

BOOKS FOR KIDS

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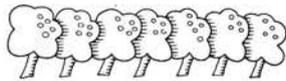
PICTURE BOOK SPECIAL

Brian Alderson
on
Randolph Caldecott

Stephanie Nettell
on the new
Uncle Remus

Authorgraph:
Anthony Browne

Nicholas Tucker
on
Just So Stories



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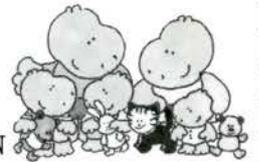
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This issue's cover is taken from an illustration by Jerry Pinkney for The Tales of Uncle Remus by Julius Lester (Bodley Head, 0 370 31089 6, £9.95).	
We are grateful for help from Bodley Head in using this illustration.	

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EDITOR'S PAGE

'What?' do I hear you ask. 'No Pat?' Relax, gentle reader. The unfamiliar face at the head of this piece doesn't signify blood in the boardroom at **Books for Keeps** nor is That Man Murdoch muscling in on the Kid Lit scene. The take-over is entirely temporary. As announced in her last editorial, Pat Triggs is stepping down for one issue only to concentrate on **BfK's Guide to Children's Poetry** due later this year. Normal service returns to the magazine in July . . . with not too many pieces for Pat to pick up, I hope.

This issue concentrates on picture-books. Whether or not we're enjoying a second Golden Age of Children's Literature as we're sometimes told, there can be no doubt at all that illustration for children has never been more plentiful, more varied or more accomplished in both technique and production. Mind you, it has to be. As Jan Pienkowski once pointed out, children these days encounter more visual pzazz in one commercial-break on television than most middle-aged adults experienced throughout their entire childhood. Does this mean illustration today is *better* than ever before, though?

The Caldecott Tradition

That's a very different question. And who better to pose it, and nudge towards an answer, than Brian Alderson? His dissent from the notion that 'promotion is all that matters in the euphoric world of children's books' is well known and in his article 'The Flow of the Images' (see page 4) we're reminded as powerfully as ever that what we should be engaged in is the 'aiding and abetting of a *critical* enterprise' in which text and illustration are seen, or not seen, to be working together. Central to Brian Alderson's case is the work of the nineteenth-century illustrator, Randolph Caldecott, in comparison with whom Errol Le Cain, for instance, is a mere 'decorative artist' and Anthony Browne 'a clever-clever technician'.

Well, maybe. Assessment Alderson-style is neither dull nor lacking in depth so you'll need all your wits about you to disagree. You may also need our Authorgraph (page 16) which takes Anthony Browne as its subject, an exploration of the approach and motivation of an illustrator whose appeal for me goes well beyond that distinctive and disturbing surface style. His **Hansel and Gretel**, first published in 1981 but in Magnet paperback only last year, is as good an example as I can cite of the way in which pictures can shift our perception of a well-known story. On this Nicholas Tucker is an expert. In 'When the Kipling Had to Stop' (page 24) he explores the fate of the **Just So Stories**, recently out-of-copyright and thus liable to be buried under an avalanche of illustrative alternatives. Is that what's happened, though? Read his account for a far from depressing view.

The Return of Mother Goose

Sally Grindley, on the other hand, might have called her piece 'When Mother Goose Had to Re-start'. On page 15 she reports on the deliberations behind this year's Mother Goose Award for The Most Exciting Newcomer to British Children's Book Illustration. Last year, you may recall, the panel failed to find a winner for the first time since the award began in 1979. This year's panel, which included Charles Keeping, Colin McNaughton, Lisa Kopper and, yes, Anthony Browne, was luckier. The 1987 bronze egg goes to Patrick James Lynch who made his debut illustrating Alan Garner's **A Bag of Moonshine** (Collins) and joins a list of distinguished former winners like Michelle Cartledge, Reg Cartwright, Juan Wijngaard and Jan Ormerod . . . not to mention Satoshi Kitamura, Patrick Benson and Susan Varley. What makes the Mother Goose Award so special, as its sponsors Books for Children are well aware, is the encouragement it gives young illustrators at the *outset* of their career.

Chris



So watch out for Patrick James Lynch.

Re-animating Remus

Watch out, too, for Jerry Pinkney. He's far from being a newcomer — remember his illustrations for Valerie Flounoy's **The Patchwork Quilt** published a couple of years ago by Bodley Head? Till now, though, he's been much better known in his native America than in Britain. That could be about to change. See page 30 for a review of **Half a Moon and One Whole Star** where he makes wonderful use of some distinctly mediocre verse by Crescent Dragonwagon. But for a glimpse of the full power of Pinkney turn to our front-cover. It comes from **The Tales of Uncle Remus**. Joel Chandler Harris's famous Brer Rabbit adventures, re-told by Julius Lester, with Pinkney's colour-plate and black-and-white drawings inviting comparison with the Frost originals. According to Julius Lester's introduction these stories represent 'the largest single collection of Afro-American folk-tales ever collected and published. Their place and importance in Afro-American culture is singular and undisputed' — despite, that is, their dubious provenance as the product of a white man very much of his time. Now that the stories have been re-claimed by two black men very much of their time, we asked Stephanie Nettell to discuss the project with both of them (see 'Rehabilitating That Rabbit' on page 12). Amongst much else, she discovered that Lester and Pinkney had never in fact met nor felt any great need to do so. The manuscript was link enough, apparently. Given the current fashion for close author-illustrator collaboration, at any rate with books for younger readers, it's an apt reminder that very different modes of perception are involved. We'll see the outcome next month when the book is published by Bodley Head.

Putting a Picture-book to Work

As usual, this issue also reviews the latest paperbacks across the age-range, together with a special review of Spring picture-books in hardback. The importance of picture-books for older children is now well established thanks to pioneers like Elaine Moss. They're far more than a mere aid-to-literacy, often enough representing the only sustained encounter children have with visual art out to sell only itself. Do picture-books have other curriculum possibilities, though? For details about a recent initiative in a Hampshire middle school, read Andy Chapell and Louise Fitzpatrick on pages 9 and 10. They were a bit diffident about writing it up for a wider audience but we think it's well worth reporting — and emulating.

And that's about it. Well, almost. Let me finish with Julius Lester's **Do Lord Remember Me** from Dent (0 460 04720 5, £9.95). Yes, I know it isn't a picture-book, nor is it for children. However, even a novice editor has some privileges and I can't pass up the chance to recommend a novel that under the guise of describing the last day alive of an elderly preacher sums up a century-and-a-half of black experience in America from slavery to civil rights. By the end, you feel as close to the South as Brer Rabbit did to the briar-patch where he was 'bred en born'. Don't miss it.

My thanks to all reviewers and contributors in the following pages — also to Angie Hill, Richard Hill and Jan Powling for providing the sort of back-up which tactfully became front-up when I got into difficulties. Welcome back, Pat! ●

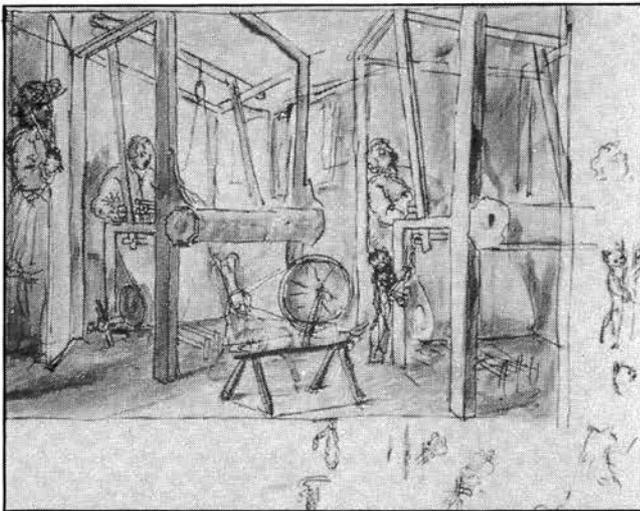
THE FLOW OF THE IMAGES

Brian Alderson outlines the thinking behind 'Sing a Song for Sixpence' - an exhibition he arranged at the British Library from October 1986 to January 1987. The purpose of the exhibition was not just to commemorate a great illustrator but, more ambitiously, to demonstrate 'the integrity of picture-book art'.

Very little attempt is made to perceive historical continuities in picture-book art. When therefore the British Library offered me the chance to put on a small exhibition to commemorate the centenary of the death of Randolph Caldecott it struck me that it might be worth pursuing some of the critical/historical enquiries that are so often overlooked. For Caldecott may be seen as a pivotal figure in the development of the English picture book and it was arguable that his commemoration might justly take the form of a graphic celebration of this fact rather than being a 'one-man show'. (Such a show had, in any case, been perfectly staged at Manchester City Art Gallery only a few years before.) My hope was to establish the pre-eminence of Caldecott's place through my selection of books and drawings with their accompanying captions, and to provide a fuller critical rationale in an illustrated handbook.*

The substance of the argument is simple enough, and nowhere better expressed than by Maurice Sendak when he talks about 'the rhythmic progression [through the pages of Caldecott's book] - a sense of music and dance'. Picture books may come in all shapes and sizes. They may have narrative unity or be an unconnected sequence of subjects, as in an alphabet book or a collection of nursery rhymes. Their success however depends upon the integrity of the illustrator's response within the covers of the book, and that integrity is most surely achieved through the illustrator's command of the drawn line. (I think that I caused some confusion in the argument - both in the exhibition and in the book - by seeking to add the rather crude psychological rider: that drawing is also the most natural way of illustrating. We are all given to it, children and adults alike, whatever our competence, and to that extent the drawing of pictures - rather than the making of decorations or the slapping around of paint - answers natural expectations.)

Now it may be coincidental, but from the time that children's books began to emerge as a definable commercial genre in the middle of the eighteenth century, English illustrators have shown themselves to possess a distinctive command of the drawn line. Undoubtedly the influence of Hogarth was paramount, and undoubtedly the Hogarthian style gained variety, flexibility, and sometimes a coarsening frenzy, through the popularity of caricature prints. The long-term effect though was the establishing of a fertile, non-academic - even amateur - tradition in illustration which was to be especially fruitful in the making of picture books. It was an hospitable tradition. It could include the passionate vision of Blake's whole-page prints for *Songs of Innocence* and the levity of George Cruikshank's *Comic Alphabet*. What it insisted on was the fluency of the illustrator's pen or graver, needle or brush.



William Hogarth, preliminary sketch for 'Industry and Idleness'.

Clarifying the technical and stylistic shifts of this tradition was one of the purposes of *Sing a Song for Sixpence*. The exhibition attempted to show an enduring family likeness in, let us say, picture books etched

by Rowlandson, or engraved on wood by the firm of Edmund Evans on behalf of Charles Bennett or Randolph Caldecott, or photographed for printing from the art-work of Leslie Brooke or Quentin Blake. Frustration was always at hand though, for the theme proved to be too large and too difficult to articulate within the confines of either the exhibition or the book.

One of the reasons for this is my own penchant for trying to demonstrate points by making contrasts. I was partly impelled to set up *Sing a Song for Sixpence* because it seemed to me that we are all too easily seduced by the surface impressions of picture books and do not sufficiently consider the inner relationships of the text and the illustrations. I may appear to be labouring the obvious when writing about the English tradition of drawing, but alongside that tradition there have subsisted contrasting modes of illustration whose fuller discussion would have clarified the central argument. With modern work, for instance, how better to counter the *Schwärmerei* that greets each new offering from decorative artists like Errol Le Cain or clever-clever technicians like Anthony Browne, than by reasserting the fluid interaction of picture and text that is present in the less stunning, but altogether more coherent picture books within 'the tradition'.

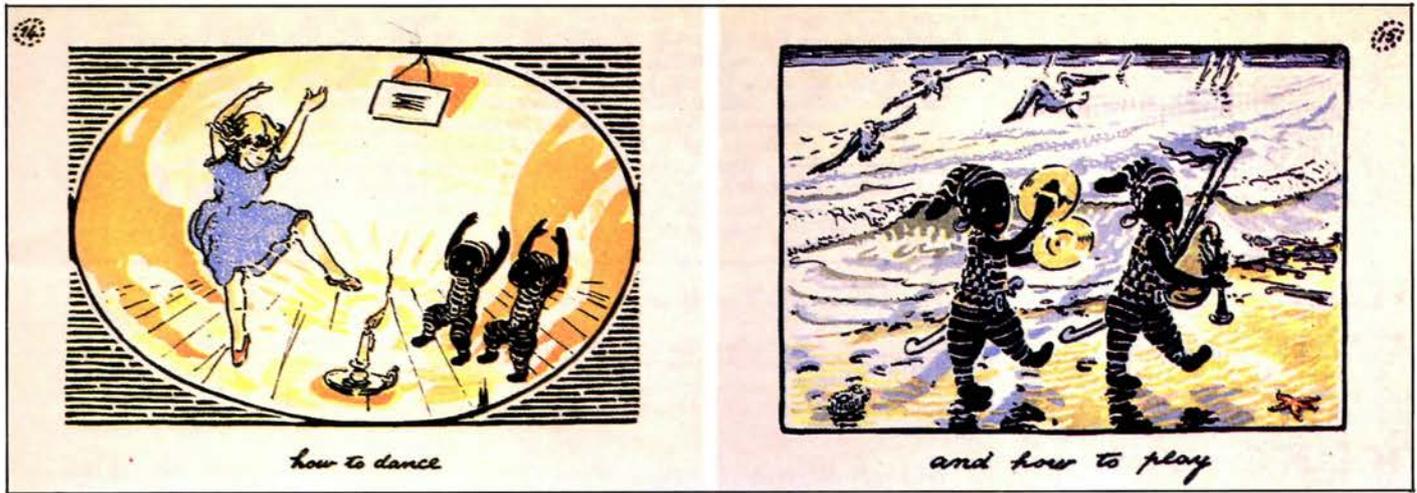


Beatrix Potter, 'The Tale of Mrs Tittlemouse'.

The impossibility of pursuing these contrasts as fully as I would have liked was matched by what several critics saw as the crucial weakness of the exhibition: the impossibility of turning the pages of the books. For if 'rhythmic progression' or 'fluid interaction' mean anything at all they mean the flow of words and pictures through the books as a whole - and looking at the book as a whole is not something that can be contrived in glass-cases or within the compass of 112-page manuals. A plan did exist for overcoming this problem by having on display an open rack of modern picture books which everyone attending the exhibition - adults and children alike - could examine at their leisure. This however was defeated by Administrative Prudence. It seems that the Warders, upon whom the successful operation of the British Museum entirely depends, were unwilling to permit so radical a departure from convention as to have people reading books in a book-exhibition. The only compromise that could be reached was to provide visitors with a list of recommended books which could then be seen and bought in the Museum Shop. That list was a - highly selective - summary of 'the Caldecott tradition' as it manifests itself today, with entries ranging from Beatrix Potter's *Sly Old Cat* to Charlotte Voake's *Over the Moon*.

In books such as these can be seen the delight in picture-book art that prompted the whole enterprise - and fortunately one opportunity did present itself for me to clarify further the points I wished to make. At a lunch-time lecture in the Museum in January we were able to 'turn the pages' of a couple of examples to demonstrate the nature and virtues - and fun - of 'the tradition'.

The first book I chose was the little-reckoned Caldecott *Toy Book Come Lasses and Lads* of 1881. The text, which is a ballad, is not an easy work to illustrate or to come to terms with as something to read to children. But the intelligence and artistry with which Caldecott parallels the May-Day celebrations of the song with a narrative line of his own, the way, for instance, that he characterises participants and



William Nicholson, 'The Pirate Twins'.



Randolph Caldecott, 'Sing a Song for Sixpence'.

creates from hints in the text the sad story of the fiddler – these are as good an example of the integrity of picture-book art as one could wish.

My second example was *The Pirate Twins* by William Nicholson (1929) – a companion-piece to *Clever Bill* and a book which it is shameful to find now out-of-print. Superficially it seems to have little to do with Randolph Caldecott but it is imbued with the same genius for the complete, harmonious integration of text and picture. This is seen partly in the dynamic way in which Nicholson paces the story

through the pages (it is written in his own round-hand script), and the pacing is perfectly complemented by the flow of the images. For although Nicholson's drawing (for offset lithography) is simpler and chunkier than Caldecott's it has the same vibrancy of movement and pleasure in off-the-cuff narrative detail.

To the audience it may have seemed coincidental that both these examples included reference to dancing, but in terms of the exhibition and the larger thesis that was present behind it this was not so. For when Sendak talked of Caldecott's 'sense of music and dance' he



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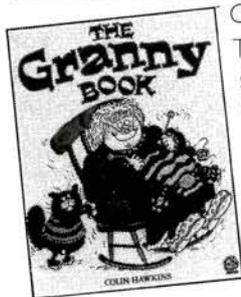


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was adumbrating a motif that asserts itself again and again in the progress of the English picture book. From Hogarth, who used a dance-scene as an example in his *Analysis of Beauty* (1753), to Quentin Blake, whose Mr Magnolia dances his way from one end of a book to the other, English illustrators (and American illustrators in the English tradition) can almost be judged by their response to the challenge of the dance. For in the demands that it makes on their powers of drawing – Blake's 'bounding line', Rowlandson's 'bouncing calligraphy', Caldecott's 'art of leaving out' – it symbolises the adequacy with which they can match the tune, the playfulness, the momentum of their subjects. ●

The Caldecott Tradition for Today's Children

The following list has been compiled with the wholly practical aim of recommending some of the picture books in 'the Caldecott tradition' that are available in bookshops or libraries today. The titles have been selected and classified to show the tradition at work in different kinds of picture book.

