

nine-year-old loved the book. And I'm sure this would be true of the younger set in the age range the publishers describe. It's a page-turner and it's lots of fun. But reflection is not a big factor here, not even when the aunts take on such big subjects as the problem of TV in our society and what to do with criminals.

The thirteen-year-old protagonist of Richard Scrimger's *The Nose From Jupiter* is introspective, and so is this warmly written, often funny book. Alan's parents are divorced, his father lives in another city and, given the amount of communication that takes place between Alan and his Mom, mom might as well live somewhere else too. "She asked you how your day went. Then she said, 'That's fine.' And then she put the frozen pizza in the oven" (33). That's Norbert talking. Norbert is the pint-sized alien from Jupiter who has taken up residence in Alan's nose and whose spunky attitude and outspoken ways change Alan's life forever.

Alan has a best buddy too: Victor, who has a mom who cooks and a dad who drives him to school. Victor, who abandons Alan with a mumbled apology when the bullies descend.

There's adventure in Scrimger's story: the age-old problems of the average kid against determined bullies. But much of the tale centres on relationships; on Alan's attempts to understand himself and those around him. The story is about growing up and some of it hurts. While a soccer game against the bully team and a confused school assembly offer action segments that are similar to those in the Jeremy books, the events are less important in this story than are the feelings of the characters. It's about "... what you've got inside you" (29), as Norbert says, pun fully intended. It's about accepting what you can't change, and about liking yourself. The plot moves too slowly for the younger set, but twelve and thirteen-year olds, beset by identity issues and teenage angst will love this tale of Alan's cry for help and Norbert, who "nose" just what is needed.

Bonnie Ryan-Fisher is a freelance writer/editor and a philosophy tutor for Athabasca University. She is also currently studying learning disabilities and volunteering in a special needs classroom.

One Good Pal Deserves Another

Franklin's Secret Club. Paulette Bourgeois. Illus. Brenda Clark. Kids Can, 1998. Unpag. \$12.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55074-474-7, 1-55074-476-3. *Elliot's Emergency.* Andrea Beck. Illus. author. Kids Can, 1998. Unpag. \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-441-0.

I first came across Franklin the turtle in his French incarnation as Benjamin and was bemused by the eagerness with which my then primary-grade child added titles to her collection. I have since grown fond of the little green fellow as he struggles cheerfully to contend with such everyday situations as wanting a pet, starting school, and having a sleepover. Indeed, it's the very ordinariness of the events

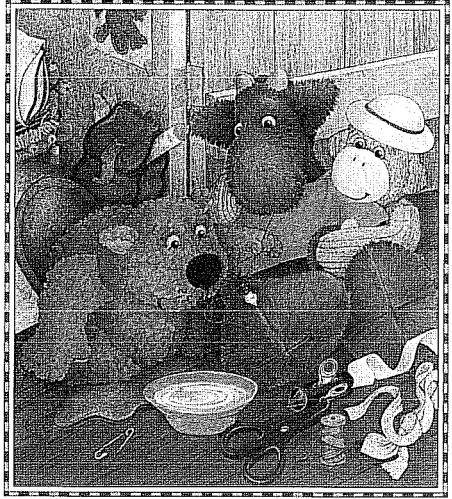


Illustration from *Elliot's
Emergency*

covered by the series which makes the books so meaningful to children.

The present title, *Franklin's Secret Club*, follows Franklin and Bear as they set up a club — a small one because “The hideaway was very snug. It was too small for a big club.” Through this simple situation, issues of belonging and, on the flip side, of being left out, are effectively dealt with. The animal characters are irresistible to young readers, and the pictures are beautifully detailed, with lots to keep a child's attention.

Elliot's Emergency, also from Kids Can Press, is the inaugural title in the Elliot Moose series. The hero is a stuffed toy whose first adventure begins when he hears “a terrible ripping sound.” What child hasn't been upset when his own “stuffy” is torn or injured? The solutions which Elliot and his stuffy friends try are as unconventional as those a child might try herself.

Elliot's Emergency is tastefully styled, with each page attractively bordered. Some of the illustrations are close-ups, like the one of Elliot's face and his two horrified, marble eyes! Others are more distant and detailed, like the one of Elliot asleep in his bed (the two leaves he has taped to his bedroom wall will surely be copied by many readers). While Elliot isn't as unique a character as that young turtle with his shell perpetually on his back, the first book at least is as relevant to kid-size concerns.

Incidentally, Franklin is also found on television in fifteen-minute episodes. The media release for *Elliot's Emergency* reports that Nelvana, the same animation house involved in the Franklin series, is interested in Elliot.

Kaija Pepper writes about the arts for Canadian and US publications. She is the Review Editor for *Dance International* and edits the Vancouver Dance Centre's monthly publication.