

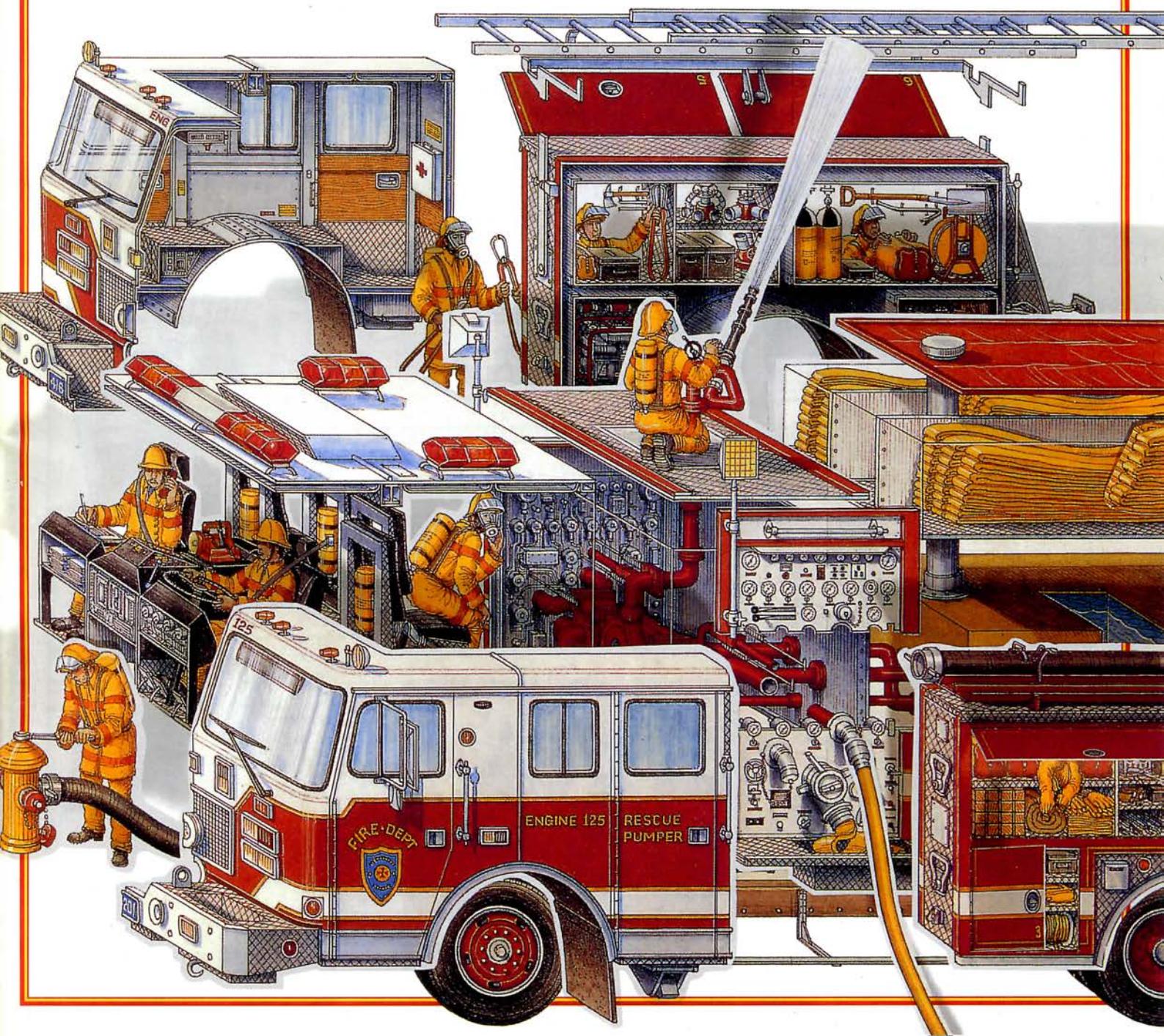
# BOOKS for KEEPS

November 1995  
No. 95 UK Price £2.70

the children's book magazine



## BOOKS THAT DO THINGS



# COME ROUND TO OUR HOUSE AND FIND BOOKS CHILDREN WILL LOVE TO READ THEMSELVES



Gamesroom  
ages 9 +

Bedroom  
ages 6 - 9

Playroom  
ages 4 - 7

Nursery  
ages 1 - 4

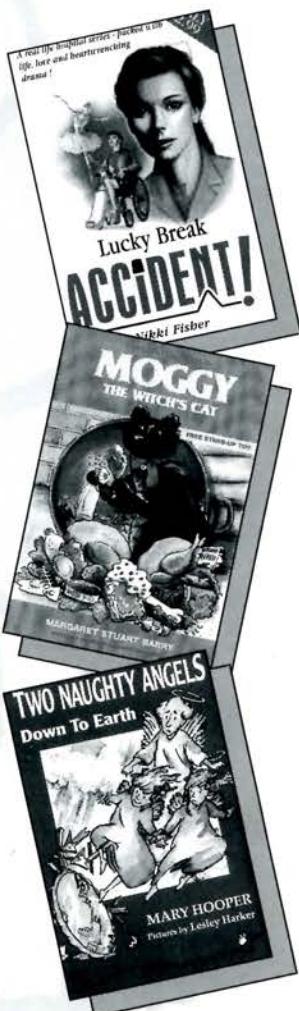
FREE mini  
Catalogue and BIG  
Height chart-phone  
0171 494 6009  
NOW!



Bloomsbury Children's Books



A BRAND NEW CHILDREN'S LIST FROM A WELL-LOVED PARENT



# Contents

3

## Editor's Page

News and comment from the Editor

4

## The Perennial Pop-up

Judith Elliott

6

## Reviews

Fiction 6 / Puzzling over Puzzles  
by Steve Rosson 15 / Non Fiction 26

16

## Authorgraph No. 95

Stephen Biesty, interviewed by  
Julia Eccleshare

18

## Creating The Creation

Brian Wildsmith on his new  
pop-up

22

## A Pop-up Round-up

George Hunt

28

## Martin in Wallywood

Chris Powling discusses the  
latest Wally book with Martin  
Handford

30

## News

31

## Letters

32

## The Postman Always Rings Twice... or is it Thrice?

Julia Eccleshare talks to Allan  
Ahlberg

## Cover STORY

The November cover of BfK features Stephen Biesty's *Incredible Pop-up Cross-sections*. The book is published by Dorling Kindersley and we're grateful to them for their help in using it as our front cover. Details can be found in our Authorgraph on pages 16/17.

