

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

September 1990 No. 64
UK Price £1.55

the children's book magazine

I Saw a Jolly Hunter

I saw a jolly hunter
With a jolly gun
Walking in the country
In the jolly sun.

In the jolly meadow
Sat a jolly hare.
Saw the jolly hunter.
Took jolly care.

Hunter jolly eager –
Sight of jolly prey.
Forgot gun pointing
Wrong jolly way.

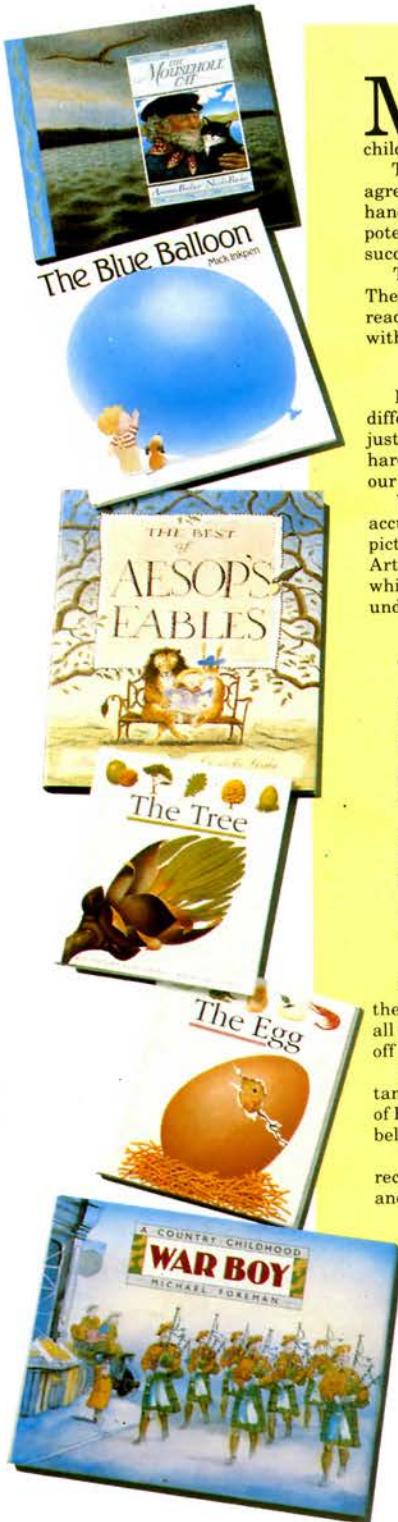
Jolly hunter jolly head
Over heels gone.
Jolly old safety-catch
Not jolly on.

Bang went the jolly gun.
Hunter jolly dead.
Jolly hare got clean away.
Jolly good, I said.



WHY THE RIGHT BOOKS MATTER...

WHY YOU CAN RECOMMEND BFC



More than a dozen years ago, BOOKS FOR CHILDREN realised that caring parents with limited time, money and expertise, were looking for ways to help their children prepare for, and do well at school.

Teachers, educationalists and government committees all agreed: a love of reading and an aptitude for learning go hand in hand. For reading is a key factor in developing the language potential which still remains the best predictor of educational success.

This is where homes that own books have such an advantage. They provide the perfect context not just for reading, but for re-reading – the enjoyment, over and over again, of some encounter with print so happy it leads to more and more encounters.

So, where does BFC come in?

BFC is a children's book club. But it's a book club with a difference. Our trademark is quality, and we never offer a book just because it is a money-spinner. We aim to screen all the new hardback children's books before they are published, and offer our members only the very best of them.

We offer information books – offering knowledge at its most accurate, up-to-date and attractively presented. We look for picture books – nowadays not just an aid to literacy but a whole Art Curriculum in miniature. We look for fiction – the form in which humanity has always cast its wisest attempts to understand itself and communicate that understanding.

And who selects these books?

The BFC selection panel is:

ANNE WOOD, editor of the magazine Books for Your Children, a producer of children's television programmes, and holder of two literary awards;

CHRIS POWLING, who is a tutor in English, a former head teacher, a writer and broadcaster;

MARGARET CARTER, who is an expert in child development, former editor of 'Mother' magazine and a writer and children's book reviewer;

SALLY GRINDLEY, who is editorial director of BFC and a writer of children's books.

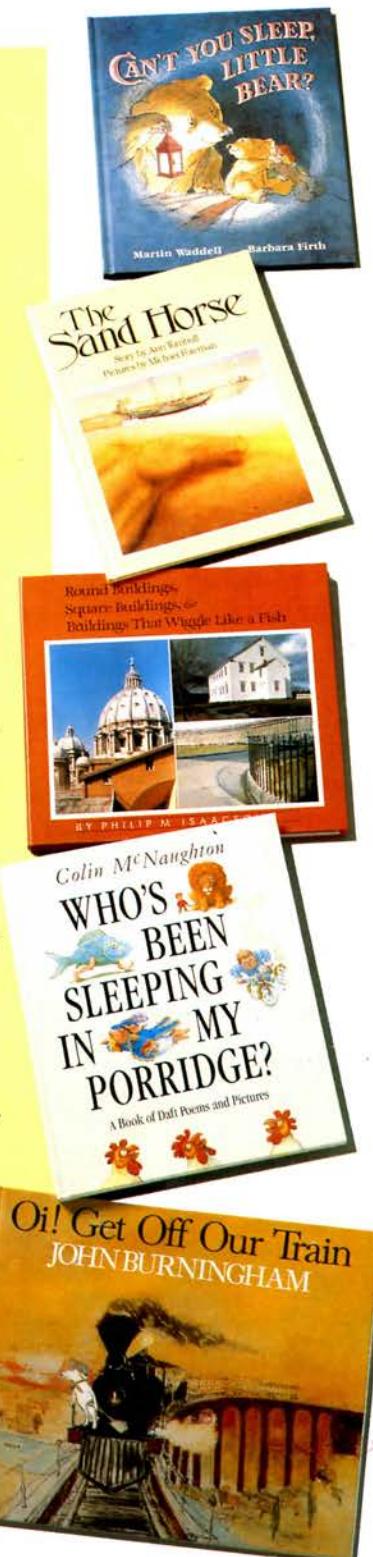
You only have to look at this page to see the calibre of books they have recommended over the past few months. And they are all offered at savings which range from between 20% to 50% off the publishers' prices.

So the benefits of Club membership are very real, very tangible and very valuable. Anyone wishing to become a member of Books for Children should simply write to us at the address below and we will send full details and our introductory offer.

We hope, too, that after reading this page you will want to recommend us to other parents, teachers, playgroup leaders and PTAs.



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Cover Story

The poem on our front cover is taken from *Figgie Hobbin* by Charles Causley, with illustrations by Gerald Rose, re-issued by Macmillan (0 333 12078 7, £7.50) in May 1990. *Figgie Hobbin* was first published in 1970 and has remained in print ever since. We are grateful to Macmillan for help in using this illustration.

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SEPTEMBER 1990 No. 64

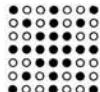
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The British Council



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EDITOR'S PAGE

Why bother with books?

This may seem a strange question from a magazine like ours but, in an age when so much else competes for children's attention, we need to be sharply and constantly aware of why reading matters and of the conditions which best promote it. **BfK 64**, miscellaneous though it is, re-examines some of our basic beliefs.

On page 4, for instance, HMI Trevor Dickinson's 'The Need for Story' is an affirmation of a whole professional career – as, in its different way, is Margaret Meek's celebration of the novels of Rosemary Sutcliff, 'Of the Minstrel Kind' on page 28. Similarly, Faith Jaques's **Orchard Book of Nursery Rhymes**, discussed on page 25, crowns more than forty years' worth of commitment to the notion that books help us to be more fully and satisfactorily human. As Trevor Dickinson puts it:

I know that being a reader doesn't guarantee that we know ourselves or that we're more sensitive to those who share our space. Nonetheless, I can't escape the faith that our sustained contact with the efforts of good writers to grapple with life's eternal questions at least gives us the chance to be a little better. It gives us less excuse for not being so.

Interestingly, Dr John Quicke's non-fiction article on page 20 comes to much the same conclusion – that the most important thing books can do for handicapped people is to make it clear that's what they are, *people*. Not that our distinctive ability to represent ourselves to ourselves comes easily. Charles Causley's lifelong wrestle with words is explored in Morag Styles' Authorgraph across our centre-spread – with our front cover bringing a **BfK** first: a complete poem from his re-issued *Figgie Hobbin*, newly and magnificently illustrated by Gerald Rose. For a rather different perspective on the rigours and perils of communication, though, turn to page 26 and Mary Hoffman's



'Separated by the Same Language?' which takes a cool look at the tension between US and UK English in children's books. Are youngsters really as bothered by transatlantic differences in vocabulary and idiom as some editors maintain?

Maybe we should ask a librarian . . . while we've got some around. For one of the most depressing features of current LMS budgeting is the threat it poses to School Library Services. That's why we make no apology for Margaret Köberl's reminder, on page 22, of what they have to offer – an account based on her own Lancashire service but applying nationwide. So do the figures cited by the Publishers Association for essential spending on schoolbooks (back page) and Eunice McMullen's worrying report on the Pan/Macmillan School Library Competition (page 30). Altogether, these pieces set the current debate about reading standards in a context that's wider than some are willing to allow – it being both more comfortable, and cheaper, to suggest that teaching methods are all that's at issue. But can we really dismiss as irrelevant the booming sales of computers, videos and TV channels-in-the-sky throughout a decade in which school book-purchasing has slumped by thirty-five percent?

In short, it's our view that questions about what children can read are inseparable in the end from questions about what they do read . . . or perhaps *should* be reading. Helping to identify the latter is where **BfK** comes in.

Enjoy the issue!

Chris



A new Sponsor for BfK

A magazine like **Books for Keeps** can expand in only two ways. The first, and best way, is through a substantial increase in its subscriptions – so, dear reader, please promote us shamelessly to colleagues, family, friends, acquaintances and the person sitting opposite you on the bus since our shoe-string budget falls well short of the usual advertising outlets. Word-of-mouth recommendation really is crucial to us.

Another way to expand, though, is through appropriate sponsorship. This, as a short-term measure, enables an increase in what we can offer . . . with more therefore to be recommended by word of mouth. So **BfK** was delighted to accept the sponsorship of the British Council in 1988, and we're happy now to announce a three-year sponsorship agreement with Books for Children, the nation's leading quality children's book club (see their advertisement on the facing page). Books for Children's generosity in sponsoring projects in the children's book world is well-established: the Club already funds both the Eleanor Farjeon and Mother Goose Awards and last October enabled a major exhibition of children's book

illustration to be mounted at the Commonwealth Institute in London. It's an organisation **BfK** knows well since our current editor has been a member of the Club's Book Selection Panel since it was launched more than thirteen years ago. We're very happy indeed to be associated with a company whose track record in promoting the best in children's books is exemplary.

How, then, will we use the additional funds sponsorship makes available to us? Well, till now the number of pages in each issue of **BfK** has been wholly determined by the amount of advertising that's carried. Our plan is to expand our standard 24 page issue to a standard 28 pages regardless of advertising. The additional pages will be used both to increase the scope of our reviewing – of hardbacks and audio-tapes in particular – and to extend our coverage of news items. The January 1991 issue, we hope, should see the changes in place.

Thank you, Books for Children! ■

THE NEED FOR STORY

Trevor Dickinson
HMI

Some things stay the same because they're rooted in the deepest fabric of our human being. One of those constancies is the need for story, story told and, more recently, for story read.

Barbara Hardy wrote:

'We dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative.'

The printed word ('writing to keep it to remember', as a child once called it) has meant that we can draw our stories, daily, freshly from further and further afield. The printed word and our growing capacity to read it have together given us the chance to shake off what R K Narayan in 'A Tiger for Malgudi' describes as 'fetters and shackles for the rising soul, minds overburdened with knowledge, facts or information'.

At the same time, however, it has to be understood that the reading of story is not mere escape. The reading of story is part of the effort to understand more clearly what is simply 'known'. Story is part of the vast evidence about life and those who live it. Story is the agent of Rudyard Kipling's 'six honest serving men' in 'The Elephant's Child':

*'They taught me all I knew
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.'*

Since story is a fundamental question-raiser, I would argue that those who don't read stories, those who neglect the importance of story-reading are dangerous to us all. Our children and the adults they become need to be able constantly to ask the right questions about life and its living. They need the best language in which to frame those questions and in which to understand the answers.

It's for these reasons that all our children need to be surrounded by rich print worlds – which places special obligations, of course, upon school and public libraries. They share a particular responsibility to demonstrate, through their book provision, that the adult world deeply cherishes its children. That essential demonstration pays dividends, I believe, in helping the growing of children into adults who, touched from their earliest years by the sad and joyful magic of books, have been given the chance to be creative, imaginative beings, more fully conscious of, and more sensitive to, the needs of the many living worlds about them. I know that being a reader doesn't guarantee that we know *ourselves*.

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or that we're more sensitive to those who share our space. Nonetheless, I can't escape the faith that our sustained contact with the efforts of good writers to grapple with life's eternal questions at least gives us the chance to be a little better. It gives us less excuse for not being so.

For the children we teach and provide for in our libraries, depend on our having in mind for them some noble adult reading destinations. What kind of readers do we want our present children to be when they are forty or fifty or sixty or more years old? What aim should we have, at the outset, for them all?

I'm not thinking here of reading benchmarks for eleven-year-olds. Indeed, I'm convinced there are deep dangers in meeting some books too soon, emotionally unprepared for and switched off, perhaps for ever, by a particular book's adult concerns. For instance, I'm eternally glad that I met Huckleberry Finn first in my twenties rather than at twelve. By the same token I'm ever guiltily sad at my grammar school teaching struggles to teach Silas Marner to twelve-year-old boys and girls whose tedium was matched only by their sour distaste. I was fifty-five before I read the novel again – reduced to tears on some un-Eliot Greek island. My regret is that few, if any, of those I taught will have ever returned to the book.

No – what I seek to pursue is merely the thought that teachers and librarians should believe that all those in their care may have one day the potential to read, say, Hard Times. For some of their children, they may believe that if their adult reading is lame, they will, nonetheless, have the capacity to listen to and understand the novel – as illiterate audiences, heard and understood Dickens. From the beginning the assumption has to be made by teachers and librarians that one day each child who stumbles into the nursery classroom or the children's library is entitled, at the age of fifty or sixty, to meet, say, Ronald Bottrall's poem 'Belfast' (and, pray, reflect upon it as a piece of bizarre, sad history).

*'It doesn't matter if you are a child
Or an old woman,
There is no time to look at the sun
Or enjoy the privacy
Of cellars, attics and cemeteries.
In the morning
And the afternoon and the evening
Things happen.
You put out your hand to greet a friend.
Before you can reach him
He has exploded into fragments.'*

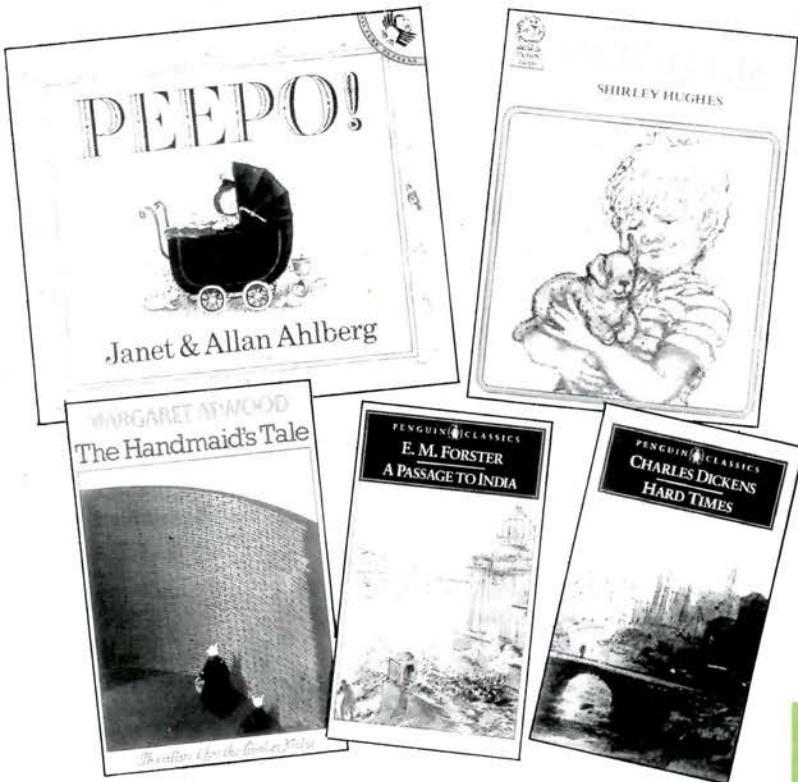
With Bottrall's poem just read, it will be as well if the future reader can quietly lean for some consolation upon Dostoyevsky's Brothers Karamazov.

