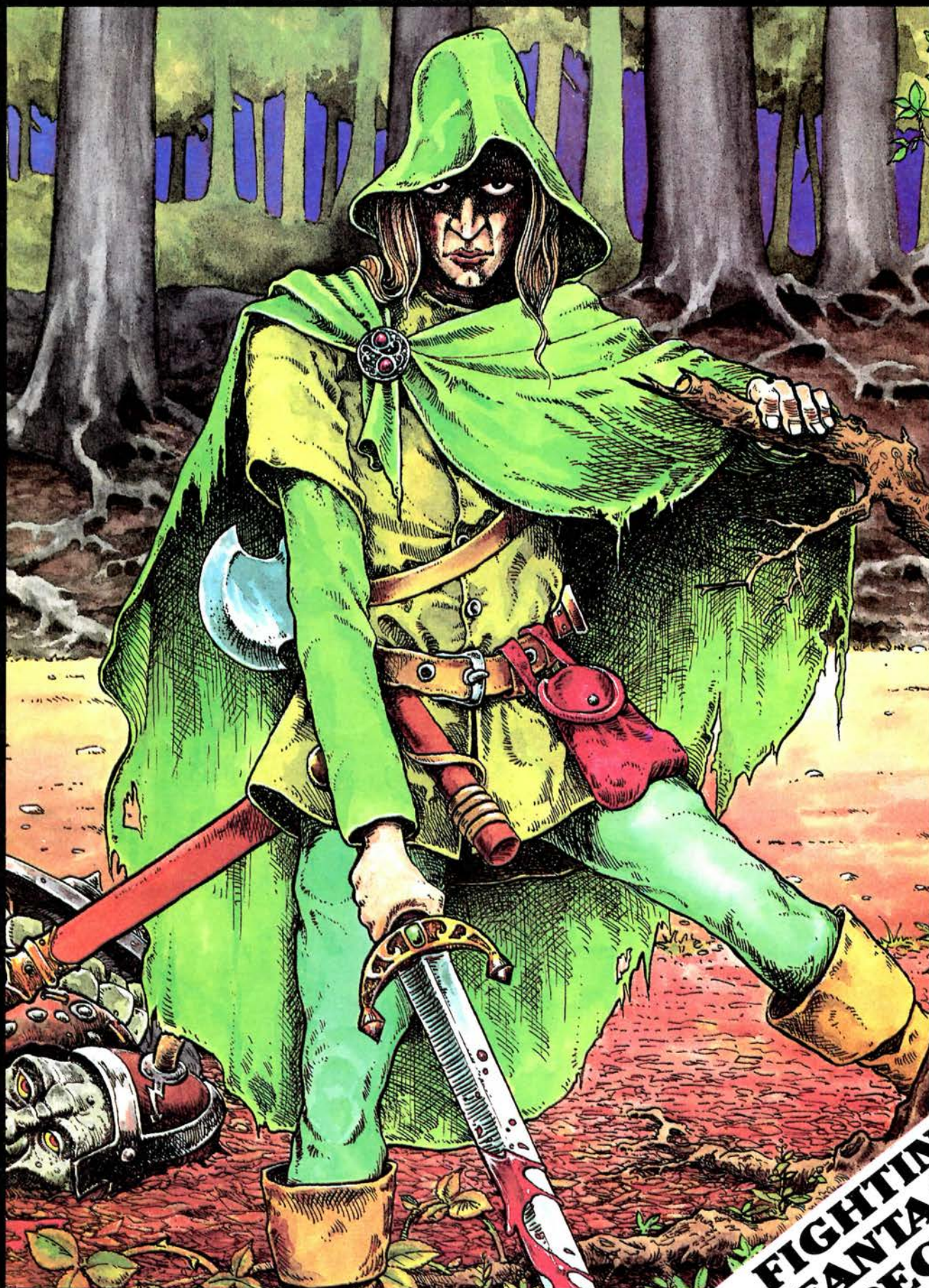


BOOKS FOR KEEPS

JULY 1984 No. 27 UK Price £1.00



**FIGHTING
FANTASY
SPECIAL**

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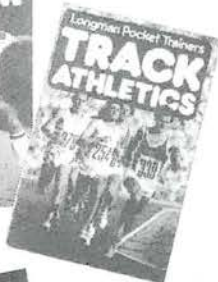


Cover Book

The illustration on our cover for this issue is by Gary Chalk and is taken from the cover of **Flight from the Dark** the first book in the new Lone Wolf fantasy role-playing adventure by Joe Dever. (Sparrow, 0 09 935890 5, £1.50).

We are most grateful to Sparrow Books for help in using this illustration.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

When we asked in our last issue, 'What will the parents say?' we had no idea that the question would be answered by no less a parent than the Prince of Wales. 'I can't understand some of the books for children now,' was his reported response on being presented with a copy of John Astrop's *Ghastly Games* which had just figured in the British Book Production Awards. 'Horrible' was the Prince's judgement — in particular of a game of snakes and ladders to be played on a double-spread drawing of intestines. And then there was Roald Dahl (who has a nice line in nastiness himself) in full support of HRH in the *Daily Mail* and going on to accuse children's books of being too political. Here in BfK we continue the debate with Jessica Yates' annotated listing of books with political themes, promised as a follow-up to our March feature: Children's Books and Politics. Jessica, as you will read (p.24) thinks Dahl has got it all wrong. In similar vein Nicholas Tucker lets us into the secrets of his developing relationship with Judy Blume (p.4).

We have been topical in other ways too: Shirley Hughes, Jan Mark, James Watson, Anthony Browne, Ron Maris — recently featured in BfK have all appeared in award lists (see p. 12 & 26). Congratulations on recognition well deserved.

Opportunities for Orcs

The five-page feature on Fighting Fantasy adventures (p.7-11) also reflects a current preoccupation. David Hill a teacher and keen Dungeons and Dragons gamesman joins forces with Pat Thomson to investigate the popularity of role-play adventures and suggest how this current passion might lead to more reading. Pat Thomson who has been feeding hitherto 'reluctant to read' D&D freaks with solid fantasy wrote, 'I really thought I'd cracked it when a group came asking for *War and Peace*. It was only later I discovered that covered with a sheet the two volumes were just right for making a mountain.'

Of course the predecessors of Fighting Fantasy role-play adventures are the Choose-Your-Own-Adventure books. First in the field and still going strong are Bantam. There are now 24 titles in the *Choose-Your-Own-Adventure* series for 9-15's, a dozen in the *Skylark* series for 6-9's and a growing number in the newer *Inter-Planetary Spy* (multiple choice in comic strip) and *Time Machine* (Medieval Knights or Dinosaurs so far) series. For lots of good ideas (on the same lines as David Hill's) for using these books in the classroom send for Chris Burgess' *Teachers' Guide*. (Write to The Marketing Director, Corgi Books, Century House, 61-63 Uxbridge Road, London W5 5SA.)

From the States, like the Bantam books, are Hilary Milton's *Plot-Your-Own Horror* stories (Magnet), and the *Zork* trilogy, for younger readers (Puffin). European versions of this sort of storytelling are more in the

thriller/detective adventure line, following the lead perhaps of Wolfgang Ecke whose 'Super Sleuth' books, translated from the German, have been published here by Methuen/Magnet for more than ten years. In these stories the readers spot clues and make deductions on the basis of evidence in the text. Martin Waddell has adopted this approach and used it along with the choose-your-own adventure format in his new *Solve-It-Yourself* series (Blackie). So far there are four adventures each starring the *Mystery Squad*; the readers score points for skill in detection and at the end discover how they have done in the Detective Rating Chart (60-70 Sherlock Holmes!) Even the *Famous Five* have taken to the format. Coming soon from Hodder are four 'adventure game' books complete with cards, maps and coded messages. Will the *Famous Five* survive?

Longest established — and arguably the best written — of the home grown products is Alan Sharp's *Storytrails* (CUP) — fewer choices, fewer endings but good material for developing readers and in classrooms usually better value than more sensationally jacketed alternatives which have instant appeal but are less popular in the long term. Thanks to Piccolo even the very youngest can join in; the *Magic Road Books* (hardback £3.99), based on fairy tale characters are designed as read alouds. And at the other end of the scale and almost upon us are Sweet Dreams-type Choose-Your-Own-Romance stories. Where will it all end?

The Old Magic

On computers of course. We already have *The Bytes Brothers*, computer detectives, (Armada) and Usborne issue an invitation to *Write Your Own Adventure Programme*; but that is only the beginning. 'Inter-active Literature' (like D&D born in the States) is our destiny. A few software stories with the reader/keyboard operator as hero (heroine?) are already available — *The Hobbit* (Melbourne House) and the *Korth Trilogy* (Penguin) are but two. More write-it-yourself cassettes are promised. Fantasy and Detection, as with the books, are favourite themes; so it is not surprising to hear that software 'publishers' are looking speculatively at the Narnia books which must be top of the children's long-term bestsellers.

Ann Pilling wants nothing to do with 'computerised classics' preferring the original texts which is not surprising since she wrote her M.Phil thesis on C.S. Lewis and — at their request — has just been re-reading *The Magician's Nephew* aloud at the tea table to her two sons. We asked Ann to undertake this issue's rather unusual Authorgraph (the first to feature a dead author) as C.S. Lewis seemed just the right complement to Fighting Fantasy. Ann could well become a candidate for a BfK Authorgraph herself. Her most recent book *The Year of the Worm* has just appeared in Kestrel and last year Armada published her first book, *Black Harvest*

written under the name of Ann Cheetham — which has been chosen for this month's Children's Choice BMC promotion. A sequel, *The Beggar's Curse* is promised from Armada in October.

Looking Ahead

Is Ann Pilling, and all new writers like her, destined to become an anachronism? Are 'real' books a thing of the past? Not on the evidence of our report from Felicity Trotman on this year's International Children's Book Fair. Felicity's *Bologna Diary* (p.13) (replacing for this issue John Mason's *New York Diary*) gives a vivid account of a very important event in the children's book calendar. News from publishers in other countries helps to put our position in perspective. In Spain it seems they are just beginning and teachers are helping to create a market by recommending books to children and encouraging reading. No school bookshops as yet though to immediately meet the demand that is inevitably created by the approach advocated by Joan Barker and David Bennett (p.21-23) in *Lifeline Three*. Like the other *Lifeline* series this one is intended to be of severely practical help to teachers looking for support in working with books and children in the form of tried and tested advice and ideas. They, and we, hope that many of you will follow their lead through a year's reading aloud and book sharing. Start now and be ready at the start of the autumn term with your first book.

Also announced at Bologna were the winners of this year's Hans Andersen Awards (see BfK 25). The winning illustrator was Mitsumasa Anno, the author Christine Nostlinger. Both are published in this country (Anno by Bodley Head, Nostlinger by Andersen Press) but Christine Nostlinger is not as well known as we think she should be. We were delighted to hear she had been honoured with this major international award, especially as we will be featuring her in our May We Recommend... series in September. We've got lots of things planned for you for the autumn which we hope you will find interesting and useful. Especially exciting is the first part of a special publication: *The BfK Guide to Books for a Multi-Cultural Society*, written by Judith Elkin as an extension of her *Lifeline Two*. As well as lots of recommendations for books (all annotated) it contains articles and information. So much is being published in this area at the moment that we hope this will help you to keep up.

Useful, if expensive, is *Prince Siddhartha* (Wisdom) a picture book re-telling of the life of Buddha — particularly good for reading aloud to younger children but it would not be out of place in secondary schools which are exploring our multi-faith society.

Enjoy the summer. Good holiday reading. See you in the autumn.

Pat

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*.



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



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



Colin Mills is in the Division of Teaching Studies at Worcester College where he helps run a Diploma in Children's Literature.



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

Terry Downie is a member of the English Department and teacher librarian in an Avon Comprehensive School. She has just joined BfK's regular reviewing team.

My Affair with Judy . . .

Nicholas Tucker describes a developing relationship between critic and author

My first encounter with the best-selling American writer Judy Blume took place in 1976, when I reviewed *Forever*, still her most notorious novel. It describes a brief affair between a seventeen year old heroine and a boy of the same age, and was neither brilliantly written nor mere slop and gush. But rather than give a mid-way judgement, I reacted prudishly to the unfamiliar sexual frankness in the story, and perhaps a little jealously too, remembering my own inhibited, unadventurous adolescence. It was, I wrote loftily in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 'A dull novel about two very dull young people . . . who couple and separate like self-lubricated automata . . .' The characters are so flat one might almost be in a sexed-up Enid Blyton plot — 5 go on an orgy, perhaps. But at least Enid Blyton sometimes dealt with feelings; a better analogy might be a so far missing link in the Janet and John reading scheme: *Come and have sex!*

Mine was only one of many hostile reviews that Miss Blume's books have attracted over the years, yet soon afterwards I began to develop an uneasy conscience, particularly when her hard-back British publisher told me I had played a part in blocking any quick take-up of the paper-back rights over here. In addition, my own children had now read *Forever*, and it clearly had something both they and their friends wanted, since it was widely lent out. This immediate interest in Miss Blume's work is nothing new, especially across the Atlantic. A children's bookshop owner in Canada told me around that time about a successful visit from the author, resulting in a capacity audience of young readers listening to every word with close attention. I also found that my own memories of *Forever* did not simply disappear in favour of better books reviewed since. It did, after all, contain some authentic-sounding dialogue, and the story itself, with its down-beat ending and clever mixture of adolescent idealism and cynicism, was better than I had stated.

When her next two books came out, *It's not the End of the World and Then again, maybe I Won't*, I was anxious to be more open-minded. Writing for *New Society*, I praised her ability to see things from a teenager's point of view which, 'plus a fluent, colloquial style, makes it easier for her to cover a range of

adolescent preoccupations in a way that appears unforced'. This time, I did not object to the descriptions of voyeurism, wet dreams and various other sexy passages. I also gave my own students who were studying children's literature Miss Blume's powerful story *Blubber*, and while they were critical of it in parts, most found it extremely readable. Its theme of pointless, cruel bullying in a junior school was well realised, bringing back uncomfortable memories not only of specific incidents of the same type, but also for a whole atmosphere of potential daily insecurity, once an inseparable part of being young and small.

I also liked her latest novel, *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself*, published over here last Summer, and this time, reviewing it once again in the *Times Literary Supplement*, felt I owed her some apology. After commending her professional skill, I concluded, 'Critics such as myself, who have condemned her writing in the past for its sensationalism, may like this present novel'. Curiously enough, the only reservation I felt about it now was that children themselves may find parts of it a little dull, since all the incidents it described were determinedly domestic, with none of the sexual high jinks of former years.

I hope this did not give the impression that I now welcomed Miss Blume back into my critical fold precisely because she had omitted more explicit material in this story. On the contrary, I wish I had praised her more for those earlier novels popular with children but which most critics disliked, since this division between the distaste of adult reviewers and the needs of young readers has always been the key to the different responses she provokes. Adult critics, for example, can be excused for finding the technical detail Miss Blume uses to explain and describe period pains, masturbation and so on somewhat tedious. Young readers, though, are often bursting with curiosity not about the facts of life merely as an academic exercise, but also how, when, where, with whom, how often and anything else that can be thrown in of a reasonably detailed nature. They also want to know how these things work in a personal context, and where better to read about them than in a novel containing adolescent characters themselves very ordinary and therefore easy to identify with?



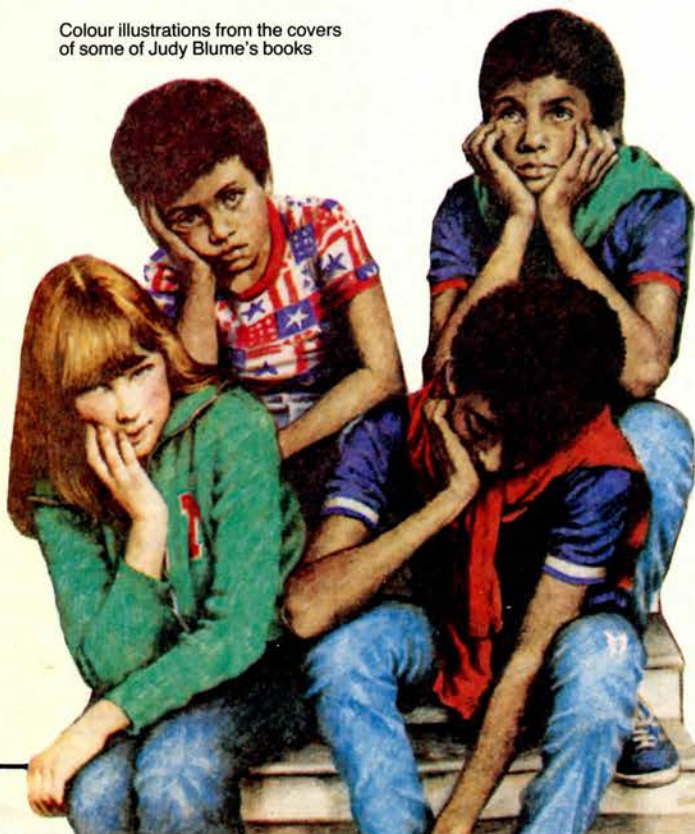


This was just the type of information Miss Blume handed over in *Forever* and other novels, and young readers were duly grateful.

As well as heart-beats and sparkling eyes, there were discussions of contraceptives, the use of tissues in heavy petting sessions, vaginal discharges ('Just clear . . . that's normal') and what noises people make when they climax. Negative adult reaction to this, I suspect, is not simply based on a distrust of sensational 'problem' novels aimed at the young. There is also a deeper rejection of the whole concept of childhood as a time for intense sexual curiosity. Never mind that Freud first suggested this possibility nearly a hundred years ago, and that the dialogue in every school playground and the words and pictures on every school lavatory wall still support such a generalisation. It remains a side — though not, of course, the *only* side — to childhood we do not much want to think about, and children's writers who meet such interest at least half-way have to accept the aggressive critical consequences. How else can one explain the venom Miss Blume has so often attracted, with less competent authors dealing with different topics never suffering from the same disapproving criticism?

I also now believe that the other main complaint about Miss Blume, her selective focus on adolescence as a time for personal problems, is again based on a similar adult unwillingness to face up to the fact that children have always been interested and sometimes knowledgeable about the more seamy side to life, even from a comparatively early age. Bullying, divorce, dead parents, phobias, racism and savage sibling rivalry, for example, all crop up in various Blume novels. Actual experience of such things is not common to all children, yet the affluent New Jersey environment she writes about, with its family break-ups, drug abuse and psychological stress, is certainly a world that more rather than fewer middle class children are getting to know about, either at first or second hand. Naturally there are many other things still happening in childhood that make pleasanter reading, but as with sex, one cannot blame children for wanting to find out about the more dramatic behaviour they may be witnessing around them, even if this means choosing novels that offer a fairly one-sided picture of life in the suburbs. Ignoring these issues does not make them go away for some unfortunate children, nor does it mean that others will no longer want to test themselves out in their own imaginations against such upsets.

Colour illustrations from the covers of some of Judy Blume's books



Not every children's novel that deals with sex and/or personal problems can be justified simply because these are things children feel curious about. Cliché-ridden, falsely-perceived formula novels remain bad whatever situations they describe, and there have been a number like this mostly from the USA and lately from Britain as well. Miss Blume does not come into this category; her dialogue is spare and individual, her jokes are often funny, and the resolutions to her stories are neither sentimental nor fashionably depressing. We should be encouraged that so many children read her, so still choosing books in preference to TV or video at various moments in their lives. There are obvious faults in her writing, and she does not produce novels that both adults and children can share and treasure. But this should not rule out appreciation of her as a serious and successful writer for children, should it? ●

Judy Blume

Graduate, mother of two, approaching thirty, living in suburban New Jersey with the husband she met at college and aspiring perhaps to one day being president of the PTA: that was Judy Blume in the late sixties. Then she signed up for a course in writing children's books — one evening a week in New York — and things were never the same again. Her first book, *Iggie's House*, about a black family in an all-white neighbourhood — written during the course and one she doesn't like much now — appeared in 1970, and others followed quickly.

