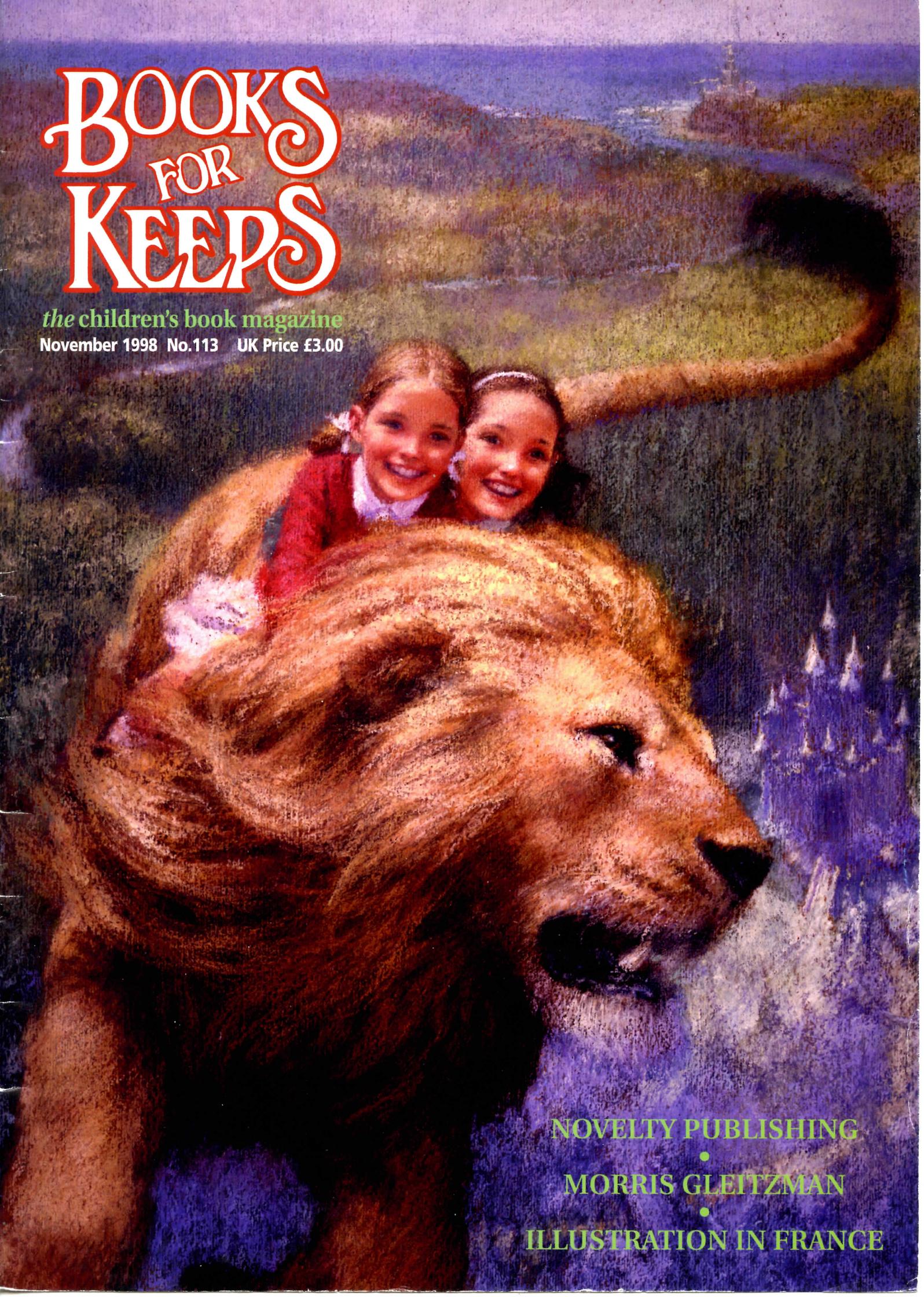


BOOKS FOR KEEPS

the children's book magazine

November 1998 No.113 UK Price £3.00

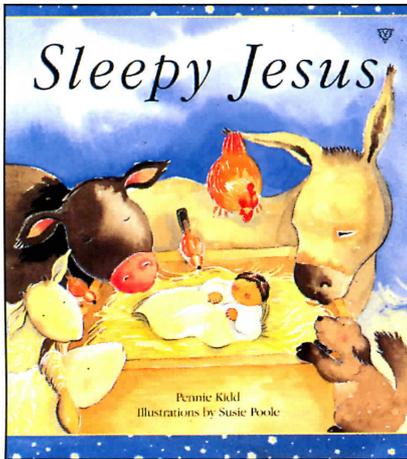
A detailed oil painting of two young girls with brown hair, smiling and riding a large, golden-brown lion. The lion is walking towards the right. The background is a fantastical landscape with a blue sky, a green field, and a castle with spires in the distance. The style is soft and painterly.

NOVELTY PUBLISHING
•
MORRIS GLEITZMAN
•
ILLUSTRATION IN FRANCE

Telling Tales from Lion

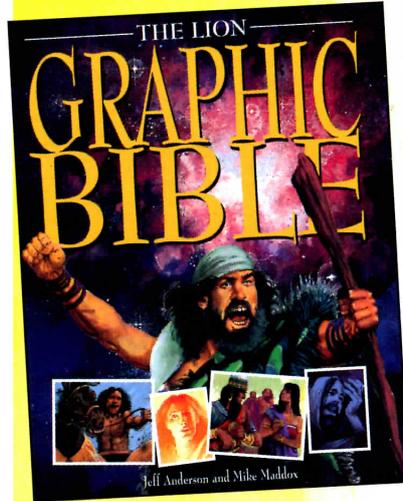
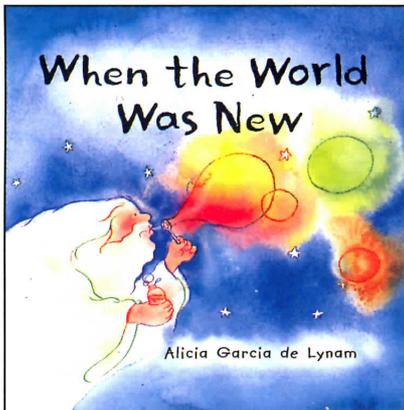


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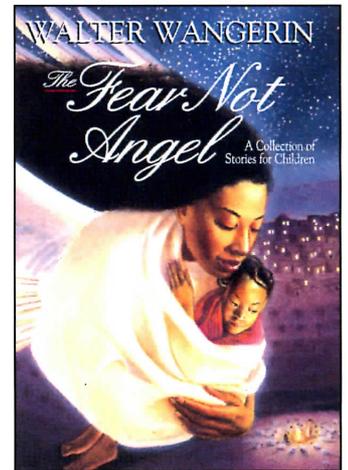
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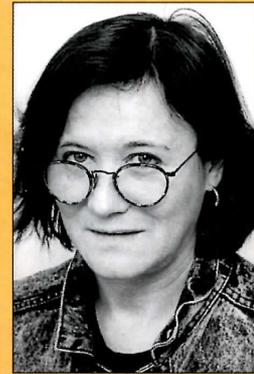
28 Classics in Short No.12

Helen Levene on *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

EDITORIAL

That novelty books (flap, board, pop-up, bath, smelly, die-cut etc) have only recently been regularly reviewed in the pages of BfK is perhaps one small indication of the confusion and distrust that continue to surround critical response to their publication. There has been relatively little debate about such titles in the children's books world and yet there remain fundamental questions – what do we mean by novelty? Are such titles really books? What is their value to children? How are they to be assessed?

A part of our confusion perhaps stems from the very different marketing of novelty titles from other books. Libraries will stock some kinds of novelty (flap books, books with holes) but pop-ups are too fragile to survive a loans' system and board books have no verso title page onto which library



Rosemary Stones

stickers may be attached. In the market place the high unit cost/low perceived value dilemma of novelty publishing has meant that its recent successes have been primarily sold via book clubs rather than via the trade. Many novelty books are bought in gift outlets as well as bookshops. Reviewing of such titles tends to be confined to the pre-Christmas press with reviews of the 'my niece enjoyed this book' variety.

Perhaps this is why critical discussion of novelty titles has been confined, in the main, to those interested in the history of children's books for whom the current crop of novelty has little to offer in way of surprises. As Brian Alderson points out (see p4) by the end of the 19th century 'almost all the natty dodges found in the present heap of new books had been perfected'. In this issue of BfK, Alderson (Chair of the Children's Books History Society) assesses recent novelty publishing and divides the books into useful categories. That we have the beginnings of a critical language and a taxonomy in which to discuss such titles is largely due to his efforts and those of his colleagues.



The tiger drinks all the water from the tap in Judith Kerr's *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*, thirty years old but still loved 'by today's sophisticates'. See review p18.

Rosemary

BOOKS FOR KEEPS
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NOVEMBER 1998 No. 113

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, Dorset

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.

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Annual subscription for six issues: £18.00 (UK), £21.75 (Europe including Ireland), £24.50 (airmail).

Single copies: £3.00 (UK), £3.60 (Europe including Ireland), £4.10 (airmail).

CoverStory

This issue's cover is from the picture book adaptation of C S Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* illustrated by Christian Birmingham (see p8). Thanks to Collins Children's Books for their help in producing this November cover.

But Are They 'Real' Books?

A Look at Novelty Publishing

Once confined to the shelves of newsagents and the gift trade, the last decades have seen an avalanche of novelty publishing (board, cloth, flap, touch and feel, pop-up etc) from all the big players. But despite this embarrassment of riches, novelty publishing has remained sidelined in critical debates about children's literature. So what is a novelty book? What sort of relationship should there be between technology and the other elements that come together to make a successful book? **Brian Alderson** looks at the history of novelty publishing and assesses and categorises examples from the current crop of titles.

Looking bleakly at about sixty recently published 'novelty books' I wonder what the creator of **The Toilet** would have made of them.

Not of course the eminent Thomas Crapper (whose invention could, nonetheless, be serviced by quite a lot of children's books that come to mind), but Stacey Grimaldi, the antiquary, whose little book called **The Toilet** was published in 1821 and can be accounted among the earliest of all English novelty books. 'Toilet' here referred to the equipment of a lady's dressing-table. Each leaf of the book had a hand-coloured engraving of some item such as 'Fine Lip Salve' affixed centrally on a flap. When the flap was raised the emblematic significance was revealed, in that case 'cheerfulness'.

Early examples

The Toilet was one of a number of attractive novelties for children that were published at the start of the nineteenth century – a period of rich invention, too much neglected by today's commentators, who seem to think that everything before **Alice** was gloomy didacticism. You had, for instance, a strip-cartoon panorama for a version of 'The Old Woman and her Pig'; you had hand-coloured picture-sheets that might also be published as booklets or jig-saw puzzles; you had elegant doll-dressing books; and you had books of scenes accompanied by dozens of cut-out figures who could be eased into a multitude of slots cut in the pages.

The first pop-ups

Mucking about thus with conventional books later proved to be a source of profitable pleasure, one way or another, to Victorian publishers and children

alike. By 1860 the pop-up book had been devised (pull a ribbon and a theatrical scene rises from the page) and by the end of the century almost all the natty dodges found in the present heap of new books had been perfected. The German printer and publisher Ernest Nister, who operated chiefly from a London office, produced the greatest variety of ingenuities: sliding slats, dissolving discs, multi-layered pop-up scenes etc., and a fellow-countryman, Lothar Meggendorfer, engineered the most wondrous of articulated comic movables. A tailor leans over an ironing-board. Pull a single tab and he nods his head, moves the iron with his right hand, takes away his left hand, while a cat at the end of the board flicks its tail. (A number of these Victorian and Edwardian movables have been produced in facsimile by firms like HarperCollins in recent years. If you want the originals though, you must dig deep. I have just received a catalogue from an American dealer in which a copy of Nister's **Magic Moments** c.1890 is listed at \$1250.)

New technological developments?

While very few developments have taken place in the technology of novelty books in the last hundred years (the introduction of miniature batteries, permitting an endless repetition of 'Jingle Bells', hardly counts as advancement) so too there has been very little progress in the critical recognition of what counts as complete success in the making of the books. The buying public – adults and children alike – ask chiefly that they be gobsmailed by the ingenuity of the product rather than that they find everything between the covers adding up to a satisfying whole. **Ellen, or the naughty girl reclaimed** (1811) may have afforded great pleasure to children who could dress the wayward infant in dunce's cap or whatever as the story required, but the words themselves have been chiefly valuable to satirists like Hilaire Belloc:

*This little girl whom now you see,
To mind mamma will not agree,
And though her face is fair and mild,
You view a stubborn, naughty child ...*

and many a vigorous folktale is hashed up to provide copy for the paper engineers.

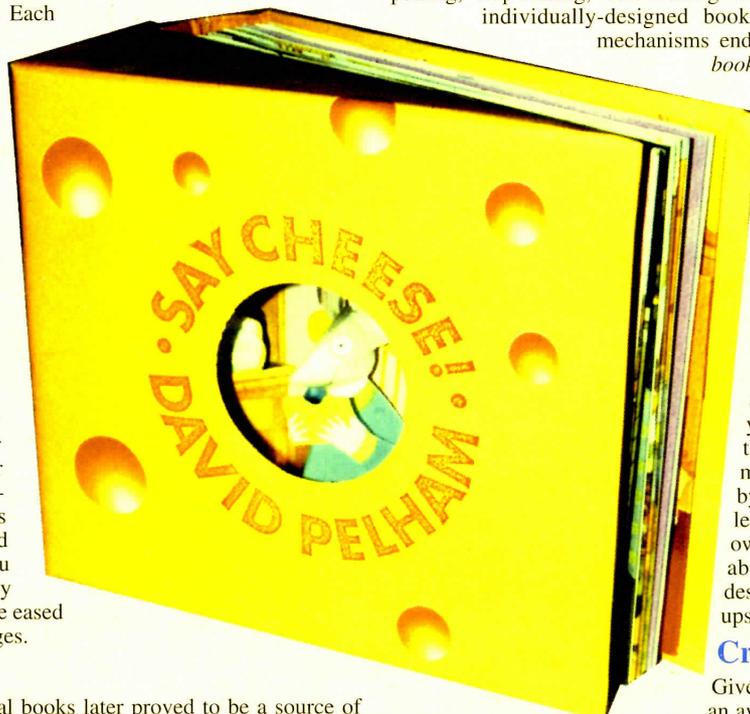
Ambitious assemblages

Since the huge resurgence of novelty books began in the 1960s the same thing has happened to 'children's classics'. Everything from **Alice to Good Night Moon** can find itself sacrificed to the not inexhaustible pleasures of tab-pulling, flap-raising, disc-turning and picture-popping. Very often the individually-designed books that exploit one or two simple mechanisms end up by working more coherently as

books than more ambitious assemblages. It is easy to see why the children's librarians of 1979 selected Jan Pieńkowski's **Haunted House** (Heinemann) to win the Kate Greenaway Medal. It is a virtuoso display of at least ten variant movable mechanisms – but Pieńkowski's **Dinner Time** of a year later (Gallery Five Ltd) gets a more dynamic drama from one simple device. Each page opening uses the principle of the 'V-fold' pop-up, so that as you open the leaves an animal's jaws are projected towards you, opening and closing as you move the hinge. In a chain of predacity that may surprise naturalists, frog is eaten by vulture is eaten by gorilla...etc., leading to a simple climax whose force owes everything to the way in which the absurd sequence is matched by the design and comic depiction of the pop-ups.

Critical confusion

Given the propensity these days to invent an award for Absolutely Everything, it is a



bit surprising that none is as yet in existence for movable books – and, trawling through Ruth Allen's recent, and very naive, **Children's Book Prizes** (Ashgate), I can find only one other outright prizewinner to go with **Haunted House**: the Greenaway Medal for the Ahlbergs' **Jolly Christmas Postman** in 1991. Such a side-lining of what is one of the most prominent developments in recent children's book publishing could be seen as a kind of evidence first for professional suspicion that movables do not really count as children's books and second for critical confusion about how they can be assessed. This seems to me to be unnecessarily exclusive and when I compare the invigorating work of illustrators like Rod Campbell, or Colin and Jacqui Hawkins, or Maureen Roffey, with the often overblown or pretentious work of people who *do* win prizes then my doubts about the graphic judgement of our present arbiters of taste are sharpened. At the same time I wonder how far there may be a lack of 'historical' or comparative awareness which inhibits reviewers from seeing individual examples of movables within their own context. ('Historical' is given those quotes in the hopes of indicating less an awareness of nineteenth-century precursors, than of the hundreds of movables that have flooded on to the market in the last thirty years.)

Categories of novelty

In an effort to bring at least a degree of order to assessing the movables of 1998 I therefore propose to deal with them in categories related to the foremost *modus operandi* that they employ, with rather a lot of items ending up in the 'mixed methods' section. Despite some very elaborate get-ups, most examples fall within a fairly predictable, run-of-the-mill tradition, and I have reserved to the end two books which strike me as bringing a high degree of playful originality to the genre. (To save space only authors and illustrators are named among the credits. Production teams often include any number of editors, designers, paper engineers and other dogsbodies.)

● Board Books

Although there was a time when these were regarded as products sold only in stationers and sub-post-offices, they have now become so widely used that such recent arrivals as Helen Oxenbury's 'Big Board Books' are really part of the conventional picture-book, rather than novelty, market. The four titles **All Fall Down**, **Clap Hands**, **Say Goodnight**, and **Tickle, Tickle** give close-up, snapshot drawings of four variably-featured, moon-faced toddlers bouncing, banging and splashing their way through the day (Walker Books, £3.50 each).

● Shaped Books

These are 'novelty books' mostly by virtue (such as it is) of being die-cut round the edges so that they have the outline of some person or object featured in the text. **Tug Boat** (Dorling Kindersley, £3.99) – incidentally also a board book – opens up to reveal the interior of the boat, an actual model, photographed and peopled by plasticine figures from the Wallace-and-Gromit team. Events, of a kind, occur as you turn through the five page-openings but the 'story' is purposeless to the point of stupidity. Nor can many better things be said about Judy Paterson's 'Fidgets' series, four paperback booklets uniformly shaped like a short-fingered glove (Bloomsbury, £2.99 each). The Fidget family who inhabit these objects are worked up from Judy Paterson's fingerprints and the laboured stories about them rely heavily on repetitions, sometimes with rhymes, of words like Didget, Gidget, Widget, Smidget and yellow wellies. The graphics make almost no use of the books' cut-out shape.

● Folded Leaf Books

The right-hand leaf in each page-opening folds out to reveal a second picture below the one that you see first. **Spotted Yellow Frogs** by Matthew Van Fleet (Ragged Bears, £7.99) makes clever use of this by showing, say, a 'zig zag red ball', but when you fold back the leaf one edge of the ball is revealed as the back of a beetle in a zig zag red beetle family. Various other shapes – pyramid, cube etc. – are put to similar use and the final opening can be extended into a five-panel panorama with the animals nesting below appropriately shaped and coloured flaps.

● Horizontal Split Leaf Books

Each leaf is divided horizontally, one or more times, and the illustrations are so drawn that the upper and lower portions will fit together whatever sections are turned. Nick Sharratt's **A Cheese and Tomato Spider** (André Deutsch, £8.99), as you may guess, also supplies combinable captions. Since the book has twelve leaves there is scope for plenty of permutations, some of which (eg. 'Cor!! An exploding man') work very much better than others (eg. 'Ello, 'ello, 'ello! A police volcano').

