

# BOOKS FOR KEEPS

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Jon Pertwee as Worzel, from the cover of 'Worzel Gummidge goes to the Seaside' (Picture Puffin)

## THE TIE-IN BUSINESS

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## Apologies

In the November issue **Patrick Comes to Puttyville** by Geoffrey Hayes was wrongly attributed in paperback to Fontana Lions. It is, of course, published by Knight.

We are very sorry that Bill Boyle and Colin Mills were omitted from the list of reviewers in Books for Keeps 5. Their reviews were initialled but their faces were missing from our page two line-up. We are delighted to have them back — Bill has even got a new photograph.

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## LOOKING AHEAD

In March we put the focus on  
Humour.

Plus the latest news, reviews and  
comment.

# Reviewers

in this issue



## Jill Bennett

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



## Steve Bowles

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

## Pat Triggs

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



## Colin Mills (left)

Colin is in the Division of Teaching Studies at Worcester College, where he helps run a Diploma in Children's Literature. He's taught in a comprehensive school, a primary school and worked in radio.



## Bill Boyle (right)

Bill teaches in Middle School in Wirral. He was founding Deputy Editor of **Junior Education**.



## Cathy Lister

Cathy teaches in a middle school in Staffordshire, with responsibility for English and Language across the Curriculum.

# EDITOR'S PAGE



Pat

'I can't understand people who say they wouldn't have television in the house. It's there; it's with us. What's to be gained by turning our backs on it?' The view of Rosemary Sandberg (editor at Fontana Lions), and one of the people who contributed to our **Tie-in Business** feature (page 4.). Eighty-five per cent of all children watch some television every day. It's an enormous influence on all of us. That's why a large part of this issue of **Books for Keeps** looks at the relationship between books and television. For the most part we are looking at what is, and going behind the scenes. We are left wanting to ask why there are not more programmes about books; why is there not a 'book spot' on programmes like **Multi-Coloured Swap Shop** which have a huge audience?

## Stay home teenagers — you've been discovered

The experiment of repeating **Grange Hill** in the early evening was so successful (at times 55% of all people between thirteen and sixteen were watching) that BBC television was forced to reconsider its approach to a neglected audience. Casting aside the idea that at thirteen the young lost interest in television, they are trying instead to find the magic ingredient that will keep them watching. The search has led in part to books. **Spine Chillers** is a sort of grown-up Jackanory — straight-to-camera dramatic readings of classic ghost stories. Reaction in the Letters pages of **The Radio Times** has been mainly outrage from mums of younger children accustomed to leaving them 'safely' in front of the box for the whole of 'children's time'. I hope Edward Barnes (BBC television's head of children's programmes) will hold out against this attack. Such expectations are unreasonable — to use his own words: 'eleven to sixteen year olds have been short-changed for too long.' **Maggie**, the serial based on Joan Lingard's novels (see page 6) also hopes to capture this audience.

## Going Out?

ITV, too, has 'discovered' teenagers. John Hambley (controller of children's programmes at Thames Television) thinks they should have ten times more time. Lewis Rudd (Southern Television) who also talked to us about tie-ins (page 4) and says he is 'the man who turned down **Grange Hill**', has not turned down Phil Redmond's latest excursion into teenage realism. Will this inspire a book, I wonder? **Going Out** is for sixteen to nineteen year olds and will probably be shown after nine o'clock later this year. Lewis Rudd says it's 'Quite dangerous, but highly moral.' Which I think means that the language will be fairly ripe, the attitudes challenging, but no one will

actually get into bed with anyone else. Will its later showing time and slightly older audience mean that it avoids the sort of protest from parents and teachers that met **Grange Hill**? Will it make BBC's **Maggie** look 'square'? Lewis Rudd thinks they might be seen as 'bold little Southern dars to go where the angels of the BBC feared to tread.'

Ironically Southern Television itself is going out — its franchise removed by the IBA. In its recent report the IBA criticised many ITV companies for the standard of their children's programmes. Southern has not been guilty in this area. Let's hope the new franchise holders build on this good foundation.

## Dinner Ladies and Dodgem

Bernard Ashley (see Authorgraph 6, page 14) has three new books coming out this year. **Dinner Ladies Don't Count** is a story for younger children which will appear in Julia Macrae's new **Blackbird** series, and **I'm Trying to Tell You** is a collection of four short stories, 'told' by four kids, from Kestrel. The one which will give him most pleasure, though, 'for me it's probably the best so far' he says, is **Dodgem** (Julia Macrae), out in April. Tony Bradman says the pace and tension of the story (Simon Leighton coping with his depressive dad) are almost unbearable — and its got a cliffhanger ending.

## Thumbs Down

A **Books for Keeps** raspberry for titles from two new publishers, Pepper Press and Sparrow Books. The first sentence of **The Amazing Adventures of Chilly Billy** (Pepper Press) is 'Nobody knows this except you and I.' Surely some editor could have given Peter Mayle a quick grammar lesson — that's not his only mistake! As for Sparrow Books... **The Very Big Secret** is stiff with sexist stereotypes and apart from that it's so silly. Mum 'has to go away for a while' but she promises the two quite old children that when she comes back she'll bring 'a big surprise'. It turns out to be a new baby! (No, the very big secret isn't the size of mum's tum which no-one noticed.) It's difficult to believe that anyone could consider publishing such rubbish today, even if it is by Enid Blyton.

## Thumbs Up

Congratulations to Kestrel and Jan Mark, though, for **Nothing to be Afraid Of** (0 7226 5677 7, £3.95) a knockout collection of ten stories: odd, eerie, funny, frightening. This is Jan Mark in fine **Thunder and Lightnings** form. Not to be missed.

## Now we are One

With this issue of **Books for Keeps** we complete our first year. New subscriptions arrive every day and we know that this is due in no small part

to the recommendations of all of you who have joined us during the year and been enthusiastic about the magazine to friends and colleagues. Many thanks, and thanks too to all of you who have written to us. We want **Books for Keeps** to reflect what is happening wherever books and children meet. In this issue, Kevin Jeffrey and David Bennett (pages 17 and 26) write about things that have worked; but confronting difficulties and problems, raising issues, asking questions is equally important. Coombe Down School in Plymouth wrote to us very unhappily after hiring an NBL exhibition. Their 'onward carriage' liability was to Wales, rather more costly than they had expected. 'Devon Library Service' they said, 'would have provided us with the books free of charge.' NBL exhibitions are only books — stands would add prohibitively to transport costs. So if you have a co-operative library service, it's a good idea to buy the Book List from the NBL and do-it-yourself.

In May we launched the **Books for Keeps 'Award'** for books that 'worked' (You tell us about how a particular book really broke through with an individual or a group; we give a £5 book token for those we publish.) A few weeks ago a teacher said to me 'I thought about sending my nomination; then I thought you wouldn't want what I wrote.' But we do. Keep sending us 'books that worked', and keep writing. We welcome your reactions and suggestions.

We are full of plans for our second year, and delighted to have you all with us.



Norman & Gordon inadvertently enter the fancy dress competition as Hillary and Tensing in the Coronation Mob from 'Nothing To Be Afraid Of'. Illustration by David Parkins

# THE TIE-IN BUSINESS

Who decides what books get on television?  
How is it all arranged?  
How important are tie-ins to publishers?  
We've been talking to people in TV and publishing, finding out what makes up the many-sided relationship between television and books.

Southern TV is one of the few ITV companies (Yorkshire with Joy Whitby, and Granada are two others) which has given serious consideration to children's programmes and made book adaptations a major part of its output. Lewis Rudd (Assistant Controller) is the person behind the dramatisations of *Midnight is a Place* (Joan Aiken), *Worzel Gummidge* (the Waterhouse and Hall version), *Noah's Castle* (John Rowe Townsend), *Scarf Jack* (P.J. Kavanagh), and *Brendon Chase* (B.B.) — the last two are due for showing this year.

'I'm a great believer in adaptations of children's books for television. The once-removed collaboration between the TV writer and the writer of the original book tends to get you a different dimension of imagination. That's not to disparage TV writers; but I don't think you get something like, say *Midnight is a Place* written just for TV'.

Clearly books offer a rich source of material. But who decides which ones?

## How does a Book get Televised?

Sometimes an author's agent suggests it — *Scarf Jack* was one of those. More rarely writers approach a company: Willis Hall, Keith Waterhouse and Jon Pertwee went to Southern with their idea for *Worzel Gummidge*. Most often, it seems, it's pure chance. A script editor at Southern happened across *Noah's Castle*; a producer admired Joan Aiken's stories and wanted to do one. There is some contact between the book world and television but it depends largely on chance meetings and informal contacts. Publishers do suggest books.

Rosemary Sandberg (editor of *Fontana Lions*) explained. 'We regularly send off books; but it's totally chance if one gets picked up. It's a question of the right book in the right place at the right time. We don't know what they are looking for. We assume that they are keeping up with all the books, but . . .'

Usually it seems 'they' want something they've heard of, or something out of copyright, which makes it cheaper. Occasionally motives are questionable. Not all ITV companies place a high priority on children's programmes, although by their contracts they have to produce a certain number.

Barry Cunningham (Children's Marketing at Penguin) told us, 'Some TV companies ring me and say, "Have you got an S.F. story that's quick, that I can film in the studio?" All the criteria they give me are technical — nothing to do with the story — so they can put it through in six weeks. They're just filling in their quota.'

Lewis Rudd isn't one of those. 'It's got to be a book I feel enthused about, something a bit different, a bit special. I'd rather do contemporary fiction than the classics — that ground's regularly trod by the BBC. *Noah's Castle* and *Scarf Jack* are good strong adventures, but they are exploring political ideas as well; there's something a bit extra. We've got a thirteen part adaptation of one of John Christopher's *Tripods* trilogy, but we haven't decided if we can afford to go ahead and make it yet.'

## Can we afford it?

So it's not just a question of a book the executive producer likes. It comes down to money in the end. Location filming is expensive, so is building special sets and casting large crowds. Lewis Rudd again: '*Midnight is a Place* was not my favourite Joan Aiken — it was a Joan Aiken we could do. I turned down *Black Hearts in Battersea* because I couldn't see us doing it successfully. We would have had to build a completely different London, and an enormous palace. There's no point in doing a lame version of something.'

Budgets for children's programmes are very small compared with those for adult television. Doing dramatisations of books is an exercise in the art of the possible on a shoestring.

## Wide Appeal

Just occasionally though a company goes overboard. All of Southern's *Worzel Gummidge* series have been entirely made on film. This makes them very expensive — 'even more than we originally thought,' Lewis Rudd confesses. But the series is hugely successful. Is this a direct result of the money spent on it? Barry Cunningham thinks in part it is. 'Children just love the simple idea of the funny man, the scarecrow. But because it's very well filmed and the casting's excellent — lots of familiar adult actors — Jon Pertwee, Barbara Windsor, Una Stubbs — it appeals to adults as well.'

The desire for wide appeal lies behind the choice of many books, Barry thinks. 'Period pieces like *The Secret Garden*, *The Peppermint Pig* are safer for a family audience. You're not risking as much as with something realistic like *Break in the Sun*. With a subject like that it's harder to identify your audience and know who you are aiming at. It hasn't got in-built wide appeal. Something like *Bagthorpes* is easier.'

## TV into Books

The tie-in traffic isn't all one way. Richard Carpenter's *Catweazle* is an early example of a successful transformation of a TV series into a book. The wide range of the TV audience creates problems for a publisher taking on a 'novelisation'. Sally Floyer (editor at Beaver) is bringing out *Echoes of Louisa* from a series by Gail Renard, on ATV later this year. It's about a girl and a ghost (both aged fifteen). The likely television audience will be from eight years old up. 'For a book we have to narrow down the age-range. The question is where do you pitch it?' Gail Renard is an experienced television writer — she worked on *Flambards* for Yorkshire — but she's never written a book. The tie-in was arranged on the basis of the scripts for the screenplay. Sally sees it as 'a limited risk. It may not be a good novel, but we hope that while the series is on we'll sell enough to make it worthwhile doing. And if it's a good book and she's a good writer, we've given someone the chance to write a first novel, and maybe we can follow her up.'

When Rosemary Sandberg asked Robert Leeson to try his hand at a *Grange Hill* story, she wasn't taking such a risk. But she was trying something different, motivated by an editor's natural desire to sell a lot of books and also by her belief in the importance of books and reading. 'I wanted us to get to kids who would normally never pick up a book; but because of the power of *Grange Hill* they actually would. But we didn't want just a write up of the scripts; we wanted to take the characters and situations and build from there. In *Grange Hill Goes Wild* (the second book) the kids go to summer camp. For financial reasons the BBC couldn't do that. The book widens the imaginative vision of the series.'

*Grange Hill* has nine million viewers aged six to eighteen. Robert Leeson's brief was to 'make it simple to read, with lots of dialogue. Make it a book eight and nine year olds can manage; but don't make it so young that twelve to fourteen year olds will feel put off.'

Independent film makers, we discovered, are constantly approaching publishers to make books about their film characters. 'They are all after a Mr. Men-type breakthrough,' said Sally Floyer. 'They need to say they have books lined up to help sell the films. Mostly we turn them down. They are not translatable; they rely on a song, or the animation and they don't work as books.' An exception is the work of John Ryan. His *Noah's Ark* series of early readers (Beaver) will soon be seen as twelve ten minute films for Yorkshire TV, broadcast at lunchtime.

## How does a Tie-in affect sales?

Television exposure sells books. On that everyone agrees. How much it affects sales and for how long depends on a lot of things. *Bagpuss*, *Ivor the Engine*, *Paddington*, *Pugwash* and the like have consistently good sales, arising partly from regular repeats for younger viewers.

The *Hardy Boys* TV series in 1979 boosted sales. In 1980 they were back to their previous level. *Nancy Drew* (same series) sales shot up and have stayed up. No-one knows why. For *Just William* (also *Armada*) television brought a brief reprieve of half a million sales before he went back to the verge of extinction.

In *Puffin The TV Adventures of Worzel Gummidge* have sold over 80,000 copies a year each, so far. Barbara Euphan Todd's *Worzel Gummidge* (the first ever Puffin) is still in print along with other original titles. Sales are lower for these than for the Waterhouse and Hall titles; but they are double what they were before *Worzel* hit TV. Television also lifted K.M. Peyton's *Flambards* from 'very low sales' to a place in the Penguin adult list. It seems that where the quality of book and television is good the effects are longer lasting. If you break through to a mass audience, as with *Gummidge* and *Grange Hill* the effects are spectacular.

Belinda Hick (Fontana Publicity) thinks books featured on television are especially important for children buying books. 'For lots of them it's the first opportunity they have for exercising their own choice of a book. It's usually parents who do the choosing and a child doesn't have the confidence, or the knowledge of what he would rather put in the place of a parent's choice. If they have seen something on television and they know they have enjoyed it, they can say, "I know this book; that's the one I want."



## Recognition

Lots of people who usually never go near a bookshop could discover books through television. But getting simple information about books which are being dramatised, onto the screen is a sore point. The IBA rules say that only books that *come out* of a series can be promoted — not the one that originated it. Lewis Rudd thinks this is pity. 'I'd like to underline to kids that there is a book and that they can read it.'

The BBC advertises only its own publications. Publishers are naturally irritated to see a plug for the record of the theme music of a series when the book which originated it goes unmentioned. Because the book doesn't appear on the screen, publishers have to work hard to make it recognisable in bookshops. This means special covers, posters, point of sale display — a big undertaking on the limited budgets for promoting children's lists. Rosemary Sandberg: 'There's a big bonus if it comes off; but it's high risk. You can't tiptoe into it. You have to make a heavy commitment and go in with confidence to convince the wholesalers.' That sort of activity impresses booksellers too. They display titles with more confidence. Once a children's book has sold well they tend to re-order it and keep it in view so sales stay up for longer. Puffins keep their TV covers on books long after the series have finished.

There are other spin-off benefits. Robert Leeson's *The Third Class Genie* and *The Demon Bike Rider* are doing well. 'The kids know him from *Grange Hill* and they trust him.'

## Covers and Conflicts

In spite of the closeness implied by tie-in, TV and books inhabit different worlds. Publishers work months ahead; in TV they may well be changing and adapting up to the last minute. For covers and publicity the book people need material of a certain kind well in advance.

Getting tie-in covers on out-of-copyright classics isn't as easy as it used to be. 'Ten years ago the BBC would give you still photographs for nothing. Now they've got wise,' said Rosemary Sandberg. 'They wanted a huge fee for using the Heidi material. When they put it up for auction no-one was interested.' So there was no 'official' Heidi edition. That caused problems for Belinda Hick at a Book Fair. 'A mum said, "I want the Heidi books." I said, "Yes, here they are." She said, "No, not those ones, the ones on television".'

