

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

March 2000
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the children's book magazine



SALMAN RUSHDIE
PICTURE BOOKS • ALISON UTTLEY

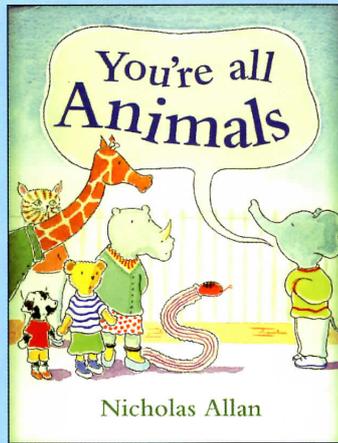
**20th
Anniversary
Issue**

You're all Animals

Nicholas Allan, Hutchinson, 32pp, 0 09 176797 0, £7.99 hbk

Nicholas Allan's highly expressive characters are brought to life in this brilliant new picture book which shows the funny side of a difficult situation that is faced by every child. It is Billy Trunk's first day at school and he is worried that everyone in his class is so different from him. Determined to find himself a friend, Billy surfs the internet and contacts someone who seems just the same as him – who has a long nose and big ears – and what's more, goes to his own school!

Nicholas Allan's work has been acclaimed for its warmth and understanding and for its ability to be both comic and serious. This reassuring new story is perfect for sharing with young children about to start school.



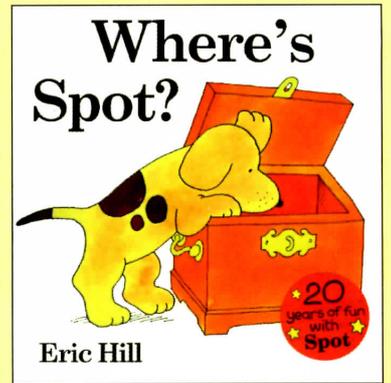
Published May 2000

Where's Spot? Board Book

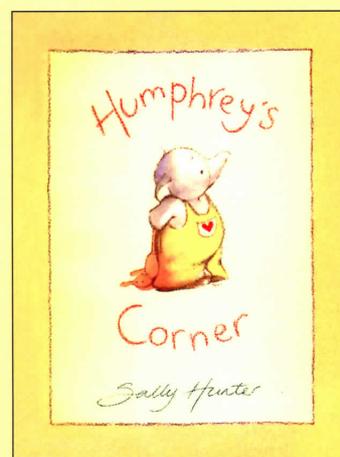
Eric Hill, Frederick Warne, 24pp, 0 7232 4599 1, £4.99 board

Spot first appeared in 1980 in Eric Hill's award winning title **Where's Spot?** With its simple story, charming and colourful illustrations, and bold text, combined with an innovative new lift-the-flap concept, encouraging play and participation, **Where's Spot?** captured the hearts and minds of youngsters throughout the world.

In celebration of 20 years since its first publication, a special Anniversary board book edition of **Where's Spot?** is now available for young readers to enjoy. Printed on sturdy board in a smaller format, this delightful addition to Spot's classic lift-the-flap series is perfect for little hands. With its winning formula of exploration and interaction, the **Where's Spot?** Board Book will engage a whole new generation of pre-readers as they lift the picture flaps in search of their favourite puppy.



Published March 2000



Humphrey's Corner

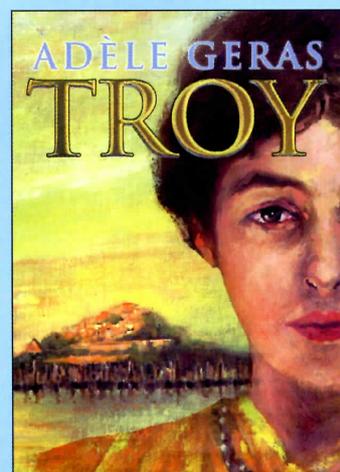
Sally Hunter, Puffin, 32pp, 0 14 056585 X, £4.99 pbk

Humphrey is a small, loveable, vulnerable elephant who is looking for a perfect place to play. With his favourite toy, Mop, and his bedtime blanket, Mooney, Humphrey visits Mummy's bedroom, the bathroom and the airing cupboard, collecting something from each place to take with him. He is in a dilemma at the top of the stairs as Mop falls down them and he can't risk fetching him as everything else would fall down as well.

Luckily Mummy comes to the rescue and leads Humphrey to the kitchen to find a perfect place to play.

A wonderful warm and cosy picture book about a typical two year-old, illustrated in beautiful pastel shades by Sally Hunter. A range of stationery and cuddly toys are also available. Look out for Humphrey's continuing adventures in further publishing by Puffin.

Published 27 April 2000



Troy

Adèle Geras, Scholastic, 360pp, 0 439 01409 3, £14.99 hbk

Bored with the siege of Troy which has lasted almost ten years, Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, decides to play with two sisters. Marpessa, the younger, is gifted with God-sight and can see the Immortals. Xanthe, kind and loving, tends the warriors in the Blood Room, where the wounded are carried in from the battle. When the young soldier Alastor is brought into the Blood Room, Xanthe looks after him, and there Eros fits an arrow to his silver-lighted bow and lets it fly.

Neither sister will escape its power...

Adèle Geras has breathed personality, humour and a refreshing reality into this ancient story. Using all her consummate skill, she has wrought a wonderfully believable tale where the Gods move among the people and an ancient city is brought to life.

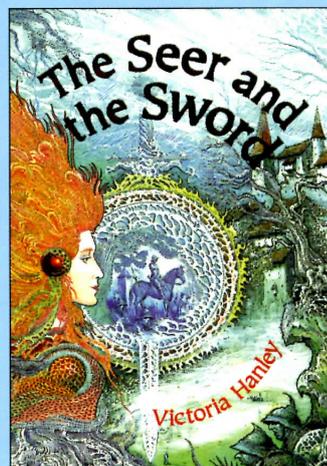
Published 17 March 2000

The Seer and the Sword

Victoria Hanley, Scholastic, 392pp, 0 439 01282 1, £14.99 hbk

Flame-haired Princess Torina knows nothing of battles and conquest. Her father, King Kareed, has returned home – that is all that matters. But he brings such odd gifts: a beautiful sphere in which she glimpses strange images and a bruised and bloodied boy – a former prince, it is whispered – offered to her as a slave. Landen's world is in tatters. Now the one-time prince stands alone, his life in Princess Torina's hands.

An epic fantasy of extraordinary scope and vision, **The Seer and the Sword** is stunningly complex yet wonderfully readable. Told in a style reflecting the oral tradition of all the best-loved folk-tales and legends, Victoria Hanley's first novel will take you to a world you will never want to leave.



Published 21 April 2000

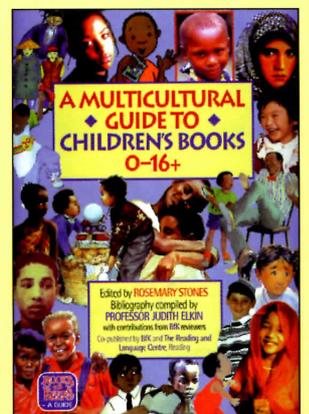
A Multicultural Guide to Children's Books 0-16+

Edited by Rosemary Stones, Books for Keeps and The Reading and Language Information Centre, Reading, 68pp, 1 871566 05 3, £7.50 (UK), £9.50 (overseas)

A fully annotated bibliography of children's books with a multicultural theme – twice the extent of the previous edition of this guide published in 1994 and including a new section of books for 16+.

Arranged by age groupings, each with its own short introduction, the selection of titles has been rigorous – we have chosen the very best. The bibliography is accompanied by a number of context-setting articles looking at the current state of our multicultural society and pen-portraits of several authors and illustrators who feature in the Guide.

Phone, fax or e-mail to order your copy today or to receive more details. Phone: 020 8852 4953, fax: 020 8318 7580, e-mail: booksforkeeps@btinternet.com



Published October 1999

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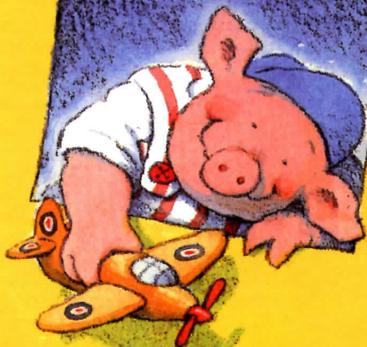
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Brian Alderson on *The Squirrel, the Hare and the Little Grey Rabbit*.

CoverStory



This issue's cover is from Colin McNaughton's *Hmm...* Colin McNaughton discusses the thinking behind his book in *Windows into Illustration* (p11). Thanks to CollinsChildren's Books for their help in producing the cover.

EDITORIAL

The Whitbread

Some adults are very afraid of not being seen as grown-ups. It appears that Anthony Holden, biographer of Prince Charles and Beethoven and Whitbread Award judge, is one such. Holden is the Whitbread judge who is reported as arguing that if J K Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* won the Whitbread Book of the Year Award, it would 'send a message to the world' that Britain refused to grow up. He went on to threaten to dissociate himself from the decision should *Harry Potter* win. In the event, Seamus Heaney's translation of the Anglo-Saxon epic, *Beowulf*, was chosen. This was seen as a 'safe choice' for a book of undoubted quality but considered by many in the children's book world and elsewhere as a disappointing and craven decision, given the extra-ordinary impact of Ms Rowling's work.

In his pamphlet, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books**, Peter Hollindale cites the philosopher Mary Warnock's reaction to an undergraduate who 'preferred children's books to other forms of mental entertainment':

'There is no doubt that there is an irritating feyness about the spectacle of an intelligent adult... curling up, metaphorically thumb-sucking, lost in *The Secret Garden* or *Sara Crewe*. One feels inclined to ask how they *can* be intelligent, if they are so ready to switch their minds off when they are not actually working.'

Hollindale comments: 'As I write, current affairs are dominated by anxiety about the ills and crimes of children. None of the heavyweight papers I have read, nor the politicians I have listened to as a model Warnock adult, have given me remotely as intelligent an insight into these troubles as does the moving demonstration of *mens sana in corpore sano*, the diagnosis of psychosomatic illness, the celebration of therapeutic play, the castigation of parental neglect, the proof of redemptive power in constructive motivation, which I find in *The Secret Garden*. These are not simple matters, but child readers can register them, and so in more sophisticated ways could Warnock's students.'



Rosemary Stones

But if children's literature is a way of presenting metaphors of states of feeling as well as exploring the conception of self and the possibility of imagining the selfhood of others, is this really a process that, *pace* Warnock and Holden, ceases to apply once adulthood is attained? The need to denigrate children's literature as something childish or unintelligent, speaks volumes about the adults who do so who appear to need to draw a line under their emotional development when they become 'grown-up'. By so doing they deny the lifelong process of revisiting and reframing the great developmental themes that recur throughout life and which first find external imaginative expression in literature for children.



Illustration by Anne Spudvilas from Margaret Wild's *Jenny Angel* (Viking), this issue's Editor's Choice (see p24).

Twenty Years of Books for Keeps

This issue of *Books for Keeps* marks our twentieth anniversary year and it is an opportunity for me to pay tribute to Richard Hill, its co-founder, together with Angie Hill and its designer, Alec Davis, whose tenacity and dedication have ensured that this journal has not only survived the vicissitudes of the marketplace but continues to maintain its independent stance. To mark this birthday issue we are delighted to publish an exclusive interview with Salman Rushdie (see p.14) on, amongst other things, his book *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*.

* *Signs of Childness in Children's Books* by Peter Hollindale, Thimble Press, 0 903355 44 2, £8.95 from Lockwood, Station Road, Woodchester, Stroud, Glos. GL5 5EQ (tel: 01453 873716). It was reviewed in *BfK* 109.

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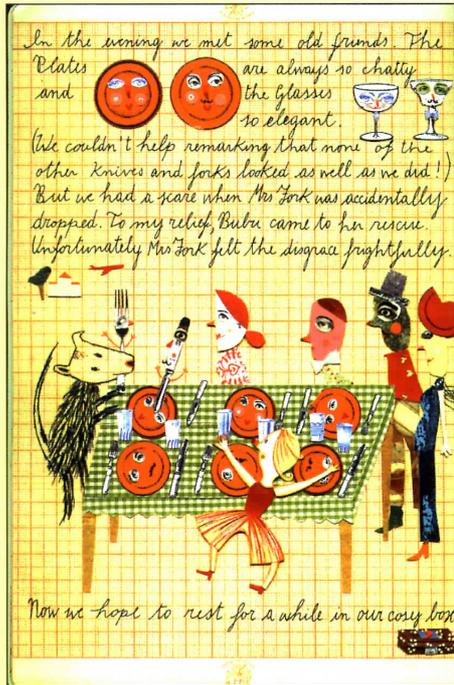
Annual subscription for six issues: £18.60 (UK), £22.50 (Europe including Ireland), £25.50 (airmail).

Single copies: £3.10 (UK), £3.75 (Europe including Ireland), £4.25 (airmail).

Giving a Free Rein to Invention:

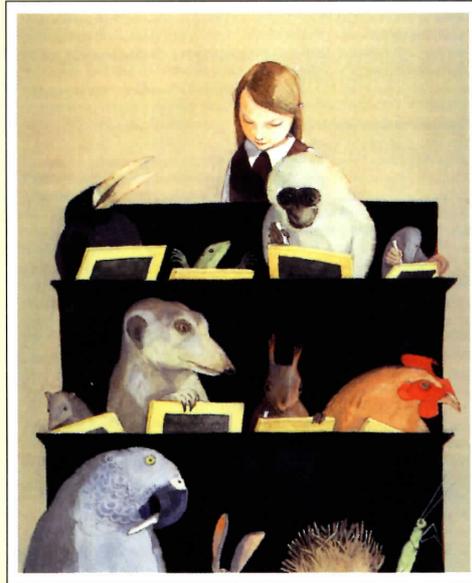
The frenetic nature of so much children's entertainment, on film and television, makes the picture book seem a perfect haven: a sort of laptop theatre which can be enjoyed at the child's own pace. But, given that children are now so visually literate, and can cope so easily with the graphic wizardry they see on screen, why do picture book publishers so seldom give free rein to inventive illustrators who dare to experiment? Joanna Carey investigates.

One illustrator consistently pushing out the boundaries, and exploring the possibilities of the picture book is Sara Fanelli; her new picture book, **Dear Diary**, celebrates not just the recording of personal experiences, but also the joy of handling a book – a journal – an exercise book – a sketch pad – a scrap book. Taking the form of an old fashioned schoolbook, with lines, squares, margins, columns and graph paper in a stout traditional binding, **Dear Diary** brings together an eccentric collection of inter-connecting episodes from the diaries of a little girl, a chair, a spider, a firefly, a knife and fork, and a dog.



Amongst a welter of collages and spirited illustrations, further embellished with labels, mottoes, inscriptions and pressed flowers, the stories are told in a jumble of graphic styles – everything from neat printing, wild scribbling, spidery doodles and scraps of musical notation to extravagant calligraphic flourishes and rhythmical copperplate handwriting. And you can easily forgive those children who will doubtless feel tempted to add their own doodles and hieroglyphs to this exhilarating celebration of things you can do with – and to – a book.

Subtly unconventional

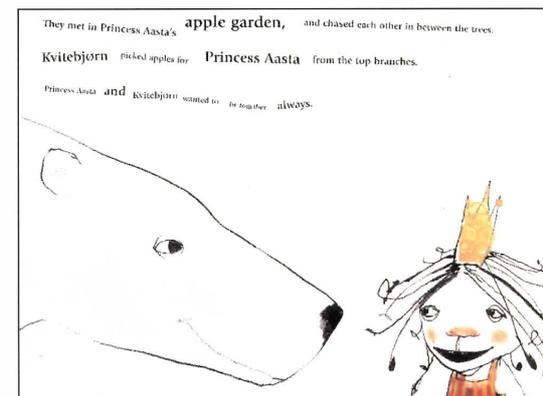


Lisbeth Zwerger is a subtly unconventional illustrator. In **Alice in Wonderland** she combines the delicacy, wit and airy elegance of her technique with a daring ability to crop her images in a startling way that really does reflect the curious dislocations of the narrative. Her Alice is perfect – a thoughtful, introspective and dignified child who seldom smiles and whose downcast eyes so eloquently reflect the puzzlement and frustration brought on by having to cope with the mad hatter, the Queen of Hearts or those twelve hopeless creatures in the jury box. Zwerger's style is based on impeccable draughtsmanship and a stunning watercolour technique. In **Thumbelina** by Hans Christian Andersen, first published in 1980 and now re-issued by North-South, you can see how her style has evolved over these 20 years, and how powerful an influence Arthur Rackham was on her early work.



Niamh Sharkey is another innovative illustrator. In Richard Walker's lively retelling of **Jack and the Beanstalk** her easy-to-read pictures are drawn with a quirky but incisive schematic simplicity, creating quaintly expressive puppet like characters against subtly textured backdrops. Opulent endpapers, like theatre curtains, create a real sense of occasion.

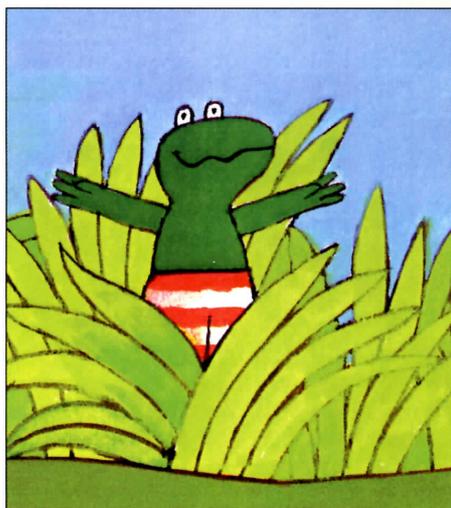
In **Princess Aasta** by Stina Langlo Ørdal, a lonely princess rather rashly puts an ad. in the paper (the **Guardian**): 'little princess seeking big, cuddly bear friend.' She gets replies from all round the world and settles on a huge polar bear. Her father, the king, is worried about 'having a big dangerous Ursus Maritimus running about in his garden. But when he saw



New Picture Books

how much fun the two of them had together he left them alone...' Far from being 'twee' as you might imagine, this is a bold, adventurous book. The drawings are uncompromisingly raw and scratchy, the princess is noticeably free of conventional beauty and the artist makes exciting use of space and scale. The typography has the urgent 'scissors and paste' look of a ransom note and the whole story is enigmatically framed by the footprints in the vast snowy endpapers.

A community of animals



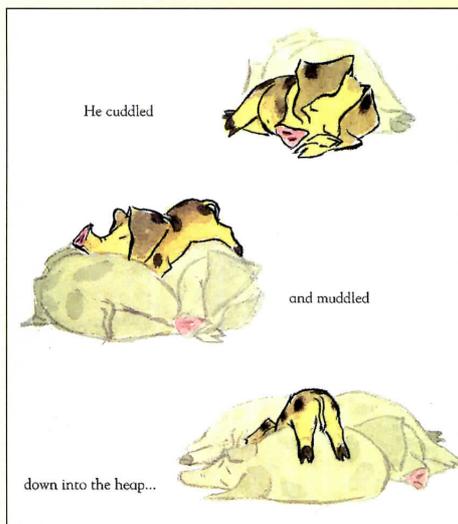
Picture books have always allowed children to learn not just about themselves but also how to get along with others, however different they may be. This is where the diversity of the animal kingdom is so useful, and Max Velthuis is the finest exponent of this genre. His little community of animals – Hare, Duck, Pig, Rat and Frog, act out all kinds of important everyday dramas with gentle wit and understanding. Frog is the pivotal character: somehow it's always his naivety, his innocence, his gullibility or his impetuous behaviour that sparks off the stories. In **Frog and a Very Special Day**, Frog is aware that plans are being made, and he is convinced that he's been left out – once again he's got the wrong end of the stick. With the eloquent simplicity of his drawing and his expressive use of colour, Velthuis again underlines the importance of friendship – and the delight there is to be had in simple things.

Blue Rabbit and the Runaway Wheel by Chris Wormell is about a rabbit whose recklessness on his bike causes havoc and distress in the neighbourhood. Rabbit however is unrepentant – without apology or explanation he hops on his bike, and pedals off. The message is clear – Rabbit has done wrong – and Wormell's illustrations express with magnificent simplicity the reactions of Squirrel, Badger and Tortoise to Rabbit's



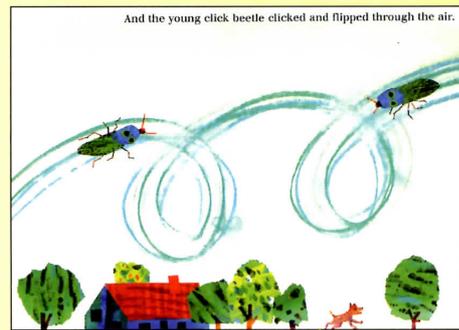
outrageous behaviour. The text is set in large print and the very beautiful lino cut illustrations, with their inky black outlines and finely modulated colours have the impact and luminosity of stained glass windows.

Little Pig Figwort by Henrietta Branford, and illustrated by Claudio Muñoz, doesn't have a message, it's simply a light-hearted tale about a fidgety piglet who can't get to sleep and longs for adventure.



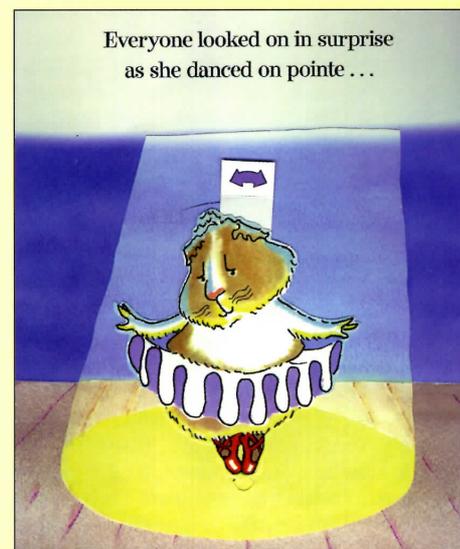
The book is distinguished not so much by Muñoz' imaginative fantasy spreads, as by the witty, affectionate observation in his vigorous brush drawings of the restless little pig struggling to get comfortable in a bedful of snoozing porkers.

Eric Carle draws not with a pen but a sharp blade – cutting the shapes for his distinctive collage illustrations from painted tissue paper. The shapes are uncompromisingly simple but rich in surface pattern, and the page design is airy and bold. In **The Very Clumsy Click Beetle** the diminutive hero of this (surprisingly hefty) book must learn to flip himself out of danger when he lands on his back. It's a question of perseverance and, encouraged by



passers-by, a worm, a turtle, a snail etc., he finally gets the hang of it and his success is celebrated with intriguing, electronic sound effects.

Also dealing with perseverance, but in a more *frivolous* vein, is **Ruby the Ballet Star**, a comic little pop-up book. Ruby, a comfortably plump guinea pig, feels at a disadvantage alongside the assortment of etiolated rodents in her ballet class but she perseveres and although the artwork is a bit bland, the robust and witty paper engineering enables her to become a star performer, whirling and twirling on 'pointe'.



But of all these animal stories, perhaps the most beautiful is **The Little Wood Duck** by Brian Wildsmith. Although the psychedelic butterflies, the wilful colours and the free splodgy brushwork of the flowers and foliage place this firmly in the '70s (it was first published in 1972) the drawing of the fox and the duck – and the delicate handling of the fur and feathers – have the tenderness of the wild life details you can find



hidden away in early Italian paintings – and there’s an oriental feel to Wildsmith’s exquisite watercolour technique which captures the ephemeral thistledown texture of those fluffy ducklings.

