

Editorial: The love of reading

We have come a long way from the time when children's literature emerged, late in literary history, reflecting the need of a rising middle class to fix sure moral values in the minds of young people. Today, especially in America, children's literature has obviously gone beyond that kind of heavy-handed didacticism. Children's literature still teaches in a subtle and complex way. It teaches the joy of reading. Indeed, modern pedagogues argue that giving children good books is the *only* way to teach them, not just how to read, but how to become readers. The "whole language" approach to reading suggests that we set aside the basal readers, and pick up *Alice in Wonderland* or *Jacob Two-Two* or *Where the wild things are*. We should expose children to good literature so that they will love to read, rather than teach them to read in the hope that they will enjoy literature. Great writers like Yves Thériault and Margaret Laurence recognized this sequence; they worked in children's literature because they knew that herein lies the magic access to a life-time of reading pleasure.

In officially bilingual Canada, children can benefit from two literary streams. André Gagnon's excellent bibliography of books in translation in this issue of *CCL* should help us unlock the double store of good Canadian books for children. A second article in this issue, by the team of Amprimoz and Viselli, discusses the way one Canadian writer in French, Robert Soulières, meticulously adjusts his work to fit the young reader's ability to respond to literary symbols. This article takes us back to the teaching function of children's reading: it shows how a sophisticated, well-executed book can lead the child to the complex joy of literature.