● Vertical Split Leaf Books

A bit like the Folded Leaf Books above, but here the picture-change is internalised with the picture on each page-opening changing as an inserted half-leaf is turned. **If I Were an Animal** by 'Woody' (Bloomsbury, £7.99) has

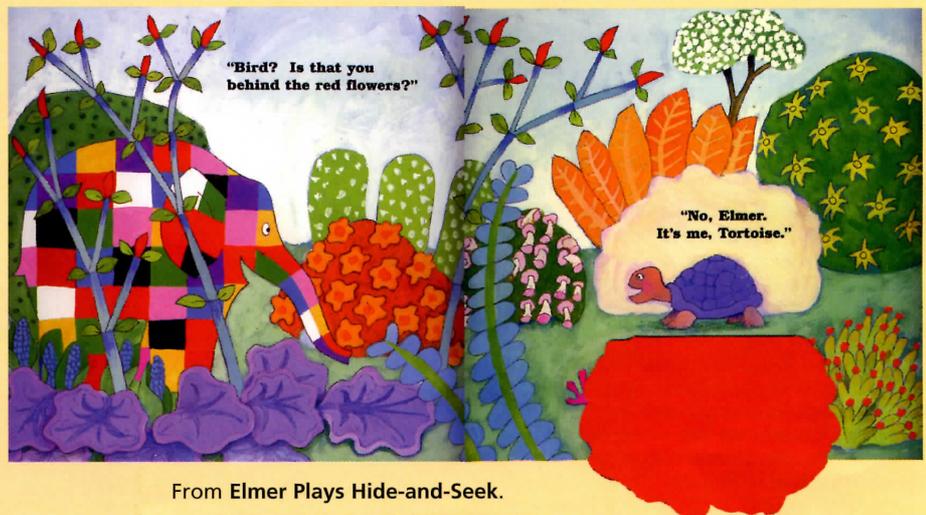
illustrations in the current gross-nursery style – heavy magic-marker outlines, powerful colours – and one element in the first picture, say a little girl's spotted sock, connects into the new picture when the inner leaf is turned: a spotty horse's leg. All the participants gather together for a party at the end.

● Hole Books

Holes punched in leaves need to be organised for two-way looking. Anni Axworthy's **Guess What I Am** (Walker Books, £5.99) does this quite well by showing you part of an animal through one side of the hole and – when you've guessed what it is and turned the page – showing you a companion creature making a (rather weak-minded) comment on the other side. A second book in the series, **Guess What I'll Be** works less well, since the fur or feathers seen one way are of little consequence and the return comments are even more weak-minded.

Richard Brassey's adaptation of novelty techniques on behalf of the animal welfare movement, **Look Into Their Eyes**, has just come out as a paperback (Dolphin, £4.50). The view of animals looking through bars changes as the page is turned to what they might see in their natural habitat – an affecting device, with Brassey's brief, marginal commentary pointing up the dilemmas of conservation.

The Ahlbergs' **Peepo!**, the hole book which began the recent fashion for such things, has just been issued as a board book in smaller format – a very successful adaption (Viking, £4.99).

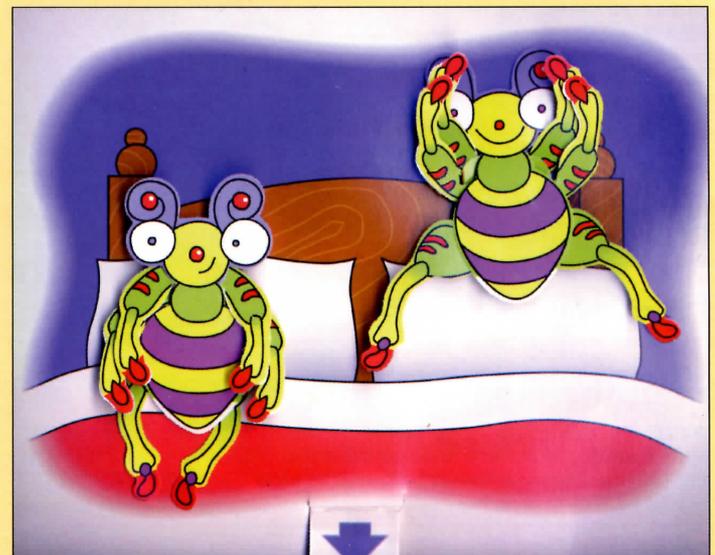


From **Elmer Plays Hide-and-Seek**.

● Lift the Flap Books (successors, of course, to **The Toilet**)

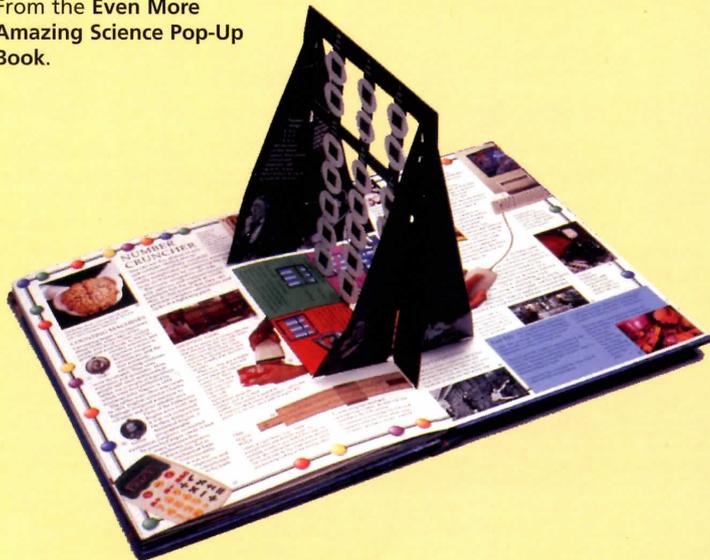
The huge popularity of Eric Hill's 'Spot' series probably had a very persuasive influence on publishers looking for a natty and not too expensive novelty process and flap-lifting is incorporated into dozens of books, often with very little justifiable point.

Novelty books may well be an ideal play-way for children learning their letters, as witness Robert Crowther's classic **Amazing Hide and Seek Alphabet Book** (Viking, 1977), but Richard Edwards and Sue Hendra's **Amazing Animal Alphabet** 'with fantastic flaps' (OUP, £9.99) warrants neither of those gasping adjectives. The relentless sequence of questions in



From **Bedtime Bugs**.

From the **Even More Amazing Science Pop-Up Book.**



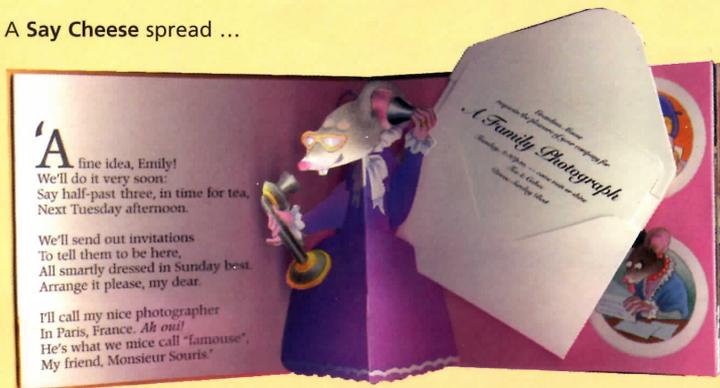
verse is tedious, the flat patterning of the art-work is ungainly and the uniform trapdoor-style flaps at the bottom of each page have parsimoniously been left plain white on their undersides.

Similarly Sian Tucker's **Look With Me. What Do You See?** (Orchard, £8.99) scatters a few liftable flaps through its own ungainly pages, but without any creative engagement with the book's purpose in having the child-reader identify objects. **Elmer Plays Hide-and-Seek** by David McKee (Andersen, £6.99) operates at the same elementary level but stands forth as a model of how the job should be done. Elmer the patchwork elephant is hunting for Bird. That provides a reason for looking behind flaps and although Elmer's mistakes seem repetitious you know that they are working towards a fitting climax, and McKee's simple text and sparkling graphics make the entertainment a coherent whole.

Two other flap books deserve mention for more particular reasons. Shoo Rayner's **Hey Diddle Diddle and Other Mother Goose Rhymes** (Dutton, £8.99) looks predictable enough at first sight, apart from the jolly device of five toes separately raised for 'This little piggy'. But on closer acquaintance the reader will see that lifting the flaps is only part of a sequence of pictorial jokes that thread their way very satisfyingly backwards and forwards through the selection of rhymes.

As for **Whose House?** (HarperCollins, £10.99), connoisseurs of novelty books will suddenly find themselves confronted by madcap Colin and Jacqui Hawkins subdued under the spell of the Ahlbergs. Not only is the idea for the book and its versification an echo of Allan, with various nursery-tale characters making their way to their cottages, houses, or castles (which open up to show the interior decoration and plumbing), but the delicate sepia line-work, the gentle water-colours, and the bonhomie of the characters seem to owe everything to Janet. The persistent plundering of this style by Laurence and Catherine Anholt (currently on view in the lift-the-flap paperback of **Can You Guess?** (Lincoln, £4.99) is known to all – but what a transformation it has worked on the creators of the peerless **Mig the Pig** and friends.

A **Say Cheese** spread ...



● **Lift the Flap, Pull the Tab**

Such are the instructions on the two latest 'Maisy' books by Lucy Cousins: **Happy Birthday Maisy** and **Maisy at the Farm** (Walker Books, £7.99 each). Their eight predecessors should be known to most readers of **BfK** who will thus also know how well Lucy Cousins enhances her sense of where to make use of flaps that open on the page with simple but ingenious tab movements. Pull a tab and Maisy's birthday-cards come tumbling through the letter-box (one can be opened too); pull another tab and, Meggendorfer-like, a lamb drinks milk from a bottle and wags its tail. Such quiet excellence rather shows



A spread and a page from **Deep Down Under Ground.**



up the crudity and obviousness of more rough-and-ready competitors like Ken Wilson-Max's **Max** (David Bennett, £7.95) where blunt orders 'Pull', 'Lift', 'Turn' are printed on the pictures. Even the one *pièce de resistance*, a green jelly, carries the note 'Wiggle up and down!'

● **Simple Pop-Ups**

It is difficult not to see Keith Faulkner and Jonathan Lambert's **The Wide-Mouthed Frog** (Madcap/Deutsch, £5.99) as plagiarizing Pieńkowski's **Dinner Time**, noted above, by applying in a much larger format his idea of animals' mouths snapping at you from the book's centre-fold (the frog is almost a copy of its predecessor). The story is barely existent, but does end with a dramatic splash.

And the end of Colin McNaughton's **Journals of Count Dracula** (Walker Books, £10.99) is the only excuse for including the book in this article. The eighteen pages of the **Journals** themselves consist of illustrated documentary evidence for the Count's biography (eg. 'My Schooldays' at Dr Frankenstein's School for Little Monsters, with its motto of 'We'll make a man of you'), but when you get to the casket of the Count's remains it opens with a dreadful creaking and a fully-accoatered, green-visaged incumbent rises to greet you.

● **Pop-Ups Plus**

The huge market for novelties that has been fashioned and the sophisticated production processes that have been developed in Colombia, Ecuador, Singapore, Thailand... have given the creators of movable books great scope for incorporating multiple gimmicks within one pair of covers and well over a dozen of the present batch of books combine simple lift-the-flap or pull-the-tab devices with varying kinds of pop-up or with pictures that are transformed by turning wheels or pulling slats etc. Some of these multiplex objects take on an educational role which may be crudely explanatory like Steven Augarde's **Here Comes the Fire Engine** (Orion, £9.99) and Richard Fowler's semi-narrative **Pop-Up Trucks** (Transworld, £12.99); or they may be madly



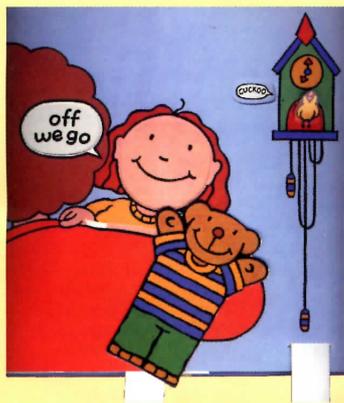
Part of *Four Feathers in Percy's Park* and, below, the whole constructed book.



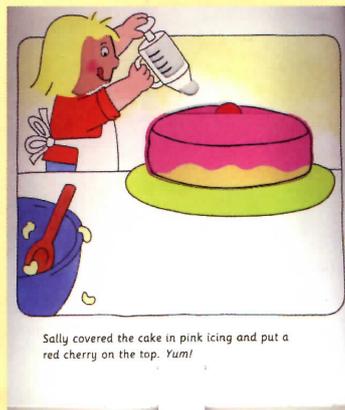
incoherent like Kate Petty and Jennie Maizels's *The Terrific Times Table Book* (The Bodley Head, £12.99), whose chaotic pages are so full of gimmickry and exclamations that they could make Einstein innumerate in three minutes flat; or they may be serious, if breathless, educational aids like Jay Young's *Even More Amazing Science Pop-Up Book* (Watts, £15.99) – complete with cardboard binoculars, balances, and phenakistoscopes – which turn out to be kits rather than books.

As so often is the case, the most original and rewarding of these factual pop-ups comes from Robert Crowther with his 'pop-up book of amazing facts and feats' *Deep Down Under Ground* (Walker Books, £12.99). In a series of five colour-spreads he goes caving, mining, underwater exploring, tunnelling and travelling, interlarding his fine graphic displays with both 'amazing facts' and comic asides by participating characters. On the *other* side of these colour-openings however Crowther shows you the guts of the paper engineering and includes more information about Things Underground and also the problems of constructing movable books.

The varying of mechanisms found in explanatory books has a modest practical value. Slide up panels and see a fire engine's hose-bay and pump-



From *Lucy's Bedtime Book*.



From *Sally's Amazing Colour Book*.

bay; pull a mechanical mole along the gallery of a mine. But, as has already been noted, movables in picture books or story books may often be their own *raison d'être*. Ian Whybrow and Axel Scheffler's *The Christmas Bear* (Macmillan, £9.99) and *The Secret Fairy Handbook* 'as told by the fairies to Penny Dann' (Orchard, £9.99) are pointless jumbles of gimmickry, and *Annie Ate Apples* by Lynette Ruschak and Bonnie Matthews, 'a lift-the-flap, pull-the-tab, turn-the-wheel, pop-up alphabet book' (Dorling Kindersley, £9.99), while also forming a whirligig anthology of paper-engineering techniques, at least gets points for being a ludicrous satire on conventional alphabet books (see, for instance Ulrich untangling unicorns, or Victor vaporizing vegetables).

Given that Sam McBratney's *Guess How Much I Love You* has appeared in a multiplicity of guises already, a pop-up reworking of Anita Jeram's illustrations was only to be expected (Walker Books, £9.99). We aren't told if any paper engineers were involved in the design, so if Anita devised the movables herself she is much to be congratulated. The varied movements, no more than one to a page, key in closely with the text so that they augment it rather than distract. And another 'mixed medium' sequence which is clever, without overdoing things, is the latest addition to David A Carter's exemplary 'Bugs' series: *Bedtime Bugs* (Orchard, £9.99). You even get a bonus in the form of 'Hush Little Buggies', a 12-page miniature pop-up book incorporated as the Bugs' bedtime storybook.

● Miscellany

The old idea of providing loose figures to be slotted into parts of pages has recently been revived, a procedure which hasn't encouraged much sparkling wit in books like *I'm Silly Spider* and *Mole's Summer Story* by David Wood and Richard Fowler (Transworld, £6.99 each). Gus Clarke's *Lucy's Bedtime Book* (Andersen, £8.99) is much more thoughtfully organised, with 10 different objects – toys, teddy-bear etc – to slot into each page or with some nice supplementary tab-pull surprises as well. (Andersen have also just published the latest of Paul Dowling's colour-change books: *Sally's Amazing Colour Book* [£8.99]. Dowling is the chief exponent of acetate pictures superimposed upon duplicate scenes so that when you pull a tab a black and white drawing turns into a coloured one – an almost hypnotically attractive device.)

A quantity of other experimental works have also been published recently, ranging from *Dexter Gets Dressed!* by Ken Wilson-Max (Kingfisher, £8.99), which incorporates fabrics, zips, buttons and boot-laces into the enterprise, to things which are apparatus or toys rather than books (eg. *You Are the Store Detective* by Richard Brassey [Orion, £9.99] which opens up rather like a game-board and has a battery that operates a lift to help you seek a thief – my lift's conked out).

Without doubt the most startling of the quasi-toys is Nick Butterworth's *Four Feathers in Percy's Park* (Collins, £16.99). The story about Percy and the animals losing things is fatuous in the extreme – present only as an excuse for the construction of a large 4-section model of parts of Percy's park, complete with pop-up adjuncts like a see-saw and roundabout in the recreation-ground and air-borne ducks over the maze. It may not be a book, but Meggendorfer would have been proud of it.

● Accolade

If the criteria for a successful novelty book require a unity of form and content, so that the gimmicks cohere with and enhance the purpose of the book then David Pelham's *Say Cheese!* (Cape, £8.99) seems to me to come closest in all this array to doing that. Grandma Mouse here sends invitations to all the family to come to her place for a new family photograph. The book, which is shaped like a wedge of cheese, follows the progress of events with a



trippingly-rhymed text and a sequence of brilliantly devised, beautifully-coloured V-fold pop-ups, culminating in a tremendous double-spread exclamation. The thing is a model of perfectly attuned rhythm and detail.

And by way of a supplement, David Pelham's **Skeleton in the Cupboard** (Cape, £6.99) bids fair to compete. Here we get the skeleton himself jiggling around within the front cover of the book, and after three page-openings we get a (modest) shock conclusion, accompanied by materials to make your own dancing skeleton. It doesn't quite have the rich flavour of **Cheese** but it confirms David Pelham as one of our most ingenious Movable Inventors.

Further Reading

'Movable Books' by Geoff Fox in **Children's Book Publishing in Britain Since 1945**, ed. Kimberley Reynolds and Nicholas Tucker (Scholar Press, 1 85928 236 9, £39.95 hbk)

'Novelty Books and Movables: Questions of Terminology' in the **Children's Books History Society Newsletter** No.61, July 1998. Enquiries to the Secretary of the CBHS, 25 Field Way, Hoddesdon, Herts EN11 0QN.

Historical Children's Book Collections which include novelty

The Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood in London owns the 75,000 volume **Renier Collection** of early English children's books reflecting the period from 1780 to 1840.

The collection contains over 500 examples of the movable book, dating from the mid-19th century. Enquiries to the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9PA (tel: 0181 983 5200).

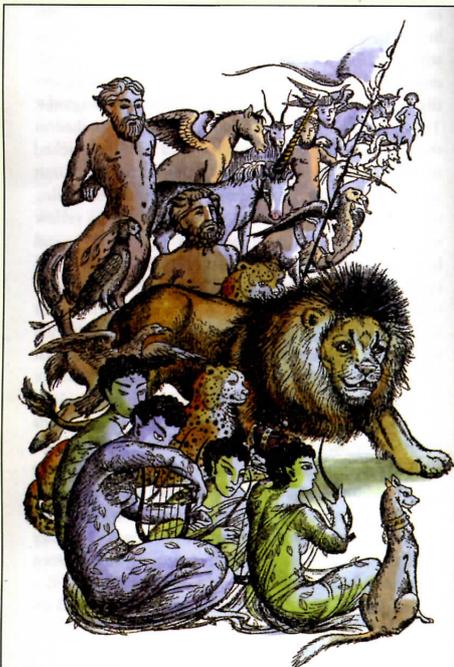
The Bodleian Library in Oxford acquired the **Opie Collection of Folklore and Nursery Rhymes** which includes some movable books. Enquiries to The Bodleian, Broad Street, Oxford OX1 3BG (tel: 01865 277000). ■

Brian Alderson is Chair of the Children's Books History Society and the chief children's book consultant for **The Times**.

ILLUSTRATING NARNIA

In this, the centenary year of the birth of C. S. Lewis, **BfK** looks at the work of the illustrators who have interpreted **The Chronicles of Narnia**, Pauline Baynes and Christian Birmingham.

Pauline Baynes



Pauline Baynes's illustrations to the **Chronicles of Narnia** are as inseparable in the imagination as John Tenniel's illustrations to **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland** or E. H. Shepard's illustrations to **Winnie-the-Pooh**.

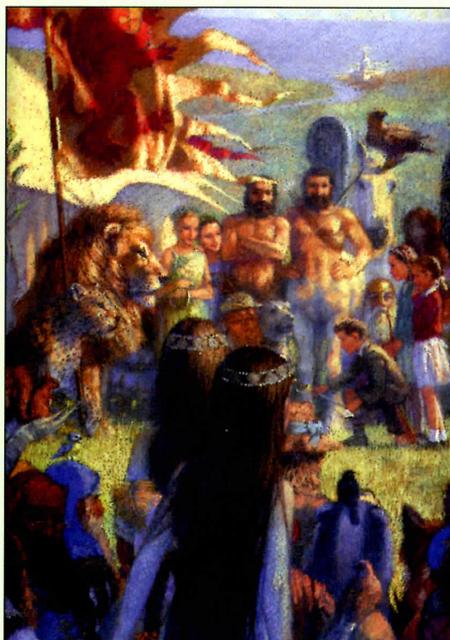
Pauline Baynes's long association with Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien began with Tolkien's dislike of some illustrations his publishers had chosen for **Farmer Giles of Ham** (1946). Pauline had recently left her portfolio with publishers Allen and Unwin and when they showed the drawings to Tolkien he was delighted. Pauline illustrated the book in the style of a medieval manuscript. Not long afterwards it was suggested to Lewis that she might illustrate **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe**. Pauline met C. S. Lewis for the first time on 31st December 1949 at a luncheon party that Lewis gave in Magdalen College. Lewis was so impressed by her style of drawing that he wanted her to illustrate all the Narnia stories.

