



# BOOKS FOR KEEPS

UK Price £1.40 the children's book magazine NOVEMBER 1989 No 59

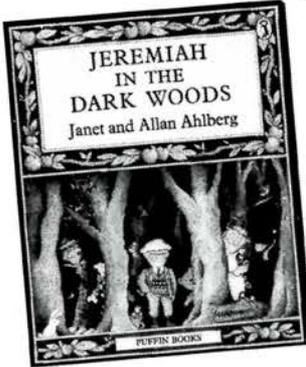
POETRY 89 / A Decade of Mother Goose / Astrid Lindgren

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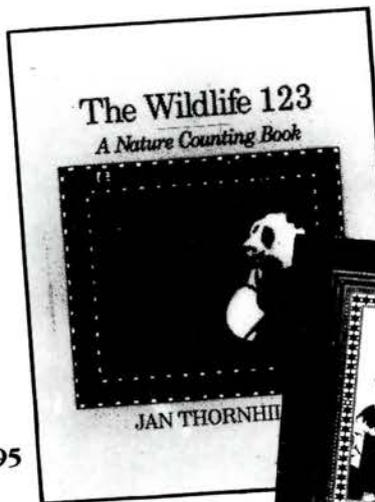


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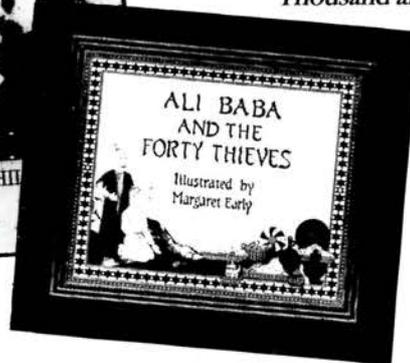


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## Cover Story

The illustration on our cover is taken from **The Eleventh Hour** by Graeme Base published this month by Macmillan (0 333 51867 5, £7.95).

We are grateful to Macmillan for help in using this illustration.

## BOOKS FOR KEEPS

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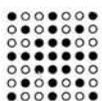
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# EDITOR'S PAGE



Who's the most translated living author in the world? According to Patricia Crampton, her British translator, it's the subject of this issue's Authorgraph: the Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren. Astrid's popularity world-wide dwarfs – or should I say tomtens – even that of our own Roald Dahl. See page 21 for Patricia's account of her friendship with one of literature's youngest octogenarians.



## Back to Base

Pictures, of course, need no translation which greatly increases the international appeal of illustrators like Graeme Base. We preview his follow-up to **Animalia** on page 22. It's called **The Eleventh Hour** – a whodunnit, would you believe, over which tens of thousands of Australian families have already scratched their heads. Graeme is just one of a whole new generation of artists working in children's books who've emerged in the last few years. Outstanding new talent in this country is celebrated by Clodagh Corcoran on pages 4-6 with her personal reflections on the Mother Goose Award for the best newcomer to British children's book illustration – founded by Clodagh and now on the brink of its second decade. To mark the anniversary, from Walker Books comes **Ten Golden Years**, an anthology of new poems by some of the best of current writers for children with each double-spread illustrated by a different Mother Goose winner. Appropriately enough, the book is dedicated to Clodagh herself. For who's done more to make sure that our wealth of illustrating talent isn't just recognised but constantly *renews* itself?

## Poetry Plus

Speaking of renewal, what of the upsurge in children's enthusiasm for verse in recent years? Yes, I know there are critics who insist this is more a matter of feeling the width of current publications rather than minding the quality but not every participant in the Gold Rush struck the mother-lode, either. There was still enough of the stuff in them there hills to justify all the excitement. On pages 27-30, Morag Styles panhandles for the real thing amongst poetry books published since BfK's **Poetry 0-16** which she edited with Pat Triggs last year. Copies of this are still available, by the way, price £5.50. 'No teacher or parent in possession of this admirable guide need ever again feel hesitant or ill-informed about poetry for the young,' said John Mole in the **TES** . . . and we're not going to argue.

Also considered in this issue is the poetry written *by* children – at least when they're lucky enough to have Gareth Owen in attendance. Gareth's reflections on being a writer-in-schools can be found on pages 23-25 together with a transcript of himself working on a poem with a group of young assistants. Rare data, this. And worth scrutiny if it leads to the sort of verse we print below. This emerged from a visit Gareth made last Autumn to Henley County Primary School. It's a sharp, timely reminder of how much many of us owe the 'Miss Goodman' in our lives and why financial cutbacks that undermine the library service are so barbaric. Thanks, kids. Thanks, Gareth.

*Chris*

## In Henley Library

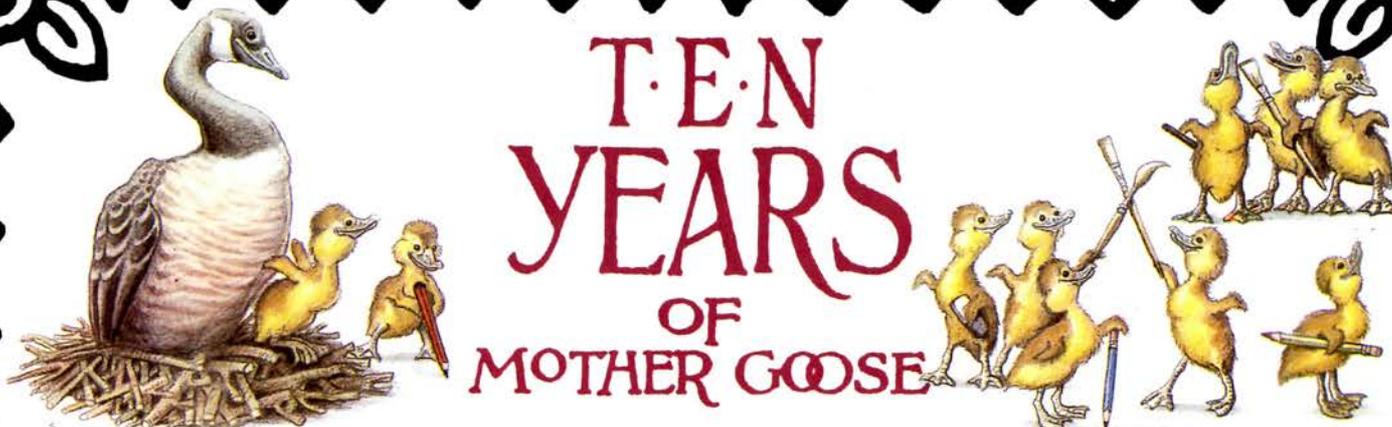
Miss Goodman stands behind the polished counter  
 Stamping books.  
 Her hair is frizzed and orange  
 And she wears a face  
 That's somewhere in between  
 A simper and a smile.  
 'These books are late,' she says  
 As if somehow the guilt lay with the books  
 Although of course it's me  
 Who has to pay the fine.  
 I hand across the thirty pence  
 That otherwise I would have spent  
 On polo mints and aniseeds.  
 The library smells of calor gas  
 And castle walls.

As always, the strange old lady  
 In the plastic pixie hat is there;  
 She shuffles, head up, frowning,  
 Searching the spines  
 In the section marked 'Romance'.  
 Above it is a poster  
 Warning you of AIDS;  
 'Don't take the risk,' it says.  
 Does that apply to everything?  
 I make for 'Stories'.  
 Outside the cars roar  
 Through the rain on Henley High Street.

In here I'm in a hundred different worlds;  
 Retrieving magic rings in Middle Earth,  
 Or in the fifth form at Saint Clares  
 Bolting my secret dormitory feast  
 With Isobel and Pat  
 Before Ma'moiselle comes round  
 To call lights out.

And then again  
 My trusty Hurricane,  
 (One wing a scarf of flame)  
 Limp bravelly home through streams  
 of flak  
 That flare up from the Dardanelles.  
 But someone, somewhere taps the message out:  
 'We will be back.'  
 Oh mother we'll be back,  
 With Love and Blood and Wild Adventure  
 'Neath our arms  
 Striding through the rain dashed faces  
 and the feet  
 Past shop fronts bright ablaze with lights  
 And faceless dummies staring at the street.  
 We will be back  
 Oh mother do not fret  
 We do this every week now  
 And it hasn't killed us yet.

(19.10.88, Henley County JI School)



**Clodagh Corcoran, onlie begetter of the Award (with a little help from her friends), looks back . . .**

Is it only ten years? I seem to have lived both with the Mother Goose Award and, latterly, without it for a much longer lifetime. Conceived on the long drive home from exhausting book exhibitions and lectures, along flat, isolated roads in South Yorkshire, nurtured for nine months, the Award was finally born as a golden egg, designed and executed by a Yorkshire artist, who used a real goose egg as a model for the first hatchings.

Is it only ten years since Jan Pieńkowski steamed off a train in Doncaster breathing fire and thunder about printers who couldn't, or wouldn't, carry out his instructions in the printing of the logo and lettering? I think he finally came to rest in Hull, finding there a printer who understood his need for perfection.

And that search for a 'balanced' panel of judges! God help me, how naive I was!

*'Not another bloody award.'*

*'I won't help unless you agree not to give an award when nothing deserves it.'*

*'Will I get a fee – expenses – free books?'*

*'I will if I can be chairman.'*

*'Who are you? What are you getting from this?'*

*'It will never get off the ground.'*

*'Publishers won't co-operate, they don't care, you know.'*

But it did get off the ground, and publishers did co-operate (albeit to a greater or lesser degree), nobody got a fee, the chair was democratically elected, and one year we really didn't give an award, on the principle that it's a bad idea to encourage mediocrity (and this was well before Ken Livingstone's 'don't vote it only encourages them' policy).

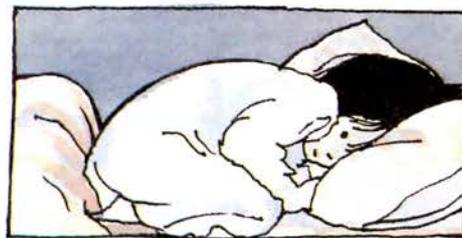
Why an award for *beginners* in illustration? Well, by 1978 I had been steeped in children's books and their illustration for some years. I recognised that a certain staleness was creeping in. Publishers were retrenching in the whole area of new writers and illustrators, preferring instead not to take commercial risks, and new artistic talent was not being nurtured. Such a policy could have denied children the experience of making contact with life-enhancing illustrations and books. I had no problems with the old artistic talent, but to quote from the philosophy of the Irish Children's Book Trust, 'Culture does not stand still. It is an amalgamation of the past and the present, leading into the future; a future where a strong sense of personal identity will be needed to preserve a balanced individuality.'

Our first hesitant Panel meetings established criteria for

the Award, 'the most exciting newcomer to British children's book illustration', and then set up an infrastructure to ensure we saw every book which fell within the framework of that criteria. On the whole publishers co-operated willingly, but we were occasionally exasperated enough to enquire from a recalcitrant one when they would be submitting a particular new illustrator's work. And on these occasions we could be met with a blank, frustrating, 'Oh! Yes. Mother Goose. Mmmmm. Have we details of that?'

In those early days of seeking to identify fresh new talent, it must be said that the publishers themselves frequently did not serve their illustrators as well as they might. Although as Panel members we knew exactly what we were looking for, there were some problems with the criteria 'most exciting newcomer'. When was a 'newcomer' not a newcomer? What if they had illustrated a magazine article, or done some minor work for an encyclopaedia? What about nationality – did the criteria mean British-born? Each problem was chewed over and resolved as it arose, and the clarification passed on. Nevertheless, there were some submissions made which clearly fell outside the criteria. And, horrors, on one notable occasion we chose the work of an illustrator whose publisher omitted to tell us that she had indeed done substantial work on a series of children's fully illustrated books. It was embarrassing, and disappointing for the illustrator, but we held fast to our guidelines and survived. Effectively what the criteria sought to identify was the first major, UK-published, illustrated book for children. The nationality of the artist was not an issue. If the first UK publication was part of an international simultaneous co-edition, we accepted that.

Looking back, our criteria served us extremely well. Within its framework we searched for vision, for empathy with the reader, for originality, for cohesion with the text being illustrated, if any, and above all we searched for the artist who could develop what we felt was exciting talent. What we sometimes found was poor colour register, bad binding, self-indulgence, stereotyping and a very surprising amount of derivative work showing clear plagiaristic tendencies, where the illustrator had identified too closely with, for example, Maurice Sendak or Pat Hutchins and, in so doing, had lost sight of his or her own individuality. And there was, and is, a lamentable lack of both black and white illustration, or information books, despite pleas to publishers to consider this particular art-form. The other, positive, side of this problem was those publishers who clearly served their illustrators well, with excellent book design, inviting jacket, editorial advice, and a heartening belief that children deserved the best they could offer.



Racism, sexism and chauvinism quickly became matters of contentious (and, with hindsight, frequently hilarious) debate amongst us. In the early part of this decade these were not burning issues for writers, illustrators or publishers. But they were certainly being confronted in some quarters. 'Debate', particularly at the final selection meeting, frequently teetered towards hand-to-hand combat between Panel members, with the pacifists retiring to make coffee for everyone. Or to pour more wine. In the beautiful, couth drawing-room of Shirley Hughes' home, set in a peaceful leafy part of west London, words like 'patriarchy', 'ideology', 'gender' and, most terrifying of all, 'feminist propaganda' were hurled into the fray, and ricocheted around the bemused walls. Eventually, however, consensus would shuffle forward, hands in air, exhausted, and another Mother Goose winner was announced. Now, a decade later, I think we have indeed learned to accommodate all these issues, on an informed level, and learned not to equate them with censorship.

In ten years, thirty-eight emerging illustrators were identified by Mother Goose as special, deserving support and encouragement. Ten Golden Years brings many of them together in stunning, exciting celebration. The roll of honour is an impressive one:

## • THE • MOTHER GOOSE AWARD WINNERS

1979

Pippin and Pod

Michelle Cartlidge, Heinemann, 0 434 93140 3, £5.50;  
Magnet, 0 416 13682 6, £2.50 pbk

1980

Mr Potter's Pigeon

Patrick Kinmouth, illustrated by Reg Cartwright,  
Hutchinson, o/p; Pocket Puffin, 0 14 03.3103 4,  
£1.95 pbk

1981

Green Finger House

Rosemary Harris, illustrated by Juan Wijngaard,  
Eel Pie, o/p

1982

Sunshine

Jan Ormerod, Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80353 7, £6.95;  
Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.362 5, £1.95 pbk

1983

Angry Arthur

Hiawyn Oram, illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura,  
Andersen, 0 86264 017 2, £5.95; Picture Puffin,  
0 14 050.426 5, £2.25 pbk

1984

The Red Book of Hob Stories, 0 7445 0120 2

The Green Book of Hob Stories, 0 7445 0121 0

William Mayne, illustrated by Patrick Benson, Walker,  
£2.95 each

1985

Badger's Parting Gifts

Susan Varley, Andersen, 0 86264 062 8, £6.95;

Picture Lions, 0 00 662398 0, £1.95 pbk

1986

Not awarded

1987

A Bag of Moonshine

Alan Garner, illustrated by Patrick James Lynch,

Collins, 0 00 184403 2, £8.95; 0 00 184449 0, £4.95 pbk

1988

Listen to This

Laura Cecil, illustrated by Emma Chichester Clark,  
Bodley Head, 0 370 31100 0, £7.95

1989

Bush Vark's First Day Out

Charles Fuge, Macmillan, 0 333 46280 7, £6.50

So many of the Award-winning artists have developed that indefinable *something* which instantly identifies them to the reader. There is no confusing the subtle style of Jan Ormerod's illustration for 'Haiku' with Satoshi Kitamura's exuberant, tongue-in-cheek interpretations for 'Nice to See the Boys Playing So Well Together'. This year's winner, Charles Fuge has succeeded in investing each animal with its own personality, complementing perfectly the zany verse of John Rice's 'Bears Don't Like Bananas'. The most pleasant surprise, for me, however, in Ten Golden Years is the current phase of Patrick Benson's work. Winner of the 1984 Award, I had lost sight of his progress, and here I find his bopping anarchic teddy-boy rats, complete with dayglo pink socks, a joy to behold in 'Rattin' It Up'. But particularly I loved the 100mm lens effect he uses to illustrate Shirley Hughes' poem 'Fishy'. Why does Susan Varley's work move me in a most mysterious way, and why do I always feel so nostalgic about Michelle Cartlidge's teddies? Juan Wijngaard's Award-winning Green Finger House saw a wonderful combining of text, cameo sketches and full-colour illustrations, foretelling a great talent. As I look at his work in this book, I know our choice was inspired. Inspired too was Reg Cartwright, who introduced us to Mr Potter's Pigeon in 1980, giving us the essence of

sympathetic characterisations. Readily accessible for young minds is the delicate work of Emma Chichester Clark and Patrick Lynch (who is sadly unsung here in Ireland, in a country without a body of native modern illustration).

There are no 'bests' in *Ten Golden Years* – the standard of illustration throughout is excellent. I look at it, stroke its pages, in wonderment, and marvel at the verve, confidence and sheer exuberance of the illustrators. To be so talented and so uninhibited in that talent is a wonderful thing. If there had been no Mother Goose perhaps their creativity would not have found expression in this particular way. But there was, and it did, and so that rite of passage known to us all as childhood, has been enhanced immeasurably. To own it is a must for anyone who is remotely interested in children's literature. But it is most particularly the child, lucky owner indeed, who will get intense pleasure for many years to come, through this collision of talent.

Do I have a favourite Mother Goose winner? I am in awe of all of them, but were you to put a shotgun to my head to encourage me choose just one, it would have to be Susan Varley. Or maybe Charles Fuge. Or, wait, maybe Patrick Benson. But then I love Jan Ormerod. Oh, hell . . .

Somewhere in the early eighties I closed up my shops, sold my home and returned abruptly to Dublin, in

personal crisis. I left behind an embryonic Award and a flock of Geese who, to their enormous credit, carried on the work. In admirable generosity of spirit Rosemary Stones, Shirley Hughes, Jan Pieńkowski and Chris Powling in particular steered it through these tricky times, sought and found a strong and courageous Mother Goose in Sally Grindley and Books for Children, and kept me informed, despite my ruffled feathers and deafening silence from Dublin.

