

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

SEPTEMBER 1984 No. 28 UK Price £1.00



Judy Taylor on Beatrix Potter
Meet Gene Kemp
The Tripods are Coming

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Cover Book

The illustration on the cover of this issue of **Books for Keeps** is from the new large-size edition of **The Complete Adventures of Tom Kitten and His Friends**, published by Frederick Warne, 0 7232 3288 1, £5.95. We are grateful to Penguin Books for help in using this illustration.

Correction

We are sorry that the booklists for the articles on Judy Blume and C.S. Lewis were incomplete in our last issue. Please add the following editions — all in hardback from The Bodley Head:

C.S. Lewis

The Magician's Nephew
0 370 00926 6, £4.95

The Last Battle
0 370 00933 9, £4.95

Judy Blume

Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great
0 370 30170 6, £4.50

Superfudge
0 370 30358 X, £4.50

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing
0 370 30171 4, £4.50

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WHSMITH



EDITOR'S PAGE

It's been a busy year for Penguin Books. Peter Mayer, Penguin's Chief Executive, has been justifying his whizz kid label by reorganising the group's publishing on both sides of the Atlantic. One immediately visible result of the changes is that from 1st July all children's hardback books on both sides of the Atlantic will be published under the name of Viking Kestrel (Viking is Penguin's American imprint). In paperback a Penguin has always been called a Penguin in whichever country it was published — now the hardbacks will follow suit. Allen Lane — the Penguin adult hardback imprint — will change its name to The Viking Press. All this of course while Penguin has been busily absorbing Frederick Warne and the whole Beatrix Potter list.

How would Beatrix Potter react to the assertive marketing strategy for her books outlined by Barry Cunningham (see p. 5). Judy Taylor's account of Miss Potter (p. 4) suggests she might be less outraged than some of her more conservative fans might suggest. Penguin hopes to win a lot of new readers for Beatrix Potter, though they may have to pay a little more for those exquisite little books and there are no paperbacks planned. Nice to hear though that part of the new strategy is to bring back the dust jackets.

Less welcome for some will be the news that an American businessman — a former vice-president of Walt Disney — is planning Beatrix Potter theme parks and looking to have at least one open in 1987/88. One person he will have to consult is Judy Taylor who, in one of her many guises, 'looks after' Beatrix Potter's image for Warne. She's also a member of the UNICEF Greeting Card Committee and has obviously been instrumental in arranging for a lovely Potter card to be included in this year's selection (that's my Christmas card problem solved). The design was originally intended by Beatrix Potter for the Invalid Children's Aid Association.

New Library

Beatrix Potter theme parks may be on the horizon here but there are already Asterix playgrounds on the continent. How has all-time favourite Enid Blyton got left out? Perhaps because the Enid Blyton Trust for Children has been busy sponsoring a much more worthwhile project. In co-operation with Margaret Marshall they are setting up a National Library and Information Centre on Books, Reading and the Handicapped Child. The Centre which will have a full-time librarian running it will open in Spring 1985 and aims to provide a comprehensive reference collection and information service on all aspects of this area. With the post Warnock developments in integrating the handicapped into 'normal' education, this will be a much needed and welcomed resource for all teachers, and clearly owes much to Margaret Marshall's particular

vision. We hope to carry more news of the library as it develops.

Meanwhile in this issue Margaret draws our attention to Books for All — the rallying cry of all who are concerned about book provision in the third world. We hope readers will want to contribute. One hundred pounds' worth of unums can be directed to a particular project with which those donating can feel a real association. Perhaps **Books for Keeps** and its readers could sponsor a project. How about it? Send donations to Effingham Road and we'll keep you informed.

Mixing the Ingredients

Our May We Recommend . . . series is intended to keep you informed in another area. This time Pat Thomson recommends Christine Nostlinger, winner of this year's international Hans Andersen Award but by no means as well-known here as she should be. Pat writes about the books and Andersen, Christine Nostlinger's publisher in this country, has provided us with a delightful snatch of her autobiography:

'I don't any longer think I know much about myself, apart from a few officially acknowledged dates, such as: born 13.10.36; birth of two daughters, 1959 and 1961. I also know I'm married. As we have lost the marriage certificate, I can't give the exact date, but it will be a few months before the birth of my elder daughter.

'I grew up in a working-class district of Vienna, where I was considered a "posh" child, because my mother ran a nursery school and my grandfather had a shop. In the area where I lived, these were very exalted positions. My father was unemployed at the time of my birth, and during my childhood was marching on the return trip to Moscow. Photographs prove that he was a very handsome man. It is my own story that he was the dearest, cleverest and most magnificent possible of human beings, and I shall probably stick to it until my dying day, since I have been offered plenty of evidence that this was not entirely the case, and have rejected it indignantly.

'Like all daughters, I always had a rather difficult relationship with my mother. The answer I give to the frequently asked question of whether I had a "happy" childhood is sometimes a radiant "yes" and sometimes a sad "no". Both are true. All childhoods are very happy and very unhappy.

'I do not intend to describe here the particular problems of writing for children, when one cannot formulate ideas out of one's own consciousness, but must be constantly adapting oneself to readers of whom one knows nothing, at whom one can only guess. That would be a mammoth undertaking. I would just like to admit that I am always wangling things. I have certain notions of what children like to read, and



certain notions of what children ought to read. Then I have the urgent need to get certain things written out of my mind and brain. And I also have a firm conviction that children like to laugh when they read. I usually mix these four ingredients together to make my books.'

Fighting Feminists?

Children like to laugh when they read. They also like do-it-yourself adventures as the July issue of **Books for Keeps** showed. Now we find Corgi joining forces with the whole wheat nourishment of Weetabix to offer free 'Choose Your own Adventure' books with your breakfast cereal. And Puffin, according to Barry Cunningham, are yet again ahead of this trend. After Fighting Fantasy comes, what at Puffin they refer to as, Fighting Feminist books. Multiple choice but with 'the girls making decisions about how to play out their lives in terms of romance and adventure. These are not just another drippy teenage romance series; these are something completely different, more in tune with the spirit of the eighties.' They are thinking of launching them on St Valentine's Day!

Feminist Footnote

News of Puffin's spirit of the eighties arrived coincidentally with a comment on Ann Pilling's defence of C. S. Lewis as anti-feminist in the July Authorgraph. Margery Fisher writes of how she and two other women asked, as post-graduate students, to attend C. S. Lewis' seminars. They were told they could 'if we sat at the back and didn't speak'. Terms which they accepted. 'Of course', adds Mrs Fisher perceptively, 'that was before his marriage'.

I hope the new school year has started well — and for those following Barker and Bennett, keep reading. We are busy getting the festive spirit for the next issue.

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.

BEATRIX POTTER LIVES

Judy Taylor writes about a remarkable artist whose work really came alive for forty children in Gloucestershire this spring.

The story of that remarkable artist, Beatrix Potter, and of her books for children is much more widely known now as a result of the world-wide screenings of John Hawkesworth's recent television programme, a portrayal that was controversial to some eyes but which caused the tears to flow from others. The incontrovertible facts are that Beatrix Potter was a draughtswoman and water-colour artist of extraordinary ability and she created a series of books for children that, over eighty years after the publication of the first, are listened to, read and loved by children and adults all over the world. They are translated into thirteen languages, the latest of which is Icelandic.

It was in 1901 that Miss Potter despaired of finding a publisher for *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and *Mr McGregor's Garden* by H. B. Potter, and decided to publish it herself. She had sent her story, with forty-two pen and ink drawings and a coloured frontispiece, to at least six publishers without success, though Frederick Warne had shown considerable interest and had gone so far as to prepare a layout and to discuss with Miss Potter their preference for colour illustrations throughout — a preference with which she took issue, on the one hand because so many of her subjects were 'rabbit brown and green', and on the other because the high cost of colour printing would put the published price of the book above one that children could afford, 'she thinks little rabbits cannot afford to spend six shillings on one book'. So she took her book to Strangeways & Sons in Cambridge Circus and had 250 copies printed, many of which she gave away to friends and relatives, the rest she sold at 1/2d a copy. Within two weeks Beatrix Potter had ordered a reprint of 200 copies. But even before the first printing was ready, Frederick Warne had had second thoughts about publication and it appears that Beatrix Potter had capitulated on the matter of colour illustrations and agreed to reduce the number from forty-two to thirty, plus the frontispiece. And so *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* was published by Warne in October 1902 in an edition of 8000 copies, in paper boards at 1/- and in a cloth binding at 1/6d. It was the first of the twenty-three little books so familiar today in their distinctive white bindings. They were published over a span of nearly thirty years, *The Tale of Little Pig Robinson*, the last in the series, in 1930. Other Beatrix Potter stories have found their way in to print, *The Fairy Caravan* with her own illustrations, but it is those twenty-three books that form the main core of her work and are what have become popularly known as The Peter Rabbit Books.

The proliferation of Potter material in the form of toys, china, stationery, etc. as well as the publication by Frederick Warne of *The Peter Rabbit Pop-up Book* and the large format *The Complete Adventures of Peter Rabbit* have caused a raising of the eyebrows in some circles and some critics have gone so far as to protest about the exploitation on Miss Potter's behalf; but Beatrix Potter herself was by no means unaware of the commercial possibilities of the exploitation of her work or of using the material contained in her books in a variety of ways.

Soon after the publication of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, she made a Peter Rabbit doll as a gift and so pleased she was with it that she asked Norman Warne to help her find a manufacturer, 'there is a run on toys copied from pictures'. Unfortunately the toy trade was flooded at that time with cheap German imports and no British firm could be found to take on the Peter Rabbit doll so her plan came to nothing. Then in October 1911 Frederick Warne published, at Beatrix Potter's request, *Peter Rabbit's Painting Book*, the first of three painting books, each containing eight to twelve pairs of pictures drawn specially by Miss Potter, with a one-line text for each and some hints about colour mixing and not sucking your paint brush, 'if you do, you will be ill, like Peter', printed inside the front cover. Single sheets of the black outlines (with the text) were printed separately and sold as colouring sheets in packets of twelve. *Peter Rabbit's Almanac* for 1929 was published by Warne in 1928, and seven years later Beatrix Potter provided new sketches and an introduction for the two *Peter Rabbit Music Books*.

The Story of the Fierce Bad Rabbit, *The Story of Miss Moppet* and *The Sly Old Cat* all started life in panoramic form, mounted on linen and, when folded, contained in a wallet with a tuck-in flap, and some years before she wrote *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* Beatrix Potter had designed some pop-up greeting cards.

On the dust jacket of *Appley Dapply's Nursery Rhymes* published in October 1917 there is an advertisement for *Peter Rabbit's Slippers*, 'The greatest novelty in Indoor Shoes obtainable! . . . Prettily pictured with coloured designs from *Peter Rabbit*, they form THE JOY FOOTWEAR FOR TINY FEET.' The merchandisers have been at work for a surprisingly long time.

But what about the books themselves? There are not many authors whose books for children have survived such a test of time — Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, Helen Bannerman, Kenneth Grahame would be on my list, with Beatrix Potter at its head. Her stories are strong, her characters are faithfully representative of their species in spite of being clothed, the illustrations are full of meticulous natural detail. There is a recurring element of danger in many of the stories and sometimes of tragedy but never accompanied by bloodthirsty detail. There is a close relationship between text and picture, and the introduction of intriguing words and phrases. That the books and their spin-offs can be a source of inspiration and pleasure was shown here in this Gloucestershire village of Chedworth earlier this year.

St Andrew's Primary School is a two teacher village school, with forty pupils between the ages of four and eleven. The middle week of March was given over entirely to Book Week with visits by Pat Hutchins, Sarah Garland, Mary Steele from Cirencester Library, the showing of Weston Woods films, a talk about colour separation and how a book is made, and so on, but the underlying theme for the week was the books of Beatrix Potter, culminating in *Peter Rabbit Day* on the final Friday.



In the weeks leading up to Book Week all the Potter books were gathered together, children and parents were asked to bring in their copies, some were bought for the school library, some borrowed from the public library. The teachers read their favourites to their classes, (*Squirrel Nutkin* for the Head, Mrs. Barnes, and *The Fierce Bad Rabbit* for Miss Griffiths, the infant teacher) and the children were each given a complete list of the books in order to keep a record of the ones they had read or had had read to them. Sadly there is, as yet, no Potter computer software or that would have been on the much-used school computer.

Book Week began on the Saturday when the children and their families visited *The Tailor of Gloucester* shop in Gloucester, an Aladdin's cave of Potter products including colouring sheets to be coloured on the spot and the intriguing mechanised models of the mice at their stitching. On Sunday the morning service in St Andrew's had a book theme and throughout the week preparations were going ahead for the Peter Rabbit Fancy Dress Parade and Tea Party.

Peter Rabbit Day was Friday and it started with the school divided into groups, each at work on a particular Beatrix Potter activity. One group were cutting out and making up the *Peter Rabbit Theatre*, another was putting together the mobile sent by Warne, others were working out a play of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* to be performed that afternoon. Some were doing a Beatrix Potter quiz compiled by Mrs Barnes, others colouring the outline sheets, the infants discovering the *Peter Rabbit Pop-up Book* and having the other books read to them, while a continually changing group were planting mint and beans, sowing grass seed and mustard and cress under the careful instruction of Sarah Garland, whose *Peter Rabbit Gardening Book* was much in evidence.

School lunch that day was salad, and bread and milk and blackberries — what else? Then it was time to start the dressing up. Parents arrived with safety pins and sewing kits, face paints and old fur hats. There were at least three Mr McGregors among the older boys (one with a lethal rake), a great many rabbits and mice, and even a Peter Rabbit inside a cardboard watering can. One boy opted out of dressing up altogether but wore a T-shirt proudly proclaiming 'Peter Rabbit Rules OK'. There were no prizes but there was a parade round the school in conga-fashion, followed by games and the performance of the Peter Rabbit play.

At the start of the week recipes from *The Peter Rabbit Cookery Book* had been circulated so the table for the Peter Rabbit Tea was loaded with Jeremy Fisher's Butterfly Sandwiches, Appley Dapdly's Jam Tarts and Pig-Wig's Conversation Peppermints. There was blackberry cordial and lemonade to drink and even camomile tea, though the latter did not find much favour. But the *pièce de résistance* of the tea was a magnificent Mrs Tiggywinkle iced cake. Book Week ended that evening with a wine and cheese party for the adults of the village and it was there that was displayed one of the most interesting results of the week. Using the recently published edition of Beatrix Potter's miniature letters, *Yours Affectionately, Peter Rabbit*, as inspiration, the children had written their own miniature letters inventing correspondence between pairs of Potter characters of their choice. The letters showed without doubt that the readers of the books had certainly absorbed the nuances and inflections of the stories, and in addition one child had even copied Beatrix Potter's doll-sized mail-bag illustrated in *Yours Affectionately*, sewing it in sackings and marking it with GPO.

Not only does Peter Rabbit Rule OK but Beatrix Potter Lives On! ●

Judy Taylor worked for The Bodley Head for over thirty years and for fifteen of them she was their Children's Book Editor. In 1971 she was awarded the MBE. Now married to author Richard Hough, Judy works mainly from their home in Gloucestershire on a number of projects, among them as consultant to Frederick Warne on 'matters pertaining to Beatrix Potter' and author of the texts for the three Sophie and Jack Hippo books, illustrated by Susan Gantner (*Sophie and Jack in the Snow* is coming in September from Bodley Head).

All Beatrix Potter's books are now published by Penguin Books under the 'Frederick Warne' imprint.



Last year Penguin Books bought Frederick Warne and acquired among other things the copyright on Beatrix Potter.

What, everyone wondered, would the international publishing giant do with these twenty-three miniature classics?

Barry Cunningham, Head of Promotions at Penguin, reveals his plans for marketing

When we took on the job of marketing Beatrix Potter we were very conscious of the unique place she has in the heritage of children's books. Equally we were absolutely convinced we would sell a lot more copies and we've been proved right even before we launch our new campaign this autumn. In the first three months of 1983, with Warne, sales of Beatrix Potter were 76,000; this year, with Penguin, they were 338,000 — nearly 100% increase. That's happened simply because we've been getting more books into the shops — we have forty reps, Warne had seven. It's only a beginning.

Planning how to market Beatrix Potter, we tried to pin down exactly what the appeal of the books is. I think they have a lot in common with Grimm and Andersen before them and perhaps with Dahl and C.S. Lewis, in that they contain an integrated world which is a perfect blend of make-believe and reality. And there is an element of the real dangers and fears of childhood in there — getting lost, getting caught in the dark and perhaps worst of all being gobbled up. Naughtiness brings just and sometimes

extremely violent results, and, equally, good behaviour is rewarded. The appeal essentially is universal and enduring, especially for children. They know that there is danger out there, that the world can be a nasty place — and Beatrix Potter agrees with them. It pays to be careful and listen to your mum.

But the books have become, I think wrongly, fixed at the nursery end of the market — lovely books to give a baby and they sometimes never get read. These are not just books for very young children, they are great story books for 7–8 year olds. We are going to try to promote the books across a much broader age-range — in bookshops and, very importantly for us, through schools. We are preparing a special schools mailing to show what we think the books have to offer. They are absolutely ideal, for example, as first story books — for reading or listening; a lovely beginning to learning about story and character as so many of the characters appear in more than one book.

