

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

NOV. 1980 No. 5
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There was a boy called Thomas Mead who never ever learned to read.

“I wish you would!” his teacher sighed.

“Why should I?” Thomas Mead replied.



CHRISTMAS BOOKS
STORYTELLING – WHY & HOW

AUTHORGRAPH No.5

Pat Hutchins

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LOOKING AHEAD

In January we take a many-sided
look at Books and Television.

Plus the latest news, reviews
and comment.

Reviewers

in this issue



Jill Bennett

Jill is an infant teacher, currently on a course at the Institute of Education in London. She is Literary Editor of Child Education and on the Board of the SBA.



Steve Bowles

Steve was a secondary English teacher and co-producer of Reviewsheet until it ceased publication. He is now writing full-time.

Pat Triggs

Teaches in the Department of Education, Bristol Polytechnic. Past Chairman of the Federation of Children's Book Groups and on the Board of the SBA.

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EDITOR'S PAGE



**What exams does Santa Claus take?
Ho! Ho! Ho! Levels**

**What do angry mice send each other
at Christmas?**

Cross-mouse cards.

Ah Christmas! Crunching snow, rosy cheeks, shining eyes, church bells, chestnuts popping, sparkling tree, and the family gathered around a glowing fire listening to magical stories. What a fantasy! Well, even if the reality is more likely to be sludge underfoot, dropping noses, popping gas fires, and the family clustered round the telly again — it won't be Eileen Colwell's fault if the magic of storytelling doesn't feature somewhere this season. Her article for us (p. 4) coincides with the publication of her latest book **Storytelling** (Bodley Head, 0 370 30228 1, £4.95). All her wisdom and experience as a world-famous storyteller is distilled into this practical, down-to-earth handbook for all would-be storytellers. For a Starter Kit for **Storytelling NOW**, see **How to . . .** (p. 20), compiled by Chris Powling, headmaster and storytelling addict. Armed with that and Eileen Colwell's list of sources for stories for Christmas, how can you fail?

The power of the word in the air

Storytellers we may become, but there's no longer a living oral tradition of British folk tale. What is recorded and available to us was in the main captured by nineteenth century collectors. Since then, says **Alan Garner**, British folktale has become either the province of the scholar or something we use for children's moral education. 'There remains no middle ground.' He voices these thoughts in the introduction to his latest book **The Lad of the Gad** (Collins, 0 00 184711 2, £4.95) which is 'an attempt to recover the middle ground.' Garner is acutely conscious that 'the word in the air is not the same as the word on the page.' But, 'I have tried to place my literate ear in the way of a preliterate voice so that . . . the force may be recreated and felt.' And it is. The language is powerful, and the vigorous rhythms of 'ordinary' speech are moulded into the poetry of the storyteller. (Impossible to escape metaphors of craftsmanship in trying to describe Garner.) The reader/ listener moves through a landscape peopled by men and women whose lives, spent accepting the 'crosses and spells', enchantments and quests placed on them, are lived with the logic of dreams. Get it, share it, and let the yeast of the images work in your imagination.

More Uses of Enchantment?

Barbara Janzer, a library consultant in West Germany, has sent us news of yet another slant on Fairy Tales. Results of a medical research study of 76 children

(reported in **The German Tribune**) indicate that children who are told fairy tales are 'more intelligent, calmer, mentally more balanced and more open-minded than those who are not.' We are finding out more about the study. Meanwhile, better get storytelling — just in case.

Multi-cultural postscript

Some follow up to our September multi-ethnic special issue. The bad news? Ann Harries' **The Sound of the Gora** has been banned in South Africa. Official reason: 'it would be prejudicial to the safety of the state.'

The good news? We have been hearing lots more about books and sources of information you might find useful. We are gathering it together in a mini-supplement for the next issue.

Cover Story

*There was a boy called Thomas Mead
Who never ever learned to read.
"I wish you would!" his teacher
sighed
"Why should I?" Thomas Mead
replied.*

Pat Hutchins wrote that verse for a librarian in Des Plaines, Illinois who wanted something to encourage children to read. Eventually it turned into a book. **The Tale of Thomas Mead** (Bodley Head 0 370 30357 1, £3.25, January 1981) which is a positive and hilarious answer to 'Why should I?' Pat says, 'I liked the idea because both my children found reading difficult.' We are delighted to have **Thomas Mead** on our cover and Pat Hutchins in the Authorgraph (p. 14). We discovered she is a great admirer of Arnold Lobel's work. (He's also in this issue, on p. 26) She repeated to us a remark he made which she obviously cherishes. 'He said he'd always thought of doing a wordless picture book; but after seeing **Changes, Changes** he didn't want to any more.'



From **Morris's Disappearing Bag** by Rosemary Wells (Kestrel/Puffin)

Dear Father Christmas . . .

Thomas Mead is certainly on my Christmas list — along with **The Signal Approach to Children's Books** (see p. 12), and two titles from regular contributors to **Books for Keeps**.

Roger was a Razor Fish (Bodley Head, 0 370 30352 0, £3.50) is Jill Bennett's anthology of poems for infants, illustrated by Maureen Roffey, and **Mog and the Rectifier** (Abelard, 0 200 72697 8, £3.95) is Chris Powling's first full-length novel. The idea of a folk hero Rectifier who steals from tax dodgers and hands the loot over to the Inland Revenue is certainly intriguing. They are all hardbacks. Expensive? Well, compare the prices of these and the books in our selection (p. 18) with one ticket for the pantomime or the cinema, a bottle of sherry, most toys, and then consider how much longer lasting is the pleasure of a book. Owning hardbacks is an important experience for children. Nick Tucker tells a lovely story of his small daughter's passion for a library book. Eventually she was given her own copy; but on the next library visit she insisted on borrowing her favourite book again. That night she was found in bed with both copies, comparing them page by page to make quite sure they were the same. Here at the SBA, Robin, Angie and Richard's baby son, is delighting us all. From the moment he could focus his eyes he's been hooked on C for Clown in John Burningham's **ABC** (Cape).

Sorry, but . . .

We're sorry to have to announce a price increase for **Books for Keeps**.

Recently Rosemary Sandberg (editor of **Fontana Lions**) reported that teachers she'd been talking to reckoned it took six years to find out about a new book, try it, get a response and finally order it — by which time it is probably out of print. If **Books for Keeps** can help cut down that time, we hope you think we're worth the subscription.

Anyway, don't you know how to make a pound note worth more? If you fold it, it doubles, and when you open it again you find it in creases.

Groan, groan. That really is **The End** (Puffin, 0 14 03 1383 4, 80p).

Merry Christmas ●

Pat

'Each one of us is a potential storyteller.' Why bother? EILEEN COLWELL puts the case for

Storytelling

First of all what is storytelling? For many people it is reading from a book. This is not what I mean by the term. For me storytelling is the telling of a story spontaneously in my own words directly to children. Storytelling of this kind is a shared experience between storyteller and audience and the story flows freely from the storyteller's imagination and identification with the spirit of the story, so that it becomes a living experience. 'And out of my mind a story shall come./Old and lovely and wise,' said Walter de la Mare and who should know better! Storytelling is a happy time not only for the children who are listening but for the storyteller too.

This is not to decry the reading aloud of a story from a book, a demanding exercise requiring skill and preparation. Some stories must be read as they are written because of their distinctive style. Both those who read stories and those who tell them come to recognise that some stories are for reading and some for telling and that the two kinds differ in construction and demand a different technique in their presentation. An example might be the folk tale which has been handed down by oral tradition so that it is obviously in the right form for telling. As a contrast, consider a story by Walter de la Mare with its contemplative style and leisurely pace — here is a story for reading and savouring. A story for telling has a pattern — an interesting beginning, a quick moving sequence of events, clear cut characters, a climax, followed speedily by an ending that satisfies the child.

When a story is read directly from a book the reader's attention must be mainly on the printed page rather than on the children listening; when it is told the words come alive with the human voice and personality of the storyteller who is free to watch the children's reaction and to make any necessary adaptations in approach and difficulty as the story flows on. Reading aloud demands much from a child in concentration; storytelling is easier to listen to because of its directness and the intimate contact between child and storyteller.

Storytelling has been my particular interest and delight throughout my life. I could not have made it so had I not believed in its value for both child and storyteller. Through the medium of told stories, so much that is valuable, beautiful and memorable can be presented to the child in a lively and positive way. With primitive peoples the story has always been a means of presenting a way of life, tribal customs, history and tradition. This is still the strength of storytelling, that it conveys to children facets of life and character, the constant battle between good and evil that is the theme of the greatest stories in the world. Here are man's reactions to the emotions which move all human beings — love and hatred, courage and fear, loyalty and treachery, pride in the creation of beauty. The ubiquitous media have contributed greatly to the spreading of knowledge, but at the same time they have confused man's sense of values and priorities. Well chosen stories can help to restore the balance and encourage the positive values and, because they are presented by a real living person not at second hand, they can have an immediacy and impact that is remembered although it may not be fully understood at the time.

Meet Eileen Colwell —

Eileen Colwell MBE has spent a lifetime in the cause of children's reading. Much of what we take for granted (and should fight to preserve and expand) in the work of libraries for children and schools stems from her pioneering work. In 1926, two years after completing a Diploma in Librarianship, she went to work in Hendon in North London. There was no library service for children, so she started one. Hendon Children's Library became internationally famous and Miss Colwell's work continued. She was Chairman for five years of the International Federation of Library Associations' committee on library work with children and was a member of the Carnegie Medal committee of the Library Association from its first award in 1936.

Storytelling has always been her special interest and joy and she is an internationally acclaimed master of the ancient art. To see her — a tiny, slender figure, hold an audience spellbound is an experience and an education. Now retired from lecturing at the Loughborough School of Librarianship, she continues to tour the country telling stories and passing on her skills. Her *Storytellers' Choice* series for the Bodley Head and her collections of stories for Puffin are invaluable for anyone wanting to bring stories to children. Eileen Colwell's latest book, *Storytelling*, was published in October by Bodley Head.

Nowadays we lack stimulation to the imagination, the 'golden thread' that runs through all life and inspires a sense of mystery and wonder. Imagination is the spring-board for adventures of the mind and spirit and, trained by use, it continues to explore the unknown to the benefit of the future as well as the present. It can be a 'magic casement' for a child, opening on untold delights. Listening to a story, a child uses his imagination perhaps unconsciously, to create background, character, adventures, details that the visual media present to him ready-made in a predetermined pattern.

It is often claimed that modern children no longer enjoy listening to stories and cannot concentrate on them as they used to unless helped by visual aids. As far as length of concentration is concerned, there is evidence that this is true to some degree, but this is not an argument against storytelling. Storytellers have found that children do enjoy stories and indeed need them for the love of stories is still an instinctive desire of human beings, young or old. If children show boredom during a story time, it does not prove that they do not like stories, but more probably that the storyteller has made a poor choice. Has the storyteller forgotten one vital element in children's enjoyment, a sense of humour and shared laughter? Another reason for inattention might be that we have told the story badly without sufficient thought and preparation. This is unfair to both audience and story.

So many people have said to me, 'Oh, I could never tell a story!' Why not? Storytelling is not the prerogative of a few chosen gifted people, for each one of us is a potential storyteller. We tell stories of our own doings every day, tell them with eagerness and conviction and with detail, for we know exactly what happened. Here are the essentials of successful storytelling. It is true, of course, that the telling of a selected story to a group of children or adults requires more than this casual approach. The storyteller needs the self-discipline of preparation and practice if he is to tell the story well. But given the desire to



Eileen Colwell photographed recently in Hendon Library where she started her career. (Photo, Bodley Head)

share stories with children for their enjoyment — and many children never have the opportunity to hear stories in their own homes — success can be achieved by most people. We can fit the story to the audience by careful selection, decide on the best way to tell it and become so familiar with its structure that it is no longer an effort to remember it. In this preparation it helps to see the story in our imagination as a series of pictures.

Storytelling is not the privilege of women only as is so often assumed. Men make excellent storytellers as I have proved many times, but too often it is taken for granted that storytelling is the women's field. Another fallacy is that only children like to hear stories. I remember many adult audiences — assemblies of students and teachers, gatherings of parents, four hundred nuns in a London hall — who, private problems and the strains of modern life forgotten, have obviously enjoyed sharing this unusual experience.

Behind all storytelling is one basic essential, wide reading! A storyteller soon finds that he must read many books to discover the material that appeals to him and is suitable for telling. This is not a tedious duty but a journey of delight in which new byways are constantly discovered, intriguing incidents which demand further investigation, new fields of interest. Even a large collection of stories may only yield one story that is just right for the occasion and about which we can feel enthusiasm. The kind of story we choose may differ for each one of us, but once shared with children, the telling becomes a memorable and pleasant experience for both the children and ourselves. For the child it may be an introduction to a book he did not know before, an incentive to further adventuring in reading.

The sharing of a story can offer an uplift to the spirit, an escape from too great pressure — and children can feel the strain of modern life just as adults do — an escape into the magic realm of Story. Give it a try. ●

**Christmas is a time for telling stories.
For beginners or old hands, Eileen Colwell recommends —**

The Long Christmas
Ruth Sawyer, Bodley Head,
0 370 01068 X, £3.50
Thirteen stories from many countries.

A Christmas Acorn
Margaret Hainson, Bodley Head, 0 370 00979 7, £1.50
For younger children.

Stories for Christmas
Chosen from Alison Uttley's collections by Kathleen Lines, Faber, 0 571 11074 6, £3.50

Individual stories

The Donkey that Helped Father Christmas

In *Tell Me Another Story*, Eileen Colwell, Puffin, 0 14 03.0210 7, 85p

Baboushka
In *The Youngest Storybook*, Eileen Colwell, Bodley Head, 0 370 01011 6, £3.25

The Glass Peacock
In *The Little Bookroom*, Eleanor Farjeon, OUP, 0 19 277099 3, £1.80
For older children.

Schnitzle, Schnotzle and Schnootzle by Ruth Sawyer
In *A Christmas Acorn* (see above)

Where Love is, God is by Leo Tolstoy
In *A Storyteller's Choice*, Eileen Colwell, Bodley Head, 0 370 01051 5, £2.95
For older children or adults, this has the true spirit of Christmas.

Room for a Little One by Ruth Tongue
In *The Magic Umbrella and Other Stories for Telling*, Eileen Colwell, Bodley Head, 0 370 11020 X, £3.25

A variant on the theme of 'No room at the inn', a moving simple story.

The Fir Tree by Hans Andersen

Brother Johannick and his Silver Bell by Elizabeth Clark
In *A Second Storyteller's Choice*, Eileen Colwell, Bodley Head (now out of print but probably available in libraries)

The Good Little Christmas Tree
Ursula Moray Williams, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 01956 7, 85p
A charming and compassionate story with a recurring repetitive phrase for participation. (Also out of print)

Practical help for would-be storytellers in *How To... Start Storytelling*, page 20.

'A tin a day keeps the vet away' is Pussycat Purr Catfood's motto, and the motley gang of cats employed to keep down the rats in the factory enthusiastically agree. Led by the great one-eyed, torn-eared Pyewacket, the factory cats find that vermin are the least of their problems when a rival gang of alley-cats not only try to take over their patch, but also incriminate Pyewacket's son in an underhand plot. Fast and furious fun with —

PYEWACKET AND SON

by ROSEMARY WEIR

Illustrated by

Charles Pickard

(£3.50 hb, 95p pb)

A Green Grasshopper

ISBN 0 200 72708 7 hb

ISBN 0 200 72707 9 pb

TWO NONSENSE STORIES

written and illustrated

by EDWARD LEAR

(£2.95 hb, 75p pb)

A Red Grasshopper

Everyone knows about the Owl and the Pussycat and the Pobble who had No Toes but fewer have met the seven strange families with their forty-nine children or Violet, Slingsby, Guy and Lionel who went round the world. Now the two zany stories which tell of their hilarious exploits, combined with Lear's own unique ink drawings, appear in a great introduction to nonsense at its best.

