

useful is the first chapter, which tackles the thorny (and usually neglected) question of why we need a constitution in the first place. The tone is informal but never condescending; Morton has simply rendered things like the amending formula and the notwithstanding clause into language that can be understood by someone who lacks a graduate degree in political science. Pitched to the teenaged reader, the book includes very informative appendices, such as a constitutional time line, short biographies of the major players in Canadian constitutional history, and the full text of the Constitution Act of 1982.

Rather than resort to that most Canadian of solutions, a Royal Commission on the teaching of history, to escape the recurring nightmare, our leaders could spend our tax dollars more effectively by purchasing copies of these books for every Canadian child. For if we have failed at anything, it has been in not providing children with accessible and entertaining accounts of the nation's history. It is also well to remember that today's parents are themselves the product of the same educational system, and that their knowledge of the nation's history may well be barely more complete than their children's. Both books, then, might be just as useful to parents as they are to children.

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### A Crafts Duo from Kids Can

*Pioneer Crafts*. Barbara Greenwood. Illus. Heather Collins. Kids Can, 1997. 40 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 1-55074-359-7. *The Jumbo Book of Crafts*. Judy Ann Sadler. Illus. Caroline Price. Kids Can, 1997. 208 pp. \$12.00 paper. ISBN 1-55074-375-9.

*Pioneer Crafts*, a companion volume to Greenwood's award-winning *A Pioneer Story*, presents heritage crafts which didn't make the first book. Craft projects include intriguing items such as tin lanterns and whimsy diddles, as well as general skills like weaving, sewing, and carving. Notably, several projects have direct appeal for boys. Each project is presented on facing pages with detailed instructions and Heather Collins' watercolour illustrations in muted heritage hues. An attractive feature is the sepia-toned vignettes of pioneer children doing each craft, with an explanation of how our ancestors used the particular item or skill. Although the book is rated for ages seven and up, many of the projects require the guidance of an adult or older child for carving, braiding, boiling, melting wax, ironing, sewing and so on. But this is probably as it should be, in a book that models co-operation and making much with little.

*The Jumbo Book of Crafts* is a treasure chest of projects, 75 percent of which are new, according to the publisher. Sadler helpfully groups craft projects into categories such as things for your room, wearables, gifts, special days, and old-time crafts. Not only is the array of things to make breathtaking, but each project

is accompanied by “more ideas” designed to spark creativity and exploration. Caroline Price’s vigorous and inviting line drawings complement the clear directions. Some projects require supervision, such as papermaking and tie-dyeing, while others develop useful skills. The new crafts popular with the preteen set are here: macramé bracelets, rolled paper beads, and dreamcatchers. Old favourites include Jacob’s ladders, hobby horses, and button buddies.

Both of these books feature materials readily available around the house. Comparing the instructions, I felt that some projects in *The Jumbo Book of Crafts* had been more thoroughly tested. For example, its cardboard loom is easier for smaller hands to manage than *Pioneer Crafts’* styrofoam tray loom. In general, Sadler focuses on having fun making things, whereas Greenwood focuses on acquiring useful skills in an historical context.

For any creative child and for anyone who works with children, *The Jumbo Book of Crafts* is an invaluable resource guaranteed to banish the “nothing-to-do” blues. For those who seek a specific heritage link with an emphasis on responsibility and resourcefulness, *Pioneer Crafts* is a good choice.

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### Science for the Young: Experiments in Light, Sound, Illusion and Reflection

*Funhouse Mirrors: The Science and Illusion of Reflection.* Dan Witkovski. Illus. Christopher Bailey Foote. Random House, 1995. Unpag. \$19 cloth. ISBN 0-679-87229-9. See *Hear, Playing with Light and Sound.* Milan Tytla. Illus. Chum McLeod. Annick, 1994. 112 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-988-7.

A sturdy, colourful book about reflection, *Funhouse Mirrors* is literally an “eyes on” experience for readers of four and up (no limit given). It is published under the imprint of Abracadazzle and subtitled “the science ...” although there is very little of the latter here (despite the involvement of Martin Gardner) but much of the former (and at \$19 Canadian, it is expensive fun). It would have been easy to simply illustrate the formation of images by plane and curved mirrors — that is basically what the book is about — however the diagrams, showing only concave mirror image formation, present only half the story. In 28 pages a surprising number of reflective phenomena can be easily evoked with observer involvement using the foil mirror provided (replaceable by a piece of aluminum foil, by the way). Most of the demonstrations are successful, and some are clever, whilst the cover has an eye-catching 24-mirror display. Inside, simple plane and curved surface reflections progress to anamorphic art and a hologram. However, the demonstrations are a little uneven in quality. Nevertheless, the book is fun and stimulating, and might also be found so by the companion reader who will be needed to help the four- to six-year-olds looking at this book.