

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

JANUARY 1985 No. 30

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A closer look at Walker Books

Authorgraph: Rosa Guy

Information Please: books on the Third World

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Cover Story

On the cover of this issue we feature a selection of illustrations from the Walker Books List.

Can you identify the artists?
(Answers below).

We are grateful for the help from Walker Books in using this material.

1. Helen Oxenbury (First Picture Books).
2. Shirley Hughes (Nursery Collection).
3. John Burningham (First Words).
4. Patrick Benson (William Mayne's Hob Stories).
5. Kenneth Lilly (Large as Life).
6. Nicola Bayley (Copycats).
7. Philippe Dupasquier (Little Robert).
8. E. J. Taylor (Biscuits, Buttons and Pickles).
9. Jan Ormerod (Baby Books).
10. Colin McNaughton (Allan Ahlberg's Red Nose Readers).
11. Helen Craig (Susie and Alfred).
12. Peter Cross (David Lloyd's Dinosaur Days).

Titles are of the series, not individual books.



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BOOKS FOR KEEPS Subscription Price Increase

Regrettably we have to announce a 5% increase in the cost of the subscription to **Books for keeps** from £6.00 to £6.30 per annum. This has been brought about by production cost increases borne by us across the board from setting charges through to postage. The increase takes effect from January 1985. Any outstanding subscription renewal forms and order forms for new subscriptions at the old price sent into us after this date will, of course, be honoured by us.

Richard Hill
Managing Director.

Special Announcement

To all **Books for Keeps** readers ...

In February 1985 we are publishing

THE BOOKS FOR KEEPS GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY: 8-12

Compiled by Judith Elkin. Edited by Pat Triggs

Price £1.75

Special Offer: If you place your single copy order by 15th February (i.e. in advance of publication) we will give you 20% off the cover price. See enclosed order form for further details or phone your order through to us on 01-852 4953 now!

EDITOR'S PAGE

Goodbye to 1984 but not I fear to one of Orwell's concerns — the effect of government on books and literacy. Going into 1985 the campaign to avert the imposition of VAT on books and journals is at full flood; worries about the Arts Council's intentions towards literature are still unresolved; and many librarians are joining together in their own campaign against cuts and moves which seem to be attacking the tradition of free public libraries built up and enjoyed in this country for over a century. In Somerset, cuts in library funding mean that no new adult fiction will be bought in 1985-6. Even more insidious is the growing tendency for libraries to make charges for services not concerned with books (these have to be freely loaned by Act of Parliament). Lord Gowrie, Minister for Arts and Libraries, opening a new library in Ealing last September, is quoted as saying, 'If a charge is made for peripheral services provided by a library then the user will appreciate what he or she is getting, use will be restricted to those who really have an interest rather than a whim, and extra resources are available for the service as a whole. I suggest that a well run library authority should always raise a charge if it is legally entitled to do so.' To some this may seem a reasonable argument. What's wrong with making a charge for records and cassettes if it means more books? But think again. Libraries are the natural location for community-based computer information services. Is access to those to depend on the ability to pay? If knowledge is power the rights of all to have access to it must be protected or we shall not be so far from Orwell's world as we think:

The Library Campaign provides a rallying point for all who want to defend the role of the library in the community. Local action groups are needed in every local authority; ordinary library users must make their views heard alongside the professionals. If you want further information contact: The Library Campaign, c/o Central Library, Surrey Street, Sheffield S1 1XZ.

The Struggle for Literacy

No less cause for concern as we begin 1985 is the lack of access to books for children and young people in the Third World. The production and distribution of children's books in developing countries was the theme of the 19th Congress of IBBY (The International Board on Books for Young People) held in Cyprus last Autumn. For three days representatives from all over the world discussed the continuing struggle for literacy in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Lack of public funding, the problems of diverse dialects and languages, the shortage of publishers and their reluctance to take risks; all were identified as obstacles to progress. While countries develop their own publishing traditions they are inevitably dependant on imported books. That too

means money and very few places are even as fortunate as the one in Botswana described by Jane Goodwin (p 22). The British Section of IBBY launched its Third World Book Fund in 1983. It has already helped projects in India, Peru, Kenya, Tanzania and the Philippines. Rosemary Stones who contributes a review of how the Third World is presented in children's non-fiction to our **Information Please** series (p 4) is a member of the Third World Book Fund Committee. Contact us if you want to help; we will put you in touch.

The First BfK Guide

It is important for children in this country to have a proper understanding of the Third World and of their own society. Books can play an important part which is why we have produced the first **Books for Keeps Guide: Books for a Multi-cultural society (8-12)**. Compiled by Judith Elkin, this is much more than a book list — it contains features on authors, reports of interesting activities, lists of publishers and sources of supply and information — though the heart of the guide is an extensive, annotated list of over 200 books and other materials. We have brought together a lot of useful information which is often scattered and difficult to find to make a really useful, practical guide. It is being printed at this moment and Judith is working on the other two parts (0-8 and 12 plus) which will follow. We are very excited about this venture. We hope you will want to support it and tell us what you think. We intend to revise and reprint so your comments and contributions could help to make the second edition even better.

Publishing '85

That's our new publishing venture. Walker Books, starting only its third year as an independent imprint is astounding children's publishing with its success (p.14). Our cover features some of the artists Sebastian Walker has been able to attract to his list; you could use it as the basis for a competition we thought, but be careful some of the books won't be published till later this year.

Also into its third year is Barn Owl Press, a Welsh imprint publishing children's books in English. Sally Jones who launched the list says 'the vast range of English Children's literature, magnificent though it may be, is largely irrelevant to the average Welsh working-class child. We don't want to be parochial; but we do want to offer a more accurate, more positive picture of Wales and its culture.' For the last two years the English language Tir na N-Og Award has been won by a Barn Owl title. (p 24). Good luck to all small publishers and booksellers in 1985. We need them for their care and concern for particular areas of the market, as our Multi-cultural Guide clearly shows.

And what of mainstream publishing?

Lots of good things are coming in hardback and paperback which you will be able to read about in BfK. And there is the usual desperate race to keep up with crazes and enthusiasms. We'll all be wanting books on hand for those post-Christmas BMX owners.



Best of the bunch for those into freestyle and stunts are **BMX Action Hot Shots** (Hippo, 0 590 70373 0, £1.95) and **BMX Freestyle**, Dave Spurdin (Hamlyn, 0 600 34775 3, £3.99). Full of facts statistics, practical advice and lots of superb colour photographs. Why, I wonder has no major publisher done anything on Breakdancing and Body-Popping yet? (I know of only one title, **Street Dance** by Yonina Knoppers (Zomba Books, 0 946391 60 2, £1.99) which is illustrated with black and white photographs on rather poor paper.) The appeal isn't quite as universal as the A.Team's but I've noticed an interest in most schools I go into — including the Infants!

Spin-off Problems

Rivalling the A.Team for popularity is Richard Carpenter's TV series, **Robin of Sherwood** (p 18). A second series is due for screening in March and a third is about to go into production. The book of the second series, **Robin of Sherwood and the Hounds of Lucifer** (Puffin) is already in the shops, something which Richard Carpenter was not over-enthusiastic about when I spoke to him recently. 'I realise publishers want to have the book available and TV companies do change transmission dates; but this book is a spin-off, it's based on the series and it's out months in advance. I've always been a TV writer who turned his scripts into books — even **Catweazle** started that way — and I'm not at all happy as a story-teller that the viewers who have read the book will already know the outcomes. How can I surprise them, keep them in suspense?' I can't help thinking he has a point. Those who have already read the book will know what he means. If you haven't, save it for later and discover, via television, how Richard coped with the news that Michael Praed (the actor who plays Robin) would not be available for the third series. (He left to star in a Broadway musical of **The Three Musketeers**, which flopped; but watch out for him in **Dynasty** — or is it **Dallas**?) Can there be **Sherwood** without Robin? Watch this space — and the popular press — about March.

Meanwhile, good wishes for 1985.

Pat

Reviewers in this issue



For this issue **Pat Triggs** is standing in for **Jill Bennett** to review picture books for younger readers. Jill will be back in March.



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 the English Editor at the Resources for Learning Development Unit in Avon.

HOW THE OTHER

Rosemary Stones considers how the Third World is presented in non-fiction for young readers.

Two thirds of the world's population live in what has become known as the 'Third World', that is in the poorest countries of the world. Many of these countries were until recently the colonies of European countries who ruled them and some are thereby the homelands of immigrants to Britain in the last decades. What our children learn about the Third World is important, therefore, not simply because the majority of the human race live in Third World countries but because our knowledge of and attitudes to Third World countries contribute to an understanding of our own multi-racial society in Britain. But what do children's books tell children about the Third World?

In 1971 the Institute of Race Relations published a critical survey of books about countries from which people have come to Britain to settle, **Books for Children: The Homelands of Immigrants in Britain**, carried out by a group of librarians from the London and Home Counties branch of the Youth Libraries Group. In her introduction the distinguished London librarian Janet Hill wrote:

'Many books are blatantly biased and prejudiced. Not surprisingly this criticism applies most strongly to books about countries which have been closely connected with England, notably India, Pakistan and the African countries.'

Thirteen years on little progress seems to have been made in publishing for children about the Third World. Delegates to the recent Council of Europe conference on teaching about Africa were warned that 'pupils were receiving only stereotyped ideas about "the dark continent" — images of drought and famine, primitive tribes, and poor countries living off foreign aid'. A survey of school students in Oxfordshire, aged from 13 to 17, found that 81% 'felt they knew little or nothing about the Third World', and a teacher who had done work on children's perception of the Third World reported that:

'the term Third World suggested starvation, poor agricultural practice and people unable to look after themselves in all of the children's minds. No one spoke of technological advances that have been made, the Green Revolution or any positive feature of the countries... I think it is important that we not only teach about the Third World... but that we also present a more balanced picture of the area in which the majority of mankind live.'

Clearly geography, history and R.E. textbooks play a part in this stereotypical perception of the Third World and critiques of these books have been carried out in the last few years by, among others, Dave Hicks (in *Images of the World*), Dawn Gill (in *Assessment in a Multicultural Society: Geography*) and David Wright (in *A Portrait of Racism in Geography*) who have found that even recently published and well-reviewed books often contain inaccurate and insulting attitudes to Third World peoples. Even the Educational Publishers Council has expressed concern at the state of affairs in its 1983 report *Publishing for a Multi-Cultural Society* which said:

'Reference to the lives of Africans and Asians is scanty and simplistic; their life styles are accepted as primitive, their customs and festivals strange; assimilation of European culture is assumed to be desirable. The language reveals the conventional assumptions of writers: empires are "shared out", countries "discovered", the third world "developed" by Europeans...'

Sifting through recent books from mainstream publishers and from the development education agencies I did find some encouraging signs that criticism about the presentation of Third



Photograph from **Patterns of Living: Learning in Life**, (Macmillan Education in association with the Save the Children Fund and the Commonwealth Institute).

World countries is beginning to be taken on board — but in a piecemeal fashion. It is still not possible to recommend without reservations a complete series, or the output of a particular publisher, or even some of the publications from the development education agencies who really ought to be getting it right.

In **The World: People and Places** by Kenneth Maclean and Norman Thomson (Save the Children Fund and Macmillan Education 1984, 0 333 34755 2, £5.95) for Primary age children for example, a section introduces the concept of 'race' as to do with *differences* without introducing at all the concept of the genetic *unity* of the human species. The section goes on to describe the 'Caucasoid' as having 'straight or wavy' hair and 'thin' lips while the Mongoloid has 'coarse' hair and the 'Negroid' 'woolly' hair and 'thick and protruding' lips. In this description the authors assume that whites are the norm and they therefore describe other people by comparison to whites. Why are white people's lips not 'inverted' rather than Black people's lips 'protruding'? To describe hair as 'coarse' or 'woolly' is to introduce a comparison with unfavourable connotations which is then dressed up as 'science' by the use of terms like 'mongoloid'.

For secondary school age readers, Christopher Barlow's **The Third World** (Batsford Educational 1979, 0 7134 1878 8, £6.95) presents Third World poverty without explaining the causes. In a section on land reform Barlow criticises Zambia for growing tobacco and Ghana for growing cocoa ('these crops do not fill empty bellies in the Third World') but omits to explain that in many Third World countries local industries were destroyed under colonial rule and rural economies diverted to producing cash crops for the overseas market.

For us adults, ourselves almost invariably uninformed or misinformed about Third World countries and issues, it seems essential to gain background knowledge to enable us to supplement or explain inadequacies in the information books about the Third World that we will be presenting to young readers.

TWO THIRDS LIVE

The following books were written for older secondary school students but they provide succinct and accessible introductory information for teachers that could also be adapted for younger readers if a project were undertaken.

BACKGROUND READING:

Roots of Racism

0 83001 023 3, £1.50 plus 30p p & p

Patterns of Racism

0 85001 024 1, £2.00 plus 40p p & p

The Institute of Race Relations (from 247/9 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NG. Tel: 01-837 0041).

To make sense of the relationship between the rich world and the poor world it is necessary to go back in history and examine the 400 years of European colonial domination. These two strongly written books cover the establishment of the colonial system, the genesis of racism, the impact of the Industrial Revolution and its legacy for the Third World.

The Third World

Roger Clare, Macdonald Educational Colour Units, 0 356 04490 4, £1.95

A simply laid out introduction to the problems that beset Third World countries today which also provides explanations, and places issues in economic and historical context.

World Inequality

John Turner, Longman Social Science Studies, 0 582 22138 2, £1.95

This outstanding book examines clearly the roots of world poverty and the present unequal relationship between the Third World and the industrialised countries.

A SELECTION FROM RECENT BOOKS FOR CHILDREN ABOUT THE THIRD WORLD:

Homes Around the World

Anna Sproule, 0 356 10198 3

Food from Many Lands

Beverley Birch, 0 356 10197 5

Macdonald 'My First Library' series, £3.50 each

Two attractive books for primary school age children which look at 'homes' and 'food' round the world in a way that emphasises the similarities as well as the differences in the ways that people live, North and South, and presents each way of life as equally valid.

Mexico

Palle Petersen, 0 7136 1978 3

Village in Egypt

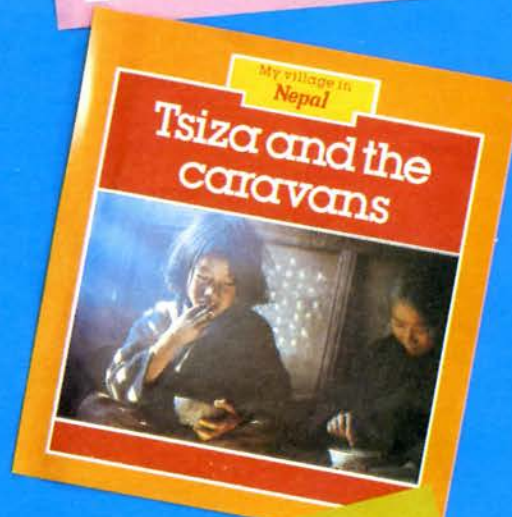
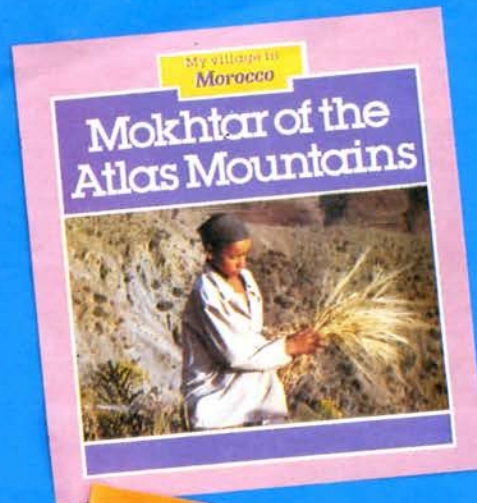
Olivia Bennett, 0 7136 2292 X

Sakina in India

Tony Tigwell, 0 7136 2243 1

A & C Black 'Beans' series, £3.50 each

Three of the best titles from a high standard series of photo-information books for primary school children about different countries. Some of the titles in the series are rather





From *A Village in Egypt*, (A & C Black 'Beans' series).

bland (eg *Zambia* by Palle Petersen), but most capture the detail and feel of life in a particular part of the world with sympathy and immediacy. *Sakina in India* is particularly successful in this respect with its first person narration by Sakina herself, a lively 10-year-old girl who lives in a Northern Indian village with her parents who are weavers.

Food	Families
0 333 30676 7	0 333 30675 9
Working	Learning
0 333 30677 5	0 333 30678 3

Save the Children Fund/Macmillan Education 'Round the World' series, £3.50 each.

Four information books for middle age range readers which attempt to develop concepts about different topics by taking examples from countries round the world. Unfortunately the books do not explain the difference in the standards of living described. In *Food* for example, we are told: 'In Lesotho [the Save the Children Fund] gives thousands of children a meal a day' without being told that Lesotho is in economic thrall to South Africa. However this series would be useful for project work if additional information was made available.

