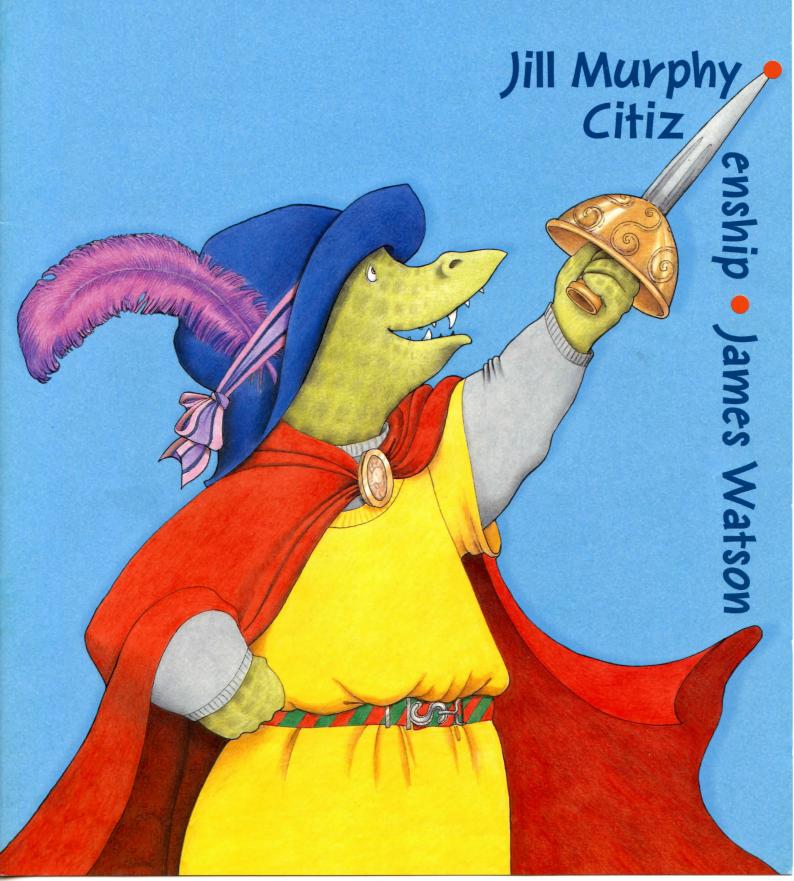


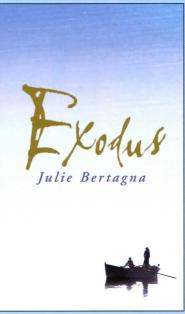
the children's book magazine



Exodus

Julie Bertagna, 0 330 40096 7, £9.99 Longlisted for the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize 2002

It is 2099 - and the world is gradually drowning, as mighty Arctic ice floes melt, the seas rise, and land forever disappears beneath storm-tossed waves. For Mara, her family and community, huddled on the fastdisappearing island of Wing, the new century brings flight. Packed into tiny boats, a terrifying journey begins to a bizarre city that rises into the sky, built on the drowned remains of the ancient city of Glasgow.



But even here there is no safety and, shut out of the city, Mara realizes they are asylum-seekers in a world torn between hightech wizardry and the most primitive injustice. To save her people, Mara must not only find a way into the city but also search for a new land and a home for them all.

'This novel is fresh, brilliantly creative and peopled with extraordinary and well-drawn characters; a saga of survival with the echoes of a moving old love story at the heart of it." The Bookseller

'Exodus is thrilling and thought-provoking in equal measure ... an exciting adventure.' The Guardian

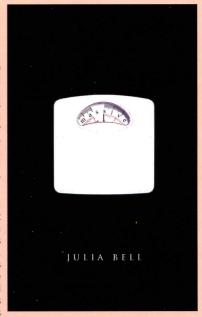
Published 9 August 2002

Massive

Julia Bell, 0 330 41547 6. £9.99

By the age of 10 most girls are afraid of becoming fat. 70% of these girls will diet during adolescence. A few will go on to develop serious eating disorders that will haunt them throughout their adult life.

Diet-obsessed Maria firmly believes that thin is beautiful, thin is successful, thin is the only way to be. What's more, she's going to make sure that her 14-year-old daughter Carmen is thin too. Carmen's



grandmother desperately wants to help her daughter and granddaughter, but her misguided attempts to force her family to eat only evoke rebellion and resentment.

This honest novel moves between Yorkshire and Birmingham, as three women struggle to make sense of themselves and each other in a world where nothing but the pursuit of thinness is important.

'A rich, funny, moving novel ... Bell's writing is spare, tough, a combination of kindness and searing clarity.' Ali Smith, author of Hotel World

Published 6 September 2002

PICADOR

The Facts Speak for **Themselves**

Brock Cole, 0 330 41549 2,

This is Linda's story. She is 13 years old and has been involved in the murder of one man and the suicide of another. Everyone wants the facts - the police, the social workers, and Linda's mother. But can the facts ever really speak for themselves? Linda doesn't think so, and she demands to tell her own version, in her own words.

As Linda's mother moves from town to

town, job to job and man to man, Linda is forced to grow up quickly. Stuck in a world full of abuse at the hands of the adults around her, she is left with a wisdom and bitterness far beyond her years. Distressing and compelling this is the tale of an extraordinary girl you will never forget. A novel for older teenagers.

'Tremendously touching and sad. Brock Cole has found the perfect tone for this very raw and very real novel.' The New **York Times**

Published 11 October 2002

The Facts Speak for Themselves

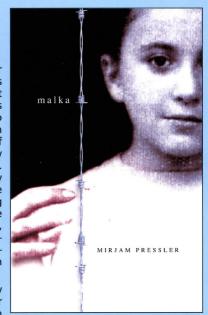
BROCK COLE

Malka

Mirjam Pressler, 0 330 41550 6, f9.99

It is 1943 and Dr Hannah Mai is forced to accept that the time has come for her to leave Poland with her two daughters if they are to have any chance of survival. With regular, deadly round-ups of the sweeping lews across their home country, Hannah, along with 16-year-old Minna and 7year-old Malka, plan to flee to Hungary.

But just before they reach the border Malka is taken seriously ill, and



Hannah is forced to make the most difficult decision of her life to leave her daughter behind. Told from two perspectives, this is the tragic tale of a mother and child, and their struggle to survive the horrors of a Nazi-led society as they try to find each other again. It is also based on a true story.

Mirjam Pressler is an award-winning author for young people; her books include The Story of Anne Frank and the novel, Shylock's Daughter. She was also the editor of the Definitive Edition of Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl.

Published 8 November 2002

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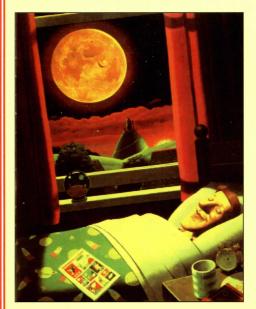
No.35 Brian Alderson on The World of Peter Rabbit

Classics in Short

EDITORIAL

The major focus of this issue of BfK is citizenship, both in the curriculum and beyond, both in the UK and in the world. The problem with the word 'citizenship' is its earnestness so I was relieved to discover from Sue Unstead's excellent article in this issue, 'Citizenship in Curriculum', that it is really about values and that lots of schools are doing it just already: 'It wasn't called Citizenship.

James Watson is a 'political' writer, one of the first in the 1980s to challenge the cosy parochialism of British children's fiction with Talking in Whispers, his powerful novel set in Chile after Allende in which the young hero is tortured by the regime. As General Pinochet finally spends his retirement in disgrace, we can look back to this landmark novel which demonstrated that young people do want to read novels set in countries not their own. As Watson says in his article on page 10, young people are



Man on the Moon (a day in the life of Bob), written and illustrated by Simon Bartram (Templar Publishing), gets a fivestar review on page 25.



Rosemary Stones

interested in 'serious and challenging perspectives on the world' - in becoming, in fact, citizens of the world.

Closer to home, Professor of Romani Studies, Thomas Acton, celebrates the self publishing movement which is enabling Traveller people to ensure that their history, culture and present-day lives do not continue to be excluded from books. In this issue too, Shereen Pandit concludes our series of articles on the depiction of Muslims in non-fiction children's titles. subheading in her article, 'Not just prayermat and pilgrimage' suggests there is a way to go...



Carey on page 8. Thanks to Walker Books for their help with this September cover.

the children's book magazine

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CITIZENSHIP IN THE CURRICULUM:

'In our school, citizenship is central to all

that we do. All our children contribute to

decision-making and organisation, taking

more responsibility as they get older.

Citizenship is more than a part of our

curriculum, it is a way of life for the whole

Canning School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Dame Mavis Grant, Headteacher,

school community.'

A recent survey amongst 14-year-olds revealed a distinct lack of interest in politics and a correspondingly low opinion of MPs whom they describe not just as 'uncool', but positively 'boring, long-winded and untruthful'. It is perhaps no surprise therefore that the impetus for the recent introduction of Citizenship into the curriculum came from a politician, one David Blunkett. Whether this new subject will succeed in raising poor electoral turnout – only 39% of 18–25 year olds voted in the last general election – is yet to be seen, but if it succeeds in its aim of producing responsible and active citizens for the future, one can only applaud. **Sue Unstead** explores.

A new Curriculum

When the Government announced the framework for the revised Curriculum 2000, there was a new emphasis on promoting a definable set of social values:

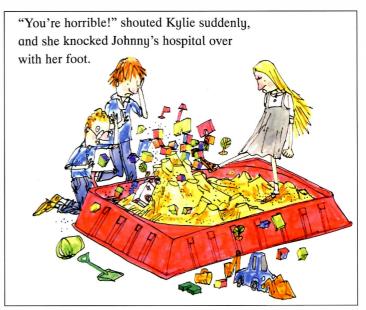
'Education influences and reflects the values of society and the kind of society we want to be. It is important, therefore, to recognise a broad set of common values and purposes that underpin the school curriculum and the work of schools ... these include valuing ourselves, our families and other relationships, the wider groups to which we belong, the diversity in our society and the environment in which we live ... The school curriculum should pass on enduring values, develop pupils' integrity and autonomy and help them to be responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development of a just society.' The National Curriculum Handbook

Citizenship was introduced under the broad umbrella of PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and is part of the non-statutory framework at Key Stages 1 and 2 – ie optional, like modern languages, at primary level. It has to be said that much of what is covered in the curriculum at this lower age group is something that all good primary schools were already tackling – encouraging pupils to express their own views, respect others' viewpoints, the promotion of good relations among different age groups through playground buddy schemes or paired reading, as well as community involvement and policies to deal with bullying. It just wasn't called Citizenship.

Citizenship at the youngest age, at Key Stage 1, aims to give children 'the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to lead confident and independent lives, preparing them to become informed, active and responsible citizens'. Properly introduced as part of a whole-school policy, it helps children to develop not just as members of their school community but of the local neighbourhood and the wider community. It is concerned with

issues of right and wrong, rights and responsibilities, conflict and cooperation – all in preparation for an understanding of democracy. The framework has been designed to be flexible, to allow schools to build on what they are already doing well and to adapt it to make it relevant to their children, their backgrounds and abilities.

Several primary heads I spoke to bemoaned the lack of good materials for the youngest age group, but a plea to publishers to send material to **BfK** for consideration brought an



From The Sand Tray, one of the series of four 'Thinkers'.

overwhelming response with books, videos and other materials for all age groups. Much support has been given by organisations such as the Citizenship Foundation, an independent educational charity, while other resources have been produced with sponsorship from major retail businesses and industry. One excellent starting point is **Introducing Citizenship: A Handbook for Primary Schools** by Don Rowe, Director of the Foundation. This paperback aimed at teachers is accompanied by a 60-minute video showing teaching strategies being put into practice. Produced alongside the pack is '**Thinkers**', a series of four specially created picture books, deceptively simple open-ended stories designed to encourage children to think about and discuss the issues that arise such as fairness, loyalty or responsibility.

The role of picture books and stories

Once you have seen the possibilities afforded here, you start to realise that you probably already have a shelf of picture books that offer the same kind of rich stimulus for discussion – like **Tusk Tusk** by Elmer's creator David McKee, a pictorial lesson in conflict and tolerance. Then there are those that tackle topics such as freedom, like the gentle **Mole and the Baby Bird**, or the values of different cultures such as Mary Hoffman's **The Colour of Home**, a moving story of an uprooted child settling in a new country, the perfect springboard for a discussion on asylum and refugees (see this issue's Editor's Choice, p25). There are opportunities

for encouraging very small children to articulate their own emotions and respect others' sensitivities in I Have Feelings by Jana Novotny-Hunter, while the concept of self esteem is nowhere more beautifully explored than in Max Velthuijs' Frog is Frog. Frog reappears to challenge ideas of stereotyping and fear of the outsider in Frog and the Stranger. (Introducing Citizenship includes some useful booklists for identifying issues tackled by story books, and publishers might consider doing the same for the school market.)

Sharing and caring

Community involvement is one of three strands that are interwoven in the curriculum at all age groups. Children learn that they are members of a class and school community and that this has links with the wider community. At the youngest level **Five Little Fiends** shows clearly in simple picture-book format how each part of our environment is linked and relates this to the concept of sharing. Bernard Ashley's **Growing Good** celebrates the work of a community as a group of neighbours triumphs over the town planners to transform a waste site into a communal garden. At a more sophisticated level suitable for Key Stage 2,

more than just politics



He opened the cage door and he let his bird fly away, because he loved it.

Then he cried.

From Mole and the Baby Bird.

Yellow-Eye tells a story based on real events of the interdependence of two habitats and ultimately two communities in Australia's Northern Territory, where the aborigines have much to teach the scientists and ecologists.

Respecting differences

Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people is one of the most important strands of Citizenship. At Key Stage 1 this is grounded in home, family and friends, but at Key Stage 2 the focus is broadened to people living in other places and times. Frances Lincoln's series 'Child's Day', photographic accounts of different children's daily lives around the world - from a Peruvian village to a Ghanaian town, has an immediacy with which children will quickly identify. Britain's own cultural melting pot is celebrated in Benjamin Zephaniah's We are Britain! a collection of poems about twelve children from many different backgrounds living in Britain.

Suitable role models can also be found in Barefoot's Heroic Children, a companion title to The Barefoot Book of Heroes and The Barefoot Book of Heroines. Verna Wilkins' biography The Life of Stephen Lawrence gives a quietly dignified and sensitive account of his life and tragic death. It concludes with a quotation from the recommendation of the Inquiry into his death, that 'consideration be given to amendment of

the National Curriculum aimed at valuing cultural diversity and preventing racism in order better to reflect the needs of a diverse society'.

Racism is one of a number of issues given extensive debate in a series from Hodder Wayland. Suitable for KS2 and up, Why are People Racist? explores the topic with plenty of real examples and good quotes. For a more reflective approach, a number of outstanding novels have recently been published including The Edge by Alan Gibbons, a tense and deeply affecting story that encompasses racism and manipulative violence (reviewed in BfK No.135). For a similar age group Gaye Hiçyilmaz wrote Girl in Red (reviewed in BfK No.122),

touched by news coverage of Romanian asylum seekers arriving in Dover, and the result is a powerful novel about exclusion and belonging.

Political literacy

The main emphasis in the primary years is on the development of social and moral responsibility. A general understanding of what democracy is and the local and national institutions that support it is required at the





4. Do the best work that

5. Let others have their say

you can

Four key strands covered by

* Developing confidence and

responsibility and making the most of

* Preparing to play an active role as a

* Developing a healthy safer lifestyle.

* Developing good relationships and

respecting differences between people.

PSHE and Citizenship

one's abilities.

Above, from The Life of Stephen Lawrence and, below, from Cool Citizens.

AT SCHOOL

As soon as you start school you discover that there are even more rules to follow in order to stay out of trouble. But if you think about them carefully, they are there to make sure you enjoy school as much as possible.

given greater weight once pupils start secondary school. From September 2002 Citizenship becomes a separate foundation subject and a statutory part of the curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4. Belitha's recent series 'Shooting Stars' tackles each of the four strands of Citizenship with titles on relationships (Radical Relations), personal development (Powerful People), health (Healthy Habits), while the fourth in the series, Cool Citizens, covers the practices of democracy, of local and national government. There are simple explanations of the legal system, of a citizen's rights and responsibilities in a breathless cartoon-illustrated approach that includes a story to foster debate as well as quizzes and fact boxes. Hodder Wayland's 'A

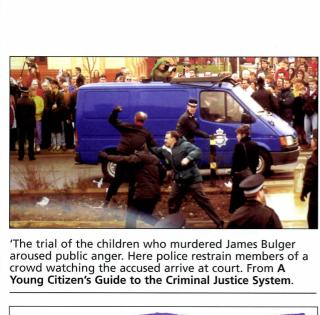
> suitable for Key Stage 3 and up, but the coverage of different aspects of the subject, individual titles focusing on Central Government or The Criminal Justice System for example, is thorough and well informed, with a strong panel of authors and consultants. Plentiful use of photographs helps to make the books accessible, and there are useful ideas for school and community based activities in each book. Philip Steele's Citizenship will be another useful resource for Key Stage 3, since it follows the curriculum so

closely, but it takes a much broader sweep than Hodder Wayland's series.

Role play

For a really practical approach to the topic, Franklin Watts' 'Taking Part' series includes A Pupil Parliament, following the children of a junior school learning about democracy by

upper end of Key Stage 2, but the political literacy strand is Young Citizen's Guide' series takes a more serious approach



The new mayor

Caitlin was elected to be the Pupil Parliament's mayor for the year. Her speech was about traffic safety, helping the environment and the difference children can make even though they are only young.

I love being mayor. I have to make speeches and I have to welcome people and say goodbye. And sometimes I have to do a bit of work arranging what we do.



Everyone was impressed with Caitlin's speech

Student role play from A Pupil Parliament.

holding their own election. Candidates have to campaign and stand for election to represent their school at the Pupil Parliament that involves all schools in the Richmond-on-Thames area. It provides a very positive message about the importance of taking on responsibility and the children mentioned here have clearly enjoyed their year in office. Other titles in the series cover different aspects of citizenship such as community work, school newspaper and town twinning.

The introduction of Citizenship into the curriculum was an ambitious aim and it is still in its infancy in many schools. Publishers' responses are frankly mixed — some offering resources that are disappointingly didactic, failing to reflect the 'light touch', flexible approach that is recommended in all the curriculum support materials, while other publishers disarmingly own up to not knowing what citizenship is really about! Teaching citizenship is of course no guarantee that the newly enfranchised will rush out and vote, as a comparison with the US Presidential election clearly shows, but if pupils absorb only a fraction of the new curriculum, they should be better prepared to take their place in the adult workplace and in society as a result.

Sue Unstead was a publisher of children's non-fiction for 25 years and is now a freelance editorial consultant and writer

People border strips taken from Philip Steele's Citizenship.

