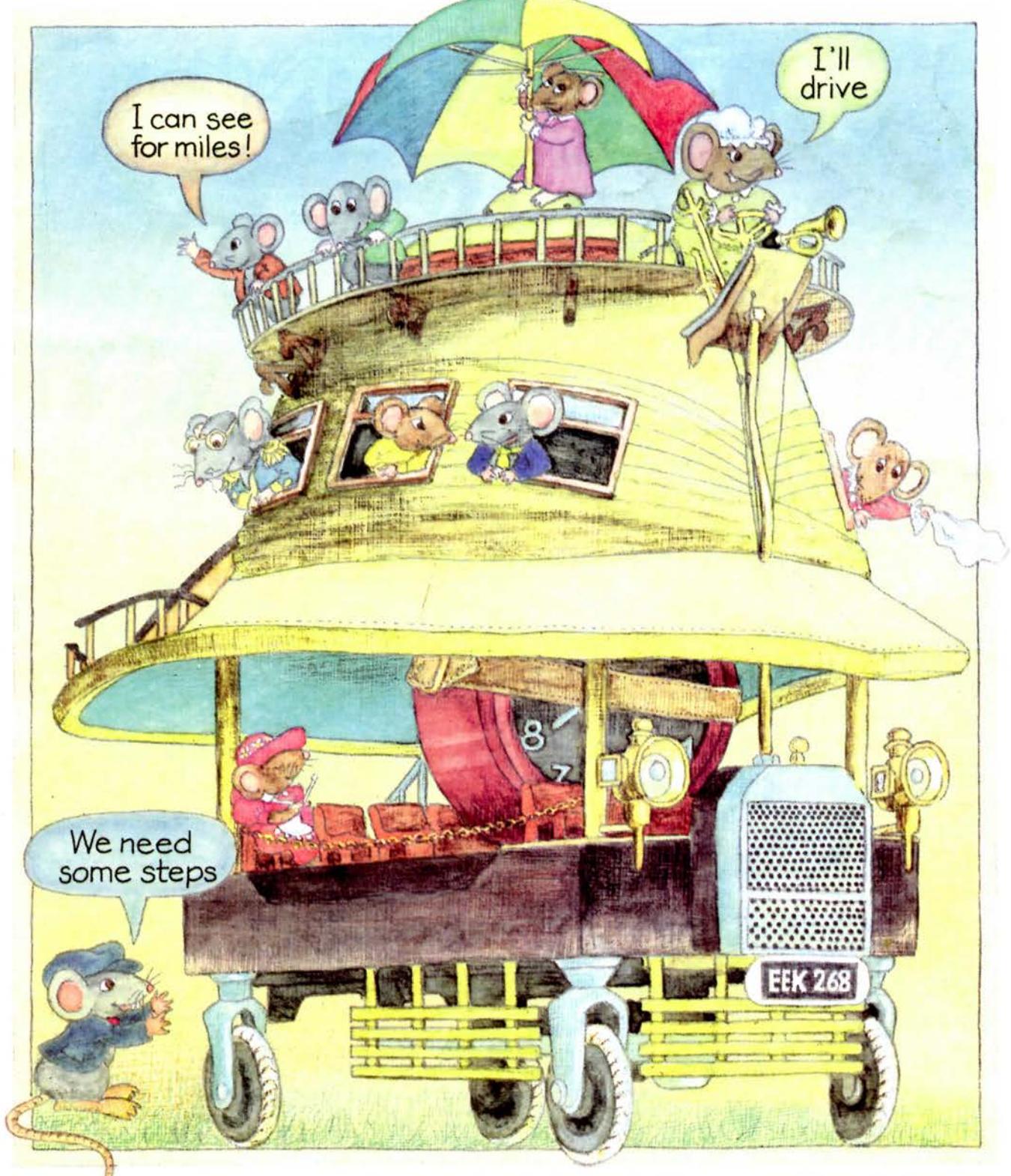


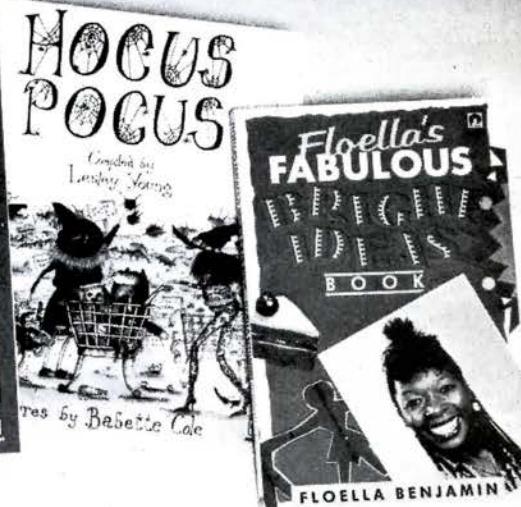
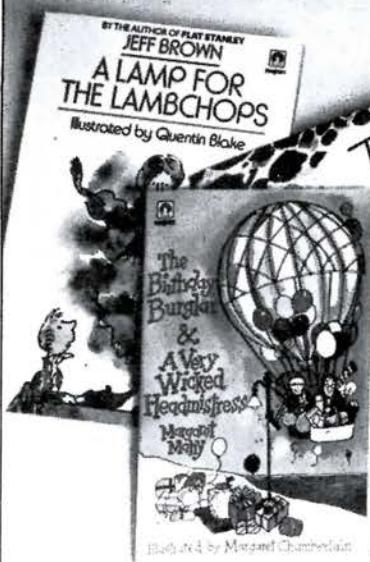
BOOKS FOR KEEPS

No. 41 Nov. 1986
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EDITOR'S PAGE

Christmas and Classics: two special features in this last BfK of 1986. This year the pile of Christmas books seems to be higher than ever and new titles are arriving even as I write. For our selection (page 4) we looked for books about the giving and getting of presents, books which feature Father Christmas and books which look a little deeper into the significance of gifts. We had to leave out some more general books which we'd recommend as good investments for this year and any other. **An Oxford Book of Christmas Stories**, compiled by Dennis Pepper (OUP, 0 19 278119 7, £7.95) is a lovely pudding of a book containing original and reprinted stories. The range of tone and content is satisfyingly wide and varied and the eighteen illustrations add to the richness of the mix. John Rhodes, head of English in a 13-18 comprehensive, out of requests for reading for carol concerts and festive occasions, put together **Christmas: A Celebration** (Faber, 0 571 13752 0, £6.95); here are 50 extracts and poems which show how Christmas has been celebrated since the middle ages, with his own brief but helpful introductions. **The Puffin Book of Christmas Stories**, fourteen stories compiled by the ever reliable Sara and Stephen Corrin (0 14 03 1967 0, £2.50) includes a complete version of **A Christmas Carol**, some traditional tales and some with a more contemporary setting. Harrased teachers and parents should welcome **More Bright Ideas: Christmas Art and Craft** (Scholastic, 0 590 70601 2, £4.95) with lots of practical ideas for decorations, presents, fancy dress and play costumes, and decorations from other lands. Things to make and do as well as stories come in two bright and cheerful album-type collections: Mary Batchelor's widely liked **Lion Christmas Book** is now in paperback (0 7459 1220 6, £3.95) and **The Happy Christmas Book** (Hippo, 0 590 70593 8, £1.95) has Satoshi Kitamura's inviting and amusing illustrations.

Publishing Trends

Two books that didn't make our selection this year are new versions of **The Twelve Days of Christmas**, that ultimate feat of present giving. Between them they represent two distinctive strands of current publishing for children. Louise Brierley's version for Walker Books is an elegant production: formally patterned, mannered illustrations, subtle and restrained colours, a faintly detectable sense of humour. It's a book without a point of contact for most children. Sophie Windham's book for Macmillan is highly decorative — lots of patterned borders with seasonal motifs — but there is no sign of my true love or 'me'. An invitation to action — lots of flaps to lift — and on the surface most accessible, but where is the story?

Spin-offs are another publishing phenomena amply illustrated by what has befallen Pooh (see page 6). Raymond Briggs' Snowman appears again this year in a pop-up which will mean most to those who have seen the Snowman film — it even plays the theme music. High quality paper engineering, but there must be better ways of spending £8.95 on books than this. **The Snowman Easy Piano Picture Book** (Faber) adds music and words to pictures from the film. Sometimes I fear Briggs' exquisite and restrained original wordless picture book may be quite submerged. Not that all this is new. Beatrix Potter made a Peter Rabbit doll herself and was keen to get it on the market. 'There is a run on toys copied from pictures,' she wrote to her publisher. She also invented a Peter Rabbit board game, designed painting books and kept a close watch on her royalties from merchandising her characters to manufacturers. Want to know more? Read Judy Taylor's excellent biography (see page 10).

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Pat



Classic Perspective

Another classic artist being currently celebrated is Randolph Caldecott. Brian Alderson's exhibition **Sing a Song of Sixpence: the English picture book tradition and Randolph Caldecott** is a tribute one hundred years after Caldecott's death. It's in the galleries of the British Library in Great Russell Street, London, until 25th January 1987 (admission free). The catalogue (CUP, 0 521 33760 7, £9.95 pbk) written by Brian Alderson provides a critical history of children's book illustration from Hogarth to the present day and is essential reading for anyone interested in this subject. Frederick Warne's new Classics series (£2.95 each in 'little book' size) has three **Caldecott Collections** of traditional rhymes and three of the **Johnny Crow** stories by Leslie Brooke, an artist who encouraged Warne to publish Peter Rabbit saying 'it would undoubtedly be a success'.

In her letters Beatrix Potter refers to Norman Warne — who so sadly died soon after they became engaged — as Johnny Crow. As a maker of doll's houses and travelling boxes for mice, Warne would have found much in common with Rodney Peppé, our choice for the Authorgraph and the cover of this issue. Stephanie Nettell who interviewed Rodney for us was enchanted by his collection of toys and models.

Nice to see that Margaret Fisher and BfK are in agreement about putting Noel Streatfeild among the classics. Mrs Fisher's **Signal Bookguide, Classics for Children and Young People** (Thimble Press, 0 903355 20 5, £3.50), contains nearly 100 recommendations each concisely and elegantly annotated in a way that made me, for one, want to start re-reading. This is more a taught course than just a booklist, the guiding voice is questioning and challenging. A voice of similar quality can be easily heard in Kaye Webb's **I Like This Story**, the 2000th Puffin (0 14 03 2000 8, £2.95). Kaye was editor of Puffin for eighteen years, a period when Puffin reigned unchallenged among children's paperbacks. Celebrating 25 years in children's publishing herself, Kaye has lost none of her touch in selecting extracts from and writing introductions to 50 favourite books (some of these are already in Margery Fisher's selection as modern classics — others could well be soon). There are so many cliffhangers her young readers should be beating a path to library or bookshop to read on. As perhaps will viewers of the new adaptation of **The Children of Green Knowe**. Paul Stone clearly hopes so (see page 11). Look out too in the run-up to Christmas for the repeat of Paul Stone's very successful production of another classic, John Masefield's **Box of Delights**.

Footnote:

One of the latest Hamish Hamilton Cherrystones, **The Librarian** (0 241 11939 1, £4.95), features Reading Children's Librarian, Jenny Kinnear. A photograph of librarians in the staff room carries the caption, 'This is a good place to read reviews of the latest children's books, and recent interviews with popular authors.' Hastily we scanned the publications on the table. What, no BfK? Then we noticed. Of course, **Books for Keeps** was the magazine Jenny Kinnear was READING. ●

A SEASON TO BE GIVING



The giving and receiving of gifts is a part of Christmas which arouses conflicting feelings in all of us whatever our age. Now and in memory there is anticipation and disappointment, unbearable excitement and awful anti-climax, joy, tears, envy, security, exhaustion, fulfilment.

We've selected books from this season's crop which provide space and opportunity for children, alone or with adults, to explore this emotional mix up.

The three kings following the star and bearing their symbolic gifts to Bethlehem began it all. Two books retell that Christian myth in ways which illuminate the theme.

Christmas Cat

Words by Peggy Blakeley, paintings by Yutaka Sugita, A & C Black, 0 7136 2867 7, £5.95

Rich colours glow so brightly from the shiny textured appearance of Sugita's pages that many young readers reach out to touch or even lick the pictures. Here, illustrating a simple text, the kings, smiling and friendly, move steadily in stylised forms through the book. They are joined on their journey by Cat ('A cat may look at a king') . . . and Donkey . . . and Bird; arriving at the stable the animals are sad to have no gifts until they realise that they can give themselves - the bird will sing, the donkey (delicately foreshadowing Palm Sunday) offers rides, the cat will play and be stroked.

Amahl and the Night Visitors

Gian Carlo Menotti, ill. Michèle Lemieux, Faber, 0 571 10070 8, £5.95

This longer story is a retelling by the composer of his famous Christmas opera. The kings seek hospitality from a poor shepherd boy and his widowed mother. Amahl hearing that the child the kings seek will 'build his kingdom on love alone' offers his crutch as a gift: 'Who knows he may need one, and this I made myself.' Miraculously he is cured; can walk, run and dance and rides off with the kings to present his gift in person. All the humour, the drama and the magic of the story are captured in the illustrations.

More everyday concerns about Christmas and presents can be found in this next batch.

James and the Father Christmases

Ute Krause, Methuen, 0 416 63910 0, £5.95

proposes a world in which the news that THERE IS NO FATHER CHRISTMAS spreads like wildfire through the media.

Eventually even the Father Christmases hear about it, letters from children decline to a trickle and at the very first world conference of Father Christmases they decide to go on strike, take a break in the South Seas and deliver no presents that year. James however has his doubts and a little bit of evidence is all he needs to convince him he has to go to the South Seas to put things right. Back on duty the Santas make their Christmas calls leaving labels, 'If I'm not real, where did the presents come from?' Amusing, cartoonish pictures show identical Santas - useful to explain away the one in every store - and the concept of depersonalised generosity which we did not deserve or believe in is something to discuss!

A Bear for Christmas

Holly Keller, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 283 0, £4.95

and

Thomas and the Christmas Presents

A. Vesey, Methuen, 0 416 96890 2, £4.95

deal with the awful anxiety about what you are 'getting for Christmas' and the dreadful temptation of hidden parcels. In **A Bear for Christmas** Joey tracks down a present he knows is for him. He opens it and finds a big bear he immediately names Fred. Trouble begins when he lets his friend Arnold into the secret and a squabble leads to Fred getting ripped. Joey's guilt and anxiety ruin the Christmas prep-

arations for him but luckily he has a wise mum and everything is cleared up on Christmas morning. As usual Holly Keller has her finger on exactly how children feel.

Thomas, in A. Vesey's story, is a cat, but his desperate desire to know if he is getting the longed-for bicycle for Christmas will be recognised by many human counterparts. It drives him, one night, to unwrapping all the parcels in the landing cupboard to find out. No bicycle, just bad dreams and, next morning, two angry disappointed parents. Thomas tries hard to make amends but when he hangs up his stocking on Christmas Eve it is more in hope than certainty . . . Guess what happens!

Both these books are just right for newly developing readers.

The Best Christmas

Lee Kingham, ill. Janet Duchesne, Julia MacRae (Redwing Books), 0 86203 262 8, £3.95

is a longer text and could be read alone for more experience or shared with a class - there's something here for all ages. First published in 1949, this could be an antidote to those relentlessly competitive recitals of who's being given what or (after Christmas) who's got what.

The rural life-style of a large, poor American family living on the Atlantic coast in the early part of this century may have little in common with that of video-watching, computer-using collectors of Transformers, Care Bears, My Little Pony and He-man. But what may communicate and give rise to talk are the feelings of a family when the oldest child, grown-up Matti, is missing at sea. The simple ritual Christmas preparations cannot disguise anxiety and, for the younger children, there is the realisation that no Matti means no store-bought presents. Erkki is ten and the fifth child; secretly, using anything he can lay his hands on, he makes presents for everyone else and (trying to take on his brother's role for Matti's sake) he discovers the excitement of giving. Sensitively observed detail makes this well worth attention - and there is a happy ending.

Don't look, Max! said Santa Claus.
Why? said Max.
Because, said Santa Claus,
nobody is supposed to see me!