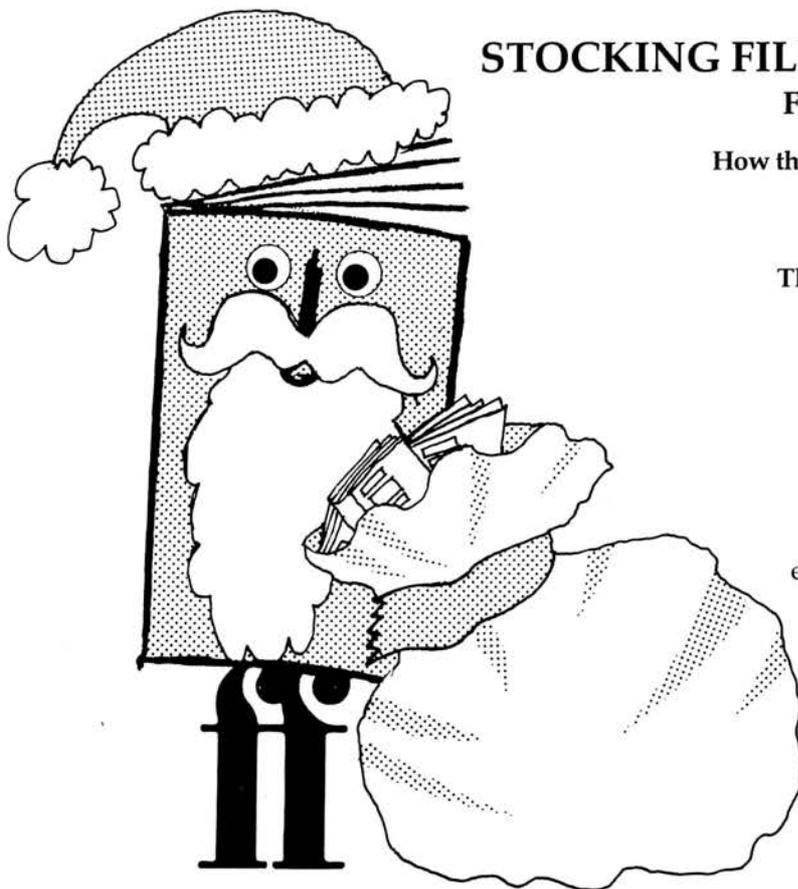
Occasionally I spread wings and fly to London for the annual Award, hissing and feeling hostile towards everyone because I am no longer actively involved, but am nevertheless emotionally engaged at some deep level. As I write this, I remember the day, in 1985, when I found Jan Pieńkowski's original artwork for the logo and lettering (which I had carefully preserved, wanting posterity for 'my' Goose), and I sat down and wept for a long time. I weep no more, for 'my' Goose has grown up, stretched her wings and now flies successfully, year in and year out. ■

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Clodagh Corcoran now lives in Dublin. She is Chair of the Irish Children's Book Trust, and buyer for the Children's Book Department of Waterstone's, Dublin. She has recently edited *Baker's Dozen*, an anthology of new Irish writing for young adults, published by Poolbeg Press.

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*Ten Golden Years*, a collection of new verse illustrated by ten Mother Goose Award winners, is published by Walker (0 7445 1214 X, £9.95).



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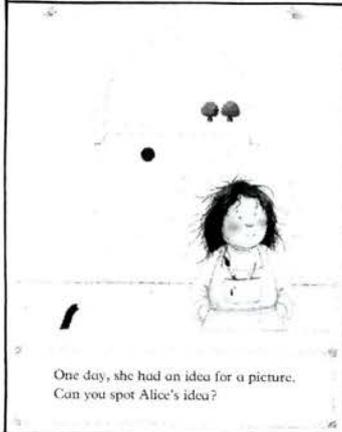
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*faber and faber*

# 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.

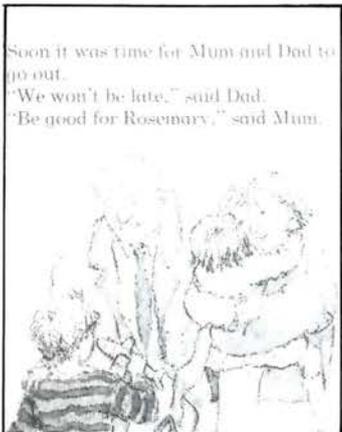
## Nursery/Infant



### Alice the Artist

Martin Waddell, ill.  
Jonathan Langley, Little  
Mammoth,  
0 7497 0003 3, £2.50

This book hits the nail on the head! Alice, like so many children, has a wonderful idea for a painting but is swayed by her friends to change it and include all their ideas with bizarre results. We travel with her into fantasy as she learns to trust her own judgement and finally returns to paint her original idea. The story works well, touching a chord of self awareness in many, and Jonathan Langley's cleverly understated illustrations with their delightful visual tricks complement it perfectly. JS



### Daisy and the Babysitter

0 340 49615 0

### Daisy Goes Swimming

0 340 49616 9

Tony Bradman, ill.  
Priscilla Lamont, Picture  
Knight, £1.99 each

We can't wait to get our hands on the rest of the series! These stories truthfully reproduce children's fears and reactions when they are in new and

unnerving situations without in any way trivialising them. Through these books we share Daisy's feelings and experience reassurance as she is helped by the important people in her life to cope with these, very real, moments of self-discovery. JS

### Sophie's Bucket

Catherine Stock, Little  
Mammoth,  
0 7497 0002 5, £2.50



Some books make one feel warm inside. Reminding one somehow of a Betjeman poem, Catherine Stock takes an everyday situation, a visit to stay at the seaside, and transforms it into the vibrant glowing magic that memories and dreams are made of. This is a special book. JS



### Casper's Week

Cindy Ward, ill. Tomie  
de Paola, Macdonald,  
0 356 16784 4, £2.50

A pleasant, comfy sort of book probably intended for 2-5 year olds. The illustrations are softly coloured and help the simple story line move along nicely as a little cat gets up to mischief, creating a different kind of mess for every day of the week. Children are often entertained by things they perceive to be naughty and may well find Casper's antics funny while getting used to the order of the days of the week. Definitely to be recommended. MS



### A Bun for Barney

Joyce Dunbar, ill.  
Emilie Boon, Picture  
Corgi, 0 552 52512 X,  
£2.50

A large paperback using good strong colours to illustrate a counting story about Barney the bear, who has a delicious looking iced bun with five cherries on top. Just as he is about to eat it, he meets first a wasp, then a mouse, then a crow and so on, with each of them eating a cherry until there are none left. When he meets a bear who wants the bun, Barney eats it up in case the bear gets it... A good counting game with a satisfying rhythm and beat, giving the listening child a chance to join in. 2-4 year olds should enjoy this both at home and at school. MS

### The Perfect Day

John Prater, Picture  
Corgi, 0 552 52513 8,  
£2.50



This is a story about a family and, as we all know, families are never perfect. This one is no exception. Kevin goes to the beach with his mum, dad and sister and, although it should be perfect, he finds something to complain about all the time: the sun's too bright, his hair gets wet, he loses a flipper... However at the very end something does

please him which makes the story funny and rewarding to complete. A realistic, reassuring book for 3-5s. MS

### Twice Mice

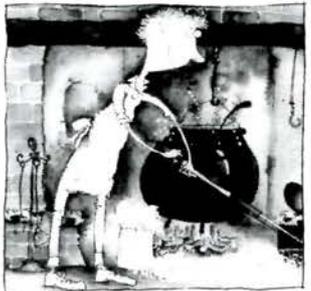
Wendy Smith, Picture  
Puffin, 0 14 050.804 X,  
£2.50

Thelonus is an 'only' mouse, and the story begins when his father tells him he is about to become a brother! Very soon he finds himself the brother of twin sisters but discovers when they return from hospital that his father has no time to play football with him and his mother is always busy with the babies. Things begin to get better when his father asks his advice about names for the twins (he decides on Thelonica and Melodica) and even better when Thelonus discovers he can entertain the babies and that there is going to be a party to celebrate their arrival.

I really like this book; it's funny, unusual and deals well with the emotional upheaval for a child experiencing the arrival of a new baby in the family. MS

### Prince Cinders

Babette Cole, Picture  
Lions, 0 00 662964 4,  
£2.50



The story of Cinderella, the alternative version, about a prince who is shy and gets turned into the wrong sort of prince to go to the disco. It would be sacrilege to tell this to children who have never heard the real Cinderella so I would leave this for older ones who will be able to see the parallels in it. As always with Babette Cole, this is a very funny book and one which should be around for all the family... and certainly around for people who work with small children and who sometimes are in danger of losing their sense of humour, especially towards the end of term! MS

# Infant/Junior

## Floella Hits the Roof

Jane Holiday, ill. Kate Simpson, Young Lions, 0 00 673375 1, £1.95

When Floella goes to the assistance of a dragon who has crash-landed onto the roof of Great Bootington Town Hall, she becomes involved in a conspiracy, hatched by the ghoulish Miss Squidger, to seize the lost sapphires of the Bight family, lovable and impoverished aristocrats who are trying to protect their island from Squidger's clutches.

This is a convoluted tale whose plot I found too slight to carry all the whimsical embellishments. However, it is a charming enough story, with some touches of dry humour, and it should appeal to competent readers who like their dragons to be slightly cuddly and their villains not too threatening. GH

## Melanie Brown Goes to School

Pamela Oldfield, 0 571 15346 1

## A Time to Laugh

Sara and Stephen Corrin, 0 571 15499 9

## Lavender Shoes

Alison Uttley, 0 571 15344 5

## The Green Wishbone

Ruth Tomalin, 0 571 15438 7

## Bottle Rabbit

Bernard McCabe, 0 571 15339 9

## The Iron Man

Ted Hughes, 0 571 14149 8

Faber, £1.99 each

Faber have made somewhat abortive attempts to launch a children's paperback list on a previous occasion – remember Fanfares? – but one hopes that this latest venture which again draws exclusively on their well-established hardback list will be more successful. The list is launched with two selections: one for 'older readers 8-12 years' and the other comprises these six titles 'for younger readers 5-8 years'. I would argue strongly that this is misleading: very few solo readers of under eight would be able to tackle successfully the texts in any of these books although many would enjoy hearing the stories read aloud. And to limit Ted Hughes' brilliant *The Iron Man* to the undernines would be doing a great disservice both to the book and many potential older readers.

*Melanie Brown Goes to School*, first published in 1970, is now

rather dated in some respects. 'Wendy houses' have now become home corners, domestic play areas and so on, and in many places crates of school milk bottles have become a victim of the education cuts. However, these short stories could still be read aloud to, and enjoyed by, those of around Melanie's age (five) who should respond to this rather self-possessed young miss with a tendency to overdo things in her attempts to please.

*A Time to Laugh* is a collection of fifteen amusing tales selected by the Corrins who have given a global perspective to their collection with the inclusion of folk tales from India, Africa, Russia and Rumania alongside more modern stories by writers such as Ruth Ainsworth and Alf Pröysen. A strong vein of humour runs right through the book which offers hours of happy listening for infants and can be enjoyed by confident solo readers at the lower end of the junior school.

Alison Uttley has a quiet, distinctive, spellbinding charm which can still transport her audience into the idyllic countryside of Tim Rabbit, the Little White Hen (will they see a resemblance to that more famous Red Hen?), and the mice, Jemima and Jeremy. Try *Lavender Shoes* and see.

I was greatly impressed by Ruth Tomalin's *The Green Wishbone* some fourteen years ago when at the beginning of my teaching career I wished I had the right audience with which to share it (I was working with mixed 4s to 7s). Having read the book again I am still impressed by its directness and the way it catches the absolute straightforwardness of children around seven like Holly and Jon in the story who find a 'wishbone' brooch (really a sprig of mistletoe) which helps them in the realisation of their dearest wishes. Try offering to confident readers of around eight.

*Bottle Rabbit* is the only one of the batch first published in the last year or so by an author new to me and a real find. There are seven tales which feature the endearing Bottle Rabbit and other interesting animal characters not the least being the marauding and perfectly named Crad, the vulture, who should delight both young listeners and able solo readers. This charming rural fantasy would make an interesting comparison with Alison Uttley's tales for those readers who are able to think about 'how does the author do it?' as well as 'what happens next?'

There can be little left to say about the now classic modern fantasy, *The Iron Man*, which

holds readers in its thrall from its gripping opening chapter right through to its equally powerful climax. This multi-layered tale of light against dark is one which every child ought to encounter in his or her journey as reader and each re-reading will bring fresh insights and enjoyment. Now with Andrew Davidson's new illustrations and cover design, the book is even more dramatic. JB

## The Real Thief

William Steig, Faber, 0 571 12101 2, £2.99

Gawain the goose is the loyal guardian of the treasurehouse in the court of his beloved king, Basil the Bear. When a fortune vanishes piecemeal from his custody, Gawain is accused and publicly condemned. His loyalty is destroyed with his reputation and he escapes from captivity after making a scathing declaration of hatred against the entire court. The real thief is a pathetically covetous little mouse who, tormented by guilt, pursues Gawain into the wilderness, seeking to re-establish the integrity of his own personality and that of the state.

This is a beautifully told story, which deals gently but honestly with the anguish arising from affection betrayed. The use of animal characters is effective in refracting painful events while maintaining a sense of empathy. The book is ideal for reading aloud, and highly recommended for independent readers of all ages. GH

## Little Red Riding Hood

Trina Schart Hyman, Oxford, 0 19 272196 8, £2.50



Trina Schart Hyman manages to capture an old fashioned, sumptuous quality in her detailed illustrations without losing any lightness of touch. The marriage of text to illustration and the beautiful use of borders draw the reader along in a complete pageant of sensations. The old Grimm story retains its build-up of suspense with a strong crispness of language that

increases the immediacy and yet is still accessible to newly independent readers. One of my children said, 'This book feels . . . good' going on to sniff the pages appreciatively and I knew just what she meant! JS

## A Dog for Ben

Jean Richardson and Joanna Carey, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050.888 0, £2.50

Once again this team seems to have produced a book which is thought-provoking and challenges young children to re-examine their initial reactions. That they manage to do this without coming across as pompous or moralising is a real tribute for they don't pull any punches or hesitate over setting the children up.



Ben desperately wants a dog but finds it hard to come to terms with the reality of actually getting a Pekinese instead of the dog of his dreams – a big one 'who could run like the wind'. Ben's resentment and his unpleasant treatment of the poor animal as well as the most unattractive aspects of the dog are portrayed convincingly but so too is the gradual awakening of respect and love in their relationship. All the children reviewing the book for me thought it was good and a surprising number spent a considerable time arguing about the ethics of it – a good sign! JS

## Abigail at the Beach

Felix Pirani, ill. Christine Roche, Picture Lions, 0 00 662994 6, £2.25

There were diametrically opposing reactions to this book – the children either raved about the book ecstatically or looked on in bewilderment at the others as they said they felt it was silly and how could Abigail's daddy be in the Secret Service and the Marines and the Mafia, and what was the Marines anyway?! A lot of the humour

is really slanted towards the adult but more than enough children responded to Abigail's imaginative flights and her gutsy defence of her sandcastle to make for a really good humdinger of an argument between the rival camps. A must for the classroom collection! JS

### Rain and Shine

Paul Rogers, Young Lions, 0 00 673379 4, £1.95

Seven short stories revolving around Ned (7), Nina (4) and Joshy (2) who live in the country with their mum and dad and a big dog and stripy cat. Their everyday activities such as playing pirates, hide and seek, and baking pies (spider pies in Joshy's case) are described in a very direct style which is equally appropriate for young listeners or for solo readers of around Ned's age, who will especially appreciate Ned's dealings with his younger sister and brother. JB

### The Hairy Monster

Henriette Bichonnier, ill. Pef, Pocket Puffins, 0 14 03.3135 2, £2.50

The rhyming exchange between Lucy and the hairy horror is sufficient to ensure that this neo fairy tale of a down-to-earth princess and a hairy, child-eating monster will be a winner with new solo readers. Who could resist this: "Princesses should not be rude, you weren't born in a slum!"



"Hairy bum."  
"Right, we are through."  
"Hairy poo."

JB

### Princess Gorilla and a New Kind of Water

Verna Aardema, ill. Victoria Chess, Picture Piper, 0 330 30776 2, £2.50

A lively retelling of an African folktale. The structure is familiar: King seeking suitable husband for daughter devises task for would-be suitors, only here it is animals not humans who act out the drama. The Princess wants only someone who loves her but the King is determined to find the strongest, bravest son-in-law.



'Whoever can drink this barrel of a new kind of water will be allowed to marry my daughter,' he decrees (he couldn't read the word vinegar). Various animals try and fail till a tiny Talapoin monkey (plus helpers) tricks the King. He is then faced with a whole host of monkeys all demanding the Princess but the dilemma is resolved by Leopard and the Princess finally gets her chosen mate. Marvellously expressive pictures add to the fun of this story which will amuse both solo readers and listeners. JB

### Barney's Beanstalk

Sylvia Fair, Macdonald, 0 356 16742 9, £2.50

Barney loves to draw,



especially on walls, so when he learns of an attempt on the record for the longest pavement drawing in the world he can't wait to get started. The problem is that his pitch is outside Mrs Winkey's shop and she won't allow him to draw anything. So Barney's plans for a huge elephant have to be abandoned. But thanks to some imaginative thinking inspired by his grandmother's beanstalk he manages to get around the problem - literally.

Sylvia Fair's longish story picture book with its wealth of pavement artistry is a treat to look at and the story idea is a clever one. However, there seem to be several places where the textual cohesion is lost and I had to check that I had not turned over two pages by mistake. JB

### The Tale of the Tooth Fairy

Helen East, ill. Katinka Kew, Macdonald, 0 356 16758 5, £2.50

When Jack asks his mother about tooth fairies, his misconceptions about how they operate are put right by the tooth fairy herself who



types out her story for him to find along with his coin for his missing tooth. 'Nothing' tells of how she became the tooth fairy, where teeth go and much more besides. Nothing is far from the stereotype dainty fairy and her revelations are bound to amuse readers who will equally delight in the portrayal of both her and the fearsome gang of tooth collectors. JB

### Bubblegum Monster

Susan Lacy, Magnet, 0 416 13852 7, £1.75

An episodic story which features a Pakistani family, particularly Mussarat whose 10p ball from the bubblegum machine contains not the ring she was hoping for but a yellow monster with a passion for bananas. Having this monster around turns ordinary everyday events like a school netball game (does the author know the rules?) and a supermarket visit into rather extraordinary happenings for all concerned but especially for Mussarat's family.



I wanted to like this book but somehow it seemed to be trying just too hard to do everything right and for me at least it lacked that vital spark, though I suspect young readers will be less critical. JB

## Junior/Middle

### The Whipping Boy

Sid Fleischman, Magnet, 0 416 08812 0, £1.99

Jemmy is an apprentice rat catcher who has the misfortune to be recruited as royal whipping boy, collecting the blows due to the obnoxious Prince Brat. When the prince decides to do a runner, he takes Jemmy with him as a servant, and their relationship evolves through several stages as they endure pursuit by soldiers, cut-throats and a runaway bear. Before their adventures climax in a rat-infested sewer, an understanding of sorts has developed between them. This is a brisk and eventful



tale which keeps you wondering, almost to the last episode, as to whether the capricious prince will be humanised or not. It should maintain the interest of children acquiring independence in reading, and an author's note at the end, confirming the authenticity of the whipping boy custom, should generate some passionate discussion. GH

### Kelpie

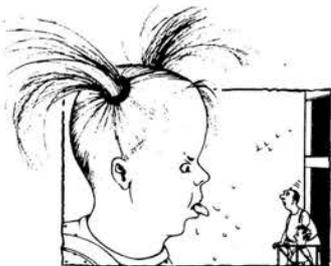
William Mayne, Puffin, 0 14 03.2854 8, £1.99

Kelpie is a loch-dwelling water horse, visible only to those who want to see him. Lucy, a fey child with the gift of

serendipity, encounters this protean creature while she is on a school journey to Scotland. She also picks up the fragments of a tenuous, organic chain from the lochside, and takes them with her back to England. Next summer, Kelpie appears in the lake near her school, searching for his lost bride.