'Love will teach us all things: but we must learn how to win love, it is got with difficulty: it is a possession dearly bought with much labour and in long time; for one must love not sometimes only, for a passing moment, but always: even the wicked can do that.'

... all our children need to be surrounded by rich print worlds – which places special obligations, of course, upon school and public libraries. They share a particular responsibility to demonstrate, through their book provision, that the adult world deeply cherishes its children.

From the beginning, teachers and librarians should have for children the aspiration that, one day, they might meet with delight the work of, for instance, R K Narayan or Shusako Endo or Ngugi or Margaret Atwood or Gabriel Marquez or Elizabeth Jolley or Primo Levi or Janet Frame or . . .

The beginning needs an end. But what of the beginnings? To make their way to the writers like those I've just mentioned, to their successors in the year 2000 and beyond and to the great writers of the past who will continue long to have their tomorrows, today's children need good starting points. They need starting points beyond the last visible reading scheme. They need to start perhaps with the Ahlberg's *Each Peach Pear Plum*, a book in which text and illustration sing so richly together. They might start with the same two authors' remarkable history book *Peepo*. They might move to John Burningham, perhaps to the unending delight of the questions in his *Would You Rather?* or to the moving comedy of Shirley Hughes' *Dogger*. A little older, some will still be caught (and carried forward) by the poignant magic of the classic *Velveteen Rabbit*.



What kind of readers do we want our present children to be when they are forty, fifty or sixty or more years old? What aim should we have, at the outset, for them all?

Some, older still, may identify with and be oddly comforted by *The Shrinking of Treehorn*. At, perhaps, twelve or so, the road will, for some, be brightened by the outstanding poetry (and art) anthology *Talking to the Sun*. The picture story books *Rose Blanche*, *Are We Nearly There?* and *Piggy Book* will continue to speak volumes to sophisticated young readers in their late teens. With luck, few of them will be disengaged from encounters with Anne Fine or Robert Westall or Susan Cooper or Jan Mark or Katharine Paterson or Cynthia Voigt or James Berry. This is not an 'approved' list: there's too much to choose from. The roads (diverging 'in a yellow wood') may lead to Jeffrey Archer or to Chinua Achebe, to Frederick Forsyth or to E M Forster, to Robert Ludlum or to Doris Lessing.

These roads are not the same. It would be dangerous to be dogmatic about the needs for the readers our chil-

... today's children need good starting points. They need starting points beyond the last visible reading scheme.

dren become to take 'the road less travelled by'. In plucking authors from the air, I don't intend an excess of worthiness. The light, the trivial, the comfortable (and comforting) are not barred. None of us, I hope, can be serious all the time. To meet a range of genres and generations of writing is essential. But I cannot escape the belief that some writers are better and more necessary to humanity than others. I argue merely that every effort should be made to give all our children an unblindfold chance to choose the wiser route. My faith is that, given the right start, the clearest, best signposted, and most beautiful of maps, few of our children will go astray.

With retirement looming, I begin to grasp a truth which, had I been sharper, I would (I should) have grasped too many years ago. It's summed up for me in a poem by Gillian Clarke, called 'Miracle on St David's Day'. In that poem she gives an account of her reading poetry in a mental institution and of being interrupted by a man who hadn't spoken for forty years. He interrupts to recite faultlessly the Wordsworth's 'Daffodils' he learned in school as a child – and Gillian Clarke comments:

*'he has remembered there was a music
Of speech and that once he had something to say.'*

At the heart of what I seek to say here is the belief that in presenting our children with the best, most considered of language in the best of books, teachers and librarians are enabling them all to possess a music of speech, giving them all an improved chance of something to say and the means by which to say it for themselves.

My slow realisation, however, helped by my repeated reading of Gillian Clarke's poem (in which, simultaneously, I find ever something new and contentedly discover the same) is that of knowing now, as never before, that our children can never escape us. We can escape them – and do. But our children are ours forever, touched for better or for worse by the what and how of our teaching. We have, as teachers, as librarians, as parents, that terrifying obligation and proud privilege of making sure that our book-touch is benign and lasting. Our unremembered children will then be ever in our happy debt.

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I end with a reflection on reading by E B White, whose *Charlotte's Web* continues to instruct and delight children as much now as it did when first published almost forty years ago.

'Reading is the work of the alert mind, is demanding, and under ideal conditions produces finally a sort of ecstasy . . . The experience of reading has a sublimity and power unequalled by any other form of communication. It would be just as well if educators clung to this great phenomenon and did not get side-tracked.' ■

Trevor Dickinson retires in 1991 as a member of HM Inspectorate. His travelling roadshow promoting children's books and reading is well-known throughout the UK. He was awarded an OBE in the recent Honours List. BK offers congratulations on this well-deserved recognition for all his work.

REVIEWS

Nursery/Infant



'Tu-whit tu-who!' the donkey said.

'Quack!' said the Billy Goat

POETRY
Charles Causley, ill.
Barbara Firth, Walker
(Mar 90), 0 7445 1442 8,
£2.99

A lovely Charles Causley poem about farm animals, illustrated by the winner of the 1988 Kate Greenaway medal. A delight to eye and ear whatever your age... although I suspect it's meant for the very young. MS

Granny is a Darling

Kady MacDonald Denton, Walker
(Mar 90), 0 7445 1440 1,
£2.99

Happily nowadays we work at helping children overcome their fears and here's a really excellent book for learning to cope with the dark. Granny comes to stay and her snoring chases the monsters off! A simple notion that's beautifully carried out. A good buy and one which should be most useful to have 'just in case'. MS

Annie's abc

0 00 663455 9

Annie's one to ten

0 00 663456 7

Annie Owen, Picture Lions (May 90), £2.50 each

Two attractive books with interesting and decorative pictures for small children and their parents to enjoy. Normally 'abc' books wouldn't really be a good idea for the very young, but I think this one has enough charm to make it worthwhile. Similarly the counting book has so many detailed pictures with so much to discuss that I think it's good value. MS

Making Friends

0 7445 1489 4

Mum's Home

0 7445 1491 6

This Little Nose

0 7445 1490 8

Bend and Stretch

0 7445 1492 4



Jan Ormerod, Walker (Apr 90), 'Mum and Me' series, £1.99 each

This series of little books is very worthwhile and each one conveys warmth and humour as the blurb suggests. Babies do need books and these certainly fill the bill, for they show much about comfortable relationships and give an opportunity to teach new words, too. Definitely recommended. MS

Come Out and Play, Little Mouse

Robert Kraus, ill. Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey, Walker (May 90), 0 7445 1470 3, £2.99

The most important thing about a good children's book is what it leaves out!! This book would be fine if it left out a bit more. The pictures are charming, but there are too many of them. The story is fine, but it confuses as there are at least two strands to it. Such a pity because the ideas are fun and the format pleasant. MS

Bad Baby

Nanette Newman, ill. Andy Cooke, Picture Lions (May 90), 0 00 663752 3, £2.50

Why is it that the more appalling the behaviour depicted in a book the more popular it's likely to be? Nanette Newman's catchy verse is perfectly matched by

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.



Andy Cooke's bubbly illustrations. Together they produce a real romp of a book. Bad Baby is a positively horrendous toddler who arrives for a visit, wrecks the house and comes close to traumatizing the family. One gathers she's been before and will come again. What's worse is that I'm not alone in thinking I've met her! JS

Wake Up Mr B!

Penny Dale, Walker (May 90), 0 7445 1467 3, £3.99

Shortlisted for the 1988 Kate Greenaway Medal and one can understand why! Complementing Jan Ormerod's *Sunlight*, the book depicts Rosie's crack of dawn adventures with her long-suffering dog, Mr B, in a gentle humorous, yet never patronising way. The illustrations have a hazy, luminous quality which softens the comic-strip format and suffuses the book with a timeless feel. JS

One Hungry Monster

POETRY
Susan Heyboer O'Keefe, ill. Lynn Munsinger, Little Brown (May 90), 0 316 88848 6, £2.99



Not so much poetry as a counting story told in rhyme, it tells of a small boy and a growing number of ravenous monsters who wreak havoc

through his house. For the most part the story reads aloud well though there are places where it loses its rhythm and the rhyme becomes somewhat forced. Humorous illustrations of the 'Sendak-esque' monsters will amuse young listeners, not to say adult readers-aloud. JB

Teddy's Story

0 7497 0239 7

Rabbit's Story

0 7497 0245 1

Rose Impey, ill. Sue Porter, Little Mammoth (May 90), £2.50 each

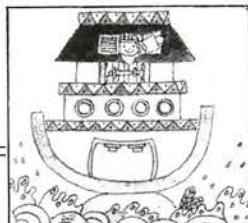


These two books are perfect for younger children - from 2-year-olds to 6-year-olds. Everyone who tried it was enchanted by the idea of the Storybag and how the toys who come out of it are woven into the adventure stories by Grandma and Mummy. Half the fun is that the two stories are very different so you need to buy both! JS

The Amazing Story of Noah's Ark

Marcia Williams, Walker (May 90), 0 7445 1469 X, £2.99

A jolly retelling of the Bible story with every page full of colour and action and highly decorative borders. The text is clear, close to the Biblical phrasing and split up into single lines between the busy, childlike pictures. Packed with animals, trees, people and decoration, it's a very attractive book - even if the plot is unlikely and the morality dubious! LW



Infant/Junior



Miss Rumphius.

Miss Rumphius

Barbara Cooney, Walker (May 90), 0 7445 1472 X, £3.99

Miss Rumphius, the Lupin Lady, is Alice's elderly great-aunt. As a young girl she made herself three promises – to travel the world and, in her old age, to live close to the sea like her grandfather. The third promise, to make the world more beautiful, was more difficult to fulfil, but she achieves this with great effect. An enchanting book that transcends the boundaries of picture and story book. The detail in each picture not only enhances each page, but adds to the meaning of the text. PH

The Donkey That Sneezed

Val Biro, Oxford (May 90), 0 19 272221 2, £1.95

A really good retelling of a traditional tale. It's a great yarn, roaring along yet with a reading level that will encourage fledgling readers to have a go. Val Biro's catchy illustrations are always winners with my class. JS

When Dad Cuts Down the Chestnut Tree

0 7445 1436 3

When Dad Fills In the Garden Pond

0 7445 1437 1

Pam Ayres, ill. Graham Percy, Walker (Mar 90), £2.99 each

Thought-provoking books with a rather heavy 'green' message about valuing our natural resources and not wasting them for short-term gain or gratification. Graham Percy's illustrations don't just complement the poetry, but transcend it, striking deep chords of recognition and leaving one uneasy – and concerned. JS

The One and Only Robin Hood

Nigel Gray, ill. Helen Craig, Walker (Apr 90), 0 7445 1424 X, £2.99

This begins as a question and answer version of 'Sing a Song of Sixpence', ('Who was in the counting house counting out the money?' 'The King') and then Robin Hood gets involved, ('Who burst into the counting house and took the money from the King?'). The King's money is to go to the poor, of course, despite attempts by the King to get it back.

Very enjoyable, original and with cheerful, busy illustrations, this is highly appealing to a wide age-range, including those who do remember 'who is feared by the bad, loved by the good?'. LW

Wishwhat

Alex Brychta, Oxford (Jun 90), 0 19 272219 0, £2.95



Clever, witty, quirky, zany – you name it; the children found adjectives I didn't know they knew to describe this book! Another reworking of a traditional tale, but with no heavy message, just good fun. An ordinary couple living in an ordinary terraced house with a dog, a cat, a grandson and an extraordinary teapot which grants wishes... JS

Goodbye Max

Holly Keller, Walker (Apr 90), 0 7445 1455 X, £2.99

An honest attempt to deal with the very emotive topic of a child coping with the death of a loved pet. As such, and as there is so little available on the subject, it deserves a place in the classroom, but the children hit on the book's weakness when they said that Holly Keller's comic-style illustrations, though popular in other books, seemed 'too jokey' and 'not right for the story'. JS

King Tubbitum at the Fair

Margaret Ryan, Mammoth (Apr 90), 0 7497 0248 6, £1.99

This is the second collection of seven stories featuring a king whose favourite occupation is eating, so much so that the only thing that fits him is his scruffy T-shirt. But that's not the only embarrassing situation he finds himself in. Under-7s will enjoy hearing about the likes of King Poshnosh, Queen Slenderella, Fierce Dragon (a vegetarian) and Princess Uptotrix. Young fluent readers will revel in the humour, too. JB

Ben's Big Day

Dick Cate, Simon & Schuster (Jun 90), 0 7500 0262 X, £2.99

Ben isn't looking forward to the first day at his new school. He's heard that the teacher is horrible and that there's a big, rough boy too; what's more he won't be able to get home in time to see his favourite TV programme. But things go from bad to better as the day progresses and an unlikely friendship is forged. JB



Many juniors will recognise the characters and situations Ben encounters in this lively and well-observed story. With plenty of dialogue and expressive illustrations, both colour and black-and-white, this is an ideal book for solo reading. JB

Crumbling Castle

Sarah Hayes, ill. Helen Craig, Walker (May 90), 0 7445 1726 5, £2.99

The basement of Crumbling Castle is inhabited by wizard Zebeleum and his crow,

Jason; but the castle has other inhabitants, too. There's the invisible ghost who has to be scared to become scary himself and the dragon who needs lessons in dragonlore. Gentle, cosy magic for solo readers at the lower end of the junior school who will enjoy Helen Craig's amusing, detailed line drawings which are nicely integrated with the text. JB

Whiskers and Rhymes

Arnold Lobel, Walker (Mar 90), 0 7445 1430 4, £3.99

Feline characters grace the pages of Arnold Lobel's picture book of some 35 nonsense rhymes which are very much in the nursery rhyme tradition. There are verses featuring the likes of tongue twisting

*'Friendly Frederick
Fiddlestone
Could fiddle on his funny
bone.'*

and 'Polly in the parlour' to get the tongue round, but my favourite is the old woman of long ago:

*'She sewed the wind against
the clouds
To stop the trees from
bending.
She stitched the sun to the
highest hill
To hold the day from
ending.'*

Rooted in fairytale and nursery rhyme lore, Lobel's illustrations speak as loudly as the words and draw the reader or listener into the mood and metre of the rhymes. JB

Bad Egg: The True Story of Humpty Dumpty

Sarah Hayes, ill. Charlotte Voake, Walker (Mar 90), 0 7445 1456 8, £2.99

Great fun, as Humpty challenges the King's horses and men to do tricks on the wall and then roars with laughter as they go crashing down. His come-uppance was greeted with satisfied nods and peals of laughter. Text and illustrations work beautifully together and it was interesting that some of the children commented that the 'writing was thin and just right!' A cautionary note – it didn't work well with younger Nursery children who disliked the rhyme being tampered with! JS

POETRY



Wayland

Books for Special Needs

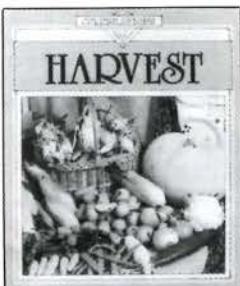
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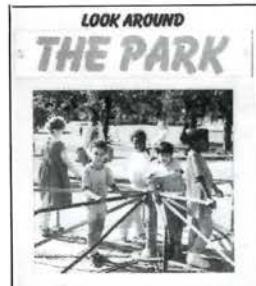
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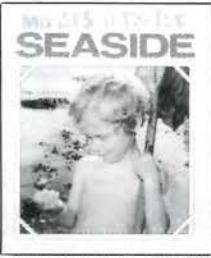
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Magic Mash

Peter Firmin, Young Lions 'Jets' (May 90), 0 00 673680 7, £1.99
'Jets' are short stories, usually funny, with a great deal of cartoon-style illustration to split up the large-print text into short paragraphs. They're aimed at the reluctant, reasonably able reader at lower-junior level.



But it was too late. The mash swelled up faster than they could stir it

The plot here is rather complex: a packet of mashed potato is able to grant wishes to Kevin and his grandfather whenever they mix up a serving. The reason for this strange ability is that it was bought with an old half-crown coin (which is made to sound like ancient money – oh, dear!). Yes, well, it is unlikely – but works because of the boldness and speed of the telling and is therefore well targeted to its intended audience. LW

Green Monster Magic

Marjorie Newman, Young Corgi (May 90), 0 552 52620 7, £1.99

Joseph is just awful at the dress rehearsal of the concert; his hat is too big, he forgets his lines and is wooden and dull. His sister, Estelle, is full of embarrassment on his behalf, especially since Grandmother, visiting from Nigeria, will be in the audience to see the concert. A neighbour suggests some applied psychology and a small green monster mascot to overcome the problem.