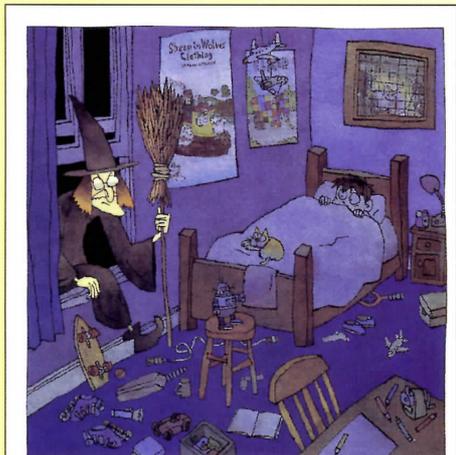
Animals and humans



What fine food! How awful cat food tasted in comparison. However had he put up with it all these years?

Peter Collington’s story **Clever Cat** shows animals interacting with humans. With his owners at work all day, Tibs has to learn to look after himself. Soon he’s able to cope with a cash card, a tin opener and a front door key. Then he gets caught up in the business of earning his own living, with a job in a café. Once on the treadmill he sees the advantages of being unemployed – like most cats – and realizes he’d rather be asleep on the doorstep. Collington, a self taught illustrator, has a gloriously quirky imagination and the painstaking quality of his drawings, and the scrupulous attention to detail gives them a surreal, slightly awkward intensity that is by turns comic, gripping and curiously convincing.

Equally engaging, but entirely different is Satoshi Kitamura’s story **Me and My Cat?** Kitamura has a polished technique with a distinctive, angular line that’s witty and expressive in its inexhaustible search for detail. This is an extremely funny tale of accidental magic, but the subtle textures and inky hues of the colour washes cast an exacting light on the suburban scene, and, with the purposeful incongruities of the classical allusions in the background, the humour has a cryptic edge to it.



Late one night an old lady in a pointed hat came in through the bedroom window. She brandished her broom at me and fired out some words. Then she left without saying goodbye...



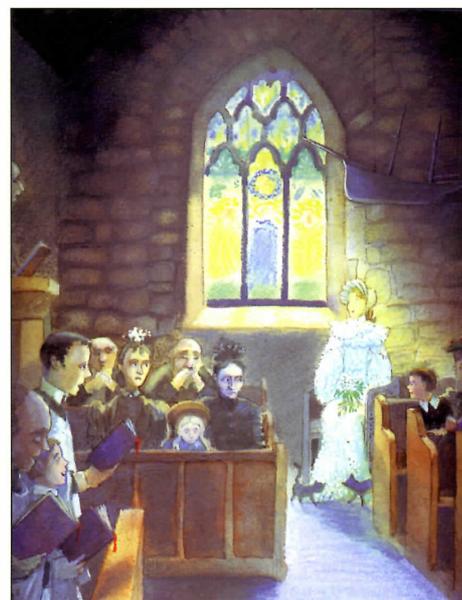
Ebb’s New Friend by Jane Simmons has a nautical setting and features a dog, a bird and a little girl – a triangular relationship in which the dog deeply resents the presence of the bird. But when the bird goes missing the dog is sad. The animals are drawn with great good humour and when the bird returns, all’s well with the world. Recalling the atmosphere of John Burningham’s classic, **Mr Gumpy’s Outing**, these engaging illustrations have a painterly exuberance that makes you look forward to hot summer days on the river.

Fantasy, fairy tale and legend



Nobody Rides the Unicorn by the poet Adrian Mitchell, is a fairytale set in a faraway land. The king wants a unicorn and in order to entrap one he needs an innocent young girl to sit in the forest and sing sweetly. Zoe, a quiet gentle beggar girl, is summoned and the plan works perfectly – but when Zoe realizes the dreadful fate that lies in store for the unicorn, she vows to release it. Stephen Lambert creates atmospheric magic with dramatically cropped compositions and subtle shady colours that achieve a velvety bloom in their twilight intensity. This is a perfect coming together of words and pictures – creating a story of operatic breadth – lose yourself in it and you can almost hear the music...

Another story that benefits from the grace and economy of a poet’s prose is **The Mermaid of Zennor**, a retelling by Charles Causley of an old Cornish legend. Dressed all in his Sunday best, Tom Taskis is the young tin miner who is lured away by the beautiful mermaid who appears in church one day, a shimmering vision in white.



Zachy Pender is the boy who later rescues a tiny mer-baby, thrown ashore in a violent storm. Zachy’s kindness is rewarded one day by a glimpse of Tom and his mermaid wife and children out at sea off the coast of Cornwall. Michael Foreman’s watercolours make a sensitive exploration of this text, reflecting the close nature of the small god-fearing village community, and capturing all the misty-moisty magic of the Cornish landscape.

With sparkling white cottages scattered higgledy-piggledy in child like perspectives against a rocky backdrop of deep indigo, purple, pink and magenta, illustrator Sheila Moxley gives the West Country a very different complexion in **Stone Girl Bone Girl**. Told by Laurence Anholt, and set in the early 19th century, in Lyme Regis, this is the true story of Mary Anning, a child who became fascinated by the fossils or ‘curiosities’



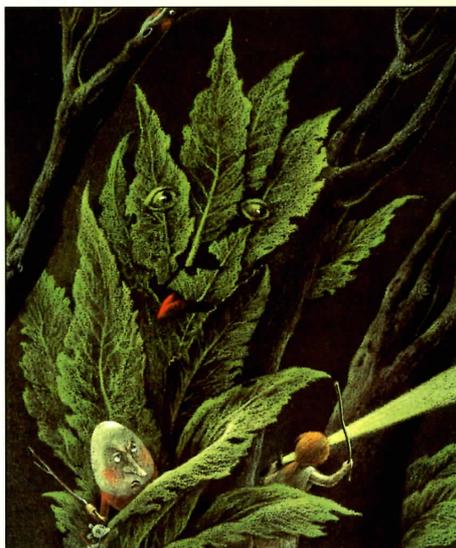
she found in the crumbling cliffs around her home, and who at the age of 12 became famous for her discovery of the remains of the great Ichthyosaurus – the ‘fish lizard’. This is a very child friendly approach to history and geology and in addition to her colourful handling of the different rock strata Moxley provides an imaginative array of the prehistoric monsters that once roamed these parts.

In **Brother Sun, Sister Moon** Margaret Mayo tells stories and legends surrounding the life of St Francis of Assisi. Peter Malone's illustrations, borrowing widely from a range of sources – illuminated manuscripts, Indian miniatures and early Italian paintings – are exquisite. Birds and animals are drawn with the meticulous eye of a miniaturist and the gentle, archaic attitudes of the figures give the work a rare stillness that further enhances the intensity of colour and the extraordinary luminosity he achieves.



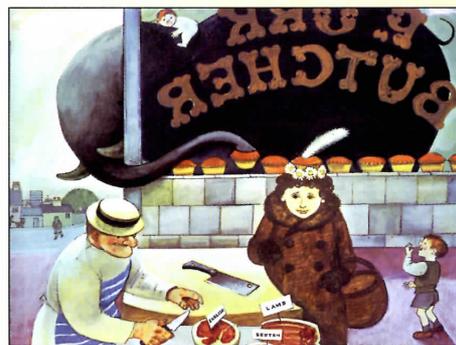
This is the kind of book that is often described as a ‘gift book’ but that must *not* be allowed to mean that it's kept on a high shelf where sticky fingers can't mess it up – these stories and pictures have a unique enchantment that a thoughtful child will return to again and again.

Although it sounds like an ancient firm of city solicitors, **Fair, Brown and Trembling** by Jude Daly is an Irish version of the Cinderella story. (Fair and Brown are the ugly sisters; Cinderella is Trembling). Set in the Emerald Isle where the quality of light constantly suggests imminent rainfall, this is a charming, fast paced narrative. It's full of medieval period detail with bustling Brueghelesque characters, a multi-cultural array of suitors and an appealing heroine who, on a spindly milk white steed, gallops across the wide green landscapes to a fairy tale ending with a prince and 14 children.



Meanwhile, as they say, in another part of the forest, **Laura**, the eponymous heroine of Binette Schroeder's new book, wakes up early in her tree house home; out of the window something shimmers in the distance. Burning with curiosity Laura steps out into the exciting but not entirely unfamiliar territory of the fairytale; with a sort of ‘into the woods’ intertextuality she meets up with Humpty Dumpty. They spend a glorious day together but when night falls she has to help him overcome his fear of the dark, as the forest becomes a hostile mysterious place. Exploiting the luminosity of coloured chalks on textured black paper, Schroeder's illustrations have the illusory depth and drama of stage sets, the perspectives cunningly emphasized in the angles that occur as the pages turn...there are some deliciously scary moments here and Laura's bravery is rewarded by an intriguing transformation scene and a magical homecoming on the back of a giant bird.

And lastly, **The Elephant and the Bad Baby**. It's now 30 years since this pair galloped into town on a scandalous shoplifting spree, snatching ice creams, biscuits, pies, cakes and lollies. But it's not so much their failure to pay for anything that causes the scandal, it's the fact that the baby never *once* says ‘Please’.



Raymond Briggs' illustrations are wickedly funny, the shops and shop keepers are beautifully observed, with a wealth of period detail and some good jokes (like the pork pie hat). And the

baby, a demanding little bruiser with a mop of red hair, bears an interesting resemblance to Briggs' subsequent 1992 creation, **The Man**. Good manners may be an old-fashioned concept – but this rousing little morality tale, written by Elfrida Vipont, and first published in 1969, shows that if you want to make a point, the old formula of rhythm, repetition and riotous assembly is hard to beat. ■

Joanna Carey is an author and illustrator and the former Children's Book editor of *The Guardian*.

Details of books discussed

Dear Diary, Sara Fanelli, Walker, 0 7445 6756 4, £9.99 hbk

Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll, ill. Lisbeth Zwerger, North-South, 0 7558 1166 0, £14.99 hbk

Thumbeline, Hans Christian Andersen, trans. Anthea Bell, ill. Lisbeth Zwerger, North-South, 0 7558 1215 6, £8.99 hbk, 0 7558 1210 1, £4.99 pbk

Jack and the Beanstalk, Richard Walker, ill. Niamh Sharkey, Barefoot, 1 901223 61 2, £9.99 hbk

Princess Aasta, Stina Langlo Ørdal, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 4127 2, £9.99 hbk

Frog and a Very Special Day, Max Velthuijs, Andersen, 0 86264 952 8, £9.99 hbk (published April 2000)

Blue Rabbit and the Runaway Wheel, Chris Wormell, Cape, 0 224 04765 5, £8.99 hbk

Little Pig Figwort, Henrietta Branford, ill. Claudio Muñoz, Collins, 0 00 198336 9, £10.99 hbk

The Very Clumsy Click Beetle, Eric Carle, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 14089 7, £12.99 hbk

Ruby the Ballet Star, Harriet Griffey, ill. Anne Holt, Tango, 1 85707 465 3, £8.99 hbk

The Little Wood Duck, Brian Wildsmith, Oxford, 0 19 272401 0, £4.99 pbk

Clever Cat, Peter Collington, Cape, 0 224 04646 2, £9.99 hbk

Me and My Cat? Satoshi Kitamura, Andersen, 0 86264 925 0, £9.99 hbk

Ebb's New Friend, Jane Simmons, Orchard, 1 84121 181 8, £4.99 pbk

Nobody Rides the Unicorn, Adrian Mitchell, ill. Stephen Lambert, Doubleday, 0 385 41025 5, £9.99 hbk

The Merrymaid of Zennor, Charles Causley, ill. Michael Foreman, Orchard, 1 85215 922 6, £9.99 hbk

Stone Girl Bone Girl, Laurence Anholt, ill. Sheila Moxley, Doubleday, 0 385 40984 2, £9.99 hbk

Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Margaret Mayo, ill. Peter Malone, Orion, 1 85881 615 7, £9.99 hbk

Fair, Brown and Trembling, Jude Daly, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 1463 8, £10.99 hbk

Laura, Binette Schroeder, trans. Rosemary Lanning, North-South, 0 7558 1170 9, £9.99 hbk

The Elephant and the Bad Baby, Elfrida Vipont, ill. Raymond Briggs, Puffin, 0 14 056691 0, £2.99 pbk

Children's Book Illustration: A Separate Story?

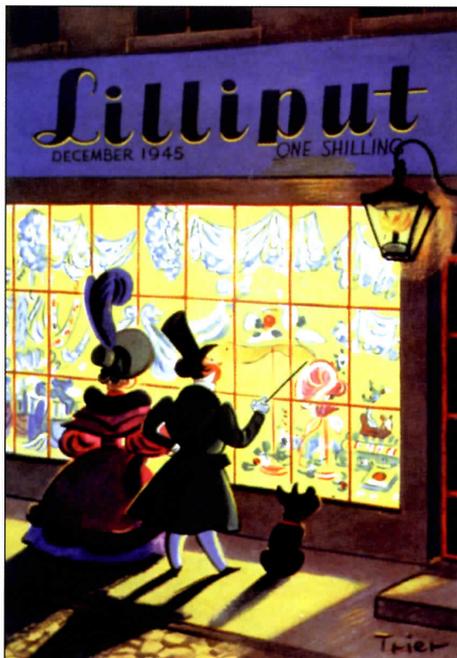
Should children's book illustration be assessed separately from adult illustration? Quentin Blake reflects on the place of children's book illustration within the history of illustration and the links between illustrating for adult and child audiences.

The message of what I am about to write is very simple, in fact some may think it too simple to require statement. It is that the history of children's book illustration is not a clearly defined and separate story. That we ever do think of it as that is perhaps because it gets treated together with the history of the children's book, which gives the impression that it started exclusively in chapbooks with their primitive and energetic woodcuts, soon to be enriched by the genius of Bewick.

None of this is in itself wrong; but I suppose the notion that the story of illustration is an altogether much more untidy one was underlined for me by the circumstances of my own beginnings. As a boy I liked drawing, and I liked humour: it was pointed out to me that one way I could combine these two was by doing humorous drawing – jokes and illustrations – for the press. A few years after I had started to do this it occurred to me (by now I had trained as a teacher) that children might also like this humour, and that the format of a book offered even more interesting possibilities than the magazine. Once I had done that, and was taken with the habit, I became aware that I was not the first – by far from the first – who had followed some such course. My purpose here is simply to enumerate some of those instances.

A clear visual message

It gives me the opportunity to celebrate (if I may be allowed to begin very far from the beginning) the achievement of Walter Trier. Here and now we know him best as the artist of *Emil* and the



Cover of *Lilliput* by Walter Trier.

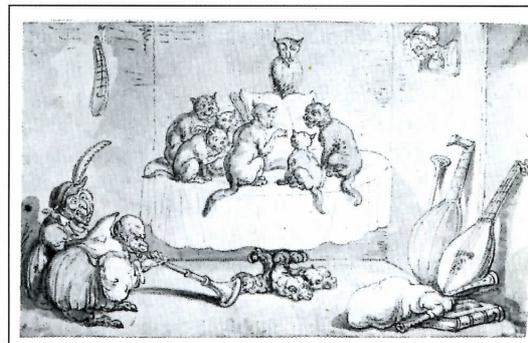
Detectives, and as such we celebrate him every year with the announcement of the Maschler Award and the presentation of that engaging statuette of Emil himself. But Trier's work is very much more rich and varied than is suggested by that book, even though we get an accurate taste of it there. In Germany in the thirties Trier was an accomplished magazine artist, producing covers and illustrations for humorous magazines and women's magazines, and I suspect that one reason for his success in children's books was not only his humour but the experience of giving a clear visual message with what was nevertheless quite a subtle mixture of innocence and sophistication. Later, Walter Trier was one of those blessings that Hitler inadvertently bestowed upon us when (like our beloved Fritz Wegner) he fled the attentions of the Nazis. What was then most on view was not in fact his children's books but – I remember them well – his covers for the pocket magazine *Lilliput* (itself, like *Picture Post*, the brainchild of another refugee, Stefan Lorant).

Imaginative vitality



'Ignorance is bliss' by George Cruikshank.

Similar examples of a talent being shared between adult and youthful audiences exist from the beginning of children's books; in fact, it is possible to see the political and satirical 18th-century print, with its scenes of activity and fantasy (think of Boney carving a slice of the world with his sabre, not to mention more delicate instances) as part of juvenile viewing, even without parental guidance – as these images were displayed to the public gaze in printshop windows. It was in this school that one of the great illustrators of the 19th century, George Cruikshank, learned his trade, since he was literally the apprentice of his father Isaac Cruikshank. Later he abandoned this mode and became a humorous observer and commentator



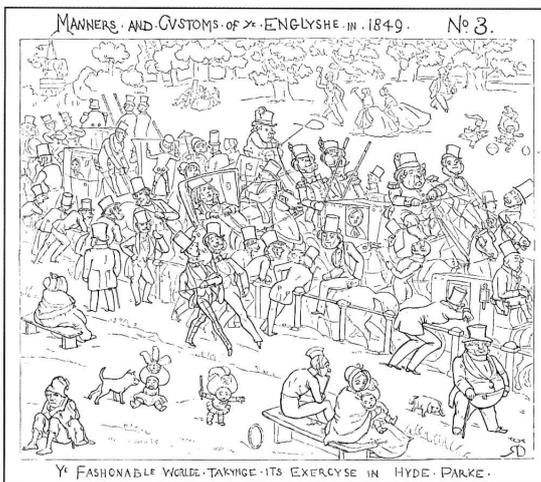
'The Musical Cats' by Thomas Rowlandson.

on the life of his times. It was this Cruikshank, already a celebrated figure, who became the illustrator of the first works of the young Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz* and *Oliver Twist*, as well as of other popular novels of the time. So that when we see him as the illustrator of *Cinderella* or of Grimm's *Fairy Tales*, we are looking at the work of someone who has behind him years of addressing the public, years of the practice of engraving, as well as the sort of imaginative vitality that can convincingly depict our hero riding at speed on the tail of a fox.

One of the great figures in the world of the 18th-century satirical print where Cruikshank had his roots was Thomas Rowlandson. There was at the time no method of faithfully reproducing those works in reed pen and watercolour, that we think of as the main substance of his achievement; even though there were print techniques which offered quite a happy parallel effect. What I suspect, however, is that that fluency of drawing, subtlety of light and colour – so beautifully adapted to the depiction of transient activity, and so natural to the English temperament – must have added some tincture to the visual influences of many of those who came, in later years, to the illustration of children's books.

Very different artistic backgrounds

If we go back to the mid 19th century, I think it is worth noting three draughtsmen who came from very different artistic backgrounds to make their contribution; Lear, Dicky Doyle, John Tenniel. The example of Lear is the most striking, in that the informality of 'nonsense' for children allowed him to abandon the fidelity of the natural history and topographical artist for an urgent graphic shorthand, a visual demotic that looks forward to the 20th century. Curiously, the extraordinarily gifted Dicky Doyle had, in producing a 17th-century pastiche for a series in



1849 Hyde Park illustration by Dicky Doyle.

Punch (it was of Pepys, and called 'Mr Pips, His Diary.')

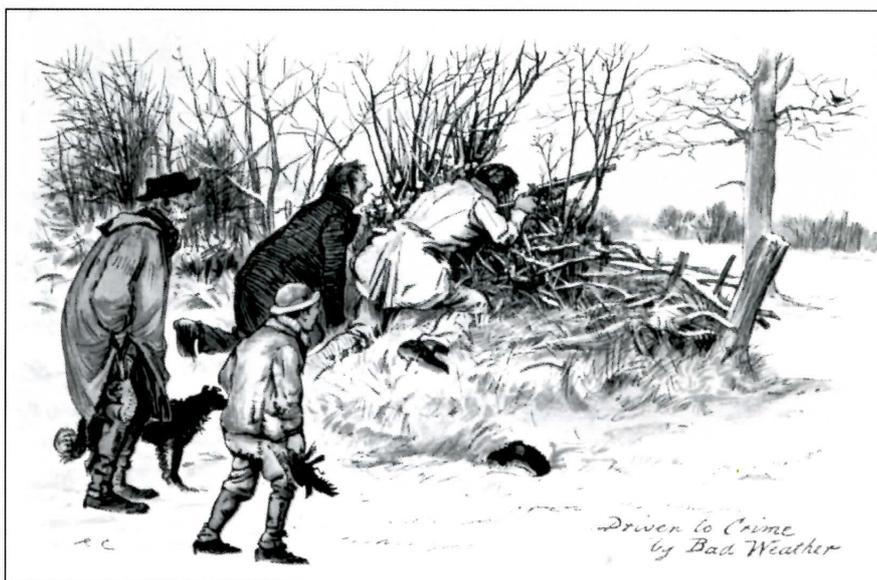
produced a not altogether dissimilar simplification which could have proved very useful to him as a children's book illustrator – though he never made use of it. It was only after he fell out with the proprietors of **Punch** that he seriously took to the business of children's books; John Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River* is part of that result, as well as his charming illustrations to the Fairy Books, where the sweetness of sentiment is held in check by the accuracy and elegance of the delineation. My third example is in its way as extraordinary as the other two. I have no idea how it was that Tenniel, whose heavyweight woodenly authoritative political cartoons in **Punch** no doubt eventually earned him his knighthood, came to be commissioned to illustrate *Alice*. On the face of it, it had no right to succeed; and yet the fact that Tenniel seemed incapable of any stylistic adaptation was the secret of success.

He was as straight-faced as Magritte; who else could have reflected, by sheer conviction, the dark side of Carroll's imaginings?

Techniques and approaches

Later in the century, when children's books and their illustration truly settled into their separate life, the people who did the pictures were more evidently the children's book illustrators we speak of now; in particular, that trio of artists (Crane, Caldecott and Greenaway) who seemed to have decided that children's book characters, at least in England, wore the costumes of a former age. Even so, Walter Crane was a decorative artist who only gave part of his time to children's books, and Randolph Caldecott, indisputably Lord of the Nursery, was still also the visual reporter of **The Graphic**; even though in that role he couldn't fail to show his penchant for activity and indeed for *dance*, as Maurice Sendak has identified it. And my sense of it is that it was at the same time, in the proliferating world of Parisian magazines, that some of the techniques and approaches that most of us have made use of were being developed.

From that world let me take just one example, and that of an artist who as far as I know never produced a children's book. Caran d'Ache took the Russian for lead pencil as his nom de plume: many will be more familiar with his distinctive signature than with his drawings, because it is that that still appears today on your tin of Caran d'Ache crayons. He was a master at telling a story in pictures, with very carefully-plotted effects; think of Keaton or Jacques Tati. To do that all the more efficiently he developed a very economical



'Driven to Crime by the Bad Weather' by Randolph Caldecott.



Café on a square facing the old church of St Germain-des-Prés, by Ludwig Bemelmans.



Illustrations by Caran d'Ache.

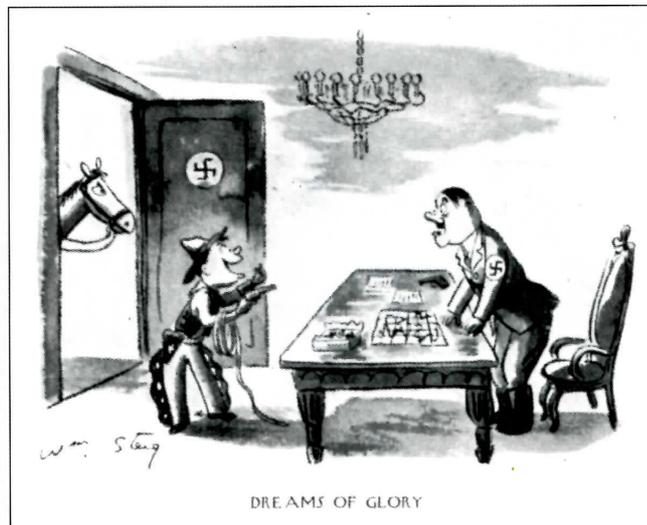
but accurate line drawing – sometimes strangely reminiscent of Picasso in his classicising phase. I cannot help thinking that his distinctive sense of visual narrative must have helped to influence the approach of many a later artist.

