

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

No. 42 Jan. 1987
UK Price £1.15

**Teenage Reading:
Special Feature**

Peter Carter

Helen Cresswell

The Jolly Postman



PAN HORIZONS

FIRST AND FOREMOST IN TEENAGE FICTION

PAN HORIZONS HAVE BLAZED A TRAIL IN THEIR FIRST YEAR, PUBLISHING QUALITY FICTION FOR TEENAGERS WHICH *APPEALS* TO TEENAGERS. OPENING 1987 WITH HUMOUR, VARIETY AND CHALLENGE ARE:



In the thick of the riots, two black brothers find that they have more in common than they thought...

0 330 29662 0 9 JANUARY

PAPERBACK
£1.95 EACH



Jody thinks she knows it all. Lyle knows he doesn't. The path of love never runs smoothly.

0 330 29702 3 9 JANUARY



Mystery and suspense as the past catches up with Julie.

0 330 29361 3 13 FEBRUARY



As the Johannesburg spring turns to summer, Rhonda realizes that she is in love. But Dave has something to hide...

0 330 29681 7 13 FEBRUARY



Flanders Brown's new school was full of characters, and some were pretty eccentric. You don't forget someone like Miss Blue easily...

0 330 29583 7 13 MARCH

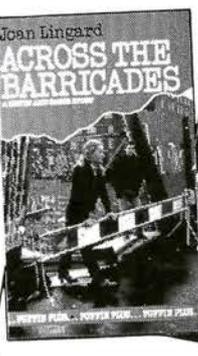


Michael wasn't a murderer. Was he?

0 330 29749 X 13 MARCH

EASY TO PICK UP · HARD TO PUT DOWN.

PUFFIN BOOKS FOR TEENAGERS – THOUGHT-PROVOKING, ENTERTAINING READING!!!



PUFFIN WINNERS

GOODNIGHT MR TOM
Michelle Magorian
£2.50

BUDDY
Nigel Hinton
£1.75

ACROSS THE BARRICADES
Joan Lingard
£1.95

THE DARK IS RISING
Susan Cooper
£1.95

Featured in the top 20 Best Books – BMC TEEN READ Campaign

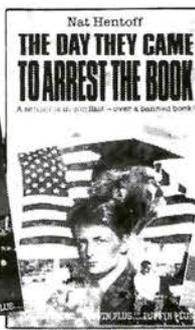
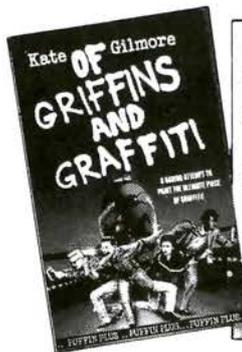
NEW SPRING TITLES

JANUARY
OF GRIFFINS AND GRAFITTI
Kate Gilmore £1.95

FEBRUARY
THE DAY THEY CAME TO ARREST THE BOOK
Nat Hentoff £1.95

MARCH
MAX ON EARTH
Marilyn Kaye £1.95

PUFFIN PLUS



Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Editor's Page | 3 |
| News and comment from the Editor | |
| The Jolly Postman | 4 |
| Chris Powling examines another Ahlberg classic | |
| Reviews | 6 |
| Authorgraph No 42 | 12 |
| Helen Cresswell | |
| Teenage Reading – A Special Feature | |
| ● Books in the Teenage World | 14 |
| Michael Pountney reports | |
| ● Making the Charts | 15 |
| Jessica Yates reflects on the Teen Read promotion | |
| ● New Horizons? | 17 |
| Steve Bowles welcomes a new list | |
| ● Border Country | 19 |
| Michael Jones meets Peter Carter | |
| ● Live Wires and Upstarts | 20 |
| Pat Triggs looks at new teenage lists from feminist presses | |
| News | 22 |
| Sound and Vision | 24 |
| News of books on television | |

Cover Book

Our cover this issue is taken from the jacket illustration by Trevor Webster for Peter Carter's **Bury the Dead** (OUP, 0 19 271493 7, £8.95).

We are grateful for help from OUP in using this illustration.

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

– the magazine of the
School Bookshop Association
JANUARY 1987 No. 42

ISSN: 0143-909X
Editor: Pat Triggs
Managing Editor: Richard Hill
Designed and typeset by: Rondale Limited, Lydney, Glos.
Printed by: Surrey Fine Art Press Ltd, Redhill, Surrey

© School Bookshop Association 1987

Books for Keeps can be obtained on subscription by sending a cheque or postal order to the Subscription Secretary, SBA, 1 Effingham Road, Lee, London SE12 8NZ. Tel: 01-852 4953.

Annual subscription for six issues:
£6.90 UK

Single copies:
£1.15 UK,
Or use the **Dial-a-Sub** service on
01-852 4953.

Editorial correspondence: Pat Triggs,
36 Ravenswood Road, Redland, Bristol,
Avon BS6 6BW. Tel: 0272 49048.

Books for Keeps
is published by the
School Bookshop
Association Ltd
with the help of
Lloyds Bank,
six times a year.



EDITOR'S PAGE



Pat

The first **BfK** of 1987 and we make no apology for giving more space to best-selling **The Jolly Postman**. The Ahlbergs have done it again: an idea for a book so right and so simple that it seems blindingly obvious – once you see it, and (and here's the magic trick) brought to life with wit, ingenuity and a scrupulous attention to detail. **The Jolly Postman** is fun but there is also a whole agenda for developing readers and writers between its shiny covers. So many voices to attend to, so many texts to explore and add to, so much as yet unwritten mail for the postman to deliver. This is a book worth celebrating and Chris Powling is just the man for the job (see page 4). Share with him the delight in looking closely to see how and why **The Jolly Postman** works and then share it with children who will show you even more.

Proof Positive

Anyone still in doubt that experience of good fiction is central to children's development as readers and writers – and in many other ways too – should be directed at once to **Dipping in a Street** and **All Four One**. **Dipping in a Street** tells how 26 teachers from 13 primary schools in West Leeds based a half term of work across the curriculum on Berlie Doherty's **How Green You Are** with Jamila Gavin's **Kamla and Kate** in support for younger children. It is full of examples of children's work: poems stories, instructions reports, observational drawings, maps, drama, music. **All Four One** is a 140 page hardback book conceived, written and published by the 260 children and the teachers of Earls Barton Junior School. For a school year they took a Focus on Books project to its logical conclusion: the first years collaborated on a full colour picture story, **The Jelly Lover**; the second years devised **Friends with Nature**, 32 pages of poems, puzzles, pictures and facts; the third years became poets and illustrators of **Lost for Words**, and the fourth years produced a 13 chapter illustrated novel, **Guardians of Zargon**, set in the village and involving exciting time shift adventures for two eleven-year-olds. It's an excellent production, well worth reading in anyone's terms.

The Leeds and the Earls Barton projects have things in common. They involved thoughtful, enthusiastic, imaginative teachers committed to the principle of first hand experience and purposeful learning, and convinced of the value of literature. Both also enjoyed the extended participation of professional writers and artists. In Leeds Berlie Doherty worked for three days with the teachers on a residential course and then for a week talked and worked with children in schools. In Earls Barton, writer Gwen Grant and illustrator Kim Palmer worked closely with staff and pupils. And of course both projects needed and got financial support – from their LEAs, from Writers in Schools and in Earls Barton's case a special SCDC grant.

Beyond Our Ken

Those two books should be in every school and sent to Kenneth Baker with a note to remind him that much work of this kind is going on. On the evidence of a recent speech he is concerned that children should learn to love reading 'for the enlightenment it can bring; and for the engagement with language and authors'; he wants pupils to be 'reflective users of our language: able to understand it as well as to use it; to be in control of it rather than at its mercy.' Hurray! Hang on though, he also appears to think that a combination of schools, parents and television is stopping this happening. What does he want us to do? 'I would like to see bench marks for progress in English

which actually set out lists of the sort of books or authors children should be able to read and understand at particular ages and levels of achievement.' For example? 'Animal Farm at 12, David Copperfield at 15 – for children of average ability.' Oh yes, and he's appointing another 'high-level independent committee' to tell us what our pupils ought to know 'about the English language.' Words fail me. How can anyone be so right and so wrong in the same speech? We don't need another committee, or another prescriptive checklist. What we need is support: INSET support to give teachers time to plan, collaborate, evaluate; support to allow more writers, poets and artists to work with teachers and children; support for better information, for exchange of ideas between teachers; support for book events, book weeks and all those other activities which we *know* help children to become readers for pleasure.

Teenage Special

And how can we help teenagers to go on developing as readers? Last November the Book Marketing Council launched the Teen Read promotion; several publishers, including Virago and The Women's Press, are developing new young adult lists. Our seven page special on Teenage Reading reflects some of this (see page 14). From my own mini survey in three schools the BMC's Teen Read newspaper was a hit. The pop stars, the sport, the association with Nike, the romantic fiction, the clubs to join (Nike and Sweet Dreams) were all enjoyed. Books were ordered, bought, borrowed. But it was still mainly girls who responded. How do we get more boys reading? How do we provide the kind of reading experience that leads more teenagers to Peter Carter (see page 19) whose books get literary awards but are not top of the pops? His latest novel, **Bury the Dead**, whose atmospheric jacket illustration we feature on our cover is accessible to a wide readership if they find a way to it.

Contributors' Notes

For this Teenage Reading feature we welcome back Steve Bowles' distinctive voice – this time *enthusiasing* about some recent publishing (see page 17). And we have a new reviewer, Val Randall, another lively voice. Val is Head of English in a comprehensive school in North East Lancashire. And finally news for Chris Powling whose favourite literary fantasy – he revealed in November's **BfK** – is a meeting between Just William and Christopher Robin. Well, Richmal Crompton, Mary Cadogan tells us in her biography or William's creator (Allen and Unwin, 0 04 928054 6, £12.95) got there first. In **William the Pirate** he meets spoiled brat Anthony Martin whose mother writes 'literary stories and poems about him' – 'Homework' has the refrain 'Anthony Martin is doing his sums'. Needless to say prissy Anthony is no match for William and the Outlaws.

Dipping in a Street, Ed. David Morton, 0 906835 25 9, £4.50, from The Primary Schools Centre, St Mary's Street, Leeds LS9 7DP (Cheques to 'Leeds City Council'). **All for One** is available from Earls Barton Junior School, Earls Barton, Northampton, NN6 0ND, £5.95 plus £1.50 p&p.



The Jolly Postman:

Chris Powling, starry-eyed and over-excited, contains to give a revealing coherent account of **The Jolly Post** a magic pudding of a book full of new delights and

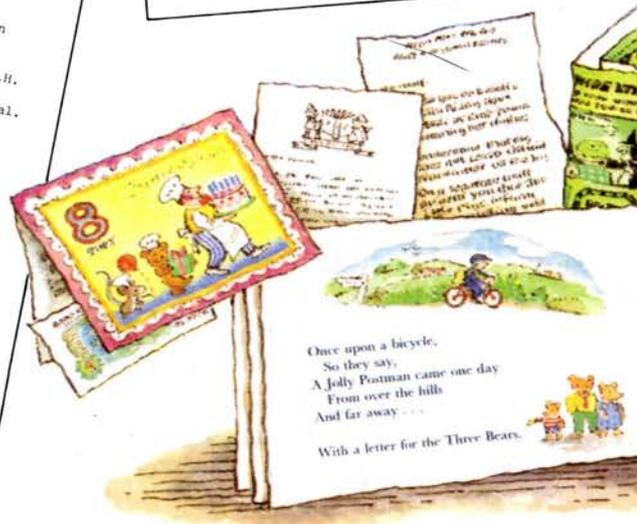
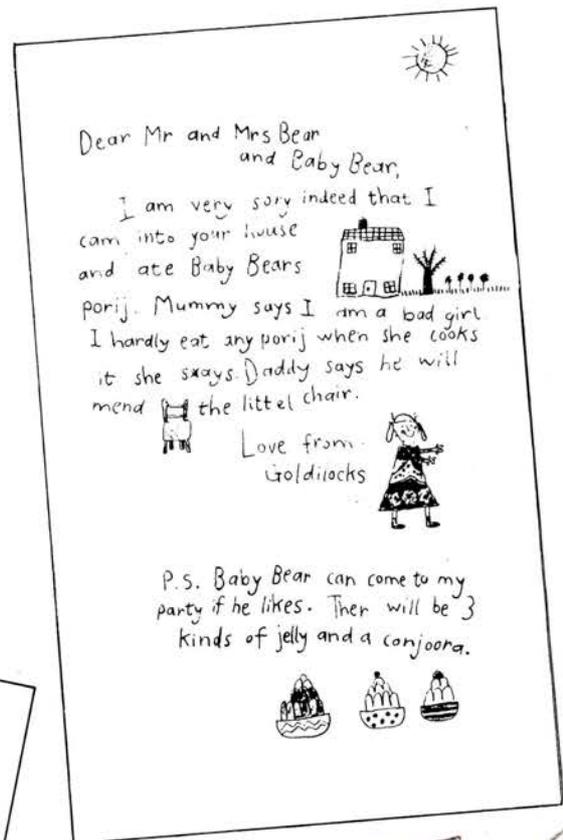
Once in a while a picture-book arrives that's so brilliant, so broad in its appeal, it seems to be a summation of the state-of-the-art. For me, *The Jolly Postman* is just such a book. As a matching of word and image it's a virtuoso performance; as a feat of design it's without a flaw; as an instance of the sort of bliss only a book can confer it's equally alluring for child and adult; as a conspectus of Where It's At Right Now it gives the current latitude and longitude of the illustrated book for children with pinpoint accuracy. In short, Janet and Allan Ahlberg have come up with a Mistress-and-Masterpiece.

In my view, that is. But my view is certainly suspect for reasons shrewdly diagnosed by the former pupil who remarked 'we can always tell when you're keen on a book because you go all starry-eyed and get over-excited'. Beware, then. This appraisal of *The Jolly Postman* is offered in the spirit of celebrant rather than critic - my vision being cluttered and my emotions a-twang from sheer enthusiasm. Mind you, I'm in good company. When judging the 1986 Emil Award with Margaret Meek and Elaine Moss, I had an early and unsettling impression that this distinguished pair were holding back in much the way I was - like gamblers saving an ace for just the right moment. They were, too. Our admiration and pleasure at this year's offerings by Blake and Burningham and Foreman and Hutchins and Wilson was entirely shared but so, it turned out, was our preferred front-runner. Once we'd each revealed our full hand the Prize was settled. As veteran-panellists we were astonished, given the quality of the entry, at the ease with which we chose our winner.



Perhaps we shouldn't have been. For what lifts *The Jolly Postman* above even competition as classy as this is the sort of simple, bright idea that's obvious once someone has thought of it. After all, what's the most personal, most user-friendly mode of written communication - opted for by storytellers from the very start of sustained narrative? A letter, yes. Link this mode, deployed as correspondence in real envelopes between the most familiar and best-loved characters from nursery rhymes and tales, with an illustrated 'holding' text and what have we got? Well, a neat example of what scholars of a structuralist and semiotic disposition call intertext - a strategy we've encountered before in the Ahlberg opus with *Each Peach Pear Plum* and *Jeremiah in the Dark Woods*. It's a joke scene, Margaret pointed out, but also a very serious game for behind every text stand other texts, not just as references but as embeddings in our culture.

Hence our delight as differing registers, rhetorics and conventions are gloriously mocked by Goldilocks's letter of apology to the three bears (personal interaction), Jack's postcard to the giant (holiday brochure), a mail-shot to Hansel and Gretel's Witch (advertising), a solicitor's warning to the Big Bad Wolf (the law), a complimentary first-off-the-press marriage memento for Cinderella (publishing) and so on . . . a succession of send-ups woven together in a marvellous montage of writing and re-writing.



another Ahlberg classic

his enthusiasm long enough
man, winner of the Emil Award,
 surprises.