## BOOKS FOR KEEPS

the children's book magazine

### NOVEMBER 1995 No. 95

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:  
£16.20 (UK); £20.00 (Europe including Ireland);  
£23.00 (airmail)

Single copies:  
£2.70 (UK); £3.35 (Europe including Ireland);  
£3.85 (airmail)

# Backing The Book

Devoted as it is to Books That Do Things (with a little help from the reader), this issue provides plenty of evidence that Books themselves are a long, long way from being Done For. Take Ruth Tilden's *Keep Fit with Froggy*, for instance. According to George Hunt in his Round-up on pages 22-25, here was the title which 'inspired the most laughter and affection amongst my team of helpers' despite also being 'the least complicated' of the couple of dozen pop-ups under review. In fact, the paper technology which lies behind this smartly up-to-date tale of an amphibian with aerobic inclinations isn't much more advanced than the kind already available when such novelty books first appeared two centuries or so ago.

The same re-vamping of age-old ingenuities applies to other publications we consider – to the puzzle books assessed by Steve Rosson on page 15, to Martin Handford's inspired eye-spy games with Wally discussed on pages 28-29, or to Janet and Allan Ahlberg's re-constitution of the traditional epistolary novel which has rung bells across the world for *The Jolly Postman* (see Allan's interview with Julia Eccleshare on our back page). All these we celebrate – along with a new pop-up from Brian Wildsmith (pages 18-21) and Stephen Biesty in Authorgraph (centre-spread). Could we ask for more convincing, page-turning proof that books are as alive and well as they ever were?

Wait, though...

Judith Elliott, who's done as much as anyone to sustain the popularity of the pop-up in recent years, sounds a cautionary note in her state-of-the-art article overleaf. 'Today,' she warns, 'it seems hard to sell a book which is just a book, with pages and a conventional binding.' In her view, the appeal of the pop-up lies in its capacity to surprise, in its interactive and tactile quality, in the fact that 'its illusions are real in the way a screen image cannot be'. These, she predicts, will ensure its survival even alongside fully-dimensional video or CD-Rom. The sheer *immediacy* of the novelty book gives it huge advantages over the standard hardback or paperback.

To begin with, anyway. Having helped pave the way to book-ishness – and no one should underestimate the importance of this at a time when there's so much else vying for children's attention – the splendours of the pop-up, like those of the picture book, need to be aligned sooner or later with the more distant, more individualised vision brought about by words acting solely on their own behalf. In our last issue, Bob Hull referred to 'brilliant bits of before-your-very-eyes verbal cinema' of the sort Ted Hughes projects when he describes a rhino as an 'elastic boulder'. It's not difficult to come up with similar clips:

'The great, grey-green, greasy Limpopo river  
all set about with fever trees.'

or

'Softly down the staircase,  
through the haughty hall,  
trying to look  
small,  
me and Loopy  
and Little Gee,  
We three.'

or

'He was so short his chin would have been under  
water in the shallow end of any swimming pool in  
the world.'

... and so on.

The point about such language-on-tiptoe, to use Edith Sitwell's term for it, is that its quality – however self-evident to us – can so easily pass inexperienced readers by if there aren't experienced readers on hand to relish it. Margaret Meek taught us long ago how texts teach what children learn but, in order to do that teaching, these texts may well need a little help from well-informed friends even to get in front of the children in the first place... let alone in the second or third place as the emphasis shifts from the cinematic to words in a more analytic, discriminatory mode.

# Editor's PAGE



CHRIS POWLING

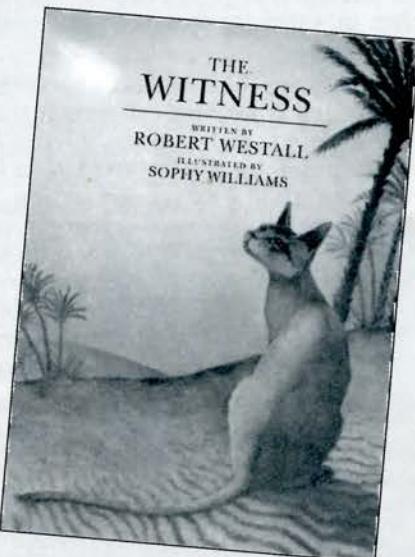
And there's the rub. Recent times have been more than a little hard on the friends of text. Book budgets in schools are increasingly under pressure as resources are diverted into media which should be complementing literacy not competing with it; library provision and specialist expertise steadily diminishes or must be eked out across ever-widening remits; the government persists in inflating wholly factitious arguments about differing approaches to reading in order to divert attention from the over-size classes which undermine any approach; even the book-trade itself sometimes seems to be doing us no favours. Whatever the consequences for children's books of the recent collapse of the Net Book Agreement, for example, the ramshackle manner of its departure scarcely breeds confidence – or faith in those market forces we're constantly told are our only hope of salvation.

In short, as the pages that follow demonstrate, books will go on casting the spell they've always done. What's much more problematic is the future of the support systems which up till now we've relied upon to bind that spell into a continuing, maturing enchantment. More than ever, books need to be backed up by committed enthusiasts – the wizards of the classroom, library and chimney corner to whom everyone here at BfK sends the warmest, Christmas greetings and every good wish for a happy, well-funded New Year.

Enjoy the issue!

Chris

And here, reviewed by David Bennett, is the plump Christmas Card we'd love to send our readers:



## The Witness

Robert Westall, ill. Sophy Williams, Macmillan (Sept 95), 0 333 63789 5, £3.99

Robert Westall has created a book that works on many levels. He's made a plausible fusion of pagan Egyptian cat-worship and the birth of the Christ-child. He's added shades of other stories like the animals' peaceful co-existence in the face of the divine and blended remarkably the plight of the Holy family and a she-cat exiled in Israel. This retelling of the Christmas story is a beautiful, sensual gem both in language and in its warm, spicy-coloured illustrations. It should be available everywhere as a perfect antidote to the harsh tinsel and glitter that often obscures the simplicity of the real nativity.

# THE PERENN

Judith Elliott on her encounters with

At a time when it seems hard to sell a book that is just a book, with pages and a conventional binding, the idea of the pop-up is increasingly attractive. But the pop-up is nothing new, and has held its appeal since the early nineteenth century. By pop-up I mean all manner of novelty books: not just books with three-dimensional structures on the page, but books with pull tabs, slides, flaps, holes, rivets, microchips, acetate, foil, mirrors. It's an irony that all these books are referred to as 'novelties' when the fact is that practically none of them are novel at all. Take them apart and you can identify the mechanisms used in dozens of pop-up books down the years. There have been a few refinements and developments, but your basic pop-up book relies on tried and tested formulae.

