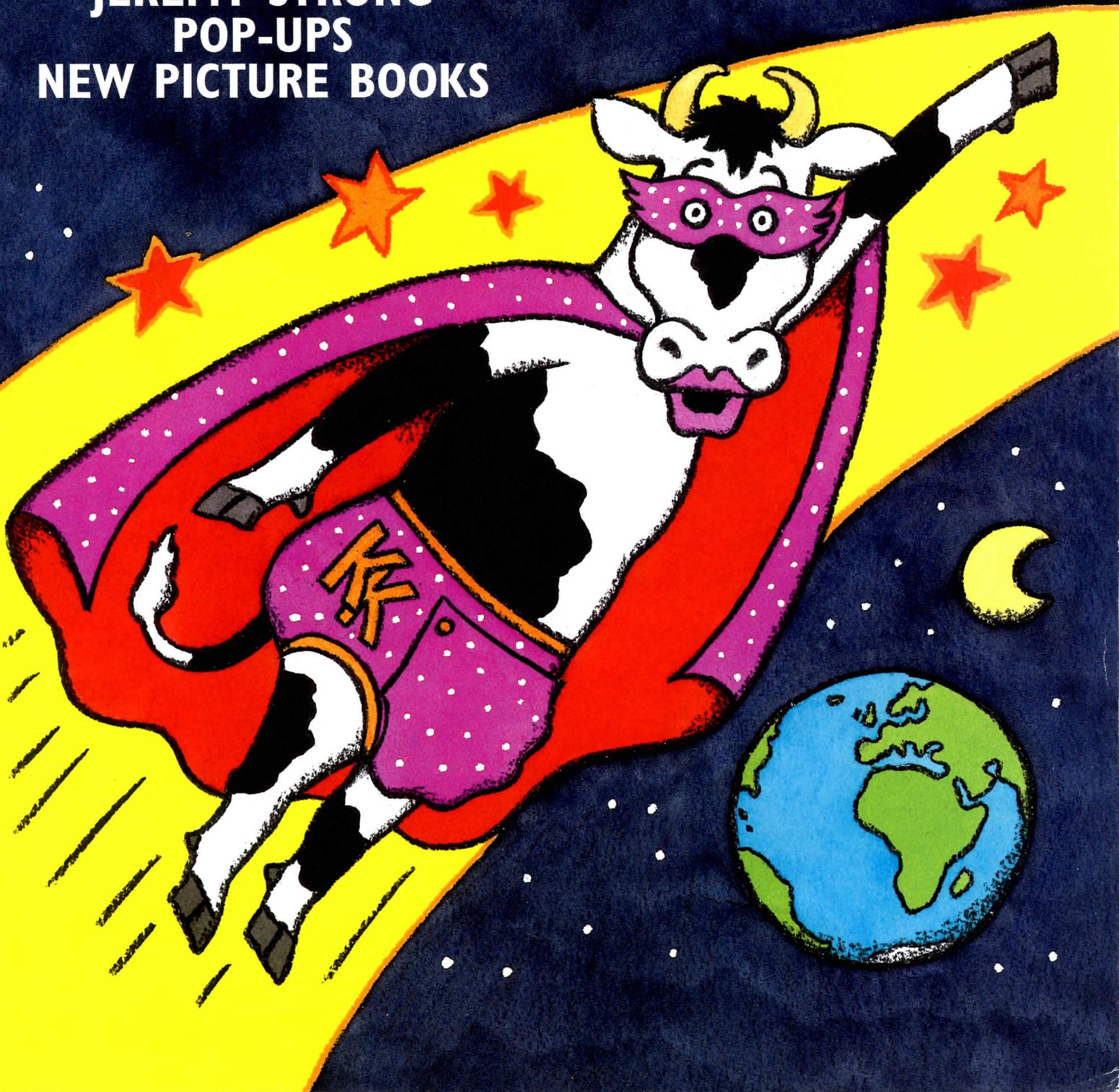


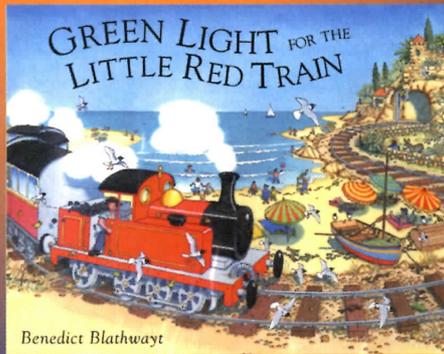
BOOKS FOR KEEPS

July 2002 No.135
UK Price £3.45

the children's book magazine

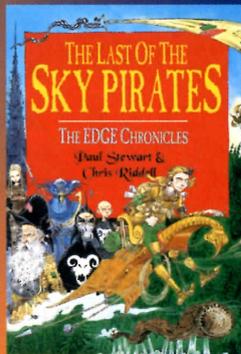
**JEREMY STRONG
POP-UPS
NEW PICTURE BOOKS**



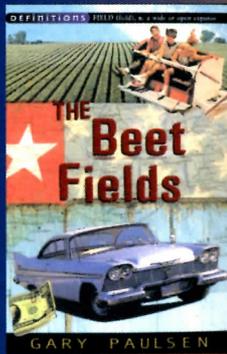


Benedict Blathwayt

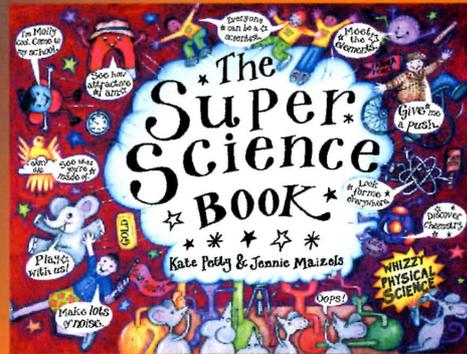
0091884810
October • £10.99 • hb



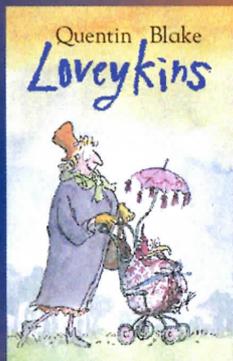
0385602006
September • £10.99 • hb



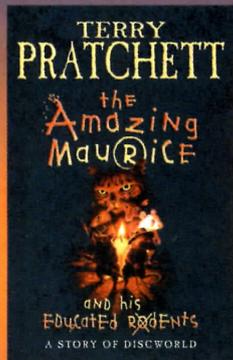
0099439654
September • £4.99 • pb



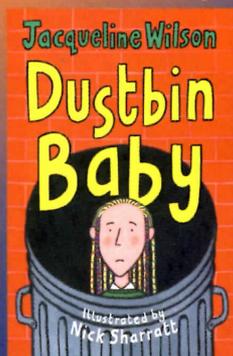
0370325842
August • £14.99 • hb



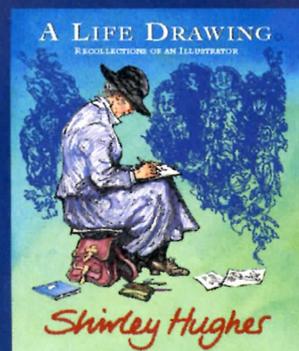
0224064711
October • £10.99 • hb



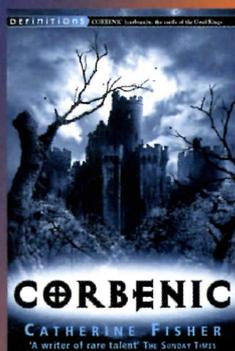
0552546933
November • £5.99 • pb



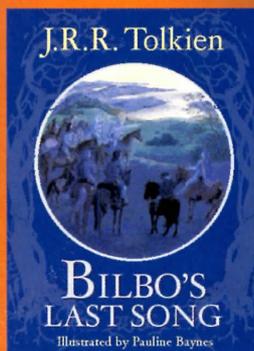
0552547964
October • £4.99 • pb



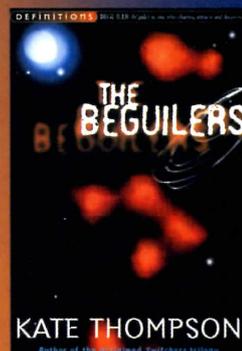
0370326059
September • £19.99 • hb



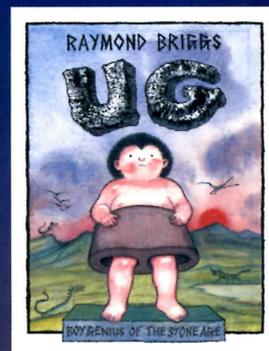
0099438488
July • £4.99 • pb



0091884888
October • £7.99 • hb



0099411490
October • £4.99 • pb



0099417898
October • £5.99 • pb

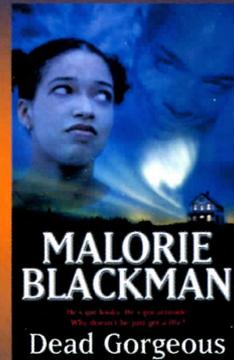


RANDOM HOUSE CHILDREN'S BOOKS

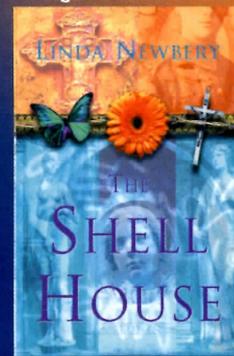
The new home of the
best children's books,
all under one roof!



0099439247
July • £3.99 • pb



0385600097
August • £10.99 • hb



0385603894
July • £10.99 • hb

Jonathan Cape • Hutchinson • The Bodley Head • Doubleday • David Fickling Books • Corgi • Red Fox

Random House Children's Books, 61-63 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, London W5 5SA Tel 020 8231 6800 • Random House Children's Books is a division of The Random House Group Ltd

Contents

- 3** Editorial
-
- 4** Popping Up All Over
Geoff Fox on movable books.
-
- 6** The Art of Looking at Things
Joanna Carey on new picture books.
-
- 7** Hal's Reading Diary
Roger Mills on his son Hal at 16 months.
-
- 8** The Wicor Ten
Sue Leach on an innovative reading project.
-
- 9** BfK Profile
Lois Keith on the novels of Helen Flint.
-
- 10** Adult Books Teenagers Read
Julia Eccleshare on the books that attract teens.
-
- 12** Authorgraph No.135
Jeremy Strong interviewed by Jeff Hynds.
-
- 14** BfK Briefing
News • Prizes • Events • People • Useful Organisation • Letters to the Editor • I Wish I'd Written • Good Reads
-
- 17** Reviews
Index of Titles and Star Ratings 17
Reviewers 17
Books About Children's Books 18
Now Out in Paperback 18
Under 5s (Pre-School/Nursery/Infant) 19
5-8 (Infant/Junior) 19
8-10 (Junior/Middle) 21
10-12 (Middle/Secondary) 22
+ New Talent 23
+ Editor's Choice 24
12+ (Secondary) 25
14+ (Secondary/Adult) 26
-
- 28** Classics in Short
No.34
Brian Alderson on Molesworth.

CoverStory

This issue's cover illustration by Nick Sharratt is from Jeremy Strong's *Krazy Kow Saves the World - Well, Almost*.

Jeremy Strong is interviewed by Jeff Hynds on page 12. Thanks to Puffin for their help with this July cover.



EDITORIAL



Rosemary Stones

In this issue of BfK we introduce for the first time a 14+ age category into our review section. This has been prompted by new developments in publishing for older readers which have seen the emergence of 'crossover' titles which are marketed to appeal to both teenage and adult readers and by the increasing number of novels with 'contentious' subject matter.

This new age category of course raises yet again the question of the usefulness and validity of such inevitably arbitrary divisions. We have probably all met the ten-year-old who has read

The Lord of the Rings with pleasure and understanding as well as the ten-year-old who can barely read. BfK always prefaces its review section with a preamble which reads, 'Books and children being varied and adaptable, we suggest that you look either side of your area.' We also always include a list of picture books reviewed which are 'suitable for older readers'.

But age categories remain a crude business. As one of our reviewers commented: 'I have seen Y9 / 14 year-old boys this year hooked by *The Wind Singer* (BfK No.134, 8-10 age category) and *At the Crossing-Places* (BfK No. 134, 10-12 age category) - no sense of immaturity. Bright students (aiming for Level 7 English) reading at their age and stage.' Were these books then put in the 'wrong' age category or should we have found a way to make it clearer that they would *also* appeal to older readers?

In my Editorial in BfK No. 133 I discussed some of our readers' reactions to my review of Benjamin Lebert's *Crazy* (Puffin), in which I did not mention that the teenage hero has sex. I have just finished reading a wonderful 'crossover' novel, *Across the Nightingale Floor* (to be published later this year by Macmillan) in which we learn that the 15-year-old hero visits brothels. Time, I thought, for a 14+ age category. Or should it be 15+?

Our reviewers' replies when I asked for their views were varied:

'15+ seems a far too old category just so that you can include *Across the Nightingale Floor*. Surely teachers can bear a trip to a brothel before that? After all, it is set in the long distant past...didn't they do things differently then?'

'Are you sure *you're* ready for reading of this kind? I should give it a year or two yet... I



This Amazing World, compiled by Lois Rock, published by Lion, gets a five-star review on page 20.

round and go for Key Stage Nursery, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, rather than trying to be age specific. Your current problem would then slip into KS5. Such categorisations are in common parlance for most of your readers in education and should not be alien to any librarian worth its salt. As for content, this stuff has to be handled with a clear health warning to the teacher/librarian mediators. I remember *Forever*. Parents have lots of *rights* you see and love to use them through the press or local radio. The wrong parent, the right little stirrer child and a public worker's career or a school's reputation can be dented badly by promoting this dreadfully subversive stuff...

Phew! But what are your views on or experiences of this topic? We look forward to hearing.

Rosemary

BOOKS FOR KEEPS
the children's book magazine

JULY 2002 No. 135

ISSN 0143-909X © School Bookshop Assoc. Ltd 2002

Editor: Rosemary Stones
Managing Director: Richard Hill
Design: Alec Davis, Rondale Design
Printed: The Friary Press, Dorchester, Dorset

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

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

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

Tel: 020 8852 4953
Fax: 020 8318 7580

E-mail: booksforkeeps@btinternet.com

Annual subscription for six issues: £20.50 (UK), £23.50 (Europe including Ireland), £26.50 (airmail).

Single copies: £3.45 (UK), £3.95 (Europe including Ireland), £4.45 (airmail).

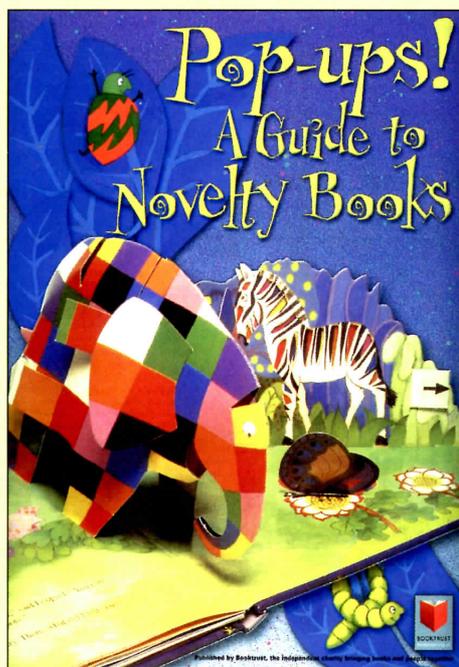
POPPING UP ALL OVER:

WITH THE HIGH PRODUCTION COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH HAND-ASSEMBLY, POP-UPS NEED A LARGE INITIAL PRINT RUN. AND YET, THIS AREA OF CHILDREN'S PUBLISHING RECEIVES RELATIVELY LITTLE CRITICAL ATTENTION. GEOFF FOX DISCUSSES A NEW GUIDE TO THE FIELD AS WELL AS SOME RECENT TITLES.

A typical hardback print run for a children's novel might well be only 3,000 copies; a movable book, on the other hand, might be produced in a run of 50,000 or more, for sale in several languages around the world. Yet reviewing attention focuses on the novel while the movable slips onto the 'Novelty' shelves of the bookseller almost unremarked.

Reviewers have rarely been comfortable with the discussion of movable books. They can adapt the machinery of literary criticism to children's novels readily enough; even construct a child's response to a text by drawing upon memories of their own childhood. There are few models to work from – little has been written about movables and some of the best of what there was has gone out of print or appeared in articles in ephemeral and elusive magazines. There is no easily usable vocabulary for the discussion of movable books. How can a literary critic assess the quality of the work of a paper engineer, for example? Such an appraisal would require some knowledge of the history and the mechanics of the production of movable books.

NEW BOOKTRUST GUIDE



The Children's Literature Team at Booktrust have gone a long way to putting things to rights for the general reader as well as the reviewer in their latest publication, **Pop-ups! A Guide to Novelty Books**. Although noting that many of the queries they received about movables came from students on GCSE Graphics courses, they have defined their audience as 'children, parents, teachers, librarians and collectors who are interested in this form of children's literature'.

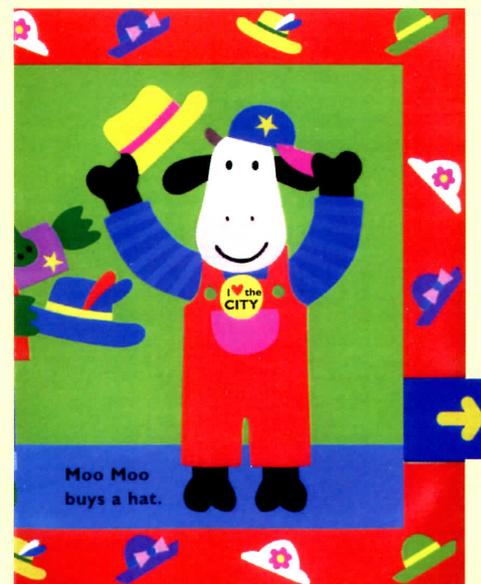
Quite rightly, given the lack of accessible information about movables, they assume no knowledge on the reader's part. So in the attractively designed and colourful 24 pages of this paperback guide, you can find: a brief and surprising history of the form; some definitions of terms from 'Carousel' to 'Volvelle' by way of 'Harlequinade' and 'Peep-Shows'; and a couple of breezy articles by expert makers of pop-up books. There are annotated lists of specialist booksellers, online resources and useful organisations; and a further list of 27 'favourite' titles including such famous landmark texts as the 1979 Kate Greenaway Medal winner **Haunted House** by Jan Pieńkowski.

There are also two pages of references which could open up this neglected field to those who wish to dig more deeply. Six of the recommendations provide practical instruction in the making of pop-up books, whilst the remaining twenty references will take the reader into the extraordinary means by which movables are engineered and published as well as the equally remarkable recent history of the form. Half a dozen of these pieces are by Michael Dawson, the leading British authority on the field. He is at once enthusiast, historian, pop-up repairer and specialist bookseller (Ampersand Books, Ludford Mill, Ludlow SY8 1PP).

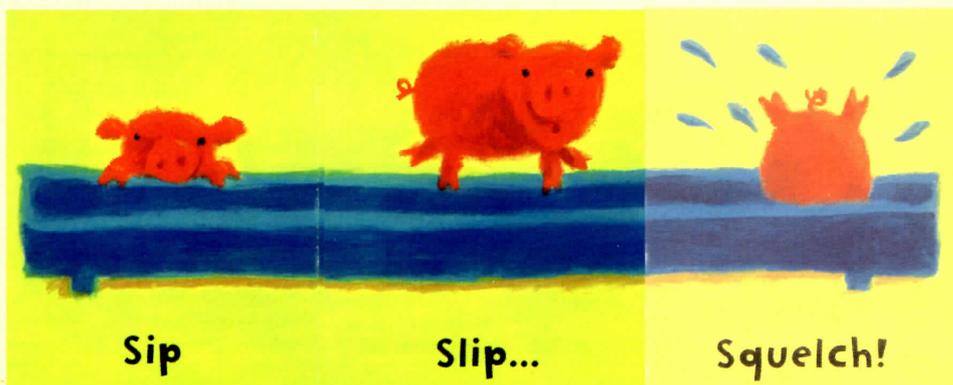
All in all, this is an admirable compilation; Sarah Harrington and Edgardo Zaghini of Booktrust have rendered a considerable service to those interested in children's books. They note, in their introduction, that 'novelty books play an important role in literacy development from an early age. Always visually stimulating, and usually designed to be physically explored, they instantly invite reader participation.' They point out the opportunities for physical and verbal interaction between young readers and the text, and between young readers and the sharing adult. Moreover, novelty books are invariably sheer good fun – part way between conventional picture book and toy.

RECENT TITLES

The batch of recent movables under consideration here is indeed written with those learning to read very much in mind. Christopher Gunson's **Animal Surprise!** plays with rhyme, sound and image. A frog watches a fly buzz by, and FLICK goes his tongue. On the facing page, his (?) tongue fastens onto the fly – STICK. Open this page out and behind the flap you reveal the same picture as for STICK but without the word. Then, as the flap is fully extended, we find a smilingly replete frog with the fly's wings just disappearing into his mouth – YUM! That's the pattern for similarly energetic adventures for a monkey, a duckling (WADDLE, HOP... PLOP!) and so on. Bright, large, slightly blurry-friendly pictures and lively words which readers will very quickly be sounding out for themselves.



Moo Moo goes to the city is a lift-the-flap, pull-the-tab trip for an amiable cow around the city – New York, it seems, given the benignly bovine Statue of Liberty. Simple paper engineering, strongly constructed, leads to a



From **Animal Surprise!**

NEW MOVABLE BOOKS

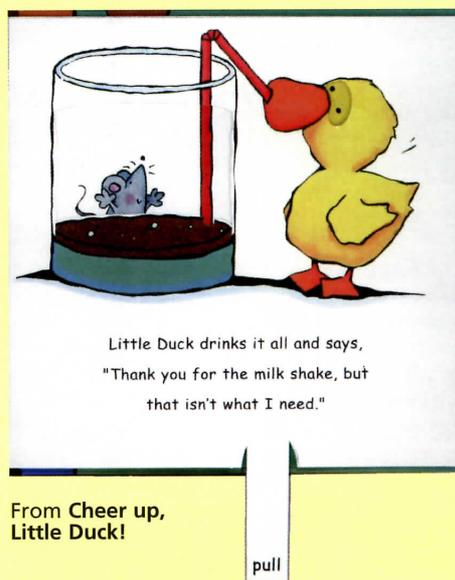
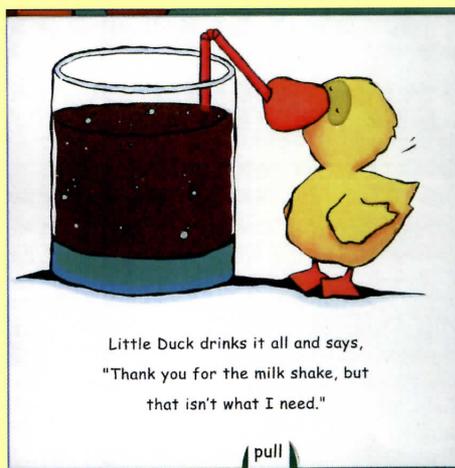
popping-up conclusion of serried skyscrapers as Moo Moo catches the bus home.



Oh no! A puncture! We can change the wheel.