ISBN 0 200 72282 4 hb

ISBN 0 200 72281 6 pb

**THE STAINED
GLASS WINDOW**

by PENELOPE LIVELY

Illustrated by

Michael Pollard

(£2.95 hb, 75p pb)

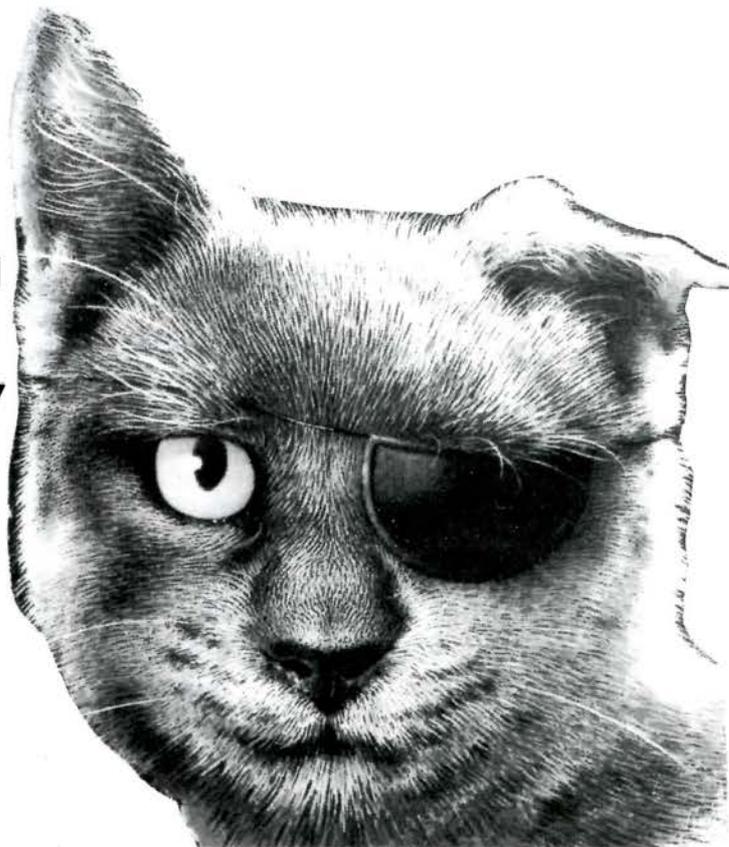
A Red Grasshopper

Captured forever in a stained glass of a small country church, a knight and his lady stand facing each other. As a young girl gazes at them one Sunday, their whole story seems to come alive for her. It's a delightful tale of courtly love and knightly virtue, told in beautiful and evocative prose with an unexpected and satisfying ending.

ISBN 0 200 72264 6 hb

ISBN 0 200 72263 8 pb

**'A TIN A DAY
KEEPS
THE
VET
AWAY'**



**Great Children's Books
From Blackie & Abelard**

reviews

PAPERBACKS NURSERY/INFANT

My Naughty Little Sister Goes Fishing
Dorothy Edwards and Shirley Hughes, Magnet, 0 416 89910 2, 90p



And she cried and cried.

A full colour version of a story which was first published in the original *My Naughty Little Sister* book in the early fifties — and who better to illustrate this favourite tale than Shirley Hughes? *My Naughty Little Sister* is — inevitably — disobedient; she gets herself soaking wet on the fishing expedition and finishes the day with a hot drink in bed and, a little fish in her basket.

Just the thing for those who want to read about this irrepressible character but cannot yet cope with the collections of stories, and, for sharing with a small group. JB

The Naughty Little Goat, 0 416 89370 8



"There's no peace with you around," she said. "Go and butt somebody else."

How Foal Forgot to be Frightened, 0 416 89380 5

Helen Piers, Magnet, 75p each
Also published in hardcover as **The Foal and the Naughty Little Goat**, Methuen, 0 416 89360 0, £3.50

The quality and simplicity of Helen Piers' writing coupled with her superb colour photographs of animals adds up to ideal material for those who are learning to read

whatever their age. These two stories — whose texts are slightly longer than some of her previous books — relate how a goat's butting makes him very unpopular and, in the end, an accidental hero; and how a fearful foal, in helping a lost lamb, eventually loses his own fears. JB

The Cat in the Hat, 0 00 171303 5

The Cat in the Hat Comes Back, 0 00 171304 3

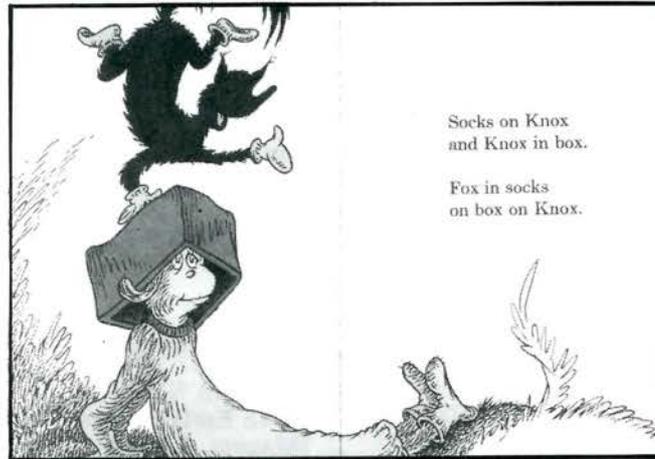
Hop on Pop, 0 00 171309 4

Green Eggs and Ham, 0 00 171306 X

Fox in Socks, 0 00 171311 6

Dr. Seuss's ABC, 0 00 171308 6

Collins, £1 each



Socks on Knox and Knox in box.

Fox in socks on box on Knox.

Double spread from 'Fox in Socks'

Two Americans have done more for the cause of making learning to read fun than anyone else I can think of. One is Arnold Lobel; the other is, of course, Theodor S. Geisel — Dr. Seuss. Writing well for beginner readers is no easy task; **The Cat in the Hat** took over a year to write, but in the past twenty years it has helped countless children on the way to becoming autonomous readers. Now at long last this and five more of the most popular Beginner Books are available in paperback. These inviting looking books, the same size as the hardcover editions, are bargains — 64 pages of rhyming fun for £1 each. Every primary classroom should have at least two sets, and make sure school bookshops are well prepared. More titles to look forward to next year. JB

Father Bear Comes Home, Else Holmelund Minarik, pictures by Maurice Sendak, 0 437 96039 0

Chester Syd Hoff, 0 437 96038 2, **World's Work I Can Read** paperbacks, 95p each

The Little Bear books have also become classics of their kind. The most recent of them to appear in paperback contains four enchanting stories about Little Bear and his friends not forgetting his loving parents.

Syd Hoff's books are also very popular with learner readers; the combination of his humorous pictures and simple

Crash!!, Dorothy Edwards, illustrated by Lynne Cousins, 0 590 70015 4

The Noisiest Class in the School, Pauline Hill, illustrated by Joan Beales, 0 590 70016 2

Chunka saves the Day, Elizabeth Robinson, illustrated by Peter Dennis, 0 590 70017 0
Junior Hippo books, Scholastic, 75p each

I was very disappointed with the new Junior Hippos which are intended as easy readers. The idea of producing such a series is a good one but when measured against well established series like the Beginner Books and the I Can Reads these stories and illustrations just will not do.

H.E.L.P. presupposes that one starts reading from the back cover — at least that is what the reader must do to see the significance of those initials. The story of the quartet's attempts to find a missing cat seems to be merely a vehicle for a series of poorly illustrated slapstick situations. And the statutory two black faces are nothing short of insulting.

Crash!! left me speechless. The story — dog chases cat near roadworks, car and jam van crash, tar and jam everywhere — is told (partly in rhyme) in language which is no better than most reading schemes. The monosyllabic text is matched with illustrations which are its visual equivalent.

There is no story in **The Noisiest Class in the School**, just a number of incidents featuring a group of unruly children who seem — definitely — to have got the upper hand as far as their trendy teacher is concerned.

Chunka is an unexceptional story about how an abandoned traction engine comes to the rescue and joins the circus. But why the avoidance of contractions in the text? — "I shall be back," said Chunka. "Then I will tell you what it is like to be a circus engine!" — is that natural language? JB

stories appeals strongly. Chester is a wild horse who is determined to make people want him and has lots of adventures before he is finally accepted by the cowboys.

Also just published in this series are **Arthur's Pen Pal** by Lillian Hoban and **The Several Tricks of Edgar Dolphin**. With over forty of these I Can Read books now available in paperback and the new Dr. Seuss ones, it seems to me there is no need whatsoever for schools to cling to their reading schemes. JB

H.E.L.P., Kathleen Ramsay, illustrated by David Mastyn, 0 590 70018 9

Wearing Many Hats Althea, Dinosaur, 0 85122 211 0, 60p

Just by trying different hats on, we can become lots of different people . . . The heroine here becomes a farmer; policewoman; Roman soldier; pirate; astronaut. This is a sure-fire one for the non-sexist lists and a direct, sometimes witty, look at the implications of 'let's pretend' which could lead to some useful discussion with middle and top infants. CM

King Rollo and the Tree, 0 905478 70 3

King Rollo and the Balloons, 0 905478 69 X

King Rollo and the Dishes, 0 905478 68 1

David McKee,
Andersen Press, 95p
each

Three tiny books featuring a charming monarch whose mishaps and mistakes, whilst troubling his cook and magician, will delight under-sevens. These very short easy-to-read stories with their comical illustrations should be a real incentive to infant readers. JB

Babar Learns to Cook Laurent de Brunhoff, Picture Lions, 0 00 661700 X, 85p

Another Babar in paperback: in this one, the cult-figure elephant studies under Chef Truffles. There's a strong storyline and some vibrant illustrations of the goodies. I'm always sad that the glorious illustrations aren't matched by richer texts; that said, I've seen skilled storytellers bring them alive. There's an undoubted sense of fun, though, and top infants who've tried some cooking themselves will love it! CM

INFANT/JUNIOR

Roll Call on the Ark, 0 600 20164 3

The Weather Forecast, 0 600 20165 1

The Haunted Ark, 0 600 20244 5

Cockle Takes a Swim, 0 600 20243 7 John

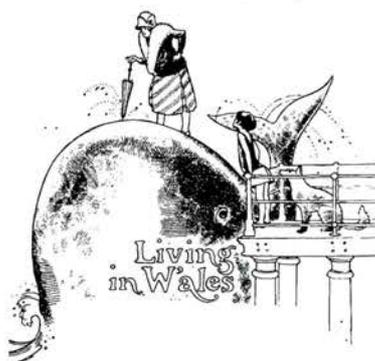
Ryan, Beaver, all 70p
John Ryan has made a zany world in these books which top infants to top juniors will enter with enthusiasm. The wide appeal is worth noting. The youngest children love the extension of a story they half know and the immediate characterisation (the fey Mr. Noah; the gloomy Shems; the cheery Hams; the rumbustious Jaffet and Jannet and, best of all, the ubiquitous crocodile, Crocket). The older ones like

all this plus the engaging cartoon format (Ryan is clever at the climactic joke: TV training?), the verbal fun and the humour that's always implicit in 'going it alone against the world'.

In Roll Call there's a great recount of all the Ark's creatures — but they can't find the caterpillars. (Have you guessed? Most eight-year-olds do!) Mr. Noah gets faulty Met readings in The Weather Forecast with hilarious consequences. There's surefire fun when a ghost appears in The Haunted Ark and the quirky individuality of the books is best captured in Cockle Takes a Swim when the mischievous crocodile decides to explore.

Super read-aloud books in a single session: the children will want to pore over the pictures. CM

The Wonder Dog Collected Children's Stories of Richard Hughes, Puffin, 0 14 03.1069 X, 85p



Thirty short stories here are a testament to a writer with a life-long concern with storytelling. This collection is aimed at the 'six to nine-year-olds' and the short introduction is an important statement on the 'power' of story.

The stories deal mainly in whimsy, in the illogical, in reality turned upside down and often, the ridiculing of the pompous adults. Much of it is trite: some of it, frankly, worrying (see The Man with a Green Face and, please, before you put it on your bookshelf, The Dark Child), but there are gems — the title story, for instance. It may sound churlish to the memory of a writer who gave much to children, but I seriously wonder whether these appeal to contemporary readers. They didn't to the ones I know! Is the appeal to the atavistic, Uncle Mac-reared adults? . . . CM

LOWER JUNIOR

Bogwoppit Ursula Moray Williams, Beaver, 0 600 20060 4, 85p

Samantha, an orphan, is sent to the Park to live with Aunt Daisy. She's unwelcome, and so are the strange, mischievous creatures who inhabit the house. The Bogwoppits (and, come to that, the Moly-piddles) must be the best fictional joke for ages! Ursula Moray Williams is one of those writers who, because she's been doing it so well for so long, we often underrate: the sure touch of a storyteller is here. The pace of the action is faultless; the characters all live, especially Daisy Clandorris, who rates for me with Grannie Bagthorpe as one of the most appealing ladies of the seventies!

Shirley Hughes' outrageously comic illustrations give real substance. It brought the nation's 7 to 9-year-olds racing home to Jackanory, and I know one class of 8 and 9-year-olds who've prayed for months for the paperback. CM

Fort Wilberforce Leslie Coleman, Beaver, 0 600 20136 8, 75p

The fourth in the 'Wilberforce' series, in which the eccentric whale and the Undersea Rangers, led by Nelson the Crab, meet an undersea monster, battle against the submarine bullies, come upon some sunken treasure and generally maintain the derring-do beneath the waves. Coleman certainly has the knack of catching the in-jokes, the zany characters and the linguistic jokes that are the stuff of life to most nine-year-old boys I know. Read aloud, but be prepared for all the wooomps and whee-ee-ees! CM



Bogwoppit

Captain Skip John Emlyn Edwards, Magnet, 0 416 89530 1, 85p

If you have read Paul Biegel's 'Little Captain' books you will be extremely disappointed by the pale pastiche similarities of plot and characterisation in this vastly inferior 'Captain Skip' adventure.

The reader is invited to come aboard the boat, Somedayfind, with Captain Skip, Panama, Pete, Bill-Bill and Sally, and join their magical, fun-packed quest to find the paradise of Holiday Island. My advice is to decline gracefully and stay with the genuine Biegel article. BB

Chocolate Fever Robert Kimmel Smith, Piccolo, 0 330 26158 4, 80p

Henry starts the day with chocolate cake, chocolate cereal, chocolate milk and chocolate biscuits. Lunch, tea and supper follow a similar pattern. Inevitably, Henry comes out in brown spots, diagnosed as Chocolate Fever. Henry makes medical history but escapes before they can inoculate him into antiseptic Superstardom. He hitches a lift in a lorry which is carrying (you've guessed it) . . . chocolate bars. Robbers hijack the lorry, thinking it contains a cargo of expensive furs . . . So this silly little tale rambles on. Has Henry got an incurable disease? Will Sugar Cane become the first sweet millionaire? Will Chocolate Fever take over the world? . . . Only if you really need to know should you read this. BB

JUNIOR/MIDDLE



Rook

Deborah King, Beaver,
0 600 20309 3, £2.25

A rare, enchanting book. The story of the first year of Young Rook's life is told in expressive language against a background of a Monmouthshire village. The illustrations are worth an award in themselves: vivid, potent and bringing the young in close contact with the cycle of the seasons and the changing landscapes.

What shines through is the writer's enthusiasm for the topic: a lesson perhaps for the writers of those dreary 'information' books that land on my desk each week? A book to be read, shared, looked at, and talked about. Every junior classroom will be richer for a copy; many older juniors will want it in their personal collections. CM



Illustration by Trevor Stubley from 'Old Dog, New Tricks'

Old Dog, New Tricks Dick Cate, Puffin,

0 14 03.1270 6, 70p

The third book about a Durham family, after *Flying Free* (Beaver) and *A Funny Sort of Christmas* (Puffin). It's the best, too, cleverly but unobtrusively making its points about Change without ever forgetting that the vehicle is a story for young kids. Billy's Dad, lost without a job when the pit is closed, does nothing with the nuisance of a dog that grandma got from the RSPCA. But his unexpected new start holds the seeds of Dot's reclamation too. A minor classic, this, well worth its Other Award despite being slightly dated. Illustrations by Trevor Stubley, the Guvnor for books like this. SB

Scottish Fairy Tales Grant Campbell, Piccolo, 0 330 26136 3,

80p

Scottish folklore is rich in tales which need to be passed on to the young and preserved: twelve are lovingly collected here by a devoted anthologist with a life-long interest. There's a strong sense of place here — the mists, lochs, rivers and moorlands are not just settings for the stories, they are in the tones of them. They read aloud extremely well: my real test of a collection like this.

