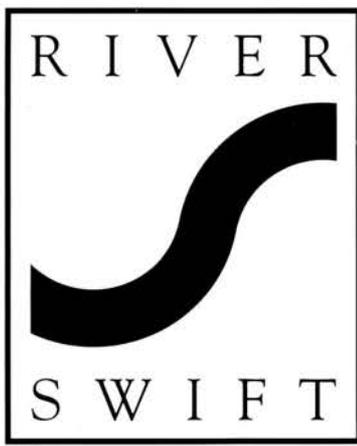


# BOOKS FOR KEEPS

September 1994 No. 88  
UK Price £2.15

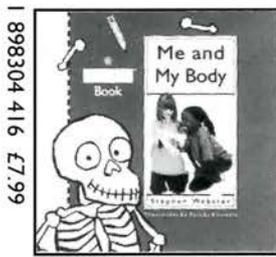


*Multicultural Matters & Poetry*



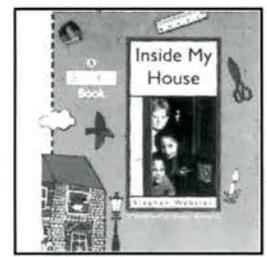
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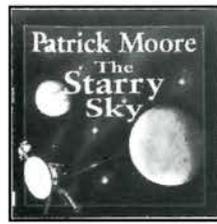
I 898304 416 £7.99

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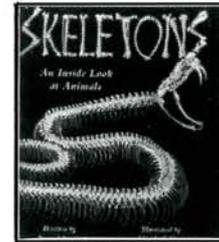


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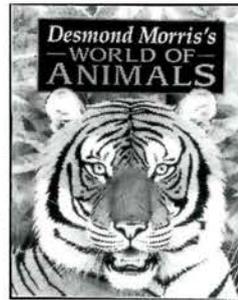
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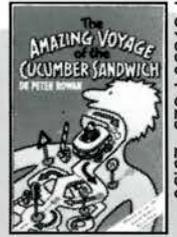
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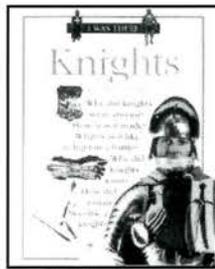


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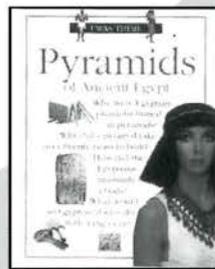
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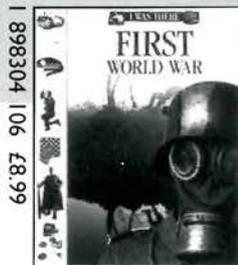


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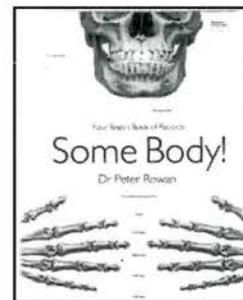


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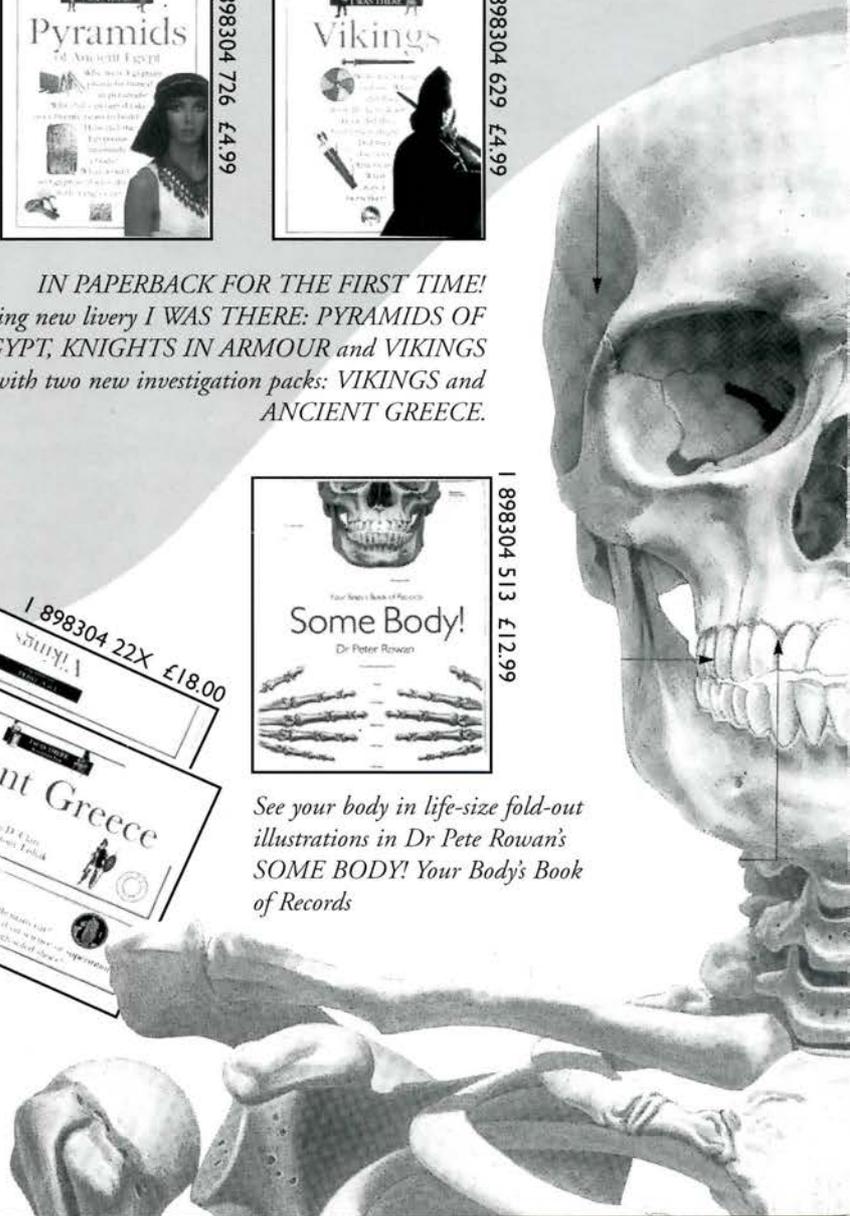


I 898304 122 £18.00



I 898304 513 £12.99

See your body in life-size fold-out illustrations in Dr Pete Rowan's SOME BODY! Your Body's Book of Records



# Contents

**3** **Editor's Page**  
News and comment from the Editor

**4** **I Din Do Nuttin . . .  
to Gregory Cool**  
Rosemary Stones on BfK's  
updated Multicultural Guide

**7** **REVIEWS**  
**Fiction**

**11** **Series**

**14** **Non Fiction**

**12** **Authorgraph No. 88**  
Jamila Gavin, interviewed by  
Stephanie Nettell

**16** **It Began in a Forest  
Rest-house**  
Ruskin Bond tells how he became  
a reader

**19** **Blindspot**  
Rachel Anderson on Edward Lear

**20** **A Poet on Poetry**  
Judith Nicholls assesses recent titles

**22** **News**

**24** **Generous Vendors**  
Morag Styles introduces  
A Caribbean Dozen

## CoverSTORY

This month our cover features Grandpa Chatterji (see Authorgraph on page 12 for details), with artwork by Caroline Binch. The paperback of Jamila Gavin's book was published by Mammoth in July and we're most grateful to them for their help in using this illustration.

## BOOKS FOR KEEPS

SEPTEMBER 1994 No. 88

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## Five years as Editor of BfK?

Can 30 issues really have slipped by since September 1989? It hardly seems possible – except when I look at the photograph heading up this column. It's time we updated *that*, certainly. No wonder a young librarian earlier this year greeted me from my train with the words 'Goodness, Chris! You're much older than I was expecting . . .'

Still, sudden and shocking though they always are, at least these anniversaries prompt a sort of stock-taking. Now is a particularly good time for it here at BfK since two projects we've been working on, alongside the magazine, have at last reached the most crucial stage of all: *we're actually offering them to our readers*. So what follows, please be warned, is a blatant sales pitch excused only by the fact that the BfK team has no alibi. We've given both our best shots. Here's the first:

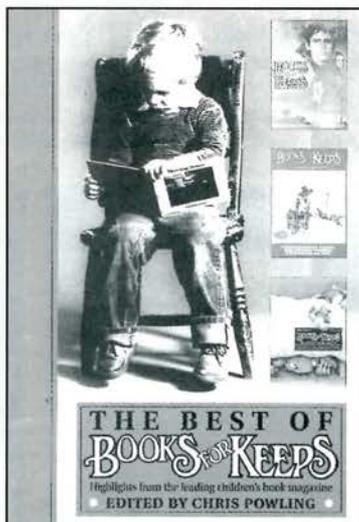
## Children's Books for a Multicultural Society 0-12



Yes, at long last, an update to our enormously successful publications of 1985-86. Ten years on, though, we've condensed our 0-7 and 8-12 Guides into one volume, under the expert guidance of Judith Elkin, enlisted Steve Rosson to provide non-fiction annotations and commissioned Rosemary Stones – who better? – to edit it. This state-of-the-art review, produced jointly with Viv Edwards and her redoubtable team at the Reading Centre, University of Reading, will be available at the end of October. For Rosemary's own account of the project, turn to pages 4-5 in this issue which arrives with an insert providing full details of how you can secure your copy.

And that's not all . . .

## The Best of Books for Keeps



When an enterprising editor from Bodley Head took up our suggestion of a hardback anthology to celebrate the first dozen years of our existence, we were delighted but a little alarmed. Could we produce a compilation that, in a totally unfamiliar but much more permanent format, did justice to our

## Editor's PAGE



CHRIS POWLING

magazine-ness and to what we stand for? Would it give a fresh impetus and perspective to pieces otherwise doomed to be archive material?

It wasn't easy.

For a start, there was the problem of choice. We soon despaired of agreeing on our own favourite articles let alone anyone else's – a good sign, of course. Also, would the assortment of authors, illustrators, critics, academics and commentators agree to being re-printed without an additional fee since any further payment, however minimal, would clobber our project at the outset? Here, an even better sign, we were overwhelmed by the goodwill of those we approached. Not a single contributor refused permission. On the contrary, every one wished the enterprise well . . . though I did relish the remark of an especially eminent writer about a piece from our earliest hand-to-mouth days: 'Chris, I didn't get a bloody fee in the first place.'

Not surprisingly, it all took a lot longer than we anticipated. Literally every word of every previous issue was read, and every picture examined, as we assembled a collection of 'snippets' to reflect our reviews, news items, editorials and other perishables we felt were needed to supplement the feature articles and give some indication that on-the-hoof is our normal mode of operation.

Finally, we got there – wherever that was. So it was a great relief when Margaret Meek, on accepting our invitation to write a Foreword, spotted instantly what we were about:

'Given the ephemeral nature of magazine writing and production, the editors are bound always to press on with the next event, challenge, order, initiative. But it is clear that some pieces, articles particularly, are a kind of social history of books, of reading, of childhood. In this volume, they are given their own chance of being "for keeps". In addition, as all good anthologists know, bringing them together creates not just a collection but also a unity, an argument, an interweaving of convictions to demonstrate what is at issue in children's literature and children's growth in literacy . . . hence the importance of this book.'

Bless you, Margaret!

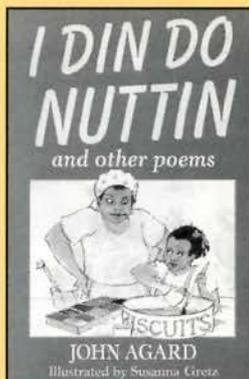
So that's what we hope you'll find irresistible – **The Best of Books for Keeps** (published by Bodley Head, 0 370 31905 2, £12.99), a handy summary of BfK's response, or series of responses, to one of the most turbulent decades in the history of children's literature. See the advertisement on page 22 for the easiest way to obtain it.

As for the rest of this magazine, my advice is to start on the back page with Morag Styles's review of *A Caribbean Dozen* which brings together our twin themes for the issue: poetry and multi-cultural matters.

In the meantime, on with the stock-taking. After I've had some new photographs taken, that is . . .

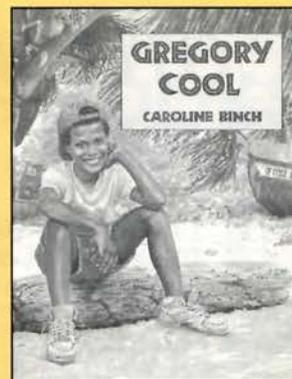
Enjoy the issue!

*Chris*



# I Din Do Nuttin... to Gregory Cool

## Rosemary Stones on the evolution of our updated BfK guide to Children's Books for a Multicultural Society



Ten years ago **Books for Keeps** published its first multicultural children's book guides, **Children's Books for a Multicultural Society**, in two editions – for 0-7s and for 8-12 year olds. The guides, written by Judith Elkin and edited by Pat Triggs, sold a staggering 35,000 copies.

For everyone concerned with children's books – writers, illustrators, publishers, teachers, librarians, parents, booksellers – the '70s and early '80s had been a period of intense and sometimes acrimonious discussion as the need became accepted (mostly) for all our children to have access to a literature free from racial stereotyping on the one hand, and reflecting the diversity of the multicultural society that we are, on the other.

In her pioneering bibliography published in 1971 by the Institute of Race Relations, **Books for Children: the Homelands of Immigrants to Britain**, the then Lambeth Children's Librarian, Janet Hill, wrote in the introduction: 'Many books are blatantly biased and prejudiced... How is an African child growing up in this country likely to react to some of the patronizing, insensitive and outmoded tales of the noble white man and the natives that are still in print? Perhaps saddest of all is that despite the rich variety of adult novels by African, Indian and West Indian writers, there are hardly any for children.'

After more than a decade of criticism and heated debate of this kind, the **Books for Keeps** 1985/6 guides brought together the evidence of an extraordinarily creative response from the children's book world to the challenge posed: the need for books of quality and imagination for and about all our children.

Where we had got to by the mid '80s can be judged from the contents of the guides. There was much of note. Amongst the writers included were Black Americans (such as Rosa Guy) who had begun to be published here. Their books had an immediate and profound impact, giving us instantaneously the definition of a 'Black voice' and laying down the highest and most demanding standards for what was possible.

Well established British writers and illustrators (Peter Dickinson, Jill Paton Walsh, Bernard Ashley, Robert Leeson, Chris Powling, Shirley Hughes among others) wrote or illustrated fine picture books and fiction that reflected multiracial realities in contemporary Britain via fantasy or social realism.

New 'Black British' writers and illustrators (Errol Lloyd, John Agard, Jamila Gavin and others) whose countries of origin were in the main Caribbean or Asian, brought new talent and a new particularity in terms of subject matter which was also often expressed in voices using forms of English renewed, as American English has been, by the impact of a colonial

history. *I Din Do Nuttin* was the title of a John Agard poetry collection from the mainstream publisher, The Bodley Head.

Attitudes towards children whose first language was not English had started to change. As it became acknowledged that being bilingual was an asset, not a handicap, teachers' centres and publishers began to produce the first dual-language books.

Publishers began actively to seek out writers and illustrators capable of creating the kinds of books that were needed. Here was a phenomenon (when will there ever be another such, wonder hard-pressed publishers) – an audience (the children of multicultural Britain) for whom there were no books.

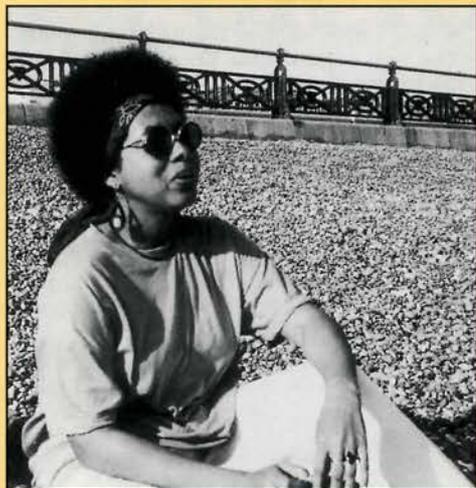
It wasn't easy to find writers who could get it right, even harder to find writers of talent and imagination who could get it right. The problems ranged from the unwitting internalisation of colonialist assumptions, painfully discovered, to the heavy demands made on the few British ethnic minority writers there were to become spokespeople for their communities on any number of pressing issues before the needs of children for books could be addressed.