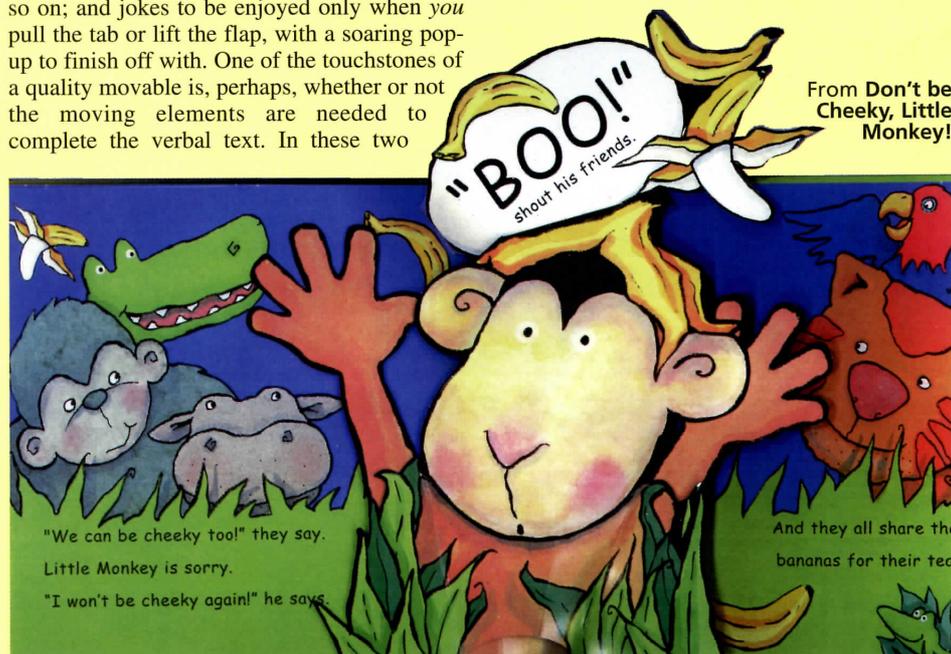
Let's Go Driving! takes us on a trip to the seaside. The text is straightforward and is reinforced by what we find, for example, when we lift the flap to check what's in the car boot (bucket and spade). No passengers except for us, and we are provided with a key to start the engine, indicators to check, a zebra crossing to stop at, and even a wheel to change when we get a puncture. For many children, the familiarity of such a journey already provides a known structure to help them into the narrative, though some of the paper engineering here might not withstand the vigorous treatment drivers will certainly give it. The slightly tacky texture of the paper in my new copy was already giving the car a rather jerkier ride than was intended; and I can't shift the tab out to sea on the last page to discover whether Jaws or Whatever is lurking out there among the bathers.

Cheer up, Little Duck! and **Don't be Cheeky, Little Monkey!** illustrated by Caroline Jayne Church (in the 'Little Friends' series) will give much delight. There are textures to touch – soft furry stuff, a flower centre as brittle as a pan scrub, a durable silver paper cake wrapper and so on; and jokes to be enjoyed only when you pull the tab or lift the flap, with a soaring pop-up to finish off with. One of the touchstones of a quality movable is, perhaps, whether or not the moving elements are needed to complete the verbal text. In these two



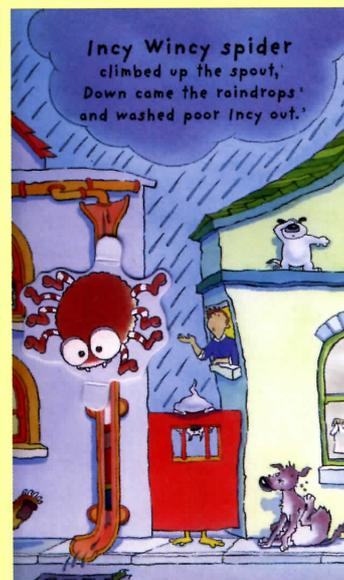
From **Cheer up, Little Duck!**

books, this is precisely the case and, as a consequence, there is the probability of numerous returns to the text since young readers love this kind of engagement – being on the inside of good jokes. They also make use of the movable book's essential capacity to



From **Don't be Cheeky, Little Monkey!**

From **Five Little Monkeys**



surprise and to provoke a smile of pleasure at the wit and ingenuity of the book's creators.

Perhaps the most interactive of these books in the terms used by the Booktrust Guide is **Five Little Monkeys**. This collection of 'Best-loved Action Rhymes' addresses a dual audience. Parents are given precise instructions about how best to suit the action to the word whilst their children join in the rhymes and actions, no doubt also 'working' the pictures. The rhymes are mostly oldies (or variations on them) such as 'Here we go round the mulberry bush', 'Pat-a-cake, Pat-a-cake' or 'Row, row, row your boat'. You might need a few extra hands to manage all of the manoeuvres simultaneously, but no doubt someone at Templar Publishing has road-tested all of them. Certainly, someone at Templar (who also publish the 'Little Friends' series) has a very keen sense of how children learn to read, and how they can have a great time doing so. ■

Geoff Fox edits **Children's Literature in Education** and is an honorary research fellow at Exeter University School of Education.

TITLES REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT

Pop-ups! A Guide to Novelty Books
The Children's Literature Team, Booktrust,
Booktrust, 24pp, 0 85353 491 8, £5.00 pbk

Animal Surprise!
Christopher Gunson, Doubleday, 16pp,
0 385 60223 5, £10.99 hbk

Moo Moo goes to the city
Jo Lodge, Bodley Head, 14pp, 0 370 32624 5,
£9.99 hbk

Let's Go Driving!
Gus Clarke, Walker, 12pp, 0 7445 8110 9,
£7.99 hbk

Cheer up, Little Duck!
1 84011 805 9

Don't be Cheeky, Little Monkey!
1 84011 810 5

Ronne Randall, ill. Caroline Jayne Church,
paper engineering by Keith Finch, Templar,
18pp, £7.99 each hbk

Five Little Monkeys
Ill. David Melling, Templar, 24pp,
1 84011 058 9, £8.99 hbk

The Art of Looking at Things: New Picture Books

There is a vast – almost unruly – number of picture books published each year for young children, but, with so little scope for any critical discussion beyond the usual short reviews, we do sometimes seem to be in danger of taking for granted the rich diversity of the artwork, and the vigour and intensity with which some artists undertake the responsibility of introducing children to art, and the art of looking at things. **Joanna Carey** discusses four new and very different picture books which all have a natural history theme.

Currently, there is an astonishing variety in style and form in picture book publishing, that ranges from innovation within old traditions, to ground-breaking use of new technology but, frustratingly, we are seldom given any insight as to how the images are produced. So, one of the great things about John Lawrence's book, **This Little Chick**, is his explanatory note about the engravings.

The art of wood engraving

When children's books themselves were in their infancy, they were illustrated with woodcuts and Lawrence's work echoes not just the boldness of the the early chap book, but also the innovative work of Thomas Bewick who, in the 18th century, brought a new finesse to the art of wood engraving. Lawrence's illustrations are engraved on vinyl rather than

wood, and in addition to the engravings, he uses watercolour washes and printed wood textures and the lettering is created from an alphabet engraved on vinyl, so the book has an organic feel to it, with the words being an essential part of the design. Lawrence has a very distinctive line and a vigorous engraving technique that gives the book a rhythmic energy and in this lively – and ultimately rather noisy – story, about an adventurous little chick who sets out to meet all the other creatures in the neighbourhood, he imbues all the characters – cows, pigs, sheep, frogs – even tadpoles and bees – with an infectious *joie de vivre*.

This is a beautifully produced book and turning the pages is like seeing the prints fresh from the press – the fine quality of the reproduction gives an inky lustre to the bold black lines, and with glowing colours and vibrant textures this is not just a glorious picture book but also, in the classroom, a valuable source of inspiration for young printmakers.

Exquisite drawing

The Happy Bee by Ian Beck is a quieter, more reflective tale. With his enchanting mellifluous watercolour technique (presumably it is watercolour, though it is hard to tell here, since the paper is very shiny), Beck gives us a child's eye view of a lavish array of garden flowers as, one by one, they are visited by a bee. Bees can be scary, but not this one; although the flowers are realistically painted, Beck has wisely made the bee a gentle, unthreatening roly-poly character with an innocent smile and impeccable manners who politely greets all the flowers by name, and hovers patiently while the artist zooms in to explore the very different qualities of each bloom – the subtle, secret folds of the rose, the forthright simplicity of the

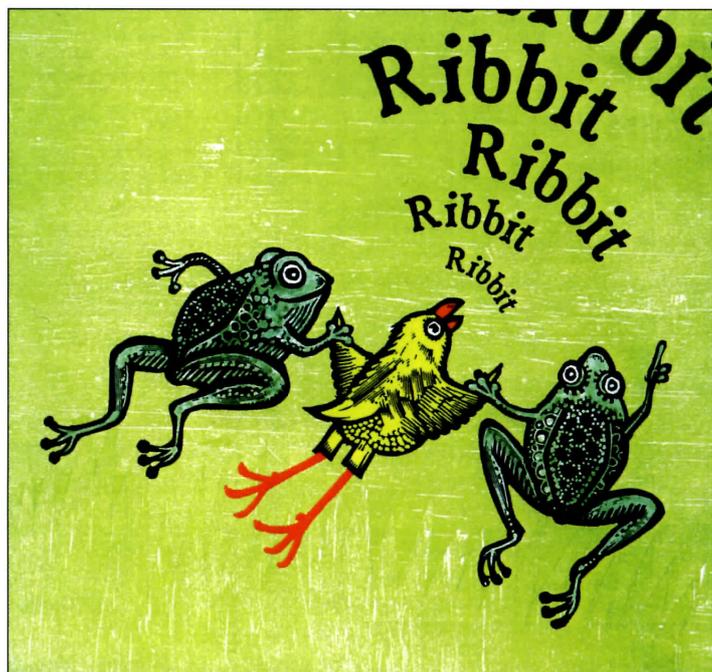
daisy, the racy but ephemeral flamboyance of the poppies and the exotic allure of the lilies with their creamy lolling tongues. The flowers, the foliage and the opening buds are exquisitely drawn and the gentle stitchery of Beck's pencil line is subtly echoed in the texture of the thread with which the pages are sewn together – and along with the stiff, deliciously smooth card on which it's printed, the feel of that linen thread, when you run your finger down it, adds to the very tactile qualities of this handsome and robustly made book.

Experimental, unconventional ways

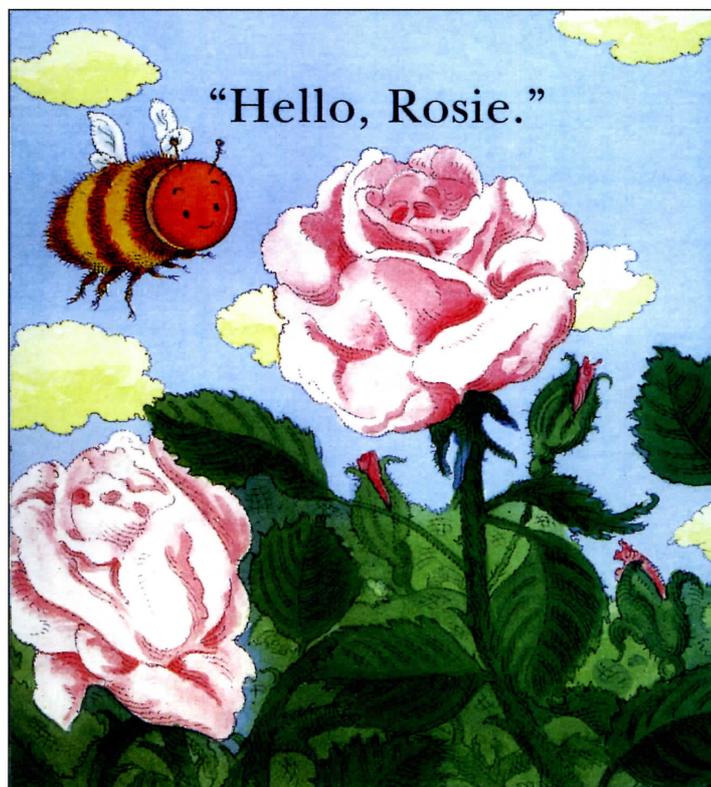
With **First Flight**, Sara Fanelli takes a very different look at natural history – and a very different approach to the art of illustration. Fanelli is one of a newish wave of illustrators whose publishers have allowed them to spread their wings a little in experimental, unconventional ways. This is the story of a newly hatched butterfly who longs to launch herself on the world but can't quite get the hang of flying. Full of eccentric details that invite endless exploration, these pictures take the shape of intricate collages, made with an intriguing mix of snipped up sepia prints, bus tickets, stamps, fabrics, graph paper, evocative snatches of old-fashioned handwriting, pieces of yellowing newsprint, and arcane diagrams. With tremendous delicacy and subtle orchestration of these disparate elements, and atmospheric use of colour and texture, Fanelli's puppet-like characters manage to convey all kinds of emotion and there's an impish magic in the spiky hieroglyphic drawings which haunt odd corners of these pages.

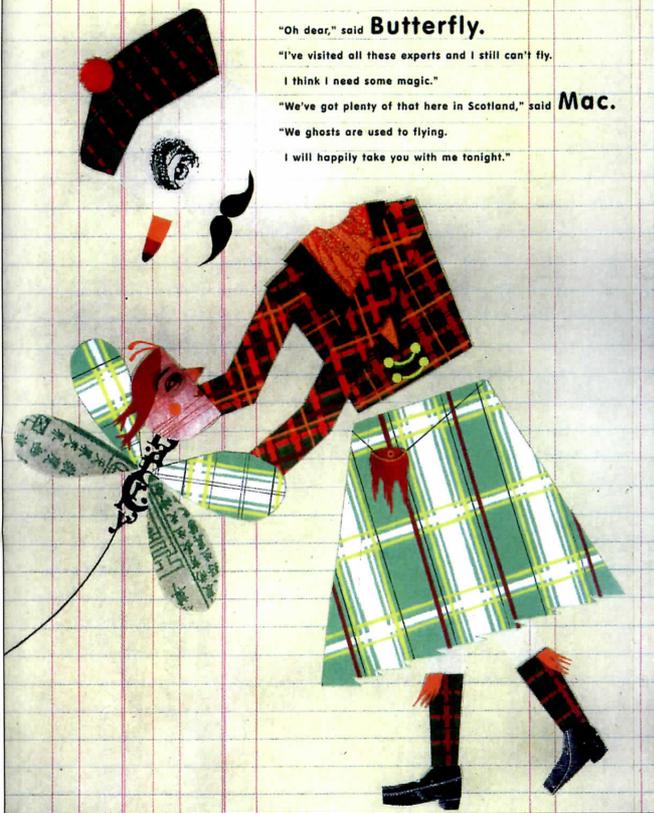
Anarchic untidiness

In contrast to the precision of Fanelli's,



Above, from **The Little Chick**; right, from **The Happy Bee**.





"Oh dear," said **Butterfly.**

"I've visited all these experts and I still can't fly.

I think I need some magic."

"We've got plenty of that here in Scotland," said **Mac.**

"We ghosts are used to flying.

I will happily take you with me tonight."

Left,
from
**First
Flight**;
right,
from
**Oscar
and
Arabella.**



elegantly controlled compositions, Neal Layton's story about two woolly mammoths, **Oscar and Arabella**, has a deliberately scrawly anarchic untidiness. Making use of a computer (perhaps?) Layton brings together panoramic photographic images, watercolour washes, charcoal squiggles, torn paper textures and inky splodges to create authentic backgrounds for the absurd antics of the two woolly mammoths. In witty contrast to the sophisticated traces of the 'real' cave paintings that you can just make out on the rock face, Oscar and Arabella are huge shapeless

creatures, loosely drawn with scribbly fur, unwieldy tusks and tender pink extremities – but they have enormous charm, galumphing about on the ice, climbing trees and squirting water at *Early Man* – a curmudgeonly creature, selfishly guarding his fire ... but besides all the prehistoric slapstick humour there are moments of calm and sobriety – including a handwritten note with some useful facts about woolly mammoths; and the penultimate spread shows the two mammoths in a touching sleepy embrace, their curving tusks gently echoing the sickle shape of the crescent moon. ■

Joanna Carey is a writer and illustrator.

This Little Chick, John Lawrence, Walker, 0 7445 7534 6, £10.99 hbk

The Happy Bee, Ian Beck, Scholastic, 0 439 99262 1, £10.99 hbk

First Flight, Sara Fanelli, Cape, 0 224 06457 6, £10.99 hbk

Oscar and Arabella, Neal Layton, Hodder, 0 340 79719 3, £9.99 hbk, 0 340 79720 7, £4.99 pbk

Hal's Reading Diary

Things seem to be changing in the way Hal Mills, now 16 months, sees images on the page. His father, **Roger Mills**, explains.

One of my son Hal's favourite books from the beginning of his 'reading' career has been a touchy-feely title called **That's Not My Tractor**. Every page features a schematised drawing of a tractor, part of which is made of a textured material. There's a tractor with a trailer made of sandpaper with the caption 'That's not my tractor, its trailer is too rough'. One with soft plastic panels for tyres is the wrong tractor because the wheels are 'too squashy'.

As well as the tractors, a recurrent motif in each picture is a little white mouse, and though it is difficult to be sure exactly how Hal saw things, in the early days it seemed as though he never noticed the mouse. When each page opened up he would always put his finger straight on to the textured bit, but when we pointed out the mouse his response was to simply look blank.

Around 15 months though, Hal started noticing and pointing to the mouse. It seemed as if something fairly important had changed in the way he saw images on a page, as if before the mouse was just part of an overall pattern, not noteworthy in its own right, whereas now he could see it as an object standing out from the overall pattern.

The shift in his way of looking at the book is part of a broader shift in Hal's way of seeing the world. Pointing has become one of Hal's big things at the moment. He is constantly jabbing a finger out, drawing attention to something. Often it is cars or trees. Our cat gets the finger on the occasions she is rash enough to stay around and get noticed (her tail

getting pulled is the inevitable consequence of being spotted). Sometimes you haven't a clue what he has seen, but what does seem clear is that he is now noticing things in a way that he didn't when he was smaller.

In the last issue I talked about how theorists like John Bowlby have argued that infants at this stage start to recognise that they are distinct from mother, a separate person. And it seems likely both that this new way of seeing is a crucial part of recognising that mum is another person, and that the knowledge that she is distinct from you, encourages you to see objects as separate. Before, when Hal looked at our garden, I think he saw something like an overall pattern, a visual field the brain made relatively little sense of. When he looks now though, it is as if he is seeing a field full of distinct, different things – trees, plants, pots. He has started to see a world full of objects.

Seeing things as distinct objects enables another crucial shift. You start to realise that there are categories of objects. Tall things with trunks and leaves and branches, though they don't all look exactly the same, nevertheless belong to the same family. They are all trees. It is no accident that it is at this stage, at the time when infants start to see that there are families of objects, that words first appear. Not long after Hal started pointing to things, he began to say his first words ('car' being the first arrival, closely followed by 'tree'). A new capacity to see has ushered in a way of thinking in which, for the first time, it made sense to use words. These are tiny and very normal steps if you don't think about them. But in the development of a mind they are quantum leaps. ■

Roger Mills is a Psychodynamic Counsellor.



The Wicor Ten

No, not a campaign to overturn a miscarriage of justice, but the name of a reading initiative for school beginners that sprang out of a chance remark made by Hampshire Divisional Children's Librarian, **Sue Leach**, on a school visit. She explains...

When I was visiting Headteacher Mark Wildman's school, Wicor Primary, he mentioned that his Reception Year pupils often joined the school lacking the exposure to books that they needed to develop their imaginative and language skills. He had been amazed at the zeal shown by many parents of older children in getting hold of the recommended books for Key Stage 1 SATs, and felt that if we could tap into this enthusiasm with the parents of the new Reception intake children even before they started school in September, we might begin to address some of these concerns.

The local library in Portchester had not taken part in the past in the national summer reading game, so with the approval of the staff there, I worked with the school to devise a scheme that would involve the children in reading ten picture books over the summer holidays. For every book the children read, they received a stamp in a passport that the school had produced and given out at a new parents' evening at the end of the summer term. I attended this evening to speak about the scheme.

We started the scheme in July and ended it in September, giving parents plenty of time to visit the library. When the children had read their ten books, Portchester library staff gave them a folder with a certificate, pictures to colour in, a sticker and a bookmark. As an extra incentive, Mark bought each child who completed the scheme a book to keep. These were presented to the children at a school assembly during National Children's Book Week in October.

Evaluation

It was important for all concerned that we evaluate the scheme. Of 49 Reception children, 41 started and finished 'Wicor Ten'. 22 children (and one adult!) joined Portchester library to take part. There were, of course, other, less quantifiable results, some of which are alluded to in the comments from people directly involved in the scheme.

The library staff welcomed the chance to get to know the parents and children, and to talk informally to them. They had set aside a special area in the library with a low table to put the Wicor Ten books on, which made it more special for the children. I had bought in extra copies of the books so that there were at least five copies of each title available. When the scheme ended, these books were dispersed around the rest of the division's libraries.

The school bought a set of the books for each reception class, so

'The Wicor Ten, for me as a class teacher, was a very positive experience. It was a good start to the children's first year at Wicor, as they had a positive connection with the school before their first day. The ten books chosen for the children were also new additions to my classroom, and the children were pleased to see them when they came to school: it gave them a sense of familiarity and security. It also certainly assisted in developing some early reading skills. Those who participated couldn't wait to give me their stamped passport book to show that they had completed the activity. The children were praised in class and congratulated in an assembly by being rewarded with a certificate and a book. The children still choose the books as old favourites and we enjoy sharing them as a class. I hope the scheme is able to run again because it was a huge success for all involved.'

Kelly Mansbridge,
Reception Teacher and
Early Years Manager,
Wicor Primary School.



Carleen
and Emma
Warner

'When the book was presented to the Reception children in October, I innocently asked the children if they recognised the books that I had put out on display (the Wicor Ten). "It's the Wicor Ten," many said. "What's the Wicor Ten?" I challenged. This time a sea of confident hands shot up, and I selected one earnest looking boy who proceeded to name each of the books in turn. Amazing and unprecedented!'

Mark Wildman, Headteacher,
Wicor Primary School

that the children would see familiar titles in their classroom when they started school.

Would we do it again? A resounding yes from both the library and the school! By working so closely together, we hope that we have fostered an enjoyment that will last throughout those children's lives. It is a project that is certainly being considered for implementing in libraries in other parts of Hampshire. ■

'The Wicor Ten was great fun to do over the summer holidays. Emma thoroughly enjoyed going to the library and choosing her books. The choice was excellent and it was a delight to read with her. Emma herself enjoyed the books that made her laugh – even now we have a giggle over the books we read. Emma loved collecting the stamps in her book, and it made her very happy the day she received her tenth and final stamp. We all as a family enjoyed the Wicor Ten – it was an excellent idea and a good way of introducing young children to the world of books.'

Carleen Warner, mother of
Emma

The Wicor Ten Picture Books:

Duck in the Truck, Jez Alborough, Picture Lions, 0 00 664717 0, £4.99

Little Robots, Mike Brownlow, Ragged Bears, 1 85714 194 6, £7.50 hbk

Fran's Flower, Lisa Bruce, ill. Rosalind Beardshaw, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 4674 6, £4.99

I Love You, Blue Kangaroo, Emma Chichester Clark, Picture Lions, 0 00 664684 0, £4.99

Hairy Maclary and Zachary Quack, Lynley Dodd, Puffin, 0 14 056773 9, £4.99

Monkey Puzzle, Julia Donaldson, ill. Axel Scheffler, Macmillan, 0 333 72001 6, £4.99

Picnic, Mick Inkpen, Hodder, 0 340 78850 X, £3.99

Bears in my Bed, Michael Irwin, David Bennett, 1 85602 396 6, £4.99

Goal!, Colin McNaughton, Picture Lions, 0 00 714011 8, £4.99

Rocket Countdown!, Nick Sharratt, Walker, 0 7445 7802 7, £5.99

Selection criteria: a range of titles that would have some appeal for everyone; in paperback; published, preferably, in the last year, so they would be new to everyone. We *are* doing the scheme again this year, but with a different lot of titles.