The subsequent events are those of a gently humorous adventure story, but the tale is suffused with allusions to the symbolism of freedom and captivity: paradoxically, the purpose of the bridle is to liberate Kelpie, and it must be tied on by two people because the creature cannot be mastered by any one.

I found the story fascinating, but complexities of syntax and imagery mist the narrative in obscurity from time to time. The book should, however, appeal to competent readers who have a taste for subtle enchantment. GH



### The Bangers and Chips Explosion

Brough Girling, Puffin, 0 14 03.2695 2, £1.75

This slapstick fantasy about a school held to ransom by its villainous kitchen staff is somewhat marred by the silliness of its premises: that all children detest healthy food, that all dinner ladies are either angelic or demonic, that all criminals are skilled but stupid. The book also contains some of the most misogynistic writing I've seen in recent children's fiction. However, the story swaggers along at a fairly catchy pace, and should entertain all those juniors who are amused by the antics of dim coppers and overweight women. GH

### How to Fight a Girl

Thomas Rockwell, ill. Gioia Fiammenghi, Piper, 0 330 30616 2, £2.25

Billy Forrester, the hero of *How to Eat Fried Worms*, has his first brush with romance as a direct result of his vermivorous feat. His worsted rivals conspire to involve him in a compromising liaison with Amy Miller, the prettiest girl in the school. When Billy and Amy get together to plan a counter-conspiracy, they are, very predictably, inexorably attracted to each other.

In spite of a bewildering density of references to contemporary American culture, I found this book rather old-fashioned, in that Billy and his mates treat the flickerings of incipient sexuality as if they were the symptoms of some shameful disease. I was under the impression that most kids these days can't wait to get started. Perhaps things are different over there. In any case, the book deals in an appropriately tacky manner with the awkwardness of early adolescence, and should provide plenty of entertainment for youngsters who watch enough television to be able to comprehend all the transatlantic idioms. GH

### Greedy Alice

Helen Cresswell, Young Corgi, 0 552 52524 3, £1.75

Helen Cresswell's heroine, Alice, is a show-off as well as greedy. She loves to scoff as much as she can as quick as she can, and do headstands to impress her friends. So it's not surprising that when she is left a box containing a small green bottle labelled 'Drink Me', a biscuit with the instruction 'Eat Me' and a mushroom,

that she lands in trouble. For what she fails to see is the note from her Great Aunt Alice warning her to 'Beware', and it is only with difficulty that she regains her normal size after growing to giant and then miniscule proportions.

Clearly this amusing, easy to read story owes much to its progenitor *Alice in Wonderland* but it's none the worse for that. JB

### The Beach Dogs

Colin Dann, Beaver, 0 09 961380 8, £1.99

I couldn't quite come to terms with the way the animals in this tale talked, acted and reacted so much like humans. I guess children can waive this providing the story is fast and exciting which, until the last third, isn't really so in this tale. The rivalry for terrier Zoe's affection between Smoothie Jack mongrel and geriatric Bertram Boxer is a bit dull and slow but the introduction of faithful wolfhound Liam does inject some mystery and later excitement when the animals are trapped on Clany Island and realise that the other hound's patch is not always greener and man is a dog's best friend after all. DB

### The Rival Games

Michael Hardcastle, Magnet, 0 416 13722 9, £1.99

Michael Hardcastle's 100th published title dwells largely upon a host of hopeful youngsters training themselves for the running, cycling, throwing and jumping of Amertown Rival's very own Olympics, in honour of a local high-jumping hero. Play to win but play fair, and total dedication to your chosen sport will bring the rewards of medals and acclaim, seem to be the predominant messages in this rather over-populated book that might allure the sports mad, but might not have enough suspense to keep them reading to the end. DB

### Tom's Amazing Machine

Gordon Snell, Beaver, 0 09 960890 1, £1.99

There's plenty of swift action and tight plotting in this amusing tale of one boy and his computer Zenda, whose relationship becomes an affecting friendship, largely due to the machine's amazing capabilities, including the

power of speech and even a sense of humour! The havoc and incident that this duo cause at home and at school in just a few days prior to Guy Fawkes Night should entertain even the most reluctant boys and ought to entice the computer buffs away from tele-print and into print on paper.

I'm already consulting colleagues on its suitability for a lower secondary class reader; it'll read aloud well and serialise well. DB

### In the Kingdom of the Carpet Dragon

Ralph Batten, Lion Publishing, 0 7459 1533 7, £1.99

A gentle story in the fairy tale tradition; Princess Anah is set a royal birthday quest. She has to find one thing in the kingdom that needs changing and she has a birthday gift of a stone on a golden chain to help her - and Doxa, a tufted and incredibly clumsy, pet carpet dragon who, in spite of or perhaps because of his loyalty to her, is a cuddly and lovable hindrance. Each hilarious episode can be read in isolation and yet they all hang together wonderfully naturally to show Anah growing into a true princess in the most admirable of ways.

A delight to read and a good resource for assemblies for the middle school. Themes of boastfulness, humility, listening, caring, tolerance and pride receive sensitive attention. Each can be understood as a straight narrative or a deeper allegorical tale - a superb touchstone for discussion. PH

### Owl and Billy and the Space Days

Martin Waddell, Magnet, 0 416 13932 9, £1.75



A highly amusing and enchantingly written foray back into a world filled with the sunlit innocence of childhood. Billy's half-term stretches out in front of him, seven whole days to play with his friends Owl, Woggly man, Mum and Mr Bennett from the old folks home. It is a big secret between these few friends that Mr Bennett is really a spaceman who

receives space messages giving them ideas about what to do each day. Together they, and we, enjoy seven splendid adventures on Moonday, Chooseday, Weddingsday, Fairsday, Pic-day, Sat-on-day and Sunday.

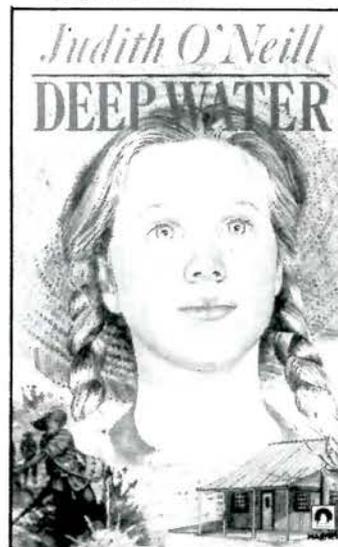
A book full of fun which had my six-year-old visitor enthralled and was enormous fun for me as the reader too. The sheer delight in playing with words and the strong repetition made for good reading and very loud joining in! PH

### Old Man on a Horse

Robert Westall, Hippo 'Hauntings', 0 590 76082 3, £1.95

A refreshing departure from conventional family structures and an exploration into little charted waters. Seen through the eyes of Tobias, we experience the hippie camp at Stonehenge prior to the Solstice ceremony. The sudden crashing intrusion of the police instigates a sequence of events that abstract us from reality, through a powerful time shift, to another outcry for social individuality, the Civil War. Tobias is at first afraid and mistrusting, and struggles in his attempts to justify the seemingly unaccountable changes of dress and lifestyle he witnesses. It is this struggle for the logical that gives us the graphic realism that lifts this book beyond the ordinary.

One of a series of ghost stories for older readers, this latest addition provides a fresh input to topics of social conflict and personal expression. An evocative book full of realistic homely detail and powerful magical forces. PH



### Deep Water

Judith O'Neill, Magnet, 0 416 12642 1, £1.99

*Deep Water* is blown through with the searing winds of the Australian bush. Set in 1914 the Great War murmurs in the background only waiting to mete out its crippling effects in the remote community in Victoria. We see the chaos through the eyes of fourteen-

year-old Char who, when her elder brother enlists, is forced to help out on the farm; their lives hardened by the endemic problem of drought and split apart with the violence of persecution. The massacres at Gallipoli and their own casualties have reverberating effects, but throughout it all the solid, determined spirit of the settler is always evident.

An absorbing and moving book that had me reading until the early hours. Convincing in

the minutiae of life and yet not flinching from the harsh realities of universal injustice. I enjoyed it enormously and felt one of the family from the first page. PH

### The Karate Princess

Jeremy Strong, Puffin,  
0 14 03.2804 1, £1.75

Belinda of the title is wonderfully drawn and falls gloriously short of our expectations of a fairy

princess. A vague disappointment to her father because she grows up to be clever and not especially beautiful, she spends seven years living in the royal palace unnoticed, while her elder and prettier sisters marry. However now it is Belinda's turn and the king is worried. Cue for royal mum to the rescue! The seven years prove not to have been wasted when our thinking princess shows she has skills to bounce, biff

and bash her way past cut-throat robbers and palace guards to bring back the Bogle from the Marsh at the end of the World and claim her handsome prince.

Jeremy Strong has written a rollicking fairy tale that moves apace with enough thrills in each end-stop chapter to make a brilliant read-aloud. Be prepared for eruptive giggles from reader and listener alike as each page unfolds. PH

## Middle/Secondary

### Secret Persuader

0 00 693038 7

### Bomb Alert

0 00 693268 1

Pamela Oldfield,  
Armada, £1.95 each

These books feature the adventures of Ann Burnside, a teenager from a harmoniously broken home, who spends her summers commuting with her kid brother on a cruise liner between parents on either side of the Atlantic. This would be a cushy number, were it not for the fact that she is bedevilled by a mad scientist in the first book and terrorists 'with foreign accents' in the second. However, Ann spots the dangers before the dull but worthy crew and, assisted by doughty male chums, saves the day for the cruisesline and its wealthy clientele.

The flavour of this genre of serial writing is at its fullest in the second story, a tale in which stalwart passengers risk death in order to assist a kidnapped rock group, the immortal words, 'those blighters mean business', are uttered under gunfire, and a cadre of armed terrorists is overcome by a teenager with a fire extinguisher and an invalid with a crutch. A few people die violently, but they are mainly foreigners, and don't leave any mess. In short, this is the simplistic world of Ms Blyton and Capt. Johns, tarted up in the meretricious trappings of 1980s prolefeed: ostentatious prosperity, a little bland romance, and dollops of mild mayhem. Targeted at the teen market, and strictly for those who won't read anything else. GH

### Adam's Common

David Wiseman, Corgi,  
0 552 52511 1, £1.99

The past and present are cleverly mingled in this story which manages to explore the friendship between two boys from very diverse backgrounds in the Traverton of the 1840s, and a campaign to save a piece of common land from greedy developers in the 1980s. Historical detail, which often deters, is not intrusive but the baddies are rather stereotyped and the ending too convenient to be credible. Peggy



Donovan's quest to discover why Adam's Common is so called, believing that therein will be the key to saving it for future generations, makes a readable ghost story with a topical slant and some quite atmospheric writing. DB

### Tomorrow is a Stranger

Geoffrey Trease, Piper,  
0 330 30903 X, £2.25

Topical addition to a long line of prestigious books, **Tomorrow is a Stranger** was published on the eightieth birthday of the author. Telling of the wartime invasion that destroyed tranquillity in the Channel Island of Guernsey, the day-to-day difficulties of living in Occupied Territory are given the breath of life as a back-cloth to Tessa and Paul's lives. Left behind after the evacuation, dramatic changes in their lives are not at first apparent but slowly, inevitably



the frightening experience of war, only seen on the news reels, comes to school and home.

Meticulously detailed research must make this the least painful of ways to learn about modern history. A vivid input into topics about World War II and no less as a riveting story of adventure, heroism, horror and growing awareness of political reality. You'll smell the Ovaltine and wince at the memory of mashed swede. Superb reading. PH

are sure to adopt it as a 'now' book. DB

### Angel

Richard Severy,  
Mammoth,  
0 7497 0014 9, £2.25

The Autumn term is fraught for Angie (Angel) Crockford and her twin Billy; the temporary headmistress has a down on them and their beloved railway, 'The Somerset and Dorset', is threatened by the Beeching Axe. This will do them out of a home when their father will cease to be a signalman. The only bright spots are a chance meeting with a blind lady and a spectacular televised solo in a Christmas church service. Readers of a certain age (mine!) will appreciate the peppering of sixties detail but modern-day youngsters might find it a bit bewildering. It's a gentle tale which should strike chords amongst a wide audience, especially of thoughtful readers. DB



### I Can't Stand Losing

Gene Kemp, Penguin  
Plus, 0 14 03.2677 4,  
£1.99

Mum, 'the everloving doormat', has upped rucksack and decamped to Greenham leaving her rather shiftless, hopeless family to fend for themselves, which they try to handle with their usual wayward incompetence. Patrick, self-confessed 'number one whizz kid', will rise above the proles and triumph, or so he thinks; after all he can charm the birds (and their mums) out of the trees. Unfortunately some birds have big burly brothers and their mums have a wealth of experience on their side! Brimming with bizarre characters, a catalogue of social problems and current issues, this makes a quick, thought-provoking read for older (male?) readers, who



# Older Readers

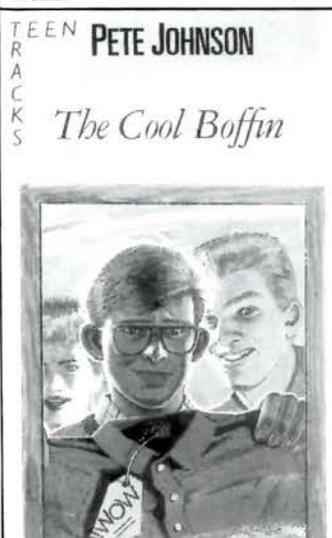
## The Falklands Summer

John Branfield, Lions Teen Tracks, 0 00 672888 X, £2.25

John Branfield's work has always had my wholehearted approval, but this latest book lacks the fluency – and to some extent the conviction – apparent in, for example, *The Fox in Winter* and more notably *The Day I Shot My Dad*.

*The Falklands Summer* is redolent of post-examination languor and the restlessness engendered by a long, empty summer. Matthew Walker has finished his examinations and his mind is full of the Falklands conflict, eager for heroic action. His chance soon comes in the shape of a new and unsympathetic local landowner who thoughtlessly begins to clear a wood and surrounding moorlands for building purposes. The man's lack of regard for local feeling and the plight of wild animals denied their natural habitat stimulate Matthew to devise a plan to assert the power of local identity. Accompanied by his friends, he attempts a dangerous night-time swim to Gull Island to claim it for the Cornish community but the attempt ends in disaster.

Branfield raises many thought-provoking issues, not least those of loyalty and identity, but his usual effortless style seems clipped and tense, almost jarring on the reader on occasion. *The Falklands Summer* should be read – 3rd and 4th year boys will enjoy it enormously – but not as an example of Branfield's best work. VR

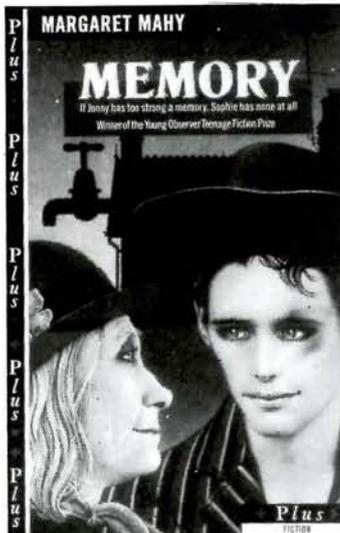


## The Cool Boffin

Pete Johnson, Lions Teen Tracks, 0 00 673373 5, £2.25

Richard Hodgson is fifteen and feverishly uncool. He is intelligent and fat, a boffin, and an outcast until through a twist of plot he changes and

attempts to become cool. His first attempts all show him up with those in the know (intended to include the reader). But he does make it and is given access to the social and emotional world previously closed to him. There is a greater degree of subtlety here than Pete Johnson has been known for and the humour of the stereotypes is developed to include some reflection on the shallowness of the cool world. The author knows this kind of school life very well and is very good at creating the series of dramatic scenes. Popular with 3rd years up and rarely in the book box for long. AJ



## Memory

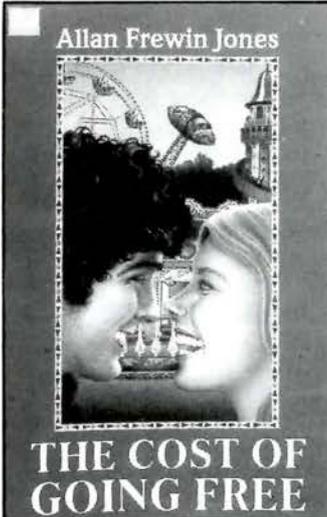
Margaret Mahy, Penguin Plus, 0 14 03.2680 4, £2.50

An intricate, delicate weaving of story continually teaching you the allusiveness and fascination of writing, of words which tug and play with connections. Margaret Mahy, as before, creates a world which suggests the possibilities of something more and, here, seems like memory itself. Jonny Dart has many of the Mahy characteristics and through drink and in darkness he begins the journey to re-examine painful memories. He encounters old Sophie whose house and life are a host of disordered memories. Sophie and her world is the true measure of Mahy's writing, existing unfixed in between the world of words. There's a lot for 4th and 5th years to think about and enjoy. AJ

## The Cost of Going Free

Allan Frewin Jones, Lightning, 0 340 49436 0, £1.99

Fifteen-year-old Sally lives with her twin brother and divorced mother in a household where the quasi-incestuous passions surface in



a strident alternation of badinage and vitriol, very vividly transcribed by the author.

During the half-term holiday, at a time when Sally's romantic illusions about her philandering father are beginning to shred, the fair comes to town, and Sally transfers these illusions to Tom, a handsome young man who works the rides. The relationship that develops between them involves both partners in a constricting web of deceit and thwarted desire.

This is a well-crafted book, dealing frankly with the agonies arising from sexual attraction and the tension between the urges for freedom and security. My main reservation about the book is in its treatment of the fairground worker. Mr Jones writes a couple of token complexities into Tom's character, granting him a scant centimetre of depth, but in comparison with the detailed exegesis of the middle-class characters' emotions, he remains a barely examined item of proletarian rough trade. GH

## Monster in Our Midst

Peggy Woodford, Corgi Freeway, 0 552 52491 3, £1.99

Stagwell village is under threat. Already the home of a nuclear power station, it has now been suggested as the site of a nuclear dump. The local community mount a vigorous protest campaign and Alan Page, despite the burden of public examinations, finds himself involved.

Less convincingly, he is increasingly drawn to Kathy Wilson, a daring and passionate sixth-form campaigner, and this developing relationship is the least successful area of the book. However, the cool, matter-of-fact prose in which the story is told echoes ironically the blandly reassuring information given

to residents by the PR team at the power station. This, combined with extracts from newspaper reports of the Chernobyl disaster and the garishly effective cover, make Woodford's novel a hard-hitting addition to a GCSE Wider Reading course.

