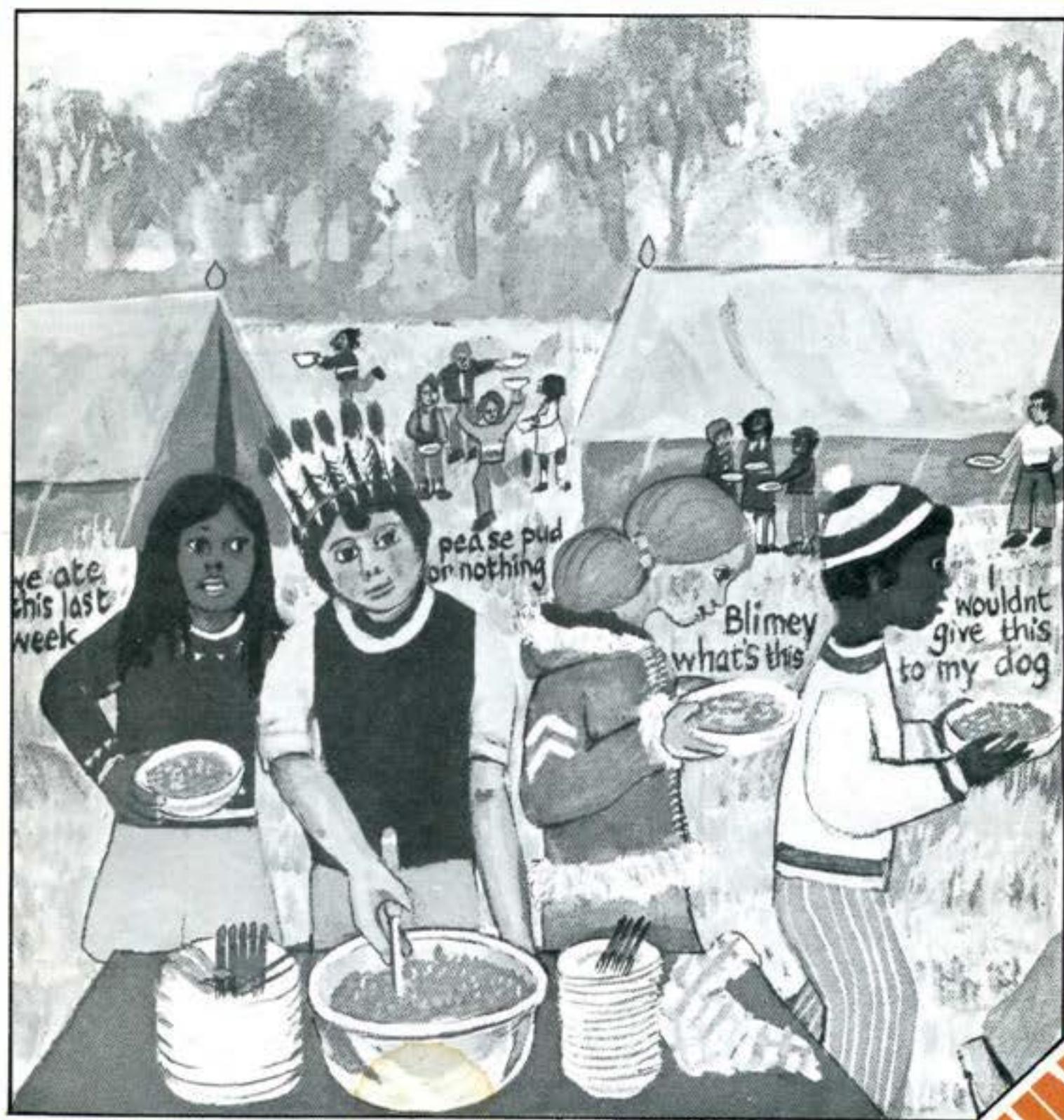


BOOKS FOR KEEPS

SEPT 1980 No. 4
UK Price 85p



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HOW TO CREATE A BOOK

MULTI-FUNING
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Editorial correspondence:

Pat Triggs
36 Ravenswood Road
Bristol, Avon, BS6 6BW
Tel: 0272 49048

Subscriptions and advertising:

Richard Hill
1 Effingham Road
Lee, London, SE12 8NZ
Tel: 01-852 4953

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Reviewers

in this issue



Jill Bennett

Jill has a class of 4 to 7-year-olds in outer
London. She is Literary Editor of **Child
Education** and on the Board of the SBA.



Steve Bowles

Steve is a secondary teacher and was co-
producer of **Reviewsheet** (reviews for
teachers) until it ceased publication.



Colin Mills (left)

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



Bill Boyle (right)

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



Yvonne White

Yvonne was formerly a teacher/librarian in
a comprehensive school and ran a school
bookshop for six years. She is currently
Northern School Bookshop Manager for
W. H. Smith.



Margaret Cooper (left)

Margaret and her husband opened their own
bookshop in Bromsgrove three years ago and
have developed strong links with schools. She
has taught with the Open University since
1974.



David Bennett (right)

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

EDITOR'S PAGE



A cry from the heart answered

Claire O'Connor was one of the winners in the 21st W. H. Smith Children's Literary Competition. Her entry *That's Life* is included in *Children as Writers* (Heinemann, 0 435 13410 8, £2.50). She writes: 'Should this experience get you down? Is there something wrong with me? Am I so different that growing up for me is a painful experience? Someone, please, please answer me. I wonder why menstruation is kept so quiet. I wonder and ask why?'

The rawness of the emotion in this sad experience hits hard at teachers and parents. Claire was fourteen when she wrote down her feelings. She's fifteen now. *Have you Started Yet?* by Ruth Thomson (Heinemann, 0 434 96600 2, £3.50) may save others from the pain caused by ignorance. It's a blessedly honest book which deals with feelings as well as facts. Happily it's published simultaneously in *Piccolo* (0 330 26134 7, 80p).

Something out-of-the-ordinary

A press release in Latin (with English crib) announced *Domus Anguli Puensis* (*The House at Pooh Corner* to you), Brian Staples' translation of A. A. Milne's evergreen story (Methuen, 0 416 88550 0, £3.95). Mr Staples (ex Birmingham Public Librarian) followed Dr Alexander Lenard (*Winnie Ille Pu*) as translator as a sort of therapy for early retirement because of illness. It's a great improvement on most Latin readers (*Et frigorum digitorum, Tiddely Pum*) — it's fun.



And for sheer strange beauty you can't beat Martin Ware's illustrations for Christina Rossetti's magically mysterious *Goblin Market* (Gollancz, 0 575 02772 X, £4.95). Look and see — you'll be bewitched.

Pat

Just as we (parents and teachers) were coming to the end of another annual round of Summer Fairs and Sports Days and beginning to think the holidays were actually nearly here, came the latest DES report on reading standards. Things it seems are not as bad as they might be. Most eleven-year-olds can read. Two-thirds of them however, only comics and annuals. Difficult to know whether to cheer or groan. If, like me, you believe that children who haven't plugged themselves into a rich source of stories are as deprived as they would be if cut off from protein, you read on in the report for further clues. What about this one? 'Children who live in the country,' the report says, 'are more likely to be book readers than are city dwellers.' The possible reasons are legion. But, I wonder, is it something to do with that old theme of not enough books about urban children? Being able to find yourself in books is important in developing a view of yourself and an attitude to reading.

Focus on Multi-ethnic groups

For a long time ethnic minorities have not been able to find themselves positively reflected in books. Things are changing slowly. In this issue of *Books for Keeps* we focus on multi-cultural books; there's news of a new NBL Booklist and comment from its compilers, an Authorgraph of Farrukh Dhondy, a Talking Point from Rosemary Stones and lots of information. Don't think that just because you are miles from a minority community this is not for you. 'For centuries Britain has been brought up to regard black people as inferior or at best a source of entertainment.' Words spoken after the April riots in St Paul's, Bristol. Books helped to create this image, books can help to undo it — in all our minds.

Cover story

A delightfully positive step in the right direction is *Mother Goose Comes to Cable Street* (Kestrel/Puffin), a collection of nursery rhymes chosen by Rosemary Stones and Andrew Mann, and illustrated by Dan Jones. The illustrations are a joy, full of life and humour, rich in detail and surprises, and all recognisably from London's East End. Sadly we can't show you the colour — you'll just have to rush out and get the new Picture Puffin. 80p's worth of pure delight.

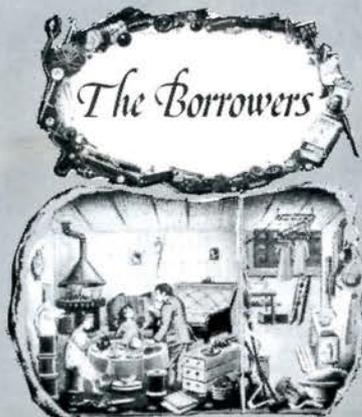
How to ... organise a Christmas Book Fair

We've been hearing a lot about your plans for book fairs and book events this term, especially in Children's Book Week. You've positively overwhelmed Margaret Turfrey with requests for *Hints for Organisers*; unfortunately some of you have been disappointed not to get the 'free' authors you would

have liked. Sadly there are only a limited number available and some of them get snapped up very early. If you haven't been lucky, don't let that stop you having a fair. Authors aren't everything. See your book supplier about a special display, put the spotlight on hardbacks (everyone should have a hardback for Christmas), get some balloons, badges, posters, stickers, and you're away. Why not make Secombe's Selection a feature of your event (page 28)? Do get the children involved — in one school we know the kids are doing their own *Book Tower* programme for visitors.

More about old favourites, please

You haven't been writing just about Book Week. Jack Freeborn, headmaster of a junior school in Halifax, writes: 'Please can you say a bit more about well-tried old favourites — not every reader knows about them. One teacher of lower juniors recently said to me, "After Dahl's 'Charlie' books and *Stig of the Dump* I can't find any more good ones for reading aloud.'" Point taken. We hope top junior teachers found Elaine Moss's article useful in the July *Books for Keeps*. We are working on lists for lower juniors. Meanwhile some August reissues in paperback seem just the thing. Penguin are reissuing all Mary Norton's 'Borrowers' series (75p) with beautiful covers by Pauline Baynes. The first story of these tiny resourceful people who live alongside the 'Human Beans' and 'borrow' our possessions for their everyday needs is told in *The Borrowers* — a splendid read-aloud (edit the beginning a bit) for lower juniors. If you haven't read Russell Hoban's classic *The Mouse and his Child* (Puffin, 80p), don't wait any longer. This epic tale of the quest by two clockwork toys to become self-winding and their encounters with Manny Rat cannot fail to move and inspire. Try also *Dominic*, William Steig (65p), *Along Came a Dog*, Meindert deJong (75p) and, for slightly younger readers/listeners, *Mary-Mary* (80p), Joan Robinson's genuinely funny adventures of the youngest in a family of five who always manages to come out on top (all in Fontana Lions). It's a vintage month for reprints.



The National Book League has recently published a new booklist — a selection of books for children and young people in multi-cultural Britain.

Ruth Ballin, Jean Bleach and Josie Levine explain the background against which they chose books for

A Wider Heritage

We are at a point of change. Awareness among the majority of the multicultural nature of British society is increasing; contrasting feelings about the future of minorities within this society are being expressed more openly than ever before by minority and majority alike; research reveals problems of racism not only at large but also in schools; but happily, the voices of the minority communities are being heard with increasing force — and, in some areas at least, being taken seriously.

How is all this reflected in the world of books? Beginning to be taken seriously by publishers and colleagues in the 'educating' professions are the voices of a forceful minority of teachers, librarians, parents and community groups who, for a decade or so, have been questioning the attitudes that underlie our society, and hence, among other things, curricula in schools and publishing for schools and young people. Their view, in the matter of books and curriculum, is that schools and publishers, by the sin of omission, contribute to and maintain a form of institutionalised racism, and in so doing collude to demean and consequently damage young people in our community, whether they are members of minority groups or of the so-called majority.

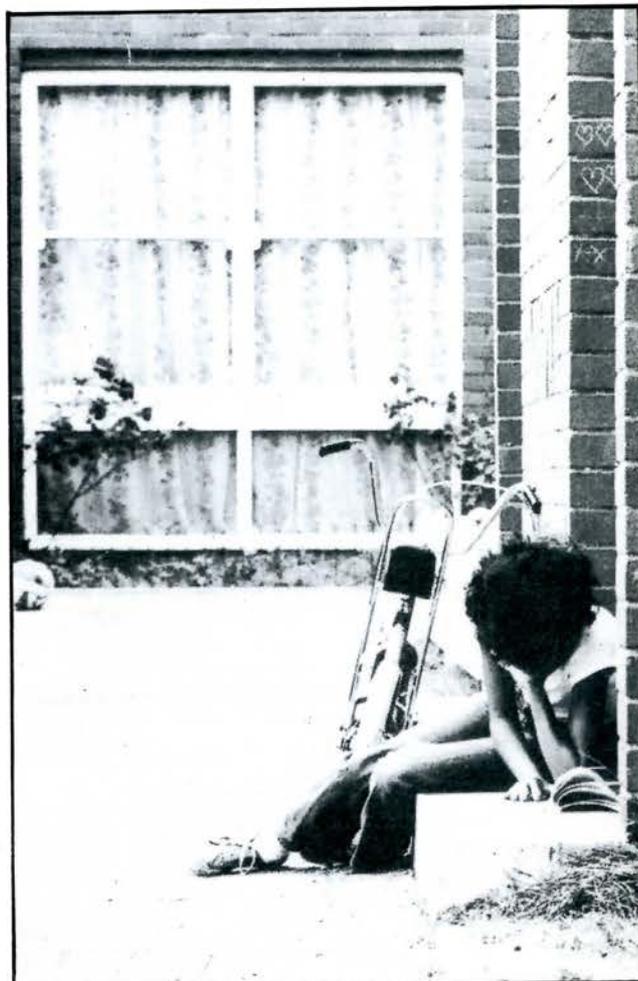
Indeed, here we are entering the 1980s, and we find ourselves still asking questions like: why cannot all groups find themselves reflected and playing strong roles in books? And: why isn't it normal to expect the values of all societies and backgrounds to be represented in books so that it is possible to deepen understanding both of one's own group and of others? Where these books do exist, why isn't it easy to get hold of them? Some writers get taken up only by minority publishers and other books go out of print before they have had time to gain a hold. These are serious matters and create great obstacles to giving children access to a wider heritage.

What of the books that *are* available? Those for younger children are in some cases little more than an acknowledgement that children from cultures other than white, Anglo-Saxon, middle class can be represented in books. They offer an environment out of which more positive assertions can come. Mostly, they do not take up issues. Mostly, they are written from the 'outside'. Perhaps for this to change we have to wait till some of the children grow into writers themselves. Where they have (some are in print with minority publishers) there is a sense of urgency and authenticity which refuses to be ignored.

Older children will be at many different points in the process of entering into an understanding of the effects of racism on individuals and societies. These stages correspond, to some extent, with the many ways of thinking that exist about oppressed and minority groups. Some books available though 'liberal' and 'generous' for their time, can be considered now to present outdated views. This does not disqualify them. They remain, under some conditions, ways into understanding, just as they were when first written — so long as they are not the only books that children read.

Ruth Ballin is Assistant Warden at the ILEA Centre for Language in Primary Education. Jean Bleach is Head of English at Langdon Park School, London and Josie Levine lectures in the English Department of the London University Institute of Education.

They have worked together in compiling *A Wider Heritage* drawing on their experience with children, young people and teachers, and the ways in which they respond to and use books. 'The consumers have had their say, albeit indirectly, as much as we have.' They recognise that at the current stage of publishing, 'any list must inevitably have gaps' and 'some of the books one does choose are barely adequate to do the range of jobs we need done in the classroom.' Yet they believe it is important to publish. The list is a reflection of the situation in 1980 — a contribution to the achievement of a society which is genuinely multi-cultural.





Books should make it possible for children to enter imaginatively the lives of people other than themselves (maybe other groups than their own; maybe their own group but where the experience is different from their own through differences in time and place); and for them, through this reading, to create for themselves a 'virtual world' that enables them both to understand their own present position better and also to empathise with that of other people. But books must also be 'good to read' in their own right, not simply fulfil an educational, emotional or moral purpose.

This is the background against which we compiled **A Wider Heritage**. At present the publication of books for multi-cultural understanding in Britain burgeons; a real sign of the increase in awareness we mentioned earlier. Our list is not the end of the matter. There are journals which regularly review new publications. There are and will be other bibliographies.

