

Awake and Dreaming
by Kit Pearson
Penguin Books Canada Ltd
224 pp., \$19.99 hardcover

Review by Nina Schmieder

Cecily the ghost says it best when she says that this story is "about being a lonely child. Being an outcast and yearning for a different kind of life."

Awake and Dreaming is the story of nine-year-old Theo who lives with her single mother, Rae. Sadly, like many young children, she is the more mature of the two. Theo would rather be neglected and almost invisible than face the certain humiliation in acknowledging the realities of her lifestyle. With the help of the friendly ghost, Cecily, Theo realizes her life-long dream of belonging to a period family "a mother and a father and four children." It is a culmination of all her yearnings.

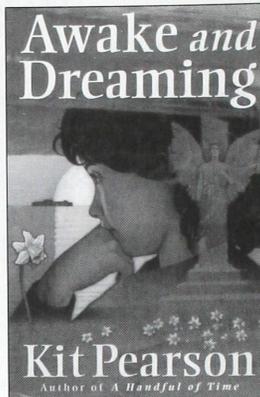
But like many dreams, this one fades and Theo is plunged into the reality of living with her single aunt in Victoria—and then only until her

mother Rae is forced to take her back. The story does end on a hopeful note with Rae trying to be some sort of mother to Theo for the first time.

The story moves from reality to fantasy and back again. In the process it loses some of the sympathy of the reader who hopes for a happy ending. The transition between the two stages of awake and dreaming is bumpy and awkward at best.

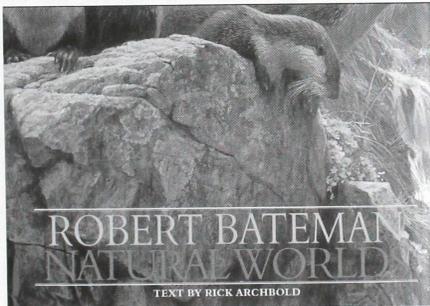
The character of Theo never quite emerges as flesh and bones. The same is true of most of Pearson's other characters, who all seem to stop short of being human. In the case of Cecily, the ghost, she fails to arouse the shivering excitement associated with the supernatural. It is hard to imagine a ghost talking to a young person about symbolism and writing styles. While the reader may readily agree with her to, "stop philosophizing. When you've done nothing for 40 years you get pretty pedantic," how many nine-year-olds know what that means?

A shining light in the book is Pearson's descriptions of Vancouver, Victoria and the surrounding areas.



The images are sharp and familiar. Her young readers, while they may be interested in Theo's adventure, will have to wait for Pearson's next book to enjoy the rich excitement the author is capable of delivering. ☺

[Arts Alive wants to encourage young readers to review books aimed at their age group. If you are interested, please contact the editor at this magazine (984-9537)—ed.]



Natural Worlds
by Robert Bateman
Penguin Books Canada
192 pp., \$60 hardcover
Review by Lori Vanderspek

When you pick up Robert Bateman's latest publication *Natural Worlds*, by the weight of it alone, you know that you will be spending quite some time in your favorite reading chair. Bateman fans will quickly become absorbed in the awe inspiring paintings, lithographs and colour sketches, and readers will be delighted with the insight and emotion conveyed in the text.

Bateman's first two grandchildren were born while he was preparing this book, and he acknowledges the impact this has had on him. He has a renewed concern about the environment that we are passing onto future generations and states that it is essential for humankind to find a "balance between progress and preservation."

The book is divided into six different land regions that range in diversity from the Western Shore, the Great Divide and the Arctic, to the Eastern Forest and the Tropics. Close to home, The Western Shore is a look into Bateman's life on Salt Spring Island, and regardless of whether you have been there yourself or not, it is worth reading. I have been there many times, yet in my stressed-out haze I managed to miss most of the beauty and peace that Bateman portrays. He focusses on the wildlife of the island, as well as the Native art, particularly the totem poles found in many outlying areas of the West Coast.

Bateman's very personal points of view in this book, stories of travels and childhood memories, make the paintings in *Natural Worlds* come alive for the reader. ☺