Even when you get a cover your problems aren't over. When a series actually goes out depends on the schedulers. TV companies are cagey about precise dates because they don't want the competition to know what's coming. A series can be postponed after the books are in the shops. 'Now on TV' flashed across a cover can suddenly have a hollow ring. On ITV no children's programmes are shown after 5.15; 'building an evening audience' has priority. So it's unlikely that a series like *Noah's Castle* found its best audience.

## The final impression

What does all this add up to for teachers, parents, school bookshops?

Television, it is clear, is hugely influential. Few people in it however, seem interested in putting that influence to work for children and books. Those who are, are isolated and hedged about by lack of finance, restrictions of time, rules and regulations which prevent even simple information about books being passed on at a time when it would be most effective. But even in a company like Southern which is sympathetic to books, the choice of material seems frighteningly arbitrary, left to chance or personal enthusiasm. Because of this we are to have *Brendon Chase*, which may be nice nostalgia for adults but probably won't turn a single child who picks up the book into an avid reader. There are lots of books, equally good for television, which would. Should there then be more co-operation between TV and publishers to ensure better use of this powerful medium?

In the end what matters for television may be viewing figures. What matters for publishers may be sales. But need this mean that they cannot co-operate to encourage enthusiasm for books among children, something which is important for individuals and for the whole of society.

Teachers and parents who are trying to do this, searching for the 'right' books and trying to avoid the 'wrong' ones, know that tie-ins can hinder as well as help. They have an important role in all this. One positive step might be for them to pass back to those in publishing and television who created the tie-in in the first place their responses and those of the children who are at the receiving end of both. ●

Next month BBC TV starts a new series, **Maggie**, based on the first two of Joan Lingard's quartet of books about Sixteen-year-old Maggie McKinley.

**JOAN LINGARD** writes about her books and about re-creating them for television.

# Maggie



Now a major  
BBC TV series

When my children were small we used to spend holidays in a house in a glen in Inverness-shire. Once it had been a school and schoolhouse, in the days when the glen had had a thriving population; when the numbers dropped to three or four it was sold and became a holiday house. Across the road was a forester's cottage, an old black timbered building with a red corrugated iron roof. An old lady in her eighties, the widow of a forester, lived there, and she wore a wrap-around flowered overall and men's laced-up boots. Or did she? Now I'm not sure for, you see, she became intertwined with my own granny who *did* wear such an overall and boots, and the two, blended together, were transposed into Maggie's granny.

So I had Granny and the glen before I had Maggie. Granny needed a granddaughter, a suitable one, a chip off the old block, if you like. I named her Margaret after her, also naming her after her great-great-granny, Margaret Ross of Greenyards, who had been evicted during the time of the Highland Clearances. I took the theme of being cleared, that is uprooted from one's own home against one's will by some force or another, and wove it through the quartet. Each time a clearance takes place the people caught up in it have to resettle, to come to terms with their new environment, and in so doing they often have to face up to aspects of themselves which they have not had to before. Background is important to me: my characters grow out of it and react as they do because of it.

Another factor which influenced me in my creation of Maggie was the

character of Sadie in my Ulster books. Sadie — for whom, I must say, I have a great affection — although a rebel in some areas, follows the traditional path of a woman, taking up the role expected of her by marrying and having a child. (Though not of course by marrying a catholic boy!) I wanted Maggie to take a different path, to reject the role her family expected her to play, and so she has ambitions to go to university and become an anthropologist. She may or may not marry but marriage for her will not be an end in itself. The only one in her family who fully understands and sympathises is her granny who, if things had been different in her young days, would have liked to have been a forester herself.

Now that I had Granny and Maggie installed in the forestry cottage I had to fill the holiday one across the way. Since Maggie was a Glaswegian, I decided the Frasers should be from Edinburgh, and that they should be solidly middle-class, to provide another contrast. They have the problem of their daughter's future turned the other way round: they expect her to stay on at school and go to university; she wants to leave, become a hairdresser and marry young. The son James, who intends to become a doctor, causes no ripples until he shows signs of becoming too attached to Maggie. And so these threads are taken too and interwoven with the others through the books.

Maggie's family, although not understanding her, do not in any way reject her, as Sadie's family did when she married Kevin; the McKinleys are a close, united family.

In fact, it is because they are so united that it is more difficult for Maggie to break free to go her own way. It was for this reason that I sent her to Canada in **The Reunion**, so that she would have to stand on her own feet without her family to fall back on. And her family also has to manage without falling back on her.

When Anna Home of the BBC put the idea of a television series based on Maggie to me I was immediately interested, as most writers would be but especially because I could write the scripts myself. (I had already written a considerable number of scripts for television.) The phrase 'based on' is important here, as the series is not a straight adaptation of the books in chronological order. The characters are the same, except



for one new Glasgow one, the threads that I mentioned earlier are the same, as are the main events. What is different is the sequence of the events, and there is a reason for this. During preliminary discussions we decided that the McKinley family should provide the central focus and Glasgow the main setting, and that therefore the opening episodes had to be in Glasgow and should establish Maggie and the McKinleys. And then in episode three we go to Edinburgh to meet the Frasers. It is not until episode five that we go to the glen and meet Granny, though we do hear about her before then! It would have been difficult to have opened in the glen and followed closely to the lines of **The Clearance** since quite a lot of that book is taken up with Maggie's thoughts. I am not keen on television drama with a voice over — sometimes it works — but I did not want to use it here. I wanted each character to speak out directly for herself or himself. And I felt that basically the Glasgow background would provide more material for the kind of television drama we wanted to make.

Scenes that will work in a book will not necessarily work on television. One must, in a way, clear one's mind of the prose and begin listening more to the characters. I did not reread the books before starting to write the television version — I hate rereading my books anyway! — because I wanted to think about the characters operating in a different medium.



The television series opens then with the demolishing of the McKinleys' tenement, and Maggie watching it coming down, just as she did in **The Resettling**. So the McKinleys are cleared before Granny. Her clearance does not take place in the first nine episodes at all — there was not enough space — but it will happen in the second of the next nine episodes which I am writing at present and are scheduled for production in the autumn. In spite of this, I would still recommend that the books be read in the correct sequence, beginning with **The Clearance**, even by those who come first to Maggie through television.

Because I was both the author of the books and the script writer I had much greater freedom than an adaptor of someone else's work has. I could not have allowed another writer to change my books around in the same way; I needed to make the artistic decision myself as to what was valid and what was not. And I think it is good that I had this freedom as it makes — or should make — for better television. What matters most is that the spirit of the quartet should be preserved. And I believe it is.

This is due, aside from the part I played in it, to the sympathetic treatment of the producer Anna Home and director Renny Rye, and to the cast itself. Obviously the characters are not going to *look* exactly like the ones I had imagined, or like what anyone else will have imagined for that matter — they could not — but they are true to the characters of the people.

Kirsty Miller, who plays Maggie, told me, when I first met her, that as she read the books she kept thinking how alike she and Maggie were, and how often she had had similar thoughts and feelings. I always hope my books will strike chords of recognition in readers, and not just in the ones who are going to play the parts!

The young actors are all aged between 17 and 20, and they are all acting professionally for the first time. Watching them, I felt they became 'professional' very quickly. They have also become, for me, Maggie and James and Jean and Sandy, and now, working on the following episodes, it is *their* voices that I hear in my ear as I write.

It has been a most interesting experience for me to watch my characters being transposed from the page to the television screen, and to see them achieve a kind of 'reality' other than that which exists inside my own head. ●



Joan Lingard, brought up in Belfast, now lives in Edinburgh where she was born. Her best known books to date are probably the 'Kevin and Sadie' sequence. Kevin (a Catholic) and Sadie (a Protestant) meet as children in a divided Belfast (**The Twelfth Day of July**), fall in love (**Across the Barricades**), marry and 'escape' to London (**Into Exile**) and, now with a baby, finally find a home in Cheshire (**A Proper Place**).

The 'Maggie' books have a Scottish background. In **The Clearance**, Maggie, staying the summer with Granny in a highland glen, meets the Fraser family from the holiday house across the road. **The Resettling** finds the McKinley family, forced to move from their Glasgow tenement into high rise flats which they hate, making a new start (prompted by Maggie) with a plumbing business and a move to a flat over the shop. Maggie's relationship with James develops and in **The Pilgrimage** they go youth hostelling in search of Greenyards (where Maggie's great-great-granny, Margaret Ross, was evicted during the mid-nineteenth-century clearances) and meet two Canadian boys, one, Phil Ross, also in search of his ancestors. The holiday turns out not quite as James and Maggie imagined. In **The Reunion** Maggie goes to Canada to work for the summer before university.

Joan Lingard also writes for adults. In her latest historical novel, **Greenyards**, which will be published by Hamish Hamilton in March, she follows the thread of the Greenyards clearance back to its source.

The books mentioned here are published in hardback by Hamish Hamilton. The 'Kevin and Sadie' books are in paperback from Puffin. All four 'Maggie' titles are published in paperback by Beaver on 5th February at 95p each.

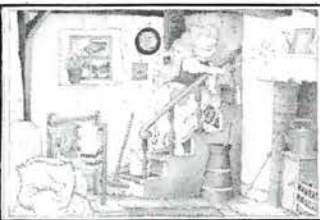
Photographs from the set and of the cast of 'Maggie' courtesy of BBC TV

# reviews

## PAPERBACKS NURSERY/INFANT



Cinderella on the stairs  
I spy the Three Bears



From 'Each Peach Pear Plum'

### Each Peach Pear Plum

Janet and Allan Ahlberg,  
Picture Lion,

0 00 661678 X, 85p

A long-awaited paperback of an Ahlberg favourite which, to my mind, is one of the very best picture books of the last few years. With its superb, pastel illustrations and a text which invites the child to participate in a game of I-spy the nursery characters who are hidden in the pictures, this is an essential part of every young child's literary experience. JB

### Crazy Charlie

Ruth Brown,  
Sparrow Books,  
0 09 924130 7, £1.25

It's good to welcome a new picture book artist. This is a sumptuously illustrated story about a crocodile who loses his teeth and so his power to frighten people. He has to learn to be friendly and learns that it's not so bad after all!

The five-year-olds I shared it with loved it! They wanted the story again and then pored over the strong, immediate pictures. A definite winner and an artist who deserves more recognition. CM

### Sand Cake

Frank Asch,  
Carousel,  
0 552 52123 X, 75p

In this unpretentious, yet ingenious picturebook Mama, Papa and Baby Bear picnic on the beach. Papa makes a most unusual cake and then Baby Bear who is equally clever, gets round the problem of eating it. Full of child appeal this is likely to become a firm favourite with the very young and is also an inviting book for learner readers. JB

### Reading,

0 582 25024 2

### Eating,

0 582 25026 9

### Helping,

0 582 25027 7

### The Cat, the Bird and the Tree,

0 582 25025 0 (Yellow Books)

### Our Baby,

0 582 25028 5

### Dressing Up,

0 582 25031 5

### The Loose Tooth,

0 582 25029 3

### People in Stories,

0 582 25030 7 (Red Books)

### Fire!

0 582 25032 3

### Old Houses,

0 582 25033 1

### The Football Book,

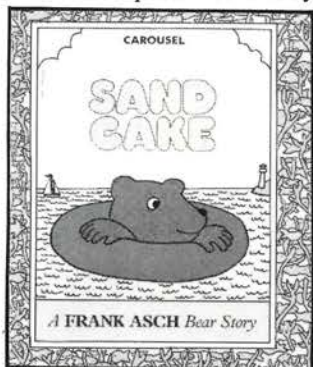
0 582 25035 8

### Crocodiles are Dangerous,

0 582 25034 X (Blue Books)

### Longman, 35p each

It's good to see Breakthrough books available once again in net editions and at a very reasonable price. Illustrated by



such people as Quentin Blake, Posy Simmonds and David McKee, these inviting little books written in 'children's own language' should help beginners to achieve immediate success so that they are able to say — as does the small boy on the first page of **Reading** — 'I can read.'

Despite the lack of any real story in some of the **Yellow** and **Red** titles, and a reversal of two captions in **Eating** (I bet the children will pick this up straightaway), I recommend school bookshops to stock up with plenty of copies. JB

### Numbers, Sizes,

0 851 66 900 X 0 85166 902 6

### Shapes, Colours,

0 85166 901 8 0 85166 899 2

Gillian Youlden,  
Franklin Watts, 99p each

'Learning is designed to be fun,' says the blurb on the back of these Picture Play books. Whether mathematical concepts can be learned from books at all, however good their content, is an idea I strongly question (though they may promote the idea that books are fun, which in itself is an important piece of learning); but this particular series leaves much to be desired.

**Numbers** is probably the best of the four; the pages are split into three sections which can be turned independently to change the scene.

'Watch the animals change their sizes,' is the message on the front cover of **Sizes**. The implication seems to be that the size of the creature changes, but of course this is not so; it only appears so in relation to what it is placed alongside. This could be thoroughly misleading to a child. What seemed like a good idea has gone disastrously astray due to insufficient care with the way the material is presented and with the language used.

This is also a major criticism of **Shapes**: what does one say when the child responds, as did one five-year-old, to the question, 'Can you count the rectangles?' with a quite simple 'No'?

The basic idea that colours are best learned not in isolation, but by contrast, is one that I go along with, but black is presented as grey throughout the book and in my copy, the final spread presented brown and black as an almost indistinguishable grey. And why head the pages 'Remember?' — a hippopotamus is NOT purple and anyway on this particular

page it is shown as blue. 'Endless surprises' these books certainly do provide, but in the case of this reviewer, not, I'm sure, the ones intended. JB

### I Have Two Homes

Althea, illustrated by Isabel Pearce,

Dinosaur,

0 85122 240 4, 60p

The story of a little boy's adjustment to his parents' divorce is told in the direct, unpatronising manner we've come to expect from this author and publisher. It's a sensitive subject, and the blurb about 'a caring, loving book for children in need of extra love' may put some teachers and parents off, but it's compassionate, optimistic and literate. If we think that books have a part to play in coming to terms with the untidy aspects of life, then this one has a place. CM

### Gingerbread Pigs and other rhymes

Daphne Lister, illustrated by Caroline McDonald Paul,

Carousel,

0 552 52126 4, 90p

We need anthologies to introduce the very young to poetry and this gap is being slowly filled (see Jill Bennett's **Roger was a Razor Fish**, Bodley Head). I'm not wholly convinced that this collection meets the needs of five and six-year-olds who are beginning to play with language for the fun of it. A lot of it is below the standard of writing we should be looking for in such anthologies. The splendidly intricate, sometimes delicately surreal pictures by Caroline McDonald Paul are lovely though: I wish she could have been given the opportunity to illustrate a more interesting collection. CM

### Topsy and Tim Can Garden

0 216 90984 8

### Topsy and Tim Can Print in Colour

0 216 90990 0

Jean and Gareth

Adamson,  
Blackie, 95p each

The ubiquitous pair enter the information books stakes. These first two (to be followed by . . . **Can Cook** and . . . **Can Sing and Play**) are well-written, with realistic ideas for activities. I suspect that the real use for these will not be 'do-it-yourself' for tots but ideas for teachers and for harassed holiday mums. CM

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.



# INFANT/JUNIOR



## The Lost Merbaby and The Wishing Nut Tree

Margaret Baker, illustrated by Mary Baker, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1185 8, 80p  
Two generous full-length fairy tales, with splendidly vivid silhouette illustrations by the

author's sister, make up this welcome revival from an underestimated storyteller. We need the variety and vitality of fairy tales, and these are beautiful examples from a mistress of the spell-weaving art. There are many versions of the Merbaby story: in this one the fisherman and his wife who adopt the baby from the sea are haunted by the grief of those who've lost the baby; the

second story is the one about the old man who leaves each of his three sons a wishing nut. Both are right for reading aloud; seven to nines will love to re-read them alone. A super addition to our stock of fairy tales. I just wish Puffin had chosen a more attractive cover. CM

Fifteen stories range from lost pets to lonely grandpas, from the excitement of a rising river storm to the excitement of snow on Christmas Day. The wit, warmth and pace still appeals and their length is just right for a story-telling session. CM

## The Six Bullerby Children

Astrid Lindgren, illustrated by Ilon Wikland, Magnet, 0 416 89500 X, 85p  
These stories of six fun-loving, wholesome country children are now nearly twenty years old. It's easy enough to point to the features which date them: a certain tweeness and predictability; heavy sex stereotyping (Lisa, Britta and Anna are stuck with the washing up whilst Lars, Pip and Ollie play Indians!). It's easy too to see the appeal: adventure, action and a fresh child's eye view.