Judy Blume's books have aroused anger in parents, anxiety in librarians and passionate commitment from her readers — 20 million copies sold and 2,000 letters a month arriving at her publishers. Adolescence, its preoccupations and anxieties — getting (or not getting) breasts, starting (or not starting) to menstruate, wet dreams, sexual curiosity, being overweight, friendship, families, divorce, lack of confidence — these are the stock-in-trade of many Blume novels where her central characters are 12 or 13. For older readers, *Tiger Eyes* explores grief and loss and the moral ambiguities of violence, and *Forever* . . . is an explicit and anti-romantic description of teenage love and sex. Her latest book to be published here, *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself*, about a ten-year old, is set in 1947 — the most autobiographical yet she says.

Fourteen years on from *Iggie's House* Judy Blume is a best-selling writer by any standards. With two marriages behind her and her children launched on the world she lives now in Manhattan, enjoying 'a second adolescence', a happy and successful woman. In an interview she gave to *The New York Magazine* she reveals something of the impulse behind her writing. 'I hate the idea that you should always protect children. They live in the same world as we do. They see things and hear things. The worst is when there are secrets, because what they imagine and have to deal with alone is usually scarier than the truth. Sexuality and death — these are the two big secrets we try to keep from children, partly because the adult world isn't comfortable with them either. But it hasn't kept kids from being frightened by those things.'

The books

(published in hardback by Heinemann and in paperback by Piccolo unless otherwise stated)

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret

Gollancz, 0 575 02433 X, £5.95; 0 330 26244 0, £1.25

Blubber

0 434 92882 8, £4.95; 0 330 26329 3, £1.25

Deenie

0 434 92883 6, £4.95; 0 330 28003 1, £1.25

Forever . . .

Gollancz, 0 575 02144 6, £5.95

Iggie's House

0 434 92884 4, £4.95; 0 330 26682 9, £1.25

It's Not the End of the World

0 434 92881 X, £4.95; 0 330 25689 0, £1.25

Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great

0 330 26051 0, £1.25

Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself

0 434 92886 0, £5.95; 0 330 28279 4, £1.50

Superfudge

0 330 26602 0, £1.25

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing

0 330 26211 4, £1.25

Then Again, Maybe I Won't

0 434 92880 0, £4.95; 0 330 25690 4, £1.25

Tiger Eyes

0 434 92885 2, £4.95; 0 330 26954 2, £1.25

Nicholas Tucker lectures in the University of Sussex and is a well-known reviewer and writer about children and their books. His most recent book *The Child and the Book* is published by Cambridge University Press (Paperback, 0521 27048 0, £6.95).

Puffin Adventure Gamebooks are quite simply the best way I've found to get my children reading with eager enjoyment'

— Brenda Marshall, London teacher and School Bookshop Organiser

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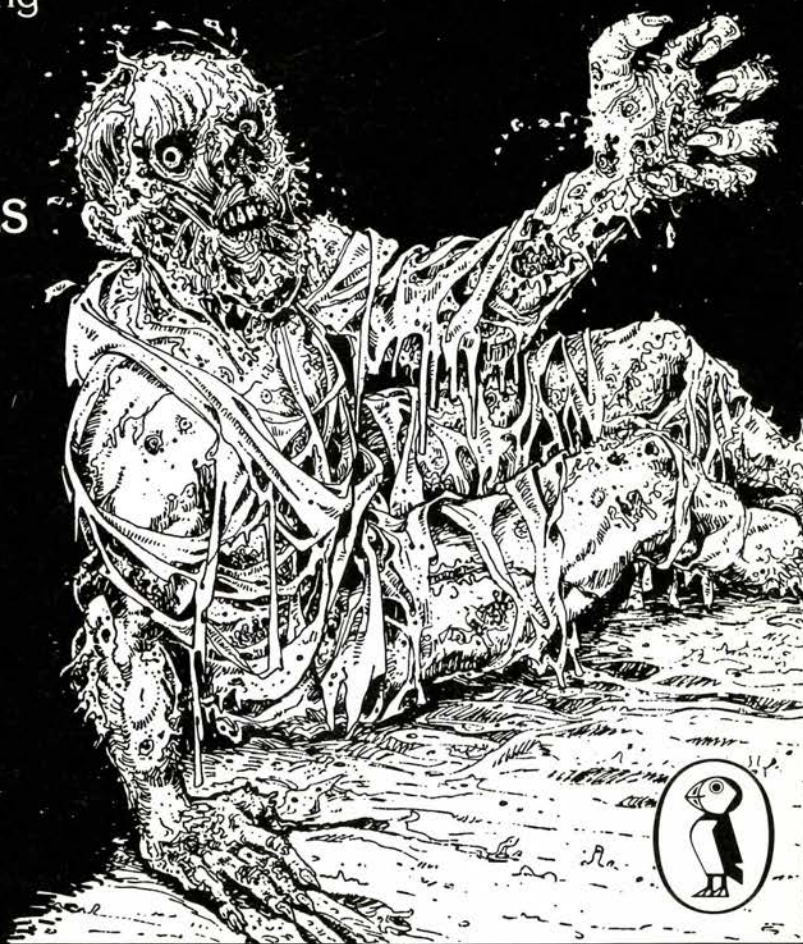
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— Steve Jackson

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**Fighting Fantasy —
The Sorcery Epic**

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TRAPS
THE SEVEN SERPENTS**

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ZORK

**1. THE FORCES OF
KRILL
2. THE MALIFESTRO
QUEST
3. THE CAVERN OF
DOOM**



FIGHTING FANTASY RULES

A five page special feature looks into a publishing phenomenon.

In August 1982 Puffin launched *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*. It shot to the top of the children's bestsellers list and it and its successors strong, has sold over a million copies and other publishers are hurrying to catch up.

Where did these do-it-yourself adventures come from?

Why are they so successful? Have they any educational potential?

David Hill investigates.

What is a Fighting Fantasy Adventure?

To answer that question we must go back ten years and cross the Atlantic to Wisconsin USA. There in 1974 a new game, *Dungeons and Dragons*, first appeared. Today its creator, Gary Gygax, is the head of a thriving games empire and British disciples have been equally successful in creating an enthusiastic following for the game here.

Dungeons and Dragons is not a board game — though it does have dice. It is a role-playing game. Each player 'creates' a game character — fighter, thief, wizard, cleric — and then acts out the role of this character in a world designed and controlled by a sort of referee known as a Gamesmaster. The players as a group pit themselves against the god-like Gamesmaster in a quest for treasure, power, survival. The fantasy world — it's often a series of dungeons — the characters explore is unknown to them at the outset of the game/adventure. In it they meet dragons, monsters, mythical beasts; some good, some evil, some constant, some changeable. How they deal with these creatures will determine their success or failure. The player can invest his or her character with whatever characteristics imagination suggests; but at the outset of the adventure six attributes of the character are determined by the roll of the dice: strength, charisma, dexterity, intelligence, wisdom and stamina. A seventh throw decides how many gold pieces the character will have with which to buy useful luggage in the form of clothing, armour, weapons, spells, food.

Once the adventure is under way the Gamesmaster narrates the story and the players decide what their characters will do at each point. The outcomes of battle encounters with monsters, the casting of spells, indeed of every decision, are decided on the roll of the dice which can be four, six, eight, ten or twenty-sided.

When a group of adventurers leaves a dungeon or a world — if they survive — the characters are usually richer in treasure and experience. These gains are reflected in experience points (won for finding treasure or winning combats) which the character takes into the next adventure. A veteran of many games becomes rich in power and ability and the player and his or her character usually stay together till death them do part.

A game knows no time limits. During a session an adventure or part of an adventure can be played; it can be as long or as short as those involved decide. Most adventures continue over several sessions. The success of a *Dungeons and Dragons* game depends solely upon the imagination of the group involved; within broad limits the players are free to create the game as they choose. The fascination lies in solving the problems created by the Gamesmaster and watching the development of the characters as they

move through each new adventure. The sword and sorcery world of *Dungeons and Dragons* has its roots in the legends, myths, folktales and literature of Western Europe and owes more than a slight debt of gratitude to J. R. R. Tolkien.

The existence of a large cult following for D&D in this country is due largely to Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone who in the mid seventies started their own company in this country. And it is Jackson and Livingstone who were responsible for the very first fighting fantasy adventure book, *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*. The books make it possible to play D&D without a Gamesmaster or any other players. A place for novices to start, a chance for isolated addicts to play solo between group sessions.

How Does it Work?

The books have much the same format as the Choose-your-own-Adventure books that have been around for some time. In essence a Fighting Fantasy book provides the reader with a Gamesmaster narrative and scenario. Before embarking on the adventure the reader-character rolls the dice to determine levels of Skill, Stamina and Luck. These are entered on an adventure sheet. Armed only with a pencil for a sword and a rubber for a shield the intrepid adventurer sets out. In the introduction to the adventure the aims of the quest are set out, along with a few hints and clues. After that you are on your own.

The whole of the book is divided into numbered sections each of which ends with multi-choice options. Like this one from Ian Livingstone's *City of Thieves* (Puffin).

96

You open the door and enter a room which is adorned with macabre objects and paintings. A black cat is sitting in front of a table covered in black cloth. Two black candles are burning on either side of a mirror on the far wall. On the table lies an open chest containing a golden skull. Will you:

Walk over to the chest Turn to 257
Close the door and open the white door (if you have not done so already)

Close the door and walk back to the staircase to climb up to the next floor Turn to 319
Turn to 197

On turning to the numbered section chosen the adventurer finds out what fate has decreed. Was it a wise decision? Only time will tell. Scattered throughout the sections are encounters with all sorts and conditions of monsters and villains. Here's one from *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*:

188

He now stands just under two metres tall. He advances towards you. His body is hairy. His teeth are pointed. His eyes flash. His fingernails are sharp claws. His nose has

become a rat-like snout. He is a WERERAT.

WERERAT SKILL 8 STAMINA 5

Resolve your battle with him. If you win turn to 342. If you decide to escape you may run over the rickety bridge.

Turn to 209

It's now that the adventurer's Stamina and Skill scores play an important part. By consulting the battle rules at the front of the book the adventurer is ready to throw the dice and pit skill with skill and stamina with stamina in combat. (Discretion is rarely the better part of valour in Fighting Fantasy. It is assumed that only a stupid coward would trust a rickety bridge, and stupid cowards don't live long in this game!)

400 or so sections, each with a choice to make, means literally hundreds of permutations so there are always new ways to read and tackle the books. Experienced readers tend to keep an ongoing map and make detailed notes on the territory explored for future reference. The chances are that the task will not be successfully completed on the first journey into the unknown (except by determined cheats); but most readers seem to find it good fun to be killed by a giant sandworm, exterminated by a demented troll or eaten alive by a monster spider. It's the sort of trip you can't book at the local travel agents; adventure is guaranteed. Shake the dice; fill out the sheet and a new hero or heroine is born, one ready to face unspeakable dangers in a great quest.

Want to find out more?

What is Dungeons and Dragons?

John Butterfield, David Honingmann and Philip Parker, Penguin, 0 1400 646 0 5. £1.50. Puffin Plus, 0 14 031.754 6. £1.50. An excellent little volume written by three young adventurers. It sets out clearly how to play the game and contains a wealth of information relating to the subject.

Dicing with Dragons

Ian Livingstone, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 0 7100 9466 3, £3.95 pbk.

An essential handbook if you want to know the history of the game. Also contains 40 pages on games you can buy, 40 pages on accessories, 30 pages on figures and the painting of them plus a chapter on computer games. An added bonus is a 50 page solo game. Most children won't have come across this one and it makes an excellent game to adapt for the classroom. Useful addresses, suppliers etc.

White Dwarf

is the magazine published by *The Games Workshop* (owned by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone and source of the British cult.) 27-29, Sunbeam Road, London NW10.

Good articles and superb artwork. Should keep any fan up-to-date with all the latest news. ●

Round-up Reviews

New series, new settings, computer software: the publishing world is really buzzing with role-playing adventures.

Here's a round-up of what is happening to keep you in the picture.

Yet More from Puffin

Puffin, the leaders in the field, have published two more Fighting Fantasy books and a do-it-yourself guide to scenario writing. They have also launched a quarterly magazine and are busy bringing out Steve Jackson's Sorcery epic (originally in Penguin) in Puffin. And then there's the software packages and ... and ...

Deathtrap Dungeon

Ian Livingstone, 0 14 03.1743 0, £1.50

The sixth book in the series sees the young adventurer taking up the challenge thrown down by Baron Sukumit. A reward of 10,000 gold pieces and the freedom of the town is offered to the successful warrior who survives the monsters, creatures and traps in the labyrinth of Fang. Other would-be heroes may be encountered in the labyrinth and co-operation will often take place but only one adventurer will win through and be successful. Overall a difficult adventure with nasty traps and monsters which will be much enjoyed by young adventurers everywhere.



Island of the Lizard King

Ian Livingstone, 0 14 03.1708 2, £1.50

The seventh adventure in the series is set on a volcanic island, and the inhabitants have had strange voodoo experiments carried out on them by the Lizard King and his followers. The young adventurer has to rescue the young men who are held as captives. Quicksand, swamps, mutant creatures and giant crabs are just a few of the obstacles which tend to spoil the picnic.

Both titles will be enjoyed by children from the age of nine upwards.

Puffin have developed a very successful formula; but it would be good to see variations on the theme in the books which will follow over the next couple of years.

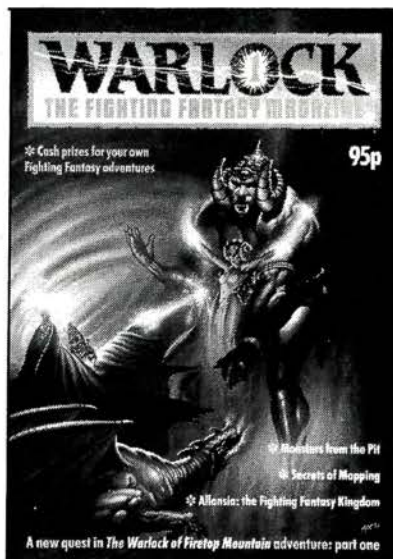
Fighting Fantasy

Steve Jackson, 0 14 03.1709 0, £1.75

In this do-it-yourself guide book to Fighting Fantasy, Steve Jackson explains how anyone can write and set up a gaming scenario. Anyone can become a competent Gamesmaster by following the succinct instructions. Combat situations, map planning and a host of other rules grace the pages. Strongly recommended for teachers who wish to write their own scenarios for either class lessons or club sessions.

Two role play scenarios are included to show how it all works and both proved very popular with my 2nd year English class.

A must for all enthusiasts of the solo adventure series who have always wanted to write their own adventures for others to enjoy. Certainly a good way of stretching the creative imagination. Suitable for top junior children and above.



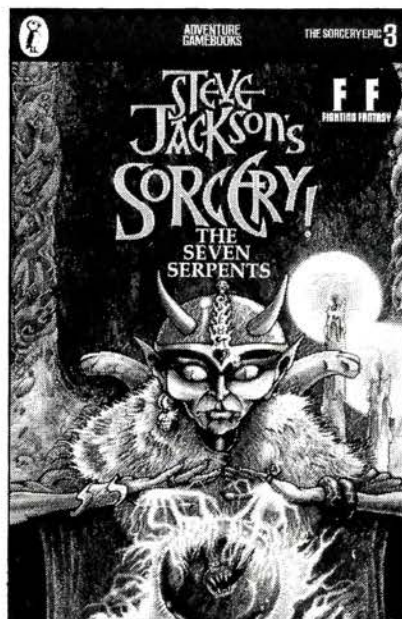
Warlock

Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone. Published by Puffin as a Quarterly Magazine. First Issue April, 95p

Devoted solely to Fighting Fantasy this magazine contains articles, competitions, maps and a gaming scenario. The artwork is of a high standard and it will prove a popular addition to the magazine shelf in the school library. A very good introduction for those who have never tried the books. The first issues contain a revised version of The Warlock of Firetop Mountain. A new adventure scenario in each issue would provide better value for money!

Puffin Adventure Gamebooks

The Sorcery Epic,
Steve Jackson



The Shamoutanti Hills

0 14 03.1807 0

Khare — Cityport of Traps

0 14 03.1808 9

The Seven Serpents

0 14 03.1809 7

(All published 30th August, £1.95 each)

The Crown of Kings

(forthcoming)

The hero in this series can be either a wizard or a fighter. The story is ongoing and clues amassed in one volume prove valuable in the next. The spell book, originally published separately in Penguin is incorporated into Sorcery 3 (The Seven Serpents) in Puffin.

Puffin Personal Computer Collection Software

The Warlock of Firetop Mountain

Book and tape package,

0 14 095 240 3, £6.95

Tape only, 0 14 088 098 4, £5.50

The computer game bears little resemblance to the solo adventure in the book. The player sends a little stick man through a maze to find 15 keys to unlock the Warlock's chest. The maze is different each time you play. Reviewers report that it is 'great'.

The Korth Trilogy

T. K. McBride

Escape from Arkaron

0 14 095 232 2

Besieged

0 14 095 233 0

Into the Empire

0 14 095 234 9

All £4.95 inc VAT

Book and cassette package which can be used with a Sinclair Spectrum 16K and 48K. Purists tell us it's not a 'true Adventure product' more a 'zap and strategy' game.

Grail Quest from Armada

The Castle of Darkness

J. H. Brennan, 0 00 692307 0, £1.50

The Den of Dragons

J. H. Brennan, 0 00 692344 5, £1.50



The first two volumes of the Grail Quest Trilogy. Set in the realm of Avalon the would-be adventurer takes on the role of Pip the adopted son of a Freeman farmer, and is guided by his mentor Merlin.

In The Castle of Darkness he has the task of rescuing Queen Guinivere from the evil clutches of the Wizard Absalom.

In The Den of Dragons he has the task of tracking down and slaying a rampaging dragon which is threatening to destroy the

court of Camelot. Members of my gaming club thought that Merlin was talking down to them throughout the two books, and none of them was impressed with the name of Pip. All agreed that the introduction was far too long and that 156 sections in Book One and 173 in Book Two weren't enough.

Some of the sections take up to 2 sides before the options are presented; I am of the opinion that young adventurers will skip much of the reading to get to the options quickly.

Overall, although the spell book and the combat situations with fireballs and lightning bolts are enjoyable the books are disappointing.

To a purist the idea of an Avalonian meeting Medusa and the Minotaur is an anachronism hard to swallow. Suitable for top juniors and above, and perhaps best for beginners.

Lone Wolf from Sparrow

Flight from the Dark

Joe Dever, 0 09 935890 5, £1.50

Fire on the Water

Joe Dever, 0 09 935900 6, £1.50

The best books in the solo adventure genre I've kept until last.



If there is going to be a new monarch on the adventure throne then Joe Dever will be the man to depose Kings Jackson and Livingstone. In the first two books, of a projected series of twelve, this young man brings a very refreshing breath into the world of gaming books. The books are further enhanced by the superb black and white illustrations and full colour map by artist Gary Chalk.

Set in the world of Magnamund, Lone Wolf, a student warrior at the monastery of the Kai Lords, is the sole survivor when the monastery is razed to the ground by the Dark Lords. In *Flight from the Dark* his task is to reach the capital and warn the king of the impending doom. In *Fire on the Water* he is sent on a quest by the king to retrieve the weapon Sommerswerd — the sword of the sun. Only by finding this weapon can Lone Wolf hope to save his people.

The books move along at a terrific pace and the reader actually feels involved in the fate of the land, its people and its hero. The decisions taken in the first two volumes will have far reaching consequences in the books which follow.

Lone Wolf is going to become Gregarious Lupus over the next few months. Certainly not another series pumped out to sate a public demand for adventure gaming books — Joe Dever has been working on the series for seven years.

In another original innovation dice aren't used to decide the outcome of combat; but you'll have to buy the books to see how it works.

Book 3: *The Caverns of Kaltie* will be published in October 1984.

Computer Software

Lonewolf

Book and cassette packages will be available in September.

Flight from the Dark

0 09 938720 4

Fire on the Water

0 09 938730 1

Both £7.95.

These are not yet available for review.●

Reviews by David Hill.

Meet Joe Dever — creator of **LONE WOLF**



Joe Dever

The Lone Wolf series is the culmination of seven years research by Essex born twenty-eight year old Joe Dever. '1977 was when I discovered *Dungeons and Dragons* and I'm still actively involved in campaigning when time permits — organising and running sessions. I've documented every game and campaign that I've organised, and my books have developed from those scenarios.' Writing though is a fairly recent occupation. He was originally a musician — a double bass player. He worked with Mike Oldfield and was a studio engineer with Virgin Records. 'I got out of the music scene when Punk came in!'