For Narnia Pauline worked in pen and ink. Her source of inspiration was in part Persian

miniatures (cf **The Horse and His Boy**) and her style highly decorative. Her fluent line, imaginative flair and lively attention to detail admirably suit the spirit of the **Chronicles**. For this centenary year of the birth of C. S. Lewis, Pauline has hand painted her original black and white illustrations to the **Chronicles** which are being reissued in 'B' format and in a compilation volume.

In 1968 Pauline won the Kate Greenaway Medal for her illustrations to Grant Uden's **Dictionary of Chivalry**. The award was probably given as much for her illustrations to Narnia as for this book. She was runner-up for the prize in 1972. She has illustrated over a hundred books, including some she has written herself.

Christian Birmingham



Christian Birmingham graduated from Exeter College of Art and Design in 1991. His first picture book, Berlie Doherty's **The Magical Bicycle**, was shortlisted for the Kurt Maschler Award in 1995. Since then he has illustrated numerous picture books including **The Sea of Tranquility** and **The Butterfly Lion**. For his picture book version of **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe** (which has an abridged text), he has created illustrations in both colour

and black and white. Birmingham's style is naturalist, rendered with a bold and intense palette in which the play of light and shade via dappled colours is dramatically integral.

Centenary Year Events

'World of Narnia' Exhibition at The London Toy and Model Museum

This exhibition will run until April 1999. It allows you to walk through the wardrobe and step into scenes from the world of Narnia. Among the exhibits will be first editions and original artwork by Pauline Baynes. There will also be an historical showcase devoted to the life of C. S. Lewis. Christian Birmingham's artwork for the picture book version of **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe** will also be featured. Further information from Matthew O'Reilly, The London Toy and Model Museum, 21/23 Craven Hill, London W2 3EN (0171 706 8000).

RSC Stage New Adaptation of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

Adrian Mitchell's new dramatisation of **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe** is being staged in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon from 24th November 1998 to 27th February 1999. It will be directed by Adrian Noble, the Artistic Director of the RSC. The production will transfer to London in the spring of 1999.

Details of Books Discussed

The Magician's Nephew, 0 00 671683 0

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, 0 00 671677 6

The Horse and His Boy, 0 00 671678 4

Prince Caspian, 0 00 671679 2

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, 0 00 671680 6

The Silver Chair, 0 00 671681 4

The Last Battle, 0 00 671682 2

Collins Children's Books, 'B' format pbks, £6.99 each. With colour illustrations by Pauline Baynes.

The Complete Chronicles of Narnia

Collins Children's Books, 0 00 185713 4, £29.99 hbk. Illustrated in colour by Pauline Baynes.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

Collins Children's Books, 0 00 185701 0, £12.99 hbk. Picture book illustrated by Christian Birmingham.

ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOKS IN FRANCE

Picture book publishing in France is supported by an infrastructure of well attended book fairs and children's bookshops. But why do so few of these high quality titles cross the Channel? **Quentin Blake** investigates.



From **Toi Grand et Moi Petit** illustrated by Grégoire Solotareff.

What strikes me first about French children's books or certainly about the best of them is their dynamism and variety; the taste and panache of their covers, the readiness to try anything new and experimental. This is not restricted to the books themselves. It is expressed also, for instance, in the phenomenon of the Salon du Livre de Jeunesse – the children's book fair or festival. The blockbuster of these is at Montreuil, one of the Paris banlieues. The main square is entirely covered, there are talks and discussions, visiting authors and artists, workshops and exhibitions of originals. Most importantly, every French publisher has a stand. Over four days there are something like 150,000 visitors – children, parents, teachers, librarians – who have come to look at, and buy, books.

Perhaps even more extraordinary is the fact that this is not an isolated event; it sometimes seems to me that every self-respecting town in France has either a book fair or a children's book fair – Cherbourg, Avignon, Limoges, Arles, Bordeaux, Nantes, Marseilles – and smaller towns too are ready annually to put on such an event.

Many of those salons depend on the cooperation, or are the initiative, of France's specialist children's bookshops. There are some sixty of them, like L'Eau Vive in Avignon, or La Courte Echelle in Rennes, in touch with each other's activities and initiatives.

Children's Magazines

France also has a range of children's magazines of a sort that we do not have here. Gallimard has **Le Blaireau**,



Illustration by François Place from **Les Derniers Géants**.

very much directed at primary schools. Bayard Presse has a whole stable of titles; **Astrapi**, for instance, for eight-year-olds or thereabouts, has stories, information, and things to do presented not only with a sense of responsibility but with a visual wit and flair which makes many adult magazines look turgid. **Le Petit Léonard** is an art magazine for children of seven and above. And there are many others.

In addition, somewhere between these magazines and picturebooks, there is a myriad of small books – like the 'Lili and Max' series illustrated by Serge Bloch – which deal in a lively fashion with the everyday problems of children's lives.

French Picture Book Artists

The French tradition of the visual is also able to admit quite a bold and painterly style in the illustration of the picture-book or 'album'. The list of the publisher L'École des Loisirs, for instance, has a quite different look from anything we would find in England; and this approach makes possible the reputation of an artist such as Grégoire Solotareff, and others working in what is perhaps more a poster than a book-illustration tradition.

But the range of approaches is very wide: from, say, Pef, at one extreme, with a kind of crazy (but intelligent) cartoon-like urgency, through the detailed authenticity of François Place and the restrained strip-cartoon technique of Yvan Pommaux with his excellent Marion Duval stories to, at the other, the elegance and refinement of Georges Lemoine.

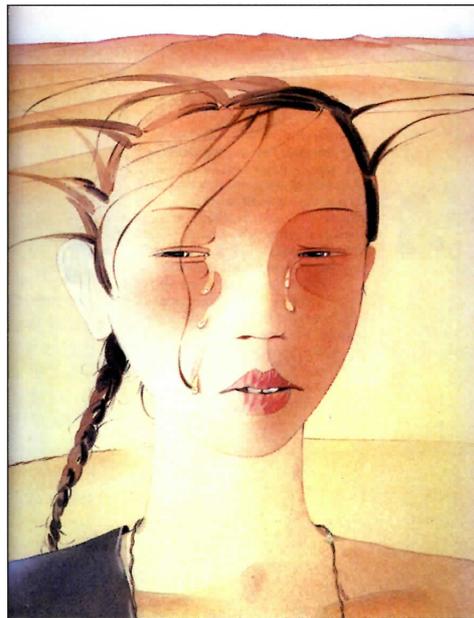


Illustration by Georges Lemoine from **Leïla** by Sue Alexander.

I am only too aware that precious little of this gets through to us, and that most of the traffic is going in the other direction (John Burningham, David McKee, Tony Ross, Babette Cole – they are all well-known names in French bookshops).

Different Traditions?

There are no doubt many reasons for this situation. One, perhaps, is that temperamentally the English are happy working with fantasy, mingled with humour. The French take fantasy rather seriously, and see it as something poetical, which is less to the English taste. On the other hand they are obviously enthusiastic about their own everyday life in all its detail. Take for instance **Le Carnet d'Albert** by Bruno Heitz: a wonderful alphabetical guide to a small boy's life. From the English viewpoint, such a book presents not only the problems of translating 'zizi', 'zoner' and 'zéro de conduite', but of relating to the



M for McDonald's from **Le Carnet d'Albert** by Bruno Heitz.

French idiosyncrasies of routine and habit (though no doubt the school lunch and the visit to McDonald's would be recognisable anywhere).



Mathieu discovering he has headlice from **Rendez-moi mes Poux!** by Pef.

The work of many of the artists I have mentioned presents these difficulties – if they are difficulties. Wouldn't it be nice if in some way we could see some of these in their pure French form, and get up to date about how life is carried on by our interesting neighbours? ■

Quentin Blake is an illustrator and was head of the Illustration Department of the Royal College of Art from 1978 to 1986. He is published in France by Gallimard.

Copyright, the annual conference of the Institut Français (14 Cromwell Place, London SW7), has Le Livre Jeunesse (French Children's Books) as its theme this year. It will take place on 4th and 5th December. There will be exhibitions and book stalls featuring French and English children's books. On 4th December at 11.30am Quentin Blake, Philip Pullman and Michael Morpurgo and a Le Monde journalist will be talking on Children's Books in France and England. French writers participating include Geneviève Brame, Agnès Desarthe, Jacqueline Duhême, Alexis Ferrier, Stéphane Heuet and Hervé Jaouen. Details from the Institut Français Cultural Centre (0171 838 2144).

Authorgraph No.113



Morris Gleitzman interviewed by Julia Eccleshare

From his 'G'day' onwards Morris Gleitzman is every inch an Australian, which is surprising given that he spent what is usually thought of as 'the formative years' growing up in Welling in the south east of London. Sadly for us, he comes to England rarely. This most recent visit was to cement a new relationship with Puffin over the new Paul Jennings/Morris Gleitzman mini-series, 'Wicked'.

I had met Morris on a previous visit to London when *Two Weeks With the Queen* was at the height of its success in its play version at the National Theatre and through its reading on *Jackanory*. Then, only recently successful as a children's writer, but with a string of TV writing successes in Australia behind him, Morris was quite reserved about his writing.

Now, surely established as a master of the tragicomic novel, Morris is far more forthcoming about exactly what it is that he does in his books.

Like many others who entertain through humour, Morris is not obviously or ostentatiously funny. Rather the reverse. He is excellent company because he is thoughtful and introspective with a serious view of life. As he talked more about what he is doing in his books he became increasingly intense and passionate about the role of both humour and adversity for children and particularly about the effect on him as the storyteller. Put simply he says: 'My stories are about relationships between kids and adults marked by love, conflict and anxiety. The characters reflect different parts of my own self. I was an anxious younger person, given to panic attacks. Writing comic scripts helped, but it was when I allowed myself to speak through my 11- and 12-year-old characters that I felt as though I had discovered a process that made me feel good about life.'

His move into writing for children was a very deliberate one though he finds it hard to know exactly why he felt the need to do so. His child was only a baby at the time and his own childhood in England has become only dimly remembered. 'I haven't thought about this stuff for years,' he admits as he pieces together the story of growing up. He went to a grammar school which he hated. 'I was very good at soccer, they played rugby. I used humour in the classroom as a device to win friends and influence people and the teachers hated it. I was a sit-down, behind-the-raised-desk-lid comic. I did O-levels and got out and went to work in a sandwich shop in St Martin's Lane. My parents were very liberal and relaxed about me leaving school. I now think that my father was already developing his major emigration plans, otherwise I think he would have made an issue about it.'

As it was, Morris emigrated to Australia with his family on 29 September 1969. 'I didn't want to go. I thought that

I should be left to get myself a stylish bedsit in Notting Hill Gate. But for my parents, the notion that I should leave home at sixteen would not even have been comprehensible. They would have regarded that as utter dereliction on their part. I think they also wanted to get me away from The Roundhouse and long haired friends.'

Once in Australia, Morris worked at some dull jobs until he rediscovered reading after being lent Joyce Carey's *The Horse's Mouth* by an older work colleague. 'I had read a lot when I was a kid - Richmal Crompton was my favourite by a long chalk - but had given it all up at about fourteen for sex, drugs and rock and roll (they were conceptual rather than real). Reading *The Horse's Mouth* made me realise that I wanted to go back to reading and to be with other people who wanted to talk about English literature.' To achieve this, Morris crammed his A-level equivalents into a year and then studied on a Creative Writing course at Canberra University.

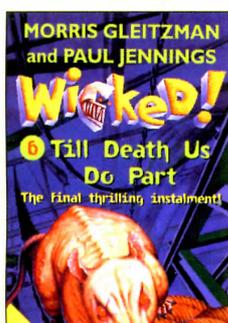
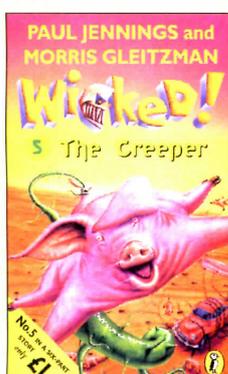
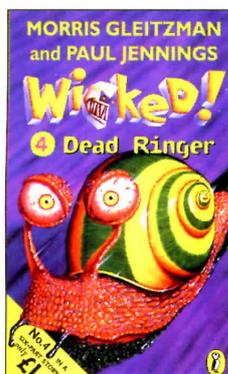
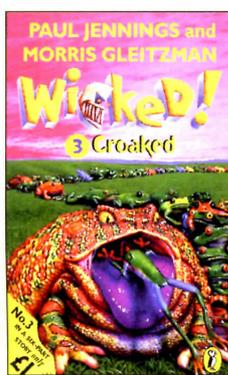
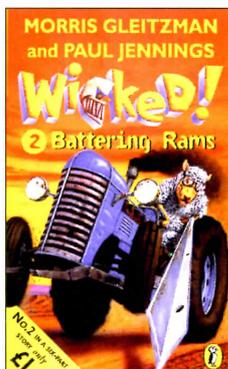
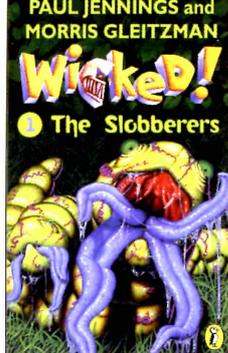
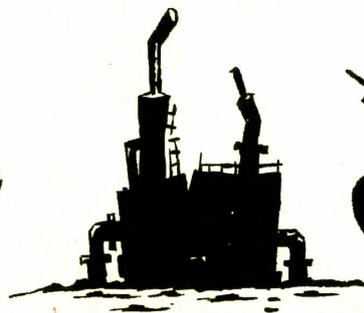
After this late start and having put what he calls 'his rebellious years' behind him, Morris came quickly to success. 'I knew that what I really wanted to do was to write television comedy and I got a job at ABC. Within three years of graduating I was writing the Norman Gunson show and that ran for four years. It had a very high profile so when it finished I was one of the best known TV writers, so other work followed.'

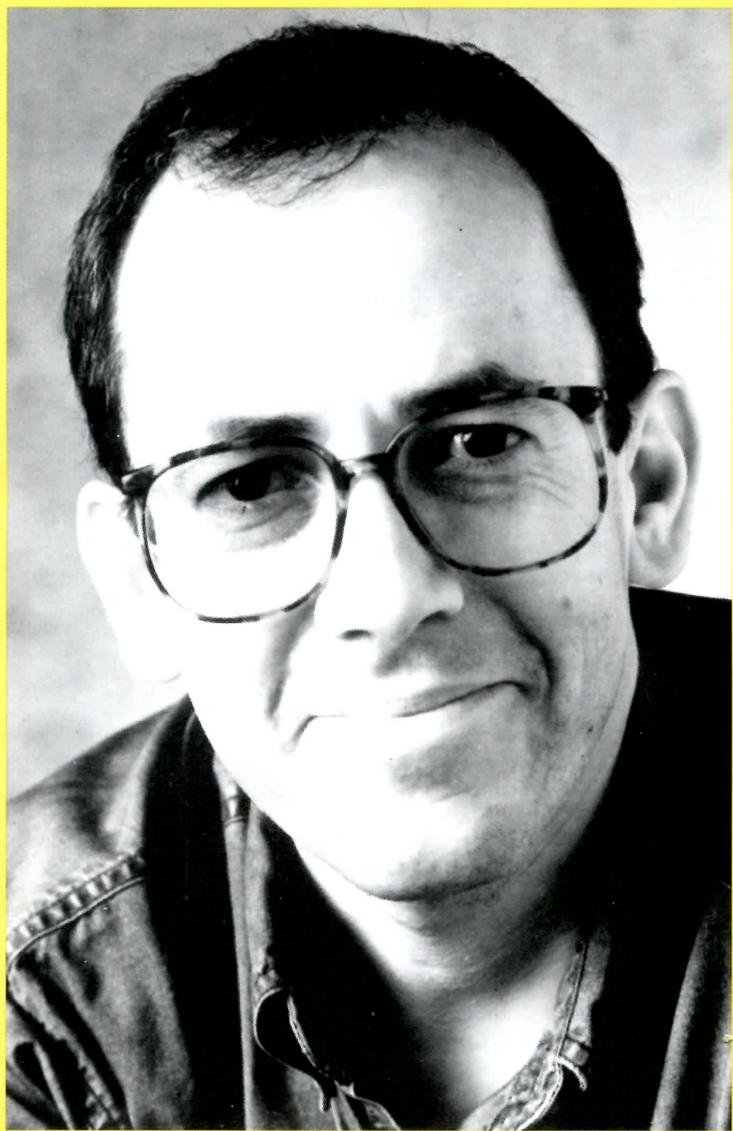
Morris worked for a further five years as a freelance writer but by 1983 he was beginning to feel dissatisfied with the kind of writing he was doing. 'Comedy tends to deal with stereotypes so I wasn't able to explore characters in the kind of way that I wanted.'

The chance to write for children came from a film writing project for the Children's Television Foundation which wanted original material with child protagonists. Morris leapt at the opportunity feeling that it would give him the chance to write about things more deeply. He wrote the scripts as they went into production and then wrote what became his first children's book - *The Other Facts of Life*.

Through the mediation of Anne Wood, whom Morris met at a screen conference, Philippa Milnes-Smith (then an editor at Blackie Children's Books) wrote suggesting that he should write another children's book. Funding himself by writing another film script, Morris set to and wrote *Two Weeks With the Queen*.

'That was when I began to see myself as an author. I wrote three more books - *Misery Guts*, *Worry Warts* and another film tie in. They were well received but didn't make enough to live off. In 1992 my marriage was coming to an end after eighteen years and we decided to change as many things as possible in the hope that we





could find a way of reinventing the relationship. We went to live in France where I wrote *Blabber Mouth*. I had planned it as a movie with the central character as a middle aged farmer but the more I thought about the story, it was the daughter of one of the farmers who became the most important person. She became Rowena Batts. I sent it back to Australia and when we got back to Australia I discovered that my books had gone through the roof. It had suddenly happened and I was a children's writer.'

The particular hallmark of Morris's writing in which he deals with tough subjects in a funny and offbeat way is, he claims 'just a product of the process. It isn't, and I don't ever want it to be, a conscious sort of formula that I apply.'

Not formulaic, certainly, but Morris's involvement with his characters is intense and, as he has admitted, there is a great deal of himself and his feelings within them.

'I write the books from deep inside the central character and it's the sensibility of the central character that matters to me. The one conscious check I do is to make sure that the reader stays connected to how the character is feeling. Perhaps that combination of serious subject and sadness and humour may come from the fact that I'm looking for the moment that is the biggest problem in that character's life. I'm more interested than anything else about how

they feel about that problem and about their chances of overcoming it. Usually those problems can't be overcome in a complete way and I'm very interested in how the character responds to that.'

There is a strong underlying philosophy as to why Morris feels that his books should confront life in this particular way.

'I think that kids' popular culture bombards them with the notion that heroism is synonymous with success. It makes them think that problems can be solved in their entirety as they often are on screen. Life's not like that. I'm simply interested in how kids deal with that discovery. Without being overt, I champion a heroism that's about overcoming, not escaping or denial or bitterness or bigotry. It's the heroism of staying optimistic and continuing to struggle. Heroism is the striving to overcome problems in the knowledge that they will never be overcome.'

Passionate stuff and Morris becomes increasingly eloquent and revealing as he expands on how he tempers this rather gloomy outlook on life with humour.

'The reason I say this is that I feel an intense fondness for my young characters' ability to do this and I think that the humour comes from my fondness for them. It lies in the interaction between the author's voice – my voice – as well as from within the characters. My characters really delight me partly because they are a part of me that has never had an opportunity to really be heard before or to be valued – at least not in the way I value them.

'I've always used humour in my life for all sorts of reasons – as armour, and as a way of self advertisement and as a way of offering love and friendship in a more digestible way. At the centre of all that, and always accepting that humour can trivialise and stereotype and set up barriers, I don't know any more potent way to affirm the good things that can happen between people. Certainly between me and people I'm never going to meet. The laughter of fond recognition for our shared human predicament is a very useful thing.'

