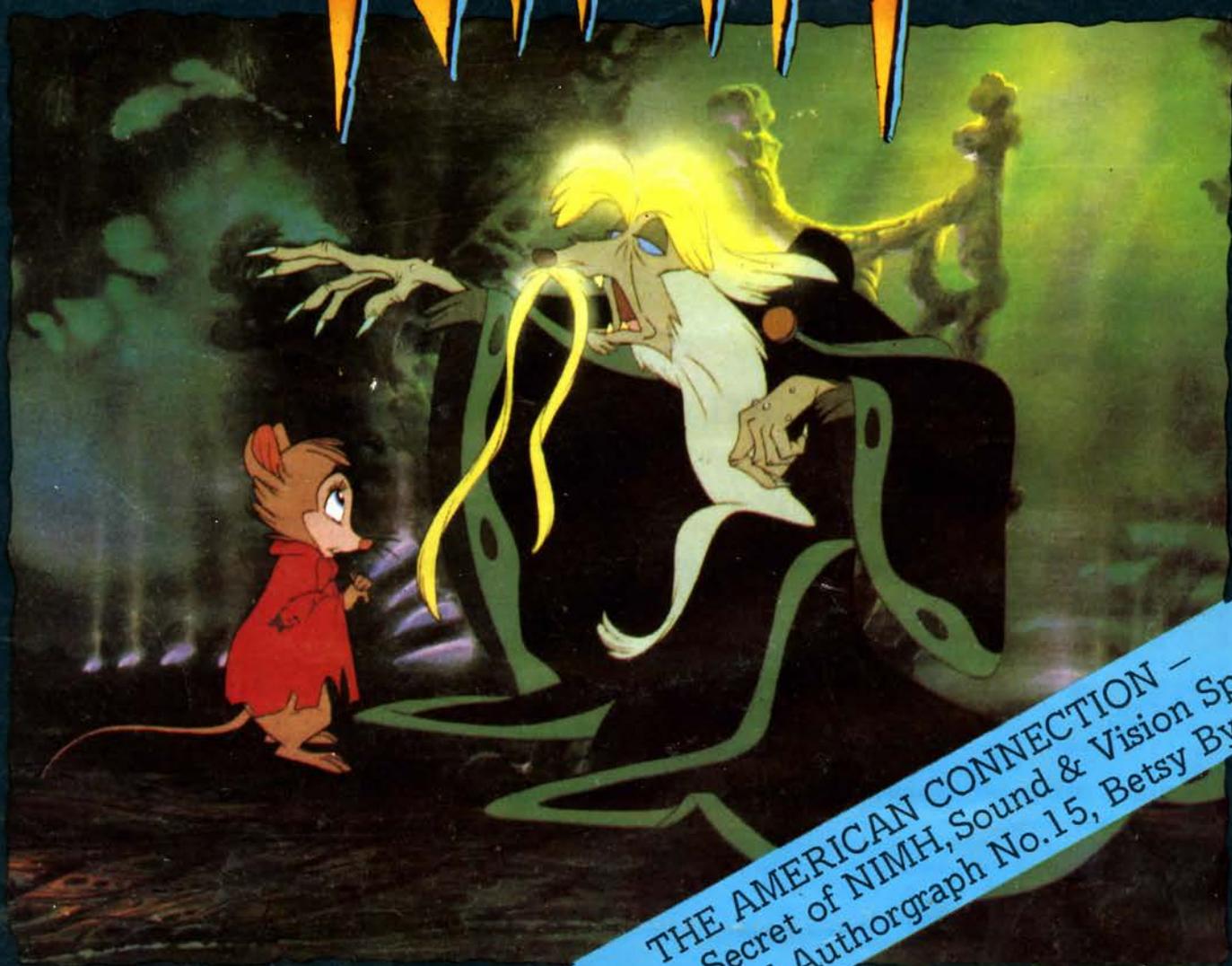


# BOOKS FOR KEEPS

JULY 1982 No.15  
UK Price 85p

## The Secret of NIMH™



THE AMERICAN CONNECTION —  
The Secret of NIMH, Sound & Vision Special,  
and Authorgraph No.15, Betsy Byars

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### Cover Book

On our cover this issue we feature **The Secret of NIMH**, the film based on Robert C O'Brien's **Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH** (0 14 03.0725 7, £1.10).

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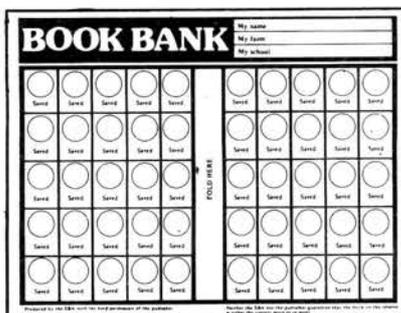
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Puffin have re-issued this book with a new tie-in cover. We are grateful to Puffin for their help in reproducing our cover illustration in full colour.

# 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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# EDITOR'S PAGE *Special*

What a hornet's nest the new arrangements for allocating authors for Children's Book Week has stirred up. Everywhere I turn I seem to meet teachers smouldering with indignation at the way they are being treated. How can we plan if we don't know who we might get? What if the author we are offered isn't suitable for our kids? We don't know who is on the list and who isn't so we can't do anything off our own bat. We just keep being told not to do anything except be good and wait quietly. And those are just some of the milder protests. The Federation of Children's Book Groups whose members are always very active in CBW discussed a resolution at its annual conference to withdraw support from the week altogether.

In a sense perhaps this year's author allocation system is the last straw on a growing heap of resentment. Over the years organisers of events have given freely of their energy, time and talents; all in addition to their demanding full-time jobs as teachers, librarians, parents and (occasionally) booksellers. Without these people there would be no Children's Book Week. They do it because they think it is important and worth doing; but more than once I've heard comments like, 'We're really doing the publishers and booksellers jobs for them. And then they ask us to pay for posters, badges, balloons and stickers.' The perk of a slightly subsidised author visit was all they got in return and now that seems to be fast disappearing and, even worse, out of their control.

Beverley Mathias who is co-ordinating the new scheme stresses that it is an experiment. The idea was to make the whole operation tidier, to prevent authors from having to travel vast distances and to take them to areas that have never been visited before. Seventy-eight people all over the country were selected from those who volunteered to be area co-ordinators. Authors and illustrators are going to virgin territory like the Western Isles, parts of Wales, and the far north of Scotland. This year, says Beverley, people won't be able to be 'greedy' and grab twenty authors for one area. She thinks it is time experienced 'eventers' who have earned the confidence of publishers and know their way around the system stood back and let some others into the action.

The problem as it happens has been made worse because this year there are only 130 authors on offer for the 78 areas. Are authors unwilling or are publishers reluctant to sponsor the expenses of more than one or two of their list?

Children's Book Week it seems has become the victim of its own success. 'Have an event without an author!' is the cry from the BMC. (And *Hints for Organisers* is full of good ideas.) But down here at the grass roots (apologies for the cliché) there will have to be a deal more support and recognition from the centre before that idea takes off. If there isn't I fear more schools will be taking the line of one who wrote to us recently. 'We are pulling out of Children's Book Week and holding our own School Book Week in the Spring Term instead. We think we'll get more help from publishers and our supplier — and we might even be able to get the author we want!'

## Carnegie — a missed opportunity?

In a talk to the Children's Book Circle in March Kathleen Gribble, the current Youth Libraries Group chairperson, described something of the heated discussion that goes on before the final selection of the Carnegie

and Kate Greenaway winners is made. She also hinted darkly that she thought this year's selection would be particularly difficult to resolve. And when you look at the short list (see News page 28) you can see what she meant. In the end the selection committee chose books for the older age range for both awards. Hooray for picking Charles Keeping; but much as we admire Robert Westall we can't help wishing they had come down in favour of *Bridget and William*. It's a little gem of a book and for a story of this length to win a major award might well have helped to raise the general standard of writing for fledgling readers. We need writers of the quality of Jane Gardam to take the form seriously; she has shown beyond all doubt that simple vocabulary, short sentences and limited length are no bar to quality story-making. On the other side of the Atlantic attitudes to writing for young readers are rather different as Aidan Chambers points out in *The American Connection* (page 4).



'Carefully she watched where William cleverly put his feet. She walked to one side of him, her father, not too happily on the other.' — a snow scene from *Bridget and William*.

## The Special Relationship

Which brings us rather neatly to the major theme of this issue: children's books from the USA. As well as Aidan Chambers we have an Englishman's view of the children's book world 'across the pond' from John Mason (page 12), three writers of teenage fiction chosen by Chris Kloet (page 16) and a Sound and Vision Special which includes a look at the film *The Secret of NIMH* (our cover features the Puffin tie-in). As if that wasn't riches enough, an amazing piece of luck means that we have the incomparable Betsy Byars as our Authorgraph.



SBA Director Richard Hill, Betsy Byars and Margaret Clark (Bodley Head children's editor).

## There's V. *became* The Secret of

In May Betsy Byars came to this country for the very first time. It was a private visit and lasted only a week but Betsy agreed to do 'one or two publicity things'. We felt most honoured when Bodley Head arranged for us to meet and interview her for this issue. She came to lunch which turned out to be several laughter-filled hours of her delightful company. She told us about her latest book *The Two Thousand Pound Goldfish*, published this autumn. The giant goldfish in the sewers is the fantasy of her central character. 'At the very end — in his mind — he wants to save the goldfish's life and he figures out that if everyone in the city will flush their toilet at the same moment they will flood the sewer, open the floodgates and Bubbles will be washed out to sea. So there's a long sequence in which the radio announcer is saying, 'We are asking everyone to get to their toilets. If you have an extra toilet ask a friend to flush with you.' And we have the countdown. ' -- 3, 2, 1, FLUSH!' I had so much fun writing it, I'll be happy to be banned.' Banned? Well, that's another aspect of the American children's book scene. The moral majority it seems is very touchy about certain things in children's books and one of them is lavatories. Margaret Clark, children's editor at The Bodley Head (who was also with us) told us that the American publishers had just taken a picture of a child sitting on the lavatory out of Mitsumasa Anno's newest counting book *Anno's Counting House*, also due here later this year.

## EB lives — OK?

One writer who is unlikely to offend the moral majority, but who has never made much of an impact in the USA is Enid Blyton. That will all be changed if Ebefilms, the company which plans to make fast-moving, up-dated versions of the Blyton adventures, has anything to do with it. Stand by America — you've had *Chariots of Fire* and the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Nicholas Nickleby* now it's time for Enid Blyton. Be warned, teachers and librarians here will tell you she ought to come with a government health warning, 'This product can be addictive'. What a good time to have Sheila Ray's detached and reasonable assessment, *The Blyton Phenomenon*. She gives us a taste of her new book on page 20.

I suppose if EB does take off in the States it will be a just exchange for all those books-of-the-films which British publishers (Collins Cubs and NEL are but two) keep bringing over and which seem determined to persuade children that *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *Bambi*, *The Jungle Book*, and *Bedknob and Broomsticks* were not written by A.A. Milne, Felix Salten, Rudyard Kipling and Mary Norton, but by Walt Disney. Not that any of these writers would be likely to recognise their creations after they have been Disneyfied anyway.

Ah well. Think of the good things like Maurice Sendak and Betsy Byars.

Have a nice day!

*Pak*

# SOUND & AMERICAN ACTION



## Mrs Frisby and Mrs Brisby

Unlike many films from books, this is not the original. Perhaps the biggest film to book, or book to film, is to find the film makers didn't want any credit for throwing and catching!

...ers the American contribution to children's books

In spite of a few 'adjustments' to the plot, the film suddenly vamoosed every American (or even U.S.) children's book from Britain we would all of us, adults as well as young readers, find our lives astonishingly deprived. For the plain fact is that we cannot do without them. The American contribution to our children's literature is essential to the reading enjoyment, not to mention the literary development, of British young people. You have only to run through a list of the most obvious and well-known titles to acknowledge the truth of this. Think, for example, of *Where the Wild Things Are*, and of *Huckleberry Finn*, of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *Charlotte's Web*, of *The Pigman*, *The Eighteenth Emergency* and of those indestructible *Little Women*. . . we could go on like this for the rest of my space.

What is it they bring us, these fine books from across the Atlantic that match the best of our own? All kinds of things. They add immeasurably to the variety we can offer, of course, like the enlargement of any family. A strong and sometimes more exciting and inventive sense of design, especially in picturebooks. An attractive and open-hearted sense of humour; if it weren't for the American imports our children's books would be pretty short on laughter.

Take a look at *Frog and Toad are Friends* by Arnold Lobel (World's Work/I Can Read Series) and see all these qualities at work along with others. What strikes me at once about these stories of the bosom pals, sensible and faithful Frog and scatty, likeable Toad, is the high standard of every aspect of the book, from the choice of paper (a gentle cream, not the dreadful, glaring and bleached-to-death white that's forced onto us these days) to the subtlety of the colour printing. Words, pictures, design: all work together. In short, the same care and attention have been expended as would be given to a major picturebook. It has not been thought of by author-artist or publisher as 'merely' a supplementary 'reader'. Far from regarding this kind of work as beneath him or diminishing his talent, what reaches you is Lobel's relaxed and enthusiastic pleasure in writing and drawing for children just starting to read for themselves. Until recently it was hard to find British writers and illustrators of Lobel's gifts who would even think of attempting literature of this order. The Ahlbergs are now our most obvious and successful comparison.

In America, however, Lobel is far from alone. As early as 1952 Maurice Sendak co-operated with Ruth Krauss in a book, *A Hole is to Dig*, that set standards for beginning readers that are still unsurpassed. At the other extreme of nature and kind and as valuable in their own way are the rhyming ruckuses of Dr Seuss, marking a high point in child-appealing anarchy. We have no match at all for Seuss.

It is this easy acceptance of the worth of writing for children in the awkward process of learning to read that I find totally admirable. And it sets the tone, I think, for all writing for children in the U.S.A. Indeed it comes from an American quality which affects the whole of their literature. I mean the quality of openness to the reader. Richard Hoggart helped sort this out in a fascinating article, 'Finding a Voice', which is included in his book *Speaking to Each Other, Vol 2: About Literature* (Chatto). America is geographically and numerically huge, a nation composed comparatively recently from people from many nations, many cultures, many languages. No writer there dare assume a common store of references, a sharing of assumptions, whether literary, social, or of any other kind. The problem, then, for an American writer was and still is to find a voice that is open to all, which draws in the reader, which without condescension or presumptuousness, makes plain whatever aspects of the story the writer wants the reader to understand.

One way to solve this problem, of course, is to use the first person colloquial style, which puts the protagonist directly in touch with the reader, and makes it easy for the writer to say, in effect, 'Look, I don't know who you are, but I've got this story I want to tell you and this is what you need to know about . . . me [the protagonist] . . . and where I come from . . . and the sort of person I am . . .' and so on. And as when telling anything to strangers there is an instinctive understanding that they must be kept entertained, and there must be humorous and dramatic engagements that bind teller and readers together 'above the head', so to speak, of the story itself.

In short, American writers are preoccupied as much with the *how* of the story as with the *what*. They seem to me much more concerned with the craft of their art than are most English writers. The two key books in all this from our point of view are *Huckleberry Finn* and *Catcher in the Rye*. In them we see the American use of the first person, and the American way of striking up a relationship between author/narrator and reader at its freest and richest. There is no sense of inhibition, no sign of authorial anxiety about the colloquial and unliterary style. You take Huck and Holden Caulfield as they are, or leave them alone — and they make no bones about who and what they are. But if you decide to stay



Photo by Margaret Lister

Aidan Chambers was a teacher before becoming a full-time writer. With his American wife, Nancy, he has just been awarded the Eleanor Farjeon Award for distinguished services to children's books. Together they launched the journal *Signal* from which have grown *Signal Publications* (useful bookguides) and the *Signal Poetry Award*. Aidan has lectured and written about books (his *Introducing Books to Children* is still a most sensible and practical guide to the art), compiled anthologies of stories and originated Macmillan's *Topliner* series. He also finds time to write fiction and his latest novel, *Dance on My Grave* has just been published by the Bodley Head in their New Adult paperback series (0 370 30366 0, £4.25).

with them, they put themselves out to entertain, to explain, and to keep you interested. If there is anything American writers and American characters hate, it is the idea that they might be boring.

All this — drawing the reader in, finding a way of telling the story that includes rather than excludes readers — describes exactly what a children's writer anywhere, in any language, must do, or at least must make decisions about. Those authors who exclude, like William Mayne, make uneasy, often adult-read children's authors. Those who seek to include — Betsy Byars in all her books and Philippa Pearce in *The Battle of Bubble and Squeak* are good U.S. and British examples — seem to be by nature children's writers and find a wide audience.

The problem with English literature as a whole is that it excludes, for reasons Richard Hoggart explains well. And that is why our children's books and writers are often uneasy beings, not quite sure whether they are meant to be demotic, and reader-focused, or inward-looking and meant only for those who are already in-the-know. The fact that American Literature as a whole has to be inclusive of disparate people and readers means that American children's writers agonize less about their role and status as writers. They feel more confident of what they are doing, and that confidence infects their work so that we here find ourselves using of it words like 'uninhibited', 'relaxed', 'appealing', 'approachable', 'well judged', 'vigorous'.

Two qualities, then, so far that I find attractive: an enthusiastic attitude to writing *for* children, and an interest in the art of bringing the reader into the book. Now a third: a willingness, even an eagerness to tackle 'difficult' topics, to break down taboos and inhibitions about certain subjects, and to widen the narrative style, the ways in which the stories about those subjects are told. Sometimes the Americans can be too opportunistic and organised than is pleasing in this regard. But that is the weak side of a great strength. Let them decide that too little attention has been given to girls in glasses and *wham!* within a year there are x number of novels about girls in glasses.

But the best side of this quality has given us, to take just one example, a ground-breaking picturebook, really a psychological picture-novel: *Where the Wild Things Are*. So great was the resistance to it in this country that it took four years before that far-sighted publisher, Judy Taylor, persuaded The Bodley Head, against all advice, to bring it

across the Atlantic. It has been a bestseller ever since and has become a classic of the art of picturebook making. At the other end of the age range, in writing for teenagers, where the Americans always have been and still are so much more innovative and committed than we English, Robert Cormier has produced three books which explore political subjects in increasingly direct ways. His first, **The Chocolate War**, uses the well-known (and English rather than American) form of the school story to deal with fascist totalitarianism in its modern expression — subjugation and bullying of the mind. His third novel, **After the First Death**, openly treats of terrorism.

In other words, American children's writers respond much more sensitively and easily to social changes, and to changes of thought, and find ways of interpreting them to children. Consider, for example, their response to ethnic minorities and oppression. Rosa Guy, Virginia Hamilton, Julius Lester, Rachel Isadora, Louise Fitzhugh, Ezra Jack Keats, and many others working both in novels for the young and in picturebooks — most of them belonging to the racial minorities or oppressed themselves — have brought racial questions to the centre of their work without loss of literary values. How many similar writers can you name who deal with the same kinds of subject matter here and do it as

well, and come themselves from the ethnic groups that now form a part of British life: blacks, Asians, Chinese, and the rest? How much of today's British society do we find in British children's literature? We all know the answer: too little. In this, we compare unfavourably with the Americans and learn from them.