Talents developed elsewhere

As we get into the 20th century there are plenty of other examples of artists who brought to children's books a talent which they had developed elsewhere. It's hard for us, for example, to think of E H Shepard nowadays in terms of anything but *The Wind in the Willows* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*; and it's true that those two distinctive ventures seemed to have the effect of focusing and concentrating his work so that, strangely, the anthropomorphic heroes are somehow more convincing, less conventionally comic, than the human beings. Nevertheless, Shepard's was a drawing talent of which the charm and accuracy had much more often been used in lightly humorous comment and observation in (once again) *Punch* and other magazines. We find something of the same situation with two artists of quite different cultural backgrounds: Ludwig Bemelmans and (more recently) William Steig. Bemelmans wrote and drew in books, and in magazines like *Holiday*, about travel; in the first instance his own experiences of moving from Europe to the USA, and his reminiscences of the hotel business. In both word and image his art was that of the raconteur, and if he moved naturally into the world of children's books it was perhaps in part the softening or romanticising effect of recollection on his work – so that a drawing of the church of St Germain-des-Prés suggests a village-like innocence which it probably didn't really possess even in the thirties. At the same

time his pictures had the gestural dash and enterprising formalisation of colour that were characteristic of modern painting, as well as an eye for detail (the table settings and the lampshades exactly right) and a sense of how to dispose a black-and-white drawing on the page. (I wonder what has become of the two very large and beautiful drawings of Paris that used to hang in the upstairs dining room of André Deutsch in Great Russell Street?) In the Madeline books those knowledgeable and affectionate cityscapes were added to a sense of how to bring off a story with economy and emphasis.

It is possible to imagine that William Steig might never have given children's books the benefit of his abilities, because he didn't set his hand to it until the age of about sixty. (Fortunately for all of us he is still practising his art now as he passes ninety.) Within the covers of a book he is able to make use of both his sympathy with children, earlier exemplified by the *Small Fry* of New York, as well as that later more poetical and symbolic form of drawing that the *New Yorker* was happy to see him explore in its pages. Was it perhaps also the authority afforded by those years of experience that ensured that there has always been a sort of straight-faced idiosyncrasy in his own distinctive take on the traditional materials of fable and fairy tale. His works seem familiar and yet unpredictable.

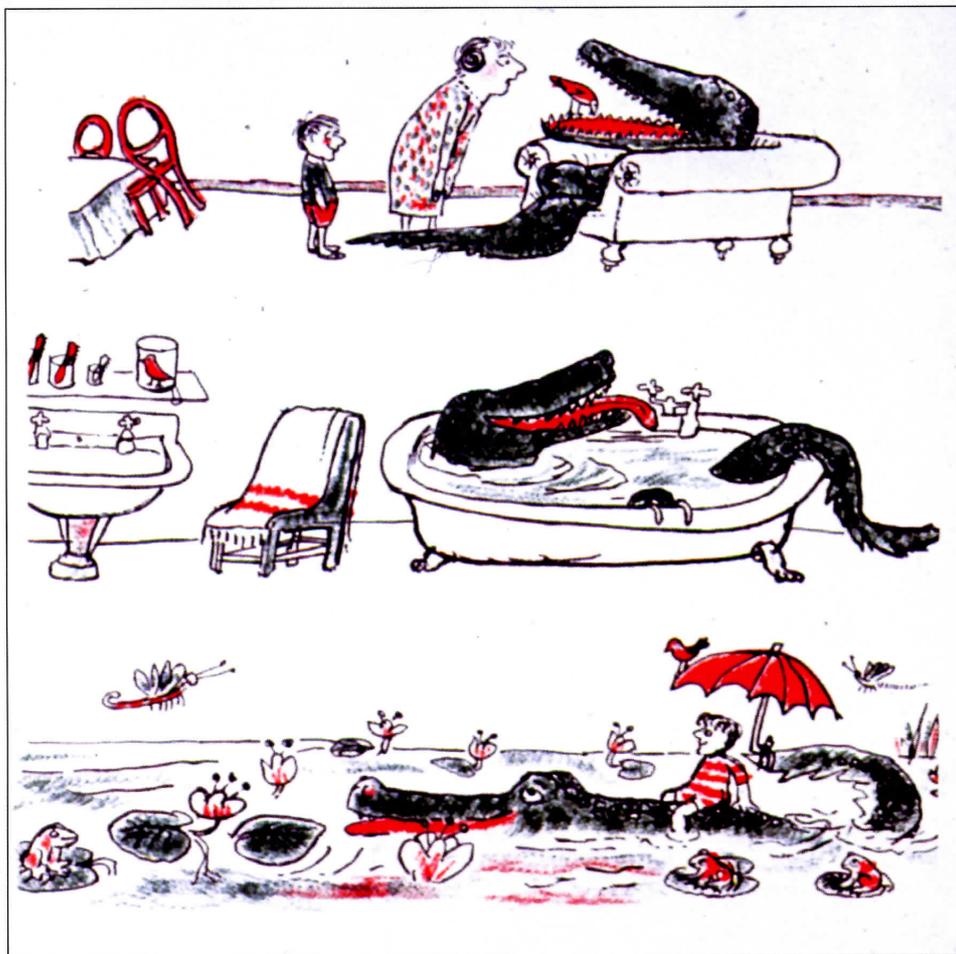


'Dreams of Glory' by William Steig.

Lack of British sobriety

I remember seeing, in the fifties, the original version of André François' *Crocodile Tears* (*Les Larmes du Crocodile*), characteristic of the collaboration of the artist and his publisher/designer, Robert Delpire – the book was in the form of the box in which, in the story, the crocodile is sent back from Egypt to Paris. It was not only this, among the relatively few children's books that have come from François' pen, that, it seems to me, influenced the artists of the time; there were also his posters and editorial work for magazines full of visual ingenuity and readiness to bring into illustration the painterliness and colour sense of 20th-century painting, as well as the rough and improvisational quality of urgent draughtsmanship. I know that I found a sense of liberation in that lack of British sobriety; and, though I have to confess that I am only guessing, I see the influence of François in a number of contemporary illustrators – would, for instance, John Burningham, David McKee, Gerald Rose or Ralph Steadman be quite the same without it?

It will be all too evident to the reader that the notes and speculations that I have put down here do not hope for scholarly accuracy; they are not questions that I have researched so much as things I have stumbled upon while fossicking in books and magazines. What I do hope they suggest, however, in an approximate fashion, is that children's book illustration is not something that we should consider tidily on its own quite separate criteria, but somewhere where paths cross and mingle, sometimes in interesting ways; and no doubt in many interesting ways that I haven't even glanced at here. It's evidently possible and proper to judge an illustrated book within its own terms of reference; but it may not be the most fun – and what should they know of England, as a great children's writer once enquired, who only England know? ■

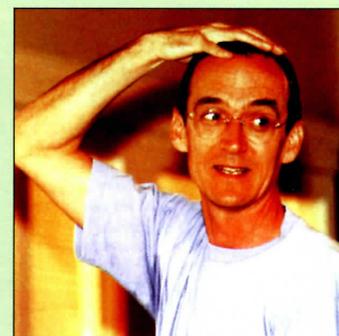


From *Crocodile Tears* by André François.

The Children's Laureate, Quentin Blake, OBE, RDI, is the illustrator of, amongst many others, the books of Roald Dahl. He was Head of the Illustration Department of the Royal College of Art from 1978–1986.

Windows into Illustration: Colin McNaughton

Colin McNaughton is an illustrator, writer and poet whose exuberant picture books with their comic-strip techniques, often take the form of an extended joke. In this article McNaughton explains the thinking behind *Hmm...*, the fifth book about popular Preston Pig and his adversary, Mister Wolf.



When I was little, adults were always telling me to 'Stop Being Silly' and to 'Stop Messing About'. It took me far, far, too many years to realize that these were the only two things in life that I was any good at. Now, it's what I do all day. It's how I write my books: I get an idea and I mess about with it. I do silly things with it. I play with it.

might indulge in this sort of contemplative conversation. I particularly like the marks a very soft pencil makes. The crumbling of graphite on hand-made water-colour paper. The sensuous response to the pressure of the hand. It demands total concentration yet a certain detachment. It's a Zen-like activity. (Pretentious, moi?)

This opening spread design is repeated at the end of the book and forms the bread

convention of the thought-balloon to reveal Mister Wolf's inner-voice, his vivid imagination and to confirm his unpleasant (though hopefully humorous) nature. Preston is blissfully unaware of Mister Wolf's thoughts. Whereas, you, the reader, are let in on the secret. In academic circles this is known as 'Irony'. (I hope you're taking notes.)

The pirate theme is just me having a little fun with the readers who know my other books. It comes under the heading 'Knowingness', I think. Mister Wolf making Preston walk the plank is a cliché, I know, but clichés are incredibly useful when you need to get a lot of information over in a limited space. All I do is to give the clichés a little twist – making them my own.

I suppose what I'm striving for these days, in my books, is to do more with less. I'm looking for that kind of quality that the classic, two minute, pop song has; it's great when you first hear it and it's still great thirty years later. It's a lovely contradiction; it's of the moment but it's also timeless. That's what I'm after. That's what gets me out of bed in the morning. (That and the cats drooling on my face.) ■



Preston Pig lives in that uncorrupted state of childhood, that oh-too-short stage in our lives when we walk around with our eyes and our imaginations wide open. Mister Wolf represents all those dangers out there that give parents nightmares. He's a nasty piece of work. Only thing is, I got to feeling pretty bad about Mister Wolf because he was so one-dimensional. He had no inner-life. *Hmm...* is my attempt at remedying that. The book shows, through the use of thought-balloons, how his mind works.

The first spread shows, for the first time, Preston and Mister Wolf actually conversing. (A risk this, as the previous books depended on Preston's 'unawareness' of Mister Wolf for their humour and suspense.) I've done it in a comic-strip way with panels and speech-balloons because that was the most efficient way to get all that 'intro' information over without a hugely wordy text. (Also, because I think it looks great!)

Technically, the artwork is done in pencil-line and watercolour. I've used lots of bright yellow and blue to suggest a warm sunny day. The sort of day when one

on either side of the filling of the book – a sort of ham sandwich. (Oh, for heavens-sake!)

The second spread is representative of all the other spreads. A sandwich spread. (Colin, I'm warning you!) I use the comic



Colin McNaughton's books include the Preston Pig series – *Suddenly!*, *Boo!*, *Oops!*, *Goal!*, *Hmm...* and *Shh (Don't Tell Mister Wolf!)* (Andersen Press and HarperCollins) and his illustrated poetry books from Walker Books; the latest being, *Wish You Were Here (And I Wasn't!)*. An extended interview with Colin McNaughton, *Daft as a Bucket, Inside the World of Colin McNaughton*, is available from The Centre for the Children's Book, Pendower Hall, West Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 6PP (tel. 0191 274 3941) at £5 inc p & p.

Authorgraph No.121

Alison Uttley

Alison Uttley
by Denis Judd

Half a century ago Alison Uttley had established herself as one of Britain's best loved and best selling writers for children. Millions of her books were eagerly purchased and her fame spread well beyond the United Kingdom and the English-speaking world. In her writing for children she created several vividly defined and enchanting worlds inhabited by some of her most celebrated animal characters – Sam Pig, Brock the Badger, and Tim Rabbit, but best known of all was the community that centred round Little Grey Rabbit, Squirrel and Hare. Now, at the start of the new millennium Little Grey Rabbit and company are being given a vigorous new lease of life through their first television adaptation, and accompanied by a reissuing of these classic books by HarperCollins.

Now that the twentieth century has passed, the nostalgic appeal of Alison Uttley's writing, deeply rooted in her late-Victorian childhood in rural Derbyshire, may prove an irresistible tonic for the jaded, over-stimulated, computer-zapped imaginations of today's children. It is easy to see why this should be, for in these sparkling, sharp, diamond-bright, yet also dreamy, stories there are no soulless tower blocks, no bored and distracted au pairs, no lurking paedophiles, no violent and terrifying videos. Instead there is adventure, magic and good-fellowship; a world where small dangers are encountered, but also successfully navigated, and where, more often than not, well meaning individuals rally to the cause of the community – even though they may puzzle, mutter, and scratch their heads before deciding what to do for the best.

So although shadows pass over the generally sun-lit, rural landscapes

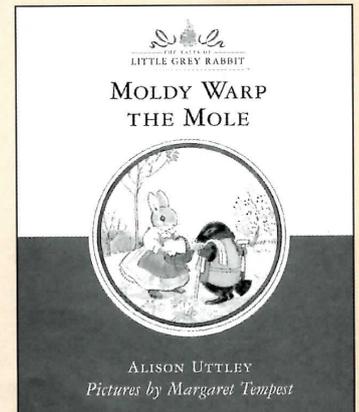
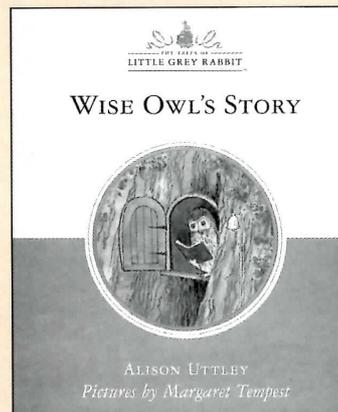
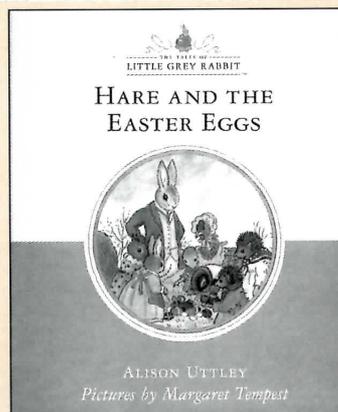
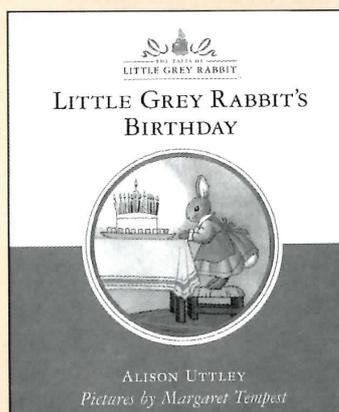
inhabited by Little Grey Rabbit, Fuzzypeg the hedgehog, Moldy Warp and company, they do not lower and linger. The stories themselves triumph through their brilliant characterisation and wry humour, their love of country lore and magic, their sense of time and place and their celebration of old and solid values – good neighbourliness, good sense, a love of the natural world and of the enduring values of hearth and home.



Grey Rabbit's little house at the end of the wood is always bright with gingham curtains and crackling fires, the walls and furniture are 'distressed' without knowing how trendy that might be, and from the kitchen wafts the mouth-watering smell of bread, and other good things, baking. Here, with the reliable, earnest, hard-working Little Grey Rabbit herself, with the conceited, wilful yet lively Squirrel and the vain, feckless but well-intentioned Hare there is, apparently, a sufficiency – a surfeit even – of the basic kindness and security for which every child longs.

Yet at the heart of the story book success of Alison Uttley and Little Grey Rabbit there lies an unexpectedly tragic tale, as her yet unpublished diaries powerfully reveal. For although Mrs Uttley's life and career encompassed a remarkable and unpredictable progress, from the warmly recollected and passionately lived childhood idyll of Castle Top Farm, overlooking the Derwent Valley in Derbyshire, to a prosperous and celebrated old age in suburban Buckinghamshire, it also contained strange and disturbing conflicts and tensions, and much personal pain.

Alison Uttley's life was marked by paradox and dogged by mystifying shifts of personality and identity. A bright scholarship girl, in 1906 she was only the second woman to graduate in physics from Manchester University; but she also believed passionately and persistently in fairies. She was an Edwardian suffragette and a close friend of Ramsay MacDonald (to whose children she told bedtime stories), but she ended up as a staunch Conservative. She was in touch with the world of dreams, writing an intriguing book, *The Stuff of Dreams*, yet flinched



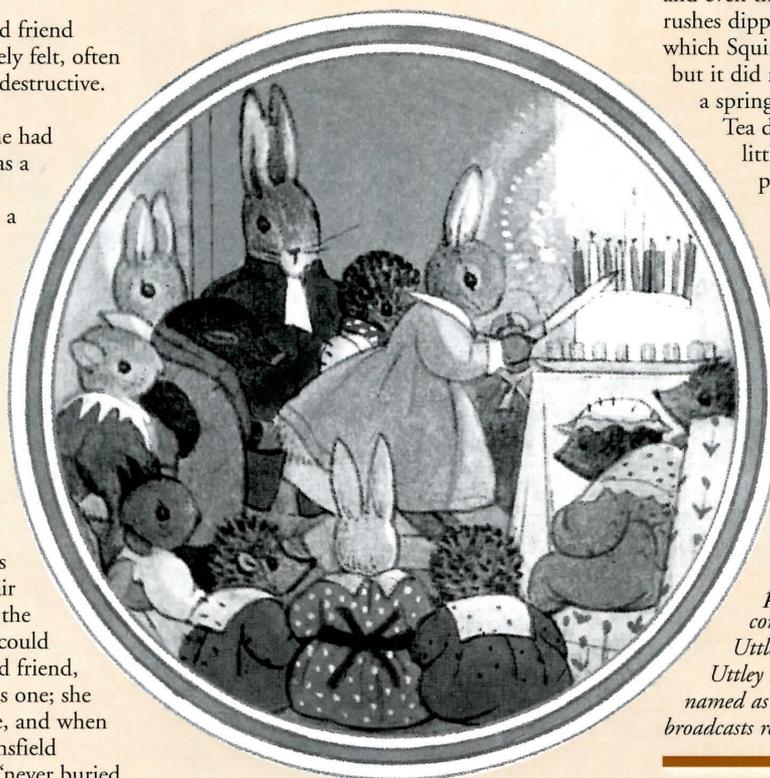
from any serious self-analysis. She almost always felt that she was a very special, gifted person. As she was dreamily to recall of her childhood; 'I always felt I was a changeling child. A bit of fairy got into me at Castle Top.'

She was a devoted wife, mother and friend whose relationships were passionately felt, often stormy, and sometimes downright destructive. Her fiercely loved husband, James, drowned himself in 1930 before she had been able fully to establish herself as a writer – a tragedy from which she never fully recovered. She could be a demanding and over-attentive mother, and her only child, John, had to fight hard for his independence and for the fresh air of separate adult relationships. Alison disapproved of his eventual choice of wife, and had earlier destroyed his plans to marry another woman by arbitrarily calling off the wedding only hours before it was due to take place. Not long after his mother's death, John Uttley was so overwhelmed by grief and despair that he took his life – driving over the edge of a cliff in Guernsey. Alison could also be a jealous and easily offended friend, as well as an inspiring and generous one; she was increasingly difficult in old age, and when she died in 1976 one of her Beaconsfield neighbours remarked that she had 'never buried anyone with more relief'.

Alison Uttley was extraordinarily gifted but, like so many intensely creative and self-regarding individuals, she was also extraordinarily complicated, even contrary. After a series of bitter disputes, she was eventually estranged from Margaret Tempest, the illustrator of most of the *Little Grey Rabbit* books, over the copyright to these beautiful pictures, and over which of them had really created the characters. She was angrily resentful of comparisons with Beatrix Potter, and scornfully dismissive of Enid Blyton, with whom she had some frosty encounters and whose work she despised. She took the work of literary creation very seriously and relished her success, but was easily hurt by criticism and craved the affirmation of the public.

Money became very important to her – not least because her husband's sudden and unexpected death had left her feeling both emotionally and financially destitute. Her growing success as an author was therefore of immeasurable satisfaction to her. The tragedy also coincided with the Great Depression of the early 1930s when investments became valueless and even savings were threatened by the world-wide financial turmoil. Alison's longing for public affirmation and for a comfortable income also helps to explain her extraordinary productivity – by the end of her life she had written thirty-two *Little Grey Rabbit* books, twelve in the *Sam Pig* series, five about *Tim Rabbit*, twelve about *The Little Red Fox*, and seven about the mice *Snug* and *Serena*; in addition there were classic novels like *A Traveller in Time*, inspired autobiographical reminiscences such as *The Country Child*, twenty books of essays, two novels for adults, several plays for children, other story books for younger readers, many articles and even a county history of

Buckinghamshire. It was by any standards, anywhere, at any time, a prodigious and fruitful outpouring of talent and creative energy.



But although she eventually became a considerable celebrity – even something of a *grande dame* of letters – and regularly earned very large quantities of money, even purchasing some valuable Brueghels and other works of art, and living in a large and well-appointed house in Beaconsfield, she was still liable to watch the pennies and able to agonise over whether to buy a bag of oranges.

Alison was no easy sentimentalist, and despite the charm and whimsy of much of her writing, there is a good deal that is clear-eyed, down-to-earth and even violent. If she was only partly fulfilled in her personal and emotional life, she at least succeeded in becoming a greatly loved and influential author. At the root of her accomplishments there is, however, a pervading sense of tragedy and loss. Indeed her vitality and productivity as a writer stem in part from a need to compensate for a variety of disappointments and denials, as well as to make symbolic reparation. Penelope Fitzgerald once shrewdly described her as 'a self-deluding romantic...and a compulsive housekeeper, patching and jam-making in an heroically untidy kitchen...it is impossible not to think of her as a sorceress, a storyteller whose tales were produced only at mortal cost.'

It is the final irony of Alison Uttley's long, accomplished and too often tormented life that the old-fashioned, rural England, which she had sought to celebrate so vividly and with so much feeling in her writing, was essentially doomed at her birth in 1884 and had virtually decayed and vanished before her own death.

At the very least, in the year 2000, her restless and indomitable spirit can take great solace from the current revival of interest in her work and especially at the world-wide television audiences that will be transported back into a

world which she delineated so clearly and touchingly in the Foreword to each of her deft, inspired and moving *Little Grey Rabbit* books: 'Grey Rabbit's home had no electric light or gas, and even the candles were made from pith of rushes dipped in wax from the wild bees' nests, which Squirrel found. Water there was in plenty, but it did not come from a tap. It flowed from a spring outside, which...went to a brook.

Tea did not come from India, but from a little herb known very well to country people. The doormats were plaited rushes...and cushions were stuffed with wool gathered from the hedges... The country ways of Grey Rabbit were the country ways known to the author.' ■

Professor Denis Judd has written the authorised biography, *Alison Uttley: The Life of a Country Child*, Michael Joseph (1986) and *Further Tales of Little Grey Rabbit*, HarperCollins (1989). He wrote a BBC Radio 4 programme, *The Snow-baby: a portrait of Alison Uttley in 1984*, to commemorate the centenary of Mrs Uttley's birth. He is a trustee of the Alison Uttley Literary Property Trust, and has been named as the editor of *Mrs Uttley's Diaries*. He broadcasts regularly on radio and television.

THE BOOKS

A Traveller in Time, Puffin, 0 14 030931 4, £5.99 pbk

Forthcoming:

The Country Child, Jane Nissen Books, 1 903252 01 6, £4.99 pbk

From HarperCollins, £5.99 each hbk:

Little Grey Rabbit's Birthday, 0 00 198391 1

Hare and the Easter Eggs, 0 00 198396 2

Moldy Warp the Mole, 0 00 198389 X

Wise Owl's Story, 0 00 198387 3

Forthcoming:

Fuzzypeg Goes to School, *Little Grey Rabbit's May Day (May 2000)*, *Little Grey Rabbit Goes to the Sea*, *Water Rat's Picnic (August 2000)*, *The Knot Squirrel Tied*, *Squirrel Goes Skating (January 2001)*

TV tie-in editions from HarperCollins, £2.99 each pbk:

The Squirrel, the Hare and the Little Grey Rabbit, 0 00 710010 8

The Story of Fuzzypeg the Hedgehog, 0 00 710012 4

How Little Grey Rabbit Got Back Her Tail, 0 00 710011 6

Squirrel Goes Skating, 0 00 710041 8

From Egmont Children's Books, £4.99 each pbk:

The Squirrel, the Hare and the Little Grey Rabbit, 0 7497 4176 7

Forthcoming:

How Little Grey Rabbit Got Back Her Tail, *Fuzzypeg the Hedgehog*, (August 2000) and there are plans for further titles.