As good an introduction as any for 8 to 11-year-olds to a heritage that we know shamefully little of. There are generous notes for the teacher on 'sources': a topic older juniors tend to be fascinated with. Read them *Habetrot* in this collection and the Grimm's *Three Spinners* for a Germanic slant; *The Elfin Knight*, one of my favourites here, has a parallel in Arthurian legend. Excellent value, with some splendid illustrations by Jane Bottomley. CM



Henny Takes a Hand Barbara Paterson, Hippo, 0 590 70009 X,

95p

The illustrations here match the nine stories well — they nearly score. It'd need long, close analysis to explain exactly how Barbara Paterson gets the detail of description and dialogue wrong — only space to mention a common fault: Too Long. A hardback company might have edited more decisively and perhaps made two volumes — Hippo cram it all in with tiny print. However, in some ways these match the best on the "everyday" primary school scene — bullying, Spring Fair, pets — even if Henny herself is a touch artificial. Reading one aloud (suitably abridged) would help, especially where Tyke Tiler has gone well. SB

Little Ed Tom Tully, Beaver, 0 600 20120 1, 75p

This looks awful and the stories don't belie the cover. Nevertheless, there are kids who would laugh at the chaos Ed Englefield creates as he tries to get the scoop which will save his school magazine from the Deputy Head's closure threat. There's more than a touch of old-time kids' TV comedy and *The Dandy* as Ed disrupts his family, a film set and the local football club. Totally uncool, and the style's not always appropriate to the unsophisticated readers who might consider such a grotty looking object. Do without it if you can. SB

Shooting Stars Sean McCann, Knight, 0 340 25497 1, 75p

Sean McCann's fourth footballing saga of Georgie Goode and his friends from Borlton Boys Football Club contains all the ingredients that have proved so successful in the earlier stories. Mud, goals and fear, are all liberally mixed with high speed action and intrigue. It all comes right in the end, of course, as our hero scores the winning goal, and the villains are defeated.

All good stuff for the football fanatics in the 10-12 range. One jarring note though: I felt the lad's attitude to the referee in the final game wasn't the best of examples to give to highly susceptible and impressionable kids. BB

Undercover Boy, 0 583 30355 2

Chips and the Crossword Gang, 0 583 30356 0, Roy Brown, Granada, 75p each

Roy Brown's output recently arouses doubts. These seem tired and unconvincing. Elements recurring from earlier novels don't help either. In such short books (\pm 80 pages) characters get little room alongside all the action and the adults are handled very poorly. Clumsy construction too; one feels like writing, "You must take more care with your work" at the end. Chips, 'the policeman's son' and his errant labrador seem more at home catching petty bike thieves in *Crossword Gang* than the big time jewel thief of the first book. Perhaps for top junior boys wanting something a bit tougher. Gravesend setting. SB

The Case of the Fagin File Terrance Dicks, Piccolo, 0 330 26157 6, 85p

An unqualified vote of approval for this, the second 'case' for the Baker Street 'irregulars'. A great read for the 10-12 age group; the

language is just right; the narrative moves at the racy pace kids like, with just enough twists in the tale to keep everyone guessing.

In brief: the police are puzzled by a spate of burglaries and completely mystified by the inclusion of sweets and toys, along with the cash and jewellery, of the robbers' haul. Throw in a mastermind called Fagin, a dog (Baskerville, naturally!), four credible kids as detectives, plenty of action, and you've got an intriguing and realistic story about juvenile crime. BB

Goldenrod and the Kidnappers Jim Slater, Puffin, 0 14 03.1229 3, 80p

The second 'Goldenrod' book. If you missed the first adventure of William (Golden) Rod, suffice it to say that the lad is endowed with special powers of sight, hearing and strength, which he employs in a variety of ways to overcome his adversaries.

The storyline of this second book centres around the protection of Midnight, a potential Derby-winning horse, which is threatened by Scarface and the Syndicate.

I found it a disappointment as 'an adventure story for readers of eight and over', to quote the publicity blurb. It tries too hard to sustain pace and excitement, lacking that vital relationship between character and reader that makes a story special. BB

The Tiger Gang and the Car Thieves Dafne Bidwell, Magnet, 0 416 89550 6, 85p

I would have thought we had enough native junk of this kind without importing it from Australia — especially when it's stre-e-etched over 180 pages. This is Six Capture the Bad Guys. 'Remember Rule 3. Tigers are tough. Tigers don't give up.' What a pity. SB

Journey Into War Margaret Donaldson, Hippo, 0 590 70026 X, 90p



Drawing by Joanna Stubbs

A realistic story which manages to avoid the sentimentalism and cheap sensationalism which mars inferior 'child lost in wartime' novels.

The time is May 1940. Janey is trying to return to the comparative safety of Britain as the German army advances

across France. In the chaos and confusion, she is separated from her companion, leaving her alone, friendless, in an increasingly hostile situation.

Her ensuing adventures — meeting two similarly stranded Polish boys, forming their own guerilla force, capture by the Gestapo — make exciting and believable reading.

A marvellous adventure story which will be welcomed as excellent background reading for World War II projects. **BB**

A sequel to *Journey Into War*, called *The Moon's on Fire*, has just been published by Deutsch (0 233 97249 8) at £4.50.

The Midnight Kittens

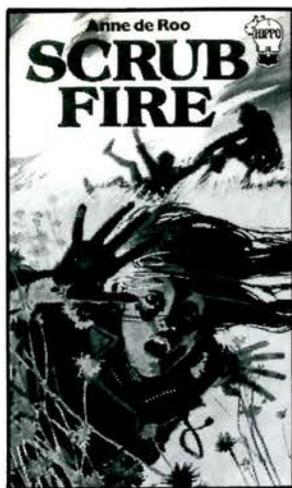
Dodie Smith, Sparrow, 0 09 924060 2, 80p

Having tried out *The Midnight Kittens* with several groups of middle school children, I still remain puzzled about which readership the book is trying to reach. On page one, we are informed that the twins are ten and are then regaled with a description of round faces and rosy cheeks that recalls in its triteness the 'Bobbsey Twins' and other dated fiction. Then, with barely a pause for breath, the reader is expected to absorb and believe in these same children learnedly discussing atheism and progressive schooling. Mind you, their headmaster is called 'Mike' and, we are told confidentially, 'it is that kind of school.' The whole book is full of these inconsistencies of character and dialogue, demolishing a story line which occasionally threatens to capture the imagination. **BB**

Scrub Fire

Anne de Roo, Hippo, 0 590 70023 5, 65p

Do you need another survival-in-the-wild story? Michelle (14), Andrew (12) and Jason (9) are separated from their cozy aunt and uncle after an accident with the camp fire.



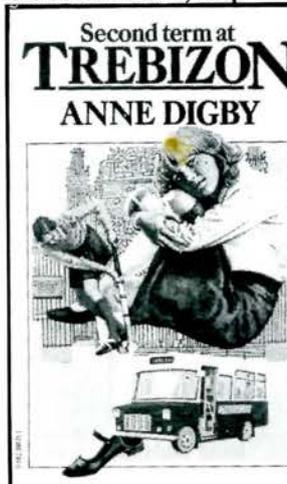
Thereafter, it's lost in New Zealand, escape in the nick of time. Mercifully, it's shorter than most but the genre demands chunks of landscape description and is prone to damagingly predictable action and repetitive clashes of personality. On the plus side, the opening here is easy to get into. I won't comment on the cover. My experience suggests such books go little better than historical; maybe in your school . . . ? **SB**

Shadows in the Pit Robin Chambers, Granada, 0 583 30412 5, 70p

Kids enjoy *Time Out* despite its faults (see *The Ice Warrior*, Puffin) but few will go a bundle on this. Four on a Camping Holiday not only uncover a coastal village's black economy (smuggling), they also find a giant alien fish turning folk into shadowy slaves to help its craft back into space. Dreadfully old-fashioned, this never once gets near to making fantasy credible. It reads like a longer story that someone's attacked with a hatchet — a match would've been preferable. **SB**

First Term at Trebizon Anne Digby, Granada, 0 583 30427 3, 60p

Second Term at Trebizon Anne Digby, Granada, 0 583 30428 1, 60p



Summer Term at Trebizon Anne Digby, Granada, 0 583 30431 1, 60p

Boy Trouble at Trebizon Anne Digby, Granada, 0 246 11421 5, £3.95

Rebecca Mason's transfer from the local comprehensive to the famous boarding school by the sea is plausible enough: Mr Mason has a job in Saudi Arabia and school fees go with it. After that it's pure *School Friend*: loyalty and undying friendship with 'the Six', misunderstandings, intrigue and deception from other girls with despicable motives, hockey, the school magazine, the music scholarship, charity week, the temporary Maths master with a passion for surfing and something to hide. Absolutely nothing to do with the day-to-day experiences of your average second-year. Nevertheless one of them read

all four in one day, looked around for more and went off to recommend them to her friends. **PT**

The Light Beyond the Forest Rosemary Sutcliff, Knight, 0 340 25821 7, 85p

'A light beyond the forest, but a dark forest to be traversed first,' says Lancelot.

This book tells of the journeying through that 'dark forest' of the knights in quest of the Holy Grail — Lancelot, Percival, Bors, Gawain, and Galahad whose fate it is finally to see into the mystery, 'the heart of all things'. Rosemary Sutcliff draws together the strands of the Grail legend and retells it simply and clearly while retaining its essential poetry and mystery. Probably only the literary will enjoy it alone; but it reads aloud well. All children should have more of the Arthurian legends in their imaginative stock than the diluted stuff of old Hollywood costume dramas and Walt Disney. **PT**

Starstormers, 0 340 24878 5

Sunburst, 0 340 24879 3 Nicholas Fisk, Knight, 85p each

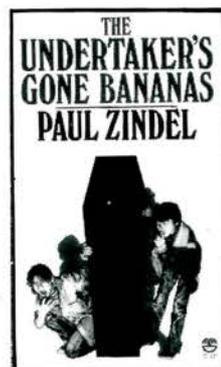
Another new space series. You need both books since *Starstormers*, ditching convention, isn't complete in itself. But check response very carefully before buying next year's vol.3 — I was bored and, at times, confused by the end of *Sunburst*. Sad that the author of *Grimy* should have come to this. Fisk's class shows in places and *Starstormers* is certainly better than comparable pulp by Terrance Dicks, Patrick Moore, etc. but it's still *Four Go Off* in a Meteorite. Two boys, two girls (multi-ethnic, reduced sexual stereotyping) are photo'd on garish covers which I suspect might please *The Trade* more than kids. **SB**

OLDER READERS

The Undertaker's Gone Bananas

Paul Zindel, Lions, 0 00 671698 9, 95p

This comedy thriller has to be Zindel's next-to-best book, after the amazingly popular *My Darling, My Hamburger*. It is long and the opening chapters are on the slow side but just try putting it down once you've reached the murder! (If it doesn't shift of its own accord in school, read a trailer.) It's especially recommended for teachers who've become disenchanted by the sameness of Zindel's work — here he's found a



story that holds all the obsessions neatly in check. Try it one Friday evening. **SB**

Sea Change Anne Knowles, Hippo, 0 590 70024 3, 65p

'Mainly for girls of 12 and over.' They should have added, 'who are capable and committed readers' for, slim as it is, few of my acquaintance would even get through the self-indulgent descriptions of the first chapter. For those who do, there's a nicely understated, open-ended romance set on a Welsh hill farm. Occasional clichés and coincidences don't damage it much but the slow opening and overall heaviness restrict the audience drastically. Good front cover but somehow Scholastic invariably make most of their books look cheap and unappetising. **SB**

The Gardener's Grandchildren Barbara Willard, Puffin, 0 14 03.1224 2, 85p

A subtle moving story but very few kids could cope with it. Set in Scotland (late 19th or early 20th century) it tells of a 14-year-old girl's growth to maturity. Ella's family tend the Garden Island, awaiting the return of the Laird who charged them, years ago, to look after the place till his return. But the death of Ella's father marks the start of a series of changes which bring Ella face to face with the reality of the world outside the garden. It's excellently done but useless unless you've got readers who go for period pieces with slow, slow pace. **SB**

‘The Best Kids’ SF of the Last Decade’

Keill Randor is the only survivor of the Legions, the people of Moros who lived by selling their fighting skills to nations needing their help. They were destroyed by a surprise attack with a weapon which made their planet's atmosphere fatally radioactive. Returning late from a mission, Keill escapes alive but dying slowly from his brush with the radiation. His hope is to avenge his people before he dies. The search for the enemy is interrupted when he's kidnapped by a 'strange, secretive group of brilliant elderly scientists', the Overseers, who cure him by completely replacing his diseased bones with a new, unbreakable alloy. Keill is highly sceptical of their story about a mysterious 'Warlord' making a grab for galactic domination but in tracking down and killing some men masquerading as Legionaries, he learns that it's true. With Glr, a winged telepathic alien who has sided with the Overseers, he sets out to destroy the Warlord and his underlings.

Stylistic difficulties arise from the vocabulary of technology, descriptions of terrain and the need to work in essential background detail. Some potential readers will inevitably be lost but Douglas Hill always seems aware of the problem and does a great deal to minimize it. *Galactic Warlord*, for example, starts with Keill extracting information from some thugs who are foolish enough to try mugging him. The destruction of Moros is a flashback and the slowish section with the Overseers is only reached once the story has you gripped. Though each novel is a self-contained adventure, those who've enjoyed *Galactic Warlord* will undoubtedly want to get *Deathwing* and *Starwind* as soon as possible and they're unlikely to be disappointed in them. These build more gradually into the

Is that an extravagant claim to make for Douglas Hill's books about Keill Randor? Now that the third novel, *Day of the Starwind*, has maintained the standard of the first two, Steve Bowles certainly thinks it's justified.



Detail from cover illustration by David Smee for 'Day of the Starwind'

main drama but the narrative never goes flat and there are tasters of conflict to keep the least involved happy. *Starwind*, in particular, develops relentlessly once Keill makes contact with the Warlord's men.

The regard they display for the chosen audience is perhaps the most impressive thing about Douglas Hill's books. Adult fans of Andre Norton have for years tried to interest kids in her work but, beyond occasional fanatics, it's been hard going. For me, there are distinct echoes of Norton in Keill Randor's adventures, especially with regard to their convincing picture of a colonized universe. But the differences — relatively slim volumes, big doses of violent action — make them much more enticing to a general teenage readership. There have been compromises, it's true. To adults, the books can seem over-written in places and some aspects push credulity too far. One must remember, though, that they're not for widely-read aficionados alone. As a bridge to more sophisticated SF novels, they're invaluable and virtually unique. ●

Galactic Warlord,
Gollancz, 0 575 02663 4, £3.50 Piccolo,
0 330 26186 X, 80p

Deathwing Over Veynaa,
Gollancz, 0 575 02779 7, £3.95

Day of the Starwind,
Gollancz, 0 575 02917 X, £4.50

Meet Lindsay Brown...

For a fourteen-year-old to have a novel published is remarkable. Last month, approaching her fifteenth birthday, Lindsay Brown saw her second novel come out in hardback and her first is just out in paperback. We talked to Lindsay about herself and her writing.

Lindsay and her younger brother Rupert get on very well. She's always told him stories. Two baby-sitting sixth formers read one and showed it to their English teacher whose husband, the writer Maurice Lindsay, sent it to his publishers, Robert Hale. *The Treasure of Dubarry Castle* appeared in 1978, just before Lindsay's thirteenth birthday. It has everything: a circus, vicious villains, smugglers, and a ruined French castle with secret passages. The adventure doesn't get started until half way — Lindsay is busy establishing her eleven-year-old characters (Sarah, Jack and Anna) — but the narrative moves at a spanking pace. It sold well; Lindsay read it on *Jackanory*, and Robert Hale encouraged her to try another.

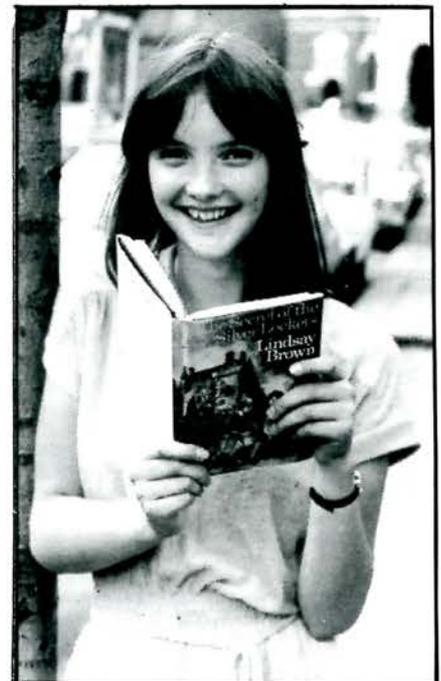
So in the summer holidays last year Lindsay wrote *The Secret of the Silver Lockets*, another fast-moving adventure, in which cousins John (15) and Michelle (14) get caught up in a terrifying 'treasure hunt' involving rival gangs of ruthless murdering criminals. The central characters are older because Lindsay is; but the books seem to come out as appealing most to 8-12s. Rupert, now twelve, is the test: 'If he says it's good, it's a good sign.'

