

group, *Everest* (2002) and *Dive* (scheduled for release in summer 2003). And, even though a positive end to the trilogy was rather unavoidable, I was curious enough about how the rest of the story unraveled to run out and buy the last two volumes. Perhaps these two miniseries mark a transition period in the career of the prolific Korman, whose recent offerings also include the young adult novel *Son of the Mob* (2002) and the middle-reader novel *Maxx Comedy: The Funniest Kid in America* (2003), both of which are a return to more familiar territory. Also in 2003, Scholastic will reissue the classic Bruno and Boots series — with slightly updated texts and some changed titles — as the Macdonald Hall series, just in time for the 25th anniversary of *This Can't Be Happening at Macdonald Hall!* But, despite these updates and changes, and despite Korman's experiment with new modes of fiction, ultimately he will remain best known for his first books, written during his own adolescence, about a pair of rapscaillon schoolboys named Bruno and Boots.

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Power-Packed Picture Books

Eh? to Zed: A Canadian ABeCedarium. Kevin Major. Illus. Alan Daniel. Red Deer, 2000. 32 pp. \$18.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88995-222-1. *Imagine That!* Janet Wilson. Illus. Janet Wilson. Stoddart Kids, 2000. 32 pp. \$19.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-3221-7. *A Time for Golden Dragons.* Song Nan Zhang and Hao Yu Zhang. Illus. Song Nan Zhang. Tundra, 2000. 24 pp. \$19.99 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-506-8.

The contents of this trio of information-packed "picture books" argue that the old saw about never judging a book by its cover should perhaps be amended to add the corollary "or by its length." Too often, the 24-to-32-page picture book simply gets dismissed as being fare for just the pre-reader and the early reader, but the audiences for the following titles are much broader. Public libraries should seriously consider purchasing two copies of each book, with one housed in the juvenile collection and the second in the adult area.

While alphabet books are usually associated with pre-reading activities, such as identifying the letters of the alphabet in their upper- and lowercase forms or associating letters with their "sounds," Major's thematic alphabet book would almost be more at home in a high school or university class on Canadian studies than in a reading class. Major's witty title choice, *Eh? to Zed*, reflects an alphabetical alpha and omega of the stereotypical Canadian, an image reinforced by Daniel's cover illustration of a maple leaf-waving Mountie. (By placing the Mountie astride a weathervane horse, is Daniel satirically suggesting that Canadians are directionless, just going where the shifting winds point them?) It is perhaps fitting that Newfoundlander Major, who was born in the year that the "Rock" became the nation's tenth province, should author such a Canadian book. His rhythmic text con-

sists of 104 nouns, four per letter, with each noun being a place (at least one for every province and territory) and a real or imaginary person or thing (e.g., Gretzky and Dan McGrew; lumberjack and Ogopogo) that is distinctly, but not necessarily uniquely, Canadian. To add to the writing challenge Major assigned himself, he also had his word quartets form rhyming couplets. While many of the words, such as beaver and moose, are likely familiar to even younger readers/listeners, others (like xylograph, tourtière, and bannock) are either obscure or more culturally specific. To assist readers of all ages in enjoying the book more fully, a four-page section titled "The Choice of Words, The Choice of Images" provides Major the opportunity to provide a brief explanation for each of the words he selected: "We like to give our JUNO Awards to musical giants before the Grammy Awards discover them. Just ask Céline, Sarah, Shania, Alanis, or k.d."

As co-illustrator of *The Story of Canada*, Alan Daniel was an excellent choice for another book about Canada's past and present. Like the best illustrators, Daniel's art most imaginatively extends the author's text. For instance, Daniel's "jack pine" is not just a realistically rendered tree but one from a Tom Jackson painting which, in turn, has been transformed into a jigsaw puzzle, thereby unofficially adding two more "J" words. "Neepawa" is represented by a stone statue of an angel, which may remind people that the community was the birthplace of author Margaret Laurence. Daniel's half-page contribution to "The Choice of Words, The Choice of Images" section explains how he also incorporated Canadian folk and fine art into his illustrations. But these notes do not explain everything, and Daniel also has some fun with his viewers by providing them with some visual gifts. For example, "Spud" becomes a Mr. Potato Head which bears a remarkable resemblance to Stompin' Tom Connors who, of course, is also associated with the song "Bud, the Spud." Daniel's "Mountie" wears not the traditional stetson but rather a turban, a reminder of a past controversy surrounding a Canadian symbol. With each "re-reading" of the illustrations, one cannot help but wonder how much still awaits discovery in Daniel's work.

