

Although this language may be intended to distance the story and to enhance its feeling of mystery and universality, for younger children it can be an impediment. Still, I consider the book a classic, and so does my nine-year-old.

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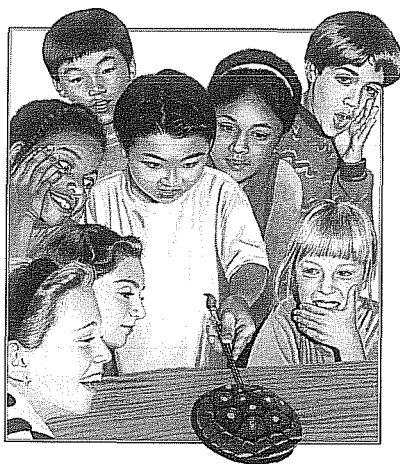
Isolation and the Immigrant Child

A Turtle Called Friendly. Jean Sangwine. Illus. Bernadette Lau. Rubicon, 1996. 30 pp. paper. ISBN 0-921156-48-0.

It is a something that occurs daily in our schoolyards and playgrounds. Among the groups of children engaged in active play, there are those who stand on the periphery. Seemingly unnoticed by the others, these children hang back, either unwilling or unable to join in the games. The reasons for their reticence are as diverse as the personalities that make up any community.

Jean Sangwine's *A Turtle Called Friendly* is a picture book that explores the territory of isolation from the point of view of an immigrant child. Though this subject has been examined by other writers, Sangwine has managed to produce a fresh text that is neither condescending nor moralizing in tone. There are no adult "quick fixes" in this story. In fact, it is the children's voices that drive the tale, and in particular, the lonely voice of a young boy from China.

As a newcomer, Ming must somehow make his way in a place that seems to offer him little. Children will readily identify with his painful attempts at making friends and his joy when he discovers Friendly, a turtle that eases his



entry into Canadian culture. Sangwine avoids predictable outcomes, however, as Friendly's visit to school becomes disruptive and more than just a bit messy.

Bernadette Lau's exceptional illustrations easily capture the natural expressions and attitudes of today's school child. Her effective use of colour and composition fully supports the book's text. Employing a blend of cultural symbols, Lau evokes the duality that is part of Ming's new life, and accordingly, underscores the story's central conflict and tension.

In just over 25 pages, Sangwine's book provides parents and teachers with a wide range of issues for discussion including the culture and history of China, the importance of a natural habitat for wildlife and most importantly, the loneliness of isolation and the value of friendship.

Sangwine has drawn on her experience as a teacher of English as a Second Language to create this book. Her respect for the difficult struggle of learning a new language, and understanding a new culture, is apparent. While this is her first children's book, Sangwine has published non-fiction in a variety of magazines, and has twice been a runner up in the *Toronto Star's* short story contest.

A Turtle Called Friendly is suitable for children in both primary and junior grades, especially ages eight to eleven. Many adults will find themselves both delighted and fully engaged in this children's book.

[**Editor's Note:** Although the turtle in the true story that inspired this book was a snapping turtle, the turtle in Bernadette Lau's illustrations for the book (which Jean Sangwine describes as "part fact, part fiction") is not.]

Ruth E. Walker's story, "Traditions," won Canadian Living's 1996 short fiction award. The mother of four children and a former foster parent, she is completing an English/Cultural Studies degree through Trent University.

Artful Initiations East and West

The Basketball Player. Roch Carrier. Illus. Sheldon Cohen. Trans. Sheila Fischman. (French: Le Joueur de basket-ball.) Tundra Books, 1996. Unpag. \$15.95 cloth. English, ISBN 0-88776-367-7. French, ISBN 0-88776-368-5. *Tiger's New Cowboy Boots.* Irene Morck. Illus. Georgia Graham. Red Deer College P, 1996. Unpag. \$17.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88995-153-5.

The most interesting relations between these books emerge, not through the differences in their settings (Quebec and Alberta), but in their literary qualities. Whether set in Carrier's familiar homeground or Morck's foothills, these initiation tales succeed because the writers know how to tell stories.

To be sure, the settings are very different. For three decades, Carrier has returned with love, irony, and anger to Church, to family, to the charged relations between les Anglais and his villagers. More importantly, he has created a voice and style that blend autobiography and memory with invention