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Quentin Blake, Cape, o/p;
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Hamilton, o/p

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Wallace Tripp, Worlds Work,
o/p

Over the Moon
Charlotte Voake, Walker,
0 7445 0337 X, £7.95

Single Nursery Rhyme

Each Peach Pear Plum
Alan Ahlberg, ill. Janet
Ahlberg, Viking Kestrel,
0 670 28705 9, £5.95; Picture
Lions, 0 00 661678 X,
£1.75 pbk

A was an Apple Pie
Tracey Campbell Pearson,
Bodley Head, 0 370 30771 2,
£4.50

Sing a Song of Sixpence
Tracey Campbell Pearson,
Bodley Head, 0 370 30862 X,
£5.25

**Hector Protector and
As I Went over the Water**
Maurice Sendak, Macmillan,
0 333 37148 8, £1.95 pbk

Folk Tales

The Three Little Pigs
Erik Blegvad, Julia MacRae,
o/p; Picture Lions,
0 00 661966 5, £1.75 pbk

**The Great Big Enormous
Turnip**
Tolstói, ill. Helen Oxenbury,
Heinemann, 0 434 96680 0,
£5.50; Piccolo, 0 330 23386 6,
£1.25 pbk

The Little Red Hen
Margot Zemach, Viking
Kestrel, o/p; Picture Puffin,
0 14 050.567 9, £1.75 pbk

Comic Rhymes, etc

The Old Joke Book
Allan Ahlberg, ill. Janet
Ahlberg, Viking Kestrel,
0 670 52273 2, £4.95; Picture
Lions, o/p

Mr Magnolia
Quentin Blake, Cape,
0 224 01612 1, £4.95; Picture
Lions, 0 00 661879 0,
£1.95 pbk

Johnny Crow's Garden
L. Leslie Brooke, Warne,
0 723 23429 9, £2.95

**Hairy Maclary from
Donaldson's Dairy**
Lynley Dodd, Spindlewood,
0 907349 50 1, £4.25; Picture
Puffin, 0 14 050.531 8,
£1.95 pbk

Pat the Cat
Colin and Jacqui Hawkins,
Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.459 1,
£1.75 pbk

This is the Bear
Sarah Hayes, ill. Helen Craig,
Walker, 0 7445 0482 1, £2.95

Storybooks

Diana and her Rhinoceros
Edward Ardizzone, Magnet,
0 416 45260 4, £1.50 pbk

Johnny the Clockmaker
Edward Ardizzone, Oxford
University Press,
0 19 272120 8, £1.75 pbk, o/s at
present

**Little Tim and the Brave Sea
Captain**
Edward Ardizzone, Viking
Kestrel, 0 7226 5801 X, £6.50;
Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.175 4,
£2.50 pbk

The Snowman
Raymond Briggs, Hamish
Hamilton, 0 241 10004 6,
£5.95; Picture Puffin,
0 14 050.350 1, £2.95 pbk

Mr Gumpy's Outing
John Burningham, Cape,
0 224 61909 8, £5.50; Picture
Puffin, 0 14 050.254 8,
£1.75 pbk

The Winter Bear
Ruth Craft, ill. Erik Blegvad,
Collins, 0 00 195869 0, £4.95;
Picture Lions, 0 00 660872 8,
£1.75 pbk

The Big Green Book
Robert Graves, ill. Maurice
Sendak, Puffin, 0 14 03.0955 1,
£1.50 pbk

See Mouse Run
Sally Grindley, ill. Priscilla
Lamont, Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 11567 1, £5.50

The Sly Old Cat
Beatrix Potter, Warne,
0 723 21420 4, £2.95

Mr and Mrs Pig's Evening Out
Mary Rayner, Macmillan,
0 333 19371 7, £5.95; Piccolo,
0 330 25549 5, £1.25 pbk

Tom's Cat
Charlotte Voake, Walker,
0 7445 0527 5, £2.95

**John Brown, Rose and the
Midnight Cat**
Jenny Wagner, ill. Ron
Brooks, Viking Kestrel,
0 670 80790 7, £6.95; Picture
Puffin, 0 14 050.306 4,
£2.95 pbk

**The Elephant and the
Bad Baby**
Elfrida Vipont, ill. Raymond
Briggs, Hamish Hamilton,
0 241 01639 8, £4.95; Picture
Puffin, 0 14 050.048 0,
£1.75 pbk

Randolph Caldecott

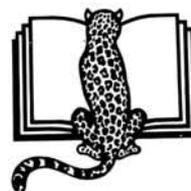
Three Miniature 'Collections'
of Randolph Caldecott's
picture books (each containing
two of his titles) have recently
been published by Warne
(0 723 23432 9, 0 723 23433 7,
0 723 23434 5) at £2.95 each.



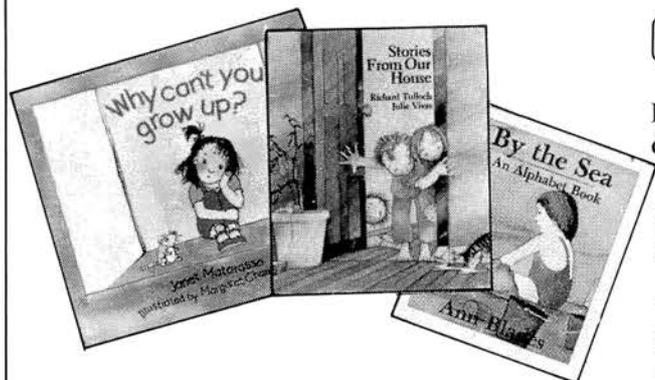
Mr Magnolia, Quentin Blake.

*Brian Alderson is Children's
Book Editor of *The Times*.
His *Sing a Song for Sixpence:
the English Picture-Book
Tradition and Randolph
Caldecott* is published by
Cambridge University Press in
paperback at £9.95
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hardback at £25.00
(0 521 33179 X).

Picture Books



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From *The Sad Story of Veronica, Who Played the Violin* by David McKee

Using Picture Books . . .

Andy Chapell and Louise Fitzpatrick describe their approach.

Our middle school was 'converted' to picture books last autumn term. By courtesy of our enlightened county librarian, a large number of picture books arrived in the library. They were greeted initially with the observation that somehow the first school's books had found their way to us and surely a mistake had been made. After all, picture books are only used when teaching very young children to read or to keep them amused while waiting in the doctor's surgery. We couldn't possibly use them, could we? When we discovered that they were indeed destined for us, we took them into the staff room where they were immediately pounced upon and devoured by eager members of staff:

'Is there another Willy the Wimp book?'

'Just look at these wonderful illustrations!'

'When can I show them to my class?'

Everyone responded enthusiastically to them so we decided to explore a variety of ways of using the books with our classes.

To begin with, each year-group was given the chance to browse through the books and share reading experiences. Children of all ages and abilities quite obviously enjoyed this activity. Poorer readers were delighted because they could actually read a whole book in a few minutes, let alone days, and the better readers were pleased that now there were books with pictures for them, too. At this stage, we drew attention to the different formats and layouts of the books. This was important for the work which we tackled later on.

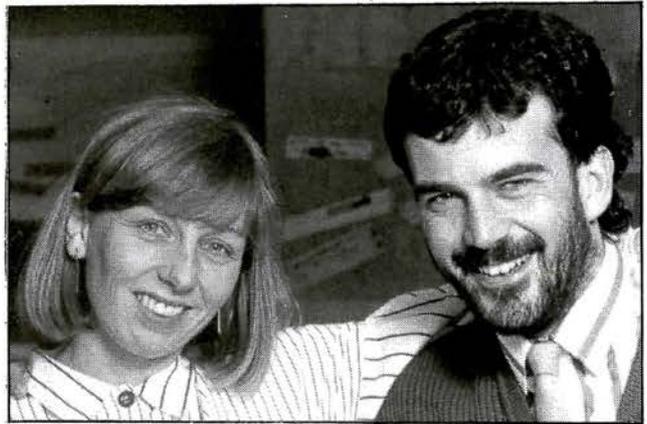
While reading the books with the children, we found that some of the stories naturally lent themselves to points of discussion; books like **Granpa** which examines the close relationships between children and grandparents and the emotions associated with death, and **The Visitors Who Came to Stay** which highlights the tensions which can arise in a one-parent family when a new partner is introduced to the family unit. Both books were used successfully with children who were coping with those very same situations.

We were aware that by talking with the children about the stories we were extending their thinking and encouraging them to empathise, but we also wanted to establish a link with writing. One of the first successful writing sessions was stimulated by using **Alastair's Elephant**. The story was read almost to the end and then the task was set – if the children were the author, how would they finish the story? Small groups were organised and the children started to plan. They were issued with large sheets of sugar paper, pastels, wax crayons and felt tip pens so that they could include illustrations as well as language. Some of the ideas were ingenious and even rivalled the original ending! The children's work was displayed on the 'Alternative Endings' board in the classroom. A follow-up activity to this was that some children wrote their own stories using the same theme but this time the number and types of animals which followed them home from the zoo were amazing. An array of zebras, orang-utans, and deadly snakes stomped and slithered across the story pages.

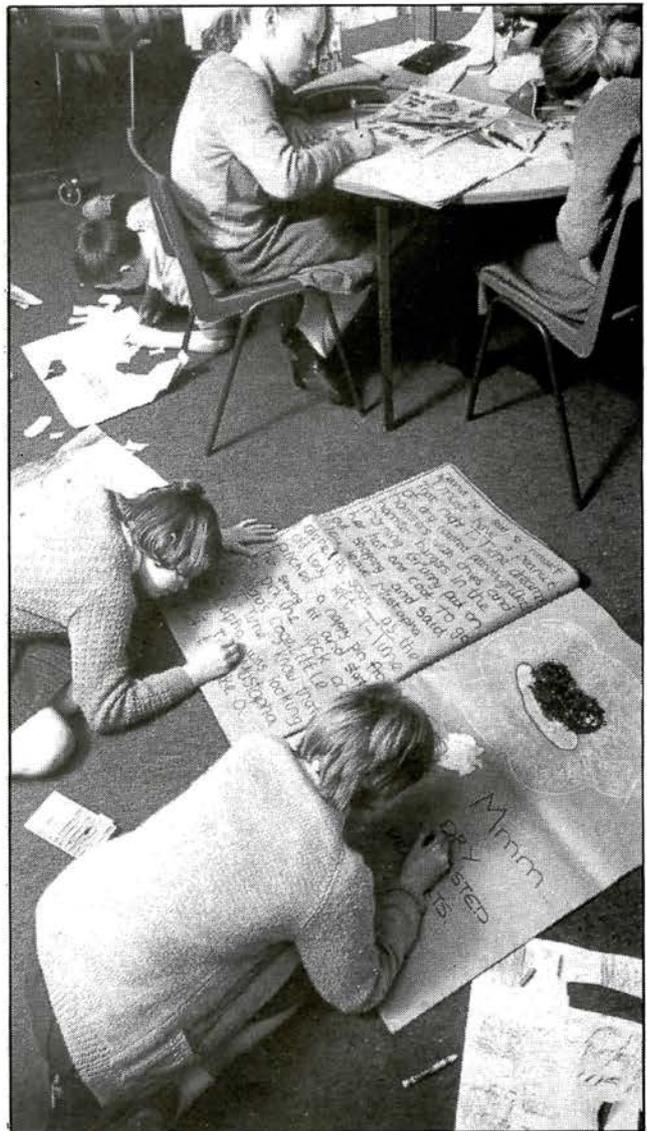
Great fun was had by the second years when one afternoon **Would You Rather . . .** was read and then used as a basis for writing. The reader is invited by the author to make some rather unusual and sometimes revolting choices! Which would you rather . . . snail juice or spider stew? Choices were made and then our results displayed on a large pictogram (snail juice proved to be a popular choice). Another page asked the children to make the decision between having breakfast in a balloon, tea on the river or supper in a castle. We developed this by asking children to justify their decision and give further information. Who would they invite to join them? What would they have to eat? Where would they like the balloon/river/castle to be? The finished pieces were presented on large sheets of white paper where the children recorded their ideas and also painted a picture in the style of the book's illustrations.

We are very fortunate to have a well stocked library van which has some videos of picture book stories. One video available is **Strega Nona** and it was this film that was watched by our lower school. The story is about an old woman who owns a magic pasta pot. The pot goes terribly wrong when her boy helper activates the pot and drowns the local town in a sea of spaghetti. After watching the film and reading the book, the children soon realised that they knew similar stories like **The Magic Porridge Pot** and **The Sorcerer's Apprentice**. The children then chose a partner to work with and were asked to list what the stories had in common. It was decided that there were five main likenesses.

- * Each story involves a magic object which can produce food, liquid, etc.
- * There are two spells, one to begin the magic and one to stop it.

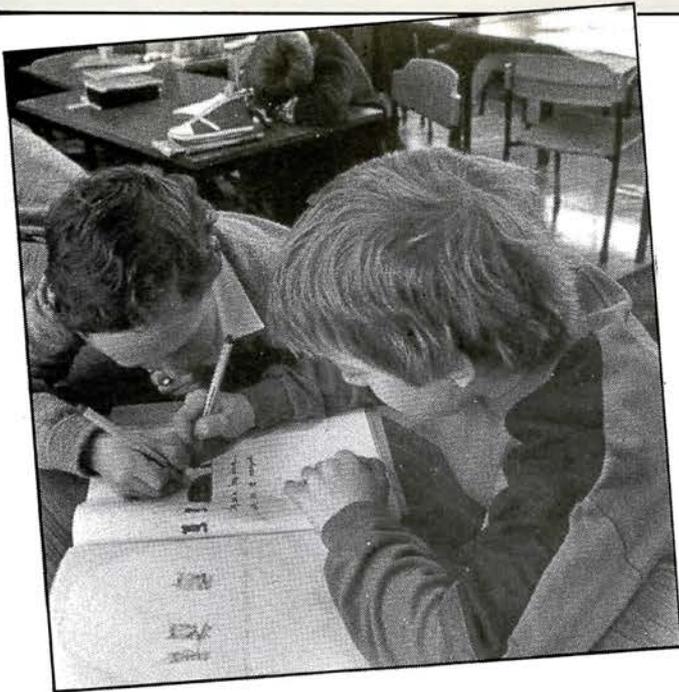


Louise Fitzpatrick and Andy Chapell



- * Each story has two main characters – one goodie and one baddie.
- * A disaster happens as a result of the second spell not being known.
- * The baddie is given a punishment to fit his/her crime.

Once this was established and understood, the children began working on their own stories using this same structure as a basis for their writing. They had to work carefully to meet the challenge of including



the relevant details while keeping their story in the correct sequence and telling it in a set number of pages. We suggested a layout for the children to use – dividing their sugar paper into eight equal sections which represented their eight pages. We felt that the success of the results depended upon giving the children a structure and format to work within. Because they were working in pairs it didn't matter if a child had difficulty with writing because his/her partner could wield the pen, but ideas were shared. Titles of the finished stories ranged from 'The Magic Jam Jar' to 'The Magic Truck Factory', which, due to a faulty spell, produced more trucks in a minute than Ford does in a year! We shared and read each other's stories and the children were thrilled that they had become real authors.

The idea of writing for a real audience was also developed earlier this year when the snow fell. It seemed a perfect opportunity to use **The Snowman** and the fact that a year group were studying weather made it irresistible. After watching the video and sharing the book, the three classes were told that they were to become authors for a second time and that they were to write a book in readiness for an exhibition three weeks later. The exhibition was to be mounted in the school library and their work was to be viewed by the rest of the school. They created their own characters from 3D materials, as the boy had used the snow to create his snowman. The children chose from plasticine, clay, papier-mâché, dough or anything else that they wanted to use. Soon the classrooms were transformed into thriving, buzzing workshops. Children worked individually or in pairs bringing in typewriters from home or borrowing our long-suffering secretary's old one. Desks were rearranged as partners spread out their papers deliberating on storyline and presentation. To give a realistic feel and to add value to the finished books, they were covered with clear fablon. Not only were the children thrilled that they had become real authors but the enthusiasm of other children to read their books because of the attractive format gave them enormous satisfaction.

Our eleven and twelve-year-olds based a school assembly on stories they had written after sharing the picture books. The class identified various formats within the different books and used these as a basis



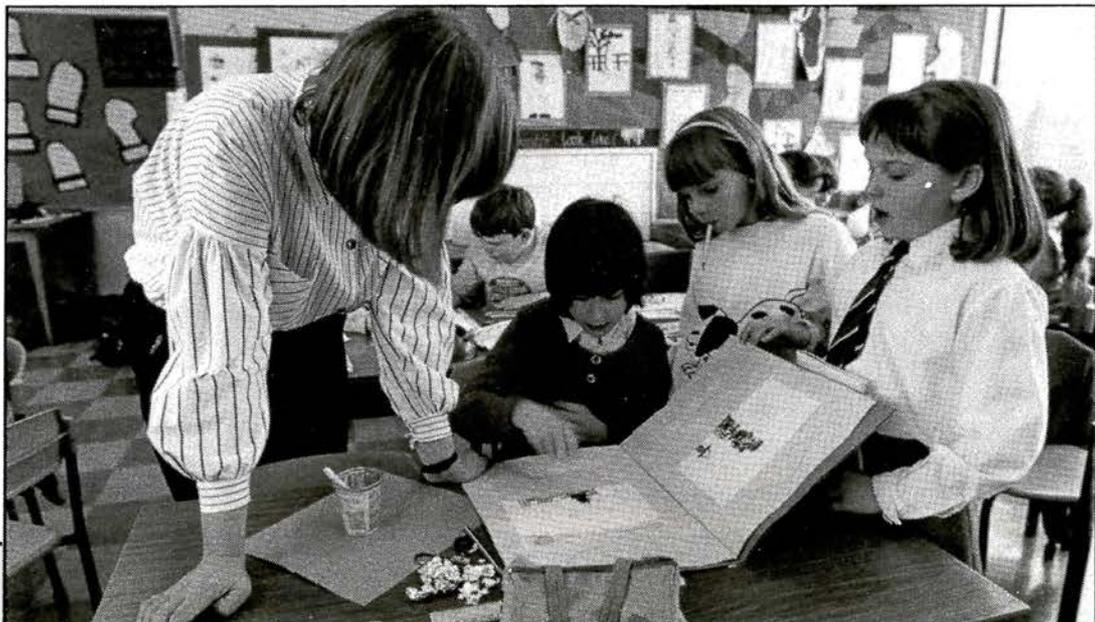
for dramatic presentations. Some were sequels like 'Willie the Snooker Player' and 'Grandma, Felix and Mustapha Peanut' (a hamster); others were adaptations with original twists. One based on **Alastair's Elephant** used an enormous cardboard house with opening windows to reveal weird and wonderful creatures. This particular idea has now toured much of southern Hampshire. All the stories were motivated by the prospect of presentation to an audience and united by a willingness to re-work and re-draft early attempts.

A different idea was used by another year-group which decided to use the books as a vehicle for linking spoken language and music making. The books used for this purpose were **Two Can Toucan**, **Where the Wild Things Are** and **On Friday Something Funny Happened**. The stories were read aloud by small groups of children while others used the instruments to create sound effects to add atmosphere to the storytelling or composed music to accompany the stories. These taped sessions stimulated rich and varied discussion between the children and gave them opportunities to experiment with their own language and to develop their music making talents. Later on, when the tapes were played, they added another dimension to the stories.

