

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

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Cover Book

The illustration on our cover this issue is by Michael Foreman and is taken from the endpapers of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, (Gollancz, 0 575 03311 8, £5.95)
We are grateful to Gollancz for help in using this illustration.



For every child's library

MICHAEL FOREMAN'S A CHRISTMAS CAROL by CHARLES DICKENS

Michael Foreman's irresistible pictures conjure up the spirit of Scrooge and Marley's Ghost to haunt and delight a new generation.

From the winner of the
1982 Kate Greenaway Medal

128pp with colour plates and b/w drawings
£5.95 unabridged 0 575 03311 8

The Best Song Book Ever

Sing a Song of Sixpence!

Compiled by Jane Hart
Colourfully illustrated by Anita Lobel

All the favourite nursery rhymes and traditional singing games appear in this splendid new volume.
Pictures on every page and a simple musical score with each song.

125 songs 160pp £6.95
0 575 03275 8

Gollancz

This Spring we interviewed Michael Foreman. He showed us the finished art work for *Christmas Carol* which was waiting to go to Gollancz. On his desk was some work in progress — the illustrations for Terry Jones' *The Saga of Erik the Viking*. The pictures for Dickens were so dazzling that we decided then and there to put one on the cover of our Christmas issue and here it is, wrapped round what we hope you will find an entertaining and useful end-of-year BfK package.

The idea of Mike Foreman doing illustrations for Dickens and Jones rather appealed to us. (We were feeling a bit silly at the time I suspect.) Fortunately it also appealed to him and he agreed to write about it for us. (See pages 3 and 4).

Then we read *The Saga of Erik the Viking* and knew we had to get Terry Jones in on the act as well. Last year, with *Fairy Tales*, his first venture into writing for children, Terry Jones showed how skilfully he could use, adapt, extend and vary a traditional form of storytelling. This year *Fairy Tales* is in paperback, with Puffin, and from Pavilion Books comes the second Jones/Foreman collaboration. With *Erik the Viking* Terry Jones has pulled off a very difficult trick — taking the essence of the Viking sagas and making it accessible and acceptable to the seven year old listener. The excitement, the power, the violence, the heroism, the high seriousness are all here but in a storytelling style that is exactly right for young ears and never condescends. Erik and his companions Ragnar Forkbeard, Sven the Strong and Thorkild on their quest for 'the land where the sun goes at night' meet danger, temptation, treachery, in the form of dragons, monsters, enchanters, magic places. These twenty-eight short, tightly-constructed episodes are the result of the very best kind of market research — a gifted writer trying things out on an ideal audience. To find out more about Bill, who 'commissioned' Erik from his dad we sent Tony Bradman to talk to Terry Jones.

To discover what he came back with turn to page 5.

A long-awaited pleasure

Perhaps the most eagerly-awaited book this year has been *The Way to Sattin Shore*, Philippa Pearce's first long novel since *A Dog So Small* in 1962.

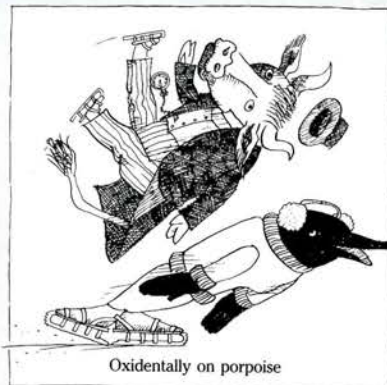
Philippa Pearce writes, quite consciously, for children. Her prose is clear and concise, the tone cool, detached, often almost casual, which makes it very accessible to young readers. But beneath this transparent surface lie themes which touch us deeply: she writes of love, of longing, of loss, of need, of the acute intense pain and pleasure of being a child. Through its rhythms her writing stirs depths which few writers for children even attempt to reach. To read or listen to a Philippa Pearce story is to experience a complexity of feelings, to be moved to joy or tears, to be left thoughtful, to be enriched. Adult critics have unpacked the sentences and laid all bare; children may not fully understand their own responses but through thinking and talking they will find meanings in these very special stories by a uniquely talented and original writer. We are particularly delighted to have Philippa Pearce as the subject for the Authorgraph this issue. We visited her in Cambridgeshire; she was welcoming, humorous, perceptive and modest. Talking about *The Way to Sattin Shore* she managed somehow to be both deeply involved and critically detached.

'I knew what I wanted to write about', she said. 'I had to invent the circumstances to make it possible. I'm conscious of the weaknesses. I'm not very good at plots and there are details in this one that are unexplained, or need too much explaining. I could have waited and ploughed on with another year at it but I don't think it would have made it any better so I decided to

EDITOR'S PAGE

commit it to paper and have done with it. I wish I could have made it better.'

I had just read it for the first time and been totally absorbed. I was far too engaged by Kate and her family and her quest for the past and her father to either notice or care if the machinery of the plot was creaking a little. Philippa Pearce allows the reader almost to become Kate Tranter, to experience with her the sensuous pleasure, the perfect happiness of a tobogganing expedition, the mixed emotions of a solo bike ride to Sattin Shore on a day she should have been at school, the minute details of family life. All are realised with a completeness that is characteristic of Philippa Pearce at her very best. And that is something not to be missed.



Good Buys

Sattin Shore is certainly on our list of Good Buys for Christmas (page 8). You'll notice we have chosen book-shaped books, deliberately passing over cubes, boxes, houses, castles containing tricky little cut-outs and minimal stories on pull-out concertina strips. 'Charming' they may be, but £4.00 (average price) doesn't seem like good value for money for something that will be treated like an ornament or a toy.

If you are looking for something outside the booky straight and narrow we enjoyed Macmillans *Do-it-Yourself Pop-Up Books* by Ron van der Meer. (The Case of the Kidnapped Dog, 0 333 34220 8, The Ghost Book, 0 333 34219 4, both £4.99.) Well designed, (fairly) easy to assemble — no cutting, no glueing, fixers provided — and when you have finished you've got a good hardback book. Or try Maureen Roffey's *Make-Your-Own-Pop-Up Circus Book*, Bodley Head, 0 370 30528 0, £4.95 (Press-out bits, provide your own glue.)



When it's finished the book will have most appeal to younger children. One for older brothers or sisters to make perhaps.

The stage-struck should be delighted by Antony Maitland's *Encore*, (Kestrel, 0 7226 5778 1, £6.95) which unfolds to reveal four different scenes in one ornate proscenium arch. One of my favourites this year and very much in the mainstream of the pop-up tradition. Also in the classic tradition is *Yours Affectionately, Peter Rabbit* (Warne, 0 7232 3178 8, £2.95) a collection of the miniature letters which make up the correspondence Beatrix Potter invented to entertain her young friends. A delight for all Potter addicts. And for sheer fun try *Otter Nonsense*, Norton Juster and Eric Carle, punning in words and pictures (Faber, 0 571 13179 4, £3.50). A gimmick of a different kind has been making a big impact, literally, in our house. *Juggling for the Complete Klutz*, John Cassidy and B. C. Rimbeaux, (Fontana, 0 00 692226 0, £4.95) comes complete with three cube-shaped soft bags with which to learn the art. Looking for something to occupy the family over Christmas? This is it. (Eds warning: don't practice in the kitchen!) So far we have two fourteen-year-old experts who have graduated to juggling with fruit, invented their own variations and, they say, got a good return by combining juggling with Penny for the Guy. Who knows, this book could be an investment. What price juggling carol singers?

Thumbs Down for Hands Together

Carol singing and all things Christmassy feature large in the first issue of *Hands Together* a new magazine from Scholastic which we received for review. It intends, it says, to provide a regular supply of ideas and materials for use in school assemblies and will appear six times a year. We showed it to a range of people connected with Religious Education in schools. 'To judge from this all the developments of the past twenty-five years might never have happened', said one in amazement, summing up the feelings of the others. 'The very name indicates it's on the wrong track, and it could do harm.' Strange that something so out of touch should come from the same stable as *Child Education* and *Junior Education* which have become so reliably on the ball. For those wanting help with assemblies that is more in line with current thinking we recommend *The Tinder Box Assembly Book*, compiled by Sylvia Barratt (A&C Black, 0 71316 2169, £6.95).

Looking Ahead

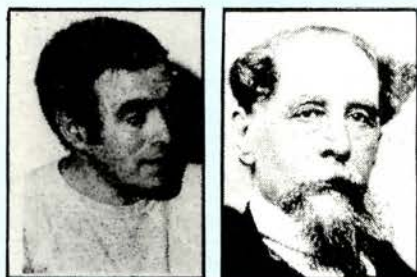
Finally, thank you for all the kind and generous letters and messages you have sent this year. We are glad you like *Books for Keeps*, are most grateful for your support and welcome your comments and suggestions. We are very sorry that the last two issues have reached you late. We are making every effort to ensure that you will get your copies on time next year. Meanwhile keep writing and, from all of us at BfK, our very good wishes.



Par

Illustrating a dead author has advantages because there are no arguments. **Michael Foreman** writes about creating

PICTURES FOR DI



I re-read *A Christmas Carol* during a long flight in October 1982. From that moment on I was full of the Christmas spirit.

When I am home I feel I must work. Reading isn't working (actually I don't think drawing is working either) and any reading I have to do is done during journeys or waiting at stations, airports and dentists.

Whenever I opened *A Christmas Carol* I was instantly lost to all around me, and when forced to look from the book by the arrival of my stop, plane or dentist, I would be surprised to see no snow through the window.

Japan in October was not very Christmassy, and London in that bright crisp November was quite out of step with my festive feelings.

By December it was better. We were now in Cornwall. At least the streets were cobbled. People wrapped and muffled, actually smiling and saying 'Hello. Merry Christmas!'

The shops in the narrow street almost rivalled Dickens' glorious description of the poulterers, fruiterers, and grocers.

By this time I was well into the pictures and it was very difficult to keep working while feeling the bustle mounting in the streets and the bonhomie in the pubs.

Part of the story actually stems from a visit Dickens made to Cornwall.

In the sequence about the mine and the moor and the lighthouse, Dickens referred to the old tin mines at Bottalack, between St Ives and Lands End.

As part of my research, therefore, we made little trips along the coast to Bottalack, and the fact that the old Count House at the mine is now one of the best restaurants in Britain is purely coincidental.

The colour plate of the cliffs shows the ruins of the old Bottalack mine. Other reference was at hand. My image of Scrooge is based upon a Cornish friend and master mariner, while one of the shops on the endpapers is my mother's old village shop in Suffolk.

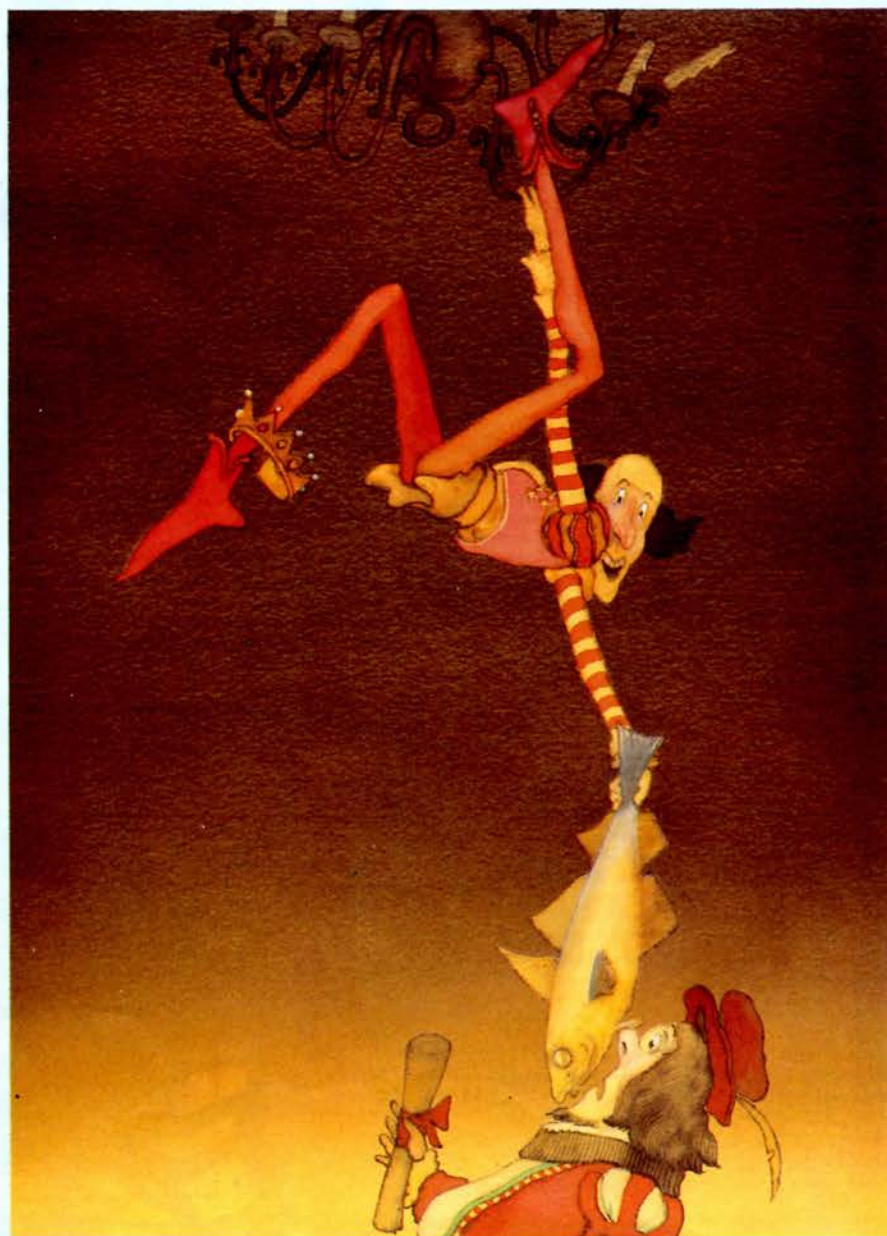
One of the interesting things about illustrating Dickens is that it is the first period in history to be thoroughly recorded photographically, and but for the substitution of parking meters for horse dung, whole streets of the period are virtually intact.

With this wealth of available reference, there is a danger of overdoing the detail and petrifying the action.

Whether books need illustrations at all, and the work of a brilliant descriptive writer like Dickens in particular, is a question I won't raise. The fewer people who think about that the better!

I want my pictures to be more of an invitation than a guided tour. I had a wonderful time doing it. Imagine — the Christmas spirit every day for four months.

If you are one of the peculiar people who don't like Christmas, (I was one for a while) either change your friends, (change them anyway, they must be a boring lot) or read *A Christmas Carol*. Enjoy a born again Christmas.



From *Fairy Tales*, Pavilion Books

uments. Illustrating a living author has advantages because there is

CKENS & JONES

Illustrating Terry Jones is obviously something completely different. Everything is invented. His *Fairy Tales* (written for his daughter), of course, are outside time and historic reference, but *Eric the Viking* also was written without any factual constraint.

Terry wrote the saga for his five year old son, Bill, and carefully avoided learning anything about vikings other than what everyone thinks they know about vikings. When I thought about the pictures I found I needed to know rather more.

I went to Scandinavia and saw the remains of long ships and Viking bits and pieces.

The main directive from all the experts there was 'Whatever you do, don't put horns on their helmets. Viking helmets did not have horns.'

I decided that what they meant was they had never *found* a viking helmet with horns, and I decided I had "every faith" in them finding one in the next week or two!

Reassured by how little had actually been found, I thought the Jones version was as sound as any.

Terry Jones' *Fairy Tales* were virtually finished before he showed them to me. But *Eric* was fed to me adventure by adventure. Like a Dickens serial.

I found it grew from an exciting adventure into something quite epic.



It gained a momentum of its own and I think even surprised Terry in some of the directions it took. The first drawings I did were OK for the early part of the saga, but did not suit the later developments, and needed to be redone.

Terry, of course, has his four penny worth if he doesn't approve of any of the pictures. He is often surprised by my interpretations, but usually I can talk him round over lunch.

Illustrating a dead author has advantages because there are no arguments. Illustrating a living author has advantages because there is lunch.

Due to the lack of a publisher, we had two years of lunches before *Fairy Tales* was produced by Pavilion.

Eric was produced much quicker and there was more work involved, so we are still catching up on the lunches.

Working on two books at the same time can cause problems, but usually I find it an advantage.

The Dickens had to be finished first, but whenever I had a block or became unsure of what to do, I had a go at the Vikings for a few days. In this way each book kept the other fresh.

This winter, I am concentrating on just one book — *Tales from Shakespeare* — by Leon Garfield. A daunting prospect. But Leon phoned the other day and suggested LUNCH, so things are moving in the right direction.