If all present criteria were fulfilled in the matter of producing anti-racist and non-racist books, there still remains the challenge of what is and is not 'acceptable'. For example, myth and legend, and, say, Caribbean literature are no longer the contentious issues they once were (although the myth and legend of some cultures is still more 'acceptable' than that of others even when they deal with the same underlying themes!). But, the question remains. How far — and, therefore, how seriously — are we prepared to extend hospitality in our homes and classrooms to the perspectives offered by a different culture and political ideology? How should we respond to books from Red China published by Foreign Language Press, Peking, for instance? We own to a feeling that the direct messages of joint endeavour and mutual help in these books demonstrate a certainty of values — and useful values at that — which it would be good to see in some children's books published here. ●

About Books

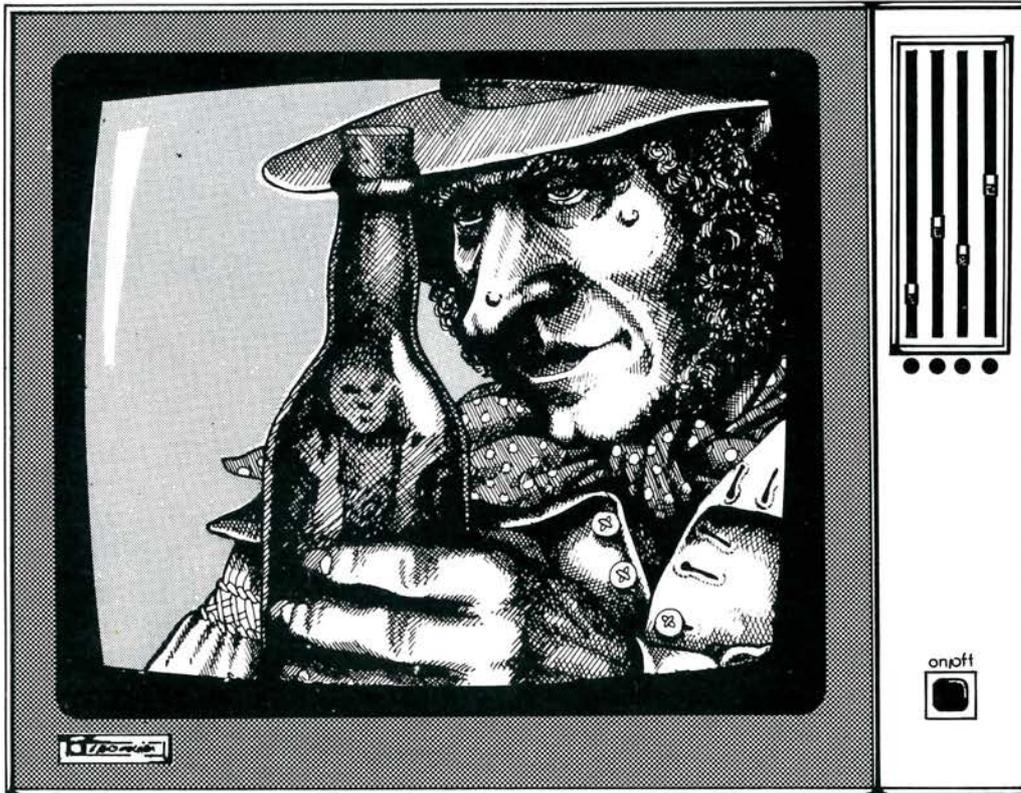


Illustration by Yvonne Gilbert from *Abbey Lubbers, Bamshees & Boggarts (Kestrel)* - one of the books featured in *British Folk Tales and Legends*.

ABOUT BOOKS is a series of five programmes across the year, which tries to encourage more reading by children in the 9-12 age range. A variety of books, both fiction and non-fiction, is presented in a lively and entertaining way through film clips, dramatisations, readings etc. The advisor for the series is Elaine Moss, selector of the National Book League's 'Children's Books of the Year' exhibition.

Autumn term 1980, Spring and Summer terms 1981.

Tuesday 10.04-10.24 in the school year 1980-81, the series will feature books on the following topics:

LIVING TOGETHER

September 23

FARAWAY PLACES

March 24

**BRITISH FOLK TALES
AND LEGENDS**

November 25

HOBBIES

May 5

WORK

January 20

For more information, please contact *The Education Officer, About Books, Thames Television Ltd., 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9LL*, or The Education Officer at your local ITV Company.

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reviews

NEW PLUMAGE FOR Picture Puffins



Old Format

New Format

For years Picture Puffins have come in varied shapes and sizes, and booksellers have been driven quietly bonkers wondering how best to display them. 25th September will see the end of all that (or at least the beginning of almost the end). With a bumper bunch of new titles and welcome reissues, in comes the new style Picture Puffin.

It's much bigger than before, has a new logo and at least one edge is the new standard 229mm. For some books, like *Captain Pugwash* this will be the spine, for others, like *The Wind Blew*, the top edge. The covers will still come titled front and back so that books can be displayed either way up, and some will have a white border. There's a new standard price too — at least for this first lot — 80p.

In the midst of all this standardisation it's a great relief to find that Puffin recognise that being true to the book is more important than being helpful to booksellers. There are two super exceptions to the new standard rule.

The Snowman Raymond Briggs, 0 14 050.350 1, £1.25

This beautifully wordless story, told in softly-coloured pictures, is reproduced full-size. Three cheers. Who would want to lose a millimetre of this magical book?

and

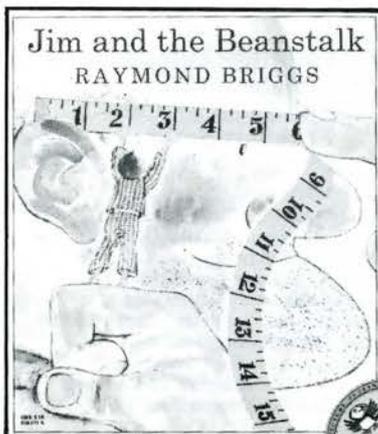
Morris's Disappearing Bag Rosemary Wells, 0 14 050.319 6, 80p

Another proof that small is beautiful, and thank heavens for the recognition that its size and proportion are an essential part of the book's appeal. The paperback is only marginally smaller than the original hardback. The humour of Rosemary Wells' drawings is irresistible — one look and you're smiling — and this story of a rather 'different' Christmas present should sell so fast that how to display its non-standard format becomes an irrelevant issue.

The new titles are a welcome bunch:

Cat and Mouse, 0 14 050.297 1

A collection of not-so-familiar nursery rhymes illustrated by Rodney Peppé.



The Rat Race, 0 14 050.311 0

The first of Colin McNaughton's Amazing Adventures of Anton B Stanton 'a very small boy, just about as tall as an ordinary teacup'. A witty and sophisticated book for older readers.

The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch, 0 14 050.327 7

Ronda and David Armitage's first picture book — a good story for the youngest.

Mother Goose Comes to Cable Street, 0 14 050.313 7

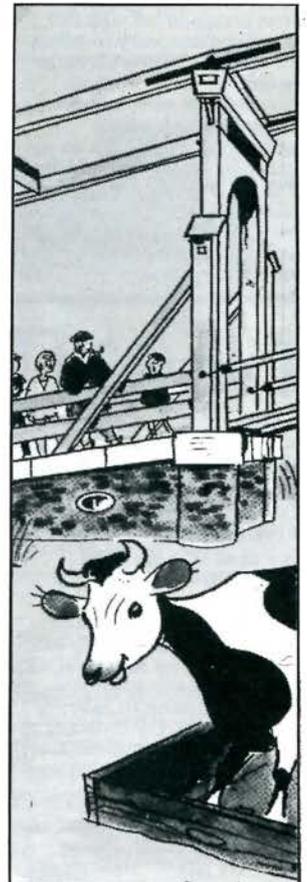
Our cover book for this issue (see Editor's Page, page 3). Even more welcome are some of the reissues which have been unavailable for a frustratingly long time.

Jim and the Beanstalk, 0 14 050.077 4

The new size serves Raymond Briggs' marvellously comic variation on the Jack story well.

The Cow Who Fell in the Canal, 0 14 050.034 0

Phyllis Krasilovsky's story of Hendrika the cow who feels somehow that there must be more to life than eating grass and accidentally finds out what it is, has been delighting children for over twenty years in hardback and then in Puffin.



The new larger pages allow the details of Peter Spier's characterful illustrations of Holland to be explored and relished more easily.

Pat Hutchins should never be allowed to go out of print. Two favourites *The Wind Blew*, 0 14 050.236 X, and the marvellously funny *Don't Forget the Bacon*, 0 14 050.315 3, are now back with us.

As is John Ryan's *Captain Pugwash*, 0 14 050.013 8.

PAPERBACKS NURSERY/INFANT

Sam Who Never Forgets

Eve Rice, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.348, 80p

Every day at three o'clock, zookeeper Sam takes round his wagon and feeds the animals; he never forgets. But one day the wagon is empty and poor elephant hasn't had his food. Has he been forgotten?

Children are immediately sympathetic when it seems that elephant will go hungry. A good one to read aloud to nursery and reception classes whilst the simple text, attractive pictures and clear, well-spaced type make it especially good for beginner readers. JB

The Worst Person in the World

James Stevenson, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.286 6, 80p

I was disappointed with this very American story in which 'the worst' is converted by a cheerful monster, from a miserable old man, into a fun-loving party thrower; it nowhere near measures up to James Stevenson's *Could Be Worse*. Certainly not one I would choose to read aloud to infants, though it may well appeal to slightly older individual readers. JB

Cops and Robbers

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Picture Lion, 0 00 661681 X, 80p

Grabber Dan, Snatcher Jack, Billy-the-Bag, Peg-Leg Horace, Fingers Maurice and Grandma Swagg — a villainous gang if ever there was one — plan a campaign to rob all the children of their Christmas presents. They had reckoned without the hidden talents of gallant Officer Pugh though. Too good to restrict to Christmas, this story, told in rollicking rhyme, is one which infants and younger juniors will enjoy hearing and reading all year round. JB



Dorothy Edwards' Story Time One

Magnet, 0 416 88930 1, 75p

Dorothy Edwards knows just what appeals to the very young so her selection of short tales from the writing of others will be a godsend to anyone who shares stories with the under-fives. Very definitely a 'read aloud' though as the print is minute.

This and *Story Time Two* (available in August) are taken from *The Read-me-another-story Book* (Methuen 1976). JB

The Rich Man and the Shoe-maker

Illustrated by Brian Wildsmith, Oxford University Press, 0 19 272104 6, £1.25

A full-size, good value paperback of an early Wildsmith — the fable by La Fontaine in which a shoe-maker concludes that gold is more trouble than it's worth. Rich humorous illustrations and good, clear print make this an attractive read alone or read aloud for infants and young juniors. JB



INFANT/JUNIOR

Ginnie

Ted Greenwood, Fontana, 0 00 671703 9, 80p

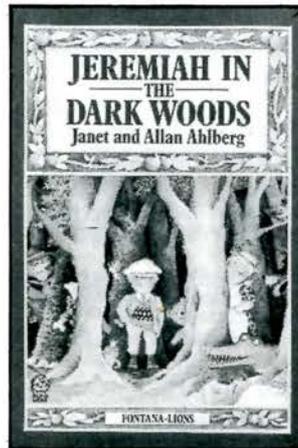
Any child who has lived through the excitement of a first trip to the cinema, the thrill of a day at the seaside, the frustration of a family row or the anxiety of a sick pet will warm to this new character. This author has a delightfully evocative, low-key style and a perfect ear for the six-year-old's constant questioning and sense of justice!

Six delightful stories about Ginnie and her cat, Pinkus, which are just the right length for seven-year-olds to take on alone. Vividly contemporary and immediate illustrations, too, by the author. CM

Jeremiah in the Dark Woods

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671640 7, 75p

An Ahlberg romp through fairyland in which Jeremiah Obadiah Jackenory Jones goes in search of the no-good robber who has stolen his



grandma's tarts. Among those he meets up with are three bears, a sly wolf, the Mad Hatter, a frog prince and a sleeping beauty before he finally unmasks the culprit, Goldilocks. Sevens to nines will cope with the words and enjoy the funny drawings (not, though, especially well reproduced in my copy). But will they all catch the humour of this send-up of stock fairy story characters? MC

Magic in the Air

Phyllis Arkle, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1179 3, 75p

A delightful yarn, set in Scotland, about Sam and the Weather-vane Witch, the Dragon from the Church spire and the Weathercock, who all come to life and trap a gang of Egg Snatchers. Sam's one of the most sympathetic characters I've come across in a while: the little boy who believes in magic but just can't convince the adults! It's a super cliffhanging (literally!) ending. If you haven't got to it, I do recommend this same author's *The Village Dinosaur* (also in Young Puffins). CM

Country Tales to Tell

Elizabeth Clark, illustrated by Cara Lockhart-Smith, Piccolo, 0 330 26052 9, 80p

Eight delightful traditional read-aloud tales collected by a mistress of the narrator's art. All the devices of the folk tale are used: the dominant ideas of goodness and endeavour, woven in language used for the pure fun of it (contrast with the dire, dehydrated Ladybird *Read it Yourself* series, reviewed by Jill Bennett, BFK, May 80). I love the way the

storyteller mediates to the young reader ('Rose-Marie looked in surprise, (wouldn't you have been surprised)').

A warmly recommended collection of stories which the young need, to get the magic of reading handed down. CM

Katy and the Nurgla

Harry Secombe, Puffin, 0 14 03.1189 0, 65p



Katy and the monstrous Nurgla are both having a February holiday in Majorca (he usually spends the summer in Loch Ness). When they meet on the beach Katy is unperturbed — 'She had imagined far worse-looking creatures' — and before long she is reading him *The Wind in the Willows*, making barbecued chicken on his hot breath, and teaching him good manners. But the Nurgla is more than he appears and there's a touch of S.F. about this delightful short story. Its humour and warmth make it a good choice for a family read-aloud or an early go-it-alone. PT

JUNIOR/MIDDLE



Bertie's Escapade Kenneth Grahame, illustrated by E.H. Shepard, Magnet, 0 416 89760 6, 85p

This tale of Bertie the Black Pig and his rabbit friends, was first published in 1949. They set out on an eventful carol-singing trip which ends with a clandestine midnight feast in 'Mr Grahame's' house. It has pace, humour and a quaint air to it. Some of the language now creaks ('Hang it all — I'm not going to fag up that hill') but the characters are endearing, and Shepard's illustrations are enchanting in their detail. There's a sophisticated twist to the end of the story, which eight to ten-year-olds may enjoy, but I've a sad feeling that the appeal may be more to adults.

CM

Patrick Comes to Puttville Geoffrey Hayes, Knight, 0 340 25509 9, 70p

I'm not exaggerating the power of this book when I say that it reminded me of Hoban's *The Mouse and his Child*. It has the same poignancy and sense of 'coming to terms' with potentially frightening situations. Patrick, a bear, has to leave his home and move to a strange new area. He has to start school, make friends and face problems which children will recognise. Yet these are placed in a sensitive, optimistic story, with insight and humour.

Try reading extracts aloud, then let eight to ten-year-olds take it on. Another splendid book from a writer who may become significant.

CM

Warton and the King of the Skies Russell E. Erickson, illustrated by L. Di Fiori, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 25295 2, £3.75

A Toad for Tuesday Knight, 0 340 25506 4, 85p



The toad dug into his pack and pulled out two beeswax candles. As soon as they were lit and began casting their warm glow about the room, he felt much better. He began to straighten his corner. And, being of a cheerful nature, he began to hum a little tune.

The owl couldn't believe his ears. "Warry, you did hear me say that I was going to eat you next Tuesday, didn't you?"

"Yes," said the toad.

The owl shook his head.

Warton continued to busy himself in his corner. Then he turned to the owl and said, "What's your name?"

A new addition to Erickson's stories about his two toads, Warton and Morton: a paperback edition of an earlier adventure.

They are fast-moving energetic stories with that zany, unpatronising humour which most American writers for the young seem to catch so well. The fraternal toads are lovable, avuncular characters who win through a legion of disasters!

In *Warton and the King of the Skies* Warton (the clever one) builds a flying machine out of a bath tub and snake skin. The brothers are captured by a bunch of argumentative weasels and give them a lesson in team-spirit by teaching them volleyball and rescuing Freda Weasel from a perilous hawk. It's hilarious!

In *A Toad for Tuesday* Warton sets off on his own (on skis) and is captured by an owl who plans to eat him on Tuesday (his birthday) but instead, is caught by a fox himself. Erickson's stories have pace and immediacy and his racy, rumbustious writing goes down well with eight to eleven-year-olds.

CM

Nicholas on Holiday Goscinny and Sempé, Beaver, 0 600 20134 1, 75p

Actually, Nicholas on holidays: in the first half of the book Nicholas goes to Cornwall with his mum and dad (and gets a little gang together) and in the second half Nicholas goes to boys' camp (and gets a little gang together). Verdict from those who read it: not as funny as the first two Nicholas books (*Nicholas and the Gang*, *Nicholas and the Gang Again*, also in Beaver, 55p), but 'good enough'. Sempé's drawings are certainly as funny. For sevens up.

MC



Supergran Forrest Wilson, Puffin, 0 14 03.1266 8, 75p

Supergran is a winner for the nine plus range. The hilarious adventures of Gran, Willard, Edison Faraday Black and company, superbly captured and enlivened by David McKee's illustrations, make compulsive and entertaining reading. Even to a harassed teacher struggling through a 'story' session, the vision of Gran karate chopping her way through a bank door to leap on and demolish a gang of robbers, must raise a smile at the end of the most tiring day. The concluding chapter is full of possibilities for follow-up adventures and I feel it's safe to say that Supergran will be on the warpath again soon. My class can't wait!

BB

Ned Kelly and the City of the Bees Thomas Keneally, illustrated by Stephen Ryan, Puffin, 0 14 03.1227 7, 95p

Overcoming an unconvincing opening, Thomas Keneally succeeds in transporting us into a believable world of bees and identifying with their struggle for survival. Ned Kelly's adventures within this community, very cleverly shown as a microcosm of our own human society, make for compulsive reading. I hope people are not deterred by the



'Ned and Nancy Clancy ride Apis.'

title, or by the undistinguished cover. This is the author's first book for children and judging by the enthusiastic reaction of the eleven-year-olds who read it, he has quickly found his pitch for this market.

BB

My Best Fiend Sheila Lavelle, Lions, 0 00 671661 X, 85p

Here are two real flesh-and-blood girls who say 'Knickers!', set fire to dad's garage (with good intentions) and pull tongues behind teacher's back. Eleven very funny episodes feature Charlie (Charlotte) and her best friend ('fiend') Angela who is daring, self-willed and adept at putting the blame where it doesn't belong — the sort of girl any normal adult would dearly love to strangle. The humorous salvos sometimes seem to be directed above the heads of children, straight at adults. But that simply means there's something for everyone.