Possibilities for Dual Certification assignments proliferate – less cold-bloodedly, the calm and reasoned quality of the writing ensures that the reader gives this subject the serious consideration it merits. VR

**The Pigman's Legacy**  
Paul Zindel, Lions Teen Tracks, 0 00 672977 0, £2.25

"It's the Pigman," Lorraine said. "That man is the Pigman reincarnated." Four months on in book time and more than a score of years in real time, an older and wiser John and Lorraine are drawn back to Pignati's house to become involved with yet another eccentric, unhealthy geriatric. This time their escapades are not on roller-skates but in an old Studebaker and John's chief peccadillo has graduated to gambling. It would be easy to brand it as the same story but this time there's a mellow tenderness, especially between the two youngsters, and mercifully they find that people can love each other and want to show that love without feeling the guilt that their parents have drilled into them . . . and that's the Pigman's legacy. DB

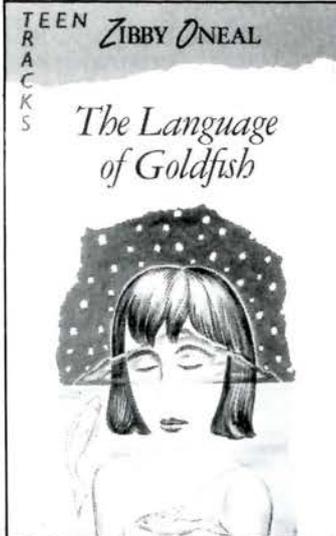
## Beware! Beware!

Edited by Jean Richardson, Lightning, 0 340 50096 4, £1.99

Eight of these nine 'Chilling Tales' involve the supernatural and each of them is engrossing. Peter Dickinson's 'The Spring' is about a young boy who meets the 'ghost' of his unborn twin brother; Adele Geras' beautifully written 'We'll Meet Again' is a poignant story in which the past (wartime Britain) and the present are inextricably mixed. In Jan Mark's 'Efflorescence', two boys' fascination with codes is given a supernatural twist. Jean Richardson, in 'The Road Home', creates effective suspense when a teenage girl, driving alone on a foggy night, is forced by the breakdown of her car to continue on foot.

These stories seem most convincing when the ghostly elements are lightly drawn, and are subordinated to other events and relationships for the majority of the tale. Supernatural stories are always popular with young readers, and this selection of works by such distinguished writers as Jane Gardam,

Vivien Alcock and Berlie Doherty, besides those already mentioned, will not disappoint. LN



### The Language of Goldfish

Zibby Oneal, Lions Tracks, 0 00 673165 1, £2.50

With the onset of puberty, Carrie experiences disturbing dizzy spells and 'visions' of an island with its reassuring associations of childhood. Through her painting and with the help of Mrs Ramsey, her art teacher, Carrie eventually copes with the transition to young womanhood. This sympathetic and closely observed account of an intelligent American teenager's shifting perspective on family and friends should appeal to a wide audience. Carrie's failure to communicate with essentially supportive parents will be familiar to many! However, the plot is virtually non-existent; this occasionally results in a uniformity of pace which some readers may find tedious. LN

### New Guys Around the Block

Rosa Guy, Penguin Plus, 0 14 03.2860 2, £2.50

This is the story of Imamu's struggles with his own conscience, his relationships with his mother and friends, and his fight for survival in the hostile streets of Harlem. The 'new guys' are sophisticated, intelligent Olivette and his young brother Pierre. Olivette's altruistic attitudes and breadth of outlook influence Imamu, but conceal a darker purpose.

The characterisation is convincing and, although Rosa Guy's world of streetwise black America is likely to be beyond the experience of most readers, she has convincingly captured the atmosphere of an impoverished, vicious environment. The main dialect is fairly easy to follow from context, but some readers may find themselves searching for a non-existent glossary. LN

### ME and Morton

Sylvia Cassedy, Lions, 0 00 672887 1, £2.95

Mary Ella (ME), a teenaged American, has a slow-learning brother, Morton. Initially, she is callous towards him and embarrassed by his slowness. Only after an accident which leaves Morton in a coma do ME and her parents really begin to understand and respect him.

Although there is some memorable detailed description of surroundings and equally effective drawing of Mary Ella's outlook on the world, this is a rather laborious read. The detail is exhaustive in quantity and Mary's egocentric outlook alienates the reader; her fantasy games seem inappropriate to a fourteen-year-old. Consequently it is difficult to imagine a reader who would persevere to savour the moving final section. This is, and seems, a long book which, with prudent editing, could have created a sharper impact. LN

### Out of the Ordinary

Annie Dalton, Mandarin Teens, 0 7497 0007 6, £2.25

Sixteen-year-old Molly Gurney is chosen to act as protector of a mute changeling boy, Floris. His parents' world of magic crystals and wizards' vendettas overlaps with Molly's experiences, and gradually she is able to tune into this other world at will. Her struggle to protect Floris from his parents' rivals, and the need to complete the 'Heartstone', result in effective suspense and climaxes involving magic forces of good and evil.

Molly's increasing attachment to Floris, her relationship with her benevolent but dishevelled mother, and her intimate feelings for the eccentric Icarus Ocean Tompkins are all convincingly portrayed. These effective descriptions of the 'human' characters contrast with the brief, two-dimensional glimpses of figures from the world beyond. The division between the two worlds is indicated by the use of sustained sections of italic print. This story should appeal to readers who enjoy fantasy and possibly to those who have some reservations about the genre. LN

### Tomorrow is Also a Day

Jean Ure, Mandarin Teens, 0 7497 0008 4, £2.25

The third of the Abe and Marianne books and to show how they've progressed this opens just after they have given up their virginity. It's part of the style of the book to deal sensibly and calmly with what might be shocking or even erotic. As before the book is full of sensible responses to issues: blindness, being a vegetarian, lesbians,

intercourse . . . The major issue is Marianne's mother's affair with a married man and there is at least some toughness in the resolution to that. Jean Ure makes it readable and has a strong following for these and her other novels. AJ

### Spellbound

0 340 49908 7

### Chain Letter

0 340 49909 5

Christopher Pike, Lightning, £2.50 each

Whodunnits or rather whosedoingits. There's a veneer of sophistication about these two, almost grown-up, horror books, junior Stephen King with Enid Blyton's device of the marginal adults. These kids can play at being adults – the American setting seems to allow supplies of money and cars to keep the illusion going – and there's much reference to sexuality and 'making it'. **Spellbound** is about a nice English girl who's really a vulture and there are some violent deaths and a good bit of twisting of plot. **Chain Letter** sticks to something like normality. The gang of kids share a guilty secret which the writer of the chain letter seems to know as she forces them to commit more and more serious task or be punished. Excitement of plot with a few demands on logic and thought. AJ

### The Earth Witch

Louise Lawrence, Lions Tracks, 0 00 673378 6, £2.50

Bronwen Davis moves into a dilapidated cottage in a small, tightly-knit Welsh community. Soon Owen, abandoned by his mother and brought up by his aunt and uncle, finds himself increasingly drawn to her. Eventually he finds himself unable to break away – Bronwen, Earth Witch, has claimed him as a sacrifice to perpetuate the Earth's renewal.

The cyclical pattern of medieval legend emerges – lover/mother, rescuer, observer: Kate is the rescuer as she intuitively senses Bronwen's true nature and defeats her through her own use of ancient power – 'people not only died for what they loved, they also killed for it.'

The book was written in 1982 and, linguistically, shows its age somewhat. The reproduction of the gentle Welsh lilt is over-stylised on occasion and the narrative line stumbles awkwardly in places. Do offer this through the medium of book boxes – perhaps most interestingly to 3rd years as a basis for a study of legend or as one component in an analysis of Lawrence's work. VR

## AUTUMN 'AAHS'.... AND CHRISTMAS CHEERS



SPIKE

The Sparrow Who Couldn't Sing!

Tony Maddox

1 85340 055 6 £5.50

5 Canfield Place · London · NW6 3BT

piccadilly press

# Audio Tapes

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

## Fun with Colours

## Fun with Opposites

## Fun with Shapes

Margaret Carter and Malcolm Bird, read by Elizabeth Lindsey, Tempo Early Learners with Campbell Blackie 24-page book, 40 mins, £2.99 each title

These excellent, colourful books feature character-packed Whiskers the Cat and Patch the Dog, and are crammed with learning through fun for 3-5 year olds at home or at nursery school. Colours, shapes and opposites are imaginatively explored through mini stories, puzzles, games, pictures to colour and things to make, like a crown with coloured 'jewels' or a tunnel and a bridge out of a cardboard tube to illustrate 'over' and 'under'. Everything is carefully geared to this age group. The tape with turn-over tone talks through the book. Excellent value.

## Selected Stories for Under Fives

Edited by Sara and Stephen Corrin, read by Andrew Branch and Heather Tobias, Puffin Cover to Cover, one tape, ten stories unabridged, 1 hr 5 mins, £3.99

The competent narrators' various accents (the Scottish hen), animal noises (the hissing snake) and volume (the whispering mouse, a roaring lion) enliven these ten stories and make the most of their oral tradition. There's the young lion who couldn't roar - until he roared for his mother when the snake hid him in a secluded part of the forest and 'the little small wee tiny man' who fed on dew drops and wheat grains, and longed for a companion. Just right for bedtime and playgroup stories.

## Oxford Reading Tree Storytape 1

Read by Hannah Gordon, Peter Davison, Floella Benjamin, Judi Dench and Barrie Rutter

## Oxford Reading Tree Storytape 2

Read by Barrie Rutter, Judi Dench, Madhav

Sharma and Sinead Cusack

With 24-page Oxford paperback storybooks, £1.05 each; pack of six or class packs greatly reduced. Oxford cassette, 85 mins, £7.50 + VAT

Oxford Reading Tree is Oxford's major reading programme for 5-7 year olds. It includes five stages of Storybooks and Sparrows, ten storybooks at Stages 3 and 4 providing extra reading practice for those who need a more gradual pace. They're lively, attractive and varied with titles like **New Trainers** (Stage 1) and **The Dolphin Pool** (Stage 3). The cassettes with their distinguished narrators provide extended versions of the 28 stories at Stages 2, 3, 4 and Sparrows. They help children link pictures and text as they listen with the turn-over tone.

A cassette box with 14 cassettes with one story on each side, particularly useful in primary schools, is available at £29.50 + VAT. An excellent cassette and book programme.

## It's Too Frightening for Me!

Shirley Hughes, read by John Bennett, Puffin Cover to Cover, one tape, unabridged, 25 mins, £3.99

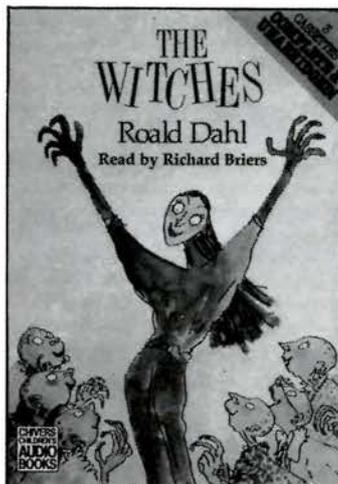
Screams that haunt Hardlock House, a white face at the window - no wonder Arthur and Jim run away, terrified, back through the creaking gate. But the face is harmless Mary who lives with her temperamental Granny. They're looking after the House for absent Captain Ginger Grimthorpe. When the belligerent Captain returns, Jim and Arthur hear his vicious dog barking and they're not allowed to see their new friend Mary who has to work like a slave. All the ingredients of a spooky story but, of course, there's a happy ending. It's cleverly dramatised using children's voices and has plenty of eerie sound effects.

## The Witches

Roald Dahl, read by Richard Briers, Chivers, three cassettes, unabridged, 3 hours, £11.95 + VAT

A witch is a woman who 'squishes and squiggles'

Rachel Redford reviews a selection of recent story tapes.



children and makes them disappear. 'She might even be your lovely school teacher . . . Look carefully.' What child can fail to be hooked? Listeners are told how to recognise 'Real Witches', those gruesome, child-destroying women who masquerade as ordinary people. As wise, cigar-smoking Grandma tells her little grandson, the tell-tale signs are missing finger nails and blue saliva. The unlikely setting for vanquishing the witches is the Hotel Magnificent in Bournemouth but although the witches are eliminated, the little grandson is turned into a mouse. This is irresistible Dahl and Richard Briers captures the cracking pace.

Also on Tempo double cassette, read by Judy Bennett, unabridged, 3 hrs, £4.99. Excellent value.

## Tanya Moves House

Elaine Abrahams, read by different narrators for each language, Harmony Publishing, with 12-page, large format, full-colour Harmony paperback, £6.50 (or cassette £2.00, book £4.50)

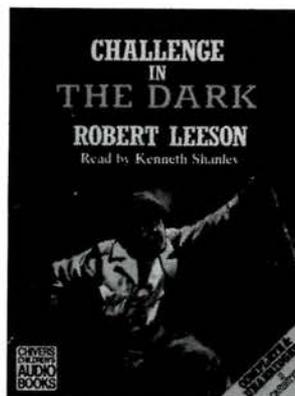
In English with Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali, Arabic, German or French.

As a teacher of ESL children, Elaine Abrahams believes young children build on their existing language, so that it is vital that their mother tongue should be continued until they have enough English to be bi-lingual. She produced her expanding, very bright and attractive series of dual-language, book and cassette packages for 4-8 year olds to help. Full-page coloured pictures encourage children to identify the details of the text illustrated in them. The sentences are clear and simple as are the stories; in this new title, Tanya moves from Bangladesh to settle happily in Britain.

## The Village by the Sea

Anita Desai, read by Pearl Padamsee, Mantra, six cassettes, unabridged, 6 hrs 10 mins, £25.00

Winner of the Guardian Fiction Award, this powerful story read by a leading Bombay actress appeals to a wide range of ages and cultures. Hari and Lila are the eldest of a rural Indian family stricken with a sick, malnourished mother and a drunken father. Finally Hari breaks away to Bombay and suffers exploitation in a street cafe in his efforts to make money to take home to his sisters. Meanwhile Lila and her sisters struggle against cruel odds at home - but there is a happy ending. Pearl Padamsee's dramatic performance conveys the full atmosphere of the Indian settings and characters, and the whole is enhanced by occasional Indian music.



## Challenge in the Dark

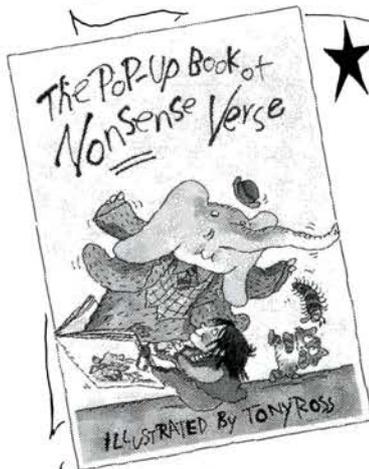
Robert Leeson, read by Kenneth Shanley, Chivers, two cassettes, unabridged, 1 hours, £9.25 + VAT

Read in an appropriate Northern accent, this gripping story is about young Mike Baxter. He's plagued at the Comprehensive by the bully Steven - until they decide to challenge one another. Which of them can stay down the longest in the disused air-raid shelter filled with blackness and stories of long-dead men? In the twenty minutes that drag like hours, Steven and Mike are forced to learn truths about one another and from understanding comes tolerance. An unobtrusive moral in a fast-moving story.

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.

# Count Down to a Cracking Christmas

with Viking Kestrel

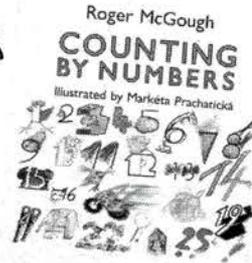


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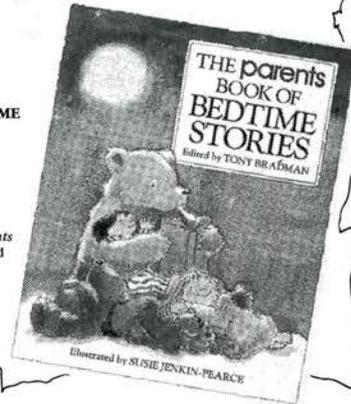


**HELEN HIGHWATER**  
by Roger McGough

Illustrated by Tony Blundell

The wonderful tale of Helen Highwater and her epic swim to save the town of Chucklewick is a great example of contemporary narrative verse and one to amuse all age groups.

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**PARENTS BOOK OF BEDTIME STORIES**  
Edited by Tony Bradman

Illustrated by Susie Jenkin-Pearce

Specially commissioned by *Parents* magazine, here is a fresh, new and exciting collection of stories for adults and children to share at bedtime.

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## Watch out, watch out! CUPID'S about this Christmas

The irrepressible offspring of the Goddess of beauty and the God of Thunder causes havoc when the family descend from the Land of Gods to live in Mount Olympus Avenue. No one escapes the amorous arrow and the results are, as one would expect from Babette Cole, outrageous and hilarious.  
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### Mini Monsters

Two of Hamish Hamilton's best-selling children's books are now available in mini editions, at mini prices! The perfect stocking-filler gift for children and adults.



**Have You Seen My Cat**  
Eric Carle £3.25  
Size: 96 x 128mm  
0241 124921



**The Snowman**  
Raymond Briggs £2.99  
Size: 130 x 94mm  
024112784X

### Russell Hoban Jim Hedgehog's Supernatural Christmas

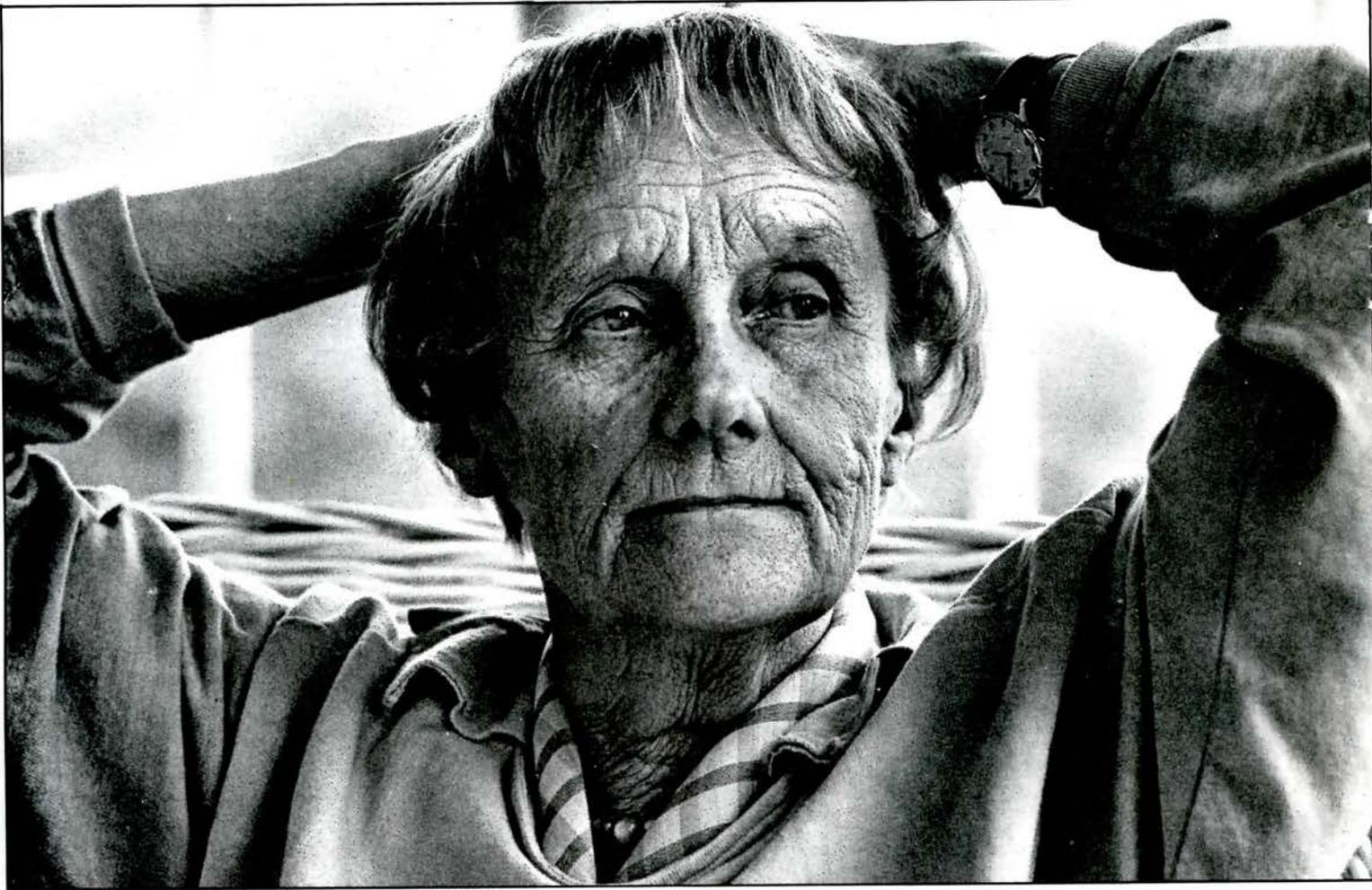
Jim Hedgehog likes nothing better than sitting in front of the TV-eating. One Christmas, settling down to watch his favourite film 'The Revolting Blob', events take an unusual turn when the Blob and the slob change places!  
0241127947 £6.95



HAMISH HAMILTON CHILDREN'S BOOKS

# Authorgraph No. 59

*Astrid Lindgren*



Astrid Lindgren is not so much an author as an industry – her sales figures are staggering: seventy or so books published in sixty countries in more than fifty languages. According to Patricia Crampton, provider of most of our English versions, she's the most translated author in the world with more than thirty million copies sold.

