

# BOOKS FOR KEEPS

March 1995  
No. 91 UK Price £2.50

the children's book magazine

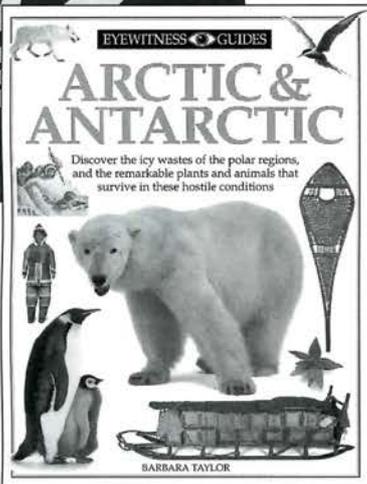


Gillian Cross in Authorgraph  
The New Little Prince  
Books for VE Day

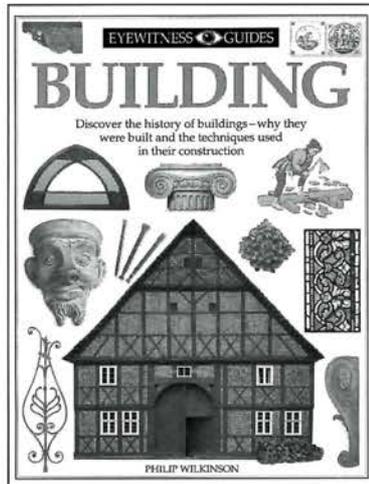
# EYEWITNESS GUIDES

With over 18 million copies sold in 39 countries, Dorling Kindersley proudly present the next chapter in the Eyewitness story:

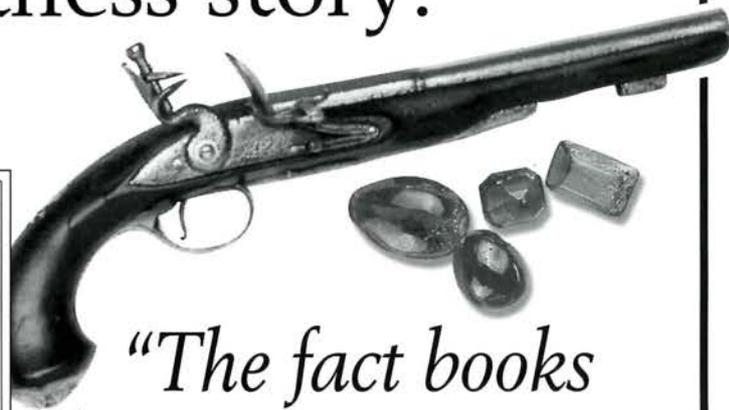
**SPRING 1995**



Arctic & Antarctic  
07513 6033 3



Building  
07513 6034 1

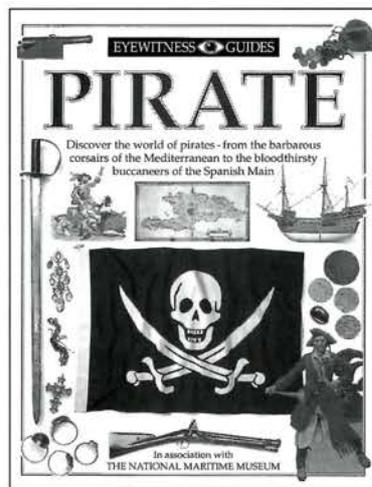


*"The fact books that are more tempting to look at than television"*

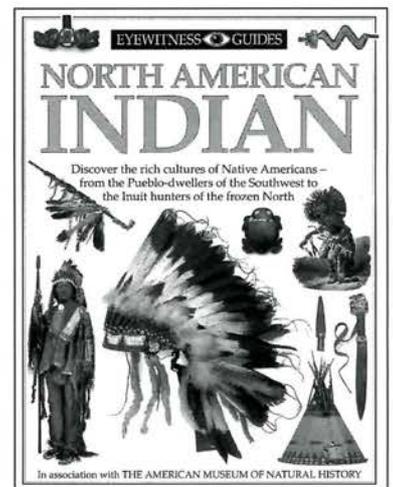
-THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

*"Some of the most beautiful and enticing information books I have ever seen"*

-THE GUARDIAN



Pirate  
07513 6035 X



North American Indian  
07513 6036 8

**£8.99 each**

D O R L I N G K I N D E R S L E Y



# Contents

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

**4** Seeing with the Heart  
Alan Wakeman on *The Little Prince* – with further commentary by Michael Foreman and Erik Blegvad

**8** REVIEWS  
**Series 8 / Fiction 9 / Non Fiction 18**

**14** Authorgraph No. 91  
Gillian Cross, interviewed by Julia Eccleshare

**20** Navigating with a Faulty Compass  
Eleanor von Schweinitz

**23** Blind Spot  
Robert Leeson writes about *Daddy Long Legs*

**24** Books and Bi-lingual Pupils  
Viv Edwards

**26** News

**28** Books that Do Furnish a War  
Chris Powling on books to commemorate the ending of World War II

## CoverSTORY



Our front cover this month features an illustration by Mark Longworth for Gillian Cross's new paperback, *The Revenge of the Demon Headmaster*. Puffin publish this book in April (see our Authorgraph for full details) and we are grateful to them for their help in using this illustration.

## BOOKS FOR KEEPS

the children's book magazine

**MARCH 1995 No. 91**

ISSN 0143-909X: © School Bookshop Assoc. 1995  
Editor: Chris Powling  
Managing Director: Richard Hill  
Design and typeset: Rondale Ltd., Lydney, Glos.  
Printed by: The Friary Press, Dorchester.

Editorial correspondence: *Books for Keeps*,  
The Old Chapel, Easton, Nr Winchester,  
Hampshire SO21 1EG Tel: 01962 779600

*Books for Keeps* can be obtained on subscription by sending a cheque or postal order to *Books for Keeps*, 6 Brightfield Road, Lee, London SE12 8QF. You can also pay by credit card (Access, Visa, Eurocard or Mastercard) or use the telephone order service on

**0181-852 4953**

Annual subscription for six issues:  
£15.00 (UK); £19.00 (Europe including Ireland);  
£22.00 (airmail)

Single copies:  
£2.50 (UK); £3.20 (Europe including Ireland);  
£3.60 (airmail)

## ARE WE WHAT YOU WANT?

It's the season for anniversaries, all right – at any rate as far as children's book journals are concerned. Both *Signal* and *Children's Literature in Education* have just reached their quarter century and, to our utter amazement, *Books for Keeps* is 15 years old this month. Why, it seems only yesterday . . .

In Issue No. 1 (March 1980), Pat Triggs, our founding Editor, introduced *BfK* thus:

*'Helpful, practical, stimulating, informative, sometimes provocative and always enjoyable to read – this is what we intend Books for Keeps to be.'*

More than 90 issues on, it's our intention still. Much has changed in the children's book world during the last decade-and-a-half, though. We've changed, too – but not, we feel, in essence. Are we still meeting your needs? Would you like us to make some adjustments (cost permitting)? Is there any aspect of bringing books and children happily together that you think we neglect?

Now you can have *your* say.

With this issue comes our first-ever questionnaire, a survey of *BfK* readers, and their opinions, which should help smooth progress towards our own silver anniversary. Please spare us the time (no more than five minutes in our estimate) to fill it in – mostly by ticking boxes, rank ordering or suggesting how we should allocate our pages. The survey can be returned free of charge to *Books for Keeps*, FREEPOST, London SE12 8BR and, obviously, the bigger response we get the better. We'd still welcome a reply even if you're reasonably satisfied with the magazine since it's important to know this as well. After all, it would be self-defeating to move too far away from a *winning* formula.

Many, many thanks . . . whoever you are.

I say this because one of the survey's purposes is to find out as much as we can about our readership who we suspect, judging by our mailing list, are a pretty diverse bunch. Also, we guess, pretty busy.

## Editor's PAGE



CHRIS POWLING

Our image of a representative *BfK* subscriber is someone browsing through the magazine between lessons, or 'phone-calls or appointments with a rapidly cooling cup of coffee to hand. If we can catch this person's attention sufficiently to persuade her/him to return to our pages for another, closer look later on, then we've done our job. Our advice to new contributors is always the same – remember you'll be read, at least in the first instance, on the run.

Of course, we know we can't please everybody. Not all the time, anyway. For instance, *BfK* was described recently in the *Daily Telegraph* as 'an iconoclastic fanzine – a children's books equivalent of football's *When Saturday Comes* – where orthodoxy is likely to be given a rough ride'. Dr Peter Hunt, on the other hand, in that tentative, roundabout way by which academics hedge their bets, suggests 'a post-modernist critic might well interpret [*BfK*] as being deeply conservative'. Let's hope they're both right. *Books for Keeps*, after all, is a *magazine* – in both senses of the word. Aside from our continuing and undiminished commitment to a personal engagement with reading, to intercultural issues, to the fictive aspects of non-fiction and so on, a variety of voice and opinion is very much our aim . . . and if that leads to the occasional explosion, so be it.

Our chief constraint is space. Alas, we can't get enough of it. This is why, in the standard 24-page issue we ask you to tinker with, we include *advertising*. When publishers back us with this, we expand. When they don't, we contract – and also lose our colour. So, in these tough, recession-bound times, we're especially grateful to the companies who continue to support us . . . they help convert our basic, bread-and-butter format into something much more tasty.

But is it to your particular taste? Do, please, take the trouble to let us know. The second page of our questionnaire let's you play with the range of options – reviews versus feature article, fiction versus non-fiction – which are a standard part of my juggling-act as Editor. I know what *my* priorities are (most of the time anyway) but do these match your priorities? Beware, though. We've set up the questionnaire in such a way that if you double one thing, you halve another . . . which is exactly the sort of constraint that plagues me every other month. For returns which ignore this real-life limitation, we've prepared a special file already. It's labelled THE CHANCE WOULD BE A FINE THING . . .

Have fun! And thanks again.

*Chris*

# Seeing with the Heart

## Alan Wakeman on his new translation of *The Little Prince*

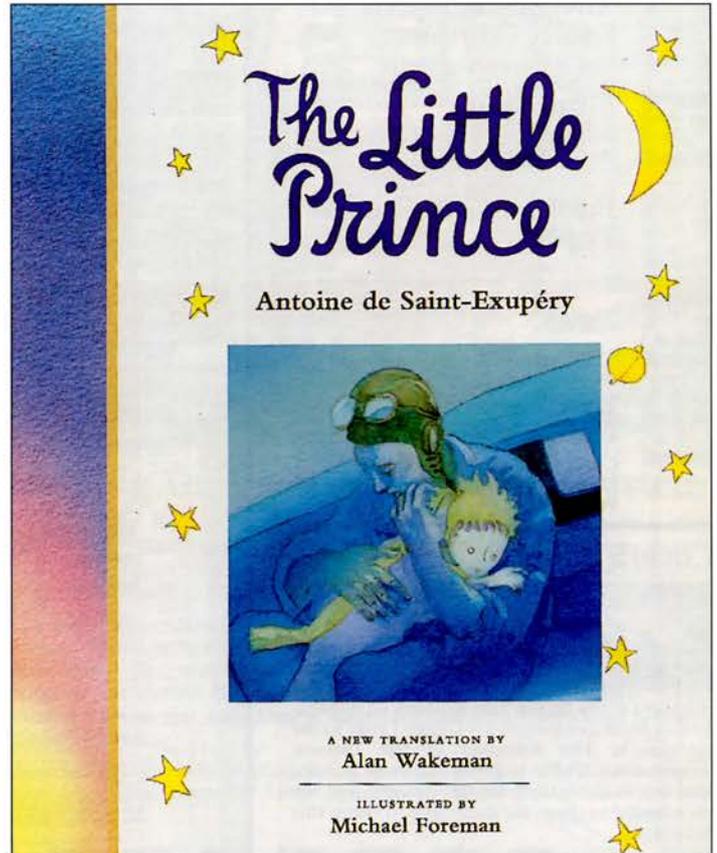
Since it first appeared 50 years ago, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* has become a classic attracting a cult following in each successive generation. This month sees the publication, by Pavilion Books, of a radical new version which combines new illustrations by Michael Foreman with a new translation by Alan Wakeman, who here describes how and why he embarked on its 17-year journey to publication.

37 years ago I picked up a second-hand copy of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince* at one of those pavement booksellers that still cling precariously to the stone parapets of the River Seine in Paris. The year before I'd dropped out of the fourth year of a part-time architecture course, sold all my worldly goods – it didn't amount to much – and taken a one-way ticket to Paris. At the time I couldn't explain why to bewildered friends or family but, looking back, I'm surprised it took me so long. I was young, idealistic, full of passion and desperate to find something meaningful to do with my life. Instead I'd found myself doing a succession of mind-numbing drafting jobs on factory farms, housing estates and office blocks for a succession of materialistic clients who boasted their only interest was 'maximum floorspace for minimum money'. Small wonder I fled.

So, at the age of 23, I was alone in a country where I hardly spoke the language, painting walls by day and reading in cafés by night. But now at least my circumstances matched my feelings: I'd always felt an outsider, now I genuinely was one. Inevitably, as my language skills improved, I discovered the French could be just as materialistic as the English. But during the three years I lived in France I happened upon a series of books that were to change my life. *Le Petit Prince* was the first. 'We only really see with our hearts,' the fox says to the little prince. 'What matters is invisible to the eyes ...' Exactly.

Imagine my disappointment then, on my return to London a few years later, to find this profound magical book available in English only in a ponderous translation that failed utterly to capture the spirit of the original. I abandoned my plan to buy copies as presents and got on with my new job – a job which was satisfying because it helped people communicate with one another: I became an English language teacher.

In 1979, 20 years after I first read it, I resolved to attempt a new translation myself. I rented my favourite hillside cabin on my favourite Mediterranean island and set about my labour of love – I took it for granted that my new version, however successful, couldn't be published till the copyright expired in 1994. But I was on holiday, and the view was inspiring. A chain of islands known as Les Iles d'Or stretches away to the west and every evening I was treated to spectacular sunsets of the Golfe de Giens where the last island becomes a peninsular linked to the mainland at Hyères. As I sat on my terrace, my favourite view in the world spread before me, serenaded by nightingales, struggling with my self-appointed task, I would scarcely have credited what would happen at the focal point of this scene 14 years later. For, in December 1993, even as we began preparing my new translation for publication, the wreckage of Saint-Exupéry's plane was found in this selfsame Golfe de Giens, where it had lain undiscovered since he crashed and died there on 31st July 1944.



Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was born in Lyon on 29th June 1900 into a family with an aristocratic lineage extending back seven centuries. When his father died before his fourth birthday he inherited the title *Le Comte de Saint-Exupéry* (though he rarely used it). Despite this loss, he and his three sisters and younger brother, Francois, had an idyllic childhood thanks to their mother, Marie. She created a secure loving atmosphere at the family estate at Saint-Maurice de Rémoins to shield her children from the loss of their father and the financial blow it had dealt them. (It eventually forced her to sell the entire estate.) Antoine was influenced all his life by her simple goodness which for him set an example no other woman could match, while she for her part loved her son's gentle nature and cherished the curious tender boy she observed picking his way cautiously along the footpaths to avoid treading on insects. 30 years later when he was a famous aviator, bestselling author and *enfant terrible* of the French establishment, he could still write to his mother: 'I'm not sure I've lived since childhood ...'

Yet his life was crammed with adventure. Saint-Exupéry pioneered remote airmail routes across deserts and mountain ranges, flew long-distance record attempts (some ending in near-fatal crashes), patented more than a dozen inventions (including an aircraft landing

system) and wrote numerous prize-winning books and successful screenplays. The 1934 film of his bestselling novel, **Night Flight**, starring Clark Gable and Myrna Loy, ran for months on both sides of the Atlantic while another bestseller, **Terre des Hommes (Wind, Sand and Stars)** won the *Prix du Roman* in France in 1939. This brave passionate man also won three *Croix de Guerre* as a reconnaissance pilot in the Second World War, went into voluntary exile in the United States when France was occupied by the Nazis, and returned to fly perilous reconnaissance missions over southern France from Algeria and Corsica. Indeed, it seemed to his friends he sometimes 'forgot' to take the most elementary precautions when flying in order to flirt with death. In France he is a national hero whose life is celebrated in more than 40 biographies – though we can easily imagine the retort his cheeky star child would make seeing the current 50-franc banknote with its rudimentary depiction of Saint-Exupéry and the little prince himself on his planet.



Shortly after I completed mine and returned to London, I met by chance a young man who turned out to be a member of the author's family. He passed a copy of my new translation on to his mother, Mme Huguette Imbert de Saint-Exupéry, who commented: 'I hope you'll move heaven and earth to get it published!' and sent it on to Saint-Exupéry's last surviving sister in Provence. As a result of their delight at my new version, I was invited to spend a holiday at their country home on an island off the Brittany coast. So I found myself honing the text I'd begun on an island off the south coast of France within sight of the place where the author had died, on another island off the north coast, staying with his family.

These serendipitous events have enhanced my feelings of personal involvement with Saint-Exupéry's marvellous fable of life, love and death. Re-reading it now, I'm astonished how relevant it still is. 50 years ago it presaged our current despair as the certain result if self-serving materialistic politicians were allowed to continue treating their citizens as mere consumers. **The Little Prince** is a manifesto for a saner way to conduct our lives. No one listened then. Will anyone listen now? Are we ready to see with the heart yet?

**The Little Prince** by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, translated by Alan Wakeman and illustrated by Michael Foreman, is published this month by Pavilion (1 85793 288 9) at £10.99.

As a writer he was a perfectionist. The simple beauty and purity of his prose was the result of hours of painstaking distillation of his thoughts to their irreducible essence. His friends were accustomed to being wakened at three in the morning to listen to rewrites of chapters they'd heard a dozen times before in wordier versions. He even invaded printers' workshops to make changes to 'final' copy. Such an author deserves careful translation.



There was no more than a flash of yellow near his ankle.  
He remained still for a moment. He didn't scream.



