

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

the children's book magazine

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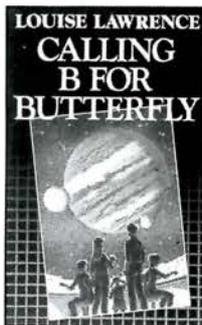


TEENAGE BOOKS

*Robert Cormier • Paul Zindel
Janni Howker • Philip Pullman*

THE NATURAL CURRICULUM
FOR ENGLISH

THE BODLEY HEAD



Calling B for Butterfly

Louise Lawrence £2.95

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Cover Story – The illustration on our cover by Denis Ryan is taken from the Teen Tracks paperback of *The Pigman's Legacy* by Paul Zindel (0 00 672977 0, £2.25) to be published in April. We are grateful to Collins for help in using this illustration.

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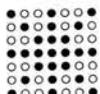
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EDITOR'S PAGE



Happy New Year. It's good to be back in the Editor's chair, though I can't pretend I didn't enjoy my sabbatical – not least for the pleasure of reading the last four issues of **BfK** so ably edited by Richard and Chris. Being in the USA for the first time was constantly absorbing, particularly being in schools and universities. But there's no doubt that a high spot of the visit was going to the annual conference of the American Library Association (ALA) in New Orleans. Imagine 16,000 delegates, a conference programme the size of a telephone directory setting out 2,000 sessions, 1,000 exhibitors, a page of acronyms – expression of the amazing organisation and influence of ALA and its sub-groups. I plotted my course through four days of children's book events – award ceremonies, sessions on selection, intellectual freedom, Out reach to pre-schoolers and parents, teenage reading, and . . . and . . . I noted the provision of Day Care for children, signing for the deaf, an amazing feat of organisation, and turned into the exhibition. In the Children's Books sections, librarians descended on piles of posters like locusts; publishers – topline editors as well as publicity people – smiled and kept the supplies coming. There were authors everywhere, British as well as American. Allan Ahlberg sat for hours signing copies of *Starting School*, Leon Garfield and Vivien Alcock answered streams of questions from formidably enthusiastic librarians. I enjoyed putting faces to names and discovering many writers not so far published here – though the presence of a small posse of British editors might change that.

S E Hinton – a winner

A major theme of this issue is Teenage Books – what in the USA they call Young Adult. This year the YAASD (Young Adult Services Division of ALA) got together with *School Library Journal* to present an award to an author 'whose book or books over a period of time have been accepted by young adults as an authentic voice that continues to illuminate their experiences and emotions, giving insight into their lives'. Librarian Susan Tait, who chairs the award committee, believes the books highlighted by the award will enable young adults to better understand 'themselves, the world in which they live, and their relationship with others and with society'. First recipient of the bi-annual award and the \$1,000 gift that goes with it was S E Hinton, whose *The Outsiders* (1967) is still very much top of the pops. It's nearly ten years since *Tex* – time taken up by film versions of the books, and another kind of production. Susan Hinton explained. 'I seem to produce a book about every four years, but four years ago I had a baby instead.' *Taming the Star Runner*, published here by Gollancz in March, restarts the cycle. Its hero, Travis, is another 'outsider' but he's also a secret writer: 'Travis always had stories going in his head. From those monster stories to that long involved tale he'd been telling his cellmate last week; he couldn't stop the stories the way he couldn't stop breathing.' Charismatic, streetwise Travis is faced with a different set of values when he is sent to his uncle in the country after a series of violent incidents at home; he is challenged by the contact with new people (in particular two young women) and with

horses – another of Hinton's passions. 'People will say it's autobiographical,' says Hinton, 'but it's not really. I had much more in mind the young actors I spent time with when I was making the films. It's about the struggle to get recognition, though when I heard my first book had been accepted I was in the same situation as Travis when he hears about his book, and, like Travis, I failed English the term I signed the contract for *The Outsiders*.

Writing Books, Writing Films

Lots of YA librarians were raving about Philip Pullman's *The Ruby in the Smoke* sequence. Philip writes in this issue (page 25) about another book *How To Be Cool*, recently adapted by him for TV. He, like Janni Howker (page 24), has become aware of what happens when a book is handed over to a different medium. Robert Cormier's books have been filmed but on his visit here he was more interested in talking about the writing process. Cormier Talking (page 12) and this issue's Authorgraph (page 14) give fascinating insights into the ways in which writers work. A new Zindel novel is always a literary event and reissues are always welcome especially when they have such eye-catching covers as the Collins Teen Tracks edition of *The Pigman's Legacy* featured on our cover. If the name Zindel didn't persuade a teenage reader to pick it up, this cover surely will. By chance we have stumbled on the news that there is a new BBC TV adaptation of *Tom's Midnight Garden*, scheduled (we think) to start this month. Makes you wonder why publishers employ people to tell the rest of us about media tie-ins when they remain so silent about what could be a major TV event for children's books.

Writing Across the Curriculum

Meanwhile we have 'the Cox report' on English 5-11. Not bad so far, but we wait for 'more precise and more specific differentiation between levels' and 'greater emphasis on grammatical structure and terminology'. It will all hang on the assessment. It was fear of an even greater spread of decontextualised drilling that made us so keen to spread the word about *Rushavenn Time* (see page 4) and in particular the practice that lay behind it. Peter Woods is saying something very important about progression and reaching standards. At Brixworth School there's great emphasis laid on reading aloud and you can see it in the writing. *Tom's Midnight Garden* is a favourite. Philippa Pearce figures on Cox's 'by no means comprehensive' list of recommended authors. It's provided a lot of fun, hasn't it? Lots of obvious omissions as well as the contentious EB. But what a sloppy piece of work, and full of spelling mistakes! (The Js are 75% incorrect.) We made a few guesses but 'D Blackheath', not in *Children's Books in Print*, still eludes us. Any help? Let's hope the revised document improves and extends the list and then Mr Baker comes up with massive funding to get stocks into libraries and classrooms! Some hope! ■



The Natural Curric

Last November, just before the publication of the Cox report, we heard that **Rushavenn Time**, written by Theresa Whistler working with a group of children from Brixworth Primary School, had won the Smarties Prize in the 9-11 category.

The collaborative project which produced the book was a natural extension of the school's philosophy and approach to the curriculum. This account is a timely reminder of a route to the National Curriculum's Attainment Targets that has no need to go via pointless drills and rigid segregation.

Peter Woods begins the story.

In the summer of 1980 I found myself acting Headteacher of Brixworth Primary School. The school had for many years been run on traditional lines. The children were seated in very formal arrangements. The teacher's desk was larger and at a remove from the children's. This seemed to emphasise the gap – the chasm – which existed between the staff and the children. The teaching approach was wholly didactic and there was little movement across subject boundaries. The children were rarely, if ever, invited to make an oral contribution – except as a brief response to a teacher's question. Moreover, that response was expected to reflect, not the child's own ideas, but the teacher's earlier instruction. There was little recognition of the fact that education is a two-way process and that at one moment we are teacher and at another we are learner. There was little recognition of the fact that children should be helped towards an independence which derives from verbal and intellectual assurance. The children were mostly seen as empty baskets to be filled with the fruits of the teacher's greater experience and superior intellect. This was what was being passed off as education at Brixworth Primary School. I don't want to sound too critical. There was a great deal of honest endeavour – and a little good work – going on. But nobody had stopped to think about, to question, what they were doing and why, some for as long as 25 years. There is a beautiful poem, written in AD 820 by the Chinese poet Po-Chu-I, which suggests that what we were experiencing at Brixworth was an age-old problem. The poem is entitled 'The Red Cockatoo':

*'Sent as a present from Annam –
A red cockatoo
Coloured like the peach-tree blossom,
Speaking with the speech of men.
And they did to it what is always done
To the learned and eloquent.
They took a cage with stout bars
And shut it up inside.'*

Well, what did we do? Sitting down as a staff, and talking about our beliefs, we made several important policy decisions:

1. That we would move away from a largely teacher-directed to a largely child-centred approach to teaching and learning.

In so doing we were attempting to recognise the autonomy of our children – that through such personal freedom they would all be able to give expression to those special and individual gifts which they all have, but which are so little understood despite the great increase in educational research in recent years.

2. That we would spend less time talking to and at our children and spend more time listening to them, believing that it is only in this way that we can even begin to understand the uniqueness – the genuineness and creativeness – of their thought processes and their true potential.

3. That we would seek to recognise and elevate those special skills which many children have, but which, sadly, are often relegated to a double period on Friday afternoon and then only 'if you behave yourselves and finish all your other work!' I refer, of course, to drawing and painting and modelling and drama and other forms of movement.

At Brixworth Art and Craft is no longer timetabled. A wide range of Art and Craft materials is located in every classroom. They are always available to the children irrespective of whether the work they are involved in has a literary or mathematical or scientific or historical or geographical basis. If the child feels that the work could be enhanced or extended then he (or she) is encouraged to make use of the alternative media. As a result of this particular policy change we have minimised our use of the depressingly boring, stereotyped and unimaginative exercise book and we now create our own plain paper books which we make in their entirety from the preparation of the paper, perhaps with a marbling or stippled effect, through the process of sewing and binding to the endpaper and cover decoration.

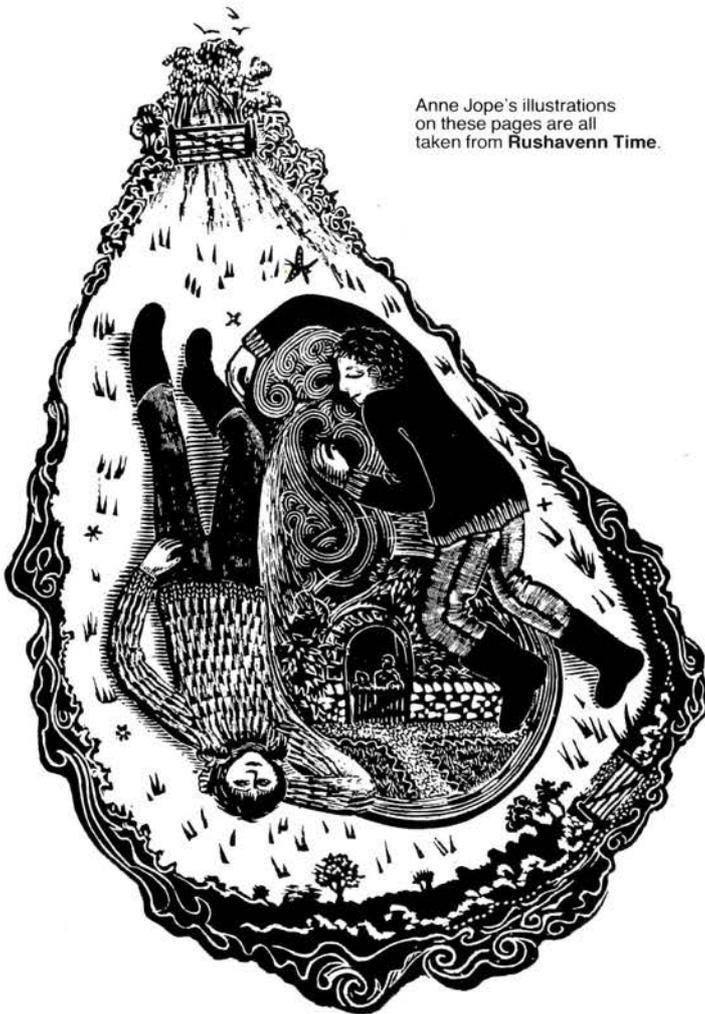
4. That for the rigidly subject-based structure we would substitute an interdisciplinary approach to the curriculum.

5. That we would endeavour to acknowledge the important role which narrative and oracy plays in a child's development, that we would use story not only as a way into the curriculum, but as a focus for much of our work right across the board. Here we were seeking to re-establish language and literature, not merely as the cornerstone of the curriculum, but as its pillars and flying-buttresses. Remove these and the whole fabric will be reduced to piles of rubble.

This last area was my particular interest and over the next several years I sought to make use of the marvellous opportunities offered by the Writers in Schools (now Book a Writer) scheme.

ulum

I believe that there is a need to regard literature as a dynamic process, having to do with readers and writers and what they do, and not being primarily concerned with books. Together with the children I wanted to look at the way in which writers make a world through their story and how they invite readers to enter that world and explore it with them. As well as that I wanted to examine the very complex relationship between fiction and reality. Writers like Fleur Adcock, Stan Barstow, Kevin Crossley-Holland, Charles Keeping, Edward Storey and Brian Wildsmith have come to work with our children.



Anne Jope's illustrations on these pages are all taken from *Rushavenn Time*.



– linguistic, curricular and social – was quite exceptional – so much so that there were numerous occasions when we had to go away and rethink how we were going to handle the potential we had unleashed. The children's level of response was such that we were made to realise that, as far as understanding children's true abilities is concerned, educational research has only just begun to uncover the tip of the iceberg. And all this had occurred because we had released the children from their educational and environmental strait-jackets.

It was at this point that Theresa Whistler was invited to come and join us in a project to produce a full-length children's book of publishable standard. There were 15 volunteers, mostly aged between eight and eleven years, in the group. These children turned up regularly, on at least one Saturday each month, for a whole school year, to work with Theresa.

Over months a unique partnership evolved between the experienced writer and this group of children. At the beginning of each session they would talk over their ideas for the development of the story. They would then go off in twos and threes to begin writing up their ideas. Later in the day they came together again to discuss with Theresa what they had written. She would sometimes help the children to make improvements. Such changes were mostly concerned with style and technique rather than content. Over the next few days the children would undertake further work at home. Then the scripts would be bundled up and sent to Theresa to work into a coherent story. Each new chapter was debated at length.

Wanting to make not only a mental, but a physical, separation from what had gone before I began to cast my eyes around for a different location for the work which we were to undertake. About a mile distant, in the older part of the village and lying in the very shadow of the famous Saxon church at Brixworth, was a large room which had been the former Infants' classroom. It was now officially designated as the Rural Schools Project Centre. This room had a great deal of character. It had a high ceiling and windows that let in a lot of light. There were few desks, but plenty of comfortable armchairs. There was also an abundance of Art and Craft materials which could be used as an alternative means of expression for those children who – initially – found it difficult to articulate their thoughts. And it was here that we came regularly with our texts – to act and to draw and to paint, but above all to talk. What occurred during the following months is almost impossible to describe. The children's development

The story which emerged concerns two cousins, Sam and Rebecca, who go to stay with their uncles on a large estate somewhere in the West Country. Shortly after their arrival they meet up with a solitary character called Fady who tells them about a derelict farmhouse (Rushavenn). They learn that its former owners had moved to London during the Second World War where they had all been killed in a bombing raid. As the children play round the house they witness and eavesdrop on family conversations and make special friends of two of the five children who lived there. A whole series of unpredictable meetings occur and with each encounter, and increased knowledge of the family and its circumstances, an additional part of the house is restored in the cousins' imaginations. At the very end of the story, on the occasion of their final visit to Rushavenn Field, the house is momentarily seen in its entirety. The story's theme is the persistence and accessibility of the past.

The Natural Curriculum

Theresa Whistler takes up the narrative.

It was hard work for us all. The earlier sessions took up a whole Saturday, 9.30 to 4.00, and these children, naturally, had had no experience in developing a theme beyond a few pages. Some who came to do best had not, they confessed later, enjoyed writing hitherto, nor believed they had the capacity. Some 'hated' the whole thing – but stuck to it, not saying so, till happy finish day.

The children were not at all passive; they came to meet any idea I put forward. They talked easily, confidently and expressively. They listened intently and remembered very accurately. They were also far less shy than most school children of revealing private and romantic feelings in front of their peers. There was a welcome absence of a pecking-order of seniority. Instead, they listened to each other with the respect of equals – which was what their teachers gave them. Nor did I ever find the two or three who had a much greater natural talent than the rest treated as stars.

I knew that, for my own part, I could only teach them anything worthwhile if our story was one of those I would write anyway – one where atmosphere and setting matter above story-line, and 'the place where' is the main 'character'.

My family's North Devon holiday home, burnt down by accident in the war, had been the centre of my own first 15 years. The 'seed' of the whole thing was my sharp recollection of coming home from boarding school in early March 1942, standing underneath the gap of air where my bedroom had been, struck by the realisation that no human eye would ever see again the faces and forms which had peopled for me the bare elm tree opposite. For no one would ever again lie looking across from that exact angle at which those unique branches traced these pictures against the western sky. I came to the first session full of this notion. I wanted to celebrate my lost home, and share it with children so like what I had been. I brought a box of old photographs and sketches from 40 years ago, to bring it into romantic focus as I talked.

The lost home might re-arise from its ruins, I thought, in mysterious episodes, window by window: its bygone household appearing to two visiting children of nowadays. By the end, in some climax, they might glimpse the whole farmhouse once, complete and clear, before it vanished forever. (The Brixworth children had already read or heard classics of this genre – Alison Uttley's *A Traveller in Time* and Tom's *Midnight Garden* by Philippa Pearce.)

I hoped, if I involved as many as seven main young characters, aged from eight to sixteen, that each of my volunteers might find one or other they cared to identify with. A year seemed a good time-span to pick for the action, as this would mean that nature description could come fresh from our year of work together (roughly Autumn to the end of July).

At our first session, besides describing the setting, I sketched the main lines of each character in the story – the lively girl who wrote poetry secretly, the small boy with seafaring fantasies and a cat for companion, and so on. But above all I tried to impress on the group that what I chiefly wanted was to establish was 'a world you could go into', since this was what I had most valued myself in stories, at their age – and still do! I sketched out some possible encounters and incidents for the early chapters.

I expected that the setting up of our own project would take several introductory sessions before the children began themselves to invent. Instead, the volunteers seized on my first proposals as if this was the most natural enterprise in the world! They made the world of Rushavenn, as I conceived it, their own at once. Small groups went aside to discuss amongst themselves the boy or girl character of their special choice

and to make up episodes and pieces of dialogue relevant to him or her – returning from time to time to question me further or show their work. By the end of that day Rushavenn already had its own impetus and stamp.

I wrote three opening chapters to read at the second session. By then the children had tried their hand at several 'incidental' stories. But it rapidly became plain that what really interested them was Rushavenn itself. They tried to reproduce its own atmosphere in their incidental stories, and kept on duplicating mysterious companions and appearances. So, since Rushavenn seemed to be enough on its own, we let the frame become the whole picture. But the children continued, whenever the spirit moved them, to produce miscellaneous stories of their own at a tangent – comic, fantastic, adventurous, in whatever style they pleased. I think this was an important aid in avoiding monotony and helping them to find, from personal impulse, what line of storytelling suited each – what range, and what styles.