All of which, you may say, is very well for structuralists and semiologists but what about the kids? Will they be laughing? You bet, because, as always, Janet and Allan Ahlberg have their implied child-reader firmly in focus – any from top-infant on upwards who is ready to grin at stories partly outgrown but still recalled with affection. Indeed, my guess is that many youngsters will also spot the element of inter-pic in Janet Ahlberg's warm, witty illustrations – the stamps and post-marks and handwriting deftly parodied, the sly reference to other imagery by way of a Briggs giant or Pienkowski owl or Bestall bear.



Yes, **The Jolly Postman** is clever stuff – made cleverer still by the traditional virtues it's careful not to neglect. Author and illustrator play craftily off each other, for example:

Once upon a bicycle
 So they say,
 A Jolly Postman came one day
 From over the hills
 And far away . . .

. . . so Janet teases Allan with a sign-post that reads *Faraway 4 miles* and offers an end-piece which has the hero reading his own letter. Both text and illustration, in fact, are as balanced and free-wheeling as the postman's progress through the book's pages which is, to say the least, fluid:

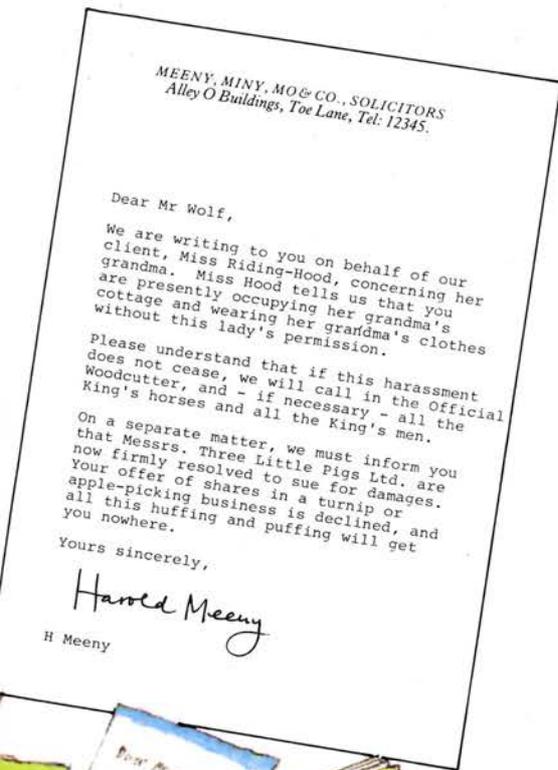


So Cinders read her little book,
 The Postman drank champagne
 Then wobbled off
 On his round again
 (and again and again – Oops!)

Altogether, it's hard to imagine the book giving more pleasure – unless, perhaps, it just happens to miss a reader's favourite storybook set-up. In which case no more is required than a bit of *readerly* intervention. The book is envelope-sized, after all, so why not reach for pencils, paper and the family post-kit to continue the delivery? Not least of **The Jolly Postman's** virtues is the bond it makes between reading and writing. It's an R.S.V.P. of a book which invites participation through an implicit post-or-inter script. There's been no better encouragement for epistolary enterprise since the invention of the pen-pal. Small wonder it gives me stellar-vision and hyper-activity: a condition, I fancy, we can predict for almost everyone on whom this postman calls. ●



. . . and continues to the next call, on the Big Bad Wolf, which sobers him up considerably.



MEENY, MINY, MO & CO., SOLICITORS
 Alley O Buildings, Toe Lane, Tel: 12345.

Dear Mr Wolf,

We are writing to you on behalf of our client, Miss Riding-Hood, concerning her grandma. Miss Hood tells us that you are presently occupying her grandma's cottage and wearing her grandma's clothes without this lady's permission.

Please understand that if this harassment does not cease, we will call in the Official Woodcutter, and – if necessary – all the King's horses and all the King's men.

On a separate matter, we must inform you that Messrs. Three Little Pigs Ltd. are now firmly resolved to sue for damages. Your offer of shares in a turnip or apple-picking business is declined, and all this huffing and puffing will get you nowhere.

Yours sincerely,

Harold Meeny

H Meeny

REVIEWS

Nursery/Infant



Teddy at the Seaside

Amanda Davidson, Picture Lions, 0 00 662593 2, £1.75

Bears are usually sure-fire winners but Amanda Davidson's toy teddy is too sweet and sugary for my taste at least. The brief text is easy enough to read but the present tense story has no sparkle and there is no real incentive to read it though under-fives may enjoy looking at the 'chocolate box' style pictures. JB

A Kiss on the Nose

Rhymes by Tony Bradman, pictures by Sumiko, Picture Corgi, 0 552 52340 2, £1.75

Tony Bradman's rhymes certainly reflect the moods, tantrums and preoccupations of very young children but I found myself totally unable to read them aloud with any conviction. Nor did I warm to Sumiko's insipid illustrations of the incidents in a day in the life of two preschoolers and their mummy and daddy. I found it altogether too cosy. JB

One Night at a Time

Susan Hill, ill. Vanessa Julian-Ottie, Picture Lions, 0 00 662430 8, £1.75

Poor Tom goes through a phase of suffering from nightmares. It makes no difference when his mum explains that they can't hurt him - he knows that, but it doesn't make them go away. Then mum comes up with the idea of giving him good dreams instead - a temporary solution for, when Tom goes to stay with his friend, the problem seems to solve itself. The nicely-caught dialogue is the main strength of this story which is probably best shared between parent and child. JB

Blossom

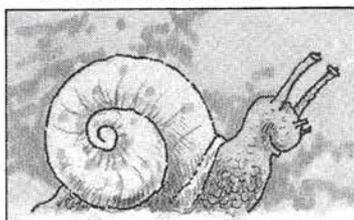
Diane Wilmer, ill. Meg Rutherford, Dinosaur, 0 85122 537 3, £1.50

Blossom, an albino rabbit,

dives her way out of her run and goes in search of a friend. Her first encounters are far from friendly but then she finds just what she is looking for. A rather mundane but easy-to-read story enlivened by the techniques for the water colour illustrations - Blossom almost seems to glow in the dark. JB

Cecil's Breakfast

Roger Smith, Dinosaur, 0 85122 568 2, £1.50



Cecil snail's trip to the greenhouse takes him up the hill, over the bridge into the woods, down the tunnel and across the ploughed field, or so says the hand-lettered text but the pictures tell a different story. A somewhat derivative but enjoyable example of how picture books can work in different ways according to your viewpoint. JB

What a Tale

0 19 272160 7

My Dream

0 19 272161 5

Brian Wildsmith, Oxford University Press, 95p each

Two more of Wildsmith's 16-page 'Cat on the Mat' books in which a very short text accompanies his vibrant patterned illustrations so loved by children and adults alike. **What a Tale** is literally a cumulative tale with a pleasing twist as we discover that dog, cat, fox, rabbit and monkey are all aboard one large kangaroo. **My Dream** is more straightforward with the young dreamer's antics 'I ride a tiger', 'I sit on a whale' etc. contained in a dream bubble above the bed on each double page spread. JB

I'm going for a walk!

Shigeo Watanabe, ill. Yasuo Ohtomo, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.520 2, £1.75

The ever-popular small bear is back with a new lesson; this time he negotiates various obstacles as he takes a walk,

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.

but Dad is on hand to rescue him and teach him how to cross the road. Old friends will delight in this new story and Bear will very likely win lots of new fans among beginning readers. JB

My Day

Rod Campbell, Picture Lions, 0 00 662641 6, £1.75

This isn't a story but rather a series of named pictures of objects and animals to be found in and around the house, out shopping, at the park, in the country and at the zoo. A useful but not outstanding book for parents and others to share with the very young. JB

Dance Away

George Shannon, ill. Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey, Picturemac, 0 333 42433 6, £2.25



Aruego and Dewey have an unflinching skill in producing books with real child appeal and this one is no exception. With a few seemingly simple lines their illustrations radiate fun; in this story a rabbit's enthusiasm for the dance is not always shared by his companions but his talent proves irresistible to the hungry fox who is led a right dance and thus deprived of his meal. Great fun for young readers and listeners. JB

Trouble in the Ark

Gerald Rose, Magnet, 0 416 54330 8, £1.95



A welcome revamping of an old favourite wherein a cacophony of animal noises is provoked by a fly's ill-tempered buzzing of mouse. Rose's animals are splendid and the varied large print styles used for the noises provide plenty of opportunity for audience participation as well as giving the reader further visual clues to their meaning and the volume of voice required. JB

Oranges and Lemons

Compiled by Karen King, ill. Ian Beck, Oxford University Press, 0 19 272171 2, £2.50

A book of action songs and games complete with music and illustrations demonstrating how the games are played, as well as a full-page interpretation of each rhyme to share with the children. An invaluable book for nursery and infant teachers as well as parents and organisers of children's parties; it includes traditional songs such as the title one and 'The Farmer's in his Den' as well as more modern favourites like 'The Wheels on the Bus' and 'Five Little Speckled Frogs'. With the constant use this book is likely to get though, the hardback edition may prove better value in the long run. JB

The Very Worst Monster

Pat Hutchins, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.565 2, £1.75

When Billy Monster is born poor Hazel is very much ignored. Everyone is convinced that Billy will grow up to be the worst monster in the world despite Hazel's aspirations to that title. But even her worst efforts at eliminating her rival seem doomed to failure. By using monsters and inventing a world where worst is best, Pat Hutchins cleverly defuses the strong feelings provoked by sibling jealousy and puts an acceptable face to such dreadful actions as losing Billy or giving him away. JB

Jen the Hen

Colin and Jacqui Hawkins, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.564 4, £1.75

Another of the Hawkins' 'flip-the-page' books, which device enables the reader to alter the initial letters of the chief character's name (Jen) to make other words featured in

the short rhyming text. Cartoon characters both large and small, bubble talk and constant word play: at least this is a book which lifts the normally boring phonic exercises into a fun reading activity. JB

The Big Sneeze

Ruth Brown, Beaver,
0 09 942150 X, £2.50

Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain

Verna Aardema, ill.
Beatriz Vidal,
Picturemac,
0 333 35164 9, £2.25

Both these full-size paperbacks use the same structure as the familiar 'The House that Jack Built'. 'Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain' was discovered in Kenya some seventy years ago by an anthropologist and Verna Aardema's version with its cumulative refrain and rhythm. ('This is the grass/all brown and dead/That needed the rain/from the cloud overhead - /The big, black cloud/all heavy with rain./That shadowed the ground/on Kapiti Plain.') brings it closer to the English rhyme. This and the stylised illustrations of men and animals extend children's imaginative experience to the less familiar African landscape.

In **The Big Sneeze**, a fly lands on a sleeping farmer's nose and atishoo - chaos ensues, shattering the peace of the occupants of the barn. Here the structure is that of 'The House that Jack Built' but without the strong rhythm. There is strength though in the way the artist uses light to change and control the way the events are perceived. JB

Pig in the Library
Diane Wilmer, ill. Paul Dowling, Dinosaur,
0 85122 533 0, £1.50

Pig Pig Rides
David McPhail,
Picturemac,
0 333 42367 4, £2.25



Pigs are the central characters in both these stories. When the mobile library visits the farm Polly Pig unobserved stows away and thus discovers the delights of the ice cream parlour. The text breaks into somewhat uncomfortable rhyme in places but young readers may be less put off than I was and should certainly enjoy Paul Dowling's amusing cartoon-like illustrations.

Pig Pig's adventures are wholly flights of fancy. Over breakfast he tells his mother of his plans to drive a car, ride in the Derby and jump five hundred elephants, among other things. McPhail's interpretations of his escapades are suitably spectacular the more so when contrasted with this endearing

character's true means of transport. A delightful, easy to read full-size picture book. JB

The Truck Book

Ann Morris, ill. David Eaton, Dinosaur,
0 85122 652 3, £1.50

A present tense text which is little more than a series of statements recounts the journey of a red lorry on a delivery run with stops for food and petrol. Both text and illustrations seem flat and unlikely to inspire the beginning readers for whom the book is presumably intended. JB

Postman Pat's Messy Day

0 590 70589 X

Postman Pat's Safari

0 590 70591 1

Postman Pat's Wet Day

0 590 70592 X

Postman Pat Plays for Greendale

0 590 70590 3

John Cunliffe, ill. Joan Hickson, Hippo, £1.50 each

Four easy readers featuring the TV star, Postman Pat, and his cat, Jess, illustrated here not by Celia Berridge but by Joan Hickson. The stories - about Jess's rooftop misadventure, the church outing to the safari park, a soggy day's postal deliveries and the big cricket match against Pencaster - are well constructed and told with plenty of dialogue, indeed they read aloud quite well.

But I wonder whether children old enough to be able to read these books for themselves will still be Postman Pat fans. JB

The Billy Goats Gruff
0 416 96600 4

Three Little Geese
0 416 96590 3

The Fox and the Hare
0 416 96580 6

Isabelle Balibar, ill.
Lucile Butel, Magnet,
£1.25 each

Three traditional animal stories. Here the Billy Goats Gruff have to outwit not a troll but a wolf. The familiar folk tale devices of patterning and repetition are also used in the other lesser known stories which both feature house building.

In **Three Little Geese**, first the oldest and then the youngest asks for and receives help to build a house with the promise of reciprocal aid. But the promise is broken and the smallest goose has to rely on help from a carpenter for her refuge from the fox.



Fox and Hare has, unexpectedly, Cock rather than Wolf or Bear as the one who finally evicts Fox from Hare's wooden house, Fox's ice house having melted with the coming of spring. All three books have clean, bright colour wash illustrations and clearly printed texts. JB

Infant/Junior

The Cake Maker

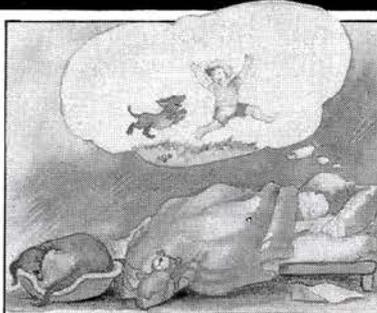
Althea, ill. Nita Sowter, Dinosaur, 0 85122 553 5, £1.50

A first-person telling by a boy of sevenish about how he made a birthday cake for his younger sister. As he works, his imagination runs riot as he fantasises about how he would run his own business if he was a famous cake maker. His efforts in reality are less spectacular and distinctly messy but highly appreciated nevertheless. Nita Sowter's naive style illustrations enliven the proceedings and it's good to see a boy working in the kitchen. Maybe others will be encouraged to try out the chocolate cake recipe at the back of the book for themselves. JB

I'll Always Love You

Hans Wilhelm, Knight,
0 340 40153 2, £2.50

A touching but not over



sentimental story in words and pictures of a boy and his relationship with his dog. It works on several levels; as well as showing the fun of having a dog and the amusing mishaps that can occur, the book also deals with the inevitable growing old and death of a pet. The first person narrative style is most effective in conveying the love of boy for dog and the importance to the narrator of having expressed that love out loud. The author's own paintings of the ever more rotund Elfie and her master and family

bring just the right touch of humour and sensitivity. JB

Pinnocchio

Walt Disney, Hippo,
0 590 70623 3, £1.50

A short book based on stills from the Disney version of Carlo Collodi's classic story. The text is brief for language is subservient to the full-colour pictures. Whatever the version, children of all ages can identify with the little wooden puppet as he roller-coasters through good and bad times. The opportunity it offers to recreate the film for readers makes this book worth purchasing. NS

A Cat and Mouse Love Story

Nanette Newman, ill.
Michael Foreman,
Piccolo, 0 330 29526 8,
£1.95

Leola the cat and Jasper the mouse meet, fall in love, and

persuade the rest of the cat and mouse world to make love, not war. Despite some tweeness in the writing - and some shaky scansion which won't help some independent readers - there's some deft wit: "Will you take this old cat?" - Jasper said, "Oh yes, rather." Eight small kittens all sighed, they'd at last got a father. Foreman's pictures add depth and style. CM