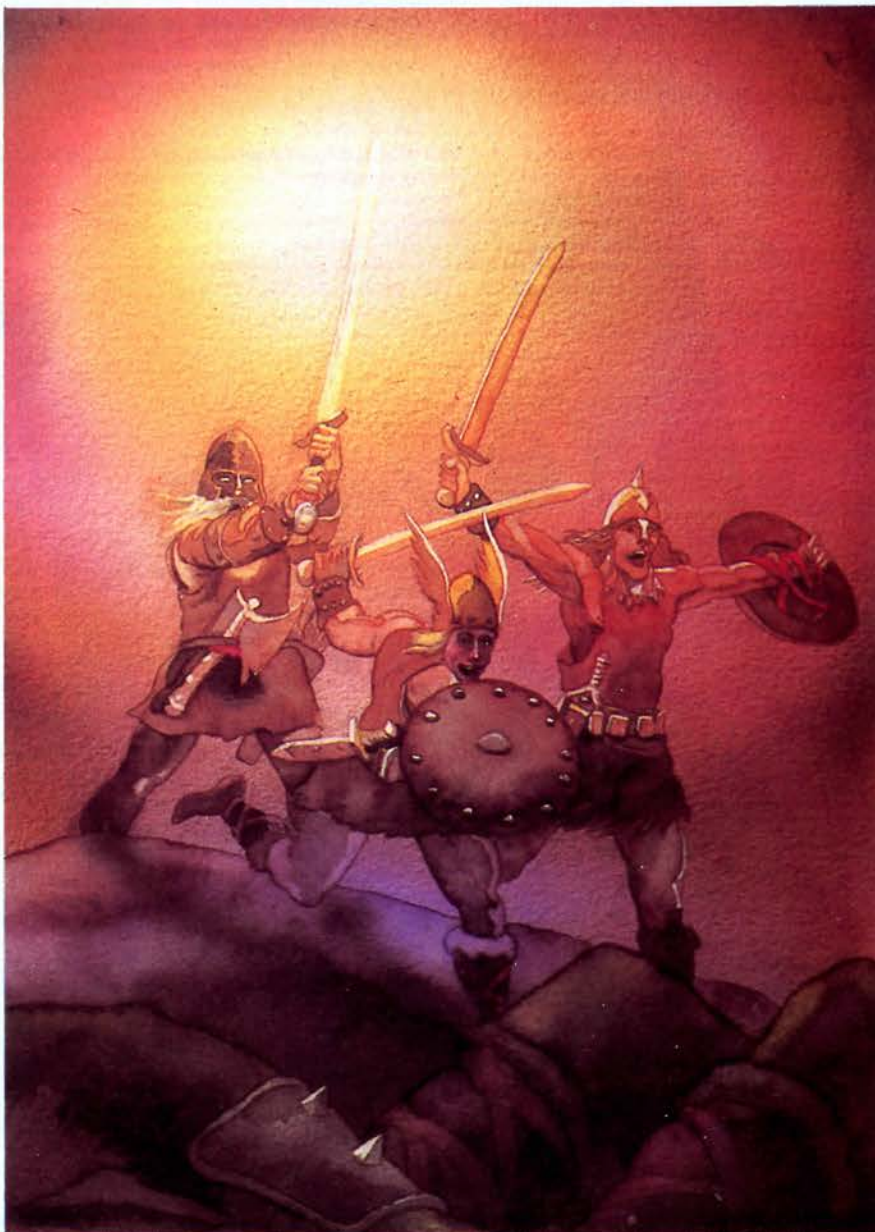
The Books

A Christmas Carol, Gollancz, 0 575 03311 8, £5.95

Fairy Tales, Pavilion Books, 0 907516 03 3, £6.95

Puffin,

The Saga of Erik the Viking, Pavillion Books, 0 907516 23 8, £6.95



From *The Saga of Eric the Viking*, Pavilion Books

TERRY JONES: Children's writer

Interviewed by Tony Bradman

A nice young lady (who later turned out to be the au pair) opened the door of the Jones house on the afternoon I arrived to interview Terry. I was ushered in and sent up the stairs to a room in the attic, where I half expected to find the aforesaid Mr Jones sitting at a large organ, naked but for a collar and tie.

That particular pose should be familiar to the millions of Monty Python fans out there; it was one in which we saw Terry Jones many times during the television series which changed British comedy for ever. Terry, along with the other Pythons, moved onwards, outwards and upwards into films like *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and their most recent production — which Terry both directed and physically exploded in — *The Meaning of Life*.

But there's more, there's more; like several other members of the Python team, Mr Jones had demonstrated an envy-provoking ability to do Other Things As Well As Make You Fear For The Integrity Of Your Bladder By Making You Laugh A Lot. To wit: he has also (and here we must speak in hushed whispers) *Written Books*. His first, an academic book on the Knight in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, wasn't really the sort of tome you'd expect from a man who's been seen naked (but for a collar and tie) on television. But it was the result of a long term interest in Chaucer which has its roots in Terry's study of English Literature at Oxford.

Medieval literature and books about it therefore form a very substantial part of the library revealed to my eyes when Terry ushered me into the attic study of the South London home where he lives with his wife Alison, daughter Sally (nine) and son Bill (seven). Terry Jones has a very good grounding in the sort of material which, filtered through the subconscious of a Python, has emerged in two of the most interesting and individual children's books to have been published for many a long year — *Fairy Tales* and *Erik the Viking*. Which is, of course, why I was there to talk to him. I was there on one of the last warm days of the year, and we took the opportunity to sit in the garden.

Of course, the first question to put to Terry was *Why Does Someone As Busy And Rich And Famous As Him Take The Time To Write A Children's Book?*

"I just got up one Monday morning to discover that I had a bit of spare time, and I'd simply always wanted to write some fairy tales. I'd read Grimm and Andersen to Sally when she was about five, and thought the stories were too long and too wordy. I also didn't like them very much; I mean, it was a bit over the top to put Snow White's wicked stepmother in a pair of red hot metal shoes! I didn't like the violence, the gratuitous cruelty of them at all. They seemed to be condoning violence, and I thought that it wasn't right for a child to go to sleep with that message in her head."

Terry found the writing of the tales quite easy. "I wrote two a day to start with, although I slowed down after a while. Alison's always worked since we've had kids — she's a research scientist — and Sally was in a nursery, so I used to try them out on her when she got home in the evening. It was a good discipline — you could always tell the ones that worked."

One major interruption was that Terry had to go off to Tunisia to make *The Life of Brian* with the Monty Python team, and it wasn't until he came back that he found a publisher for the book; another publisher, who shall remain nameless, had been too slow. Colin Webb had published Terry's Chaucer book when he'd been an editor at Weidenfeld and Nicolson, and had since started Pavilion Books — and he snapped *Fairy Tales* up. Terry already knew Michael

Foreman, and had interested him in the project, and in his words, they came "as a package".

Some of Michael's original illustrations for the book adorn various walls of the Jones household. "I've got a lot of admiration for Michael's work", said Terry. "He seemed to get it just right, and I think that his pictures really do an awful lot for the book as a whole — as they do for *Erik the Viking*."

Which is, of course, the Jones/Foreman team's second co-product. "I wrote it for Bill, because he wasn't interested in *Fairy Tales*. This is all terribly sexist, but Bill appears to be solely interested in the different ways you can kill people. He said he didn't want a lot of different stories, he wanted one hero, and he was interested at the time in the Vikings exhibition at the British Museum. The Vikings did actually kill people, too, which made them OK."

"Unfortunately he's slightly irritated by wet Vikings like the ones in the book who don't do too much slaughter and pillage. I didn't do any research; I amassed a great pile of books about the Vikings which I then didn't read."

Bill, it appeared, was something of a character. I was even a little worried at the prospect of meeting him, imagining him to be some sort of large Viking child who chewed up interviewers for breakfast. I

didn't actually meet him during the afternoon although at one stage Terry climbed up one of the garden walls (a high one, separating the garden from some playing fields) and had a long drawn out conversation with an invisible Bill on the other side. Apart from this being the only whacky thing Terry did during our meeting, it also managed to make the figure of Bill even more mysterious and terrifying. Subsequent perusal of photographs of the family reveal him to be a deceptively ordinary looking little boy.

I had a strong feeling that Bill was also behind the enormous career change which Terry Jones appears to be contemplating, although I'm sure he'll come to his senses before long.

"I enjoyed writing the two children's books more than anything I've ever done, in fact, and I'd love to write more and more books for kids. There's not much money in it, though, is there?"

I nodded my agreement.

"I'll just have to make more Monty Python films to finance my kids' books, then, won't I?"

Our interview didn't last much longer. Inside the house, the telephone was ringing and it seemed that the au pair had gone out, leaving no one to answer whoever was calling. Terry said that the dog was indoors, but "he was terrible on the phone", so he had to answer it.

I left, slightly nervous about meeting Bill in the street. ●



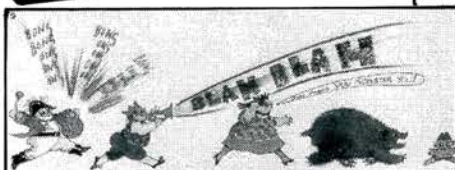
GOOD BUYS FOR Christmas

A round-up of some titles we think would be value for money in any home, classroom, or library.

Selections by Pat Triggs

Picture Books

Some favourite authors and artists do it again.



General toot tooting, and the Sergeant BOM BOMMING, and the little dog yip yipping, they made an IN-CRED-IBLE noise.

Bertie and the Bear

Pamela Allen, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11054 8, £4.75

The bear chases Bertie and in turn everyone else chases the bear — shouting, blowing trumpets, banging gongs, tooting flutes etc. etc. Great for infants and extrovert storytellers who like to make a noise and really get involved in a story.



The Kettleship Pirates

Rodney Peppé, Kestrel, 0 7226 5837 0, £4.95

Fun, fantasy, excitement as Pip mouse gets carried away on a pirate adventure. In the same style as the very successful *The Mice who Lived in a Shoe* and equally appealing for sharing and beginning reading.



'I think they like you,' said his mother. 'Aren't they big?' said Bernice. From —

Alex's Outing

Mary Dickinson, pictures by Charlotte Firmin, Deutsch, 0 233 95558 6, £3.95

Mums and kids on a day out in the country. Alex and his mum have a great time in their

different ways. (Alex gets very dirty; Mum doesn't get cross.) Top infants and reading lower juniors.

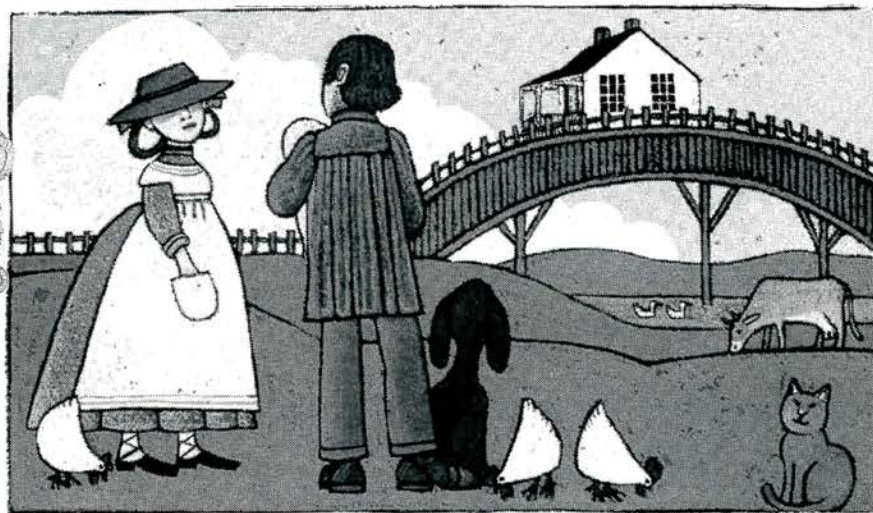


'King Henry was a very nice king.'

King Henry's Palace

Pat Hutchins, Bodley Head, 0 370 30981 2, £4.50

Another hit. Three stories about very nice King Henry, his soldiers, his servants, his gardener and his cook. Clever and funny and just right for new readers.



'Neither could think of any way to get Tattie's house off the bridge.'

Tattie's River Journey

Shirley Rousseau Murphy, pictures by Tomie de Paola, Methuen, 0 416 45460 7, £5.50

A set of beautifully stylised, subtly coloured illustrations exactly complements the story of calm resourceful Tattie whose house floats away on the flood. She rescues a baby and a plain, domesticated young man and when the waters subside discovers a whole new life.

Doctor de Soto

William Steig, Andersen Press, 0 86264 059 8, £4.95

Should a mouse dentist treat a fox with toothache? Marvellously funny and inventive William Steig explores the dilemma in a brilliant sequence of words and pictures. Not to be missed.

Stanley Bagshaw and the Twenty-Two Ton Whale

Bob Wilson, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10812 8, £4.75

Another saga in rhyme and cartoon from Huddersgate where our hero, Stan, 'resides with his Grandma'. This time a whale mistakes the way to the pole and ends up in the canal. Very funny. A must for juniors.

And, of course, *Gorilla*, Anthony Browne's witty, perceptive, impeccably designed book, featured in BfK earlier this year.

Some less well-known (as yet) names to recommend.

My Book

Ron Maris, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 1443, £4.95

For the youngest. A series of double spreads interspersed with vertically split half pages which turn to show more and more of what's in 'my house'. Very cleverly conceived (doors seen in the distance become the pages we turn) and executed. Endless potential for sharing and talking.

Ned and the Joybaloo

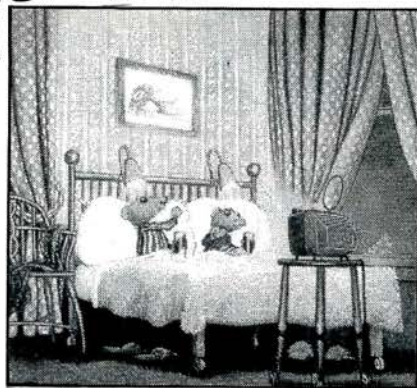
Hiawyn Oram, pictures by Satoshi Kitamura, Andersen Press, 0 86264 048 2, £4.50

Another rich and resonant fantasy from the *Angry Arthur* team. What this book has to say about pleasure, happiness, joy, may not be completely understood by young readers, but it will be felt. There's something here for adult sharers too!

The Vegetable Thieves

Inga Moore, Andersen Press, 0 86264 047 4, £4.50

Des and Letty — two mice — find running a market garden pretty exhausting. Following a trail left by vegetable thieves they find some abandoned mice children. You can guess the rest. The pictures, especially of the vegetable garden, are exquisitely drawn and coloured.



'That night they sat up watching television' from **The Vegetable Thieves**.

The Bedspread

Sylvia Fair, Macmillan, 0 333 32655, £4.95

Maud and Amelia decide to relieve the monotony of a life confined to their respective ends of a long bed by embroidering the bedspread with pictures of their childhood home. Each sister sews her memories in her own way; telling and showing how they did it makes a delightful story.



'Snicketty-snack went their little silver scissors,' from **The Bedspread**.

Moveables: Simple and Effective

Who's That?

Harry Stevens, Collins, 0 00 143195 1, £4.95

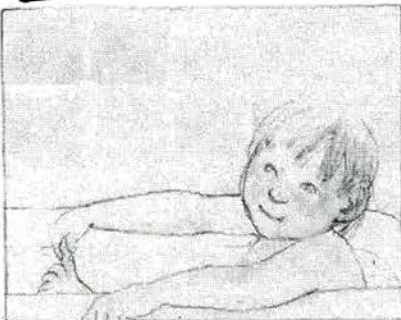
A pull out book that is a guessing game. Who buries his bones under garden stones? Who had grass to chew and gives milk to you? The picture answer appears when you pull, and the word is revealed on the tab. Jolly cartoony pictures; strong, smooth-running mechanisms.

Oh Dear!

Rod Campbell, Blackie, 0 216 91468 X, £4.50

Lift the flaps as Buster goes to look for eggs on Grandma's farm. Simple storyline with lots of repetition and opportunities for joining in and predicting.

Poetry



Rhymes Around the Day

chosen by Pat Thomson, pictures by Jan Ormerod, Kestrel, 0 7226 5808 7, £4.50

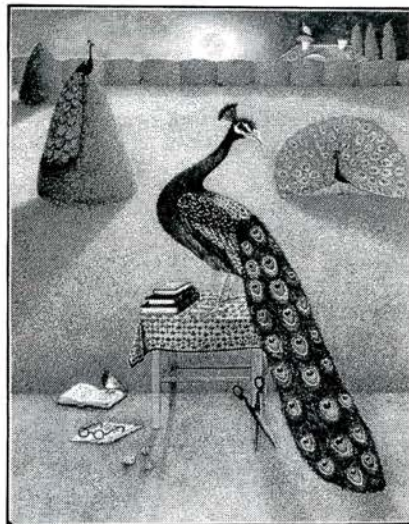
Jan Ormerod's pictures take the family — the girl twins and the baby — through a day of rhymes from 'The cock does crow' to 'Starlight, Star bright'. A lovely blend of traditional and contemporary.



Quick Let's Get Out of Here

Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake, Deutsch, 0 233 97559 4, £5.95

Rosen and Blake do it again. 128 pages of poems and expressive black and white drawings about families and friends and people and . . . well . . . life. (There's also a cassette tape from Deutsch of Mike Rosen reading poems from this and the three other collections.)



From **The Book of Riddles**

Monika Beisner's Book of Riddles

Cape, 0 224 02091 9, £4.95

Metaphor, wordplay are at the heart of riddles so, apart from the fact that lots of them rhyme, these are very close to poetry. Each page of riddles faces a colour plate, beautifully drawn and containing visual clues to the answers. A book to delight in and one with lots of classroom possibilities.

Collections

Sing a Song of Sixpence

compiled by Jane Hart, pictures by Anita Lobel, Gollancz, 0 575 03275 8, £6.95

Sub-titled **The Best Song Book Ever**, this collection of words, music (piano and guitar) and pictures is excellent value, especially for use with Infants. Where appropriate, instructions are given for games, dances and actions that accompany the songs and there is a very useful subject index.

The New Golden Land Anthology

ed. Judith Elkin, Kestrel, 0 7226 5805 2, £7.50

James Reeves' anthology **A Golden Land** became an institution, the paperback a holiday standby. But it was first published 25 years ago and a lot has happened in writing for children in that time. Judith Elkin has done an excellent job of revising and

adding to the original selection so that, as she says in her introduction, today's reader and listeners can 'find afresh the Golden Land'. Jan Mark, Philippa Pearce, Mike Rosen, Bernard Ashley, Margaret Mahy and other modern masters join with the likes of A.A. Milne, Hans Andersen, Eleanor Farjeon, Lewis Carroll and Walter de la Mare, in a book that is a treasure in itself and a starting point for discovery.



From **Sing a Song of Sixpence**

Legends of the Sun and Moon

retold by Eric and Tessa Hadley, ill. Jan Nesbitt, CUP, 0 521 25227 X, £5.25

A dozen carefully selected and beautifully presented stories from many different cultures. The tales are short, extremely well-told for reading aloud and Jan Nesbitt's strong, bright pictures echo in style the cultures they come from. There is a lot on offer here for the imaginative Junior teacher.

In paperback now Three classic collections from Faber:

North American Legends

ed. Virginia Haviland, ill. Ann Strugnell, £2.95

Northern Folk Tales and Northern Legends

ed. Kevin Crossley-Holland, ill. Alan Howard. Both £2.95

Full-sized, identical to the hardback. Fantastically good value.

and

Grimm's Fairy Tales

selected and introduced by Richard Adams, ill. Pauline Ellison, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 0 7100 9997 5, £4.95

Nineteen stories illustrated with black and white title drawings and full colour plates. Pauline Ellison's pictures capture the magic, the mystery, the strangeness and the humour of these timeless tales. Full-size, excellent reproduction, good quality paper.

The Complete Borrowers Stories

Mary Norton, Puffin, 0 14 03.1666 3, £4.95

A large format bind up of all five 'Borrowers' books with the original illustrations.

Information

Sleeping Animals

Masayuki Yabuuchi, Bodley Head, 0 370 30966 9, £4.50

An addition to an excellent series of Infant Information books that already includes **Animal Mothers and Feeding Babies**. Simple text in question and answer format and admirably clear pictures deal with a topic that often engages the young child.