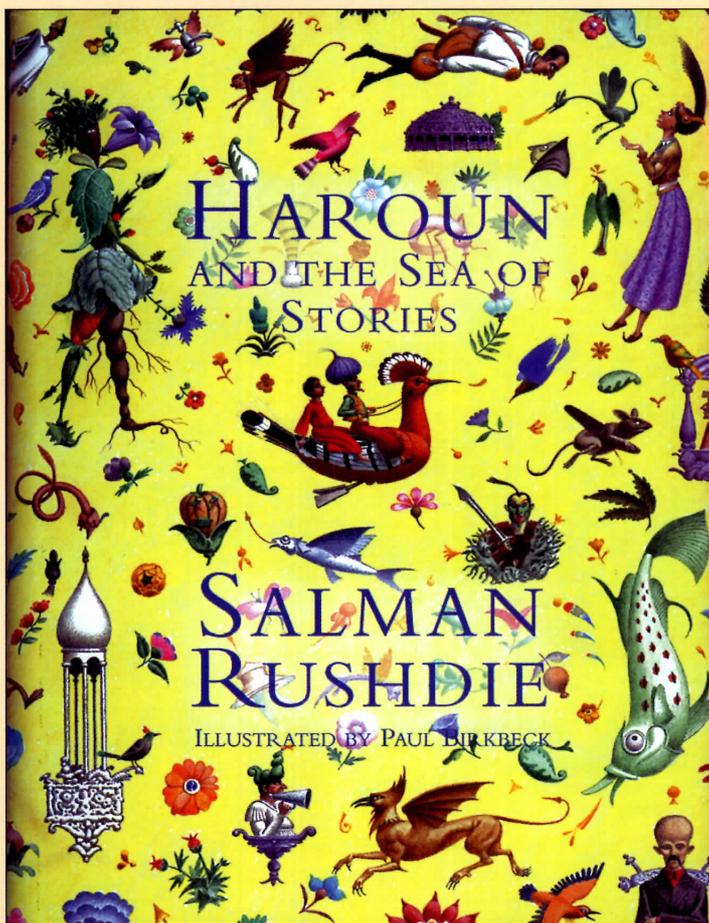
Little Grey Rabbit is currently showing on ITV every Monday at 3.40pm.



Farrukh Dhondy

SPEECH SILENCING

Salman Rushdie is the author of, amongst other titles for adults, the Booker Prize winner, **Midnight's Children**. A subsequent novel, **The Satanic Verses**, was denounced by the Ayatollah Khomeini for blasphemy and a fatwa issued against its author. The Iranian state has only recently said that it will not do anything active to carry out the sentence of death resulting from the fatwa. In 1990 Rushdie wrote his first book for children, **Haroun and the Sea of Stories**, dedicated to his son, Zafar. It has just been reissued in a sumptuous new edition illustrated in colour and black and white by Paul Birkbeck. In this wide ranging interview for **BfK**, Salman Rushdie talks to writer and commentator Farrukh Dhondy about his writing for children, his views on other writers, how important India is to him and much besides ...



FD There's just been a new edition of **Haroun and the Sea of Stories**. It's not exclusively a children's book, is it?

SR The book is clearly at one level about serious things – about language and silence. It's about speech and the silencing of speech.

FD 'From the moment I could talk, I was ordered to listen.'

SR Who is that, that's a song, isn't it?

FD Don't you remember?

SR Oh yes. It was Cat Stevens. A great and wise man. For me the secret of the book was knowing precisely where to pitch the language. For a long time I didn't find the language for it. The moment the book came to life was when I found the tone of voice. And obviously it has a

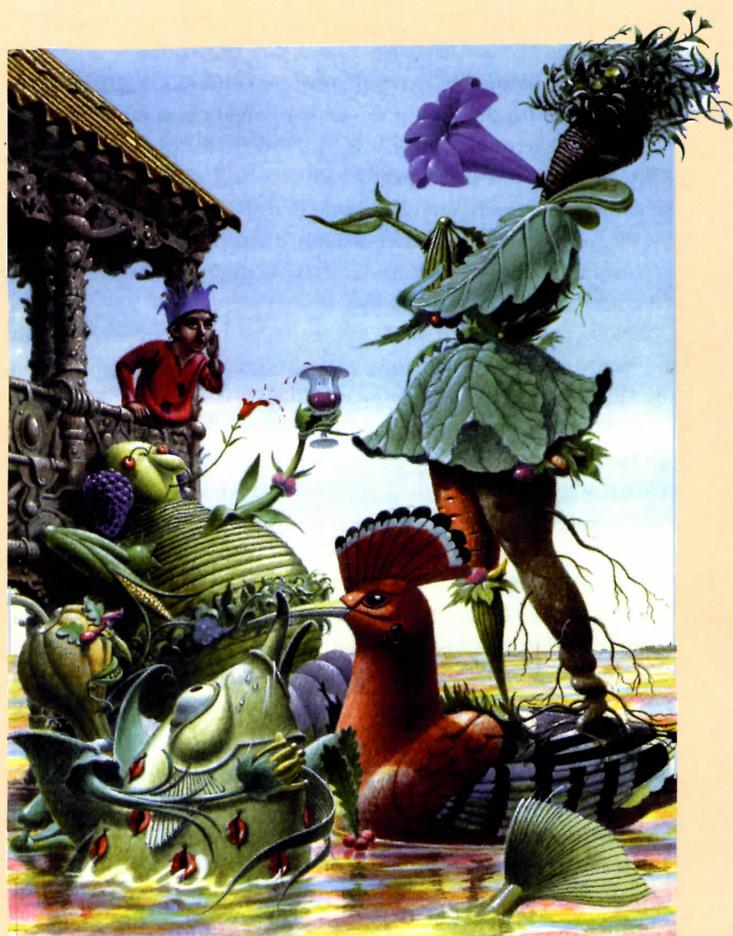
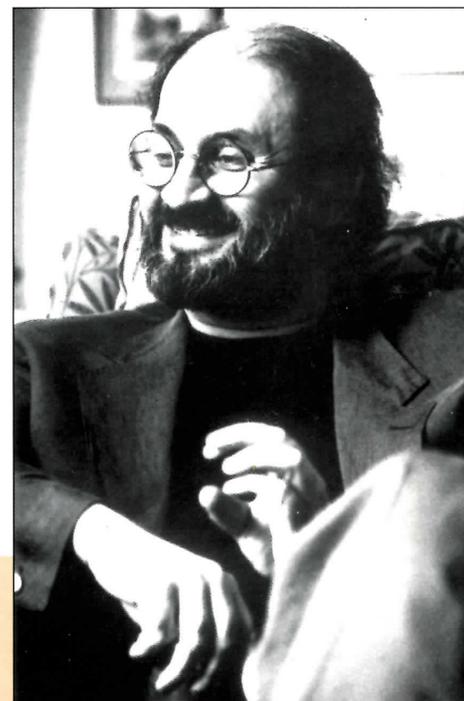
serious dimension but I didn't have any moralising intent in my head when writing it. It didn't feel like a different process than I would use in any other kind of writing. There is, though, a slightly different kind of language effort.

FD It is very much in your style. Call it magic realism which is what it's been labelled.

SR It starts from a more or less real place. Haroun's family is naturalistic, Indian. Then it goes off into a fairy tale land, and that's fine. After all the country is deliberately not called India or the city is deliberately not called Bombay. And Kashmir is the valley of K. Obviously it's meant to be those places.

AND THE OF SPEECH

Salman Rushdie



FD Before we talk about magic realism may I mention the illustrations in **Haroun** which are remarkable.

SR I think it's a terrific job. I don't know the illustrator. What happened was that five years ago on Jackanory on the BBC they read **Haroun**. And the illustrator, Paul, got in touch. He had done some simple drawings. He'd never done a children's book before but I thought that they were pretty good. So I met him. He was rather embarrassed because he said when you're drawing the stuff on TV it's very sketchy. You don't put proper detail into it, it is just for the camera to move across. But he said that he felt he could do something much better than what he'd done for Jackanory. And he'd like to. He did some pictures which

were wonderful. So that's how the project began. So we owe it to the BBC.

FD And is the world he drew the one you envisaged as you were writing?

SR Not exactly.

FD Lewis Carroll did his own illustrations, didn't he, before Tenniel. And of course Disney took over.

SR Yes. Lucky Lewis. But Paul's pictures fit very well with the vision of my book. It's not exactly the same. One of the things we did discuss a lot was the figure of the boy. Some of the earlier versions I thought were too fat or too thin or that. They just didn't feel right. Either the face was too long, or there was something wrong with his nose etc. Eventually he arrived at a boy we all liked. Haroun starts in a real place and Paul has caught that quite well. The pictures have roots in the real place but they are not limited by that.

FD The book was written for your son, Zafar, wasn't it?

SR Yes. His middle name is Haroun and it's always been a book very important to him and to us. He was its first reader and only audience. The only time I ever wrote a book for one person.

FD Did you speak it before you wrote it?

SR Not in exactly that version, but when he was much littler. When I wrote it he was about eleven. But when he was much smaller I would tell him what became **Haroun** as – not exactly a bedtime story – I would tell him stories in the bath. That's where the germ of it originated – stories in the bath, trying to find stories relevant to a bath. But he loved it. He still does. I was writing it for him at two different ages. When it came out he read it as an eleven-year-old child and I hope that he would read it again and see other things, which he does now.

FD Kipling wrote stories which work on both levels, though he pitched the **Just So Stories** at his children ...

SR Kipling was very smart. He also had a very childlike side to him so he could write very easily as a child man which he was. **Just So Stories** were for children but **The Jungle Book** was for every level ...

FD It rips off the **Ramayana**. Salman, what about the multicultural intent of **Haroun**. This is the first time a very Western literary tradition has absorbed this territory.

SR I didn't think of it like that. I was writing a story that I could write. I didn't sit down to write a multicultural book, except in the sense that I have multiple cultures inside me. So whatever comes out, comes out like that. Where I did think that aspect was important was when they did it at the National Theatre. It really was the first time there had been a production with that many Asian actors at the National level. And for many of them it was their first chance at being there. I thought it was great to offer them that chance and that it was a shame they hadn't had it before. I thought it was striking how it brought a different audience to the theatre. The audience going into the Cottesloe was not your usual middle class British ... it was people who had never come to the National Theatre. It was a huge Asian audience and of course the behaviour of the audience was different. They were behaving as one would hope, shouting things out.

FD And whistling?

SR There was a moment in the play towards the end where Haroun discovers that it's his birthday. Someone in the audience shouts out 'Happy Birthday!' I loved that. When a book is published you don't physically see the audience having that kind of reaction. But I suppose the same sort of thing happens with its readers.

FD You enjoyed writing for young ones?

SR The pleasure of writing for children is what you get back from kids. It's very original and strange and unexpected. I get letters telling me how to write the sequel, what should be his next adventure. They tell me which characters they don't like. What started to happen is that the book gets taught in class and then the whole class will write little pieces and the teacher will send me all of them. And the class will have their own go and say what their characters look like.

FD Do you write back?

SR Yes, I do. I get very interesting letters. I got a letter from a girl in America. At the top of it she had printed in bold letters: 'Please answer this letter urgently because when I grow up I expect to be either a novelist or a world leader.' I thought to write back: 'Ten minutes and I shall be President.'

FD To get away from **Haroun** to your other books. Doesn't the literary genre of magic realism cause the writer to deviate from the serious and necessary task of bringing out the savagery, shame, barbarity even danger in the countries and places he or she is writing about?

SR Take **Shame**. It's a savage book.

FD Yes, but it still deals in a 'magic' way with a country and a milieu and events that are humanly degrading.

SR There are many ways of approaching this subject. I think it's the way of discussing evil or barbarity that matters. Approaching it head-on is one way of doing it. **Haroun**, for instance, is a fairy tale, but even in **Haroun** there is a frightening aspect and people who have read it have found it frightening because of the whole 'Chupwalla' section, silencing stories, silencing testimony ... The book may use the language of fairy tale but it's not escapist. It's about something real. This whole argument about realism and magic is conceived in the wrong terms. In my opinion,

realism in the novel has nothing to do with the rules of naturalism. Realism is the intention of the author to respond truthfully to the world that he sees, and techniques are of secondary concern.

FD Do you think your writing about India and Pakistan has stimulated a writing or at least a publishing trend which is negative because it tempts writers into whimsical nonsense and meaningless word-play?

SR I know there is a desire in some quarters to put my writing down in that way. I know there was a moment when less good versions of **Midnight's Children** were being produced by other people. You have to look at a writer's work over a long period before you see what they are doing. Amitav Ghosh with his first book⁽¹⁾ may have owed something to my writing, but you couldn't say that about his non-fiction. His book about Egypt, **In an Antique Land**, I thought was a very fine book. And some of the journalism he has published, for instance about Subhash Chandra Bose's army⁽²⁾ was very good indeed. As there is this enormous amount of writing in English, a lot of it will be rubbish, but the fact that there are more writers will mean that there will be more good ones.

FD One really needs critical writing to help make the distinctions. Talking of which did you see Pankaj Mishra's pieces⁽³⁾ on you in India and **The New Statesman** and **The New York Review of Books**?

SR No. And I've never met him. I don't know him, but I've heard for some time that he has this animus and fair enough. There's always some young punk ...

FD You think it's the fastest-gun-in-the-West syndrome?

SR Maybe. Here I am, sitting in the corner of the bar drinking my whisky when this kid comes to call me out. All I can say is I hope he's fast, because I'm still fast.

FD He raises some serious points

SR Since I've not read the piece you'll have to tell me what they are.

FD One is that the human condition in Rushdie always seems to be the Rushdie condition. And then again that 'exile' is a much more serious problem for the really dispossessed and displaced than the predicament that your writer persona seems to feel in your novels and essays.

SR Well. Writers can only write from how they see the world. This is the world according to me. If he thinks it's inadequate or insufficient, that's his privilege. But he has to show us why. We must wait for his books.

FD I think there is a book threatened⁽⁴⁾.

SR We wait with not much interest. I don't like it when people are rude to me, nobody likes it. I could live without Pankaj Mishra's good opinions.

FD The prominent absentee from the recent Nobel Prize shortlist, my nomination, would be ...

SR Yes I know, V S Naipaul. I may have this or that argument with Naipaul but it doesn't affect my genuine appreciation of what he has written and what he is, which is a formidable voice in modern literature.

FD Absolutely. Despite the Theroux book⁽⁵⁾.

SR Which is, I think, an own goal, Paul's book. It's got plenty of truth in it. If I have a dispute with Naipaul it's about two things. It's a political dispute where I think we don't agree very often and then there are some books which I like less than others. That doesn't mean I don't

think he is a great writer. And I think he doesn't return the compliment, which is fine ...

FD I don't think he's read the books so he can't pass an opinion.

SR Yeah. That's what I call bullshit. What I feel is really a shame is that Naipaul has lost interest in fiction. He is going down his own road. And he clearly writes that he finds it now to be a more interesting and important road than a novel. Which I feel is not right. I think from his own body of work, the work that will last is **Biswas**⁽⁶⁾ and **A Bend in the River** and to an extent **The Enigma of Arrival**. I reviewed that book and maybe that's what Naipaul has against me. There is no narrative energy in the book at all. What remains with me about **The Enigma of Arrival** is not having ground beneath your feet. Out of this response has come the title of my new novel⁽⁷⁾. It is that the enigma of the immigrant literally having to describe the universe into being because it's not there for him till he does. In that sense of not being able to take the world for granted, but literally having to put the earth under your feet. What I admire in the book is the energy with which that is done, but the effort is so great that it exhausts the writer and leaves no energy for actually narrating a story. That's the problem. The book just sits there statically. Nothing happens.

FD There is a compelling section in it in which he describes finding his material.

SR The autobiographical stories, about him and his father – he has done that several times, they are everywhere. You can argue all this about him, but it doesn't change the fact that he is a great writer. I would have liked to know him better, or to have been on better terms with him, but there it is. We disagree quite strongly about India. He decided to cheer up about India at the point at which the BJP⁽⁸⁾ were emerging. That seemed the wrong moment to become optimistic about India. Just as some of the earlier pessimism seemed a little unearned. So in a way I have the opposite trajectory in my analysis of what happened there. But that doesn't mean I don't read every word he writes on the subject.

FD He is very clear about the effects that Muslim imperialism had on India and on the upper echelons of Hindu society.

SR Yeah, I know, but he comes across as a Hindu nationalist. And that's worrying when we see what that actually means on the ground. When Naipaul writes articles which the BJP can use as recruiting material, that's a problem.

FD Are you still living with a security guard?

SR Yes, but there's virtually nothing that I can't do now. I've just got to give them notice. I can't spontaneously take a stroll. That's a small degree of inconvenience compared to what it was. The only problem is how long should it go on and who will make that decision and how can I believe them when they tell me etc.

FD And travelling to India?

SR Well, I've got the visa.

FD India is important to you.

SR I'd like to go back to see what happens. Yes, it is of course very important to me and to my writing. But, to put it plainly, I don't think there is much support from India.

FD In what sense? The security?

SR There are plenty of people willing to facilitate a visit, that's certainly true. Leaving aside the security side, I thought it was interesting that when it was first announced that I'd got a visa, there were threats emerging from Bukhari⁽⁹⁾ and the Delhi Jamma Masjid⁽¹⁰⁾.

FD Your visit will inevitably become a political football.

SR I don't want to be a political football. And there's no way I can go there quietly. Frankly I am not interested in going there to do lectures and readings, but there's no way of going there and not being noticed. So in the end I have to let the media have the story. There's no way of running away from them. So I thought that the first time I'll go for a brief visit, let everyone have the story and leave. Then go later and if Rushdie turns up again, it's not such a big story.

FD What about Pakistan? You have family there.

SR I do have family there but if I don't go to Pakistan it's not going to bother me. But India ... leaving aside the politics and all that, I am not sure that I feel particularly supported or appreciated by the intellectual and literary community. So I think I will have a rather hard time, so I don't want to go.

FD Why do you feel that way? Apart from the Mishra articles I haven't seen anything that merits ...

SR Pankaj Mishra is a straw in that wind rather than in his own right. This is a long and difficult conversation to have for a newspaper article but I don't feel good about the way in which the literary and intellectual community in India has responded to me.

FD Is there an intellectual or literary community? Bit like the Pope's harem, isn't it?

SR Whatever it calls itself, then. The way it has responded to my writing and to me. I find myself increasingly just saying: 'I do this. I think this. These are my thoughts.' I genuinely do not think I'd have a pleasant return.

FD Apart from this literary response, there's the smells and noise and feel and air of Bombay ...

SR That's what I would go back for. There's Delhi and lots of India to get to feel around me. I would love to do just that and maybe that would be enough. It's been a very long time. Almost twelve years. I'm very interested to go back and I don't know what it will be like ... ■

TEXT NOTES

- (1) **Circle of Reason** is the title of Amitav Ghosh's first novel.
- (2) A Bengali nationalist leader of the early 20th century who fielded an Indian nationalist army in alliance with Hitler and the Japanese against the British during World War II.
- (3) The author of **Butter Chicken in Ludhiana**, a travelogue of small town India.
- (4) **The Romantics** by Pankaj Mishra (Picador).
- (5) **Sir Vidya's Shadow** by Paul Theroux.
- (6) **A House for Mr Biswas** by V S Naipaul.
- (7) **The Ground Beneath Her Feet** (Vintage).
- (8) The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the leading party in the coalition that rules India today. It has a Hindu fundamentalist wing which is actively anti-Muslim and anti-Christian.
- (9) The Imam of the Delhi mosque and the spiritual leader of millions of Indian Muslims.
- (10) The main historic mosque of Delhi.

Haroun and the Sea of Stories illustrated by Paul Birkbeck is published by Viking (0 670 88658 0) at £14.99. Salman Rushdie's books for adults include **Grimus**, **Midnight's Children**, **Shame**, **The Satanic Verses**, **The Moor's Last Sigh** and **The Ground Beneath Her Feet**.

NEWS

The Branford Boase Prize

A new annual award for an outstanding first-time novel for children has been announced. The first Branford Boase Award will be presented in June 2000 to a first-time writer of a book for young people. As well as celebrating a promising new writer in the field of children's books, it will highlight the importance of the editor in identifying and nurturing new writers. The writer will receive a cheque for £1,000; both writer and editor will be presented with an award. The Branford Boase Award has been set up in memory of the writer, Henrietta Branford, and the editor of her later books, Wendy Boase, Editorial Director of Walker Books. They both died of cancer in 1999.

The Award is supported by a partnership of publishers, headed by Walker Books, and with a grant from the Arts Council, and donations from a Friends Scheme and charitable trusts. David Lloyd, Chairman of Walker Books, said, 'Henrietta and Wendy were both so vital and brilliant, and they so thoroughly enjoyed themselves and one another. I know how happy they would be now to have their names linked in this way, in support of excellent writing and the future of children's fiction.' Further information from Lois Beeson, 023 8055 5057 or local@csi.com; or Charlie Price at Walker Books, 020 7793 0909 or e-mail: charliep@walker.co.uk

Mother Goose Award

Books For Children has announced the cancellation of the Mother Goose Award due to 'unforeseen circumstances'. Awarded to an illustrator for their first major book, the award has fulfilled an important function in encouraging new talent. It is hoped that it will return next year.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Whitbread

Dear Editor

I don't think it is true to say (BfK 120) that it's the first time the winner of the Whitbread Children's Book category has been allowed to compete for the overall prize. As far as I know, kids' books were only given their separate prize in '98: I was a Whitbread judge when Peter Dickinson won the children's novel category, and then, as there had always been each year for decades, there was an anguished debate about whether a children's book could ever win against a good adults' book, and whether comparing them was even possible. Every year, people went round saying, 'Could this be the year?' So I actually think that far from its being the first year, it's the few years when it wasn't compelled to compete that were the exceptions.

Stephanie Nettell

Alex.hamill@virgin.net

Judging the Greenaway

Dear Editor

I agree with Shirley Hughes's comments about judging the Kate Greenaway (BfK 120, January '00) and feel entitled to put in my penn'orth both as a one-time member of the Library Association and a founder member of the Maschler Award.

After a few years of judging of the Maschler (with luminaries such as Margaret Meek as part of the panel) it became clear to me that we needed the input of an illustrator to inform us about the techniques of the art work for each submission - which we were judging for balance of text and illustration. Accordingly, it was decided that year by year we should invite an artist (preferably one who had already won the Award) to join us on the panel.

I am sure that other Maschler judges will agree with me that the comments of Quentin Blake and his fellow artists were eye-openers which helped us to make better informed choices over the years.

Elaine Moss

7 St Anne's Close, Highgate West Hill, London N6 6AR

PEOPLE

● **Jonathan Douglas** has recently been appointed Professional Adviser, Youth and School Libraries at The Library Association. He has taken over from Trish Botten, who has gone to work in New Zealand. Jonathan has most recently been the National Year of Reading Co-ordinator for Westminster Libraries, helping to raise the profile of children's books and libraries. He is currently Chair of the Youth Libraries Group in London and the South East and is also Membership Officer for the Children's Book Circle as well as being involved in Launchpad and World Book Day. He is well known to many librarians and publishers for his great enthusiasm and commitment to children's books and he will undoubtedly prove a great asset to The Library Association.