Picture books have provided us with a wealth of ideas and stimuli for developing the curriculum, particularly language. We believe that picture books represent a vast resource for *all* ages of inspirational material which is just waiting to be used in our first, middle and even secondary schools. We hope you agree. Happy Picture Book Exploring! ●

Andy Chapell and Louise Fitzpatrick teach at Holbury Middle School, Southampton.

Photographs by Richard Mewton.



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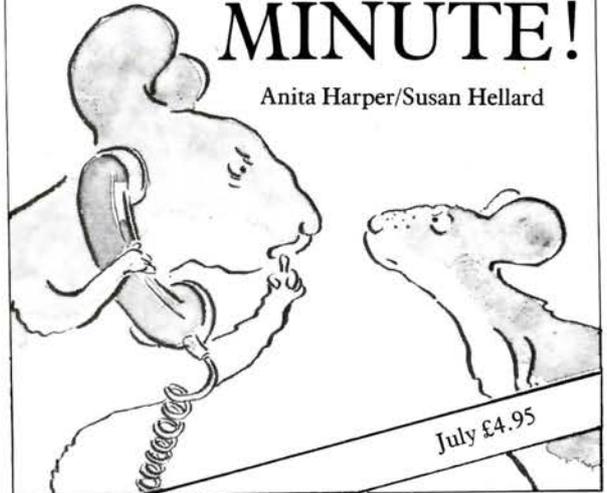
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Rehabilitating That Rabbit . . .

For years, Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus stories have been under a cloud – black language and lore, say critics, concealing a white view of the world. Now **Julius Lester** and **Jerry Pinkney** have mounted a rescue operation.

Stephanie Nettell talks to both of them about one of the most exciting literary projects of the year.

JULIUS LESTER

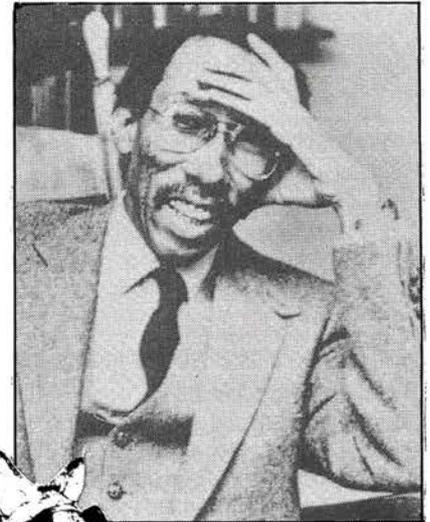
'I feel that the ghost of every slave lives inside me, and that one of my reasons for being on this earth is to let them speak through me, to give them life again and to let their voices be heard – because while they lived their voices were not heard.'

And so Julius Lester in retelling *The Tales of Uncle Remus* is simply fulfilling a destiny: to reclaim the stories for black people. In the Uncle Remus character telling stories to a small white boy, Joel Chandler Harris may have used a narrative device we today find distasteful and which was not even an accurate reflection of black life and culture, but the stories themselves remain strong and authentic. 'I wanted black people to have the experience of the tales, to recognise that they come out of the lives of our ancestors, and that we can take a pride in them, learn from them, and make them part of our culture again. But I certainly want white people, too, to enjoy them, to love them and sense some of the magic that is in black culture.'

The mischievous, shrewd, affectionate and funny little stories of Brer Rabbit and his friends and enemies have almost disappeared beneath a burden of embarrassment and contempt combined with their near-incomprehensible dialect. To lift this burden Lester at first considered having adults in a slave community tell the tales, as in reality happened, but decided this would get in the way of the stories; he finally decided to create a voice only, but one so distinctive and contemporary that an image of the storyteller would come to the reader's own mind.

'The language I use is a combination of the English I grew up speaking in the South and what's spoken on the street now. Black English, the English which certain strata of blacks, though not all, use among each other, has been the centre of education debates in the States for about fifteen years – teachers found that texts using a language the kids themselves spoke made it easier for them to learn to read standard English.' It's a language as concerned with sound as with meaning, lending vigour, colour and humour, and is a life-force of the book, but it had to survive anxious editorial scissors. Lester in his introduction is at pains to explain his entirely unexceptionable use of the historic present to give immediacy.

'That simply reflects the battles I've been through with editors to protect changing tenses, and to protect using language to convey emotion regardless of strictly correct grammar. My experience of a manuscript going through editors' hands is that there are so many queries and requests for changes that it's like fighting a war: black writers in this country have a problem with white



editors who don't want to respect the "rules" of black speech because they are uncomfortable with them and they want to reach as wide a market as possible. Whereas I want to reach that wide market and still reflect my culture.' The storyteller of *Uncle Remus* shoots off into quirky and vivid little asides – just like a *real* storyteller – but they are the lonely survivors of many more who fell to the editor's knife. 'It's been an on-going battle for all the years I've been in publishing.

'The asides have all sorts of jokes meant for adults: when I was growing up traditional storytelling was an adult activity, though the kids could sit nice and quiet in a corner and listen.' Storytelling in America for both adults and children is an accepted event but, good storyteller though he knows he is, and much as he enjoys writing them, Lester shirks telling stories in public, and even to his own children. He doesn't know why. Perhaps it is because he is uneasy as a 'literary person'. 'Writing is something I enjoy and is important to me, it's one of the ways I communicate with people and one of the ways I express my love for the world, but it's not really what my life is about.' And perhaps because he has tried to keep his four children free of the influence of having a well-known writer and academic as a father – he is amazed now to find his two elder ones majoring in Afro-American Studies and English at university.

Lester has taught at the University of Massachusetts since 1971 (far longer than he intended, such has been his enjoyment of students) in Afro-American Studies and in Judaic Studies, offering a wide variety of courses – from the black novel to the civil rights movement to Elie Wiesel. Despite this background he resents approaching folktales like Brer Rabbit in an academic way, searching for symbolic roots in myth. 'They served two purposes within the slave society, educational and psychological: anyone who is weak and powerless can identify with a Brer Rabbit who survives by his wits, so that people who are unable to triumph within the context of their lives can triumph vicariously through the tales. But although there will inevitably be a significance in the stories beyond the reach of a white audience, the beauty of them is that they have a universal appeal regardless of the culture they come from.'

As the power of his latest book, the adult novel *Do Lord Remember Me*, suggests, Julius Lester is the child of a South where black ministers, like his own father, loved to tell stories – the Uncle Remus project is a natural part of a life-long pleasure. 'The real accomplishment for me is putting the stories into order, creating a link so that instead of the original random collection they read like a series of adventures. There will be four volumes, and this for me is the really creative aspect.' Like all his writing, novels, stories and black folktales, it reflects his heritage, and more vitally, he says, fulfils his responsibility to his ancestors.

'I began work on the Uncle Remus stories with preliminary sketches, the way I had worked with animals in the past, but found I wasn't getting the story across. Then I realised they weren't about animals at all – they were about people who took the forms of animals – so I had to re-think my whole process. I ended up taking Polaroids of myself and my wife in animal poses, and I found I'd arrived at a way of turning animals into people without losing any of their essential animal quality.'

JERRY PINKNEY



record and book jackets, advertising (about half his work), National Geographic covers, china design, commemorative stamps (serving on the US Postal Stamp Advisory Committee), Sesame Street . . . Till about five years ago he would suit his style to each project, but now it has developed into 'a very signature style, a Jerry Pinkney style, and I take those assignments that are looking for that style. There is a new artist on the scene, and it's pretty exciting!'

He works in pencil line and water-colour washes. He has always been strong in colour, which may be why his success is relatively recent. 'Most of my books till **Patchwork Quilt** have been black and white or two-colour; then **Half a Moon** was an extension of **Patchwork Quilt**, using full colour for a subject, nature, I enjoy.' The British tend to think of him as a marvellous discovery, but he has illustrated about forty children's books over more than twenty years, and (like Lester) is festooned with awards for, among others, **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Tonweya and the Eagles** (Lakota Indian stories, with whose author he did work closely) and **The Patchwork Quilt**.

From the beginning, it seems, 'people somehow felt that my style lent itself to ethnic books.' (It may change: there is nothing specifically ethnic, only American, about **Half a Moon**.) Although Lester believes there is little that is directly African in the Uncle Remus tales, the roots of black culture in Africa are important to Pinkney as an artist. 'African art and design are part of the things I collect, part of the books I have, and if you look at African art, which deals with pattern, and you look at my art, you must see it plays a large role.'

The successful illustrator and one-time professor remembers the small boy who drew pictures when the papers on his newsstand weren't selling but never dreamed there could be a living in it, and frequently visits junior schools. 'I try to encourage young people who are interested in becoming artists – I always tell them their work looks good. What they are asking from me is the same thing I asked for – someone to pay attention.' ●

The Tales of Uncle Remus: the Adventures of Brer Rabbit is published by The Bodley Head (0 370 31089 6, £9.95) in June.

Stephanie Nettell is Children's Book Editor of the *Guardian*.

It is a measure of Jerry Pinkney's brilliance that his rabbits, foxes and bears, dressed in dungarees, waistcoats and neckerchiefs, behave and express emotions like humans yet remain totally their own furry selves. Today his work is naturalistic, lush and full, the work, it seems, of a man fond of life and fond of people. 'After art school I was much involved with abstract work, and, although my work is now very realistic, I'm really on the borderline. Below the surface there's a tremendous use of a decorative quality: I exploit pattern – feather patterns, the coat of an animal, a person's hair – much more than a realist might.'

He is anxious about describing himself as a nature *artist*, preferring to emphasise only his enjoyment and research interest, but 'I must admit that I'm getting many more assignments that deal with nature. Before, I was adding in animals as devices, but now I've even done a pop-up for National Geographic on creatures of the deep.' And the jungle parrots, the wood owl and raccoons and the garden cricket in the honeysucked night of **Half a Moon and One Whole Star** are the work of no simple nature lover but a passionate nature artist. (This was a book he designed entirely, including the panels and typography, to maintain the flow of the story in its different setting.)

The **Uncle Remus** illustrations are humorous, less exotic, from a quieter, greener farmland. Re-interpreting the stories visually, Pinkney, in his relationship with Frost, the original artist, faced a different problem from Julius Lester's with Joel Chandler Harris.

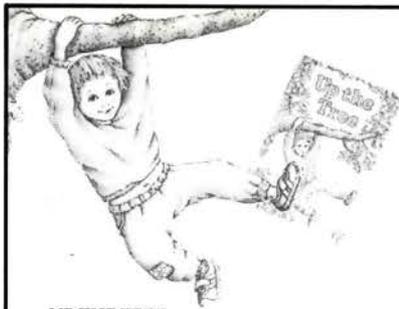
'The difficulty was to get Frost out of my mind, because he did such a wonderful job I couldn't help but be inspired by him. I wanted to bring something new to the book, but I didn't feel, as people do about the

stories, that there was anything I wanted to erase, just things I wanted to improve.' There is not 'Black Illustration' along the lines of 'Black English', but 'I do think there are certain things I'm more sensitive to than, say, a non-black, simply because that's part of my culture.

'Above all, an artist should be simply an artist, but yes, I do enjoy black assignments, and I think awards like the Coretta Scott King' (which he has received twice, including **The Patchwork Quilt**) 'help stress that black artists are out there. And it is easy for me to reach back and bring things from my own life, my own childhood, to the work; I can use my entire family, my sons and daughters and my wife, and often these stories relate to something I've heard my father talk about.'

Surprisingly, there was no collaboration between Lester and Pinkney over **Uncle Remus**. They have never met, and Lester for one sees no reason why they should: 'I stay away from illustrators – the illustrator should have the creative freedom to work, and, since I have strong ideas and if I get involved I express them forcefully, it's better to stay out of the way!' Pinkney was already working with American publishers Dial, who chose him for his skill with animals. 'Close collaboration to me means with a manuscript, and that is certainly very close, not with an author.'

Pinkney, like Lester, was born in 1939, and has four grown children, all with an artistic bent – one son 'working towards the same goals as a freelance illustrator, who works with me when I'm extremely busy', another an art director with Ogilvy and Mather in New York. Pinkney himself has worked in an amazing number of fields since studying commercial art and design in his native Philadelphia: for a greetings card company,



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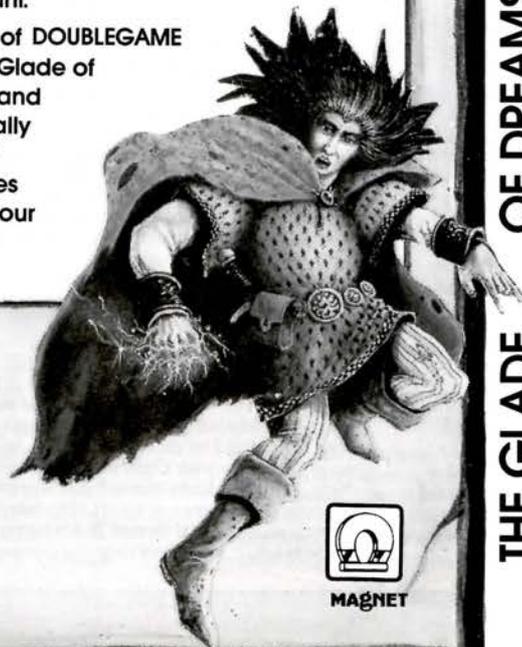


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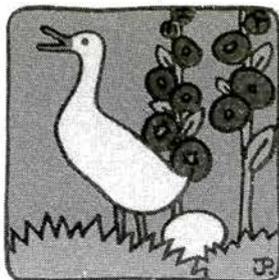
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A BAG OF PLENTY

Sally Grindley reports on this year's Mother Goose Award.

Winner: Patrick James Lynch.

The Mother Goose Award is alive and well and still being sponsored by Books for Children. Last year's panel was unable to make an award (a sponsor's nightmare). This year's panel was bowled over by the number and quality of the submissions: 41 altogether, making a rich crop of new talent, much of it to be admired.

Top of the crop came Patrick James Lynch for his illustrations for Alan Garner's *A Bag of Moonshine*. Amazingly, he doesn't even warrant a mention on the cover, such is the eminence of the book's author. But the more we looked the more we were impressed by the sheer accomplishment of Patrick Lynch's work. He is manifestly talented with pen and ink, as much at home with soft cross-hatching as with heavier line and even silhouette. There's a robustness and cheekiness about his interpretation of an extremely difficult text and, though the influences of Rackham, Ardizzone, Pieńkowski and many others are very strong, there's a definite individuality about much of his work which we hope will develop when he is given a freer rein. We felt that his colour work was more mundane and somewhat uneven in style, only to be expected in a newcomer, perhaps. But he cannot have been helped by the limitations imposed by the use of old-fashioned glossy colour plates in preference to a looser interweaving of colour.



One of Patrick Lynch's illustrations for Alan Garner's *A Bag of Moonshine*.

We hope now that Patrick Lynch will be given the opportunity, via very different material, to develop his own style. It would be too easy for him to be typecast because of this one book and kept as a kind of utility-illustrator able to play in every position including goal but never being given a starring role. What a waste this would be!

On to the runners-up, in no particular order. Sue Scullard's *Miss Fanshawe and the Great Dragon Adventure* could not fail to boggle the mind. We were dazzled by her extraordinary perspective-bending landscapes. Here is a book that finds its roots in the days of Sergeant Pepper and the psychedelic sixties. The detail is phenomenal and, not content to let you sit and look at the book from left to right and top to bottom, she makes you turn it round and look at it from different angles. She has an amazing talent for layout and ingenious visual effects. What is quite remarkable is that she should have taken so many risks with a first book. What will she tackle next?! We would like to see her develop a greater sense of movement, to loosen up, in order to find a specifically *narrative* flair that's underplayed in this book.

Claudio Munoz's *Big Baby* tore the panel asunder: we loved it, and hated it. But we decided that the story did not lend itself to award-winning visual interpretation, and that the artist had in fact done a very good job. He demonstrates a great sense of movement, a flair for the eye-catching angle of vision, and a good sense of humour and fun. There's a punchiness about his work that's difficult to resist, and he really knows how to use a page to take your eye where he wants you to look.

Dom Mansell's interpretation of *The Selfish Giant* is a very accomplished and inventive piece of work. His approach to this classic tale is refreshingly informal and his use of colour is sparkling. The children are a lovely mischievous-looking bunch, and the giant ages beautifully without losing his identity. There is a Tony Ross-like humour about many of the pictures, in fact Ross's influence is quite marked, but there are also a number of attractive individual touches and we hope that these will take over as the artist gains in confidence.

Finally, Peter Collington won a lot of admiration for *Little Pickle* and, more particularly, for its follow-up, *The Angel and the Soldier Boy* (which was ineligible). Here is an artist who already has his own marvellously distinctive style and a superb talent for carrying the narrative in visual form. No need for words, pictures can say it all. He uses the comic book layout with great confidence and has learned his craft well from people like Raymond Briggs and Hergé. The most memorable aspect of his work is the degree of feeling that emanates, and an inherent primitive charm. He now needs to strengthen his use of colour and depth to avoid the flatness of some spreads.

So those were our top five, but there were so many other talented newcomers who came very close. Helen Ganly makes breathtaking use of collage in *Jyoti's Journey*, a sensitive story about a little Indian

girl's reunion with her father in England. From collage to linocuts, with Jo Lawrence's boisterous story about a homeless beard, called *The Beard*. We were pleased to see different media being used. And then there was Chris Riddell's *Mr Underbed* with its great chunky monsters and huge sense of fun. He's already well established and making a name for himself. There was the usual dearth of multi-cultural books and too little non-fiction – are they being saved for established artists or are they simply not around? But we finished full of optimism about the talented new people coming through. Don't let's lose them. ●

A Bag of Moonshine

Alan Garner, ill. Patrick James Lynch, Collins, 0 00 184403 2, £8.95

Miss Fanshawe and the Great Dragon Adventure

Sue Scullard, Macmillan, 0 333 39307 4, £5.95

Big Baby

John Ward, ill. Claudio Munoz, Walker, 0 7445 0528 3, £2.95

The Selfish Giant

Oscar Wilde, ill. Dom Mansell, Walker, 0 7445 0678 6, £5.95

Little Pickle

Peter Collington, Methuen, 0 416 54780 X, £5.95

The judges this year were Anthony Browne, Sally Grindley, Charles Keeping, Lisa Kopper, Colin McNaughton, Anne Marley, Beverley Mathias and Chris Powling.

Sally Grindley is editorial director of Books for Children and also writes texts for picture books.

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Authorgraph No. 44

Anthony Browne.



