

# BOOKS FOR KEEPS

MAY 1980 No.2  
UK Price 65p



**Parents getting involved  
Profile of Penelope Lively  
Coping with the Viking invasion**



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## Looking Ahead

In our July issue the accent will be on Holidays and we are planning a special extended review feature on non-fiction.

In September our main feature is on multi-ethnic books. If there is any aspect of this that you need help with or want to comment on please let us know NOW (our copy date for September is the end of July).

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on page 24

All photographs, unless otherwise credited,  
by Richard Mewton.

His cover photograph shows parents and  
teachers Oakdale JMI School, Peterborough  
. . . who are actively involved with their  
children's bookshop. See **How to . . .** on  
page 26.

## WHOOOPS! SORRY...



In Authorgraph 1 (last issue) **Mind Your Own Business** and **Wouldn't You Like to Know** by Michael Rosen, illustrated by Quentin Blake, were wrongly attributed in hardback to Collins. They are of course published by Deutsch. Our apologies.

In Paperback Roundup (page 12) **Nightwatch Winter** by Jenny Overton (Puffin) was wrongly titled **The Night Watch**.

# Reviewers

in this issue

(Reviews pages 7 to 12)



## Jill Bennett

Jill has a class of 4 to 7-year-olds in outer London. She is Literary Editor of **Child Education** and on the Board of the SBA.



## Dinah Starkey

Dinah teaches in Wiltshire (infants and juniors). She has written several books (collections of traditional tales) and has worked in radio.



## Steve Bowles

Steve is a secondary teacher and was co-producer of **Reviewsheet** (reviews for teachers) until it ceased publication.

## Pat Triggs

Teaches in the Department of Education, Bristol Polytechnic. Past Chairman of the Federation of Children's Book Groups and on the Board of the SBA.



## Yvonne White

Yvonne was formerly a teacher/librarian in a comprehensive school and ran a school bookshop for six years. She is currently Northern School Bookshop Manager for W. H. Smith.



## Pip Rimington

Pip has a class of 9 to 10-year-olds in a large middle school in Surrey. She's also been involved in nursery and pre-school education and has run her own playgroup.



# EDITOR'S PAGE

**Pat Triggs**  
Editor



*Pat*

Well we asked for feedback and we got it. Waiting to hear what you thought of **Books for Keeps**, wondering if you'd even bother to tell us, was nerve-wracking. Thank you to all who wrote (there were many) for your enthusiasm, support and suggestions. I hope to reply to everyone in time. Meanwhile we've responded straightaway to a nationwide plea. You asked for ISBNs to be included: you've got them.

## Books for Keeps on 'Bookshelf'

Did you hear us on Radio 4's **Bookshelf** on April 6th? We were delighted to be asked on the programme: it's lively, informative and does an excellent job of taking the cultural mystique out of books and arousing enthusiasm instead. Imagine how we felt when Frank Delaney, the presenter, said he thought that's just what we were doing with **Books for Keeps**!

But enough trumpet blowing — a magazine is only as good as its next issue.

## What's in this issue?

There's a lot about parents. Richard Bourne, asked to comment on the Cuts (page 4), talks about 'bringing in the organisational and financial muscle of the parents'. Great, where it exists. In many schools financial muscles are already strained; but you can help organisational muscle to develop (see *How To*... p. 20). For me the best reason for involving parents is that they then understand more clearly what teachers are trying to achieve and what their problems are. So informed, they can add their voices to the demand for better provision for books in schools and libraries. They might also be able to persuade those who decide such things that what teachers who run school bookshops want is not the opportunity to retire after three years, but time off to run the bookshop as a vital part of the curriculum.

## Prizes for the Winners

For the winner of the Eleanor Farjeon Award there is a modest prize of £50, 'an appropriate gift' and the honour of having been chosen. The winners of the new National Book Awards receive £7,500 and a medal. (See News, page 22) It's good to see a writer getting a substantial award; but let's hope that the Arts Council doesn't think that it has now done its duty by Children's Literature. One more award isn't

going to help persuade more children and young people that books and 'the Arts' aren't just the province of some cultural elite but are instead a source of satisfaction, excitement and sheer enjoyment that is open to all. We shall be looking carefully to see what else is forthcoming for children and books.



Pat interviewing Penelope Lively at Duck End.

## A clutch of coincidences

It was pouring with rain the day Richard Hill, Richard Mewton (our photographer) and I went to interview Penelope Lively; but the snowdrops were thick in the banks and the welcome at Duck End (very appropriate) was warm and friendly. Richard (Hill) and Penelope discovered a mutual passion for vegetable gardening and we very nearly got an Authorgraph full of hints on growing onions and avoiding carrot fly. By a happy coincidence the Arts Council Award for adult fiction has gone to Penelope Lively for **Treasures of Time** (Heinemann). Our warmest congratulations. The police and parking meter people had better watch the double yellow lines outside Blackwell's bookshop in Oxford! Now she really can afford to pay the fine! (See Authorgraph, page 14).

By another coincidence Ann Schlee's **The Vandal** (Guardian Award winner) shares with Penelope Lively's stories a concern with memory. It's a powerful and intriguing story. Roll on the paperback.

## Astercote on TV

Penelope Lively told us that BBC TV are going to serialise **Astercote** and that only a few days before our visit she had been driving around Oxfordshire looking for suitable locations. We asked her how she felt about having a book televised. 'I'm glad they've chosen a book which I don't feel deeply bound up with. It will be fun to watch. If it was a book I felt strongly about, like **Going Back**, I should feel I wanted to interfere all the time.'

## A book to set everyone talking

Is it or isn't it a children's book? What? **Gentleman Jim**, of course, the latest picture book from Raymond Briggs and successor to **Father Christmas** and **Fungus the Bogeyman**. It's the story of a lavatory attendant, Jim, whose dreams of becoming an executive, an ace pilot, a cowboy, etc. are thwarted at every turn by the system (he hasn't got *The Levels*), by money (cowboy boots £57) and by bureaucracy.

It certainly won't mean much to young children — but does that matter? Forget categories and welcome a book that is funny, satirical, poignant and even tragic and makes reading picture books respectable for everyone.

**Gentleman Jim** Raymond Briggs  
Hamish Hamilton £3.25 0 241 10281 2

## A book to treasure

Alison Uttley's first four **Little Grey Rabbit** stories have been out of print for some years, and the original, familiar Margaret Tempest illustrations have been lost. Heinemann, wanting to reissue the stories in an anthology, asked Faith Jaques for new illustrations. The result is a joy — 54 line drawings and 4 colour plates so much in the spirit of the stories that there is no room to regret the lost originals. The increased number of illustrations, plus larger print, should in fact make these rather long stories accessible to even more children and their parents.

**Tales of Little Grey Rabbit** Alison Uttley, Illustrated Faith Jaques  
Heinemann £4.50 0 434 96924 9

## Up and Up!

Printing and paper costs mean that another round of price increases for books is on the way. Hardbacks that have been in print for some time will look like very good value — it might be a good idea to do some searching while there's still time. *Some* paperbacks are still under 50p. Why not start a 'bargain' section in the bookshop?

Best wishes and keep writing! ●



More cuts on the way. Inflation eroding what we have got. Frustration, anger or gloomy acceptance in every staffroom.

## Is there a silver lining?

Where does the school bookshop figure in all this?

We asked Richard Bourne, a journalist who has written widely on education, to take an objective look at the picture and, with bookshops in mind, make

# A COMMENT ON THE CUTS

In all but a few lucky counties and boroughs the allowances for school books and materials will be lower this year than last. And, as everybody knows, the allowances were not too generous in most places last year anyway. The sight of dog-eared, old-fashioned books being dished out produces a weary depression in teacher, child and parent. No wonder literacy is such hard graft nowadays: at least most things a child will watch on television look well-made and up-to-date.

In this shiver of the educational ice age I've been asking around to see what school bookshops might do. With library allowances being slashed, the school bookshop may find itself carrying the banner for new books in general: it may be the only place that many children will actually see and browse around the new titles issued for them in 1980. Not only that, but in secondary schools or where parents are also encouraged to buy books, it may provide a surprisingly rare opportunity to look at new adult fiction and non-fiction. (For unhappily it is not only school libraries that are buying less, the same is true of public libraries too.) It must therefore be *lively* and *active*. By being positive, by using their imaginations, those who run bookshops can raise the morale of all around them and increase the chances of getting help from others.

## Call for reinforcements

And this brings me to the first principle for the fightback against cuts and general melancholia: school bookshops should bring in parents wherever possible. Parents to serve behind the counter. Parents to get leaflets about new books in stock. Parents to help put plastic backs on worthwhile second-hand books (of which more later). Parents to buy for their children and *for themselves*. Parents to observe the taste of children the same age or a little bit older than theirs. Parents to take part in exhibitions related to a particular bookish theme. Author parents to come in and talk and sign copies. Printer parents to come in and explain how a book is set and bound. Parents to list new books in stock in their newsletter, and to order new ones at publication. Parents to help organise book token schemes, or pocket money savings cards which will give children the resources to choose and buy their own books.

This principle is not designed to take away in any respect the prime purpose of a school bookshop — to be a place where, for pleasure and education, a *child* can buy his or her own book to read. What it does however, is to bring in the organisational and financial muscle of parents *to help the teachers*. The best, most natural example of reading is the example set a child by the rest of the family. And even where a school has no particular desire to be a community school it is likely that the PTA or Friends' Association will do what it can to support a school bookshop if the school makes the invitation.

## A case of practical conservation

The second principle which I have gleaned from talking around is that no school bookshop should be shy of running a second-hand section, given the economic climate

A former Education Correspondent of the Guardian, Richard Bourne has also been Assistant Editor for New Society and Deputy Editor for the London Evening Standard. He has written several books and is co-author of the centenary history of the National Union of Teachers, *Struggle for Education, 1870-1970*. He is married with three children at ILEA schools.

and the price of new books. 'I give a 5p credit for any book that is brought in and resell second-hand books for 5p or 10p,' one school bookshop organiser at a large South London secondary school told me. A lively second-hand trade can give children who may have little possibility of buying many new books with their own money the pleasure of choosing, buying, owning and indeed reselling the stories that appeal to them. It is a case of practical conservation. And it may even be a way in which children can be encouraged to respect books: those in better condition can be bought back at a higher price. Wherever possible books should be resold with a durable protection for their covers.

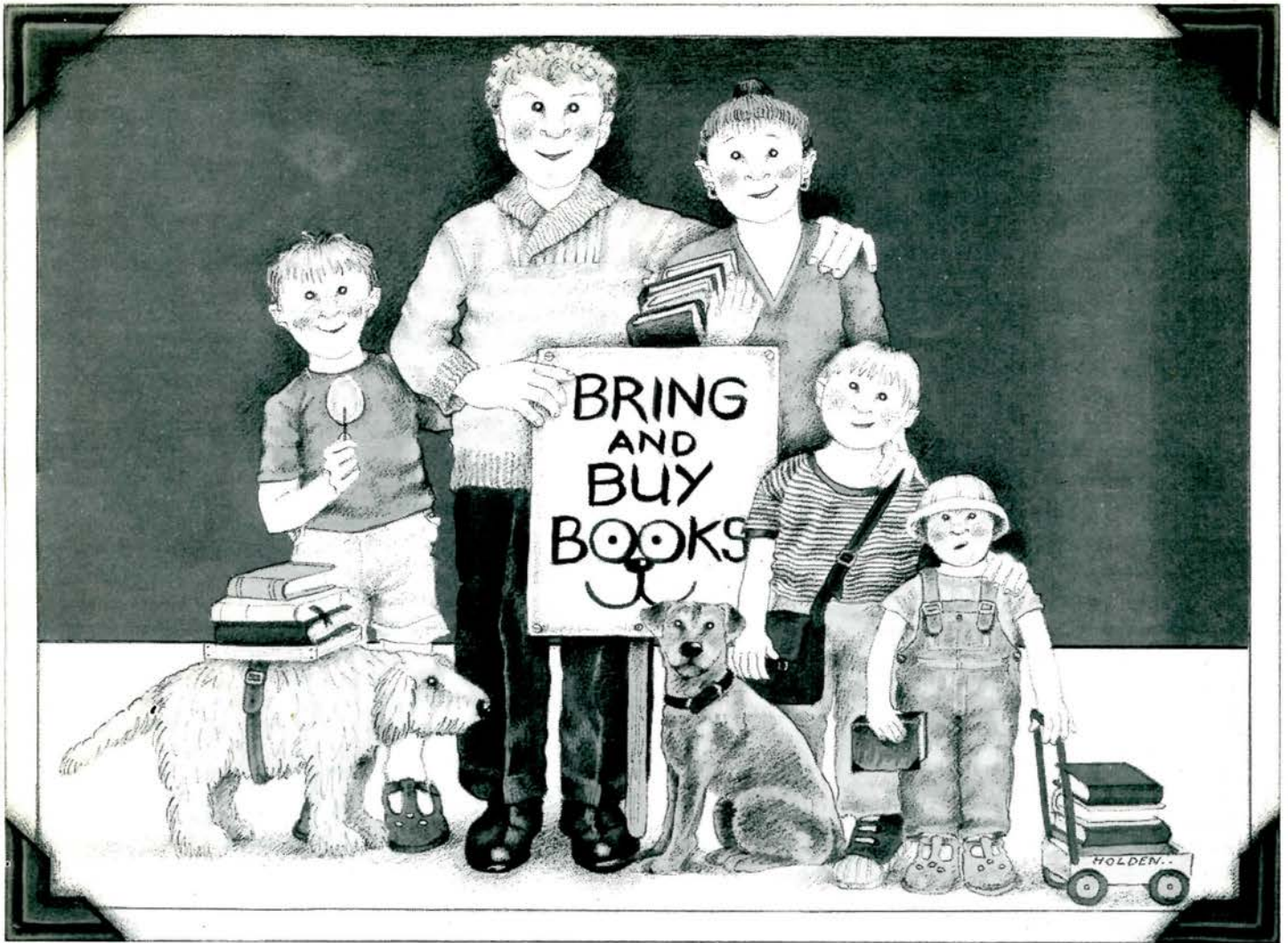
The third general principle which seems to apply at the present time is that the school bookshop should be determinedly eclectic — aiming to serve all age groups in a school, with both fiction and non-fiction. Some secondary bookshops, I know, do a trade in set books but I am not referring to that. Many bookshops in secondary schools really only serve the first and second years — and that I think is a pity. The range of books should be wide because young people should be encouraged to experiment and develop their taste. I was talking to a book publisher recently who was very worried about the immediate outlook for book publishing in Britain. But he felt that a good story could be as popular today as it was 100 years ago. For his firm he felt that survival lay in being more aware of the interests of the market — more willing to offer books as entertainment, and less keen on being didactic. He was also less interested in publishing books just for the sake of it: he felt fewer books could be better books.

## The needs of older teenagers

I am sure that this awareness of a child's need to enjoy books, to be entertained as well as stimulated, lies behind the success of many school bookshops. It is the reason why children queued up at the counters of bookshops in the 1940s to buy Enid Blyton at a time when some high-minded public librarians were refusing to stock her. But there is also continuing scope for 'finding out books', descriptive and non-fiction, both among primary age children and teenagers. Here too the school bookshop is important because it can go on obtaining new books, and it is these kinds of books that date fastest.

Some of the liveliest school bookshops are in primary schools, but more needs to be discovered about the requirements of older teenagers in secondary schools. It may be that they are using outside bookshops for new or second-hand books, or are adequately provided for by public libraries. But I have a nasty feeling that 14 to 18-year-olds





Cartoon by Caroline Holden, illustrator of *The Lion & Albert* (Methuen).



Richard Bourne

do less reading for pleasure than one would like and, if this is confirmed by English departments and school librarians, I would hope school bookshops could make an effort here.