Books mentioned

Introducing Citizenship, Don Rowe, A & C Black, 0 7136 5857 6, £16.99 pbk and video

'Thinkers' series:

The Sand Tray (Don Rowe, 0 7136 5843 6), Joe's Car (Annabelle Dixon, 0 7136 5846 0), The Scary Video (Gill Rose, 0 7136 5844 4), William and the Guinea-pig (Gill Rose, 0 7136 5837 1), ill. Tim Archbold, A & C Black, £3.99 each pbk (big book also available)

Tusk Tusk, David McKee, Red Fox, 0 09 930650 6, £4.99 pbk

Mole and the Baby Bird, Marjorie Newman, ill. Patrick Benson, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 5883 3, £9.99 hbk

The Colour of Home, Mary Hoffman, ill. Karin Littlewood, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 1940 0, £10.99 hbk

I Have Feelings! Jana Novotny Hunter, ill. Sue Porter, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 1734 3, £5.99 pbk

Frog is Frog, Max Velthuijs, Andersen Press, 0 86264 696 0, £8.99 hbk

Frog and the Stranger, Max Velthuijs, Andersen Press, 0 86264 625 1, £4.99 pbk

Five Little Fiends, Sarah Dyer, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 5949 X, £4.99 pbk

Growing Good, Bernard Ashley, ill. Anne Wilson, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 4700 9, £4.99 pbk

Yellow-Eye, David Spillman, ill. Mark Wilson, Era, 1 86374 607 2, £8.99 hbk

'Child's Day' series:

Enrique's Day, Sara Andrea Fajardo, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 1933 8, £10.99 hbk (10 titles in series)

We are Britain! Benjamin Zephaniah, photographs by Prodeepta Das, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 1764 5, £10.99 hbk

Heroic Children, Rebecca Hazell, ill. Helen Cann, Barefoot, 1 902283 22 8, £14.99 hbk

The Barefoot Book of Heroes, Rebecca Hazell, Barefoot, 1 84148 201 3, £7.99 pbk

The Barefoot Book of Heroines, Rebecca Hazell, Barefoot, 1 84148 200 5, £7.99 pbk

The Life of Stephen Lawrence, Verna Allette Wilkins, ill. Lynne Willey, Tamarind, 1 870516 58 3, £10.99 hbk

Why are People Racist? Cath Senker, Hodder Wayland, 0 7502 3717 1, £5.99 pbk

The Edge, Alan Gibbons, Dolphin, 1 84255 094 2, £4.99

Girl in Red, Gaye Hiçyilmaz, Dolphin, 1 85881 490 1, £4.99 pbk

'Shooting Stars – Citizenship' series: Radical Relations (1 84138 431 3), Powerful People (1 84138 430 5), Healthy Habits (1 84138 429 1), Cool Citizens (1 84138 428 3), Rosie McCormick, Belitha, £8.99 each hbk

'A Young Citizen's Guide to' series: Central Government, (Richard Tames, 0 7502 3777 5), The Criminal Justice System (Sean Sheehan, 0 7502 3778 3), Hodder Wayland, £10.99 each hbk (10 titles in series)

Citizenship, Philip Steele, Evans, 0 237 52431 7, £8.99 pbk 'Taking Part' series:

A Pupil Parliament, Sally Hewitt, photographs by Chris Fairclough, Franklin Watts, 0 7496 4367 5, £10.99 hbk

Windows into Illustration: **Korky Paul**

Korky Paul's anarchic style with its scribbly line and wild characterisation is unmistakeable. Here he explains the thinking behind his recent picture book, Captain Teachum's Buried Treasure.



henever I visit schools I get asked loads of questions. Sometimes about me, sometimes about my drawings. For instance, 'Do you like climbing trees?', 'How often do you shower(!)?' or 'Where do you get your ideas

'I don't know really,' I answer. 'From all sorts of unlikely things, strange places and weird people. I feel there are windows all tightly locked in my mind's eye. It's about finding the key to unlock that window and open up the world of the story I am about to illustrate.'

'Yeah, yeah, yeah. But where do you get your ideas from?'

'Okay,' I say, 'Try this. A yacht from Trinidad and Tobago breezing into a small fishing village on a Greek island.'

This was the unlikely key that unlocked the window into the world of Captain Teachum's Treasure. wonderfully quirky story, full of ambiguity that the late Peter Carter had written on a napkin in a pub while drinking with our editor from Oxford University Press, Ron Heapy.

When I was about to embark on illustrating Captain Teachum I spent hours poring over pictures of sailing ships, galleons and clippers and making lots of sketches. The pictures I had looked at during my research showed ships in immaculate condition, all very neat and very tidy and v-e-r-y ship shape. I had all these images of pirates and ships swirling about in my head but I couldn't seem to get a handle on these windows in my mind's eye, let alone the key.

So one day I am sitting at this quayside in Greece, thoughts of how to illustrate Cap'n Teachum niggling away, and I am staring forlornly at these immaculate yachts anchored all around me. The poor people on board seem to spend their time scrubbing decks and neatly coiling ropes. Is this the life a pirate would lead?

Then in breezed a battered old yacht with tattered sails, beach towels and swimming costumes hanging from a makeshift clothes line. The deck was strewn with piles of ropes, snorkelling gear, and what looked like finds from beachcombing expeditions twisted tree roots bleached white from the sea and sun, shells, rocks and a pile of assorted plastic goodies. The family on board secured their boat and headed straight for the Ouzoria for Greek mezethes and long iced drinks. No scrubbing decks. No coiling ropes.

This was my Captain Teachum and this was his ship. Now I had that elusive key to open the window, I could see what to draw. As the illustrator I enjoy adding to the story, embellishing it with my pictures that surprise the author, the editor and most importantly the reader. I insert tales within tales, events and characters perhaps not related to the story but inspired by it. Cap'n Teachum didn't have a cat in the story. I included him in as I wanted to draw a cat with an eye patch and the yacht from Trinidad had one on board. Later, Peter Carter named him Scratchum.

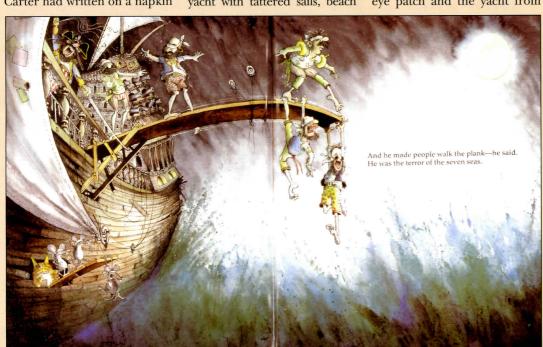
In Cap'n Teachum there are two drawings with his peg leg on the wrong leg. The mistake was pointed out by a boy in Australia. This gave me the idea of deliberately putting in mistakes and waiting...

Here are a few technical details: I use an Apple Mac, Schminke watercolours, Caran d'Ache pencil crayons (with electric sharpener), Saunders Waterford paper 190gm³, black kandahar and coloured inks with a dip pen, toothbrush, porcupine quills, and my trusty left hand.

Finally, the other question I get asked is 'How do you draw?' That one I have not yet been able to answer.

Captain Teachum's Buried Treasure by Peter Carter is published by Oxford (0 19 272230 1, £4.99 pbk).

Korky Paul is the 1987 winner of the The Children's Book Award and has been shortlisted for the Kate Greenaway Medal three times. His web site is at www.korkypaul.com







Jil Murph

Jill Murphy interviewed by Joanna Carey

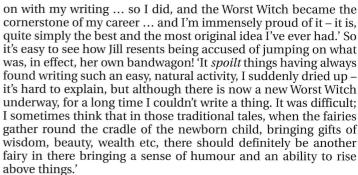
'On her first day at the academy each pupil was given a broomstick and taught to ride it, which takes quite a long time and isn't nearly as easy as it looks. Halfway through the first term they were each presented with a black kitten which they trained to ride the broomsticks ... At the end of the first year each pupil received a copy of The Popular Book of Spells, a three inch thick volume bound in black leather. This was not really to be used as they already had paperback editions for the classroom, but like the cats it was another part of tradition.'

o! It's not Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry – it's Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches, established way back in 1974. A witty and original variation on the traditional 'school story', **The Worst Witch** sold out within two months of publication and it was followed by three more 'Worst Witch' titles – all subsequently

snapped up by Puffin. 'They were so unusual,' says Jane Nissen, an ex Puffin editor, 'and phenomenally successful. There was at that time a certain nervousness about stories concerning witchcraft, but these books hit the right note exactly ... AND they are still in print, no mean feat for books first published in the '70s.' Internationally popular, the books have also inspired a film, a stage play and a TV series and things were 'chugging along nicely', until Harry Potter turned up. A letter to the Daily Mail in 2001 asked 'How much does the Harry Potter phenomenon owe to Jill Murphy's Worst Witch series?' and talking to Jill, it's clear that she looks back longingly to the days when she wasn't constantly having to field questions concerning her reactions to the fact that Hogwarts is something of a rival establishment. 'It's irritating... everyone asks the same question and I even get children writing to ask me whether I mind about the Hogwarts school of witchcraft and pointing out similarities. Even worse are reviewers who come across my books, or see the TV series, and, without taking the trouble to find out that it's now over quarter of a century since I wrote my first book, make pointed remarks



about "clever timing" - or say things like "the Worst Witch stories are not a million miles from J K Rowling's books". implications are really quite insulting! Ironically, I never dreamt I could have a career as a writer - I wrote that book when I was eighteen – yes, I was keen to get it published - to see it on the shelf alongside my own childhood favourites, but really I'd always expected to be the sort of person who got married and did the ironing... but as it turned out, my first husband (a Marxist economist) was a real feminist he wouldn't allow me to do the ironing, told me to get

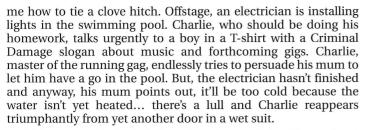


In terms of talent, imagination and good looks, it's clear that the fairies who gathered round her cradle did a good job – and the Worst Witch has certainly brought financial security. But Jill funny, friendly, forthright and disarmingly frank - has certainly had her share of things to rise above, including two marriages that didn't work, and a terrifying encounter with breast cancer. But now after a chaotic series of domestic upheavals, she's living in Cornwall in an idyllic Georgian house with three enormous deerhounds, a fluffy cat and her beloved 12-year-old son Charlie. And she's converted an adjoining barn to create a home for her elderly mother. It's all very rural, but there's no sense of isolation. Far from it – sitting in a rocking chair, by the Aga, in the country kitchen where she holds court with such panache, is a bit like suddenly finding yourself on stage in a fast paced Alan Ayckbourn play - with an energetic cast constantly zipping in and out through doors that open and close on all sides of the room, a script that swerves from world affairs to local gossip and a subplot concerning the building of a swimming pool – will it be ready for Charlie's birthday on Saturday? Rita, Jill's secretary, enters stage right with some papers, and subsequently appears through a door on the left with a pile of freshly laundered school shirts (clearly, Jill never did get to do the ironing). Rita's husband, out in the rain overseeing the building work, comes in for a cup of tea. Dave, who's been operating some earsplitting machinery laying flagstones comes in through yet another door with a length of rope and talks about his other life as a tree surgeon and shows









And it's against this lively informal background that I learn about Jill Murphy's own, rather more orderly upbringing in Surrey, and how it was that she came up with the idea for the Worst Witch when she was only 14.

'I was at a very strict Convent school in Wimbledon, we wore a dark navy uniform – long coats and velour hats: I took some friends home one day and my mother said "just look at you, you look like the three witches!" and I did some drawings – it was easy to convert the school hats into witches' hats. And at school, nuns in long black habits lurked invisibly in the shadows – just as you were doing something forbidden, a pale face would magically appear and you'd be caught red handed. Other ideas – like the potion lessons – were inspired by time spent in the chemistry lab.' And the presentation of the The Popular Book of Spells? 'Well, that was because all new girls were traditionally presented with a Bible at the end of the first year. The cats were there to make it easy for readers to imagine themselves into this world by engaging with their own pets at home.'

From the start Jill was addressing a young age group. 'I simply wanted to write about the girls' day-to-day experience of school life – even if the school was a bit different.' The first Worst Witch story gets instant lift-off in the opening pages with the striking image of the turreted school building high up on a mountain, surrounded by pine forests. 'I got that idea on holiday with my parents at Durlston Bay, Swanage – across the bay you could see a turret sticking out of the trees – it looked so exciting – but when I explored, it wasn't a castle as I'd thought, but a rather splendid tea-room.' And somehow that's typical of the magic of these beautifully conceived books, with the fantasy so comfortably accommodated in familiar territory.

A prolific writer, even at five, Jill still has a lot of her early work, and while she goes off to find the knitting bag in which her mother has lovingly preserved it, Charlie – now wearing a Jimmy Hendrix T-shirt – comes in with a guitar. He strums while I look at the little books, written in a flowing confident hand, and lavishly illustrated. 'My mother always encouraged me, and being a librarian, she also made sure I read widely – C S Lewis was my all-time favourite, I loved Dickens and T H White – I adored Mistress Masham's Repose – I think it was Maria's football boots that inspired me to put the Worst Witch in hobnailed boots; and I loved Enid Blyton – especially the Good Morning Book – my mother kept giving it to jumble sales but I always managed to buy it back again. Comics were a huge influence – especially Girl.'

Jill was restless at school – a bit of a tearaway perhaps? 'Probably a bit too *individual* I think' – the only lesson she enjoyed was art so at 16 she went to art school, but couldn't settle; one problem, in those days, was the lack of illustration courses; she attended three art schools in quick succession and at the third and last one she got so depressed she began to stay in bed all day. So she left and did various jobs, including working in a children's home and she shows me another book of stories she wrote for the children in the home. Meanwhile **The Worst Witch**, having been turned down by three publishers, languished in a drawer until, by chance, she met some new, enlightened young publishers (Allison and Busby) who immediately recognised its potential.

Upstairs, away from the hubbub of the kitchen, her studio has a quiet reflective atmosphere and view of open country, with a buzzard wheeling overhead. Three stuffed bats hang from a shelf.



From the start Jill did her own illustrations. The Worst Witch books all have spirited line drawings of the quaintly named Mildred Hubble and co., and distinctive silhouette jacket designs. But for her picture books she uses the very child friendly medium of coloured pencils with gently stippled textures and subtle gradations of colour. Her first, Peace at Last, was an instant success and was shortlisted for the 1980 Greenaway medal. This was followed by a warm, witty series of picture books about a family of suburban elephants - the Large family, and then in 1995 she wrote The Last Noo-noo, a picture book based on her experience of trying to persuade Charlie to give up his dummy. This won her the Smarties prize, but it was a difficult time for her: 'I was in hospital, having just had an operation for breast cancer, so I couldn't go to the ceremony, so Charlie went instead – he was six. He accepted the prize for me then afterwards he was brought round to the hospital – he rushed into the ward to cheer me up, and really that was the most delightful thing in the whole world. And,' she adds, with feeling, 'I think it's worth saying how I've treasured every single day since coming through that operation.'

Along with her customary perceptive humour, memories of Charlie's exploits as a little boy have provided further inspiration for her latest picture book. All for One is about Marlon, an only child who's keen to make friends with a local gang. By now the electrician has finished – and Charlie says his homework really is done – so, although it's now dark, and still raining, he's finally allowed to dive into the pool. He surfaces with a beaming smile and his mum gets a big soggy hug of gratitude ... and it's not hard to imagine what the next Jill Murphy picture book might be about.

The Books

All for One, Walker, 0 7445 4914 0, £10.99 hbk

All in One Piece, Walker, 0 7445 5593 0, £9.99 hbk, 0 7445 6002 0, £4.99 pbk Five Minutes' Peace, Walker, 0 7445 6001 2, £4.99 pbk, 0 7445 8119 2, £4.99 board

The Last Noo-noo, Walker, 0 7445 3228 0, £8.99 hbk, 0 7445 5298 2, £4.99 pbk A Piece of Cake, Walker, 0 7445 5595 7, £9.99 hbk, 0 7445 6003 9, £4.99 pbk A Quiet Night In, Walker, 0 7445 5596 5, £9.99 hbk, 0 7445 6000 4, £4.99 pbk, 0 7445 6925 7, £12.99 big book

Worlds Apart, Walker, 0 7445 4786 5, £3.50 pbk

The Worst Witch, Puffin, 0 14 031108 4, £3.99 pbk, Puffin Modern Classic, 0 14 037249 0, £4.99 pbk, TV tie-in edition, 0 14 130330 1, £3.99 pbk

The Worst Witch Strikes Again, Puffin, 0 14 031348 6, £3.99 pbk, TV tie-in edition, 0 14 130331 X, £3.99 pbk

A Bad Spell for the Worst Witch, Puffin, 0 14 031446 6, £3.99 pbk, TV tie-in editon, 0 14 130647 5, £3.99 pbk

The Worst Witch All at Sea, Puffin, 0 14 034389 X, £4.99 pbk, TV tie-in edition, 0 14 130646 7, £4.99 pbk

The Worst Witch's Spelling Book, with Rose Griffiths, Puffin, 0 14 037672 0, £3.99 pbk

Photographs by Joanna Carey.

Joanna Carey is a writer and illustrator.

TEEN **FICTION** - where to from here?

Teenagers are too often seen as a problem or a commercial opportunity. 'Citizenship' aims to inculcate responsibilities but can it also give teens a sense of the Other? And in a world controlled by adults, including the teen fiction arena, could teens be given their voice? James Watson explores.



Photo courtesy of Puffin Books © Eleanor Sepanski

Julia Eccleshare's article in Books for Keeps (January 2002) highlights the problematics of writing and publishing 'teen books'. It has often been stated that teenagers are a lost generation; not lost once, like Bo Peep's sheep, but somehow lost permanently. They are neither children nor adults and when they seem to achieve profile, it's either as problem or a consumerist opportunity.

Yet the teenage years are hugely formative. It is a period of aspiration, searching, sharing, opportunity, setback, advance, temporary retrenchment. Like all transitory states, it is also volatile - sometimes extremely so, for reasons which are very often outside the young person's power of control.

Everyone involved with young people works to and from their position as developing individuals; people en route, meeting the familiar challenges of rites of passage. As well as writing for young adults, I have taught this age group for many years, in addition to helping bring up three of them - and I still make no claim to understand them sufficiently to predict their responses or their attitudes. One can guess at their peer culture but, as an adult, never really join it. Ultimately, though, we share the same world; and sooner or later we will share the same perceptions of it.

A sense of disillusionment

Looking around them at the state of this world, its savage inequalities of wealth and opportunity, teenagers could well be forgiven for feeling a profound sense of disillusionment; and the more of the world teenagers see - beyond that of sex, clothes and celebrity - the more they might ask questions and search for

Those who prejudge teenagers, usually on scant evidence, fear that they are so wrapped up in their own personal odysseys that they lack interest in, and concern about issues which do not touch them directly. I do not believe this. On the contrary, young adults are capable of empathy and commitment, though the avenues for showing these are limited.

They are still governed, in practically every aspect of their lives, by rules made by adults; people who 'know best'. It is good to see, then, the BBC planning broadcasting channels directed at children and teenagers; but who'll be manning those channels - teenagers? Unlikely. Yet today, in schools and colleges, young people as never before have access to the kind of equipment and studios which enable them to be their own broadcasters. Many are as familiar with producing media texts of one kind or another as they are with computers and mobile

Giving teens their voice

I doubt whether it will happen, but surely a channel for teenagers should be, at least in part, run by them? They should be given their voice; that and their vision of the world deserve to be expressed in the public arena without the potentially stifling (and sometimes patronising) control of adults, however professional. Educational requirements ought perhaps to be more closely tailored to citizen entitlements. In such circumstances it might at last happen that young readers produce, and participate in, their own programmes about teen fiction. And how about teen book of the month, read by a teenager; or dramatisations of teen stories with teen directors and actors? Heady thoughts.

The challenge of citizenship

Young people require to be challenged; they relish being stretched intellectually and emotionally. They resent being talked down to or their abilities and potential underestimated. A critically important aspect of the challenge of citizenship is, in my view, learning how to treasure things other than commodities; how to disengage from the preoccupation with the here and now within the context of one's own aspirations and lifestyle; how, in brief, to engage with Other, whoever that is perceived to be.

'Other' may be teenagers across the globe - the peers of UK young adults in Afghanistan, Africa, Indonesia or Palestine, facing challenges similar to, but also sometimes altogether different from those facing the British teenager. Yet in global terms, what are the role models for any of them, east or west?

