

July 1998 No.111

UK Price £2.90

**BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH • POETRY ROUND-UP  
POETRY IN THE CLASSROOM • ROSIE'S WALK**



# Contents

- 2** Editorial
- 
- 3** **Keep on Walking!**  
Julia Eccleshare on 30 years of Rosie's Walk.
- 
- 4** **Poetry Power**  
Helen Taylor assesses recent poetry publishing for children.
- 
- 9** **Breaking Down the Barriers**  
Kevin Berry on first languages and poetry.
- 
- 10** **King of the Sky**  
Gwynneth Bailey on using poetry for The Literacy Hour.
- 
- 11** **Finding Their Own Voices**  
John Lynch on children writing poetry.
- 
- 12** **Authorgraph No.111**  
Errol Lloyd on Benjamin Zephaniah.
- 
- 14** **BfK Briefing**  
National Year of Reading • The Poetry Society • Best Seller Chart • Publications • News • People • Letters to the Editor • What Should Win the Carnegie/Greenaway Medals? • Good Reads
- 
- 18** **Reviews**  
Index of Titles and Star Ratings 18  
Reviewers 18  
Books About Children's Books 18  
Under 5s (Pre-Sch./Nursery/Infant) 19  
5-8 (Infant/Junior) 21  
8-10 (Junior/Middle) 23  
10-12 (Middle/Secondary) 24  
12+ (Secondary) 26
- 
- 28** **Classics in Short No.10**  
Helen Levene on A Child's Garden of Verses.

## CoverStory

This issue's cover is from *The Hutchinson Treasury of Children's Poetry* (cover illustration by Peter Weevers). Edited by Alison Sage (who also edited *The Hutchinson Treasury of Children's Literature*), this sumptuous anthology is loosely divided into four sections corresponding to age starting with nursery rhymes and first poems through to poems for older children and classic poetry. Poems from such modern poets as Roger McGough, Ted Hughes, Wendy Cope and Maya Angelou sit alongside poems by Longfellow, Robert Louis Stevenson, Shelley and Shakespeare. The anthology is illustrated in full colour and black and white. Newly commissioned illustrations from, for example, Quentin Blake, Shirley Hughes and Nicola Bayley are included together with illustrations by Randolph Caldecott, Jessie Willcox Smith and Kate Greenaway. With such a comprehensive range of poems for 2-11 year olds and upwards, this is a wonderful family book.

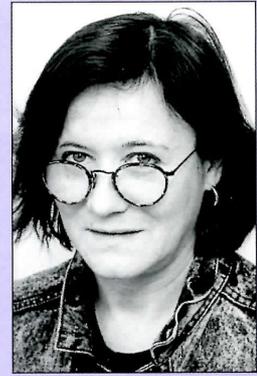
Thanks to Hutchinson Children's Books for their help with this July cover.

*The Hutchinson Treasury of Children's Poetry*, edited by Alison Sage, foreword by Michael Rosen, 320pp, 0 09 176748 2, £19.99 hbk

# EDITORIAL

This issue of BfK focuses on poetry – from a survey of the most recent publications for children and young people and a profile of a poet, Benjamin Zephaniah, whose poems constitute a powerful commentary on the world we live in, to *A Child's Garden of Verses* in our 'Classics in Short' slot and a review from Margaret Meek of Morag Styles's long awaited history of 300 years of children's poetry, *From the Garden to the Street* (see page 18).

But while interest in poetry appears to be booming (and Bloomsbury Children's Books are launching a new poetry list) it is still the case that many adults find it hard to discuss poetry with children and encourage them to enjoy and write poetry themselves. Poetry enthusiasts, Gwynneth Bailey, John Lynch and Kevin Berry take three different aspects of using poetry with children and come up with some practical ways forward. On page 14 of this issue, your attention is also drawn

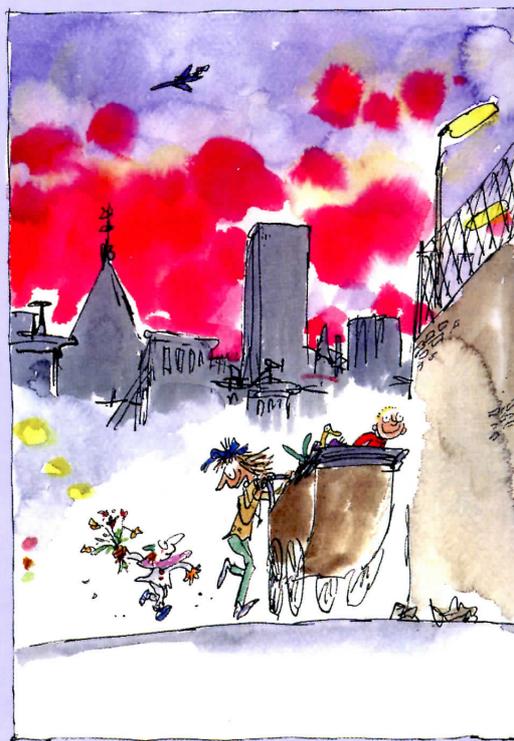


Rosemary Stones

to the first of a new BfK mini-series on 'Useful Organisations', in this case The Poetry Society and all it has to offer.

At BfK one of our most requested items is still 'Four Steps to a Poetic Primary Classroom', a series of check-lists on how to become a Poetry Enthusiast Teacher. It can be found in *A Guide to Poetry 0-13\**.

*Poetry*



Left, an illustration from Quentin Blake's *Clown*, a 'masterpiece of a wordless picture book.' See review on page 21.

**\*A Guide to Poetry 0-13** (ed. Chris Powling and Morag Styles, Books for Keeps and The Reading and Language Information Centre, Reading, 1 871566 03 7) is available from **Books for Keeps**, 6 Brightfield Road, Lee, London SE12 8QF at £5.50 (UK) or £7.50 (airmail) inc. postage.

**BOOKS FOR KEEPS**  
the children's book magazine

**JULY 1998 No. 111**

ISSN 0143-909X © School Bookshop Assoc. Ltd 1998

Editor: Rosemary Stones

Managing Director: Richard Hill

Design and Typeset: Rondale Ltd, Lydney, Glos.

Printed: The Friary Press, Dorchester

Editorial correspondence should be sent to the BfK office, same address as for subscriptions.

Books for Keeps can be obtained on subscription by sending a cheque or postal order to: Books for Keeps, 6 Brightfield Road, Lee, London SE12 8QF.

You can also pay by credit card (Access, Visa, Eurocard or Mastercard) and order via:

**Tel: 0181 852 4953**  
**Fax: 0181 318 7580**

**E-mail: booksforkeeps@btinternet.com**

Annual subscription for six issues: £17.40 (UK), £21.75 (Europe including Ireland), £24.50 (airmail).

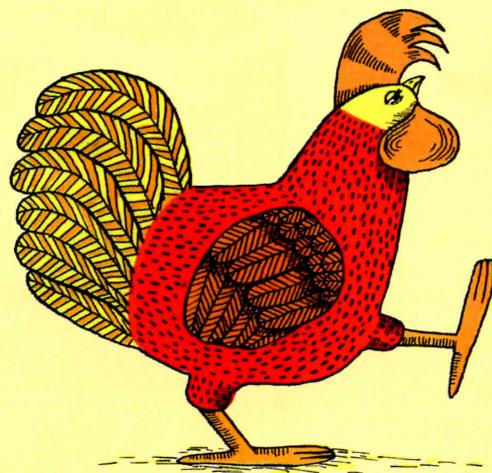
Single copies: £2.90 (UK), £3.60 (Europe including Ireland), £4.10 (airmail).



# Keep on Walking!



Published in 1968 with a daringly minimal text and flat, stylised illustrations, Pat Hutchins' *Rosie's Walk* was not only a picture book that was interactive in an innovative way with its young 'readers' but it was delightfully comic. Julia Eccleshare looks at the history of children's literature's favourite hen.



When, on the advice of Susan Hirshman, children's books editor at Greenwillow in the USA, Pat Hutchins cut down the lengthy text of her first picture book to the famous 36 words that *Rosie's Walk* has now become and took it back for re-examination, she was rewarded by Hirshman announcing that, 'This is going to be a classic.'

## • A CLASSIC •

Thirty years on, *Rosie's Walk* is, indeed, a classic. To celebrate the life of a book which has gone through countless hardback and paperback editions, first in Puffin and currently in Red Fox, The Bodley Head are publishing a neat board book version making it freshly available to a new and slightly younger generation of children.

The story of Rosie the hen who steps out on a simple journey around the farmyard, apparently oblivious of the fox who is following her, is only partly told by the text. The pictures reveal a great deal more which allows a child to enjoy the story with the author, long before they can read all the words. This collusion between the author and child, combined with the way the pictures tell the story, explains why, very swiftly after its publication, *Rosie's Walk* was seized upon as the perfect picture book for teaching children to read.

## • READERS AND NON READERS •

In *On Being Literate* Margaret Meek wrote, 'The child who understands that she and the author of *Rosie's Walk* know that the fox is chasing Rosie but Rosie may not know, has already begun to learn the distinctive kind of sharing that readers and writers engage in.'

For the non reader, following the story through the pictures enables him/her to tell the story in far greater detail than the reader can achieve. It is

this possession that makes *Rosie's Walk* such a gem for the teacher because it is all about enabling the child to take charge of the story. (Perhaps it was fortunate that *Rosie's Walk* was published coincidentally with a commitment to child-centred learning. It might not have fared so favourably in the era of the Literacy Hour.) Of course, Pat Hutchins did not set out to write a book that would become the core title in helping children to learn to read.

## • THINKING FILMICALLY •

As a young illustrator with a couple of years as an assistant art director at the advertising agency J Walter Thompson behind her, she had her sights on writing and illustrating a picture book. From her years in advertising she had 'learnt to put ideas in a simple way' which is probably why she was able to respond to Hirshman's suggestion that she jettison almost everything in her original draft for the book and concentrate instead on the one interesting character – the silent fox who observes his prey.

It may also have been instrumental in her vision of how the book should work. 'I was trying to think of it filmically,' says Pat Hutchins. 'I set it up on each page so that it is the child turning the page who makes the drama.'

How simply she describes it. And how accurately. Try turning the page and it becomes clear that it is in that turning of it that the story is told, giving the reader a role to play in the unfolding of the story. Judged alone, neither the words nor the simple illustrations are so exceptional, but the interplay between the two is remarkable. 'The type

of story I write dictates the artwork. The good thing about doing the artwork for Rosie in separated colour is that the line is so sharp. It makes it very stylised which fits the story well.'

## • DRAMATIC IRONY •

But, it is not just the structure of *Rosie's Walk* that has made it endure. It is also the superb use of dramatic irony that makes what could be a common enough story in children's books into a masterpiece. Rosie's brainless insouciance as she goes about her daily business and the very closeness of her encounters continue to entertain long after the joke is understood.

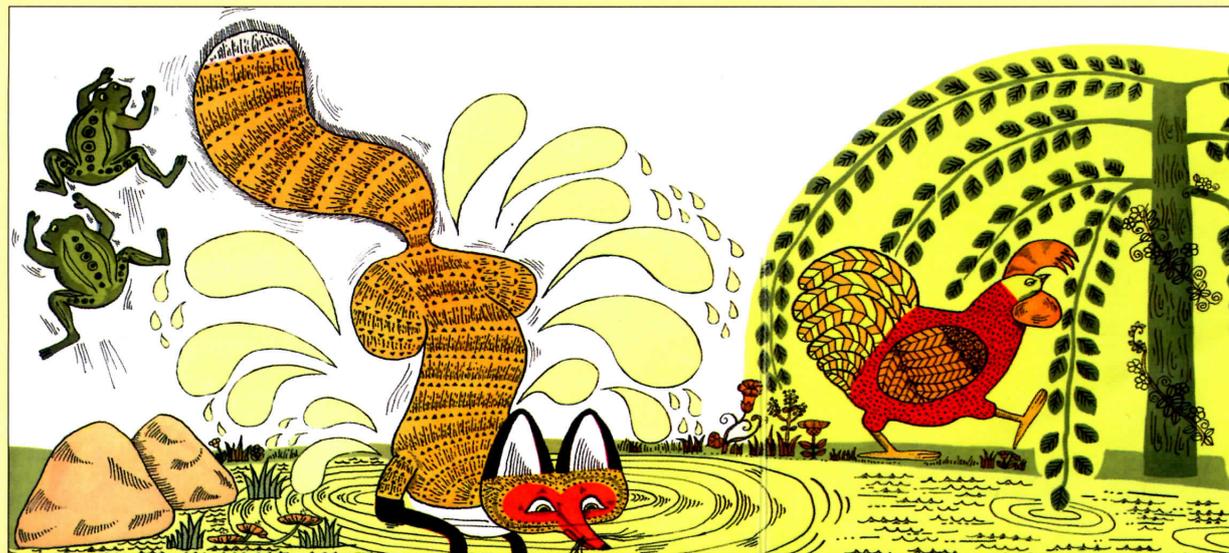
None of this is chance. Pat Hutchins thinks about each of her books as a whole and, surprisingly for a winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal for illustration, the stories come to her first. *Rosie's Walk* took a year to create after Pat had been sent away to work on it. Even then there were details to perfect. 'Susan Hirshman and I practised the scene where the bag of flour is going to fall on the fox's head – just to make sure that it really could happen.' And if you follow the winding string – as all young readers do – you will find that it would unwind neatly and easily, dropping the flour sack smack on the top of the fox.

Pat Hutchins followed *Rosie's Walk* with a quick succession of other titles. And no, there never was to be a sequel. 'Rosie was a one off. I moved on to other stories after that. Sometimes other illustrators feel that they've copied Rosie but, after all, it's only the story of a chase.' Or is it?

For what it leaves out, as much for what it has in it, *Rosie's Walk* deserves to celebrate its thirtieth birthday. ■



Pat Hutchins at work.



The thirtieth anniversary special edition board book of *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins is published this month by The Bodley Head (0 370 32446 3, £3.99).

Julia Eccleshare is the children's books editor of the *Guardian*.

# Poetry POWER

**Helen Taylor** wants a poetry anthology that does not just have all the old chestnuts in it and appears to be aimed at parents rather than children. She wants a single poet collection of poems to be more than endless lists of rollicking rhymes or poems about school. She wants challenging, thought provoking poems in the same book as riddles and wordplay. She wants the cover of the book to tempt her inside and illustrations, design and layout to show her that somebody cared about design and content complementing each other. **BfK** asks her to see if any of the new poetry titles on the market fit the bill ...

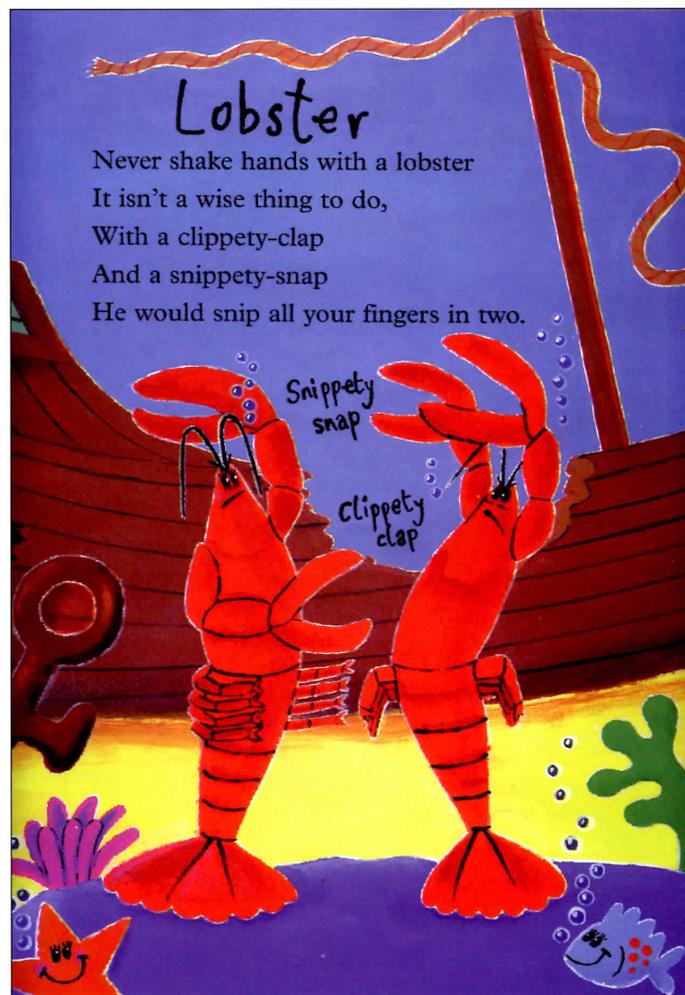
After reading more than fifty recently published poetry books the 'champagne supernova' feeling of finding exciting new titles was not as frequent as I had hoped. The old adage 'Don't judge a book by its cover' echoed in my head as it became evident that the current trend is either towards the expensively produced collection of poems that reflect an ailing culture or towards the fun type book of zany poems published in a street cred, graffiti design style. These are interesting directions especially when we have reached the end of New Labour's first year of government, a year when the word 'new' has been used both to dress up the old and to make things seem more desirable; a year which has espoused a supposedly *more* caring culture in which we can both spice up our lives and help the aged.

So which are the books which make you want to look inside and when you do, do not disappoint in terms of design, illustration and most importantly, content?

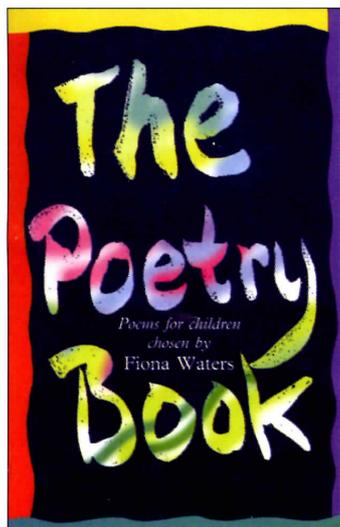
## Anthologies and Collections

There has been a heavy crop of new anthologies and collections – with some old favourites appearing in new editions with new covers. Michael Rosen's **The Hypnotiser** is issued in hardback at only £4.99 and James Berry's **Playing a Dazzler** is now in Puffin – both are definitely worth having. But look at the difference between Fiona Waters' excellent anthology **The Poetry Book**, now in paperback and John Foster's **School's Out** anthology issued

with a new cover. Good selections, attractive covers, but once inside, Waters' book is also reader friendly – simple layout, sensitive illustration and clear typeface, a welcoming book for the reader. The typeface and layout in Foster's book make my heart sink as they effectively destroy the relationship between poem and illustration on the page.



From **Commotion in the Ocean**.



### CONSERVATION PIECE

The countryside must be preserved!  
(Preferably miles away from me.)  
Neat hectares of the stuff reserved  
For those in need of flower or tree.

I'll make do with landscape painting  
Film documentaries on TV  
And when I need to escape, painting,  
Then open-mouthed I'll head for the sea.

Let others stroll and take their leisure.  
In grasses wade up to their knees,  
For I derive no earthly pleasure  
From the green green rash that makes me sneeze.

ROGER MCGOUGH

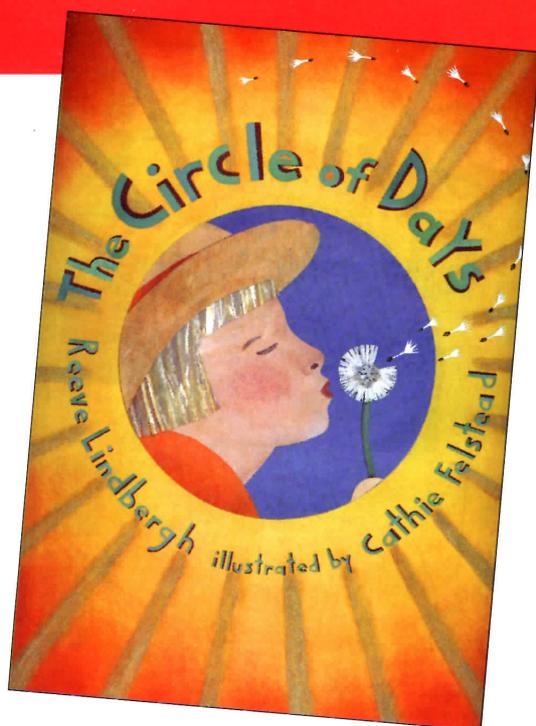


## Picture Book Poetry

For the youngest age group, picture books like **Rumble in the Jungle** and its sequel **Commotion in the Ocean** get everything right – funny, witty verses by Giles Andreae which capture the character of an animal or fish, complemented by David Wojtowycz's vivacious and colourful illustrations. Design, layout and text all perfectly in tune. There is lots to look at, think about and to keep the reader turning the pages: 'I swim with a grin up to greet you / See how my jaws open wide, / Why don't you come a bit closer? / Please take a good look inside...' ('Shark' from **Commotion in the Ocean**).

