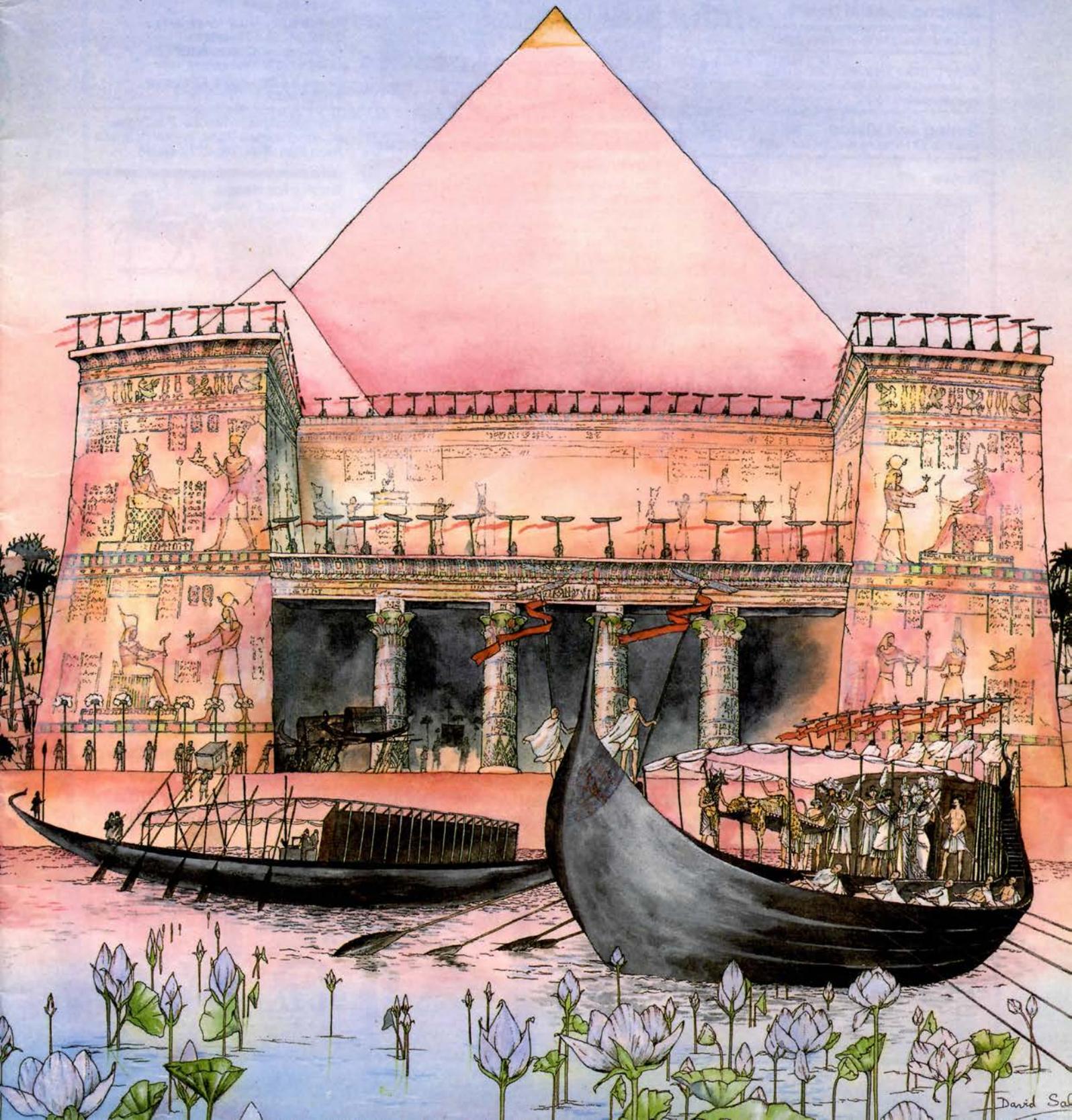


BOOKS FOR KEEPS

JULY 1985 No. 33
UK Price £1.05

Stories in School • Meeting Special Needs • Award Winners • Information Please



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Cover Story
The illustration on the cover of this issue of **Books for Keeps** shows the arrival of King Sahure's funeral procession at the pyramid at Abusir around 2473 BC. Reconstructed from archaeological evidence, this illustration by David Salariya and Shirley Willis is taken from **Ancient Egypt** by Rosalie and Antony E. David, published by Kingfisher in the History as Evidence series (0 86272 091 5, £3.95).

We are grateful to Kingfisher for help in using this illustration.
(See **Information Please**, pages 20-21)

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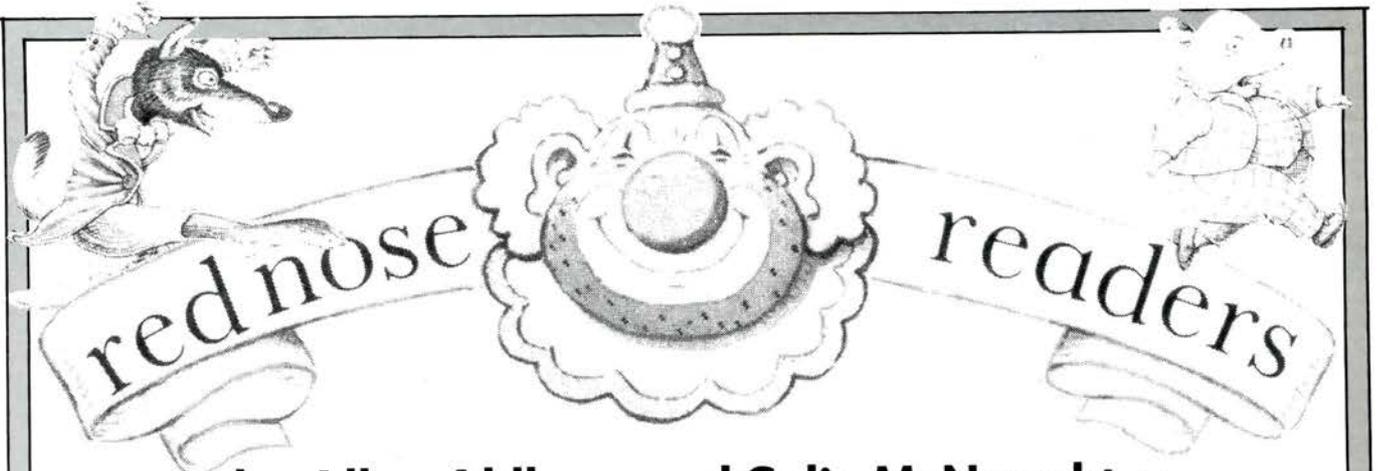
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EDITOR'S PAGE



Par

There's a lot packed into this issue of **Books for Keeps**, enough we hope to keep you busy through the summer. Certainly the Avon Fiction Survey got us thinking and talking; so much so that we wanted to share it with all our readers (page 4). How correct I wonder is Terry Downie's feeling that surveys held in other parts of the country would come up with similar results? Does the Avon experience reflect your own? There can never be too much talk about books. The end of a school year means perhaps a little more time to stand back and consider what we do. If you have any thoughts let us know.

There's also a neat – and unplanned – connection between our lead article and the Authorgraph. Nina Bawden, the Avon computer tells us, was the third most frequently mentioned writer in the survey, following Roald Dahl and Betsy Byars.

Special Needs

For some time we have been planning to feature books for and about children with special needs. Integration of special children into ordinary classrooms and the developing awareness of the value of book experience to even severely handicapped children means that teachers more than ever need information about suitable books and how to make use of them. Now, thanks to the Enid Blyton Trust, they can find that information and much more in the National Library for the Handicapped Child. Margaret Marshall, acknowledged expert on libraries and the handicapped, was a powerful moving force behind the setting up of the National Library and will act as a consultant as it develops. For this issue Margaret has made a special selection of story and information books about children with different kinds of handicap (see page 7 and 8).

Included in the list are several from the **Dinosaur Talk it Over** series including **I Can't hear Like You**, one of six titles which relaunch **Dinosaur** as part of Fontana. Rosemary Sandberg, editor of Fontana Lions, and now also managing editor of **Dinosaur Publications**, talked to us about the list.

'The original **Dinosaur**s have an informality and a directness that appeals very strongly and the honest, home-grown feel about the books makes them attractive even to people who don't habitually buy books. That all came from Althea's approach and we want to maintain that philosophy. But the design of the books needs developing for the 80s; I'm using artists with a looser more attractive style. As well as new titles we are re-illustrating several popular titles, like **Starting School** and **Going to the Doctor**, and updating the text.'

The new list has three main strands: the **Talk it Over** series, simple natural history and stories for the very young and for beginner readers. Althea Braithwaite, who created **Dinosaur** eighteen years ago, is now a consultant. Her current project is a book about premature babies in **Special Care Units**. Meanwhile Rosemary is commissioning stories. 'I want to inject more humour into the series; we need more funny books for sharing and beginning reading. The stories will be short, (24 pages), simple, direct and with no frills.' **Dinosaur**s will appear mainly in paperback (£1.25) but there will be a limited supply of hardback editions (£2.95) with librarians in mind.

Who's Won?

What children's librarians themselves had in mind recently were the annual Carnegie and Greenaway Awards. This year the identity

of the winners was a close-kept secret until the official announcement. Not even the publishers of the winning books knew which of the short listed titles would come out on top (see page 22).

One person particularly delighted at the librarians' choice of Errol le Cain as the Greenaway winner was Penny Sibson, in charge of Children's publicity at Faber. But her pleasure was not just at having another award-winning book to promote; this particular book, **Hiawatha's Childhood**, is dedicated by Errol le Cain to Penny Sibson.



In a world where publicity people are often on the move, Penny is a remarkably constant figure. Nice to see her hard work recognised in this way.

Margaret Mahy, Carnegie winner, heard the news from her publisher, Dent, by telephone at 3 am New Zealand time. She is only the fourth writer to win the medal twice. Her previous award two years ago was for **The Haunting**. She hopes to be able to come to England to receive the award at the YLG conference in September.

A New Partnership

Runner-up for the 1983 Mother Goose Award for Bodley Head's **Your Body** series, was Sarah Pooley. This lively, talented young artist has a new collaborator, Tom Johnston, head of Lower School Science in a comprehensive school. Together with Rona Selby, their editor at Bodley Head, they have been working on a six book series on science, **Let's Imagine**. The first two titles **Water** (see page 21) and **Colour** (see page 20) have the mark of a good team working closely together; a welcome feature when so many information books look as if they have been assembled by a badly programmed robot, or a committee that never met. This impression was confirmed when I spoke to Tom Johnston whose first venture into writing this is. 'I wanted the books to have a proper integrated science approach – physics, chemistry and biology all in together – to mix fact and experiment and to be as open ended as possible. When I first started I wrote it thinking about how I would teach rather than the way it would read.'

Rona Selby was good at making suggestions about how what I wanted could be done in book form. She read my text and passed it to Sarah who worked out ideas for illustrations, did sketches and then passed it back to me.

We talked a lot over the phone and sometimes we managed to sit down together to work at it. It would have been much quicker to have collaborated more like that; but with Sarah in London and me teaching it was difficult. Sarah is responsible for all the jokes, it's very much her sense of humour that appears in the bubbles. It was my job to check the science content!'

The series title is from an Einstein quotation. Budding Einsteins (7-14) should find the books interesting and accessible and teachers, too, will find ideas for primary/middle science.

Not Such a Wizard

From science to fantasy (there's everything in this issue) and the new Walt Disney production film based on L. Frank Baum's stories of **Oz** (see page 24).

All the trappings of late twentieth century hype often prompt thoughts of the original authors 'turning in their graves'. Though born in 1856, it is unlikely that Lyman Frank Baum would feel at all put out by film version, tie-ins or spin-offs. He got involved in projects in the theatre, in newspapers, and had a go at selling and marketing the family's axle grease – all before he had his first children's book published when he was past 40. The only problem was all his projects ended in financial disaster. Even after the super success of the **Oz** stories he faced bankruptcy as he put **Oz** on stage, made film versions in his own studio in the infant Hollywood, engaged in disastrous business deals and tried unsuccessfully to get recognition for his other works.

After his death, in 1919, other writers produced **Oz** stories but none with the particular quality of the fourteen by L. Frank Baum.

Book News

What else to note as the holidays approach? After my comments on their small size in **May BfK**, it's good to hear that Magnet will have bigger picture paperbacks this year. Their first could hardly be more starry – Anthony Browne's **Gorilla**. Tony Bradman, who writes regularly for **BfK** has just had his first book published. **So You Want to Have a Baby?** (Julia MacRae, 0 86203 212 1, £3.95 pbk) should find a place in Secondary Schools libraries and on many social science and life skills courses. It's a very open, human and readable book written from the heart and from first hand experience!

Anyone striving to fulfil Sir Keith's directive about ensuring children understand the economic basis of a free society might be interested in two books just out. **Summer Business** by Charles E. Martin (Julia MacRae, 0 86203 210 5, £5.25) was first published in the USA and is dedicated to 'small business persons (under twelve) wherever they may be.' It shows a gang of small entrepreneurs making money from (ripping off?) the summer tourists who visit their island. In contrast **Union Farm**, published by the Labour Research Department (0 900 508 779, £1.95) and apparently written by a committee shows how the animals of Glowmore Farm unite against evil, exploitative Mr Moneybags, and by striking win better pay and conditions. Take your pick. I wouldn't take either of them. Instead I'd urge you to read **Booktalk** a collection of occasional writing on literature and children by Aidan Chambers (Bodley Head, 0 370 30858 1, £5.95). Some previously published work but much of it new and as ever thoughtful and thought provoking. Book talk is good talk. Which is where we came in.

Happy Holidays.

Teachers, Children & Books

Terry Downie reports on a recent survey of fiction in Avon's primary and secondary schools

In January, all Avon Junior/Primary and Secondary schools received a bright green A3 form asking 'Which fiction works well with your 9-14 pupils?'. By the end of February, nearly 30% of schools in each sector had responded – a good return, so I am told. Perhaps the stunning colour (our printer's choice) contributed to this. Columns on the form were headed:

Author	Title	Pupil Age	Method of use (read to class, read with class, small group reading, individual reading)	Any comments on activities and materials used with book
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The first three items were processed by computer using the Quest program so that I have printouts listed by author, title, Primary, Secondary and total mentions and by youngest/oldest reading of any book. I make no claim to have statistically viable results – and not all entries were processed for various reasons: Quest couldn't handle all the data; I didn't expect to see the book mentioned more than a couple of times; the teacher couldn't remember the author/title or I'd never heard of the book; I got bored with entering Roald Dahl titles. So the printouts don't show some things of interest. For example, at Primary level, there's considerable enthusiasm for myth, legend and folk-tale, a sprinkling of 'classics' – **Treasure Island**, **Just-so Stories**, **The Wind in the Willows** – and more than one

instance of teachers reading aloud from Enid Blyton, Willard Price and reading scheme books. Given time, I hope to make a more thorough analysis. However, the results as they stand make an interesting description of our teaching practice and of children's experience of reading in the Junior/Secondary classroom. I suspect that the other 70% of Avon schools or a response from another authority would show much the same pattern.

What books and when

Of the top 40 titles (See Top of the Class tables) many are fine books. Over half are fantasy. Three-quarters are by British authors. About a third are by women. A handful have strong central female characters. Two books could be described as having a multi-ethnic perspective. All are in paperback; in fact, the only hardback mentioned at all was Dahl's **The Witches**. There are seven Dahl titles in the top 40 and, in the whole survey, he is mentioned over four times as often as any other author (11 titles) with Byars coming second (9 titles) and Bawden third (8 titles). There is one 1984 paperback in the top 40 and six books first published over 25 years ago (see Table 3).

What about the also-rans? Outside the Top 40, there is one mention each for **The Crane** and **Slake's Limbo** (Primary) and for **The Outsiders** and **Summer of My German Soldier** (Secondary). **Jacob Two-Two and the Hooded Fang** is listed twice (Primary) and **Tuck Everlasting** twice (Secondary). Three Primary teachers use **Conrad, the Factory-Made Boy**; four Secondary teachers use **Bridge to Terabithia**. There are thirty records for Dick King-Smith titles and two mentions of picture books, **Where the Wilds Things Are** and **Father Christmas**, both at Primary level.

Probably no-one will be particularly surprised by the titles mentioned most frequently or by the overlap of reading between Primary and Secondary. Perhaps the youngest/oldest ages for some books (see Table 2) will raise a few eyebrows. (I'm glad that some teachers gave me information outside the 9-14 range I specified.) Who would deny that there is much in **Danny** and in **Charlotte's Web** that can be enjoyed by a 7 year-old and by a 12 year-old? After a pause for thought, perhaps, wouldn't we agree that many 10 year-olds are concerned about the possibilities and effects of nuclear war so that a reading of **Z for Zachariah** (presumably edited? I don't know) may be appropriate for top Juniors as well as CSE candidates. One of the five Primary teachers who listed **Walkabout** explained that although it 'might appear "too old", it was used as part of a project on Explorers and a lot of discussion came out of it.' Survival, identity, relationships between individuals and between cultures – aren't these preoccupations of any age group, which can be explored and illuminated in 'the secondary world' of fiction? I wouldn't be surprised if stories from **The Goalkeeper's Revenge** are read to children younger than 8 and I know 16 year-olds who still ask for **Spit Nolan**, having heard and read it many times before. And why not? Those of us who have the reading habit and had it in childhood know that tasting and skipping, grasping what you can at the time, immersing oneself and revisiting are all part of the pleasure. Is this why we abridge **The Silver Sword** and read it quickly to 7 year-olds as an adventure story, use it again with 10 year-olds in a project on the Second World War and ask 13 year-olds to study it for half a term and write about the character and development of Jan? What, though, happens to the book and to the children when we do?