Max's Christmas

Rosemary Wells, Collins, 0 00 195328 1, £3.95

Max and big sister Ruby, Rosemary Wells' two characterful 'human rabbits', are here again. Ruby pushes, prods and faces a barrage of questions as she organises Max into bed on Christmas Eve. Finally, standing on him to keep him down, she is driven to authoritarian BECAUSE! when Max wants to know why no-one ever sees Santa Claus. Being the kind of rabbit who needs to know for himself Max waits by the chimney and subjects Santa Claus to a similar inquisition. Once again it's the pictures that tell more than half the story – Rosemary Wells' rabbits must have the most expressive body language in picture books.

Happy Christmas, Gemma

Sarah Hayes, ill. Jan Ormerod, Walker Books, 0 7445 0618 2, £5.95

A family Christmas simply described in the words of baby Gemma's older brother and chronicling in particular Gemma's part in it all. 'Another day we put up the decorations. I made a long paper chain. Gemma made a mess.' Jan Ormerod's pictures of this delightful Black family – including Grandma – extend the text with a wealth of human observation. Look at the range of facial expressions as Gemma, who has her back to us, turns her bowl of Christmas dinner upside down. Lovely.

More Christmases Past are available for comparison in

A Christmas Carol

Adapted from Dickens by Jane Wilton-Smith, ill. John Worsley, Blackie, 0 216 92080 9, £4.50

The central theme of this most definitive of all discussions of the Christmas spirit is retained in this very slimmed-down version. Dickens' voice survives despite a (probably unnecessary) tendency to simplify the vocabulary in places – 'very much' for 'exceedingly', 'scarf' for 'comforter'. Sadly, also, some richly detailed set pieces – Fezziwig's party, the streets of Christmas present, the Cratchit family's concentrated involvement with goose and pudding – have become bare bones to make room for pictures which, though supportive, cannot replace the images created by the words. Still, you can always go back to the original for these and this is a workable text to read aloud to juniors.

A look at the dreadful, lifeless 'adaptation' in the pop-up *A Christmas Carol* (Methuen, 0 416 96550 4, £6.95) will show you how not to do it. The illustrations by Victor Ambrus catch the Dickens spirit and the pop-up effects are nicely inventive – Marley's face appearing in the knocker for one. But the text! Bah! Humbug!

The Christmas Party

Faith Jaques, Orchard Books, 1 85213 002 4, £4.95

takes us to Edwardian England in the form of a make-it-yourself model of a children's party. It's unusual for us to recommend a toy rather than a book; but this one provides so many opportunities for story-making and the detail is so carefully researched and incorporated that we think it's worth mentioning. Try it with lots of speculative questions – Who are the children? What games will they play at the party? What will they eat? Who are the presents on the tree for? What's in the parcels on the table? Who are the cards from? When did we start sending cards, decorating our houses with Christmas trees, balloons, paper chains, greenery? Who put up the decorations in this house? Where is father? Did all the children in Edwardian England have a Christmas like this? A good focus for children researching and writing.

A Child's Christmas in Wales

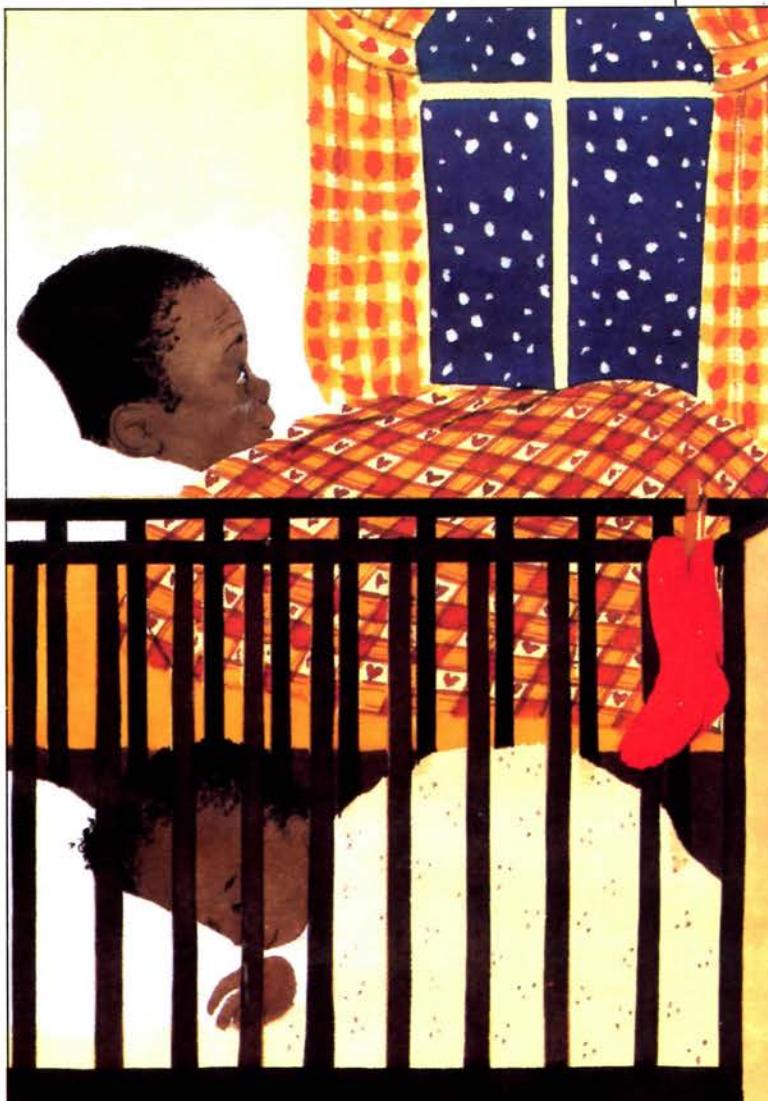
Dylan Thomas, ill. Edward Ardizzone, Dent, 0 460 02772 7, £2.95

This full-size paperback edition must be the bargain of the season. Dylan Thomas' memories of thirties' Christmases capture exactly the child-sized perspective on uncles, and eating and presents, and amazing events like Mrs Prothero's fire. Ardizzone's illustrations are all you could ask and more. Magical.

The Christmas Day Kitten

James Herriot, ill. Ruth Brown, Michael Joseph, 0 7181 2750 1, £5.95

This unassuming story, adapted from a chapter in one of the Herriot memoirs, is the most successful by miles of the three books so far produced from this source. The telling is unremarkable but Ruth Brown's pictures take this book into the special class. Landscapes, location, people and especially the animals – cats and Basset hounds – lift the flatness of the prose into a vividly real world. Ruth Brown has drawn cats before but never like this; Debbie the bedraggled stray and Buster the kitten she brings to Mrs Pickering on Christmas Day are so completely realised you can feel the texture of their fur and read their different personalities. Don't be put off by the cover design which makes this look like a twee book. It isn't. It's another view of giving and receiving.



'Gemma went to sleep.' From *Happy Christmas, Gemma*, Walker Books.



Father Christmases here and at title, from *James and the Father Christmases*.

The Polar Express

Chris van Allsburg, Andersen, 0 86264 143 8, £5.95

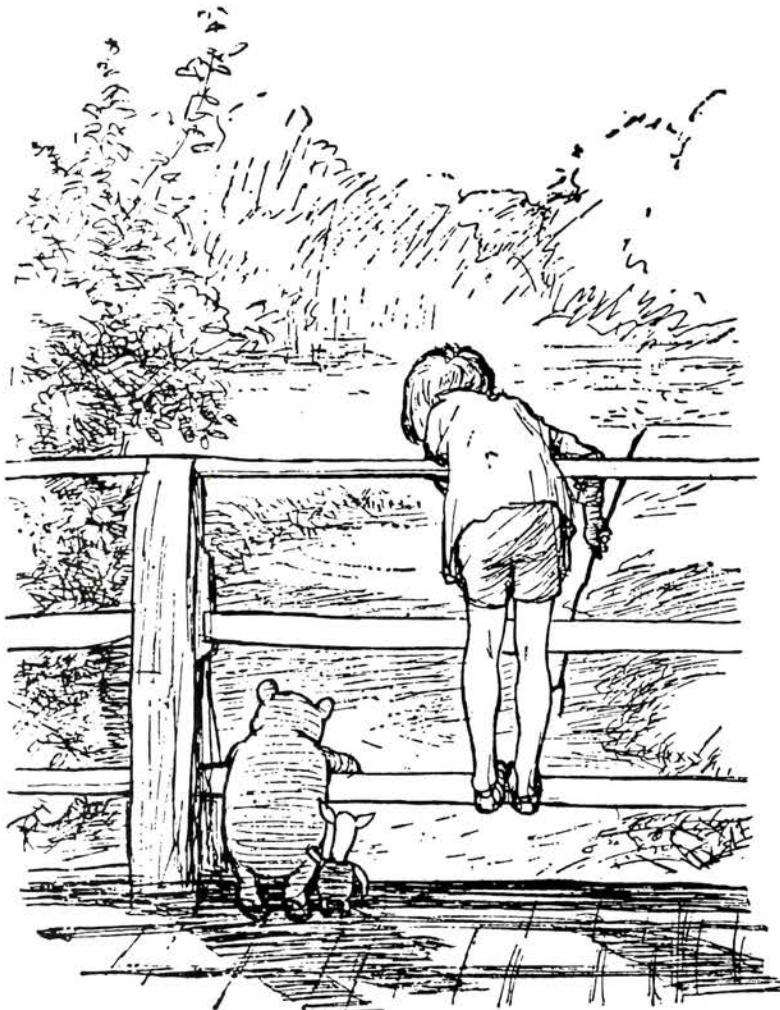
A beautiful, atmospheric book whose pictures and story speak to all ages of the undying magic of Christmas, the best gift of all and always there for those who wish to find it. The first person narrative tells how 'many years ago' on Christmas Eve the Polar Express – a huge steam train – pulled up outside a boy's house; the guard invited him aboard and he and a train load of other children, all in their night-clothes, set off for the North Pole and Santa's city. Houses, forests, wolves, mountains, viaducts, factories are simultaneously real and mysterious in Chris van Allsburg's snow-filled pictures; but Santa Claus is as sharp and clear as the delineation in the final picture of the bell from his sleigh that the now adult storyteller asked for as 'the first gift of Christmas'.

Winner of the Caldecott medal when it was first published in the USA last year, this is a really special book; without doubt my Christmas book of the year by miles. ●

CLASSICS • CLASSICS • CLASSICS • CLASSICS • CLASSICS • CLASSICS • CLASSICS •

To mark the sixtieth anniversary of the first appearance of A. A. Milne's famous bear, **Chris Powling** offers an essay

On the Permanence of Pooh



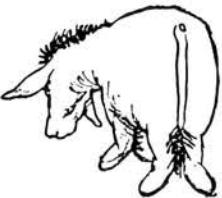
When did you last play pooh-sticks?

As you'll recall, it's not a complicated game. All you need is a bridge, a handful of twigs and a river whose speed-of-flow urgently requires testing. After this, Nature can safely be left to take its course. Like conkers, pillow-fights and seashore pebbles flat enough for skimming, pooh-sticks brings about a response so obvious nobody has ever spelled out the rules in any detail.

Literary historians, however, being bores of little brain, may try to tell you it was invented by A. A. Milne and cite chapter and verse (or hum) to prove it. Well, that's their story. His story is rather better. It simply documents a phenomenon that's timeless and universal. Pooh-sticks has *always* existed.

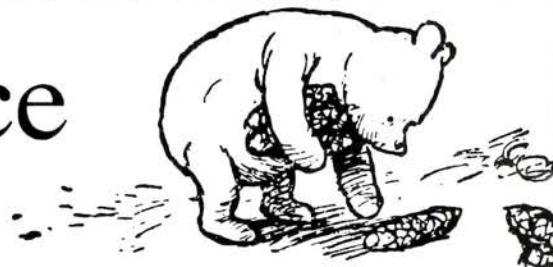
Like Pooh himself, of course. Or Piglet. Or Rabbit. Or Owl. Or Kanga. Or Roo. Or Tigger.

What?



Oh yes. Or Eeyore.

Who, except on purpose to establish essential Eeyore-ness, could possibly forget Eeyore? Haven't we known him, or someone exactly like him, all our lives? For the Pooh-books introduce us to what's already perfectly familiar, that's all. Well, almost all. The permanence of Pooh is certainly rooted in recognition-at-first sight, but it's the freshness built into every subsequent encounter by sheer literary



craftsmanship which keeps us hooked. Take this, for instance:

'Before he knew where he was,
Piglet was in the bath, and Kanga
was scrubbing him firmly with a
large, lathery flannel.'

"Ow!" cried Piglet. "Let me out!
I'm Piglet!"

"Don't open the mouth, dear, or
the soap goes in," said Kanga.
"There! What did I tell you?"'

All the Pooh stories have this luminous what-did-I-tell-you quality. They're a celebration of the Obvious made suddenly less blinding. Yet, over and over again, the revelation is kept sharp by the author's verbal deftness.

Of course, as the years go by we have to work a little harder at the text. Time casts a stumbling-block or two into the passage of most books and Pooh is no exception. The biggest obstacle here, undeniably, is Christopher Robin.

Was there ever a more insufferable child than Christopher Robin?



Every inch of him exudes smugness – from the top of that curious, bobbed haircut to the tip of those tiny-tot sandals (and the smock and shorts in between are just as irritating). Okay, so we shouldn't take him at face value. Maybe there *is* deep irony in this twentieth-century version of the Victorian Beautiful Child. In Christopher Robin's case, however, we must certainly heed the wise advice of Oscar Wilde that it's only a superficial person who does *not* judge by appearances. With Milne's prose reinforced by E. H. Shepard's superb line-drawings, Christopher Robin must surely be just what he seems. And what he seems is a serious affront to anyone who believes children are simply people who haven't lived very long. My favourite literary fantasy is a



CLASSICS • CLASSICS • CLASSICS • CLASSICS • CLASSICS • CLASSICS •

confrontation between Pooh's celebrated owner and that alternative emblem of childhood, the hardly less celebrated William Brown – amazingly, in fact and fiction, some half-dozen years the elder. The outcome, as satisfying as it is predictable, might be summarised thus:

"How did you fall in Christopher Robin?" asked Rabbit, as he dried him with Piglet's handkerchief.

"I didn't," said Christopher Robin.

"But how –"

"I was BOUNCED," said Christopher Robin.

"Oo," said Roo, excitedly, "Did somebody push you?"

"Somebody BOUNCED me. I was just thinking by the side of the river – thinking, if any of you know what that means – when I received a loud BOUNCE."

"Oh, Christopher Robin!" said everybody.'

Actually, they said it to Eeyore but few adults today won't relish my substitution.

Today's children, on the other hand, would probably wonder why I'm making such a fuss. Like Heffalumps and North Pole Expotitions and Crustimoney Proseedcake and the 'useful pot to put things in' which grown-up critics now shrink from for fear of seeming to endorse nostalgia, Christopher Robin nowadays is self-evidently a period-piece – part of a continuing costume drama of no greater handicap than the Eton collars and gobstoppers and dinner-gongs in the early William stories. What still counts for youngsters, in my experience, is what should count for us: the toy-animals who are almost people. They're far more important than the twee human who is nowhere near a child.

And it's not hard to see why. That 'almost' is crucial. For Pooh and company are magnificently full-of-life only so far as comedy allows. They don't grow, for example. That's not their function. To grumble, as a recent critic has done, that 'the narrative derives . . . from the conjunction and opposition of known qualities. No one, not even the comparatively imaginative Pooh, changes or develops' is to miss the point by a mile. The same is true of William, Henry, Douglas and Ginger, over the course of three hundred-or-more Richmal Crompton stories. The known-qualities deployed by comedy are static because the pain of being otherwise would foul up the plot. Children are free to laugh at what happens to Eeyore precisely because they recognise at once there's no need to feel sorry for him: he's so good at feeling sorry for himself. None better, in fact – just as Rabbit's bossiness can't be topped, nor Piglet's timidity, nor Tigger's bounce, nor Owl's pomposity.

Hence attention can be focussed right where Milne wants it – on a series of the most gentle come-uppances ever devised: 'There! What did I tell you?'



