

and unity of nature, but in keeping with the survival theme, this colour scheme falls short. Even Wickiup's dangerously conspicuous new coat of orange is a soft pastel tangerine at best, and at the height of his danger the tone of the drawings' colours is still rather too tranquil to lend appropriate credibility to the story. Also detrimental to the story's effect are the two-inch pastel green borders framing each illustration. They appear stylish, but minimize the pictures, and the reader is constantly aware of the structure of the book while experiencing the story.

This is an inventive story with potentially effective illustrations that could be extrapolated for a more dramatic effect. The story itself is interesting and concisely written, worthy of recommendation despite its shortcomings.

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SEASONS BY THE SEA

Waiting for the whales. Sheryl McFarlane. Illus. Ron Lightburn. Orca, 1991. Unpag., \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920501-664; **Grey cat at sea.** Joan Skogan. Illus. Claudia Stewart. Polestar, 1991. Unpag., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-919591-698.

Grey cat at sea and *Waiting for the whales* are stories which reveal the influence that living creatures can have on humans. The aloof yet playful grey cat provides amusement for the seamen on the Rekin while the whales delight and highlight the lives of the old man and his granddaughter each year. Both stories are set on the west coast of British Columbia, portraying the tranquility and enjoyment that the sea offers its habitants. Such similarities, however, are superficial. Although both have appreciation of beasts at their core, *Waiting for the whales* is the deeper, more insightful story both in text and illustrations.

Grey cat at sea is a simple, straightforward story of a feline seeking a home. The text follows the style of a sailor's log told in third-person narrative which offers children insight into the daily life on a fishing trawler. These detailed accounts reflect the author's wealth of experience at sea. However, while the story is informative and entertaining, the characters lack depth and development. As a result, the young reader may laugh at the antics of the protagonist but not identify with or feel compassion for her. In fact, what we do learn about the cat is appalling: she is self-centred, egotistical, and ungrateful. The phrase "the cat did not care" becomes tedious. Furthermore, while the colours are bright and attractive, the illustrations are, like the text, flat. They are ancillary to the story, providing only physical details of the vessel.

Grey cat at sea is, then, a playful story but too long and detailed for the beginning reader. It is more likely to be enjoyed by an older child willing to be challenged by the interesting fishing vocabulary.

The cover of *Waiting for the whales* depicts an old man cradling his grandchild in his arms, sharing a peaceful moment of wonder as they gaze into the Pacific ocean at the magnificent orca whales. Relationships are central to this story and McFarland beautifully illuminates the unique friendship between grandparent and grandchild. The young girl brings purpose into the lonely old man's life while he passes on to her his wisdom about living in harmony with one's environment.

Lightburn masterfully extends the story with his illustrations which have a three-dimensional quality. The bordered pictures are reminiscent of a family album. Each subject is realistically detailed and carefully framed; contrasted against their impressionistic backgrounds, the subjects are distinctive.

This story will be appreciated by younger readers for its simple, poetic, and occasionally repetitive narrative, yet its sensitive depth and layered symbolism can be appreciated by all ages (particularly adults). Finally, *Waiting for the whales* is most poignant in its gentle presentation of death. As the young girl determinedly dons her grandpa's hat and waits for the whales, she hopes that at life's end all grandfathers' spirits go "to leap and swim with the whales." [Editor's note: *Waiting for the whales* won the 1992 Governor General's Award for Illustration.]

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ÉCOLOGIE ET FANTAISIE: UN CONTE DE FÉES CONTEMPORAIN

Les Enfants de l'eau. Hélène Gagnier. Illus. Danielle Simard. Montréal, Pierre Tisseyre, 1991, 150 pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89051-430-7.

Dix ans après la publication de ses deux recueils de comptines en 1981, Hélène Gagnier a fait paraître deux romans de jeunesse aux Editions Papillon: *Le Secret de François* (1990) et *Les Enfants de l'eau* (1991). Dans *Le Secret de François*, il s'agit d'un petit garçon cyclope qui enseigne à François, un vieillard acerbe et solitaire, qu'il faut "avoir la tête, le coeur remplis de l'autre pour vivre vraiment" (53). Une leçon importante est de nouveau transmise par des enfants venus d'un autre monde dans *Les Enfants de l'eau*.

Cette fois, deux enfants aux cheveux bleus et aux yeux en forme de demi-lune ont été choisis par le peuple sous-marin pour convaincre les humains de ne plus polluer l'eau. Chalie et Stollo sont soeur et frère de marée, c'est-à-dire nés exactement à la même marée et capables de respirer à la fois sous l'eau et à la surface. Leurs mères sont très spéciales aussi, nées avec le pouvoir de "raconter des souvenirs qui remontent à de temps lointains et des événements qu'[elles] n'ont jamais vécus" (47). Mais malgré tout leur savoir sur la vie des humains, elles sont incapables de vivre sur terre. Elles transmettent toutes leurs