I purposely did not correct their work much, except for a suggestion here and there of a word or so. But I did try to help them find their own sense of 'consistency'. I wanted to avoid interfering in their subject matter – and all 'marking'. Some of the girls missed such comment on 'good' or 'bad', but it was against my instinct. They would get plenty of this kind of criticism elsewhere – too much, for some, even from within themselves! Our Saturdays were for something much more elusive – to identify and set free the individual fruitful impulse. I wanted to foster in each the very pressure to write itself – which is the adult artist's lifelong central quest, after all.

They soon noticed that my own written contributions consisted a good deal more of description and less of dialogue than they were used to. I offered to adapt, but they did not wish me to alter this, nor seemed to mind that a vocabulary and style natural to me made demands on them. It was 'different', they said, and the turns the story took were not what they expected, but this attracted them. Above all, they kindled to the mood of the story, which we were generating together out of my childhood memories and their own experiences of life. I thought they grasped the need for 'unity of feeling' with marvellous quickness – shaping character and atmosphere to that with a rapidly growing feeling for artistic 'rightness'. If any invention of their own jarred on this consistency, I found they would usually discard the result, themselves, as unsatisfactory.

I brought to show the children whatever I could of authentic visual origins for the characters (nearly all only recognised by me as sources after I had begun writing). The surfacing of such sub-conscious material can be odd and surprising. There are two Vermeer portraits of a girl, looking over her left



shoulder (possibly from the same model). In one, 'The Studio', she holds up a wind-instrument and wears a wreath; in the other, she wears a greenish-gold, turban-style head-dress. These I realised had given rise to Carlie – together with my memories of a particular Devon neighbour, a beautiful country girl of 17. It was Millais' 'Boyhood of Raleigh' – painted from his own sons – which started the idea of Vidal. Pin had grown from a brief glimpse of an actual Venetian child who had teased me years before, across a wide piazza, with her scrap of looking-glass. The children were eager for more 'origins', but I could not at the time supply them. They had to accept the fact that the impressions which set a writer off are inconsequent in the extreme – and likely to remain mostly buried in unconscious memory.

We did incorporate, in the end, three 'incidental' tales made up by groups of the children working with Peter Woods, and I used the most sustained piece produced by the children in the course of the year – the entire episode of the Green Man play,

from its planning to performance. Peter had helped them put it together – all I did was to break up this complete composition a little, just enough to embed it into the action of the main story. All Pin's poems and leaf-riddles are by the children. So are Glory's knitting jingle and Carlie's Spring Song – and its tune. These child-written pieces are verbatim, and include another sustained piece describing sunset achieved by one boy quite on his own.

By the end I was able, as I had so hoped, to include some item from everybody – only to find them singularly unconcerned. Their own words in print were a matter of small prestige to most, it seemed. They had usually forgotten, in fact, that they had written them! What did matter, I found, was any niche achieved for some treasured personal memory of someone, or personal 'talisman'. Wherever I had found a place for

these, a comment of satisfaction and gratitude followed. Above all, and pervading everything we did, was the mysterious communion of imagination any close group of collaborating friends create in discussing such work, however humble.

At first the most expressive writing came from the girls and the best ideas, on the other hand, from boys. As time went by, this difference evened out and the capacity for sustained description, and for dialogue which could present quite subtle or complex materials, developed a great deal in both.

At each session Peter Woods used to establish by recapitulation and questions that everyone had fully grasped the point of all I had read to them and its relation to earlier passages. He would often propose some new angle or activity to vary things and so open a fresh vein of invention. One very successful scheme was to get each child to choose and bring, if feasible, some favourite possession – whatever he or she

would choose to save if they must abandon everything else in a disaster. Their choices – and reasons for them – gave me many insights and led to other 'talisman' objects which found a place in the story.

Many of our talks, naturally, were about Time and inevitability and what laws a fantasy must observe in order to convince. Towards the close, the children grew reluctant to give the story's end absolute finality. They wanted some loophole left for a sequel – or at any rate the possibility that the children divided by Time might yet meet again. Some felt specially concerned for Vidal, still a small boy, never to see again so close a companion as Sam had become. I pointed out that by the conventions we had set up for ourselves, it was only the children of the present that were aware of losing those of the past, not the other way round. For the Rushavenn children lost in the Blitz had met death suddenly, without foreseeing farewells. One of the older boys broke in thoughtfully pointing out that, in any case, Sam and Rebecca must lose the



relationship they had with these others. For these two would go on growing up and changing (as they had already begun to do in recent chapters) whereas the children of the past must stay fixed at the same age for ever and so be left behind inevitably. Artistic sense – and these arguments – prevailed. The group accepted finality. It was a practical demonstration of the force – and risk – for a writer, in nostalgia.

By debating such questions of construction throughout, as each arose, we formulated gradually for the story the laws of its being. We had to be clear how the Rushavenn children, for instance, experienced the presence of Sam and Rebecca – to Pin and Vidal not perceived as part of the future, but as wish-fulfillments, 'secret companions', almost part of their own fantasies. We decided that the older children of the past, Christen and Carlie, being nearly adult, would never see them at all. Also it seemed important to emphasise remoteness by such devices as the fact that Sam and Rebecca mostly

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see the inhabitants of Rushavenn through a window, or in some other way elusively, and that they themselves never set foot inside the bygone Rushavenn rooms.

These discussions of ours vitally affected the course of the story for I purposely never wrote ahead, beyond each session to hand. I kept of course a general notion of how it would all end, but I wanted to stay quite open to the children's inventions, chapter by chapter. So nothing was written by me until after their discussions and suggestions were complete.



I think they made their best discoveries in the arts of storytelling for themselves. Dawne mentioned Fady as a character different from all the rest. 'In what way?' we asked. I wrote down the exact words of her reply. 'He's more mythical. He's half real, half story-like. He's like something that's come out from the depths of a castle - like a narrator springing up from somewhere and saying if it's right or not. It's like he's a link between.'

This perception was entirely her own, for I had read without commenting on Fady's part, leaving the children to make whatever they would of him. Perhaps for that reason he intrigued them, and of course what Dawne had just said exactly expressed my aim. (This is not a claim that he succeeds artistically - he may be a rather obvious chorus.)

At the last session Peter Woods asked each in turn what personal effect the project had had. Several said they had liked it for some quality they felt was 'more adult' than their usual reading - though they agreed that this would not have held them so much if they had not been helpers in writing it.

Andrew was the one who volunteered that he used to dread writing and had, in fact, hated the first sessions, but now wrote for pleasure. One of the younger and quieter members, Rachel, had found the confidence and enterprise to go in for a public short-story competition. (I hear that she has been writing ever since.) Several said that they did much better in school subjects now because of the project, and others that they now *read* a great deal more for pleasure. One honest fellow said that what it had taught him was to get up on a Saturday morning!

I cannot tell how many of these benefits were really due to the year of creation we had shared; much would have flowered anyway at this 'prime of childhood stage'. But one very stimulating pleasure, at least, I know the project gave them - a lively sense of achievement.

The story must stand or fall now, for any outside reader, on its own merits - not on this account of how it came about, which is written only for those it might encourage to try such an enterprise for themselves. ■



Theresa Whistler.

Theresa Whistler has been writing for many years. In 1954 she edited *The Collected Poems of Mary Coleridge*. This was followed by *The River Boy*, a fantasy for children set in North Devon. For the past 25 years she has been working on the official biography of the de la Mare family. This account of her work with Brixworth School is taken from her Afterword to *Rushavenn Time*.

Anne Jope, who produced the intricate wood engravings for *Rushavenn Time*, is a freelance painter and printmaker. She met Theresa Whistler two years ago. By a curious coincidence she was given a Box tree trunk from the garden of the house which became *Rushavenn* long before the book was even thought of. Anne used one of the wood blocks from this trunk for the cover design.

Peter Woods is Headteacher of Brixworth VC Primary School in Northamptonshire. With 350 pupils it is one of the largest primary schools in the county. This account is extracted from an address given to the English Speaking Board's annual conference in 1985.

Rushavenn Time, illustrated by Anne Jope, is available in two editions: 0 9513213 0 7, £9.95 (non-net hbk) and 0 9513213 1 5, £3.95 (non-net pbk), from Brixworth VC Primary School, Froxhill Crescent, Brixworth, Northampton NN6 9BG (tel: 0604 880457).

LIFELINE 4: PROJECTS AND TOPICS

Pat Thomson continues her seven-part series

Putting a project together ideally begins with an unhurried survey of all the resources, and then a drawing together of the elements which most suit the age and ability of your particular group of children.

For the 5-12 age range, each section covers one major topic and suggest non-fiction books, stories and poems related to the one theme. The addresses of organisations which offer help and material to schools are also included. The result should be a broadly based range of options which remind you of good material, inform you about new books and maybe even suggest new approaches within the chosen theme.

PART 4: FOOD

- A single foodstuff can be a topic for a project in itself but for those looking for a wider application, food in our lives, the subject has important scientific and social, particularly multi-cultural, implications. The age range of the books covers 5-12, with most of the titles having a wide age reference.

INFORMATION BOOKS

● Food and Science

Lots of Rot, Vicki Cobb, A & C Black 1988, 0 7136 2992 4, £4.95. Leaving aside the mildewed sock, this 'Science Safari' title deals with rotting food. Lots of magnificent experiments and clear explanations. Lively enough to grab the whole primary age range. Doffy Weir deserves a credit, too, for the amusing and helpful illustrations.

Early Experiences: Beginnings, Schools Council Science 5/13, Macdonald, 1985 reprint, 0 356 04005 4, £4.95 non-net. Section on 'Cooking Things' lists the scientific experiences which can be gained and gives ideas for activities and recipes.

Science Horizons Level 1: Cooking and what we eat, West Sussex Science 5/14, Macmillan Education 1982, 0 333 32156 1, £7.50. Plans and aims clearly set out before the activities. A very teacher-supportive series.

Food, Terry Jennings, Oxford 1984, 0 19 918161 6, £3.95. Part of 'The Young Scientist Investigates' series. Information pages on all aspects from the food chain to famine, separated by questions and experiments. Well organised.

Strawberry, Jennifer Coldrey and George Bernard, A & C Black 1988, 'Stopwatch' series, 0 7136 3052 3, £4.50. Luscious photographs illustrate how the plant grows and how fruit and seeds develop. Clear two-level text for younger or older readers. See also **Apple Tree** (0 7136 2818 9), **Broad Bean** (0 7136 2427 2), **Mushroom** (0 7136 2730 1) and **Potato** (0 7136 2929 0) in this series, £4.50 each.

Your Body Fuel, Dorothy Baldwin and Claire Lister, Wayland 1983, 0 85078 332 1, £4.50. Covers nutrition, energy, digestion, waste, food preservation and hygiene. Junior level, with extra information about particular terms (carbohydrates, saliva, etc.) in the form of an enlarged glossary.

Good Health 2, Vaughan Johnson & Trefor Williams, Nelson 1980, 0 17 423092 3, £2.95. The chapter on food deals with growth and nutrition. There are suggestions for related activities.

Teaching Primary Science, Keith Anderson, Macdonald 1973, 0 356 05082 3, £4.50. The introduction and guide volume indicates the value of cooking as an entry into science: the experience of materials, the effect of heat, and adds a sensible note on safety precautions.

● Foodstuffs

Food, Jan Pienkowski, Heinemann 1986, 0 434 95637 6, £4.95; **Picture Puffins**, 0 14 050.778 7, £1.75 pbk. Very basic picture book. One-word captions accompany partners, such as milk and cows, rice and a paddy field.

Fruit Salad, Althea, Dinosaur 1987, 0 85122 677 9, £3.50; 0 85122 747 3, £1.75 pbk. Pleasing pictures of wild and cultivated fruits with a brief text, suitable for younger children.

Milk, Annabelle Dixon, A & C Black 'Threads' series 1988, 0 7136 2933 9, £4.50. For top infants. Pictures, diagrams and long captions describe the dairying process and discuss food values. There is also a 'things to do' section. See also **Bread**, Judith Baskerville, 0 7136 2930 4, £4.50.

Eggs, Dorothy Turner, Wayland 1988, 1 85210 253 5, £4.95. These eggs are thoroughly done. The opening pages remind us that not only birds lay eggs, then scientific and technical information gives way to social aspects, including Easter and its precursors, and cookery. The same author's **Bread** (1 85210 252 7) is equally well set out and includes the production process in a bakery and at home. In the same series **Milk** (1 85210 258 6) and **Potatoes** (1 85210 254 3), £4.95 each.

The Meat in Your Hamburger, Andrew Langley, Wayland 1982, 0 85340 946 3, £4.25. Publishers seem to be chickening out of books on meat! You may get this one from the library. Describes where and how the butcher gets his meat, methods of preservation and the animals involved.

Banana, Kathy Henderson, Macdonald 1986, 0 356 11554 2, £2.95. Double spreads follow the banana from planting to tea table. Short but dense text!

Mixed Vegetables, Julia Eccleshare, ill. Martin Ursell, Hamish Hamilton 1986, 0 241 11973 1, £4.95. Attractive coloured illustrations with very simple caption text. Useful for the wide range of vegetables which includes several exotic varieties. See also **Fruit Salad**, 0 241 11796 8, £4.95.

Potatoes on the Farm, Peggy Heeks, Wayland 1984, 0 85078 378 X, £4.50. Mainly about growing potatoes with some reference to their various destinations (pigs, Macdonalds). Brief text interspersed with questions.

Making Bread, Ruth Thomson, Watts 1986, 0 86313 429 7, £5.25. The full process in large print, photographs and diagrams. Concise and comprehensive. See also **Making Chocolates**, 0 86313 540 4, £5.25.

Mr Bourne is a Milkman, Richard Devenish, Young Library 1982, 0 946003 00 9, £3.95. This book has a slightly different approach, almost that of a diary, which may suggest an interesting way of looking at a commodity we take for granted. Seen through the milkman's eyes, his day is described by photographs and a brief text on the right, extra details on the left. Despite the youngish format, there is a density of information.

A useful series which offers a wide range of commodities is 'Focus on Resources' from Wayland, text for top juniors but informatively illustrated. Included are **Coffee** (0 85078 518 9), **Dairy Produce** (0 85078 601 0), **Fruit** (0 85078 793 9), **Grain** (0 85078 636 3), **Rice** (0 85078 795 5), **Salt** (1 85210 068 0), **Seafood** (0 85078 656 8), **Soya** (0 85078 791 2), **Sugar** (0 85078 618 5), **Tea** (0 85078 549 9), **Vegetables** (1 85210 069 9), £5.95 each. **Cocoa** (1 85210 073 7, £6.50) will also be added to the list.

Two books about shopping, one for infants, one for juniors, are:

The Food Market, Peter Spier, Collins 1981, 0 00 140139 4, o/p. Jolly, sturdy book with lots of pictures of foodstuffs, arranged in categories. Useful 'word book'.

Supermarket, Andrew Langley, Watts 1983, 0 86313 038 0, £4.95. About a branch of Tesco, the emphasis on foodstuffs. Photographs with long captions.

Food and Cooking Around the World

Books about single commodities seem to be giving way to books about food in its social context. Most of the following have a strong multi-cultural theme. The first two also recognise the problem of hunger.

Round the World Food, Macmillan Education 1981, 0 333 30676 7, £4.75. A Save the Children Fund collaboration which looks at diet and produce around the world, concluding with a reference to the Fund's work in areas of need.

Food for Life, Olivia Bennett, Macmillan Education 1982, 0 333 31197 3, £6.50. Similar to the previous title but for older children (10+). Includes food and religion, customs and a strong section on health.

Children Need Food, Harry Undy, Wayland 1987, 1 85210 104 0, £6.95. Food science, pleasure, production, distribution and the many aspects of food sharing. Useful teacher's notes and addresses.

Finger Foods, Chris Deshpande, A & C Black 1988, 0 7136 2986 X, £4.50. Off to a good start with a lollipop counting rhyme, this is a photographic survey of things we eat with our fingers. The cross-cultural sweep takes in chapatis and swiss rolls and we see a class of infants buying, preparing, cooking and tasting. The six suggested activities include recipes.

Chopsticks and Chips, Joan Solomon, Hamish Hamilton 1987, 0 241 12313 5, £4.95. Describes a Japanese Dolls' Day party and the food which must go with it.

Nadeem Makes Samosas, Shusheila Stone, Hamish Hamilton 1987, 0 241 12049 7, £5.50. The whole process of making samosas at home, from shopping to eating. Photographs, with Urdu and English texts.

What's for Breakfast?, Tom and Jenny Watson, Wayland 1984, 0 85078 424 7, o/p. Part of a series for juniors which follows a particular meal around the world: 'What we eat', 'Breakfast in other countries', 'Food for health'. See also **What's for Dinner?**, 1984, 0 85078 426 3, o/p.

Middle Eastern Food and Drink, Christine Osborne, Wayland 1988, 'Food and Drink' series, 1 85210 313 2, £6.50. This series uses food as the key to the geography, history, religion, agriculture and trade of the countries described. This title for example uses cookery to illuminate life and customs in the Arab states. Modern photographs take us from desert to city and indicate both the variety and common themes throughout the area. The food at the Kuwait Hilton, by the way, seems okay.

French Food and Drink, Françoise Lafargue, Wayland 1987, 0 85078 895 1, £5.95, is part of the same series but is appropriately different, reflecting the contrasts in the countries and our children's likely experience of them both. Here brief geographical and historical references precede a wide-ranging regional survey which includes recipes. A few French phrases and a typical menu invite a little activity. See also titles in the same series on Japan, Russia, North America, Mexico and China.

If You Want to Cook

Food Around the World, Jenny Ridgwell and Judy Ridgway, Oxford 1986, 0 19 832727 7, £5.95. An introduction with some local food detail is provided for each country and there are projects and ques-

Picture Books

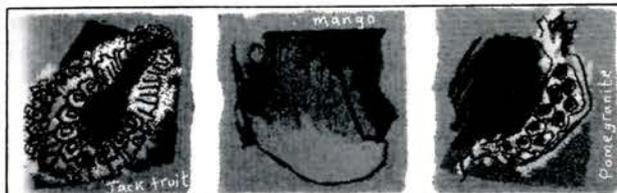
The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Eric Carle, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 01798 X, £6.95; **Picture Puffins**, 0 14 050.087 1, £1.95 pbk. A favourite which touches on the subject of suitable and unsuitable food as well as picturing a very mixed diet.