Some publishers commissioned books to fill the gaps. In the main these were photo-story books with a multicultural mix of well scrubbed children dressed in their best clothes displaying polite interest in each others' customs. These 'one-of-each' books (as my daughter cynically referred to them) were at worst dull as ditch water; at best they gave enormous pleasure to many children from ethnic minority backgrounds who had never before seen themselves reflected in a book.

Ten years have sped by and this October sees the publication of a revised and updated **Books for Keeps Guide to Children's Books for a Multicultural Society**. Spanning titles for 0-12 year olds, it has been written by Judith Elkin and Steve Rosson and is published in collaboration with the Reading Centre for Reading Development who have contributed the section on dual-language titles. It contains a selection of 250 titles, chosen from a possible 500.

So, what can be deduced this time around (and after reading so many books) about the state of publishing for children in multicultural Britain?

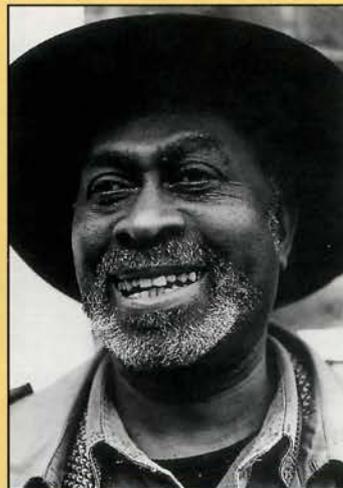
There can be no doubt that the most significant development of the last decade has been the emergence of a new generation of British born Black poets and writers - Jackie Kay who followed the success of her prize-winning adult collection, **The Adoption Papers**, with **Two's Company** and **Three Has Gone** for children; rap poet Benjamin Zephaniah (**Talking**



Grace Nichols



Jackie Kay



James Berry (photo by Lucy Rogers)



Malorie Blackman

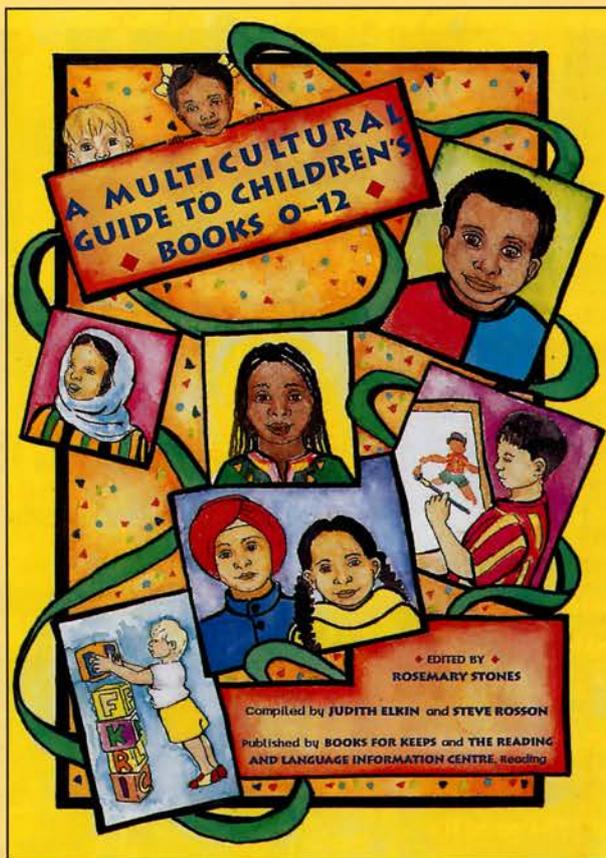
Turkeys); novelists Malorie Blackman (*Girl Wonder* and *the Terrific Twins* and many other titles) and Jackie Roy (*Soul Daddy* and *Fat Chance*) amongst others. Their work speaks to a young audience for whom multicultural realities are now part of the wallpaper.

Black illustrators are still thin on the ground. Ten years ago Lisa Kopper (the *Jafta* books) wrote about the absence of ethnic minority students at art schools and how few of the few there were, took illustration. Black illustrator, Jenny Bent, (*Calypso Alphabet* and *Come Home Soon, Baba*), writes in the new guide about how both her class teacher and head teacher at school constantly advised her against going to art school – they thought accountancy more suitable.

Above all, though, this latest guide gives us evidence that the number of talented contributors to the field (black and white) continues to grow on the one hand, and on the other that many 'household' names continue to produce dazzling books. A few examples must suffice: for picture books the Jamaican poet James Berry and illustrator Louise Brierley's Caribbean version of the nativity, *Celebration Song*, is breathtaking; illustrator Caroline Binch's *Hue Boy* and *Gregory Cool*, both set in the Caribbean, impel the reader into the world her characters inhabit; for fiction, Beverley Naidoo's *Chain of Fire* about turbulent years of resistance to apartheid and Elizabeth Laird's *Kiss the Dust* about the plight of the Kurds stay in the mind; for poetry Grace Nichols' *Come on in to My Tropical Garden* creates a lyrical sense of place; for folk tales, Trinidadian Grace Hallworth's *Cric Crac* shows her to be a consummate storyteller as is Romila Thapar in her *Indian Tales*; for non-fiction David Bygott's *Black and British* is an accessible and moving history of the British Afro-Caribbean community.

There are also, of course, new publishing directions contingent on the historical moment. Thus, the excitement and joy of the emergence, after so many painful years of struggle, of a new South Africa are reflected in a number of strong picture books. Hugh Lewin and Lisa Kopper have added *Jafta: The Homecoming* to their acclaimed series about the small South African boy longing for his father who must live far away from the family home. But 'mother says things are changing in our country and now he can come home'. Set in a shanty town, Rachel Isadora's *At the Crossroads* has a similar theme as children wait and wait for their fathers to arrive home on leave from the mines.

Of course the strengths and weaknesses of areas of children's publishing in general are also reflected in multicultural publishing. Publishers' dependence in the field of non-fiction and novelty items such as board books on co-edition partners can be seen in the paucity of multicultural



titles of particular relevance and worth in those areas. Some under-represented areas in multicultural publishing reflect the composition of British ethnic minorities – there are still relatively few titles featuring, for example, Asian or Chinese children.

Multicultural publishing for children has come a long way, though there is still, of course, a fair distance to go. What is of concern, however, is whether the many adults who will welcome and use this new **Books for Keeps** guide, will have the resources and support they need to acquire the books and actually use them with, or get them to, young people. For while the last decade has seen the publication of a wealth of multicultural books, it has at the same time seen a massive attack on the educational and public library structures which underpin their availability.

We need only to think of the abolition of the ILEA, the deprofessionalisation of the school library service, LMS, the opting out of schools, the exigent demands on the time and morale of teachers of the National Curriculum and, in the public library arena, substantial cuts in resources and a move towards contracting out library services to bidders who may or may not be cognizant of multicultural issues.

We must also add to this a new social climate of ridicule and alienation around equalities issues which it has become socially acceptable to dismiss as 'political correctness'. The intellectually challenged Report of the **PEN Committee on Censorship** which purported to give evidence that children's writers were being coerced by PC editors was enthusiastically taken up by the right wing press which gave further credence to the notion that concerns such as multicultural books for children are undesirable.

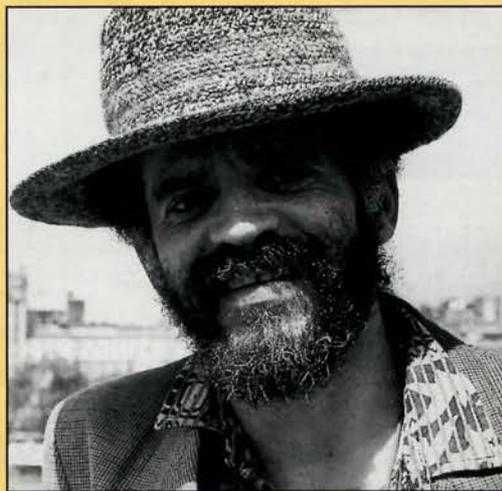
One of the key roles of this new **Books for Keeps Multicultural Guide** will undoubtedly be to reclaim, by the strength, passion, humour, exuberance and warmth of the many fine titles it encompasses within its pages, our knowledge that all our children continue to need access to books for the multicultural society. ■

Rosemary Stones is Editorial Director of Blackie, Dutton and Viking Children's Books and a writer. Her latest book, *It's Not Your Fault: what to do when your parents divorce*, is published by Piccadilly Press in October. In the '70s, she was a founder member of Children's Rights Workshop, a campaigning group that was concerned, among other issues, with gender and race stereotyping in children's books.

**The Guide to Children's Books for a Multicultural Society: 0-12** will be published at the end of October 1994, price £4.99 (inc p&p). There are also a range of bulk discounts up to 60%. To obtain a copy or further information write or phone: **Books for Keeps**, 6 Brightfield Road, Lee, London SE12 8QF. Telephone 081-852 4953.



Grace Hallworth



John Agard (photo by Richard Mewton)



Jenny Bent

# READATHON

## WHAT IS READATHON?

- Readathon is a national sponsored read which raises money for sick children. It is organised in schools throughout Britain.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

- Readathon works just like a sponsored walk or swim, except that the children taking part read books in exchange for pledges of money.

## WHERE DO THE PROCEEDS GO?

- All proceeds raised by Readathon 1994 go to the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund and the Roald Dahl Foundation, where it is spent on providing practical help for children in Britain, who are ill with cancer, leukaemia, epilepsy and other neurological disorders.

## HOW AND WHEN DOES READATHON TAKE PLACE?

- Schools, teachers, parents, libraries and booksellers come together in a festival of books and reading for Children's Book Week, which takes place during October. This event is sponsored by The Daily Telegraph, and Readathon is a vital part of this entire event.
- Readathon 1994 will be launched with Puffin on Blue Peter in the Autumn.

## FOR INFORMATION ON READATHON:

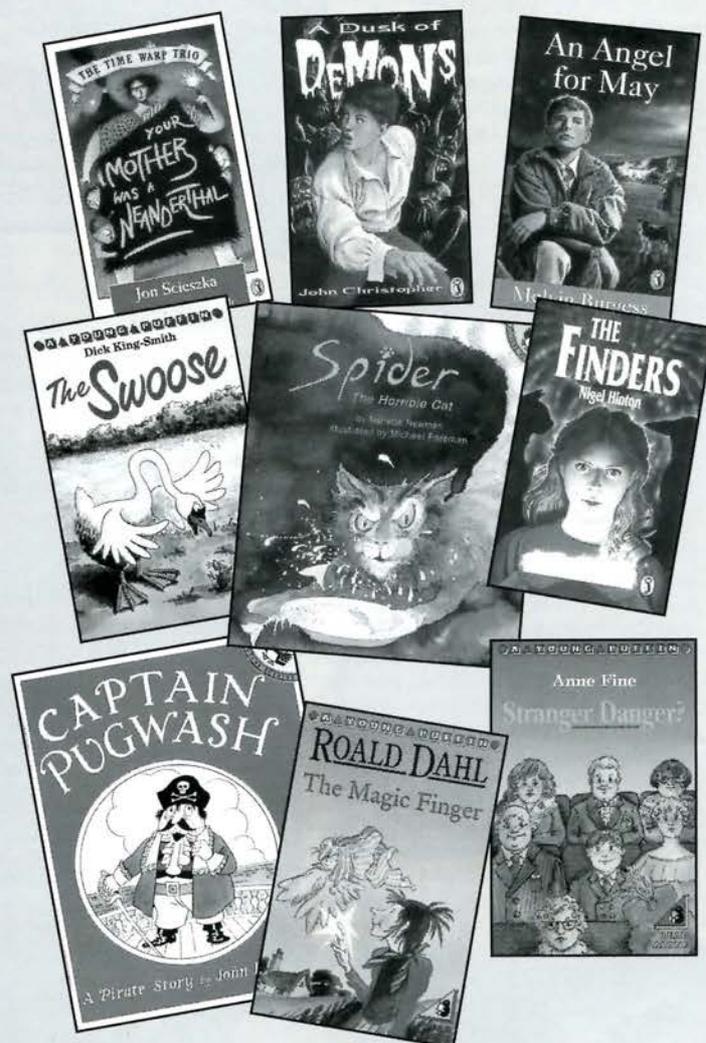
- Contact The Readathon Office on 0926 314366

## LIBRARIANS

- A Puffin Readathon display bin is available from participating library suppliers.

# TEN YEARS ON

Readathon celebrates its 10th Anniversary in 1994, having already raised nearly 7 million pounds for charity.



The Malcolm Sargent  
Cancer Fund for children



The Roald Dahl  
Foundation

PUFFIN BRINGS READATHON INTO YOUR LIBRARY.



**PUFFIN BOOKS.** Growing up with your children.

# REVIEWS

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

## Nursery/Infant REVIEWS

### Little Red Tractor To the Rescue

1 85881 058 2

### The Day Jeremy Came to Stay

0 85881 059 0

Colin Reeder, Orion  
(Apr 94), £3.50 each

It's a sad sign of the times that the leaflet tucked into these books proclaims:

*'Teachers looking for new ways into topics on Food and Farming, Animals or Machines for National Curriculum Key Stage One need look no further than Colin Reed's Little Red Tractor Stories.'*

What a kiss of death for any author! Well, the poor man needn't worry. Luckily, this dreary assertion doesn't alter the fact that these are actually rather well-written and nicely illustrated stories, all about the day-to-day doings of a farm tractor. They could even wean the odd child away from Thomas the Tank Engine – a real bonus for teachers. **LW**

### Toot! Toot! I'm Going Shopping

Sally Grindley, ill. Jenny Williams, Picture Puffin  
(Apr 94), 0 14 054316 3, £3.99

A cheerful, brightly illustrated story about a young kleptomaniac who causes havoc in the household when he decides to make a shop to play in. He has to stock it somehow. There's a point at which young children suddenly twig where all the missing things have gone and this makes reading aloud a lot of fun... even if the spirit of the Thatcher era hovers over William's attempt to sell people their own things back – just like privatisation, really. **LW**



SPLASH!