Why these?

What are the reasons for this pattern of use and what are the implications? To start with why do so many of us choose the same books and these particular ones? Perhaps we have in mind the Schools Council's question: 'Is this book one we can imagine a responsible teacher justly recommending to pupils at a certain stage of development on the ground that they are likely to take from it some imaginative experience valuable to them at their own level, over and above the mere practice of reading skills?' (**Children and their Books**, 1977) Or do our reasons look more like this? Mine often have.

Top of the Class

TABLE 1

The top 40 titles overall, in order of popularity:

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, C. S. Lewis
Danny, the Champion of the World, Roald Dahl
The Silver Sword, Ian Serraillier
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Roald Dahl
Stig of the Dump, Clive King
The Iron Man, Ted Hughes
The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler, Gene Kemp
Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH, Robert C. O'Brien
The Hobbit, J. R. R. Tolkien
I am David, Anne Holm
Charlotte's Web, E. B. White
The Eighteenth Emergency, Betsy Byars
George's Marvellous Medicine, Roald Dahl
The Twits, Roald Dahl
The BFG, Roald Dahl
Supergran, Forrest Wilson
James and the Giant Peach, Roald Dahl
Goodnight Mister Tom, Michelle Magorian
The Battle of Bubble and Squeak, Philippa Pearce
Fantastic Mr Fox, Roald Dahl
The 101 Dalmatians, Dodie Smith
The Shrinking of Treehorn, Florence Parry Heide
Walkabout, James Vance Marshall
The Ghost of Thomas Kempe, Penelope Lively
The Machine Gunners, Robert Westall
The Goalkeeper's Revenge, Bill Naughton
Grinny, Nicholas Fisk
The Fib, George Layton
Smith, Leon Garfield
The Midnight Fox, Betsy Byars
Flat Stanley, Jeff Brown
Carrie's War, Nina Bawden
Tom's Midnight Garden, Philippa Pearce
Gowie Corby Plays Chicken, Gene Kemp
Bottersniks and Gumbles, S. A. Wakefield
Z for Zachariah, Robert C. O'Brien
The Worst Witch, Jill Murphy
Daggie Dogfoot, Dick King-Smith
The Arthur Books, Alan Coren
A Dog So Small, Philippa Pearce

The 20 most popular books at Primary level:

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
Danny, the Champion of the World
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
The Silver Sword
The Iron Man
Stig of the Dump
Charlotte's Web
The Hobbit
George's Marvellous Medicine
I am David
The Twits
The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler
The BFG
Supergran
James and the Giant Peach
Mrs Frisby and Rats of NIMH
The Eighteenth Emergency
Fantastic Mr Fox
The Battle of Bubble and Squeak
The 101 Dalmatians

Books, mentioned by quite a few Primaries, which are also read in 25-50% of Secondaries:

Goodnight Mister Tom
The Goalkeeper's Revenge
Grinny **The Ghost of Thomas Kempe**
The Fib **Carrie's War**

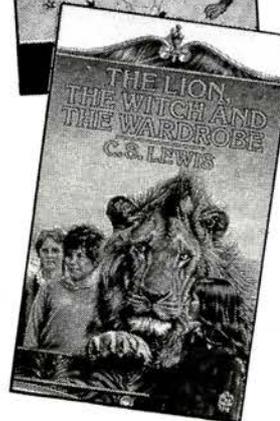
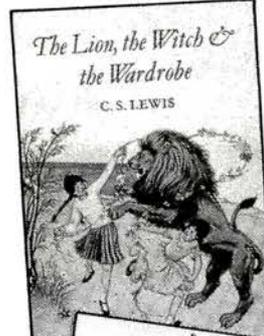
The 11 most popular books at Secondary level:

Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH
The Machine Gunners
The Eighteenth Emergency
Walkabout
The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler
Z for Zachariah
Goodnight Mister Tom
Smith
The Ghost of Thomas Kempe
Carrie's War
Fireweed, Jill Paton Walsh

Books, mentioned by Secondaries, which are also read in 25-50% of Primaries:

The Silver Sword
Stig of the Dump
Danny, the Champion of the World
I am David

I like it/they'll like it/the last class did
 They ought to like it
 It's different from/very like the last book
 It fits in with the work we're doing
 You can do a lot of work on it
 It's a good example of . . . (genre, style, theme, etc.)
 I know how to read it/use it
 I've always used it
 It's been televised/filmed
 It's nice and short/long
 I don't/they won't like the alternatives
 It's the only one left in the cupboard



	Youngest	Oldest
Z for Zachariah	10	15
Dragon in the Garden, Reginald Maddock	10	15
Kes, Barry Hines	9	16
Walkabout	9	14
Smith	9	14
Run for Your Life, David Linc	9	14
Pinballs, Betsy Byars	9	14
Goodnight Mister Tom	9	14
The Machine Gunners	9	14
Fireweed	9	14
Elidor, Alan Garner	9	14
The Ghost of Thomas Kempe	9	13
The Midnight Fox	9	13
Grinny	9	13
The Runaways, Victor Canning	8	14
Gowie Corby Plays Chicken	8	14
Nothing to be Afraid Of, Jan Mark	8	14
Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH	8	13
The Goalkeeper's Revenge	8	13
The Fib	8	13
I am David	8	13
Carrie's War	8	13
The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler	8	12
Stig of the Dump	8	12
The Eighteenth Emergency	8	12
The Wolves of Willoughby Chase, Joan Aiken	7	13
The Silver Sword	7	13
Danny, the Champion of the World	7	12
Charlotte's Web	7	12
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	6	12

Date of first publication of Top 40 titles	
Before 1960	6
1960-1970	11
1971-1975	10
1976-1980	9
Since 1980	4

Does the fact that nearly two-thirds of the books were published over ten years ago bear out Rosemary Sandberg's observation that it takes that long for teachers to find out about a book? That may be the case, especially if we take into account the time it takes for word to get around that it 'works well'.

Those good books which are scarcely mentioned – how did teachers come across them? Did someone go on a course/read a review/talk with colleagues from another school? Are books like *The Crane* and *Jacob Two-Two*, writers like Christine Nostlinger and Natalie Babbitt, on their way up the charts? (Some of them have waited a long time if they are.) Certainly the word about Dick King-Smith is spreading fast through Avon's Primary schools; part of that may be because he lives locally and is a frequent visitor to schools.

Any why so few picture books? The case for sharing picture books with older children has been well made for several years: training and in-service courses must have introduced large numbers of teachers to the delights, the sophistications and the value of books like *Granpa* and *Would You Rather . . .*, *The Church Mice*, *Anno's Journey*, *Gorilla*, and *A Walk in the Park*, *Outside Over There*, *Fungus the Bogeyman*, *Not Now Bernard* and *I Hate My Teddy Bear*. They are being read to and by children in this age range. Perhaps the teachers who filled in my form didn't think of them as significant reading experiences or considered them not appropriate to a survey of fiction.

There are signs in the survey results of teachers 'colonising' books – authors and sequels which children might well be allowed to devour independently or by their own choice. To read aloud more than one of *The Dark is Rising* or the *Narnia* series must be to deny some children this pleasure – and surely precludes introducing them to other, better books which they might not meet on their own? I can sympathise with the desire to stick to a recipe for success that must lie behind all the Dahl reading, but it must be questioned for the same reasons. Are all his books of such value that we want to endorse them by reading them aloud? I'd defend anyone's right and need to read rubbish and happily slump into my own brands of undemanding fiction in the sun or in the bath but why choose to read cliched, flawed, formula books aloud to children?

The Missing Books

Where are all the other good books? Where are the more recent books? Where are the hardbacks? What about African, Asian, Australian, Caribbean, Canadian writers in English? Surely we need books by Buchi Emecheta, Patricia Wrightson, C. Everard Palmer . . . What about authors in translation?

How hard are we looking for powerful, positive books which genuinely offer some valuable 'imaginative experience' wherever and whenever they are set? I note that the following titles, some of which provide strong images to counter stereotyping of all kinds, are missing from the survey: *Nobody's Family is Going to Change*, *The Butty Boy*, *Homecoming*, *Handles*, *Thimbles*, *A Question of Courage*, *Welcome Home*, *Jellybean*, *The Broken Saddle*, *Philip Hall Likes Me*, *I Reckon Maybe*, *The Peacock Garden*, *A Strong and Willing Girl*, *The Practical Princess and Other Liberating Tales*, *The Village by the Sea*. Open a review journal, read a recommended list and you immediately meet acclaim and enthusiasm for these books and others like them. Maybe they're in the schools but teachers aren't yet sure if they 'work well'?

I think there are three factors which shape the pattern of reading revealed by the survey

Increasing the Pool of Knowledge

The first is the extent of our knowledge of books. We need a commit-

ment to increasing our pooled awareness of what is available and worthwhile. Every teacher does not need to read every review and every new book, but by load-sharing we should be able to keep abreast of the best fiction. It doesn't take long to scan a couple of review journals and note recommended titles for our age range, nor to make a half-termly trip to library, bookshop or school library service to get hold of the most likely-sounding of those titles. How long does it take to skim an average-length children's book? Share the reading of ten books among even a small school or department, devise a comment sheet or simply exchange views over coffee, narrow down the field to maybe five books to consider in more depth – and you have a painless, even pleasurable increase in expertise which is even more valuable if acquired by schools working together. Advisors, Reading Centres, local branches of NATE can set this up but so can individual teachers. One of the rewarding outcomes of the survey has been to put teachers who have expressed a desire to exchange information in touch with each other.

Spending Money, Reading Books

The second factor is finance, an obvious constraint, but what needs looking at is not just how much money there is but how it is spent and this links closely with the third factor – the ways in which we use books in the classroom.

Popular belief would have it that Primary classes are read to from single copies by their teachers and that Secondary pupils have a copy each to follow while the teacher reads and to take away for reading or writing homework. The survey bears out this pattern, by and large. I have to ask why, if only single copies are needed, there aren't more titles, more recent books, more hardbacks. And why do older children each need a copy? Is 'gather round' reading really impossible at 11+ except for the odd short story and should this sharing experience of narrative be lost? Are there always valid reasons to exploit books for homework tasks? Clearly, a school which invests in sets of 35 will be reluctant to abandon the use of those books. I question whether such money is well spent.

Individual reading is common to both sectors; some teachers sent interesting accounts of how this is recorded but I would like to know more about the circumstances in which it takes place, the time given to it, the teacher's intervention in selecting books and guiding children's choice and, again, what space is made for sharing of the experience. How widespread is Primary allotment of as much as two half-hour private reading sessions each day and do Secondary teachers know which of their pupils have been used to this? How fruitful can one 35-minutes-a-week library or bookbox lesson be for Secondary classes and how many English teachers, whose instinct is to spend three or five lessons a week or a whole fortnight or a whole half-term reading to, with or alongside their classes, feel threatened by the perceived demands of other areas of the English curriculum? Two Secondary schools, with whole school silent reading for pupils and staff in tutorial time, are described in the ILEA's English Centre booklet on fiction; are other schools trying this?

Most interestingly, there is evidence from both sectors in the survey of small group reading. In financial terms this makes sense. Given an average paperback price of £1.50, the Primary teacher can buy a set of four books for £6.00, or two titles for £12.00. For £60, a Secondary year can be resourced with 5 copies each of eight titles. Many Primary classrooms have built-in flexibility so that short sets can be used by small groups alongside other types of work. English Departments can offer a greater range of books. Both sectors can admit to misjudgement at low cost, by re-allocating short sets to another age group or by spreading minority-taste books to shelves and boxes. This may happen annually and why not? In my experience, it's more worthwhile than flogging dead books or splitting well-embalmed sets to fill bookbox spaces.

● Doing Things with Books

But the crux of the matter is what we do with the books, or expect children to do. The last column of the form, inviting 'comments on activities and materials' gave insufficient space for some teachers who, I'm delighted to say, sent letters, topic webs, booklets and invitations to visit their schools to discuss and examine resources. I was also delighted to see from a few terse statements that 'we read it just for fun'. More of this, I hope. Earlier, I described some of the pleasures of reading. Here are some more. The grip of having to know what happens, the deliberate slowing-down because you don't want it to end, and the after-glow of joy and sadness when the world of the book and your own world separate. Are the sexual parallels

unapt? For most of us, as adults, reading is a private experience whereas for our pupils it's a public one. We have the knowledge and they don't as yet. I don't expect to hand over much of my knowledge or experience but I'd hope to use them to give children room to develop their own. How?

The activities shown in Table 4 are various, typical, valuable and not all easily identifiable as Primary or Secondary. Most of them came from Primary schools, in fact, but discussion of sex-stereotyping or conservation, the creation of book jackets or character sketches, the examination of war novels or metaphor are part of some children's classroom experience at 9 and at 14.

In some schools, mainly Primary, close attention is being given to texts through activities such as prediction, cloze, sequencing and labelling (DARTS - Directed Activities in Relation to Texts). Sometimes this is shared by the whole class, often it's small group work. Teachers in both sectors make books serve topics and topics serve books. Modelling activities can be illuminating for the whole age range - flow diagrams of plot using colour to mark crisis points, visual representations of relationships, pie charts to show the relative importance of characters. These activities are accessible to young children and demand the same close knowledge and discernment as essays do of A-level students.

Most of us want reading to be enjoyable, discerning, confident, independent, central. For this to happen, good books must be around children and children must be around good books. I'm going to peg my concluding remarks to the title of a talk Margaret Spencer recently gave for Avon teachers - **The Child's Grasp of The Book; The Book's Grasp of The Child**. We must seek out books which exert a real grasp and create an environment which allows them to do so. Some books work privately on their readers; others encourage the voicing of responses. We should be more ready to give books their own space, to leave them alone with the child at times. And when active responses are made, we should be alert to whether the outcomes we devise do a service to book and reader, or not.

I think we can develop the child's grasp of the book in two ways. We must have the confidence to stand back and let children explore books in small groups so that they can make their own experience, not constantly have to measure up to ours. And we must also know what important things there are to be grasped in each book and how to enable children to discover them and so become owners of the books they read. ●

Terry Downie is the English Editor at Avon's Resources for Learning Development Unit (RLDU) which instigated and analysed the survey. Terry invites comments and contributions from readers' own experiences in this area. Contact her at Avon RLDU, Bishop Road, Bristol BS7 8LS.

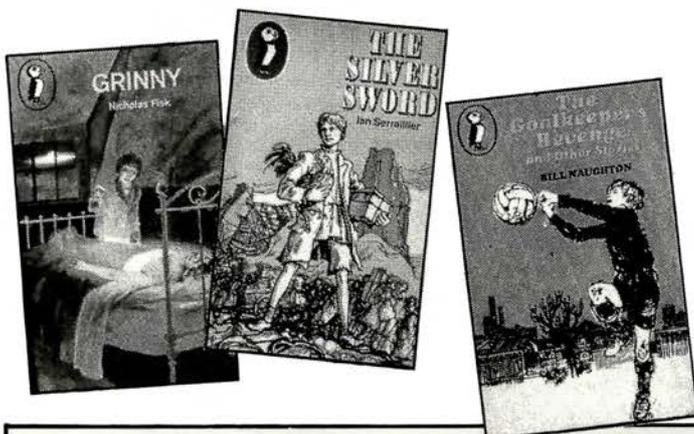


TABLE 4
Things Done with Books

DARTS and Writing

prediction, cloze, alternative endings, sequencing, poems, stories, plays, discursive, characters, personal, reviews, diaries, newspaper articles

'Topics'

conservation, pollution, India, sea, growth, flight, China, USA, Romans, pirates, soil, animals, survival, crime and police, Australia, city life, 20th century, minibeasts, World War II, Stone Age

Language

adjectives, homonyms, puns, idioms, metaphor

Talk and Drama

discussion of moral/social/ethical issues, sex stereotyping, family, personal fears, dreams, animal rights, empathy, taping

Modelling

strip cartoons, friezes, illustrations, storyboards, book jackets, posters, maps, craft - construction

Specific Books

Walkabout - explorers topic
Dahl - creative writing
Lavelle/Cleary - non-soppy girls
Run for Your Life - with new class
Fireweed, The Machine Gunners, The Silver Sword - comparative study
The Weirdstone - British, Nordic folklore, D and D boys
The Owl Service - Mabinogion

MEETING SPECIAL NEEDS

There are about 100,000 handicapped children in the United Kingdom. Out of every 100 children born 2 have a severe handicap and 8 are handicapped to a lesser degree. They have special needs; they also have abilities which can and must be developed so that they can take their place in and contribute to society in general. Many are now learning alongside children in ordinary schools. Books are as important for the special child as for the non-handicapped; but knowledge and information about what is suitable and available is not widespread, especially among those new to handicapped children.

Which is why 30th April 1985 is a date to celebrate.

Margaret Marshall writes about the opening of The National Library for the Handicapped Child

A social worker phoned me to ask for advice about books for a nine year old, mentally handicapped, hyperactive boy in his care. The grandmother of a four year old blind, deaf and mentally handicapped girl wanted to know where she could get tactile books. A teacher of hearing impaired secondary school aged children asked about information books in simple language with clear pictures.