Sleeping Animals

Masayuki Yabuuchi



Life of a Butterfly

Andreas and Heiderose Fischer-Nagel, trans. Noel Simon, Dent, 0 460 06141 0, £4.95

One of the best yet in a remarkable series. Admirably clear text and superb close-up photography combine to make what must be the definitive butterfly book for younger children. As a bonus there's encouragement to go and look for yourself, and the beauty of the photographs, especially the close-ups of a butterfly's wing, is quite breathtaking.

Out of the Wood

Graham Underhill, OUP, 0 19 918142 X, £6.95

A fascinating amalgam of natural history with social, political and economic history achieved by following an oak tree from its accidental planting in 850 to its destruction in 1850. Large full colour pictures showing the lives of people at periods across 1,000 years are packed with detailed visual information. The accompanying text is short and in story form. Charts, lists, a timeline, all mean that the reader can use the book itself as a basis for investigation; but it's also an excellent starting point for further enquiry and investigation of an integrated kind. (UJ/LS)



From *The Elephant Man*

The Elephant Man

Michael Howell and Peter Ford, ill. Robert Geary, Allison and Busby, 0 85031 531 X, £4.95

A version for children of the true story of Joseph Merrick, exhibited in a freak show as the Elephant Man until he came into the protection of the London Hospital. Skilfully done by the artist and the authors of the original book. A moving story which provokes much thought and discussion in the young.

Copycats

Marianne Ford, drawings by Anna Pugh, Deutsch, 0 233 97584 5, £6.95

This most interesting and original make-it book for a long time. The origin of each and every activity is traced historically and illustrated by museum photographs. This background information is combined with clearly drawn instructions for a range of things to make and do including quilting, marquetry, applique, silhouettes, miniature shops, 'jewelled' eggs, whistles, boomerangs — and lots more. Spiral bound to lie flat. A quality production.

Novels

The Witches

Roald Dahl, ill. Quentin Blake, Cape, 0224 02165 6, £6.50

REAL WITCHES look and behave just like ORDINARY WOMEN and they LOATHE CHILDREN. There are ways of telling what they are (for instance their spit is blue) but not many people know how to do it. One who does is one of the most super grandmothers in fiction, and a definite plus for this book which is highly inventive, if not quite as good as the marvellous BFG.

One Way Only

Gwen Grant, ill. Faith Jaques, Heinemann, 0 434 94136 0, £6.95

The third instalment of the life and times of the narrator of *Private — Keep Out!* and *Knock and Wait*. Back from hospital she is still writing in her book and it's 1950. Youngest of a large Nottinghamshire family she records the passing scene with devastating clarity and a good line in partial comment. Funny, observant, highly readable.



Cover drawing from *One Way Only*

The Present Takers

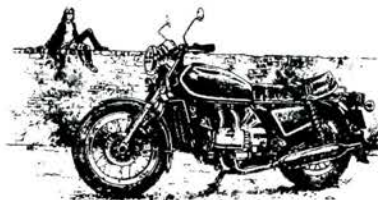
Aidan Chambers, Bodley Head, 0 370 30967 7, £4.95

The kids in this story have read *The Eighteenth Emergency*, but it's not much help in coping with top junior Melanie Prosser and her two nasty side-kicks. Bullying, extortion, humiliation are their specialities and no one person, adult or child, can find the answer. Lucy and Angus getting together is a start. Shades of Betsy Byars and Gene Kemp in a very satisfying tale which, among other things, makes a powerful case for the written word. Reads well aloud or alone.

Handles

Jan Mark, Kestrel, 0 7226 5857 5, £5.50

When bike-mad Erica goes to spend the summer with vegetable growing Auntie Joan, Uncle Peter and revolting cousin Robert in a Norfolk village, she doesn't expect excitement. And she doesn't get it. But on an errand to 'the smallest industrial estate in



David Parkins' illustration to *Handles*

the world' she finds Elsie Wainwright, his motor bike repair shop and a variety of characters — all with handles to their names. Nothing much happens in this book, but it is impossible to stop reading it. Needle sharp, quirky, observant, Jan Mark has assembled a cast of characters that keep the reader as entertained and fascinated as Erica is. A very funny and perceptive book. One of the best this season.

Thimbles

David Wiseman, Kestrel, 0 7226 5864 8, £5.50

Cathy's dad, a union organizer is known as Red Tom. When he is sacked and trouble brews she is sent to Gran in Cornwall. There she finds two thimbles, one gold, one iron. They take her back to 1819 (as two different people depending which thimble she wears) and the Manchester Massacre at Peterloo. A neat and readable exploration of human rights and the nature of freedom. This is David Wiseman's second novel — a name to watch.

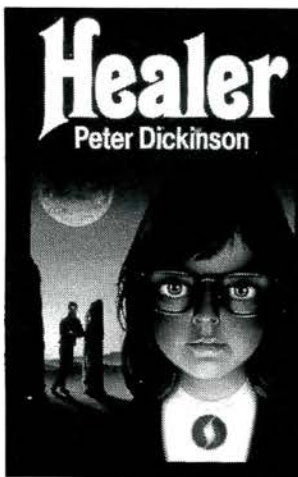
Talking in Whispers

James Watson, Gollancz, 0 575 03272 3, £5.95

Another book about the fight for freedom and justice. The setting here is Chile, now or in the future, and this story of sixteen year old Andres and his friends and their opposition to the military Junta makes compelling reading. Here is grief, anger, compassion, courage and hope. Try to ensure no teenager misses it.

Healer

Peter Dickinson, Gollancz, 0 575 003314 2, £5.95



The Foundation researches into Harmonic Energy. If you are ill, are found suitable and can pay, the Foundation will arrange for you to have access to The Healer — a ten year old girl with strange and mysterious powers. Sixteen year old Barry's attempt to rescue her from what he and her grandfather see as the clutches of the Foundation makes an exciting and dramatic story. But as always with Peter Dickinson there is more to it. Refusing to over-simplify, he explores ideas about knowledge, faith, belief, obsession, gullibility, mental and physical health, and his conclusions are determinedly ambiguous and open-ended. One for older readers who like to be challenged and to think.

REVIEWS

Nursery/Infants

The Apple Bird
0 19 272136 4

The Nest
0 19 272134 8

All Fall Down
0 19 272135 6

The Island
0 19 272137 2
Brian Wildsmith, Oxford
University Press, 95p
each

Wildsmith plays visual jokes on his readers in these four sixteen page books, two of which, *The Nest* and *The Apple Bird* are wordless. In the former, close-up views show two birds building a nest, somewhat precariously balancing it between what looks like the branches of a tree. The final spread is a long view and shows the fledglings departing from their home which, as is now revealed, rests on the antler of a deer.



The Apple Bird is aptly named as we see from the final pages, the juicy fruit having been progressively diminished in direct proportion to the growth in circumference of the greedy bird's devouring of same.

In *All Fall Down* we have a cumulative text with matching pictures as the onlooker is shown, by the widening perspective, the extent of a precarious balancing act and its inevitable collapse.

Three wild animals clamber from their raft onto *The Island* only to find that their 'terra' is far from 'firma' as it sinks, and then rises, and finally, walks to the river bank. Minimal text but the pictures speak volumes. JB

Travelling Moose
0 583 30554 7

Tell-Tale Tiger
0 583 30553 9

Spider Spy
0 583 30552 0
Allan Ahlberg and André Amstutz, Granada Dragon, 85p each

These additions to the 'Help Your Child to Read' series are, in my view, a great improvement on the first batch. Each begins with two pages of very sensible and helpful advice aimed at parents (though some teachers could benefit from reading it too) and it should go a long way in persuading everyone that parents can and do have a vital role to play in their children's development as readers.

Travelling Moose is a counting rhyme in the style of 'Ten little Indians' but here we start with six — a moose and his five friends — who together set off on their travels and one by one, fall by the wayside.

Tell-Tale Tiger tells how a story-telling tiger entertains a group of children in the jungle. As well as the main rhyming narrative there is bubbletalk and the occasional narrator (bird) to reader comment.



When he's wiped his whiskers of ginger ale, the Tell-Tale Tiger tells his tale.



A page from *Tell-Tale Tiger*

That's what the books for!

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

Reviewers in this issue



Jill Bennett is in charge of a Reading Centre in Middlesex. She is the compiler of *Learning to Read with Picture Books* and of several anthologies of poetry for infants, Literary Editor of *Child Education* and on the Board of the SBA.



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



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



Bill Boyle teaches in Middle School in Wirral. He was founding Deputy Editor of *Junior Education*.



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

Spider Spy, again in rhyme, is not really a story, more a series of incidents built around a game of I-spy, each item spied being used as the focus of that particular incident: ... 'P for pudding/b for baby/c for crawl/Blow me down/he's eaten it all!'

The sense of fun in Allan Ahlberg's text is in each case, fittingly served by the illustrations of André Amstutz. JB

Ernest and Celestine
0 00 662136 8

Bravo, Ernest and Celestine
0 00 662137 6
Gabrielle Vincent, Picture Lions, £1 each

The Belgian artist Gabrielle Vincent is one of the finds of the '80s and it is good to see the first two Ernest and Celestine titles in paperback already. In *Ernest and Celestine*, the young girl mouse, Celestine is very sad when she loses her beloved toy duck Gideon; no other toy can replace him. Then Ernest, a

large brown bear, hits on a solution: he makes her a new Gideon. The portrayal of the special relationship between the pair is touching but manages to avoid sentimentality. Gentle, muted watercolour pictures depict their simple life style and help convey the tenderness of the friendship.

The sequel, *Bravo, Ernest and Celestine* shows the pair trying their hand as street musicians in an attempt to raise money to repair the leaking roof. In both books the text is all in dialogue and is not as simple as the single line per page would lead you to believe at first glance. In my view these are best offered to those readers at the stage when they are moving from oral to silent reading, when they seem to offer most. JB

Goodnight, Goodnight
Eve Rice, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.386 2, £1.25

This is rather more a mood poem than a story: the black and white pictures with their



patches of yellow light and the text combine to create an atmosphere of homeliness as 'goodnight' falls on the city. The words are printed in white against a black background and as well as being the perfect bedtime book (which it is) this is ideal for those in the early stages of learning to read. JB

If At First You Do Not See

Ruth Brown, Sparrow Books, 0 09 932250 1, £1.60

If at first you do not see then try turning the book round . . . and round and you will quickly find that things aren't quite what they seem. We follow a greedy caterpillar as it searches for more exciting food than its usual green leaves; but every time the larva comes upon an ideal feast, the would-be meal turns out to have a personality of its own; this being revealed when we read the sideways and upside-down text. Only when the caterpillar completes its metamorphosis does it see things as they really are. An ingenious idea which should provide endless fascination for readers of all ages. JB

The Tiger Who Lost His Stripes

Anthony Paul, ill. Michael Foreman, Sparrow Books, 0 09 932070 3, £1.60

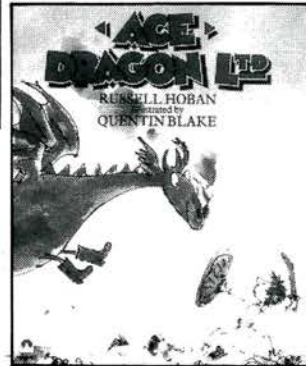
A highly amusing fable which owes something to Kipling and Aesop; the longish text, chiefly in dialogue, is very witty and great fun to read aloud. Foreman's watercolours brilliantly convey the humidity of the lush jungle landscape and are a perfect complement to the text. The original hardcover was a landscape picturebook but this squarish paperback loses nothing in its change of shape and is excellent value. Thoroughly recommended. JB

Teddybears Moving Day

Susanna Gretz, Hippo, 0 590 70229 7, £1.25

Another engaging episode featuring the five bears and Fred the dog; on this occasion they find themselves at odds

with one another and with life in general, but after a thoroughly trying and exhausting day, friendship — not to mention spaghetti — wins through. Humorous touches abound in the bright pictures and the text is clear and well spaced, and as well as the main narrative there is bubbletalk, a map and lots of other signs and labels to enjoy. JB



Ace Dragon Ltd

Russel Hoban, ill. Quentin Blake, Magnet, 0 416 23770 3, £1.25

A superb exploitation of traditional material: Ace, like other dragons can breathe fire and fly; unlike others of his kind however, he can 'spin gold into straw' an accomplishment that proves especially useful in an emergency. This funny story, wittily illustrated in shades of grey, and orange by the inimitable Blake, is ideal for the newly independent reader and for slightly older children who do not find reading easy. JB

The Greedy Little Cobbler

Tony Ross, Methuen Moonlight, 0 907144 36 5, £1.50

The Greedy Little Cobbler is a kind of neo folk tale: the hero receives payment in kind — a pig, a hen and so on — more often than not; but when he sees how a rich man lives, he decides to mend 'only the finest shoes' and sets off with his cart to tout for 'upperclass' business. Soon he is making shoes for lords, admirals and the like; but what good are these wealthy clients when none of them remembers to pay. A good example of Ross's visual and verbal humour this. JB

See You in the Morning!

Janosch, Methuen Moonlight, 0 907144 41 1, £1.50

Another artist with an off beat and highly individual sense of humour is Janosch whose *See You in the Morning* appears for the first time in English. Snoddle is a hairy, canine-looking creature whose escapades are related in seven brief linked tales. Though primarily intended as a book for reading aloud, it also

appears inviting for solo readers but those still relying to some extent on the pictures as cues to the text will not be helped by the fact that the two are sometimes out of sync. JB

Honey Bear

Gina Ruck-Pauquet/Erika Dietzsch-Capelle, Methuen Moonlight, 0 907144 41 1, £1.50

Honey Bear is an easy-going, friendly character who is too nice for his own good; everyone relies on him to help them out. But then one day he decides to do the things he likes to do best — play the violin and day dream, and so the others have to stand on their own feet. Not one of my favourite Bears though it may appeal to some ursine addicts. JB

Lola at the Riverbank

Yvan Pommaux, Methuen Moonlight, (Pocket Bears), 0 907144 43 8, £1.35

Lola at the Riverbank is a French translation whose text is solely in speech bubbles and an interesting attempt at integrating natural history facts with fiction. I am not sure that I like the mix of anthropomorphic fantasy and animal facts: it seems to me a danger that either could obscure the other. In this book the story dominates so that the information about herons and salmon might be missed by the reader. The companion volume *Lola and the Dandelion* Mystery is more overtly an attempt to convey the life history of a flowering plant, and the story suffers as a consequence. Anthropomorphism apart, the pictures in both books are closely observed and for the most part true to life. JB

The Hobyahs

Simon Stern, Magnet, 0 416 23850 5, £1.50

A very welcome paperback edition of a book which in hardcover was a great favourite with many an infant. Some alterations to the Jacobs version have been made but this does nothing to lessen the enjoyment of learner readers who adore Stern's purple creatures and delight in reading of them in his version of the traditional tale. JB

Olga Takes Charge

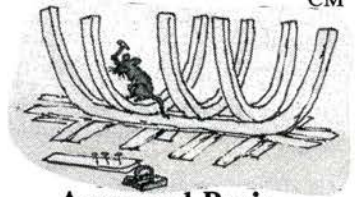
Michael Bond, ill. Hans Helwig, Young Puffin, 0 14 03 1486 5, £1.10

I'm always having to remind myself that a new primary school generation may not know the characters in vogue in my early teaching days.

Eight fresh stories about Olga the guinea pig show new

readers and listeners the character's appeal as fixer, storyteller, campaigner, wit. Bond's style does not date and the camaraderie between Olga's animal friends and the Sawdust family still strikes me as witty and endearing.

Middle infants to middle juniors will still feel at home. CM



Amos and Boris

William Steig, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050 229 7, £1.25

A welcome reprint for the beautifully-crafted story about the friendship of Amos the Mouse and Boris the Whale. 'Spacious' is the best word I can use to describe this writer-artist's style. Bold, luxuriant water colours allow young readers space for enjoyment of the almost musical text ('He loved to hear the surf sounds — the bursting breakers, the backwashes with rolling pebbles') and of the unobtrusive moral of the story.

One I'll share with all ages, especially older juniors to show them how pictures and text combine to make a story. CM

The next night the Hobyahs came again and said:



'HOBYAH! HOBYAH! HOBYAH!'
'Tear down the turnip house!'
'Chase off the old man!'
'Chase off the old woman!'
'Put the little girl in the Hobyah bag!'

Aladdin

Retold by Andrew Lang, ill. Errol Le Cain, Picture Puffins, 0 14 050 389 7, £1.50

Purists will always dispute the relative merits of different ways of telling the traditional tales. For me, Lang has all the intricate curves of the plot, the power, fear, surprise. Le Cain's pictures show the East the young have in their heads extended into intensely beautiful mosaics: sometimes shadowy, demonic and often, literally, spellbinding. For all ages.

Look at the arrival of the eighty slaves on page 16 and see how an artist's version (and our picture book technology) can show the young the patterns and complexity of a tale in a simple, stunning image. CM

Junior/Middle

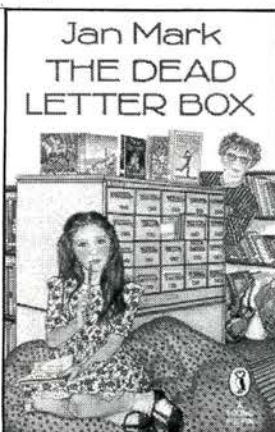
The Dead Letter Box

Jan Mark, ill. Mary Rayner, Puffin, 0 14 03 1619 1, 95p

This is one of those rare books that not only engage seven to tens on the level of 'what happens next?', but holds within it some of the powerful ideas most of them are beginning to think about.

The surface plot is simple (seeming). Louie's indifferent friend, Glenda, leaves the school and they promise to write. Louie, the bookish, isolated girl, writes; Glenda, the popular social one, doesn't.

You don't have to believe this, but the group of second year juniors I read this to involved themselves with the themes of this book for days... What does writing enable us to do? What's a true friend? All this, much more, Jan Mark's feeling for children's lives, lore and language — plus a character called Wayne who won't take his snorkel jacket off in class, make it one of the best so far this year. CM



Mary Poppins Opens the Door

0 14 03 1648 5, £1.25

Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane

0 14 03 1600 0, 95p
P. L. Travers, ill. Mary Shepard, Puffin

I never thought that the twee film version did much justice to the originality of the 'Poppins' stories: rich galleries of characters, the eccentric adult on the side of the angels, who's very much a part of our literary landscape. The film was too much magic and treacle; the stories have the fear, too and the social observation which doesn't always require a spoonful of sugar.

