

Les illustrations de Mario Giguère viennent discrètement suggérer, plus que souligner quelques-uns des points forts de l'histoire de la planète Lumière. Il ne met aucun visage sur les deux enfants, ce qui paraît essentiel dans un type de récit qui veut donner le pouvoir à l'imaginaire.

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EYE-CATCHING COSIMO CAT

Cosimo cat. Kenneth Oppel. Illus. Regolo Ricci. Scholastic Canada, 1990. 22 pp., cloth. ISBN 0-590-73649-3.

Cosimo cat is a success for all the right reasons—the story is charming and magical, and the illustrations are a perfect match.

The story follows a young boy who one day dusts off his adventure gear in response to a missing cat notice. Cosimo the cat, he is told, has cobalt eyes. As he leaves, Rowan asks his father what colour is cobalt. His father's answer—"deep, deep blue, ocean blue, summer sky blue"—becomes a rhythmic refrain throughout the book.

Rowan soon finds the charcoal grey cat with such distinctive eyes, but he cannot catch him. The cat leads him on a merry chase through city parks, subways, and underground shopping malls and finally into a museum. In the stillness, Rowan hears purring and follows Cosimo into the Egyptian exhibit. There he finds two stone cats on the same pedestal. One with deep, deep blue eyes and the other with "...emerald green eyes, deep, deep green, seaweed green, summer grass green." As Rowan leaves with Cosimo, he is sure he sees the whiskers on the stone cat move.

The mystery and magic in this story is very subtle, perhaps requiring a slightly more sophisticated reader. Beyond the obvious question—was the statue somehow Cosimo's mate?—the story is significant because it makes the power of the past come alive. It may even make kids want to explore museums to discover their own magic.

The illustrations are rich, lush, and beautiful. It appears that the original medium may have been watercolour. The richness is partially attributed to motifs in the illustrations. Each illustration looks like a miniature Baroque painting—full of details that together create a panoramic view.

My only quibble, and it is minor, is that like so many books published in Canada, *someone* decided to hide the Canadian identity. This story clearly takes place in Toronto; the skyline is unmistakable, the subway signs are in the shape

of TTC, and the park and museum are the Royal Ontario Museum, but names have been withheld. Why?

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BROWN BAG BLUES: A NEED FOR BALANCED LITERARY NUTRITION

Brown bag blues. Linda Rogers and Rick Van Krugel. Illus. Rick Van Krugel. Studio 123, 1991. 47 pp., \$10.00 paper. ISBN 1-895302-06-4.

The battle against Victorian mores seems to have resulted in blatant concentration on sex by the media. Will the Van Krugels' tilting against physical-emotional repression of children result in blatant focus on boogers, belches, bowel movements and between-toes accumulations? If the TV cult cartoon "Ren and Stimpy" is any indication of entertainment fare for school-age children, it is a trend with which our authors here are definitely in touch.

Isn't vulgarity, like spice, better used in pinches to keep life from becoming prissy and bland? Why must great doses of crudeness constitute the healing measure?

Must we accept negative vulgarity, technological twaddle and pseudo-sociology as influences? Much of life can be tedious, indelicate, harsh. Somehow we learn to cope with less than pleasurable experiences. Yet, to concentrate on the shocking and gross, to exclude the fantasy, adventure and antic humour of high spirits is to deny children the development of subtlety, of finesse. Are children not capable of a variety of responses, acknowledging grossness and horror and moving on? In devoting so much time to this trivia, these artists neglect other more enriching experiences.

As to form, why are these and many other authors intent on setting children against learning rules of writing which have evolved in our language? Have we reached a sudden plateau, a place to rest on the way to Olympus, an experimental station to test the strength of these guidelines for expression? There is an attitude that spontaneity is stifled by knowledge of grammar, spelling, rhyming and rhythmic structure. Yes, test the holds but on with the ascent. Neglect of the structure which shapes poetry results in too much slack as in this book-tape production *Brown bag blues*.

Be wary of granting yourself or the young too easy a poetic license. Caution does not preclude patient acceptance of a child's fresh hopeful writing. With models of excellence the young will absorb and produce great things. Exposed to crass cartooning, undisciplined writing, unexceptional music and repeated grossness, they may develop into crass, undisciplined, unexceptional gross people.