Sue Leach is Divisional Children's Librarian, Hampshire County Library Service.

BfK PROFILE

Energy and Humour

Like many women, Helen Flint did not start writing until her youngest child was at school but she made up for it in the years that followed. Between 1987 and her early death in January 2000, she wrote three adult novels, a poetry collection and three novels for teenagers. Her semi autobiographical first novel, **Return Journey**, was published by Heinemann in 1987 and won the Betty Trask Award and this was followed by two more adult novels, **In Full Possession**, 1989, and **Making the Angels Weep**, 1992.

Her three teenage novels followed; **Not Just Dancing**, 1993, **Not Just Babysitting**, 1997, and **Not Just Rescuing**, 2002, have been reissued with what publishers describe as a 'new cover look', attractive and colourful, but which suggest a younger readership than the one Helen Flint probably intended. Her stories are concerned with the universals of teenage fiction: the desire to address serious issues with candour and wit, problems with adults (particularly argumentative and sometimes unreasonable parents or relatives), insecurity, young love which doesn't always go smoothly and learning that life is 'not just' about one thing. Helen Flint became disabled as an adult and died in January 2000 at the age of 47 from a rare inherited

degenerative disease. Disabled people and some of the issues they face find their way into her stories, but not always in ways the reader might expect.

One reviewer described **Not Just Dancing** as 'a cross between **Strictly Ballroom** and **Waiting for God**'. Geraldine, a talented dancer, misses out on finding a work experience placement and has to spend the week working with her mother who is a Home Help. Her response to an encounter with disabled people is a conventional one. 'Oh, *lucky* me. Lucky not to be blind or deaf or mute or limbleless or spastic or wracked with pain – oh, lucky me to have endless opportunity for enjoying life!' and she describes a disabled person she sees as having a face like 'Fungus the Bogeyman'. But as the story develops, she gains insight to some of the insensitive, even hostile attitudes elderly and disabled people have to deal with and begins to genuinely care for two of her mum's clients. Flint's research on ballroom dancing gives energy and life to this part of the story (including a description of how you walk forwards while appearing to walk backwards in disco dancing) and the romantic subplot with her new dancing partner Sunil, a posh grammar school boy, is entertaining if a tad unlikely.

Not Just Babysitting is in many ways the most successful of the three books.

Lois Keith on the novels of **HELEN FLINT**



It is set in Canada where Helen Flint lived as a student. Like her other books, the style is warm and lively, and the familiar elements – eccentric families, money worries, work, first love, the desire for happiness and stability – fit together very comfortably in this story. Sandra's Eastern European father has just lost his job. Money is very short and so, together with her sister Meg and their mother, she decides to start a nursery at Beznobar, their magical, half built summer home. Beznobar is 'our Sacred Place', infused with the legends told by her Native Canadian mother. But their father passionately believes that everything that is wrong in the universe is because of childminding and so they have to lie to him. The nursery is a great success but the father feels betrayed and family harmony teeters on the edge of collapse. The story has strong secondary characters: Jason, an extraordinarily naughty under-five, and Paul, the rich wild boy next door. Sandra realises that she cares for Paul when he kisses Meg and then, confusingly, kisses her. What does this mean? The problem of how to interpret that thrilling but fleeting first kiss is well told in all three of the 'Not Just...' books.

Not Just Rescuing is the book that deals most directly with

disability, and tells the story of Joanna and her disabled brother Ralph. The 'rescuing' in the title refers mostly to animal rescue when Joanna and her brother are sent to spend the summer with their eccentric and not obviously loveable aunt. Reluctantly at first, Joanna sets about rescuing and then releasing swans, flying pigeons and sundry lost kittens. There are acute and sometimes disturbing observations on what it must be like to be disabled and Joanna's complicated feelings about her brother and the world's response to him. 'Everyone loves Ralph more than they love me... Sometimes, just for a moment, a nanosecond really, I wish I was the one in the wheelchair and needing rescuing.' But like all books where a character's story is told second-hand through a narrator, we learn more about Joanna's take on disability rather than Ralph's own view of the world.

Helen Flint brought energy and humour to her stories. Describing a dream she writes 'Reality thumbs its nose at me by slowing down just when I most need to run or shout or warn someone – the floor becomes toffee, the air wool, the voice dead.' Sadly true in her case, but these stories might well survive the test of time. ■

Not Just Dancing, 224pp, 0 7497 4604 1
Not Just Babysitting, 160pp, 0 7497 4605 X
Not Just Rescuing, 128pp, 0 7497 4163 5
 Egmont Books, new editions 2002, £4.99 each pbk

Lois Keith's most recent book is **Take Up Thy Bed and Walk: Death, Disability and Cure in Classic Fiction for Girls** (The Women's Press).



ADULT BOOKS TEENAGERS READ

If the notion that children's books can be 'crossover' fiction – ie read by all ages – is a relatively new one, the idea that adult books can – and moreover should – be read by children is ages old. In fact, the idea of a separate teenage literature, though first put forward by the educationalist Sarah Trimmer in 1802 (she defined 'young adulthood' as the years between 14 and 21), only really took hold in the 1960s when being a teenager became defined as a time of separation from both childhood and full adulthood in behaviour, taste and, above all, consumer spending.

To meet the new demand for teen titles, British publishers began to publish first liberal Swedish imports such as Gunnel Beckman's *Mia* which were soon followed by American and even home grown 'daring' teenage novels such as Judy Blume's *Forever*, Honor Arundel's *The Longest Weekend*, K M Peyton's 'Pennington' series and Aidan Chambers' *Breaktime*.

But for teenagers novels such as these were only ever a stopgap before moving onto adult literature, making the jump from children's books to adult reading seem easier. 'Teen' books were tailored to their audience: fashioned and intended to deal with much the same matters as many adult books – most notably relationships and even sex – but in an 'appropriate' way. There was a kind of *cordon sanitaire* which controlled the risks. Perhaps only Melvin Burgess's *Junk* has truly broken out – though even that quickly became a stepping stone to Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* which adolescents embraced wholeheartedly, despite the qualms of their parents.

These books were useful, certainly, but not the same as adult books and especially the kind of adult books that teenagers most like to read.

What do teenagers read?

So what do teenagers read and why? Interestingly, despite changing fashions and the perception that 'teenagers are so different nowadays', the reasons that teenagers enjoy reading adult books have remained remarkably constant. Not only that, but even

The jump from children's books to adult books is now increasingly enabled by 'crossover' titles. But what sort of adult books attract teenage readers and why? **Julia Eccleshare** explores.

some of the titles have remained the same.

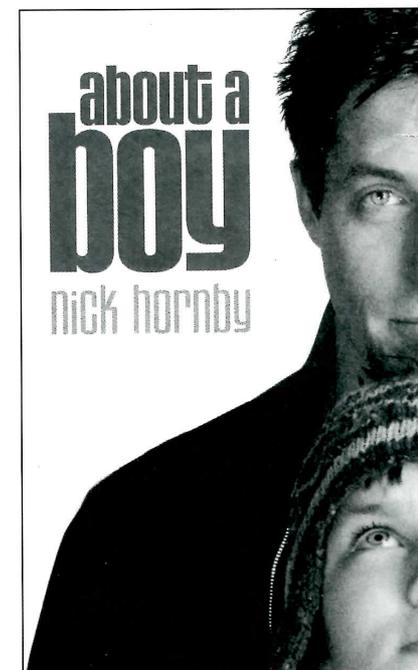
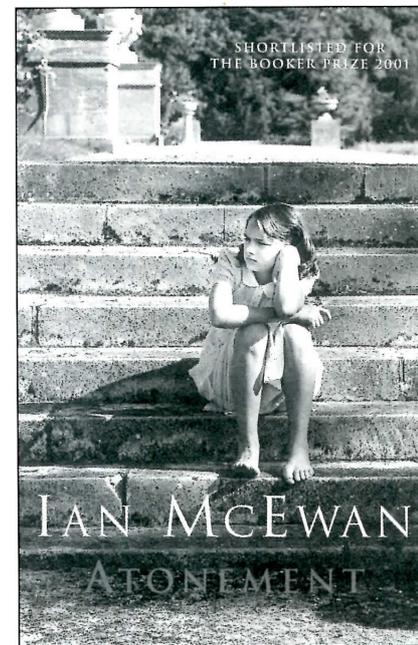
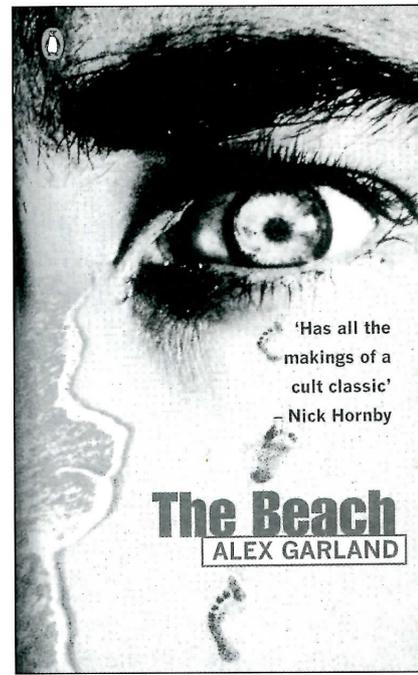
Though often depicted as demons of destruction and revolt, teenagers are people, too and their prime motive for reading is to be entertained and/or informed. They read to find out about what matters to them and changes in their reading tastes mark the shift from childhood perceptions and interests to adult ones. In his recent book, *The Child that Books Built* [see review on p18], Francis Spufford describes some of the changes that occur in the move from children's to adult books in the following way: 'Fiction recomplicates itself for you: you step up a whole level of complexity. Suddenly you are surrounded anew by difficulties and riches commensurate with your state of mind. From an exhausted territory, you have come to an unexplored one, where manners and conventions are all to find, just like the rules of your own new existence in your own new lurch-prone adolescent body.'

But the shift is not perfect or complete which is why only some adult books appeal. And this is where teenagers become a particular category. The immediacy of what matters to them is different from what matters to the child they have left behind or the adult they will become.

Sexual knowledge and romance

The easiest shift to chart is the need for greater sexual knowledge. The one governing reason why teenagers once read *Fanny Hill*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* or even *Lolita* so eagerly was simply the sex. Now, though there are still remarkably few children's books which include even mildly explicit sex, every aspect of sex is on display in every other medium. But blatant display is different from the hot heat that print can give, so maybe reading about sex – especially as it can be done privately – remains an important consideration.

But, even more than sex, adult books provide romance. For those who like the predictable and don't mind the stereotyping of women, Georgette Heyer, Catherine Cookson and more recently Jilly Cooper fulfil that need. For



older and more sophisticated readers, the nineteenth-century classics **Jane Eyre** and **Wuthering Heights** (though I defy most teenagers to have full understanding of what was going on in these two, given the need to know more about jealousy than one hopes most teenagers will) mark the transition into adult readers. Jane Austen's **Pride and Prejudice** with all its delicious irony – something almost entirely lacking in children's books – still inspires huge affection in teenagers who identify with the jigs and reels of the formal courtship of the day. From the early twentieth century, Daphne du Maurier's **Rebecca** stands out as an example of romance blended with mystery and malevolence that seems to touch adolescents deeply.

Yearning, that state of longing and being 'in between', still seems as prevalent in teenagers as when Carson McCullers captured it so accurately in **The Member of the Wedding** in which the motivation of the adult world is only partly understood and decoded. Before her, L P Hartley wrote with the same half-informed perspective in **The Go-Between** while most recently, Ian McEwan's **Atonement**, the story of how 13-year-old Briony Tallis misreads the behaviour of the adults around her and so sets off a chain of disastrous events, captures the same mood.

In contrast, for those who prefer a more up-front view of life, the burgeoning 'chick lit' field led by Helen Fielding's **Bridget Jones's Diary** and Arabella Weir's **Does My Bum Look Big in This?** gives an up-to-the-minute view of how life might be giving 'guidance' – or what to avoid, depending on your inclination.

Male role models

Contemporary male role models are harder to find. Alex Garland's **The Beach** celebrates the appeal of the travelling culture with its largely hedonist values. Nick Hornby offers much more, giving about the best young male characters in his novels **Fever Pitch**, **High Fidelity** and **About a Boy** which capture various aspects of masculinity in a responsible and thoughtful way.

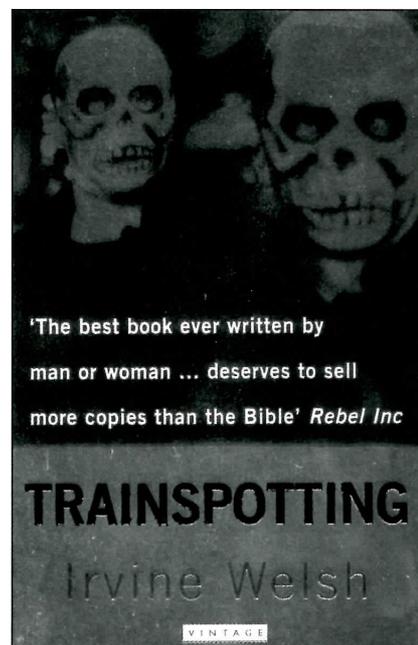
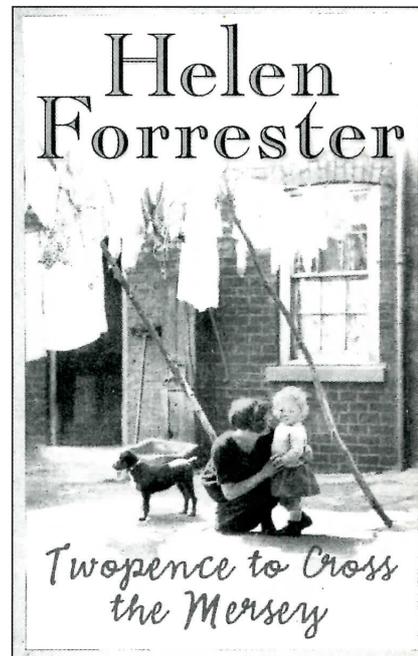
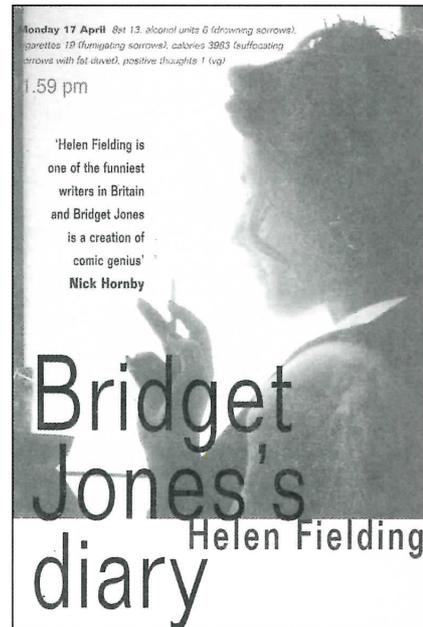
Me and not-me

Developmentally, as readers, teenagers are able to think about other people's motives and aspirations – to move from thinking about 'me' to 'outside me' and even teenagers are not so self-centred that they only want to read about themselves and their own preoccupations. Now, and always, teenagers also have interests far beyond sex and romance. GCSE examiners are quick to identify the kind of literature that appeals. The repeated appearance of both Harper Lee's **To Kill a Mockingbird** with its theme of small town racial prejudice and Atticus's fight for justice which teenagers find inspiring and William Golding's **Lord of the Flies** which explores what happens when teenagers are unsupervised by adults, indicates that justice – however that may be achieved – is an important preoccupation of the age group.

And beyond the particular, socially aware teenagers have a strong sense of the ills of the world. Issues of poverty, race and social exclusion appeal again and again. Classics of the American depression such as John Steinbeck's **Of Mice and Men**, political satires such as George Orwell's **Nineteen Eighty-Four**, memoirs of growing up poor in Liverpool in the depressions as in Helen Forrester's **Twopence to Cross the Mersey** or growing up in the face of racial prejudice as in Alice Walker's **The Color Purple** – all of these, though written for adults, appeal to teenagers curious about other childhoods at other times and how individuals came through them.

In a world of instant gratification and immediacy, adult books such as these provide teenagers with a slower and calmer world; a world in which the hectic condition of teenage is considered from the perspective of having passed it. By this means it is modified and refracted making it no less intense but just a little bit more controlled. Teenagers like to read the adult books that understand their urgency and help them to make something constructive of it. ■

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



Authorgraph No.135

Jeremy Strong interviewed by Jeff Hynds

Meeting Jeremy Strong was a bit of a surprise. I'm not entirely sure what I was expecting, but any reader of his books, full as they are of the madcap adventures of extraordinary characters, could be forgiven for anticipating an encounter with someone like an elderly Hell's Angel, or perhaps a huge, bearded and be-horned Viking warrior. In Jeremy's books such characters abound, and besides Lancelot, the Hell's Angel in **My Granny's Great Escape**, and Sigurd in **There's a Viking in My Bed**, you will soon encounter a mummified Pharaoh in someone's bath, a dog called Streaker that runs faster than a whirlwind, and an exceedingly dangerous vacuum cleaner, rejoicing in the name of Fatbag, intent on sucking up the world! Surely I would find, I thought, as I journeyed down through the quiet Kent countryside, an eccentric person at least. Who else would invent a louche though stunningly handsome royal prince who finds it amusing to fill his grandmother's ear trumpet with rice pudding? This improbable fellow is the villain of the piece in **The Karate Princess in MoNsta Trouble**, that is, apart from the actual 'MoNsta'. I should perhaps explain that 'MoNsta' is so spelt because that's how the semi-literate Dudless the 'Duck' (sic) of Dork spells it when he summons Belinda, the clever and cunning Karate Princess, to help him defeat a creature (with '2 hedz') that is 'teRRoRyzing' his dukedom. Are you beginning to feel like I felt?

I suppose I should have foreseen it, but the surprise was that Jeremy is nothing like his highly imaginative creations. As is the way with creative writers, his crazily conceived characters all live in his extraordinarily inventive mind. He himself is a modest, thoughtful man. Indeed I found him and his wife Susan as charming as the picturesque, bucolic village where they live. This is a world very different from the world in Jeremy's head. You will perhaps see the odd cow grazing in a nearby field, but it is nowhere near as odd as the totally bizarre cow (with Swiss Army udder) who is the eponymous heroine of his forthcoming book, **Krazy Kow Saves the World - Well, Almost**. (His titles are often as wayward as his stories.) Notwithstanding the zany world of his books, Jeremy is a calm, unassuming chap who writes for ordinary young readers in an extraordinary way. He stresses that he wants 'to encourage reading amongst *ordinary* children', not necessarily the cleverest or most precocious. And he has a special regard for those who find reading a bit of a struggle.

And Jeremy knows what it is like to struggle, though it was not in his case a struggle with literacy. He feels lucky to have grown up in a book-loving home and, unlike many children, he thoroughly enjoyed writing at school. He remembers an enlightened primary teacher, Miss Cox, with gratitude. 'She was tall and young and pretty and I liked her a lot. It was while I was in her class that I discovered how wonderful it was to write.' Later, in secondary school, another progressive teacher, Tony Harding, introduced him to the works of

poets like Dylan Thomas and Gerard Manley Hopkins, and he found himself greatly attracted to their verbal intricacies.

No, it was not with writing that he struggled. From early on he knew he wanted to be a writer and felt, he says, 'driven to write', though as a young boy he was not so single-minded that he never thought of anything else. He also wanted to be a racing driver! He had everything planned. He would start as a mechanic, he told his father, and work his way up, but his father was horrified. 'You cannot be a mechanic,' he told the young Jeremy, 'you will always have dirt under your fingernails!' Whether this disquieting revelation robbed British motor sport of a budding world champion, or whether the lure of writing was too great, we shall never know, but Jeremy's fate was sealed, and his struggle began. His big problem, not unusual for embryonic writers, was to get published.

Jeremy's early life as a writer is an object lesson in determination. He began writing, he says, when he was about 17, but it was over 10 years before he found a willing publisher. In the meantime he had been to York University, where he first read music (he is an accomplished violinist) and then later switched to English. He did odd jobs, like working in a bakery stuffing the jam into 3,000 doughnuts a night. He was a relief school caretaker and a casual strawberry picker. For a time his wife Susan selflessly went out to work (she is a teacher) while he stayed at home to concentrate seriously on his writing. But after 18 months of nothing but rejection slips, and feeling he was getting nowhere, he decided that he too must take a postgraduate course to qualify as a primary teacher. Then one day he put together a mock-up book, complete with words and illustrations, about a cat with a long tail, and personally hawked it round a number of publishing houses. It was an almost desperate ploy, but it worked. In the end he got a taker, and **Smith's Tail** was published by Evans in 1978. The book is no longer in print, but it was a breakthrough and he had struggled hard for it. He still has, and cherishes, the 24-year-old mock-up version, now faded and discoloured with age.

More work followed, and Jeremy's dream of becoming a successful writer began to look a little more attainable. A steady trickle of books appeared, but getting established was a slow process, and it was just as well that he had a day job as a teacher. In fact Jeremy taught for 17 years altogether, ending up as headteacher of a primary school in Kent, not far from where he now lives. All the time he continued to write, and his reputation was building, but true recognition did not come until 1997, when **The Hundred-Mile-An-Hour Dog** won the Children's Book Award. This was a massive boost and at long last Jeremy really had broken into the big time. It had only taken him 30 years! Jeremy is up for the award again this year with **My Mum's Going to Explode!**, one of several preposterous stories about a 10-year-old's crazy family.

But then all Jeremy's stories are preposterous, anarchic, iconoclastic. In **My Granny's Great Escape**, Nicholas's Granny, who loves snooker and motorbikes, falls in love with her 65-year-old next-door neighbour. He is the proud owner of a big black Matchless motorbike, and wears a leather jacket with MAD, BAD AND ARTHRITIC written in silver studs on the back. This unlikely love-match begins when Lancelot, for that is the elderly gentleman's name, whisks Granny off on his bike to 'burn rubber' round the local park, pursued by the park keepers on a motor mower. 'It was fabulous,' said Granny, 'we went so fast I thought my dentures would fall out.' Their respective families do not approve of this liaison, and lock them in their rooms like naughty children, but in a chaotic sequence of events they manage to escape, with their families in hot and hilarious pursuit. Of course in the end the old people are married and live happily...but



wait! That's another story!