We all know how boring politics are seen to be by the younger generation, because the field is defined largely by the actors in it - politicians who, it would seem, are incapable of giving a straight answer to any question; who are seen to make promises they have little intention of keeping, who opt for spin in order to conceal unpleasant truths - and anyway, they are so 'old' and 'past it'.

Fictional role models

In their place as role models, what do teenagers have? In real life - celebrities; fame the measure of value, good looks the key to success. It is all western, very consumerised and exceedingly conformist, despite the relentless emphasis on individuality. Thankfully, when we scrutinise the canon of literature written for young adults we encounter role models aplenty vulnerable, yes, wrong-doing, sometimes, thrashing about in confusion, often, but ultimately, for the most part, survivors; young people working out their own project of self, developing a personal script or schema which helps them come to terms with themselves and the world around them.

In the process of matching the project of self with experience, real or mediated, the young adult encounters certain values (other than fame, success and wealth): justice, fair play, equality, tolerance; and the realisation of such values through character and action. Real-world problems have to be addressed through intelligence, imagination (sometimes cunning) but invariably through decision and action; otherwise, all of us, young adults and older adults, will have to learn to live with injustice, unfair play, inequality and intolerance.

The Labour government plans to insert a citizenship requirement into schools education. This may turn out to be a good idea or flop like a lead balloon, but clearly in the highest echelons of social control, there is concern: are

our young people switched off from their civic duty of understanding the why, where, what and how of the exercise of power in our community. and sometimes its abuse, nationally and globally?

Education, education, education?

Some will say, and with a degree of justification, pontificating about duties and obligations on the part of the power elite is a hypocrisy too far. But who will take up the slack? Where indeed will issues of justice etc. be debated, examined, deconstructed; how might commitments to a better world be nurtured?

The pat answer is education, education, education; but if education is chiefly defined as training, training and training, and if the measure of that education is a set of league tables in a culture of blame, and within a system in which partnerships between schools and commerce are deemed to be a virtue - what then? We have a right to fear that even education is in danger of being commodified. Thank god most headteachers and teachers understand this danger and will resist the incipient privatisation of a public treasure.

Literature may not be the answer, either, but it is undoubtedly a likely contributor, at least by articulating questions that recognise issues exist; for stories allow for the exploration of experience, yet free of risk (at least of the physical sort). That a fictional narrative might disturb, upset, fill a reader with dismay or even despair, is of course a 'risk' but there are few who will fail to recognise the difference between mediated and lived trauma; and as I say, young people search for, and can cope with, such challenges.

What we are converging on here is – the serious. If life has become just a laugh, if as some gloomy commentators believe, society - western society at least - is entertaining itself to death, what price the serious? Yet there are still plenty of good tales for young readers of all ages which can be put under the heading of 'serious'; and this certainly does not mean that stories, so described, are worthy but dull. On the contrary, the serious usually invites danger, and danger can make for a thrilling narrative.

Even so, the serious treats the reader as wishing to probe beyond entertainment to discovery and understanding. Through the characters in stories, and the actions they are involved in, young readers encounter experiences that make them think and feel - and sometimes act differently. Only the real, or the semblance of the real, does this in the terms I have described. I am not just talking about 'real life' on the streets of Birmingham or Glasgow, but of events and places that extend - literally - reader horizons. True, the best literature may be about us, in our own contexts; yet more and more our context is shared by other peoples, other races.

Citizens of the world

So few novels written elsewhere in other languages seem to warrant translation and publishing here. For example, how many teenage book winners of the Buxtehuder Bulle Prize - a prestigious annual German award for teen novels - have been published here or in the States? Yet these have been judged of outstanding merit by panels of readers made up of 50% of teenage judges; books celebrated not only for their literary merit, but their serious and challenging perspectives on the world.

We need to recognise rather more than we have done in the past that the teen reader is a citizen of the world, for good or ill, a cosmopolite rather than merely a localite. The teen book should recognise this fact, and in responding to it, embrace it as well as celebrate it.

There is, of course, nothing of the lone voice about the sentiments expressed here. Readers of Books for Keeps need only turn to the Editorial of the January edition in which Rosemary Stones makes her own plea for the 'serious' when, in referring to the depiction of Muslims, she talks of 'a pressing need for books which challenge distorted and negative images'.

Children's book editors and publishers may still be dazzled by the blinding light of that Holy Grail, Harry Potter; and orders from above may insist, 'At all costs, seek a successor to Golden Harry'; but the wiser ones among them will remember to keep faith with the serious, for the benefit of those young people with an appetite for something beyond magic and wishful thinking.

James Watson is the author of several novels for young readers, including The Freedom Tree, Talking in Whispers, No Surrender, Ticket to Prague and Justice of the Dagger. In line with the 'cosmopolite' perspectives he mentions here, the books are set in Spain, Chile, Angola, Eastern Europe and East Timor. He can be contacted on the following e-mail: James.Watson4@btinternet.com

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Hal's Reading Diary

Now 18 months, Hal loves to have the same books read over and over again. His father, Roger Mills, on the importance of predictability.

There has been a major change in our lives since my last entry in Hal's reading diary. A couple of weeks ago, after months and months of slow deliberation, followed by some unexpectedly brisk decision making, we moved out of our home in Queens Park in north west London, and set up a new home in a cottage next to a farm in the middle of the countryside in Sussex.

This is a huge upheaval for us, and we were naturally concerned about how Hal would handle the change. We thought about it a lot and decided that the first thing I should do when I got to the cottage (I was the advance party delegated to show the removals team where to put things), was to set up Hal's room so that there would at least be familiar things for him to see when he got to the new house.

It worked splendidly. A wide-eyed Hal arrived, clearly not quite sure what was going on. And then he spotted his favourite toy, a plastic multi-storey car park and there was a gurgle of surprise and delight. We went upstairs and there were more happy cries when he saw his cot, his menagerie of soft animals, and his books. With so many old friends around him Hal knew that the new place was home and he never showed the smallest sign of disorientation.

What this brought home to me was how enormously important it is to a small child that life should feel predictable. Predictability makes life feel safe, and if a child has it, it will gradually be internalised so that the child builds up a reservoir of confidence

Books can play an important part in this. These days reading is a vital part of Hal's bedtime ritual. He has supper, plays outside and then goes for his bath. After the bath he does his teeth and then my wife Jo or I sit with him and read at least three books with him before it is time for his bottle and bed. Reading with Hal has become one of those things that he knows happens every night, one of the things that makes him know the world is full of frightening, unexpected happenings.

The small child's love of predictability makes sense of another feature of children's reading habits (as well as video ones) - they always want to read the same book

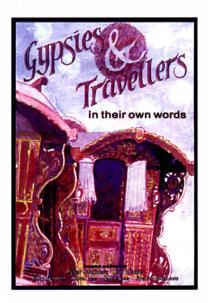


all the time. Children (and quite a few adults too) aren't interested in novelty. Hal wants The Tiger who came to Tea, Each Peach Pear Plum and Esther's Trunk almost every evening. He wants to hear the same words (they can get almost mantra-like to the reader at times) and he wants to see the same pictures. New books do get introduced, but it has to be one at a time, and the new one has to be repeated often till it too becomes familiar.

Psychoanalysts know all about the child's need for predictability. It might seem strange to the lay person, but analysts do their utmost to make sure that changes in the therapy set up are minimal. The patient comes at the same hour, the session lasts for the same period of time, efforts are made to make sure that the room in which the therapy happens looks exactly the same each session. Analysts' patients can be upset by even tiny changes – a light that is normally on that is switched off one week can make a patient feel decidedly unsettled. And it is all because the child part of each of us wants predictability.

In an earlier diary entry I talked about how books give the small child a wonderful feeling of being with another person. This month's main argument is that the experience of being read to, for a child, is part of what makes the world seem safe and predictable. Both points reinforce the idea that the importance of books for children goes way beyond the words and pictures on the page. It is the experience of reading as well that it vital.

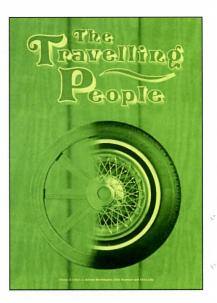
Roger Mills is a Psychodynamic Counsellor.



TRAVELLE EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

- A genre coming of age?

Over the past twenty-five years teachers of Gypsy and Traveller children have faced the dilemma that the texts generally available in schools for social studies, history, language and literature generally omit all mention of Travellers. In doing so most school books do not merely bolster anti-Gypsy racism by giving a false view of society and history, but they also put Traveller children off education, often for good by giving them the tradition that a knowledge of their own identity is incompatible with academic knowledge. They have reacted to that dilemma by producing their own work. Thomas Acton explains.



he first examples of these self published books in the 1970s were somewhat amateurish; David Smith, then an art education lecturer at Scraptoft College, remarked of one of mine that its drawings 'might permanently damage the aesthetic capabilities of children exposed to them'. The same charge could not be brought against the books here reviewed, which all have high production values, glossy paper and colour photographs throughout. These are 'real books' which will combat, rather than reinforce the marginality of Traveller children in the classroom.

A cultural meeting place

The function of, and the audience for, these books, however, is different in each case. Each text is to some extent a meeting place of Traveller and non-Traveller cultures, which can be used in the inter-cultural classroom, but the first, Gypsies and Travellers in their own Words, is the one that responds most closely to the agenda of Traveller adults from the old Traveller and Romani communities of the Western European Isles, from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. It is a monumental compilation of oral histories, backed up by old and new photographs, covering family life, fairs, education, Romani and Gammon language, waggons and horses, sites and politics, that will stir the nostalgia of any Traveller, and anyone who has been involved with Travellers during the last fifty years. Modern graphic designers may frown at the way material is packed into the book, but the crowded detail exactly corresponds to the richness of Traveller culture and its aesthetic appreciation of intricacy. In text and pictures, but also in spirit, it pays due tribute to the patron saint of English Gypsy decorative art, the late Jimmy Berry. To some extent the book works on the principle of old local newspapers: every name mentioned is another certain sale. And in the case of Travellers more than one sale. Selling a stack of these from a stall at Stow Fair, I found that virtually every Traveller who picked the book up found people they knew in it. This book is the antithesis of the folkloristic concepts of 'anon' and 'trad'. It is chock-full of real, named people, and the teachers and Travellers, who have so lovingly facilitated this fantastic living kaleidoscope, have carefully faded themselves into the background. The publishers are to be congratulated on risking a print run of 3,000, some three times the normal print run of a Traveller Education Service publication, which may be why this one is relatively cheap. Most

have been sold already and become collectors' items, bound to increase in value.

History and current situation

Despite all that, this would not be a good introductory text for the non-Gypsy who knows nothing about Gypsies unless they were, say, in an upper secondary school class which included Travellers who could elucidate and contextualise difficult points for non-Travellers. Fully to appreciate Gypsies and Travellers in their own Words, the non-Traveller needs some general education about Travellers first. Given that Travellers have been part of British society for half a millennium this should have happened centuries ago; realising the tragic historical explanations of why it did not is the starting point for understanding, and then transcending, the racism and community relations difficulties of today. This is the function of The Travelling People produced by three East London Traveller Education Services, which explains the basic facts of history and the current social situation of Romani and Traveller communities in Britain. It covers New Travellers, Showmen and Romani asylum-seekers as well as the territorially defined Gypsy and Traveller groups, all with extremely positive thumbnail sketches, that celebrate diversity rather than presenting any one group as somehow more authentic. Inevitably the presentation is a little simplistic (the roundingout of population figures may provoke the pedantic); but it is a great deal more subtle than what will be presented to its readership from other sources, and it contains a useful bibliography for teachers (whom, the authors recognise, may have as many questions as the pupils).

Dylan has lost Mouse.



Where is he?

Inevitably this book is aimed more at non-Travellers than at Travellers, although it may tell some Traveller children things they did not know about other Traveller groups. But the quality of the photographs and the clarity of the text means that if this book were used with a class of non-Traveller children with just one Gypsy in it, the Gypsy child should be affirmed, not embarrassed,

Both of the above books are somewhat remedial in character; that is to say they provide information and resources that have hitherto been lacking, and can now be assumed to be lacking in older pupils, students and teachers. The long-term solution to that problem, however, must be providing appropriate texts for those at the earliest stage of their education, which show Travellers as members of the general community like any other minority. Where's Mouse? does exactly that, a first stage reader which in only 26 different words (and a number of evocative photographs) tells the story of a little boy, Dylan, looking for his dog (comically named 'Mouse' but we don't find that out until the end: we start off thinking he's looking for a real mouse). Dylan is a charming little fellow anyone would like for a brother; Mouse is the dog we can all have a soft spot for. They just happen to live on a Traveller caravan site. Bravo! Let's hope future booklets may give us more adventures of Dylan and Mouse.

The high quality of these books is by no means unique. The resource fair held every two years by the National Association of Teachers with Travellers brings together a cornucopia of such publications. Their quality, innovation and rootedness in the community present a challenge to all educational publishing.

Books discussed

Gypsies and Travellers in their own Words

Peter Saunders, Jim Clarke, Sally Kendall, Anna Lee, Sakie Lee, Freda Marthews, 2000, Leeds Traveller Education Service, 254pp, A4, numerous colour and black and white photographs, 0 9508029 9 9, £20.95

The Travelling People

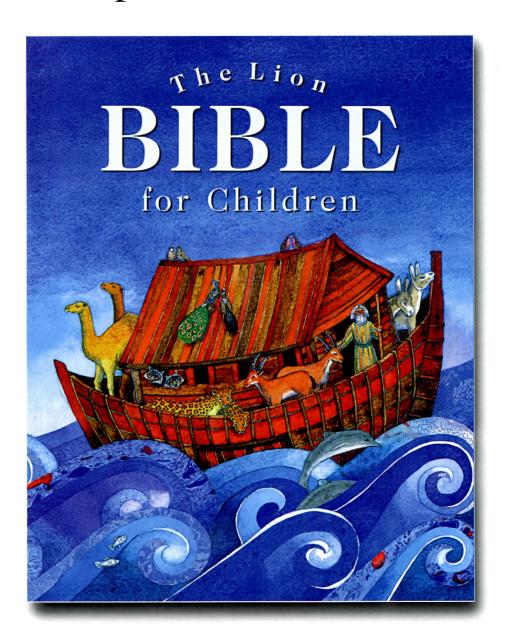
Anthea Wormington, Siân Newman and Chris Lilly, 2001, Newham, Hackney and Tower Hamlets Traveller Education Services, 25pp, 24.5 cm x 17.5 cm, colour photographs throughout, 0 9538008 3 0, c. £6.50

Val Hawksworth, Jean Flynn and Sylvia Murphy, 2000, Cardiff Traveller Education Service, 15pp, A5, colour photographs, no ISBN, c.£4.50

Thomas Acton, MA, DPhil (Oxon), FRSA is Professor of Romani Studies, University of Greenwich.

A classic is born.

September 20th 2002





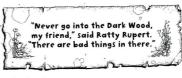
A captivating retelling from Murray Watts, award-winning screen writer of The Miracle Maker, with inspiring illustrations from Helen Cann.

NOT A VINTAGE YEAR

The circus around the Carnegie and Greenaway Medals continues to grow with the awards achieving extensive media coverage – and this can only be good news for children's books. Meanwhile the Carnegie/Greenaway schools' shadowing scheme goes from strength to strength and BfK is privileged to reproduce here reviews of the Carnegie shortlisted books by pupils from Bristol Grammar School. But what of this year's winning books? Rosemary Stones investigates.

erry Pratchett's The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents is this year's Carnegie Medal winner. I, however, am at one with Bristol Grammar School's Martin Arcari when he hopes 'that Pratchett soon has another book in the Carnegie shortlist, this time more like some of his better books'. Indeed. Carnegie/Greenaway judges often move in mysterious ways but awarding the UK's most prestigious children's literary award to a distinctly feeble Pratchett takes the biscuit. What could have won? As ever Geraldine McCaughrean, with two shortlisted titles, Stop the Train and The Kite Rider, is assured, challenging and original. While Terry Pratchett struggles to address what constitutes thinking, McCaughrean's discussion of its nature in the luminous The Kite Rider emerges developmentally from within her most memorable characters. A triumph.

Peter Dickinson is on reasonable form with The Ropemaker although his characters (who grin and cackle their way through adventures) lack depth and thereby engagement. Eva Ibbotson's Journey to the River Sea with its stock goodies and baddies and clumsy attempts to present the culture of the Amazon Indians in a dignified way is a very old fashioned yarn in which 'horrible' children deserve cruel treatment. Liz Laird's Jake's Tower is accomplished and moving but not, to be picky, quite of





Above: from The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents, right: from Pirate Diary.



the stature to be a winner. Virginia Euwer Wolff's True Believer is a truly wonderful book by this American author. It is eligible, I am told, because co-published in the US and the UK. Why that should be so is another matter. Does it not undermine one of the functions of the Carnegie - to encourage high standards in publishing for children within UK copyright territories? Aren't there plenty of US children's literary awards to encourage high standards in US territories? Sharon Creech is also, of course, an American, but Love That Dog was first published (and therefore edited, produced, marketed and sold - those crucial processes that have everything to do with high standards) in the UK. It is both charming and moving if not, perhaps, a winner.



The Carnegie Medal

Winner:

The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents by Terry Pratchett (Doubleday, 0 385 60123 9, £12.99 hbk)

Highly Commended:

Stop the Train by Geraldine McCaughrean (Oxford University Press, 0 19 271901 7, £10.99 hbk)

Love That Dog by Sharon Creech (Bloomsbury, 0 7475 5616 4, £9.99 hbk)

Other shortlisted books:

The Ropemaker by Peter Dickinson (Macmillan, 0 333 94738 X, £12.99 hbk)

Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson (Macmillan, 0 333 94740 1, £9.99 hbk)

Jake's Tower by Elizabeth Laird (Macmillan, 0 333 96215 X, £9.99 hbk)

The Kite Rider by Geraldine McCaughrean (Oxford University Press, 0 19 275157 3, £4.99 pbk)

True Believer by Virginia Euwer Wolff (Faber, 0 571 20702 2, £4.99 pbk)



The Kate Greenaway Medal

Pirate Diary by Richard Platt, ill. Chris Riddell (Walker, 0 7445 6233 3, £12.99 hbk)

Highly Commended:

Fix-It Duck by Jez Alborough (Collins, 0 00 710624 6, £4.99 pbk) and Sometimes I Like to Curl up in a Ball by Vicki Churchill, ill. Charles Fuge (Gullane, 1 86233 253 3, £8.99 hbk, 1 86233 396 3, £4.99 pbk)

Other shortlisted books:

The Witch's Children by Ursula Jones, ill. Russell Ayto (Orchard, 1841215511, £10.99 hbk)

Katje the Windmill Cat by Gretchen Woelfle, ill. Nicola Bayley (Walker, 0 7445 8016 1, £10.99 hbk)

Silver Shoes by Caroline Binch (Dorling Kindersley, 0 7513 2754 9, £9.99 hbk)

Let's Get a Pup! by Bob Graham (Walker, 0 7445 7574 5, £10.99 hbk)

Tatty Ratty by Helen Cooper (Doubleday, 0 385 60006 2, £10.99 hbk)

THE GREENAWAY MEDAL

Chris Riddell is the winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal for Pirate Diary (written by Richard Platt). Riddell is a superb illustrator not at his best in this uneasy blend of story bristling with facts. When the characters have no inner life (the boy Jake is indifferent when his uncle is cast adrift in a small boat after a flogging) it must be hard for the illustrator to know whether his job is to convey goody goody information about fids and serving mallets or a dramatic visual narrative. The result is a number of technically accomplished spreads of battles which are quite devoid of atmosphere or light and shade - even, curiously, in the scene where a fire is burning. Every character's face has the same rictus snarl and the same, relentless degree of focus. Riddell's black and white drawings to illustrate the index are far more evocative.