The Gingerbread Boy, Vera Southgate, Ladybird, 0 7214 0472 3, 90p. One of several versions. Here we have the possibility of hearing the story and eating the hero.

The Doorbell Rang, Pat Hutchins, Bodley Head, 0 370 30726 7, £5.25; **Picture Puffins**, 0 14 050.709 4, £1.95 pbk. The batch of cookies diminishes with each new caller. Fortunately, the last ring heralds Grandma with a big tray of her cookies. Nice mathematical implications.

Don't Forget the Bacon!, Pat Hutchins, Bodley Head, 0 370 11542 2, £5.50; **Picture Puffins**, 0 14 050.315 3, £1.95 pbk. A shopping list

tions suitable for 10+ but the recipes are the real strength – often exotic but easy to prepare. Clever pictures add to the information.



Exploring Indian Food in Britain, Shahrugh Husain, Mantra 1988, 0 947679 90 1, £6.95. A group of children go shopping for things to make an Indian meal. Quite a densely informative narrative plus photographs, maps, drawings. Juniors. See also in the same series: **Caribbean Food** (0 947679 89 8) and **Chinese Food** (0 947679 91 X), £6.95 each.

The Khalid Aziz Book of Simple Indian Cookery, E J Arnold 1981, 0 560 74521 4, o/p. Explanations before the recipes, giving a little culture and history.

Little Mouse Makes Sweets, Michelle Cartledge, Walker 1986, 0 7445 0475 9, £3.95. Picture/recipe book for the youngest which should result in peppermint creams and fudge. Picture ingredients and story instructions.

Peter Rabbit's Cookery Book, Anne Emerson, Warne 1986, 0 7232 3328 4, £3.95, and **The Pooh Cook Book**, Katie Stewart, Methuen 1971, 0 416 65270 0, £4.50. Both have simple recipes and illustrations from the story books.

Cooking is Easy, Anne Thorpe, Hamlyn 1986, 0 600 31114 7, o/p. Adopts a step by step approach, for junior age range. Microwave cookery is included.

Food in History

A Medieval Feast, Aliko, Bodley Head 1985, 0 370 30979 0, £5.95. Elegant, colourful pictures and a short, explanatory text show us everything which was needed to produce the great feast.

Looking Back at Food and Drink, Anne Mountfield, Macmillan 1988, 0 333 43942 2, £6.50. Double spreads on early hunters, different animal food sources, farming tools, cultivation, cooking, preserving and selling. A quiz recapitulates the information and the glossary is a dictionary of food matters.

Both **Food in History**, Sheila Robertson, Wayland 1983, 0 85078 309 7, o/p, and **Farming in History**, Ralph Whitlock, Wayland 1983, 0 85078 357 7, £5.50, are part of the 'Picture History' series. The first takes a wide range of commodities and places a page of information against contemporary illustrations. These are fascinating, selected from advertisements as well as magazines and books. The second starts with a medieval manor and finishes with mechanisation, having dealt with food production as well as that of cider and beer. Sources of further information, including places to visit, are found at the back of the book.

For an extra spark to your project, consider **The British Museum Cookbook**, Michelle Barriedale-Johnson, British Museum 1987, 0 7141 1663 7, £9.95. Extraordinary book, accessible to top juniors with teacher help. Brief notes on the food of ancient civilisations (China, Egypt) are followed by actual recipes. Should the history project be flagging, here is everything you need to provide a full banquet from Imperial Rome.

FICTION AND POETRY

story with good jokes and a 'joining in' refrain.

The Magic Pasta Pot, Tomie de Paola, Andersen, 0 86264 081 4, £5.95; **Beaver**, 0 09 941950 5, £1.95 pbk. The traditional story of the cooking pot which overflows – this time with pasta which threatens to engulf the town. Good for drama.

The Giant Jam Sandwich, John Vernon Lord and Janet Burroway, Cape, 0 224 00674 6, £4.95; **Picture Piper**, 0 330 30354 6, £2.50 pbk. When Itching Down is hit by a plague of wasps, a giant trap is devised – a huge jam sandwich. An ingenious comedy of scale.

Where's Julius?, John Burningham, Cape, 0 224 02411 6, £5.95; **Picture Piper**, 0 330 30168 3, £2.50 pbk. A roll-call of elaborate menus fails to entice Julius who has much better things to do, until the steamed pud brings him home for supper.

Mrs Pig's Bulk Buy, Mary Rayner, Macmillan, 0 333 30978 2, £5.95. Mrs Pig calls the piglets' bluff over the matter of the ever-present tomato ketchup.

Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs, Judi Barrett, Gollancz, o/p. Try and get this one from the library. What if the weather was all food? Drifts of baked beans? Gets them inventing.

Short Stories

Supermarket Thursday, Jean Chapman, Hodder, 0 340 36637 0, £6.95. Title story. A simple shopping adventure for the youngest.

Trouble in the Cupboard, Pat Thomson, Gollancz, 0 575 03976 0, £5.95. 'A Very Important Person'. When Thomas Chocolate Paws comes to dinner, the more proletarian Ginger thinks of a highly original meal to give him, which ensures he does not come again.

Allotment Lane School Again, Margaret Joy, Faber, 0 571 13563 3, £5.95; Young Puffins, 0 14 03.2089 X, £1.50 pbk. 'Pancake Day Surprises'. School stories based on familiar infant activities. On Shrove Tuesday, Miss Mee burns the pancakes.

Toad Food and Measle Soup, Christine McDonnell, Puffins, 0 14 03.1724 4, £1.75 pbk. Title story. Mother's vegetarian phase is rather a strain on the family but Leo is relieved to find that tofu and miso soup is different but edible.

The Julian Stories, Ann Cameron, Gollancz, 0 575 03143 3, £5.95; Young Lions, 0 00 672227 X, £1.50 pbk. 'The Pudding Like a Night on the Sea'. Father makes a very special pudding for Mother but somehow it gets eaten and Julian and Huey are in trouble.

Fighting in Break, Barbara Ireson, Faber, 0 571 14623 6, £6.95. 'The Dinner Lady who Made Magic' by Dorothy Edwards transforms dinner hour at school. Not only the food but the children change.

Trouble with the Fiend, Sheila Lavelle, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 11305 9, £6.95; Young Lions, 0 00 672433 7, £1.75 pbk. Chapter 4. More fiend than friend, Angela sends long-suffering Charlie in search of the non-existent, free, giant McDougal Cheeseburger.

Novels

Dinner at Alberta's, Russell Hoban, Cape, 0 224 01393 9, £4.95; Young Puffins, 0 14 03.1267 6, £1.50 pbk. Arthur Crocodile decides he has to improve his table manners radically when he is invited to dinner at Alberta's house. The impact of falling in love explored at 'Young Puffin' length.

The Gingerbread Man, David Wood, Pavilion, 0 907516 81 5, £5.95; Young Puffins, 0 14 03.2054 7, £1.50 pbk. Not the traditional story but taken from the play. The action takes place on a dresser and a tea bag takes a leading role.

The Perfect Hamburger, Alexander McCall Smith, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10717 2, £3.50; Young Puffins, 0 14 03.1670 1, £1.50 pbk. The search for the lost recipe which will save an ailing hamburger business.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

The following organisations offer information or materials to schools at no cost or for a nominal sum. Further items may be available. Most food manufacturers' materials will, of course, be in some measure promotional. For full details, send an sae.

Apple and Pear Development Council

Union House
Eridge House
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
(Study pack)

British Egg Information Service

Bury House
126-128 Cromwell Road
London
SW7 4ET
(Charts, cards. 'Healthy Eating' pack from same address.)

Dairy Produce Advisory Service

Milk Marketing Board
Thames Ditton
Surrey
KT7 0EL
(Booklets, workcards, video)

Flour Advisory Service

21 Arlington Street
London
SW1A 1RN
(Posters, leaflets, recipes)

Fyffes Group Ltd

Publicity Department
15 Stratton Street
London
W1A 2LL
(Booklet)

Health Education Council

78 New Oxford Street
London
WC1A 1AH
(Resource list)

Learning from the Land Association of Agriculture

Victoria Chambers
16-20 Strutton Ground
London
SW1P 2HP
(Handbook)

Magnus Powermouse, Dick King-Smith, Gollancz, 0 575 03116 6, £5.95; Puffins, 0 14 03.1602 7, £1.50 pbk. The secret of Magnus's extraordinary size lies in what he eats. Comic novel which works well in class.

Little House in the Big Woods, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Methuen, 0 416 07130 9, £5.95; Puffins, 0 14 03.0194 1, £1.95 pbk. Positive compendium of food information from hunter, through preservation and cooking, to table. With this, you too could become pioneers.

The Piemakers, Helen Cresswell, Faber, 0 571 14761 5, £6.95; Puffins, 0 14 03.0868 7, £1.75. A competition, a rivalry, and the biggest pie ever baked. A satisfying middle age range story.

The Revenge of Samuel Stokes, Penelope Lively, Heinemann, 0 434 94889 6, £7.95; Puffins, 0 14 03.1504 7, £1.95 pbk. When an enraged Samuel returns to haunt the new estate, only Grandad can be the mediator. It's a love of food which draws the two old gentlemen together.

The Ship from Simnel Street, Jenny Overton, Faber, 0 571 13649 4, £7.95; Puffins, 0 14 03.2332 5, £1.99 pbk. Wonderfully detailed historical story of a baker's family. For fluent readers or share the details about baking and food customs with younger listeners.

Poetry

One location for each poem is given but you may well find them in your own collections. The first anthology is entirely about food; the next three have substantial food sections.

A Packet of Poems, Jill Bennett, Oxford, 0 19 276049 1, £5.95; 0 19 276066 1, £2.95 pbk

A Very First Poetry Book, John Foster, Oxford, 0 19 916051 1, £4.95; 0 19 916050 3, £2.95 pbk

The Kingfisher Book of Comic Verse, Roger McGough, Kingfisher, 0 86272 217 9, £6.95. 'Chew on this' section.

Poems for Seven-Year-Olds and Under, Helen Nicoll, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80757 5, £6.95; Puffins, 0 14 03.1489 X, £1.95 pbk. 'Dinnertime' section.

You'll Love This Stuff!, Morag Styles, Cambridge, 0 521 32130 1, £5.25; 0 521 31275 2, £2.95 pbk. See especially 'Have a Mango', 'Coconut', 'Dumplin'' and 'Pawpaw'.

The Old Man and the Edible Suit, Edward Lear and Jon Atlas Higham, Macmillan, 0 333 41384 9, £5.50; Picturemac, 0 333 45283 6, £2.50 pbk

'The Welsh' by E V Lucas in **The Children's Book of Comic Verse**, Christopher Logue, Batsford, 0 7134 1528 2, £7.95; Piccolo, 0 330 26273 4, £1.25 pbk

'School Dinners' in **Magic Mirror**, poems by Judith Nicholls, Faber, 0 571 13696 6, £2.95 pbk

'Anna Mae "Chip Shop" O'Sullivan' in **Song of the City**, Gareth Owen, Collins, 0 00 184846 1, £4.95; Lions, 0 00 672410 8, £1.95 pbk

New Zealand Lamb Education Service

10 Barb Mews
London
W6 7PA
(Charts, leaflets, video)

Sugar Bureau

120 Rodney House
Dolphin Square
London
SW1V 3LS
(Booklets)

United Biscuits (UK) Ltd

Syon Lane
Isleworth
Middlesex
TW7 5NN
(Literature pack)

Van den Berghs

Sussex House
Civic Way
Burgess Hill
West Sussex
RH15 9AW
(Range offered)

The Vegetarian Society

Youth Education Officer
Parkdale
Dunham Road
Altrincham
Cheshire
WA14 4QG
(Booklets)

Other themes to be covered in the series include **Festivals and Celebrations** and **The Senses**. Previous themes: **House and Home** (July 88); **Water** (September 88); and **Clothing** (November 88).

Pat Thomson is Professional Studies Librarian at Nene College of Higher Education, past chair of the Federation of Children's Book Groups, and author of the 'Share-a-Story' series from Gollancz.

Robert Cormier, author of *The Chocolate War*, *I am the Cheese*, *After the First Death*, *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, *Beyond the Chocolate War*, was in Britain recently for the publication of his latest novel *Fade*.



CORMIER TALKING

Cormier has always been a controversial author, guaranteed to polarise teachers, librarians and parents in their views of his writing. At the same time, he is hugely popular with teenagers, providing compelling and demanding reading for many young people who rarely find books to sustain their interest. His books have variously been described as 'powerful but deeply disturbing'... 'brilliant, brutal, uncompromising'... 'stunning'... 'compulsive'... 'physically disgusting'... 'sexist' and many other complimentary and damning comments.

In rather sharp contrast to his books, Robert Cormier is a gentle, caring, family-orientated man, with four grown-up children. An ex-journalist, now a full-time writer, he says he has always written, from as long ago as he can remember. It is his way of expressing his feelings and communicating with people. He is deeply concerned about the problems facing young people in the world today. He is frightened by today's world, terrified by big things: 'Big governments frighten me, so does big defence and the power of technology to control the individual. The size of schools frightens me. Kids can so easily slip through the cracks and the individual be defeated.'

He writes about the individual in the face of power, corruption, betrayal, victimisation, conspiracy. 'The question of identity runs through all my novels.' So too does a preoccupation with the nature of evil in the guise of expedience, pragmatism, profit and policy.

Cormier positively enjoys meeting his readers. On his latest visit he talked in schools with great sensitivity and understanding, reacting positively to questions and revealing much of himself as a writer and as a person.

Here for those not lucky enough to meet him is a selection of what he said.

'I'm writing books about young people but not for young people. How do you write for a 14-year-old person? Sitting at my typewriter I always have the image of an intelligent reader that I'm writing for – a person I can be complex with, a person who likes me, who'll forgive any of my errors or goofs. I found out when I wrote *The Chocolate War* that this person is often 14 or 15 – the good readers. Thank goodness my books are in the schools where there are teachers who lead students to the depths I hope are in my novels.

I think a writer has to be more human than other people. Emotion is the key to everything I write. If I'm not emotionally involved with a story then I find that it doesn't work for me, I can't reach the readers emotionally.'

The Chocolate War, Cormier's first novel, is rooted in a powerful emotional reaction to something that happened in his family.

'The boy who did not sell the chocolates was fashioned on my son. One day he came home from school; I saw him get off the school bus and come up to the house; he had two shopping bags. I said "What have you got there Peter?" "Well Dad," he said, "We're having a chocolate sale at school to raise funds for the school and I have 25 boxes to sell."

I was appalled. I was a kid growing up in the Depression and we sold everything – perfume, handkerchiefs, candy – to raise money to run the schools. Here we were two generations later, my son was going to a fine school and I thought it was nonsense that he should be required to sell chocolates. That night at the supper table we began talking about the sale. Peter knew how I felt. I told him "Look, we have options here. You can sell the chocolates. We could buy the chocolates. You don't have to sell the chocolates. It's a free world." Peter said, "That's what I'm going to do, Dad. I won't sell the chocolates." His answer left me a bit breathless. Peter was going to a boys' school: 400 boys, a very active school football team, all kinds of athletics. I thought who knows what might happen there. It's one thing to say something; it's another to do it.

I said, "Tomorrow, instead of taking those chocolates back on the school bus, I'll drive you to school."

Well, I drove him to school and I watched him walking in carrying those two bags. It was his first year; he was with 400 strangers. There went my son, 14 years old, facing what?

I thought, he's going to get murdered in there. He's going against the grain and it's very hard to go against what everyone else is doing. I was besieged by emotions: fear, apprehension, even guilt. As it was, nothing happened to Peter – but a lot happened to me. Writing *The Chocolate War* allowed me to explore the individual against society, how people can abuse authority. All those grand, deep themes came out of a very simple human emotion having to do with my son.'

A vividly recalled traumatic experience when Cormier was only 12 years old himself lies at the back of a lot of his writing. It is about betrayal.

'When I was young kids who had a lot of colds would be recommended to have their tonsils out. It was a big medical fashion. Whole families would go to out-patients to have their tonsils removed. One day my parents told me I was going to the hospital with my older brother and my younger sister to have my tonsils out. I didn't want to have my tonsils out; but I had no say in the matter. Next thing I found myself in hospital, lying on this table, dressed in



a gown that didn't quite tie up at the back. I felt humiliated, terrified, lying there waiting, for what? Then a nice nurse came along and said, "Robert, we understand you are a singer." Suddenly the whole situation was different, more human. I said "Yes, I am." She said, "Would you like to give us a little tune?" I thought, this is great. Suddenly I was an individual. I started singing. I had about nine notes out and she clamped this ether mask over my mouth and nose; sent me hurtling into oblivion with a terrible suffocating feeling. But it was more than suffocation. I had such anger because she had tricked me.'

Asked about the themes of his novels, the selection of murder, suicide, terrorism, violence and brutality of all kinds as their subject matter, he replies:

'I think there's a lot going on in today's world that we have a false view of. Television in particular is lying to us. In the programme before the nine o'clock news the good guy always wins – that's a lie. The TV commercial tells you that if you use a certain deodorant everyone will love you – that's a lie. We know life isn't always fair and happy. There are enough books with happy endings. I think there's room for the realistic novel about things that really go on in the world. I try to write a warning about what's waiting out there.'

In America we do have a Witness Relocation Programme where people are given new identities and things have gone wrong with that programme. Adam (in *I am the Cheese*) is part of that; he's in a mental hospital because he's an embarrassment to the government. In that story the relationship I show between organised

crime and government shakes people. But it's a fact of life. And there are experimental hospitals for terminally ill patients, young and old (*The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*). And right outside the town where I live there's an army installation containing a secret agency. I can't ignore all that.'

Cormier's latest novel *Fade* is, he says, 'probably the most autobiographical thing I have written and it says a lot about how I feel about writing'.

Fade began with a family photograph.

'My father's family came down from Canada to New England in the early part of the century, like a lot of people who came to America to seek jobs and fortune. There were 10 children, my grandfather and grandmother. Before they left Canada they had a portrait taken. They sat outside on the steps of the farmhouse; the photographer came in from town, took the picture. About three weeks later they got the photograph back. When they looked at it they found that one of my uncles had disappeared, he wasn't in the photograph. He had been sitting there along with the others and somehow when the picture was developed he wasn't there – you could see parts of the house behind where he should have been. This picture's been in my family for years – it's a sort of family legend.'