Much interviewed these days, Anthony Browne would prefer to skip certain questions. 'Can you comment on the significance of brick walls in your work?' he was once asked on television. Or, from a German critic intrigued by his punning references to surrealist painters like Magritte, de Chirico and Dali, 'Why do you *steal* so much of your humour?' Remembering these makes him roar with laughter. His grin is a bit more fixed, though, when he has to recount, for the umpteenth time, how he was once bitten by a real-life gorilla – ironically, while making a film to show how fond he is of a creature which often appears in his books. 'I've told that one over and over again,' he says ruefully.

And duly repeats the story, like the pro he is.

What bothers him about interviews is their tendency to encourage a response that's merely glib or, worse still, pretentious. Art for Anthony Browne is perfectly *normal* – even if one of its crucial functions is to help us renew the way we see the world. The freshness of his own vision, and his highly skilled craftsmanship, has already won him both the Kate Greenaway Medal and the Kurt Maschler Award. It's also brought him a delightful seventeenth-century house, one of the historic buildings of Kent, and a job he freely admits he can't believe he's being paid for. 'I'd do it for nothing if I had to.'

Yet, like many other illustrators, he came to children's books almost by accident. 'I

couldn't make enough to live on as the designer of greetings cards and it was a toss-up between children's books and women's magazine illustration.' He'd already worked in advertising and as a medical illustrator, along with two short-lived attempts at becoming a teacher. His first try at a picture-book, moreover, was 'the wrong size, the wrong shape, the wrong number of pages and basically just derivative.' Luckily, though, Julia MacRae was amongst the first publishers he showed it to and she spotted at once that there were also one or two things he was getting right. He still speaks warmly of her encouragement and good advice and it's to her that **Piggybook**, a front-runner for many of this year's prizes, is dedicated.

Despite this roundabout route, Anthony Browne's arrival as one of the most original and accomplished of our picture-book artists seems to have been destined from the start. As a child in the fifties, growing up in the Yorkshire village of Hipperholme, near Halifax, he was more conscious of comics and annuals than books. But he drew endlessly. 'Battles, as much as anything. I used to fill the page with lots and lots of battles – and lots of little figures with plenty of what would now be called surrealistic jokes. Things like a disembodied head with a speech-bubble coming out saying "Aaargh!" In those days I'd use arrows to point at something that was going on in the background and write a label in case I hadn't drawn it clearly enough – such as "An Invisible Man", that kind of thing.'

Even though he always knew 'Art was my best subject,' his passage through grammar

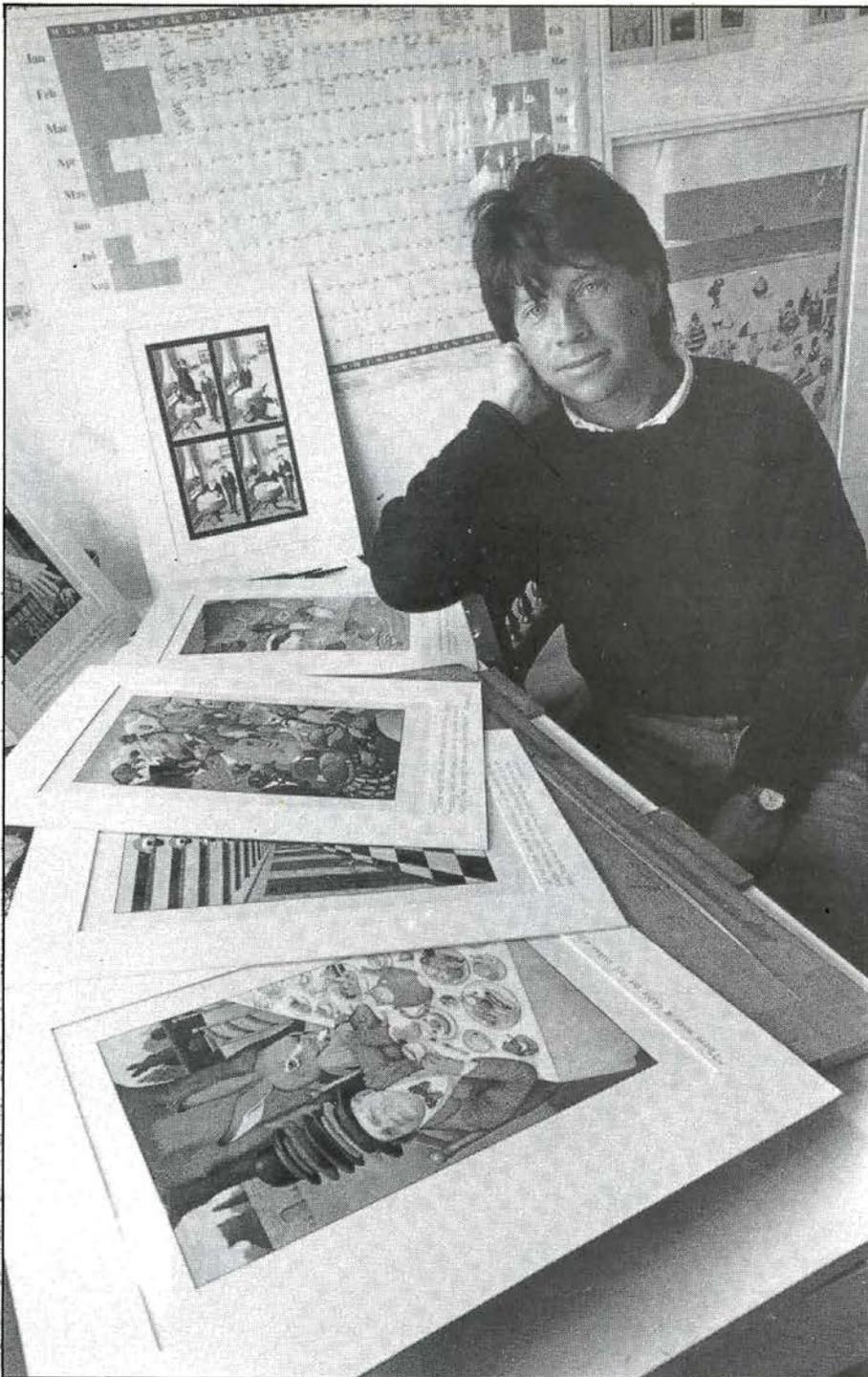
school wasn't easy. Partly this was due to the low status it had in the academic pecking-order, a familiar enough circumstance, and partly to his Art teacher, 'a classic wide-brush man whose own work in oils was as far removed as it could possibly be from me with my sharp little pencil.' He passed O-level Art a year early but came bottom in the exam. Having been thwarted in his attempt to take Art, English and Biology at A-level, a combination which would have been very handy for his future employment, he transferred after a year to Leeds Art School.

It was there, embarked on a three-year course in graphic design, that the unthinkable happened. 'My father died. It was a great shock to me, an incredible shock. This God-like figure I thought would live forever, who I never dreamed would not be there, was suddenly gone. He was a frustrated artist, I suppose, born at the wrong time. From what I can gather his parents always strongly advised him against doing anything artistic because it was unreliable and you couldn't make a living out of it. Plus being much more difficult to go to art college in those days without grants. So he never actually found out what he wanted to do . . . but always, in his spare time, he drew – usually for us, my elder brother Michael and me. He didn't paint pictures and put them in frames and hold exhibitions and stuff, but he used to spend a lot of time with us as children drawing, and playing drawing games.' Is Anthony Browne to some extent fulfilling his father's unfulfilled ambition, then? 'It's not something I think about but I suppose in a way, yes. If he'd been given the opportunities I had, I'm pretty sure he'd have done something very similar . . .'

His father's sudden death affected him greatly. 'It took me a long time to get over it. As well as the surrealist painters, I was much impressed by Francis Bacon and for ages had this morbid death thing. I was always painting the insides of people showing on the outside, for instance – adolescent stuff, I know.' Perhaps, but perfect preparation for his subsequent job as a medical illustrator, the official recorder of the intricate goings-on in the operating theatre of a large hospital. But even this wasn't sufficient exorcism. Later, in the 'high-pressure, very difficult, very boring, incredibly well paid world of advertising, I still found it very difficult to paint anything happy . . . I remember I once had to draw this family having a nice time inside a caravan. And I couldn't! Whatever I did it looked as if something ominous was about to happen, or as if they'd just had a row or were about to stab somebody . . . I just couldn't paint a happy picture.'

The cure, amazingly enough, turned out to be greetings cards. He was taken on by Gordon Fraser who 'taught me how to do happy designs. Eventually I was able to do happy teddy-bears and happy cats. He was always very good to me.' Not least of the Fraser kindnesses, as it turned out, was his suggestion of a second string to the Browne bow to offset the precariousness of the card market. Why didn't he take up magazine illustration, perhaps? Or children's books? Hence Julia MacRae and, in due course, **Through the Magic Mirror**.

He's very critical of the book now. 'In a way it was a fake book. It started the wrong way round. It began with images and was linked with words afterwards. They should both come together ideally.' Nevertheless it's been reprinted twice since 1976 and established the Browne hallmarks from the outset: the careful use of colour, the bold draughtsmanship, the gloriously inventive surreal humour. These were developed further in the books that followed – **A Walk in the Park**, **Bear Hunt**, **Look What I've Got**, **Hansel and Gretel**, **Bear Goes to Town** – all



getting increasing critical attention as the distinctive Anthony Browne vision of things established itself. Then, in 1983, came those prizes for **Gorilla**, his classic account of a small girl's birthday gift which becomes so much more than a gift.

As with all his books, he's not sure how **Gorilla** came about. 'My audience, I suppose, is always me as a child – the book I'd have liked to have seen as a child. I don't ever really think "will seven-year-old children in 1987 like this book?" In some unconscious way I tune in to the child I was. I've heard Maurice Sendak say similar things and that's the only awareness of my audience I have. . . . I suppose some vague part of me is aware of what the book is about but I shrink from making the process too self-conscious. It's why I'm a little wary even of talking about it in case I become pretentious or pompous. The books do come naturally. At any particular time I've always got three or four ideas which aren't

quite fully formed in my head. It's a question of waiting for one of them to come to the surface. I'd find it very difficult to do a book to order – to do a commissioned book, for instance.'

Hence his preference for providing both the words and the pictures himself. Even his book with Sally Grindley, **Knock, Knock! Who's There?**, was a curious throwback to a never-published book of his own. 'That was probably why I took it on in the first place – this idea of opening up a door to see what's behind it is a recurring dream I've had ever since I was a child. Quite inadvertently Sally's text seemed to tap into this.' It was the same with **The Visitors Who Came to Stay**, his book with Annalena McAfee. 'She's a very old friend of mine and we worked on it closely together so that the book grew in a very natural kind of way between us – which is very unusual for a separate author and illustrator.'

This growing from within is, quite literally, vital to his approach which is why he firmly denies any propagandist intention behind books of his like **Willy the Wimp**, **Willy the Champ** and **Piggybook**. 'I couldn't do an "issues" book if I tried,' he says. Indeed, critics with a special care for such matters have taken several of his books to task. His updating of **Hansel and Gretel**, which he set in the 1950s, made one reviewer ask 'Where are the Social Services?' and he still recalls wryly the letter he received from a multi-racial educational group in Bedfordshire which accused **Willy the Wimp** of 'racism, sexism . . . and *transvestism*'. 'Till then it had never crossed my mind that because gorillas have got darker faces than chimpanzees, therefore the gorillas are black and Willy's white. As for the sexism, I'd concede they have a point in that the only female character in the book is negative, a secondary character. But how does this fit in with the charge that Milly, Willy's girlfriend, is just a dressed-up male anyway?' The ambiguous ending to **Piggybook** (see the car numberplate in that final spread) has also provoked objections yet it's as much a deliberate joke as the uncanny resemblance between Mrs Piggott, in the book, and his wife Jane, in real life. Noone, least of all himself, is exempt from the Anthony Browne humour.

For all his professional enthusiasm, which means that 'every day I'm raring to get at the drawing-board', his family in fact comes first. It's one of the bonuses of working at home. In the summer especially, he's off to the beach as often as he can with Joseph (4) and Ellen (2), instant recompense for 'leaving me alone for hours up in my studio'. Currently, having just finished another book with Annalena McAfee, to be published in the autumn, he's been spending those hours on one of the few texts he can remember from his own childhood. It's a project his many admirers look forward to with special interest. What better stimulus could there be for the quirky, arresting talent of Anthony Browne than Lewis Carroll's **Alice in Wonderland**? ●

The Books

(hardbacks from Hamish Hamilton or Julia MacRae)

Through the Magic Mirror, HH, 0 241 89307 0, £5.95

A Walk in the Park, HH, 0 241 89397 6, £5.95

Bear Hunt, HH, 0 241 89921 4, £4.95; Hippo, 0 590 70090 1, £1.50 pbk

Look What I've Got, JM, 0 86203 004 8, £5.95; Magnet, 0 416 95940 7, £1.95 pbk

Hansel and Gretel, JM, 0 86203 042 0, £5.95; Magnet, 0 416 60590 7, £1.95 pbk

Bear Goes to Town, HH, 0 241 10817 9, £5.95; Beaver, 0 09 932040 1, £2.50 pbk

Gorilla, JM, 0 86203 104 4, £5.95; Magnet, 0 416 52460 5, £1.95 pbk

Knock, Knock! Who's There?, Sally Grindley, HH, 0 241 11559 0, £5.50

The Visitors Who Came to Stay, Annalena McAfee, HH, 0 241 11224 9, £5.95; 0 241 12018 7, £3.50 pbk

Willy the Wimp, JM, 0 86203 175 3, £5.25; Magnet, 0 416 53230 6, £1.95 pbk

Willy the Champ, JM, 0 86203 215 6, £5.25; Magnet, 0 416 95930 X, £1.95 pbk

Piggybook, JM, 0 86203 268 7, £5.95; Magnet, 0 416 01292 2, £1.95 pbk (Sept 87)

Anthony Browne was interviewed by Chris Powling.

Photographs by Richard Mewton.

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Reviewers in this issue



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



Val Randall is head of the English department of a high school in Nelson, Lancashire.



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



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

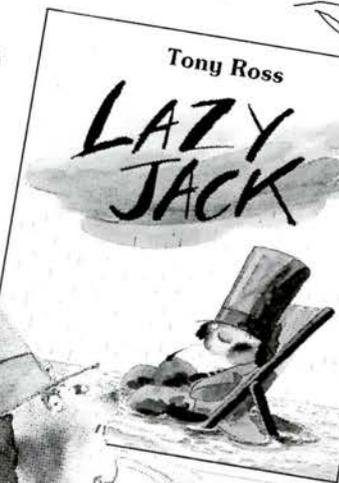
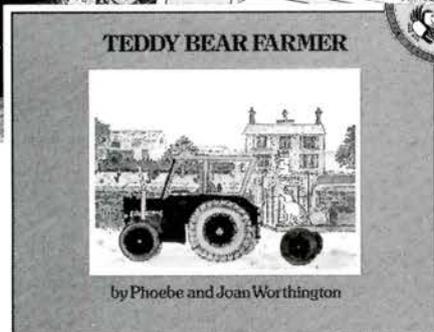
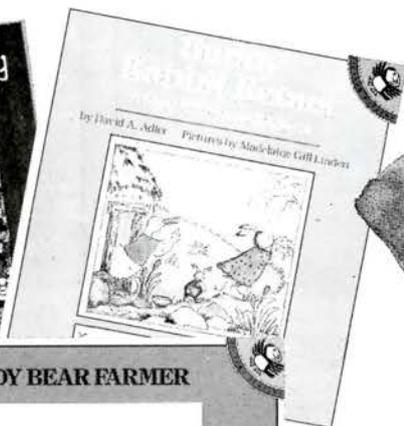
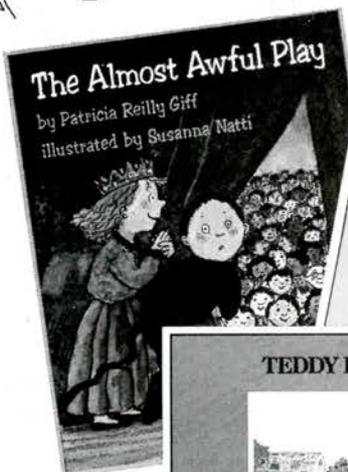


Terry Downie is the English Editor at the Resources for Learning Development Unit in Avon.



Nigel Spencer is deputy head of a village school in Essex, a teacher librarian and school bookshop organiser.

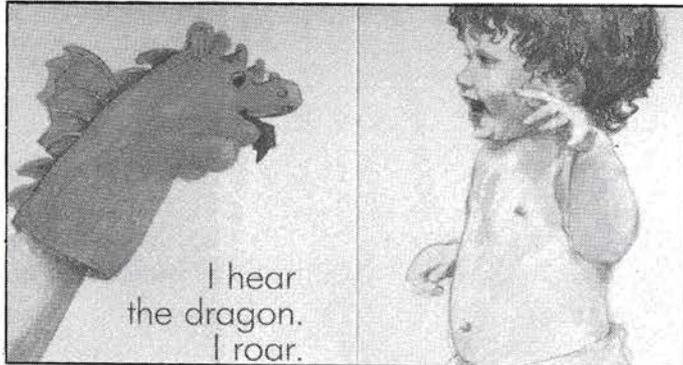
spring into summer



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REVIEWS

Nursery/Infant



I Touch

0 00 662746 3

I Hear

0 00 662689 0

I See

0 00 662688 2

Rachel Isadora, Picture Lions, £1.95 each

Five Senses

Althea, ill. Emma Hughes, Dinosaur, 0 85122 549 7, £1.50

Rachel Isadora uses the eyes, ears and fingers of a toddler to experience these three senses. Each book takes us through a day and there are some objects and activities which are explored in each of the books giving an added continuity to the series. The mainly close-up pictures are soft and gentle in mood and the toddler is beautifully portrayed. The gentle mood is echoed in the simple, well chosen words. Ideal for sharing with the very young.

For older children Althea's **Five Senses** has a more scientific approach to the subject with an appropriately engaging text in keeping with the exploratory nature of scientific activity with young learners. Some of the problems encountered by being blind and deaf are touched upon as well as the heightened senses of some animals. JB

Animal Mothers

0 552 52360 7

Sleeping Animals

0 552 52361 5

Masayuki Yabuuchi, Picture Corgi, £1.75 each

A pair of superbly and realistically illustrated animal books. One can see almost every hair, wrinkle or prickle and learn some basic information about how animals

sleep and carry or look after their young. Highly recommended. JB

Humpty Dumpty and other rhymes

0 590 70565 2

Little Boy Blue and other rhymes

0 590 70566 0

Little Bo Peep and other rhymes

0 590 70564 4

The Grand Old Duke of York and other rhymes

0 590 70563 6

Hippo Books, Rocking Horse Rhymes series, £1.50 each

A series of four board books each containing three well-known nursery rhymes and illustrated with bright jolly pictures. If, unlike me, you are happy about board books in principle (other than for real babies), then you will most probably like these. JB

The Adventures of the Gingerbread Man

Elizabeth Walker, Beaver, 0 09 949660 7, £1.50

Where Does Andy Go?

