

To Honduras with Love from Holly Drive School. Mary-Jane Hampton. Illus. Jane Gallinaugh. Nimbus, 2000. 40 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 1-55109-335-9.

In telling the story of young Emma's endeavour to send love itself, in the guise of her favourite Teddy bear, to the children of a devastated city, Mary-Jane Hampton illustrates some important points. The first of these, that even a child's single act of kindness can inspire others to follow suit, is demonstrated from the start of the story as Emma's generous gift snowballs into a large collective gesture. As thousands of favourite bears join Emma's own, countless adults share in the children's generosity as they volunteer their time and their work to safely convey the Teddy-bears to hurricane-torn Honduras. In these post-September 11 days, the second point conveyed in the story is perhaps as important as the first. Emma's initiative as she responds to a crisis so much larger than herself shows that no one, not even a young child, needs to feel helpless in the face of catastrophic events.

Yet, for all its didactic virtues, the story, interspersed with information about Honduras and the nature of hurricanes, is lacking in the magical flavour that characterizes the best in children's literature. The most suspenseful event in the narrative occurs when the bags of bears are accidentally abandoned in a food-freezer in Florida. The choice of the format is itself a puzzling one. Profusely illustrated in a serviceable manner, the story is published in the square, flat shape of very young children's books, while the text itself, printed quite tightly in smallish characters, would be too hard to handle for the four- or five-year-olds to whom such editions are normally destined. With its cover chock-full of Teddy-bear portraits, the book would not be readily chosen by the seven- to nine-year-olds to whom such tightly-woven text would apply. Perhaps the choice of edition indicates that the book is principally meant to be read to the children by parents or teachers rather than to be selected by young readers themselves.

Claudine Pope writes in Toronto.

Ooo-cha! Colleen Sydor. Illus. Ruth Ori. Annick, 1999. 32 pp. \$7.95 paper. \$17.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-605-5.

This whimsical spoof of "Little Red Riding Hood" by author Colleen Sydor is an engaging tale. The story features a fearless young girl named Emily who sets out to visit her grandmother armed with her good witch wand. During her trek across the wild forest, Emily encounters a tiger, who demands a piece of her seven-layer chocolate cake with triple fudge icing and who also forgets to say please. Emily calmly waves her magic wand, says the magic word "Ooo-cha" and turns him into a tiger lily. Other rude wild animals that demand goodies from Emily's basket end up being transformed into wild flowers for Emily's bouquet.

I found this book to be delightful in every way. The story is well paced and funny. Emily is a confident and strong character, providing a wonderful role model of a young girl who uses her head when faced with a problem. Her preoccupation with table manners makes her seem real in spite of her magic powers. As well, the ending of the story includes a clever twist when Emily discovers that the Three

Little Pigs have tied up her grandmother. Emily tickles the pigs' noses with her wildflower bouquet and the "Aaa-choo" releases the hungry wild animals to clear out the pigs from her grandmother's house.

The illustrations by Ruth Ori match the mood of this fanciful story. Flowers and other small vignettes of Emily skip across the pages underneath the text. The full-page illustrations are bordered by wooden-like flower frames, giving the book the feel of an old fairy tale.

Ooo-cha! is a book that can be read many times over and enjoyed by children and parents alike.

Ingrid Masak Mida is a freelance writer and editor.

Pussycats Everywhere. Sheila McGraw. Illus. Sheila McGraw. Firefly, 2000. 32 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 1-55209-348-4. Ages 5-8.

Sheila McGraw is probably best known for her illustrations in *Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch, and her latest work, which she has written and illustrated, tells the story of a lost cat and a little girl's efforts to retrieve him. When beloved Mister Whiskers disappears, a young girl named Karen puts up "Lost Cat" posters. She forgets to include a description of the cat, and all of the stray cats in town are dropped off at her door. Thirty-seven cats arrive, and Karen is kept busy entertaining them while continuing her search for Mister Whiskers. She invents "pussycat games" like "cat-nip mouse tag." The language in the book makes it perfect for reading aloud. For example, when the thirty-seven cats arrive, readers hear their arrival through repeated "ding dongs" of the doorbell. Perhaps the most inventive part of the text is the three page *cat*-ologue that pairs a cat picture with a cat name. The names are creative: there is Clawdia, Purcee, Tux, and Ruggles along with the more usual Smudge, Socks, and Snowball. More importantly, the catalogue appeals to younger readers who rejoice in naming all the beings in their world. McGraw's illustrations are, for the most part, warm and glowing, and cats peek out from hiding places on each page. Karen and Mr. Whiskers are reunited in the end, and all thirty-seven cats find their rightful homes, offering emotional reassurance to young readers. The plot offers delightful chaos and a comforting return to order.

Why? The best ever question and answer book about nature, science and the world around you. Catherine Ripley. Illus. Scot Ritchie. Owl, 2001. 192 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 1-894379-25-X. Ages 3-8.

Covering topics from acid, air, and animals to wrinkles, yarn, and yawns, this book tries to provide answers to the questions kids ask about the world around them. *Why? The best ever question and answer book* is a compilation of some six books that previously appeared in Owl Books's *Question and Answer* series under titles such as *Why is soap so slippery?* (1995), *Why is the Sky Blue?* (1997), and *Why does Popcorn Pop?* (1997). This collection is comprised of six sections organized from a kid's-eye point of view: Bathtime Questions, Supermarket Questions, Nighttime Questions,