Pop-ups can be a nightmare to produce, made possible only by an early commitment to a frighteningly large print-run involving sales to publishers all around the world: something that's harder to achieve each year. A pop-up that flops can be a financial disaster. But when it works – eye-catching, pickupable, and with obvious child appeal – it can bring in sales far greater than most other books.

There's no special magic about the pop-up: it's what you do with it that matters, and that, for me, is the fun of pop-up publishing – the explosion of creativity that can occur when a talented artist starts experimenting with pieces of card. I've been lucky enough to work on some of the most exciting of all, including Jan Pieńkowski's *Haunted House*, Eric Hill's *Where's Spot?* and Janet and

Allan Ahlberg's *The Jolly Postman*. Each of these has sold in enormous quantities in many countries over many years, each had a huge impact on the novelty books market, and each led to the production of many other titles in the same genres, which have often been extremely successful in their own right. These books have been an inspiration and stimulus to many artists.

Pop-ups are perennial, but for a long period they were regarded merely as low-priced mass-market fodder, and it was inconceivable that a 'name' illustrator would want to produce one. All that changed in the late seventies. First there was Robert Crowther's *Most Amazing Hide-and-Seek Alphabet*. Then, in 1979, there was *Haunted House* – the classic example of how somebody as innovative as Jan Pieńkowski can revitalise an old formula. At the time, it was terrifying. The costs seemed astronomical, the print-run required to cover them unachievable. It worked because the book's brilliance was evident at a glance. A million copies later, it's still going strong.

*Haunted House* was an extravaganza, a spectacularly elaborate construction with ingenuity in every square inch. But one of the joys of publishing pop-ups is how much can be achieved with how little. It only takes some imagination, and you can do wonders with one or two of the simplest mechanisms. Flap books, for instance – so popular they have become a category in their own right. For very young children it's never boring to look under a flap and find something hidden there. But it needed Eric Hill to make it work after

this blindingly obvious idea had lain dormant for years. When he showed me the first rough dummy for *Where's Spot?* there were no other flap books around. Spot's staggering and immediate worldwide success proved the irresistible attraction of this simple device and – just like *Haunted House* a couple of years earlier – opened the doors to a host of followers, including such successes as Rod Campbell and Lucy Cousins.

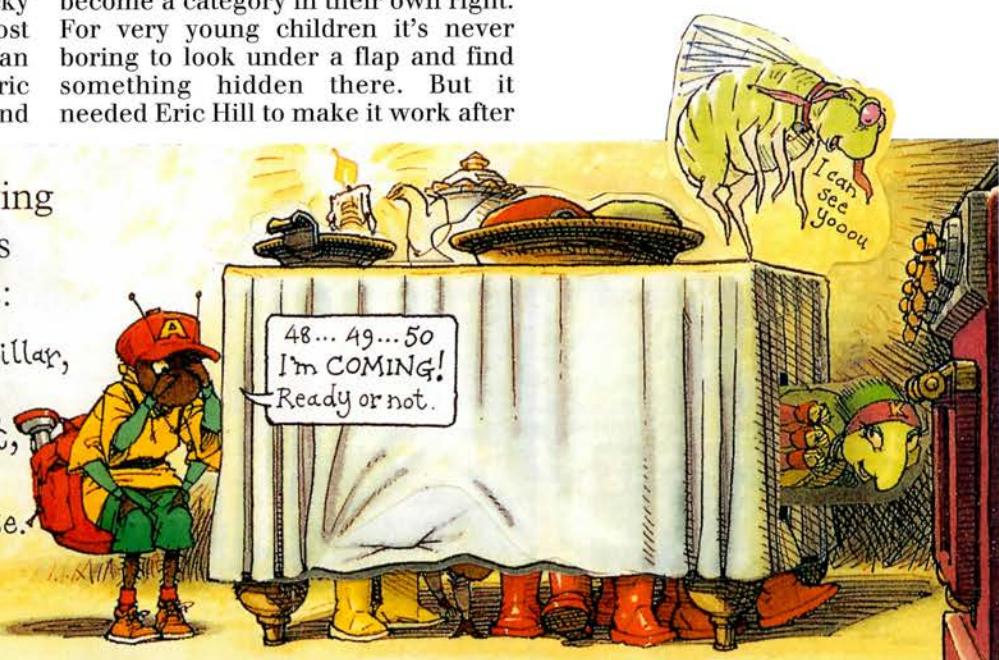
It took the genius of Janet and Allan Ahlberg to come up with the device of envelopes with letters in, and to apply it to a theme with the universal appeal of a postman delivering letters to fairytale characters. Like other great innovative books, *The Jolly Postman* – so simple in conception – seemed hugely daring at the time. It would cost so much to produce! Booksellers wouldn't order it for fear the letters would be stolen from the envelopes! But objections melted away as the book was completed. It had that irresistible quality that makes a bestseller.

And yet again, it was a book that opened doors and defined children's publishing in a new way. The learning possibilities of the novelty book were opened up. Teachers could see that its tactile qualities would encourage non-readers to enjoy books. Three-dimensional pages or flaps could be used to develop learning skills. Non-fiction subjects were ideal for the pop-up treatment. *The Human Body* by Jonathan Miller and

Anthony Ant is playing hide and seek with his creepy crawlly friends:

Georgie Ant, Kitty Caterpillar,  
Rocky Ant, Jeremy Beetle,  
Lucy Woodlouse, Ruby Red Ant,  
Kevin Ant, Billy Bedbug,  
Bobby Ant and Terry Termite.

Where can they be?



# HAL POP-UP

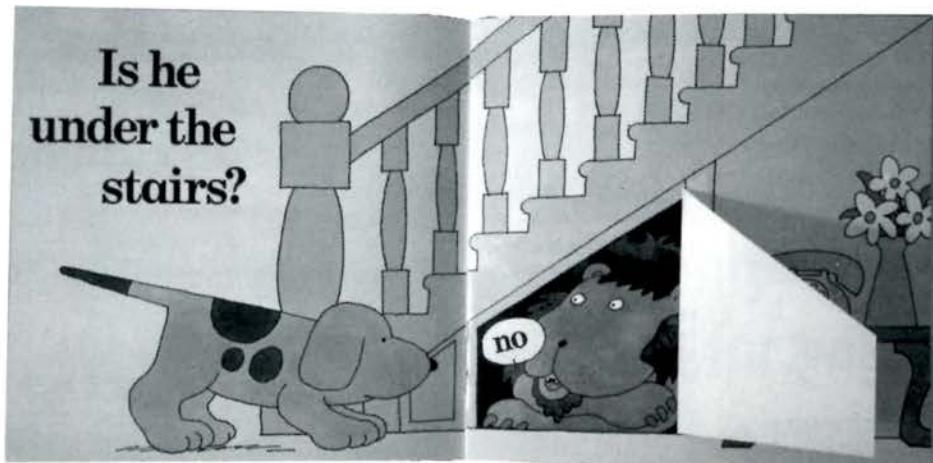
an enduring book-ish phenomenon



From *The Human Body*.