### The Pig in the Pond

Martin Waddell, ill. Jill Barton, Walker (May 94),  
0 7445 3153 5, £3.99

This delightful story is about Neligan's pig and how it solves the problem of a very hot day and an inability to swim. Worth every penny of the price for the wonderful double-page spread of the pig cavorting in the water and, later, the sight of Farmer Neligan joining him. The illustrations are a perfect foil for the rhythmic, clear, entertaining text and the quality of the presentation makes this a real winner with me and my class. **LW**

### What Happened to Wilfred Bear

Abigail Pizer, Picturemac  
(Jun 94), 0 333 59260 3, £3.99

One greets the work of Abigail Pizer with excitement, having been enchanted by earlier books. Wilfred Bear starts the book on the fly leaf looking worn and well-loved – he ends on the corresponding flyleaf looking worn and well loved, but with added stitches and a few patches! The illustrations have all the detail and charm we expect from this artist. She manages with subtle deft touches to make us empathise with Wilfred as he tumbles help-

lessly from one ghastly predicament to the next, yet she never loses that essential quality of the mute, long-suffering teddy bear. **JS**

### A Shop Full of Kittens

Ian Penney, Orchard  
(May 94), 1 85213 721 5, £3.99



Tabitha Cat lives in the basement of a large department store with her nine kittens. The kittens love playing on the various floors of the store, but as opening time approaches Tabitha needs the help of those sharing the book to find them. Ian Penney's picture book has provided endless fun with the younger children. It spans the toddler to top infant stage very successfully – what with searching for the kittens, identifying all the things in each department, choosing what one would buy if one had all the money in the world, trying to remember the names of each of the kittens and, hardest of all, searching for the initials C.A.W. on each page. Why C.A.W. remains a mystery to me. **JS**

### Eat Your Dinner

Virginia Miller, Walker  
(May 94), 0 7445 3154 3, £3.99



Another in the series about George and Bartholomew Bear. Virginia Miller specialises in portraying the small daily battles that face parent and child and gently lets us, adult and child, share in the humour as they're resolved. Her illustrations are delightful and bring about instant wry recognition. A 'must buy' for any Nursery. **JS**

## POETRY

### Emily's House

Niko Scharer, ill. Joanne Fitzgerald, Mammoth  
(Apr 94), 0 7497 1018 7, £3.50

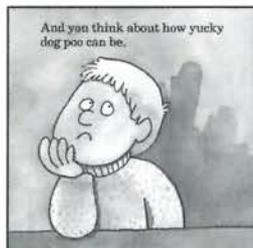
Emily lives in a perfect house except for a creaking door and a squeaky mouse. The solution is obvious to the mouse: all she has to do is get more and more animals, each to cloak the sound of the one before! The charm of Niko Scharer's cumulative poem is matched perfectly by the detail of Joanne Fitzgerald's illustrations. A book to come back to again and again! **JS**

## Infant/Junior REVIEWS

### Lily and the Present

Christine Ross, Mammoth  
(Apr 94), 0 7497 1651 7, £3.99

An odd story, this, about a little girl who decides to buy a present for her baby brother, something 'big, bright and beautiful'. She goes to the store and chooses three unlikely things for which she cannot pay and so she asks the shop to 'charge it please'. Later, she changes her mind, leaves the parcels on the shop floor and finds a balloon for 20p. But what is going to happen when the bill comes in, that's what I want to know... and how do I explain 'charge it' as a way of life to my less advantaged infants? **LW**



### Let's Get a Pet... or maybe not!

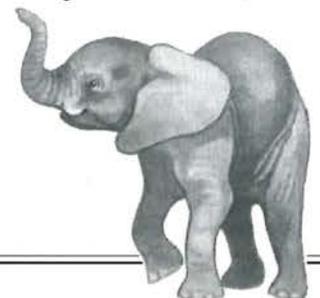
Harriet Ziefert, ill. Mavis Smith, Red Fox (May 94),  
0 09 929981 X, £3.99

I don't know in how many homes the wrong choice of pet has led to heartbreak and arguments, but it must be millions so this book can only be welcomed. Unusually for a non-fiction title, it's in a bold picture-book format with a very accessible text which is brutally honest about all aspects of pet care ('... you think about how yucky dog poo can be'). Recommended for any family thinking about being joined by a furry, scaly or feathered friend. **LW**

### Tippu

David Day, ill. Abigail Pizer, Picturemac (May 94),  
0 333 61579 4, £3.99

An ecologically aware, conservation based story about the animals on the plains of Africa and the effects, both good and bad, of the intervention of humans. It's attractively illustrated with clear pictures of the landscape and the animals, and the



Right: the perils of pets, from *Let's Get a Pet... or maybe not!*

message is less simplistic than is sometimes the case. This is a thoughtful book and would stimulate some interesting discussion. **LW**

### Donkey Magic

Caroline Sutherland, ill.  
Carolyn Dinan, Picture Puffin (May 94),  
0 14 054446 1, £3.99

When dad says he's going to sell Hogan because the donkey's become so lazy and bad-tempered, twins Doren and Dermot are horrified. They ask old Mrs Fay what can be the matter with the creature but she doesn't know and can only suggest they stand him in a fairy ring and make a wish. But where can they find a fairy ring? Luckily, Hogan discovers the answer and also solves the puzzle of why he was so bad-tempered. Through words and pictures this story powerfully evokes the close-to-nature lifestyle of rural Ireland. **JB**

### Jessy and the Bridesmaid's Dress

Rachel Anderson, ill.  
Shelagh McNicholas,  
Young Lions 'Jets' (Apr 94),  
0 00 674493 1, £2.99

Jessy is very upset when she hears that her beloved teacher, Miss Wright, is leaving Orchard House Special School. Then she learns that Miss Wright is getting married and has chosen her to be one of her bridesmaids. It's a big responsibility for young Jessie (who has Down's Syndrome and can usually turn to her sister Anna to help if she gets in

a muddle) as she'll also have to keep an eye on Miss Wright's young niece, Rosie, the other bridesmaid. Disaster nearly strikes the evening before the big day when Waffle the dog appears wearing the sleeve of Jessy's beautiful dress. However, thanks to all-night efforts by mum, everything ends happily. Warmly recommended for solo readers of junior age. **JB**

### Betsey Biggalow the Detective

Malorie Blackman, ill. Lis Toft, Mammoth (Jul 94),  
0 7497 1422 0, £2.99



The second quartet of tales featuring Betsey Biggalow, an assertive young miss who lives on a Caribbean island. Herein, the ever determined Betsey learns a lesson about bike riding the hard, or rather, the wet way; entertains friends and relations with her musical renditions; plays detective and tracks down her missing teddy bear and more; and flies a kite - well, almost. The warmth and humour of the tales is underlined by

Lis Toft's charming line drawings. Stories to read and re-read, either alone or shared. **JB**

### The Ghost at Codlin Castle and Other Stories

Dick King-Smith, ill.  
Amanda Harvey, Puffin  
(May 94), 0 14 034962 6, £3.25

The events related in this set of light and enigmatic little yarns are fleeting episodes that leave barely a ripple on the stream of history. A garden gnome tumbles into a pond, a sausage shaped omnivore drifts into our world then out of it again, two boys get into difficulties attempting to retrieve a message in a bottle from a river. Yet the author manages to imbue these episodes with such vivid hues of mystery and humour that an audience of 8-year-olds were fascinated and delighted by them. An excellent collection for storytime, and for newly independent readers to enjoy on their own. **GH**

### The Dog Who Had Kittens

Polly M Robertus, ill. Janet Stevens, Oxford (Apr 94),  
0 19 272270 0, £2.99

A lovely story about a basset hound dealing with a cat who considers herself to be a very superior feline and is particularly obnoxious as the limelight of motherhood rests upon her. Baxter's experiences as he copes with the situation and eventually becomes honorary father is superbly depicted in text and illustration. The sadness he experiences as the kittens go to new homes is

sensitively drawn and the end is satisfying to one and all. A really good book: it doesn't duck the issues, the animals remain true to their likely characteristics and we're left with wry smiles on our faces. **JS**

### The Fit Fat Cat

Wendy Smith, Picture Puffin (May 94),  
0 14 054447 X, £3.99



One day Angel found Mr Grey stuck in the cat-flap. Angel's father had to take the door off its hinges to free him. "That animal is a pest," he said crossly. "Either he gets thinner or out he goes!"

Angel's cat, Mr Grey, with his up and down weight problem is a most adorable hero. As Angel struggles to help him keep his bulk under control we share in his adventures - shooting to stardom and falling into disgrace - until Angel hits on the perfect solution. This romp of a book with zany illustrations and text, full of dry humour, will appeal to adult and child alike. **JS**

## Junior/Middle REVIEWS

### Blue Bird

Maurice Maeterlinck, ill.  
Brian Wildsmith, Oxford  
(Apr 94), 0 19 272262 X, £3.99



I'll admit it straightaway - I've adored Brian Wildsmith's work for at least 100 years, if not longer. This is no exception. The gentle story of the ill and unhappy girl who could only be cured by a blue bird is magical and bewitching. The illustrations with their wealth of colour, detail and collage manage to be subtle and

yet jewel-like in their brilliance. A wonderful volume to browse through time and time again. **PH**

### Fire on the Wind

Geoffrey Trease, Piper  
(May 94), 0 330 33362 3, £2.99

Hugh and Sarah meet in the London of 1666 and their mutual love of books nurtures their blossoming friendship. Events overtake them when they must flee for their lives in the face of the Great Fire.

The story is hallmarked by Trease's meticulous research and I can think of no better introduction to history than to be immersed in a well-constructed story whose protagonists challenge stereotypes and bring events sharply to life. Links between English and History are often fruitful: this one, used with Year 7 and 8 pupils, will be especially so. **VR**

### Two's Company **POETRY**

Jackie Kay, ill. Shirley Tourret, Puffin (May 94),  
0 14 036952 X, £3.50

In her first collection of poetry for children, Jackie Kay's writing has a freshness and directness which children will immediately recognise. The poems reflect her Glasgow upbringing, with evocative descriptions of Burns Suppers (*Patrick Burgh Hall? Partick, surely!*) Hogmanay, and island holidays.



Her use of Scots dialect with wonderfully descriptive words - skelf, glaikit, cludgie - needs no explanations (although they are given). The poems will strike many chords with children - bullying, racist taunts and adoption, as well as the pleasures of having an imaginary friend. One of the most refreshing and original poetry books I've seen for some time. **VB**

### The Dancing Bear

Michael Morpurgo, ill.  
Christian Birmingham,  
Young Lions (Apr 94),  
0 00 674511 3, £2.99

7-year-old Roxanne, who lives alone with her 'dour and unloving' grand-

father, where life is ruled by the mountains, sheep, snow and drought, finds and adopts Bruno the bear cub. Initial opposition is calmed by the unique relationship bear and child develop. Then media interest and the outside world intervenes: Bruno is to become a performing, dancing bear and Roxanne a singing star. It's a very moving tale told in the first person, which gives it still more credibility and pathos. The complexity of issues surrounding 'animals in captivity' is underlined by the simple reporting narrative. A memorable read. **GR**

### Smart Girls

Robert Leeson, ill. Axel Scheffler, Walker (May 94),  
0 7445 3193 4, £2.99

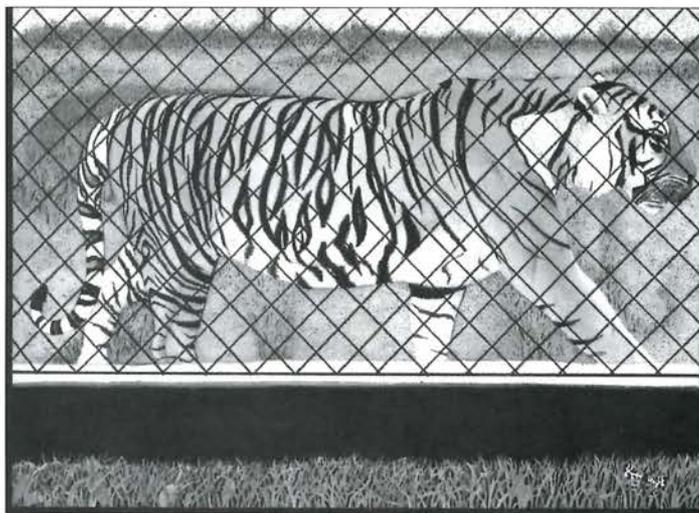
Five folktales from England, Ireland, Norway, Egypt and the Ukraine, which, as the title suggests, have girls as strong main characters. Mary remains unruffled by ghosts, finding their 'eerie radiance' acceptable 'because it saved on candles'; and poor, clever Marusya, who knows the injustice of money made through ill-means, wisely acknowledges and proves that 'No matter how clever we are some things are out of our grasp'... and so on.

Entertaining, thought-provoking and a source of invaluable learning. It was also runner-up for this year's Guardian Award. **GR**

## The Rain Forest Storybook

Rosalind Kerven,  
Cambridge (Apr 94),  
0 521 43533 1, £4.75

The stories gathered here have been adapted from the oral traditions of the forest dwellers of the Amazon, Central Africa and South East Asia. In keeping with those traditions, they are related in a conversational style and are open enough to carry ironic allusions to the modern world. The prevalent mood, however, is of poignant remoteness as the storyteller, in relating how life and death customs originated, conjures up visions of a vanished, magical time when people could converse with animals, plants and elemental forces. The sense of sadness accompanying these fascinating legends is deepened by a factual commentary on how the rainforests and the cultures they support are being deliberately exterminated. This is moving and important reading. **GH**



'Here puss . . . come here pussy . . .' From Zoo.

## Zoo

Anthony Browne, Red Fox  
(Apr 94), 0 09 921901 8, £4.50

A bleakly satirical record of a family

day out at the zoo. The text might have been written by an articulate 10-year-old recording the experience in school the following Monday morning; the impact of the book is,

of course, in the juxtaposition of this dry and dutiful account with Browne's ultra realistic pictures, which reveal the oafishness, ugliness and asininity of the human observers, alongside the majestic despair of the caged beasts. A very sad book, but essential reading. **GH**

## Cyril MC

Mary Hoffman, ill.  
Martin Chatterton, Puffin  
(May 94) 0 14 036470 6, £2.99

A boisterous rap poem about the eponymous school child, a restless, smirking, strident, decibel-drunken reprobate who can't attend to anything unless it has rhythm and rhyme. We all know the type. Hoffman obviously tends to sympathise with this dreadful character, for whom she accordingly creates an understanding teacher and a rosy future as a highly successful noise polluter. The children I read this stuff to enjoyed it for some reason, and couldn't understand why I found it so loathsome. **GH**

**POETRY**

# Middle/Secondary REVIEWS

## The Puffin Book of Science Fiction

Chosen by Nicholas Fisk,  
ill. Nick Harris, Puffin  
(May 94), 0 14 034797 6, £3.99



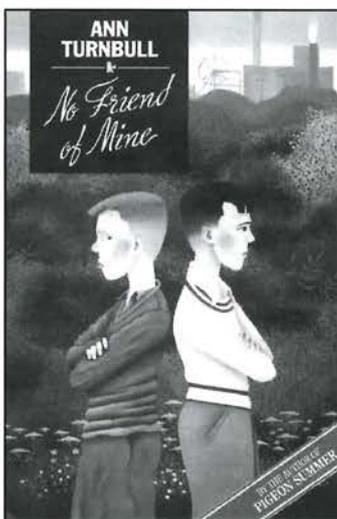
To say these are stories isn't quite true; they are largely bits of stories from masters such as Clarke, Wells, Bradbury, Vonnegut, etc. with surprises like *The Book of Revelations* and Jan Mark. As such they form a useful introduction and taster for the SF seeker to discover new reads and (maybe) unfamiliar authors. Daniel Keyes' 'Flowers for Algernon' might come into this category, which Fisk places on his list of '... our century's "Finest Short Stories"'. Worth the investment of a library copy. **DB**

## Ghost Song

Susan Price, Faber  
(May 94), 0 571 16939 2, £3.99

Tales within tales weave and intertwine in a modern piece of myth-making by a very skilled storyteller. This challenging novel complements the award-winning *Ghost Drum*

with another story of the Shaman in the north lands and their terrifying and sometimes cruel magics. Ambrosi, by destiny a Shaman's apprentice and by inclination son of his ageing hunter father, is eventually bound to Bitten-by-a-Fox, viciously condemned to being a Laplander in the light and a wolf in darkness. Salvation for both depends one upon the other. Brilliant, but it'll require stickability. **DB**



## No Friend of Mine

Ann Turnbull, Walker  
(May 94), 0 7445 2471 7, £4.99

Class conflict and tests of true friendship lie at the heart of this fairly light novel set in 1937, I guess somewhere in Staffordshire. Bullied Lennie finds a friend in Ralph and soon realises they are poles apart yet drawn together by a need for companionship. The latter seems to have so much more material but in the end he's the one who cannot sustain the ill-matched bond and breaks it with his ungentlemanly conduct. Worth a copy, mainly for boys. Bully victims might take some comfort from it. **DB**

## Boom Boom Loopy and the Rainforest Remedy

Mark Foster and Phillip Burrows, **ORIGINAL**  
Bodley Head (May 94),  
0 370 31947 8, £5.99



Describing itself as a 'graphic novel' this must be cartoonwriting at its near best. The story of an extremely unconventional way of saving a rainforest bounces along with restless energy from page to page. The vocabulary is user-friendly so even those most actively allergic to books will find the action and humour compulsive. The colours are dazzling and the reading non-threatening. **PH**

## The Rag Bag Family

Yvonne Coppard, Red Fox  
(Jun 94), 0 09 926621 0, £2.99

Rita joins the Browns' noisy foster family when her Gran is taken into hospital, leaving her alone. Withdrawn and unsure of herself, she faces a further crisis when the mother she has never known enters

her life.