We are changing slowly. While we do, American children's books fill the gaps, influence us, often show us the way. I do not, however, want to make it seem that the literary trade is all in one direction. It isn't. But it has to be said that in this respect as in some others we British are more prepared to take from the U.S.A. than they are to take from us. Americans are still too ready to complain about the 'difficulty' of many British children's writers, about their being — God save us! — too English. Being so used to writing that makes immediate appeals, that gives itself to the reader, they seem unwilling to deal with — perhaps do not know enough about how to help their children enjoy — books that ask the reader to give him/herself to the narrative. They could learn something from us, perhaps, in discovering how to do that.

All of which means, quite simply, that we need each other's literature, and to know about each other's skills in bringing books to children. The exchange is fruitful. ●

## A Personal Choice

Aidan Chambers selects a few American children's books he personally enjoys and which he feels demonstrate the kind of qualities he talks about in his article. He emphasises that his list is in no way either representative or comprehensive.

### Millions of Cats

Wanda Gág (Faber, 0 571 05361 0, £2.25; Picture Puffin 0 14 050.168 1, 85p)

Before the 1920s the USA had few picturebooks of its own; they bought from Europe. Gág's black-and-white treatment of this old tale was a turning point in 1928 and remains a sampler of classic qualities in picturebook making.

### Noisy Nora

Rosemary Wells (Picture Lions, 0 00 661465 5, 90p)

Noisy because her younger brother and older sister get all the attention while 'Nora had to wait'. The result is a tantrum and a little book that again demonstrates how good the Americans are at the learning-to-read stage: funny, accurately observed, a rhyming text that exactly suits the witty pictures.

### Ben's Trumpet

Rachel Isadora (Angus and Robertson, 0 207 95944 7, £3.95)

A black-and-white picturebook for the over sevens. Ben plays an imaginary trumpet, aping his hero in the jazz club. The other kids jeer but imagination and determination win through. Colour print is ever more expensive; it is time to recover the b. and w. tradition. When handled with as much inventive skill as here, no one ought to complain.

### Outside Over There

Maurice Sendak (Bodley Head, 0 370 30403 9, £5.95)

The presiding genius of American children's books gave us in 1981 the promised third major work to go with **Where the Wild Things Are** and **In the Night Kitchen**. We are all still trying to cope with the gift: how to read it? How to bring it to children (and which ones)? The

questions are worth answering and deserve the time they take. Sendak, after all, spent years making the book.

### Flat Stanley

Jeff Brown (Methuen, 0 416 80360 1, £3.50; Magnet, 0 416 57290 1, 75p)

Now a touchstone in judging what's just right for children at the stage on from learning-to-read: everything is right — the humour, the length, the size of print, the amount of print in relation to the simple illustrations. Stanley is flattened when his pinboard falls on him; thereafter he has flattened adventures being posted by air mail and recovering objects from drains, etc. A witty text too.

### The Shrinking of Treehorn

Florence Parry Heide (Kestrel, 0 7226 5458 8, £2.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.0746 X, 75p)

When he starts shrinking, Treehorn experiences the full force of human foible when his parents, friends and teachers refuse to take his plight seriously. In a short time the book has proved itself a classic of satiric children's fiction-with-pictures, able to appeal from 5 to adulthood.

### Little House in the Big Woods

Laura Ingalls Wilder, (Methuen, 0 416 07130 9, £4.50; Puffin, 0 14 03.0194 1, 85p)

First published in 1932 and based on Wilder's memories of life in pioneer days. Its openhearted sentiment (which the English are wary of in their own work but enjoy in American where it seems natural and 'right') makes a strong appeal to children of 8 to 13 or so. The Americans can be superb at innocent domesticity lived out in rural settings, and this book and the others that followed it epitomize that quality.

### Harriet the Spy

Louise Fitzhugh, (Gollancz, 0 575 01808 9, £4.50; Lions, 0 00 671002 6, 85p)

Harriet sets out to spy on adults and friends and records her discoveries in her diary. Caused a scandal when it appeared in the U.S. in 1965:

squads of would-be Harriets gave adults a bad time. Was this why it took ten years for the book to come here? When it did, however, all was well and the book slipped into a respectable niche as an amusing story.

### Iggie's House

Judy Blume, (Piccolo, 0 330 26682 9, £1.00)

The *enfant terrible* of U.S. children's authors (though not so *enfant* now) Blume gets attacked almost as much by librarians and teachers in the U.S. as Blyton does here. Is almost slick in her skill at drawing in the young reader; and seems to relish getting into each book a 'taboo' subject. This story tells of a white girl's relationship with a black family who move into a middle class white housing estate. If the treatment is a little pat, the subject demands attention and Blume touches on it honourably.

### The Night Swimmers

Betsy Byars, (Bodley Head, 0 370 30317 2, £3.75; Puffin, 0 14 03.14091, £1.00; This autumn)

Byars and Blume are close in narrative skills but for my money Byars is the stayer, and this novel about a 13-year-old girl left to cope with her brothers at night by a country-western singing father has an admirable elegance and the usual Byars qualities of humour and precision of observation.

### Tuck Everlasting

Natalie Babbitt, (Chatto, 0 7011 5095 5, o/p; Lions, 0 00 671484 6, 65p)

Babbitt's work is both fine-grained and full-blooded. In this story of the time-trapped Tuck family, she has made a fantasy that appeals to a wide range of readers.

### Fifteen

Beverly Cleary, (Puffin, 0 14 03.0948 9, 90p)

The now famous and still enthusiastically read story of Jane Purdy's first real date with a boy. The pubescent novel in essence, a story told with humour and not a hint of embarrassment: the kind of thing the Americans have

always done well (**Little Women**) and we never quite manage to achieve with so light a touch.

### Slake's Limbo

Felice Holman, (Macmillan Educational Topliners, 0 333 28305 8, £3.95)

One of the best early teenage novels recently come from America that I know and far too little attended to yet. Slake is a put-upon New York 13 yr old who finally hides himself in the tunnel of a subway where he sets up a kind of urban Robinson Crusoe life and learns to survive and conquer his inadequacies and fear. Minute detail of his life becomes almost obsessively compulsive to read about.

### A Wizard of Earthsea

Ursula Le Guin, (Gollancz, 0 575 00717 6, £3.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.0477 0, £1.00)

Fantasy or SF? Whatever, a finely wrought tale (with two companion volumes) that charts in narrative events the Jungian trip. People get hooked on it as firmly as on Tolkien.

### M. C. Higgins the Great

Virginia Hamilton, (Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 89214 7, £3.50)

I am still trying to appreciate Hamilton's writing. She deals in the black experience and writes in a voice as personal and idiosyncratic as her stories are. M.C. is a kind of Simon Stylites, and symbols, I think, work hard as a subtext. One day someone will write a really helpful critical essay about Hamilton and then I'll understand.

### I Am the Cheese

Robert Cormier, (Gollancz, 0 575 02372 4, £4.95; Lions, 0 00 671485 4, 95p)

The hidden state, the controlling bureaucracy — CIA, MI5, KGB — and a boy whose life is being remade to a different history. But you don't know that, as he doesn't, till nearly the end. Cormier is fascinated by narrative technique as well as by politics. He brings the two together in never less than impressive novels. Many people regard this one as his best so far.

# Judy Blume.

## America's #1 Children's Author.



'Should she write "Negro" like her teacher said? "Black," like the Garbers said? Or "coloured" like her parents said?'

Winnie's best friend Iggie and her family have moved away, and a black family have moved into Iggie's house. The Garbers are the first black people to move into a traditionally all-white area. Winnie is eager to welcome them, full of good intentions and good neighbourliness. But the Garber children don't really need good neighbours.

What they really want is friends...

**IGGIE'S HOUSE** is published by Piccolo on 4th June at £1.00. It's an early novel by Judy Blume, typical of the straightforward way she handles contemporary issues and problems. Judy Blume herself grew up in New Jersey, 'The Garden State,' a suburban paradise that can be terribly dull. Around her were all the problems of families on the move in the most mobile society in the world. Most of her novels are set in New Jersey.

From New Jersey Judy Blume went to the excitement of New York at the age of 18 to study at university. She was really expected to find a husband there, rather than study seriously. True to form, she married a lawyer and had two children, Randy in 1961 and Larry in 1963. But when Larry went to kindergarten, Judy Blume was left alone at the age of 27, at a loss what to do with her time, her energy and imagination. Here she was in Scotch Plains, New Jersey, once again bored.

So one day a week she travelled to New York to take a course at her old university in writing for children. She had always made up stories (rhyming ones) for her own children whilst doing the washing up. Her first published story had the unlikely title of **THE ONE IN THE MIDDLE IS THE GREEN KANGAROO**. Her second, in 1970, was **IGGIE'S HOUSE**, which brought her to national attention for its bold tackling of a typical suburban situation. And her third novel, **ARE YOU THERE, GOD? IT'S ME, MARGARET**, shot her to No. 1 in the children's best-seller charts. Here was the authentic voice of a 12-year-old girl, her worries and concerns, her first bra, and her conversations with God: 'Please help me grow, God, I just want to be normal...'

**TALES OF A FOURTH GRADE NOTHING** dealt with a 9-year-old, Peter, and his difficulties with Fudge, his little 3-year-old brother, and Peter's pet turtle Dribble. **IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD** is perhaps an increasingly important book - because it deals with the problems of divorce. In **OTHERWISE KNOWN AS SHEILA THE GREAT**, Sheila learns to overcome her fears of ghosts, thunderstorms,



dogs and growing up, but will she ever be Sheila the Great - bright, witty, slim and popular? **BLUBBER** is the story of the fat girl everyone wants to tease. Every class has one. But not every class learns its lesson like this one... **SUPERFUDGE** sees Fudge two years on and twice the trouble for Peter, who decides to leave home. **THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I WON'T** is the story of Tony, 13, whose parents have just moved from New Jersey to affluent Long Island. This book is astonishingly evocative of the moods and loneliness of adolescence.

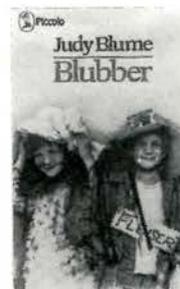
Judy Blume has divorced and remarried, has moved to New Mexico (the antithesis of New Jersey) and back to New York City. She receives over a thousand letters a week from children who can scarcely believe that she knows so much about their lives, their problems within the family and their growing pains. A child of suburbia, a child of her times, she writes for an age-group who are traditionally hard to please and reluctant to read - not any more (if it was ever true).

*'I hate the idea that you should always protect children. They live in the same world as we do. They see things and hear things. The worst is when there are secrets and whispering, because what they imagine, and have to deal with alone, is usually scarier than the truth.'*

*The impression I get, from letter after letter, is that a great many kids don't communicate with their parents. They feel alone in the world. Reading books that deal with other kids who feel the same things they do makes them feel less alone.'*



Judy Blume  Piccolo



For more information on these and other Piccolo titles, please write to: Piccolo Promotion Dept., Pan Books, Cavaye Place, London SW10 9PG.

# REVIEWS

## Nursery/Infant



Mary Kate has ice cream in bed

### Mary Kate and the Jumble Bear, and other stories

Helen Morgan, ill. Shirley Hughes, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1271 4, 85p

Seven stories about Mary Kate from a sensitive and sometimes underestimated writer whose uncluttered style is engaging. They read aloud beautifully. Mary Kate loses her favourite bear and has to retrieve him from a Jumble Sale; goes into hospital, and is a bridesmaid for the first time. There's a genuine child's-eye-view of these experiences which ring very true.

Well worth reading to 4 to 7's. Shirley Hughes' cover and pictures are a joy, as always.

CM

### My Naughty Little Sister

0 416 22010 X

### My Naughty Little Sister's Friends

0 416 22020 7

Dorothy Edwards, Magnet, 90p each

Attractive new editions of Dorothy Edwards' now classic

stories. The first collection is now thirty years old, yet still retains the power of an immediate narrative by a storyteller who knows what appeals to the 5's to 7's. It's easy to mistake for twyness a genuine sincerity and knowledge of the *kinds* of story experience the age group loves. Super sources of storytelling for infant teachers.

The later collection introduces a wider gallery of characters and the storytelling is, if anything, more involving and vigorous. The two collections are very good value (15 stories in the first; 10 in the second). Include some of each in the bookshop. Shirley Hughes' marvellous pictures are by now inseparable from Dorothy Edwards' characters. Who else could catch the wrinkles, folds and stances of infant school children so well?

CM

### Clams Can't Sing

James Stevenson, Hippo, 0 590 70094 4, 75p

'Clams can't do anything' is the consensus of the other seashore creatures so Beatrice and Benny are to be excluded from the evening concert. Undaunted however, the pair

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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2



3



4



5

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. **Chris Powling** is head of an ILEA primary school and has written three books. He lives in London with his wife Jan (who helps the SBA to run smoothly) and their two daughters.

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.

of molluscs prove just how wrong that is by giving an outstanding performance of a 'Symphony for Two Clams'. Onomatopoeia is used to effect in this gentle amusement for learner readers, and Stevenson's casual illustrations in shades of green and brown match the throw-away humour of the story.

JB

### Eating with Doris

0 330 26773 2

### Shopping with Doris

0 330 26774 4

Hilary Hayton, Piccolo Picture Books, 60p each

I can find nothing to recommend in these four small books: there is no story whatsoever and the illustrations are lifeless and monotonous. The only reason I would have them as a gift and put them into a classroom is that they may help children to become discriminating readers.

JB

### Bedtime with Doris

0 330 26773 6

### Keep fit with Doris

0 330 26776 0

## Infant/Junior

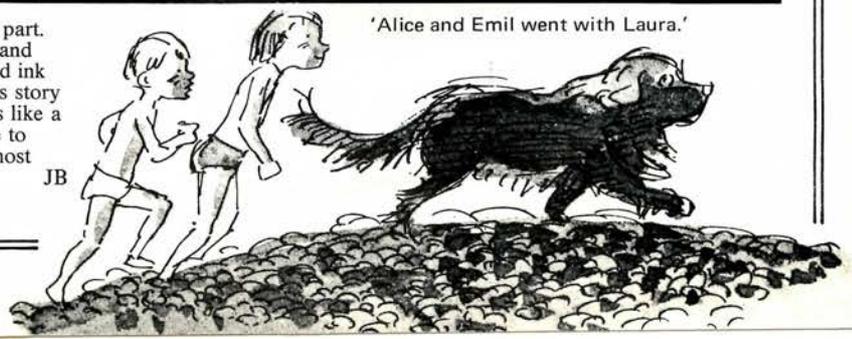
### Laura and the Bandits

Phillipe Dumas, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672043 9, 95p

The discovery of a cave in the cliffs by Laura, a large shaggy sheepdog, turns the family picnic into an adventure in

which everyone plays a part. The economy of words and profusion of fine pen and ink drawings with which this story is told, make what looks like a 'proper' book accessible to learner readers, and a most appealing one it is.

JB



'Alice and Emil went with Laura.'

**Dorrie and the Wizard's Spell**

0 14 03.1469 5

**Dorrie and the Haunted House**

0 14 03.1467 9

**Dorrie and the Birthday Eggs**

0 14 03.1466 0

**Dorrie and the Goblin**

0 14 03.1468 7

Patricia Coombs, Young Puffin, 90p each

Exquisitely produced paperback editions from Young Puffin of the stories of Dorrie, the little witch whose hat is always crooked and whose socks never match — and of Gink, her black cat. High quality storytelling and pace of action is maintained throughout the four books. **The Wizard's Spell**, in which Dorrie's Mum, the Big Witch, plays a big part in Dorrie's introduction into the magic arts, is a good starting point. **The Haunted House** is a witty, whimsical detective story with a delightful catch in its tail; **The Birthday Eggs** has a lovely folk-tale resonance to it. **The Goblin** is the funniest of the bunch: we meet the Short High Sorcerer and the red-eyed Goblin who is put in Dorrie's charge.



I'm always looking for 'bridging' books for 6 to 9's who need to take on a full-length story and these books are models. The author's pastel coloured illustrations, sometimes up to half a page, marking the narrative, are wonderful. Four of the best things to happen so far this year!

CM

**The Adventures of Tammy Troot**

Lavinia Derwent, ill. Virginia Salter, Sparrow, 0 09 927580 5, 95p

Ten self-contained episodes based upon the whimsical exploits of Thomas Troot, a Scottish fish with a lively line in one-upmanship and an ever-eager eye for the main chance. Non-stop action, racy dialogue ('Jings! I'm in a tight corner! Anybody else would say this is the end, but Tammy Troot never gives in. Brainwave coming up!) A larky range of characters (Rab Rat; Katy Kipper . . . and the inmates of Sam Soles Academy for Mixed Fishes!)

Seven to nines I read this with enjoyed Tammy's attempts to swim the Channel and his spell as a Private Eye best. Read one or two aloud (some of the plots are over-complicated but the intrepid will get through them!) A pity that cramped spacing makes the pictures look curiously static and unvaried.

CM

**King of Beasts**

H.E. Todd, ill. Val Biro, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.361 7, £1.10

On his trip to the zoo, Bobby Brewster finds that he can talk with the animals — once he

has winked at them that is. So he is able to tell the keeper why Leo the lion is off his food: Leo it seems wants a feast fit for a king all served up on silver platters.

Certainly not up to the standard of **The Sick Cow**, but Val Biro's amusingly drawn animals and humans undoubtedly draw children to what I feel is a mediocre story.

JB



'Then he toasted the crowd with a glass of champagne and winked broadly at Bobby.' From **King of Beasts**.

# Junior/Middle

**Ramona and Her Mother**

Beverly Cleary, Puffin, 0 14 03.1328 1, 95p

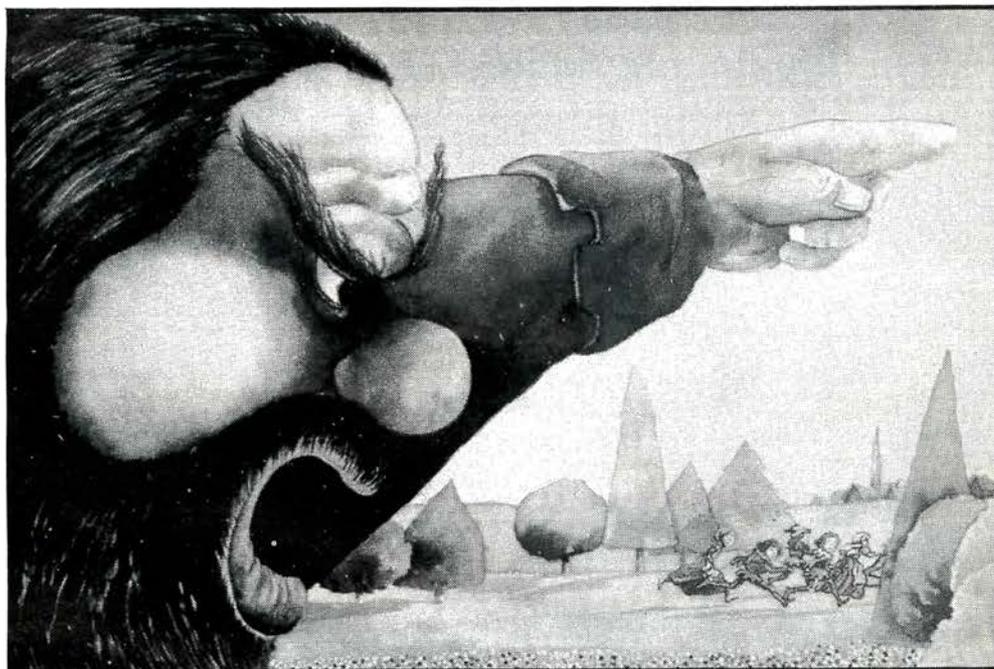
Ramona has decided that the world and, in particular, her family are against her. 'I couldn't do without her' is an expression that always seems to be applied to sister Beezus. Ramona, in her efforts to win the same praise, becomes involved in one mishap after another. A basin full of toothpaste, a bathtub full of 'bluing' and wearing one's pyjamas to school are not factors likely to win love and attention of the kind Ramona is really seeking. Finally she packs her bags and it is only then that she realises that the family want her after all. This is another delightful book from Beverly Cleary with just the right level of humour and frustration for readers and listeners from seven upwards. Separate episodes could be successfully read aloud in the junior school and it is a perfect choice for those just coming to read 'whole books'.

