

46 little men. Jan Mogensen. Breakwater Books, 1990. Unpag., laminated board. ISBN 1-55081-003-0.

46 little men is a wordless picture book translated from the original Danish version, *De 46 sma moend*. It follows the common thread of many children's books where toys, or in this case, men, from a picture come to life and take over the nursery. Although some information about the men and their journey is given, the creation of the story is up to the reader. Children will have the opportunity of providing their own story line, dialogue and characterization as they follow the illustrations.

Young children may be amused by the slap-stick antics of the characters but will become discouraged as they try to keep track of the men who are very similar in appearance and clothing. They will also become frustrated by the homogeneous colouring of the illustrations.

46 little men is better suited for older children who, with some guidance from an adult, will appreciate Mogensen's wit, irony and general commentary on life.

Tamara Williams is a primary teacher with the Muskoka Board of Education.

In my backyard. John DeVries. Illus. Werner Zimmerman. Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1992, \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-73307-9.

In this simple and charming story, a little boy resolves a problem—accommodation for his new friend Jim, the frog. When no one in his family is interested in having Jim around, the little boy turns to his dog, Rover, who has no objection to sharing his doghouse.

The brief, rhyming text is accompanied by rich watercolour illustrations by Werner Zimmerman. The pictures capture the shadowy softness of a backyard in summertime and Jim in all his "frogginess." Whether sitting lumpishly on a log, springing off the little boy's father's computer keyboard, or diving into Rover's water bowl, Jim's lovely green presence on each page (and leaping across the book's endpapers) is delightful and endearing.

What I particularly like about this story is that the frog stays willingly. He's not stuffed into a bottle with jagged holes. The backyard is Jim's world and so the boy joins him there.

The boy's resourcefulness in solving his dilemma and his simple delight in playing alone in his backyard with his dog and his frog are positive images for young children. The book depicts the pleasures of imaginative play and the joy of relating to nature on nature's terms. It also shows children that friendships do exist between people, animals—and frogs.

This is a perfect book for that quiet bedtime read for pre-schoolers.

Jennifer Charles has a degree in journalism from Carleton University and is a scientific editor with *Environment Canada* in Ottawa.