Yvonne Coppard writes without pretension, tackling difficult issues head on and creating, in Rita, a character who enjoys all the reader's sympathies. We travel with her through her journey to emotional security and when she emerges, bruised but intact at the end of the book, we've shared in the learning process. Highly recommended for years 7 to 9. **VR**

## The Great Elephant Chase

Gillian Cross, Puffin  
(Apr 94), 0 14 036361 0, £3.99

An epic story of rich imagination set in America at the turn of the century. The town was turning out to see a great wonder, a beast the size of a house – a real elephant! Tad had heard they were giving rides so he slipped away from his mean aunt and her horrible lodger Mr Jackson, to stare in awe as the great beast lumbered past. When he saw the gaily painted railroad car, which housed the animal, Tad couldn't help slipping inside. Suddenly, a heavy foot thudded on the ramp and a huge black shape blocked the doorway. The ramp clanged shut. 'And after fifteen years of being watched and picked on . . . Tad Hawkins slid out of Markle so secretly that no one, except an elephant, knew he had gone.' A fascinating book which just begs a sequel. **VB**

## Throwaways

Ian Strachan, Mammoth  
(Jun 94), 0 7497 1294 5, £3.50

In the near future, the gap between rich and poor has left many children abandoned – throwaways – a name that catches their place in an economic system where they live amongst the waste of the rest of society. We follow 11-year-old Sky and her little brother, Chip, as they make their way in the community of throwaways. It's a very powerful

story which despite awful detail and events - particularly the imagined smell of the waste the children sift through for food and tradable things - is full of optimism about the resilience of children and their innate spirit of community. AJ

### Lucky

Roger McGough, ill.  
Sally Kindberg, Puffin (May 94), 0 14 036172 3, £3.50

**POETRY**

A  
void

A mix of poems, sequences of phrase definitions, letters, famous last words and a tabloid front-page full of verbal play and fun. The way words can turn the world around is always a source of pleasure but 'The

Dada Christmas Catalogue' is the only section where the ideas leave unsettling touches - 'An underwater ashtray... Contact lens adhesive.' AJ

### Flour Babies

Anne Fine, Puffin (Apr 94),  
0 14 036147 2, £3.50

A superb book: Anne Fine makes wonderful stories out of the unlikely of material, blending comedy with a fine streak of poignant human understanding. All the pupils do a science project, but these pupils are the lowest of the low and take on sacks of flour as babies to which they act as surrogate fathers. It begins with a misunderstanding as Simon Martin is sure he overhears the promise of being able to explode the flour sacks at the end but, for Simon, the flour sack becomes a real baby to which he talks earnestly, trying to solve the question of his own father leaving him as an infant. The interrogation is both moving and very funny and the finale well! After **Madame Doubtfire** let's hope they film this. AJ

### Dog Bites Goalie

Michael Hardcastle, ill.  
Trevor Parkin, Mammoth  
(Jun 94), 0 7497 1681 9, £2.50

A series of neatly told short stories whose plots are embedded in games of football. The stories are easily read, often exciting and the knowledgeable links with the game make them ideal for many readers - especially those who may well avoid or distrust most fiction. You might need to rip the cover off for older pupils who may think it's too young for them despite the age of many of the characters and the more aggressive illustrations inside the book. AJ

### A Bone from a Dry Sea

Peter Dickinson, Corgi  
(May 94), 0 552 52797 1, £2.99

Alternating chapters of Then and Now, this book tracks early human life in the wonders of Li's developing consciousness of what she can make happen and the linked, slow

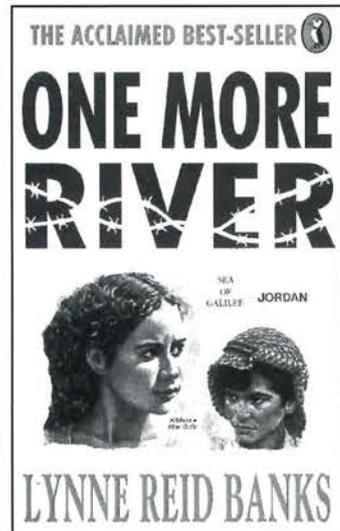
unearthing of fossil remains in present-day Africa. It's a fascinating, thought-provoking story about human development with fiction providing the solid base of possibility made vividly real. AJ

### Land of the Four Winds

Veronica Freeman Ellis,  
ill. Sylvia Walker, **ORIGINAL**  
Just Us Books  
(Mar 94),  
0 940975 39 4, £5.99

From a world of tropical abundance Neejee, the evil water spirit, washes away the colour and life. Only Tonieh with his medicine talk and some extraordinary tools can restore it. This is a glorious fantasy rich in imagination, folklore and a West Indian dialect that makes it perfect for a read-aloud. Do pre-read it carefully though, the dialect is not as easy as it sounds! PH

## Older Readers **REVIEWS**



### One More River

Lynne Reid Banks, Puffin  
(May 94), 0 14 037021 8, £4.99

Lesley's father feels his family's Jewishness is compromised by their wealthy Canadian lifestyle. When he decides they will live on an Israeli kibbutz, Lesley is convinced she'll be unable to adapt to the austere conditions. At first, she is physically and emotionally drained, but with her acceptance of the situation comes the realisation that she's where she belongs. She becomes briefly acquainted with an Arab boy and the relationship symbolises the moral dilemma thrown into vivid relief by the Six Days' War.

**One More River** raises issues of adaptability and change, but above all questions the morality of a victory which humiliates the conquered forces. This would make a useful and rewarding addition to GCSE reading lists. VR

### Tunes for Bears to dance to -

Robert Cormier, Lions  
(May 94), 0 00 674756 6, £2.99

A short, subtle study of untimely

death and its consequences, in which Cormier explores the nature of evil and the resilience of the human spirit.

Henry's elder brother is killed by a hit-and-run driver; Mr Levine's family were murdered by the Nazis. Each has his own path to acceptance and forgiveness - Henry wants a monument for his brother's grave and Mr Levine carves his family and village in wood. Events come full circle when Henry destroys Mr Levine's model. He recognises the evil he's done and negates it by refusing his reward; thus the process of regeneration and regrowth begins.

A small, profound book with a potent philosophical message for able and sensitive readers in Years 9 to 11. VR

### They Do Things Differently There

Jan Mark, Bodley **ORIGINAL**  
Head (May 94),  
0 370 31943 5, £7.99

Select your readers carefully for this challengingly imaginative collection of densely layered short stories. Language, concepts and humour are sophisticated: invention runs energetically riot.

Compton Rosehay 'overlays' the two villages from which it takes its name: it exists as an alternative reality, sharing time and space with its ancient progenitor. Within this 'double dimension' Jan Mark creates a cast of improbable characters who amaze and entertain from first to last. They most certainly 'do things differently there'. Lovers of wit and shrewd observation, read on. VR

### In Love with an Urban Gorilla

Steve Skidmore and Steve Barlow, Piccadilly (Apr 94),  
1 85340 243 5, £5.99

A series of letters between Sammy and her friend Camille, chronicling



her obsessions which embrace numerous assorted causes from Greenpeace, parents, teachers and a complicated love life. She joins the Green Action Group, not only because of her principles but more importantly, because her latest passion, Dave, is a member. The education system also comes under Sammy's scrutiny, not least those engaged in dispensing it: 'Adolf our head, looked as gruesome as ever - Michael reckoned he'd spent his holidays in the lab getting a new bolt put in his neck! But if we thought Adolf was The Creature from the Pit, that's only because we hadn't seen our new form teacher.'

Not an original idea - Adrian Mole got there first - but wickedly funny nevertheless. It will probably be enjoyed by adults even more than children. VB

### The Year of the Stranger

Allan Campbell McLean,  
Canongate Kelpie (Apr 94),  
0 86241 485 7, £2.99

If the cover artist had done his homework more diligently, he might not have depicted Calum Og as dark-haired, clad in stout hiking boots and the latest gear from an outdoor supply shop circa 1994. He

is after all, a barefoot crofter with hair the colour of bleached straw - date 1877!

A pity, as this is a fine book which tells the story of the iniquitous Skye Clearances when crofters were banished from their meagre lands by wealthy southern landowners. Then, one day, a mysterious stranger arrived with his pet monkey who was to have a profound effect on their lives, in particular on Calum Og with whom he shared his secret of the Cave of Gold. A provocative story of cruelty and injustice in a dark period of Scots history. VB

### The Boy in the Bubble

Ian Strachan, Mammoth  
(Jun 94), 0 7497 1685 1, £3.50

'... I crept across the grass to get a better look at the weird contraption. I expected plants or pets but lying full length in it, wearing only blue swimming trunks, was a boy!' That was Anne's first meeting with Adam who lives permanently in a plastic tent to protect him from the outside world, having been born with no immune system. Eventually the two fall in love. But how could a relationship develop without being able to touch, let alone kiss! Then comes an opportunity for Adam to have a bone marrow transplant in the hope that it will correct his deficiency and allow him to lead a normal life. Ian Strachan's powerful and moving story avoids any hint of sentimentality and the book fully deserves the Children's Book Award and the Lancashire Book Award - both chosen entirely by young readers. VB

### Reviewers in this issue:

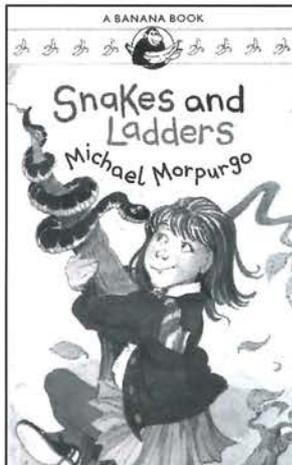
David Bennett, Jill Bennett,  
Val Bierman, Pam Harwood,  
George Hunt, Adrian Jackson,  
Val Randall, Gill Roberts,  
Judith Sharman and  
Liz Waterland.

# Series Titles REVIEWS

Some of the latest chosen by Steve Rosson.

What can one say about Scripture Union's 'Read by Myself' titles which they proudly announce have been 'carefully edited to conform to National Curriculum criteria' and 'have been assessed at Key Stage 2 Level 2/3'? The only possible response is to scream 'Aaargh' and move swiftly on to those who know what they're doing.

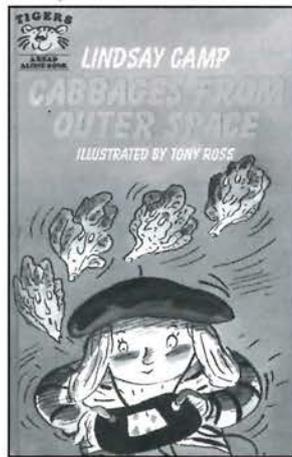
At the risk of qualifying for what Basil Fawley called 'a degree in the bleedin' obvious', let me say that some people who do know what they're about are the folk at Heinemann with their Banana Books. The latest group of six is so strong it's almost impossible to select the ones to review, but I suppose I'll have to.



Deft characterisation by Michael Morpurgo enables him to take a fairly conventional 'escaped animal in school' story and introduce the themes of single-parent families, frail elderly relatives and mental bullying in **Snakes and Ladders** (0 434 96636 3, £3.99) with illustrations by Lesley Smith. Wendy is small, thin and quiet and is known as 'weedy Wendy' and 'weepy Wendy', especially by the awful Simon McTavish. Her decision to take Grandad's pet snake Slinky to feature in the class Interesting Things Exhibition inevitably leads to problems but all is resolved happily – including the trouble with Simon.

**Spike's Specs** (ill. Anthony Lewis, 0 434 97809 4, £3.99) is a fine debut by Elizabeth Dale. Spike, banned from the school soccer team, is forced to attend the Brownie jumble sale with Mum. It's as full of stupid, giggly girls as he feared but he does find the tatty denim jacket of his dreams in the pocket of which are the specs of the title. They enable him to detect lies from truth. After a strong opening (including some marvellous bargaining with a shrewd Brownie) it falls away rather into a fairly predictable 'crook-catching' caper but this is surely an author to look out for.

Tony Ross's distinctive style of drawing adds a lot of the humour to Lindsay Camp's **Cabbages from Outer Space** (Andersen 'Tigers', 0 86264 486 0, £4.99). Emma is addicted to computer games so when Uncle Richard brings her a Mini Max Double X Personal Entertainment System (a Gameboy by any other name) she's able to play in bed, on the loo, eating her breakfast and to and from school. She's so engrossed in the game on her way home from Rebecca's, she doesn't realise she's being tracked by real aliens who are then attacked by the dreaded Thargons. As the text takes us through the various levels of the game involving Cosmic Cabbages and Sonic Shredders the pictures show us Emma's unwitting role in this galactic battle.



Dick King-Smith scores again with **Mr Potter's Pet** (Viking 'Kites', 0 670 84256 7, £5.99) illustrated by Hilda Offen. 50-year-old Peter Potter is finally rid of his domineering parents thanks to food poisoning brought on by a dicey tin of dressed crab. At last he can satisfy his craving for a pet – in this case a Greater Indian Hill-Mynah he names Everest. Now this bird can talk – and I mean *talk*.



"Feeling guilty, huh?" he said.  
"Yes."  
"Suit yourself," said Everest. "In fact, why not tell her yourself? If you don't like the look of her, all you have to do is say, 'I will let you know my decision later.'"

When he hears about Peter's dismal life so far, he decides to take him under his wing. A lot of the dialogue between man and bird is hilarious and there's a nicely old-fashioned resolution as Peter re-discovers his long-lost childhood sweetheart.

Annie Dalton's **Ugly Mug** (ill. Kate Aldous, Hamish Hamilton 'Antelope', 0 241 13377, £5.50) is also a bird; a fledgling sparrow discovered by Ned one rainy day in a shop doorway. Ned is having a tough time. Grandad has died, Mum and Dad have split up and it seems as though nothing will ever be the same again. A weekend at Dad's new flat turns out to be a disaster – no furniture, a black-and-white TV, someone downstairs called Gretta who seems to be important in Dad's life and beefburgers for tea when Ned is now a vegetarian. The bird acts as a healing agent as Ned re-establishes his relationship with Dad and Gretta, who's not at all what Ned assumed, teaching him that 'The best changes always make the world a bigger place, with *more* happiness for everyone, not less'.

And finally a few issues ago I suggested we might see the re-appearance of Littlest, the Echinodin hatched out by Olly and Elly. Well here he is in Terrance Dicks's **Littlest on Guard** (ill. Bethan Matthews, Hamish Hamilton 'Gazelle', 0 241 13383 1, £4.50). Would that my pools predictions were so accurate.■

## A MULTICULTURAL GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S BOOKS 0-12

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# Authorgraph No.88

Jamila Gavin

INTERVIEWED BY STEPHANIE NETTELL



Photographs by Katie Vandyck.

More than most of us, the Fates had woven the pattern for Jamila Gavin's life long before she was born in 1941. Britain was at war; in 1947 India would signal the end of the British Empire, and the agony of partition would follow. Looking back, she sees her parents' marriage and her early years reflecting the history of Britain and India, and the Gandhian movement in which her father was so heavily involved.

It was the memory, the *feel*, of those years, unconsciously absorbed as a child or rooted out from family reminiscences and photos, that simmered beneath the surface 'for years and years and years' while she struggled to find the medium to express it.

'I'm not a natural diary keeper, and my memory is not detailed for autobiography. But fiction allows you to invent! *The Wheel of Surya* used material from the first five years of my life, and I made up the rest or gleaned it from all sorts of sources.' It's brought both excitement and a kind of peace to dig at last into this fertile ground.

The Fates spun together two threads from opposite ends of the world.

Jamila's (pronounced Jameela) mother was a Staffordshire girl, born of a pottery background, who won a scholarship to the local girls' school and on to history at Cambridge. 'She wanted to teach, and her itchy feet also made her want to break away, so she got her training at the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in London and was sent out to Persia. There she met my father, who had done the same thing from the other side of the world.'