The Great Bamboozle Bird

John Cameron, Picture Corgi, 0 552 52401 8, £1.75

Six-year-olds will enjoy the joke at the centre of this story. Menagerie Dan has trouble finding the Bamboozle Bird because of its skill at camouflage. I read it alongside the smashing game of hide and seek that is Pat Hutchins' **One Hunter**. There are other books in a series about the eccentric zookeeper (**The Spotty**

Fingersnitch, 0 552 52398 4;
The Smelly Pongeroos,
 0 552 52400 X; **The Enormous
 Blob**, 0 552 52399 2). There
 seems to be just one plot
 throughout the series (the
 keeper tries to set traps for the
 animals and outwits them in
 the end). A pity, as, despite
 the garish pictures, the writer
 has a lively and engaging style.
 Worth having a look at and
 choosing one for the book
 corner? CM

The Princess and the Pea

Dick Gackenbach,
 Picture Puffin,
 0 14 050.571 7, £1.95



The Andersen tale is cleverly
 updated by a gifted American
 author-artist. The transatlantic
 tones add to the fun: "They
 are all phony," Prince Charley
 decided. "There's not a real
 princess in the bunch." The
 pictures, green and pink
 pastels and a clever use of
 perspective, serve the tale
 well. CM

Under the Bed: The Bedtime Book

0 7445 0614 X

Smelly Jelly Smelly Fish: The Seaside Book

0 7445 0615 8

Michael Rosen and
 Quentin Blake, Walker
 Books, £1.95 each

Two splendidly eccentric
 collections of poems, short
 stories, jokes and rhymes from
 a writer who is always able to



tune into the tastes of children.
 Here, sixes to eights (and
 older readers) will enjoy these
 thematic collections. As
 always Blake's pictures are
 finely matched to the vigour of
 the text. These will be pored
 over in the classroom: lots of
 copies in the bookshop, please.
 CM

Dear Daddy

Philippe Dupasquier,
 Picture Puffin,
 0 14 050.540 7, £1.75

A little girl writes to her
 father, a sailor serving abroad.
 The artist's clever pictures tell
 two stories: that of the
 ordinary, everyday events
 which the girl describes in her
 letters; that of the Dad's
 voyage and the tropical places
 he visits.



The text is spare and touching.
 Sixes to nines will read the
 pictures and will be led, I
 hope, to the same artist's
Going West. CM

The Return of the Antelope

Willis Hall and Mary
 Hoffman, ill. Faith
 Jaques, Picture Puffin,
 0 14 050.694 2, £1.95

A gorgeous Picture Puffin this
 – a real cameo of Victorian
 nursery life, beautifully
 illustrated. Willis Hall wrote
 the Granada TV series – well
 worth viewing – and this book,
 with Mary Hoffman's text, is
 based on it.



The story of two children who
 rescue three Lilliputians – yes
Gulliver's Travels yet lives
 (who says the classics are
 dead?) – is lively and easily
 readable by those who have
 progressed to more elaborate
 fiction. I've sold all the copies
 in the school bookshop
 already, though I have it on
 good authority that it is the
 pictures that clinch the sale!
 NS

Haunted Ivy

Hazel Townson, ill.
 Philippe Dupasquier,
 Beaver, 0 09 41320 5,
 £1.25

The writer of **The Siege of
 Cobb Street School**, and **The
 Speckled Panic**, has produced
 another readable story for
 lower Junior age children. In
Haunted Ivy her two main
 heroes, Lenny and Jake,
 invent a ghost to help publicise
 a remote, rural tea garden, but
 end up finding a robber's loot

and a 'real' flying saucer.
 Sounds implausible, doesn't it,
 yet surprisingly the tale does
 have credibility. My class are
 enjoying hearing it read aloud
 to them but it's eminently
 readable by the individual too.
 I recommend all of Hazel
 Townson's books for the
 school bookshop. NS

Lion at School and Other Stories

Philippa Pearce, ill.
 Caroline Sharpe, Puffin,
 0 14 03.1855 0, £1.50



A useful anthology of short
 stories for Top Infants, from a
 versatile storyteller. With her
 usual lucid insight into a young
 child's mind, Philippa Pearce
 expertly takes a minor incident
 and weaves a tale which
 strikes a chord within the
 reader's mind. By starting
 with the familiar, she gains
 credibility, captivating her
 audience and taking them into
 the fantastic. I shall take **Lion
 at School** with me to the Infant
 room when next I'm invited to
 share a story with those lively
 individuals! Good for solo
 reading too, for the more
 experienced. NS

The Hat

Tomi Ungerer,
 Picturemac,
 0 333 41559 0, £2.50

Ungerer's witty and expansive
 pictures are, as usual,
 stimulating. Sixes-up could
 enjoy hearing this one read
 aloud, but my feeling was that
 this tale of a shiny old hat
 lacks cohesion and interest as
 a story. CM

Junior/Middle

The Birthday Burglar and A Very Wicked Headmistress

Margaret Mahy, ill.
 Margaret Chamberlain,
 Magnet, 0 416 59720 3,
 £1.75

Boring and banal might be
 more becoming for at least the
 first of these two stories, for
 NEVER have I encountered
 so much alliteration on the
 letter 'B'. Margaret Mahy is
 an excellent story teller – but
 surely not here?

The first tale of two characters

stealing birthdays is as far
 fetched as the second about a
 headmistress who wickedly
 tries to gain the monopoly in
 volcanic caramel custard. If
 such nonsense appeals to a
 reader, clearly this is the book
 for them; if not, middle
 juniors, you have been
 warned. NS

Muckfields Midnight Monster Match

Lee Pressman, ill. David
 Higham, Hippo,
 0 590 70549 0, £1.75

A 'fangtastic' story, full of

outrageous 'happenings' and
 puns! A tale for all those who
 love football and horror.
 Dracula, a ghoul, a yeti, a
 skeleton, Frankenstein are
 just some of the members of
 this monster team conjured up
 by Lee Pressman in diabolical
 language. Their opponents are
 a down and out local football
 side. David Higham's pictures
 tell the tale and support
 readers through some
 demanding vocabulary. This
 humorous story is well worth
 reading even if the ending is
 abrupt and will arouse
 tremendous interest from
 many young readers although

I suspect adults will 'dread'
 this book. NS

Gangelhoff

Brian Murphy, ill. Geoff
 Todd, Picture Puffin,
 0 14 050.476 1, £1.75

Dramatic presentation tends to
 dominate this slight tale of a
 robber getting his come-
 uppance. The eponymous
 robber has a catch phrase
 which is not used often enough
 for the children to enjoy its
 repetition. The book does not
 build sufficiently to the
 moment of truth. Nemesis
 takes the form of a little old



lady who welcomes Gangelhoff into her house then locks him in the cellar. In this book, rather in the style of Hitchcock, even the nice guys aren't very!

Geoff Todd's illustrations and layout are in black, white, red and grey. It is a pleasing book at first glance. The typeface has one serious flaw – when the text is continuous, as opposed to informally arranged for effect, there is insufficient spacing between words.

The book would be well worth reading with a small group. With luck, and a good group leader, questions of a moral nature could be raised. I would be interested to hear the discussion about the morality of the old lady. Her sinister last words – 'I'll just have a nice cup of tea,' as Gangelhoff mutters in the cellar are distinctly chilling.

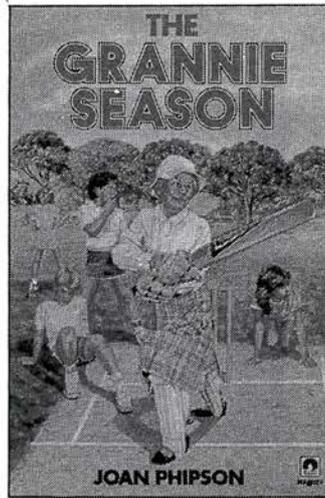
BJ

The Magic Horse

Sally Scott, Picturemac,
0 333 41901 4, £2.25

A challenging and mysterious tale about the efforts of a wizard to corrupt an imperial family through the power of a flying horse. The artist's intricate pictures will fascinate sevens-up: she is particularly skilled in showing changes in mood by the use of vibrant colours and by perspective. But the story doesn't quite have the gripping power of the pictures.

CM



The Grannie Season

Joan Phipson, ill. Sally Holmes, Magnet,
0 416 95910 5, £1.50

A really enjoyable book with a difference. The storyline is based on a simple event but there is depth and colour in the character portraits.

Timothy, a quiet thoughtful boy, who lacks any ostentation, earns a place in his Australian primary school's cricket team. For a special match he, with his fellow players, is allowed to include a relation in the team. Tim is looking forward to playing with his dad, till mum is taken off to hospital and grannie decides to stand in. The clever way in which grannie has been introduced makes us feel Tim's sense of anti-climax; but the old adage of not judging by appearances proves very apt.

I recommend **The Grannie Season** – there are shades of a Jan Mark-style humour and perception, which make it well worth buying.

NS

Charlie Lewis Plays for Time

Gene Kemp, ill. Vanessa Julian-Ottie, Puffin,
0 14 03.1864 X, £1.75

If you enjoyed **The Turbulent**

Term of Tyke Tiler, then you will enjoy this latest tale of Cricklepit Combined School which is written in the same mode, complete with surprising twist.

Gene Kemp has a penchant for siding with the under-dog, yet is careful to maintain a balance, ensuring no character is totally objectionable. She almost runs a crusade to show that all 'good' folk have a dark side, and vice versa, thus the characters of Rocket and Charlie complement each other. And she also plays on our tendency to accept the good parts of the favourable character, and suspect the rogue of all bad doings, as quiet law-abiding Charlie (whose mother is a concert pianist) tells the story of their last term at primary school.

The old adage 'Give a dog a bad name' still runs true and this book allows our prejudices to prove it. My advice to any top Junior reader – buy this book now!

NS

The Runaway Duck

David Lyon, Hippo,
0 590 70497 4, £1.75



A delightful and strangely moving picture story about a toy duck that is accidentally taken on a long journey and is lost abroad. The pictures are imaginatively combined with the text to tell of a little boy's longing for his lost possession. I like picture books that can be enjoyed on a literate and sophisticated level by eights to tens: this is one of those.

CM

Gymnast Gilly: The Novice

0 583 30777 9

Gymnast Gilly: The Dancer

0 583 30779 5

Peter Aykroyd, Dragon,
£1.95 each

'Demi plié and relevé in first position – down, two, three.' Give us a Clue. Well, one of the first things that Gilly had learned when she began ballet classes was that the rail was called a barre. You've got it in one. These are two stories about ballet. No, they're actually about gymnastics. You may be confused, but the eight-plus target audience will doubtless guess it quick as a flash. Even if they do, will they be willing to flog through these turgid pages to see if Marcia or Christina or Esmerelda makes it to the 'top' in a world where 'the coach' is God, and heaven is a polished cartwheel?

BB

The Curse of the Blue Figurine

John Bellairs, Corgi,
0 552 52364 X, £1.75

John Bellairs successfully creates here the evocative world of Fifties childhood – listening to radio programmes with unprovocative titles like, 'The House of Mystery', whilst munching a plateful of Ritz crackers and cream cheese. Mind you, wasn't it still called the wireless in the early Fifties? The anachronism can be easily forgiven for so much of the atmosphere and sense of time is perfect. Johnny, living with his grandparents, is involved in a world of 'grown-up' conversation, littered with archaeological phrases and references. From mummies, it's but a short step in a boy's imagination to ghosts and hauntings, and an even shorter step to being embroiled in an adventure that makes 'The House of Mystery' seem as tame as Larry the Lamb.

BB

Middle/Secondary

Earth Invaded

0 583 30840 6

Slaveworld

0 583 30841 4

The Liberators

0 583 30842 2

Nathan Elliott, Dragon Grafton (Hood's Army Trilogy), £1.95 each

'This isn't straightforward heroes and villains,' announces Hood, the hero of this trilogy, as he once again prepares to do battle with the K'Thraa – an alien race bent on invading and subjugating Earth. But

that's exactly what this trilogy is: a series of adventures in which Hood and his army – Big Mac, Will Redmond, Marianne and A.M.O.S. (a sophisticated robot reminiscent of R2D2 of **Star Wars** fame) – repeatedly and with consummate ease frustrate the K'Thraa's evil plans.

Although these books rely heavily for their appeal on lurid covers, stereotyped characters and heavily repetitive storylines, they have a curious old-fashioned quality which I found quite endearing: the remaining inhabitants of

Earth are fiercely moral in their attitude to warfare and even Hood is given one bad-tempered lapse to allow him to humble himself later in selfless apology! Offer this trilogy to second/third-year boys who are reluctant readers – they could love it.

VR

Eleanor, Elizabeth

Libby Gleeson, Puffin,
0 14 03.1993 X, £1.75

This story encapsulates much of the misery of the time betwixt and between childhood and adulthood. Eleanor has been forced to move away

from her urban environment to the unfriendly fringe of the Australian Bush, where her mother is reclaiming her own family home. School is not going well; she is seldom in accord with her younger brothers; and then she discovers a diary kept by her high-spirited grandma 65 years previously, and when the novel reaches its destructive, fiery climax, it is the knowledge of that diary which enables Eleanor to save her own life and the lives of her brother and their friend. The language is mildly raw in one or two places and the

story rather slowly-paced until the end but it should find readership amongst thoughtful, lower-mid secondary girls. DB

Henry's Leg

Ann Pilling, Puffin, 0 14 03.2016 4, £1.75

This sensitive novel, only her second, from Ann Pilling, was rightly awarded the 1986 Guardian Prize for Children's Fiction. Henry Hooper collects junk. Any kind of junk will do. Wire coathangers gratefully accepted, bits of tubing, even the odd dead hedgehog can be accommodated. Does he collect the bits that other people don't want because he feels rejected too since his father left home? This provides the strong central theme of the book round which is wrapped an exciting and frequently funny thriller with Henry and his fashion dummy's leg outwittingly involved in a robbery.



Henry's desperate need is for his family to be reunited again. The compulsive collecting of junk hides his deep sense of loss, his insecurity. When his father reappears, the junk rapidly becomes an irrelevancy in his life. How can a youngster comprehend the situation that father has gone away 'to have a good think'? Truly a novel for today and, sadly, of today. 'His dad was hugging him hard. He didn't want to think about Afterwards. It was Now that concerned him.' BB

Sword and Flame

Simon Farrell and Jon Sutherland, Dragon, 0 583 30917 8, £1.95

Sword and Flame is an addition to the excellent 'Gamebooks' series from Grafton. Based on the commendable notion of reader-involvement, the books require a response from the youngster, while the game aspect acts as a motivation for the, albeit basic, inquiry into historical evidence of the period, in this case the English Civil War. Anything that encourages children to become involved in historical evidence is to be welcomed; in the process they have to weigh facts in an analytical manner

as a means of reaching balanced decisions and judgements – a valuable ability in life outside the classroom. BB

Curtis the Hip-Hop Cat

Gini Wade, Macmillan, 0 333 42804 8, £2.50



This is the story of Curtis the street-dancing cat, 'who hip-hops his way to the top'. Written in 'street verse' or 'rap' jargon, it's great fun, even more so when read or chanted aloud. 'Now this is the story of a Hip-Hop cat/His name is Curtis and, boy is he fat./You'd think his hobby was putting on weight-/All that mattered to that cat was the food on his plate.'