# Seeing with the Heart

First, the 1945 Katherine Woods translation of Saint-Exupéry's dedication. On its right, the new Alan Wakeman translation.

## TO LEON WERTH

I ask the indulgence of the children who may read this book for dedicating it to a grown-up. I have a serious reason; he is the best friend I have in the world. I have another reason: this grown-up understands everything, even books about children. I have a third reason: he lives in France where he is hungry and cold. He needs cheering up. If all these reasons are not enough, I will dedicate the book to the child from whom this grown-up grew. All grown-ups were once children—although few of them remember it. And so I correct my dedication:

## TO LEON WERTH WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE BOY

## FOR LEON WERTH

I hope all you children will forgive me for dedicating this book to a grown-up. I've got a good excuse: this grown-up is my best friend in the whole world. I've got another excuse: this grown-up understands everything, even children's books. I've got a third excuse: this grown-up lives in France and he's hungry and cold. He really needs cheering up. If all these excuses aren't good enough, I don't mind dedicating this book to the child this grown-up used to be. All grown-ups used to be children once. (Though few of them remember it.) So I'll alter my dedication:

## FOR LEON WERTH when he was a little boy

Saint-Exupéry wrote *The Little Prince* in exile in the USA while his beloved France was occupied by Nazi Germany.

## A word from the new translation's illustrator, Michael Foreman



I was working in my studio last year when the phone rang. 'My name is Alan Wakeman. You don't know me. Do you like *The Little Prince*?' 'I love it,' I said. 'I've made a new translation. Do you want to illustrate it?' 'It shouldn't be re-illustrated,' I said. 'The original drawings are part of the magic.' 'It's coming out of copyright,' he said. 'Think about it.' I thought about it. I re-read the story. I loved it even more than when I first read it in my teens. I was even more certain that the original pictures should not be changed. I read around the subject and about the extraordinary life of Saint-Ex. I found I loved the author even more than his little Prince. I wanted to do pictures of the author. I felt he should be visible in this, his most famous book. This seemed to be a valid reason to make new pictures – not instead of the old ones, but as *extra* pictures. I phoned Colin Webb at Pavilion. 'Do you like *The Little Prince*?' I asked. 'I love it,' he said. 'Would you be interested in a new translation and a few new pictures?' 'Let's do it,' he said. The challenge was to do as little damage to the delicate beauty of the original as possible. I regarded the undertaking as a damage limitation exercise. I hoped it would appear as if untouched by hand or brush. Perhaps the brush of a butterfly's wing at most. To this end I reverted to using an airbrush (a habit I have given up in recent years). Later I found I had to faithfully re-draw all Saint-Ex's original pictures onto my watercolour paper using my paints as the mix of old and new was too disturbing. Also Saint-Ex had not cleaned his brush very carefully and the Little Prince's costume varied in colour from one picture to the next. I hope not too much charm has been lost in the process. I read it to my eight-year-old who thought it brilliant, funny and sad. It has a beautiful poignant sadness. The final paragraph hits the spot every time. ■

## A memoir by Erik Blegvad, Danish author/illustrator and would-be aviator; plus a further memoir by the very first child to read *The Little Prince*.

As a boy in Copenhagen before the war, and before any understanding of philosophy or appreciation of literary style had ever interfered with my choice of reading matter, I read three Saint-Exupéry titles available in Danish translation – *Courier Sud*, *Vol de Nuit* and *Terre des Hommes*. These three books, it's true, lived on the periphery of my shelves of aviation literature. You could never count on him to mention the type of aeroplane he was flying and sometimes the book became a love story. But I had never before read an author who so convincingly described what flying an aeroplane is like.

Living in Paris after the war I found more books by Saint-Exupéry, *Pilote de Guerre*, *Lettre à un Otage* and, to my surprise, a children's book *Le Petit Prince*. It's a tender, wise text and, like the best children's books, of equal value to adults. Saint-Exupéry's own humanism, his search for what it is that makes a life worth living, makes it a classic worthy of a place among his best novels and it's illustrated by the author! I had myself become an illustrator of sorts, not an aviator as in my boyhood dreams. Saint-Exupéry's illustrations completely enchanted me. I was moved to think of him as a philosopher and a famous author exiled in New York after the fall of France, now also an illustrator. Still a pilot, volunteering to fight with the free French, crashing and dying, he lies in his own French Mediterranean, among others – Philosophers, Pilots, Authors, an Illustrator! This pleased me enormously. My prosaic occupation seemed now imbued with a deeper glow and I realised that it no longer mattered that I might never become a pilot. It was fine being an illustrator.

During my second year in Paris I heard a personal memoir of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The first reader of *Le Petit Prince*, the first child to see the manuscript and those enchanting illustrations – was a friend of mine, Michele Lazareff Rosier. Here is how she remembers it:

'The story goes like this: Saint-Exupéry was a very close friend of my parents and as I was the only little French child he knew, he gave me his manuscript to read to learn how a child would react. I was then, I think, 11 years old – in 1940 (I suppose everyone knows the year and month it was written in – I'm not sure at all). He lived near Columbus Circle in Manhattan; the manuscript was absolutely beautiful with very few words on each page, handwritten in Saint-Ex tiny, but very easy to read writing – and on each page an ink drawing filled in with most delicate watercolour.

I don't know how long it took me to read *Le Petit Prince* but, yes, I cried a lot. That's all I remember and that's very little. ■

Erik Blegvad has illustrated and translated **Hans Christian Andersen**, a selection of stories and fairy tales, published by Heinemann (0 434 92904 2) at £12.99.

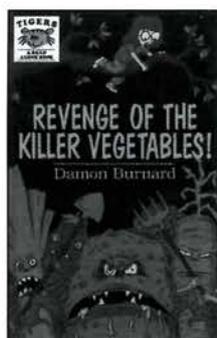
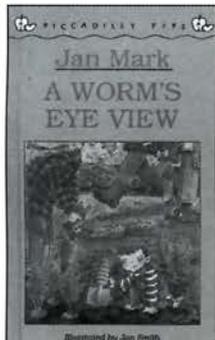
# REVIEWS

Reviews of paperback fiction opposite 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.

## Series TITLES

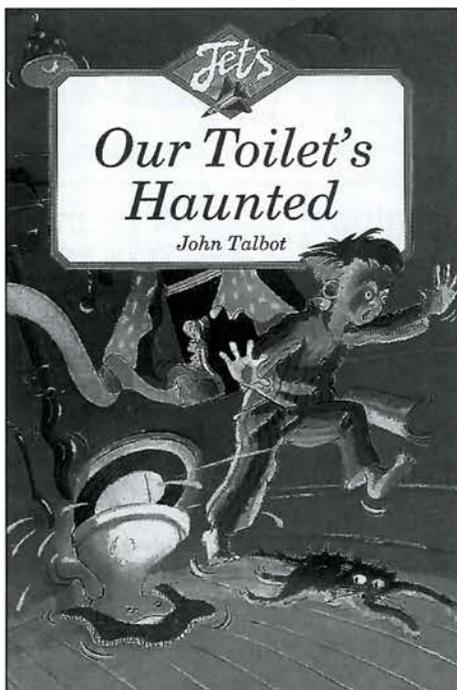
Some of the latest hardbacks chosen by **Steve Rosson**

'Piccadilly Pips' is a new 'Banana'-sized series for 7-9 year-olds and they've certainly gone for big-name authors to start the whole thing off. Jan Mark's contribution is *A Worm's Eye View* (1 85340 292 3, £3.99), illustrated by Jan Smith. Alice and Tom enjoy helping on the family allotment but are less than pleased when Mum agrees that their younger cousin David should come along, too. In order to keep him out of trouble while the others beaver away at hoeing, weeding and harvesting, David is encouraged to dig holes with a trowel and plants sticks and stones and bits of bone. When it's time to go home and the keys are missing from Dad's coat pocket, it doesn't take too long to work out that the awful David has planted them somewhere on one of the disused allotments he's been working on. Alice and Tom solve all by taking if not quite the worm's eye view of the title, then certainly a David-level view.

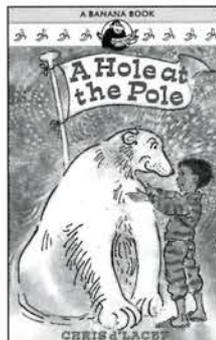
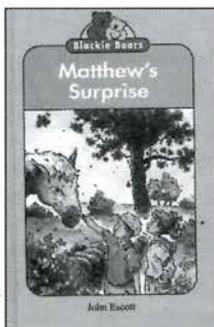


Sticking with gardening, we come to *Revenge of the Killer Vegetables!* (Andersen 'Tigers', 0 86264 526 3, £5.99) by Damon Burnard. If you hadn't already guessed from the title, be warned; this is very, very silly indeed. It takes in an incompetent Elizabethan actor, a narrator called Curly Kale (well, you did know it was about vegetables), a magic potion to increase the size of veg, a giant stick of broccoli dressed in a police uniform, an enormous slaving snail that manages to get at some of the potion, and much other daftness. The author's own cartoon style illustrations add to the telling and if there's a serious side, it is the underlining of the stupidity of the rivalry between Curly's dad and Mrs Weeny next door over the respective size of their spuds. All great fun!

'Blackie Bears' have always struck me as being rather old-fashioned and staid, both in subject-matter and illustration; even the logo is just so comfortable. *Matthew's Surprise* (0 216 94119 9, £4.50) by John Escott (illustrated by Ivan Bates) is no exception, but it's a neatly worked story with much to think about. Georgina,



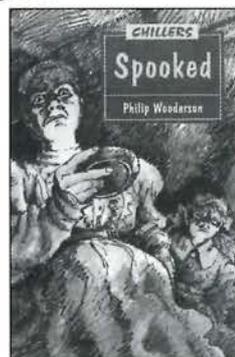
from the new housing estate with her new tracksuit and new trainers and tales of a new caravan plus a trip to Euro Disney, continually irritates poor Matthew, who lives in an old cottage that Mum and Dad are doing up and furnishing from finds at auctions and car boot sales. The only new thing in Matthew's life is baby Emma, in whom Georgina shows no interest at all. Matthew eventually gets a caravan holiday with a real difference that makes Georgina's jaw drop and he also realises the reason for her lack of interest in the baby. The moralising on the final page is rather glib but it's an enjoyable story and the children are sympathetically drawn.



No piles of ring binders, half-termly forecasts or schemes of work carefully linked to the programmes of study for Miss Harrison in Chris d'Lacey's *A Hole at the Pole* (Heinemann 'Banana', 0 434 96801 3, £3.99), illustrated by Joanna Carey. As soon as Billy tells her that he'd like to walk

to the North Pole because he wants to mend the hole in the sky there, she's setting the class off on a project. Now Billy has some curious notions about this hole in the ozone layer and global warming thanks to his Dad's tall tales, but he learns the truth from a friendly polar bear in an efficiently handled dream sequence. The ecological issues are dealt with clearly and the characters of leg-pulling Dad and ever-practical Mum are cleverly done. A very encouraging first novel.

Toilets have always been an endless source of amusement for youngsters (and, in fairness, many of their elders), so John Talbot's *Our Toilet's Haunted* (A & C Black 'Jets', 0 7136 3982 2, £5.50) should prove popular. Jessie let slip her fears about the loo while appearing on a local radio show and when go-getting Philippa of the roving mike interviews Jessie's mum, most of the town seems to want to take a look. With commendable Thatcherite zeal, Mum and Dad start charging 50p a visit plus 10p for a sheet of haunted toilet paper. Dad finally calls a halt when he has to queue for 20 minutes to use his own lavatory and anyway the men from the council then arrive to carry out a refit. Lots of neat touches in this straightforward story but some of the pictures will prove too tempting to those of your readers who like to 'improve' what they are given.



Finally, for older readers Philip Wooderson has re-worked many of the old ghost story clichés in *Spooked* (A & C Black 'Chillers', 0 7136 3912 1, £5.50), illustrated by Jane Cope. An old chest with a secret drawer, a hidden message from the past, a ghostly face at a window, a candle-lit house full of people in Victorian costume all play their part in interesting, intriguing and finally terrifying poor Pete. The reader is kept interested and intrigued, too - I was confidently expecting this to be the old favourite 'time-shift' story but that is not the case at all. Perhaps the ending is rather pat, but it's definitely a page-turner.

# Nursery/Infant REVIEWS

## Let's Go Home, Little Bear

Martin Waddell, ill.  
Barbara Firth, Walker  
(Oct 94), 0 7445 3169 1, £3.99

Big Bear and Little Bear are out in the snowy woods and at first Little Bear is really enjoying the fun. Then he starts to get tired and a little fearful of the snow and space. Like any small child on a long walk he needs to be carried home to the security of the cave and a story before bed. Delightful illustrations and a tender but realistic view of the relationship between the characters will make this just as much a classic as *Can't You Sleep Little Bear?* **LW**

## Grandpa Bodley and the Photographs

Caroline Castle, ill. Peter Bowman, Red Fox  
(Dec 94), 0 09 929011 1, £3.99

A rather unsatisfactory story about Hutchinson Bear and his Grandpa who come upon a box of old photographs in a cupboard. Hutchinson hears all about his family history as they look through them. The problem, to my mind, is that the writing is sentimental in an adult, soppy sort of way, the illustrations lack sufficient clarity to be easily interpreted by a young child and the teddy bear characters seems pointlessly self-indulgent. A much sharper story about real people lies in here somewhere and I'd have liked to read it rather than this one. **LW**

keeper. The illustrations are clear and amusing and the story is ideal for infants beginning to share the reading of both words and pictures. **LW**

## A Zoo in Our House

Heather Eyles, ill. Andy Cooke, Walker (Nov 94),  
0 7445 3648 0, £3.99

You'll remember *Dear Zoo* in which the zoo sends various unsuitable pets? Well, suppose the pets had not been sent back but had stayed in your house... This book starts with a letter to the zoo as well, but imagines the result if the giraffe, the lion, the monkey were living with the little boy who sent for them. Unfortunately, Mum puts her foot down at the end of the week... but how could she have missed the gorilla under the table? Good for young beginners with print. **LW**

## A Lion at Bedtime

Debi Gliori, Hippo  
(Oct 94), 0 590 55683 5, £3.99

There have been several stories lately about children with fears of the dark and creatures that might be lurking in it. Perhaps this is a reflection of children's engagement with other media? Whatever the reason, here's another one - nicely illustrated and written - about a little boy who believes in the lion that comes to his room. He learns how to deal with it himself in a conclusion that's satisfying but so confuses reality and fantasy it might not help the fearful child after all. Interesting, though. **LW**

book with amusing illustrations which run seamlessly, in the manner of a continuous strip, thanks to the cut-page layout. **LW**

## Mog on Fox Night

Judith Kerr, Picture Lions  
(Nov 94), 0 00 664501 1, £4.50

This is Mog back in splendid form with a thoroughly satisfactory story about the night that foxes got into the kitchen through the cat flap. The family is just as always - Mr Thomas trying to get some discipline into Mog's life, Debbie as soft as butter and Mog, of course, coming out on top without ever quite knowing how. The writing is spot on, the pictures are Judith Kerr at her best and this makes a wonderful book for any young child to read or listen to. **LW**



From *A Lion at Bedtime*.



## Good Night, Gorilla

Peggy Rathmann,  
Mammoth (Jan 95),  
0 7497 2312 2, £3.99

There are very few words in this picture story about a baby gorilla who gets hold of the zoo keeper's keys. As he goes round saying good-night to the animals, the gorilla is trotting behind unlocking the doors. The whole zoo follows the unsuspecting keeper home and his wife gets such a shock...! There's a hint of *Rosie's Walk* in the format which allows us to see more than the zoo

From *Good Night, Gorilla*.

## Snake Supper

Alan Durant, ill. Ant Parker, Picture Lions  
(Nov 94), 0 00 664423 6, £3.99

An entertaining tale of a hungry snake who eats every animal he meets, bulging interestingly the while, until he meets his match in a clever elephant. All the animals survive unharmed and even the snake is satisfyingly unrepentant at the end as he sets off to look for more food. This is a simple and enjoyable

adorable penguin that before he knows it, with a waddle and a huddle, he's being cuddled to pieces by his brothers and sisters. Even when he runs away and finds a wooden house to live in, he's followed. But when he gets lost, he realises that being alone isn't as much fun as he'd imagined.

Jez Alborough has fun and games in the snow with his readers, using a variety of page layouts and incongruous images to great effect. **JB**

## The Hungry Cat

Phyllis King, Walker  
(Nov 94), 0 7445 1415 0, £3.99

A hungry cat eats its way with gusto through 1 fish, 2 potatoes... 10 melons, then inevitably suffers an attack of nausea and up come the 10 melons, etc, etc, leaving the grey puss ready to start again - as I suspect will be the beginner readers who share in this ravenous moggy's feast. Highly predictable and great fun. **JB**

## Don't Climb Out of the Window Tonight

Richard McGilvray, ill. Alan Snow, Mammoth (Dec 94),  
0 7497 1787 4, £3.99

Dragons on the drainpipes, goblins in the grass and giants jogging are just some of the horrors to deter the would-be nocturnal explorer of the world outside the bedroom window - all good reasons for staying in bed. The reader is forewarned of each new horror (which has a reassuring touch of humour about it) by the repeated admonition, 'Don't climb out of the window tonight because...' inviting full participation in this creepy treat for any time of the day or night. **JB**

## Giant Hiccups

Jacqui Farley, ill. Pamela Venus, Tamarind (Dec 94),  
1 870516 27 3, £3.95

A modern day 'fairy tale' featuring a gentle, female Afro-Caribbean giant, a potter by trade, who shakes up the whole town when she gets an attack of hiccups. Various remedies are tried but Kara Louise's suggestion does the trick. Pamela Venus's illustrations of Ayesha and the inhabitants of the town are sympathetic and animated, as well as challenging stereotypes. **JB**

## Leo and the Wallpaper Jungle

Rachel Pank, Picture Lions  
(Nov 94), 0 00 664419 8, £4.50

When Leo's well-meaning parents decide he's big enough to have his own room, they decorate it with



## Cuddly Dudley

Jez Alborough, Walker  
(Oct 94), 0 7445 3607 3, £3.99

Cuddly Dudley likes to be on his own. The trouble is he's such an



From *Snake Supper*.

jungle wallpaper. Leo's fearful reaction is predictably but amusingly depicted by Rachel Pank. The volume of this reaction quells the disbelief of the jungle animals as they try to come to terms with their minuscule King. From that day on, to his parents' amazement, Leo goes happily to bed each night - to rule over his jungle subjects. JS

### Here Come the Babies

Catherine and Laurence Anholt, Walker (Oct 94), 0 7445 3617 0, £3.99

This book is another in the popular series by the Anholts which essentially catalogues for children all the activities and situations in which they can find themselves. The negative side of having babies around isn't really touched on, but nowadays this is dealt with very effectively elsewhere. This title is up to the high standard of all the others in the series - the books are popular, charming



Four babies yelling while their mummies try to talk,



Five babies, holding hands, learning how to walk.

and amusing - an ideal addition to any Nursery or Reception book corner. JS

From *Here Come the Babies*.