Add to this the usual authorial spin-offs – tapes, cartoons, musicals, plays, movies and merchandising – and it's small wonder that the Swedish Inland Revenue once taxed her annual income at 102%! Mind you, it did them little good. Her response was typical: a satirical fairy-story called 'Pomperipossa in Monismania' (no translation needed) at which the nation rocked with laughter. And, in the general election later that year, threw out the government. Astrid's fault? She grins impishly and refers us to the tale of a little old lady during the Blitz. 'She was sitting in the toilet in her house and at that very moment a bomb dropped and the house fell to pieces. When people came to dig her out, they found her laughing loudly. "Imagine," said the old lady, "I just pulled the chain and the house fell in!"'

The story's a perfect reflection of her humour and her modesty. Also that element of the subversive which brings instant child appeal. Right from the start, in fact, upsetting the expectations of her readership has been one of her trademarks. This, for instance:

*She was nine years old and she lived all alone. She had neither mother nor father . . .*

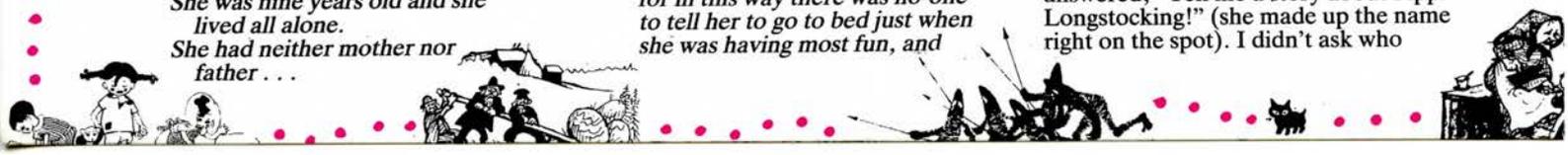
Sob-stuff? Not a bit of it! Astrid has had her own share of misfortune, notably the early deaths of both her husband and her son, but you won't hear about these from her. The sentence continues:

*. . . which was really rather nice, for in this way there was no-one to tell her to go to bed just when she was having most fun, and*

*no-one to make her take cod-liver-oil when she felt like eating peppermints.*

Pippi Longstocking, of course. Strong enough to lift a horse, rich enough to keep a chest of gold pieces from her pirate father under her bed and sassy enough to confound any grown-up who crosses her path, Pippi appeared in Astrid's third book, published in 1945. She made her creator famous. Ever since, it's fair to say, a substantial proportion of Europe's children, boys as well as girls, have hankered after freckles, red hair and a monkey called Nelson to perch on their shoulder.

How did she think of this extraordinary character? The question has cropped up so many times she has the answer down pat: 'In 1941 my seven-year-old daughter Karin had pneumonia. Every night, when I sat by her bed, she would beg me to tell her a story. One evening, completely exhausted, I asked her what she would like to hear, and she answered, "Tell me a story about Pippi Longstocking!" (she made up the name right on the spot). I didn't ask who



Pippi Longstocking was, I just started telling a story about her. And because she had such a funny name, she turned out to be a funny little girl. Pippi was a hit with Karin, and later with her friends; I had to tell the story over and over again.

'Then, one snowy March evening in 1944, I was taking a walk in central Stockholm . . . and I fell, spraining my ankle. It was quite a while before I was up and about again, and to pass the time I started writing down the Pippi stories (in shorthand – I still always write my stories first in shorthand, which I know from my secretarial days).

'In May 1944, when Karin was ten, I wrote out the Pippi stories and gave them to her as a birthday present. Then I took a copy and sent it off to a publisher . . .

As simple as that. Later, she took a job as an editor at that very same publisher, Rabén and Sögren, who soon came to realise what a phenomenon they'd taken on. Book after book of her own steadily followed. Pippi turned out to be just one of a whole repertory company of Lindgren characters – Bill Bergson, Master Detective; the Bullerby Children; Rasmus; Mardie; Little Lotta; Karlson-on-the-Roof; Emil – not to mention that mysterious little creature, the Tomten.



Perhaps this productivity isn't altogether surprising. As a child she was already a natural storyteller. 'I wrote,' she says, 'in some ways better than I do now! At school they kept telling me "you're going to be an author when you grow up" and used to call me "the Selma Lagerlöf of Vimmerby" which is the small town where I was born. Being compared with so famous a Swedish writer scared me so much I decided I'd never-never-never try.' It was a decision she stuck to till that fall thirty years later brought the luckiest of lucky breaks. She'd re-discovered something she'd forgotten since her schooldays: 'how much fun it is to write!'

Another re-discovery was her own childhood 'in an old red house in the southern Swedish province of Småland'. The house, the landscape and the happiness crop up constantly in her work – a happiness always saved from sentimentality by her honesty and sharp eye for detail. Another constant is the importance of fathers even when, as with Pippi's, they're seldom present. 'Maybe this is because I had the most wonderful father in the world. He was so loving – I never heard him say a harsh word to anybody. He was quite unusual for a farmer because they don't usually show how they feel.' Astrid's exploration of father-daughter relationships is seen at its most acute in her last full-length book, **Ronia, the**

**Robber's Daughter** (1981) with its warmly observed Romeo-and-Juliet themes. Ronia's problems centre less on her sweetheart Birk than on her father Matt whose narrowness and immaturity are the reverse of the qualities Astrid saw in her own father. Only when Matt is able to come to terms with his feelings is happiness possible.

Whether in her life or her books, Astrid has never been afraid to express how *she* feels. This includes her response to critics. It's easy to forget today that even Pippi once had her detractors. 'One old critic, he wrote that no normal child ever ate a whole cream-cake at a tea party. I told him that if there's a child so strong that she can lift a horse I'm sure that she can eat like one too!' At other times her work has been accused of promoting racism, socialism, anarchy, religion and atheism. Also that it could scare youngsters witless:

*I hung there, wriggling and feeling with my feet for something to stand on. But there was nothing. I was hanging over a black, bottomless pit. There was no-one to help. Soon I shall fall down, I thought, and that will be the end . . . 'Help me, someone, help me!' I cried.*

*Someone came up the stairs. Was it Pompoo? 'Pompoo, dear Pompoo, help me!' I whispered.*

*'Yes, take my hand. I'll help you,' whispered somebody who I thought was Pompoo. 'Take my hand and I'll help you!' I took his hand. But it was not a hand. It was a claw of iron.*

The evil Sir Kato, with his iron claw and heart of stone, is the villain of her fantasy **Mio, My Son** (1954) in which a young orphan explores his true identity in an enchanted land. Some reviewers condemned Sir Kato as much too nightmarish for young readers. Astrid's answer was brisk. 'The child in me wanted it this way. I can't consider other adults – they must take care of their own children. If they think it is too hard, then take the book away.'

Her trust in her sense of what children wanted, and could bear, was put to an even tougher test in **The Brothers Lionheart** (1973):

*Jonathan knew that I was going to die. I think everyone knew, except for me. They knew at school, too, because I was away most of the time, coughing and always being ill. For the last six months, I haven't been able to go to school at all. All the ladies Mother sews dresses for knew it, too, and it was one of them who was talking to Mother about it when I happened to hear, although I wasn't meant to. They thought I was asleep.*

In fact, to Ruski's dismay, Jonathan dies first trying to rescue his younger brother from a fire . . . and when the two are re-united in a land beyond

death called Nangiyala, they're soon involved in an epic battle between good and evil, light and darkness, at the end of which, apparently victorious over the evil tyrant Tengil and his dragon Katla, they die all over again! No wonder adults were alarmed. 'There was a teacher,' Astrid smiles, 'who said in a meeting I had with psychologists, that it was too cruel for the brother to die twice. But I replied "the more you die the more you get used to it." And when I came home that evening from the meeting there was a telephone call from the little girl who plays Emil's sister in the Emil films and she said, "This is the best book you've ever written – thank you for making such a happy ending." You see, children and adults don't read books in the same way.'

Astrid Lindgren's sense of the way children read, and how to write for it, has won her a world-wide following and a stack of honours from the Hans Christian Andersen Award to the Leo Tolstoy Gold Medal. More than a dozen primary schools have been named after her in Germany alone. Yet she still lives in the same Stockholm flat she's owned for more than forty years, moving each summer to a pretty, unpretentious house in the Swedish archipelago. From her windows she can look down her garden to the sea where huge ferryboats lumber past on their way to Finland. These apart, with its deep red walls, white woodwork and tiled roof, the house might almost be the one where she grew up in Småland. Or even Pippi's Villekulla Cottage. In a sense, for all the achievements of her life, she's travelled no distance at all. 'I remember my childhood and how I felt and what I thought very clearly. I wanted to be a child forever and ever. So I write my books entirely for myself – for the child who is still there in me and who knows exactly how she wants those books to be. If I like them then I think other children may like them, too. And it seems that they do.' ■

Astrid Lindgren was interviewed by Chris Powling. Acknowledgements to BBC Radio 4 for material from the programme 'The Girl Who Never Grew Up' broadcast in September 1988.

### A selection of Astrid Lindgren's books

**Pippi Longstocking**, Puffin, 0 14 03.0894 6, £1.99 pbk

**The Six Bullerby Children**, Magnet, 0 416 89500 X, £1.75 pbk

**Karlson on the Roof**, Methuen, 0 416 80240 0, £5.50; Magnet, 0 416 58010 6, £1.50 pbk

**Mardie's Adventures**, Magnet, 0 416 87610 2, £1.75 pbk

**Lotta Leaves Home**, Magnet, 0 416 27430 7, £1.50 pbk

**The Fox and the Tomten**, sadly out of print.

**Emil and the Soup Tureen**, Beaver, 0 09 942210 7, £1.50 pbk

**The Brothers Lionheart**, sadly out of print

**Ronia, the Robber's Daughter**, Methuen, 0 416 26220 1, £6.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.1720 1, £2.50 pbk

**The Dragon with Red Eyes**, Methuen, 0 416 64180 6, £5.95



# REVIEWS – Non Fiction

## Collins First Dictionary

Evelyn Goldsmith, ill. Penny Dann, Collins, 0 00 190055 2, £6.95; 0 00 190070 6, £3.95 pbk (JUNIOR/MIDDLE)

The National Curriculum states that by the end of Key Stage 1, pupils should be able to refer to dictionaries 'as a matter of course'. This new arrival is therefore a well-timed addition to the range of titles currently available for readers of seven upwards. Collins have been at pains to make it user-friendly, with amusing coloured illustrations, large format and clear typeface. However, some illustrations seem more decorative than informative and the guiding at the top of each page could have been more clearly laid out.

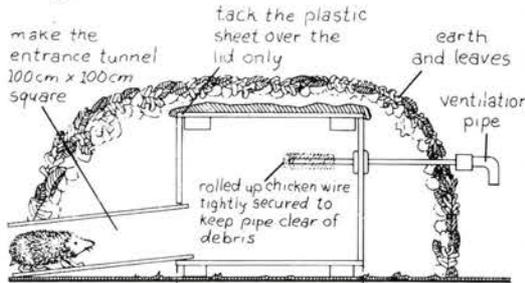
Each definition uses a full sentence to explain the meaning of a word. If necessary, an additional sentence in italics contains the word in context to aid clarification. Comparative and superlative forms of adjectives are shown adjacent to the headword, and help is occasionally given with pronunciation.

## How to Look at Wildlife

Bob Gibbons, Hamlyn, 0 600 55692 1, £7.95 (JUNIOR UPWARDS)

Arranged according to terrain, this pleasant browsing book prepares us for the life we might, if lucky, find in any nearby surroundings and consoles us with fine photographs of what we just missed.

A variety of 'projects' is included, like making a hedgehog box (Tony Soper's unacknowledged design) or analysing bird pellets.



Extreme optimism and a pan-European approach may lead us to expect a fox on every urban lawn, an eagle on every crag and a Nutkin and Old Brown on every wooded isle, and this needs the moderation of experience, but it's a good appetite-whetter and will probably do at least as well as a family book as in the school library. Good value too. TP

## Rainforest monkeys in danger



GOLDEN LION TAMARIN

**Habitat** Tropical forests on Atlantic coast of South-east Brazil.  
**Population** Less than 100 animals.  
**Threats** Rainforest destruction.  
**Conservation measures** Protected in Poco d'Anta Reserve. 30 tamarins released into wild following captive breeding scheme by London Zoo.

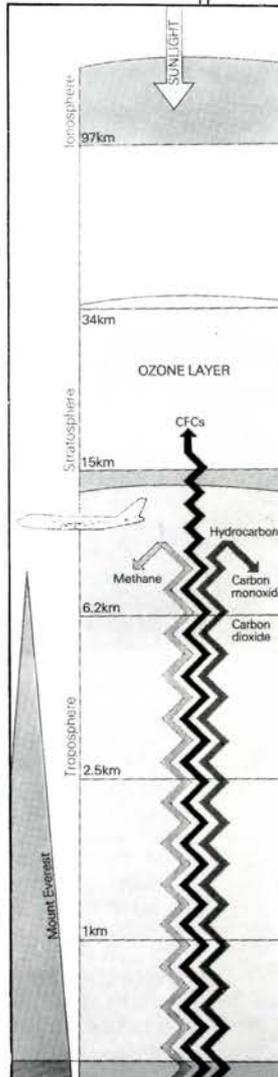
From *Conserving Rainforests*.

## The Climate Crisis – Greenhouse Effect and Ozone Layer

John Becklake, Franklin Watts (Issues series), 0 86313 946 9, £6.50 (MIDDLE/SECONDARY)

The double-spread increasingly dominates information book design. At its worst it presents a multifocal rash of information in the cereal-packet tradition; at its best it chops a subject into a well-ordered buffet, allowing more to be absorbed more easily than by knife-and-fork narrative. Watts' 'Issues' series succeeds better than many because its authors are not merely commentators but present their own opinions and some realistic optimism about the future.

John Becklake's account of the build-up of greenhouse gases is eminently lucid, especially his explanation that, whatever humankind may do to reduce its carbon dioxide output, a major contribution to the Effect remains the methane of the mammalian fart. 'If we eat less meat,' he muses, 'there will be fewer animals to produce methane.' Perhaps, but more beans?



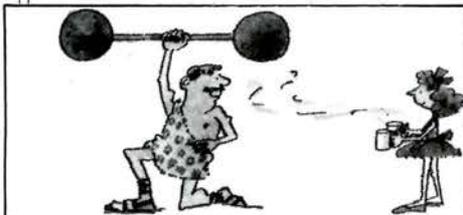
Understanding the Ozone Layer I have found difficult, but Becklake explains very



**almost** means very nearly, but not quite: *He tripped and almost fell.*



**fear** is the nasty feeling you have when you think you are in danger.



**strong** (stronger, strongest)  
 1 People or animals that are strong can work hard and carry heavy things.  
 2 Objects or materials that are strong will not break easily.

Definitions are variable (occasionally using words which themselves need, but don't get, definition) – animals, in particular, are dealt with very inconsistently. The entries for some words contain supplementary information so that they become almost mini-articles (the entry for 'newspaper' extends to over nine lines). This is no doubt one of the reasons why the number of entries is only around 2,700 – 40% less than the inexpensive Puffin Junior Dictionary (£2.95) which is the original edition of the admirable Oxford Junior Dictionary with the addition of 150 illustrations. The current edition of the Oxford Junior with over 5,000 entries in a clearly laid-out format is excellent value at £3.95.

Potential purchasers of a dictionary for this age-group may well feel that there is a place for each or indeed all of these on their reference shelves. VH

## Acid Rain

John Baines, 1 85210 694 8

## Conserving Rainforests

Martin Banks, 1 85210 695 6 Wayland (Conserving Our World series), £7.50 each (MIDDLE/SECONDARY)

That there is still a place for narrative non-fiction to fulfil the demands of the 'project approach' is nicely exemplified by this new series from Wayland. Here the authors (good credentials, resonant names) have been encouraged to stretch their literary legs with excellent illustrative support, so we get a full and very readable account of the subject matter before going on to discover what's gone wrong and what to do about it.

Banks' thoughtful treatment of the issue of rainforest management is a fine antidote to some of the popular press hysteria on the subject (which is nearly all that's available to your average student) and his text is packed with examples of good and bad practice. The cartophile in me notices some excellent maps.

The angler in me notices the ravishing Swedish lake-scape that begins Baines' book; sadly the water is bereft of life thanks to industrial acid. A proper explanation of the pollution cycle's addition to the oft-forgotten natural acidification of inland waters leads to well chronicled examples of its effects (first officially recorded in 1872) from which even the Statue of Liberty is not immune! Actual and potential remedies are also realistically dealt with.

In each volume glossary, index and bibliography are excellent, and I look forward to further members of this handsome series. TP

clearly how ultraviolet rays get out of CFCs the chlorine which then destroys the ozone molecule. It is also salutary to know that industrial pollution eats more ozone than aerosols and that whatever we do about these sources, the polar holes will keep growing as long as we use nitrous oxide anaesthetic or send up space-shuttles. Now, perhaps if we fuelled them with methane . . .

An account as clear as this, which will stimulate debate as well as inform, deserves a decent bibliography; that there is none at all can probably be ascribed to there being no spread-space left after the photo credits.