Moirá Miller, Magnet, 0 416 00562 4, £1.50

A series of 'adventures of the Gingerbread Man' in which he has a number of alarming encounters ending with the onset of winter where we leave him snugly prepared for some further adventures of a chillier nature. There is also a gingerbread recipe for those who want to meet the character at first hand. Try sharing this one with younger infants but it is also ideal for fluent infant readers to tackle for themselves.

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.

The Mice and the Flying Basket

Rodney Peppé, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.483 4, £1.75

Another of Peppé's flights of fancy with his numerous inventive and industrious mice who this time form three straw shopping baskets into a bi-plane and take part in a flying circus. Bubble talk and a photo of Peppé's real model as before. A good book for going solo. JB

Is Anyone Home?

Ron Maris, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.643 8, £1.75



With the aid of alternate whole and half pages the reader takes the young girl narrator of this story through various gates and doors on an exploration of her grandparents' farmyard. This use of the split page is a favourite device of Ron Maris which, besides being fun, encourages a deeper exploration of her finely observed and detailed illustrations. The simple text in the form of both internal and external dialogue heightens the illusion of almost being inside the story. JB

Lucy Says No

Maryann Macdonald, ill. Susie Pritchatt, Dinosaur, 0 85122 662 0, £1.50

Lucy feels thoroughly bossed about and put upon by both her parents and older sister. She has a very unhappy day and come bedtime complains to Mum and takes it out on her doll whom she throws out the bedroom window. In her dreams though she does all the things she couldn't do in the day and wakes up in a far better mood. Many young readers will recognise something of themselves in Lucy. JB

The same is true of **Where Does Andy Go?** which relates episodes in a most unusual and largely enjoyable family holiday spent in a double decker bus. Line drawings break up the text for those tackling the book solo. JB

The Good-night Book

Peter Curry, Picture Lions, 0 00 662434 0, £1.75

It's a pity the subdued nature of the black, blue and yellow cover of this book is not continued inside. Instead we meet a collection of characters in bed: baby, clown, giant and so on, all in brightly coloured simple pictures which rather destroy the night-time imagery. The rhyming text though reads well and with its strong metre and repeated use of 'Good-night to the ...' could prove suitably soporific for bedtime listeners. JB

Sam and the Big Machines

Kathy Henderson, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.644 6, £1.75

When Sam slips from his vantage point into a pile of sand on a construction site he gets almost too close a view for comfort of what his beloved construction machines can do as he is grabbed, tipped and tumbled with the sand around the site. Sam the Small's fascination for diggers, dumpers, cement mixers, cranes and the like is one shared by many children and adults, and all should enjoy these pictures of their favourite monsters and the partially rhyming, alliterative text. (With safety in mind it might be as well to make sure that children understand the fantasy element in this realistically depicted adventure.) JB

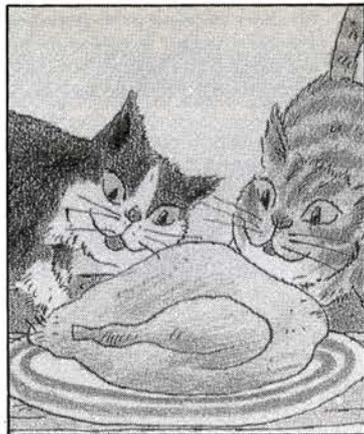
Old Macdonald Had a Farm

Tracey Campbell Pearson, Picture Lions, 0 00 662435 9, £2.25

A rollicking interpretation of the favourite nursery song with added verses and illustrations which become increasingly hectic with the length of the text. With all those animal noises to make, readers or singers who share the Macdonalds' day on the farm should end up as exhausted as the farmer and his wife. JB

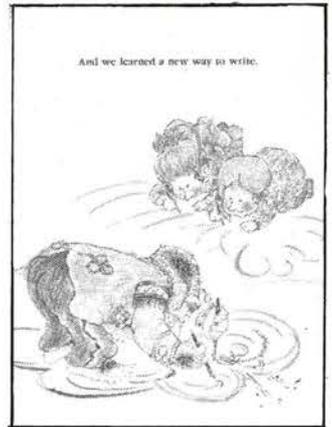
Chicken for Dinner
 Nettie Lowenstein, ill.
 Jonathan Hills,
 Dinosaur, 0 85122 674 4,
 £1.50

The fate of a cooked chicken is seen from two viewpoints in this simple story. Outside the house two cats spy and devour the bird whilst inside mum and dad are too busy drinking and eating their tea to notice. Young children should enjoy the humour of the situation, the jokey coloured crayon illustrations and the brief, circular and deliberately deadpan text. JB



The Day the Teacher Went Bananas
 James Howe, ill. Lillian Hoban, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.576 8, £1.75

If you are willing to suspend your disbelief sufficiently to accept that a gorilla could happily spend the day teaching a class while a teacher was mistakenly sent to the zoo, then you should enjoy this book as much as any six-year-old. Lillian Hoban clearly enjoyed every moment as is evident from her exuberant and gleeful portrayal of the resultant classroom antics. Great fun. JB



Infant/Junior

Did I Ever Tell You About My Irish Great Grandmother?

Iris Grender, ill. Tony Ross, Knight, 0 340 39227 4, £1.50

Eleven lively and finely spun stories by a writer with a warm and involving style. The recounting of the events of a long-past holiday with an eccentric great grannie has variety and wit. Sixes to nines will be captivated by the cleverly woven domestic details and by the economical way in which the storyteller draws her characters. Well worth a try for storytelling sessions. CM

Thingnapped
 Robin Klein, ill. Alison Lester, Oxford, 0 19 554784 5, £2.50

A quirky, original and very funny picture book which will be enjoyed by sixes to tens. I like this author's assured and witty style, as well as the ability (too rare) to create convincing and assertive girl characters.

Emily's beloved stegosaurus, Thing, is kidnapped by the odious Stephanie Strobe: there's some well paced and punchy writing in the recounting of how he endures the ordeal. Lovely pictures: light, bright exteriors and the

atmosphere in the spoilt brat's bedroom is well caught. CM

Here Comes Pob
 Edited by Anne Wood, ill. Jonathon Hills, Fontana Young Lions, 0 00 672775 1, £1.75

A generous and eclectic collection of stories and poems which will be enjoyed by sixes to nines. Collections for dipping into are still rare for novice readers; this will be welcome for storytelling sessions, too.

Highlights for my seven and eight-year-old co-readers were Alan Garner's wonderfully

economical retelling of **The Little Red Hen** and Diana Wynne Jones' **The Thing** which shows how a gifted writer can work well within the short story form. With some Milligan poems and a couple of Helen Cresswell stories amidst much else, this one's a winner. CM

Junior/Middle

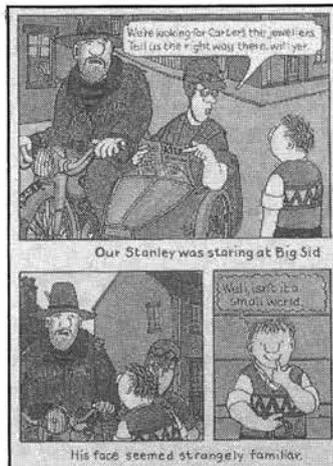
Stanley Bagshaw and the Mafeking Square Cheese Robbery

Bob Wilson, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.581 4, £1.75

A bright, colourful comic-strip book which is well worth having in class or library. Countless junior-aged children will have encountered Stan (and his gran) in their northern town, so the setting of this latest adventure will be familiar.

Briefly, Stan runs an errand for his neighbour, daydreams outside the local 'flea pit' Roxy, and suddenly encounters two robbers, who he thinks are wild west villains. Subsequently they all reach a 'High Noon' in the local grocers, and the outcome is frenetic.

I rate this book highly for those who have just mastered reading skills, and who need a confidence booster. The minimum of words and the maximum of pictures encourage the desire to keep persevering, yet daydreaming is not out of place, for the wealth of detail in the



illustrations continually arrests attention. Bob Wilson's nuances and sense of humour also enhance the storyline. NS

The Mona Lisa Mystery
 Pat Hutchins, ill. Laurence Hutchins, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672589 9, £1.95

An enjoyable, if rather complicated, tale of children

on a trip to Paris solving an art theft. This is Pat Hutchins at her most devious. Frankly I became rather confused and lost some of the threads of evidence - but that can be put down to creeping senility! An able junior should easily manage to cope with the story, and rejoice at the far-fetched successful conclusion.



I quite like the black and white cartoony illustrations; the vintage coach amuses me. Is the Hampstead area education office utilising a fleet of museum transport? NS

Princess Alice
 Nina Bawden, ill. Phillida Gili, Magnet, 0 416 96660 8, £1.95

A gentle and sensitive tale about a little girl living with her adoptive parents and visiting her real father, an African prince. The domestic scenes are well handled; the author has the skill to show the relaxed and easy-going family in the banter and the conversations. The meeting with father is tensely drawn.

The harsh edges are rather too readily smoothed over - but eights to tens will want to explore the issues themselves. The pictures are splendid: readers will feel they've actually been inside the Ritz. CM

Look What I've Got
 Anthony Browne, Magnet, 0 416 95940 7, £1.95

A welcome issue in paperback of Browne's slowly unfolding tale of the boastful and indulged boy who has everything. The thoughtful and introverted friend has the

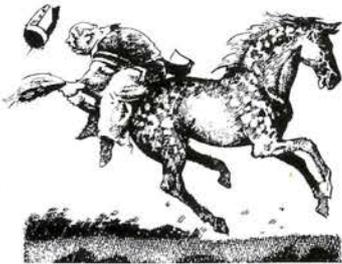
most valuable thing of all: an imagination.

I read Browne's work all the time with eights up to twelves. I learn from this one that the author/artist slows down his telling and showing so that the young are brought to reflect upon the tale – and their reading of it. The surreal world of *Willy the Wimp* and *A Walk in the Park* is here. Get ten-year-olds to tell their own story of the last page. This is the kind of reading – powerful, imaginative, challenging – that the schemes don't begin to engage in. CM

Robin Hood

Edward Blishen, ill.
Geoff Taylor,
BBC/Knight,
0 340 40278 4, £1.75

Being a great follower of Robin Hood and his merry men, the reading of this offering from Edward Blishen came as no penance to me!



Here are some of the best known tales about the outlaw and the characters associated with him, simply written for lower junior age children to enjoy. The smattering of Old English poetry adds a period authenticity, and is a welcome touch by a Carnegie medal winning co-author of *The God Beneath the Sea*. Ideal for the youngster who is growing in reading maturity. NS

The Ghost in the Noonday Sun

Sid Fleischman, Puffin,
0 14 03.0443 6, £1.50



Pirate adventure with a difference, lots of differences in fact, as it's a sort of side-splitting Captain Pugwash

with an extended storyline. Oliver's twelfth birthday has an inauspicious start as he 'stepped on the tail of Jiboom, the one-eyed cat . . . banged my shin and raised a lump the size of a turkey egg.' Things don't get much better after the captain of the *Sweet Molly* arrives in Oliver's life. Captain Scratch is a giant among pirates, towering over pygmies such as Captain Blood and Long John Silver, and when he decides Oliver is a lucky mascot, promptly kidnaps him. However, Oliver is desperate to find his father who 'almost three years ago put out from Nantucket to hunt whales', so goes along for the ride, until the tables are turned on the bold Captain. A welcome reissue for a humorous writer who ought to be better known in this country. BB

Foxglove Tales

Alison Uttley, ill.
Shirley Felts, Piccolo,
0 330 29507 6, £1.95

Although born in 1884, Alison Uttley was still writing stories up to 1970. This compact anthology produced to honour her centenary proves that she had lost little of her quaint originality. That *Tim Rabbit* and the *Little White Hen* can still be accepted in this computer age says a lot for the



writer's feel for her subject and love of rural lifestyles. Perhaps it is because she appeals to traditional values and our own honeyed view of the countryside that Alison Uttley's creations refuse to return to mother earth. Or maybe it's those pulls at our childhood which Uttley resurrects.

In our school bookshop *Tim Rabbit*, *Sam Pig* and now *Foxglove Tales* do sell and, for whatever reasons, they look set to do so for many more years. Illustrator Shirley Felts has produced exquisite black and white and cover pictures which enhance considerably the narrative. Delightful! NS

Middle/Secondary

Kings and Queens

Eleanor and Herbert
Farjeon, ill. Robin
Jacques, Puffin,
0 14 03.2112 8, £1.75

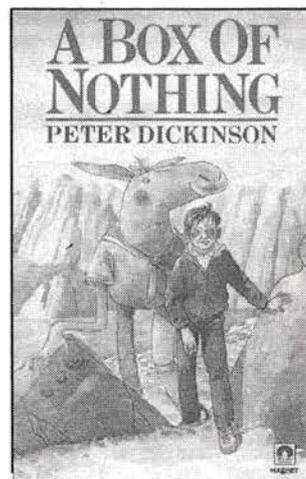
Remember those halcyon days of childhood when many of the stories which we read depicted characters and scenes with great simplicity? Today, in the more realistic world of children's fiction, we seem to have turned our backs on this type of basic storytelling . . .



Well Puffin have attempted to turn the clock back by re-releasing the Farjeon brother/sister story about English

royalty, namely this 'poetic' masterpiece *Kings and Queens*.

Now a page of verse and an illustration about each monarch may seem to be a good way to learn about history, but take the contents with a pinch of salt, for the bias is often extreme. The period flavour of the book plus Robin Jacques' excellent drawings will be a selling point, though mostly to nostalgic adults I fear! NS



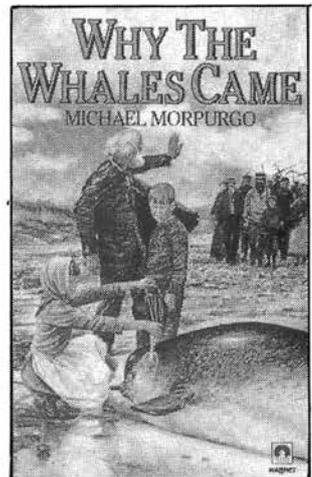
A Box of Nothing
Peter Dickinson,
Magnet, 0 416 96630 6,
£1.75

James had no idea of the

possible implications of buying the box in the *Nothing Shop*. But, for no pounds and no pence, it had to be a bargain. Complications set in when mother decides it could be full of germs, and throws it away. James' attempts to retrieve his bargain-buy lead naturally into a tense and mysterious adventure, showing Peter Dickinson at his best. 'A furry yellow arm with no proper fingers came through, took James gently by the elbow and pulled him into the dark.' In this way James meets the Burra, whose first action is to save him from the deadly Rat Patrol, 'as big as labradors'. Lots of cut and thrust to hold the attention, until James is eventually restored to mother assuaging her curiosity with this philosophical statement of the book's theme: 'It's a box of nothing, you see. Everything came out of nothing . . . The nothing is the seed, and it exploded itself into the stars, and the universe started up.' BB

Why the Whales Came
Michael Morpurgo,
Magnet, 0 416 97090 7,
£1.75

Set in the Scilly Isles fishing community in the early years of this century, this is a tightly constructed, sensitive story. The children of the community are warned by their parents to



avoid contact with the mysterious Birdman, but events prove that he is not the alien, evil force that he has been portrayed as. The tale shows how even small outposts of the British Isles were touched by and embroiled in the murderous events taking place on the killing fields of Europe between 1914 and 1918. An adventure with complementary complex threads combining to produce an outstanding 'children's' story. BB



Come Back Soon

Judy Gardiner, Puffin,
0 14 03.2017 2, £1.75

Being fully prepared to take an instant dislike to a 'jolly tale' about a pretentious family, with stereotyped, middle-class offspring rejoicing in the unfortunate names of Theodosia, Bardolph and Bertram, I must admit to being pleasantly surprised. In précis, the story reduces to mum suddenly leaving home, with the resultant effects on the life of the shattered family. 'We're not the only ones it has happened to,' is father's, and the author's, consolatory comment, on a situation that is as constant and frequent, as it cuts through all class boundaries. Occasionally Judy Gardiner trips over her own cleverness, but on balance has written a very relevant and sensitive book about a trauma which will affect a disturbingly high proportion of today's children. BB

Ghost-breakers

Michel Parry (ed.),
Dragon Grafton,
0 583 30913 5, £1.95

The Ghost-breakers in question turn out to be celebrated detectives who investigate cases concerning the weird and the supernatural. This varied collection of stories, six in all, ranges wide in content, from ghostly horses, mysterious coffins, the statutory vampire, through another old chestnut, the disembodied hand. All good spooky stuff, which will set young readers' spines a-tingle, as they try to untangle the cases which turn out to be hoaxes, from those which have some other rational explanation. BB

Dead Entry

Allan Baker,
BBC/Knight,
0 340 40955 X, £1.50

If we were on *Give Us a Clue*, then *Dead Entry* would be denoted by the symbolic language for book and play, as it is very much the book of the recent three-part BBC Television series. Basically computer espionage, but much more besides to interest

non-computer buffs, an increasing proportion as the initial fad has faded. Plenty of action, double agents, topical environmental issues, and the inevitable saccharined sentimentality as 'Avery is forced to choose between loyalty to his country or his own flesh and blood.' BB

Eating Ice-cream with a Werewolf

Phyllis Green, ill. Patti Stren, Corgi,
0 552 52419 0, £1.50

The title belies the true contents of the book. I thought this was going to be yet another highly fanciful nonsense novel, but the reality pleasantly surprised me.

Set in Madison, USA, the plot revolves around 12-year-old Brad and sister Nancy, and their life with their very original babysitter, Phoebe. Her book of spells is a work of fiction, but the incidence of coincidence is peculiarly high, so the story's outcome cannot be prejudged.

More important than the story is the interplay of relationships, plus the development of Brad's character. The writer has a sympathy for adolescence and allows a rapport between the reader and Brad to flourish, so that one sees life through Brad's focus. The variety of cartoon sketches included emphasise this too.

This is a good middle/secondary book but the cover, which seems designed to appeal to younger readers, may be off-putting. NS

Down with Taffy Sinclair

Betsy Haynes, Corgi,
0 552 52357 7, £1.50

Oh dear - this is dreadful! It sets out to examine the preoccupations of the adolescent girl and falls back miserably on the cliché of the bust - or lack of it.