Morris does not laugh a lot and he says this with a kind of fervour, as if he wants to believe it rather than as if it comes naturally to him. He knows that he needs to write the kind of books he does for himself as much as for his readers. He does not like to think of them as books designed to help children face difficult situations. The mainspring of the writing comes from deep inside himself, not as a response to an intended audience. 'Writing the books is therapeutic for me. Apart from the privilege of doing work that I love, on a more basic level I'm a much happier and more well-balanced person now than I was before I started writing for kids. Writing *Two Weeks With the Queen* was the beginning of me saving the life of the part of me that was a child.' Luckily that child was saved and the parts of the grown-up Morris Gleitzman that go into all of his characters can continue to touch his readers. ■

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

The Books

From Macmillan Children's Books
(£3.99 each unless stated otherwise):

Misery Guts, 0 330 32440 3

Worry Warts, 0 330 32845 X

Puppy Fat, 0 330 34211 8

Blabber Mouth, 0 330 33283 X

Sticky Beak, 0 330 33681 9

Two Weeks With the Queen,
0 330 31376 2

Two Weeks With the Queen, play
adapted by Mary Morris,
0 330 33693 2, £4.99

Belly Flop, 0 330 34522 2

Water Wings, 0 330 35014 5

From Puffin:

The Other Facts of Life,
0 14 036877 9, £3.99

Second Childhood, 0 14 036878 7,
£3.50

Wicked! Series with Paul
Jennings, £1.00 each

1. *The Slobberers*, 0 14 038990 3

2. *Battering Rams*, 0 14 038991 1

3. *Croaked*, 0 14 038992 X

4. *Dead Ringer*, 0 14 038993 8

5. *The Creeper*, 0 14 038994 6

6. *Till Death Us Do Part*,
0 14 038995 4

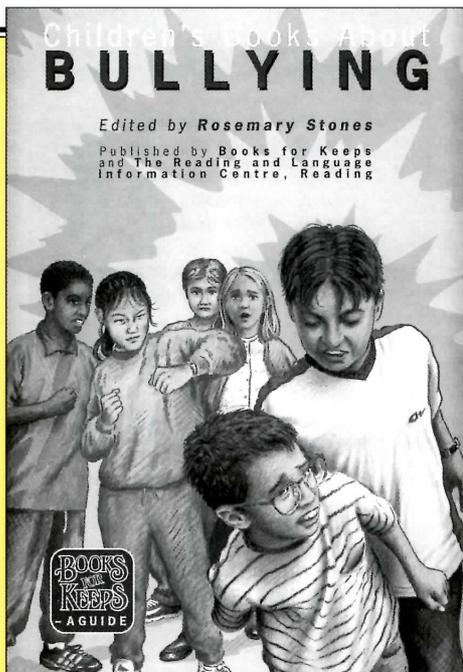
Morris Gleitzman's latest book,
Bumface, is published this
month by Viking Children's
Books.



Line drawings
on these
pages and p12
taken from
the *Wicked*
series.



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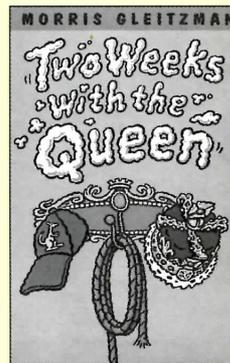
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Using Gleitzman in the classroom

George Hunt on the temptation to 'protect' children from reading about issues that they have a right to know about.

When I first read *Two Weeks With the Queen* some years ago, I knew that this was a book whose humour and humanity I was duty bound to share with the children I taught, yet I did not have the courage to do it. Teaching was hard enough, I reasoned, without having to deal with complaints from parents resentful of their eight-year-olds being pulled through such spiny territory as childhood cancer, gay-bashing and Aids. I agonised over this for some time, and in the end I borrowed a backbone from close friends whose daughters were enduring the same ordeal as the Mudford brothers: the younger one desperately ill, the older racked with anxiety and resentment.



It was the heartfelt enthusiasm for the book expressed by both these parents and their children that convinced me that my initial conviction was worth carrying through.

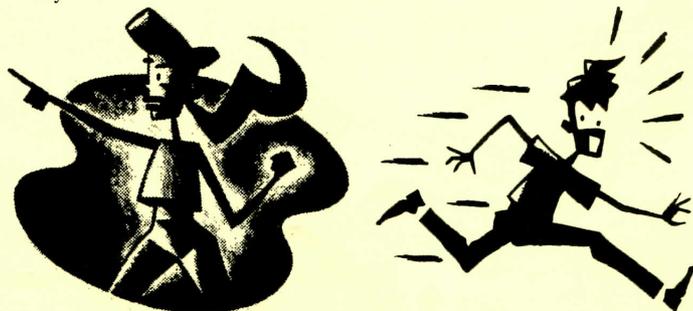
In the meantime, I had interviewed Morris Gleitzman for *Books for Keeps* (No.84, January 1994), and he had pointed out the irony of such avoidance behaviour: in the book, Colin's parents pack him off to England because they want to 'protect' him from the sight of his brother's terminal decline; in real life classrooms, adults strive to 'protect' children from reading about issues that they have a right to know about. In both cases, he suggested, the motivation might be more to do with shielding the sensitivities of adults.



One of the things that children find most appealing about Gleitzman's books is the refusal of his young characters to flinch from harsh realities. These eleven- and twelve-year-olds face their tribulations with a defiant creativity that underlies the frequent eruptions of hilarity in the stories. One of the funniest and saddest chapters of a book to read aloud with a class is the opening scene in *Misery Guts*, where Keith Shipley paints his parents' dismal failing chippy in a lurid Tropical Mango Hi-Gloss as a birthday present to cheer up his depressed father. Listeners will probably consider this pure slapstick at first, but in a single poignant sentence

towards the end of the chapter - Keith realised that his father was staring down at the pavement - the genuine misery of the scene is exposed. From then on it becomes clear that that firestorm of pigment that Keith detonates in greyest Lewisham represents his determination to 'rage against the dying of the light' on behalf of his defeated and defeatist parents.

Classroom audiences sympathise with the relentless, courageous attempts of Gleitzman's young heroes and heroines to spark hope and laughter from the everyday flinty realities of disappointment and family agony. They also appreciate his celebration of sheer bloody cheek.



NEWS

NATIONAL YEAR OF READING



● Libraries, schools, businesses, community projects and local authorities all round the country are organising events for the Year of Reading from storytelling sessions, to festivals, to reading advice surgeries to writing competitions. Further information from The National Year of Reading Team, National Literacy Trust, Swire House, 59 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6AJ (0171 828 2435).

● The National Year of Reading has launched an online magazine, Read Me, featuring the work of poets. More poets and authors are wanted to take part in interviews and online discussion. Further information from Leon Thompson (0171 828 2435 x231).

● The new Readathon pack (Readathon is a national sponsored read in aid of sick children) is now available with a newly designed organiser's booklet full of good ideas for implementing Readathon in your school. Further information about enrolment from Readathon, Swerford, Chipping Norton, Oxon OX7 4BG (tel/fax: 01608 730335).

Useful Organisations
No.3: SOCIETY FOR
STORYTELLINGSociety for
Storytelling

PO Box 2344, Reading RG6 7FG
(tel: 0118 935 1381)

Founded in 1993 (by, among others, Grace Hallworth, Alan Garner and Eileen Colwell) to serve and promote the exploration and sharing of oral storytelling and stories, the Society for Storytelling aims to provide information (on stories, storytelling and storytelling events) and to be a network for those who are interested in the exchange of knowledge re the art of storytelling. The Society also aims to increase public awareness of the art, practice and value of oral storytelling and the narrative traditions of the peoples and cultures of the world. The Society publishes a newsletter, 'Storylines', a 'Directory of Storytellers', factsheets, booklists and discussion documents. It has an Education group and plans to set up a Library and Therapy group.

Membership is open to anyone who has an interest in storytelling, whether teller, listener, amateur or professional. Individual membership is £18.00. For details of couple, group and overseas membership, contact the Society at the address above.

Creating a
Children's Laureate

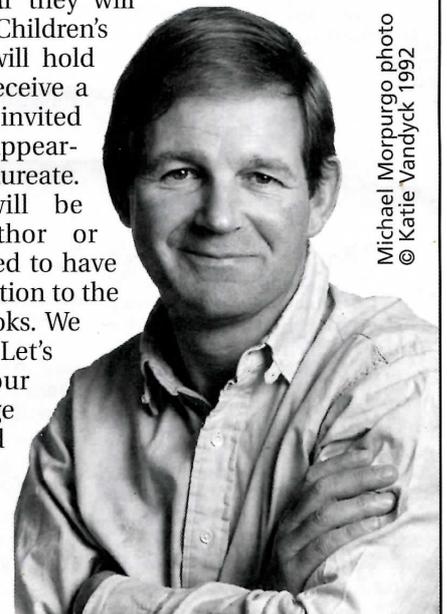
Michael Morpurgo explains the thinking behind this exciting new venture.

Parents, teachers, publishers, writers, illustrators, librarians, bookshops, bookclubs – even government now – we've all been trying to encourage more children to read. Great literacy campaigns are in full swing, and they are great too. Yet at the same time, *Treasure Islands* comes off the air, *Jackanory* has been cancelled and the amount of space for reviews of children's books is minimal. The adult world wants our children to read, to be literate, but only in theory I'm afraid. They neglect almost completely the people who produce and promote their children's books. Children's literature is sidelined as a sort of subspecies of literature. Yet the very people who often do the sidelining are so often the highly literate, who were themselves brought to a love of books through a children's book. Strange.

So what to do? Shrug shoulders and say it's hopeless, or try to find a new way of raising the status of children's writing and illustration, and in so doing bring the best of children's

books to the attention of adults and children alike. The Children's Laureate is a new way.

Nominations are now coming in from all over the country. IBBY*, who will be the judging committee, will be coming up with a list of 20 nominations by the time Chris Smith launches the project on 14 November, and by June next year they will have selected our first Children's Laureate. He or she will hold office for two years, receive a prize of £10,000 and be invited to make occasional appearances as Children's Laureate. The Laureateship will be awarded to an author or illustrator who is judged to have made a major contribution to the world of children's books. We need heroes, I think. Let's celebrate our best, our finest, let's acknowledge how they have enriched all our lives, adults and children alike. It may help some child somewhere to pick up their first book.



Michael Morpurgo photo
© Katie Vandyck 1992

B/K REVIEWS

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

Khalida Alvi was formerly a primary and advisory teacher in Ealing.

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.

Lois Keith teaches at North Westminster Community School.

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

Errol Lloyd is an artist and writer.

Margaret Mallett is Visiting Tutor in Primary English, Goldsmiths' College.

Ted Percy, until he retired, was Divisional Children's Librarian with Buckinghamshire County Library.

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

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

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

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

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REVIEWS Under 5s Pre-School/Nursery/Infant



From *Going Out*.

My Toys

1 86039 713 1

My Clothes

1 86039 712 3

Colours

1 86039 711 5

Going Out

1 86039 714 X

★★★

Sian Tucker, Orchard, 16pp, £2.99 each board

First published as part of another series in 1990, these board books use strong, interesting colours to introduce babies to a variety of objects and concepts. Images are boldly presented on colourful backgrounds with one-word labels, and the items chosen are not always commonplace.

Going Out is the least coherent of the four, encompassing images ranging from flowers to transport and the weather – it feels as though it should have a story line: a challenge for inventive sharers, perhaps? *Colours* adopts a conventional format – left-hand pages in one colour labelled, for example, 'This is yellow', the corresponding right-hand page shows 'a yellow balloon'. Complementary colours are often used to show up the objects and some pages are very striking as a result.

Worth including in your baby's collection for their simple forms and bright colours. AG

Mr Bear Says Hello, Baby Bear

★★

Debi Gliori, Orchard, 32pp, 1 86039 799 9, £5.99 board

A thick, large format board book whose 16 double spreads weigh in at around 700g – awkward for an adult to handle easily, never mind a toddler. Might be a bit nasty if dropped on the toes, in fact...

That obstacle overcome, inside the baby will find a series of rhyming (or almost rhyming) couplets such as 'A spoonful for you and a spoonful for me. And a spoonful for teddy and bunny and bee.' Another couplet rhymes 'toes' with 'clothes', and not all the lines scan.

The illustrations have a certain charm and some nice toddler activities are shown, but the book as a whole does not hang together well

and the verse is banal. I would take my £5.99 elsewhere, frankly. AG

Bedtime Rhymes

★★★

1 86039 485 X

Counting Rhymes

★★

1 86039 484 1

Carol Thompson, Little Orchard, 24pp, £2.99 each pbk

A racially mixed group of toddlers bound through the pages of *Bedtime Rhymes*, illustrating an assortment of verses – some well-known, others variants on the theme. Thompson's appealing artwork is achieved with an exuberant water colour wash.

The same children appear in *Counting Rhymes* – confusingly the rhyme about 'Five little peas' features seven of them, nattily attired in peapod suits, and it takes a bit of working out to see how they are being used to illustrate the rhyme.

Layout is the major problem here: rhymes follow closely one upon another with little to tell the reader that one has finished and another begun. Not enough space is given to the illustrations for some of the rhymes – essential particularly in the counting rhymes where confusion is too easy. The book's usefulness is considerably diminished as a result. AG

Freddie goes swimming

1 86039 810 3

Freddie gets dressed

1 86039 489 2

Freddie visits the doctor

1 86039 490 6

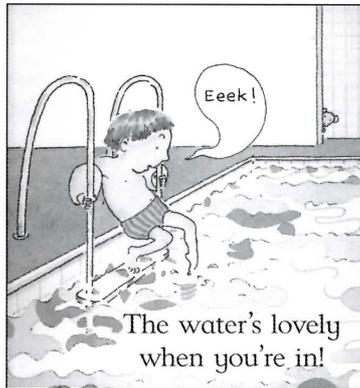
Freddie goes to playgroup

1 86039 811 1

★★★★

Nicola Smee, Little Orchard, 24pp, £2.99 each pbk

Printed on 'sturdy card pages for maximum wear and tear', these four titles feature a small boy and his go-everywhere toy bear engaged in the usual round of toddler activities – they learn to dress themselves; they enjoy a straightforward visit to a friendly doctor who examines Bear too; they have a successful trip to the oddly-punctuated 'Learner's pool'



From *Freddie goes swimming*.

(sic), and a fun first morning at playgroup where even Bear is pleased to make a new friend. Bear is useful for expressing Freddie's emotions and the books are reassuringly matter-of-fact about new experiences. The friendly illustrations are reminiscent of Helen Oxenbury's, with occasional glimpses of humour – check out the assortment of odd ailments in the doctor's waiting-room for example! Occasional speech bubbles extend the text and will attract would-be readers of nursery and playgroup age. AG

The Wheels on the Bus

1 86039 744 1

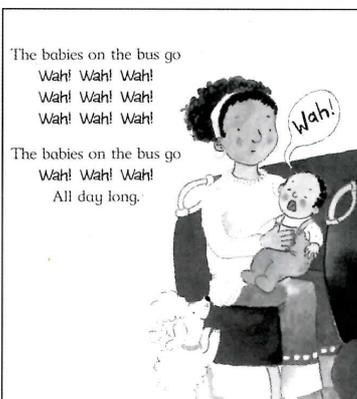
Incey Wincey Spider

1 86039 743 3

★★★★

Penny Dann, Little Orchard, 24pp, £2.99 each pbk

This picture book version of the much-loved song 'The Wheels on the Bus' features a cheerful yellow bus. The format is suitable for pre-schoolers and reception children, with speech bubbles and environmental print to add to the reading opportunities. A second typeface is used to mark the new activity on each page and the busy passengers are of mixed ages and races.



From *The Wheels on the Bus*.

In his picture book, Incey Wincey Spider, sporting green bowler and matching broly, climbs up his spout, mirrored by adults and children (of mixed ethnic origin again) demonstrating the actions that accompany the rhyme clearly. Of most use to children beginning to

make the connection between spoken and written word – these titles are a jolly addition to nursery or playgroup shelf. AG

The Brand New Creature

★★★

Jemma Beeke, ill. Tiphanie Beeke, Levinson, 32pp, 1 86233 037 9, £4.99 pbk

Created in mixed media on home made Indian paper, this debut picture book is simple, comforting and very stylish. Bored with her domestic pets, a little girl sets off from home in her search of a crocodile, not knowing what it is nor what it looks like. She encounters many exotic creatures through the heat of an African day but does not find the one she is looking for – or does she? What is the green, scaly, long-tailed creature she finds hatching from an egg? Illustrated in subtle colours by the author's sister, this title has been deservedly shortlisted for the Mother Goose Award – open to illustrators publishing a first major illustrated book. AK

Ten Bright Eyes

★★★

Judy Hindley, ill. Alison Barlett, Levinson, 24pp, 1 899607 95 1, £8.99 hbk novelty

The sequel to *Cat Among the Cabbages*, this new picture book from Hindley and Bartlett has mother bird leaving her hedgerow nest one spring morning in search of breakfast for her young. The rhythmic story follows her journey and in the process involves counting animals, finding shapes, looking at animal camouflage and identifying patterns, many scratched into the paint. ('Three slim, striped trees that shiver in the breeze, making dappled shadows in a glade – three dappled deer that leap away!') A page at the back of the book has suggestions aimed at the adult reader for ways to involve the pre-school child for whom this book is intended.

The vivid impasto acrylic spreads have secret half-page flaps of varying success in their ability to engage the young reader. The overall impression is that the book has been created for adult rather than child. Worth looking at nevertheless. AK

The Tiger Who Came to Tea

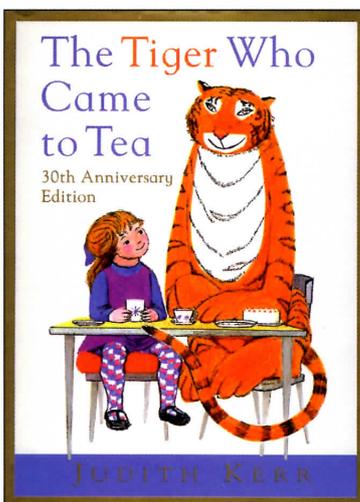
★★★★★

Judith Kerr, Collins, 32pp, 0 00 195804 6, £10.99 hbk

Thirty years on, what is there to say about this classic picture book in which Sophie and her mummy share their tea with an unexpected and very hungry feline guest, who eats all the food in the house, and drinks all the drink right down to the last drop of water in the tap?

In this anniversary edition, Kerr's tiger is as velvety and appealing as ever, with his air of slight superiority and his marvellously sinuous tail.

Modern adult readers may not be entirely comfortable with the image of mummy as the 'little woman' anxiously awaiting Daddy's return to



solve the problem of what to have for supper, but the charm of this book is in the tiger's audacious thoroughness and Sophie's sensual enjoyment of him – not to mention the idea of not having a bath because a tiger has drunk all the water in the taps.

In my experience this book – whose text is perfect for reading aloud – is much loved even by today's sophisticates. It is set to remain a firm favourite for a few more years yet.

AG

Happy Birth Day!

★★★★★

Robie H. Harris, ill. Michael Emberley, Walker, 32pp, 0 7445 5264 8, £5.99 pbk

This large format picture book is a loving account of a baby's birth, seen through the Mother's eyes. It captures the birth experience, the thrill and activity, tenderness and wonder surrounding the event. The baby is portrayed realistically yet beautifully, and the words are gentle and full of awe. The newly-born babe is somewhat like a Sendak character, whilst the text is reminiscent of Laurie Lee's essay written on the birth of his daughter, 'The Firstborn'. A wonderful book for a pregnant Mum to share with her toddler, preparing her/him for the reality of the newborn babe. A book to use effectively with children of all ages.

GB

Shrinking Mouse

★★★★★

Pat Hutchins, Bodley Head, 32pp, 0 370 32496 X, £9.99 hbk

A young picture book that can deftly provoke ideas as well as offer a good read is a book to be celebrated. As ever with Hutchins, the illustrations of Fox, Rabbit, Squirrel and Mouse are captivating – their knowing eyes especially – and the background rural landscape has a simple charm. Each animal in turn moves off to a distant wood, watched anxiously by the others. The 'shrinking' is of course about perspective and horizons, and successive pages draw the beginning reader into wondering about distance and disappearance. This is a witty look at a subject that always intrigues young minds. Its simplicity commends it highly, its ideas invite many re-readings.