Unlike any other gaming books for children the Lone Wolf adventures take place in a unique fantasy world, in this case the land of Magnamund. 'Everything about the books, I hope, is totally original — myths, cults, heroes of the different ages, formation of creatures, migrations of races and the languages — none are borrowed from any other myths although there are bound to be similarities.' Like Alan Garner, he is the first to admit that all too often something which the writer thinks is an original creation can be found cropping up in a volume of ancient folklore at a later date.

'My favourite myths come from the Nordic, Mexican and Aztec civilizations. Japanese stories have also provided ideas for the combat situations and techniques.' By creating a new land Joe hopes 'to give the series as much depth as possible'. He even makes it more authentic by developing his own Magnamund language. 'The language gives an extra dimension to the characters. It actually works and plays an important part in the story. It has its own syntax and grammar and it can be broken down into its component parts of subject, verb and object.'

What Joe has created is a world as vast and as complex as J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle Earth. 'Two writers who inspired me were Tolkien and Michael Moorcock. In fact my English teacher switched me on to *The Hobbit* when I was thirteen and that's when it all started. After that I moved onto *The Lord of the Rings* and the seeds of an ambition to produce something comparable were sown.'

Whilst preparing the eight remaining books he is also working on a huge compendium based on the world of Magnamund. 'It's going to contain the myths behind the series plus information on the land, the weapons, the language, the flora and fauna — a real background to the series with additional gaming scenarios.'

Playing an important part in the Lone Wolf books is the illustrator Gary Chalk. 'I first came across his work in a version of *Beowulf* that he'd illustrated. Now we work well as a team. The illustrations are based on my guidelines. We bounce ideas off each other. I write the books but we get ideas from one another.'



Gary Chalk

Both Gary and Joe share a love for wargaming and military history, and at school Joe was lucky to have an enlightened history teacher. 'He made the period he was telling us about come alive. That aspect of history teaching is very important.'

The Napoleonic era and the American civil war are two of his favourite historical eras and they contribute to another of his hobbies — model figures. 'I started my collection when I was twelve. It now numbers between sixteen and seventeen thousand. They're all stored in a room full of cabinets which are full of shelves, which are full of figures which are one inch tall.' Photos of his armies are often featured in the gaming magazine *White Dwarf*. As well as historical figures the collection consists of ancient Red Indian armies, Sci-Fi and Fantasy creatures.

Joe also realizes the enormous part that the computer is playing in the lives of young people and is very involved in rewriting the Lone Wolf adventures for the Spectrum 48K. 'A tape will be available to back up each book and one innovation is that we will be using both sides of the tape. The graphics are going to be very advanced — a text adventure, text mixed with animation and real time combat that is very sophisticated. It's linked with the keyboard and the faster and more dextrous you are at the keyboard the higher the chance you will have of defeating the creature.'

To write he likes to be alone. 'I leave my wife and two-year-old son at home in Essex and go down to Cornwall for a month where I do nothing but eat, sleep and write. I write in longhand, check and revise it and then type the final version. I get a book written in about 21 days.' In the future he hopes to move into the world of film animation where he sees tremendous scope for his creative ideas.●

Orcs in the Classroom?

Over a million boys and girls (but especially boys) have spent a significant proportion of the last two years with their noses buried in a book — a Fighting Fantasy book.

How should we react? Be glad they are reading anything? Write it off — along with Blyton and Sweet Dreams — as escapist relaxation? Stay away from an adults-keep-off private preoccupation?

David Hill took a close look at role-play adventures and decided to invite the Orcs into his classroom.

The scope offered by these books for classroom work, oral and written, with top junior and lower secondary children is enormous. Taking part in a role-play adventure involves children in a wide range of activities: planning, collecting information, asking questions, weighing up evidence, predicting outcomes, giving and receiving instructions, note-making, recording, developing empathy. The kinds of phrases I realised that keep cropping up in discussions about developing skills in the English Curriculum. Fantasy games are essentially exercises in problem-solving, decision-making and working in groups. All bonus points. But I could see opportunities for more than just developing skills. Through the fun and excitement of the game I hoped to open up possibilities for imaginative experience which could be shared and deepened through talking and writing and to prepare the ground for a wider range of literary experience. In particular I hoped to open the door to contact with the myths, legends, folk tales and fantasies which I feel have so much to offer.



From The Forest of Doom (Puffin).

I tried three ways of incorporating Adventure Gaming books and Solo Fantasy Gamebooks into the English lesson.

1. With the help of a different pupil each lesson I took on the role of Dungeon Master using the gaming book as my scenario for the adventure, with the class taking on the role of one adventurer. I could enter into the spirit of the adventure and also control the situation without seeming to do so. Everyone got involved and we all shared in the excitement and atmosphere created.
2. The class divided into groups. Each group represented a corporate adventurer. With me as Dungeon Master we now had a small group of warrior adventurers setting forth. As each obstacle and monster was encountered the class decided which group warrior should tackle it. Making the decision involved taking into account the stamina, skill and luck levels of each character — even assessing probabilities!
3. The class divided into groups with a pupil from each group acting as Dungeon Master controlling the adventure game within the group. The children need to be very familiar with the game for this method to succeed. The teacher is less personally involved (not so much fun!) but freer to circulate, observe and help where necessary. With smaller groups some children of course find it easier to participate and contribute to the discussion.

Before embarking on the adventure:

Make sure that you are fully au fait with the rules, especially those linked with combat situations. Have a run through with the class using the combat rules before you set out on the adventure proper.

Ensure that pupils know how to draw a plan using compass directions — N, S, E, W, NE, SW etc. to carry straight on, turn left, turn right etc. and can put the instructions on a plan. Time spent now will prevent headaches and frustration later on.

The whole exercise of learning the rules, taking the task slowly, is an excellent exercise in personal self-discipline and patience.

Devise a rota for taking the part of Chief Dice Shaker. At times the fate of the hero is in the Dice Shaker's hands — a situation to revel in!

It is also useful to track down and make the acquaintance of your colleagues in Maths and Geography. They might like to know what you are doing (Integration at last!) and you will need graph paper and a compass for keeping a plan of the route travelled by the adventurers.

Buy a couple of extra copies of the book you are using so that the illustrations can be cut out for wall display. Root out the budding artists in the class and employ their talents by making them official picture correspondents with the specific task of providing a pictorial record of the quest. A wall frieze stretching around four walls makes an impressive visual display and can be linked with written work being done once the adventure is underway.

Suggestions for follow-up.

1. A diary based on each day's journeying. (One lesson constitutes a day. An ongoing piece of work.)
2. Individual mapwork based on what children think the land looks like. This gives a free rein to both artistic and inventive imagination. Some of the place names they invent will often rival those of the fantasy authors themselves.
3. An accurate plan on graph paper of the route taken as the quest progresses. This needs careful monitoring at all stages. The less able pupils, especially in the early stages, will find difficulty in transferring oral directions onto paper.
4. Discussion work on the above will ensure that the pupils know how to read street plans, follow directions and give directions themselves.
5. Children to write their own stories/scenarios revolving around the hero. A few will even write their own computer adventure programme.
6. Children working in pairs become newspaper reporters interviewing the adventuring hero. It can be extended to a cassette audio recording — radio news item, or a video film — a T.V. interview.
7. Composing a front page of a newspaper based on the homecoming of the hero. (Hopefully not an obituary!) A good exercise to show how different newspapers lay out their front page.



From The Castle of Darkness (Armada).

8. (a) The hero writes his autobiography or someone writes a biography. A dustjacket for the cover is designed.
- (b) 'This is Your Life' — Drama work.

Themes of work which flow naturally from the above activities include:

1. Discussion work on the themes — 'What is a Hero?' 'What is a Quest?'
2. Discussion work on the theme of leadership and the qualities possessed by a good leader. Groupwork first.
3. Journeys and quests in myth and legend — Heracles, Theseus, Odysseus, Perseus, Jason, The Grail Quest. (Ideally the teacher should tell some of the stories and not read them. The oral tradition is even more important now that we have entered the video and computer age.)
4. Monsters of Myth and Legend with a special reference to the story of Beowulf.
5. Project work on armour and swords.

6. Work based on *The Silver Sword* by Ian Serraillier. The combined theme of hero and quest in a real life situation provides a fine balance to the fantasy aspects of Adventure gaming.

Finally — because there is such a forged link between role-playing and fantasy it is essential to have a large selection of books available: fantasy novels, myths, legends and folk tales. These should be on the classroom bookshelf or in the school bookshop — preferably both.

You will soon find that one of the greatest spin-offs of adventuring is that children, and especially the reluctant reader, clamour for books which tie-in with the theme. One pupil once said to me, 'I likes this. You don't have to be good at C.S.E.'s to kill a hydra.'

The potential for learning based on adventure gaming is enormous. I've even done lessons on direct and indirect speech based on the hero relating his adventures and then having them reported in a newspaper; the class actually enjoyed it. Adventure gaming makes learning fun and anything which does that can only be applauded.

It also gets pupils of all abilities wanting to read and to enjoy reading. This for all teachers is surely the real name of the game.

David Hill is Head of English at a comprehensive school in Plymouth.

Light at the end of the Dungeon

Pat Thomson reports on signs of a crack in the armour of the 'can but won't' brigade.

Around countless dining room tables groups of erstwhile 'non-readers' are drawing on the books of Tolkien and Ursula Le Guin to enhance their Dungeons and Dragons scenarios. The members of these groups have been driving their teachers into fits of depression and breaking School Librarians' hearts for years. They all learned to read without exceptional difficulty but apparently took no pleasure in it. Such pupils, frequently but not exclusively boys, are generally plied hopefully with non-fiction. We try them with *Lives of Great Footballers* or the newest motor cycle book. It is a path that can lead to lower and lower standards of reading material. Yet now, at fifth and sixth form level, they are not asking for easy reads but for complex, demanding books of a type we never dreamed of offering them before because we were looking for 'relevant' books in fashionable dress.

One reason for this change in attitude is probably related to the improved status of books when they can be associated with external, out of school activities. The role-playing fantasy games are popular leisure pursuits and reading fantasy books is an acceptable part of it. It is also a social activity played in a group with one's peers and the interest is shared. Recommendations are made, books exchanged within the group. The central motivation, improving the game, is always present. The most striking feature is that young people, by now written off as 'non-literary' or 'unimaginative' are thoroughly enjoying the creation of characters, plots and fantastic other-worldly experiences. Why were we never able to tap this creative vein in the classroom? No wonder they did not want the football biographies.

The Dungeons and Dragons handbook lists a number of fantasy books which it recommends to players. It includes Tolkien and Le Guin, as one would expect, as well as C. S. Lewis and Alan Garner. The list for adults includes material from early in the century as well as modern science fiction stories. André Norton is featured on the adult list, although the titles cited will be in the junior section of the library in most schools. The following, more recent books are some which D. and D. and other fantasy game players have found useful and which are suitable for school bookshop stock in that non-players can enjoy them, too.

Victor Kelleher's three books *Master of the Grove*, *The Hunting of Shadroth*, and *Forbidden Paths of Thual* have been well received. They were reviewed in BfK 24. In each case, they provide strong, clear themes, worked through by positively drawn characters. John Christopher's new series about a parallel 'If World' is also proving successful. *Fireball* (see BfK 21) has now been followed by *New Found Land* (Gollancz, 0 575 03222 7, £5 95). This sequel is perhaps better for gamers than the Viking and South American settings offer plenty of opportunity for interesting scenarios. There are also more unusual books which reflect the creative, imaginative world that fantasy games can offer and the remaining titles are some of the most original.

Prince of the Godborn, Geraldine Harris, (Unwin Unicorn, 0 04 823236 X, £2 50) begins in a welter of names, like a Russian three volume novel. Far from putting them off, this sort of thing is meat and drink to the dedicated games player. Prince Kerish-lo-Taan, escorted by his half-brother, the Lord Forolkin arrives at the Holy Mountain where the Keeper of the Royal Lodge awaits the arrival of the sons of Emperor Ka-Litraan.



From Puffin's *Fighting Fantasy*.



There's a good start. The dramatic characters stalk through a series of extraordinary landscapes as the young Prince sets out to recover the seven keys which will save the Kingdom of Galkis. 'Keys of gold, keys of death.' The best part of it all is that this is the first part of *The Seven Citadels* and we are only just beginning.



The Darkangel, Meredith Ann Pierce, (Collins, 0 00 184149 1, £5.95. Fontana pbk this autumn) is a strikingly original book. Aerial must destroy the vampyre, the Darkangel, before he takes his fourteenth bride. As she steels herself to complete the task, she perceives dimly the spark of good which lies buried deep within him and the battle for his soul is engaged. A variety of strange settings are peopled by fantastic creatures, some good, some bad. Some help, some hinder the quest. It is the stuff good games are made of, not least the rooftop gargoyles which in this land, disconcertingly, are living creatures.

The Blue Sword, Robin McKinley, (Julia MacRae, 0 86203 123 0, £7.25) is set in a strangely real and solid country although it is clearly not of this time or this world. Some readers have been reminded of Kipling's India and certainly, there are great sweeps of plain and mountain inhabited by tribes who live by strict codes and age-old traditions and who live uneasily with a more 'civilised' culture which has crossed the seas to manage them — if they can. The Homelander and the Hillfolk come together to defeat the common enemy in a dramatic climax when the great sword, Gonturan, spitting blue fire, literally moves mountains in the best traditions of epic fantasy.

A Dark Horn Blowing, Dahlov Ipcar, (Fontana Lion, 0 00 671896 5, £1 00) is more lyrical in mood. Magical characters and heroic actions abound but the book's fascination lies chiefly in its grip on the imagination and the weaving of the words. Nora, Eben, Eelie and Owen tell four separate strands of the tale which chronicle the events which shake the Kingdom of Erland. When evil is finally defeated, three regain their happiness and Prince Eelie inherits his kingdom. 'We were beyond Fire and Ice, far in the Twilight of Time, and the whole sky was ours!' A long way from motor bikes but not so far from the new pop videos.

The Homeward Bounders, Diana Wynne Jones, (Macmillan, 0 333 30979 0, £6 95) has a double edge to it for games players. Not only does it provide the kind of stimulus and ideas which they can build on, the whole book is a game itself. The characters referred to as 'They' are manipulating the other characters, like pieces on a board. When the living players learn the truth, they turn on the master players and destroy their power. Everyone is able to return to their own homes except the central character, Jamie, who must remain as anchor to the many worlds. 'You can get on and play your own lives as you like, while I just keep moving.' He is bound to the game forever, just as they have all been victims of other people's fantasy games.

The many-layered complexity of this novel, the dramatic possibilities and the free-wheeling imaginative strokes sum up the attractions of both fantasy fiction and the role-playing games. When young people do not care to read, we may be wrong to think that they must necessarily want something contemporary, something easy. They do tell us that this is what they want, but that is the immediate, most accessible response. The great and growing enthusiasm for fantasy games suggests that we have needs at deeper levels which require an acceptable framework for their release. We need to think, as teachers and librarians, why the games succeed where we sometimes do not. In the meantime, we can work with the interest in the games for them, and books like those described here, have a common rootstock. ●

Eagle Books

Readers for
children aged 8-12

Little Angel Comes to Stay

by Rachel Anderson



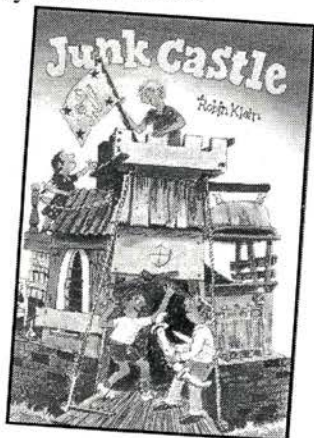
0 19 271472 4 £3.95

Gone to the Dogs

by John Rowe Townsend
0 19 271471 6 £3.95

Junk Castle

by Robin Klein



0 19 554420 X £3.50

Eagle books have bright, laminated covers to attract young readers, and are illustrated with black and white line drawings.

**oxford books
for children**

Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Awards

AWARDS

On June 8th the Youth Libraries Group of the Library Association announced the winners of this year's Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals.

The Carnegie Medal, for an outstanding book for children, went to Jan Mark for *Handles* (Kestrel, 0 7226 5857 5, £5.50).

The selection panel 'felt her book dealt with relationships with great warmth and humour. The strong narrative drive will capture the reader and the character of Erica, the girl who likes motor-bikes and almost falls in love, will captivate all'.

This is Jan Mark's second Carnegie Medal; the first was for *Thunder and Lightnings* in 1976.



Ron Surridge, President of the Library Association, wears his medal while discussing children's book quality with Anthony Browne (left) and Jan Mark (right), winners of the Association's Kate Greenaway and Carnegie Medals. John Dunne, Y.L.G. Chairman, looks on. Photo: Ted Percy.

The runner-up was **James Watson** for *Talking in Whispers* (Gollancz, 0 575 03272 3, £5.95).

About this Highly Commended book the panel said, 'James Watson has handled the difficult theme of oppression in Chile, as seen through the eyes of three teenagers, with great honesty and sincerity. The pace of the novel and the careful handling of events such as murder, torture etc were praised as were the qualities of friendship, trust and humanity'.

Two titles were Commended:

The Way to Sattin Shore, Phillippa Pearce, Kestrel, 07226 5882 6, £5.95.

A Little Fear, Patrician Wrightson, Hutchinson, 0 09 152710 4, £5.50.

The Kate Greenaway Medal for the most distinguished work in the illustration of children's books went to **Anthony Browne** for *Gorilla* (Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 104 4, £4.95).

The panel felt the book 'would enjoy a wide readership from young child to adult and that the brilliant combination of text and illustration offers different levels of appreciation. The central characters, a girl and a gorilla are brought together by wish fulfilment and their adventure is one of both fantasy and reality'. *Gorilla* has already been awarded the Kurt Maschler Award for 1983.

Commended titles were:

Ten, Nine, Eight, Molly Bang, Julia MacRae Books 0 86203 139 7, £3.95.

The Saga of Erik the Viking, Michael Foreman (story by Terry Jones), Pavilion/Michael Joseph, 0 907516 23 8, £6.95.

My Book, Ron Maris, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 144 3, £4.95.●

Bologna Diary

Felicity Trotman brought back this report from the 21st annual International Children's Book Fair which took place at the beginning of April.

Like so many Italian cities, Bologna has a long and impressive history. Its earliest origins are Etruscan, then it became a Roman colony. The middle ages were as stormy here as anywhere in Italy: the town acquired a university, saw the coronation of the Emperor Charles V, and was captured by the French. Today it is a thriving Communist administered town with two towers, a dozen or so splendid palaces, 21 miles of arcaded streets — and a tradition of running major international trade fairs. On the outskirts of the town the purpose-built fair ground is the site of at least six major events each year. The Spring children's book fair is one of the biggest: it brings publishers, booksellers, literary agents, artists, writers, printers and others connected with books from all over the world. The town is packed out; it's almost impossible to get a bed, and the pavilions housing publishers' exhibits are thronged.

The main purpose of the fair for publishers is to sell foreign rights. This is particularly important for publishers of picture books and non-fiction. Colour printing is enormously expensive and to recover costs it's necessary to print as many copies as possible. Sales in any one country are obviously limited; to have a large (and economical) print run it is necessary to link up with publishers from another country who will use the same pictures with a translated text. This suits companies who want to originate books and those who prefer to acquire a title without the large investment of money and time that that involves. Many publishers are involved in both sorts of publishing so will be buying and selling. Fiction without colour artwork is cheaper to produce; but good stories are appreciated all over the world and many publishers are looking out for them.

For British publishers, America is perhaps the most important of all the countries at the fair. An American co-edition can be the decider in whether a picture book gets published or not. With over 100 British publishers exhibiting and nearly 80 Americans, that represents a lot of business. But there are also strong links with many other countries. Japan, Scandinavia, Holland, Germany and France all have flourishing children's book trades and Britain buys many titles as well as selling. I'm

not being chauvinistic when I report that British children's books are the best in the world. The swarms of visitors to the British hall, all hunting for the new, the unexpected and the excellent are clear proof of that. Just to give you a flavour of some of the deals that were made; Chinese reading children will soon be able to make the acquaintance of Michael Foreman and Helen Piers' *Longneck and Thunderfoot* and of Shirley Hughes' *Alfie* books. The Bodley Head *Your Body* series will appear in Arabic, Peter Spier's *People* is going into its 18th language (Lappish) and *Brambly Hedge* notched up its 14th foreign edition.