Learning in Life	Food for Life
0 333 31195 7	0 333 31197 3

Working Life	Family Life
0 333 31196 5	0 333 31194 9

City Life	Village Life
0 333 31192 2	0 333 31193 0

Olivia Bennett, Macmillan Education/Save the Children Fund/The Commonwealth Institute 'Patterns of Living' series, £4.50 each.

For older readers, the 'Patterns of Living' series jars occasionally as when (in *Food for Life*) it provokes a squeamish response from readers by comparing foods from different cultures — 'Would you like to eat the mpane worms in the white bowl? The children who live in the Kalahari desert of Botswana love them', but some of the titles are well done (eg *Family Life*) and there is lots of useful material here.



Ba'abila and Grace Watcham and family, from *Through the Year in West Africa* (Batsford Educational).

Through the Year in the Caribbean
Dave Saunders, 0 7134 3974 2

Through the Year in West Africa
Malcom Green, 0 7134 3964 5

Through the Year in China
Frances Wood, 0 7134 3968 8

Through the Year in the Middle East
Taqi Altounyan, 0 7134 4075 9
Batsford, £6.95 each

A lively series, for secondary age readers which invites a specialist in a particular country to write about a year there including details of its culture, history and politics. The result is these enthusiastic individual accounts written from personal experience.

Let's Visit Cuba

John Griffiths, Burke, 0 222 00797 4, £3.95

The 'Let's Visit' series usually takes a tourist's eye view of other countries but *Let's Visit Cuba* is a well told and detailed account of Cuba's history and present economy for older readers, which also manages to explain well Cuba's tricky relationship with the USA and the Soviet Union.

The Food Chain: A Game of Choice
Michael Allaby, Deutsch, 0 233 97681 7, £3.95

An original book that asks the young reader of 10 years and upwards to try to distribute food around the world by making a series of choices about courses of action in different political situations and in countries with very different resources and terrains — but which is the right choice?

Tsiza and the Caravans

Christine de Cherisey, 0 356 11151 2

Mokhtar of the Atlas Mountains
Elizabeth Thiebaut, 0 356 11152 0

Tarlift, Tuareg Boy

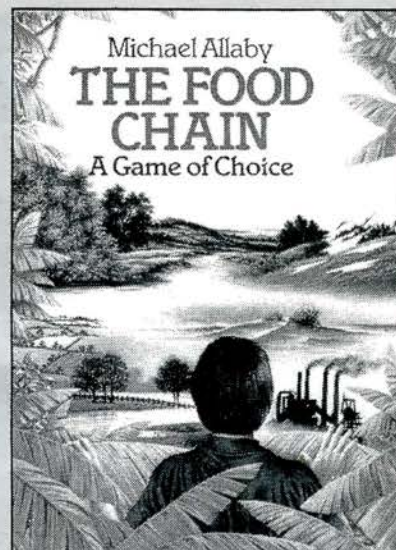
Anne Rochegude, 0 356 11153 9
adapted by Bridget Daly, Macdonald 'My Village in . . .' series, £4.95 each

A new series first published in France, these three 'My Village in . . .' books for middle age range readers about Third World village life cover two North African villages (one in the Sahara, one a Berber village in Morocco) and a village in Nepal. The books impart their information by describing the life of a village boy (no girls so far) and his family. This usually cumbersome device is surprisingly well handled and all three books have a fresh, unselfconscious style and convey the feel as well as the detail of the way of life of each village.

The Caribbean

Winston James, Macdonald 'Looking at Lands' series, 0356 07105 7, £4.95

For Primary school age readers the need to explain clearly and simply sometimes means that an information series falls into generalities and stereotyping. The 'Looking at Lands' series has been rather superficial in its approach so far but this latest title, *The Caribbean*, achieves a good balance of information, history and 'things to do' told in a chatty style. The history sections include the story of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the slave who led the fight for freedom in the Haiti (St Domingue) of the 1790's.



SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

General Reference:

The Development Puzzle

Nance Lui Fyson, Hodder & Stoughton/Centre for World Development Education, 0 340 34940 9, £5.25

A most useful resource guide on books and other materials about the Third World with suggestions for projects.

Organisations:

International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, Canon Collins House, 64 Essex Road, London N1 8LR.
(Material on apartheid)

Centre for World Development Education, 128 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SH.
Tel: 01-730 6480
(Reference library of world development materials)

Save the Children Fund, Mary Datchelor House, Grove Lane, London SE5.
Tel: 01-703 5400
(Materials on world development)

Third World Publications, 151 Stratford Road, Birmingham B11 1RD
Tel: 021-773 6572.
(Distributes children's books from the Third World)

Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.
Tel: 0865 56777
(Materials on world development)

Unicef, 55 Lincolns Inn Fields, London WC2 3NB.
Tel: 01-405 5592.
(Material about Third World children)

Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 6NJ.
Tel: 01-603 4535.
(Reference library; materials on Commonwealth countries) ●

References

Books for Children: The Homelands of Immigrants in Britain, edited by Janet Hill, The Institute of Race Relations (1971); now out of print.

Images of the World, Dave Hicks, The Centre for Multicultural Education, University of London Institute of Education, (1980) 0 85473 102 4, £1.00 incl. p & p.

Assessment in a Multicultural Society: Geography, Schools Council Report.

A Portrait of Racism in Geography, David R. Wright, 'Education Journal' 1983.

REVIEWS

Nursery/Infant

Hallo! How are You?

Shigeo Watanabe, ill.
Yasuo Ohtomo, Picture
Puffin, 0 14 050.445 1,
£1.25

The sixth in the now well-known series about Little Bear to go into paperback. In this one he is extending his range of language to the formal greeting. His demure and careful 'Hallo. How are you?' raises no response from flowers, dog, cat, busy milkman and postman; but when father bear comes home he finally gets the appropriate reply. Charming didactic for the very young, usefully repetitive for beginner readers.

PT

Alpaca

Rosemary Billam,
pictures by Vanessa
Julian-Ottie, Picture
Lions, 0 00 662299 2,
£1.25



Alpaca, Ellen's faded toy rabbit, fears he may be losing his place as favourite toy to birthday newcomers, owl and doll; but all turns out reassuringly well in the end. A cosy story with traditional-style pictures of chubby soft-focus children in a bedroom full of old-fashioned toys.

PT

Harriet's Halloween Candy

Nancy Carlson, Picture
Puffin, 0 14 050.465 6,
£1.50

Halloween customs from the USA, like 'trick or treat', seem to be catching on more in some parts of Britain; even so this American import hasn't really made a good crossing. American spelling — 'color', 'favorites' — and vocabulary — 'teensy-weensy', 'closet' — as well as a whole lot of 'candy' — 'saltwater taffy', 'peanut butter cups' — which is outside our cultural reference do not recommend this for use with young children. These disadvantages are not outweighed by a slight storyline with a simple message: sharing is better than hoarding (which makes you anxious) or gorging (which makes you sick). Harriet is a likeable enough dog/child but no match for Russel Hoban's Frances or any of the Rosemary Wells humanoid menagerie; they travel the Atlantic rather better.

PT

Toot, Toot

0 19 272146 1

Whose Shoe?

0 19 272145 3

Brian Wildsmith, Oxford,
95p each

Two more titles in a useful series for pre-reading and early readers. The same combination of visual jokes and simple concepts as before in Wildsmith's beautifully coloured, decorative pictures. **Whose Shoes?** has no words but offers plenty to talk about and play with. **Toot, Toot** has a very simple text in which words and counting are ingeniously combined.

PT

Too Big

Holly Keller, Hippo,
0 590 70334 X, £1.50

Another American import featuring sibling rivalry with animals (mice?) playing the human parts. The arrival of new baby Jake sends Henry into a spate of regressive behaviour and attention-seeking ploys. Everyone cheerfully insists on how big he is until even he can laugh at himself. All ends well with hugs and a new tricycle. Limited well-spaced text makes it a possible for early reading.

PT



'Henry,' from *Too Big*.

The Surprise Present

0 19 272142 9

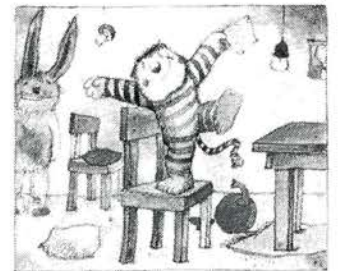
A Bag of Tricks

0 19 272143 7

Nick Ward, Oxford,
95p each

Two from the same Oxford series with, presumably, the same purpose. Both Nick Ward's books are wordless and seem to be offering story sequences of a rather surreal and even grotesque nature which might be considered inappropriate for the very youngest pre-readers. I find the pictures unattractive but their rather over-the-top style may have appeal for older slower readers who need a basis for story-making.

PT



A Letter from Tiger

Janosch, trans. Anthea
Bell, Hippo,
0 590 70333 1, £1.75

Little Bear and Little Tiger feel sad and lonely when they are apart, so they send each other letters to cheer themselves up. And that really starts something. Before long everyone is writing letters and using a well-developed postal system; by which time Bear and Tiger have invented the

'This is the happiest day of my whole life,' said Little Tiger. And that was no lie.

telephone . . . This celebration of communication provides the best possible reasons for learning to write.

PT

Infant/Junior

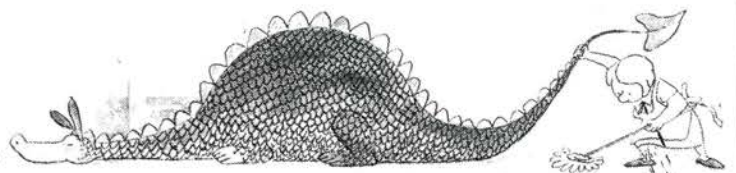
There's No Such Thing as a Dragon

Jack Kent, Blackie,
0 216 91712 3, £1.50

This splendidly funny fantasy is the first of a new picture paperback series from Blackie. Billy and the kitten-sized dragon he finds on the end of his bed one morning are getting along very well until Billy's mum

announces firmly 'There's no such thing as a dragon' which means everyone has to behave as if it isn't there. The dragon, however has ways of getting noticed. Jack Kent's words and pictures combine the wittily fantastic and the everyday in a delightfully dead pan style.

PT



'Cleaning, the downstairs took Mother all morning, what with the dragon in the way', from *There's No Such Thing as a Dragon*.

One Moonlit Night

Ronda and David
Armitage, Picture Puffin,
0 14 050.461 3, £1.25

Another jolly story of suburban family life, this time featuring two boys camping out overnight in the garden. It starts well with some nicely observed touches: an over-enthusiastic dad, a teasing sister, mixed feelings about the enterprise from the boys. But the second half, an extended 'joke' (based on the old string-on-the-big-toe-alarm stories) seems over-contrived and lacking a base in reality. Some good pictures of night time, though.

PT

Would You Rather . . .

John Burningham,
Picture Lions,
0 00 662394 8, £1.50

More than any other book I've read with young children, this one taught me how gifted authors/artists make a bond with their readers (and listeners), so enabling them to find a space for imaginative activity.

The text and pictures encourage (demand?) reflection and the author tunes the reading perfectly. Children's sense of the absurd, their love of language play and the potential of 'what if?' all meet here. There's some sensitive touching upon the embarrassing and frightening bits of being a child, too . . . Try it with fives up to twelves. Well worth waiting so long for this well-produced paperback version.

CM

Buggly Bear's Hiccup Cure

True Kelley, Magnet,
0 416 50880 4, £1.50

Lively and humorous tale in which Buggly tries to rid himself of 'hiccups' with the

help of his friend, Forrest the Deer. The homespun attempts — holding his breath, counting to a hundred, receiving a shock — will strike chords with readers from five to eight. Look at the ways in which the author's own imaginative, sparky pictures tell their own stories. The simple text has been intelligently placed to help the climax of the tale. Well worth looking at.

CM

Tales for Telling

Leila Berg, ill. Danuta Laskowska, Magnet,
0 416 49280 0, £1.25

A mistress of the storyteller's art selects seven tales which will be valuable for readaloud sessions. She generously gives some indication of their length and ranges wide in geographical origin.

Her skill is in retaining the texture and individuality of the offerings: my favourite here, the Russian Turnip-Tales, catches the tones of growing and changing within the story. The two stories about Bouki from Haiti had a group of sixes and sevens researching the character, the country and Ms Berg's other stories.

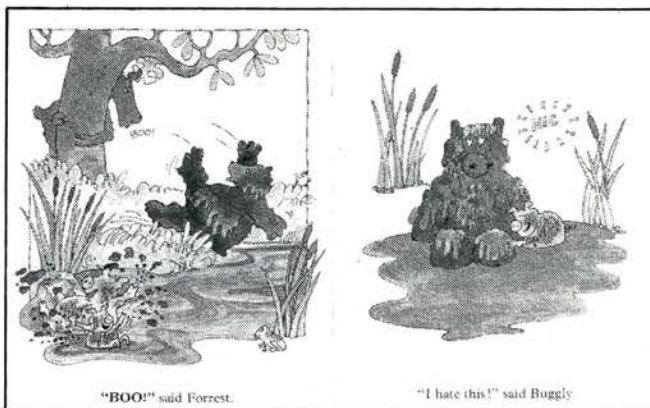
There are lessons for us all in her storytelling style: see the ways in which she gets her audience involved through shaping the climax of her tales. With valuable collections like this one, listeners soon become readers.

CM

Dinner Ladies Don't Count

Bernard Ashley, ill. Janet Duchesne, Young Puffin,
0 14 03.1593 4, 95p

Two small masterpieces from Ashley, set in the same primary classroom. I know of so few writers who can, as Ashley does in the title story and in Linda's Lie, make the sights,



From Buggly Bear's Hiccup Cure.

the sounds, and the structure of feeling within a school live within a book. Children the same age as those in the stories (seven or eight) enjoy the tale of the boy who's often in trouble yet has to get himself off the hook for something he *didn't* do, and of the girl who tells a lie to save her face and then has to un-tell it. Those a little older will see, with help, that such writing provides a space between private and public concerns — a chance to reflect upon powerful ideas. Stories to be shared and talked about.

CM

The Further Adventures of Gobbolino and the Little Wooden Horse

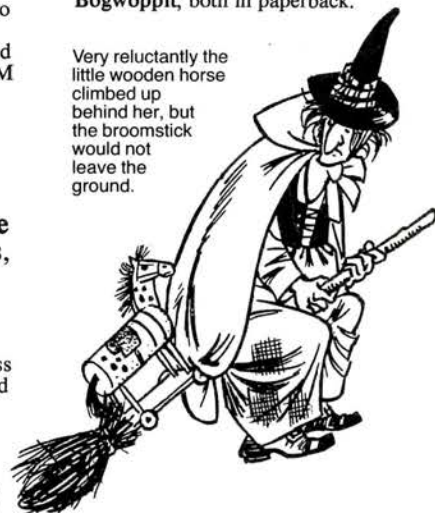
Ursula Moray Williams, ill. Pauline Baynes, Young Puffin,
0 14 031734 1, £1.50

There's a freshness, a lightness in this story that makes it hard to believe that the original stories around the characters are now over 40 years old! This is new. The characters, 'the quiet little horse' and the once-unhappy witch's cat are, if anything, sharper, less sentimental than in their

originals. In the story of how Gobbolino's sister, Sootica, is rescued from service to a witch, Ms. Moray Williams still has a sure hand on her craft. The particular brand of fantasy folk-tale will still appeal to six to eights. The dialogue is crisp and witty; the plot neatly episodic.

I hope that readers are led on to the author's more 'modern' seeming work, Jeffy and Bogwoppit, both in paperback.

Very reluctantly the little wooden horse climbed up behind her, but the broomstick would not leave the ground.



Junior/Middle



Operation Hedgehog

Margaret Lane, ill. Patricia Casey, Magnet,
0 416 50620 8, £1.50

The writer is a gifted naturalist who has that rare gift of

communicating her wisdom to the young. Here, with no hint of didacticism, she shows how a young boy saves hedgehogs from cruel deaths in cattle grids.

Seven to eights get the message that ingenuity and imagination can work together to preserve nature. It unfolds gently as a story, due in no small measure to Ms Casey's pictures, intricate and breathtakingly-detailed like Victorian miniatures. A special and beautiful book, worth shelves full of bland 'non-fiction'.

CM

The Quest of the Golden Handshake

John Ryan, Picture Lions, 0 00 662253 4, £1.50

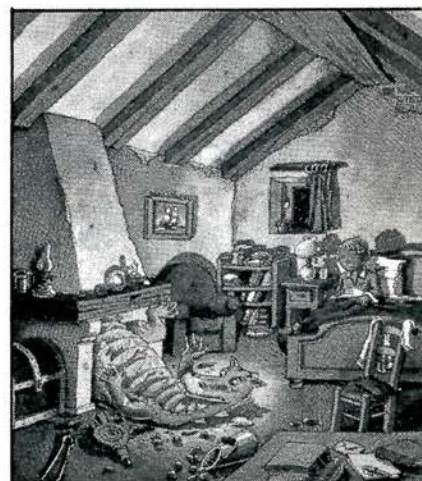
Moonquake

Roy Bentley, Hippo,
0 590 70335 8, £1.50

The Incompetent Dragon

Janice Elliott, ill. Philippe Dupasquier, Hippo, 0 590 70345 5, £1.25

Three contrasting picture books for seven to eights. Ryan's Pugwash adventure is teeming with the derring-do that readers and T.V. viewers of the sea captain's other adventures will be familiar with. Here, he sets off with his motley crew on the Black Pig to capture 'Ye Golden Treasure of the Stinkas'. Parody and word-play abound: the strip cartoon format speeds the



From The Incompetent Dragon.

story along well. My hunch is that it's best read collaboratively: it took three nine year olds a full reading lesson to get all the jokes and the nuances of character and location. Cut Throat Jake was their favourite. Dialogue like Ryan's ('Whew! That was a bit of a how-de-do, Cap'n') needs to be spoken and savoured. I'll try them on **Treasure Island** next term.