David Pelham – a direct descendant of the nineteenth-century flap books used to teach anatomy to medical students – and Jay Young's *The Most Amazing Pop-Up Science Book* spectacularly demonstrate the effectiveness of the non-fiction pop-up.

came up with the idea of *Haunted House*, it was to Waldo Hunt that I turned for help. Thus began a legendary partnership between Wally and Jan, resulting in sales of over seven million Pieńkowski pop-ups worldwide. Pop-up books, more than



From *Where's Spot?*

Many pop-up books are produced by specialist packagers, whose skills in paper engineering and the complexities of hand assembly in factories in South America and the Far East can be combined with the editorial skills of the publishers for whom the books are manufactured. Paramount among these is Intervisual Books of Los Angeles, whose founder, Waldo Hunt, has been the great enthusiast and inspiration behind many of the most successful pop-up books of the last 50 years. When Jan Pieńkowski

any others, are a team effort requiring a whole range of skills and it's the constant struggle to overcome technical problems that often forces new ideas.

In all successful pop-up books, theme and format work for each other. When Graham Philpot showed me his first ideas for *Amazing Anthony Ant*, he came up with a way of producing flaps that fold over rather than being stuck on to the paper in the usual way. A small matter, but it imposed a discipline on *Amazing Anthony Ant*

that influenced the story and the structure of the whole book. Looking for little ants is such a natural idea for flaps that it led on to full pop-up treatment in *Who's at Home with Anthony Ant?*, *Hide and Seek with Anthony Ant* and *Out and About with Anthony Ant* – miniature pop-ups for bugs and creepy-crawlies.

Today the interactive novelty book with moving parts seems to have more appeal than the pop-up with dramatic paper sculpture just for looking at. This is where the pop-up bridges the gap between the book and electronic media. It marks the step before the CD-Rom takes over. And this gives one pause to think where the pop-up will go in future. So near to the fully dimensional video or CD-Rom and yet, in relation to the new media, so unsophisticated – how can the pop-up survive? What can it offer children accustomed to learning and playing on screen?

The fact that it is tactile, that you can pull it apart and see how it's made, that its illusions are real in the way a screen image cannot be, should work for pop-ups – even, in future, give them something novel to offer. Small-scale, personal, the pop-up can be a unique and special creative medium that coexists with the electronic book, just as live theatre coexists with television and video.

The pop-up's perennial appeal lies in its capacity to surprise – and there may still be surprises ahead: a new paper engineering mechanism, for instance, that no one's thought of before. Come to think of it, Richard Brassey's *The Store Detective*, to be published by Orion in 1996, where you can make the lift doors open and close as you go through the department store – now that's a new one... ■

#### Details of books mentioned:

*Haunted House*, Heinemann, 0 434 95635 X, £10.99  
*Where's Spot?*, Heinemann, 0 434 94288 X, £6.99; Puffin, 0 14 050420 6, £5.99

*The Jolly Postman*, Heinemann, 0 434 92515 2, £9.99  
*The Most Amazing Hide-and-Seek Alphabet Book*, Viking, 0 670 48996 4, £12.99  
*The Human Body*, Cape, 0 224 04210 6, £12.99  
*The Most Amazing Pop-Up Science Book*, Watts, 0 7496 1481 1, £14.99

*Amazing Anthony Ant*, Orion, 1 85881 005 1, £8.99  
*Who's at Home with Anthony Ant?*, 1 85881 161 9; *Hide and Seek with Anthony Ant*, 1 85881 162 7; *Out and About with Anthony Ant*, 1 85881 160 0, Orion, £5.99 each

*The Store Detective* is published in September 1996. Judith Elliott has had a long and distinguished career in children's books. She's worked for Heinemann, Orchard and is now Managing Director and publisher with Orion Children's Books.

# REVIEWS

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

## Nursery/Infant REVIEWS

### No Problem

Eileen Browne, ill. David Parkins, Walker (Jul 95), 0 7445 3632 4, £4.99



When Mouse receives a parcel containing a construction kit, she fails to notice the assembly manual and uses intuition instead. When the resulting ramshackle jalopy totters to a halt, she enlists the aid of a series of friends who all take a similar approach, creating a variety of entertaining but useless vehicles.

Shrew solves the problem by following the instructions, and children are enjoined to do the same with the mini model kit built into the endpapers of the book. This is a rhythmically written story, conveying a highly practical message in an amusing way. GH

### Flipflop's First Swim

Hiawyn Oram, ill. Patrick Yee, Orchard (Jul 95), 1 86039 015 3, £3.99

Waddle, slippery slip, skid, skiddable! Off goes Flipflop for her first swimming lesson but the water looks so far down from the edge of the ledge. After a couple of abortive attempts and a bit of help from Little Seal, Flipflop finds herself 'Flap, flap, flapping': a good attempt at penguin paddle points out a friendly albatross, who goes on to tell her about real swimming. Then, it's not long before young Flipflop is back-stroking and backflipping with the best of the aquatic animals.

A lovely story, full of warmth and gentle humour. Ideal for sharing with nursery and infant children, especially those just taking their first plunge into the world of school. JB

### Handa's Surprise

Eileen Browne, Walker (Jul 95), 0 7445 3634 0, £4.50

Handa puts seven delicious fruits in a basket to take to her friend, Akeyo, in the next village: 'Won't Akeyo be surprised?' she thinks to herself. But it's Handa who gets the bigger

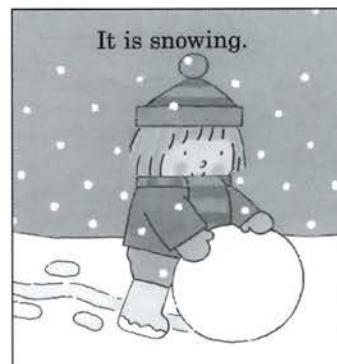


surprise. Arriving at her friend's, she learns that the basket now contains not the soft yellow banana, the sweet-smelling guava, the round juicy orange, the ripe red mango, the spiky-leaved pineapple, the creamy green avocado or the tangy purple passion fruit as she thought (monkey, ostrich, zebra, elephant, giraffe, antelope and parrot have helped themselves to these), but a mound of tangerines.

