



## BfK Briefing - March 2006

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### Children Write in Protest Against Poverty

The UK has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the industrialised world and housing inequalities are at their worst since the Victorian era. Now the charities, Shelter and End Child Poverty, have published a unique

anthology, <!--break--> **Waiting for the Future**, to raise awareness of the 3.5 million children in Britain trapped in poverty and the one million children in bad housing. It includes an exclusive poem by the Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion, and contributions from children from across the country on their thoughts and experiences of bad housing and poverty. The anthology is available for £5 plus £1.75 p&p from Shelter's credit card hotline on **020 7505 2036**, [www.shelter.org.uk/publications](http://www.shelter.org.uk/publications) [2] or from bookshops. All proceeds will go directly to Shelter and End Child Poverty.

### Mobile Phone Library

A new invention, ICUE that allows users to store and read books on their mobile phones has been launched. It can be used on any colour-screen mobile phone and enables users to download and keep up to 400 books on their normal phone memory card. ICUE is in talks with organizations such as Book Trust and the National Literacy Trust about ways in which ICUE might be used to improve reading skills and broaden access to books. Some children's publishers are planning to make some of their titles available on ICUE. ([www.i-cue.co.uk](http://www.i-cue.co.uk) [3])

## AWARDS

### Harvey Darton Award 2004-2005

The winner is Lawrence Darton for his book **The Dartons. An Annotated Check-List of Children's Books Issued by Two Publishing Houses 1787-1876** published by The British Library and New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press. In a citation, judge Dr M O Grenby said: "Such a book as this is patently the product of a lifetime's work? Lawrence Darton deserves the thanks of all current and future students of early British children's books for working so assiduously over so many years to produce this account of the firm founded by his great-great-great grandfather. **International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature** edited by Peter Hunt and published by Routledge was Highly Commended.

### Macmillan Writer's Prize for Africa

The Junior Award was won by Elizabeth Irene Baitie (Ghana) for **A Saint with Brown Sandals** and the Senior Award was won by Glaydah Namukasa (Uganda) for **Voice of a Dream**. The New Children's Writer Award was won by

Ngozi Ifeyinwa Razak-Soyebi (Nigeria) for **The House that Kojo Built** . The Children's Illustrator Award was won by Enoch Yaw Mensah (Ghana). The judges were Meshack Asare, Lemn Sissay, James Berry and Ellen Mulenga Banda-Aaku. ( [www.writeforafrica.com](http://www.writeforafrica.com) )

### **Booktrust Teenage Prize**

The winner is Sarah Singleton for **Century** (Simon & Schuster) which was the New Talent review in **BfK** No. 153.

### **Ottakar's Children's Book Prize**

The winner, selected by Ottakar's booksellers, is Julia Golding for her debut novel, **The Diamond of Drury Lane** (Egmont) ? see review on page 26.

## **PEOPLE**

Congratulations to **Christine Baker** of Gallimard Jeunesse who was awarded the Chevalier des Arts et Lettres for services to children's literature and to Franco-British cultural relations.

**Cally Poplak** , director of Egmont Press, is to focus on strategic growth and editing. **Lara Hancock** takes over as Picture Book Publisher and **Leah Thaxton** as Fiction Publisher.

**Sarah Hughes** has been appointed Fiction Publisher at Puffin.

**Sarah Fabiny** , previously Publisher at Chrysalis Children's Books, has been appointed Editorial Director of Campbell Novelty Books.

## **OBITUARY**

### **Christine Pullein-Thompson 1925-2005**

*Nicholas Tucker writes?*

Christine Pullein-Thompson, with her twin Diana and her older sister Josephine, was for years practically synonymous with the traditional British pony story for children. Growing up in the Oxfordshire village of Peppard near Henley-on-Thames, she was always in love with horses, leaving school at fourteen to open her own riding school. In 1941 she and her sisters wrote their first joint book, **It Began with Picotee** , published five years later. It followed what was to become a well-trodden path whereby a young rider initially facing difficulties and possible disappointment finally beats off all opposition to win her race in the last chapter. Many other successful novels followed written on her own; there were also four children, plus close involvement with local government and the charity Riding for the Disabled. In 1996 all three sisters wrote an affectionate collective autobiography, **Fair Girls and Grey Ponies** .