Reeve Lindbergh's verse adaptation of St Francis' Canticum of the Sun, **The Circle of Days** falls into the same category – a perfect marriage of verse, illustration and design. Simple and profound rhyming couplets celebrate the story of creation and the wonders of the world. The words run across each spread page and are surrounded by Cathie Felstead's illuminating and jewel-like illustrations. 'For brother sleep, and sister death, Who tend the borders of our breath.' An exquisite book for children or adults. Felstead also illustrated **A Caribbean Dozen**, John Agard and Grace Nichols' excellent collection of Caribbean nursery rhymes which should be in every household and every school.

On the same creation theme, Steve Turner retells the Genesis story in his simple and fast moving book **In the Beginning**. 'God said BEAK / and the bright birds soared' and the words really do soar with the bright exuberant



illustrations by Jill Newton. Unfortunately Brian Patten does not have the same luck with his illustrator and designers in **Mouse Poems**. Patten is a wonderful poet but these simple poems about mice are not enhanced by cluttered, naive pictures which just do not capture the imagination.



Two timid beetles – Ike and May –  
Crept from the woodwork that same day.  
But when Miss Spider begged, "Please stay?"  
They shrieked, "Oh no!" and dashed away.



The spidery world of David Kirk's imagination in **Miss Spider's Tea Party** is both unsettling and hypnotic. His illustrations are strikingly different, using colour and perspective to give the reader an insect's view of the world. In the story Miss Spider is trying to find friends who are not frightened of her. 'We would be fools to take our tea / With anyone so spidery.' Kirk does not compromise on the disturbing nature of spiders. The combination of words and pictures both emphasises and explains the fears so often attached to them. A good book for both adults and children, particularly those with an irrational fear of anything 'spidery'.

Stella Blackstone's counting rhyme **My Granny went to Market** is a great idea which could have been developed and illustrated more imaginatively. Granny flies round the world collecting presents which represent each country. If the pictures had been more vibrant and the map routes had been labelled, this book could have worked on several levels, not just as a counting rhyme.

## Anthologies for Under-Fives

Good anthologies for the under-5s are thin on the ground this year. **Seaside Poems** compiled by Jill Bennett and **Elephants and Emus**, animal rhymes compiled by Philippa-Alys Browne, both suffer from 'boxed text' disease. This is a shame in the former's case as the bad design really distracts the eye from Nick Sharratt's detailed, witty illustrations and Jill Bennett's lively selection of poems. Alice Taylor makes an interesting selection in **The Child's Treasury of Irish Rhymes** but the messy illustrations are not helpful to the poems. Finally, in this age group, **Twilight Verses Moonlight Rhymes** compiled by Mary Joslin works on all levels. It is beautifully produced with a thoughtful selection of poems complemented by Liz Pichon's appealing illustrations.



Little lambs, little lambs,  
Where do you sleep?  
'In the green meadow,  
With mother sheep.'

Little birds, little birds,  
Where do you rest?  
'Close to our mother,  
In a warm nest.'

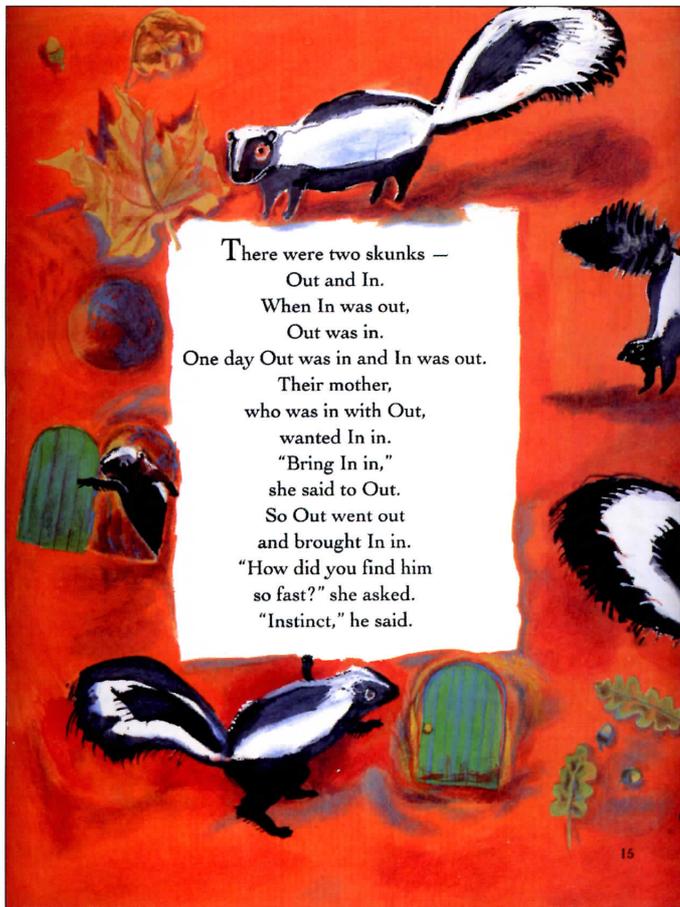
Baby dear, Baby dear,  
Where do you lie?  
'In my warm bed,  
With Mother close by.'

From *Twilight Verses Moonlight Rhymes*.

## Poetry for Five-Year-Olds and Upwards

For five-year-olds and upwards the number of new anthologies and single poet collections begins to increase. Age ranges become more blurred and it is not always clear whether a book is aimed at the reader or at the parent or teacher who may buy it. **The Children's Book of Poems, Prayers and Meditations** compiled by Liz Attenborough is described as a selection 'for children of all ages, from 6-100' which reflects 'the very real need in everyone to consider their rightful place in this world and beyond'. The choice of poems is wide-ranging and thought provoking; there are 10 different illustrators and the whole feel of the book is sumptuous and appealing until you come to the meditations. Ostensibly these meditations are a 'new' approach to reading poetry. Each section of the book ends with a contrived fantasy designed to help the parent and child to 'Calmly reflect on the emotions stirred by the words of others'. The meditations are of the 'imagine you are in a beautiful garden', 'take some of the love you have in your heart and send it down to all the people' type of pop psychology which is so prevalent in certain quarters. I expect there is room for debate here but frankly, I found the approach both irritating and disturbing. Who is this book aimed at? Can we really presume that children will appreciate poetry more if they go into a so called deeper state of consciousness and what does this say about our attitude to poetry and who it is for?

Michael Rosen's anthology of wordplay, rhymes and poems **Walking the Bridge of Your Nose**, now in paperback, came as a breath of fresh air after Liz Attenborough's 'touchy, feely' world. This banquet of rhymes, tongue twisters, laughs and nonsense should exercise the minds of children from five upwards.

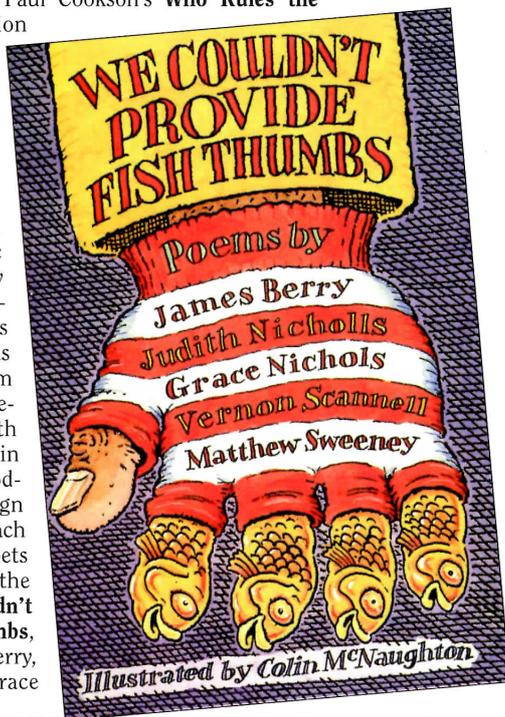


From *Walking on the Bridge of Your Nose* (see previous page).

### Street Cred in Paperback

And so we come to the largest section of books, the street cred, wacky, apparently subversive paperback which can fit in your pocket. These anthologies are usually aimed at the 8+ age group, cost between three and four pounds, and are printed on that off-white furry type of paper. The cover is always very bright – lots of purple and yellow with funny things happening all over the place. I must confess that I am bored with this type of presentation and feel (often unfairly) that I have read all these poems before. Macmillan are the most prolific in this field with titles like **Aliens Stole My Underpants** (intergalactic poems) compiled by Brian Moses and **They Think It's All Over!** (Even More Football Poems) chosen by David Orme. Both selections seem to have more to do with fitting the title than offering a wide range of top quality poetry. **School Trips** chosen by Brian Moses is more encouraging, the poems are funnier, the situations less predictable than in Paul Cookson's **Who Rules the School?** collection

which becomes repetitive after the first few poems. I liked Scholastic's Hippo series. **The Hippo Book of Silly Poems** compiled by John Foster and **Young Hippo Magic Poems** compiled by Jennifer Curry combine old, new, famous and forgotten poems by poets ranging from Silverstein and Shakespeare to Judith Nicholls and Colin McNaughton. Production and design improves as we reach Macmillan's five poets in a book series, the latest being **We Couldn't Provide Fish Thumbs**, poems by James Berry, Judith Nicholls, Grace



Nichols, Vernon Scannell and Matthew Sweeney. This collection is a lively mixture of old and new poems and a good introduction to some of the best poets writing for children today. Steve Turner's first collection **The Day I Fell Down the Toilet** contains some interesting poems (I particularly liked the last poem 'Nobody Likes You When You Grow Up') but lacks variety in rhythm and approach, too many a b a b rhyme schemes and poems with a different idea on every line. **Four O'Clock Friday**, John Foster's collection of poems about anything and everything to do with school and after school, is well produced and unusually illustrated with Debbie Cook's scraperboard type pictures.

### Single Poet Collections

Bloomsbury have launched a new series of single poet collections in a bright and friendly format. Coming soon, Adrian Henri's new collection **Robocat** which follows the essential **The World's Your Lobster** – the very best of Adrian Henri. **Once Upon An Animal**, a treasure trove of perceptive and amusing animal poems by Faustin Charles would be enjoyed by the 5-8 age group as well as older children. This collection is full of gems like 'Flame Lover': 'Fan the flame moth; / Soft cloth / Eater of flying spark / Flutters light in the dark.'

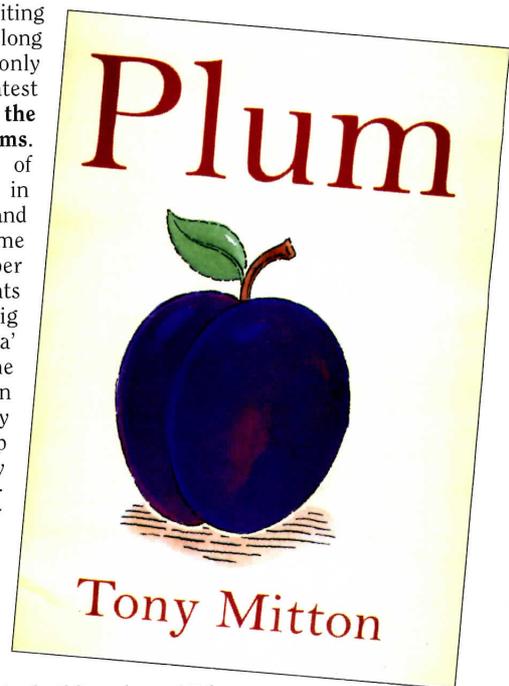
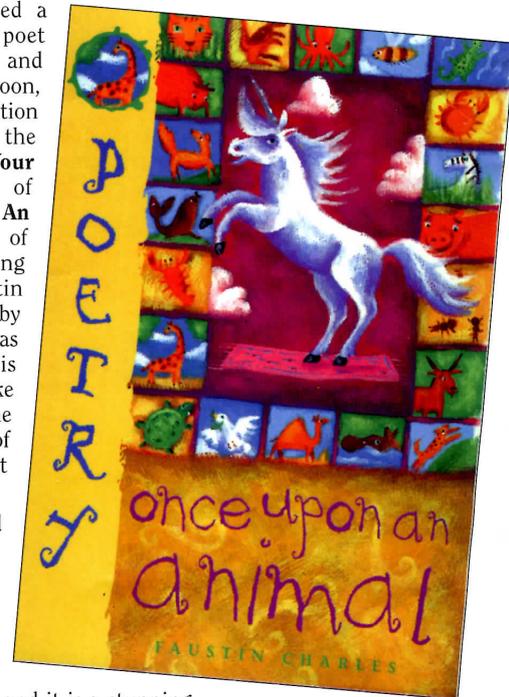
The last two books I would like to single out in this age range are from a new poet and a well established poet. Tony Mitton's poems had begun to appear in anthologies but **Plum** (out

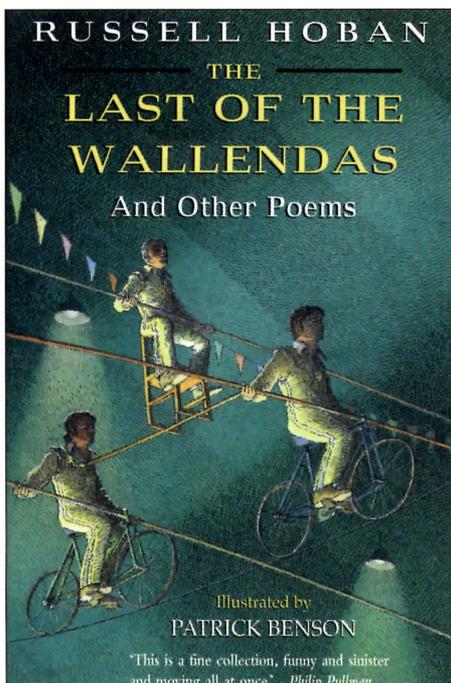
soon) is his first collection and it is a stunning debut. There is a cornucopia of subjects and forms from Chapati machines and the Green Man to ballads and rhyming chat. Mitton's obvious delight in language, wordplay and observation produces original poems that are challenging and thought provoking, or have fun with words and sounds – a bubble becomes 'a bubble of breath in a shimmering shawl' and a snail becomes a nightwriter 'Slow secretary of darkness / scribe of the silver shine'.

Russell Hoban has been writing poems and stories for a long time. His powers have only increased with his latest collection **The Last of the Wallendas and other poems**.

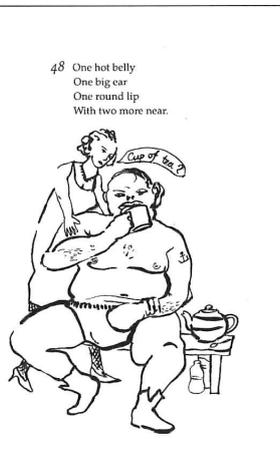
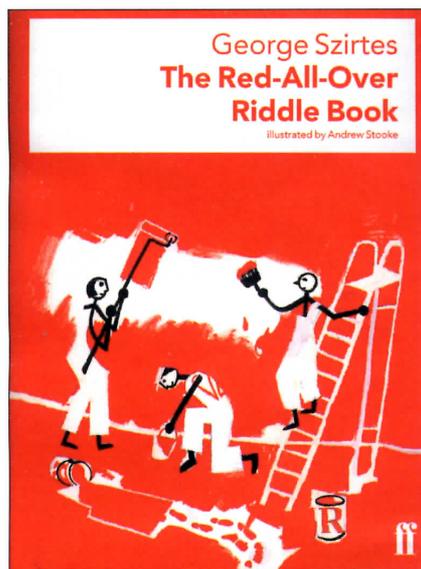
An outstanding collection of absolutely original poems in subject matter, approach and thought. The poems come from statues, newspaper clippings, paintings, events real and imaginary. 'Big Stone Women of Vienna' gives you an idea of the range 'Big stone women don't get tired- / that's why they're hired / to hold up buildings in so many different places. / With their beautiful sad faces / full of patient resignation / and acceptance of their station, / shouldering theatres, shops and banks, / and never a word of thanks / though there's no place in this town / where they've let a building down./ Take a good look all around:/ they've not let one building down!' Not surprisingly this book is short listed for the prestigious Signal Poetry prize.

Faber has produced three very attractive single poet collections for children – George Barker's **Dibby Dibby Dhu**, George Szirtes **The Red-All-Over Riddle Book** and Paul Muldoon **The Noctuary of Narcissus Bat**. They are





expensive at £8.99 but beautifully produced and illustrated (they should be in paperback by the Autumn). I especially liked Szirtes' riddle book which deserves to become a classic. His interweaving of ideas, language and rhythms is dazzling bringing a new lyricism to the traditional style of riddle writing: 'Firm in the saddle, / Riding the full force Of the world as it strikes you, / They clear a way for you. / Later in bed They lie quietly, / Folding their arms and examining their own delicate wrists.' (Glasses)

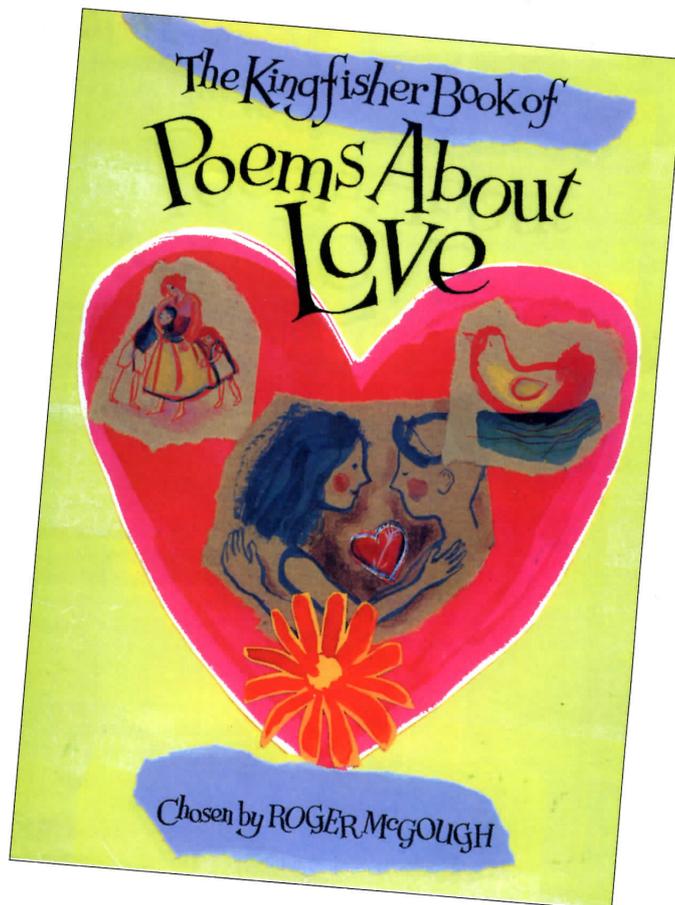


Already reviewed in BfK but worth mentioning again are Adrian Mitchell's collected poems for children **Balloon Lagoon** and his anthology **The Orchard Book of Poetry**, Elizabeth Jennings' haunting collection **A Spell of Words** and Charles Causley's **Selected Poems for Children**, Neil Nuttall and Andy Hawkins' anthology of Welsh poets **Thoughts Like an Ocean** and almost anything by John Agard or Michael Rosen.

