

description of amateur and professional athletics at the turn of the century. This work will appeal to those adolescents who enjoy sports, but is unlikely to hold the attention of those whose interests lie in other directions.

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## A PIONEER SUCCESS STORY

**A Pioneer Story: The Daily Life of a Canadian Family in 1840.** Barbara Greenwood. Illus. Heather Collins. Kids Can Press, 1994. 240 pages, \$16.95, \$24.95 paper, cloth. ISBN 1-55074-128-4, 1-55074-237-X.

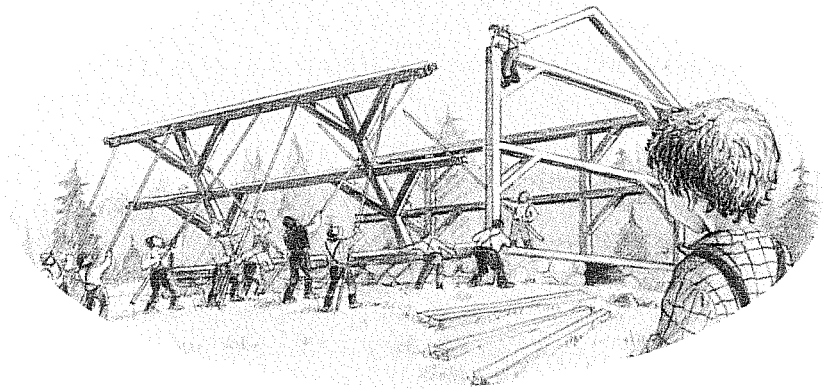
Imparting historical knowledge to children ages six to thirteen can be a difficult task. As a museum education officer, I am often asked for suggestions. "How do I make history *interesting* for my grade sevens?" wrote one teacher desperately. "Where can I find *good* material about pioneer schools for my son's grade two project?" a mother implored. My answer? "Turn to Barbara Greenwood's *A Pioneer Story: The Daily Life of a Canadian Family in 1840.*"

Greenwood takes a fictional pioneer family of nine through a year in which they experience almost every aspect of frontier social and economic development. A veteran children's author, Greenwood's plots engage the reader and her stories ring true. I developed such an affection for the Robertson family that I felt teary-eyed when they moved triumphantly from their log cabin into their new house.

The challenge of historical fiction lies in accurate representation. Greenwood does not explain how she researched the book, apart from a few brief sentences on the "acknowledgements" page. At times, the Robertsons seem too good to be true. For example, young Willy's deep friendship with Nekeet, his native counterpart, lies beyond the experience of pioneers I have studied. However, the formation of this unlikely (but possible) fictional friendship allows Greenwood to document the influence that first nation people had on white pioneer life, information that is important for today's scholars.

A non-fiction section counterbalances each short story. For instance, the tale, "The pedlar's visit," precedes a detailed look at pedlars and cobblers. Added to this are the fun, easy-to-do projects that stimulate children to imitate pioneer activities such as candle-making. A glossary and index provide useful information at the end of the book. Greenwood could have encouraged children to step beyond the pages of fiction by suggesting ideas for further research in communities, libraries, archives and museums.

Heather Collins' pencil drawings, neat and personable in style, evenly match Greenwood's writing. Occasionally, one wonders how closely some of these drawings resemble archival documents. For example, the handful of men shown



From *A Pioneer Story*. Illus. by Heather Collins

raising a massive timber wall of the Robertson's new house must have been awfully strong to do the job with so few! To someone researching building techniques, such details become important.

These few details aside, this book provides a way to get children zinging towards an exploration of Ontario's past. My seven-year-old asked to be awakened at 6:30 a.m. so we could read the book before school! My most serious complaint is that I have to buy two copies: one for story-telling at home and one to keep on my desk at the museum.

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## UN MONDE À LA MESURE DES ENFANTS

**Mon grand album d'information.** Carol Watson. Trad. Jocelyne de Pass. Richmond Hill, Ontario, Scholastic Canada, 1993. 76 pp, relié. ISBN 0-590-24201-6.

Au fond, *Mon grand album d'information*, la traduction du livre anglais *My First Book of Facts*, à la manière de bien des manuels à visée encyclopédique, n'étonne pas. Tout est attendu dans ce livre: on y parlera, bien sûr, de *tout* et, comme le destinataire est un public d'enfants, les images seront au rendez-vous. L'album, qui plaira à des petits de trois à huit ans environ et peut-être à leurs frères et soeurs aînés, remplit bien sa fonction éducative par l'image et l'initiation à un vocabulaire qui, bien que limité, se veut précis, juste. En fait, il est difficile