CL

**The Selfish Giant**

Oscar Wilde, ill. Michael Foreman and Freire Wright, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.383 8, £1.10

The very moving story of the Giant who learns to love others is one of the best known of



'What are you doing here?' he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away. From **The Selfish Giant**.

Wilde's fairy tales. In this picture book version the illustrations brilliantly capture both the awesomeness and deep humility of the Giant, and sensitive use of colour evokes the mood of the tale. An excellent introduction to Oscar Wilde's fairy stories.

JB

**Puss in Boots**

Tony Ross, Andersen/Sparrow, 0 09 928510, £1.35

A splendidly direct, unfussy and witty retelling. Ross's vivid, characterful pictures burst with rumbustious life and carry the young reader along. A surrealist feast of colour, yet the narrative line is skilfully

held. I use this artist's work a lot with teachers and children to discuss the ways in which good picture book artists tell you a good deal more than is in the text. Superb quality of production: a good addition to a paperback list that is worth catching up on (see, for example, McKee's **Not Now, Bernard** and Ruth Brown's **Crazy Charlie**).

CM

# Middle/Secondary

**The Magpies Said**  
Stories and poems from  
New Zealand, collected by  
Dorothy Butler, Puffin,  
0 14 03.1480 6, 95p



'The Old Man and the Cat'  
from **The Magpies Said**.

Stories tinged with sorrow and yearning, others with humour, some from contemporary New Zealand others with Maori connections make up this very pleasing collection. Dorothy Butler's experience in choosing stories for children is clearly expressed here in a book that may be enjoyed by children over a wide age span with potential for reading aloud as well as private enjoyment. It is a pity that the delicately designed cover is not sufficiently eye-catching for immediate appeal. Many children criticised the lack of colour. It will need to be promoted in the bookshop but with encouragement should be popular at many levels, from ten upwards. As with the best short story books it is one to grow into, with stories that grow on you to store away in the mind and rediscover later.

CL

**Count Doberman of Pinscher**

0 600 20574 6



Count  
Doberman  
of Pinscher.

**The Case of the Baffling Burglary**

0 600 20538 9

Brenda Sivers, Beaver, 85p  
each

The great detective, Sherlock Hound with his sheepdog companion, Dr Winston, exposes the criminal intrigues

of international acquaintances, discovering the thieves of a golden chalice in **The Case of the Baffling Burglary** and setting a trap for a wicked brother in **Count Doberman of Pinscher**.

The reading level is around nine to ten years but the humour at a far more sophisticated level. Younger children are not amused and read the books purely for the story line and with little interest. Older children laugh at the very amusing stereotype speech styles with which each character is endowed and nod at the jokes but some complain about the "easy reading". Perhaps this provides for a wide and flexible readership?

Possible potential as entertaining read aloud stories with the right adult who can carry off the accents and humour.

CL

**The Box in the Attic**  
Barbara Euphan Todd,  
Carousel, 0 552 52167 1,  
95p

A family of children, all with names from Shakespeare's plays, go to spend their holiday in a rectory where magic would appear to have taken over. A cloak of invisibility, wearing thin, a carpet that may be able to fly and a spindle that just might have put Sleeping Beauty to sleep are among the strange contrivances of this very confusing tale. Perdita narrates the story and at times seems to be thinking aloud, assuming that her listener, the reader, has grasped her unspoken thoughts. There are leaps and bounds in the plot with which I could not contend and many young testers felt equally confused. Perhaps the 'madcap magic' described in the blurb got into this well-recognised author. Whatever the explanation it is a book that can be easily forgotten.

CL

**No More Horses**

Joyce Stranger, Carousel,  
0 552 52168 X, 95p

There are children who seek out animal books and others who consciously avoid them. There are children and children! There are also animal stories and animal stories! Why, one wonders, do children attracted to such books not discriminate between the good and the bad? For me **No More Horses** has very little to offer. It is the inevitable catalogue of veterinary disasters with the expected happy solutions and you can rest assured that while Vet, Timothy Yorke, resolves in the first chapter to rescue no more horses the final episode finds him taking in another maltreated pony! Girl testers of ten to twelve of the 'horsey'

breed commented without exception that it was 'very good', 'interesting', 'enjoyable'. Mind you, there were those who refused to test it! Put it in the school bookshop. It will go down a bomb in the rural middle school. There will be no need to recommend it!

CL

**Let the Hurricane Roar**

Rosé Wilder Lane, Puffin,  
0 14 03.1401, 90p

It was with interest that I read the 'Afterword' to this book and discovered that Rose Wilder Lane preceded her mother as a known writer and indeed helped and encouraged her to write the 'Little House' series, some years after the publication of **Let the Hurricane Roar**. This is the tale of Molly and David leaving the family to settle in the mid-west of America. The style and mood are recognisable from the 'Little House' books as the trials of beginning married life with little money and within a very harsh environment are related. It promises the same satisfaction in reading as the Wilder books and will be welcomed by all fans of such tales of contrasting hardship and contentment.

CL

**Antigrav**

Nicholas Fisk, Puffin,  
0 14 03.1416 4, 95p

Dilemma: writer discovers initial idea won't mould to a novel worthy of young audience. Ditch it? Not Nicholas Fisk! The result — **Antigrav**. Just imagine E. Blyton getting into SF . . . Three kids accompanying a scientist's jaunt to a remote Scottish island discover a pebble combination which ignores Earth's gravity and heads for the moon. Unfortunately, commie Czeslaw, and some 'fellow travellers' call up nearby submarine. Kidnap! — but Czeslaw, doubting his masters, sets kids free. Chase . . . Escape! Yes, some juniors will read it. Sure, we need some simplistic stuff of this kind. But it would be nice to get something readable and good once in a while.

SB

**Nasty!**

Michael Rosen, Longmans  
Knockout, 0 582 20127 6,  
85p (non-net)

We always need more short stories especially written for the 10-13s so don't ignore this. Three develop the character from Rosen's previous **Knockout** so, as a lead-in, you'll need **The Bakerloo Flea** (0 582 20077 6, 80p) or the hardback **Nasty!** (0 582 25048 X, £2.95) where Flea is included. The

new stories deal with plagues of wasps and mice, and with community action over traffic. Also here, two fables which might provoke talk. (My groups, though, have mimicked the narrative voice of the longer stories well when writing but haven't got into discussing the political issues. My teaching, perhaps.) The style is irksome when reading aloud but the book has proved useful.

SB

**Goodbye, Chicken Little**

Betsy Byars, Puffin,  
0 14 03.1392 X, 90p

This won't rival the author's **Eighteenth Emergency** or **Pinballs** for popularity but you might find some useful read-aloud extracts (eg. quarrel with a friend) if you spare it an hour and there's the possibility of the occasional taker from a class library. The opening shows Jimmie Little witnessing his clowning uncle's death in a frozen river. (Talk — should Jimmie have acted differently to try to save him?) Thereafter, it's about his gradual reclamation from guilt through a realisation of his eccentric family's worth. Some larger-than-life comic characters in the Byars' tradition but Jimmie is rather colourless. Not top priority.

SB

**Iggie's House**

Judy Blume, Piccolo,  
0 330 26682 9, £1.00

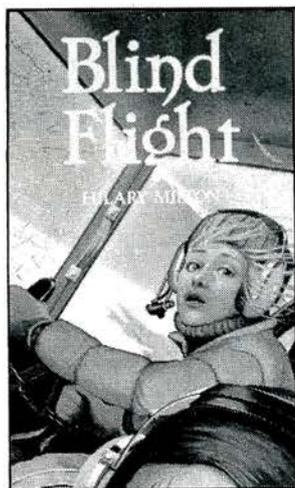
The late arrival here of Judy Blume's first novel suggested that English publishers didn't rate it. Consequently, my expectations were low — perhaps why I was pleasantly surprised. Once best friend Iggie moves away, Winnie anxiously awaits new neighbours. The Garbers are black and, swallowing initial amazement, Winnie starts to make friends with the three kids — hindered by her own clumsiness and the middle Garber's prickliness. Suburban racism rears its head — but capitulates quite easily in the end. Inevitably, it's simplistic — the Blume approach suits domestic/personal affairs better than major public issues — but Winnie is appealing and the package very easily consumed.

SB

**Blind Flight**

Hilary Milton, Hippo,  
0 590 72158, 85p

Debbie goes flying with her uncle but they hit a migrating goose, the windscreen is smashed and uncle is knocked out. The book charts the operation to talk her down; the twist — Debbie can't see. The sub-plot tackles Debbie's brother's fear of flying.

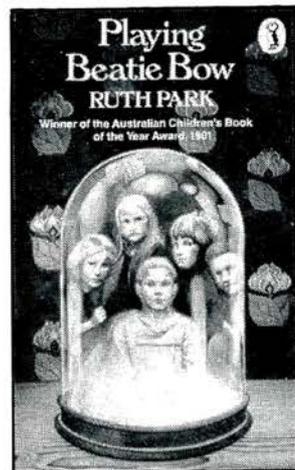


overcome when he's instrumental in her final triumph. Several other characters are involved in helping and the consequent narrative leaps might disconcert some kids. The story is also stretched a little over 122 pages but it's basically quite easy reading, no *To the Wild Sky*. Nothing special but good enough to pad a lower secondary class library, especially as Hippo have left off their colophon! SB

### Playing Beatie Bow

Ruth Park, Puffin,  
0 14 03.1460 1, £1.25

I had the good fortune to read this for the first time as I flew towards Sydney and my family last Christmas. The story of Abigail, very much a child of today, lost in Victorian Sydney haunted me for the fortnight I spent there. The contrast between the modern, architect-designed Sydney and the early town (of which perfect glimpses can still be had), growing up in intimate harbour inlets, is eerie yet very realistic.



Abigail, the daughter of a broken marriage, of a Swedish father and a busy working mother, lives in a high rise development and is left very much to her own devices. When she trims her long 'murky green' dress with a piece of Victorian lace she is unwittingly making contact with a family of that era and in particular with Beatie Bow, the legendary character of a popular game. Carried back in

time she encounters much violence and fear, discovers a personal courage and comes to recognise that the love her mother still feels for Abigail's departed father is very real, a kind of love of which she is also capable. 'Beatie Bow' is a book of great strength and power, totally absorbing. Winner of the Australian Children's Book of the Year Award 1981, it is indeed worthy of great acclaim. Make it readily available to top middle and older children. CL

### The Guardian of Isis

Monica Hughes, Magnet,  
0 416 24570 6, £1.25

This book's appeal depends entirely on the reception given to its predecessor, *Keeper of the Isis Light*, Magnet, 0 416 21030 9, 95p. (My experience suggests that, good though it is, *Keeper* doesn't sell itself and needs considerable pushing.) The small community on Isis is a couple of generations older but, technologically, it has regressed to a 'Primitive Agricultural Phase', thanks largely to President London's guilt over the events of *Keeper*. Young Jody, a born questioner, is banished but thereby brings new hope for the community through renewed contact with the Keeper and her Guardian. Philosophy, character and mood rather than action. Aficionados only. SB

### See You Thursday

Jean Ure, Puffin Plus,  
0 14 03.1335 4, £1.10

Once accepted on its own terms, *See You Thursday* isn't bad. From being implacably anti-lodgers and somewhat appalled by the idea of a new p-g. who is blind, Marianne about-turns once she meets Abe. She's a reluctant sixth-former at a mediocre private school, he's a music teacher eight years her senior (different establishment). The book charts the developing relationship. Get kids through the first few chapters to reach the romance and the mother/daughter clashes and it might be read. But why — apart from lack of imagination — make the background so distant from most kids' experience? Awarded a biscuit for a particularly awful opening. SB

### Go Well, Stay Well

Toeckey Jones, Lions,  
0 00 672030 7, £1.25

Bringing Candy and Becky together with the old sprained ankle ploy, Ms. Jones uses their friendship to suggest Apartheid's evils. The white middle-class focus makes the opening as pale as Lions' cover; initially Becky is a jokey, vivacious survivor and the only other black is faithful family servant, Tom (of course). It gets punchier — the relationship falters after Becky is raped, then the Soweto riots begin — but the conclusion is comforting optimism. Though

ultimately limiting, Liberalism has some virtues. The book is similar. It's longish but uncomplicated and worth trying — possibly with fans of *The Friends* (Rosy Guy, Puffin/M Books) or *Hey Dollface* (Deborah Hautzig, Lions). SB

## Plays for Juniors

### Theatre Box

The trick *Theatre Box* sets itself is about as easy for an adult as a triple somersault: a series of quality tele-plays/ playscripts for an audience aged 8-12+ which can be acted by the same age-group. Not surprisingly, the playwrights here — who average 40+ — have a tendency to fall flat on their faces. They're just not limber enough to cope with a junior interest-level in content that's also junior ability-level in the technical demands it makes. Hence most of these pieces do the splits between the two aspects.

Ken Campbell's *School for Clowns*, for example, is a winner performed for kids but can it really be performed by them? Conversely, Andrew Davies' *Marmalade Atkins* is well within their scope but — alas — why should they bother? The rest of the plays move steadily up the age range: from James Andrew Hall we get a sub-Ayckbourn exercise called *Reasons To Be Cheerful* and from Brian Glover a sub-Rudkin offering called *Death Angel*. Both, let it be said, are several cuts above George Moore's *The Prince and the Demons* and Adrian Mitchell's *You Must Believe All This* which are merely sub-Moore and sub-Mitchell.

In sum, this is a patchy series that's much more likely to succeed in the secondary classroom than the primary — witness the heavily teacher-orientated Production Notes by Jonathan Dudley. Having committed itself to an 8-12+ audience and 8-12+ performers, why didn't *Theatre Box* take that final bold step and, with the help of 'polished' improvisation, make a further commitment to 8-12+ *Playwrights*? Now that

really would clinch its claim to be an 'exciting link-up between children's theatre, television and publishing'. At present the links are more than a bit suspect. CP

### Theatre Box series

**School for Clowns**  
F.K. Waechter and Ken Campbell, 0 423 37650 8

**Marmalade Atkins**  
Andrew Davies,  
0 423 00320 8

**Reasons To Be Cheerful**  
James Andrew Hall,  
0 423 00270 8

**Death Angel**  
Brian Glover,  
0 423 00300 3

**The Prince and the Demons**  
George Moore,  
0 423 00260 0

**You Must Believe All This**  
Adrian Mitchell,  
0 423 00290 2  
All published in paperback by Thames Methuen at £1.95 each. (Also available *Theatre Box* hardcover omnibus edition, 0 423 00250 3, £6.95.)

## Handy for holidays

Holiday outings and activities can be made that bit more enjoyable if you take the right book along. We've chosen a handful from recent publications that we think earn their space in car, cyclebag, picnic basket or hand luggage.

### The Museum Picture-Puzzle Book of . . . series

Heritage Books and Longman, 65p each

A must for anyone visiting a museum this summer or at any

time. The series is sponsored by the Museums Association and each book — there are six so far — was compiled by Harry T Sutton with the help of a specialist adviser from one of our museums. The whole project has clearly involved people with considerable experience of encouraging children to look at and notice things. The puzzles — Spot the difference, Find the jigsaw piece, Spot the deliberate mistake — are all designed to make looking closely fun; and there's just the right amount of information to follow up.

We've indicated which museums the special advisers come from but the books are not specific to any museum collection and could also be enjoyed without setting foot outside home or classroom. As introduction or follow-up to a museum visit they are invaluable.

**Life at Sea** (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich)  
0 582 39189 X

**Bird Spotting** (Horniman Museum, London) 0 582 39192 X

**Steam Trains** (National Railway Museum, York)  
0 582 39191 1

**Motoring** (National Motor Museum, Beaulieu)  
0 582 39190 3

**The Roman Army** (Verulamium Museum, St Albans) 0 582 39187 3

**Life in Roman Times** (Verulamium Museum, St Albans) 0 582 39188 1

Anyone taking young children to see the wild birds or the marvellous collections of tame waterfowl at any of the seven Wildfowl Trust's centres would be glad of

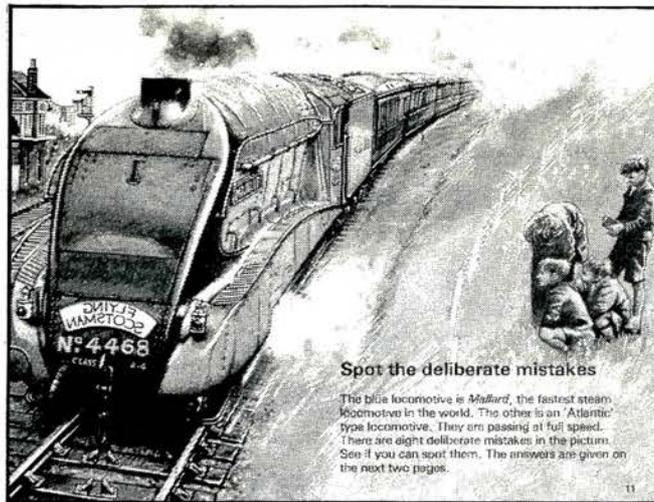
**Ducks and Drakes** Althea, ill. Joe Blossom, Dinosaur, 0 85122 342 7, 85p

Althea has sensibly given most space to mallards — the ones most familiar to children who have 'fed the ducks' on park lakes or village ponds. There's also lots of general information about ducks and some carefully selected detail about ten other species. Good clear pictures help with identification.

Those who go to observe the rituals and behaviour of a quite different species in the City of London will also be glad to have Althea as a guide.

**The Stock Exchange** Althea, ill. Chris Evans, Dinosaur, 0 85122 322 2, 85p

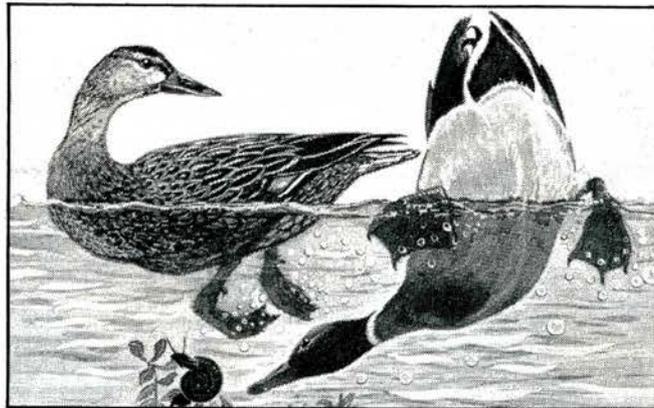
After picking her way through the minefield of explaining Trade Unions Althea turns her attention to those bastions of the capitalist system, Stock Exchanges (there are four in Britain all able to be visited). She bravely attempts some difficult concepts: pension funds, life assurance, speculation, government bonds, jobbing, broking; but most children will need an adult on hand to expand. Nice to see some female faces in the illustration of this determinedly masculine world; one is seen buying shares from a broker, another is a high level accountant/financial analyst (in glasses!).