### Hard to Classify

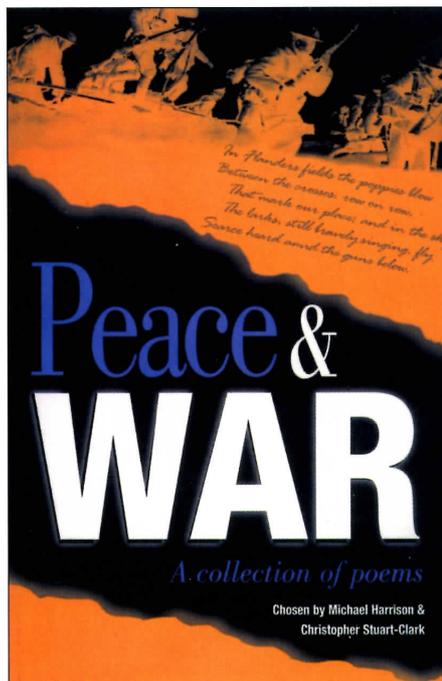
I have left the 'hard to classify' section until the end. These are the books which do not fit into any one age range and will appeal to adults as well as children. Soon to be published, **The Forsaken Merman** is a collection of story poems selected by Berlie Doherty. The idea works well with contemporary writers like Matthew Sweeney and Gillian Clarke rubbing shoulders with Tennyson and Longfellow but there are gaps. Where are the black writers, the Anancy stories? Why have Robert Burns and R L Stevenson been missed out, not to mention Adrian Henri, Adrian Mitchell, Kit Wright ... the list goes on.

**The Kingfisher Book of Poems About Love** chosen by Roger McGough is one of the best selections of love poems you are likely to come across and **Peace and War** chosen by Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark is



the most comprehensive collection of poems about war and peace I have read for a long time.

Finally, something to look forward to – I have only seen it in page proofs but it is going to be a cracker: **Classic Poetry: An Illustrated Collection** chosen by Michael Rosen and illustrated by Paul Howard. This book promises to satisfy all the requirements of a good poetry book, but with a new approach to a common theme. Design and layout cannot be faulted. Paul Howard's illustrations are something new with echoes of the past, appropriate to this collection. The selection of poems is thorough, imaginative and surprising as you would expect from Rosen. He defines a classic poem as one that has 'gone on mattering to people'. There is a picture gallery and useful descriptions of the poets and a simple glossary of terms. This collection is going to be a classic for adults and children alike and I am experiencing that wonderful feeling of excited anticipation when you cannot wait to get out and buy the book. Now that's Poetry Power!



**Helen Taylor**, formerly an English teacher and one-time Education Officer of the Poetry Society, now works in Community Arts organising arts events and poetry projects in Cambridgeshire. She coordinates the annual poetry festival, Poets Live!, and is on the board of the Poetry Book Society. Publications include **There's a Poet Behind You**, **Ink-Slinger** and **The Cambridge Poetry Box**. She has also contributed to the forthcoming **Cambridge Guide to Children's Literature**.

*Bibliographical details of books mentioned appear overleaf.*

## Book information

**The Hypnotiser**, Michael Rosen, Scholastic, 0 590 54342 3, £4.99 hbk

**Playing a Dazzler**, James Berry, Puffin, 0 14 037831 6, £4.99 pbk

**The Poetry Book**, compiled by Fiona Waters, ill. Caroline Crossland, Dolphin, 1 85881 387 5, £5.99 pbk

**School's Out**, compiled by John Foster, ill. Alastair Graham, Oxford, 0 19 276078 5, £4.99 pbk

**Rumble in the Jungle**, Giles Andreae, ill. David Wojtowycz, Orchard, 1 86039 660 7, £4.99 pbk

**Commotion in the Ocean**, Giles Andreae, ill. David Wojtowycz, Orchard, 1 86039 678 X, £9.99 hbk

**The Circle of Days**, adapted by Reeve Lindbergh, ill. Cathie Felstead, Walker, 0 7445 4047 X, £9.99 hbk

**A Caribbean Dozen**, John Agard and Grace Nichols, ill. Cathie Felstead, Walker, 0 7445 2172 6, £12.99 hbk, 0 7445 5201 X, £8.99 pbk

**In the Beginning**, retold by Steve Turner, ill. Jill Newton, Lion Publishing, 0 7459 3605 9, £8.99 hbk

**Mouse Poems**, Brian Patten, ill. Michelle Cartlidge, Scholastic, 0 590 19966 8, £7.99 hbk

**Miss Spider's Tea Party**, David Kirk, Scholastic, 0 590 19026 1, £9.99 hbk

**My Granny went to Market**, Stella Blackstone, ill. Bernard Lodge, Barefoot, 1 901223 43 4, £4.99 pbk

**Seaside Poems**, collected by Jill Bennett, ill. Nick Sharratt, Oxford, 0 19 276174 9, £3.99 pbk

**Elephants and Emus**, compiled by Philippa-Alys Browne, Barefoot, 1 901223 18 3, £4.99 pbk

**A Child's Treasury of Irish Rhymes**, compiled by Alice Taylor, ill. Nicola Emoe, Barefoot, 1 901223 23 X, £4.99 pbk

**Twilight Verses Moonlight Rhymes**, compiled by Mary Joslin, ill. Liz Pichon, Lion Publishing, 0 7459 3817 5, £10.99 hbk

**The Children's Book of Poems, Prayers and Meditations**, compiled by Liz Attenborough, Element, 1 901881 85 7, £12.99 hbk

**Walking the Bridge of Your Nose**, selected by Michael Rosen, ill. Chloë Cheese, Kingfisher, 0 7534 0149 5, £7.99 pbk

**Aliens Stole My Underpants**, compiled by Brian Moses, ill. Lucy Maddison, Macmillan, 0 330 34995 3, £2.99 pbk

**They Think It's All Over!**, chosen by David Orme, ill. Marc Vyvyan-Jones, Macmillan, 0 330 35336 5, £2.99 pbk

**School Trips**, chosen by Brian Moses, ill. Lucy Maddison, Macmillan, 0 330 35279 2, £2.99 pbk

**Who Rules the School?**, Paul Cookson, ill. David Parkins, Macmillan, 0 330 35199 0, £2.99 pbk

**The Hippo Book of Silly Poems**, compiled by John Foster, various illustrators, Scholastic, 0 590 19251 5, £3.50 pbk

**Young Hippo Magic Poems**, compiled by Jennifer Curry, ill. Philip Hopman, Scholastic, 0 590 19170 5, £3.50 pbk

**We Couldn't Provide Fish Thumbs**, poems by James Berry, Judith Nicholls, Grace Nichols, Vernon Scannell and Matthew Sweeney, ill. Colin McNaughton, Macmillan, 0 330 35236 9, £3.99 pbk

**The Day I Fell Down the Toilet**, Steve Turner, ill. David Mostyn, Lion Publishing, 0 7459 3640 7, £3.99 pbk

**Four O'Clock Friday**, John Foster, ill. Debbie Cook, Oxford, 0 19 276093 9, £3.99 pbk

**Robocat**, Adrian Henri, ill. Wendy Smith, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 3963 8, £3.99 pbk

**The World's Your Lobster**, Adrian Henri, ill. Wendy Smith, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 3864 6, £3.99 pbk

**Once Upon An Animal**, Faustin Charles, ill. Jill Newton, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 3865 4, £3.99 pbk

**Plum**, Tony Mitton, ill. Peter Bailey, Scholastic, 0 590 54291 5, £9.99 hbk

**The Last of the Wallendas and other poems**, Russell Hoban, ill. Patrick Benson, Hodder, 0 340 66766 4, £10.99 hbk, 0 340 67830 5, £3.99 pbk

**Dibby Dubby Dhu**, George Barker, ill. Sara Fanelli, Faber, 0 571 17999 1, £8.99 hbk

**The Red-All-Over Riddle Book**, George Szirtes, ill. Andrew Stooke, Faber, 0 571 17807 3, £8.99 hbk

**The Noctuary of Narcissus Batt**, Paul Muldoon, ill. Markéta Prachatická, Faber, 0 571 19020 0, £8.99 hbk

**Balloon Lagoon**, Adrian Mitchell, ill. Tony Ross, Orchard, 1 86039 446 9, £9.99 hbk

**The Orchard Book of Poems**, compiled by Adrian Mitchell, ill. Chloë Cheese, Orchard, 1 85213 316 3, £14.99 hbk, 1 86039 268 7, £9.99 pbk

**A Spell of Words**, Elizabeth Jennings, Macmillan, 0 333 66072 2, £9.99 hbk, 0 330 35422 1, £4.99 pbk

**Selected Poems for Children**, Charles Causley, ill. John Lawrence, Macmillan, 0 330 35404 3, £5.99 pbk

**Thoughts Like an Ocean**, chosen by Neil Nuttall and Andy Hawkins, ill. Jenny Fell, Pont Books, 1 85902 449 1, £5.95 pbk

**The Forsaken Merman**, selected by Berlie Doherty, Hodder, 0 340 68997 8, £11.99 hbk

**The Kingfisher Book of Poems About Love**, chosen by Roger McGough, ill. Chloë Cheese, Kingfisher, 1 85697 384 0, £12.99 hbk

**Peace and War**, chosen by Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark, ill. Alan Marks, Oxford, 0 19 276071 8, £6.99 pbk

**Classic Poetry: An Illustrated Collection**, chosen by Michael Rosen, ill. Paul Howard, Walker, 0 7445 3280 9, £14.99 hbk ■

# Plum

The first collection from Tony Mitton, a wonderful new voice in children's poetry.

Don't be so glum,  
plum.

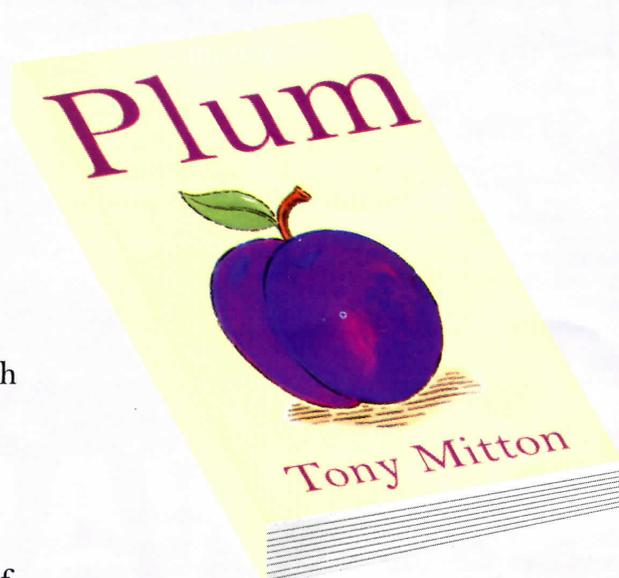
Don't feel beaten.

You were made  
to be eaten.

But don't you know  
that deep within,  
beneath your juicy flesh  
and flimsy skin,

you bear a mystery,  
you hold a key,

you have the making of  
a whole new tree.



Published 19th June 1998 0 590 54291 5 £9.99



"Plum is a peach" Liz Cross, editor

# BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS: Poetry in First Languages

How do you sanction a language? Only a handful of years ago Urdu and Punjabi and Jamaican Patois were hardly ever heard in the classroom. They were secret, underground languages, the languages of home. Now teachers are encouraging the use of first languages in schools and libraries. What is the impact on young poets? **Kevin Berry** attends a young people's Mushaira and a workshop on dialect poetry.

**S**itting in the middle of a group of bubbling and eager Asian children I was startled to hear something I had never, ever considered. 'I dream in Urdu or English,' said thirteen-year-old Afshan Raheem. 'It depends what the dream is about, school dreams are in English, dreams about my family and friends are in Urdu.' Some of Afshan's friends also admitted to bi-lingual dreaming. They answered my questions in English, but if someone was confused, a hurried explanation in Urdu, from a friend, put things right.

## The Mushaira

I was at Scotchman Middle School in Bradford, to investigate the background to a Young People's Mushaira. A mushaira is a gathering of poets and is very popular in Asia. South Asian poems are written to be spoken and performed. A Mushaira relies on boisterous participation for its success and that element is built into the writing.

The children had been asked to try their hand at writing poetry after visiting a gallery of Asian art and design. Their first attempts in English had been quite good but when their teacher had asked them to translate some lines into Urdu these attempts took on greater strength and power. This happened because the children had been using Urdu dictionaries. The dictionary explanation had given them a range of words in Urdu and they could thus choose a word that exactly matched their thoughts and translate it back into English. They were using their dictionaries as a sort of Thesaurus.

'Urdu is a much stronger language. It is much more dramatic, so we can put more of our heart into our work,' explained Ummar Hanif, a boy in the group.

Certainly, the chance to slip into a mother tongue appeared to have released a surge of creativity. Children were bringing drive and energy to their writing, possessing and controlling their work.

Ability with Urdu will vary from student to student – I made the mistake of assuming that ability in mother tongue would be strong but that is not always the case. I met children who spoke English at home and had to ask grandparents to check Urdu words and then write them. I also came across children who spoke what they saw as an 'obscure' dialect at home. They were reluctant to speak it in school for fear of ridicule and they had to be coaxed.

## Partner Poems

Translating poetry can be difficult. I journeyed to another school, Frizinghall First, where teachers had suggested the children write 'partner poems' rather than translate. They might write about a mysterious statue in Urdu one day, for example, and the next day, write about the same statue in English – with the teacher not pressing for the poems to match exactly. The results were exquisite.

When I first tried my six Urdu phrases the effect on my playground cred was astonishing! When a non-Urdu speaking adult tries to speak just a few words there might be self conscious giggling at first, but that soon changes to admiration and offers of help – and suggestions as to the most effective naughty words!



Students from Scotchman Middle School taking part in the Mushaira.

## Jamaican Patois

Is poetry written in Jamaican Patois too difficult for those without a Caribbean background to read?

No! After a few moments' help from the poet Valerie Bloom I managed to read a couple of verses out loud in front of a group of teachers. Valerie, who often writes in Patois, did say that Patois is still thought of as 'broken and bad English' by Jamaicans of the parent and grandparent generations. Yet it has an accepted structure and many words retained from African languages. Much of it relies on tones and inflections such as 'teeth kissing'. Its rhythms are intoxicating.

The advice is to try reading it out loud. The fear of offending or of looking foolish, should not matter. Suddenly giving up, closing the book and telling children to 'read it for themselves' is potentially devastating.

'Children are taught barriers,' says James Berry, the distinguished Jamaican writer. 'Drop the hang up and read it – we have to read Shakespeare but we've never had him around, nor anyone near his voice.' His advice is, 'to read it and read it straight, look at it well and find its way of release. Then in its reading it will be recreated as if the reader actually wrote it.'

Adult approval gives a language value and respect. A child's first language should not be hidden away, it should be brought out into the sunlight and used. ■

Kevin Berry is a writer and ex-teacher.

For young children, poetry should be vigorous and rhythmical. Through its use, they develop growing control and feel for words, and strengthen their grasp of how language works.

Poetry should be perceived as a pleasurable experience, often as an end in itself, without written work as an outcome. It can be a perfect teaching vehicle for listening and speaking, reading and writing; and for THINKING.

### Raising the Profile of Poetry

Teachers can raise the profile of poetry by inviting a poet to their school, by staff and pupils reading a favourite poem in assembly, by compiling a class or school book of favourite poems. Ask Y6 pupils (10 and 11-year-olds) to word process the poems, and the selectors to illustrate them. Have a week in your class, or school, when you all learn a poem a day. Get parents to learn a poem with children at home or children to teach parents a poem learnt in school. There are many ways to involve others in the joy of sharing poetry.

### Writing as a Group

One of the most successful events I have attended was a poetry workshop run by Wes Magee. Wes is hot on rhythm, and his workshop soon had the children joining in enthusiastically. He shared with us some of his poetry and then we wrote a poem as a group.

Inspiration came from the hall in which we sat. One wall was covered with a long green curtain and Wes chose the title, 'Behind the emerald curtain...' and suggested that each verse begin 'There might be...'. Ideas from the floor came thick and fast and each verse turned out to be different in character. Our creation was drafted as we went along on a flip chart. Vocabulary choices were discussed and refined, and line lengths adjusted.

### Using 'Summer Sun'

I have chosen Wes Magee's 'Summer Sun' as the focus of this article as the format of this poem can easily be identified by children. It is also full of feeling, observation and things to think about that will develop their understanding of poetry and support their own poetry writing.

#### WHOLE CLASS SESSION

- Read the poem and ask the children to imagine a scene in their heads as they listen.
- Share initial responses.
- Discuss with a neighbour who they think might be speaking.
- Get some feed-back.
- What do they notice about the beginning of both verses?

# KING OF THE SKY

Gwynneth Bailey with ideas on using a poem for the literacy hour (or any other hour ...) with Years 1 and 2 (5 to 7-year-olds).

## Summer Sun by Wes Magee

Yes,  
the sun shines  
bright  
in the summer,  
and the breeze  
is soft  
as a sigh.

Yes,  
the days are  
long  
in the summer,  
and the sun  
is king  
of the sky.

- Re-read poem.
- Talk about similes ('soft as a sigh'). Do they know any others? (eg. as hard as rock).
- Listen whilst your neighbour sighs.
- Talk about the sun being 'king of the sky'. What did the poet mean? Do they know any other kings? (eg. King of the jungle)
- Read poem a third time with everyone joining in.
- How does this poem make us feel? If we read it on a cold, wet November day, would our feelings be the same?
- Look at the pattern of lines and words in the poem. How is each verse similar? Is it just the first line?

#### GUIDED READING GROUP

Ideas for reflecting, and developing critical analysis:

- Does the poet give us any clues about how to read this poem?
- Look at the punctuation (commas, full stop). Discuss how this clearly marks the

poem into phrases.

- Are there any rhyming words?
- Should any words be emphasised when reading? (bright, breeze; long, sun, king?)
- Try reading one line each around the group. Does this work? If not, why not?
- Can the children suggest why the poet arranged the lines in this special way?

#### WRITING TASK

With classroom assistant or other adult.

- Write additional verses, using Wes Magee's format of lines and rhyme. This work can be done in a group, scribed by the adult, or individually, depending on ability and experience.

#### WORD LEVEL WORK

Try in partners.

- Think of words to rhyme with SIGH/SKY; SUN; KING; BREEZE; BRIGHT (a green hairy toes word)
  - Letter pattern -igh. Use an alphabet, run through from a to z to find initial letters of two other words ending -igh. List words ending -ight, remembering blends eg. sl, fr.

#### POETRY SEARCHING / BROWSING

Provide a box of poetry books.

- Search for other poems about summer. Read with a friend.
- Create a display of favourites.

#### WHOLE CLASS PLENARY

Begin by reading together Wes Magee's two verses, then ask the writing group to read their additional verse/s. Have they caught the celebratory feeling of summer? How did they organise their choice of words, their lines? Did they follow Wes Magee's format?

The poetry search group could read a chosen poem to the class.

Make an enormous shining sun, crowned in splendour. Write Y E S in gigantic letters, followed by the rest of the poem. Display the children's additional verses in the sky.

#### Conclusion

OFSTED reports imply poetry may be falling into decline. Stop the rot! Let us use the opportunities presented by the Literacy Hour to fill classrooms with the rich and diverse joys of poetry. ■

Wes Magee's 'Summer Sun' is included in *Language in Colour*, a Belair Publication.

Gwynneth Bailey is Language Coordinator at Aldborough Primary School, Norwich.



# FINDING THEIR OWN VOICES: Children Writing Poetry



## It is Dark

It is dark  
down the cat's yowling throat,  
inside its throbbing brain.  
It is dark  
when the badger wakens  
and sharpens its claws  
for the unsuspecting mouse.  
It is dark  
when I dream of a rattle  
and clack of the front door;  
the creak, creak of the stairs  
and the oil-slicked face  
screaming, 'Wake up! Wake up!'  
It is dark  
when I hear of factory farming;  
of battery hens, and  
sows tied to the ground.  
Please, someone up there,  
you know, the one called God;  
turn on the light.  
Even the icy moon would do;  
the fire of Mar's temper;  
the light at the tip  
of my mother's smile.