In **Moonquake**, there's travel of a more contemporary nature when a group of Space Cadets get involved in a crisis whilst on a training 'exercise'. The pictures are effective, but even my group of eight to ten year old sci-fi addicts found the text dry and over-technical in places, though there's a nifty climax.

My favourite here is Ms Elliott's warm and witty tale about Christopher Magnifico's befriending of a dragon who transforms a dreary world into a cheery, loving place. The land and seascapes of the story are created in an enchanting way by Dupasquier. See how picture-book artistry can work well for this age group when the elements of the tale are 'shown' on the first full-page spread. There's poetry and fun in the writing, too: '... ever since St. George gave us a bad name it's not been the same for dragons'. Do try this one.

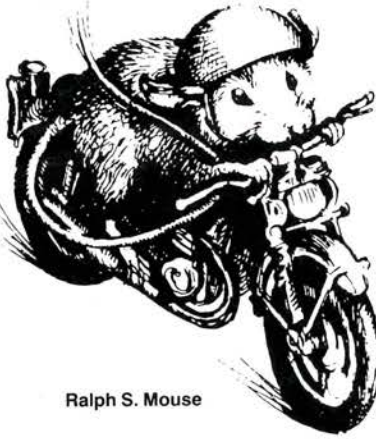
CM

The Siege of Cobb Street School

Hazel Townson, ill.
Philippe Dupasquier,
Beaver,
0 09 936650 9, 95p

The heroes of the same author's **Great Ice Cream Crime** (also in Beaver) turn up again in a racy story in which they outwit two gunmen who take over their teacher and classmates during storytime! The plot races on, but there are some deft touches of character and dialogue. Those who need to be drawn in quickly and carried through a story will not be let down. Characteristically lively pictures from Dupasquier.

CM



Ralph S. Mouse

Ralph S. Mouse
Beverly Cleary, ill. Paul
O. Zelinsky, Puffin,
0 14 031669 8, £1.50

Ralph the rodent, previously featured in **The Mouse and the Motorcycle** and **Runaway Ralph**, also in Puffin, decides to leave home and see the world. He settles in the Irwin J. Sneed Elementary School, which gives rise to some pithy, perceptive drawing of school life and characterisation from Ms Cleary.

Readers of the Ramona stories will find a deeper, more poignant reading experience here. There's something pathetic about this little mouse in a human world — especially when he is institutionalised as a school project! I read this as a serial last year with second year juniors and many of them

found the earlier books on their own. There's a truthfulness and a vigour in the writing, too-rarely found in books for this age group.

CM

Once Upon a Rhyme
Stephen and Sara Corrin
(eds.), Young Puffin,
0 14 031639 6, £1.50

I do not mean to be over-critical when I say that this is a 'safe' collection. There are no great surprises or innovations, but over a hundred poems are included, amongst them many 'classics', and their choice is supported by the wisdom and practical experience of two anthologists whose track record is as good as anybody's. Their brief

introduction is well worth reading.

The teacher will select his or her own favourites (from de la Mare; Farjeon; Serrailleur; Reeves, amongst others) and find a few unknown riches. I'd not seen Silverstein's superb **Slithergadoo** and I'd forgotten how funny youngsters find Nash's **Between Birthdays**. I'd still like more anthologies that children of seven to eleven can find *their own ways* into. That needs, I'd guess, more sensitive thematic groupings, imaginative illustrations and more contemporary work than is here. Jill Bennett's lovely anthologies may be a model. But any primary teacher should be grateful for the Corrins' care and integrity and I hope older juniors will buy it for themselves.

CM

Mary Poppins in the Park

P.L. Travers, Puffin,
0 14 031653 1, £1.50

Already over thirty years have passed since **Mary Poppins** saw the light of day, but this is the first Puffin edition, and it has the original Mary Shepard illustrations.

When a title becomes a classic, it is easy to forget that fresh generations of children are meeting it for the first time, sharing the magic and the humour, and being affected by the sadness of the stories. Admiral Boom, Robertson Ay, Mrs Brill, they're all there, as they always will be I suppose. As the king says 'one minute lasts for two hundred years' in fantasy land.

BB

Middle/Secondary

The Vampire's Revenge

Eric Morecambe,
Magnet, 0 416 47180 3,
£1.25

Sequel to **The Reluctant Vampire**, and continuing in similar vein the flood of corny puns and awful jokes so typical of Morecambe's stage performances. Marvellous material, which reaches real heights in parts: 'Although the driver and his co-driver sat outside on top of the coach, they shared one enormous hat. It had two skull caps covered with one long piece of material, like a plank of wood with two inverted soup bowls.' Illustrations by Tony Ross complement Morecambe's wit in portraying the sinister village of Katchem-by-the-Throat. As the man said, 'Wotcha, Gotcha, I'm here to getcha.'

BB

Jimmy Zest

Sam McBratney,
Magnet, 0 416 50130 3,
£1.25

From the chumminess of the 'jacket-speak', I can tell that it is assumed that we are going to just love Jimmy Zest. Well, you couldn't fail to, could you? Well I'm sorry but what Jimmy makes out of egg boxes or Legweak's ambition to be a stuntman, failed to raise a titter, never mind a belly laugh, from the eleven year olds who dutifully ploughed through it. Miss Quick provides yet another cardboard parody of 'teacher in classroom situation' — two variations only; failing to suppress chaos or shrilling archaic threats at cowering charges. While Gowso, Penny Brown, Knuckles, Shorty and Legweak are as anonymous and undeveloped a group of cronies as any author could be landed with!

BB

Marmalade Hits the Big Time

Andrew Davies, Thames
Magnet, 0 423 01200 2,
£1.25

Andrew Davies is being outrageous again! Through the appalling Marmalade and the very condescending donkey, Rufus, scorn is poured on everyone from the failed horse thief to the snottiest customers of the Ritz and Harrods. Rufus and Marmalade are in London. Every failure becomes a success and their awful behaviour shows no signs of improving. It is very funny, irritatingly so at times. The children love it but as one child said, 'I don't think it is suitable for older people because they would think it was stupid.' Very popular, very entertaining, the perfect series for reluctant readers. They may not recognise the parodies but fall about laughing, all the same.

CL

Napper's Golden Goals

Martin Waddell, Puffin,
0 14 131638 8, £1.25

I must confess that I found the non-stop football jargon very tedious. Young football-knowledgeable readers thoroughly approved. Diagrams, reports on matches, league tables and the like provide much to study as you work your way through the narrative. Not that the story line is very strong!

Napper, captain of a primary school football team tells the story of the team's progress through the local league. Disaster seems to threaten every match but glory comes at last.

Linguistically an easy book to cope with, very much one for football fans and an enticement to the reluctant reader. Capable eight year olds should manage this one.

CL



Flash the Sheep Dog

Kathleen Fidler,
Canongate Kelpies,
0 86241 071 1, £1.75

Family circumstances force Tom to leave London and live with his uncle and aunt on a farm on the Scottish borders. He is lonely and bitter until a young puppy becomes his, to train in the skills of the sheep-dog trials. When the opportunity comes to leave the farm it is the last thing that Tom wants.

This is a story that traces the tensions and tenderness of developing relationships. Young readers found Tom's plight, his struggle to be happy, his eventual success very compelling reading. Those with a knowledge of sheep and farming appreciated the authentic background. An exciting but tender tale for girls and boys of nine and over. CL

The Black Horn

Clare Cooper, Knight,
0 340 34851 8, £1.50

When Simon goes to live in Wales kindred spirits appear to be waiting for him — real spirits these are, that give Simon strange powers and lead him to free the only unicorn in the world. The tradition of good overcoming evil is very much present in a story that links ancient legend with the present. There is the excitement of the chase the frustration of time limits, the fear of discovery. Some of the writing is however a little tedious and at times there is a need for more concrete evidence. It is possible to suspend belief about the legendary past and the presence of magic but not about the real here and now. However that is the view of a cynical adult. Many children will find this an exciting and satisfying story. 9+. CL

Sula

Lavinia Derwent,
Canongate Kelpies,
0 86241 068 1, £1.50

Sensitive, lightweight tale of boy's affinity with wild things on Sula, the 'gannet rock' of an island thrown into the

Atlantic's path. Magnus finds little attraction in confining himself to a schoolroom, while he could be free in the wild. However, a new arrival, a polio-stricken school teacher forms a halting, then firmer, relationship with him, inducing Magnus to utilise his rare talent as an artist. Magnus and his friends all breathe life, and the tale evades the mire of cloying sentimentality into which, it could easily have sunk. BB

Revenge in the Silent Tomb

J.J. Fortune, Armada,
0 00 692419 0, £1.25

Evil in Paradise

J.J. Fortune, Armada,
0 00 692424 7, £1.25
Both in the Race
Against Time series.

Brilliant. Whether it's the heavenly islands of Hawaii or the shifting sands of the Sahara, there's bound to be at least one unknown killer lurking in wait for Stephen and his uncle. All the better if he's called Ali Ben Kir (local colour) and he's the merciless overlord of the desert. Ho, hum. Or, could it be that cold-blooded killer Shark and his murderous master, the Mole? Traditional female interest supplied by none other than Lorelei Blake and Jade Munroe, who else! Whatever the case, it's always a race against time for our two terrific action heroes. Do they get there in time? I wouldn't spoil the tension-tingling ending for you, but it's genuine entertainment all the way. BB

Snatched

Nicholas Fisk, Knight,
0 340 35847 5, £1.25

Mo and Gemma's father is the Ambassador, and they live most of the time in the London Embassy. Their mother lives in Switzerland, filling the house with music and musicians. Another everyday tale of country folk!

Mo and Gemma are kidnapped and don't like it much, especially as one of the kidnappers smells of sweat. If readers are slow on the uptake, the title 'snatched' is now explained to mean 'kidnapped'. Kat, one of the kidnappers, then begins to talk in pidgin English, possibly to remind readers that we are in the Common Market, and past Dover they all talk like that anyway... Oh yes, it says on the jacket, 'rivetting from start to finish!' That just about sums it up. BB

The Wild Hunt of Hagworthy

Penelope Lively, Puffin,
0 14 031495, £1.25

An ancient tradition, the horn dance, is revived by an enthusiastic village committee. Kester, the blacksmith's son is growing away from the locals

as he succeeds at school. Along with the older villagers he is aware that the original hunt involved the pursuit and punishment of an odd one out. He is bitter and antagonistic. Lucy, visiting the village, is aware of his loneliness and becomes determined to break the secret of the hunt before too many are hurt. There is a sinister tension throughout the story.

Penelope Lively uses the oppressive heat of an unusual summer to create a sense of tension and darkness. Nerves are constantly at snapping point and the compulsion to read on is positively eerie. Once again this author's characters are most aptly portrayed — the horsey girls, the sour blacksmith, the vague and kindly aunt. A perfect story for intelligent and sensitive readers. For the upper middle school. CL

The Adventures of the A B C Mob

Forrest Wilson, Beaver,
0 09 938950 9, 95p

Three children whose names begin with A, B and C become involved in various domestic adventures where havoc is generally the key point. Parts are very funny but it is for a fairly youthful audience. I stress the 'audience' rather than reader for linguistically the content is difficult and testers got fed up with the lengthy sentences and hidden jokes. Somehow it is all a bit hectic.

The cover is colourful and amusing. Children will be tempted but frustrated. Few adults will have the patience to read it aloud. CL

The Beggar's Curse

Ann Cheetham, Armada,
0 00 692200 7, £1.25

Children with names like Oliver (intelligent introvert) and Prill (likes ponies) holidaying with unknown distant relative in remote village didn't sound promising but I ended up quite involved. Local legend of an ancient curse and ritual of the village mumming play somehow give meaning to a series of eerie, gruesome and brutal incidents. Each child has fears, secrets and terrifying experiences. We end with a good/evil battle for the life of Prill enacted through the mumming — leaving a sense of huge, inexplicable forces almost unwittingly tapped by the characters. Good gripping grisly stuff. Unisex. **Black Harvest**, the prequel, was chosen by children for the BMC children's choice promotion. They thought it was like 'opening the door of a fridge.' TD

Amish Adventure

Barbara Smucker, Puffin,
0 14 03.1702 3, £1.25

In the words of Jonah, the sect's Bishop, 'We Amish

believe that we aren't here to have a good time, or to make a lot of money or become famous. We try to do the will of God, love our fellow men and prepare for eternity.' The Amish eighteenth-century style existence initially seems alien to Ian Macdonald when he is forced to stay with them after a needless very twentieth century car accident. But a realisation comes that his hosts' quaint ways have much to offer to modern life. An eventful, well-documented novel, a bit heavy on neat solutions and very badly packaged (not least by the Famous Fiveish title). But it's worth recommending for its information and insights alone. DB

New Found Land

John Christopher, Puffin,
0 14 03.1683 3, £1.50

The sequel to *Fireball*. Simon, Brad and two Roman companions are still in the 'If World' — a world on a different probability track to ours and into which they were cast by a fireball. Now they are in North America confronting danger and peril in a concoction of improbable history ending with a pagoda on a Californian shoreline — which seems to augur book three. Adventures are more important than character; indeed I began to wonder whether I was reading an A Team adventure as our heroes scaled an Aztec pyramid to rescue their treacherous female companion (who is incidentally a Viking). Probably it's this very facet of the novel which will make it appealing, especially to boys who prefer fast, active reads. DB

Space Trap

Monica Hughes, Magnet,
0 416 49750 0, £1.50

Valerie Spencer disliked her successful older brother and felt usurped by her younger sister but nevertheless was worried when they vanished into a thorn bush on Planet DP3. Before long she too is engulfed by the Space Trap and spirited to the planet of the Popeyes who delight in their zoo stocked with species plundered from other planets and who also like to keep 'unusual pets'. The trio, along with other fugitives, including the obligatory robot, discover the secrets of the trap and determine to reverse its functions. A sprightly exciting fantasy for the middle years which could do with a less mundane cover. DB

The Halfmen of O

Maurice Gee, Puffin,
0 14 03.1712 0, £1.50

This award-winning good/evil, light/dark fantasy is from the same author as *Under the Mountain* and is as inventive and compelling as its predecessor. Susan Ferris bears the wrist mark of the two halves of the stone, which must be combined as one if it

is to release the peoples of Manhome from the overwhelming, mindless evil which smothered them in the person of Otis Claw and his sycophantic henchman Odo Cling. Susan and her cousin Nick's quest amongst Birdfolk, Stonefolk, Seafolk, Woodlanders and the ferocious Bloodcat makes for stimulating, if bloodthirsty, reading. Maurice Gee is a storyteller with a very creative gift which we as teachers would do well to share with young readers. DB

The Outcast

Rosemary Sutcliff, Puffin, 0 14 03.1715 5, £1.95

First published in 1955 this novel sees Rosemary Sutcliff writing as vividly as ever about the barbarity and cruelty of the Roman slave trade and galley ships. Is it, I wonder, too horrific for a children's imprint?

Beric, a Roman baby, snatched from the sea and fostered by a British tribe, the Dumnoni, is cast out at barely 15 and becomes a Roman slave. Only after very painful and degrading experiences does he eventually fetch up in Britain again and become the helper of Justinus, the Marsh Drainer, a position which restores to him at last a sense of belonging.