A superb evocation in glowing watercolours of the rich Kenyan rural landscape and a marvellous shared joke between author and audience. JB

### What's the Weather?

Maureen Roffey, Macmillan (Jul 95), 0 333 59234 4, £3.99



One of a series of six little books which use the very simplest of language, clear, bold pictures and purposeful, well-placed cut-outs to provide an entertaining exploration of a variety of learning situations. This title gently extends children's thinking about the weather, and how it affects them, with a lot of fun included as the reader tries to guess what lies on the other side of the page. Other titles are *What's the Time?*, *Look, There's My Hat, Home, Sweet Home, How Do We Get There?* and *How Many?* All of them are exactly right for the Nursery or Playgroup. LW

### The Big Storm

Dave and Julie Saunders, Frances Lincoln (Aug 95), 0 7112 0865 4, £3.99

A wonderfully bold and dramatically illustrated story of animals in the countryside and the effect on them of a coming storm. It has the simplest of plots; one after another the creatures find shelter while the storm sweeps over them, then they emerge into the clear air and sunshine. With good print and straightforward language, the whole book is a gem of colour and drama to entice any young child into language and design.

I hope the publishers have shot the soulless lackey who thought a book like this deserved to be described as 'suitable for the National Curriculum Science Level Two'. LW

### Over in the Meadow

#### POETRY

Louise Voce, Walker (Jun 95), 0 7445 4313 4, £4.50

The amusing, cheerful illustrations give new life to this excellent version of the traditional counting song, 'Over in the Meadow, in the sand in the sun . . .' with its rag-bag collection of ever increasing animal families, all with vast grins and an entertaining variety of sound effects. Great fun for both reader and reader-to, especially if you happen to know the tune. A good have-a-go book for the apprentice reader, too. LW

### Into the Jungle

Judy Hindley, ill. Melanie Epps, Walker (Jul 95), 0 7445 2074 6, £4.50

This book will give any young child a wonderfully imaginative experience, especially if read by someone with a sense of the dramatic. 'When you go into the Jungle, go carefully. It's a wild place . . .' - each opening gives a real sense of the mystery and fear that a walk through this wild place would be. Two children go hand-in-hand between the deep trees, surrounded by seen and half-seen creatures, 'Just sniff and listen. Feel their shadows. Squint your eyes.' The tension is splendidly built up and just as splendidly released by the last double-spread. LW

### Me First

Helen Lester, ill. Lynn Munsinger, Macmillan (Jul 95), 0 333 61108 X, £3.99

Pink, plump and very pushy Pinkerton pig meets his match on the Pig Scout outing to the seaside when an ethereal voice tempts him across the dunes with 'Who would care for a sandwich?' Caring for a little Sandwitch proves difficult in the extreme but the lesson is most satisfactorily learned in this modern morality tale. The illustrations are full of character and the text reads

delightfully – this has all the hallmarks of becoming a real favourite! JS

### The New Puppy

Laurence Anholt, ill. Catherine Anholt, Orchard (Jul 95), 1 85213 858 0, £3.99

Children love true stories. This one, chronicling Anna's (the Anholt's daughter, Claire) love of 'pretend' dogs, her longing for a real dog and the difficulties and adjustments needed to cope with the reality of getting her heart's desire, is most appealing.

The Anholts really know their audience and this book has everything from the fascination of considering all the accoutrements necessary for the well kept dog to Anna's father's firm choice of the essentials; from the charm, the love and the high excitement of the first few days to Anna's bewilderment, hurt and fury at the pup's destructiveness. The resolution is satisfying, and an important lesson is learned by all who share the book. JS

### Midnight Pillow Fight

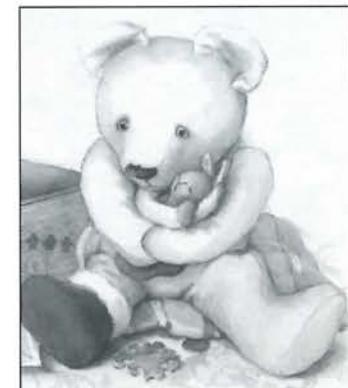
Jan Ormerod, Walker (Jun 95), 0 7445 3642 1, £3.99

When Polly wakes in the middle of the night she discovers her pillow wants to play . . . but when the sofa cushions join in it all gets a little out of hand. Polly sorts it out but needs a cuddle from the pillow to restore her. The glorious ending is bound to leave you with a grin.

Jan Ormerod is a master of this genre – her ability to catch the playful, whimsical mood, to whisk the narrative out of Polly's control and then to bring it all back to the 'comfortable' again is an idea perfectly matched by the artist's creativity and exquisite skill. JS

### Horatio's Bed

Camilla Ashforth, Walker (Jul 95), 0 7445 3156 X, £4.50



This book creates a whole world and explores very human feelings – all within the confines of the playroom. *Horatio's Bed* has long been a favourite of our Infants in hardback and Walker's faithfully reproduced

paperback should make the book accessible to more children. Camilla Ashforth's characterisation is exceptional in terms of both text and illustration. The care and love which determines the efforts James goes to in order to make a bed for his rabbit friend, Horatio, and his ability to overcome his unhappiness at having his private box rifled, are tenderly explored. Horatio's glee at doing it and his remorse are equally carefully shown. This world is one any adult and child will want to revisit again and again.

JS

## Number Parade A Wildlife Counting Book

Jakki Wood, Frances Lincoln (Jun 95), 0 7112 0905 7, £3.99

A counting book that gallops along building up to a glorious finale – the only drawback is that every child I know who's read it has gone nearly demented trying to check whether there really are one-hundred-and-one big, bigger, huge, enormous, plodding, ponderous, playful...

The illustrations are magnificent in detail, with character in every line and brush stroke.

## Hilda Hen's Search

Mary Wormell, Gollancz (Sept 95), 0 575 06096 4, £3.99

Hilda's search for the right place to lay her eggs, and the disappointment and indignity she suffers again and again, is beautifully depicted in Mary Wormell's powerful lino-cut illustrations. Her eventual success is bizarre but somehow perfectly satisfying – yes, this is a really *satisfying* book which will be enjoyed by the youngest toddler to the most worldly wise member of Year Two.



JB

# Infant/Junior REVIEWS

## Stories from the Bible

Retold by Martin Waddell, ill. Geoffrey Patterson, Frances Lincoln (Sept 95), 0 7112 1040 3, £6.99

*'The next day God made Heaven and Earth, doing the big bits first.'*

Martin Waddell's chatty retelling of 17 Old Testament tales will probably not impress those for whom venerable cadences of the King James version are sacrosanct, and the slightly preachy praising of the Lord which accompanies the narratives might rankle with those who like their folklore to be non-evangelical.