Nearly 40 years separates the writing of these two. *Opens the Door* introduces the character — and the world — to new readers. Literate eight-ups will enjoy the linguistic fun



and the refined, ridiculous plots. *Cherry Tree Lane* shows a lighter touch: the pace is slower and I sense a responsive allowance for 'eighties' children unfamiliar with the tunes of the earlier text. Start with this one: devotees will find the longer sustained read.

Mary Shepard's lovely, whimsical pictures are superior in the newer story. CM

The Puffin Book of Modern Fairy Tales

Stephen and Sara Corrin (eds), Puffin, 0 14 03 1546 2, £1.50

These anthologists know better than any others the importance of carefully served collections of stories for both young readers and busy teachers. Their introduction argues squarely for fairy tales as 'the very stuff' of storytelling and sees modern exponents as 'part of a living and continuing heritage'. Am I churlish in feeling a sense of disappointment in the resulting collection? It's good to have P. Pearce's *Squirrel-Wife* placed with a Farjeon (from *The Little Bookroom*), a Nesbit and J. Aiken's exquisite *Harp of Fishbones*, but the first three chapters of Hughes' *Iron Man*, whilst representative, I'd agree, of the best modern myth-making, seems either over-indulgent or inconclusive in this context.

Of the rest, too many of the stories seem too-readily available elsewhere, or, simply unworthy of inclusion. No anthologists should have to justify their inclusions, but I miss the eclecticism and creative contrasts of the editors' 'Stories for...' series: rich, always surprising books, with an instinct for the multi-cultural (in the exact sense of that word) which might have enriched this collection. CM

The World Around the Corner

Maurice Gee, Puffin, 03 1580 2, 95p

At eight or nine I would have loved this book. It contains a perfect balance between the realistic and the fantastic; there is teeth gritting tension as the forces of good and evil clash and room for sighs of satisfaction as good prevails. In her father's antique shop Caroline finds a pair of spectacles that provide a view of the world far sharper and more vivid than that provided by her own dreary glasses. Her find leads her to the ghastly Grimble, to Mr and Mrs Gates, first names Moon and Sun, and to Moon-girl. She witnesses a terrifying battle between Moon-girl and the dragon from the world of the Grimble and eventually tucks away deliciously secret memories for future dreams.

It is a short read, less than a hundred pages and just right for efficient young readers to gobble up. The cover is rather dreary and you may therefore have to persuade children to look inside. CL

The Borrowers Avenged

Mary Norton, Puffin, 0 14 03 1515 2, £1.50

The Borrowers 'Aloft' escape from the wicked Platters and their model village. The Borrowers 'Avenged' are pursued by the determined couple but eventually in the vestry of a church Timmus puts an end to the chase. I cannot keep Mary Norton's books on the library shelves and the delight with which this addition to the series, after so many years, has been greeted confirms all that I feel about the pleasure children find in genuinely enchanting and exciting fantasy.

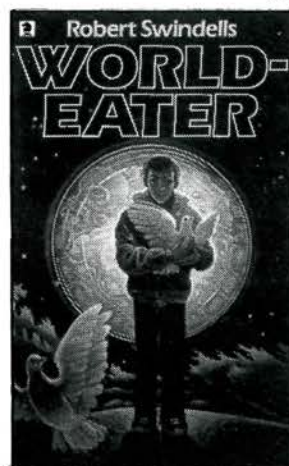
Testers from nine to fifteen have responded — 'I love the Borrowers', 'The language is very real. It is very exciting.' 'The story comes to life, the cover could easily attract someone's attention and the whole book is full of excitement.' 'Mary Norton has done well to keep the adventures unusual and interesting.' And she has indeed! Mary Norton's style is, as usual, demanding but enticing. Have lots of copies in the library and in the bookshop. CL

William the Fourth

Richmal Crompton, Macmillan, 0 333 35857 0, £1.25

There is no doubt that the very formal and adult linguistic style makes the William books material for competent readers.

It is also material for the intelligent young reader. The thoroughly ruthless way in which Richmal Crompton uses William to undo the most pretentious of people requires a level of sophistication not present in all who expect to enjoy these stories. William, however, has a loyal readership, one that passes the word on to up and coming readers and this reprint has been greeted with joy by fans. As one child remarked, 'you need patience to understand William but once you have his books are a thoroughly good read'. Among other escapades *William the Fourth* sets out to form a Bolshevik Society, kidnap Lady Barbara d'Arcey and take his elderly aunt to the fair. Originally written in 1924 the tone and illustrations make each story a period piece but there is paradoxically a sense of timelessness which causes William to be approved of by successive generations. It is a pity that the cover does not tie in with the original illustrations by Thomas Henry which are still used within the book. CL



World-eater

Robert Swindells, Knight, 0 340 32889 4, £1.25

Although lines like 'winging across the blackness of intergalactic space...' seem to suggest a recipe for the ultimate self-parody, *World-eater* presents a quite acceptable tale well told. It also provides an interesting premise for the future of the universe, that America and the Soviet Union might actually combine to work together against a threat from outside the earth. Unfortunately, the implications of this thesis will be lost on the readership of 'World-eater'. However, the story of the planet, uncannily like an egg, approaching the earth with destructive intent, contains sufficient of interest to involve readers until the joint American and Soviet space fleets sail off to do epic battle to prevent global disaster. BB

The Witch and the Grinnygog
Dorothy Edwards,
Magnet, 0 416 43050 3,
£1.25

Paperback version of Dorothy Edwards' superb venture into the invention of a world of mystery which won her the runner-up award for the Whitbread prize in 1981. Award or no award, this is an amazingly good book,

imaginatively constructed and written with much originality; if it hasn't already been added to home or school library, get this paperback edition at once. The forms that Dorothy Edwards utilises to tell the story, from diary, through

anecdote, to reportage and narrative, transcend so much of the tired writing that passes for style in children's literature, and raise the book onto a higher plane, one surely worthy of study. Thoroughly recommended. BB

Middle/Secondary

Red Pepper
Pauline Hunt, Hippo,
0 590 70093 6, £1.00

Red Pepper is Pauline Hunt's first book. Many children will be waiting for the next to come. Simon (Red) Pepper is the reflection of all those boys who cannot seem to please their anxious parents. His sport's kit is always dirty, his room is always chaos, he never quite makes the grade at school and his parents nag and gaze at Simon with desperate eyes. Simon however becomes convinced that there is more to his problem than the usual child-parent conflict. Why has no one else in the family red hair? Who is the mysterious F.C. referred to by his parents? Simon sets out to discover his real identity aided by his bright and determined friend Morgan who is, says Simon's father, 'a member of the brown rice and duffle coat brigade'. Morgan's concern for his friend does win the respect of Mr and Mrs Pepper, Simon's worst fears are not realised and the ending is entirely satisfactory without being the tear-jerker which might be expected and despised by the age group the story is aimed at. The story is written with warmth and sympathy in an easy flowing style and should appeal to many top middle school children. CL

Jacob Have I Loved
Katherine Paterson,
Puffin Plus,
0 14 03 1471 7, £1.25

Katherine Paterson won the Newbery Medal for this lost birthright story in 1980. It relates the story of twins Caroline and Louise, who is the elder by minutes. The former seems to gather all the love and attention right from birth and only when she has left their lonely island home to study music can Louise establish herself positively in the eyes of her family, dominated by a harridan, hateful grandmother. But even this does not satisfy her true inner need for love and recognition, so the time comes when she too must leave the island and seek fulfillment, which for her is in medicine.

This novel is imbued with all kinds of strong emotions that cannot fail to leave an impression on the reader for they are conveyed masterfully and poignantly — well worth introducing to older and probably well experienced readers. DB

The Boy who saw God
Ted Greenwood, Puffin Plus, 0 14 03 1583 7, 95p

This book has virtually nothing going for it — the title; the jacket illustration — and yet it is one of those hauntingly sad stories that echoes in the mind long after the book has been put down.

Leo has been brought up by a religiously pious mother, who now seems distant and burnt out, leaving her son more and more at the mercy of her antagonistic business partner Rick. One day Leo sees God, whom he feels sure is demanding the sacrifice of a sheep, an act which the boy blunderingly perpetrates, with consequences much greater than he can ever have imagined or indeed have hoped for.

Short and deceptively simple this story could touch the hearts and minds of sensitive readers. DB

Closer to the Stars
Max Fatchen, Puffin,
0 14 03 1624 8, £1.25

I think we all go through the stage of thinking that all history is exclusively *British*. It must be the way it is taught. Here's a chance to do your bit to rectify the situation; this book concerns World War II from the other side of the world, where young Australians are being trained as pilots. It also embraces the less well covered subject of a young lad squaring up to the fact that his older sister is expecting an illegitimate child, much to the open disapproval of the neighbourhood.

The tone is sentimental at times but the characterisation is strong and there is a distinctly positive underlining of the waste of life that combat entails, forcefully emphasised by the Hawk/Victim image that begins and pervades the book, and by the two old war-horses, Curtiss and Perce who influence Paul, the lad, in ways direct and indirect.

Certainly worth a copy or two in lower Secondary libraries. DB

Star Trek
William Rotsler,
Sparrow,
0 09 932230 7, £1.25

The white-sliced-bread of Children's Literature — it'll be

eagerly devoured but will not be very filling! Its T.V. and film tag ensures purchasers for this collection of 6 stories most of which are utterly familiar to us from our telly watching. I think the bizarre made-up names and terms irritated me more than the stories — try paragraph one of 'The Blaze of Glory' to see what I mean.

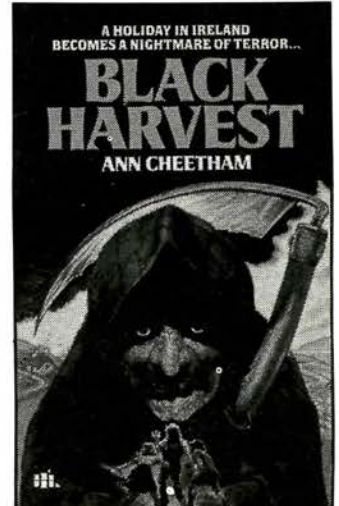
I marginally enjoyed 'Intelligence Test' best where Pavel Chekov is about to make his first transport down to an unknown planet and all the dangers that are secretly held there, including the whatever — Snakes who may or may not represent intelligent life, a question which Chekov deftly answers, even getting one up on the super-cool and profoundly logical Mister Spock. DB

Paddy Joe
Joyce Stranger,
Carousel,
0 552 52234 1, £1.25

Don't be deterred by the appalling cover illustration, or the large-print synopsis of the plot which makes it sound like a saccharine saga for remedial readers. 'Paddy Joe' is a well-written adventure, uncompromisingly unsentimental, despite the mawkish impression given on the cover. As an exploration into the reactions of a solitary child when his whole world, his security, is threatened by fragmentation, it has the ring of veracity. Drawing strength from his recent reading of the journey of the hobbits in *Lord of the Rings*, persevering through many dangers, Paddy Joe decides he too must leave home. The account of his adventures makes excellent reading — there's even a happy ending for good measure. BB

Black Harvest
Ann Cheetham, Armada,
0 00 692199 X, £0.95p

Black Harvest is a marvellously powerful book. Leaning heavily upon researched facts about the Irish potato famine of 1845-9, the author has written an unusually effective story which combines sensitivity, realism and horror at man's inhumanity to his fellow humans' sufferings. Ann Cheetham has managed to evoke the chillness and eeriness of the spirit world, while at the same time conveying the tragedy of the



Hungry Forties and the residual bitterness that is inherited by generations of Irish whose ancestors were forced either to die or emigrate to escape the deprivations of their homeland. BB

The All Electric Amusement Arcade
Gerard Macdonald,
Fontana, 0 00 672295 4,
£1.25

Punks, pop, pace and pathos; not great literature but hugely entertaining, this is a lively and genuinely funny story about youth as they dream and wish they could be and accepted on that level it becomes a book worth publishing.

Fifteen year-old, dynamic, Bella, bullies, cajoles and schemes to acquire a faded amusement arcade and turn it into a dream-come-true location for teeny boppers, and in the process she escapes into her own dream world, away from pressing family difficulties and the truancy officer. She demonstrates through sheer determination and guile the life skills that schools do not teach but should, and the magnificent premise that 'There's a stage in your life when you think you can do anything'.

Since it is based on a Thames T.V. series, with the right promotion, Bella could be as big as Tucker in the adolescent imagination. DB

Authorgraph No. 23

Philippa Pearce

Philippa Pearce's cottage stands opposite the Mill House where she spent her childhood. She recalls living there, the youngest of four children, as a very happy time.

'Oh it was lovely, it really was. Although there wasn't much cash we had lots of space. My father ran the mill and because he was the miller he had a narrow strip running up the river for about an eighth of a mile. We had a canoe, we swam, the river wasn't polluted at all in those days, my father fished (of course we girls didn't fish!) and in the mill was a wonderful workshop for carpentry and sack-mending and that sort of thing. On a Saturday afternoon my father went off to the Corn Exchange in Cambridge and my mother went with him to change her library book. We used to nip into the mill by a secret way we knew — we were never supposed to do this — and we used to play among the sacks and hide. It was a lovely time.'

Yet surrounded by family there was a sense of being separate, something, perhaps, which makes Philippa Pearce such an acute observer of people, places and feelings. 'I was a bit isolated. My sister was eight years older and the boys did everything together.' She was also ill for a long period. 'I didn't go to school until I was eight or nine. When I did go it was very leisurely. We didn't have afternoon school until I was about thirteen or fourteen. I used to come home at lunchtime and potter around up the river. I don't think it did me any harm.'

It didn't prevent her from getting a scholarship to Cambridge. Of her university career she says, 'I think I was a bit sort of asleep most of the time; and I worked terribly hard, quite unnecessarily hard. I woke up much more after Cambridge.' That was at the end of the war. Two false starts with the Civil Service led her to the BBC where she joined the Schools Broadcasting Department and stayed happily for thirteen years as script writer and producer. 'We did adaptations of books. I had to study techniques and structure and what you could do with a book. I began to think it wouldn't be impossible to try to do the same thing myself.' But she was kept fairly busy and it wasn't until 1953 when she got TB and had a long spell in hospital that she began. 'The hospital was in Cambridge; it was a hot summer and I was awfully fed up. I thought of my home and how lovely it would be to be there and to go in the canoe. I began to imagine exactly what it was like. I found I could recreate it in detail and even feel the texture of the twine that ties the canoe to the landing stage that my brother once made. And then I began to think of a story of two boys in a canoe. I wrote it with the absolute innocence of never having done it before. I just went straight ahead; it was lovely.'

Fit again and out of hospital Philippa Pearce tried to find a publisher for what had become *Minnow on the Say*. 'I offered it first of all to Faber who turned it down and I must say I was furious. I thought I had been so calm about it all, but when they turned it down I was furious.' Then John Bell at OUP read it. 'He wrote to me. I shall never forget it. I still have the letter. "We shall be delighted to publish!" I had just had breakfast and I was drying up. I opened it and read it and was bowled over by it. I was putting things away ready to catch the bus to

go to work and I couldn't think why I couldn't put the plate away. I had got this plate and I was trying to force it into the cutlery drawer.'

Minnow on the Say was published in 1955. 'I went round saying this was the only book I was ever going to write; it seemed far safer to say that.' Three years later came Tom's *Midnight Garden*. Like the first book it is rooted in intense personal feelings. 'My father had to retire and they sold the Mill House. Suddenly my childhood was chopped off from me. As they were in the process of selling it I began thinking of writing stories based on the house and the garden and this feeling of things slipping away. It's a terrible feeling. I'm glad I have forgotten what it felt like.' She had the theme, she needed a plot. 'Looking back now at *Minnow on the Say* I think the treasure hunt idea is corny. At the time I wasn't sophisticated enough to see how weak it was, but I did know it was a convention I was borrowing and I was very conscious that the plot was far too involved. I decided this new book would be just about children playing in the garden, nothing more than that. But of course it would have been shapeless. My elder brother and his friends were reading J W Dunne's *Experiment in Time*. I never really understood it properly but it was a sort of theoretical base for the book.'

It fed the real impulse of the book, 'the feeling of time passing, people becoming old. Even though I wasn't old I could see that if you were old you hadn't been old forever.'

The house and garden remain, largely unchanged and uncannily familiar to anyone who knows the book. Philippa Pearce is on good terms with the present owners and their children. Walking round the garden she recreates her childhood and the book. She points out the door in the wall which out-of-time Tom squeezes through like an inexperienced ghost. 'It's a nice door isn't it. On these walls there were the most marvellous plums. I've never seen them before or since. You could hold them up to the light and see through them... My father did actually walk along the top of this wall as a boy, and he also skated to Ely. All that in the book was based on what he told us. I imagine Hatty as being born about when my father was born, in 1876.'

Two novels published, one a Carnegie winner. Was she beginning to think of herself as a children's writer? 'Well, at that point it was still something I did in my spare time. I wasn't sure whether I would go on writing or not.' She did. *A Dog so Small*, about Ben who becomes increasingly locked into his fantasies about having a dog, was turned down by OUP and eventually published by Constable in 1962.

Scenery, places, are important in Philippa Pearce's stories. 'That often comes to me before anything else.' When she married Martin Christie they went to live in Suffolk and she found a new landscape, one which has appeared in the short stories and now most dominantly in her latest book *The Way to Sattin Shore*.

'"Sattin" Shore is a real place; it's a small estuary in Suffolk where we used to live. You approach it along a long road; it was always deserted because you weren't allowed to take a car along. The idea for the story has been lying around in my mind for 15 or 20 years. I wanted to do something



Photographs by Richard Mewton



with this feeling of going to meet somebody, going to meet somebody for a very important encounter, almost of going to meet your destiny, what you should be or what you were. I wanted that at the heart of it. I still come across boss shots at the beginning of that story dating years back. Kestrel wanted me to call it just Sattin Shore; but I wanted it to be *The Way to Sattin Shore* because it was the way into the past, as though the past were a place.'

In the book *Kate*, the central character, makes several journeys to Sattin Shore to unravel the mystery that surrounds her father whom she believes is dead. There she meets her granny who belongs to the place, and the place which was so important, and in the end she meets her father. It is a moment of great intensity.

'He had been swimming naked, as the place was very deserted: and so Kate saw her father as Eve saw Adam newly created in the Garden of Eden.'