## Worzel Gummidge Goes to the Seaside

Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall, Picture Puffins, 0 14 050.364 1, 90p  
I'm not sniffy about TV spin-offs, but I'm unsure about this one. An unmemorable story of the zany hero's trip out is accompanied by glossy, unimaginative and curiously static photographs of the leading actors. It all seems a bit of a waste. The TV series is so successful it's bound to sell; but were I a young bookbuyer, I think I'd feel cheated. CM

# LOWER JUNIOR



Drawing by Robert Hales from 'Brinsly's Dream'

## Brinsly's Dream

Petronella Breinburg, Young Puffin, 0 14 03.1112 2, 80p  
This writer has done as much as anyone else to make books for a multicultural readership more than just trendy tokenism: she keeps a rattling good story strongly in the foreground.

This one tells of a West Indian boy's efforts to keep his London-based football team together and lead them to triumph in the festival trophy. It's teeming with the rivalry, tension and enthusiasm which goes with the game and there's the banter and camaraderie of the seven to nines which only such a super writer can truthfully evoke. For me, one of the best of the year. CM

## Pyewacket and Son

Rosemary Weir, illustrated by Charles Pickard, Abelard Grasshopper, 0 200 72707 9, 95p  
Another good one from a writer who does well by that difficult age group: the eight-to-ten 'good readers' who, often, can't get enough at the right level.

This one's action-packed with excitement, humour and some winning characters. Pyewacket is the one-eyed, torn-eared leader of the cats who guard the Pussycat Purr Cat Food Factory. When a gang of rough alley cats are found stealing food, war is declared with accompanying espionage, derring-do and hilarity. A sure-fire one for story-time: if you don't know them, try the same author's 'Albert' books. CM

## The Flight of the Magic Clog

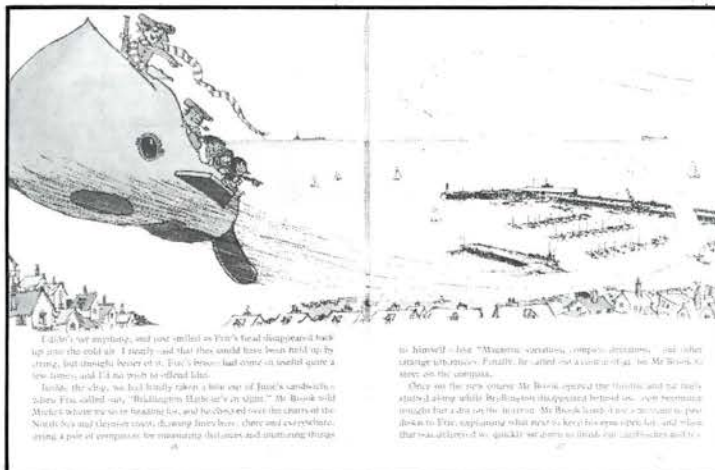
John Noakes, illustrated by Toni Goffe, Lion, 0 00 671727 6, £1.75

This book is delightfully funny and would stand alone as an entertainment without the support of a famous name. John Noakes retells a childhood fantasy spun for him by Mr Brookes. Mr Brookes, John and assorted friends set out to destroy the secret factory of an international villain, Baron Wilhelm von Doppelganger. They go by magic clog, sustained by sandwiches and equipped with sophisticated espionage gear (a box Brownie camera on a pole) and Eric's braces (indispensable for rescuing John's kidnapped sweetheart).



John Noakes

Toni Goffe's cartoon-like pictures add to the fun. Useful for tempting reluctant readers in the junior or even middle school. CL



Eric's first experience with water resulted in Eric's total disappearance back into the water. I nearly said that they would have been held up by strong, but thought better of it. Eric's presence had come in useful quite a few times, and I'd no wish to offend him.  
Inside the clog, we had finally taken a nice one of Eric's sandwiches. There Eric called out, "Wastage time! Wastage time!" The book will be a good one for reading to, and be loved over the years of the North Sea and beyond coast, during hours less. There and everywhere, being a pair of compasses for measuring distances and measuring things

to himself - like "Wastage, wastage, compass, wastage, and other strange utterances." Finally, he called out a word or so, the Mr Brook to stare on the attempt.  
"Stop on the way round. The Brook opened the throttle and the ship started going while the clog was still open behind us. I've been thought for a bit on the matter. Mr Brook had a nice account to give down to Eric, explaining what had to be kept in view, and when that was given to us, quickly we were to think our clogs and to



# JUNIOR/MIDDLE



He sprang up into the air and his form changed. He grew taller than the tallest tree, taller than the tallest tower. He was the color of sunset showing through rain. Scales covered him, scattering light. His claws and teeth glittered like diamonds. His eyes were noble like those of a proud horse. He was more beautiful and more frightening than anything Han had ever seen. He flew high, roaring, and vanished into the deep sky. Han gave a long sigh and went to tell the Mandarin what had happened.

## Everyone knows what a Dragon Looks Like

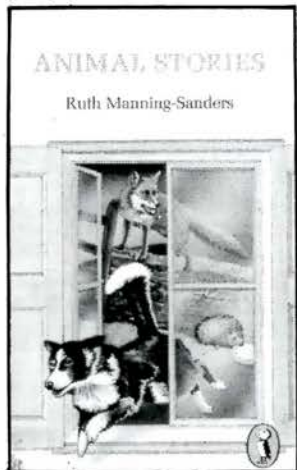
Jay Williams, illustrated by Mercer Mayer, Scholastic,

0 590 07751 1, £2.95

Two nine-year-old girls were enthralled by this picture book and recognised the balance between the subtle humour and the serious element it holds. When the mandarin and his councillors need a dragon to help them fight off the wild men of the North each one realises that he does not know what a dragon looks like; but each is certain he will be the one to recognise one when it arrives. They all refuse to accept the claim of the little fat visitor that he is the much-needed dragon and it is only when orphan Han gives the man food that he reveals his true dragon identity and the city is saved. The story carries a moral which some children may need the help of an adult to find; but the beautiful 'Chinese' illustrations are exciting and the language alone paints delightful pictures. 'I hope your honourable stomach is happy, sir', are the words with which Han greets the little fat man. Large size, good paper and rich illustrations push the price up frighteningly for a paperback. But there's a lot of mileage in this book for Junior and Lower Middle children. You could be getting value for money. CL

may well make it a useful book for the teacher working across the middle school.

Ruth Manning-Sanders' collection has a far greater sense of completeness. An elephant who becomes the first to ride a tricycle, another who, five years later, remembers a man who cured him, a rascal baboon, as human as his master, and an enticing hedgehog with bad legs, are among the extraordinary creatures whose (true) stories are told. The book was read with enthusiasm by nine-year-olds and individual stories made excellent storytime material for the same age group. CL



## Johnny Morris's Animal Story Book

Collected by Johnny Morris, Beaver, 0 600 20235 6, 90p

## Animal Stories Ruth Manning-Sanders, Puffin,

0 14 03.1219 6, 85p  
Interspersed among a collection of varied stories are introductions by Johnny Morris and verses chosen by him. A book with such a well-known name to it has a head start, so it's a pity that the tales are at so many different levels of both readability and interest. It was difficult to find one child to whom the book would appeal as a whole and so it's difficult to recommend for the bookshop. However, some of the stories read aloud well and the variety and range

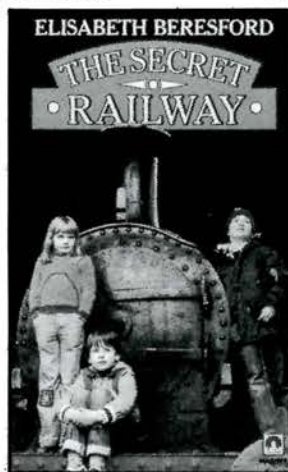
## The Stained Glass Window

Penelope Lively, Grasshopper, 0 200 72263 8, 75p  
One Sunday a little girl called Jane muses about the origins the Knight and Lady on the church's stained glass window. In a gentle, courtly manner the story locked in the windows is revealed to her. The reluctant betrothal of two young people, their growth in love, the parting for the Crusades and the loneliness of absence and fear is told with a beauty and simplicity that was understood by a sensitive nine-year-old. It should be appreciated by any intelligent child from that age onwards. The delicate sketches by Michael Pollard add to the dream-like quality of the book. It is the perfect book for any child for whom history touches the imagination. CL

Line drawing from 'The Stained Glass Window', by Michael Pollard

## The Secret Railway Elisabeth Beresford, Magnet,

0 416 89400 3, 80p  
Bored by the inactivity of the Norfolk town where they now live, city children Barny and Sue find occupation in renovating the old railway station. But who breaks in to destroy their efforts, littering the booking office with half-eaten food and overturning the furniture? Resolving the mystery involves making friends and gaining a different attitude to life in a country town. Satisfying reading for children who need encouragement to finish whole books. 'There is', said a young tester, 'always something happening.' CL



## The Day the Monster Came

John Gray, illustrated by Nick Scott, Appletree Press, 0 904651 66 5, £1.50

A strange, unusual, challenging book which should find a place in the ten to twelve-year-old's reading.

A fearful monster invades Belfast: neither the army nor

civilians are able to quell it by force — yet kindness and tolerance succeed — and it's the children who find that out. It's hard to classify this one. A picture book? Yes, but it would puzzle the very young. An allegory? Maybe, but it works very well on the level of 'what happens next'. Try it with top juniors, then talk about it. My guess is that it's one of those special books that we need to ask the young about to get to fully understand it. CM

## The Clover Club and the House of Mystery

0 416 89870 X

## The Clover Club and the Mystery that Fell out of the Sky

0 416 89850 5

A.D. Langholm, Magnet, 75p (Also in hardback, £3.95)

These seductive mystery stories had all those who read them demanding more. The Clover Club raises all those questions of how we should respond to literature that we know is very persuasive because it is easy, absorbing and exciting reading but which asks very little of the child reader. Add to that the sexist implications in the reluctant admission of Sarah to an originally all male club and the battle lines are drawn.

'The whole atmosphere was, she thought, all in all and to put it mildly, masculine. "It could be marvellous", she said, and she meant it. She was thinking how nice it would be to clean it up and put curtains at the window and a carpet down.' Over to you. The paperbacks could well find a fast selling spot in the bookshop, but I won't be finding space in the school library for the hardbacks. CL



# MIDDLE SECONDARY

## Grange Hill Goes Wild

Robert Leeson, Lions,  
0 00 671812 4, 80p  
What can you say? — this recommends itself. I can't even nit-pick; there are only a few signs of catch-the-Christmas-market haste. The punny title refers to a school camp which Tucker tries to skive out of (and fails), which Duane fancies as a first step to running away from his Dad (tough luck, Duane) and which Michael Doyle sees as a way of getting the school in lumber with the governors, using a set of 'compromising' photos (Penny Lewis saves the day). Slightly less jazzy than *RULES OK!*, it must be just as popular. **SB**

## Outlaw Red

Jim Kjelgaard,  
Carousel,  
0 552 52121 3, 75p  
Give *Outlaw Red* a chance. You'll either love it or hate it. I was fully prepared to deride it as a pale imitation of famous antecedents; the cover even looks like a rip-off from *White Fang*. Much to my astonishment, I enjoyed it; tried it with the class (11-12), and they lapped it up. Basically, the moral is simple. Survival. Survival of an Irish Setter in an intensely hostile environment: pursued by enemies from the animal and human world, suffering from cold and hunger, physical attacks. It's all there. Very readable. **BB**

## Bridge to Terabithia

Katherine Paterson,  
Puffin,  
0 14 03.1260 9, 85p  
This is a book about giving, not just material things but those intangibles like friendship, understanding, encouragement, mercy, courage, things that you might be sensitive enough to perceive that other people need. Jess realises at the tragic end of the book how much he has been given by his new neighbour Leslie, yet another girl in his female-dominated life. She opens his eyes to a far more challenging world when she invents their secret island kingdom of Terabithia, for to be its king Jess must assume the attributes of kingship, and the island rapidly takes on a significance beyond mere children's games.

Highly recommended for thoughtful readers, this is a well deserving Newbery Award winner. **DB**

## The Fox Hole

0 416 89440 2

## Over the Top

0 416 89430 5

Ivan Southall, Magnet,

85p each

I don't dislike Southall — *Over the Top* has a certain distinction, ditto the second half of *The Fox Hole* — but the constant squandering of Magnet books' potential is very distressing. Why were these dredged up from '67 and '72 (to get a 'major name'? because of overseas considerations?) when throughout the seventies, Southall's work has failed to impress many British kids? *The Fox Hole* is about a boy trapped in an old mine shaft whose rescuer, an uncle, is temporarily deranged by greed when Ken sees gold in the pit. Even in literary terms, it is flawed: slow to start, less-than-convincing characters. *Over the Top* is better — but there's some late-Southall style which'll make it tough for the 11-13 audience it shares with the earlier book. It's 2 a.m.; Perry's pregnant Mum is off to hospital. Then Dad brains himself, Mum bogs the car in mud and Perry must brave the storm to get help from an angry neighbour. A nice mixture of tension and humour although parts don't ring true. I wouldn't stake my life on these two going down well — I'd even be hesitant about risking 85p. **SB**

## Catch Colt

Mary O'Hara,  
Magnet,  
0 416 88230 7, 85p  
I've nicknamed this 'Catch Cash'. 'His strong arms encircled her and held her a few inches from his body. His touch was a caress, she felt the desperation of his yearning' . . . and there's more, much more. He is Joey Bud, the boy with no past. She is Letty, the daughter of the rich landowner, who loved dashing Joey at first sight and is desperate to give him respectability enough to be worth marrying by proving that his grandfather is the demented old fool (once a Harvard professor) who roams the Wyoming hills seeking his long lost grandson . . . and so on.

Romantically-minded girls can find similar, if not better, reading material in magazines. Don't be fooled that the author previously wrote *My Friend Flicka*. **DB**

## The Bonny Pit Laddie

Frederick Grice,  
Puffin,  
0 14 03.1190 4, 95p  
Dick Ullathorne's grandmother knew that Dick had the ability to find fulfilment away from the pit and the small mining community. A life in the pit, however, was inevitable for all his family and Dick's begins sooner than expected when a strike involving his quiet but angry father brings the family to poverty and starvation.

## The Bonny Pit Laddie



FREDERICK GRICE

Winner of the Other Award  
The famous story of life in a mining village

The reality and historical exactness with which Grice describes mining life at the turn of the century creates an historical novel brimming with action but also with sympathy for the plight of pit families.

In paperback at last (what kept it so long?) this could be the book to lead competent 12 and 13-year-olds to historical fiction and, more important, to a thoughtful consideration of the influences on communities of social and political forces. An important book for the library and the classroom. **CL**

## Under Goliath

Peter Carter,  
Puffin,  
0 14 03.1132 7, 90p  
Under Goliath, the giant crane in the Belfast docks, Alan Kenton and Fergus Riley strike up a friendship, cemented by their discovery of a hidden gun. But Alan's family is Protestant, Fergus's Catholic, and terrorism is growing throughout Ulster. Alan tells the story of the year he was thirteen from the perspective of the adult he now is. His English father who hates violence, Uncle Jack a fervent Orangeman, his brother a trade unionist, his mother exhausted and despairing, Fergus who seems no different from himself, are all facets of a story in which prejudice, bigotry, hatred and violence are all vividly exposed. The final emotion is of rage at the futility and waste of it all. A strong book. Highly recommended. **PT**

## After the First Death

Robert Cormier,  
Lions,  
0 00 671705 5, £1.00  
A bus load of children, driven by eighteen-year-old Kate is hi-jacked by terrorists. Ben's father, Brigadier General Marcus Marchand, US Army, has to deal with it — and Ben has a part to play. That's the situation on which Cormier hangs an uncompromising investigation of patriotism, betrayal, bravery, the bond between parents and children.

There are no easy answers and, in spite of the strong, clear prose, this is not an easy read, intellectually, stylistically or emotionally. But for those who can tolerate ambiguity, and don't mind being made to think and feel, this is a very rewarding book. **PT**

## The Victors

John Harris,  
Puffin,  
0 14 03.1171 8, 90p  
This is book three in the World War I fortunes of Martin Falconer (after *The Fledglings* and *The Professionals*). It is early 1918 and Martin has bluffed his way back into active flying over France after being severely wounded and sent back to England for six months' enforced convalescence. The predictable dog-fights punctuate the story, the statutory praise of comradeship and grit abounds and there is a romantic element involving the choice between a Belgian Resistance worker, now consumptive, and an amazingly tenacious V.A.D. who trails after Martin, even to France.

