

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

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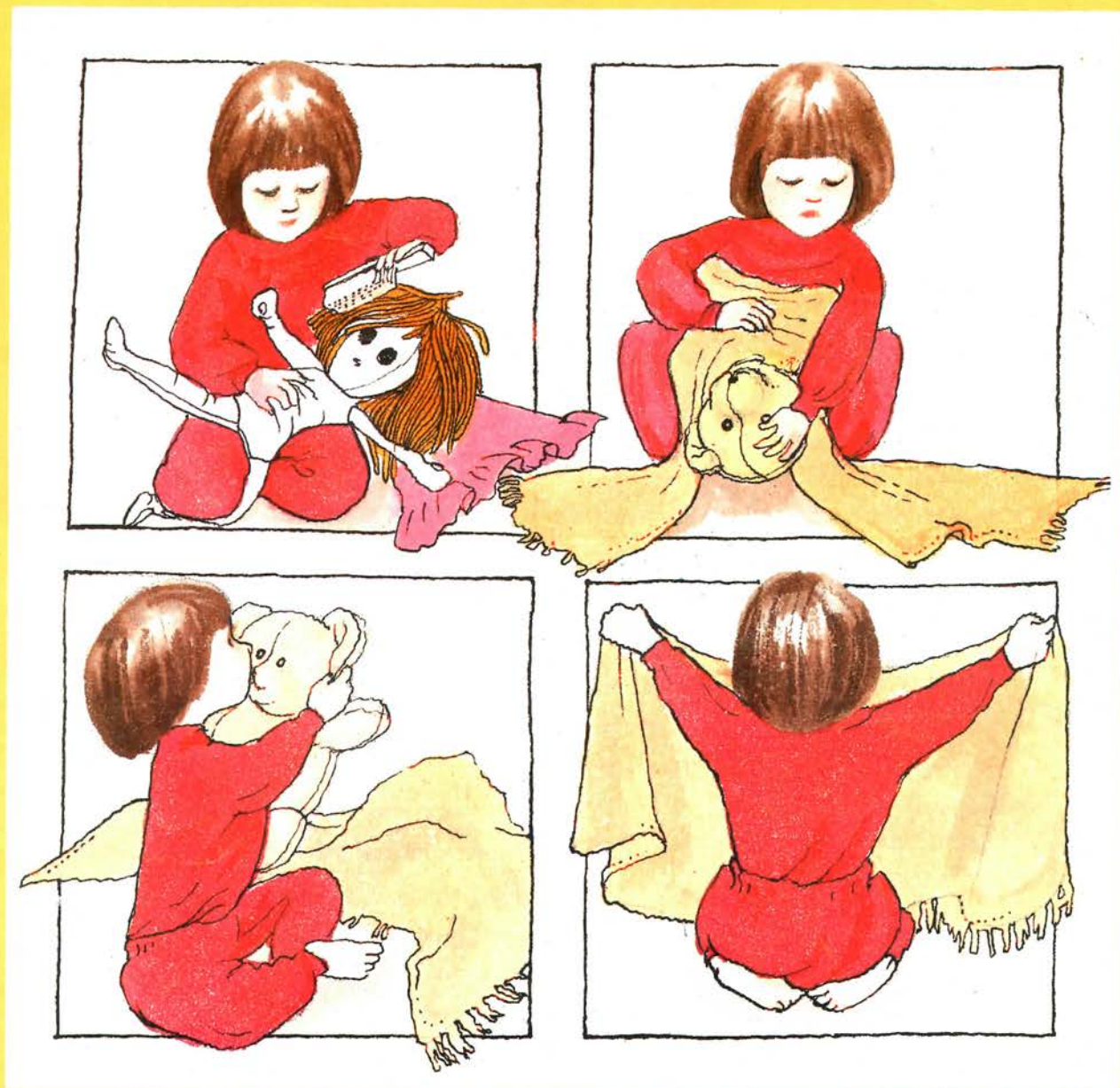


Illustration from Moonlight by Jan Ormerod (Kestrel Books)

SPOTLIGHT ON PICTURE BOOKS • SHIRLEY HUGHES •
THE AHLBERGS • MOTHER GOOSE AWARD •
WORLD OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS 3 • ELAINE MOSS

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Our cover illustration is from **Moonlight** by Jan Ormerod. (Kestrel, 0 7226 5749 8, £3.95). We are grateful to Kestrel for their help in reproducing this illustration in full colour.

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SBA Services & Publications

How to Set Up and Run a School Bookshop

Our handbook is full of practical advice and information on every aspect of school bookshops. Essential for beginners, useful for old-hands. If you already run a school bookshop, Part 5: 'How to Keep Going' is a much expanded section and may give you fresh ideas!

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Book Bank Savings Cards

For school bookshops, book clubs, book fairs — a savings card scheme can help offset the price of books. We've printed this grid on the back of paperback covers with a space for children to enter their names. There is room in the circle to record how much has been saved so that you know each child's credit at a glance. We try to give a good variety of book covers with each order.

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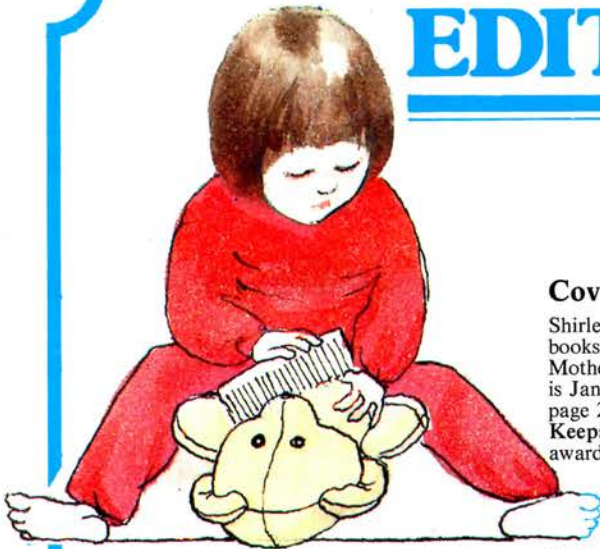
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EDITOR'S PAGE



Cover Story

Shirley Hughes (who writes about picture books on page 4) is one of the judges for the Mother Goose Award. The winner this year is Jan Ormerod for *Sunshine* (Kestrel) (see page 21). A glance at last May's *Books for Keeps* will show you it was our tip for the award as soon as we saw it, and we didn't

This *Books for Keeps* is mostly about picture books.

A lot of picture books have been published in the last twenty years but some stand head and shoulders above the rest. They are the work of the mould-breakers — artists who have taken the picture book form and given it such a shake that it can never be quite the same again. Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (Bodley Head and Puffin) for example is not just a story with pictures. The design of the book is part of the story. Max makes his first mischief in framed pictures. As he is sent to bed and his fantasy takes over, the pictures flow out to the edges of the page and onto the next until the wild rumpus is a series of double spreads with no text in sight (the big test for readers aloud!) For his 'return' the process is reversed and the five final, reassuring words appear alone on a white page. Perfect.

In his 'Shirley' books (*Come Away from the Water, Shirley* and *Time to Get out of the Bath, Shirley*, Cape) John Burningham also makes the form of the book work as part of the story. Each opening of the book offers two pictures: on the left monochrome reality, on the right the highly-coloured world of Shirley's imagination; and below is the text, the routine utterances of an automatic parent.

In this issue of *Books for Keeps* — our second picture book special — we have three mould-breakers, Shirley Hughes and Janet and Allan Ahlberg, whose creative talents in exploring what can be done with a book have given us *Up and Up* (Bodley Head), *Each Peach Pear Plum* (Kestrel) and *Peepo!* (Kestrel). The Ahlbergs (see Authorgraph, page 14) both get involved in designing their books. Allan, we discovered, also studied art during his teacher training and, he says, got the same marks as Janet. In the autumn comes their latest book *The Baby's Catalogue* (Kestrel). They have taken the idea of the baby's book, words and pictures of familiar things, and raised it to quite another level. Shirley Hughes' new book is testing the limits of another form: the longer story for older children. In *Here Comes Charlie Moon* she started tentatively with black and white line drawings at the top of each page. *Charlie Moon and the Big Bonanza Bust Up* (Bodley Head) has drawings popping up all over the page and helping to tell the story. If any book can rid children of the prejudice that books with pictures are 'babyish', this is it. And it's compulsory reading for anyone who has ever been involved in a Book Fair.

The story on the cover is completed in the two pictures on this page, from *Moonlight*.

change our mind; so it's particularly pleasing to have Jan Ormerod's second picture book, *Moonlight* (Kestrel) on our cover. Like *Sunshine* it is based on Jan's family. Paul Ormerod says that if you bumped into the family you would have no difficulty recognising them, except that he has just shaved off his beard.

In one way both books are very much for younger children, and they have been published at a time when publishers seem to have decided that books for babies is the answer to cuts in spending in libraries and schools. But it would be a pity if they got dismissed as not for older children.

The best books often work at many levels. *Sunshine*, *Moonlight*, *Peepo!*, *The Baby's Catalogue*, and Shirley Hughes' *Alfie* books certainly do that. Whether as ways of telling stories, looking at families, or remembering babyhood with a nostalgic and slightly indulgent smile, these are rich sources for all ages.

A Royal Read

I first saw the artwork for *Moonlight* last year at the Federation of Children's Book Groups' Spring Conference where the first Children's Book Award was presented. This year's winner is Leon Garfield for *Fair's Fair* (Macdonald), (see page 22), a story which children of all ages took to their hearts. The illustrator, Margaret Chamberlain, was delighted with the children's comments about the pictures, especially as they are not being used in the American edition of the book — the publishers thought they were 'too horrifying'. Comment from one very young Briton, 'It's nice to know people who look ugly can be kind.' A good lesson perhaps for the royal baby who will have this book and the others in the Federation's Top Ten on his or her royal bookshelf as a gift from the Federation.

Another Award

News of yet another picture book, and more evidence that we were in good tipping form last May. Our cover featured Quentin Blake and Michael Rosen's *Can't Catch Me* (Deutsch) which we had seen and couldn't wait to tell you about even though it wasn't published till the autumn. We've just heard it has won the Signal Poetry Award. The judges, Margaret Meek and Peter Hunt praised it for being a book which has many levels and is approachable by a wide range of children. They feel it is also unusual in that the blend of pictures and text make it attractive to children who are not usually readers of poetry. There are no official runners-up in the award but *Strictly Private*, Roger McGough's anthology (Kestrel and Puffin) was also commended.

Testing books out on children is not part of the Signal Award's judges' brief; but from

the responses we've seen to these two books many children and young people would endorse their choice.

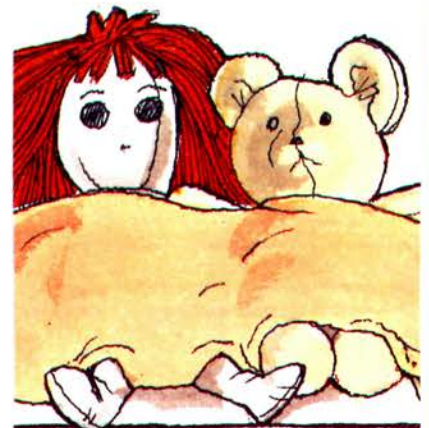
The award was, of course, initiated by *Signal*, which means by Aidan and Nancy Chambers, winners of this year's Eleanor Farjeon Award (see page 28). We are delighted to tell you that Aidan will be writing in the next issue of *Books for Keeps* when we look at the American contribution to children's books.

Foot(ball) note

This issue celebrates picture books — and not a football in sight. So I'm not even going to mention Ladybird's crude, comic-strip adventures of Naranjito (little orange, for non-Spanish speakers) the World Cup mascot. I can't understand how a company that produces such very good information books and which has just done excellent biographies for children of Pope John-Paul and the Princess of Wales can publish such rubbish. Instead I'll finish with a real master of the comic-strip, Raymond Briggs who since *Father Christmas* has been doing some determined mould-breaking. His latest book *When the Wind Blows* (published by Hamish Hamilton on the adult list 0 241 10721 0, £3.95) is a potent, tragically funny and thought-provoking statement about nuclear warfare. It should be in every secondary school, and lots of junior and middle ones too if the capable and informed discussion I often hear in them is anything to go by.



Here's to survival — and lots more picture books to enjoy.



'Like all the best entertainments, looking at a picture book calls as much out of the audience as they care to give.'

Shirley Hughes provides a guide to her

Picture Book Worlds



If it had been raining Alfie liked to go stamping about in mud and walking through puddles,

splish, splash, SPLOSH!



A page from *Alfie's Feet*

If you're talking about picture-books, theatrical analogies crop up all the time. A picture-book is, after all, rather like a small stage. The reader opens it, and up goes the curtain on the action. The way the characters are grouped, for instance, or move across a double-page spread, their gestures and facial expressions, all help to tell the story just as much as the words. Considerations such as the source of light, clothes, landscapes and interiors are important to the whole business of trying to transform a flat piece of paper into a three-dimensional scene. But this theatre is a very detailed one, seen in close-up and lingered over at leisure.

Although most illustrators start by learning to draw and paint alongside their fellow art students, to manage inks and colour washes and work in the life-room, they are nevertheless developing within themselves a narrative turn of mind, with strong overtones of grease-paint. And if you delve further back into some of our early lives you are less likely to find a child curled up with its nose buried in a book than one who dotes on comics, queues up to see Buster Keaton, and tends to burst out from the living room curtains expecting applause. The literary bit comes later, along with the drawing technique.

Being read to is highly nutritious to the infant illustrator, as it is to every child. Recited to, even better. I got declaimed to quite a bit round about the age of four by a fifteen-year-old called Nellie, who had been winkled out of the Co-op and employed full-time looking after me. She relieved the tedium of the job by enacting, with vivid vocal effects, the whole of **The Highwayman** by Alfred Noyes, coached up to word perfect by the lady at the Friday evening Girls Friendly Society. They still did things like that at the Girls Friendly when I was a child. She had a passion for boys' adventure yarns, too, Henty, Ballantyne, **The Hotspur** and **The Wizard**. A bit above my head in parts, but thrilling stuff nevertheless.

But to get back to the point. The most important thing about a children's book, of course, is the story. This applies whether the reader is perceiving the whole thing in pictures, or in words, or any combination of the two. With a picture-book, not even the most dazzling display of design and colour-technique can make up for a weak story-line. Ideas for books usually float by like icebergs, mostly below the surface, for a long time before you start putting pencil to paper. In my case they float by in pictures, seen in my head while washing-up or mooning about. Getting it into words is the most crucial bit. The sentences that appear on the page eventually take as long to write as a more substantial piece. Onion-like, the finished text should be smoothly rounded and lucidly simple, but it's the result of many layers of rigorous editing. The final test is in the reading and re-reading, the nightly encores from its young audience.

Next comes the making of the dummy, deploying the words and the roughs for pictures into a 32-page format (this is a magic number that has to do with printing machines). I cut up blocks of text and position and reposition them on the pages, drawing round them rather rapidly with a softish pencil or a felt pen. Then comes the period when my editor and I mull all this over, working very closely together. Between this and doing the finished artwork there may be a gap when I find myself doing some altogether different job. Once embarked, however, I get my head down and immerse myself for three or four months. It's a slow, meticulous process. Happily, using chalks, gouache and inks is a highly tactile pleasure as well as an intellectual one. I can even listen to records or the radio sometimes while I'm doing it (unthinkable when trying to write).

Even if things aren't going so well and deadlines are pressing, there's still no pleasure or excitement in the world to compare with sitting down in front of a blank piece of paper on the drawing-board. An added bonus is to know that a picture-book is going to be a shared experience. The people in the 'audience' look at the pictures together, point things out to one another and extend each other's visual range. It's very often the non-reader who's the best looker. He can take in the narrative at exactly the pace he wants to, can turn back the pages, compare and imagine. Like all the best entertainments, it's not a passive one, and calls as much out of the audience as they care to give.

I'm much too absorbed to think about all this when I'm actually drawing. Only when I meet children at the receiving end of books, in schools and libraries up and down the country, I sometimes feel an awesome weight of responsibility. In an era when visual reactions, even those of the very young, are hotted up to a lightening speed by television, picture-books may be the only non-photographic imagery they are going to be exposed to in a relaxed and intimate way. I'm always being pleasurably astonished by what children can actually do with a picture-book, the way they can use a wordless book like **Up and Up**, for instance, or **Dogger**, and make it their own, a way of reinforcing their own thoughts and experiences and as a starting point for their own stories and pictures.



With **Alfie Gets in First**, in which my small hero slams the front door and gets stuck inside while a frantic build-up ensues on the door-step, I was faced with the design problem of showing both inside and outside the house simultaneously. I found that I could use the actual form of the book, the gutter down the middle where the pages are sewn, as part of the story. So it became the great divide, and the pictures on each side of the spread hold a sort of double action in which the non-reader can be one ahead of the text by knowing how Alfie is going to resolve his problem. Recently, working on the artwork for **Alfie's Feet**, which is about the same little boy and his baby sister, Annie Rose, I've tried to give the reader things to discover in a leisurely way in the pictures; the time of year, for instance, and a detailed sense of place, as well as a great many (countable) feet.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of our job stems from that marvellous moment when a baby gets hold of a book and suddenly realises that the image on one page connects with the one overleaf. There's something here for him. The excitement is intense. To capitalise on this excitement, and to use visual imagery to bring him through the foothills of learning to read and on to the thrilling horizons beyond, is the aim. If I could, I'd like to bring about a time when visual ideas can be used as a counterpoint to all kinds of fiction, right up the age-range, in all kinds of ways, larky, informative, decorative, deeply moving, or simply wham! slurp! splat! pow!, just as the story demands. With **Here Comes Charlie Moon** and, more recently, **Charlie Moon and the Big Bonanza Bust Up** I've attempted to use picture-book wiles and apply them to a fast-moving narrative for older children, pacing the drawings with the action. In the latter Charlie's exploits get entangled with a Book Bonanza, organised by Linda, a lovely librarian (with a bit part played by a visiting Lady Artist). When I started writing it, the drawings got all over the page. A lot of work and glue was expended. It was a highly entertaining experience for me, at least, (and for the reader too, I hope).

In the end, of course, the most exciting pictures any child sees will be in his own head. But the ones he sees on the page will stay with him, too, for quite a while. ●

Shirley Hughes is one of our best loved and most talented artist/writers. As well as illustrating other people's work (*The Corrins*' anthologies and Dorothy Edwards' *My Naughty Little Sister* stories for two) Shirley Hughes has an impressive collection of her own picture books including *Lucy and Tom's Christmas*, *Helpers*, *Dogger*, which won the Kate Greenaway Award. Recently she has been breaking new ground in picture book terms — the wordless *Up and Up* is a masterpiece of visual storytelling and in *Alfie gets in First* the form of the book becomes part of the story.

