

Plovers, Kristin Bieber Domm cleverly chooses as her messenger an immigrant child from a far-away land who misses the pet birds he has had to leave behind. The slight thread that holds the narrative together (a visit to Ahmed's school by two conservationists who befriend the boy) is greatly strengthened by the large and appealing pictures which generously illustrate the text. The engaging portraits of dark-haired Ahmed as well as those of the lovely Piping Plovers and their tiny offspring disporting themselves on luminous beaches will help to ensure the attention of young listeners, as will also the page-large depiction of the Plover's foremost enemy, the great dark raccoon, dramatically depicted in the moonlight, as he patrols the sand in search of Plovers' eggs.

Printed very small, the introductory page that relates the real-life incident which gave rise to the book, as well as the documentary pages which give us the history and description of the Plovers, the current threat which they are under and the identity of the team involved in their protection, clearly mark the book as a tool meant for parents and teachers. Though it is definitely a didactic little tale rather than an imaginative story, it can be said to succeed in its attempt to help instill in the very young an interest in nature and a desire to treat its smallest creatures with care.

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The Lost Crown of Meleor. George Tepy. Annick, 2000. 32 pp. \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-601-2.

The Lost Crown of Meleor started with a good idea. The book is set primarily on the planet of Meleor, a place where you can grow anything you want in your garden, like a hot dog tree, or your house, or a spaceship. There are wells of lemonade and quirky creatures of all different shapes, sizes, construction, and colours who live in happy harmony. What more idyllic setting in a fantasy story for young children?

The problem is the weak story line and the stilted style, the repetitive and awkward diction, and the condescending tone of the question-and-answer format throughout the book and the frequent direct address by the narrator. The whole style of the story sounds as though the author is trying to be "cute." The artwork, which does not show the sort of things the reader might most want to see (such as what a cheesecake tree looks like), is also "cute" and rather silly. It is also imprecise while being quite cartoon-like. Good authors write *for* children, not *down to* children, and there is a big difference between the two. Overall, this is a most disappointing book, one that will not engage either the minds of children or their imaginations except in a most superficial way.

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