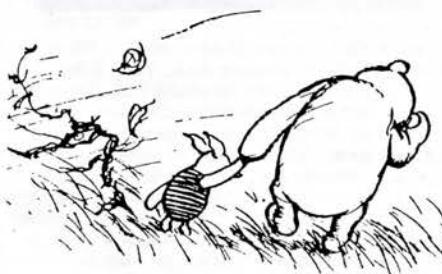
The permanence of the Pooh-books, then, has nothing whatever to do with their psychological depth or the sharpness of their social comment or their status as morality. These don't matter a jot. What's important, through and through, is their success as storytelling. And this is a triumph. It survives shifts in fashion. It survives Christopher Robin. It even survives that odd tone-of-voice which, for all Milne's simple language, never quite settles for a child audience. The world Pooh creates is completely unique and utterly self-sustaining. Yes, it is a world that's very like ours . . . but much, much more like itself.

Chris Powling, a regular contributor to **BTK**, is no mean humorist himself. One of his most recent books for children, **The Phantom Carwash** in Heinemann's Banana Books series, was included in the Smarties shortlist for the 7-11 category.

A Proliferation of Pooh

Winnie-the-Pooh first appeared in print in 1926 in the book which bears (sorry!) his name. Two years later came the second set of stories about Christopher Robin and his friends, **The House at Pooh Corner**. Those two books, discounting isolated and disguised brief appearances in verse in **When We Were Very Young** and **Now We Are Six**, are the sum total of Milne-created Pooh literature. This year Pooh, in publishing terms, is 60. Birthday parties and bear rallies have been held across the country. Pooh has been presented with an OAP bus pass and been featured on the Nine o'Clock News: hype on a scale that could only be mounted on the back of a national institution. Those two modest books with their charming black and white Shepard illustrations are still in print. So also are over fifty other 'Pooh books' on the Methuen and Magnet lists.

You can have the stories themselves in hardback or paperback, full-colour or black and white, collected or selected, mixed or singly, miniaturised or individualised, boxed or packaged, in English or Latin. And then you can have all the spin-offs: 'inspired by', 'based on', 'in the style of', 'after the style of'. There are two pop-up books 'after the style of E. H. Shepard'. A very long way after! And with extracts from Milne's original text edited to near nonsense. There's an Alphabet Book, a Counting Book, Board Books with new titles (**Pooh's Rainy Day**), a Painting Book, a Song Book, a Craft Book, a Recorder Book and no less than four cookery books (a bit tactless to put the Risotto with bacon in Piglet's section of **The Pooh Corner Cookbook**).



You can have a Pooh Frieze, or Pooh Posters, a Pooh Address Book or Birthday Book. You can even get philosophical with **The Tao of Pooh** or tone up your muscles with **Pooh's Workout Book**, paperbacked this year because Now We Are Sixty. Apart

from a few extracts from the genuine Milne the entire text of this last paperback is written by Ethan Mordden after the style of A. A. Milne – and if you want convincing that there is more to Milne's deceptively simple style than meets the eye, read Ethan Morden.

Specially for the birthday/Christmas season are some new publications: **The Winnie-the-Pooh Journal**, a book of lined pages each headed with a Pooh quotation 'For Writing your Special Thoughts in Your Own Words' (£3.95); four **Pooh Sticker Books**, containing a story and four pages of re-usable self-adhesive stickers to move around the pages (£2.95 each); and **The Pooh Book of Quotations**, compiled by Brian Sibley (£4.50) which should find a place on the bookshelf in anybody's loo.

A special award to Methuen for making a little go a very long way! And that's not saying anything about the Disney versions of Pooh – which is probably the best thing to do with them. Except to repeat the story of Suzanne told by Liz Waterland in the latest issue of **Signal** (No 51). Suzanne was watching the Disney **Winnie-the-Pooh and the Honey Tree**. Half-way through she turned to her mother in indignation. "That's not what really happened," she exclaimed. "That's not true." "What did really happen? What is true?" her mother asked. "The book, the book is," said Suzanne. "The book's true. I know what happened. We read it."

Pooh, confused by all this Proliferation, may well be cheering. ●

The books – from Methuen

Winnie-the-Pooh
0 416 39380 2, £5.50 hardback
0 416 23910 2, £1.50 paperback
0 416 16860 4, £7.95 colour edition

The House at Pooh Corner
0 416 34180 2, £5.95 hardback
0 416 22570 5, £1.50 paperback
0 416 78900 5, £7.95 colour edition

The World of Pooh
0 416 61050 1, £7.50 collected edition with 8 colour pictures

SHARING A STORY

Pat Thomson explains the thinking behind a new series of books which she has devised and written with the needs of 'new' readers in mind.

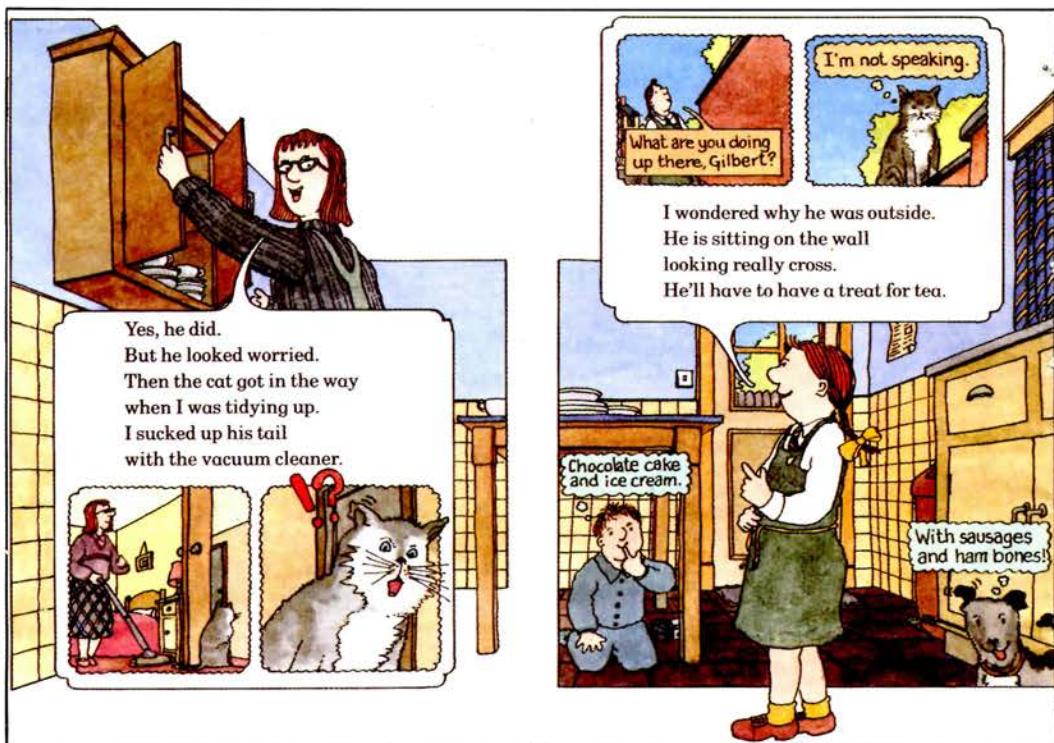
'I awoke with a start. There was a strange droning in my ears and a heaviness oppressed my spirits.' No, not an Edgar Allan Poe situation, just me listening to my son reading Book 2b, sent home for me to 'hear'. The idea for the Share-A-Story series came from remembering those sessions, both of us stiff with boredom, and from my subsequent professional experience spent persuading colleagues and students of the value of real books.

Now, changes seem to be afoot in the teaching of reading. The strange division between book people, teaching of reading experts and teachers of English is breaking down and books as I understand them are coming to the fore. This approach has been effectively expressed in the work of Jill Bennett and her use of picture books and Liz Waterland in her apprenticeship approach which involves reading *with* children. If words need a context, so do children and the involvement of parents in the reading process has revealed what a crucial role they can play. So, parents are going to find themselves increasingly asked to participate in their children's reading and teachers are going to have to provide books which they can send home.

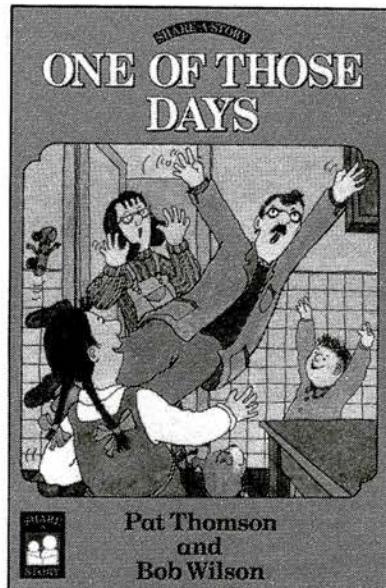
I have always been a book person, feeling that books have more to offer children than a means to recognise print. One of my children learned to read easily and quickly and we were soon sharing books which delighted us both. The other was different. Through him I came to appreciate the difficulties which some children experience. For him, it was hard work and he needed all the support he could get. Because he did not read quickly, he was never lifted and motivated by the story. Because he found texts difficult, he was given simplified material which would have bored a day-old chick. I realised that, just as in the case of swimming or cycling, he needed to practise. Like many other parents, I sat beside him, jollying him along, saying, 'You read that bit, then I'll read the next page,' and that of course is how the Share-A-Story series began.

I was driving home from a talk by Shirley Hughes who had been talking about the way illustration could be used to support new readers. With me was the illustrator Jan Ormerod and I was insisting that what we really needed were books which offered beginners a fair chance of success but which also provided a method of including a more exciting story line and vocabulary. 'Why don't you write some?' she said. It seemed the only sensible answer. The solution, I found, was to share the task of reading between the child and the adult. The adult would read the left-hand page and thus make it possible for new ideas, new vocabulary and helpful clues to be introduced. The child would read the more carefully monitored right-hand page. Later, of course, there would be the possibility of reading the whole book alone or of sharing it with a friend. I must admit it was also in the back of my mind that if the parent was given a very specific role to play it might stop them getting too bossy.

I was tremendously lucky that Gollancz took up the idea in exactly the right spirit. Chris Kloet, the children's editor, understood perfectly and said that each book must be a normal picture book in its own right and she



Double spread from **One of Those Days**, Gollancz 'Share-a-Story'.



would find the best illustrators to work on them. In **The Treasure Sock**, Tony Ross created a splendidly revolting little girl, just the sort who collects things and then conveniently puts them in her sock to carry them home. The cumulative aspect permits repetition without reducing the text to a banal staccato. A way of making repetition amusing emerges when Grandad pretends to be a little hard of hearing. In **Can You Hear Me, Grandad?** Jez Alborough's lively Grandad mishears the vital words, so the child has to repeat them. Bob Wilson has made an hilarious domestic drama out of **One of Those Days** with several sub-plots operating in the pictures. When the books were tried out with infants, this one turned into a kind of trio. The teacher and Claire

read the main text and an interested bystander, Philip aged 6, felt moved to fill in with the words in the 'thinks bubbles'. It comes over clearly on the tape how Claire becomes infected with the fun and her voice warms and quickens, until the tape ends in a callous shriek of laughter as they realise what is going to happen to poor old Dad! There are three more books to come, and as they are being illustrated by Faith Jaques, Mary Rayner and Satoshi Kitamura, they will almost be a showcase of modern children's book illustration. Certainly, nothing could be further from those flat, bloodless illustrations in my son's readers.

I am sure that four things are necessary in books like these. Firstly, there must be some kind of motivation on every page. For me, it is humour and I have been very lucky that the illustrators have each in their own way added to the fun. Secondly, there should be a short amount of text on each page. Within that short text, rhythm, structure, repetition and cumulation can be deployed to support the new reader. Thirdly, the reader must have a good chance of success. With these books, one page can be simplified without sacrificing ideas and vocabulary. The adult's page can carry the story. Lastly, there must be encouragement and approval and that is where the adults play their part. Their participation will indicate approval and support. Here is a chance for adults and children to read together. The parent is not testing the child, they are sharing a story. ●

The Treasure Sock, pictures by Tony Ross, 0 575 03816 0

Can You Hear Me, Grandad? pictures by Jez Alborough, 0 575 03886 1

One of Those Days, pictures by Bob Wilson, 0 575 03817 9

Gollancz, £2.95 each

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Noel Streatfeild

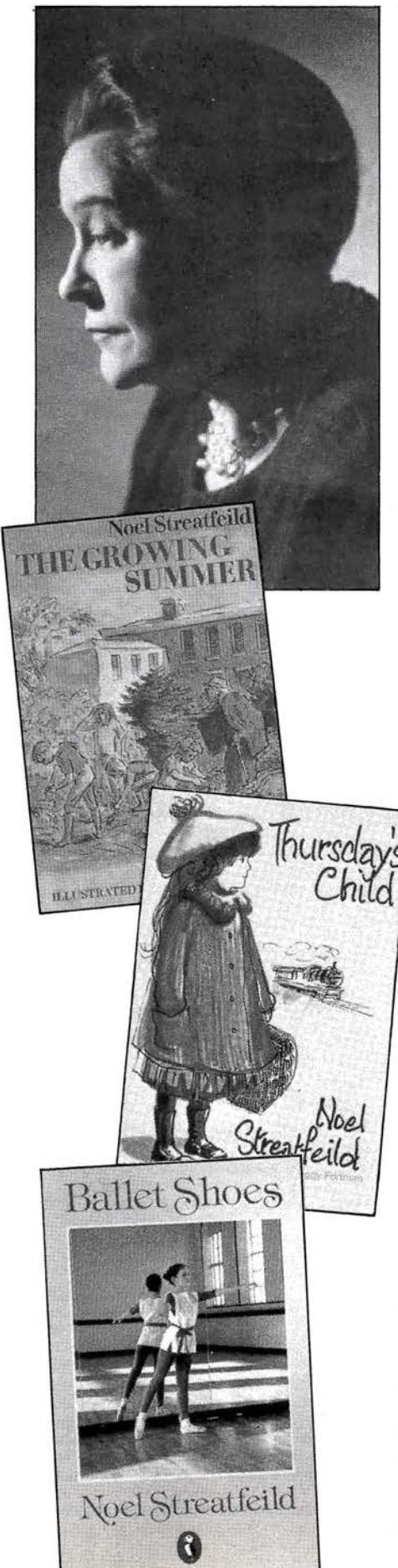
Noel Streatfeild is recalled by one of her editors, **Susan Dickinson**.

I first met Noel Streatfeild shortly after I joined Collins in 1960. **New Town** was soon to be published and she came in to return the page proofs and to meet her new editor. I was immediately drawn to her warmth and enthusiasm and the enormous feeling of compassion which she generated. But, of course, I had really 'met' her many years before when I lay under the bedclothes with a torch, reading **Ballet Shoes** and **The Circus is Coming**. Certainly the two writers whose books I had awaited most eagerly as a child were Arthur Ransome and Noel Streatfeild. Ransome, because the Swallows and Amazons and their Lake District holidays, their freedom, their amazing resourcefulness, and the whole atmosphere in the books was, I felt, only just over the horizon. And Noel Streatfeild because, although I knew I would never be any good at dancing or tennis or performing in a circus, I loved acting and I could identify with Pauline, Petrova and Posy and the others in a way that I had never previously experienced with characters in a book.

That was one of Noel's secrets. She knew her characters implicitly before she ever started to write. They were totally credible, and because she was drawing on her own experiences every detail had the ring of truth. And by choosing for her first book for children the setting of a boarding house in London where money was tight and the children were expected to earn their living she touched a chord the other writers of children's books had ignored.

Ballet Shoes is based largely on Noel's own experiences in the theatre, and she was to draw on those experiences again and again. But one of the most interesting characters in the book is Petrova. Petrova can neither dance nor act. In that household her lack of performing ability presented something of a problem – for how else could the girls earn money? But by the end of the book Petrova has her career planned: she will be an aviation expert. Who but Noel would have thought of setting a girl along that road in 1936?

Throughout her long career as a novelist, Noel, once she grew used to the startling fact that it was as a writer for children that she was best known, threw herself into the whole business of being an 'author'. She was totally professional in her approach to her work; she employed a secretary who came in daily, even during the war, when Noel, all the windows of her flat blown out, and with no gas for heating or cooking, would sit huddled in an eiderdown trying to write. She researched her subjects meticulously, to the extent of persuading her secretary to take a course of skating



lessons when writing **White Boots**. She knew the details that would interest children – how much things cost, what the training involved. Her backgrounds were always authentic, usually a setting that she herself knew well. Nothing was skimped. If there was one thing she was unsure of, it was English grammar. Readers of her autobiographical novel **A Vicarage Family** and of her official biography by Angela Bull will know why. She had hated school.