MC

Macpherson's Skyscraper Lavinia Derwent, Knight Books, 0 340 24038 5, 75p

Macpherson's Island Lavinia Derwent, Knight Books, 0 340 25498 X, 75p

Macpherson's Highland Fling Lavinia Derwent, Blackie, 0 216 90928 7, £3.95

Somewhere there are doubtless eager crowds awaiting Macpherson's next adventure; but I can't believe in this supposed Glasgow 'message boy' at all. Is it a conscious attempt to reproduce a 'William' character for the eighties? Certainly Maisie Murphy with her lisp and dogged ardour resembles Violet Elizabeth Bott. But how can you believe in a city lad whose slang consists of 'Jings' or 'Blimey' or even 'Mercy! What a mess I'll be in.'? The other starring roles in these tales are hardly memorable. Old Skinflint (Macpherson's cruel employer) and Big



'We know it's the first time you've been parted from us, Nicholas, but it's for your own good,' said Mum. 'Well ... what does my big boy say?' asked Dad. 'Oh, great!' I shouted, and I started dancing round the sitting room. From *Nicholas on Holiday* by Goscinny and Sempé.

Hamish (Highland piper) are neither inventive in name or deed, yet these are two of the better developed of the flat personalities who appear in the three stories.

For me Macpherson and his friends can all retire to 'Glen Bogle' for ever and I won't shed a tear. BB

The Elm Street Lot
Philippa Pearce,
Puffin, 0 14 03.1147 5,
75p

Stories about friends and neighbours, hamsters and kites — pleasant, occasionally inventive but in the end failing to avoid the problems of dealing with a large number of characters in a limited space. They're shorter than those in *What the Neighbours Did* — perhaps aiming at younger kids, perhaps the result of Jackanory restrictions (five of six originated there) — and more noticeably dated. Some critics, if consistent, would bewail the lack of multi-racial/contrasexist elements but I'd sooner rubbish the ersatz-Ardizzone drawings — yeuk! Not Philippa Pearce's best but worth reading — even below-par, she's better than most others on top form. SB



Private — Keep Out
Gwen Grant, Lions,
0 00 671652 0, 80p

Working-class life in a Nottinghamshire town c. 1948. An amusing series of episodes — told by the 'little madam', youngest of six, in a chatty style — deals with brother/sister nuisance, minor accidents, troubles at Sunday School and dancing class, the seaside outing, etc. Promotion should be easy — just read a trailer. (Try the appealingly vulgar chapter five. This should overcome any problems arising from Lions' poor cover.) Other extracts could be useful for instigating talk about domestic adventures. Pity we can't have something like this with a convincing modern setting. Read *Daredevils* or *Scaredycats* yet? (Chris Powling, Abellard.) (If you haven't, do. Roll on the paperback. Ed) SB

Searching for Shona
Margaret J. Anderson,
Hippo, 0 590 72028 7,
75p

Another Second World War evacuation story, this one featuring rich orphaned Marjorie and poor orphaned Shona. The two girls meet by accident and decide to swap places and identities: Shona goes off to Marjorie's wealthy Canadian relatives, Marjorie accompanies the orphanage group to the Scottish countryside. The book centres on Marjorie, her growing maturity and her unravelling of Shona's mysterious past. If you can accept two 11-year-olds sustaining the identity-swap, it's a good readable story. But, oh, the awful cover. MC

At Madam Muriel's
Mary Denison, Knight,
0 340 24880 7, 85p

What happens to children whose mother's acting career is well past its peak? When

she's working they follow her from one lot of lodgings to another; when she's searching they're palmed off on largely unwilling friends — like Madam Muriel who runs a third-rate stage school. It's an interesting theme and on the whole a more realistic tale than its poor title and cover suggest. It slows a bit in the middle and the Community Service Group kids are not terribly convincing. But the two central characters — Delia (12 and moody stage-struck sister Nell (14) — are well drawn; and an all-round happy ending is commendably rejected. MC

Horse in a Million
Patricia Leitch,
Armada, 0 00 691523,
75p

I've always seen horses only in terms of excellent providers of manure for the garden, so I cannot argue with my horse-mad advisers who assure me that this is another winner in the 'Jinny at Finnmore' series. It doesn't matter to them (perhaps it should to us) that tinkers are stereotyped into sinister thieves, or that horsey Miss Tute is more like Barbara Woodhouse than Barbara Woodhouse. Devotees of the nag will revel in the cosy world of gymkhanas and shows and that special equine vocabulary that thrills the initiated ... I'll stick to gardening. DB

Star Ka'at
Andre Norton/Dorothy
Madlee, Knight,
0 340 24716 9, 85p

'Earth invaded by Supercats!' proclaims the cover. Not quite; the Ka'ats land secretly to rescue from the coming armageddon the half-kin who can still respond, those cats retaining ancestral powers from Egyptian days when Man and Ka'at were friends. Tiro and Mer find their mission complicated because each



'I Jim,' he said, feeling a little odd as he introduced himself to a cat. Jim meets Tiro in *Star Ka'at*.

becomes attached to a human orphan. Should they save or leave them? (Three guesses.) This has large, though rather cramped print, and good illustrations but my copy is very flimsily glued. Not much action or excitement but the story flows easily. Simple SF is rare; one copy to experiment? SB

The Eyes of the
Amaryllis
Natalie Babbitt, Lions,
0 00 671654 7, 75p

If you know this author's other work, *Amaryllis* resembles *Tuck Everlasting* rather than the more accessible *Search for Delicious* (also in Lions). The setting is nineteenth-century New England. Jenny visits her grandmother on the coast, searching the tides for a sign from her thirty-years-drowned grandfather. But when it comes, the sea's tragic messenger demands it back — or else. To use it properly, you must know the book and your pupils. Left lying around, it'll bore most kids but now and again you might find someone who'll appreciate its subtle moods and tensions enough to reach the exciting climax. SB

OLDER READERS



Scarf Jack
P.J. Kavanagh, Puffin,
0 14 03.1208 0, 85p

Children 'hooked' on historical fiction are few and far between in my experience. However, this absorbing and literate adventure story should kindle an interest in older, experienced readers. The tale centres upon the past strife in Ireland, beginning with a highly mysterious and brutal hanging in late eighteenth-century rural Gloucestershire. Fifteen-year-old Francis Place, who secretly witnessed the event, subsequently becomes involved with Scarf Jack, a chameleon of a man who is being relentlessly pursued by the insane Hunter Gowan. Even in the excitement of the intrigue Francis has time to

reflect upon hate and its shattering influence on man's relationship with his fellow human beings, which alone elevates this above a straightforward adventure tale. DB

The Exeter Blitz
David Rees, Granada,
0 583 30405 2, 75p

By a strange paradox the deprivations of the Exeter Blitz bring a sense of freedom to Colin Lockwood, and the destruction a sense of security. His ordeal taught him to see the direction that he could give to his own life and showed him that the Cathedral, and all that it stood for, had endured for six centuries and '... one little Austrian maniac might have ordered its cancellation, but he had failed.'

For this Carnegie Medal winner 1978, David Rees has taken the theme of a family separated in crises, as in

Storm Surge, and woven his tale from the threads of their differing experiences and tensions, creating a narrative that is patchwork, but never over-taxing on the reader. Early and mid-secondary should be encouraged to sample this for themselves before it becomes a class-reader. DB

The River Kings
Max Fatchen, Magnet,
0 416 87630 7, 75p

As an historical novel for those interested in activities on the River Murray in Australia at the turn of the century — yes! As gripping adventure story — no! The characterisation is flat and static. So black and white are the characters, that their actions and subsequent events are totally predictable. The vocabulary and idioms are difficult. I suspect most teenage readers would not get

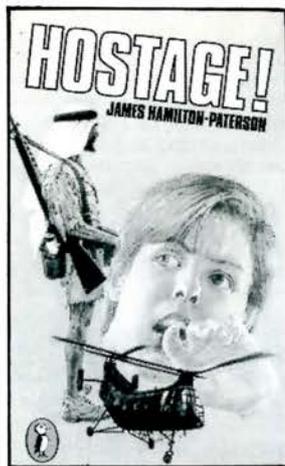
far. Unless they were interested in Australian history!

YW

Hostage!

James Hamilton-Paterson, Puffin, 0 14 03.1287 0, 95p

Had Peacocks been done properly, this would've been a fine addition. It's a striking novel (don't confuse with the same author's mediocre *Flight Underground*) but could easily get lost as a Puffin, especially with this too-young cover, because it's not just an Adventure story about an oilman's son kidnapped by guerrillas in the Middle East. It does maintain a good pace and



encompass plenty of incident but it's also about adolescence and a growing awareness of political reality. More adult than *Hijacked!* (Marks, Puffin) but not as complex as Cormier's *After the First Death* (Gollancz, Lions soon), this should be really useful in 4th/5th-year class libraries.

SB

The Watch House
Robert Westall, Puffin,
0 14 03.1285 4, 95p

The Watch House is to children's ghost stories what *The Chocolate War* is to tales of tuck shop and Remove. *Machine-Gunners* aside, schools don't know Westall's

work half well enough. Anyroad, now this is paperbacked, get stuck in. 'Dumped like a parcel' by a selfish mother walking out on a family business crisis, Anne's unhappiness feeds the two spirits inhabiting the old Watch House, the victim and the predator who tortures him. Difficult in patches and lengthy — the start could've been trimmed — its intensity still makes it a must.

SB

HARDBACK



'Even when we sat as far away as possible from Danny Payne, his arms would reach under the desk to pinch us.' Tony Ross's illustration from *Did I Ever Tell You ...?*

The Third 'Did I Ever Tell You...?'
Book

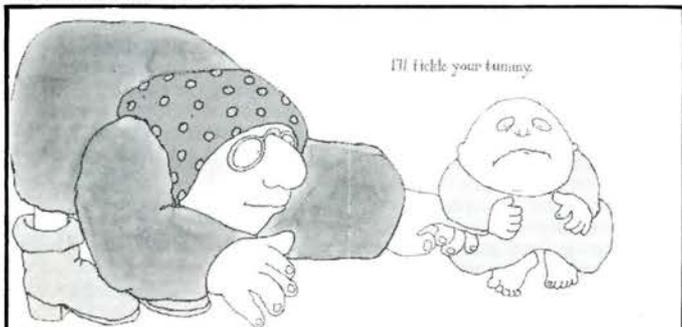
Iris Grender, Hutchinson, 0 09 140370 7, £3.50

'A bit like *My Naughty Little Sister* but not so good' was the way one of my seven-year-olds described this collection of short stories about Rosemary and her brother Francis. Fairly simple to read and mildly humorous, but this very slim volume — 64 pages — certainly isn't worth £3.50 of my money even with Tony Ross's comic illustrations. There's a paperback of the first collection from Knight, 0 340 23248 X, 50p

JB

Smile for Auntie
Diane Paterson, Benn, 0 8037 8066 4, £2.50

Determined to make him (her) smile, rotund, bespectacled Auntie sings, cavorts, grimaces, and bestows ice-cream, toys, tickles and kisses on the long-suffering infant.



'I'll go away and never come back!' she says finally, which of course does the trick, and she leaves behind a blissfully happy baby. And there should be lots more smiling faces, judging by the reactions of my infants to this hilarious very easy-to-read picture book.

JB

The Bossing of Josie Ronda and David Armitage, André Deutsch,

0 233 97231 5, £3.50

Fed up with the way her family order her about, Josie decides to put her special birthday present — a witch's costume and effects — to use immediately. She sets to work on 'vanishing spells for BOSSY PEOPLE', but one works rather too well seemingly, and her birthday is almost spoiled. This book, like Josie, is a real charmer; highly recommended both as a story-time read aloud, and for individual readers.

JB

Tortoise's Dream
Joanna Troughton, Blackie, 0 216 90886 8, £4.50

An African folk tale of the 'pourquoi' variety in which a number of animals try in vain, to remember the name of the tree said, in tortoise's dream, to bear all the fruits of the earth. The misadventures of the various animals in their attempts to find the Omumbo-rombonga tree have resulted in howls of laughter from all the children I have shared this



'If you remember the name you will find the tree. If you remember the name the fruit will fall,' said Grandmother Koko. 'But don't look round on your way back or the name will go out of your head.' *Tortoise's Dream*.

with; and Joanna Troughton's illustrations really do capture the humour of the story — £4.50 seems just a little steep even so.

JB

How Do I Eat It?
Shigeo Watanabe/
Yasuo Ohtomo, Bodley Head, 0 370 30308 3, £2.95

Hallo! How are You?
Shigeo Watanabe/
Yasuo Ohtomo, Bodley Head, 0 370 30309 1, £2.95

Following on from *How Do I Put It On?*. The small bear in these simple stories copes with two more pretty basic problems — eating a meal by himself and greeting others. His experimental approach, as in the previous book, produces amusing and interesting results, especially for those who have only recently acquired these skills. The minimal text in large, clear print makes these two delightful books ideal for beginner readers though I have had trouble persuading some of my most capable readers to give the others a look in.

JB

The Knight and the Dragon
Tomie de Paola,

Methuen,
0 416 89630 8, £3.50

Like the pair in the story, my children very nearly came to blows over this enchanting book, and I wholeheartedly endorse their enthusiasm. A series of delicious pictures and a few words relate what happens when the Knight 'who had never fought a dragon' and the dragon 'who had never fought a knight' eventually engage in battle. Don't miss this one.

JB

The Nine Lives of Montezuma
Michael Morpurgo,
Kaye and Ward,

0 7182 1239 8, £4.25

Absolutely delightful. You don't have to be a cat lover to enjoy this refreshing and absorbing novel, in which the author's insights and observations into children and animals reflect his work as founder of Farms for City Children. Each chapter covers one of the lives of the indomitable Montezuma who, like most cats, is very ordinary and very special. Running parallel is the story of Matthew growing up, and his family life on the farm. Superbly written with line drawings by Margery Gill which capture the essence of the narrative.

A paperback edition to bring the book within pocket-money range would ensure this story has a place in all school bookshops. And if it is not in your library — order it now!

YW

The Methuen Book of Strange Tales
Ed. Jean Russell,
Methuen,

0 416 88350 8, £3.95

Fourteen varied stories, specially commissioned, mostly from well-known writers. That's no guarantee — nothing like — but there are no total disasters. Or incredible successes. Joan Phipson provides the eeriest, Dick King-Smith and Alison Morgan the best read-aloud-and-talk-about. *The Promise* (Tony Ross) is the neatest — a short Devil's con-trick piece,

a good three-minute filler. The illustrations don't fit but are so weird you have to look. Biggest strengths are the jacket and subject matter — these should ensure it's continually in use. It's not entirely directed at one audience but it's okay for top junior/early secondary kids. A step up from *Armada Ghost Books*. SB

The Fox in Winter
John Branfield,
Gollancz,

0 575 02860 2, £4.95
Easily JB's best to date — no small thing, as you'll know if you've met *Sugar Mouse* — and by far the most successful treatment of the well-used friendship-twixt-teenager-and-old-(wo)man theme that I've read. It's admirable honesty makes it both touching and amusing, predictable in overall course but never in narrative detail. District Nurse Nancy and 90-year-old Cornish farmer Tom are excellent portraits; Nancy's daughter, Fran, an effective reader surrogate. A solid read but not dauntingly difficult, good for sensitive girls moving on from pulp. Nice jacket. Don't miss it — buy it! SB

The Disappearance
Rosa Guy, Gollancz,
0 575 02804 1, £4.50

Fostered by a well-to-do (Black) Brooklyn family after acquittal of murder, Imamu falls under suspicion again when his new little sister vanishes — but his Harlem sense finally solves the riddle. A thriller with a male central figure, Rosa Guy's tough new novel possibly has a wider potential audience than her first two gems (*The Friends*, Puffin; *Edith Jackson*, Gollancz) but check the market first with them. If they go well, this is the natural follow-up; if not, hold back. The style here will present difficulties for some readers and the first sixty pages are leisurely compared to the last ninety which have tremendous momentum. Short list. SB

Remember Last
Summer

Ed. John L. Foster,
Heinemann,
0 434 95836 0, £3.20

**Love You, Hate You,
Just Don't Know**
Ed. Josie Karavasil,
Evans, 0 237 45510 2,
£4.95

Those who've read John Foster's *All For Love* (Topliner) and his other Pyramid, *First Love* should devour *Remember Last Summer* without a hiccup. There's variety and some vaguely new angles but no real quality in these seven pieces; they're just easy reading on a winning theme and you can't have too much of that. (David Rees' story of a gay sixth-former is probably the one you'd least expect to find.) Useful for weaning kids on to hardbacks, if that's necessary in your school. A pity Pyramids' jackets ain't what they used to be.

The Evans set demands attention. You ought to read Jan Mark's *Feet*, Westall's *The Night Out* (about bikers) and Marion Stewart's *A Mother's Fondness*, the only previously published story. The other seven, like the Foster collection, range from poor to interesting (Sam McBratney on being ashamed of parents, Joan Salvesson on an Indian girl's arranged marriage) with Kenneth Wood deserving 'Quite good' for his one about a practical joke on an ineffectual teacher. Really pushed to choose, I'd go for *Love You, Hate You*; it's enticingly packaged, has more stories, better writing overall and is only marginally more difficult. But, if at all possible, get both. SB

The Light of Day
Othmar Franz Lang,
Collins,
0 00 184928 10, £3.95

A young nurse volunteers to work in the Third World and finds herself living for two years in a desolate village in the Bolivian Andes, where water is carried from a mile away and peasants die from undernourishment.