### No back-up and no escape?

Those then are my three general principles — useful at any time but perhaps highlighted by the effects of the cuts. There is, though, someone else to consider — the teacher who runs the bookshop. Anyone responsible for a school bookshop needs to be an ideas person, not easily downhearted and with a capacity for drawing in parents and others to help. But I wonder whether schools sometimes take advantage of the teachers who run them, allow them to go on too long and become disenchanted? Particularly at the present time, when teachers are tending to lose their auxiliaries and back-up materials for their class teaching, it would be disastrous if running the bookshop was seen as a

chore one could never get out of. Would it be unreasonable to suggest that no one should be expected to run the bookshop for more than three years unless he or she had specifically volunteered to continue?

### The cuts in perspective

There is no doubt that the present cuts in educational provision are inspiring a do-it-yourself spirit in schools, and a new willingness by teachers to see parents as vital partners. It is important, though, not to get the cuts out of proportion, not to get too demoralised: a fair bit of the build-up of resources and new buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s remains as a bonus to be shared among a falling child population, and the teacher-pupil ratio is considerably better than it was a decade ago. One always sees immediate price rises or economies in technicolour terms when they happen, but they have a habit of fading in retrospect. The general experience of schooling, both for teachers and pupils, has been steadily improving since 1945 in spite of the economic stop-go along the way: it would be most surprising if the present cuts were to usher in a period of continuing decline in standards of provision. (Education *has* taken a smaller proportion of the gross national product over the last three years but that in itself is not alarming — the GNP has been growing and the school population has been falling.)

I do not think the greatest possible efforts by school bookshops should inhibit lobbying to persuade local authorities to restore book and library allowances to a satisfactory level next year. This lobbying must go on. But in the meantime I believe that the school bookshop has a more important contribution to make than ever before. ●



# Meet Beverley Mathias

## CHILDREN'S BOOKS OFFICER FOR THE NBL

Last September Beverley Mathias suddenly found herself in the middle of the British children's book world. A few weeks before, she had arrived from Australia, 'hoping to find something to do in children's books', wandered into the NBL, applied for the job and been appointed.

Such a sudden transformation would leave most people dazed and breathless, but Bev is not the sort to be without breath for long. She immediately set about meeting and making herself known to people all over the country, and working out what she wanted to achieve at the NBL. Her qualifications and experience, energy and enthusiasm, point to an interesting future.

Beverley Mathias was born in Melbourne 'of British parents' — her father emigrated from Birkenhead and her mother's family were Scottish crofters who went out in the nineteenth century. She is a compulsive reader (who doesn't remember learning to read) and since joining the public library as a child has 'never been without a library card, except for my first two weeks in England'.

She is also a living advertisement for do-it-yourself education. She left school at fourteen for domestic college but left because of illness ('I still love cooking.') and went into the book department of the Myer Emporium (one of the three largest stores in the world). A mistake in a job advertisement (they had omitted 'qualified' before 'assistant') took her into the Sunshine City Library. Soon it was night school for O-levels and the start of the long road to becoming a qualified librarian.

In 1971 she became Children's Services Librarian for Camberwell-Waverley Regional Library Service (200,000 borrowers, 2 million issues a year, 76,000 books) with four

We asked Beverley Mathias to give us some help with *The Vikings*. Her article is on pages 18-19.

branches and eight specialised children's staff. With 'no funds' she set out to 'find the children and bring them in'. Holiday activities, mounting visits from authors, film clubs, storytimes, all helped — as did involving parents and a water fountain located in the library. 'They came for a drink and stayed to look at books.'

Five years later it was time for a change and she went 'to find how the other half lives' as business manager for Joyce and Court Oldmeadow (past winners of the Eleanor Farjeon Award for services to children's books) in their Melbourne bookshop. She was at the same time completing a part-time BA degree at Monash University. Last year, her degree completed, pastures new beckoned and here she is.

What does a Children's Books Officer do?

'It's about dispensing information, answering letters, phone-calls, putting people in touch with the expertise they want, giving practical help, offering a sympathetic ear. It also means being a catalyst — generating ideas, getting things going. You need to be informed and in touch so I spend a lot of time listening, observing, travelling around, making links with organisations concerned with children and books.' (Bev is on the board of the SBA.)

But it is also about being a librarian and Bev has plans. With more space in Book House, the reference collection of children's books can now include all books published in the past two years (previously books were removed after one). It will be catalogued and classified and laid out like a children's library. It will also, if Bev has her way, have children in it! She's exploring the idea of children coming in after school to browse so that she can see their reactions to new books. And that's only the beginning. 45 East Hill looks like being a friendly and exciting place. Why not pay it a visit? Bev would like to meet you. ●

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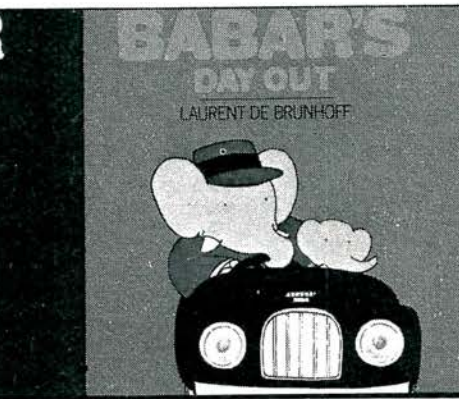
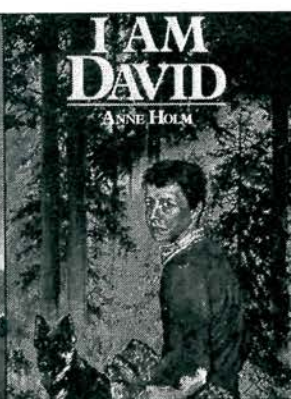
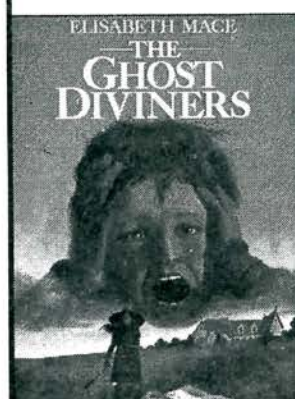
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# reviews

## NEW HARDBACK PICTURE BOOKS



So many superb hardcover picture books have arrived since our March issue that we just had to give Jill Bennett her head . . .

For this page she's picked

### Once in a Wood

Eve Rice, Bodley Head, 0 370 30318 0, £3.25

A new departure for Eve Rice, this attractively designed book is just right for the in-between stage — ten Aesop's fables simply told and presented in clear, well-leaded print. Eve Rice's droll black and white pictures bring out the essential humour of the tales. A valuable addition to the shelves of any infant or junior classroom.



### The Grape that Ran Away

William Stobbs, Bodley Head, 0 370 30255 9, £3.25

A most attractive rendering of an old French folk tale. A runaway grape eludes all her pursuers in an adventurous dash and is eventually rescued by a fairy and put safely back in her bunch — to await her final fate. Excellent to read aloud and the cumulative nature and directness of the tale makes it a 'natural' for young readers. Good, clear print too. Individuals will want to linger over the beautiful, glowing pictures: I've noticed several of my infants feeling the pages as they read.



### Mrs Fox's Wedding

Illustrated by Errol Le Cain, retold by Sara and Stephen Corrin, Faber, 0 571 11457 1, £3.25



A retelling of a Grimms' fairy tale in which various suitors present themselves to Miss Cat, maid to the bereaved Mrs Fox who is determined to wed only he who can compare favourably with her dead husband. Sara Corrin is herself a master storyteller so, as one would expect, this version reads aloud very well — the language is stimulating and there is an effective use of rhyme. Errol Le Cain's illustrations are imaginatively designed so that each turn of the page offers an exciting visual experience.

### A Treeful of Pigs

Arnold Lobel, pictures by Anita Lobel, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 007 2, £3.50

A farmer and his wife buy some pigs at the market and when his wife suggests that pig rearing will be hard work, her husband replies, 'It will not be hard. We will do it together.'

Things turn out rather differently though, as the lazy farmer's favourite occupation is lying in bed. However, after a series of ingenious efforts on the part of his wife, he finally sees the error of his ways and promises never to be lazy again.

Sheer delight. Arnold Lobel's enchanting story is simply told and easy-to-read, and his wife's illustrations are an excellent complement, capturing the humour of the tale perfectly whilst bringing the book together as a beautifully designed whole.

Highly recommended for infant and lower junior classes, both for story times and for individual readers.



### One Panda

Betty Youngs, Bodley Head, 0 370 30150 1, £3.50

For this animal counting book, Betty Youngs has embroidered a selection of wild animals — one panda, two elephants, three moose, etc. Her ingenious use of stitches and colour give the creatures a three-dimensional appearance so that they stand out from their textured backgrounds.

The lovely big, clear print makes this an excellent first 'reading', as well as counting, book.

### Long Ago When the Earth was Flat

Retold by Paola Caboara Luzzatto, illustrated by Aimone Sambuy, Collins, 0 00 195450 4, £3.95

Three tales from different parts of the African continent are retold by an author who lives in Tanzania. These myths offer answers to questions which have been asked since time began concerning the origins of mountains and fire, and why the sun is in the sky. The stories are simply told, clearly presented — the most successful in terms of marriage between text and pictures being *A Visit from the Sea*. The artist (whose first book this is) shows considerable talent and his paintings will give pleasure both to adults and children of all ages.

### Velvet Paws and Whiskers

Jean Chapman, illustrated by Deborah Niland, Hodder & Stoughton, 0 340 24605 7, £4.95

A bumper anthology of stories (both traditional and new), songs, verses and things to make and do, all with a distinct feline flavour, which deserves a place in any infant classroom. Deborah Niland's lively, humorous illustrations greatly add to the enjoyment of this book which may well result in a 'moggie mania'. Well worth investing in.

### Look What I've Got!

Anthony Browne, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 004 8, £3.95

An ageless picture book with something in it for everyone from infants up. The text is brief, clearly presented and easy-to-read, and the story concerns one of those awful boys who has everything. But, as his long-suffering friend knows, pride comes before a fall. The illustrations are fascinating (it is one of the books where the more you look, the more you realise you've missed the first



time), very witty and full of comic detail, some of which is fairly sophisticated. Buy a copy and see, is my recommendation, whatever age children you are working with.



# PAPERBACKS

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.

## NURSERY/ INFANT

All the next day  
Toad sang songs  
to his seeds.



And all the next day  
Toad read poems  
to his seeds.

And all the next day  
Toad played music  
for his seeds.



**Frog and Toad Together**  
Arnold Lobel, 0 43 796033 1

**Little Chief**  
Syd Hoff, 0 43 796031 5

**Albert the Albatross**  
Syd Hoff, 0 43 796034 X

**A Kiss for Little Bear**  
Else Holmelund Minarik, pictures by  
Maurice Sendak, 0 43 796032 3

**Tell Me Some More**  
Crosby Bonsall, pictures by Fritz  
Siebel, 0 43 796035 8

**No Funny Business**  
Edith Thacher Hurd, pictures by  
Clement Hurd, 0 43 796036 6  
**World's Work, I Can Read paperbacks,**  
80p each

**Frog and Toad Together** must be the best 80p worth around at the moment. It contains five short stories about the irresistible pair. Don't miss this book on any account — it's an absolute *must* for all children learning to read. Syd Hoff's books have great appeal for young readers so these two, one the story of a lonely Red Indian boy, and the other about an albatross who becomes the good luck mascot of a crew of sailors, will be very popular. The latter is a shorter story as is another favourite, **A Kiss for Little Bear**. The above will all help readers to discover the delights offered by books which Andrew and his friends discover in **Tell Me Some More**. Very much an 'also ran' as far as this series is concerned, No

**Funny Business** tells what a cat does when his owners go off on a picnic.  
JB

### NEW STARTERS

#### Red series

**Going to the Zoo**, 0 356 06801 3

**Zoo for Sale**, 0 356 06861 7

**Birds**, 0 356 06802 1

**Birds from Africa**, 0 356 06862 5

#### Blue Series

**Space Travel**, 0 356 06821 8

**The Space Monster**, 0 356 06881 1

**Cars**, 0 356 06822 6

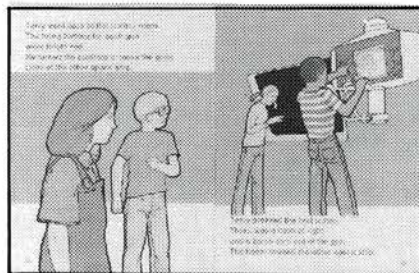
**The Red Racing Car**,  
0 356 06882 X

#### Green Series

**Airport**, 0 356 06841 2

**Flight into Danger**,  
0 356 06901 X

**Macdonald Educational**, 75p each  
In spite of the publisher's claim, 'An exciting new series for the 1980s', I was extremely disappointed by the New Starters which seem in essence not radically different from their predecessors; although now there are three reading levels — Red (5-6), Blue (6-7) and Green (7-8) — and for every factual subject there is a parallel 'story'. However, these are written in pedestrian, stilted language (though in their favour, the type is clear, well-spaced and well-led). Some of the illustrations seem oddly inappropriate for the age range proposed by the publishers.



... the illustrations seem oddly inappropriate ...?

For example, the characters depicted in **The Space Monster** would suggest that the book is aimed at much older readers than the 6 to 7s stated in the blurb. The themes chosen — space, aeroplanes, etc. — indicate that popular appeal is the aim but for me, in trying perhaps too hard, the series fails. Those who desire to further the cause of true literacy will leave well alone. JB

They will also steer well clear of

**The Enormous Turnip**,  
0 7214 0616 5

**Rapunzel**, 0 7214 0615 7

**Ananse and the Sky God**,  
0 7214 0529 0

**Wizard of Oz**, 0 7214 0613 0  
**Ladybird, Read It Yourself series**,  
40p each

Four more classic stories which have received the dreaded treatment for the Read It

Yourself series. It makes me shudder to see good stories, especially folk and fairy tales, debased to such banal language. It's sad to think of the number of teachers and parents who will seize on them as an adjunct to the reading scheme. Teachers and parents, please — take off your blinkers and let children have what they deserve — it surely isn't these. One glance at, for example, the Heinemann/Piccolo version of **The Great Big Enormous Turnip** should be enough to convince anyone. JB

### The Snowball

**Barbara Sleight**, Beaver Books,  
0 600 20055 8, 65p

I sensed that my infant audience was less than rivetted by the rather cosy story about a snowbaby who hatches out of a snowball and the efforts of two children to keep him a secret; probably due in part to a lack of enthusiasm on the part of this reader aloud. Not one of Barbara Sleight's better books. JB

**Benjamin and the Box**,  
0 00 661683 6

**Benjamin Bounces Back**,  
0 00 661684 4

**Alan Baker**, Picture Lions, 80p each



### Benjamin's Dreadful Dream

**Alan Baker**, Andre Deutsch,  
0 233 97105 X, £3.25

The exploits of a myopic hamster, whose specs perch somewhat precariously on a nose which leads him into all kinds of scrapes, are great fun. In **Benjamin and the Box** the determined Benjamin succeeds, after a number of abortive attempts, in gaining entry to a wooden box marked 'Fragile'.

In **Benjamin Bounces Back** he fails to notice a 'No Entry' sign and slides, hurtles, bounces and plummets his way through various hazards before arriving — minus specs — back at the door where he reads the sign and proceeds to the opticians.