Lindsay is learning the craft. *Silver Lockets* didn't need cutting because she knew how long to make it. But it needed revision — very tedious. 'There were lots of loopholes: sometimes the criminals' plans weren't very plausible.' Dad helped her with that and 'with grammatical things'. She likes writing descriptions; 'but lots of children don't like them, so I space them out.' And she tries to have 'an exciting bit at the end of every chapter'.

Michelle is 'partly me. She's shy and she has a lot of my opinions.' Bits of Rupert are in John ('he's a cricket fan'); but the villains came out of her imagination. She gave them 'all kinds of bad habits (smoking, drinking and not washing)'.

This novel, reasonably enough, is better constructed than her first. It's a remarkably well-sustained story from such a young writer, inventive and full of action. There are also some moments (John near drowning in a Norwegian fiord) where the power of the writing lifts the experience right off the page.

Lindsay herself is pleasantly modest, 'My English teacher says I use too many adjectives. I do tend to over-write,' and unaffected. She tells with evident delight how the headmaster of her school (Clevedon Secondary — a 500 pupil comprehensive in Glasgow) announced the publication of her novel in assembly. 'He got my name wrong; he called me Lesley!' Apart from writing she enjoys drawing and painting, and is torn between university and art school. She admires Val Biro's illustrations for her books. 'The characters look just as I imagined them.'



Lindsay Brown with her second novel, 'The Secret of the Silver Lockets' (Hale, £3.50)

And he got the details right. Some illustrators don't seem to have read the book.'

For reading she likes mainly adventure and mystery (Malcolm Saville and Agatha Christie); but she doesn't think she'll end up a full-time writer — it's so difficult to think of a good plot. ●

*The Treasure of Dubarry Castle. Piccolo
0 330 26210 6, 85p

BE OUR GUEST...

Nancy Chambers makes a personal selection of **BOOKS FOR KEEPS** for Christmas

Being asked to make a personal Christmas choice without having to stick to new titles or erect some artificial theme to hang the books on, is a great treat — something like going to a good bookshop with a big Book Token to spend. People don't always buy books for keeps according to a worked-out pattern, so why not write about them — occasionally, anyway — in the same casual manner.

Looking at the pile of books I've just taken off various shelves, I realize the selection was actually dictated by the one I am leading off with. It's a new book, based on an ancient book: Peter Dickinson's *City of Gold and Other Stories from the Old Testament*, chosen not just because it's biblical and Bibles = Christmas but because it's such an ingenious and sensible way to recast highly venerated material. As a parson's daughter I've met the Bible in everything from the Authorized Version to Sunday-school renderings that would out-Ladybird Ladybird, and am generally wary of anything but good King James. Peter Dickinson, however, has been wise enough not to tackle the texts head on but to take a parallel course: well-known stories are retailed as if by different storytellers at varying distances from the actual events. And it works beautifully.

Michael Foreman's illustrations for *City of Gold* present an experience separate from the text — and that works too. He is always impressive, and almost always gives you something to go back to. (Every time I look at the book, I turn to the picture in 'The Twelfth Plague'; I need to remind myself that what I saw is what's there.) How amazing to have Dickinson's writing and over thirty Foreman full-colour plates, plus many black-and-white drawings, all for £5.95. It's a family book for a lifetime, for sure.

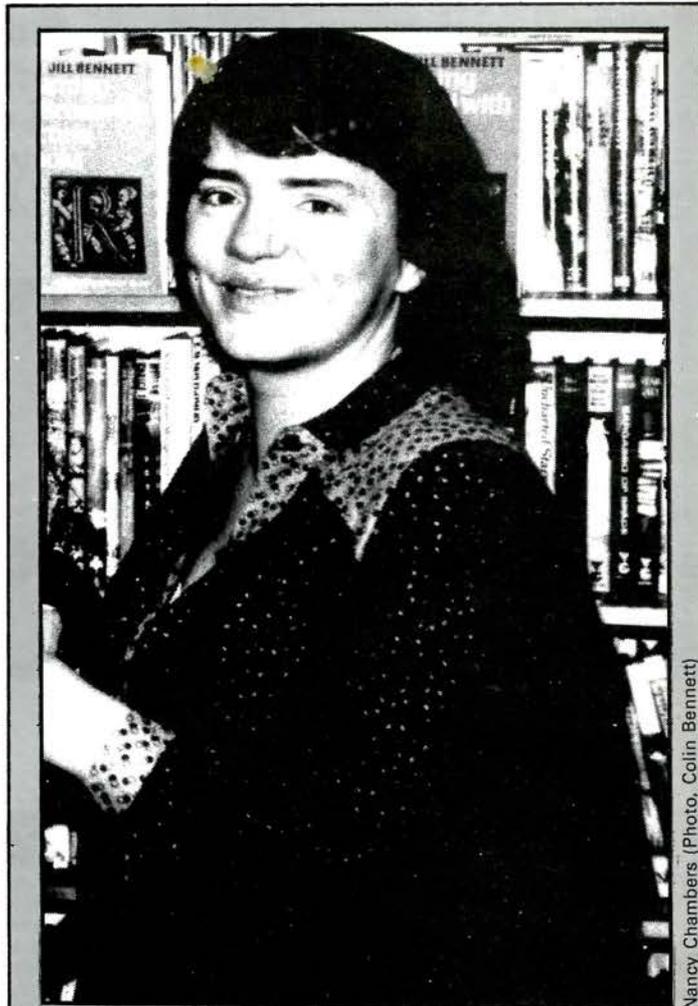
Having chosen *City of Gold*, and thinking about books that are bound to last, I was led naturally to two other Gollancz titles. Retellings of folk and fairy tales can be slightly worrying to adult selectors (like me) who aren't experts — and, anyway, if the book is for children, doesn't accessibility matter more than authenticity? As it happens, we don't have to make that decision in this instance. The Gollancz collections of Grimm and Andersen are impeccable textually (you don't have to take my word for it; on publication the books were thoroughly approved by all but the most querulous experts) and entirely approachable. Read any page in either *Hans Andersen: His Classic Fairy Tales* or *The Brothers Grimm: Popular Folk Tales* and you'll see that the language is clear and tasty; read an entire story, and you may feel you've discovered it for the first time.

Both books are illustrated by Michael Foreman and have the same elegant production as *City of Gold*. The very fact of that physical similarity made me think of the edition of Grimm from the thirties that has been my favourite for years: Wanda Gág's *Tales from Grimm*. Her homely drawings and storytelling style are wholly of a piece. She recounts the tales as if they were hers, a nice difference from more purely translated versions.

I can't leave Grimm without recommending what has to be the definitive edition so far as illustration goes: *The Juniper Tree* illustrated by Maurice Sendak. It's probably safe to say that no other contemporary artist will ever so completely fit Grimm. What a lucky coincidence that *The Juniper Tree* is also a bargain: £2.50 for 332 pages of the superbly produced paperback (it's a boxed, two-volume set in hardback). Bodley Head do the paperback edition as well as the hardback, so it may not be quite as easy to come by as a Puffin or Lion or Beaver. The paperback is worth persisting for, I think, not only because of Sendak but because it's such a marvellous square, chunky, classy thing to hold. I can't think of another paperback like it, on any subject, anywhere.



Drawings by Maurice Sendak for 'The Juniper Tree'



Nancy Chambers (Photo, Colin Bennett)

Nancy Chambers

Nancy Chambers is the Editor of *Signal*, a magazine about children's books which first appeared in January 1970. *Signal* was not Nancy Chambers' first foray into magazines. In the United States, where she was born, she worked on *The Horn Book*, and when she came to this country in the sixties she was editor of *Children's Book News* (now no more), a review journal produced by the Children's Book Centre, London. In 1969, after her marriage to Aidan Chambers, she resigned from CBN and concentrated on living in Gloucestershire and producing *Signal*.

Signal was intended 'to provide a publishing opportunity for people whose ideas about, and interests in, children's books could not be contained in brief articles or reviews'. It was addressed to 'individuals who were more than fleetingly attentive to the subject', and concerned with 'the thoughtful consideration of children's books, their authors and their illustrators'.

It has now appeared three times a year for ten years. To celebrate the anniversary Kestrel have published *The Signal Approach to Children's Books* (0 7226 5641 6, £12.50) a collection, edited by Nancy Chambers. It includes articles originally published in *Signal*, and three pieces specially commissioned for the book (one is a Review of the Seventies by Elaine Moss).

It is a splendid book for dipping into: informative, stimulating, irritating and thought-provoking.

Signal is published by The Thimble Press, Lockwood, Station Road, South Woodchester, Stroud, Glos GL5 5EQ

Three issues a year £3.60 (Single copies £1.20)

Thinking of Sendak, of books that are pleasant to handle, and still in the folk and fairy tale mood, I went to a book published in England in 1972, but which appeared first in 1959. **Seven Tales** by Hans Christian Andersen has the best-known stories printed in large well-leaded type and luxuriously wide margins with line illustration on nearly every page and a number of full-page, full-colour pictures by Maurice Sendak in his pre-*Wild Things* form. As with Grimm, there are lots of ways to own Andersen. This friendly version would be nice to have for younger children.

Once you start looking at various renditions of traditional tales, all kinds of fleeting thoughts occur — where they come from, what they mean, how true it is that they really do belong to us all. New in paperback, Iona and Peter Opie's *The Classic Fairy Tales* brings a lot of information together in a readable commentary that links twenty-four of the best-known tales as told in their first English publication. Although published for adults, there's plenty in it to interest younger people — again, a family book, and one that can be used in more than the obvious ways.



Another new paperback takes me away from traditional tales to the other half of the heart of literature, poetry. Faber have just done *Peacock Pie* in their Fanfare series, and although Walter de la Mare may not be at the top of every modern child's rhyme time, he is a good choice to go along with the sure-fire current writing that is giving poetry such a good name among more children than ever before. Christina Rossetti's *Sing-Song* in the splendid Dover paperback facsimile is another single-poet collection that provides a change of pace from the more commonly recommended collections. Both books carry the clear voice of the individual poet, and are fully and effectively illustrated (Edward Ardizzone for *Peacock Pie* and Arthur Hughes for *Sing-Song*); at just over a pound each, it would hardly be a big risk to try them out with any child who is still open to poetry at around nine.

That last sentence opens a whole other tin of beans, one that can't be chewed over in this short piece, so I'll quickly shift to my last couple of books. Staying in the way-books-look vein, it was the eccentric appearance of *The Adventures of Uncle Lubin* that made me give it to a seven-year-old recently; he's totally mechanically minded, and doesn't spend much solo time with books that aren't about earth-moving machines. The plentiful, daft but precise Heath Robinson illustrations, the unbookish way the type appears on the page, the very fact that it looks like a proper story book outside but isn't inside — whatever the reason, my engineering friend worked his way through it once, and nearly twice, on the day he got it. I'm sure he didn't realize, but I find it fascinating, that the book was originally published in 1902. So much for 'old-fashioned'.

There is something too about the look of *Rabbit Hill* that is inviting, or at any rate interesting: text and illustrations printed in brown ink rather than black; type size fairly small but with lots of leading; very cleanly drawn funny/sentimental pictures; and terrific chapter titles like 'Reading Rots the Mind'. The storyline is not wildly original — domesticized animals fearing interlopers, mainly (it's nothing like *Watership Down*, which came thirty years later anyway) — but the comfortable Yankee telling and wayward characters make it more than a read-once book. ●

Details of books mentioned

City of Gold and Other Stories from the Old Testament

Peter Dickinson, Gollancz,
0 575 02883 1, £5.95

Hans Andersen: His Classic Fairy Tales

Erik Haugaard, Gollancz,
0 575 02188 8, £4.50

The Brothers Grimm: Popular Folk Tales

Brian Alderson, Gollancz,
0 575 02446 1, £5.00

Tales from Grimm

Wanda Gág, Faber,
0 571 06779 4, £2.35
Faber Paperbacks,
0 571 10209 3, 95p

The Juniper Tree and Other Tales from Grimm

Lore Segal, Randall Jarrell and Maurice Sendak, Bodley Head,
2-volume boxed set,
0 370 01276 3, £9.95
Bodley Head, 0 370 30059 9,
£2.50

Seven Tales by Hans Christian Andersen

Eva le Gallienne, World's Work,
0 437 23050 3, £4.50

The Classic Fairy Tales

Iona and Peter Opie, OUP,
0 19 211559 6, £5.95
Granada Paladin,
0 586 08335 9, £3.95

Peacock Pie

Walter de la Mare, Faber,
0 571 04683 5, £3.25
Faber Fanfares, 0 571 18014 0,
£1.25

Sing-Song

Christina Rossetti,
Dover/Constable,
0 486 22107 5, £1.35

The Adventures of Uncle Lubin

W. Heath Robinson, Puffin,
0 14 03.0756 7, 40p

Rabbit Hill

Robert Lawson, Puffin,
0 14 03.1010 X, 75p



Illustrations on this page: "This would be a beautiful wife for my son" — a drawing by E.A. Lemann from Anderson's 'Fairy Tales,' 1893; and Bluebeard portrayed by Harry Clarke in 1922. Both from 'The Classic Fairy Tales' by Iona & Peter Opie.

Authorgraph No.5

Pat Hutchins

Pat Hutchins was born in Scorton, a small village in Yorkshire, the second youngest of a large family. 'We had no money, but Mum always insisted that we do whatever we wanted.' Pat wanted to draw. At sixteen she won a scholarship to Darlington Art School. 'I was happy to go. Somehow in Yorkshire people think you're a bit weird if you like to draw and go off for long walks on your own. I was beginning to feel I was a bit of a freak.' After Darlington came Leeds College of Art and then London, with a portfolio of drawings and £40. 'I thought it would last forever.'

'I traipsed round all the publishers and they all said, "Come back when you've had something published" or "Write a story".' Eventually she went to work as an Assistant Art Editor for J. Walter Thompson, the advertising agency. 'I had a very nice boss. He used to let me do my illustrations when we weren't busy.' She stayed for two years. 'It taught me a lot: economy, getting rid of unnecessary details, working quickly, working to a deadline.' She also met and married Laurence. But she hadn't settled for a career in advertising.

'I always wanted to illustrate children's books. I thought I would eventually. I'm quite stubborn; if I've decided to do something, I'll work at it.' When Laurence's job took him to the United States Pat went too, and so did her illustrations. 'I thought, I'll try the New York publishers.'

It was the Swinging Sixties and the English were O.K. 'I think they thought I'd come such a long way, they ought to see me.' She showed one editor an idea for a book about farmyard noises. 'There was **one line** she liked: "This is the fox. He never makes a noise." She said, "Try and write a story about that." I was terrified. I didn't think I could write; but she just sort of kept on at me.'

The story went through lots of different stages. 'It started very long.' Then came the drawings. 'As it was my first book I wanted it to be in glorious technicolour. But that would have been wrong for such a simple story.' It took well over a year of hard work to get to the apparent effortless of the thirty-two words and simple three-colour illustrations of **Rosie's Walk**.



When Susan Hirschman, Pat Hutchins' editor at Greenwillow Books, saw it in its final form she said 'This is going to be a classic.' She was right.

That was in 1968. Since then, back in London, Morgan and Sam have been born. Being with her sons and their friends as they grow up has made a big difference to Pat Hutchins' work.

'Looking through the early books there are words I would have changed, things I wouldn't have done. The most important thing is that the child should be able to understand and enjoy the book.'

For the last five years Morgan and Sam's enjoyment has clearly been an influence. **Happy Birthday, Sam** (1978) appeared because Sam thought it was time he had a book named after him. Morgan had starred in **The House that Sailed Away** (1976) — with the rest of the family including Grandma (Pat's mum) — and in **Follow that Bus** (1977) — with his class at school. Both these longer stories are uproariously funny and right for the lower junior age Morgan was at the time. Laurence did the illustrations. 'I couldn't do the sort of cartoony drawings those books needed.'