Shirley's pet crusade is for pictures in books for older children and her latest *Charlie Moon* story certainly makes the point. The book is marvellously entertaining and cleverly designed so that pictures and text join together in telling the story — a delight for all and an especial boon for those daunted by solid chunks of unrelieved text.

Charlie Moon and the Big Bonanza Bust Up
Bodley Head, 0 370 30918 9, £4.50

Alfie gets in First
Bodley Head, 0 370 30417 9, £3.50

Alfie's Feet
Bodley Head, 0 370 30416 0, £4.25

Up and Up
Bodley Head, 0 370 30179 X, £3.50
Picture Lion, 0 00 661809 X, 90p

Here Comes Charlie Moon
Bodley Head, Lions, 0 00 671934 1, 95p

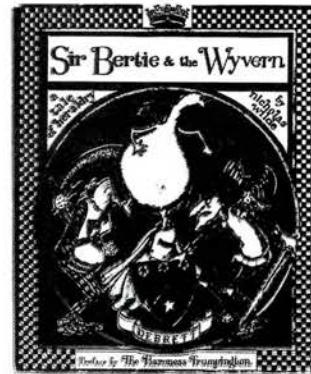


Drawings on this page from *Charlie Moon and the Big Bonanza Bust Up*.



SIR BERTIE & THE WYVERN

Written & Illustrated by Nicholas Wilde



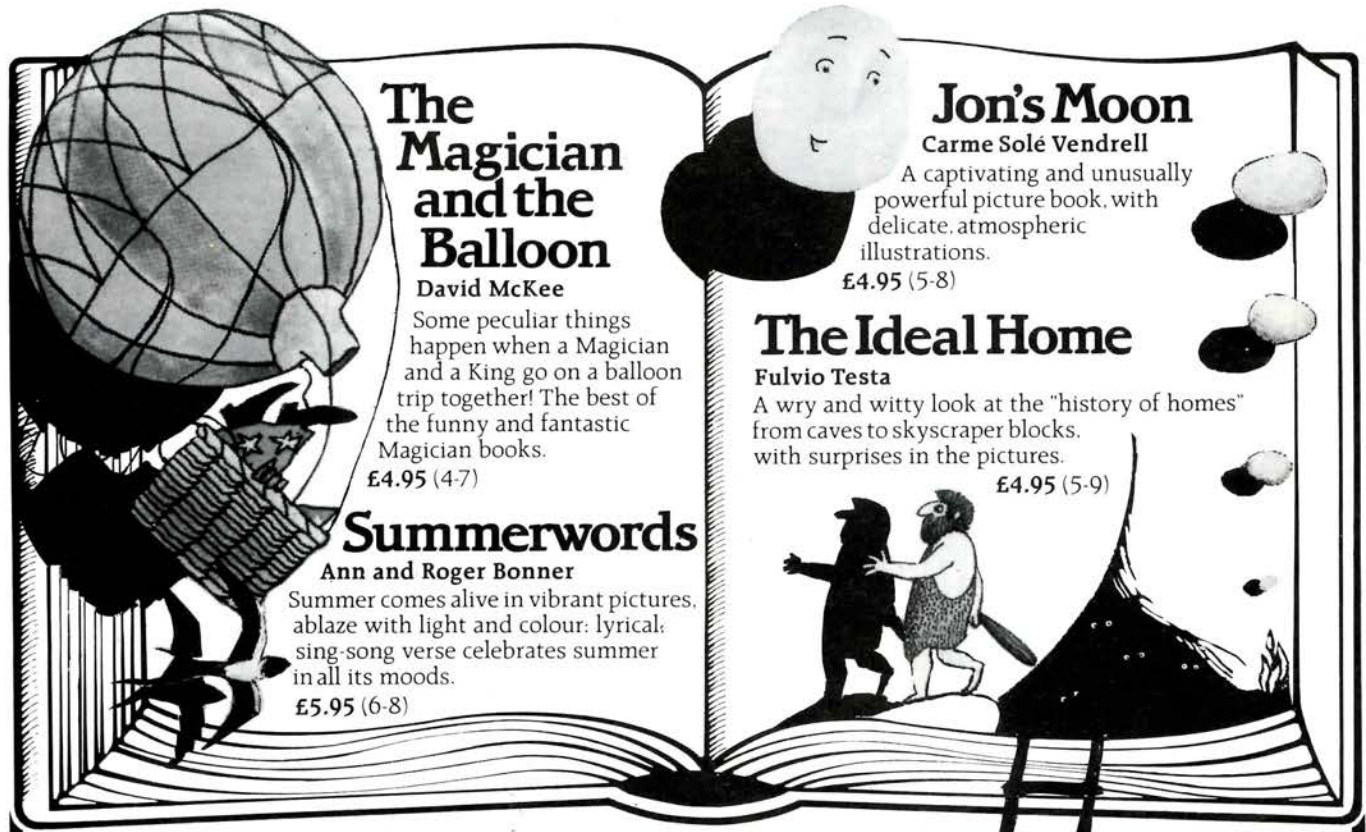
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REVIEWS

Infant/Junior

Posy and Sam

Ruth Silcock, ill. Lisa Kopper, Dinosaur, 0 85122 314 1, 70p

Posy has a vision of what she would like her pet dog Sam to be, but the reality falls somewhat short of her ideal. All the same, despite disgracing himself at home, he does carry off a prize at the show. Told in an easy-to-read present tense narrative and a series of lively strip pictures, Sam's exploits make entertaining reading. JB

Big Anthony and the Magic Ring

Tomie de Paola, Hippo, 0 590 70142 8, £1.00

A delightful tale from an author-artist whose work is a super 'bridge' between picture books and sustained reads for the six-to-eights. Big Anthony wishes for some night life and, with the help of the Magic Ring, turns into a handsome, elegant squire, pursued mercilessly by the ladies. It's good to have a boy at the centre of the 'wish-fulfilment' plot for a change. Children love de Paola's magical-sounding places (Calabria) and people (Strega Nona and Bambalona). The distinctive pictures — bold pastels, always holding more in them than is explicit in the text — will help the newly-independent reader along. CM



Two Tales of Basil Brush

Peter Firmin, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672016 1, 90p

Two stories here, *Basil Brush Goes Boating* and *Goes Flying*. Both were published in separate volumes over ten years ago. The garrulous fox comes over well as a story character in these two. There's a good combination of text and pictures, an eye-catching cover and the careful production we expect from the Lions imprint.

The two stories have similar format: Basil goes on an escapade with his friend Harry the Mole. This will help novice readers: in fact, six-to-nines who still need to see that there's fun in reading should warm to the accessible



Posy's pet dog Sam, from *Posy and Sam*

The Tiny Tiny Tadpole

H.E. Todd, ill. Val Biro, Carousel, 0 552 52163 9, 95p

Jolly story-cum-nature lesson which imaginatively tells the life-cycle of a tadpole-frog through vivid pictures. Expressive, chatty style (Can you see his tail getting smaller? And now it has completely disappeared . . .). The six and seven-year-old metamorphosis experts who read this for me said that all the facts rang true, and enjoyed matching up the pictures with their real-life observations, but the text-picture correspondence was often confusing. That said, a valuable source book for teachers and topics. CM

Hugo and Oddsock

Tony Ross, Carousel, 0 552 52162 0, 95p

When Hugo the Larder mouse is told that he can't go out to play, he makes a horse's head out of an odd sock. The two fly through 'a hole in the night' to Locksockland. Here's an artist who knows how to enter the 'let's pretend' world of five-to-sevens. The ones I read this with loved the picture of Hugo sadly peering out onto a snowbound world (where the grown-up mice had to walk on stilts!). The adventure is splendidly caught by the lively pictures.

A character who could become a favourite, from an author-artist whose work is always worth attention. CM

Reviews of paperback fiction are grouped for convenience under teaching range. Books and children being varied and adaptable, we suggest you look either side of your area. More detailed recommendation for use can be found within the reviews.

Reviewers

in this issue



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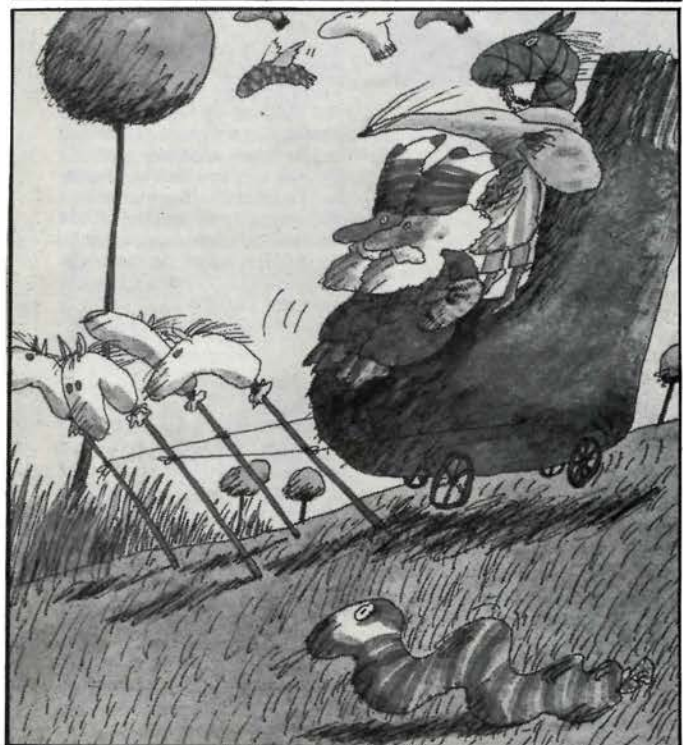
1. **Jill Bennett** is an infant teacher, currently on a course at the Institute of Education in London. She is Literary Editor of *Child Education* and on the Board of the SBA.

2. **David Bennett** (no relation to Jill) is a former librarian, and currently Head of English in a Nottinghamshire secondary school.

3. **Steve Bowles** was a secondary English teacher and co-producer of *Reviewsheet* until it ceased publication. He is now writing full-time.

4. **Colin Mills** is in the Division of Teaching Studies at Worcester College, where he helps run a Diploma in Children's Literature. He's taught in a comprehensive school, a primary school and worked in radio.

5. **Cathy Lister** teaches in a middle school in Staffordshire, with responsibility for English and Language across the Curriculum.



'Hang on, we'll be there in no time!' from *Hugo and Oddsock*.

lengths (each story is about 40 pages); good coherent plots and, not least, a character whose 'voice' they'll be able to hear as they read. CM

Changing of the Guard and Wallpaper Holiday

H.E. Todd, ill. Val Biro, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1382 6, 80p

Master storyteller has two short tales which seven-to-nines should enjoy, despite somewhat dated tone. The first has Timothy Trumper, who watches the Guardsmen passing each day, being invited to join them. I liked the second more: young boy who has to go without his holiday

'imagines' his way into the scenario of his wallpaper!

A good lead-in to the same writer's 'Bobby Brewster' stories. Val Biro's black and white illustrations are a bit static but the cover's a treat. CM

Johnny the Tin Tortoise

Donald Bisset, Magnet, 0 416 24440 8, 95p

There's a title-change here: in hardback, it was *Johnny Here and There*. I like this author's whimsical, illogical way of spinning a tale. He knows how to root the fantastic in the here and now.

This is a full-length story of Johnny and his escapades on his

tortuous way to visit Komodo the Dragon. Fast-moving plot, with use of songs, poems and word-play to push the action on. Though the author's special gift is in short, snappy episodes, the whole hangs together well, with chapters just right for reading aloud.

Smashing use of time-shift with King Alfred, Sinbad the Sailor and even Thomas' 'Yes, I remember Adelstrop' thrown in. Good, literate fun for the six-to-nines. CM

William the Wizard

Patricia Cleveland-Peck, ill. Sophie Kittredge, Beaver, 0 600 20446 4, 85p

I liked this author's *The String*

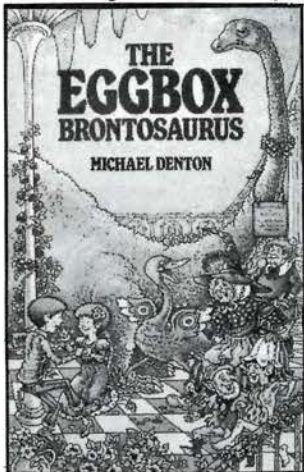
Family. This is very different but maintains the storyteller's sure touch and shows an ability to keep an uncluttered plot going for seven-to-nines. William is apprenticed to the Community Wizard, Entwhistle. He's an 'ordinary community worker, helping the people of the village'. It's all benevolent fun, then, helping old ladies rid themselves of varicose veins and saving the village school from closure — I wish we had a wizard in Worcestershire. William finally makes it to the Company of Mages, and there's some sensitively-drawn adult-child relationships conjured up by the author. One worth introducing. CM

Junior/Middle

The Eggbox Brontosaurus

Michael Denton, ill. Hilda Offen, Granada, 0 583 30476 1, 85p

A delightful parody of all that ought to happen in story land. 'The king was in his counting-house eating bread with Honey.



Honey was his private secretary. Later there is a dwarf who mines quartz crystal for digital watches, a failed pop-singer, now the hermit, and a fairy godmother, Annabelladonna! All are supporting characters to Prince Rudolph, off on a quest to find a quarter of a million eggboxes. For children of perhaps ten upwards with a sharp sense of humour and a successful read-aloud for a teacher who also enjoys the spoof. But the story line is difficult to follow at times so perhaps not for the less able reader. Those, particularly boys, who tried it were enthusiastic and the cheery, action-packed cover brought favourable comment. CL

Grasshopper and the Pickle Factory

Jim Slater, Granada, 0 583 30369 2, 85p

A hero who shrinks and animals who talk divided readers of ten or more into very separate

camp. Some were very enthusiastic about Grasshopper's involvement in saving the wood for the animals. One rather young eleven-year-old 'stayed up till midnight' to finish another of Grasshopper's adventures. Many, however, found themselves above such fantasy. 'Animals who talk are daft', 'It's a bit unreal'.

Not a book with a wide middle school market. Able readers of 7+ should enjoy it and it would be a useful book to read aloud in the lower primary and early middle years. The illustrations by Babette Cole were universally approved. CL

Vlad the Drac

Ann Jungman, Granada, 0 583 30505 9, 85p

What a disappointment! A tempting title, an enticing cover but unfortunately 'the adventures of a vegetarian vampire' are an awful bore! Vlad, a miniature vampire, found under a stone in Romania is smuggled home to England by Judy and Paul.

There he enjoys a diet of soap and washing-up liquid and is a constant worry to the children as he gets drunk on sherry, causes a football riot and finally berates Judy's teacher. However all these adventures are recorded in such matter-of-fact tones that all sense of fun is lost. As one tester commented 'this book has some good bits but it does drag on about one thing for a long time!' CL

The Further Adventures of Dr A.A.A. McGurk, M.D.

Osmar White, ill. Jeff Hook, Puffin, 0 14 03.1408 3, 80p

I had not met Dr A.A.A. McGurk before but chortles of delight from testers suggested he was a character worth knowing and indeed Osmar White has written an hilarious adventure about this eccentric Scottish doctor's attempts to find the Pole of Impossibility. During his explorations he meets a Yeti,

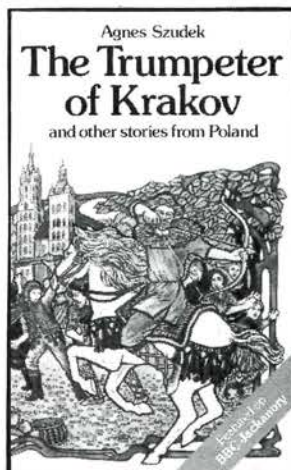
and some improbable companions, holidaying away from the hundreds of climbers tramping over Mount Everest!

A short read, just sixty-three pages with lots of entertaining illustrations. The reading level is around 8-9 years but many of the humorous references require a wit and experience more likely around 11+ years. It should go down well, particularly with boys of that age group. CL

Super Sammy's Incredible T-Shirt

H. MacLeod Robertson, ill. Paul Wright, Magnet, 0 416 22090 8, 95p

Sammy's determination to become a champion long-distance runner provides the reader with a good mixture of humour, mystery and adventure. Dr Hercules' Body Building Kit includes a T-shirt into which Sammy's growing muscles will expand — or will they? This 'lucky' shirt becomes the property of a research laboratory, it is retrieved but now endows extraordinary powers. Sammy wins the race (without the shirt) in the finale to an action-packed story much enjoyed by boys of nine and over. The promising cover should help it to sell well and a copy in the library would not be amiss. CL



The Happy Ghost

Elisabeth Beresford, Magnet, 0 416 89410 0, 95p

Sam is not sure he wants to move from his own bedroom to the attic to make way for the grumpy daughter of new lodgers. He becomes even more unsettled when he begins to suspect a ghost in the condemned row of houses he can see from the attic window. How Sam and the ghost save the Row from demolition and the friendly squatters from eviction is a tale that makes very satisfactory reading for competent readers of eight and over. Enthusiastically welcomed by many Elisabeth Beresford fans, it should be a happy addition to the bookshop and library shelves. CL

Happy Endings

Wendy Craig, Granada, 0 583 30519 9, 85p

A Book of Wizards
0 416 21890 3

A Book of Ghosts and Goblins
0 416 21900 4

Ruth Manning Sanders, ill. Robin Jacques, Magnet, 95p each

The Trumpeter of Krakow and Other Stories from Poland

Agnes Szudek, Granada, 0 583 30541 5, 85p

Good anthologies are often our lifelines in letting children in on what story and reading are all about. Of the four here, Wendy Craig's is the most uneven. There are some welcome inclusions from varied sources: *Ewungelema* from Zambia — a variation on the slow-but-steady-wins-the-race theme, but with special echoes of a culture which we know shamefully little about. I liked the Swedish *Old Lady and the Tramp*, *When the Water Disappeared*, from Australia (though there's a livelier pictorial retelling by Rob Roennfeldt in *Picture Puffins*).

My favourite was a Polish tale **The Jester Who Fooled a King** But the original stories are twee, and sometimes, rambling.

Ruth Manning Sanders knows about the importance of balance and about making a collection into a coherent whole. The **Wizard** collection has 11 stories of diverse origin, and there are good and bad wizards! The foreword is intelligent, nimbly picking out common themes in a way which will fascinate top juniors. It's good also to have a marvellously told **Aladdin**.