Many parents, teachers and paramedical professionals, plus librarians and handicapped children have said, 'I wish there was one place where we could get information about books to suit the special need.' That wish is now reality. The National Library for the Handicapped Child, sub-titled The Blyton Handi-Read Centre was opened by Susan Hampshire on 30th April, in the presence of Tony Newton, Minister, Bob Dunne MP and Jack Ashley MP, plus many other VIPs from the worlds of books, education, librarianship and the voluntary sector concerned with handicap.

The library is sponsored by the charity, The Enid Blyton Trust for Children, whose chairman is Enid Blyton's daughter Imogen Smallwood. With Beverley Mathias as Librarian and Julie Braithwaite as assistant and myself as Consultant, the library offers a reference library and information service to anyone who needs help in identifying books appropriate to the handicapped child whose disability affects reading.

Two examples of the success of the library occurred on the opening day when an eleven year old partially sighted girl discovered the large print edition of *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13¾*, and a teacher of mentally handicapped children found an excellent simple book on airports. The girl literally jumped for joy and the teacher, though more restrained, was very pleased.

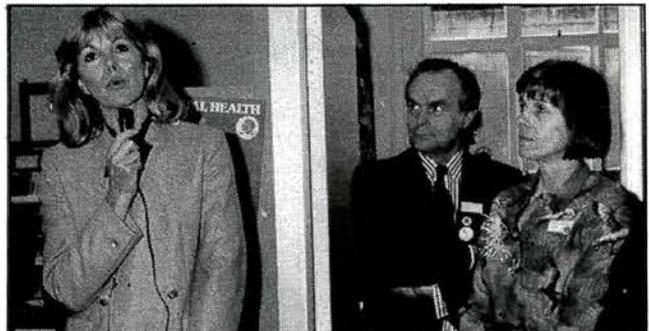
The stock contains books and audio-visual items, carefully selected according to criteria for format, layout, content and intended reader, with particular attention to typesize and page layout, clarity of illustration, vocabulary and sentence structure. There are ordinary children's books, fiction and non-fiction that fit the criteria and there are specially produced books for children with partial sight, mental handicap, hearing impairment or other conditions that affect reading. Yellow Terrapin Reska shelving provides an attractive setting and there is special audio-visual equipment, eg television, micro-computer, video, tape-slide for use with the software which will gradually be acquired. Shelf labelling is in print, braille and pictograph.

Visitors and enquirers by post or telephone are welcome and groups can be accommodated by prior arrangement, as can meetings and workshops.



The stock is in the process of being computer catalogued in great detail with many variables so that specific printouts can be obtained to meet enquirers' needs. The logo seen above is not only for the Blyton Handi-Read Centre but can also be seen on those books specially produced for children with a handicap that affects reading, for example the Chivers Press large print editions of six children's books including Philippa Pearce's *Bubble and Squeak* and Enid Blyton's *Five on a Treasure Island*. Two titles from Collins also have the logo, *Jane Telephones Her Friends* and *Jane Shops at the Supermarket*, both intended for mentally handicapped teenage readers but also useful for deaf and reading retarded older children. The logo is copyright to the Enid Blyton Trust for Children. The library is the result of years of requests for such a service and of the vision and funds raised by the Trust. As the continuance of the library depends on charitable giving, all contributions will be gratefully received, by Imogen Smallwood care of the library address. ●

The National Library for the Handicapped Child is at Lynton House, Tavistock Square, London WC1 (Tel: 01-387 7016). The library is open Monday to Friday from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm.



Susan Hampshire with Jim Ogilvie and Imogen Smallwood of the Trust, at the opening of the Blyton Handi-Read Centre.



Margaret Marshall with Jack Ashley MP (centre) and her husband Ronald McDonald at the same opening.

Books and Bibliographies

Libraries and the Handicapped Child

Margaret Marshall, Gower (1981), 0 233 97299 4, £8.95

The most comprehensive and definitive consideration of handicapped children and libraries.

See All Say All:

A selection of books for the language deprived child

Chosen by Margaret Marshall, IBBY (1985), 0 9508315 15, £1.50

Available from Margaret Marshall, 6a Harmer Green Lane, Digswell, Welwyn, Herts AL6 0AD. (Please enclose large sae.)

Books for the Mentally Handicapped:

A guide to selection

IFLA (1983), 90 70916 01 0, £2.50

A discussion document on the criteria needed in books for mentally handicapped people and in library services for them. Available from Margaret Marshall.

Seeing Clear:

Books and materials suitable for the partially sighted child

SLA (1985), 0 900641 45 2, £3.00

Jane Shops at the Supermarket

0 00 184419 9

Jane Telephones Her Friends

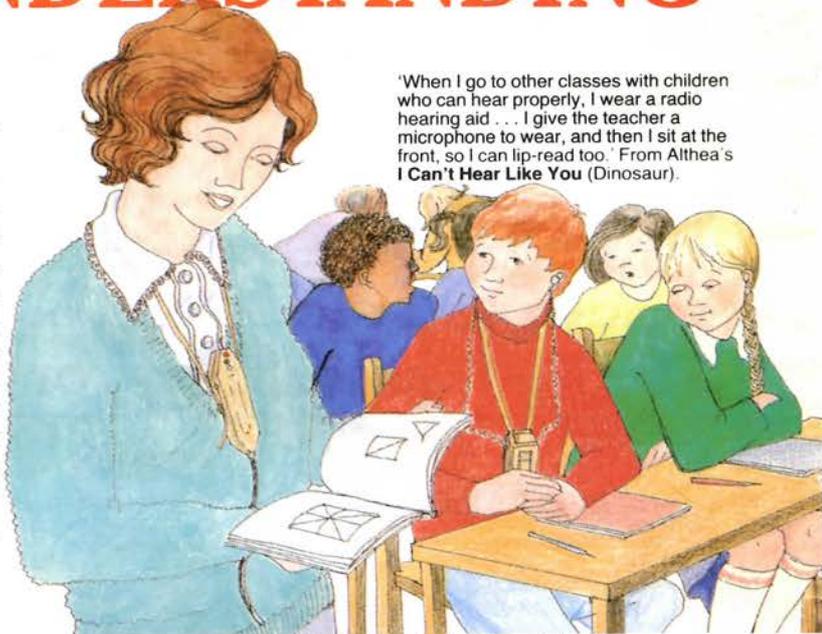
0 00 184418 0

Collins (1985), £2.50 each

The first two titles in a new series, Books for the Handicapped, consultant editor Margaret Marshall.

WAYS INTO UNDERSTANDING

The handicapped child is an ordinary child who may need special help in some things including reading books and library use. But the 'ordinary' child who is not handicapped in the usual sense is handicapped by society's view of disability. This selection of books *about* a handicapped child offers the view that the handicapped child is a normal person with a particular need. Through fiction and non-fiction these books present an awareness of the problems of handicap while indicating that the child plays a part in society and shares the joys and sorrows, fears and hopes common to all children. They provide an all too rare opportunity for the handicapped children to find themselves in books and for 'ordinary' children to develop empathy and understanding.



'When I go to other classes with children who can hear properly, I wear a radio hearing aid . . . I give the teacher a microphone to wear, and then I sit at the front, so I can lip-read too.' From Althea's **I Can't Hear Like You** (Dinosaur).

I Can't Talk Like You

Althea, ill. Isabel Pearce
Dinosaur (1982), 0 85122 344 4, £1.25 pbk
0 85122 345 1, £2.95 hbk

One in the extensive Talk it Over series intended to provide opportunities for adults and children to discuss what they know and feel about different things and situations.

The titles dealing with handicap are first person accounts of a child's experience and contain useful information and explanation about the nature of particular handicaps as well as showing the child's feelings and point of view. This title, produced with the help of the Association for all Speech Impaired Children, deals with a child who has difficulty with speech and remembering things. (32pp 5-10)

(See also **I Have Asthma**, **I Use a Wheelchair**, **I Have Diabetes**, **I Wear a Hearing Aid**, **I Have Epilepsy** and **I Can't Hear Like You**, out this month in paperback only.)

Rachel

Elizabeth Fanshawe, ill. Michael Charlton
Bodley Head (1975), 0 370 10783 7, £3.50

One of the first of the Bodley Head series of small full colour picture books designed to encourage understanding and integration of children with special needs. Here Rachel is seen living a life very like that of her friends; and at home and at school we see her playing, learning, helping. The only difference is that Rachel is in a wheelchair. (32pp 5-8)

Other titles in the same series:

The Boy Who Couldn't Hear

Freddy Bloom, ill. Michael Charlton
(1977), 0 370 01811 7, £3.25

Children's reactions to Mark, born profoundly deaf. (32pp 5-8)

Ben

Victoria Shennan, ill. Michael Charlton
(1980), 0 370 30300 8, £3.25

Shows Ben who has Down's Syndrome enjoying what other children enjoy with the help of his understanding family, friends and teachers. (32pp 5-8)

Suzy

Elizabeth Chapman, ill. Margery Gill
(1981), 0 370 30375 X, £3.95

In slightly larger format and with text set in large print. Suzy who is partially-sighted gets involved in lots of different activities. (32pp 5-8)

Mike

Margaret Marshall, ill. Lorraine Spiro
(1983), 0 370 30934 0, £3.95

Also in the larger format. Mike, who is about nine, and his family are anxious about his bed-wetting. Problems, aids, attitudes and possible solutions are included. (32pp 7-12)

'Karen begins by rolling Gareth back and forth. She encourages him to use his hands and feet, and teaches him to balance himself.' From **My Special Playgroup** by Pamela Dowling (Hamish Hamilton).





from **Tim Walks** by Rachel Anderson.

Anna

Margaret Wadhams, ill. Michael Charlton (1985), 0 370 30612 0, £5.95 (October 1985)
Deals (in slightly larger format again) with children suffering abnormal skin conditions. Anna has eczema and Mandy has psoriasis. (32pp 7-12)

My Special Playgroup

Pamela Dowling,
photography Angela Lloyd-Thomas
Hamish Hamilton (1985), 0 241 11534 5,
£3.95

An account in colour photographs and short text of a playgroup where handicapped and non-handicapped children play and learn together. (32pp 5+)

Claire and Emma

Diana Peter
A & C Black (1976), 0 7136 1631 8, £3.95

One of a series of books using colour photographs to illustrate children living and coping with different handicaps.

Claire and Emma, two deaf children, are seen enjoying life, using hearing aids and lip reading, while behaving like other girls. (24pp 6-10)

In the same series:

Janet at School

Paul White
(1978), 0 7136 1821 3, £3.95

Born with spina bifida Janet spends much of her life in a wheelchair but she takes a full part in school life and learning. (24pp 6-10)

Don't Forget Tom

Hanne Larsen
(1974), 0 7316 1483 8, £3.95

A day in the life of Tom who is mentally handicapped. (24pp 6+)

Sally Can't See

Palle Petersen
(1976), 0 7136 1661 X, £3.95

A day with Sally who is blind but can do a great many things. (24pp 6+)

Tim Walks

Rachel Anderson
CIO Publishing (1985), 0 7151 0422 5, £1.65

The story of 12 year old mentally handicapped Tim who learns how to walk to school instead of travelling on the special school bus. (28pp 8-14)

The Four of Us

Elisabeth Beresford
Hutchinson (1981), 0 09 144760 7, £4.95

Three children, one of whom is mentally handicapped, and a delightfully anti-ageist old man help to save the pier and theatre in their seaside town. (110pp 8-12)

Buttons: the dog who was more than a friend

Linda Yeatman, ill. Sir Hugh Casson
Piccadilly Press (1985), 0 946826 95 1, £4.95

The story of a puppy living with profoundly deaf Philip and his family, tells of getting lost, being taken to an animal shelter and

finally being trained as a Hearing Dog for the deaf. A surprise ending will satisfy the reader's emotions and need for information. Some of the proceeds of the sales of this book go to training a Hearing Dog. (53pp 8-10)

Alexander in Trouble

Susan Burke
Bodley Head Acorn series (1979),
0 370 30143 9, £3.50

The only difference between Alexander and the other boys is that he is in a wheelchair. Otherwise he goes to the same school and gets into the same sort of trouble. Six funny stories from Australia. (62pp 9-12)



From **Mark's Wheelchair Adventures**.

Mark's Wheelchair Adventures

Camilla Jessel
Methuen (1975), 0 416 86190 8, £4.50

Mark moves to a new area and the children there eventually make friends after doubts about his disability, spina bifida, and his wheelchair. Illustrated throughout with Camilla Jessel's perceptive photographs. (64pp 9-14)

What Difference Does it Make, Danny?

Helen Young, ill. Quentin Blake
Deutsch (1980), 0 233 97248 X, £4.95
Fontana Lions, 0 00 672219 9, £1.00

Danny is an ordinary boy, but one who has epilepsy. Banned from swimming by the new sports teacher Danny retaliates by being naughty until an event causes the adults to realise that he must be treated like anyone else. Information about epilepsy is woven into the story very effectively. (93pp 9-14)



Miss Pringle coping with Danny's fit, from **What Difference Does it Make, Danny?**

Welcome Home Jellybean

Marlene Fanta Shyer
Collins Cascades, 0 00 330018 8, £1.65

The story of an institutionalised mentally handicapped girl brought home to live with her parents and brother. Sensitively and amusingly seen through the eyes of the brother. (12+)

Let the Balloon Go

Ivan Southall
Puffin, 0 14 03.0513 0, 95p

Twelve year old John has cerebral palsy and resents being treated like a baby. His family learn to give him freedom. (112pp 9-14)

Head Over Heels

Hamish Hamilton (1979), op

After teenaged Terry becomes a quadriplegic in a road accident he and his family and friends come to terms with the problems and opportunities. (186pp 12+)

I Can Jump Puddles

Alan Marshall
Puffin (1974), 0 14 03.1651 5, £1.50

Autobiography of a polio victim who overcame both the disability and other people's attitudes to him. (128pp 13+)

What About Me?

Colby Rodowsky
Franklin Watts (1977), op

A teenage girl is jealous of all the attention needed by her brother who has Down's Syndrome. Her cry for help is the theme of the novel. (136pp 13+)

Sweet Frannie

Susan Sallis
Heinemann (1981), 0 434 96165 5, £4.95
Puffin (1983), 0 14 03.1570 5, £1.25

Teenage Fran goes to live in a residential home for paraplegic people. Her insistence in maintaining her independence in the face of being institutionalised and her efforts to bring hope to a despairing boy there make a strong and readable story. (13+)

The October Child

Eleanor Spence
OUP (1976), op

A novel about an Australian family coming to terms with the behaviour of Baby Carland and his subsequent growing up into childhood where all are affected by his autism. (13+)●

Title selections for this feature by Margaret Marshall.

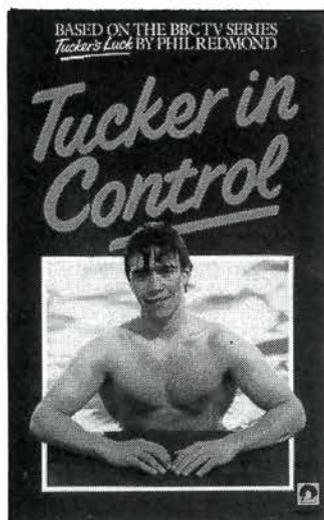
Books currently out of print should be available in libraries.

For more information on books about and featuring handicapped children:

Count Me In, YLG Publications No 23, 1981, £1.00 inc. p&p.

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

SOUND & VISION



TUCKER'S BACK

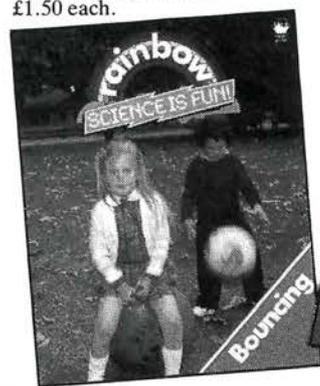
A new series of **Tucker's Luck** is back on BBC TV in the autumn. A novel by Jan Needle based on the Phil Redmond scripts will be published in September by Magnet. **Tucker in Control** shows Tucker facing up to family responsibilities when Dad runs out on Mum, coping with bureaucracy as he tries to get a place at college and keep his job on the black economy. Maturity is changing Tucker but he hasn't lost his gift of the gab or his eye for the girls.

Rainbow Spin-offs

Thames Magnet have a new **Science is Fun** series for Infants written by Charles Warren, producer of the popular Thames TV series, **Rainbow**. George, Zippy and Bungle explore basic scientific concepts in everyday surroundings. Full colour.

Titles so far:

Bouncing 0 423 01230 4
Floating 0 423 01240 1
Shadows 0 423 01250 9
£1.50 each.



Weston Woods Videos

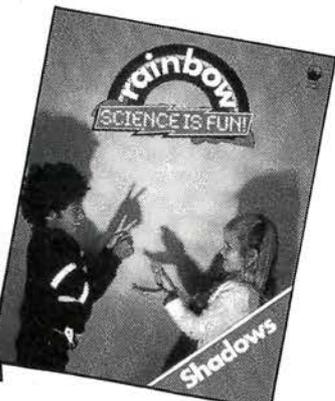
Weston Woods films (animated, iconographic and live action) of children's books are now available on video cassette (VHS and Betamax), and the first titles include several of those recently shown on the Thames TV programme Flicks.

