

Margriet Ruurs, Children's Writer: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources.

By Nadine Arial.

Introduction:

I chose to research the writing of Margriet Ruurs, children's author, as well as the available criticism of that writing. My motivation for choosing this research topic was to learn more about Margriet Ruurs as a children's author, particularly because I am enrolled in her upcoming class: Writing for Children, CCW 14. I also considered this to be a good opportunity to become more familiar with both the local writing culture, and different publishers, editors and organizations for writers.

Some outside limitations were imposed upon my research, such as the time constraints of the course, other assignments competing with the main project, and also the availability of books and difficulty in accessing materials in the time available. In addition, I have placed some of my own limits; material in English language only, sources available in North America, and to works written from 1952 onward (Ruurs' date of birth). These limits were necessary, as Ruurs was born and raised in Holland. Therefore, a number of her works were written in Dutch, and/ or they are unavailable to me. For example, Ruurs' first book was published in Dutch, in the Netherlands, and may no longer be in print.

I also found it necessary to place limits on some of the primary and secondary sources that *were* available to me. For example, I discovered that Ruurs reported for the *Vernon Daily News* in the early 1990's. However, the articles that she wrote consisted of only a reporting of the facts, and offered little of value on Ruurs herself. And, I also discovered that Ruurs wrote articles for a Yukon newspaper and the *Whitehorse Star*, but I also excluded these as sources. I did choose to include translations, as they have been of children's books (including her own). I also chose to exclude Ruurs' speaking engagements, lectures, and workshops, as they are too numerous to be covered in the time available.

For secondary sources I have excluded personal web pages, with the exception of Ruurs' home page and that of her illustrators. These two sites should remain relatively consistent sources of information over time, but other personal sites are impermanent and directly biased. I have also restricted Ruurs' publishers and bookstores as a source for reviews, being that their main purpose is to sell the book that they are reviewing. However, I did still cite her publishers as valuable sources of biographical information, and for descriptions of her books.

In terms of the layout of my annotated bibliography, I found it necessary to cite newspapers and Internet resources separately from book reviews. The reason for this is that, while these resources may contain a book review, they are also a source for interviews or other information about the author and her books. Also, in the list of primary works, where I cite two copies of the same book, the second citation refers to the paperback edition. And, where I have cited that a copy of the material was unavailable, my annotations are based on my personal interview with the author. The nature of my annotations is descriptive rather than evaluative. This is mainly due to the lack of time, as evaluative annotations would require more research about the qualifications and possible bias of the reviewers of Ruurs' books.

Overall, I think this bibliography is a reasonably comprehensive account of primary and secondary sources on Margriet Ruurs. The exception, of course would be any sources in the Netherlands, or other sources that I was unable to access in the time available. I don't know that I've discovered any new avenues of exploration, but a more thorough examination of Ruurs' children's books, or an evaluative look at Margriet Ruurs as a teacher and a lecturer is open to research.

Key:

- A. Children's Books
- B. Non-Fiction Books
- C. Translations by Margriet Ruurs
- D. Reviews of Margriet Ruurs' Work
- E. Newspaper Articles on Margriet Ruurs
- F. Awards/Honours
- G. Other Internet Resources by and about Margriet Ruurs