Spot the deliberate mistakes

The blue locomotive is Mallard, the fastest steam locomotive in the world. The other is an 'Atlantic' type locomotive. They are passing at full speed. There are eight deliberate mistakes in the picture. See if you can spot them. The answers are given on the next two pages.

Part of 'The Express Train' section of **The Museum Picture-Puzzle Book of Steam Trains**.



Joe Blossom's front cover painting for **Ducks and Drakes**.



Air travellers (and would-be air travellers) will find lots to enjoy in

**Junior Jet Club** Margaret Crush, Piccolo, 0 330 26680 2, £1.50

In collaboration with British Airways Piccolo have produced just the book for long flights, tedious waits in airport lounges or visits to airports by those who long to be above the clouds but have to remain earthbound. It's packed with information about air travel, things to look out for, things to do. The Junior Jet Club is twenty years old and has members all over the world. If you are under 16 you can join, £3.50 p.a., whether you have flown or not. This is the club's

official handbook — and a very professional production it is — large format, glossy cover, lots of colour photographs, drawings and diagrams.

Someone with her feet firmly on the ground — as far as entertaining children is concerned — is Philippa Dickinson. No-one organising a party, school camp or class picnic will want to be without

**Go! A Book of Games**

Philippa Dickinson, Puffin, 0 14 03.1440 7, 90p

Philippa's five years' experience of organising activities for Puffin Club parties and Puffin Colony holidays gives this book an unchallenged credibility. It comes through in the sensible tips, sound advice and clear explanations for organisers. It's especially good for those landed with large numbers to occupy indoors and out. What also comes across is the sheer fun and enjoyment of it all. Should inspire even the most reluctant party-giver to give it a try.

Two books for kids going it alone these holidays.

**The Complete Bicycle Book**

Tony Osman and Nicola McLaughlin, Sparrow, 0 09 928000 0, 95p

THE COMPLETE BICYCLE BOOK



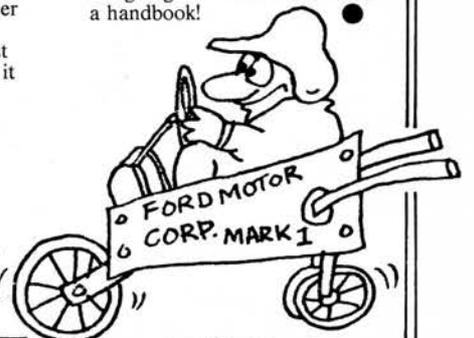
The latest in a whole line of books arising from the growing enthusiasm for cycling. It's readable and full of ideas and information (lots of useful addresses) presented in a form which is easily accessible for the young reader. Short, compact sections on all aspects of bike owning — maintenance, safety, security, touring, cycle sports. There's also a competition at the end of the book. Prize — one of the bikes in the photograph on the cover. Closing date 3rd January 1983 so there's plenty of time.

**The Millionaire's Handbook**

Peter Eldin, Armada, 0 00 691947 2, 85p



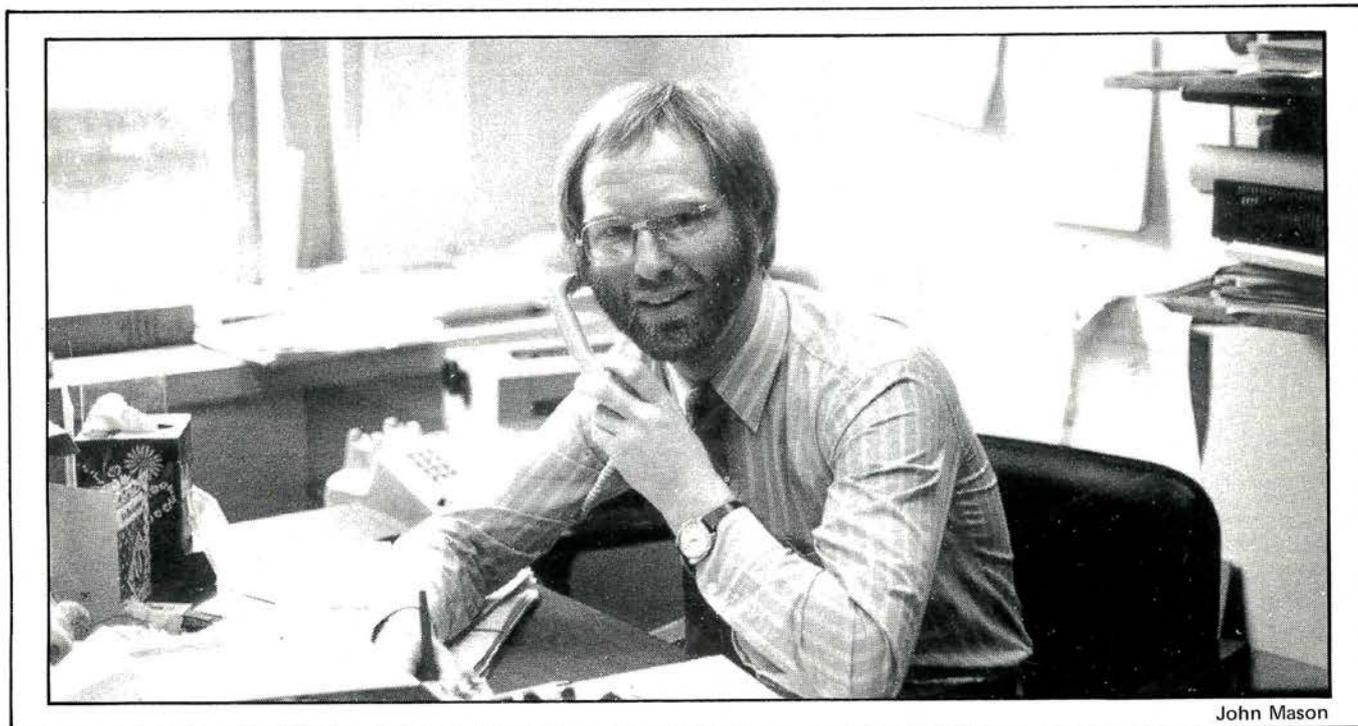
Anecdotes, information, ideas for things to do, all collected under the umbrella of how to make money. The usual Peter Eldin mixture of the silly and the sensible with joky cartoons by Roger Smith. Could be a good investment for those wanting to raise some cash this holidays. It might even be the first step to making a fortune — though I suspect those who are going to do that don't need a handbook!



Two years ago **John Mason**, one of the founders of the school bookshop movement during his time at Penguin, left his job in charge of publicity at Methuen Children's Books and moved to New York. He is now Promotion and Publicity Manager for children's books at Putnam.

He sent us these impressions of the **American children's book scene** which he finds

## THE SAME-BUT DIFFERENT



John Mason

I do all the familiar things that I used to do in London — catalogues, advertising, press releases, promotional give-aways, exhibitions. Checking the proofs of a catalogue in New York is much the same as in London. Schools still ring up and say, 'We want an author for our book bonanza — can you suggest anyone?' And there is the same feeling of cosy intimacy among children's book people — the same small world of dedicated specialists and crusaders, reviewers and librarians.

But there is one big difference. America is 3,000 miles across. In England, nearly everywhere is within a few hours' car journey of everywhere else. 'Book people' meet frequently and informally. In America, the 'cosy intimacy' has to be maintained mainly by relying on meeting people at two or three major national conventions each year. These conventions are vast social jamborees on a scale unheard of in England. The main ones for children's books are organised by the IRA (no, not the IRA you're thinking of, but the International Reading Association, to which the British UKRA is affiliated) and the ALA (the American Library Association). There is also the NCTE, the National Council of Teachers of English, to which the English NATE is affiliated.

The ALA, which has its headquarters in Chicago, is a huge organisation consisting of various major divisions (one of which, the American Association of School Librarians, holds its own annual meeting),

and literally scores of sub-divisions, committees, sub-committees, working parties and discussion groups, some with very intriguing-sounding names like the 'Social Responsibilities Round Table', and the 'Office of Intellectual Freedom', which campaigns against censorship.

Each year at the ALA Annual Convention close to 20,000 librarians from all across the nation gather for five days of intensive seminars, workshops, lectures and colloquia — and social activity. The publishers, who predominate among the hundreds of exhibitors displaying their wares to this audience, invite leading children's librarians and reviewers to a hectic merry-go-round of breakfasts, lunches, cocktail parties and dinners. Some are intimate tête-à-têtes with a select few, others lavish entertainments for scores or hundreds in opulent hotel suites. Many people get so heavily booked up that if you haven't sent out your invitations to every meal and party at least three months before, you're socially out of the running.

The climax of the show is the annual presentations of the prestigious Newbery and Caldecott Awards (the American equivalent of the British Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Awards) for the best novel and the best picture book of the year. Here, the lucky winners make their acceptance speeches to an audience of several thousand, and the party then adjourns for an evening of fun and games: this used to be a full-scale banquet, but in the last two years it has been down-graded

to a buffet supper eaten to the accompaniment of jazz-bands, troupes of street artists performing clown shows, juggling acts and the like, and other more economical entertainments for these budget-conscious times. The first time I witnessed this, accustomed as I was to modest prize-givings in London's National Book League introduced by the sober remarks of its high-minded director Martyn Goff, I wondered in wide-eyed amazement what on earth any of this had to do with children's literature, or books, or reading, or anything! But in fact, for 364 days of the year most of these people, too, are earnestly and conscientiously working in their local communities to bring children and books together. The only difference is that in America, when they let their hair down, they really let it down and make no apologies for doing so!

Another aspect of these conventions is that authors and artists who are participating usually spend much of the time at their publishers' booths signing books which are then sold like crazy to an eager throng of purchasers. That's another difference. Any publisher who sold books from his exhibition at a library or educational conference in England would be frowned upon especially by local booksellers. In America, there is no net book agreement to inhibit publishers from selling books direct to the public, at any price they choose.

Recently I was at the Texas Library Association Convention where Eric Carle was the guest speaker at their

Children's Round Table 'Brunch'. Before his speech (in front of 1,000 people) there was a presentation of the Texas Bluebonnet Award (named after the state flower of Texas), given this year to Judy Blume. Since Judy could not attend in person, her publishers presented a videotape of her acceptance speech, in which she was seen stepping out of the shower explaining that that was where she got most of her ideas! After this diversion, Eric made a 40-minute speech, and began signing books at our booth. Within a few hours, we had sold 400 copies of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* alone — in hardback. The next day, I boarded the plane for New York clutching an envelope containing our takings — \$5,000 in cash! I kept a particularly sharp lookout for muggers on the way home that night.

America — the world's melting pot — is a land of great cultural diversity. With so many different viewpoints, how can any group of people reach a consensus or agree on a course of action? By forming a committee! Committees are fair, committees are democratic, and Americans love committees! In England Elaine Moss in the past and Barbara Sherrard-Smith now relied on their own judgement in selecting titles for the National Book League's annual Children's Books of the Year. In America this kind of work is felt to have more validity if it is done by a committee of twelve people. There's a bewildering plethora of children's book awards in America, all run by earnest and well-meaning committees of enthusiasts.

The ALA itself has committees to select the Newbery and Caldecott winners, the Best Books for Young Adults, and the ALA Notable Children's Books. Numerous organizations have committees to award prizes to books that satisfy certain criteria — such as books that highlight Jewish culture, books about the handicapped, books about Blacks, books that encourage international peace and brotherhood, and so on. The Children's Book Council (CBC) and certain teacher organizations have joint committees that arrange for lists of 'Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children' and 'Notable Children's Trade Books in the Field of Social Studies' to be drawn up. There are regional prizes for the best book set in the South-East, or the North-West. Then there are the many State awards, of which the Texas Bluebonnet Award is one. These are the most democratic of all — children from all over the state nominate their favourite books and then study them intensely for a year, and finally vote on the winner (for the publisher, this means big sales of the nominated books in that state even if they don't eventually win the award). Most ambitious of all is the elaborate selection process administered by a CBC-IRA joint committee to establish a nationwide list of 'Children's Choices'. For the publicist faced with all these committees clamouring for his attention, it's almost a full-time job just submitting the right books to the right committees at the right time. Keeping track of all the awards and citations for catalogues and other publicity pieces is a major feat of organization too.

Children's book publishing in America is undergoing some changes in the eighties. Throughout the sixties and early seventies, when vast amounts of public

money were being pumped into services including schools and libraries, American children's book publishers concentrated almost entirely on the institutional market. The promotion or publicity staff for children's books were always (and in many firms still are) referred to as the 'School and Library Department'.

Members of these departments travelled the country attending not just the national conventions but many of the State ones as well (nowadays, the Texas Library Association Convention is the only State one that most children's publishers still attend). Many books — for example, picture books in two or three flat colours, which are virtually unknown in England — were published exclusively for the library market and were not expected to sell in bookshops. They were even published in special 'library editions' with reinforced bindings, and bookshops could only order them at a short discount, as they do in England with 'non net' books. But with the cut-backs of the last few years this institutional market had declined, and publishers have suddenly woken up to the fact that there is, after all, a large potential market for children's books amongst the general book-buying public, in hardback as well as paperback. Publishers' offerings are now brighter, more colourful, more commercial. Many publishers have given up 'library binding' editions and just publish trade books.

The American domestic market is still by far the largest in the English-speaking Western world, but American publishers who for years had little need to look beyond it are now catching up with their European colleagues and keeping costs down by going in for international co-editions. The works of British artists like John Burningham, Helen Oxenbury and Jan Pieńkowski are now well-known here, while Eric Hill's *Spot* books are bestsellers on the Putnam list.

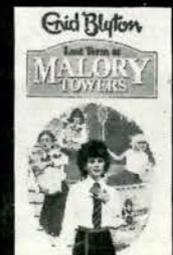
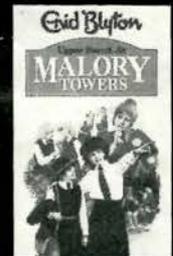
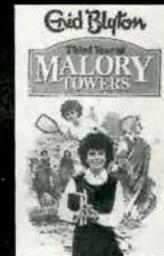
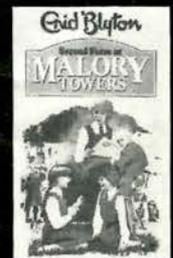
Specialist children's bookshops are flourishing — there are some 200 dotted around the country, some with intriguing names like 'A Likely Story' (Portland, Maine), 'Trespassers William' (Albuquerque, New Mexico), and 'The Alligator Tooth Popsicles' (Seattle), and more are starting up all the time. The CBC in conjunction with the ABA (American Booksellers Association) encourages them by circulating an annual exhibition of recent top-sellers under the title 'Children's Books Mean Business'.

Oddly, none of them seem to have heard of school bookshops, but, from conversations I have had with them, many seem ripe for conversion to the idea. More and more newsletters for parents about children's books are being put out by booksellers or by other parents. Children's books are also selling increasingly well in toy shops and other 'non book' outlets, and in mail order catalogues. American publishers have discovered that there's a whole new goldmine in children's books, and they're digging furiously. ●

**NO CHILDHOOD  
IS COMPLETE  
WITHOUT**

**Enid  
Blyton**

**MALORY  
TOWERS**

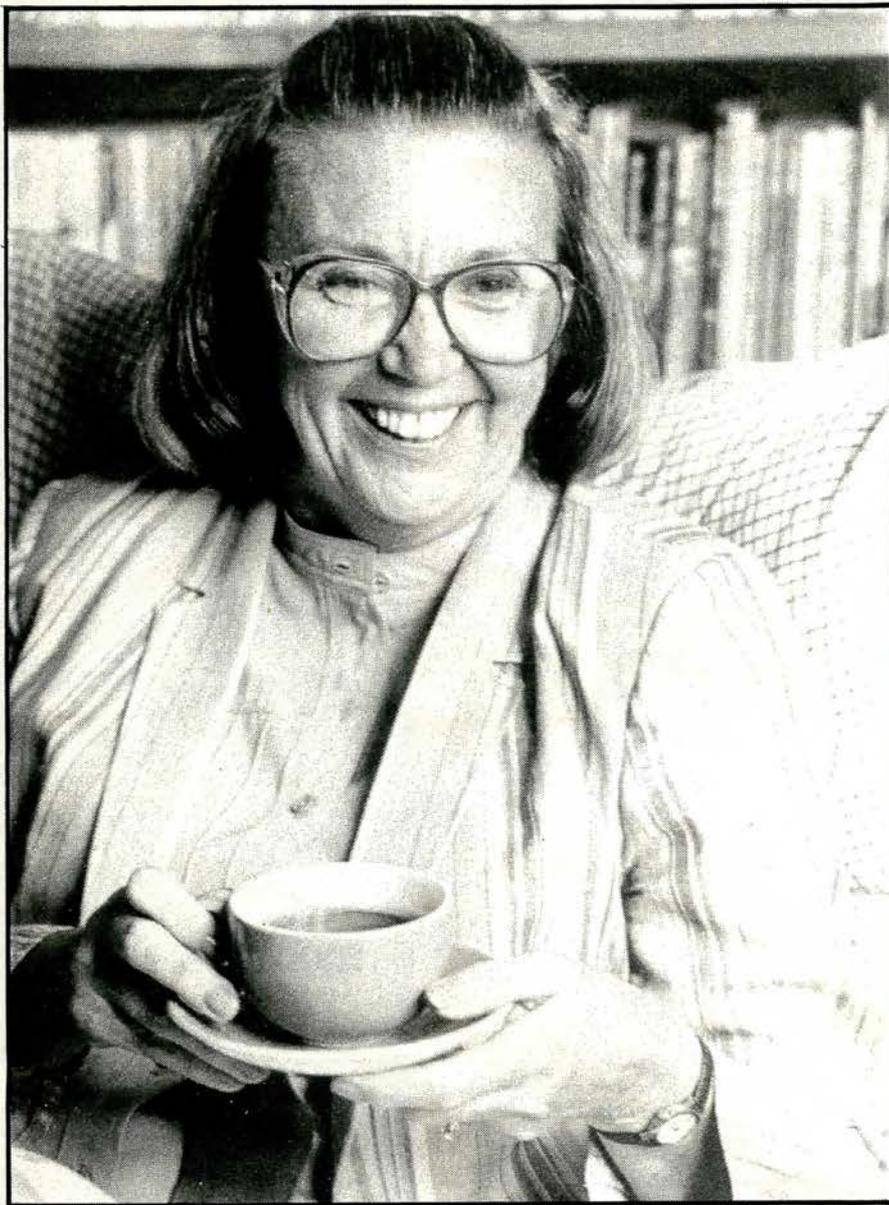


Enid Blyton's best-selling school series, which has thrilled millions of children worldwide for years is just available with a distinctive new series cover design, bringing this ever-popular series right up-to-date for today's children. Just 6 of the 55 Enid Blyton titles available in **GRANADA PAPERBACK**

**GRANADA**

# Authorgraph No. 15

Betsy Byars



The twenty-first Betsy Byars' book has just been published. In this country she is one of the most admired and loved of all American writers for children; and acclaimed (in their different ways) by critics and children for the unique blend of humour and understanding with which she depicts the traumas and travails of contemporary childhood.