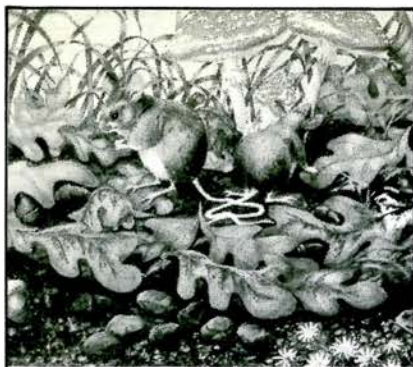
In the newest story, the irrepressible hamster suffers from an attack of insomnia — or does he? One way or another, he has an eventful night. Alan Baker's illustrations are full of detail and very lifelike. Benjamin's thoughts provide the basis for the short, easy-to-read texts; but the books should not be confined to any one age group. JB

**The Magic Tree and the Flyaway Birds**, 0 330 25946 6

**The Magic Tree and the Missing Acorn**, 0 330 25945 8  
**Hannah E. Glease**, illustrated by  
**Gillian Embleton**, Piccolo Picture  
Books (originals), 55p each

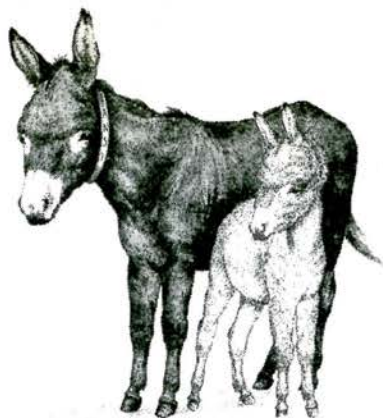
The main strength of the books lies in their clear, colourful, accurate illustrations of the flora and fauna around and about the magic





Finding the acorns among the stones was not so easy. "Oh, where can they be?" squeaked the mice, as they scratched among the stones under the fallen leaves. Can you help the mice find the acorns?

tree. However, the text is a jumble of fact and fantasy which could well confuse young readers and the stories themselves are weak. I certainly would not choose them as natural history books, nor as stories. JB



With all the exciting and colourful picture paperbacks around, I cannot see many children choosing to buy or read these books which look, and are, frankly – dull. They have been written to promote the cause of the Donkey Sanctuary and the stories are centred on the lives of some of the residents. But stories which attempt to further a cause, however worthy, seldom succeed and these are no exception. JB

### Jeremy Mouse and Cat Althea, Dinosaur Publications, 0 85122 201 3, 60p

An unexceptional story about a mouse whose joke on cat nearly ends in disaster. Nice, clearly-presented print, but still not worth 60p of my money. JB

### Tansy's Rescue, 0 330 25998 9

Eeyore and the Broken Collar,  
0 330 25997 0

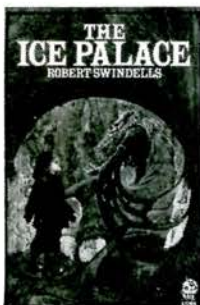
Elisabeth D. Svendsen, illustrated by  
Eve Bygrave, Piccolo Picture Books  
(originals), 70p each

## LOWER JUNIOR

### The Ice Palace

Robert Swindells, Lions,  
0 00 671699 7, 65p

A strange, haunting beautifully written story of a child who is carried away by the frost demon Starjik into the icy Northern Wastes. And into the Northern Wastes goes Ivan, the child's brother, to find and rescue him. If you think you've heard the story before, it's certainly got a lot in common with Andersen's Snow Queen. But the boy's solitary quest through the silent snow has a mystery all of its own. It's an unusual book with something of the poetry of good fairy tales but it's told with great simplicity and, with its large print and lavish illustrations, makes an inviting book for less confident readers. DS



### Kipper's Turn

Marjorie Darke, Lions, 0 00 671611 3,  
65p

Set in the late nineteenth century, it deals with the plight of young Kipper, penniless, on the run, and heading for a life of crime. As always with Marjorie Darke, the evocation of period is perfect and the characters are well drawn, but the plot itself is on the thin side and there seem to be more grown-ups with hearts of gold around than I would have expected in a den of thieves. For those just beginning to tackle longer stories alone. DS

### Mr Bat's Great Invention

Christine Nostlinger, Hippo,  
0 590 70002 2, 65p

A surreal comedy. When Granny swallows Mr Bat's rejuvenating medicine, she carelessly reduces herself to a six-year-old and it's panic stations for Robert and his friends as they try to undo the damage. Set



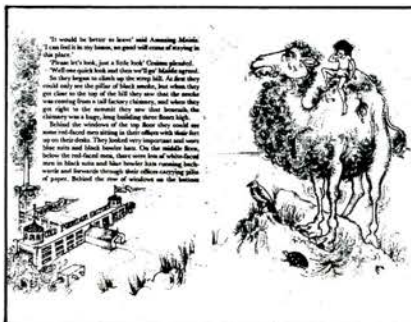
'Dreadful illustrations,' or are they?

in Vienna and translated from the German original, this is an undemanding tale, remarkable for its dreadful illustrations. But the humour should give it appeal up to top juniors. DS

### The Seagull

Penelope Farmer, Piccolo,  
0 330 26003 0, 75p

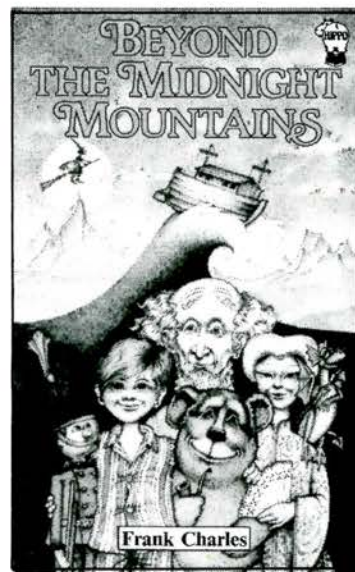
This starts out like a conventional feathered friend story with young Stephen finding a wounded gull and taking it home to Granny to heal, cherish and tame. Only the whole plan falls flat, because the gull doesn't like Stephen and Stephen, to be honest, doesn't much like the gull. It's a splendidly unsentimental story enriched by a strong sense of place, and with appeal past 10. DS



### Amazing Maisie

Andro Linklater, Magnet,  
0 416 87640 4, 65p

In the Charlie and the Chocolate Factory tradition, it includes a cold porridge factory run by the Wicked Wallah Wellibhut, not to mention a marmalade-coloured camel called Maisie and a little girl who buys her. Together they win the Christmas Camel Race and convert the Wicked Wallah to kindness and ice-cream making. The print is microscopic but there's a picture on every page and the daft humour will undoubtedly appeal to middle juniors. DS



### Beyond the Midnight Mountains Frank Charles, Hippo, 0 590 70003 0, 70p

This features a toy soldier, a teddy, a Noah's Ark and a quest for Aladdin's lamp. There's a splendidly evil magician, non-stop action and any amount of appalling jokes so it should go down well with 8 to 10-year-olds. DS

### The Fox Busters

Dick King-Smith, Puffin,  
0 14 03.1175 0, 75p

The heroines of this story are three gallant chickens who perfect the art of flight and set out to wage war on a nearby warren of foxes. And wage war they do with super hardened egg bombs and aerial combat tactics which pulverise the enemy. Shades of Fantastic Mr Fox. For animal lovers and Battle of Britain fans. DS



**Norman Hunter, Puffin,  
0 14 03.1156 4, 80p**

toothpaste and any bad teeth to: Glum's Products, Glum Lane, Glumly, Glums—"

"Gums?" A voice spoke in the night.

"Yes," said Ronnie bravely, "Gums-on-Sea."

"There's no such place. It's a false address." A man stepped out of the darkness, tall, thin, and toothless.

"They took all my teeth out," he said.

**The Boy with Illuminated Measles, 0 340 25360 6**

'Uncle Roger beamed. "My wife ran away to Australia. Or was it Wapping? She met a Madagascar seaman who turned her head with his curries."

"Do you want her back?"

"I didn't like her back. I didn't like her front very much either."

If that sort of goon-type humour is what appeals, these are your books.

**Illuminated Measles** includes Mum in orbit in a lift, the musicians from the Titanic preserved on an iceberg, Jonah in the whale, Russian spies and Hollywood.

Not recommended for the literal-minded or those who need a strong story-line. PT

**The Battle of Bubble and Squeak**  
**Philippa Pearce, Puffin,**  
**0 14 03.1183 1. 65p**

Philippa Pearce shows that it is possible to mix quality writing with popular appeal. This perceptive, affectionate look at family life owes much of its strength to the

## Goldenrod

## Kings of Space

**Captain W. E. Johns, Piccolo,**  
**0 330 26006 5, 75p**  
 Here's one exhumed from 1954. Group Captain Tiger Clinton and his son stumble from the Scottish mist into the castle where (dismissing rockets) Professor Brane and his trusty butler have secretly built a cosmic-ray-powered 'flying basin'. The Spacemaster enables them to see the remnants of lunar fauna, 'prehistoric' swamps on Venus, and Mars where mosquitoes have almost destroyed civilisation. Three subsequent novels see Brane and co. rejuvenating Mars and, with alien friends, having transitory scrapes on weird, wonderful planetoids. There's much pseudoscientific technicality before *Adventure* begins and it's less straightforward stylistically than many modern books. Might suit earnest, clever juniors of scientific bent who'd enjoy comparing it with contemporary sci-fi. Good cover.

SB

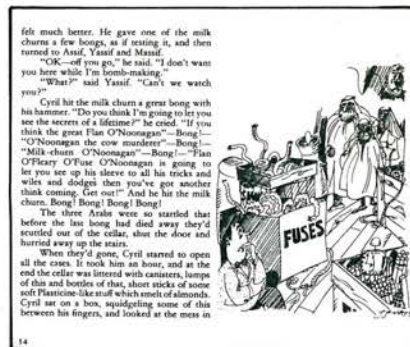
## The Case of the Missing Masterpiece

**Terrance Dicks, *Piccolo*,  
0 330 25978 4, 75p**

Last year Piccolo showed signs of life (Thomas Rockwell, Judy Blume, Carol Beach York . . .) but now I'm wondering if they've U-turned again. Here's more neo-Blytonia, though not the worst kind because it's been roughly tarted up to suit 1980s Britain. Sherlock Holmes freak Dan is challenged by a bullying type to 'solve' a local art robbery. He does (with a little help from three friends) thereby inspiring another series of juvenile detective stories, The Baker Street Irregulars. The opening isn't too bad — although I can't imagine any school starting a fire drill with the kids in the playground — but it soon deteriorates. 'For those who like that sort of thing . . .' SB

## The Terrible Kidnapping of Cyril Bonhamy

**Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy,**  
0 416 88490 3



**The Spy and the Mission of  
Staggering Importance**  
**Philip Freeman-Sayer, 0 416 88500 4**

**Who Got Rid of Angus Flint?**  
Diana Wynne Jones, 0 416 88480 6

**The Deadly Gang**  
**Sydney Paulden, 0 416 88510 1**  
**Magnet, 65p each**

Short, funny, copiously illustrated books are just right for tempting kids who are reasonably proficient readers but who don't take naturally to fiction. These Jesters are no classics but, now they've made paperback, they'll be useful in schools as possible follow-ups to *Treehorn*, *Flat Stanley*, *The Boy Who Sprouted Antlers* etc. *Cyril Bonhamy* is easily the best, though it's wide open to accusations of reinforcing racist stereotypes as *Assif*. Yassif and Massif kidnap unworlwyd, bookish Cyril in mistake for an Irish bomb expert. Drawings by ffolkes help a lot. Experience shows that kids like *The Spy* more than this adult anyway. For me, slapstick rarely works in print but perhaps cartoon-culture on the box has heightened the visual sense since my day. I'd expect the climax of *Angus Flint* to be enjoyed – the furniture chases the unwanted guest from the house when all the humans' attempts have failed – but my limited trials suggest that few kids get that far. Maybe it was too middle-class for the area I live in, maybe it was the more sophisticated narrative style. *The Deadly Gang* has little in it that even seems intended to be funny, being a semi-spoof Western with a diminutive, dog-riding hero. Mainly for the not-too-fussy who like a short read. Nothing here to go wild over but all are worth experimenting with on a small scale.

## The Pinballs

Betsy Byars, Puffin, 0 14 03.1121 1,  
65p

OK, so all the hardbitten humour is a front to cover a sentimental ending (a puppy, no less, bringing Harvey back to the living). Who cares? **Pinballs** is really enjoyable and, anyway, kids are notoriously immune to preaching. Some slop is inevitable with three foster children taking the first self-help steps towards beating the handicaps of their backgrounds but it doesn't really intrude till the book's last quarter. Would have mixed nicely with Louise Fitzhugh and other 'young teenage' writers to establish milieu and soften 'em up for later when you introduce toughies like Rosa Guy but it's got a totally inappropriate, off-putting cover. Read aloud?

SB

**Harold and Bella, Jammy and Me**  
Robert Leeson, Lions, 0 00 671606 7,  
75p

It's currently in vogue to recount your childhood and here's Leeson's experience – rural Cheshire, just pre-World War II – told in interconnected short stories. Best read aloud rather than for individuals, I reckon; anecdotes to inspire recollections from the audience rather than fully-structured beginning/middle/end pieces (several abrupt conclusions are somewhat anti-climactic).



And the cover, though it suits the book, might not draw a queue. Short, simple, often amusing, occasionally touching – if you've succeeded with John Griffin's Midlands village (*Skulker Wheat*) or Naughton's Bolton (*Dog Called Nelson*) you might try this too. None match Jan Mark's Coronation Mob though (*Jubilee Jackanory*, BBC). SB

### Rebel on a Rock

Nina Bawden, Puffin, 0 14 03.1123 8, 75p

Carrie and Albert Sandwich (from *Carrie's War*) and the four Popper children (of Carrie's previous marriage) arrive for a holiday in Ithaca which is ruled by a dictator. Slowly seeds of doubt and suspicion begin to form in the mind of twelve-year-old Jo, as to why exactly they are there. Is this really a family holiday, or

just an elaborate spying operation? As the story speeds along to its denouement Jo's suspicions grow and her meeting with Alexis, a local boy, who says there is going to be a revolution increases her confusion. As usual Nina Bawden combines truthfully observed characters with a thoroughly absorbing story. Highly recommended for 10s and over. PR

### Whispering in the Wind

Alan Marshall, Puffin, 0 14 03.1230 7, 70p

Peter and his white pony leave their tin shed to search for the last surviving Beautiful Princess. In the course of their journey they encounter many strange and magical creatures who advise and help them along the way. A book with an allegorical feel about it and a mystical atmosphere which combine to create a fairy tale to delight

both adults and children. The writing is lively and original, and less competent readers should find it eminently readable except that the print is minute. (A group of very capable eleven-year-olds commented on this before anything else.) They may need some persuading to give it a try. PR

### The Voyage of QV66

Penelope Lively, Piccolo, 0 330 26000 6, 75p

A very entertaining book. Good to read aloud. For more details see the Authorgraph (page 14).

## OLDER READERS

### Collision Course

Nigel Hinton, Puffin, 0 14 03.1169 6, 95p

Absorbing. Ray steals a motor bike and kills a woman in a hit and run accident. For two days he lives with this burning in his mind, while trying to carry on with everyday life. In this first novel, Nigel Hinton has captured with piercing accuracy the incongruous and irrational thoughts which invade the mind during times of personal crisis. Each turn of events leads the reader almost to believe Ray has covered his traces successfully. Not until the final page do we realise the inevitability of the police car arriving at his house.

Totally realistic. Compulsive reading. Ideal for classwork with over-thirteens – there is much to provoke discussion and further thought. I'm still wondering how it all turned out for Ray. Perhaps there will be a sequel? YW

### No End to Yesterday

Shelagh Macdonald, Lions, 0 00 671493 5, 95p

The injustices and mental cruelties suffered by Marjory during her 1920s' childhood are conveyed in some of the best writing for teenagers there is available. They should pass it on to their mothers who will find it just as powerful.

Marjory believes her mother is dead, and her father is a weekend visitor to the house full of relatives where the whole family is dominated by a rigid Victorian grandmother. Gran's malicious attempts to destroy Marjory's individuality makes her an outcast drifting on the sea of life.

Because of her intelligence and basic warm humour, Marjory is a survivor. Subtle glimpses into her adult life add an extra dimension to some perceptive characterisation. So moving is this story, it was no surprise to find it is based on truth – her own mother's childhood. Winner of the Whitbread Literary Award. YW

### Postmarked the Stars

Andre Norton, Magnet, 0 416 88300 1, 80p

For science fiction fans who like to become absorbed in a total fantasy world full of strange-sounding names and space world jargon. This is the third space-adventure-detective story about Dane Thorson and the 'Solar Queen'. The very small print is immediately off-putting to any but older able readers and followers of this well-established author. YW



Ted CoConis's drawing of Charlie, Sara's mentally handicapped brother, in *The Summer of the Swans*.

