

*One in a Million*. Nicholas Read. Illus. Chum McLeod. Polestar, 1996. 143 pp. \$8.95 cloth. ISBN 1-896095-22-4.

In *One in a Million* Nicholas Read captures the severe injustices faced by animals in a captivating, and at times moving, tale of a puppy named "Joey" who must find a family who will care for him. Read's love of animals is quite evident in this book, a tale strongly reminiscent of Marshall Saunders's *Beautiful Joe*.

The story is told from the point of view of the spirited puppy. Through Joey, Read discusses issues that are often too difficult to talk about with children: the death of animals due to an owner's cruelty or neglect, the life of a stray, and the incomprehensible occurrence of unwanted animals.

Joey is consistently judged by potential owners according to his size and colour. And though Read tells his readers that you cannot judge a dog by these superficial traits, he inconsistently places emphasis on the appearance of the humans in the book, using this criterion to judge whether they are suitable pet owners. When Joey is adopted for the final time, the woman who is strong and understanding enough to deal with Joey appears decidedly different from the glamorous Mrs. LeClerc. Barbara is dressed in a "Save the Rain Forest" T-shirt, faded jeans and sandals" (112). It is with Barbara that Joey finds a permanent home.

Strangely, the humans in the book seem to know Joey immediately by the name he has given himself. At the pound, he informs his cage-mate Blackie that his name is "Joey" and his owner(s) immediately recognize and use this name for him. As it is doubtful that the man who so cruelly left Joey and his brothers and sisters at the pound actually gave him a name, the immediate adoption of this name seems odd.

However, despite these small inconsistencies, *One in a Million* is a moving portrayal of a young dog who, despite misuse at the hands of humans, remains convinced that there are humans who need and want him in their lives. It is a useful book for any child who wants a pet.

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*Ribbon Rescue*. Robert Munsch. Illus. Eugenie Fernandes. Scholastic Canada, 1999. 30 pp. \$5.99 paper. ISBN 0-590-03871-0.

*Ribbon Rescue* exemplifies the political transformed into story. The protagonist is a Mohawk from Quebec, and the book is inspired by clashes between Native peoples and white regulations. The whites in the book make use of what the Native protagonist freely offers; yet at the end, the Native girl is refused admittance to church (perhaps because her dress is muddy, perhaps because the church has traditionally frowned on Native dress). Yet readers need know none of this darker sub-text to enjoy the narrative's repetition and energy. The theme about helping those around one, and the reciprocal obligations involved, is equally important in the school yard or in the relations between whites and Natives, Francophones and Anglophones.