Easily the most accomplished book on this shortlist was Bob Graham's Let's Get a Pup! It is a book full of drama, feeling and the domestic clutter of a real family. Graham can, via both his excellent text and well observed illustration, be full of sentiment but he is never sentimental. His drawings are minimal but it is the amount of drawing that is reduced, never a reduction of character. This is a book of effortless brilliance.

Caroline Binch's Silver Shoes also deserved better. Her style has notably developed here and is far more expressive, relaxed and lively with some very good drawing. Nicola Bayley's illustrations for Katje the Windmill Cat (text by Gretchen Woelfle) are less sharply focused than usual and benefit from being attached to a decent story. Amiable but perhaps not special enough. Charles Fuge's Sometimes I Like to Curl up in a Ball (text by Vicki Churchill) is a technically adept if manic response to a manic text. A sense of scale might have made this book less exhausting. Helen Cooper's Tatty Ratty is let down by mixed conventions and a jarring lack of visual discrimination between reality and dream. The muddy trees like tangled wool don't help. Russell Ayto's lively, mannered illustrations for The Witch's Children (text by Ursula Jones) are perhaps a little too self-conscious and at the expense of the story. Jez Alborough's Fix-It Duck has energy and humour but its lack of pretension in terms of colour or texture means that it is really not distinctive enough to be Highly Commended.

To conclude, some good books – shame about the winners.

Rosemary Stones is Editor of Books for Keeps.

SHADOWING THE CARNEGIE

The Carnegie shortlisted books are reviewed by teacher, Nick Attwood, and pupils from Bristol Grammar School. They were originally published on the Carnegie website. Thanks to Lucy Shepherd, parttime teacher/librarian.

Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson

The writer described the rainforest and the river scenes very well in this book but I think the characters could do with a little more description. The story line however is very intriguing and when you meet the twins and the parents of the twins you think everything will turn out alright. But when you get to know how nasty the twins and parents are to Maria it made me shiver with anger. I could not put the book down when the fire happened and as the story ended it was also very exciting. The ending was very satisfactory with the way that all the characters went off on their own way. I give this book 8/10.

Love That Dog by Sharon Creech

A good book written in a strange form. It is the shortest book I have ever read - having only about twenty words on each page. I recommend reading it as it only takes about twenty minutes to read. There are happy and sad parts in it and is about a boy who progresses in writing poetry. There are lots of funny parts so it is worth reading.

Philip Murray

The Ropemaker by Peter Dickinson

This is a great tale of good against evil and bears resemblance to **The Lord** of the Rings, only less complicated. The characters are lifelike and easy to believe. The idea of magic has not destroyed and overridden the story but has helped to make the book not too close to reality. The story is well explained but you can tell the author is keeping something back. The tale unfolds with very colourful descriptions and characters who are all unique, with their personalities. I found this longwinded but it was worth all the hours I spent reading it. The main character was Tilja and the tale unfolds around her and her family. This was by far the best book and I hope it wins. Chris Cross

Jake's Tower by Elizabeth Laird

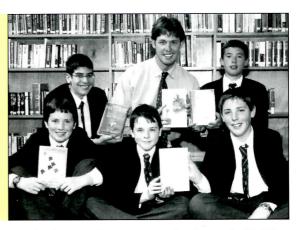
I have to admit that before I read this book, I looked upon the prospect certain amount apprehension. I have never been a big reader of writing which I consider harrowing, and the subject of child abuse seemed to fit that bill nicely. This novel tells the story of Jake, a boy living with his mother and his abusive stepfather. Jake desperately seeks escape from the world he inhabits of minute-to-minute fear.

When he discovers a place to hide by the railway track, in his head he begins to create this magical tower a safe haven where he and his idyllic image of his lost father can live without fear. As the story continues we see Jake's life improving bit by bit. But it's the factors of fear and But its the factors of fear and compelling read, Jake's constant irrational fear of his stepfather tracking him down. But it's so evocatively written that you begin to believe that he could actually get him. As Jake's life improves and his maginary idulies home develops imaginary idyllic home develops there are certain revelations that are very interesting to say the least. To conclude, I feel this book is well written, compelling and at times will bring a tear to your eye. Everyone should give this book a try.

Harry Keeling

The Kite Rider by Geraldine McCaughrean

This is an excellent book of brilliantly formed characters that enables you to read into the story and live the life and fears of the characters. It sparks of indignation and anger at Great-Uncle Bo and the end is a fitting way of getting revenge as he is left and no longer has anyone to exploit and manipulate. The Great Miao is a superb character as he is an untouchable figure that is struggling against the customs of the people and what is ingrained in his upbringing. Di Chou plays the classic villain who is cunningly outwitted by Haoyou, the simple boy who is desperate to see the spirit of his reviewers with teacher Nick Attwood, minus Harry Keeling and Daniel Summerbell who were away.



father in the heavens but is strangely reluctant to fly and eventually he realises the whole vision of his father guiding him is a damaged eye caused by too much flying. This is strangely ironic as he flies to see his father. It has some great comedy with the town they con into believing that the gods are talking to them and the way they turn rebellious.

Peter Sharpe

Stop the Train by Geraldine McCaughrean

Beautifully penned, this is sensational yee-haa romp of a Wild West novel, which complements (by contrast) the writer's story of the East in The Kite Rider. The title says it all: the neo-villagers must gain a railroad their station or newly hewn community will die, like a mongoose bitten by a rattlesnake. Interest is maintained in this beef jerky-thin premise with impressive eccentrics such as the Swedish baker (who requires a wife to jam his donuts) and the academically-challenged school-mistress (who wouldn't pass an Ofsted). I'd hoped that the railroad company's prodigal son would be the central hero, but the inter-family feud wasn't really developed. What was, however, was the powerful sense of community spirit set against John Bull's destructively steely member which repeatedly lanced through their land and aspirations, a steamspilling, horn-tooting embodiment of Nick Attwood

The Amazing Maurice and his **Educated Rodents**

by Terry Pratchett

This was a fun and enjoyable book. Although definitely not the best in Terry Pratchett's wonderful 'Disc-world' series of novels, this is still a good fun book, with some hilarious moments. However, it must be taken into account that I am an avid Terry Pratchett fan, and so the book is probably not as good as I say it is. However, even with this taken into account, it is still a good read, although not deserving of the Carnegie medal. I definitely hope that Pratchett soon has another book in the Carnegie shortlist, this time more like some of his better books. Martin Arcari

True Believer

by Virginia Euwer Wolff

Although this book probably won't be the winner of the award this year (as much as I may hope it will), it was certainly the one that I have enjoyed the most. This may be partly due to the fact that I read it at a point where I was not stressed out, and (more importantly) it was a book aimed at my age range. For starters the style is relaxing to the eyes and mind, and the plot, if not gripping, holds you tighter than a safety bar on a disreputable reasonably coaster. Another quality of the book is that it contains no obscure and pointless metaphors, quite unlike this review. However, the main quality of this book that sets it apart from the rest is that it is the only one that makes you think about it afterwards. Other books, such as The Ropemaker, have more gripping plots, but True Believer is set in a world that really comes to life, warts and all, and makes you ponder over it for week afterwards.

Daniel Summerbell

The Depiction of Islam in Children's Mon-Fiction

To what extent do books exist which promote in young minds respect for and understanding of Muslims and their beliefs, lifestyles and practices? To the extent that such books exist, do they promote cultural diversity and combat racial or religious stereotyping? Shereen Pandit investigates.

Below: 'These Muslim girls live

in China. Muslims make up a

hallenging negative images of any group of people is best done through positive practical engagement between people of that group and others. When people of different cultural, language and religious backgrounds work, live, play and eat together, stereotypes are replaced by real people who are colleagues, friends, schoolfellows, neighbours. The Nazis, like the Apartheid rulers of South Africa, fully understood how much more easily people could be dehumanised, vilified and illtreated by being segregated.

However, the media and books can and do play an important role in promoting negative images of people – for the purposes of this article, Muslim people. Equally then, they can play an important role in debunking the kind of myths which promote Islamaphobia.

Are the books out there?

A decade ago, I found that my toddler's multicultural collection of books had a huge gap in it where Islam and the Muslim world were concerned. Ordinary bookshops, and even progressive bookclubs, had few fiction titles and these few seemed to confirm stereotypical images of the Muslim world and Muslims. Non-fiction titles were almost non-existent, the bitterly few that there were providing only the barest information about Islam.

Judging from the pile of non-fiction titles sent to me for this article there has been some growth in this area. My First Arabic Alphabet Book and Stories of the Prophets from the Qur'an are board books for babies. Like their English and Christian-based counterparts, they are attractive

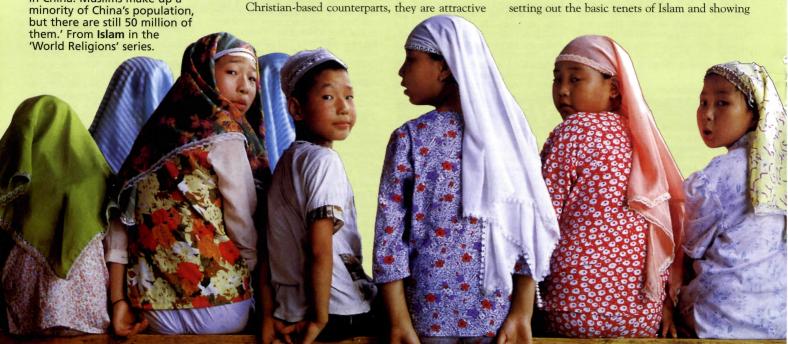
first books. My First Arabic Alphabet Book has one large, bold, easily traceable/copiable letter per page. Stories of the Prophets from the Qur'an consists of simple sentences beneath pictures. One step up there is My Arabic Words Book, with letters linked to words, pictures and sounds. There are also a few collections of animal stories for younger children (eg The Dance of the Eagle and the Fish, Faisal and Friends) and folktales for older children from the rich tradition of Arabic and Persian literature, in which the characters are usually animals.

The depiction of Islam

Mainly, however, the growth has been in titles such as Muslim, I am a Muslim, Muslim Imam, Islam, Eid-ul-Fitr, et al. Thus, lots of titles for younger children about being a practising Muslim and what the key beliefs of Muslims are - all similar in content.

To some extent, the very existence of such books challenges negative images. For non-Muslim children, the board books are helpful in teaching them about the Arabic language and Muslim views of the prophets shared with Christians and Jews, the Muslim names for the prophets, etc. Such books could have been even more helpful if more ran from back to front, or if the English stories had the Arabic alongside, showing that Arabic is read from the right. Thus both differences English/Christian counterparts would have been raised and all confirmed in young minds as valid ways of writing and reading.

These books about Islam fill the information gap, setting out the basic tenets of Islam and showing



how practising Muslims, in a Muslim community, live. Thus they contribute towards some understanding of the Faith and its fully observant adherents. Moreover, for Muslim children everywhere, it is refreshing to have books which show that their Faith is held in the same regard as any other by writers and publishers

The totality of Muslim life?

But are explanations of Islam and a practising Muslim lifestyle enough to combat negative images about Muslims and Islam? The dominance of information books about the Faith and the religious lives of Muslims in the small body of non-fiction about Muslims for children, suggests that writers and publishers think that they are sufficient for the task. Whilst a few such books are necessary for information, as a genre they do not present an adequate, rounded view of the lives of Muslim children. As a body of non-fiction about Muslims everywhere, they lack a basis in the reality of the lives of many Muslim children.

Islam is a rapidly spreading faith, expanding far more, presumably, in the West than in Muslim countries where the Faith already holds sway. Islam then is practised, and Muslim boys and girls are as likely to live, in a modern, largely secular world, as in a predominantly practising Islamic one. Whether they live in the non-Muslim world, or in predominantly Muslim countries, their lives do not escape the impact of the secular modern world of TV, radio, computers, the internet, Western styles of dress and behaviour. We were taught that Islam is more than just a religion, that it is a way of life, yet today religion is not the totality of Muslim life.

Not just prayermat and pilgrimage

From the non-fiction about Islam and Muslims available, one would suppose that all Muslims live in simple, pious, almost closed communities, where the practice of the Faith dominates all things. In real life Muslims are also single parents, asylum seekers, immigrants, ordinary school children, workers, professional people and so on. Absent from the body of non-fiction for children too, is much about the ancient or modern history of the Islamic world, its contributions to geography, mathematics, architecture or literature or any allusion to what is happening to Muslim children from Palestine to Iraq, South Africa to Sudan.

The preponderance of books purely about the religious aspects of Muslim life presents the danger of another stereotype - that of the Muslim child, its family and community, as purely practising Muslims, disengaged from the world around them. They remain 'other' rather than demystified, part of the ordinary world. There is a need for more books reflecting the totality of Muslim life.

A response to Islamaphobia?

In an understandable response to Islamaphobia, it appears that the writers of these books wish to

present Islam as a simple faith, requiring from its followers but five essentials of observance and a lifestyle of humility, obedience, care and kindness in which no-one can find anything to hate, fear or despise. This is understandable in the current climate, where Saddam Hussein and the Taliban are held up as representative of the Muslim world.

However, in presenting Muslims as a pious, community based people, what gets missed out is the ordinariness of the lives of Muslims, the diversity of practice of the Faith, the diversity of tradition, appearance, language amongst its adherents, the rich heritage of scholarship, entertainment, intellectual engagement, writing, reading and storytelling stretching back centuries before the birth of Isa (peace be upon him).

There are books which, consciously or otherwise, redress this imbalance. One such, borrowed from my daughter's school, is J. Bourgoin's Islamic Patterns. Not specifically aimed at children, the book consists wholly of patterns of Islamic art. A brief introduction cites Muslim opposition to human figures in art, as a factor in creating an abstract Islamic art of 'incomparable elegance'. It talks about the 'inventiveness of Muslim artists, who are able to transform ... simple geometrical forms ... into countless incredibly beautiful pictures'. Thus, we have an art book free from stereotype. We need more such non-fiction for children, presenting the Muslim world as one of culture and erudition, of conflict as well as accepted diversity, of secular engagement as well as religious practice. Otherwise, Muslims and Islam may continue to exist in young minds (and later older ones) as 'other' even if not so bad 'other'.

Shereen Pandit is a writer who has taught English and creative writing to refugees, mainly women, from

Books referred to

My First Arabic Alphabet Book, Siddiqa Juma, Iman Publishing, 0 9527895 0 7, £4.95 board

Stories of the Prophets from the Qur'an, containing Adam, Ibrahim (Abraham), Isa (Jesus), Muhammad, Musa (Moses), Nuh (Noah), Siddiqa Juma, Iman Publishing, 1 879402 64 5, £16.95 for boxed set of six titles

My Arabic Words Book, Siddiqa Juma, Iman Publishing, 1 879402 33 5, £6.95

The Dance of the Eagle and the Fish, Aziz Nesin and Kagan Güner, Milet Publishing, 1 84059 316 4,

Faisal and Friends, Anne Eccleshall and Rachel Verity, Iman Publishing, 0 9527895 3 1, £9.95 hbk

Muslim, Richard Tames, Franklin Watts 'Beliefs and Cultures' 0 7496 2058 7, £11.99 hbk

I am a Muslim, Manju Aggarwal, Franklin Watts 'My Belief', 0 7496 4175 4, £5.99 pbk

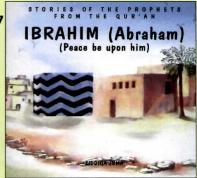
Muslim Imam, Akbar Dad Khan, Franklin Watts 'My Life, My Religion', 0 7496 4065 0, £10.99 hbk

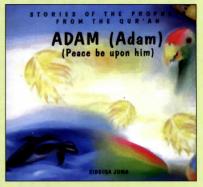
Islam, Richard Tames, Franklin Watts 'World Religions', 0 7496 3374 3, £11.99 hbk

Eid ul-Fitr, Susheila Stone, A & C Black, 0 7136 4083 9, £4.99 pbk

Islamic Patterns, J Bourgoin, Dover Publications, distributed by David & Charles, 0 486 23537 8, £5.95

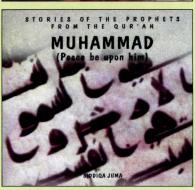
In case of any difficulty in obtaining Iman Publishing titles, the publisher can be contacted via tel: 01923 251490, fax: 01923 218332 or e-mail: iman@alif.co.uk

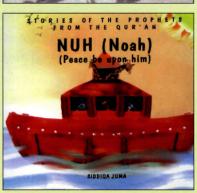












Books for St Lucia

An appeal has been launched by Anne Marley, Vice-Chair of the Youth Libraries Group and Senior Librarian at Hampshire Library and Information Services, to raise £5,000 to buy books for the poorly stocked libraries in St Lucia. Ms Marley was 'devastated', on a visit to a library in the island's capital, Castries, 'by the terrible state of the books the children had to choose from. The stock was old, in very poor condition – mildewed, dog-eared, torn and yet was still being borrowed and used by the children and parents I saw there.' If you would like to help with funding or new books, contact anne@marleyhcl.freeserve.co.uk

The National **Centre for** Language and Literacy



The Reading and Language Information Centre has been merged with REACH National Advice Centre for Children with

Reading Difficulties. The newly formed organisation which will provide a one-stop service for teachers and parents is known as The National Centre for Language and Literacy (NCLL).

Congratulations to the First Children's Laureate, Quentin Blake, who has been named a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture in recognition of outstanding artistic work. Fellow recipients of this distinguished award include Susan Sontag, Robert Redford and Meryl Streep.

Congratulations also to BfK's 'Classics in Short' contributor, Brian Alderson, whose scholarship in the field of children's books has been recognised by an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Surrey.

Yet more congratulations are due to illustrator Posy Simmonds (MBE), writer Jacqueline Wilson (OBE) and Bolton librarian Julie Spencer (OBE) who were all honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

David Kewley has stepped down as Managing Director of Scholastic UK. His future plans are not known.

Sally Floyer, Managing Director of Warne, is to take charge of a new Penguin publishing division, as yet unnamed, which brings together Warne and Ladybird.

Mandy Suhr, formerly Publishing Director for Campbell Books and Macmillan picture books, has been appointed

Useful Organisations No.22: MA Children's **Book Illustration at** APU, Cambridge

Martin Salisbury, Course Director, MA Children's Book Illustration, Department of Art and Design, Anglia Polytechnic University, East Road, Cambridge CB1 1PT

Tel: 01223 363271, ext. 2351

E-mail: m.c.salisbury@apu.ac.uk

The MA programme was validated in 2000 and is now fully recruited for its second year. This unique course evolved through the success of the Cambridge Illustration course in producing outstanding children's illustrators. These include Jane Simmons, Selina Young, Alison Bartlett, Adrian Reynolds and Thomas Taylor in the last few years alone.

This is a part-time prog-

ramme which takes two and a half years to complete. It involves one full day's work on campus a week (tutorials, lectures, seminars etc) and a further day a week devoted to course work independently. The students work from an attractive room in the original Cambridge School of Art studios.

The course emphasises the all round creative development of the artist/author in the context of the children's book. Successful applicants tend to have a good degree in illustration, graphic design or fine art. A significant proportion of current students are practising professionals who wish to take time out alongside commissioned work to explore their true creative potential.

Picture Book Publisher at Puffin. This is a newly created position.

Marc Lambert, formerly Assistant Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, has been appointed Chief Executive of Scottish Book Trust.

Egmont's Managing Director, Susannah McFarlane, has resigned her post to return to Australia. Her successor has not yet been announced.