Her father's family had been Christian for several generations: the story goes that his great-great-grandfather, a soldier in the British Army, saved the life of a British officer called Phillips and got converted for his pains. 'Traditionally, if you're converted to Christianity you change your name to a Christian one, so all my family in India are Phillips.' 'No,' she responds to my cries of 'Overtones of slavery!', 'it's not so much a sign of subservience as a way of marking yourself out from the rest of the community. You can tell who's a Sikh, who's a Muslim, a Hindu, a Parsee, by their surnames, so he wouldn't have been identified as a Christian if he had kept his Indian name.'

These two young people met in the Bishop's house in Tehran amid, she assumes, 'an extraordinarily liberal atmosphere, for these were the days when it was completely unacceptable for a white woman to marry a dark-skinned man, and she was not trying to make great statements about life or anything.'

Her father and his young wife were posted to Batala, in the Punjab, living in an abandoned three-tiered palace, a hunting lodge of the son of the last Rajah of the Punjab. But Jamila happened to be born in Mussoorie, just over the border in Uttar Pradesh, in the foothills of the Himalayas where her mother had gone to escape the August heat.

'The British in India, people like Curzon, seem to have been genuinely interested in the whole culture, its architecture, flora and fauna, listing and protecting its monuments, temples and palaces. And around 1856, Frances Baring, a young man serving as a missionary-teacher who had met an extraordinary woman called Maria Tucker - another Englishwoman Doing Her Duty - came across Batala. They wanted to set up schools for the children of the Punjab, and finally all over India.

'Maria Tucker was known as A Lady of England, and of course, being India, this was immediately put into initials, ALOE. What they meant was quickly forgotten - they became just letters after her name. When recently I went back to the graveyard' (where Jamila's younger infant brother is also buried) 'it was pillaged, barely recognisable with cattle roaming over it, but there was this little grave, its marble and lettering intact: Maria Tucker ALOE.

'This was the legacy my father inherited, Batala Primary School ALOE. Yes, the teacher in *The Eye of the Horse* who gets the school going again could have been my father, but is more like Baring, who moved all sorts of little heavens and hells to get funding for his school there.' Later her father, foreseeing India's future independence and a need for education, guided the palace into becoming Baring Christian College for training teachers up to the age of 16; he became its Head and the family moved into the bungalow.

On that visit, she found the palace, the road, the lake, unchanged, just as in *The Wheel of Surya*, but with later years superimposed - new buildings have grown round it, the water drained away. But up the steps that used to lead to her nursery, out on to the upper balcony, she could still look across to the lake. *Did* anyone drown in it? Not children, but teenage boys, students of her father: 'I must have been no more than five, and for some reason I never did tell my parents I'd been there, since the frantic efforts to recover the bodies, the wailing and so on. And there's the taboo about touching dead bodies, affecting resuscitation - that's why in my story, to Marvinder's despair, no one would touch Jaspal.'

Her life seemed governed by the whim of history. In 1944, during a misleading lull in the war, P & O sent a liner to India, and her mother, anxious about her own parents, took Jamila and her older brother to London in time for the next wave of bombing. In 1947 her pregnant mother, tuned in to the atmosphere of danger (Batala slipped in and out of Pakistan as maps were constantly redrawn), returned with them again to Ealing, where her sister was born.

At home, their father, struggling to keep the school going and helping refugees, repeatedly had miraculous escapes. He has never really spoken of the scenes he lived through. When Jamila gave him a draft of those *Wheel of Surya* chapters, his first reaction - 'You can't begin to know what it was like!' - told her she had failed; his final comment on the rewritten version - 'How did *you* know all this?' - was her reward. 'I hadn't wanted to go too far, but if I didn't get the essence of the horror I would be betraying the whole reality.'

When the CMS left Batala, her father took up a teacher-training headship in Poona, where Jamila went to school. She was 12 when the musical talent, which was to dominate most of her life, became unmistakable: her mother had been secretary for Trinity College, and visiting examiners who stayed with them would tell her to send her child to England. Anxious, anyway, about her children's education, she moved for the last time to London; with tourism on the point of developing, her husband left teaching to open up a London office, eventually running the Government of India Tourist Office. They were all together in England.

'Music in those days was all I wanted to do, especially composing.' Notting Hill and Ealing High School got her a junior exhibition for Saturday study at Trinity, where they began to channel her into a solo career. But she has always been captivated by the theatre, too, taking speech and drama - management and writing more than acting - as her subsidiary at college. 'I'd have loved to have directed - I was very bossy.' (Bossy? This sweet-faced, soft-voiced woman? Well, she says so.)

All the family had been talented, her mother's piano shifted on a bullock cart every time they moved. 'But what I never had in all those years was indigenous Indian culture, because this wretched Christian side of my father's family meant it was completely Western-orientated: we spoke English and went to English-medium schools, though I once had smatterings of Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi through playing with children. So of course I am more comfortable in Western culture. I don't live in an area of tension, and people don't find me foreign to meet, so I forget I'm actually a different colour - it's a shock when in some way I step out of line and get the "Go-back-where-you-came-from" treatment.'

A scholarship to Trinity as a pianist was followed by conservatoires in Paris and Berlin. But, uncertain about being confined, she recalled the thrill of two teenage opportunities (playing Scarlatti for Huw Wheldon on live TV, and recording a 'complete aural diary of India', for radio and the BBC archives), and on returning to London began a studio manager's job with the BBC in 1964 - talks and current affairs, but specialising in music. Even supplemented with TV documentary scripts, this came to seem restricting, and at 26 she managed to move across to television production and directing for Music and Arts.

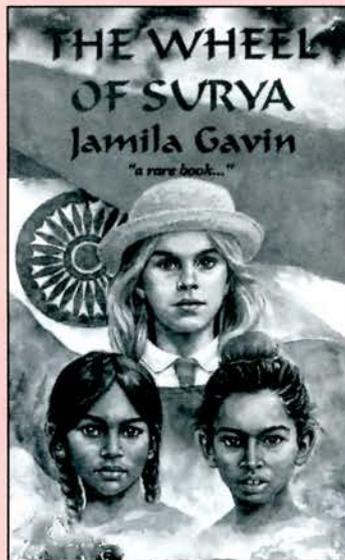
There she met a young producer, Barry Gavin, who was to become a respected director of concert programmes and contemporary music throughout Europe; their children, Rohan (Sanskrit for 'musical scale') and Indra, are now in their early twenties. But that old feeling of frustration returned: a Cotswold home in Chalford meant a peaceful sanctuary for Barry but an isolating trap for her, and they parted five years ago. Today she lives in Stroud, in a Victorian terrace of narrow, steep-staired little cottages that look over to Laurie Lee's Slad valley, marvelling at the chance at last to express her own creativity. Working alone - the piano or writing - combines with the renewed pleasure of teamwork arising from the Cheltenham Festival Committee.

She had begun writing seriously for publication in 1979, with *The Orange Tree*. A plan for an educational series - about an Indian family moving to

Kenya and then England, centring on young Jaspal - collapsed but later Methuen's Miriam Hodgson saw in the material a much more ambitious book. 'Suddenly in *The Wheel of Surya* I was able to express the very thing I had loved, everything that has haunted me through my life.' Here was the key at last.

There will be a third book for Jaspal and Marvinder, and *The Eye of the Horse*'s shiveringly emotional ending deliberately spells nothing out. 'Beryl has gone off to America, and Jaspal is a damaged boy harbouring a lot of anger - all the seeds of terrorism are there. I don't actually know their fates. I used to get up excited in the morning, not knowing what the next bit would be. It felt like sleep-walking, and I wasn't sure I could handle it. I needed Miriam, and she was brilliant.'

Written amid the ordinariness of an English country town, these latest novels (starting perhaps with *The Singing Bowls*) pulse with the symbols of India. 'The wild child is India in pieces, broken by partition - could it be brought back, tamed? Everyone has made mistakes, with promises and hopes everywhere betrayed, but the white horse is not only a bridal symbol, it is the Horse of Penance.' Powerful feelings, recollected in tranquillity, have brought fulfilment. ■



#### Some of Jamila Gavin's books:

*The Wheel of Surya*, Methuen, 0 416 18572 X, £9.99; Mammoth, 0 7497 1582 0, £2.99 pbk

*The Eye of the Horse*, Methuen, 0 416 18875 3, £9.99

*The Singing Bowls*, Mammoth, 0 7497 0332 6, £2.50 pbk

*Grandpa Chatterji*, Methuen, 0 416 19021 9, £6.99; Mammoth, 0 7497 1716 5, £2.99 pbk

*I Want to be an Angel*, Mammoth, 0 7497 0987 1, £2.99 pbk

*Deadly Friend*, Heinemann 'Banana', 0 434 96623 1, £3.99

*Kamla and Kate*, Mammoth, 0 7497 0581 7, £2.99 pbk

*Kamla and Kate Again*, Mammoth, 0 7497 1050 0, £2.99 pbk

# Non Fiction REVIEWS

## When Hunger Calls

Bert Kitchen, Walker,  
0 7445 2816 X, £8.99

ALL AGES

It would be easy to dismiss this as a luxury – 12 spreads, each with a single picture and not many words, showing how different animals get their dinner; it might, perhaps, have been produced as a calendar, just as effectively.

A second look, though, shows us a set of dramatic paintings depicting equally dramatic examples of the behaviour of predatory creatures. A killer whale surges through the surf to snatch a sea-lion, a horned frog swallows a whole live rat, a woodpecker finch spears grubs with a cactus spine and, at one fell swoop, an osprey snatches a carp. Kitchen's meticulous brushwork combines with his well-developed sense of the bizarre to provide a series of images that could inspire innumerable flights of fantasy or, equally, voyages of discovery.

And it is this capacity for inspiration that lifts the book from being just an indulgence into a telling contribution to its readers' experience. Some calendar all right – an everlasting one. TP

Some stone is so hard  
that it can be used to grind  
things into powder.



From *Rock and Stone*.

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Metal</b>
0 7496 1627 X	0 7496 1558 3
<b>Rock and Stone</b>	<b>Wood</b>
0 7496 1631 8	0 7496 1632 6

Henry Pluckrose, Watts (Find Out About series), £6.99 each

INFANT

'Find Out About' follows the format of the hugely successful 'Thinkabout' and 'Knowabout' series – very attractive colour photographs and pertinent but minimal text. Occasional questions encourage readers to think about such matters as why stainless steel suits doctors and dentists but on the whole the emphasis is on straightforward information and simple explanation. The author provides useful guidance notes for adults and the series should prove excellent as a starting point for the less technological parent or teacher working with young children.

Probably the best of this quartet is *Paper* which gives a clear explanation of how trees can 'become' paper. Its varied uses are demonstrated – including an assessment of why doilies are made of this material rather than metal!

The books take a strong, unequivocal line about the environment, stressing the need for conservation and the recycling of waste. Another feature is the risks that they take – it would have been easy not to have included a Henry Moore sculpture in *Metal*, and not to have repeated the illustration of Ironbridge to stress the importance of metals in everyday life. The covers are super – *Rock and Stone* is my choice of the year so far! GB

## Anglo-Saxon Village

Monica Stoppleman, 0 7136 3813 3

## Tudor Farmhouse

Elizabeth Newbery, 0 7136 3815 X

A & C Black (What Happened Here? series), £7.99 each  
JUNIOR

Conjuring up a picture of everyday life several centuries ago often requires a huge imaginative leap for children surrounded by the benefits of modern technology.

One answer is to visit sites which can provide an authentic period atmosphere and in these two titles children are photographed exploring West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village, Suffolk – the only Anglo-Saxon village in the world which has been re-created on its original site – and the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, West Sussex, whose buildings include two Tudor farmhouses rebuilt there after being saved from destruction.

The children learn that various types of archaeological evidence are pieced together to try to establish how things really were. At Stow, for example, which is an experimental village, archaeologists 'are still finding out what works and what doesn't'.

They also discover that the pattern of daily life was inextricably linked to the passing of the seasons and experience for themselves some of the hard work involved; using replica Anglo-Saxon tools, weaving hurdles, fetching water from the well and emptying a Tudor dung pit are just some of the activities they undertake.



The Tudors fertilised the ground with farmyard and human manure. The contents of a Tudor lavatory were not flushed away. They fell into a dung pit under the lavatory seat. The children shovelled muck out of the pit and spread it on the earth. It was hard work. If the muck had been real human dung, it would have been very smelly, too!

From *Tudor Farmhouse*.

In both volumes a great deal of information is clearly conveyed (with just the right balance of text and illustrations) in an attractive and inviting format. Young readers will find this an imaginative and painless way of absorbing some Key Stage 2 history. VH

## How Would You Survive as an Aztec?

Fiona Macdonald, Watts (How Would You Survive series),

0 7496 1252 5, £8.99

JUNIOR/MIDDLE

At first glance this book is virtually indistinguishable from others covering the same ground. An introductory section on basic facts about Aztec life is followed by fourteen double-page spreads covering topics such as family life, government, farming and beliefs. Each is profusely illustrated

with colourful artwork and bordered with small captioned picture-strip sequences which augment the main text.

The question implicit in the title is no rhetorical whim however. Right from the start the reader is personally involved in the information gathering process (what would you eat and drink?) and can even choose in what order data is accumulated (what was life like for an Aztec child? Go to pages 16-17). At the end questions are posed to determine whether one has absorbed enough knowledge to have survived.

This intriguing, innovative approach may not appeal to some purists, but there is no doubt that by involving readers in an interactive way, it might also capture the interest of those for whom more conventional history books hold little appeal. VH

## Birds

0 7496 1589 3

## Mammals

0 7496 1572 9

## Insects

0 7496 1590 7

## Reptiles

0 7496 1573 7

Anita Ganeri, Watts (First Starts: Animals series), £7.50 each

JUNIOR

Reptiles so often have to share books with amphibians that it's easy to get confused about which is which. No chance of that here, there isn't a wet-skinned water-spawner (that's how you tell) in sight as we sidewind our way through a variety of species, their habitats, food, venomousness, locomotion, skins and senses. The selection of examples manages to capture well the characteristics of a reptilian nature and as a bonus there's an excellent diagram of how a snake's poison gets into its victim.

Birds are really just reptiles with feathers for scales, wings and beaks, and are subjected to the same formula of investigation as reptiles. If this book has less impact than *Reptiles*, it's probably because the selection of species is less exciting and the pictures a bit turgid. And could the editors please note that the plural of snipe is snipe.

For years I thought fleas were crustacea but *Insects* shows me categorically that they're not. We get, too, good examples of insect behaviour and a succinct statement of the important message that to carry one's skeleton outside one's body limits one's growth potential – so there are no enormous insects.

There are enormous mammals, though, and the blue whale makes a useful appearance. So too do oddities like pangolin, platypus, and armadillo – all exceptions that prove the mammalian rule.

While it breaks little new ground, and is somewhat uneven in achievement, this is a set constructed on sound useful lines which makes some good points and, in the case of *Reptiles*, considerable impact. TP

## I Come from China

Anita Ganeri, Watts (Don't Forget Us! series), 0 7496 1719 5, £7.50

JUNIOR/MIDDLE

## China

Julia Waterlow, Watts (The Real World series), 0 7496 1367 X, £8.99

MIDDLE/SECONDARY

Western views of China represent something of a paradox – is there a new China, relaxing its more authoritarian views and likely to become a huge new market for Western exports, or is it fundamentally the same country where students died at Tiananmen Square five years ago?

These two books reflect this paradox, approaching China from rather different perspectives – *I Come from China* showing a more overtly political viewpoint (despite being aimed at the younger age group). 'The Real World' *China* has the space to describe the events of 1989 in greater detail but only refers to the demonstrations in passing,

summing up with the one line 'protesting Chinese students were shot by Government soldiers'. I **Come from China** on the other hand is less reticent and devotes a page to the background to the demonstrations concluding that 'The government sent in troops to break up the demonstrations. Hundreds of protesters were killed, injured or arrested. My parents had to leave China because of their support for the students.'