'What I meant, if I "meant" anything was that she needed him so much she almost created him. I wanted him to be absolutely stark naked. At that moment he's the perfect man, the perfect father, the Michelangelo Adam. In some ways he was a weak man. But for Kate he was perfect.'

This encounter becomes even more poignant when Philippa Pearce reveals that her husband died when their daughter was only a few weeks old. But she insists firmly that the book has nothing to do with her daughter. 'It is something I have imagined.'

As a newly widowed single parent Philippa Pearce had to re-organise her life. She returned to London and became a freelance. 'I did part-time work with the BBC as a producer. At the same time I was part-time children's editor for Andre Deutsch. They had never had a children's list before. I have never worked so hard.'

She stayed with Deutsch for five years. 'I loved doing it, and I think I was really helpful to people... Once you get a good writer you don't want to interfere with them.'

About being edited herself she is less happy. 'I don't much like constructive criticism', she smiles, 'so when I finally send it, it is as near perfect as I can make it. Of course there is constructive criticism you have to pay attention to but I dread it, it's drudgery. I think I'm just not good at plots. This latest one caused me lots of problems. I think it was because I was out of practice. I'd translated *Wings of Courage* but nothing very serious and sustained and completely my own for a long time. It took ages.'

Short stories are a different matter. 'I love doing short stories. I don't find them as difficult. I can get a complete idea for a short story whereas when I have written a long book I've never had a complete idea for the whole thing. I have a theme in my mind and one or two strong scenes and then I begin fumbling my way forward.' Like most writers she knows the despair of getting stuck, of not being able to make it work. 'You can go on writing, anyone can write a bad book, a book that doesn't take off, where the writing is dead.'

'I usually give up and go away and let it work in my mind. There is just one story, *At the River Gates*, when I got the whole story in my head between being asleep and being fully awake one morning. It was marvellous. I had never done anything like that before. I'm sure it was lying in wait for me really. It's a lovely feeling.'

Philippa Pearce's short stories demonstrate how well she understands children, their relationships with adults, the strength of their emotions. This quality is also present in *The Battle of Bubble and Squeak* which won the Whitbread Award in 1978. It was written after Philippa Pearce and her daughter had moved to the village to make it easier to keep the animals Sally loved.



Among the cats, dogs, goat, horse etc. that joined the household were two gerbils.

'It was a terrible time. I don't really take to gerbils but Sally had the chance of getting them and she was radiant at the opportunity; she was about nine. So we had them. Almost all the incidents in the book happened to us: they gnawed holes in the curtains, the cat caught one and we took it to the vet and the vet told us what to do and we saved his life. I invented the rest, but everything about the gerbils was absolutely true.'

'What I wanted to do with that book was make the opening pages deliberately gripping for say a junior child and yet be simple enough for perhaps a younger child, or a junior child who wasn't a very good reader.'

This clear sense of the reader comes very much from Philippa Pearce's years with Schools Broadcasting. 'I very often find myself referring back to that period of my life to get it right. And I have learned an awful lot from teachers and from children, of course. I like talking to children. I prefer talking to children than adults. Adults are so polite you never know when they are bored or not. Children always yawn if they are bored.'

There is a lot of the teacher and a fair bit of the actor in Philippa Pearce. 'I enjoy telling stories; it is lovely holding an audience. I don't usually use my own because although they read aloud alright (I hope), they don't tell well. *The Shadow Cage* I originally told in a school and another one, *The Great Sharp Scissors* will be in my new collection for 5-7's.'

She's working on that now. It's something she started while working on the BBC series *Listening and Reading*, and she's enjoying writing for a different age. 'I think it keeps you flexible, like gymnastics.' And after that? 'I don't know. I am sure I will want to try, if life lasts out, another long book; but I haven't got one in mind yet. At least I don't think I have. You never know what is lying around in your mind.'



The Books

Minnow on the Say
OUP, 0 19 277064 0, £2.25
Puffin, 0 14 03.1022 3, £1.10

Tom's Midnight Garden
OUP, 0 19 271128 8, £4.50
Puffin, 0 14 03.0893 8, 95p

A Dog So Small
Kestrel, 0 7226 5261 5, £3.95
Puffin, 0 14 03.0206 9, 90p

Mrs Cockle's Cat
ill. Antony Maitland, Kestrel,
0 7226 5260 7, £3.95

What the Neighbours Did
Kestrel, 0 7226 5262 3, £4.50
Puffin, 0 14 03.0710 9, 95p

The Shadow Cage
Kestrel, 0 7226 5243 7, £4.50
Puffin, 0 14 03.1073 8, 85p

The Elm Street Lot
Kestrel, 0 7226 5515 0, £3.95
Puffin, 0 14 03.1147 5, 90p

The Battle of Bubble and Squeak
Deutsch, 0 233 96986 1, £3.50
Puffin, 0 14 03.1183 1, 80p

Wings of Courage
(translated and adapted from a story by George Sand)
Kestrel, 0 7226 5770 6, £4.50

The Way to Sattin Shore
Kestrel, 0 7226 5882 6, £5.95

The Squirrel Wife
(out of print in the Kestrel picture edition)
Collected in *The Faber Book of Modern Fairy Tales*, Corrin and Corrin (eds) Faber,
0 571 11768 6, £5.95
Puffin, 0 1403 1546 2, £1.50

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0 571 13109 3 £4.95



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with Sara and Stephen Corrin

All the excitement and mystery of Christmas is gathered into this story anthology, in which younger children will find such familiar friends as Mrs Pepperpot, Bobby Brewster and My Naughty Little Sister, as well as stories by Astrid Lindgren, Alison Uttley, Beatrix Potter and many others. Jill Bennett's imaginative drawings add to the distinction of this collection. 0 571 13151 4 £4.50

The Faber Book of Carols and Christmas Songs

arranged by Eric Roseberry

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Christmas REVIEWED



Every autumn brings a new batch of books linked in some way or another with Christmas. For those keen to add something new to their collection of seasonal standbys we review this year's offerings.

Best of the bunch by about a million miles is **Merry Christmas, Ernest and Celestine**, Gabrielle Vincent, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 146 X, £4.95

This is the fifth book about the little mouse, Celestine, and Ernest the bear who looks after her; a point at which you might expect to find signs that invention was wearing thin. On the contrary Gabrielle Vincent's depiction of the adult/child relationship is richer and more subtle than ever. Pleading, insisting, cajoling and finally using the ultimate weapon, 'But you promised', Celestine convinces Ernest that you don't need money to give a party. Led by her enthusiasm, and on minimum resources they have a party that not even supercilious older cousin Max can spoil. The pictures show so much, so beautifully, you hardly need the text. (There is no credit for the translation but whoever produced it has done a good job.)

Next Christmas this will be in paperback for sure. But if you wait till then you'll be missing a treat which is worth every penny of the asking price.

Two books have Christmas trees at their centres.



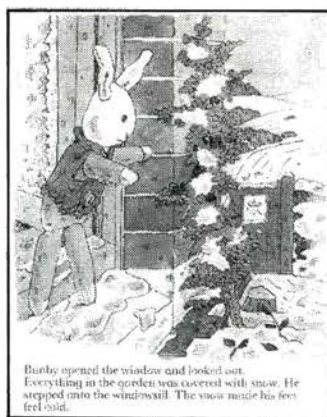
Christkindel transforms the old woman's Christmas tree in **The Cobweb Christmas**

The Cobweb Christmas, Shirley Climo, ill. Joe Lasker, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11053 X, £4.50

In the style of a traditional German tale a little old woman moves through her ritual preparations for Christmas. She shares her decorated tree with the village children and the animals, falls asleep and wakes to find that Christkindel has worked some special magic just for her. What happened *might* explain why today we hang tinsel on our Christmas trees. Attractive illustrations; a good story for reading aloud.

In **A Happy Christmas**, Harold Jones, Deutsch, 0 233 97606 X, £3.95
Magnet, 0 416 46260 X, £1.25 (pb)

Santa Claus works some more Christmas tree magic. This time at the request of toy rabbit, Bunby, who gets his wish 'to see my forest friends have a real Christmas tree of their own'. Harold Jones who has been illustrating children's books since the 1930's (he did the classic Nursery Rhyme collection *Lavender's Blue*) is now 79. The home and family in these pictures have a decidedly pre-war feel (as do the elves, Santa's helpers) which may recommend it to nostalgic adults. Young children will simply



enjoy it as a fantasy, a seasonal adventure for a very appealing and expressive toy.

Another toy to go flying through the Christmas Eve skies is **Ted in Mary's Christmas Present**, Jan Mogensen, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11014 9, £4.75



'He thought about his warm house and the beautiful Christmas tree, and soon he fell asleep.'

This is Jan Mogensen's third book about Ted, Mary's toy bear. So far I've remained immune to the charms of this particular teddy; but **Mary's Christmas Present** has a stronger storyline and more substance than its predecessors. Ted saves the life of an exhausted large black bird. In return the bird, with Ted on his back, flies to find a very special present for Mary. The illustrations — flying over snow-covered fields, a snowstorm, the bird's nest inside a hollow tree — are full of interest and exactly complement the text.

Leo's Christmas Surprise, Niki Daly, Gollancz, 0 575 03274 X, £4.50

This is also about a present and Christmas Eve. Leo's family — Mum, Dad, and Gran are busy preparing for Christmas; but Grandpa Bob is up to something mysterious, collecting an empty tin from the dust bin, Gran's rolling pin, the bathroom plug, and other strange things, and disappearing into his workshop. Leo has to wait until Christmas morning to solve the mystery. But the reader can guess and there are clues to be found in the pictures. Niki Daly's portrayal of family life is warmly realistic and full of nicely observed detail.

Two moveables.

Spot's First Christmas, Eric Hill, Heinemann, 0 434 94298 7, £4.95

Spot Book No. 4, and well up to form. The text is readable, the pictures bright; this time the flap-lifting involves all the excitements of Christmas.

The Bunnies' Christmas Eve, Wendy Watson, Methuen, 0 416 45680 4, £5.95

This is described as a Peep Through Pop-up. It folds round to make four standup 3D

scenes with tabs to pull for action. The two versions of the story that goes with it are told in that limp, patronising prose that some adults think is the way to address children. It is not easy to see what is happening at the back of each scene, and the action which results from pulling the tabs is pretty uninventive by current pop-up standards. Not worth the money.

Songs and Poems are offered in a variety of forms

The Night Before Christmas, pictures by Peter Stevenson, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 33048 1, £4.95

Yet another picture book version of Clement C. Moore's famous American poem. Peter Stevenson uses the between-the-wars style of illustration and design (so successful in his pictures for Edna O'Brien's stories about *The Dazzle*). Clean lines, crowded detail — St Nick's sleigh is packed high and overflowing with toys — and touches of humour produce the sort of pictures that children pore over for ages. If you want a version of this poem, you could do worse.

We Wish You a Merry Christmas, pictures by Tracey Campbell Pearson, Bodley Head, 0 370 30975 8, £4.50

Reversing the process, here is an American artist illustrating a traditional West Country carol — and we've come off worst. Eight cute, muppet-like carol-singing kiddies terrorise an elderly couple, demanding figgy pudding. Wobbly cartoon drawings. Not funny. The blurb says the children 'evoke the very spirit of Christmas'. If they do, it's a nasty thought.

For a wider choice of songs and carols turn to the timely paperback edition of **The Faber Book of Carols and Christmas Songs**, arranged by Eric Rosebery, Faber, 0 571 13189 1, £2.50

Words and music, some scored for different voices, some with percussion accompaniment. A well-recommended standard.

The Oxford Book of Christmas Poems, ed Michael Harrison and Christopher Smart-Clark, OUP, 0 19 276051 3, £6.95

This book could well become an indispensable and classic standby for the time of year. Well over a hundred poems reflecting all facets of Christmas: the religious, the secular, the traditional, the up-to-date. Such variety of tone, form, length and style that there is something for every mood, purpose and person (of whatever age). Illustrated in colour and black and white by 24 artists.



Round the Christmas Tree, ed Sara and Stephen Corrin, Faber, 0 571 13151 4, £4.50

This is a collection of sixteen stories for the under-nines, specially chosen for reading aloud. Much of the material may be already familiar: Bobby Brewster, My Naughty Little Sister, Mrs Pepperpot, Lotta, all appear along with the classic Alison Uttley tale, *The Little Fir Tree*. But there is Wagby-Wall a little known story by Beatrix Potter, and it's nice to have V.H. Drummond's delightful *Miss Anna Truly and the Christmas Lights* so readily to hand.

WINTER STORIES

chosen by
Margery Fisher

Editor of
Growing Point

The invitation to write this article came to me on the hottest day of the year and naturally the books that first came to mind were those that gave the strongest impression of cold. Looked at in a more detached way, this still seems a valid way to choose. The stories most important to the young are surely those that transport them to a different world for the time of reading — books that offer, not the instant scenic effects of television but the pictures that imagination builds from powerful words.

I must first define my territory. Two obvious subjects must be discarded for lack of space. In leaving out Hallowe'en I deny myself the chance to recommend many sparkling witch-comedies, including Eleanor Estes' incomparable romp, *The Witch Family*. Picture books on the Nativity and family festivities would make an article in themselves, with Jean de Brunhoff's endearing *Babar and Father Christmas*, Brian Wildsmith's electrifying set of images, *The Twelve Days of Christmas* and, in contrast, Jenny Overton's ingenious seventeenth-century pastiche, *The Thirteen Days of Christmas*; no space either for Graham Oakley's diverting *The Church Mice at Christmas*, the latest delights from that superb newcomer Gabrielle Vincent, *Merry Christmas*, Ernest and Celestine and of course Raymond Briggs' uniquely crusty *Father Christmas*.

But it is not only at Christmas that joy and affection keep out the cold. First, picture books, with the visual impact paramount, and in one notable case, complete in itself, for in *The Snowman* Raymond Briggs brilliantly expressed a child's delight in winter without using any words. The snow-model (cinder buttons, doughnut nose) quickens into a friendly companion who in return for a tour of the house takes the ecstatic small boy on a snowy flight; though the dream ends in melted snow, the memory of warm friendship remains. Following an exquisite sequence of crayoned views we 'read' the boy's alternating moods of joy, alarm, sorrow and amusement.

Few books will stand comparison with this masterpiece but it is worth remembering here another comment on children's approach to what we call 'bad weather', Peter Spier's *Rain*, another almost textless book depicting brother and sister as they stamp through puddles, float paper boats and finally take refuge at a cosy fireside, the necessary dénouement. Water-colour here, precisely detailed and joyously varied, says it all.

Deep in the Swedish countryside the secret benefactor, the Tomten, mounts winter guard over the farm. Astrid Lindgren adapted poems by Viktor Rydberg to accompany Harald Wiberg's superb paintings for *The Tomten and The Fox and the Tomten*. In the first book the brownie-like creature tours barn and stable to remind the animals of summer joys; in the second he offers prowling Reynard his traditional porridge and forbids him to touch the hens. Simple, evocative words link scenes based on the farm of the author's childhood; they strike at the heart with homely details and finely composed scenes.

Pictures stir imagination to extend the stories in these books; certainly imagination is strongly moved by Ruth Craft's few selected words and Erik Blegvad's pictures for *The Winter Bear*. Under a frosty sun children rampaging in the cold see a strange fruit on one bare tree, a battered toy bear

From *Moominland*
Midwinter



which they happily refurbish in the warmth of home. Nor has Ezra Jack Keats's black hero Peter any wish to escape the rigours of New York's winter: the sensuous colours and shapes of *The Snowy Day* touch closely a child's delight in snow-games.

So, pictures must do more than set a scene — more, even, than make us feel winter in our bones. In all these picture books we see high spirits and familial affection defeating the cold. Never was this more delicately shown than in *The Tailor of Gloucester*, Beatrix Potter's tale of the poor tailor and his malicious cat and the grateful mice who saved his reputation by finishing the Mayor's wedding clothes while he lay sick. Words set the scene:

'The moon climbed up over the roofs and chimneys, and looked down over the gateway into College Court. There were no lights in the windows, nor any sound in the houses; all the city of Gloucester was fast asleep under the snow.'

and pictures of supreme, fine detail confirm it, capturing human feelings and the impersonal silence of winter for all time.

The seasons march through folk-tale, never more significantly than in Hans Andersen's stories, in *The Little Match Girl* or *The Ugly Duckling* or *Thumbelina* or, most notably, in *The Snow Queen*. Words should be left to do the work alone here. Between

Below, from *The Winter Bear*.

'Knitted with care. A bit damp, a bit leafy, In need of repair, but still, an excellent bear.'



the simplest domestic detail (Kay and Gerda heating coins to melt peepholes in frozen window-panes) to the stern symbol of the fragment of ice in Kay's heart, there is an unforgettable panorama of scenes as faithful Gerda traces her lost playmate to the snow palace with its windows and doors made of 'the sharp winds' and its halls 'lighted by the sharp glare of the northern lights . . . huge, empty and terrifyingly cold'. This deeply reflective tale makes its first impact on children through atmosphere, through the distillation of cold and the fear of cold deep in all of us: best, perhaps, if they listen to it first.

Reading to themselves, at around seven, they can enjoy the activities of the three brothers in William Mayne's tale, *The Man from the North Pole*, as they sledge on steep Yorkshire fields. Mayne's simplest stories have deep meaning. In this one the stranger in the fields raises problems of belief and reason. Words compose a vivid picture of a farm in winter, with wet boots 'their mouths open to the fire' and the snow-plough 'butting its giant head through the drifts'. From Yorkshire into Cheshire, where in Alan Garner's *Tom Fobble's Day* a boy whose sledge has been purloined watches as his grandfather builds him another and at last triumphantly coasts down the slope of Lizzie Leah's field in the light of war's searchlights, in the 'black and glittering night and the sky flying on fire and the expectation of snow'. A total experience of time and place is encapsulated in this short book, one of four in the 'Stone Quartet', a modern classic in which every turn of phrase is vital to a reverberant unity of style, feeling and idea.

Two more books for (but not exclusively for) those middle years, up to ten or so, depend on winter for plot and images. E. W. Hildick's *Louie's Snowstorm* is the third tale of the idiosyncratic milk roundsman Louie Lay. Unwillingly accepting an American observer for the exacting Christmas Eve deliveries (his reluctance intensified when he learns the visitor is a girl), Louie has to give her best as she battles with one crisis after another. The melodramatic ending suits the wise-cracking, hyperbolic narrative of a day of emergencies. A book for fun, as Paul Theroux's *London Snow* is a book for thought. This novella may seem no more to children than a winter adventure with Dickensian characters (a malaprop shop-keeper and her young charges and a morose landlord whose threats to turn the sweet-shop into a launderette

disappear when he is marooned in a lighter halfway across the frozen Thames), a bizarre happening rather than the occasion for an almost Victorian repentance. Never mind, here is the city under snow, and if the young (for whom the book was re-published) are captured by the well-crafted prose and the compelling feel of winter, they will have gained much.