Brought up in a vicarage at the beginning of the century it was natural that she should draw on her vicarage childhood as background for her books, and one of her best loved families is the Bells, whose father is a clergyman in South London. First broadcast as a radio play, **The Bell Family** was popular with both children and adults. The book and its sequel, **New Town**, contain some of Noel's best characters. Noel was not a writer who got rid of the parents as fast as possible and let the children loose on their own. To her the family was all important. Even when the natural parents are totally absent (as in **Ballet Shoes**) the children are surrounded by loving, caring grown ups. She never attempted the 'problem novel'.

Noel Streatfeild wrote thirty-three novels for children. Throughout her life her fan mail was enormous and every letter was answered individually. Many of her books have recently been reissued as paperbacks in America and their success there has been phenomenal. Known in the States as the 'Shoe' Books (each book has the word *Shoes* in the title), modern American children have once again taken to their hearts Noel's very English young heroes and heroines.

Noel died on 11th September this year. Last Christmas she celebrated her 90th birthday. Throughout her life everything she did she did with great thoroughness; whether it was researching material for a next book, reviewing her regular 'Book of the Month' for the magazine **The Elizabethan**, encouraging anxious young writers with their first efforts, visiting a school or attending a special event of The Puffin Club. She never minded how dog-eared the pages or how old the edition of the book she was asked to autograph. Her great crusade was that children should read. ●

For further reading:

Noel Streatfeild: A Biography, Angela Bull, Collins, 0 00 195044 4, £8.95

Noel Streatfeild's books are published in hardback by Collins and Dent and in paperback by Fontana Lions and Puffin.

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Rabbits, mice . . . and children

As a child, whether in Scotland on holiday or in the schoolroom in London, Beatrix Potter always had animals about her. Rabbits, bats, frogs, lizards, birds, mice, were kept as pets or observed in the wild. All were drawn and painted over and over again and written about. It was something she did not grow out of – for which we must all be grateful.

In 1890 when she was twenty-four, Helen Beatrix Potter bought a rabbit. 'I brought him home (surreptitiously – if that's the way to spell it) from a London bird shop in a paper bag.' She called him Benjamin Bouncer and she took him with her wherever she went. He was taken for walks on a lead, photographed and – most important of all – drawn.

Six designs for greetings cards, using Benjamin Bouncer as a model, were sold to the London firm of Hildesheimer & Faulkner for £6. Miss Potter could hardly believe it. 'My first act was to give Bounce . . . a cupful of hemp seeds, the consequence being that when I wanted to draw him next morning he was partially intoxicated and wholly unmanageable. Then I retired to bed and lay awake chuckling till two in the morning, and afterwards had an impression that Bunny came to my bedside in a white cotton nightcap and tickled me with his whiskers.'

Christmas and New Year cards duly appeared and her designs were also used as illustrations for a set of verses by Frederic E. Weatherly – Beatrix Potter had started her professional career; but although she submitted more sketches to publishers, including Frederick Warne, no commissions came. The 'little books' were over ten years away.

A few years later another rabbit arrived on the scene – a Belgian rabbit bought 'in the Uxbridge Road, Shepherds Bush, for the exorbitant sum of 4/6'. Beatrix Potter called him Peter Piper. He lived for nine years, went everywhere with her, learned to do tricks to amuse visiting children and was drawn from every conceivable angle. When he died Beatrix wrote 'whatever the limitations of his intellect or outward shortcomings of his fur, and his ears and toes, his disposition was uniformly amiable and his temper unfailing sweet. An affectionate companion and a quiet friend.'

In the summer of 1893 the Potter family – with Peter Piper – were on holiday in Scotland. On 4th September Beatrix wrote the famous picture letter to Noel Moore – the six-year-old son of Annie Moore who, as Annie Carter, had been Beatrix's last governess. Annie Moore was only three years older than Beatrix and whenever she could Beatrix visited Annie and her rapidly growing family bringing a basket of rabbits or cage of pet mice for them to play with. All the eight Moore children received picture letters from Beatrix which they kept and treasured. Squirrel Nutkin first appeared in a letter to young Norah, written from the Lake District in 1901 and borrowed back to use as the starting point for the book – at the same time Beatrix acquired a couple of squirrels from a pet shop to serve as models.



The letter to Noel, as is now well known, became the basis seven years later for **The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Mr McGregor's Garden**. Failing to find a commercial publisher who would take the book on her terms – (Miss Potter) would rather make two or three little books costing 1/- each than one big book costing 6/- because she thinks little rabbits cannot afford to spend six shillings on one book – she published it herself for Christmas 1901. This book re-illustrated in colour became **The Tale of Peter Rabbit**, published by Frederick Warne in October 1902. By Christmas 1903 over 50,000 copies had been sold and Beatrix Potter was an important author on the Warne list. 'The public must be fond of rabbits! What an appalling quantity of Peter,' commented Beatrix who was overflowing with ideas for new books.

The children of the Warne family, nieces and nephews of Norman Warne, her most supportive editor (and to whom she became engaged in 1905), quickly became part of the fortunate group of children who could call Beatrix Potter friend.

From Wales she wrote to Winifred Warne about her pet hedgehog. 'Mrs Tiggy-winkle is a great traveller, I don't know how many journeys she hasn't done. She enjoys going by train, she is always very hungry when she is on a journey . . . I think I am going to the sea-side on Saturday. I wonder if I shall find any crabs and shells and shrimps. Mrs Tiggy-winkle won't eat shrimps; I think it is very silly of her, she will eat worms and beetles, and I am sure that shrimps would be much nicer. I think you must ask Mrs Tiggy-winkle to tea when she comes back to London later on, she will drink milk like anything, out of a doll's tea-cup!'

In Wales and back in London she was hard at work turning another story originally written for a child into a book. Lucie Carr, one of the daughters of the vicar of Newlands in the Lake District, was the first recipient of the tale of Mrs Tiggy-winkle, inspired by Kitty MacDonald the washerwoman at Dalgaise House, the Potter family's summer home in Scotland when Beatrix was child.

The Potter menagerie, which travelled everywhere with her, was now quite extensive. As well as Mrs Tiggy-winkle in a basket, there were rabbits and mice in wooden boxes. The mice, Tom Thumb and Hunca Munca, were caught in a Gloucestershire kitchen. Watching them nest-building gave Beatrix the idea for **The Tale of Two Bad Mice** – using as a model for the doll's house one which Norman Warne had made for his niece Winifred.

As always Beatrix Potter was observing her animals carefully and making numerous sketches. 'Mrs Tiggy as a model is comical; so long as she can go to sleep on my knee she is delighted, but if she is propped up on end for half an hour, she first begins to yawn pathetically, and then she does bite! Nevertheless she is a dear person; just like a very fat, rather stupid little dog.' For drawing the clothes she made a cotton wool dummy of the hedgehog. Her comment on this gives a vivid picture of Beatrix Potter at work. 'It is such a little figure of fun; it terrifies my rabbit; but Hunca Munca is always at pulling out the stuffing.'

Poor adventurous Hunca Munca for whom Norman Warne made a new travelling box. 'She fell off the chandelier, she managed to stagger up the staircase into your little house, but she died in my hand about ten minutes later. I think if I had broken my own neck it would have saved a deal of trouble.'

This brief account of a few events in the life of Beatrix Potter is drawn from a new biography by Judy Taylor. It is a fascinating and eminently readable book based on meticulous research, and richly illustrated in colour and black and white with photographs, illustrations, drawings and sketches.

Beatrix Potter: Artist, Storyteller and Countrywoman, Judy Taylor, Warne, 0 7232 3314 4, £12.95

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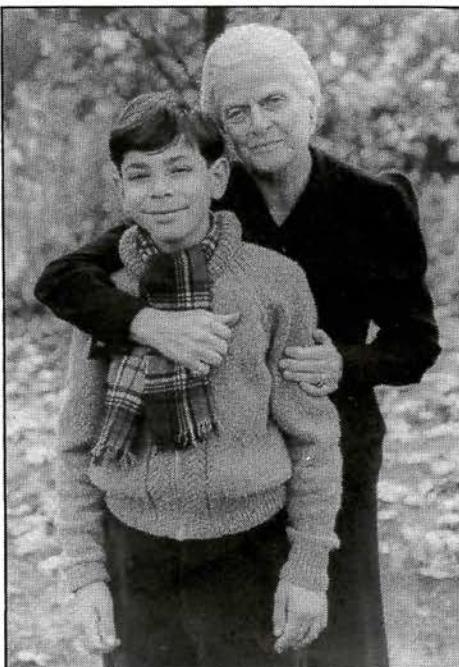
Classics on the Screen

The children of Green Knowe

Lucy Boston's magical story comes to BBC television at the end of November in a four-part serialisation produced by Paul Stone. *The Children of Green Knowe*, Lucy Boston's first book, published in 1954 when she was already over sixty, was the first of five novels with the old house, Green Knowe, as background and central character. Young Tolly comes to stay with his great-grandmother, Mrs Oldknow, and responds immediately to the memories and associations stored by the house across centuries, in particular to three children of the seventeenth century who gradually materialise and become his friends. Mrs Oldknow's stories recreate a past which the two can explore as easily and naturally as they companionably enjoy the present.

The adaptation for television has been written by a young American, John Stadelman. Paul Stone says he has brought a valuable quality to this most English of novels. 'The story wants memorable images, and a sense of the visual is so strong in the American tradition.' He managed however to resist the transatlantic desire to change everything in the original. 'It was important,' says Paul Stone, 'to retain the literate quality of writing, to keep all the English qualities.' The heart of the television adaptation as of the book is the relationship between Tolly and Mrs Oldknow, played by Alec Christie and Daphne Oxenford. But there are, of course, the other children. 'It's a ghost story but without the conventional elements. We decided not to make the children ghostly figures; as in the book we leave it up to the imagination of the reader/viewer. Are they real? It's left on a knife edge for you to make your own decision.' And, perhaps most important of all, the house. The original of Green Knowe is Lucy Boston's own home, a Norman manor house on the River Ouse at Hemingford Grey. She bought it in the late 1930s and with the help of her architect son, Peter (the illustrator of her books), she restored it, created the rose garden and miniature topiary work chess garden.

When it came to filming Paul Stone deciding not to use the house; they found instead another location in Suffolk. Paul Stone recalls, 'I took Lucy Boston to see the house



Mrs Oldknow with her great-grandson Tolly (BBC TV).

we had chosen with a certain amount of apprehension. But she loved it and was delighted with the place and the actors. We were able to borrow some of the original things – like the cherubs in the hallway – from Lucy's own house. Having these around as part of the set and props helped the actors a lot, they said. It gave them something to hang onto.'

About her writing Lucy Boston has said, 'I believe children, even the youngest, love good language and that they see, feel, understand and communicate more, not less, than grown-ups. Therefore I never write down to them, but try to evoke that new, brilliant awareness that is their world.' It's that quality that Paul Stone's production seeks to capture for television. It could well introduce Lucy Boston to a new generation of readers.

The Children of Green Knowe, Lucy Boston, Puffin, 0 14 03 0789 3, £1.75

The Little Princess

In the new year the ITV Sunday tea-time slot will be delightfully filled for six weeks by London Weekend Television's adaptation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess*.

This story, first published in 1905, is in the classic tradition of fortunes lost and regained, of suffering and deprivation endured with fortitude. However Sara Crewe, our eleven-year-old heroine, is neither unbelievable nor a prig. She has to call on all her personal reserves and imagination when the death of her father sends her from prize pupil at Miss Minchin's academy to pupil-teacher and general drudge. Frances Hodgson Burnett, as in the perennially popular *The Secret Garden*, tells a good story, without preaching, and here creates a heroine with warmth and spirit who inspires our affection.

The LWT series, produced by Colin Shindler and directed by Carol Wiseman, is strongly cast with Maureen Lipman (Miss



Minchin), Miriam Margolyes (Miss Amelia), Nigel Havers (Mr Carrisford) and John Bird (Mr Carmichael). Sara Crewe is played by Amelia Shankley. The series was filmed in Greenwich and in Central London.

The Little Princess, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Puffin Classic, 0 14 035 028 4, £1.75



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Joanna Troughton
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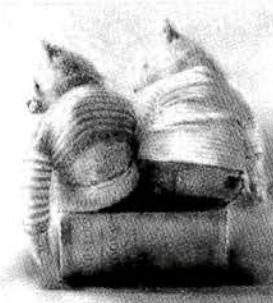


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Authograph No. 41

Rodney Peppé

'I was told at the Central School that in advertising you meet the rats and in publishing the people are so, so nice. It isn't true. You can get rats in publishing, and people in advertising are charming and terribly talented.'

Like so many writers and artists, Rodney Peppé was trained in advertising, where he believes professional standards are higher than in publishing, an irritation that he says has 'bugged me for the last 18 years'.

'Deadlines are sacrosanct to me, something not reciprocated on the other side - it seems to be unusual in publishing to actually bring in something *on time!* And what about paying attention to proofs? "Make sure you get that 'eek' on the cover," I said to them in Belgium for **Cat and Mouse**, but when the finished copy came through it wasn't there. And printers, too, cut up your artwork in an extraordinary way to get it on camera, and tea stains and ash appear on it: I don't like selling my artwork, but for a lot of artists today it's an extra source of income, and there it lies, unusable.'

'As an author I'm saved the plight of the illustrator, who suffers from a sort of gentlemen and players attitude among publishers. I think it's better now because those of us who are author-illustrators have strengthened the hands of the rest - Faith Jaques has been trumpeting on for years about the way artists are treated.'

Rodney Peppé's own hand is certainly strong now. He left advertising not because he was unhappy but because to work hard for a three-month campaign 'was like drawing in sand. Like every graphic designer I wanted to do a children's book as an ego trip, I wanted to make something that would not be washed away. I'm quite chuffed that every single book I've done for Penguin is in print, and **The Alphabet Book**, the first I ever did, in 1968, is still bringing in very respectable receipts, not in bookshops but working away in libraries and schools.' PLR (Public Lending Right) has thus strengthened his author-artist's hand, once 'the ridiculous idea of 50 per cent text on each page' was out of the way: all his books are now eligible, making a big financial difference and handing him a useful weapon in reissue arguments.

He is particularly sensitive to this artistic class distinction, because of his

twin brother's experience as an illustrator ('he can draw better than I can') and his younger son's prospects when he leaves the Slade. It's a talented family: his older son is in films, and Tatjana, his Estonian-born wife, specialised as an art student in sculpture, though he believes her talents lie now in interior design - and advising him. 'I use her as a sounding board very much, it's invaluable to have a fresh educated eye that knows you and your work.'

They met as students, 'I'm sorry to say I pinched her off a friend, and my brother did the same with his wife. Must be something about the Peppés - too damn lazy to look for their own!'

The Peppé twins were born here but went out to India when they were six months old, where their family were landowners in the foothills of the Himalayas. They used to think the name was Huguenot, but Rodney believes some great-great-grandfather added the accent to make sure it was pronounced as two syllables - 'though it's worked against me: I did some Guinness posters and the trade press asked why we needed these foreign artists when we've got good ones of our own!'

The boys returned during the war for their education, celebrating their eighth birthday on board the Windsor Castle as she zig-zagged alone through six minefields from Bombay to Liverpool, only to be bombed in the docks a week later. Neither their fluent Hindustani nor their 'sort-of-Welsh accent' survived much longer.

At the Central School Peppé gained his



Rodney Peppé with model of the 'Flying Basket'.

Rodney Peppé was interviewed by Stephanie Nettell.

Below: The 'Clockwork Bus'.



diploma as an illustrator and wood engraver. 'Students then – and probably now – were total art snobs: "commercialism" was a terrible word, and anyone commercial quite beyond the pale.' But advertising was a way to make a living, and he worked for two big agencies, including J. Walter Thompson (where he knew Pat Hutchins). Then, after five years, came an absolute plum of a job.