For the wider public we are focusing on the Potter characters: Squirrel Nutkin, Jemima Puddleduck, Mrs Tiggywinkle, Tom Kitten and the rest are going to get their share of the limelight that is usually reserved for Peter Rabbit. We are joining forces with the merchandisers — the people who produce the china, the notepaper, the badges — in an integrated promotion: *The World of Beatrix Potter*. We've employed a new copyrights agency to ensure that all the products fit with our overall standards and with the Potter image. They have to be of sufficient quality to complement the image of the books. In bookshops we want to create a 'Beatrix Potter environment' and we've developed lots of different materials — posters, friezes, show cards, window stickers — all saying 'Collect the World of Beatrix Potter'. In the larger bookstores there will even be shops within shops. You'll see all this before Christmas. And Beatrix Potter will also be in the big multiples like W. H. Smith.

For the books themselves there are new forms of packaging — there's a Jemima Puddleduck pop-up planned and we'll continue putting related stories together in collections. The quality will be improved too — we're going back to the original film for better reproduction and making the typography and presentation consistent in all editions. But the essence will remain the same; no one is going to 'modernise' Beatrix Potter.

It's that essence we are going to 'exploit' — in the best possible sense — so that many more people see the books not just as a gift but as stories to be shared and enjoyed with a wide age-range of children. I like the idea that we can do that for books of such quality. ●

REVIEWS

Nursery/Infant

Mandy and the Train Journey
0 340 33811 3

Michael in the Dark
0 340 33809 1
Alison Coles, ill. Michael Charlton, Hodder & Stoughton, £1.95 each

Two small square books intended for a parent to share with a young child; they tell in straightforward prose how a brother and sister come to terms with their fears of the unknown — that of the dark and a train journey alone. There is a full-colour picture opposite each page of text and to my mind the illustrations are the best feature of the books. The sequence depicting Michael's darkened bedroom is particularly good and captures that 'other world' quality that even familiar surroundings can take on in the dark. JB

A Rhinoceros Wakes Me Up in the Morning
Peter Goodspeed, ill. Dennis Panek, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.455 9, £1.25

This read aloud 'bedtime story' presents something of a dilemma, for in order to appreciate and enjoy the metre and rhythm of the rhyming text — one line per page — it needs to be read through without pausing. But doing so allows the young child only a cursory glance at the fantasy world of the illustrations wherein a red-headed boy is assisted by a veritable menagerie of real and mythical animals through his day at home and school. The answer is of course to read it twice over. Incidentally this is an admirable demonstration too of the importance of reading a book to a young child before asking him or her to try it alone as it is possible to miss entirely the rhyming nature of the text from a slow sequential reading. JB

Donkey's Dreadful Day
Irina Hale, Macmillan Picturemags, 0 333 37143 7, £1.95

A crazy, mixed-up tale with a circus setting wherein Donkey manages to make a complete mess of each of the performers' favourite meals when he is appointed cook for the day. A book which should appeal to



A Rhinoceros Wakes Me Up in the Morning

infants' sense of the ridiculous and, with its lively, colourful illustrations and clearly laid out, approachable text, is one that many could be encouraged to tackle themselves. JB

Billy Goat and His Well-Fed Friends
Nonny Hogrogian, Moonlight Pocket Bears, 0 907144 63 2, £1.50

When Billy Goat overhears the farmer's wife saying that he will soon be ready to eat, he decides that it's time to escape. In his travels he meets the pig, the goose, the cockerel and the sheep and together they begin a new life in the safety of the woods: 'We can build a house in the woods and live in peace together' is their aim but seemingly their peace is to be shortlived when a pair of greedy wolves arrives on the scene. However, a united effort from the friends pays dividends and at last the animals can begin their new life.

A delightful story with the elements of the traditional folk tale, this was a firm favourite with my infants in its original 'I Can Read' form and it is good to see it in what, I hope, is a more readily accessible form for would-be purchasers. If you've not come across this one before, make sure you get

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.

case inhabited by mice — which Rumer Godden creates is as strong as ever. Both tales are perfect for reading aloud and the whole presentation — print size, spacing and line drawings — makes it enticing for new solo readers too. JB



'On Tuesday Uncle John came to lunch.'

One Hunter
Pat Hutchins, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.399 4, £1.25

On Friday Something Funny Happened
John Prater, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.422 2, £1.25

I have enthused on numerous occasions and in numerous places about both of these books in their original hardback form so they are especially welcome in paperback. Each is essentially a joke created through the interaction of words and pictures, and shared by the author with the reader, the nub of which is what is NOT being said. So, *One Hunter* is very much more than a simple counting book and *On Friday* ... anything but a diary account of a brother and sister's week. Both offer valuable interpretative lessons to the beginning reader as well as being tremendous fun. Not to be missed! JB

Gregory's Garden
0 19 272140 2
Gregory's Dog
0 19 272141 0
William Stobbs, Oxford University Press, 95p each

Children in the very early stages of learning to read are the audience Stobbs presumably had in mind for these two 16-page picture books. Their central character is a small boy, Gregory. His efforts at dog training meet with no success until the final command 'EAT', but his attempt at gardening does finally bear fruit. The quality of the illustrations, both in form and colour, make them far superior to most traditional readers even though the text — one or two lines of large print per page — is unexceptional. JB

hold of a copy for yourself. The delicate illustrations are a delight too. JB

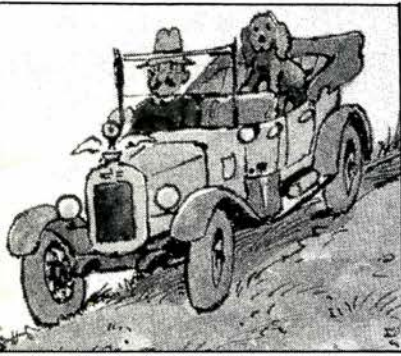
Animal Babies
Hans Baumann, ill. Erika Dietzsch-Capelle, Moonlight Pocket Bears, 0 907144 62 4, £1.50

Helen Nicoll has adapted the text for the English version of this Pocket Bear which, from its question and answer format and closing sentence, seems to be intended primarily as a bedtime book to share with a young child. In it we see baby animals at play and asleep. The illustrations merit close study for there is much to look at in the detailed paintings besides the particular animals featured in the text opposite. The repeated pattern of the text offers support to learner readers who want to tackle the book for themselves. JB

Mouse Time
Rumer Godden, Magnet, 0 416 45840 8, £1.25

Mouse Time contains two stories, *Mouse House* and *The Mousewife*, both of which were first published over a quarter of a century ago. They have lost none of their charm for children's fascination with miniature worlds — in this

Infant/Junior



Gumdrop has a Tummy-ache
0 340 33802 4

Gumdrop is the Best Car

0 340 33803 2
Val Biro, Hodder & Stoughton, 60p each

Gumdrop fans will welcome the opportunity to buy and read for themselves one or more of the Gumdrop 'Little Books'. Each contains a short well-crafted and illustrated story about the famous vintage car. In these two we see first a thoroughly sick Gumdrop having to spend a few days in the car hospital before being restored to his old self; and then, just why Mr Oldcastle prefers his sturdy old-fashioned Gumdrop to new or small, or even sports cars. At 60p each these are very good value. JB

The Berenstain Bears and the Missing Dinosaur Bone
0 00 171333 7, Stan and Jan Berenstain

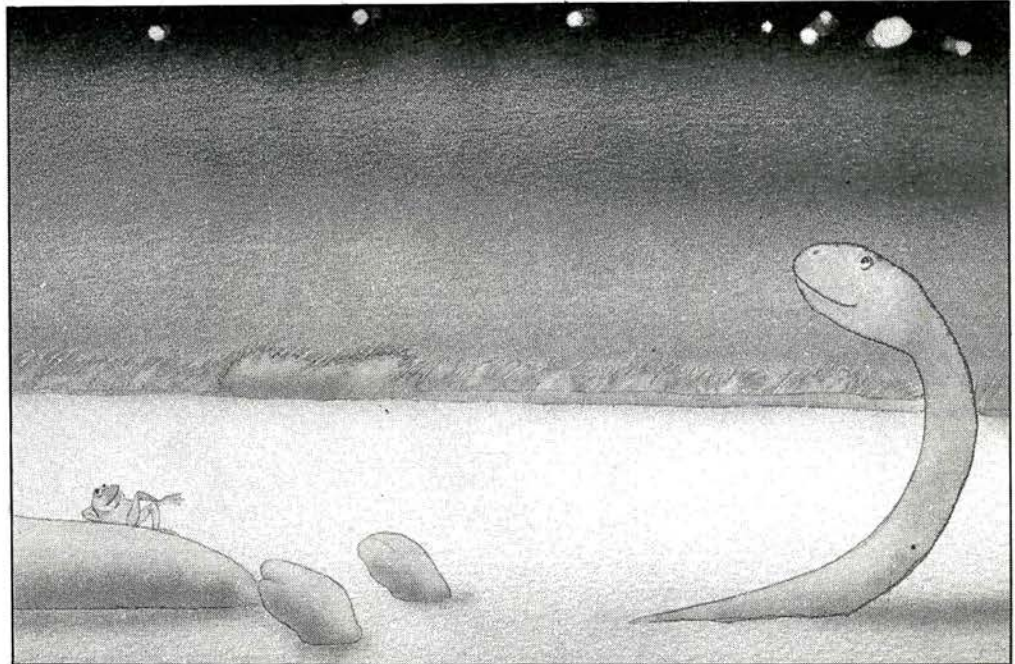
Spooky Riddles
Marc Brown,
0 00 171423 6, Collins,
£1.25 each

Two additions to the paperback Beginner Book series. Their subject matter alone should guarantee their appeal to a wide range of learner readers. The Berenstain Bear detective story is told in rhyme whilst the jokes in Spooky Riddles are the type of terrible groan makers which children love. JB

Long Neck and Thunder Foot

Helen Piers, ill. Michael Foreman, Picture Puffin,
0 14 050.419 2, £1.25

Dinosaurs again and with a message. Essentially this is a parable about the arms race and ultimately peace, for Long Neck and Thunder Foot finally discover that each is as afraid and reluctant to fight as the other and that the best thing to do is to live in harmony. Foreman manages to give a



Long Neck pottering about as usual full range of expressions to this unlikely pair and creates a dinosaur world of beauty and colour. JB

Little Riddles 1
0 00 123801 9

Little Riddles 2
0 00 123802 7
Bennett Cerf, ill. Roy McKie, Collins Colour
Cubs, 50p each

Two collections of riddles which taught the form to middle and top infants who are now making their own! The format of both books makes you turn the page to find the answers you need. Much of the fun is in the pictures; perhaps some of the amusement derives too much from transatlantic origins (I had to explain about parking 'lots'). But I'd include these in any infant classroom's 'fun' collections. CM

The Inventor
0 340 35164 0

The Film
0 340 35163 2
'Henry's Cat' Books,
Bob Godfrey and Stan Hayward, Hodder and Stoughton, 60p each

Look beyond the 'TV tie-in' label, the unremarkable pictures and see how text and illustrations tell two separate stories in these books. The cartoon format and techniques borrowed from film and television are used quite effectively to tell stories. There are good verbal jokes and inventiveness in each of these. A lively little series, which I'll use with five to eights. CM

The Pig's Wedding
Helme Eine, Methuen
Pocket Bears,
0 907144 61 6, £1.50

Celebratory tale about Trotter and Curlytail's wedding and their ploy to smarten up their piggy guests. They paint smart outfits upon them and, of course, after the dancing and merrymaking, a black cloud is seen overhead and the inevitable happens...

Imaginative text and lively pictures reminded my young readers of Mary Rayner's Garth Pig family. I do feel that some of the pictures, like the one where the couple dance after the wedding ('They whirled and hopped across the meadow') needed more space than the format of this series allows. CM

Heggerty Haggerty and the Day at the Fair
0 590 70328 5

Heggerty Haggerty and the Hallowe'en Ghosts
0 509 70326 9
Elizabeth Lindsay, ill. Peter Rush, Hippo,
£1.50 each

These engaging stories have now been even more popularised by a TV series and these picture book format 'follow-ons' are timely.

Though I'd have liked to have had more imaginative pictures in places, there is energetic storytelling here and the characters (the Witch, her Broomstick and Blackcat) are as witty as ever. Six to eights, in particular, should enjoy the

sustained stories. The 'storytelling' episode in Hallowe'en Ghosts is effective as is the scary ghost train ride in Day at the Fair. CM

Brave With Ben
Christobel Mattingley, ill. Elizabeth Honey, Picture Puffin,
0 14 050.449 4, £1.50

A rare and beautiful picture book. Nervous and eager-to-please Peter goes to stay with his Grannie in a large old house with a rambling, overgrown garden. The text is like an extended poem: sensory, expressive language in which the boy faces his fear of the garden, helped by a visiting dog and by the stories in the old books he finds.

The pictures, sometimes realistic, photographic; sometimes shadowy, dream-like, fit the tale well. Highly recommended for sevens-up. CM

Just Like Abigail!
Moir Miller, Magnet,
0 416 47860 3, £1.25

Lively, characterful set of nine stories about mischievous Abigail, a very contemporary-sounding little girl. Her adventures revolve around such realistic events as a museum visit, a new bedroom, a football match.

Abigail's concerns touch everyday tribulations of young juniors: pocket money; lost teeth; school and siblings. Ms Miller has a lively style and the adults are particularly well-drawn, as is Abigail's brother. Very inviting cover and sparkly illustrations. CM

Junior/Middle

The Irish Adventures of Worzel Gummidge

Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall, based on characters by Barbara Euphan Todd, Sparrow, 0 09 932970 0, £1.25

Worzel pursues Aunt Sally to a folk lore museum in Ireland. He becomes involved with Rooney whose style of speech is decidedly Irish, with two not very pleasant children, and with an irascible Captain Forsythe, local golfing champion.

I was rather dreading this one but found it extremely funny in parts. It is difficult to place however as the story does wind on and on. There are no chapter divisions which, in a lengthy tale, is rather daunting for young readers. The sentence structure and language content are both complex and at a primary school level I feel that only the very best readers or most devoted fans will persist until the end. The cheerful tone and constant humour, however, make it a good prospect for reading aloud, to be shared within a family or class group. An Irish brogue would be a positive advantage!

CL

Eric the Punk Cat

Adrian Henri, ill. Roger Wade Walker, Magnet, 0 416 50820 0, £1.50

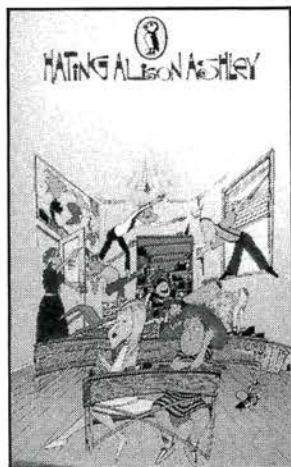
A winning picture book from the Liverpool poet about a moggy who joins a punk rock group and makes the big time.

Middle to top juniors (and probably older readers) will enjoy this one. The fun is in the tone of the text — 'Eric is a scruffy, down-at-paw loser' and the writer has that rare gift in children's writing of showing how idiom makes characters live ('We've got to have a new sound . . . raw . . . angry,' says the A and R man in the recording studio).

As with all imaginative author/artist collaborations, there are stories to be read in the pictures, too. See the shady

urban backstreets after dark and the dubious henchmen in the 'Top of the Pops' studio . . . A winner.

CM



Hating Alison Ashley

Robin Klein, Puffin, 0 14 03.1672 8, £1.50

Ideal Junior material. Australian, socially disadvantaged area school, kids terrorised by the Eastside Boys 'We Wuz Here' and their spray paint, or alternatively terrified by Miss Belmont. She was terrifying but very stylish, with a lovely figure, an expensive car and a penchant for squashing Barry Hollis. 'Although she was a dictator, Miss Belmont had some admirable qualities.' The hero is called 'Yuk'. Honest.

BB

The Sun, Dancing

Christian verse compiled by Charles Causley, Puffin, 0 14 03.1575 6, £1.95

This is a collection, not only of well-known christian verse, but of much that is lesser-known and thought-provoking. I had not before met the Australian poet, Geoff Page, and turned again and again to his stunning Christ at Gallipoli, a far and bitter cry from his other inclusion, Country Nun, full of love and loneliness. It is discoveries like that which make it a perfect

anthology, not just for christians but about all aspects of christianity.

From the seventeenth century until today the selection touches upon creation, praise, the bible, festivals, mystery, war and peace. There are verses to recite and dramatise, thoughts to discuss, new ideas to discover. A book always to have at hand when introducing poetry to children, an excellent gift for any thoughtful child — a collection that I shall turn to often.

CL

Agaton Sax and the Criminal Doubles

Nils-Olof Franzen, Beaver, 0 09 935930 8, £1.25

As the faithful will testify, Agaton Sax is much too clever a detective to be allowed to terrorise poor crooks with his powers of detection. So, it was only natural that Octopus Scott and Julius Mosca, leaders of the criminal underworld, would arrive in Bykoping, bent on closing the lid on Sax's case for ever. Typical chaos and confusion ensues, with nobody really knowing what anyone else is doing. Predictable mixture, but the fun is fast and furious, just what the legion of Sax fans enjoy. Amazing to think that some of these stories are twenty years old!

BB

Gumbles in Summer

S.A. Wakefield, Piccolo, 0 330 28363 4, £1.25

If you haven't met the Bottonsnikes and Gumbles in their earlier adventures, catch up fast. Weathersnike, Chank, Snorg *et al.* will shortly become required smart reading, while Desmond Digby's beautifully ludicrous illustrations (oh why don't Piccolo take the trouble to reproduce them properly) must get the acclaim they deserve. Brilliant material, genuinely amusing, surrealistically inventive, fantasy pitched correctly for young readers. Long live the scaly Bottonsnikes and the squashy Gumbles.