I sat down to write a story about what might have happened to my uncle. It ponders the possibilities of invisibility. Wouldn't it be wonderful you think to be invisible. But would it? Would it be a curse instead of a gift? There's also a lot of fading going on in our lives.

People fade in and out of our lives, desire fades, anger fades, innocence fades.

It begins in 1938 with a 13-year-old boy Paul who finds out about the uncle who disappeared from the picture and has now become a hobo, a tramp. Then he too inherits the "gift". The story covers three generations to 1988 and ends up with a 20-year-old Boston University student called Susan. It's about how gifts become curses – or that gifts aren't gifts at all.'

Fade continues a pattern of violence in the other books. There is violent death, child abuse, incest and voyeuristic sexual scenes.

'The first version was even more violent. Then I realised that even though I wanted him to be monstrous because of what the fade did to him I didn't want him to be completely without scruples or morals. I wanted to make him a victim. There are things you want to establish to shock the reader to the point where you have to believe why Paul acted the way he did. But I wrote unsensually, not to titillate or sensationalise.'

There's also a feeling that beneath any gift lies something to disgust, to be afraid of.

'Maybe that's a reflection of my own Catholic sense of sin. Like Paul, I was educated by nuns. At 13 years old you're just waking up to sexuality, where the most wonderful thing in the world is to think about a girl, and the nuns are telling you if you have evil thoughts you are going to hell – immediately, if this afternoon you get hit by a car. At Confession all your classmates were out there, listening, not wanting to listen but not being able to help listening because you're whispering behind this curtain, with a deaf priest – we had a deaf priest – who kept saying "Louder".'

When I started writing *Fade* it was like loosening the floodgates of my past. I didn't realise what I was getting into and how far back I was going to go into my own life.' ■

Contributions to this feature from Judith Elkin, Marion Hobbs, Adrian Jackson and Nick Kinsley.

Robert Cormier's books are published in hardback by Gollancz and in paperback by Collins in their Teen Tracks series.

The Chocolate War (1975), 0 575 03712 1, £7.95; 0 00 671765 9, £2.50 pbk

I am the Cheese (1977), 0 575 02372 4, £8.95; 0 00 671766 7, £2.25 pbk

After the First Death (1979), 0 575 02665 0, £8.95; 0 00 671705 5, £2.50 pbk

The Bumblebee Flies Anyway (1983), 0 575 03327 4, £7.95; 0 00 672358 6, £2.25 pbk

Beyond the Chocolate War (1985), 0 575 03711 3, £7.95; 0 00 672538 4, £2.25 pbk

8 Plus 1, 0 00 673057 4, £2.50 pbk

Fade (1988), 0 575 04402 0, £9.95

Photographs of Robert Cormier by Richard Mewton.

Authorgraph No. 54

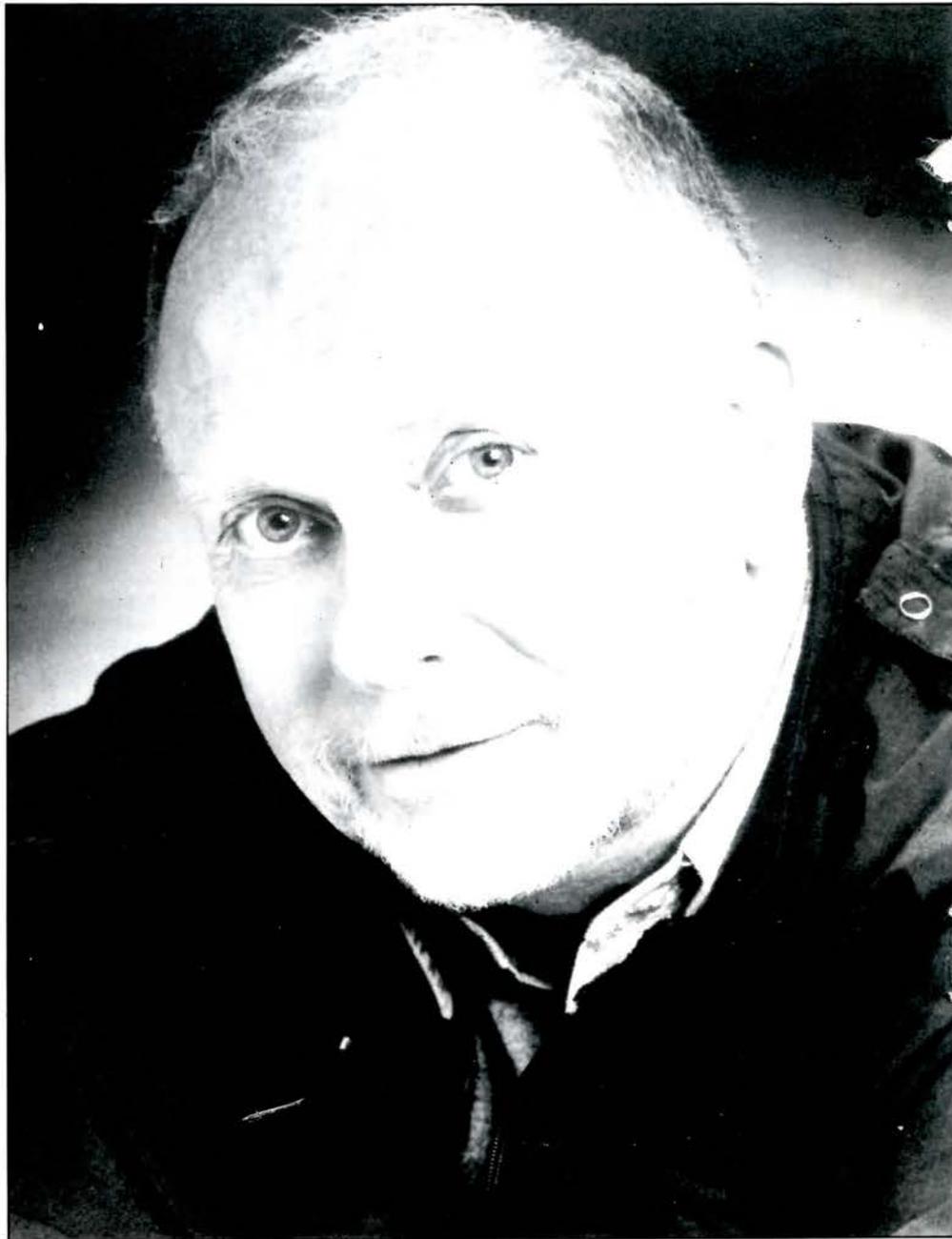
Paul Zindel 'walks tall' literally, with very straight back and extremely careful step. And he talks as he writes – theatrically, outrageously, shockingly, disarmingly – brimming over with enthusiasm for everything, mischievously shrewd about everyone. Yet in all his movements, and his words, there is a strong inner control, as if he were measuring responses and warily observing everyone around him. (His voice is soft, his frequent laughter loud.)

There is a reason for that iron control, and for being wary of life and of people. Bizarre as are the characters and events with which Zindel's novels are crammed, he exaggerates only slightly when he claims to write 'only about the things I know'.

His childhood was a solitary one: two years after his birth in 1936, his mother was left by her husband to bring up Paul and his elder sister single-handed. She had to work at a variety of jobs (including nursing the terminally ill), which meant constant moving, few friends, sometimes even living in other people's houses. (Some of this experience is recorded in **Confessions of a Teenage Baboon**, the writing of which brought him close to a breakdown.) Worse: 'I missed a father, and in many senses I missed a mother, because back then the fashion of what it was to be a divorced woman was very destructive to a child.' His mother, sadly, died before she could enjoy either his success or the financial help it would have enabled Paul to give her.

Teachers in school, therefore, were very important to him, and it is a teacher whom he celebrates in his new book, **A Begonia for Miss Applebaum**. She is a composite of three biology teachers, all women, who inspired Paul to do his 'very best'. 'One of them, Miss Wilmot, she was a poetic biology teacher. She had an enormous amount of delicateness, sweetness, understanding of humanity and yet with the grip of knowing the solid base of science.'

Paul Zindel



His schooling was interrupted when he was fifteen by an eighteen-month stay in a TB sanatorium – this was just before the discovery of drugs to cure the disease – but then he took a degree in chemistry and taught in high school for ten years, all the while writing plays. One of these was **The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds** and when this was shown on TV Charlotte Zolotow, an editor at Harper (and still his mentor), wrote to suggest he try his hand at a novel for

teenagers. This was twenty years ago.

'When I was asked to write a Young Adult novel, I didn't know there was such a thing. I asked the kids in school and they said they hadn't read any. They read comics, they saw movies, they didn't read any books. But if they had read a novel, it was **Catcher in the Rye**, because their girl-friends made them read it. So I looked at the book and I realised what the author had done. He was speaking close to the way

that kids spoke in the school where I taught. And after that I just responded to those things I saw in the kids I taught. So **The Pigman** is simply the truth laid out with a modicum of knowledge of storytelling. Recently I read the book again and I was amazed because I really never quite knew why anybody thought whatever they did about it. In my mind it was some vague collection of adolescent incidents, but when I looked at it I saw such highly condensed prose. It was filled with images. It was outrageous. There was an audacity about it that had to be true.'

After that first book, Paul went on to write ten other teenage novels; he has written plays for the theatre (he won the Pulitzer Prize for **Marigolds** in 1971); he has written many screenplays for Hollywood (from 1978 to 1985 he lived in Beverly Hills). But his new book is different in tone from the earlier novels. For so long it seemed that in his novels he was bombarding his readers with all the most awful things that can happen to anyone. 'There is an element that is similar in all of the books. It has to do with what I would call "Amulets against the dragon forces". I think that life is a fairly tough battle, a tough adventure. There are some of us who say no to the adventure and turn our back on it. In **Harry and Hortense** I was talking a little bit about that. But I, frail as I think of myself, in real life when there's an adventure, when there's adversity, I rise to the occasion. I have amulets that save me. It's like I have a lifeline built into me and that lifeline, ironically enough, is linked into the school system. In **Marigolds**, in **Miss Applebaum**, you will see a child who really doesn't have much support or magic given from the family but one given through the school. I am saved by the school! That's why school is so very important: because children somehow get to meet a variety of teachers – some mad, some quite magical, and some inspirational.'

In 1973 Paul married Bonnie Hildebrand, whom he had met some years before through his work in the theatre, and the wedding took place in London. David and Elizabeth, their children, are now teenagers: David is quiet and self-contained, Elizabeth more outgoing, a self-possessed twelve-year-old who resembles her mother and who now sings in the children's chorus at the Metropolitan Opera. Paul is very proud of them both. 'You want your children to have the things you missed, that you know you missed so much. I try to give them successes, and not to be jealous of anyone in the outer world who is able to bring them other stepping stones. My son is growing away from me now and learning strengths and enjoyments outside of the home. I guess it's just to let them do it when they're ready. But I also hear the other voice saying "Oh, I don't want anybody else, I don't want any other adult for my son to look up to, I want to be the sole teacher." You see so much of yourself living through the children, but to know that you can glory in and relish their growing up and away from you is wonderful. I think sometimes writing all my books has helped me in that.'

Do his children read his books? 'I decided that I really don't care whether or not they read my books now. I do want them to read my books when they're thirty or forty and find there all my little clues to how my life was and the values I pulled out of it for myself and how I found my amulets. That's what I wanted – but my poor kids have reading forced on them. At their school, Zindel is required reading! One of the most touching things in my life was when I found my daughter in tears after finishing **The Pigman**. I never made any comment. That she could detach herself enough from me to see that ...'

The new novel, in theme, is very near to **The Pigman**, but the differences pinpoint very clearly the sociological changes of the last twenty years. In the first book there is teenage drinking and smoking, there is even a bomb – though not a dangerous one – and the text is peppered with four-letter words, though they are spelt in symbols. In **Miss Applebaum** the teenagers drink nothing except frozen hot chocolate, they don't smoke, there is no bad language, and – most important of all – Miss Applebaum is not separated from the younger characters by anything but her wisdom and her love of life that she is determined to pass on to them. What had changed?

'Well, for the first time the main character spoke to me. I'd never had this happen. I knew about character possession, but I just didn't think things happen that magically. I was a chemistry teacher; I always try to define things and I can explain every event and so forth. It was on a drive to Atlantic City with Bonnie that the voice of Miss Applebaum came into my head. What she said was "Bury me in the park". I got such a chill from that line because, I guess, it tipped off what the iceberg, the whole iceberg was going to look like. So it was, in a sense, returning to when I didn't know anything else – the structuring, the academic approach, the symbols, these values against those – it was like returning to the same kind of energy that I didn't think was possible.'

So where did that energy come from? The amulets must have been strong indeed for him to preserve that infectious zest for life.

'Oh, that goes right to the heart of the matter, doesn't it? If I knew the answer to that ... Let me try. We are all many people. I always assume I'm a quiet person, I'm not exciting, I'm not funny. I think of myself as a suppliant, "Oh please like me, please make things go nicely for me" kind of person. But something happened early on that showed someone quite different. When I was twelve and wanted to start out sending off stories for publication, I had stationery printed up with my name in giant block letters – PAUL ZINDEL, STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK. So there must have been quite a bit of life in me. And some part of me thinks the best is yet to come.'

'All of life seems to be made up of two energies that are going at one another. There's a struggle between the suppliant and the aggressive, and when those alternating energies no longer exist, that's when life stops.'

'I've seen most of life as problem-solving, so the demand for an answer that becomes positive is really my way of a happy ending.'

And what about that ending? Death comes into a number of Paul's novels; it comes to Miss Applebaum. He doesn't believe you can protect children from the knowledge of their mortality. That's why, he thinks, readers cry over **The Pigman**.

'Everywhere you see these buttons now – *Life is horrible, Life is bad, You've got to pay taxes, and on the end of this And then you die*. My son said a few months ago, "I've got to do this, I've got the project, I've got the homework, and then I die." Just like that. And that is something I think most parents have to come to grips with. You realise the enormity of the responsibility that you've brought children into the world, and if you don't like life and what you've given them is something you don't like, then it's a terrible thing. So I think there is a big responsibility that you pass on to the children a sense of faith, that life is good, that it's an adventure and that it's something to be chosen over oblivion. And if you do that, then it's the ultimate achievement for a parent. Now I don't know how I'm going to do that, but I think future books may show us.'

Paul Zindel was interviewed by Margaret Clark.

The Books

(in Collins paperback, unless otherwise indicated)

The Pigman, 0 00 671768 3, £2.25 pbk

I Never Loved Your Mind, 0 00 671769 1, £2.25 pbk

My Darling, My Hamburger, 0 00 671800 0, £2.25 pbk

The Undertaker's Gone Bananas, 0 00 671698 9, £2.25 pbk

Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball!, Bodley Head, 0 370 11025 0, £4.50 hbk; 0 00 671904 X, £1.95 pbk

Confessions of a Teenage Baboon, 0 00 671951 1, £2.25 pbk

Harry and Hortense at Hormone High, Bodley Head, 0 370 30838 7, £3.95 pbk; 0 00 672554 6, £1.95 pbk

The Amazing and Death-Defying Diary of Eugene Dingman, Bodley Head, 0 370 31128 0, £4.50 pbk; 0 00 672872 3, £2.25 pbk

The Girl Who Wanted a Boy, Penguin Plus, 0 14 03.2496 8, £1.95 pbk

The Pigman's Legacy, 0 00 672977 0, £2.25 pbk; Penguin Plus, 0 14 03.1454 7, £1.95 pbk

A Star for the Latecomer (with Bonnie Zindel), Bodley Head, 0 370 30319 9, £4.50 hbk; 0 00 671787 X, £1.95 pbk

A Begonia for Miss Applebaum, Bodley Head, 0 370 31268 6, £2.95 pbk

BOOK AWARDS - AMERICAN STYLE

Pat Triggs reports on award-giving at the American Library Association's Annual Conference, 1988

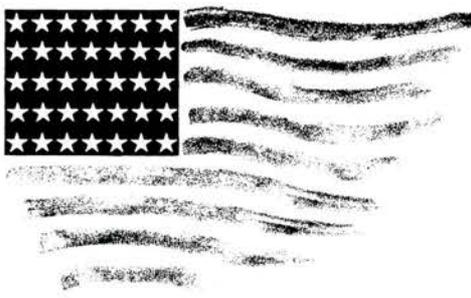
Prize-giving at ALA (as it is familiarly known) is invariably accompanied by eating. For the prestigious Newbery and Caldecott awards you (naturally) have dinner. The YASD/SLJ award to S E Hinton (see Ed's Page) was presented at a brunch. The Coretta Scott King Award committee invites you to breakfast. So at 7.00 on a Tuesday morning last July I made my way across New Orleans to La Salle Ballroom A of the Inter-Continental Hotel. By 7.30 I was starting on the orange juice along with four hundred or so others, all of whom like me had paid to be present at this occasion. (Imagine *that* happening in the UK?) It was all over soon after 9.00 - and had become for me the most remarkable event of the whole conference.

The Coretta Scott King Award was inaugurated in 1969, adopted by the Social Responsibility Round Table of ALA in 1979 and made an official part of the ALA Conference programme in 1982. It is presented annually to honour 'a Black author and Black illustrator for outstanding contributions which promote understanding and appreciation of the culture and contribution of all peoples to the realization of the American Dream'. The books chosen as winners or for honourable mention 'must portray people, places, things and events in a manner sensitive to the true worth and value of all beings'. Works of fiction or non-fiction are eligible and both biography and autobiography figure strongly in the list of past winners.

This year the award went to Mildred Taylor for **The Friendship** and to artist John Steptoe for **Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale**. (This retelling of a Zambian story with stunning illustration - the artist used his own family as models - has already won the Horn Book Award.) Four books received 'Honorable Mention'.

You do not have to be at this occasion long to sense that there is more at issue here than the celebration of good books. Librarians, who began and maintain it, writers, artists, publishers and sponsors are connected, in the act of making and celebrating this award, to a rich and complex strand of American life. For 'people of colour' the pain and the pride of their history, of their struggle for human and civil rights, is an ever-present and unfinished story. The writers and artists honoured at the presentation identified themselves strongly with that story; those who could not attend sent messages to be read by their publishers, messages which went far beyond the usual courtesies and expressions of gratitude which commonly accompany such acceptances.