RB

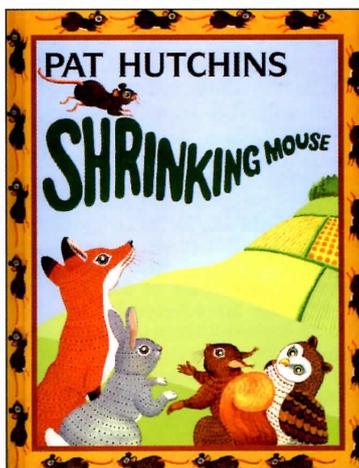
Fly with the Birds

POETRY

★★★★

Richard Edwards, ill. Satoshi Kitamura, Oxford, 24pp, 0 19 910505 7, £5.99 pbk novelty

This unusual picture flap book is narrated in the first person and in rhyming couplets by a small girl who shares her flights of fancy as she dresses, introduces her pets, sits in a traffic jam, shops, picnics, draws a space map, gardens, plays, baths and finally, goes to bed – to dream of course. Illustrated in the artist's distinctively angular style, each double page spread includes a picture dictionary featuring some of



the items from the main illustration. When the flap is lifted, it reveals the narrator's imaginings as well as the last line of the rhyme. The expanding or limiting potential of the picture dictionary will depend on the adult with whom the book is shared.

JB

Skip Across the Ocean: Nursery Rhymes from round the World

★★★★

Collected by Floella Benjamin, ill. Sheila Moxley, Frances Lincoln, 48pp, 0 7112 1285 6, £5.99 pbk

This is a delightful collection of traditional lullabies and nursery rhymes from around the world. Many

of them are printed in the original language alongside the English translation which should broaden the appeal of the book and make it a valuable tool in the multi-cultural classroom. Moxley's warm, tactile oil crayon-like illustrations exude an air of innocence and naivety.

EL

A Twist in the Tale

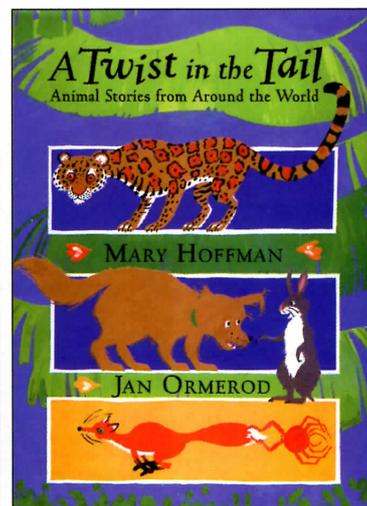
★★★★★

Mary Hoffman, ill. Jan Ormerod, Frances Lincoln, 72pp, 0 7112 1230 9, £12.99 hbk

Among the animal characters we encounter in this handsomely published collection of ten traditional stories from various parts of the world are Los Nobos (wolf) and Bagatta (sheep) from Cape Verde, a unique indigo jackal from India, an elephant-riding tortoise from Nigeria, a dithering platypus from down under and that ubiquitous Caribbean trickster, Anancy. With their universal themes of pride, greed, wisdom and foolishness the stories transcend their cultural origins but at the same time encapsulate the particular richness and *joie de vivre* of their individual locations.



From Fly with the Birds.



Hoffman's zappy, direct tellings respect the oral tradition from which they come and thus make for a pleasurable read aloud for all involved. Additional vibrancy is provided by Ormerod's bold and colourful illustrations.

JB

REVIEWS 5–8 Infant/Junior

The Teeny Tiny Woman

★★★★★

Illustrated by Arthur Robins, Walker, 24pp, 0 7445 5579 5, £7.99 hbk

This delicious ghost story with its repetitive phrasing and build up of tension is sure to send a frisson of fear through the teeny tiny bones of young listeners and readers. The cartoon-style illustrations should help dispel the anxieties of those with a very nervous disposition.

JB

Little Bunny Bobkin

★★★★★

James Riordan, ill. Tim Warnes, Orchard, 32pp, 1 86039 148 6, £9.99 hbk

The drab title apart, this tale of a bunny lost in the foxes' den has some attractive features. Foremost among them is the quality and texture of Warnes's illustrations: the chirpy looks on the animals' faces, the warmly cast country landscapes. Little Bunny Bobkin wants to learn to count and his travels through the meadows give him all kinds of opportunities. Amusingly, he mistakes the fox cubs' eyes and noses for those of the bunnies, and is soon

destined for their cooking pot. His taste for numbers however sees him effect a wonderful getaway.

The demands of the current Literacy Hour and the beckoning Numeracy Hour are conveniently met in this text, though I continue to find it frustrating and surprising that many picture books like this one do not include page numbers to assist their beginning readers.

RB

Just Dog

★★★★★

Hiawyn Oram, ill. Lisa Flather, Orchard, 32pp, 1 86039 382 9, £9.99 hbk, 1 86039 809 X, £3.99 pbk

The cover blurb to this title tells us that it is 'a warm and reassuring picture book' about the importance of being happy with who you are. Yes, but it is first and foremost a book that elicits marvellous out-loud laughter from young readers – especially if the sharing adult can find a convincing 'dog' voice! The double-spread illustrations which focus on Just Dog and his friend, Midnight the Cat, are as forceful and bold as can be found in many a Big Book and lend themselves strongly to group reading. The animals' interplay at the expense of the humans around them is deliciously observed. On the final pages Just Dog states the case for preserving his moniker when the human alternatives include

Honeybun, Pudding Face and Sugarpops. This is set to become an infant class favourite. RB

Siôn and the Bargain Bee

★★★

Jenny Sullivan and Jac Jones, Pont Books, 32pp, 1 85902 621 4, £3.95 pbk

Pont Books is well known in Wales for its stylish and beautifully produced Anglo-Welsh children's books. *Siôn and the Bargain Bee* is a fairy tale with a Welsh ambience. While threatening to be yet another Jack and the Beanstalk, *Siôn* shows his originality by trading his Mam's cows for a magic club, a music box, and a bee in a bottle. Of course with these items he manages to fell the giants, kill the wild boar and marry His Lordship's beautiful daughter. It is all fairly familiar stuff, but made special by Sullivan's sparkling and witty style and Jones' wonderfully comic illustrations. ES

Ms MacDonald Has a Class

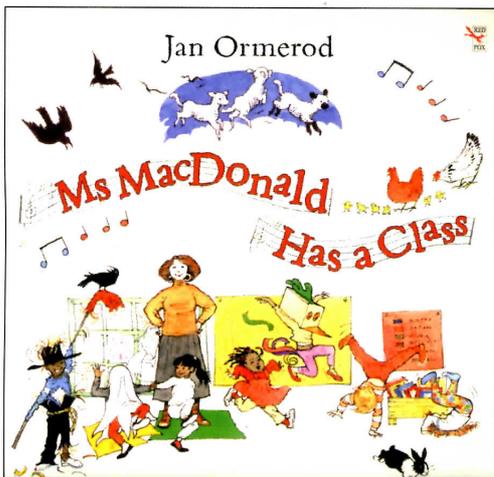
★★★★★

Jan Ormerod, Red Fox, 32pp, 0 09 951651 9, £4.99 pbk

What sheer delight! Each page of this picture book version of the cumulative song is a joy to share with young children. A nursery/reception class is identified on the title page, and the pupils' characters are cleverly developed throughout the story. Find the girl with black spotted trousers...what a little organiser! There is so much movement and interaction between characters that this title would work as a wordless book. But in fact the text is bouncy and contagious, children rapidly picking it up.

'Here a jump, there a bump, everywhere a boing boing...

Here a chatter, there a natter, everywhere a pitter patter...'



This joyful book is about co-operation, creation, and finally success as the children brilliantly perform a play for their families. It feels like a real class, involved in decision-making, problem-solving and sharing, with an inspirational teacher. A book to treasure with an individual child, but also one for every infant classroom. GB

Jaguar

★★★★

Helen Cowcher, Hippo, 32pp, 0 590 11123 X, £4.99 pbk

Set in Venezuela, north of the great Orinoco river, this picture book is strongly illustrated in a painterly style and sensitively written. Like others by Cowcher, the conservation theme is strong. The pictures convey a sense of urgency, and the reader is led on page by page as the tale of the hunting down of the killer jaguar is told. The fact file at the end informs us that the jaguar is top of the food chain in this part of the world, and its jaw is so powerful it can bite through the armour-plated shell of a turtle. These facts add to a story memorable not only for its surprising, mystical ending. GB

Elephant

0 7445 6228 7

Whale

0 7445 3295 7

★★★★★

Judy Allen, ill. Tudor Humphries, Walker, 32pp, £7.99 hbk

These two picture books are from the 'Animals at Risk' series and in both the texts are well matched by the beautiful and evocative illustrations. *Elephant* begins with an African family finding a forgotten ivory necklace. The daughter, Hannah, wants to know why her parents are frightened by it and what power it seems to hold over them. As she sleeps with the necklace under her pillow, she finds out - in her dreams she meets a great grey elephant and she feels its anger, hurt and puzzlement. When the family's car stalls on a real life visit to a game reserve, and they encounter a female elephant, the parents are terrified by the life-threatening situation. Hannah resolves the story in a memorable way.

Whale is a gripping tale of a family at sea in a small boat. They are travelling home late at night, having waited for a violent storm to abate. Their radio informs them of the break-up of an oil-tanker, and of the resulting vast oil-slick. Fear is well portrayed, as is the all-powerful nature of the sea. There is a wonderful feeling of magic in the story as a humpbacked whale and calf flee the oil-slick and pass by the small boat. Both these 'animal rights' books close with a fact sheet. GB

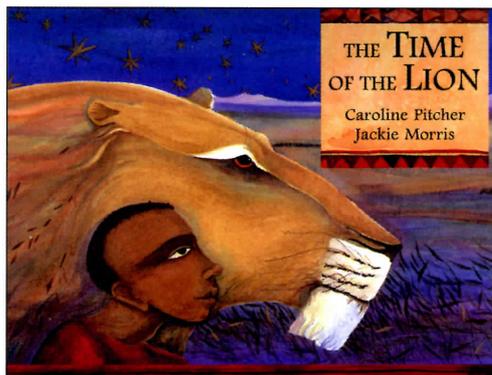
The Storm Seal

★★★

Judy Waite, ill. Neil Reed, Magi, 32pp, 1 85430 464 X, £8.99 hbk

Peter, an old sailor who is also a naturalist and animal lover, teaches the village children to respect the feral nature of animals when a seal pup is washed up on the beach. Generous use of metaphor in the descriptive passages about the Cornish coast contrast with a more

straightforward account of how the seal is looked after. The best of the rather stilted illustrations feature the dramatic seascapes and the wild animals in their natural habitat. JB



The Time of the Lion

★★★★★

Caroline Pitcher, ill. Jackie Morris, Frances Lincoln, 32pp, 0 7112 1194 9, £10.99 hbk

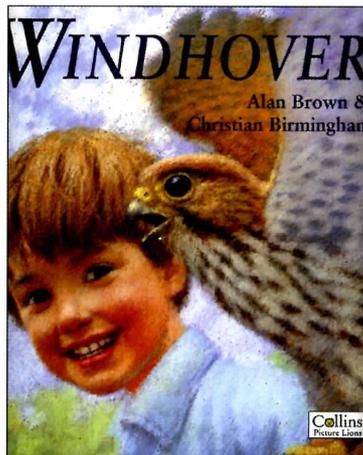
The sense of connectedness children feel with the natural world is powerfully and eloquently portrayed in this picture book tale of friendship between a village boy and a lion. Set in an East African savannah, it tells how Joseph develops a close, caring, reciprocal relationship with a lion, a relationship he keeps from his father who feels Joseph is not yet ready for leonine encounters. The arrival of traders puts Joseph's kinship with the lion and its family, and his trust in his father in jeopardy; but both Joseph and his father have things to learn about each other.

There is a strength and majesty in the watercolour illustrations which flow across the gutter of the book on every page. This is true equally of the dusty, earthy daytime scenes and the dusky, shadowy landscapes under the star-strewn night sky all in subtle shades of purple and blue. Everything and everyone is acutely observed: details of the savannah and its flora and fauna and the many and varied patterns in the village scenes. Some of the decorative motifs are repeated in borders and vignettes used as headers and footers to the text. A fine multi-layered story with endless opportunities for discussion and reflection. JB

Windhover

★★★★★

Alan Brown and Christian Birmingham, Collins Picture Lions, 32pp, 0 00 664613 1, £5.99 pbk



In a niche in a school wall above a playground a hawk chick, the narrator of this story, hatches out and becomes aware of sky and wind. Fed on morsels of shredded mammal, he grows rapidly, but just as he is about to take to the air he is captured by one of the children who have been watching him grow. Deprived of freedom and sustenance the creature dwindles and despairs, but is rescued by one of the other children, who also manages to rescue the culprit's self esteem.

This is a short, simple and powerful story in picture book format, the direct, present-tense narration supported by vivid, soft focus but highly naturalistic paintings. The moral of the story is left implicit but would make a good talking point after a shared reading of this book. A spirited reading of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem of the same name might make an effective sequel. GH

Nonsense!

BIG BOOK/POETRY ★★★

Chosen by Richard Brown and Kate Ruttle, ill. Martin Chatterton, Cambridge, 24pp, 0 521 63473 3, £14.95 (also available in a pack with six small versions, 0 521 64955 2, £27.50)

This Big Book contains eighteen largely well-known and, in my experience, popular poems of varying length from the likes of Rosen, Milligan, Causley with nearly half from 'anon'. The easily-memorable and participatory nature of the verses makes them highly suitable for whole class sharing which largely compensates for the smaller than ideal print size. There are language lessons aplenty here, not least from the inclusion of a contents page and index of first lines. The apposite illustrations are appealingly daft and brash. JB

Mulberry home alone

★★★★★

Sally Grindley, ill. Tania Hurt-Newton, Macdonald Young Books 'First Storybooks', 32pp, 0 7500 2508 5, £3.50 pbk

Mulberry does not like it when his people go out without patting him on the head and giving him his doggy crunchy things. Havoc results as he searches the kitchen for his biscuits, scatters the rubbish bin and chases the cat, but all is well eventually when the family return and normality is restored. This simple storyline is enlivened by Grindley's sympathetic text and the beautiful hues of Hurt-Newton's vibrant illustrations. First Storybooks are pitched at 'the gap between picture books and chapter books' and on the evidence of this example should provide a welcoming invitation to reading for beginners. VC

Open Wide Wilbur

1 86039 627 5

Long Live Roberto

1 86039 628 3

★★★

Rose Impey, ill. Shoo Rayner, Orchard 'Animal Crackers', 48pp, £3.50 each pbk

These two titles are from a series aimed at early readers. A brief foreword states that these anthropomorphised stories are based on actual records of prodigious creatures such as an enormous whale and a long-lived rabbit.

The formula of small blocks of conventional text, somewhat whacky illustrations (black and white) and text in other forms such as speech bubbles, letters, captions, maps are all utilised to good effect. Orchard have made an attempt to introduce some variations to the formula such as two pages of corny jokes (which young readers will love) and a short list of facts about the creatures featured in the stories. Despite all of this the two stories reviewed here fall rather flat. It is, however, difficult to judge a whole series on the strength of two titles. VC

Tanya, The Moo-vie

Keith Brumpton, 0 7500 2566 2, £3.99 pbk

Cosmic Whizz Kid

Karen King, ill. Derek Brazell, 0 7500 2535 2, £3.99 pbk

Max and the Petnappers

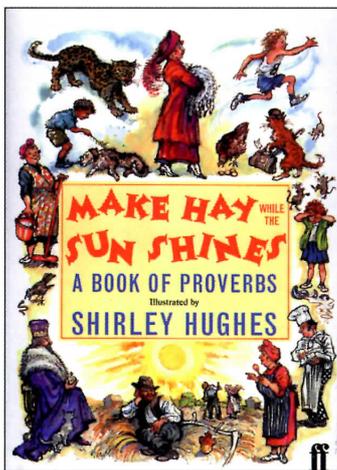
Jeremy Strong, ill. David Mostyn, 0 7500 2564 6, £4.50 pbk

★★★★

Macdonald Young Books, 48pp

These three titles in Macdonald's 'Storybook' series have red spines which means they are 'for confident readers'. Their size (20.5cm x 14.5cm) is attractive, as is the clear typeface and mixture of colour and black and white illustrations. The text is broken into chapters and the mix of text and illustration on each page makes the books very approachable.

As the title implies *Tanya, The Moo-vie* misses not the slightest opportunity for a pun, neither textually or visually. Novice readers may not get all of them, but the exploits of supercow superhero Tanya, Hoofed Crusader provide plenty of fun as she unites with UFOs (Unidentified Furry Objects) to defeat the villainous Equus, the Masked Stallion. *Cosmic Whizz Kid* shows that at least some of the concerns of school life in future times may not be much different from now as daydreamer Shiza suddenly gains magic powers which enable her to star in the Intergalactic School Quiz. *Max and the Petnappers* is more down to earth - Max outwits kidnappers Belladonna Snitch and Gretel Grappel. These are lively and well-constructed stories likely to provide enjoyment as well as a sense of achievement to newly confident readers. VC

**Make Hay While the Sun Shines: A Book of Proverbs**

0 571 19439 7

Over the Moon: A Book of Sayings

0 571 19438 9

★★★★★

Shirley Hughes, Faber & Faber, 48pp, £5.99 each hbk

The humour in these books derives from having some of the best known idioms and proverbs in the English language placed alongside black and white images which interpret them literally. When the images come from Hughes there is a guarantee that they will be characterised by an engaging attention to detail in the drawing and by a sense of mischief in the composition which never quite topples over into the malicious. See, for example, the hapless gentleman 'tied to his mother's apron strings' or the picture of DIY chaos which demonstrates that 'Jack of all trades is master of none'. The variety of levels on which such material operates ensures that these attractive publications will appeal to a range of age-groups, all of which can take Hughes's interpretations as starting points for their own imaginative forays. Who are those people 'looking for a needle in a haystack'? Who are the boy and girl gazing at the tawdry shop window display designed to remind them (and us) that 'All that glitters is not gold'?

Great fun - and endless opportunities for more of it! RD

The Unsinkable Titanic

★★★★★

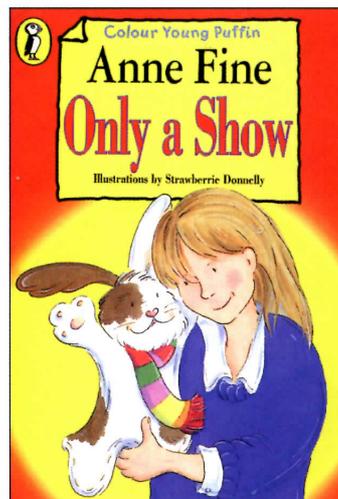
Andrew Donkin, ill. Linda Clark, Macdonald 'Historical Storybooks', 48pp, 0 7500 2479 8, £4.50 pbk

An historical storybook, set in 1912, that successfully bridges the fiction/non-fiction divide. Simple, informative, inexpensive and steering clear of being overdramatic, this book is as far from the blockbuster movie as you could wish. The central fictional characters, Sarah and her mother board the ill-fated *Titanic* at Southampton to sail, on its maiden voyage, to New York where they intend to be reunited with Sarah's father who has been in America on business.

A nice touch is the inclusion in the 'story' of several real life characters,

notably Thomas Andrews, designer of the ship, who conducts some market research with our fictional family.

Colour and monochrome illustrations successfully add to the atmosphere of this sensitively crafted book. AK

**Only a Show**

★★★★★

Anne Fine, ill. Strawberry Donnelly, Colour Young Puffin, 64pp, 0 14 038843 5, £3.99 pbk

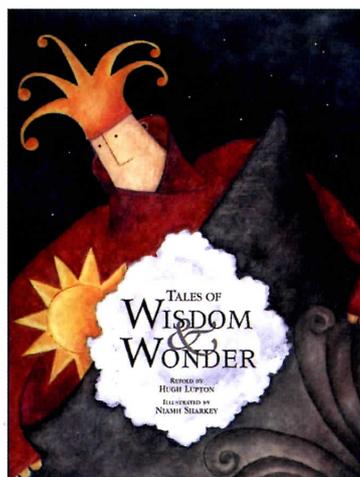
A winner of the Carnegie Medal and Whitbread Award with *Flour Babies* and the Smarties award with *Bill's New Frock*, Anne Fine's pedigree as an author of quality fiction for a wide range of young children is in no doubt. This offering, first published in 1990, is a top class read. Designed for young developing readers, this tale will have many of its audience empathising with the central character, Anna, who dreads having to do her five minute talk in front of her classmates. Unable to think of a topic on which to base her talk, Anna is reassured by her mother and brother that she will be fine. Her witty blindfold routine with her rabbit puppet is the star turn, leaving her classmates cheering for more.