### What About Me?

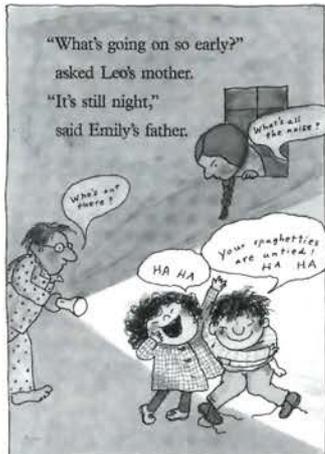
Alex de Wolf, Mammoth (Nov 94), 0 7497 1821 8, £3.50

The plight of a dearly loved cat when a new baby comes to invade his territory is familiar to many households. Alex de Wolf gives us a delightful picture book that explores the experience through the eyes of the cat. Our discerning reviewers at school rated it very highly but felt that any new edition would be improved by keeping the suspense going longer. By not featuring the baby on the cover or the baby's bottle on the title page, therefore allowing us to discover as gradually as the cat does the meaning of the changes that are afoot, the mystery would be sustained for longer and the point made even more forcibly! We agreed this would be a good read not just for families with dearly loved cats but also for families with dearly loved young humans facing imminent changes of this nature! JS

## Infant/Junior REVIEWS

### Leo and Emily

0 09 929431 1



### Leo and Emily's Big Ideas

0 09 929441 9

Franz Brandenburg, ill. Alike, Red Fox (Dec 94), £3.50 each

These titles were first published in 1982, so I wasn't sure whether the current 5-7 year-olds in my class would relate to the antics of Leo and Emily, their dialogue and the modestly coloured illustrations. However, they did! They listened quite avidly to Leo and Emily's middle of the night discourse, and found their desire to scare quite natural. What's so refreshing is their spontaneity and ingenuity which create lively, humorous adventures, true to the lives of any friends who buzz with ideas of things to do. These tales are perfectly childlike, certainly infectious and develop confidence in children wanting to read for themselves. GR

### Masai and I

Virginia Kroll, ill. Nancy Carpenter, Puffin (Nov 94), 0 14 054833 5, £4.50

This is a delightful way to learn about



East Africa and the Masai, for through the intimacy of first-person narrative daily events of the inner city are recounted and 'If I were...' considerations shared. Between the wonderful language and illustrations, which make obvious the genuine affinity between both worlds, and the spontaneous, almost greedy childlike curiosity about how the Masai eat, sleep, get ready for parties and dress for PE, this book is absolutely addictive and even exhausting. There's real beauty in its sensitivity and simplicity. It will undoubtedly involve young and old and can also be used legitimately as part of the Geography National Curriculum. GR

### Simon's Revenge

0 00 674873 2

### Don't Do It, Dani!

0 00 674874 0

### Shut up, Mickey!

0 00 674875 9

Margaret Ryan, ill. Alan Snow, Young Lions (Nov 94), £2.99 each

Three books for older, slower readers who enjoy lively stories in good, clear print with short, sharp chapters. All three are about entertaining characters who manage to get things done by force of personality. Simon, who loves to sleep, gets his quiet life by sabotaging the school camp, Mickey rescues the old folks' home from the road scheme by his skill in talking and Dani, who can't resist a dare, saves the stolen cash box with the help of a compost heap. Fresh,

entertaining and realistic, these books will be welcome in any Junior classroom.

Incidentally, Dani is also distinguished by being the only female *main* character, apart from Mog and some very minor mums, in the ten books I've reviewed for this issue. This seems to me to be a seriously worrying fact. LW

### A Book of Mice

Edited by Rosemary Debnam, ill. David McKee, Mammoth (Dec 94), 0 7497 1789 0, £2.99

Pictures of mice, poems about mice, nursery rhymes, fables and fantasies, this slim but plumply packed collection is a *muridaphile's* cornucopia. I particularly enjoyed Joan Aiken's haunting whimsy about piano-playing mice mourning the theft of the moon, while my young listeners were delighted by Anon's extended version of 'Three Blind Mice', in which the atrocity committed by the farmer's wife is set within a pilgrimage of discovery.

This is an enormously entertaining book for such a minuscule subject, its one and only weakness being a type size that would make even the most literate mouse squint. GH

### Big Bad Barney Bear

Tony Ross, Red Fox (Dec 94), 0 09 927221 0, £3.99



He knocked on the door, and it was opened by a huge animal.

When Moose gets a job on a building

site, he finds whatever he wants to use - from shovel to comfy chair - belongs to Big Bad Barney Bear. This giant, but absent, labourer is so big and strong he only has to work one day a month. Moose is not impressed and is determined to put Barney in his place - once and for all.

Bricks being lowered into position by a butterfly, a pelican wheelbarrow and a snake brick hod are just some of the visual delights in this crazy vintage Tony Ross tale. JB

### Keep on Chomping!

Nigel Gray, ill. Philippe Dupasquier, Mammoth (Nov 94), 0 7497 1696 7, £3.99

Special offers can be so tempting and so it proves in Nigel Gray's saga of consumer rights and the wiles of the promotion department. Kate and Ben eat cornflakes ad nauseam to gain enough tokens for the novelty slippers. But instead of slippers, all they get is a mildly apologetic letter and a couple of cornflake vouchers. So the family decides that it's time to visit the factory and take things straight to the top.

An amusing, not to mention educational, romp, tellingly illustrated in cartoon style. JB

### Who's That Banging on the Ceiling?

Colin McNaughton, Walker (Oct 94), 0 7445 3165 9, £4.99

What can one say - Colin McNaughton has created yet another splendid, whacky, brilliant picture book. He depicts the ideas that the occupants on each floor of a block of flats might have of just what is going on in the flat upstairs until we're brought to the top flat and a climax that could only come from Colin McNaughton! JS

### The Little Steamroller

0 14 054983 8

### The Little Horse Bus

0 14 054984 6

Graham Greene, ill. Edward Ardizzone, Puffin (Nov 94), £5.99 each



Puffin have produced these old favourites with loving care. Ardizzone's detailed illustrations entice re-reading after the initial gallop through the stories by children demanding to find out what will happen next. The way the Little Steamroller thwarts the Black Hand Gang, intent on smuggling gold into the country, and the determination of the courageous Little Horse Bus and Brandy, as they scour the back

streets of London to find a band of robbers, have as much appeal, thankfully, as the Power Rangers!

These books are as popular today as when I first introduced them in the early 70s – and, dare I say it, they also beg to be used to support Key Stage One History. JS

### Timid Tim and the Cuggy Thief

John Prater, Red Fox  
(Dec 94), 0 09 913791 7, £3.99

This is an interesting book in that it deals sensitively with the whole issue of fear, of security blankets, of finding courage to fight and win against the odds. It's a provocative read though. Year Two children were mixed in their reactions to it. Many

felt the faceless Cuggy Thief would be too frightening for 'the little ones'; the illustrations were deemed 'just right for the story', although the fantasy/reality conflict within them was too close. However, to a person they would award it shelf space in the book corner. They were very indignant at the recommended age ranges on the cover of 'Reading Together – 2 Years and Over' and 'Reading Alone – 5 Years and Over'. (Red Fox, please note.) JS

### The Window Doll

Sian Bailey, Picture Corgi  
(Nov 94), 0 552 52660 6, £3.99

This is a lovely book. Sian Bailey weaves the loneliness of the doll into her tale, through beautiful illustration and gentle text. The doll sits by



the window watching the world go by and we share her helplessness, when she's abandoned in the garden over the autumn and winter, and her joy when she's found and mended, given beautiful new clothes and rises like a phoenix to a much-loved role as the window doll. An old theme in a beautifully crafted new book. JS

## Junior/Middle REVIEWS

### The Optimist

Bob Kerr, Puffin (Nov 94),  
0 14 037418 3, £2.99



Wisely, Danny's Mum makes him talk to the owner of the boat and say he'll replace the lost paddle, and it's thanks to Mr Martin's reaction that Danny finally becomes a competent sailor and a better person. Bob Kerr's story (which apparently transpired because a friend was swept out in a small dinghy) begins with the drama of a near-fatal prank, thus immediately involving the reader in the real predicament of survival at sea. This is more an experience than a tale and will long be remembered. GR

### Boo! Stories to Make You Jump

Compiled by Laura Cecil,  
ill. Emma Chichester Clark,  
Mammoth (Nov 94),  
0 7497 1765 3, £4.99

Sandwiched within awaits a whole host of superbly sinister, heart-hopping, mind-mashing tales. They are either hilarious or haunting, and insist upon being read aloud so that the rhythm and tempo, if not the understanding of every word, really do make listeners, of any age, jump – leaving them addicted to this firework of a book.

Joseph Jacob's strange visitor, Mahy's ghost and Diana Wynne



Jones' 'thing' in the bathroom cupboard mean everyday objects won't ever be the same again. GR



### A Razzle-Dazzle Rainbow

Chris Powling, ill. Alan Marks, Puffin (Dec 94),  
0 14 036241 X, £3.25

*'Just a moment.  
Are you sure this book is for you?'*

And that's it, you're hooked, unable to break free from fast-moving events and vivacious writing just as Yen is magically magnetised to the amazing rainbow rope and the 'daft, dickory ding-dong curly-whirly,

cuckoo-boing' of a story unfolds. The vibrance of the rope and optimism of Yen and Phun exist sensitively on a credible backdrop of blatant squalor and poverty. But eventually the 'pot of gold' does appear, presenting a future at which Yen and Phun can only marvel – and which sadly many (probably any magic sceptics out there) would take for granted. A worthy book on many levels and, most importantly, a lot of fun. GR

### The Starlight Cloak

Jenny Nimmo, ill. Justin Todd, Picture Lions  
(Dec 94), 0 00 664289 6, £4.99

A beautifully written and illustrated fairytale. It has parallels with the traditional Cinderella, but is further extended so that once Oona and the prince have married, one of the ugly stepisters seeks revenge.

Cormac (who is Oona's foster-mother's grandchild) witnesses the crime and it's due to his faithfulness and his grandmother's magic powers that there's a happy ending. A truly magical tale – a Jenny Nimmo classic which will encapture readers of all ages. GR

### Pigeons and other City Poems

Compiled and illustrated  
by Annie Owen,  
Picturemac (Nov 94),  
0 333 57214 9, £3.99



A significant, cleverly selected and arranged collection. Through the senses of e e cummings, Laurie Lee, Thomas Hardy, Mike Harding, John Agard and others, this evokes much of the stark, subdued, rich, bland, funny, fearful, heady uniqueness of the city and life there. Each poem is fine in its own right; as a collection it's superb; and the lovely illustra-

tions are an extra enhancement. No school should be without it and the fact that it's also relevant to meeting Geography National Curriculum requirements just adds to its already very valid appeal. GR

### Dudley Shadow

Cara Lockhart Smith,  
Mammoth (Dec 94),  
0 7497 1790 4, £3.50

Many more shadows inhabit this imaginative tale than the strange, elusive boy of the title and his even more sinister mother. Their home, Egypt House, draws in Leo who gradually realises that he must outwit not only its two inhabitants but, also conquer all the other darkneses that be-devil his life.

The ending is a bit hard to swallow but open-minded young readers should find this a quick and unusual read. DB



### Shoot, Dad!

Michael Coleman,  
Scholastic (Oct 94),  
0 590 54132 3, £5.99

This humorous football yarn has Year 10 boys as its principals, plotting to manage a local team of men, but the format looks as though it's for a younger audience. Their scam to save Rumney from relegation succeeds in committing at least five criminal offences but, of course, they do such an ace job all is forgiven as the seemingly inevitable is reversed.

I can't see everyone warming to it, but I reckon it'll be welcomed and thoroughly enjoyed by the fans. **DB**

### Dragon Boy

Dick King-Smith, ill.  
Jocelyn Wild, Puffin  
(Nov 94), 0 14 034653 8, £3.50

An orphan boy, John, is adopted by the dragon Montague Bunsen-Burner and his wife - Montague has been told to diet, to keep off the roasted people for a while. In a series of witty adventures John befriends a wolf, solves the dragon's failure to rear eggs, and the dragon daughter takes her flying exams. Great fun, and the separate episodes make this a good read-aloud. **AJ**

### Listen to the Nightingale

Rumer Godden, Pan Piper  
(Nov 94), 0 330 33426 3, £3.99

A gentle, perceptive story about a young girl's ambition to enter the Royal Ballet School. The style is reminiscent of books from the 40s and 50s but is none the worse for that. Ten-year-old Lottie is thrilled when she's accepted after the tough audition, but her joy is overshadowed by the problem of having to give up her dog. Who will look after him? The upheaval of settling in to a strange environment, making new friends and the sheer hard slog of training are authentically woven into an engrossing story - one which will be enjoyed by young balletomanes. **VB**

### Vlad the Drac Goes Travelling **ORIGINAL**

Ann Jungman, Lions  
(Nov 94), 0 00 674377 3, £3.50

Yet more adventures of the diminutive vegetarian vampire. This time he drags the long-suffering Stone family across Europe and the Atlantic, as he researches a travel guide for vampires. Ann Jungman succeeds only too well in conveying the irritating vanity and stupidity of the eponymous hero, and I for one was left aching for somebody to bring this series to a satisfying conclusion by cramming a whole string of garlic bulbs down his throat. **GH**

### East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon

Illustrated by P J Lynch,  
introduced by Naomi  
Lewis, Walker (Oct 94),  
0 7445 3166 7, £4.99

A superbly illustrated edition of the original translation from the classic Scandinavian fairy tale. A girl is carried away by a lover trapped in the flesh of an ice bear. In her attempts to free him, she consults three hags and the four winds before travelling to a palace full of trolls. The prodigious dangers of this epic journey are painted by P J Lynch in eloquent images that sing and blaze from the page. His depiction of the heroine's flight on the shoulders of the North wind is a vertiginous vision of fragile humanity at the mercy of elemental forces.

A beautiful, powerful and indispensable book. Great reading for all ages. **GH**

### Puppy Love

Betsy Duffey, Puffin  
(Nov 94), 0 14 036514 1, £2.99

The first episode in what promises to become a series about the Pet Patrol, a two-person business set up by Evie and Megan to redistribute some of the wealth of the prosperous neighbourhood in which they live. Their first job is to find good homes for a quartet of surplus puppies, a task which is accomplished after some heart-searching about the nature of friendship and possessiveness. This is a fairly slight story, but pleasant enough. I was rather jolted by the publisher's decision to insert references to sterling into a milieu which is obviously American. **GH**

### Snotty Bumstead and the Rent-a-Mum

Hunter Davies, ill. Paul Thomas, Red Fox (Dec 94),  
0 09 929611 X, £2.99

How would your average 12-year-old react to being left alone in a big city house while his mum went off on an open-ended expedition to Africa? Snotty's reaction is one of delight. He converts the house to an earthly paradise of football facilities and electronic paraphernalia, subsists entirely on junk food, and uses the bathroom solely as a storage bin for comics. It can't last, of course, and the bulk of the story is devoted to the efforts that Snotty and his pals apply to keeping at bay the attentions of the school and social services. An anti-authoritarian romp of a book, packed with farcical incidents, that may be gratefully greeted as wish fulfilment fodder by many an oppressed adolescent. **GH**



From *East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon*.



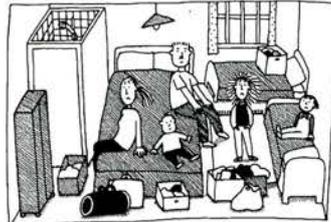
### Save Our Playground

Leon Rosselson, ill.  
Anthony Lewis, Lions  
(Dec 94), 0 00 678450 3, £2.99

Reading this book is like watching one of those old musicals in which Mickey Rooney or whoever gives a spirited cry of 'Let's put on a show right here!' and suddenly everybody from the local cop to the caretaker at the neighbourhood school is singing and dancing their way towards Broadway. You know its schmaltzy hokum but you desperately want to believe the world can be so propitiously tilted towards the underdog. This tale of a bunch of youngsters on a bleak estate trying to raise money to restore a derelict playground has a realistically rougher edge than the old musicals, but the same heart-warming, if deluded, optimism. It's funny, touching and a very good read for upper primary children. **GH**

### The Bed and Breakfast Star

Jacqueline Wilson, ill. Nick Sharratt, Yearling (Jan 95),  
0 440 86324 4, £2.99



Elsa's greatest desire is to be a comedienne, and even when a vortex of misfortune and injustice drags her family down into the sumpy underworld of bed and breakfast accommodation, the jokes keep bubbling out from under the murkiness of her experiences and spilling over the pages to mingle with the quirky drawings which share in the narration of this bleak adventure. The writer is uncompromising in her description of the squalor which Elsa's family has to endure (though the denouement might be read as an evasive concession to the demand for a happy ending), but the lasting impression is of the need for solidarity and defiant humour in adversity. Highly recommended for group and individual reading. **GH**

### Penelope's Peril

Douglas Hill, Pan Piper  
(Dec 94), 0 330 33302 X, £3.50

A rattling good yarn - a wicked scientist wants to control the power held by the Magic Folk and use it for his own evil ends. Penelope, equipped with the mysterious - and wayward - powers of the pendant, is compelled to help when her three friends Rima, Craggle and Glumdole are captured and their lives are in danger.