A. Children's Books

- A1. Ruurs, Margriet. *Fireweed*. Illustrated by Roberta Mebs. Whitehorse: Burns and Morton, 1986.
[Unpaged, softbound. Watercolor and ink illustrations. This is a story about a young boy, Michael, who lives in a northern Canadian city with his two dogs. The story depicts the trouble that Michael has when his dogs, and newly found cat (Fireweed), blend in with the seasons' colours.]
- A2. ---. *Big Little Dog*. Illustrated by Marc Houde. Ottawa: Penumbra Press, 1992.
[32 pages, softbound. Black and white pencil illustrations. Set in the far North, this is a story about Jimmy ("the shortest kid anywhere"), his dog Denali, and the One-Dog-Pull event that teaches Jimmy that "it's what's inside that counts."]
- A3. ---. *A Mountain Alphabet*. Illustrated by Andrew Kiss. Toronto: Tundra Books, 1996. Rpt. New York: Tundra Books, 1999.
[Unpaged. Oil-painted illustrations. This book contains a series of paintings of mountain scenes; each dedicated to a letter of the alphabet. Each page has a line of text that alliterates a letter, and readers are encouraged to find all of the items in the picture that start with that letter, as well as find a hidden letter in the illustration. Some of the items to be found are quite challenging (i.e.: quartz, merganser, hoary marmot, etc.). The book contains a forward, written by the author, on the wonders of mountains, and an alphabet Legend is included at the end of the book.]
- A4. ---. *Emma's Eggs*. Illustrated by Barbara Spurll. Toronto: Stoddart Kids, 1996. Rpt. New York: Stoddart Kids, 1997.
[Unpaged. Colour illustrations. This was Ruurs' first book about Emma, the silly chicken. In this easy to read story, Emma learns by trial and error what to do with her eggs. Illustrations are bright and animated.]
- A5. ---. *Emma and the Coyote*. Illustrated by Barbara Spurll. Toronto: Stoddart Kids, 1999. Rpt. New York: Stoddart Kids, 1999.
[Unpaged. Colour illustrations. The second book about Emma, the silly chicken, this book tells the story of how Emma "out-smarts" the hungry coyote.]
- A6. ---. *Virtual Maniac: Silly and Serious Poems for Kids*. Illustrated by Eve Tanselle. Florida: Maupin House Publishing, 2001.
[56 pages. Black and white pencil illustrations. A book of 46 poems for children. The poems come in various styles and formats; some are traditional rhymes, and others are more story-like. Poem subjects range from silly (*Argillaceous*) to serious (*A Piece of History*).]

- A7. ---. *When We Go Camping*. Illustrated by Andrew Kiss. New York: Tundra Books, 2001.
[Unpaged. Oil-painted illustrations. This book depicts all of the various activities of camping, as told by two young children. Animals and animal shapes are camouflaged within rich paintings of outdoor scenery. A forward is written by the author, in the same fashion as *A Mountain Alphabet*, introducing readers to the joys and cautions of camping. A Legend of animals is also included at the end of the book.]
- A8. ---. *Emma's Cold Day*. Illustrated by Barbara Spurll. Toronto: Stoddart Kids, 2001.
[Unpaged. Colour illustrations. This is the third book with Emma, the popular silly chicken. In this story, Emma hates the cold weather and has a series of misadventures in trying to find a way to stay warm.]
- A9. ---. *A Pacific Alphabet*. Illustrated by Dianna Bonder. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, forthcoming 2001.
[Colour illustrations. This is an alphabet book celebrating the coast of the Pacific Ocean. The text is an alliterative, story-like sampling of letters of the alphabet. Like *A Mountain Alphabet*, this book also features hidden letters in the illustrations, however the items that start with that letter are more whimsical (i.e.: pictures of Lemons and Limes bobbing in the ocean). This annotation is based on the author's proof copy of the book.]
- A10. ---. *Logan's Lake*. Edmonton: Hodgepog, 2001.
[60 pages. This is a young readers book about a boy, Logan, who tries to save a secluded lake from commercial development. A story about environmental awareness. Copy unavailable.]

B. Non-fiction Books

- B1. Ruurs, Margriet. *Apenkinderen*. The Netherlands: Leopold Publishers, 1982.
ISBN 90-258-4364-6.
[This was Ruurs' first published book. Meaning "baby chimps," *Apenkinderen* was printed in Dutch, in the Netherlands. It is a non-fiction book for children, about baby chimpanzees in a primate centre. Ruurs worked at a primate centre in Holland, where she cared for the chimps being bred in captivity. Copy unavailable.]
- B2. ---. *RCMP*. n.p.: KGR Learning Aides, 1992.
[Bound loose-leaf collection. This is an educational theme unit for teaching about the R.C.M.P. This work contains information and ideas for teachers, as well as master copies of fun activity sheets that may be photocopied for children. Copy unavailable.]