However, Waddell insists the tales be read *with* the Bible, not instead of it, and his friendly, lively humorous prose succeeds in his stated aim of making many of the most fascinating and influential Bible stories more accessible to children. The stories are presented in a handsome picture book format with bold, emblematic paintings by Geoffrey Patterson. GH

discs and weed control are also neglected.

Instead we have a slim, largely contemporary, but admirably diverse collection of celebratory verses, visiting all the seasons, and tropical as well as temperate gardens. Evocations of mosquitoes, and of soil inside a sweaty vest, help to balance the lyrical observations of flora and fauna.

GH

illustrations of dark and light, as toys, tools, animals and the elements are in turn dismissed as the source of the din. The rhyming text shines out pleasingly from a small white square amid the pictures. Pleasing, too, is the resolution to the mystery. Fives, sixes and sevens will find it anything but 'boring'.

## Laura's Granny

Sarah Bowen, Scripture Union (Aug 95), 0 86201 982 6, £2.50

When her granny dies, Laura feels very sad; she and Granny were special friends. But after a while, despite her sadness, Laura is able to share funny stories about Granny and talk of the happy times they shared.

This is a sensitively told story dealing, in a straightforward yet reassuring way, with what for many people can be a difficult topic. However, what Laura's Mummy and Daddy tell her is from an overtly Christian perspective – something that needs to be borne in mind when considering the book's potential and its possible audience. The advice from paediatrician, Dr Janet Goodall, could be particularly helpful to those seeking guidance whether or not the context is Christian.

JB

## Something New for a Bear to Do

Shirley Isherwood and Reg Cartwright, Red Fox (Aug 95), 0 09 930143 1, £4.50



## Nani's Holiday

Lisa Bruce, ill. Paul Howard, Mammoth (Jun 95), 0 7497 2331 9, £2.99

If you didn't make the acquaintance of Jazeera and her family in *Jazeera's Journey*, then you really should take the opportunity in this sequel, wherein Nani comes from India to visit Jazeera, Omar and new baby, Azra (who was born in a fish tank, Omar tells her). This is a marvellously warm and moving tale, portraying the loving relationship which so often exists between the very old (we share Nani's 75th birthday celebrations) and the very young. The manner of telling is particularly interesting. It features Nani's letters home to her friend, Mrs Khan, telling of her impressions of England and describing her adventures during her six-month stay, as well as the entries Jazeera makes in her new leather-bound diary (a present from Nani).

A real treat this: either for independent readers or for sharing with six to nines.

JB

## Miss Bilberry's New House

Emma Chichester Clark, Mammoth (Jun 95), 0 7497 2502 8, £3.99

The grass is always greener, or so thinks Miss Bilberry as she packs up her belongings and sets off with Cecile the dog, Chester the cat, and the two birds, Chitty and Chatty, to the other side of the blue mountains. They push the cart for many miles through all kinds of weather, for days and nights, on and on, getting more and more lost. Then, at last, Chitty and Chatty return with exciting news.

Soon things are quite perfect in their lovely 'new' house but Chester knows more than he's saying and maybe – just maybe – Miss Bilberry shares his secret...

## Bootsie Barker Bites

Barbara Bottner, ill. Peggy Rathmann, Mammoth (Jul 95), 0 7497 2507 9, £3.99

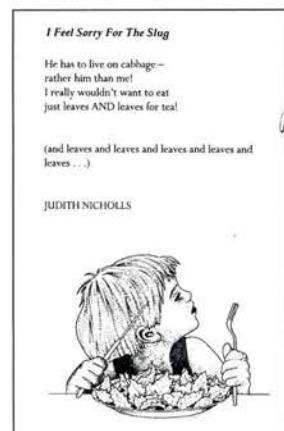
If you were being terrorised by a bully and, what's more, a bully your mother says you should learn to get along with and even have to stay with you, what would you do? You could try imagining all sorts of ways of getting rid of her but, in the end, she'd have to be dealt with. This story of how Bootsie gets her come-uppance will strengthen any child's

## Sorry for the Slug

**POETRY**

## A Collection of Garden Poetry

Ed. Jill Bennett, ill. Alan Baker, Mammoth (Jul 95), 0 7497 2334 3, £2.99



The title is likely to deter the serious gardener, who will not find much in here about the misery of losing your seedlings to the eponymous molluscs, or the shameful joy of slaughtering the culprits by fair means or foul. Composting, slipped

Being a bear becomes boring for Mr Manders so, one morning he tries his hand – or rather his paws (not to mention his voice) – at being a songbird, an ant, a spider, a mole and a bee. His abortive attempts leave poor Mr Manders feeling foolish and it's down to young Edward James, his ursine friend, to restore his sagging spirits with some timely ego-boosting words before the pair adjourn for tea. Reg Cartwright's distinctively expressive style makes each turn of the page a delight.