● Congratulations to **Lucy Jukes**, the director of Barrington Stoke, who has won the 1999 Women in Publishing New Venture Award. Set up 18 months ago, Barrington Stoke specialises in books for 'reluctant' readers and those with reading difficulties.

● At Macmillan Children's Books **Marion Lloyd** has been appointed Associate Publisher. **Sarah Davies** has been appointed Publishing Director and **Gaby Morgan** has been appointed Editorial Director.

● At Random House Children's Books **Ian Craig** has been appointed Executive Publisher while **Gill Evans**, former Publishing Director of Egmont, has been appointed Head of Publishing.

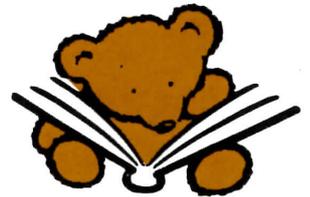
● Egmont has appointed **Susannah McFarlane** Publishing Director of Egmont Children's Books.

Contributors **BfK** team, Anne Marley. Submissions welcome.

EVENTS

The Federation of Children's Book Groups

The Federation's 32nd Annual Conference explores the role of myth and fantasy in children's books. It takes place from 14-16 April at Woldington School, near Oxted, Surrey. Speakers include Jacqueline Wilson, Robin Jarvis, Jean Ure and Philip Pullman. Details from Jane Damesick on 01883 714541.



• OBITUARY •

Kathleen Hale

1898-2000

Kathleen Hale established herself as a book illustrator and designer after studying under Cedric Morris in the thirties at the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing. She created her most famous character, Orlando the Marmalade Cat, for her two sons. The first Orlando books appeared in 1938 and with their large format and freely drawn lithographed illustrations in bright colours, they were a landmark in children's illustrated books. While Hale's cats were depicted



naturalistically, her humans tended to caricature. Another 18 Orlando titles followed, all endowed with Hale's characteristic liveliness and humour. Kathleen Hale was elected FSIA and awarded the OBE.

BfKREVIEWS

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

RATING

Audio books are rated for the quality of the reading, not the book.

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

REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

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

Gwyneth 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 Principal of Walton High, Milton Keynes, and was founding UK Director of Reading Is Fundamental.

Mary Cadogan is co-author of *You're a Brick, Angela*, and a writer, critic and broadcaster.

Urmi Chana works at the Reading & Language Information Centre, University of Reading.

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.

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

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

Annabel Gibb lives in York and is a Learning Support Tutor and mother.

Peter Hollindale was until recently Reader in English and Educational Studies at the University of York.

Robert Hull is a poet and anthologist.

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

Adrian Jackson is General Adviser - English, West Sussex.

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

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

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

Felix Pirani is Emeritus Professor of Rational Mechanics in the University of London.

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*.

Helen Taylor works in Community Arts organising arts events and poetry projects in Cambridgeshire.

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King of Shadows	★★★★★ 28	Why the Whales Came	★★★ 26
Kit's Wilderness	★★★★ 29	Worst Class in School, The	★★★★ 25
Ko's Story (The Kin)	★★★★★ 21	Zoo in the Sky	★★★★ 21
Little Rabbits' Tell the Time Book	★★ 22		
Little Red Engine and the Rocket, The	★★★ 23		
Little Red Engine Goes to Town, The	★★★ 23		
Mana's Story (The Kin)	★★★★★ 21		
Marguerite Makes a Book	★★★★★ 27		

Now Out in Paperback

Three, four and five star hardbacks or trade paperbacks previously reviewed in **BfK** and now published as mass market paperbacks.

UNDER 5s PRE-SCHOOL/ NURSERY/INFANT

Alfie and the Birthday Surprise

PICTURE BOOK ★★★★★

Shirley Hughes, Red Fox,
0 09 920862 8, £3.99

Reviewed *BfK 108, January 1998:*

'This picture book deals with the death of a loved pet, the sadness this causes and the kindness that brings resolution. This is Hughes at her best and a fitting addition to the "Alfie" series.'

5-8 INFANT/JUNIOR

Katie and the Mona Lisa

PICTURE BOOK ★★★★★

James Mayhew, Orchard,
1 86039 706 9, £4.99

Reviewed *BfK 114, January 1999:*

'An enjoyable introduction to famous paintings for the very young as Katie visits the Mona Lisa who has stepped out of her frame.'

The Brave Sister: A Story from the Arabian Nights

PICTURE BOOK ★★★★★

Retold by Fiona Waters,
ill. Danuta Mayer, Bloomsbury,
0 7475 4129 9, £5.99

Reviewed *BfK 116, May 1999:*

'Parizade, the eponymous 'Brave Sister', succeeds in a quest in which her two brothers had previously come to grief in a retelling which is lively and imparts a warmth and lightness of touch.'

Zoo in the Sky

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Jacqueline Mitton,
ill. Christina Balit, Frances
Lincoln, 0 7112 1319 4, £5.99

Reviewed *BfK 114, January 1999:*

'This beautiful picture book provides information about the location of the stars and the history of the constellations and the Milky Way using clear star maps of the Northern and Southern skies.'

8-10 JUNIOR/MIDDLE

Viking at School

Ill. John Levers, 0 14 038716 1

Pirate Pandemonium

Ill. Judy Brown, 0 14 130493 6

FICTION ★★★★★

Jeremy Strong, Puffin, £3.99
each

Reviewed *BfK 106, September 1997:*

'Two relentlessly pacy and very humorous tales that will keep lower junior children chuckling through to the books' chaotic conclusions.'

Squids will be Squids

PICTURE BOOK ★★★★★

Jon Scieszka, ill. Lane Smith,
Puffin, 0 14 056523 X, £4.99

Reviewed *BfK 115, March 1999:*

'A reworking of Aesop in which the whole book plays with its theme: in this case, of animals representing the less appealing behaviour of humans. Those who already know Scieszka and Smith will not be disappointed.'

10-12 MIDDLE/SECONDARY

Chandra

FICTION ★★★★★

Frances Mary Hendry, Oxford,
0 19 275058 5, £3.99

Reviewed *BfK 106, September 1997:*

'Chandra is a bright, 11-year-old schoolgirl living in New Delhi. Married and widowed in quick succession, the book charts her fight for freedom from what she increasingly sees as the shackles of cultural traditions. A great page-turning adventure story.'

Forever X

FICTION ★★★★★

Geraldine McCaughrean,
Puffin, 0 14 038666 1, £3.99

Reviewed *BfK 107, November 1997:*

'A bed and breakfast establishment specialises in providing Christmas festivities every day of the year, where the lonely and rejected come to seek unseasonal happiness. A few days' stay involves the Shepherds in a sequence of events, by turn hilarious and dangerous. A stunningly clever novel.'

It's My Life

FICTION ★★★★★

Michael Harrison, Oxford
'Thrillers', 0 19 275042 9, £3.99

Reviewed *BfK 108, January 1998:*

'The story of two kidnaps and the way that they come together is cleverly plotted as the two victims go on the run, uncertain who to trust. This uncertainty is the heart of the story and the certainty of the conclusion is something of an anti-climax.'

Against the Day

FICTION ★★★★★

Michael Cronin, Oxford
'Thrillers', 0 19 275039 9, £3.99

Reviewed *BfK 113, November 1998:*

'What would have happened if the Nazis had succeeded in invading Britain? 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. A gripping and enjoyable first novel with a strong sense of uneasy and menacing times.'

Beyond the Deepwoods - The Edge Chronicles

FICTION ★★★★★

Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell,
Corgi, 0 552 54592 9, £4.99

Reviewed *BfK 113, November 1998:*

'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.'

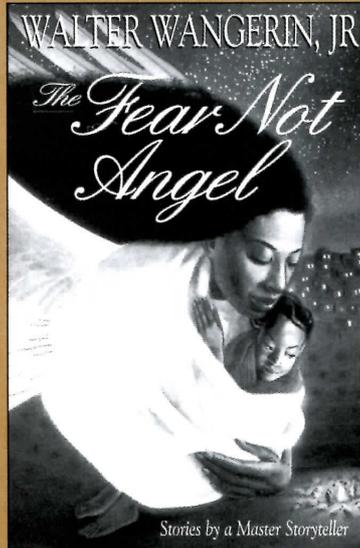
The Puffin Book of Utterly Brilliant Poetry

POETRY ★★★★★

Edited by Brian Patten, Puffin,
0 14 038421 9, £7.99

Reviewed *BfK 114, January 1999:*

'This book includes some of the best that has appeared since the seventies - Agard, Ahlberg, Kay, McGough, Patten, Zephaniah, Wright - and it is good to see the really old boys, Causley and Milligan, included in the party. Each poet is introduced by a short chat with Brian Patten that says something about the poet and poetry in general; and each collection of poems has its own illustrator.'



The Fear Not Angel

FICTION ★★★★★

Walter Wangerin Jr, Lion,
0 7459 4045 5, £4.50

Reviewed *BfK 115, March 1999:*

'This collection of six stories by an American author draws liberally on the oral tradition, though supplemented with literary infusions. The stories are by and large modern fairy tales with the usual mixture of magic and make-believe. Some are suffused with religious and spiritual sentiment.'

Humanzee

FICTION ★★★★★

Susan Gates, Oxford 'Thrillers',
0 19 275038 0, £3.99

Reviewed *BfK 115, March 1999:*

'Out of the background of the circus freak show comes the Humanzee, the missing link between human and chimpanzee. In rescuing him, Nemo and his family face the anger of a group dedicated to their beliefs in biblical creation. Amidst the hokum there are some thoughtful ideas and some skilful plotting.'

The Kin:

Suth's Story

0 330 37310 2

Noli's Story

0 330 37311 0

Ko's Story

0 330 37312 9

Mana's Story

0 330 37313 7

FICTION ★★★★★

Peter Dickinson,
ill. Ian Andrew, Macmillan,
£3.99 each

Reviewed *BfK 117, July 1999:*

'In four parts, this book follows a small group of the first human beings, mostly children, whose parents have been killed, as they journey to find a new "Good Place". There is a geographical intensity of events, from deserts, to marshland, impossible mountain climbs and an escape from an erupting volcano. Within this there is continuous, vivid action and complex threads of emotions and ideas. This is writing of the highest quality.'

Slavery from Africa to the Americas

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Christine Hatt, Evans 'History
in Writing', 0 237 52071 0,
£7.99

Reviewed *BfK 106, September 1997:*

'Extracts from journals, travel accounts, autobiographies, planter manuals and the transcripts of interviews with ex-slaves are all examined in this title, with marginal notes to explain or expand those parts which are difficult or obscure.'

12+ SECONDARY

Heroes

FICTION ★★★★★

Robert Cormier, Puffin,
0 14 130200 3, £4.99

Reviewed *BfK 114, January 1999:*

'Francis Cassavant's apparent act of heroism was a suicide attempt which destroyed his face but not his life. Francis returns to his home town to take revenge. Cormier's prose lacks the startling immediacy characteristic of his earlier work, though flashes of former glory are evident.'

REVIEWS Under 5s Pre-School/Nursery/Infant

Little Rabbits' Tell the Time Book

★★

Alan Baker, Kingfisher, 16pp, 0 7534 0377 3, £4.99 hbk novelty

'Tick-tock, it's 8 o'clock/ Wake up, Little Rabbits!/ It's time for breakfast./ Rise and shine!' Thus begins our journey through the Little Rabbits' day as they clean, shop and prepare dinner for their friend. Young sharers are invited to display the correct time on the large clockface with moving hands incorporated into every page by the usual device of a large hole on each opening. Conventional and digital clocks shown on the page may (or may not) help them. A question addressed to the reader concludes each page eg 'Are you sometimes late?'

The illustrations are slightly ill-at-ease with carefully stippled furry rabbits set against flat, solidly coloured surroundings. There are a few things to spot in the pictures, and the odd joke. Children usually enjoy turning the clock hands in this type of book rather more than adults enjoy the text and the text here is banal and unengaging. AG

Daisy's Babies

★★★★

Lisa Kopper, Hamish Hamilton, 32pp, 0 241 14042 0, £10.99 hbk



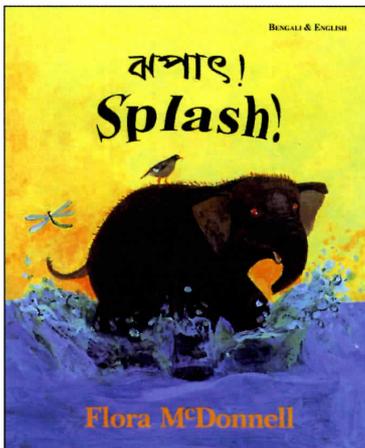
Daisy is a Mummy is a favourite in our house, and Kopper has made a world of her own for this age range with stories about Daisy and her three puppies, Morris, Dolores and Little Daisy. This new title maintains the standards of her earlier Daisy books, mirroring the antics of the darling dogs with those of the Baby. Kopper's illustrations are simple, bright and bold, always capturing the playful, knowing puppies who lead innocent Baby astray with everyday household objects, until Mummy arrives to clean up. The level and language pattern of the text are well-judged and encourage parent and child to read together and talk about what should and should not happen around the house! RB

Splash!

DUAL LANGUAGE ★★★★★

Flora McDonnell, Mantra, 28pp, 1 85269 486 6 (Bengali/English), £6.99 pbk

A wonderful picture book with bold illustrations accompanying a well-thought out dual text. The storyline is simple: elephant, tiger and rhinoceros are hot so they make their way down to the water and have some fun while cooling down. Each double page spread is visually pleasing with illustrations very well matched to the text. This is printed (Bengali first and English below) on the background colours with ample space around it, so it stands out clearly.



Typography issues have obviously been considered for both language scripts: there is parity in size of typeface, spacing between lines and between words. The rich, warm colours and bold paintings of the animals make this a lovely book to enjoy with early years classes. Plenty

of scope also, with this particular text, to make comparisons between the two scripts. All in all a welcome title. Also available in English with Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Gujarati, Korean, Panjabi, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Twi, Urdu, Vietnamese, Welsh and Yoruba. UC

Dr Seuss's ABC

BOOK & TAPE ★

Dr Seuss, read by Rik Mayall, Collins, 18 mins, unabridged, 0 00 100732 7, £6.99

To try to dramatise an ABC – even one by the brilliant Dr Seuss – is almost flying in the face of nature. Rik Mayall makes a valiant attempt to sound convincing, aided by some witty sound effects, but the tape does little to enhance the value of the excellent book. For three years and upwards. JE

The Great Pet Sale

BOOK & TAPE ★★★

Mick Inkpen, read by Roger McGough, Hodder, 15 mins, unabridged, 1 84032 229 2, £5.99

Roger McGough reads this pleasing story of the great pet sale, in which everything is a bargain, with great tenderness and humour, adding much to the enjoyment of reading it alone. The interwoven sound effects match the mood well. For three years and upwards. JE

The Badger's Bath

TAPE ★★

Nick Butterworth, read by Richard Briers, Collins, 13 mins, unabridged, 0 00 100740 8, £5.99

The graphically earthy start to *The Badger's Bath* is ideally suited to Richard Briers reading, conjuring him up immediately in his role in *The Good Life*. As Percy the park keeper struggles to make the badger take his bath, with lots of splashy and soapy sound effects, Richard Briers maintains an amiable tone that makes much of quite thin material. For three years and upwards. JE

Birdie Halleluyah!

★★★★

Judith Kerr, Collins Picture Lions, 32pp, 0 00 664689 1, £4.99 pbk

This is a magical book from the creator of *The Tiger who Came to Tea* and the 'Mog' series. Birdie Halleluyah is the name chosen by the boy for his secret friend, his guardian angel. Birdie H is there when needed most, large on each page but portrayed in soft pastel tones and highlighted with gold. The angel usually keeps him from harm, but sometimes the child knows Birdie H is preoccupied, and he must fend for himself. There are some delightful non-textual moments, one when the angel is busy fishing and the boy can be seen in the distance tumbling headlong from his bike. The boy supposes Birdie goes somewhere whilst he sleeps, imagining he plays with angel friends. The illustrations then take over, telling tales of football

in the sky, angels gossiping, birthday parties, balloons and ice-creams. The pictures hold the reader's attention throughout, and the touches of gold add that extra touch of magic. GB

Anna and the Flowers of Winter

★★★★★

Retold by Nettie Lowenstein, ill. Elizabeth Harbour, Viking, 32pp, 0 670 86003 4, £10.99 hbk

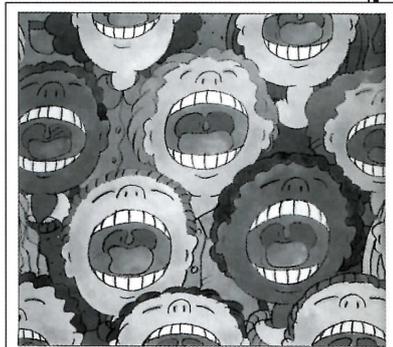
This is a Bohemian folktale retold – and it has just about every enchanted ingredient that folktales from this part of the world are known for! Anna is sent forth into the wintry, December forest by stepmother and stepsister to find some violets. Deep, deep into the woods she meets the Twelve Months of the Year who magically shift the seasons around and enable Anna to gather violets for her family. The cruel and ungrateful stepsister and stepmother reproach her for not having returned with spring vegetables and fruits, and set off on their own to revisit the Twelve Months. This time the weird figures are far from welcoming and banish their victims to an eternal winter because they have been so spiteful to Anna.

The narrative is constructed with great clarity and is certain to keep the young reader interested. Equally, the pastel drawings have a bewitching, atmospheric quality, nowhere more so than in the images of the twelve men and their twelve chairs set in a circle that enchants all those who enter it. Recommended for the infant and junior reading tree – classify under 'traditional tales'. RB

What would we do without Missus Mac?

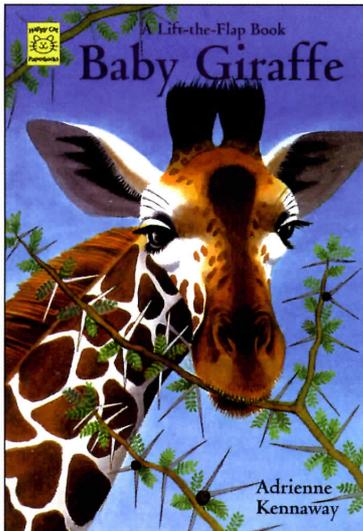
★★★★

Gus Clarke, Andersen, 32pp, 0 86264 884 X, £9.99 hbk



MISSUS MAC, PLEASE DON'T GO!

Told from the point of view of a small child, this book celebrates the comfort and security provided by a non-teaching adult in school. Mrs Mac is always there when needed most. She plasters cut knees and broken glasses, fixes jammed zips, pins snapped elastics, and everywhere she goes, her beaming smile goes too. She even has a hanky for the unhappy headteacher, as he proffers gifts to her on her retirement. Now we know the reason for the ranks of sad faces on the first endpaper. Mrs Mac is leaving. 'PLEASE DON'T GO!' yells the whole school. The final endpaper shows the same multi-cultural group of



Baby Giraffe

★★★★

Adrienne Kennaway, Happy Cat, 16pp, 1 899248 18 8, £4.99 pbk novelty

Baby giraffe is persuaded to leave the safety of the herd by honeybird, and joins lumbering warthog, rumbling rhino, ambling aardvark and swift zebra in the quest for honey in the baobab tree. Here Baby giraffe learns a double lesson, for whilst cooling his tongue after a bee sting, who can we spy lurking behind the next flap, poised to pounce? Lion. However, Mother thunders into the clearing, and the story ends with a gentle affirmation of safety within proximity of the herd. The book has striking artwork throughout. The colours are vibrant, and the animals realistically portrayed. The intriguing flaps allow prediction of the identity of the partly obscured creature below, and there is text on the underside of each flap, ensuring that the reader interacts with the story. The book is large, and produced on durable paper. GB

children, this time wreathed with smiles, for Mrs Mac agrees to stay on. A calm, reassuring book for young children. GB

The Story of the Little Red Engine

★★★★★

0 233 99402 5



The Little Red Engine Goes to Town

★★★

0 233 99404 1

The Little Red Engine and the Rocket

★★★

0 233 99405 X

Diana Ross, ill. Leslie Wood, André Deutsch 'Classics', 32pp, £6.99 each hbk

Once there was a Little Red Engine which followed the same journey every morning, passing the same landmarks and greeting his friends, just as he did in 1945. In 1952 he was invited to Town – to appear at the Great Exhibition of the Festival of Britain, no less, where, of course, he stole the show. By 1956 he was at the cutting edge of Space technology, ferrying the Cleverest Scientists and Inventors, essential materials and workers to the new Rocket Station as Britain entered the Space Race with a vengeance. (I bet you missed that one!)

The illustrations to these well-produced period pieces win the prize here – stunning in places, beautifully evocative, stylishly reminiscent of Shell or London Transport posters of the '40s and '50s, and of the paintings of Paul Nash and Eric Ravilious. They must have been wonderful to encounter for the first time in the bleak days of 1945, in all their richness of colour and texture.

The appeal, therefore, is likely to be a nostalgic one – grandparents may enjoy remembering the glorious days of the Festival of Britain, or even the descent into farce as the cat 'volunteer' sent into Space in the third volume returns with nine kittens...Train-mad tines should stick to the original Story, whose repetitive text and train effect rhythms are pleasant enough and avoid some of the out-moded social attitudes found in the later volumes. AG

Princess Beatrice and the Rotten Robber

★★★

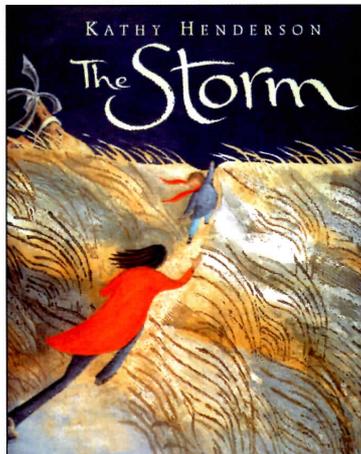
Elizabeth Honey, Allen & Unwin Australia (available via Ragged Bears), 32pp, 1 86448 848 4, £4.99 pbk

Princess Beatrice lives in a castle crammed with jewels and fairly drips with treasures. When she is unceremoniously kidnapped, the daring robber's horse dislikes the jingle jangle, and it bolts into the forest with glittering goodies flying off like sparks. On reaching his dark and tumbledown shack, the big clumsy robber finds himself no match for the incorrigible little Princess who trusses him up with necklaces and bracelets. She then doggedly tracks her way home, following the dropped treasures, with the rotten robber slung across the horse. The lively illustrations are full of fun and extend the meaning of the humorous, spirited text. GB

The Storm

★★★★★

Kathy Henderson, Walker, 32pp, 0 7445 4435 1, £9.99 hbk



The Storm is one of those books that, after just one reading, you know you will be sharing again and again with infants. 'The sea may rage but the land is strong. Come and we'll wait for the tide to turn.' Thus Grandma speaks to Jim as she shields him in her arms by the fireside, the storm gusting outside. Words and pictures are beautifully threaded together in this tale – seen through young Jim's eyes – of how a severe storm envelops a village on the desolate marshes. The ferocity of the wind, the panic of the adults, the joy turning to fear in Jim, the quiet after the winds have fallen – all are conveyed with vibrant colour and movement, in a style reminiscent of Raymond Briggs. Henderson has a powerful lyricism in words and pictures that marks her out as a distinctive talent. RB

Esmeralda and the Children-Next-Door

★★★

Jenny Nimmo, ill. Paul Howard, Methuen, 40pp, 0 416 19363 3, £9.99 hbk

Little Esmeralda wants to be an acrobat, not a strongwoman, but her circus performer parents are delighted with their giant child who chews through cot bars at six months, and carries them on her shoulders by the age of six. Because of her



When Esmeralda was four years old she could lift an armchair.