Ghosts and Goblins is a more generous package: 21 stories. Again, sources are varied and, maybe because there is a richer supply of potential material, the storytelling is even more compelling. Ms Manning Sanders knows that the ghosts don't usually mean harm — and she's at her best when they're outwitted (**A Box on the Ears**) or just plain benign (**A Kindly Ghost**). Both collections are consistently poetic, exciting and valuable. Robin Jacques' pictures, especially the covers, are superb.

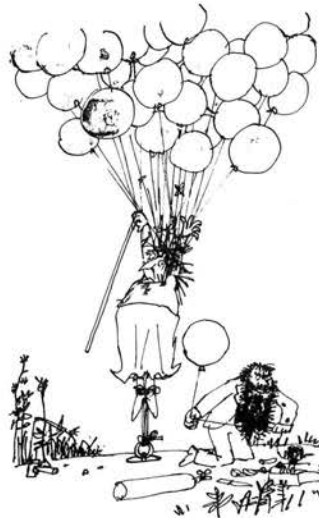
I was rivetted by Agnes Szudek's eight stories from a culture rich in its own special kind of stories. There's a consciousness of the duality of a country straddling West and East, and often at the mercy of stronger powers. The resilience, patience and wit of the people are key themes, timely reminders. The title story, on the theme of the power of stories, is the best of a good bunch. CM

The Twits

Roald Dahl, ill. Quentin Blake, Puffin, 0 14 03.1406 7, 95p

I've got to admit to feeling a sense of overkill at the *awfulness* of the Twits. He, whose 'hair sprouted in revolting tufts out of his nostrils and earholes'; she 'who has ugly thoughts every day, every week, every year'.

Their worm spaghetti, and that Birds' Pie with the birds' legs



Mrs Twit gets a stretching, drawn by Quentin Blake.

sticking up out of the crust must make them two of the most odious creations in children's fiction! In the end, they get their just rewards. If you like it, the fun will be contagious; if you don't why not try one or two chapters aloud and get the kids talking about how far you can go in stories. But don't ignore it, because the kids will find it! Blake's pictures are horribly apt. CM

Eagle's Egg
0 600 20471 5

Circlet of Oak Leaves
0 600 20470 7
Rosemary Sutcliff, Beaver, 80p each

Rosemary Sutcliff writes with feeling and great skill capturing the atmosphere of life with the Roman legions in Britain. Unfortunately her specialist subject and style please only a limited audience and these two stories written for 'younger' readers are no more approachable for individual readers than her lengthier works.

The language, with its historic flavour and lengthy sentences, many of fifty words and more, proves a deterrent and the responses from a mixed bunch

of testers were uniformly negative.

A Circlet of Oak Leaves tells of Aracos, the horse breeder, who carries a secret. Standing in for Felix, a legionary sick with fear before a battle, he fights with great courage and then sees Felix receive the Corona Civica for what he has been through.

Eagle's Egg has an amusing twist and a romantic background. Quintus must win promotion before he can marry Cordaella. How a hard boiled duck's egg and a legion's standard help to quell rebellious troops and earn the longed-for promotion make a light-hearted tale.

I doubt that many young children will buy these books but do purchase copies for the school library. They read well aloud and for those children who are tempted they are well worth a place on the shelf. CL

The Princess and the Unicorn

Marika Hanbury Tenison, ill. Ann Evans, Granada, 0 583 30474 5, £1.25

A pure white unicorn, a beautiful princess with skin of 'unblemished fairness' and a most elegant medieval court (not a maid servant with a hair out of place!); the ingredients for the perfect fairy tale are all together in this rather precious little book. Or are they? Somehow it is a tale without substance, all sentimental slush and nothing to bite on. The princess is sad, the unicorn is lonely and you can be absolutely certain that everyone will live happily ever after. Even the most predictable fairy tales need an element of evil to add uncertainty, to allow the reader to speculate. There is none of that here.

Those of nine and ten who enjoy pretty pictures and a reassuring tale will find it an attractive book. Doting relations might buy it but at £1.25 it will not be a best-seller in the school bookshop. CL

One of These Days

Helen Solomon, Dinosaur, 0 85122 321 4, £1.25

Tomboy

Terry McKenna, Dinosaur, 0 85122 320 6, £1.25

Dinosaur have 'carefully selected' authors to produce these books and others in the series. The books have also been 'monitored' prior to publication with 'older children who still enjoy and benefit from picture-strip stories'.

I tried them with boys and girls in the 11-12 age range who are either poor or reluctant readers. There was general agreement that the stories were 'quite good' but not the sort to be bought or read more than once. Some children found the story line confusing. **Tomboy** is a complex and disjointed story about Thomas Boyd, a daydreamer who meets an inventor who brings his space dreams to life. **One of These Days** tells the story of three boys who find an injured deer. There are at least two sub-plots: a desire for a puppy, and boredom on the local estate.

Obvious predictability is not always a point to praise in stories but in comics it has the considerable advantage of making the text available to the struggling reader. Perhaps deliberately these specially written stories break down that comic stereotype. I do not think it helps.

Several children who tested the books felt they were for children of ten or under. What is an 'older' child in this case? It is an admirable but, I feel, unsuccessful attempt to entice a certain kind of reader. Whenever I examine such attempts I become further convinced that knowing the child and knowing the possible 'real' books and stories to suit are the true answers to solving the problem. CL

Middle/Secondary

Animal Ghosts

Richard Davis, Granada, 0 583 30509 1, 95p

Scottish Hauntings

Grant Campbell, Piccolo, 0 330 26618 7, £1.10

Peter Davison's Book of Alien Monsters

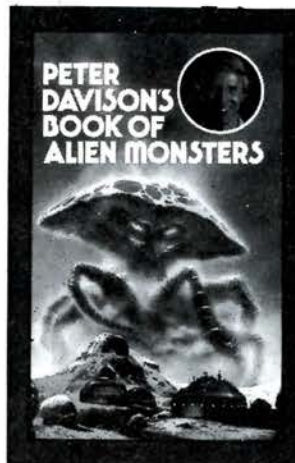
Sparrow, 0 09 928300 X, 95p

Testers much enjoyed Richard Davis' collection but found the stories variable in quality. All the stories contain ordinary ghostly animals, if such a thing exists, as the collector states in his introduction, he's avoided 'grisly hell-hounds and devil dogs'. A good collection for

dipping into and reading out aloud.

Scottish Hauntings is a slightly disappointing gallimaufry of bits and pieces. The stories are a mixture of fact and fiction concerning ghosts of Scotland and come complete with a map, presumably for those who crave to go on to first-hand experiences! The lack of flow and the rag-bag nature of the book leads to irritating, rather over-priced reading. However, I don't doubt that ghost-orientated kids, of which there are many, will get some pleasure out of it.

Peter Davison's collection was pronounced 'a very exciting and very interesting book'. For me

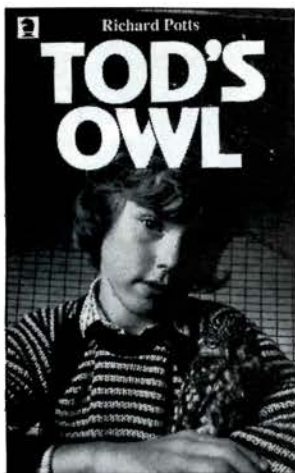


there is a kind of conveyor-belt feel about the stories, they are all of roughly the same length, by relatively unknown writers and all but one copyrighted 1982. The Doctor Who tag will help it to sell and the stories aren't bad in a pedestrian sort of way. It's worth stocking because kids will like it whatever reservations we may have. DB

Tod's Owl

Richard Potts, Knight, 0 340 27865 X, 95p

Ten-year-old Tod's life revolves around grandfather and their mutual love of birds. After the old man's death the possession of an owl, Otto, and an aviary of trapped birds forms some kind of



substitute for the old man, so too does a new school friend, Cedric. However, when the pair find Oscar, a cruelly-trapped Tawny Owl, Tod's attitudes to wildlife change with unpredictable consequences.

This story is likely to attract Upper Junior/Lower Secondary pupils but be sure to warn squeamish readers that they will not be spared the more gruesome aspects of strigine behaviour. For my own part, since the style is so direct and despite age differences, I shall use it to try to interest a lower ability C.S.E. pupil who is mad on birds but can seldom find any appropriate fiction. DB

The Haunting of Cassie Palmer

Vivien Alcock, Lions, 0 00 671895 7, 90p

In a family with Spiritualist traditions, great things are expected of Cassandra, the seventh child of a seventh child. Family stresses result in a dare and Cassie raises a spirit. But instead of the child she was after, Cassie awakens the sad and gloomy ghost of an eighteenth-century 'warlock'. Rather apt and predictable, with more overtones of Garfield than Thomas Kempe, but the modern setting helps it along and Vivien Alcock avoids the excesses of her husband's style. Worth a copy if only for more data on whether TV serialisation *does* actually encourage reading (not merely higher book sales). SB

Eighteen Desperate Hours

Roderic Jeffries, Puffin, 0 14 03.1299 4, 85p

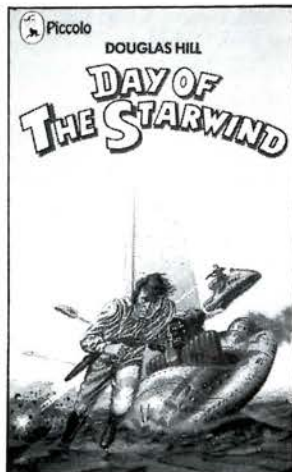
A poorly-written, disjointed thriller. Five masked men intrude upon Weston household; three take Mr while Mrs and young Jim stay home. Young Jim realises villains have lied and, fearing for Dad's safety, gets word to the Law. Mr is hostages in his watch-repair shop; Mrs is hostages in a fast-driven car. Enter reliable policemen. The book is a good index of how little thought and care is often given to kids' fiction. The only plus — it's short. If desperate, try with aficionados of Terrance Dicks' Baker Street Irregulars series, though that seems classy by comparison. SB

Under the Mountain

Maurice Gee, Puffin, 0 14 03.1389 3, 95p

'If you succeed, your race has a future. If not — the Wilberforces.' Rachel and Theo Matheson have an onerous task set before them by their otherworldly mentor Mr Jones. Their twin-ship and their red hair (representative of fire), makes them the chosen instruments by which the Wilberforces, giant slugs, can be deterred from reducing New Zealand and then the entire planet to mud.

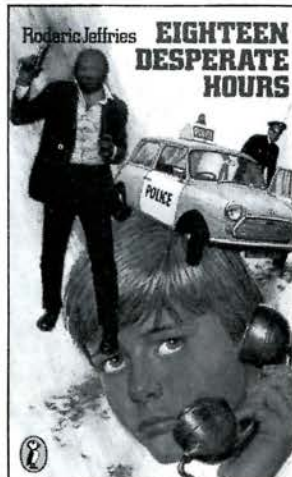
One reader was positively eulogistic — 'when I had finished it I could have read it again and again and still have enjoyed it.' I was impressed myself. It is a sci-fi fantasy which is not self-indulgent in complexity and cleverness. Its excitement and fast-moving pace recommends it to Upper Junior/Lower Secondary readers, who will proliferate no doubt when and if the TV version, made in New Zealand, reaches our own screens. DB



Day of the Starwind

Douglas Hill, Piccolo, 0 330 26652 7, £1.10

No need to elaborate on this if the Last Legionary sequence has stormed your school as it has mine. This is the best of the quartet, with Keill Randor and Glr fixing some more of the Warlord's Deathwing forces on a planet that's scoured periodically by a wind of cataclysmic power. Besides this dual threat to Keill, Douglas Hill also uses the time-honoured



device of innocent victims to inject pathos into a Good v. Evil battle where the final winner isn't in doubt. Otherwise it's all-action as usual and a splendid climax. Buy. SB

Wild Wood

Jan Needle, ill. Willie Rushton, Magnet, 0 416 21520 3, £1.25

Jan Needle's offspring and Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* have only a tenuous kinship, which denies too close a comparison. The sentiment and nostalgia of the halcyon riverbank does not exist here, for events are being examined from the point of view of the stoats and weasels; we are reading a new, more immediate, starkly realistic beast, where hunger and deprivation are the order of the day.

Best viewed then in isolation from its source, this novel should make exciting reading for kids who like a good adventure yarn. After a sluggish start the pace does liven up and carries the reader along its blood-stirring revolutionary path. With proper promotion it could become a Vith-form cult book — Tutors beware! DB



Drawing by William Rushton from Jan Needle's *Wild Wood*.

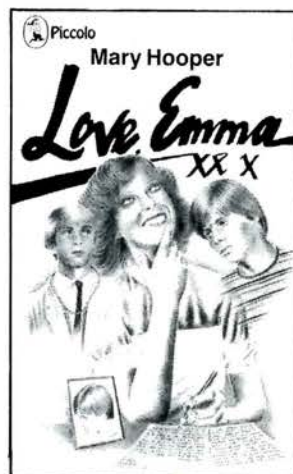
The Grey Dancer

Alison Fell, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671946 5, 95p

The year of Elizabeth II's coronation Annie Latto is eleven. It is the summer that she and the folk in her Scottish glen will not soon forget. It sees the Midsummer's Eve when the mysterious Lal, he of supernatural powers, is reunited with his Isobel, dead over a hundred years, when the newly-constructed dam breaks and when . . .

'The mother of landslides is heavy-hipped. The mother of rainbows speaks glory.'

The sense of bedrock beauty and a feeling of historical injustice is very strong in this first novel by a former fiction editor of *Spare Rib*. I finished it wishing for more, for a fleshing out of the characters. Younger readers though may well find it a thought-provoking story as it stands. DB



Love Emma

Mary Hooper, Piccolo, 0 330 26587 3, 95p

One reader found the epistolary form of *Love Emma* 'most unusual' but wasn't over-impressed by the story which 'you might have found in a photo story in *Blue Jeans* or such like'. The letters are mainly about Emma's social life. She is a first-year student nurse for whom bedpans and truculent patients rate only a casual mention as she concentrates on the pursuit of student doctor Luke, plus a self-opinionated young policeman and a careless window-cleaner who fell off his ladder. My 4th-year girls saw it on my desk and are queuing to read it. As Emma says in her diary, 'Life's not like it is in magazine stories, but I never stop hoping it will be.' DB

The Gooseberry

Joan Lingard, Beaver 0 600 20482 0, 95p

This one was pronounced more realistic: 'one could quite imagine it to be about someone you know, as most young people nowadays have an inferiority complex about something.' Ellie's principal problem is her height and appearance, but that is soon superseded by her mother's remarriage and a move to smarter, suburban Edinburgh. A retreat into fantasy brings a temporary solution but, as always, reality intrudes and Ellie is forced to accept things as they are and see their possibilities rather than their deficiencies, including the personalities of those around her.

Joan Lingard fans will not be disappointed, especially those recently converted by her 'Maggie' series. DB

Pennington's Seventeenth Summer
Magnet, 0 416 24700 8, £1.25

The Team

Sparrow, 0 09 927680 1, 95p
Both by K.M. Peyton.

A reasonably credible, realistic Pennington would be

extremely useful; *Seventeenth Summer*, however, seemed dated in 1970. But our Sec. Mod. rebel's triumph over his slimy contemporary, Smeeton, vindictive form-master, Soggy Marsh, and over-zealous P.C. Mitchell might have sufficient Hiss-The-Villain energy to grab some kids — Reginald Maddock fans, possibly? — if

they negotiate the first two chapters. The dialogue is poor, the style generally too solid for the unsophisticated most likely to dig the crude storyline. Stressing Penn's piano-playing as opposed to his sporting prowess could also deter some. Kids deserve better but, as usual, it's 'Try it, faute de mieux'.

Of its type, *The Team* (sequel to *Fly By Night*, also Sparrow) is a much better book than Pennington — Ms Peyton knows more about horses than about 14 stone louts. Ruth — Pennington's girlfriend/wife in *The Beethoven Medal*/Pennington's Heir — buys a new pony on impulse, loses an old friend because of it, sells her

old nag and struggles to become part of a Pony Club eventing team with her new one. An advance on most pony books in both length and quality and consequently well worth having around. Dreadful Peyton illustrations, unfortunately, but at least Sparrow have kept her off the cover. Both books 12+. SB

Older Readers



Summer of Fear
Hippo, 0 590 70083 9,
£1.00

I Know What You Did Last Summer
Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 10723 7, £4.95
Both by Lois Duncan.

Considering the many useful American books unpublished here and all the junk we've been offered instead, British publishers have a lot to answer for. These two 'new' Lois Duncans predate her *Killing Mr Griffin* (Hippo); *Summer of Fear* first appeared in '76, *Last Summer* in '73 — hence the now-dated Vietnam references. Both are much better than most UK teenage fiction.

Summer of Fear is a tense thriller with a supernatural element effectively suggested by the cover. When cousin Julia comes from the Ozarks after her parents' death in a car crash, Rae discovers she's using backwoods witchcraft to get things her way. But nobody believes her — not even when family friction, stealing a boyfriend, temporary illness and killing a pet seem to be only the precursors of murder. A retrospective first-person narrative, long but fast-paced — an essential addition to secondary class libraries.

Last Summer is another long thriller. Four teenagers out for a car ride kill a young boy on a bike. They report the accident anonymously and swear secrecy. One year later, it becomes obvious that someone knows — and, soon, that revenge will be exacted. The avenger isn't easy to disguise but Ms Duncan tackles the job quite well and the contrasting

characters, highlighted in turn by the shifting focus, provide some interest on their own account. Worth a close look if Mr Griffin has gone well. SB

Fathom Five
Robert Westall, Puffin,
0 14 03.1353 2, £1.25

Not all the stick this took in hardback was deserved but it is flawed by excessive length and a slow start. (Stereotypes among the characters are annoying, but to adults rather than teenagers.) Get a copy, though, to use après *Machine Gunners* since it's set in Garmouth, 1943, with supporting roles for Cem and Audrey. Sixth-former Jack Stokoc discovers that someone is passing shipping secrets to a lurking U-boat but, in unmasking the spy, he also learns things about women, class and war. If kids cope with the first third, they'll enjoy it because, thereafter, it's quite tense and exciting. SB

A Proper Little Nooryeff
Jean Ure, Bodley Head,
0 370 30470 5, £3.50

I Love You, Stupid!
Harry Mazer, Bodley Head,
0 370 30913 8, £3.50

Jean Ure's New Adult paperback is like Pennington all over again.

