

*Cinderella penguin, or the little glass flipper* by Janet Perlman offers, as the title indicates, a visual joke as its basic premise. Despite the publisher's press release, this version is not "authentic right to the end." With no mention of Cinderella's father, her mother's grave, the self-mutilation of the stepsisters, the doves attacking the sisters on the way to the wedding, Perlman's retelling, like many of Disney's renditions of classic stories, is bowdlerized and sanitized.

Perlman, therefore, tells only part of the story of Cinderella, who is depicted as a penguin. As such, it would clearly tickle a child's fancy. A simple trick of substitution, however, does not constitute an interesting achievement. Fortunately, Perlman's illustrations do.

Originally designed as an animated film, *The tender tale of Cinderella penguin*, which won the Parents' Choice Award for Best Children's Video and was nominated for an Academy Award, *Cinderella penguin* would engage a child's interest by virtue of its delightful illustrations alone. In Perlman's retelling of the classic tale, the story is secondary to the artwork. Painted directly on the back of matte acetate, the full-colour illustrations are vivid, uncluttered and amusing. Although lacking depth of feeling or subtleties of shading, remaining more clever than substantial, they nonetheless are accomplished images, convincingly connected to a text which, unfortunately, has been deprived of meaning.

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## STORIES FROM THE OKANAGAN PERSPECTIVE

**Neekna and Chemai.** Jeannette C. Armstrong. Illus. Barbara Marchand. Theytus Books, 1991. Unpag., \$12.95 paper. ISBN 0-919441-15-7.



Jeannette Armstrong, an important Native novelist, has written a delightful account of the lives of the Okanagan tribe before the coming of the white man. Her protagonist, Neekna, recounts the activities of her people during the four seasons of the year, beginning with winter. The emphasis is on a way of life which integrates the spiritual with the economic. Food is seen as the gift of the four Food Chiefs, who gave their lives so that the people could live: Chief Bitterroot, Chief Saskatoon Berry, Chief Salmon and Chief Bear. Spiritual values are introduced to the young reader in a natural way. Explained by elders (some-

times through stories) to the young characters, Neekna and her friend Chemai, the world view of the Okanagans presented here is opposed to waste and wanton destruction. Indeed, reverence for nature is a major theme of the work.

The Native method of teaching through stories is an important strategy of the book. The stories are good ones: the tale of the boy who went out inadequately dressed—bringing down punishment from the North Wind—is excellent. Traditional respect for elders is another important element in the book and the Native emphasis on sharing food is brought out. And what would a children's book without feasting be? Armstrong's blackberry and soapberry dessert takes its place alongside the picnic baskets in *The wind in the willows*. She also does a fine job of explaining the handicrafts on which a traditional culture depends.

One limitation of the book is the general blandness of the narrative: there are no really dramatic events. It would also have been effective to explore the friendship of the title characters a little more. Their personalities are not clearly differentiated. The illustrations—serviceable but not outstanding—make good use of a limited range of colours, and the use of shadows is interesting. This book is didactic in the best way, teaching its lessons gently, and certainly deserves its Children's Book Centre "Our Choice" Award.

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## À LA RECHERCHE DES CHEVAUX CÉLESTES

**L'Ombre et le cheval.** Esther Rochon. Montréal, Éditions Paulines, 1992. 121 pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89039-538-3.

Dans un univers où il faut se mettre à l'abri de l'impitoyable soleil par des voiles à degrés variables de protection, la jeune Ella se voit malgré elle poussée vers le monde adulte alors que, héritière prochaine des talents de créateur des chevaux de ciel, elle doit se reconnecter avec le passé, découvrir les circonstances ayant mené à la mort de son grand-père Ankstad, et décider ainsi de l'avenir de tout un village perdu dans le désert. A seize ans, elle ne veut cependant qu'une chose: oublier son énorme talent d'artiste qui fait d'elle un être à part, se fondre dans la foule, devenir une inconnue de la ville. Même l'amour participe à ce désir:

J'espère que mon amoureux, qui vient d'en ville, me prendra toujours pour une fille interchangeable avec n'importe quelle autre, qui se fond dans l'ensemble des bien-aimées, un grain de sable dans le désert. (p. 25)

Dans sa recherche du passé, Ella et son amoureux découvrent les voies du "progrès", un spectacle semblable à ceux des chevaux de ciel de son village natal, mais plus avancé techniquement et disponible sur écran individuel. A travers le rêve, elle reprendra finalement contact avec Ankstad et recevra son héritage, lequel lui permettra à son tour de traverser avec succès sa crise de