The English language, although dominant, is of course only one of many. I saw books in Lappish, Catalan, Arabic, Chinese, Welsh and Tagalogue as well as the major European languages. Sixty countries were represented this year, though some, from the Third World weren't selling. They had come to try to arrange deals that would allow them to purchase books for schools at rates that will not cripple their frail economies.

The fair lasts for four days, officially — from 9.00 a.m. until 6.30 p.m. Most standholders arrive at least the day before the opening to unpack books and set up. Then, since the opportunity of meeting people who are usually half the world away is too good to miss engagements are made for breakfast, before the fair opens each morning, over lunch, over dinner and late into the night. It's a constant round of meeting, talking, looking at artwork, proofs and texts and making deals.

Many publishers take the opportunity to hold parties. The most talked about this year were the Norwegian party, with publishers in splendid blue and scarlet national dress offering guests smoked reindeer meat; and the reception given by Cape and Intervisual Communications Incorporated (they are the people responsible for most of the pop-ups around) for Jonathan Miller to celebrate the huge success of the pop-up *The Human Body*. Everyone wanted a preview of the follow-up book *The Facts of Life* which has caused an even bigger stir. There was a Bodley Head party for Maurice Sendak to celebrate their securing the rights to his version of *The Nutcracker* in the face of a good deal of competition; and a Macmillan one for Jill Murphy. The Dutch were much in evidence: every one of their 21 stands was decorated with armfuls of stunning daffodils, and they had an official visit from their ambassador.

In all this activity it is pleasing to report that the book trade seems to be looking up. Last year world-wide recession meant that it was difficult to find buyers. This year there was an optimistic note; most publishers seemed cautiously cheerful. The projects unveiled at Bologna each Spring are the books we will see in the shops in the autumn or the following Spring. I toured the stands to see what is on the way. As well as *The Facts of Life* (which seems to have sold to everyone except Denmark) Intervisual had some exciting new pop-ups: *Leonardo da Vinci* by Alice and Martin Provenson which Hutchinson will be publishing, Ron van der Meer's *Sailing Ships* which, like the new Robert Crowther, they are doing with Kestrel and a pop-up *Winnie-the-Pooh* for Methuen. Julia MacRae bought Anita Lobel's *The Night before Christmas* from Random House and sold them Anthony Browne's latest, *Willy the Wimp*. Colin and Jacqui Hawkins were brought to the fair by several publishers. For newcomers, Picadilly Press they have done a flap book, *Old Mother Hubbard* and for Heinemann a picture book full of furry animals, *Snap! Snap!*. Heinemann also had on show a sumptuous picture book, *Christmas*, by Jan Pienkowski, a *Nursery Story Book* with pictures by Helen Oxenbury and a new series of stories for 7-9's, *Banana Books*. Cape had exciting new books from two of their best known artists — *The Dancing Frog* by Quentin Blake and *Grandad* by John Burningham. The last of Shirley Hughes' *Alfie* books was on show on the Bodley Head stand. An Evening at Alfie's has Alfie and his babysitter coping with a burst pipe. Editor Margaret Clark bought the latest picture book from Anno. Also buying from the States was editor David Grant, from Hamish Hamilton who took the new Eric Carle, *The Very Busy Spider*. Andersen Press were having an international success with David McKee's *Mr Browser* series and Tony Ross' *Towser*. In the Attic by the Mother Goose-winning team, of Hiawyn Oram and Satoshi Kitamura was considered by some people the most interesting book at the fair. *My New Family*, about long-term fostering will be out from Dinosaur in the autumn and there were 80 new projects and 106 new books scheduled from Walker Books some of which will not be out until 1986. What we will see this year are their *Red-nose Readers* for 7-9's and some quality picture books by Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Colin McNaughton and Jan Ormerod. At both ends of the age-range was Patrick Hardy Books with a very funny picture book *Mr Bodger's Jumping Hat* and a tough novel for teenagers set in the future, *Breaking Glass* by Brian Morse.

There are moments when the fair seems like the Tower of Babel, when in all the welter of publishers selling books to each other, printers selling manufacturing, artists looking for publishers, booksellers looking for stock, Mickey Mouse look-alike comics, exhibitions of computers and software, seminars on book distribution in Latin America, parties, prizes and razzmatazz, when one's feet are aching and one's mind is boggling one wonders whether the whole thing is crazy. But we need Bologna — not just because of setting up co-editions and selling books — but for the stimulus of being able to exchange news and views, to look, read and above all talk with people from all over the world who are engaged in the business of getting books to children. ●

Summer Picture Books

Teddybears and the cold cure

Susanna Gretz & Alison Sage

William won't eat his breakfast — can he possibly be ill? He is, for a few days, but then Andrew brings him some cards . . . "Thank you" says William "But I'd rather have a new jigsaw puzzle . . . and a bag of peanuts."

"Hmm," says Louise
£4.50



The Wild Swans

Hans Christian Andersen
English version by Naomi Lewis

Illustrated by Angela Barrett
This well-loved story — beautifully re-told by an acknowledged Andersen expert — is accompanied by the elegant illustrations of award-winning artist, Angela Barrett.

£4.95



Bare Bear

Jez Alborough

The inside story of a polar bear as he slowly prepares for a hot shower, revealed in rhyme with wickedly funny drawings.

£2.95

A & C Black

Authorgraph No. 27

C. S. Lewis

When C. S. Lewis died, in November 1963 at the age of 64, the literary world lost a man of many parts. He was mourned by a wide circle of friends, and by thousands more who knew him only through his books. Some remembered him as a popular religious writer, author of *The Screwtape Letters*, *Miracles*, and *The Problem of Pain*. Others had enjoyed his fiction, space novels, allegorical 'romances' and seven children's fairy tales. He was also a critic, specialising in mediaeval literature, and *The Allegory of Love* is a rare phenomenon, a work of great scholarship that scored a popular success. Like everything he wrote it is pungent, persuasive, and highly readable. 'His essay on "Troilus and Cryseide" is so dazzling' another critic remarked, 'do not forget to read the original.'

In the last twenty years Lewis has become a cult figure. There are 'C. S. Lewis societies' on both sides of the Atlantic, and learned theses are being written about his work in ever-increasing numbers. Quite recently, an Oxford book shop did a 'Lewis window'. There were his spectacles, his pipe, and his tobacco jar, reverently displayed for all the world to see. Lewis would have hated it, and he would have hated even more the American devotee who breathlessly approached a former pupil and said 'So you were once in a room with C. S. Lewis? Let me touch you.'

What was he like? The idea that 'inside every fat man there's a thin man struggling to get out' sums him up very well. He was stocky and short, with a round red face and a great booming voice; people said he looked more like a butcher, or a farmer, than a university don. He enjoyed evenings of 'beer and bawdy' with his friends, and 'The Inklings', a group which met regularly in the 1940's, included Nevill Coghill, Tolkien, and Charles Williams, a writer of 'spiritual shockers'. *The Lord of the Rings* was read and discussed at these gatherings, as was Lewis' own *Perelandra*.

In argument he was a formidable opponent. He terrified some of his undergraduates, and often made mincemeat of his contemporaries. But his friends knew him as a shy, very private man, a kindly, courteous figure who was humble about his own gifts. He never wrote a 'straight' work of fiction, but always hid behind the vehicles of fantasy and fairy tale. Even *Till We Have Faces*, the novel in which he occasionally drops the barriers, and lets the reader come close to him as a man, is a Greek myth 'retold'.

He was born in Ulster in 1898, the second son of a solicitor. His mother died of cancer when he was nine, and his father withdrew into brooding isolation, abandoning him to a rambling house full of books 'where nothing was forbidden me'. This experience kindled his passion for literature of all kinds, and he writes about it at length in *Surprised by Joy*. He was sent to England, to a prep school he later labelled 'Belsen'; soon after he left the headmaster was certified insane. Public school did not suit Lewis, and eventually his father withdrew him (from Malvern) and found him a private tutor. In 1917 he won an open scholarship to University College, Oxford where he took firsts both in Greats and English. He became a fellow of Magdalen in 1925 and remained there until 1954 when he took the Chair of Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies at Cambridge.

It is interesting that such an honour did not come from his own university, but Lewis was a Christian, and not universally liked for his 'hot-gospeling'; the fact that he was a best-selling popular author provoked envious ill-feeling. 'Where's Lewis?' someone asked once. 'Oh he's in hospital having an operation,' came the acid reply, 'to see if he can solve *The Problem of Pain*.'

He was an unashamed crank, never reading newspapers because they were 'all lies', and

readily agreeing to join a university 'anti-progress society'. But the picture of him as a 'man's man', who refused to admit females to his tutorials, is not true. When he was nearly sixty he married Joy Davidman, an American with whom he had corresponded for several years. She was dying of cancer, and the ceremony was performed at her hospital bedside. Miraculously, there was a sudden 'remission', and they enjoyed three years of intense happiness together. When she died, in July 1960, Lewis was devastated. He opened a notebook and, in the weeks that followed, poured out his anger, grief, and loss. The document was eventually published as *A Grief Observed*. It is a harrowing, totally honest book, and one of the finest he ever wrote.

Several of his books became bestsellers, but the works that have worn best are the stories he wrote for children. The seven *Chronicles of Narnia* appeared between 1950 and 1956, and *The Last Battle* won him The Carnegie Medal. The books still sell, in their tens of thousands. Dated, 'prepschooly', undeniably 'middle class', they have achieved the status of classics.

At a time when fantasy is enjoying a new vogue, through D.I.Y. 'fighting fantasies', and computerised games, it seems appropriate to look at the books again — not because they are enjoying a revival (they have never died), but because they stand alone. In their colour and spaciousness, in the depth of their imaginative power, these seven stories are unique, and dwarf so much that is flat, and sloppily-written, and about as memorable as last week's news.

'A children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad story', Lewis wrote. 'The good ones last.' Young readers return to the books they love more often than adults. So what is it, exactly, that lures a child back, time and again, to the fairy tales of this donnish, right-wing, unfashionably religious writer? Why do the good books 'last'?

First, and above all, Lewis is a marvellous storyteller. He valued the fairy tale because (like Tolkien) he believed it often 'says best what's to be said'. When you write for children, he pointed out, you have certain limitations — shortish chapters, a reasonably simple vocabulary, and characters that are free from psychological complexity. The children he sends into Narnia are undeniably ordinary. There is nobody 'around with the panache of Richmal Crompton's William, no Blyton character who 'has a way with



hedgehogs'. But this is quite deliberate, because 'to show how odd things affected odd people is to have an oddity too much'. Lewis is not concerned with psychology, but with 'high adventure'.

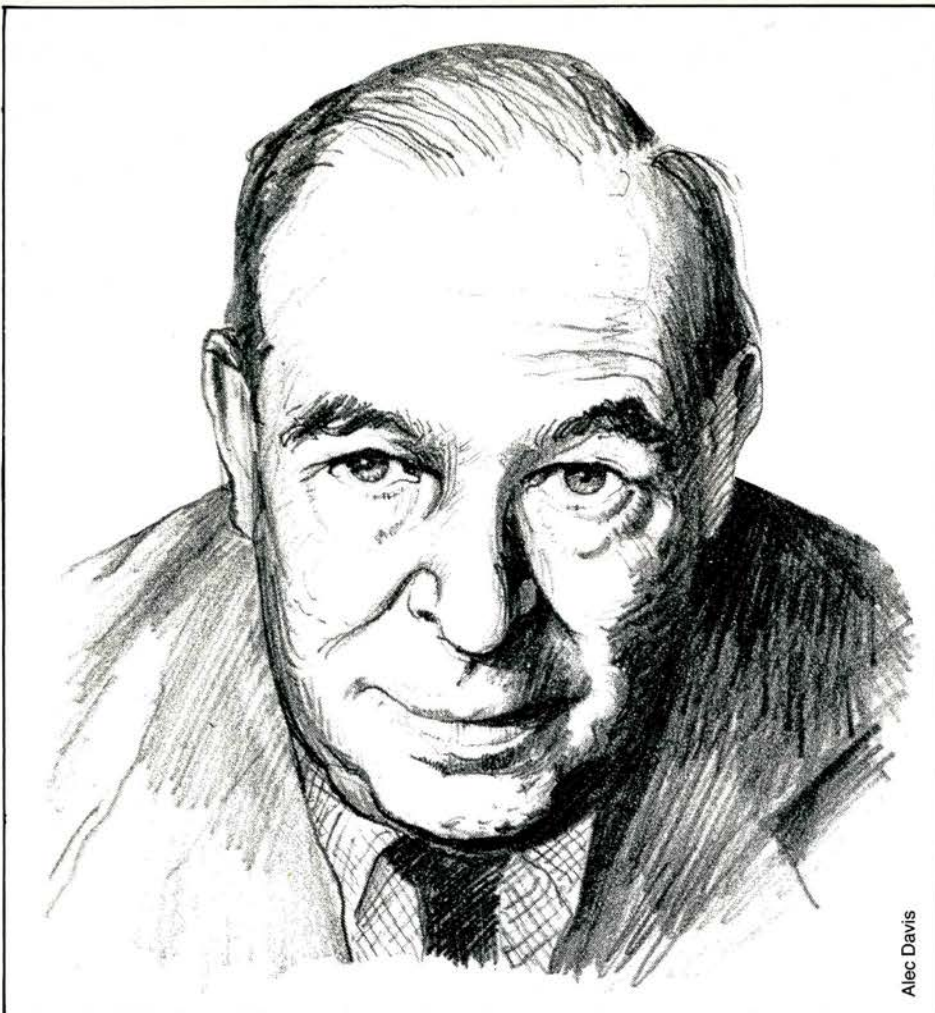
And what adventures they are! The children are got into Narnia as quickly as possible, by various time-honoured devices, magic rings that whisk the wearer away, wardrobes with no backs, and pictures you can walk through. Everything is described in that admirable, clear, 'matter of fact' way which takes the reader into the author's confidence on the very first page and keeps him there.

Narnia is 'Other World', a land of loveliness and innocence, of talking beasts, and brave kings and princes, and of the great lion Aslan. It is a land where miracles can happen, and frequently do. *The Magician's Nephew* comes first chronologically, but *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was the first book to be written, and it remains the most popular. It is the most obviously 'Christian' in flavour, though Lewis was annoyed to hear it called allegory. 'A work of art should not mean but *be*,' he said, and the tales are to be enjoyed as stories. Secondary meanings are a bonus, but action and event matter far more.

Aslan, the mysterious Christ/Lord figure, is the most important, unifying character, but he actually came 'bounding in' as an afterthought. The story began with a picture in Lewis' head, a faun (Mr Tumnus)



Colin Hardie, 'Humphrey' Harvard and C. S. Lewis, c. 1947



Alec Davis

of his confiding, often chatty style, he never talks down. Nor does he dodge the difficult issues. His children witness life and death, and they endure the loss of friends. They ask why Aslan can't cure Digory's dying mother, and how the Witch got into Narnia, and they weep with Prince Rilian for his dead father, at the end of their perilous journey:

'Then Aslan stopped, and the children looked into the stream. And there, on the golden gravel of the bed of the stream, lay King Caspian dead, with the water flowing over him like liquid glass. His long white beard swayed in it like water-weed. And all three stood and wept. Even the Lion wept; great lion tears, each more precious than the Earth would be if it was a single solid diamond.'

At such high points the quality of the writing takes off, and in the final pages of *The Last Battle* Lewis surpasses himself. Who can forget how 'Night falls on Narnia'? Or how Peter, the High King, takes a golden key and shuts the Door because 'its edges were already covered with icicles'? Or the friendly giant who 'took the sun and squeezed it in his hand as you would squeeze an orange'?

'In reading great literature' he wrote, 'I become a thousand men and yet remain myself.' If he likes fantasy, a child reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* for the first time will surely have this experience. In that Other World he will find good cheer, beauty, terror, consolation and hope. When he gets to the end he may well turn back, and start again, for 'the good ones last', and to read once is only the beginning. ●

Below, some of the characters from *The Chronicles of Narnia*

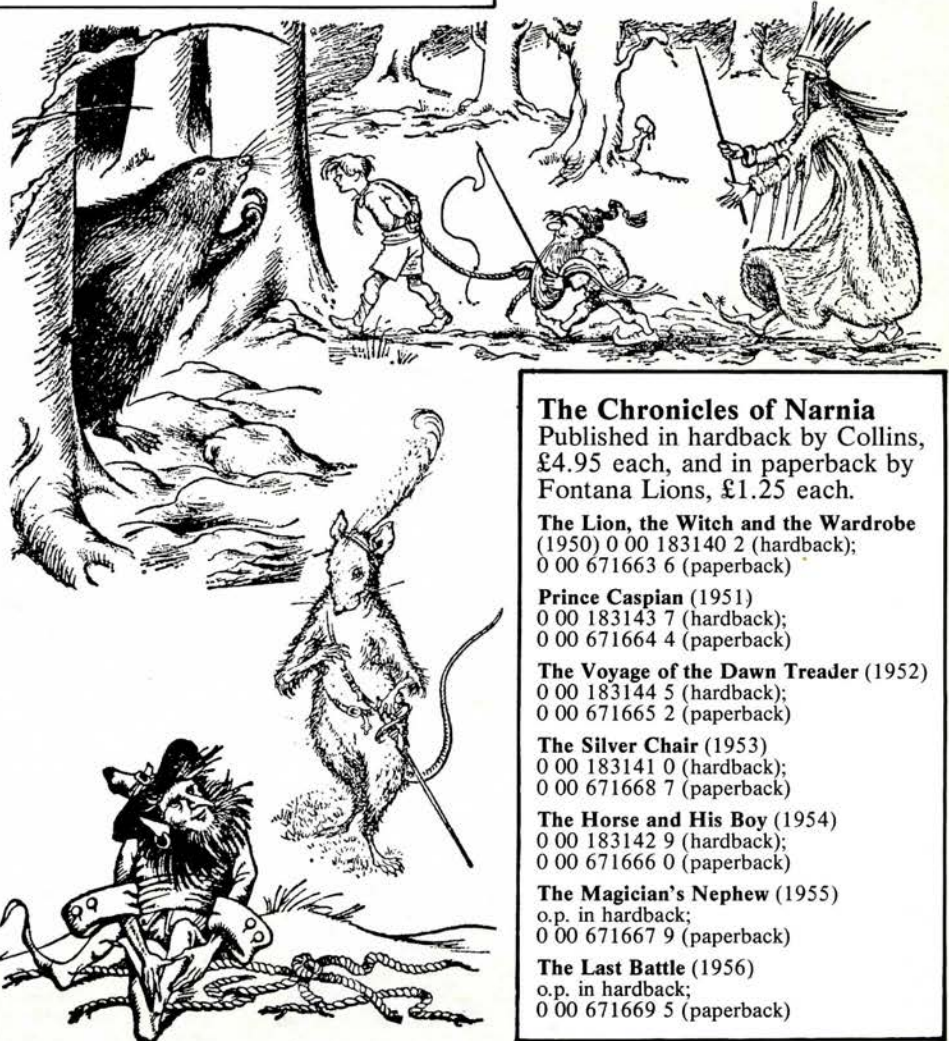
carrying an umbrella through a wood, on a snowy night. Other pictures followed, a lamp post, a queen on a sledge, and so the first Narnia chronicle was born.

Here, one can only hint at the riches in store for a child reading the books for the first time. The seven adventures are separate and distinct, and Lewis never repeats himself. His great theme is as old as Creation. Good struggles against Evil, but, as the Narnian ages unfold, that Evil takes many forms. First there is Jadis, the Queen of Charn, then a terrible White Witch. Eustace Scrubb, a priggish schoolboy, turns into a dragon, and we meet a scheming magician (Digory's Uncle Andrew) who mistakes the getting of Power for the getting of Wisdom.

Good triumphs in the end, but at great cost to itself, and at the centre of every bloody affray the frail human children stand battling it out, upheld by the brave Narnians — Reepicheep the chivalrous mouse, the mighty centaur Glenstorm, Prince Caspian and the gloomy old Puddleglum, the Marsh-wiggle, one of the most endearing characters of all.