The charming miniature, half and full page colour illustrations further enhance this delightful story. AK

Tales of Wisdom and Wonder

★★★★★

Retold by Hugh Lupton, ill. Niamh Sharkey, Barefoot, 64pp, 1 901223 15 9, £12.99 hbk



Lupton has selected seven stories from the rich corpora of Haitian, Cree, English, French, West African, Russian and Irish folklore, and retold them in a brisk and picturesque vernacular, at the same time modulating the style of the retelling to suit the character of the tale. Readers familiar with the dream of the Peddler of Swaffham will find a version here that is a lot breezier than most. There is an incantatory Cree tale about a shamanistic quest for a famished fox whose decline is mirrored in the disease of a small child. A Russian farmer plants a forest with fish and a river with sausages. A butterfly crawls from the lips of an Irish shepherd and embarks upon an odyssey that will remind some readers of the journey of the ant in the Japanese tale of the Dream of Akinosuke. This is a wonderful little collection for sharing aloud or reading alone, and it should please all ages and abilities; each of the stories is short but strange, and rich in resonances with other tales. Sharkey's illustrations are schematic but wonderfully playful. GH

Ruby the Rudest Girl

★★

1 86039 623 2

Harold the Hairiest Man

★★★

1 86039 624 0

Boris the Brainiest Baby

★★

1 86039 625 9

Polly the Most Poetic Person

★★

1 86039 626 7

Laurence Anholt, ill. Tony Ross, Orchard 'Crunchies', 48pp, £3.50 each pbk

The heroes and heroines of these stories are, as the covers point out, 'the one and only' specimens of their kind. Here, respectively, are unparalleled manifestations of rudeness, hairiness and a passion for poetry-making, conceived in Anholt's texts and Ross's illustrations in a manner designed to appeal to those young readers who enjoy anything in word or deed of which adult authority might disapprove. But it is all rather less subversive than it might at first seem. Harold learns that baldness too has its joys, Polly's rhyming mania becomes something less irritating when her doctor catches it also and Boris's days as infant prodigy are, mercifully, limited to four: only Ruby leaves us as unrepentant when we meet her first and even here we have to consider the import of the final authorial comment - 'OH RUBY! That is definitely NOT polite at all!' On the whole, then, these are moral tales in today's idiom, funny in places (Harold's story is the best), though unlikely to lead to uncontrollable laughter. They might, possibly, lead their young readers to richer and more challenging experiences. RD

The Giant Book of Snakes and Slithery Creatures

0 7496 3136 8

The Giant Book of Bugs and Creepy Crawlies

0 7496 3135 X

NON-FICTION ★★★

Jim Pipe, Aladdin/Watts 'Giant book of ...' series, 32pp, £10.99 each hbk

Children aged about six will like the sheer colourfulness and flamboyance of these large books organised in double spreads. Both feature clear and useful retrieval devices and good page organisation with sub-headings and information boxes. The information is interesting and goes beyond the superficial. For example, in *The Giant Book of Bugs*, there is an explanation for why insects have remained small – 'If an ant were the size of a horse, it would need hurricane-force winds to breathe.' The large illustrations will interest and inform. I particularly like the well labelled diagram of the amphibian body and the magnified tapeworm head in *The Giant Book of Snakes*. Children often ask about the real size of creatures and some information about this and about the degree of magnification in the pictures would have been helpful.

Children are not likely to be impressed with a bland or cosy approach and I have no problems with young-eating snakes or wasps that grow inside another creature. However I feel a little uneasy about encouraging children to think of remarkable and complicated creatures as 'yucky' and 'scary'. I think a sense of fun and wonder

could still have been achieved without the invitation to go 'ugh!'. Nevertheless these books may awaken an interest and lead children to seek other books including those looking at the life cycle of just one species. MM

A Seed in Need: A first look at the plant cycle

0 7500 2497 6

The Drop Goes Plop: A first look at the water cycle

0 7500 2495 X

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Macdonald Young Books 'M.Y. Bees', 32pp, £4.99 each pbk

Some of the children in a class I was working with recently described information narratives like these books 'information stories'. The question is do books which seem to cross the boundaries between genres confuse children just when they are trying to gain control over different kinds of writing? Once I got used to the snail and ladybird in *A Seed in Need*, who looked as if they had escaped from a storybook, I found the text a clear account of the life cycle of a sunflower. The Mama and baby seagull following the epic journey of a drop of water in *The Drop Goes Plop* are easily coped with as they are just like a parent and child in the way that questions are asked and answered. The mother's utterances are quite a good introduction to information book writing – 'When the cloud gets heavy, the drops fall out as rain. If it's really cold, the drops freeze and fall as snow or hail.' The concept of how the water cycle works and the dynamic nature of the process comes through well. A

sense of movement is achieved by making some of the text travel along with the flow of water!

The diagrams of the sunflower and the water cycle at the end of each book communicate structures and processes well.

I think many young children will be entertained by the talking animals and that these books might be a good transition between story books and the more conventional kind of information book. MM

Wild and Free

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

0 7496 2990 8

Out There Somewhere, it's time to ...

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

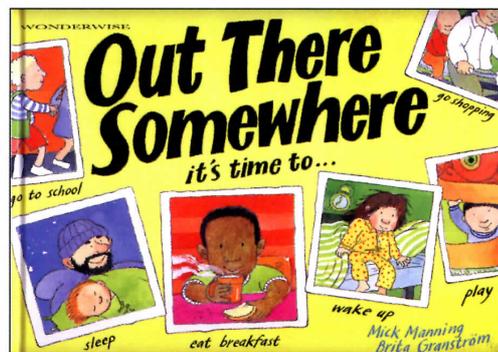
0 7496 3037 X

Mick Manning and Brita Granström, Franklin Watts 'Wonderwise' series, 32pp, £9.99 each hbk

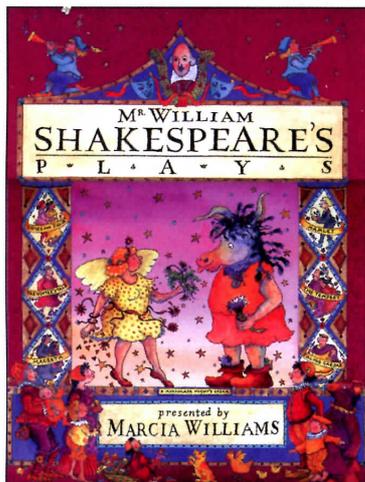
There are a lot of books on environmental issues but *Wild and Free* brings home the plight of endangered species like tigers and whales to the very young with inviting illustrations and a rhythmic text. Each double spread main text begins with 'Who could live in a world without...' and ends with 'wild and free'. *Out There Somewhere, it's time to...* adopts a most imaginative approach to time differences taking young readers on an exhilarating journey round the

world to find where it is daytime and where the middle of the night.

Two kinds of print run through both these picture books – the main text which is large and bold, and smaller writing which gives facts in conventional information book style. In *Wild and Free* the second level of print is presented in asymmetrical information boxes. The complexity of the issues is often hinted at – 'Gorillas are protected, but they are poached for meat by poor forest people.' As we might expect from this author/illustrator partnership, the pictures complement the writing perfectly and will encourage lively discussion. In *Wild and Free* each creature is placed carefully in the right habitat. *Out There Somewhere*, it's time to ... creates wonderful contrasts with the environments pictured which include New York, Moscow, Guilin (China) and Newcastle on Tyne. The picture of the earth, half dark and half lit up by the sun, will help greatly in developing children's understanding of how night and day come about. In each book simple but clear maps show young readers the conventions of this kind of representation, and 'Helpful Words' sections introduce the notion of a glossary. MM



REVIEWS 8-10 Junior/Middle



Mr William Shakespeare's Plays

★★★★★

Marcia Williams, Walker, 40pp, 0 7445 5502 7, £10.99 hbk

Those of us who are interested in how children 'read' the complex inter-relationships of word and picture will have plenty to speculate about with this totally hilarious large format picture book. Williams takes seven Shakespeare plays and re-stages

them (in either four or six pages) in the Globe Theatre, in a comic-strip production style which manages to incorporate quotations from the original texts, her own linking narration and – most inventively, in the border and margins of the pages – the usually irreverent and sceptical commentaries of members of the audience. Inevitably, there is some linguistic simplification and some sanitisation: we lose Autolycus, for example, in *The Winter's Tale* and, by way of depicting some of Leontes' violent sexual jealousy in the same play, we are told that 'he thought that Hermione and Polixenes must be in love' – even though, incidentally, his suspicion that 'my wife is slippery?' is retained. But these are minor matters in an enterprise which speaks of life, laughter and creativity and conveys the essence of the Elizabethan theatrical experience. RD

The Sewer Sleuth

0 7496 3128 7

Convict!

0 7496 3129 5

★★★★★

Julia Jarman, ill. Liz Minichiello, Franklin Watts, 64pp, £3.99 each pbk

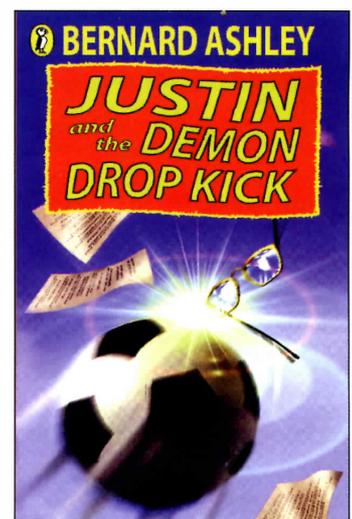
From the 'Sparks' History series,

designed to support Key Stage 2 history, these two volumes consist of short informative novels, based on fact, illustrated throughout and very readable.

Convict is based on the true story of a young woman convicted of stealing and deported to Australia, focusing on conditions in Victorian prisons and on the ships used for transportation.

The Sewer Sleuth tells of the doctor who discovered the link between cholera and water supply, his 'detective' work described as he eliminates one theory after another to arrive at the truth.

Realistic in their detail and unsensationally including deaths due to the poor conditions, these stories contain much to inform the young reader, backed up by a short information section at the end of the book. The texts are illustrated in a cartoon style by Liz Minichiello: I felt that the drawings, while showing a certain amount of relevant detail, were on the whole of poor quality compared to the writing. Similarly, I was surprised to find a careless confusion over dates in the information section of *Convict!* – details such as these detract unnecessarily from what are essentially useful and accessible texts. AG

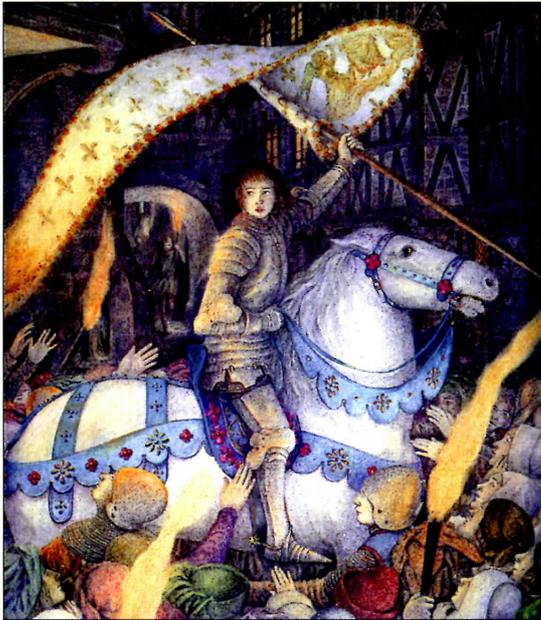


Justin and the Demon Drop-kick

★★★★★

Bernard Ashley, ill. Nick Ward, Puffin, 96pp, 0 14 0380159, £3.99 pbk

From the author of *Dinner Ladies Don't Count* and *I'm Trying to Tell You*, this is another simple, well written school based tale that will be popular with readers age 8+. It will



Joan of Arc

★★★★★

Josephine Poole, ill. Angela Barrett, Hutchinson, 40pp, 0 09 176754 7, £9.99 hbk

The representation of Joan of Arc has been variously interpreted over the centuries in the form of artworks, plays, films and books, including books for children. This picture book version includes a chronology of the key events in Joan's life and the history of France upon which she was to have such an astonishing impact. Poole's powerful, urgent text draws the reader onwards from the voices at

Domrémy through the scenes of battle to the tragic inevitability of Joan's execution. The blues and golds of Barrett's palette together with other devices in her artwork are reminiscent of illuminated manuscripts. From the lushness of a country orchard to the splendour of court to the muted tones of the trial and execution scenes, her illustrations interact with Poole's spare yet poetic account to create a truly stunning picture book in which the enigma of the life of this charismatic, driven girl is poignantly evoked. A book that will be enjoyed by readers of any age from seven upwards. RS

have particular appeal for boys as they read about Justin Perfect – a football fanatic who is always in trouble. Justin's ball is kicked over the high school wall by Eddie Mason, for it to be returned to sports mad headteacher, Mr Anchor, by an irate neighbour. Justin is the only witness to Mr Anchor kicking the football, with considerable force, down the corridor at precisely the moment teacher, Mr Branston, pops his head round his classroom door. The ball strikes the unfortunate and disorientated Mr Branston full in the face, breaking his glasses. As the only person known to have been in the corridor at the time, Justin looks to be in trouble. The question is, will the guilty headteacher own up to being the demon drop-kicker?

This bright and breezy story with likeable and lifelike characters is suitably supported by Ward's lively half and full page illustrations. AK

Robi Dobi

★★★★★

Madhur Jaffrey, ill. Amanda Hall, Pavilion, 80pp, 1 86205 160 7, £6.99 pbk

The style of the narrative and the choice of contemporary language used gives this traditional Indian tale a very modern appeal. The story is full of onomatopoeic sounds and enchanting adventures with which children of today will be able to relate.

The book has eight chapters. Each one contains a complete adventure, however all of them are linked together by the main character, Robi



Dobi the elephant. The book is beautifully and vividly illustrated in full colour and black and white thereby bringing to life each adventure. This is a book to read aloud to a class as a whole. It is also eminently suitable for young readers to enjoy for themselves. KA

Forbidden Memories

★★★★★

Jamila Gavin, ill. Mark Robertson, Mammoth, 80pp, 0 7497 3074 9, £3.99 pbk

Accurately described on the cover as a short novel for fluent readers, this science fiction book, reminiscent of *Logan's Run* and set in the year 5040, will attract older junior boys and girls

in equal numbers even though the two central characters are female. Twins Devi, the mathematical genius, and Sasha, the brilliant dancer, are the stars of the Dome, the strictly controlled world of the future, and they are about to be separated. With the local constabulary making Orwell's Thought Police look like Police Academy, the twins riskily engage in illegal telepathic communication. Sasha is caught receiving a mind picture and is taken away to be 'decommissioned' – about as pleasant a prospect as having dental surgery carried out by Laurence Olivier in *Marathon Man*!

Needless to say, the authorities move swiftly to track down Devi. A pacy, and satisfying end to this dramatic and highly engaging read sees Devi facing a dilemma – should she stay in the Dome and fulfil her destiny as the 800-year-old Chief Tutor's successor as the most powerful brain in the dome? Or should she risk everything by trying to track down her sister in the core of Sector D. Is there really no life outside the Dome? Generous spacing between lines and dramatic futuristic illustrations will further ensure a larger than average queue for this book from the school library shelf. AK

Cities of Splendour

0 7496 2955 X

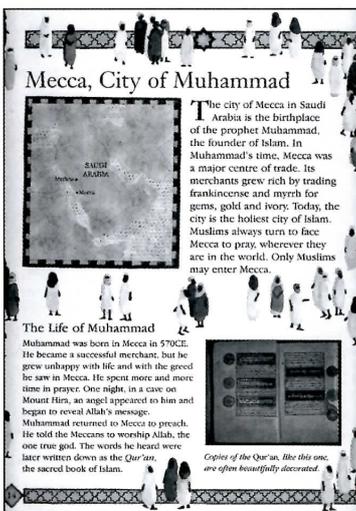
Beneath the Earth

0 7496 2956 8

★★★★★

Finn Bevan, ill. Diana Mayo, Franklin Watts, 32pp, £9.99 each hbk

Here are two titles in a new series, 'Landscapes of Legend', which presents myths and legends from a variety of cultures for 7-11 year olds. They focus on themes of universal significance – the urge to explain the natural world, and to celebrate the rise of powerful civilisations and faiths – and are vividly illustrated. Each of the tales is prefaced by a description of its historical or anthropological background.



Bevan has a storyteller's voice, which moves easily from the factual to the fabulous and shows clearly how each is rooted in the other. Mayo's illustrations pick up cultural idiosyncracies and work them into borders and dramatic scenes, while retaining an individual style which is colourful and vigorous, and scarcely contained by the double page spread. A lot of trouble has gone into a design

which integrates colour photographs and illustration imaginatively. I like the spread on Mecca in *Cities of Splendour*, where Mayo's pilgrims wend their way through Bevan's text and photographs of the ka'ba and the Qur'an.

The tales in *Cities of Splendour* are less successfully tied in to the theme of the book than those in *Beneath the Earth*: the stories involving Muhammad and Buddha are more about the prophets than Mecca or Bodh Gaya. And sometimes the factual section carries more weight than the story, which may be no more than an anecdote. Nevertheless, both titles are attractive and fascinating introductions to different cultures and religions, historical and contemporary; and are supported by thoughtful glossaries. CB

Meet Posy Bates

0 09 985360 4, 96pp

Posy Bates, Again!

0 09 997810 5, 112pp

Posy Bates and the Bag Lady

0 09 916451 5, 96pp

★★★★★

Helen Cresswell, ill. Kate Aldous, Red Fox, £3.99 each pbk

Posy Bates, mischievous eight-year-old with a fifteen-year-old sister, Pippa, and baby brother Fred, is the star of all three of Helen Cresswell's very likeable, episodic books, originally published in 1990. What Posy wants more than anything is a pet. *Meet Posy Bates* introduces our heroine as she graduates from owning stick insects to a hedgehog. Posy will not be satisfied until she has a Real pet, but mum won't hear of it.

Chancing upon a stray dog during her Great Green Pet Show at the end of the first book, *Posy Bates Again* sees Posy trying to persuade her mother not to take the mongrel, which she names 'Buggins', to the RSPCA. Posy endeavours to get in her mother's good books, to improve the chance of being allowed to keep the dog, by helping with the housework. As usual things do not quite go according to plan.

Posy Bates and the Bag Lady concentrates on Posy's attempts to turn baby Fred into a genius whilst she is also converting the old hen house into a new home for her secret friend, the bag lady – introduced in the first book. There is plenty of fun and characters to whom eight-year-olds will relate, together with simple but enjoyable illustrations. Each book's half a dozen chapters stand alone to be consumed in bite size chunks, but put together make an easily digested and appetising dish for confident young readers of seven years and upwards. AK

Mysteries of Lost Civilisations

Anne Millard, 0 14 130067 1

Mysteries of Prehistoric Life

Dr David Unwin, 0 14 130068 X

NON-FICTION

★★★★★

Puffin, 40pp, £4.99 each pbk

Two in a series of six titles that explore mysteries through the use of

modern science, myths, legends and recent discoveries. **Lost Civilisations** seeks to present a balanced view of the mysteries of ancient civilisations. Quoting Sir Leonard Woolley (1940), amongst others, we are told that 'Treasure hunting is as old as man; scientific archaeology is a modern development, but in its short life...it has done marvels.'

Children will learn that archaeologists can fit many jigsaw pieces together but missing pieces can still lead to a variety of theories being put forward to explain the past. The environmental point is also made that certain archaeological excavations have resulted in ancient evidence being inadvertently destroyed.