Linda Davis, formerly an Editorial Director at HarperCollins and Dorling Kindersley, has joined the Greene & Heaton Literary Agency with a brief to build the children's list.

The 2003 Children's Literature International Summer School will be held at the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature at the University of Surrey, Roehampton from 25–30 July 2003. CLISS is not a conference but a five-day period of study for which delegates prepare, attend lectures and contribute to seminars. Projected areas for study in 2003 include 'Radical Visual Texts', 'The Literature of War', Children's Literature in Translation' and 'Creative Writing for Children'. Further information from Jilly Paver on 020 8392 3816 or j.paver@roehampton.ac.uk

·BRIEFING·BRIEFING·BRIEFING·BRIEFING·BRIEFING·BRIEFING·

The Children's **Book Award**

The Federation of Children's Book Groups Children's Book Award has been won by Malorie Blackman's Noughts and Crosses (Doubleday). Allan Ahlberg's The Man Who Wore All His Clothes, ill. Katharine McEwen (Walker) won the Books for Younger Children category and Michael Morpurgo's Out of the Ashes, ill. Michael Foreman (Macmillan) won the Books for Younger Readers category. 20,000 children took part in the

The Bisto **Book of the** Year Award

Thompson's The Beguilers (Bodley Head) has won this year's Bisto Book of the Year.

The Eilís **Dillon Award**

Perdue's Adam's Starling (O'Brien Press) has won the The Eilís Dillon Award for a first novel.

Guardian Children's **Fiction Prize**

The shortlisted books for the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize are Bernard Ashley's Revenge House (Orchard),



Julie Bertagna's **Exodus** (Picador), Susan Cooper's Green Boy (Bodley Head), Keith Gray's Warehouse (Red Fox), Sonya Hartnett's Thursday's Child (Walker), Elizabeth Laird's Jake's Tower (Macmillan), Linda Newbery's The Shell House (David Fickling) and Terry Pratchett's The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents (Transworld). Chaired by Julia Eccleshare, the judges are Kevin Crossley-Holland, Beverley Naidoo and Bali Rai.

Askews Children's **Book Award**

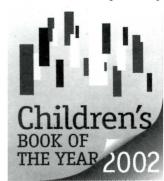
The first Askews Children's Book Award has been won by Anthony Horowitz's Point Blanc (Walker). Runners-up were Sharon Tai's Grandma You're Dead! (Bloomsbury) and Helena Pielichaty's Simone's Diary (Oxford).

At the Children's Book Award ceremony, left to right: Michael Foreman, Katharine McEwen, Allan Ahlberg, Malorie Blackman and Michael Morpurgo..

REGIONAL PRIZ

Lancashire Children's Book of the Year

Malorie Blackman's Noughts and Lancashire County Library Crosses (Doubleday) is the winner of the 16th Lancashire Children's Book of the Year Award. The runners-up were Tim Bowler's Storm Catchers (OUP), Melvin Burgess's Billy Elliot (Chicken House), Eoin Colfer's Artemis Fowl (Viking), Malachy Doyle's Georgie (Bloomsbury), William Nicholson's Slaves of the Mastery (Egmont), Philip Pullman's The Amber Spyglass (Scholastic), Bali Rai's (Un)Arranged Marriage (Corgi), Louise Rennison's Knocked Out by My Nunga-Nungas (Piccadilly Press)



The award was first presented in 1987

and Jacqueline Wilson's Vicky Angel (Doubleday). Year 9 (13–14 year old) pupils throughout Lancashire judged the award.

Portsmouth Book Award

The Portsmouth Book Award for the Longer Novel has been won by Benjamin Zephaniah's Refugee Boy (Bloomsbury). The Shorter Novel was won by Annie Dalton's Friday Forever (Barrington Stoke). They were judged by Year 8/9 (12–14 year old) pupils and Year 5 (9-10 year old) pupils respectively.

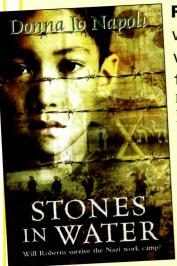
• OBITUARY • Mildred Wirt Benson

10 July 1905 - 28 May 2002

Using the pseudonym Carolyn Keene, Mildred Wirt Benson was the creator of Nancy Drew, the titian haired girl detective whose adventures were translated into 17 languages and sold millions of copies. She was paid \$125-\$250 a title, with no royalties. She wrote the first Nancy Drew title when she was 24 and had a career in journalism spanning 60 years. Benson was also an experienced pilot and aviation columnist. At the time of her death she was still writing a monthly column for the Toledo Blade.

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9. wish 9'd written...



Rachel Anderson on a war novel that is fast, vivid, economical and truthful ...

For anyone not yet mature enough to tackle Primo Levi, Stones in Water could be read as a juvenile substitute. A naive Italian is taken into captivity (Nazi slave-labour camp) where, against all the odds, like Levi, he survives, only to emerge into the chaos of a rapidly disintegrating central Europe. Here is the nightmare landscape which Primo Levi described so vividly, without infrastructure or frontiers, peopled by desperate

peasants, and disillusioned but volatile soldiery who don't care which side you're on.

The Venetian gondolier's son struggles to find a way home. And though his brutal experiences haven't destroyed him, they have changed him fundamentally, awakening him to political maturity and commitment.

Writing war fiction for younger people is as fiddly as laying a minefield. Too much realism (specially those long stretches when nothing happens except snow and starvation), and you've lost the reader's attention. Too ripping a yarn and you

glamorise. Too many warm friendships with fellow victims and it's a quick slide into the bunker of sentimentality. But Donna Jo Napoli, who researched her story at the Red Cross Archive in Geneva, has got it right. Fast, vivid, economical, truthful.

Stones in Water by Donna Jo Napoli is published by Oxford Children's Books (0 19 275169 7, £4.99 pbk). Rachel Anderson's latest book is **The Flight of the Emu** (Hodder Signature, 0 340 79939 0,



Chosen by Year 8 and 9 (12-14 year old) pupils from Glenmoor School, Bournemouth.

Thanks to Rachel Green, School Librarian

Junk

Melvin Burgess, Puffin, 0 14 038019 1, £5.99 pbk

I found the title of this book made me want to read it because if it was about drug users then I would like it because it deals with issues. The plot is about a boy called Tar and a girl called Gemma. Tar runs away from home and he wants Gemma to go with him. She ends up following him and they meet some new friends who are into some bad stuff and Gemma and Tar get mixed up in the trouble. Then more problems arise and Gemma and Tar have to find a way through.

The book is told from both Gemma and Tar's point of view. Each different chapter is about what they are thinking. The end of the story was both unexpected and expected. I didn't like the ending because it is sad and I prefer happy endings. The type of age group this book is aimed at is teenage. I would definitely recommend this book because it is a brilliant read and I couldn't put it down. I would give this book 10/10.

Laura Terry, Year 9









Left to right: Laura Terry, Samantha Webb, Emma Jamieson & Charlotte Seaton

Learning to Fly Victoria Beckham, Penguin, 0 14 100394 4, £6.99 pbk

I have always been a Posh fan. so I decided to give this book a go. The title had me confused and until I read chapter one I did not know what it was about. It was interesting, the reason why the title is Learning to Fly. Posh had always loved the film Fame and the words 'I'm gonna learn how to fly'. These told her one day she would be famous.

It tells you in the book how she was bullied in her childhood and the problems she had getting to where she is now. My favourite part of the book is when she was seeing David behind the back of Stuart, and the stages she went through getting around to telling her boyfriend 'no', because she is not posh, but shy. I would recommend this book to people aged 11+ because this

was an enjoyable book to read - it gave me dreams, tears and edge of the seat tension.

Samantha Webb, Year 9

Love That Dog Sharon Creech, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 5749 7, £4.99 pbk

The book is set out quite weirdly, it is set out like a poem. A brief summary of the book is that there is a boy called Jack, who in English, is doing poetry. He doesn't like this at all. When he starts reading poems they don't make sense to him, but when he writes his own he can relate to them. He writes about his dog. who died in a car accident. Then a poet comes into his school to talk about his poems and Jack becomes close friends with him.

My favourite character in the book was Jack. There weren't that many characters anyway. He was a sweet young boy, who

was very attached to his dog. who unfortunately died. I think the book is aimed at younger children than myself, such as 8 years+. I would definitely recommend it, as it was very easy and short to read, but it was interesting at the same time. I think that younger people would like it more than I did.

Emma Jamieson, Year 8

Secrets

Jacqueline Wilson, Doubleday, 0 385 60182 4, £10.99 hbk

Secrets is about this girl called Treasure and her step-dad (Terry) who keeps on beating her up. Her Nan takes Treasure to her house. Treasure wants to live with her Nan but her mum wants her back. So Treasure runs away and stays at her friend's house (India). And India loves Anne Frank's Diary, so she treats Treasure like Anne Frank. Then India's Mum finds Treasure out. And basically at the end Treasure lives with her Nan. The book was funny and exciting. It made me laugh in some bits. But it made me scared when Terry hit her and then she had a scar on her forehead. I recommend this book to 10-15 year olds because it is fun, exciting and sad so it makes you feel different in different chapters.

Charlotte Seaton, Year 8

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

Brian Alderson is Children's Book Consultant for The Times.

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

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

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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.

John Farndon is a non-fiction author and consultant.

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

Adrian Jackson is General Adviser -English, West Sussex.

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

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Rudolf Loewenstein is a Dominican friar working in a London parish.

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Shereen Pandit is a writer and teacher.

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

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

Rosemary Stones is Editor of Books for Keeps.

Sue Unstead was a publisher of children's non-fiction for 25 years and is now a freelance editorial consultant and writer.

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Books About Children's Books

The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in **English**

Edited by Victor Watson et al, Cambridge University Press, 832pp, 0 521 55064 5, £45.00 hbk

Since policy these days has to be made in triplicate, the slogan for literary guides must surely be 'analysis, analysis, analysis'. What group of readers is being addressed? What are the subjects that they may expect to find and how will those subjects be subdivided? How too will each entry be constructed in respect of factual information, editorial comment, and the clarification of relationships to other entries? What attention is to be paid to supplementary guidance in the way introductory explanations, captioned illustrations. bibliographies, indexes etc?

Where your guide is on a clearly delimited subject and is edited by authorities thereon (eg. Lofts & Adley's Men Behind Boys' Fiction, 1970) any problems that arise will be largely mechanical. When however you choose 'children's books in English' and determine that your timescale will stretch from the present century back to Alfred, two Aelfrics, and the Venerable Bede (did they really write in English?) then you may have problems of control. These are exacerbated if you decide to

include types of material that range from comics and baby books to young adult fiction, and from young adult fiction, technical (claymation; terms recontextualisation adaptations in various media, and that your geographical coverage will stretch to all relevant quarters of the globe. The intellectual demands of kneading all that stuff into a conformable whole are immense and, as editor-in-chief, Victor Watson has not made things any easier for himself by farming out American and Oceanic affairs to two sub-editors on whose expertise he seems to have placed complete reliance and by taking on submissions from something like 250 contributors. This was going to sea in a sieve with a vengeance.

The editorial problems posed by so gigantic a project necessarily entail equivalent problems for anyone trying to assess the result. I have already expressed strictures on the book's wayward and often ineffectual treatment of historical aspects* and I fear that the same adjectives must apply to its entries on more recent events which are probably of more interest to readers of BfK. How though can this be fairly exemplified in the limited space available?

The short answer is to point to the wholesale lack of consistency in the carrying out of the sort of editorial decisions noted at the start of this review. So far as recent children's books are concerned, it is tempting to

suggest that the material has been prepared for readers of no great knowledge or experience of the subject but who want to find out more information on matters which have caught their attention - facts about authors, or illustrators, or individual books, or genres of book etc ... Satisfaction, though, cannot be guaranteed. For one thing, what they want may not be there. I'm not just thinking of many incomprehensible omissions of authors, illustrators or titles (alas, Captain Slaughterboard, who appeared as a classic in BfK, puts down no anchor here), but rather of the way in which corners are cut with the items which are included. I noted this too in BfK, when I mentioned the crummy treatment of Joyce L Brisley, but that example was symptomatic of what happens when no clear policy exists over giving authors single entries, containing all information regarded by the Editor (often erroneously) as needful; giving author rubrics, which direct you to articles not on the author but on series written by him/her (Jacques; see Redwall); and author entries which spawn multiple separate entries on individual works. (How is this determined though? Half-a-dozen of Anthony Browne's picture books receive individual entries but only one of Charles Keeping's – who is a much more demanding and serious artist. Almost all Alan Garner's stories are given a buff-and-shine, while his towering colleagues - so much more

Peter Dickinson, William Mayne, Jill Paton Walsh - are shuffled off with embarrassing haste.)

The failure to mention, let alone discuss, major works from these authors (The Blue Hawk, A Game of Dark, Goldengrove) is a token too of the erratic critical dimensions of the book. Victor Watson shows himself in a number of articles to be a critic of keen, but not necessarily succinct, perceptions. These virtues however are double-edged for they also reveal a willingness to privilege some material unaccountably over much (three columns Borrowers?) and they show up the often threadbare efforts of many of his less talented contributors. Indeed, the gallant gesture towards oecumenism, which has necessitated delegating editorial control, has resulted in a fair cargo of the 'blandly descriptive' writing which Mr Watson was anxious to avoid. (Incidentally, readers unfamiliar with the growth of independent traditions in children's literature beyond our shores should have been supplied with 'national' summaries into which the likes of Brian Doyle, Colin Thiele and dozens more could be fitted. Is it not discrimination to give us articles on Afro-American or Maori literature for children and not American-American, or Australian, or New Zealandian?)

Much else disappoints. The boasted inclusion of material on 'contextual' topics is at best patchy - with



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It's a great addition to a School Book Event!

This year Children's Book Week runs from October 7–13th 2002. Many schools use it as an opportunity to focus on books, authors and reading. Some schools will hold Book Weeks at other times of the year. Readathon can be held at any time to fit in with your event, and is an ideal ingredient in any school literacy initiatives.

> As an avid reader myself, I love the idea of encouraging children to read while raising money that will make a difference to the lives of children and young people with cancer, and their families."

Fiona Walthall Chief Executive Sargent Cancer Care for Children illustration and book publishing particularly ill-served. What of the Children's Book Circle which is much more than just another society but is emblematic of a huge shift in public perceptions? Patrick Hardy, Grace Hogarth, Julia MacRae, Judy Taylor, Sebastian Walker ... you have lived in vain. The internal cross-referencing is half-baked (there is no other form of indexing) and the omission of bibliographical references is a disgrace. Hang it all, one of the functions of a guide is to direct your attention to where you can discover more if you want to. There is no help here; the Jumblies should not trust themselves to such a sieve.

NB Most examples here have been drawn from 'British' entries in the Guide. From my passing experience of US children's books I perceive that many similar defects can be found in coverage of that nation's production.

*Part of the judges' statements for the Harvey Darton Award in Newsletter 72 (April 2002) of the Children's Books History Society pp7-8.

The Rough Guide to Children's Books 0-5 years

272pp, 1 85828 787 1

The Rough Guide to Children's Books 5-11 years

*** 384pp, 1 85828 788 X

Nicholas Tucker, Rough Guides/ Penguin, £5.99 each pbk

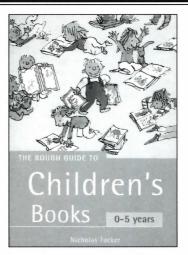
It is hard to believe that Tucker could

be responsible for anything rough, even a guide to children's books. So it proves. This is the familiar engaging Tucker, who wears his considerable knowledge lightly and puts it across with charm and reassurance. These are two little fat books, small enough to put in your pocket and consult in the bookshop or library. They are intended as a guide to the best in children's books for interested parents, and, apart from substantial reviews of individual titles (about 400 words), they are packed with sensible advice and anecdotal information about books and children, authors and illustrators, that would provide their readers with the background and confidence to move on to make their own choice and support their children in making theirs.

Grounded in child development, these guides are about shared excitement and encouragement, and sensitivity to the needs of the individual child. Tucker restrains the over enthusiastic parent and calms the anxious one.

He warns 'never to force books on babies when they are restless and not in the mood'. With older children in mind, he advises, 'However keen an adult may be about any particular is nearly counterproductive to try to insist that children read it too.' He tackles issues as they arise, writing about the possibly of therapeutic effect violence in nursery rhymes, or warning parents of a sensitive disposition of the 'earthy' humour in Babette Cole's books. It is all done firmly, with clarity and genial

Any adult or child who is already hooked by books cannot fail to be caught up in Tucker's enthusiasm. He is like a fun-loving old uncle out of a



Quentin Blake story, with his own collection of children's books, every one of which he remembers with affection and delight, and which he can't wait to share.

But the guides do have a slightly old fashioned air. The arrangement of the under fives guide, with separate sections on counting and alphabet books, suggests a curricular approach which is belied by its content, and the selections in both guides have a high proportion of classic titles. These are balanced in the under fives guide by more recent publications, producing an attractive mix, but they tend to overwhelm the older guide, particularly in the 5-7 and 7-9 age groups.

Although Tucker warns of the dangers of assigning books to particular age groups, this is the basis of the guides' arrangement. In the older guide, he is conscious of appealing to both 'keen readers' and 'less committed ones', but when you look at which books appear in which bands, you feel that it's the bookish child, who might read The Chocolate War or Lord of the Rings before they were eleven, who's much more in mind. This guide is more Baedeker than Rough: more concerned to make sure you don't miss one of the major monuments than to take you down the back streets to anywhere out of the way.

Tucker has an awareness multicultural themes, but gives much less attention to the needs of the reluctant reader or the dyslexic one. The biggest gaps, to my mind, come with his treatment of picture books and poetry. Picture books don't make it beyond the age of seven, except Asterix or Tintin, and the entire area of books for younger children beginning to read for themselves (and reluctant readers), which mix graphics and text, is overlooked. Although Tucker includes poetry for all ages, the preponderance of classic titles here seems even more apparent; which is a pity, considering the wealth of modern poetry for young readers.

For some parents and children, these guides may be just what they are looking for, and, for many families, I can't think of a better introduction for the 0-5s. I am less sure about the 5-11s. Here Tucker's selections will have more value and appeal to keen reading households, where his selections will act as a refreshing corrective to the publishing market's emphasis on the latest trend.

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

Don't Wake the Baby! **PICTURE BOOK** ***

Dawn Apperley, Bloomsbury, 32pp, 0 7475 5543 5, £4.99

Reviewed BfK 129, July 2001:

'Lily-Lu mischievously plays a variety of QUIET games around the sleeping baby. As the text gently builds up each fresh scene, the illustrations shows us disasters about to happen. A book that could be a noisy favourite toddler-hood throughout

Claydon was a Clingy Child

PICTURE BOOK

 $\star\star\star$

Cressida Cowell, Hodder, 32pp, 0 340 75724 8, £4.99

Reviewed BfK 134, May 2002:

'Claydon clings to his mother - to her leg to be precise, for it is there that he feels safest - Claydon's mum is an action woman. Cowell's cheerful, loosely structured pen and watercolour drawings suit the active life led by Claydon's mother, and the relatively minimalist text takes flight on occasion too, to coil itself around the matching illustrations.

5-8 INFANT/JUNIOR

Pip

POETRY

Tony Mitton, ill. Peter Bailey, Scholastic, 112pp, 0 439 98165 4, £5.99

Reviewed BfK 133, March 2002:

'Pip has fine accessible poems for children although I can do without the twee moments – poems about matchbox monsters, tiny elephants and dinosaurs and so on. The poetry I hear gets into the verse in more straightforward things, eg in poems like "Listening in Bed", "Insect", and "Pip". I like the way, in such poems as these particularly, Mitton's sometimes overly anticipatable rhythms get nudged about in response to the subject.