Alternating chapters flash back to the girl's comfortable middle-class home and serve to remind the reader how much we have come to take for granted in a society where we are out of touch with what real poverty means. As well as telling a moving story, the author poses many questions, particularly of the church whose doctrine helps peasants to accept their own desperation.

The true message of the book is in Chapter 12, in the dialogue between the nurse and the old priest. Any discussion arising out of this thought-provoking story would start here. This would be a worthwhile 'set book' for third year plus, as well as an essential addition to the library. The last page is an undisguised attempt to recruit youngsters for VSO. YW

'Starter' novels with
A MULTI-
CULTURAL
BACKGROUND

The White Hippo
Alexander McCall
Smith, Hamish
Hamilton (Antelope),
0 241 10460 2, £2.25

A sensitive, moving story about a rare albino hippo in a village in Gambia. The villagers protect her from a huntsman and we are given a beautiful insight into the village life that enables this to happen. The description of the landscape and attendant features is very well done. The author establishes a quick and readily accessible link between 'the cause' and the reader which would attract the most reluctant and keep him/her enthralled until the magic of the closing words. I loved it.

The Cherry Tree
Ruskin Bond,
illustrated by Valerie
Littlewood, Hamish
Hamilton (Gazelle),
0 241 10387 8, £1.40

Rakesh grows a tree of his very own, assisted by 'Dada' his grandfather. The simple story justifies itself to any child but the careful illustration and background information which establish the North Indian setting make this

We asked Adrian Smith, headmaster of Cabot Primary School in St Paul's, Bristol, to have a look at some recent titles.

a tale that many Asian children will easily claim a special relationship with.

Ruskin Bond has avoided the trap of letting the reader feel that Indian life is either pathetic or mysterious; it exists he shows through the natural movements of the seasons. Very suitable for the multi-racial society in which we live.

Kofi and the Eagle
Geraldine Kaye,
Magnet,
0 416 89270 1, 70p

A delightful book for easy reading, a must for the multi-racial school or any other for that matter. With references to yam and mango the author takes us through a couple of days in the life of Kofi, a West African boy who buys a baby eagle from a friend and wants to sell it for profit. To his horror his best buyer only wants the baby eagle's heart and Kofi just manages to undo the deal and protect his new pet; as it seems to become! Finally a kindly old man shows him how to put right the original bad deed and replace the bird with its mother. The book reads well and has been eagerly devoured. It's not deep or profound but nicely

completes one episode in Kofi's life. A pity there aren't more stories about this likeable character.

Kassim Goes
Fishing
Geraldine Kaye,
Magnet,
0 416 89260 4, 70p

A book of a Malaysian boy's dreams, full of the atmosphere one feels sure exists in life away from urban Britain. Kassim's relationships with his father and grandfather grow and establish the link little children *can* have with their elders. The stories interweave spirits, dreams and realities. I would hesitate to think that all Malay children live such idyllic lives and its classroom use would need to establish that some of the truth lies elsewhere. A delightful dance through a boy's early life though.

The Beautiful Take
Away Palace
Geraldine Kaye,
illustrated by Glenys
Ambrus, Kaye & Ward
(Early Bird Series),
0 7182 1032 8, £2.25

The title turned me sour. I'm tired of seeing children from Hong Kong or China labelled as 'Take-away kids'. The author in fact attempts to illustrate my very concern by raising the issue in a story line, which tells what happens to Kai-Cheng, a newly-arrived immigrant orphan who meets

prejudice as soon as he reaches school. It's a worthy idea but Geraldine Kaye's treatment creates problems for me. I'm not at all sure we should tolerate such phrases as 'He's a Chinky boy' and 'not bad for a loony from Kowloon' even if they are in the story to illustrate unkindness and intolerance. Once it's in print it's acceptable to many of the children we guide towards these books. Racist phrases are easily and naively introduced to children's vocabulary even when the author's aim is to achieve the opposite.

I feel this book backfires sadly. It makes little attempt to sort out the roots of the prejudice the boy experiences. On one level the story has a happy ending. Kai-Cheng is accepted because he makes a beautiful model and also overcomes the language barrier. Everyone cheers. On another level the happy ending is Kai-Cheng's own, in his own terms, understood by none of his English school friends (except perhaps Amy).

Geraldine Kaye raises the difficulty of Kai-Cheng explaining his culture: 'How could he tell all that to Mrs Knight?' (his teacher). Superficial readers may miss the point too and see him in their terms as rather foolish. This one needs talk to ensure it is understood. Otherwise not for me. Too dangerous.

A CLOSER LOOK AT DINOSAURS

In June, in response to requests from teachers and librarians, the first bunch of non-fiction hardbacks from Dinosaur Publications appeared — more will follow. A good moment, we thought, to take a closer look at Dinosaurs.

They've come a long way since the first small, narrow books about Desmond the Dinosaur appeared in 1968. The range has expanded, the books have got bigger, there are tie-ins with the National Trust and the British Tourist Authority; but the whole operation still has the spirit of its cottage industry beginnings.

Dinosaur's strengths lie in non-fiction. The 'What to Expect' Books (*Going to the Doctor*, *Visiting the Dentist*, etc.) are exactly right for talking about present and future experiences with very young children. *Having an Eye Test* has babies, teddy bears and tots subjected to all manner of investigations; *My Babysitter* and *My Childminder* accept that feeling sad is part of the experience. But what of the newest title? 'At last, a book on potty training.' If this is another example of something we didn't know we needed, then *No More Nappies* by Maryann Macdonald does not fill the gap very well. About Anna, it's not much good for boys and the illustrations by Helen Herbert are unattractive. Better just to talk about it?

Clare and the Mop by Robin Stemp is a 'latch-key child' story. Consolation for being alone in the house appears in the idea of

No More Nappies
Maryann Macdonald, ill. Helen Herbert,
0 85122 208 0, 60p

Clare and the Mop
Robin Stemp, ill. Isabel Pearce,
0 85122 209 9, 60p

Caterpillars to Butterflies
Althea, ill. Maureen Galvani,
0 85122 205 6, 60p 0 85122 232 3, £1.60

Animals at your Feet
Althea, ill. by the author, 0 85122 223 4, 60p
0 85122 230 7, £1.60

Making a Book
Althea, ill. Tim Hunkin, 0 85122 180 7, 60p

How does your Garden Grow?
Jean Ellenby, ill. Elsie Wrigley,
0 85122 178 5, 65p

Buildings and Backgrounds
Vernon Gibberd, ill. by the author,
0 85122 173 4, 65p

Note: Some Althea series titles are available in large-format hardback editions from Evans.

making friends with the mop in the broom cupboard. A better 'problem' story is Althea's *George and the Baby*, an old favourite, which gives a dog's eye view (literally) of being 'displaced' by a new baby.

Althea's Nature Series is new this year (in hardback and paperback). One of the first four titles, *Caterpillars to Butterflies* explains the life cycle with unfussy clarity and vivid detailed pictures. *Animals at your*

Feet deals with readily accessible creatures and while being properly 'scientific' does not overburden with facts. The language is easily understandable and its spontaneity and enthusiasm encourage the reader to observe and investigate.

Althea is good at explaining things to young children (*Making a Car*, *Building a House*) but in *Making a Book* the concepts and language are difficult: 'The words are stored on a computer disc'; 'words can be set'. It also ends up giving the impression that books are written by machines! But useful for older children, especially in a book-making project (see page 25).

Dinosaur's other major offering, the *Wingate Series* 'illustrated books for everyone' is a real hotchpotch of topics seemingly arrived at by a combination of the enthusiasms of the Dinosaur team and friends, and commissions from the National Trust. This makes it interesting but unpredictable in approach and quality.

How does your Garden Grow? is well illustrated and is one of the '50 Best Produced Books of 1979'. The facts are 'checked by an eminent taxonomist', but despite the title, it all comes on the author's terms. There are lots of facts, few ideas.

Buildings and Backgrounds is better. The author does not cram and seems at home with the topic (is that the secret?). He asks questions, gives ideas and *enthusies*. He also judges — picture windows and added porches are definitely frowned on! Nevertheless, a series always worth watching — new this month, *How the Countryside was Made* by Gordon Winter, certainly sounds interesting and useful. Worth a careful look.

Faber Fanfares — the paperbacks for the '80s



Ten more titles in this series of children's paperbacks bringing old favourites back into print. All are toughly designed for use in libraries, with strikingly colourful covers.

Orange 'younger' Fanfares—

A TIME TO LAUGH
Funny Stories for Children
Edited by Sara & Stephen Corrin £1.25
TAMWORTH PIG SAVES THE TREES
Gene Kemp £1.15

MELANIE BROWN CLIMBS A TREE
Pamela Oldfield 95p
THE DRAGON'S SISTER and
TIMOTHY TRAVELS
Margaret Storey £1.15

Yellow 'middle' Fanfares—

PEACOCK PIE
A Book of Rhymes
Walter de la Mare £1.25
TALES TOLD AGAIN
Walter de la Mare £1.25

FROM SPRING TO SPRING
Stories of the Four Seasons
Alison Uttley £1.25
TERROR BY SATELLITE
Hugh Walters £1.25

Blue 'older' Fanfares—

THE READY-MADE FAMILY
Antonia Forest £1.25

SHOUT AGAINST THE WIND
Mary Ray £1.25

Look for the sign of the trumpeter!

A Name to Note

Talented new writers don't appear every week but **The Sound of the Gora** made us mark down Ann Harries as a name to watch. The bad news? She is thinking of writing for adults. Now we may never know if this book's promise would have been fulfilled. Steve Bowles read the book and talked to Ann Harries.

It's 1976. Woodstock, Cape Town's Coloured slum, is riven by demonstrations inspired by the Soweto riots. Against this backdrop, Andre (11) meets a white girl, Caroline (14), and together they search for the source of the mysterious music which they alone seem to hear. To half-way Andre's chapters alternate with others set in 1800, tracing the fate of Nama, one of Andre's ancestors, a girl spared for servitude when the adult Bushmen are massacred by Boers. Her playing of the gora — a tribal instrument — represents the cultural heritage, all but destroyed by whites, which Andre regains at the end.

Ann Harries, a South African teacher, has worked in British special schools since 1975. Her Cape Town experience provides the

subject matter that has, in part, drawn attention to this novel. In it conversation is enlivened by dialect and unfamiliar speech rhythms; little-known details of apartheid and Cape Town society make you raise your eyebrows; the inhuman racial oppression — past and present — lends the story weight. But above all it's the stylish prose which makes you regret the possible move to adult fiction; such vitality and energy could be great assets if allied to a clearer sense of audience and the surer hand in matters of construction which would probably come in time.

Publicity handouts say the book isn't 'overtly political'. This puzzles the author slightly but for the reader the violence and social injustice are constantly countered by those parts of the book which are remnants of earlier versions. It started out as a South African children's adventure (Ann Harries was brought up on **Just William** and Enid Blyton) and was re-written after Soweto. The story could have benefited from a more radically political approach; it isn't as angry as you might expect. The editor was probably right to cut some fairly detailed political passages which kids might have found boring but fortunately the author vetoed most pleas to tone down the bloodier scenes.

Heinemann's approach won out on the jacket though, a dull (some say eerie) shot of Table Mountain. Ann Harries doesn't mind it — it's much better than their first try, she says — but a photo of a demo would undoubtedly have helped the book's chances. One wonders how important in all this were the possibilities of sales in South Africa (almost wholly dependent on Britain for kids' books).



— Ann Harries says all the events of the novel are possible. Nobody would doubt it, but the careful patterning of themes and the ending, which contrives some over- neat resolutions, counteract credibility somewhat. **The Sound of the Gora** balances uneasily between cosy children's fiction and the tough realism of modern teenage novels. It's an interesting first step into the adolescent market. Let's hope there may yet be more.

The Sound of the Gora
Ann Harries, Heinemann, 0 434 94236 7,
£4.50.

Books to Keep For Ever

Hans Andersen
Fairy Tales and Legends

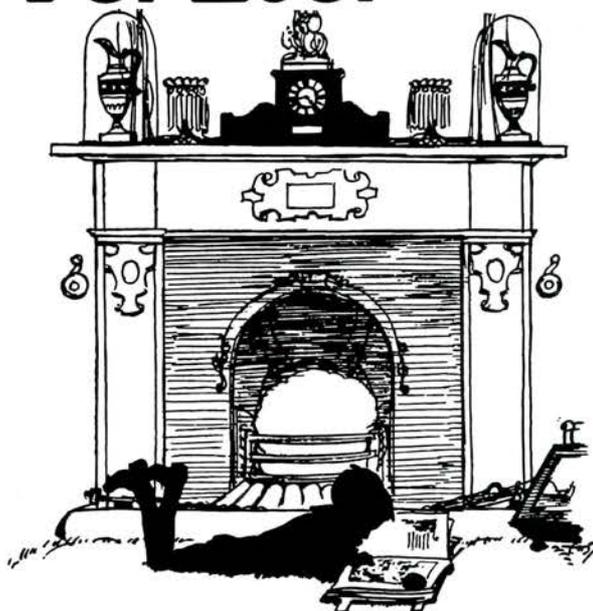
Illustrated by Rex Whistler
370 01038 8 £5.95

Kenneth Grahame
The Golden Age
Dream Days

Illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard
370 30217 6, 370 30218 4 £3.95 each

The Brothers Grimm
The Juniper Tree and
Other Tales

Illustrated by Maurice Sendak
Two volumes, boxed 370 01276 3 £9.95
One-volume paperback edition 370 30059 9 £2.50



David Mackay *Editor*
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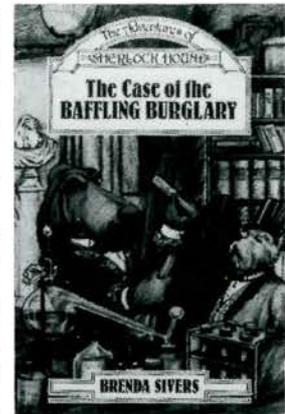
HOUND IN THE
HIGHLANDS*

0 200 72718 4



HOUND AND
THE WITCHING
AFFAIR

0 200 72719 2

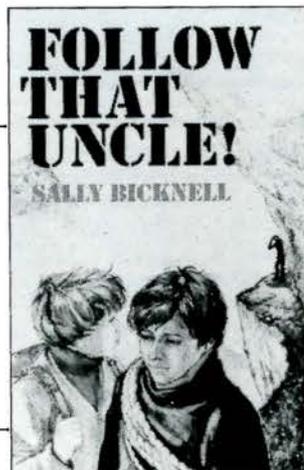


THE CASE OF
THE BAFFLING
BURGLARY

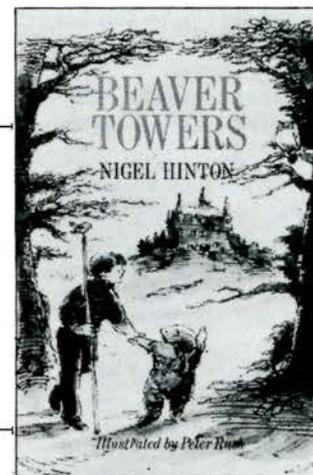
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Authorgraph No.4

Farrukh Dhondy

Farrukh Dhondy

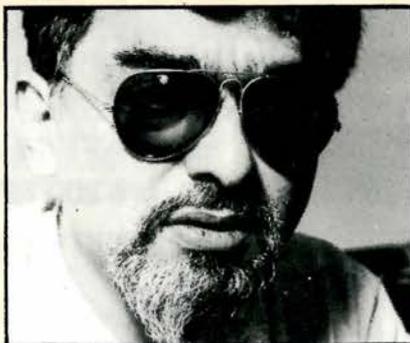
The publication of *East End at Your Feet* in 1976 announced the arrival of a major new writer for teenagers. Its subject matter and 'language' were attacked; but genuine literary ability and a voice that speaks directly to the experience of today's inner-city kids meant that Farrukh Dhondy not only survived but went on to write more. His books have been chosen twice for The Other Award and in 1978 *Come to Mecca* won the Collins/Fontana competition for Books for Multi-Ethnic Britain.

Farrukh Dhondy was born in Poona, a town on India's Western Plateau, in 1944. His father was in the Indian Army so he travelled with his parents till school age when he returned to live with his aunts and grandfather in Sachapur Street, one of Poona's Parsee districts. Lessons were in English, 'though in infancy we spoke Gujarati and Marathi and Hindi, bits of it, like our parents.' But from five or six onwards there were many opportunities to practise the language of the old colonial regime.

College followed school quite naturally. 'In my childhood there was tremendous pressure on people of my class to be professionals, to get some kind of engineering qualification or maybe be a doctor or a lawyer.' This didn't suit everyone. 'I was pressured into going to engineering college for a year in Bombay from which I literally ran away and spent a year hoboing around doing nothing. That was the time I first met Indian writers. They were asking themselves, "Why should Indians write in English?" and "What is the writer's role in Indian society?"'

Eventually he took his B.Sc., working very hard to get one of the rare overseas scholarships. He chose Cambridge and took a B.A. in 1967 after two years of Natural Sciences and one of English. 'I was appalled by the possibilities open to me if I carried on with Science so I quit.' London offered odd jobs and cash. 'I didn't have the money even to get transport for my bags from Cambridge.' Writing for journalistic agencies brought occasional 'miraculous' cheques for £25 or so. 'Inflation has killed the joy of it.'