War is not exactly glorified here, but neither is it wholeheartedly condemned. Devotees of World War I history (who surely must be rare) will no doubt revel in the details but the unconverted will not be gripped. **DB**

## Twisters

Edited by Steve Bowles,  
Lions,  
0 00 671798 5, 95p  
(Also available in hardback)  
A good idea for an anthology — fifteen sinister stories (most of them American in origin) each with a twist in the tail. The additional twist skilfully provided by the editor is that five of them are very short (Robert Kurosaka's *A Lot to Learn* is only the length of a sick joke) and four only about five pages. Tailor-made to entrap the reluctant. The longer stories are more traditional exercises in suspense, mystery and murder from Patricia Highsmith and Julian Symons — to name but two. The twists are nicely varied — some raise a smile, others a shudder and some of the stories invite involvement and speculation. *The Man who Could Turn Back the Clock*, for example, actually provides alternative endings. The whole has obvious potential for the English classroom. A pity the cover bears no relation to the content of any of the stories. **PT**

Two very popular writers have each had new novels published recently co-incidentally with titles in paperback.

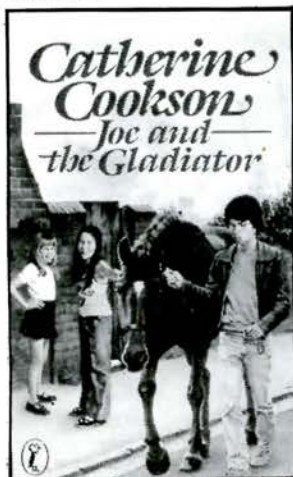
## David Bennett looks at Catherine Cookson

**Joe and The Gladiator**  
Puffin,  
0 14 03.0484 3, 75p

**The Nipper**  
Puffin,  
0 14 03.0580 7, 75p

**Lanky Jones**  
Macdonald,  
0 354 08116 0, £3.95

All by Catherine Cookson



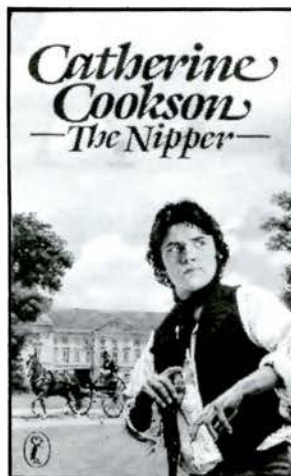
Catherine Cookson's novels are popular throughout my school, especially since the televising of *Our John Willie* earlier in the year. I can well see why, for the stories are exciting and well developed. Here are two paperback re-issues where the characters are utterly credible and engaging, whether they be Tyneside shipyard workers or members of an 1800s mining community.

Joe is on the threshold of a working life as an apprentice marine plumber. Things are fraught with bullying at work and family conflicts at home without being left a rag-and-bone man's horse, *The Gladiator*, in a will! However, Joe rises to the challenge, despite the hardship, with some very surprising results for everyone who becomes involved.

Sandy is similarly bound to a horse, this time *Nipper* the galloway of the title. Amidst the tensions between miners and coalmasters early in the last century and the unremitting poverty and hardship that was rife, Sandy tries to retain the deep mutual feeling that he shares with *The Nipper*, even if it means forsaking the open-air life that



Photo of Catherine Cookson courtesy of Transworld Publishers



he loves for the barbarity of the coal-face.

Both books deserve a place on library and bookshop shelves but don't let unsuspecting readers think that they are just horse stories. They are more than that and as such thoroughly worthwhile reads.

Reading *Lanky Jones* as an adult I found that it fell rather unsatisfactorily between two stools. What started out as a promisingly acceptable look at such realities as the effects upon the children of separated parents, death of a parent, adoption and coping with a sibling who is 'different' — in this case an epileptic, reverted mid-way into a fairly mundane kidnapping and sheep-rustling tale, which bore only a passing relationship to the earlier concerns.

On the other hand, fourteen-year-old Claire, a Catherine Cookson devotee, judged it to be 'great after the first three pages, which were boring'.

## and Steve Bowles looks at Judy Blume



Photo of Judy Blume courtesy of Piccolo



**Are You There God?** now, **Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing** and **Blubber** to come — Judy Blume's paperback canon is improving at last! (*True*, her most valuable book, *Forever . . .* is out but somewhat lost to teenagers in the *Star backwater*, 75p, 0 352 30271 2.)

**Are You There God?** undercuts the view of Ms Blume as an agent for US capitalism/establishment — there's a gently mocking adult behind the first person account of 12-year-old Margaret's search for a religion, blood in her underpants and a bigger bust.

Perhaps humourless critics or young fans made the author take herself too seriously because this element shrinks in some later books like *Deenie* (1973) which stretches to a marginally more teenage audience. Ma is pushing *Deenie* into modelling — until it's discovered that she's

**Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret**  
Piccolo, 0 330 26244 0, 85p

**Deenie**  
Heinemann,  
0 434 92883 6, £4.50

**Superfudge**  
Bodley Head,  
0 370 30358 X, £3.75

All by Judy Blume



developing a crooked spine. *Deenie* needs four years in a brace to correct it. Added extras: a budding romance and a few lines (literally) on masturbation. Still, *Deenie* has more to her than some other Blume characters.

**Superfudge** is a 1980 follow-up to **Fourth Grade Nothing**. Peter Hatcher recounts more of 4-year-old Fudge's mischief against a background of a house/school move, changing parental sex roles and a new baby sister. It improves as it goes along but it's not as funny as the first book.

All Judy Blume's books are easy to read and essential for schools. They aren't aimed at a single audience, though. Some, like **Are You There God?** and **Superfudge**, are OK for top juniors/early secondary. **Deenie** is more 12-14. Get to know them — you could easily read all nine in a weekend.

# NON-FICTION

## Collecting Football Programmes

Phil Shaw,  
Granada,  
0 583 30424 9, £1.50

## Collecting Stamps

Neil Grant and Peter Womersley,  
Granada,  
0 583 30387 0, £1.50

## Collecting Coins

C.W. Hill,  
Granada,  
0 583 30385 4, £1.50

These three books were grabbed eagerly by twelve and thirteen-year-olds, but returned almost untouched. They are well produced with eye-catching cover material and many coloured photographic illustrations. **Collecting**

Football Programmes had a natural appeal and is the most readable of the three for the inexpert collector. However its claim that 'it's a must for every collector from 7 to 70' is indeed rash. The seven-year-old who could read let alone absorb its closely packed verbal content has a promising future as far more than a collector of football programmes!

All three books are compiled in such a way that they are very much the property of the skilled older reader with a specialist interest already developed. Their historical content may warrant them a place among the 'Project' books in the library but they would be very much an extra. **CL**

## How the Countryside was made

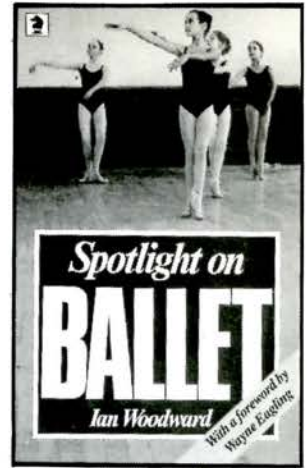
Gordon Winter,  
Dinosaur/National Trust,  
0 85122 229 3, 65p

A brief summary of the changes that have occurred in the British countryside from the earliest times to the present day. If I say that the whole of that synopsis is encapsulated in thirty pages, almost half illustrations, you will understand just how brief the summary is. However as simple reference for the eleven-plus age group, it is undemanding, well-presented and concisely cogent, with colourfully detailed illustrations by Stephen Lee. **BB**

## Spotlight on Ballet

Ian Woodward,  
Knight Books,  
0 340 25547 1, 95p

Ian Woodward's concise and information-packed book proved a great favourite with the group of ballet-crazy middle school girls. A pithy foreword by Wayne Eagling of



the Royal Ballet, leads into an exhaustive compendium of history, dancers, music, movements, stories, steps, training, concluding with a section of further information of use to the prospective student of the art. A short bibliography for further reading is a useful addition. One criticism — such a visual medium merited more illustrations surely! **BB**

# HARDBACK

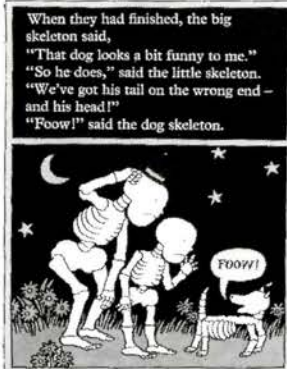
## RECENT PICTURE BOOKS

### Funnybones

Janet and Allan Ahlberg,  
Heinemann,

0 434 92503 9, £3.95

The unflinching Ahlberg magic has been at work once again — a familiar rhyme has again been used as the starting point. In this fun-packed offering we meet the occupants of a dark, dark cellar — a big and a little skeleton and a canine one. These immediately engaging characters set out one night in search of somebody to frighten. After a number of abortive attempts which result in a series of moonlit frolics in the park, town and zoo, whom do they find to frighten? Only themselves — all the way home. This one has everything a young listener or reader could possibly wish for including ingenious use of white print against a black background to highlight the mock nightmarishness of the tale. **JB**



When they had finished, the big skeleton said,  
"That dog looks a bit funny to me."  
"So he does," said the little skeleton.  
"We've got his tail on the wrong end — and his head!"  
"Fwoof!" said the dog skeleton.

### Ben's Trumpet

Rachel Isodora,  
Angus and Robertson,  
0 207 95944 7, £3.95

An outstanding picture book which demonstrates how a talented artist can — using only black and white — create a stunningly effective and ageless book. Set in what looks like Harlem in the thirties, we meet Ben who is enchanted by the music coming from the Zig Zag Jazz Club, especially that played by the trumpeter. Not to be missed. **JB**

### Animal Games,

0 19 279731 X

### Animal Tricks,

0 19 279743 3

### Seasons,

0 19 279730 1

### Animal Homes,

0 19 279732 8

### Animal Shapes,

0 19 279733 6

Brian Wildsmith,  
Oxford University Press,  
£1.95 each

Readers of *Animal Games* will want to create their own stories as well as reading the one-sentence text that accompanies each attractive illustration of animals at play. Rhyming couplets are used to keep the reader turning the pages of *Animal Tricks* but having read the book straight through, they will want to return and linger over the humorous details in the pictures. *Seasons* and *Animal Homes* have more text, the former being a colourful tribute

to the natural cycles, whilst the latter illustrates and describes various habits and habitats. And *Animal Shapes* is designed to encourage children to try their hand at creating their own pictures. It is always a joy to look at Brian Wildsmith's marvellous paintings and at £1.95 each, these books are exceptional value. **JB**

Murty and PHIX combing the galaxy for the Gloop



## Quest for the Gloop

Helen Nicoll and Jan Pienkowski,  
Heinemann,  
0 434 95641 4, £4.95

A joyously eccentric author-artist collaboration! Pienkowski at his idiosyncratic best in garish, turbulent, dizzy space epic: the cartoon format uses every device in the book and a few more. My nine-year-old friends decided that it's best to take a page a day, slowly. When people come to write Ph.D.'s about the picture book (it'll come), this will be the place where the comic, the TV drama, the technicolour epic and the comedy of manners all collide. **CM**

## Tilly's Rescue

Faith Jaques,  
Heinemann,

0 434 94441 6, £3.95

Peg doll Tilly's resourcefulness is really stretched to its limit in this her second adventure, in which she rescues her teddybear friend Edward who has failed to return with a Christmas tree one evening. Unlike many sequels, this one more than lives up to expectations as once again Faith Jaques has created a wholly satisfying and enchanting picture-story book. I must stress that this is not just a Christmas story. It is much too good to be restricted to seasonal reading, rather let it be read and re-read all through the year. **JB**

## Good Morning, Chick

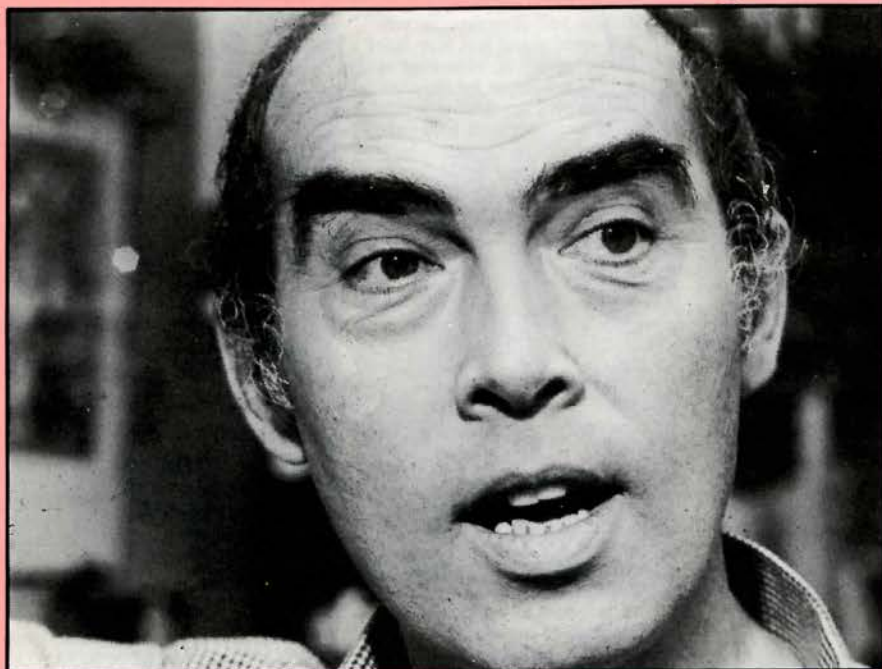
Mirra Ginsburg,  
illustrated by Byron Barton,

Julia MacRae,  
0 86203 091 9, £3.95

We have the great Russian poet and commentator on children's language, Korney Chukovsky, to thank in the first place for this captivating book. Based on his story, Mirra Ginsburg tells of 'a little house, white and smooth' and his first adventures in the farmyard. Preceded by an attractive vignette, the easy-to-read text is always placed on the left-hand side of each double spread and is cleverly linked to the opposite full page illustration by the sentence-completing phrase 'like this' which is contained within each bold, child-like picture. **JB**

# Authorgraph No.6

Bernard Ashley



When Bernard Ashley found himself in financial difficulty one year, he took a summer job to supplement his income as a village school headmaster. 'I worked as a spot welder, and it was a very proud moment for me when the foreman came round and said "Bern, that's quite good . . . we're gonna put you on the top rate for the work." I was so pleased with that because I've always had ten thumbs when it comes to using my hands.'

You can almost hear the relish at a new challenge met and overcome, and the pleasure in accomplishing a new skill. It's a relish which marks out Bernard Ashley, and it's one he demonstrates in fields other than spot welding. 'I love the word craft, and I'm proud of my craft both in teaching and writing.'

He was born in 1935 in Woolwich, and he says his background was very much of South London. 'I suppose you'd call it upper working class or lower middle class, but very much of the streets, and Sunday best, and a "front room". I had a very happy childhood.'

School too, was happy. He went to 'nine or ten' primary schools in London during the war, and to others when he, his brother and his mother were evacuated. His only unhappy school experience was in Preston, where he felt the evacuees were resented. 'That was the only place in the whole of my life where I

was caned. It was there, too, that I experienced the feelings of fear you get when you're trying desperately to get in with an already established group, when you're an outsider.' This is probably the genesis of several situations in his books. But on using his own life as material for his books he is definite. It doesn't happen very often: 'I think a lot of what I say about kids and the problems they have in schools are projections.'

After the war he went on to the Roan School, Blackheath, and Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, Rochester, and did two years' national service with the RAF. 'I enjoyed it. I was always a conformist. If I had to have my kit polished for the next day, I'd sit up all night to make sure it was spotless.' After national service, he trained as a teacher at Trent College of Education in Hertfordshire.

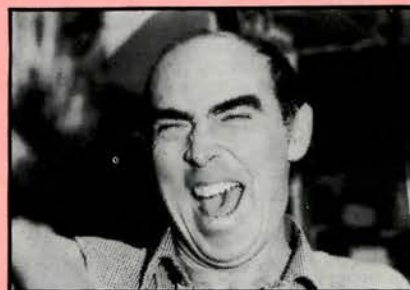
'I hadn't always wanted to teach. I wanted to act, but my father was a very cautious man, and although my mother — who was a very imaginative woman — said I should go to RADA, wise sense prevailed in the end.' He doesn't regret the decision. 'A lot of the desire to act is satisfied by being a teacher. It's a marvellous job. You can edit newspapers, perform, sing, tell stories, and you are acting a part out, a role.'

His early teaching was in Gravesend, Kent; his first headship at a village school in Hertfordshire. 'I really enjoyed my six years there. But I began to think that I'd only seen half of it, and that those years as a village head were a little bit protected from what was happening in the world.'