There is some kindness in the novel, but not much; it is the inhumanity that prevails and makes the major impact. Read it yourself before recommending to children. DB

Homecoming

Cynthia Voigt, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672459 0, £1.95

This is long, strong and very well-written. Give it to those

people of any age from 12 who love to immerse themselves in a book you can live with for days. Dicey, aged 13, is the main character. When their mother abandons them, she leads her younger brothers and sister down the American East Coast in search of a home. The journey takes weeks and hundreds of miles and they start with seven dollars but their survival, although sometimes fortuitous, sometimes dramatically threatened, is always convincing. All four are complex and rounded characters; so are many of the people they meet. Dicey is resilient, resourceful, determined. James is intelligent and rather remote. Maybelle can't communicate with outsiders who think her retarded. Sammy is explosive, confused at the loss of his mother. They must stay together and when the first relative they find provides duty but not love, they flee to search for their grandmother who, family opinion tells them, will be odd and hostile. Detail, psychological and physical, is finely-drawn. We are in close-up with the children throughout and narrative time feels like real time. The title doesn't quite describe the ending; grandmother and children find it hard to adjust to each other. Dicey realises earlier that she is 'unfond of goodbyes' and that 'A lot of people had little bits of her life now, and they were tied to her or she was tied to them' This is uncomfortable for a person who has carried such burdens so well and the sequel *Dicey's Song*, not yet in paperback, deals movingly with her re-learning of childhood. Look out for it and meanwhile read *Homecoming*. TD

Here Tomorrow, Gone Today

Tim Kennemore, Magnet, 0 416 50250 4, £1.50

Seven splendid, funny, fresh stories — some with the type of humour that gives kids cookies laced with razor blades. Who wrote Magnet's blurb? Does this sound futuristic to you? The children are total TV, video game and junk food addicts. No communication, even eye-contact with mother. A Book Club sends her 'The Pollution of Youth' by an American who has removed her family to non-electric rural wholesomeness. With great courage, mother hides all TV's. Will they now talk and play Scrabble? It takes daughter less than a day to squelch this naiveté and plug herself in again — I won't tell you how. All the stories are good and there's plenty of variety. Most read aloud well; some have tremendous punchlines. Don't miss them. TD

The Winter Visitor

Joan Lingard, Beaver, 0 09 938590 2, £1.25

Joan Lingard's usual skill with character and scene makes this worth buying for older boys and girls. Nick Murray, 15, is part Irish and Northern Ireland enters the book in the shape of Ed Black, a bomb victim who comes to the Murray's boarding-house on the Scottish coast. But the story centres on relationships in and around Nick's family. His father's away in the Gulf, his sister goes out with an Italian, his friend falls in love while Nick is still uneasy with girls, his Irish gran hates Catholics. Most important, his Mum seems to be having an affair with the

lodger. Nick is increasingly troubled. The dénouement is convincing, not easy, and since Nick is an artist, the story turns back on itself as he plans a painting which will fit the people and events together in the pattern he now perceives. Nick holds your interest from start to finish and I think many teenagers will enjoy the book. TD

The Green behind the Glass

Adele Geras, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672397 7, £1.25

I have mixed feelings about these eight love stories (highly recommended by Woman's Own) but they should attract a wide female readership and though there is some triteness and silliness, there is also variety and a bit of muscle which makes the book worth buying for the library. Certainly upmarket from *Sweet Dreams* etc. I'll only mention the final story which intercuts feelings about imminent marriage with memories of playing Mummies and Daddies at nursery school. Gradually the two claustrophobically merge as Lynn realises how like the Wendy House her new home will become and has a (nightmare?) of being trapped. 'The bright blue walls seem to be closing in . . . she is happy, rocking the doll . . . Mummies love to rock dolls. Mummies love to play in the Wendy House. It doesn't matter that she can't get out . . . Inside the Wendy House, even on the duller day, everything is bright and pretty.' TD

Older Readers

First Love

Jack Rosenthal and others, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672396 9, £1.50

Did you see *P'Tang Yang Kipperbang* and the other Goldcrest films in the First Love series on Channel Four? If so, you'll want this book. If not it's still a compulsory read. Four funny, punny, fast stories by the original screen writers, and completely contemporarily relevant in spite of being set in 1948 and the early sixties. (A bonus for ageing parents and teachers who can make connections alongside current teenagers.) The preoccupations, obsessions, passions and misunderstandings of teenagers are foremost; in the background the lives and loves of adults provide a shrewdly observed and instructive counterpoint. All splendid, convincing, real life farce, shot through with feeling. Enjoy them and share

them with kids — to get the full effect they'll need texts to follow if you read aloud. TD

Feet and other stories

Jan Mark, Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1586 1, £1.50

Sophisticated, witty, beautifully crafted stories very much for older readers. Unusual and attractive type-setting and fine Bert Kitchen illustrations. Most of the eight stories are to do with seeing through people (or not) — complex patterns of lack of understanding, deception, manipulation, realisation, explanation. But also, in most of them, you are not quite sure what has happened by the end and nor are the main characters. On the surface, all seems clear. If the story is a mirror, it isn't misted; but mirror reflections are reversed and anyway, what's behind the mirror . . . ? I

don't want to spoil any of the book by revealing what happens I'll just give three of the titles — which themselves play games: — *I Was Adored Once Too*; Mrs Tulkinghorne's *First Symphony*; *Still Life: Remote Control*. This book you can't do without. Give it to Sixth Formers as well as Fourth and Fifth. I hope lots of adults will have a chance to read it too. TD

If it weren't for Sebastian

Jean Ure, Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1719 8, £1.50

Presumably, she wouldn't decide to study psychiatry, if it weren't . . . Maggie is an interesting character and the third-person story, told from her viewpoint, is strong, intelligent and quite demanding. There are lots of well-made peripheral characters, but two main ones and two main issues

— and I'm not altogether happy with this. Maggie, with three A-levels, fights family pressure to study medicine, takes a short-hand typing course and lives in a bedsit, where she meets Sebastian. They share walks, films, meals and a cat, whose disappearance brings the climax. Sebastian goes missing. All through, we have two themes — struggle for independence, on the one hand, and on the other, the difficult concept of normal/abnormal personality. Sebastian is quite unpredictable, sometimes violent in the expression of his gentle beliefs, obsessive in his fears of hurting animals. Is he 'mad' or a poseur? Does he need understanding or treatment? The issue is raised but left dangling; perhaps a sequel is on the way which will explore it further. I hope so because I like this book and I think older, fairly bright teenagers will too. TD

Authorgraph No.30

Rosa Guy

Rosa Guy is a Black American writer who has been described as 'the creator of some of the most memorable adolescent characters in modern literature'. Her stories are hard-hitting and compellingly realistic, with a powerful message for young people.

She demonstrates a deep understanding and sympathy for young people and the many difficulties they face growing up or purely surviving today. Her books are mainly about Black characters but she doesn't see herself writing only for Black young people: 'I write for a world audience. I want to feel it's a universal not a specifically Black audience. I do believe that people are not that different. What helps one helps another and what destroys one destroys another.'

She writes from the conviction that her books have a message. 'I'm trying to raise the consciousness of young people because I believe that the future of the world is in the hands of young people. They are going to become the leaders of another generation. They need to understand it as fully as they can — the survival of the human race may depend on it.'

Born in Trinidad, Rosa Guy grew up as an orphan in Harlem. She left school at 14 and tried to break into acting but couldn't. Always tough and determined, she decided to write her own plays. She had a couple of off-Broadway successes, but gave up playwrighting because she found it too restrictive. From there it was a natural, if slow, progress to being a writer.

Her first book *The Friends* established Rosa Guy as a sympathetic chronicler of contemporary Black life, Black pride and Black expectations and at the same time it introduced one of teenage fiction's most poignant heroes, Edith Jackson.

The Friends chronicles the unlikely and at first unwanted friendship between Phyllisia, newly arrived in Harlem from the West Indies, and scruffy, irrepressible, Edith. Things are bad at home for Phyllisia; she hates her tyrannical father and her mother is slowly dying, but things are infinitely worse for Edith who takes enormous responsibility for her younger family and lives in abject poverty. It is a harrowing story of the pressures, the violence, the poverty of urban America. Nothing is really changed at the end of the book but Phyllisia has begun to come to terms with herself and her father and the point is made very forcibly that real friendship entails responsibilities and obligations.

The second novel to be published here was *Edith Jackson* which takes up the story of Edith, now 17, and her three

surviving sisters living in a foster home. The sisters are learning individually to find their own solutions to their problems but Edith is blind to her own potential and worth, and is passionately concerned to keep the family, the only secure element of her life, together. It is a deeply moving novel which offers a perceptive, harsh account of Edith's search for love and identity. Rosa Guy admits it contains autobiographical elements: being an orphan; the strong father (Calvin); the sister; the West Indian coming to the United States and feeling an outsider. 'Edith Jackson is another extension — a part — of me,' says Rosa. 'At first I thought of killing Edith off, then I wanted to develop her more, in line with things that were really happening to young people around her age, things that really needed to be talked about. Phyllisia, too, emerges as a strong character. She has to be strong to go through that Calvin who is very hard to go through — because they bend your will you never get over them, strong mothers and fathers. It is very hard to get past them, to assert a sense of self.'

The book actually written between *The Friends* and *Edith Jackson*, but published here much later, because of its problematic theme of lesbian love, was *Ruby*, which concentrates on Phyllisia's elder sister, Ruby. Ruby is unsure of herself, bored and desperately lonely until she meets fellow classmate, Daphne, and forms a deep and intimate relationship with her. For Ruby, it is a blissful, painful first love affair which is started, shaped and finished by Daphne. At first desolate, Ruby finally sees that her time spent with Daphne has given her the confidence she hitherto lacked to challenge her father and seek her own freedom. The book lacks the intensity of the other two titles but the lesbian relationship is perceptively observed.

The Disappearance introduces for the first time a male central character, Imamu Jones. It is a dramatic thriller for older teenagers which gives a brutally disturbing picture of contemporary American society, contrasting the squalor of downtown Harlem with the outwardly cosy Brooklyn environment.

When Imamu leaves the detention centre where he has been held for a month for robbery with violence, he is flattered to be offered a foster home in Brooklyn by Ann Aimsley, a

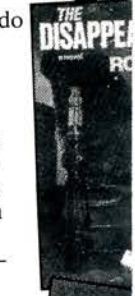
respectable, socially-minded Black woman with two daughters of her own. Imamu's arrival is inevitably fraught with emotion and when the eight-year-old Aimsley daughter, Perk, disappears, Imamu is an obvious first suspect. Imamu is deeply hurt but his much-despised street wisdom leads him to a horrifying denouement and the discovery of Perk.

New Guys Around the Block continues the story of Imamu in his role as detective (and a third title is promised), helping to solve a mystery which the police have failed to clear up, whilst at the same time working out a pattern for his own survival. Imamu now lives with his alcoholic mother in a run-down apartment. Most of his friends have become victims of the racist society and of life in the ghetto, forced into drug addiction, theft and violence. It is an intense and powerful novel with a strong political message about the destruction of Black family life through the pressures of the ghetto.

Why did Rosa choose a male central character? 'I wrote it particularly because boys in the States find it difficult to read. There's too much television. I questioned myself. How do I get young people to read? I believe profoundly that reading develops the mind. The mind is forced to create images. Wherever that happens, it's strengthening something there, after a while you cease to be the person you were and you become another person intellectually — it's active rather than passive learning. I am taking Imamu from the very lowest possible place — almost accused of murder and could have easily been committed for that crime. He had been a drop-out, was going around with the worst people who were mentally unbalanced because of poverty and all those things and I've put him into another setting, opening a little door for him and following him through that door to see him expand to the very end, to see what decisions he will finally make.'

In several of Rosa's books there is a 'mentor' figure, Mrs Aimsley, Mrs Bate. Is this the role Rosa sees herself in, as a writer? 'Young people need the help of older people. With a bit of help, I want to show they could go a long way. So many bright kids are being wasted.'

Rosa's most recent book, *Paris, Pee Wee and Big Dog*, is her first novel for younger readers. It is a fast-moving, compelling story about three young Black boys. Paris and his mother have moved to a new apartment away from their previous slum home. It is Saturday morning and Paris has been told to clean the apartment while his mother is





Rosa Guy, centre, courtesy of Thames Television.

Photo courtesy of Virago Press Ltd.



out at work, because his bedroom particularly is beginning to look like a tip. But when his friend Pee Wee calls, with compelling arguments about why they should go out to play and leave the cleaning 'till later', Paris succumbs. They are joined by Paris's cousin, Big Dog, and gradually and very convincingly one dramatic event leads to another and the day passes, until it is much too late to do the housework and his mother is distraught with worry. Rosa catches very effectively the youthful language, humour and relationships of the streets in this very readable story about three likeable and individual characters.

Does Rosa Guy see herself as a political writer? 'No, basically, I am not — more sociological, socially conscious sort of writing. My hope, my aim, is to raise awareness in people who read. Reading does that anyway but that's what I want to feel is my contribution — raising awareness of people to things around them, things that are happening because I think that's important.'

Can you really be non-political when writing as Rosa does so memorably about poverty, squalor, violence, people often in despair, deprived of both love and material things? 'If you raise the level of awareness of people, it automatically goes into the political, into the need to seek change. You can have all kinds of rhetoric which really has no meaning to you. But if you have awareness, if you basically understand

and feel about things, then when you do challenge prevailing concepts, you are in the mental position that you cannot be changed easily.'

Passionately she describes one of the most important influences on her life: 'The lack of concern for what does destroy, particularly amongst the minority youth, particularly Black kids. Prejudice, lack of concern, translates itself into lack of money for schools, lack of money for well-trained teachers, lack of money for decent housing. Many inner cities in the States have been bombed out since the 1960's, with no programme of rehabilitation or rebuilding. It's worse now. Houses are bombed out/boarded up. Drugs have taken a terrible toll, have ruined the infrastructure of the cities. It was all of little consequence to law enforcement until it became part of the white drugs scene. Then people cared. All these facts glare at you, it really glares at you: little kids on the block at 12 o'clock at night, 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock in the morning in these bombed-out places. I put it in *New Guys Around the Block*. It's traumatic. It really traumatises me. I *have* to write about it. I call it genocide — it's a sure way to kill off the people.'

This passionate concern with what she sees around her and the need to transmit a message to young people comes across strongly in all her work, but does it worry her that her books are not taken seriously by the people in power, because they are published as

young adult books? 'I think my books *are* taken seriously. That's why there was flack about *Ruby*. Young people read and things of importance stick. I don't think my books are easily forgotten.'

Many young people both black and white in Britain today would wholeheartedly endorse that, as they anxiously await her next book and absorb her enduring message. ●



The Books

The Books published in hardback by Gollancz

The Friends
0 575 01839 9, £5.95; Puffin,
0 14 03.0933 0, £1.25

Edith Jackson
0 575 02607 3, £6.95; Puffin Plus,
0 14 03.1786 4, £1.50

Ruby
0 575 03052 6, £5.95

The Disappearance
0 575 02804 1, £6.95; Puffin Plus,
0 14 03.1787 2, £1.50

New Guys Around the Block
0 575 03271 5, £5.95

Paris, Pee Wee and Big Dog
0 575 03532 3, £5.95

What makes Walker run?

Chris Powling examines the progress of a publishing house . . .

It's hard to believe that six years ago the name Walker had never appeared as publisher on the spine of a children's book. Even harder to believe that it is less than two years since Sebastian Walker took the list he had been developing under the joint Methuen/Walker imprint and launched Walker Books. So spectacular has been the company's success — whether its output is measured in terms of quantity or quality — that many rivals must be waiting (or praying) for the bubble to burst, for the meteoric rise to become an equally eye-catching fall. Look, after all, at the Walker record sheet: Zebra books launched specifically to knock the spots off Ladybird; the Mother Goose Award last year for the Mayne/Benton Hob books; Helen Oxenbury transformed from distinguished but modestly selling status into equally distinguished global best-sellerdom . . . and just about everybody who is anybody in picture-books eager to hitch themselves to the Walker wagon. Can it possibly keep on rolling?

Sebastian Walker himself has no doubts at all. 'When the recession itself recedes we'll be doing even more at Walker Books to increase the world's awareness of the educational potency and the sheer *fun* of children's literature.' When he says *world* awareness, moreover, he means just that. Fixing an interview with him is less a matter of consulting a diary than negotiating an airline schedule since the company fortunes have been based from the start on a recognition that sales abroad are at least as important, sometimes more important, than sales at home. So adroit is he at setting up joint ventures with overseas publishers that he's been dubbed The King of the Co-Edition. Nevertheless, he insists that 'co-editions only happen if you've got frightfully good books of the highest possible quality. The public won't buy the notion of a shoddy children's book . . . if you cheat, you're cheating a child.' How, then, does he define the typical Walker Book? 'Well, it's inexpensive compared with other people's books. It's rather beautifully produced in a no-nonsense, wipe-able way since it's quite often for a younger age-group — about sixty percent of our books are for under-fives — and it's always, we hope, an original work. Also it tends to be terribly well-designed, as we're rather keen on the fact that marketing and design are inextricably linked.'

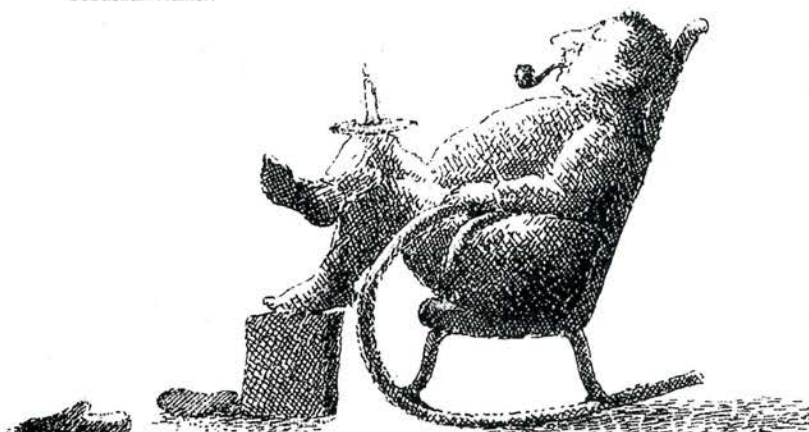
The latter point is echoed at once by Amelia Edwards, chief designer and co-founder of the firm, who maintains that 'the form of a book and how the pictures work with the words — the timing, the anticipation and how it's all planned out — can take long hours of discussion with an author and illustrator because it's a matter of letting them fill the book, as it were, letting them confront the book's pitfalls and problems. Invariably they'll solve them.' Priority for the author/illustrator is central to the Walker philosophy, in fact — and what persuaded Amelia to set up with Sebastian Walker in the first place. 'He said to me "I want to do children's books for the rest of my life . . . how about you?" He broke down all the barriers. I loved his dedication to artists.'