Betsy Byars did not always want to be a writer. 'At school I had absolutely no interest in writing. I liked the outdoor life; I thought writers must have the most boring life in the world, sitting and typing all day by themselves. Now that's just what I do; but I have never been bored. I have been frustrated, disappointed, happy and flat; but I have *never* been bored.'

Her writing now feeds off observation and memory, not least memories of her own childhood. Her father worked for a cotton mill. The family moved around, sometimes to the city, part of the time in the country. 'So we had the best of both worlds.' She and her older sister went to school in a cotton mill village. At the time children had to 'make the grade' to move on to the next year. Some didn't and huge adolescents found themselves stuck in second grade until they could leave at fourteen.

'We had two of those in my school. The Fletcher brothers. Everyone was terrified of them. One day my sister and I were coming out of school and she looked back and thought she saw a Fletcher brother behind her. She stumbled all the way down the stairs and split her head open. We thought that was so much more fortunate than if it had been one of the Fletcher brothers. She was lucky; she had gotten off easy.' The Fletcher brothers combined to become Marv Hammerman, the bully who is Mouse Fawley's Eighteenth Emergency, the only



one he and his friend Ezzie's joint imaginations cannot find a solution for.

Many of Betsy Byars' characters live rich fantasy lives inside their heads. As she talks about one of her own childhood pleasures you feel that's another thing they might share. 'I could already read quite well when I started school. I admired my older sister very much — she was a good reader so I suppose I wanted to be like her. I loved books with chapters — if a book didn't have chapters it had no value for me at all. One of my favourites was an English author, Margaret Pedlar. She wrote romances — they were "hard reads", about 400 pages. In the first five pages someone fell in love with this spunky English girl; then for 395 pages they were kept apart. The girl was always riding horses in the desert, the horse would run away with her and she would have to be rescued. There were over forty books, with international settings and titles like *Flames of Passion*. My sister and I loved them all. I have a collection of them now, I look for them at junk sales.'

At college in Charlotte, North Carolina (where she was born), 'it was assumed I would be a mathematician like my sister. I didn't want to disappoint my parents who were working to put me through college but I just couldn't make it. It was a great relief to change and major in English for my last two years.'

Straight from College she married Ed who had a University post teaching Engineering. 'We had two daughters almost straight away and a very happy young faculty social life.' Then Ed decided to take his PhD. 'We went to Illinois where I knew nobody. We lived in a barracks apartment. Everyone else was taking courses, working, doing something. I was there by myself with my kids.' That was the turning point. 'I had always thought maybe I would try writing some day. Now was the ideal opportunity. It was a case of "I know I can write something but I don't know what it is going to be!" So I tried everything: magazine articles, mystery stories (I loved reading mysteries so I thought that might be it, but it didn't work out). The last thing I would have chosen would have been realistic children's fiction — that appealed to me less than anything.'

But she did try children's books and five were published. They are not available here. 'And there's no reason why they should be. I think one of the happiest days of my life was when they told me *The Dancing Camel* was going out of print.' That was her second book. The first was *Clementine*. 'I put a lot of my own personality into that. It was totally rejected by everybody. They all said it was terrible so I thought I'd better not do that again. I'd better hide myself. The next four books are personality-less — anyone could have written them.' Then the worm turned. 'I decided I was going to do what I wanted to do.' So she wrote *The Midnight Fox*.

'We were living in West Virginia and we had a cabin up in the mountains. I had seen a fox. It was really something special for me. That sparked the book. It was the first book in which I had used my own children at all. I used a lot of personal things they were doing and things from my own childhood. It seemed to work.' She had discovered the magic formula, one which has gone on working ever since even though her children are now grown up.

The *Cybil War*, published last year, is about Simon, his double-dealing 'friend' Tony and their rivalry for the approval of the delightful Cybil Ackerman. 'When my son, who is an engineer now, read it, he said, "That's me. Did you mean it to be me? And did you mean Tony to be James? Mom, how do you think it feels to see my whole life smeared across the pages of children's books?" But it seems he doesn't really mind. What about his sisters? 'I didn't write about girls for a long time because my daughters kept saying, "Don't put me in anything, don't write about me. What are you writing now?" My son couldn't have cared less.'



The important thing was having the children around. 'There's a big gap between adults and kids. We forget totally what it is like to be ten. My kids were very communicative. When they came home from school and told me what had happened or what they were worried about it would make me remember things that had happened to me and how I'd felt. I'm sure I would not have written what I've written if I had not had kids. There would have been no way.'

Another influence on the books is place. 'The bulk of my books were written in West Virginia. It's a hard territory, the land dominates everything, it produces very strong individuals. That life shaped those books.' Recently she and her husband sold the family house and moved to South Carolina. 'It's totally different, much more relaxed. We go to the beach.' And so do the characters in her latest book, *The Animal, the Vegetable and John D Jones*. Deanie and Clara are looking forward to their summer with their father, until they find they have to share the beach house with dad's girlfriend and her son John D who isn't exactly ecstatic either. 'I had always noticed how tough it is for kids. Being thrown together just because their parents get on, having to find something in common.'

This latest is one of Betsy Byars' three-character books. 'I seem to write one-character books and three-character books. If it's one child facing a problem — like *The Eighteenth Emergency*, *The Cartoonist* or *The TV Kid* — he has to face it by himself. But if I can pick how many I want I take three. After you've been doing it for a long time — and I've written far more than the 21 that got published — you learn what works and what doesn't: two doesn't work, four doesn't work. I know what works for me. The story has to take place in a very short time, one, two, three days. After that I don't know whether I lose interest or I lose control or what it is; but I want the story to take place quickly. I want to get rid of the parents as quickly as I can. I want the kids to be on their own. I like to take ordinary people and throw them in a crisis.'

What comes out of all that is an amazing balance of seriousness and humour. Betsy Byars' stories are funny, but the result of the laughter is to enrich the readers' understanding of the characters and their situation, to add another dimension to the story. 'I have always wanted to write just a funny book — but if I try to be funny I never am. If I'm writing seriously the funny bits come almost incidentally. I can't explain it, it just happens.' The humour is off-beat, arising often from the deadly accurate, deadpan awareness or wild free-wheeling associations and fantasies that children

specialise in. 'I've always loved odd things. I go through life storing them up consciously and unconsciously for future use.' A friend of her daughter, seeing two cobwebs on the ceiling, climbed on the piano stool and did an impression of Tarzan swinging. 'Only a child would make that association. An adult would see the cobwebs and think, "that ceiling is dirty."' She used that happening obliquely. In *The Eighteenth Emergency* Mouse is lying on his back. Seeing some cobwebs, he draws an arrow on the wall and writes 'Unsafe for Swinging'. 'That incident opened up all of Mouse's personality to me.'

That exemplifies the way Betsy Byars writes — exploring the characters and what they will do. 'It takes me a long time to do a first draft. I don't know where I'm going when I start out. I come to halts and just have to pause and wait. It doesn't always work out as I planned it. When I started *The Night Swimmers* about some kids who swim secretly in someone's pool at night, I thought "this is my chance to write a mystery. They will see something." Just at that time I came across a diary my daughter had kept. (We were moving and cleaning out. I'd never have read it when she was little.) And it was all about how much she hated her sister. It hit home to me how much brothers and sisters can hate each other — I'm not talking about a little sibling rivalry — this was just hate. So I wrote about that instead.'



'Once I get a first draft and I know it's a book, it's just total pleasure adding to it. I don't do any sequels so there's always the feeling that this is the only time I'm ever going to write about these people. I want everyone to know everything I want them to know. They are all very real to me. It wouldn't surprise me at all if one of them came up and said "I'm Ezzie, I was in your book." I see them perfectly, so clearly. That's why I don't describe them.'

With all the humour, Betsy Byars' characters find themselves facing some big issues: death, their own and others, bullying, emotional deprivation, fear, conflict and powerful emotions. 'Kids have always been willing to have books that faced up to tough



things. For a long time adults wanted them to have nice books in which just the loveliest possible world was shown. I find kids like the exciting parts.'

And they read them in the knowledge that in Betsy Byars' stories everything comes out more or less right at the end. 'I hope they always will. I think it's important there should be something positive at the end. When I'd finished *After the Goat Man* my son read the manuscript. He said, "Where's the rest of it?" I said "That's all there is!" He said "If I'd thought it was going to end like that I wouldn't have wasted my time." "Hand it back here," I said. "Maybe there is a little more to do." You can't let children feel cheated.' ●



## The Books

Betsy Byars' books are published in hardback by The Bodley Head. The following are currently available:

**The Animal, the Vegetable and John D Jones**

0 370 30914 6, £3.95

**The Cybil War**

0 370 30426 8, £3.75

**The Night Swimmers**

0 370 30317 2, £3.75  
Puffin, 0 14 03.1409 1, £1.00 (Autumn 1982)

**Goodbye, Chicken Little**

0 370 30212 5, £3.25  
Puffin, 0 14 03.1392 X, 90p

**The Cartoonist**

0 370 30104 8, £3.75  
Puffin, 0 14 03.1182 3, 90p

**The Pinballs**

0 370 30040 8, £3.75  
Puffin, 0 14 03.1121 1, 85p

**The TV Kid**

0 370 11018 8, £2.75  
Puffin, 0 14 03.1065 7, 90p

**After the Goat Man**

0 370 10951 1, £3.75

**The Eighteenth Emergency**

0 370 10924 4, £3.75  
Puffin, 0 14 03.0863 6, 85p

**The Midnight Fox**

Puffin 0 14 03.0844 X, 95p

**The House of Wings**

Puffin, 0 14 03.0887 3, reissue Spring 1983

**The Summer of the Swans**

Hippo, 0 590 72001 5, 65p (Newbery Medal winner, 1971)

**The Two Thousand Pound Goldfish**

Bodley Head, 0 370 30945 6, £3.95, Autumn 1982.

# Teenage Fiction— STORIES FOR OUR TIMES

Chris Kloet recommends three American authors

In the best teenage fiction, there are not necessarily easy answers to the often awkward, funny, painful problems of growing up, any more than there are in real life: remember the e.e. cummings quotation? — . . . (existing's tricky: but to live's a gift) . . .

And nowhere is this more true than in the works of three outstanding American writers for young people, **Mildred D. Taylor**, **Rosa Guy** and **Deborah Hautzig**. Despite the many differences in their works, I see them as a complementary trio for a handful of reasons.

First, they all write heart-wrenchingly (and that isn't too strong a way of putting it) about adolescent girls who, through no fault of theirs, are having a hard time either physically, emotionally or spiritually. Each writer says something cogent about the succour of friendship here, but none of the authors' young heroines for our times survives friendships unscathed or wins growth in understanding of herself cheaply.

As well as writing at the same heightened emotional pitch, these authors all seem to be writing from the inside, as though they, themselves, have trodden the same paths as their protagonists. Perhaps that's the best compliment one can pay to authors' creative talents — to suppose that their stories must be, at least in part, autobiographical! Whatever the case, these writers' works have an emotional truth and a rare veracity which gives them an immediacy which is hard to resist.

I also link the trio Taylor, Guy and Hautzig because the themes of some of their books overlap: racial discrimination and the Black experience; teenagers defining their own sexual orientations. These are innovatory writers who have done much recently to extend the boundaries of the teenage novel, by their uncompromising choice of subjects and treatment: tough, hard-edged and controversial, their books are often strong meat indeed, and at a vast remove from the innocuous writings of the Kamm/Tate/Peyton school or, for that matter, from most other writing for people of this age group.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, these three authors are linked by the same serious intentions at the very core of their books. Intensely moral writers all, they reveal with insight and compassion the eternal dilemmas of conscience and principle which the young must face, as an awareness of Polonius's advice dawns, — **to thine own self be true**. And if that all sounds very high-flown, it should be added that it's all done with grace, wit and a great deal of robust humour!

## Mildred D. Taylor



The over-riding humour, and the warm descriptions of family unity save Mildred D. Taylor's Newbery Medal-winning novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and its distinguished sequel, *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, from being catalogues of unrelieved pain. Set in Mississippi during the 1930s' Depression, the books follow a couple of years in the troubled lives of the members of the Logan family, as seen through the, at first innocent, then increasingly fearful and disillusioned eyes of young Cassie Logan. The Logans are Black, poor (although not as poor, or as tied to their landlords as their share-cropper neighbours), and the victims of bitter racial discrimination. Initially, Cassie is oblivious to all this, but as she slowly becomes aware of the humiliations and outrages perpetrated on herself and her family (acts which become more mindless and violent as the Depression worsens), so she also learns the galling truth — that she can not fight the injustices without endangering the lives of her family. The Logans come through the turmoil surrounding them, even the lynchings

and burnings, because of their almost superhuman reserves of fortitude, endurance and independence of spirit.

The sheer dignity of these characters, who are based on Taylor's own family, lends weight to her hopes (as expressed in the Foreword to the second book), that the works will teach . . . 'children of all colors the tremendous influence that Cassie's generation . . . had in bringing about the great Civil Rights Movement of the fifties and sixties', and that they will also help children to both 'cherish the precious rights of equality' and to 'better understand and respect themselves and others'. These are surely aims which are pertinent to our teenagers' perceptions of, and experiences of, our multi-cultural society in Britain. Such eloquent pleas deserve a wide readership; I only hope that the sheer length of these brave, beautiful books (770 pages in total, for the two works), won't deter all but the most committed readers. It will be a serious loss if the second story doesn't make it into paperback; what about it, Puffin?

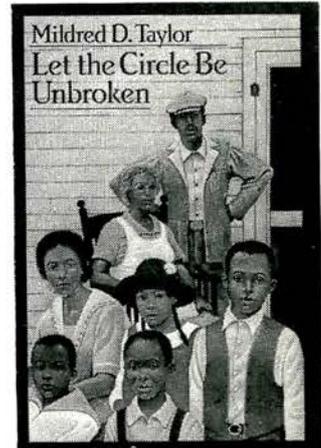
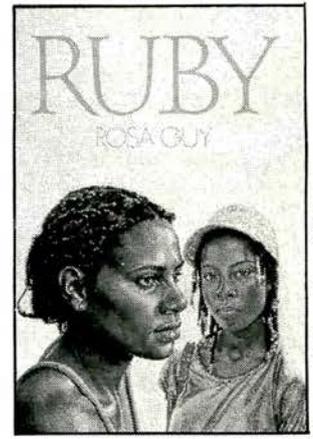


Photo of Mildred D. Taylor, Gollancz

## Rosa Guy



Judging by the four works published here to date, by our second Black writer Rosa Guy, I think that whilst she would probably agree that much was achieved by the Civil Rights



Movement, she would be less optimistic than Taylor. According to the Guy canon, if you are Black, female and living in Harlem, the odds of your getting out of the poverty trap

Photo of Rosa Guy, Gollancz

and making a success of your life are heavily against you. And as for stamping out racial discrimination, there's still a very long way to go.

Her first book, *The Friends*, established Guy as a sympathetic chronicler of contemporary Black life, Black pride and Black expectations; at the same time it introduced one of teenage fiction's most poignant heroines — Edith Jackson, whose story Guy continued in a powerful novel of the same title. *The Friends* concerns the unlikely (and at first unwanted) friendship between Phyllisia, newly arrived in Harlem from the West Indies, and scruffy, irrepressible Edith. Things are bad at home for Phyl — she hates her tyrannical father, and her mother is dying. So the unstinting loyalty which Edith, her protector at high school, thrusts at Phyl blossoms, despite her father's opposition. Even when she has shabbily betrayed Edith, whose problems are in fact far greater than Phyl's, the friendship enriches Phyl, helping her to see herself more clearly, to see where her responsibilities lie, and to stand up for herself.

A truly outstanding book, not nearly as sombre as it sounds, which makes the point that real friendship entails responsibilities and obligations. It's good that it is available in Puffin, although the dowdy cover does it less than justice.

In the next book, *Edith Jackson*, Guy examines the theme of the teenager acting as surrogate parent, and points out that the young person in this position is unlikely to grasp that one's responsibilities to oneself may properly outweigh one's responsibilities to others; hence the introduction of a pet subject of this author's, the matriarchal figure as mentor of the young. Edith and her sisters are now orphans, who have been shoved in and out of the Institution and a succession of unsuitable foster homes. At seventeen, Edith is blind to her own potential and worth. She has just one ambition — to look after her sisters, because her family unit to which she fiercely clings represents the only stability in her life. Enter Mrs Bates, a self-made Black lawyer who has had the guts and tenacity to rise above the oppression society metes out to the least privileged Black American female. By her interventions, which Edith at first resists, the girl is eventually brought to a realization that she must choose a career, but in the meantime, Edith's family is lost.

Guy's portrayal of Edith is compassionate, deeply sympathetic yet touched with grim humour. She exposes more fully than any other writer I know, the grievous hurt felt by young people who are cared for by the State and the degree of resilience necessary in an indifferent world to overcome this emotional damage. A raw, searing work (could cause offence with its language and incidents) which should be required reading for everyone. Why isn't it available in paperback?

The author continues her exploration of 'mentor' in *The Disappearance*, but breaks new ground here in that the main character is male. Cool, street-wise Imamu, just out of the detention centre, is flattered when smart Ann Aimsley, a pillar of the Brooklyn community, offers him a foster home. Soon Ann regrets her generosity because her young daughter disappears and suspicion falls on Imamu. After being tortured by the police, the boy sets out to find the child and clear his name. The horrifying climax confirms his trust in his despised street wisdom and his autonomy. This fierce, disturbing thriller examines the destructive elements of patronage and questions the often shaky motives behind the philanthropic act. Full of racy language and uncompromisingly adult in tone, this book has plenty to say to the mature teenager about social injustices and Black pride.

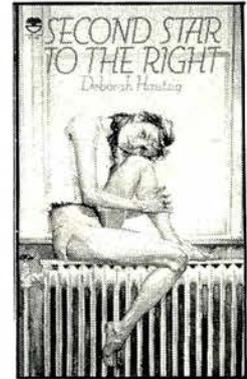
*Ruby*, Guy's most recently published work here, was actually written in 1976, between

*The Friends* and *Edith Jackson*, and it completes a loose trilogy about the same characters. Here, the emphasis is on Phyllisia's elder sister Ruby, and it's a love story. Eighteen-year-old Ruby has little of Phyl's resourcefulness. Over-protected by her father since her mother's death (and she is still especially missed), Ruby is unsure of herself, bored, uninterested in her studies and desperately lonely. When Daphne, Ruby's cool, spectacular classmate who possesses all the poise and determination which Ruby lacks, offers her friendship, Ruby eagerly accepts. The relationship soon deepens into love, and for a time Ruby is completely happy. But her possessiveness and lack of maturity lead to a break-up; at first desolate, she finally sees that her time

spent with Daphne have given her the confidence she hitherto lacked, to challenge her father, and stake her claims to pleasure and freedom.

Although there are a few purple passages, the relationship is quite shrewdly observed. The trouble is that Ruby comes across as rather wet, by comparison with the splendidly liberated Daphne, who is altogether a much more strongly realised character. The book's major strength is that it does not patronise the reader, by either omitting the physical aspects of the lesbian relationship, or suggesting that there is any cause for shame in it. Not the best Guy, but still very welcome, because we have so few books here which explore homosexuality sympathetically.