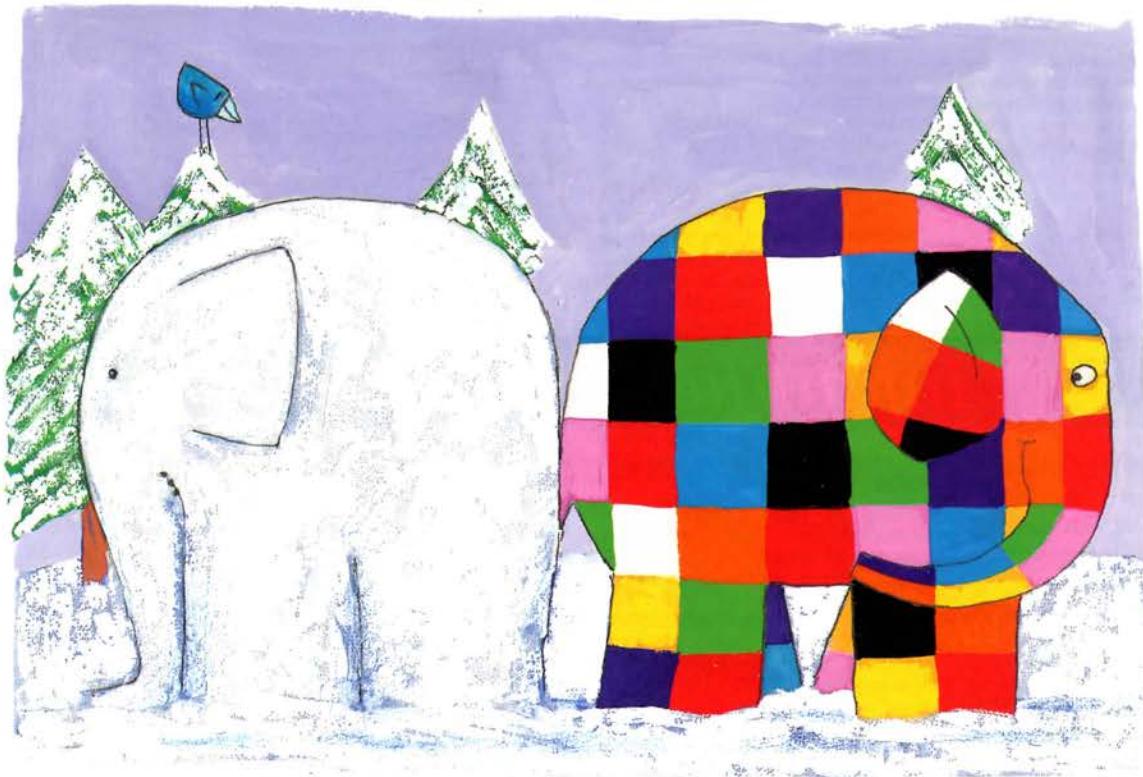
## In the Late Dark Deep of the Night

Gwenda Harslett-Jeffrey, ill. Julie Beech, Hazar (Sept 95), 1 874371 45 8, £3.99

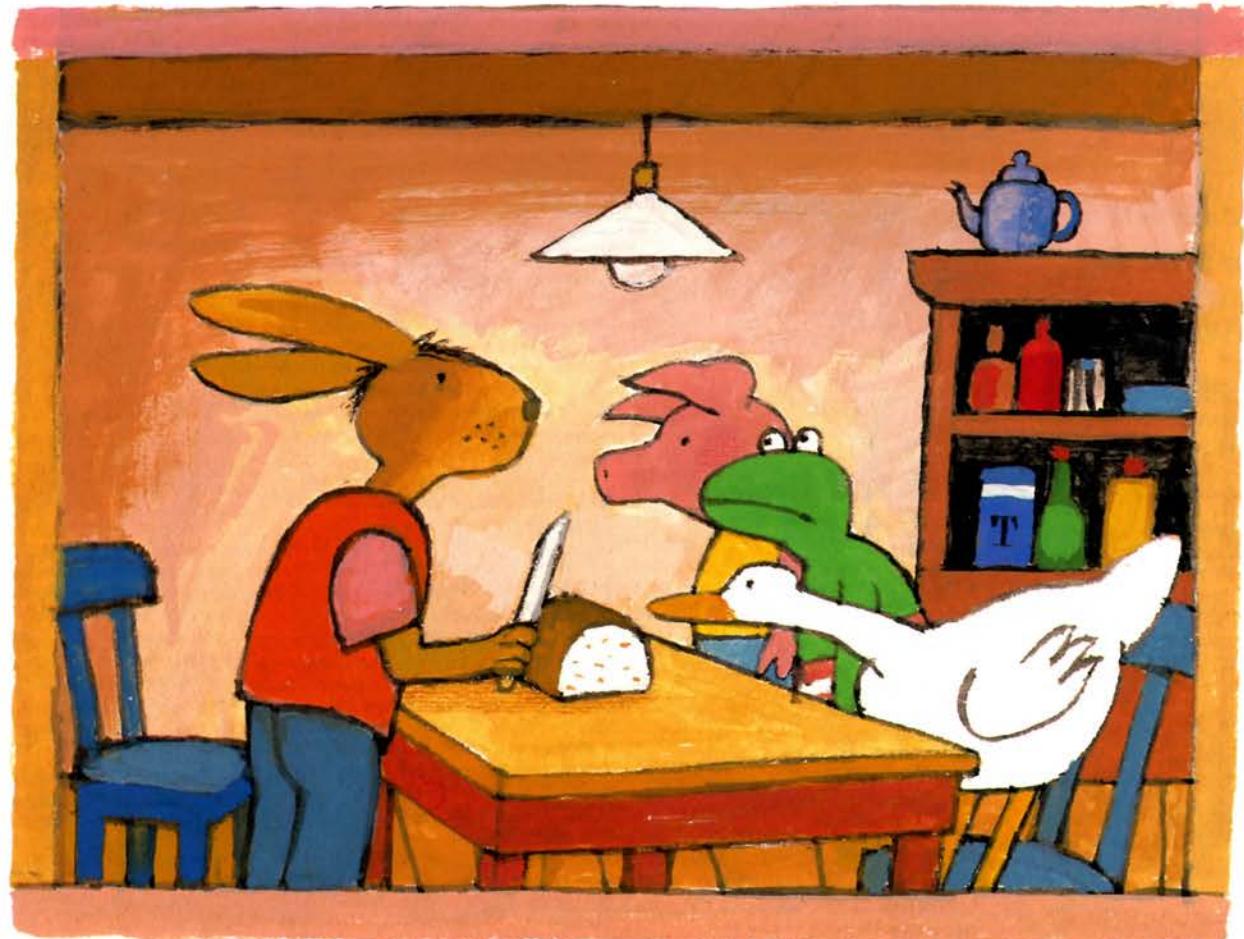
A small boy is woken by an awful noise. What can it be? The mystery is suspensefully but sensitively, and not too scarily, handled through

Readers and listeners will enjoy the joke and they'll find Miss Bilberry an endearing character as she trudges through the lush tropical terrain. JB

## Andersen Press presents two internationally acclaimed children's picture book creators



**DAVID McKEE, *Elmer in the Snow*.** Everyone's favourite patchwork elephant! £7.99



**MAX VELTHUIJS, *Frog is a Hero*.** The ever popular Frog saves the day! £7.99

Andersen Press, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA. Tel 0171-973 9720

resolve when faced with aggression, as well as well-meaning, but uncomprehending, adults. The pictures are particularly suited to the story. LW

### Puffling in a Pickle

Margaret Ryan, ill. Trevor Dunton, Puffin (Jul 95), 0 14 037062 5, £3.50



One from Puffin's very well produced 'ready, steady, read!' series. This is a satisfyingly chunky book for young fluent readers who want a 'chapter book' with an engaging character. There are two shortish, but complete, chapters with a nice joke about getting lost in each story and the text is interspersed by plenty of pictures. It's good to see more attention to high quality paper and printing, leaving only colour to be desired. LW

### The Snow Child

Debi Gliori, Frances Lincoln (Aug 95), 0 7112 0894 8, £3.99

A very good story this, for the lonely child, the child with few social skills and fewer friends. Katie is always out of step and out of the circle. She just doesn't have that sense of what the gang is doing and what the games are this season and is always pushed away, not invited - odd. A snow fall is the catalyst, however, that brings her a friend as she builds her snow-child and meets Jenny, who's as imaginative as she is. Nicely told, clearly illustrated, this would help children to consider friendship in a realistic but thoughtful way. LW

### Say Hello to the Buffalo and other animals

Miles Gibson, ill. Chris Riddell, Mammoth (Jul 95), 0 7497 2329 7, £2.99

A gloriously funny celebration of animals of all shapes, sizes and dispositions. Just when you'd given up all hope of finding a poem glorifying the stick insect, this collection arrives! And I loved the 'Snail' slobbering all over its friends '*In perpetual lamentation*'.

