

sented in maps inside the front and back cover, showing not only the different kinds of northern dwellings, but also where they would be found in relation to each other. I must qualify my praise of the circumpolar maps by objecting to the distortion suffered by the High Arctic, and by Baffin Island in particular. It is a pity that the area with the largest concentration of Inuit in Canada should be so distorted. Similarly, it is wonderful to see a book on northern topics for southern readers introducing vocabulary from a native language, such as "igluvigak" and "tupiq;" but the rather odd spelling "quarmang" is given for "qarmaq." The book could be improved if it included a glossary of words in Inuktitut to supplement the few which are used. It might surprise and interest southern readers to know that the culture which developed such efficient dwellings still has a living and unique language which linguists feel has a good chance of surviving.

The Inuit learned by practical experience and by trial and error how to use whatever they could find in their inhospitable environment. Today, however, many Inuit find themselves living in overcrowded substandard housing, which contributes to all kinds of social problems, from family violence to suicide. It is ironic that Inuit provided themselves with shelter superbly suited to their needs, literally out of skin, bones, stones, and snow, while governments today, with modern technology and building materials cannot adequately house an urban and growing population.

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SPYING ON HISTORY

Suddenly a spy. Robert Sutherland. Scholastic Canada, 1990. 175 pp., \$4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73300-1; **Spy in the shadows.** Barbara Greenwood. Kids Can Press, 1990. 216 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55074-018-0.

To most people, and to young readers especially, the word spy – prominently used in both these titles – conjures up a world of daring and intrigue. And so it did for the protagonists in *Suddenly a spy* and *Spy in the shadows*. While both young men eagerly accept their new role, they soon learn that danger and betrayal are also very real in the undercover business.

Both of these novels are action-packed and well-researched. *Suddenly a spy* is set in England during World War II. Ordinary Seaman Peter Coll seeks shelter from an air raid along with Pam Buie and her neighbour, Mr. Gardner. When his two companions mysteriously disappear the next morning, Peter joins forces with Scotland Yard to find Pam and reveal Mr. Gardner as a Nazi

spy.

Spy in the shadows takes place along the Erie Canal during the Fenian uprising in 1866. Liam O'Brien is a lonely, frustrated apprentice to a cranky German founder. He is persuaded by a blood cousin to spy for the Irish. Liam agrees until he realizes that he is being used, and that Isaac – his master's son and Liam's friend – could get killed because of his involvement. Liam then searches desperately for a way out.

In any novel dealing with war, the topic of violence must be addressed. In *Suddenly a spy*, the violence of war is kept mainly in the background. While readers do hear about bombing raids, plane crashes and U-boats, the characters are not directly involved and sometimes seem uninterested. Only Flog – a severely burned pilot – bears any effects of the fighting. Even in the scenes where the violence becomes personal – when Peter is attacked by the Nazis, for instance, or when Pam is held at knife-point by Mr. Gardner – there is little emotion. The scenes are kept brief and somewhat vague. In *Spy in the shadows*, on the other hand, Liam is intimately involved with the fighting. Although he does not at first make the connection between his role as Fenian messenger and the killing, his innocence ends when he discovers that the keg of "oysters" he is hiding for his cousin is in fact gunpowder. Liam realizes his adventure is a betrayal of his "adopted" family, and especially of Isaac:

How could he have been so stupid? Never one thought beyond the exciting job.... Never imagined what the Fenians might do if they captured the peninsula. What would happen to people who got in their way.... And what about Isaac out on the battlefield?

Liam's dread of violence grows as Isaac becomes more and more involved in the war. He attempts to destroy the gunpowder and experiences the violence firsthand. He must finally admit to his cousin that "Your road is not my road." Like his father, Liam accepts that "War only makes the hatred run deeper."

Spy in the shadows is more thought-provoking than *Suddenly a spy*. The latter borders at times on the fantastic. Some of the events – for example, Peter's surviving a fall from the top of a cliff with barely a scratch – are hard to believe. Even the main assumption – that Scotland Yard would rely on a young, inexperienced sailor to track down a suspected spy – seems far-fetched. The climax, however, in which Peter must decide whether or not to shoot down a British plane, is sensitively handled. In *Spy in the shadows* Liam's search for excitement leads him to re-examine his beliefs. He must choose between his kinsman and his adopted family, between Ireland and his new life in Canada. In doing so he grows and develops a deeper understanding of himself and of others.

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