

ately reflects the complexity of the choices and decisions facing its young characters. For different readerships, however, both novels provide a vivid and well-researched encounter with the challenges facing young Canadians in an earlier time.

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### Selina Returns

*Selina and the Shoo-Fly Pie*. Barbara Smucker. Illus. Janet Wilson. Quilts by Lucy Anne Holliday. Stoddart Kids, 1998. Unpag. \$18.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-3018-4.

*Selina and the Shoo-Fly Pie* attempts to recreate the delight of *Selina and the Bear Paw Quilt* (1996). However, when it is read in isolation, both the significance of Selina's close relationship with her grandmother and the importance of the quilt designs framing each illustration are lost.

The story's prosaic language results in unexceptional characters who never really come alive. Rudimentary dialogue like Mother's "Be more careful. You are growing up. Already you are seven and this fall you will start grade two" may be intended to give the feeling of someone new to English-speaking, but the effect sounds mechanical. Bumps in the narrative, such as the letter from Grandmother informing her Mennonite family that "We Mennonites are against slavery ... yet we cannot take sides and be part of the terrible fighting. For this we are resented and sometimes even hated," interfere with the flow of the story. Since Selina's family fled to Canada because of the American Civil War, they know first-hand the war's effects upon their culture. Although this letter provides background information for the reader, such information would have been conveyed better in an historical introduction. Finally, the story's climax is flawed. While the main theme highlights the importance of living in a land of freedom, the rejuvenation of cousin Henry — traumatised by the conflict — is not satisfactorily explained: it seems unlikely that the ravages of war can be overcome by an afternoon's visit to a sawmill coupled with teasing Selina about accidentally smashing her Shoo-Fly Pie.

Janet Wilson's paintings provide a welcome respite from the story's

tediousness. Their rich colours bring a depth to the characters not realized in the text, and vignettes such as Selina's joyful reunion with her grandmother provide a beautiful contrast between youth and age. Wilson's realistic paintings accurately depict the period, especially in the clothing. While the illustrations seem a trifle static, each represents a sentence in the story, as when



*Illustration from Selina and the Shoo-Fly Pie*

Selina gently rubs her hands over Grandmother's Bear Paw Quilt. The real strength of the book appears in Holliday's exquisite quilt designs, which frame each of Wilson's scenes. Beautifully done throughout, they suggest such themes as enduring love, especially where they surround Selina and Grandmother making the Shoo-Fly Pie with stitchings of flies, the pastry shell, and hands filled with hearts.

As a companion piece, *Selina and the Shoo-Fly Pie* is satisfactory, and themes like family, tradition and peace are reinforced by both the illustrations and the quilt designs. However, it lacks the delight and the art of *Selina and the Bear Paw Quilt*.

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