Taken together the books provide a complementary insight into China. 'The Real World' series attempts a comprehensive approach covering traditional text-book areas of farming, industry, transport, the economy and trade as well as the problems caused by physical features and the many minority groups within the population. Information is clear and pictorial support especially helpful with frequent use of maps, diagrams and tables, as well as photographs. **I Come from China** is more personal, less ambitious in coverage, but still effective - as a book for younger children covering Mao's achievements, the fear of the Cultural Revolution, and human rights, it succeeds admirably.

Without being too pedantic I would question both series titles - it is vital we don't forget Sun Dan but the title ('Don't Forget Us!') can appear patronising - 'The Real World' is rather stating the obvious, isn't it?  
GB

**Desert**

Miranda Macquitty, Dorling Kindersley (Eyewitness series), 0 7513 6023 6, £8.99

**JUNIOR UPWARDS**

Like the Tour de France which, at the time of writing, absorbs me nightly for half an hour, the 'Eyewitness' caravan rolls unstoppably and institutionally on, its members all as bright, slick and efficient as those of the Tour's peloton. But, as with the Tour, the real excitement lies not in the overall excellence of the phenomenon but the occasional exciting breakaway when real class comes to the fore.

And so it is with **Desert** - in fact this is a book which

breaks away within itself. The first 40 pages deal as competently as one would expect with geology, flora and fauna but then comes a remarkable section devoted to human desert dwellers and their animals. This is where to find out all about ceremonial camel regalia, bedouin tent construction (for which goat wool is reserved) and coffee making, costume (from San minimalism to Tuareg multi-wrap), an Australian bottle-glass razor and the modern desert bike. How long would Indurain and co. last in the Sahara, one wonders.

How long, also, can the 'Eyewitness' caravan continue to roll? Whenever it does finally rest I'd put money on **Desert** wearing the yellow jersey in the closing stages.  
TP

**Fossils**

Chris Pellant, 1 85028 260 9

**Mushrooms and Fungi**

Geoffrey Kibby, 1 85028 239 0

**Dragon's World (Junior Nature Guides), £7.95 each JUNIOR UPWARDS**

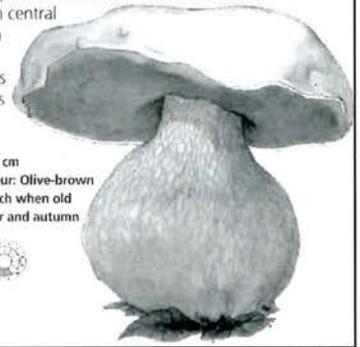
We British express our distaste for all fungi other than supermarket buttons by calling them 'toad-stools', and so it's interesting to find that nowhere in Kibby's book does this term occur. But then the book isn't much concerned with edibility, although a scarlet skull and crossbones is accorded to each poisonous species and a blanket caution not to eat unaccredited fungi occurs twice early on, it's much more about identification and understanding.

Fungi are notoriously difficult to photograph convincingly and often hard to describe. Also they are fussy about where they live. So a book like this one, where both the text and species illustrations are the work of a professional mycologist and painter of fungi, and are organised with respect to habitat, presents the best possible chance of successful identification and of the promotion of long life amongst the adventurous.

**Boletus satanus**

Commonly known as Satan's Bolete. A mycologist who described this species said that its smell was so unpleasant that he felt ill even at a distance. It is an uncommon species found under beech and oak on chalky soils in central and southern England. Do not touch this species as it is poisonous.

Bolete family  
Cap size: 7.5-30 cm  
Spore print colour: Olive-brown  
Smell: Foul stench when old  
Season: Summer and autumn  
**POISONOUS**



From **Mushrooms and Fungi**.

Fungi go off quickly so speedy identification is essential - not so fossils, which, moreover are excellent in photographs, so that is how they are portrayed by Chris Pellant in his guide. The emphasis here is not on where you find them but on what they seem to be - plants, molluscs, vertebrates etc. You can sit down with your fossil fragment and this book and reach a leisured conclusion. A delightful ammonite-clock tells you how old it is. Pellant urges us to collect only loose fossil specimens and, hearteningly, no hammer appears on his equipment list; however a camera, hard hat and good boots do, so conservation on all fronts is served.

These 'Junior Nature Guides' are excellent. Seldom can the simple but oft-abused expedient of taking an authoritative 'adult' text and 'simplifying' it for younger readers have been better done, with the add-on result that they still function perfectly well for adults too. You may remember a happy reception for the same series' **Seashells** about a year ago - well these are just as recommended.  
TP

**Greenpeace**

Paul Brown, 1 85015 366 3

**World Wide Fund for Nature**

Peter Denton, 1 85015 367 1  
Exley, £7.99 each

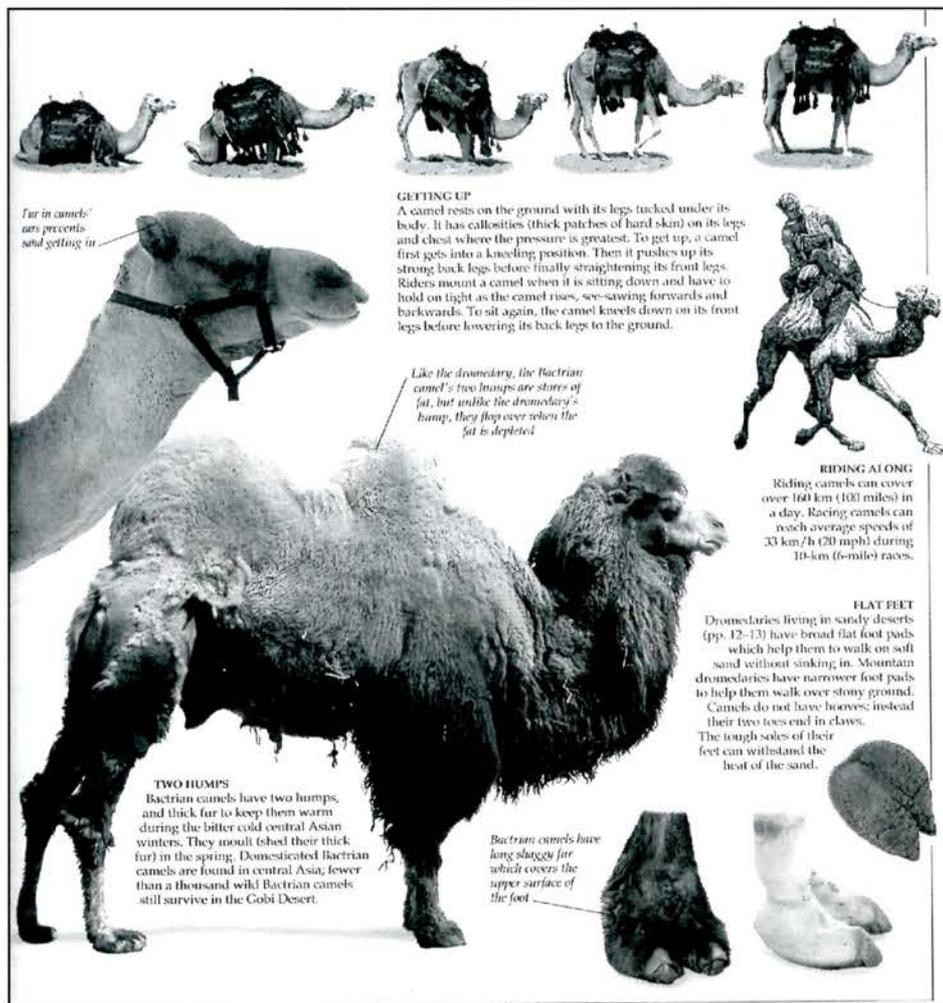
**SECONDARY**

I bet you still call it the 'World Wildlife Fund' when you see Peter Scott's famous logo. I do - finding it more satisfyingly descriptive - and so does everyone in North America where it's still officially called that. For years the WWF seemed to be the Top Peoples' Panda Club, bespangled with royalty and heads of state, but this nicely objective book from Exley helps dispel the ruling-class image and shows us that, beyond doubt, World Wide Fund for Nature is a far more accurate and better name. For the Fund's targets are all the adversities that beset our planet's natural life - major among which are ignorance and prejudice. Here we have a clearly written history of the Fund since its 1961 origin through to the 1993 Whaling Conference, charting its development, involvements and achievements along the way.

So too for Greenpeace, ten years the WWF's junior (yes, that surprises me, too) and an organisation that has always seemed to make overt headline-hitting its chief business. Here we find that it substantiates its spectacular actions with impressive backroom scientific and political research and pressure. At the same time the aura of heroism that surrounds Greenpeace's rainbow warriors is seen to be fully justified.

These are very useful volumes, being, in the true sense, handbooks. Not over-large nor over-stuffed with polemic and glamorous price-inflating photographs, they present portraits of their subjects in a far more assimilable way than could more expansive publications. So they are ideal for secondary school library stock as welcome additions to the conservation information bank. TP

Non Fiction Reviewers: **Geoff Brown, Vee Holliday and Ted Percy.** Non Fiction Reviews Editor: **Eleanor von Schweinitz.**



From **Desert**.

# It Began in a Forest Rest-house



Drawing by Valerie Littlewood from *Tiger Roars*, Eagle Soars.

My father died when I was 10, and for the next few years books became a scarce commodity for my mother and step-father were not great readers. In my lonely early teens I seized upon almost any printed matter that came my way, whether it was a girls' classic like *Little Women*, or a *Hotspur* or *Champion* comic, a detective story or *The Naturalist on the River Amazon* by Henry Walter Bates. The only books I balked at reading were collections of sermons (amazing how often they turned up in those early years) and self-improvement books, since I hadn't the slightest desire to improve myself in any way.

I think it all began in a forest rest-house in the Siwalik Hills, a subtropical range cradling the Doon Valley in northern India. Here my stepfather and his gun-toting friends were given to hunting birds and animals. He was a poor shot, so he cannot really be blamed for the absence of wildlife today; but he did his best to eliminate every creature that came within his sights.



The old Rest-house in the Doon.

On one of his 'shikar' trips we were staying near the Timli Pass. My stepfather and his friends were 'after tiger' (you were out of fashion if you weren't after big game) and set out every morning with an army of paid villagers to 'beat' the jungle, that is, to make enough noise with drums, whistles, tin trumpets and empty kerosene tins, to disturb the tiger and drive the unwilling beast into the open where he could conveniently be despatched. Truly bored by this form of sport, I stayed behind in the rest-house, and in the course of the morning's exploration of the bungalow, discovered a dusty but crowded bookshelf half-hidden in a corner of the back verandah.

Who had left them there? A literary forest officer? A *memsahib* who'd been bored by her husband's camp-fire boasting? Or someone like me who had no enthusiasm for the 'manly' sport of slaughtering wild animals, and had brought his library along to pass the time?

Or possibly the poor fellow had gone into the jungle one day, as a

gesture towards his more bloodthirsty companions, and been trampled by an elephant or gored by a wild boar, or (more likely) accidentally shot by one of his companions – and they had taken his remains away but left his books behind.

Anyway, there they were – a shelf of some 50 volumes, obviously untouched for several years. I wiped the dust off the covers and examined the titles. As my reading tastes had not yet formed, I was ready to try anything. The bookshelf was varied in its contents – and my own interests have remained equally wide-ranging.

On that fateful day in the forest rest-house, I discovered two very funny books. One was P G Wodehouse's *Love Among the Chickens*, an early Ukridge story and still one of my favourites. The other was *The Diary of a Nobody* by George and Weedon Grossmith, who spent more time on the stage than in the study but are now remembered mainly for this hilarious book. It isn't everyone's cup of tea. Recently I lent my copy to a Swiss friend, who could see nothing funny about it. I must have read it a dozen times; I pick it up whenever I'm feeling low, and on one occasion it even cured me of a peptic ulcer!

Anyway, back to the rest-house. By the time the perspiring hunters came back late in the evening, I'd started on M R James's *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, which had me hooked on ghost stories for

## Ruskin Bond on his introduction to the pleasures of reading

the rest of my life. It kept me awake most of the night, until the oil in the kerosene lamp had finished.

Next morning, fresh and optimistic again, the 'shikaris' set out for a different area, where they hoped to locate their tiger. All day I could hear the beaters' drums throbbing in the distance. This did not prevent me from finishing a collection of stories called *The Big Karoo* by Pauline Smith – wonderfully evocative of the pioneering Boers in South Africa.

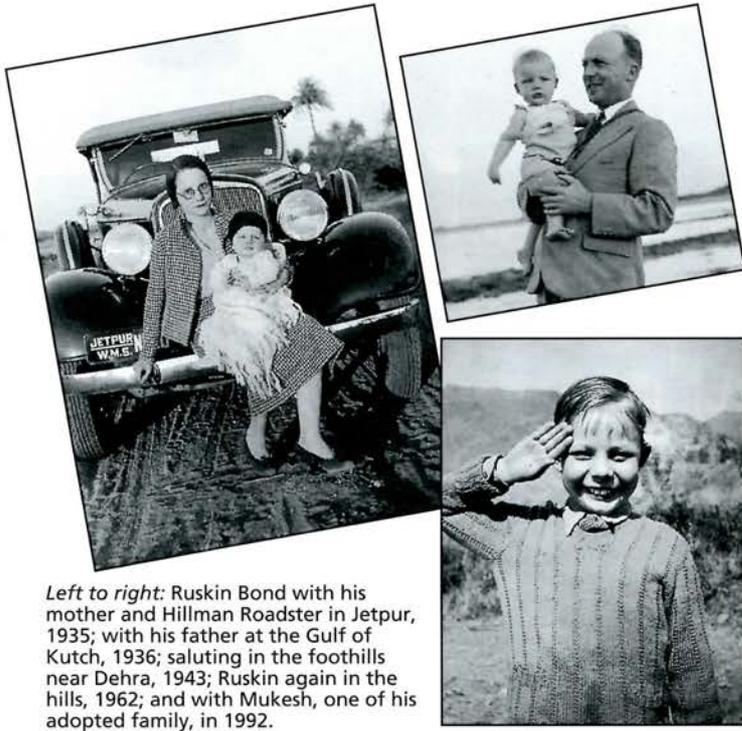
My concentration was disturbed only once, when I looked up and saw a spotted deer crossing the open clearing in front of the bungalow. The deer disappeared into the forest and I returned to my book.

Dusk had fallen when I heard the party returning from the hunt. The great men were talking loudly and seemed excited. Perhaps they had got their tiger! I came out on the verandah to meet them.

'Did you shoot the tiger?' I asked.

'No, Ruskin,' said my stepfather. 'I think we'll catch up with it tomorrow. But you should have been with us – we saw a spotted deer!'

There were three days left and I knew I would never get through the entire bookshelf. So I chose *David Copperfield* – my first encounter with Dickens – and settled down in the verandah armchair to make



Left to right: Ruskin Bond with his mother and Hillman Roadster in Jetpur, 1935; with his father at the Gulf of Kutch, 1936; saluting in the foothills near Dehra, 1943; Ruskin again in the hills, 1962; and with Mukesh, one of his adopted family, in 1992.

the acquaintance of Mr Micawber and his family, along with Aunt Betsy Trotwood, Mr Dick, Peggotty and a host of other larger-than-life characters. I think it would be true to say that Copperfield set me off on the road to literature: I identified with young David and wanted to grow up to be a writer like him.

But on my second day with the book an event occurred which interrupted my reading for a little while.

I'd noticed, on the previous day, that a number of stray dogs – some of them belonging to watchmen, villagers and forest rangers – always hung about the bungalow, waiting for scraps of food to be thrown away. It was about 10 o'clock in the morning (a time when wild animals seldom come into the open), when I heard a sudden yelp coming from the clearing. Looking up, I saw a large, full-grown leopard making off with one of the dogs. The other dogs, while keeping their distance, set up a furious barking, but the leopard and its victim had soon disappeared. I returned to *David Copperfield* and it was getting late when the 'shikaris' returned. They looked dirty, sweaty and disgruntled. Next day we were to return to the city, and none of them had anything to show for a week in the jungle.

'I saw a leopard this morning,' I said, modestly.

No one took me seriously. 'Did you really?' said the leading shikari, glancing at the book in my hands. 'Young Master Copperfield says he saw a leopard!'

