

Young readers will identify with George's longing to be taken seriously and treated as an adult even while feeling confused about justice and responsibility. The ambivalence of George's parents toward the blood-thirstiness of their fellow townspeople, and George's resulting embarrassment and uncertainty, adds tension to the narrative.

Stewart places the white settlers' hateful rhetoric in the context of their fear and misunderstanding of the native peoples who vastly outnumber them. The author adds depth to several secondary characters, in particular Pete, another teen participant in the lynching and George's best friend.

Motivations for violence in the town run the gamut from racism to greed to fervent belief in the mythology of the early American settler-hero, creating subtlety and interest in a powerful story of good versus evil. Some readers may find themselves thirsting for more resolution than they receive, but the ambiguity signals Stewart's commitment to encouraging discussion rather than maintaining convention.

Stewart's prose is relatively unadorned, keeping the book's excitement level high. The few rhetorical flourishes she includes are deft, as when she closes a chapter featuring the mob's pursuit of Louie Sam with an observation of George's horse walking in the dark: "All he needed to do was follow the pack." A clear nod to the diseased morality of the lynch mob, the comment exemplifies the book's thematic heart. — *Grace O'Connell, author of Magnified World (Random House Canada).*

**Cat's Cradle: The Golden Twine**

Jo Rioux; \$17.95 cloth 978-1-55453-636-8, \$9.95 paper 978-1-55453-637-5, 112 pp., 6 x 9, Kids Can Press, Aug. (ages 9-12) Reviewed from finished book

Ottawa native Jo Rioux is a talented and versatile artist, whose illustrative work ranges from manga-inspired drawings to softer, more delicately rendered images. With the release of the first instalment in the Cat's Cradle series of graphic novels, she proves she is also a gifted storyteller.

Suri is a foundling living with a travelling merchant caravan in a world populated with monsters, giants, and witches. Mischievous and independent, Suri avoids her work in the bakery and instead charges other children for her tales of monsters.

Suri aspires to become a monster tamer. When a new caravan joins the merchants,

she discovers its shadowy interior conceals a large and fearsome creature. On a bet, Suri confronts the monster and is successful in her attempt to control it, reinforcing her belief that her chosen path is the right one.

A chance encounter with a young seller later that day results in Suri becoming the unexpected owner of a piece of twine, upon which she strings a dragon tooth amulet for protection. When the boy returns that night, Suri doesn't realize it is because the twine has magical powers and the boy is really a monster in disguise.

With a deft hand, Rioux balances art and narrative, the two elements working together to propel the tale with a mix of adventure, excitement, mystery, and humour. The artwork is detailed yet crisp and clean, in a style that shows manga influences but isn't as exaggerated or dark as some graphic novels. This successful combination, along with a cliffhanger ending, makes *The Golden Twine* a highly accessible book, particularly for new readers of graphica. — *Cori Dusmann, a writer in Victoria.*

**I Am Canada: A Call to Battle**

Gillian Chan; \$14.99 cloth 978-1-44310-006-9, 200 pp., 4½ x 6½, Scholastic Canada, Sept. (ages 10-14) Reviewed from unbound galley

Right on schedule to commemorate the War of 1812's bicentennial, *A Call to Battle* (the sixth book in Scholastic's I Am Canada series) tells the tale of 13-year-old Alexander (Sandy) MacKay, who wants to fight alongside his father and older brother in the war against the Americans, but is left behind to care for the farm and the rest of his family. Sandy's father believes his son is too young to go to battle and is just seeking adventure. Sandy attempts to prove otherwise, but when his father continues to refuse, the boy runs away from home to join the militia. Soon, he comes face to face with the realities of war, from the brutalities of the front to gruesome battlefield surgeries.

Author Gillian Chan (whose previous books include an instalment of Scholastic's Dear Canada series) creates a strong sense of place in her rendition of early 19th-century Canada. This is largely a result of the detail and pacing of Sandy's first-person narration. Make no mistake, this novel has its share of action and adventure, but Chan takes her time getting there, allowing the reader to genuinely understand Sandy, his community, and his family before the drama ramps

up when he joins the militia.

This being a book about war, the violence is at times graphic. The language is also representative of the period and may take readers a few chapters to become accustomed to. Still, Chan uses these elements to give an authentic perspective on the War of 1812, reminding readers that the important part isn't the battle, but how people continue to cope after it's over. Fans of historical fiction, as well as action-loving boys, will find much to like in this book. — *Jennifer Foden Wilson, a writer and bookseller in Toronto.*

**Rage Within**

Jeyn Roberts; \$19.99 cloth 978-1-44242-354-1, 368 pp., 8½ x 11, Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, Sept. (ages 14+) Reviewed from advance reading copy

**D**ark Inside, Vancouver writer Jeyn Roberts' debut, was an apocalyptic tale in which the beginning of the end of civilization was marked by a series of earthquakes hitting the West Coast of North America. Immediately following the seismic shocks, the majority of humanity became homicidal maniacs with black-veined eyes, indiscriminately slaughtering friends, family members, entire towns. Those who didn't succumb to the bloodlust (a.k.a. "normals") dubbed these human killing machines "baggers," after the casual term hunters use to describe bringing down prey.

That earlier book followed four teenaged normals as they converged on Vancouver, dodging bagger attacks before finally coming together by the book's end. *Rage Within* picks up the narrative three months after the first earthquakes. The foursome, now at the centre of a fragile community, is living in an abandoned house, conducting nightly missions in search of food and other survivors.

The baggers, however, are no longer mindless killing machines. They've built a concentration camp on the site of the Plaza of Nations (part of Vancouver's Expo '86 grounds), and converted the adjacent casino into a prison. Normals are used for labour — clearing bodies and working on infrastructure projects. The baggers are rebuilding the world in their image, but who is guiding them? And can a dysfunctional community of teenagers survive in a world gone mad?

*Rage Within* builds off *Dark Inside*, continuing the story with none of the awkwardness second books in a series often succumb to. It's taut, suspenseful, and satisfying, with well-drawn characters and an imaginative