### The Summer of the Swans

Betsy Byars, Hippo, 0 590 72031 7, 65p

For Sara that summer, everything was changed. It was like being on a see-saw and she could never really be sure of anything. And then the arrival of the Swans and the disappearance of Charlie, her ten-year-old mentally handicapped brother, help her to see people, events and herself in a different way. The emotional intensities and comic anxieties of early teenage – 'I have the biggest feet in my school', 'The peak of my whole life so far was when I got to be milk monitor' – are conveyed with the insight and wry humour which are the mark of a Betsy Byars' novel. Very readable – from 11/12 up. Thank you Hippo for making this one available in this country. PT

### What About Tomorrow?

Ivan Southall, Penguin/Peacock, 0 14 00.5420 0, 95p

For the committed, intelligent reader, the novel is a rewarding experience for both sexes. For the less able reader, warn him it takes 'a bit of getting into' and encourage him to persevere – it will be worthwhile. On his newsround, Sam writes his bike off when he hits a tram, losing all his papers in the rain. Suffering from shock, and afraid of reprisals from his out-of-work, 1930s depression-hit family, he runs. And keeps on going. That's the story-line. It is also an insight into a fourteen-year-old's mind – a window opening out onto the world. The two key lines of the novel for me are:

'All part of the muddle  
All part of the pain.'

We all feel like that sometimes. And there's much here with which teenage readers will identify. YW

### The Guizer

Alan Garner, Lions, 0 00 671302 5, 95p

A collection of fool stories from different mythologies: American Indian, Eskimo, Central European, Maori, Romany, African, British. The guizer appears in many forms – Ananse the Spiderman, Robin Goodfellow, Maui-of-a-Thousand-Tricks; each, says Garner, 'as full of contradictions as we are'. A rich source of thinking and talking. PT

### Dandelion Clocks

Edited by Alfred Bradley and Kay Jamieson, Penguin, 0 14 00.4811 1, £1.25

Very welcome in paperback is this marvellous collection of 23 short stories by current British writers on the theme of childhood. It's likely to be seized and 'done' in English lessons – so encourage your older customers in the bookshop to discover these stories for themselves first. PT

### A Candle in her Room

Ruth M. Arthur, Knight, 0 340 25339 8, 85p

Three generations and two world wars are involved in this saga of a family, a house and the evil influence of a strange wooden doll. Compelling and easy to read – recommended especially for girls from about 11. PT



One of Margery Gill's drawings for *A Candle in her Room*.



# NEW HARDBACK FICTION

**Charlie, Emma and Alberic**  
Margaret Greaves, 0 416 87950 0

**Oh Really, Rabbit!**  
Ruth Manning-Sanders, 0 416 87380 4  
Methuen Read Aloud Books, £2.95 each

This series is worth looking out for. They really do read aloud well and are extremely popular with beginner readers. *Charlie, Emma and Alberic* features a small fire-breathing dragon who goes to school, takes part in the school play (*St George and the Dragon*, naturally) and visits the seaside. It's gentle, unambitious stuff of a kind that goes down well with young children.

A follow-on from *Boastful Rabbit* (now in Magnet, 60p), *Oh Really, Rabbit!* is a collection of rabbit folk tales from all over the world retold in simple, direct style and starring our canny, indestructible hero, Rabbit. Ruth Manning-Sanders is a masterly storyteller and this is a welcome addition to her other animal tales in this series. DS

**The Ghost and Bertie Boggin**  
Catherine Sefton, Faber,  
0 571 11524 1, £3.25

A marvellously funny book about Bertie, youngest of the Boggin clan, who alone can see the ghost that lives in the coalshed. When Bertie's older brother and sister oppress him, the ghost is his champion and in one adventure after another Bertie and the ghost come out on top. It makes a supremely satisfying read for younger children and the style is so swift and effortlessly funny that it's a pleasure to read. If only there were more books of this quality for younger readers! DS

**The Power of Hoodoo**  
Steve Bowles, Evans Jesters,  
0 237 45503 X, £2.95

An attractively presented book which combines a racy humorous style with a perceptive look at life in the local comprehensive! Less confident top middle/lower secondary readers will enjoy Raymond Tate's chaos-creating behaviour and more able 9 to 10s will, I am sure, also seize this with glee. A good buy for any classroom library. PR

**Marvello Simpson and the Lost Uncle**

Mary Sullivan, Evans Jesters,  
0 237 45502 1, £3.25

The school bazaar is revolutionized and the headmistress throws her inhibitions to the

wind as Marvello's hypnotic powers take over. Quite simply a super book. Read to a class of ten-year-olds, it brought the house down, and at 90 pages is short enough to encourage the less confident to go it alone. One to help convince the most reluctant reader that books really can be fun. PR

**The Reindeer and the Drum**  
Rosalind Kerven, Abelard,  
0 200 72676 5, £3.95

Anna goes to stay with her relations in Lapland. Their strangely alien way of life at first astonishes and frightens Anna but the warmth of their welcome overcomes her apprehension and she is absorbed into the life of reindeer herds and sledge journeys by night. Anna develops a special relationship with her grandmother and an insight into some mysterious Lap legends which could save the family fortunes. This is both a well-observed, sensitive story and an exciting tale which demands to be read to the finish. The Arctic setting is created with a wealth of detail and forms a picturesque backdrop to a story which should appeal to many nines and over for reading to themselves and would read aloud well to younger children. Useful for enlarging into project, movement or craft work. Highly recommended. PR

**The Keeper of the Isis Light**  
Monica Hughes, Hamish Hamilton,  
0 241 10405 X, £4.50

'Not another science fiction' was my first reaction — not being a sci-fi fan. But this one is different. It's a story of boy meets girl; of deep urgent feelings and conflicting confusing emotions. Girls of twelve and over will enjoy it more than boys, as it's basically sixteen-year-old Olwen's search for the truth about herself. With a few most unusual surprises. Also, a very modern story — raising ethical and moral issues which linger in the mind long after the final page. A paperback edition can't come too soon. YW

**A Rag, a Bone and a Hank of Hair**  
Nicholas Fisk, Kestrel, 0 7226 5550 9,  
£3.95

A leakage at the Euronuclear power plant has caused mass sterility. The future of the human race is in question. One answer is cloning from people alive before the disaster, but how would these Reborns fit into the new carefully controlled society? An experiment is set up to observe the behaviour of three of them — two children and an adult. Their own environment, London 1940, is recreated in part and Brin is chosen to join them as an observer.

An ingenious story and a compelling read, the book raises questions about freedom of choice and individual liberty in a way which makes these huge issues accessible to young readers. PT

**The Shadow Guests**  
Joan Aiken, Cape, 0 224 01797 7,  
£3.95

Returning to England from Australia after the mysterious disappearance of his mother and older brother, Cosmo looks for peace with Cousin Eunice at the mill house; but there is weekly boarding at a school in Oxford, unfriendly classmates and new knowledge of a family curse to cope with.

This is a more reflective Joan Aiken — the action being confined to Cosmo's encounters with three boys from his family's past — one Roman, one crusader, one eighteenth-century — all inexorably bound by the curse. These ghostly incidents, although part of the build-up to a dramatic climax, are isolated and less strong than the evocation of places and people — the mill house and its surroundings, Morningquest School (not exactly Grange Hill, but the relationships of the inhabitants are much the same). It is atmosphere rather than story that the reader takes away from this one. PT

**Goodbye Day**  
Olive Dehn, Gollancz, 0 575 02763 0,  
£3.95

The story, in her own words, of a day in the life of twelve-year-old Coral Sands. A rather eventful day which starts with the discovery of a note from Dad, 'Sands running out', and continues through a variety of incidents and encounters as Coral tries to find him and bring him back. The plot creaks a bit — Dad's motivation is very thin and a lot depends on Coral not understanding what miscarriage means; but the telling is lively, easy to read and often funny. There is also a good collection of 'characters', Grandma, sister Jasmine and boyfriend Kevin, Old Wally, Jenny and Sonny from school, and a back-to-back Manchester setting. PT

**A Star for the Latecomer**  
Bonnie Zindel and Paul Zindel, Bodley Head, 0 370 30319 9, £3.95

Definitely a three hanky story. Brooke Hillary is 16. She is at stage school in New York, devoted to an ambitious mother, but in her heart dreaming of love, marriage and children first and career second. When she learns her mother is dying, she longs for some success to give her before it is too late. As the months pass she learns to value what her mother has given her; but also to be herself.

Told by Brooke, the story is a great alternative for girls stuck on teenage romance. I can't see it appealing to boys — the humour and sharpness which spikes Paul Zindel's novels is completely missing. Sentimentality is all. PT

## NON-FICTION

### NOSTALGIA CORNER

Mods!

Compiled by Richard Barnes, Eel Pie,  
0 906008 14 X, £3.95  
Indispensable for all social historians and would-be members of the 'mod revival' (though I am told this is on the way 'out' for those who care to be 'in'). An insider's account of the whole scene from its origins

in the late 1950s to its submergence with the rise of 'Love' and 'Flower Power' in the late 1960s. A careful and meticulous tracing of influences in music and fashion — much appreciated by the connoisseur — plus over 150 photographs from the period. PT

**Growing Up in the Fifties**  
Jeremy Pascall, Wayland, 0 85340 754  
0 85340 754 1, £3.50

**Growing Up in the Swinging Sixties**  
Susan Cleeve, Wayland, 0 85340 755  
0 85340 755 X, £3.50  
Two in the series for 9 to 13-year-olds which aims to describe 'what it was like to

be a child in former times'. The Fifties presents a rounded picture of the time and traces interestingly the changes that took place in that decade. Out of five sections in *The Sixties*, only one is given over to News — the rest are on Fashion, Music, Heroes and Heroines, and the Media — which seems rather unbalanced (or perhaps it's just that we did begin to get out of balance then!).

There's nothing on life at home or in school (what about the spread of comprehensive schools?), nothing on jobs and precious little on domestic politics.

Both volumes are illustrated with good photographs which in themselves provide plenty of opportunities for discussion of the period. PT



# New Fiction

## The Little Captain and the Pirate Treasure

PAUL BIEGEL

Illustrated by CARL HOLLANDER

Translated by PATRICIA CRAMPTON

The third adventure of the boy-captain and his crew, in which they face many perils trying to return treasure stolen by the pirate Scurvyboots to its rightful owners.

Ages 7-10 £4.95

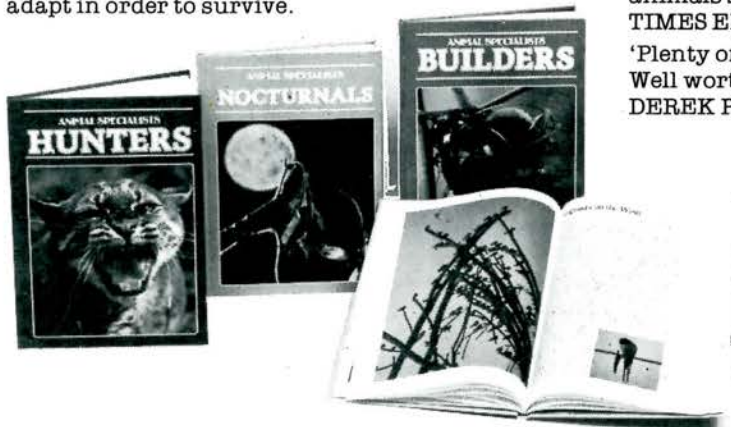


# Non-Fiction

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A magnificent large-format series, superbly illustrated with full-colour photographs, describing in detail the various ways in which animals have to adapt in order to survive.



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'This series will make a valuable contribution to conservation education.' WILDLIFE

'excellently produced in terms of format, factual matter and illustrations . . . Top quality production.'

SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL

Lions Polar Bears  
Gorillas Kangaroos  
Elephants Tigers  
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# DENT DENT DENT DENT DENT



# Authorgraph No.2

*Penelope Lively*

Penelope Lively was born in Egypt and 'trapped by the war' lived with her family on the outskirts of Cairo until 1945 when they returned to England. She was twelve and had never been to school. Home teaching instructions were frequently sunk in the Mediterranean.

'So it used to end up just with reading. As a system of education it leaves a lot to be desired — as a background for a writer it was perfect.' An only child, with no one to play with, she read and read and has gone on doing that ever since.

Boarding school in England was a miserable experience. But reading history at Oxford was very different; she loved it. 'I didn't realise at the time the sort of effect it was having on me. I wasn't a particularly good student of history — wasn't aroused by it at that point, but obviously something very curious happened because what I did during those three years has utterly changed the way I've thought about things ever since. It certainly turned me into a writer in the sense that it bred a kind of lasting interest in and concern with not so much history but the operation of memory, what people do with the past and the uses and abuses that people make of the past, and the ways in which memory functions.'

The exploration of these ideas in novels for children and adults was part of the future. 'I came out of university without any proper sense of the reality of the past' — all that came much later. It was a gradual unfolding over years which included marriage to Jack, two children, living in a sixteenth-century house in an Oxfordshire village, getting in touch with the landscape and the past beneath it, and putting down roots — most important for her she thinks because of the years spent abroad.

Then with the children, 9 and 13, 'clearly it was time to get going again.' Teaching seemed the obvious thing so it was back to reading history. 'The more I read, the more I realised that what history had to do with me wasn't going to be anything to do with teaching it. It was to do with some very odd personal response. In a very muddled way I



thought there might be something I could write that would help me to sort that out. I started writing for children out of a kind of humility. It didn't seem to me that anything I had to say about the operation of memory could be of interest to people who knew more about it than I did.'

'In the first place I suppose I was doing it for me — that's probably quite the wrong thing.' The early books look 'wrong' to her now — 'hamhanded'. 'But I'll say this for them, they tell a good story.' In the early books (*Astercote*, *The Whispering Knights*), 'I was learning how to do it. It takes a long time to learn — the learning is the doing.'



The date on a beam in the kitchen at Duck End says 1628. Penelope Lively vows not to become attached to this house as she did to her first which was painful to leave. 'I've only just recently been able to go back to see it without feeling distressed.'

The house sits on the side of the hill and at the back, beyond the lawn and a thick yew hedge, the garden falls in steps down to the stream. Here too is the vegetable garden, a fairly recent obsession and the source of great satisfaction and pleasure.

Penelope Lively works in the room off the kitchen. The deep window recesses are filled with plants — she likes growing things — and her collection of Victorian samplers hangs on the walls. Beside the typewriter are

the exercise books which contain all her notes for the current novel. The Snoopy card was 'a lovely surprise' — it arrived recently signed by 25 children and simply said 'Happy Birthday — we enjoyed reading Thomas Kempe.'



## What sort of a person is Penelope Lively?

She likes talking to people, being with friends, walking but not travelling (this year's new year resolution was 'Must travel more'), exploring London ('There's a London book coming soon I think'), listening to music ('I'm musically illiterate but have very musical children who are patient with me'), reading and writing. 'I'm



not happy if I'm not writing. I can't conceive of not doing it.' She hates 'waiting for reviews' and 'going in aeroplanes'. If you gave her thousands of pounds, 'I would hire a van, go to Blackwells in Oxford, park on the double yellow lines outside and spend an afternoon choosing books and having them loaded up — that would be lovely.'

Penelope Lively's books are published in hardback by Heinemann and in paperback by Piccolo.

All photographs by Richard Mewton.



## A sense of time

## A sense of place

## A sense of humour

Three aspects of all Penelope Lively's novels for adults and children. How does she define them?

### Time

'The notion that there are points in time at which people are fossilized as themselves at any particular age seems to me both dangerous and ludicrous. We all carry within us all the ages that we have been and all the ages that we may yet become. Nobody is frozen at any point in time. I hoped to suggest this to children.'

In Penelope Lively's novels the past comes to meet the present: Thomas Kempe, a seventeenth-century sorcerer/apothecary reacts to the twentieth century. 'I don't like stories where they go bumping people back into the past. What is the point unless it's going to enlarge commentary on the present in some way. That kind of excursion seems to me pointless.'