TP

## Soviet Union: Will Perestroika Work?

John Bradley, 0 86313 976 0



From the cover of *Soviet Union: Will Perestroika Work?*



A street mural on the provocatively named RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) Avenue. It shows the Spirit of Ireland offering freedom from the ills of British rule – housing, jobs, culture and oppression.

## Ireland: A Divided Country

John Lewis, 0 86313 977 9

Franklin Watts (Hotspots series), £6.50 each  
(SECONDARY)

Recent unrest in the Soviet republics has been compared by some commentators with the situation in Northern Ireland and both have been chosen for the first of the Hotspots titles.

The strength of this new series comes from its setting of modern situations in historical context: Gorbachev's inheritance comes not only from Stalin but also from Peter the Great; the seventeenth century is not ancient history for the people of Ireland. A sense of the past informs much of the illustrative material and, as usual, Watts have produced a well designed, immediately attractive book.

In *Ireland: A Divided Country* this visual impact may sometimes be at odds with the more measured tone of the text and the brief captions can appear facile. For instance, the caption of an illustration showing a British soldier whose 'presence raises no protest from passers by' makes a very different impression from the fuller description of the army's presence in the text. The book's beginning with the bombing at Enniskillen is not an ideal way to introduce 'A Divided Country' as this incident was 'immediately and universally condemned'. The token coverage of the part played by women in the conflict is perfunctory.

*Soviet Union: Will Perestroika Work?* cannot be criticised on these grounds – illustrations, captions and text are united to support the author's central (if occasionally rather heavy-handed) argument that 'Gorbachev is the only leader capable of taking the Soviet Union safely through this period of reforms'. This volume has a more authoritative feel and the publishers stress John Bradley's academic credentials.

However, both books make their subjects accessible to quite a wide readership and both would be useful for teenagers alongside other complementary titles.

GB

## You and Other People: Understanding Psychology

Dr Hugh Miller, ill. Nick Sharrat, 0 00 190052 8

## Money: Understanding Business and Shares

Neil Fitzgerald, ill. Martina Farrow, 0 00 190053 6



Collins (Viewpoints series), £2.50 each pbk

(SECONDARY/OLDER READERS)

'Viewpoints', a new paperback series for teenagers from Collins, has a slightly misleading title as the books are not so much controversial statements as personal insights into their subjects. At a time when much non-fiction tends to be worthy and when information often comes pre-packaged in convenient two-page spreads, these books make a refreshing and informative change.

They will not have universal appeal: some will not appreciate the blue typeface and its layout on the page; others will not like the cartoons and graphics which make them appear more like leaflets for a new bank account than information books – and the lack of an index could deter those seeking a specific term.

What is unquestionable is the value of these books as good introductions to their fields.

Texts are clear, useful terms are defined and the reader is often given a practical context to apply theory. In *You and Other People*, for example, the nature of relationships is explored by an exercise that invites the reader to compare 'real' friends with 'first' friends. This volume covering personal behaviour, interpersonal skills and learning patterns, succeeds because of the author's combination of a clear explanatory style, a compassionate tone and much good sense. The style of *Money* is more detached but equally practical in its review of the financial world from corner shop to international market. For teenagers wanting to know about bangs and crashes or bulls and bears, this could be just the book!

GB

## Architecture

Eleanor Van Zandt, Wayland (The Arts series), 1 85210 346 9, £7.50

(SECONDARY/OLDER READERS)

'Of all the arts, architecture is the one that most directly affects people in their daily lives' – Prince Charles would no doubt agree with the author's introductory remarks and her subsequent assertion that 'All of us can become more aware of our surroundings, and more visually sophisticated, and learn to take an active part in the development of our environment.'



There is scarcely a right angle to be found in Casa Milà, a block of flats in Barcelona designed by Antoni Gaudí. Although it lacks the linear quality of true Art Nouveau, Casa Milà embodies the organic aspect of this style; it seems not to have contracted but to have grown out of the earth.

In just 48 pages, she traces the history and development of world architecture from the Pyramids to the Pompidou Centre, focusing not only on the significant technical achievements, but also describing how social, religious, economic and geographical influences play their part in how buildings evolve. Eleanor Van Zandt writes knowledgeably and eloquently about her subject and reveals some fascinating tricks of the trade – for example, close study of the Parthenon has shown that its perfection is partly the result of an extremely subtle use of optical illusion.

However, it's quite a demanding read. A great deal of technical detail has been included to illustrate how architects handle the two basic components of architecture: space and mass. Although an adequate glossary is included, more explanatory diagrams would have been helpful. The excellent colour photographs generally complement the text quite well. The Further Reading list is fairly daunting and only serves to illustrate the dearth of suitable titles at this level. VH ■

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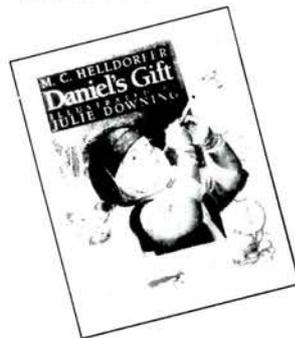
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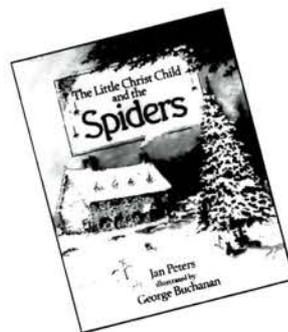
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# Astrid-trans-Lindgren

*Patricia Crampton on her relationship, personal and professional, with the most translated writer in the world.*



Patricia Crampton.

The first time I met Sweden's greatest living author she was already, officially, an OAP. She looked like an affectionate elf. Now, at 82, Astrid Lindgren still looks like an elf, rather more wrinkled, and it is possible to deduce from the elfin look the truth of her assertion 'I write for the child in me'. And yet it would be difficult to think, offhand, of a wiser, more tolerant and considerate person. But her tolerance is reserved for people. Her loathing of cruelty and injustice is manifest in her writing and her activities.

As the translator of some of her books, I am constantly humbled by her generosity. Astrid does not simply praise – she does it in a way that is more like bestowing trust, and inevitably the translator is even more committed. Bolder, too. People often ask if it is easy to translate Astrid Lindgren. Yes, it is. In the first place, it's easy because it's fun; in the second place (I'm sure most translators would agree) it is actually easier to translate a really good writer than a mediocre one. And the translator is inevitably one of the people who finds out exactly how good the writer is.

The astonishing 'Pippi Longstocking' books, the happy childhood scenes of 'Bullerby' and 'Emil' had already been published in English before I was lucky enough to begin translating her. But all of them, together with the later books about flying 'Karlsson' the alter ego and the semi-autobiographical Madicken ('Mardie') books, through the lyrical sorrows of *Sunnanäng* and *My Nightingale is Singing*, to the brave and beautiful *Mio, My Son* and *Brothers Lionheart*, to *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter*, perhaps her most

complete achievement, and most recently the funny and moving *Dragon with Red Eyes*, say something distinct and unique to her readers. Just as, writing about herself, Astrid has never so much as hinted at the trouble and suffering in her own life, so her implicit message is always: Life is very good; be yourself, have courage, go to meet it and you will find it so.

This is not to say that her outlook is unrealistic. On the contrary, she rejects the immediate, comforting illusion. I remember her response when a young publisher's editor wrote to ask if she could omit from the second 'Mardie' book the chapter in which the headteacher begins to beat the pauper child, but stops when the newspaper editor's daughter screams at him. Astrid refused, but she also told the young editor what a very pretty and charming girl she was, and that she, Astrid, quite understood why she wanted to throw out such a bitter episode. And just as she had made her refusal easy to swallow, so the episode itself turns into something positive when a slow, difficult friendship develops between the two children in the story. Quite a few authors writing

in a 'language of limited diffusion', like Swedish, are prepared to sacrifice a phrase here, an idea there, in order to make their books acceptable in the world's major language. Astrid's integrity would not even begin to allow such a sacrifice of anything she regards as important.

As well as her personal generosity of spirit, Astrid's financial generosity is legendary for a most uncommon reason: she refused to abandon highly taxed Sweden and move to the warm south as so many western writers have done. She protested only (and humorously) when her tax rate high-jumped over 100%. Translators have been lucky as well as the Swedish exchequer: with a part of her earnings abroad from translations of her books, Astrid established through the *Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs (FIT)* the Astrid Lindgren prize for translation of children's literature. When the Mildred Batchelder prize in the USA was awarded to my English translation of *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter*, Astrid's letter of congratulation contained the following: 'I wonder if you are going to the States or not for the big event? I ought to warn you, because I went to my home town, Vimmerby, to get a very honourable award, and on the way back to Stockholm my car went into a little cliff and I had to be put in a hospital for more than one month . . . So if you go to the celebration, please take good care of yourself!' Sadly, the Mildred Batchelder doesn't run to funds for the translator to attend the junketings, but not long after that, lo and behold, the Astrid Lindgren prize itself came my way; and as a FIT member I was in Vienna to receive the award. And sure enough, I was able to wave at the audience a heavily bandaged leg, badly gashed when running to answer the telephone . . . There was even some masochistic glee in following Astrid's example on a lesser scale.

I am glad to have had the fun of translating Karlsson's effrontery (my son was telling his girlfriend a joke from one of those books last night); for the emotion of involvement with *Nightingale*, the excitement of *Robber's Daughter*, the chance to identify with Astrid through working on 'I Remember' from *Samuel August . . . og Hanna i Hult*. And I am very glad of Astrid Lindgren, of her humour and kindness and her ability to bring back 'the intensity with which one experienced it all when one was new to this earth'. ■

Patricia Crampton turned from general translation to translating children's books when her own children arrived in the sixties. In early days she particularly enjoyed translating the series of 'Mr Bumblemoose' books from the Dutch, Paul Biegel's 'Little Captain' and 'Virgil (the Fattest Dwarf of Nosegay)' books, and in the teenage range, books by Hannelore Valencak (German) and Anne-Greta Winberg (Swedish). Astrid Lindgren's books have obviously given her great joy, and *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter* won the Mildred Batchelder award in 1984, as did Rudolf Frank's powerful anti-war novel *No Hero for the Kaiser* (from German) in 1987. She is a keen member of IBBY.

# MAY WE RECOMMEND

Chris Powling on

# THE·ELEVENTH·HOUR OF·GRAEME·BASE

Graeme Base had his work cut out after *Animalia*. Remember that? It was an alphabet-book – not, perhaps, the most promising of popular ventures for an artistic debut yet the combination of the exuberant Base captions and his highly-detailed, flairful draughtsmanship met with astonishing success. Who could forget H, for instance . . .

*Horribly Hairy Hogs Hurrying  
Homewards on Heavily  
Harnesses Horses*

. . . with hogs and horses erupting from the page like illuminations that have taken over the manuscript. No wonder, in *BfK 53*, Bernard Ashley commended the book to all parents and teachers of infants as being 'big enough for two laps, for sharing'. He went on:

'*Animalia* will be grabbed by both parties – with its alliterative artwork, its pages and double-spreads of invention in a variety of styles, and its game of I-Spy leading to what the dreaded SRA people would be tempted to call "word power boosting potential". The real point is that after looking through this book the world is seen through new eyes – of the closely observing kind.'

Point taken . . . by more than 300,000 buyers, world-wide, if we're to believe the sales figures. What next, then, for Graeme Base?

Not another *Animalia* that's for sure. 'People said "now you've got to do numbers"' he's reported as saying. 'But I couldn't work to that sort of formula.' Instead, he's come up with *The Eleventh Hour* – published, naturally, at eleven minutes past eleven on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of this year. Here in Britain, that is. Australia, where he's lived since the age of eight, saw the launch last year. Since then it's sold 140,000 copies – with initial print-runs of 100,000 planned for this country and the USA. Again, his target is the whole family. He describes *The Eleventh Hour* as 'an Agatha Christie-type mystery in pictures'. But with no murders, let it be said. And with Base once again supplying his own text. In this case his medium is verse:

*When Horace turned Eleven he  
decided there should be  
Some kind of celebration. 'For my  
friends,' he said, 'and me.  
For though I've been the age of  
eight and nine and six and  
seven,*



*This is the very first time that I've  
ever been Eleven!*

Horace's celebration, however – a slap-up feast 'with eleven sorts of food that Elephants like best', together with eleven games to be played by his eleven guests (including himself) – goes suddenly awry. On their arrival at the banquet-hall as the clock strikes eleven, the guests discover all the magnificent food has disappeared before their very eyes. Well, before *our* very eyes actually. Because the puzzle the reader has to solve is Which Animal is Responsible? Every double-spread contains clues . . .

somewhere. As can be seen from our front cover, the illustration is lavish and the Base invention boundless: there are codes and ciphers to be cracked, margins to be explored, red herrings to be identified, hidden objects to be discovered. According to the author, the mystery can be explained in at least four or five quite different ways.

And here we'd better pause a moment. There are those for whom this kind of conundrum normally cuts no ice at all. I know, because I'm one of them. For instance, the national *Masquerade* mania unleashed a few years ago by Kit Williams completely passed me by. I took note of it as a phenomenon – hard to miss it when clever kids at my school spent hours poring over each double-spread – but for me the attraction was nil. If *The Eleventh Hour* struck the same cryptic note, I'd be stonily indifferent.

But it doesn't and, much to my surprise, I'm not. There are two reasons for this, perhaps. Firstly, Graeme Base's approach to illustration – painterly and meticulous though it is – offers much more than a merely technical accomplishment. It's warm, funny, full of enthusiasm and offers a range of sympathy that's extraordinarily broad. At one pole we have his animal characters themselves, genuine picture-book creations with none of the record-sleeve coldness of the book's distinguished predecessor. At the other pole, there's the Base feel for background – almost every spread hints at a famous setting: the Uffizi in Florence, St Peter's in Rome, the ballroom in Salzburg where Mozart used to play . . . if you miss them, no matter. If you don't, a lovely bonus.

Secondly, and just as important, the answer to the riddle really is within the scope of most readers. You're *intended* to share it. When the text says . . .

*But in the end, although the thief  
was someone they all knew,*

*They never found out who it was  
that stole the feast – can you?*

. . . it's on your side. Why, even I got it eventually! And a thoroughly satisfactory resolution it is, too – even if I did give up on the further search it provokes. In short, *The Eleventh Hour* looks suspiciously like another Base triumph. We'll let you know what Bernard Ashley thinks. ■

*The Eleventh Hour* is published by Macmillan (0 333 51867 5, £7.95).

# ON WRITING IN SCHOOL

## A piece of owning up by Gareth Owen

'In addition to reading your poems we'd like you to do a poetry workshop with our third years,' says the teacher at the other end of the line and the thud is the sound of my heart dropping.

It's not that I'm against Creative Writing per se, or whatever term is current, rather that I'm sceptical about how much real understanding of the nature of verse writing can be effectively transmitted. Most of the time now I persuade the schools to let me work on prose with small groups of say five or six children. I ask them questions about their lives and then write out a kind of composite, anecdotal narrative so that they can observe something of what goes into the writing of a story. It's almost impossible to illustrate in any meaningful way what goes on in a writer's head during the imaginative process but at least with this method they can observe something of the journey we make together; what is retained, what jettisoned and what invented. I also try to persuade them to accept the notion that the use of actual people, places and events in a story does not constitute some kind of cheating.

Imagination is much more to do with selective memory than with mere invention. Thus, I try to encourage in them the habit of accurate recall, vigorously restricting them to providing only observable evidence. At the same time I discourage them from attempting to intuit feelings and emotions, which duty is properly the preserve of the putative reader.

Arthur Miller said a marvellous thing concerning this when talking of Ibsen. He said, 'When Ibsen is most concerned with feelings he is most writing about things.'

A writer's concern is with the 'thingness' of the world.

Finally, and this is perhaps most difficult of all, I try to get them to write good, short, simple sentences. A strange sickness grips people when they pick up pen to write imaginatively. They appear constitutionally incapable of writing straightforward, sequential and informative sentences. The language becomes florid; it gestures and flourishes and waves at one so that the matter of it becomes obscured. There seems no cure for this disease. One thirsts for modest information on the lines of: 'He opened the door and walked in.'

There is much good sense in Dr Johnson's advice: 'Read over your compositions, and where ever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out.'

But poetry. That's another matter.

In the last few years I've been asked to judge a number of competitions and have found the results disappointing. Poem after poem about Spring or Winter or Ghosts or Snow or Fog or Bonfire Night. The language inert and lacking any sense of an individual voice; of any feeling of a real world; false in sentiment and aspiration. Poems like the following which is totally indistinguishable from a hundred, nay a thousand others.

### The Castle

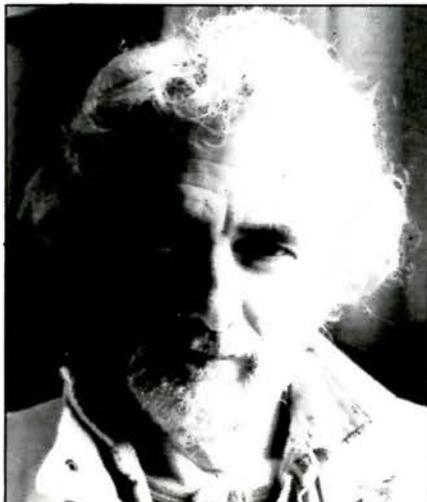
Tall jagged towers reaching towards the blue sky,  
Whistling wind through thin arrow slits.  
Rippling of the cold dirty water round the castle.

Voices echoing round cold empty rooms.  
Sounds of water dripping from low roofs.  
Slimey slippery bridges where no one will walk.  
Rooms without roofs open to the sky.

This is a kind of non-poem, which perhaps we elders have encouraged by example; poems where each sentence follows the same form, a kind of shorthand, note form with the articles omitted to lend a spurious portentousness to what is being said; where participles search unsuccessfully for conclusions so that what we end up with is the poem as shopping list, where an image or metaphor gains a house point and where there is a straining after sensitivity and feeling that is false and unachieved.

And yet when one talks to young children their language is often vigorous and amusing and they have a wealth of experiences that they enthusiastically describe for us. It's almost as though they feel that their own experiences provides inappropriate raw material for poetry; that their own speech patterns and nuances of language don't pass some kind of test.

I have to confess that I'm as guilty as the next man and have worked with classes where we've started from a stimulus or where I've prefaced their writing with a talk on metaphors



and where, if I'd received the above poem from a child in my class, I'd have been relatively pleased. But, visiting schools now as a writer, I feel that these methods are too coercive and the meagre results don't justify the outlay of hope and energy. Also if I am involved in the writing task I feel more energetic; my attitude is more realistic and enthusiastic and I think the children sense that I'm not playing at it or dispensing desperate praise where none is deserved. And finally, I suppose, somewhere deep down, I believe that one comes to an understanding of poetry (and prose for that matter) only through reading a great deal of both fiction and verse when young; by becoming immersed in various forms of language. There's no real short cut.

What then do I do when the teachers are so charming and insistent; so convinced of the benefits that a poetry workshop will bring the children, that to refuse seems churlish?

I employ something of the methodology of the prose narrative lesson using, where possible, the words and phrases that the children themselves have offered, thus demonstrating that a poem can be about *them*; their homes, their streets, their experiences. That it can be expressed in *their* language and still come out convincingly as that mysterious thing, poetry.