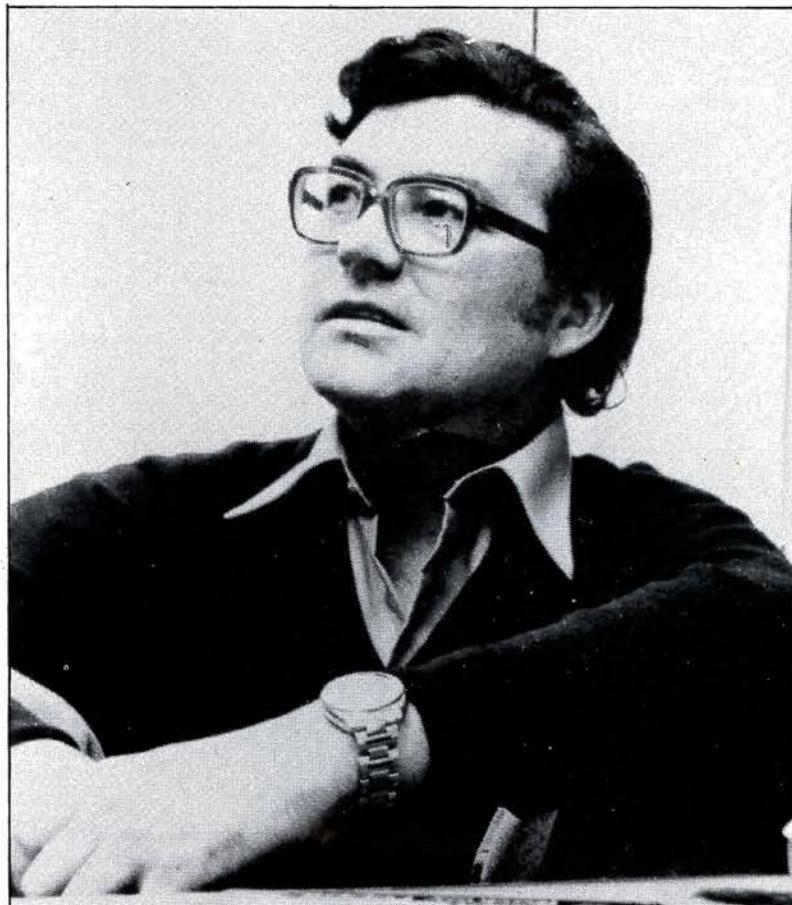
'I was offered the design consultancy to Ross, the frozen food people, and I did all their packaging, the R symbol and so on, for seven years. I did two days' work at home and every Tuesday at Ross, which left four for my own work – and all for the same money I'd earned at Thompson full-time.' At the Central he had shared a desk with John Birmingham, whom he came to see as a beacon to follow – his stuff was not being washed away in the sand.

'It's very important that your first book should take, or you easily think, this isn't for me, and give up. And in fact my first book has never been published, for when Grace Hogarth saw it, she said, "You just don't have the picture book feel," and I did give up. But then I thought, well, if I can't be an illustrator, I'll be a designer, so I changed completely and did **The Alphabet Book**.'

Those early books used a poster-like, collage technique; the original artwork has a depth of colour and varied texture that must have been curiously flattened by the printing process. It seems a long way from the detail of his present work, whether based on his own models or the quirky doodles of his thumbprints magicked into multiplication tables. It's as if he has become three different artists: 'There seems little point of contact between the Mice books and the Toy books, while the thumbprints belong very much to a graphic designer.'

He moved on from the traditional nursery rhyme text when he carved Henry the elephant, a strokably smooth little wooden chap. Peppé the collector of old children's books and toys became Peppé the toymaker – his house is alive with mechanical marvels based on ingenious Victorian ideas, such as Luigi, 'a slightly over-the-hill acrobat', whose sand-based mechanism gives him a delightfully unexpected random action. Some, like his jumping jacks, he sells in specialist galleries, but with a 100 per cent mark-up he knows, like every other craft toymaker, there's no commercial future here; unlike them he found an outlet in an instruction manual, **Rodney Peppé's Moving Toys**.

Most of his models go into his books, culminating in the ultimate fantasies created for his Mice. 'It was the toy element that started them off. I wanted to do the old woman who lived in a shoe, and had been looking in antique shops for an old buttoned-up boot when my father sent me a pair of Hush Puppies that were too big for him – instead of wearing them I made one into a house. Don't know what made



me switch to mice – something about the scale worried me, and I was happier with mice than people.'

'The Mice books took off in a different league from all my other books – perhaps because they're not so didactic?' Small readers, even parents, write requesting 'the kit' for the intricate models on the back cover, not appreciating that each took a month's dedicated work – every book takes about seven months to complete. Nor do many catch his little running gags, such as the optical illusion bootlaces, or the EEK registration marks.

'When I began I wrote and drew for myself, not even for my own children, but over the years as I've learnt the trade I've become more interested in the recipients of the books, and now I have children very much in mind. I like children: Tatjana says I can't generalise like that, but I can – I actually *like children!* Paul Klee wrote of a child describing the creative process: "I think, and then I put a line around the think." That's got to come from a child – it's an all-lean remark, the process of drawing encapsulated.'

The Peppés tend to move house frequently (strange in a man who says he dislikes change), but seem comfortably settled in a country side-road near Hindhead, Surrey, surrounded by a wealth of items each has collected or made. He's happiest when working (no good on holidays), but restricts himself now to five days a week. The other two? He makes clocks – and there they are, twinkling and amazing, gorgeous and amusing, in kitchen, bathroom, sitting-room and studio.

'I'm totally self-centred, immersed in my work – I actually enjoy it whether it's good, bad or indifferent. I feel I know my limitations: I know people with much more talent who haven't made it work for themselves – does it burn up, or are they too lazy? Maybe hard work is rarer than talent?' It's the combination of both that is rare, which is why, far from being worked in sand, Peppé's creations are now reaching out to their second generation. ●

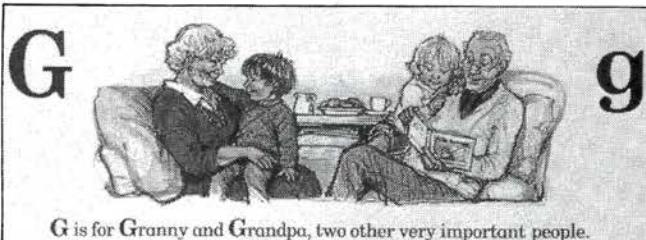
Some of Rodney Peppé's many books

(published by Viking Kestrel or Methuen)

- The Alphabet Book**, VK, 0 670 80023 6, £5.95
- Circus Numbers**, VK, 0 670 80025 2, £5.95
- Humpty Dumpty**, VK, 0 670 38673 1, £5.50
- Puzzle Book**, VK, 0 670 60261 2, £5.50
- Cat and Mouse**, VK, 0 7226 6027 8, £4.95
- The Mice Who Lived in a Shoe**, VK, 0 670 81142 4, £5.95; Picture Puffin, 0 14 050 413 3, £1.25
- The Kettleship Pirates**, VK, 0 7226 5837 0, £5.95; Picture Puffin, 0 14 050 416 8, £1.50
- The Mice and the Flying Basket**, VK, 0 670 80190 9, £5.95
- The Mice and the Clockwork Bus**, VK, 0 670 81098 3, £5.95
- Hello Henry**, M, 0 416 45540 9, £4.95
- Hurrah for Henry**, M, 0 416 45550 6, £4.95
- Tell the Time with Mortimer**, M, 0 416 59820 X, £5.95
- Run Rabbit, Run!**, M, 0 416 22060 6, £4.95
- Little Toy Board Books**, M, £1.25 each
- Peep and Play Concertina Books**, M, £1.95 each
- Block Books**, M, £1.95 each

REVIEWS

Nursery/Infant



Lucy & Tom's a.b.c.

Shirley Hughes, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.521 0, £1.75

Quite simply the best alphabet book for many a year, for my money anyway. Besides the alphabet we have dozens of stories and incidents to enjoy in both words and pictures: the sequence in 'friends' for instance in which Lucy shares a quiet moment with Jane from her class while Tom, James and Sam play, fall out and make up in just three small story-telling pictures.

JB

An Evening at Alfie's

Shirley Hughes, Picture Lions, 0 00 662484 7, £1.75

When Alfie's parents go out for the evening it seems that babysitter Maureen's bedtime story of Noah's Ark is coming true for, as Alfie announces, 'It's raining on the landing.' Maureen knows what's happened - a burst pipe - but she needs her mum and dad's help to stem the flood. Meanwhile Alfie plays in the puddles and poor Annie Rose gets very wet too, though not from the ceiling. As ever Shirley Hughes weaves her unfailing magic with words and pictures to create a warm glow of pleasure for readers and listeners alike.

JB

Nicky's Picnic

0 14 050.584 9

Nicky's Noisy Night

0 14 050.583 0

Harriet Ziefert, ill. Richard Brown, Picture Puffin, £2.95 each
These books featuring Nicky, a tabby kitten, are proving nearly as popular with my children as Spot's adventures which no doubt were their inspiration. The formula of endearingly drawn animals and flaps to lift and explore in response to Nicky's questions can hardly fail. In **Nicky's Noisy Night**, the young tabby hears various sounds - nibbling, banging, dripping and so on - and invites the reader to find their source behind doors, windows, cupboards and curtains. And in **Nicky's Picnic**, he meets various animals hidden behind

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

bushes, trees and grass on his way to the picnic. Great fun.

JB

The Supermarket Mice

Margaret Gordon, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.428 1, £1.75

A cat and mouse story with a difference. When Trevor, Sid and Mabel discover they have mice loose in their supermarket they enlist the help of Bounce, a rather rotund moggy, to rid them of the problem; and sure enough there are no more nibbled biscuits or leaking rice packets or other tell-tale signs of the 'Supermarket Mice'. This is thanks not to Bounce's mousing skill but rather to his insatiable appetite for almost everything.

A highly amusing easy-to-read book. By showing us the action from two viewpoints - the adult world of Trevor, Sidney and Mabel, and the secret viewpoint of the mice - Margaret Gordon makes the story so much more enjoyable but at the same time shows the learner reader the particular way he or she must approach this book. Her illustrations are crammed with amusing details and even I, with a strong aversion to cats, couldn't help

but warm to Bounce with his blissful demeanour as he is spooned by his 'should be' prey.

JB

One Duck, Another Duck

Charlotte Pomerantz, ill. Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.533 4, £1.75

Young Danny Owl's initial efforts at counting 'One duck, another duck, another duck . . . don't meet Grandmother's approval. Soon however he's getting his numbers right even if he does insist upon heralding the arrival of each newcomer with 'another duck' and by the end of the day, the sky's the limit such is his enthusiasm for counting. Charlotte Pomerantz cleverly uses a simple vocabulary and repetition to create a delightful, easy-to-read story book as well as counting book. Aruego and Dewey add their own special humour and child appeal with their bright, expressive illustrations.

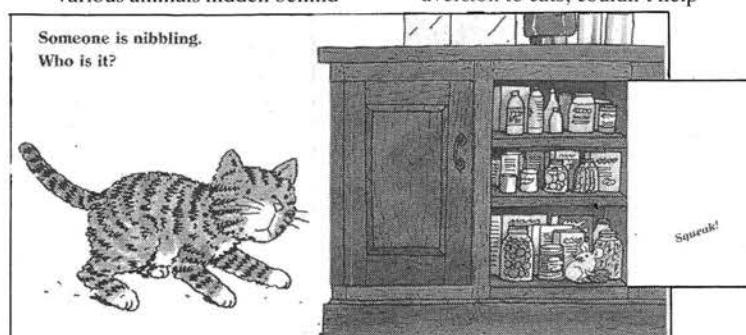
JB

The Grand Old Duke of York

Maureen Roffey, Magnet, 0 416 63920 8, £1.75

This extended version of the well-known nursery rhyme has long been a favourite in hardback with young listeners and readers. Maureen Roffey's colourful collage pictures of the Old Duke's diminishing army and their silly antics catch the mood of her husband Bernard Lodge's rhymes and the book provides plenty of visual and oral fun.

JB



Infant/Junior

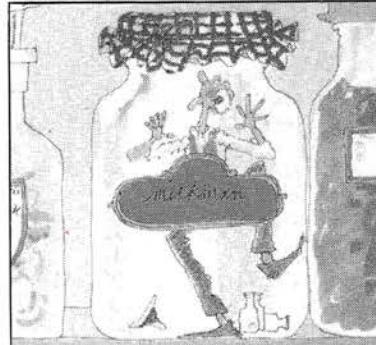
The Friends of Emily Culpepper

Ann Coleridge, ill. Roland Harvey, Piccolo Picture Books, 0 330 29467 9, £1.75

From the first few pages of this book it seems that we are in for a fairly straightforward tale of village life but then we meet Emily Culpepper and discover that her bottling talents are not confined to making jam; she so enjoys talking to her

three friends, the postman, the milkman and the plumber, that she shrinks them down to size and keeps them in jars too. She does let them out of course to eat their lunch or play in the old doll's house but, even so, the villagers understandably take a dim view, so the village policeman pays her a visit and Emily has to let her friends go. But she still wants someone to talk to . . .

Having read and enjoyed this macabre yet understated story there are fresh delights as the



reader discovers the wealth of clues as to the kind of person Emily is in the hilarious, detailed illustrations which have a hint of Anno and Blake about them.

JB

Margaret and Taylor

Kevin Henkes, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1991 3, £1.25

Small, homely events are made significant and the imaginative lives of two young children are illuminated in this



perfectly-shaped group of seven linked episodes.

The content is warm and real-sounding, especially the gentle banter between older girl and younger boy. The young author-artist tells his story partly in words, partly in pictures: sometimes in a subtle effect that combines the two. The episodes made splendid readalouds and this one has become a clear favourite in at least two top infant classrooms.

CM

Bare Bear

Jez Alborough, Hodder, 0 340 37446 2, £1.95

This is the kind of book that I want all fives and sixes to find, as early as possible in their school reading lives. It's an extended joke that can be enjoyed in one telling, held in the head, and enjoyed, first with others, then as a solo read.

Bare Bear takes off gloves, balaclava, polar suit and underwear to reveal, on the last page, 'a great big, bulging bear behind'. It's a struggle for him to get undressed: but that's the tale that's shown, not told. Try not to miss this: it will need its sturdy binding as it will be passed around a lot.

CM



Aunt Essie is a wonderfully larger than life creation. The pictures skilfully catch both quirky characters and urban settings. The ending, when the heroine graciously loses a bet with her friend, has irony and pathos that is still too rare in books for the age group. Find this one.

CM

Junior/Middle



The Gnome Factory

James Reeves, ill. E. Ardizzone, Puffin, 0 14 03 1995 6, £2.50

Whether you like stories with a moral, fantasy or magic, you are almost spoiled for choice with these nineteen illustrated tales from a poet and an artist who have left such a marvellous legacy to our children. Some are original Reeves' gems, but some are his retelling of traditional tales like 'The Elves and the Shoemaker'.

Ardizzone is my favourite illustrator and, as always, his period portraits enhance the stories. The coloured cover illustration by Elisa Trimby

manages to reflect the atmosphere created by the master's black and white line drawings. A useful teachers' book - well worth dipping into.

NS

The Bureaucats

Richard Adams, ill. Robin Jacques, Young Puffin, 0 14 03 1759 7, £1.50



A selection of stories based around two mischievous cats and a bureaucratic master may not sound appealing, but here is a good story line. A book for young readers who have got started and are now

But Martin!

June Counsel, ill. Carolyn Dinan, Picture Corgi, 0 552 52312 7, £1.75

The first day back at school is livened up by the arrival of Martin, an E.T. being who joins in the classroom activities in this original and touching picture book. The young won't miss the messages that the author and the artist are too clever to push. The school is a multi-cultural one and the diversity's a big plus; writing and maths are part of the shared fun.

The climax of the story is cleverly timed. I've shared this successfully with groups of fives to sevens - and with older children who still need to see the links between fun and the reading business. CM



where the heroine practises her ballet steps. A joy. CM

T.R.'s Day Out

Terrance Dicks, ill. Susan Hellard, Young Corgi, 0 552 52303 8, £1.50

A lively and animated tale about T.R., a character much enjoyed by many sixes to eights in *Enter T.R.* and *T.R. Goes to School* (same publisher). A school visit to the British Museum is the setting for the streetwise Bear to foil an attempt to steal a portrait of his hero, Theodore Roosevelt.