The story is well-told and convincing and the two children are very realistic. Whether or not one can rely on small green monsters to get over life's problems would be an interesting discussion point! LW

Adelaide's Naughty Granny

Hilary Sharpe, Mammoth (May 90), 0 7497 0338 5, £1.99

The granny concerned isn't so much naughty as accident-prone when she cuts up the table-cloth, loses a wellie in the river, fills the sugar-bowl with salt and other like mishaps. But then that's all part of her endearing personality and, as we're reminded at the end of each of the eight episodes, 'you can't spank a naughty granny'.

These entertaining situations with their lively characters are just right for sharing with children of around 6. JB

Grandad's Magic

Bob Graham, Walker (May 90), 0 7445 1471 1, £2.99

Grandad, a semi-retired amateur magician, teaches young Alison to juggle, a dicey enterprise in her houseproud parents' home. She makes such good progress that

Grandad is moved to attempt one of his more ambitious tricks: the one where you whip the tablecloth from beneath an entire dinner setting...



"Try one at a time, Alison," said Grandad. "Backwards and forwards..."

This is a short, rich, warm and amusingly illustrated story, whose 'Will he make it?' element makes it ideal for sharing aloud. It's also an ideal book for early independent reading. GH

Summer in Small Street

Geraldine Kaye, Mammoth (Apr 90), 0 7497 0246 X, £1.99

Will You Come on Wednesday?

Nadya Smith, Walker (Apr 90), 0 7445 1462 2, £2.50

Two books presenting short stories within multicultural contexts. *Will You Come on Wednesday?* offers five stories focused on the interaction of an Asian culture with an English school system. *Summer in Small Street* consists of eight anecdotes about life along an inner city street. In both books the stories are smooth, slight and optimistic. They present plenty of positive images and

some light entertainment, but at times the narratives are so thinly fleshed out that the good intentions behind them become as visible as the bones of a starving dog. GH

Monty, the Dog Who Wears Glasses

Colin West, Young Lions (May 90), 0 00 673681 5, £1.99

And even more intelligent, too!



Another amusing addition to the excellent 'Jets' series. As well as wearing glasses, Monty has other human traits: greed, curiosity and an endearing incompetence in carrying out his good intentions. The combination of clear print, humorous direct narrative and supporting cartoons make this an ideal book for the beginner reader to enjoy with confidence. GH

Wait and See

Tony Bradman and Eileen Browne, Little Mammoth (Apr 90), 0 7497 0351 2, £2.50

An attractively presented little book in a multicultural setting about a girl whose hesitancy in spending her pocket money on a shopping trip saves the day for her whole family. If only life were as sunny as it appears on these pages! A pleasant little story which will appeal to younger children seeking their first experiences of independent reading. GH

Junior/Middle**Rook**

Gabriel Allington, Walker (May 90), 0 7445 1475 4, £2.50

Set in the class-conscious 1930s, this is a rural tale about 13-year-old Nell's relationship with the gardener's boy, Jack. The friendship is given a mysterious dimension through their interest in Rook, an elderly tramp who has strange powers of healing. Initial ambiguity over Nell's age and the period setting detract from the story, and there's some stylistic inconsistency which seems to stem from uncertainty over the intended readership (8-10, or younger teenage?). Patience is rewarded by the effective plotting of the conclusion. LN

So Much to Tell You

John Marsden, Walker (Mar 90), 0 7445 1449 5, £2.50

Marina is at an Australian boarding school recovering from the distress caused by her parents' separation. Traumatised into silence, she uses the journal suggested by her English teacher to record her thoughts about her situation. This is an unsentimental account with a potentially happy ending, although the uniform pace and tone may limit some readers' ability to engage fully with Marina's plight. LN

Tom's Tale

Judith Stinton, Walker (Mar 90), 0 7445 1433 9, £2.25

The story of the two green children who came out of the wolf pit and lived for a time among the villagers has survived in English folklore for centuries, and there have been several versions of it for children. This one is workmanlike and interesting, but somehow lacks the unearthliness of the original legend. It's matter-of-fact where one wants magic, and down-to-earth where one looks for mystery. However, it reads easily and does tell its tale in an effectively straightforward manner. LW

A RICH HARVEST of Autumn Reading

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Illustrated by Gary Blythe

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AND THROUGH ALL BOOKSELLERS

The Voyage of QV66

Penelope Lively,
Mammoth (Jun 90),
0 7497 0360 1, £2.50
The voyagers are assorted animals, who are travelling south to London through the flooded landscape led by Stanley, an intelligent monkey. Why have the People gone? How is Stanley able to understand so much about them? The journey leads to London Zoo, where Stanley finds out the truth about his relations. The older reader will find allegorical significance in the tale, which is engaging and humorous enough to delight younger children purely at plot level. It's a pity, however, that the only two female characters in the whole story are a slow-witted, platitudine-spouting cow and a dumb-blond kitten! LN

Orange Cake for Tea

Anne de Menezes,
Walker (May 90),
0 7445 1432 0, £2.50
Mum is too busy since the new baby arrived to pay attention to Beth who most of all misses making orange cake together. She decides to give the baby away to her best friend Katy in exchange for some ballet shows.

I felt this rather contrived and the story unrealistic and far too predictable, but the setting is well described and the children's conversations sound convincing. An author looking for a better plot, I think. LW

Twisted Truth

Elsie McCutcheon,
Freeway (May 90),
0 552 52592 8, £2.25
When Lucy's English homework is to write about 'My Hero' (why not 'or Heroine'?), she chooses her poet father, Marmion Bell, 'the last of the Great Romantics', who died heroically rescuing his baby daughter from a fire in which his entire output of unpublished poetry was destroyed... if you think this sounds somewhat far-fetched, you're quite right! Lucy learns that she's been misled, and finds out the truth about her parents, in this tightly-plotted, sensitive exploration of family relationships. Elsie McCutcheon's first novel with a contemporary setting, will delight readers of 11 and above. LN

Blackbeard the Pirate

Victor G Ambrus,
Oxford (May 90),
0 19 272220 4, £2.95
A large-format softback chronicling the voyage of Captain Blackbeard's *Saucy Mermaid* and its crew of rum-sodden incompetents. Each page delivers a broadside of ludicrous nautical images accompanied by a fusillade of truly awful jokes. Here we meet Sinbad the Salesman flogging flying carpets, and



Jonah complaining about noise pollution from between the jaws of the Prince of Whales. The treasure, as it was originally buried by an Old Sea Dog, turns out to be... well, I'm sure you can guess.

This book was immensely popular with my class of 8-year-olds, and will no doubt appeal to older readers in search of extremely light entertainment. GH

Young Indiana Jones and The Plantation Treasure

Fantail (May 90),
0 14 090218 X, £2.50
A slim novel that's 'conceived and produced' so it doesn't have an author apparently. It has all the charms of a B-Movie and it'll probably be picked up and read avidly by its target audience.

Young Indy gets in and out of tricky situations with dazzling aplomb, defeats all the stereotyped baddies and forgives the treacherous Doctor, winning the heart of the fair damsel... need one say more? DB

Rip Van Winkle

Washington Irving,
retold and ill. John Howe, 0 316 88845 1

**The Star Maiden**

Retold by Barbara Juster Esbensen, ill.
Helen K Davie,
0 316 88844 3
Little Brown (May 90), £2.99 each

Here are two American picture books which will stretch beyond the Infants classroom and not bankrupt the budget.

The illustrations for *Rip Van Winkle* are no doubt very fine and beautiful, but I found them rather static, standing alongside the text within frames as in a gallery. The text itself is straightforward and approachable.

The Star Maiden, on the other hand, has a strong sense of the Chippewa tribe who originated it. The star wanted to live on earth and finally, by trial and error, became the beautiful starflower (Lily) that floats on the lake. The pale watercolour illustrations feast the eye with detail and pattern, complemented by the poetic text, crying to be spoken aloud; the oral tradition of the Chippewa brought to our classrooms - I'm all for it! DB

Private Nose

J R Taylor, ill.
E Schongut, Walker (Apr 90), 0 7445 0833 9, £2.50

When the Holmeses and Watsons come to live as neighbours, Saturday Holmes and Jack Watson continue the tradition of their namesakes and become detectives. Jack and Saturday are lively, well-defined characters who get themselves into some very difficult situations because of their detecting enthusiasm. 'Real books' for real readers - this is quality writing for 5-8 year-olds. The gentle tales have teddy-bear kidnappings, ghost-busting and a gloriously graphic exposé on the finer points of shadowing Mrs Grump.



I loved the stories, the print size and illustrations also being appreciated by my 'typical' 7-year-old, though he found the vocabulary rather challenging. PH

The Adventures of Rama and Sita

Ruskin Bond, Walker (Mar 90), 0 7445 1445 2, £2.25

The stories have a life of their own and this attractive edition might well find new readers. Although the prose is a little too plain for me at times and lacks the sense of the

storyteller when read aloud, this version is direct and kept easily to short sections. It should be ideal for shared reading and will allow readers to work their way easily through the grand events of the sequence. AJ

Horses in the Gallery

Jane Ayres, Armada (May 90), 0 00 693652 0, £2.75

Twenty very short stories with brief linking episodes, all concerned with horses. Bound to be enjoyed by the initiated. The styles and types of relationship between girl and horse offer a range of backdrops - historical, geographical and social. AJ

Bill's New Frock

Anne Fine, Mammoth (May 90), 0 7497 0305 9, £1.99

When Bill Simpson's mum drops a gorgeous pink frock over his head one Monday morning before school, he is immediately surrounded by a new world in which all his expectations are scrambled. The attitudes of the people around him towards aggression, competitiveness and independence are all as transmuted as his own appearance.

Anne Fine's instant and intriguing classic is a great book for reading both independently and aloud. It poses several questions, the pursuit of which might leave certain preconceptions as tattered as the frock by the end of the tale. GH

Uncle in the Attic

0 7497 0075 0

**Skeleton at School**

0 7497 0074 2
Jan Needle, Mammoth (May 90), £1.99 each

Springy and Sam are twins, children of parents who are struggling to set up a boarding house in the vibrant suburb of West Didsbury. In the first book, the house begins to collapse around the family's ears until help arrives in the form of Uncle Jock, a part-time vagrant who has been holed up in a treasure-filled annexe to the attic. The second book concerns the

trials and errors endured by the twins when they try to smuggle one of Uncle Jock's treasures piecemeal into school in order to impress

their enjoyably eccentric teacher. Both books proceed at a very pleasant pace, presenting the reader with convincingly

warm-blooded characters and a wealth of incident. An added advantage is that the fascination of life in Greater Manchester, long unsung in

children's literature, is here given the praise it so richly deserves.

GH

Middle/Secondary

Antar and the Eagles

William Mayne, Walker (Apr 90), 0 7445 1464 9, £2.50

I hope enough readers come by this original book to make it well-known. It's about 30 pages too long at the beginning, but it becomes compelling reading as *Antar*, snatched by the great eagles, grows to know and love them and learns of his assigned mission to help ensure their future; to do which he must undertake a perilous journey full of uncertainty and immense hardship.

It's a book to be well-introduced before setting your readers in flight! DB

In at the Shallow End

Hannah Cole, Walker (May 90), 0 7445 1477 0, £2.50

This is one of those stories that doesn't sound much in the retelling yet is well-placed, well-written and sharply observed. Unlike her live-wire sister, Dawn isn't a physical child, more active inside her head due to chronic myopia.

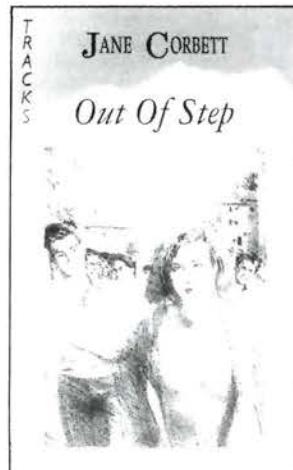
IN AT THE
SHALLOW
END
HANNAH COLE

When her father insists on swimming lessons, Dawn learns to combat her terror through meeting Michelle, who is fiercely determined to 'Pattern' the damaged brain of her handicapped child, Danny. Their co-operation is a boon to everyone concerned and makes heartening reading. DB

Out of Step

Jane Corbett, Lions Tracks (May 90), 0 00 673767 6, £2.25

The unwilling victim of Corsican Nationalists, Fleur is held for ransom in a remote farmhouse, where she gradually establishes a relationship with two of her



captors, so there's a sense of loss mingled with the euphoria of release.

The first half of the story makes a long-winded build-up to the climax of the kidnap, which is where the impact of the tale lies. Nevertheless, thriller lovers will probably stick with it. DB

The Time Tree

Enid Richemont, Walker (Mar 90), 0 7445 14479, £2.50

Two modern 11-year-old girls perched in a tree helping a deaf mute from 1598 learn her letters sounds like a crazy idea for a story. All credit to Enid Richemont, for she's brought it off admirably in this short novel, where past and present and the vagaries of friendship are blended and explored skilfully. It's gentle and intriguing, well worth introducing to newly-established readers. DB

Ffangs the Vampire Bat and The Kiss of Truth

Ted Hughes, Faber (Apr 90), 0 571 15461 1, £2.50



Ted Hughes must make other creative writers sick; he's crammed enough original ideas into these 150 pages to spark off receptive imaginations into a myriad directions. The story of *Ffangs* is told in five sections that need reading aloud to be properly savoured. The poor little chap needs help to become human and for that 'a corrected person' must be found . . . soon.

Chris Riddell's spirited drawings add much to the whole and deserve special mention. DB

A Summer to Die

Lois Lowry, Lions (May 90), 0 00 673598 3, £2.50

Early Lois Lowry (1977) and, though lacking the consistency of standard evident in her later work, this has, nonetheless, a good deal to offer its female 2nd- and 3rd-year secondary readers. The writing is strong and economical, and often surprises with its sudden wisdoms.

Meg and Molly are sisters, taken to live in the country by their parents so father can complete his book away from city distractions. Molly contracts leukaemia, deteriorates sharply and dies. Meg is left to come to terms with her guilt and grief. Despite the occasional use of cliché and stereotype, the book remains a convincing read. VR

Two Weeks with the Queen

Morris Gleitzman, Piper (May 90), 0 330 31376 2, £2.50

Buy this, it's a marvellous book – funny and wise, lulling you with the apparent simplicity of its charms. It's set in Australia and narrated by Colin whose younger brother is taken to hospital after collapsing. Luke has cancer and the distraught parents send Colin to relatives in England where he first tries to walk in and visit the Queen, then phone, write and finally climb over the wall. No success here or with the 'Best Doctor in the World'. Outside the hospital he meets Ted, crying, we learn later, for Griff, his boyfriend who has Aids. Ted helps to find out what's wrong with Luke (it's incurable) and Colin keeps up the visits to Griff after Ted is beaten up. Griff's death teaches Colin that the only important thing is that he's with his brother. The pun of the title dawned on me slowly. AJ

The Worm Charmers

Nicholas Fisk, Walker (Mar 90), 0 7445 1448 7, £2.50

The reliability and quality of the Walker list is again demonstrated in this addictive story of four young friends who charm worms – literally and metaphorically.

Shanta, Jen, Crump and Horrie charm worms from lawns with a variety of methods, but find themselves dealing with a nastier species when Shanta is captured by a gang of drug-traffickers. Her adventures and rescue by her friends form the core of this excellent book, ripe for 1st-year picking. Well-written, exciting and with a strong dose of highly palatable morality, it represents a welcome antidote to the diet of horror and violence currently invading the children's book scene. VR

Worlds Apart

Jill Murphy, Walker (May 90), 0 7445 1332 4, £2.50

Susan has never known her father, but finally persuades her mother to discuss him. She secretly traces him, only to discover that he's a famous actor.

I warmed to Susan, as will I suspect, a good number of 3rd- and 4th-year juniors who've read Jill Murphy in their early years. I found the heartiness of the style and the neatness of the ending a little wearing, however. Susan's determination to enjoy a rather genteel poverty might be incomprehensible to readers faced with the realities of such misfortunes. VR

The Time and Space of Uncle Albert

Russell Stannard, ill. John Levers, Faber (May 90), 0 571 14282 6, £1.99

Einstein's Theory of Relativity was never so exhilarating. *Endearing Uncle Albert* (guess who?) has a wonderful thought bubble where all the action happens: escaping light beams, slow motion time, squashed spacecraft, heavy energy – it's all there.

Uncle Albert exceeded my expectations all the way. Fascinating to read as a story, a series of short stories with end-stop chapters or even to use for non-fiction research. My only difficulty will be knowing where to put it; S for Stannard, Dewey 530 or my jacket pocket! PH



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ANNE FINE

Google-Eyes



Kitty Killin is not only a good storyteller, but also the World's Great Expert when it comes to mothers having new and unwanted boyfriends, particularly when they might turn into new and unwanted stepfathers. That's why she's the one who is sent down to talk to Helly Johnson in the dark privacy of the Lost Property cupboard. And why she tells Helly the story of her mum and Gerald Faulkner, also known as Goggle-Eyes, once the most unwanted boyfriend of them all...