Natasha Haddock (aged 11)

Both Natasha and Catherine's poems, in terms of theme and structure, were very teacher directed. In both cases I used a poem I had written as a model for the children's own writing. My poems also served as lesson plans: for example, one offered 'It is dark' as a repeat line for Natasha, while the other poem suggested 'I'm not really' as a way into her own poem for Catherine.

## Questions

Natasha's poem was written as a response to enquiries by me as to where it is dark; what she dreams about; where 'the light' might come from. Catherine was asked to deny her own tastes and habits and to describe a fanciful and fantastical image of herself.

## Broadening the theme

Natasha produced a powerful poem decrying 'the dark'. Its power lies in words like 'yowling', 'throbbing' and 'oil-slicked'. Too

How do some teachers manage to coax such fresh and accomplished poetry from their students as the two examples here from 11-year-old Natasha Haddock and 9-year-old Catherine Chapman? In an article in BfK's *A Guide to Poetry 0-13* their classroom teacher, John Lynch, described his role as helping young poets 'utilise the skills they already have, and then to stretch their awareness of language and its potential.' BfK asks him to comment on how he worked with these two young poets.

many adjectives can often weaken a poem but here they are part of its strength. Its power also lies in its feeling of desperation and pleading. 'Mar's temper' and the 'icy moon' continue the robustness found in the opening cat image but Natasha finishes cleverly with a contrasting mood of tenderness in 'the tip of my mother's smile'.

Natasha is sufficiently confident and able to bring in her own personal concerns about nature and our maltreatment of animals – here she is keeping to the theme of 'dark' while broadening its definition; equating it with a kind of sadness or sense of injustice.

## Mock Seriousness

In 'The Real Me' Catherine makes fun of herself by denying her own personal eating, reading and viewing habits. She then contrasts this rather mundane, everyday image with an alternative and more impressive construct of herself involving a fantasy night-life.

## The Real Me

I'm not really Catherine Chapman;  
the girl who stuffs jelly babies  
in her mouth, or makes a mess  
with Prawn Cocktail crisps.  
I'm not really the one who reads  
Disney and Me books,  
or the one who runs to her mum  
when she's scared.  
I don't really listen to The Spice Girls  
and watch The Teletubbies, or  
pick my scabs at playtime.  
No, because at night,  
I turn into what I really am:  
Superwoman.  
I look through walls for robbers.  
I can walk through walls too.  
My muscles stretch for miles.  
I lift up houses and  
save the world in thirty seconds.  
Until mum spoils it all  
when she calls me down in the morning  
for my Rice Snaps.

Catherine Chapman (aged 9)

The mock seriousness is brought home when the real Catherine is revealed again by mum and the Rice Snaps.

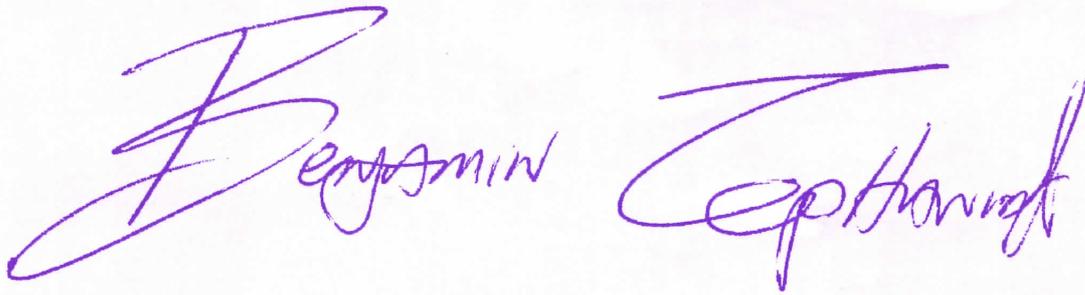
This poem is a rather playful, jokey way of writing about yourself. It avoids the bland listing of favourite things; hobbies and interests. I like the particularity of 'Prawn Cocktail', 'jelly babies' and 'scabs'.

Catherine pokes fun at herself while at the same time producing a witty and cohesive work. ■

John Lynch is a teacher at  
Tattingstone Primary School, Suffolk.

*A Guide to Poetry 0-13* (ed. Chris Powlings and Morag Styles, Books for Keeps and The Reading and Language Information Centre, Reading, 1 871566 03 7) is available from Books for Keeps, 6 Brightfield Road, Lee, London SE12 8QF at £5.50 (UK) or £7.50 (airmail) inc. postage.

# Authorgraph No.111



Benjamin Zephaniah interviewed by Errol Lloyd



**B**orn in the heart of Handsworth, Birmingham, the poet Benjamin Zephaniah thought for years that he was living in some outpost of Jamaica. 'At that time all the food was Jamaican, all the music was Jamaican and all the people were Jamaican. Once my mother told me that someone was coming to visit me from Jamaica and I ran out in the street looking at the buses to see which one was coming from Jamaica.'

His early sense of security and belonging was shattered when his mother got a job in a hospital in a poor white working class area and the family moved there. He was the only black boy in the school and had to bear the brunt of the usual racial stereotyping. He remembers injuring a finger when his teacher forced him against his wishes to play cricket, insisting that 'every dark person must be able to play cricket'. Similarly the day after Muhammad Ali (then Cassius Clay) had won a fight, all the children wanted to box him, and he ended with a bloody nose and lips. He remembers his teacher laughing and saying, 'you have the same colour blood'.

The final straw was a brick. He still has the scar to show for his encounter with a white youth on a bike who slammed a brick against his head. His mother at last saw the light and moved him to Deykin Avenue school in Whitton, Birmingham. This school was very cosmopolitan and he found that he could express himself artistically, and was happy there. It was there that he had found his voice for rhyme and rap and more conventional poetry. 'I have always been doing poetry, even before I knew what the word poetry meant. I was a great rhymer. Sometimes we'd have competitions where someone would pick a word at random and I would improvise a poem around that word. I usually won.'

After becoming well known and receiving numerous invitations to visit schools, Benjamin nurtured the wish his old school would invite him back to do a performance of his work. When no invitation materialised, he wrote them saying 'My name is Benjamin Zephaniah, I am a poet and used to go to your school and I want to come and read some poetry to the children.' They had not realised that he was an old boy and immediately invited him to the school.

The brand of poetry Benjamin developed was strongly influenced by the music and oral poetry of Jamaica, termed 'dub poetry', and what he calls 'street politics'. By the time he was fifteen he had gained a strong local following. By age twenty-two he was finding Birmingham 'too small', and headed south for London where his first book **Pen Rhythm** was published by Page One Books.

He began to read his poetry at community events which met with a positive response. 'People would come up to me in the streets and ask when my next reading would be. The poems then were very angry. I never imagined that anybody would put me on television with my type of poetry. Once after a reading in a room above a bookshop a woman came up to me and said, "you're going to be famous". You must remember the National Front was on the streets then, the SUS laws were in force, and the police were picking me up every night, locking me up and dropping me back on the street. So I didn't think the media would want to hear what I had to say. But she said, "your poetry is in such an original style that people are going to take notice of it".'

The next reading he did at a small polytechnic building in Stratford, East London, proved to be important for his

future. 'In the audience were a lot of people, who are now household

names, who were just emerging from the alternative comedy scene at the time: Rik Mayall, Alexei Sayle, Dawn French, Jennifer Saunders amongst others. They said, "Why don't you do some things with us?" I said, "I don't do comedy." Though my show was quite funny, I said, "I don't want to be dubbed a comedian." And they said, "No. You'll be introduced as a poet. We have a political audience so they will listen, not just a cabaret audience." I started doing shows for them and then it really took off. Channel 4 had just come into being and I got my first exposure on **Black on Black** produced by Trevor Phillips. Because my work was so political I found myself being invited to read at political demonstrations and meetings. One week I'd be performing my poetry at CND demonstrations, the next at animal rights or ANC demonstrations.

I know it sounds like "rent a militant" but I felt passionate about all these things. In the West you are always asked what is the poet's role in society and I always say that I know exactly what it is, it is to be a newscaster when the news is not picking up our stories, so we must tell that news through our poetry. They say here, "Do you want to be a poet or a comedian or an actor?" But in the griot tradition you can be all these things.'

Benjamin is undaunted that oral/performance poetry does not enjoy the same status as written poetry. 'I always say that poetry is a big tree with many branches. You may get introduced to the tree by climbing on to one branch, but that does not mean that you do not

explore the rest of the tree. I came on to that tree through oral poetry, but through that I have come to love classical poetry, limericks, nonsense verse – all kinds of poetry equally and that's the important thing. A lot of people bring a snobbish approach and classify written poetry above the oral, forgetting that the oral came first.'

His entry into the world of children's poetry came

about after he was approached by an editor from

Penguin. 'I originally said no, I just do poems and some children like them. But then again a lot of teachers were saying to me that I should do some poems especially for children, for them to hold the book and say "this is my book" and after a while I said, "Yes. I'll go for it".' His first book was **Talking Turkeys** published in 1994 which was an immediate success and had to be reprinted after six weeks. This book was followed by **Funky Chickens**. He puts the success of these books down to the fact that he tackled real issues such as war, racism, bullying, animal rights and environmental issues, etc.

Benjamin Zephaniah's energy and creativity find expression not only in the oral poetry that comes into its own on the performance stage, but also in playwriting, acting in films and TV, and in making records. He has taken his poetry to every continent and still today he tours for the British Council – who pursue an enlightened policy of projecting a multi-cultural image of Britain abroad. His books and records have gained immense popularity in such far flung places as Malawi and the former Yugoslavia. His help during their years of struggle has been personally acknowledged by such leaders as Nelson Mandela and Yasser Arafat.

Irreverence for the academic trappings of traditional written poetry, a loose-foot, streetwise approach to form and content and a large-hearted humanity, permeate his poetry, and this should ensure his popularity with school children – natural iconoclasts – for years to come. ■

Errol Lloyd is an artist and writer.

### Benjamin Zephaniah's poetry

**Talking Turkeys**, Puffin, 0 14 036330 0, £4.99 pbk

**Funky Chickens**, Puffin, 0 14 037945 2, £4.99 pbk

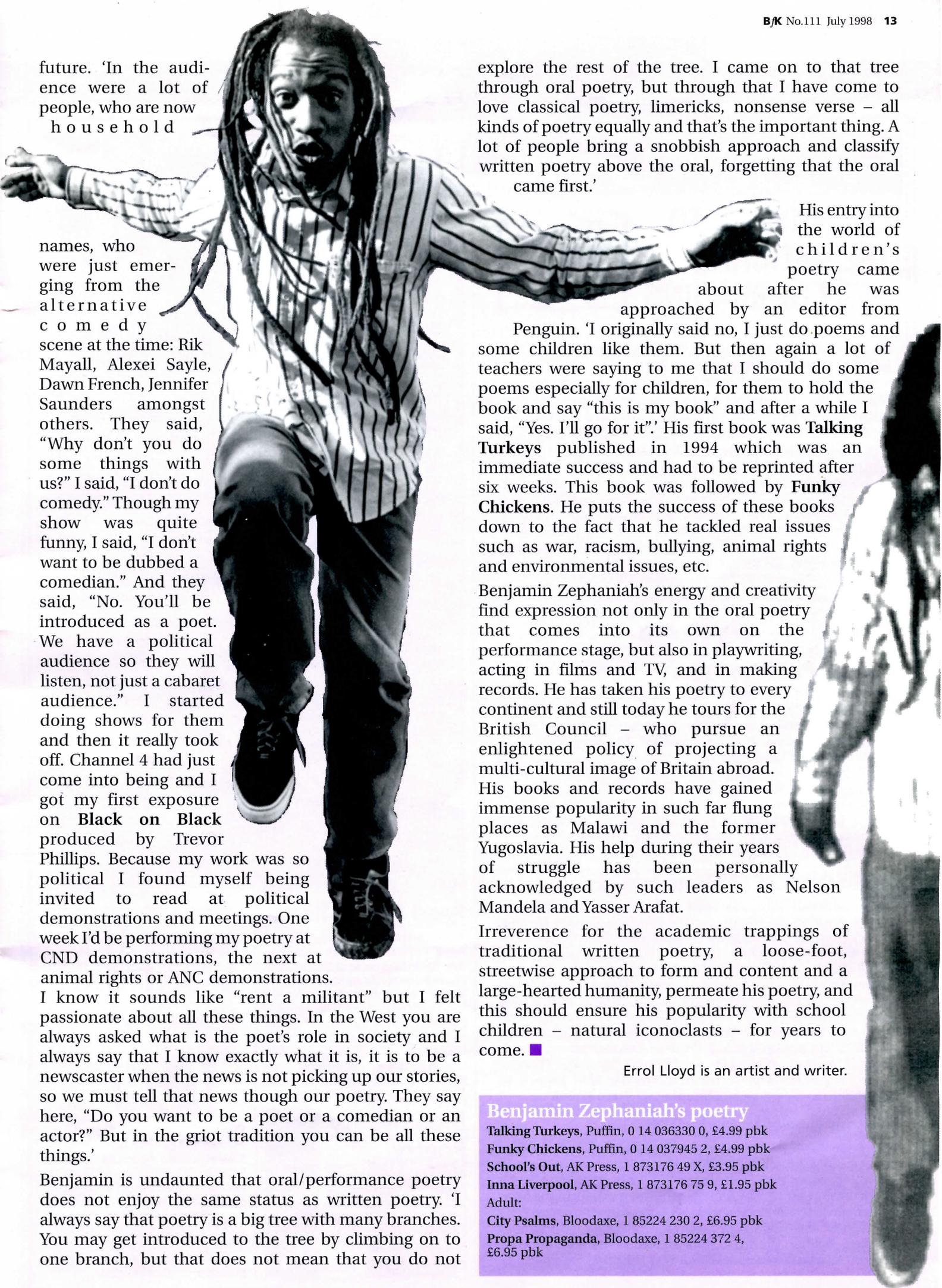
**School's Out**, AK Press, 1 873176 49 X, £3.95 pbk

**Inna Liverpool**, AK Press, 1 873176 75 9, £1.95 pbk

Adult:

**City Psalms**, Bloodaxe, 1 85224 230 2, £6.95 pbk

**Propa Propaganda**, Bloodaxe, 1 85224 372 4, £6.95 pbk



## NEWS

COUNTDOWN TO  
THE NATIONAL  
YEAR OF READING

• School Standards Minister Stephen Byers has announced the launch of the National Year of Reading website which can be found at [www.yearofreading.org.uk](http://www.yearofreading.org.uk).

• Byers also announced the allocation of £400,000 for 28 National Year of Reading projects across the country. Details from The National Year of Reading, National Literacy Trust, Swire House, 59 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6AJ.

• The Arts Council of England has launched a country-wide Writers in Schools initiative to which Local Education Authorities can apply and a scheme to enable development of reading promotion initiatives in conjunction with the National Year of Reading. The schemes which will share funding of £200,000 will be run by the Arts Council. For details and an application form, send an A4 self-addressed envelope to Christine Paris, Literature Department, The Arts Council of England, 14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ.

## Prizes

## Rhone-Poulenc Prize

The shortlisted titles for the 1998 science book prize are **How Did I Begin?** and **Yum-Yum!** by Mick Manning and Brita Granström (Franklin Watts), **The Big Bang** by Heather Couper and Nigel Henbest (Dorling Kindersley), **The Kingfisher Book of Oceans** by David Lambert (Kingfisher), **Understanding Your Muscles and Bones** by Rebecca Treays (Usborne Publishing) and **Yikes!** by Mike Janulewicz (Collins Children's Books). The six books were chosen by Dr Adam Hart-Davis, Karen Davies, Elizabeth Hammill, Justine Hopkins and Damian Kelleher. The winning book will be chosen by students from 21 schools around the country.

## Bisto Book of the Year Award

The shortlisted titles are Mark O'Sullivan's **Angel Without Wings** (Wolfhound Press), Gerard Whelan's **Dream Invader** (O'Brien Press), Siobhan Parkinson's **Four Kids, Three Cats, Two Cows, One Witch (Maybe)** (O'Brien Press), Larry O'Loughlin's **The Goban Saor** illustrated by John Leonard (Blackwater Press), Soibhe Lally's **The Hungry Wind** (Poolbeg Press), Ed Miliano's **It's a Jungle Out There** (Wolfhound Press), Dan Kissane's **Jimmy's Leprechaun Trap** illustrated by Angela Clarke (O'Brien Press), P J Lynch's **When Jessie Came Across the Sea** (Walker Books/Poolbeg Press), Mark O'Sullivan's **White Lies** (Wolfhound Press) and Mairead Ashe Fitzgerald's **The World of Colmcille Also Known as Columba** illustrated by Stephen Hall (O'Brien Press).

## Angus Book Award 1998

The Angus Book Award, which involves third-year students in all the eight Angus secondary schools in the reading and voting process, has been won by Robert Swindells for **Unbeliever** (Puffin). The winner received a trophy in the form of a replica Pictish stone and £250. The runners-up were Julie Bertagna's **The Spark Gap** (Mammoth), Lynne Reid Banks's **Broken Bridge** (Puffin), Ann Halam's **The Powerhouse** (Orion) and Ian Strachan's **Which Way is Home?** (Mammoth).

Useful  
Organisations  
No.1: THE  
POETRY  
SOCIETY

THE POETRY SOCIETY

22 Betterton Street, London WC2H 9BU (tel: 0171 420 9880; fax: 0171 240 4818; E-mail: [poetrysoc@dial.pipex.com](mailto:poetrysoc@dial.pipex.com); website: [www.poetrysoc.com](http://www.poetrysoc.com))

An organisation whose sole concern is the nurture and promotion of poets and poetry. Their Education Department (the direct line to the Education Officer is 0171 420 9894) is now offering membership of the Poetry Society to schools.

For £25 Primary schools receive a Poetry Places pack which has everything they need to know about working with poets and poetry across the curriculum, display materials, useful contacts, a poetry consultancy service, training opportunities and a special annual publication linked to National Poetry Day.

For £45 Secondary schools will receive all the benefits of institution membership including **Poetry Review** and **Poetry News** as well as a Poetry Pack containing all they need to know about live poets and keeping poetry alive through key stage 3 and beyond.

Poetry enthusiasts up to the age of 18 can become members of the Poetry Society for £10 a year. Every member receives **Poetry News** featuring a section of news and reviews written by and for young people.

The Poetry Society is running the Young National Poetry Competition which is free to everyone between 11 and 18 years old. It offers the twelve winners a chance to go on a week's poetry writing course at the Arvon Centre. Send your poem to The Poetry Society labelled 'Young National Competition' by 31 July with your name, address and date of birth written on the reverse of every sheet of paper.

## Reed finds a home

After three years of uncertainty Reed Children's Books (Thomas the Tank Engine and Winnie the Pooh) has been bought by Egmont, owner in the UK of World International and Egmont Fleetway. Reed Children's Books has been renamed Egmont Children's Books. Jane Winterbotham continues as Managing Director with Gill Evans as Deputy Managing Director.

Bloomsbury  
Poetry

Bloomsbury Children's Books are to launch a poetry list in October with new titles from Faustin Charles, Jackie Kay and Adrian Henri (see page 6).



## Barrington Stoke

A new publishing house based in Edinburgh, Barrington Stoke is launching a list aimed at reluctant readers from eight to 13 which will 'bridge the important gap between graded reading schemes and "real" books'. Authors on the new list include Michael Morpurgo, Vivian French and Mary Hoffman.







# BfKREVIEWS

Reviews (of both hardback and paperback fiction and non-fiction) are grouped for convenience into both age categories and under teaching range. Within each section, you will find reviews for younger children at the beginning. Books and children being varied and adaptable, we suggest that you look either side of your area. More detailed recommendations for use can often be found within the review.