In the group session that follows there were six boys and girls aged ten. I asked them questions and made notes. This is a transcription of our taped conversation followed by the poem that came out of it. The lesson would last about forty minutes.

Owen How d'you do. Your headteacher has asked me if we can write a poem together. I'm not sure if we can but let's have a go. What d'you say? Do you think we can?

All Yes.

Owen What an encouraging lot. Well the nice thing about coming in as a writer and not being a teacher is that I can say and do what I like. So, I'm going to ask you lots of questions about yourselves – but in the end I'll write the poem so that you'll be able to see how I go about it. All right? Agreed?

All Yes

Owen Don't have much choice do you? Right, the first thing we need is a subject. The second thing we need is a good memory. The third thing we need is some talent and the fourth is some paper.

Boy Sir, shall I get the paper? There's some here.

Owen Well that's a good start. Now, what shall we write our poem about?

Girl Hallowe'en.

Owen Boring. That's always being done. Think of something else.

Boy Bonfire night.

Owen That's been done as well. Anyway let's do it or we'll never get started. It's very important to get started. But very hard. Try to work quickly so that you don't let doubt creep in. I don't have much self confidence so I write fast to start with. Just get it all down. The next thing is to carry on, even though you think it's rubbish. Finishing's hard too. In fact it's all hard. Shall we go home? No, right, what I'm going to do is ask you about your particular bonfire night, not a made up one. So I want you to be as accurate as you can and to tell the truth. Now, tell me where you have your bonfire?

Girl In the garden?

Owen Where in the garden?

Girl Bottom.

Owen Is there a fence or wall?

Girl Fence. Wooden fence.

Owen Tell me about the fence. What colour is it? Is it new?

Girl It's sort of brown and broken.

Owen Good. I like that. I'm writing this down. Getting the information. Anybody else have the bonfire in the garden? Yes. Is it near any vegetables or anything?

Boy It's near the rhubarb.

Owen Tell me about the fire.

Girl It crackles.

Owen What's it made of?

Boy All sorts.

Owen What all sorts?

Boy Wood. Packing cases.

Girl We had a chest of drawers on one time.

Owen Whose? What colour?

Girl My nan's I think. It was like whitewood, painted blue.

Owen Good. Who lights the fireworks?

Girl Dad.

Owen I want to see what happens. Describe it to me. Where does he come from? What's he wearing? Make me see him.

Boy From the house. He comes from the house with a box of fireworks.

Girl My dad wears overalls.

Owen When he sets off the rockets where do they go?

Boy Up.

Owen I know they go up. Yes, but where do they explode over?

Girl The houses.

Boy Allotments.

Owen Where?

Boy Don't know.

Owen Let's invent. But invent like it's real. Say, Lakey Lane. D'you like that?

Boy Not much.

Owen Tough, I'm the poet. Anything else? Mmh. Anybody else there?

Girl My brother Scott runs around with one of those sparkler things being a nuisance.

Owen What happens?

Girl I slap him one and he lies down in the grass.

Owen Why?

Girl To hide, he's crying. If I ask him if he's crying he says he's looking at the grass.

Owen Give me a fancy description of a rocket exploding.

Boy Lots of colours.

Owen Boring. You can do better than that. Stop being a stone that I'm trying to get blood out of.

Girl Like flowers.

Girl A garden.

Owen What colours?

Boy Blue.

Owen I want really extraordinary colours. Have a look in that Thesaurus and come up with strange colours. See, what I want to do is put something very flowery next door to something very basic and down to earth. I love doing that in writing. It's a good trick to learn. But don't ask me why it works. It just does...

Now I want to end this poem on a sad note. That's the way I feel about it. Now if you want to say something sad, you never use the word 'sad' or you're doing the reader's work for them. It's the reader's job to feel sad. It's got nothing to do with you. It's your job to give them information. Facts. Anybody thought of anything?

Nobody? Thank you. Well, anybody ever found a rocket after bonfire night is over?

*Girl* Me.  
*Owen* Well, don't just say 'me'. Give me the facts.  
*Girl* My brother and me found one in the playground.  
*Owen* Was that Scott who cried in the grass?  
*Girl* No, that's her brother.  
*Owen* Sorry I'm sure. Anyway I'll say it's him. He won't mind will he? Tell me about this rocket.  
*Girl* It's like cardboard.  
*Owen* What? Flat cardboard?  
*Girl* No. Sort of round.  
*Boy* Yeah you know round.  
*Owen* She said that.  
*Boy* Like a cylinder.  
*Owen* Brilliant. Where?  
*Girl* Where what?

*Owen* Where did you find it?  
*Girl* He found it.  
*Owen* Where did he find it?  
*Girl* By the toilets in school.  
*Owen* Good job nobody was in there when it landed. What did it look like?  
*Girl* It would be burnt. Sort of burnt.  
*Owen* Twice burnt. Burnt to the power of two.  
*Boy* More like charred.  
*Owen* I like charred. Well that's enough. It's going to be din din time in five minutes. Let me write the poem. Have you learned anything?  
*Boy* You put flowery, complicated things next to ordinary things.  
*Owen* That's a good thing to learn. If you remember that I'll be pleased. While I'm scribbling this out - you have a go. ■

## BONFIRE NIGHT

The fire crackles beneath the oak tree and the swing;  
 Out of the shadows of the house comes Dad  
 In his boiler suit a box beneath his arm.  
 He lights the roman candle  
 And it sputters yellow against the bitter rhubarb.  
 Scott runs round the garden with a sparkler  
 Trailing crackling stars  
 Trying to set the grass on fire.  
 I slap him and he cries  
 But hides it  
 Lying face down.  
 If you ask him what he's doing  
 He'll say, 'Trying to see the grass.'  
 A rocket whistles up above the roofs  
 And explodes in a circle of flowers  
 Over Lakey Lane allotments.  
 Ann found it three months later  
 Wedged in the gutters by the bike sheds at school;  
 A cylinder of charred cardboard  
 And on its side  
 In letters half burnt away she read,  
 'Hawaiian Fire  
 Set in a bottle  
 Light blue touch paper  
 And stand clear.'

Formerly a teacher, then a Lecturer in Education, **Gareth Owen** has been a full-time writer since 1985. He is best known for his two collections of verse, **Salford Road** (Young Lions, 00 672919 3, £1.75 pbk) and **Song of the City** (Collins, 0 00 184846 1, £4.95; Lions, 0 00 672410 8, £1.95 pbk) which won the 1985 Signal Award for Poetry, but he has also published novels such as **The Final Test** (Gollancz, 0 575 03699 0, £7.95; Lions, 0 00 672692 5, £1.95 pbk) and **The Man**

with **Eyes Like Windows** (Collins, 0 00 184546 2, £6.50; 0 00 184547 0, £4.95 pbk). His latest book is **Saving Grace** (Collins, 0 00 184793 7, £5.95).

Also available is a tape of Gareth reading a selection of his poems, price £4.00 (inc. p&p) from Sunflower Records, Peachwood, New Wells, Abermule, Montgomery, Powys SY15 6JL.

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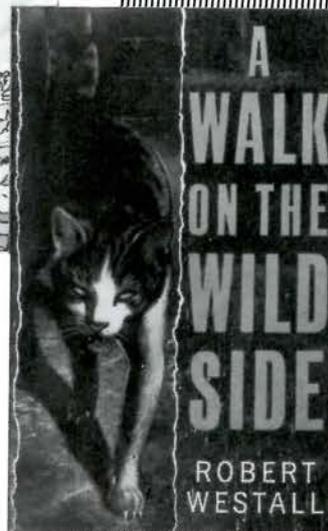
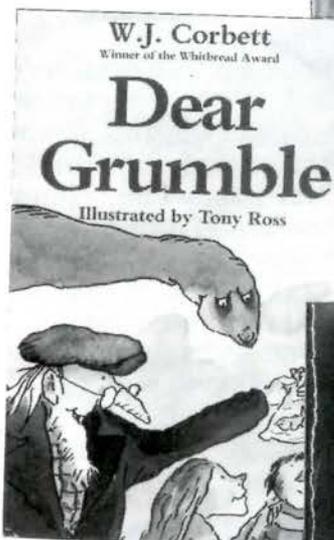
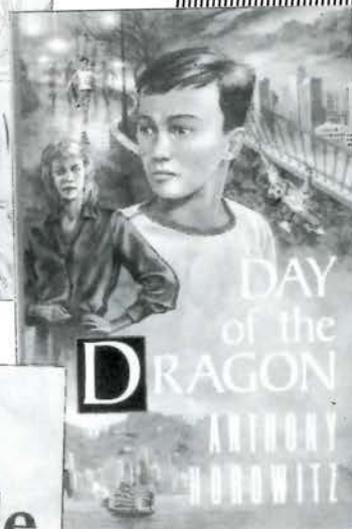
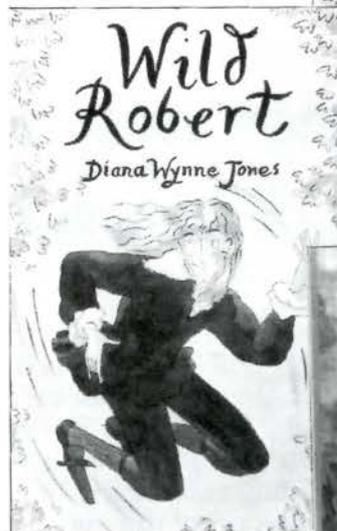
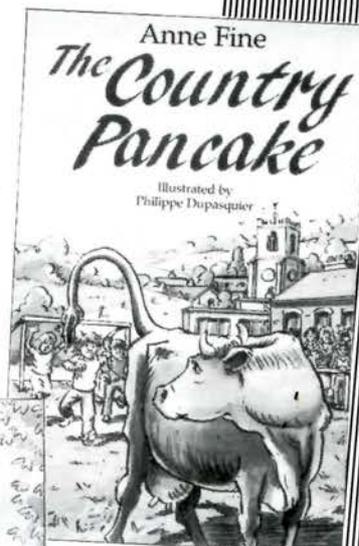
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# PICK OF THE POETRY

Morag Styles

looks back over a year's publishing

I swore I would never review another poetry book again after finishing the **BfK Poetry Guide!** Two years of being permanently surrounded by books you've got to write about would jade the most enthusiastic palate. But here I am again thrilled to be choosing about twenty of the best poetry books published after the Guide went to press – and a large pile they make too. After a fair amount of agonising (how can I whittle so many good books down to twenty?) I decided on the following criteria. Single poet collections would have priority, as they form the cutting edge of what is happening in poetry for children. After that I was looking for lively, well researched anthologies and excellence in illustration, while attempting to offer a balanced coverage of our age range 0-16.

The most enjoyable new collection was Allan Ahlberg's **Heard it in the Playground**. I will be surprised if this doesn't win one of the poetry awards this year. As everyone is likely to rave about a new Ahlberg, I was determined to judge his work sternly. It's no good. Immediately I am seduced by 'The Teacher's Prayer':



then I applaud the simplicity of dividing the poems into 'short ones', 'long ones' and 'songs'; next I renew my acquaintance with some of my favourite characters from **Please Mrs Butler**; finally, I have to admit that most of the poems resonate with authentic school experiences. Ahlberg's scored again!

He pokes gentle fun at classroom rituals like taking the register, the infant assembly and the whole school recitation of the Lord's Prayer:

*Up the corridor  
In pairs  
Foreveraneveraneveraneveran –  
Stop that, Simon!  
Amen.*

He gives us the Parents' evening from the point of view of *all* the protagonists. For us 'real books' freaks:

*There was an old teacher  
Who finally died  
Reading Ginn (Level One) which she couldn't abide.*

He provides marvellous songs with suggestions of tunes to fit. For example:

*What shall we do with the grumpy teacher  
Early in the morning?  
Tickle her toes with a hairy creature.  
Leave her in the jungle where the ants can reach her.  
Bring her back alive to be a classroom teacher!  
Early – in the – morning!*

or

*I've got the  
Teach-them-in-the-morning-  
Playground-duty-  
Teach-them-in-the-afternoon-blues.*

There's also the inventiveness of 'The Trial of Derek Drew' who is charged with 'doing disgusting things with his dinner' among other things and whose sentence is 'Life' and 'doing his handwriting again'. The book ends with the delightful 'Heard it in the Playground' – a long poem accurately based on the oral tradition of the playground. Ahlberg says in the Author's Note that he can imagine a whole classroom belting it out and so can I. He also makes it clear that he spent a year, on and off, observing in a local school to research this book. The poems reek of real life, a respect for children and teachers and a catch-in-the-throat tenderness for the human condition. Brilliant, and so are Fritz Wegner's illustrations.

Barrie Wade is another ex-teacher, now a writer and lecturer in education, and this is his first collection for children. He, too, genuinely knows about classrooms and children, so the poems in **Conkers** ring true. Even so, it is difficult to be original in a field so well sown already by poets like Ahlberg, Henri, McGough, Nicholls, Owen, Rosen and Wright. Wade is working in the same genre and at times I felt he steered a course too close to those above: one or two of his poems were remarkably like others I had encountered before.



Having said that, there is a lot to admire in Wade's book. He writes humorously about dotty aspects of school life, sensitively about delicate feelings and is observant of people and things. There's the girl who makes up wonderful stories in her head while she writes 'I went to my nan's' week after week for News, and Jimmy Pask who couldn't read, but was good with birds:

*I watch him trace the mystery  
of letters, seeking patterns pressed  
as definite as flecks of glory  
fledged on ruffled wing or stippled breast.*

In 'Whatever's the matter with Melanie?' (echoes of Milne?) he manages to convey what Melanie, her teacher and her uncomprehending classmate feel with understanding of the different points of view. In 'Name-calling' he turns the tables on the snickering author of 'Doreen Vickers wets her knickers' and makes him feel ashamed.

Wade employs various forms – rhyme, free verse, different length stanzas and ranges from languorous description to lively narrative. Occasionally, the educator in Wade comes out as in 'Good reader':

*Ask him what he's reading and immediately  
he'll tell you he's on Level 4, Book 3 –  
same as last month. He must like that book a lot.  
I'm glad my brother's reading really well.*

Best of all is the opening poem about words:

*Sticks and stones may break my bones,  
but words can also hurt me.  
Stones and sticks break only skin,  
while words are ghosts that haunt me.*

Welcome to this age group, Barrie Wade. We hope this is the first of many.

Great to have a new double-act from Adrian Henri and Tony Ross, **Rhinestone Rhino**. Henri is a talented humorist and he explores the comic possibilities of 'Mr McManus who was Very McStrong', Rhinestone Rhino the Gnashville star:

*At the Grand Old Opry  
Ah'm a superstar  
When ah sings ma songs  
And strums ma guitar.*

Or the pet oyster called Rover – 'the world's your lobster'.

But there's more than fun in this book. Henri includes a short sequence of prose poems entitled 'Wartime Child' which captures moments of genuine wartime experience from the small lad's viewpoint. There are other thoughtful moments in this most appealing second poetry collection for junior age kids. As for the drawings, they are Tony Ross at his brilliant, wicked best. Irresistible.

Henri's mate, Roger McGough also spawns a new book, **An Imaginary Menagerie**. Here McGough's sure touch for inventive word play is evident. A few tasters:

*Kiwis  
do wivis  
from spectacular heights*

or

*It gave me this to take away:  
An Imaginary Menagerie.  
Do I like it? Hard to say.*

or

*A/ water bison/ is what/ yer wash/ yer face in.*

These are just three examples from a collection full of puns, cheeky rhymes, playful pronunciations and the like. Although small children will enjoy this alphabetical medley of crazy beasts (and Blundell's realisations of them), older readers have plenty to bite on. McGough's reference is wide and the poetry is very, very clever. A must.

I simply had to look at **The Curse of the Vampire's Socks** on the strength of the title alone; the knowledge that Terry Jones and Michael Foreman were respectively author and illustrator made it essential reading. As you would expect from Terry Jones, most of the poems are off-beat, anti-establishment, sometimes with a surrealist flavour. A lot are also long which is rare these days and to be welcomed. Foreman's stunning, witty drawings are the perfect match for Jones. It's not all light-hearted: several of the poems take a strong conservationist line and bring up important issues for children to consider in a form which makes the ideas approachable.

*Mother whales and babies  
– They'd no time for regrets –  
They slaughtered whole herds at a time  
To sell as food for pets.*



From the cover of **The Curse of the Vampire's Socks**.

A winner.

From **A Golden Christmas Treasury**.

In **All the Small Poems** Valerie Worth collects together several books of small poems, as the title suggests. Many are about domestic animals or insects, natural things, household objects and one or two more exotic subjects like telegraph poles:

*But wandering/ Away, they/ Lean into/ The cloud's/  
Drift, the/ Swallow's slant*

It is a modest little book by an American writer who favours quiet observations, distinctively and delicately brought to life by Natalie Babbitt. For 7-11.

For younger readers there is **Popcorn Pie** by Judith Nicholls sold as a single book (very expensive at £12.95 for 24 poems in paperback) or as a set of six books with four poems apiece and a cassette. It costs a lot less to buy the books as a set of six, presumably designed for flexible use in infant classrooms. Part of the expense can be attributed to the lavish, full colour illustrations on every page and the quality paper and print. This makes them attractive and inviting for small hands. It's nice to see Judith Nicholls working for a younger age group than before; I'm sure the mixture of gutsy rhymes and amusing poems, based on the everyday experiences of young children, will go down well with its intended readership. Arresting and exquisitely detailed illustrations by Tessa Richardson-Jones.

Stanley Cook writes in his introduction to **The Dragon on the Wall** that a 'child's worldview is communicable to adults since they have corresponding feelings embedded at the back of their minds from their own childhood.' He sees the 'child's world' as one where simple things/everyday events are experienced freshly and vigorously and given serious attention. In his poems Cook tries to convey a sense of wonder 'at the snow in the playground, the lorry in the night and the dragon on the wall'. So his poems are a gentle evocation of objects and activities familiar to small people, with scope for a bit of imagination, of course.

In a similar vein, but concentrating on feelings (some of them more appropriate to an older age group) **How Does It Feel?** is a first collection for young readers by David Scott.

Apart from a reprint of a couple of anthologies, mentioned later (and it's nice to see Barbara Ireson's **Rhyme Time 1** and **2** reissued) and the collections above, there is very little new poetry for the younger age group. More significantly, and with a few notable exceptions, I find the quality of poetry collections for children from 0-7 rather weak. This is strange, as there are so many excellent picture book writers/artists for this age group and superb poets for 8-12 year olds. There's a gap in the market for talented poets for the young!

**The Giant Claydelbaydel** by Richard Edwards is an absolutely gorgeous picture book about a gentle giant, each poem centred on a different bird and a different weather/time of year. Part of the appeal is the enchanting colour pictures by Jo Burroughes who has a facility for painting birds, landscapes, contemporary people and giants in Victorian country garb! The subject may be too esoteric, the language too complex for its audience (6-8?), for it to be a huge seller. But the poetry is good and it's a lucky child who receives this book.

Richard Edwards has another new poetry book out – **Phoots!**, illustrated by Stephen Lambert and also published by Orchard Books (1 85213 120 9, £5.95).