## **OBITUARY**

### **Jan Mark 1943-2005**

[image:Jan Mark colour.JPG:left]

*Julia Eccleshare writes?*

Jan Mark died suddenly in her sleep on Sunday 15 January. Jan had been writing for children for over thirty years covering the entire age range from picture books to books which might just as well have been for adults. She also wrote in almost every genre, being just as much at home in science-fiction tinged fantasy as she was in her closely observed, truthful and insightful novels about how children react, speak and behave in very everyday circumstances.

Jan's first book, **Thunder and Lightnings** (1976), was written as an entry for a Penguin/Guardian writing competition which it duly won. Jan's distinctive voice was already pronounced and that, combined with her bravery in leaving an open-ending, distinguished her as a writer with something original to offer. **Thunder and Lightnings** won the Carnegie Medal and launched Jan into a tremendous flow of novels – often two or three a year – ever since. These included **The Ennead** (1978), and **Handles** (1984) for which she won a second Carnegie Medal (a very rare distinction).

(There is a longer version of this obituary on the **BfK** website.)

## PUBLICATIONS

[image:Outside In.JPG:left] **Outside In: Children's Books in Translation** (Milet, 1 84059 487 X, £6.99) is a guide to over 170 children's books from around the world that have been translated into English. Edited by Deborah Halford and Edgardo Zaghini.

[image:Cross Currents.JPG:left] **Cross-Currents** (IBBY Ireland, 0 9541352 1 0, £10/E15) is a Guide to Multi-Cultural Books for Young People edited by Liz Morris and Susanna Coghlan. It contains reviews of almost 180 books as well as articles and resource listings.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Dear Editor*

I couldn't agree more with Anne and Stephanie ( **BfK** No. 156) – if a great author turns out to be a bad person, her books remain masterpieces – otherwise we're on our way to the swamps of censorship. But it's not as easy as that. Books *don't* –stand by themselves? as Anne suggests – and the *meanings of* texts *do* change with every reader and reading. So if a declared paedophile published some non-paedophile novels, could we really say that we'd read the books neutrally? And why is 90% of the publicity material – and a lot of the 'critical' material – about children's books, actually about the authors, generally trying to convince us that they are lay saints?

So, can I, as an adult, read, say, Mayne with the same enjoyment as I did, if I'm wondering what a writer with those predilections is getting out of writing this stuff – even if it won't (apparently) damage a child reader?

Anne says that 'only the *actual content* of a book can damage a child' – as if the idea of 'actual content' were easy – and when Stephanie says that we should take action against an author or book 'whose *purpose* – was to advocate or impose an unacceptable view?', that is to assume that such a book will go around declaring its purpose in large print on its cover so that we can censor it. There must be sub-texts, and the implication that children as a class are unperceptive,

and can't pick up sub-texts, seems to be very insulting to the children (and unwise). Meaning *is* a partnership, but it's never a partnership between two innocent, contextless partners.

I don't think the answers can be clear-cut ? I'm only arguing for a more rigorous approach by adults to what they and the children are actually bringing to and taking from the texts.

**Professor Peter Hunt** (MA PhD FISTC)

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## **Floccinaucinihilipilification**

*Dear Editor*

Please could you tell Brian Alderson how delighted I am that he used 'floccinaucinihilipilification' in his article last month? I taught it to my current second form last year and they didn't believe it was 'real?', even when I showed it to them in the dictionary. So I brought in the magazine and showed it to them today. Half the class said things like 'Cool!'; the other half told me I had a very sad life if that was the kind of thing that got me excited. In some ways I think this is a fair comment... on the other hand, I don't like being floccinaucinihilipilified. You can probably tell I should be doing my exam marking.

**Elizabeth McConnell**

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[4] <mailto:huntp@fsmail.net>

[5] <mailto:emcconnell391@ballyclarehigh.ballyclare.ni.sch.uk>

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