## RATING

Unmissable ★★★★★  
 Very Good ★★★★★  
 Good ★★★  
 Fair ★★  
 Sad ★

## REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

**Gwynneth Bailey** is Language Coordinator at Aldborough County Primary School, Norwich.

**Clive Barnes** is Principal Children's Librarian, Southampton City.

**David Bennett** is Senior Teacher and Head of the English Faculty at George Spencer School, Nottinghamshire.

**Jill Bennett** is the author of *Learning to Read with Picture Books*. She is Early Years Coordinator and teacher at Chatsworth Infant School in Hounslow, Middlesex.

**Roy Blatchford** is UK Director of Reading is Fundamental and Series Editor of Longman Literature.

**Valerie Coghlan** is Librarian at the Church of Ireland College of Education, Dublin.

**Robert Dunbar** lectures in English and children's literature at the Church of Ireland College of Education, Dublin.

**Nikki Gamble** is Head of English at the School of Education, Anglia Polytechnic University.

**Annabel Gibb** works as a supply teacher in primary schools in Leeds.

**George Hunt** is a lecturer in Language in Education at the University of Reading.

**Adrian Jackson** is General Adviser – English, West Sussex.

**Andrew Kidd** is Headteacher at Burscough County Primary School in Lancashire.

**Margaret Meek** is Emeritus Reader at the University of London Institute of Education.

**Val Randall** teaches English at Mansfield High School, North East Lancashire.

**Steve Rosson** is Head of Library Resources at Moseley School, Birmingham.

**Elizabeth Schlenter** is the Librarian at Penglais School, Aberystwyth, and the compiler of *Reading Therapy for Children – books for hospital and home*.

**Judith Sharman** is Head of Hoole All Saints Infants School, Cheshire.

**Rosemary Stones** is Editor of *Books for Keeps*.

**Morag Styles** is Reader in Children's Literature and Language at Homerton College, Cambridge.

**Nicholas Tucker** is a lecturer in Psychology at Sussex University.

## TITLES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

	Page		Page
Abomination	★★ 24	MapHead 2	★★★★★ 26
Baby Duck and the New Eyeglasses	★★★★ 20	My Grandfather is a Magician	★★★★★ 24
Berlin Wall, The	★★★ 25	My Left Foot	★★★★★ 26
Big Silver Spaceship	★★★★★ 21	No More Bullying!	★★★★★ 21
Bing Bang Boogie, It's a Boy Scout	★★★★ 22	Off to School	★★★ 22
Boys Are Us	★★★★ 23	"Og Fo" says the Space Bug	★★★ 22
Carmine's Story	★★★★ 24	Our Puppy's Holiday	★★★★ 20
Child of the May	★★★★ 26	Periods	★★★★ 26
Child's Treasury of Irish Rhymes, A	★★★ 20	Pets Just Want to Have Fun!	★★★ 22
Children Don't Divorce	★★★★ 21	Pippo Gets Lost	★★★★ 19
Clown	★★★★★ 21	Rattle and Hum in Double Trouble	★★★ 22
Clues from Names	★★★★ 25	Religion	★★ 26
Crisis in Central Africa	★★★ 25	Robln of Sherwood	★★★★★ 24
Dad's Dodgy Lodger	★★★★ 23	Ruby Red: Tales from the Weedwater	★★★ 23
Daisy is a Mummy	★★★ 19	Scratch 'n' Sniff	★★★★ 21
Dealing with Eating Disorders	★★★★ 26	Sex	★★★★ 26
Dear Alien	★★★★ 23	Skellig	★★★★★ 25
"Do I Look Funny to You?"	★★★ 22	Sound City	★★★★ 22
Element Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mind, Body, Spirit and Earth, The	★★★ 25	Stellaluna	★★ 20
Empty Frame, The	★★ 24	Talking Pictures	★★ 23
Family Secrets	★★★ 26	Thud!	★★★★ 21
Farmyard Tales from Far and Wide	★★★★ 22	Timmy and Tiger	★★★ 22
Fish Who Could Wish, The	★★★ 21	Tom and Pippo Go for a Walk	★★★★ 19
Forest Tales from Far and Wide	★★★★ 22	Tom and Pippo Read a Story	★★★★ 19
From the Garden to the Street	★★★★★ 18	Tom and Pippo's Day	★★★★ 19
Gita and Goldie	★★★ 22	Tom's Private War	★★★★★ 23
Harry on Holiday	★★★ 22	Tudor Warship, A	★★★★★ 24
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	★★★★★ 25	Unexplained Psychic Powers, The	★★ 25
Hiccup on the High Seas, A	★★ 22	Victorian Mill, A	★★★★★ 24
How Castles Were Built	★★★ 24	Whistling Jack	★★★★★ 23
How to Live Forever	★★★★ 21	Willa and Old Miss Annie	★★★★★ 23
"I don't Like Space Glop"	★★★ 22	Winnie the Witch	★★★ 21
Long Nosed Pig, The	★★★★★ 19	Witnesses to War	★★★★★ 25
Love Lessons	★★★ 26	Women's Rights	★★★★ 26
		Year with Poetry, A	★★★★★ 19

## Books About Children's Books

### From the Garden to the Street: Three Hundred Years of Poetry for Children

★★★★★

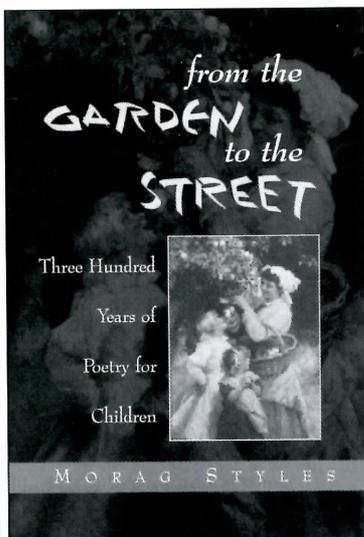
Morag Styles, Cassell, 312pp,  
 0 304 33224 0, £45.00 hbk,  
 0 304 33222 4, £15.99 pbk

Poetry, what language makes and memory holds, is children's direct way into literature. Iona and Peter Opie say 'it is probably a fact that every one of us could recite a string of nursery rhymes before we knew the meaning of the words that formed them'. Rhythmic verses, old and new, are chanted by the young long before they can read. Nursery rhymes are now recognised as pre-school literacy.

However, when in their Preface to *The Oxford Book of Children's Verse* the Opies say that their concern is 'to make available in one place the classics of children's poetry', so that 'the writing of verse for the young can be appreciated as an art form', they reveal some recurrent questions. Is children's poetry the same as children's verse? What distinguishes poems deliberately written for children from poetry children have discovered and adopted for themselves? 'The more pure the poetry,' say the Opies, 'the more difficult it can be to say for whom the poet is writing'. What kind of a distinction lies in 'classic' and 'pure'? Neil Philip claims there is a recognisable tradition of children's verse 'with its own landmarks and its own rhetoric'. Modern poetry for children comes in a wide variety of

books 'for fun'. Properly to appraise any selection we need to see what is left out, but this is difficult if we lack some perspective of the scene as a whole.

Now Morag Styles, whose reputation in this field is well-established, offers a substantial 'Introduction' to 300 years of 'anything and everything that could be called poetry for children' with a view to confronting some of the recurrent questions about this literature. By privileging children as readers, and setting authors and poems in their social and historical contexts, she contrasts pre-twentieth century childhood arcadias with the urban reality encountered by contemporary children 'on the street', and shows how adult constructions of childhood are 'varied, contradictory and subject to change'.



The last chapter shows how much our 'tradition' has been enriched by others.

As the arrangement of the book is more thematic than strictly chronological, there are some repetitions in the details. Nevertheless, important ideas are aired for the first time, with accompanying evidence. Styles' central theme is that the so-called 'canon' of poetry seen as appropriate for children in the context of their education consists of poems written for adults and taught as 'the best'. Kipling's 'If', for example, was voted the most popular poem in English on a National Day of Poetry; Keats' 'Odes' have been in anthologies and examination papers from generation to generation. Anthologists not only please themselves, but also become both historians and critics in their notes and prefaces. Before the late 20th century, poets, especially women, writing in English directly for children are only half as likely to be chosen. In Morag Styles' view, the selectors 'share the same prejudices,

and, indeed, feed off one another's choices', with the result that 'great' poetry continues to marginalize the work of those whose concern is to address a young audience.

Styles gives the poetic giants their due, notably the Romantics, who so changed the prevalent attitude to children in their time. Burns, Cowper, Clare and many others are 'read into' this display of the extraordinary riches of a poetic literature that brings together childhood and landscape. Blake stands out above the rest, as he never did in his lifetime, by virtue of his understanding that, when poetry is joined with art, children aesthetically 'live out' the virtues they read about.

An important revelation comes from a foregrounding of a significant number of the women poets whose voices were allowed to be heard only when they wrote hymns, lullabies and poems for a child audience, offering the gentler aspects of nature and nurture. Styles links their distinctive 'nursery' verse with the earlier work of Jane Johnson (1706-59), whose stories and poems for her own children have been recently discovered and declared important, and, later, with the acknowledged verses of Christina Rossetti, whose 'lightness', once dismissed, is now seen as 'nursery verse of the highest order'. One wonders what else in this domain will turn up to surprise us.

Styles' lifetime of professional contact with children and their poetry gives her views a distinctive strength and passion. Robert Louis Stevenson is the only poet to have a chapter all to himself because he 'captured as faithfully as it is possible for an adult to do, what it feels like to be a child'. She compares poems by Stevenson and Michael Rosen, both radicals who 'had mixed feelings about the "literary establishment" of their own time'. In a generously illustrated chapter about comic poetry she explores its varied history, then gives her own readings of Carroll

and Lear to link the English sense of verbal humour with its roots in subversion and the moral seriousness of laughter. There are sensitive tributes to Causley and Hughes, but more direct engagement with the popular poetry which over the last twenty years, has restored different aspects of the oral tradition and given children's poetry back to children.

Without a doubt, Michael Rosen and his contemporaries have made active children readers of poetry in ways that outpace the critics who characterize their work as 'urchin', 'populist', and 'accessible'. Readers are persuaded that their own voices are being heard, more in the tradition of I Saw Esau than of the Oxford Books of Verse. Rosen's familiarity with modern transmissions and his discreetly concealed scholarship let him come closer to his audience than has ever been possible. Over the years, he and his contemporaries have owed much to Morag Styles for championing their intent to put children, memorably, in touch with themselves. MM

### A Year with Poetry

★★★★

Edited by Myra Barrs and Michael Rosen, CLPE, 96pp, 1 872267 12 2, £11.00 inc. p&p

A text on poetry by Rosen and Barrs suggests a treat in store. Readers will not be disappointed. A group of London teachers have met regularly over the course of a year to work with Rosen on poetry. In the opening chapter Rosen tells the story of the group, pointing up some of his beliefs about children and poetry along the way – the centrality of playfulness in dealings with poetry; the links between reading, writing and oracy; the need for the widest possible definition of poetry. Barrs' concluding chapter is a fascinating reflection on what the process meant

### A YEAR WITH POETRY

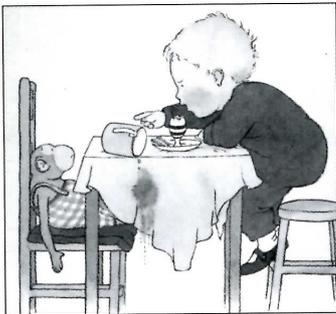


for the teachers in terms of their classrooms, their confidence in tackling poetry and, perhaps most importantly, their personal development. The rest of the book is devoted to teachers' snapshots of some of their key experiences with poetry. The range was wide: one person focused on performance, another on organising a Poetry Week; some chose fine-grained research, such as a study of two six-year-olds, while others went for the bigger picture, e.g. 'a year with year 6'; and we encounter everything from 'Proustian Smarties' to shopping raps, poems that are 'not quite Tennyson' to those that are 'not yet on the Underground'. The individual voices of the teachers and their enthusiasm for tackling poetry with their pupils are a tonic for anyone feeling jaded by the text, sentence and word level straight-jacket of the National Literacy Strategy. Ideas are brought to life by attractive photographs of kids in classrooms and, of course, poetry by young writers. A feast of ideas for those new to poetry and fresh challenges for old hands. Another very good book from the CLPE stable. MS

## REVIEWS Under 5s Pre-School/Nursery/Infant

### Pippo Gets Lost

0 7445 6120 5



### Tom and Pippo's Day

0 7445 6123 X

### Tom and Pippo Go for a Walk

0 7445 6121 3

### Tom and Pippo Read a Story

0 7445 6122 1

★★★★

Helen Oxenbury, Walker, 16pp, £3.50 each board

First published ten years ago, these titles about episodes from the life of toddler Tom and his toy monkey, Pippo have been reissued as small, square board books. Aspects of the relationships between Tom, his comfort object and his parents are shown through the uneventful happenings of the toddler day.

Small pencil drawings, supporting and sometimes extending the text, appear at the top of each left-hand page – the text leads in turn to the full-colour right-hand page taking the eye from left to right in preparation for (much-later) reading.

Their episodic nature makes these books work best as a set, so that the reader becomes familiar with the characters. Toddler life and emotions are gently and humorously shown, and Daddy has a higher profile than is usual in books of this type. AG

### Daisy is a Mummy

★★★

Lisa Kopper, Puffin 'Playtime Books', 32pp, 0 14 055565 X, £4.99 pbk

Mummy looks after her baby all day, paralleled by English bull terrier Daisy with her three pups, until tidy-



up time when Daisy leads all the babies off to Mummy's bed for a nap instead.

This picture book has large, clear type and accurately illustrated toddler and puppy behaviour. Each of Mummy's activities is described, and followed by a chorus of 'so does Daisy' allowing toddler sharers to anticipate and join in but the rhythm this provides is lost in the final third of the book, leading to an irritatingly inconsistent text overall. AG

### The Long Nosed Pig

★★★★

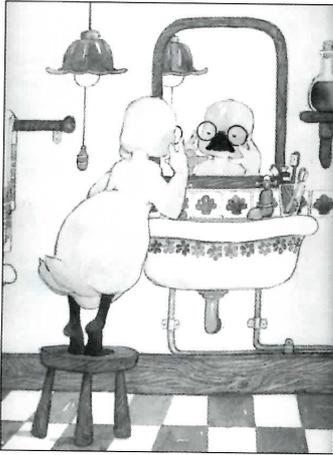
Keith Faulkner, ill. Jonathan Lambert, Madcap Books, 16pp, 0 233 99257 X, £5.99 hbk novelty

This pop-up book from the same stable as *The Wide-Mouthed Frog* has proved successful with all the children I tried it with in the Infant classes. With Kipling-like charm Faulkner and Lambert have produced a cautionary tale showing how pride or in this case a pig boasting about a beautiful long nose comes before a dramatic fall or shortening of this feature! Younger children loved the surprise element as each page turned and the pop-ups grew increasingly extravagant. Older children wanted to see how it worked but all loved the cocky pig and gleefully enjoyed his downfall! This title will not have a long shelf life but will be much loved and may entice those children who need many invitations into the wider world of books. JS

## Baby Duck and the New Eyeglasses

★★★★

Amy Hest, ill. Jill Barton, Walker, 32pp, 0 7445 5220 6, £4.99 pbk



Baby Duck has been a favourite with many in our school since her debut in *In the Rain with Baby Duck* followed by *You're the Boss, Baby Duck!* so it came as no surprise that this book was greeted rapturously by her fans. However it is good to see that this is not just another sequel but that the author and illustrator have used this popular character to good effect with a story that will help children with glasses feel that wearing glasses is not only OK but a good thing! This book arrived at just the right time for a four-year-old neighbour and never

made it into school so we had to get another copy. This too has been much chosen, rarely staying on the library shelves, so a further secret copy is now safe at hand for those children who need it! JS

## Our Puppy's Holiday

★★★★

Ruth Brown, Andersen, 32pp, 0 86264 820 3, £4.99 pbk



Readers familiar with Brown's *Greyfriars Bobby* will at once recognise the nostalgic landscape of this new title. Idyllic rural and seaside settings are the backcloth for puppy's first encounter with screeching gulls, mysterious caves, tumbling streams and cottage firesides. Innocence and charm permeate the pages, with Brown's animal detail quite breathtaking. Under fives will certainly be absorbed by the pictures alone; equally the simple text is finely

judged with just the right mix of repetition and progression for beginning readers. RB

## Stellaluna

★★

Janel Cannon, David Bennett Books, 48pp, 1 85602 272 2, £4.99 pbk

This is a curious picture book about a fruit bat, separated from its mother, who is adopted by a family of birds. The text is, at turns, affectedly lyrical and straightforwardly twee: the fruit bat is *Stellaluna*; the baby birds are *Pip*, *Flitter* and *Flap*.



The illustrations are meant to be charming and striking but are self consciously posed, like studio photographs. The foreground is bathed in light and the background disappears. You have no idea that the bat lives in a tropical or semi-tropical environment (as the 'Bat notes' at the back say it does). And what are these (dull grey) tropical birds?

The book may appeal to pre-school

and infant children but I feel the production is calculated more to impress their doting parents (and the reviewers from the Sunday papers quoted on the cover). CB

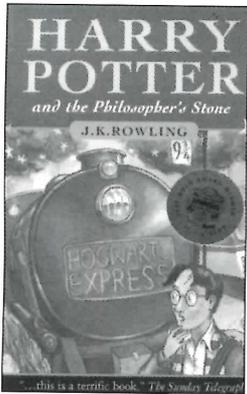
## A Child's Treasury of Irish Rhymes

POETRY

★★★★

Compiled by Alice Taylor, ill. Nicola Emoe, Barefoot, 48pp, 1 901223 23 X, £4.99 pbk

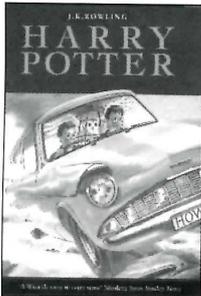
In her introduction to this picture book format poetry collection Taylor mentions parents and grandparents and it is to them that this collection is likely to appeal most. The poems and rhymes gathered together are all remembered by Taylor from her childhood in rural Ireland, but it is doubtful that they are all Irish in their origins. It seems unfair to the authors of the poems that they are not given credit on the pages on which their work is quoted; one has to go to the back page to discover this information. Nor is Robin Flower, the translator from Irish of the joyful 'Pangur Ban', given any credit at all. Nevertheless, the selection is pleasant if a trifle twee, and Emoe's illustrations bring a pleasing originality and liveliness to subject matter which is often stereotyped.VC



## From the publishers who brought you HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE...

- Winner of the Smarties Book Prize Gold Medal 9-12yrs
- Winner of the British Book Awards' Children's Book of the Year
- Shortlisted for The Carnegie Medal
- Shortlisted for The Guardian Fiction Award
- Shortlisted for The Sheffield Children's Book Award
- Shortlisted for The Birmingham Cable Children's Book Award
- Shortlisted for The Children's Book Award
- Shortlisted for The Young Telegraph Paperback of the Year
- Shortlisted for the Nottinghamshire Children's Book Award

## WATCH OUT FOR



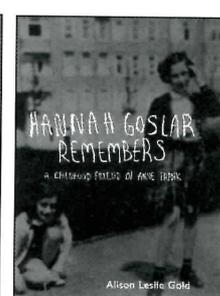
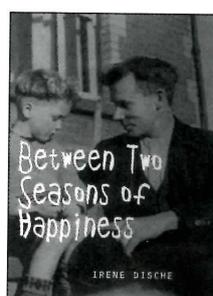
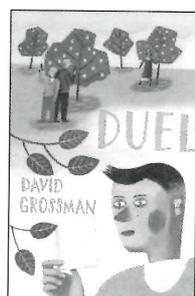
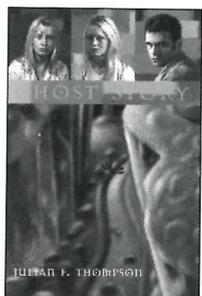
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets  
Ghost Story

That Summer

Duel

Hannah Goslar Remembers

Between Two Seasons of Happiness



- £10.99 hb, July, ISBN 0 7475 3849 2
- £4.99 pb, June, ISBN 0 7475 3660 0
- £4.99 pb, June, ISBN 0 7475 3658 9
- £10.99 hb, Sept, ISBN 0 7475 4092 6
- £10.99 hb, Aug, ISBN 0 7475 4026 8
- £10.99 hb, Aug, ISBN 0 7475 4029 2

For further enquiries, please contact Rosamund Walker at Bloomsbury on TEL: 0171 494 2111

The books are available through your usual suppliers, alternatively contact Exel Logistics on TEL: 01634 297 123 or FAX 01634 298 000

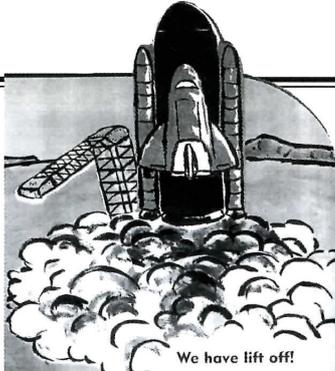
BLOOMSBURY



**Big Silver Spaceship****NON-FICTION** ★★★★★

Ken Wilson-Max, David Bennett Books, 14pp, 1 85602 262 5, £8.99 novelty

We have lift-off! This bold, colourful pop-up book has instant appeal for young children. The child takes control of the space mission by moving the ingeniously engineered



tabs. On leaving the earth's atmosphere, we eject the external fuel tank and manoeuvre the satellite into orbit. As mission is accomplished, we open up the satellite to discover its purpose – it is to relay weather data back to earth. Touch down! The amazing parachute brake concludes another successful voyage. The text is challenging, but the clear, simple sentences, using words familiar in spoken language,

are absorbed with enthusiasm. This is the sixth and final title in Wilson-Max's series of interactive pop-up books, primarily great fun, but featuring fascinating educational information. GB

**REVIEWS 5–8 Infant/Junior****Winnie the Witch**

Valerie Thomas, ill. Korky Paul, 0 19 272358 8

**The Fish Who Could Wish**

John Bush, ill. Korky Paul, 0 19 272360 X

★★★★

Oxford University Press Big Books, £12.99 each

It seems almost churlish to criticise a publisher's fast response to the desperate need for big books which has been created by the combination of windfall literacy funding and the strong and valid case that has been made for their usefulness in the classroom. However, the fact remains that font size is crucial if one is to use big books to teach children together. In both these titles the font size is nowhere near big enough to meet the constraints of group, let alone class, teaching.