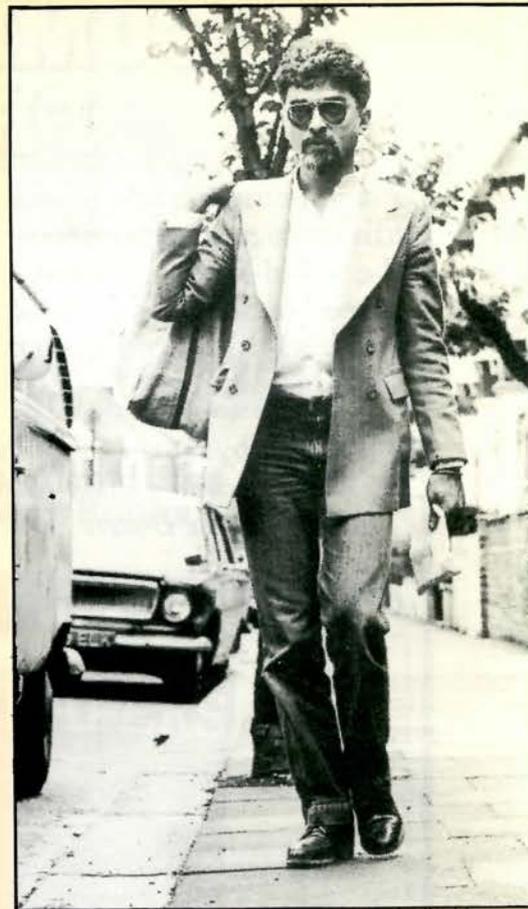
He did an M.A. in English and American literature at Leicester but 'always the metropolis acted as a magnet because I had no roots in Britain at the time.' It was back to painting houses and kitchen work because the many interviews



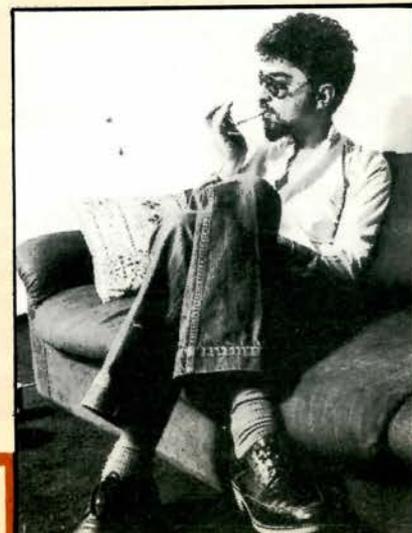
brought no settled employment: 'some said I was over-qualified, some just took a look at my face and said no.' He had no definite career in mind; it was more 'earn some money and buy a ticket back to India.' 'Then somebody says to me, "Go and apply to the ILEA — they'll take anybody." I drifted into teaching, liked it, stuck with it.'

He joined a "new" comprehensive in Clapham Common called Henry Thornton, the product of amalgamating one small grammar school with two 'almost totally Black' secondary moderns. Named, of course, after the grammar school. Its three-site organisation made life difficult. 'It was quite an adventure ... quite a horrific experience.' The set-up wasn't dissimilar to that described in his story, **Two Kinda Truth**.

Looking back, Clyde (who tells the story) remembers, 'The first day we moved to this dread school in Battersea, Bonny takes one look around the place and says, "It soft. Man could happy here." Now, I don't know how we could have made such a mistake. That school was split up in three. There was the main building, all new and still being built, where they kept the smart ones. They were all white and one or two Asian kids and a couple of Blacks. We were kept in what we called the "coal heap". It was down in Wandsworth and we called it that because there was a whole heap of coal in the yard. The teachers, they called it the "Annexe". There was only a few whites up there, most of the youths on the heap was black. We only saw the main building when the coaches fetched us to carol services or some other jive occasion and the headmaster would stand up and do he thing.'



At Henry Thornton Dhondy 'was treated like the Asian supply teacher who'd do anything. Today I know teachers would object to travelling two miles to the Annexe to teach... they wouldn't do it... but I didn't know anything about the unions then. I was what you might call demoralised... scab labour... and I worked without questioning. I was very grateful for having the job at all. I wasn't even filing for travelling expenses till someone told me that I could.' Not surprisingly, he moved on. He went to Archbishop Temple School in Lambeth, which formed part of the new Archbishop Michael Ramsey School, Camberwell, after another amalgamation in 1974. He became Head of English and stayed there until July 1980.



Did teaching interfere with his writing? 'Not all all, it helped. I find working nine to five helps me be disciplined. If I stay home, unless I've got a definite project I just waste my time. Writing stops you watching a lot of television that's all.' Political work also helps. 'Fulfilling deadlines, being at meetings you don't want to be at. That has taught me to be sort of principled.' But he has now left teaching and needs another job. 'You can't make a living out of writing. I think I could make two and a half, three thousand. If you call that a living, fine; I'm used to seven, before tax. I'll drive a van, sell onions in the East End, something like that. Just for the money. And the discipline, and for keeping in touch with people. Otherwise you become one of those writers who writes about writers. Sometimes I think I'll miss teaching grievously, that I'm making a grave mistake but in my rational moments I know that I've done ten years and if I want two lives in one I have to leave.' Isn't Deputy Head the next step? 'Yes, that's why I'm leaving. Imagine me as a Deputy Head, man!'



East End at Your Feet

This collection of stories was sparked by an enterprising commission from Martin Pick, an editor with Macmillan Educational. 'He'd heard my reputation as some kind of Black politico and he came up one afternoon after school, we had a chat and he said, 'Why don't you do it?' I was a bit sceptical at the time — I didn't know whether I should branch into writing short stories, especially for a series like Topliners because I thought Topliners was trash. But then I thought, "A series doesn't necessarily damn a book." And I have liked some Topliners.'

'I don't know if I ever thought, "Now what can I write that I can use in the classroom also?"' Nevertheless, the stories are read time and again in schools, particularly **Pushy's Pimples** (in which Pushpa is persuaded by her white friend to try sex as a cure for spots) and **K.B.W.** (which tells how a typhoid scare edges the racism in Devonmount flats from abuse to violence).

'Lots of teachers want to use that to demonstrate what happens in the East End. It generates plenty of discussion.'

The Siege of Babylon

Dhondy thinks his only novel to date hasn't had the kind of circulation it deserves. Starting as a tense thriller with three armed Blacks holding four people hostage in rooms over a mini-cab office after an attempted robbery misfires, it broadens out to show something of the three men's backgrounds in a series of flashbacks. Not only are parts of it exciting, **Siege of Babylon**, like several of Dhondy's stories, is also very moving. And it's full of the realistic dialogue which is characteristic of his work.

The book has been criticized for 'its sexist perception of the white woman, Edwina', a drama teacher who has been sleeping with two of the men. 'I'd like to take up honest debate with people who are stuck on these notions of what a book should do with sex and race. I certainly think literature *should* do things with sex and race but I don't believe the demands they are making on writers or on readers are in any sense helpful. For some women, Edwina was too credible. The book is concerned with a white girl who has this puerile fascination with young black boys and allows it to determine her behaviour. There has always been a particular class of women like that in Britain. If Edwina today goes with Black youth, in the nineteenth century she would have gone with avant-garde artists... and in the thirties she might have been with leftie poets. It's an attempt to try and describe a class of women who rely on males to draw their power. They're a bloodsucker class and I don't see that one shouldn't be allowed to mercilessly portray such a person. I can see that there are other kinds of women about but I think you have to feel something about a character before you begin to write about them. If all you feel about the feminists you personally know is that they're idiots and windbags, then you don't want to put them in a novel. There's no excitement attendant upon their being there.'

Come to Mecca

Like **East End at Your Feet**, Dhondy's second collection of stories has been criticised for some of its subject matter and its "bad language". For those who are enraged by such ignorance, Dhondy's casual dismissal of these critics — as if they're a temporary irrelevance — is instructive. It accords with his calm confidence that Britain's working class — 'the most sophisticated in the world' — will eventually create a modern, enlightened socialist state.

There are those who would prefer kids not to see 'books about working-class youth written from an informed point of view'. But where kids get to read **Come to Mecca**, they really enjoy the stories. **Free Dinners** (a white boy's description of a 'coloured' girl's progress from self-controlled first-former to aggressive fifth-year to go-go dancer to prostitute) is a particular favourite. 'Because it seems very close to them. Teachers and people who appreciate irony like **Two Kinda Truths** which contrasts a wet young English teacher with a love for great poetry and a Black pupil who makes a success from propagandist verse. As well as the Henry Thornton experience, Dhondy used a childhood memory from Poona, suitably modified, in this piece. 'We had this student round about the third year ... teaching us poetry, from cyclostyled sheets, which we'd never seen before. We thought he'd written it. We didn't know that he wasn't William Wordsworth.'

Poona Company

Dhondy's next book represents a conscious change of direction. 'I've been typecast as one of the multi-cultural writers in Britain.' It's a sequence of stories set in the Poona of his boyhood, based on things that happened then and people that he knew. 'I wanted to write about India and show a kind of India that's invisible today because it hasn't been portrayed in literature so much, in English. I'll be extremely interested to see if the Multi-culturalism of progressive teachers extends to stories about India too.'

Do British kids want to read about India? 'I think so. In fact I think the stories are probably better than those in **East End at Your Feet**. I tried it out on my fourth-years last year and it went down a bomb. And my kids are not keen to please, they're so brutal! Even so, they thought the stories were better than my other work.'

Conflict

'There's a profound conflict between me as a writer and me as a political animal, because if you write certain sorts of thing about a

community, you can kiss goodbye to wanting to organise them. If I write a play about Asians which is true but offensive because it's a truth that's difficult to take in, I think it's finally historically helpful to do so. But I can't expect the allegiance of community organisations after I've committed myself to something which is profoundly critical.'

'Any writer generalises from characters. You can't say, "All white women are such" because there are so many white women in literature: Dorothea is Dorothea or Edwina is Edwina. But when you're writing about Asians in English, British Asians, you have to be much more careful because it's seen as *the* Asian novel, *the* Asian play, all about those people, and there is a natural historical generality that sticks to the characters you've created. It's a historical circumstance within which the writer today has to work. After there are two thousand novels it will change. And so far you become the representative, the voice of some people who then say, "This person isn't speaking for us at all" and you're in the position of turning round and saying, "I never intended to speak for you, brother. I speak for myself. This is what I see. Just tell me if it's true or not."'

Other Work

Journalism. 'I write for an Indian newspaper regularly. Called **Debonair**. It's a semi-pornographic magazine; they publish political articles dotted all round the nudes, strange Bombay formula. I write occasionally about British Politics for the **Economic and Political Weekly**, a very serious paper in India. And I write for **Race Today**, the Black magazine, on education, Asian politics, everything — including reggae records.'

Drama. 'I did an episode of **Empire Road** which they haven't used yet. I did a play, **Mama Dragon**, that's been at the ICA and one called **Maids The Mad Shooter** for the OU, out at the end of this year. And I've just begun another adult thing, a television play. A director has asked me to do a "treatment" as they call it. But directors are not producers, they don't have the cash in hand. The director flogs it to a producer and then tells me to get on with it. I won't do it unless it's sold. I'm a bit scared of writing for adults but I'd like to do more, I think I have a lot to say.'

Another book for Gollancz. 'I want to do something else consciously different. Gollancz have been very principled about it — they've given me an advance and commissioned me to do something else for teenagers.'

He's thinking of trying another novel; if it comes off as well as the first three books, it will be setting the pace for the rest of the 1980s.



East End at Your Feet

Macmillan Topliner, 1976, 0 333 19962 6, 65p. Winner of The Other Award

The Siege of Babylon

Macmillan Topliner Redstar, 1978, 0 333 23705 6, 60p

Come to Mecca

Collins Lions, 1978, 0 00 671519 2, 60p. Other Award. Collins/Fontana competition winner

Right, Right! Sight, Sight! in Young Winter's Tales 8

edited by D. J. Denney, Macmillan, 1978, 0 333 21185 5, £4.95

The Demon Kite in The Methuen Book of Strange Tales

edited by Jean Russell, 1980, 0 416 88350 8, about £3.95

Poona Company

Gollancz, 0 575 02901 3, £4.95

(To be published on 23rd October 1980)



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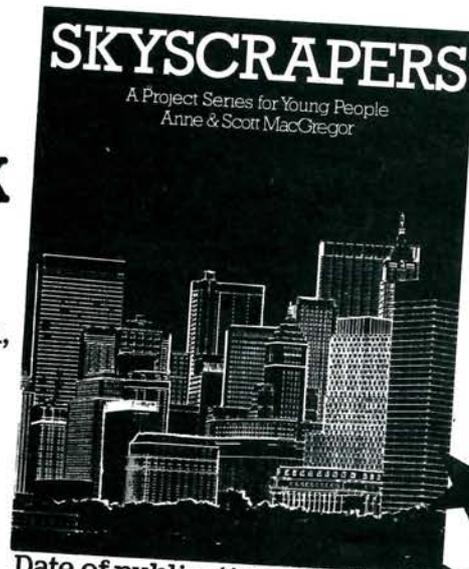
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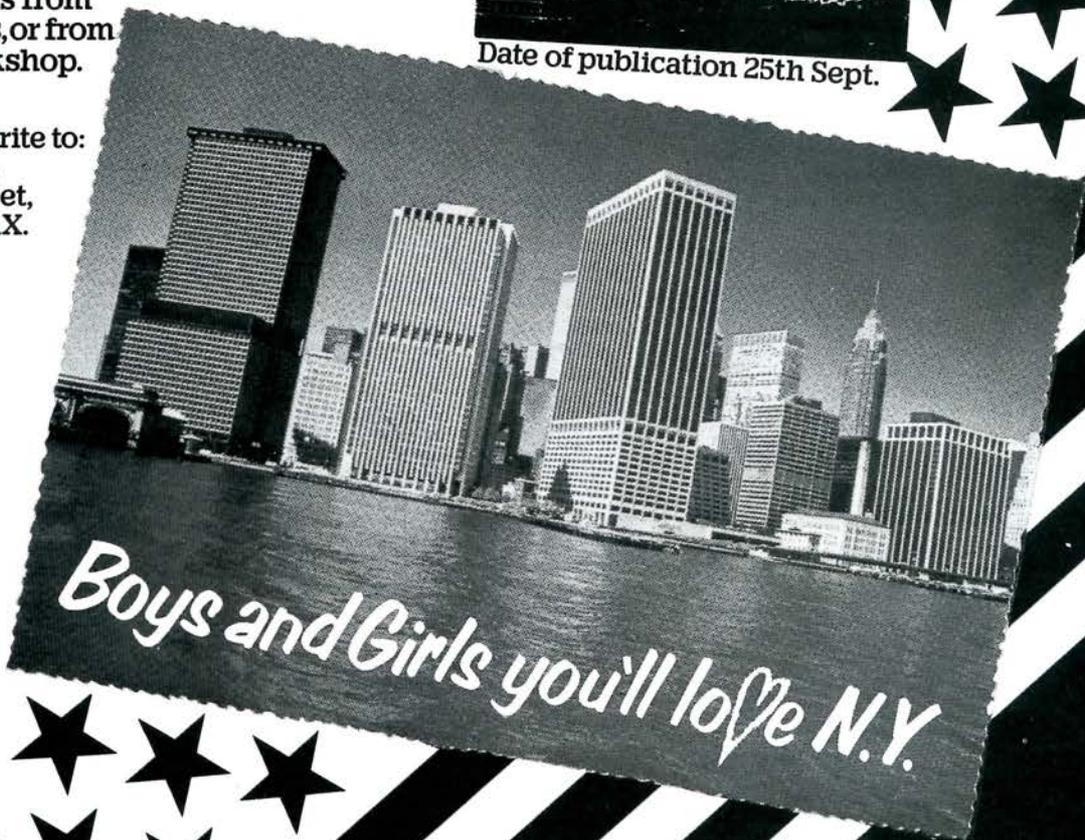
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The list covers the age range 5 to 16 years and makes suggestions for parents, teachers and librarians for choosing books across a wide range of situations. Titles are entered under the following headings: infant-junior, junior-secondary, and secondary. The latter with these sub-headings: general, in the experience of the children, reggae, rasta and black consciousness, Caribbean writing, African writing, South Africa, slavery. It also contains details of other sources of information.

Fifteen books chosen by Ruth Ballin, Jean Bleach and Josie Levine from their new NBL booklist.

Ashok's Kite

Margaret Kid, Children's Book Trust, New Delhi (available from Soma), 1977, 40p

Ashok and Sona, his sister, play outside, shoo the cow away, and fly his favourite green kite. The pictures are bright, the story is brief. For the infant class library and for early readers. (Details of Marilyn Hirsh's pictures on this page).

When Shoes Eat Socks

Barbara Klimowitz, Abingdon Press (available through New Beacon), 0 687 450918

The consequences for Barnaby, in his daily life, of socks that won't stay up, and disappear into his shoes, are related in this book with humorous sympathy. Both infants and juniors enjoy having this book read to them, and it is much revisited as a picture book in a classroom library.

The Drinking Gourd

F.N. Monjo, World's Work, 1971, 0 437 90072 X, £2.50

This is both a simple account of the underground railroad and also a really good read. As a narrative of a slave escaping to the North, it is worth reading aloud. It ends on a thorough-going white liberal note, and so is a starting point for exploring the ways in which Black Americans have acted and still act for themselves. An essential volume for any junior classroom collection.

Philip Hall likes me, I reckon, maybe

Bette Greene, Puffin, 1979, 0 14 03.1057 6, 75p

At school Beth always lets Philip beat her. Eventually, they become real friends of equal standing. This novel is an enjoyable private read for competent top juniors and lower secondary pupils.

The Call of the Fledgling and Other Children's Stories

Jan Hao, Foreign Language Press, Peking, (available from Guanhwa Bookshop), 1974, 50p

These five stories about children in Northern China show the importance of communal effort in farming, especially in countries where machinery is short. The universal value of the stories allows children here to take on some of the realities of developing countries. For top junior and lower secondary pupils. Reads aloud quite well.