8-10 JUNIOR/MIDDLE

Living with Blindness

Patsy Westcott, 0 7502 4159 4

Living with Deafness

Emma Haughton, 0 7502 4160 8

NON-FICTION

Hodder Wayland 'Living with', 32pp, £4.99 each

Reviewed BfK 117, July 1999:

'In these two books we meet children and adults who have learnt to live with disability. The causes and different levels of blindness and deafness are explained, and in colour photographs we see people coping with the help of technology, special teachers, family and understanding friends. A glossary, an index and a list of organisations and their web sites add to the usefulness.

Living with Cerebral Palsy

Paul Pimm, 0 7502 4162 4

Living with Leukaemia

Patsy Westcott, 0 7502 4161 6

NON-FICTION

Wayland 'Living with', 32pp, £4.99 each

Reviewed BfK 120, January 2000:

'As in the other six books in the 'Living with' series, much good information is given in a positive, readable form. The photographs show clearly exactly what these health problems can mean to those who suffer from them, and some of the negative aspects of treatment are explained in a matterof-fact way. Excellent for hospital libraries and for upper primary/

lower secondary schools.'

The Birth of the Earth 0713653752

Life Finds its Feet 0 7136 5374 4

The Day of the **Dinosaurs** 0 7136 5451 1

The Stick and Stone Age

0 7136 5453 8

NON-FICTION

Jacqui Bailey, ill. Matthew Lilly, A & C Black 'A Cartoon History of the Earth', 32pp, £4.99 each

Reviewed BfK 131, November 2001:

'The journey from Big Bang to primeval soup is presented in cartoon format and in a chatty informal style that tackles both straightforward description and tricky concepts with equal ease. These are deceptively simple books with a huge amount of information presented in a fresh and imaginative wav.

10-12 MIDDLE/SECONDARY

Jade's Story

FICTION

Helena Pielichaty, Oxford, 160pp, 0 19 275164 6, £4.99 Reviewed BfK 129, July 2001:

'Jade finds herself having to adjust to new family circumstances. Her father, increasingly prone to depression, suffers a nervous breakdown and goes violently berserk, the prelude to a period in psychiatric hospital. It is during the visits which she and her mother make to him there that Jade begins to understand some of the many manifestations of the condition known as "madness"."

Adults Only

FICTION

Morris Gleitzman, Puffin, 192pp, 0 14 131443 5, £4.99 Reviewed BfK 132, January 2002:

'Jake, aged 12, is the only child on an

Australian island which his parents have set up as an "Adults Only" holiday resort, guaranteed child-free. Jake has had to spend his childhood in the shadows of concealment, since his visible presence would ruin business. The cruelty undergone by the ghost children he meets is of a different order. It derives from Australia's shameful record of institutional child abuse, some of it all too recent. This is a serious story with a rip-roaring surface of farcical misadventures, a curious blend that triumphantly.' but does.

Saffy's Angel

FICTION

Hilary McKay, Hodder, 224pp, 0 340 85080 9, £5.99

Reviewed BfK 133, March 2002:

'The odd one out in the Casson family is Saffron, who five years earlier found out that the other children were not her siblings but her cousins. Saffy is adopted, following her mother's death in a car crash. She has felt marginal ever since. The serious side of the story is the troubled thirteenyear-old Saffy's recovery of confident emotional membership of her madcap, loving family, a truthful, moving, comic, ultimately joyous journey of rediscovery. This is a novel to be grateful for.'

Mortal Engines

FICTION

Philip Reeve, Scholastic, 304pp, 0 439 97943 9, £5.99

Reviewed BfK 133, March 2002:

'It's a town eat town world and Tom has been brought up to believe that municipal Darwinism is a noble and beautiful system. He joins the celebrations as the great traction city of London speeds across the Out-Country gobbling up smaller towns in its path and recycling them for spare parts. Both imaginatively and intelligently conceived, there are no predictable outcomes in this tale where the characters convincingly in response to their

12+ SECONDARY

Slaves of the Mastery FICTION

William Nicholson, Egmont, 352pp, 0 7497 4901 6, £5.99 Reviewed BfK 129, July 2001:

'The juxtaposition of "Slaves" and "Mastery" in the title of Nicholson's complex novel prefigures the dualities of his fictional landscape. From these apparent contradictions Nicholson constructs a fantasy structured on the motif of the quest (here a sister's for her twin brother) and given expression in an everchanging kaleidoscope of movement, music and colour. There is an exotic cast of hundreds and there are numerous vividly realised set pieces. There is also, however, some very unappealingly sadistic violence, particularly in the form of public burnings, and an occasional overphysical emphasis arrogance. on male

REVIEWS Under 5s Pre-School/Nursery/Infant

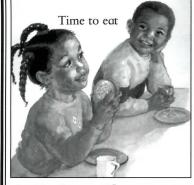
Let's Have Fun

Verna Wilkins, 1 870516 54 0

Let's Feed the Ducks Verna Wilkins, 1 870516 53 2

Let's Go to Bed

Simona Sideri, 1 870516 55 9



Let's Go to Playgroup Simona Sideri, 1 870516 56 7

Ill. Pamela Venus, Tamarind, 16pp, £3.99 each board

These three small format board books are part of an ongoing Tamarind series, dealing with simple concepts such as up, down, under, around etc, and typical of the stockin-trade of most publishers for the very young. What distinguishes these and makes them welcome is the fact that they are thoroughly multi-cultural and are filling a clear gap in the market.

Rosie's Holiday

Rachel Pank, Piccadilly, 32pp, 1 85340 622 8, £4.99 pbk

Rosie loves the security of her own home, garden, toys, and the cats next door. She does not wish to go away on holiday, especially as all the things she wants to take won't fit into the car. But of course the holiday is fun,

and soon Rosie does not want to go home. The exploratory joy of this small child, as she arrives home and rediscovers all her favourites, the garden, paddling pool, stars and sky, leaps from the page. She is delighted to be back! The text and warm, unpretentious illustrations capture a growing experience here.

Little Oops! 0 00 713236 0

Little Goal!

 $0\ 00\ 713234\ 4$

Little Suddenly! 0 00 713235 2

Little Boo!

0 00 713237 9

Colin McNaughton, Collins, 24pp, £3.99 each pbk

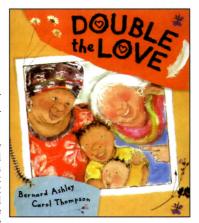
What an introduction for the very young to McNaughton's wonderful stories and pictures about Preston Pig and Mr Wolf! This small format 'Little' series, mirroring the full text versions, will delight the toddler and pre-school child. The illustrations are quite captivating, each leaving the reader to predict the outcome of encounters between Preston and Mr Wolf. The text is large and very simple and the illustrations tell so much more than the words. Older siblings familiar with these two characters will certainly be savouring the simplicity and mastery of the 'short story' in these little gems. Enormous fun.

Shark in the Park!

Nick Sharratt, David Fickling Books, 24pp, 0 385 60469 6, £10.99 hbk novelty

Through his telescope Timothy keeps seeing what looks like a shark's fin but it turns out to be – when the page is turned and a wider-angled view revealed - a cat, a crow and Timothy's

dad: not a shark in sight or is there? A story with all the child appeal you could wish for: a predictable, patterned rhyming text, peep holes, speech bubbles and a final twist in tĥe tale, or should I say, fin, together with Sharratt's characteristic zesty illustrations. It was a big hit with my audience of four- and five-year-olds who were enthusiastically joining in on the first reading. Go back as they did to the first page and take another



Double the Love

Bernard Ashley, ill. Carol Thompson, Orchard, 32pp, 1 84121 625 9, £10.99 hbk

'Blossom was a lucky girl. She had two grandmothers.' So begins this charming picture book. Not such an unusual state of affairs of course, but what is not mentioned in the text and what gives the story its underlying dynamic – is that one grandmother is black and the other white. One is a city dweller, the other lives in the countryside, and they meet for the first time when a party is thrown for Blossom's new brother. Thompson's spontaneous, carefree illustrations capture the warmth and humour of the occasion when initial awkwardness on the part of the two

grandmothers gives way, under Blossom's firm leadership, to a bout of riotous dancing and merrymaking, eventually involving the members of both families. Thereafter, when Blossom gets together with her grannies, she is guaranteed to have double the fun and double the love.

Hansel and Gretel

BIG BOOK

Retold by Rose Impey, ill. Peter Bailey, Orchard, 32pp, 1 84121 458 2, £12.99 pbk

Many readers will be familiar with Impey's lively retellings of popular traditional stories either from the original collection, The Orchard Book of Fairy Tales or, embellished with Peter Bailey's expressive line drawings, the small book editions of Clearly individual tales. publishers have targeted this big book version at teachers wanting literacy hour texts, as inside the front cover is a plethora of teaching and learning activities for use 'within and beyond the Literacy Hour' aimed at Years 1, 2 or 3.

Certainly some of the ideas, for example from the 'shared text work' or 'individual and group activities' are worth pursuing but surely we did those things long before the advent of the literacy hour and would anyone really want to trivialise this powerful tale by focusing on the ou phoneme or generating *est* rhymes? And when will children have time to discuss feelings and emotions - either theirs or those of the characters?

My Beak, Your Beak 0 385 60291 X

My Nose, Your Nose 0 385 60292 8

NON-FICTION

Melanie Walsh, Doubleday, 32pp, £10.99 each hbk

The theme of these 'concepts' books is similarities and differences.

Children are helped to notice the differences and similarities between animals in My Beak, Your Beak and between people in My Nose, Your Nose. Knowing the words 'similar' and 'different' and using them and using them appropriately helps clinch the concepts.

In My Beak, Your Beak animals of the same general species are sometimes different sizes, sausage dogs and Dalmatians, for example, but similar in an aspect of their behaviour - in this case both love chasing sticks. Or creatures might have different habitats - a penguin lives in the snowy South Pole while a robin is found in the garden but they both have pointy beaks. The children in My Nose, Your Nose have different eye colours but they all close their eyes when they go to sleep.

These books have a delightfully playful approach achieved by bright, bold illustrations and a clear simple text. Four to five year-olds would enjoy hearing an adult read the books out loud and talking about the

Infant/Junior

Fat Cat

James Sage, ill. Russell Ayto, Collins, 32pp, 0 00 198365 2, £9.99 hbk

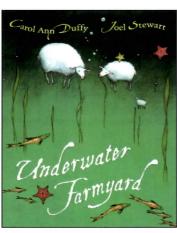
Children love a challenge, and the three neighbouring farmers in this story have a common problem - their cornfields are being devastated by mice. Farmers Big and Bluster set about building the perfect mousetrap. Here, the illustrations will intrigue any child, for contraptions built bristle familiar paraphernalia connected in whacky Heath Robinson style. There are lots of visual giggles whilst the mice chomp their way through the cornfields, laughing at the so-called mousetraps. But why does Farmer Smart have no mouse problem? This book is full of humour, with text and stylized illustrations complementing each other perfectly. GB each other perfectly.

wants them both to go to the dark wood. He sets out, well prepared for hazards in his life jacket, safety helmet and with his umbrella. But in spite of careful preparation for his physical journey it is the mental journey which he makes to overcome his fears which matters. With the help of greep he crosses the bridge leading to the wood wherein lie many of his anxieties. There he confronts a big fear, the turple, but emerges unscathed, and, we hope, with newfound confidence.

This is a book focused on helping young children to overcome fears, and would be best read with an adult who can explain that turple, crow and other grorkly worries climbing over the hedge in the penultimate opening are grork's dreads which he has successfully confronted. Cave's text is steady and calming, and Maland's use of crosshatched line and moody colour build tension nicely.

Underwater Farmyard POETRY ****

Carol Ann Duffy, ill. Joel Stewart, Macmillan, 32pp, 0 333 96063 7, £9.99 hbk



One Hundred Shoes

Tony Ross

one

handred

shoes

Tony Ross, Andersen, 32pp, 1 84270 107 X, £9.99 hbk

Ross has produced another winner! Sometimes picture books involving counting numbers or contrived, but this one just rattles along. 'Ow!' the tale begins. Centipede has hurt his toe. But which one? Having found it (at last) and kissed it better, Mum decides he ought to have some shoes, so off they go and buy fifty lefts and fifty rights. But what a long time it takes to put on his shoes the next day... This clever, witty book is very satisfying and each spread demands careful attention to detail! The text also offers lots of maths opportunities. GB

The Brave Little Grork

Kathryn Cave, ill. Nick Maland, Hodder, 32pp, 0 340 74678 5,

Grorks are naturally shy nervous creatures, so our little grork has to be brave when his friend, the greep, In the hands of Carol Ann Duffy and Joel Stewart, the unlikely subject of the underwater farmyard makes an astonishing and delightful picture book. The poet's skill, gentle humour, word play, and careful musical rhyme scheme are matched by pictures of ethereal balance, in which smiling sheep and pigs float by in a daft but perfect choreography. I wish I could quote it all, but here's one verse:

Under the deep wet meadows of the Blue A herd of sea-cows float and moo, Milked by a mermaid On a shell milk stool. The cows are smiling - her hands are cool!

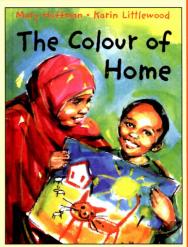
This is accompanied by illustration of the mermaid posed on her twisting shell, busily milking, with her hair flowing like a scarf, and the cow, with her ears at right angles to her head, in an expression of absolute ecstasy. The joy is repeated

Editor's Choice

The Colour of Home

Mary Hoffman, ill. Karin Littlewood, Frances Lincoln 32pp, 0 7112 1940 0, £10.99 hbk

Hassan, a refugee from Somalia, spends his first day at his new school in Britain. Everything is so different and it is hard for him to respond to friendliness from his new classmates. His imaginative teacher invites him to paint a picture and in this way Hassan is at last able to communicate the terrible things that happened to his family in Somalia when his home was burnt and his uncle shot. Hoffman's empathic text conveys the horror without it being overwhelming for a young age group and she also conveys hope as Hassan discovers the possibility of a new



home where he may feel safe. Littlewood's expressive, painterly illustrations are a sensitive response to this important story, one that came out of Hoffman's research with many refugee families.

knows there are no such things as

page after page, the poet and the artist's conviction and craft defying sense and logic and creating enchantment.

Man on the Moon: a day in the life of Bob

Simon Bartram, Templar, 32pp, 1 84011 445 2, £9.99 hbk

Bob is an ordinary guy with an extraordinary job. He gets up and has his breakfast and cycles off to work just like you or I might. It's even important that he gets to work for nine. But there the resemblance finishes, for Bob's job is to be the Man on the Moon. He keeps it clean and tidy and entertains passing tourist spaceships by doing handstands.

The fun of Simon Bartram's big, handsome picture book depends on the juxtaposition of the mundane and the extraordinary, and the clever interplay of text and picture. Bob aliens but readers may know more than he does. Bartram's bold, vivid illustrations draw on the iconography of 1950s' comic strips, where the conservatism of everyday life is invaded by dreams of space travel and visitors from other planets. This is Eagle meets The Truman Show. Before donning his space suit, Bob is a square jawed hero in a sleeveless pullover. Among the aliens he inadvertently brings to earth, you may glimpse one who has a striking resemblance to Ronald Reagan. Bartram knows his picture book illustrators, and the equally knowing reader will notice references to Anthony Browne. But this is much more than a retro-style homage, it is a book with graphic skill and child appeal that is a sheer pleasure to handle and look at. It may announce the arrival of a new talent among picture book creators.

Man on the Moon Simon Bartram

Billy the Bird / All **Because of Jackson**

AUDIO BOOK

Dick King-Smith, read by Sophie Thompson, BBC Cover to Cover, 1 hr 15 mins, unabridged, 1 85549 154 0, £8.99 tape

Billy the Bird, the story of a little boy's unlikely ability to fly up and away out of his cot – but always to return home safely – is one of Dick King-Smith's dottiest and most loveable. It shows what a good storyteller he is - even when he moves away from his trademark animals. Back in the more familiar animal territory, based on the true story of how animals reached Australia All Because of Jackson charts the adventures eponymous hero when he stows

away and sails off in search of a new life. Sophie Thompson reads both soothingly, making pleasing, undemanding listening.

Henry Pond the Poet

0 340 65700 6

Emily's Legs

0 340 85408 1

Dick King-Smith, ill. Russell Ayto, Hodder, 64pp, £3.99 each

In this pair of books, King-Smith shows that he has not lost his touch for writing simple yet enjoyable books for young readers. The plots are essentially straightforward with light touches of humour. As usual, King-Smith is able to drop in facts about the world of nature without ever seeming remotely didactic, and the illustrations are quirky and lend well to the text.

In Henry Pond the Poet, Henry Pond is a toad who writes poetry. How Henry achieves eventual success in wooing Victoria Garden-Pool occurs partly by luck as well as by using his wits. The lines of poetry that Henry writes will amuse young readers. In Emily's Legs, Emily turns out to be a natural athlete in the world of spiders until it is discovered that she has two extra legs! Although it is Not Her Fault, she is disqualified from the Spider Sports. But there is something special about her legs ...

Scritch Scratch

Miriam Moss, ill. Delphine Durand, Orchard, 32pp, 1 84121 409 4, £10.99 hbk, 1 84121 112 5, £4.99 pbk

Not a book for the sensitive, Scritch Scratch bravely goes where few



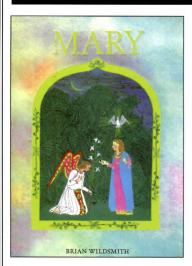
children's books have gone before to deal with the subject of head lice. The little louse who climbs into Miss Calypso's classroom decides that the teacher's cascading red curls will be the ideal home for the large louse family which soon arrives. The family

emigrates, to the heads of all the children in the class, and the scratching begins.

Durand uses flat colours and employs varying perspectives to provide overhead (sorry) views of the class as they scritch and scratch. Humans (and lice) are invested with plenty of character; the pupils behave much as any primary school class might, and the rather vague Miss Calypso looks suitably dreamy as she falls in love with the headmaster, Mr Trout, who volunteers to wash her curls. The text is dryly matter-of-fact, even though it deals with a frequently embarrassing problem.

The cartoon drawings on the endpapers show the development of head lice from nits to full adult. They look quite endearing! Despite its unusual subject, this is a delightfully witty and entertaining creation from a well-paired artist and author.

REVIEWS 8 Junior/Middle



Mary

Brian Wildsmith, Oxford, 32pp, 0 19 279076 5, £10.99 hbk

This is the latest in a series of picture books by Wildsmith with a religious theme. Drawing on gospel and apocryphal sources it tells the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Starting with her parents, Anna and Joachim, who are told by an angel that they will have a daughter whose name will be known in all the world, the book concludes with Mary's death and her assumption into heaven. In between most of the story is taken up with her role as the mother of Jesus, from his babyhood and childhood when she makes sure that he learns to read and write, to her presence at his crucifixion and ascension.

Each scene is framed in an archway of gold. Wildsmith's palette is bright, but at the final scene where Mary is crowned Oueen of Heaven and earth she is in the midst of a burst of vibrant colour in the style of earlier Wildsmith pictures. It is, as we would expect from Wildsmith, a book of great beauty, but not for the very young as it demands a degree of textual and visual maturity. VC textual and visual maturity.