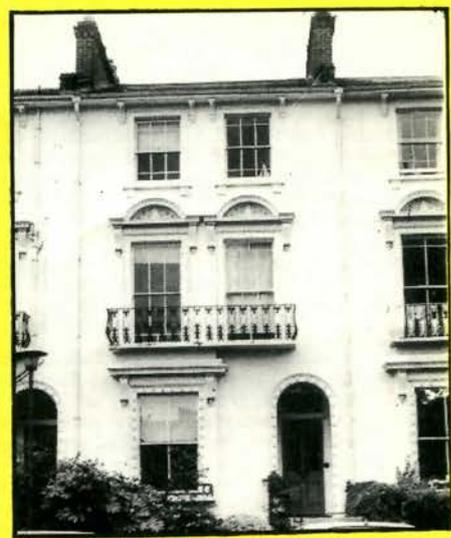
'It's a terrible admission — but I don't really like drawing very much at all. I enjoy the writing much more. I think it's because I don't know anything about writing. My English is appalling, but because I don't know it's appalling I just get on with it and enjoy it. I'm very conscious of the mistakes I do in the drawings. I'm much more relaxed about writing.'



Seventeen books in twelve years is a formidable achievement. How does it feel? 'I think I know how to write for small children now. The danger is in running out of ideas — thinking of something new each time. After each book I'm convinced that's it. I'll never be able to do another one.' Happily so far she's been wrong. She's currently working on a Number book for the under-fives which promises to be a gloriously inventive visual joke. After that? 'I'd like to think that as my children get older I'll write for older children.' A Pat Hutchins novel for teenagers, perhaps? 'What I'd really like to do is a children's play. I like writing dialogue.' And then, 'Sam wants a big book with all his mates in, like Morgan.'

Will she do one? 'I'll probably have to.' But there's a grin and she doesn't sound as if it will be too painful.

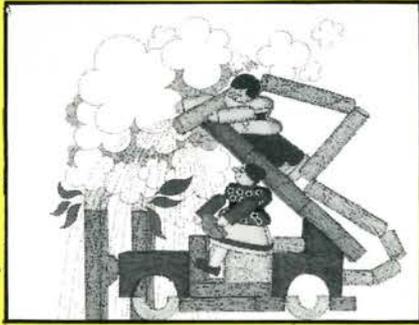
At Home



About the books

Changes Changes

'The whole point of **Changes Changes** was to use the same bricks throughout. It wouldn't have worked properly if I'd cheated and used extra bricks. The ones that get burned don't appear again. How could they?'



Changes, Changes

'A long time ago I had an idea for a book. It starts, "There's a tree growing in the forest." The tree is on the left hand page and on the facing page there's a little shoot just coming up. As you turn the pages the tree gets fuller and fuller with birds and animals and the little shoot gets bigger and bigger. At the end two woodmen come and chop down the tree and all the birds and animals transfer to the other tree — now fully grown. The last line is, "But there's another tree growing in the forest." It didn't work as a book but **Titch**, **Goodnight Owl** and **Changes Changes**, all come from that circular idea. I keep going back to it. I like the idea of continuity.'



The Wind Blew

The Wind Blew

Most of Pat Hutchins' books are published first in America so they are not eligible for British awards. As she is not American they are not eligible for American awards either! **The Wind Blew** (1974) which won the Kate Greenaway Medal was published simultaneously in both countries.

The new Numbers 1-10 book has one hunter, two elephants, three giraffes . . . 'I'm having trouble with it. I want it to be "designy" with lots of pattern, but the creatures must be easily recognisable. It's vital that the children can see exactly what's going on even at the risk of the pictures not being as beautiful as perhaps they could be. It's no good having really gorgeous, lively designs if it doesn't mean anything to a two-year-old. I know exactly how I want the book to look; it's very difficult to do it.'

**One-eyed Jake
Clocks and More Clocks**



One-eyed Jake

With a book like **One-eyed Jake** for 5-7's you can be freer, more detailed. Even then I consciously try to make it work on more than one level, so that the youngest reader can get something from it even if they don't understand the whole thing. In **Clocks and**

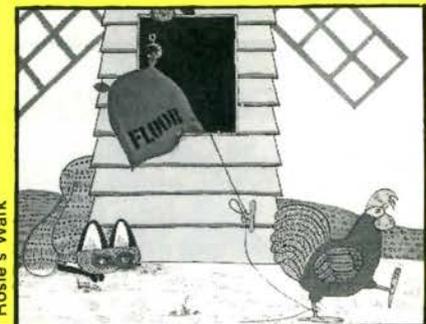
Rosie's Walk

'I thought if the fox doesn't make a noise it would be nice to make it almost like a silent movie — where the heroine doesn't realise she's being followed by the villain. So I didn't mention the fox.'

Pat Hutchins' books are published in hardback by Bodley Head and in paperback by Puffin and Fontana Lions.



Titch



Rosie's Walk

More Clocks — which was "inspired" by Laurence who was forever checking the time — I hoped that a small child who couldn't understand the concept of telling time would find Mr Higgins funny.'

The Hutchins family live in this Victorian terrace in North London. Downstairs in the big friendly kitchen, the walls and shelves are filled with a fascinating assortment of objects. 'I'm not a collector. It's just that I find it difficult to go past an antique shop, or a junk shop. We like old things; we seem to pick them up. Lots of these things were given to us by friends — there are stories behind them. Neither Laurence nor I can throw anything away. We've got cartons of things in the attic from when we moved. We'll never unpack them.'

Laurence, whose company makes TV commercials, is a model steam train enthusiast — he has a workshop and a track in the garden. Morgan is interested in space and film; Sam in gardening and the countryside. Pat won't admit to a consuming passion but likes gardening, wild birds, flowers, walking and going to the zoo.

Not long ago they bought a neglected Elizabethan farmhouse in Buckinghamshire — putting that right is keeping them busy.



Will they move there eventually? 'I don't like planning far in advance. But I know I couldn't work happily anywhere other than England.'

Pat Hutchins works here in her studio overlooking the back garden. 'I usually work five hours a day — 9.00-3.00. I like to be disciplined about it. The kids and their friends are usually around after school.' The boys don't seem to mind having a famous mum. 'They loved it when **The House that Sailed Away** was on **Jackanory** and they could tell all their friends. Sam was a bit cross though, because in that book he's "the baby". They like having books about them. I'm doing a sequel to **Follow that Bus** — **The Mona Lisa**

Mystery. There's a school outing to Paris. The Mona Lisa gets stolen and there are lots of people heavily disguised chasing each other. There are even more characters in this one because after **Follow that Bus** all Morgan's friends kept coming up and saying, "Can John be in the next one? Can Sue?" I don't think I've missed anyone out and Laurence studies them all very carefully for the drawings. The only problem is by the time I've finished they've got a new set of friends — Morgan has just gone to the local comprehensive — and they are asking for another book.'

A SERIES PUT TO THE TEST

Focus on FABER FANFARES

The idea behind Fanfares is to bring back into print favourite authors and titles from the Faber list. According to the Faber catalogue the books are for 'young readers'.

'Approximate age ranges are indicated by differently coloured spines: Orange (5-8), Yellow (8-12), Blue (12-14). They are in a uniform format and 'toughly bound to withstand the wear and tear of school and library use'. This makes them rather more expensive than other paperbacks (though the gap is closing!). The catalogue also says that Fanfares have 'stinking colourful colours'.

We tried out some of the Orange titles issued in September.

Durability

The books stood up well, though not all got a lot of child handling. (Read on for reasons.) The spines stayed strong and well glued. On some of the books the top layer of the card cover had begun to peel away at the bottom edge by the end of the eight-week test.

Response

It isn't clear whether the 'approximate age range' of the catalogue refers to reading age or interest age. None of our 5-8s were able to read the Orange titles on their own. Some over-eights ('Yellow spine' readers) could, and did.

Melanie Brown Climbs a Tree

In this follow up to *Melanie Brown Goes to School*, Melanie is six, still at the village school and still (nearly) always in trouble. These short stories read aloud well and the

rural setting didn't seem to put off the urban infants we tried it on. Naughty is naughty wherever.

A Time to Laugh

was grabbed as a good teacher's resource. Thirty well-chosen tales, some very short, others more substantial, and all excellent for reading aloud are always useful. Most of the tales are from folk tale sources and some were already known to our teachers from other collections; but all agreed it was good to have a set of funny stories to hand between two covers. Useful for over-eights too, we found.

Tamworth Pig Saves the Trees

The second of Gene Kemp's delightful stories of Tamworth the most famous pig in Britain. In *The Prime of Tamworth Pig* (also in Fanfares) he led the campaign to 'Grow More Food — and Eat Less Meat'. Now he's into tree preservation — and falling in love.

A great success with one set of sevens (experienced listeners and used to serial stories). The mixture of fantasy (talking animals and toys) and recognisably real people, places and events, all seasoned with humour, proved difficult to resist. You need to be an experienced reader to pick up the humour. (Teacher reading aloud does it for you with tone, phrasing and pauses.) Several 8-10s enjoyed it a great deal. All of which demonstrates the problems of categorising by age, especially with such a wide range as 8-12. Should *Tamworth Pig* be orange or Yellow? Perhaps Faber should go in for striped spines!



September 'Yellow spine' issues also included a selection of Alison Uttley stories *From Spring to Spring*, some of which — *The Wind in a Frolic*, for example — are just right for reading to under-eights. However helpful publishers try to be — there's just no alternative to reading the books.

Our testers thought the covers were 'pretty dull' — though *A Time to Laugh* was 'quite good'.

Melanie Brown Climbs a Tree

Pamela Oldfield, 0 571 11488 1, 95p

A Time to Laugh

Ed. Sara and Stephen Corrin, 0 571 11487 3, £1.25

Tamworth Pig Saves the Trees

Gene Kemp, 0 571 11493 8, £1.15

From Spring to Spring

Alison Uttley, Chosen by Kathleen Lines, 0 571 11491 1, £1.25

LANKY JONES

Catherine Cookson

A new novel, after a gap of several years, from this very popular children's author about a boy with divorced parents and his friendship with epileptic Sally.

354 08116 0 160pp
September £3.95

MR BEAR'S SHADOW

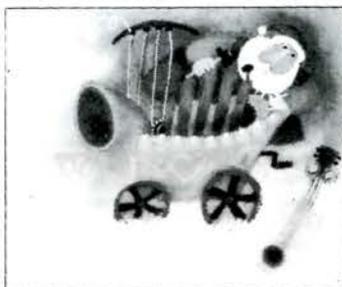
Chizuko Kuratomi

Illustrated by Kozo Kakimoto
The thirteenth title in this highly successful and popular series.

Age 5-8.
354 08113 6 32pp
September £3.50

from **Macdonald**

A Division of Macdonald Futura Publishers Ltd



FATHER CHRISTMAS'S TOYS

Evelyne Passegand

Illustrated by Marie-José Sacré
Father Christmas, fed up with mass-made toys, decides to make his own. Age 5-8.

354 08093 8 32pp
August £3.50

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE HILL

Jutta Mirtschin

A group of children reclaim a vandalised hillside and turn it into a recreation spot. Age 5-8.

354 08112 8 32pp
September £2.95

THUMBELINA

Hans Christian Andersen

A classic fairy tale, beautifully illustrated by Lisbeth Zwerger.
Age 5-8.

354 08100 4 32pp
July £3.95

What moves books off shelves?

LORNA ROBERTS considers some questions raised by the Bookmaster holiday reading scheme for teenagers.



Over the years Westminster City Libraries has gradually built up a summer holiday programme which includes activities sessions, and two reading schemes. The Bookworm Reading Scheme started in 1975. Aimed at encouraging children to read throughout the holidays, it is devised to meet the needs of all age groups and all reading abilities. From this developed the Bookmaster scheme in 1978. Young people of eleven to eighteen are invited to join the scheme and work for a Certificate which requires them to read four books from a select list and write reports on the books. Publicity encourages teenagers to join the scheme and offer their opinions on books so that the library can provide the kind of books they enjoy reading.

The information gained from Bookworm and Bookmaster has revolutionised staff thinking on book selection, and is leading us to re-examine accepted ideas and to question the organisation of libraries. Bookmaster also offers us the possibility of research into the reading preferences of a large group of teenagers. They register at one of the eight libraries in the scheme and, as they come from all over Westminster, and London generally, and attend a wide range of schools, they represent a varied sample of readers. There is also no chance of one librarian or one teacher influencing the opinions of the group. A detailed report on the 1980 scheme is currently being prepared for publication. Based on an analysis of some nine hundred reports, certain trends emerge and some points which need discussion and further investigation.

Bookmasters need to be competent readers. It is generally assumed that competent teenage readers will be able to use their libraries and select books they will enjoy. Yet for many participants the pleasure of Bookmaster is in selecting books from a small collection, and in the extra help they get from staff. Throughout the scheme there is a total commitment to individual readers. All but the most routine essential work is dropped. Time is spent offering help with the initial choice of book — all staff have to be thoroughly familiar with all the books in the scheme. Should we be consistently offering an obvious advisory service for readers?

Each time a review is written the reader and the librarian discuss the book and the review together. This is particularly popular with our teenagers. Is it perhaps that this activity mitigates the essentially solitary activity of reading. Should we seek to provide opportunities for shared response, exchange of opinions?

Should we be questioning the automatic arrangement of fiction by author? Many of our readers want science fiction. If they want information on space travel and exploration they can find this carefully shelved under the right classification number. Why therefore do so many libraries refuse to classify fiction? Is there a case to be made for a special science fiction section? If so, why not for mysteries, for historical, for romance?

The Frenchman's Creek experience made everyone think. This Daphne Du Maurier title was one of the most popular books on the 1980 list. All Bookmaster books are in paperback editions and this one had a

most attractive cover. Although a number of the teenagers in the Bookmaster scheme normally use the adult library, none had previously read this author. Looking for more, they were dismayed to find the dismal hardback edition which gave them no encouragement to read further. Covers matter enormously, and it seems impossible to persuade teenagers to try anything that does not look interesting. Even paperbacks vary in attractiveness. Through Bookmaster we are beginning to comprehend something of the reasons why some books are rejected.

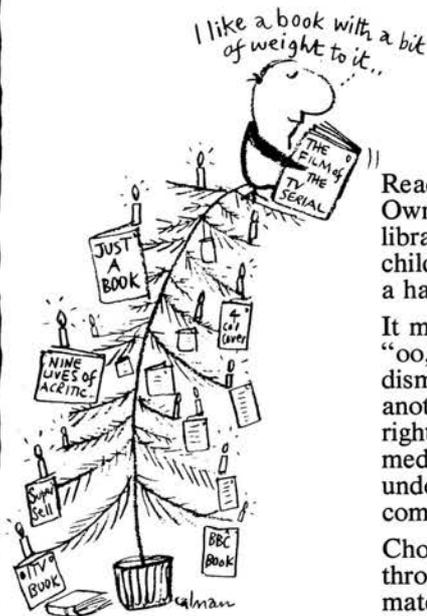
The problem of the lost teenage reader has long been under discussion. Could it be that major reasons are our book selection and the arrangement of our libraries? We have been using libraries for years. We know how to find the books we enjoy. It is hard to recall what it was like to be fourteen, faced with shelf after shelf of dull-looking books, and panicking at the over-abundance of the literary world. We should be encouraging publishers to produce books with jackets that are more informative, and in formats that will encourage the hesitant reader. Somehow we must find a way of arranging the library so that the readers can find the books they will enjoy. During the ever-changing teenage years this will be a major problem. An instructive aspect of Bookmaster was the enthusiasm for books like Frenchman's Creek which had sat unread on the shelves for years; yet found a readership within the scheme. Bookmaster seems to show that librarians, teachers, parents, need to give more time to all age groups: introducing books, guiding the developing reader to new authors, new styles, and, very important, listening to and sharing response. It's time well spent if it gives us an insight into the ideas and needs of children and young people that can lead to better book selection and a more useful library. ●

Lorna Roberts is Head of Children's and Youth Services for Westminster City Libraries. She and her staff put a tremendous amount of work into the Bookworm and Bookmaster schemes. Modestly, she says, 'The ideas I have put forward are basic and probably already adopted in some schools and libraries.' She is also reluctant to generalise from the Westminster experience which was 'based solidly on community needs'; but she hopes that publishing the Bookmaster reports will stimulate other teachers and librarians into publishing reports on their own schemes which would allow us to see if there are any common factors.

Copies of the 1979 Bookmaster Scheme Report are available from Marylebone Library, Marylebone Road, London NW1 5PS.

The 1980 Bookmaster Report should be available by the end of the year. It includes profiles of the eight libraries in the scheme, extensive quotes from reviews, and a particular consideration of the reading needs and problems of a multi-ethnic community.

A Hardback on Every Tree



Reading a hardback is different from reading a paperback. Owning a hardback is different from borrowing it from the library. Possessing hardback books is something all children should experience. So, come on everyone — give a hardback this Christmas.