Despite this criticism, these two giant-size picture books should not be dismissed. Both are old favourites and with their strong visual content, they lend themselves in their large format to helping children to understand the conventions of illustration. Some very bizarre misconceptions can occur when children have not grasped how to do this.

In *Winnie the Witch* Korky Paul uses line to convey that Winnie has fallen downstairs after tripping over Wilbur the cat rather than that she has, as one Reception class child thought, lost her temper while sitting reading on the stairs because she could not read the words in her book! Understanding the convention of movement marks and learning that the way in which illustrations are laid out can be crucial to making sense of the story are just two of the many illustrative conventions that need to be explained to children. This is vital for those who do not have a strong literary background and for whom such confusions only exacerbate their difficulties in accessing books.

For some children – at the risk of sounding sexist ... often boys – learning that an illustrator proceeds through stages (concept, ideas, rough sketches, detailed illustration etc.) which mirror the stages of creating written work, can help to improve the quality of their own written work (as well as their illustration!). The purpose of drafting can be more easily understood when seen graphically through the stages of illustration. Learning that there are ways in which artists, like authors, use humorous subplots (cf the changes that occur in the drawings of the rooms in Winnie's house as the story unfolds) and that they too

develop our knowledge of the characters and of their feelings can also be illuminating. Learning the language of illustration fascinates children, demands a lot from them and deserves a place in 'literacy hour'. JS

**Children Don't Divorce**

Ill. Nicola Spoor, 1 899248 02 1

**No More Bullying!**

Ill. Pat Ludlow, 1 899248 07 2

★★★★

Rosemary Stones, *Happy Cat 'Talking It Through'*, 32pp, £3.99 each pbk

I reviewed these two picture books when they were first published in 1991 and used such adjectives as 'outstanding' and 'excellent'. There is no reason to revise that early opinion. It is rare to find books on these sensitive subjects that combine quality illustrations, good information and an interesting plot.

In *Children Don't Divorce* the two young children suffer from nightmares, bed wetting, trouble at school and the feeling that the split in their heretofore happy family may be their fault. The problem of new partners is also addressed. There is resolution along with the knowledge that things will never be the same.

In *No More Bullying!* a little girl suffers dreadfully from a particular child, who, because of her popularity, is able to carry the whole class along with her bullying tactics. When an older boy observes the class, he is able to help the little girl tell about the bullying and get help. The teachers handle the situation well once they know of the problem. Both books are realistic, and the illustrations in soft pastel are particularly attractive. ES

**Clown**

★★★★★

Quentin Blake, Red Fox, 32pp, 0 09 949361 6, £4.99 pbk

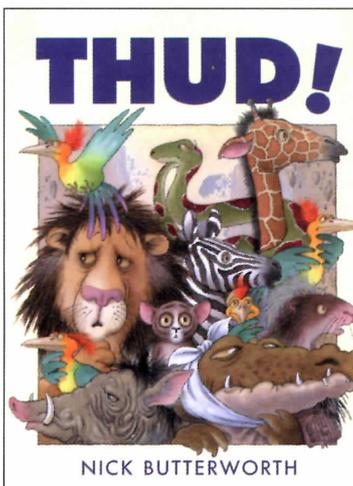
This masterpiece of a wordless picture book, an award winner in 1996, follows the fate of a hapless clown doll. He escapes the dustbin, where he and a variety of other toys are deposited, from whence he falls into a fast-moving, seemingly unending series of disasters. A sense of urgency drives us on to read each picture sequence and turn the page. We are emotionally involved as we scan the images whilst he seeks help for his abandoned friends. It is the clown himself who takes command of fate, and works towards a very satisfying conclusion. A powerful book, one to relish sharing with children. GB

**Thud!**

★★★★

Nick Butterworth, Collins, 48pp, 0 00 198264 8, £9.99 hbk, 0 00 664646 8, £5.99 pbk

The practised hand of Nick ('Percy the Park Keeper') Butterworth ensures this picture book is not a formulaic tale about monsters. For a start, the galaxy of animals which surface in *Thud!* are all brilliantly and wittily drawn from the aardvark and the antelope to the zebra and the gorilla. Second, the familiar tale of animals wanting to rid themselves of the Ugly Beast and the Monster has a delightful twist. For teachers and librarians looking for a text with careful language repetition, a developing vocabulary and lots of humour *Thud!* offers an attractive read for a junior class. RB

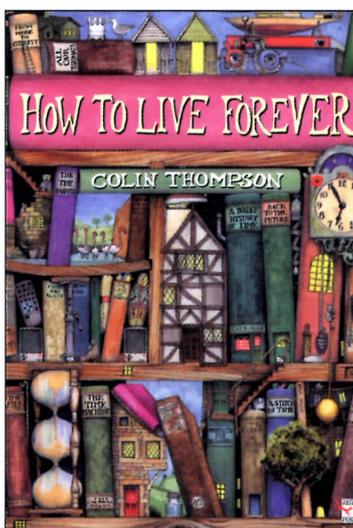
**Scratch 'n' Sniff**

★★★★

Gus Clarke, Andersen, 32pp, 0 86264 810 6, £4.99 pbk

Though the title risks suggesting otherwise, this is firmly not just another dog and cat story. I rarely come across an early story book that has me chuckling out loud on a first reading – and finding the same response with six- and seven-year-olds. In short, *Scratch* the cat wants his mates round to play. The only way he can get Sniff the dog out of the house is to put very, very strong doggy drops in Sniff's drinking bowl and send him off in search of the weird and wonderful aromas.

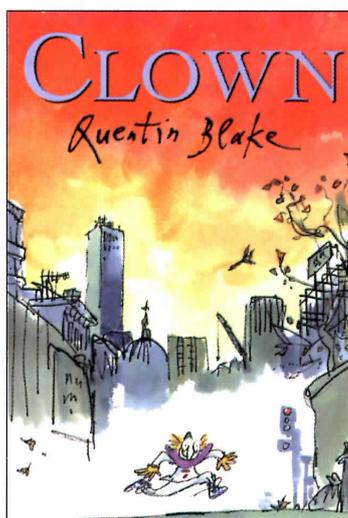
Sniff's encounters with fellow canines Scruft, Sebastian, Fifi and a wonderfully irreverent Spike ('I like a bit of leg now and again') make for great shared reading. Page lay-out, illustration and text will ensure this fast becomes a favourite for the literacy hour! RB

**How to Live Forever**

★★★★

Colin Thompson, Red Fox, 32pp, 0 09 946181 1, £4.99 pbk

Another intriguing visual labyrinth from Colin Thompson, whose picture book *Looking for Atlantis* involved an odyssey through the intricately detailed contents of an old sailor's sea chest. In this fascinating book, the starting point is a library containing every book ever published. At night, when the library closes, the books open, growing spectacularly into strange cities and landscapes which have stranger cities and landscapes embedded within them. But the book entitled 'How to Live Forever' has been hidden, and when Peter and his cat Brian discover the loss, they leave their home inside a book about quinces and travel for two years into the very heart of the library, where the Ancient Child guards a tragic secret. The text of this book is brief and economical, but the haunting



paintings are absorbing in their complexity, and might encourage children to invent a whole library of parallel narratives. **GH**

## Off to School

**POETRY** ★★★

Compiled by Tony Bradman, ill. Tony Blundell, Macdonald Young Books, 32pp, 0 7500 2149 7, £8.99 hbk

Blundell's wacky illustrations might give the impression that this picture book format poetry collection with a school theme is wholly light-hearted. However, the two dozen poems, which feature beginnings, endings and times in between, have a variety of moods. There are thoughtful poems such as Errol Lloyd's 'The Late Worm' and Benjamin Zephaniah's 'Confessions of a Runner' - his picture of a teacher 'stuck in red tape' is powerfully pertinent. I particularly like the idea of not reducing everything to the wholly rational in Eileen Round's 'Science is Magic'. Then there are the hopeful voices of Wendy Cope's 'Word-Watching' and the artist of Adèle Geras' 'Katy's Picture'. I am sure many readers will empathise with Helen Dunmore's portrayal of the lone child waiting to be collected and growing increasingly fearful when 'All the voices have gone'. Almost exclusively new poems these, there should be something to appeal to most listeners or readers from around six. **JB**

## Sound City

★★★★

Sarah Hayes, ill. Margaret Chamberlain, Walker, 48pp, 0 7445 3297 3, £10.99 hbk

Hayes' ability at playing with words and language was evident from some of her earlier books, not the least being *The Grumpalump*. Dr Seuss might have taken a whole book for any one of these twenty-six language lessons; Hayes, however, packs each one into a double spread or less. Thus, in *Sound City* we visit such zany locations as 'Camp Comfy', Bister Brown's house - the loudest in town, Curly's Perfect Perms where nerds abound and burglars lurk, not to mention Doctor Deer's Ear and Hearing Clinic which positively does not pierce ears. The whole thing is hugely entertaining with cartoons, arrows, labels and bubble talk galore - a fun way to see just how crazy the English language can be. Let us hope the publisher obliges with a big book or a series of posters for more leisurely, enlarged looking and listening at these action packed spreads. **JB**

## Forest Tales from Far and Wide

Retold by Marleen Vermeulen, 1 901223 05 1

## Farmyard Tales from Far and Wide

Retold by Wendy Cooling, 1 901223 85 X

★★★★

Ill. Rosslyn Moran, Barefoot, 48pp, £9 99 each hbk

These two collections, each with seven stories from around the world largely featuring animals, are designed to be child and reader



From *Forest Tales from Far and Wide*.

friendly. There is a pictorial index, the title given at the start of each story is in a large font size providing an opportunity for the reader to invite the listener to take part in the reading, and the text large and well-spaced enough to make reading aloud easy even for the less practised adult. Moran's illustrations too, have a strength of colour, form and line which catch and hold the attention.

Vermeulen's choice of stories has a common theme of sharing (or not) and the consequences thereof. Her theatrical background is in evidence in the numerous opportunities her tellings provide for audience participation and, in a school setting the book is rich in potential not only for noisy active dramatisation, but also for thoughtful reflective times including assemblies.

Cooling's selection, like its companion, includes the very familiar and the lesser known. This time the common thread is wisdom and foolishness; thus we have the clever Ukrainian wife who persuades her husband to construct 'The Straw Ox' which makes them their fortune and the enchantingly silly goose whose obsession with footwear proves her undoing, as well as the ever popular 'Three Little Pigs'. Again a pleasure from cover to cover, not least for the pages of notes on the story sources and possible origins. **JB**

## "Og Fo" says the Space Bug

0 7475 3562 0

## Pets Just Want to Have Fun!

0 7475 3560 4

## "I don't Like Space Glop"

0 7475 3563 9

## "Do I Look Funny to You?"

0 7475 3561 2

★★★

Nicola Matthews, ill. Eleanor Taylor, Bloomsbury 'Crazy Gang', 64pp, £3.99 each pbk

Unshamedly cashing in on the Literacy initiative, Bloomsbury is serving some new mini series. 'Crazy Gang' is a four book phonic fiction collection aimed at 5-7 year-olds. By deliberately using a phonetically controlled vocabulary and writing in the present tense these stories are rather fettered by their own

educational ties and only slightly enhanced by the quite appealing hatched illustrations.

In "Og Fo" Max's search for his missing pet dog, Pat, takes a comic turn when a mischievous space bug named Zug Zug escapes from his owner's back and causes havoc in a supermarket and local park.

*Pets Just Want to Have Fun* sees the same characters causing trouble again. While Max and Jazz go shopping, their respective pets, Pat and Zug Zug, cause endless problems after they run off with items from a toy shop.



"I Don't Like Space Glop" has Jazz facing a dilemma. Zug Zug, having dropped sticky jam called 'glop' all over the spaceship, has to travel to the Planet Igg, in the reserve craft (the Blast Box) to obtain some Space Vim. This is the only substance powerful enough to enable the mess to be cleaned up.

"Do I Look Funny to You?" is about a normal space girl who wants to join in lessons on earth. But why does everyone laugh at her?

Less dull than 'Janet & John' and with slightly more plot. **AK**

## Gita and Goldie

0 7475 3565 5

## Timmy and Tiger

0 7475 3564 7

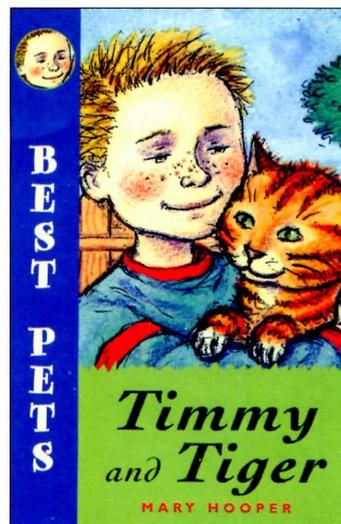
★★★

Mary Hooper, ill. Lucy Su, Bloomsbury 'Best Pets', 64pp, £3.99 each pbk

Bloomsbury's second mini-series 'Best Pets', aimed at the same market as 'Crazy Gang', is more successful and less stilted, though 5-year-olds capable of reading them must be few and far between. The stories contain believable characters with whom young children can empathise. Concepts such as loyalty, trust and friendship are explored at an appropriate comforting level and through the focus of the theme 'Pets'.

In *Timmy and Tiger* a small boy befriends a lost kitten and eventually persuades his mum that they should keep him after Tiger alerts the family to the smoke filtering up from a fire that has taken hold downstairs.

*Gita and Goldie* sees sisters Gita and Manveer arguing over where their pet dog Goldie will sleep when they move to a bigger house. When Goldie chooses to sleep in Manveer's room, Gita storms off in disgust and gets lost in nearby woods, triggering off a search which inevitably ends with



Goldie leading her family successfully to a frightened Gita.

The two books are sadly let down by very immature and rather lazy full and half page black and white illustrations that do nothing to add charm to the stories. The lack of perspective in *Gita and Goldie* is particularly irritating. **AK**

## Harry on Holiday

★★★

Chris Powling and Scoular Anderson, 0 7136 4829 5

## A Hiccup on the High Seas

★★

Karen Wallace and Russell Ayto, 0 7136 4780 9

A & C Black 'Jets', 64pp, £6.99 each hbk

## Rattle and Hum in Double Trouble

★★★

Frank Rodgers, 0 00 675324 8

## Bing Bang Boogie, It's a Boy Scout

★★★★

Bob Wilson, 0 00 675313 2

Collins 'Jets', 64pp, £3.50 each pbk

A mixed bunch from the well-established 'Jets' series of 'simple stories ideal for children who are just beginning to enjoy reading'. The stories - some of them complicated enough to require a fair amount of explanatory text - are told partly in cartoon-style pictures with speech bubbles which move the story on economically. This leads to very full, even cluttered, pages, especially in the paperback versions, which I found confusing to follow at times. These four volumes demand a fairly high level of fluency and sophistication in those who have not yet developed reading stamina for more solid texts. Parents and teachers would need to match them to readers' interest and ability.

*Harry on Holiday* is the simplest of the four and concerns Harry whose family cannot afford an exotic holiday this year. Harry finds a way to have a 'mega-badly-good' time close to home, even being asked to report on it for a TV holiday programme - alert readers will pick up clues to the

ending from the pictures.

A **Hiccup on the High Seas** is a pseudo-Viking adventure (complete with now-discredited horned helmets), its simple, at times banal, text enlivened by some apt images. The ending is limp and more attention could have been paid to the characterisation and jokes, but the story has a certain appeal.

**Rattle and Hum in Double Trouble** is about two rather cute robot detectives working with their sergeant to solve the mystery of the bogus Mr Gumboyle. A female pirate and a witch add their expertise to the puzzle in this jam-packed adventure. 8-year-olds will probably find Rattle and Hum's bottoms, which tend to fall off inconveniently at times of stress, hilarious.

The most sophisticated of these stories, and one that I enjoyed hugely is **Bing Bang Boogie, It's a Boy Scout**. This unlikely tale of Boy Scouts from outer space visiting Earth to do their 'Backwoodsman' badge contains lots of authorial comments on the history and nature of language, and a useful message for those whose only form of entertainment is the computer. AG

### Boys Are Us

Shoo Rayner, 0 00 675339 6

### Dear Alien

Angie Sage, 0 00 675340 X

★★★★

Collins 'Colour Jets', 64pp, £4.99 each pbk

Books for beginner readers frequently have 'worthy' written all over them – subliminally if not literally – but not so these 'Colour Jets'. Good humour, energy and approachability are exuded by their pages, and readers, beginners and experienced, will be carried along by visual jokes and playfulness within

the illustrations and written text. The latter is laid out in speech bubbles, captions, letters and straight narrative, all appropriate to whatever is happening within the plot.

In **Boys Are Us** a budding boy pop group meet The Nice Girls in a race to make a Christmas No. 1 in the charts. **Dear Alien** concerns a correspondence between Sam, a human boy and Luek, an ... Yes, the point is nicely made about who perceives whom as an alien. Both of these books are highly recommended to reluctant readers and indeed to any other readers who enjoy fun that is never frivolous. VC

### Dad's Dodgy Lodger

★★★★

Philip Wooderson and Dee Shulman, 0 7136 4790 6

### Talking Pictures

★★

Pat Thomson and Caroline Crossland, 0 7136 4781 7

A & C Black 'Jumbo Jets', 64pp, £6.99 each hbk

The first of these two new 'Jumbo Jets', **Dad's Dodgy Lodger** has mysterious goings on, robbers stuck in furry latex Easter Bunny bonnets and lively illustrations perfectly integrated with text, including the use of speech bubbles. It is an exciting story that will engage young readers totally.

