

coloured by following detailed and often complicated instructions. Although its intentions are good, by attempting to be a field guide, a story book and a colouring book, it loses sight of its intended audience. This book tries too hard to teach and takes the enjoyment out of learning about owls. *Eyewitness Books: BIRD* is a non-fiction book which appeals to a wide range of age groups. A young child can learn much simply by studying the excellent photographs such as the series showing a bird hatching out of an egg. The detailed index and table of contents along with the categorization of information lends itself very well to the beginning researcher. The overall quality and information in this book would greatly assist in extending a child's personal knowledge and interest in birds.

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EXUBERANT TREATMENT OF A CLASSIC

Happy thought and other poems for children. Robert Louis Stevenson. Selected and illustrated Victor GAD. Midway Publications, 1988, 32 pp., ISBN C88-094403-X.

Stevenson began writing the poems he included in *A child's garden of verses* in 1881, but most of them were composed during illness and severe pain or under the threat of death, in 1884. Yet these poems have something magical about them, springing from happy boyhood memories, often of holidays at his grandfather's house beside the Water of Leith.

Stevenson's verses evoke not only the sights and sounds of his childhood in summer and winter, with such poems as "Nest eggs" and "The cow," but are particularly remarkable for the ways they show how a child uses his or her imagination in play. "Young night thought," "The land of counterpane" and "My bed is a boat" are all examples of how Stevenson was able to re-create those complex states of childhood experience when the child is totally absorbed in an imaginative game, pretending to sail a boat across the dark ocean perhaps, and yet somehow knows that it is a game all the time,

Although there is no shortage of editions of *A child's garden* over 20 still available according to recent copies of *American and British Books in Print* – Victor GAD's new selection is a *real* selection, containing sixteen poems out of a possible 86, and aimed perhaps at the very youngest readers. It includes some of Stevenson's more direct and dramatic poems, such as "From a railway carriage," "The cow" and "A good play," and leaves the more challenging verse for older children.

More particularly, Victor GAD's selection is accompanied by his own

colourful, full-page illustrations, packed with incidents and details that the child-reader will linger over. In addition almost every picture shows a young boy either imagining or actually participating in the events of the poem himself. In "A good play" we see him building the ship on the stairs, and in "Foreign lands" he is climbing the tree in order to look out. It is an original device, and one that children will respond to. ("Is *that* boy the artist?" one young girl asked.)

Charles Robinson's black-and-white illustrations to "From a railway carriage" in 1895 focused on the train, but showed one child leaning out and another child watching by the line. Eve Garnett's black-and-white "decorations" to the Puffin edition of 1948 show three lambs at the head of the poem and a child standing by a stile at the foot. And Brian Wildsmith's brightly-coloured illustration of 1966 ingeniously places the two verses of the poem under the two arches of a railway bridge on which a red engine belches forth black smoke and sparks, in a way which conveys the rush of the train but not the sights seen from the carriage window. Victor GAD's double-page illustration by contrast with these earlier versions shows a boy watching a very long train looping through a wonderfully detailed landscape, complete with Stevenson's tramp, mill and haycart. Though perhaps underemphasising the speed of the train, the picture is full and exciting and imaginative.

Responses to children's picture-books are notoriously subjective, and some adults may find Victor GAD's illustrations a little garish, but this book appealed strongly to at least two classes of British infants (aged five-seven years). They enjoyed hearing "A good play" and "From a railway carriage," and then drew their own pictures suggested by the poems and were fascinated to compare them with Victor GAD's exuberant illustrations. This is Midway's first venture into publishing for children, and one hopes they will be encouraged to produce further titles.

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UNE CÉLÉBRATION DU RÊVE

Chansons, contes et comptines. Gilles Vigneault. Montréal, Nouvelles Éditions de l'Arc, 1987. 48 pp., 9.95\$ spiralé. ISBN 2-89016-040-8. Disque ou cassette 14,95\$.

Quand j'ai reçu ce "livre-disque", le quatrième que le poète-chansonnier québécois destine aux jeunes de 6 à 12 ans, je me suis d'abord laissé éblouir par sa présentation. Sur la page couverture, une illustration d'enfants