

## Now That You Have Asked, I Will Tell You

*Funny You Should Ask*. Marg Meikle. Illus. Tina Holdcroft. Scholastic Canada, 1998. 156 pp. \$6.99 paper. ISBN 0-590-12489-7.

Having made a career of answering wacky questions on CBC Radio's Gabereau show, Marg Meikle appears to be making a career of answering them in books as well. *Funny You Should Ask* follows in the footsteps of two previous titles, *Dear Answer Lady* and *Return of the Answer Lady*.

Covering sixteen topics from animals, the body, clothing, and cool stuff, to time, useful information and weird words and phrases, there are burning questions that beg answering. Ever wonder where one goes to the bathroom in an igloo? Look no further. Why can't you tickle yourself? Marg has come up with the answer. Have you been told you are one brick short of a load? Are you curious about where the yo-yo came from? Hankering to understand why men's and women's shirts button on opposite sides? If so, your search has ended here. If deeper understanding is the focus, forget it. I was left with more questions of how one goes to the bathroom in an igloo. Perhaps another book?

What else are you dying to know? Is the book readable? Yes, but it requires a sophisticated reading level. The answers are written in a friendly and irreverent style — in answer to "Did Sir Isaac Newton really get hit on the head by an apple?" she quips, "This is a question of utmost gravity." And it is ripe with opportunity for bad jokes. But we will get to the core of the matter. Some answers include added features. After the answer regarding real rules on breaking apart a wishbone for good luck, the following highlighted information appears, "Whoever wins the wishbone pull definitely gets a lucky break which is where that expression comes from." In addition, websites on duct tape and marbles are included for inquiring minds who need to know more.



**Why can't you tickle yourself?**  
and Other Strange Stories from SCIENCE

Illustration from *Funny You  
Should Ask*

What *Funny You Should Ask* really lacks is an index. Unlike an encyclopedia whose structure insures success in locating information, finding an answer in this work is hit and miss. The Table of Contents is not helpful unless the question is the leading question, but even that is misleading. Those listed are actually heading pages with clever drawings by Tina Holdcroft. A further search is still in order. As well, deciphering the code under which a question is classified is frustrating. My search for marbles took a while — did I see it under Sports, Odds and Ends, Science, or where? The book would have been better served listing the questions as its organizational tool. Thank heavens the book is only 156 pages!

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### Critical Approaches to Children's Literature

*Children's Literature Comes of Age: Towards a New Aesthetic.* Maria Nikolajeva. (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, v. 1816; Children's Literature and Culture, v. 1.) Garland Publishing, 1995. 239 pp. \$35.00 (US) cloth. ISBN 0-8153-1556-2. *Rediscoveries in Children's Literature.* Suzanne Rahn. (Garland Reference Library of Social Science, v. 862; Children's Literature and Culture, v. 2). Garland Publishing, 1995. 185 pp. \$35.00 (US) cloth. ISBN 0-8153-0930-9.

As introduced by its general editor Jack Zipes, the Children's Literature and Culture Series is "international in scope and [is] intended to encourage innovative research in children's literature with a focus on interdisciplinary methodology" (1: xii). The first two volumes admirably display these characteristics and herald a collection of valuable, thought-provoking works which will certainly help promote scholarly interpretation and greater appreciation of children's literature and its significance throughout a literate person's entire life. Nikolajeva would have us consider children's literature directly as an art form, that is *as literature*, by de-emphasizing the traditional relations to pedagogics and submitting the works to the same critical approaches and theoretical gazes assumed towards other categories of literature. Rahn revisits particular forms, specific authors and their works which, having seemingly failed the test of time and been discarded or disregarded, yet are argued to be worthy of contemporary critical attention from adults and reading by today's children.