Prehistoric Life produced in the same format – predominantly white text on a black background with a sensible balance between text and colour illustration – highlights some new developments in palaeontology in the penultimate spread but, in the main, covers very familiar ground. Odd quotes that are barely related to the text accompany the main body of the text. Many of the smaller colour illustrations are appropriately framed in archaeological sample cases but the full page illustrations are disappointingly uninspired. **AK**

A Flavour of India

Mike Hirst, 0 7502 2219 0

A Flavour of France

Teresa Fisher, 0 7502 2220 4

NON-FICTION ★★★

Wayland, 32pp, £8.99 each hbk

Upper primary introductions to the cuisines of the two countries. The France book tends to focus on the 'out of the ordinary' and gives us frogs and snails (almost inevitably), truffle hunting, the Lemon Festival in Menton and the Pig-squealing Festival somewhere in the south-west. The India book concentrates more on food connected with religious festivals (Diwali, Id and Guru Nanak's birthday) as well as a Hindu wedding. Large print and plenty of attractive photographs make the books easy on the eye and each has four simple recipes to try. 32 pages with a glossary, resource list, and Food and Festivals Topic Web (the same in both books). Other titles in the series include *China*, *Mexico*, *The Caribbean* and *West Africa*. **SR**

Out of This World

Carole Stott, 0 7445 2897 6

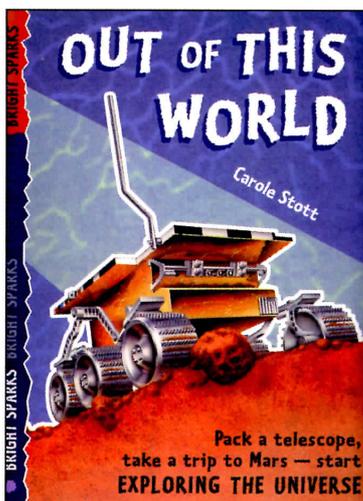
Seeing Stars

James Muirden, 0 7445 2896 8

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Walker 'Bright Sparks', 24pp, £8.99 each hbk

The size of the universe is a concept that used to keep me awake at night – how to explain *where* it is when it is everything that is anywhere. Stott is aware of this ungraspable idea too and comfortingly says an universe is 'so mind-bogglingly big...you'd need a tape-measure 300 million million million kilometres long to measure it'. With a size like that, who cares where it is, besides, think of all the jobs such a tape-measure would provide. The approach of the 'Bright Sparks' series is essentially friendly – to subject and reader – and Stott pleasantly explores the size concept before turning to astronomic



exploration and how it is done and then going on to actual astronauts and their amazing achievements.

Muirden – is he still going? Certainly is – and very effectively too, witness this engaging introduction to star gazing. The physical nature of the stars that we see is particularly clearly explained and the evolving nature of the whole of the universe is dramatically illustrated – in 5000 million years the Sun will be '100 times bigger than it is today, and 1000 times as bright. It will bake the Earth to a cinder.' So our greenhouse-global warming is but incidental to the great cosmic fry-up. That it is more important to us serves only to illustrate the theme common to each of these two engaging volumes – that the universe is unfathomably enormous. **TP**

Nelson Mandela

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Richard Killeen, ill. David McAllister, Wayland 'Life Stories', 32pp, 0 7502 2301 4, £4.99 pbk

Now out in paperback, this book was first published soon after the 1994 elections in South Africa. It is aimed at younger readers, providing a straightforward account of Mandela's childhood and youth, his involvement with and eventual control of the ANC, his numerous arrests in the course of his struggles against the old order in South Africa, and his twenty-eight years of imprisonment and hard labour. The story ends with his release and his triumphant assumption of the presidency. The book is well illustrated with historical photographs and the illustrator's impressions of events. The writing, typography and layout are admirably clear, and the text is informative about the evils of apartheid and the long struggle that eventually destroyed it. If the conclusion seems poignantly over-optimistic, it is at least reassuring to find a book about a living politician whose life merits celebration. Am I being pernickety in finding the use of President Mandela's forename throughout the book somewhat patronising? **GH**

The Story of Money

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

John Orna-Ornstein, British Museum Press, 48pp, 0 7141 0892 8, £3.99 pbk

This is a compendium of amazing facts about coins, and some paper

money, rather than the historical or economic approach you might expect from the title. The arrangement is haphazard: it begins with an historical survey which stops at the Renaissance, then there is money from different parts of the world, and then there is some more history of money-related things like forgery and hoarding. The illustrations, mainly from the British Museum, are clear; and the text is well written for 7-11 year olds. It is a more useful text for children than you would find in, for instance, the comparable Dorling Kindersley title (included in the list of further reading) and the photographs are as good but the design and production values are a long way behind. The further reading list, mainly of coin catalogues, is pushed into a corner of the index on the last page. This is a well informed and enthusiastic book for budding coin collectors, written by the curator of the British Museum's coin collection, and up-to-date enough to mention smart cards. **CB**

Saints

0 7502 2297 2

Kings and Queens

0 7502 2296 4

NON-FICTION ★★★

Philip Sauvain, Wayland, 32pp, £4.99 each pbk

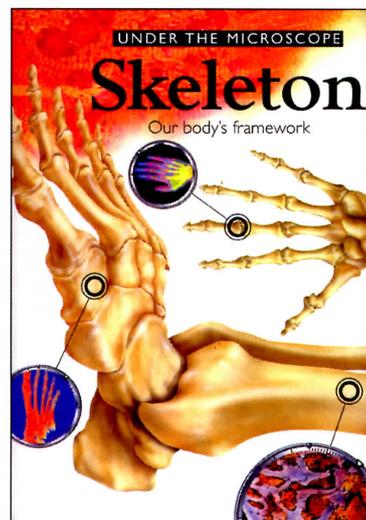
These are simplified versions of titles which first appeared in 1996 in a series, 'Famous Lives'. A differentiated text like this, which has to fit around illustrations chosen (and placed on the page) to suit something more sophisticated, is difficult to do well. Younger children or children with special needs, the audience for which the books are intended, demand at least as much care as older or more capable children. For these books, Sauvain has had the help of Norah Granger, a consultant in early years education.

Sauvain and Granger have taken care. In **Kings and Queens**, faced with matters like the English Civil War or the English Reformation, they have often come up with simple historical explanations acceptable to 7- or 8-year-olds: 'The Pope would not let Henry marry again. Henry was furious. He told people to obey him in future, not the Pope.' Sometimes, they are not so successful. 'He [Henry] was now a cruel man. He took land away from the monks and nuns and shut down their abbeys' is not a sufficient explanation of the dissolution of the monasteries. The subsequent paragraph hints at a straightforward motive beyond arbitrary malice (he needed the money) but does not make the connection.

Writing at this level and on subjects like these, it is hard for an author to resist offering judgements based on an assessment of personality or popularity: on which counts Henry was a bad king and Elizabeth I a good queen. **Saints** lends itself more readily to this approach; since, by the usual definition, its subjects are good anyway. Wisely, Sauvain leaves his readers to draw their own conclusions about what makes a saint.

The text fits with the illustrations and these are helpfully labelled, although more attention could have been paid to the captions. Readers will be intrigued, for instance, by the strange

animals that Queen Victoria is inspecting in Windsor Great Park (I think they are llamas) but Sauvain says nothing about them. The portrait of St Francis clearly shows the stigmata, but they are not explained. The glossary is good but Wayland should have tried harder with the bibliography, where the level of the recommended books does not match the text, and the index, which largely repeats the contents page. **CB**



Skeleton: Our body's framework

Jinny Johnson, 0 7496 3071 X

Making Life: How we reproduce and grow

Richard Walker, 0 7496 3073 6

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Franklin Watts 'Under the Microscope', 48pp, £10.99 each hbk

The microscope plays a surprisingly modest part in the content of these two looks at bits of human biology. Certainly some of the photomicrography is remarkable – check the cross section of a testicle in **Making Life** – but the most useful information comes from the discussion of parts unmagnified. Advised by R.N. Villar of Addenbrooke's Hospital, Johnson shows us bone structure and takes us through the main constituents of the skeleton from top to toe before going on to joints and movement. Joint types are particularly well shown, although I do not agree with her implication that a very tight grip is needed for bicycle handlebars – in fact it is positively unhelpful and very tiring – on yer bike Jinny and see for yourself!

Walker – with the help of Jane MacDougall MRCOG and Addenbrooke's again – makes more telling use of the microscope; eggs and sperms are microscopic things after all. The approach here is what Humphrey Lyttelton would call 'mainly traditional' – his flip side of that recording was called 'Oh Dad!' so it is appropriate that the spread on making sperm is particularly well done. The stages of labour – often condensed in such books – are also well explained before we glance at genetics, growth and the ageing process. Handsome clear illustrations distinguish these worthwhile additions to the human biology collection. **TP**

REVIEWS 10-12 Middle/Secondary

Screw Loose

★★

Alison Prince, ill. Judith Lawton, 1 902260 01 5

Kick Back

★★

Vivian French, ill. Jake Abrams, 1 902260 02 3

Virtual Friend

★★

Mary Hoffman, ill. Shaun McLaren, 1 902260 00 7

Wartman

★★

Michael Morpurgo, ill. Joanna Carey, 1 902260 05 8

The Gingerbread House

★★★

Adèle Geras, ill. Michael Sheehy, 1 902260 03 1

Billy the Squid

★★

Colin Dowland, ill. Peter Firmin, 1 902260 04 X

Barrington Stoke, 64pp, £3.99 each pbk

This new publisher claims its books 'will fill a gap in the market - books for the reluctant reader' - which seems to me to be the equivalent of the alchemist's claim to have found the philosopher's stone. Anyway there has been plenty of work put into these books with their 'easier on the eye' cream pages and specially designed font but despite this and the strong authorial line-up they are a curiously mixed bunch.

In *Screw Loose* Year 9-ish Roddy (14-years-old) enjoys unscrewing things around the school. Some nicely observed scenes of mildly disaffected kids and a lingering question - did Roddy really become Head for a day and begin to sort out the school's problems?

Kick Back also has an older secondary age main character. Josh is a nobody at school until Dad buys him a drum kit when he attracts the attention of some pretty unpleasant girls who form a band, use him and drop him. I am not sure how much we should encourage 'the ends justify the means' philosophy of the last few pages.

Ben in *Virtual Friend*, like Josh, is a social isolate with a busy single father - but next door lives Vince Riggs (VR) with a garden shed full of virtual reality equipment. Ben creates a virtual friend who then mysteriously appears in school bringing the obvious complications.

Dilly in *Wartman* is only nine. The appearance of a wart on his knee causes him no end of problems - especially from older brother Jim - until it is charmed away by Mr Ben.

The Gingerbread House is the most original of the stories. A gang of kids rename Farradale Drive as Fairytale

Drive and begin to fantasise that the residents are characters from the tales. All harmless fun until the Hansel and Gretel story seems to be coming true. Nicely ambivalent ending - seriously strange illustrations.

Billy the Squid is an oddball, underwater cowboy story. Readers of considerable verbal dexterity are required to cope with stuff like 'The fish of Driftwood were simple soles. Shrimps were shrimps and folk knew their plaice'. SR

Vicious Circle

★★★

Helena Pielichaty, Oxford, 144pp, 0 19 271775 8, £5.99 pbk

Ten-year-old Louisa May and her mother Georgette are homeless, living in a series of shabby boarding houses. Georgette inhabits a fantasy world of high romance, fuelled by her incessant reading of romantic fiction.

Nevertheless, the bond between mother and daughter is strong and when Georgette falls ill, Louisa May needs the friendship of Joanna, who helps her to find the father she never knew.

Sensitive issues are handled carefully by Pielichaty, but Georgette's theatrical speech and the rather stilted narrative style occasionally detract from a worthy and entertaining tale. VR

Jake's Treasure

★

Robin Hanbury-Tenison, Red Fox, 160pp, 0 09 925625 8, £3.50 pbk

This is a preposterous tale where the enjoyment comes from watching Hanbury-Tenison try to make it convincing, and from the occasional piece of local colour and wildlife description, presumably drawn from the author's own experience as explorer and conservationist.

The hero, Jake, a child of indeterminate age and boundless recklessness, has already, in another story, escaped from capture in the wilds of the Amazon. That was last summer's hols. This year, he's trekking across India with a small elephant and an Indian friend, to return a jewel which his grandfather had snatched from the forehead of an idol in a remote village to prevent it being taken by the invading Japanese. The villagers are duly grateful and are quickly recruited by Jake to take on illegal loggers who are stripping the local forest. As this young white man, in the country but a few weeks, surveys his band of full grown brown warriors he feels, 'a bit like a medieval monarch rallying his troops on the eve of a great battle, Jake walked among them in the moonlight to see if they were ready for the fight ahead.' Shades of Rider Haggard or what?

This might have been unexceptional as recent as sixty years ago, when there was still a British Empire (just); and I am sure the author's intentions are good. But if we are reviving the bumper boy's adventure story in foreign places, we ought to be careful not to exhume all the white man's burden tosh with it. CB

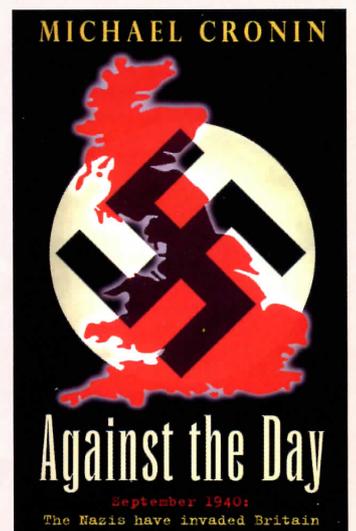
NEW Talent

Against the Day

★★★★

Michael Cronin, Oxford University Press, 224pp, 0 19 271760 X, £5.99 pbk

What would have happened if the Nazis had succeeded in invading Britain? While this is not a new idea (*It Happened Here; Fatherland* etc) it is an endlessly fascinating one and Cronin's novel of occupation is written with a strong feel for the historical moment. Frank's father is believed dead following an air-raid and he moves in with his nan and aunt in the village of Shevington. At first Frank's anger towards the German occupiers does not appear to be shared by the rest of the village but he comes to realise that there is more going on than meets the eye. Cronin creates some wonderful cameo portraits (Warden Firth the collaborator; Mr Underwood the headmaster) although Frank himself is a rather one dimensional character



and the novel comes to an oddly abrupt end. Nevertheless this is a gripping and enjoyable first novel with a strong sense of uneasy and menacing times. RS



ZinderZunder

★★★★

Philip Ridley, ill. Chris Riddell, Puffin, 144pp, 0 14 038508 8, £3.99 pbk

Max lives his love of the razzmatazz in his clothes and his tap-dancing but Mumzie (like 'a fragile porcelain doll' and like Kasper's mum in the earlier book) wants him to be more 'genteel' and stop 'bouncing around like a hyperactive grasshopper'. How can the magical ZinderZunder help Max and make Mumzie understand? The story is told almost minute by minute, covering twenty-four hours and the writing has the pace and style of its own razzmatazz, with its own tap-dancing, grasshopper energy. A showstopper of a performance. AJ

Drummer Boy

★★

Garry Kilworth, Mammoth, 208pp, 0 7497 1019 5, £4.99 pbk

Always good to have history brought alive through a child narrator - here it

is the Crimea with Charley, the Drummer Boy, taking us all the way from joining-up to the battles. But it is mostly half-hearted history, encounters with all the famous names of the time which become a little comical as we wait for them all to appear - 'O there's Mary Seacole, and isn't that Lord Cardigan?' The horrors of war seem conventional too and it is not until the book moves to an interest in gender issues that the story takes on some life of its own. AJ

Lie Detectives

★★

Malorie Blackman, Hippo, 272pp, 0 590 13429 9, £3.50 pbk

Attempts on the lives of inventor Darius Marriott and their friend Toby, aka Bullet bring to the fore the investigative powers of Ricky, Angela and Theo in a thriller which at times pushes hard on the reader's suspension of disbelief. This is not, however, my main caveat about *Lie Detectives*. It is that the core of the plot is formed by a number of attempted murders which only narrowly fail.

Death is not necessarily a subject to be avoided in books for children. There are a number of titles which deal sensitively with death and with the dark side of human nature which may propel someone towards taking the life of another. The question which exercises me is whether murder, attempted or otherwise, should be treated so lightly in what is obviously intended to be a fast paced mystery story with a possible appeal to reluctant readers. This is a long way from the days when the Five Findouters outwitted the village policeman and caught the baddies stealing jewels from the local manor house, and it is undoubtedly more in tune with much of what young people see and hear in the media. Even so, murder is a serious topic. VC

Beyond the Deepwoods – The Edge Chronicles

★★★

Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell, Doubleday, 288pp, 0 385 40967 2, £10.99 hbk

A fantasy world of strange creatures and perilous adventures is encountered by Twig as he sets out from the Woodtrolls' village where he was abandoned as a child. Each chapter introduces a new, fantastic creature and often new dangers for Twig to survive which gives an easy structure for reading and free rein to Stewart and Riddell's imaginations. (Readers will like the detailed, often spiky drawings, which they may know already from Philip Ridley's *Scribbleboy* or *Kasper in the Glitter*.) The pair have probably been too generous with their inventions for this one book – some creatures, some adventures deserve more chapters, more time. The pace is too furious. But, finally, I was hooked and left wanting to know what more fantastic things can happen. AJ

Tom's Midnight Garden

Philippa Pearce, ill. Susan Einzig, 240pp, 0 19 271777 4

A Little Lower than the Angels

Geraldine McCaughrean, 144pp, 0 19 271780 4

Brother in the Land

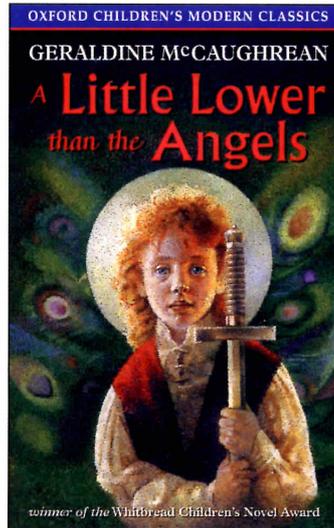
Robert Swindells, 160pp, 0 19 271785 5

★★★★★

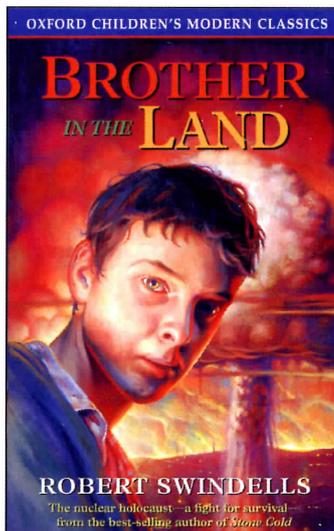
Oxford Children's Modern Classics, £5.99 each pbk

The common bond between these books which Oxford have added to their Modern Classics list is the critical acclaim they have received; all are prize winners. But the selection is not tediously predictable.

Tom's Midnight Garden will be well known to most readers of BfK (see Classics in Short, BfK 106), a seminal book of the mid-twentieth century. A carefully structured, writerly story, this time-slip fantasy continues to captivate new generations of young readers and few would dispute its inclusion in a collection of classics. Published twenty-five years after *Tom's Midnight Garden*, Geraldine



McCaughrean's *A Little Lower than the Angels*, set in the Middle Ages, tells the story of an apprentice, Gabriel, who runs away from a master stonemason to join a band of travelling players. The writing is original, powerful and rich in imagery. A book which can be enjoyed on different levels by adults as well as young readers. Also published in the early '80s Robert Swindells' holocaust novel *Brother in the Land* is one of his most serious, convincing and moving books. These titles are certainly good representatives of contemporary children's writing. Whether they have the enduring qualities which ensure they continue to be read by generations of readers remains to be seen. NG



Israel and the Arab Nations in Conflict

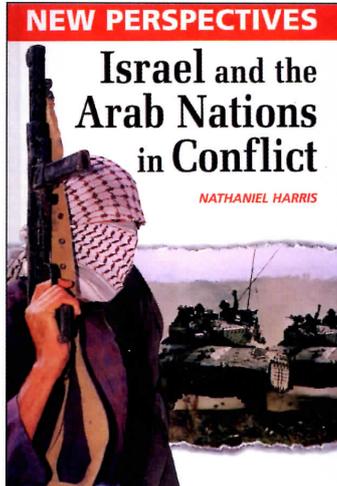
Nathaniel Harris, 0 7502 2169 0

Chernobyl and other Nuclear Accidents

Judith Condon, 0 7502 2170 4

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

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



The 'New Perspectives' series is a very welcome and highly accessible resource which provides a relatively balanced summary of the background to a range of historical struggles and crises. It attempts to bring the reader up to date by using the most recently available visual and documentary evidence. The books are robust and are well illustrated with photographs, maps and clear diagrams, laid out in arrays which support the text rather than distracting the reader from it. The language used is readable without being simplistic or evasive. Both of the books discussed here open with a graphic but non-sensational account of a crucial incident related to the main theme. Harris recounts the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, providing quotes from eye witnesses and the assassin himself. Condon describes the events leading up to and beyond the explosion at Chernobyl, including episodes of gross stupidity and of unimaginable heroism. Both authors then go back to the historical roots of their subject, providing carefully documented chronicles which bring us up to the present day. In neither case is there much cause for optimism, a fact

NEW PERSPECTIVES

Chernobyl and other Nuclear Accidents

JUDITH CONDON



which the authors do not attempt to avoid. It is of course easy to pick holes in the coverage of such controversial issues: in the first book, Arab atrocities are made more visible than Israeli ones, though the latter are not hidden; in the second book, the fact that the western powers used whole communities as guinea pigs for the effects of radiation could be given more prominence. These are caveats. I would highly recommend the books for all ages from later primary onwards. GH

Raiding and Trading

0 14 038474 X

Plotting and Chopping

0 14 037138 9

NON-FICTION ★★

Scoular Anderson, Puffin, 96pp, £3.99 each pbk

History seems to come in nutshells nowadays and here are two more to add to the hoard – all you need to know in soundbite sizes. Number one is the Vikings and number two, Tudors and Stuarts.