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"Goggle-Eyes is a winner: witty, sensitive and warmhearted...a lovely book."
THE GUARDIAN

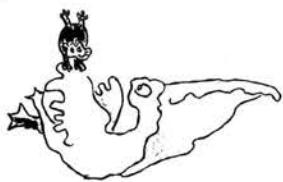
"Goggle-Eyes is both enormously enjoyable and deeply perceptive."
CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE YEAR

Anne Fine is the award-winning author of *A Pack of Liars, Round Behind the Ice-House, Madame Doubtfire* and *Crummy Mummy and Me*, all published by Puffin Books.

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Set on the West Coast of Scotland in the 1930s, this is the story of Kirstie's discovery and adoption of a strange sea monster, which hatches out of an egg she finds on the beach. Like all babies, he doesn't stay tiny for long and with his increasing size comes an increasing problem for the whole family.



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PERCY SHORT AND CUTHBERT

Susie Jenkin-Pearce
0670 828033 £7.99

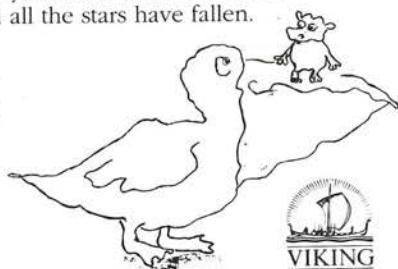
Percy Short, a tiny hippo, and his best friend Cuthbert, an enormous pelican, hate being different. So they set off in search of the Pingo -Pongo tree which, it is said, can fulfill any wish. Beautifully illustrated, this is a delightful heart-warming story.



TILL ALL THE STARS HAVE FALLEN

David Booth (ED)
0670 832723 £9.99

This wide-ranging poetry collection opens new worlds and new ways of looking at the world around us. Children and their parents will enjoy sharing poems that range from thoughtful and sensitive to funny and witty: this is a book to cherish 'till all the stars have fallen.



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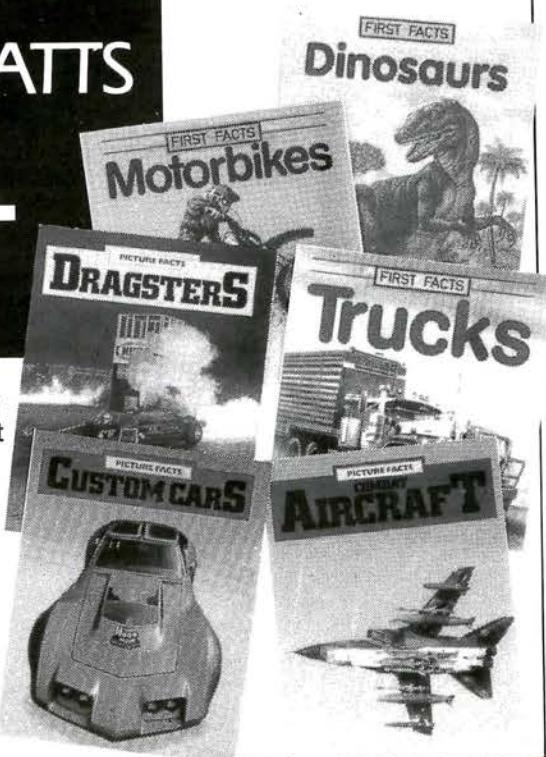


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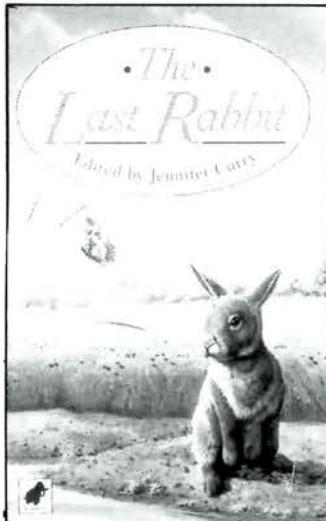
0 7500 0256 5

Keith Brumpton, 'The Peeping Duck Gang' series, Simon & Schuster (Jun 90), £2.50 each

Two appallingly funny books with text and pictures that are cleverly deplorable. Both fall into the multi-mega-groans to a page category. Working superbly as 'read-alones' with annotated cartoon-style drawings and as 'read-alouds' with excruciating puns, they're a fresh and innovative approach to children's reading material. Trialled by four 12-year-olds who devoured both one wet lunch-time with

the eloquently pronounced evaluation of 'brilliant'. I agree.

PH

**The Last Rabbit:
A collection of green poems****POETRY**

Edited by Jennifer Curry, Mammoth (Jun 90), 0 7497 0252 4, £2.50

At last an anthology where children's poetry has equal standing with that of the professionals and what a high standing that is. I've used the collection several times already and I've loved it - from Roger McGough's 'Lake' where pigs with shining eyes have a taste for human flesh, to the thought-provoking statement about 'The Tree' from Patricia Cope, aged 13.

Funny, stimulating, terrifying and immensely enjoyable, this is an influential anthology. PH

Freddie and the Enormouse

Hugh Scott, ill. David Franklin, Walker (Apr 90), 0 7445 1465 7, £2.50

A deceptively slow beginning - Freddie's rodent adventures sneak up on you while you're still wondering when the mouse action's going to start. Grieving over his dead parents, Freddie feels the ambivalence of emotional loss, but obvious material gain. His new luxurious home needs time for adaptation, but boisterous Lindsay exuberantly sweeps him along, joining forces against Angalypta, their cousin, who comes to play.

Hugh Scott's richly atmospheric writing kept me gripped till the last page. PH

Older Readers

Killing Mr Griffin

Lois Duncan, Penguin Plus (Apr 90), 0 14 03 4166 8, £2.99

The American writer Lois Duncan has a large following of readers who have sampled one of her books and are then firmly hooked. Her style is often as bland as the high school, ball-game-and-cheerleader settings, but the plots are real page-turners, as enthusiastic 13- and 14-year-olds will testify. Here, an attempt to kidnap and frighten an unpopular English teacher goes horribly wrong when the victim dies. Early on, our sympathies are steered away from the instigator of the plan, Mark, whose history of cruelty is unknown to his friends, while we share the predicament of Susan, the quiet and serious girl who is drawn in against her better judgement. Duncan's fans will approve, and the book is worth recommending to reluctant teenage readers.

LN

Fanfare for a Teenage Warrior in Love

Terry Edge, Corgi Freeway (Apr 90), 0 552 52517 0, £2.25

When Tom becomes involved in an Inter-School Discussion Group, his unscrupulous friend Taff sees an opportunity for money-making by taking bets on the outcome. Tom, however, finds that the discussions provoke consideration of his attitudes to life, love, the Universe and Everything. Although his pantheistic awakening at the end of the book is somewhat laboured, Tom's characterisation as a thoughtful boy who wants to keep up with his mates will strike chords with many teenagers.

LN

Catch

Stephen Bowkett, Piper (Jun 90), 0 330 31209 X, £2.50

Good value for money - nine stories for £2.50. This is a collection of 'chilling tales' which almost always avoid clichéd settings and stereotypical characters. The language is occasionally pretentious - 'he had the look of a king, and his eyes were as young as the stars', but the stories offer their characters and readers new perspectives on quite everyday experiences. This would be a useful collection to dip into for 3rd-year secondary upwards and would provide interesting support material for GCSE Literature/Dual Certification.

VR

When I Dance

James Berry, Puffin (Mar 90), 0 14 03 4200 1, £2.99

POETRY

The title catches the rhythms of movement; of sport, of 'Getting Nowhere', of dreaming. And the thoughts and feelings of youth are caught in language which itself dances to a variety of tunes.



Berry refers in his excellent introduction to the 'I-can't-read-black-poetry' view. He explains how it can be done and demonstrates it in the poems. I hope the Puffin imprint won't mislead; there's a much wider readership for this, including GCSE and beyond. This is a special collection.

AJ

**Misfits and Rebels**

Jenny Oldfield, Virago Upstarts (May 90), 1 85381 155 6, £3.99

An appealing collection of ten short stories - tightly woven narratives which engage the reader's imagination and encourage speculation and interpretation. Superficial details are ignored and the focus is sharply on the main characters and issues - lesbian love, anorexia, homelessness, mental illness - disaffection; a failure to fit the expected pattern.

Perfect for GCSE use and accessible to lower-ability pupils - but £3.99! How many classrooms will be able to afford it?

VR

Mightier than the Lipstick

Edited by Susan Adler, Viking Kestrel (May 90), 0 670 82824 6, £4.99

A selection of 'feminist stories' which means that all of them are by women, about women and girls, and that most of the males referred to are selfish, insensitive, immature, patronising or thick. Few of these stories are developed enough to be satisfying, with the notable exception of 'Codling-Moth', Margaret Sutherland's sensitive exploration of a friendship between two girls and the beginnings of religiously-motivated guilt. At £4.99 for 93 pages, the collection is mightily expensive.

LN

Yesterday's Daughter

Patricia Calvert, Lions Tracks (May 90), 0 00 672963 0, £2.50



There are some nicely drawn characters here which help to bring the story to life. Leenie has been left with grandparents and now, sixteen years later, her mother reappears. Leenie learns to face up to this, partly with the help of Hazel, the nicely wise helper at the motel and a young photographer, Axel, who teaches her about both photography and herself. Thoughtful, quick reading for 2nd- and 3rd-year secondary up.

AJ

Authorgraph No. 64

Charles Causley



*Mary, Mary Magdalene
lying on the wall,
I throw a pebble on your back,
Will it lie or fall?*

When my pebble landed on Mary Magdalene's back I knew I was lucky, not just because local folklore says so, but because I was walking round Launceston with Charles Causley as my guide. Not only did I see the ravishing Mary Magdalene Church and hear the stories associated with it, but I was also shown eagle one and two, peering down from the top of an elegant house with Britannia beside them. Those familiar with Causley's poetry will immediately recognise the sites of two of Causley's best loved poems from *Figgie Hobbin*, his earliest collection for children.

Launceston, the town where Causley was born, grew up, and where he still lives today, is a fascinating place, the old capital of Cornwall. As the seat of the judiciary, Launceston had a grisly record of public executions and the like. A grim prison dominated the town centre with the remains of a castle and what was once a walled town. Causley

grew up in a place where the past cast its spell on the present; the games he played, the rhymes he chanted, the stories he knew backwards were all steeped in the town's riveting and macabre history, relics of which were all around him. Causley's words in the introduction to *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse* seem extremely apt: '... folk memories of our long crawl out of the prehistoric cave into the sun of reason will awaken easily.' One brief trip to Launceston was enough to explain the inspiration and genesis of much of Causley's work.

He is a delightful man, even more fascinating and entertaining than his poetry promised. Any sense of a poet limited by living in a quiet backwater should be dismissed at once. (He has, of course, travelled widely.) The many books covering every possible surface of the Causley study reveal an intellectual with a breadth of interests. He is also modest, down to earth, laughs a lot and doesn't believe in taking himself too seriously, even though he is now Causley, CBE.

Causley attended the local primary school in Launceston of which he was later to be teacher himself for twenty-five years. He was a keen reader from a young age, but he didn't remember much exposure to poetry in his early years of schooling except 'a faint-hearted attempt to interest us in Christopher Robin ... he didn't go down terribly well with me or anybody else in the National school in the late 1920s - he might as well have come from outer space!' Later at Grammar school Causley showed obvious promise as a writer and was introduced to the Georgian poets whom he found boring, preferring the resonances of 'Young Lochinvar' and 'Ozymandias'. 'Great stuff!'

What Causley did remember with affection was his old headteacher (soon to figure prominently in his forthcoming *The Young Man of Cury*), a fine musician, pumping away furiously on the harmonium as he took the whole school for mass singing lessons through the entire repertoire of Cecil Sharp's extensive collection of English folk songs. Causley has always been drawn to the musical side of poetry and he is much admired for his own body of wonderful ballads. He has also devoted a lot of time to writing for Music Theatre, often composing between books of poetry.

As a teenager in the thirties, Causley and his contemporaries involved themselves in the usual activities of that age group, drinking, dancing and, in his

case, playing for the local dance band. But they were well aware of events in Europe and the inevitability of war. 'We all followed the terrible progress of the Spanish Civil War ... I remember coming home, having my dinner and hearing accounts of the bombing of Madrid ... you knew it was all going to happen again ...' What made Causley angry then and still does today is that 'if you had any intelligence at all it was perfectly clear what was happening to the Jews in Europe ...'

It was the fact that poets like Auden, Spender and MacNeice were prepared to speak the truth that attracted Causley as a young man to poetry and he has never moved away from that position. 'The interesting thing about the poem ... for me ... is that there's always a sub-text ... the skin of the poem is never what it's really about ...'

Causley writes for both an adult and juvenile readership and doesn't discriminate seriously between the two. His *Collected Poems* contains much of the body of work on the children's list, as well as his adult books. Causley does not believe that writing for a younger audience is light relief. He offers them challenges and mystery like the poem 'Why?', based on a childhood memory:

*Why do you take my hand,
Susanna,
As the pointing flames jump high?
It's only a bundle of sacking and
straw.
Nobody's going to die.*

It's hard to feel the same about that macabre annual ritual after reading this uneasy poem. As the author says, 'it's a thin dividing line between ecstasy and terror.'

Readers of Causley are drawn to his work because of its musicality and because the poetry feels so rich and deep, although it is often an apparently simple tale on the surface. 'The great problem (in writing poetry) is to achieve these resonances and hints and suggestions and reverberations and it's an endlessly difficult and endlessly fascinating task to get the thing to work somehow or other ...' And, of course, he succeeds wonderfully. Causley is now seventy-three, clearly at the height of his power, and there are several new collections in the pipeline.

Causley produced one of the earliest anthologies of contemporary poetry for children, *Dawn and Dusk*, in 1962. Since then he has compiled three of the finest anthologies of the twentieth century for the young. Clever Kaye Webb to snap him up for Puffin in the early seventies. *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse* begins thus: 'All poetry is magic. It is a spell against insensitivity, failure of imagination, ignorance, and barbarism.' Wow! Causley is a creative and scholarly editor: 'The rule of thumb I had about anthologising was never to make an anthology from other anthologies. It's got to be fresh. I don't think you can do an anthology in under a couple of years. The work should be of the first order. If you think Arnold should be represented, you read the whole of Arnold first.' Bravo!

Causley subsidised his passion for writing by teaching until the early seventies. He insists that he wasn't a particularly good teacher: 'too short a fuse . . . too strong a sense of humour . . .' The more Causley told me (always deprecatingly) about the way he approached the kids and the curriculum, the more convinced I was that he was a superb, natural teacher. His approach to teaching poetry was simple. Apart from the necessity of reading children a wide range of poetry first, he believed in giving children time, space and freedom. 'I've never set a subject . . . write about something you feel strongly about . . . first-hand experience . . . get it out of life . . . let them make the decisions about it all . . . they know exactly how a poem should look, the shape, how long it should be . . . and they can space out their emotions in a remarkable kind of way, like little bursts of gunfire . . . I would only put the spelling right so that when the poem was typed out for our anthology, adults wouldn't snigger because of spelling mistakes . . . who worries about that?' Embedded within those apparently casual comments is a whole philosophy about poetry and education.

One thing Causley did like about teaching was the children. 'I was determined to enjoy myself. I never went to school with a heavy heart. I used to set off feeling like a nineteenth-century explorer with a butterfly net . . . and all the wrong equipment . . . as if I was going into undiscovered territory . . . you never knew what was going to happen.' He deplored the large classes, the crowded curriculum and too little time, especially for those kids who found learning difficult. Causley didn't think he would have got on too well with the National Curriculum! And he marvelled that it was often the children without many literary skills who wrote the best poetry, 'somehow jabbing down something from their own experience'. A great humanity for, and admiration of, children came over strongly. 'If you get kids on your side they'll die for you . . . they're heroic . . . I love the way they go flat out at things . . . they're economically unsound, physically small . . . and they're often badly treated by adults who fail to understand them . . .'