## Deborah Hautzig



There are some similarities between Ruby and the first, extraordinary book by the last author in my trio, Deborah Hautzig. *Hey, Dollface* was something of a breakthrough when it appeared here in hardback in 1979, because it was the first book which treated the subject of growing up gay positively. Val and Chloe enjoy a marvellous friendship — they spend all their free time together and are typical, lively fifteen-year-olds. The special bond of trust which they share is capable of being misunderstood by outsiders, and by the girls themselves. Val, the narrator, is especially frightened by the label 'lesbian', and the book is mainly concerned with her attempts to sort out her feelings for Chloe. There's a lot of soul-searching here, and some very funny bits which are not unlike the mood and tone of vintage Zindel. And as much as it is a story about sexual definition, it is even more, a story about growing up and learning to trust one's

feelings. It deserves to be read by every girl, so full marks to Fontana Lions for being brave enough to publish it in paperback. If only there were a book which told the same story from the male viewpoint, in which the treatment were as well-handled as here.

Finally, there isn't room here to do full justice to Hautzig's recent book *Second Star to the Right*. It's a penetrating study of a fourteen-year-old girl who is suffering from anorexia nervosa, and shows the very real difficulties in diagnosis and cure which face the victim. The author doesn't pursue the 'fat is a feminist issue' line, but instead focuses her considerable talents on tracing the deeper, psychological causes for the obsession. Her insights about the girl's feelings for her mother have, for me, a tremendous ring of truth. Watch out for the paperback edition when it comes out in Fontana Lions later this year. ●

## The Books Mentioned

### Mildred D. Taylor:

*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*  
Gollancz, 1977, 0 575 02384 8, £4.95;  
Puffin, 0 14 03.1129 7, £1.25

*Let the Circle Be Unbroken*  
Gollancz, 1982, 0 575 03084 4, £6.50

### Deborah Hautzig:

*Hey, Dollface*  
Hamish Hamilton, 1979, 0 241 10151 4,  
£3.50; Fontana Lions, 0 00 671964 3, £1.00

*Second Star to the Right*  
Julia MacRae Books, 1981, 0 86203 052 8,  
£4.95; Fontana Lions, 0 00 671979 1,  
£1.00 (November 1982)

### Rosa Guy:

*The Friends*  
Gollancz, 1974, 0 575 01839 9, £4.95;  
Macmillan Education, 1982, 0 333 29514 5,  
£1.65; Puffin, 0 14 03.0933 0, 95p

*Edith Jackson*  
Gollancz, 1979, 0 575 02607 3, £4.95

*The Disappearance*  
Gollancz, 1980, 0 575 02804 1, £4.50

*Ruby*  
Gollancz, 1981, 0 575 03052 6, £5.50



## BREAKWATER

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One day Rose hears the stuttering roar of a sinister helicopter above Deadman's Wood. With Jimmy her brother, and John and Harry from the farm, she sets off on a trail of adventure. The mystery the children uncover is in the best tradition of this popular and exciting writer.

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Illustrated. £2.00 paperback; £5.00 cloth.

#### Borrowed Black

Ellen Bryan

Borrowed Black borrowed and never gave back! But when he borrowed the moon he got more than he wanted. Children are spellbound by this colourful, fully illustrated Labrador tale in rhyme. The characters are unforgettable and the book is alive with the magic possibilities of childhood.

Fully illustrated. £4.00 cloth. Ages 5-15

#### Quest of the Golden Gannet

Dorothy P. Barnhouse

A young boy sails on the **Golden Gannet** bound for the New Founde Land in the 17th century. A girl called Angel, with a mysterious background, becomes his ally. They encounter pirates and other dangers, in this story of fear of the unknown and reactions to danger and responsibility. In the background are glimpses of American and Canadian struggles towards independence. A great read and attractively illustrated too.

Illustrated. £2.00 paperback; £4.50 cloth.

#### Breakwater Books

78 Norroy Road, London SW15 1PG.

# America's gift to learner readers

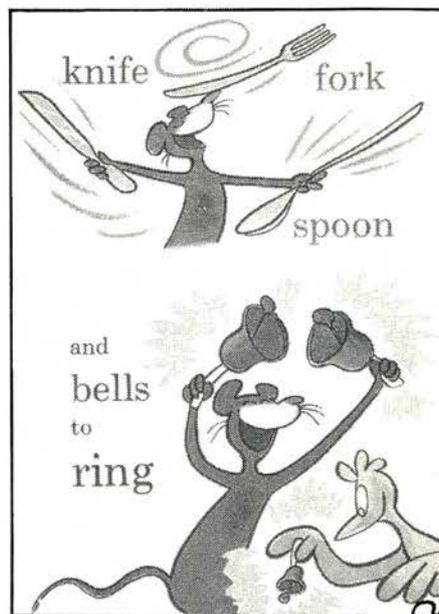
Jill Bennett considers **Dr Seuss**

Dr Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel: Theo. Le Sieg) started work as a freelance magazine humorist and cartoonist and then spent thirteen years in the advertising business. He began his picture book career in 1937 with *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* which he says was written to amuse himself on an Atlantic crossing, the words synchronising with the rhythm of the ship's engine. Once home he drew the pictures, but twenty-nine publishers rejected the book before it was finally accepted by Vanguard Press.

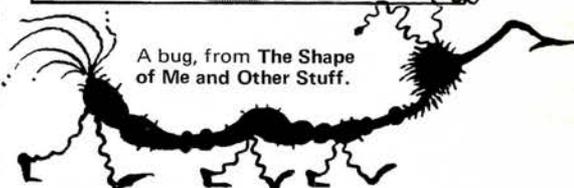
Seuss never had any formal training in writing or art and says that he has no set working habits.

In 1957 the first Beginner Book *The Cat in the Hat*, now an established classic, was published by Random House who have published all but his first two books. *The Cat in the Hat* has a controlled vocabulary and was specially written for children learning to read. Seuss reports that he thought the book would take him a couple of weeks but it took well over a year before he was satisfied with it. This care and dedication is one of the hallmarks of his work for children both as creator and Editor in Chief of the Random House Beginner Book series.

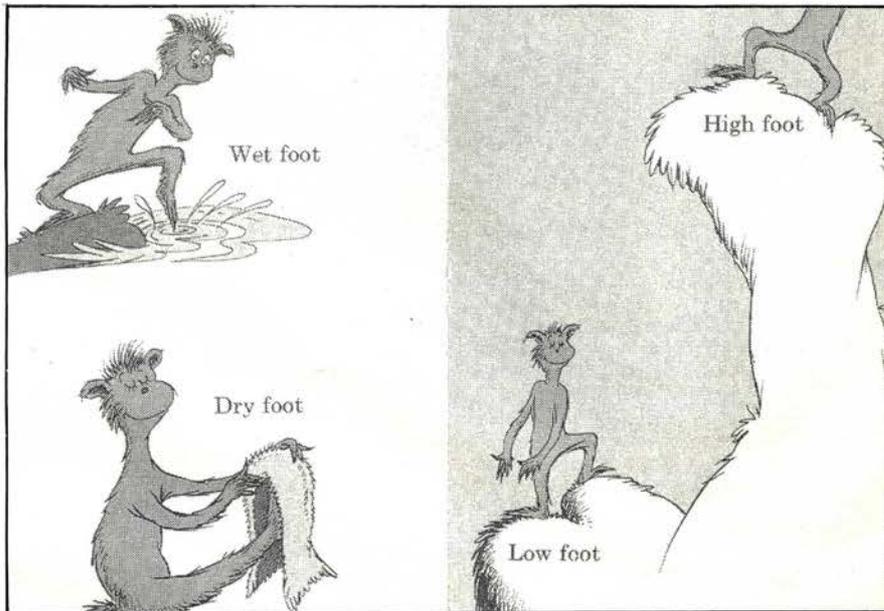
It is probably the brash illustrations which first attract children to the books and they are then hooked by Seuss's infectious humour and rhyme and the fast-moving pace of his writing. But the combination of text and pictures has an alchemy all of its own: one has to read them both, and learner readers get tremendous support from the close link between words and images.



From The People House.



A bug, from *The Shape of Me and Other Stuff*.



A double-spread from *The Foot Book*.

The zany characters in the exuberant fantasies transcend all age barriers; the books are avidly read and enjoyed by pre-schoolers, and learner readers of all ages, and are particularly valuable for older children who do not find reading easy. They work at all these levels because their humour is universal; the comic-like nature of the characters and illustrations is an instant motivation; the language is living language rejoicing in word play and at times deliberately inelegant; the disposition of the words on the page is uninhibiting: Seuss manages to create hilarious situations using just two or three words. The unmistakable message from these books — probably above all others — is that learning to read is fun.

Four of Seuss's books: *The Foot Book* for Beginning Beginners (0 00 171274 8), *The Shape of Me and Other Stuff* (0 00 171278 0) for Beginning Beginners, *In a People House* (0 00 171276 4), illustrated by Roy McKie for Beginning Beginners, *Great Day for Up* (0 00 171279 9), illustrated by Quentin Blake for Beginning Beginners, together with two titles from the Berenstains — *The Bears' Holiday* (0 00 171330 2) and *He Bear She Bear* (0 00 171269 1) — the only other author/artists who really measure up to Seuss's own work in the series, have recently been issued in paperback by Collins (£1.25 each). ●

# LIFELINE LIBRARY

Elaine Moss continues her five-part series

## Part 3: First Fling & CLASSICS of Childhood



Elaine Moss

A visitor from overseas came to see me yesterday and described how, in his country, children in school will be exposed, year by year, only to those stories and poems that are deemed by some remote bureaucrat to be 'suitable for their standard'. I know, you know (and he knew) that real readers do not grow vertically; they develop by reaching up and down and sideways. Yet so often teachers ask for (and wily publishers willingly provide) charts and ladders.

The Lifeline Library, of which this is the third instalment, is based on the concept that reading experience for children should be an ever widening circle. In the first article I covered Picture Books for all; in the second, books that were good for Learning to Read (at all ages) and for Listening to. Teachers who own the twenty paperbacks so far suggested are on their way to being equipped to meet positively the wide range of book challenges that every primary school throws out.

With *First Fling* and *Classics of Childhood* we reach the third ring of experience inside which the other two sit snugly, and offer support. There must be a feeling of exhilaration when a child reads his or her first whole book alone. So it is important to be able to offer an attractive readable story, if necessary from your own bookshelf. So here are four handy suggestions for 'first flingers' (who, at the same stage, need to be enjoying the *Classics of Childhood* of which I have selected, in accordance with the 'ten only' rule I made for myself, a mere six).

### First Fling

#### Ursula Bear

Sheila Lavelle, Hamish Hamilton Gazelle, 0 241 89647 9, £1.80; Beaver, 0 600 20072 8, 75p

This is a thrilling lesson in the importance of reading right to the end of a book. For in it Ursula, who loves bears and wants to go to the circus, reads a book of spells one of which tells her 'how a little girl can turn into a bear' and the next (which she doesn't bother with at the time) 'how to change back into a little girl again'. Ursula gets to the circus all right — though not in quite the way she had intended!

#### Wildcat Wendy and the Peekaboo Kid

Nancy Chambers, Hamish Hamilton Gazelle, 0 241 10121 2, £1.95; Fontana Lions, 0 00 671928 7, 85p

A Wild West adventure story with a girl in the saddle! Wildcat Wendy ('No one calls me little Miss Wendy more than once') is a match for the dreaded Headlock Henry and his gang — with the aid of her horse Victor and the Peekaboo Kid. Easy-to-read story, which includes a singable song, and plenty of good pictures.

#### Jenny and the Cat Club

Esther Averill, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671175 8, 60p

This is a delicious book, a wonderful blend of stories about a shy but talented kitten, and of witty thumbnail sketches of the more daring members of the Cat Club which Jenny longs to join. Will she ever become a member of the glamorous gang?

#### Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Road Dahl, Allen and Unwin, 0 04 823077 4, £3.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.0599 8, 95p

A much longer book than those above, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is nevertheless eagerly devoured almost as soon as a long book can be tackled. It is, as almost everybody now knows, the story of the poorest possible boy with the kindest possible heart who has the greatest possible luck — and shares it. A magical formula that works like a charm. Dahl is a stylish yet simple writer and a great storyteller — a combination of talents that makes him invaluable at the Blyton-weaning stage.

### Classics of Childhood

About my six *Classics of Childhood* I will only say that taking them down from my shelves and re-reading them — and many others I didn't in the end include — has been a golden experience; the kind of experience that, I would hope, most teachers also enjoy, from time to time, with their favourites. Sharing these with children is even better.

#### Charlotte's Web

E.B. White, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 90098 0, £4.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.0185 2, 95p

This farmyard story of Charlotte the spider whose web-weaving (SOME PIG) drew attention to the special qualities of Wilbur pig, runt of the litter, thus saving him from Farmer Arable's axe, is a whole world seen through the wrong end of a telescope; and Charlotte's death, once her farmyard friends have secured the survival of her children, is one of the most memorable moments in any children's book.

#### The Stone Book

Alan Garner, Collins, 0 00 184777 5, £4.50; Fontana Lions, 0 00 671600 8, 75p

With language pared down to give it the edge of a cutting tool, Garner tells the story of Mary, daughter of a stonemason, who longs for a book — but learns, with her father, how to read the story of the earth instead. Visual images of Mary's vertiginous climb (up the church spire where father is waiting for his midday 'baggin') and a dark journey (into an underground cave from which her ancestors had always cut stone) live for ever in the mind's eye.

#### Peter Pan

J.M. Barrie, Hodder & Stoughton, 0 340 21390 6, £2.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.0298 0, £1.10

Not every child gets the opportunity to see *Peter Pan* in its original, stage, version; so it is extremely fortunate that someone persuaded Barrie to write it as a novel, too. That means that everyone can share in the adventures of the Darling family — as they fly 'second to the right and straight on till morning' to the Neverland and are captured by the diabolical Captain Hook (and his pirates) whom they finally feed to the

crocodile. The opening chapter — in the Darlings' nursery — reads strangely now — but from the window-sill on it's magic all the way.

#### Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Lewis Carroll, Macmillan, 0 333 06665 0, £3.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.0169 0, 95p

I won't even cheat by adding *Through the Looking Glass* to my ten because *Wonderland* lovers will anyway proceed to it. Justifiably the most famous of English children's books, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* with its host of dream-bright characters, its surrealist adventures, its donnish humour, its rhymes and riddles is pure joy for everyone, always.

#### The Wind in the Willows

Kenneth Grahame, Methuen, 0 416 39360 8, £4.50; Magnet, 0 416 64570 4, 95p

Oh how glorious to open *The Wind in the Willows* for the umpteenth time and be drawn straightaway into the life of the small animals on the River Bank — first Mole, with Spring fever, then Rat (sculling smartly across the river) and Toad himself, that hospitable, ebullient, rich, absurd yet childish and lovable show-off whose exploits are only a part of the overflowing pleasures of this most English of tales.

#### The Hobbit

J.R.R. Tolkien, Allen and Unwin, 0 04 823147 9, £4.50; Unwin paperback, 0 04 823188 6, £1.50

At the risk of bringing forth the scorn of Tolkien worshippers I must declare my belief that *The Hobbit* is the peak of Tolkien's achievements in creative writing. Compact, clear, glowing with warmth and humour, exciting, adventure-full and compulsive, it is everything everyone 'who cares for journeys there and back out of the Western world' could ask for. That the prosaic, home-loving, comfort-seeking Hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, should find himself on a life and death adventure at the behest of Gandalf the Wizard and in the company of elves, dwarves and Smaug the Dragon is English irony at its understated best. ●

Still to come in the Lifeline Library:

4. Novels

5. Poetry and Traditional Tales

Welcomed, banned, tolerated: changing attitudes to Enid Blyton over nearly half a century. **Sheila Ray** considers

# THE Blyton PHENOMENON

I was one of the first generation of avid Blyton readers although I don't think I would ever have claimed her as my favourite author. I can clearly remember the sunny afternoon in 1936 or 1937 when my headmaster read aloud to us a chapter from *Adventures of the Wishing Chair*, which was being serialised in *Sunny Stories* at the time and which later became her first significant published full-length work. I suppose it was one of the first books I encountered which provided me with something of a reading challenge — at that time it was possible to collect the earlier issues of *Sunny Stories* and this I did, with all the enthusiasm of the treasure hunter.

Thirteen years later attitudes were beginning to change. When I became a librarian in the 1950s, there were already some libraries which bought few if any Blyton books. During the ten years that I was actually responsible for buying children's books for two different libraries, the number of her books which I bought could be counted on the fingers of one hand, although I must have discarded thousands. This was the period, between 1958 and 1968, when major controversies blew up in various parts of the country and a number of libraries and librarians hit the headlines because they were found to be not stocking books by Enid Blyton.

In 1968 I began teaching librarianship and in my first term delivered a lecture guaranteed to ensure that my audience of potential children's librarians would never buy a single Blyton book. The following week Enid Blyton died. But she continued to haunt me. For a long time, I've collected newspaper and magazine references to Enid Blyton and her work. Any reference to Enid Blyton or one of her books would leap out at me from the printed page, or from radio or television. It is surprising how many there are — only recently on *The Archers*, there was a reference to a mythical 'Five go pony-trekking'. And then I began to work seriously on a thesis about her, which grew into a book.

The production of a thesis made me look at Enid Blyton's work much more objectively and in the context of the development of children's literature since the 1930s. 'Phenomenon' is a word that was first applied to Enid Blyton in the early 1950s and it is still valid today. Although her craftsmanship and sheer hard work should not be undervalued, her success was partly due to the times in which she lived and wrote. In the 1930s there were very few adults who were much concerned about the content of books written specifically for children — a handful of children's librarians and a few other people made up the body of expertise at that time. Most teachers were intent upon encouraging the young to read the classics as soon as possible, while parents who cared were more worried about the ill-effects of comics and too many visits to the cinema. *Sunny Stories*, the weekly magazine which Enid Blyton wrote and edited, and its successor, the *Enid Blyton Magazine*, which continued to appear until the late 1950s, seemed a very acceptable alternative; nor was there anything in her stories to cause a moment's concern to any adult.

During the Second World War and for some time afterwards, there was a dearth of books because of wartime paper shortages. Libraries and other book-buying institutions and individuals had to buy what there was — and there was plenty of Enid Blyton who, by 1939, had established herself as commercial success and for whose works a number of publishers were busy finding paper from their limited ration.

By the 1980s, because of her continuing popularity, publishers of Enid Blyton's work have geared their productions very much to the existing market. Some is obviously aimed at the 'gift' market, much is published for the pocket-money market and a few of the series which are generally regarded as her better work are still available in the hardback editions which libraries are likely to purchase. So much for the history.

'Everyone' knows that Enid Blyton's work is popular with children. Looking at her books and looking at the findings of research into children's reading interests over the last fifty years, it is not difficult to see why. One thing became more and more obvious to me during my study — that if she'd had a fulltime market research team working for her, she could not have produced books more guaranteed to please her intended audience. It isn't only the fact that because of their simplicity of plot, character and vocabulary, they are easy to read. The titles and chapter headings are full of promise; the stories, whether short or long, get off to an enticing start. Every book is illustrated — not by the atmospheric illustrations of the kind admired by adults but by meaningful pictures which not only break up the text, but actually do aid the less fluent reader's understanding. The fact that many of her full-length stories first appeared as serials in *Sunny Stories* imposed a useful



Enid Blyton with her two children.