London is the setting too for a fanciful tale that really deserves reprinting, **The Tinsel November** by Julia Rhys. Not the Thames this time but Richmond Park and an adjacent street of old shops where Emma, helping mysterious Signor Arlechino ('dark-browed, fine-featured, weather-beaten and — distinctly wooden') out of the cold, finds herself involved, with her friend Guy, in the search for other members of this Harlequinade, puppets almost life-size sadly separated but joyously re-united. The feel of London streets in winter is strong in a book of special quality.

Another story which really should be made available to young readers of today is Robert Lawson's fable of Vermont snow and ice, **The Tough Winter**. This sequel to **Rabbit Hill** describes how young Georgie and his father and cantankerous old Uncle Analdas, rabbits of personality, with their friend Willie Fieldmouse, face starvation when the benevolent couple in the Big House move south, leaving caretakers who have no idea of helping the local animals. Enlivened with idiomatic dialogue and racy narrative, and with some intriguingly unusual characters (skunk, gopher, chipmunk) the story fairly crackles with ice and humour. Not long ago a new author presented in a tale set in a Yorkshire town some seventy years ago a group of animals facing dangers from men as well as weather. In Nora Wilkinson's **The Snow House** small Fred's unusual construction becomes a refuge for mice driven from the cellars by indefatigable housewife Aunt Jen; when a thaw threatens, a friendly cat helps Fred to move the mice to a new home and escape the ambitious proprietor of a mouse-circus. This tale of tension and excitement is full of entrancing detail and cosy humour.

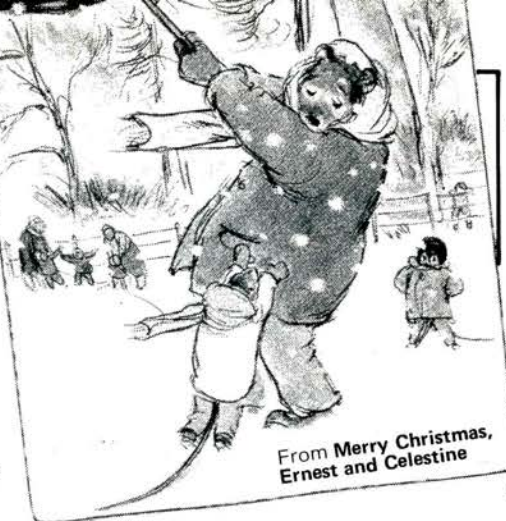
No familiar mice or rabbits in Tove Jansson's tales but her own imagined creatures — rotund Moomins, melancholy Hemulens, the egocentric Little My and the rest. Of all her books I particularly like **Moominland Midwinter** for the total identification of theme and setting. Put simply, this is the story of a hibernating animal waking by mistake to a world at once familiar but different: but Moomintroll's experience is so haunting, his adventures with Too-Ticky so entertaining and his brush with the grey, icy Groke so terrifying that the book will stand any number of re-readings. So, of course, will Masefield's gloriously exciting second tale of Kay's contest with villainous Abner Brown, **The Box of Delights**, where bitter cold and dark, lowering hills contrast with glowing lamplight and the comfort of secret, magic allies. Of all winter fantasies, this one is pre-eminent in rich, plangent prose, broad comedy and multifarious incident.

The challenge of winter may take many forms. There can be fun in confronting difficulty — for instance, in two books long vanished, Margaret J. Baker's cheerful **Castaway Christmas** and Richard Garnett's spirited skating adventure, **The White Dragon**, and, of course, in Arthur Ransome's **Winter Holiday**, where the two town visitors, Dorothy and Dick, trudge their way to the 'North Pole', determined not to accept help from the knowledgeable Swallows and Amazons. For indefatigable readers there is that capacious, digressive picture of old Holland, **The American classic**, (no less than 123 years old now) Mary Mapes Dodge's **Hans Brinker**, with humble Gretel's triumph in a skating race as the centre.

A far more severe challenge is faced in

Laura Ingalls Wilder's **The Long Winter** when Pa, Ma and the children battle with prairie blizzards to tend the beasts and roll straw to feed the hungry stoves — no more hungry than the isolated family when supplies are outpaced by exceptional weather. This utterly simple, unexaggerated book, like the rest of the sequence, offers an authentic picture of the pioneer past which readers as young as eight could appreciate. Honest and direct, too, Rutgers van der Loeff in **Avalanche!** reveals one of winter's worst dangers through the eyes of a Swiss boy evacuated from a village where his home and parents are engulfed. Beyond the uncompromising detail of the disaster lies a strong message. A group of boys, with their teacher, from a Pestalozzi village are caught by the snow near the village and the theme of international comradeship is carried through a narrative full of humour and warm feeling.

Cold becomes a dread symbol in two remarkable fantasies. Susan Cooper in **The Dark is Rising** chose the environs of Windsor for the second (and, for me, the best) of five books centering on the contest between Good and Evil. The dark of blizzard is matched by the efforts of the Dark Rider and his minions against the Old Ones and especially the youngest of them, a boy whose twelfth birthday involves him in magic adventures calling on all his courage. The reader is held by atmosphere conveyed in magnificent pictures of wood and river as much as by the suspense and mystery of event. Patricia Wrightson's **The Ice is Coming** gives a twist to winter menace, for when the Ninya move south from Queensland to attack the Eldest Nargun, a spirit born of molten rock, and so to win power over the



whole land, they bring unaccustomed ice to hot desert and dry hillside and, with the ice, alarm to Wirrun, involuntary champion of the People whose country it rightly is.

I will end, though, on a happier note. In the Western world, where cold is the mythical enemy, fireside and family affection become prime weapons, and what more reassuring picture of winter to offer than the sight of Mole and Ratty entertaining the carol-singing field-mice deep underground after their struggle through the snow-bound terrors of the Wild Wood. Kenneth Grahame's **The Wind in the Willows** is indisputably a classic for its urbane wisdom and lyrical style, its robust humour and shrewd perception, its serene country settings; in the present context, it can be guaranteed to hold back the shadows of winter with its assertion of the value of warm days and warm friendship. ●

Books mentioned

The Witch Family, Eleanor Estes (1962), Longman (o/p)

Babar and Father Christmas, Jean de Brunhoff (1940 France/1941 UK), Methuen, 0 416 57380 0, £3.95

The Twelve Days of Christmas, Brian Wildsmith (1972), OUP, 0 19 272115 1, £1.75 pb

The Thirteen Days of Christmas, Jenny Overton (1972), Faber, 0 571 09918 1, £3.50

The Church Mice at Christmas, Graham Oakley (1980), Macmillan Picturemags, 0 333 32483 8, £1.50 pb

Merry Christmas, Ernest and Celestine, Gabrielle Vincent (1983), Julia MacRae, 0 86203 146 X, £4.95

Father Christmas, Raymond Briggs (1973), Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 02260 6, £3.50; Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.125 8, £1.50

The Snowman, Raymond Briggs (1978), Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10004 6, £3.25; Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.350 1, £1.25

Rain, Peter Spier (1982), Collins, 0 00 195165 3, £3.50

The Tomten, Astrid Lindgren (1962), Kestrel, 0 7226 5188 0, £5.25

The Fox and the Tomten, Astrid Lindgren (1966), Kestrel, 0 7226 5189 9, £4.95

The Winter Bear, Ruth Craft, ill. Erik Blegvad (1974), Collins, 0 00 195869 0, £3.95; Picture Lions, 0 00 660872 8, £1.00

The Snowy Day, Ezra Jack Keats (1962 USA/1967 UK), Bodley Head, 0 370 00776 X, £3.95

The Tailor of Gloucester, Beatrix Potter (1903), Warne, 0 7232 0594 9, £1.50

The Complete Fairy Tales and Stories of Hans Andersen, Erik Haugaard (Trans. 1974), Gollancz, 0 575 02188 8, £6.00

The Man from the North Pole, William Mayne (1963), Hamish Hamilton (o/p)

Tom Fobble's Day, Alan Garner (1977), Collins, 0 00 184832 1, £4.95; Fontana Lions, 0 00 671601 6, 75p

Louie's Snowstorm, E.W. Hildick (1975), Deutsch (o/p)

London Snow, Paul Theroux, ill. John Lawrence (1979), Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10450 5, £4.95; Puffin 0 14 03.1442 3, £1.00

The Tinsel November, Julia Rhys (1963), Hart-Davis (o/p)

The Tough Winter, Robert Lawson (1954 USA), not available in this country

The Snow House, Nora Wilkinson (1980), Kestrel, 0 7226 5687 4, £5.25; Puffin, 0 14 03.1289 7, £1.25

Moominland Midwinter, Tove Jansson (1958), Puffin, 0 14 03.0502 5, 95p

The Box of Delights, John Masefield (1935), Heinemann, 0 434 95050 5, £4.50; New Windmill Heinemann Ed., 0 435 12041 7, £1.95

Castaway Christmas, Margaret J. Baker (1963), Methuen (o/p)

The White Dragon, Richard Garnett (1963), Hart-Davis (o/p)

Winter Holiday, Arthur Ransome (1933), Cape, 0 224 60634 4, £5.95; Puffin 0 14 03.0341 3, £1.50

Hans Brinker or The Silver Skates, Mary Mapes Dodge (1865), Dent (o/p)

The Long Winter, Laura Ingalls Wilder (1940 USA), Lutterworth, 0 7188 0520 8, £4.25; Puffin, 0 14 03.0381 2, £1.25

Avalanche!, A. Rutgers van der Loeff (1954 Holland), Puffin, 0 14 03.0131 3, £1.10

The Dark is Rising, Susan Cooper (1973), Chatto, 0 7011 5020 3, £4.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.0799 0, £1.35

The Ice is Coming, Patricia Wrightson (1977), Hutchinson, 0 09 129150 X, £3.50 Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1628 0, £1.50

The Wind in the Willows, Kenneth Grahame, ill. E. Shepard (1908), Methuen, 0 416 39360 8, £4.50; Magnet, 0 416 25500 0, 65p

Lifeline Two

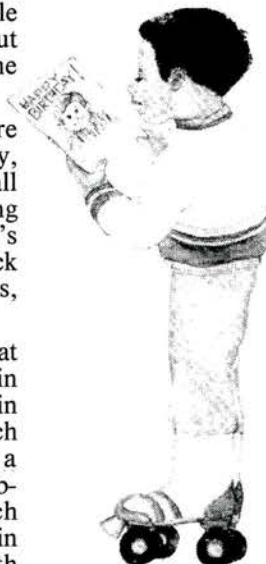
Judith Elkin concludes her series on Multi-cultural Books and chooses

No.6 Anthologies

Throughout this series of articles, I have tried to stress the need for a multi-cultural perspective in our approach to books. I feel that all of us concerned with books, have a responsibility to ensure that the books we make available to children do not offer outdated and biased views but accuracy and a multi-cultural view of the world and the people in it.

I believe that children have the right to a body of literature which truly reflects its whole readership and we are sadly, far from reaching that goal. It is still not possible for all groups to find themselves reflected in and playing strong role models in books. There are still too few children's books which honestly and positively reflect the Black experience and offer Black children positive role models, a positive self-image and true sense of identity.

In this final article of Lifeline Two, I want to look at anthologies of writing of all kinds which can be used in various ways in the classroom, and which seem to show in a positive fashion, the quality and variety of writing which can exist in a multi-cultural context. It is an area where a great deal has been produced by local community publishers, especially for the upper end of the age range. Much of this writing is by young people who have grown up in our multicultural society and are now writing, both individually and collectively, with great effect and an impressive sense of urgency and authenticity about their lives, their hopes and aspirations. Such work has a valuable place to play in the encouragement of other young people to write for themselves.



From 'Happy Birthday, Dillroy' in *I Din Do Nuttin*



Judith Elkin

ethnic understanding. They have been written by the Director of a multi-faith organisation in inner-city Birmingham in response to a perceived local need. The stories are somewhat unpolished and predictable but they do fill a gap. The unusual format: oblong, two-columns per page, brown print on cream paper may deter some children but the print is surprisingly clear and easy to read. Disappointing illustrations by Ossie Murray.

Junior

There is a lack of material at the lower end of the age range, but I would like to draw attention to several titles reviewed in some detail in previous articles in this series: *Mother Goose Comes to Cable Street*; *Everybody Here*; *Tinder Box*; *Mango Spice* (Books for Keeps No. 18); *The Julian Stories*; *I'm Trying to Tell You*; *The Orange Tree*; *Double Dare*; *City Summer* (Books for Keeps No. 21) and traditional tales and legends (Books for Keeps No. 20).

I Din do Nuttin

John Agard, Bodley Head,
0 370 30459 4, £3.50

A delightfully humorous and original collection of poems for younger children by Guyanese poet, John Agard. Some of the poems are in dialect, others in standard English, but the tone always seems right for the individual poem, whether the setting is England or the West Indies. In these lively, rhythmic poems, John Agard has managed to capture the mixture of mischief, naivety, cruelty, confusion common amongst any group of children. Attractively illustrated with black and white drawings by Susanna Gretz. A must for the lower end of the age group.

Wheel around the World

Chris Searle, compiler, Macdonald,
0 356 09213 5, £4.50

A varied collection of poems chosen to show the common elements yet individual spirits of different countries of the world. A few of the poems are already well known but mainly they are unfamiliar to children here and several are translated by Chris Searle. There are poems from Russia, U.S.A., Ghana, Cuba, Jamaica, Mozambique, Canada and many other countries. Attractively illustrated in black and white and colour by Katinka Kew.

Inky Pinky Ponky: children's playground rhymes

Michael Rosen and Susanna Steele,
Granada, 0 246 11319 7, £4.95

There is a riot of colour and action in the detailed, busy multi-cultural scenes drawn by Dan Jones to accompany this collection of playground rhymes, some familiar, others less so. There are skipping rhymes, jumping rhymes, football chants and lots of nonsense much of which will appeal hugely to the child's crude sense of humour.

The Black Rose, and other stories

Mal Bell, Affor (173 Lozells Road, Birmingham B19 1RN),
0 907127 07 X, £1.00

Nine very short stories aiming to promote Black awareness and multi-



'I'm a little bumper car, Number 48 ... from *Inky Pinky Ponky*

For Assembly Use

Assembly Stories from Around the World

William Dargue, Oxford,
0 19 917052 5, £7.95

An excellent and well-researched

collection of material for junior and middle school use. The author has retold in simple language, a selection of stories associated with the main festivals of the major world religions. Each story is preceded by notes explaining the historical and cultural background to the festival and how it is celebrated, and followed by a short quotation from the original literature, adapted in simple yet effective language and within the understanding of most children. There is also a calendar indicating (where possible) when each festival takes place. A useful source book for teachers wishing to make assembly more relevant to the multi-cultural society.

Focus

Redvers Brandling, Evans,
0 237 29335 8, £4.95

A selection of stories from many different cultures concerning common themes of courage, duty, faith, humour, friendship, and so on and selected as being suitable for school assemblies. There are 102 items, mainly taken from traditional tales and current news items and divided into 6 thematic areas. Unfortunately, some of the stories have been over-simplified, resulting in rather stilted language, and others have a rather tortuous style. But this is an interestingly varied selection and useful starting point, although I suspect that many teachers would have liked a little more guidance from the compiler as to the suggested use and follow-up of some of the stories, as well as more information about the origins of the stories, especially those which appear to have originated from contemporary news reports.

Middle/Secondary

Black Ink

Black Ink Co-operative (258
Coldharbour Lane, London SW9)
2nd edition, 0 9506248 0 2, 90p

A collection of writings by young people aged between 11 and 16 of African, Asian and Caribbean descent, living in South London. Originally published in 1978, this is a new edition produced in co-operation with ILEA Learning Materials Service. The writings drawn from personal experience, and observation are often naive but refreshingly honest.

City Lines: Poems by London School Students

ILEA English Centre (Sutherland
Street, London SW1) 0 907016 022 2,
£1.50 (ILEA schools £1.00)

These are some of the poems entered for the English Centre poetry competition held in 1981. The poems are all by school children aged between 11 and 18 and the range of subject matter and style is enormous, from concern about the bomb and death to family relationships and mates at school. Some of the poems are accompanied by comments from the individual explaining how he/she came to write that poem. The standard of material is high and the book is attractively produced, using carefully selected black and white photographs to help to interpret the poems.

Lambailey

Ron Heapy and Anne Garside, Oxford
English Project for the Caribbean,
0 19 911099 9, £1.65

Merrywhang

Ron Heapy and Anne Garside, Oxford
English Project for the Caribbean,
0 19 911098 0, £1.35

Two collections of carefully selected prose and poetry, mainly from the Caribbean, including folk tales, folk songs, dialect and calypso and writing by respected Caribbean authors. Both collections have a thematic approach and are attractively illustrated with photos and sketches, some in colour.

Secondary

As Good As We Make It

Centerprise, (136 Kingsland High
Street, London E8 2NS),
0 903738 51 1, £1.80

The second collection of writing by young people in Hackney, many of whom have been members of Centerprise Young Writers Group between 1980 and 1982. Some of the writing is naive but much of it has a compelling intensity and provides a valuable demonstration of what is happening to, and of concern to, young people, whether they are at school, at home, at work or unemployed. Attractively illustrated with black and white photographs taken by local photographers.

Black Lives, White Worlds

Keith Ajegbo, Cambridge University
Press, 0 521 28463 5, £1.75

A sensitive and skilfully annotated selection of extracts from twentieth century Black American writing, suitable for 3rd/4th year secondary children. The careful ordering of extracts gives a sense of developing and unfinished history to different facets of Black American experience through to the militant voices of the 1960's and 1970's, showing the relationship of Black people to white society and providing a record of changing Black consciousness.

I See a Voice

Compiled by Michael Rosen,
Hutchinson, 0 09 146861 2, £2.00

A poetry course for secondary school students, compiled by Michael Rosen to accompany Thames Television's The English Programme poetry units. It takes a refreshingly wide-ranging view in an attempt to show the relevance of poetry to today's teenagers and to stimulate them to both analyse poetry and write it for themselves. The inclusion of poets like Linton Kwesi Johnson, Edward Brathwaite and Gouveia de Lemos shows a progressive multi-cultural awareness.