Ostrich Egg-shell Canteen

Musa Nagenda, Heinemann Educational, 1973, 0 435 92507 5, 75p

Do not be fooled by the format of this book. This relatively short story is as exciting an adventure story as ten to thirteen-years-olds could wish for. Moreover, it is unselfconsciously anti-sexist. A girl and her grandmother are the heroes; both are likeable, tough, believable women who challenge the customs of their Kalahari tribe.

Hanuman

A. Ramachandran, A. and C. Black, 1979, 0 7136 1923 6, £3.25

A simple, powerful retelling of a story from the Ramayana with vivid stylised pictures on every page. The combination makes a brilliant picture book for all ages.

Monkey Subdues the White-bone Demon

Wang Hsing-pei, Foreign Language Press, Peking, (available from Guanhwa Bookshop), 1976, 75p

A picture book with caption text. After many exciting escapades, including a fight to the death with Demon, Monkey emerges victorious and vindicated. The intrinsic charm of the legend, the strong story line, and the detailed illustrations overcome the mixed quality of the text for most children of upper junior and lower secondary age. It is a good transition book for inexperienced readers.

East End at Your Feet

Farrukh Dhondy, Macmillan (Topliners), 1976, 0 333 19962 6, 65p

Biting, no-holds-barred stories of Bangladeshi youth firmly living their

lives in London. Defiant stories, with spirited characters who proclaim 'I'm here' to the racist society which surrounds them. For second to fifth years in secondary schools.

The Slave Dancer

Paula Fox, Macmillan, 1974, 0 333 16645 0, £2.95

A young white boy living in New Orleans is kidnapped by slavers for work on board a slave ship. His task is to provide music for exercising the slaves. It is a gruesome business, and no book captures better the hideousness of the slaves' plight in the Middle Passage. For second and third years in secondary schools who read well.

My Life

Mohammed Elbaja, English Centre, (available from ILEA English Centre), 1978, 20p

Simple, moving, graphic, this is the story of a Moroccan family divided by work and migration, and of the bonds maintained nonetheless. The booklet is total proof, to anyone needing it, that a person *can* write with power and conviction while still inexperienced in using a language other than his/her mother tongue. Mohammed Elbaja came from Morocco and was learning to speak English when he wrote this. For second years upwards in secondary schools.

At School Today

Accabre Huntley, Bogle L'Ouverture, 1977, 0 904521 11 7, £1.00

A collection of accomplished poems written by a young black girl still at primary school. Her reflections on and her confident statements of her own blackness help children to expand their consciousness about being black. For top primary and lower secondary children.

The Real Life of Domingos Xavier

Jose Luandino Viera, Heinemann Educational, 1978, 0 435 90202 4, 95p

This remarkable book, written in the sixties and published only in 1974, is set in the Angola of 1960. It portrays the horror of colonialisation in Africa, and of the heroism of those who are secretly joining together to resist it. For fifth-year pupils and upwards in secondary schools.

The Soweto I Love

Sipho Sepamla, Rex Collings, 1977, 0 86036 0652, £1.50

The poems in this collection take a reader into Soweto and, from them, one does not merely understand what it was/is like, but also why it was/is that way. There is no compromise. The poems simply and directly present a hardly bearable picture and capture the mood of the people of Soweto.

Long Journey Home

Julius Lester, Longman (Knockout), 1978, 0 582 22277 X, 75p

Puffin, 1977, 0 14 03.0903 9, 70p

Outstanding short stories set during and after slavery. They are both harsh and moving, and read aloud extremely well. *Long Journey Home* is essential reading for individuals doing work on a slavery theme but is also literature in its own right. For children from second years upwards in secondary schools and selectively, where mediated by an adult, in upper primary classes too. ●



A Wider Heritage: a selection of books for children and young people in multicultural Britain is available from the National Book League, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2HZ, £1.80 (non-members), £1.50 (members). A touring exhibition of the books listed in the bibliography is also available. Information from the Touring Exhibition Officer at the National Book League.

Footnote For details of how to obtain these and other multi-cultural books see page 32.

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Harmondsworth, Middlesex UB7 0DA



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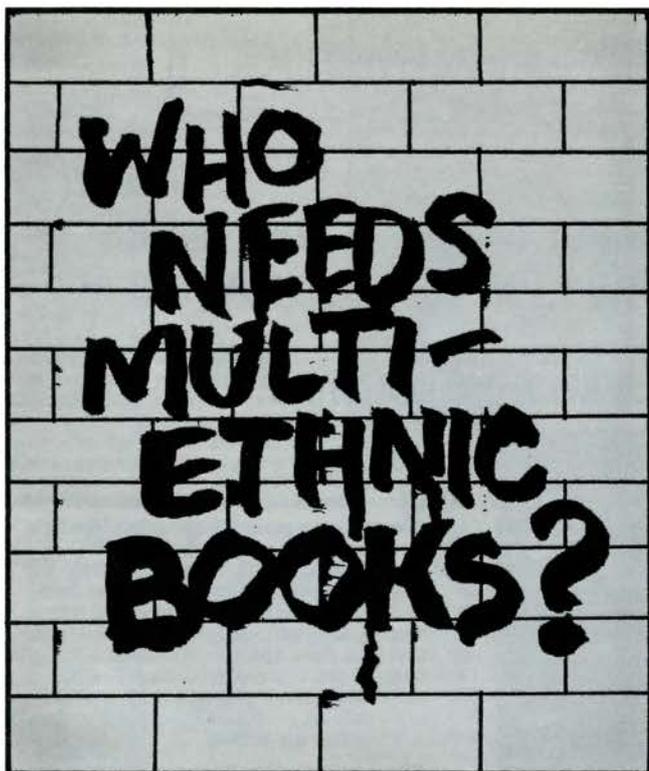
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September 85p



...KNIGHT BOOKS



Rosemary Stones considers the issues.

Children like to 'see themselves' in books — to identify in the widest sense with the characters and situation depicted, and to have implicitly reinforced their worth as people (the sort who are important enough to have books written about them). Books also have a formative influence on young readers. Without their realising it consciously, books are helping to shape their view of other people and groups; in a multi-ethnic society such a process has an obvious part to play in fostering respect and understanding for all people in our society. In an interview (*Children's Book Bulletin*, June 1979) Errol Lloyd, the Jamaican illustrator and painter, commented that children's books with positive Black characters 'support Black children while they are developing their sense of cultural identity within white dominated society' and at the same time 'they help to normalise for children the presence of Black people in Britain.'

Over the last five years the children's book world has welcomed the appearance of the occasional children's book that reflects the multi-ethnic society that is Britain today, e.g. the positive response to Petronella Breinburg and Errol Lloyd's pioneering *My Brother Sean* (Bodley Head and Puffin). But this welcome has not been accompanied by any widespread serious consideration of the issues that surround publishing for children in a multi-ethnic society. My own experience after five years of working with concerned groups of parents, teachers, librarians and booksellers on the question of children's books in a multi-ethnic society has taught me, however, that such groups want to discuss and are discussing:

- 1) What do we do about racism in children's books?
- 2) How do we find out about non-racist children's books?
- 3) How important are these issues to children in all white areas of the country?

What indeed do we do about racism in children's books?

It should be no surprise that one can still find racist children's books in Britain — we were an Empire, we did have colonies and the ideology of Empire dies hard. But in some subject areas (e.g. 'great explorers') it is still almost impossible to find suitable non-racist books. Book selectors must try to inform themselves of the nature of racial bias. *Books for Keeps* (May 1980) for example, in an article devoted to Willard Price, fails to comment on the heroes' white supremacist attitudes to the luckless Third World peoples they encounter on their travels. Nor is there discussion on whether the merit of accessibility in Price's books is countered by their racism. In *Amazon Adventure* (1961, reprinted 1979) we are told that the Indians were 'chattering like monkeys'. 'They're really very clever people,' said Terry, 'even in shirts and shorts, some of the men looked a bit wild.'

We are in a period of transition, and selection policies must constantly be revised as more and better material becomes available. Clearly books like the Willard Prices and the W. E. Johns which are offensive and which have no outstanding literary or historic qualities do not merit a place on our book stalls. The problems arise with books like Lucy Boston's *The Chimneys of Green Knowe* (Puffin) which presents a Black character in a positive and dignified way but which also contains descriptions ('rolling eyes' etc.) which are (unintentionally) pejorative;



there are also the white liberal books of the sixties about racism like *The Cay* (Theodore Taylor, Puffin) which can now be seen to be paternalistic. Books such as these should be made available to young readers but alongside good books which genuinely reflect the Black experience — *Come to Mecca* (Farrukh Dhondy, Lions), *Long Journey Home* (Julius Lester, Puffin), *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Mildred Taylor, Puffin) are some of the outstanding titles available from Black writers. From such a dynamic juxtaposition can only grow an understanding of cultural responses in a changing society.

But what has this to do with young readers who do not live in multi-ethnic communities? Few of us would be so parochial as to suggest that such young people will not travel or should not be informed about British society as a whole. But the crux of the matter is this: racism in Britain today is a white problem, and, in the words of the introduction to the World Council of Churches *Criteria for the Evaluation of Racism*, 'racism hinders both sides from a fully human experience. The victims, dominant or dominated, cannot have a normal relationship with themselves or with others. Racism destroys both parties; it dehumanizes.' The NUT Guidelines *In Black and White* point out that: 'In some ways it is the schools in which there are no ethnic minority group children which are at a disadvantage, and where the most dangerously prejudiced public attitudes stemming from ignorance may occur. So the teacher in an all-white school needs to be doubly aware of the problem of stereotyping; it is here that the misleading stereotypes of other ethnic groups which children receive from their textbooks will meet no contradiction in reality and may be unthinkingly accepted.'

But presenting a wider range of titles to young readers is a pleasure, not a boring chore. There is a great wealth of literature from Black British writers, from writers overseas and now from white writers who have responded creatively to living in a multi-ethnic society, that young readers should not be deprived of. Missing out on such books means bypassing a window onto the richness and diversity of human experience.

There is a great sense of urgency among those who work with children and their books in the inner city areas: Black parents' groups, community groups, concerned teachers and librarians are in the forefront of a movement which is developing expertise and collecting information about every aspect of children's books in a multi-ethnic society — guidelines on racial bias, books in first languages, books with dual language texts, books about countries of origin, books which reflect multi-ethnic Britain. And so forth. There is much that can now be shared with all our children. ●

Rosemary Stones is co-editor of *Children's Book Bulletin* and also reviews children's books for, among other journals, *Issues in Race and Education*, *Spare Rib* and *Time Out*. She is the compiler of the Puffin catalogue *A Multi-Ethnic Booklist* and co-editor of the multi-ethnic nursery rhyme collection *Mother Goose Comes to Cable Street* (Kestrel/Puffin.) She is the children's book buyer at Centerprise community bookshop and runs a school bookshop at her children's school.

Children's Book Bulletin — news and reviews of children's books for the multi-ethnic society. 3 issues a year. 60p per issue + 15p p. & p. 3 issues (a year subscription) £1.80 including postage.

Cheques and postal orders to Children's Book Bulletin, 4 Aldebert Terrace, London, SW8 1BH.

Guidelines

In Black and White, guidelines on racial stereotyping in text books and learning materials. 20p from the National Union of Teachers, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1.

Assessing Children's Books for a Multi-Ethnic Society: Practical Guidelines for Primary and Secondary Schools

Free to ILEA teachers on receipt of an A4 sae; 10p and an A4 sae, if outside ILEA, from The Library, The Centre for Urban Educational Studies, 34 Aberdeen Park, London N5 2BL.

Criteria for the Evaluation of Racism in Textbooks and Children's Literature formulated by an international working party of the World Council of Churches Workshop on Racism in Children's and School Textbooks. Reprinted in *Children's Book Bulletin*, No. 1.

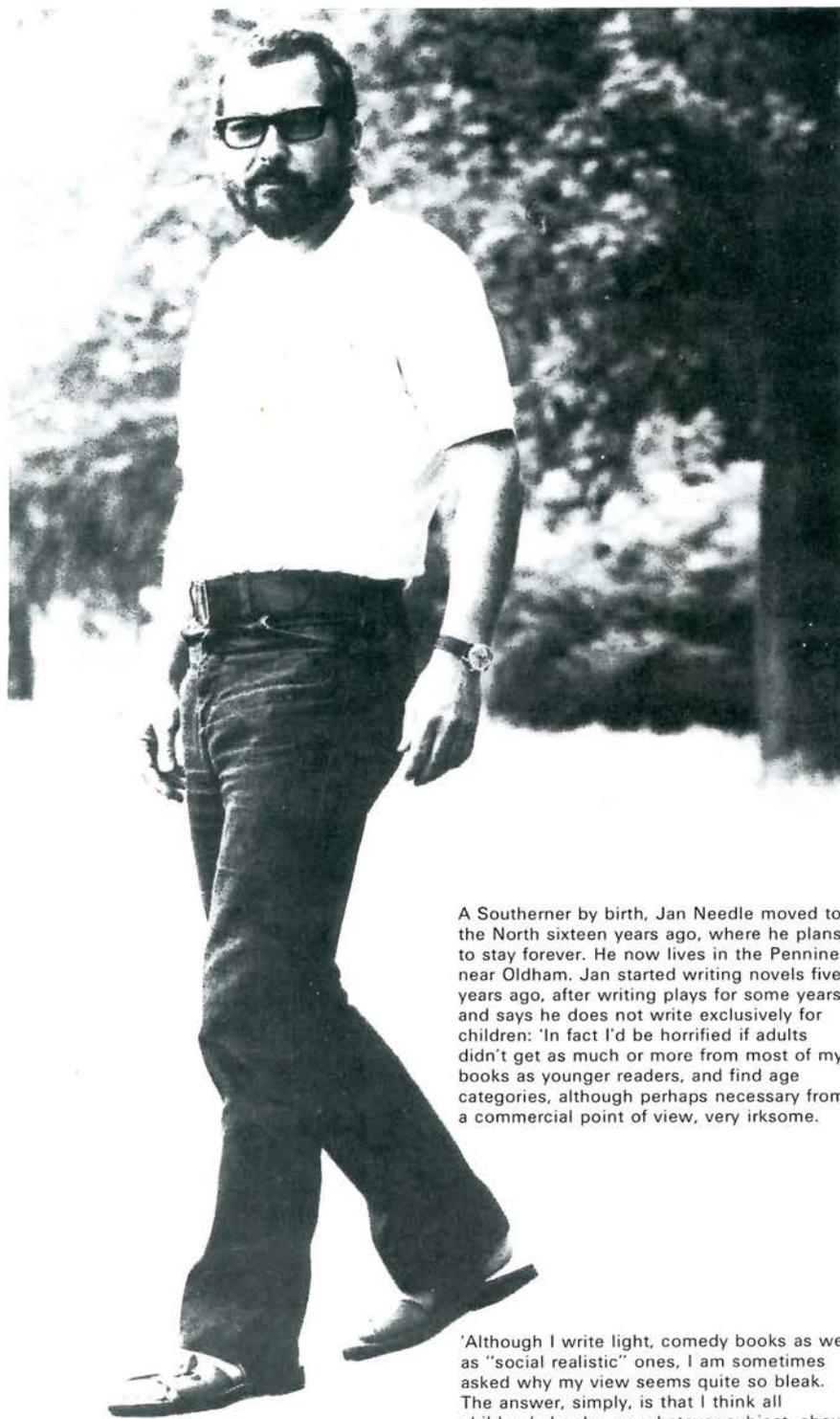
For other useful sources of information, see page 32.

'Children prefer toughness to cheating, although some adults don't.'

The speaker: Jan Needle

Since his first children's book came out in 1977, Jan Needle has acquired something of a reputation for uncompromising and unconventional writing.

Eric Hadley considers the six books so far published.



A Southerner by birth, Jan Needle moved to the North sixteen years ago, where he plans to stay forever. He now lives in the Pennines, near Oldham. Jan started writing novels five years ago, after writing plays for some years, and says he does not write exclusively for children: 'In fact I'd be horrified if adults didn't get as much or more from most of my books as younger readers, and find age categories, although perhaps necessary from a commercial point of view, very irksome.'

'Although I write light, comedy books as well as "social realistic" ones, I am sometimes asked why my view seems quite so bleak. The answer, simply, is that I think all children's books, on whatever subject, should be as truthful as the author can make them. If in some cases this means the picture must be harsh, then so it must be. Children, I have found, prefer toughness to cheating, although some adults don't.'

What delights me most about Jan Needle's work is the way that it resists being categorised. Recently I've chuckled my way through *Rottenteeth*, his first picture book, with my six-year-old son. Disagreed with a friend's daughter and my nine-year-old son over *The Size Spies* — they think it's funny, I don't (probable verdict: I've no sense of humour). And ended up near to tears over his most ambitious novel to date, *A Fine Boy for Killing*.

Rottenteeth is a cracking pirate yarn in which the baddies are dastardly and the goodies are dimmers. *Rottenteeth* (the villain) makes Cut Throat Jake from Captain Pugwash seem very tame. The jokes throughout are guaranteed terrible — and there's no happy ending for Everett Dymme, our pure but out-manoeuvred hero. Virtue is not rewarded, an aspect of reality many children know well. In *Roy Bentley*, Jan Needle has found a congenial collaborator who knows how to make the most of ships exploding and bodies flying everywhere.

The Bee Rustlers, his latest book, has the mark of the 'series' about it. Jan Needle is not responsible for the *Young Fiction* format, the undistinguished illustrations (beware illustrators who won't risk giving the main characters distinguishable features), the inflated price (£3.50 for 79 pages); but his ability to give you the authentic child's voice seems to have deserted him momentarily. I can't get interested in Carol and Tony. One carries on reading 'for the adventure' of the children saving mum's bees from the rustlers. In his other books — *Albeson and the Germans* in particular — you don't have to make this separation.