Julius Lester, honoured for **Tales of Uncle Remus: The Adventures of Brer Rabbit**,



Detail from the cover of **The Friendship**.

spoke of the stories as 'a psychic record of persistence and survival' with universal as well as specific significance. (It was good to hear from Phyllis Fogelman, his editor at Dial, that there are three more volumes to come.) Ashley Bryan, the illustrator of **What a Morning! The Christmas story in Black Spirituals**, closed his address with a powerful performance of the poem 'O Black and Unknown Bards'. And another honoured writer, Alexis de Veaux, had us out of our seats and cheering with a rousing reminder of the 'subtle yet permeating attacks' on books which help young people to a positive self image. She called for 'book activists' to unite against the many and diverse forces which were interfering with free distribution and preventing books getting to children. Her vivid, jazzy free-form prose in **An Enchanted Hair Tale** (the Honour book) is equally engaging as she tells how Sudan whose hair is a 'fan dangle of locks and lions and lagoons' learns to cope with teasing and name calling, and about being different to be yourself (Cheryl Hanna's black and white pictures explore and extend the Rastafarian themes of this lovely book which would surely be welcome here).

Mildred Taylor, a previous winner of the award for **Let the Circle be Unbroken**, spoke of herself as a 'vehicle', a 'conduit' for telling the story of her family. Brought up in the North she learned the history of her family, going back to the days of slavery, from the stories told her, mainly by her father. **The Friendship**, set in 1933, draws in particular on a story her father was part of as a child and tells how Cassie Logan and her brothers witness what happens when Mr Tom Bee, an old black man, insists on calling the white storekeeper by his first name.

As told by her father, Mildred Taylor recalls, 'it always moved me, made me angry, made me proud.' Mr Tom Bee was important to her at a time when black heroes were not in evidence, particularly at school. 'It was painful to me to listen to the history of my country, of civil war and of slavery, when the negro was always presented as docile, happy with his fate, making no effort to rise above his condition. I felt it was a condemnation of me as well as my ancestors.' She knew too that 'what the textbooks said was different from what my family told me'.

Mildred Taylor had many attempts at writing the story of Mr Tom Bee. Now we have it brilliantly compressed into fifty pages. How, she wonders, will the children of the eighties react? Will they be able to understand the importance of naming, the dignity, respect and equality that are wrapped up in it? And she recalls the sense of outrage felt in the fifties by the white community of Jackson, Mississippi (where

she was born) when the newspaper referred to a black couple as Mr and Mrs.

The Friendship is dedicated 'In memory of my father, the storyteller'. In the final paragraphs of the story Mr Tom Bee, shot in the leg for his insolence, persists in first-naming the white man whose life he saved in his youth and who swore then they would always be equals and friends. This section of the story is, says Mildred Taylor, exactly as her father told it. In New Orleans she read aloud his words, his witness to Mr Tom Bee's heroic defiance of bigotry, oppression and injustice. At 9.00 in the morning, the debris of breakfast before us, the coffee going cold as we listened, it was an extraordinarily emotional moment and one I felt privileged to be sharing.

The Friendship (another Dial title) will be published here by Gollancz, in an edition which also includes two other stories, one of which, **The Gold Cadillac**, is based on Mildred Taylor's own childhood memories of family trips back to Mississippi from Toledo, Ohio. Sadly though, this British compilation will be without the illustrations which accompanied **The Friendship** and **The Gold Cadillac**, both published separately in the USA. Max Ginsburg's black and white drawings for **The Friendship** and Michael Hay's sepia paintings in **The Gold Cadillac** extended and enhanced the text, evoking period, setting and emotions for readers removed in time (and place) from the events recorded in the stories. I hate to think that we would have been so shortsighted as to pass over these in their original editions.

I left the award breakfast full of admiration for the black librarians whose determination and dedication had brought about this confident celebration of the black experience. Who will do the same for the rapidly growing Hispanic population I wondered? I saw little reflection of that part of America's ethnic mix in publishing for children. One of the Coretta Scott King Award Honour books this year was **The Invisible Hunters**, a dual-language (English and Spanish) version of a Nicaraguan Miskito Indian legend which tells of the impact of the first European traders on traditional village life. The story was collected by Harriet Rohmer and is published by Children's Book Press, a company so small they could afford to take only a table (rather than a stand or a booth) in the publishers' exhibition and had to be hunted down in the outer edges of the vast conference hall. The book is a significant piece of publishing, but one which was able to be recognised by the Award committee only because it is illustrated by black artist Joe Sam.

Ironically, as Rosemary Stones and Andrew Mann were winding up **The Other Award** here (see **BfK 53**), I found myself wondering whether some similar initiative might usefully be started by US librarians (easily the most well-organised and influential agency in American children's books) to highlight and support those readers (and writers) not at present very visible in mainstream publishing. Those, in fact, in a very similar position to the black minority in 1969. That sent me back to the citation honouring the winners of the Coretta Scott King Award, and to pondering whether the idea of 'the American Dream' is as universally accepted and acceptable in the eighties as it was in the sixties. As Bush follows Reagan, and as Spanish moves to the position of a majority language in some parts of the USA, we shall see. ■

The Friendship and other stories by Mildred Taylor will be published by Gollancz (0 575 04495 0, £7.95) in April.

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale by John Steptoe is published by Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 12228 7, £7.95.

REVIEWS

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

Nursery/Infant

The Small Potatoes' Busy Beach Day

Harriet Ziefert, ill.
Richard Brown, Young Lions, 0 00 672925 8, £1.75

Stories about 'The Small Potatoes' have become firm favourites with many six to eights, and enthusiasts will not be disappointed with this one. Lively pictures and witty, sensitively-spaced text tell of a day's exploits on the beach with Molly, Sue, Chris, Sam, Spot the Dog, et al.



Ziefert's skill is in making stories out of conversations which accompany ordinary action. Read the story aloud with top infants to see how oral language is shaped into storytelling. Readers and listeners are given time to reflect upon, and daydream about, the events. The banter is wonderfully caught. The characters are well-rounded and have their own individuality; the girls get their own fair slice of the action, too: still too rare. Strongly recommended. CM

Ted Runs Away from Home

Jan Mogensen, Picture Corgi, 0 552 52483 2, £2.25

Feeling lonely is an emotion all of us identify with and so Ted immediately has our sympathy. Ignored by his child owners for three whole days, he prepares to leave home; but rather than going out by the front door he ascends to the attic.

The attic is a new and strange place for Ted. To his surprise he hears voices and comes upon a tea party in a broken old dolls' house with a toy soldier, a doll and a clockwork mouse. Ted makes friends

with them and invites them to join him downstairs with the children. The children are delighted and clean and mend the old toys and make a new suit for Ted.



This is a pleasant warm picture book, with a touch of adventure and a satisfying ending. The interesting illustrations hold the attention. MS

Old Bear

Jane Hissey, Beaver, 0 09 955440 2, £2.50

It's nice to find a potential classic and I'm sure this is one. This endearing story of the rescue of an old teddy bear from the attic, where he has been banished as being too old and decrepit to play with, has some of the most realistic and touchable pictures I have seen in a long time and a completely convincing and well told story as well. All the children enjoyed this and it was in constant demand for reading and listening to as soon as it went on the shelves. We now have two copies... say no more! LW

There's an Alligator Under My Bed

Mercer Mayer, Picturemac, 0 333 47111 3, £2.95

Again, a familiar scenario; small boy thinks there is an alligator under his bed, mum and dad can't see it but he can. How will he deal with it? It could be read as a book to enable children to deal with night fears and the nature of reality and unreality, or it could be enjoyed for its jolly passing of the buck ending. I recommend the latter approach. The big format of Picturemac suits the bold pictures, and the text is brief but interesting and very clearly printed. LW

Clara's Dancing Feet

Jean Richardson, ill.
Joanna Carey, Picture Puffins, 0 14 050.807 4, £2.25

Clara loves to dance so when Emily from next door tells her she has lessons, Clara wants to go to dancing school too. Mum is duly persuaded even though it's nearly the end of term. Clara is thrilled with her new outfit, most of all with her pink shoes like 'sugared almonds', but when she goes to classes shyness overwhelms her and she just stands and watches. It is only at the end of term show that Clara finds the sight of her dancing classmates irresistible and she joins in, in her street clothes.



Would-be dancers of four to seven should find this book irresistible whether they are listeners or able to read the longish text for themselves. The sensitive telling is wholly convincing and the crayon illustrations are beautifully observed with the skilful use of the page engendering pace and depth. JB

Specially Sarah

Mary Hoffman, Magnet, 0 416 11942 5, £1.50



There seems to be a plethora of books about small children of just school age at present: this one features a young miss who certainly knows her own mind as we see from the eight domestic episodes - a first party, a new baby, a supermarket excursion, a lost tooth - related in a straightforward style. As the episodes unfold Sarah becomes

reconciled with her new status in the family, deciding that 'Big girls are best...'

Enhanced by Joanna Carey's line drawings this is a pleasant comfortable book to share with those of around Sarah's age or for early fluent readers to tackle themselves. JB

Where Are You Going, Little Mouse?

Robert Kraus, ill. Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey, Picturemac, 0 333 46415 X, £2.95

This is a familiar tale of the child who runs away from home because he's fed up with his family, finds he's lonely and comes back. The child is a mouse this time but otherwise there are no surprises in the text. The pictures add interest, though, with a nice, rather self-mocking air which rescues the book from complete predictability. I liked the large, clear black and red print and very simple language which was easy and rewarding to newish readers. LW

Mother's Magic

Susan Hill, ill. Alan Marks, Picture Lions, 0 00 663067 7, £1.95

The mother in this book is certainly delightful with her gentle ideas for her child, and the idea of teaching through a story is excellent. But to teach the word 'magic' in the many ways we now use it seems to be too difficult.

The story is too complicated and inconsistent for a pre-school child although its format suggests this is the age to which it is directed. Starting with picking brambles we move to finding mushrooms. The explanation given about where the mushrooms come from is that they appear by magic.

While often the wonders of nature sometimes seem like magic, as adults we really ought to try to tell the truth especially to very young children who are trying to sort out fact from fantasy. If this book was to succeed, it would need to be simplified and reduced and an effort made to give it form. At the moment it lacks all that and the messages are lost. MS

Don't Touch!

Suzy Kline, ill. Dora Leder, Picture Puffins, 0 14 050.861 9, £1.95

This book drew many gleams of understanding from the children listening! Poor Dan



seems to spend all of life being told not to touch the exciting things around him and finally gives vent to his frustration safely but writes a very satisfying note telling everyone not to touch! JS

Monster and the Baby

0 14 050.880 5

Monster Can't Sleep

0 14 050.878 3

A Hallowe'en Mask for Monster

0 14 050.879 1

A Playhouse for Monster

0 14 050.877 5

Virginia Mueller, ill.
Lynn Munsinger, Picture Puffins, £1.95 each

A mini-series featuring monsters who look amazingly like children in spite of their green faces. **Monster and the Baby** is a simple everyday story solving the problem of a crying baby sister. I think this one would be a comfort to a frustrated big brother and it might make everyone laugh as well! **Monster Can't Sleep** is really to comfort adults who can never get their children to

sleep. It goes through all the possible ways of persuading a youngster to give up and sleep; only when the child plays it out himself with his own toy does it work and he sleeps at last. If you have this problem this one is definitely for you!

There are very few good books about Hallowe'en for small children but **A Hallowe'en Mask for Monster** deals with the problem of children being frightened by masks and is a winner. Like others in the series, it's funny and likeable. **A Playhouse for Monster** is the best yet! Monster tries out the notion of a place of his own and names all the things in it that are his very own. His friend looking on hopefully from below gets sadder and sadder until Monster realises that it would be more fun with two rather than one. The story is resolved when the friend is brought in too. Quite delightful. MS

Look I Can Read!

Peter Heaslip, Magnet, 0 416 06612 7, £2.95

Laura desperately wants to be able to read by herself but sadly everyone, including her teacher, fails her and it takes



her mum to show her that, in fact, she can already read. A real piece of propaganda for a 'real' book approach, if more than a little irritating to a lot of us teachers! The photographs are lovely and, as a book to reassure and help children to grasp a much broader concept of what reading is all about, it definitely wins a place on my classroom shelves. JS

The Demon Kevin

0 14 050.700 0

The Baked Bean Queen

0 14 050.701 9

Rose Impey and Sue Porter, Picture Puffins, £1.99 each

A brilliant new series with gloriously subversive heroes. When Kevin was a baby 'he was pink and sweet and good' ... but not for long. His escapades drew uninhibited laughter from the whole of the infant class I teach but have also rarely returned to the shelves in the lower juniors. The scrapes that Kevin gets into are wonderfully depicted and the illustrations match the mood exactly allowing a mix which successfully treads the tightrope between the possible and the gleefully terrible! JS

Here Are My Hands

Bill Martin Jr and John Archambault, ill. Ted Rand, Picture Lions, 0 00 663066 9, £1.95

This book is rather fun – using clear illustrations and a good rollicking rhythmic verse, it bounces its way through the things that can be done with hands, feet, ears, nose and so

on. The children very quickly turned it into an action rhyme and it is now fixed as a firm class favourite. JS

Look at Me Now

0 356 16034 3

There's Only One Me

0 356 16035 1

Marjorie Newman and Kathy James, Macdonald, £1.50 each

The feelings of wonder and excitement that children experience about apparently everyday things like growing taller, getting new shoes or whether freckles wash off, are encapsulated beautifully in the ideas and pictures that make up these little books. The verse in which it is written is sometimes a little contrived and awkward to read aloud but in spite of this the books are now looking distinctly well thumbed – always a good sign! JS

Do You See What I See?

Mathew Price and Sue

Porter, Picturemac, 0 333 48332 4, £2.95

This book is an absolute winner – we are allowed to peep through the windows with the little boy and his dog as they go in search of a friend to accompany them to the circus. Everyone seems too busy looking for things to want to talk to them until, thankfully, all is resolved when they finally get to the circus. The wealth of detail in Sue Porter's illustrations and the ingenious tricks that she plays on us as we look in the windows are an integral part of the charm of this book. JS

Infant/Junior

The Little Christ Child and the Spiders

Jan Peters, ill. George Buchanan, Macdonald, 0 356 16459 4, £2.99

A lovely book for reflecting on Christmas. George Buchanan's delicate shimmering illustrations gently depict the house being readied, clean and sparkling for Christmas. Meanwhile the poor house spiders are relegated to the attic, and it seems that, yet again, they will miss seeing the crowning glory – the Christmas tree. Visiting the house later that night to check that all was well, the Little Christ Child takes pity on them and allows them to come downstairs telling them that they may look but they must not touch. Overcome by excitement in their haste to explore, they spin dusty grey webs all over the beautiful tree but the Little Christ Child manages to create a miracle from the disaster. JS

Harry's Night Out

Abigail Pizer, Picturemac, 0 333 44154 0, £2.95

Harry *seems* to be a home-loving cat, but actually he goes out at night! In the barn he meets some mice, gets a fright as an owl screeches, meets a fox at the edge of the town and finds a hedgehog drinking some milk. As daylight dawns Harry finds his way home and lies down beside the little girl in the house again. When she wakes up she believes Harry has been there all night. This is a pleasant conspiracy for children to be involved in, one which gently informs as well as entertains. MS

Our House on the Hill

Philippe Dupasquier, Picture Puffins, 0 14 050.791 7, £2.25

A charming picture book without words taking us through a whole calendar year in the life of the people who



live in the house on the hill. For every month there is a picture of the house and, at the side of each big picture, several small ones showing the family doing all sorts of interesting yet ordinary things for each month.

Giving small children the reassurance about the ongoing seasons and the feeling for each time of the year is very important and the book as a whole offers much for discussion and conversation.

Certainly a good buy and a special idea. MS

Garth Pig and the Ice Cream Lady

Mary Rayner, Picturemac, 0 333 47493 7, £2.95

Garth Pig returns for another close encounter with the wolf. This time he is sent by his brothers and sisters to buy everyone an ice cream. When he takes a long time to return they become suspicious and discover that he has been carried away in the ice cream van by the driver, who turns out to be a wolf. Good triumphs over evil and the wolf is overthrown, the ice creams eaten after all and everyone arrives home safely.

This is a lovely romp with plenty of pace and adventure and definitely to be recommended, building a repertoire of textual cross references. MS

Animal Day

Neil Hollander and
Susanna Gretz, Picture
Knight, 0 340 48694 5,
£2.50

In the middle of the night the animals hold a meeting and decide that they will take over from the humans the very next day. And they do. People are put into cages at the zoo; people are treated like pets by their own animals and have to perform in the circus. Eventually the people grow tired of this and decide something must be done. So they hold a meeting in the middle of the night and decide to get all the keys back and take over again. So they do.

This is an interesting book; it is thought-provoking and might be a bit too scary if it did not have such a safe and happy ending. The pictures are delightful and add greatly to the sense of fun. Probably best for school age children to read for themselves. MS

The Christmas Day Kitten

James Herriot, ill. Ruth
Brown, Picture Piper,
0 330 30463 1, £2.99

A story taken from James Herriot's *Vets Might Fly* combined here with Ruth Brown's really stunning pictures. The vet calls on Mrs Pickering who owns three Basset hounds and in passing meets Debbie, the stray cat who visits there. Three months later on Christmas day the vet gets a call from Mrs Pickering in great distress to tell him that the poor stray cat is very ill. The stray cat, dying, has brought her kitten to Mrs Pickering to look after. A year later finds the kitten very much a part of the family teasing the Basset hounds and fetching a ball just like the dogs. Mrs Pickering tells the vet that Buster the kitten is the best Christmas present she ever had.

This is a warm and sad and happy story all at once (and adults will love to read it too). MS

Our Puppy's Holiday

Ruth Brown, Beaver
Picture Book,
0 09 954800 3, £2.50

Whatever your age the pictures in this book will conjure up holidays spent in country places away from it all. 'Our



Puppy' certainly has a marvellous time rollicking about with a bunch of children on the beach, by the river, by a big tree and meeting animals and situations new to her. Weary at the end of an exciting day she reluctantly falls asleep by a log fire, not knowing that this had been only the first day!