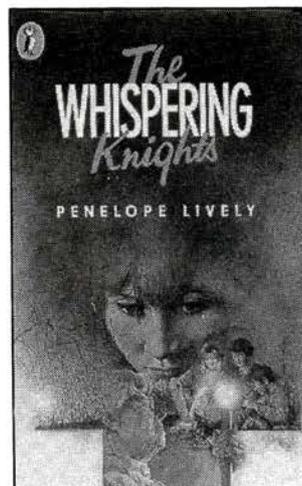
Haynes presents five flat-chested teenagers in an American high school who are envious of Taffy Sinclair's increasing dimensions and who devise ways of becoming better endowed. This could have been amusing but the predictable storyline and endlessly repetitive language puts paid to that. I even found myself counting the number of times the main character says 'I could have died' and wishing heartily that she had!

Perhaps every school ought to have a copy, as it provides marvellous material for spoof novels written on the same theme. That's certainly the only way it would ever get into my classroom! VR

The Whispering Knights

Penelope Lively, Puffin,
0 14 03.1977 8, £1.75

When William, Susie and Martha decide to concoct a



witches' brew in Miss Hepplewhite's old barn, they little realise that they are precipitating another manifestation of Morgan le Fay. From there onwards things can only get worse, both for themselves and their doomed Cotswold village. Yet, maybe there is salvation in the old legend of the Standing Stones, the Whispering Knights, who stand sentinel over Steeple Hampden.

First published in 1971, only the use of twelve pennies in the shilling ages this good versus evil tale, which should appeal to lower secondary readers who don't mind their stories travelling quite slowly. DB

The Spell of the Sorcerer's Skull

John Bellairs, Corgi,
0 552 52366 6, £1.75

This piece of gothic bewitchery should leave its readers fairly breathless by the time they get to the end. It has enough *Boy's Own*/B-movie awfulness to make it quite appealing if taken with a massive sack of salt - strictly to ward off the evil you understand!

Goings on in Professor Childermass's ancestral past puts the old codger into danger from the revengeful spirit of one Warren Windrow, who'd tried to kill Great Uncle Lucius, with good cause, I might add. It takes young Johnny Dixon, his sceptical friend Fergie and the doughty Father Higgins to save the day... just on the stroke of midnight, naturally! DB

The Time Keeper

Barbara Bartholomew,
Dragon Grafton,
0 583 30923 2, £1.95

Crammed and skimped, I think, but then 158 pages have to do the present, then the past and future, both 'alternatives'. Readable not writerly; the first of a trilogy with a girl central, making brave and right decisions. There's contemporary (USA) family and self-image; the past offers homestead manners and unicorns; the future's found a solution to human vagaries. So far, so unexceptionable. TD

Nicola Mimosa

Jean Ure, Puffin,
0 14 03.2031 8, £1.75

Having enjoyed several of Jean Ure's books, I felt somewhat disappointed by this sequel to *Hi There, Supermouse!*.

Ure states the issues clearly: ballet demands total dedication and affords only a short career; university rewards academic excellence and promises a life outside study. The characters are sharply divided: Nicola's impressionable mother, stage-struck sister and friends are determined that Nicola should become a dancer. Her teachers, boyfriend and father exert their own considerable influence to convince her that the road to university is the right one. The characters are so clearly stated as to become almost stereotyped; carefully ranged on opposing sides to give Nicola a rather obvious 'casting vote'.

Second-year girls who have enjoyed *Supermouse* will like this book - but don't offer it as an introduction to Jean Ure. VR

MASK One: The Deathstone

Kenneth Harper,
Knight, 0 340 39890 6,
£1.95

'MASK' is yet another mnemonic to launch a five-book series of science fiction adventures, these of the Mobile Armoured Strike Kommand force. Does it look more menacing to spell Kommand incorrectly? Anyway, grammar apart, this 'first thrilling adventure' of MASK centres on the task of recovering the Deathstone, roughly described as a rogue meteorite. Short on thought, but intent on rapid action and staccato dialogue exchange, this series might just prove to be a winner with junior age kids. Presentation is good, with a highly visual cover design, and plenty of black and white illustrations throughout. If you find the prospect appealing, *Peril Under Paris*, *Venice Menace*, *Book of Power* and *Panda Power* are the other titles (all by Kenneth Harper, each at £1.95). BB

Chocky's Challenge

Mark Daniel, Thames
Magnet, 0 423 02120 6,
£1.75

Mark Daniel, in the present tense again. (See *BfK* 41.) Why don't I find it irritating this time? Because Chocky's familiar? Because genius kids (nice with it) saving the world are familiar? That's the story, to be continued. (Chocky's temporarily out of the game.) There's an implied author: '... write fast. The general public has to know ...' Are film/TV tie-ins present tense so you can readalong-a-screening? Breakthrough to literacy? TD

Older Readers

On the Edge

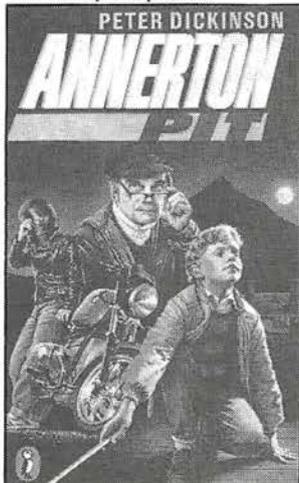
Gillian Cross, Puffin,
0 14 03.2053 9, £1.75

Annerton Pit

Peter Dickinson, Puffin,
0 14 03.1042 8, £1.95

Here are two very exciting, thought-provoking thrillers, well worth looking at for alternative GCSE texts.

Gillian Cross's stylish novel is set in remote Derbyshire climbing country, where the lives of Jenny Slattery and Liam Shakespeare become twinned in gruelling, dangerous circumstances. She is struggling to live with the alternative lifestyle imposed on her by the choice of her parents; 'So that's what real life is like . . . no money and a mountain of runner beans.' He is a hostage, barely holding on to reality as two terrorists brain-wash him into thinking they're his parents by threats and playing incessantly loud music. But then, they're out to prove a point. As one of them pronounces - 'All families are parasitic and destructive . . . The family is a prison.'



I read *Annerton Pit* ten years ago, when it first came out and I've always remembered it, not for the story but for the high quality of the writing. Unlike this edition, where the cover and the blurb give it away, there was no indication at first that the main character is blind. Only gradually did you realise that the author never describes what Jake can see, only what his other five senses are picking up. His handicap becomes a life-line when Jake and Martin, his brother, are dangerously incarcerated in the ill-famed Annerton Pit, whilst searching for their ghost-hunting grandpa. He came a shade too close to the dangerous Green Revolution group, who are taught that 'a cause is something you have to be prepared to kill for' and are hijacking a nearby oil rig.

There is much tension in this excellent book and plenty of

wisdom - 'If you mine down through the maze of your own being, perhaps . . . you will find the explosive gas of violence, the springs of love.' DB

I Know What You Did Last Summer

Lois Duncan, Pan Horizons, 0 330 29361 3,
£1.95

Lois Duncan is a consummate artist who sure knows how to create suspense. The arrival of a note bearing the title of the novel, along with a few well-sprinkled hints, leaves her readers as gripped and involved in Julie James's dilemma as the victim is herself. Then the tension mounts as Julie's friends Ray, Helen and Barry are implicated and their secret past is relentlessly, revengefully imposing itself on their present. Slowly the facts unpeel and nemesis starts to take over when Barry is shot and the red herrings swim liberally until finally . . . There's a bit of romance here and the pace is slick. It should provoke interest and enthusiasm in older readers. DB

Hillsden Riots

Rhodri Jones, Pan Horizons, 0 330 29662 0,
£1.95

A topical book, this - and one which explores the tensions between white and black communities in a realistic way. Jones begins courageously with a conversation entirely in street patois which, far from discouraging the reader with its unfamiliarity, sets the scene in the Black camp.

Colin and Wayne, two Black brothers with attitudes to life at opposite ends of the spectrum, experience inner-city riots first-hand and emerge closer both emotionally and politically. Descriptions of the riots are factual and telling - it is the political standpoints imposed on the characters which disappoint. Colin is too much the pedant, Herald too unconvincing a revolutionary - it seems unlikely that the illiterate boy he is painted could have read and absorbed Ralph Ellison's (irritatingly misspelt 'Elliston') *Invisible Man*.

Nevertheless, the book offers to third-year readers a carefully observed insight into the wrongs perpetrated by both black and white in troubled inner cities and may partially counteract the pious hysteria induced by the media. VR

Beyond the Chocolate War

Robert Cormier,
Fontana Lions,
0 00 672681 X, £2.25

Robert Cormier has, perhaps, the surest touch of any novelist I know in seeking out the worst in all of us and parading it before our horrified eyes. *Beyond the Chocolate War* clearly demonstrates that he has suffered no diminution of this skill.

Cormier makes double fools of us - he lets us believe that we have cracked the code of his book and then, at the last moment, twists it breathtakingly away from us. He places us in a position of superiority, only to demonstrate that the characters we have judged and found wanting are an undeniable part of us all.

Yet in all this fine writing there is a flaw - in his description of the sexual relationships of the two main characters, Archie and Obie. Obie's relationship motivates him to rid himself of Archie's domination and Archie's provides a further insight into his manipulatory powers. It is the unpleasant coyness of the description of the sexual act which shocks - not the act itself. Cormier has here failed to resolve the dilemma implicit in this area: it is not explicit language which is the issue but a failure to describe a sensitive subject in an acceptably honest way.

This aside, *Beyond the Chocolate War* is tailor-made for GCSE wider reading - offer it selectively to maturer fourth and fifth readers. VR

The Beast Master

André Norton, Puffin,
0 14 03.1159 9, £1.95

O, I loved this. Extra-terrestrial, Amerindian, conservationist, animal-communing adventure. Good cover. What if the face behind the vizor turned out to be a young woman's? The third paperback reissue in nearly 20 years. TD

Of Griffins and Graffiti

Kate Gilmore, Puffin Plus, 0 14 03.2134 9,
£1.95

Madcap, junior A-Teamish cover; and inside, arty (iculate) American kids who live 'in the New York of the 80s' and make a load of statements, climaxing with spraying a plane with PEACE in several languages. Are British kids up to this? Yep. And what are their messages? TD

Hollywood Dream Machine

Bonnie Zindel, Fontana Lions, 0 00 672580 5,
£1.95



The meltingly coy smirks sported by the couple on the cover of the saccharin-titled *Hollywood Dream Machine* deliberately misled the reader about the content of this book. I imagine that the publisher's intention was to capture a generation of teenage girls weaned on glamour and its attendant superficiality. This bluff is worth calling, however, because between these suspect Zindel delivers a sensitive analysis of subjects likely to be of interest to third and fourth-year girls: the changing nature of friendship; an exploration of the first forays into sexual relationships; the trials and blessings of the family unit.

Zindel neatly avoids the stereotyped 'happy ever after' ending which books for this age group so often fall foul of and confines her descriptions of the Hollywood circus to those details likely to appeal to a level-headed observer. A piece of sharply observed and restrained writing - in spite of the publisher's attempts to indicate the contrary. VR

Natfact 7

John Tully, Magnet,
0 416 00542 X, £1.75

A political thriller with a romantic subplot: Mills and Boon with bombs. The story is set in a future in which Natservs (working-class citizens) support Qualified Citizens by releasing them from menial tasks to pursue careers of their choice. There are obvious parallels with our present society and equally obvious sources of discontent.

Brian Harvard, a promising QC, is invited by his superiors to assume Natserve identity in order to uncover a plot - planned by A.C.E. (All Citizens Equal) - to overthrow the government. In the course of his adventures he befriends Skip, the cynical 'rough diamond' hero of the book and changes his political affiliations to become a member of A.C.E.

The story is fast-moving but often strains the reader's credulity - the hero wins through with predictable ease. The subplot is clichéd and the political concepts, though repetitive, would tax all but a fairly competent fourth or fifth-year reader. VR

When the Kipling had to stop



Nicholas Tucker considers the effect of new images on an old favourite: Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*

New illustrations to classics always raise objections, especially when replacing originals by the authors themselves. Thackeray's pictures of Becky Sharp, for example, make it clear he saw her as a minx whatever kinder critics have maintained since. Losing such extra evidence of an author's intentions is a heavy price to pay for the sake of more adept artistry elsewhere. Where children's literature is concerned other arguments come to mind. The technical limitations apparent in the illustrations of a Hugh Lofting may sometimes actually bring them closer to a child audience, itself still struggling with the mysteries of drawing and often naturally sympathetic to others finding similar difficulties. In Arthur Ransome's case his simple line sketches supposedly etched by the Swallows and Amazons themselves are part of his general positive image of childhood, for him a time where a basic but perfectly serviceable competence can be both expected and achieved from the young whether sailing, reading a chart, or providing rough pictures and diagrams to a text as it goes along.

I would therefore always want a copy of the *Just So Stories* illustrated by Kipling himself. All his pictures have the extra benefit of the author's own running commentary on each of them, sometimes as witty as the stage directions Barrie supplies for *Peter Pan*. His pictures are also invaluable in trying to understand this extraordinary man.

The loving detail in his illustration of the different cargo boats in *The Butterfly that Stamped* memorably conveys the romance he and so many others felt about international trading at a harbour-side level. His picture of the Ethiopian in *How the Leopard got his Spots* is both moving and dignified; no patronising racist stereotypes here, despite Kipling's suggestion on the opposite page that his hero 'was really a negro, and so his name was Sambo'. This illustration also includes an ingeniously hidden giraffe difficult to improve upon, as are some other animal portraits in the book. The picture accompanying *The Cat that Walked by Himself*, where we see the proud animal stalking through the wet wild wood, tail aloft and whiskers bristling, is still unsurpassed as an image of tough defiance. According to his biographers Kipling was touchy about criticisms of his artwork, although he does once apologise to his readers for not doing any better with a picture in *Elephant's Child* 'because elephants and bananas are hard to draw'. But on the whole his *Just So* illustrations are excellent for someone who was not a professional draughtsman; more original, in their use of dead black, than anything his artist-father ever achieved. Kipling later abandoned illustrating except for hasty sketches on family letters. On the basis of this work he could well have developed his artistic talents further. Might it be that he



'The Cat that Walked by Himself', drawn by Kipling himself. From Macmillan's *Just So Stories*, Centenary Edition.

did not want to eclipse his father here in the way that he had everywhere else while still a comparatively young man?

There are several moments in the commentaries on his illustrations when Kipling complains he is not allowed to use colour. Rather, he urges his readers to colour in the pictures themselves, for example painting 'the banana-tree green and the elephant's child red.' As it is, the 'dead black' technique he used often obscured important detail, providing for example only a blurred glimpse of the mariner's famous suspenders in *How the Whale got his Throat*. This would not have mattered so much when everyone knew what suspenders were; today, like Sherlock Holmes' boxer cartridges or Trichinopoly cigars, familiarity with such things can no longer be taken for granted. In addition, when the *Just So Stories* were first told to his own children Kipling himself was on hand to answer any questions cropping up during his narration. Good pictures can now help out children tackling these densely written tales on their own. And when numerous pictures break up his rich prose into more manageable segments, each chunk accompanied by its own illustration, these marvellous stories do become far more approachable.

Recently all 12 have been re-illustrated by modern artists in a new series brought out by Macmillan and as a show-case for British illustration at its best this whole enterprise is quite admirable. (I suspect it will also sell for a ripe old sum one day when today's books have turned into tomorrow's collectors' pieces.) Two books in particular show how new illustrations can greatly enhance even the finest text. In *The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo* Michael Taylor creates the Middle God Nquing (blue, stary and elf-like), then goes on to the Big God Nqong (a grizzled Aborigine).

Both are immediately memorable, and much more so than Kipling's own illustrations where neither god is at all impressive and so probably ending up in the reader's imagination as one undifferentiated Nq... There is also nothing specifically Australian about Kipling's version of the terrain crossed by the kangaroo; Michael Taylor, by contrast, brings in vivid examples of local flora and fauna on every page. Another artist in top form is Michael Foreman in one of Kipling's lesser known stories, *The Crab that Played with the Sea*. Early on here Kipling introduces 'All-the-elephant-there-was' plus various other animals existing in a first idealised state before the creation of Adam. This poses quite a problem for any illustrator let alone parent or teacher faced with having to explain something like the Platonic theory of once perfect forms. But Michael Foreman draws a huge elephant head merging into blue sky beyond; next page sees his 'All-the-cow-there-was', another large, misty figure, and in this way he meets an imaginative challenge that could well prove fairly formidable to young readers left on their own.



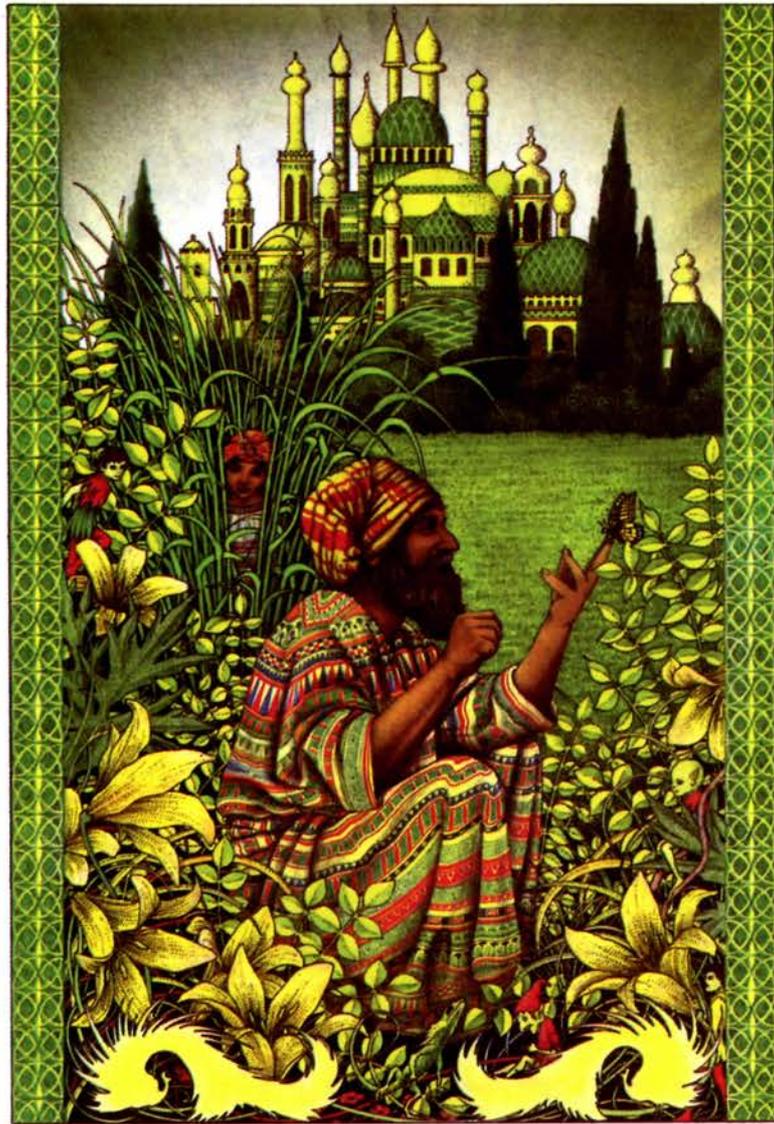
By Quentin Blake, from *How the Camel Got his Hump* (Picturemac).

