rameters of this novel to explore the complex set of events that led up to the mistreatment of Japanese-Canadians like Tadashi and his family, it seems to me that it is important for young readers to know that although it is certainly true that sometimes things happen on a scale so large it is difficult to stop them, it is a mistake to believe that "things just happen." Perhaps a foreword or afterword that provided more details about the history of Japanese-Canadians on the west coast, as well as a reference to the formal apology and compensation offered to Japanese-Canadians by the federal government in 1988, would have provided a needed sense of the political and social forces, and the people behind them, that led to the tragic events described in the novel.

Gillian Siddall is an assistant professor in the Department of English at Lakehead University. She teaches Canadian literature and literary theory.

Spider's Web: Not for Netizens

Spider's Web. Sharon Stewart. Red Deer College P, 1998. 143 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88995-177-2.

I admit I enjoyed reading this book, and many young teen readers may also enjoy it. *Spider's Web* does not overly whitewash the experience of growing up, and it provides situations that meet parental requirements — no sex, no drugs, no loud music — yet may still appear hip to some younger readers. If these are your criteria for selecting youth literature look no further.

 Spider's Web suffers somewhat in the cultural and technological domains. Spider's mom Joanna *Webber* is marrying Andrew Craven, a geeky computer industry giant who has both a son and a personality that Spider has to learn to appreciate, after she gets over her mother's perceived betrayal for remarrying. Mom has a career, but her happiness seems to be predicated on *finding a man*. While this is a legitimate choice, the two other strong female characters are also problematic. Mia Par is Mr. Craven's Manila-born executive secretary who functions as Spider's nanny through the novel, and is obviously miffed about not getting her man. The black female detective, Les Johnson, who eventually arrests the hacker who stalks Spider through the story, is conspicuously token. These are roles that reinforce stereotypes, rather then explode them. Equally disconcerting is Spider's wariness of foreign things; she never eats garlic at home (but knows what a *barista* is), and is troubled by the names of European cars, yet shops at Le Château and wears Docs. Such inconsistencies are rampant. The sentiments and attitudes would have been progressive in the '70s, but lag somewhat in the '90s.

Spider's Web is a *good read*, with a catchy buildup to a climactic revelation worthy of the best afternoon teen-soap, but this does not deflect awareness from problems. Stewart trips over her Net nuances, and the plot twists around incongruencies that pit incompatible technologies against one another. There is some problem with admitting that the inspiration for a book that purports to be net-savvy was inspired by an article about Bill Gates's house, as the "About the author" notes admit.

Why do I see these "details" as problematic? Well, if the detective fiction writer thinks that .308 cartridges work just fine in a blunderbuss, we have a logical problem that may thwart the reader's enjoyment as much as the narrative development. In *Spider's Web*, Spider moves into a house with a computer that can alert the authorities at the first sign of trouble, and can access her stepfather's corporate electronic art collection, yet Spider uses a modem when connecting to the Internet through a command-line interface. She communicates in a text-only environment while using a natural language processing capable computer. Overall, a more sophisticated presentation of the medium, cultural and gender issues would have better served the narrative.

Jason Nolan is with the Knowledge Media Design Institute at the University of Toronto, and is developing **Project Achieve: A Collaborative Virtual Learning Environment** *with Canada's Schoolnet (www.achieve.utoronto.ca).*

Pedagogy and Human Interest in Two Historical Children's Novels

The Golden Rose. Dayle Campbell Gaetz. Pacific Educational P, 1996. 156 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 1-895766-21-4. *Prairie Fire!* Bill Freeman. James Lorimer, 1998. 196 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-608-0.

Two books about pioneering in the mid-1800s in Western Canada should invite comparisons, but *The Golden Rose*, by Dayle Campbell Gaetz, and *Prairie Fire!*, by Bill Freeman, are studies in contrasting approaches to writing historical fiction for eight-to-thirteen-year-olds. Neither novel is entirely successful in the proportioning of pedagogy and human interest.

The Golden Rose focuses on a family of English settlers who almost destroy one another through inner conflict triggered by the death of the older daughter on their arrival at their site in the BC Interior. Although, traditionally, pioneering chronicles focus on the conditions and challenges of an alien, hostile environment, Gaetz draws attention to the often unexpressed dysfunction of families subjected to physical and emotional rigours for which