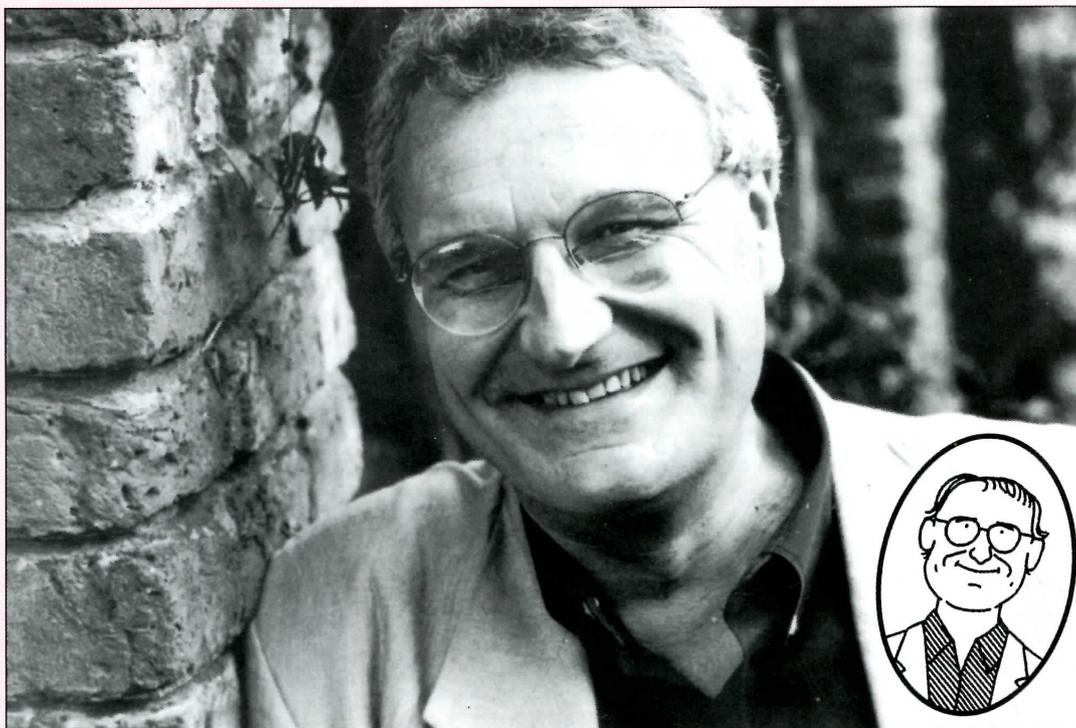
Highly imaginative stories have been flowing from Jeremy's computer throughout the '90s and since. Imagine waking up one morning to find you are a stegosaurus. This is what happens to Jodie in **Dinosaur Pox**. She had never particularly liked her looks, but this was ridiculous! In **Pirate School: Just a Bit of Wind** we meet Patagonia Clatterbottom, the fiercest headteacher in the swashbuckling universe. And at Dullandon Primary School there are very strict rules until the day a supply teacher, Miss Pandemonium, arrives. Then, in **Pandemonium at School**, amazing things happen. Big Mugg, Ugly Mugg and Little Mugg have problems finding somewhere to live, as hysterically related in **The Monster Muggs**. In **Giant Jim and the Hurricane** the giant, huge but meek, causes accidental mayhem wherever he goes. Mayhem is habitual in Jeremy's books, though there is usually a satisfying resolution. In this book Giant Jim is forgiven when he saves the town from disaster. Come to think of it, disaster is habitual in Jeremy's books too.

One of his top selling books, and my own personal favourite, is **I'm Telling You, They're Aliens!** Robert, an 11-year-old who worries a lot (like Jeremy himself used to at school), is convinced that the family who have just moved in over the road are aliens from another planet, about to take over the world. He and his friend Marsha decide they must do something about it. As a result, they have an action-packed Close Encounter of the Third Kind, and it was not quite what they were expecting. Any reader of Jeremy's books knows the feeling!

So far Jeremy has about 60 or more titles to his name. According to his current publishers, Penguin, his sales now top one million copies. He writes about three books a year, usually short novels aimed at junior children. However, they are often enjoyed by older children too, as is evident from the significant numbers who write to his website. All his books are relentlessly humorous, but sometimes the humour takes a more sophisticated turn, and this is perhaps what appeals to his more mature readers. For example, in **Aliens**, Marsha confidently tells Rob, as they formulate their daring plan to foil the aliens, that she is 'petrified'. Rob is astonished, not that she is petrified, but that she even knows the word! He has to go and look it up in the dictionary. Marsha, he reflects, is indeed turning out to be a dark horse. 'Or,' he adds thoughtfully to himself, 'a stone.' There are quite a lot of throwaway jokes and quips of this sort, more appreciated by an older readership.

Although Jeremy is constantly able to surprise, in fact it came as no surprise to learn that he was a devotee of Spike Milligan and the Goons, and later of Monty Python. He also feels, impishly, that another formative influence was **The Beano**. He thinks his books are rather like a 'wordy version of a comic strip'. Does he regard himself as a serious writer for children? He only knows that he labours long and

hard to find 'the right voice'. He re-wrote **The Hundred-Mile-An-Hour Dog** twice, eventually changing it to a first-person narrative before he was satisfied. 'I take my writing seriously,' he says, 'but I have no axes to grind, and no neuroses to reveal.' Jeremy writes farce, and writing farce is a very special skill, an art form of its own. He is a comedian, but not one who hopes one day to play Hamlet. 'There are moments of seriousness in my books,' he says, and then adds with a customary mischievous throwaway, 'though they are possibly fleeting!' ■



Some of Jeremy Strong's many titles

(published by Puffin, £3.99 each pbk)

- Dinosaur Pox**, 0 14 038979 2
- Fatbag: The Demon Vacuum Cleaner**, 0 14 036233 9
- Giant Jim and the Hurricane**, 0 14 038248 8
- The Hundred-Mile-An-Hour Dog**, 0 14 038030 2
- I'm Telling You, They're Aliens!**, 0 14 130685 8
- The Karate Princess in MoNsta Trouble**, 0 14 130492 8
- The Monster Muggs**, 0 14 130219 4
- My Granny's Great Escape**, 0 14 038390 5
- My Mum's Going to Explode!**, 0 14 131053 7
- Pandemonium at School**, 0 14 130495 2
- Pirate School: Just a Bit of Wind**, 0 14 131269 6
- There's a Pharaoh in Our Bath!**, 0 14 037571 6
- There's a Viking in My Bed**, 0 14 034878 6
- Krazy Kow Saves the World – Well, Almost**, 0 14 131374 9 (August 2002)

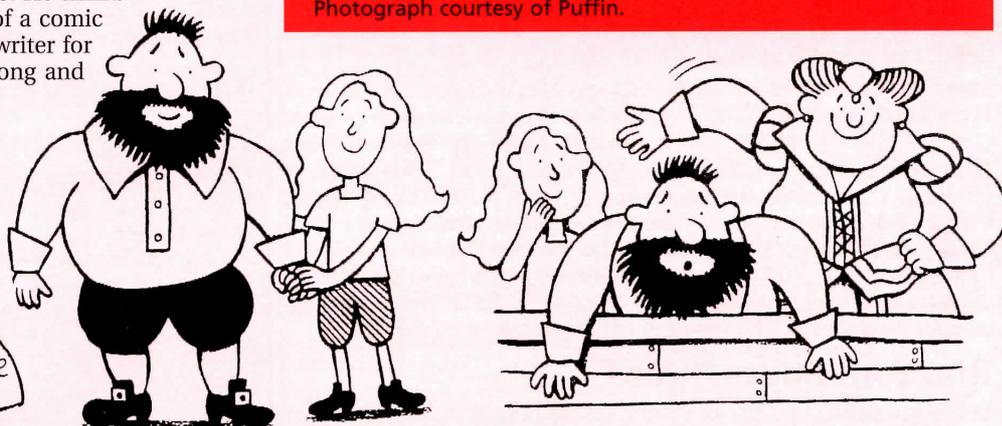
Website: www.jeremyststrong.co.uk

Jeff Hynds is an independent literacy consultant and a writer.

Drawings by Nick Sharratt from Jeremy Strong's **Sir Rupert and Rosie Gusset in Deadly Danger** (see review on page 22).

Photograph courtesy of Puffin.

If you haven't gone yet you had better get a move on at once. The Royal Executioner has got a new axe and he wants to try it out as soon as possible. Love Maggie.
p.s. Don't forget to take that clever daughter of yours, Rosie



NEWS

The Centre for the Children's Book

Work is about to begin on the Grade II listed flour mill and adjacent buildings in Newcastle that will be home to the Centre for the Children's Book. There will be a visitors' centre, gallery and workshop spaces. The Centre is due to open in 2004.

Ahead of Madonna

Harry Potter author J K Rowling is in the 147th place on the *Sunday Times* Rich List with a £226m fortune. She has jumped 379 places from her position last year and is now ahead of Madonna and Guy Ritchie.

PRIZES

INTERNATIONAL

Hans Christian Andersen Awards 2002



The Andersen Award Jury of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) has announced that Aidan Chambers has won the Author Award and Quentin Blake the Award for Illustration. The Hans Christian Andersen Awards are presented every two years to an author and illustrator whose complete works have made a lasting and significant contribution to the world of children's books. 28 authors were nominated from around the world. The two runners-up were Bart Moeyaert (Belgium) and Bjarne Reuter (Denmark). 27 illustrators were nominated. The runners-up were Rotraut Susanne Berner (Germany), Daihachi Ohta (Japan) and Grégoire Solotareff (France).

NATIONAL

The Carnegie and Greenaway Shortlists

The shortlisted titles for the Carnegie Medal are Sharon Creech's *Love That Dog* (Bloomsbury), Peter Dickinson's *The Ropemaker* (Macmillan), Eva Ibbotson's *Journey to the River Sea* (Macmillan), Elizabeth Laird's *Jake's Tower* (Macmillan), Geraldine McCaughrean's *The Kite Rider* (OUP), Geraldine McCaughrean's *Stop the Train* (OUP), Terry Pratchett's *Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents* (Doubleday) and Virginia Euwer Wolff's *True Believer* (Faber). Chair of judges, Karen Usher, said: 'This list represents the quality of books published for young people in 2001 and the depth and breadth of writing available.'



The shortlisted titles for the Greenaway Medal are Jez Alborough's *Fix-it Duck* (Collins), Russell Ayto's *The Witch's Children* (author Ursula Jones; Orchard), Nicola Bayley's *Katje The Windmill Cat* (author Gretchen Woelfle; Walker), Caroline Binch's *Silver Shoes* (Dorling Kindersley), Helen Cooper's *Tatty Ratty* (Doubleday), Charles Fuge's *Sometimes I Like to Curl Up in a Ball* (author Vicki Churchill; Gullane), Bob Graham's *Let's Get A Pup!* (Walker) and Chris Riddell's *Pirate Diary* (Walker). 'This year's shortlist exemplifies the enormous variety of subjects and styles available,' commented Usher. The winners will be announced on 12 July.

Branford Boase Award

The winner of the 2002 Branford Boase Award is Sally Prue for *Cold Tom* (Oxford University Press), her first children's novel. The

Useful Organisations No.21: Healthy Books

E-mail:
healthybooks@altavista.co.uk
Website:
www.healthybooks.org.uk

Healthy Books grew out of Elizabeth Schlenker's experiences as both a hospital children's ward librarian and a school librarian. To provide a list of children's books which offer information and reassurance with health and emotional problems, together with characters acting as good role models, she originally published two bibliographies with the Health Libraries Group of the Library Association. To expand the usefulness of these listings, it was recently decided to transfer the project to the Internet. The website includes over 500 books

in some 32 sections on such diverse subjects as adoption, bullying, divorce, death, and behavioural problems, as well as books on disability, both mental and physical, and many different medical conditions. The new online bibliography has Browse and Search functions and can be accessed through subject, author, title, publisher, or age level. The listing is intended for children up to age 12, and includes both information and fiction books – fully annotated and assessed – and is continually updated. It should be useful for parents, teachers, health and social services and all those interested in the broad aspects of children's emotional and physical health.

editor's award went to Liz Cross, Head of Fiction at Oxford University Press, who spotted Sally's talent and oversaw the publication of this first book. The annual Branford Boase Award celebrates the most promising new children's writer of the previous year, and highlights the importance of the editor in identifying and nurturing new talent. *Cold Tom* is reviewed on page 23 in BfK's New Talent slot.

The English 4–11 Awards 2002

The English Association's The English 4–11 Awards for the Best Children's Picture Books have been won by:

Key Stage 1:

Fiction: Christine Morton and Eleanor Taylor's *Run, Rabbit, Run* (Bloomsbury)

Non-fiction: Ruth Brown's *Ten Seeds* (Andersen)

Key Stage 2:

Fiction: Colin Thompson's *Falling Angels* (Hutchinson)

Non-fiction: Jacqueline Mitton and Christine Balit's *Kingdom of the Sun: a Book of the Planets* (Frances Lincoln)

W H Smith Book Awards

The children's prize in the W H Smith Book Awards which are voted for by the public has been won by Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* (Puffin).

Books for Children Award

The Books for Children Award for a first book has been won by Czechoslovakian author and illustrator, Petr Horacek for *What is Black and White?* and *Strawberries Are Red* (Walker).

REGIONAL

2002 Angus Book Award

Bali Rai's *(Un)Arranged Marriage* (Corgi) has won the Angus Book Award. Third-year pupils from eight Angus secondary schools voted for the winner from a shortlist of five titles. The other four shortlisted novels were: Malachy Doyle's *Georgie* (Bloomsbury), Carol Hedges' *Jigsaw* (OUP), Anthony Horowitz's *Stormbreaker* (Walker) and Geraldine McCaughrean's *The Kite Rider* (OUP).

CORRECTION

Apologies to Random House Children's Books for inadvertently crediting another publisher for help with our May cover. It featured Adria Meserve's *Smog the Dog* which is, of course, published by Random House.

EVENTS

This Book Belongs to Me

The exhibition, *This Book Belongs to Me: A Celebration of Children's Books from Tom Thumb to Harry Potter*, is at the National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh from 1 June – 31 October. Among the exhibits is the original Harry Potter manuscript, drawings by such illustrators as Quentin Blake and Mairi Hedderwick, and first editions of some great classics including a 1571 edition of *Aesop's Fables*. There are events for children. Further information from 0131 226 4531 or www.nls.uk/tomthumb



• Obituaries •

Harry Wingfield

1910–2002

Even if they didn't know his name, Harry Wingfield is probably the artist whose style is best known to the three decades of children who learnt to read with Ladybird's 'Key Words' series which featured the ever wholesome Peter and Jane. Wingfield based his work on photographs of children playing on the West Midlands council estates near his home. His cosy depiction of family life (gender stereotypes firmly in place) and of the world is now remembered with great affection by many of his readers.

Pierre Marchand

1939–2002

Christine Baker, Editor-in-Chief of Gallimard Jeunesse, writes...

Pierre Marchand, founder and Publisher of Gallimard Jeunesse from 1972–1999 and Director of Creation and Head of Hachette Illustrated until his untimely death, was an electrifying force that could erupt in telluric fury, or radiate warm generosity and mischievous humour, and always blaze a trail of transformation on the page, the book, the concept. Pierre saw himself, and was, a captain with his mates on a ship riding fierce seas. He liked to upset and destroy, in order to build again. He followed his instinct, his intuition, his vision. One step ahead of his teams, of his rivals, of the market – by osmosis he would absorb what he needed from them all. He couldn't suffer an error of visual taste, or the sin of banality, in a colour, a proportion, a line... his eye was truly laser-sharp. He had to mould, to control: no project was ever less than a challenge, the ambition of the 18th-century Encyclopedists was underlying every idea.

Pierre gave French publishing an international dimension. Everything he created might have been deemed 'too sophisticated', 'too French' or the wrong format, but he never had any doubts that his visual language was in fact perfectly international. He couldn't wait to get to the ABA, even if all we had there in those early days for a booth was a humble small table in a remote corner. Since then all his main creations have been adopted by the greatest American publishers and this gave him some of the rare undiluted reassurance and pride he ever felt.

His pursuit was restless for the book that would show more between its first and its last page than any book had ever shown before... Our design studio, built like a sea liner deck from his own plans, was the hub of his enterprise; to see him charge from table to table amongst designers, editors, illustrators was like observing a pure physics phenomenon of electric conduction.

To live he needed to create and to create, he needed friends and foes, storms and the sea, poetry and sailor songs, red wine, book fairs, the smell of ink and the feel of paper, an endless supply of notebooks, laughter and anger, loyalty and love, and beautiful publishing houses to work in! Faithful to himself to the end, it was with courage, vigour, speed and panache that he said goodbye to all this on 4 April 2002. He had spent up the last of his strength shaping up books, cajoling authors, phoning friends, scheming deals at his desk at Hachette until four weeks before he died: on the eve of what would have been his 33rd Bologna Book Fair and 30 years to the day after he had arrived with a children's book project contract on the illustrious doorstep of Gallimard.

PEOPLE

Sarah Odedina, Editorial Director of Bloomsbury Children's Books, has been appointed to the Bloomsbury board.

Puffin has been restructured following **Francesca Dow's** appointment as Managing Director. **Rebecca McNally**, previously Senior Children's Editor at Macmillan Children's Books, has been appointed Fiction Publisher and **Anna Billson**, formerly of Orchard, has been appointed Deputy Art Director. **Sarah Hughes**, formerly Senior Editor, has been promoted to Editorial Director for Fiction. Publishing Director **Penny Morris** has left the company.

Ingrid Selberg, formerly of the Pleasant Company and HIT Entertainment, has been appointed Vice-President of UK and international publishing at Gullane Children's Books.

Ann-Janine Murtagh has been appointed Publishing Director of Orchard Books. She was previously Publishing Director at Kingfisher Books.

HarperCollins Group Rights Director, **Katie Fulford**, has been appointed interim Managing Director of Collins Children's Division for a year.

David Smith, former Finance Director at Egmont, has been appointed Managing Director of Two-Can Publishing.

Usborne have appointed **Megan Larkin** Fiction Editor with a brief to develop a fiction list for younger readers. Ms Larkin was previously at Orchard.

Lindsey Fraser and **Kathryn Ross**, Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director of Scottish Book Trust, have decided to step down from their posts with Scottish Book Trust later this summer in order to start their own literary consultancy.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

In his scholarly article about 'The Arabian Nights' (BfK, May 2002), Neil Philip twice refers to *Shahrazad* telling stories to 'save her life'. This notion, widely held, does little justice to this extraordinary fictional figure.

In 'The 1001 Nights' King *Shahryar*, after his wife's adultery, begins, madly, to wed virgins, then slaughter them. *Shahrazad* determines to marry him and by her skills, wean him from his murderous ways. If she simply wished to 'save her life', as the Vizier's daughter, she had only to lie low. Instead she forced her father to take her to the king to *save the lives of others*.

I base this version not solely on translators like Burton and Mardrus & Mathers, who tend to embroider, but on the 14th-century *Muhsin Mahdi* text in a scholarly translation by Husain Haddawy (1990). In this, *Shahrazad* tells her father 'I would like you to marry me to King *Shahryar*, so that I may succeed in saving the people or perish and die like the rest.' And succeed she does by the power of hundreds of stories.

So widespread though, is the 'saving her life' notion that when I included the above version in *My Sister Shahrazad* (Frances Lincoln 2001 – with stunning illustrations by Christina Balit) I was asked more than once – 'is this authentic or are you making it up?'

It is authentic. *Shahrazad* is no trembling victim but one of the great heroines of world literature.

Robert Leeson

18 McKenzie Road, Broxbourne, Herts EN10 7JH

Neil Philip writes...

Bob Leeson is quite right that Shahrazad is no trembling victim.

Although by the time Shahrazad marries Shahryar, she and her sister are the only marriageable girls left, Shahrazad insists on marrying him, putting her life on the line to 'save the people'. She is a learned and compassionate heroine, cool-headed and brave; I regret overlooking Leeson's My Sister Shahrazad, which rightly emphasizes this aspect of the story.

The image of the 'intelligent, knowledgeable, wise, and refined girl whose bravery saves the day is found in other Asian stories. For instance in Asha Dhar's Folk Tales of Afghanistan (Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1982), the enterprising heroine of the story 'Princess Liyan of Bakhtar' is praised for her learning, and described as 'the wisest and most prudent' of the king's children, in contrast to her brothers, who are wastrels only interested in sport and hunting.

Dear Editor

Thank you so much for reviewing Sylvia Hall's *No Fear* in the May issue of *Books for Keeps*, and I'm so glad that your reviewer enjoyed the book.

At the end of the review there was some speculation that Sylvia Hall was a pseudonym for an American author.

I'm delighted to say that Sylvia Hall is Sylvia Hall's real name and she is neither made-up nor American! She hails from Derbyshire, where she lives, writes and teaches drama. *No Fear* is her third novel with Scholastic; I'm sorry that we didn't print any biographical details in that book but we'll remedy this when her next one, *Knife Edge* (a tense thriller), is published in February 2003.

I hope that clears up any confusion!

Jessica Grant, Publicity Manager, Scholastic Children's Books

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 ★★
Poor ★

REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

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

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

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

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

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*.

Geoff Fox edits the journal, *Children's Literature in Education*, and is an honorary Research Fellow at Exeter University School of Education.

Nikki Gamble is a freelance education and children's book consultant, and project director of Live Writing:Online.

Peter Hollindale, formerly at the University of York, is now a freelance writer and teacher.

Peter Hunt is Professor of English and Children's Literature at Cardiff University.

Adrian Jackson is General Adviser – English, West Sussex.

Lois Keith taught English for many years and is now a writer.

Andrew Kidd is Headteacher at Duke Street Primary School in Chorley, Lancashire.

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

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

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

Andrea Reece worked for children's publishers for 16 years and is now a freelance marketing consultant.

Margaret Rustin is a child psycho-therapist at the Tavistock Clinic.

Elizabeth Schlenther is Editor, English children's books for gwales.com, The Welsh Books Council's website.

Rosemary Stones is Editor of *Books for Keeps*.

Helen Taylor teaches at Homerton College, Cambridge and is the director of The Voices Project – a literature in the community project and festival in Cambridgeshire.

TITLES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

	Page		Page
Address Book of Children's Authors and Illustrators, The	★★★★ 18	Overcrowded World?, An: Our Impact on the Planet	★★★★★ 26
Archer's Goon (audio book)	★★★★ 22	Paper Faces	★★★ 22
At the Crossing-Places	★★★★★ 18	Patrick: Saint of Ireland	★★ 20
Big George	★★★ 22	Pawnee Warrior	★★★★ 24
Birdwatchers, The	★★★★★ 20	Pure Dead Magic	★★★ 18
Blitz, The	★★★★★ 24	Quirky Tales (audio book)	★★ 21
Book of Letters, A	★★ 19	Raider's Tide	★★★★ 27
Book of Shadows	★ 25	Rationing	★★★★★ 24
Boy Who Lost His Face, The	★★★★★ 24	Room for One More	★★★★ 19
Burning Issy	★★★★★ 23	Seasons Turning	★★★★ 20
Catherine the Great	★★ 26	Shopaholic	★★★★ 25
Child that Books Built, The	★★★★ 18	Shrinking Violet	★★★ 22
Child X	★★★★ 24	Sir Rupert and Rosie Gusset in Deadly Danger	★★★ 22
Civil Rights Movement, The	★★★★ 26	Sleeping Sword, The	★★★ 21
Cold Tom	★★★★★ 23	Sleepy Pendoodle	★★★ 19
Colour of My Dreams, The	★★★ 21	Spindle's End	★★★ 24
Coven, The	★ 25	Stargirl	★★★★ 18
Cut	★★★★ 25	Start with Art: Animals	★★★ 21
Daisy Chain War	★★★ 25	Story of a Storm	★★★ 20
Danger by Moonlight	★★★ 22	They're Only Human	★★★★ 27
Do Like a Duck Does!	★★★★★ 19	This Amazing World	★★★★★ 20
Edge, The	★★★★★ 23	Transported: The Diary of Elizabeth Harvey, Australia 1790	★★★ 23
Evacuation	★★★★★ 24	Tuck Everlasting	★★★★★ 22
Finn Family Moomintroll (audio book)	★★ 20	Tumbler	★★★ 19
Flop-Ear is Brave!	★★★ 19	Twilight Ghost	★★★★ 23
Food Supply: Our Impact on the Planet	★★★★★ 26	Vicky Angel (audio book)	★★ 23
Frankenstella and the Video Shop Monster	★★★ 20	Watch Out! Builders About!	★★★ 20
Frog	★★★★ 19	Wet Pebbles Under Our Feet	★★★★ 19
Generations: Poems between Fathers, Mothers, Daughters, Sons	★★★★★ 26	What My Mother Doesn't Know	★★★ 25
Great Depression, The	★★★★ 26	When Marnie Was There (audio book)	★★★ 22
Great Expectations	★★★ 21	When the Sun Goes Down	★★★★ 20
Green Fingers	★★★★ 24	Whispers on the Wind	★★★ 23
High Tide, Low Tide	★★★★★ 20	Why Do People Fight Wars?	★★★★ 26
I'm not your Friend	★★★★ 18	Why Do People Harm Animals?	★★★★ 26
Letters to Liz: Jo's Letter	★★★ 25	Wiggle My Toes and other action rhymes	★★★ 19
Letters to Liz: Nicki's Letter	★★★ 25	Women's War	★★★★★ 24
Mao Zedong	★★ 26	Wool Pack, The (audio book)	★★★★ 22
Martyn Pig	★★★★★ 27		
Midnight for Charlie Bone	★★★ 22		
Nice One, Smithy	★★★ 20		
Noughts and Crosses	★★★★★ 18		
Other Wind, The	★★★★★ 27		

Books About Children's Books

The Child that Books Built

★★★★

Francis Spufford, Faber and Faber, 224pp, 0 571 19132 0, £12.99 hbk

The toughest problem, when we write about children's books, is to work out just what an individual reader makes of a book. We can ask the children, or we can look at our own reading histories: both are incredibly difficult to do.

