



BfK Briefing - May 2003

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BfK Briefing

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NEWS<!--break-->

Smarties protest

A plan to add a teenage book award to the Smarties Book Prizes was shelved following protests from several children's authors (including Melvin Burgess, Gillian Cross and Philip Pullman) about Nestlé's involvement in the marketing of baby milk products in the Third World. Instead, the new prize has been launched by Booktrust and is called the Booktrust Teenage Prize.

Talk To Your Baby: Developing Language for Life

The key to helping young children to speak, listen, read, write and socialise better lies in encouraging parents and carers to talk to them more. To this end, the National Literacy Trust is embarking on a development year to plan an early language campaign to benefit children from birth to three. The Trust believes that the **Talk To Your Baby** campaign will make a significant contribution towards sustained long-term improvements in literacy competence. It will bring together a wide range of partners in the field to plan the way forward, promote the issues and create practical ways of sharing good practice. Cross-sector partnerships will be created in the development year to work strategically and imaginatively over a planned ten-year period. This ambitious but potentially transformational initiative is committed to making a genuine difference to early language acquisition that will contribute to the life chances of millions of our children. For more information contact Liz Attenborough, Talk To Your Baby Co-ordinator (liz.attenborough@literacytrust.org.uk [2]) or Neil McClelland, Director, National Literacy Trust (neil.mcclelland@literacytrust.org.uk [3]), ring 020 7828 2435, or look at www.literacytrust.org.uk [4]

Muggle now in the OED

'Muggle', a word invented by J K Rowling in the Harry Potter books to describe a human ignorant of the arts of magic, is included in the latest edition of the **Oxford English Dictionary** where it is defined as someone who is clumsy or unskilled.

Canadian picture books

A new web site celebrating the diversity and success of Canadian illustrated children's literature has been launched. The Canadian Children's Illustrated Books Project web site is now accessible to the public via the World Wide Web at <http://www.slais.ubc.ca/saltman/ccib/home.html> [5]

New reading and libraries fund

A new £2.6 million fund for book, reading and library projects is being established by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. **The Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund** is for young people, and others, with limited access to books and reading. It is one of the new programmes set up following Paul Hamlyn's bequest to the Foundation on his death in 2001.

Grants normally will be up to £50,000, although trustees will consider awarding at least one major grant of £100,000 or more each year. Grants usually will be for no more than three years. Funding will be available from April 2003 to April 2006 under three streams:

- **Right to Read** for collaborative projects intended to improve long term access to books and reading for children and young people in public care. This stream was initially introduced for 2001-3. It now continues as part of the new Fund.
- **Free with Words** to help young offender institutions and prisons provide easy access to books and reading material for inmates of all nationalities and reading levels and encourage reading for pleasure.
- **Libraries Connect** for initiatives that are intended to effect lasting change in the way libraries work with communities which currently are not well served, i.e. refugees and asylum seekers, young people at risk.

Details on how to apply for funding through **The Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund** are available from: Ruby Ireland, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 18 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA (tel: 020 7227 3500, email: ruby@phf.org.uk [6])

COMPETITIONS

Search for a Story

To encourage fresh talent in children's books, Little Tiger Press and The Travelling Book Company announce the launch of a New Author Prize, 'Search for a Story'. If you have written or think you could write a picture book story, this may be your opportunity to have your book published and receive a cash prize of £2,000. Further information from 'Search for a Story', Little Tiger Press, 1 The Coda Centre, 189 Munster Road, London SW6 6AW (tel: 020 7385 6333, fax: 020 7385 7333, email: jevans@littletiger.co.uk [7]). The closing date for entries is 1 September 2003.

The Perfect Ghost Story?

Piccadilly Press announce the fourth *The Guardian*/Piccadilly Press short story competition for anyone in Year 8 to Year 13. The theme is 'The Perfect Ghost Story'. Entries must be at Piccadilly Press by 30 September 2003 and the best eight to ten stories received will be published in February 2004 as a book called 'The Perfect Ghost Story'. For further information and entry forms, please contact either: Emma O'Brien, Publicity, on 020 7619 0098, email: obryen@blueyonder.co.uk [8], or Piccadilly Press on 020 7267 4492, email: books@piccadillypress.co.uk [9], or look at the Piccadilly website on www.piccadillypress.co.uk [10]

PEOPLE

Fiona Kenshole, Publishing Director for Children's Trade and Reference at Oxford University Press, has left the company following a strategic review in which her role was made redundant. Her future plans are yet to be announced.