BB

Ronnie and the Haunted Rolls Royce

John Antrobus, Knight, 0 340 33988 8, £1.10

If you've already met Ronnie as 'A Prisoner in a Toothpaste Factory' or 'The Boy with Illuminated Measles', no recommendation is needed. If not, take it from me, this is worth reading — then give it to the kids to read!

Bare bones — Ronnie and Ethel discover a ghost in the back of the Rolls Royce that Dad chauffeurs around for the Arabs, who have bought the 'top people's shop' in Knightsbridge and are prospecting for oil in the basement. However, on account of a diminishing ectoplasm allowance, plus chronic laziness, finding the ghost a home presents a problem. Subtle, non-competitive illustrations from Rowan Barnes-Murphy.

BB

Superheroes

Michael Parry (ed.), Dragom/Granada, 0 583 30695 0, £1.25

Aimed at an indeterminate audience who might be allured by the magnetism of Lefty Feep, Joe Blow, Effie Fink and Subconscious Sigmund, Superheroes is a collection of seven, post-superman stories. Some are blatantly tongue-in-cheek essays in the cult of 'clobbering time', while the remainder mix junkyard zombies with a touch of androids and hope that the resultant cocktail is to the readers' imagination. There is even a dash of social comment for good measure. 'His wife had got a job when the children started school, so he was carrying a six pack of beer and a frozen pizza in a plastic carrier bag.' All say 'ah' together! Joe Hero, Supercreeper and Thor (yes, *the* Thor) all combine to find an easy way out in the ultimate short (three pages) story of an eminently forgettable collection.

BB

Middle/Secondary

The Village by the Sea

Anita Desai, Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1635 3, £1.25

This heart-rending and well-told tale of life in village India, where children are forced so young to be adult, deserves a wide audience amongst our teenagers, but Guardian Award winner though it may be, I

doubt whether all but a few will persevere with it unless coaxed by a sensitive and informed adult.

For Hari, Lila and their two younger sisters things seem destined only to get worse — a drunken father, a chronically sick mother, debt and more debt, starvation and deprivation, and now the onslaught of industrialization, which

threatens their whole way of life — yet the human spirit to survive blazes through, and with tenacity and hard work the brother and sister are sure to keep on coping and adapting — 'we are here on earth, we cannot leave it. We must live here, somehow.' says Hari.

Highly recommended for all teachers and as many pupils, mid/upper secondary, as possible.

DB

The Hand-Me-Down Kid

Francine Pascal, Fontana Lion, 0 00 672296 2, £1.25

Ari has an elder brother called Neddy. He is quite nasty to Ari. She also has a big sister, Elizabeth, who is positively abusive to Ari, that is unless she is laying on the charm, a



softening up process before more abuse!

Ari borrows big sister's new bike — her own bike is a hand-me-down. The new bike is stolen and life becomes very complicated for everyone, including the reader.

This story is very involved with superficial emotions. Hardly a page goes by when someone isn't steaming mad with someone else. Best friends come and go and it is all very exhausting but not terribly stimulating. The title and cover will entice but it is definitely a one-off read — not very memorable. For the 10+ age group, probably girls.

CL

A Dog Called Nelson

Bill Naughton, Puffin,
0 14 03.1680 9, £1.10

Lancashire, 1920s. Nelson is the one-eyed, canine companion of Bill and Noggy. They are his guardians while the real owner, Uncle Gus, is at sea. However it is really Nelson who is the guardian, sharing the boys' street corner chat and accompanying them to the cinema and theatre. When Uncle Gus is on shore leave Nelson leaves the boys to their own devices and becomes the proud drinking companion of his master. It is drink that leads to his demise and the ensnaring of Uncle Gus by the officious local spinster.

Bill Naughton writes with an ease and gentleness that is quite disarming. He tells each stage of the tale in quiet, matter of fact tones bringing alive the everyday lives of the mining community. The reader becomes aware of poverty and struggle but also of the jaunty determination of the characters.

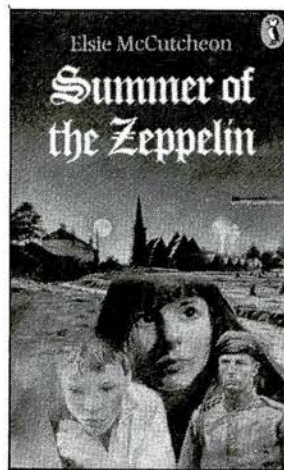
This is a poignant story but full of subtle humour. It would read aloud most successfully and be enjoyed by a wide range of individuals from eleven onwards. A must for every bookshop and school library.

CL

Summer of the Zeppelin

Elsie McCutcheon,
Puffin, 0 14 03.1661 2,
£1.50

When your father has gone



missing at 'the front' and your stepmother is too preoccupied to notice you, then you need somewhere to hide. Elvira finds a deserted house. She and her orphaned, evacuee friend, Clarry, see it as a sanctuary from demanding, unloving adults. It is some time before they realise that there is someone there before them. They find themselves keeping the secrets of a German prisoner.

This is a heart-tugging but refreshing book. It is a welcome change to read of children in the 1914-18 war after the plethora of Second World War stories. There is excitement and mystery and a very full awareness of a child's loneliness in the midst of a busy, demanding life. A worthwhile read for upper middle-school children and a possibility for reading aloud.

CL

Spooky

Pamela Lonsdale (ed.),
Magnet, 0 423 01060 3,
£1.25

Ghost after Ghost

Aidan Chambers
(comp.), Puffin,
0 14 03.1461 X, £1.25

The seven stories in *Spooky* have 'grown' from a Thames Television series, which I didn't see. I hope it lived up to its name better than the book. I quite enjoyed *The Rivals* by Vivien Alcock, about a boy who is far too sensible and unimaginative to believe in ghosts. The rest are readable but, for me, not very effective. They don't really intrigue or touch a nerve and the mental health warning on the cover seems unnecessary. Other authors are Jennie Howarth, Jane Hollowood, R. Chetwynd-Hayes, Maggie Wadey, Leon Garfield and David Hopkins. Still, another volume for the school library, if you like.

Aidan Chambers' anthology is much more compelling. In the longest story, Westall brings back Chas McGill, whose help to a First World War ghost moves us and alters one small strand of history. The other eight are diverse — often strong on the macabre, with suspense, twists and some

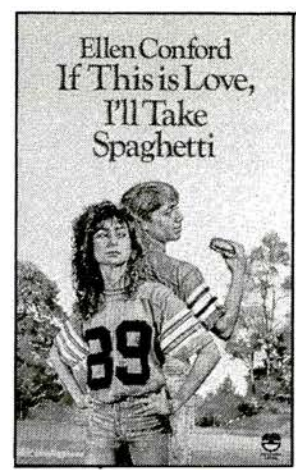
chilling open endings. Most pass one of my main criteria — of reading aloud well. Storr, Mackay-Brown, Chetwynd-Hayes, Aiken and Mark contribute good stories but I especially like John Gordon's tale of children in danger from more than ice on the fens and Lance Salway's sweet little girl with her gruesome accomplice whom no-one believes in. Bert Kitchen's fine drawings most effectively add to this splendid collection.

TD

If This is Love I'll Take Spaghetti

Ellen Conford, Fontana
Lion, 0 00 672414 0,
£1.25

A likeable and entertaining collection of stories, mostly first person and told against the narrator or main character who is in each case a teenage girl. The other narrative styles are an interior monologue, a third person story, a dialogue and a story told in letters. This range, as well as the content, recommends the book for class use as well as individual reading. Teenage problems, illusions and delusions are the subject matter so you would expect to find some clichés and the last story, where best friends discover they're dating the same boy, is disappointing. But pace, irony and style carry the rest through situations like dieting, falling in love with a pop star, preferring a friend's mother to your own. Extremely



Shy Person's correspondence with an agony column works well. I liked the chatting-up dialogue and 'Hating Wallace' (rage and revenge as she sits waiting for his phonecall), and the telephone addict limited to three minutes by her exasperated family. Girls of 12 plus will like them too and the school library will need more than one copy.

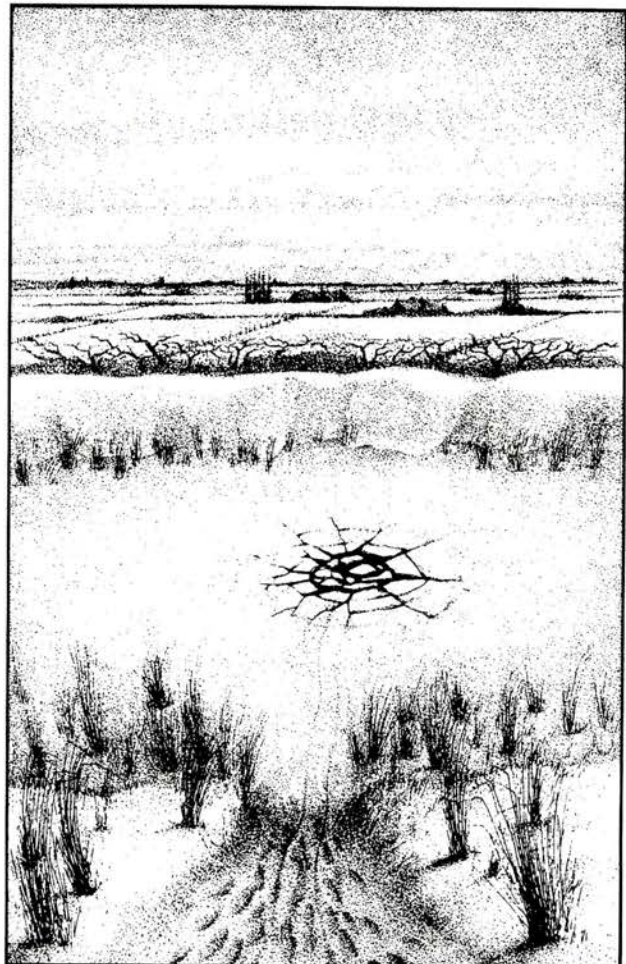
TD

Frontier Wolf

Rosemary Sutcliff,
Puffin, 0 14 03.1472 5,
£1.75

'They may make some kind of man of you, if they don't arrange for you to have a fatal accident instead,' Centurion Alexios is warned before

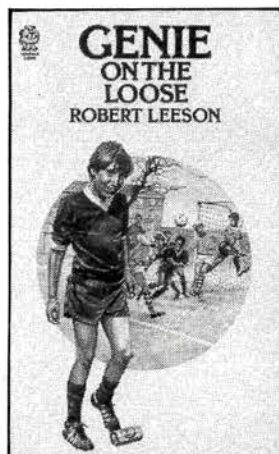
From *Ghost after Ghost*



taking command of a North British garrison whose men are known as the Frontier Wolves.

His past disgrace must be wiped out and respect and loyalty earned from native troops, their Roman officers and local tribesmen. The Sutcliffe magic still works for me, though I wouldn't call this her very best. Detail, registers on all senses, creating scene, landscape, atmosphere; dialogue is a skilful blend of modern idiom and well-judged mannerism; there is a powerful mix of abstracts to stir the emotions — courage, honour, pride, valour with humour, intelligence, sensitivity. Frontier life has a harsh beauty. Alexios learns the mysteries of command in a volatile situation. The Empire's power is dwindling, the Tribes rise and there are exciting episodes of combat, skirmish and chase. I could wish for more than one developed character and perhaps for a glossary since, even though most terms are carefully explained within the text (Principia, Optio, Ordo, Ducenarius), it is easy to be irritated by one's own forgetfulness. But that's quibbling; I enjoyed the book.

TD



Genie on the Loose
Robert Leeson, Lions,
0 00 672294 6, £1.25

This belated sequel to *The Third Class Genie* stands very well on its own, exhibiting the same winning characteristics of good humour, magical chaos and pacy excitement as its forerunner.

This time the fated Alec conjures up the wayward genie son of Abu Salem, who succeeds in acquiring a local reputation as 'The Black Panther' and amongst the odd good turn also wreaks havoc, which it is usually left to Alec to smoothe over and sort out, capably assisted by his black friends Ginger and Eulalia. These two are at the centre of the racial nastiness which underpins the riotous goings-on and gives the book another dimension, along with its N.F.-orientated villain, Gary Barker.

Its short chapters and briskness should push less confident readers through easily, so it is

well recommended through upper juniors and lower secondary. DB

Hands Off Mill Green!

Alison Prince, Armada,
0 00 692255 4, £1.25

I haven't been aware of a strong Mill Green following, but should there be one this is Book 4. It's a fairly predictable and undemanding read, a bit short on innovation, but unlikely to disappoint fans.

The Mill Green mob are not going to get their swimming pool due to the cuts and the designated land is likely to be sold off for warehouses. The answer of course is to galvanise the school into action to raise the £6,000 which will make the council change their minds and provide the pool. Give or take the odd dissenter the enthusiasm is infectious, even amongst the staff, and a motley selection of good fund-raising activities ensue, dogged only by a curse! DB

My First Love and Other Disasters

Francine Pascal,
Fontana Lions,
0 00 672298 9, £1.25

At just turned fifteen Victoria is besotted by the heart-throb of the school. She engineers and schemes her way into his line of vision and scope of grope by becoming a mother's helper at the holiday resort where he's to spend his summer as a waiter, when he's not playing body beautiful on the surf! However, a small disaster with her two young charges out in a boat in a storm draws into clearer perspective our deified Jimmy, throwing him into a very bad light but revealing the plus side of Barry, who'd been in the background all along.

If you feel you've heard it all before you probably have. Vicky is quite convincingly realised; there's some humour and even if the book is very American, teenage girls are likely to identify with many of the heroine's predicaments and hopefully recognise, as she does, that appearances are usually deceptive and independence is a hard commodity to handle. DB

Sweets from a Stranger

Nicholas Fisk, Puffin,
0 14 03.1439 3, £1.25

Ten strange and mysterious stories which would form an excellent introduction to much of the rest of this author's work. Children are at the centre of each story and alien forces are seldom far behind. Amongst the best, in the title story Tina tangles with a very unworldly other-worlder in much the same way that Alec in *Swop Shop* is engulfed by an alien hole in his bedroom wall; *Perfect Paul* is a



'Perfect Paul' from *Sweets from a Stranger*

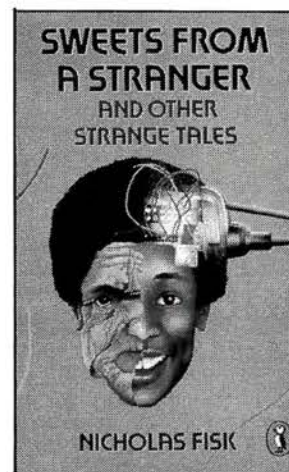
humorous fantasy about a goody-goody who aims to re-design the Pearly Gates and so is returned to Earth as a 38-year-old teacher (!); and in the more demanding *Mind Milk*, aliens probe the sleeping thoughts and dreams of earthlings with revealing consequences.

A very varied collection to suit a variety of tastes, good for reading aloud across the secondary age range. DB

The Fate of Jeremy Visick

David Wiseman, Puffin,
0 14 03.1558 6, £1.25

'Loyalty and trust between friends is one of the finest things there is, Clemens, but there are ways.' What begins as a rather ordinary fantasy/time-slip history lesson into Cornish tin-mining becomes quite compelling towards the end as Matthew Clemens dreams himself into the mine, where in 1852 his other-time friend, named in the title, witnessed the death of his father and two brothers, then abandoned hope of his own safety within sight of 'the grass'. The gravestone 'trigger' is rather over-used by now and the artefact link between past and present rather obvious, but perhaps only to widely experienced readers. Matthew is realised credibly enough and the story doesn't drag, so it is likely to find readership at upper junior/lower secondary level. DB



Super Heroes

Gyles Brandreth, Knight,
0 340 26808 5, £1.25

Gyles Brandreth seems to specialise in finding intriguing subjects for interesting children's books, and this catalogue of television, film and comic book heroes is another winner. Some wishful thinking among the cast list though. Is Gyles reliving his own youth by including *Biggles*, *Nancy Drew*, *The Hardy Boys* and *Zorro*? Still, there's plenty here to fascinate, including vital information about *Flash Gordon*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Spiderman* and *Wonderwoman*. If the present crop of superheroes bores, then there's even a questionnaire to assist the young reader in creating his own composite character to rank alongside *Buck Rogers* or *Dan Dare*. One small criticism — Where is *Desperate Dan*? BB

Older Readers

Dear Shrink

Helen Cresswell, Puffin
Plus, 0 14 03.1613 2,
£1.50

Their botanist parents' trip to study the Amazon jungle results in pain and separation for three children who have previously taken comfortable middle-class security for granted. The story is told by the middle child, first as a quite amusing account of having elderly Mrs Bartle in loco parentis then, after her death, in the form of Anne Frank-type letters. Addressed to Mr Jung (see title), these give Oliver a way to express his desperate unhappiness as he and small Lucy spend time with truly awful foster parents and in a children's home. Oliver Saxon is intelligent, articulate and suffering in many ways — lonely, frightened, tormented at school, worried about his sister, confronted with strangers and strange situations.