Years 6 and 7 will respond enthusiastically to this innocent story where good, quite properly, defeats evil, with plenty of thrills on the way. **VR**

### The Snow Vulture

Matthew Sweeney, Faber  
(Nov 94), 0 571 17168 0, £3.99

The story of identical twins Clive and Carl - alike in looks but opposite in temperament. After a snowfall it's the peace-loving Clive who builds a snowman, while Carl's creation is an aggressive vulture. Fed by Carl's badness, it hardens and grows until even he is terrified. The only way he can destroy it is to enter into an alliance with Clive and purge the wickedness from his life.

This is a fable: evil spawns evil, good does not have to be weak. The message is clearly delivered in a setting which will be familiar to many warring siblings from Years 6-8. **VR**

### The Thing in Bablock Dip

Rachel Dixon, ill. Terry Oakes, Yearling (Dec 94),  
0 440 86327 9, £2.99

Abi chooses two mementoes from her grandmother's keepsakes box but doesn't realise the potential of the attractive seed pod until she drops it into Bablock Dip. A triffid-like monster rises from the lake and she must bury her pride and work with Tammy, Isaac and William to defeat 'The Thing'.

There are shrewd perceptions here - the children quickly realise they will not be believed by adults and Abi realises she's been too quick to dismiss her grandmother as an elderly lady out of touch with the world. However, despite these strengths the plot is uneven and strains the reader's credibility. Less analytical readers in Years 5-7 will bowl easily through its pages. **VR**

### Selected Fairy Tales

Barbara Leonie Picard, ill.  
Julia Cobold, Oxford  
(Nov 94), 0 19 274162 4, £5.99

The selection here was chosen by the author as representative of her best work produced throughout a long career. I approached the anthology rather warily but was surprised and impressed by the quality and range contained within it.

These stories explore many themes and cultures, but it's the narrative style which makes the most impact. It has the dignity of an old and beloved armchair - well-used and a reliable source of comfort and ease. Particularly good for classroom use would be 'Count Alaric's Lady', 'Bertrade and Dominic' and an interesting comparison could be made of the first and last stories.

A collection which reads aloud well or it could be suitable for confident readers in Years 6-8. **VR**

**Badger in the Basement**

0 340 60775 0

**Hedgehogs in the Hall**

0 340 60774 2,

Lucy Daniels, ill. Shelagh McNicholas, Hodder (Dec 94), £2.99 each

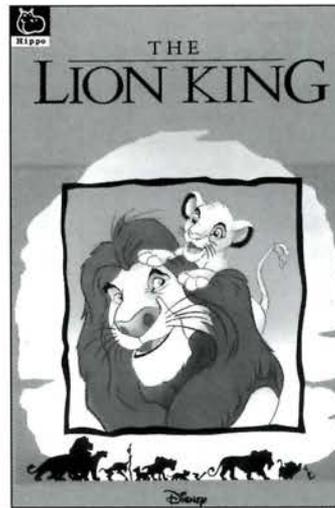
In the first title, Mandy and James are devastated when they find 'their' badger sett destroyed. The two young animal lovers decide to find those responsible and seek a suitable home for the one survivor. A lovely story that keeps us wondering until the last few pages. This is a good read and a timely reminder of how devastating man's meddling in nature can be.

In the second book, Animal Ark has no room for wild animals despite its name. Mandy and James are involved in another adventure, trying to rescue an injured hedgehog and then, the most difficult job of all, releasing a hedgehog family back into the wild. With disaster lurking around every corner, we all have to wait for the creatures to make up their minds about their new home. **PH**

**Dixie's Demon**

Andrew Matthews, ill. Tony Ross, Mammoth (Dec 94), 0 7497 1782 3, £3.50

When Dixie very bravely investigates a strange noise in old Mrs Thompson's coal shed, he has no idea of the trouble that's in store for him. Keeping a pet a secret is one thing; keeping a small, rather wimpish, black demon a secret is quite another matter, especially when he's prone to making some quite horrendous poos. The funniest story I've read for ages and look out, too, for the puzzle at the end. **PH**

**The Lion King**

Adapted by Gina Ingoglia, ill. Disney, Scholastic (Oct 94), 0 590 55708 4, £2.99

An attractive companion to the Disney film and a gentle, sunny read for confident readers who haven't seen it yet. Simba, a lion cub, leads an exciting life on the African plain playing with Nala, the lioness. Together they have lots of adventures which prepare Simba for his adult life as king of the pride. Scar, however, spoils things. He is envious of Simba's position and his jealousy makes him cruel and scheming in his ambitions to be leader. **PH**

**Calamity with the Fiend**

Sheila Lavelle, ill. Margaret Chamberlain, Puffin (Nov 94), 0 14 036413 7, £3.50

Who needs an enemy when your best friend is like Angela? As the victim of a whole series of her practical jokes, Charlie frequently finds herself in deep, deep trouble. Returning a 'kidnapped' dog proves to be an embarrassment and in claiming first prize at the painting competition she seems to be a cheat. Angela is a pain, but before the holidays begin Charlie makes sure she gets her come-uppance. **PH**

**Greek Myths for Young Children**

Marcia Williams, Walker (Oct 94), 0 7445 3075 X, £4.99

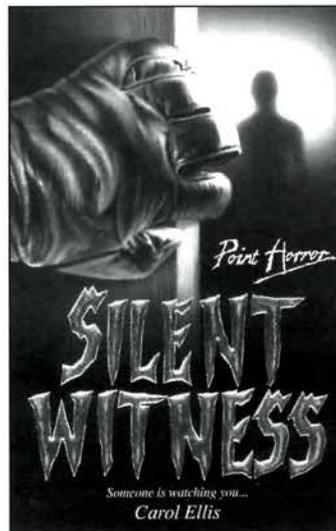
Eight Greek legends retold in strip cartoon by the author of The Amazing Story of Noah's Ark. This is a vibrant, witty and fresh approach. The brightly coloured drawings with speech bubbles overcome the difficult language of the traditional stories, making these legends easily available to less competent readers. Differentiation in its most attractive form. **PH**

## Middle/Secondary REVIEWS

**Do-Over**

Rachel Vail, Mammoth (Dec 94), 0 7497 1824 2, £3.50

Within a loose plot of putting on a school play, this covers issues of relationships for young teenagers in a way which ought to have wide appeal. It's typically American in the way they're raised within a structure of the apparently everyday life of home and school - comfortable and safe but also thought-provoking. Certainly it extends the Blume/Danziger stock which fills out the diet of accomplished readers and may well entice the less keen and less confident to give reading a go. **AJ**

**Silent Witness**

Carol Ellis, Scholastic 'Point Horror' (Oct 94), 0 590 55716 5, £2.99

'Point Horror' books can often be higher on promise than delivery: this isn't horror, and the realism and drama of the covers package something much more staid and conventional... which is all part of the appeal. Here we have a good suspense story, using all the devices of the genre to unsettle the main character and the reader - mysterious phone calls, lights failing, the girl walking and then at home alone, and the secret on the video tape. Film and television watchers know all

about this and will enjoy the print version. **AJ**

**Nightmare Hall - The Roommate**

Diane Hoh, Scholastic 'Point Horror' (Oct 94), 0 590 55522 7, £2.99

This well-honed serial thriller, second in the set with more promised, takes as its premise '... crazy people who try to act normal'. It actually succeeds rather well in making the normal characters verge on the maniacal and the psychos seem rather normal.

Fast, escapist and entertaining reads like this are the 'Point' hallmark. There's an audience out there slaving to get at them. *Ignore it at your peril!* **DB**

**The Whitby Child**

Rob Jarvis, Simon &amp; Schuster (Oct 94), 0 7500 1581 0, £4.99

Many readers will be waiting for the third part of the Whitby books. Robin Jarvis is very popular and this continues both the story and the style: high fantasy, grotesque demons and, in the battle of good and evil, we know who will win, even if the struggle is dramatic and takes an awful long time. Will Aunt Boston succumb to age and the angel who wants to take her off? Will Nelda succumb to the curse of the Aufwader women? Will Jennet become a witch and betray brother Ben? Read on. Good for reading

stamina and for strengthening the arm muscles. **AJ**

**The Island and the Ring**

Laura C Stevenson, Mammoth (Oct 94), 0 7497 1777 7, £3.99

This is a fantasy in which Tania, royal daughter of King Campion, is forced to flee after his betrayal and murder with the lutenist Eliar for company. She endeavours to avoid her enemy Ascanet but discovers that she has the power to free her land from his grip.

The story shatters stereotypes, is full of action, richly written and has a satisfying streak of romance. More able readers from Year 8 upwards will find it rewarding, but, like me, may wince at the inappropriate use of Americanisms in what purports to be a medieval setting. **VR**

**Poem for the Day**

Edited by Nicholas Albery, Sinclair Stevenson (Dec 94), 1 85619 499 X, £9.99

366 poems to keep your mind exercised and your brain working overtime. In the Foreword, Wendy Cope quotes the Curse of St Custard's, young Nigel Molesworth and his attempt at poetry recitation - 'Har fleag har fleag har fleag onward...' and suggests a better selection for him to murder.

Nicholas Albery's choice is not the most inspired - when will someone

**POETRY ORIGINAL**

# Authorgraph No.91

GILLIAN CROSS interviewed by Julia Eccleshare

**F**or a winner of the Carnegie Medal, the Whitbread Prize, the Smarties Grand Prize and overall winner with children for **The Demon Headmaster**, Gillian Cross is unnecessarily but refreshingly modest. She is unpretentious about her work and speaks neither as 'a great writer' nor as someone who 'just loves kids' (though both are true). She sees herself as lucky, not in terms of her success, but in terms of how her life has shaped itself without too many conscious decisions having to be made. No angst about career versus children or choices of lifestyle. She talks about her work plainly but with suppressed passion and humour, a conjunction which matches her books neatly.

Gillian's modesty would make it all too easy to underestimate both her ability and her professionalism about her writing. Having married as a student and taken her finals after the birth of her first son, she has always managed to combine writing with children – and knows no other life. She got a First at Oxford (which she brushes aside claiming that it was only because all her friends had left and she could therefore concentrate on the work) and did a D.Phil at Sussex immediately after, thinking she might be an academic.

With that behind her and two young children, Gillian became secretary of the Lewes Children's Book Group. The organiser was terribly keen. You can imagine, the Lewes Children's Book Group was tremendously nice. I went to a meeting and I suddenly thought it's time I did something.' (As if she hadn't been doing anything before.) And what she did was start writing.

The Children's Book Group was her first encounter with the contemporary children's book scene but Gillian had always kept in touch with children's books which she puts down to the fact that 'I didn't have much of a gap between being a teenager and having small children.' But it was reading K M Peyton's **The Beethoven Medal** which really inspired her. 'I can remember coming to the surface at the end, dazed and blinking. As though a door had opened. It made me realise that a novel has at heart to be a good story and that was what I wanted to write.'

And, after that, there was no stopping her. 'I wrote in ear plugs so I wouldn't be distracted by the television. I wrote a dreadful book that I

hawked about a bit and nobody wanted, but I went on writing. Once I'd written one I knew that was what I wanted to do. But I wrote five before anything got accepted.'

Now that takes persistence and a certain amount of self-confidence. For all her modesty, Gillian gives the impression of being a very sure person. She puts much of her ability to write – and to go on writing – down to having done a D.Phil. 'I think the thing that made writing books possible for me was writing a thesis. Pacing is the thing that stops people writing a book. They can't understand imaginatively what it's like to do that. You can say to people that it takes nine months to write a book and they can say "yes, yes" but they can't relate that to their experiences when they sit down to write and so they can't do it.'

Gillian has clearly never had any problems with the self-discipline that writing involves, though she says it was her husband Martin who really got her organised to get published. 'After the fourth book which nobody wanted, Martin said, "You must make a chart of the books you have written and who you've sent them to and work it out properly." It certainly helped.' As it happens, two novels were accepted simultaneously: **The Runaway** by Methuen and **The Iron Way** by Oxford University Press. Both were published in 1979 and Gillian went on writing. 'It takes me about nine months to write each of the big books.' Nine months in which she works on a particular title, researching, drafting, 'tweaking' and writing the final copy. She tries to plan it so that a title will be finished by July in time for the school holidays but, obviously, that is not always possible. 'I'm known to complain

about having to go to Majorca – and I never get any sympathy.'

'I write for my own satisfaction. I get a kind of notion about what I'll write.' Her ideas and inspirations are many and varied which is why her books are always so different from each other. 'Where I start from depends on what I am doing. The idea for **The Demon Headmaster**, which is by far my most successful book with children, came from the bit in **Save our School** where Clipper writes about the wicked headmaster. Our daughter, Elizabeth, who was nine, said "I really like the story of Clipper's about the Headmaster. It's much better than the sort of books you write. Why don't you write a story about a wicked headmaster?" And she went on and on about it. Then David Fickling rang and said, "Why don't you write a really gripping book. A rousing yarn. Something that eight to twelves would like." And I thought, I know what my eight to twelve really wants. And that's what got me started.'

But, it wasn't all plain sailing. When she had written **The Demon Headmaster** she discovered that she'd woven two books in together. One, which later became the basis of **Twin and Super-Twin**, had to be extracted leaving **The Demon Headmaster** to become the book we now know:

*'But his eyes were not pink. They were large and luminous, and a peculiar sea-green colour. She had never seen eyes like them before, and she found herself staring into them. Staring and staring.'*

*"Funny you should be so tired," he said, softly. "So early in the morning."*

*She opened her mouth to say that she was not tired, but, to her surprise, she yawned instead.*



"So tired," crooned the Headmaster, his huge, extraordinary eyes fixed on her face. "You can hardly move your arms and legs. You are so tired, so tired. You feel your head begin to nod and slowly, slowly your eyes are starting to close. So tired and sleepy."

'Once I'd thought of the hypnotism I couldn't believe that nobody had thought of it before. It seemed so obvious.' Gillian laughs almost guiltily about this but with an element of triumph, too.

But, although this creation was so successful, Gillian did not stick with it - partly because, for her, the fantasy premise was hard to control and she did not feel totally confident with it and partly because other ideas crowded in. A visit to Cragside in Northumberland inspired **Roscoe's Leap**. Gillian had intended to include something about hydraulics in the book but when she came to do the research she found that she couldn't understand it because she didn't know enough maths. Instead she married the impact of Cragside with detail about mechanical toys.

Place is always important to her but her prize-winning books have come from quite different inspirations:

*'... and the thing leaped out of the shadows - mouth open vast, black, slavering - its red eyes glaring and its hot, foul breath strong on her face - huge and grey, with the wolf legs kicking free of the human clothing - all animal, all beast - and no time to think of Nan or what to do or how to avoid the stained, curving, murderous teeth and the blackness that came rushing, rushing, rushing, no time and no defence and nothing to do except scream and scream and screamaandSCREAM -'*

Gillian won the 1990 Carnegie medal for **Wolf** which has been frequently and highly praised for the power of its many-layered storytelling. She thinks the idea for writing a book about wolves came from a suggestion 'that it would be dead good and lucrative to write a book about werewolves'. She quickly discovered that it might be, but not for her. Instead, 'it started with the bit at the beginning where Cassy wakes up and it had a general feel of wolfishness and that it had something to do with her father. And I knew it would involve danger, serious danger.' The plot and the power of it came later.

Gillian rarely plots a book before she starts - except in what she calls her 'little books' which have to be carefully worked out if the story is to fit the length. She even wrote a grid for **The Tree House**. For her 'plots evolve out of situations'. Even **The Great Elephant Chase** with its enormous canvas was not worked out in detail, although she knew very well some of the things she wanted to include. The force behind the book was Cissie. 'I've always had her. I've had her for years kicking around, waiting to go in a book. And then I thought, I'll put her in there.'

Similarly, in **Chartbreak** she had the voice of Janis in her head long before she wrote the book. 'I know nothing about pop music but I had to write this book.' Gillian makes the idea of an external, almost spiritual force directing the writing seem surprisingly natural. And yet, even with these two forceful heroines, Gillian worries about her ability to describe characters. 'It's more the interaction between the characters than any particular one that really matters to me. People always think that you must have strong characters and that's sort of right. And clearly you don't want to have such weedy characters that nobody can remember who they are. But actually, what children do is to identify, so you need the main character not to be too obviously unlike the reader.'

Gillian gives the impression of having been changed remarkably little by the tremendous success of both **Wolf** and **The Great Elephant Chase**. She never refers to the awards she has won and it would feel almost vulgar to do so.



Photograph of Gillian Cross courtesy of Penguin Children's Books

Mostly she still stays at home - writing. And, with a brick wall only a few feet from her study window, it's clear she doesn't want or like to be distracted by casual interruptions. About once a month she goes on a school or library visit because 'it stops you feeling sentimental about children in groups' and because writing is lonely. For the rest, she has two children still at home and is actively involved in the life of her village, something quite separate from her writing.

