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tion kept ignorant and fearful is a chilling one, but her vision is hopeful. She sees a world where democracy, knowledge and reason can have victory over fear. It is possible, in her view, to use technology to protect the earth and for needed innovations only. People do have intrinsic value beyond their 'use ratings' and can learn, change and recover from suffering. Most importantly, the earth has some capacity to regenerate from damage. Whether you fully agree with McNaughton's philosophy or not, *The Secret Under My Skin* is a finely crafted and thoughtful novel that will leave its readers pondering the road we're on.

Claire's family (minus her older brother who is fighting in Riel's rebellion) manage to subsist until her father, a fireman, is seriously injured. It is then that Marie-Claire is called upon to use all her energy and wits to keep the family together.

As with Stinson's previous writing, *Dark Spring* is infused with a warm tone, rich dialogue and believable situations. Stinson portrays life in historic Montreal as centering around family and religion, and punctuated by both hardship and simple joys. Girls will be drawn to the character of Marie-Claire and empathize with the ordinary childhood challenges she faces even during adversity: apologizing to her best friend after a fight, negotiating food prices at the market, and manoeuvring

Other Kids' Christmas Picks

1. *The Kids' Book of Canadian Firsts*, by Valerie Wyatt
2. *O Canada Puzzles for Kids*, by Jesse Ross
3. *Where Poppies Grow: A WWI Companion*, by Linda Granfield
4. *The Cat & the Wizard*, by Dennis Lee
5. *At the Crossing Places*, by Kevin Crossley-Holland
6. *Munschworks: the Grand Treasury*, by Robert Munsch
7. *You Read to Me, I'll Read to You*, by Mary Ann Hoberman
8. *M is for Maple: a Canadian Alphabet*, by Mike Ulmer
9. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, by J.K. Rowling
10. *The Water Hole*, by Graeme Base



Dark Spring
by Kathy Stinson
a Penguin paperback 7.99

Adults who associate Canada's history with stupefying tales of fur traders may want to join their kids in discovering the *Our Canadian Girl* series. Canadian women writers were invited to develop stories for seven to ten year olds about 'strong, smart and courageous girls' within an historical context. Local author Kathy Stinson's book is entitled *Dark Spring* and focuses on Marie-Claire, a ten year old girl living with her working class family in Montreal in 1885. Far from the slick city of today, this Montreal is filthy and rife with smallpox. Living in cramped and unsanitary conditions, Marie-

through garbage-strewn streets. *Dark Spring* is both an engaging and comforting book filled with family love and positive examples of human ingenuity in misfortune. The resilience and resourcefulness of Marie Claire make her a heroine that will stick in kids' minds. Perhaps this unique series will spawn an *Our Canadian Boy* equivalent.

Kelly Holmes is Our Canadian Girl at The Bookshelf.

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