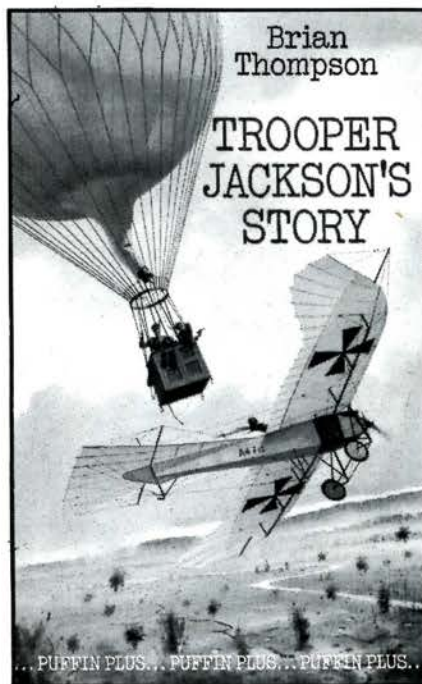
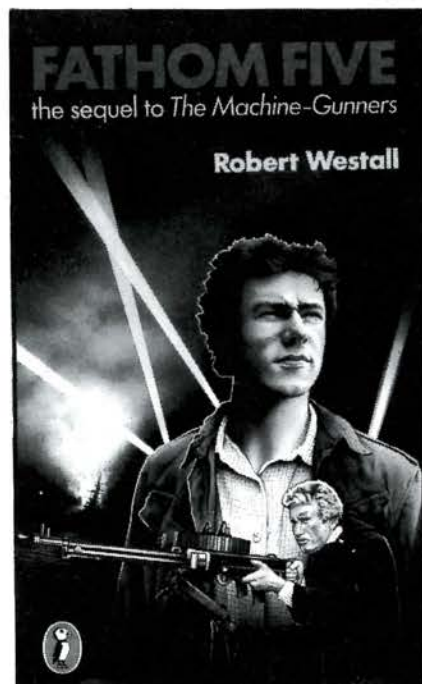
What's been learnt in twelve years? Precious little. *Nooryeff* is an advance stylistically — fewer literary pretensions — but the expletives still make you cringe ('Twist off'), the school is just as unconvincing (but less prominent fortunately), and there's possibly more unconscious condescension to the plebs than with K.M. Peyton. Jamie finds himself reluctantly partnering Anita, a girl from the Common's posh side, in a ballet school's show. He's a natural (of course) but more interested in cricket, nookie — not associated with Anita till the very end — and in keeping his dancing a secret. Lightly comic, OK cover; should get a medium-sized audience, mostly girls.

Harry Mazer's novel is better. The subject matter is dead simple — the growth of a relationship between two 17-year-olds who meet again after several years — but there's a hook on page one (Marcus's feeling that his virginity makes him sex-obsessed) and the easy-reading, humorous style chugs along nicely. It's refreshing that Marcus's ambitions to be a writer can be presented without any kind of apology. Maybe Americans would see deficiencies in authenticity similar to those in *Nooryeff* but I didn't. I'm sure kids'll enjoy it too and teachers needn't worry that it will cause 'problems' like *Forever*... SB

Trooper Jackson's Story
Brian Thompson, Puffin,
0 14 03.1291 9, £1.10

This fast-moving, highly credible World War I story ricochets around the Franco-Belgian border in an absorbing manner. The central character, Sam Jackson, recounts his tale of espionage and resistance straightforwardly and honestly, his view unsentimentalised by time, not sparing us the bloody, inhuman reality of the trenches and early guerilla warfare... the sense of despair and loneliness my war had brought me, were all things I could never have imagined for myself.

Jackson's is an impressive tale, highly recommended for Upper Secondary, and those even younger fascinated by war. DB





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There is no stage at which the reading aloud of choice stories and rhymes to children is more important than at the stage when they themselves are hell-bent on becoming readers.

If they are not in a state of terrier-like determination as a hangover from the reading aloud to them of Picture Books (which must of course continue) this may be your last chance for easy 'hooking'.

Enormously helpful in learning to read are nursery rhyme collections and anthologies of rhyming verse. I suggest, therefore:

The Mother Goose Treasury

Raymond Briggs, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 90800 0, £6.95; Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.088 X, £3.50

This is unlike any other 'Mother Goose' because Briggs has miraculously walked the tightrope, in illustrating the well known and less well known nursery and folk rhymes, between a robust, rollicking earthiness (Old King Cole is such a 'merry old soul' that his face is bright red) and vulgarity. So this bumper book, with its '408 rhymes and 897 illustrations', many in colour, is enormous fun for the hesitant reader to use at the stage where rhymes, especially known rhymes, are a boost to fluency.

Mother Goose Comes to Cable Street

Sel. Rosemary Stones and Andrew Mann, ill. Dan Jones, Kestrel, 0 7226 5277 1, £3.95; Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.313 7, 80p

Compared with the Raymond Briggs collection above, this is a very slender book (20 rhymes) but it has a special place in Britain in the '80s: the rhymes have been selected to allow Dan Jones full scope to paint illustrations for them peopled by the multi-cultural community of London's East End. 'Three babies in a basket/ And hardly room for two/ One was yellow and one was black/ And one had eyes of blue'. See them being wheeled to the butcher's stall? Quick eyes will notice 'nice bit of leg' scribbled on the wall. A painterly book — full of visual humour and social comment, too.

The Young Puffin Book of Verse

Comp. Barbara Ireson, Puffin, 0 14 03.0410 X, £1.00

Absolutely invaluable for use in any classroom in a Primary School because Barbara Ireson has the knack of including all those elusive poems that teachers half remember, and in addition (the book is divided up into imaginatively titled sections) many that will be welcome new finds.

All these can be on hand for constant use by teacher and child, whilst the following four titles, each part of a good and varied series, are being sampled by children who will find them a welcome and colourful change if they are used to the uniform prosaic reading scheme pamphlets.

The Cat in the Hat

Dr Seuss, Collins Beginner Book, 0 00 171101 6, £2.50 hb; 0 00 171303 5, £1.25 pb

So the second instalment of *Lifeline Library* (fifty books that every Primary School teacher should not only *know* but *own*) is devoted to the twin arts of **Learning and Listening**, that pleasurable intermingling of endeavour and satisfaction. Learner/listeners can be of any age, of course, so the books of rhymes and easy reading that I recommend have been chosen because they are indispensable standbys from the Infants' Reception class right up to top Juniors.

I sometimes think that the zany Cat in the Hat, prancing around in his striped gear, educating all and sundry with a nonchalant flip of his paw, is the symbol of progressive ideas in education. He doesn't *seem* to be teaching children of all ages to read — but he is, as no doubt you have discovered.

Hullabaloo for Owl

Helen Piers, Magnet, 0 416 58980 4, 60p

Helen Piers is a genius. Her photographs of animals and people are monuments to her patience (how long did she have to wait for an owl to alight on a *telephone*?). And her text, with its insistence on bang-bang, clatter-clack and all the other hullabaloo that stops owl from sleeping, is equally good for simple reading practice and for storytime. One of many books in an indispensable series.

Frog and Toad are Friends

Arnold Lobel, World's Work I Can Read series, 0 437 90074 6, £3.50 hb; 0 437 96019 6, 60p pb

Frog and Toad are two of the most enchanting characters in a child's panorama of storybook people. Yet here they are, the stars of a series of easy readers! With delicious pond-coloured pictures of lively Frog ('The snow is melting, Toad. Wake up.') and sleepy Toad ('I am not here.') the gently humorous, always interesting Frog and Toad stories are of classic quality.

Mr Cosmo the Conjuror

Allan Ahlberg and Joe Wright, Kestrel, 0 7226 5658 0, £2.50; Puffin, 0 14 03.1237 4, 60p

One of the 'Happy Families' series that work in the repetition of words and phrases felicitously, as part of the rounding up of the story. The Cosmos are a family of Indian peripatetic conjurers. Mr Cosmo's hat produces rabbits, pigeons, cakes — and collects the money. Brightly coloured pictures throughout, to help the not quite fluent reader make those vital inspired guesses.

But though nursery rhymes, poems and the attractive easy to read material might seem to be reason enough to convey to beginning readers that the effort is worthwhile, there is still a missing ingredient — the story that cannot be read aloud to a class at one sitting, the on-going, exciting, willingly entered into other world that can 'grow' in the classroom over a day, a week, a month.

Selecting only three of these (for I am determined not to overstep ten recommendations for the Lifeline Library in each of the 1982 Books for Keeps issues) was agony. I look forward to seeing your supplementary suggestions, for the field is rich.

But the stories read *to* those who are learning to read must change as the learner grows older. Because most children are at what Sybil Marshall has called the 'overlap stage' from 5 to 8, the stories that I have selected for reading aloud here are those whose appeal will be strongest in the Infants School. Stories for reading aloud to older listener/learners will be covered later in the year.

The Bears on Hemlock Mountain

Alice Dalgliesh, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.0582 3, 65p

I chose this because it is everything any teacher could want — an adventure story (*are there bears on Hemlock Mountain? will they attack Jonathan when he is alone up there in the dark?*), and a story in which the whole class will join in with Jonathan as he gives himself courage with his tramping song — **THERE ARE NO BEARS ON HEMLOCK MOUNTAIN — NO BEARS AT ALL**. Also, as the story moves on, Helen Sewell's illustrations are scattered through the text, to intrigue, enchant at every stage. If you don't already know this book — and so many people don't seem to — rush out and buy it before it goes out of print.

Fantastic Mr Fox

Roald Dahl, Allen & Unwin, 0 04 823096 0, £2.95; Young Puffin, 0 14 03.0676 5, 90p

Also an enthralling read which makes one sadly aware of how much more care this author took when writing for children in the late '60s (this book was first published in 1970) than he does in his present wild extravaganza phase. This is a perfectly constructed witty, exciting story about a family of foxes (led by the crafty Fantastic Mr Fox) who outwit three farmers — Boggis, Bunce and Bean — who are trying to starve them out, or shoot them. The audience roots for the foxes all the time — and fantastic Mr Dahl (aided by his illustrator Jill Bennett) holds them breathless. A marvellous book full of memorable spirited characters.

Ramona the Pest

Beverly Cleary, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 02412 9, £4.50; Puffin, 0 14 03.0774 5, 95p

Chosen from the whole wonderful Ramona canon only because one may as well start at the beginning. (Ramona is a minor character — aged about 3 — in the 'Henry' books, but they are less attractive.) Authors who can get right inside their heroines are rare, but Beverly Cleary has uncanny insight and a marvellously humorous approach. Ramona, a doughty, not-to-be-put-upon, six-year-old younger sister, has the kind of adventures and experiences at home and at school — where she misunderstands much that is said to her by her teacher — that other six-year-olds have. She is therefore ever popular with them, and with much older girls, too, because they enjoy remembering their youth. Don't we all?

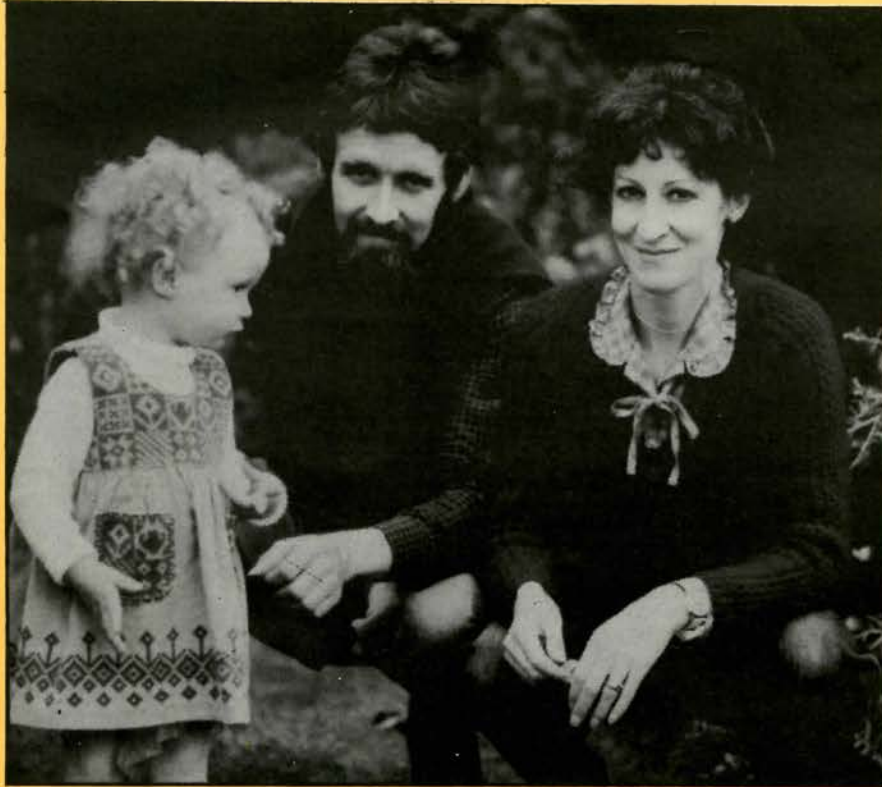
Still to come in the Lifeline Library:

3. **First Fling and Classics of Childhood**
4. **Novels**
5. **Poetry and Traditional Tales**

What's yellow and white and gets eaten at 100 m.p.h.?

A train driver's

Authorgraph No. 14



the fact that Allan is a 'day person' and Janet a 'night bird'. Allan rises at about 6.00 and works till around 11 a.m. Janet sleeps later. Jessica wakes at around 6.30, and obligingly plays in her cot until about nine when she has breakfast with Janet who leads a 'very domestic life in the mornings'. In the afternoon, Allan takes a nap, while Janet gets down to some work. One of two nice 'ladies' comes in to look after Jessica. 'They usually arrive after lunch. I have a cup of tea then go into my studio — and come out again half an hour later for another cup!'

When Allan wakes up he feels like 'a zombie for a while', then pulls himself together. 'I often do another hour's writing in the late afternoon, and usually take Jessica out to the park, until six.' The family gets together again until Jessica's bed time. 'Janet often works in the evenings, while I either go out to play badminton or down to the pub for a pint. Sometimes I just sit and read the papers. We haven't got a television.'

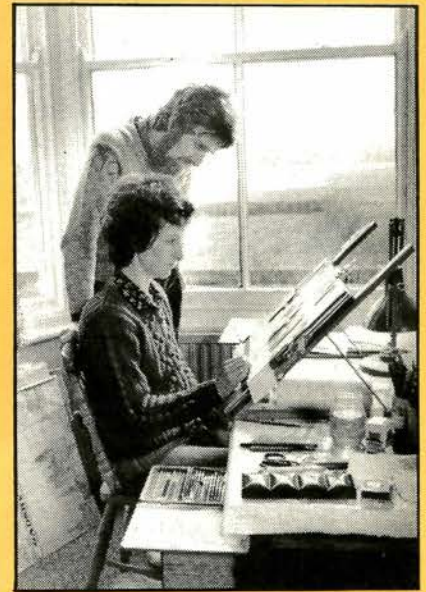


Photo by Michael Stockton

Janet Ahlberg
Allan Ahlberg

The last four years have seen a steady stream of successful Ahlberg books including *Funnybones*, *Peepo!*, the *Happy Families* series and *The Ha Ha Bonk Book*. During that time too, their daughter, Jessica, now two years old, was born. Last year they moved to another larger house in Leicester (where they have lived for some years) and are clearly enjoying being a family and a successful partnership able to concentrate on creating books.

Janet and Allan met each other at a teacher training college in Sunderland, where Janet was training for a career she wasn't to enjoy. 'I found teaching so awful that I switched to art college in Leicester. Teaching's all right, if you're not shy like I am. Otherwise it's like having to go on stage every day. I hated it.'

Allan, however, enjoyed teaching, and carried on for ten years at infant and junior level. 'But I did a lot of other jobs before that, too. I was one of the last to get caught for national service, but I was a postman, a plumber's mate and a gravedigger as well at odd times.'

Allan's experience of teaching paid off. Now Janet and he make a book first and find out later who else likes it. 'But with *Burglar Bill* I had a fair idea children would like it, even before I'd written it. It grew out of a game I used to play with a class of infants.

'At the end of the day there would often be five minutes to fill. I got the habit of telling them about *Burglar Bill*, who walked the local streets looking for houses to burgle. I'd use the names of local streets and the kids' actual houses. They loved it, wondering whose house would be next.'

When Janet and Allan married they moved to London, where Allan taught and Janet became

a freelance illustrator. She did a lot of work on non-fiction books, but what she really wanted to do was illustrate stories for children.

Allan was also discovering his true calling. 'I suppose from the age of 12 I always wanted to be a writer, but for 20 years I couldn't actually finish anything. Janet hadn't been offered any stories to illustrate, so she asked me to write one. I discovered that I could do it. I found I liked it too — so I kept at it.'

'I suppose that if we hadn't met neither of us might have got the chance to do what we really wanted. It's like a lyricist meeting a composer. Put them together and they can make songs, but apart they can't make anything.'

It wasn't *too* long before success came knocking on their door, 'although we did have a bad one and a half years. In the early years our work was often rejected. *Jeremiah in the Dark Woods*, for example, was turned down half a dozen times. At one point we had four or five packages of words and pictures going the rounds, like messages in bottles. Then, suddenly, three were taken — which explains why we work with more than one publisher even now.'

So now they're living 'the life of Riley', as Allan says, only it's unlikely that Riley would work quite so hard. 'We don't work together,' says Allan. 'That would drive us both crazy. I need silence when I'm working, for example, and Janet likes having the radio on.'

In the new house Allan is able to find peace from Janet's radio in 'a small room behind the loft above an old coach-house at the side of the house. In the old days this room was known as "the bothy", and was where the groom hung out in his spare time.'

Their daily work routine also takes into account

So what's going on in those two separate rooms? Allan and Janet stress that they're 'picture book makers' rather than an author and an illustrator who work together. 'The whole book interests us — the balance, the design, the rhythm of words and pictures, the type, the paper, the end papers, even the blurb.'

'We're making a book, and when we've finished the manuscript and painted the pictures, it doesn't end there. We work together, and we also like to work with the publisher and the printer. It's no good just ignoring that process. If there's a mistake and the printer doesn't get the colour right, for example, then people will see something that we didn't intend. People see the finished, printed, bound object — they don't see the artwork in the drawer.'

But where do the ideas come from? 'We start with words, an idea. Janet does a few roughs and we knock it around. It's all give and take, and everything eventually gives way to what looks — and sounds best. I just sit at a desk and write and cross out and re-write until I'm sick of it. If I'm not sick of it, I know it could be better, so I keep on until I am.'

As with all picture books, control slips away from the creators the further the book progresses down the chain of production. The Ahlbergs would like more control over every detail, but realise it's difficult. 'We don't get that much say over paperback or foreign editions, for example. Anyway, we'd go crazy if we tried to retain that sort of control. There simply isn't enough time.'

'There's always an urge to try and cap what you've already done, to put in that something *extra*. Better picture, better words,

How do you start a pudding race?

Sago!