The main influences on Causley as a poet have been the circumstances of his own life. Living in Cornwall, the feel for the natural world and the sea; the folklore associated with that part of the world; his partiality for music including all kinds of songs; his compassion for the underdog, partly stemming from his working-class roots, his humane beliefs and his hatred of Auden's twentieth-century ogres, particularly intolerance. Then there was Causley's family and his deep attachment to his parents. His father died quite a young man in 1924 from the effects of the First World War. The pain of this experience is suggested in some of Causley's poetry, like this extract from 'Tavistock Goose Fair':

Today, I hardly remember my father's face;



*Only the shine of his boot-and-legging leather
The day we walked the yellow October weather;
Only the way he strode at a soldier's pace,
The way he stood like a soldier of the line;
Only the feel of his iron hand in mine.*

Causley's mother was a great fund of stories and memories, one of the most celebrated of which is 'My Mother Saw a Dancing Bear'. It is typical Causley – a good story, simply told, with a strong, understated message.

*They paid a penny for the dance,
But what they saw was not the show;
Only, in bruin's aching eyes,
Far-distant forests, and the snow.*

One of the most remarkable things about Causley is how closely in touch he remains with himself as a child. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why he is such a good writer for children. The final poem in *Figgie Hobbin*, 'Who?', is a good example.

*Who is that child I see wandering, wandering
Down by the side of the quivering stream?
Why does he seem not to hear, though I call to him?
Where does he come from, and what is his name?*

Echoes of Robert Louis Stevenson's 'To Any Reader': *and it is but a child of air/who lingers in the garden there.* When asked why he doesn't write his autobiography, Causley replies:

'There's not much to say apart from the poems . . . as Rebecca West said, "You can't be sick off the same meal twice!"' This captures Causley so well – his lively sense of humour and his serious commitment to poetry.

*Why does he move like a wraith by the water,
Soft as the thistledown on the breeze blown?
When I draw near him so that I may hear him,
Why does he say that his name is my own? ■*

Charles Causley was interviewed by Morag Styles.

Photographs by David Hills.

A Charles Causley bibliography

Charles Causley: Collected Poems 1951-1975 (for adults), Macmillan, 0 333 48517 3, £7.99 pbk

Early in the Morning, Viking Kestrel (1986), 0 670 80810 5, £8.95; Young Puffin, 0 14 03.2033 4, £1.75 pbk

Figgie Hobbin, Macmillan (1990 new edition), 0 333 12078 7, £7.50; Puffin, 0 14 03.1162 9, £1.99 pbk

Jack the Treacle Eater, Macmillan (1987), 0 333 42963 X, £7.95; Premier Picturemac, 0 333 49751 1, £3.99 pbk

The Puffin Book of Magic Verse (ed.), Puffin (1974), 0 14 03.0660 9, £2.50 pbk

The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse (ed.), Puffin (1978), 0 14 03.0850 4, £2.95 pbk

The Sun, Dancing (ed.), Puffin (1984 reissued 1990), 0 14 03.1575 6, £3.99 pbk

The Young Man of Cury, Macmillan (autumn 1991)

REVIEWS – Non Fiction

Ants

0 7496 0133 7

Ladybirds

0 7496 0134 5

Barrie Watts, Franklin Watts
(*Keeping Minibeasts series*), £5.95 each
(INFANT/JUNIOR)

Minibeasts have been big business in primary schools since at least the mid-seventies and now, enshrined in the National Curriculum, they have become part of the law as well as the lore of the land. This series from Franklin Watts recognises that little creatures are no more disposable than bigger ones and sets out to show us how to look after them while they are under observation.



'A ladybird can eat up to thirty aphids each day.'

It succeeds, due mainly to excellent photographs by the author which do much to explain the somewhat slight texts and provide instruction that these leave out. We learn how to make a simple formicarium, how to collect ants to put in it, how to feed them so they will – if they include a Queen – multiply and allow a study of insect sociology. Ladybirds are even easier to entertain – in a net cage with all the aphid-infested vegetation you can find they multiply happily, the larvae chomping up to fifty greenfly a day – or each other if you don't feed them.

Each book provides a useful and responsible basis for exploration and will gain immensely from being shared – with peer or pedagogue – before the insects are released again into their natural habitats (full directions with every volume).

TP

Clean It!

0 7496 0096 9

Wear It!

0 7496 0097 7

Henry Pluckrose, Franklin Watts
(*Ways to . . . series*), £5.95 each
(INFANT/JUNIOR)

During a recent course for teachers, we were asked to sort and classify boxes of tiny objects. Many were unfamiliar, and some of the categories were new to us, but with a framework for our observations it was surprising how much we noticed. This series of books offers children a similar approach to its subjects. Familiar, and less familiar, objects are grouped, regrouped, examined and discussed so that their purposes, structure and names are revealed in ways that will enable children to make worthwhile connections and observations.

Some pages provide straightforward information. In *Clean It!* we are told that 'harmful bacteria need to be kept away from food'. Other pages show groups of objects related by their common purpose as tools for cleaning. A loofah, chimney brush and besom brush appear amongst one group with the question, 'What are these used to clean?' Concepts are presented in simple but interesting ways. In *Wear It!* we are invited

to consider what links a vicar, chef, ballerina, Buddhist monk, pilot and policewoman. The final pages provide suggestions for straightforward activities which do not require special materials. The colour photographs (by Chris Fairclough) and presentation reach a high standard and, with one or two minor exceptions, the text is clear and carefully set. Earlier titles in this series include *Cut It!*, *Join It!*, *Store It!*, and *Move It!*

Taken as a whole these books provide an approach to their subjects which children could valuably extend to other areas. More specifically, their subjects will prove useful as children explore areas of the science curriculum such as 'R'materials', 'human influences on the earth' or 'energy'. FB

Breakfast

Lisa Chaney, 0 7136 3186 4

In the Post

Ruth Thomson, 0 7136 3184 8

School Day

Monica Stoppleman, 0 7136 3185 6

Washday

Ruth Thomson, 0 7136 3183 X
A & C Black (*Turn of the Century series*), £5.95 each
(JUNIOR/MIDDLE)

What was it like to do the washing before electric washing-machines or detergents had been invented?



'The laundry well.'

Washdays and other aspects of life at the turn of the century are explored in these attractive new titles which are to be applauded for their lively, informative texts and relevant, well-chosen illustrations. The immediate visual impact on young readers, however, will be the coloured photos showing children experiencing a slice of life as it was in great grandma's day. In original or reconstructed period settings they are depicted having a go at a variety of tasks such as using a dolly tub, churning butter and practising copperplate writing.

The harsh reality of the times and the contrasts between wealthy and poor households are portrayed very effectively. But the texts also manage deft touches of humour, as when noting that the captains of

the fast mail packet ships were instructed in the event of shipwreck to save the mail first and the passengers afterwards!

Important events and inventions related to the particular topic covered are tabulated by the use of time-lines. Regrettably, further reading lists are not provided, but each book has a fairly extensive annotated list of places to visit with an indication of those that have demonstrations either for schools and/or the public. VH

Chimps

Jane Goodall, 0 00 184586 1;
0 00 184719 8 pbk

Hippos

Miriam Schlein, 0 00 184587 X;
0 00 184718 X pbk

Lions

Leslie MacGuire, 0 00 184589 6;
0 00 184721 X pbk

Pandas

Miriam Schlein, 0 00 184588 8;
0 00 184720 1 pbk

Collins (*Jane Goodall's Animal World series*), hardback £5.95 each; paperback £2.95 each
(JUNIOR UPWARDS)

With wildlife photography so habitually excellent these days, almost anyone can knock out a single volume – or a whole series – about picturesque animals which, while plausible and presentable – does little more for our understanding of its subjects than your average 'safari' calendar. A pleasure, then, to find these apparently cheap and cheerful paperbacks written with a thorough knowledge and understanding and providing far more interest and information, well conveyed, than many of their more up-market counterparts.

Jane Goodall says, 'Only when we understand can we care, only when we care can we help', and this quartet goes a long way to providing the understanding that will help us to care for the future of these four species at risk.

Remarkable value in paperback and as good for the family as for the school library – for whom the hardback at £5.95 is still a good buy.

TP

Rocks

Terry Jennings, A & C Black
(*Threads series*), 0 7136 3219 4,
£4.95
(JUNIOR)

Exploring Soil and Rocks

Ed Catherall, Wayland (*Exploring Science series*), 1 85210 789 8, £7.50
(MIDDLE/SECONDARY)

The Changing Landscape

Dougal Dixon, Wayland (*Wayland Library of Science and Technology*), 1 85210 890 8, £7.95
(MIDDLE/SECONDARY)

The 'earth and atmosphere' area of the science curriculum now introduces rocks and soils at an early stage alongside simple weather observations.

Terry Jennings' **Rocks** provides useful information for juniors accompanied by various related activities. Using a mixture of diagrams, drawings and photographs, he examines features of rocks such as texture, weight and solubility. Ways of sorting rock samples into groups – classified as sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic –

are suggested, and erosion is considered by looking at how big rocks become little rocks. This works well. Slightly less successful is the attention given to tarmac and concrete which are treated as 'artificial rocks'. Finally there is a brief index and a list of 'More things to do' for children able to pursue the subject further.

The book does not offer a detailed look at its subject but it does provide a balanced introduction which includes activities likely to arouse interest. These include an activity for grading soil which can be compared with a soil grading activity in Ed Catherall's *Exploring Soils and Rocks*. The latter is intended for children studying the subject during curriculum levels three to six. For the younger children, the aim is to note some of the differences between soil particles when they are graded in water. The book for older children requires a more detailed analysis of grading, comparisons between sand, soil and compost - and some organisation of the results in relation to information about organic and inorganic soils. Ed Catherall's book is organised into double-page spreads which provide information, an activity and test questions. The material is well organised, clearly and attractively presented. But using the same format throughout the book does tend to provoke automatic responses and lower interest. However, the subject is thoroughly examined and features such as the index and glossary are reliable.

The Changing Landscape also uses the double-page spread for aspects of its subject but the format is not allowed to become constraining. The book feels as if you are reading about the subject, not being trained to make a particular response. However, it contains fewer activities and less material that children can relate to their own surroundings. Both books provide information at a similar level and are complementary rather than competitive. *Exploring Soils and Rocks* offers aspects of erosion, soils, weathering and plant effects that children can test in their own back yards. **The Changing Landscape** takes a global view of such things as volcanoes, surface plates and continents adrift.

FB

The Science of Life

Clint Twist, Wayland (Wayland Library of Science and Technology), 1 85210 892 4, £7.95 (SECONDARY)

This is a single title from the publisher's 24-volume 'Library of Science and Technology'. Most life-science books, especially for older children, set out to identify and differentiate forms of life and it is refreshing to find one that concentrates on similarities among living organisms - similarities which exist because they are the basis of life itself. Plant cells and animal cells are remarkably the same and serve the same basic purposes. That they have evolved different specialist ways of serving these purposes accounts for the notional division of biology into botany and zoology, two sciences which have far more in common than they have differences.

This book concentrates on the common factors; animals and plants proceed through it side by side. We find, for instance, that sundew and fleas are as carnivorous as pythons and lions, nutrition is the getting of energy to feed body cells, be they flycatcher or fern, and flowers have as active a sex life as the insects that help them with it.

Here is an excellent start to a mature study of biology, a study with which the well-selected bibliography will help. An awareness of the wholeness of life is probably the key to the survival of our planet as we know it and the presence of this simple book provides an incremental increase in the likelihood of that survival.

TP

Frances Ball has been an infant teacher and currently works with pre-school children.

Geoff Brown is a Divisional Coordinator with Hertfordshire Schools Library Service.

Veronica Holliday is North Regional Schools Librarian for Hampshire.

The Winning Formula

Charles Hughes, Collins, 0 00 185354 6, £9.95; 0 00 191160 0, £7.95 pbk (SECONDARY/OLDER READERS)

The Winning Formula may be seen by some as a rarity - an intelligent and stimulating soccer book. Its approach is certainly rare - ideas on tactics and skills are derived from a statistical analysis of more than 100 top level matches to see what brought success.

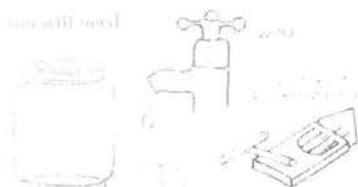
This background plus the author's standing as Director of Coaching and Education at the Football Association makes for an authoritative book. It is aimed at adults or committed teenagers who are already au fait with football terminology. The excellent colour photographs from matches (no dull still shots here), clear diagrams and good 'pros and cons' sections make it especially attractive. It should be invaluable for coaches diagnosing problems, players wanting to expand their game, supporters wanting to assess their teams' techniques. With its 192 information-packed pages, it is very good value at £7.95 for the paperback edition (though schools may think it worth paying £2 more for the hardback).

What makes the book particularly fascinating though is the winning formula itself which gives credence to the cries of 'attack' shouted by generations of cloth-cap and muffer supporters. Success on the field not surprisingly was found in attacking, having lots of shots, and direct football; possession play and intricate passing moves did not contribute to success. Let's hope **The Winning Formula** is widely read! GB ■

Ted Percy is a Divisional Children's Librarian with Buckinghamshire County Library.

Non-fiction Reviews Editor: Eleanor von Schweinitz

You can test how water wears away rock.



How to do it

1. Break your chalk into pieces about 1cm long. Keep one piece aside, and put the rest in the jam jar. Half-fill the jar with water. (You may see bubbles rising from the chalk. These are just air, escaping from little holes inside it.)

Screw the top on to the jar, hold it firmly in both hands, and shake it hard for as long as you can.



2. When you've finished shaking, look at the pieces of chalk in the jar. How are they different from the piece you didn't put in? Is there anything new lying at the bottom of the jar?

The water in your jar has worked on the chalk in the same way that waves in the sea work on lumps of rock to make sand.

A page from **Rocks**.

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A WORKERS' CO-OPERATIVE

Information Books and Special Needs Awareness

We asked **Dr John Quicke**, author of **Disability in Modern Children's Fiction**, to look at in-print information books on children with special needs and to comment on them in the light of current educational policy.

The National Curriculum Council's guidelines for special educational needs - **A Curriculum for All** - contain few surprises. They reflect the trend in recent years towards ensuring that all pupils have access to a common entitlement, whatever their difficulties or disabilities. Legally the National Curriculum can be modified or lifted for individual pupils or groups, but the Council hopes that such exceptional arrangements can be kept to a minimum. The aim is to build on the principles of the Warnock Report and Education Act 1981 and to encourage more pupils with special educational needs to become fully integrated in the mainstream.

The National Curriculum should help in this respect by providing continuity from class to class and school to school, a curricular language which all pupils, teachers and parents can share and a common framework for recording individual progress. However, whether it can be implemented in such a way as to meet the needs of all pupils and especially those with learning difficulties and disabilities, only time will tell. **A Curriculum for All** spells out some of these needs. Above all what is required is a learning environment characterized by a climate of warmth and support where all pupils feel valued. To achieve this it's not only teachers who need to become more empathetic. Pupils, too, must become more sensitive to their peers, including those with special educational needs. There's no doubt that, apart from teacher attitudes, the key to successful integration is the attitude of peers. If peer attitudes are positive, then integration can work even in an environment which is relatively unfavourable resource-wise.

It's in the light of these considerations that the books which are the subject of this review will be discussed. The main aim of most of them is to convey factual information about a disability or difficulty in a real life context. Some handicaps are clearly more difficult to teach about than others. Blindness and deafness, for example, are probably easier than mental handicap, eczema and asthma. The fact that there are proportionally more factual and fictional books published each year on the former than the latter is a pity but probably to be expected. At least three publishers - Bodley Head, Dinosaur and Hamish Hamilton - are to be commended for including stories about children with eczema - one of the most stigmatising conditions - in their collections (**Anna, I have Eczema** and **Rob has Eczema**).

Some currently available books are clearly intended for infant or pre-school children. We do not know enough about young children's conceptions of disability to predict how individuals might respond to Nigel Snell's cartoon characters (**Rob has Eczema**, **Ann visits the Speech Therapist** and **Peter gets a Hearing Aid**). Experience tells us that as long as the material is in an appealing form, it doesn't matter too much about the amount of information they impart. To adult eyes they may seem flippant and superficial but, cherished and read repeatedly by an understanding adult and with sympathetic adult commentary, they could well make a positive impact in the formative years. The same is true of the Althea books (**I have a Mental Handicap**, **I have Eczema**, **I have Epilepsy**) which are for somewhat older children than their format might suggest. Other useful books for the primary classroom are **Our Riding Centre** by Sue Corbett and **My Special Playgroup** by Pamela Dowling, which focus on particular activities rather than individuals.