With so much success stacked up behind her you'd think writing the next book would be

easier. Not so. Gillian says it takes her longer to write now than it did when she started, that the writing is slower. Nor does the success of a previous title convince her about the viability of the current one. 'I'm now at the stage with the book I'm writing at the moment where it seems impossible that I shall ever write it. When I say that to Martin, he says "That's what you always say" which ought to be terribly comforting but isn't really because you always feel that it'll never happen again.' Luckily, she laughs as she says it. Maybe she doesn't quite believe that it won't. ■

### Details of the books mentioned:

**The Demon Headmaster**, Puffin, 0 14 031643 3, £3.50 pbk  
**The Revenge of the Demon Headmaster**, Puffin, 0 14 036991 0, £3.50 pbk (April 1995). In hardback this title is called **Hunky Parker is Watching You**, Oxford, 0 19 271705 7, £8.99  
**The Iron Way**, Oxford, 0 19 271642 5, £4.00 pbk  
**Save Our School**, Mammoth, 0 7497 0591 4, £2.99 pbk  
**Twin and Super-Twin**, ill. M Bradley, Puffin, 0 14 034825 5, £3.50 pbk  
**Roscoe's Leap**, Oxford, 0 19 271557 7, £6.95; Puffin, 0 14 034013 0, £3.50 pbk

**The Tree House**, ill. Paul Howard, Mammoth, 0 7497 1767 X, £2.99 pbk  
**The Great Elephant Chase**, Oxford, 0 19 271672 7, £8.95; Puffin, 0 14 036361 0, £3.99 pbk  
**Chartbreak**, Oxford, 0 19 271508 9, £6.95; Puffin, 0 14 032458 5, £3.99 pbk  
**Wolf**, Oxford, 0 19 271633 6, £7.95; Puffin, 0 14 034826 3, £3.50 pbk  
**New World**, Oxford, 0 19 271723 5, £9.99 (see back page of BfK 90 for a full review of this title)  
**The Runaway** is now out of print.

produce an anthology *without* 'Tyger Tyger Burning Bright', Wordsworth's Daffys, Burns's wee sleekit beestie and that Assyrian still coming down from the fold? – but there's also Kathleen Jamie, Philip Gross and John McGrath. How I longed for Spike Milligan, though! Nevertheless, a large, fat tome for dipping into, even if I don't think I'll bother learning one of these poems each day. **VB**

### Storm's Eye

Judith Nicholls,  
Oxford (Nov 94),  
0 19 276138 2, £4.99

**POETRY**

A collection to extend the range of poetry for many readers. It bridges the gap between the light verse that is so wonderful and plentiful in schools and the poetry that needs quiet and re-reading to get its sense. There's plenty to enjoy here in sequences of poems whose subjects will continually cross the paths of children, and allow them to hear the



From *Storm's Eye*.

voice of an adult, sometimes boisterous, sometimes reflective, some-

times in the child's world, sometimes in the grown-up's. **AJ**

### Squirt!

*What can an elephant  
do with a trunk  
when the sun is blazing hot?*

He can  
take it for a walk  
to the waterhole,  
suck a little water up  
to make him cool –  
then squirt all over his back,  
**THAT'S WHAT!**

*When the sun is blazing hot?*

OH YES,  
he can squirt all over his back!

**WHY NOT?**

## Older Readers **REVIEWS**

### The Mummy King's Realm

Roy Pond, Albatross  
(Dec 94), 0 732 41037 1, £3.99

First in the series, this is a demanding read for the older age-group, mainly because amongst the imaginative and enthralling questing there's rather a lot of heavy soul-searching and philosophising. Pagan myth meets christian inclination as Wilson Ryder, dog and female companion are transferred into the maelstrom of very ancient Egypt where the age-old struggle of good and evil rages, awaiting the catalyst of a Bowman from the future. **DB**

### Colour her Dead

Celia Rees, Pan (Dec 94),  
0 330 33512 X, £3.99

This tightly plotted thriller keeps up the tension throughout. There's a disturbing solidarity about the way locals clam up as two sixth-form girls start to probe the unsolved murder

of a six-year-old back in 1968. Over 25 years later the case has become shrouded in myth and village taboo which the girls slowly peel back as they dig for the truth, unwittingly placing themselves in terrible danger. Local history field-work project organisers beware! **DB**

### The Domino Effect

Ann Coburn, Bodley Head  
(Nov 94), 0 370 31917 6, £8.99

A powerful novel about the effects of rape on a woman and her daughter. 16-year-old Rowan and her mother, Eleanor, live their unconventional life in a converted barn, its vast windows overlooking the countryside. But their cosy existence changes irrevocably when Eleanor is sexually assaulted by her boss. The determination of Eleanor to get justice for herself in court makes disturbing reading and highlights the difficulties faced by women in this appalling situation.

**ORIGINAL**

### You Just Don't Listen!

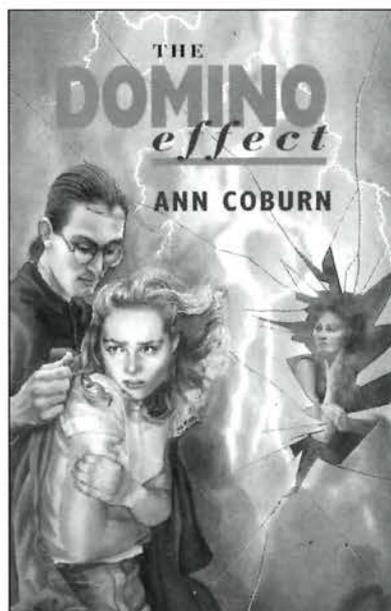
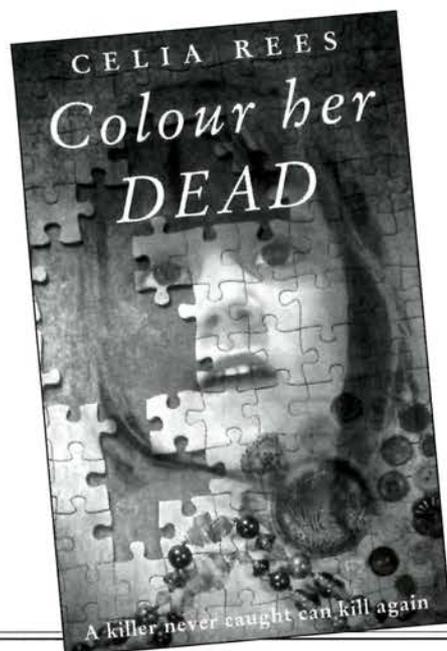
Sam McBratney,  
Mammoth (Nov 94),  
0 7497 1699 1, £2.99

This was first published in hardback under the title *Put a Saddle on the Pig* – a more attention-grabbing one than the paperback! Conflict and emotions run high when 16-year-old Laura finds out that her widowed mother is not only seeing another man but plans to move to the country. Faced with the prospect of leaving her friends and the city life she enjoys, she rebels and feels betrayed at her mother's lack of consultation. Eventually, acknowledging that her

mother too has the right to make her own life, Laura makes a fragile truce. The author describes teenage feelings with accuracy and style in a book which was chosen by young people in Ireland as the Bisto Book of the Year. **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.



## Jonathan Weir, Christopher Pike devotee, follows up his article in BfK 89 (November 1994) with reviews of the Master's latest:

### Remember Me 2:

#### The Return

Hodder, 0 340 61169 3, £3.99

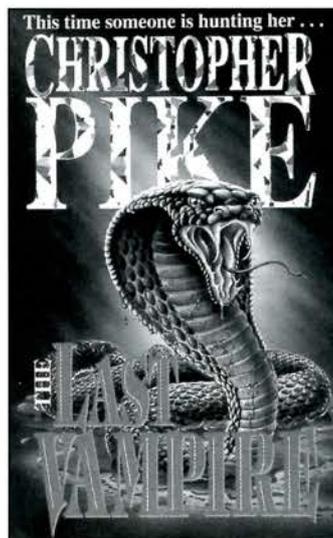
A long time arriving, **Remember Me 2: The Return** is the sequel to Pike's favourite book and neatly carries on where the original left off.

Jean Rodrigues, a Hispanic teenager who is unhappy with her life, falls from a 30ft balcony. She does not die, but wakes up feeling changed. She is strangely drawn to the area where Shari Cooper, the ghostly heroine of the original, used to live and to the place where Shari died. But Shari isn't gone forever.

Pike has created a novel that neatly picks up the threads of the first story and weaves them into the lives of a new gang of well-realised personalities. The story has several parallel sub-plots which are satisfactorily concluded and Pike even manages to throw in a final exciting twist. Those familiar with the original will recognise old characters, but those who haven't read **Remember Me** would be well advised to do so before read-



ing this. And the saga isn't over. Judging by the ending it looks as though **Remember Me 3** will not be far away.



### The Last Vampire

Hodder, 0 340 61158 8, £3.99

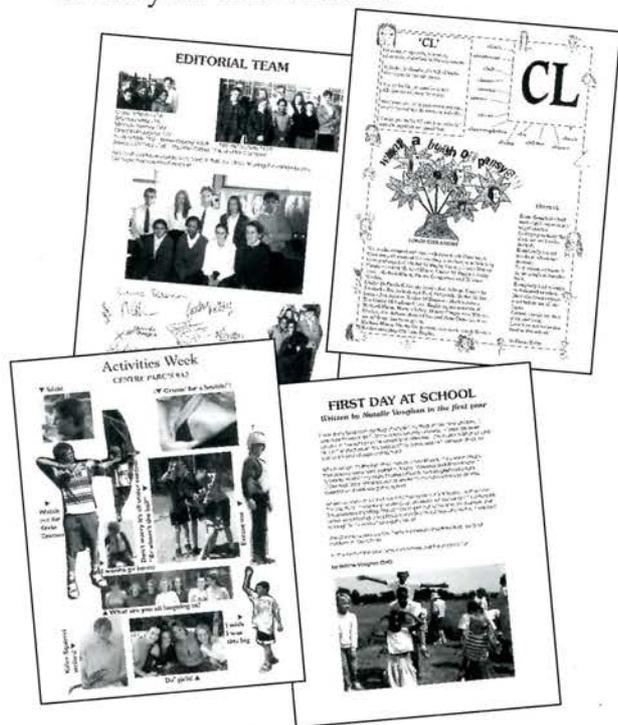
Alisa Perne is a teenage girl and also

the Last Vampire. She's lived for thousands of years, through many generations, hiding her dark secret from those around her. Now, in the present day, Alisa is a millionairess and in love with a young man. But someone knows who she is, someone Alisa thought she would never meet again. Now she must face him one last time.

This represents a return to form for Pike after the slightly sedate **The Midnight Club**. It's an exciting and fast-paced horror story that works better in the present than when it returns to ancient times and the start of all the evil. Pike's teenage vampire avoids all of the cliched myths and possesses wit and humour, whilst the villain is suitably evil. In fact, the book is fairly disturbing in places and some of the scenes are more akin to those from a Stephen King novel. Fans will devour it and, despite the fairly conclusive ending, Pike has again jumped into sequel mode with **The Last Vampire 2: Black Blood** on its way. Whatever next? **Chain Letter 3?** ■

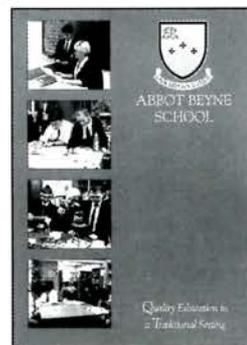
## SCHOOL / COLLEGE YEARBOOKS

- \* Student memories captured in colour
- \* Quality 50% colour hardcover books
- \* Our staff give full support at all stages
- \* Students work as an editorial and design team
- \* We supply the expertise to ensure the yearbook is a lasting, individually produced verbal and pictorial account of the year and the class



## PROSPECTUSES, FOLDERS AND BROCHURES

- \* Full design and marketing advice
- \* Expert photographic service
- \* Excellent computer typesetting facilities
- \* Quality print service
- \* Attentive, sympathetic consultation on your school's particular needs and an imaginative, strikingly designed solution to your publicity requirements



Besides having designed and typeset **Books for Keeps** since its inception, **Rondale** is a very experienced company specialising in educational graphic and printing needs. Contact us now for further details of what we can offer you.

## ◆ RONDALE Design & Print

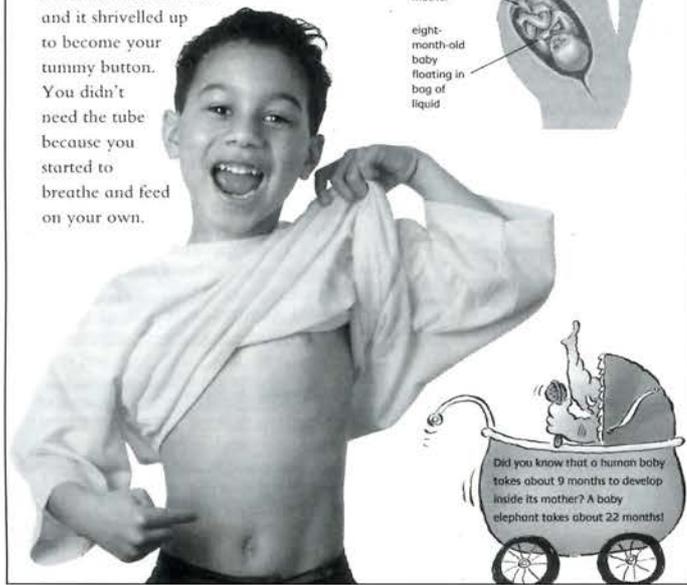
Yeoman's Acre, Aylburton Common, Lydney, Glos. GL15 6DQ  
Telephone 01594 - 843136

# Non Fiction REVIEWS



## What is my tummy button?

When you were growing inside your mum's tummy, you were joined to her through a special tube. Your tummy button is the place where this tube went into your body. Through this tube, you got food and air from your mother. When you were born, the tube was cut and it shrivelled up to become your tummy button. You didn't need the tube because you started to breathe and feed on your own.

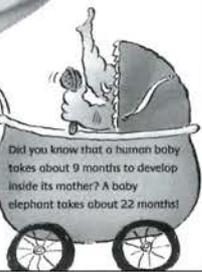


29

The tube which joins a baby to its mother is about 50 centimetres long.

tube called umbilical cord linking baby to mother

eight-month-old baby floating in bag of liquid



Did you know that a human baby takes about 9 months to develop inside its mother? A baby elephant takes about 22 months!

From *About Your Body*.

### About Your Body

0 7500 1558 6

### In the Bathroom

0 7500 1557 8

Barbara Taylor, Simon & Schuster (Everyday Science series), £7.99 each

#### INFANT/JUNIOR

All kinds of things go on in the bathroom – it's a great place for scientific inquiry into everything from self to soap – an opportunity which Barbara Taylor seizes eagerly as she provides the scientific answers to 26 popular questions. So there's Archimedes, personal hygiene, hard and soft water, supply and sewerage, surface tension, condensation, basic plumbing (especially good on the tap-washer) and, of course, how the stripes get into toothpaste.

Our bodies are similarly multi-disciplinary testbeds and provide 26 more questions and answers (that's one a week for a whole year if you get both books). The same nice kids who washed and brushed in the bathroom show us their tongues, teeth and tummy buttons as we explore noticeable features of body function – from hairiness to heartbeat.

This is an amiable pair from a series which also includes *In the Kitchen* and *At the Seaside* and should be good for all sorts of primary projects. TP

#### The Body

0 563 35543 3

Anita Ganeri

#### Changes

0 563 39615 6

Godfrey Hall

#### Light and Sound

0 563 39625 3

David Palmer

BBC (Find Out About series), £3.99 each (pbk)

#### INFANT/JUNIOR

Here are three cheerful science beginners from BBC Education. Covering familiar subjects in familiar styles, they could easily escape notice amongst many other titles with similar objectives and presentation – but what makes them stand out is the friendliness of the texts. Remarks such as 'Nothing can make the world light up like the sun' and 'A wet dog looks and feels different from a dry dog' may not, on their own, advance our knowledge of anything by very much but they don't half endear to us the text that carries them and thereby produce books that are a pleasure to read. And this is a great help when so many information series are formula-assembled rather than written.

Definitely worth the attention of early years teachers – especially at this price. TP

#### Buildings

0 7136 4028 6

#### Clothes

0 7136 4030 8

Nicola Edwards, A & C Black (Messages series) £6.99 each

#### INFANT/JUNIOR

This is a useful series to aid projects on communication. The approach is straightforward but intelligently handled, encouraging readers to consider the messages they receive every day in some of the most familiar areas of life. In *Transport*, for example, visual messages indicate route and direction, identify vehicle purpose, provide a highway code; auditory messages give warnings of bicycle or even fire tender approaching. The series also attempts to explore the interpretation of messages – how can a change of clothing transform the wearer's personality?

Production is good with attractive colour photographs and useful illustrations. There are notes for parents and teachers which suggest further ideas. GB

#### Food

0 7136 4029 4

#### Transport

0 7136 4031 6

On 10 November Jewish homes, synagogues and shops were destroyed, ninety-one people were killed, and more than 30,000 Jews were taken to concentration camps. These riots became known as *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass.



A German-Jewish businessman clearing up after *Kristallnacht*, 1938.

From *Jewish Migrations*.

#### Ants

0 7496 1885 X

#### Ladybirds

0 7496 1887 6

#### Butterflies and Moths

0 7496 1889 2

#### Grasshoppers and Crickets

0 7496 1886 8

#### Stick Insects

0 7496 1888 4

#### Woodlice and Millipedes

0 7496 1884 1

Barrie Watts, Watts (Keeping Minibeasts series), £4.50 each (pbk)

#### INFANTS UPWARDS

How very nice to see these old friends re-emerging in paperback – what a sensible decision! A long-life subject needs a long-life series and perhaps the original hardbacks have reached that state of well-loved tattered characteristic of so many effective school libraries. The ravishing photographs and practical texts have lost nothing in either the four years since their original appearance or in the soft-backing of the series, so what can one do but celebrate? TP

#### The World of Flags

William Crampton, Simon & Schuster, 0 7500 1496 2, £8.99

#### JUNIOR/MIDDLE

Books about flags have improved greatly in recent years; identifying flags is no longer such a chore and questions such as 'Which flag is not rectangular?' can be tackled.

*The World of Flags* answers these needs but has much more: extra detail – flags of the 50 states of America, and of the territories and states of Australia and Canada; extra explanation – of why

Barbados chooses a trident or why the Greek flag resembles the stars and stripes; extra content – such as the connection between the flags of the Arab states. The book is up-to-date and includes, for example, the new flags of South Africa (1994), Eritrea (1993) and the republics of the Russian Federation.