I like this page





better paper — it's like trying to knock down skittles. One skittle is design, one is printing, and so on. And the game is to knock them all down at once.

'We fuss and pester over our work, but in the end we suspect it's light, trivial, a bit like candyfloss. It would probably be more valuable to be a gravedigger. So to a certain extent you have to become schizophrenic. You know that what you're doing is trivial, but you still have to treat it as if it's the most important thing in the world, otherwise you don't get the best results.'

Like many writers for children, Allan doesn't think of his audience when he puts pen to paper. 'You set out to please yourself, first of all. You don't really think about the kids. We hope that if we like what we've done, there's a fair chance others will.'

One exception to that was **Happy Families**. 'I got the idea from the old card game, and I thought it would be fun to write 12 variations on a theme. As I've said, I usually write first and then find out later if anyone else likes it. But with **Happy Families** I thought it would be pleasing to make a set of books which could be used in schools as well as having a general sale. So I got children to read the manuscripts and rewrote wherever necessary. In the future we hope to get ideas from our own audience research — that's Jessica.'

Janet illustrated only two of the **Happy Families** set of a dozen. Allan worked with some of the best of the rest on the others, illustrators like Andre Amstutz and Colin McNaughton. Allan had only six weeks to finish the final draft of the second six stories, and this period coincided with Jessica's early days when she hadn't settled down.

'I just had to get the stories finished, and I had to sleep downstairs in the end so that I wouldn't be disturbed. We did both stop work for a while after Jessica was born, and I don't think we'll work as hard as we used to ever again.'

Allan's now working on a new series of books with another top illustrator — Eric ('Where's Spot?') Hill. It's a set of six little books called **Help Your Child to Read**. 'If you've ever been a teacher, you'll have met some children who are completely unaware of books. I wanted to make books that parents could share with their pre-school children.'

'I didn't want the books to be heavily educational. Each title has stories and verses threaded like beads on a string. I spent a lot of time in a nursery school observing the kids to get ideas. One little girl came up to me and showed me a graze on her knee and said "I've got a poorly knee." It's a big thing when you're three or four to have a plaster on your knee. So after that, one of the characters became Poorly Pig who gets a plaster on pretty well every page.' Allan's enjoyed working with Eric Hill. 'I like Eric's work a lot. It's simple and warm-hearted — a rare combination.'

Janet has recently completed the artwork for their latest joint project, **The Baby's Catalogue**, which will be giving everyone from babies up much pleasure this autumn.

And that, it seems, is what the future holds for the Ahlbergs as a team, too — more pleasure in what they're doing. 'We never had any conscious plan for our lives. The whole thing has been bits of luck. But we're getting paid for what we absolutely love doing. If we didn't get paid we'd still be doing it as a hobby.'



Photo by Michael Stockton



How much further?



Three of the five Dads from **The Baby's Catalogue**, to be published this autumn.

arry me



The Books

Burglar Bill
Heinemann, 0 434 92500 4, £3.50
Picture Lions, 0 00 661486 8, 90p

Cops and Robbers
Heinemann, 0 434 92501 2, £3.95
Picture Lions, 0 00 661681 X, 90p

Jeremiah in the Dark Woods
Kestrel, 0 7226 5357 3, £3.95
Fontana Lions, 0 00 671640 7, 75p

The Old Joke Book
Kestrel, 0 7226 5237 2, £2.95
Picture Lions, 0 00 661409 4, 85p

Each Peach Pear Plum
Kestrel, 0 7226 5335 2, £4.50
Picture Lions, 0 00 661678 X, 90p

Funnybones
Heinemann, 0 434 92503 9, £3.95
Picture Lions, 0 00 661953 3, 95p

Peepo!
Kestrel, 0 7226 5707 2, £4.95

The Ha Ha Bonk Book
Kestrel, 0 7226 5745 5, £3.95
Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1412 1, 85p

Happy Families series
Twelve books — Kestrel, £2.25 each
Puffin, 60-75p each

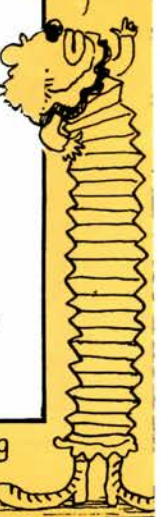
Fred's Dream
Picture Lions, 0 00 661930 4, 90p

The Great Marathon Football Match
Picture Lions, 0 00 661931 2, 90p

The Baby's Catalogue
Kestrel, 0 7226 5777 3, £4.95 (this autumn)

Drawings in the borders of these pages are from **The Ha Ha Bonk Book**

Is that it then



What's bad-tempered and goes with custard?



Apple grumble.



I'm buzzing off!

The World of Children's Books

Part 3

In search of another perspective on the World of Children's Books the good ship Books for Keeps casts off from Publishers Island and makes a new landfall on

AUTHORS ISLAND



We met many writers on Author Island. One of them was Jan Mark.

As we were leaving she thrust a manuscript into our hands. 'Take this back to the mainland,' she cried, 'so they will know what it is like for us.'

It was, of course, a story.

Ulysses among the Sirens

When the Trojan War was over, Ulysses climbed into his typewriter and set sail for home. The rays of the sinking sun cast a long shadow behind him, so he knew he must be headed westward, and his belief was confirmed when he passed a boatload of publicity and marketing personnel, proceeding in the opposite direction. They leaned over the gunwales and hailed him severally.

'Where've you been for the last ten years?' they asked in tones of friendly inquiry.

'At the Trojan War,' Ulysses replied.

'But I sent you to a Book Fair,' said his publicity officer, in some alarm, nervously waving his claim for expenses.

'Is that what it was?' Ulysses muttered, but the two craft were fast drawing apart and they did not hear him.

'You wouldn't like to go and talk to a group of librarians in Huddersfield, would you?' called the marketing manager, over the stern.

Ulysses indicated his assent since he did, in fact, like doing just that, and they bade farewell to each other with cries of mutual goodwill across the darkling sea for, oddly enough, publicity and marketing were always very nice about his books in spite of the fact that it was they who had to sell the things and the things were, in many instances, reckoned to be virtually unsaleable.

It was now twilight, but he thought he remembered well enough the straits through which he must pass, and there were many other authors floating in the same general direction, so with a wad of favourable reviews for buoyancy, he put his feet up on the platen and cruised in slumber over the limpid waters.

When next he sat up and took notice he was alone, and the dawn air was appreciably cooler. In some consternation Ulysses looked all round him at the lineaments of the islands amid which he was travelling. By the proud logos a gleam at the summit of every insular peak, he realized that he had drifted among the Publishers' Group but, whereas he recollected it as having been drawn on the map with firm assurance, it was not now as he recalled it. He could not help noticing, for instance, that the landscape seemed constantly to be changing and shifting. Isles which he had regarded hitherto as terrae firmae had sunk without trace, while violent submarine convulsions caused others to rise in unexpected places, amalgamating as he watched, or altering shape unrecognizably. One little lawny islet disappeared without trace before his very gaze, and tipped a population of frantic authors into the water. He could not see whether the editors were similarly thrown clear or went down with their list.

Eventually a tidal wave washed him into the mouth of a spacious bay which, by its deceptively calm appearance, misled him into believing it to be a haven. Trembling with relief he stood upright to announce his presence, and was instantly assailed by melodious cries emanating from a number of marine beasts basking in the sunshine upon rocks which punctuated the bay. Dazzled by the glittering light reflected from the iridescent scales of their tails, he was reassured to recognize a familiar face on the ingesting end of one such creature that beamed upside down at him from a nearby rock.

'Excuse me,' Ulysses began courteously, 'but were you not once my editor?'

The inhabitants of Authors Island are many and various: poets, artists, anthologists, dramatists, writers of fiction and non-fiction. Some are permanently resident, the ones for whom creating children's books is a full-time job. Some live on the island but commute to jobs in other places; several of these work in other parts of the children's book world as teachers, librarians, even reviewers. A few pop in for a while as a break from doing other things like being Prince of Wales or reading the news on television; but they don't usually stay long.

The majority of people on Author Island are serious about what they do. Their main aim is to be published; to navigate the hazardous Chance Channel and avoid the depressing Rejection Reef. Some attempt the crossing alone; others take the route via Agent's Island (we will visit that later). Some, particularly the writers of non-fiction, get commissioned; but it was not those we met on this first visit. Our aim was to find out something about the writers of fiction.

The writers of fiction

The main problem facing writers of fiction is that publishers may not publish what they write. We discovered while exploring Publisher's Island that editors are mindful of their companies' profits. They cannot simply publish what they like or think good; they have to publish books that will sell. What sells it seems is books that are new and gimmicky (hence the great wave of joke books, pop-ups and variations on pop-ups), or topical (all those Rubik cube books), and books that get noticed because they are on television or are written by famous people who appear on television.

None of that is much use to the writer of serious children's fiction. If that writer is unknown and unpublished he or she has to find an editor who is willing to take a risk. Not easy at the best of times (no-one wanted to take on *WaterShip Down*); even more difficult now that library funds have been so drastically reduced. Pretty well impossible if your great work is something no-one wants — a 500 page historical novel for instance. Demand fluctuates: social realism, fantasy, stories for a multi-cultural society, novels for teenagers. At present what is wanted is novels for Juniors. But first novels do get published and even win awards. Kestrel must be delighted that their gamble on Michelle Magorian has paid off so well; she, not unnaturally, is worrying about making her second book as good.

Even with visits to schools and Book Fairs (which some enjoy and others don't) writing is a solitary activity and authors often feel insecure. For most of them their relationship with their editors is very important and they come to depend on it for advice, criticism and encouragement. An editor is often the first to hear a vague idea for a book, the audience for the first draft or the opening chapters. To change editor can be traumatic.

Most writers, feeling a kind of loyalty, will stay with one or perhaps two publishing houses. But if an editor moves he may take 'his' writers with him, and a very popular or successful writer may be offered tempting contracts to write for another imprint. Most editors feel a duty to publish new work from established writers; but what happens when a writer doesn't want to write what a publisher wants to publish or a publisher doesn't want to publish what a writer wants to write?

'Whaddya mean, *were?*' the creature exclaimed, whipping over onto its front with a switch of its sinewy tail.

Having had a classical education Ulysses replied, 'I took you for a siren.'

'Alluring? Oh yes, I see what you mean,' the editor said, with a deprecating moue. 'But underneath this admittedly gorgeous exterior, I am still your editor. More to the point,' it went on, 'are you still our author?'

'Times have been hard,' Ulysses replied, defensively. 'I have, after all, been toppling the topless towers of Ilium for the last ten years.'

'If, by that laboriously literary metaphor, you mean you've been churning out lumping great tomes that make *War and Peace* look like a quickie and won't sell 1500 copies in hardback,' said the editor, 'don't blame me. I mean to say,' it continued, severely, 'you've spent so much time writing recently, that we thought you might have gone whoring after false gods.'

'You mean that crowd over there?' Ulysses asked, pointing to the neighbouring rocks from which the uproar of bright ideas and preened scales rose in a deafening aural cloud. 'Other publishers?'

'They're not real publishers!' the editor shouted. 'Incubi; succubi; anthropophagi, and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders.'

'Aw, come off it,' said Ulysses, 'they're not that bad. I've seen *you* talking to them — at parties —'

'That was different,' the editor said, hurriedly. 'You keep out of their way. You wouldn't like them, really.'

'I wasn't going anywhere near them,' Ulysses said.

'You've done it before,' the editor remarked.

'Only because you asked me to,' Ulysses returned, quickly, 'while you were on another rock.'

'That was different,' the editor snapped. 'I do wander everywhere, swifter than the moon's sphere,' it chanted, and rolled onto its back again. It appeared to doze for a while, after that, leaving Ulysses to ride at anchor, but meanwhile the waters had increased in turbulence, and the cries from the adjacent rocks grew more insistent. The mellifluous voice of the Children's Editor from Reptile Books vied with the blandishments of its counterpart at Effing & Blinding (Est 1832), while the representatives from the juvenile lists of Rodent Publishing and Cascara Paperbacks outsang each other in gut-busting fervour. Ulysses knew he should put wax in his ears but he, unlike the publishers, was only human. With growing self-esteem he heard himself offered simultaneous paperback publication, lunch, the illustrator of his choice and an orange colophon just like the grown-ups have, if only he would agree to confine himself to the 8-12 Age Range, a geographical feature to which he had not, previously given much attention. At the sound of this last mentioned, his editor awoke with a discordant clang.

'Wossat?' it said ferociously. '8-12 Age Range? There's gold in them there hills, cock, and you first climbed them under our imprint. There are people,' it said, with a leery wink, 'who wouldn't be sorry to see you go up again — and stay there.'

'What goes up must come down,' said Ulysses, sulkily kicking the shift lock, and imperceptibly nosing the typewriter round to face the Children's Editor from Reptile Books, which flashed sultry ocellades at him from behind a copy of its latest best-seller, *You Can Do the Cube and Chew Gum at the Same Time*.

'How about a quick sprint together up the 14+ Age Range?' Ulysses asked over his shoulder, in a last effort at coercion.

'I know your quick sprints,' said the editor. '75,000 words and the hero pegs out on the last page. A barrel of laughs it isn't. No. Mind you,' it murmured, 'you weren't *bad* on the 8-12s.'

'How about the nursery slopes?'

'8-12,' the editor reiterated, with a dreamy fixated gaze in its eye, and abstractedly flirting its tail so that a myriad of droplets sketched rainbows in the air. 'Some say 7-10, but it's really 8-12 . . .'

'Are you *asking* me to write a book for the 8-12 Age Range?' Ulysses said, with a wild surmise, and resolutely turning his back upon the Reptile editor which rose up on the tip of its tail and beckoned him languorously.

His own editor was staring at him with a surmise that was, if anything, even wilder. 'We could always do *War and Peace* as a pop-up book,' it said. 'Would you like to work on the text?'

'It would need shortening,' Ulysses pointed out, doubtfully.



'Yer, well; a bit,' the editor conceded. 'But that's what you're good at,' it went on, brightening. 'Think what we could do with Pierre, popping up at Borodino . . .'

Ulysses got out his loud hailer and addressed the editor of Cascara Paperbacks.

'How do you fancy a teenage novel?' he inquired.

'Like a hole in the head,' came the reply, across the wine-dark sea. Ulysses turned back to his editor, which was still speaking.

'You weren't thinking of compiling a joke-book, were you?' it asked, hopefully, 'with sections introduced by famous people? Mother-in-law jokes by Hecuba . . . Blindness jokes by Polyphemus . . . ?'

'No I bloody wasn't,' Ulysses said.

'Hoity-toity,' said the editor indicating, with its nether fin, the waters that were rapidly silting up with unsuccessful authors who sank under the weight of waterlogged letters of rejection. 'One of your novels weighs about as much as a hundred wet rejection slips,' it said, meaningly, 'and reviews won't keep you afloat for ever. Hey — where do you think you're off to?' it demanded, as Ulysses turned his typewriter toward the horizon.

'Sod this for a game of candles,' said Ulysses, 'I'm going to write an adult novel.'

'You'll perish miserably!' the editor shrieked, thrashing from side to side on the convoluted coils of its tail. 'The world is flat. You'll fall off the edge and never be heard of again! There's no such thing as an adult novel!'

Ulysses was discomposed for a moment, until he recalled that the unfortunate creature had spent so long on its rock surrounded by unsolicited manuscripts that it had forgotten that such things as adult novels existed since, as it had once complained bitterly, it never got the chance to read any.

So he forged ahead until he felt the typewriter rocked savagely by an upheaval in the sea astern. He looked back and desolation met his gaze. Once again the mighty archipelago was on the move; islands rose, sand banks foundered, rocks ground together, chasms opened and volcanoes belched, as Rodent Publishing, Cascara Paperbacks Ltd, Reptile Books and Effing & Blinding (Est 1832) metamorphosed and finally coalesced into one vast benighted land mass crowned with peaks of uniform height that encircled inescapably the miserable little puddle of water where Ulysses lay becalmed upon his Olivetti. Wordlessly, for once, he looked all about him at the rampart of implacable cliffs that surrounded his craft. It was the 8-12 Age Range, and it had got him. ●

Jan Mark

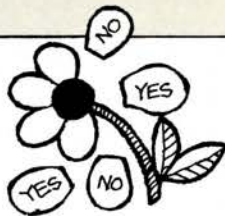
Jan Mark started her career as a writer for children in 1974 when she won the Penguin/Guardian competition for a novel for the 8-12 age range with a twentieth century setting. That book, *Thunder and Lightnings* won the Carnegie medal and was runner-up for the Guardian Award. Her third novel, for older readers *The Ennead* showed a radical change in

style which delighted some and dismayed others. In similar style are *Divide and Rule*, and *Aquarius* (published this month). Rightly refusing to be typecast Jan Mark has also written *Nothing to be Afraid of*, a collection of short stories which was highly commended for the 1980 Carnegie Medal and the Guardian Award refused to consider because it was 'too adult'. (It will be

available in Puffin this autumn.) Last year came *Hairs in the Palm of the Hand*, two very funny long short stories with a school background.

Jan Mark is published in hardback by Kestrel and in paperback by Puffin and Granada. A new book *The Dead Letter Box* will be published by Hamish Hamilton in June.

SPRING SELECTION



From the picture books we have seen so far this year we've chosen twenty-five which we think are the pick of the bunch.

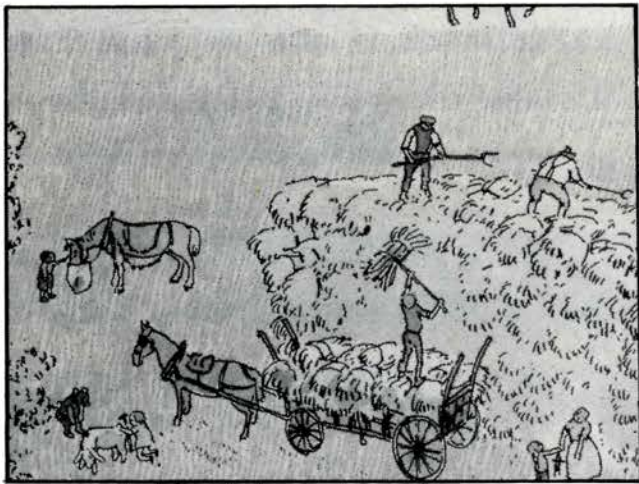
For the purposes of this selection 'picture books' means 'books in which pictures play a major part'. You'll find stories, poetry, and information, for all ages.

Just Pictures . . .

