

selected again after the first reading.

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### Bugs Unlimited

*There Ain't No Bugs on Me.* Jerry Garcia. Illus. Bruce Whatley. Incl. audio cassette: song arr. and perf. by Jerry Garcia & David Grisman. HarperCollins, 1999. Unpag. \$23.50. ISBN 0-06-028142-1.

If repetition is a beloved aspect of much of the literature for the very young, readers who loved *The Teddy Bear's Picnic*, then, are sure to jump on this bandwagon. Two major differences separate these mirror-image productions, however. The new book, *There Ain't No Bugs on Me*, skirts the snooze factor of the original book by inserting mini-plots in which the bears are invaded by a horde of insects that use the band as their romping ground. Each bug expresses its own raison d'être in clothing and autonomous activities, their combined presence lending tension between the text/lyrics and the illustrations as we wonder why there "ain't no bugs" on the dog, an unanswered mystery to the end!

Four musicians (three bears and one dog) close their door and hang out the On Tour sign. The band travels by boat and train, they tramp through various weather and terrain, they sing around a campfire and splash in a creek. Meanwhile, each illustration tells the saga of a smaller story played out by the bugs within the larger journey motif. Take for example, the peanut episode: Text and lyrics say, "A peanut sittin' on a railroad track,/ His heart was all aflutter;/ Along came a choo-choo on the track — / Toot! Toot! Peanut butter!" No tragedy here, for subsequent illustrations create a Hollywood ending. While the enamoured peanut (holding a valentine to his breast) sits on a railroad track oblivious to the approach of a train, the girlfriend (peanut) runs in high-heels toward her love followed by a cowboy bug riding a frog and swinging a lariat — all too late to save him. No worry, Grisman dog is leaning down from the cow-catcher on the front of the train, ready to scoop up the silly peanut in a last minute rescue. Sure enough, on a subsequent page the two peanuts sit with arms entwined. Later yet, as the train heads for the tunnel, the couple appears above a "just married" sign hung from the caboose. Standard, Disney-style Americana? Yes.

Another difference between these parallel productions involves the Garcia/Grisman rendering of the buggy campfire song. This time round they replace the drudging pace of their *Teddy Bear's Picnic* with a bounce as insouciant as the world of children itself. The text/lyrics supply repetition in ten verses and eight choruses. When the ninth verse says, "Oh, it ain't gonna rain no more, no more,/it ain't gonna rain no more," and the illustration shows the band walking through a desert landscape between mesas, the audio uses a rain tube over. Doesn't make sense, but it sounds great! The text of the tenth verse reads "How in the heck can the old folks

tell/ If it ain't gonna rain no more?" The lyrics, however, involve the internal rhyme "How in the hell can the old folks tell/ If it ain't gonna rain no more?" a liberty which may be of concern to some. Arching over all, the men's voices carry a cosiness redolent of the folk music tradition, with delightfully inventive between-verse takes, and a sound-over wrapping the entire composition in the song of insects on a summer evening in day-warmed grass.

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### Some Shadows in the Bright Paddles

*Bright Paddles*. Mary Alice Downie. Illus. Martin Springett. Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1999. 111 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 1-55041-516-6.

A "first flight chapter book reader" for Grades 3 and up, *Bright Paddles* may have some difficulty attracting its readers. The story combines fairy-tale qualities with an historical setting and time, but is not very engaging until the actual voyage begins halfway through the book (on page 58 at the end of Chapter 4). Even then, persistent readers may struggle with the combination of historical realism and fairy-tale events, which coexist with some difficulty in this story.

Certain characters are extremely memorable in their roles to hinder or help Anne and Meg, who are dressed as boys as they partake in an eighteenth-century journey to Grand Portage. Anne, the first person narrator of the story, and Meg join the voyageurs in order to reach their father in time to communicate with him before he is perhaps lost to his daughters forever. Mrs. Melmoth and Mr. Thorpe are evil enough to inspire great loathing in the reader, while the benevolent Jack, the most well-developed character in the novel, will be truly loved by the young reader. Anne and Meg pale a little beside these stronger characters and may fail to elicit the reader's sympathy and interest.

Martin Springett's black-and-white illustrations convey the characters and even the landscape in a compelling manner. The "really miserable times" that result from the difficulty of the journey through this land, and the weather that accompanies it, are credible and made tangible in the fatigue and hopelessness experienced by the girls and the voyageurs. The actual losses and potential losses are consistent with the brutality of the land, weather and voyage itself, while the humour displayed by various characters and in certain circumstances is an understandable attempt to deal with the difficulties that arise. The harmonious ending, however, takes the reader out of that harsh landscape back to the fairy-tale world as Meg and Anne transform themselves from boys back to girls. The very perceptive reader may sense that such neat solutions perhaps detract from the power and realism of the rivers, rocks and weather of eighteenth-century Canada, which could have been given a more enduring role and effect in the story.

The settings of *Bright Paddle* are memorable, displaying the contrasts that must have been remarkable at the time. Readers will feel as if they have been in the