Her mum made her a leopard-skin top and a frilly skirt.

exceptional size, Esmeralda is much feared by neighbouring children. She becomes increasingly lonely, and the beautiful paper animals she makes become her only friends. The children next door never guess she has gentle, clever fingers and a heart of gold. Nimmo's resolution of this tale, dealing with personal differences, is well-crafted, and the illustrations match and extend some bizarre ideas presented in the text. GB

Baby Rhymes and Bedtime Blessings

★★

Compiled by Christina Goodings, Lion Publishing, 48pp, 0 7459 4166 4, £10.99 hbk

A picture book format collection of twenty-six rhymes, lullabies and blessings, about a third written by the compiler, illustrated – to capture the variety of styles and moods of the offerings – by eleven different artists including Alex Ayliffe, Rosalind Beardshaw and Frances Lloyd. I think this book is intended to be read by a parent, grandparent or carer to an individual baby or small child at bed- or other quiet time. (I can recall my own Granny reciting 'I see the moon', 'Star light, star bright' and the Welsh prayer 'Sleep my child...'). However, I suspect that like me, many people would feel uncomfortable reading some of the more earnestly prayerful blessings aloud, not least because most of the contemporary offerings in particular are over sentimental and the language used mundane and unlikely to live in the memory of today's infants. JB

Transport Now and Fifty Years Ago

NON-FICTION BIG BOOK

★★★★

Bobbie Neate, Longman 'Book Project' Starter Book, 16pp, 0 582 33941 3, £19.99

Carefully arranged pictures with double spread headings as the sole text can provide an excellent starting point for thinking and talking. This is a book for a group of children to browse through with some questions of their own, perhaps before beginning more focused work. The photographs invite comparison between cars, bicycles, buses, passenger ships, aeroplanes and trains now and those of fifty years ago.

The large picture book format makes the book suitable discussion material

for children of different ages and abilities and some of those older than the 4-7 year olds for whom it is intended would find much of interest. Photographs of this quality can lead to some profound observations, not least about how transport provision affects people's lives. The book would be worthwhile just as visual stimulus for conversation – not every resource needs to lead to a written task. But there are a number of possibilities for extending enjoyment by encouraging writing. The later part of the book turns to passengers and issues of comfort – a possible lead in to writing about contemporary problems for travellers and commuters. Letters to newspapers, short scripts of conversations between travellers and accounts of journeys might be appropriate. MM

Growing up in South Africa

NON-FICTION BIG BOOK

★★★★

Autobiography/Geography

Siphe and Bobbie Neate, 16pp, 0 582 33944 8

Toads and Their Young

NON-FICTION BIG BOOK

★★★

Report/Science

Colin Milkins and Bobbie Neate, 24pp, 0 582 33946 4

Longman 'Book Project' Demonstration Big Books, £19.99 each

These demonstration big books, based on existing ones in smaller format, provide direct help to teachers concerned to cover the genres prescribed for the Literacy Hour. Each book has a useful summary of the content and structure on the back cover and teacher and children might well turn to this first and use it as a starting point to formulate some of their own questions to take to their reading.

Growing up in South Africa, about the life of five year old Siphe, is a delightful introduction to both geography and autobiographical writing: picture books based round photographs found in library collections rarely achieve a perfect integration between verbal and visual input and so it is good to see that these photographs have been taken specially. Young children will be able to relate to and compare what happens in Siphe's world to their everyday experiences and there are exciting possibilities for their own first person writing. The introduction invites children to dip into parts of the book that interest them. However I think a momentum builds up and children will enjoy reading the pages in sequence.

Toads and Their Young is one of a series for 4-7 year olds which demonstrates the features of report as well as imparting much interesting information about creatures. Photographs are large enough for a whole class to see well, but some sense of scale would have been helpful – perhaps achieved by life size representations of eggs, tadpoles and toads at the foot of some of the pages. The book lacks the appeal to the imagination of some rival nature books but even so it is a useful resource for modelling features of non-narrative text. MM

REVIEWS 5-8 Infant/Junior

Prosper's Mountain

★★★★

Henrietta Branford, ill. Chris Baker, Hutchinson, 32pp, 0 09 176636 2, £9.99 hbk

This striking book combines fable and fairy tale. It is Baker's first picture book, and whilst the art style is perhaps not original, the pictures have great depth and quality, and match the text admirably.



There is intensity in the illustrations, and each turn of the page presents a surprising change of colour palette or atmosphere, with particularly fine drawings of the characters' faces. We meet the old man Felix, his hen, Dorcas, and the strange young egg-baby, Prosper. No one knows from whence he came, but he delights the whole village, until his wings start to grow. At this time, the villagers turn and blame him for the weather change that causes crop failure. More trouble awaits the three before the satisfying resolution. The text, rich in imagery and description, is supported by splendid illustrations to create a remarkable, multi-layered book. GB

Cloud Tea Monkeys

★★★

Mal Peet and Elspeth Graham, ill. Alan Marks, Ragged Bears, 32pp, 1 85714 192 X, £7.95 hbk

This picture book is set in a beautiful tea plantation where a little girl called Shenaz lives. The story is characterised by her sensitivity, vivid imagination, determination and courage in the face of adversity. The beauty and tranquil atmosphere of the plantation is vividly described and the excellent portrayal of all the characters adds a realistic warmth to the story. The style of the narrative is simple and direct yet so deceptively involving that it leaves the reader/listener engrossed in the magic of the story.

The most unusual feature of the book is its graphic and detailed description of the tea tasting ritual which absorbs the reader in the complexity of the whole process. The story is also well illustrated by enchanting illustrations which accompany each page of narrative. The book touches on the important issues of child poverty and survival. It also combines a charming and fascinating mixture of reality and imagination. KA

Peg

★★★★

Maddie Stewart, ill. Bee Willey, 0 7497 3260 1

Clumsy Clumps and the Baby Moon

★★

Julie Bertagna, ill. Anthony Lewis, 0 7497 3005 6



Happy Sad

★★★★

Pippa Goodhart, ill. Stephen Lambert, 0 7497 3336 5

Promise You Won't be Cross

★★★

Bel Mooney, ill. Margaret Chamberlain, 0 7497 3747 6

Mammoth 'Blue Bananas', 48pp, £3.99 each pbk

The 'Blue Bananas' series is characterised by reader friendly type, interesting and varied page layout, speech bubbles and colour illustrations on every page.

Peg tells in jaunty rhyme and bold, engaging pictures of a one legged hen who, with the help and friendship of Benjamin Bottomley, proves that love can transcend all when it comes to raising a family. Also on the theme of friendship and love is my pick of the bunch, *Happy Sad*. Toby rescues a stranded mermaid who, despite his best efforts remains happy sad in his care: only mother and father sea can provide her a true home and happiness. To be a real friend, Toby comes to realise, he must return the mermaid from whence she came. Lambert's soft focus, watery scenes and images and Goodhart's carefully chosen words together make for an enticing and satisfying read.

Complete mayhem erupts in *Promise You Won't be Cross* when Kitty, the engaging heroine slams the door on her teasing brother one morning. Much of the fun for readers here is being in the know with the author as the tale builds to its inevitable conclusion. I find little to like in *Clumsy Clumps and the Baby Moon*, a mean story wherein a small girl seeks revenge on her unfeeling teacher with the help of a lunar visitor. Just nothing seems to ring true. JB

The Mermaid's Purse

POETRY

★★★★★

Ted Hughes, ill. Flora McDonnell, Faber, 64pp, 0 571 19621 7, £4.99 pbk

Editor's Choice

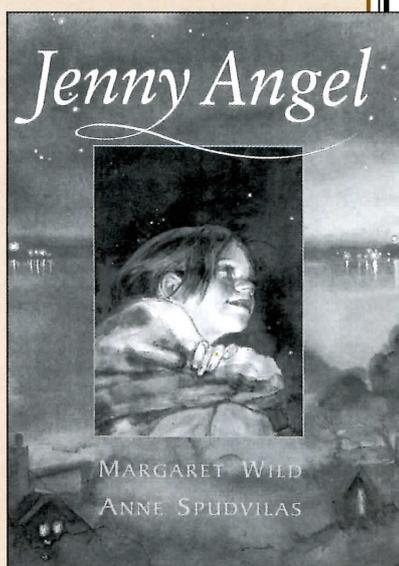
Jenny Angel

★★★★

Margaret Wild, ill. Anne Spudvilas, Viking, 32pp, 0 670 84505 1, £10.99 hbk

Jenny believes herself to be a guardian angel who can keep her dying younger brother safe if she is vigilant enough. She wills Davy to live, working hard to bring the world to him as he gradually slips farther away. But magical thinking cannot work the miracle Jenny longs for and the book depicts touchingly how her denial of death is transformed into acceptance. Spudvilas's eloquent illustrations in this large format picture book are full of tender feeling.

Death was also the theme of Wild's picture book *Old Pig* (illustrated by Ron Brooks) published in 1997 in which a granddaughter mourns the loss of her grandmother. The theme of a child's death, as in *Jenny Angel*, is even more disturbing and challenging for young readers as the



natural order of things is out of sync and Wild uses no anthropomorphic devices in this book to distance the young reader from such a difficult topic. Wild's depiction of Jenny finding a way to accept her loss is, however, so sensitively conveyed that young readers can only be enriched by it. RS

Those who are familiar with some of Hughes's earlier poems for children, like 'Season Songs' and 'Under the North Star', will recognise what he is doing in this collection. Each sea creature has its own poem, and often the poems have that familiar quality of riddles, teasing us with strange and powerful images: 'Where Ocean heaved/A breast of silk/And a black jag reef/Boiled into milk./There bobbed up a head/With eyes as wild/And wide and dark/As a famine child.' ('Seal'). What is different is the poet's playfulness. There is little of the world of nature red in tooth and claw that he found in the Arctic wastes and Devon farmyards. Instead there is light verse and metaphors as funny as they are striking: 'Drowned fishermen come back/As famished cormorants/With bare and freezing webby toes/Instead of boots and pants.' Poetry of this quality and simplicity can be enjoyed by any age of child or adult, and much of the collection would be appreciated even by pre-school children if read to them:

'When big surf slams/His tower so hard/The Lighthouse-keeper's/Teeth are jarred./ The Limpet laughs/Beneath her hat:/'There's nothing I love/So much as that!''

McDonnell's illustrations, bold, blustery and cheery monochrome, sedimentary greys beneath the sea and splashed with spray and cloud above it, catch the mood perfectly. CB

Dracula is Backula

★★★

Ann Jungman, ill. Doffy Weir, Andersen 'Tigers', 64pp, 0 86264 894 7, £7.99 hbk

Written for children with 'some experience of reading by themselves', this light-hearted story tells of a hard up Count Dracula, whose castle is

falling apart. The Count desperately needs to raise money in order to repair it. He travels to England with the intention of getting a job acting in horror movies. The story is humorous but not quite 'hilarious' as it is described on the jacket. Lively half and full page illustrations break up the text nicely for the young reader. AK

Stories from the Ballet

★★★★

Margaret Greaves, ill. Lisa Kopper, Frances Lincoln, 72pp, 0 7112 1356 9, £7.99 pbk



Illustration to 'Coppelia'.

This collection tells the stories of eight well-known ballets in language which is straightforward and without undue embellishment, giving a good sense of how the tales are translated into dance. Kopper provides the illustrations, some full page, others vignettes and all suited to the mood

of each ballet. Scenes from 'The Firebird' and 'The Nutcracker' are rich and bright while 'Swan Lake' is much more muted and ethereal. The book is done no service, however, by the choice of 'Swan Lake' to illustrate the cover. It supports the concept that ballet is 'girly' and gives no notion of the physicality and passion of good ballet dancing. It is also a pity that references to the music for the ballets are not given. These caveats aside, this will provide young enthusiasts with a good introduction. VC

Stories from The Silk Road

★★★★

Retold by Cherry Gilchrist, ill. Nilesh Mistry, Barefoot, 80pp, 1 901223 21 3, £12.99 hbk

Upper juniors should be encouraged to read (probably with their teacher) the Introduction to this fascinating collection. Here they will have explained to them the probable origins in 2000 BC and significance of the Silk Road that began at the old Chinese capital of Chang'an (now Xian) and carried on right into Central Asia passing through such legendary cities as Samarkand. Knowledge of astronomy, medicine, science, art and religions travelled along it as the caravans of traders moved silk, glass, carpets, jade, minerals and other precious stones from East to West and West to East.



The seven tales take us along the Silk Road with a combination of travel-guide material and exotic retellings of myths woven around goddesses, dragons and demons. I particularly enjoyed 'The Magic Saddlebag' and what happened to the three brothers Masud, Hamid and Wali. Most popular among one class of eight year olds was 'The Bride with The Horse's Head', a story of family violence, animal wizardry and quiet virtue which tells how Ma-t'ou Niang, the goddess of silk, came to care for silkworms and silk workers all over China. The book is self-evidently a triumph of research and is liberally illustrated, with excellent maps and a valuable Did You Know? Section. Strongly recommended for any class doing projects on myths and legends from a different culture! RB

Grandmothers' Stories: Wise Woman Tales from Many Cultures

★★★★

Retold by Burleigh Mutén, ill. Siân Bailey, Barefoot, 80pp, 1 901223 77 9, £12.99 hbk

Veneration of the wisdom of the old is common to many cultures, and this collection of eight stories bears witness to the range of countries holding to this, including Japan, Russia, Mexico, Ireland and Germany. From Senegal we have the story of a midwife who performed valuable services to a djinn and his wife during the birth of their sextuplets, from Hawaii there is the tale of Old Heena who became the Woman in the Moon, and from Sweden 'The Old Woman Who Was Right' shows her husband that work in the home is no easier than work in the fields. In her introduction Mutén points out that many traditions feel the voice of Earth herself is echoed in a grandmother's wisdom and these stories do indeed reflect a closeness to the natural world. At the bottom of each page there is an exquisitely detailed border suiting the mood of the story, as do Bailey's larger illustrations, some of which are full-page.

It is a pity that exclamations in the language of the country from which the stories were taken were not used instead of 'nonsensical phrases' used

by Mutén's own children. An excellent feature, however, is the list of sources for the stories, enabling the interested adult reader to find out more about the tales of a particular culture. VC

Poems and Prayers for a Better World

POETRY

★★★

Compiled by Su Box and Felicity Henderson, ill. Jan Barger, Lion, 96pp, 0 7459 3886 8, £9.99 hbk

An anthology of over 100 poems and prayers which aim to give encouragement as we move forward into the new century. The tone is optimistic and asks junior children to reflect on what might be needed to make the world even better. The collection includes a varied mix of traditional and contemporary work, with a significant number of contributions from children as well as from D H Lawrence, J R R Tolkien and W H Davies, with more modern material by John Agard, Steve Turner and Desmond Tutu. There are pieces from all over the globe - Sweden, Australia, Northern Ireland, Russia, Africa. Very poignant is the extract from a speech made in 1854 by a native American tribal chief in preparation for the Indian Land Treaties entitled 'How Can One Sell the Air?' My favourite is by Mother Teresa of Calcutta, which simply states, 'We can do no great things, only small things with great love.' AK

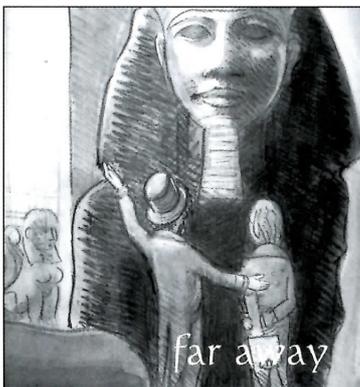
REVIEWS 8-10 Junior/Middle

Ozymandias

POETRY

★★★★

Percy Shelley, ill. Theo Gayer-Anderson, Hoopoe Books, 36pp, 977 5325 82 X, £5.50 pbk



This unusual picture book is an interpretation of Shelley's classic poem 'Ozymandias'. The dramatic charcoal and paint illustrations dust down the great poem and bring it alive for younger readers. The poem is rooted in Egypt with Egyptian workers helping an English archaeologist and his family transport the statue back to England. Seen from a child-size view, the pictures capture the monumental size of the fallen statue with close-ups of faces and features combined with Egyptian painting and hieroglyphics which run through the pages as shadowy overlays and backgrounds to the unearthing of the statue. The poet Gerard Benson introduces the poem and gives some gentle hints and examples for further reading. Just two criticisms - why has

the familiar Percy Bysshe Shelley become Percy Shelley and why not have the last picture showing the complete poem without a ribbon obscuring it? The reader needs to see the shape of the poem and to read it in its entirety. HT

The Worst Class in School

POETRY

★★★★

Collected by Brian Moses, ill. Kelly Waldek, Wayland, 48pp, 0 7502 2540 8, £3.99 pbk

This collection includes twenty-nine light-hearted poems by seventeen poets (including four by Moses), all relating to the same class of unruly top juniors. The characters are introduced in Moses's 'Who's Who in the Worst Class' with individuals reappearing in a number of poems by different poets. Many poems are written by individual members of the



We're the worst class in the school and we know it, we're the worst class in the school and we show it...

class, including the amusing 'Mo's Rap' ('I'm Mohammed - you can call me Mo/ Gimme a high five - wicked - yo!').

We are treated to the personal perspectives of not only pupils but also the beleaguered Year 6 teacher in his resignation letter, and the caretaker who complains 'Rick whose graffiti/ Adorns every door/ Malik whose boots/ Always scratch my hall floor.' Anarchic behaviour during a museum trip, on a visit to the zoo, on pets' day, whilst the school photograph is being taken, and during the school's inspection are given humorous treatment. As children enjoy reading about naughty kids, I see this as a book that will be rarely left on the library shelf. Teachers may well be more reluctant to use it in their classrooms for fear of sending the wrong message or of their children being 'identified' in the poems! AK

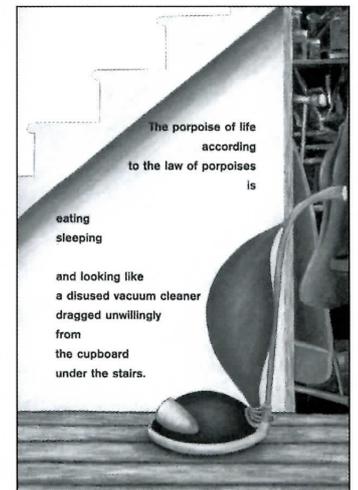
The TES Book of Young Poets

POETRY

★★★★

Chosen by Heather Neill, ill. Andrew Moss, Times Supplements, 64pp, 1 84122 005 1, £9.99 pbk. Available from the TES Bookshop (tel: 01454 617370)

Since 1994 the TES has devoted a regular spot to the publication of poetry written by young people. Each week a new poem appears with accompanying commentary written by the 'resident' poet, so that the column reads like a poetry masterclass for pupils and their teachers. The poems that have made it into print are worthy examples; a



testament to young people's achievements (and a challenge to those who claim that children cannot write 'real' poetry), rewarding teachers who have sought out a public audience for their pupils' work.

This collection reproduces a representative selection of poems with the original commentaries from poets such as Jo Shapcott, Michael Rosen, Moniza Alvi, Maura Dooley, Kit Wright and Matthew Sweeney. Connecting thoughts are provided by Siân Hughes, Education Officer at the Poetry Society, in a useful introduction. Generally care has been given to ensure the poems are well presented so it is a pity that a couple of poems are swamped by busy backgrounds or unreadable because of inappropriately coloured print (I could hardly read William

Kerley's poem 'James Bond'). Young writers and readers need to have access to poems written by other young writers as well as established classic and contemporary poets and this is a good addition for the primary or lower secondary classroom collection. NG

The Naughtiest Girl in the School

232pp, 0 340 72760 8

The Naughtiest Girl Again

216pp, 0 340 72759 4

The Naughtiest Girl is a Monitor

248pp, 0 340 72758 6

Here's The Naughtiest Girl!

80pp, 0 340 72761 6

★★★

Enid Blyton, Hodder, £3.50 each pbk

The Naughtiest Girl Saves the Day

144pp, 0 340 74423 5

The Naughtiest Girl Helps a Friend

160pp, 0 340 72763 2

The Naughtiest Girl Keeps a Secret

160pp, 0 340 72762 4

Well Done, The Naughtiest Girl!

160pp, 0 340 74424 3

★★★

Anne Digby, Hodder, £3.50 each pbk

Enid Blyton's naughtiest girl coeducational boarding-school stories were first published in the 1940s with the exception of the shorter *Here's The Naughtiest Girl!* which appeared at the beginning of the 1950s. The leading character, Elizabeth Allen, and her schoolmates were considerably younger than the average run of heroines in the schoolgirl sagas of that period. However, the naughtiest girl books, like the stories of Blyton's single-sex schools (Malory Towers and St Clare's), have proved more resilient than many of their rival creations in the genre and remained in print over several decades.

Digby, the author of the still running and popular Trebizond school stories, has now produced four further books in the naughtiest girl series. Books 'by other hands' than those of the original author rarely succeed and it is no slight challenge to have to recreate with authenticity and conviction Blyton's Whyteleaf School and its inmates.

Elizabeth remains about ten or eleven years old and – as in the Blyton tales – she is bright, colourful and sufficiently lively to hover on the edge of real or supposed 'naughtiness', though her positive qualities (leadership, enterprise and loyalty to friends) are emphasized. The switch from Blyton to Digby appears seamless and it is likely that young naughtiest girl fans will be quite happy to accept the four new titles as a continuation of the series. Adult enthusiasts might well feel that the

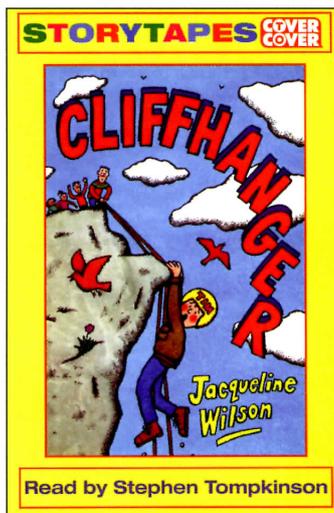
characterization, events and relationships established by Blyton needed no expansion. Nevertheless Digby has done an excellent job, after a 50 to 60 year gap, in persuasively recreating the genuine publication and atmosphere. And it says a great deal for Blyton that this still appeals to children today. Digby has introduced new characters which work well and has made Elizabeth into a rather more rounded out figure. She skilfully reiterates well-known Blyton ingredients such as children's interest in friendship and rivalries, and their love of food, camping, concerts and play-acting. The new stories also have welcome touches of greenness and conservatism.