The book is compelling, direct, often funny and worth recommending to teenagers. I feel the ending is rather overloaded with incident and the dénouement has to be

predictable. The family house is wrecked by a boy from the Home; the Saxon children run away, taking another boy in care with them; but Mum and Dad suddenly return and after broken limbs, blizzards and a helicopter rescue, the story ends with a happy Christmas. Should appeal to fairly bright teenagers. TD

The Watcher in the Garden

Joan Phipson, Puffin
Plus, 0 14 03.1714 7,
£1.50

A blind old man has a garden trespassed in by a rebellious teenage girl and a youth filled with hatred for both. There develops a tender affinity between Mr Lovett and the girl; somehow his garden pacifies her wildness. Terry menaces Catherine, yet they have some strange affinity too and after their accident (he aiming his motorbike at her, she defending herself with a stick, both concussed) something like telepathy grows between them. His grudge against Mr Lovett always threatens but it seems, at the end, as if the violence erupts as earthquake and, instead of

harming the others, Terry saves both. 'You are the bad of me', Catherine tells him and he answers, 'You must be the good of me and this time you have won'. There is a curious effect of distance and introspection together, a remote dream or nightmare-like flavour and yet much of the stance is from inside people's heads. This may grip a rather special kind of reader and the book is worth offering but I don't think it will be widely popular. TD

A Foreign Affair

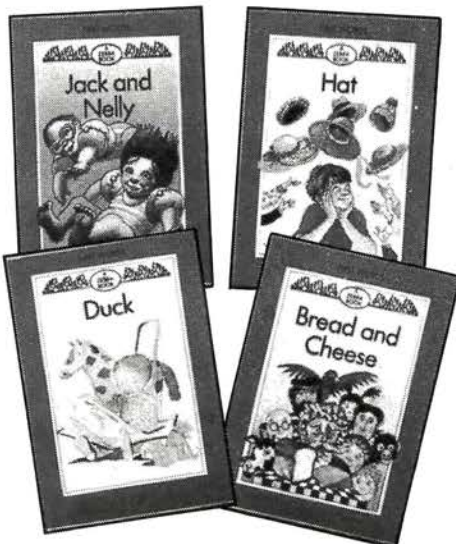
John Rowe Townsend,
Puffin Plus,
0 14 03.1525 X, £1.75

Kate, just 17, is swept off to Essenheim, a tiny country somewhere beyond Switzerland, by Crown Prince Rudi who plans to make her his official, temporary mistress to ensure that his uncle abdicates in favour of him. Clear so far? Also travelling are George, an English journalist, Sonia, an Essenheimisch student revolutionary and Aleks, Essenheim's first poet whose works are oddly familiar — 'I

moved at random in isolation similar to that of a mass of fog drifting at a considerable altitude across mountains and valleys . . .'. Just as Kate begins to grasp the complicated politics of Essenheim, there is a military coup, she's threatened with marriage to Colonel Schweiner, then the revolutionaries gain control, but are rapidly overthrown by Essenheim's capitalist who is replaced by a populist movement — the agile trimmer of a Crown Prince landing on his feet throughout. Though Kate's insides melt in his presence, she never really likes Rudi who is pushed in the river by good old George, with whom Kate escapes in the end. A busy book, humorous and quite demanding, appealing most, I think, to fairly sophisticated girls with some sense of politics and satire. Perhaps I'm being perverse in finding Kate's presence more unlikely than the situation itself, but as the author says in his Note, 'Don't take it seriously. It is for fun.' TD

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Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Pictures by Errol Le Cain

The text of this stunning picture book is taken from *The Song of Hiawatha*, Longfellow's poem based on the traditions of the American Indians. Hiawatha was of the Ojibwa tribe who lived by the Great Lakes, and the artist has meticulously researched the details of his magnificent paintings.

0 571 13286 3 October £5.95

Foxglove Tales

Alison Uttley
Chosen by Lucy Meredith

To mark the centenary of Alison Uttley's birth in 1884, here is a selection of her stories for young children which combine her characteristic fantasy, humour and feeling for nature. Her popular animal heroes Sam Pig and Tim Rabbit make guest appearances. Drawings by Shirley Felts.

0 571 13354 1 November £4.95

Ghosts at Large

Susan Price

A Hallowe'en gathering of ghost stories. Drawings by Alison Price.

0 571 13282 0 October £5.95

The Faber Book of Christmas Stories

Edited by Sara and Stephen Corrin

A companion to *Round the Christmas Tree*, for children of ten and over. Authors of the fourteen stories in this collection include Roy Fuller, O. Henry, Thomas Hardy and Leon Garfield. Drawings by Jill Bennett.

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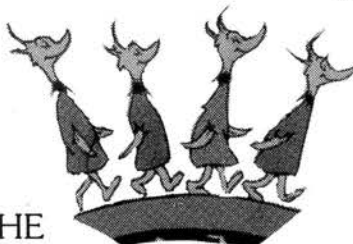
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FOREVER

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Chris Powling acclaims a classic comic hero.

Reader . . . be warned. For a continuation of the stringent critical standards proper to Books for Keeps proceed at once to the next pages. What follows on this one is an open fan-letter addressed to a character who's been going strong since May 1922. No doubt a cool appraisal of William Brown and his onlie begetter Richmal Crompton is entirely possible. But not from me. Not, at any rate, while I'm dazzled all over again by the William books now re-issued in paperback by Macmillan. Like Violet Elizabeth Bott, you can thcream and thcream until you're *thick* but William won't get a word of dithapproval here.

Unlike merely one-off classic creations — Long John Silver, say, or Mr Toad — William is best appreciated *in bulk*. So the fact that there are now *twelve* titles available (and more to come?) is cause to rejoice. Lucky for us that the blessed Richmal was as prolific as she was inspired.

Wherein, then, lies the appeal of William? I'd suggest in his status as anti-curmudgeon par excellence. Kingsley Amis, while perfecting his W.C. Fields impression, once declared that he was amazed that adults were so pleasant considering they all began as children. William, after sixty-two years in business, remains the supreme challenge to this view. Considering they all began more-or-less like William, I'm amazed so many adults finish up like Kingley Amis. Spot the Unlucky Jim in this exchange, for example:

"You've not got much hair right on the top of your head, father," he said pleasantly and conversationally.

There was no answer.

"I said you'd not got much hair on the top of your head," repeated William in a louder tone.

"I heard you," said his father coldly.

"Oh", said William sitting down on the ground. There was silence for a minute, then William said in friendly tones:

"I only said it again 'cause I thought you didn't hear the first time. I thought you'd have said 'Oh,' or 'Yes,' or 'No,' or something if you'd heard."

There was no answer, and again after a long silence, William spoke.

"I didn't mind you not sayin' 'Oh,' or 'Yes,' or 'No,'" he said, "only that was what made me say it again, 'cause with you not sayin' it I thought you'd not heard."

Mr Brown arose and moved his chair several feet away. William, on whom hints were wasted, followed.

"I was readin' a tale yesterday," he said, "about a man wot's legs got bit off by sharks —"

Mr Brown groaned . . .

As well he might. Whether the laugh is on William or from William it's always *with* William. He's living literary proof that comedy, if it's good enough, can conquer even such major historical shifts as the demise of Eton collars and domestic servants. After all, videos may come and gobstoppers may go but the guerilla-war between the young and the ex-young continues unabated with William leading the archetypal assault on all who deviate into dignity (himself included).

Which is why I was so delighted, recently, when I discussed these books with a group of today's eleven-year-olds. The charabancs and dinner-gongs and stockbroker setting didn't bother them a bit. Straightaway they recognised an ally. Jeans and feminism may have replaced short-trousers and the girl-next-door but, as one likely lass declared, "I wouldn't mind him



"DON'T YOU THINK IT'S VERY LIKE ME?"
ASKED LADY ATKINSON.

"IT'S NOT AS FAT AS YOU ARE," SAID WILLIAM, CRITICALLY.
"I'M NOT IMPOLITE. I'M BEING TRUTHFUL."

for a boyfriend." Admittedly, she did have a twinkle in the eye which suggested that these days the leader of the Outlaws might have work cut out keeping up with her. But weren't William's problems a bit *dated*, I asked? "Well, he does seem a bit infested with aunts," said a lad. "Mind you, so am I. Infested with *one* aunt anyway." William would have understood instantly what he meant.

In a curious way, of course, changing times may have worked in William's favour. His school cap and socks like ankle-warmers now have the glamour of period-costume. Even the starker-than-ever contrast between the blandness of the background and the blitz-ness of the boy merely reinforces his right to be considered the junior branch of the Mafia's supreme hit-man. Nor are stories like *Not Much* or *William's Christmas Eve* a serious handicap. These, you'll recall, run a terrible risk by confronting William with kids a lot less fortunate than he is. But who can blame William for his romantic belief that backstreet freedom is preferable to his? In 1984 of all years we ought to forgive the Winston Smiths and the William Browns for their touching faith that the answer lies in the proles. If our unease persists, moreover, there's a simple antidote: try dropping our hero into the sort of ambiance for which, heaven knows, his family intended him — at its best, say, the world of Ransome and at its worst the world of Blyton. Wouldn't he scuttle at a stroke the entire fleet of Swallows and Amazons? And have the Famous Five barricading Kirren Island to keep him at bay? William subverts social class along with every other convention.

Hence my guess that if ever there's a World Cup Competition for Kid Lit Comedy, the home team at Wembley will consist of William, Henry, Ginger, Douglas, Jumble, Ethel, Robert, Mr Brown, Mrs Brown and any two others from the four or five hundred short stories of the divine Miss Crompton. Given half a chance I'll lead the community singing myself. ●

Richmal Crompton's *William* books are published by Macmillan. Hardback £5.95, paperback £1.25.

More William

If he moves quickly Chris Powling will be able to take his enthusiasm for William a stage further by becoming a founder member of the Outlaws Club — organised by Macmillan for William's fans.

New Outlaws get a badge and red wallet containing a letter from William, the William-flavoured rules of the club and the secret password (BfK knows what it is but we're not telling!). Details of how to join will be in all William paperbacks from October.

Something else to look forward to: Martin Jarvis will be reading some of the William stories on Jackanory at Christmas.



Authorgraph No. 28



Readers of the Books for Keeps News page will know that Gene Kemp has been awarded the Honorary Degree of Master of Arts by Exeter University — 'in recognition of her work as a writer of children's books'. Awards are not new to her — in 1977 she received both the Other Award and the Carnegie Medal for *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler*.

Talking at her home in Exeter, she couldn't have been less solemn or academic in her attitude towards books and particularly writing for children. Indeed she proved highly resistant to 'labelling' of any kind — about herself as a writer or about the children she has written of — 'all these stereotypes bore me'.

Looking back with her over her writing career to date, there was a sense of tremendous energy and a refusal to be confined by anybody into any particular literary rut: 'I want to write about everybody . . . but there's not time . . . I always wanted to write but I was too busy living and I always believed you've got forever.'

'I'd like to go on doing . . .' was a phrase that cropped up time and time again and that 'going on doing' included plans for a couple more Cricklepit School stories, more novels in the vein of her first teenage novel *No Place Like*, more stories about the dreadful Fourth Year M13 (*Dog Days and Cat Naps*). Just published is the outcome of another new departure: *The Well*, a book which draws heavily on her own childhood in the Midlands before the war.

When talking about how she started as a writer this sense of not wishing to 'get stuck' emerged again along with a disarming lack of pretension about her own talent and achievement.

'I didn't think I'd got a great deal to write about and yet with the *Tamworth Pig* series I found I'd done something that was sufficiently successful. Everybody said: "Isn't that a lovely little series — like Paddington Bear." I wasn't very aware about books for children except that as a parent and a teacher I was horrified at what I read that went under the name of conversation. The pig was really a link — the quality of the conversation between the children was the important thing.'

At the same time Gene was 'sufficiently successful' in another direction and making applications for junior Headships as the next 'logical' step in her teaching career. However, that step didn't take place — a fortuitous cold led her to think again and ditch the applications

— 'I often bless that cold'. She had already started writing *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler*.

Tyke partly sprang out of a dissatisfaction with the earlier 'lovely little series': 'I found myself asking why do the children in my books bear no relation to the villains in front of me . . . ?' It is also a book 'about language'. Gene at the time was 'head of language' in her school and involved in the post-Bullock interest in 'language'.

'I wrote Tyke for the rebel child at home — outwardly conforming but ready to speak up when driven, ready to take things up . . . I didn't see Tyke as becoming a set piece . . . a 'book' to be used in teacher's centres and taken over by the educational world . . .'

Being 'taken up' has also had its amusing consequences which appeal to Gene's sense of fun — like visits from Japanese academics (Tyke is very big in Japan) and requests from translators boggled by the awful children's jokes at the head of each chapter. She clearly prefers this to being thought of as 'moralising' or as having produced the ideal 'set book'.

'I'm not moralising — I'm not trying to impose something . . . Children count in a dignified way to me and I hope I count in a dignified way to them. So particularly when I go out into schools I'm not just an entertainer being served up to the kids like factory fodder. I'm not Tommy Cooper, would that I were!'

Reflecting on her next 'Cricklepit' book *Gowie Corby Plays Chicken* led Gene to develop in more detail her point about 'moralising' and her attitude towards what she is presenting about the lives of children in her books — the 'little bit of knowledge I have'.

'A teacher at a teacher's course I was working on said: "How do you justify Gowie Corby? It should never have been written." I couldn't convince him that if you're considered to be a 'baddie', like Gowie, by other people it doesn't mean that you're a 'baddie' to yourself. And just because Gowie's deprived doesn't mean that he hasn't got a keen sense of humour. You have to understand how the glamour of

someone like Gowie grows in an enclosed society, how they come to dominate the classroom. They carry more éclat than they possibly do for the rest of their lives.

But Gowie Corby falls apart because of my cowardice. Gowie doesn't reform . . . he doesn't see the point and I wanted that to come across (if I could have been more honest). I wanted to get rid of Rosie and I still think she's totally unconvincing whereas Gowie isn't despite his awfulness.

But I'm not moralising . . . I'm just drawing a picture . . . All the time with children there's a drama going on somewhere . . . like Tam Lan (*Charlie Lewis Plays for Time*). On the boat his family lived on baked beans for five weeks. They were kidnapped twice by bandits . . . and he smiles while he's telling you all this. These things are going on and we come in with our platitudes . . . you can only just show the tip of the iceberg.'

Gene may seem to have moved a long way from 'humour' in these reflections but just as it's irrepressible in the books — you can't have the 'seriousness' without it — her own sense of fun and of the ridiculous quickly reasserts itself. This is something reflected in and fed by the writers she admires herself.

'I've a great weakness for funny books — Damon Runyon, Thurber, Jerome K. Jerome . . . nothing to do with merit or beauty except to me they have beauty . . . We're fairly 'involved' people . . . we 'belong' and I sometimes feel I'm sick of 'caring'. So this sense of the ridiculous is the other side of my writing and I'm not sure it isn't the truest element in it altogether . . . like the awful rook in *The Clock Tower Ghost* — it's so useless, so vulgar.'

Gene has another 'ghostie' one in mind as well as plans for making a collection of M13 stories — stories of that unspeakable Fourth Year which she describes with a mixture of great affection and horror.

'These are nothing to do with making the world a better place . . . if the world were a better place you wouldn't have them in it and I think one would be the poorer because of it.'

The book which Gene feels nearest to at the moment concerns the latest 'year' at Cricklepit School, *Charlie Lewis Plays for Time*. Early in our conversation Gene remarked — 'There's a lot of me in Charlie . . . Writers are in the observer class and so is Charlie which is why he's nearer to me . . .'

Charlie Lewis is not a writer but a musician but he has clearly afforded Gene an opportunity to say something about creativity and the particular pressures on the child who is 'gifted'.

'Like Charlie says, it's the prickle coming up the back of your spine and sometimes you don't want to know — you'd just like to be Joe Plod. We underestimate the tolerance of children who are gifted . . . the way they learn to keep quiet about it and learn to camouflage and hide themselves.'

School which, as Gene remarked, can be a 'sanctuary' for some children is claustrophobic for Charlie. Going into



the new term is like going into a tunnel. So Charlie has to protect himself from the tender mercies of Mr Carter, the supply teacher who takes over from Mr Merchant ('Sir' in the other Cricklepit books) — Mr Carter with his talk about 'my music' and purveyor of the elitism which destroys creativity and represses interest. Gene went on to make the point strongly: 'The elitism of music is wrong . . . elitism of any kind is wrong . . . it puts up a barrier . . .'

Music is also important in *No Place Like* where it offers a refuge for Pete who at sixteen (and unlike Charlie Lewis) is 'not one of the world's high fliers'. At least, that is the judgement that school and the examination system have made of him like many of the characters in Gene's books. Perhaps the best answer to the charge of moralising and the best clue to her own generosity of spirit came when Gene was discussing the qualities so often unused or unrecognised in the young people she knows of this age: 'I can't judge people by what school has pronounced on them . . .' Not that there's anything sloppy about her refusal to judge, rather a powerful reaction against the poverty and narrowness of the judgements which get made.

However, as with *Gowie*, she's not completely happy about *No Place*

Like: 'I'm weak on plots . . . I like twists but not plots . . . it's the people, the characterisations which are important . . .' People and characterisations are certainly important in *The Well*, Gene Kemp's latest book, an 'autobiographical novel'. Another change of direction? 'I want to edge out a bit . . . it's an oddity, an indulgence but I don't see why I shouldn't and if it doesn't do anything . . .'