The Invisible Boy

Sally Gardner, Dolphin, 112pp, 1 85881 840 0, £3.99 pbk

When Sam's parents win an all expenses paid trip to the moon, seemingly kind neighbour Hilda Hardbottom steps in to take care of Sam while Mum and Dad are away. But it is not only Hilda's bottom which is hard, so is her heart. When the Star Shuttle bearing Sam's parents vanishes in space, Mrs Hardbottom gets ready to claim a large amount of insurance money when they are declared dead. Rescue for Sam comes in the unlikely form of Splodge, a small alien who has made his first independent trip to earth. Splodge radios home to his parents who trace the missing Star Shuttle and assist in its return to earth. There are lots of very funny incidents during the course of all of this, especially due to Splodge's only partly successful attempts to make Sam invisible. Divided into short chapters and with text broken up by Gardner's lighthearted pen and ink sketches, The Invisible Boy has enough humour and action to keep less confident readers as well as assured readers turning the pages.

Teachers and librarians may, need to think before however, lending this book to children who have been bereaved, as the nub of the plot centres around the supposed death of Sam's parents. death of Sam's parents.

Dimanche Diller

128pp, 0 00 714164 5

Dimanche Diller in Danger

96pp, 0 00 714165 3

Dimanche Diller at Sea

96pp, 0 00 714166 1

Henrietta Branford, ill. Rachel Merriman, Collins, £3.99 each pbk



The Dimanche Diller trilogy by the late and much missed Henrietta Branford is again available. The first book won the Smarties prize in 1994, for the 6-8 years old category although I feel its plot twists, a multitude of bizarrely named characters and language may be named more suitable for a slightly older audience. All three books are pacy fairy tale reads. The first and lengthier book introduces our heroine, orphan Dimanche Diller. It tells of the wicked Valburga Vilemile's attempts to swindle poor Dimanche out of her inheritance by pretending to be her long lost aunt. Help comes in the form of Dimache's nanny, Polly Pugh, who becomes her guardian angel. In Dimanche Diller in Danger, Valburga's rather dim, but ultimately likeable nephew, Wolfie T Volfango, is introduced. He flies over from America, having been summoned by his evil aunt, to conduct a mission to kidnap Dimanche and demand a ransom, whilst Valburga is detained at Her Majesty's pleasure. This time there's no Polly Pugh to help out. Dimanche Diller at Sea finds plucky little Dimanche being pursued by a new enemy, Professor Verdigris. Dimanche has to find the one person who can help her get back the stolen deeds to her ancestral home, Hilton

Just one quibble; my class of 1994 were the Young Judges of the

Smarties Prize, when Dimanche Diller was one of the winners. One of the many reasons they liked the book was for its illustrations by Lesley Harker, scattered throughout the book. These have been replaced by 'Clarice Bean' look-alikes who do not clarice Bean look-alikes who do not suit the stories as well. Harker's illustrations had humour and warmth which is rather lacking in these more modern pictures. In the new versions, the illustrations are restricted to the beginning of each chapter.

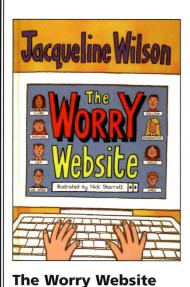


Strange Exchange

Pat Thomson, Barn Owl Books, 96pp, 1 903015 17 0, £4.99 pbk

Mike's foreign exchange student seems a bit strange and no wonder, he's not from France at all but another planet and he's on a mission to learn about humans. This sets the scene for some very funny situation comedy. The barn dancing episode for example - 'who won?' asks Pascal the alien – had me laughing out loud. It also allows for some very witty explorations of human behaviour whether it's the statements you make by choosing to use a mug or a teacup, the psychology of bullying or the importance of jokes. First published 1991 this is a very worthwhile reissue. Congratulations to Thomson too for inventing EncycloWhoopee

World 'Where Education is Fun for all the Family'. This whole chapter could now be read as a sharp piece of satire on the Millennium Dome. Lots of fun and lots to think about too.



Jacqueline Wilson, ill. Nick

Sharratt, Doubleday, 128pp, 0 385 60308 8, £10.99 hbk

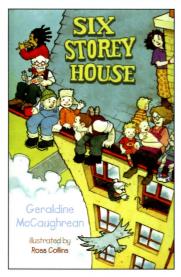
This well-written collection of linked stories is by the award-winning author of Double Act, The Illustrated Mum, and The Suitcase Kid. Cool teacher, Mr Speed, sets up a supercool Worry Website for his class. The children are invited to type in a worry and wait for good advice, which often comes from unlikely sources. Holly is worried about the prospect of Miss Morgan, the reception teacher, becoming her stepmother. Greg is worried because he secretly fancies a girl in his class, who turns out to be Holly. Claire's worry is about nightmares whilst low self-esteem is William's problem. He's not too bright and thinks he's useless at everything. Wheelchair bound Natasha would love to be able to take part in the school concert, but she can only communicate through computerised voice machine.

The themes cover familiar Wilson territory and, as you would expect from this author, are extremely well handled. A sixth worry, Lisa's, is written not by Wilson but by 12-yearold Lauren Roberts, the winner of a national competition. Her Worry Website story, about an abusive father, was chosen by Jacqueline Wilson herself, out of 15,000 entries. It is sensitively written and well deserving of publication.

Six Storey House

Geraldine McCaughrean, ill. Ross Collins, Hodder, 128pp, 0 340 85407 3, £7.99 hbk

From the opening sentence and its description of the Six Storey House standing 'like a potted palm: tall and



thin and brownly dusty' this is a joy to read. Geraldine McCaughrean has retold hundreds of fairy tales and folk tales and here she draws on those storytelling traditions to transform an apparently simple tale of a house and its six sets of inhabitants into a magical and hugely beguiling story.

The Six Storey House residents live separate lives, none of them entirely happily. Young Dexi, the book's central character, is friends with all of them except Mrs Groner who lives in determined isolation on the top floor. But by persuading Mrs Groner to move to another floor Dexi changes the whole house and with that the lives of everyone who lives in it: as the inhabitants of the house are shuffled from floor to floor they swap more than flats, while their different stories intertwine and reach their happy ever

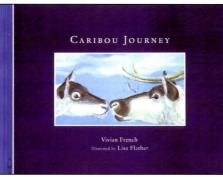
Ross Collins' illustrations perfectly complement the book reflecting its humour and inventiveness.

Caribou Journey

INFORMATION STORY****

Vivian French, ill. Lisa Flather, Zero to Ten, 32pp 1 84089 197 1, £11.99 hbk

This latest addition to the 'Fantastic Journey' series for children of about eight to ten years tells of the threejourney north through Canada to the shores of the Arctic Ocean made by female Caribou to their 'birthing grounds'.



This is a journey driven by instinct taking the animals through snow where food is hard to find, across strong flowing rivers and past predatory wolves. Children will be engaged by the sheer drama of the story; brutal details are not hidden when a small calf is devoured by a wolf 'a gush of scarlet stains the snow' and an old female is reduced to 'a heap of torn flesh'. There are gentler, poetic images too - the tread of many caribou beat the snow solid 'into a gleaming ribbon of white ice' and the steaming breath of the journeying animals 'hangs like a cloud above them'.

The book succeeds in communicating a particularly strong sense of place, partly through the well written text which mentions a specific lake (Contwoyto) and river (the Mara) in the northern tundra and partly through the fine pictures of the animals and the landscapes. All this, together with the annotated map in the frontispiece, makes reading the book a possible starting point for systematic science and geography work: young readers have been helped to start thinking about animal life and behaviour, migration patterns and the role of the predator in nature. There is enough content here to interest older primary school children who would also be extended by a sophisticated vocabulary and use of punctuation.

It is a convention of the information story genre that animals are given names: this gentle anthropo-morphism is likely to bring about a close empathy with the trials faced by Ragged Ear and her calf Soft Ear in a harsh environment.

Rainforest Insects and Spiders

0 7502 3507 1

Rainforest Mammals

0 7502 3453 9

NON-FICTION ****

Edward Parker, Hodder Wayland/WWF 'Rainforest', 48pp, £11.99 each hbk

By 'Rainforest' this series means Tropical Rainforest, the denizens and extent of which these two samples consider. Within the framework of the shrinking and increasingly exploited rainforest, each volume deals with a section of the animal kingdom, its diversity, adaptation to

habitat, and its situation and survival in the face of an increase in many kinds of human pressure.

Insects and Spiders shows us that 90% of these most successful animals live in our rainforests. Picturesque examples are not hard to come by and Parker ranges from the Hercules beetle to the thousands of 'micromoths' so small they have never been collected or named. Set



against this is the observation that rate of species-extinction amongst these creatures could be as great as 10,000 per annum. One might suppose, too, that new species will be evolving at a substantial rate.

While species loss among the anthropoids is seldom deliberately caused, with Mammals it's a different story. You can eat mammals and the increasing proximity of large population centres to rainforests has resulted, Parker tells us, in an upsurge in the trade in 'bush meat'. Add to that the traditional use of animal skins and other body parts and it's easy to see why conservatory measures ranging from habitat preservation to CITES are deployed, and why the efforts by such as WWF to stabilise sustainable usage of tropical rainforests are to be applauded.

Parker has provided an excellently objective and authoritative text which persuades end-to-end reading. Photographs, being also the end-to-end author's work, are consequently truly illustrative of his thesis - and are of excellent quality too. Further volumes in the series deal with Birds, People, Reptiles and Amphibians, and Trees and Plants. These should all be welcome additions to public and school libraries.

Chinwe Roy - Artist

NON-FICTION

Verna Wilkins, Tamarind 'Black Profiles', 48pp, 1 870516 59 1, £6.99 hbk

This biography of Chinwe Roy, aimed at 9-12 year-olds, is part of Tamarind's 'Black Profiles' series, aimed at providing positive role models for children. An account of her life from her early years in Nigeria to her current life in Suffolk, England, is interspersed with full-page colour reproductions of eleven of her paintings in both African and European styles, culminating with a magnificent full length commissioned portrait of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II - the high point of Chinwe Roy's career to date.

REVIEWS 10-12 Middle/Secondar

Everything to Live For

'Survivors', 96pp, 0 7502 3360 5, £9.99 hbk

This novel, one in a series called 'Survivors', is closely based on the catastrophic events which occurred in Omagh, Northern Ireland, in August 1998. It is difficult to quarrel with the intention of such a book, since it acts as a potent reminder of the resilience within the human spirit which allows it to overcome even the

most horrific of personal tragedies. Judged as a work of fiction, however, it is less than convincing. The story, often genuinely poignant in tone and detail, is of Lizzie, its 13-year-old Protestant heroine, who has imbibed

Stewart Ross, Hodder Wayland

IEW Talent

Girl in the Attic

Valerie Mendes, Simon & Schuster, 224pp, 0 689 83680 5, £4.99 pbk

When 13-year-old Nathan's parents split up the news comes as a shock. Ironically, his mum is an Agony Aunt but her skills appear to have deserted her as she springs more and more surprises on her son. The greatest of these is her plan to move to Cornwall and it is an angry Nathan who arrives in St Ives for a Christmas of house hunting. There is a cottage for sale and a girl who lives there, a girl who paints. As Nathan is drawn into her story and into her pictures he begins to resolve his conflicting feelings about his parents and reach out with love to his new friend. Mendes is not a new writer for children but this is her first full length novel. She has an



acute ear for dialogue and she creates a strong and heady sense of place as Nathan experiences the burgeoning of first love. A fine fiction debut. RS

some of the prejudices of her particular kind of upbringing and who, following her desperately sad experiences in the bombing which devastates her home town, is forced to reconsider some of her assumptions. But the character-isation throughout the novel is thin, the complexities of the situation are – perhaps inevitably in a children's 'Ulster troubles' novel – over-simplified and the writing marred by unlikely dialogue and inappropriate imagery.

Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging

AUDIO BOOK ***

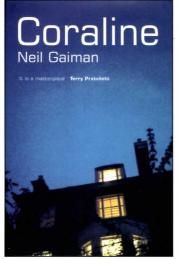
Louise Rennison, read by the author, BBC Cover to Cover, 3 hrs 48 mins, unabridged, 1 85549 166 4, £8.99 tape

Louise Rennison's own reading of teenage Georgia Nicolson's diary is a triumph. Miraculously she sounds convincingly like a teenager, capturing perfectly Georgia's extreme mood swings from elation to despair as she may – or may not – have been noticed by the Sex God, tangled with the cat Angus or improved her looks (not!) with a pair of tweezers. Georgia's diary, revealing her selfabsorption, interspersed with flashes of kindness and self-mockery, is a delight.

Coraline

Neil Gaiman, Bloomsbury, 176pp, 0 7475 5853 1, £9 99 hbk

Echoes of many earlier fantasies may be heard by readers of Coraline Through the Looking-Glass, for instance, or Masefield's The Box of or Catherine Delights. Storr's Marianne Dreams. But such is the originality and power of Gaiman's splendid novel that future reviewers may find themselves noting 'echoes of Coraline'. Rarely has a child's rash crossing to a parallel world been managed with such nightmarish conviction. Coraline, bored stiff at the end of the summer holidays, trapped by bad weather and amiably neglected by two caring but busy parents, finds her way through the wall to the flat next door. It is (or seems at first) an exact copy of her



own, but sinister differences soon reveal themselves. Another mother holds power in this new world. She seems loving and indulgent, but soon proves hungry, menacing and evil. Coraline, a girl of spirit and resource, rescues not only herself but her true parents and the souls of three dead children from a chilling entrapment. When the battle is not quite won, one of the children tells her, 'Be wise. Be brave. Be tricky.' Coraline is all these things, and emerges victorious. Sometimes funny, always creepy, genuinely moving, this marvellous spine-chiller will appeal to readers from nine to ninety.

Spiggot's Quest (Book One of The Knights of Liöfwende)

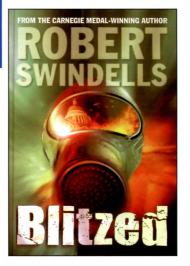
Garry Kilworth, Atom Books,

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320pp, 1 904233 01 5, £5 00 pbk Spiggot is a boggart, or fairy blacksmith, and his quest does not officially begin until the penultimate chapter of this book, which is clearly intended to inaugurate yet another multi-volume saga about the deeds of mortals, fairies and animals in some parallel world both like and unlike our own. The market for this genre is surely getting overcrowded. Newcomers need to be exceptional, and Spiggot's Quest is not. It is lively, entertaining and readable, but

nothing more than a run-of-the-mill account of stirring deeds in Liöfwende, where comic heroism is the order of the day.

Liöfwende exists in parallel to our Mortaland, and the book's two most engaging characters, an amorous modern teenager called Jack and a world-weary rat called Kling, have evidently been dispatched there after meeting a sad fate in Mortaland, caused respectively by a motorbike accident and a rat-trap. Whether they will ever return remains to be seen. Meanwhile their fate is to accompany Spiggot on his mission to deliver a new suit of golden armour to the fairy King Cimberlin. As comedy the book is quite rewarding, thanks to these two. As chivalrous adventure, however, it is just a string of disconnected episodes. Like the book itself, most of them do not end so much as fizzle out.



Blitzed

Robert Swindells, ill. Robin Lawrie, Doubleday, 176pp, 0 385 41042 5, £10.99 hbk

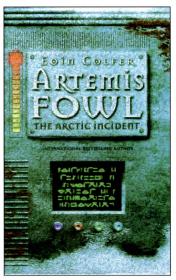
A time-slip into London in the Blitz is occasioned by a visit to Eden camp in Yorkshire. World War II mad George Wetherall learns that there was more than the Dunkirk Spirit of popular myth – there was also deprivation, loss, pain and those who went through the pockets of their own dead to steal ration books and other valuable papers.

The pace is rapid and reader friendly, the style of George's narrative is utterly engaging and full of pageturning suspense. Swindells has written another novel well worth enthusiastic promotion. My wife has already pinched it for her Year 6 class.

Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident

Eoin Colfer, Puffin, 304pp, 0 670 89963 1, £12.99 hbk

Few heroes in children's fiction can boast that by the age of thirteen they contributed, under pseudonym Doctor F. Roy Dean Schlippe, an article to The Psychologists' Journal. But, then, Artemis Fowl is no ordinary hero. In this, his second outing, he finds himself joining forces with previous arch-rival, Holly Short, as they travel to the Russian Arctic to find the father whose apparent death he cannot



accept: as a quid pro quo he will assist Holly in confronting the machinations of the B'wa Kell goblin triad, who are being supplied with weapons by humans. The pace, plotting and humour are as lively and clever as in Colfer's earlier Artemis novel, the technological gadgetry as impressively inventive and the onslaught on traditional Irish myth and legend continues vigorously. But, most interesting of all perhaps, are the changes being hinted at in 'criminal mastermind' Artemis himself and his attitudes. He is, in more senses than one, a boy on the



Otto and the Flying **Twins**

Charlotte Haptie, Hodder, 320pp, 0 340 85593 2, £10.99 hbk

The Karmidee are a people diversely gifted with magical powers, and once they lived safely and secretly in their City of Trees, ringed by protective mountains. Then an earthquake allowed human beings to break in and occupy the land, forcing the Karmidee to the fringes of their own city. Still their magic survived, and after the mountain walls were closed again to all intruders, the human settlers came to accept some magical things as normal. Now a Minister for Modernisation has taken power in the city, recruiting a secret police to enforce Normality, and the Karmidee

are threatened with reduction to a freak show for a new wave of human outsiders. This is the story of their fight for survival.

A mixture of humour and extravagant action, this attractive fantasy is accessible to quite young readers simply as an adventure story. But it is a very thoughtful book, and underlying its invention and suspense are other layers of meaning. The Karmidee stand for the natural world, overrun by human spoliation, or for indigenous peoples like the Native Americans, subjected to white colonisation. Certainly the book depicts humans unappealingly, as destroyers of magic, and encourages children to respect 'all things counter, original, spare, strange', in the human world of so-called 'normality'.

Bill Gates: Computer Legend

NON-FICTION

Sara Barton-Wood, Hodder Wayland 'Famous Lives', 48pp, 0 7502 3883 6, £5.99 pbk

useful addition to Wayland's 'Famous Lives' series, this pictorial biography charts the inexorable rise of computer whizz-kid Bill Gates, whose programming skills and business acumen enabled him to become head of a multi-billion dollar business. Much of the factual information can be found on Microsoft's own website, but Barton-Wood here fleshes out the story with details of Gates' upbringing and his extraordinary sense of timing in

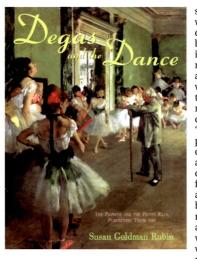
seizing the moment and dropping everything, including a place at Harvard, to develop a program that was to revolutionise computer usage forever. Plenty of first-hand quotes from Gates and his contemporaries enliven the story, while photographs show Gates' own transformation from geeky bespectacled nerd to golfing chum of ex-presidents. Much is made of Gates' role as benefactor on a grand scale to education and health programmes in the third world. Less is made of the hostility that Microsoft has attracted through its dominance of the software market. A useful glossary and date chart are included as well as websites and other sources of information.SU

Degas and the Dance: The Painter and the Petits Rats, Perfecting **Their Art**

NON-FICTION

Susan Goldman Rubin (in association with the American Federation of Arts and the School of American Ballet), Harry N Abrams, 32pp 0 8109 0567 1, £12.95 hbk

The author's interest in and commitment to dance led to her study of the work of Edgar Degas, the painter who brought to life the efforts of young ballet dancers at the Paris Opera in perfecting their skills. The resulting book has much to offer both aspiring dancers and young people with more than a superficial interest



in drawing and painting. Indeed the book affirms Degas' belief that learning to dance and learning to paint both require exceptional effort and investment of time. Just as the dancers repeated the same positions again and again - so Degas drew the same poses again and again.