There's verve and vigour in the telling. I like the supporting characters, including the Doll who refuses to have her opinions squashed and the anxious man teacher who organises the trip. CM

Angelina and the Princess

Katherine Holabird, ill. Helen Craig, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050 554 7, £1.75

Sixes-up who enjoyed the same duo's *Angelina Ballerina* won't be disappointed by this fey and charming tale. The ballet school plan a special show for visiting royalty. The understudy, Angelina, saves the day at the last moment. I like the writer's beautifully understated style and the pictures are delicate, yet always characterful. See how the clever marriage of pictures and text makes the story move on the double page spread

developing at their own pace. Some challenging vocabulary but, on the whole, the stories' style carries the reader along with it. The book could be used as class reader for lower Juniors. The illustrations are black and white, except for the cover, and help to establish the period flavour. Altogether a witty and amusing read. NS

Blue Misty Monsters

Catherine Sefton, ill. E. McGregor-Turney, Magnet, 0 416 61670 4, £1.50

A friendly book this, and one which cleverly offers younger readers a different perspective on life. Earth is about to be visited by Misty Monsters when an accident results in one of them becoming separated from her family. She is forced to befriend a human, and the adventures begin. Throughout the reader is given the monster's viewpoint; humans are seen as 'unclever', ungainly, uncouth individuals. However, they are generously tolerated by the Misty Monsters which saves us from becoming totally



alienated from ourselves as we read.

Good cover and black and white illustrations. Another excellent read for Middle Juniors from a writer whose style and good humour are, in my experience, much enjoyed by this age group. NS

A Year at Sheepfold Farm

Susan Williams, Piccolo, 0 330 29468 7, £2.50

Three hardback originals put together to make a substantial paperback showing and telling the story of a year in the life of



a sheep-farming family. Through the three sections of the book the family and the old farmhands are constant characters. Others, sheep shearers, rustlers and numerous scene-setters, are deftly sketched in. But the main characters are the sheep. In the first section lambing brings its inevitable orphans, difficult ewes and sorry deaths. Summer requires the sheep to be wormed, dipped and shorn. With autumn comes the shows and the tupping.

Each season has its hazards. Each time the children of the family are directly involved. Young readers see life through their eyes and so have many of their questions raised for them and answered. I firmly believe that as much can be learned through good narrative as through text books, and this is an informative story. The text, though, is occasionally stilted and the conversation decidedly wooden.

The black and white illustrations on the other hand are really superb. With a beautiful clarity Susan Williams illustrates and extends the text. (Interesting this – she is far more poetic about the sheep in her pictures than in her text.) Shearing implements and sheepfarming plant are shown in satisfying detail; scenes of market, gardening or lorry loading are full of incident. Children and adults will love them, and the book could be fruitfully used across a wide age range. It will give children a beautiful and realistic insight into sheepfarming and will fulfil, albeit vicariously, many a dream. Who hasn't, cast as a shepherd in the Nativity Play, longed for a real lamb to take to the Crib. Read on... BJ

Little Dracula's First Bite
0 7445 0539 9

Little Dracula's Christmas
0 7445 0544 5
Martin Waddell, ill.
Joseph Wright, Walker Books, £1.95 each

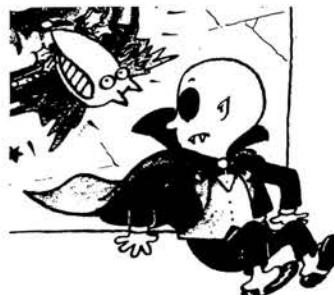
Two pieces of enjoyable nonsense which will attract many a new young reader and many an older reader with a taste for the comic fantastic. A whole Dracula family is here born out of the conventions of horror movies (and the Addams family?) with Little Dracula centre stage.

In **First Bite** Little D. wants to 'fright 'em and bite 'em' just

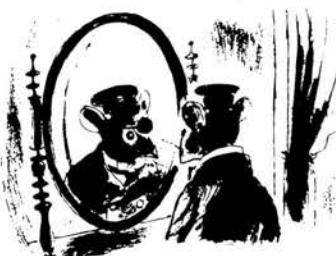
like Dad. He fails miserably and loses two milk teeth in the process. Only at the dentist's does he manage to succeed (or suck blood, rather...).

The Dracula family Christmas is all it should be with paper chains, lots of presents and a man-trap for Santa. The family fails to capture him but Little D. insists, as Mum tucks him up in his coffin bed, that they'll get him next year.

The text, however, is only half the book, probably less in strict proportions. Joseph Wright's illustrations carry on their own stories while developing that of the text. Castle Dracula is peopled by tiny weirdos who ride around in the family's carpet slippers; Big D. wears red Y-fronts; the servant doubles as a yard broom, guinea-pig for Igor and coach-horse; the disembodied hand, known as Handy, gets a fingerless glove for Christmas and so on. Splendid! The book needs poring over by small groups who can oooh! and eurgh! in delighted horror at such as the Christmas dinner of fingers, ears and a variety of viscera.



Some may see such sadistic/masochistic goings-on as objectionable. For this reader the overall impression was of good-humoured nonsense. Children were keen for them to go on longer and commented only on things nearest to their own experience – food, going to the dentist, Christmas presents. Just as **Fungus the Bogeyman** turns the world upside down, these books leave it a bit bent – but not, I think, twisted. BJ



Basil of Baker Street
Eve Titus, ill. Paul Galdone, Knight, 0 340 40514 7, £1.50

For a fan of Sherlock Holmes, the idea of a brace of mice emulating that great man and Dr Watson is not instantly appealing. However Eve Titus – of 'Anatole' fame – has managed to capture the flavour of Victorian Baker Street, and translate it into a

fantasy land where mice have problems like their human counterparts. Basil, the great mouse detective, and Dr Dawson succeed by employing all of Holmes' skill and the adventures are very plausible. Paul Galdone's black and white illustrations add to the period atmosphere and they reflect his genius for exactly capturing a subject. The cover however depicts a Disney cartoon Basil and Dr Dawson, because Basil is now starring as **Basil, the Great Mouse Detective** in a new Disney film, and this is a 'tie-in'. I can't tell you if the film is any good but at least it has led to the re-issue and paperback of this book which appeared first in 1974. The text requires a fairly able reader; I recommend it for top Juniors. An excellent aperitif to Conan Doyle! NS

A Lamp for the Lambchops

Jeff Brown, ill. Quentin Blake, Magnet, 0 416 61870 7, £1.50

The hero of **Flat Stanley** returns in a compelling and involving tale. A genie enters the lives of the Lambchop family: wishes are granted to all with resulting mayhem. The author touches humorous nerves in sevens-to-tens. There's a particularly well-crafted flight across landscapes, drawn verbally by Brown and complemented by Blake's pictures.



Brown can give us well-rounded adults, too. Stanley's parents emerge as game grown-ups who join in the fun. His Mum enjoys being famous for a day and, in a very funny episode, his Dad has a game of tennis in which he beats a brattish, unsporting champ called Tom McRude. Recommend – and do read them **Flat Stanley** if they don't already know it. CM

Hansel and Gretel

The Brothers Grimm, ill. Anthony Browne, Magnet, 0 416 60590 7 £1.95

It's good to have this now classic version in paperback edition. I hope that the squashed nature of the text doesn't put anyone off. For I now want children and

teachers to ponder together what happens when the childhood tale of loss, fear and vulnerability of children is put in a modern setting.

I now see the woodcutter and his family as starkly unemployed eighties-style. Get eights to elevens talking as to why we see so much of the tale through a mirror in the early stages. Try getting them to tell the story without reading the text to show how a televisual artist like Browne makes the characters and the action mean things. I read a class of top juniors alternative versions: the fact that the Disneyesque Prince has disappeared from this telling means that Gretel can play an active role in the conclusion...

As many copies as you can afford for the classroom, and lots for the bookshop. CM



The Beast in Ms Rooney's Room

0 00 672615 1

Fish Face
0 00 672616 X

The Pop Corn Contest

0 00 672617 8

Patricia Reilly Giff, ill. Blanche Sims, Fontana Young Lions, £1.50 each. I've rarely read the bittersweet nature of classroom life caught so well as in this author's writing. Some of it is harsh: everyone in Ms Rooney's class knows the child who wets the bed and smells. The slow readers know why they go out with the kindly teacher for 'help' (lots of phonics). You might have to explain why some get held down a class each year. There's a sharpness and freshness in the writing and there's as much reflection as action – very unusual in writing for juniors.

I want teachers to get to know Beast, Emily, Matthew and Ms Rooney as well, so read them aloud first. My hunch is that their real appeal will be to children slightly older than the characters in the book: that is, nines-to-elevens who are reading for atmosphere, motive and the fears that are only just voiced by the writer. It's rare that I'm challenged, or moved, or made unsure by books for this age-group... will the harsh bits be too unsettling for those who think they have similar problems? But I do want children to find these humane (and sometimes very funny) stories. CM

Middle/Secondary

Butterfly Island

Rick Searle, Knight, 0 340 39458 7, £1.75

Taking its origins from the tragedy of the Vietnamese Boat People of the nineteen-seventies, *Butterfly Island* (a BBC-1 television drama series) links the life of Vo Diem, a young refugee Vietnamese, with that of an Australian family. The Wilsons own Butterfly Island, briefly prosperous from holiday visitors to the Great Barrier Reef, but the family now finds itself threatened with the loss of its island home. Lots of effusive bonhomie and 'friendly aroma of hot coffee' as 'you were friends with everyone', which initially deters. However, if you're not put off by this banality of scene-setting, Vo Diem's arrival marks rapid changes and a chain of events, which make the story worth sticking with.

BB

Uninvited Ghosts

Penelope Lively, Puffin, 0 14 03 1966 2, £1.50

A collection of eight 'ghostly' short stories for young juniors, from Penelope Lively's work over the past twelve years. A loose title, as the ghosts in question range from martians to dragons, but nobody is quibbling, I'm sure, as the quality of the stories is so good. The title story is a gem of concise craftsmanship, all neatly tidied up, tongue firmly in cheek, at the conclusion. 'The ghosts kept the babies amused from morning to night. The babies thrived; the ghosts were happy; the ghost dog, who was actually a bitch, settled down so well that she had puppies, which is one of the most surprising aspects of the whole business.' Lovely touch!

BB

The Children of Lir

Michael Scott, Magnet, 0 416 55000 2, £1.95

This is a new adaptation of the Irish legend of the children of Lir. The legend has it that Lir, King of Ireland long ago, had four children. His wife, Eva, died, leaving him a tragic, mourning figure. Eventually he is besotted by Aife, and takes her as his second wife. Aife thinks she is competing for his affection with the four children, so casts an enchantment upon them. They are to remain as swans 'until the bell of the New God was heard in our land'. The children are doomed under the spell until they are released by the Christian priest Mocha, 'follower of Christ and of Patrick'. A sad and yet beautiful story which, if you've not used it with children before, is well served in this Michael Scott version.

BB

The Walking Stones

Mollie Hunter, Magnet, 0 416 51790 0, £1.50

The Bodach (old man, in Gaelic) has a good line in patter which makes him good company by the firelight in the lonely Scottish glen. However, one night he warns the Campbell family of the coming of the three men, one of whom will bring death. Although not believing in 'second sight' (foretelling the future), the old man's warning is enough to perturb the Campbells. The mysterious stone circle (a Scottish Stonehenge?) also has a message to reveal, which the Bodach interprets as one of gloom for the Campbells. Young Donald Campbell then finds himself thrust into the centre of the action, as the only one who can avert the disastrous consequences for his family and all the glen dwellers. Considering this was first published (by Blackie) in 1970, it has worn remarkably well.

BB

The Night of the Scorpion

Anthony Horowitz, Magnet, 0 416 54550 5, £1.75

Lore of the Incas, the Nazca Lines, the Old Ones ('the first great force of evil') and adventure where good takes on evil (yet again!); the excitement is boundless. It's a wonder super-psychic Martin and his journalist friend Richard manage to contain themselves intact to the end, but then young Martin is ONE OF THE FIVE!!

I daresay you've got the gist. It'll keep them reading if they want action rather than depth. Upper Junior/Lower Secondary.

DB

Dolphin Island

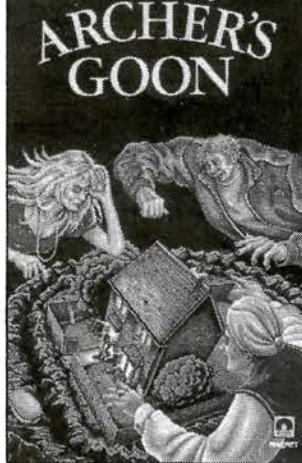
Arthur C. Clarke, Puffin, 0 14 03 1920 4, £1.75

As the author's update at the end suggests, in the 23 years since this book's first publication, his ideas about man's mutually advantageous co-operation with dolphins have already begun to become reality, and yet he set it in the twenty-first century!

Johnny Clinton stows away on an inter-continental hovership and with its destruction begins an amazing adventure with dolphins; learning their language, sampling their swift intelligence and owing them his own life and the life of his mentor, Professor Kazan. There is a wealth of detail about the Great Barrier Reef and some fascinating insights into the study of animal behaviour and conditioning. I'm thinking about it as a class set for 2nd or 3rd year secondary.

DB

DIANA WYNNE JONES
ARCHER'S GOON



Archer's Goon

Diana Wynne Jones, Magnet, 0 416 62280 1, £1.75

'Ordinary life was not exciting enough for Awful' but the arrival of the leggy Archer's Goon perked things up more than adequately, since the whole Sykes family found themselves in the midst of a maelstrom of conflicting activities conjured by a sextet of disagreeing wizards – but where was the seventh? Which one planned to take over the world and needed Quentin Sykes' two thousand words to do it? Howard Sykes, Awful's thirteen-year-old brother, sets out to discover the answer. If I had to go and live in someone else's fantasy world I'd go to any of those so far created by Diana Wynne Jones. She creates complex, bizarre situations in ordinary places, where everything fits into place eventually and I end up exhausted by the excitement but perfectly replete and happy. If only one young reader in a hundred feels the same, it's worth stocking a copy.

DB

Collision

Anthony Wall, Dragon Grafton, 0 583 30759 0, £1.75

I thoroughly endorse David Bellamy's comment 'super story, important message'; *Collision* is an ideal adventure for today's top junior child. The quick-moving tale centres on the deliberate collision between two oil tankers, and the resulting catastrophe which threatens financially and ecologically. There is murder, blackmail, tension, poignancy mixed with loyalty, honesty and friendship. The author maintains striking realism, yet does not over-dramatise that which could be so easily painted in more horrific, violent detail. Above all else, the tragedy of pollution is skilfully handled, and the plight of the sea birds memorably recreated.

The cover may sell the book but there was no fire in the collision, so why is the tanker engulfed in flames? Don't illustrators ever read books? Notwithstanding this quibble, an excellent buy!

NS

Shades of Dark

Compiled by Aidan Chambers, Puffin, 0 14 03 2022 9, £1.50

Eight stories, most of which I liked, though saccharine Cresswell and romantic Mackay Brown aren't much to my taste. But there's love-in-death, chilly knock-about, soul-snatching, vengeful ghosts and a murdering doll – from Jean Stubbs, Vivien Alcock, Needle, Mark, Gordon and Salway; all good value.

TD

Knights and Emeralds

Mark Daniel, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672682 8, £1.75

The book of the Warner Bros./Goldcrest/Putnam film – you missed it too? Or is it not out yet? – told almost entirely in the present tense, which I found immensely irritating at first; but what you have on the page is a full shooting script, acting, camera, sound, as continuous prose, and it captured me. The book has a hard core about race(ism) and gender. White Kevin and black Melissa are drummers with rival bands... There's oodles of oompah, pace and punch in plot and style. Set in Birmingham, it ends as a riot starts and (serious voice) its vivacious contemporaneity will engage less experienced readers with linguistic and conceptual challenges. Should go down a bomb.

