



Spring Selection

Article Author:

[Jill Bennett](#) [1]

Article Author:

[Pat Triggs](#) [2]

[14](#) [3]

Article Category:

Other Articles

Byline:

The pick of the Spring picture books.

From the picture books we have seen so far this year we've chosen twenty-five which we think are the pick of the bunch.

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For the purposes of this selection 'picture books' means 'books in which pictures play a major part'. You'll find stories, poetry, and information, for all ages.

Just Pictures...

Anno's Britain

Bodley Head, 0 370 30916 2, £4.95

No words but hundreds of stories and hours of enjoyment. Like Anno's Journey and Anno's Italy this is an inexhaustible book; each look through the detailed pages reveals new delights and surprises. (Can you spot the Queen taking the dog for a walk?) The additional fascination is that this time Mitsumasa Anno is travelling through *our* country and offering us his vision of our landscape, history, culture and people. It's a green and pleasant land he shows us - a warning perhaps from someone who mourns the disappearance of his own Japan under concrete, that we should keep it that way. For all ages, but especially 9+.

Animals

0416 06070 6

Bedtime

0 416 06090 0

Holidays

0 416 06050 1

Helping

0 416 06080 3

Shopping

0 416 06060 9

Helen Oxenbury, Methuen/Walker, 99p each

There are marvellous opportunities for children to story for themselves in Helen Oxenbury's second series of board books: but the baby has grown up considerably and, dare we suggest, should have grown out of board books. The ideas in these five are much more sophisticated and children who would best appreciate them are well beyond the accepted board book stage. Herein lies the dilemma: I would certainly want to include them in any collection for under-eights but

will their format deter would-be readers and buyers' More please, but as ordinary books next time.

Three for the Youngest

Ernest and Celestine

Gabrielle Vincent, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 072 2, £3.50

With a text wholly in dialogue, the story focusses on the friendship between the young and the old: Celestine. a young mouse loses her beloved toy duck Gideon whilst out walking with Ernest, a large brown bear. Celestine is inconsolable - no other toy will do - until Ernest lovingly makes another Gideon. Gabrielle Vincent's gentle water colours are full of warmth and character and have tremendous appeal for the young reader. (A companion volume **Bravo, Ernest and Celestine** is also just published.)

Avocado Baby

John Burningham, Cape, 0 224 02004 8, £3.95

Not the best of Burningham but still too good to leave out. The new addition to the Hargraves family - an anorexic infant - is in a sad state until it samples an avocado, is instantly addicted and, on a daily diet of same, goes from strength to strength. Its feats include tackling a burglar. moving furniture, bump-starting the family car, and finally, the super-tot disposes of a pair of bullies - into the pond.

Burningham's delightful humour and economy of both line and language should tempt all ages.

Wilberforce Goes on a Picnic

Margaret Gordon, Kestrel, 0 7226 5750 1, £3.95

Showing not telling is the key to the enjoyment of this story. Above a very understated text is depicted the hilarious action of the day Wilberforce, a very characterful bear, went on a picnic to the country with his grandparents and his brother and sister. For example, a sloping field liberally dotted with cowpats and infested with flies, wasps and other creepy-crawlies bears the caption 'until they found an ideal picnic spot'.

Wilberforce is surely destined to join the ranks of other favourite bears. (**Wilberforce goes Shopping** follows in the autumn.)

Lots of Visual Jokes

The Trunk

0 19 272124 0

Cat on the Mat

0 19 2721 23

Brian Wildsmith, Oxford University Press, 95p each

The Trunk is an entirely visual joke: a succession of animals climb what they think is a tree, find themselves on top of an elephant and slide back to the ground.

Cat on the Mat wittily exploits the sentence we all associate with phonic primers: the cat sat on the mat; a dog, a goat, a cow follow suit, but the last straw is an elephant; then Sppstt!... The cat sat on the mat. It is good to see Wildsmith turning his talents to books such as these and thus making his work accessible to a much wider book buying public.