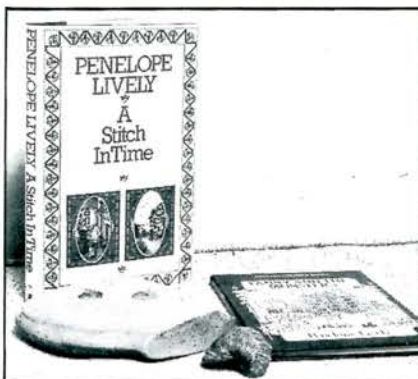
### Place

'It's a difficult thing to define. It's a sense of being enlarged, inspired by and dependent on a physical place — it doesn't have to be beautiful. Some places have a "charge" — I don't mean anything to do with ley lines. If I know about the history of a place, something in me responds to it and the place responds back — it gives me something. It's faintly mystical but rational too.'

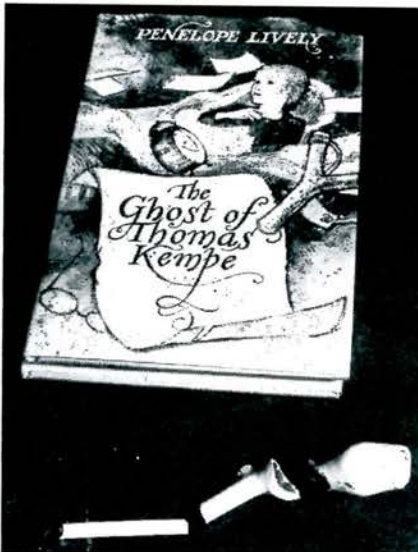
Penelope Lively's places are usually those she has known well — her grandmother's house in Somerset (*Going Back*), Exmoor (*The Wild Hunt of Hagworthy*), the B4525 (*The Driftway*) — but not always.

'I fell onto Lyme Regis by mistake. I was so taken with it, I knew I was going to set a book there. I had to work out what the book was going to be.' The place, Victorian samplers, Charles Darwin and fossils all came together in *A Stitch in Time*.

a different August. And she sat thinking about someone else (a girl, I'm somehow sure she was a girl...) who had held the same book just about a hundred years ago.' *A Stitch in Time* (winner of the Whitbread Award).



The fossils were collected by Penelope Lively at Lyme Regis.



A clay pipe and a pair of ancient spectacles, dug up in James's garden, link him even more closely to the ghost in *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe* (Carnegie Medal winner 1973). This clay pipe was dug up in Penelope Lively's garden.

### Humour

'I like the proposition of the impossible, that kind of dottiness. The book I'm working on at the moment is like that. It's about a housing estate built on the site of an eighteenth-century picturesque landscape with a park and house — it's a Stourhead kind of place. It's been destroyed for ages, the house has burned down, the landscape has vanished. Then it starts coming up again through the estate, growing up through it owing to the machinations of the landscape gardener (a kind of Humphrey Repton figure). I'm having a lot of fun with greenhouses that turn into classical temples. It's considerably wilder than *Thomas Kempe*. I hope it's going to be funny.'

She also enjoys satire — 'but there's a way in which you can be more consciously satirical in an adult novel. You can be sharper, crueller, the claws can be put out a bit further. I suppose *QV66* is the nearest I've come to satire in a children's book.'

### The Voyage of QV66

'I felt I'd written a lot in a short time. I was worried that perhaps I might be beginning to write the same book again and again. I'm not entirely sure now that that's a bad thing. Some people always write the same

book; they just do it better and better. But I wanted to do something utterly different. Writing about animals is a splendid way of writing about people. Why not have a go?'

There was a memory of a barge seen on the Thames in London. 'I remember thinking for no reason at all, if you wanted to you could get a cow and a horse on that. It didn't occur to me that that might be of any significance but when I started looking for the book, as it were, the whole thing drifted back into my head.'

'The book was a chance to have a bit of fun in all sorts of directions — Stanley is the archetypal child, Freda the archetypal parent — the fun is at the expense of both. Stanley is every little boy I've ever known — every person even. He's supposed to incorporate all human virtues and vices. There's a lot of me in Stanley. I got much involved with him.'

Her son Adam also got involved with the book. Every day after school he wanted a progress report. 'At one stage he said, "There's something missing — it needs another character." What character? "A parrot." And so the Major was created and the book was dedicated to Adam.'

What about the end? 'I knew it was going to end in the zoo but I wasn't quite sure how. So I went to London Zoo on a March day to watch monkeys — an afternoon of seeing what they all did just wrote the last chapter.' The crew of QV66 sailed off down the Thames because 'I imagined there might be a sequel but it has never come off. I've started writing it but I can't get it off the ground.'



Penelope Lively has published two novels, *The Road to Lichfield* and *Treasures of Time*, and a volume of short stories for adults. 'I needed a change. I'm a restless writer — I like to move around from one kind of thing to another.' She doesn't see writing for adults as a progression from writing for children. 'People underestimate children massively. The kind of things I wanted to explore in *The Road to Lichfield* would not necessarily be difficult for children — but rather mysterious without being intriguingly mysterious. The more I thought, the more I realised this was going to be an adult novel.'

She is fascinated by the short story as a form and sees many connections with children's books. She is also pleased when reviewers of her adult novels refer to the books for children.

Penelope Lively meets her public, children and adults, quite often. 'They always ask, "Where do your ideas come from?"' What I've seen and heard, how people behave, how I behave myself, from books. Children see this as cheating. It's difficult to explain. Constant reading is absolutely essential — a roaming around kind of reading. When you're working on an idea for a book, there's a wonderful sense that everything you see or hear will be in some eerie way relevant to it, suddenly give you further ideas, and everything that you read will feed it in some way.' ●



The Rollright stones — one of the sources of *The Whispering Knights*. The stones' powers help to protect the village from the evil accidentally aroused by three children's amateur witchcraft.

'One fossil remained to be identified... just a hint of patterning on a lump of the blue rock that at first glance appeared to be nothing in particular. What I need, she thought, is a book.'

'Stomechinus bigranularis,' said the writing, 'an extinct form of sea urchin. Found below the west cliff 3rd August 1865.' And it's August now, thought Maria,



Does what happens in the classroom affect what happens in the library and the bookshop?

Are we sabotaging our own efforts to create enthusiastic readers?

Patrick Creber asks:

## What do school books mean?

A class of eight-year-olds was on a nature walk through a rather marshy wood. One boy bent down but was suddenly restrained by his companion: 'Don't pick up that frog, or you'll have to write about it.'

A lot has been written about the kind of learning implied by that story, that what a pupil learns from a teacher may be *more* as well as less than the teacher thinks. What has received less attention is what pupils 'learn' about the meanings teachers appear to attach to particular *activities* or *materials*. What, for instance, is the 'hidden curriculum' of reading and books? What sorts of messages about what reading means, about what books are for are we transmitting to children in schools? For the teacher who 'believes in books' and in the pleasures of reading and who is trying to develop this in children, it is important to know what he is up against. All his efforts may be defeated by the effect on his pupils of all the other reading they have to do through their school careers. Perhaps even 'the believers' are frustrating their own efforts by presenting conflicting views of what reading is.

To give just three examples. In the early years the pressure to learn to read, whether it be real or imagined, whether it originates at home or at school, produces a great deal of anxiety. To the less successful reader the classroom can appear full of kids who can read better than he can. This is bound to obscure what reading really means and alter the child's feeling for books. In the junior school there is a tendency to use reading books to fill in odd moments so that books are seen as 'what you use for the few moments before playtime to keep you quiet'.



Can schools learn from how children read at home? Photograph by Keith Hawkins from **A Puffin Reading Chart**. Available from Children's Marketing Dept., Penguin Books for 25p.

At secondary level, the Schools Council Report **The Effective Use of Reading** showed that about half of all reading across the whole curriculum consisted of short bursts of perhaps thirty seconds or less, and in addition that this practice was actually used by some people as a control mechanism — 'keeping kids on their toes'.

Experiences like these can all too often conspire to rob children of the zest, confidence and 'reading appetite' which we seek to promote through class libraries, school bookshops and the like.

Other things we do may equally encourage children to have a very narrow view of what reading means. Comprehension activities where chunks of text always have questions attached to them inevitably condition response and restrict it. The child 'learns' that when reading he is under an *obligation to understand*; he learns that a good pupil is one who is able to find a particular kind of meaning from a text, get the 'right' answers phrased in the 'right' way. In this



situation and sometimes in our teaching too, perhaps, we appear to children as intolerant of ambiguity. Whenever we are particularly intent on 'putting things over' we more easily become impatient with whatever is not clear. Yet ambiguity is something not merely to be tolerated if thinking and responding is to occur — it needs to be welcomed and harnessed to win genuine personal response. If we think about our own experience as readers we realise that as we have learned to mull over books we have often been intrigued or stimulated by ambiguity, nor merely irritated by it.

But that is not all. To an obligation to understand we can add the additional burden of an *obligation to feel*. In Victorian books for children the text clearly told the reader how he should think and feel about what he was reading. The child reader nowadays is subjected to a similar process in ways which are less obvious. The most common of these is where the teacher chooses to read or recommend one of his 'favourites' to the class. Such presentation invites acceptance from the compliant or eager to please, and either dumb or vocal resistance from the disenchanted. Either response is determined more by the pupils' feelings about the *teacher* and the *teacher's relation with the book* than by their response to the book itself.

It is clearly necessary for adult and child to be able to share enthusiasm; but this has to be done in a way which does not imply that if the child remains uninfected he has somehow failed. The purpose of the enthusiasm is to help the child meet the book. If the teacher's personal feeling for the book is brandished in the wrong way this comes between the child and the book.

I referred earlier to the Schools Council Report **The Effective Use of Reading**. The most important idea of this, it seems to me, is the suggestion that success in reading, or effective reading, occurs when the conditions make it possible for the child to 'have a conversation with the text'. The research team also singled out 'willingness to reflect' as the most crucial factor in determining effective reading performance. We who are concerned to promote children's feeling for books must search for conditions in which these attitudes can be fostered and must be alert for conditions and activities which militate against them. At present, children's experience of reading in school often leaves them with low reading morale and a cramped conception of what reading means; ill-equipped to respond, understand in the ways we might hope for.

As committed readers we might also consider our own ways with books and reading, and ask ourselves how close a match there is between these and what we ask of and offer children in their contact with books in school. ●

**The Effective Use of Reading**, edited by E. Lunzer and K. Gardner, Heinemann Educational, £4.50 paperback.

Paddy Creber is Senior Lecturer in the School of Education, University of Exeter. Author of *Sense and Sensitivity* (University of London Press — now out of print) and *Lost for Words* (Penguin), he has taught in schools and lectured widely in this country, the USA and Canada. He is also a parent.



# BE OUR GUEST...

We're often told that the junior schools are doing a grand job but few English teachers at secondary level find their first-year intake consists largely of enthusiastically committed readers, whatever peculiar impressions Schools Council surveys might engender. Poor staffing and inadequate capitation play their part but excessive reliance on reading schemes and a very destructive emphasis on non-fiction can be just as pernicious. Secondary schools are frequently left to 'create' readers at an age when increasing social independence makes it less and less likely that kids will curl up in bed with a book.

Unfortunately, the books required to achieve this end have been in short supply. Most general publishers show little interest in the majority of adolescent readers — witness the **Peacock** fiasco, the limited appeal of Bodley Head's **New Adult** list, Heinemann's hot-cold attitude to paperback editions of **Pyramids** — and have made no concerted attempt to create a sizeable U.K. market for teenage fiction. The educational publishers, seeing the gap, have provided most of the books which are useful in these circumstances; **Topliners** (Macmillan) were followed by **Getaways** (Nelson) and then **Knockouts** (Longmans).

Till recently, though, it's not been easy to boost many kids' reading ability to the stage where they can whip through such books with ease, for the aim at this level must be to generate a voracious appetite for books — quantity is the important factor. But the last eighteen months have seen the arrival of two important new series which lead up to the 'reluctant reader' imprints quite neatly: **Bestellers** (John Murray) and **Action Library** (Scholastic). Developed with American money, their impact has been enhanced by weight of numbers — thirty titles from **Bestellers** and around eighty from Scholastic, counting the longer, more difficult **Double Action** books. Moreover, they're complementary. Use **Bestellers**, with their adult characters and broad canvas Adventure stories, for 11 to 12-year-olds, alongside the better British 'remedial' series — **Spirals** (see later), **Checkers** (Evans), **Hipsters** (Benn). The **Action** books are distinctly teenage in appeal, with their usefulness really beginning amongst the 12+ group.

Original stories, written to specification, these series have fewer restrictions than Hutchinson's

A Golden Age of Children's Literature? Perhaps. But, for most teenagers, Mayne, Lively and Southall might just as well be Thackeray, Trollope and Dickens. So what do you offer those who aren't even nibbling, let alone hooked? Steve Bowles takes a quick gallop around the series produced for those readers who prove to be anything but reluctant when given the right book at the right level, and asks where next?



Steve Bowles outside his home in Dagenham.

abridgements in **Bullseyes** (though famous titles help with some kids) even if they can't achieve the individuality of traditional paperback imprints. **Bestellers** are more conveniently sized and, at 65p, considerably cheaper than **Action** books (95p) but the covers and illustrations in Scholastic's series (mostly photos, some unfortunately a little dated) are well worth the extra. Neither series is quite as easy as the publishers suggest but they're well within the range of all but the weakest secondary school kids and essential for any self-respecting class library system.

**Spirals** (Hutchinson) is easily the best British series and they're amongst the cheapest 'remedial' books available (50p) because they've wisely eschewed illustrations. Even better, there's little trace of the wholesome, often didactic tone which mars most books for slow readers. The ghost/horror/sci-fi stories by Anita Jackson are so well done that they appeal to almost everyone regardless of age or reading ability. (Try *The Ear*, *The Austin Seven* and *A Game of Life or Death*.) And they link well with Jan Carew's excellent short stories in *Save the Last Dance for Me* and more recent novella *The Cat People* in **Knockouts**.

Lack of suitable material has unfortunately restricted **Spirals'** growth (two new titles just out!) but **Knockouts**, with a wider brief, can't blame their patchy standard on similar difficulties. Leaving aside their poor design, you must still say 'Could do much better' when you examine their titles. The short stories are best — Janet Green's three **Six** books and *Love at a Bus Stop*, Joan Tate's *See You* and John Griffin's *Behind the Goal* (though Notts Forest's 77/78 season seems ages ago now) plus

George Layton's read-aloud for younger kids, *The Balacava Story*. Some other titles go with a bit of help (Joan Tate, Margaret Loxton, Geraldine Kaye) but it's a case of a limited success here and there rather than the inspiration of large scale enthusiasm. Ditto for **Getaways** (Nelson). They might look better than **Knockouts** but, beyond some short story collections (possibles for class use) and the splendid little romance *Jodie* (Mary Hooper) which shouldn't be missed, they don't offer much of real use. In conjunction with **Topliners**, though, it's usually possible to keep most kids ticking over.