The style comprises masses of light touch information with lively and intriguing black and white cartoon illustrations on every page. Double page spreads abound to cover topics like Viking Food or Viking Pastimes; Tudor Fashion or Tudor Art. Political and Social History is tackled equally, chronologically in the second book, whilst the first centres on what is now known about the Vikings and their lifestyle.

Indexes are good and unfamiliar terms tactfully explained. The language overall is accessible and not condescending. DB

REVIEWS 12+ Secondary

More to Getting a Life

★★★

Samantha Rugen, Piccadilly, 128pp, 1 85340 516 7, £5.99 pbk
14-year-old Jayne's diaries and letters to her grandmother – an intriguing and effective device – and to her best friend Emily reveal the usual quota of teenage problems: boyfriends, relationships with girlfriends and examination pressures.

Although the narrative adopts an unusually formal tone on occasion, the dilemmas have authenticity. The book is a mixture of novel and problem page and likely to absorb, entertain and reassure female readers. VR

Dream On!

★★★★

Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore, Piccadilly, 144pp, 1 85340 408 X, £5.99 pbk

This is an immensely readable book: I devoured it in one sitting. The narrative is pacy and well-written, its central character Charlie ensnared in an obsession with Garth, the school heart-throb – who, of course, is unaware of her existence.

The story is wittily paralleled with the school production of *Romeo and Juliet*, including apposite quotations at appropriate moments. When Garth finally acknowledges her, Charlie sees

his shallowness and turns, too late, to a far worthier man who has, by now, fallen in love with her best friend. His loss finally teaches her that there is far more to love than looks.

Do I feel a sequel coming on? VR

That Summer

★★★

Sarah Dessen, Bloomsbury, 208pp, 0 7475 3658 9, £4.99 pbk

That summer is when Haven comes to terms with her beautiful sister marrying the dull boyfriend, her father marrying the beautiful TV weather girl and her mother dealing with divorce by becoming much

more independent. Some interesting opportunities for exploring relationships, some serious thinking? No. Haven is just another teenage narrator having a hard time but coming through and learning very little. The book ends with the sister's wedding as if it were a triumph of human love with Haven believing that everything is all right, and the author asking us to believe in her new found wisdom as Haven concludes from it all ... 'The first boy was always the hardest.' AJ

Fighting Back

★★★★

Wendy Orr, Orchard, 176pp, 1 86039 550 3, £4.99 pbk

In this Australian story, 17-year-old Anna Duncan is on her way home from a successful karate tournament with her not quite boyfriend at the wheel when she is involved in a terrible car crash. Written in a dramatic first person, present tense style, the novel takes us through the year following her accident; her slow and painful recovery, the encounters with insensitive doctors and her anger with the stranger who caused the accident. The friendships, family relationships and the romances are honestly and painfully drawn and Anna has to make some difficult decisions.

There are some of the clichés of literature dealing with disability: the popular, athletic girl who now has to forgo her ambition to be a karate champion, her joy when she can throw away her wheelchair because at least she can walk. But there is no neat, happy ending and this is a revealing and intelligent account of a young woman who is learning that her life will never be the same again.

LK

Sorrelle

★★★

Millie Murray, Livewire, 176pp, 0 7043 4954 X, £4.99 pbk

This novel is a racy, good read which reflects the street talk, romantic attachments and general lifestyle of teenagers in a multi-cultural context. It touches a raw nerve concerning the relationship between Afro-Caribbeans and Asians. Sorrelle, a black teenager, is antagonistic to inter-racial dating until she meets Arun, an Asian boy, and they fall in love. His parents are hostile to the relationship and pay a noisy visit to Sorrelle's parents which puts their backs up. So they too oppose the relationship more out of reaction than from any entrenched prejudice.

The story is told in the first person with Sorrelle providing the narration. Thus, in the absence of an overseeing authorial voice and with the adults in the novel behaving with narrow mindedness, the complexities of such inter-racial relationships are expressed through the mouths of Sorrelle and her teenage friends. Since none of them has considered views on the matter, the level of debate barely scratches the surface. As Arun, under severe parental pressure, succumbs in the end and the relationship fizzles, it is never quite clear what conclusions are reached. Sorrelle's own conclusion that this was due to personality rather than ethnic differences seems contradictory in the context of the story. Yet the novel deserves full marks for tackling such a sensitive issue in an engaging way.

EL

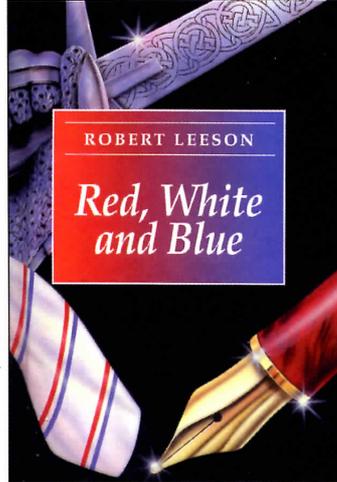
The Private Life of Georgia Brown

★★

Brian Keane, Orchard, 192pp, 1 86039 664 X, £10.99 hbk, 1 86039 665 8, £4.99 pbk

It is the first day of a new term and into the class of 14-year-old Georgia and her friend Jenny comes Stephanie, a new student dripping in apparent self-confidence and

sophistication. Jenny switches her loyalty to the newcomer, provoking Georgia – who has also a jazz pianist alcoholic father to contend with – to succumb to an act of theft in an attempt not to lose too much face. Of the ensuing consequences the most interesting involves Georgia's relationship with Luke, a fellow student with whose 'loner' instincts she has come to have something in common. There are occasional moments of high drama but the final impression is of too many solutions coming too quickly and of a narrative framework frequently not sufficiently strong to carry the young protagonists' problems. RD



Red, White and Blue

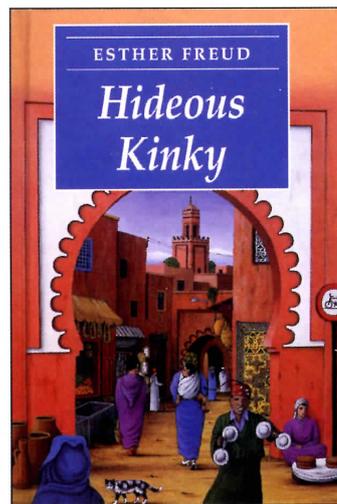
Robert Leeson, 176pp, 0 00 330321 7, £5.99 hbk

Hideous Kinky

Esther Freud, 192pp, 0 00 330323 3, £5.99 hbk

★★★★★

Collins Educational 'Cascades'



The Collins 'Cascades' series is an eclectic collection which includes deservedly well established and popular fiction as well as less well known writing. Aimed at the educational market, the titles have been selected with an understanding of curriculum requirements but more importantly one feels, a sensitivity and respect for literature. The books' themes and diversity of style provide opportunities for genre and language study as well as discussion of topical issues. The two new additions reviewed extend the range of writing.

In Leeson's experimental novel, *Red,*

White and Blue, Wain gradually reveals his story through three different modes of telling, each written on a different colour paper: his innermost thoughts, 'to someone who doesn't exist' on red; his detached observations about the darker side of school life, 'truth the English teacher sees' on white; whilst his deeply rooted feelings are revealed subconsciously through his Arthurian style fantasy, 'the truth that exists in another world', written on blue. Leeson's book stimulates discussion about writing processes and functions as well as about issues such as families in crisis, homosexuality and the unspoken rituals of school experienced but conveniently forgotten by parents and teachers.

The narrator in Freud's *Hideous Kinky*, describes an unconventional childhood, living with her 'free spirit' mother in Morocco. The narrative shifts subtly between an adult's reflections on childhood experience and a convincing child's eye view of the world. This vibrant book is written with an emotional intensity which draws the reader deep into the book. NG

The Broken Bridge

★★

Philip Pullman, Macmillan Children's Books, 304pp, 0 330 36855 9, £3.99 pbk

This novel falls into that category of white author/black central character which generated such a head of steam in the letters column of this magazine recently (BfK 105-107). Whilst acknowledging the masterly architecture of the novel and the expert interweaving of interesting characters and sub-themes, it appears to me that this is a novel which is more likely to appeal to a white readership than a black one, and perhaps explains its critical acclaim by white critics who have glossed over, or been blissfully unaware of, those matters in the book which are likely to agitate the black reader.

Ginny at sixteen is living in Wales with her white Welsh father (having been abandoned by her Haitian mother at two weeks old) and has grown up without any contact with other black people – apart from Andy who left school the previous year and is now back for the summer. Ginny seeks to explore her black identity through her art and more directly through a romantic liaison with Andy – until she discovers that he is gay. This is one of a number of revelations which throw her world into chaos – she discovers, for example, that her father had not been married to her mother but to a white woman with whom he had a son (who on her recent death is coming to live with them), that her mother is not dead as she thought but very much alive and about to hold an exhibition of her paintings in Liverpool. More significantly, Ginny discovers, after the briefest of introductions concerning the pantheon of voodoo gods and rituals by a white acquaintance who had visited Haiti, that she has the sorcerer's power to summon these deities at her command – a genetic inheritance no doubt from her Haitian mother.

Though Ginny as a character is accorded a rich inner life and is drawn with basic humanity, her prospects appear to be that of an honorary white. Even her determination to emulate the Haitian art produced by her mother (presumably British art is not sufficiently diverse to offer any models) seems a concession to exotica rather than a potentially viable source of

genuine art. Thus at the end of the novel she is accorded a deep sense of identification with the Welsh landscape, she is reconciled to her new white brother, enjoys an enhanced relationship with her father and her paternal grandparents and she finds a new boyfriend – white and heterosexual this time – and no one, it appears, need ever know about her dark, sinister voodoo side. EL

Homelessness

Kaye Stearman, 0 7502 2178 X

Divorce

Anne Charlish, 0 7502 2177 1

NON-FICTION

★★★★

Wayland 'Talking Points', 64pp, £10.99 each hbk

Two highly competent introductions to the subjects for the more able 15/16 year olds in the 'Talking Points' series. There are numerous case studies to personalise the issues dealt with in the body of the text, some useful statistics and plenty of photographs (though the overall design feels somewhat 'bitty'). 64 pages, glossary, bibliography, comprehensive index and a list of useful addresses (including the inevitable web-sites). Wayland have a long record of producing these 'issue' books and I am sure they must sell well but I am always left with the nagging question – who actually reads them?

SR

Erosion and Weathering

NON-FICTION

★

Alexander Zevenhuizen, trans. K. Hudson-Brazenall, New Holland 'Natural Phenomena', 80pp, 1 85368 746 4, £12.99 hbk

This is an expensive translation from the Dutch, in a series which covers a number of natural phenomena. It is a dense, continuous text and the author (and his translator) have made no concessions to a younger audience. Much of the information is repeated, in precis, as captions to the beautiful (as in *National Geographic*) colour photographs but even here the language has as many strange shapes as the landscape it describes: 'The result of this is the occurrence of characteristic, vertical shrinkage, jointing.' Many of the processes described here might have been illuminated by diagrams. It could all have been more simply and succinctly put. There is no impression of the topic being treated as a whole. The book ends abruptly with a very short chapter on caves and a sentence about stalagmites and stalactites. Although there are sub-headings to give some guidance as to where you are in the text, there is no index. Anyone below the age of 14 will find it impenetrable. Anyone else may well find it dull and long winded.

CB

Picture books reviewed this issue relevant to older readers

Happy Birth Day (see p19)

Make Hay While the Sun Shines: A Book of Proverbs (see p21)

Over the Moon: A Book of Sayings (see p21)

Mr William Shakespeare's Plays (see p22)

Joan of Arc (see p23)



First published

1950

Genre

Fantasy Adventure

Who for?

Children of 8 upwards, adults

What happens?

The story starts firmly in reality. It is 1940 and the four Pevensie children are evacuated from London to live with a professor in the country. In one of the many rooms in the professor's rambling old house, Lucy discovers a wardrobe which leads into a snow-covered world, called Narnia. The presence of the children is soon discovered by the wicked White Witch (who has ruled Narnia for the last 100 years). She comes across Edmund and bribes him to bring the rest of the children to her castle where all her enemies are turned to stone. Rumours of the return of the creator of Narnia, the great Lion, Aslan, weakens the witch's power but she is determined to get to the children before he does. She sends out her spy, a terrifying wolf called Maugrim, whom Peter slays. The children meet Aslan, and on his instruction, they go to rescue Edmund who is about to be killed by the witch. Aslan offers himself to her instead of Edmund and the witch kills him on the Stone Table. The children stay with Aslan and next morning he returns to life. They return to the witch's castle and bring the stone statues back to life. Edmund fights the witch and is wounded, but Aslan finally destroys her. Aslan crowns the four children Kings and Queens of Narnia. Some years later they discover their way back into the wardrobe and back home – where no time has passed at all.

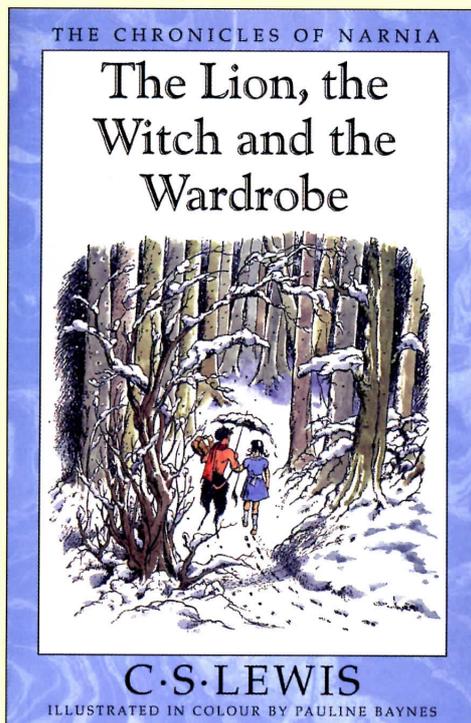
About C. S. Lewis?

Author, critic and educator, C. S. Lewis was born in 1898 in Belfast. Christened Charles Staples Lewis, but known as Jack to his family and friends, it was his childhood nurse who inspired in Lewis his lifelong fascination with mythical creatures from her retelling of stories of the ancient gods. Lewis lived with his parents and older brother ('Warnie') in a big rambling house, which provided the inspiration for his highly imaginative stories which he began inventing as young as 9 years of age. A large wardrobe in one of the many rooms in which Jack and Warnie used to tell each other tales, became the device for the way into the land of Narnia. As a child Lewis read endlessly, and was greatly influenced by authors such as E. Nesbit, Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, Rider Haggard and Beatrix Potter. He detested boarding school where he was sent after the tragically early death of his mother, and escaped further into the world of books by studying many German and Norse myths and legends. When he finally left school his father sent him to a private tutor with whom he lived and studied. One of the authors he read for the first time then was poet and novelist George Macdonald, whose work made a deep impact and influenced his writing of Narnia. Although interrupted by the First World War during which he served in France, Lewis achieved an outstanding record as a classical scholar at University College, Oxford, and remained as Fellow and Tutor of Magdalen College, Oxford from 1925 to 1954. During this time he became great friends with J. R. R. Tolkien whose strong Christian faith led him also to follow Christianity, the subject of which came through in much of his writing for adults including 'Out of the Silent Planet' (1938), 'Perelandra' (1943) and 'That Hideous Strength' (1945), a trilogy of science fiction stories with allegorical overtones.

CLASSICS IN SHORT No.12

Helen Levene

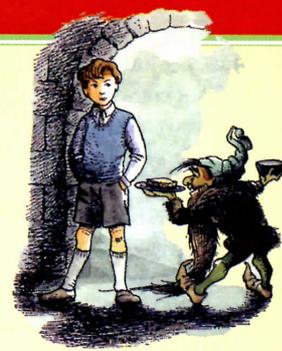
Turkish Delight, fur coats and perpetual winter? It must be ...



Lewis received many honours during his career including Honorary Doctor of Divinity at St Andrews University, and the Carnegie Medal in 1956 for *The Last Battle* which recognised the whole of the Narnia Chronicles. In 1952 he met and married American writer Joy Gresham, who died just eight years later. He died in 1963, the news of which in the public eye was overshadowed by the assassination of John F. Kennedy on the same day.

Classic qualities

C. S. Lewis always said that 'he wrote the books I should have liked to read', and the Narnia Chronicles, which have proved so immensely popular are a combination of all that he liked as a young reader – talking animals, fantastical beasts and creatures from myths and legends, witches, and good versus evil. Having never forgotten what it was like to be a child, he incorporated all these elements into his stories and created one of the most highly imaginative and totally absorbing worlds in children's literature into which



young readers can escape. The books are read on two levels – as straightforward fantasies, or combined as allegorical tales with a deeper meaning. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* the story is of the redemption of Narnia by Aslan, a great Lion who gives himself up for the children's sins, and then rises up again for the dead. Many readers recognise the hidden story of Jesus Christ and enjoy this extra allegorical dimension to the exciting and thrilling adventures.

Separated, as in so many children's adventures, from their parents, the children – Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy – are faced with the problem of how to deal with this painful deprivation. For Peter, the eldest, the temptation is to become self-righteous and see Edmund as the one who is wholly bad; for Edmund the separation is devastating and his seduction by the White Witch and subsequent betrayal of his siblings represent an abandonment to infantile gratification (cf the Turkish Delight – 'the more he ate the more he wanted to eat...'). It is Lucy, the youngest and most timid of the four children, who is the most open to Narnia's possibilities and the one who is able, like Susan, to set aside her own anger and fears and express concern for others – initially for Mr Tumnus who cannot, as a result, bear to betray her to the White Witch. Later in the story it is Lucy and Susan who observe and mourn Aslan's death in a scene that recalls the tending of Christ's body in the Garden of Gethsemane. The story ends with the White Witch's prisoners released and colour, song and laughter restored to Narnia – reconnection with liveliness and responsiveness rather than retreat into an endless winter.

This is, then, a story about the struggle to remain open to experiencing both one's inner and outer worlds in a responsive way; it is Lewis's astute rendering of this emotional dilemma that accounts for the enduring popularity of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* with both child and adult readers.

PC?

In the final volume of the Narnia Chronicles, *The Last Battle*, Lewis's Christian allegory results in splitting, ie the division into good and evil of the protagonists in a finite way that belies the subtlety of his characterisation in the previous volumes. There are racist overtones in his description of the enemies as 'dark men with white eyes flashing dreadfully in their black faces'. The creation of the false lion who is trying to enslave the gullible population of Narnia implies an anti-communist cold-war stance.

The illustrator

Pauline Baynes' illustrations have become as much a part of the Narnia Chronicles as the stories themselves. Recommended to Lewis by his friend J. R. R. Tolkien, Baynes' drawings brought Lewis's magic to life and have contributed greatly to Narnia's popularity. A picture book version illustrated by Christian Birmingham is now also available.

The Chronicles include:

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1950), *Prince Caspian* (1951), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), *The Last Battle* (1956) ■

The Chronicles of Narnia are published by Collins Children's Books.

Helen Levene works in publishing.