Most sell at £20 (plus VAT) regardless of length – six minutes of Ezra Jack Keats' **The Snowy Day** or fourteen minutes of **Teeny Tiny and the Witch Woman**. Best value of all is 26 minutes of Briggs' **The Snowman** for £25 (plus VAT) now released for 'educational use' to schools, libraries and colleges. Eight titles are currently available, with eight more coming this autumn including **Changes, Changes, The Three Robbers** and Sendak's **Really Rosie** (£25 for 26 minutes).

For catalogue and details of sale or rental: Weston Woods, 14 Friday Street, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1AH, or telephone (0491) 577033.

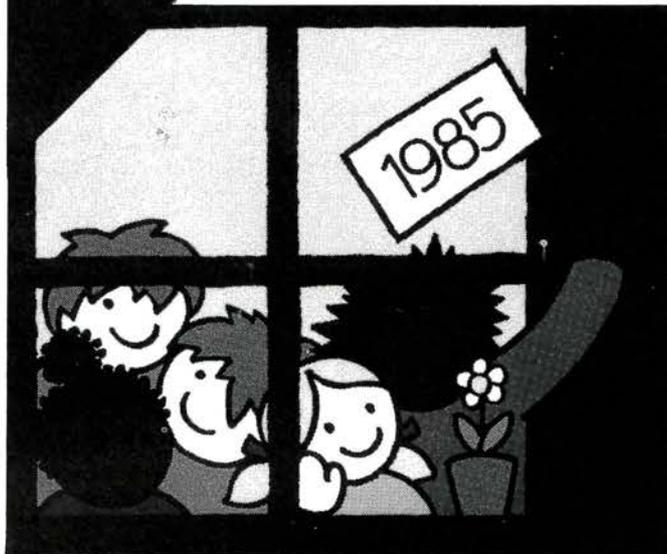
Adrian Mole on TV

The Mole bandwagon rolls on. Stage musical, records – now you can look forward to the spotty youth in a TV series for Thames. He's also breaking into computer software in an 'interactive fiction programme' in which the player is Adrian writing his diary and trying to become popular. Mosaic Publishing which specialises in book-related software has already had a lot of success with an Erik the Viking game based on the Jones/Foreman saga and expects Mole to do as well if not better. ●



BOOKS FOR KEEPS NEWS

CHILDREN'S BOOKS OF THE YEAR 1985



After a year's absence CBY returns to the National Book League in Wandsworth in August. An exhibition of over 250 books, chosen by Julia Eccleshare from children's books published between April 1984 and March 1985, opens on August 2nd and continues until the 10th (including Saturday and Sunday). The setting for the exhibition will have a seaside theme complete with beach, Punch and Judy Show, deckchairs, fishing nets, crabs and lobsters. Special visitors to the exhibition include Janni Howker and Rod Campbell. There will be storytelling and David Neville will be performing his Book Safari.

The catalogue of the exhibition, published by the NBL with the support of the Eva Reckitt Trust, will be available from August 1st. It contains annotated entries for all books in the exhibition and has a bright cover designed by Jan Pienkowski using illustrations from his **Nursery Series** in Puffin.

Bookings are already being made for hire of the exhibition after it closes.

For further information contact Sue Bennett (Head of Exhibitions) or Chris Lee (Children's Books Officer) at Book House, 45 East Hill, Wandsworth, London SW18 2QZ.

Children's Books of the Year, selected by Julia Eccleshare, NBL, 0 85353 395 4, (A5 size, 96pp) £3.50 (NBL members £3.25).

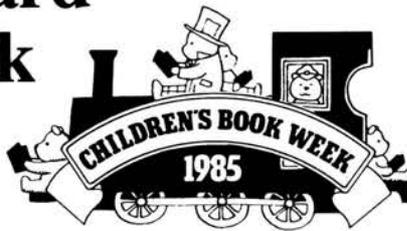
Watch Out for the Booksquad

A full colour, 12 page, A3 size comic is being distributed FREE to children via bookshops in the Blackwell's group. Schools, school bookshops and other children's groups who have links with their local Blackwell's bookshop, or customers dropping in can expect to be urged to take copies of **Booksquad**. With articles by Roald Dahl and John Christopher, an extract from **Adrian Mole**, jokes, puzzles, a Postman Pat Game, they shouldn't need much persuading. This feature

material and a 50 title book list (from books submitted and sponsored by publishers) is wrapped up in a comic strip adventure in which the **Booksquad** – a resourceful gang of avid readers – set out to defeat the monstrous baddy, Dunno (boredom personified) who cannot be allowed to spoil the summer holidays for all those children who don't know about books.

The comic is aimed at 5-12 year olds, with an eight page section for 8-12s and a four page insert for 5-7s. At present this is a one-off exercise but if the **Booksquad** captures children's imaginations (and sells books) there may be more to come.

All aboard the Book Train!



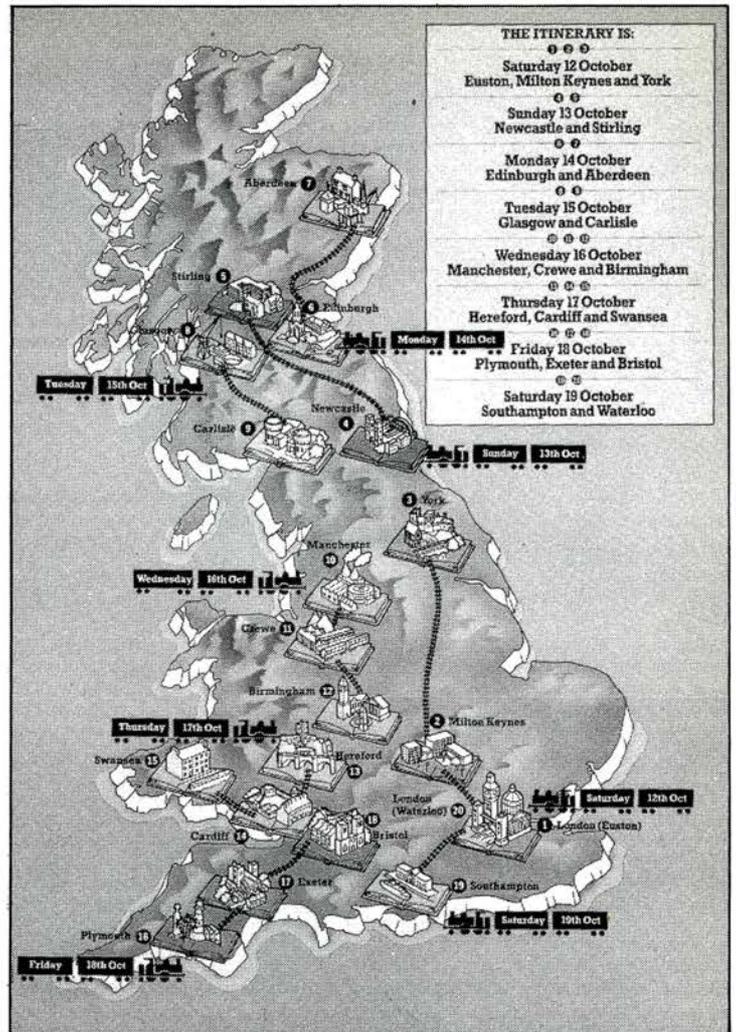
The big event of this year's Children's Book Week (October 12-19) is the Book Train's eight-day journey around the United Kingdom. In all, the train will visit 18 cities stopping for two or three hours at each station to enable children to visit the exhibitions and the W H Smith Bookshop on board and meet the authors and illustrators who will be joining and travelling with the train as it moves around the country. Platform events and other station-based activities are also promised. At each city authors and illustrators will leave the train for visits to local schools, libraries and bookshops. Mike Read, CBW 'personality', will also be appearing with the train. There will be a national competition for children with rides on the train as prizes.

Before the train pulls out of Euston on October 12th its outside will have been painted by a team of children under the direction of Jan Pienkowski, and B. A. Robertson and Tim Rice have written a Book Week song. The record will be released at the start of the train tour.

Other book events are being planned around the country. Publicity has been designed this year by Anthony Browne around the theme of the train.

CBW is sponsored by Lloyds Bank and the £70,000 for the Book Train had been raised by sponsorship from W H Smith and various children's book publishers.

For details of how to catch the train or other information about CBW, contact CBW Administration, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ.



The Book Marketing Council and *Parents* magazine are launching a special promotion for books for the under-4s this summer (15th-27th July). Fifteen titles have been selected as Best Books for Babies by a special panel – Floella Benjamin, Tony Bradman, Nancy Rhodes and Martyn Goff.

They are: Sally Kilroy's *Baby Board Books* (Viking/Kestrel); Helen Oxenbury's *Baby Board Books* (Walker Books); Colin and Jacqui Hawkins' *Baby Boo!* (Bell & Hyman); Althea and Susanna Gretz's *Colours of Things* (Fontana/Dinosaur); Carol Watson and Colin King's *The House* (Usborne); Louis Baum and Niki Daly's *I Want to See the Moon* (Bodley Head); John Burningham's *Little Books* (Cape); Shirley Hughes' *Lucy and Tom's a.b.c.* (Gollancz); Robert Crowther's *The Most Amazing Hide-and-Seek Opposites Book* (Kestrel); John Burningham's *Mr Gumpy's Outing* (Cape/Puffin); The Ahlberg's *Peepo!* (Kestrel/Puffin); Sarah Williams and Ian Beck's

Round and Round the Garden (OUP and OUP paperback); Ron and Atie van der Meer's **Surprise Concertina Books** (Blackie); Eric Carle's **The Very Busy Spider** (Hamish Hamilton); Eric Hill's **Where's Spot?** (Heinemann/Puffin).

One of these titles will be given the *Parents* magazine award for **Best Book for Babies** – an all-time accolade in 1985, but plans are being made to make it an annual award from the year's publishing.

Text versus Technology

This up-to-date topic is the theme of a weekend school organised by the Youth Libraries Group. It will be held at Lancaster University from September 6-8. The aim of the conference is to consider the impact of new technology on children's and school libraries, and to explore ways in which librarians can respond positively to the challenge of new technology. The programme promises a wide variety of speakers and an extensive trade exhibition including hardware and software.

Further details from Kathleen Leech, District Central Library, Market Square, Preston, Lancs PR1 2PP. Tel. 0772 53191.

Puffin Bookshop in Covent Garden

Penguin have acquired a second bookshop in Covent Garden buying the premises currently owned by Hammicks. They plan to open a Puffin Bookshop which will hold the full range of Puffin, Kestrel and Hamish Hamilton titles as well as other children's books, have a Mums and Dads section with gardening, cookery, travel, sport books, a permanent Beatrix Potter display and changing exhibitions featuring other book characters. Special book events are promised in the shop, and outside on the terrace and in the open area around the shop.

EDINBURGH CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR

The Children's Book Fair will be a major feature of the second Edinburgh Book Festival. It will have its own marquee filled with books and during the festival it will be visited by over 45 children's writers and artists including Gene Kemp, Joan Lingard, Mollie Hunter and Michael Foreman. There will be daily workshop sessions linked to

books in which children can take part and two special weekend events: Animal Day (organised by Edinburgh Zoo and the Federation of Children's Book Groups) and Dr Who Day, with Terrance Dicks, John Nathan Turner and a Dalek. Part of the Puffin Club exhibition is being transported north so visitors to the Book Fair will be able to try out the Spooky Book Walk, visit Spot's House and make a personal book choice at the computer desk.

Special exhibitions include a display chosen by Margaret Marshall of books for children with special needs, and the BMC/Parents magazine Books for Babies selection.

The Fair will be opened at 12 o'clock on Saturday August 10th by Terry Jones. Later on the same day there will be performances from *Erik the Viking* and Terry Jones and Tim Rice will give a recital featuring Ronald Searle's immortal schoolboy, Molesworth.

Entrance to the Festival, £1 adults, 50p children. Season tickets will be available. The Children's Book Fair is sponsored by W H Smith. For further information contact Valerie Bierman, The Book Festival, 25A South West Thistle St., Lane, Edinburgh EH2 1EW, Tel. 031 225 1915. ●

Authorgraph No. 33



Nina Bawden is one of the most popular authors writing for children today. She has over a dozen titles consistently in print and children not only read them but buy them for themselves. What makes her books so satisfying to children? What are the elements which make them so successful? Part of the answer is readily understood. They are exciting books. There is often a mystery which gradually unfolds, exposing the characters to dangerous situations. These characters are modern and real to a degree not often met in stories of adventure. Even adult reviewers, reading with pencil conscientiously poised, surface with a guilty start in chapter 3, realizing they have been drawn into the story. Never mind the notes, what is going to happen next?

Nina Bawden is clearly a very skilful and talented writer in terms of the way she writes. Her narrative skills recall that other professional, Roald Dahl. The emotional content of her stories, however, and the particular way she presents her characters, also seem important to her readers, and the way in which she describes her own childhood suggests she has never lost touch with what it felt like to be a child, and this has given her the power to present her stories genuinely from a child's point of view.

Nina Bawden was born in London, one of a family of three. She says she remembers being a child who had extremely strong feelings which she was not encouraged to express. During the war, she was evacuated to Wales, and under those circumstances, living among strangers, no one could be too free with their emotions. Her choice of childhood reading suggests that she responded to the strength of feeling in the books she read – Baroness Orczy, Hugh Walpole, Dickens. She also enjoyed reading her grandmother's Sunday School prizes, those fountains of emotion underpinned with strong moral themes. In a much more subtle and controlled way, these elements are present in her own books. Interestingly, she hated fairy stories and found Andersen's tales cruel and frightening. The sort of stories she wrote for herself, she says, tended to be about wronged children in an ill-starred world. She became a writer first of books for adults but her enjoyment in writing about child characters in those books led in the early 1960s to writing a child's book, **The Secret Passage**.

This first book was the story of three children who find a secret passage leading to the richly furnished but unoccupied house next door. Here they find a mysterious

orphan, lonely and passionate, but strangely unhungry despite her claim to be starving. When the grown-ups get involved, the truth is less glamorous but no less difficult. The seed of the story sounds like the 'wronged child' stories Nina Bawden used to make up as a child, now very much tempered by adult experience. The book was turned down at first. Publishers felt it was 'too modern'. When it was published in 1963, however, she began to receive letters from children. She had written about children with the same kind of strong feelings that she had experienced as a child and the readers liked it.

The titles which followed, written when her own children were small and running round together, usually involved a group, a little gang. In **On the Run**, Ben makes friends with a lonely child over the garden wall. There is a good reason for this child's isolation. Thomas is the son of an African leader whose country is in a state of revolt. They begin to fear the adults who are meant to protect the boy and with the help of a small but resourceful girl, they stow away in a removal van and escape to the coast. The cosy cave syndrome, however, does not operate. They are cold, wet and hungry and little Lil, already undernourished, falls ill. **The Runaway Summer** has a similar theme, but the striking factor here is Mary's character. She is thoroughly unpleasant, rude to everyone, rejecting all kindly approaches and finally expressing her misery in a theft which is witnessed by some other children. Despite this, she is drawn into their happy family and when they discover a young illegal immigrant, they join forces to hide him from the authorities. They run into trouble of course and instead of being heroes have to be bailed out by the adults. Mary has nevertheless changed. In giving

her attention to someone else she has become confident enough to come to terms with her parents' divorce and ends the book a little happier than she was at the beginning. In **A Handful of Thieves**, a gang of friends again take on too much. Gran has been robbed by her lodger and the children determine to right the wrong. As a result of their amateur detective work, they end up on the wrong side of the law themselves. The author seems to be saying 'this is how it really is'. On the other hand, her honesty and realism is tempered by reasonably happy endings. Perhaps the fantasies are not fulfilled but things can change for the better. We see an example of this in **Squib**. Kate, a lonely child, hopes that her mother will adopt the little boy they have rescued from an uncaring relative who mistreats him. That would be the story book ending, but her mother will not. Instead the large, friendly family over the road agree to foster him and Kate is happy.

The children in these stories are drawn into adventure – catching thieves, sheltering fugitives, hiding from adult authority. What makes the books different from other stories with these elements is the way in which the events affect the characters, the way they think and the complexity of the relationships between them. Nina Bawden's experience is that we do not always sufficiently recognise the strength of children's feelings or credit them with the degree of understanding they really have, and in her books, she redresses the balance.

Another striking feature of her books is the role adults play. Nina Bawden will have none of the hasty dismissal of parents on page one. She points out that adults are very powerful in the lives of children and there is no virtue in pretending that they are of no account. We see adults as authority figures as parents, policemen, but they are also exposed. In **The Robbers**, a story where a boy must choose between obeying his father and helping his less privileged friend although that leads him into danger, the father's lack of understanding is acknowledged. When Philip seems helpless under his father's authority, there is satisfaction in the grandmother's intervention:

'What's this about boarding school? A nine year old child? Oh I can see it might suit you. You're bored with him, so you want to be rid of him, pay someone else for the trouble.'