Production is good, with flag decoration clear and page layout appealing. This is a very useful buy – and, in case you are wondering, the Nepalese flag is not rectangular. **GB**

### African Migrations

0 7502 1076 1

Hakim Adi

### Chinese Migrations

0 7502 1229 2

Judith Kendra

### Indian Migrations

0 7502 1077 X

Rachel Warner

### Jewish Migrations

0 7502 1228 4

Jill Rutter

Wayland (Migrations series), £9.99 each  
**MIDDLE**

Whilst compiling the information books section of the recent **BfK Multicultural Guide I** became all too aware of the paucity of books for the 9-12 year old range that go beyond the 'saris and steel bands' approach. This set of books is a noble attempt to do just that and cover important topics but I wish I could be more enthusiastic about them. Like much non-fiction for this age group, these books attempt to be very comprehensive in their coverage within the strictly limited confines of 48 pages of fairly large print and so there's a consequent price to pay in terms of the overall cohesion of the text. Nevertheless, they are worthy additions to any library for young people, drawing thoughtfully on personal reminiscences and including many dramatic pictures and some useful maps. Each book has a rather short index, a glossary, an annotated bibliography and notes on the sources. Of the four I found the Jewish book the strongest with a particularly clear section on the Nazi persecution. **SR**

### Science and Power

1 85028 281 1

### Wheels to Rockets

1 85028 280 3

Philip Wilkinson and Michael Pollard

### Scrolls to Computers

1 85028 282 X

Philip Wilkinson and Jacqueline Dineen

Dragon's World (Ideas and Inventions series), £8.95 each

**MIDDLE**

'Ideas and Inventions' is an entirely appropriate title for this series. These books will help children to understand the motivation of the inventor and discoverer. We see the Wright Brothers returning from the daily grind of bicycle repair to evening research into flight in their attempts to conquer the skies; we can imagine their feelings when a gust of wind picked up their plane and wrecked it, or when, at last, Flight One took off.

**Science and Power** covers technological improvements from farming to medicine; **Scrolls to Computers** ranges from early printing to international telecommunications; **Wheels to Rockets** examines discoveries from early wheels to jet transport. The books have a stimulating text that is clear and interesting, and the illustrations by Robert Ingpen emphasise human endeavour and achievement rather than technological detail. The coverage is inevitably broad-brush but the series is an excellent introduction to the human dimension of inventive genius. **GB**

### Changing State

0 431 07603 0 (hbk), 0 431 07565 4 (pbk)

### Salt, Sand and Silver

0 431 07601 4 (hbk), 0 431 07568 9 (pbk)

Wendy Cowton

### Magnets and Circuits

0 431 07600 6 (hbk), 0 431 07566 2 (pbk)

### Forces

0 431 07602 2 (hbk), 0 431 07567 0 (pbk)

John Povall

Heinemann (Science Quest series),

£8.50 each (hbk), £3.99 each (pbk)

**MIDDLE/SECONDARY**

These 'Science Quests' are sort of fun textbooks – hybrids between a sober programme of developing facts that a conventional author might provide and the wacky brand of common sense that Lazy Summer made their own in Cassell's 'Spaceship Earth' series. Sounds unpromising but in fact it works – and rather well.

**Changing State** deals with just that – melting, evaporation, solution, etc, leading to a look at atomic structure and, incidentally, including a best-yet explanation of an aerosol. **Forces** supplies a basic mechanics syllabus, **Magnets** ditto for matters electrical, and **Salt, Sand and Silver** is what I think used to be called Physical Chemistry – differences between materials attributable to their chemical makeup.

Taken together, these four provide either a stimulating introduction to some key principles of physics and chemistry or a useful refresher course before that all-important test, exam or pub quiz. The publishers say that 'pupils' follow a pathway of carefully constructed statements and questions – I couldn't put it better myself for these are pre-eminently books for pupils in the way that much contemporary non-fiction bends over backwards to try not to seem. But there's nothing wrong with that – the 'lively cartoon-style illustrations' (publishers again) make them quite fun. **TP**

### The Oxford Children's Book of Famous People

Oxford University Press,

0 19 910159 0, £20

**MIDDLE/SECONDARY**

When a reference book includes such diverse personalities as Moses and Madonna in its selection of '1000 men and women who have shaped the world', there will inevitably be differing opinions as to the merits of some of the entries. Overall, however, the editors are to be applauded for their wide-ranging and imaginative selection starting with Peter Abelard and ending with Vladimir Zworykin.

One of the book's major strengths is its cross-referencing; Amelia Earhart, for example, leads us to Jean Batten, an equally distinguished but often overlooked aviatrix. Additional reference sections contain a Thematic Directory in which names are helpfully grouped under categories (Poets, Architects, Astronomers) whilst a Chronological Directory groups people according to their date of birth.

These features, combined with an attractive format, abundant illustrations and crisply written profiles that do not attempt to be all encompassing, make this a volume which will appeal equally to the casual browser and the serious enquirer. **VH**

### The Egg and Sperm Race: discover the Human Body

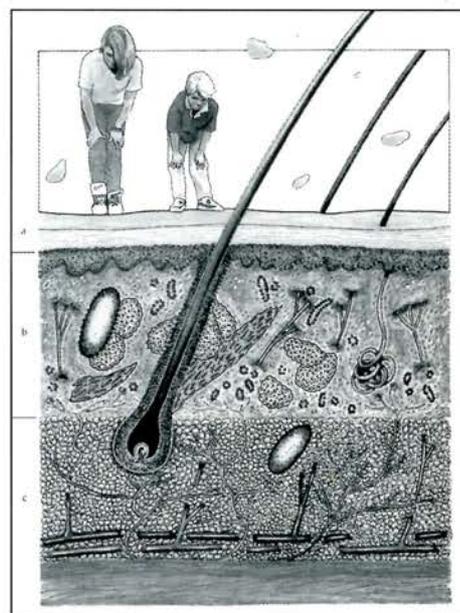
Fran Balkwill and Mik Rolph, Collins,

0 00 196517 4, £12.99

**MIDDLE/SECONDARY/ADULT**

Balkwill and Rolph did a wonderful job with their books on cells and DNA – explaining the virtually inexplicable in a quartet of handy-sized unconventional-looking volumes. Now, at twice the size and four times the formal-ness, comes a magnum opus answering the basic question 'What makes a body?'

The dauntless duo start with evolution, on to the egg



'Skin Deep' from *The Egg and Sperm Race*.

and sperm bit, through cell differentiation, DNA, chromosomes, tissue structure, specialised organs, genetics and so to social evolution. It's a tall order but the expedient of using plain language and familiar examples to explain strange facts and situations cannot be bettered, and when we have this principle embodied in a book whose text and pictures show every sign of having developed together, then success ought to follow. I think it does, not least because Balkwill and Rolph consistently respect their subject and their reader – and as these two happen to be the same thing, a happy rapport results. **TP**

### Art in the Nineteenth Century

Jillian Powell,

0 7502 0976 3

### Western Art 1600-1800

Christopher McHugh,

0 7502 0975 5

Wayland (Art and Artists series),  
£9.99 each

**SECONDARY**

Both these titles cover prolific and important periods in the history of art; indeed Impressionism is only briefly mentioned since it is to be covered in a separate volume. The authors, however, have managed to strike just the right balance – covering a tremendous lot of ground without resorting to a mere litany of names and dates.

Changes in artistic taste and movements were often a direct or indirect response to social, religious or political events and these points are skilfully brought out, as are the importance of new inventions such as photography.

Many of the paintings, which are excellently reproduced, have detailed captions to back up the main text. There's a good representative selection of the major schools and whilst the main emphasis is, of course, on European art, other countries such as North America are not neglected. It is also good to see several women painters mentioned.

These well-written, accessible introductions will hopefully stimulate young readers to go and see examples of the real thing for themselves in the major galleries listed at the end. **VH**

### Non Fiction REVIEWERS:

Geoff Brown, Vee Holliday, Ted Percy  
and Steve Rosson

Non Fiction Reviews Editor:  
Eleanor von Schweinitz

# Navigating with a Faulty Compass

Eleanor von Schweinitz, BfK's non-fiction editor, on how the contents page, captions and index – if badly devised – can hinder a child's search for the facts

Children need to develop specific skills if they are to use information books for reference. From the start the National Curriculum recognised this, incorporating quite precise statements of attainment into the Reading section of the statutory orders for English and elaborating them in the programmes of study. The revised orders for English (which come into force in August) are no less insistent that at Key Stage One children should be 'taught about the structural devices for organising information, e.g. contents, headings, captions' and at Key Stage Two 'taught how to find information in books and computer-based sources by using organisational devices to help them decide which parts of the material to read closely.'

A great deal of time and effort has gone into devising programmes to teach information skills and this has resulted in a number of research projects and the publication of teachers' manuals as well as books of ingenious exercises for pupils. Yet despite all the exertions of teachers and librarians there is little evidence that these skills are being acquired.

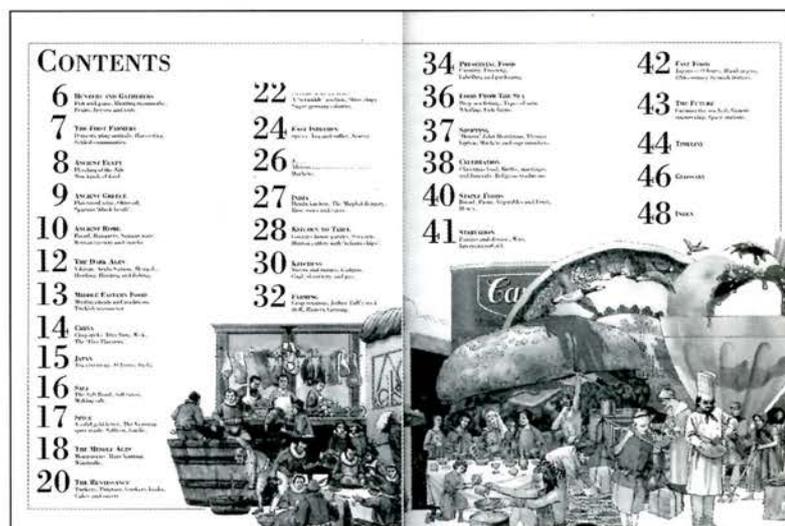
In seeking to explain this lack of success I believe we have overlooked an important contributory factor. We have assumed that because a book has a contents page, an index and other ancillary retrieval devices, any problems in locating information are due to the child's faulty understanding of how to use these devices – whereas if we had looked a little more closely, we might have discovered that many of the information books which we offer to children fail to conform to the very rules that we are so assiduously teaching. The degree of frustration or sheer bewilderment that children must experience when attempting to carry out our well-intentioned instructions is enough to stifle any desire to persist in a search in which only the most dedicated lateral thinker is likely to be rewarded.

In recent years publishers have concentrated on making information books much more attractive, with high quality colour illustrations and eye-catching page-layouts so that children are encouraged to pick them up and turn the pages. But some of the innovative design features of these books are the very cause of the difficulties that children encounter when using them to locate information.

When introducing children to the skills of skimming and scanning we point out the value of chapter headings, and headings and subheadings in the text, showing how we recognize them by differences in type size, weight and style. But the current fashion for using double-page spreads, dividing up a subject into 20 or 30 topics of apparently equal importance, has created problems for children trying to find their way around some of these information books.

## CONTENTS PAGE

The contents page of a book which has been designed around the double page opening can be a formidable sight with a list of up to 28 page headings reproduced in an undifferentiated column – as the following example illustrates.



The quick-witted child will soon work out that it will take hardly any longer to leaf through the whole book than plough his way through nearly 30 headings. And so the whole point of the contents page as a summarisation of the content and the main structure of the book is lost.

Of course some books are no more than a collection of snippets of information and the list of headings from the double-page spreads that make up the contents page can only reflect this miscellaneous approach. But sometimes there is an underlying structure which the uniform listing of headings serves to obscure. Take the following example from a recent book on the Pyramids of Ancient Egypt. The contents page consists of a list of 28 headings which includes the following sequence:

- Everyday Life
- Make-up
- The Feast
- At School
- At the Doctor's
- Hunting
- Pharaoh's Decision
- Finding True North
- Levelling the Base

Most children will have no difficulty with the first six of these headings but what about the last three? Seasoned adults will quickly spot what has happened but wouldn't the following layout make it much clearer to everyone?

### Everyday Life

- Make-up
- The Feast
- At School
- At the Doctor's
- Hunting

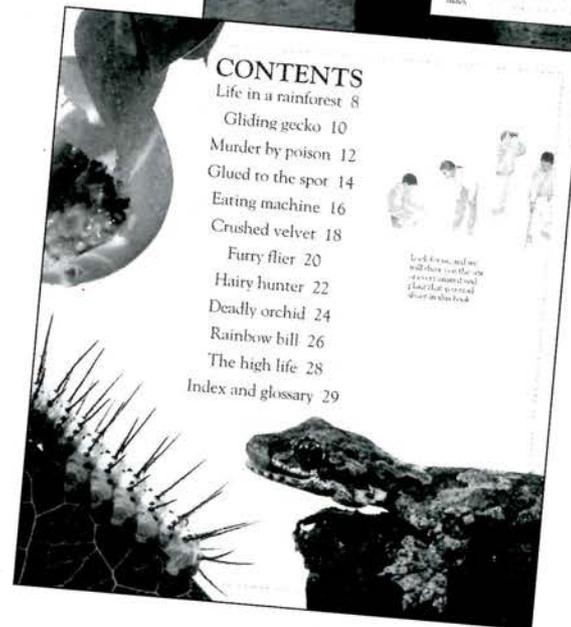
### Building the Pyramid

- Pharaoh's decision
- Finding True North
- Levelling the Base

Some contents pages have headings which read more like the headlines in the tabloid press – designed to whet the appetite rather than enlighten. See how well you score in the following example (my 'answers' follow in brackets):

- Life in a rainforest  
(*clear enough*)
- Gliding gecko  
(*no problem – it's about the gecko*)
- Murder by poison  
(*the giant tiger centipede*)
- Glued to the spot  
(*frogs*)
- Eating machine  
(*the postman caterpillar*)
- Crushed velvet  
(*the postman butterfly*)
- Furry flier  
(*the fruit bat*)
- Hairy hunter  
(*the tarantula*)
- Deadly orchid  
(*wrong! it's about the orchid mantis*)
- Rainbow bill  
(*the toucan*)
- The high life  
(*this time it is the orchid*)

These snappy headings may be perfectly clear as banner headlines accompanying a huge illustration but they are quite inappropriate as the basis for a contents page.



## CAPTIONS

Books which are illustration-led, with text packaged in short captions, can be difficult to scan for information. But children are not helped if these captions are given jokey headings, especially if the jokes presuppose an adult level of understanding. Of course, the eager nine-year-old scanning the caption headings in a book about fish may appreciate the humour of 'Tail of Terror' after a hearty dose of the new curriculum with its emphasis on spelling – but it's doubtful whether they will find it helpful when scanning the text for information. And however sophisticated your sense of humour it's simply not possible to guess the content of a caption headed 'Fish kebab?' or 'Love at first bite' or 'Swimming in the rain' – in fact you need to read the text of all these captions before you can see the point of the heading.

## INDEX

But for children in search of information by far the greatest difficulty arises when using that principal retrieval device – the index. What should be a gateway is far too often a barrier. It's only worth using an index if it speeds up the process of locating relevant information but for many children the experience is not only time-wasting but deeply frustrating.

One of the most common frustrations is to follow up a page reference only to find that it leads to a mere mention of the

term without any substantial information. I have just timed myself following up 13 page references to 'insects' in a book on living things in the home. It took me just under four minutes to trace them all (some ten-year-olds might well take twice as long) and barely half the references yielded any real information on insects. In the same book a reference to 'dogs' leads to: 'The nematods are related to those that can live in a dog or cat – but exist in far bigger numbers.' An adult will realize that this is a dud reference but what will our ten-year-old make of it?

Even more demoralising is when the index deliberately conceals the word you are looking for – tucking it away in some unexpected corner of the alphabet. We teach children to identify key words which define the information they are seeking and show them how to search for these words in the alphabetical sequence; so that if they want to look up what our book on living things in the home has to say about **woodworm** they will expect to find the term indexed at **W**. So how do you explain to them that on this occasion they won't find woodworm at **W** but at **F** in the alphabetical sequence?

Just pause and try and think this one out . . . you are, after all, an adult and should be able to suggest to a puzzled child why he should be looking at **F** for a key word that begins with **W**. Let me put you out of your misery – the woodworm is the larva of the **furniture beetle** and the word woodworm has been indented as a subheading at that term. Well now you can explain where to look for **caterpillar** (that's right - at **B** for **butterfly**). But where should we be looking for information about **snakes** or **slowworms** (neither is to be found at **S** in the index). This is where things start to get a bit more complicated because we find snake at **R** for **reptile** but slowworm isn't at **R** (despite the fact that slowworms are reptiles) so how do we explain that in this case we look at **L**? Well you see slowworms are **lizards** . . . but hang-on a minute, shouldn't lizards be indented at reptiles (together with snakes) and then slowworms indented at lizards? If you are starting to feel pretty confused, what do you think this index has done to the confidence of a child attempting to follow our simple rule about key words?

And don't imagine this sort of thing only happens in natural history books – take a look at a book on the Gulf War that indexes President Saddam **Hussein** at **H** but indents President George **Bush** at **USA**. In the same book **Patriot** missiles are indexed at **P** but if you want **Scud** missiles you are referred to a subheading at **Iraq**.

Less prevalent but equally frustrating is the failure of some indexes to include key terms. Let's compare two books in an interesting series on Exploration and Encounters. Each contains a similar double-page spread on navigation methods in the 15th and 16th centuries: one book indexes '**navigation**', the other doesn't. One of these books is about the Portuguese voyages to the East in search of trade; a major theme is the conflict between Christian and Muslim traders. The word '**Christians**' is indexed but not '**Muslims**' (although Muslims are discussed on nine of the 41 pages of text).

Let me mention just one final irritant: the failure of publishers to number all the pages in some information books (design considerations prevailing over concern for ease of retrieval). Where this occurs in a sequence of several pages it can be the final straw for the inexperienced information seeker following up a page reference from the index.

