



ingly coarse canvas and placed underneath the text of each page, tend to reveal the artist's limitations: the drawing appears to be careless, the colour becomes murky in most of the vignettes, while the coarse texture of the canvas support interferes with the quasi-naïve definitions of form.

*The Sugaring-Off Party* presents a modest attempt at Canadian bilingualism for young readers: twelve French phrases or words are introduced fairly evenly over twelve pages of English text. A glossary at the back lists a translation of the French. It explains that the term "Maple Sugar Moon" is called by the Abenaki Indians of southern Quebec, Maine and Vermont, "the March moon." This indirect link to the indigenous native population both in Quebec and south of the border implies to the adult that these borders dividing the Abenaki are artificial. The glossary ends with a translation of the first verse of the old French song "Alouette" into English. For those who are not aware of it, the verse is about killing a little lark by plucking off its feathers and finally its head! The inclusion of this well-known song into the book seems peculiar. Why would the author select this song for English-speaking children, a song which in the English translation will ruffle the feathers of any parent or animal rights activist?

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## UNFORGETTABLE GHOSTS

**Ghost Train.** Paul Yee. Illus. Harvey Chan. Groundwood Books, 1996. Unpag. \$15.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-257-2.

*Ghost Train*, set around the turn of the century, is about an unusual girl who paints wonderfully. Choon-yi's father, driven by poverty at home, has gone to North America to work on the railway. After two years of separation, Choon-yi

finally receives a letter from her father. He asks her to join him. However, what she sees when she arrives there is not her father but his ghost!

Following the ghost's instructions step by step, she creates a magic train, and helps her father and many other souls stop their pain and find their way home. A fantastic but sad story, *Ghost Train* echoes the voice of *Tales from Gold Mountain*, only this time the voice that Paul Yee gives to the early Chinese immigrants is louder and stronger. He deals with his subject seriously: the focus is the railway and the train for which Choon-yi's father and so many other ill-treated Chinese labourers have died. Together with Choon-yi, readers learn about these people's bitter lives. Once again, the story emphasizes Paul Yee's point that "we should not forget [the past]," which he made in the "Afterword" of *Tales from Gold Mountain*. *Ghost Train* is a powerful story in which Yee connects the dead with the living, the earth with hell, and dreams with reality.

A wonderful match to Yee's story are Harvey Chan's illustrations. A sad tone is set by their dark and heavy colouring and a ghostly atmosphere is created by a background of fire and blood. The giant train that connects the continent contrasts with the small figures of Choon Yi and her father, who appear so weak, helpless and lost.

It is worth noticing that as in the award-winning story *Roses Sing on New Snow*, the protagonist of this book is a girl. Both girls can create magic: Maylin in *Roses* cooks a new dish which enchants the governor of South China, and Choon Yi paints a train that is full of ghosts. There is a main difference between the two stories, however: one praises the New World and the other condemns it.

Still, like *Roses Sing on New Snow*, *Ghost Train* is a valuable contribution by Paul Yee and Harvey Chan to the education of young people about North America's past.

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## A STORY OF SURVIVAL

**Courage in the Storm.** Thomas H. Raddall. Illus. Are Gjesdal. Pottersfield Press, reprinted 1995. 52 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-919001-42-4.

*Courage in the Storm* offers a glimpse into rural life in Nova Scotia at the turn of the century. Life is hard for Greta and her son and in an effort to earn money, Greta decides to make and sell birch brooms. The painstaking and laborious method of construction is described and illustrated in detail. Greta's journey to sell the brooms involves her in another fight for survival. When she becomes lost