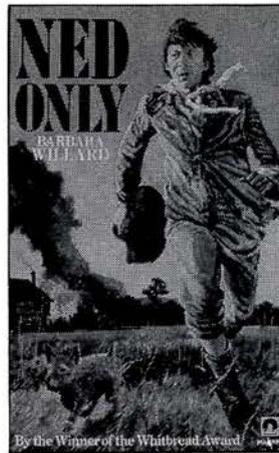
'Rap' developed out of New York street culture, but has already become popular in Britain, and many children will have been exposed to it already, possibly through the excellent Thames Television **Middle English** programme about 'rap' poet, Benjamin Zephaniah. BB

Fourth Year Triumphs at Trebizon

Anne Digby, Dragon Grafton, 0 583 30557 1, £1.95

It is remarkable how certain literary genre survive: the boarding school story is one such example. This is the tenth book in the Trebizon School series and it offers the adventures of six friends, now in their fourth year, set against the usual round of 'dorm' gossip, sports and minor romances. The climax of the book is the friends' success in discovering – in the nick of time, of course – that a documentary film about the school is to be used as a weapon of revenge by an ex-pupil expelled for petty crime.

I found the book predictable and outmoded in both concept and style. I rather suspect that first-year girls might enjoy it for much the same reasons as half the population enjoys **Dallas** – it offers an oversimplification of moral issues in a world far removed from that with which most children are familiar. VR



Ned Only

Barbara Willard, Magnet, 0 416 95510 X, £1.75

I approached this novel with a certain amount of bias, having greatly enjoyed **The Queen of the Pharisees' Children**. I was not disappointed. This is a story which involves the reader from the first and my sympathies were always completely with Ned Only, the central character. The arduous life of servants in a seventeenth-century house is clearly painted, yet there is no sense of a faceless mass of wretchedly toiling individuals – each is firmly a character in his/her own right.

Ned's involvement in the developing and illicit relationship between Miss Felicity, niece of Sir Joshua, and Mr Ransom, tutor to his son, gives him undreamed-of opportunities to fulfil his potential and, in some measure, become master of his own life. One of those rare books which will appeal to both sexes – a challenging and rewarding experience for a third-year reader. VR

The book has a matter-of-fact tone about it which lends credibility to some of the less realistic aspects of Kira's adventures. The dénouement gives a satisfying symmetry to the book – Kira is asked to find the courage to do what she had earlier criticised a senior officer for having done: sacrifice personal loyalties to the safety of the space station. I was disappointed in the poor quality paper used and the frequency, in the earlier part of the book, of printing errors. However, I'd recommend this as a possible addition to a book box or class library for a second/third-year pupil looking for a fairly entertaining if undemanding read. VR

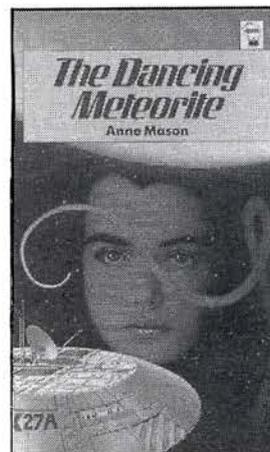
Ghost Sitter

Christobel Mattingley, Magnet, 0 416 59930 3, £1.50

A strange little cameo, this, and not without charm. Emperor Claudius Hobbs (otherwise known as Imp), intrigued by his school's F. A. Smith Memorial Chair, determines to unravel the mystery surrounding it. In the course of his research he becomes acquainted with the ghost of the ex-headmaster (to whom the Chair was dedicated), his vindictive wife, an eccentric parrot and a great number of government issue toilet rolls.



The eccentricities of the storyline are often engaging and there's plenty of warmth and humour in Imp's relationship with the ghost and his fellow-conspirator, Brett. There are irritations, too: the writing sometimes jars – almost with the rawness of a text in translation; the humour has an occasional vulgarity about it which is at odds with the gentle charm of much of the book. Nevertheless, keen second-year readers with a taste for the unusual can be profitably guided towards this book. ● VR



The Dancing Meteorite

Anne Mason, Hippo, 0 590 70541 5, £1.50

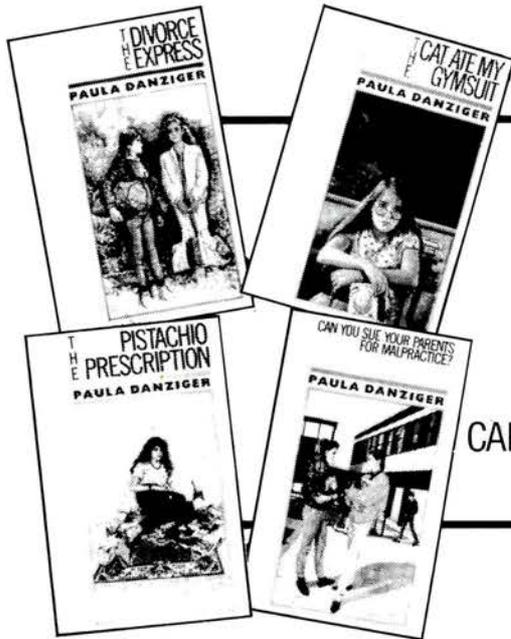
The Dancing Meteorite presents the perennial problem of an adolescent girl, Kira, trying to come to terms with her strengths and weaknesses – this time on a space station inhabited by people from three different planets.

Reviewers in this issue

Jill Bennett, Colin Mills, Nigel Spencer, Bob Jay, Bill Boyle, David Bennett, Val Randall.

PAULA DANZIGER

The bright, humorous novelist for teenagers, hailed as the new Judy Blume.

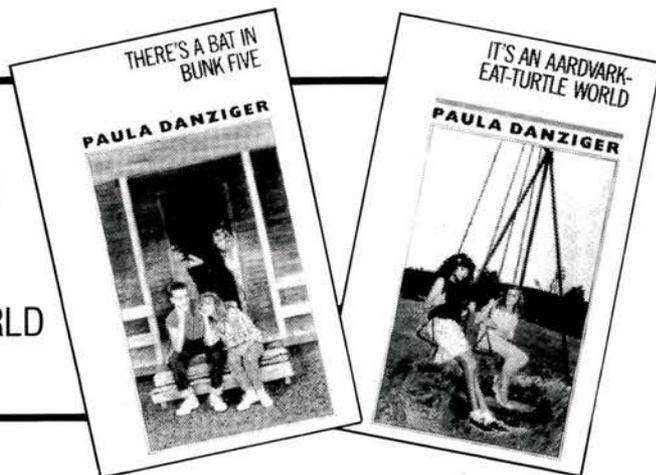


Already published:

- THE DIVORCE EXPRESS
- THE CAT ATE MY GYMSUIT
- THE PISTACHIO PRESCRIPTION
- CAN YOU SUE YOUR PARENTS FOR MALPRACTICE?

Publication in June 1987 to coincide with author's UK tour:

- THERE'S A BAT IN BUNK FIVE
- IT'S AN AARDVARK-EAT-TURTLE WORLD



UK VISIT

Any school/library interested in a visit in early June should write to:

Miriam Maxim, William Heinemann Ltd., 10 Upper Grosvenor Street, London, W1X 9PA.

Heinemann

Authorgraph No. 42

Helen Cresswell

Grandma Bagthorpe and Henry Bagthorpe are Helen Cresswell. Her two daughters combined inspired Daisy Parker, and Stella Bright/Laura Bagthorpe is modelled on her creator's late mother. If you visited Helen Cresswell and her husband Brian (Uncle Parker?) at their home in North Nottinghamshire you might be met by some fierce barking from Boris, known as Boz, the life image of the time gypsy dog in *The Secret World of Polly Flint*. The calm, ordered, utterly un-Bagthorpean environment of Old Church Farm is filled with the treasured possessions and collections which, as much as the people in her life, inspired this most prolific and fascinating author.

Helen Cresswell creates stories from what surrounds her. 'Everything that I collect is a symbol of something in my interior world . . . Everything is to reinforce and help me keep a grip on things.' Conversation is frequently punctuated by a sudden ferret through a drawer to produce a photo that inspired; Lewis Bear, hero of a forthcoming set of picture books, sits on a chair not far from the Polly Flint doll, and books that are from both Helen's childhood and her mother's are drawn from the shelves to verify a reference or show an early childhood manuscript.



Helen Cresswell with Boris (known as Boz).

The house, its contents and people are only part of the inspiration. Helen's timeless rural fantasies, like *The Piemaker*, *The Signposters*, *The Bogleweed*, are set in the landscapes where Helen walks Boz near her home; *The Secret World of Polly Flint* lies in nearby Rufford Country Park. Here also she finds echoes which spark her imagination. Helen Cresswell is very receptive to these echoes and to the coincidences that seem to over-run her life. She tells of a visit to a Leicestershire school where she spoke to the children about her varied life - 'I could pick up the phone and find it's Walt Disney asking me to write a film' - and about how she avoids the Nottingham Ring Road, because 'no-one seems to know what they're doing on roundabouts'. Driving back she passed two very recent accidents on each of the two motorway roundabouts that she had to cross and, reaching home, received a call, *not* from Walt Disney but suggesting a film script

project, which led to a visit to Australia and to *The Haunted School*, which should reach our television screens before long.

The recent writing of *Moondial*, a ghostly fantasy centred on another real location, Belton House near Newark, has had its elements of slightly more than mere coincidence. A photograph of the gnarled, sculptured Belton House sundial which started the story in motion sits on Helen's desk for inspiration. Putting it into a story seems at times to have had almost the quality of a psychic experience.

Like *Polly Flint*, and *Lizzie Dripping* ten years ago, *Moondial* was a double task; the TV version and the novel were written more or less simultaneously. But the *Moondial* project is a source of pride since Helen set up the whole thing herself. She hopes that it will be filmed at the exact location and do for Belton House what

Polly Flint has done for Rufford Country Park, where a 'Polly Flint Tour' seems to have been instituted by local schools. **Lizzie Dripping** was also filmed close to home – in the garden of Old Church Farm, with the loan of a neighbour's particularly attractive pond for a few special shots.

Visiting schools and taking part in the 'Polly Flint Tours' delight Helen. She tries hard not to say no to school visits – 'If you didn't do it you'd lose all touch with reality . . . When you go into a school it reminds you that that's where the world is.' Her mission is to encourage the children to appreciate their gift of imagination; boring adults get like that when their imaginations dry up. 'Imagination' is one of Helen's oft-used words. She says of her work that she is 'trying to pass on to children a dimension that I feel is there; I'm partly doing it for myself because it's real to me . . . the world of Polly Flint is more real than what's going on in Nottingham at this moment . . . it's the truth of the imagination. To me that's what really counts. The rest of it doesn't matter very much . . . The only way to involve children is through the imagination.'

Her activities on the 'Polly Flint Tour' certainly live up to that. Given enough notice by enthusiastic local teachers she manages to get Boz to sit forlornly by his namesake's grave in Rufford Park, recreating the scene in the book when Polly comes upon Boz the time gypsy dog. As the visiting children round the corner Helen slips into the shrubbery. The spectacle of what they have seen in imagination become reality delights the children; but when a tall blonde-haired lady appears and calls the dog by name delight becomes amazement. The whole scenario gives its creator immense satisfaction.

Helen is emphatic that she doesn't have any specific children in mind when she writes. However, like many writers for children, she has a strong remembrance of her own childhood, and in her published work she can point in retrospect to aspects of stories, plays and poems she wrote as a child and which are readily to hand. She identifies strongly with children, diagnosing herself as a case of arrested development – 'I just think I've got a childish streak in me. I adore writing books like **Polly Flint** and **The Piemakers**. I love it. I absolutely live them . . . When I'm writing those books I am completely lost in them and that is my world and I actually prefer it to my daily life.'

One of her stories, something of a 'maverick' book in what Helen was once amused to overhear described as 'The Cresswell Canon' has produced a flood of moving letters from children. **Dear Shrink**, the story of three children thrown most unexpectedly into foster care, was a painful one for Helen to write and owes some of its origins to the experience of fostering a young girl one summer many years ago. But as a child Helen too suffered a similar experience – the kitchen reeking of rotting vegetables and ironing, where a muddy budgie moped, was once her lot.



The pain for the characters themselves is all the more emphasised by the suddenness of their predicament and the difficulty for three middle-class children of coming to terms with a drastic change of environment and values. Helen contends that this isn't a book that she intended for a teenage audience; for her it is just a book like her others, for real kids who 'still have a schoolbag stuffed with felt-tip pens, usually fluorescent colours with the lids off, and who still half believe in werewolves.'

'Time' is another of Helen's words. She writes with sepia brown ink on cream paper which 'has a timeless feel'. She confesses the ability to breathe the kiss of death into watches, which is a standing joke amongst her friends. She's convinced that watches know that she doesn't really believe in them. She has twenty or so that 'go sometimes and not others' and seldom bothers to wind the two clocks in the house, which she bought only for their aesthetic qualities anyway. She firmly contends that she'll become an eccentric old lady like Aunt Lucy in the **Bagthorpes**, who disregards time utterly. As a child she never had any sense of there being a future – 'I never ever saw myself as an adult. I foresaw no future for myself whatsoever' – and supposes that her love of de la Mare's poetry is because he too seems to expound that 'what we know as linear time is really not very relevant'. **Moondial** measures Moontime, 'which is the *real* time of hearts and lives.'

She was made very conscious of this timeless quality in her fantasies, during the filming of **Polly Flint**, when the costume department couldn't find a period in the text from which to work. They settled eventually on a white socks and sandals timelessness as a way of resolving their difficulties, just as had happened earlier with **Lizzie Dripping**.

On the walls at Old Church Farm hang paintings, bought over several years. Since writing **Polly Flint** Helen Cresswell has realised that in one way or another they all contain arches, semi-circular shapes, bending trees within which the space recedes to invisible depths. For the time tunnel in

Polly Flint she chose the arch of the bridge on Rufford Lake but subconsciously it seems she had been collecting time tunnels for a long time.

Their echoes have entered the books of a writer who believes firmly that 'a children's book isn't a watered-down adult book. It's generically different.' A difference which can make children call 'Hello, Aunt Em' to the owner of the cottage in **Wellow** with the tiny eaves window which they *know* is Polly Flint's. The same children who put their ears to the grass and 'definitely' hear the bells of Grimstone, timeless sounds from a story that has penetrated deep into their imaginations. So powerfully does the Cresswell magic work that one seven-year-old 'heard children counting down below'. Polly Flint's world had become a part of her own experience; she had been transported through the time tunnel, out of the web of time. Which is just as Helen Cresswell would have it. ●

The books

(published in hardback by Faber and in paperback by Puffin)

Dear Shrink, 0 571 11912 3, £5.95 hbk; 0 14 03.1613 2, £1.50 pbk

Bagthorpes Unlimited, 0 571 11245 5, £5.95 hbk; 0 14 03.1178 5, £1.75 pbk

Bagthorpes Abroad, 0 571 13350 9, £6.95 hbk; 0 14 03.1972 7, £1.95 pbk

Bagthorpes Haunted, 0 571 13585 4, £7.95 hbk

Bagthorpes v The World, 0 14 03.1324 9, £1.95 pbk

Ordinary Jack, 0 14 03.1176 9, £1.95 pbk

Absolute Zero, 0 14 03.1177 7, £1.95 pbk

The Bongleweed, 0 571 10374 X, £4.25 hbk; 0 14 03.1272 2, £1.95 pbk

The Beachcombers, 0 14 03.1026 6, £1.75 pbk

A Gift from Winklesea, 0 14 03.0493 2, £1.25 pbk

Lizzie Dripping, 0 14 03.1751 1, £1.25 pbk

The Piemakers, 0 14 03.0868 7, £1.75 pbk

The Secret World of Polly Flint, 0 571 11939 5, £6.95 hbk; 0 14 03.1542 X, £1.95 pbk

Helen Cresswell was interviewed by David Bennett.

Photographs by Robert Portington.

Books in the Teenage World

Last year as a precursor to its autumn *Teen Read* promotion the Book Marketing Council (BMC) commissioned some research into what was known about young people's reading habits.

