

reader's participation. As the story begins with the father's erroneous "Once upon a golden apple..." his children and the reader are drawn into the magic of a fractured faerie tale in which children and the characters of the tale are the authority figures on what will eventually become a "true" faerie tale.

While the father tries to convince the children that Snow White lived with the three pigs and that the princess kissed Humpty Dumpty instead of a frog, a second, non-verbal story evolves through Phoebe Gilman's expressive illustrations as the family dog succeeds in ravishing the family's picnic basket. The illustrations not only complement the text, but also they add depth and continuity to it. Intricate patterns of apples and leaves and flowery royal vines alternate every two pages to border the story, while the family members themselves become participants in the various fractured faerie tales and nursery rhymes. The facial expressions and body language of the characters show the comical frustration felt by the two children when their father does not read the story correctly and their ecstatic joy when he does.

The many purposely incorrect allusions to well-known faerie tales and nursery rhymes rely for their humour on the fact that most children will be very familiar with them. By proposing so many incorrect pieces of children's lore, Jean Little and Maggie de Vries actually create their own faerie tale, one that by breaking the clichéd responses of the known faerie tales manages to eventually become one of those very same tales, but in such a refreshing, amusing manner that the anticipated "They all lived happily ever after" ending is joyously received by both the father and his two children. Children and adults alike should enjoy this new approach to an old theme in which they themselves can become participants.

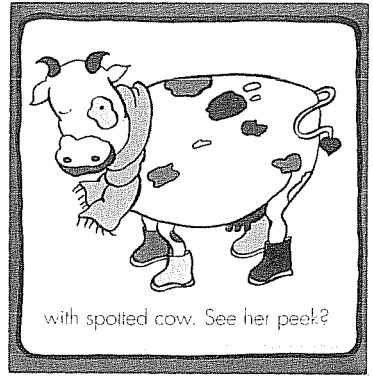
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MINI-REVIEWS

Lollypop's playtime; Lollypop's animals. Hélène Desputeaux. Illus. author. Trans. Annette Goldsmith. Editions Chouette, 1991. Unpag., plastic. ISBN 2-921198-41-X, 2-921198-40-1.

I would recommend these little books to anyone with children who are one month or older. They are designed for rough use: being chewed, handled in the bath, slept with and stuffed into diaper bags. The four pages are padded plastic—an inner foam construction makes them soft and floatable. They are rather like small, soft, hinged exercise mats (fifteen centimeters) on which bright, bold pictures are printed. There is minimal text.

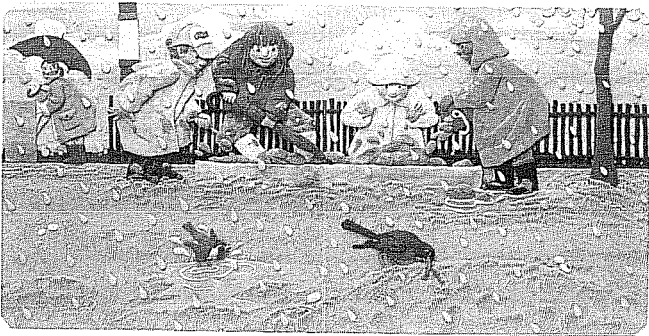
In them, a young child of non-specific gender named Lollypop plays interactively with the reader. The illustrations are especially good for infants because the bold primary colours on white background allow the infant-reader to isolate the picture and concentrate on Lollypop and the action. Although the illustrations are simple and uncomplicated, each has an amusing twist: for example, the big, fluffy lamb wears a baseball hat and bunny-slippers. The words say that Lollypop is playing games like peek-a-boo--a favourite with young children. For young children just learning games like peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek, Lollypop will encourage and stimulate them.



Zoe's snowy day; Zoe's sunny day; Zoe's windy day; Zoe's rainy day. Barbara Reid. HarperCollins, 1991. Unpag., \$4.95 Laminated boards. ISBN 0-00-223758-X, 0-00-223759-8, 0-00-223763-6, 0-00-223764-4.

Barbara Reid can do no wrong with plasticine. This amazing set of books is intricately and artfully crafted to show a young girl named Zoe on outings with her parents. The books are set up like a family photo album; the pictures are fashioned in plasticine and then photographed. Urban children are sure to recognize and identify with Zoe's activities. For example, at the end of *Zoe's Sunny Day*, Zoe is fast asleep in her stroller on the way home from the park where she's had a busy day swimming, frolicking at the playground, and picnicking on the grass.