It may not always be the present that gets greeted with "oo, just what I wanted"; it might be cast aside with a dismissive 'Oh, a book', in favour of tearing the paper off another bit of perishable plastic. But if you have chosen right it will come into its own when much of the immediately exciting gimmickry and gadgetry is in pieces under the bed, and give pleasure for months, even years, to come.

Choosing right isn't always easy. We've been browsing through some of the newest titles and making some gift-matched selections.



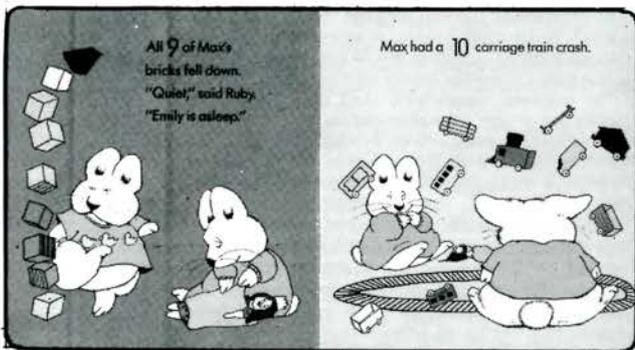
Illustration by Margaret Chamberlain, from 'Humbug Mountain'

★ For the youngest

Two and three-year-olds love books that 'do' things. But few 'pop-ups' can stand the onslaught of determined but not very dextrous fingers.

Where's Spot, Eric Hill, Heinemann, 0 434 94288 X, £2.95, has nothing more complicated than a series of flaps. It works on the 'peep boo' principle. Sally is looking for her puppy, Spot. Is he inside the clock? Is he under the stairs? The reader helps Sally by opening doors, lifting rugs, etc. There are lots of surprises before Spot is found. A delightfully simple book, solidly constructed of nice thick paper — and full of fun.

Also designed for small fingers are four **Very First Books** (Benn). Each of these small square books has ten pages on board and a picture story about Max, by Rosemary Wells. I'm not convinced we need board books; but I'd give these to my under-five friends no matter how they appeared.



Max's Toys, Rosemary Wells, Benn, 0 510 00067 3, £1.60, is a mini-masterpiece: a counting book (1-10) and a story about Max's yearning for his sister's doll. The combination of words and pictures which tell a story on their own is irresistibly funny. Lots for lap owners (of whatever age) and lap sitters to share and enjoy.

(Also, **Max's Ride**, **Max's First Word**, and **Max's New Suit**.)

★ Who can tell what a five-year-old is really thinking? Amazing questions and remarks that stop you in your tracks indicate there's a lot going on.

The Secret Inside, Geoffrey Hayes, Harper & Row, 0 06 022273 5, £3.50, could be just the book to communicate the inexpressible. Patrick, a small, dreamy, introverted bear finds a way to unlock the secret inside him of the feelings he hasn't been able to understand. This is a picture book. (Geoffrey Hayes has also written a longer story about Patrick — **Patrick Comes to Puttyville** (Fontana Lions), warmly reviewed by Colin Mills in *BfK* 4.) It's also beautifully bound with a little gold Patrick inlaid on the cover.

In similar vein —

Mr Bear's Shadow, Chizuko Kuratomi, ill. Kozo Kakimoto, Macdonald, 0 354 08113 6, £3.50. When Mr Bear's shadow shrinks he believes he is shrinking too and suddenly the world looks a very different

place. But the rabbit children know a thing or two and help him to see himself properly again. This is the thirteenth of the Mr Bear books and it's well up to standard. The large double-page-spread pictures are rich in colour and texture and exactly echo the text — a beautifully conceived book.

★ One for the young which has real year round staying power —



The Pirate Ship and Other Stories, Ruth Ainsworth, Heinemann, 0 434 92589 6, £4.95. An excellent collection of thirty varied stories for reading aloud, all with the sure touch of a storyteller who understands her listeners. The stories vary in length to suit age, mood, or time available, and Shirley Hughes' forty-five line drawings are a satisfying answer to 'show me the pictures'. A nice book to handle too, and the large, clear, well-spaced print makes it suitable as a read-alone now (for older brothers and sisters — if the owner will lend it) or later.

★ Sevens and eights (or thereabouts) who like action and suspense seasoned with magic and humour should like

Beaver Towers, Nigel Hinton, Abelard, 0 200 72725 7, £4.50. Philip, magicked by kite to a distant island, finds himself cast in the role of 'saver' of its animal inhabitants from the enchantments of Oyin, 'the cruellest witch in the whole world of Blackness', and the oppression of her growlers. **Beaver Towers** — built 500 years ago by the joint efforts of the eager Beavers and the busy Beavers — holds the answer, and Philip, aided (or hindered) by Baby B and the robin, has to get in and get it. A smashing read aloud, and short chapters encourage going it alone.

★ For those just a bit older —

Here comes **Charlie Moon**, Shirley Hughes, Bodley Head, 0 370 30335 0, £3.75. A full length (143 pages) story with a line drawing at the top of every page. It's about Charlie and his cousin Ariadne (favourite words 'typical' and 'pathetic', favourite occupation reading) and their stay with Auntie Jean in her joke shop on the run-down side of Penwyn Bay. Racy told in the present tense it has moments of high farce, a cast of larger than life adults and a couple of really nasty, boy villains in Dai and Dylan Morgan.

A book of short stories offers variety and easily manageable chunks of text for those without much reading stamina.

Dog Days and Cat Naps, Gene Kemp, Faber, 0 571 11595 0, £4.50, has ten stories with bags of appeal for 9-12s. Pets, families and school figure largely, but each story has an individual 'feel'. (Six of them are 'told' by children about themselves.) As you'd expect from Gene Kemp there's lots of humour; but there's also sadness, mystery and mixed emotions. A good present for teachers too!



☆ **For those with a taste for the absurd and a tall tale recounted with dead pan humour —**

Humbug Mountain, Sid Fleischmann, Gollancz, 0 575 12893 9, £4.50. Sid Fleischmann isn't as well known as he should be; but if you once get a taste for his particular brand of zany humour and wild invention, you are hooked. (Try starting with the McBroom stories — in Puffin.) This one is set in the pioneering days of the old west. Wiley — who tells the story — his sister, Glorietta, and their newspaper publishing parents encounter a corrupt steamboat captain, outface two dangerous desperadoes, invent a newspaper, start a gold rush . . . A far cry from the *Waltons* or *Little House on the Prairie*.

☆ **Secret agents, international espionage and intrigue, climbing in the Dolomites; if these ingredients appeal try**

Follow that **Uncle**, Sally Bicknell, Abelard, 0 200 72729 X, £4.95. A fast-moving adventure in which Gary, cousin Tom and ex-special intelligence Uncle Ed get caught up in a sinister web (as they always say) but keep their cool and their wits in the face of murder, ambush and death.

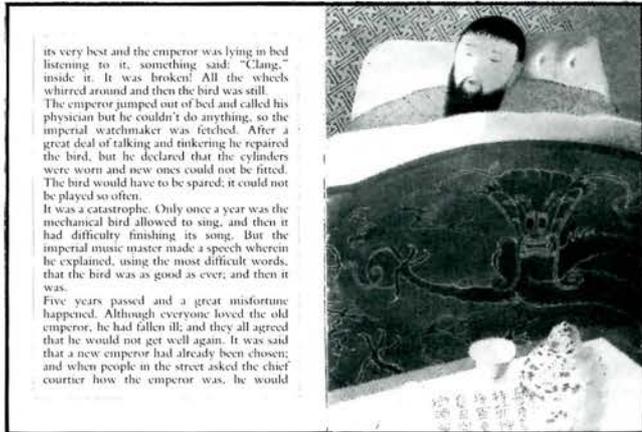
☆ **Looking for a good old-fashioned mystery adventure?**

The Ring of Zoraya, Harriet Graham, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10475 0, £4.95, is just that. Going to St Petersburg for an audition with Petipa at the Imperial Russian Ballet School proves quite an adventure for Flora who is accompanied by William and their guardian Samuel (the famous Stage Illusionist). It is 1894 and the death of Tsar Alexander III is causing repercussions all over Europe — not least in Slovakia where evil Count Lazar is on the look-out for an opportunity to depose his brother. On the Orient Express (where else?) Flora, William and Samuel encounter Prince Michael, Crown Prince of Slovakia, and find themselves drawn into a deal of danger, intrigue and excitement. A jolly ripping yarn, very well told.

☆ **For those who like to get their teeth into a really good book and don't mind a historical setting or being made to think . . .**

Rebel for Good, P.J. Kavanagh, Bodley Head, 0 370 30320 1, £4.50. This is a sequel to **Scarf Jack**. Francis Place, now seventeen (in 1801) sets out to find his father again. The quest takes him to Portsmouth Naval Hospital as Assistant-Surgeon, into the US Navy, and across America to where white settlers and American Indians live in uneasy proximity, and where his father is with the Indians. Francis learns much on his travels — survival, tolerance and an understanding that both sides can be right. A lot of careful research has been transformed into a compelling read which vividly recreates places and people.

☆ **Something classic. Something special.**



its very best and the emperor was lying in bed listening to it, something said: "Clang" inside it. It was broken! All the wheels whirred around and then the bird was still. The emperor jumped out of bed and called his physician but he couldn't do anything, so the imperial watchmaker was fetched. After a great deal of talking and tinkering he repaired the bird, but he declared that the cylinders were worn and new ones could not be fitted. The bird would have to be spared; it could not be played so often. It was a catastrophe. Only once a year was the mechanical bird allowed to sing, and then it had difficulty finishing its song. But the imperial music master made a speech wherein he explained, using the most difficult words, that the bird was as good as ever; and then it was. Five years passed and a great misfortune happened. Although everyone loved the old emperor, he had fallen ill; and they all agreed that he would not get well again. It was said that a new emperor had already been chosen; and when people in the street asked the chief courtier how the emperor was, he would

The classics are often a safe bet for hardback presents. Six books from Moonlight Publishing (originally published in France) each with a classic tale are really something special.

The Cat and the Devil, James Joyce (0 907144 09 8).
Poor Little Stephen Girard, Mark Twain (0 907144 08 X).
The Dog and the Horse, Voltaire (0 907144 06 3) are for the sophisticated (perhaps older) reader, with a wry sense of humour and a feeling for the absurdity of life.
The Emperor's Nightingale, Andersen (0 907144 04 7).
The Fool, Tolstoy (0 907144 05 5).
How Six Men Got on in the World, Grimm (0 907144 07 1) are traditional tales with universal appeal.

Each book is illustrated in colour throughout by an artist whose style exactly catches the spirit and setting of the story; and the translations cannot be faulted — Andersen by Erik Haugaard, Grimm by Brian

Alderson, Voltaire and Tolstoy by Anthea Bell.

These are beautiful little books and at £1.95 each must be the best buy this Christmas. Give them to adults too. Collect the set.

☆ **Also for Collectors**

A Book of Nonsense, Edward Lear, Warne, 0 7232 2715 2, £4.95. A reproduction of an original published around 1870 — now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. All children at some time delight in limericks and Lear is not to be missed. Good Value.

and

An Ancient Castle, Robert Graves, Peter Owen, 0 7206 0567 9, £3.95. Written in the thirties, this story for children recently surfaced from assorted Graves manuscripts. On one level it's a period piece reflecting Graves memories of the first world war — and army jam; on another it's a pleasantly matter-of-factly told tale of a boy and his father, keeper of a Welsh border castle, and the nasty doings of Sir Anderson Wigg (social upstart, man without honour who got his knighthood and made his fortune by manufacturing horrible jam for soldiers) and his equally unpleasant chauffeur, which threaten them. There's also a lot about castles and medieval warfare.

☆ **Some books have a wide appeal and ownership presents problems. Why not a book on the tree for the whole family?**

Like

Seven Years and a Day, Colette O'Hare and Beryl Cook, Collins, 0 00 195745 7, £4.50. It's said if you are kind to a six-toed cat for seven years and a day you will have your dearest wish granted; so when Mrs Mulholland finds her cat has six toes she's very kind to it indeed — kinder than she is to Mr Mulholland! She gets her wish all right — and her come-uppance. Beryl Cook's pictures speak volumes about Mr and Mrs Mulholland, the cat, and their life together. It's a gem.



"Don't sit there," Mrs Mulholland told her husband, "that's the cat's chair," from 'Seven Years and a Day'

'Hiccup'

or

Hiccup, Mercer Mayer, Benn, 0 510 00077 0, £1.75. A small book, wordless (except for 'Hiccup' and 'Boo' in speech bubbles), full of black and white illustrations of a lady and gentleman hippo, boating and hiccuping. The appeal is to everyone who likes visual jokes; the form means that pre-readers and those with problems can share equally in the fun.

(In the same series **Ah-Choo** and **Oops**.)

or

A Handbook of Family Monsters, Jenny Hawsworth and Colin McNaughton, Dent, 0 460 06060 0, £3.50. A straightfaced catalogue of household monsters and how to cope with them. Includes the Can't-You-See-I'm-Talking monster (or CYSIT) — usually found in groups clustered round a teapot; the GREDAD (Greater-Enraged-Dad), the Cwiner (Constant Whiner — Distinctive calls: 'I've-got-nothing-to-dooo', 'Snot fair'), the Wogtob (Won't-Go-To-Bed) and many more. Use for identification — spotting fairly easy in most families.

☆ **For Information**

The Puppy Book, Camilla Jessel, Methuen, 0 416 87430 4, £3.95. A lovely account, with coloured photographs, of how a Labrador's puppies are born and the first six weeks of their life. Saffy's owners, children Andrew and Lynn, the vet, and the puppies' new owners all figure in the story and the photographs.

Hocus Pocus Diplococus, Tom Stanier, Macdonald, 0 356 17119 7, £2.95. Three thousand million years of life on earth in thirty-two pages. Information about each stage is communicated in two ways: left hand page — simple facts with illustration, right hand page — funny poems and cartoons. It's a very successful and effective combination. ● PT

HOW TO... START STORYTELLING

Travelling in the footsteps of Eileen Colwell? Blazing a new trail?

CHRIS POWLING — a compulsive storyteller himself — sets you on the road.

The strangest fact about storytelling is that most people think they don't do it. For them a storyteller is some sort of exotic variant of the Ancient Mariner — a rubber-faced oddball with long grey beard, glittering eye and a thousand voices on tap. Yet aren't we all storytellers every day of our lives — in the gossip we swop, in the anecdotes we share, in the jokes we tell? Storytelling is doing what comes naturally . . . shaped up a bit by a sense of occasion.

It's just this sense of occasion, though, that brings problems for the beginner. Most of us, at first, are beset by the awful stomach-turning possibility that we'll run out of words. Such tongue-tying is about as likely as a fairy-godmother running out of magic. Hang on to that thought (even if at this point you don't really believe it). Remember too, that there's not a single 'rule' about storytelling that can't be broken by fluke or inspiration. So feel free to heed the remark of that consummate storyteller Oscar Wilde — by all accounts even better in the flesh than in print — who once insisted 'the only thing to do with good advice is pass it on'. My advice to would-be storytellers is — take it in stages.

Stage 1

Reduce that sense of occasion. The Pzazz can come later. Seize on those moments that call for a résumé of stories the children already know. During the history project for example, try: 'Look at this sword Linda's made. It's so smashing it reminds me of Excalibur — you know, King Arthur's sword. Do you remember how he first got hold of it, thanks to Merlin . . .' and so on.



You do this already? That's the point. Use these moments to practise and develop the way you shape a story. By concentrating on familiar and half-familiar stories at a time when you've got Linda's sword, or whatever, as the main focus of attention you'll be taking the heat off you as narrator. Topics, drama, language work, will give you plenty of opportunities. But don't overdo them — keep it simple and keep it quick (meaning snappy, not gabbled). Don't give yourself the chance to become self-conscious.

Soon you'll want to tackle a longer narrative. Why not use art? Show the children a filmstrip of a picture-book by



Quentin Blake or Charles Keeping. There's no better way of raising the quality of their seeing . . . and under cover of art appreciation adding muscle to your storytelling. With the children already spellbound by the blown-up images of, say Ron Brook's John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat, which appeals to all age groups, your own version may even outclass the original text by Jenny Wagner. And if it doesn't, so what?

Stage 2

Before long you'll be ready for a story-session proper. By now you'll know your listeners well . . . but how well do you need to know your story? The key to this is the storyline. It's all important. If you have a sense of its beginning, middle and end and can name its main characters that's quite enough. There must be no possibility of reciting. You must also be fond of the story. If you don't think much of it, neither will the children.