But how do they develop the stamina and linguistic experience needed to move into the more varied, more demanding, more rewarding mainstream fiction? Well, in general, they don't. Recently Rosemary Sandberg, **Fontana Lions'** editor, described how she was 'appalled lest older children were sticking with Mr Fleming and Mr Maclean, lest lasting stories did not have a place at that moment in their lives.' (**Teenage Reading**, Ward Lock, edited by Peter Kennerley.) But there are few signs of serious and accessible teenage fiction becoming available in bulk. Despite one or two excellent titles (e.g. *The Doubting Kind* — Alison Prince) Macmillan have bungled **Topliner Redstars**, and **Peacocks** have probably been discredited for ever with booksellers; a new identity is needed for Penguin's popular teenage stuff. Some 'bridging' books do appear (e.g. *Lions* have Hinton, Zindel and Dhondy) and we could make more use of things from the adult lists — obvious examples are the Pan/Fontana **Horror Stories**, Arrow's **Scully** (Bleasdale) and *For the Love of Ann* (Copeland and Hodges), Corgi's anonymous *Go Ask Alice* plus, culled from teenage hardbacks, Judy Blume's *Forever . . .* and Lynne Reid Banks' *My Darling Villain*, both Star; we'd inevitably find more if we read widely enough. (Chris Kloet's A-Z in **Teenage Reading** is a big help; ask the library for it.) Even lists like *Piccolo* (Judy Blume), *Magnet* (Anne Fine), *Hippo* (Betsy Byars) and *Puffin* (Beverly Cleary's evergreen **Fifteen**, Joan Lingard and Lucy Rees) can offer the odd life-belt. But as yet this represents only a fraction of the hardback publishers' generally dreary output. Unless there's a revolution in those cobwebbed bastions of Tradition, it looks like we'll have to wait till the Americans move in to save us yet again. ●



# VIKINGS!

**Beverley Mathias offers some advice on how to cope with a Viking invasion.**

Any major exhibition offers the prospect of teaching a subject in a way that's interesting, informative, non-boring and creative. But without the resources of the British Museum it also offers the prospect of considerable frustration. The Vikings exhibition is going to cause ulcers and sick headaches all over the country. How do you, the teacher or librarian, cope? How do you stretch the use of the limited material available so that the children are encouraged to work, to be creative, to do research and to be accurate in what they do? Who can help?

The Schools Library Service in your local authority will have books — if there are enough to go around. The public library may have something left. The museum service may be able to help. Your local authority may have a resource centre; but that too will be coping with the problem of supply and demand.

After these you fall back on your own resources. You cut out every article and picture from newspapers, magazines and colour supplements. Have you checked the fiction collection for material for an imaginative approach? Have you checked the myths and legends for stories of the Norsemen? Could your local bookseller provide a couple of useful inexpensive titles to supplement what you have without breaking the budget?

Some suggestions to help you on your way. Age range generally 10-12 but includes material for younger children and for teacher's reference.

## FICTION

- Ruth M. Arthur**  
● **On the Wasteland**  
Gollancz, 1975,  
0 575 02038 5, £2.40  
The story of a girl who finds the remains of a Viking ship, and then becomes involved in dream-like sequences involving the long vanished Viking settlement.

- Tim Goodwin**  
● **The Silver Hoard**  
Blackie, 1980,  
0 216 90874 4, £3.95  
Set in Denmark during the Viking period, this is the story of the treasure of Hedeby.

- Rosemary Sutcliff**  
● **Blood Feud**  
Oxford University Press, 1976, 0 192 71392 2, £3.50  
Puffin, 1978,  
0 14 03.1085 1, 60p  
An English boy becomes the slave of a Viking and returns with him to become unwillingly involved in a blood feud.

- Robert Swindells**  
● **Voyage to Valhalla**  
Hodder and Stoughton, 1976, 0 340 20695 0, £3.50  
A time fantasy concerning a boy of the present who has visions of a Viking past.

- Henry Treece**  
● **Swords from the North**  
Faber, 1967,  
0 571 08136 3, £2.25  
Puffin, 1979,  
0 14 03.1138 6, 75p  
In 1066 Harald the Stern landed in England. This is his story for the years 1034 to 1044 and is based on the Sagas of the Norse Kings.

- Henry Treece**  
● **Viking's Dawn**  
Puffin, 1967,  
0 14 03.0320 0, 60p  
● **The Road to Miklagard**  
Puffin, 1967,  
0 14 03.0321 9, 95p  
● **Viking's Sunset**  
Puffin, 1967,  
0 14 03.0322 7, 40p

Bev Mathias in the Children's Reference Library at the NBL.



- Henry Treece**  
● **Vinland the Good**  
Puffin, 1971, 0 14 03.0475 0 14 03.0475 4, 50p  
Based on the Greenland Saga and Erik's Saga, this is a collection of loosely connected stories.

## NON-FICTION

- J. R. L. Anderson**  
● **The Vikings**  
Kestrel, 1974,  
0 582 15379 4, £1.30  
One of the Explorer titles. Well illustrated with a clearly read text. This doesn't play down the warring nature of the Vikings, and also gives details of daily life, agriculture, food provision, and wood skills.

- Holger Arbman**  
● **The Vikings**  
Thames and Hudson, 1961,  
0 500 02018 3, £7.50  
An overall survey of the Viking period based on historical and archaeological research. Clearly divided into geographic areas of study. A valuable reference tool for the teacher.

- S. C. George**  
● **The Vikings**  
David and Charles, 1973,  
0 715 36297 6, £2.75  
Indexed and illustrated with good detail of the type to appeal to the children. It gives dimensions of Viking ships, shows maps of journeys, and layout of settlements. Major archaeological studies are covered and evidence and surmise offered as a basis for discussion.

- Michael Gibson**  
● **The Vikings**  
Macdonald Education, 1976, 0 356 05109 9, £2.75  
Divided into well-illustrated sections, each one giving details of one aspect of Viking life. It includes what children did each day which would make it a good study programme for younger children. Also includes a date line of important events.

**Stig Hadenius and Birgit Janrup**

- **How They Lived in a Viking Settlement**  
Lutterworth Press, 1976,  
0 718 82199 8, £1.50  
A simple text written in story fashion incorporating daily life, games and sport, shipping and war. It gives a brief description of the origin of the Vikings, their major journeys and also includes a map. Very useful for younger children.

- Sylvie Nichol**  
● **The Vikings**  
Jackdaw No. 133, 1976,  
0 305 62073 8, £1.50  
As with others in this series, this is a collection of broadsheets for use as information sources and to promote general enthusiasm for the topic. The cover sheet includes a bibliography.

- Amanda Purves**  
● **Growing Up with the Vikings**  
Wayland, 1978,  
0 85 340544 1, £3.25  
This is laid out as a glossary. Each term is given a full explanation plus an illustration. It covers a wide range of subjects within the general topic, including gods, entertainment, family and seafaring. Very good for use with less skilled readers.

- R. J. Unstead**  
● **From Cavemen to Vikings**  
A. & C. Black, 1974,  
0 7136 1416 1, Hb, £2.50  
0 7136 1420 X, Pb, £1.25  
This is one of a well-known series. Only Chapter 8 is directly applicable, but the whole book is useful for helping to place the Vikings within the perspective of English history.

- David M. Wilson**  
● **The Vikings and Their Origins**  
Thames and Hudson, 1970,  
0 500 29014 8, £1.50  
Very informative, profusely illustrated, indexed. It is written at adult level and would be valuable as a reference source for teachers.

Prices were current and all books in print when compiled (March 1980).



The official publication for the British Museum exhibition is:

**Helen Clarke**

● **A Closer Look at Vikings**

**Hamish Hamilton in association with the British Museum, 1979,**

**0 241 10119 0, £2.25**

This is part of an existing series of books. It is laid out in sections which may relate to the layout of the exhibition. There is a brief index at the end.

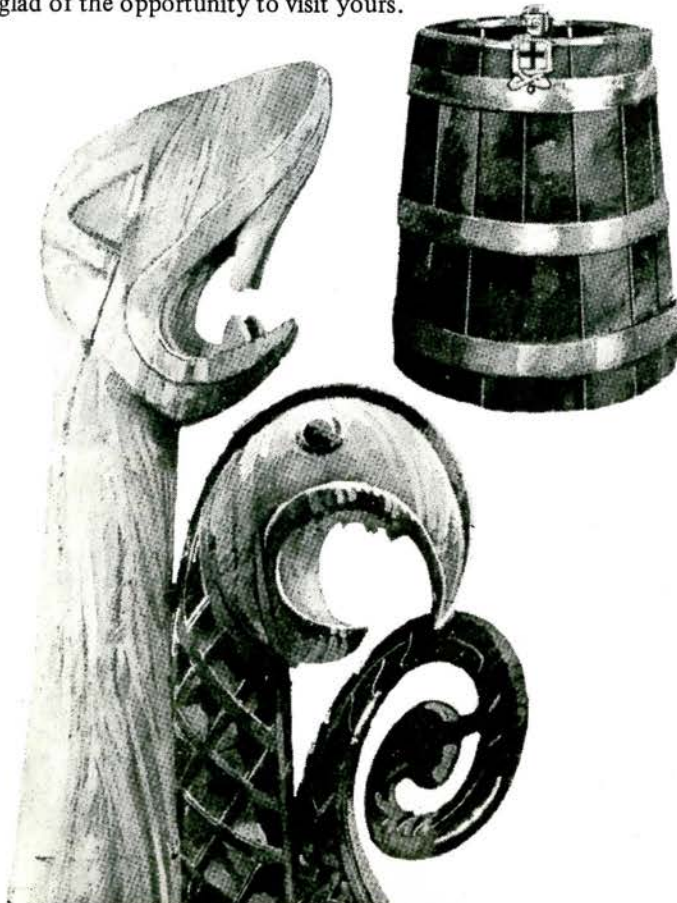


So you have a few books and 35 eager children; but you can't go to the exhibition because it's too far away; it costs too much; there is no money left for school trips.

**Why not bring the exhibition to the school?**

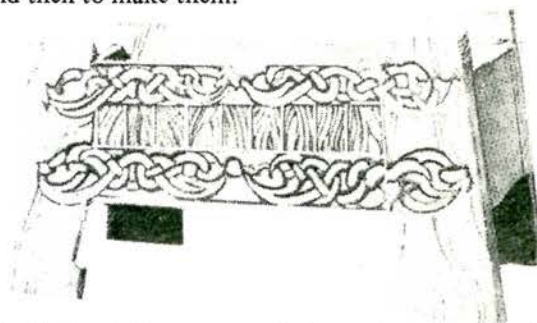
Now, don't get too excited, the British Museum is not going to dismantle the entire thing and ship it to wherever you happen to be! But why not build your own? Don't discount the idea if you *are* able to take the children to the exhibition; it can still be fun to do-it-yourself.

You can make maximum use of the limited amount of material available in the school, involve the maximum number of pupils, and have a minimum amount of duplicated work. Even the infants can become involved. It sounds like a major upheaval but it need not be. Work can be done in individual classrooms to a pre-organised programme and prepared for a predetermined exhibition opening date. If the school gets really enthusiastic, you may be able to hold a Viking Day and invite the parents and local community in to take part. The children have a lot of fun and learn in a way that will probably stay with them, and you have something which becomes a community event. After all, there may be others in your area who can't go to the exhibition in London either, and they may be glad of the opportunity to visit yours.



**How do you do it?**

Among the books listed are many with clear illustrations of the type of everyday equipment used by the Vikings. Art groups can make pots and containers out of clay, the wood-work enthusiasts can do some carving. Those interested in large-scale work can make a Viking ship out of cardboard and paint it. Boys always enjoy the warring aspect of the Vikings so set them to work to check on the weapons used, and then to make them.



Teach the infants some of the outdoor games played by Viking children and have them dress in Viking clothes for the special day.

Make a model village, model longships, a landscape out of the sand tray, anything that can be backed up with evidence to prove that it existed at the time.

Jewellery can be made from fine wire and the beads the infants use. Older children with creative abilities will enjoy doing this.

The children who can draw and paint might decorate the school with runic stones and put inscriptions on the doors.

The older children might like to use a map of Britain to track down places whose names have a Viking origin. They might like to plot the various Viking settlements on the map. They could use a dictionary to find words which have a Viking origin.

Do a broadsheet giving daily news of your Viking village, write stories, poems, plays, give a performance on the Viking Day.

The more the whole school becomes involved, the more the children will willingly seek information, as the whole learning process becomes one of enjoyment. Books become something really useful and not just something to look at because the work must be done.

Sceptics may ask what happens to the normal lessons and the disrupted curriculum. So the children don't have formal lessons, but in order to do the research they must be able to measure, to design, use craft materials, count, and organise material. Their reading skill will be taxed by unfamiliar words, and their general skills in dissemination of information will develop far more rapidly than you might have believed possible.

This sort of activity is perhaps most easily set up in the primary school; but it should also work well in the first two years of the secondary school particularly where subjects are integrated.

Through all of this, the books remain the key but do not overwhelm the work itself. By showing that books can be used as a basis for an enjoyable cycle of study, perhaps the children will become a little less apprehensive about using them. If by having one major programme in the school which involves most of the staff and the children you have also encouraged those children to use the library and the classroom collection of books, then the whole exercise will have been worthwhile. Too often we tend to regard books as being something you read and make notes from, not something to be enjoyed and from which a great deal of pleasure can emanate.

Try something. Start with the 'Vikings' and see what happens next. ●



# HOW TO... TURN A BOOKSHOP INTO A BRIDGE

We all know that books are magic; but we can work a little magic with bookshops too.

Parental involvement and, now, parental participation are widely discussed ideas. They are both easier to talk about than achieve. A school bookshop can provide a genuine meeting point for home and school as The Bookworm's Hideout at Oakdale County Primary School in Peterborough shows.

The school, in the outskirts of Peterborough, serves an estate of private housing built between 1960 and 1975. It has 167 children (infant and junior) on roll. The Bookworm's Hideout opened in April 1979.

We asked Dot Byron-Evans, a teacher, and Anne Barber, a parent, to tell us how it works.



In any school bookselling project, the parent provides both the child who is the bookshop's potential customer and the cash, which is the bookshop's purchasing power. The enthusiasm or otherwise with which a book purchase is made will be determined by three vital factors involving the parent. First the way the parent reacts to the bookshop's sales policy, secondly the way in which the child greets the parent with the book purchased, and thirdly the way the parent receives the child with the purchased book. Hence the school bookshop needs a continuous public relations exercise, not only with the children but also their parents. It is essential to have parents on an organising committee, and to involve them in the week by week running of the bookshop. Generally, parents have more informal and frequent contact with other parents of children in the school than the teachers do, and are thus able to encourage interest in the bookshop activities and reply to any queries from other parents.

The role of our bookshop committee, consisting of both parents and teachers, is to promote not primarily the sale of books but the pleasure, satisfaction and practical information which can be derived from books. Not every child will be attracted to every kind of book, so a wide spectrum of titles is required in the bookshop stock. Once the children are drawn to the books on the shelves and parental cooperation is gained, the books will sell themselves.

Committee members at browsing and selling sessions are responsible for ensuring that books selected by a child match not only his pocket but also his personality and reading performance. With a little guidance, middle juniors and upwards are mostly capable of choosing wisely for themselves, but within the infant/lower junior age range we must aim to ensure that the book sold to a particular child is suitable in theme, readability, vocabulary, size of print, ratio of illustrations to print, and style of illustrations and print. To achieve this we must know our children and know our books in stock.



Kate, the 'Book Lady,' rumoured also to be a lollipop lady in her spare time!

We get to know the books by reading them. There are shortcomings in reviewing bookshop titles in this way — our reviews are necessarily subjective, and we tend to assess the book's appeal to children by the reaction of children best known to us. Where several longer novels by the same author are on the shelves, we may read them all or perhaps only one or two thoroughly, then browse through the others. It is useful to compare other people's reviews with your own by talking to them and by reading reviews in journals and magazines. I have learned to beware of publishers' blurbs.

Oakdale is a small school so getting to know our children and their literary likes and dislikes as their reading skills develop is not a daunting task. The teachers on the committee know the pupils in their teaching situation and the five parent members all help in school regularly, quite apart from their school bookshop interests, and so become well acquainted with our 'book worms'.

Anne Barber



When it opened 10 years ago the school was the social focal point of the new estate and, because of this, has a very vigorous parent association and a strong tradition of many-sided parental involvement within normal school activities — craft, library, infant water play, cooking, etc. In a sense, therefore, parental involvement in the



The Bookworm Hideout.

running of a bookshop seemed very natural — and as the Parents' Association was financing the whole scheme it also seemed a very good idea!

In consultation with the headmaster, Mr Ron Holgate, it was decided to have a bookshop committee with parent and teacher membership. Mr Holgate envisaged that this would create a new style of parental involvement in the school:

'I particularly welcome the involvement of parents in the bookshop because it allows the school to stretch "parental help" into the difficult but more rewarding area of "parent participation". If we take participation to mean cooperation in the making of decisions in the pursuit of a



common purpose, then the parent members of the bookshop committee are in the truest sense of the word participants. They are in effect being offered the opportunity to be architects in an aspect of the children's school-based education. A secondary, but no less valuable benefit is that the very necessary but often laborious and time-consuming routine administration can be done by parents, allowing the teachers freedom to evolve and develop the educational and creative ethos of the bookshop.