In *The Well*, Gene Kemp seems to be not so much 'edging out' as edging backwards. If *No Place Like* is her comedy of contemporary family life then *The Well* finds her looking back to an earlier world and a very different kind of family. Not that she betrays any trace of nostalgia in her presentation of that world or a yearning for some kind of lost idyll — she's too involved in the here-and-now for that. More than in any of her books she has captured the internal drama of a young child's life — how susceptible they are, how richly invested with pain and excitement their world is. The setting may be 'historical' but what matters is the personal 'history' — the eventfulness of a child's life in surroundings which by 'modern standards' must seem curiously limited and uneventful. What she also demonstrates is that significant 'writers for children' write out of a deeply felt

connection with their own childhood experience. ●

The Books

(published by Faber, unless otherwise indicated)

The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler

0 571 10966 7, £4.50;
Puffin, 0 14 03.1135 1, £1.10

Gowie Corby Plays Chicken

0 571 11405 9, £5.50;
Puffin, 0 14 03.1322 2, £1.25

Charlie Lewis Plays for Time

0 571 13248 0, £5.50

The Prime of Tamworth Pig

0 571 11335 4, £1.10 pbk

Tamworth Pig Saves the Trees

0 571 11493 8, £1.15 pbk

The Clock Tower Ghost

0 571 11767 8, £4.25;
Puffin, 0 14 03.1554 3, 95p

Dog Days and Cat Naps

0 571 11595 0, £5.25;
Puffin, 0 14 03.1419 9, £1.10

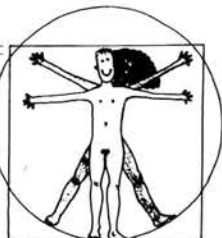
No Place Like

0 571 13063 1, £4.95

Ducks and Dragons: Poems for Children (Ed.), 0 571 11523 3, £3.95

The Well

0 571 13284 7, £4.95
(published in September)

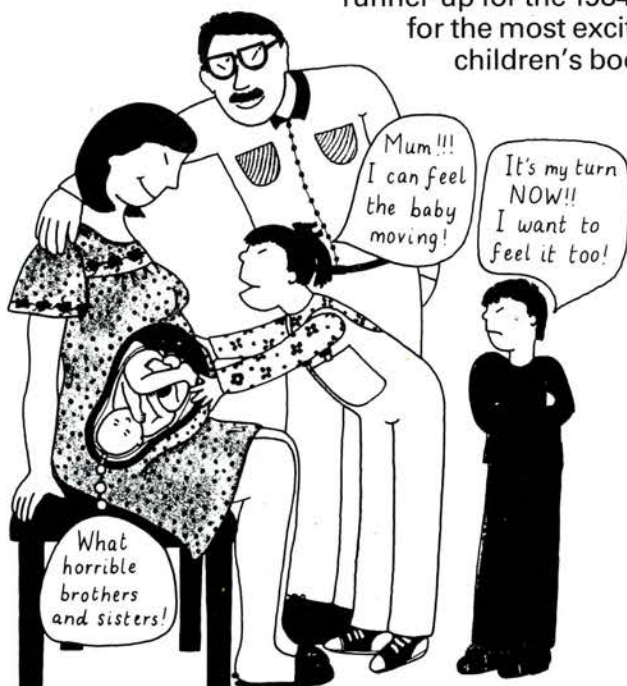
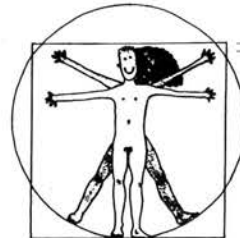


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233 977686 8 September £4.95

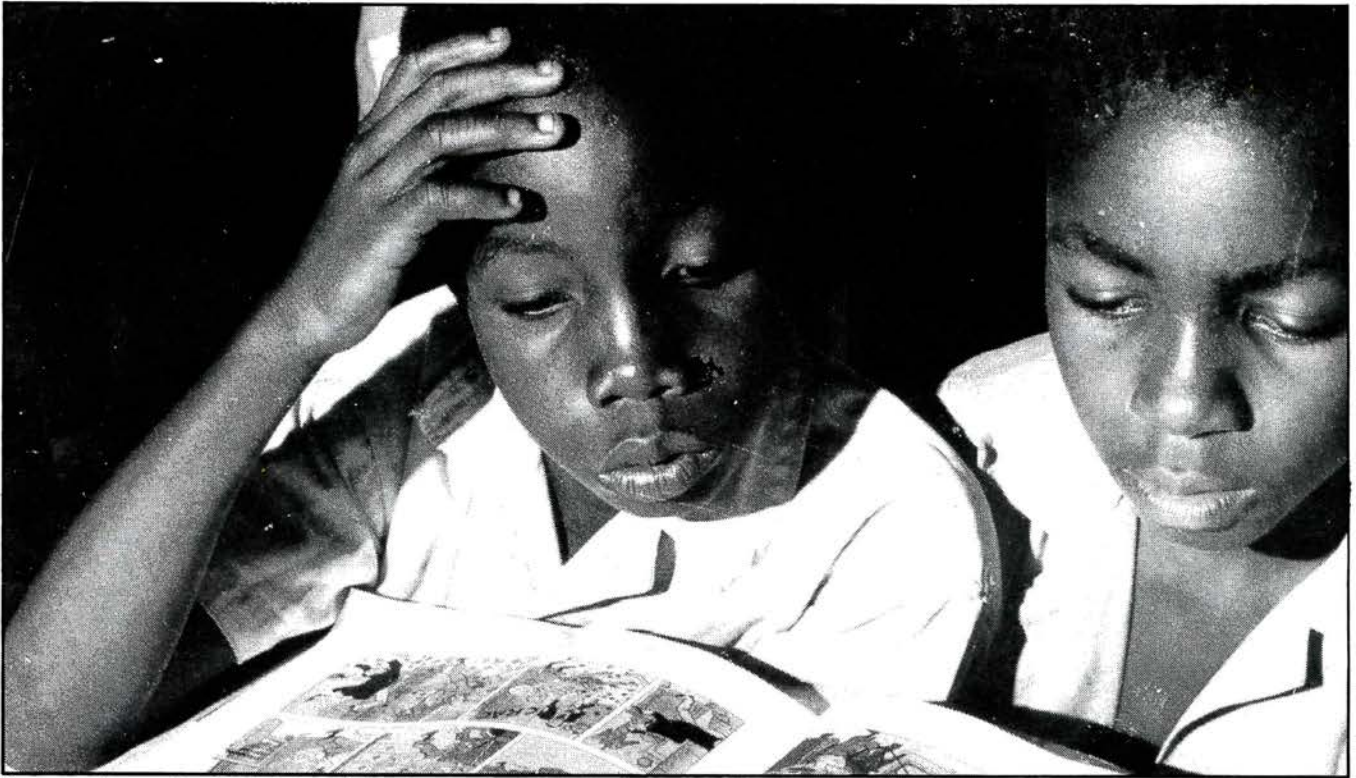
André Deutsch, 105 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LJ



We, quite rightly, protest about education cuts and campaign for better provision of books in schools and libraries; but in many countries books are in very short supply and libraries barely exist.

Margaret Marshall writes about a project designed to help by providing

BOOKS FOR ALL



Young readers totally absorbed in a Tintin adventure, in the children's section of the Ivory Coast Central Library, stocked with the help of unums.

Credit. UNESCO/A. Tessoro

'My harambee (self-help) school,' writes an English VSO teacher in Kenya, 'like many others, has no electricity and no running water and there is a rapid turnover of staff. The pupils are mostly from peasant homes in this area and find it difficult to pay fees never mind to buy reading books. I would be grateful for any assistance to buy books.'

From Peru came the letter saying 'Our library is a poor institution supported by volunteers. We are introducing for the first time in this lost zone of the Andes, the service of a library.' A sixty-four year old teacher working as a volunteer in West Africa writes, 'I am sure that you are aware of the fact that children's books in Liberia are at a premium. We just don't have any.'

We take it for granted in Britain that, when children have learned to read, there are then many books for them to choose from, but in many countries children lose the skill of reading because of the lack of books and libraries. Experience shows that, rather than sending out donations of new or second-hand books, it is better to make it possible for librarians and teachers on the spot to buy the books they know will meet the children's needs best. Hence the Books for All project's method of supply.

The project is administered jointly by Unesco and IFLA (the International Federation of Library Associations). As the voluntary, and only, organiser I collect donations from many of the book-developed countries and convert them into Unesco Units of Money (UNUMS), which are rather like cheques made out to the organisations that request help. These organisations can then use their unums to buy books in their own country or from abroad. The book supplier is paid in his own currency when he submits the unums and a list of the books purchased to Unesco in Paris. The system was devised to avoid the risk of corruption or theft and has worked well. Last year unums were sent to libraries in Congo, Fiji, India, Kenya, Liberia, Peru, the Philippines and Tonga.

Recently the British branch of IBBY (the International Board on Books for Young People) started a Third World Book Fund, largely on the initiative of Robert Leeson, and has channelled some of that Fund through the Books for All project, with donations to a jungle village in Peru, a school in Kenya and a community children's library near Hyderabad in India. Many branches of the Federation of Children's Book Groups have sent donations and a number of schools have held fund-raising activities. One school in Hertfordshire linked raising money with a study of the particular area to which they wished to direct their donation. Other contributors include a cafe owner in Tokyo, a Brownie pack in Belfast, a Soroptimist Club in Texas, a Rotary Club in Leeds and an individual in Finland.

The joy of the recipients is heartwarming and the gratitude is expressed sometimes in letters from the children, sometimes photographs, sometimes lists of the books bought and almost always the hope for continued help. I keep a filing cabinet of all the letters and photographs and one file is the pending file, awaiting enough money in the fund to be able to supply the requests for aid. One unum = one US dollar. Five unums will buy one children's book, but a gift of enough unums to buy 100 books makes a world of difference to a group of children who have none, and small donations collectively make bigger ones.

The work of the Books for All programme can be summed up in the words of a message that came with a donation from an elementary school in Osaka, Japan. 'We will be happy if our small contribution will be useful in improving education in your country. We are living on the same earth. Let's cooperate with each other.' ●

Readers of **Books for Keeps** who would like to help the Books for All project can contact Margaret Marshall at 6a Harmer Green Lane, Digswell, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, AL6 0AD (Tel: 043 871 6020).

Politics & Children's Stories

Part 2 of Jessica Yates' selection of stories with political themes



Jessica Yates

Part Two of this selection takes political fiction with a real-life setting through the Second World War, and the beginning of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, to multi-ethnic Britain and international terrorism/guerrilla warfare. I have, however, left out several relevant books by Mildred Taylor and Jan Needle, because they were annotated by Judith Elkin in her *Lifelines* series last year (see **Bfk** 22).

Then I have chosen a few fantasy and science fiction novels from the many available, and concluded the list with three picture-

books. Again, I have omitted books recently well-publicised in **Books for Keeps**, such as *When the Wind Blows*, *Brother in the Land*, and *The Butter Battle Book*.

In making my selection I have looked for balanced presentation of complex issues; and although I have tried to provide for younger readers, most of these books are for more experienced readers who should, one hopes, bring some knowledge of life, current events and other reading to these novels.

The Thirties and the Second World War

When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit — (1971)

Judith Kerr, Collins,
0 00 184913 1, £5.50
Fontana Lions, 0 00 670801 3,
£1.25

The well-known, autobiographical story of Anna's escape from Nazi Germany. Her father, a Jewish intellectual, was a double marked man. The story continues with *The Other Way Round* (Collins and Fontana Lions) in which the family copes with life in wartime England. Anna, as schoolgirl and student, adapts far better than her parents, who cannot find suitable employment.

The Machine Gunners — (1975)

Robert Westall, Macmillan, 1975,
0 333 18644 3, £4.95
Puffin, 0 14 03.0973 X, £1.25
M Books, 0 333 27868 2, £1.75

A Tyneside gang's passion for collecting war souvenirs gets out of hand when they salvage a machine gun and plan to shoot down German planes. Against this misguided enthusiasm is set the story of a captured German parachutist who becomes their prisoner and friend. To protect the secret of the gun and the German, Chas McGill has to confront the violent school bully, who, it seems, can only be defeated by superior violence.

Carnegie Medal, 1975

Mischling, Second Degree — (1978)

Ilse Koehn, Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 89861 7, £4.95
Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1356 7, £1.75
Collins Cascades, 0 00 330001 3,
£1.95

Another autobiographical novel. Ilse Koehn's parents divorce to protect her, and her part-Jewish ancestry remains a secret. Thus, like other German girls, she joins the Hitler youth, and is evacuated to Czechoslovakia. Returning to Berlin when the war is nearly over, she undergoes the horrors of 'liberation' by the Red Army, out to rape and pillage. This book corrects the stereotyped view of Germans as Nazis, showing how many were terrorised into keeping silent, and how many opposed Hitler and the war.

Contemporary Settings

Under Goliath — (1977)

Peter Carter, OUP, 0 19 271405 8,
£3.75
Puffin, 0 14 03.1132 7, £1.25

An uneasy friendship between a Protestant and a Catholic boy ends in the riots of August 1969, when the current Troubles in Northern Ireland began. Here is a book which does not take sides, but describes the idealism and bigotry in each community. The narrative told by Alan, the Protestant, effectively conveys the idiom of Northern Irish speech. ('Goliath' is the nickname for the largest crane in the Belfast shipyards.)

Come to Mecca and other stories — (1978)

Farrukh Dhondy, Collins,
0 00 184134 3, £4.95
Fontana Lions, 0 00 671519 2, £1
Collins Cascades, 0 00 330006 4,
£1.35

In this collection Dhondy examines situations familiar to Black and Asian youth: a strike at a garment factory and opportunist extreme-left involvement; female unemployment leading to prostitution; the Notting Hill Carnival; the persecution of Asians in the East End; and the development of a reggae poet/DJ in the style of Linton Kwesi Johnson. Noteworthy, however, is the humour in these stories, as well as the authentic dialogue, whether the story deals with Asians, West Indians or Cockneys.

Other Award, 1979; Collins/Fontana Multi-Ethnic Book Award, 1978.

A Kind of Wild Justice — (1978)

Bernard Ashley, OUP,
0 19 271417 1, £5.95
Puffin, 0 14 03.1262 5, £1.50
Heinemann New Windmills,
0 435 12249 5, £1.90

The Bradshaw brothers, two East End crooks, effectively control their neighbourhood. Ronnie Webster's father is arrested after driving a getaway car, and his mother promptly walks out of home. Alone in the world, and virtually illiterate, Ronnie nevertheless manages to get his revenge on the Bradshaws and secure his father's release. A sub-plot tells of Manjit Mirza, Ronnie's reading-partner in school, anxiously awaiting her father's (illegal) arrival in Britain. This is being fixed by the Bradshaws

Ronnie's success in nailing them means that Manjit will not see her father — for many years, at least.

The Seventh Raven — (1981)

Peter Dickinson, Gollancz,
0 575 02960 9, £5.95
Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1506 3, £1.50

This takes the real-life situation of a children's opera with a cast of 100, adds to the cast the son of the Mattean ambassador, and breaks up the dress rehearsal when four guerrillas from this imaginary South American state burst in and take everyone hostage. They want Juan, who was playing the part of 'the seventh raven', but is now disguised in a girl's costume by the resourceful wardrobe mistress. But as a life-long socialist, isn't she betraying the Cause? The guerrillas accuse the upper-middle-class community of wasting time on musical pursuits when they could be campaigning against fascism; Dickinson represents all points of view and refuses to indict the bourgeoisie.

After the First Death — (1979)

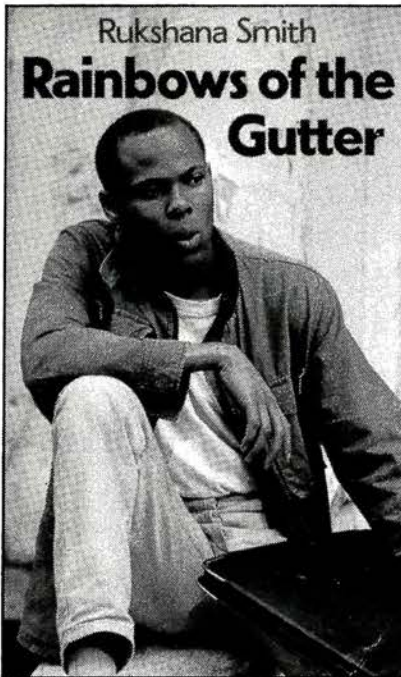
Robert Cormier, Gollancz,
0 575 02665 0, £5.95
Fontana Lions, 0 00 671705 5,
£1.25

No list of political fiction for the young would be complete without at least one from Robert Cormier, who has shed a murky light on the underside of American society: the pressures, compromises and illegalities behind the democratic facade. In *After the First Death*, terrorists — or freedom fighters — hold a bus of young children hostage. The US General, an expert in counter-intelligence, sends his son to negotiate. The son is tortured and gives away information, just as the General calculated, knowing his son's weaknesses. After the siege is over and brave youngsters have died, the General himself will meet a worse fate.

Rainbows of the Gutter — (1983)

Rukshana Smith, Bodley Head
Paperback Originals,
0 370 30526 4, £3.50

This book challenges us with an indictment of British society as seen from its Black immigrant community. The reviewers were highly critical: 'unconvincing . . . melodramatic . . . superficial' (School Librarian) and it was not included in either the teenage or the multicultural section of *Signal Review* 2 for 1983. I prefer the comments from the Other Award shortlist:



'A naive but angrily written novel of contemporary Black lives'. I consider this the most partisan book on my list. There is little story, apart from the education and first working years of the hero, but it always engaged my interest, with its persistent criticism of the state of Britain today. Rukshana Smith has also written *Sumitra's Story* (Bodley Head) about an Asian girl who feels she cannot continue to observe the traditional way of life, and secretly leaves home.