'Too imaginative for his age,' said my stepfather. 'Comes from reading so much, I expect.'

I went to bed and left them to their tales of the 'good old days' when rhinos, cheetahs and possibly even unicorns were still available for slaughter. Camp broke up before I could finish *Copperfield*, but the forest ranger said I could keep the book. And so I became the only member of the expedition with a trophy to take home.

After that adventure, I was always looking for books in unlikely places. Although I never went to college, I think I have read as much, if not more, than most collegiates, and it would be true to say that I received a large part of my education in secondhand bookshops. London had many, and Calcutta once had a large number of them, but I think the prize must go to the small town in Wales called Hay-on-Wye, which has 26 bookshops and over a million books. It's in the world's quiet corners that book lovers still flourish – a far from dying species!

One of my treasures is a little novel called *Sweet Rocket* by Mary Johnston. It was a failure when first published in 1920. It has only the thinnest outline of a story but the author sets out her ideas in lyrical prose that seduces me at every turn of the page. Miss Johnston was a Virginian. She did not travel outside America. But her little book did. I found it buried under a pile of railway timetables



at a bookstall in Simla, the old summer capital of India – almost as though it had been waiting there for me, these 70 years!

Among my souvenirs is a charming little recipe book, small enough to slip into an apron pocket. (You need to be a weight-lifter to pick up some of the cookery books that are published today.) This one's charm lies not so much in its recipes for roast lamb and mint sauce (which are very good, too) but in the margins of each page, enlivened with little Victorian maxims concerning good food and wise eating. Here are a few chosen at random:

'There is skill in all things, even in making porridge.'

'Dry bread at home is better than curried prawns abroad.'

'Eating and drinking should not keep men from thinking.'

'Better a small fish than an empty dish.'

'Let not your tongue cut your throat.'

I have collected a number of little books, like my father's *Finger Prayer Book*, which is the size of a small finger but is replete with Psalms and the complete Book of Common Prayer. Another is *The Pocket Trivet: An Anthology for Optimists*, published by *The Morning Post* newspaper in 1932 and designed to slip into the waistcoat pocket. But what is a trivet, one might well ask . . .



Ruskin Bond.

Well, it's a stand for a small pot or kettle, fixed securely over a grate. To be right as a trivet is to be perfectly and thoroughly right – just right, like the short sayings in this tiny anthology which range from Emerson's 'Hitch your wagon to a star!' to the Japanese proverb: 'In the market-place there is money to be made, but under the cherry tree there is rest.'

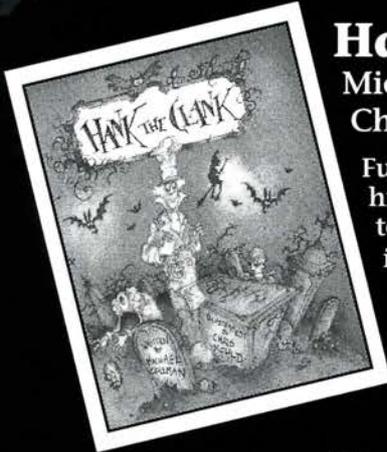
It helps me to forget the dilapidated old building in which I live and work, and to look instead at the ever-changing cloud patterns as seen from my small bedroom-cum-study window. There is no end to the shapes made by the clouds, or to the stories they set off in my head.

Most of our living has to happen in the mind. And, to quote one anonymous sage from my *Trivet*: 'The world is only the size of each man's head.' ■

Ruskin Bond's grandfather, a greengrocer's assistant from Islington, London, ran away to join the Scottish Rifles in the early 1870s. He went with his regiment to India during the Afghan Wars. Both Ruskin's parents were born in India – as he was (in Kasauli in 1934). He now lives in a small cottage in the hill village of Mussoorie. His most recent book, *Eagle Soars, Tiger Roars*, is set in northern India and is published by Walker 'Doubles' (0 7445 3177 2) at £2.99 pbk.



they're coming...



## Hank the Clank

Michael Coleman and  
Christopher Mould

Full of ghostly puns and witticisms, this hilarious picture book by a new and talented team follows Hank the Clank and other ghosts in their quest to find a friend.

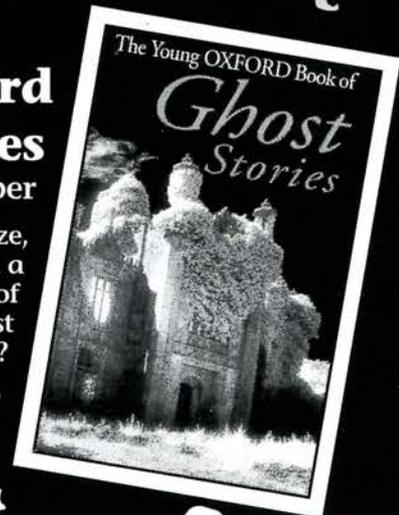
September 0 19 279959 2 £7.99  
Illustrated in full colour

## The Young Oxford Book of Ghost Stories

Dennis Pepper

If you're fascinated by ghosts in whatever shape, size, form, or guise, this is the book to delve into alone on a dark and windy night. A truly gripping collection of tales that will chill, thrill, surprise, and, at the slightest noise, make you gasp...Wwhat wwas tthat...?

September 0 19 278126 X £12.99  
Illustrated in black & white



poetry poetry poetry poetry poetry poetry poetry

### Exciting new titles for autumn



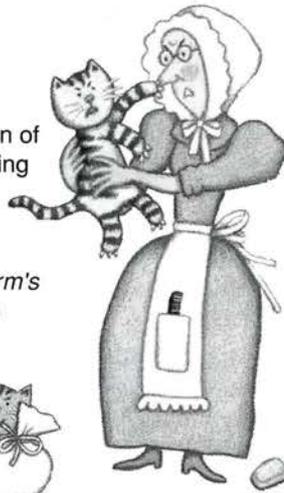
### Storm's Eye

Judith Nicholls

A fresh and original collection of poems from one of the leading children's poets of the day.

From sea poems to school poems, and from poems about creatures in danger to creatures moving in next door, *Storm's Eye* presents a wide variety of verse to fill the imagination.

November  
0 19 276127 7 £8.99 hb  
0 19 276138 2 £4.99 pb  
Illustrated in black & white



### Sing a Song of Sixpence

Vince Cross and Nick Sharratt

A colourful collection of nursery rhymes based on an imaginary land, with towns and villages populated by favourite nursery rhyme characters. Complete with accompanying cassette.

September  
0 19 276121 8 £7.99 hb  
0 19 272272 7 £2.99 pb  
Illustrated in full colour  
0 19 276132 3 £2.50 (inc. VAT) Cassette C60





## Self-Portrait of the Laureate of Nonsense

*How pleasant to know Mr Lear!  
Who has written such volumes of stuff!  
Some think him ill-tempered and queer,  
But a few think him pleasant enough.*  
(Edward Lear)

### Rachel Anderson knows which side she's on . . .

When I was six, my sister was presented, by a well-intentioned godparent, with a copy of Edward Lear's *A Book of Nonsense* which consists of 112 four-line verse poems. I read these limericks aloud and we both looked at the peculiarly creepy black-and-white line drawings.

Edward Lear was a magnificent landscape artist but he was no great shakes at figure drawing. All human forms aspire to the condition of distorted birds. Even when not perching in trees or bushes (as do the young ladies of Lucca and of Portugal, and the old men of Philoe and Dundee, among many tree-sitters) his characters bear stumpy wing-like arms tucked into their sides, rounded bird-like breasts and tiny lower limbs tapering away to flippers. For some, there are the additional deformities of noses as long as worms, trailing to the ground, or head either far too large, or pin-headedly too small.

As if their physical problems aren't enough, terrible things befall them. A man with dropsy is haunted by nightmares. A midget is devoured by a dog. Some, seriously warped in spirit, perform awesome acts of cruelty to others. A husband is baked alive. Babies are burned to death. Innocent bystanders are attacked with a poker. Even those whose habits are merely eccentric or self-destructive (amputating own thumbs, dancing with a raven, consorting with owls) are liable to be publicly ridiculed, chased out of town, or stoned to death by the populace.

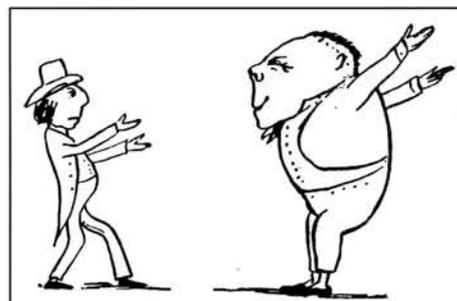
Like many children of earlier generations on whom these horrors were thrust, my sister and I did not much care for them and we were perplexed as to why the adults should consider them funny. It was an abrupt introduction to the mystifying confusion of the seriously eccentric, to the distressing anguish of the profoundly disabled, to the painful loneliness of the outsider.

Lear was writing out of lived experience. He was a gay, epileptic, myopic, depressive, asthmatic, bronchitic, emotionally shipwrecked social outcast.

He was rejected in infancy by his mother (as well she might since he was her twentieth child), half brought up by an elder sister, and at 15, thrown out of the family home to make his own way in life. The wilful oddness of his middle and later years was a way of overcoming emotional insecurity, while hiding the shameful misery of his secret illness. The one sure way to deflect ridicule was, he claimed, by being ridiculous. 'I don't care the 999th part of a spider's nose what others think of me,' he wrote, but of course he did care very much.

Being an epileptic was, at that time, three quarters of the way towards being a madman. He mentioned in diaries and letters his depressions, anxieties about the size of his nose, poor sight, bronchitis and the general unfriendliness of people, but he referred to the epilepsy, from which he suffered frequent, violent, and totally debilitating attacks which took days to recover

from, only in code. He marked the days of fits in his diary with a black cross, or mentioned them elliptically. 'Remembering as I well do - all that used to occur from the day when I was 6 or 7 years old, it is most wonderful that I exist at all, or that life is ever at all tolerable.'

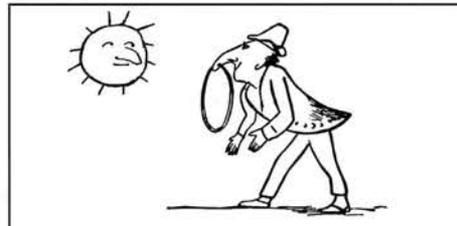


There was an Old Person of Wick,  
Who said, "Tick-a-Tick, Tick-a-Tick;  
Chickabee, Chickabaw."  
And he said nothing more,  
That laconic Old Person of Wick.

When *A Book of Nonsense* first appeared, only one disapproving voice spoke out, a Madame de Bunsen, who would not allow her grandchildren to look upon Lear's book 'inasmuch as the distorted figures would injure the children's sense of the beautiful'.

It seems that every other aunt, uncle, god- or grand-parent welcomed it for its charm and humour. Lear himself, always an active self-advocator, claimed he came upon a stranger on a train reading it aloud who, unaware that Lear himself had written it, declared to his fellow-passengers how 'Thousands of families are grateful to the author for providing such delight and entertainment for their little ones'.

Delightful? Entertaining?



These early nonsense verses were surely written out of desperate personal therapeutic need. Certainly, they were originally composed without any intention of publication. Lear entertained the family of one of his titled patrons with them. There are no clues in letters or diaries as to why, in 1846, he suddenly opted for publication. Possibly he was simply strapped for cash. As an artist he suffered a constant shortage of funds.

In the subsequent nonsensees, *Nonsense Songs* (1871), *More Nonsense* (1872), *Laughable Lyrics*



Lear showing a doubting stranger his name in his hat to prove that Edward Lear was a man and not merely a name.

Drawn by Himself.

(1877), *Nonsense Songs and Stories* (1895), which contain such gems as 'The Owl and the Pussy Cat' and 'The Quangle Wangle's Hat', the cruelty and bitterness has softened into fantastical fantasy. There is much mystical magical journeying, reflecting and anticipating Lear's own need for exotic travel. He embarked on long complicated voyages to Egypt, Cyprus, Greece and India, partly to discover new and fashionable visions of beauty for his landscape paintings, but also because keeping moving helped him cope with epilepsy. Although fits were exacerbated by stress, tiredness, uncertainty and seasickness, it seems that facing up to and surviving these discomforts was his way of triumphing over disability.

These days, *A Book of Nonsense* is thankfully no longer standard in the well-equipped child's playroom. However, the early limericks it contains continue to pop up from time to time, inappropriately offered as a source of amusement and entertainment for children.

Last term, for instance, a friend aged 10, bright but a slow reader, found himself in the special group of his North London primary school where the teacher attempted to encourage her group of reluctant readers with limericks.

My friend said he didn't understand them, and the words were very difficult to try and read. But Miss said they were funny.

Probably the chief value the verses have to recommend them as learning material for non-reading 10-year-olds is their extreme brevity, plus the fact that the first three words of each are always the same, 'There was a' or 'There was an'.

But what are present-day children supposed to make of the subject matter? Characters with microcephaly being hounded out of town by the locals, old women with Tourette's Syndrome being bashed to bits with bricks, unseemly homeless misfits being killed for their haplessness. Is this really the stuff with which to inspire and nourish young people?

Well yes, come to think of it, such representations of Care in the Community do most neatly reflect our Modern Times. Probably, a copy should be compulsory in every school to prepare children for the harsh realities of life without a welfare state. ■

Edward Lear's verse is variously available. Amongst others, Puffin, Oxford, Macmillan, Little Brown, Faber, Dover, Chatto and Everyman all offer editions. A complete and unabridged cassette of *Nonsense Songs*, read by Alan Bennett, is available from Cover to Cover.

Rachel Anderson's latest book, *Black Water* (Oxford, 0 19 271728 6, £8.99), is all about a small boy trying to come to terms with his epilepsy. It was while researching this title that she became more closely involved with the work of Edward Lear.



# THREE HAS GONE

Poems by  
**Jackie Kay**



*The big black jewels in the steel bucket.  
Toast from the naked flame was a treat,  
or burning pink and white marshmallows  
till they caved in and surrendered . . .*

Here she faces some of the major issues of childhood: guilt, betrayal, bullying, provocation and attention-seeking – as well as the fears and joys of family life.

Norman Silver's *The Walkmen Have Landed* (Faber, 0 571 17189 3, £3.99 pbk) quickly appealed with the increasingly frenetic desperation of 'I want trainers'. By the time I reached the outrageous scenario of '18 Certificate' I was laughing out loud. It's not all humour: there's chilling metaphor in 'Life is a Ball' and a copy of 'Why Mrs Parry Gave up Teaching'

(too long to quote here) should be sent immediately to Gillian Shephard! Silver is an ideal poet to win over readers of either sex who have any suspicion at all that poetry might be a touch 'sissy'.

He crops up again on the more serious side of John Foster's excellent new anthology *All in the Family* (Oxford, 0 19 276119 6, £4.99 pbk), describing a separating father standing 'with a tormented suitcase' waiting for a train . . . and his child's response:

*I sat  
in an attic room  
bustling with departures  
and people bugging each other  
through jolting windows.  
A solitary pigeon  
perched on a high ledge  
as the train pulled out.*



'When I was your age' from *All in the Family*.

This anthology has a relatively low-key cover with its sketchy snapshots and clear cream title letters. Inside John Foster has been served well by his illustrator, Michael Charlton, whose grey washes complement the text perfectly without overpowering it. The balance of mood is particularly effective in this collection and it would be a pity to box it up for a narrow age group: primary yes, but the likes of James Berry, Seamus Heaney, Wendy Cope and other contributions give wider possibilities, too.

As a fellow-compiler I both cheered and groaned when Gerard Benson produced his award-winning *This Poem Doesn't Rhyme: why didn't I think of that!* *Does W Trouble You?* (Viking, ill. Alison Forsythe, 0 670 85082 9, £8.99) is a natural sequel, focusing on rhyme and the myriad possible ways of using it beyond the ubiquitous ABAB quatrains emulated by many young rhymsters. The first section opens with examples of couplets, tercets, and the three syllable rhyme on to what Gerard Benson describes as 'desperation' tactics (8-year-old Marjorie Fleming writing in 1811 even changes facts to get her rhyme!).