Penny Morris has been appointed Editorial Director for fiction and **Kate Burns** Editorial Director for picture books and novelty at Orchard Books.

Anna Billson has been appointed Art Director at Puffin Books. She was previously Deputy Art Director at Orchard Books.

Angela MacPherson has sold Bags of Books, her well known children's bookshop in Lewes, and is setting up as a

freelance children's books advisor. The shop will continue to trade under its new management.

REGIONAL AWARDS

South Lanarkshire Book Award

James Riordan has won the fifth annual South Lanarkshire Book Award for his book **Match of Death** (Oxford). It was chosen by groups of S3 pupils from 12 secondary schools in South Lanarkshire. The other shortlisted titles were Gillian Cross's **Calling a Dead Man** (Oxford), Malachy Doyle's **Who is Jesse Flood?** (Bloomsbury), Nicky Singer's **Feather Boy** (Collins) and Mark Swallow's **Zero Per Cent** (Collins).

North East Book Award 2002

This year's North East Book Award, designed to get and keep older teenagers reading, has been won by Sue Mayfield's **Blue** (Hodder). It is a painfully realistic look at bullying and its devastating consequences. The winner was chosen by Year 10 students from schools across the North East from Berwick to Billingham. Malorie Blackman's **Noughts and Crosses** (Corgi) was Highly Recommended and Maggie Prince's **Raider's Tide** (Collins) was Recommended.

Stockton Children's Book of the Year 2003

This award has been won by Thomas Bloor for **The House of Eyes** (Hodder). The runners-up were Debi Gliori's **Pure Dead Magic** (Corgi Yearling), Geraldine McCaughrean's **Stop the Train** (Oxford), Michael Molloy's **The Witch Trade** (The Chicken House), and Sally Prue's **Cold Tom** (Oxford).

INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

Bologna Ragazzi Award 2003

The Bologna Ragazzi Award is the Children's Book Fair award presented in recognition of overall publishing. The Fiction Award was won by Raymond Queneau's **Exercices de Style** (Gallimard Jeunesse, France); the Non-Fiction Award was won by Dominique Gaussen and Alain Mounier's **Jean Moulin & ceux qui ont dit 'non!'** (Mango Jeunesse, France) and the New Horizons Award was won by Hossein Moalem, Barbara Kaef and Kourosh Parsanejad's **The Anecdotes** (The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, Iran). The Honourable Mentions were (Fiction) Roberto Innocenti and J Patrick Lewis's **The Last Resort** (Creative Editions, USA); (Non-Fiction) Sara Fanelli's **Mythological Monsters of Ancient Greece** (Walker Books, Great Britain) and (New Horizons) Denys Johnson-Davies and Walid Taher's **Tales of Thieves and Robbers** (Dar El Shorouk, Egypt).

US awards

Aidan Chambers has won the Michael Printz Award for **Postcards from No Man's Land**. The Newbery Medal was won by Avi for his historical adventure set in 14th-century England, **Crispin: The Cross of Lead**. The Caldecott Medal was won by Eric Rohmann for **My Friend Rabbit**. Full details to be found on the ALA website:

www.ala.org/pio/media_awards.htm [11]

http://www.ala.org/pio/media_awards.html [12]

EVENTS

Children's Literature International Summer School 2003

The second biennial Children's Literature International Summer School will take place from 25-30 July at the University of Surrey Roehampton's campus. CLISS is a concentrated period of study on areas such as the Origins and Development of Children's Literature, The Literature of War, Radical Visual Texts, Comparative Literature, Literature in Translation and Creative Writing for Children Masterclasses. Leading figures in Children's Literature studies will be taking part, including Anthony Browne, Aidan Chambers, Adèle Geras, Peter Hunt, Rod McGillis, Jill Paton Walsh, Lissa Paul, Kimberley Reynolds, John Stephens, and Lynne Vallone. Further information from Laura Atkins, CLISS Administrator, National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, University of Surrey Roehampton, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PH (email: L.Atkins@roehampton.ac.uk [13], website: www.ncrcl.ac.uk [14])

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SATS Protest

Dear Editor

Almost 100 leading children's authors have now signed a statement calling for the abolition or phasing out of national tests for 7, 11 and 14 year olds (SATS). The statement, originally published in **The Times Educational Supplement** and featured in the **Guardian** and on the BBC, argues that: 'children's understanding, empathy, imagination and creativity are developed best by reading whole books, not by doing comprehension exercises on short excerpts and not from ticking boxes or giving one word answers.' It continues that: 'the relentless pressure of testing...is creating an atmosphere of anxiety around the reading of literature' and calls for resources to be redirected towards libraries and book provision.