- B3. ---. *On the Write Track: A Guide to Writing, Illustrating and Publishing Stories*. Illustrated by Barbara Claydon. Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press, 1993. [87 pages, softbound. Black and white illustrations. This work is a teacher resource for grades 3-6, containing ideas and suggestions for teaching writing skills. It also contains 50 reproducible masters of student activity sheets. The book is broken down into ten sections: 1. Getting Ideas, 2. Planning a Plot, 3. Characterization, 4. Voice, 5. First Draft, 6. Editing, 7. Different Kinds of Books, 8. Illustrating, 9. Publishing, and 10. Poetry.]
- B4. ---. *Spectacular Spiders*. Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press, 1994. [53 pages (loose-leaf). This work is an educational theme unit for primary classes. It contains reproducible masters of activity sheets, including poetry writing and poems about spiders. Copy unavailable.]
- B5. ---. *The Power of Poems: Teaching the Joy of Writing Poetry*. Florida: Maupin House, 2000. [Softbound. A teaching guide to help students structure and shape poetry, this book contains suggestions, strategies, and fun activities. An extensive list of poetry book lists is also included. Copy unavailable.]

C. Translations by Margriet Ruurs

- C1. Ruurs, Margriet, trans. *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. By Judith Viorst. The Netherlands: Leopold Publishing, 1972. [This children's book was translated into Dutch. Copy unavailable.]
- C2. Ruurs, Margriet. *A Pacific Alphabet*. 2001. [Ruurs completed a Dutch translation of this work that will be submitted for publishing.]

D. Reviews of Margriet Ruurs' Work

- D1. Aker, Don. Rev. of *A Mountain Alphabet*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Books in Canada* 26. 3 (Apr. 1997): 35. Canadian Business and Current Affairs. 25 Sept. 2001 <<http://www.lib.sfu.ca>>. [Aker reviews the book as challenging, with spectacular images. He comments that the scene of rescuing hikers is discordant and may prove unsettling.]
- D2. Bryant, Jill. Rev. of *When We Go Camping*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Quill & Quire* 67. 5 (May 2001): 33. Canadian Business and Current Affairs. 22 Sept. 2001 <<http://www.lib.sfu.ca>>.

[Bryant describes the language of the book as “descriptive” and “breathtaking,” but comments that the book could have been enhanced by more active/ fun spreads.]

- D3. Carino, Anna. Rev. of *Emma's Eggs*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Resource Links* 2. 4 (April 1997): 160-161.
[Copy unavailable]
- D4. Donald, Bridget. Rev. of *Emma's Eggs*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Quill & Quire* 62. 8 (Aug. 1996): 42.
[The review notes that the book entertains, is well written, and that the illustrations add humour. Donald recommends the book to a wide audience over age 3.]
- D5. Elias, Joseph S. “Books for Children.” Rev. of *Emma's Eggs*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Childhood Education* 75. 1 (Fall 1998): 48.
[There is no real review or comments on the book, only a brief description.]
- D6. Evans, Gwyneth. Rev. of *Emma and the Coyote*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Quill & Quire* 65.7 (July 1999): 51. Canadian Business and Current Affairs. 25 Sept. 2001 <<http://www.lib.sfu.ca>>.
[The book is described as “a jaunty tale” that is lively, and appealing to read aloud.]
- D7. Haupt, Allison. Rev. of *Big Little Dog*, by Margriet Ruurs. *[C]anadian Review of [M]aterials* 21. 5 (Oct. 1993): 184.
[Haupt reviews the story as easy to read, but with some confusing elements. Overall, the book is described as heartwarming.]
- D8. Hodgson, Elizabeth. “Recent Canadian Children's Books: The Sublime and the Ridiculous.” Rev. of *Emma and the Coyote*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Canadian Literature* 164 (Spring 2000): 148, 3p.
[The review is set in the context of Canadian children's authors. Hodgson comments that the narrative has “great story-telling rhythm,” and that the illustrations are “comically expressive.”]
- D9. Homel, David. Rev. of *Big Little Dog*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Books in Canada* 22. 4 (May 1993): 30-31. Canadian Business and Current Affairs. 25 Sept. 2001 <<http://www.lib.sfu.ca>>.
[Homel reviews the book as a “positive-minded story” for the 8-12 year old range, but he does comment on how the story may be more effective.]
- D10. Hoyt, Catherine. Rev. of *Emma and the Coyote*, by Margriet Ruurs. *[C]anadian Review of [M]aterials* 7. 3 (Oct. 2000). 25 Sept. 2001 <<http://www.umanitoba.ca/cm/vol17/no3/emma.html>>.

