

taie concuades most satisfyingly with a few wise words from Spoon's mum about how lucky Spoon is. His friends, she says, will "never know the joy of diving head first into a bowl of ice cream," or "what it feels like to clink against the side of a cereal bowl ... or relax in a hot cup of tea." And they'll never know, as Spoon himself discovers, the deep joy of slipping into bed between his sleeping parents and spooning.

**ALFALFABET A TO Z**

*The Wonderful Words from Agriculture*

By Carol Watterson, illustrated by Michela Sorrentino, B.C. Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, 48 pages, \$19.95, ages 4 to 8

A product of the British Columbia Agriculture in the

Classroom Foundation, a non-profit organization that works with teachers to open up the world of B.C. agriculture to students, *Alfalfabet* is an abecedarium with a mission. The author's stated aim is "to invite new and emerging readers to discover the wonderful words from agriculture. Through language and pictures, new readers will discover many new sights, sounds, smells and flavours from agriculture and in turn learn how agriculture enriches and nourishes their own lives and that of their community."

One could be forgiven, after reading this "mission statement," for having low expectations about the book, but readers of any age can expect to be very pleasantly surprised, even delighted, by *Alfalfabet*. There is no hint of turgid di-

dacticism in this rollicking cornucopia of "sights, sounds, and smells," that extend to manure ("Stink, Stank, Stunk) and pigs "Making Merry in the Mud and Muck," to the sound, and sight too, of Pea Pods popping, and a Gaggle of Geese Giggling - and honking and hissing.

Production values are excellent: collage made with hand-painted papers and acrylics is the medium for the visuals, and much play and pleasure will be derived from font sizes that expand and contract in all the right places.

Tasty side dishes include the names of farmer-friendly bugs, and varieties of peas and chickens. Speaking of the latter, their names will be an emerging wordsmith's manna from heaven, especially when tripped off the tongue in quick

succession: "Bardrock. Bantam. Sebright. Silkie. Buff Orpington. Jersey Giant. Leghorn. Rosecomb. Silver cuckoo. Rhode Island Red. Java."

**UP HOME**

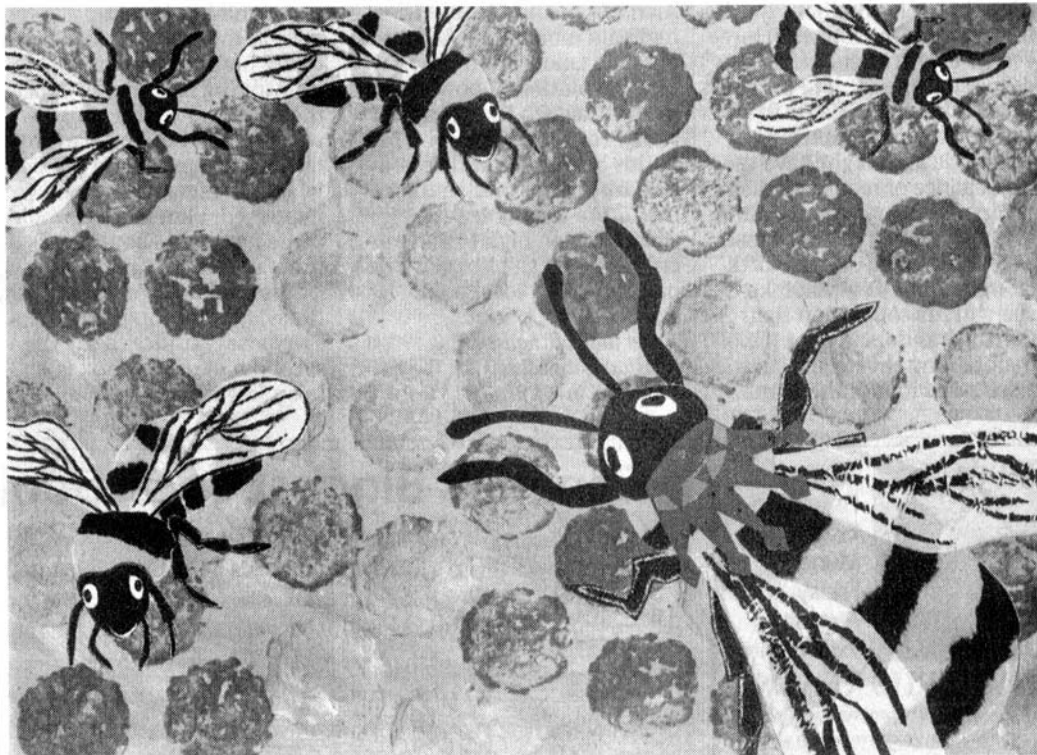
By Shauntay Grant, illustrated by Susan Tooke, *Nimbus*, 32 pages, \$19.95, ages 6 and up

Spoken-word artist, poet, writer and journalist, Shauntay Grant has just been named Halifax's Poet Laureate. In this picture-book long poem, she makes a nostalgic journey back to her childhood in North Preston, N.S. Susan Tooke's richly coloured and vibrant illustrations are a splendid visual accompaniment for this voyage home.

Home, as an afterward explains, is the Preston Townships, to which black United Empire Loyalists fled from the American Revolutionary War in the 1780s. Successive waves of black immigrants came, settled there and left. Black immigrants from the War of 1812, loyal to the British cause, were eventually given 1,800 acres of land in North Preston, which became the largest black settlement in Canada.

Here Shauntay Grant's forebears, facing marginalization and racial discrimination, eked out a living, "forced to carve something out of nothing." And they did: "The people pooled the few resources they had and built houses and churches, securing both a home and a legacy for future generations."

Grant, a legatee if you like, begins this book with the words, "I remember ... long hot days of summer/ layin' on grass/ suckin' on freezes/ playin' with cousins/ friends/ and soakin' up sun/ I remember that sweet grass/ that grew in the yard right next to grand-



A Michela Sorrentino illustration for Carol Watterson's *Alfalfabet A to Z: Agriculture enriches our lives.*