TD

The Banger Boys

Anne Fussell, Hippo, 0 590 70536 9, £1.75

Lol gets in trouble with the law and is sentenced to 240 hours at the Summer House Project. He is told in no uncertain terms that 'this is absolutely your last chance.'



The Project is designed to provide useful work on car maintenance for lads who have been caught 'nicking' cars. Some useful threads about early teen-parental pressures, and mixed racial peer group relationships, but generally the story doesn't develop from this promising germ of an initial idea.

BB

Older Readers

Children of the Dust

Louise Lawrence,
Fontana, 0 00 672621 6,
£1.95

I first read this post-nuclear holocaust novel at the same time as *Brother in the Land*, which seemed then, as now, far more pessimistic and CND absorbed. Louise Lawrence does portray the unthinkable but she mollifies it by speculating on into the future. She takes the reader, through trial and hardship, into a time of hope, where mankind does seem to have survived and evolved in mutant form to create a new, resourceful, post-nuclear holocaust civilization – and that is made up of the children of the dust. The relative complexity of the novel and its unsubstantiated conclusions requires an experienced readership who can make the leap into fantastic speculation about something already widely, more scientifically covered.

DB

Displaced Person

Lee Harding, Puffin
Plus, 0 14 03 1141 6,
£1.75

The cover blurb is depressing sounding; by page 20 you're

reaching for the gin! This was a compulsive, intriguingly bleak read based on the premise 'we are manipulated and pushed around by forces we are too puny to understand – like cattle.'

Graeme Drury was ordinary enough but then it seemed that to other people he wasn't there. By degrees he became alienated in a tangibly grey limbo state reminiscent of 'Godot', where only 'the interface' supported him from the pervading darkness. Even his two companions there passed even further into the engulfing unreality.

I shall definitely introduce this to a pair of bright fourth year SF addicts, who like a challenging read to chew over. Let's hope I don't get notes from their parents about incipient depression! DB

Enter Tom

June Oldham, Puffin
Plus, 0 14 03 1739 2,
£1.95

A light-hearted foray into the predominant preoccupations of a would-be teenage seducer of his eye-catch physics mistress. True to his nature, Tom farcically over-acts, creating more and more problems for himself and

ending up virtually where he started, but nevertheless a wiser young man.

The vagaries of teenage relationships should strike chords with both boys and girls in mid-upper secondary. I found it a bit unevenly paced and it could easily have been a good thirty pages shorter. DB

The Nature of the Beast

Janni Howker, Fontana
Lions, 0 00 672582 1,
£1.95

Highly commended this for 1985; the Carnegie panel thought it benefited from more than one reading. You can say that again – one reason why the book's so good. Whether you can or want to work out the nature of the beast in society and the beast Bill Coward kills is up to you. For me, Bill, his home and mill town savaged by redundancy are unforgettable. Chris Powling wrote: 'The progress of Billy Coward from victim to vigilante is like a prolonged scream of agony.' For his further comments (and Carnegie carpings) look back to BfK No 39, July 86. I'm assuming you've read 'The Nature of' and are sharing it

with kids. No? Whitbread and The Young Observer thought it was a winner. So do I. TD

Changing Times

Tim Kennemore,
Magnet, 0 416 54720 6,
£1.75

Self-regarding Victoria has a fine line in acid put-downs – and we like her not just for surviving her awful parents but for her niceness with boyfriend Daniel. A broken clock, chosen on her 15th birthday from uncle's antique shop, is the device which cracks open her life. It takes her back in time, uncovering patterns which have caused her parents to be as they are, and forwards to an appalling cautionary tale, almost but unfortunately not quite parody of the degrading, stultifying life she'll have with arrant sexist Daniel – if she cannot break these same patterns. She does or, rather, she will.



There's plenty of wit and challenge; I found it compulsive reading. Perhaps that should be compulsory.

TD

FUN, FANTASY AND CONTEMPORARY FICTION

The postman arrives in Lapland with the children's letters, but Father Christmas has disappeared! All of which means

A PROBLEM FOR MOTHER CHRISTMAS

TED WILLIS

Illustrated by Jill Bennett

£5.95 Ages 5-8 0 575 03884 5



Many people THINK they have seen a giant cat in the local wood, so Josh makes a large clay paw-print. Hilarity and confusion follow as the whole village is intrigued by

JOSH'S PANTHER

FAY SAMPSON

Illustrated by Jill Bennett

£5.95 Ages 8-11 0 575 03914 0



Reality for 14-year-old John is a family that is falling apart. His only escape lies in fantasy – the exciting roles and adventures he enacts with his friends, the

GAMEPLAYERS

STEPHEN BOWKETT

£7.95 Ages 12+ 0 575 03932 9

Everyone knows who sailed in the Ark: Noah's family and two of every creature on earth. But there was someone else ...

NOAH'S BROTHER

DICK KING-SMITH

Illustrated by Ian Newsham

£5.95 Ages 6-9 0 575 03876 4



In the fantasy Ratha's Creature, set in a world where wild cats speak and reason, yearling Ratha tamed the power of fire. Now leader of her clan, she finds her authority challenged in a dramatic and moving confrontation in

CLAN GROUND

CLARE BELL

£7.95 Young Adult 0 575 03888 8

Gollancz

In the May issue of **Books for Keeps** Colin McNaughton explained why the panel of judges for the Mother Goose Award had decided not to nominate a 1985 winner.

Tudor Humphries, an artist whose first children's book was published last year, read the report and sent us this.

Response to a Jaded Jury

I wasn't aware, until I read in **Books for Keeps** the report of the jury's deliberations, that I had even been considered for the Mother Goose Award for the most exciting newcomer to British children's book illustration. I've been working as an illustrator for over ten years, banging my head against the publishing wall until finally someone gave me a whole brick to paint, so I hardly fall into the category of newcomer. Reading what the judges had to say to justify not making an award this year has left me furious and bristling. This could of course be considered 'sour grapes' but I think it goes much deeper than that.

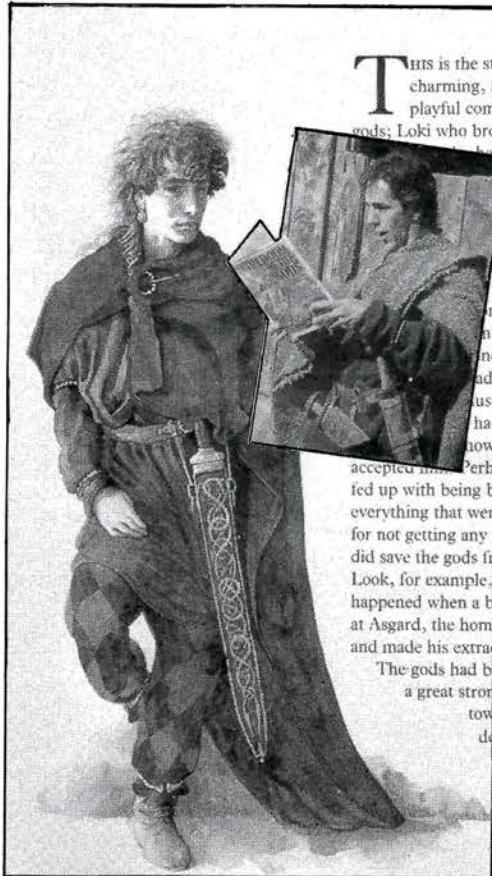
What angered me most was the suggestion that everybody who worked hard to illustrate their first book in 1984/85 could be lumped together under the umbrella of producing 'dull sanitized books' and following 'just the same old formulae'. Yet most of the list of 'formulae' (which took up half the first paragraph of the panel's report) sounded very much like publishers' ideas for books rather than ideas originated by illustrators:

'The-richly-illustrated-Arabian-nights-tale-formula, The-Myths-and-Legends-formula, The-respectable-poetry-anthology-formula, etc., etc...'

So presumably many of these books were already conceived before the artist came on the scene. Can the jury then blame the illustrator for the lack of originality in the concept? Particularly as, by the very nature of the award, we are dealing with artists who are presumably unknown, inexperienced and untried and who therefore haven't yet acquired the clout to demand their own way?

My own first book **The Doom of the Gods** was one of the few that received a reasonably favourable comment but, oh dear, it was just not quite good enough. The five other books cited as 'almosts' were similarly guilty of not being dynamically exciting enough to fire the judges' enthusiasm. In case you read the article and thought artists just weren't trying hard enough these days, let me give you some background to **Doom of the Gods**:

As a child I was obsessed with ancient history. I was awestruck by the things that have happened in this world (I still am); the fact that 'Then' was 'Now' to real people, just as 1986 is real to us, is to me one of the many wonders of being alive. When I was offered **Doom of the Gods**, Michael Harrison's reworkings for younger readers of stories from the Norse Mythology, I realised that amongst other things I had a chance to encourage in children that feeling of the reality of history. You could argue that Mythology is not history, but to the Vikings these stories of their gods were very real, just as Christ is to a Christian or Buddha to a Buddhist. I challenged myself to bring the stories to life. This involved constant research and imagination and sheer hard work. Determined not to conjure an accurate but lifeless world, I struggled for a whole year to produce a book that would be



INSPIRING to children on as many levels as possible. If you think I failed them then fair enough, but don't tell me I didn't push myself to my artistic and imaginative limits, that I settled for a dull sanitized formula. Getting the picture right often reduced me to a frustrated wreck, as I worked at the very edge of my abilities. The experience left me exhausted, wrung out, broke, and introverted but nevertheless sure that I had done what I set out to do. Did I really go through all this to be told, 'Sorry but you didn't have quite enough sparkle to make our jaded palates froth'?

Fortunately, children are not so rediculously demanding as the Mother Goose Panel. If a book stimulates them to laugh, cry, think, learn, enquire or wonder then they feel they have got something out of it; apparently the panel of judges felt differently and seemed to consider novelty value to be their main criterion.

I recently discussed **The Iron Man** (another book deemed not good enough) with some 8-10 year olds. They thought the illustrations were brilliant; so do I. I was stunned by Andrew Davidson's strong and original woodcuts for this new edition of **The Iron Man**. Surely, weren't they capable of arousing enough excitement?

There seems to be a terrible tendency in the

1980s to take criticism to an absurd level. Not to appreciate people for what they CAN do but to nitpick to find the slightest fault and pounce on it, crying 'there, he's got a flaw, he's not perfect'. Who are these panel of judges to be so elitist and esoteric as to create a group of super illustrators who have passed the ultimate eligibility test (set by them)? Surely this detracts from the very essence and purpose of childrens' book illustration which is its capacity to give enjoyment, stimulation and education to children.

Another of the jury's admonishments was that artists took 'the safe path, producing safe, boring books' in order to please publishers, to do what is necessary to get published. Yes, I made concessions to my editor, author and designer: in some cases I followed their ideas rather than my own and they were generally right. Isn't this simply part of working as a team, allowing other members of the team to make their own contribution?

The illustrators who appear in any year are expressive of that year, good or bad, and if you must try and pin down the best of them, then for God's sake do it. Give someone the prize so that all of those who worked hard can feel that they were appreciated and the best person won. Otherwise your smug condescension makes a mockery of the award and their hard work.

I've just finished another long year, painting my second book. Once again I'm exhausted, wrung out, broke and introverted but at least I can sleep soundly knowing that I can never again be considered for the Mother Goose Award . . . ●

Tudor Humphries trained as a set and costume designer for the theatre. This experience, he says, had a profound effect on his ideas about drama, lighting and atmosphere in paintings. While waiting for the opportunity to illustrate a whole book he has, among other things, worked as a landscape painter, done book covers, been a sign painter and taught life-drawing. The waiting time has also involved him with children: as a playgroup leader, an organiser of festivals and workshops, and teacher of art in primary schools.

For **The Doom of the Gods** he did extensive research and made working costumes and props which he got people to wear and use to get the feel and look of living Vikings for his paintings and black and white drawings. (His wife Mary appears as Sif.)

He has recently completed the illustrations for a second book of Norse tales (also by Michael Harrison). **The Curse of the Ring** tells the story of the ring cycle (the Volsung saga) and will be published next April. The Humphries family, which includes 'our three naughty boys', lives in Devon.

The Doom of the Gods, Oxford, 0 19 274128 4, £7.95

TALK BACK

MAKE A NOTE OF THESE

It would be very easy to fill up our review pages with the latest books by writers and artists who consistently produce excellent books. This season instead we have chosen to spotlight books which might not immediately come to your attention but which we think it would be a pity to miss.

So, we by-pass **Where's Julius?**, the latest John Burningham with its evocation of Julius' fantasy travels entered but not intruded upon by his beautifully accepting parents – and the Ahlberg's Emil-winning **The Jolly Postman**. We ignore Anthony Browne's **Willy the Champ** (even better than **Willy the Wimp**) and his **Piggybook** (also Julia MacRae), a decisive blast against male chauvinist pigs – young and old – which already has many on the defensive. The pictures are atmospheric and inventive by turn. How many pigs can you find? And this year I won't linger over the latest in James Stevenson's comic strip style accounts of Grandpa's tall tales. **There's Nothing to Do** (Gollancz) say his bored grandchildren and they are treated to another amazing story of looking after baby brother Wainey. Well up to standard. Maybe even the best yet. Nor will we stop to remind you that Quentin Blake's incomparable **The Story of the Dancing Frog** is now in large format paperback (Picture Lions) along with Foreman's **Trick a Tracker** in the extremely buyable Picturemac series.

Instead we suggest you get out your pens and make a note of

Daisy Tales, Tony Bradman and Priscilla Lamont, Methuen, £2.50 each

Four delightful little books for pre-schoolers. Tony Bradman's text – the best yet from this suddenly prolific and ubiquitous writer – is well served by the excellent Priscilla Lamont. Everyday events are captured with warmth, humour and not a little originality – very welcome in this overworked area. **Daisy and the Crying Baby** (0 416 54600 5) has Daisy and friend playing at crying babies and mummies, changing each other's nappies. In the other titles Daisy goes swimming (0 416 54580 7), helps dad do the washing (0 416 54570 X) and has a babysitter (0 416 54590 4).

Janine and the New Baby, Iolette Thomas, ill. Jennifer Northway, Deutsch, 0 233 97916 6, £5.25

Iolette Thomas was born in Antigua but came to England as a child. This, her first picture book story, was written for her two small children. It tells how three-year-old Janine and her family prepare for the arrival of a new baby. Jennifer Northway's pictures of this warmly credible Black British family are, as ever, a pleasure.

The Monster Bed, Jeanne Willis, pictures by Susan Varley, Andersen, 0 86264 127 6, £4.95

Night-time fears are given an original twist in this rhyming story: Denis the young monster is afraid the humans will hide under his bed and get him. After a very recognisable sequence of going to bed activities Monster mum agrees to Denis's strategy – the only way to be sure there is nothing under the bed is to sleep there! But a lost and tired small boy wanders into the cave, finds the bed and lies down to rest – checking first that there are no monsters under the bed!

The collaborators here both made a mark with their first books: Jeanne Willis with the entertaining **Tale of Georgie Grub** (ill. by Margaret Chamberlain) and Susan Varley, Mother Goose winner, with the beautiful **Badger's Parting Gifts**. Here she shows a new and delicious sense of humour in the pictures which extend and amplify the text. Look at the vignette of Denis, peeping with one eye through half open fingers at a frightening book, to see how she makes a character.

Two books about spooky places

I'm not Frightened of Ghosts, Juliet and Charles Snape, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 251 2, £5.95

has the intrepid Lizzie venturing into the deserted old house while the more timid Sam and Robert wait outside. Lizzie, a determined rationalist, explains away events that the more imaginative might put down to supernatural causes. Indeed in the pictures the reader can find a series of cheekily mischievous ghosts getting increasingly puzzled and frustrated by their inability to have any effect on calm and sensible Lizzie.



"The humans will get me," cried Denis. "They'll creep under my monster bed, when I'm asleep."

From **The Monster Bed**, Andersen Press.

The Ghost-eye Tree, Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault, ill. Ted Rand, Orchard Books, 1 85213 006 7, £5.95

Another intrepid girl – but this time one who is not impervious to fear. Brave Ellie goes back to rescue her brother's favourite hat which is lost as the two of them run, terrified, from the waving arms and eerie noises of the old oak tree. The occasion of the story – two children sent in the gathering dark to fetch a bucket of milk from the end of the town – may be removed in time and place from the experience of most, if not all, children; but the essential feelings, the fear of the dark and the unknown horrors that the mind can so easily conjure up are common to all. A nice sense here, too, of the brother-sister relationship. Beautifully lit and wonderfully atmospheric pictures.