The stories are 'unputdownable', the pace is breathless. Lewis had read voraciously all his life, and forgotten nothing. In 'Narnia' all his literary passions come together and give the books their peculiar exuberance. Icelandic sagas rub shoulders with Arthurian legend, the Greeks and Beatrix Potter join hands with Edith Nesbit and George MacDonald. One disgruntled (adult) reader said this mixture turned *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* into 'the Odyssey wrapped up in the Beano'. But if it is a hotch-potch it is a glorious one and, in the first adventure, it leads to that vintage moment when Father Christmas appears with his teapot, 'all sizzling and piping hot', to cheer everyone up as The White Witch's army marches steadily on.

Lewis understood instinctively 'the proper meeting between man and child' and, in spite



The Chronicles of Narnia

Published in hardback by Collins, £4.95 each, and in paperback by Fontana Lions, £1.25 each.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1950) 0 00 183140 2 (hardback); 0 00 671663 6 (paperback)

Prince Caspian (1951) 0 00 183143 7 (hardback); 0 00 671664 4 (paperback)

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (1952) 0 00 183144 5 (hardback); 0 00 671665 2 (paperback)

The Silver Chair (1953) 0 00 183141 0 (hardback); 0 00 671668 7 (paperback)

The Horse and His Boy (1954) 0 00 183142 9 (hardback); 0 00 671666 0 (paperback)

The Magician's Nephew (1955) o.p. in hardback; 0 00 671667 9 (paperback)

The Last Battle (1956) o.p. in hardback; 0 00 671669 5 (paperback)

REVIEWS

Infant/Junior

The Patchwork Cat
Nicola Bayley and
William Mayne, Picture
Puffin, 0 14 050 443 5,
£1.25

Two individual talents come together and make a rare, surprising book in which the artist's intricate detail is matched by Mayne's vigorous text.

A pet cat loses its favourite quilt and undertakes a danger-laden quest to find it. Bayley's pictures, whether of domestic warmth or menacing urban landscapes are to be 'read' as much as Mayne's spare, rhythmic, spellbinding prose ('... we have done some snatchwork on your patchwork'). Five to eleventh levels will enjoy this book at differing levels. Share the *untold* story in the last picture where Mother is washing the quilt.

CM

Life in Ponds
ill. Barbara McGirr,
0 85122 411 3

Under the Magnifying Glass
ill. Alastair Burn,
0 85122 415 6

Beside the Sea
ill. Maureen Galvani,
0 85122 417 2

More Dinosaurs from Dinosaur
ill. Barbara McGirr,
0 85122 426 1
Althea, Dinosaur Books,
£1.10 each

The first three of these will help a great deal in matching children's wonder and curiosity about natural life to the habits of close observation that turns looking into science. They have descriptive, involving texts. Althea knows as well as anybody how quirky details appeal to 5 to 9's: read in *Life in Ponds* what Whirligig

Beetles and Moorhens do when they're frightened.

Under the Magnifying Glass has some fascinating details on domestic creepies. **Beside the Sea**, which worked wonders for my rusty natural knowledge on a Welsh beach with a four year old, has vivid pictures of birds, shells, crabs and, again, some fascinating details.

More Dinosaurs builds upon the eternal attraction of pre-history to top infants/lower juniors: is it the mixture of fact and fiction implicit in the stories of the Brachiosaurus and Pterodactylus. A nice stance to the text here ('People still puzzle about why the dinosaurs died out...') which lets children in on how naturalists know what they know, so encouraging observation and conjecture.

These are issued in hard and paperback, will support classroom activities and (rare recommendation for non-fiction) should be popular for personal purchase.

CM

The Fish: Story of the Stickleback
ill. John Butler,
0 00 662100 7

The Beaver
ill. David Nockels,
0 00 662101 5
Margaret Lane, Picture
Lions, £1.50 each

Good to have these excellent books in paperback — the work of a naturalist who cares about her subject — and cares about children and language. I've read the first one as a 'story' to lower juniors. The writing is direct, poetic and the pictures catch changing seasons and action: see the zig-zag courtship dance.

The essentially hazardous nature of the creatures' existence is well conveyed — as it is in **The Beaver**, where the hardships of food-gathering and lodge-building are not

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.

glossed over. Points about conservation are never didactically 'pushed', yet the young sense that they are in touch with an expert who turns the 'facts' of topic work into ideas. Essential for class reference collections and very popular for personal buying.

CM

The Julian Stories
Ann Cameron, ill. Ann Strugnell, Fontana Young
Lions, 0 00 672227 X,
£1.00



A delightful collection: six finely-written stories which tell of the lives of two little black boys. Homely events are caught perfectly and the writer's special gift is in showing how the fantastic and the magical are rooted in the ordinary, workaday.

The boys' relationships with each other, with their father, with their friends are unfolded with care. The very titles of the episodes, 'The Pudding Like a Night on the Sea' and 'Because of Figs' (a miniature masterpiece) give you the flavour of the lilting, poetic style of the writing. Lovely pictures, too: one not to be missed.

CM

Professor Branestawm's Mouse War

Normal Hunter, ill.
Gerald Rose, Young
Puffin, 0 14 03.1562 4,
£1.10

Two new stories about the irrepressible Professor, one in which he devises a plot to rid

his house of mice, another in which he develops a house-building device.

The writer's ability to keep a well-paced plot moving is strong: lots of character, action and super word-play ensure these stories' success with six to nines. There's less text in the second story **Building Bust Up**. There's lots to be read in Gerald Rose's life-abundant pictures which match the zany linguistic fun.

CM

Ragdolly Anna
Jean Kenward, ill. Jane Hughes, Young Puffin,
0 14 03.1779 1, £1.00

I know many five to eights have enjoyed the T.V. series around these stories. Here, the indomitable Doll, with her friends, the Little Dressmaker, the White Cat and Dummy, are caught up in six self-contained adventures, ideal for reading aloud.

The exploits will be easily identified with by listeners: a picnic; sledging; visits to the Museum and the Fair. Good dialogue and humorous action. I read two of the stories to a reception class who wanted to try the stories themselves. Much better than the usual T.V. 'spin-off'.

CM

Alfie's Feet
Shirley Hughes, Fontana
Picture Lions,
0 00 6621619, £1.25

The second of Shirley Hughes' delightful series about the highlights of everyday life for Alfie and his family. In this one Alfie gets some new yellow wellingtons. Ideal for sharing with pre-schoolers and Infants; lots to talk about in the warm and detailed pictures.

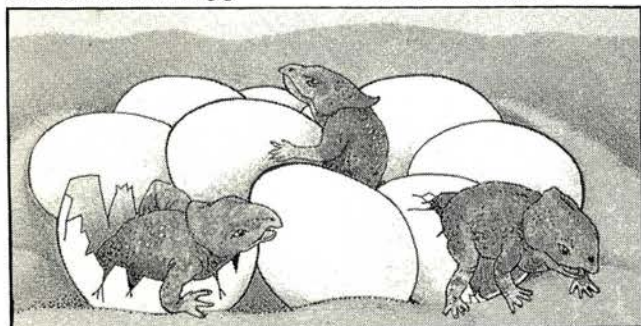
PT

Wilberforce Goes on a Picnic

Margaret Gordon,
Picture Puffin,
0 14 050.376 5 £1.25

The contrast between the simple matter-of-fact text — 'It got rather windy', 'Grandfather started the car', and the controlled disaster of the pictures shows young readers that a story is more than the sum of its words. Wilberforce, a new fictional bear, enjoys his day out in the country, reading about it is great fun too.

PT



More Dinosaurs from Dinosaur

Ivor's Birthday

Oliver Postgate and Peter Firmin, Fontana Picture Lion, 0 00 662356 5, £1.25

The results of Ivor the Engine's birthday celebration are felt long after the day itself and involve a baby lamb, an elephant and most of the inhabitants of Llanog, in particular Jones, Ivor's driver and Dai Station, the stationmaster. A gently humorous story with a quiet point to make about human behaviour. Peter Firmin's friendly style of illustration is well-known from Ivor's TV adventures. PT

Gumdrop Gets His Wings

Val Biro, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.452 4, £1.25

Lots of lessons in road safety entwined in this story of Mr Oldcastle's search for a pair of silver wings to decorate the bonnet of Gumdrop, the famous Austin Clifton Heavy Twelve/Four vintage car. Gumdrop is very accident prone in this adventure — but all turns out well in the end, and it will doubtless be welcomed and enjoyed by his many fans. PT

All Aboard with Jeremy Rabbit

Doris Smith, Magnet, 0 416 45660 X, £1.50

A hand written illustration of an invitation and a thankyou letter begin and end this episodic account of Jeremy Rabbit's seaside holiday with cousin Waldo (Otter?). The animals behave like people, the pictures are busy, the story is inconsequential and makes no strong impact. The text is possible for early readers but they will get little return for their efforts. PT

King Rollo's Playroom and other stories

David McKee, Sparrow, 0 09 933080 6, £1.60

Jill Bennett's enthusiastic BfK review of this book when it

first appeared is quoted on this paperback edition. I can't disagree. These four stories of the irresistible child-king and his friends are full of fun and jokes (visual and verbal) and make excellent early reading material. Great value. PT

Crazy Bear

Colin McNaughton, 95p Piccolo, 0 330 28223 9,

Two of the four Bruno stories (Cowboy Crazy, Snow Crazy) from the Heinemann hardback Crazy Bear. McNaughton's variations on the comic strip form (first seen in Football Crazy) are just as fun-packed and entertaining in reduced form. Bags of potential for Infant and Junior classrooms. PT

Junior/Middle

**The Great Smile Robbery**

Roger McGough, ill. Tony Blundell, Puffin, 0 14 03.1437 7, 95p

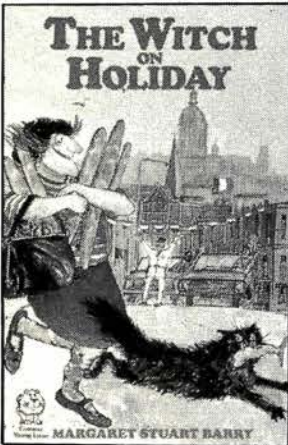
A super example of the kind of book which teaches seven to eevens (and older, I'd guess) the *fun* of reading.

McGough uses visual jokes, word play, rhymes, linguistic wizardry to tell his story of the robbery of Emerson's smiles by the dastardly Stinkers. There's a rich gallery of characters (including Mrs Wobblebottom, 'who ate more than a Lady should, fat as a factory, dark as a wood').

The reader is helped in and along, the pace of reading is adjusted and involvement *has* to be at a high level. A winner. (Illustration above). CM

The Witch on Holiday

Margaret Stuart Barry, ill. Linda Birch, Fontana Young Lions, 0 00 672300 4, £1.00



Simon's friend, the innocent-appearing old lady who happens to be an anarchic witch, in a collection of six stories which will delight those who've read

previous books and convert new seven to eevens.

Old favourites (like the local do-gooder, Lady Fox-Custard) and newcomers (like Overbearing Bertha) are here — and the action is racy. The school-based stories are best: the chaotic trip to France and the camping holiday livened up by the Witch! The teachers (including Miss Phoeble) are suitably harrassed. CM

Dragonrise

Kathryn Cave, ill. Liz Graham-Youll, Puffin, 0 14 03.1640 X, 95p



We're told early on in this book that 'interest in dragons is the beginning of all wisdom': they do seem eternally gripping story characters.

This one is discovered by Tom who makes a secret friend of him. He is full of advice and wise sayings, has an appetite for sisters and, I should warn you, an extreme way of dealing with Tom's nagging teacher!

A well-told story in which there's a genuinely suspense-laden plot: the writer has a very good ear for school scenes — children and teachers are excellently-depicted. There's a musicality in the writing

('Dragons whose fire was quenched before I ever hatched once sat watching these same stars at the dark of the moon, drinking the dark as we do . . .') too rare in books for seven to tens.

Attractive cover and generous page-spread pictures, too. CM

The Land of Utter Nonsense

ed. Colin West, Sparrow, 0 09 933320 1, £1.25

The Boy Who Forgot to Grow Down and other limericks

comp. Tom Baker, ill. Colin West, Sparrow, 0 09 934910 8, 95p

The first is a rather random collection of nonsense. There are one or two gems (such as Carolyn Wells' *Household Pets*), a good representation of the much-anthologised (Milligan, Nash, Rosen) and, well, quite a lot of weakish material. I'll look harder to introduce young juniors to the flavour of nonsense. West's lively, Quentin Blake-like illustrations are not well served in the cramped format of the book.

The second is more promising. Proceeds from this collection of limericks by 'celebrities from the sporting, political and entertainments world' will raise funds for a charity called Help A Child to See. Some of the contributors have misunderstood metre, but it's a generally vigorous collection. The third and fourth year juniors I shared it with learned well from the witty and neatly-constructed (like Judi Dench's and Michael Palin's) and wrote their own. There's a potentially libellous one about Mary Whitehouse, two smashing send-ups of the 'get a celebrity to write something' school of book making from Clement

'Claw to claw in peace and war. Scale to scale will never fail'. From *Dragonrise*

Freud and Victoria Wood. My favourites were the Archbishop of Canterbury's and, on Page 37, Bruce Kent's.

CM

Alex is My Friend

Barbara Giles, Puffin,
0 14 03.1673 6, 95p

A well-written, sensitive story for the middle junior age range, set in Australia, but relevant in experience content to a British audience. A lonely child anxious for a friend, even an imaginary friend, is a subject that children everywhere can empathise with. However, Barbara Giles avoids being suffocatingly sentimental and the story is all the better for this. Within its limits, particularly the scope of its audience, the book demands an involvement and a response from its readers that is unusual

in the run-of-the-mill material aimed at this market. Perhaps this heralds a sign of better quality fiction for the under elevens.

BB

A Fresh Wind in the Willows

Dixon Scott, Armada,
0 00 692181 7, £1.25

A marvellous idea by Dixon Scott, crafted in the style of the originator, but individual in both concept and execution. A sequel to the adventures of Rat, Mole and Toad, is such a simple notion that it must have been fear of the standard of the original that deterred other imitators. Scott need have no such fears. His feel for the subject is obvious, and his reverence does not stultify his narrative. 'The Cricket Match' and 'Chariot of Fire' are equals

of Grahame, no higher praise is possible. Both long time devotees, and a new, young audience, will gain much from a breath of a Fresh Wind in the Willows.

BB

Friends at Pine Street

Mabel Esther Allan, ill.
Patricia Drew, Abelard Grasshopper,
0 200 72847 4, £1.50

Pine Street is a school in the run down streets of a Northern city, close to the docks and the Lake District. Samantha Padgett is a child full of brainwaves in a school where creativity is encouraged; that is until Samantha has a new teacher who prefers quiet, docile children. Samantha, however, already enraged that

her real friends have passed on to the High School, is determined to get every bit of mileage out of life in the run down little Primary. She comes up with a great idea to celebrate its hundredth birthday and eventually wins around the stuffy Mrs Wenlock. In the meantime she protects the rights of an elderly neighbour, wins an essay competition and gets locked in on the roof of the high rise block in which she lives.

Here is lots of action in a very satisfying and quick read. The relationships between children and adults, both at home and at school, are very realistic, recognisable by all children, not just those from city areas. This is not great literature but Mabel Esther Allan is always good value for those younger middle school children who like to gobble up books.

CL

Middle/Secondary

Me, Jill Robinson and the Television Quiz

0 583 30596 2

Me, Jill Robinson and the Seaside Mystery

0 583 30597 0

Anne Digby, Granada Dragon, £1.25 each

School at Trebizon seemed endless but fans eagerly awaited each new Anne Digby school adventure. Now this author has ventured into the world of the new town. Jill Robinson's family move to Haven new town from the city and Jill is at home and solving problems almost before all the furniture is out of the van! In the first book Jill reconciles the town mayor with his difficult daughter and in doing so gives up her place in a television quiz team. In book number two she rapidly solves the mystery of runaway, orphaned Sam and the wicked farmer's son.

Books to curl up with in the sun — about a morning's read for the typical Anne Digby fan. The stories are perhaps for a slightly younger group — 9+ or thereabouts. Predictable, comforting, undemanding. Readily saleable, eagerly read.

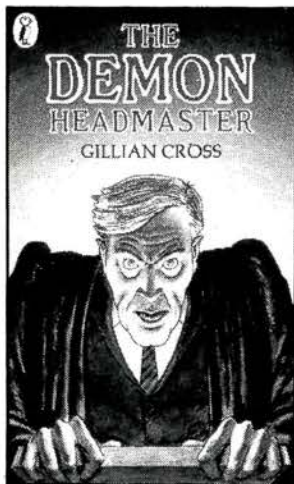
CL

The Demon Headmaster

Gillian Cross, Puffin,
0 14 03.1643 4, £1.25

'The man who can keep order can rule the world!' — the motto of the headmaster of Manor Road school.

'But the man who can bear disorder is truly free' — the maxim of SPLAT, the Society for the Protection of Our Lives Against Them.



The five members of the latter organisation are ranged against a whole school of hypnotised children and their power-mad Head. When Dinah is eventually trusted sufficiently to belong, the headmaster's plots are quickly exposed and the whole country saved from his obsessions.

This is a compact, excitingly written story, generally enjoyed although many were rather scathing about its far-fetched possibilities. The principal characters are a little difficult to believe in. Exclamations such as 'sky-blue sandwiches' and 'bright green baked beans', uttered in times of emergency hardly seem fitting to children of today!

The title and the thoroughly nasty headmaster on the cover are very seductive and middle schoolers should find this an enjoyable once off read.

CL

Supergran: The Picture Book

Forrest Wilson and Graham Kennedy, Picture Puffin,
0 14 050.437 0, £1.95

As an admirer of the original Supergran stories, with the David McKee illustrations, I was prepared to cry 'sell out!' as the 'picture book version'



Supergran: The Picture Book

appeared. However, I am delighted to discover that the comic strip format has not dulled the humour one jot or damaged the appeal of Gran, Edison and Willard in the slightest. Gran overcomes all the dastardly plots that the Inventor can contrive, even the dreaded Super Tub is foiled in typical fashion, while the Toughies go the way of all 'scunners'. So, to borrow a cliché, if you haven't read the stories, watch the pictures.

BB

Susan Sand Mystery Stories

The Clue in Witchwhistle Well
0 09 933850 5

The Riddle of Raggedrock Ridge
0 09 933860 2

Marilyn Ezzell, Beaver, £1.25 each

A typical day in the life of Susan Sand. She is out riding, when an earth tremor frightens her horse; she falls off and twists her ankle. The doctor that she happens to call on to treat her ankle is definitely sinister. Naturally, he is connected with the Sutter jewels which vanished in... another earthquake! Need I say more; Susan Sand fans, stand by your nerve tonics. It'll be a long, hard road, but we know she'll get there in the end, don't we. In case you can't wait to get to the bookstall for the follow-up, the next title is advertised in the last line of the story. Fiction is stranger than fiction.

BB

Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself

Judy Blume, Piccolo,
0 330 28279 4, £1.50

Judy Blume says that this is

her most autobiographical work. It tells of Sally J. Freedman's removal with her family, from New Jersey to Miami because of her brother's illness.

Sally is a highly imaginative child and the story is linked together by the stories that she tells herself and the colourful letters that she writes. In a Jewish family a few years after the 2nd world war, Sally is obsessed by Hitler and the possibility that he still lives. She discovers him in Florida in the person of a slightly crazy old neighbour and writes him threatening letters which are never posted.

It is not the quick, easy read that marks much of Judy Blume's work. At times the obsession with routine becomes rather tedious as does the painfully slow awakening by Sally to the facts of life. However I suspect young girl readers may find it more amusing and perhaps recognise a little more meat in this book than in others by the same author. CL

Summer Switch

Mary Rodgers, Puffin, 0 14 04.1631 0, £1.25

Freaky Friday was a considerable success. One can't help feeling that Mary Rodgers might have been better advised to recognise that the parent-child switch idea was a once only. **Summer Switch** applies the same idea to father and son, each finding himself in the other's body and role, as father departs on a vital business trip and son to Camp Soonawissakit.

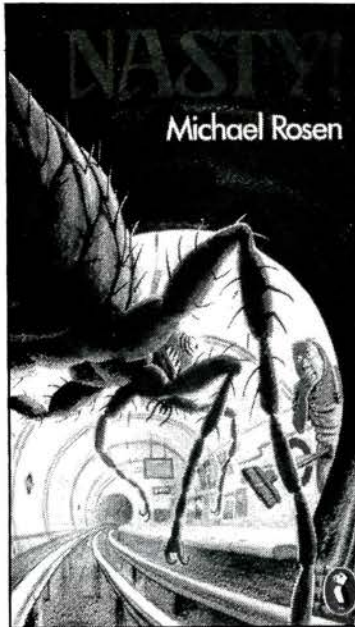
The story is totally confusing from beginning to end. The reader is forced to make character identification within each paragraph. There is therefore no natural flow to the story-line and much is told through conversation which is heavily 'American'. There were times when I felt that I was grappling with a new language.