Philip is amazed to see his father blushing and looking guilty. Fathers do not often get their come-uppance in children's books. Parents in Nina Bawden's books, in fact, tend to be treated like real human beings, not stage props. They have variable personalities, they react to pressures. The mother in *The Finding*, Nina Bawden's latest novel, has problems with her own mother. Gran, in *A Handful of Thieves*, would rather lose her money than be exposed as a foolish, gullible old lady. The vulnerability of adults is shown strongly in *Kept in the Dark*. Three children are sent to stay with grandparents they hardly know. The hostility within the family is nothing compared with the tension which builds up with the arrival of David. He decides to stay and there is nothing the grandparents can do – especially when they discover David has a gun. The story has the elements of a mystery thriller but the suspense is as much attached to the relationships as the events. This maturity of approach to the depiction of both adults and children is perhaps related to the fact that Nina Bawden writes for adults as well as children. There is never any sense of writing down, rather she seems able to make complexities accessible to children so, in a sense, the readers get the best of both worlds.

It is children, however, that Nina Bawden finds most rewarding to write about, and the child with strong, angry feelings, aware of his or her wickedness, yet wanting to be fair and to do the right thing, is her recurrent theme. There is a fascinating development through the books. In the earlier ones, we see characters like Mary and Kate suffering an intensity of feeling. In *The Witch's Daughter*, the frustration has an added physical form in Janey's blindness. What these characters feel on the inside is resolved by external events, usually of an exciting or dramatic nature. In two later books, the same process takes place but the children grow through the experience with the passage of time and increased understanding.

Like Nina Bawden herself, Carrie in *Carrie's War* is evacuated to Wales, and boarded with the mean, narrow-minded Mr Evans. Although he does not change, Carrie's perception of him does. She comes to understand something of what makes him as he is. We see the action through the children's eyes as they lead their partially aware, slightly separate lives. Carrie believes herself to be responsible for the fire because the story of the African skull has power over her childish imagination. What Nina Bawden has done, however, is to present the whole web of emotion and interdependence between the characters in a way which makes a higher level of understanding accessible to children.

The Guardian Award winner, *The Peppermint Pig*, shows the same maturity of approach put within a young reader's grasp. It has a particularly affectionate atmosphere perhaps because many of the incidents are based on stories about Nina Bawden's own family. Her grandmother lived in Norfolk and seems to have been both a teller and generator of tales. The famous opening paragraph delights children and shocks delicately-minded adults! The picture of Theo, swinging gently on the brass bedstead, his nightshirt hitched over the knob sounds authentic, as does the punishment naughty Poll receives:

'Her mother said, "I've had enough my girl. Under the table!"'

And that is where she hears of the change in the family's fortunes. Father is to leave them for a year and they will go to live in Norfolk. In the new setting, life goes on but what makes all the difference to Poll is the arrival of Johnnie. Bought for a shilling, the little piglet joins the family circle. What she does not understand is that, by the nature of



things, Johnnie's life must be a short one. When pig killing time comes round, she is devastated. We have seen Poll growing through the year in size and understanding, and although she needs a period of mourning for Johnnie, she grows through that too. When Father returns, Johnnie has gone like the whole long year but she knows that the past can still be part of her life and she will never forget him.

In both these rich, sympathetic novels, the viewpoint remains the child's – Carrie's childish guilt, the importance of a pig – but children are given the full weight of their importance. Their development as characters are respected. Nina Bawden gives them the opportunity to move out of their childlike egocentricity to a place in the adult world and we know they will go on growing.

This summer, there are two new books: a picture book called *Princess Alice*, about a little girl who discovers that her father is an African king, and a novel called *The Finding*. *The Finding* is very modern in feeling and the opening is truly gripping. Why should a child have been abandoned in the arms of the Sphinx on the Embankment? It has made Alex different. He has a finding day instead of a birthday. What connection can old Mrs Angel possibly have with him? There is a mystery here, but would it be better unsolved?

The characters are interesting, too. There is tension between the adults. Mum clashes with Gran, Mrs Angel's nephew resents her interest in Alex, with good reason, we discover. Laura, Alex's elder sister is also resentful and tries to manipulate her brother's behaviour. She is one of Nina Bawden's girl characters who are strong on emotion and full of potential if only they are taken seriously by the adults around them. Here is also an illustration of the way in which Nina Bawden deals with the complexity of life. When Mrs Angel leaves Alex a large sum of money, the experience is in fact unpleasant. He runs away from the mounting pressures and we are not sure if the old woman who shelters him is benign or not. It is left to Gran's friend, old Major Bumpus to find the solution. He does take Laura seriously and by acknowledging the real depth of feeling between her and her adopted brother, he makes it possible for her to find Alex and bring him home.

Leaving Nina Bawden's tall house, the visitor immediately crosses one of those green-fingered slivers of water which surface unexpectedly in London. It is clearly the setting for *The Robbers*. Most of her books have a solidly real physical framework. She

points out that children do not have cars and so tend to be much more aware of the complexities of the terrain. It is this kind of perception which make her a good writer for children. She makes use of real experience but as a good writer, for adults or children, the experiences are absorbed and transformed imaginatively. She says firmly that she does not believe in prescriptive writing but writes as honestly as she can and leaves the reader to take what he or she can from it. She believes that fiction functions best at a deep emotional and imaginative level. We are fortunate that Nina Bawden is a writer who can make this level accessible to children and that the resulting books are ones that children thoroughly enjoy. ●

The Books

Nina Bawden's books are published in hardback by Gollancz (0 575) and in paperback by Puffin (0 14 03.).

The Secret Passage
00202 6, £5.95; 1166 1, £1.25

***On the Run**
00634 X, £6.95; 0337 5, £1.50

The White Horse Gang
00841 5, £5.95; 0508 4, £1.50

***The Witch's Daughter**
00177 1, £6.95; 0407 X, £1.50

***A Handful of Thieves**
00152 6, £6.95; 0472 X, £1.25

The Runaway Summer
00337 5, £5.95; 0539 4, £1.25

Squib
00665 X, £5.95; 0581 5, £1.25

***Carrie's War**
01631 0, £6.95; 0689 7, £1.50

***Devil By the Sea**
02141 1, £5.95

The Peppermint Pig
01927 1, £5.95; 0944 6, £1.50

***Rebel on a Rock**
02420 8, £5.95; 1123 8, £1.10

***The Robbers**
02695 2, £6.95; 1317 6, £1.25

Kept in the Dark
03113 1, £6.95; 1550 0, £1.25

The Finding
03618 4, £6.95

Picture book: *Princess Alice*, ill. Phillida Gili, Deutsch, 0 233 97746 5, £4.95

*These titles are also in Heinemann's New Windmill series.

REVIEWS

Nursery/Infant

**Quentin Blake's
Nursery Rhyme Book**
Picture Lions,
0 00 662461 8, £1.50

It is good to see this quintessential Blake nursery rhyme book in paperback: now every child has the opportunity to own a copy and to delight in the likes of such quirky characters as William McTrimbletoe and Terence McDiddler (the three-stringed fiddler). JB

Teddy Bear Coalman
0 14 050.498 2

Teddy Bear Baker
0 14 050.499 0

**Phoebe and Selby
Worthington**, Picture
Puffin, £1.50 each

Two stories with their roots in the 1940s (even though one was published only some six years ago) which feature a teddy of independent nature. In the first we share a day in the life of Teddybear Coalman as he does his round on his horse and cart; and in the second he turns his hand to baking, and again we share in his daily routine as he first bakes, then goes on his round and finally serves in his bakery.

In each book the text is uncomplicated both in composition and presentation and the pictures have a dated appearance: a bit of nostalgia publishing for parents to share with their children up to about age three. JB

**Rhymes Around
the Day**
Jan Ormerod, chosen by
Pat Thomson, Picture
Puffin, 0 14 050.424 9,
£1.75

A day in the life of three young children and their parents from waking to sleeping told through a selection of verses, traditional and contemporary, and Jan Ormerod's finely observed watercolour pictures.

The theme allows Jan Ormerod full rein for her undoubted talent of capturing the many facets of domestic life and children's relationships: this is the artist at her best.

Perfect for sharing with the very young and for slightly older children to read and enjoy for themselves. JB

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

Ten, Nine, Eight
Molly Bang, Picture
Puffin, 0 14 050.481 8,
£1.50

A short, gentle mood poem which counts the reader down to bedtime with a black dad and his small daughter. The warmth and leisurely together time is perfectly caught both in the words and the glowing pictures. A lovely book for sharing with the very young. JB

Harriet and Walt
Nancy Carlson, Picture
Puffin, 0 14 050.463 X,
£1.50

Young brothers can be a bore as Harriet well knows, but family loyalty proves strong when others start mocking Walt's snowplay.

Both the pictures of the canine characters and the short text are distinctly American but the message that blood is thicker than water is what emerges most strongly from this quietly humorous tale. JB



'3 loving kisses on cheeks and nose', from **Ten, Nine, Eight**.

Infant/Junior



From **The Bag of Wind**.

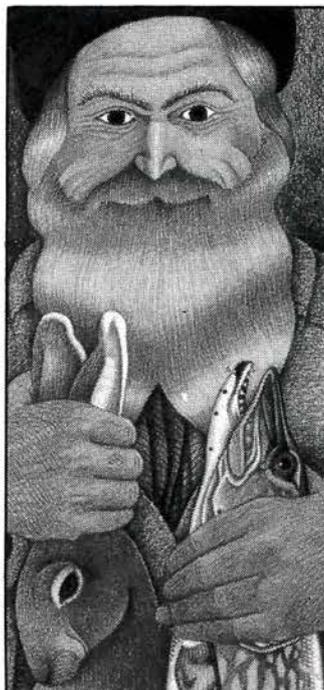
The Bag of Wind
Gerald Rose, Magnet,
0 416 50270 9, £1.50

A neo folk tale about a penniless sailor who returns from the sea with just a blue macaw and his seaman's bag, both of which are instrumental in his change of fortune. Bright, jolly, humorous pictures and the pleasing variety in page layout help to make this book just right for independent readers in both infant and junior classes. JB

The Gossipy Wife
Amanda Hall, Hippo,
0 590 70350 1, £1.75

Ivan is able to turn his wife's gossipy nature to advantage and outwit their greedy landlord. It is no good asking her to keep quiet about his find – a chest of treasure – but who is going to believe even Katrina when she insists that she has caught a land pike and a water hare, and that it has been raining pancakes? This lively adaptation of a traditional Russian tale reads aloud well and is aptly illustrated in peasant style pictures which are enhanced by use of grain, pattern and texture as well as close attention to detail: I particularly like the barrel doll endpapers. JB

Ivan, from **The Gossipy Wife**.



Norah's Ark
Ann and Reg Cartwright,
Picture Puffin,
0 14 050.477 X, £1.50

Puddle Farm suffers from a shortage of water – the pond is too small – but not for long; there's a flood on the way. With the animals' help, Norah turns the barn into an ark and everyone climbs safely aboard, and they decide to turn disaster into a holiday cruise.

In this paperback form, the quality of the original is retained so that the distinctive primitive stylised artwork of Reg Cartwright can be enjoyed to the full and, hopefully, by a wider audience than the hardback. In my experience it has proved a book which appeals to a broad age range: 4 to 9ish. JB



The Lazy Beaver

Giovanni Gallo/Ermanno Samsa, Piccolo Picture Books, 0 330 28564 5, £1.50

Beavers have a reputation for industry: not so young Bertram who is content to while away his time in more leisurely pursuits whilst the rest of the colony are hard at work constructing a new settlement. But the natural beaver trait for work finally reasserts itself thanks to a trip to the dentist and a charming lady beaver.

Although the busy, detailed illustrations are comic like and the beavers anthropomorphic, there is a factual element behind the tale as is made clear in the details about beavers' habits given at the end of the book. JB

The Vegetable Thieves

Inga Moore, Sparrow, 0 09 936960 5, £1.75

Des and Letty, two hard-working rodents, are so busy with their market garden that they have no time for anything or anyone else, but the disappearance of some of their produce leads them to take on even more responsibility – the culprits, a family of five mouse orphans. However, this increased responsibility does have its advantages – more help in the garden.

There is plenty to look at and admire in Inga Moore's detailed illustrations but I find the portrayal of the mice themselves somewhat sinister which leaves me with what is perhaps an unjust antipathy towards the book. However, older infants and young juniors will probably not share this aversion and thus should enjoy the book to the full. JB

Roald Dahl

Chris Powling, Puffin, 0 14 03.1752 X, £1.10

A book to be read retrospectively, for linguistically much of it is beyond those children who are obsessive readers of Dahl's children's books. Consequently there was some disappointment as young readers spotted the name of their favourite author writ large on the cover. Put into the right hands there was some interest, especially in the origins of ideas for Dahl's stories.

It is an interesting book,

tracing Dahl's life from child in Wales to successful author in the inventing shed in the back garden. It is however difficult to place, too sketchy for anyone genuinely concerned with biography and moving too fast for a child who might like to ask more questions about a particular book or character. As a teacher I was most interested in the section which specifically answered children's questions and which discussed how children ought to be their own best critics of what they read. CL

The Rain Cloud

Mary Rayner, Piccolo Picture Books, 0 330 28616 1, £1.25

Not exactly the most credible of stories especially as this cloud has thoughts and feelings which govern whether it rains. Some of the cloud eye views of the scenes and landscapes do offer interesting perspectives but to my mind clouds should remain strictly the province of the weatherman: not for me. JB

The Trouble with Mum

Babette Cole, Picture Lions, 0 00 662377 8, £1.50

'The trouble with mum is the hats she wears . . .' but that's far from the truth. Babette Cole's zany pictures show us mum for what she is – a real live witch. Her antics make her anything but liked by the other parents but, as you would suppose, both she and her son are highly popular with the other kids at his new school.

Hugely enjoyable and what makes it the more so is that from the short text alone you would never guess the trouble with mum. JB

Beware of the Vet

Babette Cole, Magnet, 0 416 51560 6, £1.50

A crazy tale of misadventure, which moves at a somewhat frenetic pace, relates what happens when Mr MacPlaster is given the wrong tablets for his headache. Sporting a pair of horns and a tail, he endeavours to carry on with his practice as usual and is even able to put his newly acquired features to good use. Riotous illustrations greatly enliven a rather disjointed text and may help potential readers to persevere in their efforts to read what certainly appears an attractive book. JB

Babylon

Story by Jill Paton Walsh, pictures by Jennifer Northway, Beaver, 0 09 938080 3, £1.75

A large size paperback edition of a much discussed and praised book. Whether Jill Paton Walsh got the dialect

right or fully explained the significance of Babylon apart, this is a resonant story which touches gently on the complexity of feelings of exile and belonging. The book is for Dulcie and all other black children like her who belong in this country, where they were born. Jennifer Northway's pictures are a delight. PT

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Barbara Hazen and Tomi Ungerer, Magnet, 0 416 46830 6, £1.50

Good to have this racy told version of the traditional story in paperback. Tomi Ungerer's pictures are lively and joky (not too macabre this one) and catch exactly the final frenzy of the apprentice's come-uppance. PT

A Day with Postman Pat

0 233 97769 4

Postman Pat and the Summer Show

0 233 97768 6

ill. Celia Berridge, Deutsch (Postman Pat Beginners), 95p each

No-one is credited with writing the text for the first two titles in what appears to be a new series for beginner readers. The defining framework of 'the day' and 'the show' are the 'story', the text merely captions the pictures in the present tense; but children familiar with all the characters and locations in this popular series should find it highly predictable and the pictures do lend themselves to expansion. PT

The Vanishment of Thomas Tull

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Puffin, 0 14 03.1804 6, 95p

Shades of **The Shrinking of Treehorn** in this early vintage Ahlberg about an incredible shrinking boy. There's the witty and wordy fun we expect from the writer and the artist's episodic, complementary pictures are as inventive as ever.

Their special talent is for picture book stories for younger children, I think: and this doesn't have the magic of some of their other work. There's a feeling of a good idea being stretched. But even below their very best they're better than most so I'll find a place for this in bookshops and libraries for sevens to nines. CM



A Dog Called Mischief

0 19 272155 0

The Frog and the Fly

0 19 272154 2

Leslie Wood, Oxford, 95p each

Two additions to what we have come to think of as the Brian Wildsmith series by artist Leslie Wood. Very short, repetitive, easy-to-read text filled out into story by the pictures. **A Dog Called Mischief** (my favourite) invites reader participation as Mischief in traditional storybook dog fashion steals sausages, pie and chicken in turn from the butcher and hides them for the reader to find in the pictures. At the end he's forgotten himself and wonders where he put them. In the other, fly and frog meet, frog catches and swallows fly, fly tickles frog, fly escapes. PT



Pugwash and the Mutiny and Pugwash and the Fancy-Dress Party

John Ryan, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1728 7, £1.25

Great stuff! Lots of lovely pictures many with clear print in speech balloons for young readers to search their way

through. The language is perfect for successful readers to try and try again, getting their minds and tongues around words and phrases such as 'Walloping Whales'; 'Sir Splycemeigh-Maynebrace'; 'rapscallion'.

Captain Pugwash and cabinboy Tom cope with a crew mutiny and a fancy dress ball where the intentions of Pugwash are hardly admirable but it is Cut-Throat Jake and his crew who walk the plank. A delightful addition to a young class library and no doubt very popular in the bookshop. CL

The Sheep Pig
Dick King-Smith,
Puffin, 0 14 03.1839 9,
£1.25

In all of Dick King-Smith's books there is a relationship between man and beast that is exceptional in fantasy involving the animal world. Each retains its rightful place and rightful dignity, looks at the strange quirks of the other, shrugs and accepts. **The Sheep Pig** (last year's Guardian Award winner) is no exception.