At our first committee meeting we planned our opening week and drafted our initial letter. The teachers were involved mainly in placing the orders for the books and the parents in organising the stock-control and selling once the books arrived. This pattern has remained constant but we have plans to involve other members of staff and other parents in ordering and reviewing books in the near future. Apart from actual committee members about 20 other mums helped out during opening week. Our committee now consists of 5 parents and 3 teachers.

Parental involvement in the bookshop has grown tremendously since this time. As the bookshop grew parents have taken over various absolutely vital aspects of its expansion, for instance the selling of savings stamps. Every Tuesday the same parent committee member goes round the infant classes to do this — the children call her 'The Book Lady'. Her expertise is such that every bottom and middle infant child can find its own card from the filing system! Each Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday during morning playtime we sell stamps to the juniors and, because of the complications of playground duties, this rota is basically parent-run.

On the stock-control and finance side, our treasurer (a parent) puts new books into our card index scheme. She is also usually present during a selling session. All the parents on the committee help at selling sessions.

As the bookshop has grown, so has wider parental commitment to it — and I feel that this is due largely to the magnificent and constant public relations exercise the parent committee members sustain throughout the school year. In our first year of operation we have weathered three price rises and a falling roll. Indeed, to stay just as we are, with the decrease in numbers, we have to keep improving — and the fact that we have actually expanded our operation says much for the value of parental involvement in this venture.

Dot Byron-Evans



# Blueprint for SUCCESS

In primary schools, gaining the support of parents is (from the evidence of Oakdale and a lot of other school bookshops) an essential factor in determining success. In secondary schools it can be a useful bonus.

## How do you get it?

### Keep parents informed and involved

1. Tell them in advance why you want to start a bookshop and how it will run.
2. Invite them to help in the planning and running of it.
3. Recruit a small group of enthusiastic parents who will act as good ambassadors for the bookshop.
4. Provide an opportunity for parents to see the books, ask questions, contribute ideas and comments.
5. Run a savings scheme — it helps to make buying as painless as possible and keeps the bookshop in mind between purchases.
6. Where parents of younger children can't be present at selling times, send home a note with details of the book they want to buy, its price, their current credit on the savings scheme, for approval.
7. Make the bookshop a source of information. Display and/or have for sale books for parents, magazines about children and books. Put up cuttings from newspapers and magazines about schools, children, parents and books.
8. Put on an event or exhibition specially for parents. Why not hire an exhibition from the National Book League? There are four called **Reading for Enjoyment**. Each one consists of books chosen for a particular age range. Choose from 2-5 (selected by Elaine Moss), 6-8 (Joan and Alan Tucker), 8-11 (Janet Hill) and 11+ (Aidan Chambers). A good selection to get people talking is **Humorous Books for Children** — only just revised and updated.

Each exhibition includes about 100 books. Annotated lists of the books in each exhibition are available for sale. Have some of the books in the exhibition available in the bookshop so they can be bought on the spot — and stand by to take orders.

These exhibitions cost £14.50 (£10.50 to members of the NBL) each to hire. (Warning: these charges may be going up later this year.)

Details from the NBL (address on page 2).

**A combination of all or some of these points should make for good bridge building. Let us know what happens in your school.**

## In July's Books for Keeps

**How to . . . Get ready for Children's Book Week  
Blueprint for a visit from an author**



The first letter home about the bookshop is all important. We think something like this (adapted from the one sent out by the bookshop committee of Oakdale School) should do the trick.

Dear Parents,

As you may have heard from the children we are planning to open a bookshop at the end of this term on the school premises. The Parents' Association is financing this, a group of teachers and parents is running it and there are two main reasons for us deciding to do this:

- a) There are no bookshops for children in our area.
- b) With teachers and parents involved, it means that books can be fitted to individual children in the same way as shoes can be individually fitted to their feet.

We are very anxious that you should know as much as possible about the books we hope you will let your children buy and so during opening week, as well as organising special events for the children, we have arranged a wine and cheese evening so that you will be able to look at the stock of books before we begin selling to the children. This social evening will be on . . . and we enclose a ticket for you to come along. As well as looking at the books we hope you will enjoy listening to our guest speaker who is . . . There is also a quiz and prize and a raffle so come and pit your wits and try your luck! All of us who are running the bookshop will be happy to answer any questions about our plans, prices of books and savings schemes available either at the social evening or at any time before or after this event.

We include a list of activities planned for the children during our opening week and there is an open invitation for all parents to come into school on each day from 3.00 p.m. to meet our visitors. From 3.30-4.15 p.m. we will be serving tea and biscuits. We shall start selling the books to parents and children on the Friday.

Looking forward to seeing you

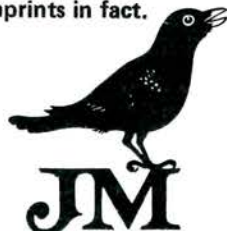


BOOKS FOR KEEPS

## NEWS

## New Faces

Well hardly new, but certainly familiar faces wearing new hats. Two new children's book imprints in fact.



## Julia MacRae Books

The cheerfully singing blackbird is the colophon of a new publishing venture led by Julia MacRae who for twelve years was editor and Managing Director of Hamish Hamilton Children's Books.

It was really the unusually seasonal snow last January which started it all. On New Years Day Julia fell off a toboggan and broke a leg. While convalescing she found herself with time to think and to face the realisation that her heart was not in the

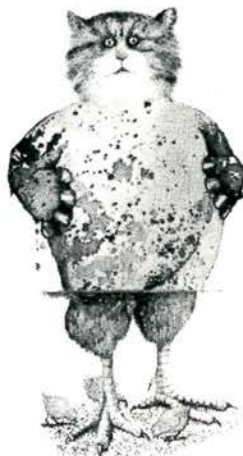
boardroom, it was with books. 'My sympathies were more with the authors than the balance sheets.'

The opportunity arose to start her own list as a division of Franklin Watts, the American publishing house, and the new imprint was born. Julia MacRae is now back doing what she likes best, what she did when she first came to this country in 1959 from working as a librarian in Australia and began the career that has earned her international respect and reputation as a children's editor. She is working with authors, developing the sort of personal involvement that makes her such a good editor. Our very good wishes to a publisher who stands for quality and integrity in children's books and clearly cares about both.

Two of the first batch of picture books from Julia MacRae are among Jill Bennett's pick of the picture books (see page 7).

## Methuen/Walker Books

A new partnership between these two publishers has produced a list which includes they say, 'very high quality, full-colour picture books, information books and novelty books at astonishingly competitive prices'.



Tomcoposter — Who? One of Methuen/Walker's *Crazy Creatures*.

The first batch of books just out at the end of April include *The Window Box Book* and *The Potted Plant Book* (from

*How Does Your Garden Grow?* series, £2.95 each) and *Know Your Dogs and Know Your Cats* (from *Animal Friends* series, £2.95 each). But it's the *Heads, Bodies and Legs* series which really looks like a winner. Helen Oxenbury has created three spiral-bound board books with each page cut into three. Arrange the strips to make your own *Crazy Creatures*, *Assorted Animals* or *Puzzle People* (£1.95 each, 18pp).

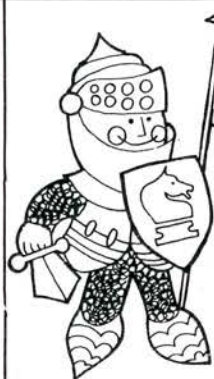
## Congratulations!

Spring is here and awards are popping up all over the place again.

★ **March: the Guardian Award for Children's Fiction (presented by the Guardian newspaper)**

The winner: Ann Schlee for *The Vandal* (Macmillan £4.50 0 333 26068 6)

Paul (the vandal) lives in a time — a recognisable not-too-distant future — where pain, guilt, curiosity, violence have all been eliminated by the removal of the ability to remember. Noone remembers anything for more than three days and a personal MEMORY machine retains all it decides you need to know. Paul is unsettled, uneasy, driven to vandalism by something within himself he doesn't understand but doesn't want to forget. 'A satisfyingly mysterious, provocative and



For the brightest and best in children's paperbacks...

**THE SWISH OF THE CURTAIN Pamela Brown**

Recently serialised on BBC TV, the classic story of a group of children who form their own repertory company is available again after some years out of print. 65p

**TIGER ADVENTURE Willard Price**

The latest, long-awaited bestseller in this highly popular series. Packed with adventure and fascinating animal information. 75p

**HELP! I AM A PRISONER IN A TOOTHPASTE FACTORY and THE BOY WITH ILLUMINATED MEASLES John Antrobus**

"Two splendid short, original and wildly funny stories" — *Books for Your Children*  
Ronnie's hilarious adventures will appeal to the 8+ age group and are also ideal for reading aloud to younger children. 65p each

**ATHLETICS Tom McNab**

An authoritative and invaluable handbook for tomorrow's champions and those who teach them, by a well-known name in the sports field and originator of the secondary school Five Star Award. Profusely illustrated with diagrams, charts and training programmes. 95p

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finally exultant novel for any thoughtful over-13.'

Runners up: Joan G. Robinson **Meg and Maxie** (Gollancz £3.25 0 575 02555 7)

'The shifting borders between love, jealousy, aggression and protectiveness in the feelings of a small girl for her baby brother are tackled with understatement and humour.' For under-10s.

Alison Morgan **Leaving Home** (Chatto and Windus £3.95 0 7011 2432 6)

'A sympathetic study for 9-12s of a small boy uprooted from his remote Welsh country home and set down in a clumsily well-intentioned suburban family.'

'All three tell grand stories. But like all first class books there's that bit more to them.'

(The quotations are from the judges' report.)

### ★ April: the first National Book Awards made by the Arts Council

A prize of £7,500 was awarded to each of the winning books in this year's categories – Fiction, Biography (including History) and Children's Literature. (Categories will change each year). Books considered were those published in 1979. The judge for the Children's Literature section was Sir John Betjeman.

The winner was: **The Animals of Farthing Wood** by Colin Dann, illustrated Jacqueline Tettmar (Heinemann £4.95 0 434 93430 5)

The arrival of the bulldozers causes the animals to join together in their flight and search for safety. Colin Dann's knowledge of and concern for the countryside is evident in this long (320 pp) saga of a fight for survival.

### ★ May: The Eleanor Farjeon Award will be presented to Dorothy Butler.

The award is made by the Children's Book Circle of the Publisher's Association – an informal group with over 100 members all working in the children's book departments of publishing firms – for distinguished services to children's books. The award was instituted in 1966 in honour of the children's writer Eleanor Farjeon who died that year. Recent winners have been Joy Whitby (from TV), Peter Kennerley (for his work with school bookshops) and Elaine Moss.

Dorothy Butler runs a specialist children's bookshop in Auckland, New Zealand. She also lectures and writes about children's books and reading. Her account of the role books played in the early years of her handicapped granddaughter **Cushla and her Books** (See Parents' Bookshelf, p. 28), published last year, is both moving and inspiring for all who 'believe in books'.

### Dual-language Picture Books

The Bodley Head is experimenting with producing some of its picture books with the text in two languages. The idea, which originates in Australia, is to make books available to children and parents for whom English is a second language. There are obviously technical problems – finding books with adequate space for a second text, getting a good translation – and the series is developing slowly because the size of the demand is not really known. So far there are six titles

available in this country and four languages have been used: Italian, Greek, Turkish and Gujarati.

The SBA is running a small project to see how these books are received. So far we are working with Greek and Gujarati speaking families. If you would like to be involved in a practical way and have good contacts with interested families, please contact Pat (address on inside front cover). We shall report our findings in **Books for Keeps** September issue which will have an emphasis on books for a multi-ethnic society.



Book House, Wandsworth – who could miss it?

### National Book League goes west . . . to Wandsworth

This month the NBL is moving from Albemarle Street off Piccadilly to its new home in Book House (County House as it used to be called for those who know the area). The NBL was created to promote books and reading on the widest possible scale – the move will give those who work there some much needed extra space in which to get on with the job.

As Children's Books Officer, Bev Mathias has plenty of ideas about how she can contribute to this (see Meet Beverley Mathias, page 6). If you're anywhere near Wandsworth, why not drop in for a chat? ●



**Now we  
can read in  
Greek...  
Gujarati...  
Italian...  
Turkish...**

The list of Bodley Head picture books available in two languages is growing, and more and more people are becoming interested in the idea of providing dual-language texts for the enjoyment of the children – and parents – of our multi-racial society. The titles now available are

**Adelaide Holl**

#### **The Rain Puddle**

Illustrated by Roger Duvoisin  
Greek/English, Italian/English  
370 30243 5, 370 302443 £3-25

**Chihiro Iwasaki**

#### **Momoko and the Pretty Bird**

Greek/English, Italian/English  
370 30113 7, 370 30112 9 £2-95

#### **Momoko's Birthday**

Greek/English, Italian/English  
370 30114 5, 370 30117 X £2-95

**Ezra Jack Keats**

#### **Hi, Cat!**

Greek/English, Italian/English  
370 30115 3, 370 30116 1 £2-95

#### **Peter's Chair**

Gujarati/English, Turkish/English  
370 30239 7, 370 30240 0 £3-50

#### **The Snowy Day**

Gujarati/English, Turkish/English  
370 30241 9, 370 30242 7 £3-50

**in books from The Bodley Head!**



# TOP 20

1. Grange Hill Rules O.K.?	Leeson	Lions
2. The Crazy Joke Book	Rogers	Beaver
3. The Worzel Gummidge Cookbook	Hall	Knight
4. I Like This Poem	Webb	Puffin
5. Star Trek: The Motion Picture	Roddenbury	Futura
6. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	Dahl	Puffin
7. Send Off For It	Gundrey	Beaver
8. Witches	Rawson	Usborne
9. Tarka the Otter	Williamson	Puffin
10. The Crack-a-Joke Book	—	Puffin
11. Young Spotter's Guides: Birds	—	Usborne
12. Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator	Dahl	Puffin
13. The Space Monster	—	Macdonald Educational
14. Charlotte's Web	White	Puffin
15. Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew meet Dracula	—	Armada
16. The Machine Gunners	Westall	Puffin
17. Burglar Bill	Ahlberg	Picture Lions
18. The Ghost of Thomas Kempe	Lively	Piccolo
19. Worzel Gummidge Again	Todd	Puffin
20. Prehistoric Animals	—	Macdonald Educational

This list is taken from Books for Students' sales during the Spring term.

## SOUND AND VISION

As readers we sometimes have strong feelings about how a book is treated on TV.

But what is it like for an author?

We asked John Rowe Townsend for his reactions to Southern TV's serial of Noah's Castle.

It's exciting, of course, to have a book serialized on the box. For children (and most adults) the small screen is for real, the small screen is special, the small screen is fame. Suddenly the title of your book is known and the characters are familiar faces. You're flattered that so much time and talent, such huge amounts of money, have been poured into something that began with yourself sitting alone at a typewriter.

It doesn't last. Nobody's going to remember the author's name. You're still only as good as your next book, and that's what you have to get on with. But it's heady for a while.

Naturally people ask you what you thought of the production. A simple question, but not necessarily easy to answer. As author you tend to think that the ideal TV version would follow the text as closely as possible. This isn't so. A TV programme is something quite different from a book. What you have to hope for is not a literal translation but a rendering that is good of its own kind.

I've had two books made into ITV serials. The first was *The Intruder*, made by Peter Plummer for Granada. Visually beautiful, I thought, excellently cast, intelligently directed, but the script could have been better. The current one is *Noah's Castle*, now being transmitted in seven parts.