But how do you get going? And what if you panic? Two aids can help here: a look-fixer and a cue-card. The look-fixer is just that — something for you and them to look at, apart



Currently Chris Powling tells stories as headteacher of Thorpe Hall Primary School in Waltham Forest and as Dad to Katie (8) and Ellie (4). He's been a reviewer of children's literature for some time and during the school holidays presents the Radio 4 arts programme **Kaleidoscope**. Last year Abelard published his collection of short stories, **Daredevils or Scaredycats** (a Fontana paperback next autumn) and this September, also from Abelard, came a full-length thriller for 9 to 13-year-olds called **Mog and the Rectifier** (see Editor's Page, page 3). For Chris Powling, though nothing beats the thrill of improvised storytelling — especially those exhilarating and terrifying moments when even I'm not sure what words are on the tip of my tongue'.

from each other, without loss of concentration. It could be a tinderbox, a red ridinghood, a slingshot, a wooden-leg . . . any emblem, that is, of your story. The cue-card should look like this:

GRENDEL

Look fixer — Pair of Antlers
Main characters — Hrothgar,
Wealthew.

Beginning — The building of
Heorot

Middle — Grendel comes . . .
and goes.

End — Abandoning the Hall of
the Hart.

Final Sentences —

"... but there was one man
who could help Hrothgar. He
lived across the sea and his
name was Beowulf. There
was something very special
about Beowulf. Very special
indeed. And I'll tell you what
it was . . . next time!"

Before you start you'll have settled the children. You too must be settled — in whatever position you find most easy. For when the storyteller on Listen with Mother used to say those famous words 'are you sitting comfortably . . . then I'll begin', she was talking partly to herself. Once you're ready and steady, you go — to what the children have been goggling at all along, those antlers. After that, I'll be surprised if you so much as glance at the cue-card. Why bother with it, then? Two reasons, actually: for a bolster and for ballast. The first boosts your feeling that you've prepared thoroughly; the second keeps your feet on the ground when, flushed with success, you're tempted to give them the complete epic there and then, Aeschere — amputation — Grendel's Mum and all. Hence also the point of writing out those closing sentences. They're insurance that you'll stop short while you're winning, and on a cliffhanger that sets up session number two.



Chris Powling at Monday's All-School Assembly

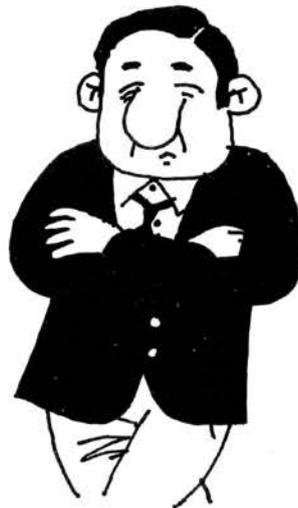
There are risks. At all costs avoid the following: DON'T . . .

- DON'T . . . BECAUSE . . .**
- put on too many voices. **You'll mix up your Major Bloodnoks with your Little Jims.**
 - invite the children to join in. **You'll be giving them licence to kill (or at any rate clobber).**
 - ask the children questions. **You may get an answer. And another. And another. And another.**
 - surround yourself with props. **They break, bite and fall on your foot.**
 - use microphones, lighting or special effects. **You'll electrocute yourself.**

DO concentrate on the tale — give it a clearly signalled start, a clearly shaped climax and a clear signing-off, all in straightforward, everyday language. Even when you reach your Big Moment, remember: a pregnant pause far outweighs the purplest of perorations. As you gain in confidence confine your experiments to two aspects only. First, add more dialogue (not 'voices'); second, develop your powers of on-the-wing description — keeping this concrete and close to the kids. Remember, one vivid detail they can identify with ('the mist was clingy and nasty in the mouth — like sour candyfloss') is more effective than the most inspired attempt to outstrip the opening of *Bleak House*.

Stage 3

After all this, what next? Well, next you can ignore everything so far, including those 'don'ts'. By now you'll be making your own rules. Through practice, perseverance and the fun of it you'll have become an expert. Indeed, so hooked will you be on the oldest of the performing arts you'll succeed with any approach, whether you've opted for son-et-lumière or just folded arms and a faraway look.



AT THIS STAGE YOU ARE IN THE GRAVEST DANGER.

Suddenly you'll be aware of the main threat in telling stories aloud, a personal catastrophe you can ward off only by sheer strength of character: you may never want to read them aloud again. ●

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

NEWS

be no question then of any turning in the grave when Cats, Andrew Lloyd Webber's new musical, based on Eliot's



(Photo, The Bookseller)

Old Possum — Superstar?

Anthony Burgess, giving the T.S. Eliot Memorial Lecture at the University of Kent talked (with piano accompaniment) about Eliot's passion for popular music. Apparently he much preferred My Fair Lady to Shaw's original Pygmalion. There will

Andrew Lloyd Weber, Mrs Valerie Eliot and Matthew Evans of Faber

Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats opens in London next April. Trevor Nunn (of the Royal Shakespeare Company) will direct and Gillian Lynne is to be the choreographer. Get in some extra paperbacks (Faber) and stand by to give poetry a push in the bookshop or library.

The true stories of six legendary heroes and villains

LIVING LEGENDS

Guy Fawkes's daring plot is still celebrated with flames and fireworks; Robin Hood's chivalry and Burke and Hare's grisly deeds have passed into legend, as have the stories of Dick Turpin, Dick Whittington and Captain Kidd. But what is the *truth* behind the traditions?

In this new BBC book, Richard Barber takes a fresh look at these colourful legends in the light of known historical facts.

BBC
PUBLICATIONS

£7.25

Read any good posters lately?

Most publicity about books appears in bookshops, libraries, magazines about books and the literary pages of newspapers where it's seen by people who go into bookshops and libraries and read about books. Recently Mills and Boon's romances and Corgi have popped up in some commercial breaks on TV, and Pan have ventured outside the book pages of some newspapers; but these are exceptions. Little attempt has been made by publishers to reach the 50 per cent or more of the public who know little or nothing about books and never visit a bookshop. That is until last month which was Book Poster Month in Brighton. Full colour posters, 5' x 3'6" appeared on the streets, each advertising twenty-four fiction titles or twenty-four non-fiction titles. Smaller posters went up in hotels, social clubs and doctors' and dentists' waiting rooms. There was a lot of activity linked with the posters, including quizzes, signing sessions and author appearances. The organisers of the campaign (the Book Marketing Council, who have finally persuaded publishers that co-operating to publicise books could make sense) are also interested to see whether people who already buy books find it helpful to be given a selected short list. (The Good Book Guide chose the books for Brighton).

Getting the unbooky into the bookshop is one of the challenges in schools too. Some large secondary schools with bookshops in less than central locations have been using home-made posters for years and scattering them about the building to attract customers with news of books and catchy slogans. We'll be keeping an eye on the Brighton results to see if we can learn to do it better.

A Book Bonanza in Barnsley

It was with some surprise — to judge from the tone of the press release — that the thirteen-person delegation from the Book Marketing Council who made the perilous foray north out of London, past Watford, to Barnsley found at journey's end, not a cultural desert but a town buzzing with activity and inhabited by a fair sprinkling of people who were already doing things with books. There are twenty-four school bookshops supplied by W.H. Smith (how many supplied from other sources?), a Children's Book Group, a thriving library service, a Literary Society. Everyone the delegation met was enthusiastic about collaborating on a 'book event' — so, a Bonanza there will be. Provisional dates: 6th–16th April 1981.

Unkind cuts are also unfair

According to the EPC (Educational Publishers Council) the majority of local authorities are now giving book provision in schools an alarmingly low priority. What is more, what provision is being made is frighteningly unequal. In Scotland some schoolchildren are receiving twice as many new books as others. If some authorities can find the money to maintain standards and keep pace with inflation, why not others? Where does your authority stand? If you live in Scotland you can find out in *A Guide to Schoolbook Spending in Scotland* — a report from the EPC. Get it from, Ms N van der Gaag, 19 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HJ (send an s.a.c.).

A Right Royal Book

Eleven years ago HRH The Prince of Wales wrote a story to amuse his younger brothers during a voyage on the royal yacht. It is now published by Hamish Hamilton with illustrations by Sir Hugh Casson. The references to shootin' and fishin'-type activities reflect the book's original audience, and there is evidence of the Prince's well-known liking for Goon humour. It's nice to note that Prince Andrew and Prince Edward were as much amused by jokes about lavatories as all the other five and nine-year-old boys in the country. Royalties (how appropriate!) go to charity.

The Old Man of Lochnager, 0 241 10527 7, £3.95.

School of the Year

As part of Children's Book Week '80, secondary school pupils were invited to submit an autobiography of their school in a competition to find the school of the year. The entry had to be in the form of a book.



Judges Henry Pluckrose, Michael Marland, Christopher Powling and Molly Hattersley (Photo, Publishers' Association)

The first prize of £500 plus the Lloyds Bank School of the Year trophy went to Heathfield High School, Congleton, Cheshire. Second prize (£250) was won by Newland High School, Kingston upon Hull, and third prize (£100) by Islington Green School, London. All prize money will be spent on books for the schools' libraries.

BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

HAMISH HAMILTON

Gazelles for 5-8 year olds

Heggarty Haggarty and the Dreadful Drought

Elizabeth Lindsay

Heggarty Haggarty decides to end the dreadful drought by casting a spell. Calamity! She does the spell for Flood instead of the one for Downpour.

241 10515 3 £1.80

Stitches for Charlie

Joy Allen

Charlie has to go to the hospital for appendicitis. At first he doesn't want to go – and then he doesn't want to go home again.

241 10511 0 £1.80

Antelopes for 6-9 year olds

William the Wizard

Patricia Cleveland-Peck

William decides to train as a Community Wizard. But the spells aren't always quite as easy as they appear.

241 10514 5 £2.25

The Horse Tree

Ann Ruffell

Jennifer plays on the horse tree every day, until a new housing estate is built near it. The horse tree survives the building and as a result of the upheavals Jennifer finds a new friend.

241 10526 9 £2.25

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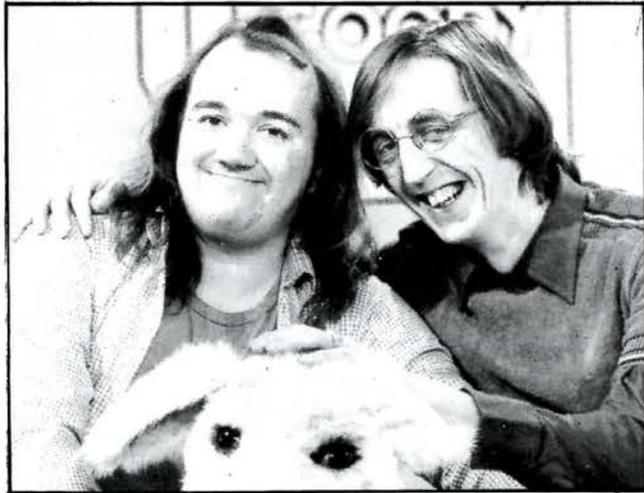
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SOUND AND VISION



Mel Smith and Bob Goody (Photo, Thames Television) with Spot

Takin' a squint at the print in a new children's TV programme from Thames

Notice anything different about Tuesdays last month? Kids rushing off from school a bit faster? A desire to avoid detentions? If you did I wouldn't mind betting it had something to do with **Smith and Goody**, the new Thames TV series about books. Kids rushing home to watch a programme about books? (I hear you cry incredulously). Ah, but this is a book programme with a difference. For a start it makes you laugh. Mel Smith (of *Not the Nine O'Clock News*), Bob Goody and Peter Brewis have put together a show which takes books out of the clean-hands-have-some-respect-for-culture-this-is-special league and puts them firmly in the arena of everyday life: material for sketches, parodies, jokes, just like pop music, politics, TV and the royal family.

Programme three, for example, started with Mel in dressing gown stuffing himself with toast and reading bits out of the *Puffin Crack-a-*

Joke Book. A book pops out of the toaster and is duly buttered and bitten. Doorbell rings. It's Bob, carrying a pile of books and clearly visible beyond the glass of the 'front door'. 'Answer the door, Bob,' yells Mel, still intent on book and breakfast. 'Bob, the door.' (Implication: when you're stuck in a book you don't want to be disturbed.) Eventually Mel goes to the door, but won't believe it's Bob and makes him post the books through the letterbox. 'The TV Kid, Tyke Tyler, I am David.' 'I thought you said your name was Bob.' But the book is not in the programme just for the joke — there's a moment at the end for telling us it's about refugee camps and trying to find your family.

Bob is still outside. Suddenly Mel and the set are transformed. He is a besuited TV quizmaster and if Bob wants us to 'Open the Door' he has to tell us everything he can remember about his favourite book (*Tyke Tyler*) in sixty seconds! The timer spins, Bob struggles to tell us about Tyke and Danny, the eleven-plus test, the stolen watch, the hideout... Mel prompts, hectors, bullies. Bob pants on, 'And, and, and... there's an amazing twist at the end.' Gong! 'Sorry, Bob, your time is up.' 'But can I tell them about this really fantastic twist?' 'Sorry, Bob, we're out of time. They'll have to read the book.' (Leer, leer.)

There's also a running argument about **This is Ridiculous** (Donald Bisset stories) which starts with Mel interrupting Bob's straight **Blue Peter**-type presentation to say he thinks the book's a load of rubbish. The debate continues at home with Mel in the shower. (Implication: it's okay to disagree about books; it's even fun to argue and discuss preferences.)

And that's only the half of it.

The series is aimed at nine to fourteen-year-olds, and Smith and Co. hope to 'encourage reading among that section of the children's audience which does not habitually borrow, buy, or have access to books'. It's fast, anarchic, and very funny. It recognises that its audience is made up of sophisticated viewers, it doesn't condescend and it doesn't preach. It's the most imaginative thing TV has done for books in a long time. Smith and Goody are in the business of changing attitudes. If they succeed, we've got to be ready to take advantage of it with the right books and the right approach.

The first series of six programmes finished at the end of October. A Christmas show is in preparation and a further series is planned for early 1981.

Details from Thames Television, Television House, 306 Euston Road, London NW1 3BB.

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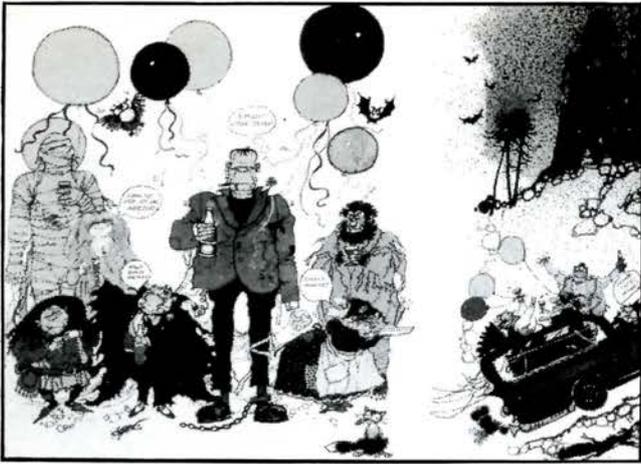
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From 'Dracula' by Victor Ambrus

Frankenstein, Dracula and friends — back where they started

Monsters, vampires, werewolves — they have come a long way since writers like Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker captured them between the covers of books which, so delightfully horribly, chilled the spines of our nineteenth-century ancestors. This century they burst out of books into films which have now inevitably turned up on our TV screens. Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Hammer Horror, now raise a smile as well as a shiver; and with that smile back our old friends come into books.

In

Frankenstein's Aunt, Allan Rune Pettersson, Hodder & Stoughton, 0 340 24933 1, £3.95, cigar-smoking Hanna Frankenstein returns to her nephew's castle to tidy things up and restore the family name. Igor is still there, so is the monster (lifeless as yet). Talbot, the werewolf, pays a call, and Count Dracula drops in. Hanna and her secretary Frans remain rational, unruffled and determined to sort it all out. It's a nice idea, and there are some funny moments, but for the most part it just tries too hard. The story is also available on cassette tape read by Valentine Dyall, with music and sound effects. Valentine Dyall is an incomparable reader, but even he can do little to give life to such turgid prose and, for the most part, the jokes fall flat. The effects are good though — and the novelty might just appeal to a reluctant reader.