Anno's Britain

Bodley Head, 0 370 30916 2, £4.95

No words but hundreds of stories and hours of enjoyment. Like Anno's Journey and Anno's Italy this is an inexhaustible book; each look through the detailed pages reveals new delights and surprises. (Can you spot the Queen taking the dog for a walk?) The additional fascination is that this time Mitsumasa Anno is travelling through *our* country and offering us his vision of our landscape, history, culture and people. It's a green and pleasant land he shows us — a warning perhaps from someone who mourns the disappearance of his own Japan under concrete, that we should keep it that way. For all ages, but especially 9+.



A small section of one of the pages of Anno's Britain. See anything familiar?



The joys of Shopping. Mum struggles in and out of too-tight trousers; Baby plays peepo round the changing room curtain.

Animals

0 416 06070 6

Holidays

0 416 06050 1

Shopping

0 416 06060 9

Bedtime

0 416 06090 0

Helping

0 416 06080 3

Helen Oxenbury, Methuen/Walker, 99p each

There are marvellous opportunities for children to story for themselves in Helen Oxenbury's second series of board books; but the baby has grown up considerably and, dare we suggest, should have grown out of board books. The ideas in these five are much more sophisticated and children who would best appreciate them are well beyond the accepted board book stage. Herein lies the dilemma: I would certainly want to include them in any collection for under-eights but will their format deter would-be readers and buyers? More please, but as ordinary books next time.



Ernest, Celestine and Gideon at the beginning of the story.

Three for the Youngest

Ernest and Celestine

Gabrielle Vincent, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 072 2, £3.50

With a text wholly in dialogue, the story focusses on the friendship between the young and the old: Celestine, a young mouse loses her beloved toy duck Gideon whilst out walking with Ernest, a large brown bear. Celestine is inconsolable — no other toy will do — until Ernest lovingly makes another Gideon. Gabrielle Vincent's gentle water colours are full of warmth and character and have tremendous appeal for the young reader. (A companion volume *Bravo, Ernest and Celestine* is also just published.)

Avocado Baby

John Burningham, Cape, 0 224 02004 8, £3.95

Not the best of Burningham but still too good to leave out. The new addition to the Hargraves family — an anorexic infant — is in a sad state until it samples an avocado, is instantly addicted and, on a daily diet of same, goes from strength to strength. Its feats include tackling a burglar, moving furniture, bump-starting the family car, and finally, the super-tot disposes of a pair of bullies — into the pond.

Burningham's delightful humour and economy of both line and language should tempt all ages.

Wilberforce Goes on a Picnic

Margaret Gordon, Kestrel, 0 7226 5750 1, £3.95

Showing not telling is the key to the enjoyment of this story. Above a very understated text is depicted the hilarious action of the day Wilberforce, a very characterful bear, went on a picnic to the country with his grandparents and his brother and sister. For example, a sloping field

liberally dotted with cowpats and infested with flies, wasps and other creepy-crawlies bears the caption 'until they found an ideal picnic spot'. Wilberforce is surely destined to join the ranks of other favourite bears. (Wilberforce goes Shopping follows in the autumn.)



Then he cleaned his teeth and brushed his ears.

Wilberforce gets ready for the picnic.

Lots of Visual Jokes

The Trunk

0 19 272124 0

Cat on the Mat

0 19 272123

Brian Wildsmith, Oxford University Press, 95p each

The Trunk is an entirely visual joke: a succession of animals climb what they think is a tree, find themselves on top of an elephant and slide back to the ground.

Cat on the Mat wittily exploits the sentence we all associate with phonic primers: the cat sat on the mat; a dog, a goat, a cow follow suit, but the last straw is an elephant; then Sppstt!... The cat sat on the mat. It is good to see Wildsmith turning his talents to books such as these and thus making his work accessible to a much wider book buying public.

One Hunter

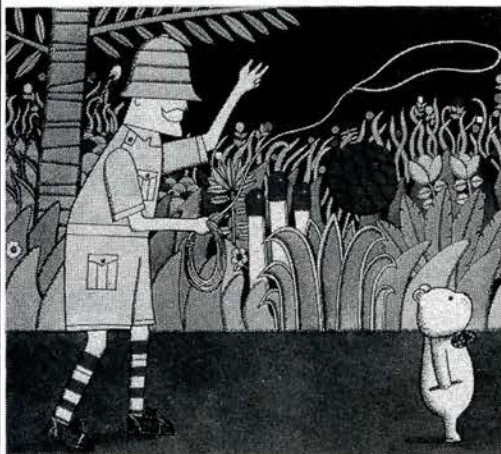
Pat Hutchins, Bodley Head, 0 370 30920 0, £3.95

Playing the game with the author is what readers of Pat Hutchins' latest book are being invited to do. The only words she uses are 1 hunter, 2 elephants, 3 giraffes... 10 parrots, but each picture shows the hunter marching resolutely forward, gun at the ready, whilst more and more animals appear and stalk him. The ten parrots finally give the game away and he flees from the serried ranks of intended prey. A wonderfully controlled joke.

Bear Hunt

Anthony Browne, Hippo, 0 590 70090 1, 95p

Visual jokes abound in what at first appears a simple story in which a white teddybear foils his would-be captors by making timely use of his magic pencil. Look again and keep on looking... A marvellous book for all ages.



'Run, Bear! Run!' Anthony Browne's jungle is full of surprises in **Bear Hunt**.

Welcome in Paperback

Quest for the Gloop

Helen Nicoll, ill. Jan Pieńkowski, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.365 X £1.50

A space epic in comic strip format: something of a new departure for this author/artist partnership and an entirely successful one. The deliberately garish colours are just right for this dramatic comedy in which Captain Murphy, aided by his robot PHIX, undertakes a desperate mission to save their planet Beetlejuice 8. Great stuff!



Funnybones

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Picture Lions, 0 00 661953 3, 90p

'On a dark dark hill/there was a dark dark town./In the dark dark town/there was a dark dark street'... does it ring any bells? Children immediately make the link and devour this smashing tale of three aspiring menaces whose nocturnal antics only succeed in frightening themselves. Skeletons, brilliantly effective use of colour and black and white, bubble-talk and an opportunity to break into song; what more could any reader ask?

The Wild Washerwomen

John Yeoman and Quentin Blake, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.367 6, £1.15

Tired of their lot, the seven washerwomen go rampaging through the countryside in a goat-cart wreaking havoc in their wake. When they run into seven woodcutters, their bid for liberation receives a set-back; but those fearsome ladies are equal to any challenge. An exuberantly witty combination of words and pictures.

For Beginning Readers

Three by the Sea

Edward Marshall, ill. James Marshall, Bodley Beginner, 0 370 30455 1, £3.25

Not to be missed on any account. Lolly's friends certainly know what makes a good story. In disgusted response to the banal offering from her 'reader', they take the same characters and skillfully create their own stories with suspense, humour and a twist in the tail. If only all children (and teachers) were as critical of what is put forward in the name of reading in schools as this pair!

James Marshall's illustrations are just right for the casual, almost throw-away humour of the writing.

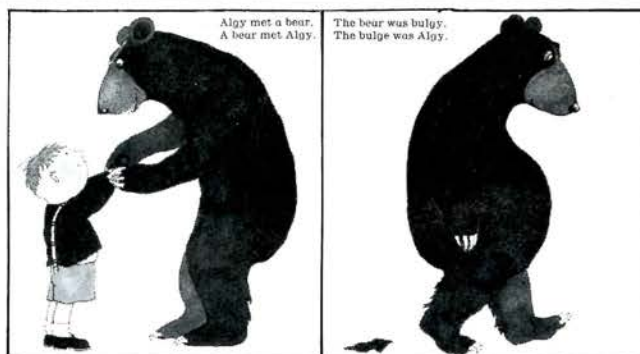
Mrs Gaddy and the Ghost

Wilson Gage, ill. Marylin Hafner, Hippo, 0 590 70060 X, £1.25

First published in this country as a Bodley Beginner, it is good to see this splendid book for new solo readers in paperback so soon. It tells how Mrs Gaddy, after making determined efforts to get rid of her resident apparition, has a sudden change of heart and takes him on as a kitchen help. The humour is beautifully brought out in Marylin Hafner's pink and brown illustrations — her facial expressions are especially good.



Mrs Gaddy



Tiny Tim

Pictures by Helen Oxenbury, Verses chosen by Jill Bennett, Heinemann, 434 95601 5, £3.95

A splendidly useful collection of sure-fire hits for Infants. Good rhythm, strong rhymes, some familiar lines and Helen Oxenbury's excellent illustrations, which manage to be supportively literal, imaginative and funny, make this a must for beginner readers.

Longer Stories

The Paper Bag Princess

Robert N Munsch, ill. Michael Martchenko, Hippo, 0 590 71126 1, 85p

Beautiful princess, Elizabeth, is left with only a paper bag to wear when the dragon smashes up her castle and carries off her betrothed, handsome Prince Ronald. Nevertheless by a combination of guts, intelligence and guile she rescues Ronald. Add to that much role reversal a very un-fairy tale ending and you get a story some little girls will resist and most small boys will reject completely. Don't give up — at least get them talking about why they don't like it. It's short, sharp and funny; good yeast for all ages.

The Wild Swans

Hans Christian Andersen, retold by Amy Ehrlich, Pictures by Susan Jeffers, Macmillan, 0 333 32659 8, £4.95

In one sense perhaps this powerfully beautiful story of self-sacrifice and devotion needs no illustration. But if young listeners and readers need pictures to fire their imaginations then these are the ones to give them. Lyrical, sad, mysterious and frightening by turns, Susan Jeffers' illustrations are beautifully executed and exactly in tune with Andersen's story. The large format and design of the book (lots of double page spread pictures) make it good for reading aloud or story-telling.

Babylon

Jill Paton Walsh, ill. Jennifer Northway, André Deutsch, 0 233 97362 1, £4.95

It's a joy to see an artist *who can* capture so sympathetically and realistically the essential vitality and beauty of black children (and adults) in an English setting.



'It was Dulcie who felt sad. 'I always been here,' she said, 'I ain't go no Zion.'"

The story of David, Lesley and Dulcie's journey through the hanging gardens of Babylon — a disused railway viaduct in the inner city — and descriptions of what they see, is told in equally vibrant style. The text possesses an almost poetic quality in places which causes the reader to focus on *how* language works as well as *what* it says. An altogether beautiful book.

The Magic Mouse and the Millionaire

Robert McCrum, ill. Michael Foreman, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10720 2, £4.25

Take a run-down circus, a sad millionaire, a ringmaster's son (who is nine and full of ideas) and a magic mouse who does amazing tricks. Mix well, and you have a jolly moral tale, simply and rhythmically told with some nice humorous touches. Add Michael Foreman's marvellously atmospheric pictures which exactly complement the writing and you have a winner of a book.

Information Books

Cathedral — The Story of its Construction

David Macaulay, Collins, 0 00 192142 8, £3.50

A paperback, full-size edition of David Macaulay's classic book about the building of a Gothic cathedral (at imaginary Chutreaux in France). In story form each step of the nearly hundred year task is described and accompanied by clear explanatory drawings and diagrams in black and white line. It is miraculously comprehensible and manages, as well as explaining, to convey something of what inspired the people of the thirteenth and fourteenth century to create such staggeringly beautiful buildings.

Mechanical Giants

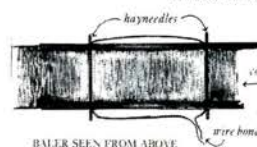
Roland Berry, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10765 2, £2.95

Sheer size is always impressive. Roland Berry has drawn twenty-six of the world's biggest machines from construction, underwater working, farming and transport. Those fascinated by the biggest, the heaviest, the longest etc will be attracted by the full colour pictures (each containing something familiar to give a sense of scale) and short, clear explanations which pack in facts while remaining chatty and accessible. An index and more headings to identify groups would have put this in the useful easy reference class. As it is it can only be recommended as a super book for dipping into.

Shakespeare and His Theatre

John Russell Brown, ill. David Gentleman, Kestrel, 0 7226 5558 4, £5.50

An invaluable aid for anyone wanting to remove Shakespeare from an academic ivory tower and put him and his plays a little closer to an understandable reality. Eight short sections are packed with information about the Globe Theatre and how the plays were staged. Those daunted by blocks of continuous print (there are no sub-headings) will still find masses of information in David Gentleman's excellent, lively full colour illustrations which are plentiful.



Haymaking in the 19th century.

The Story of Hay

Geoffrey Patterson, André Deutsch, 0 233 97356 7, £4.50

Another of Geoffrey Patterson's fascinating accounts of country life. This one looks at haymaking across the centuries from the earliest reaping hook to present day mechanisation. Beautifully drawn and intelligently labelled pictures of implements and machines accompany a short, clear text. A fascinating book which with its friendly authoritative tone could be a useful source or background book for much middle/secondary work. It has a simple index.

Looking at Art — People at Work

Patrick Conner, Wayland, 0 85340 889 0, £4.95

One of a series of three (*People at Home* and *Faces* are the other two) which looks at a subject through the eyes of thirty artists from different times and places. The artist's technique, interpretation, attitude and intention are touched on easily in the brief commentary which accompanies the pictures and gets the reader thinking and asking more questions. Short biographies of the artists and a simple index at the end.

The Ideal Home

Fulvio Testa, Abelard, 0 200 72768 0, £4.95

A series of double page spreads depicting how man lived from cave dwellers to skyscrapers. Each picture has two or three sentences of explanatory text. To encourage really close looking (and thinking) Fulvio Testa has drawn in anachronisms — television aerials on the roofs of a medieval walled town for instance. A good springboard for talking and investigation with Infants or Juniors.

This feature compiled by Jill Bennett and Pat Triggs

AWARDS

The Mother Goose Award

Winner — Jan Ormerod for **Sunshine**



Chris Powling — one of the judges —
un-scrambles the Mother Goose Egg

Back in 1978, when Clodagh Alborough convened the first Mother Goose panel, it all looked so simple. The new award was for 'the most exciting newcomer to British children's book illustration'. It was to be presented soon after Easter each year in the form of a Cheque plus an elegant bronze egg. Our aim was to encourage young illustrators at the outset of their career, to urge publishers to invest in new talent and to promote the cause of children's book illustration generally.

Straightforward enough? Four years of panel membership has convinced me that it's far easier to lay an egg than to present one. Not, let me hasten to add, that I've ever lost any sleep about our final choices — it's the way we get there that keeps me awake far into the night. If a half-dozen impartial 'experts' who like each other enormously, share a mutual enthusiasm and are far too busy to waste even a split-second can still take so long to reach agreement then I'm astonished that — say — a jury, or a parliamentary committee, or the security council of the U.N. ever comes to any decisions at all.

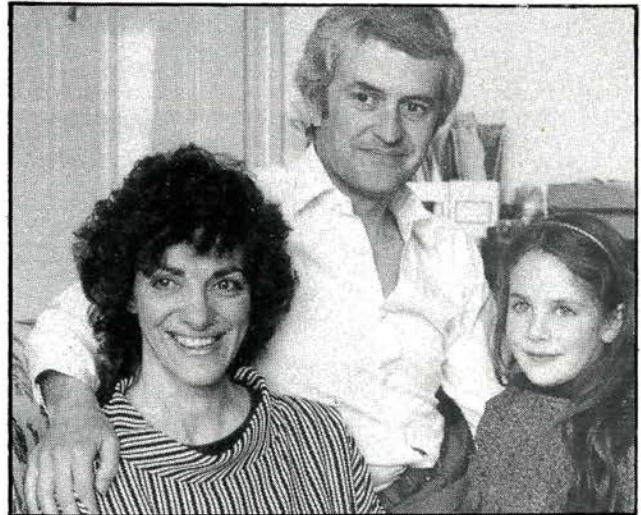
Part of the problem, of course, is that no definition is ever quite tight enough. What constitutes a 'newcomer' for example? Clearly we don't mean someone actually setting pencil to paper for the very first time but does that mean the first children's book illustrated by the President of the Royal Academy qualifies? And does a pop-up book count as illustration? To both we said 'yes' . . . eventually. Even tougher issues to resolve, since they affect almost every entry, concern the vexed question of the relationship between the pictures and the text they're serving (or should it be the other way round?) and how well or not a young artist's work has emerged from the printshop. With regard to the latter, our horror-stories increase annually: heavy ink and bad register on poor paper; cramped, dull lay-out in which even the height of the type had not always been checked; even — believe it or not — printing so erratic that one side of a double-spread is in hard focus and the other in soft. Perhaps our all-time Mother Goose Bad Egg goes to the publisher who this year seemed to have commissioned pictures in full colour but reproduced them in black-and-white half-tone to cut costs. This device ensured that a young talent appeared, quite literally, as a pale shadow of its true self.

After all this, it's time for the real fun to start. After umpteen hours spent on a hard-won shortlist, it's the calendar as much as the clock that commits us to a winner. For what we're backing is corporate hunch — our favourite from the year's dark horses who's most likely to keep up the running.

This year we are putting our money on Jan Ormerod. In *Sunshine* through a highly skilled use of texture, colour and line she tells the story of a family (small girl, Mum and Dad) getting up. There is no text; the book is a sequence of frames drawn and positioned with perfect judgement, each one advancing the story without apparent effort or insistence. Nothing much happens and nothing at all is said. Yet what comes across is *affection* — for the child, for the family, for the new day that awaits them. Jan Ormerod has an uncommon grasp of the common touch; she makes the ordinary luminous. *Sunshine* leaves you feeling good to be alive.

But the prize has never been harder to win. This year the panel are more than happy to make an each-way bet that the runners-up, Roy Gerrard, Valerie Littlewood and Terry McKenna, will be making the running in the years to come.

So far, as tipsters, our track-record isn't bad: Michelle Cartledge (1979), Reg Cartwright (1980), Juan Wijngaard (1981) and now, in 1982, Jan Ormerod. Each is very different but one thing they all share . . . in hands like theirs picture-books aren't just pretty they're *potent*. Already I'm looking forward to next year.



Pat Triggs talks to Jan Ormerod

For Jan Ormerod 1976 was something of a watershed. 'Until then I hadn't thought much about children. I'd never been very maternal and children had never really been a part of my life.' Studying art and design in Western Australia where she was born had led not to book illustration but to teaching, lecturing and freelance designing. 'I did things like wall hangings and murals.' Two people changed all that: her husband, Paul, who is a children's librarian, and their daughter, Sophie who was born in 1976. 'That was the start of my interest in children's books.' Paul fed that interest with a steady stream of picture books and Jan was delighted with the 'human qualities' she found in books by artists like the Ahlbergs and Shirley Hughes.

When the family came to England three years ago Jan took her portfolio round the children's publishers. *Kestrel* was the second. In among her other work were some strip-style black and white drawings of a little girl waking up. Martin West, the editor she saw, suggested she 'expand it'. Within a week she had produced a full colour 'dummy' book. *Kestrel* took it to the Bologna International Children's Book Fair where it was 'well received' by other publishers. That was Spring 1980. A year later *Sunshine* was published and this Spring, co-incidentally with the Mother Goose Award, comes *Moonlight* (our cover book) about the same little girl going to bed.