[The book is described as “vibrant” and “detailed,” and amusing to read aloud to pre-school children; overall, recommended.]

- D11. Lang, Isobel. Rev. of *When We Go Camping*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Resource Links* 6. 5 (Jan. 2001): 5. Canadian Business and Current Affairs. 22 Sept. 2001 <<http://www.lib.sfu.ca>>.
[The article gives a very detailed description of the book, and reviews it as a “glorious depiction of nature and camping.”]
- D12. Lewis, Shirley. “Best Picture Books.” Rev. of *A Mountain Alphabet*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Emergency Librarian* 24. 4 (Mar./Apr. 1997): 26. Academic Search Elite. 22 Sept. 2001 <<http://search.epnet.com>>.
[A brief review commenting on the lavish illustrations. Overall, describes the book as “a real wow!”]
- D13. Lombardo, Joanne. Rev. of *A Mountain Alphabet*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Resource Links* 2. 3 (Feb. 1997): 113.
[Copy unavailable.]
- D14. McNaughton, Janet. Rev. of *A Mountain Alphabet*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Quill & Quire* 62. 12 (Dec. 1996): 37.
[McNaughton comments that “the artwork carries the book.” In terms of text, she expresses that young children would find it difficult to understand.]
- D15. McNaughton, Kathryn. Rev. of *Emma and the Coyote*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Resource Links* 5. 1 (Oct. 1999): 8. Canadian Business and Current Affairs. 22 Sept. 2001 <<http://www.lib.sfu.ca>>.
[McNaughton comments that the story moves quickly and that the illustrations are captivating. She notes that the story proved popular with a range of ages.]
- D16. Mervold, Deborah. Rev. of *A Mountain Alphabet*, by Margriet Ruurs. *[C]anadian Review of [M]aterials* 3. 14 (March 1997). 22 Sept. 2001 <<http://umanitoba.ca/cm/vol3/no14/alphabet.html>>.
[Unlike Janet McNaughton, Mervold finds that the educational aspect of the book is suitable for a variety of ages. Mervold comments that “the quality of the text and illustrations can stand alone”; overall, highly recommended. While the initial source for this article is the *CM Journal*, a copy was unavailable.]
- D17. Norskey, Carolellen. Rev. of *Fireweed*, by Margriet Ruurs. *Quill & Quire Books for Young People* 1. 3 (1987):6,9.
[Copy unavailable.]

D18. Pitard, Susan Marie. Rev. of *When We Go Camping*, by Margriet Ruurs. *School Library Journal* 47. 7 (July 2001): 88. Academic Search Elite. 22 Sept. 2001 <<http://search.epnet.com>>.

[This review offers a detailed description of the book. The review is positive, describing the text as "dreamy and poetic."]

D19. Skarzynski, Patricia. "Picture Books and Easy Reading." Rev. of *Fireweed*, by Margriet Ruurs. *[C]anadian Review of [M]aterials* 15. 4 (July 1987): 163.

[The book is in the range of pre-school to grade 5. Skarzynski finds problems with the structure and style of the book, and finds little to recommend it.]

E. Newspaper and Magazine Articles on Margriet Ruurs

E1. Bell, Nancy Merritt. "Big Drama for Small Readers." *Vancouver Sun* 10 Mar. 2001, final ed.: E10. Canadian Newdisc. 25 Sept. 2001 <<http://circ.ihscanada.ca>>.

[Bell reviews *When We Go Camping* in the context of other similar-minded books. Overall, the book is described as outstanding.]

E2. Candole, Richard de. "Bedtime Stories Inspired by Barnyard Bedlam." *Times Colonist* [Victoria] 21 May 2000, final ed.: C7. Canadian Newdisc. 25 Sept. 2001 <<http://circ.ihscanada.ca>>.

[De Candole gives positive reviews of *Emma's Eggs* and *Emma and the Coyote*. Biographical information is also provided from a personal interview with Ruurs.]