Children who have enjoyed **Freaky Friday** are happy to try **Summer Switch** but it hardly seems worth the effort. CL

Nasty!

Michael Rosen, Puffin, 0 14 03.1599 3, £1.00

Michael Rosen's strength in his prose writing is his mastery of the art of retelling dialogue in such a way that you feel you were present when the conversations were actually taking place . . . and that they were real conversations anyway, rather than fictional contrivances. Using the Bakerloo Flea Woman (from earlier tales) to introduce the three major pieces in this collection of short stories, Rosen weaves a spell of rambling anecdote, detouring along tangents of local colour amid incidents from street life, flavoured and spiced with



tongue-in-cheek social comment. Don't be put off by the title, as examples of pointed, well-written short stories for pre-teens, these shouldn't be missed. BB

Heracles: Mightiest of Mortals

0 14 03.1531 4

A Fair Wind for Troy

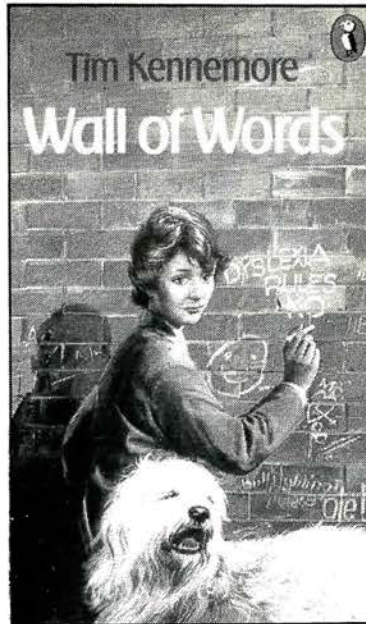
0 14 03.1718 X
Doris Gates, Puffin, £1.50 each

Two titles from a six book series, originally published in 1976, which retell the Greek myths. Presumably, as the books have been published, or re-published, someone has noticed a gap in the market, but from a style or presentation point of view, I can see nothing innovative in this particular series. The stories, including all the traditional legendary gods and goddesses and their exploits, are well told but hardly 'soar in the dramatic moments' as the publicity blurb claims. If you are interested enough to check the series out, other titles available include, **Apollo; Zeus; Aphrodite, and Athena.** BB

Wall of Words

Tim Kennemore, Puffin, 0 14 03.1596 9, £1.25

The wall of words well describes Kerry's fears when confronted with print. She suffers from dyslexia, so far un-diagnosed, which manifests itself in her school-phobia. Mind you, home isn't such a great place to be at either; father has left to write his masterpiece in solitude leaving his harassed wife to struggle with debt; sister Anna is ruthlessly, temperamentally and noisily attempting to become famous and of the other two sisters, Frances is quietly anxious about entering secondary school and Kim,



well, she seems normal enough, but she's the one who is sufficiently extraordinary to detect the real root of Kerry's problems.

The story is humorously written and likely to interest most lower secondary readers so it's worth stocking in bookshop and library. DB

All the King's Men

William Mayne, Puffin, 0 14 03.1682 5, £1.50

These three stories are wrought in the usual craftsmanlike way which we expect from so experienced a writer. They are imaginative and out of the ordinary but not easy and so unlikely to reach a wide audience. I found the dialogue, especially, needed concentration.

The title story concerns the hard lives of dwarfs in the court of the King of Spain (think of Velasquez' paintings). They each have a handicap . . . 'He could not knock himself senseless because he was that already', and their position was nothing short of utterly precarious, not least from the strangulating ministrations of the Infanta, the King's six-year-old daughter. However, the King's second marriage and an Archbishop's kindly intercession does finally result in a heartwarming change of fortune. The second tale concerns the superstition that surrounds the mysterious Faransay Island, where a 'Gift' of a boy is offered when villagers collect their lambs; and in the third Kirsty comes to see the real implications of Grandpa's far-fetched tale of the Pillar of Stony Ray. DB

Just Like Jenny

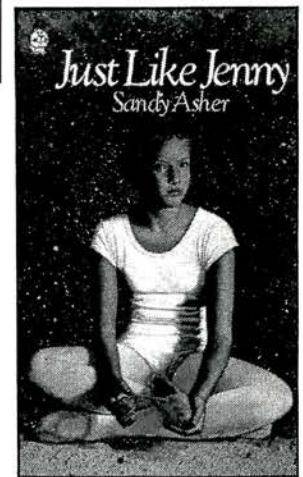
Sandy Asher, Lions, 0 00 672212 1, £1.25

'It takes more than talent. It takes guts . . .' Becoming a professional dancer is the theme of this very readable novel, which is likely to appeal to all

stage-struck girls of any age.

There is also the underpinning concept that we have to be true to ourselves and believe in ourselves, not live in the shadow of others. Stephanie realises eventually that her idolised and perfect friend Jenny is talented in a different way from herself and she can be as competent, even if in a different sphere.

The ups and downs of auditions and dance-classes are described with a realistic authority which one can expect from a writer who is an ex-dancer, and if any aspiring performers harbour any illusions about the dance this book will certainly not feed their fantasies, but will leave them better aware of the hard path they've chosen to pursue. DB



Hanging out with Cici

Francine Pascal, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672297 0, £1.50

From the 'creator' of *Sweet Valley High* a novel which is bibliotherapy-ish, but quite entertaining for all that. It might just conceivably make life a bit easier for a teenage rebel and her mother. Present-tense narration by 13 year-old Victoria who wants her mother to treat her as a pre-adult, not a silly little kid. 'I can't believe she was ever my age. I think she was born a mother. No wonder we can't get along.' Victoria is in big trouble with her mum, when a time warp throws her into the company of Cici, a lively, naughty and strangely familiar girl of the 1940's. They fool about, share jokes and experimental smoking; Cici attempts to shoplift and cheat in a school test. Of course, Cici is her mother and when Victoria eventually jolts back to the 80's, she and her mum get on much better. Should be popular in the library and might be considered for class use, to explore the generation gap. TD

The White Horse

Robert Leeson, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672252 0, £1.50

For 28 years Sutcliff's *Simon* has been the best Civil War

story I know because she involves you in a few fully-developed characters and creates atmosphere and scene around them, leaving the larger perspective to be absorbed almost by osmosis. Here, Leeson feeds the reader to the point of indignation with names, facts and figures. The Morton Ferrers intrigue continues from 'Maroon Boy and Bess' and there is interest in the story of black Matt Morten who sails to England in 1643 to avenge his father's death, fights unwillingly for Parliament and ends in Jamaica with the last Cimaroons. But Matt seems to meet the entire Roundhead

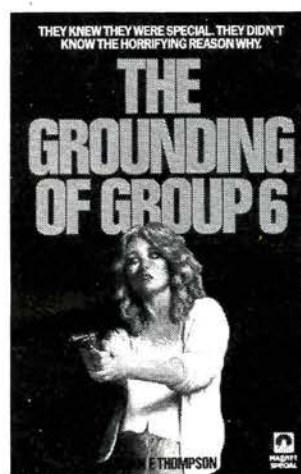
faction from Cromwell down, while we are kept informed of the progress of the war throughout the country and told about practically everyone else alive at the time. The scope is too large and it won't work with more than a handful of kids. Not much historical fiction does and I'm sorry that this book won't help to change that. TD

Power Play: Sweet Valley High series
Kate Williams, created by Francine Pascal,
Bantam, 0 553 17868 7,
95p

Trivial as this book is, it has an unpleasant flavour, which is characteristic of the series. 'A game of double love, with Todd as first prize', 'vicious gossip', 'sink her hooks into rich, handsome Bruce' — these are blurb come-ons for the previous titles. Each book features twin sisters, equals in beauty, opposites in character. In *Power Play*, Jessica uses and humiliates a fat girl who is desperate to join Pi Beta Alpha, 'the snobbiest sorority at Sweet Valley High', while her twin, Elizabeth, champions the victim. We are intended to feel that social and sexual glamour, designer clothes and

model figures are worth less than sincerity and loyalty. But the heroine, Elizabeth, has *all* those attributes and the ugly duckling loses weight, acquires stylish outfits and beats Jessica in the Miss Sweet Valley contest. Clearly, being a nice person is not enough; you must be nice *and* the 'right' shape. Perhaps the Americanisms — sorority pledging, Calvin Kleins — will put teenage girls off. Certainly the shallowness — of style as well as theme — suggest that we steer well clear. TD

Older Readers



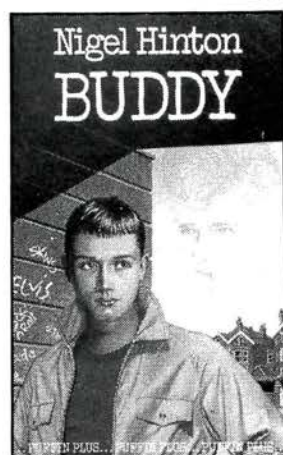
The Grounding of Group Six
Julian F. Thompson,
Magnet, 0 416 46840 3,
£1.50

Gripping, demanding, but does it combine the achievements of Swarthout's *Bless the Beasts and Children* and Cormier's *I Am the Cheese*? (Answer below). A group of misfits, sent away to college by their parents, find that the plan is that they are to be killed. Final solution. They and their group leader/assassin discover what real, interesting, warm human beings they all are. They evade death, face up to their parents' hate, outwit the college death squads and end up in control — of everything. Nearly 300 pages involve you in these people, hiding out in the hills, becoming self-sufficient, forming relationships, and this is interesting. But the situation is portrayed only through vagueness and caricature: the parents' need to wipe out their children is sketchily explained; the college conspirators are cartoon nasties. Since the plot rests on these elements it fails. I was involved while reading, and I'm sure kids will be too. But the answer to the opening question is, No. Prefer the other two books any time. Buy this for the library but don't take it seriously. TD

Buddy
Nigel Hinton, Puffin
Plus, 0 14 03.1571 3,
£1.25

A suspicious bunch of men, a mysteriously boarded-up house with a grim history, a bitter old lady in a wheelchair and three kids, two of them black, sounds like a conventional enough recipe; but then add a jail-bird dad who still lives in his flash teddy-boy youth, and a mum who left to 'find herself' and you are straying into another dimension.

The crooks and the decaying house framework are necessary to give the book its pace and incident, but only serve as a backdrop to the characters and their dilemmas. Nigel Hinton's tale is at its best when exploring Buddy's rational and irrational fears and his relationships, especially with his dad, where love, hate, exasperation and divided loyalty mingle, with love always rising to the surface. Well worth stocking in the library for middle/upper secondary readers. DB




Break of Dark
Robert Westall, Puffin
Plus, 0 14 03.1581 0,
£1.25

As short stories go, these five are very long — 50 pages the longest and 21 the shortest — so they are not the short, sharp read which less experienced readers might require. This is Westall writing in his most successful genre, the modern horror tale, where unreality impinges on known reality in a way which leaves one in doubt and likely to glance over the shoulder at regular intervals.

'You can get used to anything after a while', says the narrator in *Hitchhiker*, even a strange girl who can pick racing winners, kill thuggy men at a stroke and look nine months' pregnant at three months. But when the real macabre purpose of all this is understood, then that requires desperate measures.

Read too of the bomber crews driven to madness and Sergeant Nice faced with some decidedly odd thefts. Read aloud these should be very successful in upper secondary classrooms. DB




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A&B

Lifeline 3 – Books for Sharing

David Bennett introduces our third Lifeline series which starts in this issue.

In the decade which has seen the emergence of innovative 'job-sharing' and 'time-sharing' Books for Keeps is choosing to highlight the splendidly traditional concept of 'book-sharing'. Joan Barker and I both place the sharing of class readers at the centre of our classroom practice: she in a primary school and I in a secondary; and we are delighted to have the opportunity to share some of our successes with BfK readers and to suggest follow-up work that might be pursued.

We both feel strongly that the shared reading experience leads to greater enjoyment and that there is much that is socially worthwhile in pupils, their contemporaries and their teachers joining together in the experience of a good book, well read. Less confident readers are being helped through a text which they might find unassailable alone and every child is being encouraged to exercise reading and listening skills. Of major importance is the fact that the teacher/guide is, as likely as not, introducing pupils to a range of material which they might not otherwise discover for themselves, both through the book itself and through the additional reading that often ensues. Finally, all of this sharing is, we feel, an essential contribution to creating a valuable and positive 'book atmosphere' in the classroom (and even perhaps in school at large) where books, sharing the excitement of print and engaging actively in story are all part of the same magnificent process.

In the succeeding six issues of BfK we will suggest class readers for the bottom, middle and top of the Junior school and for the secondary range, starting now with choices for the first half of the autumn term. Books will tend to increase in difficulty as the year progresses, especially in the secondary section. Users of this Lifeline should, of course, feel free to cross our fairly arbitrary year divisions as they see fit.

We doubt whether the follow-up activities will (or should) be taken up on every book throughout the year; indeed we hope that many books will be read for the sheer hell and enjoyment of it and not as a means to a worksheet. We've suggested nothing that has not been tried and tested and we are aiming overall to offer a variety of tasks that can be adapted and tailored to individual classroom needs.

We began by drawing up a list of criteria for making our choices which we would like to pass on in order to elucidate what we are aiming to offer.

In choosing the books we had in mind

A book enjoyed by and endorsed by the teacher. You are on to a dead cert failure if you attempt a book that you have either not read or not enjoyed.

A good story, well told, in which pupils can find or be encouraged to find points of personal reference.

- Some books which do not duck such socially important considerations as racial issues, class divisions, generation differences etc. and, especially important at secondary level, sex-stereotyping.
- Variety in style, content and setting — historical, futuristic, fantasy, humorous, diary form, first person narrative, town and country etc., etc. And of course in length and difficulty.
- A good selection of authors with some facility for cross-referencing an author's work across the age groups.
- A concern, especially in Junior choices, for good relevant illustration and design.
- With economic constraints in mind we have recognised the need to select books which are readily available in paperback or less expensive school editions. Wherever possible we cite the paperback edition.

Our suggestions for follow-up were designed to offer

- A variety of tasks and responses which would make possible different kinds of writing using many styles and modes.
- A range of opportunities to explore ways of recording a reaction and response to a shared experience.
- Methods which require an essentially pupil participatory approach; we believe that this is the best route by which our pupils can come to enjoy and respond to literature, right up to examination level and beyond.
- Activities relevant to the pupils and to the book in question.
- These ideas are not envisaged as templates for use with all and every book in every situation with no room for adaptation and re-shaping; neither are they exhaustive since space is limited.

We would be delighted to hear from readers how these suggestions go down in other classrooms; and to hear about and share experiences of other titles. To see what we have chosen for starting in September just turn over the page. You've got all summer to get ready for the Year of Books for Sharing.

LIFELINE 3 Books for Sharing

Books for Sharing is a list of books compiled for use as class readers in Primary and Secondary classrooms by Joan Barker and David Bennett. They are avid sharers of books with their classes and both convinced of the enormous benefits of reading together.

Here are suggestions for titles for the next half term along with ideas for follow-up reading and activities. We hope that readers will try out books wherever they are appropriate to their own school situation and will explore and experiment with some of the follow-up work, ideas for which are not intended to be comprehensive but more to give a flavour of what might be done to further excite and engage the readers who share the texts.

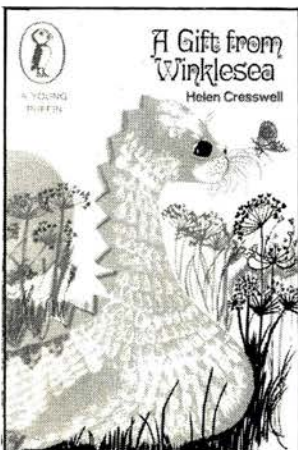


David Bennett



Joan Barker

LOWER JUNIORS



A Gift from Winklesea

Helen Cresswell, Puffin, 0 14 03.0493 4, 90p

When Dan and Mary go on the outing to Winklesea they want to find just the right present for their mum. It has to be a proper sea-side present and what they find is perfect, an egg-shaped, bluish-green stone with 'A Gift from Winklesea' painted on it in beautiful gold letters. Their mum thinks that it is beautiful too and puts it on the mantelpiece for everyone to admire. Each time Mary holds it it seems to have a living warmth as if it is an egg that is going to hatch out. When it does the family's problems are only just beginning.

This is a delightful book to read aloud to lower juniors. It is fantasy firmly set in reality — a story completely accessible to this age range. There is no time wasted and the listener is drawn into the story right from the first sentence. I like to read this book in the Autumn term because after the summer holiday many children have been to the seaside and have their own immediate experiences to bring to the enjoyment of the story.

More to Read

The White Sea Horse and other stories Helen Cresswell, Chatto & Windus, o.p. but available from libraries.

Things to Do

1. What will the stone hatch into? Think about size, shape, colour, food, behaviour. Write and illustrate your own idea. Read aloud in groups and choose the one you like most.

2. Make a class collection of words to describe the family's feelings when they hear the tapping and then see the creature for the first time. Use a thesaurus to add to the list. Write a poem about the hatching.

3. The Loch Ness Monster. Cut out black monster shapes and mount on a marbled background. Clay models or collage pictures of the monster.

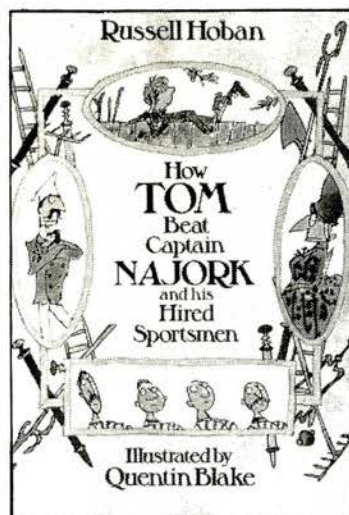
4. Design a poster for the Pet Show. Fill in an empty form for the Gift's entry.

5. Write the newspaper report of the sighting of the creature.

Green Smoke

Rosemary Manning, Puffin, 0 14 03.0297 2, 95p

MIDDLE JUNIORS



How Tom Beat Captain Najork and his Hired Sportsmen

Russell Hoban, ill. Quentin Blake, Cape, 0 224 00999 0, £4.95

In the school where I teach picture books are in no way thought of as exclusively for the youngest children and every year I try to use one in detail with my class. The joy of using a picture book is that it suggests different approaches according to the age of the children and the same books can be used successfully at each stage of the Junior school.

I am convinced of the special value of providing a real audience for children's writing and if classes of different ages use the same book their work can be shared with others as closely involved as themselves. Much of the work to be done can be fun, and preparing activities to be used by a visiting class can result in great involvement and an increased sense of purpose.

Captain Najork is an ideal book to use. It tells the story in words and pictures of Tom, a boy who likes to fool about on high up things that shake and wobble and teeter. Unfortunately he lives with his aunt Miss Fidget Wonkham-Strong who has other plans for him. She is a great believer in discipline and as Tom ignores her threats she writes to Captain Najork for help. He arrives bringing his hired sportsmen and they challenge Tom to three games; Tom, who has learned a lot from fooling around, is more than a match for them. I like to start by reading the story without the pictures — this means covering the jacket which is very striking.

Things to Do

1. Paint a picture of how you see Tom, Captain Najork, Miss Fidget Wonkham-Strong and Tom's new aunt, Miss Bundleyjoy Cosysweet. When the children do see the illustrations there can be quite a heated argument about whether Quentin Blake's ideas are right or not.
2. Write a letter from a neighbour to Aunt Fidget Wonkham-Strong complaining about Tom's behaviour.
3. Write the rules of the three games that Tom plays or invent, name and describe a new game.
4. Small picture sequences: as a book or a strip cartoon showing Tom fooling around.
5. Write the script of a TV or radio sports commentary on one of the Tom/Najork challenge games.