One Hunter

Pat Hutchins, Bodley Head, 0 370 30920 0, £3.95

Playing the game with the author is what readers of Pat Hutchins' latest book are being invited to do. The only words she uses are I hunter, 2 elephants, 3 giraffes... 10 parrots, but each picture shows the hunter marching resolutely forward, gun at the ready, whilst more and more animals appear and stalk him. The ten parrots finally give the game away and he flees from the serried ranks of intended prey. A wonderfully controlled joke.

Bear Hunt

Anthony Browne, Hippo, 0 590 70090 1, 95p

Visual jokes abound in what at first appears a simple story in which a white teddybear foils his would-be captors by

making timely use of his magic pencil. Look again and keep on looking... A marvellous book for all ages.

Welcome in Paperback

Quest for the Gloop

Helen Nicoll, ill. Jan Pienkowski, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.365 X £1 .50

A space epic in comic strip format: something of a new departure for this author/artist partnership and an entirely successful one. The deliberately garish colours are just right for this dramatic comedy in which Captain Murphy, aided by his robot PHIX, undertakes a desperate mission to save their planet Beetlejuice 8. Great stuff!

Funnybones

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Picture Lions, 0 00 661953 3, 90p

'On a dark dark hill/there was a dark dark town./In the dark dark town/there was a dark dark street'? does it ring any bells? Children immediately make the link and devour this smashing tale of three aspiring menaces whose nocturnal antics only succeed in frightening themselves. Skeletons, brilliantly effective use of colour and black and white, bubble-talk and an opportunity to break into song; what more could any reader ask?

The Wild Washerwomen

John Yeoman and Quentin Blake, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.367 6, £1.15

Tired of their lot, the seven washerwomen go rampaging through the countryside in a goat-cart wreaking havoc in their wake. When they run into seven woodcutters, their bid for liberation receives a set-back; but those fearsome ladies are equal to any challenge. An exuberantly witty combination of words and pictures.

For Beginning Readers

Three by the Sea

Edward Marshall, ill. James Marshall, Bodley Beginner, 0 370 30455 1, £3.25

Not to be missed on any account. Lolly's friends certainly know what makes a good story. In disgusted response to the banal offering from her reader', they take the same characters and skillfully create their own stories with suspense, humour and a twist in the tail. If only all children (and teachers) were as critical of what is put forward in the name of reading in schools as this pair!

James Marshall's illustrations are just right for the casual, almost throw-away humour of the writing.

Mrs Gaddy and the Ghost

Wilson Gage, ill. Marilyn Hafner, Hippo, 0 590 70060 X, £1.25

First published in this country as a Bodley Beginner, it is good to see this splendid book for new solo readers in paperback so soon. It tells how Mrs Gaddy, after making determined efforts to get rid of her resident apparition, has a sudden change of heart and takes him on as a kitchen help. The humour is beautifully brought out in Marilyn Hafner's pink and brown illustrations - her facial expressions are especially good.

Tiny Tim

Pictures by Helen Oxenbury, Verses chosen by Jill Bennett, Heinemann, 434 95601 5, £3.95

A splendidly useful collection of sure-fire hits for Infants. Good rhythm, strong rhymes, some familiar lines and Helen Oxenbury's excellent illustrations, which manage to be supportively literal, imaginative *and* funny, make this a must for beginner readers.

Longer Stories

The Paper Bag Princess

Robert N Munsch, ill. Michael Martchenko, Hippo, 0 590 711 26 1, 85p

Beautiful princess, Elizabeth, is left with only a paper bag to wear when the dragon smashes up her castle and carries off her betrothed, handsome Prince Ronald. Nevertheless by a combination of guts, intelligence and guile she rescues Ronald. Add to that much role reversal a very un-fairy tale ending and you get a story some little girls will resist and

most small boys will reject completely. Don't give up - at least get them talking about why they don't like it. It's short, sharp and funny; good yeast for all ages.

The Wild Swans

Hans Christian Andersen, retold by Amy Ehrlich, Pictures by Susan Jeffers, Macmillan, 0 333 32659 8, £4.95

In one sense perhaps this powerfully beautiful story of self-sacrifice and devotion needs no illustration. But if young listeners and readers need pictures to fire their imaginations then these are the ones to give them. Lyrical, sad, mysterious and frightening by turns, Susan Jeffers' illustrations are beautifully executed and exactly in tune with Andersen's story. The large format and design of the book (lots of double page spread pictures) make it good for reading aloud or story-telling.