So fierce is this dedication that Sebastian is disarmingly off-hand about his company's own contribution to the creative process. 'We're just the clerk and the nanny. We do the dirty work of the commercial world.' Even so he acknowledges the importance of providing the right conditions for his clerks and nannies. 'Because we're a new company and a very democratic one in terms of structure, there's a rather splendid lack of self-importance here. I'm abnormally uninterested in telling people what to do and become quite overwrought if I'm compelled to tell them. Companies, on the whole, are successful if clever people do better than their best. You don't need a computer in our business, just a trestle table and a bright idea.' It helps, nevertheless, if there are cut flowers on the trestle table and an endless supply of good coffee and fresh orange juice — standard features of the airy, open-plan offices at a distinctly non-posh address into which Walker Books recently moved. This, too, turns out to be a concession to the figure he regards as indispensable to publishing success. 'Why,' he asks, 'should an author pay for smart premises?' On the contrary, he sees it as part of his responsibility as a publisher to ensure that an artist reaps a just reward for his or her efforts. 'One wouldn't dream of going and suggesting a book or an idea to somebody unless they were going to earn a lot . . . I mean, five hundred pounds' advance for a year's work is *undignified*.' A Walker advance tends to be three or four times as much which helps account for the orderly queue of kid-literary lions beating a track to his door. If, that is, a track to their door hasn't been beaten already by Sebastian Walker. Typical of his approach was a visit, a year or so ago, to William Mayne — a trip across half-flooded Yorkshire which resulted in the commission of a somewhat unusual text. He admits 'I couldn't understand a word when I read it in typescript', but backed it nevertheless. After this, Amelia Edwards coaxed a new talent into illustrating it: Patrick Benson. The outcome was the premier picture-book event of 1984: the Hob stories.

So far, so good, then. If Walker Books is currently ahead of the field, what's put it there is sheer commitment. 'We're *specialists*,' Sebastian insists. 'Nobody here is terribly interested in grown-up books. It's a common failing of publishers that they prefer those — they love the



Sebastian Walker.



Hob, by Patrick Benson.

razzmatazz of the latest Adult Thing. I think we're all rather unmoved by that. This has meant that a lot of highly professional and experienced energy has been directed with a very high focus at the illustrated children's book and what it can do.' Which is, as the expanding Walker empire demonstrates, a great deal more than many realise. In its combination of quality and mass marketing, Walker Books invites comparison less with other publishing houses than with companies in different fields altogether — with the early days of Disney, say, or of High Street moguls like Conran and Sainsbury. These are, of course, hard acts to follow and doubtless there are tough times ahead for Sebastian Walker. But times may be tougher for his rivals.

Walker Books

The Proof of the Pudding . . .

In 1984 Walker Books added sixteen new series to its catalogue — a huge expansion on the list with which the imprint was launched in 1983.

How good are they?

We sent a box of Walker books to a group of Hampshire Librarians and asked them to tell us what they thought.

Before we embarked on this activity we had not fully appreciated what a remarkable phenomenon Walker Books is. We remembered the joint imprint with Methuen Books and we associated good things like Helen Oxenbury's **First Picture Books** series and William Mayne's **Hob Stories** with the new name: a slightly superior new publisher, we thought.

Our examination of the Walker Books list has shown how much more there is to it. We found a wide range of books characterised by high quality production and a particularly high standard of illustration. High quality is not always attended by commercial success but the sheer quantity of books published at a time when many publishers are cutting back shows that they have judged the market accurately.

We have chosen to comment on eleven of the twenty-six series currently in the catalogue. (Walker Books favours series of titles) including the Zebra Books range. The selection is mainly for younger children (the strength of the list we think, though the beginnings of non-fiction for slightly older readers looks interesting) and does not include novelty books which are of limited value for library and classroom use.

● Board Books

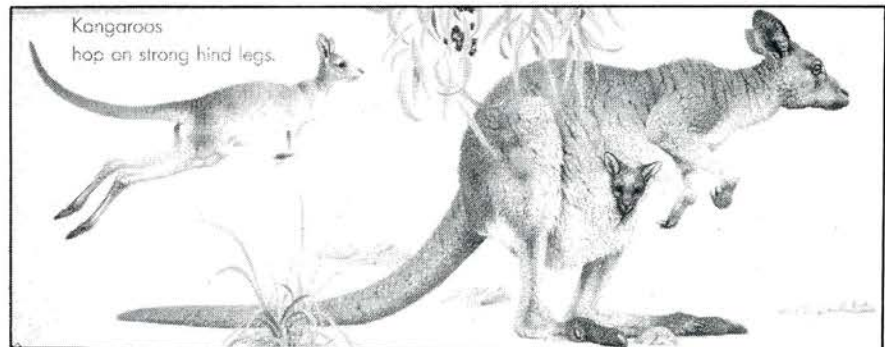
Walker Books moved smartly into the publishing gap first discussed in print by Valerie Wilsner in her article **Books for the under-twos** in **Signal 38**. Prompted by that and by Dorothy Butler's **Babies need books** librarians everywhere began looking for more books for the very young. Now Walker Books are amongst those providing a range of board books and simple picture books which help to fill that gap.

Very young children like Rosalinda Kightley's **On the Move** board books, though to adult eyes they are not artistically distinguished.

The bright, jolly, cartoon-like illustrations are accompanied by a simple story line and at 95p they are good value.

The Little Red Car 0184 9, **The Big Blue Truck** 0185 7, **The Busy Orange Tractor** 0186 5, **The Strong Yellow Tugboat** 0187 3, **The Noisy Green Engine** 0188 1, 95p each (14pp)

Animal Board Books by Kenneth Lilly have a stronger adult appeal. The beautifully detailed and realistic illustrations are quite outstanding, particularly rare for this format. The short line of text on each page provides a good basic talking point. The content and quality means that these board books can be



Kangaroos, a double spread from **Animal Jumpers**.

used in Infant Schools as well as with the youngest child.

Jumpers 0098 2, **Climbers** 0099 0, **Swimmers** 0100 8, **Runners** 0101 6, **Builders** 0102 4, £1.50 each (10pp)

● Picture Book Talkabouts

For a clear view of the world of young children and their attendant adults we cannot do better than turn to Helen Oxenbury's **First Picture Books**. An instant success, these stories combine a minimal text with lovely but devastatingly truthful pictures which capture the joys and embarrassments of childhood. The clever use of humour holds the adult's attention as much as the child's. Both can identify characters and situations they recognise; the enthusiastic but hopelessly untidy child, the pink lady at the playgroup and the terrible complications of eating out 'en famille'. Here is something for everyone.

New titles '84: **Gran and Grandpa** 0181 4, **Our Dog** 0182 2, **The Visitor** 0183 0, £2.95 each (24pp)

John Burningham's **First Words** is a simpler but no less effective series. A small child is accompanied by toy bear and various animals in a variety of real and fantasy situations which illustrate a much more interesting range of words than are usually found in 'first concept' books. 'Wobble', 'jangle', 'slump', 'shout' — this last as the cat walks over a precious painting — all sound as good as they look in accurate representations of the meanings of the words. In addition the sequence of pictures builds into a story. Great value.

cluck baa 0164 4, **skip trip** 0165 2, **slam bang** 0166 0, **sniff shout** 0167 9, **wobble pop** 0168 7, **jangle twang** 0169 5, £1.95 each (24pp)

Philippe Dupasquier's **Busy Places**, at first we eyed a little doubtfully; some liked them, some did not. But we found they have definite appeal to young children who are fascinated by the bustle and action which cover every double page spread. The scenes are full of the clutter of real life and provide so much to talk about that we found the text redundant.

The Garage 0158 X, **The Airport** 0159 8, **The Building Site** 0160 1, **The Harbour** 0161 X, **The Railway Station** 0162 8, **The Factory** 0163 6, £2.50 each (24pp)

● Picture Book Stories

In Derek Hall's **Growing Up** books young Panda, Tiger and Otter learn essential skills illustrated in excellent pictures by John Butler showing attention to detail on every page. The text is a model of economy and explores the events of a young animal's life whilst never descending into sentimentality. These have the blessing of the World Wildlife Fund and the approval of several five year olds of our acquaintance.

Panda Climbs 0131 8, **Otter Swims** 0132 6, **Tiger Runs** 0133 4, £2.50 each (24pp) Three more titles in May.

Russell Hoban's **Ponders** is a more ambitious and sophisticated series of animal stories which we liked less well. Perhaps it is a matter of taste, of whether you like your information straight or enjoy it mixed with fiction, but to us the stories are contrived and, especially in **Lavinia Bat**, the facts

'skip' from John Burningham's **skip trip**.



become muddles which are lost in the inventiveness of the story. Martin Baynton's illustrations are as good as any but only the occasional gleaming phrase reminds one of Russell Hoban at his best.

'84 titles: *Charlie Meadows* 0076 1, *Lavinia Bat* 0079 X, £3.50 each (24pp)

Ivor Cutler's *The Herbert Books* were not well liked by the children we tried them with. A visual representation of a small boy's fantasies they show Herbert as a chicken in one and an elephant in another. His mother accepts the change without question and provides appropriate food. Alfreda Bengé's almost surrealist style of illustration suits the nature of the story well but, in spite of the humour, the children found the stories pointless and the characters unattractive. Perhaps with a different group of children...

Herbert the Chicken 0088 5, *Herbert the Elephant* 0089 3, £3.95 (32pp). Two new titles in April.

David Lloyd's *Great Escapes* series is billed as an 'animal Canterbury Tales' and is inclined to be a little pretentious and to try too hard. Each volume tells the tale of one of the six animals in the gang. The idea is somewhat sentimental but often the quality of the writing just saves it. We liked the 'mouse-eating monster land' in *Mot the Mouse* and Barbara Firth's delicate illustrations make these books very attractive.

Jack the Dog 0170 9, *Lady Loudly the Goose* 0171 7, *Mot the Mouse* 0172 5, £3.95 each (32pp). Three new titles in March.

● Something special: The Hob Books

For librarians with long memories William Mayne's name is a warning sign. 'Be careful' it says 'that seductive and original style may not appeal to the children'. So we eyed the *Books of Hob Stories* doubtfully. Hob is a form of household tomtom or brownie; he protects his household from a variety of intruders who are personifications of household problems such as the Sad, Bad Temper, the Cough etc. Patrick Benson won the Mother Goose award for his lovely soft illustrations of Hob's shadowy world and his imaginative portrayal of his strange opponents. Once accustomed to the unusual style two bright 8/9 year olds found the books compulsive so it seems likely that librarians and teachers who take the trouble to introduce them to the right children will be rewarded by the reaction to their rare quality.

The Red Book 0120 2, *The Green Book* 0121 0, *The Yellow Book* 0122 9, *The Blue Book* 0123 7, £3.95 each (32pp)

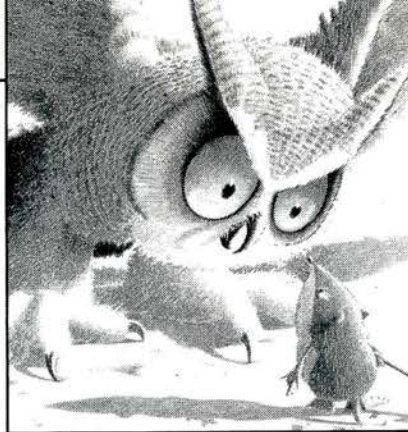
● Zebra Books

Zebra Books is the general title of a whole range of series which seem to be intended as an alternative to Ladybirds for young children. The price (75p) and format make the comparison inevitable so how far have they succeeded and with which areas of the market?

Parents buying or borrowing books usually expect a lot for their money and effort — hence the rather jam-packed approach of some cheap books for the young. Zebra Books, benefiting from the advice so wisely sought from the Pre-school Playgroups Association, have avoided this trap and most of the series have just the right amount of text, visual stimulus and things to talk about.

Something of their success may be gauged by their appearance as the basis for a range of pre-school computer software produced by Griffin.

Libraries in Hampshire are buying them with caution. It is easy to overdo things with a prolific new series and little books so beloved by children are sometimes seen as a nuisance by staff for their ability to slip behind the shelves and disappear into the bottom of kinderboxes. Consequently we are looking



Ephraim the owl and *Charlie Meadows*.

carefully to see which titles have the most appeal.

Obvious winners so far are the *First Maths* books with their charming green Monster who is very popular with the under-fives. Close inspection reveals that this Monster has real personality and a child-like approach to life. He eagerly joins *nine* slightly surprised looking ducks in the water and tackles with equal zest a *thick* hamburger and a *thin* slice of fruit tart. He is a bit nervous of *five* dogs and takes refuge up a tree and he definitely prefers the *low* diving board to the *high* one.

The series is by John Satchwell, ill. Katy Sleight. *Odd One Out* 0127 X, *Big and Little* 0128 8, *Shapes* 0129 6, *Counting* 0130 X.

Look and Say books are simple identification books intended to encourage speech in the very young. The words are printed in the pencil-line style familiar in infant schools so it may be that they have a use as pre-readers. The style and choice of objects reinforces this impression. Some of the objects are a little odd and old-fashioned looking but the device of an animal using each object gives these books a pleasing sense of continuity.

By Sue Tarsky, ill. Clive Scruton, *Cup and Bowl* 0026 5, *Apple and Pear* 0027 3, *Doll and Drum* 0028 1, *Table and Chair* 0029 X.

Time to Talk is another vocabulary building series. It succeeds by providing pictures of everyday situations such as playing and bathtime and adding questions and comments in a low key style which avoids the didactic approach often found in other 'talkabout' books. There is plenty of detail in the rather pale pastel coloured illustrations and it is pleasant to see a variety of sequencing and page layouts which help to keep the interest of child and parent.

Bathtime 0010 9, *Mealtime* 0011 7, *Shopping* 0012 5, *Playtime* 0013 3.

We found *Easy Learning* with its carefully contrived situations and poorly-drawn pictures less successful though still an acceptable addition to first concept books. Minor domestic incidents, finding and choosing a pair of socks and keeping quiet while a younger child sleeps are familiar to all brothers and sisters so perhaps the ideas are better than the finished products.

By David Lloyd, ill. Malcolm Livingstone *Coloured Socks* 0022 2, *Keeping Quiet* 0023 0, *High and Low* 0024 9, *How Many Fingers?* 0025 7.

Hide and Seek books are packed with interesting detail in a range of popular styles of illustration. The minimal text is occasionally irritating, particularly in *Farm Animals* but it provides a springboard for children to study the pictures closely and join in the game.

By Wendy Boase, *Farm Animals* 0018 4, *Country Animals* 0019 2, *Park Animals* 0020 6, *Woodland Animals* 0021 4, *Toyland*, ill. Elisa Trimby 0145 8, *Fairyland*, ill. Jenny Rodwell, 0146 6, *The Castle*, ill. Pauline King 0147 4, *The Circus*, ill. Deborah Ward 0148 2.

Extending Zebras a little further David Lloyd's *First Words* show great variety in length, style and complexity. They are designed 'to encourage an early awareness that the words in books are as much fun as

the pictures' but to do that needs a touch of genius lacking in some of them. The most successful are the simplest. *Duck and Cat and Dog* both have illustrations which exactly match the style and content of the imaginative text while the busy approach of *Bread and Cheese* and *Jack and Nelly* is less happy. *Bread and Cheese* does have the advantage though of a plethora of people and animals which would make it a useful addition to many book corners.

'84 titles: *Jack and Nelly*, ill. Clive Scruton 0141 5, *Hat*, ill. Gill Tomblin 0142 3, *Duck*, ill. Charlotte Voake 0143 1, *Bread and Cheese*, ill. Deborah Ward 0144 X, *Cat and Dog* Clive Scruton 0007 9.

The other story series in the Zebras range is *First Fairytales*. These are a considerable improvement on most of the low priced versions available. They were not much liked though by experienced storytellers who commented that children (and some adults) do not take kindly to traditional formulas being frilled up. In *Three Bears* the porridge is not just too hot but 'so hot it burnt her tongue' and the big chair was 'far too big for her and the cushion was horribly hard'. But such well-known stories are notoriously difficult to re-tell and these versions will be enjoyed by many parents and children. The illustrations are imaginative and well drawn in a good variety of styles and it is good to see that the choice of stories has been sensibly kept to those most suited to the very young.

Three Bears 0014 1, *Red Riding Hood* 0015 X, *Three Little Pigs* 0016 8, *Billy Goats Gruff* 0017 6.