Fantasy and Science Fiction

The Chronicles of Narnia — (1950-56)

C.S. Lewis, Collins and Bodley Head (hardback)
Fontana Lions

Like it or not, the Narnian chronicles are frequently our children's first introduction to many political ideas. The kingdom (anathema to republicans!) is usually under threat from invasion by witches or the quasi-Arabian Calormenes. Dictatorship, slavery, indoctrination, religious persecution, guerrilla warfare, secret police, turning-to-stone, and even a weapon of total destruction (the Deplorable Word) — are all found in the Chronicles. Added to that the explicitly Christian content, and one can see why the books have come under fire from left-wing critics. Will they continue to be chosen as class readers in multi-faith schools? I will continue to recommend them for their exciting plots, concept of moral responsibility and awareness of our literary heritage, as well as, politically, their anti-totalitarian stance.

The Borribles — (1976)

Michael de Larrabeiti, Bodley Head, 0 370 10898 1, £2.95
Piccolo, 0 330 26857 0, £1.50

and

The Borribles Go for Broke — (1981)

Bodley Head, 0 370 30413 6, £3.75
Piccolo, 0 330 28176 3, £1.50

Books for Keeps has praised this saga before (Issue 18). It is a major work of fantasy, located not in Wales or Narnia, but in the inner city. A group of Borribles, 12-year-old

dropouts and school truants who never grow up, set out to Rumbledom to wipe out the Rumble High Command in single combat. Returning with the Rumble Treasure Chest, they are trapped by Flinthead, a dictator who has converted the Wendles of Wandsworth to a militaristic society. In the second book Flinthead's tyranny is broken and he meets a gory end. The saga is political both internally, in its theme of conflict, invasion and survival, and as a literary work parodying the 'nicer' children's classics, especially *The Wombles*, *The Hobbit* and *Peter Pan*.

The Prince in Waiting trilogy — (1970-72)

John Christopher, Puffin, 1983,
0 14 03.1654 X, £2.95

In a future Britain after a series of geophysical disasters, the inhabitants have regressed to a mediaeval-style, machine-hating society of city-states. Mutants, or 'polymufs', form a slave class, women are subordinate to men, and men gain status through skill in fighting and hunting. A priest class, the Seers, commands worship of the 'Spirits', and Christianity just about survives as the faith of the poorest. Luke, heir to the Princedom of Winchester, describes his rise to power, guided by the Seers, who turn out not to be priests, but scientists faking the magic tricks which deceive the people. Luke is to be their tool to reunite Britain as one kingdom and restore civilisation, but their plans go wrong. A gripping story of political manipulation, and the qualities needed for leadership.

Z for Zachariah — (1975)

Robert C. O'Brien, Gollancz,
0 575 03378 9, £6.95
Fontana Lions, 0 00 671081 6, £1
Heinemann New Windmills,
0 435 12211 8, £1.65

O'Brien reverses the conventions of the SF last-man-on-earth story. We expect to read of the coming-together of an unlikely couple in order to repopulate the earth. Instead, the girl says no. She won't mate with this flawed, murdering Zachariah who would rape her to make sure of her, and away she goes into the nuclear wasteland, where she may find other survivors. A book that questions sex-roles as well as warning against nuclear war.

Futuretrack 5 — (1983)

Robert Westall, Kestrel, 1983,
0 7226 5880 X, £5.95
Scheduled for Puffin Plus next spring

In this world of the 21st century, after some unexplained international crisis, Britain is virtually on her own, and has become a police state. Everyone is labelled, either a Tech (the rulers), Est (Establishment — the rich), Unnem (Unemployed) or Paramil (the police). Henry Kitson qualifies as a Tech, but rebels and joins the Unnems in their reservations, where they spend their time in gambling, motor-bike racing, whoring and fighting, and life is short. Discovering that no dictator but a powerful computer is in charge, carrying out the extermination of the Unnems and any protesters, he plans to wreck its circuits or change its 'mind'. If Henry succeeds in mastering the computer, he will acquire ultimate power — will he reform society without being corrupted himself? Other SF novels using the concept of a stratified and heavily controlled society are John Christopher's *The Guardians* (Puffin) and Ann Schlee's *The Vandal* (Magnet).

Picture Books

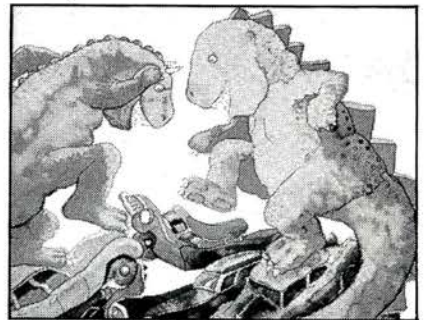
The Lorax — (1972)

Dr. Seuss, Collins, 0 00 195458 X,
£4.95

A boy wanders into a murky, derelict part of town and hears the story of the Once-ler. Suddenly pages become colourful, and the landscape full of trees, water, swans, bears and fish, living in harmony. When the Once-ler, a travelling pedlar, arrives, he starts to cut down the Truffula Trees to make (useless) Thneeds. The Lorax, a tree spirit, expostulates with him as the trees fall, a factory is built, and the bears, swans and fish all migrate for lack of food, water and clean air. The Once-ler refuses to listen, but when the last tree falls, cloud-pollution settles permanently over the area, and the Lorax departs. The Once-ler now gives the boy the very last Truffula seed.

'Grow a forest. Protect it from axes that hack.

Then the Lorax
and all of his friends
may come back.'



Dinosaurs and all that Rubbish — (1972)

Michael Foreman, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 02234 7, £4.25
Puffin, 0 14 050 098 7, £1.25

This could be a sequel to *The Lorax*. Man flies to the stars, leaving behind an Earth totally polluted by the factories needed to build the space-rocket. Dinosaurs awaken, tidy up the earth, and a green paradise returns. So does Man, who has found nothing in space worth the journey. Now Man must promise to live in harmony with nature.

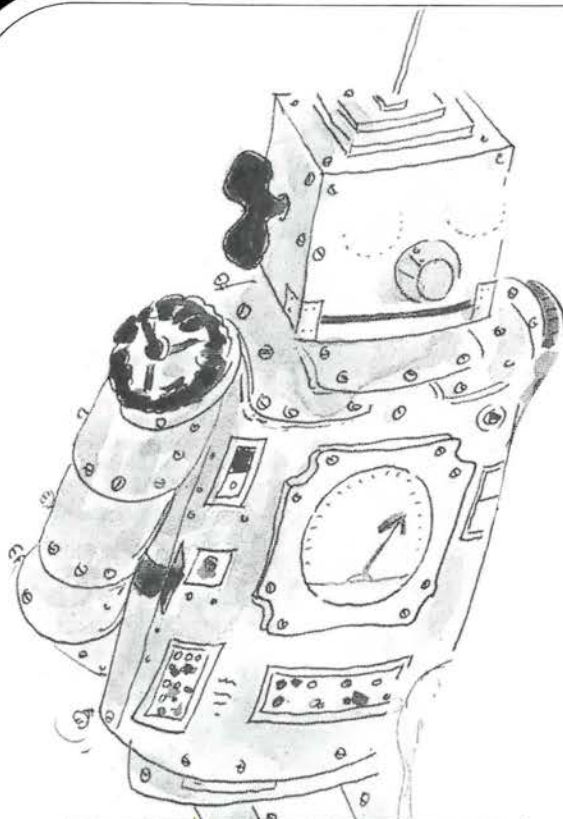
See also Foreman's *War and Peas* (Hamish Hamilton) a fable about the world food problem.

Bear Goes to Town — (1982)

Anthony Browne, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10817 9, £4.50
Sparrow, 0 09 932040 1, £1.60

This is a sequel to *Bear Hunt*. Bear has a magic pencil with which he draws his way out of trouble. Bear makes friends with Cat, but Cat is captured by a man in uniform with a skull-badge. When Bear goes to the rescue, he finds other animals trapped by the swastika-shaped guards, and with his magic pencil he saves them all, except for the sheep who refuses to leave. Is this 'about' vivisection, or eating meat, or is it an allegory of Auschwitz? Vegetarian parents will approve, but although the wordage is brief, I'm inclined to recommend it for the 7+ age-group, rather than the 4-7's suggested by the publisher's catalogue.

Jessica Yates was librarian in an ILEA secondary school for ten years. She reviews and contributes to *British Book News*, *Contact*, the *TES*, the *School Librarian* and other journals. Since 1982 she has combined work as a freelance with being a mother.



meet



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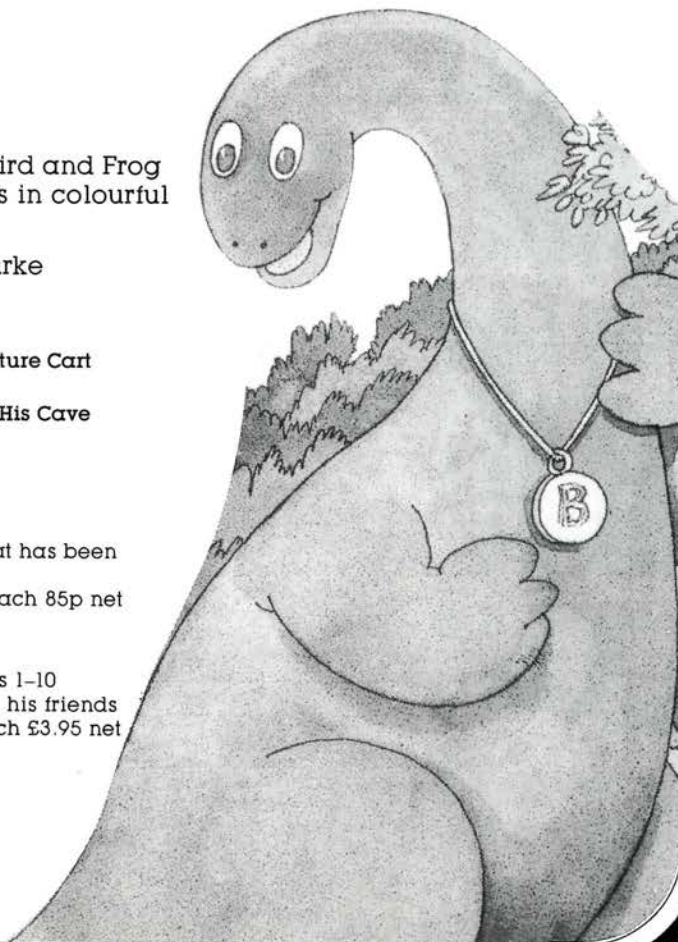
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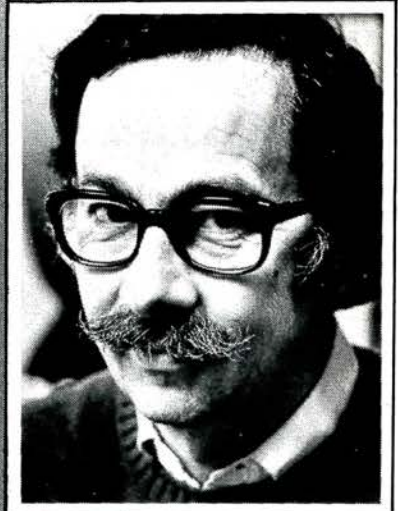
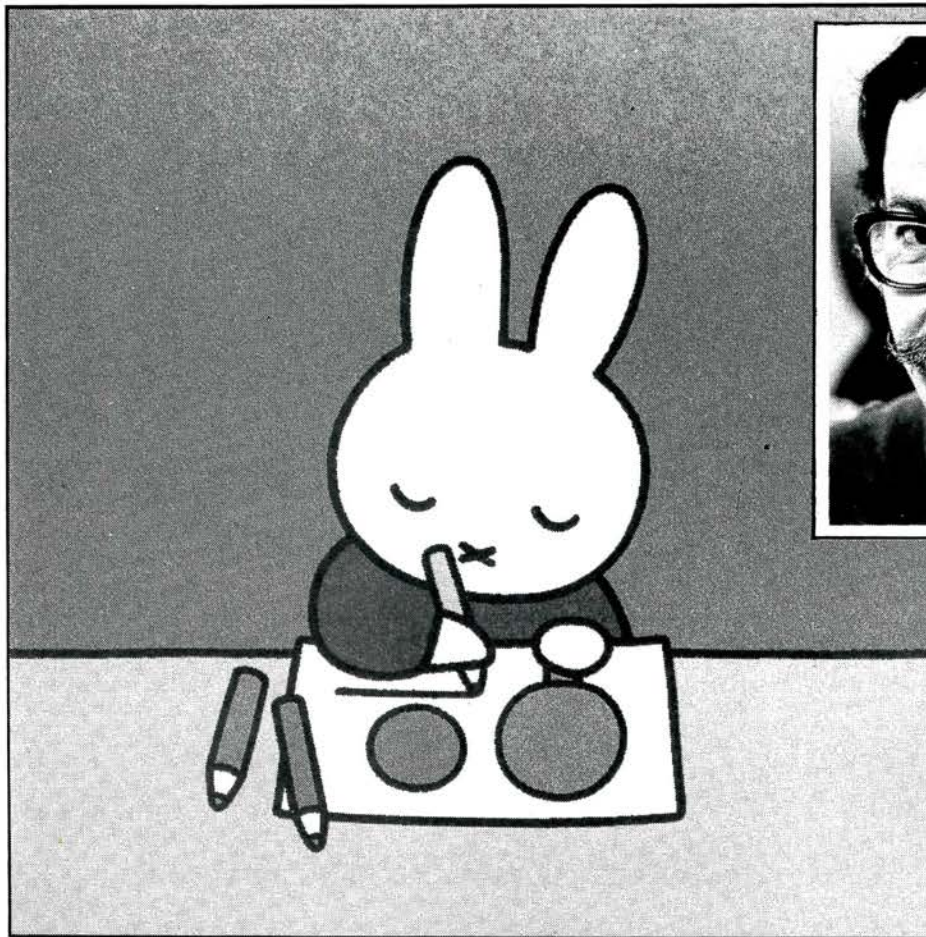
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Published: October '84

Longman 





'I DO MY BOOKS FOR THE FUN OF CHILDREN'

Dick Bruna talks to Tony Bradman

I know it's quite irrational but I somehow expected Dick Bruna to look like Miffy — you know, round face, clean lines, bold colours, big smile... When we met I saw a Dutchman in his mid fifties or thereabouts. He wasn't wearing a triangular skirt, and his tweedy suit wasn't exactly a combination of bold, primary colours. But he's not a big man, and I could see something of his characters in the gentle eyes and the big smile that hid under his greying, handlebar moustache.

It was easy to see where the Bruna books got their warm, friendly style, because that's exactly what Dick Bruna seems to be. He also appears to be clued in to what children like; since his first book was published in the 1950s, around 15 million copies of his books have been sold and he is now read in 20 languages, including Japanese. The Bruna empire has also expanded from books into calendars, wall friezes, cut-out kits, posters, and now the **Playboxes**, of which there are four — Blue, Green, Brown and Red. These contain educational games and materials, and are bound to prove popular despite a fairly steep price tag of £9.95.

But behind all the commercial activity lies a very simple philosophy, which he explained to me in endearingly Dutch-flavoured English. 'I do my books for the fun of children,' he said. 'They're for children to play with. I'm not a psychologist, so I don't do books as teaching materials. It's good if they can be used in that way, but I see it as nice pictures, first of all. I'm working as an illustrator and my work is there to be enjoyed by children.'

Simplification is also a key concept in Dick Bruna's work. As a young illustrator he was interested in the work of artists like Picasso and Matisse, and his first book (*The Apple*, now out of print) was done as a collage. He admits now that it was too complicated. 'It was also too large for children's small hands. So from then on I aimed at simplicity. I also made the books small for small hands, and made them square because it's the simplest shape of all.' His method of work even now is often to start with quite detailed sketches — perhaps of animals in the zoo, for example — and then to simplify them down until he reaches a point where he's satisfied with them.

'I like it simple because that means there's room for a child's imagination to work. I use simple lines, simple colour, simple words. In the original Dutch, many of the texts to my book are in rhymes, which is good for

children. They pick it up more quickly, it belongs to them more. I'm sorry that they can't be in rhymes in English.'

He has three children, and Miffy was in fact a little woollen rabbit that they used to play with, and it was his daughter who asked him to do a book about the family's spaniel, a book which introduced the character of Snuffy. He's not averse even now to accepting suggestions for new book ideas. The **Playboxes** were suggested to him by his Japanese publishers, and he's done several books for worthy causes. His most recent is *Blue Boat*, a book specially written to help children come to terms with deafness, an idea which came to him from doctors and staff at The Royal Newcastle Infirmary.

There are still over 40 Bruna titles in print, and he seems set to add two new titles a year or more. Apart from *Blue Boat*, other titles recently from Methuen have been *Miffy's Bicycle*, *Farmer John* and *I Know About Shapes*. In Utrecht where he lives, his life seems to centre round doing books for the very young.

'I'm very glad about it, very happy. I just continue and try to make each new book as good as it can be. It's just as difficult as ever. I sometimes go out to see children at schools and libraries, but most of the time I'm just in my studio, working on my own. All I really want to do is just to continue what I'm doing.' ●

Dick Bruna's many books and related materials are published by Methuen.

Playboxes £9.95 each

Red
0 416 43960 8

Brown
0 416 43970 5

Blue
0 416 43980 2

Green
0 416 43990 X

Blue Coat (with Peter Jones)
0 416 27640 7, £3.50

Miffy's Bicycle
0 416 44150 5, £1.50

Farmer John
0 416 44140 8, £1.50

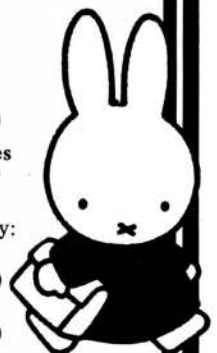
I Know About Shapes
0 416 44130 0, £1.50

Also, published in July:

The Lifeboat
0 416 50630 5, £1.50

Miffy at School
0 416 50640 2, £1.50

I Can Make Music
0 416 50650 X, £1.50



LIFELINE 3

Books for Sharing



David Bennett

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. Part One appeared in July.