However, even for younger ages we have to consider carefully our criteria for choosing and using books. Detailed information about the disability itself may not be necessary,



From **Rob has Eczema** by Nigel Snell (Hamish Hamilton).

but the impression conveyed about how children with disabilities are perceived and how they should be treated by others is an important matter. Sometimes authors unwittingly reinforce notions about such children which may impede rather than enhance their acceptance in the mainstream school. One has doubts for example about the way asthma is handled in **Wheezy** by Michael Charlton. We see William going to special asthma swimming classes on Saturdays, but in real life such segregated activities are not typical and not usually necessary for asthmatic children. In Palle Peterson's **Sally Can't See** no explanation is given as to why she has to go to a special residential school for the blind. Most of the activities she engages in could just as easily be carried out with appropriate arrangements in the ordinary school - swimming, athletics, cleaning out the budgie, riding, etc. And the specialist activities - feeling shapes of lions, numbers and countries - seem to be at too low an educational level for her. First published in 1975 and still in print, this book is now out of step with current thinking. Probably the most problematical book, however, is Pam Adams' **Who Cares about Disabled People?**. This not only portrays a whole range of 'handicaps' but takes on board alcohol and drug abuse and the evils of smoking and junk food all in the first ten pages, with one short line of text devoted to each problem! Some form of stereotyping is probably unavoidable when the message is simplified for young children, but it's unfortunate that, yet again, mental handicap is portrayed as messy eating. This is in marked contrast to the sensitivity with which this particular form of disability is handled in Althea's **I have a Mental Handicap**.

Those books which are more story-like, e.g. **The Trouble with Josh** by Carolyn Nystrom, make for a more exciting read, but there's a danger of them falling between two stools. In trying

to impart information and tell a story they do neither very well. In a story one of the main aims presumably is to show that disabled children have their loves and laughs and differ from other children only in so far as all individuals differ to some extent. The presentation of facts must surely be subsumed under this main aim and as far as possible must be integrated into the story in such a way that it's not interruptive of plot development. Whole pages devoted to explaining away a disability can be a turn off for a young child who wants to get on with the story if story is what he or she has been led to expect.

For older children, Franklin Watts have published two wide-ranging series - 'One World' and 'Living With'. The former are all written by Brenda Pettenuzzo and cover not only Blindness and Deafness but also Asthma, Epilepsy, Diabetes, Cerebral Palsy, Cystic Fibrosis, Down's Syndrome, Muscular Dystrophy and Spina Bifida. Each book focuses on the actual life and experiences of a particular young person - for instance, *I have Cerebral Palsy* is about Maria Hill who lives in East London. The texts include a great deal of useful information but fail to tell us much about each child's personality. The publishers claim that the individuals 'tell the story in their own words' but though each page starts with a token sentence in the first person, the text then lapses into conventional third person descriptive narrative which lacks a feeling of genuine individuality. Each book uses specially commissioned colour photographs and has an appendix listing more detailed 'facts' about the disability and giving information about relevant organisations. This series answers many of the questions that children ask about disability and, with its focus on 'real' people, it might appeal particularly to those who themselves have a disability or who have a disabled sibling or relative.

Such children may also be reassured by the directly factual approach of the recently published 'Living With' series - aimed more at the secondary age group. Titles here include Blindness, Deafness, Diabetes, Heart Disease, Allergies, Physical Handicap and Arthritis. Each consists of thirty pages packed with information mostly about the physical and medical aspects of the disability and illustrated with coloured diagrams and photographs. If enthused by this series the child would learn a great deal about the workings of the human body in addition to the disability focused upon. It's worth noting that this content could readily be related to the National Curriculum attainment targets in Science and the cross curricular theme of Health Education. On the other hand excessive use of medical jargon may be off-putting even to children who were interested in the topic. For example, half a page of text on page 4 of *Arthritis* contains words like bacterial, auto-immune, rheumatoid, ankylosing, spondylitis and osteoarthritis; the other half is a drawing of a skeleton with a further eighteen technical terms attached, e.g. mandible, humerus, ulna, radius, clavicle, scapula, etc. Also, such a medically oriented approach doesn't seem compatible with the explicit aim of the series which is to 'look at contemporary issues regarding health and disability and society's



'Our house has a lift on the stairs, so that I can go up and down on my own.'
From *I have Cerebral Palsy* by Brenda Pettenuzzo (Franklin Watts).

changing attitudes towards them'. Knowing the facts does not in itself necessarily lead to greater understanding and a more positive attitude. These books should perhaps be read in conjunction with the 'One World' series.

We should not underestimate the difficulty of teaching about disability in a way which is not counterproductive. Practice in this area is particularly prone to the 'sentimental' approach which reinforces pupils' stereotypes rather than weakens them and encourages patronizing attitudes whilst undermining attempts to foster compassion and critical understanding.

In general, it would seem more appropriate for the emphasis always to be on human relationships rather than on technical information about disability. Even in books for young children, the disabled character should be portrayed as having interests and experiences (in addition to those specifically associated with his or her disability) with which a 'normal' child can identify. ■

Dr John Quicke is an educational psychologist and senior lecturer in education at the Division of Education, Sheffield University. He recently published the results of a two-year curriculum project exploring different approaches to teaching about mental handicap in three comprehensive schools: **Challenging Prejudice through Education**: the story of a mental handicap awareness project, Falmer Press, 1990, 1 85000 692 X, £20.00; 1 85000 693 8, £9.95 pbk.

Details of books mentioned

- Anna**, Margaret Wadham, Bodley Head, 1986, 0 370 30612 0, £5.95
- I have Eczema**, Althea, Dinosaur, 1988, 0 85122 712 0, £1.75 pbk
- Rob has Eczema**, Nigel Snell, Hamish Hamilton, 1989, 0 241 12503 0, £4.50
- Ann visits the Speech Therapist**, Nigel Snell, Hamish Hamilton, 1983, 0 241 11029 7, £3.50
- Peter gets a Hearing Aid**, Nigel Snell, Hamish Hamilton, 1979, 0 241 89918 4, £3.50; 0 241 11190 0, 85p pbk
- I have a Mental Handicap**, Althea, Dinosaur, 1987, 0 85122 685 X, £1.75 pbk
- I have Epilepsy**, Althea, Dinosaur, 1987, 0 85122 672 8, £1.75 pbk
- Our Riding Centre**, Sue Corbett, Hamish Hamilton, 1988, 0 241 12442 5, £4.95
- My Special Playgroup**, Pamela Dowling, Hamish Hamilton, 1985, 0 241 11645 7, £4.95
- Wheezy**, Michael Charlton, Bodley Head, 1986, 0 370 31150 7, £5.95
- Sally Can't See**, Palle Peterson, A & C Black, 1975, 0 7136 1661 X, £4.95
- Who Cares about Disabled People?** Pam Adams, Childs Play, 1989, 0 85953 361 1, £2.95
- The Trouble with Josh**, Carolyn Nystrom, Lion, 1989, 0 7459 1313 X, £4.95

I am Blind, 1988, 0 86313 698 2

I am Deaf, 1987, 0 86313 571 4

I have Asthma, 1988, 0 86313 745 8

I have Cerebral Palsy, 1988, 0 86313 699 0

I have Cystic Fibrosis, 1988, 0 86313 746 6

I have Diabetes, 1987, 0 86313 561 7

I have Down's Syndrome, 1987, 0 86313 572 2

I have Epilepsy, 1989, 0 86313 870 5

I have Muscular Dystrophy, 1987, 0 86313 871 3

I have Spina Bifida, 1987, 0 86313 562 5

Brenda Pettenuzzo, Franklin Watts 'One World' series, £5.95 each

Living with Allergies, Dr T White, 1990, 0 7496 0098 5

Living with Arthritis, John Shenkman, 1990, 0 7496 0100 0

Living with Blindness, Steve Parker, 1989, 0 7496 0043 8

Living with Deafness, Barbara Taylor, 1989, 0 7496 0042 X

Living with Diabetes, Barbara Taylor, 1989, 0 7496 0044 6

Living with Heart Disease, Steve Parker, 1989, 0 7496 0045 4

Living with Physical Handicap, John Shenkman, 1990, 0 7496 0101 9

Franklin Watts, £6.95 each

LMS . . . Libraries Must Suffer?

Margaret Köberl writes an open letter to the clients of School Library Services everywhere.

September 1990

Dear Headteachers and School Governors,

Before you succumb completely to the LMS gold rush and desert your local school library service, consider the three Es . . . efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

First, though, let me agree with you – anyone can buy books. But can you put hand on heart and honestly say that you'll buy library books – and only library books – with the money you receive from the education authority? No, I'm afraid cheating isn't allowed. Text books and multiple copies of set texts – important as they may be – are not necessarily the books which will foster a lifelong love of reading in your children. Have you really the time to sift through the wealth of literature and information now on the market? 5063 books were published for children alone in 1988. A good specialist children's bookseller can stock up to 20,000 titles and secondary schools also need to acquire non-fiction titles from the adult lists.

The books chosen by your SLS are selected using a strict set of criteria to ensure that standards are maintained and that value for money is given. Each book is examined by a professional librarian for style, quality of illustrations and factual content. Once purchased, the books are then categorised into infant, junior, secondary and teenage to help the teacher and save that most valuable commodity – time. There's also a wide range of other material available – books for tiny tots, for children with special needs, books for the reluctant reader and for GCSE candidates, books for fun, books to educate, books to treasure, in paperback and hardback – whatever your preference.

What's more, if you're unable to visit your library centre, many school library services will come to you. The schools' mobile will make regular visits, enabling both staff and pupils to do their own choosing from books and cassettes.

Are you having problems, perhaps, with resourcing the National Curriculum – only five books on the Romans for a class of thirty information-hungry ten-year-olds? Then don't despair. Put pen to paper and fill in an application form for a project loan, or curriculum pack, to supplement your own resources. Project loans are short-term loan collections of books and AV material on a wide variety of topics, ranging from 'Myself' books for the reception class to resources on, for example, World War II at GCSE level – not to mention a video of 'Hamlet' or 'Macbeth' to delight your English Literature students. Once the project is completed, all that's required is that the material be collected together, boxed and returned. What could be simpler and yet so economical? Or so effective and efficient?

After all, with the National Curriculum, GCSE, HMI visits and reports, can you afford to neglect the school library? How many schools, for example, have a written library policy?

'Perhaps the most important step a school can take to improve its resource provision is the fundamental one of formulating a policy for the resource centre, based upon discussion by the whole staff and presented within the context of discussion about the curriculum.'

DES, 1985

Your SLS provides an advisory service on all aspects of school librarianship – from formulating policy to book promotion. At your

invitation, a senior librarian will visit the school to discuss your library projects or problems. We offer practical advice on layout, shelving and furniture – creating an attractive library, however unpromising the starting-point.

If you already have an attractive library, maybe you need an effective information retrieval system (manual or computerised). For this our help is at hand – also with operating it once it's in place. Librarians, working alongside teachers, can formulate library/information skills programmes which will be of value to children as independent learners throughout their lives.

Professional librarians will share their secrets, giving talks and holding practical sessions on everything from book selection, publicity and displays to computerisation. Why not invite a Schools' Librarian to participate in one of your own INSET days? Remember – while you have a school library service, you're never on your own.

What else can we offer? Well, we reduce the nightmares of organising a book week by offering information on authors, putting on book exhibitions, telling stories, and showing videos whilst our voices recover. Or, if you prefer, you can take advantage of our own special events such as book fairs, Christmas activities, Children's Book of the Year Award, library quizzes and so on. There will be some variation according to area, but every SLS in the country offers a wide choice of services.

In conclusion, let's consider the need to foster the growth and development of school libraries in conjunction with a school library service:

'Evidence regarding the need to improve the provision of library and information services in schools and the use made of this provision is abundant . . . The need is also an urgent one.'

LISC report, 1984

The teaching of English within the National Curriculum reinforces this:

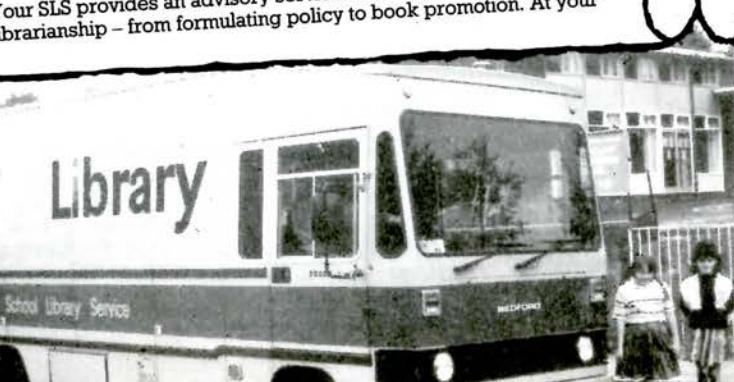
'Teachers need . . . the support of well chosen and well supplied book stocks in classrooms, in school libraries and from local authority library services.'

So the evidence is strong for the improvement of school libraries and for the continued support of a dedicated and professional school library service. By building together for the future, we can make our school libraries something to be proud of and the envy of all. And if you are still not convinced . . . a good school library may be a selling point in attracting more pupils. Now that's a thought!

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Köberl

Senior Librarian with Lancashire County Schools' Library Service. ■



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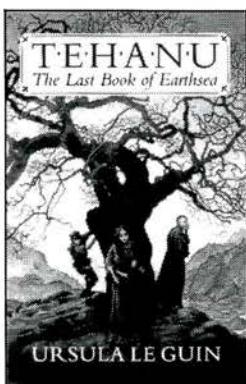
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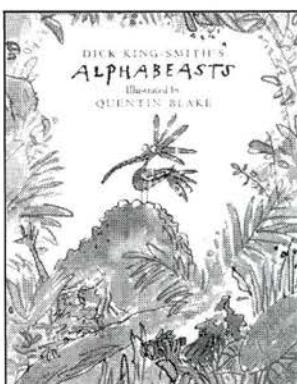
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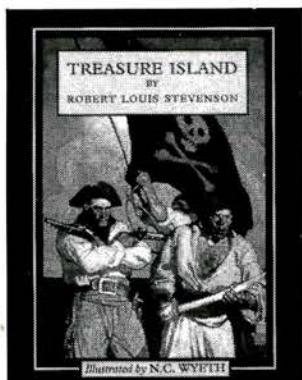
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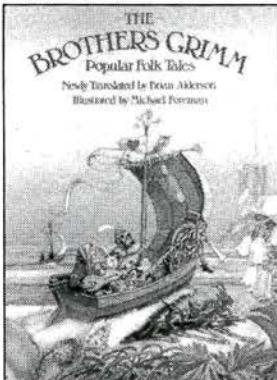
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FROM HAMISH HAMILTON CHILDRENS BOOKS

Faith's Farewell

Chris Powling talks to Faith Jaques about her Grand Finale.

'Any illustrator would relish tackling a collection of nursery-rhymes,' says Faith Jaques. 'It's such an obvious and lovable thing to do. After all, the main reason for specialising in children's books at all is the range of subject-matter they provide – fantasy, illusion and imagination well beyond what most adult books allow. Not only that, but every rhyme offers something different. You're not shackled to a repetitive likeness for page after page. I don't think people realise how *boring* this can be . . .' Her latest book, then – **The Orchard Book of Nursery Rhymes** – is rather special. 'It's one of the few wholly enjoyable jobs I've undertaken because I was given all the time I needed. Without a deadline to worry about I could concentrate on making it *good* rather than *quick*.' Also, it's special for another reason. She insists it's the last book she'll ever illustrate.

Why?

'Because I've been drawing since I was three,' she says. 'That's more than sixty years of hard grind – watching the light (only three reliable working-hours a day during the winter) one eye always on the calendar so I keep to my schedule, four different pairs of glasses on the go all the time so I can get the close work right, looking after a damaged thumb that's troubled me for ages . . . I've had enough of *doing*. From now on I'm concentrating on *being* – with friends, with books, with just rambling about instead of leading the life of a recluse!'

It's hard to disagree, of course. After all, the Jaques career began more than forty years ago with **Alice in Wonderland**, **Cinderella**, **Goldilocks** and **Little Women** – not to mention **The Football Association Book for Boys** and **The Young Cricketer**. And that was just in 1950. Since then she's illustrated more than a 120 books including texts by Roald Dahl, Philippa Pearce, Leon Garfield, Gillian Avery, John Cunliffe, Nina Bawden, Arthur Ransome, Barbara Willard, Gwen Grant, Alison Uttley, Allan Ahlberg and Helen

Cresswell. The excellence of her 'doing' has never been in doubt. Douglas Martin, in **The Telling Line** (Julia MacRae 1989), described her best books as 'already being sought out as the true heirs of Greenaway, Rackham and Ardizzone . . . increasingly apparent to a new generation of collectors'.

So a great deal rests on this final performance of hers. She's quick to point out that the back-up has been splendid in every respect. 'Judith Elliott at Orchard really *listens!* She gave me all the time I needed with no pressure on me at all. I was able to take two-and-a-half to three years over the project as a whole – three months just for the pencil dummy. Not only that but I was able to *design* the book, to make the layout crystal clear with a careful distribution of pages and plenty of white space on quality paper. You see, I wanted this to be an entirely individual-looking book. Rita Ireland, Orchard's production manager, was marvellous. At Orchard you can have your say with anybody. It's one of the advantages of a small publisher.'