In *Imagine That!*, Janet Wilson links story and history together via the narrative device of a conversation between Auntie Violet, who is celebrating her one hundredth birthday, and her great-grandniece, Elizabeth. While awaiting the arrival of her cake, Auntie Violet reminisces about what the world was like when she was a child of Elizabeth's age and she reflects on the many changes that occurred during the twentieth century. Each of the book's thirteen double-page spreads focuses on one aspect of Violet's life, such as the changes that have occurred over the century in such areas as clothing, entertainment, transportation, communications, home furnishings, medicine, human rights, and world history. The conversation between the two sets the stage for Wilson's collage-like illustrations, which are spread across pairs of facing pages. Bordering either side of the facing pages are sidebars, each divided into five coloured decadal boxes that contain information relating to the pages' themes. In turn, the contents of the boxes are linked to the pages' illustrations via their colour. For example, on the medical advancements pages, the 1930-1939 yellow-shaded box informs readers that "Canadian doctor Norman Bethune invents the mobile blood unit and becomes a hero in China for treating wounded freedom fighters." A search through the pages' images yields a yellow-tinted one of a man ministering to a soldier.

Just in terms of the detailed information provided, *Imagine That!* is truly a remarkable book, and readers will undoubtedly be surprised by how old some seem-

ingly commonplace items are. For example, did you know aspirin, vacuum cleaners, subways, escalators, hamburgers, and hot dogs all date to the first decade of the twentieth century? The almost 700 illustrations which are linked to the text also provide a "search-and-find" component to the book. If the book has a weakness, it is that the colours of the sidebars are not always distinct enough, which complicates the illustration search.

In Western tradition, the dragon is a ferocious creature to be feared and something to be slain, but, in *A Time of Golden Dragons*, the father-and-son combination of Song Nan Zhang and Hao Yu Zhang, both Canadians originally from China, provides an illustrated explanation of how the dragon has come to be the symbol of the Chinese people. The year 2000 C.E. was a most appropriate time to produce this book for, as the authors explain, a western millennium and the Chinese Year of the Dragon coincide only every 3,000 years, and 2000 C.E. was one of these times. Making the year even more significant is the fact that this Dragon Year also coincided with "metal" in a cycle of five elements, hence the "Golden Dragon." Using an essentially chronological approach, each of the book's 10 pairs of facing pages treats one aspect of the dragon. For example, "Where Dragons Come From" illustrates how the dragon has been artistically portrayed in China from its first appearance around 3600 B.C.E., through the various dynasties, and concluding with the Qing Dynasty of 1644-1911 C.E. Children who live in communities that stage Dragon Boat Races can now have a better appreciation of the event, since the authors provide the history behind this event, which commemorates the death of one of China's greatest poets. "Dragon Time" explains how each day was divided into twelve equal time units which, in turn, were each named after one of twelve animals while "The Year of the Dragon" shows how the Chinese calendar moves through a twelve-year cycle of animal symbols and allows readers to ascertain the symbol under which they were born.

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Plasticine, Fabric Collage, and Button Blankets: Illustration Prevails

The Golden Goose. Barbara Reid. North Winds, 2000. 30 pp. \$19.99 cloth. ISBN 0-439-98719-9. *Hannah and the Seven Dresses.* Marthe Jocelyn. Tundra, 1999. Unpag. \$16.99 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-447-9. *Hannah's Collections.* Marthe Jocelyn. Tundra, 2000. Unpag. \$17.99 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-521-1. *Aunt Mary Buttons.* Diane Jarvis Jones. Self-published, 1995. Unpag. ISBN 0-9699407-0-X. *Larry, Red and Blue.* Diane Jarvis Jones. Self-published, 1997. Unpag. ISBN 0-9699407-2-6. *The Lucy Doll.* Diane Jarvis Jones. Self-published, 1999. Unpag. ISBN 0-9699407-3-4.

These titles were developed by visual artists rather than by writers. In two cases, the illustrations are magnificent and work successfully with the story, and in the third case the illustrations are intriguing yet problematic. Unquestionably, advances in contemporary technologies of illustration have produced astonishing results.