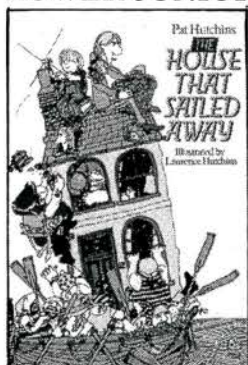
Here are suggestions for titles for the second half of this term along with ideas for follow-up reading and activities. We hope that readers will try out books wherever they are appropriate to their own school situation and will explore and experiment with some of the follow-up work, ideas for which 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.



Joan Barker

LOWER JUNIORS The House That Sailed Away

Pat Hutchins, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671452 8, £1.25



More to Read

As soon as Grandma came to stay in London with Morgan and his family, it started to rain and it rained every day. Everyone stayed indoors trying to amuse themselves, when suddenly the house began to shudder and rock.

The deluge had washed the house from its foundations and it began to float away, down Willow Road, over the sea and away to foreign lands. On the journey Morgan, Grandma and the family have numerous adventures involving cannibals, pirates, buried treasure and the terrible villain, One-Eyed Jake.

This is a very funny book full of slapstick humour. It is easy to read aloud with lots of good cliff-hanger places to stop at, leaving the children wanting more. A book to read just for fun but also one that offers lots of stimulus for creative work of all kinds.

Follow That Bus

Pat Hutchins, Fontana Lions,
0 00 671480 3, £1.25

The Town that Went South

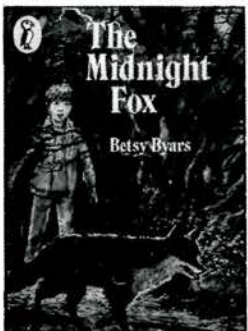
Clive King, Puffin, 0 14 03.0442 8, £1.25

Things to Do

1. Pirate Portraits. Choose a name for a pirate then paint or make a collage portrait to fit his name.
2. Make a sea of sailing houses. Paint house fronts, backs or sides and mount them on a combed paint and glue background.
3. Design your own island. Paint, make a plan, or make a model of an island.
4. Make a box model of the next door neighbours' house showing what it looked like inside after Morgan's house had floated away.
5. One-Eyed Jake is caught in a trap. The bait used to catch him is the Crown Jewels. Can you design a trap to catch a teacher? What bait would you use? Write a description of your trap.

MIDDLE JUNIORS The Midnight Fox

Betsy Byars, Puffin, 0 14 03.0844 X, £1.10



More to Read

The Eighteenth Emergency
Betsy Byars, Puffin, 0 14 03.0863 6, £1.10

The House of Wings

Betsy Byars, Puffin, 0 14 03.0887 3, £1.25

Town dweller Tom doesn't want to go to his uncle's farm whilst his mother and father are on holiday. 'I'll probably be the only kid in the world to be stampeded to death by a bunch of baby lambs.'

But after three boring days he sees a black fox and becomes completely absorbed by her and her cubs. When his uncle goes out to shoot her for stealing a turkey, Tom has to try and save her.

Guaranteed to hold children's attention; it is funny and sad, full of descriptive detail and appealing to a wide age range. I have always found it a winner. Take care not to break up the mood created by the book by only reading a chapter at a time. Chapters 14, 15, 16 and 17 together add up to one of the most sensitive pieces of children's literature — emotional but not sentimental — and need to be read as a whole.

Things to Do

1. Have you ever felt abandoned or do you like to be left alone? Discuss the difference between being alone and being lonely. Write about it.
2. Choose an ordinary event that happens to you during the day and write a headline that makes it sound extraordinary. Write the event up as a newspaper article.
3. Read the description in Chapter 5 when Tom first sees the fox. Paint a picture of the scene.
4. Make up a questionnaire to decide what kind of a person you are. Use the one that Petie made up as a model.

A Dog So Small

Philippa Pearce, Puffin, 0 14 03.0206 9,
£1.10

UPPER JUNIORS The Thirteen Clocks and The Wonderful O

James Thurber, Puffin, 0 14 03.0180 1, £1.25



More to Read

Fairy Tales
Terry Jones, ill. Michael Foreman,
Puffin, 0 14 03.1642 6, £3.95

The Paper Bag Princess
Robert N. Munsch, Hippo,
0 590 71126 1, £1.25

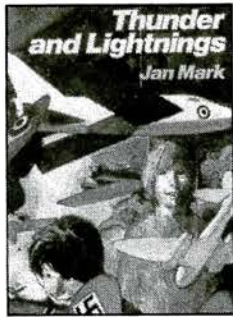
The Practical Princess and other
Liberating Fairy Tales
Jay Williams, Hippo, 0 590 72170 4, 80p

Of these two very good short stories, it is the first one that I particularly want to recommend. *The Thirteen Clocks* is a fairy story with a princess to be rescued, a wicked uncle and a prince in disguise, but not to be despised by Upper Juniors.

It is poetic, witty and exciting. The language is always apt, often direct and at times brutal but invariably full of imagery. The first chapter plunges you directly into character and plot and from then on nothing is quite what it seems. A book to read for sheer enjoyment, to stimulate imaginative work — writing, art, drama and craft; a book to encourage children to take delight in words. Because the plot is so fast-moving, I prefer to read the eight chapters right through at one go, but it could be read as a serial.

Things to Do

1. Hagga's tears turn to precious jewels. Write a story to make Hagga either weep or laugh. Read the stories aloud in groups.
2. Make a model of Hagga's cottage in pairs. Use the text to make sure that all the details are there.
3. 'In the town below the castle, taverners, travellers, tale tellers, trouble makers and other townspeople were gathered.' Make a list of groups of people using a letter of your choice — decorate and display the list.
4. Construct a board game based on the story, e.g. Zorn of Zorna's trail to the jewels. Write the instructions and rules to fit in with the story.
5. A tour of Coffin Castle. Make a taped commentary with lighting and sound effects.

**SECONDARY
YEAR 1**

More to Read
all by Jan Mark

Under the Autumn Garden
Puffin, 0 14 03.1248 X, £1.25

Thunder and Lightnings

Jan Mark, Puffin, 0 14 03.1063 0, £1.25

This award-winning novel has always had a great impact at my school, especially with the less able. It is Victor, the dummy of the school, who knows more about aeroplanes than doing projects on fish, who captures one's sympathy and tickles the funnybones. Andrew, the bright boy new to the area, grows as he tries to adjust to the alien Norfolk surroundings and, more especially, the many aircraft which form the noisy backdrop for their friendship.

Quite a long novel which, in my opinion, needs a brisk treatment if it is to succeed. The dialogue requires practised handling if the full humour is to be realised. Girls might complain a bit that there are no strong juvenile female roles.

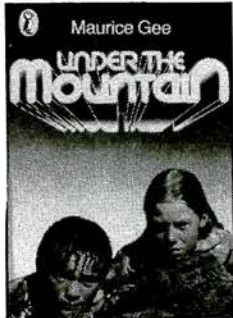
and two story collections:

Hairs in the Palm of the Hand
Puffin, 0 14 03.1441 5, 95p

Nothing to Be Afraid Of
Puffin, 0 14 03.1392 3, £1.10

Things to Do

1. Talks on what the members of your class are interested in most so that you can find out about them and they about each other.
2. Making new friends and exploring a new place. Descriptions of experiences e.g. moving house, new school, holiday venues.
3. Victor's school report alongside Andrew's and the pupils' own.
4. Library research on the aeroplanes mentioned with a chart for the classroom or a map of the area which the book covers using all the information from the story and adding labels with pins and cotton, illustrating key incidents and their location.
5. Dramatise what happened inside the Skelton household after the soiled sheet incident. Utilise all the information available about the attitudes and habits of Victor's parents.

YEAR 2

More to Read

The World Around the Corner
Maurice Gee, Puffin, 0 14 03.1580 2, 95p

Under the Mountain

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

Liven up the haul towards Christmas with some warm and exciting suspense/fantasy set in New Zealand. Rachel and Theo, red-headed twins, have an onerous task set by their other-worldly mentor Mr Jones. Their red hair and their twinship makes them the chosen instruments by which the Wilberforces, giant slugs, can be deterred from reducing the entire planet to mud.

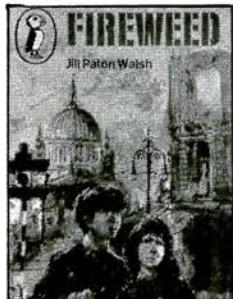
In the suspense tale tradition there are many passages that invite the reader to make predictions and lots of ideas for further explorations, discussion and consideration. Not over-complicated or clever, clever, and its excitement and fast pace recommend it to any class that puts enjoyment at a premium. Whenever I have used it there are always pupils who then re-read it for themselves.

and another fantasy in a New Zealand setting:

Children of Fire Mountain
Graeme Farmer, Magnet, 0 423 00770 X, £1.25

Things to Do

1. Predict whatever a story with words like 'Rangitoto', 'Rotura', 'Maar', 'Takapuna', 'Pupuke', 'Manukau', 'Taumarunui' and 'Cormandel' might be about.
2. Explore in descriptive or poetic writing the concept of 'pebbling' and 'soundless conversations'. Perhaps set the results to music or organise an Art/English collaboration on these themes (pp 46-47) or 'the Stones' (pp 50-51, 85-97).
3. Set a story in the 100 years hence that will come to pass if the Wilberforces are not stopped now.
4. Warning posters with full technical details and data on the slugs (pp 80-81).
5. Read p. 100 and p. 155 ff. and discuss the methods by which the author has conveyed and built up suspense.

YEAR 3

More to Read

The Dolphin Crossing
Jill Paton Walsh, Puffin, 0 14 03.0457 6, 95p

The Machine Gunners
Robert Westall, Puffin, 0 14 03.0973 X, £1.25

Fireweed

Jill Paton Walsh, Puffin, 0 14 03.0560 2, 95p

This Second World War novel is in its teens but age hasn't altered its poignant theme, which centres on the developing relationship between rich girl Julie and poor boy Bill, two resourceful runaways during the London Blitz of 1940. The fun and daredevilry of their early days turn sour and dangerous when nosy adults start asking questions and the pair are forced to move above ground into bombed buildings and shattered alleys, which marks the beginning of the end of their happiness and freedom.

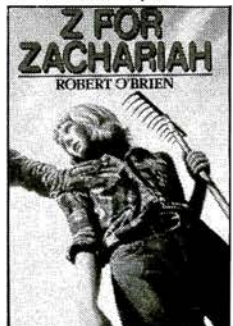
Bill's evacuation to Wales at the start is best dispensed with quickly, but then allow the historical detail, the sharply observed incidental characters and the vivid reality of children adrift in wartime to take over and capture the attention of the readers. Like *The Silver Sword* I've known it used with all kinds of classes from Year 1 through to C.S.E., but I've always found it most successful at this Year 3 level.

Carrie's War
Nina Bawden, Puffin, 0 14 03.0689 7, £1.10

Things to Do

1. A class project to collect together war reminiscences from their older relatives and friends and to present these alongside memorabilia as a programme for another class, partially dramatised, partially as documentary and partially as visual/graphic material. Bill and Julie could take part.
2. 'Below us the water of the river was a sheet of orange and gold . . . it seemed like the end of the world' (p63). Select and rearrange in an illustrated poem.
3. Devise a poster for the film of the book and write the publicity material that might be sent to cinema managers to persuade them to screen it.
4. If Chapter 11 was Julie's ending to the story, what might she have written?

Dawn of Fear
Susan Cooper, Puffin, 0 14 03.0719 2, £1.10

YEARS 4/5

More to Read

Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH
Robert O'Brien, Puffin, 0 14 03.0725 7, £1.50

Adam's Ark
Harold Hodgson, Macmillan Dramascripts, 0 333 18244 8, £1.15

Z for Zachariah

Robert O'Brien, Fontana, 0 00 671081 6, £1.50

Ann Burden survives the nuclear holocaust in a valley which is so geographically situated as to avoid the horrifying effects of radiation. The peace and solitude of her situation is shattered by the arrival of Mr Loomis, who staggers in from the outside wearing a special radiation-proof suit. A fatal error on his part leads him into severe illness and reveals his past sins as well as his present fanatical plans, in which Ann must play a vital part or die.

The awful reality of a post-nuclear situation is never far from the surface as the Eden-like valley becomes corrupted and spoilt, but there is hope at the end in the birds circling overhead in the distance.

The diary-form makes compulsive reading and underlines the humanity of this important novel, which should form the basis for exploring the issues that surround its very controversial subject matter.

Your Attention Please
a poem by Peter Porter, much anthologised

When the Wind Blows
Raymond Briggs, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10721 0, £4.25

Things to Do

1. As a pre-reading exercise make a **Survival Priority Game**. On each of 20-30 pieces of card write one different activity of post-holocaust survival, e.g. find fresh water; try to grow a variety of crops; breed livestock; make generator. Groups of pupils then arrange these into columns of top, mid-term and long-term priority and discuss with other groups their final conclusions. (Good to use with *Lord of the Flies* too!)
2. Make a chart that shows the order in which things first become, and will increasingly become, irreplaceable in the valley.
3. Draw a map of the valley, labelling points where key events might have occurred.
4. Look up Zachariah 14 v. 12-13 in the Bible and discuss how far these verses might have been an inspiration for the novel. What is Ann's reason for the title? ●



THE TRIPODS ARE COMING

Saturday, September 14th saw the first episode of the new BBC adaptation of John Christopher's famous Tripods trilogy. In the prestigious 6.30 'Dr Who' slot, the 13 half-hour episodes to be shown this autumn are based on the first book, *The White Mountains*; the others, equally generously treated, will follow in Autumn '85 (*The City of Gold and Lead*) and some time the following year (*The Pool of Fire*).

Producer Richard Bates has been working for fifteen years to put the stories on the screen. He commissioned the script originally as a film and when that fell through he sold the idea to the BBC. The story of three sixteen-year-old boys escaping from the mind-control of the alien Tripods who have created a happy but totally subjugated human race, their journey to the White Mountains, location of the rebel groups, and the Freeman's plot to overthrow the Masters should make good family viewing over the next three years.

The first eight episodes, taken from the film script, are full of action and likely to grab an audience with a liking for fast-moving adventure. In the following five parts the mood changes slightly and there is more drama, the characters begin to be explored and the underlying themes emerge. The makers of the programmes are particularly proud of their special effects which promise to be even more spectacular as the series develops.

We talked to Ceri Seel, the eighteen-year-old who plays the part of Beanpole — one of the three boys who challenge the Tripods.

Those addicted to television adaptations of children's books will have seen Ceri Seel before as William in *The Bagthorpe Saga*. Ceri has grown taller and thinner since his Bagthorpe days but it was the recent repeat of that series that brought him the chance to be in *The Tripods*.

'One of the directors happened to see the series, rang me up and asked me to audition.' And eventually he was the one chosen out of the 200-300 young actors who were being considered. It was a big decision. 'We filmed from June to December in 1983 so I missed all the Autumn term at school. I don't think I've done very well in my A-levels but it was an opportunity not to be missed.'

And it was very hard work. 'When I did Bagthorpes it was on summer holiday in a house in Tetbury. We didn't do any studio work and it was all very relaxed. With Tripods there was no time to sit around. It was a very tight schedule and we were always falling behind, especially as our directors were such perfectionists. We went on location all over the country — Devon, Wells, Folkestone, Snowdonia, Kent. It's hard to remember where we did what. And there were lots of rehearsals first in London, and also filming in the studio. On location we started at 6.30 in the morning and went on until 7.00 in the evening or maybe later. When we were filming in the studio we started really early too (they send a taxi to fetch you) and went on until 10.30. It's very different from being in the school play. There's no way you can get in the swing of it, start feeling it. It's all start, stop — and it's quite difficult to act being really terrified of a Tripod five times in a row early in the morning, then stop, have a cup of tea and be terrified again.'

It's especially difficult, as Ceri went on to explain when the Tripod isn't there either, because it's a special effect. 'The whole series was made on video tape and the special effects are all images put onto the tape using a computer. The tripods were actually about two feet tall so when we "acted" with them we were filmed in front of nothing. Unless it was just their legs. Those were full-size sometimes — 30 feet high and put up in a

**SOUND
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field by huge cranes. They did a lot of the locations using special effects too. The bits where we were supposed to be in Parisian streets (big cities are deserted since the Tripods, though we find evidence of past resistance in the Metro) were filmed on a deserted airfield and we had to say things like "Wow, look at the Arc de Triomphe" pointing at nothing. The White Mountains are the Alps — we went to Snowdonia and they put the snow on the top after. For the close-ups we had 50 square feet of foam for snow.'

The character Ceri plays is Beanpole — the name given him by Will and Henry. He is French and a little older than the other two. 'I really like the character — though I think in the book he is more sensible than he's written in the series. Henry is a bit selfish. Will is a bit throw-away, a bit brash. Beanpole is like a father figure; he stops them getting at each other; he keeps cool and detached, has all the ideas, gets them out of scrapes. And he's an inventor — he prefers machines to people. The only problem with Beanpole is that because he's French they wanted me to do it with a slight accent. I didn't like it and some of the things I had to say and do I didn't think fitted Beanpole. But I got used to it — that's the thing about acting, you have to do what they want. Still I hope I'll get a bit more going about Beanpole in the next series. John Christopher came to see us several times; he seemed pleased with the way we looked and said it was as he'd imagined us.'