When Babe, the young pig, is won at the local fair by Farmer Hogget he is taken in hand by Fly the sheep-dog and quite unintentionally becomes a sheep-pig. It is a funny tale, amusing in the techniques that are adopted by Babe and not in any way degrading. Babe proves, not only to be adept enough to win a national trial, but concerned enough for the animals he must herd, the 'stupid' sheep, to befriend them and politely win their cooperation. He rescues them from rustlers and worrying dogs and, with a grin on his

face, Farmer Hogget takes it all in his stride. The characters are beautifully developed.

A cheerful, thoroughly satisfying read, much loved by all the Dick King-Smith fans I know and new addicts. It is very gratifying to hear this author's name requested so often in library and bookshop. CL

Junior/Middle

Poems That Go Bump in the Night

Zenka & Ian Woodward (eds), Beaver, 0 09 938110 9, £1.25

'Are all the dragons dead? Are all the witches fled? Am I quite safe in bed?' The fear of the dark, and its working upon the mind of the young, provides ample material for a varied collection of poems about things that frighten at night. The devil, the werewolf, the bogeyman, all emotive titles, and all find their place, 'as I shake beneath my covers, and I shiver in my sheet.' Some old faithfuls naturally, but diligent searching has unearthed some original material which will provide fresh interpretations on the 'bumps in the night'. BB

A Step in the Wrong Direction

Colin West, Arrow, 0 09 940600 4, £1.00

More anarchy from Colin West in the form of zany poems and even zanier pictures. We've all met a 'nasty Norman Noshier', without doubt 'the horriblemest boy I know of', but whether we could describe him as gruesomely as West is debatable. The collection abounds with kid-appeal lunacy, ranging from the eulogy to schoolmeals, 'Eat your food up, Artie', to the Falklands hymn, 'A Penguin's life'. Special favourites are 'Trevor is ever so' and the pathos of 'In monster town'. But get it and find your own favourites. What Milligan started, West has extended to his own art form. Even explaining to us dullards that 'a poet spends his hours / sat in sofas sniffing flowers / and writing rhymes as silly as can be.' BB

Rentaghost Rules

Bob Block, BBC/Knight, 0 340 36918 3, £1.25

Fans of **Rentaghost** (BBC Television) will buy this because they have been

amused by the programme. Hopefully non-viewers will discover it hidden in some enterprising bookshop and give it a second glance, because it is fun. Corny, but fun. And as anyone who has taken kids to pantomimes realises, they love corny humour. Nadia Popov's inadequate grasp of the English language provides an easy target for confusion, and this is milked naturally. 'What is amiss?' 'A miss is a female mister.' I liked it anyway, so there! BB

The Caravan Puppets

Michael Bond, ill. Vanessa Julian-Ottie, Fontana Young Lions, 0 00 672462 0, £1.25

Too often, this author is exclusively associated with **Paddington**. Fine as those books are, this one reminds us of his versatility. Each of the puppets made by old Mr Briggs has a rich provenance, none more so than the performing mouse, Elmer Knickerbocker. The children put on a show using the puppets which enlivens both their summer holiday and the rural community. Places and people are beautifully characterised: Bond lets his characters speak for themselves and my nine year old co-readers were fascinated by Mr Briggs' travelling tales. Some fine showbusiness touches, and an involving tale from start to finish. CM

Poems for Nine Year Olds and Under

Kit Wright, Puffin, 0 14 03.1490 3, £1.95

Having seen Kit Wright work successfully with Merseyside schoolkids cynical about 'soft poetry', I'm biased in this collection's favour anyway.

However, the combination of Wright's sensitivity in the choosing of material for a young audience, and Michael Foreman's brilliant illustrations, makes this a must for homes, schools and libraries everywhere.

Enjoyment is the theme, as it must surely be with this age group, if the seeds of poetry experience are to be sown properly, and enjoyment there is in plenty.

A talented list of contributors includes Spike Milligan, Roger McGough, Michael Rosen and the under-rated Tom Pickard. BB

The Pirates Mixed-Up Voyage

Margaret Mahy, Magnet, 0 416 51150 3, £1.50

Piled with layer upon layer of adjectival overkill, so beloved by the sort of child who will understand the humour that Margaret Mahy injects into her text, this pirate story is a guaranteed winner. Philosophy satirised, even slinks into the opening page, in an erudite argument between Lionel Wafer and Toothpick. Free Will. Determinism. Great stuff. Sir Kief will love every nuance, not to mention Toad, without a wooden leg, just in case you confuse him with any antecedent pirate, nameless of course. Ye Olde Pyratte Shippe Teashoppe, well there's ethnic, boyo. A lot of rumblebumpkin, if you don't mind me saying so. BB

The Mystery of the Haunted Hospital

0 340 33986 1

The Mystery of the Smuggler's Treasure

0 340 36390 8

Terrance Dicks, ill. Valerie Littlewood, Knight 'Ask Oliver' Books, £1.25 each

Fast moving plots in these two which brim over with action and events. Mr Dicks' experience as a TV writer means that he knows about giving a tale its twists and turns. But even the eights and nines I read this with (boys, whose teacher said they 'needed encouragement') felt that after quite enjoying **The Haunted Hospital**, **The**

Smuggler's Treasure was rather more of the same.

Cramped print and pictures is off-putting for independent readers, which is a pity as there's some decent detective work, some scope for readers to get involved in the tales and (now and again) some sparks of contemporary-sounding humour. CM

Caught Out

Michael Hardcastle, Magnet, 0 416 51930 X, £1.50

Joel's cricket team is going to win the Knockout, or so he is determined. It doesn't look much like it at the first match until the day is saved by a mysterious number eleven who has already declared that he hates batting.

I am delighted to see another Michael Hardcastle about cricket. He is an author on whom I fall back time and time again, especially when confronted with a mixed ability private reading group and that handful who do not want to know.

His straightforward sporting stories often capture the mind of a child who is very scathing about imaginary stories. Not all of this ilk are football fanatics. A welcome addition. CL

Mr Majeika

Humphrey Carpenter, ill. Frank Rodgers, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1677 9, £1.25

Another title that started life as a Kestrel Kite (see also **Bright-Eye** and **Conker**).

Bright and well-paced story about a wizard of a supply teacher who can turn the naughtiest child in the class into a frog, or a vampire. Realistic-sounding children and a suitably bewildered headmaster who certainly gets some realism into his lesson on the Force of Gravity when the children learn to fly like Superman!

Lively, literate fun for sevens to nines from a writer who has read enough children's books to develop a good ear for dialogue and a strong visual

sense. The latter's helped by a characterful cover and illustrations. Not to be missed. CM

Sunshine Island, Moonshine Baby
Clare Cherrington, ill.
Jennifer Northway,
Fontana Young Lions,
0 00 672560 0, £1.25

More than any other children's book I've read, this is the one that has set me thinking about storytelling, narrative and the ways in which we invent our pasts by the stories we tell of them.

A little West Indian girl growing up in this country listens to the tales told by a group of old ladies about their childhoods in a far-off land. The joy of the book is in these tellings and in their distinctive voices. The language is warm, vivid, imaginative. The older



characters are treated generously and truthfully: that's still too rare in books for this age group. Very fine pictures from an artist whose work is always worth watching. Ideal for story sessions for sevens-up – though I know that middle schoolers and younger secondaries enjoy it too. CM

Going Home
K. M. Peyton, ill.
Chris Molan, Magnet,
0 416 50290 3, £1.50

A moving and intelligent book which will appeal to older juniors and middle schoolers. The central characters sound much older than they actually are – that's part of the sadness of the story. They're perceived as 'problems' but are, in truth, resourceful, brave and they have a hold on their experiences as they are shipped by politely tolerating relations on a holiday to France.

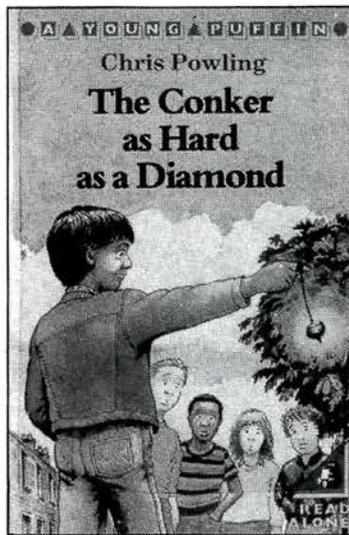
The surface story is of their escape through vividly-drawn landscapes to England. But this writer enables her young readers to grasp another challenging tale through the stumbling conversations of the well-meaning adults and the actions and gestures of children who've learned to look blankly at do-gooders. The observation of social mores is as sharp as this author's *Flambards* stories. Those (around ten?) who are learning to read through a plot to the tensions below will appreciate this one. CM

Bright-Eye
Alison Morgan, ill.
Vanessa Julian-Ottie,
Young Puffin,
0 14 03.1671 X, £1.25

A beautifully-written and reflective book which gently

unfolds its story of a little girl who nurtures and cares for a duckling. It's a fine example of a book for the young which gives the structure of feeling within a close-knit family and community. Independent, imaginative activity is in the texture of the telling – I like the way the adults only give help when they're asked to. It is short but don't let that and the Young Puffin label lead you to ignore the possibilities for older classes.

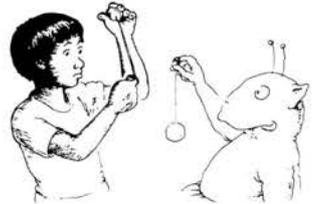
There's some finely-crafted episodes: read slowly with older juniors the part where the egg hatches out to show them how writing can slow time down. For good measure, there's more feel for natural life than in shelves full of information books. Splendid pictures: nines to elevens will warm to the power at the heart of this one. CM



The Conker as Hard as a Diamond ✱
Chris Powling, ill.
Jon Riley, Young Puffin,
0 14 03.1717 1, £1.25

Sevens to tens will enjoy this tale of the contest to find the Conker Champion of the World – and I hope Puffin's new and well-intentioned packaging won't stop older children and their teachers finding it (it's billed as a 'first solo reading').

Read the opening pages to understand the ways in which a gifted writer who knows about language and the *context* of kids' reading can involve his readers with admirable artlessness. The early dialogue gives the characters a firm setting. Mr Powling's real skill lies in his ability to play with words ('It's their only chance to conquer each other before they conkersequesterly conk out') and in his acute sense of how contemporary kids talk to each other. It cheered me that they still have twenty-ers and snicker-snackers as well as wheelies in their contests! He makes the pace of the tale part of the reading experience and it'll be liked most by those we used to call 'reluctant' who tell stories like these in the playground. CM



Middle/Secondary

The Enchanted Whistle
Mollie Hunter, Magnet,
0 416 51780 3, £1.50

Hob, orphaned, adopted by a witch and forced to work for his keep, yearns for happiness. In dreams he hears the music of the ferlie world and makes a pipe to play the same betwitching tunes. They lead him to the threshold of the ferlie world where he discovers that true happiness is of his own making and in the real world.

Mollie Hunter is expert in the folk-lore tradition: the telling is quiet and gentle but the characters range from the timid heroine through the grabbing, plotting witch to the aggressive and avaricious farmer.

Read alone this is a story for the more capable middle school reader and the fan of genuine fantasy and magic. But the style lends itself to reading aloud if you can manage the occasional border country colloquialism. CL

The Ghosts in the Attic
Betty Ren Wright,
Hippo, 0 590 70347 1,
£1.25

A book approved of by testers. As an adult reader I found it difficult to suspend belief sufficiently – not to accept the ghosts in the attic, but to condone the mixed-up behaviour of the grown-ups in the story.

Amy's mother sees Amy as full-time baby sitter for a

younger, brain-damaged sister. She has no sympathy for Amy when she wants relief from this daunting chore and as yet another friendship is threatened Amy runs away to a strange spinster aunt who lives alone in the isolated family home. Aunt Clare is one moment open-armed, consoling, entertaining; the next resentful, aggressive, withdrawn. Through Amy, she relives childhood memories of violent murders and a broken heart. In the attic tiny dolls re-enact the murder of Amy's grandparents. Amy is able to solve a long unsolved murder mystery, she comes to love her sister, understand her parents, give her aunt a reason for living.

There are some genuinely

spine-chilling passages and some glimpses of reality. But it is a very complex plot and I can't help feeling that the author has attempted to handle too many predicaments in one story. CL

Limerick Delight
Selected by
E. O. Parrott, Puffin,
0 14 03.1747 3, £1.50

Edward Lear, Frank Richards, Ogden Nash, even Mark Twain, find their rhyming nonsense immortalised in this limerick Hall of Fame.

Love them or hate them, there is no denying the form's popularity, with youngsters and adults alike. There's over three hundred here, all themed, so it's easy to pick out personal favourites. En masse,

it's strange to realise how many limericks have grim or macabre twists to them. Says a lot about what we find funny, I suppose. BB

The Making of Fingers Finnigan

Berlie Doherty,
Fontana Lions,
0 00 672340 3, £1.50

Despite being deterred by the cover claim 'full of riotously funny antics', it's worth persevering with 'Fingers Finnigan'. Berlie Doherty can write believable kids' dialogue, a rare talent, and has produced here an amusing and interesting story for strictly junior age readers. Several of the characters have the potential for development in further stories, particularly Weird George and Fingers. Besides which, anyone who knows about soggy Liverpool Echoes and chip butties can't go wrong! BB

One Way Only

Gwen Grant, Fontana
Lions, 0 00 672290 3,
£1.25

Set in 1950 the
Nottinghamshire Mischief
Maker of *Private - Keep Out*



and *Knock and Wait* has returned home from the school/sanatorium in Kent to plague her long-suffering family once more. Gwen Grant maintains the eventful pace and lively good fun of the previous books, which will undoubtedly delight and satisfy her devotees.

Can you imagine Our insufferable Rose, who thinks she's Princess Margaret, winning a Beauty Competition and Our Lucy bringing her Adrian home for tea when our naughty heroine has a mouse in her pocket? - Good fun to read aloud. DB

Momo

Michael Ende, Puffin,
0 14 03.1753 8, £1.75

The sinister men in grey were experts on time just as leeches are experts on blood. They visit innocent, undeveloped characters in poor novels, like Mr Figaro, the barber, and

frighten the life out of them. Time saved is time doubled. Don't worry about it, even if you get to the end of the story, you'll wonder why you bothered. Is Momo a witch? Is Guido a guide, or an agent for the KGB/CIA/BBC or any other mnemonic that takes your fancy? Timesharing I've seen advertised, but Timesaving is about to boom big if the men in grey have their way. I'm sure it could all be heavily psychological, but I don't think your average eleven year old is going to wait around long enough to decipher it. BB

Me and Jeshua

Eleanor Spence,
Lion Publishing,
0 85648 866 6, £1.50

The subtlety of this story is better appreciated if the reader knows something about the life of Jesus, for this is an imagined account of his childhood, told by a cousin, Jude. I don't doubt that some readers could easily miss the source of the material for Eleanor Spence handles the religious dimension with a lightness of touch which only suggests reverence. She is obviously firmly committed to a very realistic account of everyday life in New Testament times, a theme which might not necessarily prove compulsive reading to all youngsters. Teachers should find it an acceptable novel to read for their own background information and sensitive, experienced Junior readers might enjoy it. DB

The French Resistance

0 330 28657 9

The K.G.B.

0 330 28716 8

Don Lawson, Piccolo
Spy Shelf series,
£1.50 each

Written by an expert in the field these books are credited as being 'Thrilling true-life stories of cloak and dagger armies of the world'.

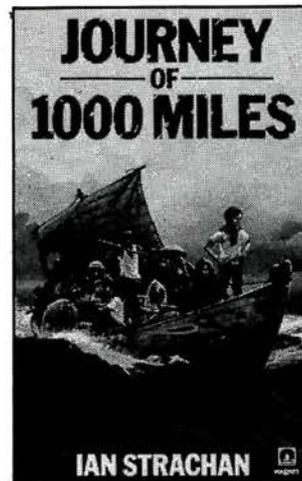
Well, I found them *quite* interesting and directly informative, though not without bias, especially *K.G.B.* - useful no doubt for fact-seeking youngsters after project material or immune to fiction, but *thrilling* is not a word I'd use myself. There's certainly a useful index and an impressive bibliography for follow-up, which should keep librarians busy, and the text is neatly sub-divided to assist specific enquiry.

The French Resistance focuses mainly upon Marie-Madeleine Fourcade and her 'Noah's Ark' group, but also covers the famous Maquis, along with other lesser-known resistance units.

The K.G.B. is right up to date including the Geoffrey Prime Case and the spying activities recently authorised by the new Soviet premier Andropov.

This particular book features famous spy cases involving K.G.B. activities largely in Britain and the U.S.A.

Well worth buying for the library. If they turn up for a mail-order book club I hope that the descriptions are accurate and honest. Otherwise, children might be led to think that it's something that it's not and be disappointed. DB



Journey of 1000 Miles
Ian Strachan, Magnet, *
0 416 51880 X, £1.50

I've been waiting for this to become a paperback since I first read it, because I want to use it as a class reader. Strachan's story is of Lee and his family, bravely leaving all that they possess in Vietnam to attempt a crossing of the hostile China Sea. Forty people crammed into an ancient boat face deprivation and multiple dangers, which they endure and bravely overcome.