Michael Pountney who took on the job gives us a flavour of what he discovered.

'You're trying to find out about what teenagers read? Well, everyone knows they don't read at all, or if they do it's precious little, and certainly a lot less than we used to when we were that age.'

I always treat 'everyone knows' claims with a lot of suspicion; what they usually mean is 'my unsubstantiated prejudice tells me that...'. In this case, however, there is at least a degree of substance to what people were saying to me. In the publishing and bookselling business, there are lots of figures that seem to indicate a severe falling off in the numbers of books bought for or by children in the 11-15 age group. This leads to the gloomy conclusion that unless something is done about it, the outlook for the adult market in ten or fifteen years is bleak. The hypothesis is that if young people don't get the habit of reading for pleasure when they are at school, they'll never have it as adults. It was that view that led to the **Teen Read** idea, and to the decision to do some research into the market. There was no time or money to do any primary research, to go out and ask samples of young people for their views. My report is based on information already available from different sources. There are two levels to the research. The first tries to see how books and reading rate in the overall teenage world: how important books are as things to spend money on, and how important reading is as a thing to spend time on. The second looks at what is known about the opinions teenagers have of the books they do read; what they prefer, what they would like to see more of, what they think is missing altogether.

At the first level I soon discovered that full-scale market research into the under-eighteen market is much sparser than for all subsequent age-groups. This wasn't a surprise. The size of the market is so much smaller than the adult market that the cost of the research is much less easy to justify. But there was some, and what there was was very detailed. A research company called Carrick James dominates the field and if you look at what they research it is immediately clear that the people who buy their results are the people who make the products for which children and young people form the whole, or at least a major part of the market. They look at sweets and 'snacks', comics and magazines, records, toys, clothes, cosmetics, and rate them very precisely according to the value of each market. They look at TV and video, radio, newspaper, magazine and comic reading, cinema, sport, 'going-out', and rate each according to their importance as things to spend time on.

But there is nothing about books and book reading, or nothing precise. The 'other' things children and young people spend their time and money on are bundled up into unhelpful groups. This is because they are too small to look at individually, or because no-one has shown any interest in buying the detailed research. Books suffer on both counts. They are bundled up with greetings cards, 'stickers' and stationery. As a measure, it's interesting, salutary perhaps, to see that the size of (i.e. money spent on) this whole bundle is roughly equivalent to that of one of about ten sub-divisions of the sweet market – the one for 'gum'.



So what is the general picture? From 11 onwards (the move to secondary education does seem to be a watershed) consumers (neither manufacturers nor researchers have come up with a label for the non child / not yet teenager) are increasingly the deciding influence in decisions about what is spent on them, from whatever source the money comes. Fashion, records, comics and magazines are acutely aware of a market resolutely establishing its separate (not-a-child) identity and driven by forces within itself. There is little precise research analysing the way teenagers use their time and certainly none specifically on time spent reading books. In general it seems that time is spent on television, video, sport, discos, music, going around with friends... and homework. Reading for pleasure – perhaps not surprisingly – has strong competition and takes something of a back seat.

One immediate thing that strikes you in the research is how inadequate it is to talk about children and young people as a homogeneous group, when you look at their preferences for spending both their money and their time. The way their tastes change as they grow up is the most obvious factor that invalidates overall 'Children's market' opinions. It's not one market; it's more like seven, each of about two years. And there are differences between socio-economic groups, too, and between geographical areas, between sexes and between types of education, all of them significant.

As far as disposable income is concerned the whole age-range seems to have pretty well kept pace with inflation. Thirteen and fourteen year-olds have approximately half as much again in disposable income per annum as eleven and twelve year-olds. Between fifteen and sixteen however there is an almost 300% increase – a time when more adult purchases (and responsibilities) figure and when according to the figures this age-group is apparently permanently insolvent, overspending by 10%! The averages though, as ever, are misleading especially as there is clearly a big difference between teenagers still in education and those not. Little or no information on these various dimensions exists specifically for books. Broadly speaking the thirteen and fourteen year-old group pays the least attention to spending in the 'book group' of products. 54% of them spend nothing in this area. Magazines in particular peak at this age and are significant as opinion formers and trend setters.

When I went on to the second level of the research, the part concerned with what the children who do read think about what they read, I discovered that although there are clear age distinctions between types of books produced for the 11+ market, no-one knows much about the way each age-group's opinions of books and reading are changing. If there is a marked diminution in the time spent on reading for pleasure the important thing to know – and not just to have opinions about – is whether this diminution is getting

bigger; and if so why, what is it that is 'winning' against books?

In this context, the **Sweet Dreams** phenomenon is interesting. **Sweet Dreams** started in America. The US publisher pressed their UK subsidiary – Corgi – to publish them here. Corgi didn't think there would be a market, and to prove their point they did some scale market research. The researchers reported 'It is rare in market research that we come across a manifest demand for a new product... Respondents said openly, emphatically and without hesitation that they were looking for novels to read, but couldn't find what they wanted'. Everyone knows the outcome – but isn't it at least likely that there are other hidden interests which are not being met by the books that are available?

There are a lot of pieces of research, mostly done by Public Libraries and LEAs, which do focus on particular areas of book provision. The difficulty about them is that, while they usually achieve their particular objects, their samples are too small for general conclusions to be drawn from them, and their structures are so different that they can't be aggregated. They give hints, but not directions.

One of the strongest of these hints is that there is inadequate provision of books for children for whom English is not the mother tongue or not the mother culture; another is that the editorial line 'I publish "quality" books, the sort of books that children *ought* to read,' still has far too much currency and that what is published is still far too much influenced by middle-class values and didactic attitudes. But these are only hints, not directions.

In all, **Books in the Teenage World** came up with very little hard information. But it has a value nevertheless. It has shown how much other industries think it necessary to know about their markets if they are to keep their 'share' of them in the face of competition from other claims on young people's time and money, and it has at least hinted that in spite of the huge number of books being published, there are still areas that are inadequately covered or not covered at all. The report concluded that books in the teenage world – indeed in the whole of the children's world – very much need formal and continuous market research. It also concluded that it would be very valuable if all small-scale research projects could be constructed within an overall framework that would make one properly comparable with another, and all of them capable of aggregation without loss of validity.

The immediate outcome has been a number of offers from within the book trade to help fund some new research, so perhaps by next year that bundle of books and stationery and the rest will have been un-packed at least to the extent of getting books and reading into packets of their own. ●

Books in the Teenage World (0 85386 119 6, £10.00) is available from BMC, 19 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HJ (01-580 6321). Cheques should be payable to the Publishers Association.

Making the Charts – book style

Jessica Yates looks at the top pop lists from the Teen Read promotion and reveals her own approach to picking a chart topper.

The Book Marketing Council, set up by the Publishers Association to increase book sales, runs promotions lasting a few weeks around a specific theme, usually featuring a Top 12 or Top 20 list of authors or titles, e.g. *Best Novels of our Time*, *Authors USA*. A third of their budget is devoted to promoting children's books, and previously we have seen the *Children's Choice* campaign (1984) and *Best Books for Babies* (1985). The 1986 promotion was *Teen Read*, an unusual attempt to target a group rarely identified as such in the book trade, where publishing and bookselling is divided into adults' and children's departments.

Preparations for *Teen Read* involved preliminary research by Michael Pountney, and a good deal of consumer research, for Maggie van Reenen, BMC's director, had decided on a change of policy. Instead of asking a panel of media celebrities to choose the Top 20 teenage books, the BMC would compile a pool of 100 likely best-sellers, and then appoint a teenage jury to select the Top 20. The usual practice of inviting publishers to submit titles for the promotion (which they would back with cash if chosen), was modified by asking booksellers and librarians to tell the BMC what was currently popular. Thus the Top 100 did have a basis in consumer opinion, as well as including a number of new titles which their publishers thought were likely to sell in the future, judging by their authors' previous track record.

The choice of titles for the Top 100 indicates a wide view of teenage reading and of the 11-14 age range intended as the main target of *Teen Read*. As well as many well-known teenage novels, there are books for older children, and a few adult titles. It was not the intention of this promotion to deal in detail with adult fiction read by teenagers, but instead to boost sales of the top end of children's publishing. The few adult books on the list are mainly SF and fantasy. There are novelties such as books about pop stars, a few humorous titles, a little poetry; but the main body of the list is prose fiction. Within this we find fantasy love stories, school stories, thrillers and formula romance.

In early October a colourful, fashionably-designed *Teen Read* newspaper was published and made available in bookshops. The Top 100 books were grouped in categories and annotated, and there were messages from authors, Grange Hill characters, and sports stars, together with competitions and news from the sponsors, Nike sports gear. Many teachers wrote to BMC for copies to use in the classroom, after seeing them in bookshops (there are NO MORE). Entries for the competitions were still coming in in December. The newspaper design and layout illustrates the whole concept of the campaign, which is that since teenagers were vulnerable to peer-group pressure, reading for pleasure has to be sold as a fashionable peer-group activity.

The jury selection process lasted for several months. Far from my original speculation that the jurors were bound to be the children of media celebrities, they were instead chosen from schools in seven parts of the country (from Scotland to the south-east), which had agreed to involve their pupils in reading and reporting back. When choosing a juror to carry their votes to London they were not necessarily after a 'born reader', but for somebody who was lively, and good at discussion. In one case a highly reluctant reader was chosen – who had experienced a complete conversion after tackling *The Lord of the Rings*!

Finally the 12 jurors had a long weekend in London, and after 2 days of argument, some of it televised, they got down to 21 titles, could not bear to reject one of them, and chose a Top 21 by the evening of 13th October. I spoke to the three Londoners, who emphasised that the list was based on their personal choice and the votes of their schoolfriends which they had been mandated to bring. Individually they were quite scornful of the formula fiction. (Maggie van Reenen commented afterwards that their tastes had become more literary during the weekend!) On the near misses which didn't make the Top 21, there was enthusiasm for Cynthia Voigt's writing, especially *The Runner*, and Peck's *Are you in the house alone?* Any title *not* in the Top 100 you'd like to recommend? *The Borribles*. How should bookshops market books for teenagers? Separately, they thought, not among the children's books, in a section adjacent to adult fiction.

Now for a closer look at that Top 21. Maggie says that the list wasn't 'cooked' by BMC to provide a spread of genres and publishers: whatever balance there is between quality and popular fiction emerged from the jurors' discussions and wasn't directed by the foreman (Pete Johnson, an English lecturer). It is true that there is some duplication, e.g. two books about the aftermath of nuclear war, and a lot of fantasy, while there is no realistic adventure-thriller (there are not many of those for teenagers anyway). But if not 'directed' the jury seems to have been remarkably 'diplomatic', arriving at a neat spread of publishers and types of books.

Breaking down this Top 21 into categories we find:

Established teenage novels, well-known before the promotion: *Across the barricades*, *Buddy*, *It's my life*, *Tex*, *Forever*, *Goodnight Mr. Tom* (a children's book really); *Stranger with my face*; plus one teenage novel new to the British market: *Breaking up*

Fantasy and SF: *The changeover*, *Children of the dust*, *The dark is rising*, *Lord of the Rings*, *When the wind blows*, *Hitchhiker's guide* (the last three are bridge-builders to adult fiction, and popular with all ages)

Humour: *The Adrian Mole* diaries (another bridge-builder from the adult list); *Spitting Image* (also TV tie-in)

School stories: *Batteries not included* (humorous SF in a school setting); *First term at Trebizon*

Formula romance: *101 ways to meet Mr. Right*, *Malibu Summer*, *The Caitlin* trilogy.



The Book Marketing Council's Teen Read jury.
Photo, Chris Lord.

Readers of *B7K* will be familiar with the 'quality' titles in this list. The American series titles I found quick to read, enjoyable, escapist, and not over-harmful except in the lack of any distinction in the writing, and a profusion of clichés which bordered on self-parody.

Batteries not included, the first one in the *Not quite human* series, has the advantage of appealing to reluctant boy readers. It's about a scientist who has made an android in the form of a teenage boy, and of the android's adventures in junior high school as he pretends to be real. Humour mainly derives from Chip's habit of taking idiomatic expressions like 'Keep your eyes peeled' literally.

The representative *Sweet Dreams* title is **101 ways to meet Mr. Right**, which I found diverting and even true to life describing the girl's feelings when she falls in love. A pity the boy's identity is given away in the blurb.

Sweet Valley High is a 30-book series about twin sisters at a Californian high school; the action alternates between family and boyfriend problems, and more dramatic events as in **Malibu Summer** where one girl saves a pop star's life and the other rescues a little girl from a flooded bridge. Apart from all the clichés about true love, it is again a pleasant diversion.

The **Caitlin** Trilogy is something else. Starting off like American high school soap opera, it turns into melodrama when rich, beautiful but spoiled and proud Caitlin accidentally injures a little boy, and lets his baby-sitter take the blame. From then on it resembles nothing so much as a Victorian novel where the sinful heroine strives to expiate her past, and throughout the other two volumes Caitlin seeks redemption. **East Lynne** crossed with **Gone with the Wind** (it's set in Virginia)! I found the story compulsive, the clichés appalling, and Caitlin herself impossible to believe in.

Like the *Sweet Valley High* series, **Caitlin** is 'created by Francine Pascal', and although it is of course legitimate to use another author's characters, or novelise a screen-play, I am deeply suspicious of the practice of omitting the author of the story's text from the cover and spine, thus selling the book on Pascal's name. What does 'creation' mean? A three-paragraph synopsis? A chapter-by-chapter outline? Anyway, Joanna Campbell is the 'real' author of this text.

Teen Read Top Twenty-One

| | |
|--|--|
| Across the Barricades | Joan Lingard, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 02167 7, £6.50; Puffin, 0 14 03.0637 4, £1.75 |
| Adrian Mole: The Secret Diary/The Growing Pains | Sue Townsend, Methuen, £5.95 hbk, £1.95 pbk |
| Batteries Not Included | Seth McEvoy, Grafton, 0 583 30982 8, £1.95 |
| Breaking Up | Norma Klein, Pan Horizons, 0 330 29293 5, £1.75 |
| Buddy | Nigel Hinton, Dent, 0 460 06089 9, £7.50; Puffin, 0 14 03.1571 3, £1.75 |
| Caitlin Trilogy | Joanna Campbell, Transworld Bantam, £1.50 each |
| The Changeover | Margaret Mahy, Dent, 0 460 06153 4, £6.95; Magnet, 0 416 52270 X, £1.75 |
| Children of the Dust | Louise Lawrence, Bodley Head, 0 370 30679 1, £4.50 pbk |
| The Dark is Rising | Susan Cooper, Bodley Head, 0 370 30815 8, £6.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.0799 0, £1.95 |
| First Term at Trebizon | Anne Digby, Grafton, 0 583 30427 3, £1.75 |
| Forever | Judy Blume, Gollancz, 0 575 02144 6, £5.95; Pan Horizons, 0 330 28533 5, £1.75 |
| Good night Mr Tom | Michelle Magorian, Viking Kestrel, 0 7226 5701 3, £7.50; Puffin, 0 14 03.1541 1, £2.25 |
| Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy | Douglas Adams, Pan, 0 330 25864 8, £1.95 |
| It's My Life | Robert Leeson, Fontana Lions, 0 00 671783 7, £1.75 |
| Lord of the Rings Trilogy | J.R.R. Tolkien, Allen & Unwin, 0 048 23200 9, £9.25; 0 048 23229 7, £8.95 pbk |
| Malibu Summer | Kate Williams, Transworld Bantam, Sweet Valley High, 0 553 26050 2, £1.50 |
| 101 Ways to Meet Mr Right | Janet Quin-Harkin, Transworld Bantam, Sweet Dreams, 0553 24946 0, £1.50 |
| Spitting Image | Lloyd, Fluck & Law, Faber, 0 571 13670 2, £3.95 pbk |
| Stranger With My Face | Lois Duncan, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10913 2, £6.25; Pan Horizons, 0 330 29255 2, £1.75 |
| Tex | S.E. Hinton, Gollancz, 0 575 02710 X, £5.95; Fontana Lions, 0 00 671763 2, £1.95 |
| When the Wind Blows | Raymond Briggs, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10721 0, £4.25; Penguin, 0 14 00.6606 3, £2.95 |

I became interested in the **Teen Read** promotion because all this year I have been working on a booklist of fiction for teenagers, for the School Library Association. The criteria were that the books should be in paperback, published fairly recently, and selected for their quality. There should be a balance between 'literary' titles which would probably appeal to a minority, and more popular books which go down well with reluctant readers.