Although John Bush's verse is charming, it is also old fashioned, so it's Peter Weever's illustrations which made me select **The Christmas Fox**. His masterful paintings are dazzlingly original and at the same time very reminiscent of the world of Beatrix Potter, Alison Uttley and Kenneth Grahame. The animals are dressed in elaborate clothing and inhabit an exquisite landscape. A strong sense of looking backwards for inspiration. See also **The March Hare** (Hutchinson, 0 09 173603 X, £5.95) by the same duo.

Other new Christmas poetry to note:

**A Golden Christmas Treasury**, edited by Marc Daniels, Pavilion, 1 85145 463 2, £7.99

**A Christmas Stocking**, edited by Wes Magee, Cassell, 0 304 31494 3, £7.95



Finally for this section, one of the most interesting contributions of the year and, arguably, the most exciting poetry is Philip Gross's **Manifold Manor**. This is a sequence of poems about an old haunted ruin frequented by a jackdaw. It reminds me of Ted Hughes' **Crow** (for adults) though it is quite different. There is, however, the same brooding sense of darkness and spellbinding story and the powerful presence of a bird.

There is much to challenge more experienced readers of 11+ here. It is full of puzzling clues, unanswered questions and strong, memorable images. At the climax the towel is thrown down for the reader:

*The more you shout about it,  
the less you see and hear.*

*Sometimes you need darkness  
to make your vision clear.*

*If you don't see through my riddle  
all you have to do is look.*

*If you think the answer's simple  
well . . .*

*you write a different book!*

Poetry books chosen for excellence in illustration:

**Ten Golden Years** is a must, as all the royalties go to Great Ormond Street Hospital for children. Chris Powling and Sally Grindley, both members of the Mother Goose Award panel, invited the ten winning artists so far to illustrate new poems by some of the best contemporary poets writing for the young. With a cast list of Patrick Benson, Michelle Cartledge, Reg Cartwright, Emma Chichester Clark, Charles Fuge, Satoshi Kitamura, Patrick Lynch, Jan Ormerod, Susan Varley, Juan Wijngaard and the poets Agard, Brownjohn, Causley, Cope, Dahl, Dixon, Edwards, Fatchen, Henri, Shirley and Ted Hughes, King-Smith, McGough, McNaughton, Magee, Mayer, Nicholls, Nichols, Rice, Rosen and West, you can see that you are in for a feast! Especially with the Walker Books design team in charge – this must be one of the most exciting books of the year, visually. The illustrations are as much a treat for the eye as the poetry is for the ear.

My next offering is traditional rhymes accompanied by some of the foremost illustrators working today, again for a good cause. All publishing profits from **Tail Feathers from Mother Goose** will be donated to the Bodleian Opie Appeal to keep Iona Opie's unique collection of rare children's books from being broken up. This sumptuous book is illustrated by sixty different artists: when I tell you that the front cover is by Maurice Sendak, the endpapers by Janet Ahlberg, the foreword by Sara Midda and the first poem by Shirley Hughes, you'll see what I mean! The text is comprised of rhymes, mostly previously unpublished, selected by Iona Opie.

Another set of brilliant artists is featured in **Sing a Song of Popcorn**, nine Caldecott Medal winners. With a glorious selection of poetry from the past and present chosen by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers and others, this would make a lovely Christmas gift at £8.95 (Hodder & Stoughton, 0 340 49078 0).

The last book in this section is not poetry, strictly speaking, but comes close enough for inclusion. Nancy White Carlstrom employs a lyrical style in **Wild Wild Sunflower Child Anna** aided by the lush creations of Jerry Pinkney. This is a glorious picture book about a little girl (black as it happens) revelling in the outdoors in a very physical way. Both author and illustrator seem to delight in this evocation of nature and childhood which manages to avoid being sentimental. I can't convey how lovely this book is to look at, but I can offer a taste of the language:

*Anna drifts,  
Anna glides,  
Anna's arms open wide  
for the sun rolling  
sky falling.  
It doesn't, Anna does.  
Dizzy, tizzy Anna.*

For small children and adults.

Louise Brierley has produced a magnificent version of **Peacock Pie**. I think the artwork is remarkable and love the animals and bits of landscape. But Louise Brierley's conical, elongated figures fail to evoke de la Mare for me. See if you agree. (Faber, 0 571 13989 2, £7.99)

Finally we come to anthologies where I only have space left to select a few of the best and write about them briefly.

**Catch It If You Can** deserves a mention because with Brian Thompson as editor you can guarantee quality, because the illustrations by Susie Jenkin-Pearce are a joy and because this is a delectable book for very small children to handle. A mixture of rhymes, old favourites and modern poems.

Two other well chosen anthologies for this age group are **For Me, Me, Me** (0 340 49434 4) and **I Will Build You a House** (0 340 49514 6) by



From **Tail Feathers from Mother Goose**.



From **Peacock Pie**.

Dorothy Butler with line drawings by Megan Gressor, Knight paperbacks, £2.50 each.

**Strawberry Drums** is Adrian Mitchell's first anthology for children, though most readers will know his own collection **Nothingmas Day**. I thoroughly enjoyed Adrian Mitchell's eclectic choice from William Blake to Navaho native Americans, Bessie Smith to Kirandeeep Chahal. Lots of fun including a do-it-yourself section.

Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark always produce thoughtful, intelligent anthologies. They have several new books out of this year:

**Peace and War**, 0 19 276069 6, R£8.95; 0 19 276071 8, £4.95 pbk

**The New Dragon Book of Verse**, Q 19 831240 7, £5.95;  
0 19 831241 5, £3.95 pbk

**The Young Dragon Book of Verse**, 0 19 831266 0, £5.95;  
0 19 831259 8, £3.25 pbk

all from Oxford University Press.

However, it is Michael Harrison I want to feature with **Splinters** – a book of very short poems was an original idea. The book is attractively produced, a bit smaller than A3 size, and delicately and effectively illustrated in line drawings by Sue Heap. Most importantly the poetry is good; lots of tiny moments captured in words. For 9-13 roughly.

**Madtail, Miniwhale and Other Shape Poems**, edited by Wes Magee, will be a very handy resource in junior classrooms. The entire book is dedicated to poems where the impact comes not just from the words used, but also from the shapes they make. See also Magee's two new collections from Cambridge University Press: **The Witch's Brew** (0 521 36119 2, £5.95; 0 521 36941 X, £2.75 pbk) for lower juniors; and **Morning Break** (0 521 36118 4, £5.95; 0 521 36940 1, £2.75 pbk) for upper juniors.

I very much commend Judith Nicholls for **What on Earth . . . ?** (poems with a conservation theme) as the intentions are worthy and highly topical. Nicholls employs a wide canvas: there are poems which glory in the wonders of nature, as well as those which despair at what human beings have done to our fragile planet. She includes many beautiful native American poems, as well as traditional and



Illustration to  
'Song of the  
Battery Hen',  
from **What on  
Earth . . . ?**

modern from Britain and elsewhere. The cover is lovely and Alan Baker provides fine drawings to accompany the text. For 9 and above.

The romantic O.T.T. cover of **In Love**, edited by Jennifer Curry, would put any self-respecting teenager off the book! This is a pity as Jennifer Curry is a very good anthologist who selects poems from as early as Sappho to as recent as Roger McGough, gives due space to the Elizabethan love poets and the Romantics; who dips into other cultures too and includes many by women. A substantial and fascinating anthology.

My personal favourite of all the new anthologies is Wendy Cope's **Is That the New Moon?** This is a stunning collection of modern poetry by women for teenagers. Wendy Cope writes interestingly in her introduction about the book:

'There's something to be said for excluding men, now and again, in order to give women a chance to come into their own . . . Accessibility was one important criterion – anything I couldn't understand on a careful first reading was put aside . . . and directly to the teenage reader: 'Read slowly and, if you like the poem, read it again – you'll probably get more out of it the second time . . . If there is anything at all here that you want to go back to and read over and over again, then you have the capacity to respond to poetry . . . The time won't be wasted.' Good advice.

A note to the publisher: I found my enjoyment of these poems marred by the layout and the excessive need to illustrate nearly everything, leaving little room for the imagination. Although Christine Roche is a talented artist, many of whose drawings do neatly reflect the right mood for this readership, there is too much of her, a few of her illustrations badly miss the point of the poems and the overall effect is busy.

Three interesting books on teaching poetry for teachers:

**Did I Hear You Write?**, Michael Rosen, Deutsch 1989,  
0 233 98381 3, £9.95; 0 233 98436 4, £5.95 pbk

**Young Readers Responding to Poems**, Michael Benton with  
J Teasey, R Bell and K Hurst, Routledge 1988, 0 415 01291 0,  
£9.95

**Talking with Charles Causley**, Brian Merrick, NATE 1989,  
0 901291 16 1, £2.25 (£1.50 members)

and one for teachers and pupils:

Colin Walter has compiled an anthology of poems for the junior age group called **An Early Start to Poetry** (Macdonald Educational, 0 356 16046 7, £7.99), with an eight-page introduction offering advice on reading, writing and listening to poetry in classrooms and beyond. The content is sound, but the editor is ill-served by his publishers in terms of design and illustration. The latter features eleven different illustrators, some really dreadful, and I'm afraid this book wins my award for the worst poetry cover of the year. It's such a pity to see a good idea spoiled in this way.

I must admit I've had a lovely time getting back into poetry and thoroughly enjoyed writing about the best of the crop since the Guide. I'm only sorry to have to leave so many good books out. Happy reading. ■

## Details of books mentioned

**Heard it in the Playground**, Allan Ahlberg, ill. Fritz Wegner, Viking Kestrel 1989, 0 670 82372 4, £6.99

**Conkers**, Barrie Wade, ill. Annable Large, Oxford 1989, 0 19 276073 4, £5.95

**Rhinestone Rhino**, Adrian Henri, ill. Tony Ross, Methuen 1989, 0 416 06332 2, £5.95

**An Imaginary Menagerie**, Roger McGough, ill. Tony Blundell, Viking Kestrel 1988, 0 670 82330 9, £6.95

**The Curse of the Vampire's Socks**, Terry Jones, ill. Michael Foreman, Pavilion 1988, 1 85145 233 8, £7.95

**All the Small Poems**, Valerie Worth, ill. Natalie Babbitt, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, USA, distributed by Faber 1989, 0 571 12106 3, £2.99 pbk

**Popcorn Pie**, Judith Nicholls, ill. Tessa Richardson-Jones, Mary Glasgow 1988, 1 85234 199 8, £12.95 (collected edition); 1 85234 200 5, £7.25 (set of six books); 1 85234 215 3, £6.95 (cassette)

**The Dragon on the Wall**, Stanley Cook, ill. Liz Graham-Yooll, Blackie 1989, 0 216 92722 6, £6.95

**How Does It Feel?**, David Scott, ill. Alan Marks, Blackie 1989, 0 216 92656 4, £6.95

**The Giant Claydelbaydel**, Richard Edwards, ill. Jo Burroughes, Orchard 1989, 1 85213 136 5, £6.95

**The Christmas Fox**, John Bush, ill. Peter Weevers, Hutchinson 1988, 0 09 173648 X, £5.95

**Manifold Manor**, Philip Gross, ill. Chris Riddell, Faber 1989, 0 571 15405 0, £3.99 pbk

**Ten Golden Years**, Walker 1989, 0 7445 1214 X, £9.95

**Tail Feathers from Mother Goose**, The Opie Rhyme Book, Walker 1988, 0 7445 1039 2, £12.95

**Wild Wild Sunflower Child Anna**, Nancy White Carlstrom, ill. Jerry Pinkney, Collier Macmillan 1988, 0 02 717360 7, £5.95

**Catch It If You Can**, edited by Brian Thompson, ill. Susie Jenkin-Pearce, Viking Kestrel 1989, 0 670 82279 5, £6.95

**Strawberry Drums**, edited by Adrian Mitchell, ill. Frances Lloyd, 0 361 08354 8, £5.99; 0 361 08355 6, £2.99 pbk

**Splinters**, edited by Michael Harrison, ill. Sue Heap, Oxford 1989, 0 19 276072 6, £4.95

**Madtail, Miniwhale and Other Shape Poems**, chosen by Wes Magee, ill. Caroline Crossland, Viking Kestrel 1989, 0 670 82672 3, £6.99

**What on Earth . . . ?**, edited by Judith Nicholls, ill. Alan Baker, Faber 1989, 0 571 15261 9, £8.99; 0 571 15262 7, £4.99 pbk

**In Love**, edited by Jennifer Curry, Methuen Teens 1989, 0 416 12782 7, £7.95

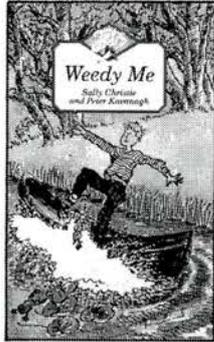
**Is That the New Moon?**, edited by Wendy Cope, ill. Christine Roche, Lions Tracks 1989, 0 00 673240 2, £2.25 pbk

**Morag Styles** is Senior Lecturer in Curriculum Studies at Homerton College, Cambridge. She has specialised in poetry and is a highly respected anthologist. She was co-editor with Pat Triggs of the Bk Guide, **Poetry 0-16** published in October 1988.

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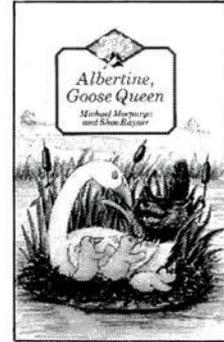
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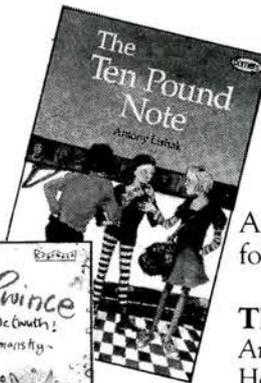
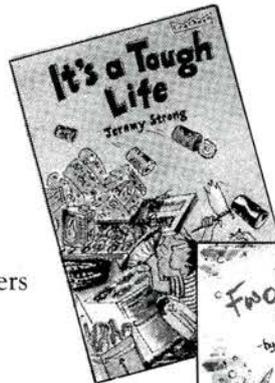


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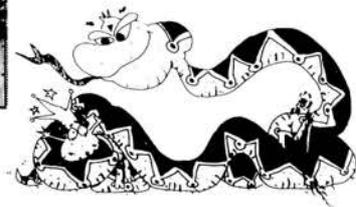
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BOOKS FOR KEEPS

NEWS

# BfK moves to New Offices

On 1st November 1989 we moved to a new office just round the corner from Effingham Road. Not that it was easily come by. It was a greengrocers shop for over fifty years and, when we took it over, closely resembled the inside of a very ancient potato sack. We spent several weeks rebuilding, replumbing, rewiring, re-everything. The only things we didn't touch were the walls and the roof!

And what a morale booster it's turning out to be, just at the moment when we're looking next year for the largest surge of growth we've ever had since **BfK** itself was launched in 1980. We have already begun work on a **BfK** Green List (coming Autumn 1990), and this summer we commissioned an Anti-Sexist Guide, the third volume of Judith Elkin's Multicultural Guides for the 12-16s and a thoroughly revised edition of the 0-7 and 8-12 (to be combined into one publication). These should be published between Autumn 1990 and Easter 1991. And that's not counting a couple of other projects which we are still negotiating and which could happen in the first half of next year. By the time all this comes to pass, we could well be looking for new offices all over again!

The telephone number hasn't changed and there are now two lines so it should be much easier to get through. If you have written to us at 1 Effingham Road, don't worry; it won't be lost.

Here's the new address:

Books for Keeps  
6 Brightfield Road  
Lee  
London  
SE12 8QF  
Telephone: 01-852 4953 (2 lines)

## The Pan and Macmillan School Library Award

As the leaflet says: 'Would you like £5000 worth of books for your library?' That's the first prize and a more enticing one it's hard to imagine. This new Award, recently announced by Macmillan and Pan, is open to infant, junior, middle and lower secondary schools in Britain and Eire. Winners and runners-up need to convince the judges (including the Earl of Stockton, Brough Girling, Diana Wynne Jones, Roger McGough and our own Chris Powling amongst other glitterati from the children's book world) that their school makes the best possible use of its book resources. The Award calls for an account, using a diary or journal format and with the full participation of the children, of how book resources are employed within and without the curriculum, how the library is utilised, and how you might make use of £5000 worth of books. The closing date for receipt of entries is 10th April 1990. Our advice? Go for it and send off for an Entry Form by writing to Pan/Macmillan Children's Books, Marketing Dept, Pan Books Ltd, Cavaye Place, London SW10 9PG.

## BfK Annual Subscription Price Increase

As from 1st January 1990 we are going to raise the price of an annual subscription to **BfK**. The subscription rates therefore for the coming calendar year are as follows:

UK annual subscription: £9.30  
Europe and surface worldwide: £13.50  
Airmail rates on application

## Teenage Issue

### January offers . . .

- Adèle Geras on the possibility of teenage fiction
- Toby Forward on fiction and young offenders
- Bob Hull on the language of information books
- Picture books for older readers
- Joan Lingard in *Authorgraph*

Literature

THE POETRY LIBRARY

THE SOUTH BANK CENTRE

## The Poetry Library Children's Section

The Poetry Library, South Bank Centre, has recently opened a Children's Section in its new purpose-built library in the Royal Festival Hall. The collection, consisting of about 2,500 modern poetry books for teachers and children, also includes the Signal Poetry Collection, recently rehoused from Book Trust.

There are two copies of every book in the Library – one for lending and the other kept permanently available for consultation in the reference collection. There is also a growing collection of audio and video cassettes of poets reading and performing their own poems. Some of these are available for borrowing.

In addition, Teachers' Packs of Information on Poetry for Children are available free. These contain booklists, news of competitions and events, information on poetry magazines, publishers of poetry and a list of different subjects and themes indexed in the Poetry Library.

Class visits from schools are welcome but it is advisable to arrange these at least one week in advance. Teachers' days, organised by the Education Department of the South Bank Centre in conjunction with the Poetry Library, are planned to run throughout the year.

The Poetry Library is situated on the Red Side, Level 5, Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, London SE1 8XX. Opening hours: 11am to 8pm, seven days a week. Membership free. For more information, contact Dolores Conway on 01-921 0664.



## Children's Books of the Year 1989

0 86264 262 0, £3.95

Just published by Andersen Press in association with the Children's Book Foundation is

the annual guide to the best children's books published during the year. Best, that is, according to the selector, Julia Eccleshare, who has picked 308 titles from over 5,000 books published for children over the last twelve months.

## The Federation of Children's Book Groups

22nd Annual Conference

6th-8th April 1990 at Chester College, Chester

The 22nd Annual Conference has as its title *Yesterday, today, forever . . .* and will be highlighting the rich choice of good books available to children today with an equally rich choice of speakers, all of them authors. They include Michael Rosen, Geraldine McCaughrean, Bob Wilson, Hazel Townson, Brian Jacques and Julia Jarman. A full residential weekend for non-members is £70, with a reduction for members. Daily rates are also available. Closing date: 24th February 1990

Further details from: Liz Youngs, 12 Argarmools Road, Formby, Liverpool L37 7BU (tel: 07048 73789). ■