I suppose books by Ruth Brown are meant for children but I don't know many adults who would not be delighted to have this one by them. A real treat on every page . . . and if that sounds like advertising blurb, I'm sorry, but this time it's true. All ages. MS

Mother Holly

Bernadette Watts,
North-South Books,
3 85539 011 8, £2.95

I love Bernadette Watts' versions of fairy tales. She seems to have a particular affinity for The Brothers Grimm and her complex pictures match the light and dark of the text very well. All her versions make no concessions as far as language is concerned and so are rich diets for young children . . . and none the worse for that.

Mother Holly is a highly moral tale about virtue rewarded with a rather macabre sub-text in which the daughters are plainly dead and in heaven (or perhaps purgatory?) through most of the story. The ending always strikes me as a little weak; the sudden conversion of the lazy daughter is not satisfying; I would like it to end with her return, covered in pitch, and let the rest be supposed. Still, all in all, a very satisfying book and one that ought to be part of all children's literary luggage. LW

Ursula Climbing

Sheila Lavelle, Young
Corgi, 0 552 52516 2,
£1.75

Once you have accepted the idea that a little girl, for no logical reason, could find a spell in a library book which enables her to turn into a bear at will, the Ursula books are very entertaining. I must admit to liking my magic a little less random than that but I did enjoy this latest offering in the series and the children enjoyed it too.

The layout is enticing to newly independent readers, few lines on most of the pages and plenty of line drawings to split them up, all in what is obviously a 'longer' book. The story is amusing and the little girl resourceful and realistic. Worth a place in a top infant library. LW

Sun and Rain

Ann Ruffell, Young
Puffin, 0 14 03.2173 X,
£1.75

You may find yourself having to explain to your children what a drought is, it's so long since we had one, but once

that is done this will be a popular book. The story of what happens when Susan sends off for a rain-making kit is told in enjoyably matter of fact prose which belies the lunacy of the plot. The family are very believable, especially the rather grumpy and illogical Dad, and the man from the Council has a certain charm as well. Good for fluent readers or for reading aloud. LW

Bimwili and the Zimwi

Verna Aardema, ill.
Susan Meddaugh,
Picturemac,
0 333 48056 2, £2.95

Bimwili's first trip to the sea with her two elder sisters turns into disaster when she is lured into the clutches of the evil Zimwi with the aid of a sea shell. She is forced by the ugly shape-changer to sing from within his drum which he plays in the villages for his food. Then one day he visits Bimwili's own village where she sings a different version of the song to alert her family to her plight and she is rescued. The Zimwi tries in vain to recapture his meal ticket but is beaten off and forced to return as a sea gull to the coast.

This magical, rather scary Swahili folk-tale is retold with the verve and vigour one expects from Verna Aardema and boldly illustrated in rich glowing colours. A treat for fives to nines. JB

Footprints in the Butter

Peter Mayle, ill. Arthur
Robins, Magnet,
0 416 10132 1, £1.95

This is the second book about Chilly Billy, a little man who lives in a fridge with his friend Chilly Lily. It would be a help to have read the first one since there is no attempt to scene set or to introduce the characters in this book. Chilly Billy finds footprints in the butter and sets out to discover who they belong to. It turns out to be a ladybird who was put into the fridge on a carrot and then froze solid. The rest of the story concerns Billy's attempts with the help of the 'Thaw Brigade' to free the ladybird.

It's a long story with a lot of reading and a relentlessly jokey style that I found hard to take. I also thought it a pity that no attempt was made to think out the logic of the situation. The idea of a sort of sub-culture going on in the fridge is interesting but instead of building on this and creating something which works within its own rules and logic, the plot relies on unlikely events such as a fridge being cold enough to coat a ladybird with ice several centimetres thick but still leaving butter soft enough to show footprints!

Not really to my taste at all but, in fairness, the children did enjoy it the first time it was read and several read it for themselves. No one so far has read it twice. LW

The Old Woman and her Pig

Mary O'Toole, ill. Chris
Meadows, 0 333 47535 6

Red Jack

Mary Durack, ill.
Michael Wilkin,
0 333 47531 3

The Mount Martha Monster

Joan and John van
Loon, 0 333 47539 9

Moona Park

Alastair Sharp, ill.
Bruce Rankin,
0 333 47538 0

The Kitten Who Wouldn't Purr

David Martin, ill. Mark
Payne, 0 333 47533 X

Longneck the Tortoise

Ann Coleridge, ill.

Marg Towt,
0 333 47530 5

Macmillan Kookaburra,
£1.75 each

I have lumped all these books together since they make up what must be most of a new series of books called Kookaburras. As far as I can see, the only justification for publishing these under one logo is that they are all Australian in origin and have been transferred lock, stock and barrel to the English market. There is no other discernible connection between them.

The first is a fairly culture-free retelling of the 'Old Woman and her Pig' story. I liked the text, which is clear and faithful to the original but the illustrations lacked all charm and were wooden and crudely coloured. This was the best of the bunch, though, as far as my children and I were concerned and some of the others were very odd indeed we thought.

The Kitten Who Wouldn't Purr

had no story to it at all and was written in a de-dumpty rhyme pattern that was not enticing and in places didn't scan. Both this and the former book are sort of infant-ish in range but the other four go from that level to adult without any indication of this on the cover. If you know a lot about Australian geography and wildlife it would help you to read these and you also need to be able to cope with phrases such as 'She rode alone, and wise men learned to set her virtue high' or 'Heavy rains came and the billabong was a frog world; the males sang their own praises and the females listened in wonder.'

In other words this is a very oddly assorted, mixed bunch which I would approach with extreme caution. I can think of no real reason for publishing them in this uniform format, other than a cheap deal with the Australian branch of Macmillans. LW

Junior/Middle

Alistair's Time Machine

Marilyn Sadler, ill.
Roger Bollen,
Picturemac,
0 333 48088 0, £2.95

Alistair is everyone's idea of a brainy schoolboy boffin complete with spectacles, cap and blazer and everyone expects him to win the 'Twicadilly Science Competition' with his time machine. However, things do not go exactly to plan and a test trip to 'the day before yesterday' leads instead to encounters with Knights of the Round Table, French courtiers, pirates, Roman lions and cavemen.

The incongruity of this diminutive character in such company so humorously depicted in Roger Bollen's illustrations and the contrastingly straight-faced style of the text together make for a diverting piece of nonsense which could have a wide age appeal. JB

Vlad the Drac Vampire

Ann Jungman, Young
Lions, 0 00 673049 3,
£1.75

The fourth adventure of a small, friendly Transylvanian vampire who has been adopted by a London family. Here, an addition to the Stone family brings him on a visit and true to form Vlad quickly gets into all sorts of trouble.

I found it very hard to suspend my disbelief and go along with everyone in the story's seeming acceptance of Vlad. However, clearly others are less sceptical as he does seem to have captured something of a following of young juniors; but if you're not familiar with this character already, then don't start here. JB

A Problem for Mother Christmas

Ted Willis, Piper,
0 330 30461 5, £1.99

Beth's postman father has a special top secret mission: to deliver all Santa's mail to him in Lapland. Beth and her dog accompany him and are flown by helicopter (piloted by a woman) to the far north but, having sabotaged the plans of one would-be spy, they find themselves faced with further problems not the least of which is the disappearance of Father Christmas himself.

I found the story unconvincing and the characters had no real depth to them. I fear that junior readers who bring to this book the same eager anticipation as I did will very likely be disappointed. JB

The Ghost Messengers

Robert Swindells,
Knight, 0 340 48668 6,
£1.99



This is only short, a bare ninety pages of text, but it contains a gem of a story. Robert Swindells skilfully builds up an atmospheric 'ghost' story within the overall scenario of tension and relationships in a sleepy village. Meg has been long haunted by the ghost of her grandfather, who disappeared during a wartime bombing raid. Her previous attempt at drawing the family's attention to her 'dream' produced only ridicule. However, there must be a reason behind these appearances. What is the message? This one is worth the read to find out. BB

The Flying Trunk and other stories from Andersen

Naomi Lewis and
various illustrators,
Beaver, 0 09 958690 8,
£2.99

The royalties from this book go to charity and each of thirteen artists have chosen a Hans Andersen story, in a new version by Naomi Lewis, to illustrate for this collection. Some are familiar, such as 'The Princess and the Pea' or 'The Emperor's New Clothes'. Some are unusual, 'The Jumping Competition' or 'The Top and the Ball'. One or two of my favourites are missing: where is 'The Little Mermaid'?; but it is a good selection, clearly told in slightly less elaborate language than I was brought up on and, with some attractive illustrations by very well-known artists such as Michael Foreman and Tony Ross.

The only reservations I have about what is on the whole a lively and attractive book is that the variety of artists means that it has no style of its own and seems, therefore, rather bitty and I do wonder if some of the artists' styles are well matched to Hans Andersen. Tomie de Paola's flat and childlike style seems to take the weirdness out of 'The Tinder Box' and Philippe Dupasquier's prisoner in 'From the Ramparts of the Citadel' lacks any touch of torment or evil and the citadel, far from being bleak and cheerless, is positively Toy Town-ish.

This would make an attractive introduction to Andersen for today's children... even if, as always, some of the tales are really not very childlike at all. LW

The Haunting of Hiram C Hoppood

Eva Ibbotson, Piper,
0 330 30462 3, £1.99

When you sell your rotting Scottish castle to an American millionaire, whatever do you do with its ghosts, when the new owner positively does not want them? Poor old Angus MacBuff tries boarding them out, unsuccessfully; but out of the experience springs an unexpected bonus when the eccentric spectres, now with the stately pile that is being re-constructed next to a cinema in Texas, outwit an even more ghoulish crew of kidnappers. This barmy, crazy tale should make a welcome addition on the shelves for youngsters who like longish, funny reads and easily suspend disbelief. DB

Miss Fanshawe and the Great Dragon Adventure

Sue Scullard,
Picturemac,
0 333 47486 4, £2.95

This lavishly illustrated tale of Miss Harriet Fanshawe, great explorer, and her parrot, Cedric, is certainly a sophisticated form of picture storytelling. The style and content will appeal to an older age group, readers who (wrongly) might not naturally look to this format; teachers should try to ensure that it does not miss its potential market. There is a touch of 'spot the parrot' about the illustrations, which I personally could have done without, and is perhaps a tactic more appropriate to younger readers. That said, the illustrations are very lavish, there is lots happening, and the cut pages create a nice 'keyhole' effect which both teases and helps the continuity of the story. BB

Middle/Secondary

Seal Story

Kathleen Fidler,
Canongate Kelpie,
0 86241 195 5, £1.95

Kathleen Fidler's strength is in describing natural environments, particularly evoking the rugged island life of the inhabitants of such as Lindisfarne, where survival is linked closely to the moods of the sea. 'The seals lay close together on the rocks and warily watched the passing boats with their large beautiful eyes.' The seals make good attractions for the tourists, but are an increasing threat to the salmon fishing. Dan grows up as a member of a family of fishing folk, aware of this



constant quandary in the struggle to make ends meet. The culling season is here, and although Dan knows that 'the men who slaughter the seals do it as painlessly as possible', that doesn't make him feel any better. His moral dilemma is made a personal decision when he stumbles across the singing seal, a baby seemingly

orphaned during the cull. A sensitive story, realistically told, with a relevant message in these times of reawakening ecological concern. A timely re-issue. BB

Running Riot

John Kenworthy,
Viking Kestrel,
0 670 82143 8, £3.95

Set in the recent miners' strike, **Running Riot** is a view of life in a South Yorkshire mining village, seen through the eyes of a group of youngsters. 'The worst thing about the place was that all the houses were identical, give or take a few degrees of shabbiness, and that made the

place seem more drab.' Although the style is rather disjointed, the actual recounting of instances are coldly frightening – the beating up of 'scab' children in the playground, mobs of children chanting 'We're miners, we'll never be defeated', the witnessing by the youngsters of the violence (on both sides) of the picket lines, etc. etc. Naturally, the kids get sucked into this violence, with the inevitable dramatic result – a death, one of their own, a mere child. Fiction? Fact? A thought-provoking and important book. BB

Dead Birds Singing

Marc Talbert, Penguin Plus, 0 14 03.2184 5, £1.99

Matt is on top of the world. School swimming champion, everything going for him. Then, disaster! His mother is killed, his sister in a coma, himself badly hurt, as their car is hit by a drunken driver. The adjustments necessary for Matt to come to terms with his pain, his remorse, even his guilt, make painful but compulsive reading in this superb story for young adolescents. 'Matt tried not to think about the accident, but it was hard. Images sneaked up on him, and held his thoughts hostage until he fought them off.' No gimmicks, no histrionics, no sensationalism to keep the reader hooked – just a picture of a child in pain, looking for comfort, looking for escape from the nightmares. BB

At the Sign of the Dog and Rocket

Jan Mark, Penguin Plus, 0 14 03.2237 X, £1.95

Award-winning Jan Mark has written yet another wryly observed, amusing book for young people with this light-hearted, chaos-stricken story of pub life. When the landlady is away and the landlord is flat on his back (disc, not drink!), Lillian, their capable teenage daughter, is forced to take charge. As if that's not enough, the only other help available is the student teacher whose life she'd spent a term making miserable. Fortunately for both, the bossy young madam comes to see that teachers bruise easily (literally) and like most humans have unique kinds of bottle if given a good head! Warmly recommended by my Year-3 testers. DB

Rob's Place

John Rowe Townsend, Puffin, 0 14 03.2318 X, £1.99

Depressing or thought-provoking? I seriously wonder whether schools oughtn't to give this one to separated parents. Rob's relationships with his mother, her new husband, and especially with his father are becoming more and more difficult as they seek to establish themselves in their new roles and Rob, charting a lonely course, tries to cling on to what he sees as his fair share of their love and attention. He reaches that stage where teenagers often seem to be saying 'no matter how awful I am, will you still love me?' and he retreats wounded into a fantasy world that centres on an island in the local park. The whole painful process and its rather rapid conclusion are charted with a masterly insight, which might attract only serious-minded readers. DB

The Tomb of Reeds

Sarah Baylis, Swallow, 0 86267 225 2, £2.25

The major attribute of this Celtic twilight fantasy is the strength and significance of the two key female roles. It is undoubtedly written most effectively in parts and at times most poetically, but it is rather abstruse for many tastes, I'd imagine.



Bridey and Canola, the peasant basket-maker and the privileged bard, are two sides of the same coin, who must combine to fulfil prophecies in the ancient ogham cypher. Then there can be peace in their war-riven land of Erin. The fact that the two of them never cease to bicker and dispute doesn't prevent them from completing their quest, after a long, at times, slow, expedition. DB

Haunted United

Dennis Hamley, Lions Teen Tracks, 0 00 672889 8, £1.95

'I'll stalk the place. As long as I have breath I'll be at Bowland's heels. I'll lay them low.' Dan MacAvity's revengeful curse against Bowland's Football Club, who have just fired him, fulfils all its tragic potential in the havoc it wreaks on succeeding generations of club officials, players and supporters. It takes a mysterious, ailing old man and a young psychic girl to right past wrongs and make the two facets of Dan MacAvity one. Dennis Hamley has managed to combine the two popular themes of sport and horror into one successful tale full of thrills, suspense and variety. It's a bit melodramatic at times but most young readers ought to stick with it to the last page. DB

The Big Pink

Ann Pilling, Puffin, 0 14 03.2319 8, £1.99

Ann Pilling has taken the school story and given it a less predictable face and a more meaningful direction. Angela Grace Collis-Browne's time at her aunt's private school is bound to be fraught; she's fat, she dislikes her aunt and her dormitory mates include the viperish Sophie Sharman. Music is her only solace in the madhouse that sorely tests both her resistance to barbed

remarks, vindictive actions and her firm adherence to her Christian, non-materialistic upbringing. It has found favour with my third-year girl testers. DB

The Story of Grace Darling

Helen Cresswell, Puffin, 0 14 03.2434 8, £1.75

This short novel was written to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Grace's heroism. Part of the proceeds will go to the RNLI.



Helen Cresswell has obviously researched her material well and infused a fairly unremarkable, hardly documented life with flesh and blood so that Grace exists as a real person above and beyond her heroic deed. Just as markedly the author has used one of her strongest talents to create a strikingly atmospheric evocation of early Victorian Bamburgh and of the wild heartless elements, always menacingly present on the Northumberland coast and which contrived to bring Grace her finest hours. An interesting, short read. DB

It's an Aardvark-Eat-Turtle World

Paula Danzinger, Piper, 0 330 30375 9, £1.99

Standard Danzinger fare – teenage girls embroiled in family crisis – but, as ever, delivered with a generous helping of readability, accessible characterisation and a sufficiently respectable amount of thought-provoking material to merit a place on library shelves or in lower school book boxes.

Rosie and Phoebe are best friends. Phoebe's father and Rosie's mother fall in love and all four move into a new home together. Complications abound – Phoebe returns briefly to live with her mother in New York and Rosie is strongly attracted to Phoebe's cousin, Jason.

Plenty of teenage interest here and one of the book's strengths is that it explores the situations beyond the disappointment of a hollow happy ending. VR

Just as Long as We're Together

Judy Blume, Piper, 0 330 30474 7, £2.25

The Blume books keep on coming like chocolate bars, offering a comforting lack of variation and the apparent quenching of a kind of hunger. It's all to do with easing anxiety, naming the problems of schoolgirl adolescent life and weaving them into the comfort of everyday existence. Which is why we have so many facts of shopping trips and names of teachers, clothes, boys and rooms. The debate about different kinds of stuffing exists with the onset of menstruation and is handled in much the same way. The story? Well, parents separating, breaking and making friends, going out with boys. The title says it all and it will be popular but oh for the antidote – a strong dose of singleness. AJ

The Singing Stone

O R Melling, Puffin, 0 14 03.1980 8, £2.25

Detailed and quite dense historical fantasy, with the orphaned, 18-year-old Kay moving from present-day Canada to the mythic, Celtic past of Ireland – playing a major role in the recovery of four lost treasures and in the process helping what turn out to be her parents before her birth. The book is written with such assurance, despite the complexity of names, the simplicity of action and some implausibility, that it feels impolite to resist. AJ

The Third Eye

Mollie Hunter, Swallow, 0 86267 224 4, £2.25

Despite the air of a fantasy story about title and cover and the time needed to adjust to the voice of the book, this is a very powerful, realistic story. Set in Scotland during the thirties, it's apparently about the Ballinford Doom, the curse by which the eldest son and heir to the Earl of Ballinford has, for generations, died before succeeding to the title. The 13-year-old Jinty is making her way to the Procurator Fiscal's office to be interviewed about the Earl's death. Then and while she waits, she recalls and creates the events which have led up to the death. In so doing she weaves together many strands of lives and past with clashes of personality, especially within her own family. There are some memorable scenes and in so many ways, but particularly in characterisation, narration and the creation of incident, this is a lovely hard-edged contrast to the cloying sentimentality of so much fiction for this age group. Oh for more third eye vision. AJ

Diamond

Caroline Pitcher,
Canongate Kelpie,
0 86241 185 8, £1.95

The success of this book is in part attributable to the uncomplicated boundaries of the community with which it deals. Jenny's family,

temporarily moved during the modernisation of their council house to a high rise block on a sink estate, retain their ties with the close-knit East End community they have left. (Pause for children to make television links . . .)