Our Lives: Young People's Autobiographies

ILEA English Centre,
0 907016 00 6, £2.00 (ILEA schools
£1.50)

A powerful collection of writings by young people, mostly by children of immigrant families, reflecting the upheavals and adjustments their families may have experienced and the

experience of being black in a white society. Some of the stories are quite demanding but this is the authentic voice of the young and many young people will respond positively to this. Useful reading for teachers, too.

East End at Your Feet

Macmillan Topliner, 0 333 19962 6,
95p

Come to Mecca

Collins, 0 00 184134 3, £4.95
Fontana Lion, 0 00 671519 2, £1.00

Trip Trap

Gollancz, 0 575 03193 X, £5.95
All by Farrukh Dhondy

East End at Your Feet and Come to Mecca are two hard-hitting, but very readable collections of stories about teenagers living in London today and reflecting the tensions faced by many teenagers in inner-city areas: racial harassment, unemployment, homelessness. Farrukh Dhondy has the ability to make the stories equally credible whether he is writing about Black, Asian or white kids and he demonstrates a deep understanding about the way individual teenagers really feel and react. His latest collection, *Trip Trap* is much less direct and accessible. The stories demonstrate the fine quality of his recent writing and have an attractive obliqueness which sophisticated readers will enjoy but will prove difficult for many of the teenagers who revelled in the first two titles.



From 'Children cry',
Wheel around the
world.

A Taste of Freedom

Longman Knockouts, 0 582 25052 8,
£3.75 (hb), 0 582 20128 4, 95p (pb)

Long Journey Home

Longman Knockouts, 0 582 22277 X,
£1.05

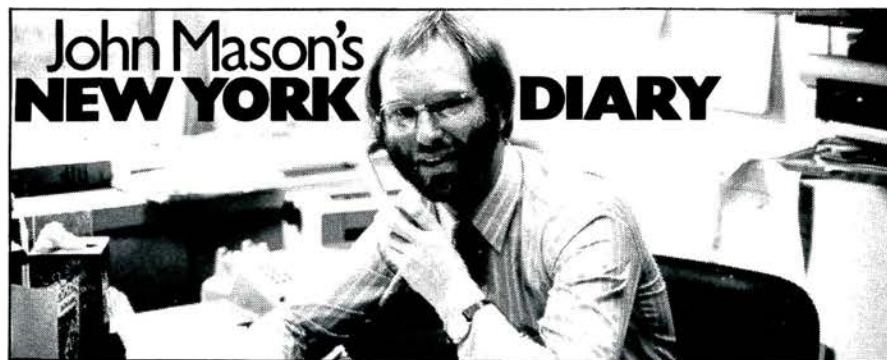
Both by Julius Lester

Julius Lester's stories of slavery have an overwhelming intensity of feeling in their often understated but undeniably moving accounts of the bravery, dogged tenacity and inner spirit of slaves in the Southern states of America. The stories are all viewed from the points of view of the slaves themselves, taken from contemporary sources and are all the more powerful for that. Julius Lester's writing is direct and powerful and offers us a dramatic account of this part of Black history.

A Sense of Shame

Jan Needle, Deutsch, 0 233 97266 8,
£4.50. Fontana Lion, 0 00 671901 5,
£1.00

An uncompromising and powerfully written collection of short stories for teenagers about different types of prejudice, and men and women, young and old, Black and white who are guilty of, or may be victims, of prejudice. The stories are thought-provoking and often disturbing and have a great deal to say to teenagers about the complexities and confusions of life today. ●



Children's media

Close to 3,000 children's booksellers, librarians, teachers and parents from all across the country crowded into the New York Hilton Hotel for three days at the end of August for a new national conference on children's media — the 'Everychild' Conference — organized by the Children's Book Council. The Council, which is the closest equivalent here to the National Book League but with an exclusive focus on children's books, put together the ambitious conference "to increase our understanding of all media through which children learn, and from which they derive pleasure" — not just books, but toys, games, magazines, records, television, films and, of course, computers. The Council failed, however, to reach significantly beyond the traditional world of children's books — almost all the exhibitors were book publishers; toy and computer manufacturers and record and film producers stayed away in droves. Despite this limitation, the conference was in many respects enjoyable, with literally hundreds of programmes to choose from — too many, some said — on everything from storytelling techniques to starting up a children's bookshop, critical TV viewing to character licensing, evaluating toys and games to the need for computer literacy. Around 75 authors and 25 illustrators — including top names like Maurice Sendak and Judy Blume — gave talks or led discussions. Since the Council's advance publicity and advertising failed to pull in significant numbers of the general public — parents and children — the question remains whether the conference, impressive though it was, was really only a forum of experts talking to other experts, rather than genuinely reaching out and promoting to a wider audience. But most people here seem prepared to give it another try — in two years' time — before drawing any definitive conclusions as to its usefulness.

Parent communication

Everyone knows that one of the hardest things about adolescence is that communications between adolescents and their parents often break down or become very strained. Yet there is more literature being written for teenagers in America than ever before — realistic literature that deals with teenagers' concerns fairly and squarely in honest, everyday language. If only parents would read some of these books written for teenagers, perhaps they'd understand their own teenagers better, thought Pat Scales, a middle school librarian in North Carolina a few years ago. An 11-year-old girl told her one day that her mother wouldn't let her read *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, Judy Blume's story of a girl approaching puberty, "because it's a dirty book", yet another parent who had expressed concern about "the kind of books that today's teenagers are reading" had changed her mind after taking some books home and reading them herself. Experiences like these led Pat Scales to start a series of discussion groups for parents on adolescent literature. At each meeting, a discussion topic for the next meeting was chosen — peer pressure, sibling rivalry,

parent-adolescent relationships, teenage sexuality, achieving a sense of self-worth, and more — and each parent was assigned a book relating to that theme.

The results were spectacular. "Reading these books reminds me of the things that I'd forgotten bothered me so much as a kid", said one mother. A father said, "I had no idea what my son was thinking... but now that we have discovered a way to communicate, I think I'm getting to know him better". And another mother reported, "Participating in this programme has encouraged me to open lots of conversations at home that would have been hard for me to bring up".

Word of the scheme's success has spread like wildfire, and Pat Scales is now so much in demand as a speaker that Judy Blume has founded a non-profit organization called "The Kids' Fund" to enable her to travel, as well as to provide seed money to help others start up their own groups. Pat Scales has also written a "how-to-do-it" guidebook with suggested topics and book lists which will be published next year by Putnam.

Wholesome

A new kind of censorship hit the headlines here recently, censorship from within the structure of a publishing company rather than from outside sources. When the large Nashville-based Bible publisher, Thomas Nelson, bought the old-established New York literary firm of Dodd, Mead, Nelson executives began reading some of Dodd, Mead's forthcoming offerings and didn't like what they saw. Novels and poems containing words like "goddamn" and "son-of-a-bitch", they decided, were not in keeping with Nelson's "existing image as a wholesome publisher of books of value and usefulness", and would hurt multi-million dollar Bible sales. Directives were issued which resulted in the cancellation of several soon-to-be-published Dodd, Mead books. One of the affected authors, who had refused to change "about 20" words in his manuscript, said: "This decision effectively takes Dodd, Mead out of the general trade book business — I don't see how any reputable author or agent would submit work to them now". But Nelson insisted they were "just asserting the rights that any company has in setting policy of what's good for our stockholders and our markets", and that "the objections of two or three disgruntled authors are not going to change our plans".

Breaking a tradition

When President Hoover moved into the White House in 1929 he was amazed to find empty bookshelves, and this prompted the American Booksellers Association to organize a donation of books to the White House library. The practice became a tradition, with each succeeding President receiving a gift of approximately 250 books, chosen by a panel of editors and booksellers, considered to be the most significant published since the previous donation. This year, breaking a tradition now a half-century old, President Reagan did not schedule any acceptance ceremony, a fact which intrigued the American press but surprised few people.●

SOUND & VISION

Listen to this

Latest recruit to the growing number of companies producing stories on sound cassettes is Rainbow Communications Ltd. Picking up on the fear that children may have become too dependant on the visual image at the expense of listening and imaginative response they are marketing **Rainbow Theatre for Children** as 'a healthy change from television'. Tapes are of two kinds — Listen and Read, and dramatic adaptations of longer books; both sorts have music, sound effects and a variety of actors' voices.

The Listen and Read Pack consists of a tape and a copy of the book. So far there are four titles from the **Superted** series by Mike Young and four from Jane Pilgrim's **Blackberry Farm** books.

We tried **Superted and the Stolen Rocket Ship** (BOW 113). No amount of sound effects and valiant acting performances could do much for the wooden prose and inadequate storylines of these little books. But perhaps the fans of Superted on TV won't notice. For listening and reading the production is good: clear instructions and well-integrated page turning cues.

Of the 'full scale dramatic productions... just like a radio play' we listened to **James and the Giant Peach** (adapted from Roald Dahl by Edward Phillips, BOW 110) and **The Sea of Adventure** (adapted from Enid Blyton by Edward Kelsey, BOW 100). The Dahl is well done with sufficient stretches of straight narrative from the book to give a true flavour of the original. It's an entertaining 40 minutes listen which could well send a child racing off to find the book. Forty minutes of Blyton proves just how thin and boring even the best of her stuff is when reduced to the bare essentials. This adaptation misses out most of what grabs the Blyton reader — in the whole adventure the only thing that gets eaten is one bar of chocolate! The voices of the children are straight out of Children's Hour 1950's vintage — so is the language, 'Golly, that's torn it'. Other noises, like disco music from a trannie, indicate attempts at updating.

Rainbow so far have dramatised *eight* Blyton titles, including *Sea of Adventure*, and two by Dahl (*James and Fantastic Mr Fox*). The commercial motives behind choosing these authors are not hard to see. But if they do manage to find a market it would be nice to see Rainbow using its considerable expertise to widen children's reading and listening experience.

All Rainbow packs cost £1.99.

Looking Ahead

Carrie's War

A third screening for this popular version of Nina Bawden's story begins at the end of November. (BBC1)

Swallows and Amazons Forever

A new TV serial based on *Coot Club* and *The Big Six*. Puffin have an abridged single volume tie-in. (Jan. BBC1)

Stanley Bagshaw and the 14 Foot Wheel

Seven 10 minute animated films from Bob Wilson's picture book. (Jan. Yorkshire TV)

The Book Tower

A new series starts on January 5th at 4.45. The new presenter is actor Alun Armstrong. If not already on the mailing list send to Yorkshire TV for your poster and Watcher's Guide. The new series will feature a competition with book token prizes.●

BOOKS NEWS

AWARDS

American Award

The 1983 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for children's fiction went to **Playing Beatie Bow** by Ruth Park. Honor Books included **Ask Me No Questions** by Ann Schlee and **The Scarecrows** by Robert Westall.

The Kurt Maschler Emil

This is the second year of this award, established in the name of Kurt Maschler in memory of Erich Kastner and Walter Trier (author and illustrator of **Emil and the Detectives**).

It is made to 'the work of imagination, fiction or non fiction, in the children's field in which text and illustrations are of excellence and so presented that each enhances yet balances the other'.

The judges, Elaine Moss, Fiona Waters and Tom Maschler chose a shortlist of five from this year's entries.

Copycats, Marianne Ford, illustrated by Anna Pugh, Deutsch, 0 233 97584 5, £6.95

Gorilla, Anthony Browne, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 104 4, £4.95

The Mouldy, William Mayne, illustrated by Nicola Bayley, Cape, 0 224 02092 7, £4.95

The Troublesome Pig, Priscilla Lamont, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10921 3, £4.50

The Wind in the Willows, Kenneth Grahame, illustrated by John Burningham, Kestrel, 0 7226 5746 3, £7.95

From these they selected **Gorilla** as the overall winner. Anthony Browne, the author/artist receives £1,000 and a bronze figure of Emil.

Elaine Moss said of the winning book "Gorilla is a picture book of great originality and power that explores the loneliness of a little girl (whose mother is nowhere in evidence and whose father is always pre-occupied) and her compensating obsession with a gorilla who, in her fantasy, fits exactly into father's overcoat and boots and is always willing to play. The text is straightforward, yet carefully weighed; it is used as the springboard for pictures that are as dramatic as they are full of poignant touches and witty visual jokes. **Gorilla** is a picture book of our time that makes bold statements with great subtlety."

The Young Observer/Rank Prize for Teenage Fiction

The prize this year has gone to Peter Carter for **Children of the Book**, OUP, 0 19 271456 2, £6.95

A historical novel which takes as its background the Siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683. Perspective on events is provided through the stories of three young people: Anna, a Viennese baker's daughter, Stefan, the son of a Polish knight and part of the army marching to Vienna's aid, and Timur, a recruit in the Turkish infantry.

USEFUL BOOKLISTS

Peace at Last. Books for the pre-school child.

Selected by the Children's Services Team of Birmingham Public Libraries.

Over 60 authors, no ISBNs.

YLG Publications,

0 946581 00 2, £1.95

Available from Maggie Norwood, Central Children's Library, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3HQ.

We All Live Here. Selected by Anne Kesterton.

Over 100 books make up a useful list of multi-cultural books, mostly up to middle school level.

NBL, 0 85353 377 6, £1.50 (£1.20, members).

From Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ.

Knowing and Doing — Information Books, Ed John Rees.

Third in the SLA's series of three lists 'to help teachers and librarians in primary and middle schools develop sound criteria and build up balanced collections'.

SLA, 0 900641 42 8, £2.00 (£1.50, members).

From Victoria House, 29-31 George Street, Oxford OX1 2AY.

The Whitbread Literary Awards

The three books shortlisted for the children's novel section of the Whitbread Awards are:

The Witches, Roald Dahl, Cape, 0 224 02165 6, £6.50

A tale of REAL WITCHES. They don't wear black hats, they don't have broomsticks. The look just like ORDINARY PEOPLE. And they DON'T LIKE CHILDREN.

The Donkey's Crusade, Jean Morris, Bodley Head, 0 370 30985 5, £6.95

The extraordinary adventures of 15 year old Thomas, a professional guide to the old trade routes across Asia. With him goes a wise and philosophical donkey.

A Parcel of Patterns, Jill Paton Walsh, Kestrel, 0 7226 5898 2, £5.50

Based on the true story of the people of Eyam in Derbyshire who in the year of the great plague vowed to contain the pestilence within the boundaries of their village.

The judges, Frank Delaney, John Elsley, Jane Gardam and Elizabeth Longford announce the winner on November 18th. The award carries a prize of £3,000.

From Blackbirds to Redwings

Two and twenty Blackbirds have been successfully launched from the Julia MacRae nest to the benefit of a host of fledgling readers. Now come **Redwings**, slightly longer than Blackbirds and for slightly older children but still with plenty of black and white line drawings integrated in the text.

The first three titles are by Jane Gardam, Ruskin Bond and Bernard Ashley who have all had notable successes in the Blackbird series.

Kit, by Jane Gardam, (0 86203 132 X) is another story set on a farm high in the Yorkshire Dales. Kit, who is seven, is afraid of most things but not of the farm's huge bull.

Ruskin Bond's **Tigers Forever** (0 86203 133 8) is set in the Himalayas and in **Your Guess is as Good as Mine** (0 86203 134 6) Bernard Ashley has written a story which deliberately aims to be a warning against accepting lifts from strangers.

All three titles are £3.50. ●

Choose a book for Christmas

Our Village Shop

FAITH JAQUES

A cut-out model book full of fascinating Edwardian detail from the creator of *Little Grey Rabbit's House*.

£4.95 inc. VAT

Spots First Christmas

ERIC HILL

A new lift-the-flap book about Spot the puppy.

£4.95

The Pop-Up Book of Magic Tricks

RON VAN DER MEER

A 3D book of conjuring tricks containing everything you need to put on a magic show at home.

£6.95 inc. VAT



from Heinemann Young Books

YOUNG NAVIGATORS —

'Games to last the journey, skills to last a lifetime.' This is how the Automobile Association and publishers Hamish Hamilton describe their new joint publication, the AA Junior Atlas of Britain. We visited the AA's Cartographic Department in Basingstoke to find the story behind the book.

The Atlas is the first to be designed especially for children, and the AA are keen to point out that it is a real road atlas, professionally produced by professional cartographers. In addition to 30 pages of large colourful maps, there are numerous games and activities and pages of information about how a map is made, how it should be read, planning a route, roads and traffic — and much more. The result is an Atlas which should keep children amused on even the longest journey — and a teaching aid which will prove invaluable in the classroom.



Chris Harding, (one of a team of 8 cartographers who spent 4 months on the maps) works on the first stage of transcribing the surveyor's *compilation* (rough map) onto film sheets, from which the Atlas pages are printed.

Some of the many illustrations included in the ATLAS. This shows a section of motorway and an A road.

Opposite, a police traffic-accident car's equipment and parrots from 'Bird World' in Hampshire.

The idea for a Junior Atlas first came to Ralph Robbins, Editor-in-Chief at AA Publications, about seven years ago. He realised that 'many people did not know how to use maps, and that navigation skills did not seem to be taught in schools. And yet there were enormous numbers of children travelling by road, all of whom would need to know how to read a road map when they grew up.' He therefore employed a market research company to find out how a Junior Atlas might best remedy this gap. The researchers talked to teachers, parents and children, asking them what they would like to see in the book, and showing them visuals of the proposed maps and information pages.

The research was revealing. First, everyone agreed that it was a real problem keeping children amused on long car journeys. So the numerous games and activities, and colourfully illustrated pages, were conceived. Teachers stressed that the games had to be activity-oriented and linked to the information presented — so route-planning puzzles and games such as Silhouettes (which introduces children to the grid system) were devised.

Children showed themselves to be particularly interested in decoding vehicle marks and number plates, and they liked those games which could be played over and over again. Above all, it became clear that they enjoyed the challenge and responsibility of route-planning and navigating. One boy of eight said he wanted an Atlas which would enable him 'to read it better than my mum and dad so when we go on a journey I won't get fed up.' (Interestingly enough, many adults seemed to underestimate children's capabilities when it came to map-reading, though the children were keen to navigate and often demonstrated considerable skill in doing so.)