It is too soon to tell how successful Zebras will be as a series. If they are to challenge Ladybirds successfully they will have to overcome what to some adult eyes may be the disadvantage that Ladybirds are nearly twice as long; Zebras use the standard 32 page format while Ladybirds still have an amazing 50 plus pages. Fortunately there are plenty of people who do not subscribe to the 'never mind the quality feel the width' view of life and certainly the parents to whom we showed the Zebra books were impressed by the range and quality.

● An Overall View

Walker Books in general are a welcome sight on library shelves and in boxes of new books. It is noticeable that of the forty or so books we examined and used with children only two were singled out as having poorly drawn pictures; even that was a mild comment and not one of the scathing remarks frequently made by librarians about new books.

There is one comment we would like the editors to take serious note of though. We hope that future titles will feature families from the ethnic minorities who are conspicuously absent, except as rare background figures, from the books inspected.

Apart from these few criticisms, we have come to expect of Walker Books, high quality production, consistently good and sometimes outstanding illustrations and very high editorial standards. We particularly like the fact that the author and illustrator are always named, showing a justifiable pride in good work.

There can be no doubt that Walker Books are an excellent addition to the children's publishing scene and we look forward with pleasure to future publications. ●

This feature was compiled by Mary Watkins, County Children's and Schools' Librarian; Lyn Baran, S.E. Divisional Children's Librarian and Lesley Crowthers, Family Library Link Librarian. All are on the staff of Hampshire County Library Service.

NB To all ISBNs quoted here you should add the Walker Books prefix, 0 7445.

May we recommend . . .

a series in which we feature writers and books we think you might like to know better.

For younger readers, **Tony Bradman** introduces

BOB GRAHAM

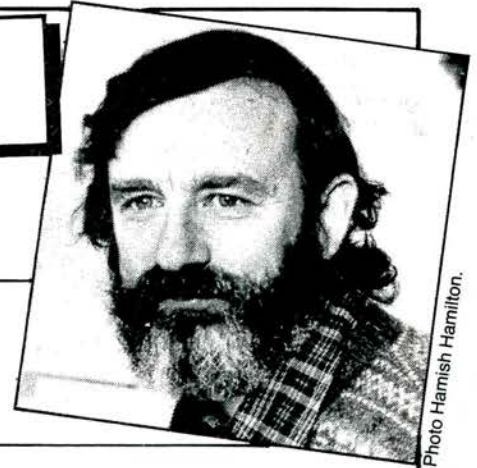


Photo Hamish Hamilton.

Theo is a small black dog of indeterminate breed. Theo lives with Sarah and her little baby brother, John.

Theo is very playful.

In Bob Graham's *Here Comes Theo*, in fact, this particular canine is so playful and friendly that he knocks Sarah over to give her 'the licking treatment'. Dog owners, especially owners of small, black and over-affectionate mongrel dogs will know exactly what the licking treatment consists of: a warm, rasping, red tongue slopping all over your face at a high rate of knots.

Such seemingly minor details form an essential part of the appeal of Bob Graham's work. It's the sort of closely observed, everyday part of life in a family house which draws young children in — and makes them laugh. In *Here Comes John*, a companion volume to the book which features the licking treatment, baby John crawls along the garden path and meets . . . a snail. He's saved from a fate worse than 'yeuch!' by Sarah's well timed intervention, and there will be many older brothers and sisters among the book's readers who will have had the same experience of stopping baby siblings from eating something nasty they've just found. Put this together with the sort of combination of words and pictures that make these books ideal for early reading and you've found a name well worth recommending.

Bob Graham is a softly spoken Australian who once lived in Manchester for a while. 'That was just after I got married. My wife Carolyn comes from London originally, and her parents still live in England.' Their first child, Naomi, was born while the couple were living in Manchester, and although

attention. *Pete and Roland* was published in hardback here a few years ago by Collins, and is now available as a Picture Lion paperback from Fontana. This touching little story of how Pete finds and looks after budgerigar Roland until the day Roland flies away comes, says Bob Graham, from an experience in his own family. *Jenny's Baby Brother* issued at the same time by Collins (and now also available in Picture Lions) has the same ring of truth about it. Jenny isn't very keen on her new baby brother until he does something remarkable — like splatting her in the eye with a perfectly aimed shot from his highchair.

Re-settled in Australia Bob Graham put his art school training to use and worked for a while for the government printing office in Sydney where he did what he describes as 'educational artwork'. 'But I had always

that's got something to do with the fact that he's always liked children's books — to the extent that they've come before other things in the Graham household.

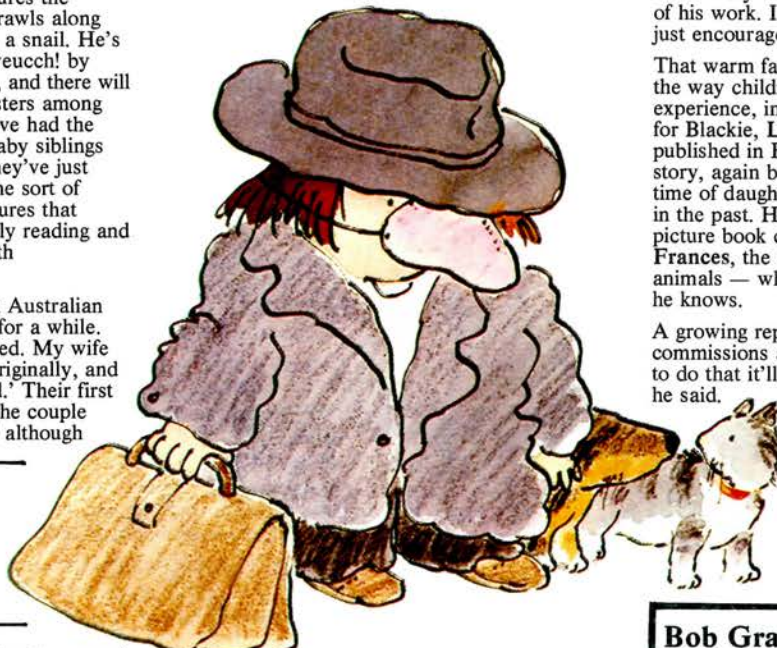
'My wife works in a bookshop, and we're lucky to have lots of books stacked up all around the house. Children's books, I think, are most important. Our kids at any rate always had books — they even had books before we had the telly! In fact they've even had books sometimes instead of, or before, other things.'

Family input still plays a large part in Bob's work even though his children are now well past the picture book stage. 'My kids are a captive audience, but they do give me a lot of constructive criticism. I show them my books and get lots of ideas from them. In fact Pete's very good on artwork — he draws very well himself, and I'm a great fan of his work. I try not to push him too much, just encourage him.'

That warm family feeling, and knowledge of the way children are, based on real parental experience, informs his latest picture book for Blackie, *Libby, Oscar and Me*, to be published in February. It's a dressing up story, again based on family experience, this time of daughter Naomi's dressing up games in the past. He's also working on a new picture book called *First There was Frances*, the story of a lady who collects animals — which again is based on someone he knows.

A growing reputation has led to lots of commissions and projects. 'I've got so much to do that it'll be no telly for me for a while', he said.

With books like Bob Graham's to share more adults and young children might feel like turning the set off for a while themselves. ●



'Tomorrow is Monday, a good day for my plastic nose.'

From *Libby, Oscar and Me*.

both of them wanted to try and make a go of life in the old country, harsh economic reality forced a return to the Antipodes. 'It just wasn't much fun living in a small flat without enough coins for the meter. But I do love the English countryside, and I'd really like to come and settle here.'

Down under, Bob and Carolyn have moved house 12 times in 14 years, finally settling in a house on top of a hill in the middle of a rain forest near Melbourne. Daughter Naomi is now 16 and her brother Peter 14. All of which may explain why Bob Graham's first large format picture book, *Pearl's Place*, was about moving house. Arthur, the hero of the story, lives in a block of flats with his mum where he's not allowed to keep pets. Then he discovers Pearl, who lives in an old rambling house which contains hundreds of budgerigars.

A budgerigar also features in the book which first brought Bob Graham's work to my

been interested in children's books, and one day when I was at home from work with an illness I decided to start one. That book eventually became *Pete and Roland*. From there he went from strength to strength. Several of his books have had foreign editions, most notably in countries such as France, Germany, Norway, Finland and America. In this country he is now published in hardback by Blackie and by Hamish Hamilton, for whom he did the Theo, John and Sarah books. There are now two more of those titles forthcoming: *Where is Sarah?* and *Bath Time for John*. In both of these the irrepressible Theo causes all sorts of havoc with a game of hide and seek, a toy frog who ends up missing a leg and Sarah's face — which gets the licking treatment once again.

Apart from appearing to be a little bemused at the success of his creations, Bob Graham looks like a very happy man indeed. Perhaps

Bob Graham's books

Pearl's Place

Blackie, 0 216 91487 6, £4.95;
Picture Lions, 0 00 662342 5, £1.25
(in February).

Pete and Roland

Picture Lions, 0 00 661880 4, £1.25

Jenny's Baby Brother

Picture Lions, 0 00 661881 2, £1.25

Libby, Oscar and Me

Blackie, 0 216 91674 7, £5.50

Here Comes Theo

Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11200 1, £3.95

Here Comes John

Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11199 4, £3.95

Where is Sarah?

Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11434 9, £2.95

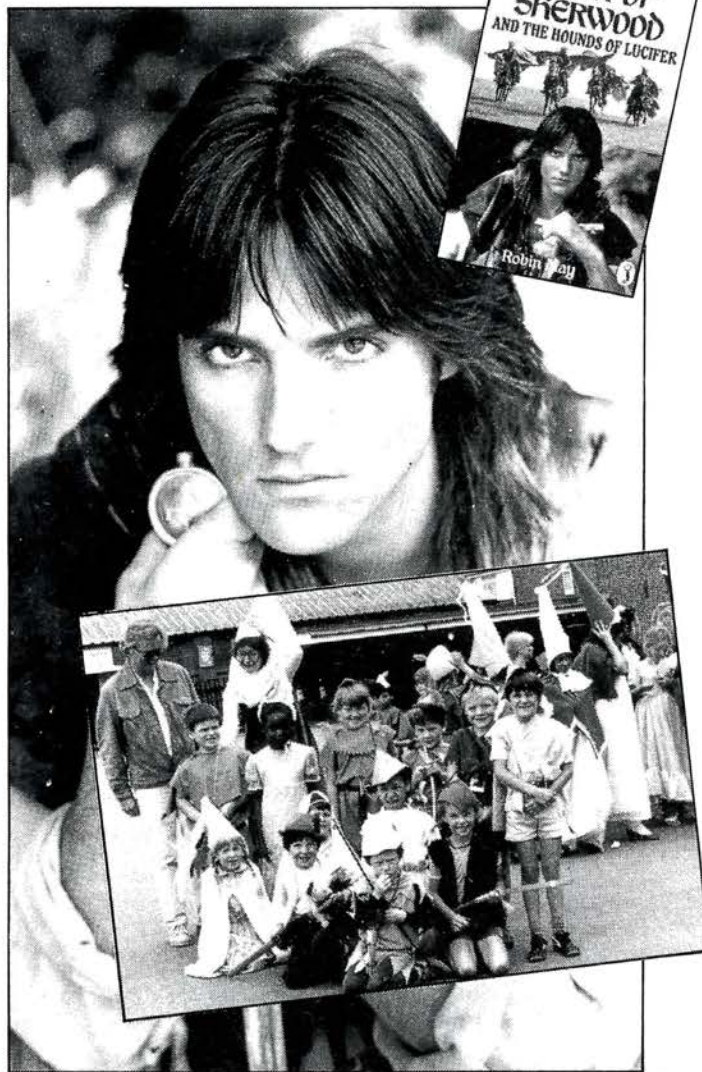
Bath Time for John

Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11433 0, £2.95

SOUND & VISION

The hugely popular **Robin of Sherwood** returns to television for a second series early in March.

Richard Carpenter, who wrote the series, shares some thoughts on Robin's enduring appeal.



Michael Praed as **Robin of Sherwood** (courtesy HTV/Goldcrest).

I'm ten years old, and belabouring a defenceless tree with a wooden sword. 'Have at thee, Sherriff!' I yell. Behind me are half a dozen school friends — all of whom flatly refused to be the Sherriff of Nottingham. They carry home-made swords and bows and arrows. We've been in the woods — I mean Sherwood Forest — all afternoon and the game is nearly over because it's tea-time. Anyway, Maid Marion — my best friend's younger sister — is bored and wants to go home.

What is it about Robin Hood that has such an appeal? I suspect it's because he's a rebel on the side of the under-dog and is free to do as he pleases. He cocks a snook at authority. Something we'd all like to do. He's as English as an oak-tree and as mysterious as Stone Henge. I've always wanted to write about him, and when I got the chance a couple of years ago, I felt just as excited as I did all those years ago when my friends said, 'All right, you can be Robin'.

Naturally I'm thrilled that the television series and the subsequent book of **Robin of Sherwood** have both been so successful but really how could they fail? Robin Hood is the greatest of all folk heroes, and it would be hard to go wrong with such a compelling character.

When I was researching the project I was puzzled that such a wonderful legend contains no magic. Nearly all folk tales have some element of the supernatural. So I felt that, particularly because of the current interest in sword, and sorcery, my version ought to be invested with something mysterious and occult. This is why Herne the Hunter, the strange horned god of pre-Christian England, came to be Robin's mentor and guide — and judging by the letters I've had, he seems to have caught the imagination of children who have seen and read my version.

I was fortunate to pay a visit to Lewisham Bridge Primary School recently and was thrilled to see the children's creative response to **Robin of Sherwood**. They had all drawn and painted Robin, Little John, Friar Tuck and the others. They were looking at pictures of armour, and castles. They were reading about what it was like — really like — to live in the days of the Angevin Empire, and Sandra, one of the teachers who had organised my visit, had got them to dress up as the characters. There was also a colourful array of shields which gave the whole affair a touch of heraldic splendour. History and legend had come alive.

It is amazing that such an English subject goes so well in America. I was in New York recently for the preview of the second series — to be screened here in March — and I was surprised to find how well-known the legend is in the States. Hard-nosed ad-men and TV executives came up to me with shining eyes and explained that Robin Hood had been part of their childhood too! It seems as if the appeal is universal and certainly Goldcrest and their American partners Showtime have plans to sell the series world-wide. It has been screened in Australia and Germany and in both places was a tremendous success.

My enthusiasm for 'Robin' remains unbounded and the thought of writing more stories, although in many ways a daunting prospect, continues to fire my imagination. We intend making thirteen more episodes next year and hopefully they too will be adapted. It's always been important to me that my scripts eventually form the basis of books.

While preparing the series I read as much as I could of the original Robin Hood ballads and tried to immerse myself in the background to the period. One of the most recent books on our hero is J.C. Holt's **Robin Hood** published by Thames and Hudson. Also M.H. Keen's **Outlaws of Medieval Legend** — Routledge and Kegan Paul. Professor Holt's book has a valuable bibliography should anyone wish to study the origins and development of Robin Hood.

I confess however that having read all I could, I then 'did my own thing'. The purist approach can be a dangerous strait-jacket to the writer of fiction and Robin Hood survives because of the inspiration the old tales have given story tellers through the centuries.

I believe that if writers hadn't re-told, re-interpreted, and added to the story — Sir Walter Scott, Peacock and Pierce Egan among others — I wouldn't have been whacking away at that tree when I was ten, and it's certain I'd never have written **Robin of Sherwood**.

Robin Hood

J.C. Holt, Thames and Hudson, 0 500 25081 2, £8.95; 0 500 27308 1, £4.50 pbk

Outlaws of Medieval Legend

M.H. Keen, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 0 7100 8682 2, £9.95

Robin of Sherwood

Richard Carpenter, Puffin, 0 14 03.1690 6, £1.25

Robin of Sherwood and the Hounds of Lucifer

Richard Carpenter and Robin May, Puffin, 0 14 03.1869 0, £1.75

Behind the Bike Sheds

Pat Triggs wonders if this is a new kind of television tie-in.



Behind the Bikesheds, Yorkshire Television.

If you had to bet on a handful of writers who might do something out of the usual run with a TV tie-in book, Jan Needle would surely be of the company. His book of the series *Behind the Bike Sheds* (Yorkshire TV, starts on all ITV networks on 8th January — 4.20 pm every Wednesday for nine episodes) is certainly different. By the time you read this you may already have seen the first episodes of the not-so-everyday story of Fulley Comprehensive, its (few) pupils and its (even fewer) staff. If you have you'll realise that this is, among other things, a mad, anarchic send-up of all school TV series from *Grange Hill* to *Fame*, augmented by the usual Needle assault on the wilder lunacies of what we fondly think of as our Education System. The book is an extension of this. From time to time it deliberately reminds you that what you are reading is the book of the TV series.

'We cut now to the gymnasium, thanks to the vision mixer, Llynos. It's the school hall

in fact, and also the classroom, where we've just come from. In between shots the scene shifters have removed the desks and put up the wall bars, that's all. Magic, eh? All the kids and the dancers are standing about in gym gear, waiting. Waiting for the horrible new Deputy Headmaster. Waiting for the sadist from the Acme Teacher's Agency.'