Sophie, living with her hard-up single Dad, gets suspicious about his new 'French' lodger, Mini. When Sophie and her friend discover Mini spying and making secretive phonecalls, they suspect the worst and investigate further. Through wearing one of a number of furry rabbit masks, made by Mini and her Dad, Sophie becomes involved in a

bungled robbery and wins first prize in the school's Easter Bonnet parade. Lots of fun.

Talitha Augusta Fortescue Fitz-Rowland in **Talking Pictures** is an immensely rich orphan, the last surviving Fitz-Rowland in the world, so she thinks, until she discovers an old letter pointing to the existence of other members of her family. Talitha begins some detective work by contacting the family solicitor but is helped enormously by two talking portraits of her paternal grandparents in the gallery. A mysterious photographer, who conveniently arrives at the house, turns out to be none other than a long lost relative who has returned from Australia.

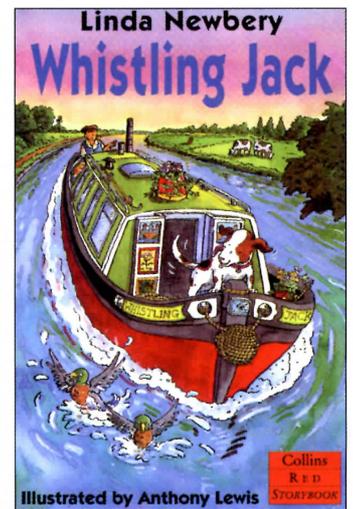
An interesting idea involving family trees but it is just too confusing for its likely audience, despite the diagrams and monochrome wash illustrations. Some inaccuracies in the relationships described at the end of the book only serve to add to the confusion. (A first cousin once removed is described as an uncle and second cousins are referred to as cousins.) By this time, however, a lot of young readers may well have given up. AK

### Whistling Jack

★★★★★

Linda Newbery, ill. Anthony Lewis, Collins 'Red Storybook', 80pp, 0 00 675295 0, £3.50 pbk

Roger the dog loves cruising along canals and rivers with his devoted master on board the narrow boat *Whistling Jack*. Indeed, they have made the boat their home since his owner, Jack, became a widower. Roger especially likes racing from one lock gate to the other, waiting for the water to rush through. The one aspect of canal life which upsets Roger is dark, damp, tunnels. Each



one looms as a huge mouth waiting to swallow him up. He once remembers barking in a tunnel and another fierce echoey dog barked back at him!

Roger becomes separated from his beloved Jack by the longest darkest tunnel of all, forcing Roger to overcome his fear of tunnels to become a VBD (very brave dog).

This is a truly heartwarming story told from the dog's point of view. Tension mounts as Roger and Jack keep missing each other in their search for each other. Anxiety turns to joy as this highly recommended book draws to a satisfying and comforting end.

Lewis (who recently illustrated Jenny Nimmo's award winning book *The Owl Tree*) is on top form with his dramatic hatched full page drawings perfectly capturing the mood of the story. Helpful cross-sections detailing what is happening inside and on top of the long tunnel are successful too. AK

## REVIEWS 8-10 Junior/Middle

### Ruby Red: Tales from the Weedwater

★★★

Henrietta Branford, ill. John Lupton, Collins, 96pp, 0 00 185670 7, £9.99 hbk

A collection of five fairy tales from Branford, whose *Fire, Bed and Bone* has recently won the Guardian Children's Fiction prize. **Ruby Red** is a very traditional looking fairy – John Lupton's pencil and charcoal sketches depict an elfin figure wandering dreamily amidst the fey fauna and flora usually associated with the secret folk. The stories also have a slightly old fashioned feel to them – Ruby heals a family rift, rescues a stranded pirate on weedwater stream, gives a new home and life to an abandoned mechanical horse – but there is an undertow of gentle humour and irony here that makes these tales read beautifully freshly. Branford succeeds in creating a miniature world and society in which many children will find a secure and fascinating place to read. GH

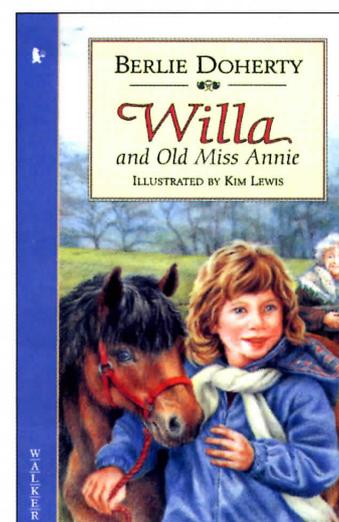
### Tom's Private War

★★★★

Robert Leeson, ill. Kenny McKendry, Puffin, 96pp, 0 14 038427 8, £3.99 pbk

Set in the opening weeks of the second world war, when a group of children at the end of summer are learning to cope with gas masks and black outs and the prospect of threatening changes ahead of them, **Tom's Private War** is a short, exciting, old fashioned story of rivalry, courage and comradeship.

Tom is a subordinate member of the gang who is beginning to fret against gangleader William's arrogant authority. When a bunch of tough refugees arrive from Liverpool, William retaliates by engineering a potentially lethal contest of daring between Tom and one of the newcomers. This book is very redolent of one of those children's thrillers written at the time that the action of this story takes place, so it achieves a pleasing sense of period authenticity in its telling as well as its content. GH



### Willa and Old Miss Annie

★★★★★

Berlie Doherty, ill. Kim Lewis, Walker, 96pp, 0 7445 6084 5, £3.50 pbk

This collaboration between award winning author and celebrated illustrator was Highly Commended

for the Carnegie Medal when it appeared in hardback in 1994. There are three linked short stories, suitable to read to infant school children or for juniors to read for themselves, in which Willa and Old Miss Annie play a part in the lives of a goat, a pony and a fox.

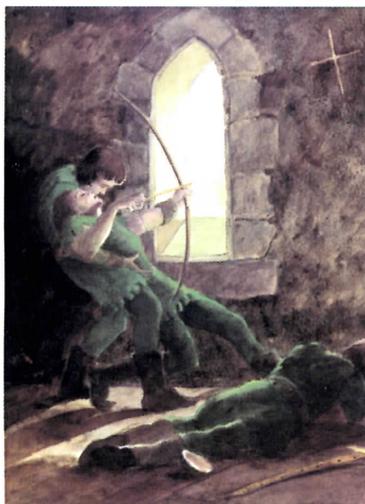
Doherty makes a virtue of a restricted vocabulary, polishing phrases until they shine and repeating them in a way that is both hypnotic and comforting. She uses words to illuminate the magic of the stories. The pony found abandoned in the wood is identified first by a desperate misspelled plea, written in the snow, 'Helb the bony'. And *boney* he is, until he is nursed back to *bonny* health.

Doherty transports these adventures into the realm of folk tale in which the older characters, viewed from the level of a small child, become larger than life; in the less attractive traits of selfishness, jealousy and deceit as well as those of friendship, warmth and understanding. Lewis's black and white illustrations, perfectly placed in the text, set the stories in a recognisable country landscape. A gem of a book. CB

## Robln of Sherwood

★★★★★

Michael Morpurgo, ill. Michael Foreman, Hodder, 128pp, 0 340 69014 3, £8.99 pbk



It does Morpurgo's splendid version of the Robin Hood legend a disservice to think of it simply as a 're-telling'. Its content and characters may already be familiar to many readers, but few of these will be prepared for the dramatic re-invention of Sherwood, its 'outcasts' and their fight against oppression and privileges. Brilliantly framed between an opening and conclusion in which dream and reality merge, the principal focus of the narrative is on Robin and the urges which create, motivate and, ultimately, destroy him. It is a totally absorbing psychological study, to which an integral contribution is made by Foreman's richly atmospheric watercolours. These, like the text, enforce a strikingly new perspective on some of our best known stories. RD

## Carmine's Story

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Arlene Schulman, Lerner Publications, 40pp, 0 8225 2582 8, £9.99 hbk

Carmine is a ten-year-old boy with AIDS. He has never known life without a constant round of hospital visits, medication, and the loneliness of isolation. Living with his grandmother in New York City, he gets supportive care from her and a number of professional helpers. A

very serious child looks out of the black and white photographs in this picture book, and his history – told in the first person – is bleak but without a trace of self-pity. He knows he is dying; he knows his mother died of AIDS, and two other members of the family have it too. This family's tragedy must be repeated world-wide time and again, and the strength of the book is in our getting to know one sufferer so intimately. It is not a happy story, and is made sadder still by the 'epilogue' which tells us that Carmine died in 1996. As this is an American publication, the bibliography and list of addresses will be of little use to British readers. The book is distributed by Turnaround (0181 829 3000) in the UK. ES

## My Grandfather is a Magician

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Ifeoma Onyefulu, Frances Lincoln, 32pp, 0 7112 1211 2, £10.99 hbk

Not a fairy tale, but, as the subtitle 'work and wisdom in an African village' reveals, an explanation of the place of traditional herbal medicine in a south east Nigerian village. The book is related from the point of view of a young boy who introduces us to his family and the traditional and modern professions that they follow: baker, potter, smith, teacher, doctor, lawyer and seamstress. But to the narrator the most powerful of all is his grandfather, who spends half the year in the forest, and can use leaves and roots and bark to cure illnesses. This book presents a positive and fascinating account of traditional medicine, and a brief note on the study of ethnobiology which has arisen from it. It is superbly illustrated with the author's own photographs of contemporary Nigerian community life, and of the raw materials of grandfather's trade. This is an unusual and very rewarding book. GH

## A Tudor Warship

0 7502 1957 2

## A Victorian Mill

0 7502 1998 X

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Brian Moses, Wayland 'Look Inside', 32pp, £9.99 each hbk  
Wayland's 'Look Inside' series is well



A top-hatted overseer with his stick of knotted thongs for chastising lazy mill apprentices, from *A Victorian Mill*.

established; with these two titles there are now six books, all by Moses, on national curriculum topics for junior schools.

The idea of the series, with its key-hole logo, is elegant. Each book begins with an historical tableau: the deck of a warship or the shop floor of the mill. Each element is highlighted – the *mill owner* offers the worker a *wage token*; in his other hand he holds an *indenture*; on the wall there is a *clock* and a *warning sign* about the dangers of mill machinery. This is, in effect, the contents page and the dozen topics which are indicated each have a double page spread devoted to them subsequently.

Moses has read widely and writes clearly. The format is generous with contemporary prints and photographs, and eyewitness quotations (many of them footnoted, something unique in a book for this age group). And where there is rich evidence, like the treasure trove from the *Mary Rose* displayed in *Tudor Warship*, the past emerges in all its complexity.

In some of the other books in the series, the reliance on the opening freeze frame to organize the book has led to the introduction of information in unlikely places (a poor index does not help). This is not such a problem in these two titles, although there is still awkwardness. There is difficulty, too, with

discussing change and variation: the Tudor warship was different at the time of the Armada from the time of the *Mary Rose*; and a Spanish warship was different from an English warship.

In the Victorian titles in particular, there is another problem – the impression, exacerbated by some dramatic scene setting by Moses, that the past was benign. The industrial revolution made the nineteenth century a difficult time to live in for most people. But it was also a time when there was greater recognition of social injustice and an impetus for change (many of the sources that Moses uses are the voices of reformers). *Victorian Mill* deals with this rather better than the earlier *Victorian Schoolroom*, and there is space for enlightened mill owners, although only a paragraph for trade unionism.

The glory of the series, however, is the way it plunges children into the thick of history and beguiles them with the strangeness of another time, rather like a visit to an imaginative working museum. CB

## How Castles Were Built

NON-FICTION ★★★

Peter Hicks, Wayland, 48pp, 0 7502 2144 5, £9.99 hbk

One of four in a series on aspects of the history of castles, this title considers castle design and construction in their social, political and military contexts. There is discussion of castles beyond the British Isles and glimpses of some of the sources of the history of fortresses: the medieval Pipe Rolls and Licences to Crenellate.

Some of the information will be new to junior school children and it is good to see web sites and videos listed beside books as extra sources. However, the index is poor – no entries for obvious subjects like walls, towers and moat – and there is some padding: the 'Build Your Own Castle' project, with its thick rolls of newspaper, is one I remember from castle books of twenty years ago. The last might well have been replaced by a section on what features to look out for on a visit to a castle – like mason's marks. Sometimes the arrangement of the double page spreads is haphazard, determined more by the need to fit the illustrations in attractively than by the logic of the text. CB

# REVIEWS 10–12 Middle/Secondary

## Abomination

★★

Robert Swindells, Doubleday, 208pp, 0 385 40854 4, £9.99 hbk

Robert Swindells returns to a subject explored in an earlier novel, *Unbeliever*. This time he writes for a younger audience about the impact of belonging to an extreme religious sect on children and their families.

Martha's life is dominated by the rules of the Brethren. She is different from the other children; friendless, until she meets Scott, a new boy at school. But she knows she must never invite him home in case he finds out about the terrible secret in the cellar – *Abomination*. We are shocked to

discover that the family's 'shame' is the six-year-old illegitimate son of Martha's older sister. And that he has been kept caged in the cellar from birth.

As is characteristic of Swindells' fiction, an impact grabbing title invites us in to the book and short paced chapters propel the action forward. This is a good page turner but is not to my mind Swindells at his best.

There is an uneasy tension between the chilling gothic elements of the story and the contemporary realist mode of telling. I was disappointed with the treatment of this controversial subject. In previous work, *Stone Cold* and *Unbeliever*, Swindells has explored the

psychology of his deviants by allowing them a voice either through first person narration or presentation of multiple viewpoints. In this instance the story is told almost exclusively from Martha and Scott's perspectives and they are insufficiently mature to provide real insight into the adults' behaviour.

The final resolution suggests rather optimistically that once the child has been rescued he will be rehabilitated with no lasting ill effects. NG

## The Empty Frame

★★

Ann Pilling, Collins, 224pp, 0 00 185679 0, £9.99 hbk

Another ghost story by the author of the fine *Black Harvest* has three children sent to stay at the old abbey. They soon begin to see and detect the presence of the ghost of the past, Lady Alice, who, stepping from her portrait, seems to be asking the children to deal with the mystery and murder of the past. There are clever links made between the different suffering of parents and children in the past and present and the resolving of the mystery comes with the message 'that it wasn't courage that cast out fear, it was love.' Despite having all the right elements of the successful ghost story, this one does not manage in the end to engage either the heart or the head. AJ

## Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

★★★★

J K Rowling, Bloomsbury, 256pp, 0 7475 3849 2, £10.99 hbk

The first Harry book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, has already gained many ardent fans and picked up a deserved Smarties Gold Award (1997). It told how a bemused Harry escaped his horrendous relatives to attend Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry, and thereby began to fulfil his destiny as potentially one of the greatest wizards of all time. Even in his first year he managed to confront and defeat the greatly feared black wizard, Voldemort – and win!

In this new title, Harry and his friends confront further evils and are sorely tested once more by a rejuvenated Voldemort intent on direct revenge against his new, young enemy – Harry Potter!

These Harry books represent imaginative, complex, inventive yarning that compels and rewards the reader. Rowling pulls off the wizardly feat of convincing us that the utterly improbable is utterly probable; the humour, the dazzling, eccentric characters, the carefully timed suspense and cheerful, down-to-earth Harry, are cast into the enticing cauldron of a bright new talent on the children's literature scene. DB

## Clues from Names

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Gillian Clegg, Wayland, 48pp, 0 7502 1504 6, £10.99 hbk

This title takes an interesting sidelong look at our past through the medium of names: first names (not only Christian, of course), surnames, and place names. It is a tale of

## Tracy/Tracey

Here's a name with a complicated story. It was a place name, a surname and a boy's name before it became a girl's name. There was a place in France called Traci-Bocage. A family from there settled in Bovey, in Devon, in 1219 and gave themselves the surname Tracy. Tracy was used as a first name from the nineteenth century. One of the male characters in Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, written in 1836, is called Tracy Tupman. As a girl's name, it was probably a short name for Teresa. It only became really popular as a girl's name in the 1960s after the release of the film *High Society*, in which the heroine was called Tracy Samantha.

▼ The kneeling man is Tracy Tupman from Charles Dickens's novel *The Pickwick Papers*. He is shown here with two other characters, Miss Wardle and the Fat Boy.



changing peoples and languages, of forgotten crafts and new faiths, of honouring the past and seeking to shape the future.

A lot of the interest is particular (everyone looks for their own name first), and Clegg keeps a knowledgeable balance between general historical developments and fascinating examples, and highlights some real curiosities. She also provides a helpful separate index of names.

Names is not a subject that cries out for illustration but the photographs of people and places have been carefully selected and captioned, sometimes with an eye to the incongruity caused by change: beneath a photo of a plane taking off, we learn that Gatwick means 'goat farm'.

I do not know of another children's book on this subject – or of an adult

## Editor's Choice

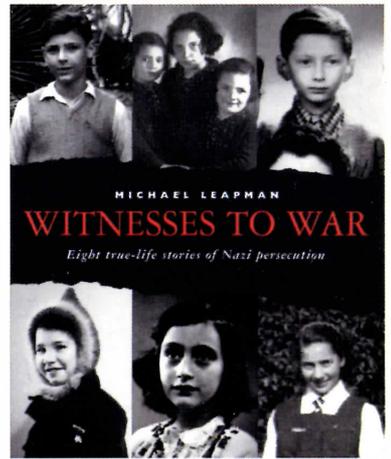
### Witnesses to War

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Michael Leapman, Viking, 128pp, 0 670 87386 1 £12.99 hbk

Anne Frank is one of eight young people featured in this collection of war-time biographies whose lives were irrevocably disrupted by Nazism. Anne Frank was to die in Bergen-Belsen, and because we feel we know her so well via her diary, come to represent the unique loss of each individual among the millions who died. In this well written history, her story is alongside those of seven other children, four Jewish, one Gypsy and two Catholic. They managed to survive but their traumatic individual experiences also represent those of millions of others.

Of the four Jewish children, 11-year-old Beate had to leave her parents behind and escape to England with the Kindertransporte; in occupied France 10-year-old Alice was kept safe at a Protestant boarding school until she could escape with her family over the border to Switzerland; 11-year-old Renee adopted a new identity as a Catholic at a Flers convent until liberation while eight-year-old Joseph got out of the Warsaw ghetto just before the uprising by escaping across a wall. Barbara, a 16-year-old Czech gypsy,



survived Auschwitz and managed to escape by jumping into a lorry when being taken to the Lackenback camp for Gypsies. The Catholics, 11-year-old Alexander from Poland and eight-year-old Czech Emilie (from Lidice), were both taken from their families by the Nazis and sent for 'Germanisation' prior to adoption in Germany.

Leapman's accounts are pitched well – his subjects' stories are riveting and well integrated into their historical context. Photographs (including some poignant family snaps) and maps help to place events. Leapman's introduction explains Nazi theories of racial purity but he does not dwell on the nature of the evil done to these disparate children. Their stories speak for themselves. RS

one that offers this approach – and, apart from its intrinsic interest, the book will be a support for junior and lower secondary school history, particularly useful for local history and researching your family tree. One quibble: more care should have been taken with the glossary; some of the entries seem unnecessary at this level and others are inadequately explained. CB

### Crisis in Central Africa

Charles Freeman, 0 7502 2168 2

### The Berlin Wall

R G Grant, 0 7502 2167 4

NON-FICTION ★★★

Wayland 'New Perspectives', 64pp, £10.99 each hbk

These hardback, compact, robust and visually attractive books are from a series of eight titles describing some of the greatest crises and atrocities of the twentieth century. The subject matter is inevitably grim but the tone of the books is carefully non-sensational. Bias, is however inevitable. Freeman's account of the massacres in Rwanda is a measured and highly informative account of an unthinkable catastrophe, but resorts to explanations based largely on tribalism and overpopulation; he does acknowledge that falling prices of Central African produce played a part, but does not implicate the agents who control these prices. The IMF and WB for example, are credited with having 'increasingly insisted that aid will be given only to governments that put their house in order and rule democratically' which is a very forgiving summary of the work of two bodies whose ruthless ideological devotion to the free market has provided the breeding

ground for the kind of disruption and division which facilitate social breakdown.