No alibis, then.

And no shirking the preparatory work. Many of the rhymes, chosen here by Zena Sutherland, have their origins in the Middle Ages or even earlier, but it was towards the end of the eighteenth century that they first came to be published. That's why Faith chose to set them in the Georgian period. This presented no problem since her private archive is legendary. 'I never have to go to a museum or gallery – I have filing cabinets crammed full of evidence about what people wore, or made, or where they lived.' Even the colour she strove to get just right. 'It needed to be soft and very muted – Georgian colours always went through grey.' Such historical details being important to her, she was determined that as many as possible would be correct. Hence, where a specific background was called for – as with the 'Doctor Fell' or 'Doctor Foster' verses – that's what she



gave it. She steeped herself, too, in the Opie's invaluable **Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes** and at the end of the book offers five pages of notes discussing her interpretations. She points out, for instance, that 'Polly Flinders'

'. . . is an example of how frequently people seemed to whip their children. There are several old engravings showing mothers or fathers wielding a bundle of birch twigs over a child. The twigs were often hung up on the kitchen wall ready to use.'

Is this, then, a nursery-rhyme collection for the drily academic?

On the contrary!

Child-friendly throughout and ravishingly pretty from one set of end-papers to the other, it's full of a wonderful quality that's easy to specify and hard to deliver: sheer *charm*. Certainly Faith Jaques brings to her work the traditional virtues of painstaking research and meticulous draughtsmanship, yet she also draws on a lifetime's experience in making sure her skills are unobtrusive. After all, why should children know, or even care, that the shoe in 'There was an old woman' is 'made of embroidered brocade and typical of the decorative shoes of the period' or that in 'Gregory Griggs' we really do encounter twenty-seven wigs covering the changing fashions between 1730 and 1800? For young readers the fantasy, illusion and imagination on offer in these pages will be attraction enough . . . at first, anyway. Later, who knows? With a labour of love like this, anything is possible.

Can this really be the Jaques swansong, then? If so, it's a wonderful farewell. But my guess is that thousands of children, and many discriminating adults, will be hoping otherwise. ■

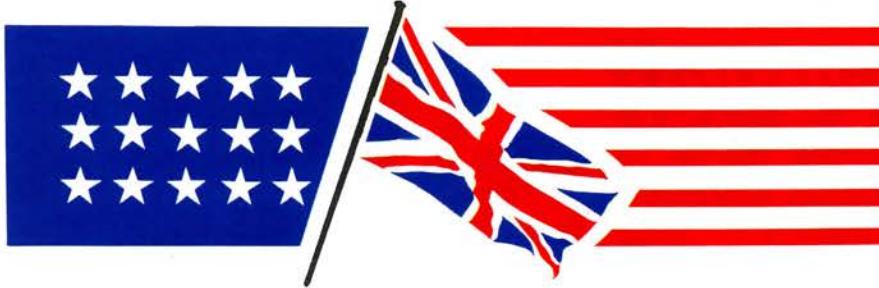
The Orchard Book of Nursery Rhymes by Faith Jaques, rhymes chosen by Zena Sutherland, is published by Orchard Books, 1 85213 056 3, £9.95.

Other books mentioned:

The Telling Line: Essays on Fifteen Contemporary Book Illustrators, Douglas Martin, Julia MacRae, 0 86203 333 0, £35.00. An article by Douglas Martin appeared in **BfK 62** (May 1990).

The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes, Iona and Peter Opie, Oxford, 0 19 869111 4, £15.95





SEPARATED BY THE SAME LANGUAGE?

Mary Hoffman spans the US/English divide

If you've read to small children in the last decade or so, the chances are you know Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* or Rosemary Wells' *Noisy Nora* or Russell Hoban's books about *Frances* the badger. And where would British primary classrooms be without Eric Carle's *Very Hungry Caterpillar* or Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad* stories or *Flat Stanley* or *The Shrinkng of Treehorn*? All these books are American.

But British publishers are becoming increasingly cautious about how they present American texts to English children. When they buy them at all, they make changes ranging from spellings to culture. And this at a time when British children, from their favourite films, TV series and songs, are saturated in American ways. So while the consumers who actually read the end product are more cosmopolitan than ever before, the many adults who mediate the books between writer and reader seem to be becoming more conservative and insular.

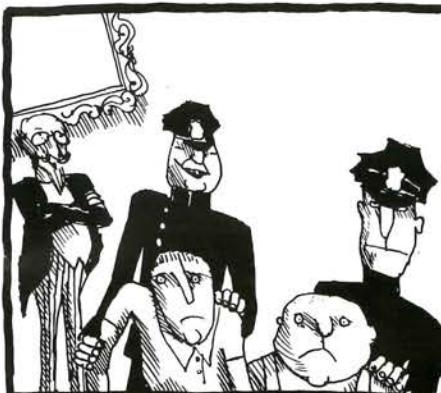
I've talked to many children's trade publishers and have discovered a wide range of practice among them. But the majority who do make changes to American texts do so for marketing reasons. The reps who have to sell the books, the library suppliers, booksellers and teachers who buy them, were all quoted to me as not liking books to look or sound American.

Judith Elliott of Orchard Books would change even the typeface on an American picture book. 'They have a solid library look which puts buyers off, even if only subliminally,' she says. 'They don't use script 'a's and 'g's in their typefaces for books for the very young and we tend to notice that here.'

Spelling and Vocabulary

Judith Elliott was thinking particularly of books for under-sevens and most of the publishers I talked to had a cut-off age in mind when talking about making changes. That ceiling varied, but about one area there was a consensus: spelling. 'An extra burden', 'just one

more thing to worry about', 'not fair to the beginner reader', were typical comments. The spelling of words like 'centre/center' and 'colour/color' would be changed in picture books by all the publishers I spoke to. And this would cost money. Every change made to a text costs money, which is why it's surprising that there's no common policy about what other changes are necessary once you've gone beyond variant spellings.



'You'll get a rest, all right!' shouted Mr Dart, rushing in with the Chief of Police and lots of guards and policemen behind him. 'You'll get *ar-rested*, that's what! Ha, ha, ha!'

From *Flat Stanley*.



From *The Shrinkng of Treehorn*.



No Nora in the mailbox
Or hiding in a shrub.

From *Noisy Nora*.

For Jane Fior at Heinemann, some expressions were almost as important. She wasn't the only publisher to mention 'peanut butter and jelly sandwiches'! Not only do we not eat that combination here, the 'jelly' is what we call 'jam'. Whatever substitute snack she might come up with, Jane's intention is to make the text 'feel homely and natural' to the English reader.

Liz Attenborough of Puffin and Viking Kestrel would change 'Mommy' to 'Mummy' and 'Come home for cookies' to 'Come home for tea', but would stop making changes once the reader was over eleven. She, in common with everyone I spoke to, wouldn't make any changes without full consultation with the American author usually through their US publisher. 'The negotiating skills of the editor' were also regarded as important by Jane Fior, who would exert gentle but firm pressure where she felt changes were really necessary.

Interestingly, some of the people who hold top jobs in British publishing for children are themselves originally from the States. Does this make it difficult for them to judge how easily something might be understood over here? Linda Davis at Collins would change even artwork, which is very expensive, if it showed pictures of currency and it was making an important point, as in a counting book. 'But then it would have to be a specially outstanding book to make it worth the expense of the changes.' Collins do anglicise their Dr Seuss books, 'but not the nonsense', Linda reassured me.

Jane Nissen of Hamish Hamilton is another American. She tends to do 'the absolute minimum' to American

picture book texts, beyond changing the spellings. She might change 'pocketbook' to 'handbag' if there was likely to be a confusion, but if a book were very American, she might just be less likely to buy it. For that reason Hamish Hamilton did not buy a book called **Peanut Butter and Jelly**.

Non-fiction

In the field of non-fiction there are extra considerations. Chester Fisher of Franklin Watts develops some texts jointly with his opposite numbers in America. But many books have to have changes; as Chester Fisher says, 'We're British publishers and we've got to be loyal to our market.' For instance, measurement differs on each side of the Atlantic. Watts always put the metric first and the imperial in brackets afterwards.

In the case of natural history books, the robin is a quite different bird in America from the familiar red-breasted one we have here – it's a much bigger one, of another species. Series that Franklin Watts publish on both sides of the Atlantic sometimes have alternative titles, the British ones tending to be more fun. The series published here as 'Just Rubbish?' is called 'Controlling Waste' in the US.

Titles sometimes have to be changed when they just wouldn't convey the same message here that the American author intended. Miriam Hodgson, the senior fiction editor at Methuen, is publishing a book next spring by Caroline B Cooney called **The Face on the Milk Carton**. In America the photographs of missing children and runaways are printed on milk cartons. In Caroline Cooney's book, the heroine suddenly sees her own picture on a carton she buys in the school cafeteria. Methuen eventually decided to retain the US title but did consider choosing one that would push the right button for an English readership. Otherwise Miriam wouldn't make changes to American books at all. As she points out, 'bulletin board' is an American expression, but that's the object which squashes Stanley flat in the Jeff Brown book that Methuen publish.

Treld Bicknell, who was recently at Walker Books running their non-fiction list, is an American with twenty-five years' experience of working in children's information books. She's lived in England for twenty-six years, but says there are still times when something reads all right to her but she feels the need to try it out on one of her English colleagues. She keeps a shelf of English and American reference books at home and in the office, a **Webster's Dictionary** as well as the **OED**. There are also Natural History works published in Britain and America, so she's never likely to get into trouble over the two kinds of robin. What matters to her is that the text should be written 'in clear, warm language that uses real words like "photosynthesis". Euphemisms are right out of the window.'

Julia MacRae, who has her own

imprint at Walker Books and has been in the business for thirty years, describes herself as 'a bit of a renegade' and also says she sometimes 'feels like a dodo'. She'll change picture book spellings and words like 'Mom', but says 'it's ridiculous to pretend that a book written by an American is English'. Julia's been campaigning against the drawbacks of writing what she calls 'universal bland' for a couple of decades.

A Necessary Fuss?

She frankly admits to being more concerned with the writer than the reader – 'The essence of my job is respect for the writer. If he or she is getting it right, that takes care of respect for the reader.' The major changes that other publishers would make strike her as an 'insane waste of money'. She also says she 'could retire on' the number of times buyers have said to her 'It's too American' of a book, 'and then they go home and their kids are watching American TV shows'.

So are we operating a double standard? With the exception of Julia MacRae and Miriam Hodgson, most British publishers are spending a lot of money and a lot of editorial time on making changes that no-one has proved to be essential. Shouldn't there be research to establish if children understand un-anglicised American texts as well as they understand American TV, cartoons, films and songs? The publishers say it's the adults who won't buy American books unless they're adapted. But are the buying adults really in touch with what children can understand? Or are they in the grip of literary and linguistic xenophobia? ■

Mary Hoffman is a freelance journalist and popular children's author. Her latest title from Methuen is **Just Jack** (0 416 15552 9, £6.99). She has also edited an anthology for Collins called **Ip, Dip, Sky Blue** (0 00 193251 9, £6.95) to be published in December this year.

Details of books mentioned:

Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak, Bodley Head, 0 370 00772 7, £8.95; Picture Puffin, 0 14 050 078 2, £2.25 pbk

Noisy Nora, Rosemary Wells, Collins, 0 00 183740 0, £2.95; Picture Lions, 0 00 661465 5, £2.50 pbk

Bread and Jam for Frances, Russell Hoban, ill. Lillian Hoban, Picture Puffin, 0 14 050 176 2, £2.50 pbk

The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Eric Carle, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 01798 X, £7.50; Picture Puffin, 0 14 050 0871, £2.25 pbk

Frog and Toad are Friends, 0 14 03 1564 0; **Frog and Toad Together**, 0 14 03 1565 9; **Frog and Toad All Year**, 0 14 03 1566 7; **Days with Frog and Toad**, 0 14 03 1567 5; Arnold Lobel, Young Puffin 'I Can Read', £2.50 each pbk

Flat Stanley, Jeff Brown, Methuen, 0 416 80360 1, £6.95; Mammoth, 0 7497 0137 4, £1.99 pbk

The Shrinking of Treehorn, Florence Parry Heide, Young Puffin, 0 14 03 0746 X, £1.75 pbk

The Face on the Milk Carton, Caroline B Cooney, Methuen, 0 416 16292 4, £8.95, will be published in April 1991.

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OF THE MINSTREL KIND



Margaret Meek pays tribute to Rosemary Sutcliff at Seventy

I met Rosemary Sutcliff for the first time thirty years ago in a London hospital where she was recovering from an operation. She was already famous; **The Eagle of the Ninth** had seen to that. Published in 1954 it had been reprinted four times. It's probably still the book by which she is best known: an historical novel about the Romans in Britain, the first of a group of stories including **The Lantern Bearers** which won for her the Carnegie Medal.

Although I was nervous at that first encounter I was much more worried about seeming impudent. I'd agreed to write about the novels for a Bodley Head Monograph, one of a series of essays about well-known writers for children, to which Rosemary Sutcliff had already contributed a fine example about Rudyard Kipling. It wasn't so easy in those days to be curious about a famous author, especially one who had had a long childhood illness, who went to school for the first time at nine and learned to read even later, and who finished her compulsory education 'mercifully early' at fourteen.

The details of Rosemary's early years and her amazing resourcefulness in the face of crippling pain are given with no trace of self pity in her autobiographical narrative, **Blue Remembered Hills**. There's also a revealing paragraph in the collection of stories which she edited with Monica Dickens, **Is Anyone There?**, where she says: 'I had a lonely childhood and growing-up time. My parents loved me and I loved them, but I could never talk to them about the problems and fears and aching hopes inside me that I had most need to talk about to someone. And there was no one else.' Writers cannot be convivial people in work time; their chosen craft is a solitary one. But to be cut off in childhood from the society of the school playground, where the gossipy tales are told, is a particular deprivation. Rosemary Sutcliff could never have been a chatty novelist. Yet her experience of being read to throughout her childhood by a sympathetic adult bears out everything that has been researched or said about reading stories to children. If you want to understand where Rosemary Sutcliff, as a novelist, 'comes from', read **The Jungle Books**, **Kim** and **The Just So Stories**, preferably aloud.

This year Rosemary Sutcliff is seventy. Her latest novel, **The Shining Company**, appeared in June. For me it's a vintage volume, the work of a writer who has a distinctive view of her readers, a view which many may not know that they can have of themselves. To read Rosemary Sutcliff is to discover what reading is good for. So this anniversary and this accomplishment make me ask what might be the contemporary appeal or, more simply, the enduring attraction of the historical novels for the young. After all, much has clearly changed in children's books and reading since television became their more immediate storyteller, and novelists, now more matey and informal, adopted a more elliptical vernacular prose, in which the readers' ease is more visible than the challenge to read.

But, given her isolation, Rosemary Sutcliff needs her readers. Like her characters they people her world, so she devises means of coming close to them and drawing them into the worlds she makes out of the dark places in history. Sometimes the trick is a first-person narrative: 'I am - I was - Prosper,

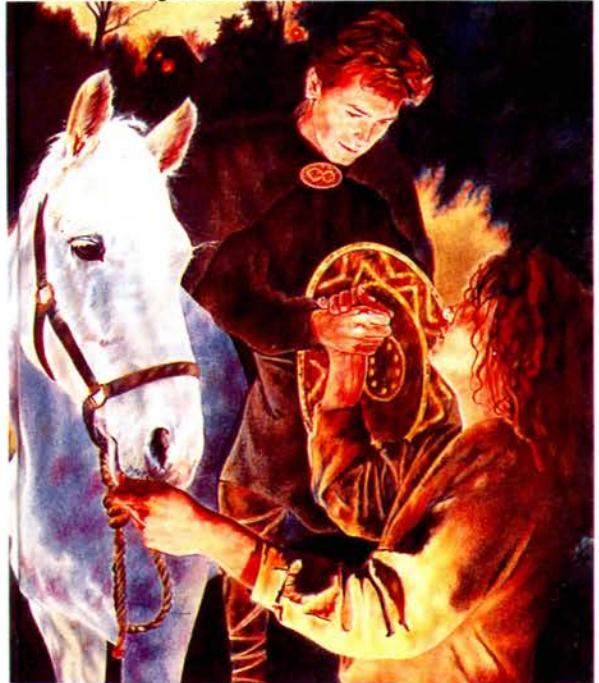


Rosemary Sutcliff (Photo The Bodley Head).

second son to Gerontius, lord of three cantrefs between Nant Ffrancon and the sea.' Or there's a dedication, 'For all four houses of Hilsea Modern Girls' School, Portsmouth (my school) who adopted me like a battleship or a regimental goat.' The first page swings the characters into action in a situation as clear as a television image. The names of the people and places set the rules of belonging; the relations between the sexes are formally arrayed; the battles are long and fierce. Readers who are unaccustomed to the building up of suspense in poised sentences may need a helping hand. Again, the best way into a Sutcliff narrative, a kind of initiation, is to hear it read aloud. Then you know what the author means when she says she tells her tales 'from the inside'.