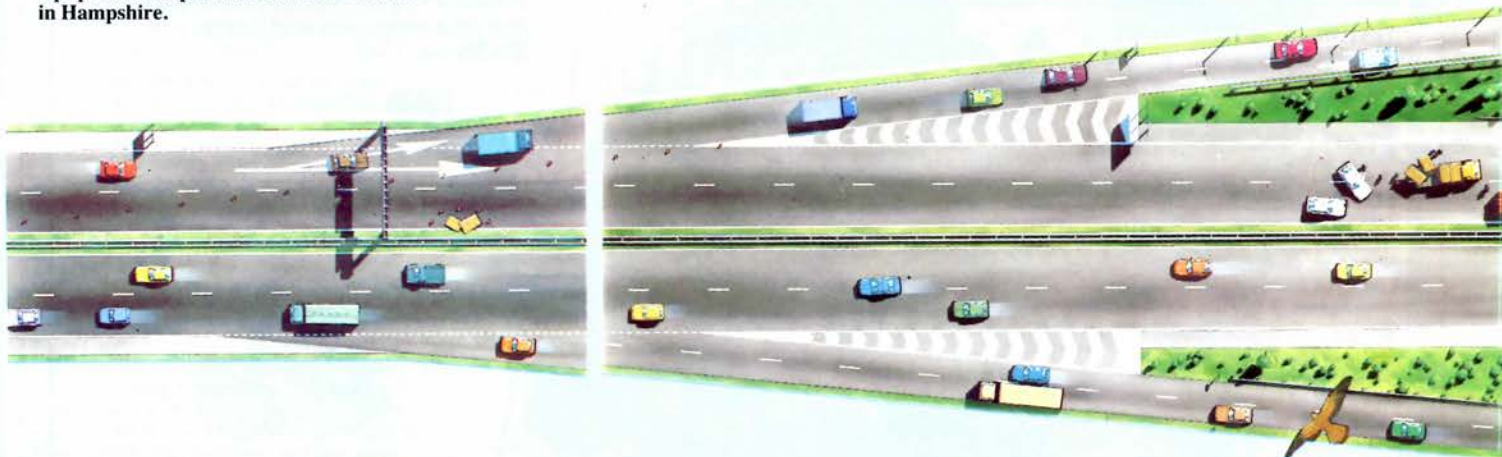
The maps, too, were specially adapted with children's wants and needs in mind. Clarity was the first priority, and so these were drawn on a scale of 1 inch to 8 miles, and some of the smaller roads were left out. For the first time, the counties were picked out in different colours so that county boundaries were visible at a glance. Specially drawn symbols for places to visit were also added. These were selected with children's interests in mind and included wildlife parks, zoos, and lighthouses open to the public.

Armed with this research, and certain they were well on the way to meeting an urgent need, the AA decided they needed the expert help and guidance of an established children's books publisher. They therefore approached Hamish Hamilton who, with the AA, ensured that the text and presentation were at the correct level for children — simple, but not patronising — and that the marketing was absolutely right.

And so, after years of research and months of preparing maps, text, photographs and pictures, we have an Atlas which is practical,



Ralph Robbins (Editor in Chief, AA Publications) and Vic Bates (Cartographic Supervisor for the Atlas) check the four final colour film sheets for the map of Southern Britain. These sheets were put together from a total of 22 different, hand-produced sheets — each carrying different information in the map. Individual pages of the Atlas are cut from the larger maps when printed.



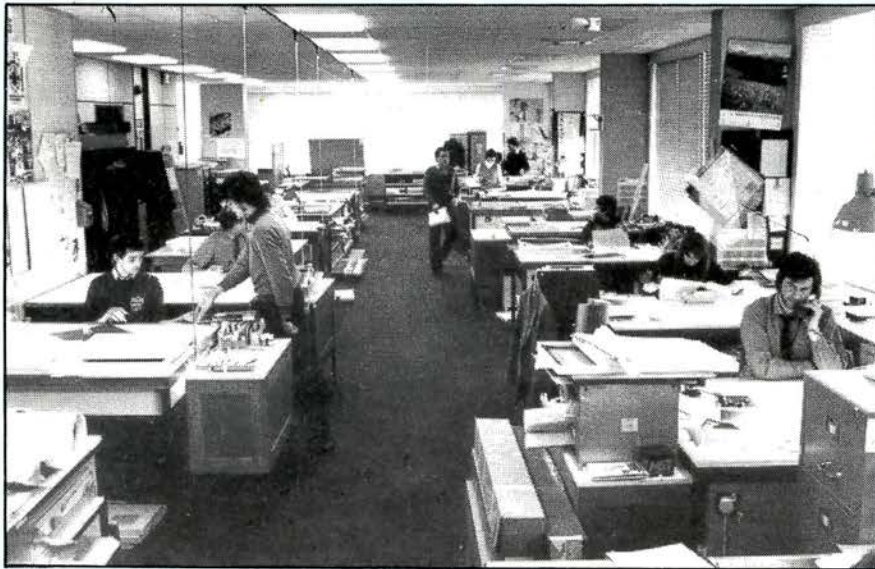
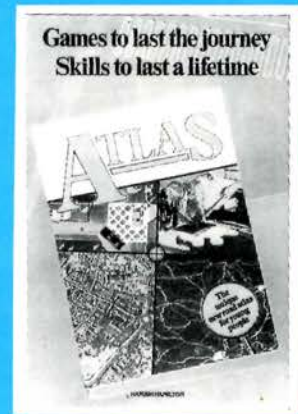
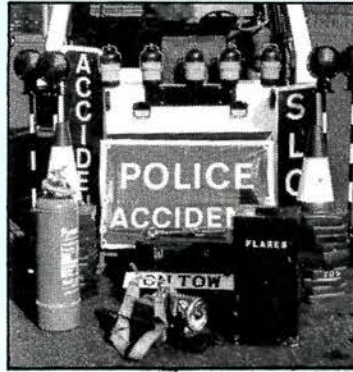
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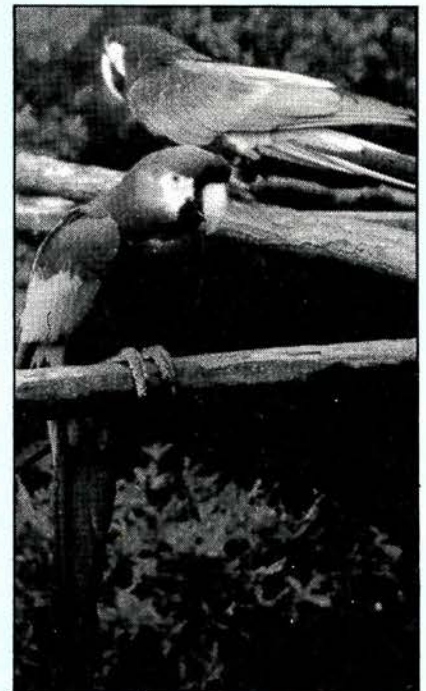
In this close up, Chris uses his special sapphire tipped *scriber* to trace the line of a motorway onto a special wax-coated sheet that will be used for the film that carries the black lines in the map.

informative and fun. Simple enough to be understood by children of eight years plus, it will be useful to parents and teachers — at home, at school and, of course, in the car. At £4.95, it's good as a gift and as a classroom tool. ●

AA Junior Atlas of Britain, AA and Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11041 6, £4.95.



One of the AA's two cartography rooms.



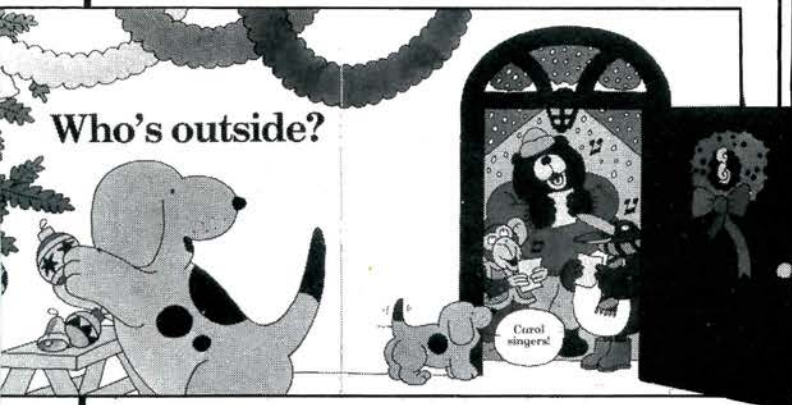
Take one small dog, add his mum and some animal friends, fill in the colours and put in some flaps — and what have you got? You've got Spot.

Tony Bradman meets Spot's creator — Eric Hill

When *Where's Spot?* appeared in 1980 it rapidly became a bestseller, and not only in Britain. More Spot books have followed — *Spot's First Walk* and *Spot's Birthday Party*, and more are to come after the newest title, *Spot's First Christmas*.

In fact, Spot has been so successful that his creator, Eric Hill, can now afford to shake the dust of the Old World from his feet and go west — to be precise, to Arizona. That's a long way for a self confessed townie, born and brought up in North London.

'I was born in 1927, and when the war came in 1939 I was evacuated to Bluntisham, in Huntingdon. I hated the countryside, so before Christmas I just took me bike and me little bag of sprouts and came home.'



A spread from *Spot's First Christmas*

Home was Holloway, and Eric experienced the blitz there. Although it wasn't all bad. 'That was what started me drawing. Like all kids, I was fascinated by aircraft, the Spitfires, Hurricanes and Messerschmitts.'

'I had a minimal education and left as soon as I could, at about 15. I had no art school training at all. My first job was pretty futile — it was as a clerk in a shipping office. But I saw an ad in the paper for a messenger in an art studio, applied and got it. I've never looked back.'

Working in that studio was an Austrian refugee called Wilhelm Timyn — better known as the cartoonist Tim. 'He taught me an awful lot. I was brought up on the cartoon style — very few words.'

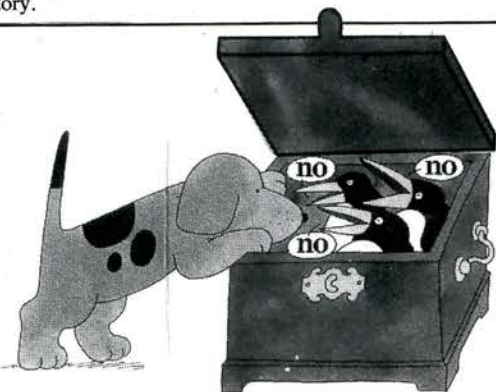
Children's books and Spot came along after many successful years in advertising and as a freelance graphic designer, and after a second marriage, to Gillian who is also an artist. 'I got interested in children's books because we had a little boy, Chris, who's seven now. When my first daughter, who's now in her twenties, was born I was too busy earning a living to be very involved.'

'I'd noticed from Chris and from friends' children that they loved using their hands. At the time I was doing some novelty shots for some ads I was working on, with a man raising his bowler hat to reveal something underneath. Chris was fascinated by that.'

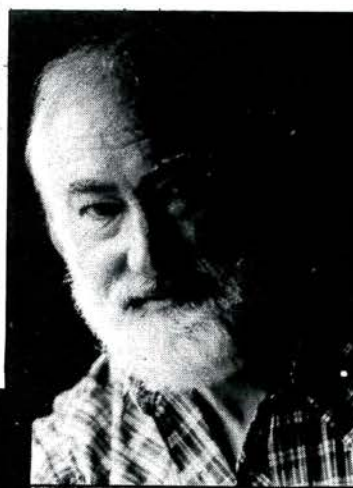
'So I started making up the story of a little puppy called Spot, and the two ideas merged — puppy and flaps. It was all done for Chris.'

The rough of *Where's Spot?* actually sat around in a drawer for a year before Eric did anything about it. ('I was too busy earning a living then too.') But eventually he gave it to a packaging company — Ventura — and the rest is history.

Is he
in the
box?



From *Where's Spot?*



Eric Hill

The Books

Where's Spot?

Heinemann, 0 434 94288 X,
£4.95; Picture Puffin,
0 14 050.420 6, £1.95

Spot's First Walk

Heinemann, 0 434 94289 8,
£4.50; Picture Puffin,
0 14 050.421 4, £1.95

Spot's Birthday Party

Heinemann, 0 434 94287 1,
£4.50

Spot's First Christmas

Heinemann, 0 434 94298 7,
£4.95

Coming next Spring, also from Heinemann, Read and Colour Books. Short (12 pages) books, each one containing a story about Spot with coloured pictures and line drawings for children to colour in.

'I was really pleased because it went international straightaway, and became a bestseller. I think the first four countries it was sold to were France, Germany, the States and Britain. So I took a chance and decided to give up my graphic work entirely and devote myself to children's books.'

'I knew it wasn't just a novelty, that there would be a sequel at least. I couldn't leave the poor little sod in the basket, after all, could I? It's like a cartoon, you've got to find out what happens next.'

Spot is now available in more than 20 languages all over the world — including Welsh and Gaelic. And Eric Hill hasn't just restricted himself to everybody's favourite puppy, either. He's also worked on books with Allan Ahlberg — the Learning to Read series of paperbacks from Granada, featuring characters like Silly Sheep and Double Ducks — the Peek-a-Books from Piccolo, and the Baby Bear books from Heinemann. He says that in 1982 he produced 17 books — and he looks set for the same figure this year.

Eric intends Spot to have a very long future. 'What's pleased me most is that the Spot books have had a great success with children who've got difficulties, kids who are slow readers, for example. I get a terrific kick if I know that something I've done helps kids as well as entertains them.'

'I was pleased with the praise I had from the academic world, too. I wasn't aware of what I was doing in using key words, for example — it seemed natural and right to write the text in that way. But then I got feedback from nursery teachers and reviewers that this was just what was needed and I started to learn from that.'

'Spot's changed a little with each book. I like there to be some progress. I'll always stick to the flaps and the basic idea, but a character like Spot takes on a life of his own. It's like childhood in a way; at first it's just him and his mum, Sally, then he has some mates, and then you can do things like *Spot's First Christmas*, and the one that's going to come after that — *Spot Goes to School*. All themes which are familiar to kids. I'm committed to at least one Spot book per year for the foreseeable future.'

Eric's move to Arizona is partly dictated by his involvement in children's books, too. 'I've been working for a San Francisco company called Determine Productions for some years, and on a trip there a few years back we decided we'd go for a holiday on a dude ranch in Arizona. Gillian loves horse riding, and even though I'd never done any, I decided to have a go.'

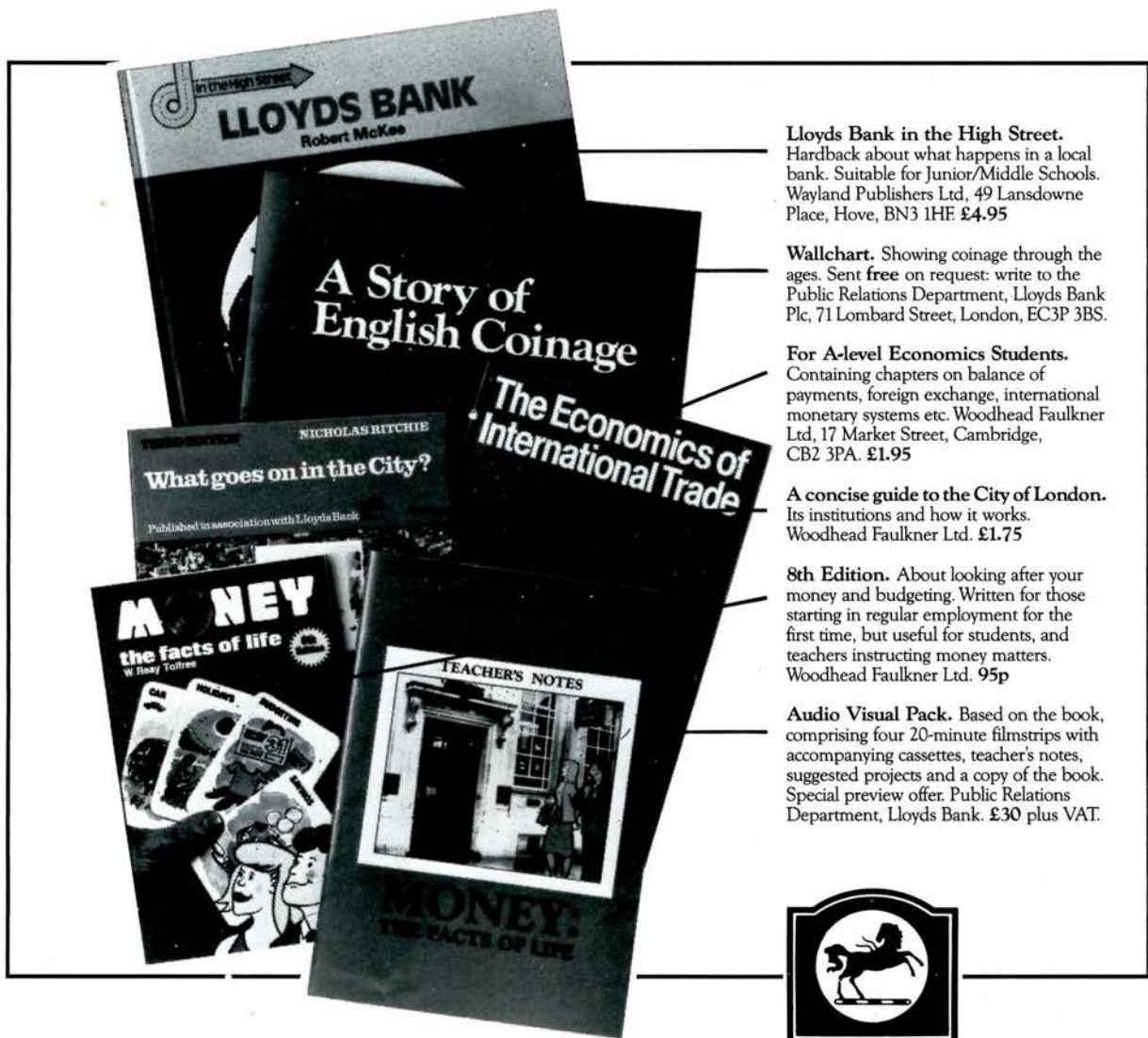
'All three of us loved Arizona — that clean, dry desert air seems to agree with me. So when Determine suggested I move out to the States to get more involved with them, I thought about having a holiday home built in Arizona. That's being done now, and we can use it as a permanent base. It won't make any difference to my work. It's international, anyway, and I'll still be working with British and European publishers in the future.'

Eric Hill is a happy man who creates happy books. 'All my books are gentle. I suppose that's in my character. I could never have anything nasty happening in one of my books. I always think of a Greek film I saw once. There was a Greek tragedy in it, but Melina Mercouri comes on at the end and says "And afterwards, everyone was happy and they all went home." The people in the film say to her, "you can't say that". But I agree with her — why not?' ●

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Merry
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from
all at
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