The director, Peter Tabern, bawls instructions from the gallery, the actors complain to the writer that they haven't had a good line for ages. In between, what passes for the plot progresses, the narrative accompanied by a stream of comments from the author to the reader in a style of language usually referred to in reviews as 'racy'.

Not content with pushing out the boundaries of a TV tie-in, the book itself is a spoof 'Choose-Your-Own-Adventure' story. You start with Chapter 23, followed by Chapter 73, and so on. There are 'choices':

'If you wish to fight the orcs, turn to Chapter 88. If you wish to visit the nit nurse, put your hand up and wait.'

Throughout, the book is liberally sprinkled with footnotes — all referenced to different pages so the reader has to hunt — which contain jokes, definitions, in-jokes about children's books, publishing, writing, Jan Needle etc.

Self-indulgent? Over the top? Silly? Genuinely innovative? A new cult book? Jane Nissoon, Jan Needle's editor at Methuen is prepared for almost any kind of critical response and confesses to not having any idea how teenagers will react. I enjoyed it, and would probably have enjoyed it even more if I'd seen more of the TV series. This may be the first tie-in to be just what it says — a book to be read *with* the television! And I think there is something here for teachers. If you want to encourage teenagers to think about questions like: what is a book? what is a story? how is reading different from watching TV? what is the relationship between a writer and a reader?, this book could well be doing just that. At which idea Jan Needle may well be making rude noises and being sick into a paper bag. (Did he think that at last he'd written a book that teachers couldn't use?) Whatever his intentions, this adventure in writing inevitably becomes an adventure in reading. Like Jane Nissoon I shall be watching what happens with interest.

Behind the Bike Sheds, Magnet, 0 416 51840 0, £1.50

Classics on Screen

Announced for March/April the premiere of an epic film version of E.M. Forster's *Passage to India*, directed by Sir David Lean and with a dazzling cast of actors: Alec Guinness, Peggy Ashcroft, James Fox, Nigel Havers, Judy Davis and Victor Bannerjee.

Starting on January 9th (BBC 2) a four part serial adaptation of Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns* — very readable, a useful recommendation for secondary readers, especially girls.

In Brief

Chosen for this year's Royal Film Premiere (February), *The Shooting Party*, based on Isabel Colegate's excellent and resonant story of a country house weekend before the first world war. Recommend to literate fifth and sixth formers. In Penguin.

Ragdoll Anna (YTV) returns for a second series in February. There is a Puffin tie-in, *Three Cheers for Ragdoll Anna*, by Jean Kenward, to coincide.

Everybody Here (Channel 4). A welcome and well-deserved repeat of Mike Rosen's excellent 10 part series with a multi-cultural slant. Starts Jan 12th. The book based on the series is still available from Bodley Head.

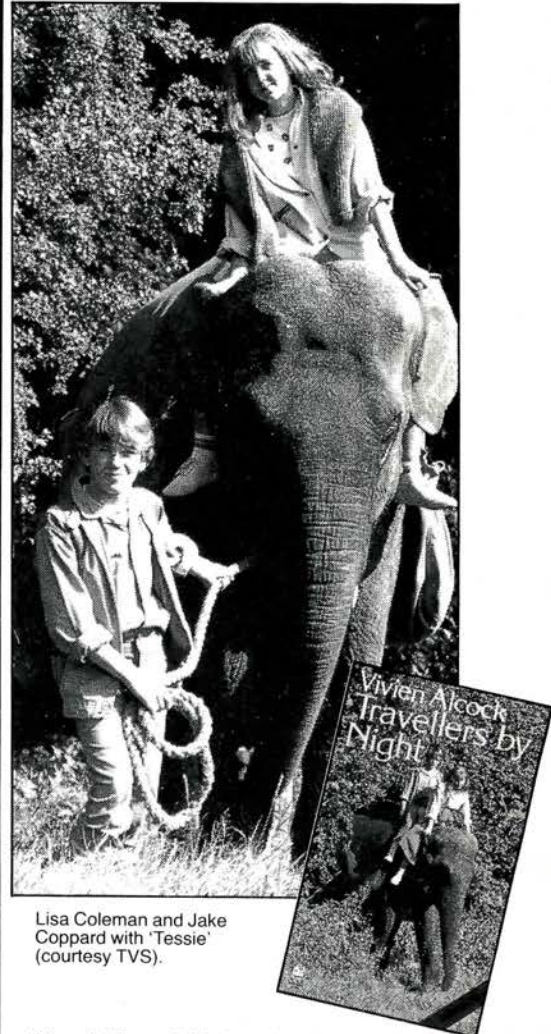
Emma and Grandpa (YTV). Another repeat series which started on Jan 2nd. Joy Whitby's four books which show Emma and Grandpa through the four seasons are available from Longmans.

Chocky. A Puffin Plus edition of John Wyndham's novel appears to coincide with the full-length film edited from the series shown early in 1984. A new series, *Chocky's Children*, is scheduled for the second week in January.

Who Sir? Me Sir? When he talked to BfK last year about *The Box of Delights* Paul Stone, Executive Producer for BBC Children's TV, revealed that his next project would be a TV version of K.M. Peyton's *Who Sir? Me Sir?* He was most enthusiastic about this school story in which a challenge between a comprehensive and an independent school has some amusing and surprising outcomes. The series may begin in February. Puffin tie-in of the OUP hardback is out this month.

Travellers By Night

If you were in the New Forest area last summer you might have been surprised by an elephant lumbering out between the trees. It would have been closely followed by a film crew and probably accompanied by two young actors, Lisa Coleman and Jake Coppard. They play Belle and Charlie, two children from a circus which is closing down, who decide to save Tessie, the old elephant, from the slaughterhouse by taking her secretly across the forest to a Safari Park where they hope she will be given a home.



Lisa Coleman and Jake Coppard with 'Tessie' (courtesy TVS).

The all film serial is based on the book by Vivien Alcock (Fontana Lions, 0 00 672383 7, £1.50) and captures the excitement and humour of the original: it's not easy to hide an elephant in an English forest, especially when you are being pursued by police and journalists.

The six part serial is scheduled to begin in the second week in February in a mid-week, tea-time slot.

Blockbusters. Bestsellers?

No need to add to the enormous publicity for *Gremlins* and *Ghostbusters*. Just in case you hadn't noticed there are several book tie-ins. Corgi has a 'novelisation' of *Gremlins* by George Gipe and a shorter B format, 'simplified for children' edition. Coronet has the novel version of *Ghostbusters* by Larry Milne. Each of these contains eight pages of still photographs from the film. Hippo has a Storybook version for younger readers heavily illustrated with coloured stills. *Ghostbusters* is by Ann Digby, *Gremlins* by Mary Carey, £2.50 each. *Gremlins* has a 15 certificate in the cinema; the Storybook is no substitute for those who can't get in — it's strong on nastiness and short on charm. ●

LIFELINE 3

Books for Sharing



David Bennett



Joan Barker

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 1984.

Part 4 offers 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.

The Snowman



RAYMOND BRIGGS

LOWER JUNIORS

The Snowman

Raymond Briggs, Puffin, 0 14 050.350 1, £1.75

A picture book without words which relates in subtle colours the story of a lonely child and a snowman who comes to life. Indoors all the ordinary equipment of the house becomes extraordinary through the eyes of the Snowman. The two have supper and then fly through the snowy evening to the sea. When they return the boy goes to bed and wakes in the morning to find that the Snowman has melted. Did it really happen? Was it a dream or just his imagination?

Although the organisation of sharing a picture book with a class of children can be a problem, this book is well worth the effort. The cost of four paperbacks wouldn't be wasted; librarians are often willing to supply multiple copies if you explain why you want them.) Because it has no text the book offers a wide range of language activities and provides a good introduction to the idea of 'reading' a picture to obtain information.

More to Read

Father Christmas, Raymond Briggs, Puffin, 0 14 050.125 8, £1.50

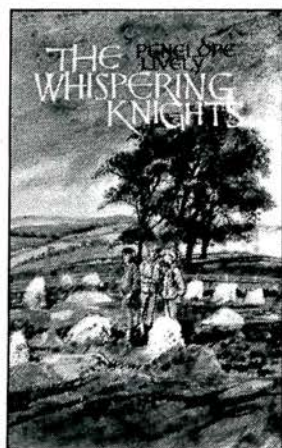
Father Christmas Goes on Holiday.

Raymond Briggs, Puffin, 0 14 050.187 8, £1.50

and you might like to show the film (or video) of *The Snowman* (Weston Woods).

Things to Do

1. Give a friend instructions how to build a snowman. Rehearse them and then try to write them down. Use the first three pages of the book to help you remember everything. Don't forget suitable clothing to wear.
2. The Snowman comes to life. Write or tape the dialogue between the boy and the Snowman when he first comes into the house, or his time in the kitchen or the playroom.
3. The Snowman's supper. Make and decorate a menu - not hot dogs but perhaps apple snow.
4. When the boy goes to bed after his journey to the sea, what does he dream about? Can you remember a dream that you have had? In small groups, tell each other your dreams.
5. Retell the story as if you were the Snowman.



MIDDLE JUNIORS

The Whispering Knights

Penelope Lively, Heinemann, 0 434 94891 8, £4.95

Three children, who live in an Oxfordshire village, concoct a magic brew in a barn which had once been a haunt of Morgan le Fay. Although they only partly believe the stories that are told, that half belief is enough to invoke her evil spirit and free it to work against the village. A motorway is to be constructed through the centre of the village and Morgan le Fay intends to make it an accident black spot. With the help of an old lady and an ancient Stone Circle, the children are able to frustrate her wicked plans.

Penelope Lively is a natural story teller with a gift for holding attention. These characters become real for children; the events are vivid, exciting but always believable. Guaranteed to succeed as a gripping adventure story and well worth a closer study.

More to Read

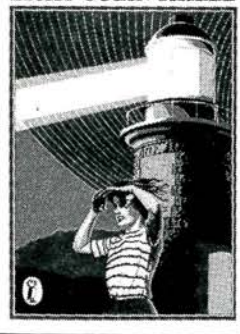
The Ghost of Thomas Kempe, Penelope Lively, Puffin, 0 14 03.1496 2, £1.25

Over Sea Under Stone, Susan Cooper, Puffin, 0 14 03.0362 6, £1.25

Things to Do

1. Make up spells, potions or curses. Tape record them with appropriate sound effects or music.
2. Chapter 2. Read from, "There was a pile of hay in the far corner." to "There was absolutely nothing there." Paint the creature that comes out of the hay.
3. The local newspaper is on the side of the villagers in their fight against the motorway. Produce the edition of the newspaper published after the news of the road has become general knowledge.
4. William and Susie thumb a lift from a lorry driver. In pairs act out the scene when he gets home and tells this to his wife. She questions him to find out all the details.
5. Chapter 10. "Miss Hepplewhite listened avidly to the whole story." Write the events of Chapter 9 as though you were Martha, Susie or William telling the story to Miss Hepplewhite.

THE HAMMERHEAD LIGHT COLIN THIELE



UPPER JUNIORS

The Hammerhead Light

Colin Thiele, Puffin.

The Hammerhead Light is a stone lighthouse standing like a great white monument on the headland in Snapper Bay, a remote area of Australia. It changes character with the weather and to the local people it symbolises safety and strength. The book tells the story of Tessa who is twelve and growing up in Snapper Bay, her friendship with an old man Axel and how both their lives are affected by an injured bird. It lends itself well to an exploration of emotional and social problems but there are also aspects of environmental and technological studies which are too good to miss and seem to occur very naturally. It offers lots of opportunities for art work and creative writing but as these are quite obvious I have concentrated on the other aspects of the book.

More to Read

Marianne Dreams, Catherine Storr, Puffin, 0 14 03.0209 3, £1.50

Goodnight Mr Tom, Michelle Magorian, Puffin, 0 14 03.1541 1, £1.50

Things to Do

1. "It would be better to put him away than let him starve to death". (p.16) Have any of the children had to have a pet put down? Discussion.
Act out the scene in fours where you and your mum and dad have to break the news to a younger brother or sister that a family pet has to be put down.
2. Use Chapter 3 to introduce a study of the properties of wood/aluminium/plastics. Collect and examine under a hand lens examples of each. Which material is best for which job? Investigate how man-made materials have taken over from natural materials.
3. "Her mother had . . . old men in lighthouses." (pp. 53, 54).
Discuss which of your habits your parents disapprove of. How do you convince them that these habits are not really wrong?
4. "... time to think her own thoughts". (p.77) Put your head on your arms, close your eyes and think your own thoughts for five minutes. Secretly and in disguised handwriting write them on a thought bubble. Distribute bubbles randomly and let each child try to pair the bubble with the person who wrote it.

SECONDARY



YEAR 1

The Eighteenth Emergency

Betsy Byars, Puffin, 0 14 03.0863 6, £1.10

It amazes me that there are teachers left who have not yet encountered Betsy Byars' work. This story of Benjie Fawley being hunted by bully Marv Hammerman on a point of honour is arguably one of her best. Mouse, as Benjie is known, and his friend Ezzie derive much comic pleasure from concocting improbable solutions to the even more improbable emergencies that might confront them in urban America. When Mouse, a compulsive and impulsive writer of graffiti, inscribes Hammerman's name under a picture of Neanderthal man there is a real-live emergency with no easy solution. In the end Mouse must face the consequences and the painful solution alone.

The serious issue of bullying and its causes and effects are dealt with in an entertaining and humorous way. It's the sort of book that tends to echo around for a long while and, despite its brevity, does challenge the reader to think long and hard.

More to Read

I'm plumping for my four favourites:

The Midnight Fox, Puffin,

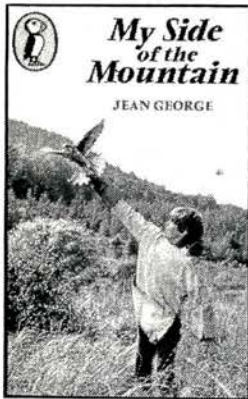
0 14 03.0844 X, £1.10, (another good class reader)

The Pinballs, Puffin, 0 14 03.1121 1, 95p**Things to Do**

1. Illustrate your favourite emergencies or graffiti sequences and think up some of your own to describe and draw.
2. Examine in story Mouse's ideas of "Smartness Potion", "liquid in the water to make kids behave" and "X-ray vision".
3. Drama. After the fight with Hammerman how did Mouse explain his bruises to his mother and what did his father decide to do?
4. Discuss how you rate Ezzie as a friend. What do you look for in friends and how far are you prepared to be a friend? Where does honour come into it?
5. How might Hammerman have described the fight to a friend and what might Peachie have had to say about this version? — Write the script or tape the conversation.

The House of Wings, Puffin,

0 14 03.0887 3, £1.25

The Night Swimmers, Puffin, 0 14 03.1409 1, £1.00

YEAR 2

My Side of the Mountain

Jean George, Puffin, 0 14 03.0363 4, £1.25

Back to earth after Grinny with a tale of the great outdoors — running away to live for a year in the Catskill Mountains.

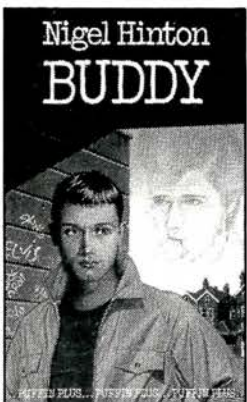
Sam Gribble's claustrophobia in his New York home is soon forgotten when he holes up in a tree on land formerly farmed by his grandfather and attempts to live off the bounty of the land like a latterday Thoreau. He fails at some things and at others he is miraculously successful but above all he is tenacious, not least in the training of Frightful, his duck-hawk, who is one of the co-stars of the book.

The idea of running away from it all is close to most hearts, but I am principally interested in its form and style, which break away from traditional beginning, middle and end narrative. Lots of incident and closely observed natural detail but it can move slowly so I recommend a brisk reading. No girl characters but I promise to rectify that in the next choice!

More to Read The author who is a naturalist and an authority on woodcrafting has also written

Julie of the Wolves, Puffin, 0 14 03.0832 6, £1.25**Things to Do**

1. Imagine running away from your home and holing up in a local beauty spot near you for two or three days. Write your own journal of events with diagrams like Sam Gribble's. Use the same structure if you can.
2. Instruction writing — how to light a fire using tinder; how to train a falcon etc. These could be presented both in list form and cartoon form.
3. Write a menu for the "Catskill Mountain Restaurant".
4. Drama! The scene in the Gribble flat when father has returned from visiting Sam and suggests that the family move up to join him.
5. Draw Sam's den in cross-section and label; similarly a map could be made of the Gribble farm land.



YEAR 3

Buddy

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

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

The crooks and the decaying house framework are necessary to give the book its pace and incident, but only serve as a backdrop to the characters and their dilemmas. Nigel Hinton has produced a tale which is at its best when exploring Buddy's rational and irrational fears and his relationships, especially with his dad, where love, hate and exasperation mingle, with love always rising to the surface.

Interesting to compare the parent/child relationship in *Nobody's Family is Going to Change* (shared in the first half of term) and later in *Your Friend, Rebecca* (see below).