Both books are about the Ormerod family. 'I did the first drawings when Sophie was about four. I was so delighted by the beautiful relationship between us three — and by the resourcefulness of our four year old.' Intensely personal as they are the books strike an immediate chord with many readers. They are a marvellous celebration of the warmth of family life.

Jan designed the books for sharing. 'I imagined people being very close together while they looked at it. I wanted to tell the story in the simplest possible way. I tried always to use the frames not as limitations but as part of the storytelling. I learned a lot from Shirley Hughes. I pored over *Up and Up* for hours!'

There are more Jan Ormerod books on the way. From *Kestrel*, *Rhymes Around the Day*, a collection of about thirty traditional rhymes chosen by Pat Thomson which Jan has illustrated with pictures of a present-day family (five-year-old twins and a boy of two) throughout the day. And from Dent, *Be Brave Billy* (provisional title) a picture book with words also about a family.

Jan has also illustrated other people's work. She has done black and white illustrations for *Chewing Gum Rescue* (a collection of Margaret Mahy stories, Dent) and *Hairs in the Palm of my Hand* (two stories by Jan Mark, Kestrel). 'It has extended me. I'm asked to draw things I would never ask myself to draw so I get pushed beyond my limits. It's hard work but I enjoy it.'

What of the immediate future? 'Well, I'm expecting another baby in November. And we are going back to Australia, to Melbourne, for a while, though we hope to return. I shall keep working on children's books. I've got a lot of ideas but I feel I need to stop for a minute to see where I am, where I've been and where I'm going.'

Sunshine is published by Kestrel, 0 7226 5736 6, £3.95.

The runners-up:

Roy Gerrard for the illustrations in *Matilda Jane* by Jean Gerrard, Gollancz, 0 575 02897 1, £4.95.

Valerie Littlewood for the illustrations in *Only the Best* by Meguido Zola, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 047 1, £4.95.

Terry McKenna for the illustrations in *The Fox and the Circus Bear*, Gollancz, 0 575 02918 8, £3.95.

AWARDS

The Children's Book Award Winner — *Fair's Fair* by Leon Garfield



The Children's Book Award, now in its second year, seems already a well-established part of the children's books scene.

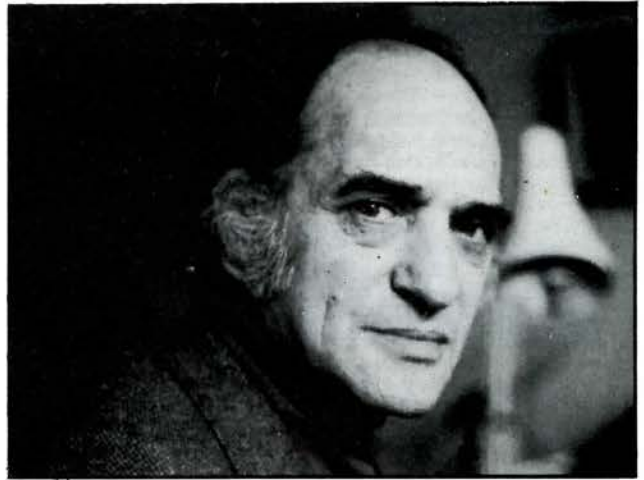
It is given by the Federation of Children's Book Groups for a work of fiction for children under fourteen, and is unusual in that children play a large part in deciding which book shall be the winner. In the main, members of the Federation of Children's Book Groups are parents and through their activities in families, playgroups, schools and libraries they are able to collect information about children's responses to books all over the country.

Pat Thomson who co-ordinates the award says, 'We seek a high standard in literary and physical terms but we use the Federation's unique opportunities to see how the children judge the books, and we give them the last word. The Award expresses our concern for fiction at a time when cuts are operating against children's books, and our concern that standards are maintained. Nothing in our search has suggested that children automatically prefer lower standards.'

The very special prize takes the form of a book filled with comments, letters and pictures from the children who took the winning title to their hearts.

Announcing the Award, the Federation said, 'It is with particular pleasure that we find that this excellent writer is accessible to younger readers. The eldest thoroughly enjoyed it, the middle age range lived through every moment, and the five to sevens, having been reassured by the first reading that all would end well, clamoured for it again.'

'The book is a mystery story, well illustrated in colour by Margaret Chamberlain, and tells how two poor children with courage, honesty and tenacity win through to happiness. Whatever has happened to our world, children clearly still admire these qualities and want to see them celebrated in their books. The adults of the Federation can only respect their clear-sightedness and learn from their optimism. We applaud their choice.'



The 'Top Ten' runners-up are:

Peepo!

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Kestrel, 0 7226 5707 2, £4.95

The baby's day, seen through a peephole which makes the book as much fun as the game. 0+

Sunshine

Jan Ormerod, Kestrel, 0 7226 5736 6, £3.95

Every child makes this book its own by supplying the words to go with the clear, witty pictures. 2+

The Patchwork Cat

Nicola Bayley and William Mayne, Cape, 0 224 01925 2, £3.95

Beautiful pictures, fascinating word play. A book of great quality, with an appealing tabby cat heroine. 6-9

World Eater

Robert Swindells, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 26576 0, £4.95 (reprinting January 1983)

Science fiction, well paced for younger readers. Tension as the young hero finds himself the possessor of a terrible secret. 9+

Rainbow Cake

Alan Spooner, Kestrel, 0 7226 5675 0, £4.95

An evacuee, Brian never imagined he would actually meet a German one day and see him as a real person. Honest, absorbing war story for the 9-12s.

The Highwayman

Charles Keeping, OUP, 0 19 279748 4, £4.50

Alfred Noyes's poem brilliantly realised in striking illustration. A superb picture book for everyone over 10.

The Hollow Land

Jane Gardam, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 023 4, £5.25

Beautifully written stories of a life-long friendship and a landscape. For younger if read aloud, otherwise about 11.

Playing Beatie Bow

Ruth Park, Kestrel, 0 7226 5771 4, £5.50 (now in Puffin)

Absorbing time fantasy. Very modern Abigail moves in to Sydney's Victorian past when the children play the old game of Beatie Bow. 11+

The Seventh Raven

Peter Dickinson, Gollancz, 0 575 02960 9, £4.95

Drama in the setting, the events and the emotions. Excellent thriller for teenagers. 13+

See You Thursday

Jean Ure, Kestrel, 0 7226 5724 2, £4.95 (Puffin in June)

A romantic novel about a young girl's growing love for a wise young man. Went straight to the heart of every female reader.



Fair's Fair is published by Macdonald, 0 354 08126 8, £3.25.

Copies of a specially designed poster featuring the winning book and listing the 'top ten' are available FREE (send large sae with 12½p stamp to the SBA). This year it is designed by Margaret Chamberlain and features lots of snow and the huge black dog of the story. 'Great for Christmas book fairs,' says Pat Thomson.

Also available, *Pick of the Year*, an annotated booklist featuring the 'top eleven' plus thirty other recommended titles. From: Jan Ryan, 79 Moorhouse Road, Off Willoughby Road, Hull, North Humberside HU5 5PP. Price 20p including postage.

The GUARDIAN Award

Winner — **Goodnight Mister Tom** by Michelle Magorian

The only first novel to have won the Guardian Children's Fiction Award until this year was **Watership Down**, a difficult act to follow.

Tony Bradman talks to Michelle Magorian

There's no doubt that **Goodnight Mister Tom** deserves the praise it's getting (and has got every since it was published last year). It's a classic, tear-jerking story of how an irascible, solitary old man and a battered, emotionally starved young boy develop a close relationship when the boy is evacuated to the country from London in 1940.

The background to the novel is so vividly realised it was something of a surprise to discover that Michelle Magorian was born two years after the end of the war in which her novel is set. Another surprise is that she is an actress.

'In repertory touring around I discovered writing was a good thing to fill in the gaps when I wasn't working. But all the time I knew I wanted to write something substantial, something more creative.'

She decided to set herself the task of writing a book of short stories based on colours. One of them 'Green and Brown' was about an evacuee dumped on an old man. 'I was sitting in the launderette and I just had this vision of a small boy standing in a graveyard with a label round his neck.' Another story was about the young Mister Tom and his wife Rachel, who in the novel is only a memory of a dead young wife.

Having finished ten short stories, Michelle realised that she could tackle something bigger. 'I realised that if I could write ten short stories I could write ten chapters. So I set out to do it.' Writing the novel took four years and a lot of research. (Michelle's father generously supported her when work was scarce.) She did loads and loads of reading and also haunted junk shops. 'I got some women's mags from the war which were a great help.'

Other parts of her background also went into the book. 'My mother was a nurse in the London Blitz, and she'd met lots of kids from the slums. She told me the story about a little boy who was badly grazed, and they had to cut him out of his underwear to treat him. His mother was furious — she'd sewn him in for the winter.'

Michelle is very shy and modest, evident in the slight worry she expresses about the Guardian Fiction Award. It's a prestigious award, and she also won an American award — The International Reading Association Children's Book Award — and was a runner-up in the Young Observer/Rank Organisation Fiction Prize.

'I'm afraid people might have great expectations of me and they also might want 'Mister Tom Revisited' for years to come. I've been in the background for so long, struggling, that actually to make it is unfamiliar and a little uncomfortable. I don't want great expectations to be left unfulfilled.

'But on the other side of the scale, I hope more bookshops will take the book so that more kids will read it. I have heard that some adults don't like some of the harshness and reality in the book — but I've had good feedback from kids. When I was a child I always wanted to read books about real feelings and situations, books about children's fears and problems. Those are the sorts of books I want to write.'

Goodnight Mister Tom is published by Kestrel, 0 7226 5701 3, £5.50.

Runner-up — **Playing Beatie Bow** by Ruth Park (Kestrel, 0 7226 5771 4, £5.50 and Puffin, 0 14 03.1460 1, £1.25)

Abigail, a resilient Australian teenager, is drawn back in time and finds herself part of the Victorian working-class life which existed where her own modern Sydney flat block now stands. A powerful and compelling fantasy. Winner of the 1981 Australian Children's Book of the Year Award.

SPACERS

SPACE RESCUE SERVICE

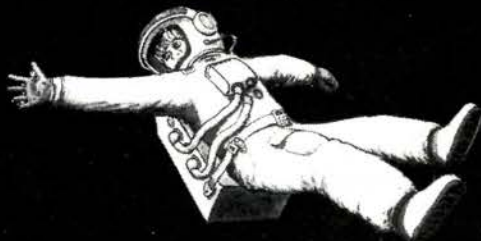
LIFT OFF TO DANGER

Written and illustrated by
ROY BENTLEY

Four young space cadets set out from Moonbase One on their first mission without an instructor. Everything goes off without a hitch until one of them leaves the ship to inspect a satellite. His safety line snaps and he is left floating in space without fuel or oxygen. Will he be rescued in time?

An exciting adventure story with accurate technical detail.

June £4.50



 **ANDRE DEUTSCH**

Upon the Head of the Goat

ARANKA SIEGAL

The intensely moving story of a Hungarian Jewish girl's experiences from 1939 to 1944, set against the background of the impending holocaust and before the horrors of her survival in Auschwitz.

Ages 11+ September £5.95

Buddy

NIGEL HINTON

The vivid story of a young teenager and the anxieties he faces when abandoned by his mother to cope with his feckless out-of-work father and complex problems at school.

Ages 11-17 May £5.95

Children's Catalogue available on request from the Publicity Dept., J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 33 Welbeck Street, London W1M 8LX.

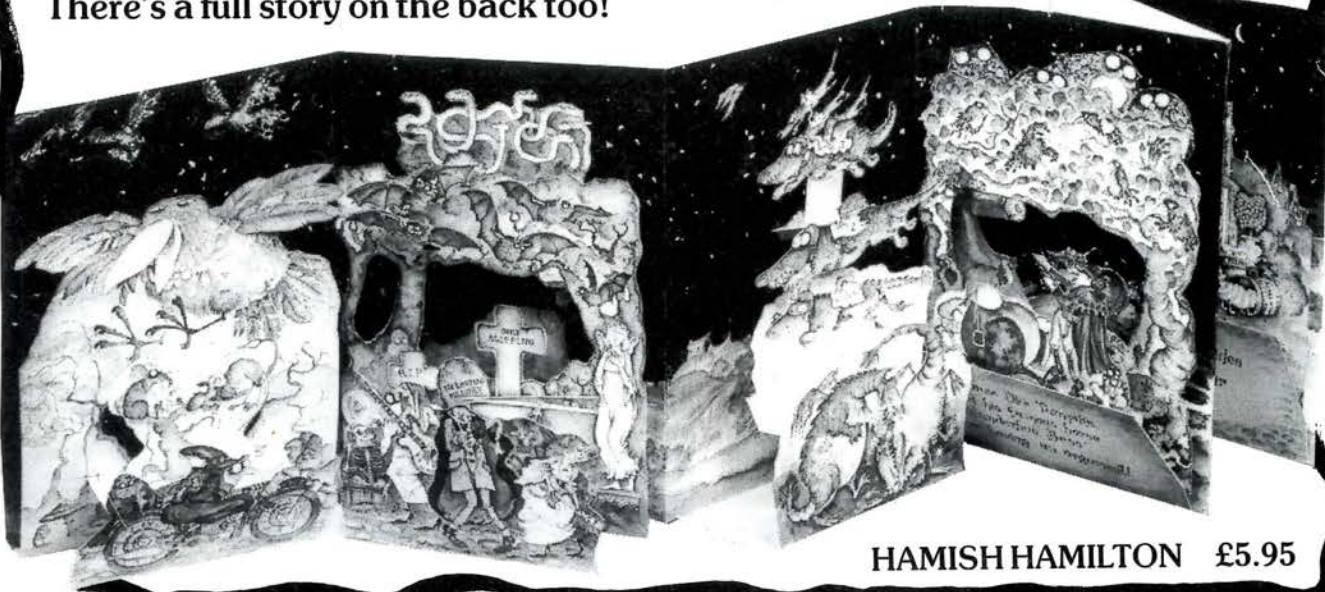
DENT

Don't go out TONIGHT

Babette Cole

A hilarious new pop-up book to delight children of all ages.

Six marvellous scenes, complete with moving parts, unfold concertina-wise to reveal the adventures of the creepy inhabitants of *Ow*. There's a full story on the back too!



HAMISH HAMILTON £5.95

THE MAGIC MOUSE AND THE MILLIONAIRE

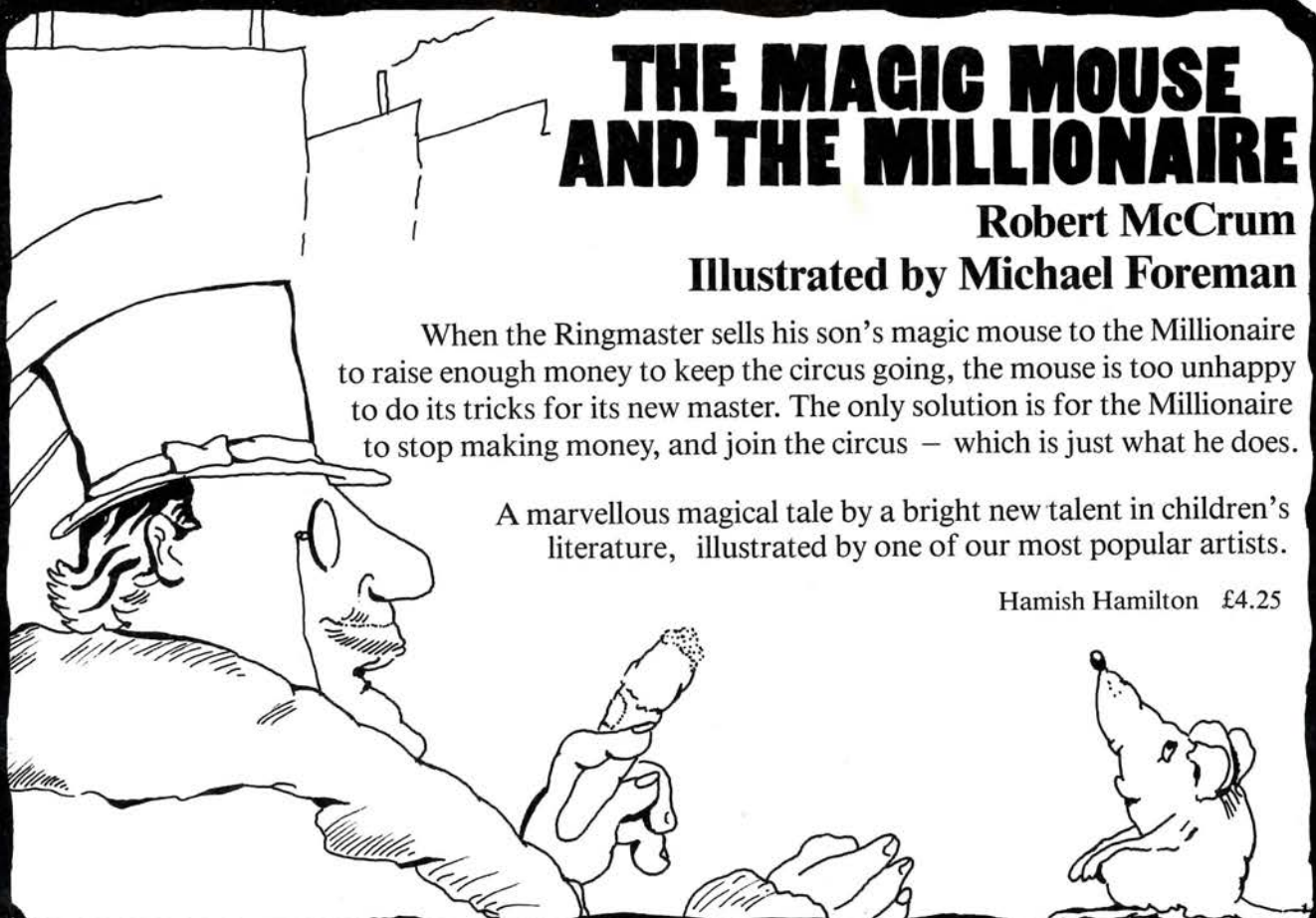
Robert McCrum

Illustrated by Michael Foreman

When the Ringmaster sells his son's magic mouse to the Millionaire to raise enough money to keep the circus going, the mouse is too unhappy to do its tricks for its new master. The only solution is for the Millionaire to stop making money, and join the circus — which is just what he does.

A marvellous magical tale by a bright new talent in children's literature, illustrated by one of our most popular artists.