So, considering 'only himself', he brought his family back to live in South London and became the headmaster of a school in East Ham in search of 'fresh challenges', which he enjoyed. He is now the head of Charlton Manor Junior School not far from where he lives, and grew up.

The writing began in his early days as a teacher, with several books specially designed for children with special learning difficulties. There followed a couple of non-fiction books, as well as short stories and articles. His first novel, **The Trouble with Donovan Croft** — which won the Children's Rights Workshop Other Award in 1975 — was written while he was at East Ham.

'I needed something to do which would stop me worrying and being unhappy, so I decided to write a full-length story. I just sat down and wrote a story which had a background that was very real to me. There wasn't any question of writing a book to fill a gap in terms of being "multi-racial". And by the time I'd finished the story I was very happy in that place.'



Almost all the books are specifically rooted in one time — now — and one place — London. This is a conscious decision. 'I very much use the stuff that's around me. I don't think I'd have written anything that would have really excited me out of a rural background. But I don't go on teaching to get the material for my books. I have been asked that, and I find it rather an offensive question. The material is there, but I'm not in the job for that.'

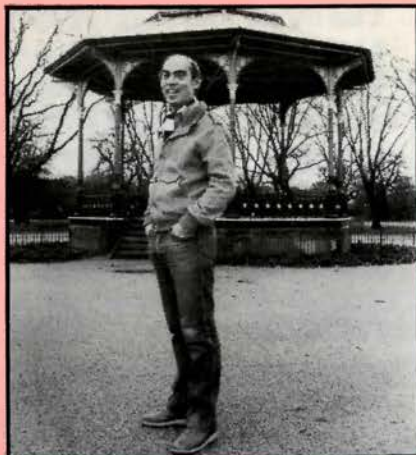
In fact he has no intention of giving up teaching to write full time. 'It's death once you start dreaming about a small acreage in the South of France where you can write about London.' Indeed he's a very committed and caring teacher. 'I don't want to give the impression that I'm always having sleepless nights, but there are times when, if

you are awake at three in the morning, you do find yourself worrying about a child.'

The voices, attitudes, motives and all the paraphernalia of working class life in London come to life in his books. 'I'm recording things because they fascinate me, I'm not really making any point about it. But I do feel that the people with their own identity, whether it's the Liverpool working class or the people of a South Wales mining village, have a great sense of being *together*. It's a feeling of community that's important, and when you look at the class structure, you see that the sense of community gets thinner and thinner as you get higher. But I'm not making a point. It's there, so I write about it.'



'I've been reading Graham Greene's autobiography. He says: "In every writer's heart there's a splinter of ice." That splinter of ice has different dimensions in different hearts, and I like to think that mine wouldn't be the coldly analytical splinter of ice which would mean I would stand by and observe without taking any sort



of action, if so moved. I think I'd want to get involved. But having got involved, I wouldn't be displeased if afterwards there was something I could record in a book.'

When it comes to writing Bernard Ashley is something of a perfectionist. He writes the first draft of each novel out in longhand in a notebook, on every other line, every other page: 'So that there's plenty of room for fiddling about afterwards.' He types up each chapter as it's written, making corrections as he goes along. This is the second draft.

'I've learnt now to put the book aside at this stage for at least three weeks. I used to send it straight off to the publishers the morning after, and of course when the proofs came back I used to try and re-write it. Re-reading it after a gap means you look at it almost as an objective reader. Then I make a lot of corrections before it has its final posh type-up and gets sent off.'



He researches to get every detail right and worries about style. 'I really sweat on my books. You know, sometimes you can go into a sentence wrong, all back to front, and when you read a sentence like that you find yourself saying, "Hang on!", and you have to go back.

'I like to feel that no one has ever gone back over a sentence of mine to find out what I was getting at. If I thought they had, I'd feel I would have failed as a writer. I'm trying to communicate, so it's got to be a smooth read. Not a bland read — shock them, give them something with impact, but make sure it's a read that you can take down without going back over.'

His concern for children as readers goes beyond his own writing. He does a lot of storytelling, and goes on 'author visits' whenever he can. He feels it's his duty. 'I'm interested in getting books to kids. I do what I can.'

### 'You haven't got a book unless you've got a problem, some conflict that has to be resolved.'

**Bernard Ashley's novels are about a sense of community, what it is to be an outsider, people facing problems, people growing, changing, surviving. They also contain a deal of tension, excitement and drama.**

#### **The Trouble with Donovan Croft**

When Donovan Croft's mother has to go back to the West Indies and he is fostered with the Chapman family he reacts by becoming an elective mute, refusing to communicate. Keith Chapman, his new foster brother, has to learn to live with the conflicts Donovan's arrival creates at home and in school.

'I'd seen some children very upset by a mother who'd gone home to the West Indies. This particular mother stayed away for eight weeks, by which time we could see these children deteriorating because they were worried she wouldn't come back. Now to say, as some people did, that you mustn't write about that because it doesn't happen to every black family is to say that you mustn't write about Ronnie Webster' — the main character of **A Kind of Wild Justice** — 'because not all children have criminal fathers.'

#### **A Kind of Wild Justice**

Ronnie Webster's life is full of fear and anxiety as is Manjit's, an Asian girl. Both their fathers are mixed up with the menacing Bradshaw brothers whose gang runs the lives of everybody in the area. Ronnie's dad is an unwilling accomplice, Manjit's an immigrant

trying to get an illegal entry. Ronnie is a survivor, for Manjit the ending is more ambiguous and unhappy.

#### **Terry on the Fence**

In his relationship with Les and his gang, Terry is venturing into foreign territory, less than a couple of miles from his home. Terry comes from one side of the common. Had he come from the other side where Les and his gang did, they wouldn't have taken any notice of him. But they knew where he came from, by all sorts of indications — the way he talked, his clothes, even his plimsolls. They wore boots. All that sort of thing, the interactions of people from different communities, fascinates me.'

'I found **Terry on the Fence** probably one of the most satisfying of my books to write. It's got its problems — I think some of the vocabulary might be a bit difficult for kids — but I got a great deal of pleasure from it. In fact I'd like to think of it simply as a novel that children or adults can enjoy on their own level.'

#### **All My Men**

Paul Daines, newly moved from London, struggles to get accepted by the gang at his new school in Kent and break into the football team, controlled by Bill Richardson.

'A lot of **All My Men** comes from my experience when my father bought a small shop in Rainham in Kent. I felt all those

things that Paul feels, but in retrospect it's probably my least favourite. In a sense I'm writing outside the area where I feel most at home, and that's probably why it's the least successful for me.'

#### **Break in the Sun**

The central character, Patsy, tries to return to a happier past by running away and gets a lift with a barge load of amateur actors; but in this story it is not only Patsy, the unhappy bedwetter, who learns something about herself. Eddie Green, her stepfather who pursues her, Patsy's mother, Kenny, Patsy's lonely fat friend, Joe, the barge owner, all emerge a little different because of what happens to them. Whether the change is permanent is for the reader to decide.

'I was a long time getting started with **Break in the Sun**, but then, gradually, bits and pieces came together, and I sat down one Sunday afternoon and wrote the first three pages. I showed them to Iris, my wife, and she liked them. I don't know where the girl and the enuretic thing came from. I just realised that she had to be unhappy, and I thought about some of the unhappy kids I'd known and the reasons for their unhappiness.' ●

**These Bernard Ashley novels are published in hardback by the Oxford University Press and in paperback by Puffin.**



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The lively and highly enjoyable story of Maggie, an irrepressible Glasgow teenager, will be a major new venture for BBC-TV – a drama series aimed at young people. It starts on February 17 in the very successful *Grange Hill* slot.

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 'A very enjoyable story' *Evening Standard*



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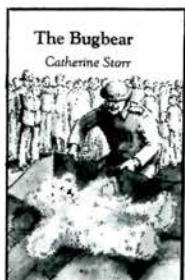
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HAMISH HAMILTON



# TALKING POINT

The school bookshop at Eastcombe Manor Secondary School, Gloucestershire, is branching out. **Kevin Jeffery**, Head of English and organiser of the bookshop, describes what happened and asks

## If It's Good, Why Keep It To Yourself?

One of the arguments in favour of a school bookshop is that children will be more willing to go there and browse than to the local booksellers, where they may not feel particularly welcome or at home. What if there is no local bookseller though? In many areas, rural, city or suburban, a bookshop is harder to find than a parking space in Oxford Street. In that case, there is no choice; if children are to become book buyers, then the school must become the bookseller.

This is exactly why many school bookshops have been set up, including ours. Eastcombe Manor is in a small village and has a large rural catchment area. But what about those schools, in rural areas particularly, which are too small to support a permanent bookshop? All right, there are countless book clubs available, but many teachers will know the difference between choosing from a catalogue and handling the genuine article — particularly if the children concerned are not that familiar with books in the first place. And what about the rest of the community? Surely, if it's worthwhile turning your pupils into book buyers, the same is true of their parents. And what about the old lady down the road? How does she get her diet of books, if the only shop in the village is the grocer's, and it costs £1 to get to the nearest town by bus (if there is one)?

These were some of the questions which prompted us to expand the normal operations of the Manor School Bookshop. And they began to be raised the moment we operated.

We started in the Autumn term of 1979, with a big splash. Kit Williams lives nearby. *Masquerade* was all the rage, so we tried, and amazingly succeeded, in booking him for the opening night. Our bookseller had produced a glossy brochure of 100 best buys for Christmas. We begged six hundred copies and despatched them to parents, while we crammed the bookshop with copies of the books, and all the pegboard and clips that we could muster. Result: a four-day book fair, with takings over £900 swelling to £1200 in a fortnight, and lunchtimes a seething mass of humanity crammed into the space between the books.

Then came the questions and some re-thinking about what we were for. Firstly, local junior schools, invited to send parties to the book fair, mentioned regretfully that they were not big enough to support their own bookshop. For any event we have had since then we have sent out invitations to all infant and junior schools within our catchment area. Talks have also been held about organising regular termly visits to the

bookshop. Details of stock to be carried that term, in the form of lists or leaflets, will be sent to the schools in advance.

The second development concerned people in the community. One local woman remarked at the book fair that it was difficult to get books unless you went all the way to Stroud; this led to the establishment of a small group of local people, not all parents, who were willing to open the bookshop two evenings a week, to test reaction. We have now settled on one evening a week, to coincide with the use of the school for evening classes, plus extra nights for special occasions, such as concerts, open evenings, exhibitions, and so on.

The third development also resulted from the publicity gained by our opening book fair. A local member of the Pre-school Playgroups Association was involved in organising a one-day regional conference in the area, and needed a local bookseller to mount an exhibition of relevant books — from picture books for toddlers to texts on childcare. Having received an apathetic response from the local bookseller, she approached our two suppliers and duly put on a very successful exhibition. Since then, we have done other similar exhibitions, arranged to supply books to local playgroups, and begun discussions with the local PPA about a possible one-day event later this year, combining visiting authors, speakers and entertainers, and a book exhibition.

What does the school gain from all this? A great deal, we think.

- Much-needed bridges are built between school and community. Schools are too often remote from the community which surrounds them, and suffer bad images as a result.
- Equally important, bridges are built between junior and senior schools, creating smoother transition for pupils and greater understanding between staffs. Our pupils are affected by the increased local approval of the school, and become favourably disposed towards the object of that approval!
- Perhaps most importantly, it helps us to thrive and a thriving lively bookshop will attract the attention of the most unexpected children.
- We involve our pupils in running the bookshop — they are an essential part of the bookshop operation. It's valuable educational experience; but much more so when the customers are not simply the other pupils of the school.

If you want to expand into the local community:

1. Spread the burden by making use of local people to help run the bookshop — they will also publicise the venture by word of mouth.
2. Seek out local knowledge on communication channels — there are probably local newsletters which go to every house — and evenings to avoid because of traditional local events.
3. Make use of Arts Council grants and invite authors to your opening or special event — with 50% of the fee plus travelling expenses refunded, the cost is not as high as you might think.
4. Foster good relations with the local press — they can offer useful publicity for events, and may also be keen to use



articles on books, both adults' and children's, at odd times of the year.

Manor School Bookshop is now just over a year old. Pupils in the school seem to regard it as a permanent fixture and no longer ask when it is going to close. Incoming pupils and their parents arrive knowing of its existence, and the reading and buying of books are increasingly regarded as normal and unremarkable activities. We think that is good. We don't believe in keeping it to ourselves. ●

## TURNING A BOOK INTO A TV SERIES

'Making a television series is very much like making a scrambled egg,' says Roger Singleton-Turner, a director for the BBC. 'First you get your ingredients, then you make them into a nice, tasty mixture. Gradually, as it comes to the boil, things begin to solidify and the whole thing begins to take shape. You just have to hope that it doesn't end up sticking to the bottom of the saucepan.'

TONY BRADMAN tells what went into the making of



which is on our screens in February.

### Take One Writer and One Producer

Bernard Ashley, writer, and Anna Home, Executive Producer of BBC Children's Drama, were the first ingredients. The two met at a party to launch Children's Book Week, in October 1978. 'I'd read all Bernard's books as they came out,' said Anna. 'I liked them very much, and thought they would make good television because they're absolutely bang up to date, contemporary stuff. But I just hadn't been able to do one up to that point.'

A *Kind of Wild Justice* had just been published, and although Anna thought it would make a good series, it was 'too late' — her schedules were booked up for two years ahead. So she suggested to Bernard that he should send her the manuscript of his next novel *before* it was published.

### Add a Book

Bernard obliged, in April 1979. Anna liked the book very much, but — as Bernard says — 'things went dead.' It wasn't until he came back from holiday in August of that year that he found a letter waiting for him, making an offer for the television rights to *Break in the Sun*, long before the hardback was published by Oxford University Press. In fact, from that time onwards, Bernard was sending Anna 'updates' regularly as he made slight corrections to the proofs.

### And a Scriptwriter

Stage two of the process was having a script written. The choice of scriptwriter in the case of *Break in the Sun* was a happy one. Alan England, who is a lecturer in Education at the University of Sheffield, had actually been a teacher in the area where the book's action takes place, and so for his first major children's television script he was very familiar with the locations and 'the idiom of the local kids'.

Anna Home gave him the manuscript of the novel in the autumn of 1979, and he set to work on writing a first draft of the scripts, dividing the book into six episodes. 'There were a lot of problems,' he said. 'Much of the book is in the form of interior monologue, but for television you have to have visual action. So it was a case of translating thought into action and direct speech.'

Anna Home says that what she looks for in a book is 'a good strong story line, not too many characters, and it should be reasonably self-contained in terms of place.' *Break in the Sun* has the first two advantages, but presents real problems in terms of locations, which range from the Thames at Deptford to Dreamland at Margate, with several stops on the Kent coast in between. The fact that it also involves a boat created some headaches.

'It's a question of practicalities. Most children's drama is done on film because it's the best way to do it, but location filming is enormously expensive,' said Anna Home. 'It takes a long time, and involves a whole caravanserai of people — over 30 people for *Break in the Sun*, for example — who have to be paid and put up at hotels at our expense.' This meant that several minor characters in the novel were dispensed with immediately, to save casting costs.

### Choose Your Locations

Roger Singleton-Turner, the director, was very closely involved in the script conferences that took place between Alan England and Anna Home in January and February 1980. It is the director who has to go and look at the locations and work out the practicalities of actually shooting the series.

'Those conferences served a dual purpose,' he said. 'Part of it was artistic; we were looking at the draft script to see where there might be problems in dramatic terms, but I was also looking at it from the point of view of actually scheduling it for filming, and the costs involved. That's where we started to think about ways round the problem of locations.'

For example, in an attempt 'to save licence payers' money', Roger decided to shoot the scenes which take place in the book in a block of flats at Deptford in a block of flats just behind BBC Television Centre. Bernard Ashley was also called in to give help on the locations, and he was able for one scene to tell Roger exactly where three grain towers which play an important part in the book were, because he had based that part of the book on his own experiences when living in that part of Kent.



The film unit prepares to take the sailing barge 'Stina' out into the Medway, which is standing in for the Thames. The owner, Mike Little (pointing) indicates a bollard to the director.

Bernard's clarifications were not all quite so helpful, however. The boat — which plays a large part in the book — enters harbour at several stages, and tides are a real problem when it comes to filming. 'Shooting one three-minute sequence can take a whole day,' said Roger, 'and when it involves a boat, you can find yourself starting to shoot the scene with the boat very low near the quay and by the time you've finished it's riding very high.'

Much travelling had to be done to find the right locations to fit in with the original story, and make filming as smooth as possible. The result is that, at one stage, one shot was done in one place, and the next was done 20 miles away — 'and you just have to hope that the joins don't show,' said Anna.