Dracula — Everything you always wanted to know but were afraid to ask, Victor Ambrus, Oxford, 0 19 279746 8, £3.95, has got pictures and comic strip (à la Briggs), puns, 'Dreaded wheat with spookghetti' for supper, and tells what happens when Dracula hounded by insistent creditors (Dentist: five sets of fangs) has a 'fangtastic' idea and opens up the castle to tourists. It's quite funny. Not a rich source to be returned to again and again like **Fungus** — but good for a passing giggle.

More successful are two recent titles which pass up the joke in favour of thrilling the reader or scaring him/her stiff.

A Walk in Wolf Wood, Mary Stewart, Hodder & Stoughton, 0 340 25291 X, £3.50, is a timeslip fantasy set in the Black Forest. Two children meet a werewolf and help him fight his enchantment and regain his rightful place beside his friend the Duke. A gripping tale, well told.

The Hell Hound and Other True Mysteries, Peter Haining, Armada, 0 00 691745 3, 75p contains tales of vampires, abominable snowmen, Egyptian mummies — all your favourite horrors.

Promised soon: **Bram Stoker's Dracula**, adapted in comic strip form by Alice and Joel Schick (Heinemann, £3.95) and **The Eerie Series** (Harper and Row) stories of film characters in easy-to-read chapters. First titles, **Meet the Vampire** by Georghess McHargue, and **Creatures from Lost Worlds** by Seymour Simon. Both £3.95.

Grange Hill Forces BBC re-think

The success of **Grange Hill** as an early evening BBC2 programme has encouraged the BBC to consider putting out material with the 13 to 16-year-old audience in mind.

This month we are promised **Spine Chillers** — a sort of **Jackanory**-plus with actors reading stories by Saki, H.G. Wells and M.R. James. Early next year as an early evening serial comes **Maggie**, the story of a sixteen-year-old Glasgow girl and her problems. Scripts by Joan Lingard from her novels **The Clearance** and **The Resettling** (in paperback from Beaver).

The last series of **Grange Hill** gets a repeat run this month as a run-up to a new series beginning on 30th December (twice weekly, Tuesdays and Fridays).

Lions announce a new Bob Leeson, **Grange Hill Goes Wild** for December.

Return of The Book Tower

Having carried off the Prix Jeunesse in Munich for the best children's TV programme, **The Book Tower** starts a new eight week series on 22nd

December (ITV). Watchers' Guides will be available with details of all books featured in the programme week by week — and a message from Tom Baker. Apply to The Book Tower, Yorkshire TV, the TV Centre, Leeds LS3 1JS.

(Limited numbers available, so apply now.)

Long, Short and Tall Stories

A six-week series from the BBC Adult Education Unit, with the aim of getting parents more familiar with children's books. Presented by Aidan Chambers with film of and interviews with authors and illustrators including Quentin Blake, Alan Garner, Nina Bawden. Starts on BBC2 (early evening) on 16th November.

Spin-offs for Christmas

If books are not tying-in to TV, then they are spinning-off, especially at this time of the year. There are old institutions like the **Blue Peter Seventeenth Book** (BBC, £1.85) devised and written by Bidy Baxter, Edward Barnes and John Adcock, and managing to look and sound exactly like the other sixteen. Which is just as it should be. At least the book hasn't gone down the drain like the programme's presenters. **The Match of the Day Soccer Annual** (BBC, £1.80) pops up in predictable form too, with comments from Jimmy Hill, John Motson, Tony Gubba and the rest of the gang. Kevin Keegan (who else?) also appears and so does (you've guessed it) Lawrie McMenemy. Lots of photos, facts and figures. Good value for a footballer's stocking.

New this year are compilations from the two Yorkshire Johns — Noakes and Craven.

Noakes at Large, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10465 3, £3.25, consists of sixteen pieces (and some bits) only about half of which are accounts of 'going with Noakes', and have any sense of personality behind them. The rest are factual pieces on things like heraldry or festivals, which pale sadly beside accounts of Noakes walking in the Grand Canyon or going on the footplate of an express steam train. Most of the photographs, too, are from picture libraries; few feature Noakes (he 'appears' in Toni Goffe's cartoons) and somehow it doesn't really feel like his book.

John Craven's Newsworld, EP Publishing, 0 7157 0733 1, £3.95, in contrast seems very much his book. He reports ten stories — sensibly not immediately topical — from around the world, with a style, language and viewpoint just right for young readers. He describes, explains and comments, so that the reader 'feels' each situation — whether it be an earthquake in Guatemala, a soccer match in America, or animal rescue in Panama. Glossy paper, coloured photographs, many of them featuring the author on location, and clear layout and design all help to make this my choice of the two and well worth the extra 70p.

John Noakes seems diminished by his book, John Craven in his, more substantial than he is on screen. Perhaps it's because one is an actor and the other a journalist.

In View Soon

The Good Companions, J.B. Priestley. Alan Plater's serialisation in nine hour-long episodes starts on Friday, 14th November (Yorkshire)

The Talisman, Walter Scott, is the BBC Sunday serial. Starts 7th December.

The Gamekeeper — Barry Hines story of a year in a gamekeeper's life (Penguin). Adapted as a ninety-minute play, directed by Ken Loach. 16th December, 8.30 (ATV)

The Bagthorpe Saga — Now due to start end January. Six half-hour episodes, with Dandy Nichols as Grandma (BBC)

The Bells of Astercote — A fifty-minute play from Penelope Lively's novel **Astercote**. Due around Christmas.

Coming Next Year

Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen — January (BBC1)

Sons and Lovers, D.H. Lawrence — January (BBC2)

The Little World of Don Camillo, Giovanni Guareschi — (BBC1)

Vice-Versa, F. Anstey — (ATV)

Scarf Jack, P.J. Kavanagh — (Southern TV)

Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams — (BBC)

Great Minds?

Just as BBC TV is serialising **A Tale of Two Cities** there is news that yet another film version of Dickens' novel is in progress. Cast includes Peter Cushing, Dame Flora Robson, Kenneth More and Billie Whitelaw.

Roman Polanski's film of **Tess of the D'Urbervilles** is due to be released in London in January. Granada, we hear, are planning a TV version to be transmitted in 1982. ●

Arnold Lobel

Earlier this year whilst in America, Jill Bennett talked to Arnold Lobel and heard him speak about his work. Here she recalls the meeting and considers his newest books.

Arnold Lobel was born in Los Angeles on 22nd May 1933 and grew up in Schenectady, New York. He met his wife Anita (also an author/illustrator) whilst the two were attending the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Arnold was directing a play in which Anita had the leading role. The Lobels now have a son and a daughter and live in Brooklyn.

The decision to do children's books was a simple one — 'I found it was the one thing I could do well.' Arnold Lobel has a clear idea of what is meant by doing it well. He believes that an illustrator is successful when there is a complete unity in the relationship of the pictures and text. 'Young children do not differentiate where the words stop and the pictures begin.'

The difference for him between illustrating his own text and that of others is that, as the artist, he must know when not to 'write the pictures'. He doesn't talk to the writer; but lets ideas percolate and tries to feel the manuscript before deciding on an appropriate interpretation — 'kind of like jumping into the mind of someone else'.

When he starts he has no fixed ideas on how a book will look and feels that art should not be forced on to a story. He hates the kind of artist who subjugates a book to his particular style. His own style, he says, is constantly evolving and changing; he keeps on experimenting and nothing is ruled out.

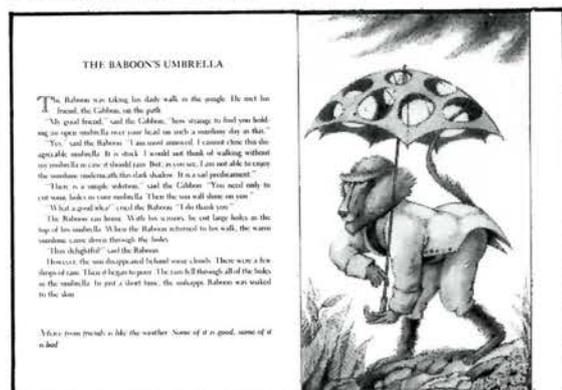
In his own books Arnold Lobel seems to speak to the mind of the child directly. Through the complete child-like quality of Frog and Toad for example, he achieves a direct communication with the very young. Was this intuition or cultivated observation? He decided that it must be instinctive. He has no childhood memory — or barely any — and does not try out his ideas on children. He described his most successful books as 'a kind of psychological accident'; somehow he had made contact with a part of himself and showed children his own weaknesses which they found amusing. Was it coincidence that to me he seemed like Toad personified?

The stories usually emerge from a visual idea. He approaches writing with much more caution and apprehension than illustrating (which he finds much easier). It can be a long and frustrating process before he eventually arrives at a text which is sufficiently finished for him to begin drawing the pictures. But even then he keeps working at it, taking out unnecessary words. 'When it comes to the words of a picture book, less is almost always very definitely more.'

The best part of creating a book, according to Arnold, is starting the illustrations. He uses tracing pads and makes hundreds of sketches which he describes as visual thinking. The pictures are evolved in layers and he achieves mirror images by reversing the paper so his drawing is 'kind of dynamic'. Making a dummy (a mock-up of what the book will be like) is very exciting, but he detests doing colour separations which he calls the gruel — the bane of his existence. It took him years to learn the process and he says, 'I always do my separations through gritted teeth.'

'Once a book is actually out, it is a real anticlimax: you spend about nine months working on a book, it's three days with the printer and then I'm on to a different book.' His favourite book is always the next one.

Arnold Lobel's most recent book is **Fables** (Jonathan Cape) a large format book of animal fables. The humorous text of each takes up one page and is accompanied by a full page illustration, rich in colour and detail.



Arnold Lobel (Photo, Adam Lobel)

Arnold described how, in the winter of '78, he started on this venture. Using a series of 'Bic' pens — he scribbles with these as a kind of 'anti-image' because recently people have been claiming that when Arnold Lobel takes up his pen and writes, it is a literary event — he wrote the twenty fables in twenty-five days, 'roughly one animal per day, with very little rewriting'. He says he frightened himself, and felt it was like a kind of spirit writing. Then between October '79 and the following January, he took up a black marker — 'an anger symbol' — and reshuffled the chapters. Then came the pictures.

His labours have resulted in a book of fables which can be read and enjoyed on a number of levels by anyone from about seven. And with such illustrations as the bear with a frying pan hat and paper bag boots, and a bespectacled Father Elephant engrossed in his Daily Trumpet while (to his small son's consternation) the slipper on his left foot blazes away, Arnold Lobel certainly achieves that feeling of unity between text and pictures.

Also recently published is **Days with Frog and Toad**, the fourth of Lobel's classics featuring this endearing pair. In this one Toad is persuaded not to put off until tomorrow what can be done today; the two expend a great deal of energy getting a kite to fly and spend a shivery evening storytelling; Toad's birthday hat becomes a perfect fit thanks to his friend's ingenuity, and Frog decides that he wants to be by himself — only temporarily though — to Toad's relief.



From 'Frog and Toad All Year'

The third collection of adventures, **Frog and Toad all Year**, is now happily in paperback. In this one the two friends' activities include a somewhat hairy toboggan ride, a search for Spring, and preparations for Christmas — rather fraught as far as Toad is concerned.

I've long advocated Frog and Toad as indispensable companions for all those on the road to independent reading. A new friend is Owl, another enchanting Lobel creation.

In **Owl at Home** (now in paperback) his misunderstandings will delight all who make his acquaintance. In the five short stories he invites winter in to warm himself, discovers strange bumps at the bottom of his bed, makes tear-water tea, solves a problem, and finds a friend. I hope we shall see more of Owl. And lots more of Arnold Lobel. ●

Fables,
Cape, 0 224 01866 3, £3.95

Days with Frog and Toad,
World's Work I-Can-Read series, 0 437 90131 9, £3.50

Frog and Toad all Year,
World's Work I-Can-Read paperback, 0 437 96040 4, 95p

Owl at Home,
World's Work I-Can-Read paperback, 0 437 96041 2, 95p



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MONEY – THE FACTS OF LIFE

5th edition by W. Reay Tolfree

As part of a continuing programme of educational sponsorship this book has been produced by the Bank, in association with the publishers, Woodhead-Faulkner Limited, 8 Market Passage, Cambridge.

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

Copies from booksellers or, in cases of difficulty, direct from the publishers.

Price 90 pence.

MONEY – THE FACTS OF LIFE

Audio-Visual Presentation

A new audio-visual teaching pack based on the book has now been produced, comprising four 20-minute filmstrips with accompanying cassettes, teachers' notes, suggested projects and a copy of the book.

Specifically for classroom use, the filmstrips trace the early working lives of two cartoon characters, Zack and Zelda, through numerous drawings, photographs and charts, combined with a lively informative soundtrack.

Each pack costs £30 plus VAT and is available under special preview offer from Public Relations Department (FS), Lloyds Bank, 71 Lombard Street, London EC3P 3BS.

Make Frog and Toad



Jill Bennett's class were so enthusiastic about Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad* books that she set about bringing Frog and Toad to 'life' for them. The result (pictured here) is very easy to make and not expensive. Jill says she used mostly scraps that parents brought in.

Having book characters in the form of toys or puppets in the classroom stimulates interest in books and also provides the raw material for lots of imaginative play and talk.

Frog and Toad have had many more adventures in Jill Bennett's classroom than even Arnold Lobel has dreamed up.

So that you can have Frog and Toad in your classroom, Jill has drawn up a pattern and instructions on how to make them. If you'd like a copy, just send 50p to the SBA, 1 Effingham Road, Lee, London SE12 8NZ. Cheques or postal orders should be payable to the SBA. ●

A PLEA TO PUBLISHERS

from David Stewart

David Stewart is a bookseller in Liverpool and a member of the Board of the SBA.

In an excellent article in *Books for Keeps* 2 in May, Steve Bowles reviewed and recommended a number of series of books for adolescent readers. He made the point that general publishers with a few honourable exceptions 'have made no concerted effort to create a sizeable UK market for teenage fiction' but that educational publishers 'seeing the gap have provided most of the books which are useful in these circumstances'.

Unfortunately like many people connected with education he mistakes two quite distinct and separate markets. When he says that educational publishers have filled a gap he means only a gap in the school market for educational books — literally 'text' books purchased by schools through educational suppliers and having until recently no connection whatever with a teenage reading market for fiction as stocked by booksellers. However the first tentative connection between these two markets is now being made. *Topliners* were probably the first teenage educational series which booksellers found they were being asked for regularly. As a result of pressure from booksellers, Macmillans reluctantly have granted one or two booksellers a 25% discount instead of the usual 17½% and these booksellers can now sell *Topliners* without actually making a loss (they don't make a profit either at 25%). Longmans have followed with *Knockouts* but none of the rest of the series mentioned by Steve Bowles are available on booksellers'

shelves — and thus regrettably not available for sale through school bookshops.

Teenagers are not the only potential market for 'educational' books. Parents who have seen them have been enthusiastic about the excellent *Terraced House Books* series from Methuen Educational (mentioned in *Books for Keeps* 4 in September). But the price at which the ordinary bookseller can offer these 'non-net' books on which he receives such a small discount from the publisher, puts them out of the reach of the very people who want and need them so much.

So I would make a passionate plea to publishers to recognise a new and expanding market for these series. All that is needed to have these series on sale in booksellers and available for the general public and school bookshops is for publishers to give full trade discount on these series — preferably making them 'net' books at the same time.

Which brings up the thorny subject of 'net' and 'non-net' books. There is considerable confusion among teachers about this and its related subjects — the Net Book Agreement and Book Agency Licences, etc. The SBA is now compiling a simple statement about the whole complicated issue. This will be included in the new issue of the Handbook (now in preparation) and reprinted here in the magazine when we will also attempt to guide readers through the maze of trade practices and the law. ●

Price increase from January 1981

We are very sorry about this but, along with everyone else, we are smitten by the effects of inflation. As from January 1981 and *Books for Keeps* No. 6 we shall be charging £4.50 for new annual subscriptions, or 75p per single copy. New overseas subscriptions will rise to £7.50 or £1.25 per single copy.



TWO BOOKS TO TICKLE THE TOES OF CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS AND RAISE A LAUGH OR A GLORIOUS GROAN ON CHRISTMAS MORNING — Therese Birch's 'Jellybone Graffiti Book' (Sparrow, 0 09 924090 4, 85p) is a collection of the best/worst wall writing from listeners to JELLYBONE (LBC Radio's Saturday show for kids).

THE END is a collection of the best/worst jokes in the world submitted by children and compiled by Richard Stanley (for samples see Ed's Page).



Richard Stanley, compiler of *The End* with readers/contributors; (Photo, Puffin Books)

THE END!