More to Read

A Near Thing for Captain Najork

Russell Hoban, ill. Quentin Blake, Cape, 0 224 01197 9, £4.95

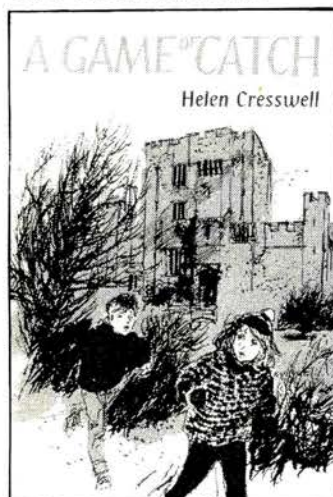
The Dancing Tigers

Russell Hoban, Cape, 0 224 01374 2, £4.95

The Enormous Crocodile

Road Dahl, ill. Quentin Blake, Puffin, £1.25 0 14 050.342 0,

UPPER JUNIORS



A Game of Catch

Helen Cresswell, Chatto & Windus, o.p. but available from libraries.

Kate and her brother Hugh are staying with their aunt for a few days before going to live in Canada with their parents. They visit the nearby castle and make friends with the caretaker. Finding the museum heavy with boredom they decide to go up onto the battlements where they begin a game of catch that takes them through the galleries of the castle. As Hugh calls Kate's name it echoes round the walls and, among the echoes she hears another voice saying her name. At first Hugh says he heard the voice, later he is not sure and only Kate, insisting that nothing is impossible, becomes involved with Katherine and her brother who lived in the castle two hundred years before and whose portraits still hang there.

This beautifully written story is my choice for the perfect first book to read with a new class. Although very short it provides a wealth of material for creative work of various kinds. The children become immersed in the language of the book which is at all times exactly right, and this focussing of attention on the power of words to create moods and scenes provides an ideal basis for the rest of the year's work. The text is referred to constantly in the following ideas for using the book.

More to Read

Tom's Midnight Garden

Philippa Pearce, Puffin, 0 14 03.0893 8, £1.10

Up the Pier

Helen Cresswell, Faber. o.p. but available from libraries.

Things to Do

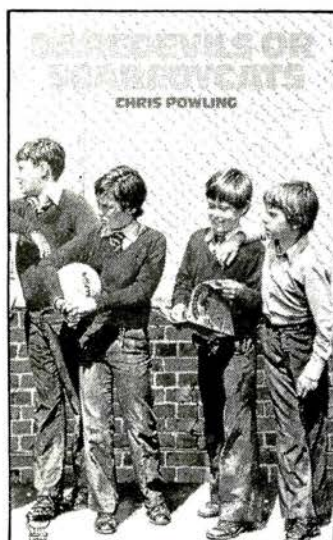
1. '... like a bird with the whole vast air of the sky to choose from.' If you could be a bird which one would you choose and why? Find out facts about your bird, then write a poem describing it.
2. 'The freedom of endless choice. It was almost too much.' Have you ever had so much to choose that you were unable to decide? Is it better to have no choice or too much?
3. 'That night it froze ... it came combing softly down in the night through the trees.' Write a poem or a description or paint a picture of frost.
4. 'Winters he could remember with snow high as barn doors and ice you could light fires on.' Collect reminiscences of grandparents or other old people about childhood winters. Tape record or write down as an interview.
5. 'And as he stared ... they swam into blurs in the snowstorm and were gone.' Rewrite this episode as if you were Katherine or her brother.

The Secret World of Polly Flint

Helen Cresswell, Puffin, 0 14 03.1542 X, £1.25

SECONDARY

YEAR 1



Daredevils or Scaredycats

Chris Powling, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671897 3, 95p

I like to begin year one either with a book that is likely to be familiar from Junior School — *Stig of the Dump*, *Charlotte's Web* or *Tyke Tiler* or else with short stories, that are not daunting and generally have an immediacy and quick impact. This collection has proved popular at most levels in the first year. It takes a group of upper juniors and manages to convey the impression of familiar kids behaving in familiar ways in familiar surroundings.

There are nine tales in all, each fitting easily into a lesson. *An Oscar for Godfrey* always provokes a lively response as our theatrical hero is hoisted with his own petard by the not-so-dim student teacher on whom he thought he was wreaking a brilliant revenge. Then we have a couple of eerie tales that elicit much discussion and surmise, *Wednesday's Werewolf* and *Pokerface*, and the two poignantly sad offerings *Thingy* and *Mad Eric*. Throughout all runs the theme of the title typified in *Ice* by Jimmy, who fears ice and snow, and in *Under the Mansions* where the book's mad-cap Teddy braves it just too far for once.

More to Read Other short story collections.

The Fib and other stories

George Layton, Longman's Knockouts, 0 582 22221 4, 95p
Fontana Lions, 0 00 671808 6, £1.00

Nasty

Michael Rosen, Longman's Knockouts, 0 582 20127 6, 95p
Puffin, 0 14 03.1599 3, £1.00

(for both of the above books, cassette tapes are also available)

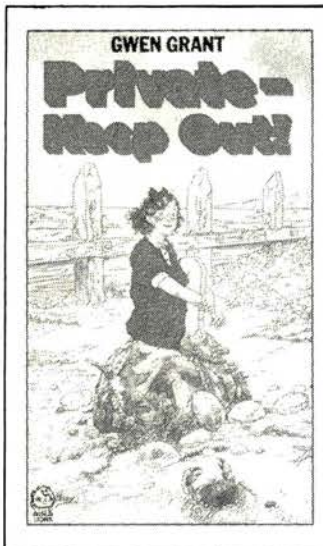
Things to Do

1. ... And what did happen at Parents' Evening and more importantly afterwards when Godfrey's Mum saw the 40 pieces of writing in *An Oscar for Godfrey*? — Write the script.
2. At the end of the school year Miss Manly sets the class to make a newspaper which reviews their activities and adventures during the year. In groups make that newspaper after reading all of the stories. Otherwise choose one or two stories for the same exercise e.g. *Under the Mansions*.
3. Your own adventures when you've played knock-at-the-door-and-run-away. They could then be made into more mysterious accounts after studying the mysterious elements in *Wednesday's Werewolf*. Record the stories on tape.
4. Miss Manly's notes about characters and attitudes beside all the members of the class mentioned in the stories.
5. How might Lorna Penfold or Eric have told their own stories to a sympathetic listener?

Dog Days and Cat Naps

Gene Kemp, Puffin, 0 14 03.1419 9, 95p

YEAR 2

**Private, Keep Out!**

Gwen Grant, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671652 0, 95p

Start the year with a chuckle as you lead your group through the riotous adventures of a humorous and accident-prone Nottinghamshire lass. The book is episodic and very fast-moving with masses of dialogue, which takes skilled and practised handling if it is to be read aloud successfully.

This secret diary is about working-class Worksop just after the second world war, but the adventures, scrapes and escapes are so timeless that modern boys and girls have no trouble in identifying with the writer. The sibling rivalry with 'our Tone', 'our Lucy', 'our Rose' and 'our Joe', the interfering neighbours, dancing classes, school, Sunday school, and learning to ride a bike are as fresh as if they are taking place here and now. There's a delightful zaniness in the accounts of throwing pebbles at a beached mine and clearing a whole beach or removing the plugs from the boys' oil drum rafts, and the narrator's questioning mind endears her to most kids — 'Did God make Gloria Hottentot as well?', along with such gems as 'Everybody's supposed to have a guardian Angel... All I'm saying is that mine must have the longest dinner hours in history because everytime I get into bother, it's never there.' That it's a high-spirited girl who's directing the action, makes a refreshingly welcome change.

More to Read These adventures continue in**Knock & Wait**

Fontana Lions, 0 00 671762 4, 95p

One Way Only

Heinemann, 0 434 94136 0, £5.95

see also

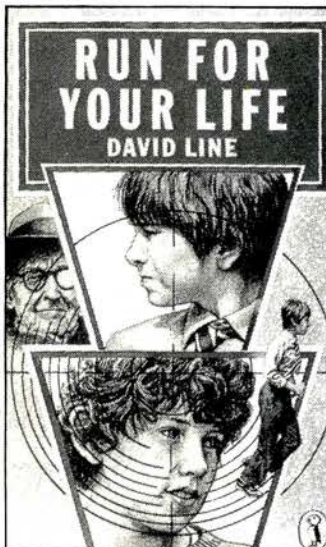
The Lily Pickle Band Book

Gwen Grant, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672081 1, £1.25

Things to Do

1. Pupils make their own, personally decorated and bound secret diaries full of deliberately exaggerated and daredevil action.
2. Collect reminiscences of childhood from a variety of older people. Initially on tape, these could later be transcribed and then woven into long stories with a touch of realism, or used as a basis for drama and script writing.
3. The heroine's adventures from another point of view — Ruby Brown's version of the dancing show or Miss Greybroom's account of the Sunday school.
4. A Music/English collaboration — 'The Ballad of Calamity Hall'.
5. In groups of 4 pupils, decide on a list of 15 words which might describe different characters from the book. The list is passed to another group who must decide which characters are referred to by which words and back up their decision with an example. Then a 'Private, Keep Out!' portrait gallery might be created.

YEAR 3

**Run for your Life**

David Line, Puffin, 0 14 03.0430 4, 95p

Start the third year with an adventure. This was often referred to as 'Soldier and Me' for a while, when a T.V. serial of the same name was current. It's a fast, fairly light-weight read which serialises well, mainly because the chapters are relatively short.

The two boy heroes are Woolcott, a down-to-earth likeable type and Szolda, a newly-arrived rather out-cast Hungarian youngster, who accidentally overhears a plot to kill an emigré. Their subsequent involvement leads them through such adventures as jumping from moving trains, being shot at by turkey farmers and spending Christmas Day hidden in a barn loft, whilst being pursued by a gang of desperate and very ruthless would-be executioners. All ends happily, but only just.

Woolcott himself tells the story in a believably adolescent tone, unlike many other such narrators who can be too adultly precocious, and the development of the relationship between the two boys, from the narrator's take-it-or-leave-it to their mutual dependence and admiration is convincingly handled. There is no female character but you can promise to rectify that in other book choices for later.

More to Read**Mike and Me**

Puffin, 0 14 03.0784 2, 90p, also features Woolcott.

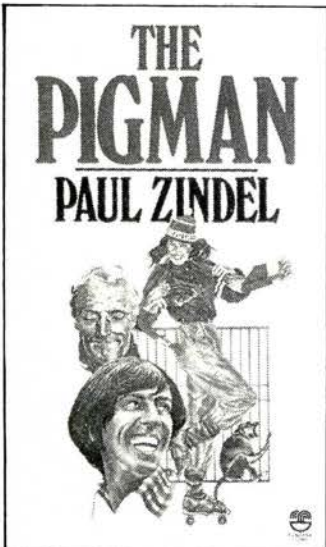
Things to Do

1. A board game based upon the plot of the book. Work in groups and include the writing of precise rules and instruction.
2. Interview the boys on 'Breakfast Time' after their adventure and their return to London.
3. Select key incidents from the book and work in groups to present a tableau of that incident. The class can now ask questions of each participant in turn about his thoughts, his previous actions and future plans, which he must answer in character and from his knowledge of the text. (The teacher might prefer to be the magician with the power to bring to life each character in the tableau).
4. Write the ensuing confrontation between the gang boss and the gang members after the interruption of the 'trial' in the school of languages (chapter 7).
5. Before reading it predict the end of the adventure from the end of chapter 17.

Under Plum Lake

Puffin, 0 14 03.1513 6, £1.25, by the same author, writing as Lionel Davidson.

YEARS 4 & 5

**The Pigman**

Paul Zindel, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671768 3, £1.25

Most of the best teenage material is American and this one, now in its 16th year, is the forerunner of much which was to follow. I use it mainly because its style is so unconventional in relation to that which youngsters generally read — or are set to read.

The central characters John and Lorraine write the story of their developing relationship both with each other and with an old man, Mr. Pignati, chapter by chapter, turn and turn about. They begin by describing each other and their individually problematic home life and then how a telephone prank led them to a lonely retired electrician who himself is not coping with the problem of bereavement. The trio find mutual comfort until the teenagers go too far and unwittingly contribute to the old man's untimely death.

The novel repays close study before use with a class because it contains more complex material than at first appears or than I can give space to here. It would certainly make a worthy C.S.E. text for more traditional work but also is an excellent vehicle for a participatory/creative approach, which I shall concentrate upon.

More to Read**The Pigman's Legacy** (a sequel)

Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1454 7, £1.10

Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball!

Fontana Lions, 0 00 671904 X, £1.25

Things to Do

1. As a pre-reading activity, what story does the very title suggest or what are class attitudes to aspects of loneliness and old age.
2. The book hinges on a telephone call. In pairs consider others that might have been made, e.g. Mrs. Jensen to Bore after the party (chapter 13/14) or Kenny to Bore after the party.
3. A store detective's report, after the Beekman's episode (chapter 8) or the Policeman's report (chapter 13/14).
4. Carefully select phrases and words from the text and re-arrange them as a poem to express John's feelings as he lay on the tomb (chapter 7).
5. 10 years after, John and Lorraine meet by accident; they reminisce and catch up on news. Write the script.

Confessions of a Teenage Baboon

Fontana Lions, 0 00 671951 1, £1.00

My Darling My Hamburger

Fontana Lions, 0 00 671800 0, £1.00

Politics & Children's Stories

Jessica Yates' two part selection of stories with political themes



Jessica Yates

I am defining political fiction as fiction about conflict within a society, or between societies. Thus for me the genre includes not only war, revolution, terrorism, and the persecution of minorities, but also economic and social issues, such as the struggle of the poor for work and fair pay, the fight for religious freedom, and campaigns against slavery and industrial pollution.

In an article published in the *Daily Mail*, May 4, 1984, Roald Dahl implied that political fiction was something new in children's literature: 'The world of children's literature is being invaded by authors with axes to grind and causes to advance.' But if we look at the earliest children's books, we find propagandist tracts; and such moralistic works as *Sandford and Merton*, and *The Fairchild Family*. Some Victorian classics of a political nature are still read today: *The Water-Babies*; *Westward Ho!*; *Huckleberry Finn* and *Black Beauty*; while young people have also read with enjoyment political books not written specifically for them, like *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the novels of Dickens and Scott.

Dahl declares: 'I'm not sure that kind of thing has gone on even in totalitarian societies.' This is ridiculous, when we consider the anti-semitic propaganda offered to children under Hitler's régime, and the control of children's literature by state publishing houses in certain countries today. By contrast British writers enjoy great freedom, for example to advocate conscientious objection in wartime (*A Long Way To Go*); or to criticise the government and police force (*Piggy in the Middle*, *Rainbows of the Gutter*). If much contemporary political fiction seems controversial, it is written to redress the balance, as a reaction against the political atmosphere pervading the media and children's comics.

For this list I have selected books written after 1945, not all, *pace* Dahl, recently published, as you will see. Date of first publication is given after each title. Details are of current editions. I have excluded books which seem to me propagandist, or just unsuccessful as fiction.

To save space I have not given SBNs for every single title mentioned, and not at all when annotating a group of three or more titles.

Part 1: Stories with historical settings up to the 1930s

Early History - 18th Century

Shout against the Wind — (1970)

Mary Ray, Faber, 1980, 0 571 11489 X, o.p.

The Dorian invasion of Greece in about 1200 B.C. put an end to the Homeric Bronze Age culture. Three palace servants escape from the inevitable rape and pillage, but pity forces them to break their flight in order to rescue first a crippled soldier, and then an abandoned baby. Eventually the refugees find a hidden valley where they can settle and learn to farm the land.

Mary Ray's novels of the Ancient World always have a political and religious dimension. Her 5-novel Roman Empire sequence describes the secret growth of Christianity in the 1st century A.D., and explores resistance to Roman rule in Greece, Palestine and Britain. At present rather a minority taste, she could be far better known.

Song for a Dark Queen — (1978)

Rosemary Sutcliff, Pelham Books, 0 7207 1060 X, £3.75
Knight, 0 340 24864 5, £1.25

This is the story of Boudicca's rebellion against the Romans, told in Sutcliff's poetic, Celtic-flavoured prose. Guided by the Mother Goddess, the Queen wins several battles and sacks Camulodunum (Colchester) and Londinium, but eventually loses to the professional Roman army. Another book in which Sutcliff takes the side of the Celts against the Romans is *The Mark of the Horse Lord* (Puffin), set in Scotland beyond the Wall. Discreet but pleasing sexual

innuendo marks these out for teenage readers.

Other Award 1978.

Dawn Wind — (1961)

Rosemary Sutcliff, Puffin, 0 14 03.1223 4, £1.95

In her 'dolphin ring' sequence Rosemary Sutcliff traces the line of a Roman family who settle in Britain, from *The Eagle of the Ninth*, through Arthurian times in *The Lantern-Bearers* and *Sword at Sunset*, to resistance against the Normans in *The Shield-Ring*. *Dawn Wind* begins with the Saxon conquest of Britain. Young Owain from Wales serves the Saxons as a thrall, and earns his freedom in time to witness St. Augustine's arrival in Kent. Sutcliff argues that conversion of the pagan Saxons to Christianity brought about reconciliation between them and the conquered Britons (who were already Christians).

Dawn Wind is now a more controversial book than when first published. Present concerns with possible racism have made the terms 'light' and 'dark' more controversial; and the course of history has also rendered questionable the optimistic view that converting a nation to Christianity puts an end to intolerance and barbarism.

The Mantlemass Chronicles — (1970-81)

Barbara Willard, Kestrel and Puffin

One of the landmarks of the Seventies, though somewhat under-rated by the new *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, was Willard's cycle of novels about the rise and fall of the Medleys of Mantlemass from the death of Richard III to the English Civil War. Each novel sets romance and family life against a background of political unrest. In *A Cold Wind Blowing*

Piers Medley marries a stranger, Isabella, but their love is doomed because she is an ex-nun made homeless by the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Willard's series is also notable for its attention to the details of economic and social life, particularly the iron-working industry of Ashdown Forest, and its use of local dialect.

The Morten Trilogy — (1974-77)

Robert Leeson, Collins and Fontana Lions

Leeson's trilogy set in Tudor and Stuart times, *Maroon Boy*, *Bess* and *The White Horse*, provides a fresh look at a period so often represented in children's fiction by tales of the Elizabethan playhouse, the Spanish Armada, and Royalist heroes. Leeson explores the lives of Black slaves, women, and the working-class, featuring in each book a central character who rebels against society's conventions. Note also the slightly archaic language used for the dialogue — worlds away from Walter Scott! *Maroon Boy*, about Matthew Morten's decision to free a cargo of African slaves, is probably more accessible to younger readers than the other two, especially *The White Horse* with its detailed analysis of Parliamentary politics.

Children of the Book — (1982)

Peter Carter, OUP, 0 19 271456 2, £6.95

This epic novel commemorates the 300th anniversary of the Siege of Vienna by the Turks and its relief by the Poles, a turning-point in European history. The narrative shifts between three young people, a professional Turkish soldier, a volunteer Pole, and a Viennese girl. Only the girl survives — the two soldiers kill one another

in the final battle. Carter's skill is evident in the way we come to sympathise with both sides. There is only one villain: the Turkish Grand Vizier who masterminded the invasion. A book for experienced readers.

Young Observer/Rank Fiction Prize 1983

The Witch of Blackbird Pond — (1960)

Elizabeth George Speare, Gollancz, 0 575 00225 5, £4.95

Puffin, 1967, 0 14 03.0327 8, £1.25

Kit Tyler shocks the staid Connecticut Puritan community in which she comes to live, by her unconventional behaviour. Her skill in swimming, her fancy clothes, her friendship with an eccentric Quaker widow, all arouse jealousy. When fever spreads through the town, she and the Quaker are accused of witchcraft, but the truth prevails in a dramatic courtroom scene. The book is set in the 1680's, with the independent New Englanders already showing irritation at British rule.

Newbery Medal, 1959.

19th and 20th Century

The Green Bough of Liberty — (1979)

David Rees, Dobson, 0 234 72187 1

Three brothers, Garret, Billy and Ned Byrne, are involved in the 1798 Irish rebellion. Although sympathising with the Irish cause, Rees shows that both sides committed atrocities. The Irish army of volunteers was unprepared for war and undisciplined, and the British army took savage reprisals on civilians. We identify with Ned, whose fantasies about glory in victory are soon destroyed, and who is revolted by the reality of killing a fellow human being. This book is true to history, and shows the two sides of human nature involved in war: idealism and violence.

Other Award 1980.