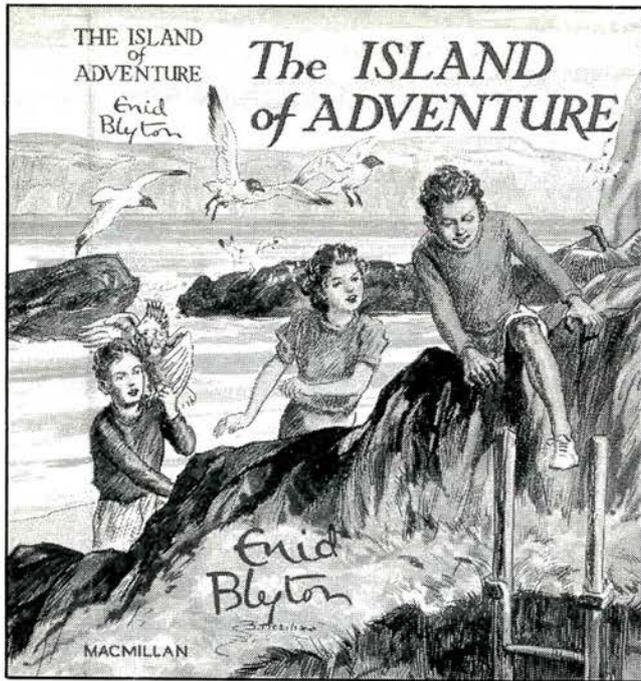
discipline on Enid Blyton — chapters end on a note of suspense — and the reader keeps on reading. The stories are extremely moral — the good get their reward, the bad, if they do not reform, are suitably punished. This is an element which appeals to children in the same way that the wish-fulfilment element does. This is how life should be. The child readers are invited to identify with characters who are important and highly regarded, who are successful — in solving the mystery, making good in school or being an outstanding performer in the circus ring. Of course, there are other children's books which are popular but an examination of them shows that they often have some of the same characteristics as a story by Enid Blyton.

Recent research, such as that carried out in connection with the Bradford Book Flood or in the Westminster Bookmaster project, shows that children and young people need help in identifying books which they can read and are likely to enjoy. In the case of Enid Blyton's books, there is little need for an adult mediator — her name and the book's appearance are an adequate substitute.

I think that it is probably impossible to produce Blyton-type books which would be equally successful with children but which would also meet with adult critical approval. Most of the books depend for their success on their simplicity — to make the plots credible to the adult reader would require so much additional detail that the action would be slowed down considerably, while developing the characters might make them incomprehensible to the inexperienced young reader.

Disapproving teachers and librarians who tried to rationalise their dislike of Enid Blyton's work condemned it for not 'stretching' children's imaginations, for her cardboard characters, for her limited vocabulary and for her incredible plots. The only criticism which really stands up to close examination is the one which concerns her limited vocabulary and even that is occasionally illuminated by a more imaginative word.

Enid Blyton has also been condemned for her attitudes. As far as class is concerned, her characters as a rule live in a 'comfortable' environment; but in fact in her work characters are subordinate to plot and in books such as *The Adventurous Four* and *The Secret Island* it is the working-class boy who is the leader of the group because his knowledge enables the group to survive. As far as racial attitudes are concerned, some of her books are inappropriate for a multi-ethnic society but her attitudes



(implied rather than conscious) were those of many people in the 1930s. The girls are frequently kept out of the most exciting action and organise the cooking and the housework; but research carried out at the time when Enid Blyton was writing her books shows that many girls preferred this.

Another common piece of rationalisation was that reading too much Blyton would make children bored with reading and cause them to abandon it. I was forced to reassess this view by the evidence gathered from our students in the Department of Librarianship. People who decide to become librarians are usually people who like reading for enjoyment and this liking has been acquired in childhood. Almost without exception, our students, who come to us at eighteen with at least 2 'A' levels, have read lots of Blyton — and lots of other things as well. Her work undoubtedly serves a useful purpose when children are going through the stage of needing plenty of practice in order to achieve fluency — and no-one who isn't fluent is going to read for enjoyment. Able girls do go on reading her books for longer than boys because they enjoy the school stories, which represent her best work anyway. But because her work is so simple, many children do grow out of it naturally — there just isn't enough in it to retain most children's interest beyond a certain stage.

However, I think that although we should regard Enid Blyton's books as useful, self-mediating books, we should not overlook the important adult role of introducing children to more demanding books which will be an enriching experience. In the course of my research, I discovered that around 1974-5 there was a change to a more 'permissive' attitude to Enid Blyton's work. The young people who were ten in 1974 are now eighteen and entering higher education. This year when I asked my forty-five first-year students to write about a book which they remembered reading and enjoying before the age of twelve, six of them chose to write about an Enid Blyton book. Hitherto, new students in the same situation have concentrated on authors and titles categorised by the Schools Council Research team as 'quality' books, and never has Enid Blyton been written about on such a scale. A warning that efforts to introduce children to other books and authors should not be relaxed perhaps?

I think it is a useful exercise for any adult who is concerned with children's reading to do a short course in Blyton's work, (one 'Secret Seven', one 'Famous Five', 'The Enchanted Wood', 'The Secret Island', 'Island of Adventure', 'Mr Galliano's Circus' and one 'Malory Towers' perhaps?) and identify the factors which make this author's work so popular. This might help more realistic assessment to be made of those books which we would really like children to read and enjoy and which are likely to succeed. ●

Sheila Ray, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Librarianship at Birmingham Polytechnic, is well known for her useful and highly readable books on children's fiction and librarianship. With her husband, Colin Ray, she has been reviewing, writing and talking about books for many years and working actively to create a better informed public for children's books.

Her latest book, published this month, is *The Blyton Phenomenon* (Deutsch, 0 233 97441 5, £10.95). In it

Sheila Ray most helpfully 'places' Enid Blyton clearly in the general history of publishing for children since the 1920s and in the developing and changing views of librarians and teachers in that time. She also attempts an answer to the difficult question 'Why do children like Enid Blyton's books?' and gives her own critical assessment of the Blyton canon. Interesting and illuminating for all working with children and books.

## Blyton in print

No better illustration of the continuing Blyton phenomenon is needed than a glance at what is available. In *British Books in Print 1981*, Enid Blyton covers two and a half pages. There are 242 titles in print, many in more than one edition. In the past few months Beaver have resurrected *Josie, Click and Bun*, picture strip stories with the original 1940s' illustrations by Dorothy M Wheeler, Sparrow offer us *The Seaside Family*, Dragon have *Mr Pink-Whistle's Party* and *Tricky the Goblin*; and Collins Cubs have gone to the trouble of having four heavily moral tales re-illustrated in full colour. And Knight continue with their apparently spirit-written new adventures of the Famous Five (translated from the French by Anthea Bell).

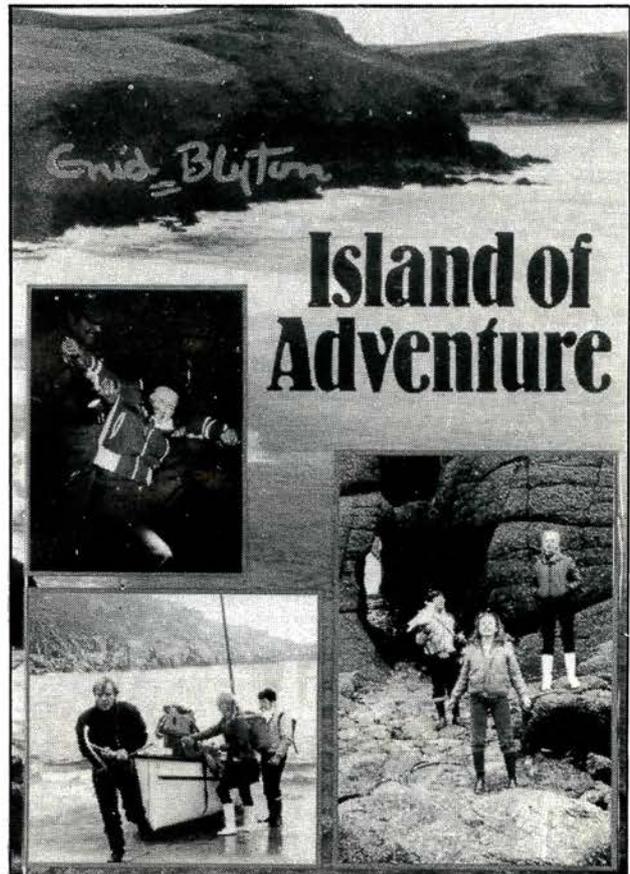
The future promises more, not less Blyton. Ebeffilms, a company set up by Darrell Waters Ltd (the owners of the Blyton copyright), have plans to put EB in quantity on the large and small screen and make her available on all kinds of video.



Kiki the parrot, Jack, Dinah, Philip and Lucy-Anne from Ebeffilms' *Island of Adventure*.

Already completed is a 90-minute film of *The Island of Adventure* which should be on television here in December. The other seven 'Adventure' stories will follow! The story has been updated for the 1980s with helicopters, speedboats and scubadivers to convey a 'James Bond flavour'. Also updated (and cut) is the Macmillan book of the film — A4 size, 95 pages, lots of full-colour photographs (£3.95). In the shops in October.

More news of all this in future issues. ●



# SOUND & VISION

## Inside Stories

On the next page you'll find the start of our four-page transatlantic sound and vision special.

But there's just enough space here to tell you about two British productions, both based on two very British television programmes: *Dr Who* and *Tiswas*.

Just out is a blow by blow (or in the case of *Tiswas*, a fling by fling) account of how the programmes are made. Both in their different styles offer a fascinating insight into what goes on behind the screen.

**Dr. Who: The Making of a Television Series**  
Alan Road, Deutsch,  
0 233 97444 X, £4.95

The book concentrates on the making of one story, *The Visitation*, screened earlier this year. (It's the one about plague rats in 17th-century England.) Information about all the people who contribute to the series, filming on location and in the studio. Lots of photographs — black and white and colour.



Crew members' lunchtime, and the five faces of *Dr Who*



**The Tiswas File**  
Gordon Astley, Beaver,  
0 600 20666 1, £1.25

Paperback, large-size, joky layout, lots of exclamation marks and a strong feeling of 'aren't we funny!!' Still the kids won't mind that (they don't seem to on the programme). Lots of photographs (all black and white). Minimal text but what there is is pretty fact-packed and easy to read.

Also recently re-issued — **Secrets of Films and Television**, Gordon Hill, Knight, 0 340 25496 3, 85p.

Less exciting to look at but lots of inside information about stunts and special effects.

## WHO'S WHO-



Pages of vivid explanation from *The Tiswas File*.

## ... AND WHAT THEY DO!

At the end of *Tiswas* you often see a morning list of people's names and what they do. You've probably been baffled by it — well, here, to de-baffle you, is a guide to who does what on your favourite TV show.

**THE PRODUCER**  
The producer is the person who takes the show to everybody! Before anything is on 'teel of the screen, the producer is responsible for everything from the script to the cameras and the studio. He or she is the person who makes the show happen.

**THE DIRECTOR**  
The director is the person who tells the camera what to do and what to show. He or she is the person who makes the show look like it's really happening.

**VISION MIXER**  
The vision mixer is the person who takes the pictures from the cameras and puts them together to make the final picture that you see on the screen.

**SOUND MIXER**  
The sound mixer is the person who takes the sound from the microphones and puts it together to make the final sound that you hear on the screen.

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**  
The production assistant is the person who helps the producer and director to make the show happen. They do all the little jobs that nobody else wants to do.

**SCRIPT ASSOCIATE**  
The script associate is the person who helps the producer and director to write the script. They do all the little jobs that nobody else wants to do.

**PROGRAMME ASSISTANT**  
The programme assistant is the person who helps the producer and director to make the show happen. They do all the little jobs that nobody else wants to do.

**RESEARCHER**  
The researcher is the person who finds out all the facts and figures that the producer and director need to make the show happen.

**FILM AND VT (VIDEOTAPE) EDITOR**  
The film and VT editor is the person who takes the pictures and sound from the cameras and puts them together to make the final picture and sound that you see and hear on the screen.

**DESIGN**  
The designer is the person who makes the sets and costumes for the show. They make the show look like it's really happening.

**GRAPHICS**  
The graphics person is the person who makes the titles and graphics that you see on the screen.

**NEU SUZY FERGUSON - GLASGOW**

**Charles Keeping has won the Kate Greenaway Medal 1982 for his illustration of Alfred Noyes' poem**

## THE HIGHWAYMAN

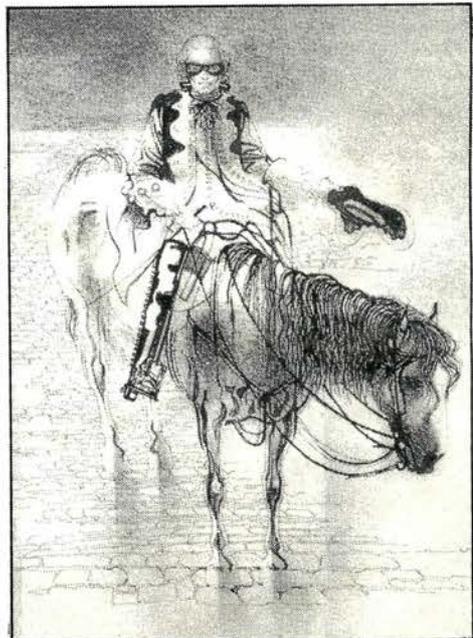
0 19 279748 4      £4.50

Other books by **Charles Keeping**

- |               |                                     |              |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| 0 19 279640 2 | <b>Alfie and the Ferryboat</b>      | <b>£3.95</b> |
| 0 19 279651 8 | <b>Joseph's Yard</b>                | <b>£3.75</b> |
| 0 19 279655 0 | <b>Through the Window</b>           | <b>£3.95</b> |
| 0 19 279700 X | <b>Railway Passage</b>              | <b>£3.95</b> |
| 0 19 279691 7 | <b>Richard</b>                      | <b>£3.25</b> |
| 0 19 279723 9 | <b>River</b>                        | <b>£3.95</b> |
| 0 19 279624 0 | <b>Shaun and the Cart-Horse</b>     | <b>£3.95</b> |
| 0 19 272110 0 | <b>Shaun and the Cart-Horse p/b</b> | <b>£1.25</b> |
| 0 19 279708 5 | <b>Wasteground Circus</b>           | <b>£3.95</b> |
| 0 19 279728 X | <b>Willie's Fire Engine</b>         | <b>£3.95</b> |

Published Autumn 1982:

**Beowulf**      0 19 279770 0      **£4.50**

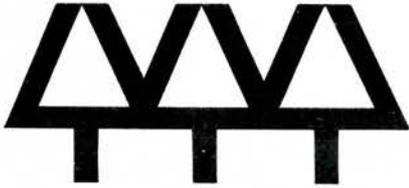


**Oxford Books for Children**

# SOUND & VISION *Special*

Twenty-five years ago **Morton Schindel** started a company which pioneered the production of audiovisual materials based on books, and still leads the field.

In this **Sound and Vision** special feature we tell



## The weston woods® Story

Like all good American stories it begins in a log cabin. It was here in the woods of Weston, Connecticut — just sixty miles from New York — that Morton Schindel made the first Weston Woods films of children's picture books. Reading to his two small daughters, he'd become fascinated by their involvement with the stories and in particular the close attention they gave to the pictures that accompanied them. As a film maker he was struck by the possibilities that film and television offered for bringing these stories to children who for one reason or another might never find the books.

In the early fifties there had been few attempts to turn picture books into films. Walt Disney had produced 'shorts' for the cinema, based on stories like Virginia Lee Burton's *The Little House*, and Hardie Gramatky's *Little Toot* but without using the original book illustrations — the stories were animated Disney-style. In 1952 an adaptation by United Productions of America of Ludwig Bemelman's *Madeline* kept faith with the original but it was not followed up as the demand for short films declined.



Morton Schindel

With a splendid show of lateral thinking and foresight — which might be described as genius, or at the very least as considerable business acumen — Morton Schindel turned his back on the cinema and decided instead to concentrate on producing material for schools, libraries and that infant giant, television. He set about it in a way no film producer had ever done before.

'I consulted with specialists in the children's book field, combed the library shelves, talked with authors and illustrators and came up with a list of time-tested books with universal appeal. I knew that for the films to be successful each adaptation must retain the artist's intent and, as much as possible, be a "mirror image" of the



The log cabin where Weston Woods began.

book. I felt it was my responsibility to the authors and illustrators to present their work on screen just as it appeared in their books.' Being faithful to the original book, preserving the essence of its individuality, is the philosophy that underlies all Weston Woods' productions. No book, no matter how desirable (that is well-received by librarians, teachers and children) will be used if they feel it will not transfer successfully from page to screen.

Weston Woods' first adaptations included Wanda Gág's *Millions of Cats*, Robert McCloskey's *Make Way for Ducklings* and Marjorie Flack and Kurt Wiese's *The Story about Ping*. To film them Morton Schindel invented a new technique which he called 'iconographic'. As the story is told the camera moves across the illustration, focussing on detail, capturing mood and action in its movements — much as the child's eye might. In fact, to make the film the camera remains stationary and the illustration moves — Schindel's effective but rather Heath Robinson original apparatus was made from a drawing board, garage door tracks and screwdriver handles. Today the whole process is automated rather than hand cranked but the effect is still the same. In the sixties Weston Woods began to experiment with animation but the iconographic technique is still used for books by artists like Ezra Jack Keats, Edward Ardizzone and Steven Kellogg where the textures, line, or brush work of the original must be preserved.

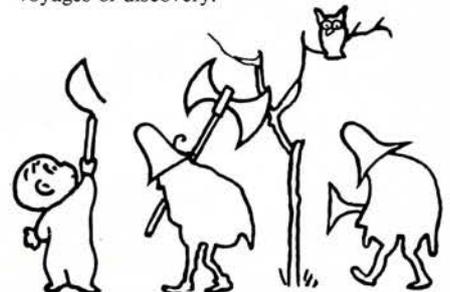
Although most of their versions of Ezra Jack Keats' picture books are iconographic it was the desire to release the movements implied in his *The Snowy Day* that led to Weston Woods' first fully animated film. *Whistle for Willie* followed soon after. (Both were made in New York.) Since 1968 Gene Deitch has been responsible for directing all Weston Woods' animated films. He works in Prague with his Czech wife and a highly talented team of animators and film-makers who are also Czechoslovakian. For animation, none of the

original artwork is used. Animators re-draw pictures in the style of the originals — Quentin Blake gave Gene Deitch what was left of the crayons he used for *Patrick* to help with the drawings for the film. Pat Hutchins' *Rosie's Walk and Changes Changes*, Tomi Ungerer's *The Three Robbers* and Gail Haley's *A Story A Story* are just four books which have been carefully and faithfully re-created in the new medium, often after close collaboration with the artists.