It will be interesting to see whether the Digby naughtiest girl will achieve as long a shelf life as Blyton's original version of Elizabeth Allen: despite the fact that the early books were in the vanguard of school stories (in depicting coeducational exploits and making a girl the leader of mixed sex groups), Elizabeth is surely one of the most slightly-etched heroines to attain Enid Blyton's resilient popularity. Whatever the 'secret' of Blyton's appeal may be, Digby seems to have reharnessed it. MC

Cliffhanger

TAPE ★★★★★

Jacqueline Wilson, read by Stephen Tompkinson, Cover to Cover, 1 hr 15 mins, unabridged, 1 85549 392 6, £3.99



Stephen Tompkinson's clever, deadpan reading makes *Cliffhanger* so funny that it is hard not to laugh out loud. Wilson's eye for the tiny details of character are exploited to the full in this brilliant story of life on an adventure holiday. Sporty, knowing Giles, determined to win everything, is delightfully brought down by Biscuits and Tim, who narrates the ups and downs of his enforced week of adventure. The triumph of kindness, consideration and thoughtfulness over competitiveness is sheer joy. For nine years and upwards. JE

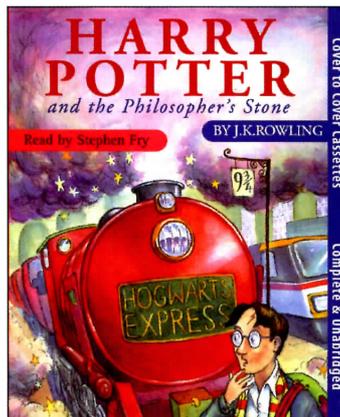
Why the Whales Came

TAPE ★★★

Michael Morpurgo, read by Virginia McKenna, Cover to Cover, 4 hrs 15 mins, unabridged, 1 85549 382 9, £10.99

Set on the Scilly Isles in 1914 against

the impending threat of the First World War, *Why the Whales Came* is a touching story in which two children, Daniel and Gracie cut through the prejudice that has been held against the strange 'birdman' and show that far from being mad, his unusual knowledge of the island makes him especially wise. The children's initial fear of 'the birdman', changing as it does to love and respect, is finely observed and deeply felt. On tape, however, the problem of the story having been written by Gracie as an adult looking back on her childhood, means that Virginia McKenna's silvery, grandmotherly tones prevent listeners from identifying immediately with the strong, child appeal that the book holds. Instead, it is a story told by an adult to children, not from one child to another, across time. For nine years and upwards. JE



Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

TAPE ★★★★★

J K Rowling, read by Stephen Fry, Cover to Cover, 8 hrs 25 mins, unabridged, 1 85549 394 2, £19.99

Anyone who has missed reading *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* should happily skip the pleasure and move straight onto the tape instead. Stephen Fry's reading of the first of the books about the young wizard and his friends in their school story setting is simply brilliant. His reading is lightly humorous, keeping just on the right side of sending up Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry as a latter day Chalet School. He captures the strong spirit of adventure that propels the book and holds attention absolutely through the twists and turns of its beguiling and complex plotting. For eight years and upwards. JE

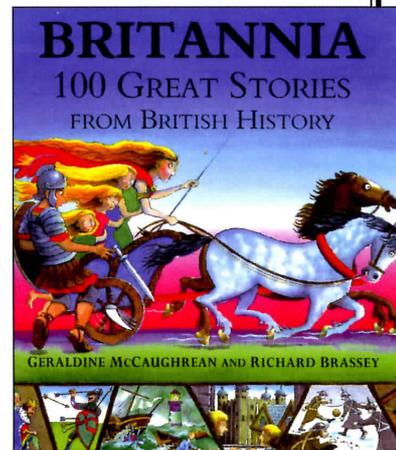
The Big Book of Little Poems

POETRY ★

Roger McGough, Gyles Brandreth and friends, ill. Fran Evans, André Deutsch, 128pp, 0 233 99567 6, £6.99 hbk

You can learn a lot from this frenziedly illustrated and winsomely collected book. Terry Wogan likes a bit of Gray's 'Elegy'. Tony Blair likes a bit of a corner of a foreign field. Henry Cooper and Cilla Black are not sure about capitals. Gyles Brandreth is not sure about doggerel. Blunkett D has problems with literacy. Also, Friends are Important. Especially friends famous, ex-famous and short-of-famous, who will do recitations for your celebs' party of a

book, which contains some funny poems, a few real poems by poets, and a lot of duds, in a whole heap that lurches from mood to mood and reader to reader. Royalties to the National Advice Centre for Children with Reading Difficulties, who will not get much else out of it. Would it have been a gesture, sort of, to make a book for *them* to read? No, poems are a laugh, poems are a laugh, poems are a laugh – even when they are not funny and are not for kids. RH



Britannia, 100 Great Stories from British History

★★★★★

Geraldine McCaughrean, ill. Richard Brassey, Orion, 264pp, 1 85881 680 7, £20.00 hbk

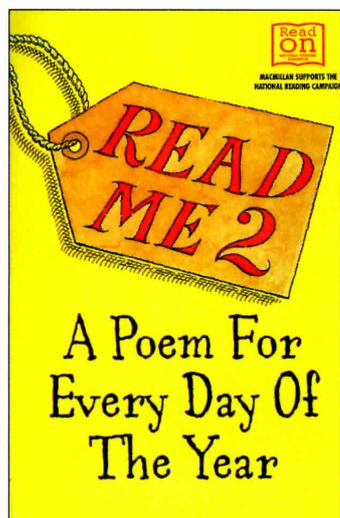
Here McCaughrean applies an array of her considerable skills: as adapter and reteller, as short story writer, and as historian. She gives 8-12 year olds a brilliant helter-skelter ride through the most dramatic incidents in British history. Some of the hundred tales are purely legendary, like the foundation of Albion by Brutus the Trojan; others possess some truth, like Dick Whittington; and still others are more remarkable than fiction, like the Christmas football match in no man's land in the First World War, or Scott's last expedition. Drawing on a range of sources, including folk tale and Shakespeare, McCaughrean's subjects, each taking no more than two or three pages, offer a larger than life version of our past, which includes, among others, highwaymen and kings, grave robbers and Jarrow marchers, Crippen and Grace Darling. This is a *tour de force*. Characters and incidents are deftly introduced and described with passion and flair. Brassey's illustrations are a joy. Never without humour, in a style that has echoes of Foreman and Chichester Clark, he moves easily, with colour and panache, from the intimate to the epic. This is an expensive book but worth every penny: even the further reading list has been carefully selected to offer an introduction to the best of children's historical fiction of the last forty years. CB

Read Me 2: A Poem for Every Day of the Year

POETRY ★★★★★

Chosen by Gaby Morgan, Macmillan, 512pp, 0 330 39132 1, £4.99 pbk

Following on from last year's National



Year of Reading's poetry anthology, this extremely reasonably priced paperback (£4.99) begins in January and sustains the high quality selection and positioning of poems to be found in *Read Me*. As well as the more traditional poems, contemporary poets are well represented with some as yet unanthologised gems by Philip Gross, Jackie Kay and Carol Ann Duffy. Adults and children are bound to find a poem which fits the way they feel on a particular day or be surprised by a thought on another day. There's a great 'millennium' type poem by Ogden Nash as the last poem in the book 'Good Riddance But Now What?':

'Hark! It's midnight, children dear,
Duck! Here comes another year.'

My thoughts entirely... HT

Reference Book of Water and Weather Reference/Meteorology

Bobbie Neate, 24pp,
0 582 33940 5

Tudor Homes Recount/Explanation, History

Fiona Reynoldson, 32pp, 0 582 33939 1

NON-FICTION BIG BOOKS ★★★

Longman 'Book Project'
Demonstration Big Books,
£19.99 each

These titles are demonstration big books, based on existing ones in smaller format. Quite difficult concepts are introduced in *Reference Book of Water and Weather* and many children, even in the 7-11 age group for whom it is intended, would need careful mediation from the teacher to achieve a complete understanding. There is a strong focus; we have a lot of general books on weather and it is useful to have one looking in depth at the relationship between water and weather. Diagrams are clear – I particularly like the one showing how a hailstone builds in layers like an onion.

Illustrations are also a strong feature in *Tudor Homes* which uses cross sections to show how houses were constructed, carefully chosen photographs of existing Tudor houses and some interesting contemporary drawings and paintings which work well in this large format version. I think two further diagrams would have been helpful in setting a context

for Tudor homes: first a diagram showing how houses changed and developed before and after the Tudor period and another one showing the main changes over the course of the Tudor period. The latter could have been in the form of a visual and verbal summary.

To help reinforce some of the different strategies we use in reading for information rather than reading fiction, children are invited to read the introduction and then to select chapters of special interest from the contents page. Perhaps this leads to a rather random ordering of topics – 'Chimneys and curfews', 'Big houses and glass windows', 'Town houses', 'Kitchens' and so on. There is a strong chapter on 'Historical sources' and a very interesting and detailed chapter on 'Kitchens'. The book is a good resource for modelling retrieval devices. MM

Atlas in the Round

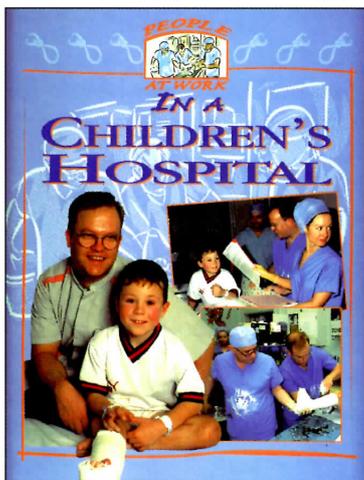
NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Keith Lye and Alastair Campbell, Orion, 32pp,
1 85881 787 0, £9.99 hbk

The roundness of our planet has always challenged map-makers and their need to portray its topography on plain sheets of paper has made flat-earthers of us all, whether it be roadmaps, charts or atlases that we consult.

But once you realise that it is possible to portray the surface of a globe as a virtually infinitely large number of different hemispheres then it is possible to demonstrate its roundness more effectively than in conventional mapping. And this is what Lye and Campbell have done. The result is interesting, entertaining and friendly and makes the accepted premises of continental drift, population spread, and the way in which round the world yacht crews all head for the South Pole rather than the Panama Canal easier to understand than a flat map does. What would really have set this off nicely? An inflatable terrestrial globe tucked into a pocket at the back...

But then, come to think of it, why not just get a globe? TP



In a Children's Hospital

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Deborah Fox, Evans 'People at Work', 32pp, 0 237 51963 1,
£9.99 hbk

This is one of a series of careers information books for upper

primary/lower secondary schools, but it would also be useful on children's wards to allay fears about being in hospital. The information is detailed and precise, and we meet people working in every aspect of hospital life from surgeons, dieticians and radiologists to teachers and kitchen staff. Photogenic children (and staff) at the Manchester Royal Children's Hospital help make the information accessible. Interesting details such as quotes from the various professionals about their work and why they find it satisfying are also included, as well as some facts about how they trained for their jobs. An excellent production. ES

Oxford First Book of Science

NON-FICTION ★

Nina Morgan, Oxford, 48pp,
0 19 910501 4, £9.99 hbk

This should be a good one – good title, good publisher – buy it unseen, should be fine, you would think... Illustrations are meant to extend and enliven the work of the text, but here all they do is confine and deaden it. And the text, ranging as it does through the nature of scientific inquiry, life, materials and energy never gets much better than worthy. The Isotype Institute sparked by comparison with this utterly mediocre production. If OUP are planning a 'Second Book' it will have to be better than this. TP

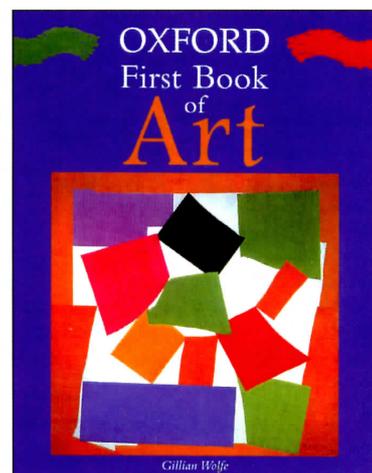
Oxford First Book of Art

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Gillian Wolfe, Oxford, 48pp,
0 19 910561 8, £9.99 hbk

This is a really excellent reference book introducing children to the works of a wide range of artists in an informative way which also encourages them to get involved with the artwork. The book takes themes such as 'Figures', 'Animals', 'Seasons' for each spread and asks the reader to look closer at the artwork of up to three artists on each theme, enabling comparisons to be made across different periods and cultures. The theme of 'Faces' examines Paul Klee's 'Senecio' made up of many geometric shapes, a three faced mask made by the Etoi people of Nigeria and 'Portrait of a Lady in Yellow' by the fifteenth-century artist, Alesso Baldovinetti. Children are asked to consider the composition of paintings showing people relaxing and to appreciate the skill of creating movement in a painting by the Portuguese artist, Paula Rego. Her work is included in the theme 'Dance'. The reader is introduced to the energy generated through Van Gogh's masterly brushstrokes in 'The Starry Night' with its magnificent colour, texture and pattern. Van Gogh's use of 'Light and Shade' is contrasted with that of Turner in 'The Fighting Temeraire' and again with that demonstrated by Japanese artist, Shunkosai Hokuei.

An Art Activity suggested for every theme demonstrates how children can apply ideas they have been studying in their own art. After looking at Gustav Klimt's 'Expectation' it is suggested that children might make a mosaic collage. The glowing 'Autumn Leaves' by Millais is the stimulation for an art activity involving the mixing of warm colours. The author is the Head of



Education at Dulwich Picture Gallery, London. AK

Marguerite Makes a Book

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Bruce Robertson, ill. Kathryn Hewitt, The J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 48pp,
0 89236 372 X, £14.95 hbk
(available via Windsor Books,
tel: 01865 361122)



This beautifully produced picture book, inspired by a group of Parisian manuscripts in the Getty Museum's collection, shows how a story can be a powerful device to impart historical information. The exceptionally fine illustrations recreate the background to the tale: the buildings, clothes, artefacts and lifestyle of the people of Medieval Paris. Young Marguerite is determined to complete the illuminated prayer book begun by her old, ailing father for a wealthy patron. The text describes the materials and procedures and some splendid pull-out pages show each stage of production in great detail. Features of medieval books – distinctive chapter headings, illuminated letters and colourful gold embellished borders of animals, fruits and flowers – add to the charm of the book. Some of my students planning teaching practice thought most primary age children would enjoy the story but considered that 9-11 year olds would particularly appreciate the meticulous treatment of the subject. The skilful use of direct speech energises the narrative and could be used to inspire children's script writing. Teachers could use this book to link work in history with the literacy hour: there is much potential for looking at how pictures and text work together and how an author chooses words and images to make a story interesting and coherent. Above all children will respond to a touching tale and warm to Marguerite's courage and resourcefulness. MM

REVIEWS 10-12 Middle/Secondary

Sheep Don't Go to School: Mad and Magical Children's Poetry

★★★★

Edited by Andrew Fusek Peters, ill. Markéta Prachatická, Bloodaxe Books, 96pp, 1 85224 408 9, £5.95 pbk

This is something special. The poet Andrew Fusek Peters, whose parents fled Prague in 1948, has selected a fantastic array of poems, rhymes and riddles from Eastern Europe. There are some familiar poets – Gerda Mayer, Miroslav Holub, Nina Cassian, Marin Sorescu and Yevtushenko, accompanied by traditional tales and rhymes, older than children's poetry, but which speak directly and poetically to the reader like the traditional Serbian poem 'Brotherless Sisters': 'Two sisters who had no brother/ Made one of silk to share,/ Of white silk and of red./ For his waist they used barberry wood,/ Black eyes, two precious stones./ For eyebrows, sea leeches,/ Tiny teeth a string of pearls...'

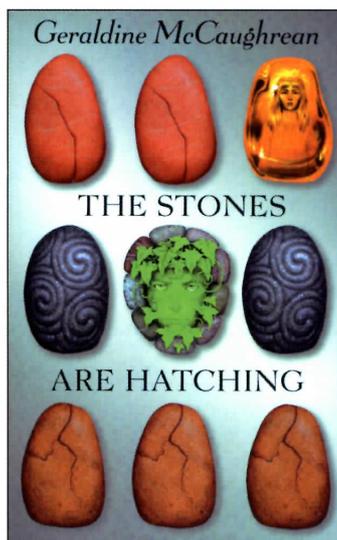
There are funny poems, magical poems, thought provoking and heart stopping poems, inspirationally translated by some of our best translators. Czech born Prachatická obviously loved every minute of illustrating this book and her inimitable pictures beautifully echo and complement the poems and the spirit of the book. This book should be in everyone's poetry collection, not just because of the wonderful poetry, fresh views and new experiences; but because it gives us a chance to think of Eastern European countries like Albania, Estonia, Russia and the Czech republic as places with people who have dreams and a sense of humour rather than just names we hear on the news. Buy it! HT

The Kidnapping of Suzie Q

★★★★

Martin Waddell, Walker, 160pp, 0 7445 5940 5, £9.99 hbk

This novel (published originally in 1994 under Waddell's Catherine Sefton pen name) focuses on the consequences of a kidnapping which was never meant to happen, when three young, inept and socially disadvantaged robbers, following their botched raid on a supermarket, become the captors of 15 year old Suzie Quinn. Quickly realising how incompetent (and ultimately pathetic) they are, Suzie soon comes to understand that extricating herself from her plight will involve more of a psychological than a physical battle. Waddell's depiction of this warfare of minds and wills, played out in an isolated, rural Ulster setting, is such that high drama and black comedy are never far apart. It is an engaging mixture, raising just enough questions about crime and its causes to challenge the reader's assumptions. RD



The Stones are Hatching

★★★★

Geraldine McCaughrean, Oxford, 192pp, 0 19 271797 9, £5.99 pbk

The stones are hatching, the worm is waking! Only reluctant hero, Phelim Green, can save the world from the Stoor Worm and her monstrous hatchlings. Accompanied by his maiden, his fool and his horse, he embarks on a terrifying odyssey that brings successive encounters with creatures named in tales of folklore and demonology; bugganes, dracs, merrows, ushtays, the nuckalavee and Shuck the black dog. It seems as though the landscape itself is unleashing terrors.

Across the channel in France, the earth is scarred by the horrors of trench warfare. Gunfire is waking the worm. War! Another madness of human consciousness. At its best the aural quality of McCaughrean's writing awakens the reader's senses and her poetic vision is realised through carefully wrought prose. The musicality and cadence of the writing touches the soul, capturing moments of beauty as well as horror. The final reflections invite us to consider how 'the world will explain away its nightmares'. NG

King of Shadows

★★★★★

Susan Cooper, Bodley Head, 192pp, 0 370 32620 2, £10.99 hbk

The newly built Globe Theatre and our own age feature in this intriguing time-slip yarn alongside a vividly realised account of the original and the people who played there, including William Shakespeare himself. The parallels are worked by a boy actor called Nat Field coming to London to play Puck with a troupe assembled in America. An illness renders him in intensive care and so his perplexing sixteenth-century adventure begins; he finds himself playing alongside the author's Oberon in front of Queen Elizabeth I herself. There is an under-layer of self discovery and coming to terms with the scars of grief and loss here which elevates this novel into a powerful and most satisfying read. I shall definitely ensure it gets into the

NEW Talent

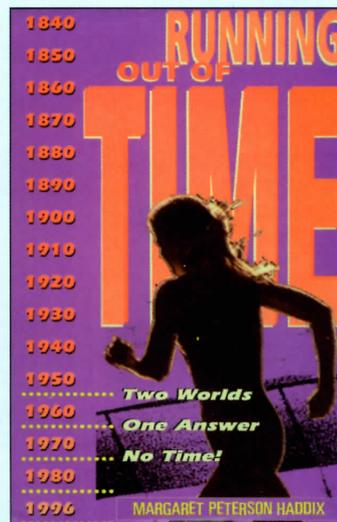
Running Out of Time

★★★★

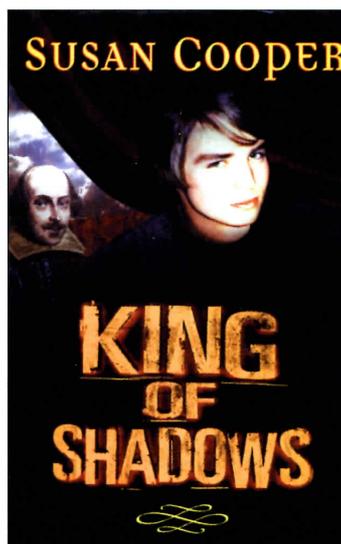
Margaret Peterson Haddix, Bodley Head, 180pp, 0 370 32641 5, £10.99 hbk

A diphtheria outbreak threatens the small rural community of Clifton and now Jessie's little sister, Katie, has fallen ill. There is no cure for diphtheria in 1840 but is it really 1840? Desperate to save Katie, Jessie's mum finally tells Jessie the truth – it is 1996 and Clifton is a living history museum secretly observed by tourists. More sinisterly, it now also is a place from which they cannot escape, even to get medicine. Can Jessie save them?

Reminiscent of *The Trueman Show*, this agreeable first novel is pacily plotted with cliffhanger chapter endings as Jessie escapes from Clifton into the modern world. Young readers will enjoy seeing 1996 through Jessie's eyes – so many things



surprise or baffle her – from flush lavatories to cars to phones. If characterisation is rather perfunctory and the denouement stretches credibility, this hardly matters as the reader is swept along by events. RS



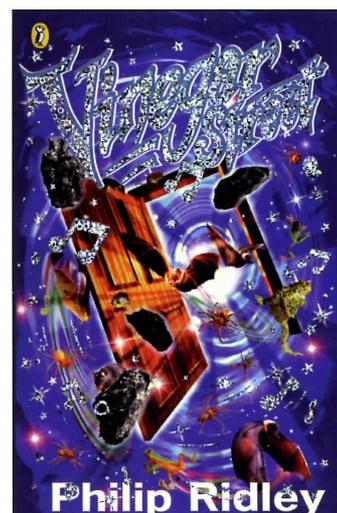
hands of my more able Year 7s and 8s (11-13 year olds). DB

Vinegar Street

★★★★

Philip Ridley, ill. Stephen Lee, Puffin, 224pp, 0 14 038509 6, £3.99 pbk

Vinegar Street is a wasteland of derelict jerry-built houses in a sea of urban mud near an abandoned nuclear power plant. Just one family of eccentrics lives in this wilderness, happily undisturbed. Chief among them is Poppy Picklesticks, aged twelve and a bit, who dresses strangely, makes Creations, has a mind which now and then gets 'overcooked' with its own powers, and is blessed or cursed with a special version of the inner voice (conscience? intuition? premonition? second sight?) that all of us have in a more modest form. She loves this bizarre and glorious desolation, but it is threatened when the one remaining empty, habitable house is occupied by the odious Mandy



Nylon, high priestess of tidiness and conformity, ambitious to turn Vinegar Street into a manicured suburbia. A titanic struggle then ensues, which calls for all of Poppy's powers. And all of Ridley's powers, too, because he is a Poppy among storytellers. The book is a storytelling firework, a verbal and typographical extravaganza of lunatic comedy, like a strip cartoon turned into crazy poetry. It is even (literally) a kind of music. Children of twelve or so who have a taste for the surreal will find it sheer delight. PH

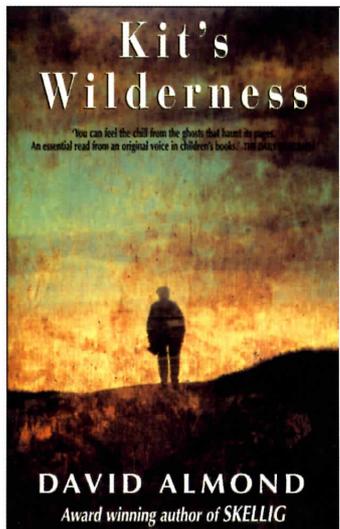
Paulina

★★★★

Lesley Howarth, Walker, 224pp, 0 7445 5948 0, £9.99 hbk

A summer house-swap takes Rebecca and her family from their bungalow in Cornwall to a luxury house in Connecticut with its swimming pool and Buick. But while the sweet and caring George and Annie take off for Cornwall they leave behind Paulina; actually two Paulinas. One is the neighbour's daughter, 'by day the homecoming queen, by night the

Bride of Frankenstein', who uses the house and its pool for partying; the other is the ghostly Paulina, 'poor-lina', re-living her tragic family life and death of sixteen years ago. Not a dream-holiday but a studied, nightmarish one. This book shows that Howarth can write a good, but unexceptional modern horror story, complete with American setting. Perhaps it will attract new readers to her other, more exceptional and gripping stories. AJ



Kit's Wilderness

240pp, 0 340 77885 7

Heaven Eyes

224pp, 0 340 76481 3

★★★★★

David Almond, Hodder, £10.00 each hbk

The numerous layers of *Kit's Wilderness* run as deep as the disused coal mines which have now been grown over by the 'wilderness' of his title. These wasted landscapes, both above and below the ground, are linked by their power to generate the stories which scatter their shared darkness. It falls to 13 year old Kit to inherit some of these stories from his grandfather and to realise their magical qualities in helping him and his community to confront the terrifying 'game' called Death. This confrontation, particularly that part of it which involves Kit's encounters with his contemporary, John Askew, the game's apparent controller, provides the opportunity – brilliantly seized – for an enthralling, atmospheric and frequently poignant narrative. Fans of *Skellig* will not be disappointed!