Among the signatories are Carnegie Medal winners Beverley Naidoo, David Almond, Robert Swindells, Philip Pullman, Geraldine McCaughrean, Tim Bowler and Melvin Burgess and many other prize-winning authors. The statement gathered the impressive list of signatories in just six days, indicating the strength of feeling among authors and illustrators about the roller coaster ride of endless revision, testing and pre-testing that faces children, and the subsequent pressure on reading for pleasure. Many authors had their own horror stories about activities cancelled to accommodate yet more revision. A recent survey found that a quarter of schools started preparing for the SATS before Christmas!

As I write, at least one major teachers' union is actively considering boycotting the tests, while the NATE, the organisation for the teaching of English, has voiced its opposition to the testing regime. Even the Chief Ofsted Inspectors of England and Wales have criticised the emphasis on tests and targets. There appears to be a real groundswell of opinion against the tests. For more information on the campaign, to get a full list of signatories, or to add your name, contact me at the email address below.

Alan Gibbons (children's author and teacher)

aagibbons@blueyonder.co.uk [15]

Mightier Than the Sword

Dear Editor

I have been subscribing to **Books for Keeps** for several years. There are sections of the magazine that I think are fantastic: the book reviews, Brian Alderson's back page, 'I Wish I'd Written', etc.

But there is something disturbing about this magazine. I first noticed it some time ago in an editorial lamenting the lack of positive images of Muslims in children's literature today. That may be valid or true, but what bothered me were your additional comments regarding too much exposure of Israeli images in the literature, causing an imbalance of views. That smelled to me like good old-fashioned Israel-bashing.

Now I've opened my copy of **BfK** No.138 to find the lead article on an Institute in Ramallah dedicated to promoting literacy amongst Palestinian children. Not a bad thing by any means. However, tucked inside the article, are many veiled (and not so veiled) attacks at the Israeli 'occupation' and the usual incendiary comments about the oppressor etc.

If you or your editorial position represents a specific political stance, then kindly have the courage to say it loud and clear! Why a magazine dedicated to the promotion of children's literature should be so biased is beyond me, but at least you should have the courtesy to clarify to potential subscribers that you are not interested in maintaining an impartial position on something as loaded as the Arab-Israeli conflict.

And to close, I really take exception with the definition of Intifada, as described on page 5. Masses of oppressed people did not spontaneously rise to confront their oppressors. Rather, the Intifada of 2000-current was well organized and planned in advance.

Phyllis Simon

Vancouver, Canada

BfK is not a 'political' magazine but a children's book review journal. However, children's books inevitably raise political issues by virtue of their content or approach or, on occasion, by virtue of who or what is not included in children's books or only included in a biased or stereotypical way. My editorial policy is to alert our readers to such important issues and to provide a forum for debate. The views expressed by contributors to BfK are their own. Ed.

Letters may be shortened for space reasons.

Obituary

Lois Beeson

Died 6 March 2003

Anne Marley writes?

The children's book world lost one of its great unsung heroes on World Book Day 2003 when Lois Beeson died of cancer at the age of 53. She was the Administrator of the Children's Laureate and the Branford Boase Award, as well as being a major contributor to the publication 'Young Writer'. She was previously heavily involved with the 'Poets in Schools' project for the Poetry Society and also the W H Smith Young Writers' competition. Anne Fine, the Children's Laureate, says of Lois: 'She was astonishing: warm in spirit, thoughtful, always interesting and insightful, but, above all, fearless and uncompromising both in principle and intellect. Without her, I could not have done even a small fraction of what we managed together during the last couple of years. She was unfailingly supportive, and I came to have the highest possible respect for her. It doesn't make sense to me that people should be missed even more, simply because of their virtues. But Lois's death will be a lasting loss, not just to her close family, but to us all.'

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Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/140>

[2] <mailto:liz.attenborough@literacytrust.org.uk>

- [3] <mailto:neil.mcclelland@literacytrust.org.uk>
- [4] <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk>
- [5] <http://www.slais.ubc.ca/saltman/ccib/home.html>
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