Films of books certainly have the power to grab the attention of children brought up on cinema and television. But the medium is a law unto itself — it does all the storytelling. Librarians and teachers who enjoy storytelling didn't want to be replaced. So Weston Woods offered them support in the form of new style filmstrips. In existing storytelling filmstrips the text was condensed to two or three lines fitted in at the bottom of each frame. A Weston Woods filmstrip concentrates on adapting the original illustrations to film and retains the text unabridged in an accompanying booklet. The booklet is designed so that each frame of the strip is shown next to the appropriate lines of text to cue the storyteller (or the storyteller's technical assistant). Each filmstrip is a very skilful adaptation. Close-up details, parts of pages, double spreads are all carefully selected to make the best possible match between text and illustration in the service of telling the story.

Close behind the filmstrips came sound recordings (on cassette) of the texts, with original music. To complement their adaptations of picture books Weston Woods has also produced films and sound filmstrips of 'background' material about books and authors. And — nothing if not thorough — they have also designed some simple but efficient storage systems for audiovisual materials for schools and libraries.

What of the future? Morton Schindel is preparing to take his storytelling crusade into the video age. As well as serving schools, libraries and colleges, he hopes to 'bring literature into the home'. 'The art of storytelling will continue to evolve and to reach young people in new ways. We hope to share stories with expanding audiences, to stimulate the imagination of both child and adult, and to bring families together in shared voyages of discovery.'



# SOUND & VISION *Special*

## Using Weston Woods material

There are clearly advantages in being able to project a book's pictures onto a large screen. Suddenly even Beatrix Potter (four tales are available) becomes possible with large groups. What you lose, of course, is the closeness of the reader-book-listeners relationship. It's even more impersonal if the reader has to stand behind the group in the dark twiddling the knobs on the machine — better to recruit an assistant and stand by the screen so that words and pictures are kept as close as possible and you can still connect with your audience.

One way to turn reading into a purposeful activity is to allow children to be the storytellers for the filmstrip. Performance requires and encourages careful preparation, reading with expression and understanding.

Tape and filmstrip together create a package which can be used with groups or by children on their own. With an individual filmstrip viewer and cassette player a child can organise his or her own looking and listening, perhaps a more attractive prospect for some than settling down with a book. The tape alone, is a talking book for listening or for following the text. (The voices are American, of course, which some may consider a disadvantage, and the tapes are not cued for the turn of pages.)

Naturally a large part of Weston Woods' production is based on American books; but many of these like *Where the Wild Things Are* and Morris's *Disappearing Bag* (to name but two) are well-known and loved in this country. And there's no shortage of British artists in the catalogue. Charles Keeping, Brian Wildsmith, Pat Hutchins, Shirley Hughes (*Dogger*), John Burningham (*Mr Gumpy's Outing*), Quentin Blake, Colin McNaughton, Edward Ardizzone and Beatrix Potter have just been joined by Faith Jaques (*Tilly's House*) and Anthony Browne (*Bear Hunt*).

For general interest and projects the 'background' materials are useful. For example, in *How a Picture Book is Made* Steven Kellogg explains each stage in the creation of *The Island of the Skog* (including the four-colour printing process!). Those researching their own stories and making their own books will be interested in *Making a Legend* in which Gail Haley describes her researches into the Green Man, the central figure in her latest picture book for young children. Both of these are sound filmstrips. Films featuring Maurice Sendak, Edward Ardizzone, and Ezra Jack Keats talking about their work are worth a look — though the Sendak is rather out-of-date now.

Weston Woods offers a good service to its customers from its British headquarters in Henley-on-Thames. All materials and copies of most of the books (in hardback and paperback where available) are for sale. 16mm films can also be hired. Filmstrips can be converted to sets of slides; damaged or worn filmstrips or tapes will be replaced (within two years) at half-price (filmstrips at present cost £6, tapes £3). Films and sound filmstrips of books are available *free* for use in workshops on courses for teachers and librarians.

For catalogue and more information, ring Betty Carey on Henley-on-Thames (049 12) 77033/4. Reverse the charges. Or write to Weston Woods, 14 Friday Street, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1PZ.



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ORIGINAL PAPERBACK FICTION  
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# SOUND & VISION *Special*

## Look behind you Mickey! There's another mouse on the way.

We tell how **Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH** became **The Secret of NIMH**.

In the autumn of 1979 twelve animators resigned from Walt Disney Productions. This mass defection (seven more people joined later) was led by Don Bluth and within days Don Bluth Productions was born.

But you don't create a film company overnight. Seven years before, Don Bluth and Gary Goldman had started up their own animation studio. They did it — like that old-style Hollywood movie cliché 'let's do the show right here!' — in Don Bluth's garage. The impulse behind the move was to 'restore the glory that was classical animation'. They use the term 'classical animation' to mean animation in the tradition of the early Disney films involving advanced special effects, shadows, and a three-dimensional effect brought about by the use of multiplane cameras. The style and techniques currently employed by Disney they refer to as 'limited' animation — a trend brought about since Walt Disney's death in 1966 under the pressure to save money by taking short-cuts.

For Don Bluth there was also a desire to get back to the strong storylines of early Disney where good qualities are tested and found triumphantly sufficient. At forty-four he looks back fondly to his own encounters with Disney films as a child. He's grateful to Walt Disney for the suspense, the excitement and the real sense of terror he felt, and doesn't believe in over protecting children from these experiences; to appreciate peace and happiness they have to experience the other extreme.

The garage twosome soon became three as Bluth and Goldman were joined by John Pomeroy — a very talented, young, Disney trainee animator. During the day they worked at Disney on *Robin Hood*, *Winnie the Pooh* and *Tigger Too*, *The Rescuers*, *Pete's Dragon* and *The Fox and the Hound* (the exodus of so many top animators in the middle of this film delayed its completion), and after work and at weekends they worked on their own project — a half-hour television special, *Banjo the Woodpile Cat*.

Over the years they were joined by a steady stream of fellow animators working beside them at Disney. People dropped in at the garage to put in a few hours whenever they could; often they worked late into the night. As well as their time and talent, the group also provided the money for the equipment and materials needed to make *Banjo*. By 1979 it was completed and sold (by Mel Griffin who joined them in 1977 to run the 'non-creative' side of the business) and the way was clear to start up on their own in earnest.

The garage was abandoned (like Disney) in favour of a two-storey modern office building which they converted into a studio. At the same time they joined up with Aurora Productions — a company itself only a year old which had also been founded by ex-executives from Disney. Together they raised enough money to get started on a film version of *Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*.

Robert C O'Brien's story which won the Newbery award in 1972 had all the qualities Don Bluth was looking for. The courage, resource and fortitude of a little widow mouse, determined to save her family no matter the terrors, had obvious possibilities. Along the way they were encouraged by the critical

acclaim which greeted their first project, a two-minute animated fantasy of a song (played by the ELO and sung by Olivia Newton John) in the feature film *Xanadu*. They completed that in Spring 1980.

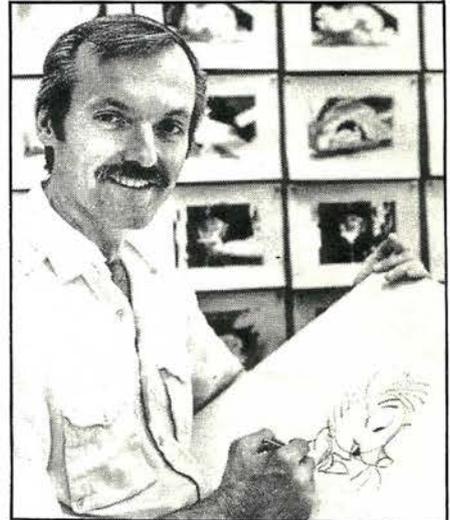
It took the 65 employees of Don Bluth Productions two and a half years to produce *The Secret of NIMH* (as it is now called). Trying to find a way to illustrate their determined pursuit of quality, they point to makers of cartoons for television who 'churn out 12,000 feet of film a year'. It takes *them* three years to produce 6,000 feet of film 'because of our incredible attention to detail'.

Animation is a lengthy process. The camera can consume drawings at a rate of twenty-four per second (that's about 1½ feet of film). Each drawing is the work of at least four artists: the background painter, the animator who 'creates' the action, the 'in-betweener' who does the in-between drawings that make the movement happen and the 'clean-up' artist who provides the detail. *The Secret of NIMH* has approximately 1,000 background paintings and up to 160,000 drawings. An artist can do between two and four drawings an hour.

Responsibility for visualising the characters of Robert C O'Brien's book and giving them personality lies with Don Bluth, Gary Goldman and John Pomeroy. They hand over their original designs to the animators who are encouraged to be 'actors' — bringing their characters to life with paints and brushes. They work to an already recorded screenplay devised from a combination of drawings and draft script which makes up the storyboard.

The animation is essentially a process of interpreting a script which has been written and recorded with animation in mind. It's not unusual to see animators grimacing in mirrors, mouthing the dialogue or (in the case of the medicine mouse, Mr Ages) hopping around on one crutch to get a sense of the movement. The personality given to the characters by 'their' voices is all important to the animators. So Don Bluth, the director, worked closely with all his voice actors (Hermione Baddeley, Dom de Luise, John Carradine and Derek Jacobi — to name but four) to give his animators the best possible material to work on.

Anything that moves that is not character animation is the responsibility of Dorset Lanpher, head of special effects. (At Disney where he had the same job he did the special effects for, among their films, *The Black Hole*.) Snowflakes, rain, wind, cobwebs, shadows — all of which abound in *The Secret of NIMH* — are given the careful attention that this company believes is necessary for a 'quality product'.



Don Bluth (photo©1981 Mrs Brisby Ltd.)

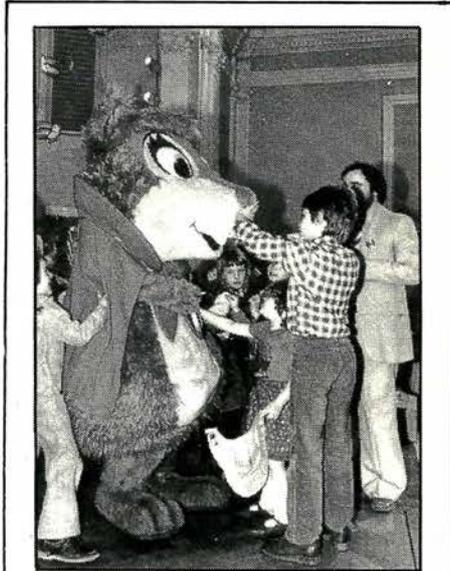


Photo of Puffin's Mrs Brisby by Chris Lord.

Children at a Hertfordshire book fair meet Mrs Brisby — one of the character costumes specially created to publicise the film (and all the spin-off materials).

Puffin have three of these costumes available — Jeremy Crow, Dragon the Cat and Mrs Brisby. If you are organising a REALLY BIG book event between now and Christmas and would like to use them, contact Andrew Bragg, Children's Marketing, Penguin Books, 536 King's Road, London SW10 0UH (telephone 01-351 2392).

N.B. The costumes are too big to go in a car — you'll need a van or to be prepared to pay for transport by road or rail.

# SOUND & VISION *Special*

## Mrs Frisby and Mrs Brisby

Unlike many films from books, this one remains gratifyingly faithful to the original. Perhaps the biggest surprise for anyone moving from film to book, or book to film, is to find that Mrs Frisby is Mrs Brisby — the film makers didn't want any confusion with that well-known disc for throwing and catching!!

In spite of a few 'adjustments' to the plot, the film catches the spirit of Robert C O'Brien's story of Mrs Frisby (widow of Jonathan Frisby, fieldmouse, whose winter home will be destroyed by Farmer Fitzgibbon's plough before her youngest son, Timothy, is sufficiently recovered from pneumonia to be moved) and the amazingly intelligent rats of NIMH (escapees from the experimental laboratories of the National Institute of Mental Health, where they learned to read and write and reason, who in their highly sophisticated mechanised community beneath Farmer Fitzgibbon's rose bush are now planning to move to a secret valley in the mountains where they can 'live without stealing').

In seeking their help Mrs Frisby learns the history of the rats (and the part her husband played in it) and while they help her to save Timothy, she is able to help them escape recapture. The book is full of excitement, suspense and fascinating detail, and says much about courage and the right way to live. The film, probably finding the climaxes in the book too frequent (chapter endings) and too low-key for the screen, dramatises the issues more obviously by introducing a power struggle for leadership among the rats and putting more suspense into the moving of Mrs Frisby's home. Mrs Frisby's children are more developed as separate characters, as are Jeremy (the comic crow) and Shrew (Mrs Frisby's neighbour). The rat, Jenner — described in the book as a 'cynical pessimist who disagrees with the philosophy of 'life without stealing' — has in the book left the community to seek his own way. In the film he becomes a treacherous dissenter opposing the move who plots to murder Nicodemus, the leader rat.

But much remains: Mrs Frisby's flight on Jeremy crow's back, her terrifying encounters with the Owl (source of good advice but eater of mice) and with Dragon the farm cat, and her capture are all excitingly realised (if often exaggerated) in the true Disney manner. The special effects are stunning. It pretty certainly will frighten the children and earn itself an 'A' certificate. ●



Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH, Robert C O'Brien, is being re-issued by Puffin with a film tie-in cover (0 14 03.0725 7, £1.10).

The film is a United Artists film and opens in London on 22nd July and in seaside resorts and major provincial cities on 25th July.

Details on this page from MGM/United Artists' full-length animated feature film, *The Secret of NIMH*, courtesy of Penguin Books Ltd.



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## NEWS



### Children's Book Week Personality

Peter Davison, the new Dr Who, the old Tristram Farnon and general all-round actor, has agreed to be this year's CBW personality. It should be a popular choice judging by the way Peter has been mobbed recently by enthusiastic children at signing sessions for his *Book of Alien Monsters* (Sparrow). Taking on the role of Dr Who it seems demands more than mere acting! Details of CBW events in our September issue.

### James and the Giant Peach on stage

The official British premiere of Richard R. George's stage adaptation of Roald Dahl's best-selling story is being presented by an enterprising new company of young Oxford graduates led by a founder member of the Puffin Club, Paul Godfrey. *The Good Companions Seaside Theatre Company* opened on July 7th at the Cheltenham Music Festival and will be in rep on the Isle of Wight until mid-August. Thereafter watch out for them on a Southern Arts tour and in London.

Also in their repertory is an end-of-the-pier style production of Shakespeare's *Pericles* with song and dance routines and *The Story of Ino*, a new play for children by Zoe Brooks, also in the company. This promises mime and slapstick and an anarchic world where adult rules of conduct play no part. You have been warned.

(*James and the Giant Peach*, a play, Richard R. George, Puffin, 0 14 03.1464 4, 95p)

### Teenage Reading Habits

Last year Lorna Roberts reported in *Books for Keeps* on the 1980 Bookmaster summer reading scheme organised by Westminster Children's Libraries. The scheme aroused so much interest because of what it revealed about teenage readers that Westminster was given a grant from the British National Bibliography Research and Development Fund to explore the 1981 programme. A report by the research officer, Jean Bird, will appear this summer (details from BNB Research Fund, Sheraton House, Great Chapel Street, London W1V 4BH).

The Westminster City Libraries report, *The 1981 Bookmaster Scheme*, is available now (£3 from Westminster City Libraries, Marylebone Road, London NW1 5PS).

### Free while stocks last

Rosemary Stones has extended and updated the very useful multi-ethnic booklist she produced for Penguin a few years ago. For your copy apply to Children's Marketing, Penguin Books, 536 King's Road, London SW10 0UH.

### Children's Books of the Year

The annual CBY exhibition will be at the National Book League, Book House, Wandsworth, London SW18, from 2nd — 14th August. There will be storytelling, author appearances and lots of things to do as well as look at the books. Details from Barbara Buckley at the NBL (01-870 9055).

## Spending on books — derisory

The NBL has updated the recommended figures for spending on books which appeared in *Books for Schools*, the 1979 report of the working party on the provision of books in schools. The new recommended levels per capita are Primary Schools: 'good' £12.85, 'reasonable' £10.72. Secondary Schools: 'good' £20.28, 'reasonable' £17.51. (These are for class books and library books).

Michael Marland, Head of North Westminster Community School, who chaired the original Working Party commented, 'We said that spending levels on books were inadequate in 1979. They are now derisory. Many local authorities are not even spending a third of what is necessary.'

Critical reports by HMIs have prodded the Secretary of State into a statement that £20 million extra should be spent on 'books and equipment' in the next financial year. Even this, if it happens, will not be sufficient. Nor will it do anything about the gross inequalities in spending which exist around the country.

## Summer Storyboat

This summer, Hertfordshire Library Service (what an example they set for their fellow professionals) takes to the water in a narrowboat. From 26th July to 5th August the *Belfast*, well stocked with books and librarians, will cruise along the Grand Union Canal from Rickmansworth to Marsworth, near Tring. It will make nine stops for storytelling sessions, visits from authors and illustrators, and activities such as singing, painting and making a play. The content of many of these activities will be linked with English Maritime Heritage Year, the current promotion of the English Tourist Board which is helping to finance the project.

The Hertfordshire librarians seem to have been as imaginative in their search for sponsors and fund-raising as they were in conceiving the programme in the first place. Dina Thorpe, Divisional Schools Librarian for primary schools, says 'We hope that children and families will find the idea of a mobile library travelling along a canal in an old-fashioned narrowboat interesting and exciting. We will be doing our best to get as many of them as possible involved.'

For details of the programme, contact Dina Thorpe, Watford 27937, or Martin Dudley, Hertford 54242, ext. 5488.

### More Awards

In June the Library Association's Youth Libraries Group announced this year's winners of the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Awards.

**The Carnegie Medal** for a children's book of outstanding merit goes to *The Scarecrows* by Robert Westall (Chatto and Windus, 0 7011 2556 X, £5.50).

Highly commended: *The Hollow Land* by Jane Gardam (Julia MacRae, 0 86203 023 4, £5.25).

Commended: *Goodnight Mr. Tom* by Michelle Magorian (Kestrel, 0 7226 5701 3, £5.50). *Bridget and William* by Jane Gardam (Julia MacRae, 0 86203 012 9, £2.75).

**The Kate Greenaway Medal** for the most distinguished work in the illustration of a children's book goes to *The Highwayman*, Charles Keeping's illustrated version of Alfred Noyes' poem (Oxford, 0 19 279748 4, £4.50).

Highly Commended: *Sunshine* by Jan Ormerod (Kestrel, 0 7226 5736 6, £3.95).

Commended: *The Patchwork Cat*, Nicola Bayley illustrates a William Mayne story (Cape 0 224 01925 2, £3.95). *Hansel and Gretel*, Anthony Brownes' updated version of the traditional tale (Julia MacRae, 0 86203 042 0, £4.95).

More rarely given (every five years) are the Francis Williams Awards for **Illustration**, one of which is for the best illustration of a children's book. The awards (£300 in each category) are administered by the Victoria and Albert Museum and the NBL and arise from the bequest in 1972 of Francis Williams of Uckfield 'to encourage and advance the art of book illustration.'

The winner for 1977 — 82 is Raymond Briggs for *The Snowman* (Hamish Hamilton and Puffin).

The runners-up are Stephen Ryan for his black and white illustration of *Ned Kelly and the City of the Bees* by Thomas Keneally (Cape, 1978 and Puffin 1980) and Justin Todd for *Moonshadow*, a just published picture book with story by Angela Carter (Gollancz 1982).

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