That book is full of excitement and suspense but it is also full of moments like this where the headmaster has just finished browbeating the school at assembly over the break-in *Albeson* has been part of:

'As the seconds crept by *Albeson* almost burst with the effort not to confess. He dug his fingernails deeper and deeper into his palms, his eyes were screwed up so tight it hurt badly. It would have been so lovely to just stand up and say the words. He knew that a great weight would have fallen from him, that he would have felt light, and clean and loved. Every part of him ached to admit it, his lungs ached to rid themselves of the breathless pain he was suffering.'

This is a moment of great tension but the tension is *in Albeson*. The book is his story, his adventure, and what excites us and children are his sense of confusion, his isolation — the way he only half understands the people who surround or use him.

The most telling moments in *My Mate Shofiq* are like this too. Take, for example, this almost casual moment of illumination. Scared, half-believing that if caught they will 'end up in the deep freeze at the Calcutta

Restaurant', Bernard and his friends have tracked Shofiq and his father to their house in the depths of 'Little India'. Suddenly doors open and men emerge.

'Maureen, Terry and Dougie were shaking with fear... Bernard, returning from a first glance at the tiny back gardens of the houses, saw their faces, saw the group of little brown men, and saw the mini-bus arrive. "Oh," he said. "They're off on the night shift." But he was talking to himself. The others... had pelted off past him... The scene on the road was nothing to panic about, just the men getting in their mini-buses; he supposed it must be for cheapness or something, or maybe they went for a pint or a game of darts first. Anyway, it was obvious no-one was out to cut his throat — it would make them late for

clocking in.'

The point isn't that Bernard becomes less prejudiced at this point. Mixed with his realisation that Pakistani men work and organise transport for themselves is a much stronger feeling of triumph over his mates who run off at the sight of the 'bogey men'. Unlike the confrontation scenes at the Social Security office and with the social worker this doesn't feel like a 'set piece', nor is there that uneasy sense of life 'realities' being spelt out:

"You'll get well looked after... Grown-ups aren't all stupid. They're not always up the creek. They get some things right."

I've left *A Fine Boy for Killing* till last because I think it's Jan Needle's most uncompromising book to date, and for all its

Napoleonic war setting it confronts the human and social issues lurking in *My Mate Shofiq* much more thoroughly. It is a long book (refreshing to think that some writers believe teenagers like a 'good read') and his most exciting. We are not spared the horrors of life in the navy, but there's no sense of inert reconstruction. In the best sense it is completely serious, unlike the fancifully over-written sea-stories of Leon Garfield. This time Jan Needle looks deep into the moral pressures on children living in a world of pernicious class divisions, bullying thoughtlessness and egomania, as well as unlooked for heroism.

At the end we share the feelings of the fifteen-year-old boy who has lived through this story! 'William Bentley could look no more. His eyes had seen enough.'

Books by Jan Needle

Rottenteeth

pictures by Roy Bentley
Deutsch, 0 233 97205 6, £4.25,
32 pages, 1980
Read aloud or alone. 7+, especially boys.

The Size Spies

illustrated by Roy Bentley
Deutsch, 0 233 97003 7, £3.50,
156 pages, 1979
Lions, 0 00 671701 2, 80p, 1980
Cynthia and George manage to keep sane in a world of crazy grown-ups including the professor, inventor of the machine which has accidentally shrunk their parents, and the British government (which doesn't believe in children). 8-12. Good read aloud.

The Bee Rustlers

illustrated by Paul Wright
Collins, 0 00 184043 6, £3.50,
79 pages, 1980
Yorkshire moors setting. 8-12.

My Mate Shofiq

Deutsch, 0 233 96987 X, £3.50,
175 pages, 1978
Lions, 0 00 671518 4, 70p, 1980
Almost in spite of himself Bernard finds himself included in Shofiq's problems. Junior school background. 9+.

Albeson and the Germans
Deutsch, 0 233 96900 4, £2.75,
1977

Albeson (who knows about Germans from his comics) decides he has to stop two German children coming to his school. 9+.

A Fine Boy for Killing
Deutsch, 0 233 97106 8, £4.95,
256 pages, 1979

A Sense of Shame and other Stories
Deutsch, 0 233 97266 8, £4.50,
due out November 1980.

The title story is about Lorraine 'sixteen... white Oldham and a Catholic too' and Mohammed, nineteen, a Pakistani, and the summer they fall in love.

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NEWS

Awards

The Other Award

The Other Award is an alternative children's book award for non-biased books of literary merit. It was inaugurated in 1975 by Rosemary Stones and Andrew Mann, co-editors of **Children's Book Bulletin**, in an attempt to draw attention to important new writing and illustration for children, and to give due recognition to those writers and illustrators who are taking positive steps to widen the literary experience of young people today. The Other Award takes the form of annual commendations to a number of children's books published in the preceding twelve months. The Award is not accompanied by a money or other prize.

The commended books for 1980, with the judges' comments, are:

Mrs Plug the Plumber by Allan Ahlberg, illustrated by Joe Wright (Kestrel, £1.95 and Puffin, 60p).

Mrs Plug the plumber is called out to cope with various plumbing emergencies in a punchily written and illustrated book packed with non-sexist detail and comic events.

The Machine Breakers by Angela Bull (Collins, 'History's People' series, £3.95).

The Luddite movement is at last discussed as a response to the wider social and economic changes of which ordinary workers were the victims. A narrative full of individual accounts and histories.

Aborigines by Virginia Luling (Macdonald, 'Surviving Peoples' series, £2.95).

An outstanding account of one of the Third World peoples, ill-served till now in children's information books.

The Green Bough of Liberty by David Rees (Dobson, £3.95)

Recreates the incidents and the people of the Irish rebellion of 1798 in which more than 30,000 died. Intensely and movingly written, this sensitive novel for teenagers also faces up to the moral dilemma that is still with us today: what place has violence in the struggle for freedom?

The panel which selected this year's Other Award winners consisted of: Peter Griffiths — Education Officer, Thames Television. Bob Leeson — Literary and Children's Editor of the **Morning Star**, and children's book writer. John Vincent — Principal Librarian Adult and Specialist Services, London Borough of Lambeth. Andrew Mann and Rosemary Stones.

A poster of this year's winners, and a list of previous winners, is available from Children's Rights Workshop, 4 Aldebert Terrace, London SW8 1BH (Enclose a s.a.e. please.)

Library Association Awards

The Carnegie Medal has been awarded to Peter Dickinson for his novel **Tulku** (Gollancz). The Kate Greenaway Medal has gone to Jan Pienkowski for **Haunted House** (Heinemann).

New Names in Children's Books

Scorning words like recession and the cuts being made all round, two publishers are bringing out new imprints.

Pepper Press

Pepper Press (from E.J. Arnold) will be publishing (they say) 'quality children's books at the best possible prices'. The list will be launched this month with eight titles. The range is wide. There's a picture book for infants **The Smallest Swallow** (£2.50) which tells, with colour photographs, the life story of a swallow; historical fiction based on fact for the 5-9's (first title **Abilene 1870** by Felicia Law); poetry for 6-12's, stories for 5-9's and non-fiction for juniors. **The A-Z of Ghosts and the Supernatural** sounds like a useful addition to the class library. This dictionary is

OLD MACDONALD HAD A FARM

David Frankland

A delightful picturebook version of the well-known song, capturing the eccentric charm of the old farmer and all his animals. A simple piano setting of the melody is included. Ages 3-8
0 08 024494 7 hardback £3.95

MY AUNT POLLY BY THE SEA

Helen Cresswell

Illustrations in full colour by Margaret Gordon
Another hilarious book from the author and illustrator of *My Aunt Polly*. As the old lady describes her seaside outing, each scene is visualised by her admiring young niece, who believes every word. Ages 4-8
0 08 025621 X hardback £2.75
0 08 025622 8 laminated paperback 90p

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A rich selection of meaningful tales involving unusual animals: a dancing bear; a proud tiger; an elusive mermaid; three wandering kittens; a ghostly hound; and the fateful 'plastic-eaters'. Illustrated in full colour and black-and-white by Kathy Wyatt. Age 10+
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*Shortlisted for the National Arts Council, Children's Literature Award 1980.

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compiled by Jan Knight who says she has seen ghosts and a U.F.O.

The launch list also includes the first two books in **A Project Series for Young People — Bridges and Skyscrapers** by Anne and Scott MacGregor (£3.95). The idea is to teach architectural and engineering principles by inviting the reader to make the various structures from inexpensive materials'.

There's a glamorous competition associated with **Skyscrapers** — first prize a trip to New York for winner and parent or guardian. There's also a special schools entry. Details from Pepper Press, Butterley Street, Leeds LS10 1AX.



Pippins from Evans

Due out in October a new series of 'read-by-yourself' fiction for 5 to 8-year-olds. Evans say these are 'exciting stories about subjects that will appeal to children, ranging from football to frogs, with lots of mystery and adventure'. There's an illustration (black and white) on every page and they claim 'each line is an easily readable phrase'. Authors in the first

batch are Gladys Williams, Janet Lynch-Watson, Peter Richards and Joan Cass. Price? £2.95 for 48 pages.

A Story Competition

The National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations (in conjunction with Hodder and Stoughton and the SBA) are running a story-writing competition for children called **Century 2000**.

School children of all ages are invited to write a chapter from a story entitled **Century 2000**. They should then include a brief outline as to the rest of the story. There will be two age sections. Section 'A' for children below the age of 12 years on the 1st September 1980.

Section 'B' for pupils over 12. Book and cash prizes will be presented to the first, second and third in each section — first £20, second £15, and £10 for third. The presentations will be made at the Silver Jubilee Conference of NCPTA at Avery Hill College, London in April 1981. All entries should be sent to 43 Stonebridge Road, Northfleet, Kent.

They must include (attached to the actual entry)
 (1) NAME, ADDRESS AND AGE of the entrant, also section entered (A or B).
 (2) School attended.
 (3) The signature of the parent or teacher of the entrant in verification.

ALL ENTRIES MUST BE IN BY 31ST JANUARY 1981.

Children's Book Fairs

Dates and Contacts.

20th September, St Albans
 Helen James (0727 50441)
 23rd-25th September,
 Wolverhampton, Wulfrith Hall
 Mr S.J. Findlay (Midland
 Educational Co., 0902 28782)
 22nd-26th October,
 Cheltenham Festival of
 Literature — Children's Book
 Fair and Festival.

Michael Darling (Cheltenham
 Library, 0242 22476/512131)
 27th-29th October, Colchester
 Margaret Turfrey (01 580 6321)
 29th October — 1st November,
 Exeter, Condie's Bookshop
 James Condie (0392 54024)
 1st November, Grays Thurrock,
 Essex

Nancy Rhodes (Pied Piper
 Bookshop, 0277 219908)
 3rd — 7th November
 Weymouth

Mr R.J. Ronald (Weymouth
 Bookshop, 03057 74707)
 13th — 15th November,
 Islington

John McEachen (Central
 Library, 01 609 3051 Ext 30)
 20th — 23rd November, Oxford
 Chris Hicks (Children's
 Bookshop, 0865 46111)

The 50 Best Produced Books of 1979

This annual exhibition will be at the NBL in Wandsworth from 21st October to 7th November. It includes a number of children's books including William Stobbs' **Chanticleer**

(The Bodley Head) which was included in the 'Top Ten'. Two children's paperbacks made the list: **How does your Garden Grow?**, Jean Ellenby (Dinosaur) and **The Maggie B**, Irene Haas (Picture Lions).

Covent Garden Book Fair 1980—New Dates

The dates for this event have been changed from those announced in the July **Books for Keeps**. The Fair is now scheduled for 21st-27th September. It will be opened by actor Sidney Poitier and Saturday the 27th will be Children's Day.

Moonlight Publishing

This new company set up by Christine and Robin Baker (formerly of the Children's Book Centre) launched its first two series at the end of August **Picture Story Books** (£1.95) aimed at 7-10's feature snort stories by 'classic' writers (Joyce, Tolstoy, Voltaire, Twain, Andersen and Grimm) each illustrated by 'a leading international children's book illustrator'.

The **My Nature Book Series** consists of small-size books for four to eight-year-olds (£1.50). The first four titles are **Water, Air, Earth and The Earthworm**. All illustrated in colour by Etienne Delessert. ●

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Secombe's Selection



Harry Secombe. Photograph by David Secombe, courtesy of Puffin Books.

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Harry Secombe whose talents and infectious giggle have earned him a special place in all British hearts is this year's Children's Book Week personality.

He's an ideal choice. Singer, actor and all-round entertainer, Harry is also reader, writer, President of the Junior Puffin Club and all-round book person.

He's always been an avid reader. As a child with Scarlet fever he read all Scott's Waverley novels which left him he says 'with a yearning for adventure — and very short-sighted'.

Nowadays his tastes run to 'the latest adventure novel, biography or history'. The Secombe family home in Cheam is overflowing with books and a visitor is quite likely to leave laden with volumes to make room for the latest titles.

Harry (like his fellow goon Spike Milligan) has turned his talents to writing. The appearance of his first novel *Twice Brightly* (Robson Books/Sphere Books) in 1974 would have pleased his old English master in Swansea. He spotted Harry as a promising writer and was disappointed when he gave up his early ambition to become a journalist for a stage career. Years later, famous and well-established, Harry returned to Swansea and paid a visit to his old teacher. He drew up outside the house in his Rolls Royce and went in to see the old man who greeted him with 'What went wrong then, boy?'

After *Twice Brightly* came a collection of short stories, *Goon for Lunch* (Michael Joseph/Star Books), and in 1977 his first book for children *Katy and the Nurgla* (Robson Books) dedicated to his youngest daughter Katy, who was ten at the time.

For CBW Harry and his family have made a personal selection of books — all published this year.

From books submitted by publishers, Beverley Mathias at the NBL created a 'short list' of family books. Harry, son David (just finishing A Levels and an aspiring photographer), daughters Katy, and Jennifer (also representing granddaughters Harriet (2) and newly arrived Emily) set about choosing twelve.

'We asked them to include paperbacks and hardbacks, fiction and non-fiction,' said Margaret Turfrey. 'They took it very seriously and knew exactly why they had chosen each one.'

Hound in the Highlands

Brenda Sivers,
Abelard-Schuman,
0 200 72718 4, £3.95

Seven Years and a Day

Colette O'Hare and Beryl
Cook, Collins,
0 00 195745 7, £4 50

Big-Top Benn

David McKee, Dobson Books,
0 234 77607 2, £3.50

Grange Hill Rules — OK?

Robert Leeson, Fontana,
0 00 671658 X, 75p

Gentleman Jim

Raymond Briggs, Hamish
Hamilton, 0 241 10281 2,
£3.25

A Walk in Wolf Wood

Mary Stewart, Hodder &
Stoughton, 0 340 25291 X,
£3.50

The Mother Goose Book

Ill. Alice and Martin
Provinsen, Julia MacRae
Books, 0 86203 001 3,
£4.95

Just Look ... A Book About Paintings

Robert Cumming, Kestrel
Books, 0 7226 5676 9,
£4.95

A Day in the Zoo

Anon, Kestrel Books,
0 7226 5706 4, £4.25

The Guinness Book of Animal Marvels

Ed. Shirley Greenway,
Piccolo, 0 330 26030 8,
75p

The Battle of Bubble and Squeak

Philippa Pearce, Puffin,
0 14 03.1183 1, 65p

The Enormous Crocodile

Roald Dahl, Puffin,
0 14 050.342 0, £1.00



Margaret Turfrey, Children's Book
Officer, Book Marketing Council,
with Harry Secombe at the
announcement of 'Secombe's
Selection'.

Readers of Books for Keeps will recognise a number of these titles from past issues. We liked them too.

Why not use Secombe's Selection as your CBW display? There is a full-colour poster. A limited number of these are available for Books for Keeps readers. First come, first served. Send large s.a.e. to the SBA in Lee by 30th September.

Katy and the Nurgla is available in Puffin this month. See Reviews, page 8. ●

SOUND AND VISION

Two programmes not to be missed

Anyone looking for allies in the crusade to create avid readers for pleasure will find them in the Schools Broadcasting Schedules.

Both BBC radio and ITV are in strong support again with well-established series that get books moving off shelves and into children's hands.

BBC Schools Radio gives us

Bill Oddie, presenter of *Inside Pages*.



Inside Pages— the only radio series for 10 to 12-year-olds which deals exclusively with books. The programmes are presented by Bill Oddie with the aim of introducing a wide selection of some of the best books currently available, so that children will know what to look for when visiting the library or bookshop having had a taster on the programme. Bill introduces narrated and dramatised extracts, interviews with authors and other topics of related interest to the chosen books which are both fiction and non-fiction. The programmes are arranged in themes and include for this autumn:

Mysterious

24th September

Elaine Strich reads from *The Remarkable Return of Winston Potter Crisply* with other extracts from Leon Garfield's new book *John Diamond*, Conan Doyle's *The Speckled Band* and Jane Curry's *The Bassumtye Treasure*.

Future Worlds

8th October

Jan Chappell and Steven Pacey, stars of TV's *Blake's 7*, dramatise an extract from *Galactic Warlord*, a new sci-fi thriller by Douglas Hill. Jan also reads from the chilling *Z for Zachariah* with other extracts from *The Men from PIG and ROBOT* and *A Rag, A Bone and a Hank of Hair*.

Come Alive

22nd October (repeat 29th October)

Una Stubbs reads from *La Corona* and *the Tin Frog* by Russell Hoban, beautifully illustrated by Nicola Bayley; also extracts from John Gordon's *The Giant under the Snow* and Conrad, *the Factory Made Boy* by Christine Nostlinger.