By arranging my annotations according to genre I also hoped to demonstrate the variety of themes available. Some genres were specially devised: my categories were Family relationships and love stories (approximately a third of annotations), Adventure stories (including historical fiction), Fantasy/SF etc., Ethnic minority experiences, Heroines, School life and hobbies, and Humour.

Given that many of the Top 100 were outside the range of my criteria (no poetry, non-fiction or formula fiction), it was interesting to find that about 25 of them were also on my list, and that we also had several authors in common, though chose different titles. With the Top 21 I had 8 titles in common, and another 3 where I chose different books by the same author.

I sent a list of my chosen 165 titles to two ILEA librarians, asking them to indicate the books most (and least) popular with their pupils. Here are those titles most popular in one or the other school, which were also in the Top 100:

Forever, Buddy, Tex, Earthsea trilogy, **Adrian Mole** diaries, **It's my life, I love you, stupid!, A proper little Nooryeff** – and other books on my list were ticked to show moderate enthusiasm.

What is more interesting, though, for a teacher or librarian who has studied the Top 100, is to refresh their memory with some other titles from my list which were *not* chosen for **Teen Read**, but *are* popular with teenagers:

Tiger Eyes, Nobody's Family's going to Change, See you Thursday, My Darling my Hamburger, Confessions of a Teenage Baboon, Slake's Limbo, The Friends and Edith Jackson, Roll of Thunder hear my Cry, Fungus the Bogeyman, Lingard's Maggie quartet, **My Darling Villain, Hey Dollface, Second Star to the Right, Your Friend Rebecca, A Formal Feeling, Sweet Frannie, Sam and Me, Breaking Training, This School is driving me Crazy, Empty World, Break of Dark, Piggy in the Middle, Running Scared and The Great Gilly Hopkins.**

So where do we go from here? This being the first time the BMC had studied the teenage market, Maggie van Reenen commented, after reading the Top 100, that books for teenagers were a good idea, as they catered for readers who were not emotionally mature and lacked experience of life, but wanted to read about serious issues. They hope that the book trade will commission more research, and that the idea of a teenage book promotion will be taken up elsewhere, perhaps by a teenage magazine just as **Parents** have taken over the baby-book promotion.

Although a mild criticism of the Top 21 was that 'the BMC are all set to promote just those titles which seem to be selling quite well already' (*TES*, 17.10.86.), Poutney's research showed that under 50% of the age-group 13-17 buy books, so any catching up on those top titles that was done by the non-readers would have increased sales to a new market. That was exactly what W.H. Smith reported during the promotion – new customers coming into the shops and heading for the teenage sections, with sales significantly increased.

With a promotion aimed at making new readers, rather than persuading existing book-buyers to switch their purchases in another direction, it's the marketing environment within the bookshop which works on that vital peer-group pressure. At a recent Children's Book Circle meeting on teenage reading, Elizabeth Attenborough of Puffin said that cross-merchandising would be a good idea. Instead of hiding teenage books among children's books, put them next to the magazines, LPs, cassettes and film tie-ins. We have to admit the power of the market: W.H. Smith stock more quality teenage fiction since they started selling *Sweet Dreams* in 1983, even if they still believe in putting teenage fiction in the children's section.

I wonder if children's paperback publishers who *don't* want to run a teenage imprint, would try to be more helpful to booksellers by packaging their occasional teenage title somehow differently from their children's paperbacks? The book trade has finally realised that with books selling well to children and parents, this book-buying habit must be preserved to adulthood, and that means catering for teenagers as a special group. ●

Jessica Yates was a comprehensive school librarian with ILEA for 9 years, and is now the mother of two young children and a freelance children's book reviewer. Her book list **Teenager to Young Adult** was published recently by the School Library Association. It contains over 150 recommendations and will be of interest and use to secondary teachers, librarians and school bookshop organisers, as well as perhaps to booksellers wondering what to put in a Young Adult section. Jessica also identifies 'controversial books you don't offer to under-13s'.

Teenage to Young Adult available from SLA, Liden Library, Barrington Close, Liden, Swindon SN3 6HF, £2.40 (£2.90 non-members). Cheques payable to SLA.

New Horizons?

At last, a real chance to do something about teenage reading. **Steve Bowles** welcomes the new **Pan Horizons** series.

Some things about teenage reading are all too predictable. Many kids (boys, mostly) read very little, if anything, and while many girls read a lot, they tend to stick with series like **Couples**, **Sweet Valley High**, **Heartlines** and **Sweet Dreams**. That may be an essential stage in their reading development but for far too many it remains the end of the journey. Successes tend to be isolated and intermittent. Publishers support the worthy heavies (**Brother in the Land**, **Talking in Whispers**) and occasionally an odd title arrives which promises to be useful (e.g. **Biker** by Jon Hardy, Puffin Plus) but the most glaring indictment of all those concerned with teenage reading (teachers, librarians, booksellers and publishers) is that **My Darling, My Hamburger** (1969) and **That Was Then, This Is Now** (1971) are *still* unsurpassed as class readers.

1986, however, saw by far the most positive move in teenage fiction that I can recall. In the seventies, Puffin's editors made such a hash of reviving Peacocks that it's been all caution ever since, particularly as far as mass market paperback series for this age range is concerned. Yet there's always been a market for the right book; it's not Mills and Boon grannies who've ensured Corgi's **Go Ask Alice** a permanent slot on the shelves of my local Smiths for the last thirteen years. But now Pan – till recently worth only a passing nod in relation to kids' books – have launched their **Horizons** series and at last teachers/librarians have a real chance to do something about teenage reading, especially with GCSE Literature opportunities and some new money available. If we don't make these books a total success, a publishing sensation, then we *deserve* to be replaced on the timetable by 'Soap Opera Studies', 'Yet More Keyboard Skills' and 'Economic Awareness'.

For **Horizons**, Pan have found a number of very readable books, mostly good quality, and – miraculously, one might say, since it's so rare – marketed them in an excellently designed, clearly identifiable series format. One reason for the success of series from Blyton to **Sweet Dreams** is the certainty they offer the customer. Kids know where they are with them. By using the cover design to link fifteen other titles with the all-time Judy Blume favourite **Forever**, Pan ensured kids' instant interest in the new series. Writers like Lois Duncan and M. E. Kerr, whose previous work has been lost amongst general kiddie-lit publishing, are now being sought by kids who've rapidly grown to trust Pan's choice.

And, so far, that trust hasn't been misplaced. Pan have shown a degree of sense and an understanding of the audience which is fairly remarkable in British publishing. One obvious sign of this is that fourteen of the first sixteen titles are American and there's absolutely no doubt that U.S. writers and editors understand teenage fiction better than anyone. Compare their sureness of touch and absence of hang-ups with Aidan Chambers' convoluted **Dance on my Grave**, the one big mistake that **Horizons** made in their first year. Arty-farty, self-regarding stuff like this has plagued British teenage fiction for years.

Pan have done us some great favours in bringing out many books previously unpublished over here, most notably **Are You In the House Alone?** by Richard Peck (1976) which British publishers, even the better ones like Gollancz and Fontana Lions, have rejected in the past. My American edition has been read till it's falling apart – that alone shows the book's appearance here is long overdue. We can't pretend that teenagers haven't heard of rape and it's hardly responsible to leave their awareness of it to be formed by the gutter press and the countless video-nasties which so many kids watch. Richard Peck's book could be improved but it's certainly an essential title for any English department.



Pan's bravery also needs tough-minded, unrelenting support against those who'd prevent teenagers reading anything to do with sex. Most of them seem capable only of flicking through a book to find 'dirty bits' to exploit out of context. Recent **Woman's Hour** criticism of **Forever** showed this, though there's craftiness creeping in, with attacks on the ease with which Kath reaches orgasm, as opposed to the mere fact that sex is dealt with openly. Kids *do* want to read about sex and the morality of books like **Beginner's Love** (Norma Klein) is infinitely less suspect than that of reactionary no-brows who campaign for the banning of honest, helpful, informative books like Jane Cousins' **Make It Happy** (Penguin) while at the same time defending the **Sun's** page-three girls as 'harmless fun'. **Beginner's Love** is starting to rival **Forever** in popularity and it must be defended strenuously whenever (if ever) it comes under fire. As for the books' influence, in my school it's the kids who *don't* read them who are out there 'doing it'.

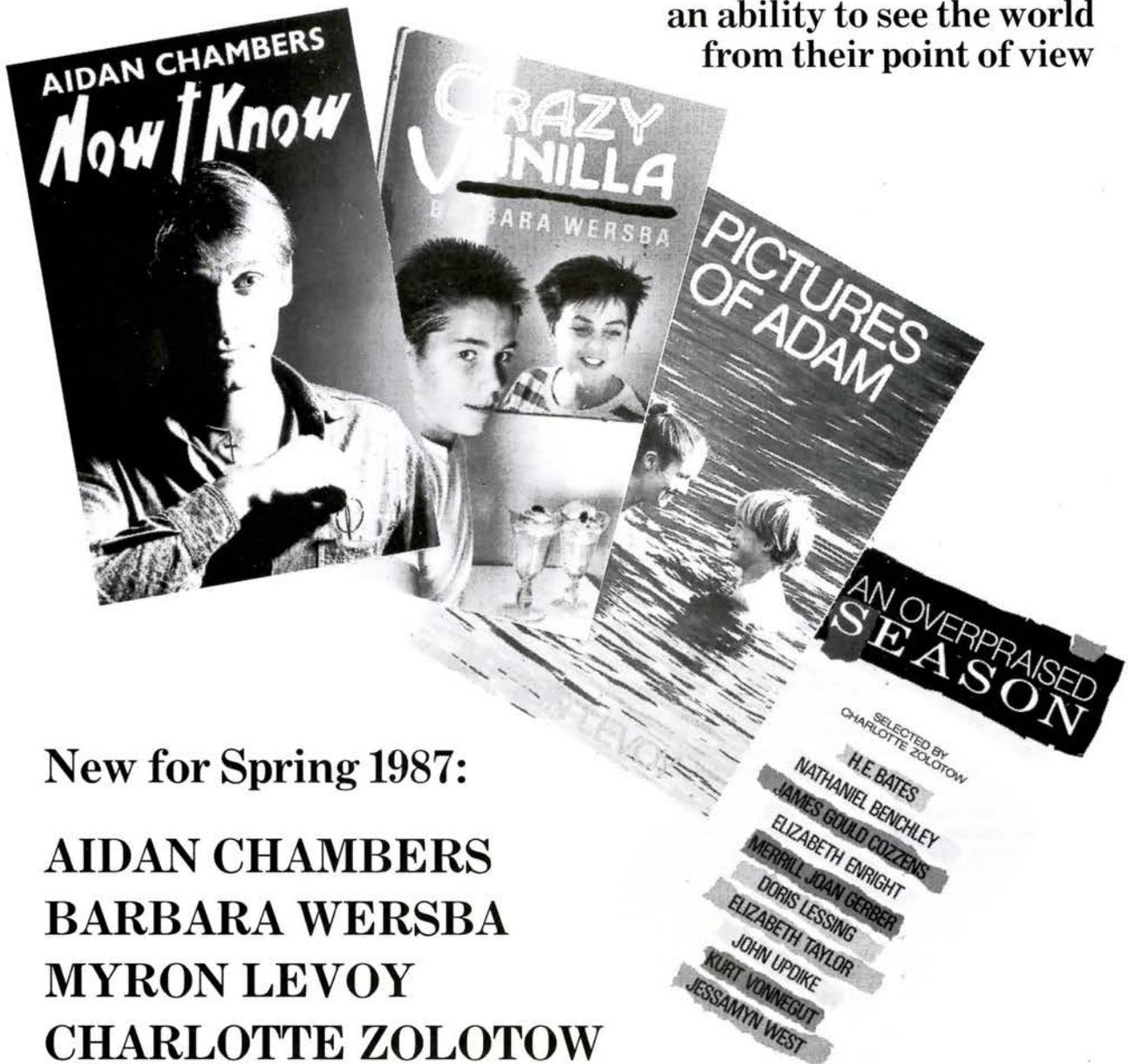
Not that **Horizons** concentrate exclusively on heavy or controversial 'problem' subjects. There are several mysteries, for example. Lois Duncan (**The Eyes of Karen Connors** and **Stranger With My Face**) is beginning to become a cult figure with some of our second-year girls and my personal favourite in the whole series so far has been Rosemary Wells' murder story **When No One Was Looking**. There's humour, too, from Harry Mazer (**I Love You, Stupid!** and **Hey Kid! Does She Love Me?**) and straight love/family stories which are many steps on from **Sweet Dreams**, notably M. E. Kerr's enjoyable **If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?** and **I Stay Near You**, the first part of which is amongst the best writing for teenagers that I've ever encountered. All the titles are worth reading and trying (though don't go wild with your orders for Barbara Wersba, Wendy Simons and Aidan Chambers) and the series as a whole should be followed closely – 1987 promises lots more new titles. If Pan stick by the Americans (until British/Antipodean writers learn how to do it *really* well) and don't let worries about their literary image stampede them into publishing the unreadable (Ivan Southall, Virginia Hamilton et al) then great things could happen. Is it too much to hope that some of the other mass market paperback firms might do something positive too?

Stranger With My Face, Lois Duncan, 0 330 29255 2, £1.95
Are You In the House Alone? Richard Peck, 0 330 29254 4, £1.75
It's OK If You Don't Love Me, Norma Klein, 0 330 29702 3, £1.95

THE BODLEY HEAD

Paperback Originals

The core of our editorial policy in selecting books for teenagers is to publish authors with a real sympathy for young people and an ability to see the world from their point of view



New for Spring 1987:

AIDAN CHAMBERS
BARBARA WERSBA
MYRON LEVOY
CHARLOTTE ZOLOTOW

(Editor)

For a list of all our Paperback Originals
 and a copy of our Louise Lawrence poster please write to:
 Children's Publicity, The Bodley Head, 32 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3EL

Border Country

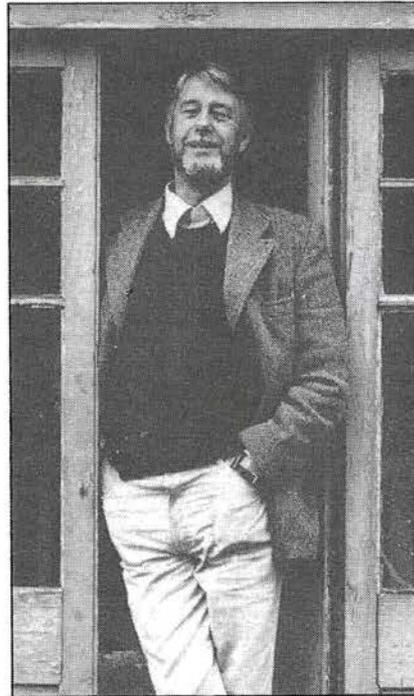
Michael Jones examines the work of **Peter Carter** who has twice been awarded the Observer prize for teenage fiction; this year for **Bury the Dead**.