Adults might spot some contrivance in the plot but I don't doubt that children will respond well to its sprightly pace and excitement and, more importantly, acquire some insight into a poignant episode in recent history which should not be forgotten. Well recommended for lower secondary. DB

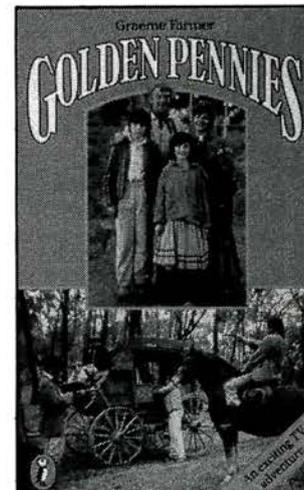
Jess and the River Kids

Judith O'Neill, Beaver,
0 09 935700 3, £1.50

The story is set in the Australian town of Glencarra, one hot summer during World War II. Jess befriends two boys who live on a houseboat and are temporarily cared for by Lizzie, an elderly English lady, who is deaf. There are two threads to the story, the adventures that Jess shares with the boys and the tales that Lizzie tells of her childhood in Northumberland and her early life in Australia. The two are linked by the children's dramatic rescue of Lizzie from a burning houseboat. There are also the mystery of a theft to be solved, a suspicious 'swagman' to be dealt with, the town ruffians to

be put in their place and the boys to be reunited with their parents. A fairly long read which is given depth in the relationship that develops between Lizzie and Jess.

There are hints of the Australian setting, forty years ago. It is, however, a story to be read anywhere. A bit long winded, but enthusiasts of ten to twelve gave high praise. 'It's not that funny but it isn't that serious, the kind of middle writing I like.' Deserves a place in the bookshop and library. CL



Golden Pennies
Graeme Farmer, Puffin,
0 14 03.1926 3, £1.75

Another Australian setting, this time in the goldfields of Victoria in the 1850s. The story tells of poverty and rivalry on the goldfields, touches on the violence of the Eureka Stockade and has a constant thread concerning two very odd bushrangers.

It is a reasonable story and testers were generally happy to read on. However it is a tale that is badly put together and the scenarios for the TV series, from which it is taken, become very obvious. The 'big' scenes happen too easily, there is little build up or follow-on, problems are resolved a little too cosily and the smiling well-dressed family group on the cover somehow speaks of the superficialities of it all. Children will be attracted by this 'exciting TV adventure'; but it is hardly strong stuff. CL

Hi There Supermouse

Jean Ure, Puffin,
0 14 03.1716 3, £1.25

'Rose was Rose, and Rose was perfect. Rose was pretty. Rose was good.' Rose was also the apple of her mother's eye and Nicola spent much of her time being regaled concerning her sister's perfections and her own imperfections. Having succeeded in making Rose ill Nicola must stand in for her at a dance rehearsal and discovers that she herself has considerable skill both as a dancer and actress. Her mother does not really wish to admit this at first but

eventually comes to be proud of both her daughters.

A fairly predictable story but told with wit and brevity. Many a sister will recognise Nicola's ability to take off both her sister and her mother behind closed doors and sympathise with her periods of intense bad feeling. An amusing, short read for the 10+ age group, not necessarily only for ballet fans. **CL**

Tales of Terror

E. Nesbit, ed. Hugh Lamb, Magnet, 0 416 51830 3, £1.50

Seven stories, sufficiently strong, nasty and varied to appeal to lovers of the macabre. I don't think they have read-aloud qualities but they're good value for book boxes and the library. **TD**

Colin's Fantastic Video Adventure

Kenneth Oppel, Puffin, 0 14 03.1796 1, £1.25

Kenneth Oppel, the blurb tells us, at present in school in Canada, wrote this book at the age of fourteen. One young tester was so impressed that he spent a great deal of time seeing how many grammatical errors and confusing sentences he could spot. He had to admit that there were not many and that it was a good story.

Colin is obsessed by space invaders. Every spare minute is spent playing them until the day two little men who whiz about in space leapt out of the machine and joined Colin for a holiday. Colin plans to work the system by feeding his friends back each time he plays to gain the perfect score. As a national hero he travels to competitions all over the

world until his conscience gets the better of him. He loses the crunch match and is last seen disappearing inside a space invader machine.

A very slick little number! In hitting on the space-invader idea the young author has chosen an area of the market that will attract all sorts of readers, including the most reluctant. **CL**

Sky in the Pie

Roger McGough, Puffin, 0 14 03.1612 4, £1.25

I like The New Poem, where 'The words have not yet / Got used to being / Where they should be.'

And The Body - 'I wouldn't be seen dead without one' - which echoes Carl Sandburg. There's a haiku and a valentine, song poems and

diary poems and . . . lots of gritty, witty McGoughery for fun and for thought. Signal Poetry Award winner. Buy several copies. **TD**

The Devil's Door-bell

Anthony Horowitz, Magnet, 0 416 45700 2, £1.50

Darker than a thousand suns. Village coven prepares to sacrifice abducted teenager in abandoned nuclear power station. Critical mass enables ancient satanic forces to resume control. Well, we knew that, sort of. Luckily, teenager has unsuspected powers for good. I liked the opening pace and build-up and the fossil dinosaur animation sequence. At the end, the hero's friend says, 'I've got a nasty feeling that this isn't all over yet.' Me too, but this book and its expected sequel(s) will attract some readers. **TD**

Older Readers

A Parcel of Patterns

Jill Paton Walsh, Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1663 9, £1.75

Perhaps the parcel from London brought plague to Eyam. Within a year, 267 villagers have died, including the parents and husband of young Mall who tells the story as a ridding charm to leave behind the voices of the dead. Early on, she apologises - 'I lack wit and skill and set things down awry' - but language and narrative are compelling. It's a story of love and suffering, fear, courage and loyalty, based on real events - with the plague as centre but also bringing close this Derbyshire lead-mining community, just post-Restoration. The apparently naive voice and the strong plot interest carry a fine historical novel so that concerns remote to us, but the context of Mall's life, are made immediate and available. I'd like to share this with Third years up. **TD**

Ladyhawke

Joan D. Vinge, Piccolo, 0 330 28872 5, £1.50

A young thief, something of an anti-hero, escapes dungeons via sewers and becomes instrumental in this fantasy-medieval-romance story of cursed lovers. Navarre is doomed to be a wolf by night, Isabeau a hawk by day. Can the evil Bishop's curse ever be broken? I was carried along by the atmosphere but only mildly concerned for the characters and their outcome. **TD**

Are You Listening, Karen?

David Day, Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1748 1, £1.50

Karen is Jay's dead elder sister. He addresses her throughout the book, as you know, Karen. Hell, Karen, it gets on your wick a bit, what you might call this confessional device. Know what I mean, Karen? Jay has several strands of his recent life to work out; sixth-form college, Dad's remarriage, friend's accident and new girlfriend. So the story moves along with commentary for Karen who, if she likes Jay as little as I do, must be gyrating in her grave at having her ear bent like this with no means of retaliation. **TD**

Win Some, Lose Some

Collected by Jo Goodman, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672427 2, £1.50

An original Lions collection of 18 stories from Australia which will appeal to 12 to 15 year olds. Mixed in length, mood and quality, all about teenagers, some will read aloud well or serve as models for story writing of the length our average exam-age pupils might aim for.

Three examples: a dialogue story of how Jan copes with parents' decision that she leaves school; a boy's turning to advantage the embarrassment of using mum's overnight bag at school; a new Australian's (Vietnamese?) feelings about displacement. Worth buying for the library and examining for classroom use. Good to have non-British writers; I like some of the non-punchy endings. **TD**

Seaward

Susan Cooper, Puffin, 0 14 03.1711 2, £1.50

How do writers and readers

deal with the value content of imagery? I saw, recently, a TIE performance for 9-13s loosely based on Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* and we discussed the use of black and white as metaphors. Can dark/light, night/day serve as images without racist implications? What other symbols and effects are available to the writer who deals with good and evil? In this Cooper story, the forces are Life and Death, male and female respectively. Paradox and ambiguity are central - Death, for example, has two faces, kindly and cruel.

Atmosphere and plot work through elements of myth, fantasy, ritual; at the same time, there's the dialogue of a contemporary adolescent friendship. The main characters are a girl and boy, suffering separate bereavements, who enter another world where their ultimate choice is to join the happy static dead of Tir n'An Og or return to 'a land ruled by Death' but also offering 'the discoveries and lovely astonishments that go with the grief and the pain'. I found the story unsatisfying as a whole but powerful in parts and worth a place in the library. **TD**

Reviewers in this issue

Some reviews also by Editor, Pat Triggs.



Jill Bennett is currently teaching in a Junior class in Middlesex. She is the compiler of *Learning to Read with Picture Books*.



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



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



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



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



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

**INFORMATION
PLEASE...**

About History – Ancient and Natural

A selection from recently published titles

Titles selected by Pat Triggs.

Discovering the Past

The shift in the study of history from kings and queens, battles and dates to the investigation of how people lived, using documents and artefacts, is now well established in many schools. The very distant past, ancient and classical civilisations can be brought to life by visits to museums and historical sites. Books obviously have an important part to play. One publisher well in tune with this move is Kingfisher whose **History as Evidence** series tells not only what we know but how we found it out. Mike Corbishley's **The Romans** (0 86272 065 6) was runner-up for the TES Information Book Award for 1983 and the two newest titles in the series are well up to standard.

Ancient Egypt, Rosalie and Antony E. David, 0 86272 091 5;
Prehistory, Keith Branigan, 0 86272 090 7
Illustrated by David Salariya and Shirley Willis, £3.95 each.

In both books illustrations reconstruct scenes which are explained and amplified in text, photographs and diagrams. **Ancient Egypt** includes evidence from Tutankhamun's tomb, from the less frequently referred to pyramid of King Salure at Abusir, and from Petrie's excavations at Kahun, a town built to house the families of the workmen and officials engaged in the building of the pyramid of King Sesostris. There's also a fascinating section on mummification and what has been learned from the most up-to-date methods of investigating mummies. Most Egyptian teenagers and adults it seems suffered severe toothache because the bread contained a great deal of grit and sand which wore away the protective outer layer of the teeth. The diet of ordinary people consisted of bread, beer and onions. Just the sort of thing to bring the past alive, especially when it's based on evidence and not just speculation.

Keith Branigan's **Prehistory** features evidence from ten prehistoric sites all over Europe (four in England). He writes in a clear accessible style, always with careful reference to the sources that surround the text, and with a tentativeness that makes clear to the reader the proper nature of archaeological interpretation. 'We do not know whether each family had its own fields'; 'This is roughly what seems to have happened at Maiden Castle'; 'Understanding the religion of prehistoric peoples is particularly difficult.'

Good stuff. A useful time chart completes this excellent book. Most obviously of use in the Middle/Secondary range but could be used by older children alone or younger ones with adult help.

Useful as a complement to these is Macdonald's **In Search Of** series. In these translations of books first published in Italy, Gian Paolo Cesarini tells the story of famous archaeological investigations: Howard Carter and Tutankhamun, Sir Arthur Evans



Breaking the seals, from **In Search of Tutankhamun**.

and Crete, Heinrich Schliemann and Troy, Pompeii since it was first unearthed by a peasant farmer in the mid-eighteenth century. Events, methods, evidence are evaluated, and well illustrated in Piero Ventura's large detailed and informative pictures. Very readable text; no index.

In Search of Tutankhamun, 0 356 11235 7;
In Search of Ancient Crete, 0 356 11232 2;
In Search of Troy, 0 356 11234 9;
In Search of Pompeii, 0 356 11233 0,
£3.95 each.

Informative Stories

A Pterodactyl, the story of a flying reptile, Beverly Halstead, pictures by Jenny Halstead, Collins, 0 00 10412 X, £4.50

Another way of dealing with evidence in an imaginative reconstruction of the brief and precarious life of Rostri, a pterodactyl who lived 150 million years ago and shared the land and the sky with an amazing variety of other creatures. The story is accompanied by bold and graphic pictures which leave nothing to the imagination and should satisfy any dinosaur-crazed reader, and, boxed off on each page spread, is a summary of the fossil evidence used as the basis for the story. It's a formula the Halsteads have used successfully before in **A Brontosaur**, **Terrible Claw** and **A Sea Serpent**. On the title page of this one appears a photograph of the fossil flying reptile, found in what is now Southern Germany, which inspired the story.

Darwin and the Voyage of the Beagle, Felicia Law, illustrated by Judy Brook, Deutsch, 0 233 97482 2, £6.95.

Described as a fictional account of Charles Darwin's work and adventures during his five year voyage, this fascinating oversize book has the same scrupulous basis in fact as the Halsteads'. A cabin boy, 12 year old Ben Sweet, befriended by Darwin, is Felicia Law's only invention and Judy Brook's black and white pictures which occupy more

than half the book are equally carefully researched.

Joyce Pope's **Animals in Town** series from Hamish Hamilton contains a wealth of interesting facts woven into a story which tells how different creatures live, breed and survive in towns. Well observed and informative pictures by Elizabeth Gross.

The Duck, 0 241 11466 7; **The Hedgehog**, 0 241 11467 5; **The Starling**, 0 241 11469 1, £3.95 each.

Also in story form but dealing with animals not likely to be seen first hand are two titles by Margaret Davidson in paperback from Hippo.

Dolphins, illustrated by Ian Andrew, 0 590 70356 0, £1.75.
Sea Otters, illustrated by Meryl Meisler, 0 590 70355 2, £1.50.

Dolphins, in slightly larger format, has a simple text, divided into chapters. It is set in large type size, well spaced to make it accessible to less experienced readers. Evocative, blue-toned pictures spread across the pages and show dolphins in every kind of beautiful movement.

Sea Otters, the smallest sea mammal of all, live off the coast of California and 'look like giant teddy bears'. The sea otter 'drifts from place to place on its back. It even sleeps on its back (if it slept face down it would drown) ... On a sunny day ... it simply shades its eyes with its paws.' I defy you not



Studying finches for beak development to suit different eating habits, from **Darwin and the Voyage of the Beagle**.

to succumb to their charms especially as drawn by Meryl Meisler. A longer text but also divided into chapters and, like **Dolphins**, suitable for reading aloud or alone.



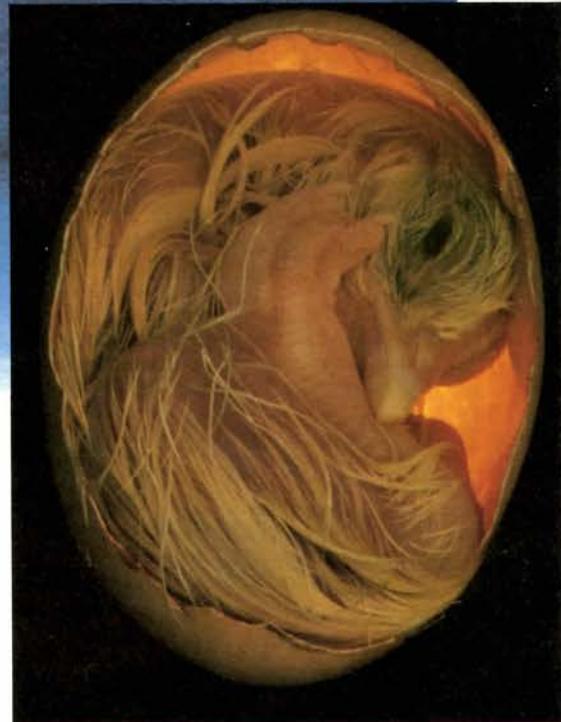
Scared otters hold each other tight, from **Sea Otters**.

on the left hand page draw attention to and amplify different stages in the processes which the photographs record. Simple index. Throughout the tone of the writing is exactly right; the design works and involvement of a realistic kind is invited. A model of its kind. Highly recommended.

Use **Your Eyes**, a new series from Wayland also uses a combination of photographs and coloured drawings. Easy to use, easy to read, with glossary, index and suggestions for things to do. Just what's needed for 6-7s investigating the environment. First two titles by Sarah McKenzie:

In the Woods, 85078 502 2; **In the Pond**, 85078 503 0, £3.75 each.

A baby dolphin asleep with his mother, from **Dolphin!**



A chick at eighteen days, from **Chicken and Egg**.

The Natural World

Good information books for Infants and young Juniors in this popular area are hard to find. If the presentation is accessible the information is often inadequate, failing to stimulate interest or answer questions. Often it seems preferable to use good adult books in a joint adult and child investigation. But there are some exceptions, notably where the information is contained in high quality illustration which can be 'read' by young enquirers.

Like the four titles in Mary Hoffman's excellent **Animals in the Wild** series for Belitha/Methuen.

Zebra, 0 416 53340 X; **Lion**, 0 416 53330 2; **Gorilla**, 0 416 53310 8; **Hippo**, 0 416 53320 5, £2.50 each.

A combination of colour photographs and simple text which invites the reader to look is the recipe. Of these **Zebra** is particularly well put together. The Zebra is not an animal that gets a lot of attention in books; here we see how its hair grows, discover different patterns of stripes and different sorts of zebra. Watch them having a dust bath, and 'helping each other with itches'.

All the books have a short index and list of 'Useful Words'.

Stunning colour photography of a quite amazing quality is a feature of the **Stopwatch** series from A and C Black.

Chicken and Egg, Christine Back and Jens Olesen, Photographs by Bo Janner, 0 7136 2425 6; **Broad Bean**, 0 7136 2427 2; **Spider's Web**, 0 7136 2428 0; **Tadpole and Frog**, 0 7136 2426 4.

All by Christine Back, photographs by Barrie Watts, £3.50 each.