### Cast the Parts

At the same time as scheduling was being planned, Roger and Anna were involved in casting the parts. One problem in children's television is finding adult actors who are willing to take the parts. 'Obviously enough,' said Anna, 'children's books are written from a child's point of view, so adult parts tend to be peripheral and shadowy, and it's difficult to persuade good adult actors to do them. One advantage of *Break in the Sun* was that there are some strong adult characters, such as Eddie Green, Patsy's stepfather, but we did have to beef up some of the other adult parts as well. In any case, child actors need an adult to play off against. It helps them enormously in terms of pace and technique, however good they are.'



Kevin Taffurelli as Kenny (Photo. Mike Cullen).



Nicola Cowper as Patsy.



Lindsey Walker as Jenny.



Brian Hall as Eddie.



Brian Peck as Joe (Photo. Peter Lane).

Roger was having some problems in the spring of 1980 in casting the two children's parts. He found Nicola Cowper at the Corona Stage School in Chiswick to play Patsy — her first major part — but the character of Kenny was still unfilled. Until, that is, he decided to make enquiries at a school he passed every day on the way to work, Southfields Comprehensive in South London. His luck was in. A boy called Kevin Taffurelli was interested in doing the part and seemed right, although he had done no acting before — and he landed it.

### Stir Well and Adjust for the Medium

By the early summer of 1980, the mixture was almost ready to go into the pan. The scripts were finalised, the schedules set, the actors cast, and the cameras were waiting to roll. One interesting point is that once the scripts are finally agreed, the book is usually no longer referred to. When the BBC — or any television company, for that matter — buys a book for serialisation, it buys it (in Bernard Ashley's words) 'lock, stock and barrel'. They can do anything they like to it — change the ending, the characters, the whole plot.

In fact, with *Break in the Sun*, Bernard Ashley was 'very pleased' with the way the series was put together. Changes were made, but as far as he is concerned, the book and the television scripts were 'two parallel stories which get to the same place at the end, albeit by different methods'.

Roger Singleton-Turner says that he hopes 'the series — and the film one makes — will be faithful to the spirit of the book, although you may have to use completely different means to achieve it. Essentially, what you're doing is translating from one medium which works one way, into another which works differently, but so long as you keep to the spirit of the original I think you're justified in making sweeping changes.' This is also the reason the book is ignored once the scripts are written. 'Actors don't like to use the book as well as the scripts specifically because of these sorts of changes. It can lead them up blind alleys in their interpretation.'

### Start Filming

Filming actually took place between 16th June and 29th August 1980. One problem that presented itself immediately was the weather. As the book's title indicates, fine weather plays an important part in the novel, and as Roger Singleton-Turner says, 'the summer we'd chosen to film in was probably the worst on record.' This meant there had to be changes made to locations and the script *during* shooting. One important scene takes place between Eddie Green, the stepfather, and Kenny, Patsy's friend, in the open air at night. During shooting, the ground was so wet from the steady rain, that the scene had to be transferred entirely to a nearby barn.

But in general, shooting went well. Bernard Ashley was unable to see any of the filming until the last episode was being shot, although he was very



Filming Episode 1. Left to right — Director, Kenny, Patsy, Asst. Cameraman (John Rhodes), Cameraman (Colin Munn). Everyone waits while the Assistant Producer asks a man to stop repairing his boat with an electric grinder.

pleased at the 'extremely courteous' invitation to attend. He says that the shooting of the final, climactic sequence was so good that it actually made him cry. Nicola Cowper, who plays Patsy, described the whole experience of filming as 'ever so good fun', with real delight in her voice. Brian Hall, who plays Eddie Green, thought it was 'the happiest job I've ever done'. He went on to say that it was also 'one of the most deeply satisfying jobs I've ever done. I loved the part — I usually play psychopaths, idiots or tearaways — and I thought the whole thing had so much depth and so many levels that it was a real delight to do. In fact it's got an unusual amount of depth for a television script, and the two kids involved (Nicola Cowper and Kevin Taffurelli) were absolutely marvellous.'

### Prepare for Serving

Even when the series is 'in the can' and filming is over, work isn't finished. There's still the editing to be done, the titles to be prepared, the soundtrack and dubbing to be added. Roger Singleton-Turner was still in fact working on solidifying these particular parts of the mixture in November and December 1980, with only two months to go before the series is broadcast in February 1981 — nearly two and a half years since the meeting between Bernard Ashley and Anna Home, when this particular scrambled egg was first thought of. ●



Filming Episode 6. The Director takes a creative look at the view across the fairground. Bernard Ashley watches.



Sheerness fun fair stands in for Margate. Bernard Ashley, Brian Hall (Eddie Green), Nicola Cowper (Patsy) and Lindsey Walker (Jenny) during a break in the filming of the climax of Episode 6.

# BE OUR GUEST...

## POETRY A LOOK AT SOME NEW ANTHOLOGIES

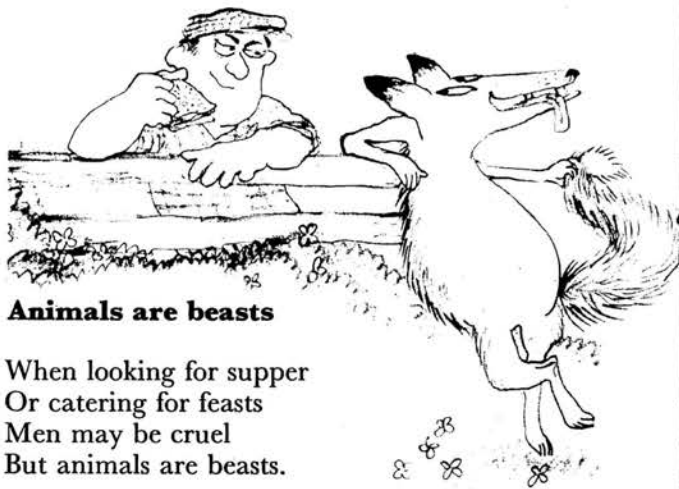
'My kids are really into poetry at the moment,' remarked **BILL BOYLE**, one of our reviewers. So we rounded up some of the poetry that has come our way in recent months and sent it off to see what he, and they, made of it.

This very mixed bag of poetry books contains such an assortment of styles and quality, that the average teacher must be left completely bemused by the publishers' interpretation of material fit to be classified and distributed under the heading of 'children's poetry'. This collection of anthologies illustrates some of the worst examples of the genre and, fortunately, several marvellous exceptions which are worth adding to any school library.

**In and Out of the Windows** is subtitled 'poems for children'. It is neither poetry, in even the most liberal interpretation of the term, nor is it likely to be read by many children. How can reputable publishers find the funds to distribute this trite and silly nonsense while there is so much excellent verse suitable for kids not available in themed or anthology form? Don't be lured towards **In and Out of the Windows** even by a sense of masochism just to see how awful it is; take my word for it and avoid it.

Ian and Zenka Woodward have had an excellent idea to attract kids with their collection of **Creepy Verse**, a subject dear to the heart and the emotions of most youngsters. The book opens with the marvellous James Kirkup's 'Who's that?', continues in similar quality through Lawrence, Fuller, Serrailier and Milligan, with some old, venerable favourites thrown in as good measure for the traditionalists. Something for everyone here and even the most hardened teacher will force a smile or grimace at Roger McGough's 'Gruesome'.

It was with high hopes, seeing the name of Christopher Logue as compiler, that I turned to **The Children's Book of Comic Verse**. Well, there are the obligatory contributions from Spike Milligan, Ogden Nash, A. A. Milne and T. S. Eliot — tried and trusted all. But these apart, the collection is a great disappointment. There isn't much classroom mileage to be gained from this one — my kids couldn't even see the comedy in most of this verse. Small consolation in some excellent cartoons by Bill Tidy, which raised more laughs than the poems.



### Animals are beasts

When looking for supper  
Or catering for feasts  
Men may be cruel  
But animals are beasts.

JAMES FENTON

Poem and drawings from  
'All Sorts of Poems'

**All Sorts of Poems**, an unassuming little paperback collection, edited by Ann Thwaite, gave me more pleasure than any of the other books in this selection. Breaking away completely from the safe, steady selling pitch of the old chestnuts with a couple of modern names thrown in, Ann Thwaite has chosen a marvellous selection of newish poems on themes as diverse as supermarkets, Parents' evening, Bringing up babies and

Death of a Snowman. The quality of the writing is of the standard necessary to present as examples of good observation and sensitivity to children. Poets represented include Roy Fuller, Charles Causley, Vernon Scannell, Elizabeth Jennings and Philip Larkin. You have the unusual feeling that all these poems have been chosen for a purpose — most odd when you are used to looking through children's anthologies! Excellent value at 85p — in fact if you can only afford one of these selections, make it this one!

**Witch Poems** and **Giant Poems** are two thematic collections, edited by Daisy Wallace. There is little, if anything, new or appealing about the **Witch Poems**; the short volume (only eighteen poems in all) pales in comparison with **Hist Whist!** (Piccolo, out of print) both as an anthology, and with the poem of that name by e. e. cummings, which is included, tucked self-consciously away at the end of the book, embarrassed at the company it's keeping.

**Giant Poems** has slightly more to recommend it. The unusual **Momotara**, a Japanese nursery rhyme, is well worth reading with kids, but there is still too much worthless nonsense. How, in a book containing seventeen poems, can two poorly illustrated pages be justified for the four lines of the hardly original **Fe, Fi, Fo, Fum?** Both of these 'slim volumes' are priced at £3.50 each. Not really value for money in these stringy times for librarians and English Departments.

I liked **Songs for my Dog and other people**. It was light, it was funny, it wasn't pompous and didn't try to preach; it didn't pretend to be great poetry. Perhaps it was because Max Fatchen had blown some fresh air and a sense of fun into a mind still reeling from the inanities of **The Fairest Flowers**, the most ponderous and unsuitable children's poetry book that I have read for a long time, all suitably illustrated by Barbara Sampson. Try **Songs for my Dog** with your class, it's fun! The illustrations by Michael Atchison capture and expand the sense of the poems ideally. The stodgy **Comic Verse** collection would have greatly benefited from **Nutty Nursery Rhymes** to mention only one example.

**Ducks and Dragons** has obviously been compiled with the thesis that a melange of Rossetti, de la Mare, Lear and Stevenson, a token Ted Hughes, McGough and Patten, arranged under the imaginative headings of Seasons, Animals, Fantastical, etc. . . adds up to a school poetry anthology. 'Children take to poetry like ducks to water,' says the editor, Gene Kemp, quoting from her own experience in the classroom. To misquote the saying: 'You can take a duck to water, but you can't make him drink.' Not for very long anyway if this is the sort of gibberish that's being churned out for our children.

Please, publishers, can we have collections that contain poems that touch on the experiences of kids, poems they can relate to, poems that they find funny, poetry books they want to open again, and again. Take home and read . . . then perhaps you, the publishers, might actually benefit too. Your books might be bought! Thank heavens for Ann Thwaite's **All Sorts of Poems**, Max Fatchen's **Songs for my Dog** and the Woodward's **Creepy Verse** — what a sorry selection this would have been without them. ●



### In and Out of the Windows

Peggy Dunstan  
Hodder and Stoughton  
0 340 25055 0, £3.95

### Creepy Verse

Ian and Zenka Woodward  
Beaver Books  
0 600 20178 3, 90p

### The Children's Book of Comic Verse

Christopher Logue  
Piccolo  
0 330 26273 4, 95p

### All Sorts of Poems

Ann Thwaite  
Magnet  
0 416 89570 0, 85p

### Witch Poems

Daisy Wallace  
Pepper Press  
0 560 74506 0, £3.50

### Giant Poems

Daisy Wallace  
Pepper Press  
0 560 74507 9, £3.50

### Songs for my Dog and other people

Max Fatchen  
Kestrel  
0 7226 5645 9, £3.95

### The Fairest Flowers

Barbara Sampson  
World's Work  
0 437 73000 X, £3.95

### Ducks and Dragons

Gene Kemp  
Faber & Faber  
0 571 11523 3, £3.25

# Multi-cultural Supplement

After our special multi-cultural issue last September several minority publishers sent us material we think you might be interested in. There have also been some new titles from mainstream publishing houses. So, to keep you up to date —



Illustration by Paul Peter Piech to 'The man who didn't want to work in the country' — one of the 'Tales of Mozambique'

**Tales of Mozambique**, Young World Books, 0 905405 04 8, £2.00

A collection translated from the Portuguese, of over thirty stories from the African oral tradition. The book is based on an anthology published by Frelimo in 1978 to promote the tradition of popular storytelling. It is A4 size, beautifully designed and printed in black and white with illustrations by eighteen artists from all over the world.

Available from Liberation, 313/5 Caledonian Road, London N1 1DR. (Please add 35p for postage and packing. 15% reduction for 10 copies or over.)

**The King's Picture**, 0 978 153 006 5, 75p  
**The Gold Digger**, 0 978 153 001 4, 75p  
**The Door: The Crafty Tailor: The Bundle of Sticks**, 0 978 153 004 9, 95p

All published by West African Book Publishers.

These three Atoka books originally published in Nigeria are now available here. They contain moral tales, some traditional, some with contemporary settings, all with African backgrounds. The plentiful, brightly coloured illustrations give a lively picture of another culture; the stories reflect values which we share.

Available from Hambleside Publishers Ltd, 21 Southgate Street, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 9EF.

**Ravi of India**, Aruna Hardy, ill. Gordon Stowell, Lutterworth, 0 7188 2419 9, £2.50  
 One in a new series designed to give young children an understanding of different ways of life around the world. This one is about Ravi who lives in Pune (Poona). Written by Aruna Hardy who grew up in Pune, it gives a lively and clear account of Ravi and his Hindu family, touching on India's history, traditions, changing and varied life styles, and religions. Useful for top infants and onwards.

On the morning of Eid Mrs. Ahmed from down the road brings presents. "That's terrific," says Nawaz when he gets his pound. "now I can buy my football socks." Saïqa's bracelets are just what she wanted. "I hope I can wear them to school," she says. "they're too tight to keep pulling on and off."



From 'Gifts and Almonds'

**Gifts and Almonds**, 0 241 10422 X  
**Shabnam's Day Out**, 0 241 10420 3  
 Both by Joan Solomon, Hamish Hamilton, £3.50

These simple texts feature a Muslim family in London. References to football, darts, school, playing in the park, the night shift, occur naturally alongside learning the Koran at Prayer School, arranged marriages and celebrating the end of Ramadan. The coloured photographs are a brilliant complement to text, showing so naturally one of the many facets of our multi-cultural society.

**The Story of Prince Rama**, Brian Thompson, Kestrel, 0 7226 5684 X, £7.95

'This version of the Ramayana,' writes Brian Thompson, 'originated in an account of the exiling of Rama written by a boy, Jitander Dudee, in my class at Lionel Primary School, Brentford. The English lesson turned out to be a prolonged Indian lesson for his teacher.' The book is an attempt to make a complex and difficult saga accessible to most readers. To keep the narrative clear parts have been condensed or omitted; what remains is a strong and lively rendering of this epic struggle between good and evil. It is brilliantly illustrated by reproductions of original paintings from ancient manuscripts, supplemented by specially commissioned paintings by Jerroo Roy. Exploring the narrative within these illustrations is a fascinating activity for junior or secondary children. Expensive, but worth it if you are serious about the myths of other cultures.



The man who dug for gold, from 'The Gold Digger'



**The Carnival Kite**, Grace Hallworth, Methuen, 0 416 87880 6, £2.95

One of Methuen's Picture Story Books for children moving on to longer fiction. This one has two stars (for more adventurous readers) and is interesting not just because of its Caribbean setting, but for Grace Hallworth's use of West Indian speech patterns.

'Mammy, what happen to mi kite?'  
 'Now Arty, yo' know you aint have no kite.'

There's also a really smashing Gramma who helps Arty make his beautiful multi-coloured dream kite come true. (But I wonder why the kite's tail, 'a long crimson ribbon' at the planning stage, becomes blue in the final version. The kids wondered too!) Readers keen to make their own carnival bird kite will find instructions inside the back cover.

An addition to Longman's Whizz Bang Books — a bright series of early readers — is

**Winking Witch**, Anne Diack, Longman, 0 582 18415 0, 80p (paper)

The storyteller, a small West Indian girl, tells of the chaos created by her tiny invisible friend (Winking Witch) in supermarket and classroom. A jokey fantasy with lively pictures to help the reader, and for good measure it's Dad who is doing the shopping in the supermarket.