Slavery and Freedom

12th November

Rudolph Walker reads from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Isabelle Lucas from Julius Lester's *Long Journey Home*. Other extracts include the exciting escape story *Underground to Canada* and Robert Leeson's *The Cimarrons*.

Heroes and Heroines

26th November

George Layton reads from *My Mate Shofiq* with other extracts from *The Great Book Raid*, *The Practical Princess* and *Other Liberating Fairy Tales and Conrad's War*.

There is a booklet to accompany the series which not only gives details of the books in the programmes but also has extensive booklists of other good reads under the same theme. The booklet (price 25p) can be obtained from:

Janet Whitaker, *Inside Pages*, Room 401, 1 Portland Place, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA.

Inside Pages is broadcast on Radio 4 VHF on alternate Wednesdays at 11.20 am starting on 24th September.

Independent Television for schools gives us

About Books — a series of five programmes across the year which tries to encourage more reading in the 9-12 age range. A variety of books, both fiction and non-fiction, is presented in a lively and entertaining way through film clips, dramatisations, readings, etc. Programmes will wherever appropriate also focus on aspects of reading such as: how to read an anthology, the uses of indexes and contents pages, 'reading' a photograph or illustration; expanding interests and knowledge through reading. The adviser for the series is Elaine Moss. Themes for this year are:

Living Together 23rd September

British Folk Tales and Legends 25th November

Work 20th January

Faraway Places 24th March

Hobbies 5th May

Programmes will be transmitted on Tuesdays 10.04 — 10.24 am.

Booklet and wallchart from Thames Television Ltd, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9LL.

Heidi's Back — in twenty-six episodes

Starting this month BBC are broadcasting a new European version of this hundred-year-old 'classic' children's story. Each episode is twenty minutes and the production is dubbed into English.

In case there is anyone who doesn't know the story it's about little orphan Heidi, sent to live with eccentric (but lovable) grandfather who lives alone in the Swiss mountains. She loves the life and her friend Peter, the goatherd; but she is whisked away to Frankfurt to be companion to Clara (who is ill) and be educated. She pines for her beloved mountains and eventually returns there with Clara who grows strong and abandons her wheelchair.

If it's a long time since you read the book (if you ever did) and you're wondering whether to stock up the bookshop, be warned. It's long, in places very wordy, has a laboured beginning and is poorly illustrated. Heidi is amazingly 'adult' throughout (even at five years old); Peter, much older, is unbelievably childish; Clara is the traditionally passive handicapped person.

We asked around for children's reactions. Not many in our one-day sample had read it or even heard of it. Those who had were, predictably, the bookish ones. One nine-year-old boy, asked for his opinion, said 'It's a very feminine book.' And indeed most enthusiasts were eight-plus girls. It certainly still had charm for them.

Heidi, Johanna Spyri, Puffin, 0 14 03.0097 X, 75p

Summer Holiday Tie-ins

From Granada in August we had *Watch All Night* by John Foster who wrote the novel version for Puffin (0 14 03.1331 1, 80p) himself. (There's an interesting article by him about it in *Puffin Post*.)

The story is based on an occurrence earlier this century at the Paris World Fair. A girl whose brother has inexplicably disappeared cannot get anyone, especially the police, to believe that he ever existed. (It was filmed years ago as *So Long at the Fair*.) In this updated version it is the girl's father who disappears, there is a broken marriage and the intrigue is political. There's a depressing ending — but presumably the viewer would already know about that. Quite a good read.

On general release in the cinema, *The Wildcats of St Trinian's* — another Frank Launder romp. He also 'did' the novel for Armada (0 00 691779 8, 80p).

The rapacious little horrors are now forming a schoolgirls' union demanding such things as free chewing-gum, cigarettes and make-up and that all ten-year-olds should be admitted to 'X' films ... the chaos that results in every major (and minor) girls' school of the realm and in Whitehall makes for a lively, undemanding read.

The double-entendre and salacious goings-on that punctuate some of the other St Trinian's frolics have been toned down, and judging by the ripple of excitement that it caused in classrooms where we tried it out, it is guaranteed to sell well.

The book of the TV film, of the song!

Colin Mills looks at *Puff the Magic Dragon*, Romeo Muller, illustrations by Swenson, Kirson, Wolf and McMacken, Magnet, 0 416 89590 5, 95p Jackie Draper is dumb (I mean he can't talk) and is taken on a magical journey to face up to all his fears. I'm dubious about the value of this book which indulges in sub-standard fantasy and rather transparent bibliotherapy to tell the 'extraordinary untold story locked inside a boy's head'.



There are lessons to be drawn though in the ways in which stories come to children from the screen. If you get a chance, look at the bold, animated pictures ... at the way the text is on the page, like a TV script. Let's spend the 95p on the real artists (like the Ahlbergs) who can combine that sort of immediacy with worthwhile stories.

Languages for Life

'No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold, nor to live and act as though school and home represent two totally separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart.'

This statement from the Bullock Report, *A Language for Life*, in 1975 seems to indicate a place for the mother tongue (whatever language this might be) in our schools. A closer look at what is actually happening reveals an amazingly complicated and diverse scene. There are children starting school who speak no English, and parents who speak no English with children who are rapidly forgetting their mother tongue. Provision for mother tongue teaching is varied and patchy. In urban areas (like London, Bradford and Coventry) with large minority populations some teaching happens in schools; elsewhere classes outside school hours are organised by local community and religious groups. In Bradford in 1975 there were self-help groups running classes in Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Polish, Ukrainian, Gujarati, Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi. There is difficulty everywhere in getting trained teachers; there is little or no money for such schemes and a shortage of good learning materials.

Bodley Head's **Dual-language Picture Books** are an attempt by a major publisher to do something about this. The project started in Australia as a way to help Greek and Italian speaking 'New Australians' learn to speak English. Parent and child could enjoy the story together and each could help the other towards the new language. In this country so far four titles are available in Greek/English and Italian/English and the scheme has expanded to include two titles in Gujarati/English and Turkish/English.

We gave these books for testing to teachers of Greek and Gujarati who hold mother tongue classes out of school. For both these groups it is not so much a case of learning English as preserving a minority language. Both teachers commented on the excellence of the language and commended it for not being a literal translation from the English. 'It is as if the story had been originally written in this language,' said one.

The acute shortage of any material of this kind meant that the books were welcome, but there was some criticism of the layout of the two languages — sometimes one first, sometimes the other. This, as Bodley Head explained, depends entirely on the space available in the originals. It's this factor also which limits the number of books suitable for dual-language texts. The choice of *Peter's Chair* and *The Snowy Day* for Gujarati versions was the cause of some comment: children would not immediately identify with Peter, some parents might be put off because Peter is a Black American child. The appeal of the Chihiro Iwasaki illustrations for *Momoko's Birthday* and *Momoko and the Pretty Bird* was definitely a plus factor for older children who were being obliged to learn Greek by determined parents. The Greek equivalent of 'Janet and John' with which they usually learn is pretty uninspiring.

None of the books so far available from Bodley Head are directly culturally relevant to the groups they are intended for. 'If mother tongue is to survive, it must be translated into a British context. We can't go on pretending our Asian kids live in an Indian village,' said Mike Feeley, Coventry's adviser for multi-cultural education (*Times Educational Supplement*, 2nd February).

A promising move in this direction may be coming from Methuen Educational. **The Terraced House Books** by Peter Heaslip with their urban, multi-cultural settings are a great breakthrough in early reading material. The most recent eight titles are small masterpieces both in the construction of the simple repetitive text and in the composition of Anne Griffiths' coloured photographs. The illustrations are full of information, opportunities for extended talking, and varied backgrounds and experiences. So strong has been the response to these little books that Methuen have brought out a set of four posters from photographs in the series. Even more exciting is the news that they are considering doing sheets of translations — just text — which can be cut up and stuck above or below the original text. Do-it-yourself dual-language texts.

Unfortunately for school bookshops **The Terraced House Books** and the posters are non-net so you will have to ask your supplier what he will charge you for them. (If you're puzzled by the terms 'net' and 'non-net', watch out for an explanation from the expert who explained it to us, in **Books for Keeps** soon.)

Creating a genuinely multi-cultural society is not easy. It involves much more than everyone speaking English and being tolerant. If ethnic minorities are to preserve their cultures, they must also preserve their languages for it is in language that our cultures largely exist.

Bodley Head Dual-language Picture Books

The Rain Puddle, Adelaide Holl, £3.25
Greek/English, 0 370 30243 5;
Italian/English, 0 370 30244 3

Momoko and the Pretty Bird, Chihiro Iwasaki, £2.95
Greek/English, 0 370 30113 7;
Italian/English, 0 370 30112 9

Momoko's Birthday, Chihiro Iwasaki, £2.95
Greek/English, 0 370 30114 5;
Italian/English, 0 370 30117 X

Hi, Cat!, Ezra Jack Keats, £2.95
Greek/English, 0 370 30115 3;
Italian/English, 0 370 30116 1



Peter's Chair, Ezra Jack Keats, £3.50 Gujarati/English, 0 370 30239 7; Turkish/English, 0 370 30240 0

The Snowy Day, Ezra Jack Keats, £3.50 Gujarati/English, 0 370 30241 9; Turkish/English, 0 370 30242 7

Methuen Educational Terraced House Books

Set A: Me; My Mum; My Dad; School, 0 423 50470 3

Set B: My Home; School Dinners; The Launderette; The Supermarket, 0 423 50480 0

Set C: Jobs; Birthdays; Our House; A Hole in the Road, 0 423 90070 6

Set D: My Aunt; The Clinic; The Market; Our New Baby, 0 423 90080 3

Each set £2.30 non-net

Terraced House Posters, set of four, 0 423 90170 2, £4.00 non-net



What do you do?
I'm a shop keeper.



What do you do?
I'm a milkman.



What do you do?
I'm a teacher.

Another useful early reading dual-language text:

Raja and Shabnam Visit the Nursery School
In English/Gujarati/Hindi/
Urdu and English/Italian/
Punjabi/Bengali. Illustrated
with children's drawings and
photographs. From
Bedfordshire Education
Service, English Language
and Resources Centre, Acacia
Road, Bedford MK42 0HU, at
45p.



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MONEY—THE FACTS OF LIFE

5th edition by **W Reay Tolfree**

Written for those starting in regular employment for the first time, this contains useful information such as how wages and salaries are paid, how to look after money and how to budget. Suitable for school-leavers, students and teachers instructing in money matters.

Price 90 pence

WHAT GOES ON IN THE CITY?

2nd edition by **Nicholas Ritchie**

A concise guide to the City of London, its institutions, and how it works, aimed at young people beginning a course in economics or commerce.

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THE ECONOMICS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

1st Edition by **David Cobham**

For 'A' level economics students, containing chapters on visible and invisible trade, balance of payments, the foreign exchange market, international monetary systems, etc.

Price £1.95

The first of the **BOOKS FOR KEEPS** 'award' for **BOOKS THAT WORKED***

In the May issue of **Books for Keeps** we asked you to tell us about a book that really worked for you this year. A book, perhaps, that suddenly broke through, or worked in unusual circumstances, and got an individual or group really enthused and absorbed. It could be an unexpected title or a well-known and popular one. The response was so interesting that we've decided to keep the idea going (see below for details).

Meanwhile — here is our first 'winner'.

Doris Rushton of the Senior Primary School, the International School in Geneva, nominates **The Secret of the Seventh Star**, a Tracker Book from Transworld, which really worked for ten-year-old Nicky.

Nicky couldn't read, and didn't want to — although he was bright enough to have no real problem. Teachers and librarians wheedled, bullied him, introduced books/authors/pictures. Nothing seemed to catch his interest. He would come into the library, fool about, get into trouble and be sent out. In library lessons he refused to listen. Books were to hit other boys over the head with.

And then our librarian took the Tracker Book, **The Secret of the Seventh Star**, and asked Nicky whether, on a stormy night in a strange, weird house, he would go up the stairs or through the nearest door. She showed him the illustration offering two possibilities. Nicky chose one, and they turned to the correct page together. After the second choice, he took the little book out of her hand and went away to a corner to work it out for himself.

He came back begging for more Tracker Books. When he'd finished all we'd got, he went on to Willard Price. After that, there was no further difficulty. Nicky loved reading.

Doris Rushton thinks the book worked because it demanded his involvement, 'his own imagination became part of the plot'.

Have you a story about a book that 'worked'? It doesn't have to be a book that has worked in school. We'd like to hear from parents, librarians or anyone involved with children and books, as well as teachers. A £5 book token for each one we print.

The Secret of the Seventh Star is now out of print, but there are currently nine Tracker Books available. Each one is a picture story adventure, (some have sporting backgrounds) and throughout the book the reader is offered alternatives for action. The 'track' through the book depends on these choices and there are several possible endings, so the same book can be read in different ways. Prices range from 45p to 65p.

I realised that I did not need to consult them. From the other messages, I knew that this one must be a number and that it would lead me to a room.

As I studied the little figures, I realised that the first, third and fifth were all the same and, therefore, must represent the same letter. The other figures were all different. So now I knew that I was looking for a number with six letters having the first, third and fifth letters the same. It would almost certainly have to be F.

Slowly I began to work through the numbers. ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE, TEN, ELEVEN, TWELVE, THIRTEEN, FOURTEEN, FIFTEEN, SIXTEEN, SEVENTEEN, EIGHTEEN, NINETEEN, TWENTY, TWENTY-ONE, TWENTY-TWO, TWENTY-THREE, TWENTY-FOUR, TWENTY-FIVE, TWENTY-SIX, TWENTY-SEVEN, TWENTY-EIGHT, TWENTY-NINE, THIRTY, THIRTY-ONE, THIRTY-TWO, THIRTY-THREE, THIRTY-FOUR, THIRTY-FIVE, THIRTY-SIX, THIRTY-SEVEN, THIRTY-EIGHT, THIRTY-NINE, FORTY, FORTY-ONE, FORTY-TWO, FORTY-THREE, FORTY-FOUR, FORTY-FIVE, FORTY-SIX, FORTY-SEVEN, FORTY-EIGHT, FORTY-NINE, FIFTY, FIFTY-ONE, FIFTY-TWO, FIFTY-THREE, FIFTY-FOUR, FIFTY-FIVE, FIFTY-SIX, FIFTY-SEVEN, FIFTY-EIGHT, FIFTY-NINE, SIXTY, SIXTY-ONE, SIXTY-TWO, SIXTY-THREE, SIXTY-FOUR, SIXTY-FIVE, SIXTY-SIX, SIXTY-SEVEN, SIXTY-EIGHT, SIXTY-NINE, SEVENTY, SEVENTY-ONE, SEVENTY-TWO, SEVENTY-THREE, SEVENTY-FOUR, SEVENTY-FIVE, SEVENTY-SIX, SEVENTY-SEVEN, SEVENTY-EIGHT, SEVENTY-NINE, EIGHTY, EIGHTY-ONE, EIGHTY-TWO, EIGHTY-THREE, EIGHTY-FOUR, EIGHTY-FIVE, EIGHTY-SIX, EIGHTY-SEVEN, EIGHTY-EIGHT, EIGHTY-NINE, 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HUNDRED AND ELEVEN, NINE HUNDRED AND TWELVE, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN, NINE HUNDRED AND FOURTEEN, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTEEN, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTEEN, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETEEN, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THREE, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOUR, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIX, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-EIGHT, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-NINE, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-ONE, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-TWO, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-THREE, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOUR, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIVE, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SIX, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SEVEN, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHT, NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINE, NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY, NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-ONE, NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-TWO, NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-THREE, NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR, NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIVE, NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SIX, NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SEVEN, NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-EIGHT, NINE HUNDRED AND FORTY-NINE, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-ONE, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-TWO, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIX, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SEVEN, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-EIGHT, NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-NINE, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-ONE, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-TWO, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THREE, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FOUR, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIX, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SEVEN, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHT, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINE, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-ONE, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-THREE, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIX, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SEVEN, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHT, NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINE, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-ONE, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TWO, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-THREE, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOUR, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIVE, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SIX, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SEVEN, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-EIGHT, NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-NINE, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-ONE, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-TWO, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-THREE, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-FOUR, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIVE, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-SIX, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-SEVEN, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-EIGHT, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-NINE, TEN HUNDRED, TEN HUNDRED AND ONE, TEN HUNDRED AND TWO, TEN HUNDRED AND THREE, TEN HUNDRED AND FOUR, TEN HUNDRED AND FIVE, TEN HUNDRED AND SIX, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVEN, TEN HUNDRED AND EIGHT, TEN HUNDRED AND NINE, TEN HUNDRED AND TEN, TEN HUNDRED AND ELEVEN, TEN HUNDRED AND TWELVE, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN, TEN HUNDRED AND FOURTEEN, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTEEN, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTEEN, TEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN, TEN HUNDRED AND NINETEEN, TEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY, TEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE, TEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO, TEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THREE, TEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOUR, TEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE, TEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIX, TEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN, TEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-EIGHT, TEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-NINE, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-ONE, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-TWO, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-THREE, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOUR, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIVE, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SIX, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SEVEN, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHT, TEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINE, TEN HUNDRED AND FORTY, TEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-ONE, TEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-TWO, TEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-THREE, TEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR, TEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIVE, TEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-SIX, TEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-SEVEN, TEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-EIGHT, TEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-NINE, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-ONE, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-TWO, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIX, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SEVEN, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-EIGHT, TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-NINE, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-ONE, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-TWO, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THREE, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FOUR, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIX, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SEVEN, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHT, TEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINE, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-ONE, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-THREE, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIX, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SEVEN, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHT, TEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINE, TEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY, TEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-ONE, TEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TWO, TEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TH