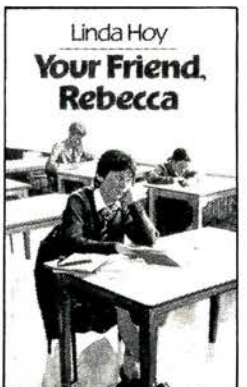
More to Read

Collision Course, Puffin, 0 14 03.1169 6, £1.35

Also by Nigel Hinton:

Things to Do

1. Write the estate agent's blurb for selling the house, 5b, Croxley Street, just as it stands. He will of course attempt to make it sound far more interesting to prospective buyers. (Chapter 11).
2. News reports of either the trial of Buddy's father or else the murder and suicide of Ralph's parents.
3. Collect the various references to Buddy's fear of the dark. Represent these graphically or poetically.
4. Buddy's dad says you "Gotta take a few risks" and in General Studies Buddy's class talk about crime. How do your class feel about these issues? Could they conduct a survey and present their results?
5. Mr. Normington's interview with Julius's parents and then his verbal report to the Head afterwards on his impressions of Mr. Clark and The Rybeeros.



YEARS 4/5

Your Friend Rebecca

Linda Hoy, Sparrow, 0 09 931280 8, £1.25

This is a first person narrative by the rebellious girl of the title, (the statutory male groans rapidly decrease after it has been introduced to a mixed class). Rebecca is a very strongly identifiable character for many young people, who are struck by her familiar predicament, her feelings of hopelessness and isolation and, I suppose, her justifiable bitterness.

Rebecca tries to solve her problems by visiting a Meeting House, where she eventually gains a more balanced impression of her dead, Quakerly mother. But it is through the more unexpected channels of a lunchtime drama workshop that she gradually increases her sense of self-esteem and acquires the confidence to face the future more positively. Through the improvisation of "King Lear" she begins to perceive parallels to her relationship with her drunken father and sees that she, not he, must change if they are to unite in their shared grief.

It may sound heavy but it was written with very appealing humour and flair and not a little ingenuity.

More to Read Another novel by Linda Hoy is: **The Damned**, Bodley Head, 0 370 30520 5, £4.50

Things to Do

1. Enlist the help of a Humanities teacher to explore the Quaker connection, although very capable pupils might be able to research it themselves. How is this aspect reflected in the title?
2. Write Rebecca's school-leaving reference and a selection of the notes in Miss Hoggit's dossier on Rebecca. These may have been collected from other teachers.
3. Imagine that it is a year after the novel ended. Record an interview with Rebecca and her father. Re-read the last page first.
4. Examine the "Lear" tie in, possibly working out some of the improvisations yourself before you read them in the book.
5. Try to construct a flow diagram which leads from the elements and events which contribute to the mutual isolation of Rebecca and her father, through to their final pact of solidarity.

A School Bookshop in the Third World?

Jane Goodwin writes about

THE BOTSWANA BOOKWORM

'That sounds a good idea, can you tell us a bit more about it?' We were at the PTA's AGM in late March 1983 and I was elated to find that both parents and staff were interested in the suggestion of running a school bookshop. Nothing unusual in that, you say. Well, the slight difference was that the school, Northside Primary School, is on the edge of the Kalahari Desert, in Gaborone, the tiny capital of Botswana. It is a private English medium school in which only about a third of the 500 pupils are first language English speakers. About half the children are Batswana, the rest coming from between 40 and 50 different countries. Gaborone has one main bookshop which, all things considered, carries quite a reasonable selection of books, but there still seemed to be a need for other opportunities for children to buy books, and the small committee which was formed immediately was lucky to have the backing, help and encouragement of the school head and staff.

The major problem in a country so far from the U.K. was actually getting hold of new books — they took months to arrive. We could have obtained them more quickly from South Africa (Botswana imports almost everything, including electricity, from the Republic) but books in South Africa are notoriously expensive — sometimes twice the U.K. price — so we preferred to wait and pay less. Meanwhile, we needed to catch and hold the interest of the children, so decided to buy and sell second hand books. The headmistress set the ball rolling by asking for gifts of books for the first session. The money made from these gave us a nice little float, which was augmented weekly by further buying and selling. Trade in both second hand books and comics was brisk for the first few weeks. We provided a rudimentary activity corner where book tokens could be designed and ran a weekly story session. A final date for the book token competition was set, each of the winners receiving a copy of their design to spend in the bookshop. Printing costs being high, we ran off the tokens on the school photocopier, folding the A4 paper into four afterwards. Although they were only in black and white, the book tokens proved quite effective and were frequently sold as birthday gifts.

Choosing the new books was particularly exciting as we had very few current catalogues. To have written to the U.K. for copies would have used two or three weeks of valuable time, so we began with what we knew. I went through my own children's book shelves, making a note of all the books they recommended. Most of the rest we did from memory, "What was the name of that book about the hen who went for a walk . . .?" and "Can you remember who publishes the little Paddington books?" (Paddington was being shown on T.V. just then). Finally we produced a list of about 400 books, for some of which we ordered duplicate copies.

Our friendly supplier sent off the list post haste to the U.K. but it seemed an eternity before any of them arrived. Everytime I had a free moment I would rush down to the airport where he had his "shop" in a tin hut, to check on progress. Eventually the first lot appeared, but before we could sell them we not only had to catalogue them but also to price each one. Our supplier allowed us 15% discount, two thirds of which we decided to pass on to the children. On top of those calculations, we had, of course, to convert from pounds to pulas. However, we managed to get it all done for the first opening after the half term break. The room was aedlam, and almost all our first load of about 200 books was sold immediately. My son and I quickly wrote out another order, hoping that in the meantime more of the first order would arrive.

At this stage I came across a publisher's representative who had just arrived in Botswana. She offered a 35% discount on the South African prices of all her firm's books. Unfortunately, most of their publications are hardbacks, but it seemed a good idea to order some for the forthcoming Open Evenings. When the first Open Evening arrived, we were besieged by parents and children desperate to buy the hardback reference books as well as new and second hand paperbacks. The queue at the cash desk



stretched across the stage and back again, the caretaker had to delay closing-up time and we sold about 250 new books together with an uncountable number of second hand ones. The next night was not quite so crowded but we still managed to sell another 100 new books. In fact, during the second day, I frantically scoured Gaborone for books to sell, since we were still awaiting the remainder of our first order. In desperation, our normal supplier very kindly arranged for me to select books from the shelves of the main town bookseller, passing on to us the whole of his own 10% discount.

By the time of the Open Evening we had worked out a regular system for cataloguing books and recording sales, had been given a loan by the PTA to pay for some bookshelves (to be made locally from SBA plans) had held a second competition and had held a Parents' Information Evening. At this event, parents were told about the aims of the bookshop and a little about the types of books suitable for different age groups. For the first term our bookshop (called, of course, the Bookworm) opened for an hour every Friday afternoon, manned by a variety of volunteer parents. This fitted in with the school timetable as children attend lessons only in the mornings, returning in the afternoons for a variety of voluntary activities. We also experimented with a Saturday morning opening, to accommodate working parents who wanted to come with their children. There were plans for further evening openings, especially before Christmas, when it was hoped to have a good selection of Christmas books available.

We probably had more problems in running a bookshop in Botswana than other people do in the U.K., but the rewards, of seeing children buying and enjoying a much wider selection of books than most of them had been used to make it well worthwhile. We still provided them with *Asterix*, *The Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew* (the current favourites) but gave them others to choose from as well. What children in Botswana now need are more books set in the country. We tried to order multi-cultural books for the Bookworm but many of these have little relevance to children in a land-locked, almost waterless Black African country.

I have now returned to the U.K. with my family but the Bookworm continues at Northside School and rumour has it that at least one of the other private primaries in Gaborone is following suit with its own bookshop. If only the same facilities could be made available to children in all the Botswana government schools.

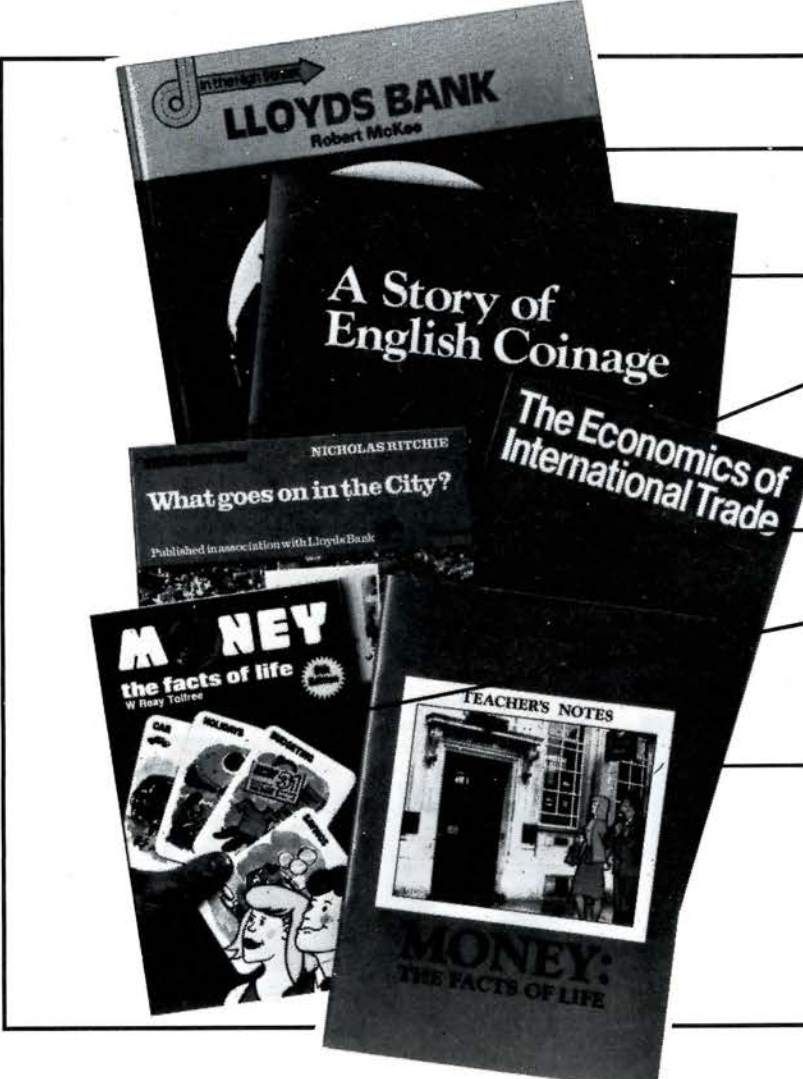
Unfortunately, this is just a pipe dream since few children in these schools could afford to buy new books. Unless, of course, anyone has any second hand books to pass on . . . ●

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Don't tax reading

The book world led by the National Book Committee has mounted a strong campaign against the imposition of VAT on books and journals in the next Budget. The 'Don't Tax Reading' slogan has appeared on posters and stickers and copies of the anti-VAT petition have been available for signing in book shops, libraries, schools, universities and polytechnics: but that was only the tip of the iceberg. A debate in the House of Lords, discussion and comment on radio and television, letters to newspapers — all took the campaign into the public domain. And behind all this has been persistent and determined lobbying of MP's and a continuous flow of information to the public about the implications of this possible change in legislation.

The Campaign pointed to the situation in other countries. Within the EEC, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Germany have only nominal rates of tax much lower than the standard rate and there are strong movements to get rid of VAT on books altogether. Italy has only a 2% tax. Ireland has removed VAT on books. The European Parliament showed that it viewed books as a special case in 1981 when it resolved that 'exclusively economic criteria should not apply to the book industry' because books are products 'which directly affect the interests of the citizen in the cultural, educational and information fields.'

In addition the Campaign focused attention on the vicious circle which would be the probable outcome of a 15% tax: lower sales and consequent shorter print runs would lead to even higher prices; this would mean fewer books in schools and libraries (even where VAT can be reclaimed) with an immediate effect on education at all levels from pre-school nurseries to advanced research and putting at risk our fine tradition of free public libraries; many small bookshops would go out of business; fewer books would be published and the first to be affected would be new writers and minority interests.

It is generally assumed that broad decisions about the content of the Budget will have been made by mid-January. The outcome may be 'leaked' or we may have to wait and see. If it is still in doubt the campaign will continue. (Remember Sir Keith Joseph changed his mind about financing students in Higher Education). So keep writing to your MP and to the newspapers and keep talking about it to anyone who will listen. It's important that everyone in the country — not just those in the book trade — understands what this will mean for all of us, our children and our future as a well-informed, reading society. It's a poor exchange for the very small amount of extra revenue the tax on knowledge would bring to the Treasury.



Competition

Write Your Own Storytrail

Cambridge University Press invite children to write their own Storytrail Adventure. Book prizes for winners and their teachers and a promise to publish the winning story. Entry forms should be arriving for Heads of English in secondary schools in early March. Teachers in Cambridgeshire who encouraged pupils to take part in a small scale pilot run on the competition last year were enthusiastic about how much the children learned and how much they enjoyed the activity.

For more details contact: Rosalind Horton, CUP, The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU.

Fontana Buys Dinosaur

The Fontana paperback division of Collins has acquired Dinosaur. Rosemary Sandberg, children's editor for Fontana, is delighted by this extension into non-fiction and will be announcing future plans before long. Althea will be retained as a consultant.

BOOK EVENTS IN '85

Readathon 1985

The first British Readathon held last year raised over £100,000 for Mencap. Schools and children all over the country entered enthusiastically into this sponsored reading event. This year Readathon 85 promises to be even bigger. The time fixed is early in the summer term and the charity chosen to benefit from all the reading is The World Wildlife Fund.

For details contact: Brough Gilling, Books for Students, 58-64 Berrington Road, Sydenham Estate, Leamington Spa CV31 1NB. Tel. 0926 29341.

AWARDS

Granpa wins Emil



The Kurt Maschler/Emil Award for a children's book 'in which text and illustration are both excellent and perfectly harmonious' has been won this year by **Granpa**, John Burningham's picture book description of a very special relationship between a little girl and her granpa which ends with his death. Frank Delany, one of the judges, said of the winning book, 'The pictures are entrancing in their mildness and travel gently to logic through illogical, almost inconsequential, little occurrences. The text is minimal, a word, a half sentence, a suggestion, and the effect is most moving.'

The other judges were Elaine Moss and Fiona Waters. Granpa is published by Cape (0 224 02279 2) £4.95.

Teenage Fiction Prize to Australia

The Young Observer Teenage Fiction Prize for 1984 has been awarded to Patricia Wrightson for **A Little Fear** (Hutchinson, 0 09 152710 4, £5.95). It tells of an old woman, Mrs Tucker, and her dog Hector, moving into and settling in the territory of a bad-tempered spirit, the Nijimbin, and the battle that ensues. Patricia Wrightson describes it as 'a small, intimate, almost personal story that I had to write.'

Leon Garfield, chairman of the judges who also included Malcolm Bradbury, Helen Cresswell and Sue Matthias (editor of the Young Observer), said of the book, 'It is not directed overtly at the teenage market but it explores ideas interesting to people developing into adults. Its magical and mysterious atmosphere, together with superb characterisation and subtle moral tone make it a work of great literary merit.'

Also commended were Robert Swindell's **Brother in the Land** (OUP 0 19 271491 0, £5.95) and Gene Kemp's **No Place Like** (Faber 0 571 13063 1, £4.95).

The Tir na N-Og Prize

This year's Anglo-Welsh Tir na N-Og Award for a book in English which has a Welsh theme or background has been won by **The Prize** by Irma Chilton (Barn Owl Press, 0 907117 29 5, £2.50 pbk).

Prize Winning Translator

Patricia Crampton has been awarded the triennial Astrid Lindgren award by the Federation Internationale des Traducteurs. The prize was made in recognition of the whole body of her work as a children's book translator.

Children's Book Week

Plans are already well underway for the annual October celebration of children's books. Locally events organised by teachers, librarians, booksellers and children's book groups always make a lively and colourful impact and are hugely enjoyed. This year the organising committee is hoping to make a big breakthrough in national publicity via an eight day train tour, carrying authors, illustrators and publishers on a whistle-stop tour of eighteen towns and cities.

For information about CBW contact Angela Toombs or Dorothy Wood, CBW, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ.

Edinburgh 2

The Children's Book Fair was one of the high spots of the First Edinburgh Book Fair/Literature Festival in 1983. A

repeat of that very successful event is planned for August/September this year and children's events will again play a big part. More later.

Cornwall 3

The third Cornwall Children's Book Fair will be held on Friday and Saturday, February 15th and 16th at Richard Lander School in Truro. As well as visits from Leila Berg, Nigel Hinton, Michael Hardcastle, Jan Needle, John Ryan, Pat Hutchins, Mike Rosen and Althea, the organisers promise folk music, buskers, exhibitions and displays, theatre, Punch and Judy, storytelling and, of course, a huge selection of books for sale. Sounds like an exciting time in store for schools and families in Cornwall.

Details from: Ann Jenkin, Camborne School, Cranberry Road, Camborne TR14 7PJ. Tel. Camborne 712280.