## The Commonwealth Institute

The library at the Commonwealth Institute has a collection of over 800 children's books, mostly in English, which 'demonstrate the backgrounds, cultures and imaginative horizons of children living in a variety of Commonwealth countries, including many in the third world.' Just available is their **Checklist of Commonwealth Children's Literature** (60 pages, £1.00 +25p postage). This booklet has titles under Asia, Antarctica, Australia and New Zealand, Canada, Caribbean and Oceania.

Michael Foster, the Librarian, tells us that the staff are always ready to give advice on multi-ethnic books and A/V materials.

The Commonwealth Institute is in Kensington High Street, London W8 6NQ (Tel. 01-602 3252). ●

# TAKE HART

When you win a Swap Shop Star of the Year award two years running as Tony Hart has done, there's no doubt about your popularity with children.

To gain that popularity while proving that television can and does encourage people to be creative is something special.

Pat Triggs went to talk to Tony Hart on the Take Hart set in Bristol.

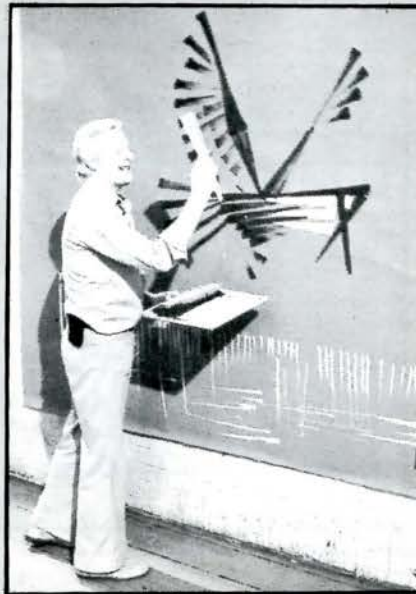
We arrived at lunch time. The morning, they told us, had gone well and a lot of Flight, one of the new series of fifteen Take Hart programmes was safely 'in the can'. Tony Hart, bright, warm and welcoming in spite of recently diagnosed diabetes and a temporarily mislaid apple (part of a carefully controlled diet), took us around the set. There it all was: the rough 'brick' walls, the view over the docks, the sink, the paint pots, the cosy sitting room, the Gallery. All there, but all in bits; spread around a vast studio, yet looking so substantial it was difficult to believe it would all be gone next day to reappear the next week for another session of recording. 'Marvellous, isn't it,' said Tony. 'People really believe we do this in an old warehouse.'

There were signs of the good morning: paint splattered on the floor, a large bird painted on the wall, a newly-created picture of a gloomy Dracula's castle, bats hovering around the tower. 'Come and look,' — the castle was a piece of bark, the bats, holly leaves. So simple!

Take Hart began in 1978 when Patrick Dowling, producer of the international award-winning *Vision On* asked Tony Hart if he would like to have his own programme. He accepted. 'I'm enjoying it tremendously now. But in the beginning I was very scared, very frightened, and not very good either. I couldn't see myself coping with twenty-five minutes all on my own. But that was sheer conceit. I'm not on my own; we're a marvellous team.'

The team though does rely on Tony Hart to have the ideas. Every series he makes what he calls a hymn sheet: a complete outline for fifteen programmes each with a theme. There are little postage stamp size pictures of each piece of art work, notes on method. This goes to Christopher Pilkington (the present producer) for his comments and eventually becomes the basis for the series.

'But we actually make changes in the programme as we do it. Christopher Pilkington is very clever. This morning he said, "Why don't we cut that, and go straight into this? O.K.?" It was just right. Two or three years ago if someone had said, "I want to make a change," my heart would have started thumping, my hands sweating. I'd have thought, I've learned it, we can't make a change now. But of course you can.'



This professionalism about which he clearly feels a modest pride has been earned through years of willingness to have a go, in spite of beating heart and sweating hands. The sort of qualities, one guesses, that make for survival in television. He is clearly also fascinated by the whole business and loves performing.

He got onto the BBC because of a chance meeting with a children's television producer at a party. At the time he was working in a display studio, providing window dressing for a Regent Street store, and looking for the next move. He followed up a casual invitation to 'come and see me' with some determination; 'auditioned' by drawing a fish blowing bubbles — on a paper napkin that came with the coffee, the only material to hand — and was engaged because he could draw fast.

"About this fast," I said, doing it on the spot. "If you can do it that fast, you can do it on the screen," they said.' So Tony Hart's right hand appeared in every programme until the day a cameraman's mistake caught him grinning. The producer liked it and a bit more of Hart came regularly into view.

With *Vision On* he became an established 'personality' and we saw the first of that amazing fund of ideas for 'making' art. But for Tony Hart *what* is done is not as important as *how* it is done.

'We have bits on the programme we call 'Pretties'. We go fairly slowly with some nice background music so everyone can relax and think "Cor, isn't he clever." Well he's *not*; but the way it's shown it looks quite clever — but never so clever they don't think, "Well, I could do that."

That morning he'd recorded a demonstration of how to make your own carbon paper and use it to make a butterfly.

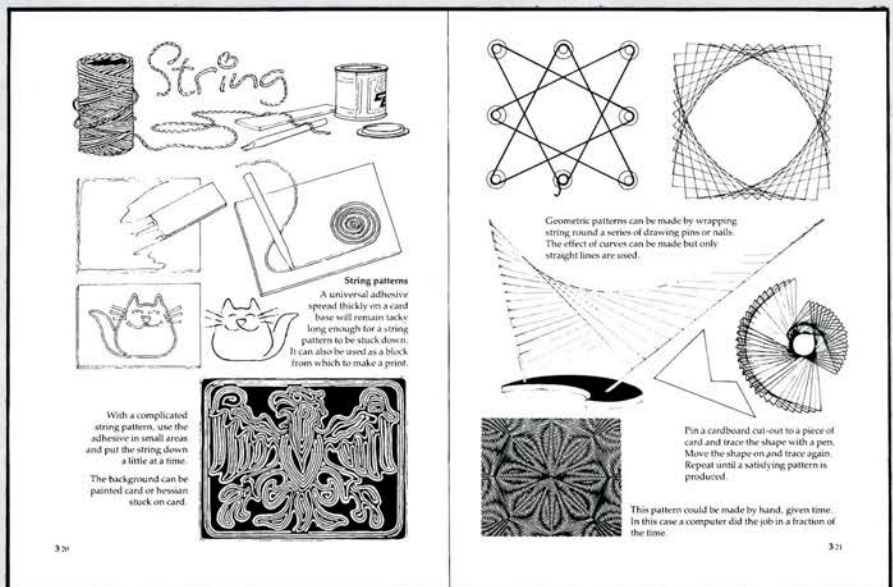
'What I hope is that some child will say, "Well if he can use black chalk and wax crayon, what will happen if I use colours." I haven't told them; but . . .'

That is the philosophy: 'suggest, show by example, but always try to stop before there's a finish. Always leave them space to say I can carry that a bit further.'

The roots of that philosophy lie way back in Tony Hart's own school days — where he was only any good at art and English — and in his three years at Maidstone College of Art where he went when he left the Indian Army after partition. In his final year at college he taught in a public school, a technical college, a mental hospital and a prison. These experiences, especially of the hospital and the prison were obviously important.

Art, for him, is an important part of education in its widest sense. What children are capable of in art, he believes, depends largely on the attitudes and approaches of teachers and head teachers. 'It all depends on what they think they are going to do with their children's lives.'

For a teacher, the keynote must be enthusiasm. 'Enthusiasm is contagious, if



A double spread on 'String' from 'The Tony Hart Art Factory'

He worked on a design team and literally inched his way on to the screen from behind the camera. It was on a children's programme, *Playbox*. 'I used to draw pictures for quiz questions. They were all done in advance, but I used to hang around the studio. One day they wanted a change and they said, "How quickly can you do it?"

you don't allow your enthusiasm to be conceit and only for something *you* want to do. Enthuse about a *method* rather than the aesthetics, the subject of what you are doing. Give children something you know will work. Leave them room to deviate, experiment.

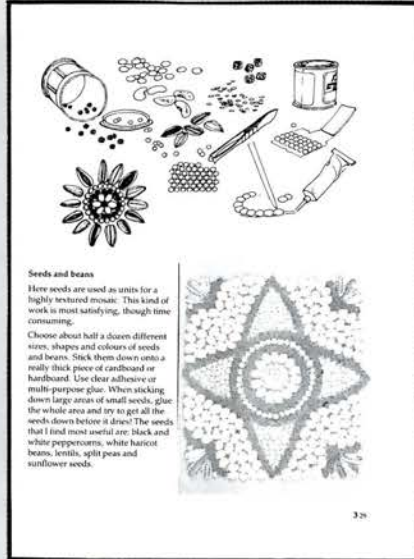


A teacher who is a realist and simply keeps changing things so that there's a lot going on all the time, and isn't worried thinking, "Oh this will make a terrible mess" or, "I've got to clear all this up at the end of the day" — a teacher like that can spark children off. Some teachers are so uninspiring the children don't produce anything of merit or interest.

For those long on enthusiasm but short on ideas, Tony Hart has produced his definitive work **The Tony Hart Art Factory**. He's put into it everything he wanted to see in a book like that. All the sorts of things he does on television where you don't have to be an artist to get an interesting, exciting end result. 'There's nothing in the book I haven't done, so I know it works,' he says. He took all the photographs himself, and is clearly delighted with it — as well he might be. It's smashing. And so is he.

**Take Hart** is on your screens on BBC now. ●

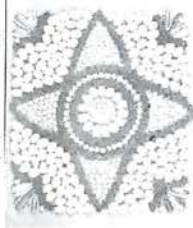
On the right, 'Seeds and beans' and an owl drawn with a bamboo pen, from 'The Tony Hart Art Factory'



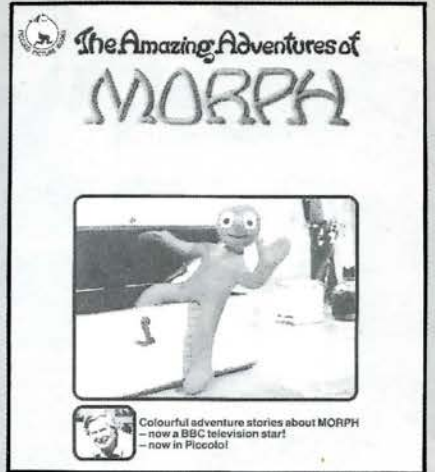
**Seeds and beans**

Here seeds are used as units for a highly textured mosaic. This kind of work is most satisfying, though time consuming.

Choose about half a dozen different sizes, shapes and colours of seeds and beans. Stick them down onto a really thick piece of cardboard or hardboard. Use clear adhesive or multi-purpose glue. When sticking down large areas of small seeds, glue the whole area and try to get all the seeds down before it dries! The seeds that I find most useful are black and white peppercorns, white haricot beans, lentils, split peas and sunflower seeds.



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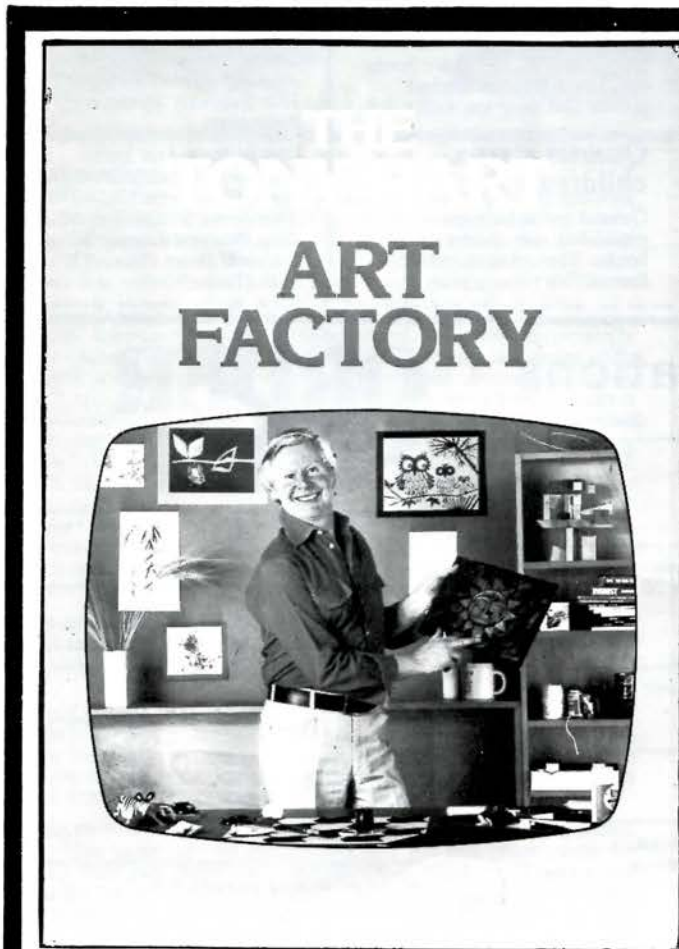


'Art work can raise a little pomposity,' said Tony Hart. Morph, created by Patrick Dowling and animated by David Sproxton and Peter Lord was invented for **Take Hart** to replace people like Sylvester Mc Coy who did such a good job of de-bunking Hart's art in **Vision On**.

Morph now has a series of his own, narrated by Tony Hart, and two books written by Patrick Dowling, **The Birthday Party** and **The Swimming Pool**. (These are in hardback from Heinemann, £2.95 and in paperback from Piccolo, 90p, in April.)

The **Tony Hart Art Factory**, Kaye and Ward, 07182 1262 2, £6.25 (or in four paperback editions at £1.50 each, 0 7182 1263 0/1264 9/1265 7/1266 5.

Make it with Hart, Piccolo, 0 330 26328 5, £1.95 is all about making things. 'It's the sort of book I would have loved as a child,' says Tony Hart.



# The Tony Hart Art Factory

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BOOKS FOR KEEPS

## NEWS



## Children's Book Week '81

This year the dates will be 3rd—10th October. Michelle Oberman has taken over the organisation from Margaret Turrey. She told us, 'This year's colour is blue and we are aiming sky high for the biggest, brightest event yet.'

Free copies of Hints for Organisers and sample packs of promotion material will be mailed early in March. If you asked for a booklet last year you will automatically get one. If you are not yet on the mailing list and wish to participate, simply put your name and address on a postcard and send it to: Michelle Oberman, Book Marketing Council, 19 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HJ (before 28th February).

## Moving the Books

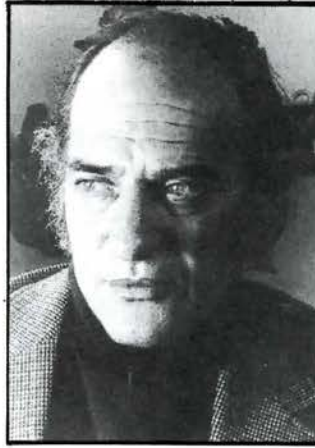
The full report of the Westminster City Libraries Bookmaster holiday reading scheme is now available. Lorna Roberts (who wrote about the scheme in Books for Keeps 4) has produced a valuable and stimulating report which among other things records the response of some of the 257 readers who enrolled in the scheme to 51 books. The readers were aged 10—16, the largest group being between 11 and 13. The books were a mixture of adult and children's fiction.

The report doesn't tell us much about the 14+ reader but it is full of material which gives us insights into what keeps the early teenager reading which could help us to lay better foundations. It also provides a useful model for anyone wanting to do some 'research' of their own. The report is available from Lorna Roberts, Marylebone Library, Marylebone Road, London NW1 5PS (£2 to cover cost of printing and postage).

A meeting to discuss the report, **Moving the Books: Teenage Reading and the Westminster Bookmaster Scheme**, is being held on Tuesday, 3rd March at The National Book League, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ — 5.00 Wine, 5.45—8.30 the meeting, admission free.

For tickets and further information, contact Beverley Mathias at the NBL (01-870 9055).

## Awards



The Whitbread Award for Children's Fiction has gone to Leon Garfield for **John Diamond** (Kestrel, 0 7226 5619 X, £4.50).

The Dorothy Tutin Award for services to poetry has gone to Howard Sergeant, editor of **The Swinging Rainbow** and **Happy Landings**, tried and tested anthologies for children. (Both are published by Evans.)

Leon Garfield, photo courtesy of Penguin Books

## Picture Book Competition

There was no first prize awarded in the first Times/Kestrel competition for a 'new talent in the making of picture books'. The judges, Virginia Berkeley, Quentin Blake, Brian Alderson, Patrick Hardy and two Penguin editors, did award two prizes of £200 — to David Beers for **Looking Back** and Geraldine Martin for **Paper Men** — and six books were commended. Picture books, **The Times** suggested, 'are more subtle than they seem to be'. The 317 entries 'lacked the clinching ability to unite graphic work with a sharp lively text.'