E3. Donnelly, Louise. "Courage, Talent, Luck." *BC Bookworld* 15. 3 (Autumn 2001): 36. [Donnelly gives thorough biographical details on Ruurs, as well as quotes from the author. Donnelly comments on previous and upcoming works: *A Mountain Alphabet* (1996), *A Pacific Alphabet* (forthcoming 2001), *When We Go Camping* (2001), *Logan's Lake* (forthcoming 2001), *Virtual Maniac: Silly and Serious Poems for Kids* (2001), *The Power of Poems: Teaching the Joy of Writing Poetry* (2000), *Emma's Eggs* (1996), *Emma and the Coyote* (1999), *Emma's Cold Day* (2001).]

E4. Goedhart, Bernie. "'Tis the Season of Bunny Books." *Gazette* [Montreal] 4 Apr. 1998, final ed.: J2. Canadian Newdisc. 25 Sept. 2001 <<http://circihscanada.ca>>.

[This article lists *Emma's Eggs* as a title to consider for upcoming Easter gifts for children. Goedhart gives a description, but otherwise no review of the book.]

E5. Hart, Paula. "When a Picture is Worth a Thousand Words." *Vancouver Sun* 8 Feb. 1997, final ed.: F7. Canadian Newdisc. 25 Sept. 2001 <<http://circ.ihscanada.ca>>.

[Hart reviews *Emma's Eggs*, making positive note of the illustrations. The book is described as a "delightful [and] playful barnyard romp."]

- E6. "Kids Author Tests the Market." *Vernon Daily News* 11 Dec. 1992.
[Ruurs describes her latest book, *Big Little Dog*. She also describes how she published her first book, and how she tests her books on elementary schools before publishing.]
- E7. MacDonald, Cara. "Local Author Short-Listed for Book Prize." *Morning Star* [Vernon, B.C.] 16 June 2000.
[MacDonald reports that *Emma and the Coyote* is listed as one of the finalists in the English category of the 11th Annual *Mr. Christies* Book Awards in Dresden. There are several quotes from Ruurs.]
- E8. ---. "Young Authors See Their Work in Bound Books." *Morning Star* [Vernon, B.C.] 15 Mar. 1991: 30.
[The article gives a brief bio on Ruurs, and lists activities she's involved in. Ruurs explains why she teaches classes to young authors, and what the classes involve. Comments about Ruurs are given by students aged 8-11.]
- E9. ---. "Emma Hits the Shelves." *Morning Star* [Vernon, B.C.] 7 Nov. 2001: B5.
[Announces the publication of *Emma's Cold Day*.]
- E10. Niles, Russ. "Author Earns Honours." *Sun* [Vernon, B.C.] 19 Oct. 1997.
[Ruurs' book, *A Mountain Alphabet*, was put on the children's feature page for the *Book of the Month* club. Ruurs discusses the success of her books.]
- E11. "Ruurs Launches Writing Study Guide." *Morning Star* [Vernon, B.C.] 28 Sept. 1993.
[The article offers a brief bio on Ruurs, and Ruurs describes her new book *On the Write Track*.]
- E12. "Ruurs Writes Rhymes." *Morning Star* [Vernon, B.C.] 8 Dec. 2000: 31.
[Ruurs describes her new book of poetry being launched (*Virtual Maniac*), and she comments on what writing poetry is all about.]
- E13. Ward, Pamela. "Writer's Newest Book Helps Kids Get Creative." *Morning Star* [Vernon, B.C.] 22 Sept. 1993.
[The article gives a brief bio on Ruurs, and discusses her newly launched book, *On the Write Track*.]

F. Awards / Honours

- F1. 11th Annual *Mr. Christies'* Book Awards. Dresden 2000.

[*Emma and the Coyote* was short-listed for the award in the English category.]

- F2. Banff Mountain Book Festival. Banff, Alberta 1996.
[*A Mountain Alphabet* was a finalist for the award in the "Mountain Image" category. There were 60 entries from five different countries.]
- F3. B.C. Teaching Federation named *Spectacular Spiders* (1994) a Top Ten Teaching Resource.
- F4. Canadian Children's Book Centre selected Ruurs to tour schools and libraries in Newfoundland, Nov. 2001.
- F5. Honor Title. Storytellers World Association. 1997
[Ruurs received the Honor Title for *Emma's Eggs*, out of 3,000 entries.]
- F6. Our Choice Book. Canadian Children's Book Centre. 1998-99.
[*A Mountain Alphabet* was placed in the *Our Choice* catalogue for best books.]
- F7. Tiny Torgi Award. The Canadian National Institute for the Blind. 1999.
[Ruurs received the Tiny Torgi Award for *Emma and the Coyote*. The book was also transcribed into Braille.]