Hamish Hamilton £4.25



SOUND & VISION

The Courage of Andy Robson

Starting next month is a new six part serial 'inspired by' Frederick Grice's highly readable story *The Courage of Andy Robson*.



Photo courtesy of Tyne Tees Television

We can't tell you how good the television adaptation is because we haven't been able to see it yet. But we do know that it cost Tyne Tees £1 million to make and it was filmed entirely on location in the north-east. And if they have managed to capture something of the spirit of the original story it should make good viewing.

The book tells the story of Andy Robson who, to relieve the burden on the family when his father has a serious pit accident, leaves his Durham mining community and goes to live with his aunt and uncle in a village in Northumberland. He adapts to country life, makes new friends — and enemies, learns to wrestle — and knit; but most of all he becomes involved with his uncle the Park Ranger in caring for the herd of rare wild white cattle in the grounds of Lilburn Castle. (Lilburn is based on the real Chillingham Park and its famous herd of cattle which has lived there for seven hundred years.)

It's a story with humour, excitement and tension and it is good to feel that if the television serial is a success, the book should not prove a disappointment or a problem for those who seek it out. And if through it they develop a taste for the north-east there is always Frederick Grice's excellent *Bonnie Pit Laddie* for them to move on to.

The Courage of Andy Robson starts on ITV on Wednesday, June 9th at 4.45.

The book is out this month in Puffin, 0 14 03.1528 4, 85p

Annie

The film of the musical of the comic strip, with Albert Finney as the outwardly intimidating, inwardly soft-centred billionaire Oliver Warbucks and yet another cute new child 'discovery' as Annie Orphan, will be on general release very soon now.

From Granada we've got the *book* of the musical of the comic strip, re-told by Thomas Meehan and sub-titled 'an old-fashioned story'. It's that all right and a good professional

job to boot. Those who wallowed in the stage version or the film will find this slips down very easily. New readers may need a little help with the background — the American Depression, the New Deal, the Pinkerton Agency, the FBI — to get the full flavour.

What a pity it's available only in hardback. Good pulp is for the people, in paperback.

Annie, Thomas Meehan, Granada, 0 246 11735 4, £4.95



Noggin is back — in colour

How very much poorer we'd all be without the marvellously comic inventions of Oliver Postgate and Peter Firmin: *Ivor the Engine*, the Pogles, the Clangers, *Bagguss* and *Noggin the Nog*.

They all started life as characters in animated films which quickly led to books in hardback and paperback. The films are created in Peter Firmin's barn in the village near Canterbury where both he and Oliver Postgate live with their families.

In *Books for Keeps 3* (July 1980) Peter Firmin wrote about these films: 'We've recently remade the *Ivor the Engine* films in colour for the BBC. We'd like to do the same with *Noggin*!' It seems they got their wish for *Noggin*, gentle peace-loving King of the Nogs, Nooka his queen, Knut his little son, and his evil uncle *Nogbad the Bad* whose dastardly plans to usurp his nephew and rule the Northlands always come to naught, are now back on our screens to delight a new generation.

The original black and white films were made in the 1960s and repeated regularly until 1977. Fortunately the *Noggin* stories remained available in book form and two years ago *Picture Lions* scooped the BBC by asking Peter Firmin to re-illustrate two *Noggin* stories (*Noggin and the Flowers* and *Noggin and the Island*) in full colour. Both well worth getting. Five *Noggin* stories are also available from Kaye and Ward.

For enthusiasts of *Ivor the Engine*, there is a new hardback collection of the four stories available in *Picture Lions: Ivor the Engine Storybook*, Richard Drew Publishing, 0 904002 89 6, £4.95.

Takin' a Squint at the Print — Again

Mel Smith and Bob Goody are back in a re-run of their Thames TV series, *Smith and Goody*. The idea behind the programmes was to present reading as something ordinary people do for fun. They were aimed at '9-14s who don't habitually borrow, buy or have access to books', and used all the techniques of *Not the Nine O'Clock News* to get the message across. If you missed it the first time around try to catch it this time. It's very funny and has a lot to teach us, if we are bold enough to learn. ITV Mondays, May 10, 17, 24 and June 7, 21, 28 at 4.45. Booklist (yes they do mention books but not in quite the same way as *The Book Tower*) from Roger Gale, Thames Television, Television House, 306 Euston Road, London NW1 3RB.

Children's Video Books — the first of the many?

Determined to be front-runners in the video revolution which some people think (fear?) may spell doom for books, Hodder and Stoughton have joined up with Nutland Video to produce a series of one hour video cassettes. First on tape are the adventures of Val Biro's popular vintage car, *Gumdrop* and H.E. Todd's young hero, *Bobby Brewster* (who in print time is thirty years old this year).

We shall be reviewing these in our next issue and keeping you in touch with the video scene.

Inside Pages

News from producer, Janet Whitaker, of plans for the new series of her *Schools Radio* magazine programme about books. Five programmes in the Autumn term and five in the following Spring will feature a variety of books, fiction and non-fiction. Themes for the Autumn include *Flying*, *Knights' Tales*, *A Dog's Life*, *Nonsense* and *New Books*.

The aim is to introduce 10 to 12-year-olds to books they may enjoy reading. To arouse their interest the programme includes readings, dramatisations, interviews with authors and readers.

The *Teachers' Notes* (which contain extensive annotated booklists) are available now from BBC Publications, 144 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3TH. Orders must be received before July.

SALES POINT

— a page for people who sell books in schools

TAKING STOCK

Summer — no-one in the bookshop except perhaps the occasional hopeless print addict who even in blazing sunshine comes to read another chapter of a book he can't afford to buy. What to do? Close up? Give up? Walk around the playground selling books like ice-creams?

Even if that isn't your particular experience of summer book-selling there are always times throughout the year when we wonder if it's all worth it.

There's nothing like having a good moan to make you feel better, and a trouble shared is a trouble halved (they say); so here are a few cries from the heart. We bet you will identify with at least one.

* I find it hard work. We have no permanent 'home' and have to set up from scratch and completely clear away each time. (We open for 30 minutes, twice a week at lunchtime.) This undoubtedly puts off otherwise willing helpers and takes time. With no permanent site and publicity spot we can be forgotten. We also have to compete with all the other lunchtime school activities — nothing happens after school. Most of all it's time consuming to select and order stock — I do it at home usually. There is no parent involvement largely because there is a school reluctance to involve parents in what is considered a teaching area. (Girls Grammar)

* Turnover makes it barely worth keeping on. Sales always reflect promotion campaigns and as I do library, drama and O and A teaching I never have enough time. I wish there was more ready made promotion material of the right sort available. (Mixed Comprehensive)

* Getting to know the right books to have in a small stock is not easy. My stock is limited by space and finance. Getting to stimulate children's and parents' interest to buy is also a problem. (Village Infant and Junior)

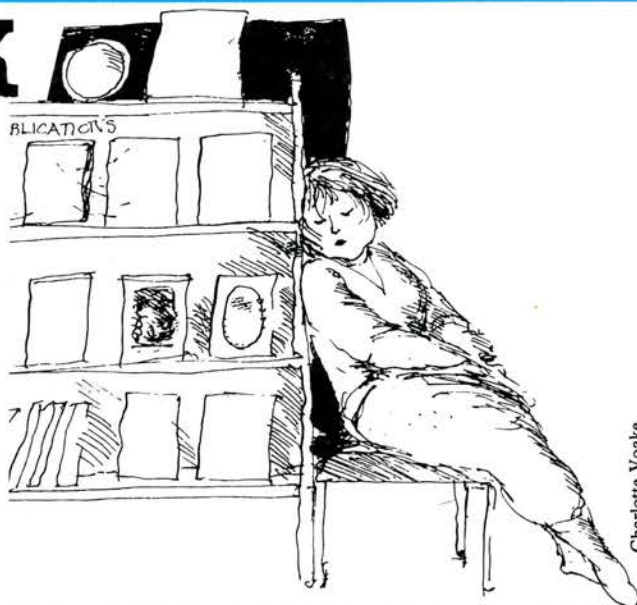
* The bookshop is used a lot by 1st and 2nd years — few seniors come near us. (Mixed Comprehensive)

Has anyone any help or consolation to offer? This is *your* page. Tell us what you think.

Meanwhile here are some ideas from around and about that might help you out of the summer doldrums.

* Go out with a bang with a big Holiday Reading promotion at the end of term. Try to keep open all day and persuade class teachers or English teachers to bring the kids in in lesson time. (They'll probably be delighted not to have to think of something to do.) There will be less chance of a generally chaotic free-for-all if you do a bit of planning. Start each session by talking about your latest titles or your hottest sellers; get some of the customers to recommend books. Be ready to take orders, reserve books for those who haven't money with them.

* Try some mini-promotions on likely themes: horse books, love stories, cricket, fishing, graffiti. Get some stalwart helpers (you must have one or two) to put notices all around the school (write on



blackboards?) like 'Love in the Bookshop today' or 'Horses in the Bookshop today'. Well it *might* work — you'll never know unless you try.

* And selling books like ice-cream might not be as mad as it sounds. If they won't come to you... Try getting some supporters to read from joke books. You'll soon have a crowd.

In April Maggy Doyle (Piccolo's enterprising publicity person) sent copies of *Football Crazy* to managers of all the clubs in the Football League. She suggested they might like to run a competition for young supporters based on football or *Football Crazy*. Why not try something similar for *your* young supporters at World Cup time — backed up with a special display of football books (fact and fiction) in the bookshop? See *Books for Keeps 13* for a useful list. Perhaps a list of questions about football (with a 'write a football books slogan' as a tie-breaker), or a quiz between two teams of football fans, or a Football Mastermind organised by the bookshop.

For younger children Maggy offered an outline drawing of one of the illustrations in *Football Crazy* for a colouring competition. She will very kindly send a copy of this 5" x 4" illustration to any school which would like to run a competition. Colin McNaughton has given permission for his drawing to be used in this way so you can duplicate or make copies without fear of infringing copyright. If you don't like the idea of colouring, ask the kids to draw a new member of Bruno's football team.

(Write to Maggy Doyle at Pan Books, Cavaye Place, London SW10 9PG. Offer only available while stocks last!)

Ready . . . Steady . . . for 2nd - 9th October

The count-down for Children's Book Week '82 continues. If you are on the CBW mailing list you will already have received your copy of the excellent *Hints for Organisers*, sample publicity pack and details of the Design a Postage Stamp Competition — all in this year's colour, bright green.

If you are not on the list but are considering making even the smallest noise about books in that week, do write to Maggi Turfrey for your own copy of *Hints for Organisers* — it's packed with good ideas and advice. And don't think you have to go in for expensive author visits or elaborate events to be effective. Quite often it's the simple things that make the most impact on children — for instance turning parents, teachers or children into celebrities for an 'Interest' afternoon. They may be delighted to reveal their hidden talents and hobbies! Supported by the appropriate books.

But you'll have to get moving — the deadline for ordering posters, stickers, balloons, etc. (and also for being on next year's mailing list) is 23rd July. Author visits will all be fixed by the end of June (contact CBW, Centre for Children's Books, 45 East Hill, London SW18, for the up-to-date position in your area).

If you've got an event planned, do tell Maggi Turfrey about it (before the end of July) so that it can be added to the complete list of events the Book Marketing Council will be using for national publicity. You can contact Maggi by writing to CBW '82, BMC, The Publishers Association, 19 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3BR.

Advance News of June Paperbacks

From *Armada*, Mill Green on *Fire*, the first in a new series by Alison Prince about a rural comprehensive school. Could this be another 'Grange Hill' success story?

The Trebizon series is already well-established. Fans of that particular Cornish educational fantasy will doubtless be queuing up for No. 7, *Summer Camp at Trebizon* (Dragon).

For ballet lovers stock up with *Ballet Stories* (Carousel), a selection of short stories by Ian Woodward. There's also a Judy Blume — *Iggie's House* (Piccolo), a Betsy Byars — *Goodbye, Chicken Little* (Puffin) and a guaranteed-to-grab-all-females love story, Jean Ure's *See You Thursday* (Puffin Plus).

Fans of Nicholas Fisk can look forward to *Antigrav* (Puffin).

If you have bright ideas for selling books, send them to Sales Point and share them with other school booksellers.



Lloyds Bank

is pleased to support
The School Bookshop Association

MONEY – THE FACTS OF LIFE

6th edition by W. Reay Tolfree

As part of a continuing programme of educational sponsorship this book has been produced by the Bank, in association with the publishers, Woodhead-Faulkner Limited, 17 Market Street, Cambridge.

Written for those starting in regular employment for the first time, the book contains useful information such as how wages and salaries are paid, how to look after money and how to budget. Suitable for school-leavers, students, and teachers instructing in money matters.

Copies from booksellers or, in cases of difficulty, direct from the publishers.

Price £1.

MONEY – THE FACTS OF LIFE

Audio-Visual Presentation

A new audio-visual teaching pack based on the book has now been produced, comprising four 20-minute filmstrips with accompanying cassettes, teachers' notes, suggested projects and a copy of the book.

Specifically for classroom use, the filmstrips trace the early working lives of two cartoon characters, Zack and Zelda, through numerous drawings, photographs and charts, combined with a lively informative soundtrack.

Each pack costs £30 plus VAT and is available under special preview offer from Public Relations Department (FS), Lloyds Bank Plc, 71 Lombard Street, London EC3P 3BS.

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

NEWS

Children's Books of the Year

The twelfth annual CBY exhibition will be at the National Book League (45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ) from 2nd to 14th August. It will include over 300 books across the age range chosen by Barbara Sherrard-Smith from the more than 3,000 published in 1981.

As usual there will be storytelling sessions, appearances by authors and illustrators, competitions and activities, with a special emphasis this year on multi-cultural events. The catalogue of the exhibition published by Julia MacRae Books will be available in July. Details from Barbara Buckley on 01-870 9055.

Scotland gets its own Children's Reference Library

The NBL in Scotland which in the twenty-one years since its inauguration had done so much good work with and for children and books has now opened its own reference collection of children's books.

One copy of every children's book published in Britain will be housed in the collection for just twelve months. There is in addition a range of review journals and a small collection of books about children's books and reading.

The library was officially launched on 3rd March by Leon Garfield. It's open to anyone wishing to use it (Monday - Friday, 9.30-12.30 and 1.30-5.00) and visitors will be sure of a warm welcome from Christine Morgan. School and college groups are welcome but for ten or more people please make an advance booking.

NBL Scotland is at 15A Lynedoch Street, Glasgow G3 6EF. Tel: 041-332 0391.

WORCESTER COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Summer School 1982



23rd - 30th July, 1982

This course is designed to extend knowledge of recent fiction for children. It discusses the latest authors, books and trends in children's literature and relates them to current school and classroom practice. A critical study will be made of selected aspects of children's literature and these will be related to children's books in the classroom. There will be opportunities to read, to discuss and to listen to authors, publishers, librarians and teachers; visits will be made to various school libraries. Some part of the course will be allotted to workshops in the College Teaching Practice Library.

Residential accommodation is available at the College.

Particulars of this course can be obtained from the Director of the Summer School, Worcester College of Higher Education, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ. Telephone No. (0905) 428080.

Eleanor Farjeon Award

Each year the Children's Book Circle presents the Eleanor Farjeon Award for 'distinguished services to children's books.' Past winners include Margery Fisher, Kaye Webb, Elaine Moss and Peter Kennerley (for his work for the School Bookshop movement). This year, the seventeenth, it is a particular pleasure to report that the prize goes to Nancy and Aidan Chambers whose activities over more than twelve years have done so much to improve both the quality of discussion about children's books and the level of awareness of books, particularly among teachers.

Signal, the magazine which Nancy edits and which she and Aidan launched twelve years ago, has established itself as a platform for regular and extended serious discussion of children's books. In recent years **Signal** publications have given us very useful bookguides on subjects like Humour, Poetry, and Picture Books; and, arising from a particular interest in poetry, they instituted the **Signal Poetry Award** and created the **Signal Poetry Collection**, now lodged at the Centre for Children's Books in the NBL.

Among other things, including writing some excellent children's novels, criticism, and books about children and reading, Aidan spends an enormous amount of time in this country and abroad talking about and lecturing on books. His Children's Literature courses for teachers in Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire have produced a steady stream of enthusiastic, well-informed teachers. Many of his early 'graduates' are now spreading the word in other parts of the country.

No-one who has had contact with Nancy and Aidan Chambers, directly or indirectly, can fail to have been influenced by their deep concern for good children's books. Without this concern, allied as it is to knowledge, humour and enthusiasm, all who work with children and books would be much poorer.

Story-writing Winners

The NCPTA/SBA/Hodder and Stoughton story-writing competition this year asked for one chapter and a whole plot outline for a story on the theme, *Our Electronic Age*. The winners are obviously budding novelists.

Under 11s

1st Simon Wright, Shears Green CP Junior School, Kent
2nd Caroline Moss, St Peter's Primary School, Rossett, Wrexham
3rd Alison Benton, St Andrew's C of E Community School, Cambridge

Over 11s

1st Philip Andrews, Hugh Christie School, Tonbridge, Kent
2nd Victoria James, Clayesmore School, Iwerne Minster, Blandford Forum, Dorset
3rd Sally Hicks, Kingsfield School, Bristol

Motivating the Reader

A two-day, non-residential conference at Brighton Polytechnic, Falmer, Sussex. 22nd and 23rd July, 10.00 - 4.00.

Speakers include Elaine Moss, Shirley Hughes, Jan Mark and Michael Hardcastle. There will also be opportunities for small group discussion.

Fee:

Two days £8 (inc. coffee and tea)

One day £5 (inc. coffee and tea)

Lunch extra. Advance booking essential.

Booking forms from: The Children's Book Conference, The Literacy Centre, Brighton Polytechnic, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9PH. Tel: (0273) 606622, Ext. 223/366.

Books Events Ahead**4th-5th June**

Manchester Children's Book Fair. Friday 10.00-5.00; Saturday 10.00-4.00. Organised by Sherratt and Hughes. Details 061-834 7055.

19th June - 18th July

Lewis Carroll's 15th Anniversary Exhibition in Dundee (in Edinburgh 1st-29th May). Organised by the Edinburgh Children's Book Group. Details from Val Bierman, 9 Gillespie Crescent, Edinburgh.

12th-17th July

Ilkley Literature Festival Children's Book Bonanza, 10th July. Details from June Oldham, the Festival Office, 0943 601210.

21st-24th July

Barnsley Book Bonanza. Lots of events for children, including the Saturday Book Bang. Details from Maggi Turfrey, 01-580 6321.

29th-30th July

Peterborough Children's Book Fair. Details from Peter Shaw, 27 Broadway, Peterborough.