'To keep one's eye on heaven and one's feet on the muddy earth and not overbalance is a gift, a rare one, but some possess it.' These words apply, not just to one of Peter Carter's characters (in *Madatan*), but to the author himself. His books are the antithesis of commercially crafted 'teenage readers' which confine rather than challenge the reader's imagination. They can be demanding in terms of historical context, emotional power and linguistic level, yet they have a sufficiently wide appeal to be translated into seventeen languages. What gives them that appeal, and what makes it so important that they should form part of every secondary school's reading provision?

Peter Carter often uses the past to gain a perspective on the present. In his first book, *Madatan*, the novel which he acknowledges as having an autobiographical basis transferred through time, it says of the central character '... as he learned to read he began to understand the width of the world, to realise that it had a history, going far back into time. And as he felt the pressure of the past, he began to have a paradoxical sense of freedom from the present.' *Madatan* is prefaced with a quotation from Eliot's *Four Quartets*. It is hardly surprising to find within it that 'the past pointed to the future, and past and future gave meaning and purpose to the present'. Books can offer young readers a perspective on themselves, especially books like Peter Carter's which contain ideas that are 'like chinks in the vast doors of time'.

Reading the books and talking to their author brings a deeper engagement with ultimate questions about life. What a piece of work is man (or woman) when faced with cataclysmic pressures which no individual can resist, but which some can endure with a dignity that evokes admiration? His books are usually located at crucial moments of cultural confrontation, in times of transition when the pressures on people seem greater than in periods of comparative stability. His characters live in border country such as that between Christianity and Islam in *The Children of the Book* (his first Observer prize winner), between the pre-industrial world of hand loom weavers and the new machine age in *The Black Lamp* or between the clashing economies and ideologies of slaves and abolitionists in *The Sentinels* (winner of the Guardian award).

Such historical contexts are not divorced from contemporary concerns. The origin of *The Children of the Book*, based around the greatest Ottoman attack on Christendom in the 17th century, was a stroll in Regent's Park. Peter Carter noticed the nearby mosque and started to do research into earlier Islamic 'invasions'. *The Black Lamp*, with its indignation against the sacrificing at Peterloo of people to profit says more about the recent miners' strike than many a contemporary analysis. As Peter Carter



agreed, had he ever written directly about that strike, he would have put his verbal camera behind the miners' lines. Being a writer who does not evoke simplistic emotional responses however, he might well have decided to place another camera behind the police.

His presentation of multiple perspectives in his later novels is both obvious and important. When he writes about Northern Ireland in *Under Goliath* he does not espouse or despise 'causes' such as Catholicism or Protestantism. Instead he makes us feel 'a rage at borders without meaning except that they divide the hearts of men'. If there is such a border in our world, it is surely the Berlin Wall, the setting for Peter Carter's latest novel, *Bury the Dead*.

The central character in *Bury the Dead* is (untypically for this writer) female. Erika, aged sixteen and with the talent to become an international high-jumper, lives with her very ordinary East German family almost within sight of the Wall, known officially as 'the Anti-Fascist Barrier'. This is border country, literally, and the ignorant armies of Eastern and Western attitudes clash by night and by day. Proving one of Peter Carter's recurrent themes, that 'the past climbs from its grave, though it be buried never so deep' (*The Black Lamp*), smiling Uncle Karl, a prosperous West German businessman thought to have died long ago, erupts into the life of Erika's family. With him comes 'the endless resurrection of the vile, unspeakable deeds of Nazism'. The facade of humanity cracks, revealing the beast within and for Erika 'it was as if in her world of steady normality a door had opened a crack giving her a glimpse into another world; one bizarre and twisted and deformed and into which she did NOT want to look but which she now knew was there

just the same, a sort of fourth dimension of horror.'

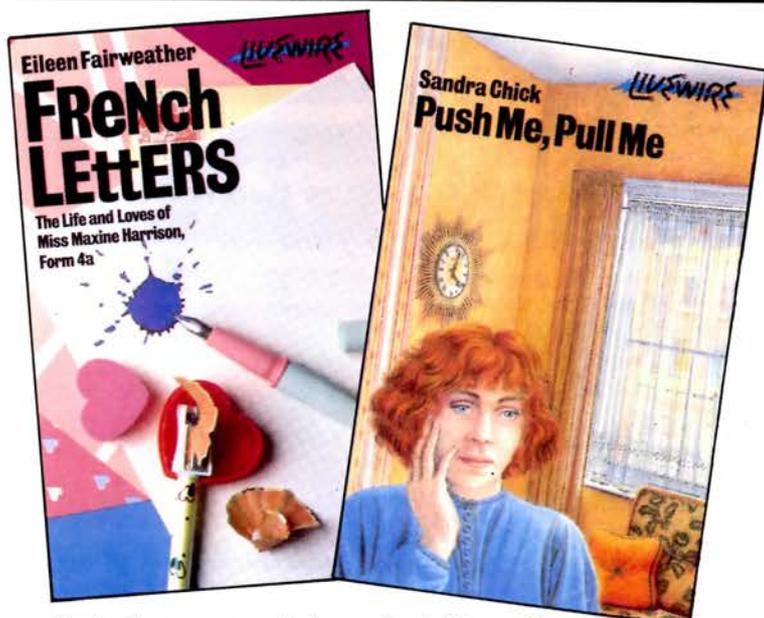
As readers we are shown different perspectives on the horror that haunts our world and the world of these novels. We can identify with those who help a war criminal to escape, we appreciate that a slave trader's life is not an easy one and we can even understand in *Madatan* that it is possible to feel that trust is an illusion, love a weakness and that 'the only way to live unhurt was to cut oneself off from humanity'. Peter Carter's characters have that ambiguity about them that insists that every man is, and is not, an island. His characters are trapped in a history which is never entirely of their own making, struggling to preserve some sense of what it is to be human whilst carried on the torrents of time. Many would have wished to live differently, but with a 'stubborn adherence to life' they survive the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and manage to stay, in Peter Carter's phrase, 'half-way decent'. The focus is not on one of life's generals, but on a number of the 'poor bloody infantry'. As readers we are caught in a web of feeling, offering simultaneous sympathies to the infantry on all sides. This forces us to try to hold the whole world of the novel in our heads and therefore to enter the border country of the moral imagination, judging not quickly that we be not quickly judged. Such an experience helps us to develop as readers increasingly prepared for the richest complexities that the novel can offer.

The nearest we come to a recognisable hero is in one of his least accessible novels, *The Gates of Paradise*, which is based very closely on William Blake's life. Blake, an 'ordinary' man with extraordinary vision, is a powerful reference point for Peter Carter. Both are fiercely independent about what they write, both are anti-hierarchical, both react against man's inhumanity to man and both tell the truth as they see it about people on the receiving end. How many contemporary novelists when given as free a hand as O.U.P. give to Peter Carter would have chosen to write about the siege of Vienna in 1683? How many other novelists make such valuably disturbing demands on the capacity, the stamina and sensitivity of the reader?

Margaret Meek, writing of books which we give to children, says that the only reading rule which really works is that the book offered must show that the giver values the reader. The parallel here between teachers and authors is an important one — we need to experience, to share and to celebrate authors whose books are written in such a way as to show that the writer values the reader. At a time when, even in the book world, there are those who would insult or enslave the moral imagination of young readers, just for profit, we need the true fictions of sentinels like Peter Carter. ●

Bury the Dead (0 19 271493 7, £8.95), like all Peter Carter's novels, is published by Oxford University Press.

Under Goliath is available in paperback from Puffin (0 14 03.1132 7, £1.75).



Books for young people from a feminist press?

When Carole Spedding started to explore this idea for The Women's Press she found that most people assumed she must be talking about a series of handbooks, a kind of teach-yourself-feminism packed with analysis and explanation. No such thing. Far from telling readers what they should be thinking the idea was to provide books of all kinds which would reflect the experience of the present day teenager. Looking around, Carole and her co-editor, Christina Dunhill, found little evidence of this in publishing for this age-range and teachers and librarians confirmed that this was indeed a shortage area. Three years and a lot of research later The Women's Press are launching **Live Wire** books.

It's an imprint which Carole Spedding believes has an eager readership all ready and waiting. 'They are demanding books like these. This is a generation which has reaped the benefits of twenty years of feminism. They have different ideas of what they want, they don't want to put up with things they find unacceptable. They should be able to find this in their books.'

Carole's view of the market for **Live Wires** is not daunted by the sales figures for series like *Sweet Dreams* which she sees as teenage Blyton – nothing to worry about unless they don't read anything else. 'I believe teenagers read far more than many people think. And, like adults, they read a huge range and variety of stuff according to how they are feeling. They only stick to *Sweet Dreams* if that is all there is to read.'

The first four **Live Wire** titles are published in April (there will be twelve each year) and between them express much of the philosophy of the list.

The younger end of the intended 13-18 age range is well catered for by **French Letters: the life and loves of Miss Maxine Harrison, Form 4A**. Maxine's letters (from Hornsey, London N8) to her best friend Jean (removed to Ashton-under-Lyne, The Far North) are likely to be as avidly consumed and discussed as the diary of her literary counterpart, Adrian Mole. A whole cast of characters rise from her partial prose: Dad (who reckons he's Hornsey's answer to Arthur Scargill); Mum (who turns up to buy school uniform at the dead posh School Outfitters in her purple nylon chip shop overalls); new friend Imelda (who wants to be the first woman Pope); the upwardly mobile neighbours, Amanda and Nathan (hanging plants hanging everywhere and white sofas with no tea stains); Michelle and Kim, the school snobs etc. Family and school, being fat, part-time jobs, clothes, friendship: it's all here. But of course, at the centre of the whole story is SEX – a bet between these two fourteen-year-old correspondents about which will be the first to get 'a real boyfriend'. Maxine acquires a French penfriend (Jean) who turns out to be a boy. (She doesn't know about French names and she also has to have the pun about French Letters explained to her – go on, suspend your disbelief.) And when he announces that he is coming to England...

Elaine Fairweather, Maxine's creator, is a journalist, a playwright and a comic actress. At 32, 'still essentially a teenager', she drew on her own memories of being fourteen, of copious letter-writing for the pleasure of getting replies, 'though you never got as many as you sent out.' But she checked out Maxine's impressions and reactions with current teenagers, in particular Carole Spedding's 13-year-old daughter. Carole is enthusiastic about **French Letters** because 'as well

Livewires a

Two new teenage lists this year for Pat Triggs talks to the editors

as being funny it is not afraid to portray the contradictions, and teenage life is riddled with contradictions.'

You Worry Me Tracey, You really Do continues a humorous look at teenage life in a collection of cartoons by Angela Martin. Work was commissioned and the final selection is the result of the reactions of a teenage 'panel' who Carole Spedding recalls were quite ruthless in their response.

Push Me, Pull Me is a first novel. Its author, Sandra Chick, is twenty-four and finding herself unemployed she decided to write a book. At school in Somerset Sandra, by her own account, was not particularly good at English, and didn't enjoy reading or writing much. 'I've only started reading in the last couple of years. The books we were offered at school didn't interest me; they always underestimated how much you knew about sex, life, everything.' **Push Me, Pull Me** is a strongly written narrative in the voice of fourteen-year-old Catherine who in the opening pages is raped by her mother's boyfriend. The book covers about a year in Catherine's life during which her mother gets pregnant, marries her boyfriend and is separated taking Cathy and the baby with her. Although the rape is significant, and child abuse was something Sandra Chick wanted to write about ('When you mention it people close up; they don't want to know about it.') the heart of the book is the account of a mother daughter relationship. Catherine simultaneously despises and admires, loves and hates the desperate optimist, 'the brave coward' who is her Mum. Her vision is coloured by the confusion, the anger, the disgust and the guilt created by the rape but somehow this seems more grafted on than central. The whole is unremitting and uncompromising; there is little if any light at the end. 'That's how I think it would be,' says Sandra Chick. 'There couldn't be a pretty-pretty, happy-ever-after ending. But at the end Cathy is stronger, she's survived. She's worked out her anger; she's started to analyse things but there is still confusion about her situation. She sees no way out yet. But I can see her eventually talking to someone, though not someone in the book.'

Unlike many first novels **Push Me, Pull Me** is not autobiographical. 'Though I have drawn on my own experience; things I can remember thinking and feeling. But I read a lot about child abuse and thought about it a great deal.'

Carole Spedding is delighted that Sandra chose to send her manuscript first to The Women's Press. 'It epitomises what I hope will develop with this list. We want actively to support writing by young women.' Carole sees **Push Me, Pull Me** as for the older end of the **Live Wire** age-range both in its subject matter and in the challenge it presents in literary style. 'It's a powerfully emotional story but teenagers are not frightened of emotion; it's a time for wildly extreme feelings.' Sandra hopes that women her own age and boys might read it.

The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou by Kristen Hunter is an American novel first published in 1968 and until this edition out of print and unobtainable. It appears on the **Live Wire** list as a result of pleas and requests from a group of school librarians who are currently sharing the remaining copies which are collapsing from use and still in demand. It's a pacy novel with a strong storyline about the street life of black teenagers in the inner city who form their own band. Soul music, street gangs, the history of black music all feature with sensitive, talented singer/composer Lou, a characterful girl at the centre.

Coming in the next batch of **Live Wires** is **Skirmish**, an American SF story by Melissa Michaels, lightly written and with a girl as the central character; **Relationships: who needs them**, a collection of original short stories; **Second Wave**, a collection of eight short plays by young women, and **Over the Water**, a first novel by Maud Casey, another young writer, about a relationship between a girl returning to Ireland as a teenager and her grandmother. In preparation is a series of Profiles of notable women from different countries designed to complement geographical and historical studies, and a book about assertiveness, **Strength Without Muscles**, to help teenage girls speak up for themselves effectively at home, at school and in the street. ●

French Letters, Elaine Fairweather, 0 7043 4903 5, £2.95

You Worry Me, Tracey, Angela Martin, 0 7043 4902 7, £1.95

Push Me, Pull Me, Sandra Chick, 0 7043 4901 9, £2.95

The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou, Kristen Hunter, 0 7043 4900 0, £3.50

LIVE WIRES

teen age reading

teen age

nd Upstarts

om The Women's Press and Virago
and previews some of the books.



Virago has been a long time thinking about and preparing for an entry into the teenage market. Consultation with teachers and librarians (who have long been urging this) and with teenagers themselves has been extensive. The move, now it comes, is as much for philosophical as commercial reasons. Lennie Goodings, one of the editors of the new Virago Upstarts imprint: 'As feminist presses we have not been particularly good at directly addressing the concerns of young women. The climate girls are growing up in today is different but we still need to show them that they do have options, that the possibility of change exists. We have now got the editorial and marketing staff to go into this area and co-incidentally it's happening at the right time with W.H. Smith having success with Young Adult Sections and the recent BMC promotion.'

Upstarts are intended for young women of 13 plus who are actively seeking a better/different read; but they also hope to have an effect on those who perhaps have not yet thought objectively about themselves.