The Black Lamp — (1973)

Peter Carter, OUP, 0 19 271356 6, £3.25

(Archway Novels, OUP), 0 19 271497 X, £1.95 non-net

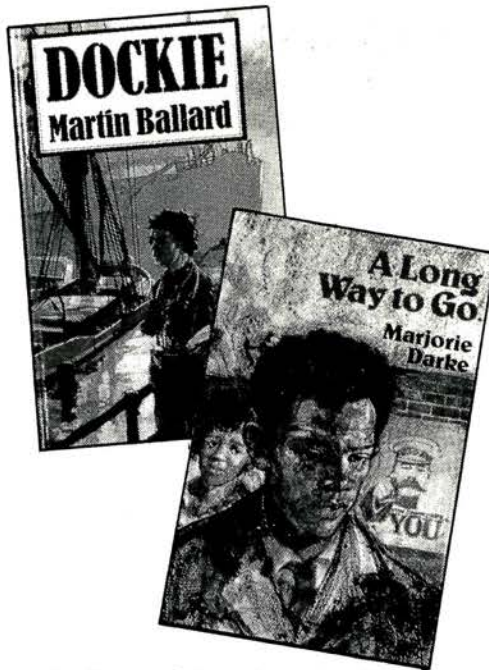
Daniel Clegg is the son of a Lancashire handloom-weaver, in the early 19th century when machines threatened the traditional family way of life. Persuaded by the Radical, Samuel Bamford, they join the march to Manchester to demand Parliamentary Reform. The rally is broken up by the Yeoman Cavalry, and goes down in history as the Peterloo massacre of 1819. Daniel survives, and rescues his younger sister who has been kidnapped to work in a cotton-mill. To get his living afterwards, Daniel has to find work at the new machines. Carter's skill in bringing history to life is especially impressive when we look at his immediate source, E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working-class* (from which Carter got the name 'The Black Lamp' for a secret political society of working-men).

(See also *Thimbles*, David Wiseman (1983), Kestrel).

Twopence a Tub — (1975)

Susan Price, Faber, 0 571 10624 2, £2.95

Local history and family memories provided the story of the Dudley miners' strike for a rise from a penny to twopence per tub of coal. The author draws harsh distinctions between the miners in their squalor and the rich in their overfed luxury, and illustrates



the dilemma of the strikebreakers. The strikers lose their fight, and wages are cut to three-farthings a tub. The central character, Jek, will not escape the pit, and Sunday meetings with his girl are all he can look forward to. Note the effective use of Black Country speech-patterns to suggest the locality and period.

Other Award, 1975.

A Candle in the Dark — (1974)

Robert Swindells, Knight, 0 340 32098 2, £1.25

Jimmy Booth, a parish orphan, is apprenticed to a collier and suffers the horrors of pit life. He and his pit friend Joe save the life of a social reformer who has been kidnapped and imprisoned down the pit. There is a pit fall and Jimmy dies, but Joe will carry on his memory as the 'candle in the dark'. With its expressive illustrations by Gareth Floyd, it is a good book for young readers, though if used in class, teachers should handle Jimmy's death carefully.

Sixty Five — (1960)

V. S. Reid, Longman Caribbean Horizons, 0 582 76573 0, £1.60

In 1865 many Jamaicans under Deacon Paul Bogle rebelled against unjust taxes and biased judges. A peaceful show of force turns into a massacre of government officials, and the English Redcoats turn out to quell the rebellion. The narrator is Japheth, a 12-year-old, whose grandfather, a seasoned soldier, opts out of the fighting and tries to give Bogle good advice — which he does not follow. An excellent guide to an important part of Caribbean history, by a Jamaican author. It is an easy read, and there is a map.

The Bonny Pit Laddie — (1960)

Frederick Grice, Puffin, 0 14 03.1190 4, £1.25
Archway Novels, OUP, 0 19 271498 8, £1.95

In this faithful reconstruction of Durham pit life around 1900, young Dick grows up, and witnesses a strike and the ensuing evictions.

The family camps out on the common before giving in to the hated owner. Dick's father is sacked and Dick, aged 12, must go down the pit to support the family. When the pit caves in, Dick helps the miners escape. Eventually his intellectual talents are recognised and he becomes a chemist's apprentice.

In 1977 Grice was given a special commendation by the Other Award Committee for the body of his work. It is a pity that so many are out of print: look for *Young Tom Sawbones* and *Nine Days' Wonder* in the libraries.

A Question of Courage — (1975)

Marjorie Darke, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671212 6, £1.25

and

A Long Way to Go — (1978)

Marjorie Darke, Kestrel, 0 7226 5485 5, £4.95
Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1359 1, £1.50

These are the central two novels of the quartet which begins with *The First of Midnight* (see BfK 22), and ends with *Comeback*. *A Question of Courage* is the story of Emily Palmer, a working-class girl who joins the Suffragette Movement and experiences force-feeding in prison and a dangerous kick from a police-horse.

In *A Long Way to Go*, Emily meets Bella Knight, descendant of *Midnight* the boxer. Emily and Bella work in a munitions factory. Luke, Bella's twin brother, is conscripted for World War I, but doesn't want to fight, so goes on the run. The considerable political content: conscientious objection, women's rights, racial prejudice — does not swamp the book's concern with personal relationships, between Emily and Bella, and Bella and Luke, and with Luke's quest for freedom and an artist's career.

Days of Terror — (1979)

Barbara Smucker, Puffin, 0 14 03.1306 0, 95p

This is the historically-researched story of the German Mennonite community which had been settled in Russia for over a century, until the First World War. After the Russian Revolution, religious and political persecution drove them to emigrate to Canada. The book reflects the universal problem where ethnic groups maintain their separateness, and if newcomers prosper, they are envied by 'natives' for their wealth, and often (though not in this case) hated for their superior political power. Barbara Smucker has also written *Underground to Canada* (Puffin) about two Black slave girls who escape to the North on the 'underground railway'.

Dockie — (1972)

Martin Ballard, Kestrel, 0 7226 5498 7, £4.95
Fontana Lions, 0 00 672228 8, £1
Heinemann New Windmills, 0 435 12270 3, £1.70

At 14 Moggy Harris leaves school to work in the East End Docks. He is a natural fighter, and begins to box in his spare time in the hope of a better career. We read of the competition for work by the dockers who crowd the gates each morning, the need to bribe the supervisors in the pubs the night before, and the dock strike when Moggy's father becomes a black-leg in order to pay the midwife to deliver his wife's new baby. But this is not depressing, as the story is told through Moggy's eyes, hopeful that he may win a better life for himself. ●

Part 2 of Jessica Yates' list will include books with historical settings after the Thirties, fantasy, science fiction and picture books.

Fifth Anniversary for Julia MacRae Books

Three out of four titles — including the winner — in this year's Greenaway shortlist are from one publisher. A remarkable achievement and one which must be particularly rewarding for Julia MacRae who five years ago left Hamish Hamilton where she had been editor and Managing Director for children's books for twelve years and started her own imprint. At the time she explained her reasons for the move: 'my sympathies were more with the authors than with the balance sheets'. The outcome of that sympathy has been a steady flow of high quality books and the encouragement and development of new talents like Anthony Browne and Ron Maris.

This autumn there are new titles from Julia MacRae Books for both artists.

Anthony Browne moves on from *Gorilla* to *Willy the Wimp*, the story of a self-effacing monkey who decides to assert himself. (0 86203 175 3, £4.95). Ron Maris, depicting the same home that appeared in *My Book has Are You There Bear?* (See BfK 26, 0 86203 174 5, £4.95).

Anthony Browne's wit, style and ability to reflect and counterpoint feeling is clear to see in his illustrations to a lovely story of single parenthood by Annalena McAfee: *The Visitors Who Came to Stay* (Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11224 9, £4.95).

Eleanor Farjeon Award to Shirley Hughes

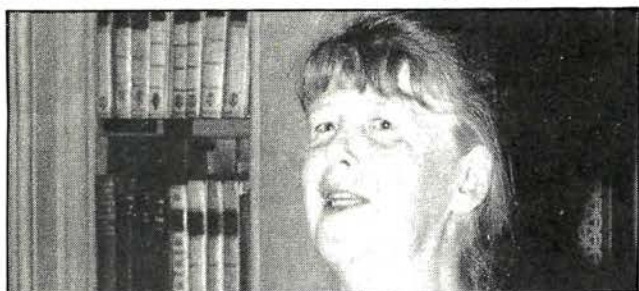


Photo: B. H. Gaskell

In presenting this year's award for distinguished services to children's books to Shirley Hughes the Children's Book Circle was highlighting an aspect of the work of this talented artist and writer of which few people are aware. Shirley Hughes is a tireless campaigner for the importance of children's reading and a passionate believer that every child needs visual stimulus of the highest quality. She is greatly in demand as a lecturer and teacher in this country and abroad and has also been instrumental in bringing several talented young picture book artists to the fore. The same impulse informs the contribution she has made in the past four years as a member of the Mother Goose Award jury — another voluntary task. As a committee member of the Children's Writers Group of the Society of Authors Shirley campaigned actively for the rights of children's writers and artists in the setting up of a Public Lending Right — children's picture books were originally excluded.

Shirley Hughes' energy, enthusiasm and total dedication to children through books has been evident since her career began nearly thirty years ago. She is a worthy recipient of this very special award.

Prize for Dr Seuss

As he celebrated his 80th birthday Theodore Seuss Geisel (Dr Seuss) received the news that he had been awarded a Pulitzer Prize Special Citation for his 'special contribution over nearly half a century to the education and enjoyment of America's children and their parents.

A £250,000 Read-in

During the week beginning May 28, almost a quarter of a million children of all ages from every corner of Britain devoted a great deal of their time to reading as much as they possibly could. They had one common aim: to collect sponsorship for MENCAP from family and friends for every book they completed.

They were participating in 'READATHON '84', organised by Books for Students Ltd. The response to Readathon from schools was overwhelming. Support flooded in from other areas too. Many libraries were keen to help, and enrolments were received from youth groups, Sunday schools, physically handicapped centres, and even from a school for the blind in Edinburgh where the pupils read in braille. Interest in the event was not confined to Britain; children in schools in Belgium, Switzerland and Turkey also participated.

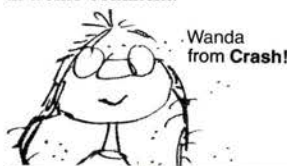
Results of Readathon '84 are just starting to trickle in; one child read 15 books (the minimum so far is 2), another raised £45, and every child so far has expressed a desire to participate in the event next



Happy Birthday Magnet

Another list celebrating five years of increasingly successful publishing is Magnet, the paperback imprint from Methuen. With authors like Leila Berg, Margaret Mahy, Monica Hughes, Ruth Manning-Sanders, artists like Tomie de Paula and Tomi Ungerer and series like Pocket Bears this is always a list worth watching.

An appropriately fun-filled title just out in time for the celebrations is *Crash!*, a Magnet original by John Yeoman and Quentin Blake (0 416 46520 X, £1.50). Subtitled the Waldo and Wanda Book of Practical Hints this is packed with cartoon-style advice on things like Improving your Tennis, Icing a Cake, Tie-dyeing Fabric. Quentin Blake's characteristic line captures the confident disaster of it all and there is a delightful cat with a good line in ironic comment.

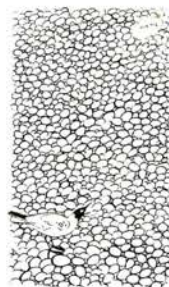


The Book Bus, London's only double decker children's bookshop, newly decorated and currently amazing children and motorists all over SE London. Eight children's book characters (each sponsored by a publisher) are incorporated into the stunning design by Valerie Dunant and Pat Parker, students at Camberwell School of Art. A busy programme of term-time visits to schools, often with illustrators, authors and other special guests on board has got children talking about books — even before they get inside the bus.

year. The final results are expected to be available in September but at a guess it looks as if about a quarter of a million pounds will be raised. Readathon looks all set to become a huge annual event, supporting a different charity each year.

Any school or group interested in taking part in Readathon '85 should get in touch with: Andrée Lloyd, Readathon '85, Books for Students Ltd., 58-64 Berrington Road, Sydenham Estate, Leamington Spa. Tel: Leamington 0926 29341.

One Hundred Years Old



'Hundreds of pebbles' by Pauline Baynes

1984 is the Centenary year of the NSPCC and of the Society of Authors. To celebrate the occasion many of Britain's top writers and artists have joined together to create a very special collection of stories, poems, jokes, puzzles and pictures. All the contributors took 'One Hundred' as their theme. The results — including stories of all kinds by Joan Aiken, John Christopher, Nicholas Fisk, Leon Garfield, Shirley Hughes, Terry Jones, Gene Kemp, Jan Mark and Philippa Pearce — have been edited by Peter Dickinson into *Hundreds and Hundreds*. All royalties from the sale of the book go to the NSPCC.

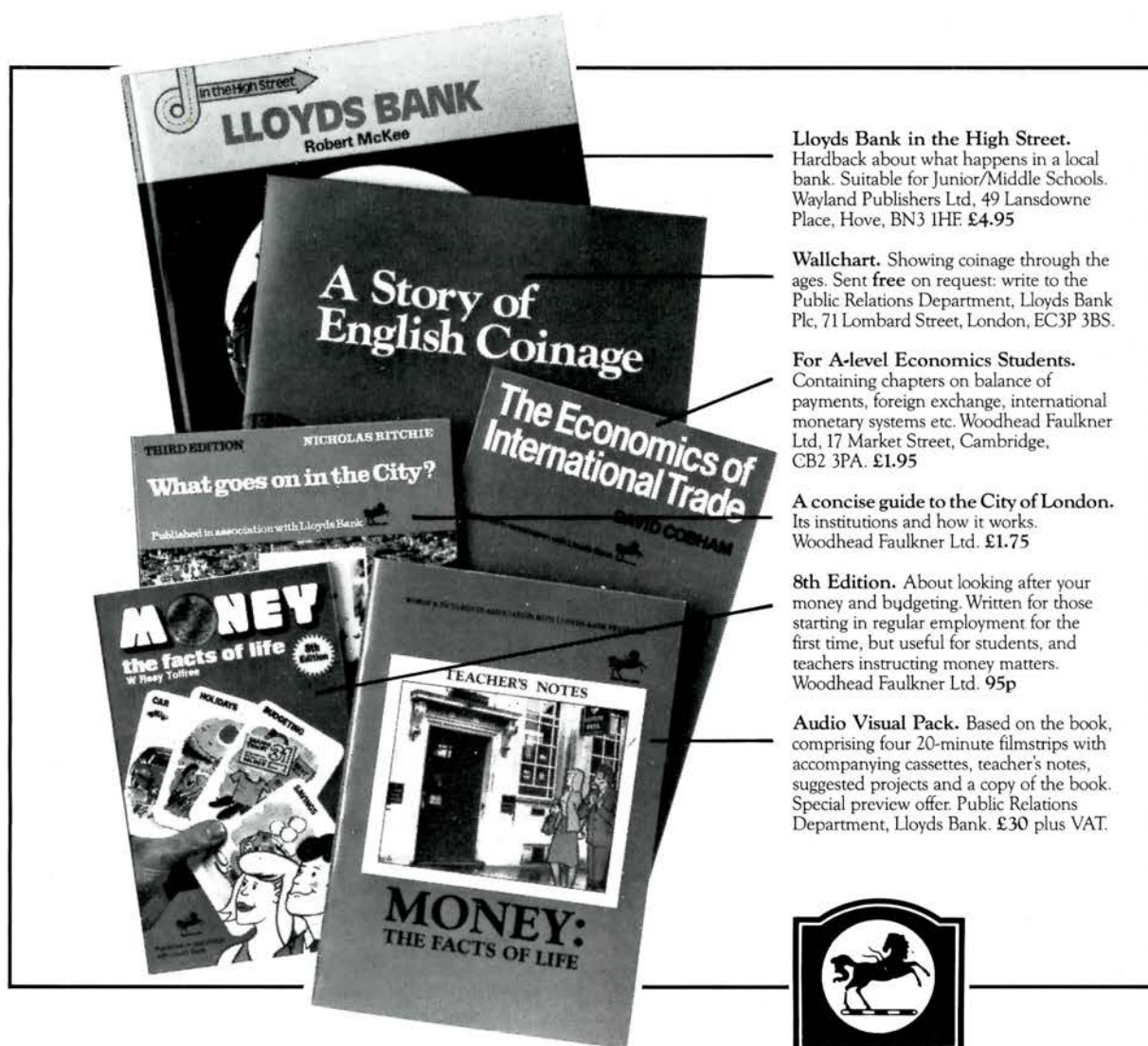
Reflecting Society

The Youth Libraries Group is holding a weekend school on the theme **Reflecting Society: library provision in a multi-cultural society** at the University College of Swansea, 21st – 23rd September. The organisers say that the programme will have a broad interest and there will be a wide range of speakers. Teachers, Advisers, indeed anyone with an interest in the area would be welcome. For more information contact Mrs B. Price, Branch Librarian, Cwm Bran Public Library, Cwm Bran, Gwent, Wales. ●

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SOUND & VISION

INDIANA JONES and the TEMPLE OF DOOM™



The second adventure of Dr Indiana Jones, the archaeologist who is handy with a bull whip is already breaking box office records in the States and looks likely to do just as well here.

Chronologically it is a prequel to *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (it takes place four years earlier in 1935). If anything it has more thrills, stunts, fights, chases and narrow squeaks (and perhaps less plot) than its predecessor. Steven Spielberg is still paying homage to a lot of great old-style Hollywood adventure movies and making hay with everyone's nastiest nightmare fears. The result is a marvellously entertaining two hours and a film that is confident enough to send itself up, keep you on the edge of your seat (or under it) and make you laugh at the same time. At the showing to which we took a group of assorted children 13-14+ the audience clapped and cheered the best bits.

I hope no one accuses it of being sexist or racist — though they could. Miss Willie Scott, night club dancer, is the classic Hollywood female side-kick; she worries about breaking her nails and screams a lot. The evil followers of Kali, the Thuggees (favourite sport garotting) couldn't be farther removed from any genuine connection with Hinduism and the massive underground temple where the rituals of the cult are performed is pure fantasy.

No purely verbal re-telling could capture the essentially visual excitement of the film so

it's just as well that Armada's two tie-in books have plenty of shots from the film in full colour. There is a large format *Storybook*, adaptation by Michael French (0 00 692405 0, £2.95) which carries a more or less faithful account of what happens. It misses out the sexy bit — but then as it turns out in the film so does Indiana Jones; give him a choice between a glamorous woman and a draughty secret passage with un-named horrors lurking round every corner and it's no contest. The Famous Five would have taken him to their hearts. The spelling in this version is Anglicized (Marks and Spencer are also doing an edition and insisted.) The other Armada version, by Les Martin, is ordinary paperback size; it has just as many stills from the film but with a longer (American) text aimed at slightly older readers. (0 00 692046 2, £1.75).

There is also an 'adult' version by James Kahn from Sphere (0 7221 51721, £1.75).

Robin Hood will be back

Viewers and reviewers were united in their enthusiasm for the new style Robin Hood as presented in the recent HTV/Goldcrest series. Response was so positive that another seven episodes are currently being filmed for transmission in the autumn.

Richard Carpenter, writer of the TV scripts and author of the Puffin based on the series has been commissioned to continue the series. He talked to *Books for Keeps* about this new project.

'It's been great fun working with this team and I very much hope we will be able to keep the production standards up — the reviews have been so good. So far I've written three of the seven episodes and at the moment I'm working on the fourth and fifth. I'm bringing the character of King John in rather more; but I'm trying to steer away from the kind of stereotyping of history he has been the victim of. If he hadn't been so paranoid and small-minded he might have been one of the great Angevin kings like his father, Henry II. Of course the Sherriff of Nottingham is still in evidence. He becomes Robin's friend and then his enemy again. In general I'm keeping the same elements and the same approach. I don't know if there will be a second book. No-one has mentioned it yet!'

In View this Autumn

Watch out for two big new series on TV this autumn. The BBC has produced a serial adaptation of John Christopher's *Tripods* trilogy — *The White Mountains*, *The City of Gold and Lead* and *The Pool of Fire*. The series starts in the autumn and will go out on Saturdays in the 'Dr Who slot'.

From Tyne/Tees, an all action, star-studded adaptation of the adventures of *Supergran* which will no doubt spread enthusiasm for this amazing senior citizen still further. ●