# DOES W TROUBLE YOU ?

A BOOK OF  
RHYMING POEMS

EDITED BY GERARD BENSON

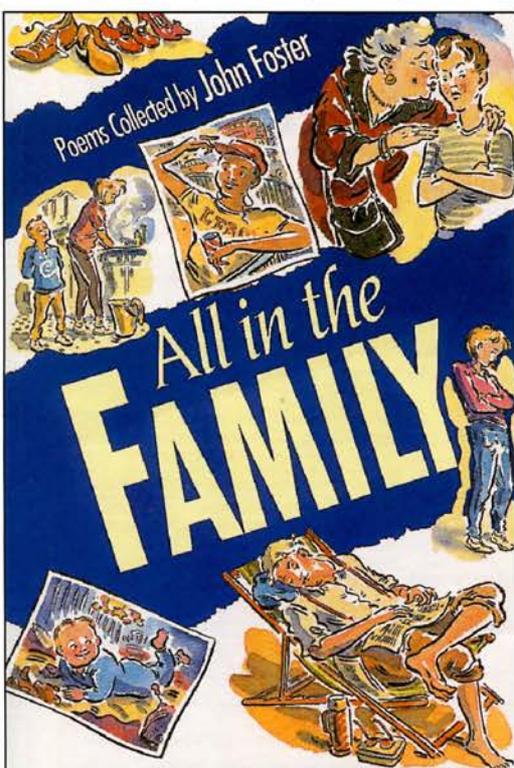


The central sections give a variety of rhyming poems from traditional Anon to sonnets by Wordsworth and Shelley; one discovery for me was A P Herbert's eulogy on 'Sausage and Mash', but I suspect that poets H Cholmondeley Pennell and Aunt Effie, amongst others, will also be new to many. His final section deals with 'Poetry obeying the rules': distichs, heroic couplets, triolets, a pantoum, limericks and his own brief, pithy ending. These are foremost poems to enjoy as poems. Beyond that they certainly offer a model and an encouragement for readers to experiment with their personal poetry-writing.

Gerard Benson, together with Judith Chernaik and Cicely Herbert, has also edited my final choice: the new, extended edition of *Poems on the Underground* (Cassell, 0 304 34339 0, £5.99 pbk). For me this has all the elements of a good anthology: a varied, intensely memorable choice of poems which weaves together the familiar, the forgotten or neglected, the obscure. Presentation is classic and simple: one poem per page and a small number of black-and-white complementary illustrations including snatches of manuscripts or earlier illustrations for relevant poems. This one stays on my shelves, but I'd buy it for any teenage or adult poetry-lover. The fourth edition, to include all the poems featured on the underground in 1994, is due out later this year. Long may it thrive! ■

Judith Nicholls has written or compiled over 30 books of poetry and run many talks, readings and workshops with pupils and teachers.

Published this month is the paperback of *A Trunkful of Elephants* which she's edited for Mammoth (0 7497 1753 X, £2.99) illustrated by Chris Riddell. In October comes her new collection *Storm's Eye* (Oxford, 0 19 276127 7, £8.99; 0 19 276138 2, £4.99 pbk) with illustrations by Shirley Felts.





# COUNT TO FIVE AND SAY I'M ALIVE!



Mike Rosen live.

This primary school video resource, devised by Michael Rosen for children aged 8-13, can also double as an INSET package on poetry.

It consists of two videos – the first titled **The Poetry**, includes appearances by John Agard, Valerie Bloom, Jackie Kay, Roger McGough, Colin McNaughton, Judith Nicholls, Brian Patten, Kit Wright... not to mention M Rosen himself. It's as lively and comprehensive a fifty-five minute survey of current poetry for children as you're likely to get.

The second, **The Workshops** offer four examples of poet's writing alongside children – Judith Nicholls, Lemn Sissay, Michael Rosen and the Yakety Yak team.

Offered free with both videos is a 120 page book featuring all the poems recited together with performing and teaching suggestions... and some smart INSET training ideas.

Altogether, at a price which – dare we say it – amounts to less than half an author visit these days (and you can't file half-an-author in your library afterwards) this resource offers excellent value. Of course, *accompanying* a visit by one of the poets concerned, it's unbeatable...

Each video is priced at £24.49 (including VAT and p&p). Available from: Team Video Productions, Canalot, 222 Kensal Road, London W10 5BN or on 081 960 5536.

## October 6th is National Poetry Day

The organisers expect blanket media coverage of events taking place on 6th October and anyone participating is being encouraged to let the Poetry Society know what their plans are. The more unusual the event, the more likely it is to be picked up by local, or national, media.

Anyone can take part in National Poetry Day. Information packs can be obtained by ringing The Poetry Society Hotline, 071 240 2133 (24hrs). Callers should state whether they're a school, a workplace or an interested individual.

### • CONFERENCES •

**IBBY Conference – Politics and Children's Literature: issues in writing and publishing today**

Date: Saturday, 12th November 1994.  
Venue: Roehampton Institute, London.  
Contributors: Michael Rosen, Gaye Hıçyılmaz, Mary Hoffman, Ira Saxena, Verna Wilkins, Philip Dickinson, Adèle Geras and Tamoko Masaki amongst others. Cost: £20.00 (IBBY members £15 / concessions for students £10). Lunch: optional at £6.00. Applications: Susan Hancock, Children's Literature Research

Centre, Downshire House, Roehampton Institute, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 4HT (tel 081 392 3008).

**The Fifth Annual Conference of CLAI** will be held on 21st and 22nd October 1994 in the Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines, Dublin. Speakers to include Allan Ahlberg, Shirley Hughes, Ed Marum and Jacqueline Wilson, together with a panel of Irish writers. Details from the Church of Ireland College of Education, 96 Upper Rathmines Road, Rathmines, Dublin 6.

### November BfK

features *Beasties*, *Ghosties* and *Things That Go Bump on the Page*...  
Anthony Browne on his version of *King Kong*  
Adèle Geras and Jenny Nimmo on their new spooky titles  
Colin Hawkins on *Frightening Littles*  
A ghostly round-up by Jill Burridge  
Susan Cooper in *Authorgraph*  
and reviews, reviews, reviews plus OP Plea for a phantom

# BfK News

## • AWARDS •

### THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CARNEGIE AND GREENAWAY AWARDS

#### Carnegie Medal

Robert Swindells for **Stone Cold** (Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 13300 9, £8.99).

'A gripping teenage novel with eerie topical echoes. A powerful thriller and disturbingly plausible depiction of the plight of young homeless people. A terrific achievement.' – comment the judges.



#### Kate Greenaway Medal

Alan Lee for **Black Ships before Troy**, author Rosemary Sutcliff (Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 0778 X, £12.99). The judges describe this as 'A retelling of the legend of Troy, using ageless, haunting illustrations which add enormously to the old story, whilst capturing the grand sweep of the Iliad.'

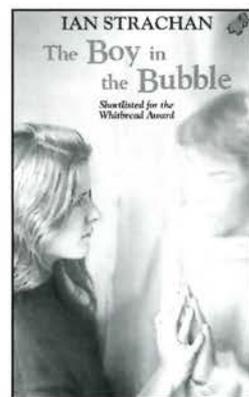
### SIGNAL POETRY AWARD 1994

The **All-Nite Café** by Philip Gross (Faber, 0 571 16753 5, £4.99). A ghost at a railway station and a negative uncle, punk mermaids and a deadbeat circus, the elusive Who-man and the Ace of Strange... where else could they meet but in a book of poems by Philip Gross?

### LANCASHIRE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE YEAR

Winner: Ian Strachan for **The Boy in the Bubble** (Methuen, 0 416 18739 0, £9.99; Mammoth, 0 7497 1685 1, £3.50 pbk). See page 10 in our reviews section.

For more details of this Award, and a copy of the excellent accompanying publication, with children's comments on all the entries, contact P McKay at Lancashire County Library HQ, 143 Corporation Street, Preston PR1 2UQ or phone 0722 264040.



### NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD 1994

The Acorn Award goes to David Morgan and David Parkins for **Blooming Cats** (Deutsch, 0 590 54092 0, £7.99).

The Oak Tree Award goes to Helen Cresswell for **The Watchers** (Viking, 0 670 84584 1, £8.99; Puffin, 0 14 036140 5, £3.50 pbk).

To find out more about this Award, ring Ann Fairbairn of Nottinghamshire Libraries on 0602 854203.■



'Who dat girl?  
Who dat girl?  
Pretty as poetry?  
Who dat girl in  
de lookin'-glass?'  
From Valerie  
Bloom's 'Who  
Dat Girl?'

**A Caribbean Dozen** is a great treat. The dozen in the title refers to the thirteen poets who are featured in this book, in keeping with the market tradition of a little bit extra or 'mek-up' thrown in by generous vendors at Caribbean markets.

Some of the Caribbean poets are well known in Britain and live here now (like the editors themselves) – James Berry, Valerie Bloom, Faustin Charles and Marc Matthews. Then there are poets I have long revered like Frank Collymore (from Barbados, who died in 1980), Telcine Turner, Pamela Mordecai and Dionne Brand who live in the Bahamas, Jamaica and Canada respectively. Finally, there are poets I am ashamed I didn't know like Opal Palmer Adisa, David Campbell and John Lyons. Each poet introduces herself or himself by writing some childhood memories, including favourite youthful reading, and is represented by four or five poems which often, but not always, make reference to the Caribbean. There's also a brief bibliography, plus an attractive photograph of each poet.

The illustrations (full colour throughout) are an added pleasure with Cathie Felstead evoking the lush, sensual nature of the Caribbean through her colourful, mixed-media artwork. There are some truly glorious spreads. In almost every case she made me re-examine familiar poems and brought inviting visual images to the words on the page without getting in the way of the reader's own imagination. Illustrating poetry is never easy; illustrating so many different voices must have been even harder, but this is a case where the illustrator adds a strong dimension to the verse.

Let's begin with the editors. Grace Nichols' delightful 'Ar-a-Rat' is included, but a new animal also makes an appearance in the form of Dilberta, biggest of the elephants at London Zoo, 'the walking-whale of the earth kingdom'. 'If the headmaster asks for me / say I'm a million dreaming degrees / beyond the equator' says the geography teacher in one of John Agard's poems, while we hear from Count Laughula and Anancy in two of the others.

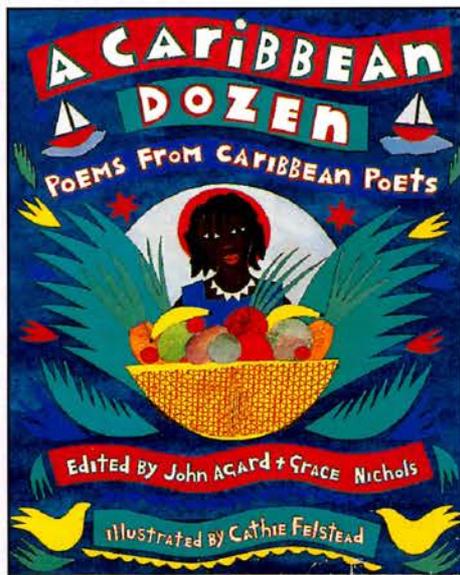
Sureness of touch is also James Berry's hallmark. He's represented by a few of his best loved poems from **When I Dance** and the memorable 'Isn't My Name Magical?':

'My name echoes across playground  
it comes, it demands attention.

# GENEROUS VENDORS

## MORAG STYLES WELCOMES A CARIBBEAN DOZEN

Edited by JOHN AGARD AND  
GRACE NICHOLS, illustrated by  
CATHIE FELSTEAD, WALKER,  
0 7445 2172 6, £14.99



I have to find out who calls  
who wants me for what.'

Valerie Bloom is an exciting performer whose teasing voice is captured nicely by poems like 'Chicken Dinner'. I also like the quieter, positive 'Who Dat Girl?'. 'Who dat girl? Who dat girl? / Pretty as poetry? Who dat girl in de lookin'-glass? / Yuh mean dat girl is me?' Bloom writes in accessible dialect which comes alive when read aloud. Faustin Charles is also a humorist with a penchant for rhythm, repetition and a sense of wonder:

'And every night before they go to sleep  
A black-eyed fairy will reap  
Raindrops from their dreams.'

Now for the poets who are not yet familiar to British readers. Telcine Turner is witty and tender and will, I think, delight many children with her narrative poem 'Charley and Miss Morley's Goat'. This story in verse is told in Louise Bennett tradition, easy to understand and with a lively refrain, 'Run, Charley, Run'. 'Dancing Poinciana' is much more lyrical and blazes off the page:

'Fire in the treetops  
Fire in the sky  
Blossoms red as sunset  
Dazzling to the eye.'

Opal Palmer Adisa also writes evocatively of flowers when she describes jasmine. 'My eyes / pool of deep ocean waters / glittering under the sun', and fruits, simply by listing the names 'and coolie-plum / star-apple / and custard apple / navel orange / and wild cherries'.

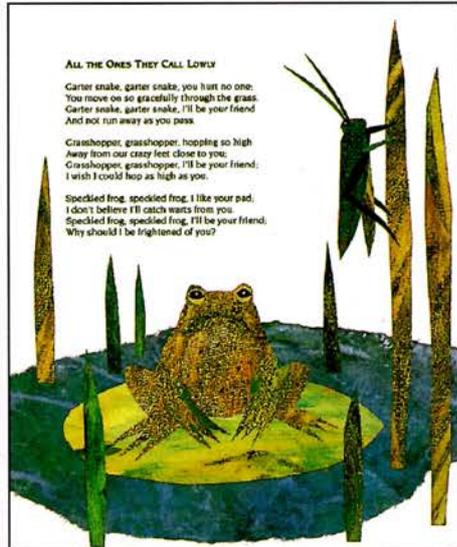
David Campbell addresses the history of some basic crops in 'Corn and Potato', where he gently informs the reader that they originate from Native American communities. He celebrates reptiles and invertebrates in a poem entitled 'All the Ones They Call Lowly'. John Lyons combines amusing word

### ALL THE ONES THEY CALL LOWLY

Carter snake, garter snake, you hurt no one:  
You move on so gracefully through the grass.  
Garter snake, garter snake, I'll be your friend  
And not run away as you pass.

Grasshopper, grasshopper, hopping so high  
Away from our crazy feet close to you:  
Grasshopper, grasshopper, I'll be your friend,  
I wish I could hop as high as you.

Speckled frog, speckled frog, I like your pad,  
I don't believe I'll catch warts from you.  
Speckled frog, speckled frog, I'll be your friend,  
Why should I be frightened of you?



David Campbell's 'All The Ones They Call Lowly.'

play and Caribbean language with his 'pum na-na frogs' 'cheeky chichichong' and 'mammie's coo-coo and callaloo'.

Dionne Brand captures the threat of hurricane, vividly yet simply:

'Gather in the clothesline  
Pull down the blinds  
Big wind rising  
Coming up the mountain.'

This is a contrast to the wind in another poem which 'hovered and hung and rustled and lay / where I could'.

Pamela Mordecai strikes a more sombre note with her 'Lament of an Arawak Child': 'Now there are not more hummingbirds / the sea's songs are all sad / for strange men came and took this land / and plundered all we had.' She has a nice sense of fun in a list poem about legs from the small child's point of view, 'thin legs / fat legs / dog legs / cat legs', and one about a rabbit, 'A rabbit is easy / to care for / to munch on grass / is what he's hare for'.



From Pamela Mordecai's 'Rabbit Poem.'

Finally, the distinguished poet, Frank Collymore, shows how to be philosophical and amusing at the same time:

'I'm told that the spider  
has coiled up inside her  
Enough silky material  
To spin an aerial  
One-way track  
to the moon and back  
Whilst I  
Cannot even catch a fly.'

**A Caribbean Dozen** is an excellent introduction to Caribbean poetry for readers of six to nine and for younger children, who will be drawn in by the pictures, to share with adults. For too long Caribbean poetry for children has been served by only a handful of talented writers. John Agard and Grace Nichols have now made sure that other gifted poets get a wider audience. ■