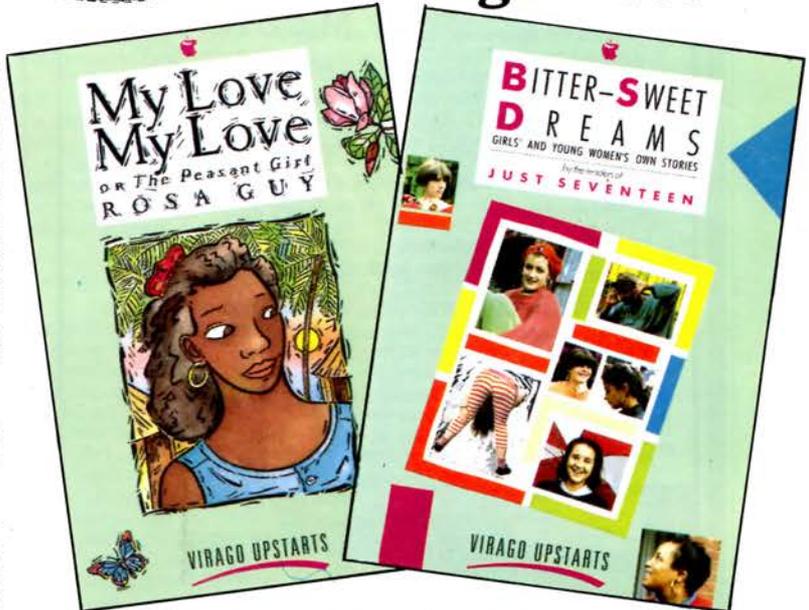
Two out of the first four Upstarts (published in May) quite deliberately seek to give teenagers a voice. **Bitter-Sweet Dreams** is, in the main, the result of an invitation in **Just Seventeen** magazine to 'be a Virago author and tell us what your life is like.' Over a hundred replied and nearly forty of them appear in the book, augmented by a few specially commissioned pieces to extend the range. 'The majority of what came in was about school and boys,' says Lennie Goodings. And indeed it is the immediacy of their lives and experiences that seems uppermost: exams (O-Levels), revision, fashion, pop music, boys. There is a marked similarity of voice in many of the pieces, and comparatively little on wider issues, morality, racism, politics, (nothing on AIDS).

It's an interesting sociological document with some powerfully individual voices: some, barely coherent (like CRW's which is casually organised and speaks of senility, death, separation, work, hairstyles and television in the same undifferentiated laconic tone) mean far more than they say, perhaps more than they know. The trite, conventional ending reveals the pain of CRW's piece. Here too are some real writers. There was no rewriting and very little editing – the contributions were used as they came. It's tantalising to think what some of these young writers might have achieved with support and encouragement to redraft.

The introduction to **Bitter-Sweet Dreams** by Janice Long sets out to give the collection a sense of perspective by analogy with another Virago title **Truth, Dare or Promise** in which women looked back on their adolescence in the fifties.

For many reasons **Bitter-Sweet Dreams** has much to offer, not least to teachers willing to handle and build on what it might release in connection with the experience of living and the experience of writing about living.

Falling for Love is sub-titled **Teenage Mothers Talk**. The voices this time have been captured by Sue Sharpe in a series of interviews transcribed and then skilfully and sensitively edited into a fascinating document. Forty-five interviews were recorded; eighteen of them appear here quoted in detail.



Upstarts fiction kicks off with two wildly contrasting titles. **My Love, My Love** is Rosa Guy's lyrically tragic story of the Caribbean peasant girl, Désirée and her love for Daniel Beauxhomme, the son of a rich and powerful man. A version of Andersen's **The Little Mermaid**, it mixes realism with magic, the cosmic and the fated with the everyday. This is not a long book (120 pages) but a slow start and Rosa Guy's literary prose mean that this is probably not for the inexperienced reader.

Hotel Romantika is a collection of stories by Melanie McFadyean, the advice columnist of **Just Seventeen** magazine. Ms McFadyean may be a first class advice columnist and have an excellent understanding of her readers but, on this evidence anyway, she is no writer of fiction and lacks even the basic craft skills needed for that most demanding of forms, the short story. Germs of ideas are not achieved (some struggle to become novels); there is no clear consistent control of genre, voice, viewpoint, timescale, stance; there's too much telling and precious little showing; there's caricature and stereotyping. As for content, there is nothing here that hasn't been already done better for this age-range. In all, whether it sells or not, this is out of place on the Virago list. It may be read but it is certainly not what those who urged Virago to start a teenage list had in mind. Melanie McFadyean should read Jan Mark, Berlie Doherty or even **Bitter-Sweet Dreams**.

Later this year the second batch of Upstarts, in their distinctive new 'Virago green' includes an American import, a story of a Brooklyn girl who races pigeons; and a newly commissioned detective novel featuring a 'Virago Nancy Drew'. ●

Bitter-Sweet Dreams, 0 86068 913 1, £2.95
Falling for Love, 0 86068 841 0, £3.50
My Love, My Love, 0 86068 804 6, £2.95
Hotel Romantika, 0 86068 918 2, £2.95

VIRAGO UPSTARTS

Freeway from Corgi/Bantam



CORGI
FREEWAY



BANTAM
FREEWAY

Bantam Young Adults, the Transworld imprint which publishes **Sweet Dreams**, **Sweet Valley High** and **Couples** is launching a new list in July. **Freeway** is for older readers and Philippa Dickinson, editorial director, says it is a project very close to her heart. 'I am keen to publish fiction which can deal with teenage interests and issues with a light touch of humour. Most of our titles have been published before but some will be original – Jean Ure is writing an original trilogy for **Freeway** – and we have a mix of American and British writers.'

Launch titles all competitively priced at £1.95, include:

The Fat Girl, Marilyn Sachs' interesting exploration of the relationship between love and power in the story of how Jeff, the narrator, helps Ellen lose weight (0 522 52406 9); **Zak**, Frances Thomas' story of what happens when a rich, mysterious and magnetic boy joins a local comprehensive school (0 552 52362 3); Jean Ure's sequel to **A Proper Little Nooryeff**, **You Win Some You Lose Some** (0 552 52431 X) and Peggy Woodford's **Please Don't Go** (0 552 52457 3). Plus the first of Robert Leeson's **Time Rope** quartet (0 552 52344 5) – the rest will follow.

Top teenage fiction

The Landfill

DAVID LENEY

Illustrated by
Tony Kerins

A powerful and disturbing first novel about Danny Vickers, who ignores his father's warnings about the landfill and finds himself caught up in a game which is both funny and horrific.

Age: 10+ £7.95
06251 4 March



Storm Bird

ELSIE McCUTCHEON

Author of *The Rat War*,
Smokescreen

Forced to go and live with a strange, moody spinster aunt, 12 year old Jenny Lovett befriends Josh Gale, whose passion for birds ultimately leads her to discover the sinister truth surrounding her aunt's dour existence. A dramatic and perceptive teenage novel.

Ages 9-14 £7.95
06259 X March

from DENT

KESTREL

Trade paperbacks for teenagers

Jan Mark

FRANKIE'S HAT

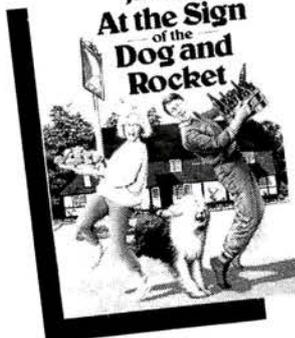
Three perceptive stories on different aspects of teenage life.

0 670 81004 5 £4.50



KESTREL

Jan Mark At the Sign of the Dog and Rocket



AT THE SIGN OF THE DOG AND ROCKET

The exuberant tale of the summer Lilian leaves school and begins to help behind the bar in the family pub.

0 670 81008 8 £4.50

Viking Kestrel

BOOKS FOR KEEPS NEWS

Children's Book Week '87

'The Great Book Event Competition '87'

That's what the CBW team are announcing this January as part of the annual children's book festival held in October. And quite a competition it looks to be too. £42,000 divided into £3,000 lots for 14 separate regions. As far as we know this must rate as one of the largest sums of money yet made available to teachers, librarians and children's book groups – in fact anyone who wants to put on a really ambitious children's book event during the autumn. To win, mind you, you're going to have to put in a fair amount of effort, and fast. The closing date for entries is 30th March 1987.

What the CBW organisers are looking for are the best plans for a week-long Children's Book Week event. The winners, one from each of the 14 regions (see map), will receive £3,000 each (immediately – now that's impressive, isn't it?) and pretty fulsome practical support from the CBW team as you put your winning plans into effect.

You have to produce detailed plans for a day-by-day programme with imaginative and original ideas, combined with a convincing demonstration that you have the resources and the organisation. You need to be able to involve at least 2,500 children, which means you're obviously going to have to get teamed up with other schools, libraries, colleges, etc. in your area. CBW also want you to involve a bookseller, rough out publicity plans, name your location and produce an expenditure budget.

As we said, quite a competition! For fuller details, either see if this copy of *Books for Keeps* still has its CBW '87 competition leaflet or write to Bob Cattell, Children's Book Week, Book Trust, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ (tel: 01-874 6361 or 01-870 9055).

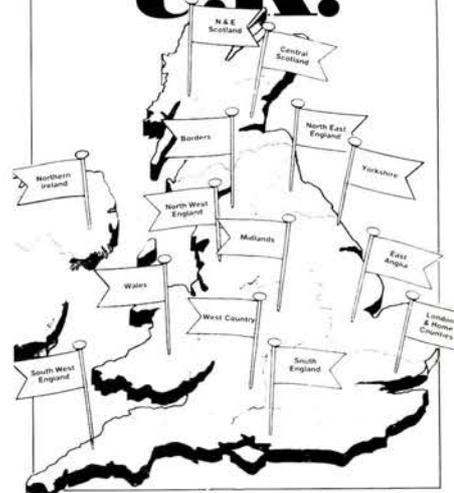
We hope to report on the full CBW '87 plans in the March issue of *Books for Keeps*.

Cornwall Children's Book Fair

February 27th and 28th,
Richard Lander School,

£3,000 for your Book Event!

BOOK COVER U.K.



The Great Book Event Competition '87

Administered by Book Trust

Truro. Pat Hutchins, Jan Needle, Jan Mark, John Ryan, Jane Gardam – just a few of the authors and artists who will be at the 1987 Cornwall Children's Book Fair. Always an exciting event with lots for children to do and see, including a huge book exhibition, it looks like being even better than ever this year.

Videos for Schools sponsored by



Lloyds Bank

BALLET RAMBERT'S 'DIFFERENT STEPS' - THREE APPROACHES TO CHOREOGRAPHY

This 40-minute video was made with the aim of assisting teachers and young people involved in CSE, GCE 'O' and 'A' level examinations, Further and Higher Education students and those individuals wishing to gain an insight into the creative workings of Ballet Rambert.

It takes the form of highlighting and contrasting the work of the company and its three principal choreographers, Robert North, Richard Alston and Christopher Bruce. The choreographers are seen at work with the dancers in rehearsal and in conversation about their methods and approaches to choreography, music and design.

Three ballets are shown in rehearsal and with excerpts from full performances: Robert North's *DEATH AND THE MAIDEN*, Richard Alston's *WILDLIFE* and Christopher Bruce's *SERGEANT EARLY'S DREAM*. Dancers are also seen displaying techniques from classical and contemporary classes.

To accompany the video, also available are a cassette tape and teachers' notes. The tape consists of complete interviews with the choreographers and was made separately to avoid overcrowding the visual effect of the video with too much 'voice-over'.



Robert North and Diane Walker in 'DEATH AND THE MAIDEN'

Available in VHS or Betamax formats from:
Ballet Rambert,
94 Chiswick High Road,
London W4 1SH.

Video tape only: £29 (including VAT, postage & packing)

Video tape, cassette tape and teachers' notes:
£35 (including VAT, postage & packing)

In addition to the above, Lloyds Bank has also sponsored other schools videos—one describing the work of the Young National Trust Theatre, and a series of three Shakespearean workshops dealing with the Tragedies, Comedies and Roman Tragedies.

Further information from: Sponsorship Section, CCD, Lloyds Bank Plc, 152/156 Upper Thames Street, London EC4R 3UJ.

SOUND & VISION

The Secret World of Polly Flint – on screen at last

The television screenplay and the novel of **Polly Flint** were conceived and written together and the original plan was that the novel should appear after the television version. As it turned out the book was published in 1983; the first of six episodes in the Central Television serial starts in February.

Helen Cresswell based her story on a Nottinghamshire legend and set it in an actual location. Polly, whose imagination soars as freely as her miner dad's pigeons, is forced to stay with her fiercely clean and stolid Aunt Em. By the lake she sees the shadowy, elusive Time Gypsies exiled from their underworld village of Grimstone which was spun out of time many centuries ago during a Maypole dance. Polly becomes involved in their efforts to escape the net of time which holds them in the upper world.

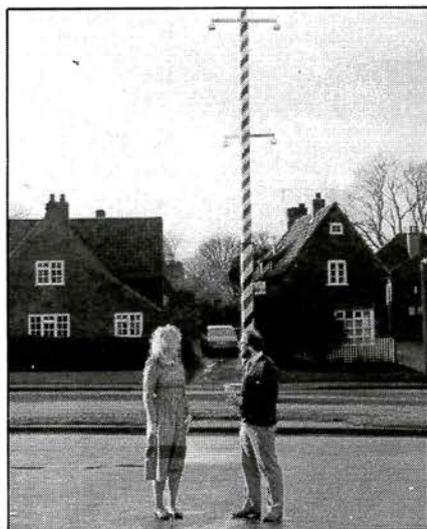
The series was all filmed on location in the Dukeries where the original story is set. Rufford Abbey, Clumber Park, the villages of Wellow and Car Colston were all invaded by television last summer.

Helen Cresswell is delighted with the casting of Katie Reynolds as Polly in her first major screen role. Katie is a member of Central's own junior TV workshop and plays opposite Brenda Bruce as the fearsome old harridan Granny Porter. Other members of the cast include Susan Jameson as Aunt Em, Daniel Pope as Sam and Jeremy Coote as Gil. Old Mazey is played by Don Anderson.

Boz, Helen Cresswell's dog, nearly got a part but missed the chance of stardom by a whisker. In any case he visited the set regularly, with his owner, just to check up on how the part of his namesake was being played.



Katie Reynolds as Polly, Brenda Bruce as Granny Porter. Courtesy of Central Independent Television.

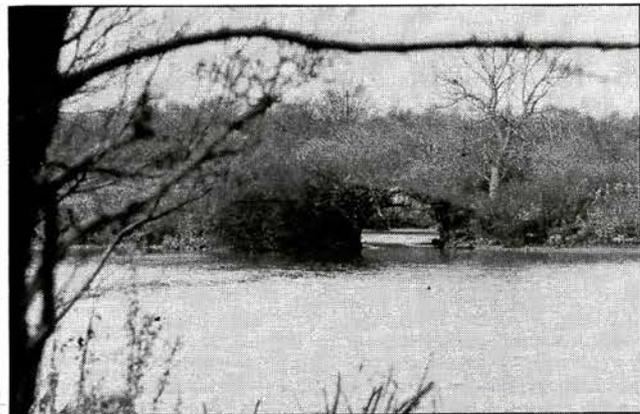


The Giant Maypole on the Green at Wellow – one of only three villages in the country to boast a permanent Maypole. Celebrations take place on Whit Monday Bank Holiday, attended by hundreds of visitors. Children have designated the house on the right as Aunt Em's and the tiny window as Polly's.

Polly saw the shadowy Time Gypsies dancing on the Green at dawn on May Day. In joining them she committed herself to helping them escape the net of time.

Our photograph shows the author herself on a very blowy Sunday in November last.

The nearby village of Car Colston was used for Grimstone.



The bridge that joins two islands in Rufford Lake, which for the book and film became the time tunnel. Between dawn and sunset from May Day to Midsummer Eve the lost folk of Grimstone could travel by boat through this arch to the village of Wellow. If they ate a morsel in the upper world, as Old Mazey did, then they would be doomed to remain 'on top'. Somehow Granny Porter, Gil, Sam and Babby Porter became stuck on the wrong side of the tunnel and only Polly, it seemed, could help them back into their own time and place.



Zoe Natheson as Frankie, courtesy of Thames TV.

Frankie's Hat, Jan Mark's subtle and evocative account of teenage marriage, has been filmed for television by Thames. First shown at the end of December, it will be repeated for schools in the Spring term. Frankie, married at sixteen and now the mother of eleven-week-old Simon, is visited on the eve of her seventeenth birthday by her young sister Sonia.

The story, with two others which are equally entertaining, appears in **Frankie's Hat**, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 81004 5, £3.95 pbk. ●