This is not to say that everything Kipling wrote needs pictures. Which artist could ever hope to do better than the subjective impressions created in any reader's imagination by word-music like 'the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo river', or tall forests described as 'speckled and spottled and spottled, dotted and splashed and slashed and hatched and cross-hatched with shadows?' ('Say that quickly aloud,' adds Kipling in parentheses, 'and you will see how very shadowy the forest must have been.') But on the whole modern children can only be grateful for the extra bonuses provided for them in today's illustrations. Pauline Baynes, for example, offers a delightful picture of the ship-wrecked

mariner holding up his breeches with his hands after leaving his braces behind in the whale, and Louise Brierley creates a truly memorable Bi-Coloured-Python-Rock-Snake, not to mention enticing sticks of long purple sugar cane and quantities of 'greeny-crackly melons' in her illustrations to *The Elephant's Child*. As for Alan Baker's work in *The Butterfly that Stamped* the rich oriental atmosphere evoked here contains enough fantastic detail in just one of his 12 amazing pictures to keep any imagination busy. Not every book in this series is a winner; Victor Ambrus's broad and Quentin Blake's more scratchy humour are out of place, while Williams Stobbs' *The Cat that Walked by Himself* is too cosily domestic. But otherwise I think Kipling would have been as delighted with these books as Kenneth Grahame was with E. H. Shepard's illustrations to *The Wind in the Willows*, having previously warned the artist, 'I love these little people; be kind to them.' Shepard's brilliant work did much to increase their popularity; it would be nice if Macmillan's series could achieve the same for the *Just So Stories*, however difficult some of them now are for younger generations.

For those wanting one volume editions, Michael Foreman and Safaya Salter both offer pleasant illustrated collections. Foreman visited India recently to steep himself in its atmosphere, possibly seeing more of it than Kipling, who got most of his knowledge of the Indian jungle second-hand from photographs and travellers' tales. Foreman's own book, published by Viking Kestrel, is illustrated both in colour for atmosphere and black and white for humour and includes a properly enigmatic looking camel, some cheeky children and a cheerful short-nosed elephant. His illustrations for *The Crab that Played with the Sea* are quite like the earlier version he did for Macmillan, providing sharp-eyed young critics with a good opportunity to spot the similarities!

Safaya Salter also has connections with the East since she was born in Cairo of Egyptian and English parents and brought up to love oriental art forms, especially Persian miniatures. In her edition of the *Just So Stories* (Pavilion) each tale is allotted an attractive head-piece plus one full-page illustration, with an extra title page showing all the chief characters somehow existing together alongside a river bank very much in the manner of Shepard's front page for the Pooh stories. Each picture has its own decorated border and the whole effect is very striking. Yet this is more a curtain-raiser to Kipling than genuine illustration. The camel for example looks surprisingly benign for an animal permanently cursed with three days of extra work. Quentin Blake does much better in his Macmillan version, ending up with Kipling himself perched on top of the camel; a fair comment on someone able to admit that where the hump that is black and blue is concerned, 'I get it as well as you-oo-oo--If I haven't enough to do-oo-oo!' Elsewhere Safaya Salter follows her own imagination rather than the text; her picture of Taffy's first illustration performed with a shark tooth on a piece of bark does not show the spear sticking into her father's back – a surprising error, considering it was this very detail that caused the Stranger-man such trouble when he handled the completed picture over to the young artist's neolithic mother. There are good things as well: bright flowers, huge suns, grinning little gods, and masses of jewels, mosques and minarets. I am sure some children will like it, others may go for Foreman and few, I would guess, could possibly resist every one of the talented artists discussed earlier. All that is needed now is the money for libraries and schools to buy all these copies so that readers can make this final choice for themselves.



From *The Butterfly that Stamped* (Picturemac). Illustration by Alan Baker.



Illustration by Safaya Salter to *Just So Stories* (Pavilion).

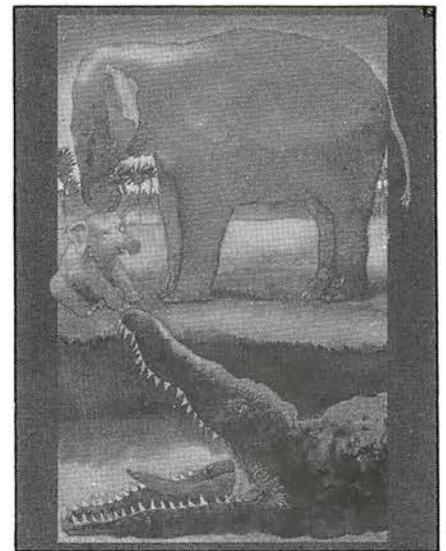


Illustration by Michael Foreman to *The Elephant's Child*, *Just So Stories* (Viking Kestrel).

Just So Stories

The Macmillan series of individual stories, using various artists, is available at between £3.50 and £4.50 each or £1.75 each paperback. The Viking Kestrel edition (0 670 80242 5), illustrated by Michael Foreman, and the Pavilion edition (1 85145 105 6), illustrated by Safaya Salter, are £7.95 each.

Nicholas Tucker teaches at the University of Sussex. Amongst his many publications *The Child and the Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration* (Cambridge University Press) is a standard work.

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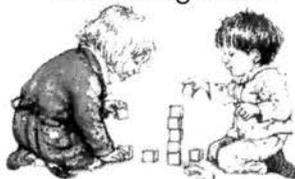
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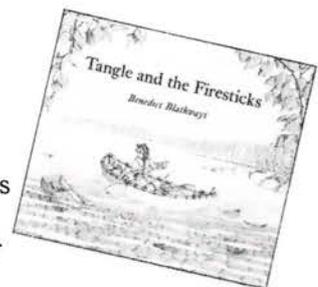


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A TOP-ISH TWENTY

Chris Powling chooses from the season's new picture books.

Spring is sprung, the grass is riz . . . and if you're wondering where the boidies is maybe you should switch to books. As always, they're here in plenty. That 'ish' in the title reflects difficulty in picking a mere score, not doubts about the quality of the batch. Most of them are so easy on the eye, the hard bit for a reviewer is to pay appropriate attention – especially when the new offering comes in a familiar form, from familiar talents. For example . . .

Mog's Box

Helen Nicoll and Jan Pieńkowski, Heinemann, 0 434 95658 9, £4.95

An established team in Carle country, as Meg and Mog between them concoct a caterpillar then coax it towards butterfly-ness. It's the thirteenth in this wonderful series and that's bound to be unlucky for some . . . competitors, for instance. Words and images are as zippy as ever and so well integrated it's impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins. Do Nicoll and Pieńkowski still meet at the Membury service station on the M4 to discuss these de-luxe, designerly comic-strips? If so, it's about time they re-named the station in their honour.

Lucy and Tom's 123

Shirley Hughes, Gollancz, 0 575 03889 6, £4.95

Again, what's-only-to-be-expected presented so freshly it takes a while to persuade yourself you won't be smudging the ink as you turn over the pages. Shirley Hughes is our foremost chronicler of the life of ordinary households and every detail here counts – which is what she's after – from ornamental ducks on the mantelpiece to the marking of family heights on Mum and Dad's bedroom wall. There's much opportunity for Maths work but so cunningly crafted into the storyline it comes across as maths-play. Who needs Nuffield or Harold Fletcher? Clearly the Lucy and Tom show will run and run . . . all the way to GCSE if I had my way.

The Guinea Pig ABC

Kate Duke, Methuen, 0 416 97310 8, £5.95

ABCs abound so it's not easy for them to make an impact. The origins of this one are transatlantic but only for a couple of spreads is this significant – apart from the energy that is. There's an admirable oomph about this tour through twenty-six page-size letters, along with a pleasing inventiveness and wit. Guinea-pigs aren't the most obvious creatures to animate adjectives like 'bouncy' and 'vain' but it says a great deal for Kate Duke's ingenuity and craftsmanship that these chunky, likeable creatures seem natural comedians by the end.

Our Puppy's Holiday

Ruth Brown, Andersen, 0 86264 145 4, £4.95

If you think Eric Hill has cornered the puppy market, try this. The un-named pet is as far removed from Spot as it's possible to be, jumping as it does from an easel rather



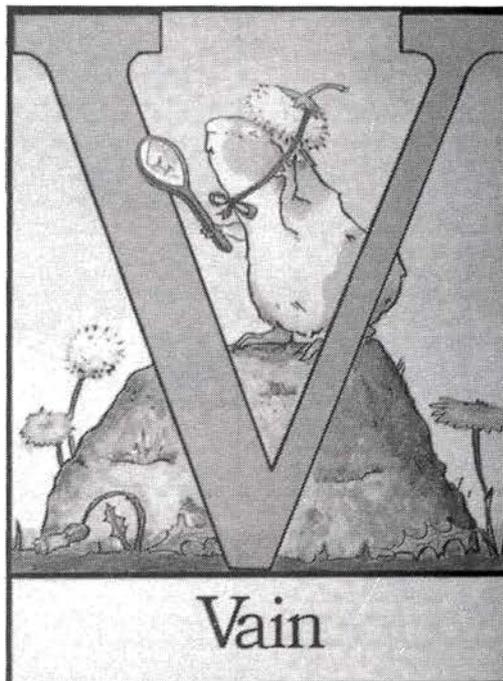
'Everything was new to her: the wide, wide beach . . . from *Our Puppy's Holiday*.

than a drawing-board. Ruth Brown exploits her painterly talents to the full and what we get is not just a wonderful sense of pup, but also of place and time. Note the steady, frame-by-frame shift in the background light, for instance, as the day goes on. Too subtle for this age-group? Not at all, when the dog's activities are so securely foregrounded in a snapshot realism that goes beyond any camera. It's hard to tell which gets the bigger boost from this marvellous book – out-of-season holidays or out-of-pedigree pups. Don't miss it.

The Boy with Two Shadows

Margaret Mahy and Jenny Williams, Dent, 0 460 06241 1, £5.95

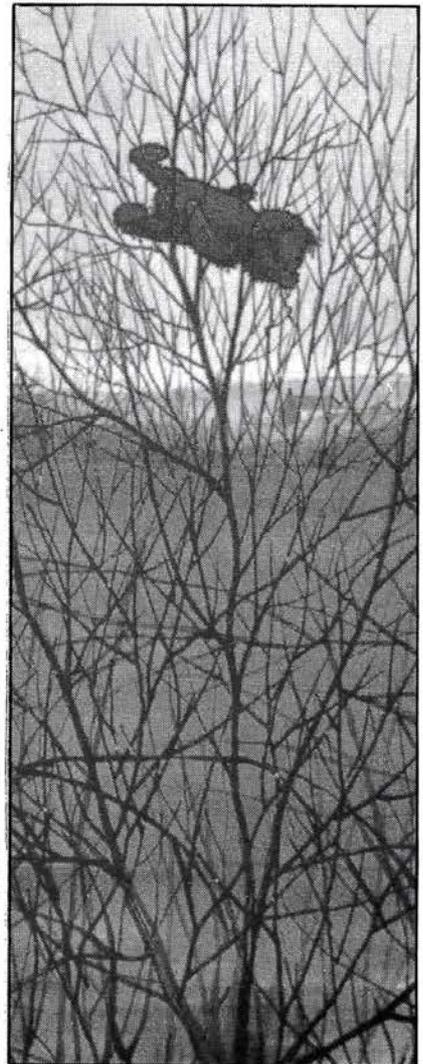
The tale, a quirky variant on a problem Peter Pan would recognise instantly, has been around some time. So, in a way, has Jenny Williams' approach to illustration which is bold, bright and totally without



From *The Guinea Pig ABC*.

pretension – a little like Celia Berridge's before she joined the Post Office. Postman Pat can't match the energy and detail here, though, or the use of colour which certainly makes more accessible the weird, witchy Mahy storyline. It's a style that's immensely popular with children and shouldn't be underestimated on that account. Just bread-and-butter stuff, do I hear an objection? More jam-tart and chocolate-cake, in my view.

Mind you, there are reissues and reissues. Some come at you with a disorientating shock – like encountering an old friend who has no right to look so young. Take *The Winter Bear*, for example, reissued by Collins (0 00 195869 0, £4.95) for the fifth time since 1974. Everything about it, from end-paper to end-paper, not excluding that stunning cover, is a perfect matching of word, image and picture-book design. The sharpness of Erik Blegvad's line and textures and the layout of the pages which draws attention, but not too much attention, to Ruth Craft's spritely verse, are all the more thrilling for the bygone pleasure they invest with new radiance. It's a hard act to follow.



From the cover of *The Winter Bear*.

In fact only another classic, such as V. H. Drummond's *Phewtus the Squirrel*, can possibly do it. This new edition, from Walker Books (0 7445 0689 1, £6.95), may offend some purists precisely for its new dimension – the colour it brings to the original black-and-white, pre-war illustrations. If so, shame on the purists. There's no loss in wit and spontaneity and a distinct gain in the substance it brings to a talent that points backwards to Bickerstaff and forwards to Blake. The end-papers alone justify the enterprise, with Phewtus careering through the park as fully a squirrel as the breeziness of the text demands; maximum effect achieved with the minimum of fuss.

In comparison, the art of Maurice Sendak seems almost monumental especially when presented at least twice the size of most paperbacks as he is in *Posters by Maurice Sendak* from Bodley Head (0 370 31038 1, £12.95). No, it's not strictly a picture-book nor for a child audience in particular. It's a wonderful reminder, though, of the sheer potency and inventiveness of one of the major modern illustrators – also, despite that instantly recognisable style, of his versatility. Whether he's billing book-weeks, museums, exhibitions, opera or whatever, you can't help feeling Sendak's advertising was the most enduring aspect of the event. My only quibble with this glorious compendium is the time it takes to look up a particular poster since the contents list is numbered but the pages aren't – which means total exposure to distraction as you leaf through. Still, there are worse ways to spend your time.

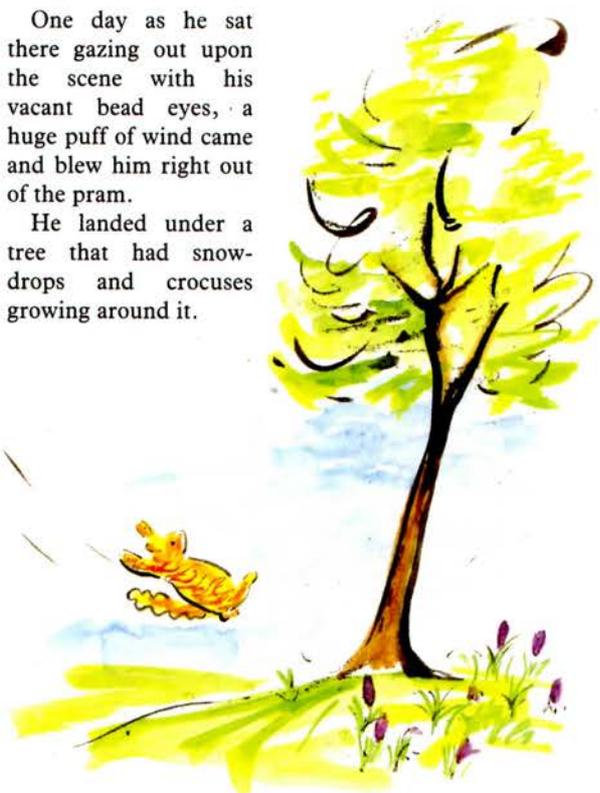
What Happened to the Picnic?

Gillian McClure, André Deutsch, 0 233 96069 5, £5.95

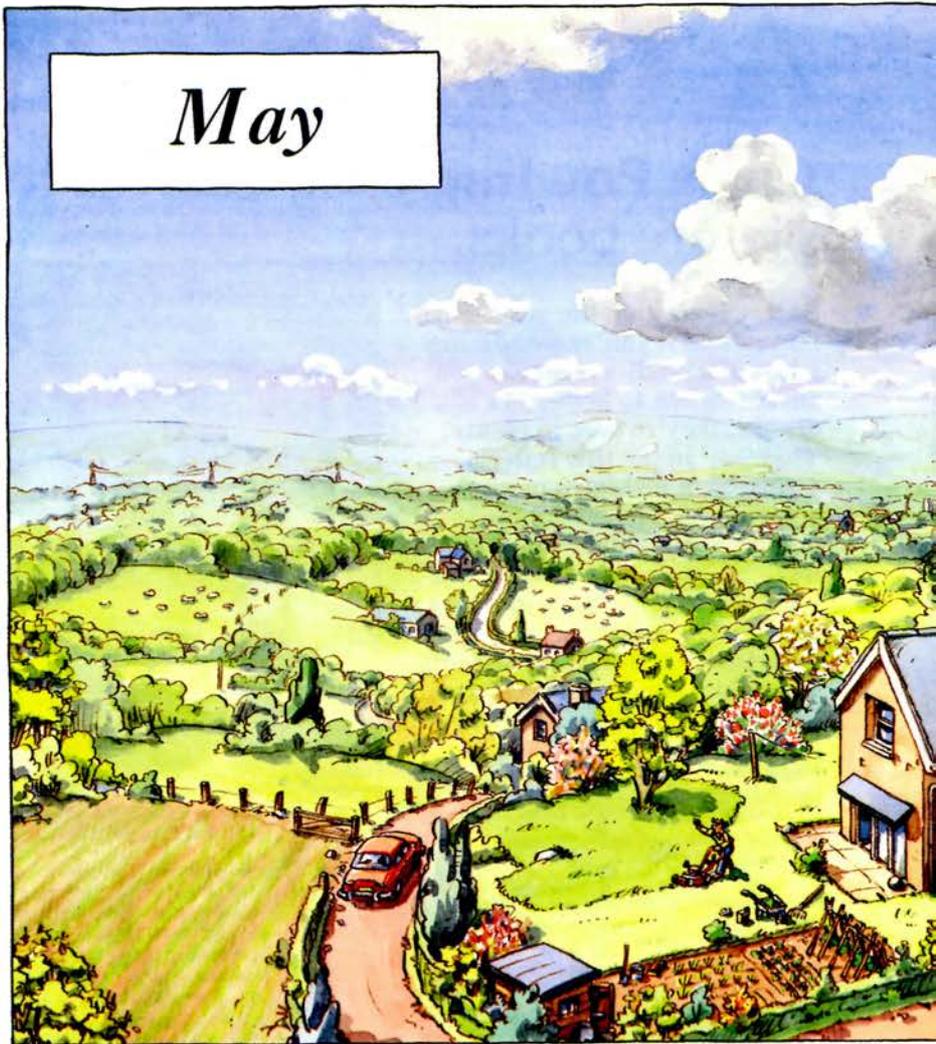
As we saw in *Tog the Ribber*, Gillian McClure also has a style of her own. Though here she provides her own text, there's more than a touch of Tog-ish horror about this tale of an apparently self-consuming picnic and the distinctly un-Teddy-like bears who lose track of it. What makes her work so arresting is the tension between the hard forms of her foreground detail and the soft forms of the wispy, delicate background into which it fades . . . arresting, but also nerve-jangling. Is she quite sure of the age-group she's pitching at?