There were many examinations and dancers were ruthlessly rejected if they failed to meet the exacting standards. Two of the plates show Degas' paintings of the nervewracking moments before the test -Dance Examination (1880) and Waiting (1882). The author comments 'Degas noticed everything - he understood the ballerinas' jitters ... but he also captured the thrill of a

successful performance.' The book will have particular appeal for young enthusiasts in the 11-14 age range, but it will also be of considerable interest to some younger and older readers. The high quality illustrations alone, thirty reproductions of Degas' work in oil, pastel and pencil, make this a book worth owning. But there is much in the text too for aspiring dancers; the story of the lives of the 'petits rats' – the very young dancers practising day after day at their rond de jambe, frappé, attitude and arabesque - makes us marvel at their determination and dedication. And for children interested in the way an artist sets about making marks and building a painting using different methods and techniques this will be a fascinating read. For Degas, pastel was 'the powder of a butterfly's wings'; sometimes he bleached his paintings in sunlight to soften the colours or even blew steam over the paper to make the drawing 'look smeared'.

We also get a strong sense of the sort of person Degas was: the author makes clear the artist's human sympathy and respect for the young dancers ('most of them are poor girls doing a very demanding job'), his endearing untidiness in his studio and his enjoyment of singing arias from his favourite operas while he painted. The many direct quotations add energy to the text. 'Drawing is not what one sees, but what one can make others see' reflected Degas. The two-page biography of the artist and the bibliography encourage further research.

$REVIEWS\ 12$ + ${f Secondarv}$

Crazy Games

Sandra Glover, Andersen, 160pp, 184270 066 9, £9.99 hbk This novel has computer games

which become fascinatingly real, teenage boy-girl relationships, child abuse, bullying - and all in a school setting. Brad loves the realism of the new game, 'borrowed' from Colford as some payment for saving him from the worst of the bullying at school. It emerges that Colford's father is providing the games as some recompense for what at first seems to be just a lack of care but is gradually revealed as something worse. Colford is taken over by his own fantasy world and, in the climax, Brad has to deal with a more shocking reality. There are interesting themes of people 'using' others in a range of settings and Glover tells an exciting story but there seems to be too much for one book, leading to more telling than showing, a mixture not a compound.

Bend it like Beckham

Narinder Dhami, based on the original screenplay, Hodder Bite, 176pp, 0 340 86094 4, £4.99 pbk

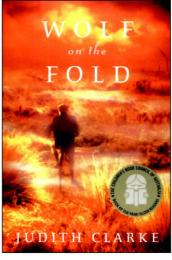
Doubtless many young people who read this novel will already have seen the film on which it is based. Many of my Asian/African friends found the film hilarious and look forward to reading the book.

Jess, a British girl of Asian descent, fresh from A-level studies, loves

football. Jess has two problems, though. Firstly, she is a girl who wants to play football and secondly, her family not only expects her to become a little woman, learning to make *aloo gobi* and behave in a manner conducive to securing a nice Indian boy for a husband, but to become the modern version of that stereotype - a little woman with an education and a topnotch career as a solicitor.

Bend it pokes gentle fun at the community which lies at its heart. The book is as filled with Indian family stereotypes as a Woody Allen film is with Jewish ones. Of course, as in Allen's films, here the stereotyping is done by an insider - and only an insider is presumably allowed to send up a group, be it a religious, gender or racial one, with impunity. In addition, an insider gets laughs based on the degree of accuracy of the sendup. Such stereotypes invariably receive a split reaction. Some find it funny. Others think that such stereotypes are humiliating to that community.

The book does, however, also have interesting and elements, not least of which is the fact that an Asian girl is an ordinary everyday heroine. The plot itself is interesting in that Jess not only wants to do something different with her life, but to do something utterly and completely different. Her goal (ahem!) is one which even her English-descended friends might find hard to achieve. Other issues might have been delved into more deeply - Jess's best friend Tony is gay, for example, but this is not explored



Wolf on the Fold

Judith Clarke, Allen & Unwin, 180pp, 1 86508 796 3, £5.99 pbk

Wolf on the Fold is a hopeful journey: six vignettes which form a living tableau of family life from 1935 to the present day. These memorable depictions of domestic scenes are vehicles for optimism, continuity and renewal.

They are ambitious in their historical perspective, spanning the Depression, Amin's expulsion of the Asian heritage population from Uganda and the Israeli-Arab conflict but they are far more than a factual record. At the centre of each story is a reminder of the capacity to reach beyond the horrors of poverty and

conflict to find a way of thinking which will carry protagonists through the problems they face in coming to terms with the unpredictability of the human condition.

These moments are tellingly etched into the narrative: Kenny's focused calm and careful stillness during his encounter with a murderer saves his life; Raj's insistence on talking about the baby sister murdered by Amin's troops restores her to her proper place in family history; Gabriel's stubborn determination to buy figs in order to cling on to normal routines brings him and his mother to an Arab market in Jerusalem at the height of the conflict: here are the gifts of an accomplished writer. These momentous emotional stillnesses are prompts for lifelong learning – lessons to be passed down which speak to succeeding generations.

Wolf on the Fold is wholly absorbing filled with memorable characters with more than a hint of the skeletons in all our family cupboards. This is a book which should be read - for its humanity and narrative grace, but most of all as a testament to the power of the human spirit.

The Xenocide Mission

Ben Jeapes, David Fickling Books, 400pp, 0 385 604122, £10.99 hbk

The year is 2153 and in the outer domains of space the Xenocides are plundering an observation station: retaliation is in the hands of a Lieutenant Joel Gilmore, his team of humans and an extra-terrestrial species of quadrupeds known as Rusties From this hasic confrontation Jeapes creates a dense narrative in which matters of political, sociological and cultural interest assume significant roles in the numerous power struggles in which the various groups of protagonists engage. The humorous portrayal of the relationship between Gilmore and his Rustie companion, Boon Round, provides some welcome light relief, though, overall, the size of this volume, its large cast and convoluted plotting and its fondness for the jargon of futuristic technology will almost certainly limit its appeal to the existing science fiction enthusiast.

D-Day

Sean Sheehan, 0 7502 3567 5

Hiroshima

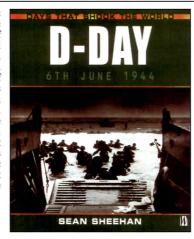
Jason Hook, 0 7502 3573 X

NON-FICTION

Hodder Wayland 'Days That Shook the World', 48pp, £11.99 each hbk

Here are two samples from the publishers' 'high-drama series' publishers' 'high-drama series' looking at 'momentous days in the last century when great and terrible things transpired in 24 hours' to 'leave an impact... for decades afterwards'.

It was the build-up to D-Day that had the greatest impact on me as a small child - suddenly the Cheshire lanes were filled with columns of soldiers, marching almost noiselessly on rubber soles. They were American, they were black, and they habitually smiled (probably at my bubblecurled sister). It was a shock, then to read that British military authorities had asked the U.S. not to send black troops to join the invasion force. Sheehan's book begins with this 'friendly invasion' before going on to



a day-by-day countdown to June 6th and an hour-by-hour account of that longest day. Contemporary photographs dominate a dense text and display the determined hobnailed British soldier at his unsmiling, up-against-it grittiest. Here is a workmanlike documentary of the beginning of the end of WWII extrapolated into the development of

The end of the end of WWII (and the beginning of the Cold War) was signalled by the obscenity of Hiroshima. Hook provides a chillingly impartial account of the political and military background to the dropping of Little Boy (only 3 out of 55 hospitals remained in Hiroshima) and its repercussions (which are still resonantly with us) through Bikini Atoll, Aldermaston marches, Cuban missile crisis and Doctor Strangelove.

This is a pair of worthy companions to a serious look at the Second World War and its legacies, and we all have to live with them.

The Diary of a Teenage Health Freak

176pp, 0 19 910905 2

The Diary of the **Other Health Freak**

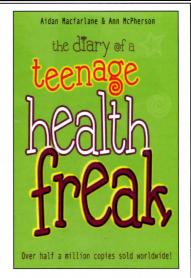
192pp, 0 19 910904 4

INFORMATION STORY ***

Aidan Macfarlane and Ann McPherson, ill. John Astrop, Oxford, £4.99 each pbk

It's odd to realise that an entire new generation of Peter and Susie Paynes has grown up in the fifteen years since the appearance of the first of these titles. In between, there's been the TV series, teen heroes have come and gone, and the teenage reading market has been flooded with diaries that deal in a light-hearted way with the anxieties and excitements of the adolescent years.

The presentation has lost its novelty, it's true. The diary format, the mixture of fact and fiction, and the use of a variety of other formats within the book – magazine articles, questionnaires, even school test sheets - are now very familiar. But Peter and Susie have moved on too. They are using mobile phones and into texting. Susie, at least, is thinking about body piercing. The books have a back-up website for really anxious readers to consult. But even more important than their updating are the books' enduring qualities, particularly the skill with which the authors, both experts in child and adolescent health, get their message across. It's done with empathy and wit, mixing plain speaking with careful explanations that bring in all the proper technical terms. The books run the gamut of teenage preoccupations, from acne, through animal rights and exam stress, to eating disorders and sexually



transmitted diseases. They treat them all with a seriousness that shows an understanding of the distorted scale of teenage terrors, when a zit on the chin can seem like a major tragedy. Against these horrors, they offer clear information and wise advice, and a comedy of the kind of errors that any teenager can make, putting everything into reassuring perspective.

It's possible to read the books from first page to last as a gentle, witty tragi-comedy, picking up all sorts of useful information and advice on the way. It's also possible, if you want to remind yourself of what Chlamydia is, or how to get through your exams, to consult the indexes and go straight back to what you want to know. Either way, these titles still have a place. And that's probably face down, open on an interesting page, on the floor by the bed, next to the orange peel and the mug with the congealed hot chocolate dregs.

condary/Adult *REVIEWS 14*

Secrets

TA Blezard, Livewire, 192pp, 0 7043 4977 9, £5.99 pbk

Briony's step-father Colin beats her mother - and Briony, too, on occasion. Paralysed by fear and torn by loyalty to her mother and a desire to live her own life, she remains silent increasingly withdrawn from her friends and unable to confide in her boyfriend Ian. When Colin's attacks finally hospitalise her mother, Briony visits an interactive web site devoted to domestic violence to get the advice she so desperately needs. She finds the courage to confide in her closest friend and to persuade her mother to consider leaving her home and Colin. The book ends with Briony and her mother about to make a new and uncertain beginning.

The power of this novel lies in its characterisation and utterly believable dialogue. Briony's inner turmoil - her anger, guilt, despair and loneliness - is captured accurately and with conviction. Bully and victim are chillingly credible, perfectly realising the tension between unreasonable behaviour and excessive appeasement. Secrets provides both advice and warning: secrecy can only protect the abuser but abandoning it is complex and dangerous. The courage needed to leave a violent domestic situation is almost greater than that needed to endure it - but it is the only commodity which will buy a better emotional place and a chance of rebuilding the self-esteem which victims of abuse so often lack. VR

The Atlas of **Endangered Species NON-FICTION**

Richard Mackay, Earthscan, 128pp, 1 85383 874 8, £11.99

Before listing the species involved, Mackay wisely introduces the planetary situation in which this endangerment' occurs, discussing evolution ends endangerment starts and how they overlap. An examination ecosystems as habitats follows and the 'Fragile Regions' of the globe receive particular attention.

World maps in abundance follow, each devoted to a class of animal or plant (e.g. primates, big cats, seabirds, fish) and quantitatively the illustrating extent endangerment throughout the planet. In each case a brief text explains the characteristics of each class and highlights noteworthy reasons for and examples of endangerment. Conservation issues

ranging from animal biodiversity to plant and animal trading are then discussed and mapped before a country-by-country league table of threatened species and protected ecosystems is appended.

This is not a book for the casual browser but a useful aid to research by the already-informed student, teacher or lecturer - staffroom rather than school library.

Oxford Student's Dictionary

NON-FICTION ***

Robert Allen and Andrew Delahunty, Oxford, 1232pp, 0 19 910729 7, £8.99 hbk

Oxford's student dictionary is squarely aimed schoolchildren up to A-levels, and it largely hits its target. Robust and compact, it is comprehensive enough for most purposes. Definitions are concise and clear and type design is clean. It sensibly includes a wide range of scientific terms, clearly defined, to help students encountering technical terms on science courses. It is also fairly up-todate in its inclusion of new words including information technology terms such as FTP, though it is left behind by such now common words as webcam. Like most school

dictionaries, it scrupulously avoids all sexual and drug slang, making it easy and safe for parents and teachers to recommend - although it is arguable that education on sex and drugs may not be helped by this selfcensorship. A potentially useful feature is the inclusion of synonyms, though the suggested alternatives they include for what they say is the overused word 'nice' - friendly, considerate, suggest it may not be so overused after all. I could say this is a really nice dictionary. Friendly and considerate really don't cut it at all - a new sense of cut which, by the way, they miss. All in all, though, a reliable word companion for school.

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

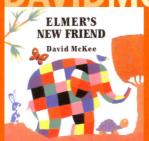
Mary (see p26)

Degas and the Dance (see

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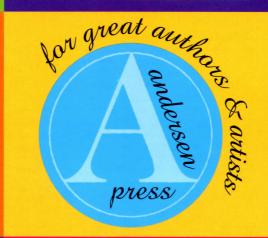
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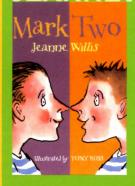
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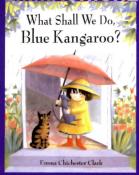
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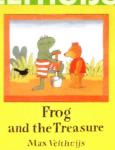


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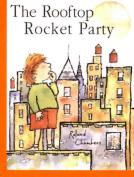


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CLASSICS IN SHORT No. 35 Brian Alderson

THE WORLD OF PETER RABBIT (Sorry, Peter... that's what they call it)



I am sorry to say that Peter was not very well during the evening

talk about a bad-fur day - and all on account of those publicity people dragging him off to celebrate his hundredth year as a full-published bunny; and, coincidentally of course, jack up their marketing campaign for Mr Douglas Martin's typographic revivification of all Miss Potter's 'little books'.

He had been set upon

by intrusive journalists who wanted a faceto-face interview between him and the great-grandson of the villainous McGregor, and by publicity girls who insisted that he hold up a board labelled (19) to ensure the preservation of their lucrative trade-mark rights.

Worst of all,

he had been asked to autograph copies of a huge book by (was it?) a Mr Darling Kindersley. Pouf! No darling he. It proved to be some of the vulgarest exploitation that a poor bunny had so far been subjected to and believe me, there'd been plenty of that. (Did you know that all those hundred years ago one Mr Warne, or another, had forgotten to copyright him in the United States, and from then on it had been Open Season for blue-coated bunnies over there. Beyond number are the travesties of his tale, from the first ever attempt by a Mr Altemus - a fearsome ugly affair - to retellings in anthologies, to adaptations in school readers, to novelty and pop-up books, and to reillustrated versions by all the worst artists of the day. Darling Mr Kindersley's Ultimate Peter Rabbit (compiled by an editorial team of nine people) was certainly the ultimate in ad hoc book-making, but this time it was British.) 'Hang the camomile tea,' said Peter and went to bed with a lot of something more soothing to a put-upon rabbit.

I wasn't present myself

to witness these indignities but heard about them later when I took a pipe of rabbittobacco with Squirrel Nutkin down at Mrs Tittlemouse's place (outside, naturally, since it was a designated smoke-free domicile). Nutkin had long ago given up riddles in favour of literary journalism, and I believe he's currently an advisor to Tessa Jowell. He'd also reached an accommodation with Old Brown - who had been Professor of Media Studies at the University of Keswick - and he joined our conversazione along, of course, with Mrs T's lodger, Mr Jackson, that cynosure of Johnsonian criticism.

that Dougie Martin's re-engineering of 'the little books' was the most elegant and coherent that had yet been achieved - and indeed that Peter should not grumble since his tale had received superior attention and was now to be had, as never before, with four illustrations which had been dropped from the book in 1903 and two never previously published there.

But Mr Jackson had reservations

about the entire policy of reducing Miss Potter's stories to a single standard format, even though it was something that had occurred in her lifetime and presumably with her sanction. 'I am sufficiently aged,' he said, 'to know that it was not ever thus. Why,

THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT



BEATRIX POTTER

sir, Miss Moppet and A Fierce Bad Rabbit were first designed to be issued as panoramic displays, but the booksellers would not have them, and we are now subject to large imposts if we want copies in that early state. Look too at those village tales The Pie and the Patty-pan and Ginger and Pickles. These were first promulgated in larger format with different bindings, as too was The Roly-Poly Pudding ('her masterpiece' according to Mr Graham Greene). Is there not, sir, a degree of Procrusteanism in compressing these works into pre-designed uniformity? And as for Little Pig Robinson, why he has never been presented to the British public with all the illustrations that Miss Potter made for his first ever appearance in Philadelphia' (also in large format).

'Yes,' said Nutkin,

'and is that not paradigmatic [you can see he was a literary journalist] - is that not



Mr. McGregor was quite sure that Peter was somewhere in the tool-shed, perhaps hidden underneath a flower-pot. He began to turn them over carefully, looking under each.

Presently Peter sneezed -"Kertyschoo!" Mr. McGregor was after him in no time,

paradigmatic of the way in which her oeuvre has come to be seen as monothematic rather than as the wondrously diverse performance that it is? I recall how dismayed young Peter was when he discovered he was to be the unwitting symbol of her work. "What's all this with The World of Peter Rabbit," he used to say, "or with Peter Rabbit and Friends. My world lies between the sand-bank and old McGregor's garden and you may read of it in the tales of Benjamin Bunny and those Flopsies. It extends (very elastically) to Bull Banks and Oatmeal Crag for our terrifying but glorious adventure contra Mr Tod, and we are occasionally found down at Ginger and Pickles's, but what on earth do I have to do with the tailor of Gloucester, or Tom Thumb and Hunca Munca in the dolls' house, or that rabble of hedgehogs, frogs, ducks, wood-mice, squirrels, rats (ugh!) and dogsancats (you well know how I get on with *them*)? These are not 'my world' and few of 'em are likely to be 'my friends'. But there – we are all at the mercy of The Market."'

'That is so,'

said old Brown sagely. 'People of my profession of course cannot do without The Market. How could Media Studies exist without the flotsam and jetsam of ceramic figurines, nursery tea-sets, bath-books and jigsaws, ballet dancing, movies, and television series on which we exercise our hermeneutic skills. But (tell it not elsewhere) these things are of little consequence when set beside the craftsmanship of Miss Potter, who made every story its own story and would have no truck with formulaic repetitions.'

We debated the genius

of these tiny gem-like and, above all, individual tales and, like many other disputants, differed over our favourites. But how can one choose between the varied delights and satisfactions of such incomparables as Two Bad Mice, or Jemima Puddle-Duck, or Mr Tod, or Pigling Bland, or Samuel Whiskers ...? Returning home in the moonlight, I remembered that Miss Potter had once named her favourite as the original, uncut Tailor of Gloucester; for me though there was a little-regarded masterpiece at the other end of the narrative scale - the panorama that (thanks to the booksellers) never appeared, but which eventually came out as a book with its delicious manuscript drawings in 1971: The Sly Old Cat. But you won't find it in 'The World of Peter Rabbit'.

Frederick Warne have published 'The World of Peter Rabbit' as a complete (and completely redesigned) edition of the 23 'original tales', £115 as a boxed set, or £4.99 for individual volumes. The Ultimate Peter Rabbit: a visual guide to the world of Beatrix Potter is published by Dorling Kindersley at £14.99.

The illustrations are taken from The Tale of Peter Rabbit published by Frederick Warne (0 7232 4770 6, £4.99).

Brian Alderson is President of the Beatrix Potter Society. Membership details from Jenny Akester, 9 Broadfields, Harpenden, Herts. AL5 2HJ.