Once there was a House, Gregg Reyes, Judy Hindley, Robert Bartlett, Collins (Make and Play series), 0 00 195626 4, £4.95

Take one large cardboard box . . . make a window . . . and a



'There's no such thing
as a ghost!
From **The Ghost-eye
Tree**, Orchard Books.

door . . . add a roof, a chimney, gutters, drainpipes. Then take some more assorted boxes and plastic bottles, paper roll tubes, some old newspapers – and before you know it you've made a stack of furniture . . . and a car . . . and a petrol station.

A pleasant picture story shows a group of children at play – nine pages of easy-to-follow instructions show how to do-it-yourself easily and safely. Imaginative, low cost ideas for home or school.

(For another imaginative view of what to do with a cardboard box try **Ben's Box** (Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 40124 9, £7.95) a Michael Foreman pop-up. Ben's mum plays with her new toy – a washing machine – while Ben has fantastic adventures in the box it came in.)

Watch the Stars Come Out, Riki Levinson, ill. Diane Goode, Orchard Books, 1 85213 001 6, £6.95

Lines of continuity stretch between past and present as Grandma tells granddaughter the special story her mother used to tell her about how she came to America when she was a little girl. The journey to a new life to meet mother, father and sister who have gone ahead is told with simplicity and economy. The feelings which accompany leaving two younger brothers behind, the long sea voyage, the arrival in a strange country, lie below the surface of the text and in the beautifully detailed pictures to be discovered by a thoughtful reader. The immigrant child lives on in her great granddaughter who has the same red hair, and the same love of watching the stars come out. Stories within stories, and lives within lives.

The Miracle Tree, Christobel Mattingley, ill. Marianne Yamaguchi, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 37604 X, £5.95

A story of three people separated by the bombing of Nagasaki: Taro, his beautiful wife Hanako and Hanako's mother. Over twenty years the threads of their lives separate

and unknowingly converge again on the pine tree which gardener Taro has lovingly tended as a symbol of hope. Finally united on Christmas Day their prayer out of pain, suffering and enduring love is for peace.

This short, many-layered story has a poignant bitter-sweet beauty. Its theme, design and sensitive charcoal illustrations will appeal especially to older readers, or listeners.

Alex, the Amazing Aerial Acrobat, Gianni Peg, A & C Black, 0 7136 2719 0, £5.95

If you came across the daredevil adventures of Alex the Amazing Juggler, says the title page, 'stay a while longer and clasp tightly some secure object, for truly my dear reader, you have read nothing yet . . .' And truly the title page does not lie. Alex is now a member of the world's first Flying Circus; but it's more James Bond than Mounty Python when he and his friends have to rescue the best inventing brains of Tapocca-Tapocca from the evil clutches of Baron von Kraffen who wants to rule the world. Like **The Miracle Tree** this book has a message. 'True progress,' say the rescued scientists, 'is that which enriches life, not that which harms it.' But it's a message contained within a tour de force of comic strip art, amazingly detailed, action-packed, exuberant and full of fun.

So there you are – and we didn't mention the fact that you can now get no fewer than thirteen of Leo Lionni's stories with full colour illustrations throughout. (**Frederick's Tales**, Andersen, 0 86264 140 3, £9.95 include the classic **Frederick**, **Fish is Fish**, **Swimmy** and **Cornelius**. No primary classroom should be without them – and this edition carries an introduction for adults by Bruno Bettelheim.) Nor that you can find seven new stories about the Pig family in marvellous Mary Rayner's **Mrs Pig Gets Cross**, Collins, 0 00 184532 2, £5.95. All family life is here in these ideal read aloud adventures. ●

The Award Season

The Booker prize for adults and no less than three children's book awards to get people talking about books in the run-up to Christmas.

THE Smarties PRIZE

Sponsored by Rowntree Mackintosh, this is the biggest British children's book prize – in money terms. The overall winner of this year's Grand Prix (£8,000) is **Jenny Nimmo** for her novel **The Snow Spider**, a Methuen Pied Piper book (0 416 54530 0, £5.50).

This is only Jenny Nimmo's second book for Methuen. **The Snow Spider**, like her previous story **Tatty Apple** (recently paperbacked in Magnet and reviewed in **BfK** 40), mixes magic and fantasy into the everyday life of a family tense with suppressed emotion. The setting is the Welsh mountains and the magic is the age-old Celtic powers handed down through the generations. On Gwyn's ninth birthday it is time for him to find out if he is a magician, time to remember his ancestors, Math, Lord of Gwynedd, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy. Perhaps he can solve the five-year-old mystery of the disappearance of his sister Bethan; life for Gwyn and his parents has not been the same since she disappeared without trace in a snowstorm on the mountain.

Young Observer Teenage Fiction Prize

The winner is Peter Carter's **Bury the Dead**, Oxford University Press, 0 19 271493 7, £6.95.

An East German family is the focus for a strong and thought-provoking examination of conflicting loyalties, values, political systems.

Also shortlisted were:

Moonwind, Louise Lawrence, Bodley Head, 0 370 30717 8, £3.95 pbk

The Tricksters, Margaret Mahy, Dent, 0 460 06203 4, £7.95

The Silent Shore, Ruth Elwin Harris, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 239 3, £7.95

Starry Night, Catherine Sefton, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11795 X, £5.95

Phoenix Rising

In October the National Book League disappeared to be replaced by Book Trust – the NBL rearranged and reorganised with exciting and ambitious plans for the future. First priority is a huge fund-raising activity. The NBL was financed in the main by the Arts Council and the book trade; Book Trust will be looking to the 'wider world of industry, banks and trust foundations'. Tim Rix of Longman, first chairman of Book Trust, is reported in the **Bookseller** as saying, 'We will be selling Book Trust on the importance of having a fully literate – not just functionally literate – society. It is estimated that 50 per cent of the adult population never reads a book. This is not good politically, socially or economically.'

Book Trust will continue with NBL activities and also instigate new projects including the creation of a Children's Book Foundation. Martyn Goff, director of the NBL, now chief executive of Book Trust, promises a report 'when they have firmed up' in the New Year.

A story which touches delicately on powerful feelings and remains accessible to readers at the lower end of the 7-11 category in which this was the winning book.

Runners-up are:

The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg, Geoffrey Patterson, Deutsch, 0 233 97878 X, £5.95 (6 Years and Under category)

The Mirrorstone, Michael Palin, Alan Lee and Richard Seymour, Cape, 0 224 02408 6, £7.95

and

Village Heritage, Miss Pinnell and the Children of Sapperton School, Alan Sutton, 0 86299 263 X, £10.95

(joint winners of the Innovation category).

The judges for this year's award were Bernard Ashley, Floella Benjamin, Roger McGough, Judy Taylor (former Bodley Head children's editor and biographer of Beatrix Potter) and Bing Taylor (no relation! co-founder of **The Good Book Guide**).

The Emil/Kurt Maschler Award

From 104 entries, the judging panel – Margaret Meek, Elaine Moss and Chris Powling – have selected **The Jolly Postman** by Janet and Allan Ahlberg (Heinemann, 0 434 92515 2, £5.95).

In a story told in rhyme **The Jolly Postman** delivers letters to fairy-tale characters. The letters are real and can be taken out of envelopes in the book. Goldilocks says sorry to the Three Bears, Mr Wolf gets a warning from a solicitor instructed by Red Riding Hood and the Three Little Pigs. So many different voices to discover for the young reader.

The other books shortlisted for the award were:

Where's Julius?, John Birmingham, Cape, 0 224 02411 6, £5.95

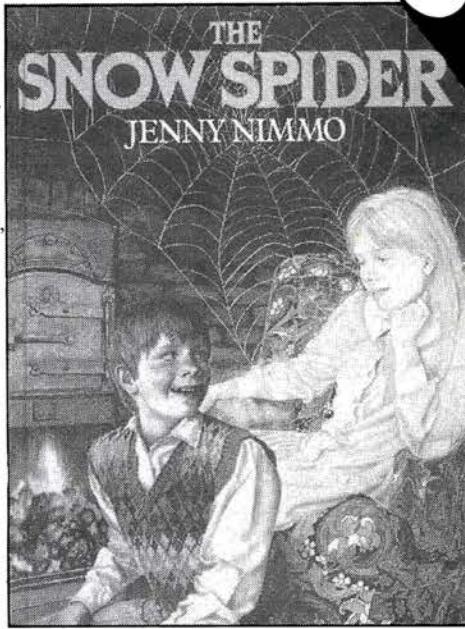
Walker paperbacks

Walker Books published its first paperbacks this season. First titles are in the over-seven range where Walker believes children need books to be as cheap as possible so they can buy them themselves. Look out for 'Little Dracula' stories by Martin Waddell and Joseph Wright (enthusiastically reviewed by Bob Jay in this issue), and 'Scrapbooks' by Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake (large format, £1.95 each). These will also be available in a small hardback edition for libraries.

Now they are ten

Celebrating a decade of publishing this autumn are Andersen Press and Beaver Books.

Andersen Press was founded by Klaus Flugge. He chose the name in honour of Hans Andersen who, he believes, was 'an original writer who contributed more to children's books, internationally speaking, than anyone else.' And because 'it's easier to spell and pronounce than Flugge.'



Early in the Morning, Charles Causley, music by Anthony Castro, ill. Michael Foreman, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80810 5, £7.95

The Rain Door, Russell Hoban, ill. Quentin Blake, Gollancz, 0 575 03097 6, £5.25

The Doorbell Rang, Pat Hutchinson, Bodley Head, 0 370 30726 7, £5.25

Stanley Bagshaw and the Short-sighted Football Trainer, Bob Wilson, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11783 6, £6.50

The Emil is given for a book in which text and illustration are both excellent and perfectly harmonious, each enhancing and balancing the other.

In December, to celebrate its tenth birthday, Andersen is publishing a special edition of thirteen Hans Andersen stories translated by Naomi Lewis and each illustrated by a different artist from the amazing Andersen list. Among them are Ruth Brown, Satoshi Kitamura, David McKee, Susan Varley, Michael Foreman, Fulvio Testa, Ralph Steadman and Tony Ross, author/artist of the very first Andersen book, **Goldilocks and the Three Bears**. The celebration collection is called **The Flying Trunk**, (0 86264 147 0, £7.95) – artists' royalties will go to the Save the Children Fund and Naomi Lewis is donating hers to Animal Aid.

Beaver Books started with Hamlyn and is now the children's paperback imprint of Arrow in the Century Hutchinson group. Alison Berry, the present editor, looks forward to a period of expansion as Beaver moves into its second decade. The association with Hutchinson and Andersen provides opportunities for access to quality books especially in the picture book area where Beaver intends to publish more next year. There are also plans for more originals, film and television tie-ins, humour and non-fiction. ●

BOOKS
FOR
KIDS
NEWS



**Lloyds
Bank**

Sponsors Videos for Schools

THE SHAKESPEARE VIDEO WORKSHOPS

Three 60-minute workshops produced by the Learning Resources Branch of the Inner London Education Authority primarily for 'O' and 'A' level students. However, a detailed knowledge of the texts is not assumed and the programmes will be enjoyed by students from the middle years of secondary school upwards. Written and presented by David Whitworth and acted by members of the New Shakespeare Company, whose schools matinees at the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park, have been famous for many years.

THE TORTURED MIND This programme examines Shakespeare's portrayal of the mind under intolerable stress in his four great tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*.

THE COMIC SPIRIT Looks at Shakespeare's use of the many aspects of comedy from straightforward clowning to subtle irony in the plays *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

THE ROMAN TRAGEDIES Explores *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* giving particular attention to Shakespeare's treatment of the themes of leadership and loyalty, tyranny and tyrannicide, and political and personal treachery. Parallels between the modern world and that of Shakespeare are drawn and appreciation of the playwright's relationship to his own time and relevance to our own is thereby heightened.



Renee Asherson (Volumnia) and John Nettles (Coriolanus) and Philippa Gail (Virgilia) in The Roman Tragedies.

Produced and directed by Noël Hardy, all three videos have won awards at International Film and Video Festivals in the Education categories.

Price: £20 each including VAT, post and packing for VHS or Betamax formats from:
CFL Vision, Sales Department, Gerrards Cross, Bucks. SL9 8TN.

In addition to the above, Lloyds Bank has also sponsored other schools videos – one describing the work of the Young National Trust Theatre, and another made for Ballet Rambert for use by students of CSE, 'O' and 'A' level dance.

SOUND & VISION



Supergran is back

On Christmas Eve on ITV there's an hour-long 'special': **Supergran and the World's Worst Circus**. Then, starting in January, a new series of 13 thirty-minute episodes has Supergran caught up in another round of strenuous adventures.

Puffin have two new tie-in titles to be published in January: **Supergran to the Rescue**, 0 14 03.2201 9, and **Supergran at the Circus**, 0 14 03.2200 0, at £1.75 each.



Howard the Duck

Spielberg made ET appealing – now George Lucas has set himself an even bigger challenge – making the film-going world fall in love with a blue-eyed beer drinking, cigar-smoking alien – DUCK. There's a lot of James Bondery as Howard joins the humans to prevent the Dark Overlords taking over the world by mind control. Armada has the Movie Storybook with lots of coloured stills (0 00 692744 0, £2.95).



Labyrinth – the Storybook

Labyrinth, the latest George Lucas/Jim Henson film, goes on general release in early December. Like the result of their last collaboration, **The Dark Crystal**, this is another fantasy adventure quest but this time with more than a few touches of humour, with the makers of the Muppets creating the troll-like Hoggle, the huge, furry, floppy Ludo and the doggy knight, Sir Didymus. The script is by Terry Jones and contains some classic literary reference points. Fourteen-year-old Sarah, in a moment of resentment against her baby half-brother, wishes the goblins would take him away. And they do – into the castle of the evil Jareth at the centre of the Labyrinth. Like Ida in Sendak's **Outside Over There** Sarah goes to fetch the baby back. In the Labyrinth she faces many trials – including having to solve Hobbit-style riddles and being entrapped by an enchanted peach – but collects (as did Dorothy in **The Wizard of Oz**) three companions who help her. At the thirteenth hour, though, she is alone and has to find the only weapon that will work against hate and envy.

Behind the Screen

A brief glimpse behind most aspects of the small screen which will answer some questions and provoke even more: that is the essence of Chris Kelly's **The Telebook**,

(OUP, 0 19 273156 4, £7.95). It covers most types of programme from the Weather Forecast to Coronation Street, takes in make-up, stunts and special effects and raises the lid a very little way off topics like commercial breaks and scheduling. News programmes and current affairs raise questions about bias and censorship. Not a full-blown media studies course but perhaps a good starting point. Lots of full colour photographs make this an attractive book for browsing.

Looking for more on Special Effects? Try Mat Irvine's account of the **Doctor Who Special Effects**, (Beaver, 0 09 942630 7, £5.95 pbk). He has worked on **Doctor Who** for

A **Storybook** with full-colour pictures by Bruce McNally, and a simple text by Louise Gikow, is published to coincide with the film (Macdonald Purnell, 0 361 07376 3, £4.99). The illustrations are very much of the film – David Bowie who appears as Jareth is clearly recognisable. Probably best for those wanting to recapture the experience of the film but plenty of pictorial narrative for those who can't or don't get to see it.

Purnell also offer a **Labyrinth Family Activity Book** (for Labyrinth families?), £2.99, and a **Sticker Book**, £1.99, with four pages of full-colour stickers to make your own narrative.

A novel version for adults by A. C. H. Smith is published by Virgin (0 86369 151 X, £2.50). Virgin is also offering a **Labyrinth Photo Album**, with stills and a minimal text (0 86309 152 8, £2.99).

Illustration from **Labyrinth, The Storybook**, Macdonald Purnell.



many years and tells in a relaxed style of how the many and varied effects were designed, built, worked and filmed.

There is an index to the 12 chapters but this is more a 'read' than a 'dip into' book. A generous sprinkling of colour photographs. ●