One day as he sat there gazing out upon the scene with his vacant bead eyes, a huge puff of wind came and blew him right out of the pram.

He landed under a tree that had snowdrops and crocuses growing around it.



May



From *Our House on the Hill* by Philippe Dupasquier (Andersen Press).

From *Phewtus the Squirrel* by V. H. Drummond (Walker Books).

Our House on the Hill

Philippe Dupasquier, Andersen, 0 86264 167 5, £5.95

Philippe Dupasquier, on the other hand, knows exactly what he's after. There are no words, nor are any needed. Using a standard spread-and-a-half plus supporting frames, he shows the same landscape a dozen times over, from January to December. Since the differences in each case are largely dependent on the weather, this is a high-risk enterprise. Extraordinarily, it works. For the reader willing to persevere, it's a deft and ingenious account combining the cycle of the seasons with twelve months' worth of family ritual, lovingly observed. Is it Dupasquier's own year we're being invited to share? Hints and jokes that this may be the case make this virtuoso stuff.

The Trouble with Gran

Babette Cole, Heinemann, 0 434 93296 5, £5.50

Babette Cole is in top form, too. Gruesome grannies are nothing new these days but this one achieves lift-off, quite literally, by being so outrageous she out-distances the opposition – and incipient ageism – with an alien's eye-view that up-ends every possible geriatric cliché from bloomers to the old folk's outing. Does mischief like this run in the family, though? Are Mum, Dad and the kid simply lying low till they're old enough to zap us with similar comic, and cosmic, capers? For our own peace of mind, we must be told.



From *Peter and the Wolf*.

lifts itself well above the contempt we reserve for the overly-familiar while staying true to the mood and atmosphere of the original folk-tale. Selena Hastings' dignified re-telling is matched perfectly by Reg Cartwright's marvellous vignettes and full-plates. Some present a well-known scene from an unexpected angle, others are more traditional but always slyly humorous . . . and every one could have come only from Cartwright. Though I say it and shouldn't, that Mother Goose panel which made him 1980's most exciting newcomer to illustration certainly knew what it was doing. He's never been better.

Gammer Gurton's Needle

Charlotte Voake and David Lloyd, Walker, 0 7445 0640 9, £7.95

Neither has Charlotte Voake. At first sight the delicacy of her line and wash seems wrong for a rumbustious comedy which first knocked 'em in the aisles four centuries ago – a blend of farce and pantomime David Lloyd exploits to the full. Yet the beautifully paced and expertly laid out illustrations are just as impressive in their ability to suggest a particular period yet still be smartly up-to-date. Something of a tour-de-force, this.

From Babette Cole's *The Trouble with Gran* (Heinemann).

Stone Soup

Tony Ross, Andersen, 0 86264 161 6, £4.95

According to the blurb, Tony Ross first heard this folk-tale from an Australian storyteller which may account for it being both like, and unlike, our indigenous version. Bad, Bad Wolf turns out to be the dumb cluck as Mother Hen dupes him into spring-cleaning her house . . . distracting him from making a meal of her by making that time-honoured meal for him. The exuberant, throwaway style of both text and pictures won't be to everybody's taste, perhaps, but went down very nicely with me even if the ending does come as a bit of a hiccup.

The Sad Story of Veronica Who Played the Violin

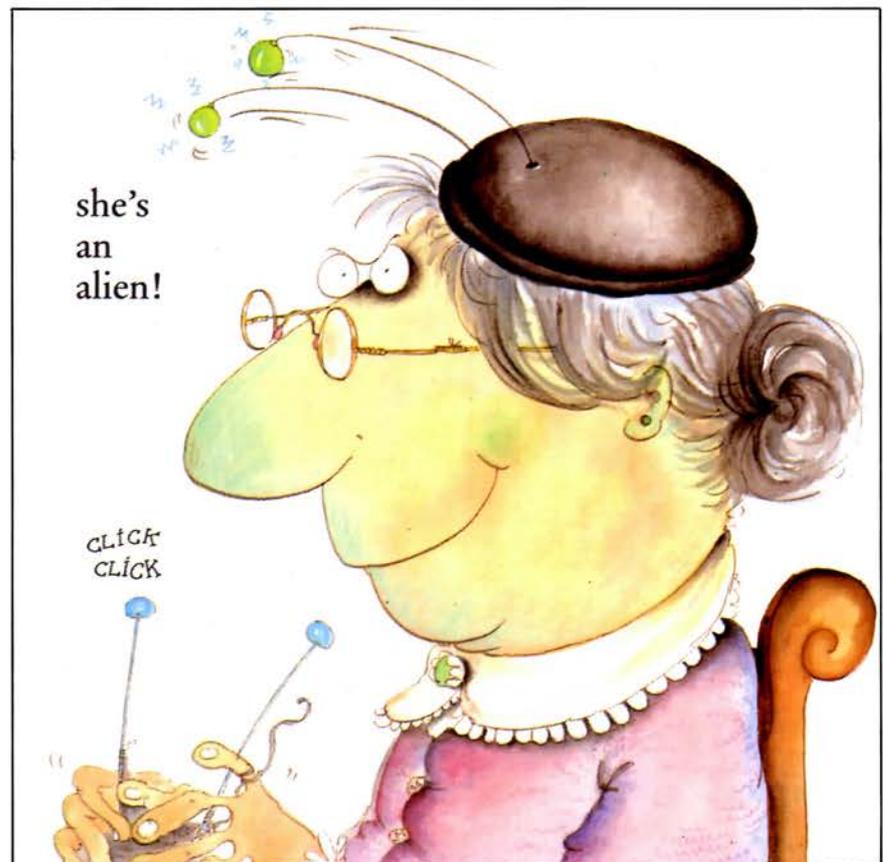
David McKee, Andersen, 0 86264 169 1, £4.95

In contrast, the success of *Veronica* depends on the ending – as blatant a violation of readerly expectation as I've come across in a long time. It had me laughing out loud. So will most readers, I guess, as they follow the career of a little girl with a musical talent so tear-jerking, it can charm the most savage of beasts. That is, until . . . well, try it for yourself. As with all the best McKee, every stroke – verbal or visual – is a masterly celebration of the *droll*.

Peter and the Wolf

Reg Cartwright and Selena Hastings, Walker, 0 7445 0519 4, £6.95

Another *Peter and the Wolf*, do I hear you groan? It says a lot for this version that it



SPRING PICTURE BOOKS FROM BLACKIE

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David McPhail

The rituals of bathtime are captured in this hilarious fantasy-come-true story. (£5.95).

The Teddy Bears' Picnic

Jimmy Kennedy
Illustrated by Prue Theobalds

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From *Half a Moon and One Whole Star*.

Half a Moon and One Whole Star
Jerry Pinkney and Crescent Dragonwagon,
Bodley Head, 0 370 31081 0, £5.95

... And so is this, Jerry Pinkney's artwork is superb. Spread after spread is lush, inventive, beautifully textured and so haunting as we tour the after-dark world of a sleeping child it compensates completely for the accompanying verse. This isn't totally bad - just too close for comfort to the sort of thing you'd expect from someone who's opted for a name like Crescent Dragonwagon.

A New Coat for Anna
Anita Lobel and Harriet Ziefert, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 286 9, £6.25

Astonishingly, the world of post-war austerity turns out to be just as haunting. Anna's mother scrimps, scrapes and swaps her way to the coat her daughter badly needs, every stage in the process deftly caught by a penny-plain text plus pictures well short of tuppence-coloured, yet with such a warmth and bloom about them they transform the sombre setting. Living proof that you don't have to hitch your Dragonwagon to a star, or even half a moon, to make magic.

No Friends
James Stevenson, Gollancz, 0 575 03974 4, £5.75

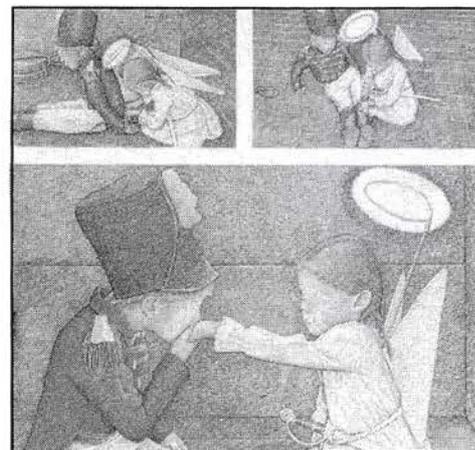
Fred
Posy Simmonds, Cape, 0 224 02448 5, £5.95
Two of a kind, this pair. Both come from well-known cartoonists for adults: Stevenson is a regular contributor to the *New Yorker* and our own Posy Simmonds enlivens each Monday for *Guardian* readers. The difference is that she's making her debut with children while he's an established favourite. Does it show? Not much. In **No Friends**, Stevenson spans the gap between child interest and adult sophistication with his usual device of the faux-naif fogey, Grandpa, who reconciles Mary Ann and Louie to their new neighbourhood with a splendidly improbable tale of how he coped as a child in similar circumstances. It's a delight from start to finish. So is **Fred**, in which Sophie and Nick discover the true status of their dead tomtcat, revealed at his hilarious midnight memorial service to be one of the greatest of all rooftop caterwaulers. There's no attempt to draw down to the kids - the Simmonds' social observation is as spikey as ever, in fact. The success of both books is rooted in their child-centred storyline, the progress of which is never impeded by adult knowingness however much of a bonus this will be for the grown-ups.



From *A New Coat for Anna*.

Finally, an extraordinary book.

The Angel and the Soldier Boy
Peter Collington, Methuen, 0 416 96870 8, £5.95



Not quite a debut since **Little Pickle** came out earlier this year. For that, Peter Collington was mentioned in Mother Goose dispatches (see Sally Grindley's piece on page 15). For this, he'd surely have been a winner. It confirms a new talent accelerating to the front of the field - a wordless narrative of such ambition and charm it makes you breathless for what might be ahead. There are faults, of course. Here and there the figure-drawing isn't quite right and the restraint of the colouring has faded into monotony by the end of the book. These are mere quibbles, though, set against the verve and originality of a story that could only be told in pictures: a toy angel's rescue of a tin-soldier captured by pirates when he intervenes in their piggy-bank raid. An exercise in twee-ness? Not a bit of it when the whole house becomes an epic landscape in which a piano is mountainous and a potted plant as dense as a primeval forest. Lovely stuff.

And a good point to stop - before my top-ish twenty extends to a thrilling thirty. That's only too easy with such a burgeoning of newcomers and oldcomers. If I didn't know how long it takes to produce a picture-book I'd say it was something in the air. Like Spring, perhaps. ●



Lloyds Bank

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

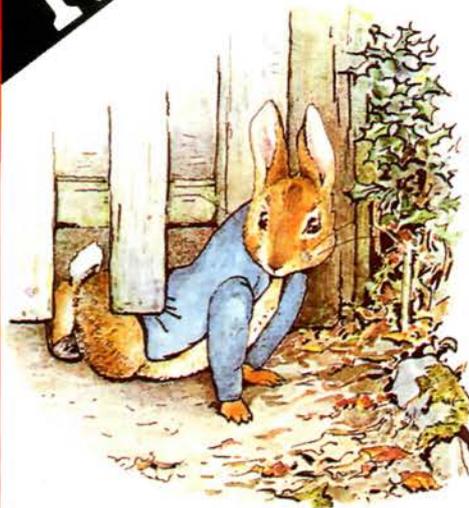
Price: £20 each including VAT, post and packing for VHS or Betamax formats from:
CFL Vision, Sales Department, Gerrards Cross, Bucks. SL9 8TN.

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

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

BOOKS FOR KEEPS NEWS

... Refurbishing Another Rabbit



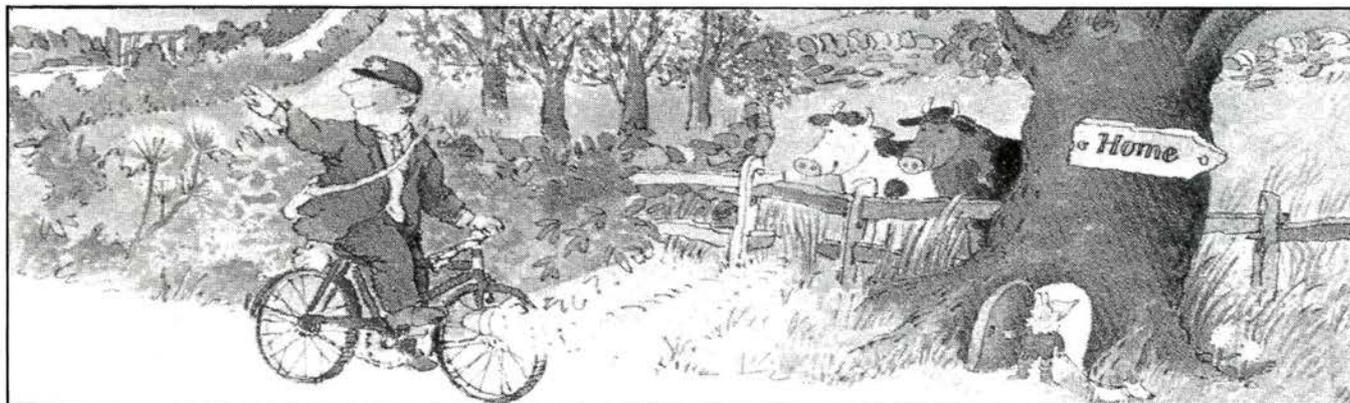
It's not just Brer Rabbit being re-launched this Spring. Peter Rabbit, too, demands fresh attention – so fresh, indeed, that it's doubtful if Beatrix Potter herself saw her much-loved series of books in such pristine condition. Using techniques not available in her day, new plates have been created from more than six hundred of her original illustrations so that colour, detail and brushwork have a quality as close as possible to that first appearance.

The project took eighteen months to complete, involving experts from the worlds of art and printing. As a result we've now got the best editions of the Peter Rabbit books ever issued – or so say Penguin who bought Frederick Warne and the Potter property in 1983. Astonishingly, this is no sales pitch. The most casual comparison with earlier editions shows up the superior

sharpness and delicacy of this one. 'Like wiping off the dust of centuries and finding some bright and sparkling treasure underneath' says Stephanie Nettell. Other authorities, from Maurice Sendak to Shirley Hughes, echo her endorsement of what Penguin, with some justification, call 'one of the most important events in the history of children's publishing'. The new edition, alongside the Beatrix Potter originals, is on exhibition at the Tate Gallery, London in November so soon you'll be able to judge for yourself.

Of course, if you're amongst the seven million purchasers of Peter Rabbit books since Penguin took over, you may be feeling a little miffed. Our advice is to re-invest. At only £2.75 each they're still wonderful value. With only six years to go before she's out of copyright, Beatrix Potter is bigger business than ever.

It's that Postman again



The winner of this year's Children's Book Award is **The Jolly Postman** by Allan and Janet Ahlberg (Heinemann, 0 434 92515 2, £6.95). Children of all ages who tested the book loved opening the envelopes and reading the mail of the nursery favourites.

The 'Top Ten Plus One' runners-up are:

Five Minutes' Peace

Jill Murphy, Walker Books, 0 7445 0491 0, £4.95

I Want My Potty

Tony Ross, Andersen, 0 86264 137 3, £4.95

Katie Morag and the Tiresome Ted

Mairi Hedderwick, Bodley Head, 0 370 30699 6, £5.25

The Tough Princess

Martin Waddell, Walker Books, 0 7445 0540 2, £2.95

Piggybook

Anthony Browne, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 268 7, £5.95

The Wrestling Princess

Judy Corbalis, Deutsch, 0 233 97852 6, £5.95

The Snow Spider

Jenny Nimmo, Methuen, 0 416 54530 0, £5.50

Woof!

Allan Ahlberg, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80832 6, £6.95

The Dream Catcher

Monica Hughes, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 241 5, £7.25

Isaac Champion

Janni Howker, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 270 9, £5.95

Dead Birds Singing

Marc Talbert, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11770 4, £5.95

The Children's Book Award is given annually by the Federation of Children's Book Groups. A book list, **Pick of the Year**, reviewing the winner and the runners-up, and recommending a further 28 books which were well received during the Award testing programme, is available from Josie Weeks, 9 Lynwood Gardens, Pudsey, West Yorkshire. Copies are available at 40p each or, for orders of 10 or more, at 10p each including postage (cheques payable to FCBG).

Summer Storyboat

The idea of a travelling narrow boat, packed with authors, books and stories, began with Hertfordshire Libraries. For several years the Storyboat made its way slowly along the canal between Watford and Tring during the first week of the school summer holidays, stopping to allow children and their families to clamber aboard and explore its treasures. The scheme was threatened when the County Library Service had to withdraw support but we are pleased to report that the Summer Storyboat project has survived and this year has been granted charitable status. It is funded by a combination of local and national concerns, including Kodak, BP, the Dickens and Robinson Group, local councils and, increasingly, by publishers who encourage their authors to take part.

From 27th-31st July this year the Summer Storyboat is off again with a series of day-long programmes of stories, songs, games, painting and competitions – all for free and designed to prove that books are fun. Details from Dina Thorpe, tel: Hatfield (07072) 66137. ●