There is no text to accompany the artwork, but none is needed. When my two-year old asked where the words were, I realized the need for books such as these

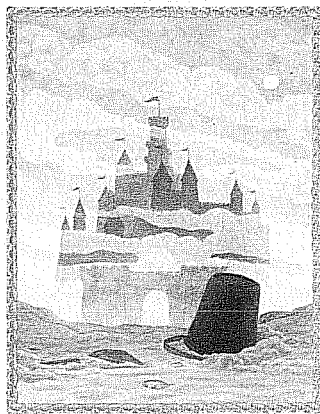


in a child's library. Reading stories is important, but it is equally important to learn to use books as a focus for sharing ideas and conversation. These books allow adults and children the opportunity to make up stories, to talk about familiar sights, sounds and smells, remember similar days in their own lives and, most importantly, to spend shared time together in an interactive way. These wordless books can create a shared space of pleasure between children and their caregivers.

The Zoe books are constructed of sturdy cardboard. They are small in size, just perfect for the hands of children. Reid has won international awards in the past for her books (e.g., *Who Has Seen Birds*), and this collection of books is sure to win her more acclaim.

Kate's castle. Julie Lawson. Illus. Frances Tyrell. Oxford University Press, 1992. Unpag., \$16.95 cloth. 0-19-540842-X.

Kate's castle is a beautifully illustrated book built on a cumulative tale pattern similar to that in *The house that Jack built*. The text tells the story of Kate building a sand castle and daydreaming on the beach. She creates sand castles both from sand and from her imagination. The text uses an imaginative rhyme scheme involving many sea creatures, some familiar ones (like mussels) and others not so familiar (like agates).



The illustrator, Frances Tyrell, has cleverly designed the left side of each page to show the actual castle that Kate built and the opposite page to show the corresponding castle that Kate's imagination sees. The border of each picture is lined with many shells, making the book an intricate seascape which will evoke fond memories of the beach. Both the story and the illustrations are soft and soothing. Therefore, *Kate's castle* makes a good discussion and bedtime storybook. Children will quickly learn the cumulative-tale lines and enjoy reciting them along with the adult reading the book.

My uncle Max. Les Casson. Illus. H  l  ne Desputeaux. Annick Press, 1990. Unpag., \$0.99 paper. [Annikin edition only] ISBN 1-55037-130-4.

Some kids dream of having athletes or rock stars as best friends, but not Uncle Max's nephew. This little guy prefers his uncle to famous people. He adores every idiosyncratic detail about his uncle right down to the old rickety car he drives and the silly Halloween costume he wears. Uncle Max is a whimsical uncle who remains a child at heart.

This story is enhanced by H  l  ne Desputeaux's bright, distinctive and playful illustrations. My two-year old followed the story and giggled at the pictures, but school-age kids would like it too. Annick Press has released this book in the popular Annikin format, but I would recommend the full-sized copy so as to fully enjoy Desputeaux's artwork.

I can't sleep. Patti Farmer. Illus. Ron Lightburn. Orca Book Publishers, 1992. Unpag., \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-920501-84-2.

Everyone who reads *I can't sleep*, especially the youngest child in a family, is sure to be amused by little Zoey. Zoey can't sleep and she makes many attempts to tell her sleeping family members why. Nobody lets her finish her sentence to actually explain the problem until it's too late to matter. The story is clever, but unfortunately it does not read well aloud. Young children get lost in the sentence structure: "I can't sleep," said Zoey, raising her voice, "because...". An adult understands unfinished sentences with ellipsis marks, and the conventions of dialogue which separate the "I can't sleep" from the "because," but the children I read this book to thought the only thing Zoey ever said was "I can't sleep." Also, the children constantly misunderstood who was saying what and that made them lose interest in the storyline. The adult reading the book can explain what's going on, but a reader should not have to do this. Also, the last line of the text from the left-hand page appears under the illustrations on the right-hand page; it is almost hidden there, and this means it is sometimes missed, making the story even more confusing. The story's text and layout could be clearer: perhaps it can be improved in a subsequent edition, for it is a good story which illustrates the consequences of our not listening to what children want to tell us. Too often we interrupt them, or jump to anticipate what they are trying to explain instead of being attentive to their faltering words.

Lightburn's illustrations are fun and colourful. As the story stands now, they redeem the book. Children love pictures of mice and identify with them as story characters. Lightburn has given little Zoey very endearing facial expressions. I would love to see the text reworked since the illustrations are really delightful.

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