Babylon

Jill Paton Walsh, ill. Jennifer Northway, Andre Deutsch, 0 233 97362 1, £4.95

It's a joy to see an artist *who can* capture so sympathetically and realistically the essential vitality and beauty of black children (and adults) in an English setting.

The story of David, Lesley and Dulcie's journey through the hanging gardens of Babylon - a disused railway viaduct in the inner city - and descriptions of what they see, is told in equally vibrant style. The text possesses an almost poetic quality in places which causes the reader to focus on *how* language works as well as *what* it says. An altogether beautiful book.

The Magic Mouse and the Millionaire

Robert McCrum, ill. Michael Foreman, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10720 2, £4.25

Take a run-down circus, a sad millionaire, a ringmaster's son (who is nine and full of ideas) and a magic mouse who does amazing tricks. Mix well, and you have a jolly moral tale, simply and rhythmically told with some nice humorous touches. Add Michael Foreman's marvellously atmospheric pictures which exactly complement the writing and you have a winner of a book.

Information Books

Cathedral - The Story of its Construction

David Macaulay, Collins, 0 00 192142 8, £3.50

A paperback, full-size edition of David Macaulay's classic book about the building of a Gothic cathedral (at imaginary Chutreaux in France). In story form each step of the nearly hundred year task is described and accompanied by clear explanatory drawings and diagrams in black and white line. It is miraculously comprehensible and manages, as well as explaining, to convey something of what inspired the people of the thirteenth and fourteenth century to create such staggeringly beautiful buildings.

Mechanical Giants

Roland Berry, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10765 2, £2.95

Sheer size is always impressive. Roland Berry has drawn twenty-six of the world's biggest machines from construction, underwater working, farming and transport. Those fascinated by the biggest, the heaviest, the longest etc will be attracted by the full colour pictures (each containing something familiar to give a sense of scale) and short, clear explanations which pack in facts while remaining chatty and accessible. An index and more headings to identify groups would have put this in the useful easy reference class. As it is it can only be recommended as a super book for dipping into.

Shakespeare and His Theatre

John Russell Brown, ill. David Gentleman, Kestrel, 0 7226 5558 4, £5.50

An invaluable aid for anyone wanting to remove Shakespeare from an academic ivory tower and put him and his plays a little closer to an understandable reality. Eight short sections are packed with information about the Globe Theatre and how the plays were staged. Those daunted by blocks of continuous print (there are no sub-headings) will still find masses of information in David Gentleman's excellent, lively full colour illustrations which are plentiful.

The Story of Hay

Geoffrey Patterson, Andre Deutsch, 0 233 97356 7, £4.50

Another of Geoffrey Patterson's fascinating accounts of country life. This one looks at haymaking across the centuries from the earliest reaping hook to present day mechanisation. Beautifully drawn and intelligently labelled pictures of implements and machines accompany a short, clear text. A fascinating book which with its friendly authoritative tone could be a useful source or background book for much middle/ secondary work. It has a simple index.

Looking at Art - People at Work

Patrick Conner, Wayland, 0 85340 889 0, £4.95

One of a series of three (**People at Home** and **Faces** are the other two) which looks at a subject through the eyes of thirty artists from different times and places. The artist's technique, interpretation, attitude and intention are touched on easily in the brief commentary which accompanies the pictures and gets the reader thinking and asking more questions. Short biographies of the artists and a simple index at the end.

The Ideal Home

Fulvio Testa, Abelard, 0 200 72768 0, £4.95

A series of double page spreads depicting how man lived from cave dwellers to skyscrapers. Each picture has two or three sentences of explanatory text. To encourage really close looking (and thinking) Fulvio Testa has drawn in anachronisms - television aerials on the roofs of a medieval walled town for instance. A good springboard for talking and investigation with Infants or Juniors.

This feature compiled by **Jill Bennett** and **Pat Triggs**

Page Number:

18

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[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/pat-triggs>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/14>