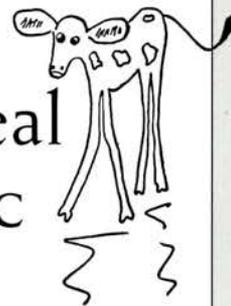
Let's look at some examples of all these indexing faults in a book on Romans and Celts (aimed at Key Stage Two). Imagine a nine-year-old who wants to know about '**slaves**' – he finds five page references in the index but he is held up in his search for them as three of the pages he's looking for have no page numbers. The first page he finds has a useful paragraph on slaves, the second has an illustration of a street scene with a slave (labelled), but the other three pages yield nothing whatsoever about slaves. He next looks for '**soldiers**' in the index but there is nothing at **S** so he tries **A** for 'army' – nothing there either. He gives up, having (naturally enough) missed the word 'soldier' indented at '**war**'. If he had found this entry with its three page references (one unnumbered) he still would have missed a full page illustration of Roman soldiers with four useful sentences of text which the index has failed to include. But so far he hasn't found anything on Celtic soldiers (or more correctly warriors). Although they are discussed and illustrated on four pages he will find nothing in the index. He tries '**Boudicca**' – nothing at **B** but he finally tracks her down indented at '**chiefs**' (along with Julius Caesar!) He looks at **W** for '**women**' but they have been indented at '**people**' – next he tries '**food**' – that's at 'people' too, along with '**clothes**' and '**cooking**'. Of course this is an extreme example of a bizarre index but there are hundreds of books which exhibit these same faults on a more modest scale.

Is it surprising that many children abandon any pretence of using those 'organisational devices' that the National Curriculum is so anxious for them to master? In a world where a growing number of reference sources are available on CD-Rom shouldn't publishers of children's information books start to take the question of information retrieval more seriously? When it comes to tracking down specific information children could find that CD-Rom offers a more user-friendly approach – with lead-in menus providing all the virtues of a highly structured contents page and key word searching no problem (not to mention the added bonus of hypertext cross-referencing at the touch of a button). But that's the start of another story . . . ■





# Robert Leeson on why he resists the appeal of Jean Webster's classic **Daddy-Long-Legs**



I first knew *Daddy-Long-Legs* in a hostile boy's way. The title, as with *Fauntleroy* and *C. Robin*, made me, like Tontant Weader, want to throw up.

But at 12, I read my older sisters' mags, and Jane Eyre, and Gene Stratton Porter's *Girl of the Limberlost*. So I read DDL.

Books about orphans had a family resonance. Poverty, through the early death of grandparents, projected my father and his siblings respectively into the Army and children's homes. When, later, they married, they found their name was not their own. They were fanatics for education. That took my siblings and me, via scholarships to fee-paying schools where we mixed with bosses' offspring. Not culture shock as much as culture stress.

So Jerusha Abbott, plucked from the John Grier Home by a mysteriously anonymous Trustee, to rival rich girls in college and marry her patron (who turns out to be just 14 years older than she) had a certain fascination.

I suppose in the end the love interest deterred me. But there was also a dis-inclination to believe in Jerusha Abbott as an orphan. This *Cinderella* hit the palace a bit too quickly.

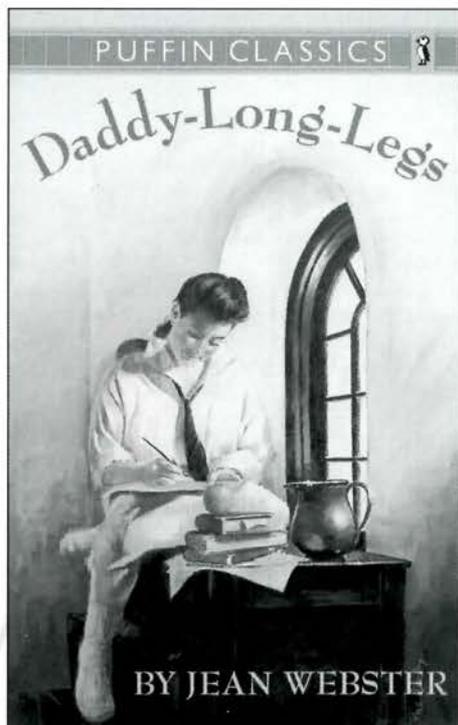
I read the book a second time many years later, after an unfortunate encounter with the chairperson of an award jury, who proclaimed, five minutes after we met, 'Of course, *Daddy-Long-Legs* is just about the best children's book ever.' I replied in the tones of that crusty character from the *Navy Lark* – 'I happen to think you're wrong.' Jury service was fraught from then on. But it made me read the book again. My respect for the social passion and skill of the author Jean Webster, increased. My scepticism about Jerusha (or Judy) Abbott, the orphan, was consolidated.

I read the book a third time, when challenged on the subject, with wine glass halfway to my lips, by the *BfK* Editor. My third and final conclusion is as follows:

*Daddy-Long-Legs* is a charming love story, an amusing naturalistic romp through college by a well-founded American middle-class girl at the turn of the century. In passing it makes shrewd points about social conditions and even shrewder points, implicit and explicit, about the man-woman power struggle in New York society pre-1914.

But it is really the story of Jean (or rather Alice Jane) Webster, including her first attempts to get published. The persona of Judy Abbott, the working-class orphan, is a flimsy, even perfunctory disguise so transparent it almost negates the author's intention (a) to prove that an orphan with financial backing can make it through college and (b) that orphanages ought to be reformed. So they should, but first they must have credibility.

We are asked to believe that Jerusha/Judy, at 17, earning her keep by being den mother to the



younger kids, knows the matron's confidential method of choosing orphans' names (the phone book and the cemetery) – yet the trustees (and particularly the one who sponsors her) are just shadows on the stairs. We are already in Contrivance County here.

We are asked to believe that a working-class orphan (or as Judy in her later Socialist mode primly says – 'proletarian'), that such a girl, instructed to write letters to 'Mr Smith' from college, does so immediately in terms of teasing intimacy. Pull my other long leg, I say. These letters are without doubt the sort of letters Jean Webster may well have written to her great uncle, Mark Twain, who bequeathed her a sense of humour. What is more, the Webster narrative style in the introductory section is identical with the Abbott epistolary style in the second section.

We are asked to believe that Judy floats through college immune from all but the most passing embarrassments, hob-nobs with young socialites, absorbs the spending and the clothes, fending off almost with nonchalance any tentative questions about her origins. (Anyone reading Gene Stratton Porter's *Girl of the Limberlost*, written at roughly the same time, will see what crossing cultural boundaries really involved.)

We are even asked to believe that an orphan deprived of books can, on entering college, produce a complete list of the main novels, etc, she has missed out on. Only an accomplished reader can make lists like that.

The point is that Jerusha/Judy is seen from the outside with the greatest sympathy, by Jean

Webster who visited orphanages while studying economics. The real inner feelings of the orphan are not lived, but described – when the author remembers (which isn't all that often) who the 'I' character is supposed to be.

As I said, it is not a story about an orphan. It's a love story, sometimes novelettish, a kind of Sweet Valley Higher Ed. But it contains some neat dramatic ironies as when she meets, unknowingly, her patron and they fall for each other. He uses his patron's finances to try to separate her off from rival suitors and to keep her in his power. This was the kind of pressure which stiffened the back of more than one middle-class suffragette/Socialist in the early twentieth century.

At first sight, assuming *Daddy Long Legs* (forgetting the orphan bit) is autobiographical, then Jean Webster's was a happy life. Endowed with a comfortable lifestyle, intelligence, a bubbling sense of fun and compassion, she seemed to have everything. And, apparently, she married the man she loved. Then a year later, as her baby daughter was born, she died.

In the end, though she may not have got ash on her dresses, she was closer to reality than *Cinderella*. ■

*Daddy-Long-Legs* by Jean Webster was first published by Century, New York in 1912. The Puffin Classics edition (0 14 035111 6) is available in paperback at £3.99.

Robert Leeson's latest book is *The Dog Who Changed the World* from Hamish Hamilton (0 241 00244 3, £8.99).

**Yvonne Whiteman and Judith Escreet write:**

'As a children's fiction editor and a children's art director, we read with mounting dismay and sinking hearts Rachel Anderson's 'Blind Spot' in the September issue of *BfK*, on the subject of Edward Lear and his verse. Children, we fear for you, if nonsense and humour are to be sourly tossed out with the bath water by the Ms Andersons of this world in pursuit of the fashionable norm:

*There was a dull Dame who thought Lear  
Was no more than a non-PC queer.  
When they said, 'What of Snark?  
Owl & Pussycat?', 'Art,'  
Droned the Dame, 'should be worthy and dear'.*

**Rachel Anderson responds:**

*There was a weird person of Cromer,  
Stood accused of having no humour,  
She said, 'You're so right.  
It's a terrible blight.  
And from now on I'll only read Homer.'*

# Books and Bi-lingual Pupils

With Section 11 under threat, Viv Edwards contemplates GEST 16 and reflects on her own training-pack approach

Chroniclers of education in the late twentieth century will no doubt regale their readers with accounts of blunders and missed opportunities. Not least of the omissions has been the failure to prepare teachers adequately for the needs of multi-lingual classrooms.

In the 1960s and 1970s, received wisdom deemed that new arrivals should be placed in special language centres. By the 1980s, it was becoming clear that 'withdrawal' was seriously flawed. Ironically, the mainstream classroom offered a far more effective language learning environment: plenty of native speaking models and opportunities for real communication, and access to the whole curriculum. Specialist teachers of English as a second language assumed a new role as language support teachers, working alongside class and subject teachers.

Just at the point when INSET on these changing roles was needed urgently, that mighty Leviathan – the National Curriculum – raised its mighty head, and concerns about language learning were submerged by the more pressing demands of insecure historians, scientists and technologists.

## GEST 16

Enter stage left, about 15 years too late, GEST 16. No – not a new magazine for teenage girls, but the latest DfE initiative to prepare class and subject teachers to meet the needs of bi-lingual pupils.

Cynics amongst us might be tempted to say that the larger than average sums of money earmarked for GEST 16 are a feeble attempt to calm the waters bestirred by attempts to cut the Section 11 budget which pays for support teachers. But whatever the political imperatives – and however tardy – this initiative should be welcomed with open arms.

Unfortunately, the fact that all things multi-cultural have been swept under the carpet for the last five years or so has serious implications for our readiness to respond. Aware of the serious shortage of suitable materials, I have spent the last six months preparing training packs on **Reading, Writing and Speaking and Listening** which I hope will address this problem.

Each pack contains a course leader's handbook, supporting overhead transparencies,



handouts and a teacher's book – also available separately – which sets out and expands on the main issues covered in the course. In preparing the materials I've been guided by certain basic beliefs:

- Classrooms are complex communities. Often there are several possible courses of action. Sometimes there is no obvious solution to a problem.
- Teachers will have varying levels of knowledge, experience and confidence. It is very important to start from where they are and build on what they know.

For these reasons, the packs try to strike a balance between presenting information and engaging participants in activities that focus on their own teaching situations and generate a range of possible solutions.

The materials take a developmental approach to language and literacy learning. They address the needs of bi-lingual learners at all stages and can be used with teachers at both primary and secondary level. The intention, then, is to equip teachers to make sound decisions about classroom organisation, teaching strategies and materials in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Not always the easiest of tasks.

## RESOURCES FOR READING

The question of selecting suitable reading resources is a case in point. In my work at the Reading and Language Information Centre at the University of Reading, we welcome somewhere in the range of 4,000 visitors a year, many of whom are looking for the solution to a particular problem: what scheme will work best for children with special needs? And so on.

Our response to queries of this kind is no doubt disappointing, but has the merit of honesty and realism. The line we take is that the crucial ingredient is the teacher – not the resources – and it's more important to think about how and why you are using particular materials than to pursue that hopeless dream – the pack which does it all for you.

So how does this relate to books for language learners? We are dealing here, of course, with a very mixed group which includes:

- children who speak other languages at home and whose first sustained contact with English is on starting school;
- children who arrive at various points throughout primary and secondary school who can read their community languages but not English;
- children with little or no previous experience of literacy.

Certain principles should guide the choice of

books. All second language learners need:

- books with a high level of visual support to help them cue into what the text is all about. Some illustrators are much better than others at providing a close match between the illustration and the text.
- books with a strong element of repetition and rhyme to help them predict what comes next and internalise the rhythms, sounds and structures of English.
- books which avoid ethnic stereotypes and present Black and Asian characters in a positive way.

Other bi-lingual readers have extra needs. They will understandably resist books which are too babyish, either in subject matter or in the style of illustration. But, by choosing humorous themes and photographic illustrations, it's possible to greatly extend the 'shelf life' of a book.

Translating these basic concepts into training materials can be problematic. On the one hand, there's no substitute for paging through actual examples to appreciate the principles in practice. On the other hand, by suggesting particular titles you may seem to be subscribing to the 'literary canon' school of thought – and de-skilling teachers in the process.

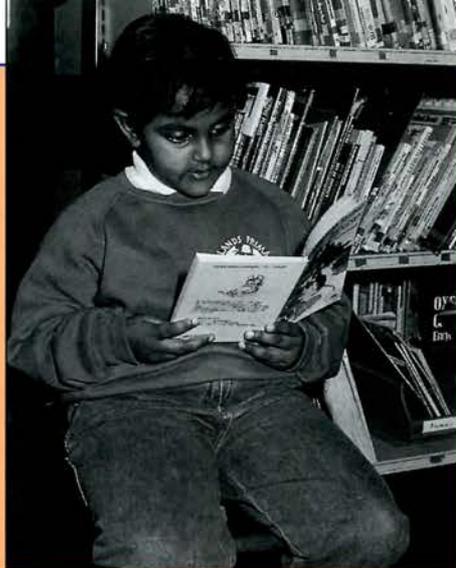
Most real-life situations demand compromises of some sort: in this case, the solution has been to work with Badger Publishing to produce book selections which demonstrate the basic principles, but to make it clear that the purpose of these selections is to show what works and why. The selections – 'Books for beginners' and 'Moving on' – are aimed at children in the early stages of learning English who still need a good deal of teacher support with reading.

## MAKING GOOD CHOICES

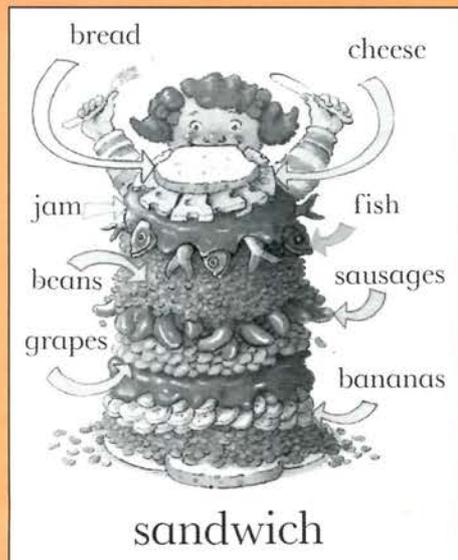
Certain kinds of books are well-suited to the needs of all emergent readers, but are particularly helpful for second language learners. Where should teachers start their search?

### Caption books

Although caption – or concept – books have tended to go in and out of fashion over the years, there's now a general consensus that naming things is an important step in helping us make sense of the world. Caption books are certainly helpful for bi-lingual readers in the early stages: as children move into their new language, there is an urgent need to learn labels for both familiar and new experiences. The strong pictorial support which caption books offer is very useful in extending vocabulary.



The labels used in caption books are often nouns, though sometimes they are verbs and adjectives. Very often the illustrations are babyish and therefore unsuitable for older readers. But there are many notable exceptions. The Longman Photo Dictionary labels photographs of items that will be of interest to most teenagers, including VCR, tape deck and clock radio under the heading of 'Electronics'. *ABC I can be*, by Verna Wilkins, is an alphabet book about people's jobs which suggests that anything is possible! *Help!* and other books in Allan Ahlberg's 'Red Nose Readers' series will also appeal to a wide age range. In these, Colin McNaughton's amusing illustrations combine with labels, speech bubbles and simple phrases to convey jokes, ideas and uncomplicated stories.



From *Help!*.

Another solution to the problem of the very young 'feel' to many caption books is to use them as the starting point for children's own book-making activities.

### Wordless picture books

Wordless picture books allow beginners to tell the story as they see it, and to develop an understanding of basic features such as sequence and climax. They vary both in style and complexity. Eric Carle's *Do you want to be my friend?*, for instance, is a simple story about a mouse who encounters a variety of animals while searching for a friend. The identity of each animal is hinted at by a visual cue on the preceding page.

Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* is slightly more complex. Similar in layout to a comic



Mouse chases after monkey from *Do you want to be my friend?*.

strip, it requires the reader to work from top to bottom, left to right to make sense of the unfolding story. This classic might seem to have little relevance for, say, a child from rural Bangladesh. But, no doubt because of familiar resonances with their own isolation and the need for friends to help, it has a strong appeal for recent arrivals.



Wordless action from *The Great Escape*.

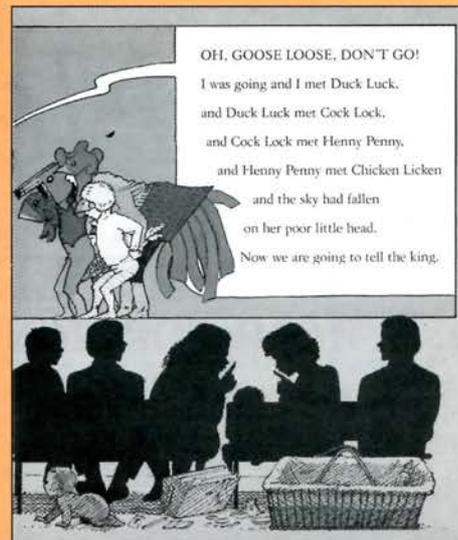
Many wordless picture books need a high level of visual literacy, which makes them particularly appropriate for older readers. Take Philippe Dupasquier's *The Great Escape*, an action-packed pursuit story in the style of the Keystone Cops, full of visual jokes. Or Jeannie Baker's *Window*, which tells the story of a baby gradually growing into manhood, whose window looks out on to a beautiful natural landscape which changes over time. Stories of personal history and environmental issues are skillfully woven into this sophisticated wordless text.

Wordless picture books are ideal for 'reading' in any language. Secure in the knowledge that their version is as valid as any written text, children can use the books independently, share the telling, 'read' in English or their first language.