Grant's account of the Iron Curtain years from the point of view of the inhabitants of Berlin begins with the no nonsense assertion that 'West Berlin was an island of democracy lapped around by a sea of communism' but he does go on to mention how the Wall served western as well as eastern interests, and to describe the bitter disappointment with capitalism felt by many east Europeans today.

Both of the books are very well illustrated with contemporary photographs and maps; the authors' clear writing is supplemented with commentary and eye-witness accounts. GH

### The Element Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mind, Body, Spirit and Earth

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Joanna Crosse, Element Books, 160pp, 1 90188 110 5, £14.99 hbk

### The Unexplained Psychic Powers

NON-FICTION ★★

Colin Wilson, Dorling Kindersley, 40pp, 0 7513 5683 2, £7.99 hbk

Element's bright and breezy illustrated encyclopedia underwrites every wacky idea that has irritated rationalists since time began. For example, 'If you're frightened of spiders, it might be because, in one of your past lives, you were a fly!' Regular exclamation marks and the use of

## NEW Talent

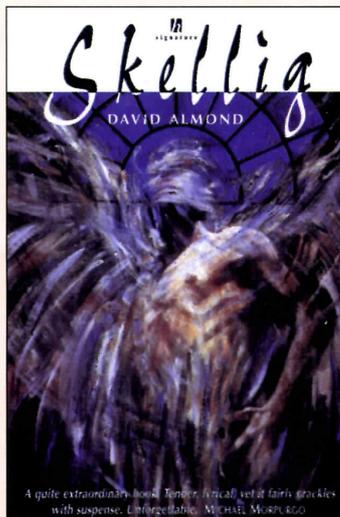
### Skellig

★★★★★

David Almond, Hodder Signature, 176pp, 0 340 71600 2, £4.99 pbk

A move to a new house coincides for Michael with the anguish of bearing his new baby sister's medical problems. Will she live? As the baby fights for her life in a hospital incubator, Michael learns, with the help of his new friend Mina, to look wider and harder at the world. If we are, as William Blake (Mina's favourite poet) tells us, surrounded by angels and spirits, then which is Skellig, the mysterious being Michael discovers in the ramshackle garage of his new home?

An intensely written and fast moving fable, *Skellig* deals with the threat of loss out of which comes change as Michael begins to bear not knowing whether the baby will survive. *Skellig* (part-angel, part-invalid, part bird of prey) is both a loving figure providing protection, a shambolic figure requiring care and a cannibalistic creature feeding on the mice and fledglings provided by the owls who befriend him. This integration of a loving character with both vulnerable



and unlovely aspects is unusual and touching. Just as the blackbirds and owls in the overgrown gardens that are the setting for much of the story nurture their young even while danger stalks, so Michael takes in his baby sister's very heartbeat and wills her, via Skellig, into life.

An author of fiction for adults, this is Almond's first children's book. It is well and confidently paced despite a touch of bathos at the end. A considerable achievement. RS

phrases like 'appear to', 'could be', or 'some cultures believe' make a small concession to doubters, but on the whole scepticism is in short supply. A smudgy photograph on page 21 is captioned 'the two people in the picture appear to be combining their mind power to raise the girl's body off the ground.' Even Sir Arthur Conan Doyle might not have been taken in by that one.

The end result offers an interesting

challenge to those who, unlike the author, do not live in a spiritual community themselves. The book certainly discusses issues that have enlivened many a playground or saloon bar debate. But its refusal to consider well-known physiological explanations for phenomena like astral flying or near-death experiences is surely misleading, together with repeated warnings against harming children by throwing cold,

rational water too quickly on some of their delusions. Yet what else is a responsible adult expected to do when faced by questions about reading tea leaves or contacting one's Guardian Angel for a cosy chat ('Just believe it!')? A sceptics' encyclopedia for children, questioning all the assumptions of this volume, would make an excellent counter-balance, though it would probably not be nearly as popular.

Colin Wilson's *The Unexplained Psychic Powers* makes the Element Encyclopedia seem positively restrained. A celebration of general hocus pocus plus some obvious trickery, this is a very odd and occasionally rather tacky publication. Beautifully illustrated as always, but with pictures which can seem tasteless for a variety of reasons, here is another book which could well prove more popular with children than with responsible adults. NT

## REVIEWS 12+ Secondary



### Child of the May

★★★★

Theresa Tomlinson, Julia MacRae, 144pp, 1 85681 513 7, £9.99 hbk

The usual focus on the male camaraderie of Robin Hood's escapades in Sherwood Forest is abandoned here – with a frequent sense of glee and mischief – in favour of a story which sets out to demonstrate that women too had a significant contribution to make to the 'struggles between 'outlaw' and despot. At the centre of these entertaining episodes is a feisty 15-year-old, Magda, determined to have her share of the action and, in particular, to revenge her mother's killing. Translating this determination into practice involves feats of high risk and danger and challengingly demands from the reader a constant re-examination of male and female roles, not least in the tantalisingly tetchy 'background' relationship portrayed between Marian and Robin himself. RD

### Family Secrets

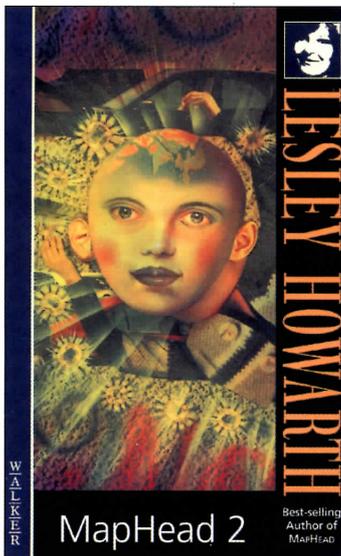
★★★

Brian Keaney, Orchard, 208pp, 1 86039 540 6, £4.99 pbk

The manner in which the past often catches up with events in the present is the basis for *Family Secrets*, a story involving three generations of strong-minded women, centred around Kate (13). Kate and her mother, Anne, live in a flat in London. Anne grew up on a farm in the west of Ireland, but has not returned there since she fell out with her mother and left, pregnant with Kate, at the age of seventeen. Kate knows nothing of this and only become aware that she has a grandmother in Ireland when a letter unexpectedly arrives for Anne telling her that her mother is seriously ill. They travel to Ireland where Kate

encounters many aspects of her past, her present and possibly her future: her grandmother, her father, new friends and first love, and most important of all, a place with which she feels a close affinity.

The possibilities for tension in the narrative are not always realised, but in what one guesses may be a first novel, there is a strong sense of place and a straightforward attempt to describe Kate's development during this, for her, growing summer. The cover is impressive although it may convey the impression that this book is for an older readership than that to which it is likely to appeal. VC



### MapHead 2

★★★★★

Lesley Howarth, Walker, 224pp, 0 7445 5495 0, £3.99 pbk

Lesley Howarth's *MapHead* must count as one of the most original creations in contemporary writing for children and readers who responded to his first manifestation will need little encouragement to become absorbed in this sequel. Depicted as a traveller between 'the obvious world of people' and 'the Subtle World', he finds himself a temporary guest of the 'everyday' Stamp family. His arrival in their lives is to provide material for some hilarious scenes of domestic chaos and, more seriously, for fascinating considerations of childhood (and adult) loneliness, of father-son relationships and, above all, of the nature of power, its uses and abuses. This is an ingenious, multi-faceted novel, shot through with humanity and tenderness. RD

### My Left Foot

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Christy Brown, Collins Educational 'Cascades', 184pp,

0 00 330320 9, £5.99 hbk

There is definitely a place for this famous autobiography in secondary schools. I have seen extracts in several source-books and even on a GCSE exam paper, which prompted one of my pupils to ask to read the whole book before he left school for good.

The story needs no summary here; what is worth recording is that Christy Brown's personality commands the reader's respect and admiration and leaves an indelible impression. The writing seduces the reader and leaves her/him knowing that here was an extraordinary person who, against all odds, reached out to win our hearts. Used alongside the film this could be a valuable, memorable resource. DB

### Love Lessons

★★★

David Belbin, Scholastic, 256pp, 0 590 54229 X, £5.99 pbk

Rachel is 15 and has a crush on her English teacher, Mike. During rehearsals for the school production of 'Romeo and Juliet' mutual admiration turns into a physical relationship. Belbin builds the interaction between the two characters in a convincing way, so that their liaison becomes as inevitable to the reader as it is to them.

Discovery creeps upon the pair in a similarly invidious way, and emotions are explored honestly and minutely, with frequent references to the legal and moral implications of such a relationship.

This is a brave novel, since it tackles a familiar problem head on: Belbin is always ready to show his characters' foibles. It is a thoughtful study of very young love and a clear-eyed appraisal of the selfishness of manipulative men. VR

### Religion

NON-FICTION ★★

Anita Ganeri, ill. Christine Roche, 0 340 66719 2

### Women's Rights

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Victoria Parker, ill. Andrew McIntyre, 0 340 65589 5

Hodder 'What's the Big Idea?', 128pp, £3.99 each pbk

Two from a growing series which claims to focus 'on the hottest ideas and issues around'. On a first flip-through they are vaguely reminiscent of 'Horrible Histories' and similar series with their jokey line-drawings but the text takes a serious approach. Of the two, *Women's Rights* is the more engagingly written as it is from a committed standpoint. It begins

with a general discussion about how and why girls and boys are treated differently. We then get a rapid history of women's role in society from the days of cave dwellers to the 19th century and then a more considered account of the growth in the demands for female equality finishing with a lengthy section on 'Where do we go from here?'. Despite the index this is more a book to be read from cover to cover than a reference text. The writing is lively and accessible.

**Religion**, however, revisits the same ground as countless other books and whilst posing many questions does not argue any of them through. SR

### Dealing with Eating Disorders

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Kate Haycock, Wayland, 48pp, 0 7502 2286 7, £4.99 pbk

### Sex

Anita Naik, ill. Corinne Pearlman, 144pp, 0 340 71042 X. £3.99 pbk

### Periods

Charlotte Owen, ill. James Tyrrell, 96pp, 0 340 63604 1, £3.50 pbk

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

### Hodder 'Wise Guides'

The Wayland guide to eating disorders is picture book format, with a large, clear typeface and colour photographs. Like the B format 'Wise Guides', it follows the traditional formula of explanation and clarification, case histories, advice, glossary and reading lists. It features celebrities and refers to both sexes and a variety of ethnic groups. The text is well organised and reassuringly matter of fact: a tone adopted by all three guides which gives them the appeal of an experienced adult or trusted friend.

The 'Wise Guides' rely on cartoon illustrations which are abundant, unflinching and reassuring. Their glossaries necessitate much turning of pages back and forth and would have been better incorporated into the text. Their covers are bright, modern and appealing, giving them less of the library reference feel from which the Wayland guide suffers. This may result in them being bought and used more often.

Their reasonable prices and important subject matter make these guides most welcome on teenage bookshelves. VR

Picture books reviewed this issue relevant to older readers:

Clown (see page 21)

How to Live Forever (see page 21)

# MAMMOTH PROUDLY PRESENT

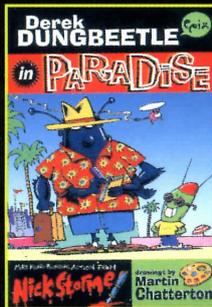


A BRAND NEW series of FAST-PACED, HILARIOUS, ACTION-PACKED ADVENTURES!

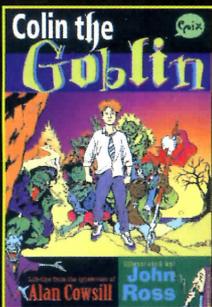
## AVAILABLE NOW!



Circus Twins in . . .  
Dynamite Summer  
Stik & Stones  
0 7497 3326 8



Derek DUNGBEETLE  
in Paradise  
Martin Chatterton  
& Nick Storme  
0 7497 3070 6

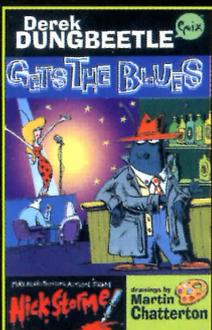


Colin the Goblin  
John Ross  
& Alan Cowsill  
0 7497 3430 2



Heavenly Hosts v.  
Hell United  
Mark Oliver  
& Garry Kilworth  
0 7497 3282 2

## COMING IN AUGUST!



Derek the DUNGbeetle  
gets the Blues  
Martin Chatterton  
& Nick Storme  
0 7497 3069 2



Bad Rep  
Lesley Howarth  
& Mark Oliver  
0 7497 3377 2

Featuring  
**AMAZING ARTWORK**  
by the **MOST EXCITING**  
illustrators from the world  
of books and comics

with  
**ASTOUNDING STORIES**  
by the **MOST TALENTED**  
children's authors

And introducing new  
cult characters who will  
**AMUSE, DELIGHT**  
and **TERRIFY!**



All of this for  
**ONLY £2.99**  
**A BARGAIN!**



**WHERE COMICS MEET THEIR MATCH**

Published by Mammoth an imprint of EGMONT CHILDREN'S BOOKS  
Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road, London SW3 6RB Tel: 0171 225 9743 Fax: 0171 225 9726

## CLASSICS IN SHORT No.10

Helen Levene

*Faster than fairies, faster than witches? My bed is like  
a little boat? It must be ...*

**First published:**

1885

**Genre:**

Poetry collection

**Who for?**

Imaginative young children and nostalgic adults

**Claim to fame:**

The Western world's best known collection of poems about childhood

**Influenced by:**

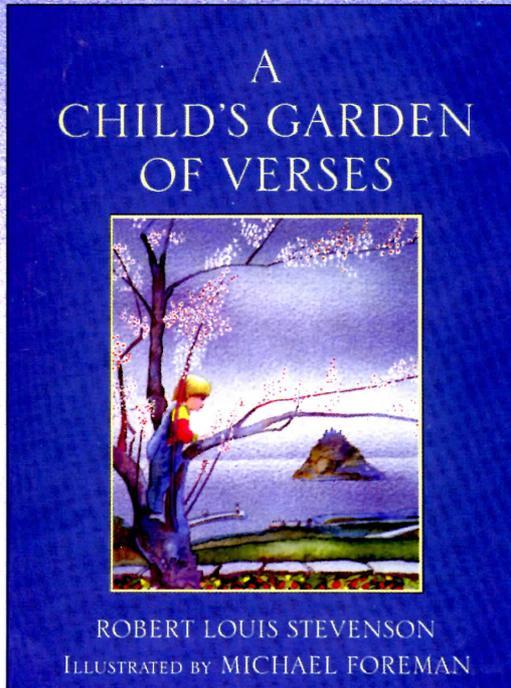
Author's own childhood, despite it being, in his words: '... a very mixed experience, full of fever, nightmare, insomnia, painful days and interminable nights ...' The collection reflects the benign side of Robert Louis Stevenson's earlier years rather than the pain of his many illnesses; it includes the longings and imaginings of young children, their likes and their fears, their surroundings, dreams of travel and adventure, out and about, the seasons and the weather, nature, being alone, and being ill. Some of the poems pay tribute to the special people in his childhood – his beloved nurse, his mother and his auntie.

**Classic qualities:**

A *Child's Garden of Verses* is the earliest poetry book for children to remain consistently in print since its publication. It was written specially for children to read and enjoy for themselves. A seminal work, it changed how children could be written for and written about in poetry as it presented children for the first time as the makers of their own imaginative worlds. Robert Louis Stevenson's ability to recall precisely the feelings and the experiences of his own infancy brings the poems to life, ringing true with little children and evoking fond reminiscences in adults. Seen through the eyes of a child, and told in the first person, the world of play depicted in these poems does not condescend or patronize a young audience. This is why generations of children have taken them into their hearts, especially the well-known ones such as 'My Shadow', 'The Land of Counterpane', and 'Where Go the Boats?'. They are simple to read yet skilfully written with an economy of words; they are highly evocative of the time yet most are as relevant and poignant today as they were then.

**Who was Cummy?**

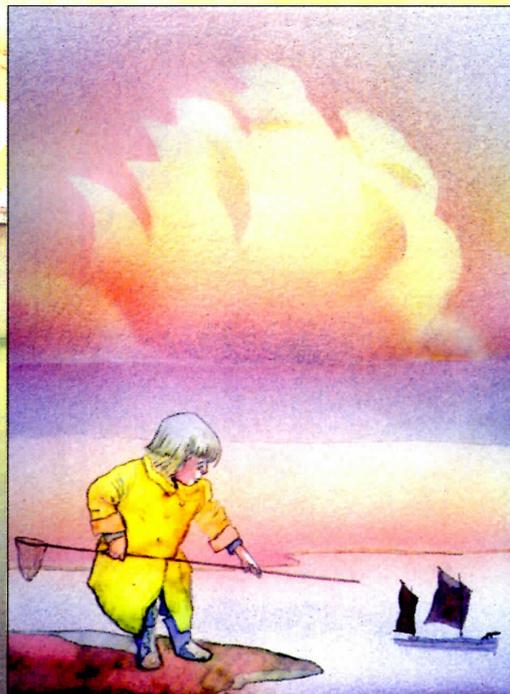
Stevenson's much-loved and deeply religious nurse, Alison Cunningham, 'Cummy' as he called her, who watched over him during his many bouts of illness, diverting his attention and firing his imagination by repeating psalms and hymns from the Bible and tales of the Covenanters, eg. Robert Woodrow's *Suffering of the Church of Scotland*. 'Cummy' became the formative influence of Stevenson's early childhood with her intoxicating mixture of comfort, religious terror and guilt. He dedicated *A Child's Garden of Verses* to her.

**When and where did RLS write the poems?**

The first few poems came to him in Braemar in Scotland, in between writing *Treasure Island*. The rest were composed during 1881-84, in Hyères in France, during a long period of illness, where he lay in bed unable to do anything but reflect.

**About the author:**

Born in Edinburgh on 13th November 1850, Robert Louis Stevenson was the much-loved only child of civil engineer Thomas Stevenson and Margaret Balfour. From as young as six years of age he knew he was going to be a writer and his first known literary creation was a biography of



From 'My Ship and I'

**Moses, which he dictated to his mother.**

He attended various schools but was often away due to ill health, and long periods of recuperation in Europe. Despite his literary ambition, RLS entered Edinburgh University to study Engineering to please his father, but he dropped out after three years. His father insisted that he take up Law instead which he agreed to do, particularly so that he could continue his Bohemian lifestyle. Although he qualified, he did not practise and was still determined to become a professional author. He worked hard at his writing and gradually succeeded in gaining the interest of editors, contributing essays to various periodicals. In 1876 he met Fanny Osborne, an American whom he later married. His stepson, Lloyd Osborne, was the inspiration behind *Treasure Island* which was first published in 1883. Stevenson's other books include *Prince Otto*; *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*; *Kidnapped*; *The Merry Men*; *The Black Arrow*, and other novels and essays. After his father's death in 1887 he published a book of poems called *Underwoods* and then left Scotland with his wife, mother and stepson for America. In the late 1880s he settled on the island of Samoa, where he died in 1894 of a brain haemorrhage.

**Is the collection PC?**

Stevenson has been accused of presenting too sweet and innocent a view of childhood. Interestingly, his own childhood was often wracked with pain and illness, yet there is no hint of this suffering in the poems. The poems are a personal reflection of RLS's upbringing and therefore contain the highly Christian moral values that were instilled in him as a child by Cummy. Yet the poems do not preach, or moralize and if they do, it is with an element of humour:

A child should always say what's true  
And speak when he is spoken to,  
And behave mannerly at table;  
At least as far as he is able.

One poem, 'Foreign Children', in which the child is so happy that he or she cannot believe that anyone living anywhere else could be so fulfilled now appears condescending.

**Editions?**

The first illustrator of *A Child's Garden of Verses* was Charles Robinson. There have been many editions since with different styles of illustration. The collection is so popular that a Robert Louis Stevenson poem can be found in most contemporary anthologies for young children. ■

The illustrations are taken from the Hamish Hamilton edition illustrated by Michael Foreman (0 241 13918 X, £6.99 pbk).

Helen Levene works in publishing.