

## Book Reviews

present lists of questions addressed to administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, people interested in school law, and, ideally, a team of the above people. The authors intend these questions to spark problem-solving sessions that will help schools develop policies or solutions for each of these situations. Hopefully, too, the school personnel will see the value of a team approach to problem solving, which, according to the introduction, is the ultimate objective of the authors.

In spite of these good intentions, the book stops short of providing either answer or suggestions. Its mandate is to promote discussion only. While the book provides a needed service by raising the questions and causing school personnel to address the issues, it takes them no further.

However, in spite of this limited use, the book acknowledges problem situations and forces school personnel to ask probing questions about those issues. The book's format is useful and easy to follow, clearly differentiating the various types of "troubles" that can befall students.

I believe, that in spite of its limitations, this casebook will prove a useful tool for school personnel to sensitize themselves to the problems that face school children in the 1990s and into the new millennium.

AUDREY BERNER *McGill University*

DAVID BOOTH. KAREN RECZUCH, *Illustrator*. *The Dust Bowl*.  
Toronto: Kids Can Press (1996). Ages 4 - 9.  
\$16.95. 32 pp. ISBN 1-55074-295-7

One of David Booth's most wonderful accomplishments with *The Dust Bowl* is his ability to bring to life the trials, tribulations, frustrations, and rewards of life as a farmer on the Canadian prairies. His story-telling prowess is proven strong as he gracefully weaves his readers through a tale revolving around natural cycles of death and rebirth.

The story centres around a young boy's fear that his father and grandfather will sell his beloved farm because of the seemingly unending dry spell. Matthew's family must have *faith* that the rains will come, *patience* to wait out the dry spell and *courage* to face the hardships before them: namely, the battle to save their land. For Matthew, comfort lies in the knowledge that eventually, as it has in the past, fortune will come full circle and there will be prosperity once again.

Through a flawless integration of text and illustration, Booth and Reczuch offer a sympathetic view of the farmer's life and the hardships

caused by events like the "Big Dry" of the thirties. Illustrations created with watercolour and coloured pencil by Karen Reczuch are a perfect compliment to the text. This accomplished illustrator breathes life and personality into her characters with animated facial expressions and gestures. The frustration of the depression is felt in the characters faces; their brows furrowed in concern and their bodies crumpled with exhaustion. Reczuch evokes the foreboding dusty atmosphere of the drought-ridden prairies with an artful combination of colour and texture. Her dry, sandy prairie glows in muted earth tones of rust, brown, and ochre.

Few books capture both historical content and personal feelings as *The Dust Bowl* does. It introduces children to an important part of Canada's history that is often overshadowed by discussions of The Great Depression. Readers are likely to feel a bond with Matthew as, like them, he is a child who loves his family and his home and does not want to lose either. Booth's inspiring story piques the interest of readers to the lives, plight, and hardships of the farmers who continue to live in the Canadian Prairies still today, each one casting his lot with Mother Nature and straining to hear the gentle patter of the life-giving rain.

LORI STEEVES & ALLISON MARIA HOLMES *McGill University*

AUBREY DAVIS. ALAN & LEA DANIEL, Illustrators

*Sody Salleratus*. Toronto: Kids Can Press (1997). Ages 3 - 7.

32 pp. \$14.95 (HC); \$5.95 (paper). ISBN 1-55074-224-8 & 1-55074-326-0.

One can hear why Aubrey Davis, a master storyteller, would have been drawn to this humorous retelling of a funny folktale. *Sody Salleratus*, the story of a small boy who is sent to the store to buy some Salleratus, the 19th century American word for baking soda, is a delight to the ear, and a treat for the eye. Words pour out of this book in a happy jumble of repetition and rhyme. This simple story begs to be shared "out loud" to readers and listeners of all ages, although the 3- to 7-year-old crowd might commandeer rights to this tale of the mysterious disappearance of a small boy, a girl, an old man, and, finally, an old woman. Without giving too much away, a big, hungry, and comically clumsy bear, and a small but heroic squirrel loom large in this story. The book is chock full of repetitive words such as *A-hippity-hop* and *Skumpity-skump* which are delicious words to wrap our tongues and ears around. The language throughout the book is simple and melodic, yet offers a challenge to its