The small world within which Jenny moves – flat, school,

market, local streets – gives the storyline an intensity heightened by the colourful descriptions of the mysterious old man who gives Jenny what appears to be a diamond. The stone distorts the vision and through it Jenny sees a beauty in her surroundings which makes her situation bearable

and her responses to challenges more positive.

Family life is convincingly and entertainingly portrayed and a range of issues are raised which ensure that the book never condescends to its 10-12 year old readership. Stock it in the library/book box; consider it as a class set. VR

Older Readers

Trooper Jackson's Story

Brian Thompson,
Penguin Plus,
0 14 03.2512 3, £1.95

Well-known I'm sure but worth buying in reissued form. It's set before and then during the first year of the First World War contrasting the Yorkshire England of Sam's youth with war-destroyed France and Belgium. A contrast too between Sam's dreams of being a dashing cavalry trooper and the reality of struggling behind German lines with a mixed group of exhausted French soldiers. The reality of war, death and destruction fits slightly strangely with the old-fashioned style – men dashing around being adventurous, driven by bonds of love and honour. Though slightly flattened by the conventional plotting and characterisation this is a story strong enough to engage third-year boys and the new packaging will help. AJ

Find a Stranger, Say Goodbye

Lois Lowry, Lions Teen Tracks, 0 00 673263 1, £1.95

Find a stranger indeed. It's a great pleasure to see this back in print and by a publisher who will take better care of it. Always popular with pupils, rarely out of circulation, the only problem has been in keeping track of it. It could be sentimental, and there's much of the American focus on family here, but it works on the whole. Natalie, in the summer before she goes to college, is allowed by her adopted parents to attempt to trace her real mother. It's part mild detective story but mainly a reflection on the bonds which tie us to people and places, about the past and coming to terms with it, learning what to store, what to reject. All done in that breezy, confident way so apparently natural to American writers. To celebrate its return, and at this price, buy several copies and try to hold onto them. (I hope that Lois Lowry's *A Summer to Die* might also be reissued, please.) AJ

Over the Moon

Elissa Haden Guest,
Methuen Teens,
0 416 08662 4, £1.95

Not a lot of story stretched out here although it's all done in a lightly readable way. The real story begins about half way through with 16-year-old Kate's journey to visit the elder sister, Mattie, who ran away four years earlier. It's all about healing old wounds: they are relieved first – the death of the parents, Mattie's ex-boyfriend whom Kate loves and the departure of Mattie herself – and then there's reconciliation. Another one to add to the collection of 'Teens' in third-year book boxes, probably. AJ

Happy Endings

Adèle Geras, Lions Teen Tracks, 0 00 672791 3, £2.25

The ambitiousness of Adele Geras' plots is admirable. Mel(usine) in the isolation of her room with a broken ankle recalls the events of the past weeks where she has taken part in a youth theatre production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. The dramas of relationship which go on around the dramas of production and the play itself are the focus, standard behind the scenes stuff but handled with care and the author's gentle understanding of people. AJ

Come a Stranger

Cynthia Voigt, Lions Teen Tracks, 0 00 672928 2, £2.25

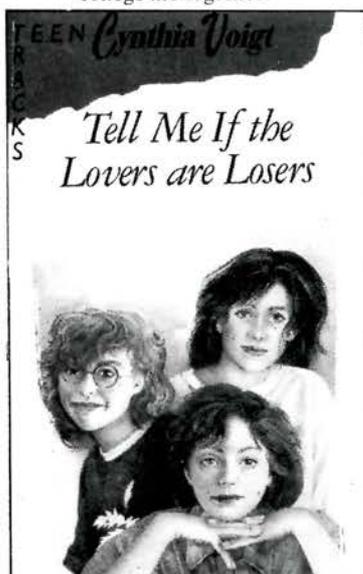
The Tillermans again – although from a different angle and not for some time. Mina is a lovely, strong black character and prejudice is a, not always obvious, strand to the story. More clearly this is about people and relationships: strong characters, standing up for themselves and standing out against unfairness. The early part has Mina's failure during a second year at an all-white summer dance school. She is rejected for her ungainliness and made to feel it as a racial failure. Tamer Shipp, a Harlem priest who swaps with her father for a summer break, helps her to face this and her earlier rejection of friends and all things black in favour of white, classical culture. Her love for the married man is handled well by being acknowledged as more than just a fantasy. From here the links with earlier books begin to proliferate as we are

reminded first of *The Runner*, meet Dicey, in Mina's class, and then the rest of the family. There's reconciliation and a laying to rest of earlier griefs (both for this book and the others), and a brave, but measured looking ahead. AJ

Tell Me If the Lovers are Losers

Cynthia Voigt, Lions Teen Tracks, 0 00 672927 4, £2.25

Vintage Voigt – a rare treat! First published in America in 1982, the book is set in 1961 and follows the fortunes of three very different room-mates – Niki, Hildy and Ann – as they embark on college life together.



There is a not displeasing rawness about the writing, a preoccupation with detail, a looser quality than Voigt's later works, but the wisdoms, the insights and the sheer power of all her work are absolutely intact here. Hildy is the most remarkable character – she feels and sounds so much like the Voigt who lights a reader's way through a universally shared problem or reduces a situation overlaid with myth and hysteria to the simplicity of its component parts. Niki and Ann don't fade beside her, they merely play a different sort of part.

This is a novel of exploration rather than event, though the shared medium of college life ensures a coherent and readable structure: fourth and fifth-year classes are in for a treat! VR

A Girl Like Abby

Hadley Irwin,
0 14 03.2146 2

An Open Mind

Susan Sallis,
0 14 03.2607 3

Penguin Plus, £1.99 each

Both these books grasp the nettle of social problems and, in the main, do it well.

A Girl Like Abby deals with incest. Chip, fifteen years old, falls in love with the unpredictable Abby. He finds her tendency to withdraw into herself both fascinating and alarming. Chip's warm, humorous and wholly convincing relationship with his widowed mother gives him a springboard for his anxieties. Abby's inability to allow Chip physical contact, despite their developing relationship, leads to her revelation about her father's incestuous relationship with her. The situation is handled in a sympathetic way, providing a vehicle for information about what to do if such a situation arises. Although the book is American, sources of help are similar enough to provide useful basic advice.

The book is successful and could be offered to and discussed with third-years upwards. One criticism is the sensationalist nature of the cover blurbs – 'terrible secret' and 'free her from her living nightmare' belie the low-key treatment of the subject.

An Open Mind is similarly successful – this time in dealing with attitudes to handicapped children. Again, it is irritatingly flawed – first published in America, it has been painstakingly transferred to Bristol but American spellings and expressions are still too much in evidence.

The book shows its age in places – it was first published in 1978 – but is a convincing account of David Winterbourne's acceptance of his father's right to remarry and his own understanding of the existence of patterns – and, therefore, meanings – in experiences and expectations; both his own and those of his handicapped friends. A good book-box text to offer to enquiring third-year minds. VR

Audio Tapes

Rachel Redford begins a regular review feature on story tapes.

Reviews are listed in roughly ascending order of listening age. Prices include VAT unless otherwise indicated.

Mrs Tiggy-Winkle and Friends

The Tales of Mrs Tiggy-Winkle/ Mr Jeremy Fisher/ Pigling Bland

Beatrix Potter, read by Michael Hordern and Patricia Routledge, Puffin Cover to Cover, four titles, one tape, 55 mins, £3.99 each;

also Tempo, eight titles, 16-min cassette with Frederick Warne paperback, £2.99 each

This is the definitive series of Beatrix Potter. As with all the Puffin Cover to Cover cassettes, the narrators are chosen to complement exactly the tone of the stories. Patricia Routledge's voice is aptly warm and lyrical yet down to earth. The music is specially composed by Carl Davis. The incidental watery music and gentle trumpet unobtrusively underly the narrative in Michael Hordern's superb reading of **Jeremy Fisher**. Timothy West, Janet Maw and Rosemary Leach read some of the other titles. The Puffin cassettes have three or four stories on each cassette; Tempo has the same recordings with one story on one cassette very attractively packaged with the Warne paperback. Ageless and enduring.

The Little Red Fox Book/The Brown Mouse Book

Alison Uttley, read by Prunella Scales, Listen for Pleasure, two cassettes, 2 hours, £5.99

These classic stories have just been re-released. They make ideal listening for very young children and Prunella Scales combines professionalism with motherliness in her voice. The Little Red Fox's adventures start when Mrs Badger takes pity on the little orphan fox she finds in the wood and takes him home to bring up with her own badger children. One night his wicked Uncle Rufus captures him... Snug and Serena are the mice in the Brown Mouse stories and they too narrowly escape danger, this time from hawks and weasels. Improved by abridgement, Alison Uttley's country stories make leisurely listening.

Postman Pat Makes a Splash

John Cunliffe, read by Ken Barrie, Tempo, one cassette with

Deutsch/Tempo paperback, 10 mins, £2.49

Postman Pat is a perennial favourite. This series is an attractive incentive to independent reading with the turn-over tone and the simple text printed amidst plenty of lively colour illustrations. Children respond to TV Postman Pat Ken Barrie's reassuring narration of this adventure which tells what happens when Mrs Pottage rushes off to catch the escaped pig and leaves Pat with a wriggling baby Paul. Gurgling baby and squealing pig sound effects throughout enliven the story. This is a short tape, which can be an advantage for a child with a short concentration span. There are nine titles in this Postman Pat Easy Reader series.

Funnybones

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, read by Bernard Cribbins, Tempo, one cassette with Picture Lions paperback, 20 mins, £2.99

This is a very attractive series including the equally vivacious, unabridged **Cops and Robbers** and **Burglar Bill**. Bernard Cribbins is a great narrator with different voices for the Big Skeleton and the Little Skeleton as they sing songs and look, unsuccessfully, for someone to frighten. The sound effects are lively and funny: the jangling of the skeletons, the owl's hooting and the scraping sound as the skeletons scratch their skulls, trying to think of another plan to frighten someone. Side 2 of the cassette is the story for children to follow with the book and the story is read without sound effects with a turn-over tone. Fun and imaginative for 4-8.

The Vanishment of Thomas Tull

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, read by Nigel Carrington, Tellastory, one cassette, 45 mins, £3.99

This is a typically zany, densely-packed Ahlberg story of Thomas Tull, the boy who started shrinking when he was seven. Despite all kinds of crazy remedies, at eight he had to stand on a box to blow out his birthday candles and at nine, his young sister dressed him up like a doll. Like all Tellastory cassettes, the story is a good length and unabridged. Nigel Carrington's narration is competent. Different voices are effectively and subtly characterised: engrossing listening for girls and boys of around 8-11.

The Shrinking of Treehorn/Treehorn's Treasure

Florence Parry Heide, read by Kerry Shale, Puffin Cover to Cover, one cassette, 40 mins, £3.99

This is another shrinking story which starts when Treehorn realises his clothes are getting bigger. The American Kerry Shale is a tremendous narrator of this witty story, capturing a range of varied voices including Treehorn's mother. She's preoccupied with her home improvements. 'Just don't shrink at table,' she tells Treehorn when he can't reach his food, with a wonderfully nonchalant whine. When he ends up the right size, but green, she doesn't even notice; just as the dollar-bill-bearing tree in the second story goes unnoticed by Treehorn's self-obsessed parents. Funny, imaginative, unabridged. 8-12.

The BFG

Roald Dahl, adapted by Edward Phillips, dramatised, Rainbow, one cassette, 1½ hours, £2.99

This is one of the 12 excellent Dahl titles available on cassette from various companies. It is a vigorous dramatisation with a cast of seven, led by Bernard Cribbins as the BFG. It loses nothing of the original text about that 'jumbly' dream-blowing giant. All the sound effects add greatly to the listeners' enjoyment, like the 'glorificious' pops and squelches of the BFG's whizzpopping, those 'loudest and rudest sounds Sophie had ever heard'; or the sinister orchestra of Fleshlumpeter and the other giants in the throes of their terrifying nightmares. Children love the BFG's 'squiff squiggled' words and the fast-moving story – and they might think about his judgement on 'human beans' as the 'only ones who kill their own kind'. Excellent value.

The Fiend Next Door Holiday with the Fiend

Sheila Lavelle, read by Judy Bennett, Chivers, two cassettes, 2 hours, £9.25 + VAT each title

These are funny stories finding an immediate response in girls around 9-13. Judy Bennett is a vivacious reader who portrays the girls' voices well, although she makes them sound rather too young. Angela is Charlie's irrepressible friend next door who is always playing funny but exasperating tricks on her – as when she persuades Charlie that her aunt's baby is

really one she has stolen from outside a supermarket and Charlie has got to put it back. Angela's tricks predictably cause havoc in the super-clean holiday guest house. This is unabridged and without sound effects. It is both absorbing and entertaining.

The Hobbit

J R R Tolkien, read by Nicol Williamson, Hamlyn, two cassettes, 3 hours, £4.99; also dramatised, BBC, four cassettes, 4 hours, £14.95

Nicol Williamson's narration is a triumph, encompassing the tense excitement of danger, the lyrical descriptions made almost mystical by the musical background of harp strings, and a range of voices from the country accents of Thorin to the throaty petulance of Gollum. The whole skilfully abridged story cracks along at a good pace. The BBC dramatisation, originally broadcast on the radio, is a stunning recreation by a cast of over 30. Each character's voice reflects his personality, like the hesitancy in Paul Daneman's Bilbo. The inventive and haunting sound effects from the BBC Radiophonic Workshop add an extra dimension throughout.

The Nature of the Beast

Janni Howker, read by Christian Rodska, Chivers (Windsor Bridge Road, Bath BA2 3AX), three cassettes, 3½ hours, £11.95 + VAT

In Janni Howker's gripping story, the closure of the mill depresses the community with yet more unemployment. Billy's life with his quarrelling father and grandfather is grim. The Beast, roaming the moors and killing livestock, becomes a symbol of all the misery and Billy decides to kill it. His mission is tensely exciting. This is one of Chivers' 70 unabridged children's titles in sturdy library cases, representing the best of contemporary fiction. Christian Rodska's northern accent suits the gritty nature of the story and, through his atmospheric narration, listeners enter Billy's troubled and thought-provoking world.

Rachel Redford is a well-known authority on audio tapes and compiler of Book Trust's **Hear to Read** (1986, 0 85353 403 9, £1.50 non-members, £1.00 members, inc. p&p) available from the Publications Dept, Book Trust, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ.

SOUND & VISION

The Nature of the Beast — book into film

The film version of Janni Howker's award-winning novel was released in November. The story, told in the novel by young Bill Coward, charts the impact of unemployment on a Lancashire mill town and in particular on Bill's family. The Beast of the title roams the moors making attacks on the town; Bill sets out to track it down.

We sent **Val Randall**, who loves the book and its setting, to see the film and to talk to **Janni Howker**.

'I reckon the Beast's something that's been here all the time – something real, something they're afraid of.' Bill Coward's words express the ambiguous nature of the Beast in book and film. I wondered how successfully the film would convey this ambiguity. For part of the film the camera becomes the Beast, roaming Haverston's streets, filling Bill's consciousness and exposing the callousness of multi-national corporations which engulf small mills and so destroy communities who depend on them. This is largely effective but there are times when the film compromises introducing a demon 'cat god' on a television programme Bill watches and a brief unexplained glimpse of a jaguar in Bill's final confrontation with the Beast on the moor.

Seeing the characters of one's imagining realised on screen is another test. Chunder is played marvellously by Tony Melody, the warmth of his relationship with Bill is finely stated in the scene following the slaughter of his chickens by 'the Beast' where Bill becomes the stronger of the two, reassuring the beaten old man which Chunder has become. Other relationships fare less well. The book created the friendship between Bill and his friend Mick with that special intensity and complexity peculiar to adolescent boys. In the film it becomes almost mundane, with Mick (who doesn't go to live with Bill) taking a secondary role.

I wondered, too, how well the film would capture the ending. Bill leaves home before the institutions which are determined to control his life manipulate him in the same way that powerful outside forces manipulated the mill and its workers. The impotence this suggested in the book was laced with an impressive determination to

rule his own life. The film's final scene has none of this and it is a less memorable Bill, one who invoked in me merely a sense of pity.

I shared these reactions with Janni Howker, who also wrote the screenplay, and asked her about the difficult task of turning novel into film.

'Like most people, I had little idea about the complexities of film-making. The first thing you have to understand is that a film is, essentially, the creation of a director and not of a writer. For a writer, this is an odd situation. When I wrote the novel there were no constraints – nothing to come between me and my initial conception and imagination, and the reader other than a publisher's editor.

'With a screenplay, however, there is a procedure of submitting first, second, third and even fourth drafts, in some cases, before the acceptance of the final draft which will act as the basis on which the film is made. Each draft is discussed and there are often technical, film-making reasons for changes being made.



Lynton Dearden and Tony Melody.



Janni Howker

'Then there is a technical language to learn which is utterly different from the way in which I would write a novel. The biggest difficulty, from my point of view, was in trying to find a way of adapting a first-person story into a visual third-person narrative. I'm not sure that was managed – I know I missed hearing Bill's voice, his lively comments on situations, his jokes.

'The second major difficulty was that of time. The film only lasts 95 minutes. The book is immensely complicated and my first draft would have probably run to about three hours. This time constraint leads onto the biggest constraint of all – money. "Beast" is a very low-budget film and one had to accept what was possible to be filmed within this budget. This makes for another level of change and of simplification.

'In the end, one has to understand that a screenplay is a kind of recipe which is used by the director – but financial constraints, the director's own artistic point of view and even the weather may mean that many of the ingredients of that recipe are changed. As a writer, I had to learn how to 'let go' of Beast – a great deal of this was out of my hands.'