Close-up photographs, beautifully lit, show the bean growing, the chicken hatching, the tadpole becoming a frog and the spider spinning its web. Simple text with additional photographs and line drawings or diagrams

Discovering Science

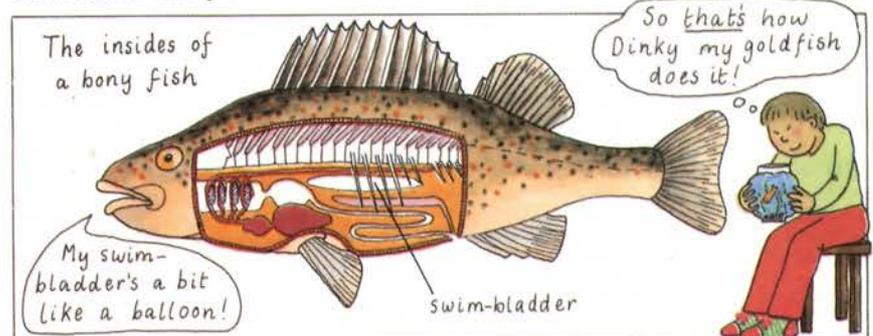
Examples from History, ancient and natural, form part of the lively approach to understanding science found in

Let's Imagine: Water, Tom Johnston illustrated by Sarah Pooley, Bodley Head, 0 376 30867 0, £4.95

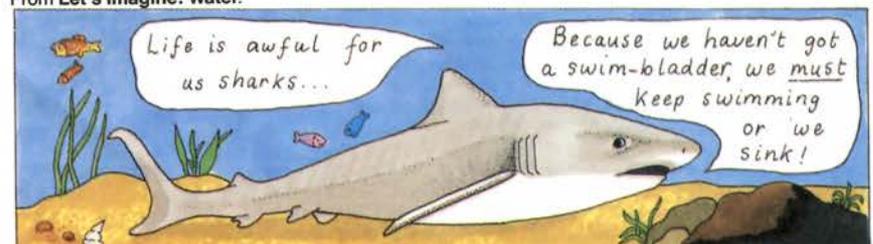
This is the first book in the new series from Bodley Head which takes as its keynote Einstein's phrase, 'To imagine is everything'. The content is not very different from that found in many books dealing with science for the primary/lower secondary level.

What makes this book different and highly recommendable is the total integration between Tom Johnston's text and Sarah Pooley's illustrations which makes for extremely entertaining reading and learning about water. Where possible Tom Johnston

combines facts with discovery and experiment and Sarah Pooley's humorous and inventive use of speech bubbles makes the book look inviting and accessible. ●



From **Let's Imagine: Water**.



AWARDS

Carnegie and Greenaway

This year's award of the Library Association's prestigious medals for excellence in books for children was made on 14th June. The names of the two winners had been kept strictly secret, so that the atmosphere in the British Library Boardroom at the presentation was a bit like the Oscar ceremony – authors, artists, publishers all waiting to see whose name was in the envelope.



Photo, The Press, Christchurch.

In the event **The Carnegie Medal** for an outstanding book written for children went to Margaret Mahy for **The Changeover**.

The thirteen strong selection panel which consisted of children's librarians representing all regions of the UK commented:

'The combination of supernatural thriller and teenage romance produced a novel of superb characterisation, original plot and powerful imaginative fantasy.'

Margaret Mahy now becomes one of a small group of authors to win the Carnegie Medal twice. She was awarded it first in 1982 for **The Haunting**.

Highly commended was Robert Swindells' **Brother in the Land** (OUP, 0 19 271491 0, £5.95 and Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.1798 8, £1.50) for the way it 'graphically illustrates in a brave and imaginative manner life in the devastation following a nuclear war.'

Shortlisted were:

On the Edge by Gillian Cross
OUP, 0 19 271486 4, £6.95

Badger on the Barge and Other Stories by Janni Howker
Julia MacRae, 0 86203 163 X, £5.95

Christabel by Alison Morgan
Julia MacRae, 0 86203 136 2, £2.95

The Changeover
is published by Dent, 0 460 06153 4, at £6.95.

Nominations for these awards can be submitted by any member of the Library Association and literally hundreds of librarians are involved in the initial selection process. The awards are organised by the Youth Libraries Group of the LA and the selection panel is chaired by the current YLG chairperson, who this year is Grace Shaw.

The Kathleen Fidler Award

The 1984 Kathleen Fidler Award has been awarded to Janet Collins for her novel, **Barty**. The Award, now in its third year, was suggested by the Edinburgh Children's Book Group to honour prolific children's author, Kathleen Fidler. It is sponsored by Blackie & Son and administered by the National Book League in Scotland.

The judges report: '**Barty** is a convincing and sympathetic story about a boy of restricted growth who longs to take part in all the activities that his schools friends enjoy but because of his small size he is unable to. Worst of all he is looked upon by friends as something of a freak.'

During the summer holiday, Barty meets Dan, a boy from the local Canoe Club. Through canoeing and his friendship with Dan, Barty's confidence grows and by the end of the summer he achieves a longstanding ambition of going to camp with his friends and being accepted as a "normal" boy.'

Janet Collins was born in Leicestershire and at present is living with her husband and two sons in Ironbridge, Telford. She has taught drama in secondary schools since 1955. **Barty** is her first book for children and will be published by Blackie Children's Books in March 1986. ●

The Kate Greenaway Medal for the most distinguished work in the illustration of children's books went to Errol le Cain for his illustration of **Hiawatha's Childhood** with a text taken from Longfellow's poem, **Hiawatha**.



Photo by Jenny Bauer.

The selection panel commended 'a set of outstandingly beautiful designs, capturing the atmosphere, interpreting and enriching the verse, bringing the poem to life.'

Errol le Cain has been shortlisted for the Greenaway on three previous occasions. This is the first time he has won it.

Shortlisted this year were:

Cat and Canary by Michael Foreman
Andersen Press, 0 86264 075 X, £4.95

Lucy and Tom's ABC by Shirley Hughes
Gollancz, 0 575 03398 3, £3.95

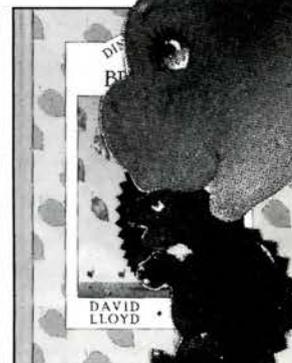
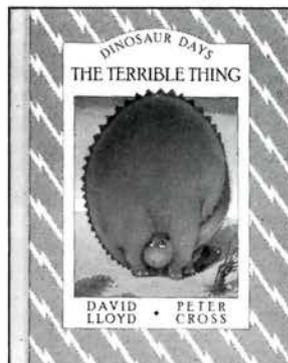
Sammy Streetsinger by Charles Keeping
OUP, 0 19 279782 4, £4.95

Christmas by Jan Pienkowski
Heinemann, 0 434 95649 X, £5.95

There's a Sea in My Bedroom illustrated by Jane Turner
text by Margaret Wild, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11345 8, £4.95

Hiawatha's Childhood
is published by Faber, 0 571 13286 3, at £5.95.

Give your children a dinosaur
that goes *hoo hā nichoc*
and you won't hear
a **peep** out of them!



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by David Lloyd · Illustrated by Peter Cross

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Breakfast 0-7445-0297-7 Silly Games 0-7445-0299-3

Published June 1985
Only £1.95 each, hardback



From Walker Books

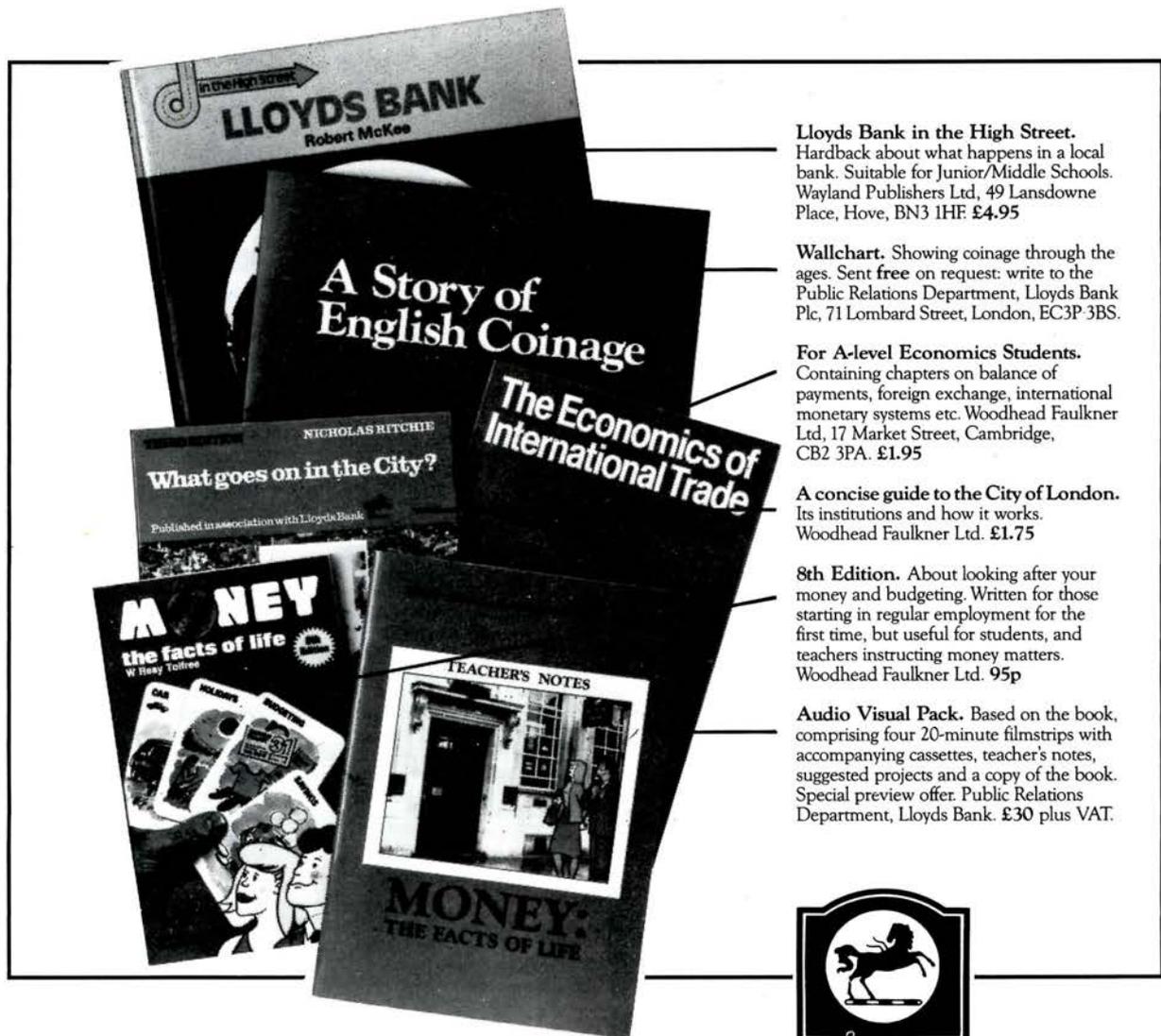
The children's book publisher

Walker Books Ltd, 184-192 Drummond Street, London NW1 3HP.

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Return to Oz

Going over the rainbow and along the yellow brick road to find the Wizard of Oz with Judy Garland's Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion and the Scarecrow, has become something of an annual television event. This month sees the release of **Return to Oz** the first major Oz film to challenge MGM's classic musical made in 1939. Puffin have the tie-in novel and are launching new editions of eight of the original Oz stories in a series it's calling **The World of Oz**. Hippo have a large size Picture Storybook of the film illustrated with full colour stills.



Dorothy, Tik-Tok, Jack Pumpkinhead and the Gump from Puffin's **Return to Oz**.

The Books

Children and their parents are likely to flock to the film. It's a relief, for once, to be able to recommend without reservations the tie-in books which come with it.

Listening to it read aloud or reading independently, children from six upwards should have no difficulty with Alistair Hedley's **Return to Oz** based on the photoplay written by the film's director, Walter Murch, and Gill Dennis. The book has a straightforward narrative in ten short chapters generously illustrated by Jo Worth's attractive line drawings and with four pages of colour stills from the film. Also based on the Murch and Dennis photoplay is Lance Salway's story version for Hippo. It's very much a shot for shot re-working of the film and strangely seems more two-dimensional than Alistair Hedley's story; but it is very lavishly illustrated with stills from the film in full colour. Good for a child who needs to relive the film in a literal way.

Simultaneously with the book of the film Puffin are publishing the first eight of Baum's Oz adventures – an enticingly collectable series which could well be greeted as enthusiastically by children now as each book was 70 and 80 years ago. **The Wizard of Oz** on which the MGM musical was based appeared first in 1900 and was an instant popular success. **The Marvellous Land of Oz** came four years later and from then on it was a book a year whether Baum liked it or not. The response from his American child readers who looked forward to a new Oz book every Christmas was comparable to that inspired by Enid Blyton. When he tried to put an end to the series with the sixth book, **The Emerald City of Oz**, in which he magics Uncle Henry and Aunt Em to Oz and has the famous sorceress, Glinda the Good, use her magic charm to make the Land of Oz 'entirely disappear from the knowledge of the rest of the world', they would not have it. Two years later Oz was visible again in **The Patchwork Girl of Oz** and seven more stories followed, the last two published after Baum's death in 1919.

Unlike many 'classic' tales from the early years of this century Baum may well find an audience of enthusiastic new readers. His inventiveness in creating cast upon cast of yet more strange and wonderful characters is remarkable. Professor Woggleby, for instance, who feeds his students School Pills – 'We live in an age of Progress. It is easier to swallow Knowledge than to acquire it laboriously from books.' The time saved is spent on athletics; the Cuttenclips all made of paper – 'VISITORS are requested to MOVE SLOWLY and CAREFULLY and to avoid COUGHING or making any BREEZE or DRAUGHT'; the Yoop, the Shaggy Man, the Woozy. Some make a brief and entertaining appearance, others stay around and join the team which from book to book never fails to find an adventurous quest or exciting struggle with the equally diverting cast of villains. It's all very pacy (no hold-ups for long descriptions) and child-centred: A. A. Milne crossed with Dr Seuss with a dash of Dahl and Monty Python thrown in for good measure. Except of course that they all came *after* Oz. If Dorothy has a literary predecessor it is Alice. But the breath of life blown into Oz is very much of the New World.

Baum's robust brand of escapism, his strong female characters, his humour, his brisk event-filled narrative and his almost total lack of whimsy should recommend him anew in this country to adults and children alike. ●

The Books from Puffin:

- The Wizard of Oz**, 0 14 03.1935 2, £1.25
- The Marvellous Land of Oz**, 0 14 03.1936 0, £1.25
- Ozma of Oz**, 0 14 03.1937 9, £1.25
- Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz**, 0 14 03.1938 7, £1.25
- The Road to Oz**, 0 14 03.1939 5, £1.25
- The Emerald City of Oz**, 0 14 03.1940 9, £1.25
- The Patchwork Girl of Oz**, 0 14 03.1941 7, £1.25
- Tik-Tok of Oz**, 0 14 03.1942 5, £1.25
- Return to Oz**, Alistair Hedley, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1957 3, £1.50.

from Hippo:

- Return to Oz**, Lance Salway, 0 590 70420 6, £2.50



Dorothy & Billina, photo courtesy Puffin.

The Film

Walt Disney Pictures' **Return to Oz** (not a musical) is the final realization of a project begun over 20 years ago when Disney bought the rights to eleven of L. Frank Baum's Oz books. It takes characters and ideas from several of the Oz stories to make a new narrative. You will remember that at the end of **The Wizard of Oz** Dorothy returns to Kansas leaving the Scarecrow (with his new brain) to rule Oz. When she returns in this new film she finds the Yellow Brick Road and the Emerald City in ruins and all her friends turned to stone. The cruel Princess Mombi (Jean Marsh) and the wicked Nome King who is made of stone (Nicol Williamson under inches of complicated make-up) have taken over. It's up to Dorothy, Toto and Billina (the talking hen) with their new friends Jack Pumpkinhead and Tik-Tok (fighting machine extraordinary) to put things right.

As you would expect the screenplay provides a field day for special effects: a talking hen for instance and The Flying Gump created from a stuffed Gump's head with an old Victorian sofa for a body and palm fronds for wings. Nine-year-old Fairuza Balk who plays Dorothy flies on its back. She is also catapulted through windows, falls headfirst into a raging river and is swept away clinging to a chicken coop. The sets and costumes are, of course, spectacular. Richard Hughes who designed the costumes says he took as his reference point the woodcuts, drawings and colour illustrations done by John R. Neill for the early edition of L. Frank Baum's stories. And the characterisations of the Scarecrow, the Tin Man etc. are based on the original drawings by William Wallace Denslow, Baum's first collaborator.

Return to Oz was made in England, filmed mainly at Elstree Studios where the Emerald City was built and also on Salisbury Plain where they recreated the Kansas farmstead where Dorothy lived with Aunt Em and Uncle Henry which was carefully stocked with the type and breed of animals authentic to mid-west USA in 1900.

The film has all the ingredients of the early Disney – adventure, suspense, excitement, some gruesome bits, some funny bits and good fighting against evil. All that and a strong, resourceful heroine. What more could you want to while away a wet day this summer?