G. Other Internet Resources by and about Margriet Ruurs

- G1. "*Big Little Dog*, by Margriet Ruurs." Pacific Educational Press. 27 Sept. 2001
<<http://www.edu.pe.ca/stjean/coll456/biglittl.htm>>.
[Pacific Educational Press published Ruurs' *Big Little Dog*. The site gives a brief biography on Ruurs, and reviews the book. Links to other Ruurs sites.]
- G2. "Books Released." Andrew Kiss Home Page. 22 Sept. 2001
<<http://www.andrewkiss.bc.ca/booksreleased.html>>.
[Andrew Kiss was Ruurs' illustrator for *A Mountain Alphabet* and *When We Go Camping*. Detailed descriptions of these books are given, as well as the occasional biographical comment on Ruurs.]
- G3. "CANSCAIP Members: Margriet Ruurs." CANSCAIP Home Page. 13 Sept. 2001
<<http://www.canscaip.org/bios/ruursm.html>>.
[This is a site for members of CANSCAIP (The Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators, and Performers). There is a biography on Ruurs, giving several quotes from the author, and also a comprehensive list of her published works, awards and memberships.]
- G4. Margriet Ruurs Home Page. 24 June 2002 <<http://www.margietruurs.com>>.

[This site provides thorough biographical information on Ruurs: photos of Ruurs, her upcoming conference schedule, a list of the workshops and public speaking engagements that she offers, descriptions of nine published and 3 upcoming books, and book reviews from various sources. The site also provides links to Ruurs' publisher and illustrator, as well as her own e-mail address.]

- G5. "Margriet Ruurs." Maupin House Publishing. 27 Sept. 2001
 <<http://www.maupinhouse.com/author/marruur.htm>>.
 [Maupin House published Ruurs' *Virtual Maniac* and *The Power of Poems*. *Virtual Maniac* is described, and you can view a sample poem. The site lists Ruurs' books, gives several brief reviews, and lists her 2001 schedule.]
- G6. "Margriet Ruurs." Writers Union of Canada. 22 Sept. 2001
 <<http://www.writersunion.ca/r/ruurs.htm>>.
 [A website for the members of the Writer's Union of Canada, this site offers only a brief biographical remark, and lists some of Ruurs' publications.]
- G7. "Margriet Ruurs Biography." 29 July 2001. The Kalamalka Institute for Working Writers. 25 Sept. 2001. <http://www.kalwriters.com/ruurs_bio.html>.
 [The site offers a brief biography on Ruurs, noting that she teaches in the Commercial Creative Writing Certificate program at OUC (Vernon, B.C.), and is also the editor of KidsWWwrite (a web magazine that publishes writing by children).]
- G8. "Language Arts and Literature: Education." Pacific Educational Press. 25 Sept. 2001 <<http://www.pep.educ.ubc.ca/language.html>>.
 [Pacific Ed. Press published several of Ruurs' books, including *On the Write Track*. A description of this book, with several brief reviews, is provided. The site also gives background information on the author.]
- G9. "*A Mountain Alphabet*." Tundra Books. 27 Sept. 2001
 <http://www.tundrabooks.com/book_pages/Mountain_alphabet.html>.
 [Tundra Books published *A Mountain Alphabet*, and in this site, gives a detailed description of the book.]
- G10. "Name Search Results." Artstarts. 27 Sept. 2001
 <<http://www.artstarts.com/result2.asp>>.
 [This site gives biographies of Canadian authors. The biography on Ruurs is very brief, listing two awards and only five of her books.]
- G11. "*When We Go Camping*." Tundra Books. 27 Sept. 2001
 <http://www.tundrabooks.com/book_pages/When_we_go.html>.
 [Tundra Books published *When We Go Camping*, and in this site, gives a detailed description of the book.]