And so it is good to see Spufford, *Sunday Times* Young Writer of the Year in 1997, a book addict in his early thirties, doing the latter (I should point out that Mr Spufford is not exactly your average reader – he read *The Lord of the Rings* when he was eight 'in three transported, mesmerised days'):

I have gone back and read again the sequence of books that carried me from babyhood to the age of nineteen, from the first fragmentary stories I remember to the science fiction I was reading on the brink of adulthood. As I re-read them, I tried to become again the reader I had been when I encountered each for the first time, wanting to know how my particular history...at that particular time, had ended up making me into the reader I am today.

Does he deliver? Not surprisingly, not quite.

But he does campaign eloquently for the value of reading, sounding like Margaret Meek on something illegal:

...the words we take into ourselves help to shape us; they shift around the boundaries of the sayable inside us, and the related borders of what's acceptable; their potent images, calling on more in us than the

responses we will ourselves to have... They build and stretch and build again the chambers of the imagination.

We also get pages of potted Piaget, Bettelheim in brief, reading theory in three pages, Shannon's theory of redundancy in reading, and if you don't know too much about these things, you won't be wasting your time (although his breezy self-confidence might cause experts to mutter darkly). We get to know a lot about Spufford's childhood, his family, his travels, even what sex is like for him. And then there are twenty fascinating pages on Wilder's 'Little House' books, and a lucid account of C S Lewis's theology – but, it seems, disappointingly little on the actual encounter of the child Spufford with books. And all of this in a style that veers from the elegant to the glutinous, while his 'an aphorism in every paragraph' policy can seem more like posing than wisdom.

And yet, when he does actually get to the books he is doing something really special. His impassioned advocacy of myths demonstrates his technique:

Roger Lancelyn Green's retellings were useless, making all their highs and lows smoothly, mildly reasonable, as if the myths were schizophrenics and he was administering a massive dose of lithium...The God Beneath the Sea had pictures by Charles Keeping. He turned this world of savage impulses into line drawing so kinetic, so full of force, that they were on the verge of mania... We were on holiday in Greece, the heat and the smell of cloves worked their way into the stories, and my parents had just confirmed, in answer to a direct question, that my sister was going to die.

That extract shows, in short, just what

the close examination of personal readings entails. We need to have a lot of detail about the person, the circumstance of reading; we need to expect a mixture of mature judgement and visceral reaction; we need to accept large chunks of ego – not only in the solipsistic young reader, but in the adult created by that reading. All these things are in Spufford's book, and they are all (except the 'mature judgement') not what we have been trained to produce as critics. But it is vital that we tackle the challenge of individual meanings, and Spufford points the way. PHU

The Address Book of Children's Authors and Illustrators

★★★★

Gervase Phinn, LDA, 144pp, 1 85503 355 0, £15.95 pbk

This comprehensive directory includes over 100 authors and illustrators of children's books, from Joan Aiken and David Almond to Colin West and Benjamin Zephaniah. Each fact-filled A4 page includes an autobiographical section with paragraphs covering childhood experiences and adult working life. Anthony Horowitz, for instance, recalls teachers who had won prizes for cruelty. In addition we are presented with a book extract and a list of selected titles by the author/illustrator concerned. At the foot of each page is a 'favourites' section ('book' and 'place' – fine, I'm not sure about the relevance of favourite 'colour' or 'food', and the responses to the latter, suggest some authors themselves question the relevance). **Where the Wild Things Are** is the favourite book of both Margaret Mahy and Jenny Nimmo.



The selection of a favourite 'word' is quite novel. Korky Paul's favourite word is 'serendipity', as is Jackie Kay's. Authors also reveal what they might have done if they had not become literary successes. A number have actually been teachers, and might still be if they hadn't 'escaped' the profession. Most authors reveal their birth place and date and, helpfully, give a contact address, including e-mail, for children and or teachers to use.

Despite being a goldmine of information on authors and illustrators, the sections on how to use the book, how to write book reviews and on the National Literacy Strategy are unnecessarily patronising. More useful would have been to include details on an extra twenty authors, perhaps on the noticeably absent Michael Foreman, Mick Inkpen, Nick Butterworth, Jill Murphy and J K Rowling. AK

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

I'm not your Friend

PICTURE BOOK ★★★★★

Sam McBratney, ill. Kim Lewis, Collins, 32pp, 0 00 664690 5, £4.99

Reviewed *BfK* 130, September 2001:

'An understanding mother fox converses with her recalcitrant cub while his resolve – "I'm not going to be your friend ever again" – slowly dissipates as night, with its shadows and strange shapes, begins to envelop him and he comes around to the idea of reconciliation. A deeply reassuring, multi-layered story.'

10-12 MIDDLE/SECONDARY

Pure Dead Magic

FICTION ★★★

Debi Gliori, Corgi, 224pp, 0 552 54757 3, £4.99

Reviewed *BfK* 129, July 2001:

'Computers which swallow baby rats and miniaturised baby sisters, e-mailing them across Europe, prehistoric beasts guarding a gothic castle, a proficient witch for a nanny, a fond Dad kidnapped by the mafia... Gliori has gone to town in this, her first novel, giving a contemporary twist to kidnap and rescue with the creative use of computers and the Web. The result is fast-moving, over-the-top, engaging and great fun.'

At the Crossing-Places

FICTION ★★★★★

Kevin Crossley-Holland, Orion, 384pp, 1 84255 200 7, £5.99

Reviewed *BfK* 134, May 2002:

'Much of that reader's pleasure might lie in the manner of Crossley-Holland's telling, as well as in the content of the tales. He invests the language of the brief chapters of Arthurian myth with a sense of otherness. Readers will need to

change pace, to allow the imagery to work on their minds' eyes. In the descriptions of a hunt or a journey, there might be echoes of the rhythms and alliterations of Old and Middle English verse to be relished. This is storytelling of subtlety and nuance and, for the reflective reader, all the more satisfying for that.'

Noughts and Crosses

FICTION ★★★★★

Malorie Blackman, Corgi, 448pp, 0 552 54632 1, £5.99

Reviewed *BfK* 127, March 2001:

'Fifteen-year-old Callum is a Nought, a member of a despised racial group which is also an underclass. Meggie, his mother, works as a servant for the Hadleys (rich Crosses who are members of the racial elite) so Callum has grown up knowing and being friends with their daughter, Sephy. However, Blackman's spin on segregation is to have the white people as the Noughts and the black people as the Crosses. With its powerful theme of racial injustice,

Noughts and Crosses engages the reader at a greater depth and in a more demanding way than any of Blackman's previous work.'

12+ SECONDARY

Stargirl

FICTION ★★★★★

Jerry Spinelli, Orchard, 192pp, 1 84121 926 6, £4.99

Reviewed *BfK* 132, January 2002:

'This American teenage novel is a hymn to nonconformity. Stargirl, aged 15, has been homeschooled, and makes a belated entry to the local High School in a small Arizona town. In a conformist environment, where everyone dresses, eats, behaves and thinks like everyone else with gender as the only differential, her eccentric, demonstrative, bizarre behaviour creates convulsions in the school community. A thought-provoking, challenging book.'

REVIEWS Under 5s Pre-School/Nursery/Infant

Wiggle My Toes and other action rhymes

★★★★

Kaye Umansky, ill. Nick Sharratt, Puffin, 32pp, 0 14 056772 0, £4.99 pbk

Nineteen new rhymes featuring such things as bees, boots, bears, bubbles, sandcastles, swings and scarecrows, illustrated with a variety of jolly animal characters jumping, tumbling, trumpeting, tending and toe wiggling. There are lots of humorous touches in Sharratt's bold, bright pictures which add much to the variable quality of the rhymes.

Parents and carers of babies and toddlers will find the four final pages containing illustrated instructions for the actions to perform on or with tinies useful. The book certainly offers a vehicle for combining important elements of early learning; the kinaesthetic, verbal and visual. JB

Flop-Ear is Brave!

★★★★

Guido Van Genechten, Cat's Whiskers, 32pp, 1 903012 46 5, £10.99 hbk

Bold yet gentle illustrations fill every spread in this reassuring story. The palette is warm throughout, with bold, black outlines. Flop-Ear excitedly prepares to sleep by himself, outdoors in a tent, whilst the parent bunnies anxiously hover and watch. Night falls. Flop-Ear is alone, and what fun he has until his torch battery fails. Sounds now become so scary that he stuffs a carrot into each ear. That is better! He can still see however, and an approaching shadow, becoming bigger and bigger, makes his heart beat wildly, and he does NOT feel brave. The comforting ending will dispel many a night-time fear, and will provide lots to talk about. GB

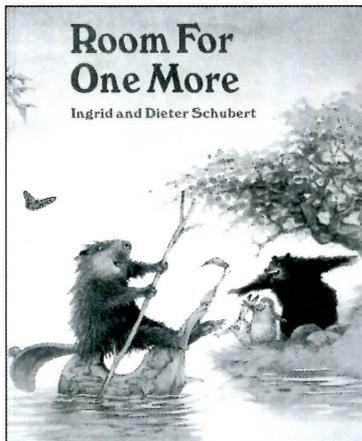
Wet Pebbles Under Our Feet

★★★★

Manya Stojic, David Bennett Books, 32pp, 1 85602 404 0, £9.99 hbk

The evocative magic and mystery of the sea rise and fall in this lyrical

family tale, packed full of memories. 'Far away in the deep blue sea is a small island with a pebbly shore...' This was the home of a fisherman, his wife and three children. Whilst the younger generation have grown and left the island, they return, now bringing a grandchild. With lots of warm nostalgia, all the family tells tales of their upbringing in this magical place. The illustrations are in zingy, vibrant colours, with lots of close-ups of the three generations. The text is large and bold, with emphasis brought to many words and phrases by an increase in text size. No young reader will handle this book without understanding that there is a special message related here. GB



Room for One More

★★★★

Ingrid and Dieter Schubert, Andersen, 32pp, 1 84270 084 7, £9.99 hbk

This is an entertaining and gently amusing picture book with beautifully detailed watercolour illustrations. When Beaver builds a boat just big enough for one, he soon gets lonely, paddling on his own. Constructing a large raft, he attracts a succession of willing passengers from the riverbank: Mole, Hedgehog, Hare and Badger. As there is 'room for one more' at each stop, the raft gradually fills up until it is crammed with creatures when Bear embarks, making the raft rock wildly. Despite protestations from the crew that

there now is no room for any more, a butterfly lands on the raft, which immediately turns upside down, giving all the animals on board a thorough ducking. Children will enjoy perusing each page for the very small creatures not mentioned in the story, including a ladybird, snail and mouse, who, almost unnoticed, end up on Beaver's raft as it journeys downstream. Originally published in Dutch, other books involving the same characters include *There's a Hole in my Bucket* and *Beaver's Lodge*. AK

Sleepy Pendoodle

★★★★

Malachy Doyle, ill. Julie Vivas, Walker, 32pp, 0 7445 7508 7, £10.99 hbk

An Irish folk tale was Doyle's inspiration for this rhythmic account of a small girl's attempts to recall the precise words of her Uncle Hughie's invocation to awaken the abandoned newborn pup she has found in an alley. As she encounters various neighbours on the way back from her Uncle's, these all important words get muddled up and now, back home, it seems that they will never come to her. But then the words just fall into place and, seemingly in recognition of his true name, Pendoodle opens his eyes and is transformed into a yapping, yelping, tail-wagging pup.

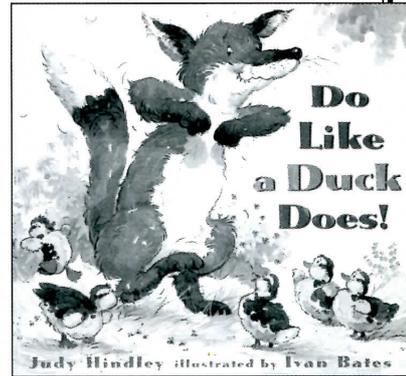
Vivas's subtle watercolours, set against a stark white background, expressively convey the spirit of the young heroine and the transformation of the puppy. As the awakening draws nearer so too does the focus of our attention, drawn in by Vivas's increasingly close-up views of girl and pup. JB

Do Like a Duck Does!

★★★★★

Judy Hindley, ill. Ivan Bates, Walker, 40pp, 0 7445 7561 3, £10.99 hbk

Five fluffy ducklings playing follow my leader with Mama are joined by a big brown stranger: 'he has no feathers and he has no beak. He has four claws on his hairy-scary feet. He has two ears that stick up a mile...' Mama has her doubts but insists he does like a duck does and leads him a



merry dance through a muddy puddle to eat bugs, across a thistly meadow and into the river where it becomes plain the brown stranger is no duck.

Young readers and listeners are only too aware of the stranger's true identity from the moment he emerges from behind the flower pots and can hardly contain themselves as he and they are teased and tantalised by Mama. Bates' lively watercolour and crayon illustrations make it plain that she isn't as naive as it might seem at first. Audience participation is guaranteed in the rhyming text punctuated with Flop!, Pop! and other onomatopoeic utterances. JB

Frog

★★★★★

Susan Cooper, ill. Jane Browne, Bodley Head, 32pp, 0 370 32635 0, £10.99 hbk

Fear can be paralysing, particularly if you are the only one who feels it. Joe's family are all keen swimmers and they laugh at his attempts. But it is Joe who rescues a frightened frog from the pool when his family has bungled the job and, in so doing, learns something from the frog's swimming technique. By helping the frog, Joe conquers his own fears, and the last picture of him steaming across the pool in frog-like mode is triumph indeed. Firm, simple illustrations in natural colours combine with a text that often flows in wavy, water-like lines amongst the pictures, creating a strong sense of movement. ES

REVIEWS 5-8 Infant/Junior

A Book of Letters

★★

Ken Wilson-Max, ill. Manya Stojic, David Bennett Books, 32pp, 1 85602 424 5, £9.99 hbk novelty

A chain letter sent by a friend of Abigail Anderson is mailed on to Bunny Bernstein, Carlton Cavendish and so on till it finally arrives back with the originator Zuzu. The letters, written in a range of styles and forms, go to various places around the world and on the final page we again meet the originator clutching a full-size envelope containing an alphabet poster of all the characters in the chain.

Blocks of acrylic colour serve as backgrounds to the boldly executed, multi-ethnic, predominantly child portraits of the correspondents.

A good idea but the letters seem contrived and lack any real communicative purpose, revealing little about the writers: for me letter writing should be more than merely continuing a chain. JB

Tumbler

★★★

Liz Filleul, ill. Susan Field, Lion, 32pp, 0 7459 4576 7, £4.99 pbk

Tumbler is a retelling of a popular



French legend, about Tristan, a medieval acrobat, who travels the

country with a troupe of entertainers. After a nasty fall during a performance, Tristan has to convalesce at the local monastery whilst the troupe moves on. While he recuperates, Tristan decides that now is the perfect opportunity to realise his childhood ambition of serving God, by becoming a novice monk himself.

Tristan struggles to adapt to life in the monastery and he is not accepted by a number of monks who look down on him. Everything changes when the Abbot sees an angel watching over Tristan after he falls during a clandestine acrobatic session. The Abbot says God obviously wants Tristan to serve Him by doing what he

is best at – tumbling.

The oil pastel or acrylic illustrations, with roly-poly characters reminiscent of Breugel, are visually striking and most effective when perspective is ignored. However, in many illustrations conventional rules of perspective are applied and the resulting inconsistency is a source of minor irritation. AK

The Birdwatchers

★★★★★

Simon James, Walker, 32pp,
0 7445 7592 3, £10.99 hbk



Beautifully illustrated and written, this picture book is simply delightful. 'Birds are amazing,' says Grandad. 'When I go birdwatching, things happen,' he says. Sometimes the birds draw Grandad while he is drawing them. Sometimes birds help him find their names in his bird book. Once they recorded the dawn chorus. His granddaughter Jess isn't sure so she decides to go birdwatching with Grandad to see for herself.

Through his muted line and colour wash scenes, with gently comical characters not dissimilar in style to that of Quentin Blake, James captures perfectly the special, warm relationship he wishes to portray between a little girl and her grandfather as they explore the great outdoors. The final spread is wonderful, but I won't spoil the surprise by revealing its content here. Discover for yourself. AK

This Amazing World

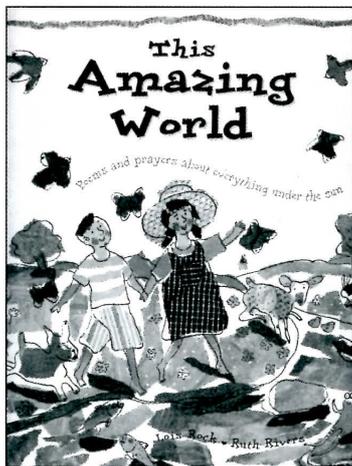
POETRY ★★★★★

Compiled by Lois Rock,
ill. Ruth Rivers, Lion, 48pp,
0 7459 4459 0, £9.99 hbk

If you're looking for a little 'awe and wonder', for home, school or library, here it is! This collection of poems and prayers about everything under the sun really does lift the heart. Eleanor Farjeon's 'Morning has broken' is here, along with poems by Christina Rossetti and Gerard Manley Hopkins. There are poems to rejoice in, '... waves roll in from the glittering green of the sparkling summertime sea', alongside old favourites like Walter de la Mare's 'Slowly, silently, now the moon ...'

Children will delight in

*'All things bright and beautiful
All creatures great and small
All weevils, worms and warthogs
The Lord God made them all.'*



Conservation is simply addressed in Jane Whittle's poem:

*'Save me a clean stream, flowing
to unpolluted seas...
Keep me a place in this old land,
somewhere to grow, somewhere to be.'*

The illustrations are simple and appealing, and the book closes beautifully with a traditional Gaelic blessing. Its slow, repetitive words steal into one's being. GB

Patrick: Saint of Ireland

★★★

Joyce Denham, ill. Diana Mayo,
Lion, 32pp, 0 7459 4295 4,
£9.99 hbk

Details of the life of the man who became Ireland's patron saint remain elusive: those which we have are a hazy mixture of his own autobiographical writing and a vast accretion of legendary material. Using these varied sources, Denham outlines the key moments of Patrick's career, culminating in his conversion of Ireland from its native paganism to Christianity. Her emphasis is very much on the spiritual (and occasionally mystical) side of his story and though it may be true that 'thousands of Christians still worship in the churches that Patrick established', a sense does not overall emerge of a saint for our time. Mayo's full-colour illustrations are attractively evocative of the semi-realistic, semi-mythical world of the text. RD

Frankenstella and the Video Shop Monster

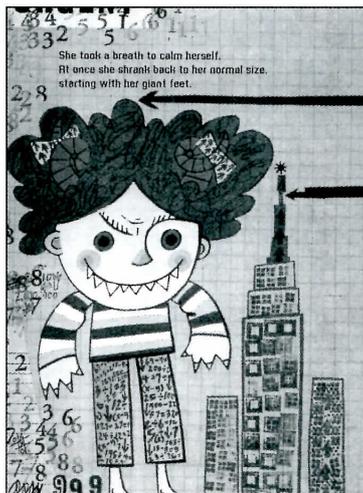
★★★★

Herbie Brennan, ill. Cathy Gale,
Bloomsbury, 32pp,
0 7475 5508 7, £9.99 hbk

Send for the De-Construction Crew! This large format picture book text has echoes of narratives such as *Not Now, Bernard* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. And maybe that's the old house on the hill from *Psycho* recurring at least three times in increasing stages of conflagration. What's more, it's on the back cover, so it's probably Significant. The pictures employ frenetically busy collages in which numbers fly all over the double-page spreads, making use of old bus tickets, maps, train timetables, travel brochures, match box labels and the like. The maps are of foreign parts and the languages are mostly European. These fragments are from past times, as indeed are the large blocks of background

composed of lined paper – old style computer print-out sheets and pages from ledgers with handwritten columns of £.s.d. While late middle-aged readers (and reviewers) might recognise these, they may well feel ill at ease with the noisy impact of the brashly coloured pages. Children steeped in the giddy maelstrom of Kids TV will be far more comfortable, and probably less distracted from the plot.

For there is a plot. Stella and her Mum visit the video shop to pick up a movie since there's nothing but the World Cup on. Stella knows there's a monster in there. To the leering amusement of the video shop assistant, the monster duly gobbles up Mum, who doesn't believe in monsters. Stella grows and grows, and then grows some more until she has become Frankenstella, chasing the monster over land and sea, taking in the Eiffel Tower, the Empire State Building, Brighton (?) Pier and London buses en route. Finally, finding the pace too hot, the monster burps out Mum, covered in green slime and still not believing in monsters. Pretty much end of story, which has been told in prose decorated by some flashes of witty and uncompromising language. At last, Mum and Stella share a settee, watching what seems to be the World Cup. Only a sad purist would note that Jack Charlton (on the screen) is wearing his Leeds United strip rather than the England shirt.