Ceri remembered reading the books when he was eleven or twelve and enjoyed re-reading them for the series. How close is the adaptation? 'It's very close. I don't think anyone going to the books would be disappointed. They've added some things and invented characters — for instance, there are girls for Henry and Beanpole in the farmhouse, as well as Eloise for Will in the castle! But by the time something's been adapted and so many people are involved, it seems quite removed from a book. Once you've taken it out of your mind it's a new thing. Not that it's any worse — just different.'

When we talked Ceri was just about to start filming the second series — *The City of Gold and Lead*. What memories did he have of *The White Mountains* now it was all over? 'The worst bits when we'd just started. We were filming in a department store in London that had been closed down — it was half ruined and full of broken mirrors — weird. I was feeling a bit lost and we hadn't got going properly. Being shouted at for 8–9 hours really makes you want to cry. And the best bits in Kent by the sea in midsummer and filming on a boat with just two of us and a cameraman — and no-one shouting.'

And looking ahead? 'I'm looking forward to seeing people again, and going on location to the Rhine, and to seeing the set the director has designed for the city. In the third series Beanpole invents a hot air balloon. I'd really like to go up in one of those; but I bet they'll get a stunt man. We weren't allowed to do anything remotely dangerous. When Will absails out of a window in this series it's a stunt man. But I did get to throw a hand grenade — it was really a dud one but lots of dynamite went up as I threw it down this tunnel.'

If the A-levels turn out badly, will it have been worth it? 'It's good training — you learn you've got to get on and get the most out of people. Jim (Baker) and John (Shackley) and I were around the whole time, lots of other people came and went, and we had to get on together. And I've earned enough to buy some recording equipment. I've got a four-track recorder and synthesizer. I don't think I'm really cut out to be an actor. I want to make music.'

'When the programmes are shown I'll probably feel a bit embarrassed. It's silly but when you've been on TV people expect you to be something different, something special. They forget how normal everyone is. Being in something helps you to understand television and how it works. The Tripods got control over the human race by brainwashing them through TV. I can see how people can be manipulated by it but I still manage to waste quite a lot of time in front of it.' ●



Will (John Shackley), Henry (Jim Baker) and Beanpole (Ceri Seel) on location for *The White Mountains* at a slate quarry in North Wales.

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PAT THOMSON INTRODUCES

CHRISTINE NOSTLINGER



Christine Nostlinger seems less well-known in this country than she deserves to be. Her books have been honoured in German-speaking countries and internationally, and there is certainly no barrier for British readers in the translation, as Anthea Bell works on the books with the kind of skill which could have you believing that they were written in English to start with. Anyone looking for fresh books with a modern, humorous, urban atmosphere should take a closer look at this author.

The books for younger children, about 7-11, usually contain a fantasy element. *Mr Bat's Great Invention* is the most conventionally magical. Robert allows his Granny to try Mr Bat's rejuvenation process and finds himself responsible for an infant Granny.

"Hey, what did Robert give you to pretend to be his Granny?"

Looking crosser than ever, Granny put out her tongue and went: "YAAAH!"

In *Lollipop*, the magic may or may not be what it seems. Lollipop is the nickname of a boy who by staring through a well-licked lollipop makes others obey him. This becomes his aid to coping with the demands of junior life. Here, Christine Nostlinger is exploring the feelings of a younger age range in a way usually reserved for older children. She does it seriously but with a light touch. On one occasion, for example, the technique backfires on Lollipop. In an effort to persuade his sister that only girls should help with the housework, he practises his compelling stare in the mirror! By the end of the story, he no longer needs this special prop. He can depend on himself.

The *Cucumber King* is overtly critical of parents. The father is dominated by conventional concerns so when a strange cucumber-like figure emerges from the cellar, it only has to claim that it is a King, ejected from his kingdom by rebellious subjects, for the reactionary father to rush to its defence. The rest of the family loathe it and its nasty ways and make common cause with the downtrodden subjects, so when they defeat the Cucumber King so, in a way, is the father defeated. This author makes no special allowance for adults.

Their motives and self-deceptions are exposed as rigorously as the children's.

Her most unusual book is *Conrad*, the story of a factory-made child delivered to the wrong address. The fun lies in the reversal of roles, for Conrad is beautifully programmed to be the perfect child, while Mrs Bartolotti is unconventional and extremely easy-going. The crisis comes when a very disagreeable couple arrive to claim their property, and to save himself, Conrad has to behave like an ordinary boy. As the damp patch on the ceiling spreads, the light fittings sway, and Conrad arrives head first down the banisters, the would-be parents hastily renounce all claims and Conrad and Mrs Bartolotti are left to live affectionately together.

In all these books, Christine Nostlinger speaks very directly to the reader, involving them in an immediate way. She is anti-authoritarian, writing largely from the child's point of view, but without abdicating adult responsibility. The characters always recognise ultimately that they, too, must contribute to family harmony whatever the parental shortcomings. She acknowledges the pressures of being a father and is often interesting on the role of mothers. They fight to retain their personalities in much the same way as the children do.

In her novels for older readers, two of them make intriguing references to England. Luke, in *Luke and Angela*, returns from an English summer school with a new, liberated personality which gradually alienates him from Angela, till then his most faithful friend. There is some high comedy, as when Luke patiently, honestly and sincerely explains to the Latin mistress why he is wearing his brother's cast-off pyjamas and cannot now obey ordinary, stultifying rules. She does not appreciate his sincerity or appearance. At the same time, the book raises the questions about friendship, faithfulness and stability, all serious matters to Luke and Angela and to others like them.

But *Jasper Came Instead* involves a family's reactions to an objectionable English exchange student. Anyone who has been involved in such an exchange will cherish the account of the drive back from the airport, Dad valiantly making conversation in English.

"This is the big oil refinery. This is the Zentralfreidhof. All the dead people of Vienna are lying here!" Jasper didn't bother to look out of the window in search of all the dead Viennese people living in the cemetery."

Jasper, in fact, is a great shock to Waldy's formal parents. It takes Billie, the elder sister, to see through Jasper's behaviour, discovering his painful insecurity and offering him support and friendship. Realising that Jasper's problems are so much greater than any of their petty frictions brings the whole family together in a better understanding.

One other book, for mature juniors or teenagers, makes compelling reading for adults, too. It is *Fly Away Home*, based on Christine Nostlinger's own experiences in Vienna towards the end of the war. The Nazis retreat and the Russians move in. Christel and her family survive the confusion and disorder which follows. Perhaps when someone has grown up during this period, they see only too clearly that adults are not always right, that conformity is not always the proper goal, and that loving concern for each other matters more than anything else.

These are all contemporary books in urban settings which could be labelled 'problem' novels, but they are saved from being heavy, oppressive documents by the author's humour, inventive moments and imaginative situations. She has said that she sees four elements in writing for children: their love of humour, what they like to read, what they ought to read, and what she feels compelled to write. She tries to combine these factors while being honest about contemporary life. In doing this, she has succeeded in working out serious themes through fun and an element of fantasy, looking at parents, brothers, sisters and friends and managing to say something serious but funny about all of it. ●

Book Information

Titles are published in hardback by Andersen and in paperback by Beaver.

Mr Bat's Great Invention
0 905478 29 0, £4.95 hbk

Lollipop
0 86264 015 6, £3.95 hbk;
0 600 20707 2, £1.25 pbk

The Cucumber King
0 86264 057 1, £4.50 hbk;
0 09 933940 4, £1.10 pbk

Conrad
0 905478 03 7, £4.95 hbk;
0 600 32002 2, 90p pbk

Luke and Angela
0 905478 64 9, £4.50 hbk

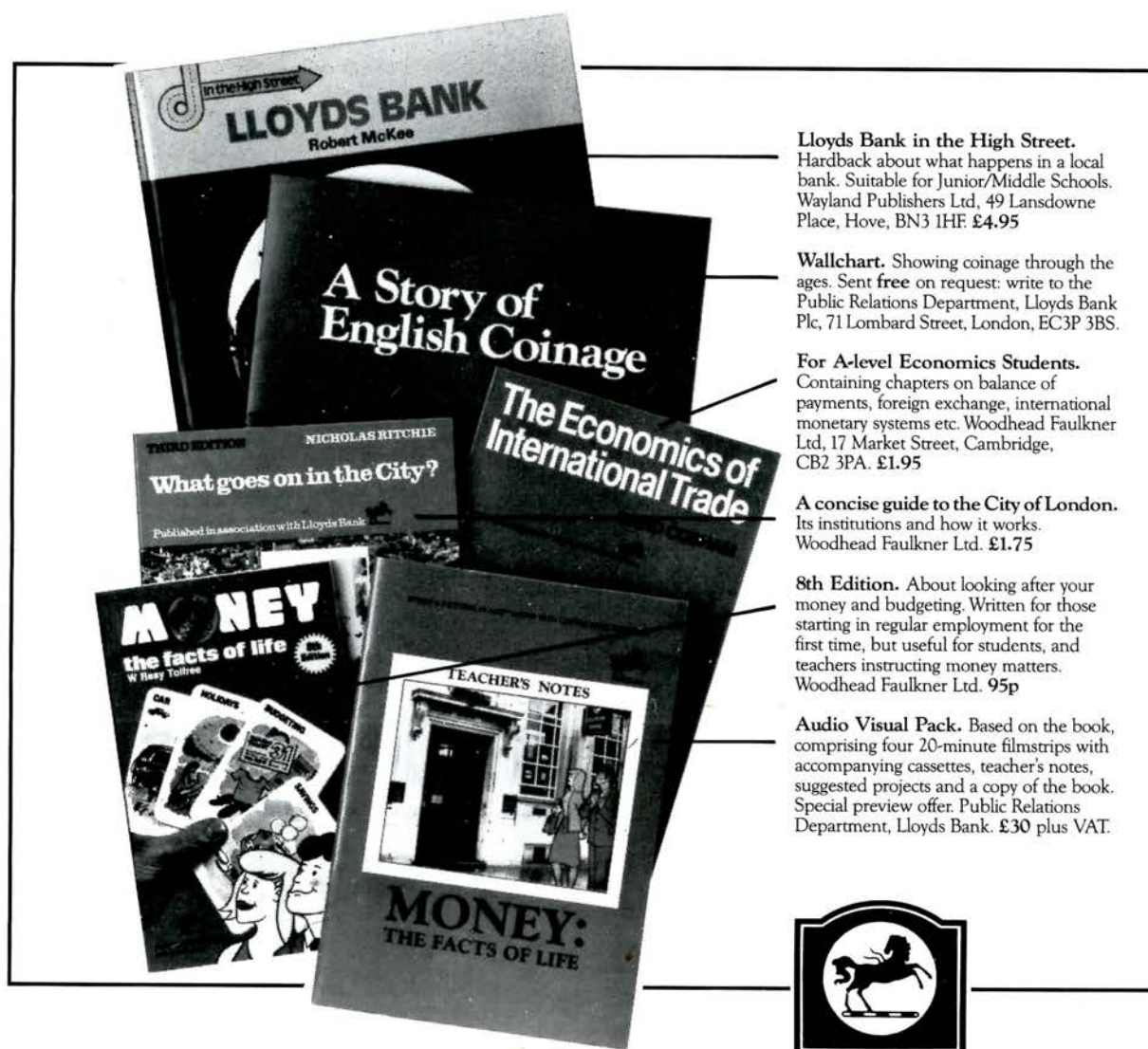
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Fly Away Home
(available in hardback January 1985)

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Children's Book Week 1984 6th - 13th October

All the signs are that CBW will be bigger than ever this year, thanks to the efforts of schools, librarians, book groups, booksellers and the like, who have organised all kinds of activities to get children and books together.

The promotional material has lively and witty illustrations by super David McKee and the national organisers, sensibly realising that not everybody chooses the first week of October for a book week, have arranged for the dates to be left off. If you want to know what's on offer and what it costs, there is still time to send for details. There is for example a special bargain pack of assorted material for those on small budgets. There are two national competitions — for painting and poetry, and a story-writing competition in *Woman* magazine (finish the story Terry Jones has started). Theatres and Arts Centres have been major targets for organisers so keep your eyes open locally.

For further details, contact Dorothy Wood or Angela Toombs at the National Book League — 01-874 6361 or 01-870 9055.

Educational Publishers' Council Exhibitions

English and Library Books, 5-18

Regent Crest Hotel, Carburton Street, London W1
26th and 27th September, 12.00 - 7.00 p.m.

London Remedial '84

Bloomsbury Crest Hotel, Coram Street, London WC1
16th and 17th October, 10.00 a.m. - 7.00 p.m.

Schools Computer Fair for Teachers

London: Bloomsbury Crest Hotel, Coram Street, London WC1
6th and 7th November, 9.00 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.
Manchester: Pembroke Halls, The Precinct, Worsley, Manchester
14th and 15th November, 9.00 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.

Bristol Festival for Children

As part of this first Arts Festival for Children in Bristol, George's Bookshop is organising a Children's Book Fair in the Victoria Rooms, 16th - 20th October, 10.00 a.m. - 7.00 p.m. Authors, live entertainment, workshops, exhibitions are all promised as well as, of course, hundreds of books. School groups, and individual children and their parents, will be welcome. Admission is free.

For information, contact Elizabeth Berry at George's. Tel: Bristol (0272) 276602, Ext. 54.

Elizabeth Goudge

Jessica Yates commemorates the well-known novelist and children's author who died on 1st April this year.

Born in 1900, Elizabeth Goudge spent her childhood in Wells, Oxford, Ely and the Channel Islands — all to be used as settings for her fiction.

She won the 1947 Carnegie Medal for *The Little White Horse*, about the orphan Maria who goes to live in a Devon village and sorts out various romantic and political complications with the aid of the magical white horse and the 'dog' Wroolf (actually a unicorn and lion). Along with this book Knight paperbacks also have in print *Linnets and Valerians*, another family story where wrong is set to right; and the short Christmas story, *I Saw Three Ships*.

Several of her children's books share characters with her adult fiction, for example *Henrietta's House*, about a girl who finds her dream house. This, and *The Valley of Song*, about an early paradise governed by the signs of the Zodiac, are out of print. Lucky children may find them in libraries, and may also explore Goudge's romantic and period fiction for adults.

Her fiction would now be classed as highly sentimental, yet within the books there are moments of tragedy and spiritual insight, and man-woman relationships are realistic as well as romantic.

Where is Spock?

Star Trek is having a re-run on our TV screens and the third film, *Star Trek III — The Search for Spock*, is breaking new box office records in the United States.

It opened in London at the end of July and went on general release soon after. At the end of *Star Trek II* no one on the

starship Enterprise could believe that Spock was really dead. They could certainly do with his help as they continue to battle for the future of the Galaxy. There's a tie-in novel by Vonda N. McIntyre based on the screenplay by Harve Bennett (Granada, £1.95).



Postman Pat goes International

André Deutsch, publisher of Postman Pat in hardback, say they have sold over 1¼ million titles of the various books to date. Pat and Jess, the black and white cat, have regularly featured in the bestseller lists and now it seems Greendale's very special postman is being exported too.

The BBC have sold transmission rights in the TV series across the world to Saudi Arabia, Iceland, Australia, Norway (to name but four countries). The books are following (56,000 for Norway, 3,000 in Welsh!) and of course so must the mugs, the clocks, the jigsaws, the pillowcases, etc. etc.

The Postman Pat costume owned by Deutsch and Scholastic (the paperback publishers) seen in *Books for Keeps* 26 has been touring non-stop since March and is well booked for the Autumn. In one shop the costume, inhabited by a patient sales rep, was kept autographing books for three hours.

Two new stories are out this Autumn from Deutsch: *Postman Pat's Thirsty Day* (0 233 97675 2, £1.95) and *Postman Pat Goes Sledging* (0 233 97676 0, £1.95) — numbers nine and ten in this very successful series, written by John Cunliffe with pictures by Celia Berridge — based on the TV series created by Ivor Wood. There's also a colouring book and an 'activity' book *Postman Pat and his Village*, containing a make-it-yourself model of Greendale village.

There's lots on the Box this season including

**Six Stanley Bagshaw* adventures, based on Bob Wilson's delightfully funny rhyming cartoon books (*Hamish Hamilton and Puffin*), are scheduled to be networked from Yorkshire Television in the first week of November.



**The Irish Adventures of Worzel Gummidge* — a new series starring the ever popular scarecrow in his Waterhouse and Hall incarnation. There is a TV tie-in book by the scriptwriters, from Sparrow. (See Reviews)

**Anna of the Five Towns* — a five-part series based on Arnold Bennett's classic novel starts on BBC in October.

Living Language

Janet Whitaker, producer of this lively BBC Schools radio series, sends details of the Autumn term programmes:

'The main event of the Autumn term will be a new dramatisation of Homer's *The Odyssey* by Leon Garfield in five episodes which we've called 'The Wanderer'. Readers who know the vigour of *The God Beneath the Sea* which Leon wrote with Edward Blishen will realise that this should be a powerful and exciting new version of the *Odyssey*.

Later in the term we have a dramatisation of Rosemary Harris's *The Enchanted Horse*. Although a very attractive picture book the story has been adapted for radio to enhance the magical quality of this humorous and exciting story with all the elements of the traditional Indian folk tale.

We end the term with the rollicking rhymes of Allan Ahlberg's splendid *A Pair of Sinners* which, for those who don't know it, is a tale of 'baby skimmers' in Victorian London who accidentally try to strip a royal child and find themselves in no end of bother.

Teacher's Notes are available to accompany the series; the address to write to is: BBC Publications, School Orders Section, 144 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3TH. ●