This is a story set in the near future, at a time when (it's supposed) the British economy has crashed and inflation has gone through the roof. A loaf of bread costs first pounds, then hundreds of pounds, then thousands of pounds. Armies of unemployed roam the streets and people are starving. It's told from a young person's point of view, but the main character is really a father. Norman Mortimer, with a wife and four children, is determined that whatever happens to anyone else his family is not going to suffer. He's bought a big old Victorian house and stocked its basement with everything you could possibly need to survive a siege. The Mortimer teenagers are

# BOOKS FOR KEEPS

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Total			
Name			
Address			

Please make cheques payable to the School Bookshop Association and return this form to the SBA, 1 Effingham Road, Lee, London SE12 8NZ.



still eating well. But they can't bear to see what is happening to those around them. One by one they peel away; and in the end, when his fortress really is besieged, Father is left heroically defending nobody.

The heart of the story is a moral dilemma. It's not Father's dilemma. He has none. 'My family comes first' is his view of the matter. But his children are in an agonising position. It's easy to sympathise with people in want; not so easy to cut yourself off from a home of plenty and face starvation yourself. It's easy to disapprove of a parent's actions — but when it's your father, who is doing it all to protect you, can you give him away? Do you love him or hate him — or both?

*Noah's Castle* could have been presented simply as a strong action story, with Father presumably as the baddie. I'm gratified that the script by Nick McCarty is not only powerful but sensitive. The moral issue is never lost sight of, and Norman Mortimer (admirably played by David Neal) is exactly as I see him myself: a deeply ambiguous character. I'm delighted with Colin Nuttley's production and with the young actors whose characterisations of the teenagers are distinctive and all different.

There will be people who think this is not a suitable subject for children's TV. Well, that's a branch of an old argument. Myself, I haven't the slightest objection to TV comedy, to easy light-hearted stuff, even to escapism. But I believe that young people are also capable of facing up to serious issues, and here I think that all concerned have tried to give them a chance to do so.

I've often been asked by readers of the book, and I expect to be asked by viewers, what I think of Norman Mortimer's morality myself. Actually I can't make up my mind. When I look at him from outside, so to speak, I condemn him, but when as a father I put myself in his place I'm not so sure. Isn't it a father's job to protect his offspring at all costs?

An unsatisfactory reply, you may think. Perhaps, but let me quote from Peter Plummer's splendid essay on televising fiction for adolescents in *Teenage Reading*, edited by Peter Kennerley (Ward Lock, £3.75): 'What the very best of TFA offers in the end,' he says, 'will always take the form of a question, hopefully never of a statement, and unquestionably never of an answer.' I'd like to think that *Noah's Castle* came within this definition.



The Mortimers in Southern Television's production of *Noah's Castle*

**Recommended for those with O/A Level Shakespeare phobia — Shakespeare Superscribe (Penguin £1.50).**

Transcripts from Capital Radio's 'Set Books' series in which Maggie Norden got actors, directors and critics to talk about some of the plays. It's interesting and occasionally staggeringly brilliant. I defy anyone not to feel differently about *Romeo and Juliet* or *Macbeth* after listening to Ian McKellan — he really is a teacher.

We'll be reviewing this and other aids to teaching the bard in a later issue of *Books for Keeps*.

### God's Wonderful Railway

This beautifully produced and acted recent serial had as its background the Severn Valley Railway, from its beginning in 1850 until the First World War.

*Permanent Way* (BBC 0 563 17827 2) and *Clear Ahead* (BBC 0 563 17829 9) both by Avril Rowlands are based on the series. They stand up well as books in their own right — sadly at £1.25 each in paperback they are overpriced for most school bookshops. A pity because they are just what's needed to hook railway addicts on to stories.



Ian Sandy as George Grant and Richard Pearson as Mr Jellicoe in BBC TV's film *Clear Ahead*.



Coming shortly —

### The Black Stallion, a film based on the novel by Walter Farley (Knight, 60p). The cast includes Mickey Rooney.

Apparently the film has been very well received in America (where it was produced by Francis Coppola) as good family entertainment. There's nothing like a horse and child combination for success — *National Velvet* is still going strong. The book, written in 1941, is about a boy and a wild half-Arab stallion who meet at a small port on the Red Sea, survive a shipwreck

The main cast from the United Artists film *The Black Stallion*.

together, are rescued from a desert island, get back to New York and finally, with the help of neighbour old Henry, who is good with horses, end up (you've guessed it) on a Chicago race track. The film hasn't been released in this country at the time of writing — it's promised for April/May. The book is an undemanding read in the Willard Price mould — short chapters, lots of action. If the film goes down well here, there are a whole heap of other Black Stallion stories to satisfy the fans.

### What makes a Bestseller?

In the (adult) bestsellers list in the *Bookseller* for 15th March, eight out of fifteen hardbacks and six out of fifteen paperbacks had direct links with film or TV. (Five of them were BBC Publications.) In the March issue of *Books for Keeps* our three guest reviewers, all of whom run school bookshops, said they didn't think TV had a major influence on what was bought. There were noises of agreement from all over the country, particularly in primary schools.

Look at this issue's Top 20, supplied by Books for Students. Two titles from the cinema, four from television. It's no surprise to see *Grange Hill Rules O.K.?* at number one — it would have been amazing if it hadn't got there. But *The Worzel Gummidge Cookbook*? A spin-off — not even the book of the series. And it's *Worzel Gummidge*, Barbara Euphan Todd style, creeping in at number nineteen. Is this really what the kids are buying?

Well it may be? but in fact this list tells us *what teachers are ordering*. It is compiled from books issued from (in this case) the Leamington depot. Teachers ordering may well be in touch with what their readers want or will buy; but this list doesn't tell us whether these books were *sold* to children. Even more important from our point of view it

doesn't tell us whether the purchase was successful in the child's terms. How many copies of *Tarka the Otter* are gathering dust because it was more difficult to read than the film was to watch?

Do you think we need information about what actually sells and what is successful? If you do let us know.

Would you be interested in taking part in a survey by filling in a form perhaps once or twice a term giving information about sales in your bookshop? If you would, let us know.

### For the absolutely hard-line book hater

You might try the Beaver *Flash Gordon Puzzle Books*, 60p. The drawings are crude and the story minimal; but it is there and the puzzles (each given a generous time rating to pit yourself against) actually develop skills needed for reading.

For watchers of old movies, Beaver's *Famous Lives: Showbiz* (70p) has 186 entries which tell you who's dead, when they were born and what their real names were. Youngest entry is Elizabeth Taylor, born 1932, and if Bogart was still alive he'd be 81 — dreadful thought! ●



'I want to take kids who have been bored to death by school books and give them something so interesting that they will change their minds about reading.'

**The speaker: Willard Price**

## **The recipe: Animals and adventures**

The publication of a Willard Price novel does not cause much of a stir in the literary pages of our posher newspapers. Nevertheless his books are read and bought by millions of children. Knight Books have just published *Tiger Adventure* (75p), the paperback of his thirteenth and most recent title. We thought a closer look at the man and his stories would be interesting.

*Amazon Adventure* (Cape) was published in 1951. Since then each new story of Hal and Roger Hunt, teenage animal collectors extraordinary, has been welcomed by eager fans.

Thirty years of writing for children, however, is only part of the Willard Price story. The first book was written when he was well over sixty and he had already packed into those years enough travel and incident for half a dozen average lives. He was born on an isolated farm in Ontario, Canada in 1887; but his career as journalist and writer has taken him and his wife Mary all over the world — into 144 countries he says — including six years living in Japan. An interest in natural history and exploration led to expeditions for the American Museum of Natural History and the National Geographical Society. He has been along the Amazon, the Congo and the Nile and his most recent round-the-world trip was only twelve years ago.

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Are the books, then, autobiographical? 'Sometimes . . . but in most cases they are pure imagination based on the habits of animals. It's animal behaviour I'm interested in.' Each story demands months of research. 'I like to get all the scientific facts about the life of animals correct.'

Scientific accuracy, though, is probably not what makes the books so popular (though teachers may see it as a bonus). They are what they claim — Adventures with a capital A. Hal (19) and Roger (14) — each has aged only one year since the start of the series — are the sons of John Hunt, owner of an animal farm on Long Island, New York, and supplier of animals to the zoos of the world. The boys start each book with a shopping list of animals from dad and the adventures follow as a matter of course: man-eating leopards, runaway elephants, killer bees, wrongful arrest, attempted arson, yetis, avalanche — and those are only the ones in *Tiger Adventure* (a rather tame saga compared with the others). Dad, who appears in *Amazon Adventure* long enough to be shot by hostile Indians with a curare tipped arrow ('Keep paddling, but first pass the salt.' No, he's not eating chips — it's a cure for the poison. Amazing what you pick up in these books!), is called home in Chapter 12. In the next book, *South Sea Adventure*, he announces, 'I'm afraid I'm getting too old for that sort of rough and tumble,' (No Willard Price, obviously) and thereafter stays traditionally out of the way.

According to Willard Price, 'It's very easy to kill an animal; to take one alive is a different proposition. It's very difficult and very dangerous.' Capturing the animals is certainly part of each adventure (not much easy stuff with tranquillizer darts for the Hunt boys) but in addition Hal and Roger are usually up against some sort of villainy. This linking plot is stronger in the earlier books — in *Tiger Adventure* it is hardly there at all.

All the books share the same qualities. Suspense is rapidly created and quickly relieved; incident follows incident at boredom-defying pace. Action is all. The characters are cardboard; nothing that happens to the boys — being swallowed by a whale, seeing a friend killed by an anaconda — affects them very much. They remain fearless, resourceful, honest and fun-loving; experts in survival and always ready to try something new to eat (broiled bat for breakfast in a Buddhist monastery in the latest book).

Willard Price admits to having a formula. 'To write in short sentences; not to string together a lot of ideas in one sentence so that the reader doesn't take in any of them. One idea to a sentence — this is necessary for young readers.' He could have included also short chapters which clearly help to keep the reader going.

Most of the books, cleverly, end with a trailer for the next adventure: 'And we should like to go on to tell how the two budding explorers got all (the adventure) they wanted and more during that fateful cruise among Pacific islands. But since there is no room for that story in these pages, the tale is told in another book, *South Sea Adventure*.' The books are all 'ripping yarns' and the slightly dated narrative style doesn't seem to deter the fans.

For the past few years, since he was badly injured in a car crash, Willard Price and his wife have lived in a retirement community in California. He has recovered well but cataracts threaten his sight and this bothers him: 'It makes research so slow and difficult.' He is ninety-three this year and working on *Arctic Adventure*, his fourteenth, set in Greenland.

Willard Price's gift is to write books that many 'kids (particularly boys) who hate all books' find readable. They are a starting point, an opportunity. If these books 'change children's minds about reading' it is our job to know what to offer next. But that is for another feature, in another issue. ●

**Willard Price Adventures are published in hardback by Cape and in paperback by Knight Books.**





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Our intention is to build up gradually a range of items which help you help children come to books with interest and pleasure.

### The SBA Handbook: The What, Why and How of School Bookshops

This is now being updated and rewritten. It will not be available until the autumn term; if you want advice on school bookshops, do not hesitate to write or phone.

### Badges and Bags

Badges seem to be ever-popular and our 55mm metal ones carry the Books for Keeps slogan as you can see in the illustration. They cost 10p each, including postage and packing, which we think is still pretty cheap these days. The paper bags are real Penguin ones which you quite often get when you buy books at your local bookseller. We charge £1.20 for 100 bags.

### Poster Packs

Everybody loves posters and, of course, they're marvellous for brightening up and creating lively book atmospheres in book corners, libraries and school bookshops. We have two packs, one for primary, the other for secondary schools, made up of about ten publishers' posters. We charge 60p each which covers postage and an OAP's time in folding and packing. You could of course write to a dozen or so publishers and get your publicity free but when you add up the cost of stamps and bear in mind that you may or may not get suitable posters, it's probably easier, quicker and cheaper to write for our packs.

### New Book-Bank Savings Cards

Book saving schemes are one of the best ideas to come out of school bookshops; they make book purchase relatively painless and, if imaginatively handled, can be a great boon for bookshops. Come to think of it they can work for book clubs and book fairs too.

We had a brilliant brainwave for our new ones. Being despondent about the price of card and wondering how to keep the cost down, we realised we had tons of the stuff in the SBA storeroom — paperback book jackets. By simply printing a grid on the reverse with a space for children to enter their names, we managed to produce a fairly cheap, book-related, colourful savings card.

Each column on the card has 'saved' and 'spent' printed at the top with room for the teacher's initial so that you know each child's credit at a glance. Alternatively you could make your own stick-on stamps or work out your own system with colouring-in.

Each card costs two pence plus, for postage, one penny per card. Minimum order 20 cards (20 cards would therefore cost 60p in all). You can save the postage by collecting direct from the SBA in Lee.

### Advisory Service

We try to answer any question put to us about children's books. Apart from school bookshops themselves which we know quite a bit about, we like to think we're a good place to start with if you have a problem or a query. If we can't answer your enquiry straight off the top of our heads, we'll put you in touch with someone who can.

If you want any of these items, just complete the order form on page 24 and enclose a cheque or postal order made out to the SBA.

### What's the book that worked best this year for you? Tell us and perhaps win a £5 book token.

Everywhere you turn you come across children's book awards. There's the Carnegie Medal, the Kate Greenaway Award, the Guardian Award, the Other Award, the Newbery Medal, the Caldecott Award, the Eleanor Farjeon Award, the Mother Goose Award and the Hans Christian Andersen Award. All these acknowledge and celebrate excellence in one form or another in children's writers, illustrators and people who make outstanding contributions to children's literature. They are also all decided upon by people very much inside the children's book world, be they publishers, librarians or reviewers.

It's all very nice. The trouble is that it does rather leave out an important group of children's book users who experience in many different ways the effects, both

successes and failures, of books that children read: namely teachers. We thought therefore it would be a good idea to ask you for your nominations for the book that worked best either with an individual child or with a class or group during this current school year.

What do we mean by 'worked'? We're looking for a book that suddenly broke through, or worked in unusual circumstances and got an individual or group really enthused and absorbed. It could be an unexpected title or a very popular one.

What we'd like you to do is send us just one title that has worked its particular magic on a child or children that you teach, with a brief description of how and why this occurred. The only restriction is that on this occasion we'd like to stick to fiction only.

We have five categories to match most of the teaching ranges:

**Nursery and infant (up to 7)**

**Lower Junior (7-9)**

**Upper Junior/Lower Middle (9-11)**

**Upper Middle/Lower Secondary (11-13)**

**Secondary (14+)**

We will publish the winning titles in our September issue, and award a £5 book token to the best reasons why in each of our five categories. Send your votes to **Books for Keeps**, 1 Effingham Road, Lee, London SE12 8NZ, no later than 15th July.

## Parents' Bookshelf

### Reversals: a personal account of victory over dyslexia

Eileen Simpson, Gollancz,  
0 575 02760 6, £5.95

A fascinating account of Eileen Simpson's battle with dyslexia — a condition which for her remained undiagnosed until she was 22. She tells how she concealed, eventually faced and finally conquered the problem and became a psychotherapist and novelist. Full of interest and insight. Recommended not only for parents of dyslexics but for those whose children are having problems of any kind (and that means most of us).

### Cushla and her Books

Dorothy Butler, Hodder & Stoughton,  
0 340 22768 0, £3.95

Soon after Cushla was born it became clear that she was very ill and severely handicapped. The book is an account of how her family helped her to cope with pain and frustration and to achieve a potential few would have allowed her to possess. It deals with her first four years and concentrates on the huge part books (first introduced at four months) played in her development. This book should not be missed by any parent or teacher.

### Reading through Play

Carol Baker, Macdonald,  
0 356 07048 4, £1.95

Advice and ideas for activities and games to help children towards reading. Aimed at parents, it's lively, practical and informative. Just two quibbles: I wish the vitally important reading aloud, sharing books, library visits had been given a more central place rather than mentioned in passing (on page 41); and why refer to a first reading book as a 'reader'? A book is a book is a book. Nevertheless recommended. Get some for the Infant bookshop.

This illustration (by Shirley Hughes) is from Dorothy Butler's **Babies Need Books** (Bodley Head £4.95 0 370 30151 X) published this month.