Will children go back over the book again and again, exploring the details of the collages? I just don't know, and doubt whether too many adults could make an informed guess. I was tempted all the time to ask, 'But does it mean anything?' which I know is the wrong question, but can't help asking of a picture book for young readers. Artists' games are great fun, as Anthony Browne showed us long ago. But do these games lead anywhere? Of course, children 'read' pictures differently from us grown-ups, but if there's a narrative, shouldn't there be some interplay between image and text? Find a copy, find a child, and Discuss. GF

Nice One, Smithy

★★★★

Paul May, ill. Kate Sheppard,
Young Corgi, 96pp,
0 552 54720 4, £3.99 pbk

This football story is told through the eyes of Felicity Parker of Hillside Primary School. Their best player, Smithy, is on crutches as a new teacher, Miss Brown, takes over Class

5. She is a former international footballer who sets about transforming the school team in order that they conquer their archivals, the unbeaten Church Street gang. The pace is brisk and there is enough humour to keep the reader entertained to the final whistle as Smithy, reluctantly repositioned in goal as he returns to fitness, moves up the field to complete Hillside's exhibition of total football in the style of Brazil. Sheppard's roughly sketched spindle-legged characters add to the gentle humour. AK

Finn Family Moomintroll

AUDIO BOOK ★★

Tove Jansson, read by Hugh Laurie, BBC Cover to Cover,
3 hrs 15 mins, unabridged,
1 85549 126 5, £8.99 tape

Everything about this cassette makes it look like a sure-fire winner: favourite author, popular reader and all presented with a good cover adapted from the original artwork complete with a version of the much-loved hand lettering. But, alas, it disappoints. Tove Jansson's stories of the Moomins and their friends, the Snork Maiden and the Hemulen, are full of many things, including wonderful fantasy and even philosophy, but driving them all is Jansson's delicate and tender humour. Sadly Hugh Laurie seems not to find them funny. The result is that though the adventures remain original and the Moomin world full of delightful detail, the characters come across as quaint but lifeless, very different from the amusing and memorable individuality that bubbles through the writing. JE

Seasons Turning

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

0 7496 4182 7

High Tide, Low Tide

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

0 7496 4181 9

Story of a Storm

NON-FICTION ★★★

0 7496 4180 0

When the Sun Goes Down

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

0 7496 4179 7

Watch Out! Builders About!

NON-FICTION ★★★

0 7496 4298 X

Mick Manning and Brita Granström, Franklin Watts
'Wonderwise', 32pp, £7.99 each hbk

Manning and Granström know how to capture the interest of young learners. These books provide children of about 5 to 8 with an exhilarating first look at the chosen topics. The main narrative is in large, bold print with extra information included in italic. There are particularly lively suggestions for further research and activities. Each book is crammed with wonderful pictures, often labelled and sometimes quite small in scale, which might well inspire children to write and illustrate their own nature

journals. All this creates great variety on the page and gives each book its own flavour. What the books have in common, though, is that they reveal a dynamic, ever changing world.

Seasons Turning reinforces the linking of each season with the next. So we start and end with winter as 'cold as penguins' feet'. The sights, scents and noises of each season are brought to life in words and in detailed pictures of flora and fauna. The visual and the verbal combine equally well in **High Tide, Low Tide**. The quality of the double spreads with annotated illustrations makes this my personal favourite. The picture of wading, tide-following birds like oystercatchers, godwits and curlews has a particularly strong imaginative appeal. The small, beautifully drawn and labelled pictures of sea plants and sea creatures are likely to please and inform young readers. There is also guidance on how to make a map of a well-liked seaside place. The setting for **Story of a Storm** is the open countryside and farmland. We learn about the impact of a storm on both the people and the animals, including some beautiful heavy



horses - 'The wind grew stronger lashing the rain against fur and skin!' I just felt, however, that in a strong series this was a little slighter, a little lighter on content than some of the other books.

When **The Sun Goes Down** shows us a

dark landscape and the activities of animals and people through the night. The text and pictures indicate the movements and sounds of nocturnal animals - foxes chasing prey, cats prowling and bats as they 'flutter and squeak'. There's a charming little diagram here showing echolocation and lots of extra visual details to encourage talk. The excitement and slight menace of night-time comes over well. **Watch Out! Builders About!** shows a landscape in the process of transformation. Perhaps this book lacks the minutiae which appeal to children and are so evident in some of the other books in the series. We nevertheless learn much about the process of turning wasteland into housing, what the builders do at each stage and the machinery that is used.

These books would provide inspiration inside the classroom - particularly in science and geography lessons. The labelled and annotated diagrams would be helpful in the literacy hour as examples of non-fiction illustration. Such lively and intriguing books would also be much enjoyed at home. MM

Start with Art: Animals

NON-FICTION ★★★

Sue Lacey, Franklin Watts, 32pp, 0 7496 4614 4, £5.99 pbk

This book encourages children to work as artists and try out different styles, techniques and mediums, basing twelve different projects on works for which the artist used the same approach. Gobbets of information about the artist are included with the reproduction of the works of art together with questions designed to help the child work out more about the effects of composition, use of colour etc. The layout encourages you to go through from cover to cover and there is a real sense of enthusiasm for making art. Some of the step by step instructions could be more detailed but the emphasis is on trying something out and discovering why it works for yourself. AR

REVIEWS 8-10 Junior/Middle

The Sleeping Sword

★★★

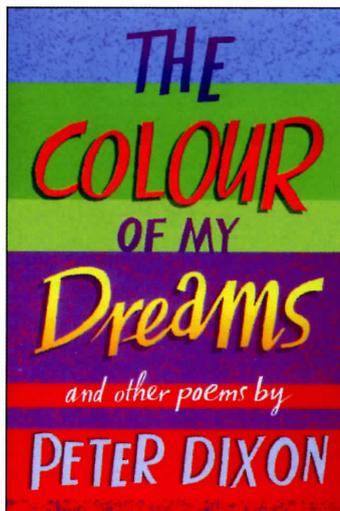
Michael Morpurgo, ill. Michael Foreman, Egmont, 96pp, 0 7497 4852 4, £9.99 hbk

In children's fiction, writers have long been attracted to miracle cures as a way of taking characters from the dark night of the soul into the bright light of a happy ending and by far the most popular conditions to bring this about are paralysis, the inability to walk, and blindness, the inability to see. Those who think this convention has been replaced by a more realistic way to write about disability should read Morpurgo's otherwise excellent **The Sleeping Sword**.

The story is set on Bryher in the Isles of Scilly where the sounds of the sea and the oyster catchers are beautifully evoked. The hero Bun has been blinded in a diving accident and for the past two years he has been learning how to deal with this new life. He often feels lost and frightened but with the help of good friends and a blind woman on the mainland who teaches him braille and a more positive way of looking at the world, he begins to move forward. With great skill, Morpurgo weaves this story of Bun's difficult, sometimes painful reality with mythical fantasy and dreams. In this dream world, Bun discovers King Arthur's sword and shield in an ancient tomb buried on his father's farm. Bedevere instructs him to return it to King Arthur where he is guided by six white swans which turn into six black queens. Arthur tells his story and instructs Bun to return the sword to the stone telling him that he must have faith. 'Believe it will happen and it will, I promise you.'

When Bun wakes from this dream, he has been cured. 'I can see, I can see' he shouts, in much the same way that Heidi's friend Clara cried, 'look, look, I can walk' as she took her first steps on the Alps. Perhaps I'm alone in wishing that Morpurgo had found an alternative to the well worn convention which suggests that the

only happy way to deal with being disabled is to be cured, because in every other way this is a ripping yarn. LK



The Colour of My Dreams

POETRY ★★★

Peter Dixon, ill. David Thomas, Macmillan, 96pp, 0 330 48020 0, £4.99 pbk

Dixon goes from strength to strength in each new collection of poems. **The Colour of My Dreams** is a good title for all the themes and subjects addressed in these poems. There are poems on shadows, cuddles, angels, escaped hamsters, worksheets and wheelchair access. Thomas deserves special mention for his illustrations which go far beyond the usual format and quality of artwork to be found in the typical paperback primary age anthology produced these days. HT

Quirky Tales

AUDIO BOOK ★★★

Paul Jennings, read by Steven Pacey, Cavalcade, 2 hrs 52 mins, unabridged, 0 7540 7162 6, £8.99 tape

The real point about Paul Jennings' **Quirky Tales** (and indeed all his stories) is the accessibility of his writing to unconfident readers. He tells genuinely amusing stories in an easy-to-read way without ever being patronising. But that makes them less successful when read aloud as the carefully designed simplicity and lightness becomes more like lightweight. The amusing idiosyncrasies of the stories are hard to capture and depend partly on Jennings' Australian turn of phrase. Without an Australian accent, Stephen Pacey sadly struggles to bring them to life. JE

Great Expectations

★★★

Retold by James Riordan, based on the original story by Charles Dickens, ill. Victor G Ambrus, Oxford, 96pp, 0 19 274191 8, £9.99 pbk

The publisher's blurb which accompanied this retelling speaks of 'a classic tale brought to vivid life for children by two prodigious contemporary talents', claiming that the book is 'accessible' to children aged eight and above. It doesn't, however, explain why you'd want to give it to them in the first place.

Exactly what is the point of hurrying children into a stripped down version of **Great Expectations**? For this reworking is inevitably a skeletal account of the novel (95 liberally illustrated pages against the 460 pages of close print of the Everyman edition). It follows the convict-on-the-marshes/Miss-Havisham-and-Estella-at-Satis-House/Pip-in-London/return-of-Magwitch/failed-escape route. Magwitch shows up before halfway and we didn't even

know from the text that he had been recaptured on the marshes. Bidy does not appear until she is already married to Joe in the denouement, there is hardly anything of Wemmick (no Miss Skiffins, no Aged P), no Orlick, no glorious Wopsle giving his Hamlet, and a minor player as rich in exasperating pomposity as Pumblechook is there as no more than a name. Such is the pace that Pip's slow decline into snobbery and London mores is lost. Jagers' mysterious housekeeper is not introduced until she can't be left out any longer when Estella's parentage is disclosed and a writer as excellent as Riordan is reduced to 'So Molly, the housemaid, must be Estella's mother. It all fitted.' There is no room for most of the comedy which lies, as ever with Dickens, in the detail of the telling rather than the plot.

Riordan keeps as close to the original text as he can, though even here some questions arise. If you change 'My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip,' to 'My surname being Pirrip and my first name Philip' (and so on, throughout the text), you lose the very sense of stylistic otherness which for older readers, *in due time*, is one of the attractions of nineteenth-century literature.

So, the justification has to be, even the skeleton of this story is so fine (superior to stories of the present day, maybe?) that children will love it. Or, in some sense, *need it* - the view that children *should* know the classics, even in pared down form, because that knowledge will somehow be good for them. This view and the belief that such a book begins an inevitable route towards the complete texts are dubious and certainly impossible to prove.

Ambrus's unmistakable illustrations (several of them in colour) are charged with wonderful energy and excitement. They are reminiscent of the work by Charles Keeping which illuminated earlier Oxford books (**Beowulf**, **The Highwayman**, et al) in a similar format (20.5cm x 28cm). The

street scenes, the images of Magwitch especially, and the episodes on the river are quintessentially Dickensian. **GF**

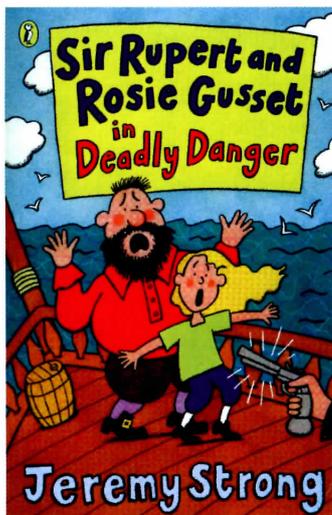
Danger by Moonlight

★★★

Jamila Gavin, ill. David Dean, Egmont, 112pp, 0 7497 4886 9, £3.99 pbk

Filippo Veronese is son of the seventeenth-century Venetian master jeweller. His father has been away for years in the courts of the Great Mogul Shah Jehan when the family hears that he has been kidnapped by an Afghan warlord. Filippo must deliver a ransom, raising the money by selling his father's masterpiece, a fabulous pearl and diamond pendant.

Robbed by bandits in the desert, caught up in the bloody power play of the Mogul court, Filippo has many adventures – yet the star of the book is undoubtedly the jewel, the Ocean of the Moon. Described more vividly than any of the human characters it directly influences the course of their lives remaining untouched by their suffering. Filippo's father dies a broken man far from home, but his magnificent jewel becomes inspiration for the Taj Mahal, perfect monument to human love. The Mogul's palace shimmering in the dawn is the final image in a book rich with images and ideas. **AR**



Sir Rupert and Rosie Gusset in Deadly Danger

★★★

Jeremy Strong, ill. Nick Sharratt, Puffin, 144pp, 0 14 130490 1, £3.99 pbk

Strong and Sharratt team up again to produce another deliciously ridiculous tale of wacky characters with daft names. Sir Rupert and his

plucky daughter Rosie are ordered by ugly Queen Margaret to deliver an over-flattering portrait of her to the King of Sicily in the hope that he will want to marry her. She has a picture of the tall dark and handsome monarch and has fallen in love with him. A chest of twenty thousand gold coins is thrown in for good measure to persuade the king to pop the question. However, sailing with such a valuable cargo attracts all kinds of enemies, from within and outside the state, including a fashion conscious pirate, named Snotless, and a scheming secret agent called Murk Malpractice. The King of Sicily turns out to be as ugly as Margaret herself and there are plenty of laughs as Rosie endeavours to carry out the wishes of the Queen, prevent the baddies from stealing the gold and simultaneously ensure her father does not lose his head to the executioner's axe. **AK**

Big George

★★★

Eric Pringle, ill. Colin Paine, Bloomsbury, 160pp, 0 7475 5544 3, £4.99 pbk

Funny, light-hearted and moving, **Big George** is 'Beauty and the Beast' meets 'The BFG' and 'E.T.'. Or possibly it's a mixture of 'St George and the Dragon', King Kong' and 'Frankenstein's Monster'. It is 1103. Big George crash-lands on earth from space. In his own language George is a grolhyoomp; a man with blue and green hair, a giraffe-like neck and a face that glows like the moon. Aptly named, Big George is also the size of several large trees. This makes it rather difficult for Tilly, the miller's daughter, to protect him from the rather scared and intimidated village folk whose first instinct is to run from or kill Big George. With a smattering of baddies, including the evil Baron Lousewort, Bones Lousewort (his son, who wants to marry Tilly), Silas Sludge, Bartholomew Bog and some goodies with equally unlikely names including kind-hearted poacher, Simpkins Sampkins, **Big George** is an energetic and enjoyable fairy tale. Very occasional line illustrations are well suited to the story. **AK**

The Wool Pack

AUDIO BOOK ★★★★★

Cynthia Harnett, read by Jamie Glover, Collins, 3 hrs, abridged, 0 00 713486 X, £8.99 tape

Judicious cutting for this excellent abridgement give Cynthia Harnett's Carnegie Medal winning **The Wool Pack** a well-deserved lease of life. The meticulous details of the many stages of the wool trade and the complex social hierarchies of all those involved in it are not lost. But the story is driven at a greater pace than in the book making it a thrilling

adventure of smuggling and shady dealing with the enigmatic Lombard merchants as well as a marvellously evocative historical novel. Jamie Glover conveys the enthusiasm and anxieties of the young narrator Nicholas Fetterlock well, capturing both his youthful exuberance as a young sleuth and his tenderness as he meets his child bride. **JE**

Shrinking Violet

★★★

Jean Ure, ill. Karen Donnelly, Collins, 176pp, 0 00 185748 7, £9.99 hbk

Where would children's literature be without twins? Lily and Violet are identical physically but while Lily is loud, outgoing and confident, Violet is the exact opposite.

This is also a classic epistolary novel. **Shrinking Violet** finds herself a pen friend and through their letters and the stories and articles they make up for an invented magazine, the two get to know each other and of course themselves.

Letters not email? It's explained. At times the author has tried to be up to the minute with references to current pop bands and TV programmes but it could well be the letter writing that proves harder for editors of the future to modernize. Let's hope the book survives because the story is timeless, the descriptions of the girls and their relationship spot on and it does a great job selling the empowering nature of language and story. **AR**

Midnight for Charlie Bone

★★★

Jenny Nimmo, ill. David Wyatt, Egmont, 352pp, 0 7497 4888 5, £4.99 pbk

The success of the 'Harry Potter' novels has created a market for and a resulting supply of children's books concerned with magic. Thus it is difficult to read **Charlie Bone** without a mental reference to Potter, to which, unfortunately, it does not measure up. To make such a comparison is not really fair to Nimmo who was an accomplished and well-regarded author of 'magic' stories long before J K Rowling hit the headlines. However, the similarities are there.

Charlie Bone is a boy leading a relatively ordinary life who discovers he is 'endowed' with supernatural powers: he can hear people in photographs talking. This means that he is to become a boarder at Bloor's Academy, a school for others who are 'endowed' and for the very talented. The action is divided between Bloor's and Charlie's home and environs, and there is a large number of characters which I found confusing at times.

The book begins with a prologue set in a mythical past where events have repercussions for those living in the present, especially Charlie Bone. These are reflected in the number of plots and sub-plots in the narrative, and while some of these are resolved, there is still much to be told and the closing page says 'To be continued'.

Despite the above caveats, **Midnight for Charlie Bone** is likely to be enjoyed by many young readers. **VC**

When Marnie Was There

AUDIO BOOK ★★★★★

Joan G Robinson, read by Jan Francis, Collins, 3 hrs, abridged, 0 00 713487 8, £8.99 tape

Perhaps a little over-wordy for modern listeners, **When Marnie Was There** is, nonetheless, an intriguing mystery as well as a thoughtful story of friendship and its complications. Jan Francis reads it well, especially catching the character of lonely Anna whose very ordinariness counts against her, making both adults and other children find her difficult. While on a holiday from her foster mother Anna is given the freedom she craves and, away from adult eyes and expectations, she makes a friend. But Marnie is different. When she disappears, Anna has to adapt again in ways that show she is far from 'difficult' but emotionally sensitive and resourceful. Collins' much-favoured electronic mood-music heightens the drama. **JE**

Archer's Goon

AUDIO BOOK ★★★★★

Diana Wynne Jones, read by Miriam Margolyes, Collins, 3 hrs 30 mins, abridged, 0 00 713479 7, £8.99 tape

The quality of Diana Wynne Jones' comic invention is given full expression in Miriam Margolyes' reading of **Archer's Goon**. The Goon, an alarming but strangely amiable creature, arrives unexpectedly in the Sykes household claiming an outstanding payment. But this is no ordinary debt: the 2,000 is not pounds but words, words to be written by Mr Sykes to pay the bills for gas, water, electricity and so forth. As Howard Sykes tries to unravel just who the Goon is, let alone the truth about his boss Archer and the rest, the jokes about the problems of writer's block are skilfully woven around a biting satire on the vagaries and incompetence of the public service providers (the book was written in 1984). Excellent entertainment from an outstanding storyteller. **JE**

REVIEWS 10-12 Middle/Secondary

Paper Faces

★★★

Rachel Anderson, Oxford, 128pp, 0 19 275165 4, £4.99 pbk

Post 1945 England is re-created with painstakingly palpable detail as Dot tries to cope with the alien phenomenon of peace. The

deprivations of Blitz-torn London are tellingly contrasted with the relative bounty of the country. Through it all young Dot is trying to extract some sense from a post-war world where even the adults, whom she longs to trust, seem confused, or at best too preoccupied with the day to day to explain the vicissitudes of survival in

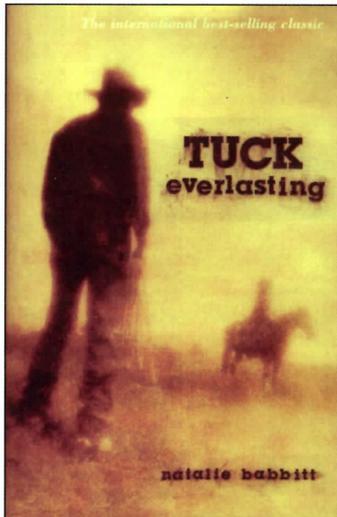
rapidly altering circumstances.

Published originally in 1991, this is a timely reprint. The pace is gentle, not much that is remarkable happens, but it would certainly be an excellent way to learn some National Curriculum Social History from the last century. **DB**

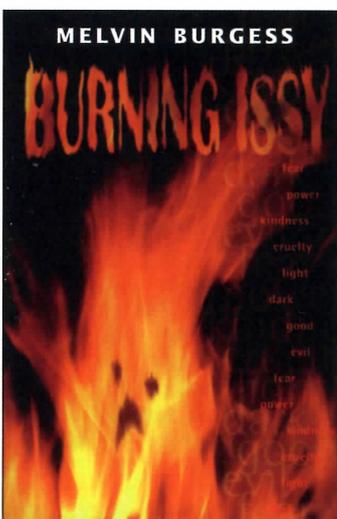
Tuck Everlasting

★★★★★

Natalie Babbitt, Bloomsbury, 144pp, 0 7475 5595 8, £9.99 hbk
I love this book. It was first published in 1975, not always easily available since then, and now appears in a new hardback edition with a 'major



motion picture' coming. From the wheel-turning image of the opening, the story, like Pullman's clock, has a marvellously sprung art and ease to it: 'three things happened and at first there appeared to be no connection between them... No connection, you would agree. But things can come together in strange ways. The wood was at the center, the hub of the wheel.' The reader then shares with ten-year-old Winnie the wonder of the Tucks' secret of everlasting life and then the dawning understanding of their situation. This is crystallised in the remarkable chapter, at the centre of the book, where Pa Tuck takes Winnie out onto a pond to show her what they have lost in losing life, living, change and death. It's a great read, a page-turner which educates and makes you marvel at life and stories – and face up to endings. A classic and a beautiful book. AJ



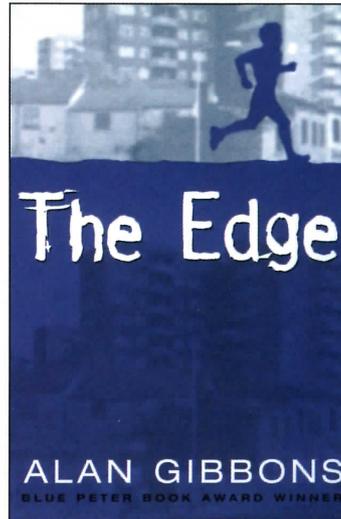
Burning Issy

★★★★★

Melvin Burgess, Puffin, 160pp, 0 14 131383 8, £4.99 pbk

This welcome reissue of an early Burgess novel reminds us what a versatile writer he is. *Burning Issy* is an historical novel about witchcraft, set near Pendle in Lancashire at the time of the infamous seventeenth-century witch trials. 12-year-old Issy is indeed a witch, of a kind. Haunted from infancy by a terrifying nightmare memory of fire, she also has the involuntary supernatural power to create fire as a weapon, in defence of those she loves. Issy's past is mysterious. She longs to know her true origins and nature, and is

lacerated by fears of persecution, sin and the Devil, until the strange woman Iohan (her aunt, as it proves) appears when things are desperate and gradually enables her to find the truth. Issy and Iohan are priestesses of an old religion, pantheistic in nature, predating Christianity and under threat from it. They have nothing to do with Christianity's polarisation of God and Satan, good and evil, but belong to an older, innocent, more inclusive worship. Burgess convincingly recreates the confusions, fears and superstitions of a bigoted and cruel age, and Issy's troubled but successful efforts to find herself make a compelling story, exploring difficult themes in a clear, strong narrative accessible to readers of ten and over. PHO



The Edge

★★★★★

Alan Gibbons, Dolphin, 176pp, 1 84255 094 2, £4.99 pbk

'For three years shame has been an infection inside him, sour and spreading.'

But Danny is on the edge of reversing the shame by conquering his fear and so it is for all the other characters, through whom this gripping story is told.

The Edge, a solid rock spur near a northern town, serves as a striking metaphor for lives that are altering from one state to another. Grandma Joan will regain her family and act against the lovelessness of her marriage and Harry, her husband, will appreciate just where his BNP views have led him, even to the alienation of his only daughter and her mixed-race son. However, it is Danny above all who will tame fear and the manipulative violence that has blighted all their lives.