In *Heaven Eyes* Erin and her friends January and Mouse are parentless children living in a home called 'Whitegates'. They have run away on earlier occasions but the adventure which results in their meeting Heaven Eyes is an altogether more profound experience. It starts as a freedom-seeking jaunt down river on a roughly constructed raft, but soon becomes a voyage of discovery involving the navigation of the river's dark waters and their hidden Black Middens. Here reside Grampa, his secrets and his treasures; here too is the moon-pale Heaven Eyes, endowed with the gift of seeing through the world's troubles to the Heaven underneath. At times mystical, at times matter of fact, this is a tale of dreams, memories and mysteries, confirming its author's status as one of our most hypnotic storytellers. RD

The Candle House

★★★★

Pauline Fisk, Bodley Head, 272pp, 0 370 32411 0, £10.99 hbk

Legends and ghosts of the past, present and future mingle continuously as the villagers of a hidden valley seek to get a grip on their long-held rivalries, their individual fears and their mutual suspicion of a Big Brother Council, that wishes to make 'that odd lot up there' see the economic sense of being subsumed into the Kynaston Country Adventure Trail, which will inevitably change history for ever. The pace and suspense seldom slacken as the narrative builds and switches around a wide array of characters in situations both realistic and mystic. The main characters are a believable bunch, supported by fairly predictable country bumpkin cast of extras. A lively read for lower/mid secondary. DB

Blind Beauty

★★★★

K M Peyton, Scholastic, 368pp, 0 439 01277 5, £14.99 hbk

Tessa is the child of a tumultuous marriage and in her early childhood love and security were found with Shiner, her father's blind bay mare. Even this solace is lost when Myra, her mother, leaves her father, and she and Tessa live with Maurice, Myra's second husband. Tessa is 'excluded' from a number of boarding schools due to her unruly behaviour. Her life is without purpose, until she finds work in a local racing stable. She sets all of her considerable determination on becoming a jockey and racing in the Grand National on Buffoon, the ungainly and unattractive foal of Tessa's beloved Shiner. The greedy and unscrupulous Maurice and Tessa have been set on a collision course ever since they met, providing a dynamic on which much of the plot pivots.

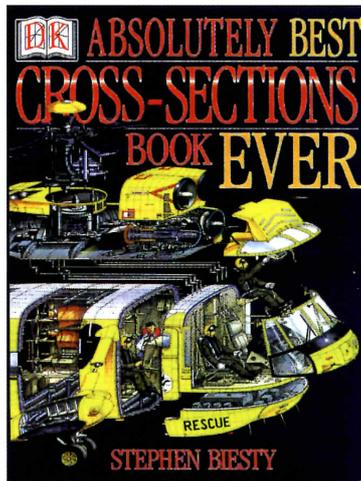
Many young girls will empathise with Tessa in her struggles to break into racing and to come to terms with the world against which she rages. More discerning readers will find that the characters are stereotyped and somewhat two-dimensional, but horse-mad youngsters will devour *Blind Beauty* for whom it will provide a sustained and enjoyable read. VC

Absolutely Best Cross-Sections Book Ever

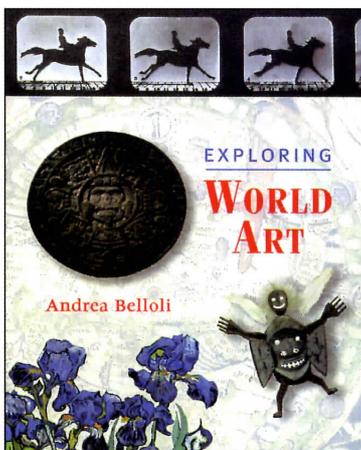
NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Stephen Biesty, written by Richard Platt, Dorling Kindersley, 184pp, 0 7513 7103 3, £14.99 hbk

Regular readers will know how highly esteemed as craftsman, illustrator and researcher Biesty is and his cross-sectional approach to complex structures has won him wide acclaim in all quarters. To those of us reared on *The Children's Encyclopedia*, *Wonder Books*, *The Eagle* and *W T Stead* in the *Illustrated London News* the concept is not new but here, in Biesty's work, it has reached its apogee. A combination of endearing intimacy with devoted accuracy is served by a supremely able graphic style to produce an illustrative masterpiece on every page. I do not believe in using 'incredible' as an everyday description but here it is justified.



Biesty's subjects range from Dentures to the Empire State Building, Fishing Trawler to Coal Mine, all treated with the same intensity of interest which serves to dignify the frivolous as well as to lighten up the gruesome. And *Where's Wally?* fans will not be disappointed – there are plenty of bog-squatters to spot. Biesty's own introduction is illuminating, too – it took over 16,000 hours of work for him to complete this book – working at 50 hours a week – and his appreciation of the contribution made by Platt's perceptive text reminds us of this writer's excellent ability. This title was doubtless timed to hit the Christmas market but it would make a superb present any time. Reflect that 'Stephen Biesty' is an anagram of His Best Pen Yet, which just about sums it up. TP



Exploring World Art

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Andrea Belloli, Frances Lincoln, 120pp, 0 7112 1361 5, £14.99 hbk

Belloli and her publisher have produced an attractive introduction to world art. It is less concerned with technique and chronology than with the meaning and purposes of a work of art, and the opportunity it offers to show different ways of looking at the world. Belloli gives each work a double page spread and groups them under five broad headings – the cosmos, the supernatural, the everyday, history and the environment. Within each heading, she offers exciting juxtapositions: an Aztec calendar stone follows a Persian pen box decorated with the signs of the Zodiac; a painting of Parisian high life in the 1700s is followed by a Polynesian fly whisk. In a few cases, the works of art demand more (or less) explanation than she

has space available. We do not get to grips fully with Aboriginal dreamtime art, for instance; yet there appears to be only so much she can say about the fly whisk. But Belloli is enthusiastic, authoritative, with a strong direct voice; and her descriptions are engrossing. The book is splendidly produced with clear colour reproductions that allow the works to be fully appreciated; a map and time line show the works' provenance and there is a good index. The book is meant for children from 9 years old but may be a tough read for most children under 11. Belloli takes for granted some knowledge of techniques and terms and offers help only by context or in the glossary, which is extensive. The only thing missing is a further reading list. CB

The Usborne Encyclopedia of Planet Earth

NON-FICTION ★★

Anna Claybourne, Gillian Doherty and Rebecca Treays, Usborne, 160pp, 0 7460 3405 9, £14.99 hbk

This introduction to physical geography covers earthquakes and volcanoes, climate and weather, plants and animals, soil, rivers and oceans. The apparatus includes a glossary and a page of relevant biographies. The pictures are interestingly chosen and the diagrams generally clear. However, the book suffers from imprecision and misplaced emphasis. Some examples: a paragraph beginning 'Earthquakes can be prevented...' leaves the reader uncertain why they are still allowed to occur. Although the inclination of the Earth's axis is mentioned, the succession of the seasons is (wrongly) connected with proximity to the Sun. The length of the solar year is mis-stated, and the incidence of leap years misleadingly presented. High tides on the side of the Earth away from the moon are wrongly attributed to centrifugal force. The role of plants in oxygen production is mentioned only in passing; from the section on the carbon cycle one might well conclude that they emit as much carbon dioxide as they absorb. FP

The Usborne Illustrated Dictionary of Science

NON-FICTION ★★

Corinne Stockley, Chris Oxlade and Jane Wertheim, Usborne, 384pp, 0 7460 3485 7, £14.99 pbk

This rather accurate and thorough book, apparently a revision of a volume with the same title published in 1988, is divided into three equal parts, treating physics, chemistry and biology. Astronomy and geology are not covered. It is very much a sequence of definitions, with little leavening. There is ample cross-referencing. The boundaries have been drawn sharply, so that, for example, Newton's law of gravitation is stated explicitly, but Kepler's laws of planetary motion, one of its prime applications, are not mentioned. When Newton's law was discovered, or by whom, is not apparent either. The chemistry section is better endowed with dates. There are some duplications: for example, atomic structure is treated under both chemistry and physics. And some

omissions: from the text it appears that the gun-assembly (uranium) nuclear device is the only one; the implosion (plutonium) device is not mentioned. Nor is there any indication that these weapons have ever been used. FP

The DK Space Encyclopedia

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

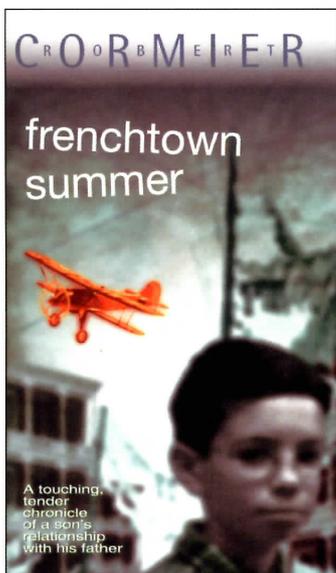
Heather Couper and Nigel Henbest, Dorling Kindersley, 312pp, 0 7513 5413 9, £20.00 hbk

This splendid volume, clear and up-to-date, starts with means of astronomical observation and goes on to spacecraft and satellites.

Detailed description of the Solar System and of stars and galaxies each take up about a quarter of the book. There are twenty pages of cosmology and thirty on practical stargazing, plus some well-organised apparatus. The DK standard of cross-referencing is admirably maintained. Although astronomy is presented as a developing subject, there are some assertions, not universally accepted by astronomers, which may need to

be qualified or revised in later editions. However, the careful reader will be so well-prepared to follow new developments in the popular literature as to be able to make such revisions for herself. A 1996 CD-ROM, the *Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Space and the Universe*, covering much the same material in rather brief chunks, is included. For Windows only, not for Macs. FP

REVIEWS 12+ Secondary



Frenchtown Summer

★★★★

Robert Cormier, Hamish Hamilton, 128pp, 0 241 14088 9, £10.99 hbk

This 30 chapter prose poem, rich in metaphorical language, details one summer of Eugene's life in Frenchtown. Cameos of family members are fluently drawn and relationships clearly delineated: his father's distant, enigmatic presence; his mother's tenderness. Eugene's contemporaries are by turns confiding and cruel – here Cormier draws the landscape of childhood most powerfully. It is the mocking disbelief of Eugene's friends which occasions his father's unexpected support in confirming his sighting of an orange plane in a neighbour's yard.

This is a short book but one seamed with shrewd observations of the minutiae of family and community life and the particulars of familiar surroundings. *Frenchtown Summer* may not be a landmark in Cormier's work but it is a poetic reminder of his remarkable control of language and consummate skill as an observer. VR

The Perfect Love Story?

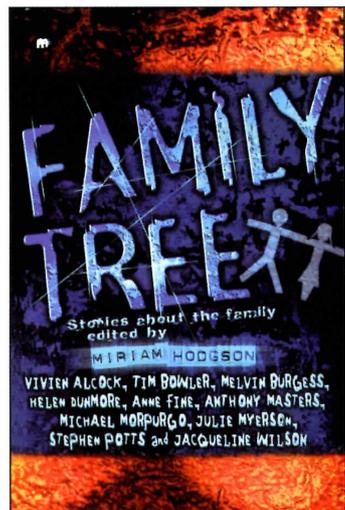
★★★

Piccadilly, 128pp, 1 85340 524 8, £5.99 pbk

This collection consists of the ten winning stories chosen from the 1,000 entries to *The Guardian/Piccadilly* writing competition for teenagers. Love is presented in stories that employ different moods and modes; pathos and humour, mystery and realism. It is perhaps unsurprising that in a collection produced by teenagers, romantic

love is most prevalent with an interest in relationships that transcend boundaries such as age, social acceptability, or death. The young writers use the short story form to good effect, many of them providing a twist or 'sting in the tale'.

In his brief foreword Andrew Motion comments on the particular difficulties of writing a love story for the self-conscious teenager. The perspectives in these stories are characteristically adolescent and in this sense the fiction has a specific appeal for its intended audience. However, I particularly enjoyed Emma Bevin's 'Chamber Street' for its skilful handling of the ordinary and insight into the grey areas of failed relationships. She avoids overcontrolling the reader, leaving narrative gaps to draw them into the untold story. NG



Family Tree: Stories about the family

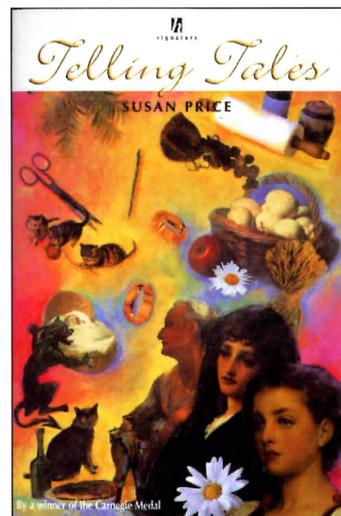
★★★★

Edited by Miriam Hodgson, Mammoth, 144pp, 0 7497 3684 4, £4.99 pbk

Do not let the sub-title arouse expectations of tales of familial harmony: five out of the ten stories here deal with divorce, and all of them revolve around strife and suffering of one kind or another. Only Anne Fine's hilarious squib about a Scottish miner struggling to come to terms with his son's prowess at needlework is anything like a sunny read. All of the stories are skilfully, even powerfully, written: Helen Dunmore's WW1 story about a child trying to rebuild a cricket team after the youth of his village have been slaughtered in the trenches is particularly moving. Most of the stories provide a sense of reassuring closure following episodes of anguish: Anthony Masters' 'We've Got You For Life', about an insecure

adolescent's desire to punish his adoptive parents, ends with an acceptance of the kind of benign bondage that families can supply; Jacqueline Wilson's 'Just Like Your Father' describes how a boy's fear of inheriting his lost father's nastiness is assuaged by his casual observation of another father and son playing together. Only Melvin Burgess, in the final story about a boy using his knowledge of his mother's affair as a source of destructive power, strikes a (more realistic?) bleak note.

This is not comfortable reading, but it is thought provoking and compassionate. It is probably a good idea to read the stories yourself first and judge their suitability for particular readers. GH

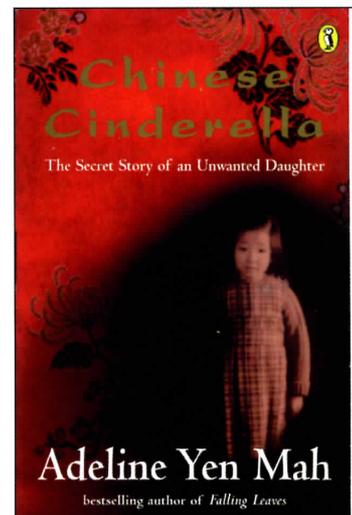


Telling Tales

★★★★★

Susan Price, Hodder, 160pp, 0 340 70903 0, £4.99 pbk

Women from different generations gather to prepare each other for important life-changing moments, telling stories as they work. A new bride is told a tale about triumphant love; a young girl leaving home for the first time listens to a story about a resourceful young heroine and a nursing mother is treated to a lively retelling of a well-known naming tale. Price weaves the stories together with great skill. Each event is marked by three tales told in distinctive voices of different storytellers offering their personal 'narratives for life'. *Telling Tales* is more than a collection of stories, it emphasises the importance of 'the telling'; the story's existence is inextricably interwoven with the life of the teller. An affirming, celebratory book of traditional storytelling which avoids rigid gender stereotyping of either men or women. I for one have already bought copies of *Telling Tales* to give to friends. NG



Chinese Cinderella

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Adeline Yen Mah, Puffin, 252pp, 0 14 130487 1, £4.99 pbk

Following her mother's death, Wu Mei's (Adeline Yen Mah) father remarries a much younger Eurasian wife. *Chinese Cinderella*, the autobiography of Wu Mei's childhood, describes how the children of the second marriage are favoured above those of the first and how as a young child Wu Mei is singled out for cruel treatment by her parents. After enduring humiliation and deprivation she is eventually abandoned in a convent school, a certain target for communist hostility.

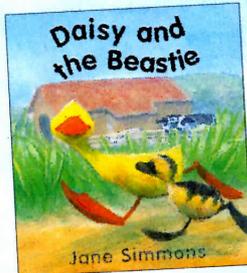
Yen Mah tells her story without bitterness, writing about tender moments in relationships with her aunt and grandfather and occasional moments of solidarity with her older brothers and sister. Although troubled at home she finds solace at school and earns the respect of her teachers and friends. An absorbing story of triumph over adversity, told against the background of the Nationalist/Communist struggle for control of China. NG

Picture books reviewed this issue relevant to older readers:

Anna and the Flowers of Winter (see p22)

Ozymandias (see p25)

Blow the Trumpet, Bang the Drum Books are Fun for Everyone



Join Daisy, the little duck with big feet, in a brand new adventure.

1-86039-795-6
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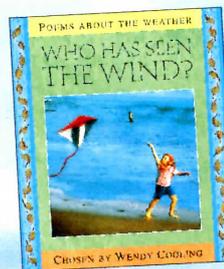
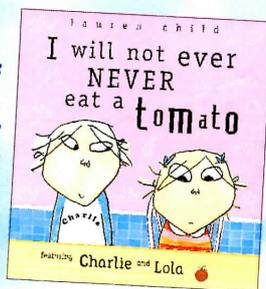
A thrilling pre-historic adventure from the award-winning Wonderwise team.

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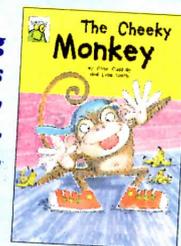


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A Wondrous Mix
from
Orchard Books
and
Franklin Watts

Illustration © Jane Simmons 2000
from Plum Pudding - Stories, Rhymes
and Fun for the Very, Very Young

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CLASSICS IN SHORT No. 20

Brian Alderson

Long ago, somewhere between the Wild Wood and Mr McGregor's Garden there lived ...



Who were they?

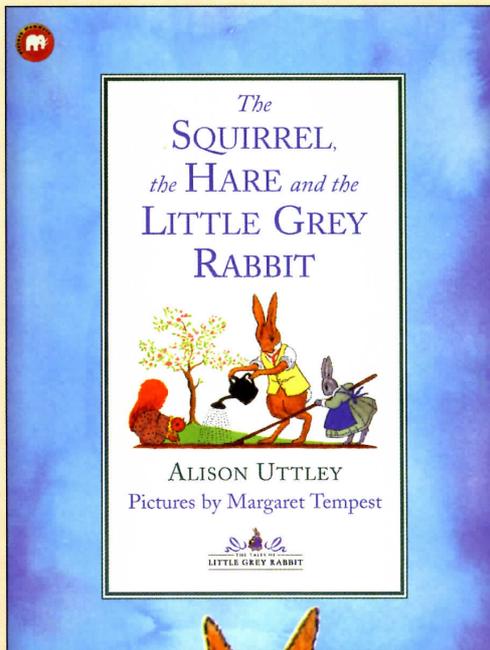
The Hare, described as a conceited fellow, dwelt with proud Miss Squirrel and the Little Grey Rabbit, whose thoughtfulness, energy and permanent good nature ensured domestic harmony. An outside observer, Freudy Ferret was inclined to impute unnatural vices to this *ménage à trois* but there is no evidence for it in the 34 volumes and four play-scripts recording their seasonal activities as set down by Mrs Alison Uttley (1884-1976) and published between 1929 and 1975.

Where did they live?

In a quasi-Lutyens cottage with dimity curtains set among the fields and woods of a still-Edwardian nursery-land. Neighbours, like Moldy Warp the Mole and old Hedgehog, the milkman, with his son Fuzzypeg, are regularly found worrying about such matters as Wise Owl's unreliable temperament or the depredations of Rat, or invasion by Weasels, but all worries are assuaged by good, sensible Little Grey Rabbit. Recent threats to the community from persons like Councillor Prescott Pigge (who wants to build two thousand executive homes on the site) appear to be exaggerated. Messrs Harper Collins, agents to the Residents' Association, and with a keen eye for Character Promotion and Merchandising Rights, are re-styling the area in expectation of conservation, albeit rather modified.

What did it look like?

Oho! a leading question. How many people who have enjoyed the adventures of Little Grey Rabbit have done so for the imagery and presentation as much as for the storytelling? The form was established with the acceptance of the first story by Messrs Heinemann in 1929 (Collins didn't move in till No. 5, *Squirrel Goes Skating* in 1934). Although Mrs Uttley had wanted a friend to do the designing, Heinemann insisted on Margaret Tempest and moreover paid her £15.00 for her work whereas the author – who had hitherto published nothing – got only £10 – and no royalty. This led to a longstanding tension between the two, which was hardly alleviated by Tempest knowing that she had established an instantly recognisable identity for the series: the square format, the blue letterpress, the watercolour scenes with their prettily devised frames, and the brush-script on the covers. And when,



towards the end of the saga, the 75 year-old Tempest's work fell away (partly because she had Parkinson's disease) and an Uttley friend – Kathleen Wigglesworth – was brought in, she was required to preserve the Tempest style and that lady cast a beady eye over her work before it went to press.

So what does Mr Criticky Cricket have to say?

Enough that's positive, I should hope, to justify preserving this antic vision of pastoral innocence for today's knowing juvenile executive incomers. 'I always try to give some specially English touch of country life [to these little books] which might be forgotten,' said Mrs Uttley in 1970, and while that may seem

a vain endeavour in a countryside ravaged by industrial farming, it provided a method that allowed her to sustain the quality of her undemonstrative narratives right to the end. Kenneth Grahame obviously stands behind her, but she objected fiercely – temperamental lady that she was – to suggestions that she was copying Beatrix Potter, and although superficial comparisons can be made, she had none of Beatrix Potter's artistry in shaping and honing stories. What she did was to set out 34 episodes within the apparently timeless life of her field folk (bits from earlier tales are often woven into later ones) and she preferred a looser structure and more casual address – which, it must be said, sometimes veers towards the whimsy that was the speciality of a near neighbour of hers in Beaconsfield.

And that wasn't all, was it?

Emphatically not. Almost simultaneously with the arrival of Little Grey Rabbit came Mrs Uttley's first book for adults. A *Country Child*, a (diplomatically?) blissful account of her early years on her parents' farm in Derbyshire. And for the rest of her life she wrote for her two audiences in tandem – observed life in the countryside for one and the invented japes of its inhabitants such as Sam Pig and Tim Rabbit for the other. But at the end of the 30s the qualities that she brought to these subjects coalesced in her inspired story of the Babington plot to rescue Mary, Queen of Scots, set within a mile or two of her childhood home. A *Traveller in Time* is one of the outstanding books of twentieth-century children's literature and I for one would be sorrier to see it obliterated than all the pastures occupied by Ms Rabbit and her friends. ■

Some material here has been gleaned from Denis Judd's detailed biography *Alison Uttley: The Life of a Country Child* (Michael Joseph, 1986). Alison Uttley's papers are now deposited at the John Rylands Library in Manchester. See also Authorgraph No.121: Alison Uttley on page 12.

The illustrations by Margaret Tempest are taken from *The Squirrel, the Hare and the Little Grey Rabbit*, reissued this month by Egmont Children's Books as a Picture Mammoth (0 7497 4176 7, £4.99 pbk).

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