I returned to my feeling that the Beast of the film was less ambiguous than the Beast of the book. Did Janni Howker think this affected the 'message' of the film?

'That's all part of what I've just been saying. It's here, in this sort of

imaginative area, that I think words can be more subtle, complex and frightening than any visually one-dimensional effect. I would have preferred there to have been no "animal" shown. But this is a problem which related to the altered point of view. As a reader you would feel the real intensity and complex savagery of Bill's relationship with the "Beast" and the notion of the "Beast" because it's all woven into the story. I think that the powerful and ambiguous "nature" of the "Beast" in the book lies in the very business of the struggle Bill has in finding words to articulate all that is happening to him. This is much more simplistic in the film and that makes me uneasy. However, given the constraints upon the director, perhaps this is understandable.'

I came out of the film feeling that the way the North was portrayed had a very sixties' feel; yet the themes of this book are very much of the present day. I wondered how that had happened. Did Janni agree?

'Let me say the obvious thing for a start – the film was made on location and nothing was altered about the streets or houses or the working mill in which the shots were made. The two boys who play Bill and Mick were local boys from local schools and even the chip shop scene was filmed in the chip shop!

'Now this is very odd – here are *real* places and people – and yet it comes as a bit of a shock. It makes me realise how invisible a great deal of the North has become in the media. What shocks me is how one can begin to accept as "the norm" the kind of accents, houses, life-styles which are portrayed on television. There is a very positive side of the film which is showing strong family and community networks and close ties to place and neighbourhood. This has always been one of the great strengths of the North, but it has also made the industrial North vulnerable because those ties are often linked to a local place of work – like the mill in the film.

'If you carry this "invisibility" one step further, it quickly becomes apparent that when communities like this are experiencing real difficulties, those of unemployment, little notice is taken. They're simply not seen. This is what I was trying to say in my book and what, I believe, is still being said in the film.'

So, now that the film is out, how does she feel about the whole project?

'I feel very grateful to have had this experience of working on a film. Above all, I was deeply impressed by the commitment of the director, Franco Rosso, and the producer, Joanna Smith, in putting themselves on the line with this low-budget film during a time of rampant consumerism, fantasy and escapism in the arena of young people's viewing.'

The Nature of the Beast by Janni Howker is published in hardback by Julia MacRae (0 86203 194 X, £6.95) and in paperback by Lions (0 00 672582 1, £1.95).

Behind the three-part TV series that hit our screens in December is a novel. **Philip Pullman**, author of **How To Be Cool**, tells how he came to be . . .

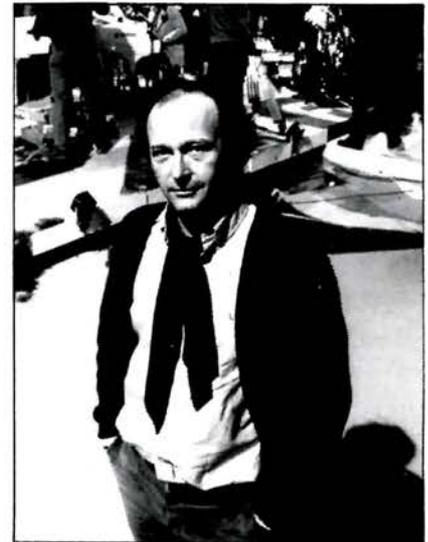
WRITING ABOUT COOL

When I was a teacher, what I enjoyed most was the unofficial culture of the schools I taught in. The school uniform, for instance, might be described in the brochure, but that's only a starting point: what really matters is how the pupils wear it. If they have to wear a tie, they'll tie it in a huge big fat knot and leave two rude little bits sticking down underneath; or casually knotted halfway down the chest over an open collar; or rolled and stretched so it's as thin as a piece of string – anything to put their own mark on it, and quite right too.

I used to watch all this with fascination. And I used to listen. When kids, right, are talking together, right, I don't mean the GCSE kind of oral wossname, you know, assessment, right, but just kind of – no, shut up, listen – if they're just *talking*, okay, okay? – then if you *listen*, right, you get all the rhythms. It's all in the rhythms. Almost.

Take white socks and *well wicked*. Dated now, both of them, but I remember the first occasion I came across them. I moved from a job in one Oxford middle school to another middle school a couple of miles away across the city; and one of the first things I noticed was that the stylists, the leaders, were wearing white socks and little black low-cut shoes. And the highest term of praise in their lexicon was *well wicked*. *Wicked* was easy to place: words like *mean*, *dirty*, Michael Jackson's *Bad*, have long been terms of approval in hip slang. *Well* as an intensifier (it's well hot, he was well angry) was more intriguing; I haven't been able to work out where that one comes from.

Now neither white socks nor *well wicked* had appeared at my previous school. But as it happened, my son was a pupil there at the time, and I asked him to keep his eyes and ears open and let me know when they turned up. It took a couple of months for them to make their first appearance, and within six months they were established.



Philip Pullman on the studio set (Granada TV).

I'd been vaguely intending to write a story about style for some time; I'd even thought of the title – **How To Be Cool** – and sketched a couple of outlines, but nothing had come of it. White socks crystallised the feeling of the title into a plot. Suppose there was a sinister secret organisation controlling the spread of fashions such as white socks; the National Cool Board. And suppose some bright kid became aware of this and decided to expose it. And suppose (this was the easiest of all) that the Cool Board was about to be privatised – as British Cool, naturally. It's the sort of situation you just wind up and set going.

I still needed a protagonist, and here again classroom life came to my aid. In the class I was teaching at that time, there were three boys who were real stylists. Pink tennis shirts – exotic trainers – and there was one occasion when they all turned up with gold-rimmed folding sunglasses, and stood inside the doorway and just posed, exuding waves of cool. The girls, at whom the waves were aimed, naturally took not the slightest notice.

Well, there were my heroes. With their permission, I used their names in the book; everything else (I think) is fiction. Though when I go into one of these new mega-shopping centres and see the uniformed security guards deciding who's allowed in and who isn't, and when I consider the mysterious business of who really did first wear white socks, I begin to wonder.

Philip Pullman, who wrote the screenplay for the TV adaptation of **How To Be Cool** (Heinemann, 0 434 95781 X, £6.95; 0 434 95782 8, £3.95 pbk, and Pan Piper, 0 330 29901 8, £2.50 pbk), is also the author of **The Ruby in the Smoke** (Oxford, 0 19 271543 7, £6.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.2209 4, £1.95 pbk) and its sequel **The Shadow in the Plate** (Oxford, 0 19 271548 8, £6.95). A third story to complete this Victorian thriller trilogy is due soon.

SOUND & VISION

AN UPDATE OF TV, FILM & RADIO INFORMATION

The New Adventures of William Tell

Anthony Horowitz, Puffin, 0 14 03.2353 8, £1.99

Latest information is that this should be on your screens from ITV starting this month (January) in eighteen 30-minute episodes.

The BFG

Roald Dahl, Cape, 0 224 02040 4, £7.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.1597 7, £2.50 pbk

A feature film coming some time this year, possibly Easter.

The Wolves of Willoughby Chase

Joan Aiken, Puffin, 0 14 03.0310 3, £1.95 pbk

A feature film for this Spring.

Woof!

Allan Ahlberg, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80832 6, £6.95; Puffin 0 14 03.1996 4, £1.75 pbk

Four 30-minute episodes with Liza Goddard, from ITV starting mid to end February.

Tom's Midnight Garden

Philippa Pearce, Oxford, 0 19 271128 8, £6.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.0893 8, £2.50 pbk

This has taken us completely by surprise. Produced by Paul Stone (of recent *Narnia* fame) it's one of the most enduring books published in the last thirty years. We're told it starts this January on BBC1 and runs for six 30-minute episodes.

The Falcon's Malteser

Anthony Horowitz, Lions, 0 00 673396 4, £1.95 pbk

A feature film (Twentieth Century Fox) set for general release from this January and retitled *Just Ask for Diamond*, it stars Susannah York, Nikolas Grace (Sheriff of Nottingham in *Robin of Sherwood*), Patricia Hodge, Saeed Jaffrey, and the late Roy Kinnear. It's a spoof detective thriller, with half a nod to the Bogart classic, *The Maltese Falcon*, about two brothers, their detective agency, a Dwarf, a box of Maltesers, and a three-and-a-half million pound fortune. For 8s to 12s.

Book Tower Returns

This very popular programme from Yorkshire TV (recent winner of a gold medal at the New York Film and Television Festival Awards) returns to our screens from 28th March through to 17th May in the 4.45pm slot. In all there are eight 20-minute programmes. Viewing figures are impressive from the last series (January 1988) – four and a half million viewers; 35% of that audience were children with a peak in the 10 to 12 year old age group. To accompany the series, Yorkshire Television produce an illustrated, helpful guide giving details of all the books shown in the programme. Like the last series the new one adopts a thematic approach with a variety of presenters:

Brother and Sisters
Legends
Birds
Witches
Jokes and Humour
Science and Science
Fiction
Sport and Football
Mystery

Michael Rosen
Chris Serle
Su Ingle
Carol Lee Scott
Gary Wilmot

Carol Vorderman
Bruce Grobbelaar
Tony Robinson

There will also be another Book Tower serial running through each episode. This time it features two Jan Mark stories with 'Hairs on the Palm of the Hand' taking up four episodes and 'Chutzpah', another four. **The Book Tower Watchers' Guide** will be available in time for the start of the series – we'll try to give that information in the March issue of *BfK*.

JACKANORY (BBC1)

Details for the rest of the spring term.

Week beginning 23rd January, read by Penny Wilton:

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll, various publishers

Week beginning 30th January, read by Matthew Devitt:

Paddy on the Island, Ursula Moray Williams, Andersen, 0 86264 186 1, £5.95

Week beginning 6th February, read by Sophie Aldred and Jonathon Morris:

The Reversible Giant, Robert Leeson, Black, 0 7136 2864 2, £4.50

Princess Florizella, Philippa Gregory, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 82153 5, £4.50

The Last of the Dragons, E Nesbit, Methuen, 0 416 96700 0, £5.95; Puffin Classics, 0 14 035.069 1, £1.75 pbk

Never Kiss Frogs!, Robert Leeson, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 12489 1, £2.75

Week beginning 13th February, read by Peter O'Brien:

The Monday Sheepdog, Ivy Baker, Angus & Robertson, 0 207 15503 8, £5.95

Week beginning 20th February, read by Victoria Wood:

Matilda, Roald Dahl, Cape, 0 224 02572 4, £8.50

Week beginning 27th February, read by Tony Robinson:

Nicobobinus, Terry Jones, Pavilion, 1 85145 000 9, £7.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.2091 1, £2.25 pbk

Week beginning 6th March:

My Friend Walter, Michael Morpurgo, Heinemann, 0 434 95203 6, £7.95

Week beginning 13th March, read by Bernard Cribbins:

Jeremiah in the Dark Woods, Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 40637 6, £5.95; Young Lions, 0 00 671640 7, £1.75 pbk

The Reluctant Dragon, Kenneth Grahame, Methuen, 0 416 46270 7, £6.95; Deutsch, 0 233 98041 5, £4.95; Young Lions, 0 00 670544 8, £1.75 pbk

Week beginning 20th March, with the Auckland City Opera Ballet:

Dance Tales

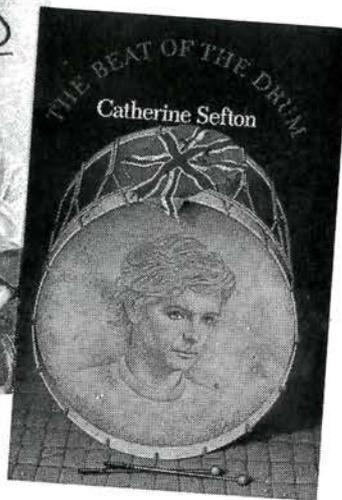
Week beginning 27th March:

The Whipping Boy, Sid Fleischman, Methuen, 0 416 12512 3, £5.95; Magnet, 0 416 08812 0, £1.99 pbk, due May 1989



The Falcon's
Malteser.

Take a look at teenage reading with HAMISH HAMILTON CHILDREN'S BOOKS



GOGGLE EYES Anne Fine

A highly amusing read from Anne Fine where two serious subjects – coping with a parent's new partner and the nuclear controversy – are skillfully handled with a deceptively light touch.

0241 12617 7 £7.95 March

THE BEAT OF THE DRUM Catherine Sefton

Brian Hanna is a young Protestant teenager, confined to a wheelchair as a result of a bomb blast which killed his parents – yet he strives to maintain a balanced viewpoint on life in Ulster.

0241 12642 8 £7.95 April

Also to be published by Hamish Hamilton this year are new novels by:
Berlie Doherty
Robert Swindells
Judith O'Neill
Ouida Sebestyen
Lois Duncan

This is the final part in Catherine Sefton's trilogy about the particular problems faced by young people in Northern Ireland.

Earlier titles in the trilogy include:

STARRY NIGHT (Winner of the Other Award and shortlisted for the Observer Teenage Fiction Prize) and **FRANKIE'S STORY**

F·R·E·E·W·A·Y — straight-talking fiction that covers all the angles

A

new trilogy from Jean Ure, characteristically funny and true to life, the story of the lives and loves of four stage-struck teenagers.



Trouble with Vanessa
0 552 524662 £1.95



There's Always Danny
0 552 524298 £1.95



Say Goodbye
0 552 524301 £1.95

J

ust how far can Megan and Bel go on a fiver each? A lively story with an irresistible wise-cracking style.

Just How Far?
0 552 524743 £1.95



Monster in Our Midst
0 552 524913 £1.95

A village says "No" to nuclear waste dumping and its teenagers are at the heart of the protest. A challenging novel, meeting head-on one of today's most debated issues.

F·R·E·E·W·A·Y — FOR TEENAGERS WHO WANT REAL BOOKS

BOOKS FOR KEEPS NEWS

Brough Girling.



Children's Book Foundation Appoints New Head

Book Trust, after several months reconsidering the future of its **Children's Book Foundation**, has announced the appointment of Brough Girling as the new Head of CBF who takes up this important job from 1st January 1989. Brough would appear to be well suited. He took a degree in Education at Oxford, has worked for one of the largest booksellers in the UK (Books for Students), and was Head of Publicity and Promotion for the Hamlyn Group. He is probably best known as the creator, Campaign Director and driving force behind Readathon, the hugely successful sponsored reading event. He will continue in this role. When asked about the prospect of re-establishing the rather damaged image of the CBF, he said:

'Schools are the powerhouse of children's reading, not just the teaching of it, but also for the acquisition of the recreational reading habit. To a busy teacher the sheer range of children's books can be bewildering (it is for parents too, incidentally) so we'll need to encourage and guide them. Our industry does not have the cash to evangelise about the pleasures of reading to children - not to the extent that I want to do it - so we will have to win sponsorship from people who have. The **Children's Book Foundation** is ideally positioned for this important job.'

He is clearly stressing the strategic importance of schools and teachers to the children's book market and thus for the future direction of the CBF. We wish Brough well and, not for the first time, look forward to a fruitful and creative relationship with a revitalised **Children's Book Foundation**.

Directory of Children's Writers from Scotland

From **Book Trust** in Scotland comes an updated version of its invaluable directory of children's writers willing to make visits to schools and libraries. There is a detailed entry on each author describing the age group of children preferred, ideal number per group and number of groups per visit, areas covered, any special requirements, and the author's most recent titles. Also included are introductory notes about booking and looking after an author, and planning a book event in general. Available from Book Trust Scotland, 15a Lynedoch Street, Glasgow G3 6EF (tel: 041 332 0391), price £2.50 inc. p&p.



Sprint - a new paperback imprint for teenagers

Well, newish: the first four titles were launched by Simon & Schuster (the American publishing house now with a UK base) back in October 1988 and they're looking good. We've been passing them around teaching friends and getting back encouraging noises. There's another clutch of titles on their way this Spring to look out for. In the meantime, if you'd like more details, there's an Information Pack available with sample chapters, covers and book information. Write or phone Jo Waters, Simon & Schuster, West Garden Place, Kendal Street, London W2 2AQ (tel: 01-724 7577).

Catching Up on Awards the smarties prize

The 1988 Grand Prize winner of **The Smarties Prize** for children's books (and winner of the Under Fives category) was **Can't You Sleep, Little Bear?** (Walker Books, 0 7445 07960, £6.95) by Martin Waddell with illustrations by Barbara Firth. They shared the the £8000 prize.



The other category winners, each receiving £1000, were:

Can It Be True?, Susan Hill, illustrated by Angela Barrett, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 12155 8, £6.95 (6-8 category)

Rushavenn Time, Theresa Whistler, published by and available from Brixworth Primary School, see page 4 (9-11 category).

The judges for the award were: Fiona Waters, Gyles Brandreth, Colin Hawkins, Helen Paiba and Kaye Webb. **The Smarties Prize**, established in 1985, is sponsored by Rowntree Mackintosh Confectionery and administered by Book Trust.

The Kathleen Fidler AWARD

For a first novel for children by a writer born or resident in Scotland.

The 1988 winner was **Flight of the Solar Ducks** by Charles Morgan, published by Blackie, 0 216 92585 1, £6.95



A sci-fi adventure, with environmental and rich/poor overtones running throughout, this is Charles Morgan's first book for children.

TES Information Book Awards

The **Senior Award** (10-16) went to **Martin Luther King** by Pam Brown and Valerie Scheldt, published by Exley in their 'People Who Have Helped the World' series, 1 85015 086 9, £4.99.

The judges were so impressed with its clear, sympathetic text and unusual photographs that it beat some stiff competition from more glamorous publications.

The **Junior Award** (up to 9) was won jointly by 'straightforward, beautifully illustrated, natural history' - **Conker**, Barrie Watts, A & C Black, 0 7136 2928 2, £4.50 - and a description of the complicated process of book production - **Making a Book**, Ruth Thomson, Franklin Watts, 0 86313 539 0, £5.25.

Both texts were commended for the clarity and naturalness of their tone for this age group and also for the aptness of their illustrations.

The Whitbread Award

Shortlisted for the Children's Novel category were:

The Monster Garden, Vivien Alcock, Methuen, 0 416 09192 X, £7.95
Awaiting Developments, Judy Allen, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 356 X, £8.95

A Map of Nowhere, Gillian Cross, Oxford, 0 19 271583 6, £7.95

The winner was **Awaiting Developments**, which now goes forward to be judged for the overall Whitbread Book of the Year. ■