This is a fast and compelling 'must read' that is disturbing in ways that are bound to make teenagers confront important issues like racism and endemic violence. I can't recommend it highly enough. DB

Whispers on the Wind

★★★

Sue Welford, Oxford, 176pp, 0 19 271885 1, £6.99 pbk

In the Stoghold the pampered Upper Crust live at the top of the Tower while below, amongst the rubbish, the Lower Crust must scavenge for scraps and discarded clothes. This is the way it has always

NEW Talent

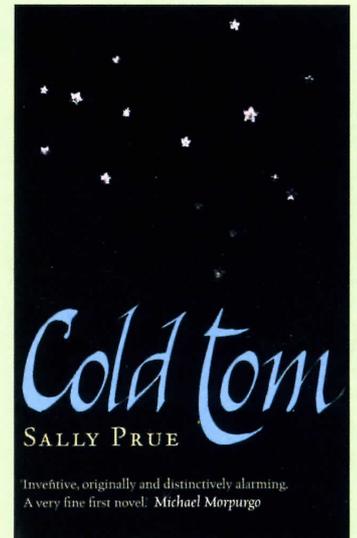
Cold Tom

★★★★★

Sally Prue, Oxford, 144pp, 0 19 271887 8, £6.99 pbk

One of the tribe who live on the common, Tom fends cautiously for himself, ever watchful in case his growing clumsiness leads to his expulsion or worse. Meanwhile the houses of the much-feared demons have edged closer. These alien worlds come dramatically together when Tom must flee for his life. He finds shelter in a demon's garden shed and is cared for by Anna, a demon girl. Which world, then, does Tom belong to? Is it a choice between the ruthless hating of the Tribe and the smothering warmth of the demons or can he stand alone?

Written in short, intense chapters, this bold mixture of magic and realism is rooted by its sturdy sense of location and its witty play with difference as, eg, when Tom is astonished that Anna should keep a piece of meat (her guinea pig) as a pet rather than eat it. At a deeper level, Tom, Anna and her lonely half-brother Joe are faced with an



existential choice – will the vines that bind them turn out to be the slave-ropes that Tom first assumed them to be or is there a freer way to be attached? In this edgily written first novel, Prue's inventive flair is both engrossing and demanding. A considerable achievement. RS

been and always will be. Then one night the predictability is disrupted; the Heiress is kidnapped and a young scavenger, Vinna, is the only one to hear her cries in the night. Together with Aysix, a strange boy with piercing eyes and superhuman strength, she is sent to find the Heiress and secure her return to the Stronghold.

Welford is a good storyteller; the plot is uncluttered and moves along at a brisk pace. I did however find that explicit forward projecting cues undermined the suspense that Welford builds so skilfully. Halfway through the book Vinna notices that her companion neither eats nor sleeps and she observes, 'Being with Aysix was like living with a machine that never needed winding up.' (p.73). Later the denouement reveals that he is human replica, created Frankenstein-like during an electric storm. There were several instances like this where I felt I was being told the outcome of the story rather than being led to work it out for myself.

Nevertheless, *Whispers on the Wind* poses some interesting questions about social organisation, ethics and science, freedom and service. The satisfying ending is the beginning of a new adventure and perhaps a sequel? NG

Vicky Angel

AUDIO BOOK

★★

Jacqueline Wilson, read by Eve Best, BBC Cover to Cover, 4 hrs 15 mins, 1 85549 691 7, £14.99 CD

In the tragic opening of *Vicky Angel*, Jacqueline Wilson captures Jade and her friends' complex reactions to Vicky's sudden death. This is Wilson at her best, showing just how well she understands emotional complexities and how fitting her direct style of writing is to conveying them. The subsequent story of how Vicky haunts Jade is less satisfactory, although Jade's recurrent feelings of guilt are good. Eve Best's reading of

Jade's first person narrative never seems quite to enter the character, making the story seem less substantial and dramatic than it should. JE

Twilight Ghost

★★★★★

Magdalen Nabb, ill. Tim Stevens, Collins, 192pp, 0 00 713397 9, £4.99 pbk

A twilight ghost, we learn early on in Magdalen Nabb's novel, is 'a kind of long-lasting memory that ... fades away as the first star comes out and the day dies.' By the book's closing line, that first star has indeed appeared and the story's heroine, 11-year-old Carrie, is emerging a more self-assured young woman. At first extremely unhappy when changing circumstances compel her family to move to her grandmother's house, she is soon involved in a time-slip adventure which – occasionally quite frighteningly – gives her glimpses of how earlier family members had had to cope with their dilemmas and tragedies. It is not a particularly original theme, but Nabb's lyricism and her confidence in moving between present and historical time raise her story above the more conventional examples of the genre. RD

Transported: The Diary of Elizabeth Harvey, Australia 1790

★★★

Goldie Alexander, Scholastic 'My Story', 208pp, 0 439 98114 X, £4.99 pbk

If you want to publish novels that are intended to support the history curriculum, this is probably the best way to do it. Some of the most popular teenage novels come in the shape of diaries, and the individuality and intimacy of the form gives an appealing aspect to a story which otherwise might be mainly

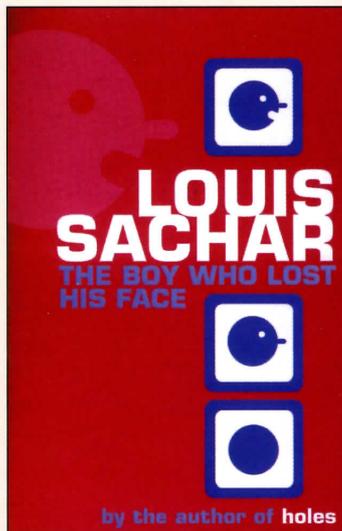
Editor's Choice

The Boy Who Lost His Face

★★★★★

Louis Sachar, Bloomsbury, 208pp, 0 7475 5528 1, £4.99 pbk

David reluctantly takes part in stealing an old lady's cane in an ugly incident in which she falls off her chair showing her knickers and has lemonade tipped over her head. As David struggles with peer group pressure and bullying, this painful event comes back to haunt him. He tips off his chair and 'forgets' to do up his fly. Has he been cursed? In this elegantly plotted, funny novel Sachar holds the tension well as David gradually forms a group of real friends and finds the courage to retrieve the cane and take it back to its owner. There is also a delightful sub-plot about David's crush on Tori, a girl in his class; the intensity of his feelings and the aching awkwardness



of first love are beautifully captured. After *Holes*, Sachar's *chef d'oeuvre* to date, the ending of this earlier novel is perhaps a little cosy, but nevertheless it is hugely enjoyable.

RS

concerned with accurate description of historical conditions and events.

Alexander's portrayal of life among the first European colonists doesn't get very far under the skin of her characters. Nor does she explore in any depth the social divisions between militia and convicts, and between the whites and the aborigines. The need to offer an objective historical viewpoint softens the edges of class and racial antagonism but the narrative does deal with the reality of grubbing an existence in an inhospitable world and with the outbursts of barbarism that must have punctuated it.

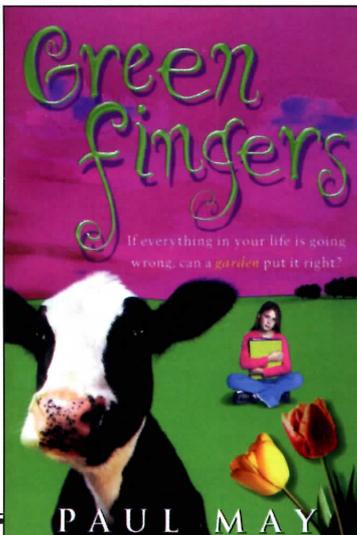
In Elizabeth Harvey, Alexander has created a young woman who thinks and speaks in ways that are different from our own, and whose relationships and everyday problems of survival hold our interest. On balance, however, there is perhaps too much of the historically authentic and not enough of the dramatically effective. The novel leaves the impression of a writer's imagination constrained by her brief.

CB

Green Fingers

★★★★★

Paul May, ill. Siân Bailey, Corgi Yearling, 224pp, 0 440 86456 9, £4.99 pbk



Kate is right on the edge of being a school phobic, a girl who blows easily with frustration at her inability to read and write. She is far from impressed when her well-meaning parents move to East Anglia for a fresh start. She just copes but teacher prejudice brings her close to trouble once more.

Then, in a bid to get her mother to come back to her husband, Kate sees a need to restore the garden of their dilapidated new home. She now has the incentive to crack the codes of print in order to get vital information on gardening. There is a lot that is gently moving and wise in this very readable novel. The cover suggests a middle school readership, probably girls, doubtfully ones like Kate who are still struggling with reading.

DB

Child X

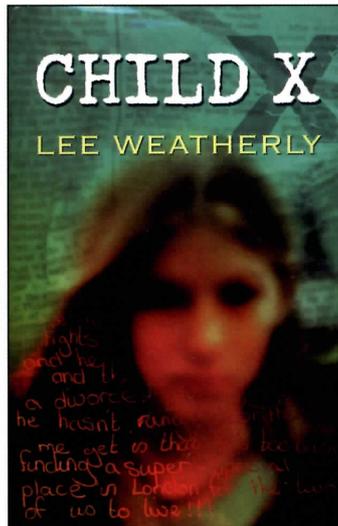
★★★★★

Lee Weatherley, David Fickling Books, 224pp, 0 385 60393 2, £10.99 hbk

Weatherley's first novel plunges us into the world of media sensationalism, as 13-year-old Jules gradually discovers why her parents have suddenly separated and her father refuses to speak to her. The X of the title has nothing to do with Malcolm X or the Nation of Islam. It refers to the way in which Jules is identified by press and television because they are legally restrained from naming her.

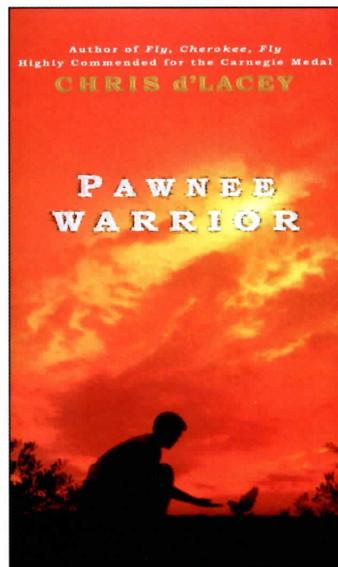
Told in the first person, the story moves swiftly, keeping the reader's interest with a large cast of characters, a central plot which depends on sexual revelations and media harassment, and subplots involving bullying at school, Jules's part-time career as an actress in a stage adaptation of *Northern Lights*, and her growing romance with a school friend.

All in all, there is rather too much going on to allow some of the characters to appear as any more than insubstantial and unconvincing, and the break between father and daughter, essential to the development of the plot, is difficult to



believe. But Weatherley can tell a story, and Jules herself is a solid, three-dimensional figure, self-conscious and vulnerable, funny, touching and exasperating at turns, who gradually acquires self-confidence as she makes her way through the usual embarrassments of adolescence and the sudden extraordinary collapse of her family life, all in the glare of national publicity.

CB



Pawnee Warrior

★★★★★

Chris d'Lacey, Corgi, 288pp, 0 552 54788 3, £4.99 pbk

Pigeons I can take or leave, and on the whole I'm happier leaving them. Having read *Pawnee Warrior*, I now know quite a bit more than I did (nothing) about pigeon breeding and racing. The point of this personal information is that for me *Pawnee Warrior* is an excellent example of the way in which a story can absorb a reader in a hitherto uninteresting topic.

Pawnee Warrior takes up where the highly acclaimed *Fly, Cherokee, Fly* stops. The concluding page of *Fly, Cherokee, Fly* shows Darryl Otterwell finding two eggs in the nest of his pet pigeons. In *Pawnee Warrior* the eggs hatch, and Darryl is confronted with the dilemma of what to do with his fledglings in the face of his parents' opposition to pigeon breeding; two pet pigeons – yes; lots of pigeons – no. Against this is set his mother's

troubled pregnancy, Darryl's continuing bullying by Warren Spiggo, and his growing interest and confusion related to girls, and in particular the very different Susan and Suzie.

One of the strengths of this very likeable novel is the portrayal of the young people's interaction with adults. D'Lacey wins the confidence of his readers by his creation of the worlds of school and home. Credibility is only strained at the rousing denouement when the unpleasant Warren is well and truly routed, but this is done in such an entertaining manner that it is a relatively minor caveat.

I also learned a bit about genetics from this book, and no, I haven't joined the local pigeon fanciers club.

VC

Spindle's End

★★★★★

Robin McKinley, David Fickling Books, 364pp, 0 385 60419 X, £10.99 hbk

Spindle's End is a fairy tale, but also a long, leisurely, sophisticated narrative which makes no linguistic compromises, and demands readers able to cope with such sentences as 'Katriona let the confused provenance of this metaphor pass in silence'. Bits and pieces of many traditional fairy tales are fed into the story of Rosie, a child princess, firstborn and heiress of the king and queen in a land where benevolent fairies and magicians are accepted citizens. The long-desired baby is cursed on her name-day by the wicked fairy Pernicia, who threatens that on her twenty-first birthday she will die, poisoned by a sharp spindle end. In the court's confusion Rosie is rescued by a humble country fairy, Katriona, and raised in protective ordinariness hidden from Pernicia's malice. Of course she is eventually found, and a battle for survival ensues. The unnamed country is a strange place, because Pernicia is its only source of evil, and even she lives outside its bounds; within the borders fairies, humans and animals live in idyllic harmony. As a fairy tale *Spindle's End's* subject is magical perils, but as a novel it is an almost utopian love story. A curious and distinctive book, but one with no obvious readership.

PHO

The Blitz

0 237 52304 3

Evacuation

0 237 52306 X

Rationing

0 237 52307 8

Women's War

0 237 52305 1

NON-FICTION

★★★★★

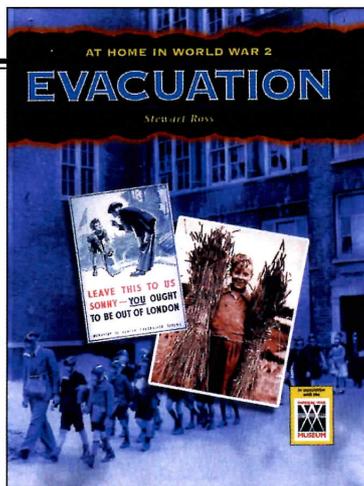
Stewart Ross, Evans 'At Home in World War Two', 32pp, £10.99 each hbk

This quartet, produced in association with the Imperial War Museum, mines the fertile seam of the Home Front. Mining can be a hazardous process and produce large quantities of dross, but, when skilfully done, real riches can be revealed. And so it is here – a host of accurately evocative images illustrates each facet of the war at home, and Ross's text provides brilliantly objective explanation throughout.

The Blitz introduces the German concept of community-erasure and its results in British cities before moving to the Allies' enthusiastic uptake of the idea that culminated in the obscurity of Hiroshima.

Evacuation shows not only the experience of evacuees in their transplanted situations but the reaction of those who were evacuated upon. It also deals with the life of children who lived out the war at home in bombed cities.

Rationing takes us into the banal world of dried egg and Spam, reminding us that not just food was rationed, but clothes as well, and some rationing didn't end until 1954.



Fewer sweets, less meat, liberal cod liver oil, and orange juice resulted in a generation of children healthier than in pre-war times!

Women's War looks at women in the Services, on the land (in breeches unnervingly like Hitler's), doing 'men's' jobs in industry, and holding households together.

This is a splendid foursome which will pilot the newcomer to the war at home and evoke myriad memories amongst those who were there at the time. The books will probably be at their best shared between these two generations, but, with their excellent layout, admirably clear texts, generous and imaginative biblio- and

website-ographies, will amply reward the wide audience that they deserve to attract. TP

**PICTURE BOOK
REVIEWED IN THIS
ISSUE RELEVANT TO
OLDER READERS:**

**Frankstellla and the
Video Shop Monster** (see p20)

REVIEWS 12+ Secondary

Letters to Liz: Jo's Letter

0 7445 5987 1

Letters to Liz: Nicki's Letter

0 7445 9002 7

★★★

Mary Hooper, Walker, 80pp, £3.99 each pbk

These bright, lively pocket-sized books are the latest of Hooper's forays into fiction about troubled young adults. *Megan* and *Megan 2* dealt successfully with the challenges of teenage pregnancy and here she explores two more typical teenage preoccupations: petty crime and relationships with the opposite sex.

Four friends – Nicki, Zoe, Amber and Jo – have a book devoted to their own dark secrets, written in the form of a narrative followed by a letter to a problem page. Nicki's letter deals with her friend Zoe's shoplifting and Jo's with her fictitious boyfriend Vince, invented to keep pace with her friends' tally of boys.

The narratives are pacy and page-turning but their speed and brevity do not prevent knowledgeable and sympathetic examination of the featured problem. These useful and entertaining books will provide reassurance for many teenagers and the knowledge that there is always someone to whom they can turn for help. VR

(Also available: *Amber's Letter*, 0 7445 9004 3, and *Zoe's Letter*, 0 7445 9003 5)

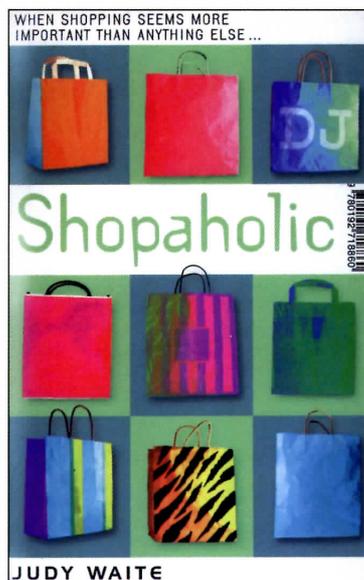
Shopaholic

★★★★

Judy Waite, Oxford, 176pp, 0 19 271886 X, £6.99 pbk

Taylor's life is changing: her lifelong friends, Sam and Sophie, seem to exclude her from their lives – she can't participate in their experiments with a more grown-up image without money. When pretty, popular Kat turns her attention to Taylor she can't believe her luck: this will be her gateway to a new, sophisticated lifestyle – a release from the repetitive cycle of worry and failure.

However, Kat is not what she seems and ruthlessly manipulates Taylor to feed both her shopping addiction and her own sense of inadequacy, leading her into the fringes of criminality and leaving her to take the blame. Taylor is rescued –



physically and emotionally – by her grandfather; a rock in her sea of isolation and confusion. Kat has no such saviour and at the end of the book it is her empty damaged life that the reader feels most sympathy for.

I read this compelling and often poetic novel in one sitting – tension mounts inexorably throughout the narrative, as Taylor spirals deeper into debt and confusion. The death of Taylor's sister, Laura, is chillingly recounted as the innocence of Taylor's internal dialogue is starkly contrasted with the harrowing events.

The end of the novel signals hope for the future for Taylor: a reconciliation with her friends, her mother's determination to conquer her depression and Taylor's own catharsis in finally telling the truth about her sister's death. But Kat can find no respite from the addiction which cushions her from the bruising realities of her sordid life. VR

Cut

★★★★

Patricia McCormick, Collins Flamingo, 176pp, 0 00 713031 7, £4.99 pbk

As an elective mute, Callie is able to observe and record information about her fellow 'guests' in the residential treatment facility they have grimly re-christened as 'Sick Minds'. Here, the emphasis is on self-help and when Callie seems to be making no progress she is told she

may have to leave.

Spurred on by the thought of losing her security – albeit temporary and illusory – Callie gradually begins to talk and reveals the family tensions and the needless grief-stricken blame at her part in her brother's death. As a child, Callie has never considered her parents' fallibility and this chink in the parental armour is one of the reasons for her retreat from the world.

There are shades here of Robert Cormier's exquisite novel *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* – the supportive claustrophobia of the clinic, the painful innocence of young minds damaged by society's inadequacies, the reader's guilt at being a member of a society which is as often dysfunctional as it is supportive. McCormick's novel works because it rings true, delivering a warning about how we treat our young people which we cannot afford to ignore. VR

Book of Shadows

0 14 131400 1

The Coven

0 14 131401 X

★

Cate Tiernan, Puffin, 192pp, £4.99 each pbk

These two titles are the first in a series entitled 'Wicca' in which witchcraft meets the American High School novel. Morgan Rowlands, aged 16, discovers she is a blood witch, and becomes part of a school coven. She and her fellow witches can do magic, but otherwise their preoccupations are much the same as those of characters in similar books: boys/girls, parents, friends, driving around in their cars, pimples (but the pimples can be cured by magic).

Perhaps it is too much to expect accuracy in novels as trite as these, but in books from a reputable publisher, readers deserve to be treated with some respect, which includes accuracy in factual information. It is very unlikely that in a west of Ireland village a girl would sit A-levels rather than an Irish examination. Yet in one of the extracts from the *Book of Shadows* which precede each chapter, a young woman, revealed as Morgan's mother, is anticipating doing just this. There are other inconsistencies also in these extracts.

It is obvious that this series is cashing in on the current demand for books relating to magic, but the difference

between this series and others such as 'Harry Potter' is that in the latter readers are invited into what is obviously a fantastical world. In the 'Wicca' series magic meets normal life. The way in which this is done lacks any note of credibility in a literary sense, but it also raises questions of treating in such a trivial manner a subject which should be discussed with some caution. That this is a very commercial series is indicated by the supposed cliff-hanging ending of each novel, presumably urging readers to buy the next one. But readers, it would be better to save up for a broomstick.VC

Daisy Chain War

★★★

Joan O'Neill, Hodder, 244pp, 0 340 85466 9, £5.99 pbk

First published in Ireland in 1990, O'Neill's novel deals with that period in Irish history quaintly known as 'The Emergency', more widely referred to as World War Two. While she reconstructs superbly the minutiae of everyday domestic detail, giving her writing a strong documentary feel, the book's appeal for most young readers will be in its tale of two cousins, Irish Lizzie and English Vicky, brought together when Vicky, an evacuee, comes to join Lizzie in Dún Laoghaire, just outside Dublin. As the girls grow into young womanhood, O'Neill handles with humour, honesty and, above all, with sympathetic insight, the 'waiting, waiting, endless waiting' – as Lizzie calls it at one moment – of their teenage years. Her greatest achievement is that she effortlessly moves beyond the immediacy of her location to present her readers with matters of wide and general concern. RD

What My Mother Doesn't Know

★★★

Sonya Sones, Orion, 272pp, 1 84255 089 6, £8.99 hbk

In her first book, the autobiographical *Stop Pretending*, Sones included some poems about her first love. She recalls, 'I had such a good time writing about those feelings of overwhelming passion that I knew I wanted to delve into them more deeply.' This is what she has set out to achieve in the fictional *What My Mother Doesn't Know*. The story charts Sophie's emotional journey towards an epiphany – when she

becomes conscious of a distinction between love and lust.

Sones' verse form produces some poetic moments where the fusion of form and content works extremely well; however, I felt this was inconsistent. Sophie's wisdom and reflective capacity is remarkable rather than typical of most 15-year-olds but perhaps that is the point. NG

Why Do People Fight Wars?

Ali Brownlie and Chris Mason, 0 7502 3714 7

Why Do People Harm Animals?

Chris Mason, 0 7502 3718 X

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Hodder Wayland, 48pp, £11.99 each hbk

This series ('Ideal for Citizenship' each volume tells us) aims to provide 'all the facts you need to make up your own mind about the subject', and facts a-plenty are provided. Wars looks at much more than reasons for the origins of war, including the types of war that we fight, rules, tactics and crimes of war, its impact and aftermath, its resolution and prevention, the involvement of children and the fate of refugees. Similarly *Animals* goes well beyond intentional cruelty – embracing farming methods, aquaculture, animals at work and as pets, as well as the more predictable zoos, circuses, fur-trapping and fox-hunting.

