

the circus development from these early times and its evolution throughout Europe, North America and the rest of the world. She also examines the circus as a subject in literature and art. All of this information is presented in a balanced and accessible way, making it a useful reference source, whose sidebars and colourful photos will go a long way in holding the interest of young readers.

The romance and spectacle of circus-life may initially appeal to young readers, but Granfield's coverage provides a clear and informative reality check. Through descriptions of the organization, the setting up, and the detailed preparation, one will discover circus performance is a time-consuming task. Groups of performers live a life on the road that has little privacy, while they spend a great deal of time perfecting, training, and developing new acts. There is truth in Granfield's statement that "the easiest way to join the circus is to be a member of the audience" (36).

As in other forms of entertainment, such as music or movies, the circus has its share of controversy as well, particularly when it comes to its animals. The inclusion of horses, big cats, Russian bears, and the infamous "Jumbo" the elephant continues to cause debate. The author reflects upon on the pros and cons of animal participation in a clear and balanced way.

In *Kids Perform Circus Arts*, Bobbie Kalman examines this popular form of entertainment through a behind-the-scenes look at circus arts. She explains how a variety of trapeze acts are performed and the kind of training children undergo to perform juggling tricks, acrobatic acts, and cycling stunts. Kalman's coverage allows each act to be briefly yet succinctly explained, showing the training, discipline, and commitment of the entertainers. The book is completely illustrated with full colour photographs that demonstrate a variety of tricks and their execution. Complete with a fun page of "circus talk" we learn that "flatties" are spectators, "ponger" is an acrobat, and "joey" is a clown. An informative glossary and index nicely complete the coverage.

Kalman has compiled a book on a subject matter that is not often addressed in the nonfiction category. As well, the book is written for children and about children. Would-be entertainers will be happy to learn that circus arts programs can be found at select vacation camps, gymnastic schools and elementary schools.

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Writing about Animals

The World of Marine Mammals. Adrienne Mason. Illus. Garth Buzzard. Orca, 1999. 64 pp. \$12.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-046-0. *A Seal in the Family*. Maria Coffey. Illus. Eugenie Fernandes. Annick, 1999. Unpag. \$17.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-581-4. *Elisha the Flamingo and Her Amazing Adventures*. Dan & Jean Mayo. Illus. Alison Stalker. GreenHouse, 1999. 16 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-9686258-0-0.

It's not easy to write about animals in either a factual or fictionalized way; unless it is a deliberate device, it is too easy to fall into the trap of anthropomorphism, which can render the depiction of an animal into resembling the old saying "neither fish nor fowl, nor good red beef." However, it is a useful technique to use when the objective of the work is to increase readers' awareness of problems animals have thanks to humanity. *The World of Marine Mammals*, *A Seal in the Family*, and *Elisha the Flamingo and her Amazing Adventures* all take a stab at making a connection between young readers and the animals they present in an effort to achieve such an objective.

The World of Marine Mammals is the most successful of these three. It is a factual account of marine mammals and resembles an encyclopedia in its wealth of information; plus it is devoid of anthropomorphism. However, it evokes sympathy for its subjects by relating to youngsters' experiences in a variety of ways. For example, the sections on the animals are separated by biographical accounts of marine biologists who have worked with them. These accounts are accompanied by photographs and tell how these people became interested in the animals they research. A second way the information is made relevant is that interspersed throughout are experiments and activities children can do to learn first hand about marine mammals' experiences. One compares swimming as a human and then as a marine mammal. Another approximates echolocation, while a third is a recipe for "making" fossils. The third way is the use of black-and-white illustrations throughout the text that range from depictions of mammalian skeletons to playing sea otters. After thorough discussions of how different marine mammals successfully function in their environments and interact within their species and without, the book wraps up with a brief but significant discussion about pollution problems and the future, giving young readers something to think about beyond the facts of the marine mammalian world. And although parallels are made between humans and marine animals, anthropomorphism is entirely avoided. The book is aimed at eight- to twelve-year-olds, and would definitely appeal to that age group.

The title of *A Seal in the Family* is a bit of a misnomer, as the family involved is made up of birds, animals and one veterinarian living in the only house on an island, so obviously anthropomorphism is a major device.

It is a fantasy based on the true story of a harbour seal found supposedly abandoned on the coast of British Columbia. The book ends with a brief section telling about the real seal, with the instruction to leave baby seals on the beach alone as their mothers will return after their fishing forays to feed them. Unfortunately, the fictionalized part of the book does not entirely bear this out. Teelo the cat finds Lucille, the baby seal, and his master the vet takes the seal in. The vet with all his animals takes good care of her, which involves a lot of work and aggravation, returns her to the ocean, and she comes back after with seal pups of her own. The warning about leaving baby seals alone seems to be ignored, which makes one wonder about the point of the book. Unlike *The World of Marine Mammals*, anthropomorphism is in full force here, as Teelo and his fellow pets are more like children than animals, but it is not offensively done. The book is targeted at four- to seven-year-olds and the anthropomorphism is appropriate for that age group.

Elisha the Flamingo and Her Amazing Adventures is similar to *A Seal in the Family* as it too is a fictionalized account of a true animal's story, in this case a

Chilean flamingo that had escaped from a bird refuge in the United States and was finally captured in Ottawa. This is one instance where anthropomorphism doesn't work very well. There is no doubt that the bird made an incredible journey, but the anthropomorphism does not make the creature heroic, or even likeable. Instead, it depicts her as an ornery misfit who doesn't like anyone. The book does teach a little about what some Canadian birds eat, but the flamingo keeps refusing to eat what they do, yet contradictorily eats something unspecified anyway, so it is confusing and the bird comes across as obnoxiously picky instead of merely foreign. If the objective of the book was to evoke admiration for the bird, the anthropomorphism made it backfire, as she is more stupid and stubborn than brave. The book is targeted at eight- to eleven-year-olds, and although the information is suitable for that age group, the story line is for younger children.

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Two Novels of World War II

Wish Me Luck. James Heneghan. Laurel Leaf Books/Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1997. 198 pp. \$5.99 paper. ISBN 0-440-22764-X. *Make or Break Spring.* Janet McNaughton. Tuckamore, 1998. 188 pp. \$11.95 paper. ISBN 1-895387-93-0.

If one cannot judge a book by its cover, it is at least partially true that a book will stand or fall on its cover. In the Chapters/Indigo/Megabookworld society in which we live, it's all about shelf appeal — if you can't grab them with the cover, you've lost the battle. Granted, such decisions are with designers and publishers more than authors. Nevertheless, it is the authors who either gain or lose by those decisions. Sometimes, like with *Wish Me Luck*, they go well; other times, like with *Make or Break Spring*, they go badly. Both are fine books, but only one is well served by its cover.

Wish Me Luck, which concerns the experiences of a young boy from Liverpool who is sent to Canada during the Second World War to be safely out of reach of German bombers, is decorated with a charming illustration of a passenger liner leaving the dock. It has the feel of a 1930s travel poster, and establishes from the outset the contemporaneity of the book; it roots the action firmly in time, so that everything that follows is utterly convincing. That Heneghan is himself a Liverpudlian certainly helps, for his descriptions of Jamie's working-class neighbourhood and school have such authenticity that one wonders how much of the narrative is autobiographical. There are some wonderful vignettes here: Jamie's awkward relationship with the new kid in the school, a young tough from an abusive family; a scene where neighbours cluster together in an air-raid shelter listening to the bombs wreck their city; and the clumsy goodbyes exchanged between Jamie and his father, a gruff man determined to hide his emotions as he puts his son aboard the