Thinking of readers, I remember, with gratitude and some pain, a class of girls in a London secondary school in the early seventies. The parents of most of them had come from the Caribbean; I guess their own children are now in school. Then they were the first of their kind to speak out their awareness of the complications we now call 'multi-cultural'. They were reading with their gifted teacher, Joan Goody, **The Eagle of the Ninth**. On this particular day they ignored the dashing young Roman hero, recovering from a battle wound in his uncle's house in Bath, and concentrated on the girl next door, Cottia, a Briton. Cottia's uncle and aunt were taking her to the games, and in their hankering after Roman ways had tried to insist that she wear Roman clothes and speak Latin. Cottia protested, and so did the readers, on her behalf. I've never heard a more spirited discussion than that one, when those girls spoke indirectly of their nearest concerns in arguing on behalf of Cottia, who existed only in a book.

The sharing of storytelling that writers do with readers is the dialogue of imagination. Rosemary Sutcliff lives, grows and acts and suffers in her stories. The worlds created in her imagination have had to stand in for the world of much everyday actuality. From her therefore we can learn what the imagination does, and how it allows us all to explore what's possible, the realm of *virtual* experience. In Rosemary Sutcliff's world, heroes, heroines and readers alike walk a head taller than usual, as heroic warriors, to confront, like Drem in **Warrior Scarlet**, fearsome events as rites of passage and thus discover what is worth striving for. Readers have to expect to be spellbound in the tradition of storytelling that's much older than reading and writing, when before the days of written records bards and minstrels were entrusted with the memory of a tribe. Rosemary Sutcliff is in this tradition; she says of herself that she's 'of the minstrel kind'. This in itself sets her apart from some of the more, apparently, throwaway casualness of some contemporary writing. In these days, when we've learned to look closely at the *constructedness* of narratives, she will still say that she knows when a story is 'in' her and 'waiting to be told'.

Detail from the cover of *The Shining Company*

The rest, she insists, is sheer hard work: research, planning the shape and the details of themes rather than plots. But the tale is there, entire, from the beginning. Part of her gift to her readers' reading is that the same care is visible in the little books of single episodes (*A Circlet of Oak Leaves*; *Eagle's Egg*; *The Truce of the Games*) which can be read by or read to younger readers with the same spellbinding effect of what is still, for me, her most remarkable achievement, **The Lantern Bearers**. The chapter in which Aquila, the proud Roman soldier, decides to stay in Britain when the legions sail away, and light the fire in the lighthouse is as memorable as anything in a history lesson, and probably more lasting. Although heroism has been an unpopular virtue for some time, we've seen its value for the young in newsreels just lately.

Now think of historical novels, both as a genre and as a particular way of looking at our way of living and our place in history. We're born into our society at a particular time. Society changes; we contribute to the change and are changed by it. The same is true of the way we learn our language; of what it lets us take for granted and how it helps us discover what's new and strange. Historians try to understand these processes in the light of what they admit as evidence. Novelists breathe life into what they take to be the past, recent or long gone, because all novels are about time. Both historians and novelists have different ways of using the past to explain ourselves, now.

Rosemary Sutcliff's skill is in recreating spots of time when change is both dramatic and threatening. How, one wonders, do deadly enemies learn to live together? What happens to those who stand in the way of invaders? What of the disgraced centurion (the hero of **Frontier Wolf**, which will spellbind most classes even on difficult days) who has to win back a lost reputation (the equivalent of the worst foul or

missed penalty) on the miserable outposts of a crumbling empire, realising that the power he represents will soon be gone for ever? For all their intense singularity and, all right, their kinship with later forms of colonialism, these are abiding, recurrent issues. What, after all, will Europe be like in fifty years' time? Do we care enough to ask? What will our grandchildren think of us if we bring on the dark destruction of the ozone layer? Sometimes we help the young to confront these problems directly. At others we encourage them to understand how our forebears dealt with comparable if not similar ones. At all times there are common and shared as well as individual views of what is the light, what is the dark.

Most of Rosemary Sutcliff's novels have this opposition as their main theme. In a self-deprecating way she likens it to the struggle between the baddies and goodies in cowboy Western sagas. In fact, her stories have more in common with the Earthsea trilogy of Ursula LeGuin, who says we tell stories to keep ourselves from disappearing into our surroundings. The darkest tales of all are **Song for a Dark Queen** and the most recent one, **The Shining Company**. In the first of this pair Boudicca, a rare heroine in the Sutcliff canon, is bound to avenge the sacrilegious treatment she suffered at the hands of the Romans who have no understanding of her as Queen of a matrilineal tribe. She leads her people in a savage and merciless Holy War which she cannot but lose. The legend is already sketched in the understanding of her readers; the author's task here is to revive it. It's interesting, and significant that this, the women's book, is sterner, more merciless than any of the others. It calls out the dark places in all of us.

The Shining Company is a tragedy, difficult to follow for the uninitiated because there's not the space, the breathing through the descriptions as in **The Lantern Bearers** or even in **Frontier Wolf**. There's one great battle, as good as all the rest, but if the reader does not catch the note of doom early, the end seems unfair. The facts on which the original legend of the Companions rests are scarce, but there is a seventh-century epic which celebrates them: it begins 'This is the Gododdin, Aneirin sang it.' Three hundred horsemen, trained together by ordeal and bonded by the Great Oath, met in the king's seat which is now Edinburgh. The king sent them out to defeat a Saxon war host at Catterick Bridge, but failed to ensure the backup of the rest of the clans. The Company was cut to pieces, their shining and their glory gone in all but the song of the bard who returned to tell the tale. Here he is helped by the young shieldbearer, Prosper, who, in the seventieth year of his creator, stands for all his like in these exceptional books to which children deserve entry.

If I say that reading **The Shining Company** feels like watching the events of Tiananmen Square you'll think I'm spellbound by legend. But I'm sure that the stories of that recent event are already in the making. I also know that those who care for the company children keep when they read will see the relation between the events of now and the stories Rosemary Sutcliff writes to make heroic readers. The conflict of the light and the dark is the stuff of legends of all ages. Those of the minstrel kind still make pictures, songs and tales out of words while there are those who look, listen and read. ■

The Shining Company was published in June by The Bodley Head (0 370 31467 0, £7.99).

Other Rosemary Sutcliff titles mentioned:

The Eagle of the Ninth, Oxford, 0 19 271037 0, £5.95; Puffin, 0 14 03.0890 3, £2.99 pbk

The Lantern Bearers, Puffin, 0 14 03.1222 6, £2.99 pbk

Is Anyone There? (ed. with Monica Dickens), Penguin Plus, 0 14 03.2544 1, £2.50 pbk

Warrior Scarlet, Puffin, 0 14 03.0895 4, £2.99 pbk

The Truce of the Games, Hamish Hamilton 'Antelope', 0 241 02021 2, £3.50

Frontier Wolf, Puffin, 0 14 03.1472 5, £2.99 pbk

Song for a Dark Queen, Knight, 0 340 24864 5, £2.99 pbk

A Circlet of Oak Leaves and **Eagle's Egg** are now out of print.

Margaret Meek has just retired from the London Institute of Education. Her books on reading have won her a world-wide reputation. Later this year from Bodley Head comes **On Being Literate** (0 370 31190 6) priced at £6.99.

THE BEST SCHOOL LIBRARY IN THE LAND?

The Pan-Macmillan Award, launched this year, is designed to track down this phenomenon. **Eunice McMullen**, who set up the Award, reports.

The Pan-Macmillan School Library Award came about because we, as publishers, recognise the importance of the School Library and the role it plays in the development of the reading habit.

Far too many teachers are working in difficult conditions without proper resourcing – yet the early years are vital in building the readers of tomorrow.

Pan-Macmillan feel it's important to assist the enthusiastic teacher-librarian in any way we can; hence the Award. But how to pick an overall winner?

We asked for entries, in the form of a book or journal, giving an account of the school's library and all related activities. It was important that the school showed the library as a core to the curriculum and promoted reading as a pleasurable experience. The vast majority of the entries did just that! The judges (including representatives from **Books for Keeps**, the **Children's Book Foundation**, **Books for Students**, **SLA** and **SLS**) were impressed by the variety of activity including book clubs, shops, fairs, author visits and fund-raising. (Sadly, the latter was all too evident, given the obvious lack of resources due to underfunding.)

Nevertheless, the enormous amount of work and obvious enthusiasm from so many schools made the Award an extremely close-run competition.

The winning schools were as follows:

OVERALL WINNER (first prize of £5,000 worth of books):

Emmbrook Junior School, Wokingham, Berkshire

CATEGORY WINNERS (£500 worth of books each):

Infant:
St Peters C of E First School, Droitwich Spa,
Worcestershire

Primary (joint winners):
East Ayton County School, Scarborough,

Yorkshire St Thomas' School, Blackburn, Lancashire

Library Ladies

I love our library, it's really great! You can find what ever you want when ever you want! Our library ladies are great too, they give up so much time for us and don't get a penny. They are really helpful and keep our library in order very well. I don't know what we would do without them and they have got a hard task because we aren't the most tidyest people in the world. I would give them a lot of money if I could, because they do a great job.

Polly Grant
Age 10

Middle/Lower Secondary:
Manor School, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport,
Cheshire

Two special awards of £100 worth of books were awarded to Manish Primary School in the Western Isles and Breakspeare School in Hertfordshire.

The Infant category was of an especially high standard with some impressive entries. Many schools provided a lively, imaginative library environment with a good deal of emphasis placed upon pre-school. Parental involvement was greatly encouraged.

The Primary and Junior categories were also enthusiastic with outside activities such as book weeks, clubs and author visits in strong evidence.

Surprisingly, the largest entry category was Middle/Lower Secondary but the standard here was very mixed. The general library environment across this entry was often uninspiring; these libraries had the most comprehensive selection of books but there were few posters or attractive displays. The depressing lack of modern fiction in some schools was also noted (and this was evident in all categories). Although there were excellent classics being read, many schools were missing out on first-class current fiction.

To sum up the entries in the first year of this Award, it's probably best to use the words of the judging panel:

'What we think stood out, over and above the effort and excellence of entries, was how grossly under-resourced the schools were, particularly Primary schools. It makes us wonder what teachers, especially those working at the sharp end of the teaching of reading, would do were they to enjoy proper resourcing.

This Award has shown clearly the inventiveness and dedication that teachers still possess despite the appalling difficulties of recent years. One worries for the future at the implementation of LMS.' ■

During book week we had a quiz - in the quiz we had up a limerick. When the time got round to judging we found it very hard, so decided to give everyone a prize for entering. We decided to make a book all the limericks; we are reading each others' by Nicholas



Our Library

There are the fiction books, photocopier the non-fiction, the new shelves fitted on to the walls and they're all in a small room, a hexagon shape there was moved to an old classroom and now its in that used to be a corridor. The tables have been taken out and left two big where you can sit on them and read.

Suzanne Nelson
20/2/11

A Lady In a Millie
Mrs. Vial has worked in the twenty years. She has been three libraries. The first one was in the room, the second was in and the third is the new library. Some retired Mrs. Vial has taught us very carefully. A BIG Mrs. Vial.

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NEWS

Exit Brough Girling . . .

Eighteen months after taking over as head of the Children's Book Foundation, Brough Girling has left to join Two Can Publishing. 'They made him an offer he couldn't refuse,' says Book Trust's Keith McWilliams. 'Brough has really put CBF on the map - enhancing its profile nationwide with projects like the School Membership Scheme, including Book Fax and Authorbank. Already, with over 1,000 schools joining, it's exceeded our expectations for the first year. Brough leaves a tremendous achievement behind him.'

Advertisements for Brough Girling's successor will be posted in mid-September but Keith McWilliams says, 'I've been much encouraged by the interest that's being taken in the job - already a number of people prominent in the children's book world have made enquiries.' The post carries a salary that's negotiable, but comparable to the head of a fair-sized primary school, and would suit someone 'with a background in education and children's books ... also someone who's willing to build on what Brough has started.'

With Brough's predecessor in post for an even shorter length of time than he was, BfK hopes the successful candidate has long-service ambitions, too. Till an appointment is made, the day-to-day running of CBF is in the hands of Anne Sarrag.

Read With . . . Who?

As everyone knows, there's no copyright in titles. So Ladybird Books, of 'Key Words' and 'Puddle Lane' reading scheme fame, are free to launch a new scheme which according to editorial director, Mike Gabb, 'retains all that is good - the controlled vocabulary and the repetition . . . but the stories introduce a fantasy element and have a broader language base', and still call it 'Read With Me'. This, as BfK readers may recall, is also the title of Liz Waterland's well-known publication for Thimble Press (1985). It firmly rejects the need for, amongst other strategies, a controlled vocabulary and repetition - indeed it's become a standard text for the apprentice approach which uses 'real' books for initial reading. 'Appalled dismay' is how Liz Waterland describes her response to the new scheme. 'Pure coincidence,' says Lynne Bradbury of Ladybird. 'We weren't aware of Liz Waterland's book . . . our title grew from a speech-bubble in the mouth of Sam the Dog.'

OUR NEXT ISSUE IS MAGICAL . . .

- * Nick Tucker on the importance of Fairy Stories
 - * Kevin Crossley-Holland on maintaining the Fabulous
 - * Adèle Geras on her teenage fairy-tale trilogy
 - * Chris Powling on casting a spell with the National Curriculum
 - * Fiona Waters on the latest fairy-tale publications
 - * Naomi Lewis in Authorgraph
- PLUS**
- News, Comment and Reviews, reviews, reviews
all in November's BfK



Schools urged to spend two percent of their LMS budget on books - it's the minimum needed to cover the National Curriculum properly

At the Annual General Meeting of the Educational Publishers Council in the House of Commons on 21st June, Mr John Davies, Director of the Council, urged all schools and local authorities to spend at least *two percent* of their LMS budget on books and teaching materials. Only in this way, said Mr Davies, could the demands placed on schools by the National Curriculum be met. Mr Davies also called on the Government to make additional monies available to schools via central specific grants for books and teaching materials as it had done for the introduction of the GCSE examination.

Figures released by an independent organisation, the Book Trust, for 1990-91 indicated that amounts which should be spent to equip pupils properly with books for the National Curriculum were as follows:

	Primary	Secondary
Text books	£13.49 per head	£21.24 per head
Library books	£6.29 per head	£9.17 per head
TOTAL	£19.78 per head	£31.17 per head

Further details from: The Publishers Association, 19 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HJ (Tel: 071 580 6321).

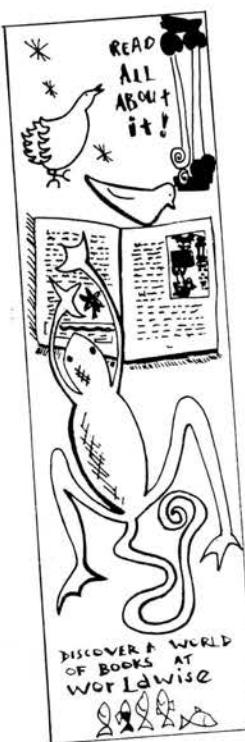
PENGUIN LAUNCH A GREEN BOOKLIST

This new list has been compiled independently by David Day who has taken a broad look at what children's books in the Penguin Group (Puffin, Viking Kestrel and Hamish Hamilton) have to offer.

Penguin Green Booklist, available, free of charge, from Puffin Books, Marketing Dept, 27 Wrights Lane, London W8 5TZ.

David Day has just published the most wonderful 'green' information book himself, *Noah's Choice*, sub-titled 'True stories of extinction and survival' (Viking Kestrel, 0 670 80661 2, £7.95). This will of course be featured in **The BfK Green Guide to Children's Books** (containing between 300 and 400 titles) due for publication early in 1991. Watch these pages . . .

Worldwise - a bookshop worth a second glance . . .



A 'not-for-profit' shop, run by a collective in Oxford since 1985, specializing in children's books concerned with a multicultural society, world development and human rights plus materials for teachers and teaching on similar issues including aid, trade, race, and minorities. What's interesting, and what caused us the second glance, is that they supply to schools on a nationwide basis. Some materials in this area, including dual-language texts (Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Vietnamese, Japanese, Chinese and European languages) can be notoriously difficult to get hold of, so it may be worth writing or phoning for their listings. Worldwise tell us they can turn round orders within two to four weeks depending on stock.

See their advertisement on page 19 or phone Worldwise on 0865 723553 (ask for Andrew). ■