### Repetition, rhythm and rhyme

Good examples of books which combine repetition with strong visual support include Rebecca and Brian Wildsmith's *Look Closer*, which invites the reader to search for something hidden in the picture and gives the answer on the following page. Many simple retellings of traditional fairy tales work in a similar way. Jan Ormerod's *The Story of Chicken Licken* is particularly impressive. The story is told in picture book format by a group of children performing the play on stage. At the same time, a wordless story is in progress as a baby in the audience makes a break from his parents and crawls up on the stage.

Books such as Quentin Blake's *All Join In* or



From *The Story of Chicken Licken*.

Michael Rosen's *Freckly Feet and Itchy Knees* use rhyme as well as repetition to help children predict what comes next and carry them along with the natural rhythms of the language.

### Unexpected obstacles

Putting together selections of this kind is not an easy matter. Very often books fell down because the subject matter or the illustrations were culturally insensitive. For instance, the all-pervasiveness of the pig in British picture books, is quite astonishing (if you don't believe me, do a quick survey for yourself\*). Because some Moslems find pigs offensive, we found this automatically excluded many otherwise excellent books. Sometimes books were culturally appropriate but uninspiring reads. And sometimes, to our complete exasperation, the perfect book had just gone out of print.

So much for resources for reading. This, of course, is just one of many issues which need to be considered if teachers are to meet the needs of children in multi-lingual classrooms. The accumulated experience of the last few decades may not have generated all the answers but has certainly pointed us in the right direction. Hopefully GEST 16 will allow us to rekindle the enthusiasm for diversity so cruelly stifled by the ERA (Education Reform Act, 1988).■

[\*Er . . . beginning, perhaps, with the front cover of this very issue. - Ed.]

Viv Edwards is Professor of Language in Education at the University of Reading where she is Director of the Reading and Language Information Centre.

Details of books mentioned (paperback, unless otherwise stated):

*The Longman Photo Dictionary*, Rosenthal and Freeman, 0 582 89571 2, £7.50

*ABC I can be*, ill. Zoe Gorham, Tamarind, 1 870516 12 5, £3.95

*Help!*, Walker, 0 7445 1496 7, £2.25

*Do you want to be my friend?*, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 12359 3, £8.50 hbk; Puffin, 0 14 050284 X, £3.50

*The Snowman*, Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 10004 6, £8.99 hbk; Puffin, 0 14 050350 1, £4.50

*The Great Escape*, Walker, 0 7445 1565 0, £5.99

*Window*, Red Fox, 0 09 918211 4, £5.99

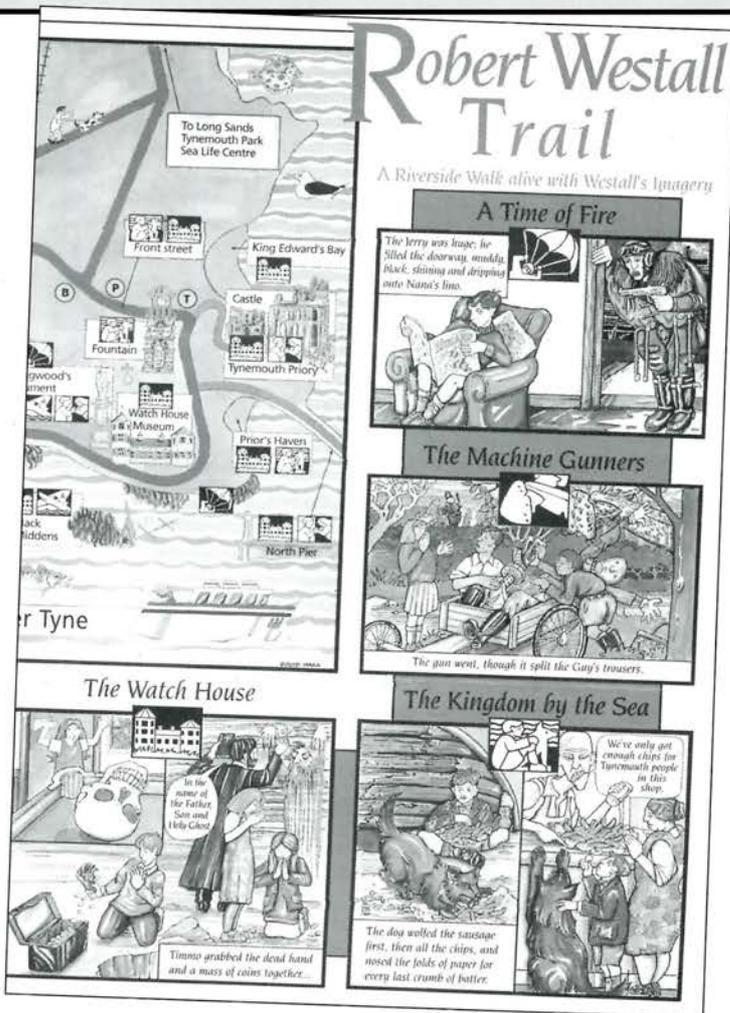
*Look Closer*, Oxford, 0 19 279920 7, £5.95 hbk; 0 19 272250 6, £1.95

*The Story of Chicken Licken*, Walker, 0 7445 0989 0, £5.99

*All Join In*, Red Fox, 0 09 996490 2, £5.99

*Freckly Feet and Itchy Knees*, Harper Collins, 0 00 665579 2, £5.99





'Garmouth', the location of so many early Robert Westall stories, can now be visited in fact as well as fiction. The North Tyneside Children and Young People's Library Service have produced a full-colour leaflet, including a map of his North Shields/Tyneside home town plus book details and a brief biography, to commemorate their local author who died two years ago.

Here's how the Service describe its Robert Westall trail:

'... an attractive 3-mile walk along the River Tyne between North Shields and Tynemouth. It features many of the famous landmarks from Westall's books. The trail is clearly defined on a map and visual keys link these landmarks with locations in Westall's Tyneside novels, including *The Machine Gunners*, *The Watch House* and *The Kingdom by the Sea*. Places of historical interest such as the Watch House, Collingwood's Monument, Tynemouth Priory and the Fish Quay are central to the books and take on a special significance for Westall fans.'

It's a fetching initiative... not least in the way it will bring home to young readers how imaginative fiction can be rooted firmly in geographical and autobiographical facts.

For further information and copies of the Westall Trail leaflet (25p each plus sae), write to North Tyneside Children and Young People's Library Service, St Edmund's Building, Station Road, Backworth, Tyne and Wear NE27 0RU. (Bulk order discounts available - phone 0191 268 9999 for details.) Stamps in lieu of payment up to £1, cheques to be payable to North Tyneside Council.



## March BfK will bring you

- Margaret Meek on what we can learn from Beatrix Potter
  - Philip Pullman on Graphic Novels
  - Tony Bradman on Books for Babies and Toddlers
  - Colin Harris on Current Atlases
  - Ted Percy's Picture Book Round-up
  - Nick Butterworth in Authorgraph
- plus reviews, reviews, reviews

# BfK News

## SILVER CELEBRATIONS

Quarter-Centenary Anniversaries

this year for both

*Signal* and *Children's Literature in Education*

The first *Signal* appeared in January 1970

and March 1970 brought the first issue of *CLE*

Congratulations to them both from all at BfK

Details about *Signal* are available from The Thimble Press, Lockwood, Station Road, South Woodchester, Stroud, Glos. GL5 5EQ. Information on *CLE* can be obtained by contacting Geoff Fox, University of Exeter, School of Education, St Luke's, Exeter EX1 2LU.

## CONFERENCES

### SUSTAINING THE VISION

Worcester College of Higher Education  
17th-21st July 1995

The 25th International Association of School Librarianship Conference combines the four themes of school librarianship, children's literature, literacy and technology.

Keynote speakers are: Margaret Meek, Margaret Kinnell, Michael Rosen, Vida Conway and Kim Reynolds. Seminars, workshops and visits will be built into the proceedings, plus exhibitions, a Waterstones bookshop and an opening event sponsored by World Books. Between 130-200 overseas visitors are expected from 21-30 countries.

Further information from IASL Professional Development Office, Worcester College of HE, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ (tel: 01905 748089 or fax: 01905 748162).

### BRIDGING THE GAP National Policy and Individual Needs

School Libraries Group Weekend School - College of Ripon and York St John  
21st-23rd April 1995

Speakers include Duncan Graham, Mike Jones, Janet Hill, Robert Swindells, Francis James and Judith Elkin. Optional lectures and workshops on offer plus an exhibition of a wide variety of books and software.

Closing date for applications is 24th March 1995, so if you want more details contact Polly Smith, 25 Hale View Road, Helsby, Cheshire WA6 9PH.

## HANDMADE READINGS

An Exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge  
3rd April - 21st May 1995

On display will be the exquisite miniature items of reading material which Jane Johnson produced around 1738-48 as her Nursery Library. This collection forms part of the Elizabeth Ball Collection of Children's Literature currently housed at the Lilly Library of Indiana University.

Opening times: Tues-Fri, 2.00-5.00 pm; Sat, 10.00 am-5.00 pm; Sun, 2.15-5.00

## POMPEII

Peter Connolly



### A CLASSIC HOWLER

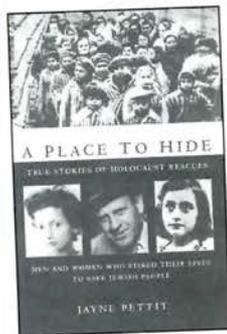
Things seem to have gone a little quiet on the 'Howler' front so BfK was delighted to receive the following from Jeff Hynds of Jeff Hynds Books, Biggin Hill, Kent:

'We were selling books at a big educational exhibition in London when a customer came up to one of our assistants with a copy of Peter Connolly's *Pompeii*.

The customer held out the book and said to our assistant, "Do you also have a copy of Pompe the First, only I can't find it?"

Our assistant swears that the customer was deadly serious and not trying to be funny! ■

# BOOKS THAT DO FURNISH A WAR



With VE Day in the offing, Chris Powling considers newly issued children's books that look back more than half-a-century

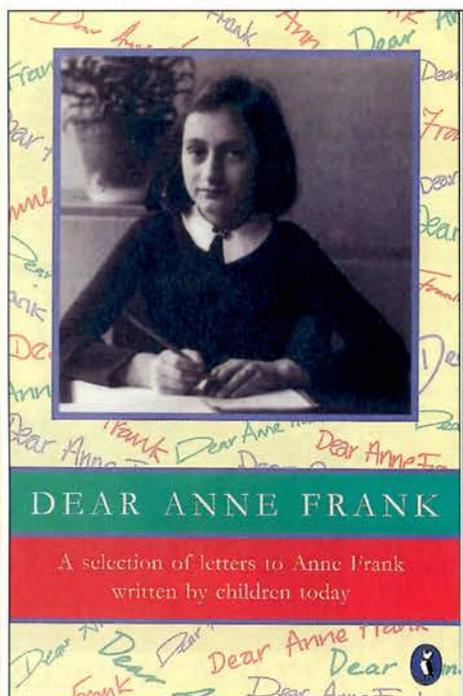


Commemoration is the keynote, of course. There's not much celebration in this batch, thank goodness – except, perhaps, of the human spirit generally in somehow remaining uncrushed by the horrors of fifty-or-so years ago. Quite by chance, on the very day I began this piece, I bought a second-hand copy of Andrew Motion's *Dangerous Play, Poems 1974-1984* and came across his verses on 'Anne Frank Hius':

*'Imagine it –  
three years of whispering and loneliness  
and plotting, day by day, the Allied line  
in Europe with a yellow chalk.'*

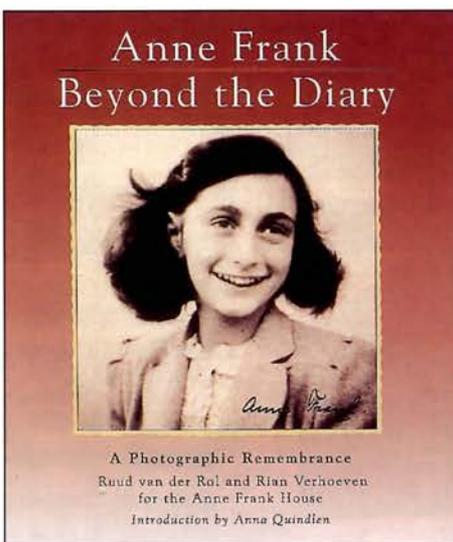
Reassuringly, I had plenty of evidence to hand that today's children can do just that, imagine it, and with the same sharp, sad clarity as the adult poet. Kimberly Paterson (aged 11) from Motherwell, for instance:

*'It must have been terrible not getting outside, and not being able to walk, or talk, in the daytime. It must have been boring tip-toeing about and whispering ...'*



I'm quoting from *Dear Anne Frank* (Puffin, 0 14 037616 X, £3.50 pbk), an anthology of writing from schoolchildren across the country who answered an invitation from Puffin, and the Anne Frank Educational Trust, to respond to issues raised by the famous diary in any way they chose. And so they did, with letters, family experiences, poems, games and diaries of their own. The collection is moving, unpretentious and, in the best sense, dignified. If there's evidence of a bit of teacherly tidying-up here and there, this never detracts from the authentic voice of the children themselves reflecting on the varieties and extremes of childhood experience – in itself something of a rarity. No school should be without this book.

Or, perhaps, without *Anne Frank, Beyond the Diary*

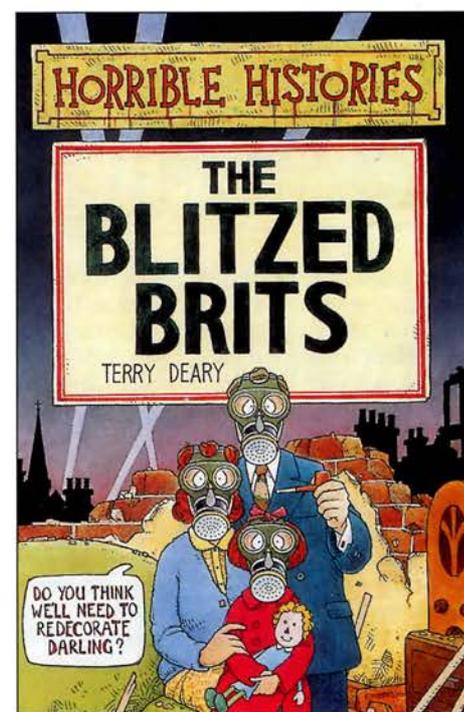


(Viking, 0 670 84932 4, £9.99; Puffin, 0 14 036926 0, £6.99 pbk). This is one of those brilliant ideas that's obvious once someone's thought of it – a combination, mainly, of pictorial history and family album with a well-judged text in support that supplies just enough period detail for upper junior/lower secondary readers. Nothing is allowed to distract attention from the pictures, though. Most of them come from the Anne Frank Trust and many are published here for the first time. *Beyond the Diary* this book certainly goes... but alongside the diary is the feeling it gives you. It deserves every one of the non-fiction awards and commendations it's already received.

No prizes are likely to come the way of Jayne Pettit's *A Place to Hide* (Piccolo, 0 330 33893 5, £3.50 pbk) since, in comparison, it's drably produced and plunkingly written. Yet this account of six true Holocaust rescues is honest and eye-opening – also, if the four stories I didn't know check out as well as the two stories I did, pretty reliable. Worth a second look, this. Add *Christabel Bielenberg and Nazi Germany* (Heinemann Education, 0 431 07151 9, £8.99) from the excellent 'History Eyewitness' series – a grown-up's wartime diary set in deft, corroborating context – and you'll safely disabuse youngsters of the notion that just about everyone on the Other Side was a prancing thug. Of current reissues, Nina Bowden's *Carrie's War* (Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 13544 3, £10.99) will need no recommendation to BfK readers... though they may not recognise Judith Kerr's *Out of the Hitler Time* (Collins, 0 00 675077 X, £7.99 pbk) till they see, from the spine, that it's a bind-up of the trilogy *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971), *The Other Way Round* (1975) and *A Small Person Far Away* (1979), a fictionalised account of her own growing up. 'I remember these,' beamed my daughter, now aged 22, when she spotted this bulky paperback on my desk. 'They were my favourites when I was 10!' My tentative suggestion that the trilogy does lose a little pace and fascination as it progresses was rewarded with the withering look true fans reserve for mere critics.

The popularity of *The Blitzed Brits* (Hippo, 0 590 55825 0, £2.99 pbk) by Terry Deary in the

'Horrible Histories' series is just as certain, booksellers tell me – a proven combination of bad jokes, odd facts, tall tales and the occasional quiz all linked together by Kate Sheppard's cartoons and comic-strips. It's vulgar, remorselessly cheerful, trivialises just about every wartime topic it mentions as a matter of principle... and thereby captures perfectly the never-say-die spirit of ordinary, men, women and children on the receiving end of the most sustained assault this country has ever suffered. History as spot-on as this is not so much an account as an enactment.



*Blitz* (ill. David Frankland, Collins, 0 00 185615 4, £6.99) by the late Robert Westall has a similar tell-it-like-it-was verisimilitude but this time in the form of four short stories – a re-run, or perhaps a pre-run, of *The Machine Gunners*, a gentle meditation on cowardice, a rumbustious tale of black marketeers and a chilling ghost story. Whether you read them for yourself or listen to the tape version narrated by James Bolam and Susan Jameson (Collins, £4.49, 74 mins) it's impossible to rank order their impact. An author as successful as Robert Westall can attract extravagant praise – in his case about the subtlety and deftness of his writing. Forget it... as this quartet makes clear, he painted with a broad brush and never shrank from a handy cliché. What he was, though, was a brilliant storyteller who could shape and pace his tales perfectly. Each one here grips you like a spitfire's safety harness and comes to a halt a heartbeat before you'd prefer. Does the varying age-range betray a posthumous packaging, though? Very possibly, but the instant I noticed this I was already giving myself a withering look. A fine finale to a fine writing career. ■

[*Carrie's War* is reissued on 27th April and the two Puffins on *Anne Frank* are published on 30th March.]