Individuals who can manage both are indeed rare — a glance at a lot of picture books that actually get published proves that only too well.

## Quartet start a children's list

Quartet publishers are expanding into children's books. They plan to publish four or five titles a year,

mainly hardback picture books for 5—8's. Their first titles are **Liza's Yellow Boat** by Bel Mooney and **The Adventures of Chatrat** by Venetia Spicer (each £4.95). Both illustrated by their authors.

## Books are Fun

Teachers and librarians from all over Cornwall have been co-operating to organise the biggest children's book event the county has seen. 'Books are Fun' is the theme and it's all happening from 26th—28th February at the Richard Lander School in Truro.

Bernard Ashley and Malcolm Saville will be appearing and there are plans for films, story sessions, fancy dress, model railways, craft exhibitions, book binding and a visit from Culdrose Air-Sea Rescue Group. The fair is being officially opened on Friday, 27th February by the **Blue Peter** team.

Details from Ann Jenkin, Camborne School, Cranberry Road, Camborne TR14 7PJ (Camborne 712280) or Mrs R. King, Richard Lander School, Tresawls Road, Truro TR1 3LF (Truro 3750).

## SBA Services and Publications

Quantity £ p

Quantity £ p

\* I wish to take out a subscription to **Books for Keeps** (six issues) commencing with Issue No. — £4.50 (or £7.50 overseas) for six issues

\* **How to Set Up and Run a School Bookshop** £1.20 per copy

\* **Badges** 10p each (minimum order 5 badges)  
Books for Keeps OK   
Piccolo Guess What   
I'm a Sparrow fan

\* **Penguin Paper Bags** £1.20 per 100

\* **Authorgraphs** 40p each  
No. 2 Penelope Lively   
No. 3 Malcolm Saville   
No. 5 Pat Hutchins

\* **Poster Packs**

90p each  
Primary   
Secondary

\* **Book Bank Savings Cards** 5p each (minimum order 20 cards)  
Primary   
Secondary

\* **DIY School Bookshop Unit Plans** £1.00 per copy

Total

Please make cheques/postal orders payable to the School Bookshop Association.

Return this form to:  
SBA,  
1 Effingham Road,  
Lee,  
London SE12 8NZ.

## ORDER FORM

Name

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All prices include postage and packing.

For more details of items listed on this form, turn to the back page.



# SOUND AND VISION

## The Bagthorpe Saga

Led by Dandy Nichols as Grandma, Helen Cresswell's whole preposterous tribe of Bagthorpes has been made flesh and put on our screens.

How does this popular comic invention stand up to being whisked from imagination into TV reality? How will TV Bagthorpe fans react to the books?

David Bennett wonders.



Dandy Nichols as Mrs Fosdyke, Madelaine Smith as Aunt Celia and Rebecca Lalonde as Daisy Parker

I am devoted to eccentric Grandma Bagthorpe, head of a family of super egotists. Jack the youngest grandson is the only ordinary one among them, and the central character of **Ordinary Jack**. At every turn he is eclipsed by his aggressively brilliant family until Uncle Parker, himself pretty remarkable, decides to manufacture some extra-ordinariness for his young nephew. Although the attempt fails, **Absolute Zero** sees some reflected glory for Jack, when his dim dog Zero beats the whole family to winning public acclaim in the world of advertising by becoming the nation's most lovable mongrel, no mean feat when the main opposition is Grandma, by now an unholy alliance with Daisy, the Parker's demoniacal four-year-old.



Ruth Potter as Tess, Richard Orme as Jack, Ceri Seel as William

In Book Three the competitive spirit is rife again. Grandma decides on a Family Reunion, which means the visit of the kill-joy but brainy 'Dog-collar Brigade'. The Bagthorpe brood feels compelled to outface them at every turn, possibly by getting into the Guinness Book of Records by fair means or foul, but no one reckons on the Unholy Alliance, who manage to outdo everyone with an inimitable coup de grace.

**Bagthorpes v. the World** has Henry misreading his bank statement and the family creating chaos upon chaos as they take to self-sufficiency, whilst coping with Daisy in her burial and death phase, suspiciously aided and abetted by her doting Grandma.

These very fast-moving episodes in the lives of chaotic, larger-than-life characters are told with humour and invention in a way that is endearing to most adults, but which only a certain sort of child enjoys. The predominant middle-class tone, the uncompromising literary references and vocabulary, the dashes of precocious flamboyance probably go down well in Kensington or Cheltenham but might easily miss the mark in Cardiff or Merseyside. My pupils, who hail from a good social mix, either love the Bagthorpes or hate them and it is mainly upon their reactions that I judge the general appeal of the books.

The TV version will doubtless have greater general impact than the books and will create a wider interest in the Bagthorpes, for if Helen Cresswell's humorous creatures are faithfully portrayed then young audiences are in for plenty of visual fun and, like Giles' Cartoons, lots of hilarious small details and irrepressible characters — come to think of it, grandma is my favourite character in Giles' Cartoons too!

**Ordinary Jack** — Puffin, 0 14 03.1176 9, 75p  
**Absolute Zero** — Puffin, 0 14 03.1177 7, 75p  
**Bagthorpes Unlimited** — Puffin, 0 14 03.1178 5, 85p  
**Bagthorpes v. the World** — Faber, 0 571 11446 6, £4.50  
 (in reading order)

### Inside Television

Many children are keen to know what goes on behind the camera.

**Making Television Programmes**, Peter Wiltshire and Tim Hunkin, *Dinosaur*, 0 85122 210 2, 60p is designed for young children but is informative and useful at any level. Very young children would need an adult at hand to explain some of the more difficult concepts. A good book for sharing and talking.

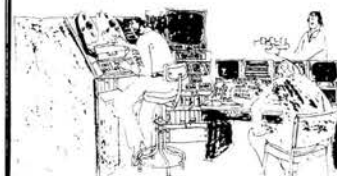
**A Day with a Dancer**  
0 85340 691 X

**A Day with a TV Producer**  
0 85340 793 2  
Both by Graham Rickard,  
Wayland, £3.25

Two from Wayland's excellent *A Day in the Life* series. The dancer is Sue of Legs and Co. — her day includes filming *Top of the Pops*. The producer is John Nathan-Turner of *Dr Who*. We have two days with him — one on location filming, one in the studio.

Each page of these books has a black and white photograph and eleven or twelve lines of text. The author is careful to explain technical terms as they arise in special 'footnotes'. There's a lot in these books in easily accessible form. A useful bibliography at the end points the way ahead. ●

If the show is not going to appear on our television sets straight away, the pictures are sent down cables to a tape recording machine. Here they are stored until needed later.



A page from 'Making Television Programmes'

Hello! Desmond the **DINOSAUR** here again! My friends Peter Wiltshire from BBC TV's *Play-school* and Tim Hunkin of *Observer* fame have made a smashing job of describing what goes into MAKING TELEVISION PROGRAMMES (60p, hardback £1.85)

Mr. Hunkin has also illustrated Althea's MAKING A BOOK (60p). And among the other books you can get in Althea's Information Series are VISITING A MUSEUM, MAKING A CAR, MAKING A ROAD and BUILDING A HOUSE — just the ticket for school bookshops! Why not write to me for my full catalogue — Desmond **DINOSAUR**

Beechcroft House  
Over, Cambridge  
CB4 5NE

# HOW TO... Make your Book Bonanza a Sickcess



**David Bennett, Head of English at the George Spencer Comprehensive School in Stapleford, Nottingham, describes their Fungus the Bogeyman Book Bonanza.**

that dripped from the low ceiling. Finally, when your graffiti bears the legend 'Fungus was here' you know that you've sold the idea to your pupils and you have a gripe sickcess on your hands.

The opening day arrived and the £1,500 worth of books supplied by a local bookseller were ready for the deluge — spread out, according to broad subject areas, on tables covered with suitably muddy-coloured cloths. Our stock ranged from picture books to adult paperbacks, both fiction and non-fiction. This reflects our general policy which is to invite everyone connected with the school to our events, including our feeder primaries.

The Bonanza went on non-stop for three days during school time and we had a Parents' Evening when we opened from 6.30 to 8.00. Every child came in once with his form during an English lesson and then again during an allotted lunch-hour. They browsed; they used their saved-up book club money; they bought outright and they reserved until the next day. There were competitions laid on by the Maths., Humanities, Science and English Faculties and there was music organised by the Music Department, but best of all there was colour, excitement, involvement and the tremendous experience of being amongst hundreds of books, including Fungus, who sold no fewer than 54 copies. I had to dash into Nottingham to get fresh supplies after the first day.

Most of the staff assisted in one way or another or else were seen alongside the cleaners and dinner ladies to be browsing and buying. Two mums worked the cash register and a bevy of pupils assisted — children make by far the best detectives. One of the mums was so good at selling raffle tickets on the parents' evening that we made an enormous profit which offset the loss on the film, which we showed in two lunch hours.

At the final exhausted count we had taken just over £700 — roughly £1 per pupil on roll — from which we will receive 10% in cash with the help of Fungus, who himself made £72.90, small beer perhaps to his publishers Hamish Hamilton. When I wrote to them in early October asking for some publicity help I received no reply whatsoever. It is as well that schools are dedicated enough to run their bookshops and bookfairs despite such a lack of support and interest from some publishers; that they are committed to creating the book buying public of the future in the face of such little regard or recognition from those who will derive the most gain, when our pupils become the paying customers in tomorrow's world.

It is as well that financial gain is not uppermost in our minds. Our gripes pale into insignificance beside the continuing enthusiasm for books that Fungus's Book Bonanza has given the school. However, he was a great financial success and a jolly good slime was had by all so next year we're cashing in. Tentative plans are afoot for the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica Book Bonanza' — not quite the same ring to it perhaps, but think of the educational value. I wonder if they'll give us a set!

**Fungus the Bogeyman**  
Raymond Briggs, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10198 0, £1.35

**Post script:** A second letter to Hamish Hamilton *after* the event did provoke an apologetic response. Apparently the Fungus Bonanza coincided with 'necessary changes in the children's books publicity department'. Juliet Nicolson, who is now in charge, promises full support in the future. Take note anyone who is thinking of taking up the idea.



I'd anticipated the excitement that Fungus might create when I first persuaded the librarian to place a few copies on library reserve in each of our two Resource Centres. I also tried some copies in the Bookshop. When you begin to hear Fungus jokes around the school, and one child calling another 'Mildew' or 'My Drear', then you know that you're on to a winner. Accordingly Raymond Briggs' deliciously unwholesome creation became the coathanger upon which we hung our planned November book fair.

Everyone was delighted. Within weeks of the decision having been made Fungus invaded the school, especially the Lower School where his Book Bonanza was to be held. Portraits of Fungus's illustrious ancestors were dredged up by the Art Department, plus a wall of assorted Bogeys some 20 feet by 10 feet in area. In English, Bogeyman Recipe Books and Menus were being lovingly (and sickeningly) compiled, whilst walls blossomed with adverts for Bogey products (Dirtmestos puts back all known germs). A Bogey Newspaper was issued and a sticky, slimey, very sludge-brown model of a Bogey Backyard appeared at the same time as a rash of Bogey Board Games. Some dedicated Bogey addicts created dozens of imaginative creepy crawlies, who lurked amongst a fringe of crepe paper slime





# Lloyds Bank

## is pleased to support The School Bookshop Association

### **MONEY – THE FACTS OF LIFE**

**5th edition by W. Reay Tolfree**

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

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

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

**Price 90 pence.**

### **MONEY – THE FACTS OF LIFE**

#### **Audio-Visual Presentation**

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

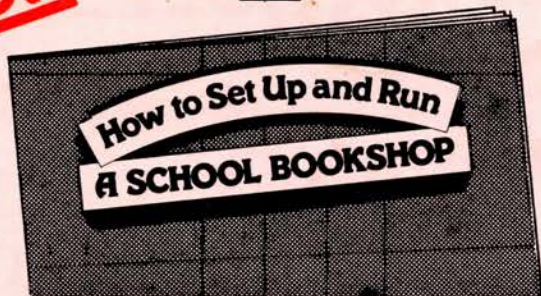
Specifically for classroom use, the filmstrips trace the early working lives of two cartoon characters, Zack and Zelda, through numerous drawings, photographs and charts, combined with a lively informative soundtrack.

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

# SBA Services & Publications

Our intention is to build up gradually a range of items which help you help children come to books with interest and pleasure.

## **New** The SBA's new handbook



At last our completely rewritten and updated handbook will be available in February. If you're thinking of setting up your own bookshop in school, this handbook is essential. If you already run one, the new section on 'How to Keep Going' is full of ideas and suggestions. It's laid out logically and sequentially to take you from start to finish in the most practical way possible. Sections include:

- Part 1 **What is a school bookshop**  
Includes information on the school bookshop movement itself.
  - Part 2 **Why set one up**  
Educational, cultural, social and simple, practical reasons to convince either yourself or, if need be, others too.
  - Part 3 **How to set one up**  
Includes the planning stage (eg. what kind of bookshop, the site, how much time and money is involved, etc.) and putting plans into operation (eg. your book supplier, choosing stock, furniture, etc.).
  - Part 4 **Opening a school bookshop**  
PR and publicity, inviting authors, opening ceremony.
  - Part 5 **Running a school bookshop** (How to keep going)  
Publicity, creating the 'atmosphere', encouraging sales, special events, activities and competitions.
  - Part 6 **Profiles of school bookshops**  
Infant, Junior, Middle and Secondary school bookshops described by teachers who already run their own school bookshop.
  - Part 7 **Useful sources of information**
- Price £1.20.

## **New**



### The SBA's DIY School Bookshop Unit

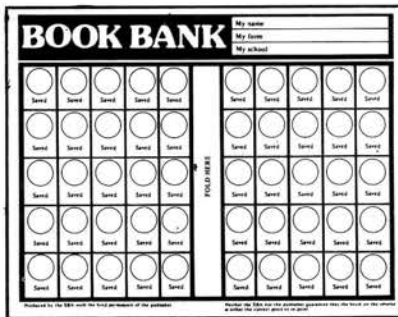
If you can't afford the price of commercially produced units and you have a competent Do-it-Yourselfer to hand (a willing dad, a helpful secondary school woodwork department, etc.), our detailed, professionally designed plans may be the answer. At present day prices you should be able to build your own five-shelf, lockable (and if you want, mobile) school bookshop unit for between £30 and £35 (assuming no labour charges). That's about a third of the cost of a ready-made unit. Our plans include full assembly instructions and materials list. Price £1.00.

### Authorgraphs

This is the centre-fold author profile from **Books for Keeps** which can be used as an author display piece.  
 Authorgraph No. 2 Penelope Lively  
 Authorgraph No. 3 Malcolm Saville  
 Authorgraph No. 5 Pat Hutchins  
 Price 40p each.

### Book Bank Savings Cards

For school bookshops, book clubs, book fairs — indeed anywhere books are sold to children — a savings card scheme can help offset the price of books. Most schools use the idea. We've printed this grid on the back of paperback covers with a space for children to enter their names. There is room in the circle to record how much has been saved so that you know each child's credit at a glance. There is a good variety of different book covers, for individuality, and each card costs 5p. Minimum order 20 cards (i.e. £1 in all).



### Poster Packs

These are proving to be extraordinarily popular as an easy way to brighten up and create lively, colourful book atmospheres in book corners, libraries and school bookshops. We have two packs, one for primary, the other for secondary schools, made up of about a dozen publishers' posters. We change the contents of each pack roughly every four to five months as we obtain new material from the publishers. If you have a special request (eg. a girls' school, a nursery class, a middle school, a special event), let us know and we'll try to oblige. It all depends on what we have available. We charge 90p each which covers postage, folding and packing. You could of course write to a dozen or so publishers and get your publicity free but when you add up the cost of stamps and bear in mind that you may or may not get suitable posters, it's probably easier, quicker and cheaper to write for our packs.

### Badges

From time to time we have on offer metal badges from publishers and others which aren't generally available elsewhere. At present we have  
 Books for Keeps OK (55 mm diameter)  
 Piccolo Guess What (55 mm diameter)  
 I'm a Sparrow fan (45 mm diameter)  
 Price 10p each (minimum order 5 badges).



### Bags

Real Penguin paper bags to add a bit of authenticity to your bookshop. Price £1.20 per 100.



### Advisory Service

We try to answer any question put to us about children's books. Apart from school bookshops themselves which we know quite a bit about, we like to think we're a good place to start with if you have a problem or a query. If we can't answer your enquiry straight off the top of our heads, we'll put you in touch with someone who can.

If you want any of these items, please use the order form on page 24 or write to the SBA at Lee. All cheques and postal orders payable to the School Bookshop Association.