

strong premise and dreamy illustrations, it does not live up to its potential. Christopher's journey takes him to the local fair, where he meets a boy who helps him sell candied tomatoes. The pair go on to a vaguely Spanish seaside town where they repair a fisherman's boat and enjoy the sights. Christopher, of course, returns in time for supper with his grandparents.

In covering so much ground, author and illustrator Andreas Greve lessens the impact of Christopher's adventure; it becomes a series of unconnected bits, any of which would have made an interesting story on its own. The events don't have to be realistic, but they should make some kind of sense.

Given Greve's control of words and pictures, there are too many inconsistencies in the book. The text first uses the term "dream car" as adults would, to denote an expensive sports or luxury car, then switches immediately to use it the way a child – indeed, Christopher would: a vehicle that can go anywhere in a twinkling of an eye. And if all the text refers to Christopher's dream *car*, why do the pictures show him in a *van*? Literal-minded young readers may well be annoyed.

Finally comes *Stephen's frog*, a wonderful book for very young children. Using all kinds of fabrics and sewing techniques, Barbara Feldman creates fascinating, complex pictures of Stephen and his pet frog. The pictures build a story without the help – or need – of words, so it can be told differently every time.

Despite the potential limitations of her chosen medium, Feldman creates refreshingly different scenarios, whether it is Stephen and his frog looking down from an airplane en route to his grandparents' farm, the frog's misbehaviour at the dinner table, or its eventual return to a lively pond by its loving owner. The pictures yield new delightful details with every perusal – quizzical cattle, an embroidered snail – giving it a richness and potential for longevity unrivalled by any of the others.

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WITCHES WITHOUT BROOMSTICKS AND BEDS THAT GO "CREAK" IN THE NIGHT

Aunt Fred is a witch. Rachna Gilmore. Illus. Chum McLeod. Second Story Press, 1991. Unpag., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-929005-23-6; **Who is sleeping in Aunty's bed?** Kathy Stinson. Illus. Robin Baird Lewis. Oxford University Press, 1991. 32 pp, \$14.95 laminated boards. ISBN 0-19-540824-1, 0-19-540852-7.

While the visits and the aunts are quite different, in a sense these two books complement each other. *Aunt Fred is a witch* is about an unusual and exciting

visit in which Leila, the visitor; takes a risk and discovers new things about her aunt and about herself. It challenges our sometimes narrow way of looking at things. *Who is sleeping in Aunty's bed?*, on the other hand, is about a more ordinary visit and conveys a feeling of reassuring comfort.

Aunt Fred is a witch conveys an enlightening message to children. Leila takes a chance on visiting her aunt for the weekend, despite what she's heard about her (and after equipping herself with a garlic necklace to fend off Fred's reputed skills as a witch). But after a riotous day of fun that includes learning to tango after dinner and arriving home way past her bedtime, Leila begins to see the light. Aunt Fred is not a witch – she's just different. Thus, Leila learns that you can't always believe what people tell you about others. Indeed, she discovers that she has a fun-loving aunt with whom she shares a wonderful sense of adventure. "I get so tired of people telling me to act my age, don't you?" Aunt Fred says to her niece.

The illustrations by Chum McLeod (her first picture book) have an element of the unexpected – pointed faces, slanted eyes, distorted perspectives, and unusual colours and textures. But their very oddness makes them the perfect match for this lively story (in fact, both story and pictures grow on you with each reading).

In *Who is sleeping in Aunty's bed?*, Meg wins the coin toss and gets to sleep with Aunty when her family visits. Everyone – including the basset hound – settles down for the night. But soon Aunty's snoring wakes Meg up and she bails out to go to sleep with her parents. So begins a night of "musical beds" as everyone tries to get a peaceful night's sleep. Sounds and phrases are repeated throughout the story to create a pleasing rhythm that children will enjoy: "creak" when anyone gets in – or out – of bed and "Mmmm" when anyone first settles down.

This is the first collaboration in eight years for Kathy Stinson and Robin Baird Lewis (their last book together was the award-winning *Red is best*). The result is a light and funny story that conveys a warm and comfortable feeling. The illustrations are soft and appealing. The characters are endearing and their facial expressions comical. In this Aunty's house, everything is in its accustomed place – the pendulum clock on the wall, the potted fern on the table, and the colourful patchwork quilt on Aunty's four-poster bed. The patchwork quilt is repeated on the book's endpapers for an added touch of coziness.

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