Well-illustrated presentation is supported by useful and relevant addresses (both postal and web) to provide an objective array of facts and current opinions around each subject. The authors have successfully avoided imposing their own thoughts or characters on their works, which makes them unattractively impersonal to read but reinforces their value as research sources. So, Inspiring? – no, Sound? – yes, 'Ideal'? – well on the way. TP

The Great Depression

R G Grant, 0 7502 3638 8

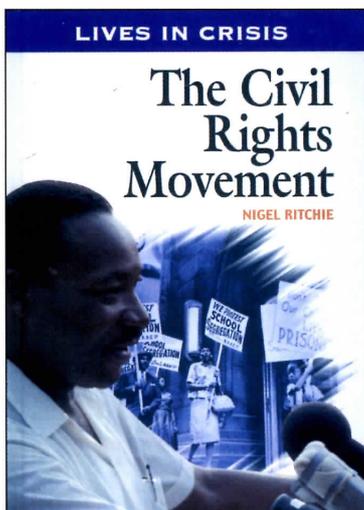
The Civil Rights Movement

Nigel Ritchie, 0 7502 3639 6

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Hodder Wayland 'Lives in Crisis', 64pp, £12.99 each hbk

These titles deal with subjects whose wide-reaching effects are matched by their complexity. The series format is of narrative chapters supported by



contemporary photographs and quotations from a range of actors in the events. This is clear, comfortable to read and creates an unobtrusive but stimulating relationship between the historical evidence and the account drawn from it.

In each case, the reader's attention is captured in the first chapter which examines a single moment of crisis – the Bonus Army at Washington in 1932, the crisis at Little Rock High School in 1957 – which acts as a focus for the subsequent discussion. The two authors have the space to create coherent stories which introduce young readers to the big issues and to the suffering, endurance and courage of individuals caught up in them.

Both writers know their subjects. Grant, in particular, shows his enviable skill at writing history with clarity and directness. There are areas, like economic theory, and the political and judicial structure of the United States, which are intrinsic to these subjects, but which are difficult to explain in any detail at this level without interrupting the flow of the narrative. These are acknowledged, but readers are, perhaps wisely, left to explore them more fully elsewhere. Both texts are supported by an index, a glossary, a table of major dates, and a list of sources for further research. CB

Catherine the Great

0 237 52245 4

Mao Zedong

0 237 52234 9

NON-FICTION ★★

Christine Hatt, Evans 'Judge for Yourself', 64pp, £12.99 each hbk

Hatt's portraits of these two great

autocrats are ambitious. Her attempt to do justice to the detail of these long lives and to the impact they had on their huge nations, falls victim to the wealth and difficulty of her material, and to the format of the series. The distinguishing feature of the format is the separation of a number of discussion points at the end of the books. Here, two sides of an argument are presented, with supporting evidence and sources, and the reader is invited to 'Judge for Yourself'. Was Mao's agricultural reform a success or a failure? Was Catherine the serf's friend or the serf's enemy?

This is a reminder that 'facts and statistics can be used to support completely different points of view'. But it makes for a curious book when some of the central questions are not explored in the body of the text. This, with so much of its major parts removed elsewhere, tends to collapse into exhaustive and exhausting detail. The long march of events is interrupted only by the occasional double page spread which attempts to inject a burst of background information, on, for instance, Chinese philosophy or the history of the Romanov dynasty.

A great deal of research is evident in both Hatt's text and its accompanying illustrations and sources. However, this is a format which demands a level of concentration, tolerance and flexibility which will surely restrict its readership. Finally, why is a bold squiggly, handwritten type of font used for the books' subheadings and for the captions to their illustrations? It doesn't help English readers to familiarise themselves with Russian or Chinese personal and place names if they have difficulty deciphering them. CB

Food Supply: Our Impact on the Planet

0 7502 3493 8

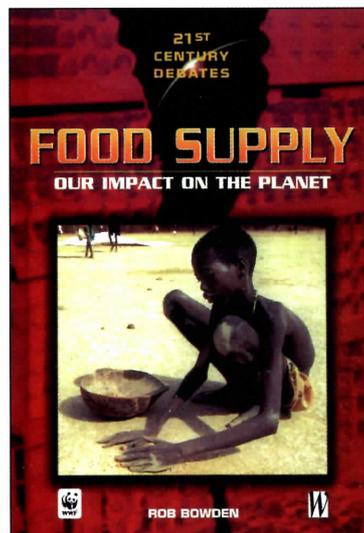
An Overcrowded World? Our Impact on the Planet

0 7502 3427 X

NON-FICTION ★★★★★

Rob Bowden, Hodder Wayland '21st Century Debates', 64pp, £12.99 each hbk

Here are two volumes that share not only the same author but have much material in common, as so they should, the two topics being sides of the same coin. 'If you are about 13 years old,' Bowden alleges, 'a billion people have been added to the world's population since you were born.'



Overcrowded starts with Malthus and charts the six-fold world population expansion in the two centuries since his initial warning. The considerations of resources, food, living space, poverty, and population control ('Keep afloat in the AIDS flood – use a condom') are painstakingly examined with commendable clarity and the unattractively laid out text is enlivened by 'Fact', 'Debate' and 'Viewpoint' statements. These latter, although sited in the pages' margins, are far from marginal in nature.

Food Supply starts with the accepted truism that the problem is not a shortage of food, but who gets what and how much. Per person, globally, we eat 18% more calories than in 1970. Not only globally, though, but globally, as this increase largely goes into the bellies of those who don't need it, providing at least a quarter-million obesity-related deaths annually in the USA. Statistics of the same nature pervade this book as it ranges through the green revolution, food supply improvement and the environment. Climate changes and land degradation, cash crops versus sustenance agriculture, distribution and fair trade get fair treatment. So here's a matched pair of research primers that tend to make the publishers' claim of 'Ideal for Citizenship' quite credible. Library stocks should benefit. TP

REVIEWS 14+ Secondary/Adult

Generations: Poems between Fathers, Mothers, Daughters, Sons

POETRY ★★★★★

Edited by Melanie Hart and James Loader, Penguin, 384pp, 0 14 058784 5, £14.99 pbk

This anthology of poems which explore the emotional meaning of family ties was inspired in part, the editors write, by the question: what

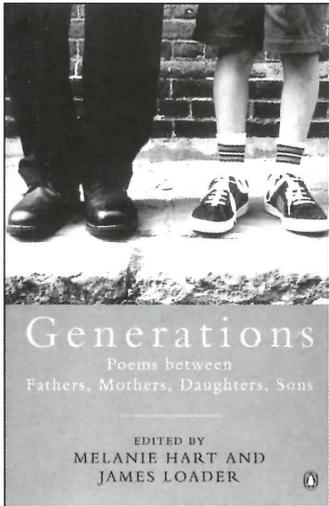
difference has our contemporary freedom of expression made to writing about intimate relationships? A fair bit, they conclude, as they argue that the emergence of the voices of children writing as adults about their parents is a twentieth-century phenomenon, as is the wider range of tone and emotion. The change in the gender balance of published poets is of course another significant factor.

The poems are ordered within particular family relationships and this structure provides a sense of the

complexities of the life-long entanglement in the inner world of the imagination of parents and children. There are wonderful poems about birth, loss, ambivalence, the growing up of children and the growing old of parents, protectiveness, cruelty, the impact of parental quarrels and estrangements and the devastation of family wrecked by historical catastrophes, particularly the European holocaust. The relational framing enables surprising symmetries to emerge: Geronwy Owen's 'orphaned father', E.

Nesbit mourning the 'eyes of my baby-queen' bespeak the child-like feelings of abandonment stirred in parents faced with the loss of a child. The father without his child has lost his identity as a father; the mother with no baby to gaze at is similarly bereft.

Some of the poems are well known, but many were new to me and this mixture of familiar and unfamiliar was particularly enjoyable in the context of the editorial framework. Memorable for me are Donald Hall's poem 'My Son My Executioner',



where he writes of the birth of a child as the dawn of awareness of mortality, Cecil Day Lewis in 'Walking Away' on the pain of letting go, Anthony Thwaite in 'Looking On' writing of a daughter's preoccupation with what goes on between mother and father. There seems a greater weight of ambivalence and pain in the poems between women. Hatred, refusal of closeness, shame, frustration and guilt are among the darker feelings summoned up. When women writers address both parents, there is a less claustrophobic atmosphere. Jean Earle's poem 'To Father and Mother' memorably records her dream-recreation of parents as lovers. At the other end of the spectrum, failures of development, the intractable and the intolerable, can be written about with rage (Sylvia Plath) or, more rarely but refreshingly, humour (Stevie Smith).

A sprinkling of translations is included, among them poems from Brazil, Estonia, Israel, Wales, Arabia and China. This last provides a delightful example of father-love in the eighth century. It is called 'Rising late and playing with A-ts'ui, aged two'. The final couplet goes:

*'To the three Joys of the book of Mercius
I have added the fourth of playing
with my baby boy.'*

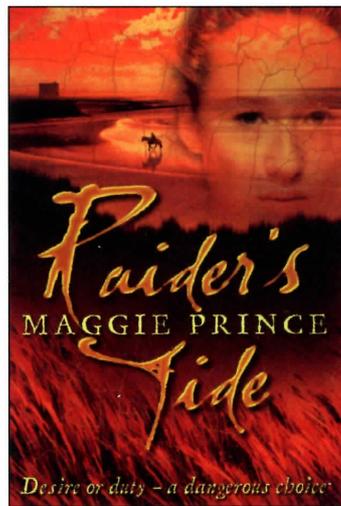
So much for the supposed modern discovery of childhood!

Eliza Ogilvy's stark greeting to her newborn child (1844) similarly punctures the myth that only modern writers put the mess of life on the page:

*'No locks thy tender cranium
boasteth,
No lashes veil thy gummy eye
And, like some steak gridiron
toasteth,
Thy skin is red and crisp and dry.'*

Nonetheless, some distinctively modern voices are to be heard. Geoffrey Lehmann writes of the demanding and embarrassing physicality of young children, Carole Satyamurti of her disabled daughter ('Moon broken' says the child looking at a crescent moon, creating the poem's title 'Broken Moon'), Gwendolen Brooks of aborted children who remain in the mind, Jackie Kay of her struggle to gain a sense of a lost birth mother, Les Murray of an autistic son. Writers like these are recording, and creating, a public language for experiences which would have remained largely hidden or indeed unknowable in an earlier period.

The pleasure of the book lies in the echoes across the generations and the multiple vertices of observation and reflection it offers. A fine sourcebook for reading with adolescents, I thought. MR

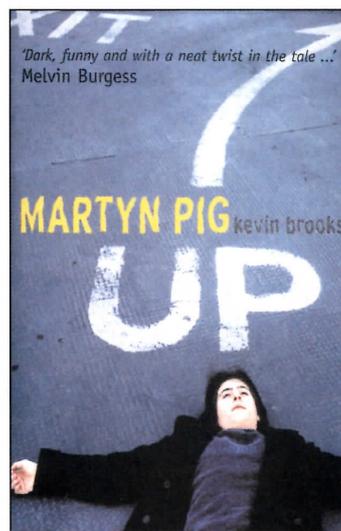


Raider's Tide

★★★★

Maggie Prince, Collins, 208pp, 0 00 712403 1, £4.99 pbk

A vividly physical recreation of the northern borderlands in the sixteenth century where the ever-present fear of raids by plundering Scots is one part of the hard daily life we see through 16-year-old Beatrice's present-tense narration. An actual raid and beating it off is powerfully told but the aftermath as Beatrice secretly attempts to save the life (and diseased arm) of one of the Scots is the real drama. The tension of her love for her Scot is just another layer in the secret and forbidden relationships which make her 'family a disaster' but no simple romanticism here. Hurt is puss and maggots. And Beatrice is a resourceful and spirited character always fighting to make her way in this world. AJ



Martyn Pig

★★★★★

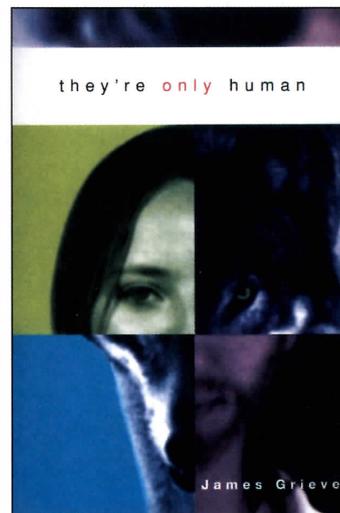
Kevin Brooks, The Chicken House, 224pp, 1 903434 51 3, £11.99 hbk

The boundaries of acceptable subject matter in books for young people have moved a lot recently, but the

concealment of a dead body must be a first in a young adult book. This is the pivotal factor in Brooks' debut novel (nowhere does it say that it is aimed at a youth market), as Martyn Pig, aged 15, becomes trapped in a tangled web of deceit woven when he does not immediately report the death of his brutal, drunken father. The warp and the weft of the story consist of Martyn's accidental involvement in his father's death intersecting with clever, talented Alex who proposes a way in which events may be turned to Martyn's and her advantage.

Martyn is an avid consumer of crime novels and television series, and these form part of his terms of reference as he ponders how matters have become so complicated: in stories complications are solvable but in reality everything is much more mixed up. The voice of narrator Martyn is well-captured by Brooks in a style that is direct, questioning and makes credible a series of bizarre circumstances.

While Martyn struggles with the complexities of his situation, there are also some very funny moments involving his Auntie Jean who comes to visit and insists on seeing her brother who has been dead for almost two days. How Martyn and Alex deal with this and with the threats of biker Dean who discovers what has happened to Mr Pig, and how Martyn ultimately deals with his predicament make for an absorbing read. VC



They're Only Human

★★★★

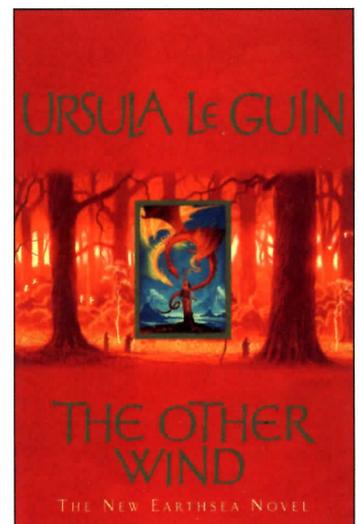
James Grieve, Allen & Unwin, 240pp, 1 86508 438 7, £5.99 pbk

'Any heart holds the seeds of everything; the worst villains or the finest heroes are only our possible selves. To do evil no help is needed; but good requires courage.'

This quotation from Amiel begins Grieve's elliptical and vivid novel which presents his characters with a range of possibilities within which lie heroic or demonic possibilities. The central character, English teacher Harry Larmour - his name perhaps a sinister bilingual pun? - betrays his young female students' trust by seducing them. In a double betrayal he irretrievably smashes their lives by changing them utterly. It is after the suicide of his 13-year-old pregnant sister that Mark Lonsdale determines to hunt down and punish Larmour for his sins.

By this time he has selected two other young victims - 13-year-old Lysistrata and 15-year-old Suzanne, through whose eyes events are seen. Suzanne's emotional decline from innocent delight in Larmour's attentions to obsessive longing for a continuation of the sexual activity to which he has introduced her memorably and subtly conveys loss and irreversible change. The topic of animal rights is interwoven with this grand deception and Grieve cleverly examines our ability to let our passions blind us to the truth - which is often a less comfortable reality than high-minded principles will allow.

Accomplished and tenacious readers will enjoy this book - its slow, tense unravelling is perfectly handled and Grieve's often cinematic imagery gives both a sense of urgency and a focus among the complex interplay of narrative strands. VR



The Other Wind

★★★★★

Ursula Le Guin, Orion, 264pp, 1 84255 205 8, £10.99 hbk

Tehanu, Ursula Le Guin's late sequel to the renowned 'Earthsea' trilogy, was published in 1990 with the subtitle 'The Last Book of Earthsea'. The valediction was obviously premature, because twelve years on here is another 'Earthsea' novel, this time reaching what seems inescapable closure. Each of these two afterthoughts seems influenced by changes in the real world. **The Other Wind** was written under the influence of the feminist movement. **The Other Wind** is more confident and relaxed about the altered status of women, but it is a highly political novel, mirroring in the fantasy world of Earthsea our contemporary concerns with ethical and religious dilemmas, and the dangerous advance of human control over natural biological processes. As this will suggest, **The Other Wind** is not an easy book. Caught like the whole series between a prudent conservatism and a love of wild freedom, it is a profound and philosophical novel, bypassing **Tehanu** and developing themes from the third 'Earthsea' book, **The Farthest Shore**. Readers unfamiliar with the first four books will find it hard going, perhaps impenetrable, but the many devotees of Le Guin's classic fantasy will find that it brings the whole work (as **Tehanu** did not) to a deeply satisfying close. PHO



The
'resident
bully'

CLASSICS IN SHORT No. 34

Brian Alderson

'I have been
here thirty
years...'



CLASSICS OF EDUCATION No.1: A survey of the work of Professor nigel molesworth PhD (hem hem) by Sir Timothy Peason Q.C. ...

Cap. III div. 4 (g)

in the Regulations for Conduct of BfK (1897) states that this ultimate page is to be devoted to a brief assessment of a classick. [Voices off, somewhere beyond the Editor's cell: *Eheu, eheu! Bebop, bebop.*]

However,

we have recently had a communication from Sir Timothy Peason Q.C. who is anxious that we find space for a tribute to his late (very late) friend, nigel molesworth, whose pioneering studies in the social history of education are on the brink of their fiftieth anniversary. His suggestion is particularly timely, coming as it does at the end of another school year which has seen unparalleled progress in Education (as cubed by the P.M.). [Offstage cheers: *Wow! Wizz! Super! No more lat, no more fr. ect, ect.*]

molesworth's researches

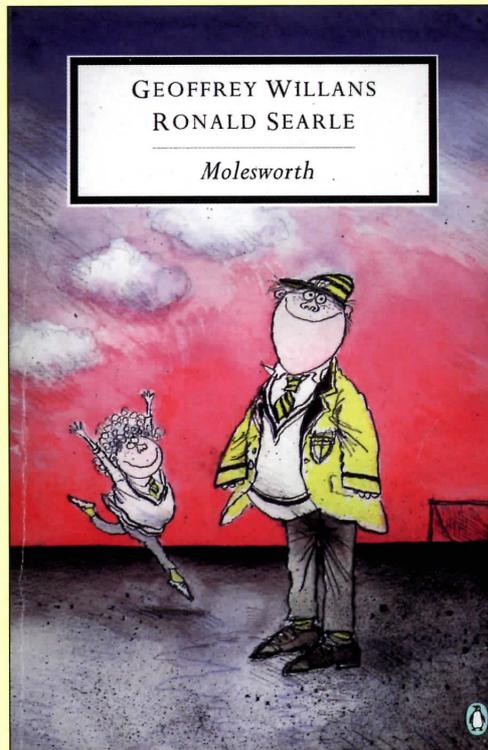
were first published in the education section of that hebdomadal **The London Charivari**, well-known for never being as good as it used to be. Such was his incisive analysis of almost every facet of educational practice, ruthlessly revealing facts that pedagogic crammers and theorists had sought to hide, that he was easily persuaded [*crinkle, crinkle: a crisp fiver, mr. m.?*] to formalize it in his first training manual **Down With Skool!** (Max Parrish, 1953), soon to be followed by **How to be Topp** (1954), **Whizz for Atomms** (1956) and **Back in the Jug Agane** (1959).

Spelling reform

clearly played a central part in his own thinking, as evidenced by the foregoing book titles. Opinions differ as to how far he was motivated by the prospect of rewards from the 'alfabet trusts' envisaged in the will of G B Shaw, or by a lucrative collaboration with Isaac Pitman over ita. Without doubt though, his own legacy has come down to us through the manufacturers of spell-checkers and other members of the Society for the Eradication of Human Intelligence.

The honourable calling

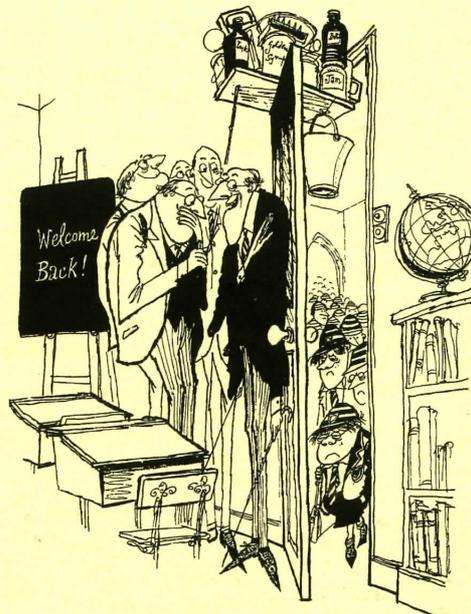
of schoolmastering was assessed in terms more sceptical than fellow analysts, such as Professor Buckeridge in his longitudinal studies at Linbury Court School. molesworth's theory that the subject maykth the Beak led him to some penetrating observations on those conducting lessons in English, French, Botany ect, ect alongside their less formal behaviour outside the classroom [Quote: *'English masters hav long hair red ties and weeds like wordsworth throw them into exstaties.'* Another quote: *'Charge ta-ranta-rah for the masters comon room... such a pong poo-gosh of pipes and cig ends you would almost think they all go around picking up ours...'*]. Subsequent efforts by the profession to free



themselves from the public opprobrium occasioned by these reports have so far had little effect as witness such things as Blunkett's Ball-and-Chain edict which, it is believed, was based on molesworthian theory.

The Curriculum

was seen in its traditional and somewhat moribund form, and one regrets that molesworth has not been around to assess the impact of what he would have called post-modernist thort on current practice. He clear-sightedly developed a critique of the



approach to pedagogy that has tended to undermine everything from the days of the quadrivium onwards: *'I have been here thirty years. I have always said that and do not intend to change now...'* and he was no less pragmatic in advising on the social life of students: *'Every skool hav a resident bully who is fat and roll about the place clouting everybode. This is nesessessery so that we can all hav a sermon from time to time chiz...'*

On the other hand

he is constructive in dealing with less-formal aspects of in-school learning, advancing programmes that were revolutionary for their date eg the design of an Atommic Pile (in which I was honoured to render assistance) and plans for travel to the moon and beyond [*'Mars would be all right if it wer not for the Martians who are quite beyond the pail.'*]. Even more valuable was his recognition of the need to question exactly what the *corpore sano* was which the *mens sana* was supposed to inhabit and whether exercises like foopball and criket served any useful purpose. His arguments for the closer study of such subjects as horseflesh were pregnant with practical wisdom and it is no surprise to find his essay 'A Few Tips from the Coarse' being included in Sean Magee's anthology **Runners & Riders** (Methuen, 1993), a collection acclaimed as the best ever of such things.

Conclusion

molesworth's associates throughout his research were his amanuensis Geoffrey Willans and his adviser on graphic communication, Ronald Searle, whose brilliance as portraitist, designer of working-diagrams, and narrative scene-setter contributed an essential element to the texts. Unfortunately these friends could not persuade him to abandon the rebarbative chauvinism evident in such essays as 'Ko-education at St Custard's' where, neglectful of the sweeping tide of egalitarianism, he sought to defend brave, noble and fearless boys against the imposition of wet girlies. It was his undoing. One dark night he was set upon by the maidens of that neighbouring academy, St Trinian's, and his broken body was found next day among the rhododendrons. Chiz chiz. ■

Molesworth by Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle is published by Penguin (0 14 118600 3, £9.99 pbk).

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