If you're feeling in a serious mood about poetry, don't dare open the

cover - if you want to grimace at some awful rhymes and then wonder at the cleverness of it, this is for you. PH

### Great Snakes

Kit Wright, ill. Posy Simmonds, Puffin (Aug 95), 0 14 034315 6, £3.50

When I find a collection as funny and as sparkling as this, I don't tell a soul. I hide it away in my jacket pocket and wait with a knowing smile for the next wet Friday afternoon. A broad collection of limericks, ballads, rhymes and riddles - there's something for everyone. The fun perpetuates everywhere, with appalling puns and catastrophic rhymes. I like the one about the sympathetic rats who feel sorry for their 'host' and commit 'raticide' best . . . or is it the very clever anagram of Merry Christmas? But that leaves out Monty the Mounty . . . oh, it's too difficult to choose.

While you're giggling over the poems do look at the illustrations - Posy does it again - they're delicious, especially the Pope's shower cubicle. PH

### Come for a Ride on the Ghost Train

Colin and Jacqui Hawkins, Walker (Aug 95), 0 7445 3671 5, £4.99

*Ghost Train* has been described by Year Two reviewers as 'great', 'cool', 'brilliant' and 'just like the real thing but better at the end'! It even galvanised some fairly phlegmatic and 'seen it all' lower juniors into putting pen to paper with similar enthusiasm. Each double-spread zaps you with a shocking flap. Don't try it with the younger infants and Be Prepared - some adults will definitely *not* like it. Every child I shared it with has lapped it up and I've not heard of any nightmares, yet . . . JS

### The Family Album

John Yeoman and Quentin Blake, Puffin (Jul 95), 0 14 036244 4, £3.25

'*Granpa beckons us over and quick as can be*  
*We all snuggle down on the squashy settee.'*

This provided a family history session which honestly left a class of six- and seven-year-olds (plus me, of course) chuckling long after the downright raucous laughter had waned.

There's Cousin Charlie who's 'only just ten' and has 'lived in the kitchen

**POETRY**

since goodness knows when', not to mention super-powered-bike-mad Annabelle Jane, disguise artists Uncle Ignatius and Auntie Diane, Great Uncle Bertie (who thinks he's a budgie), Uncle Marvello and Auntie Shazam (alias Eric and Pam), Baby Cedric super crawler, tardy Cousin Ted, paint-potty Cousin Lucy and many more . . .

A brilliant book, brilliantly illustrated, which defies anyone to keep a straight face. No classroom, staffroom, home or library should be without it. GR

### The Second Princess

Hiawyn Oram, ill. Tony Ross, Collins (Jul 95), 0 00 664412 0, £4.50

Perpetual second place is no joke! Number Two Princess becomes obsessed with usurping her sister's first place and she'll reward any accomplice in any way even if it means stealing from her own mother. If she'd only voiced her feelings, things may not have become so complicated, but at least her depth of feeling cannot be underestimated.

Hiawyn Oram's usual subtlety and sensitivity attune perfectly with Tony Ross's uniquely humorous illustrations and, thankfully, a happy and typically simple compromise is reached. Six-year-olds loved it, obviously appreciating the fun, and one or two of my class appeared to consider her predicaments. GR

### A Jumble of Clothes

Ed. Jill Bennett, ill. Sue Heap, Corgi (Aug 95), 0 552 52716 5, £2.99



Children love the racy rhythms and sheer fun language of this collection by many celebrated writers including Michelle Magorian, Berlie Doherty, Judith Nicholls, John Agard, Michael Rosen, etc . . . about blue wellies, yellow wellies, faded

t-shirts, speedy sole-worn trainers, brand new jimjams, hateful hats, difflle-dufflecult dufflecoats, as well as Mrs Moggett's knickers . . . and more.

Sue Heap's bold and bright illustrations frame and further vitalise the already vivid images. This collection shouldn't be missed for its quality alone, but also for its relevance to much school topic work. GR

### Oliver's Vegetables

Vivian French, ill. Alison Bartlett, Hodder (Aug 95), 0 340 6347 90, £4.99

### Princess Primrose

Vivian French, ill. Chris Fisher, Walker (Jul 95), 0 7445 4315 0, £4.50

Two quality picture books by Vivian French, both with striking illustrations.

Oliver appreciates the value of eating more adventurously and Princess Primrose appreciates the value of speaking more politely. Wise Grandad devises a fun game whereby Oliver must eat every type of vegetable he finds during a garden quest for his favourite chip-making 'potato'. Alison Bartlett's illustrations enhance beautifully the obvious warmth and gentleness between Oliver and Grandad.

There's little gentleness, however, about Princess Primrose who is glaringly selfish, ill-mannered, ungrateful for birthday gifts, demanding and totally spoilt. Plentiful, busy pictures by Chris Fisher fit the brusque badness of her behaviour perfectly. Thankfully, a straightforward cook's boy finally prompts her to say 'please'.

Both books are decidedly memorable and enjoyable, but only mature readers will be able to tackle them alone. GR

### Tom and the Island of Dinosaurs

Ian Beck, Picture Corgi (Aug 95), 0 552 52756 4, £3.99

This is a rip-roaring yarn of messages in bottles flung upon the shore guarded by a lonely lighthouse; of Tom flying to the rescue in a hot air balloon; of Katy devising a cunning plan to save the last of the dinosaurs from destruction; of escaping in the nick of time from an erupting volcano - you name it, this story has it. This is the stuff of a master storyteller weaving an epic - it's not just the paper he paints, but also our imaginations. JS

## Junior/Middle REVIEWS

### does W trouble **POETRY**

Ed. Gerard Benson, ill. Alison Forsythe, Puffin (Jul 95), 0 14 036551 6, £4.99

This celebration of rhyming poetry is one of the most interesting, wide-ranging and useful anthologies I've read in a long time. Selections have been taken from across the

centuries, representing a range of genres from limericks to extracts from narrative sagas.

Gerard Benson's introduction to this book pre-empts its reception by presenting a dialogue in letters, addressing many of the issues associated with rhyme, or its apparent absence, in poetry. The poems in the first and last sections are headed by unobtrusive notes directing the

reader's attention to the way in which the poet has used rhyme.

Highly recommended for all ages of children and adults, and as a resource for teachers and parents. GH

### The Time Sailors

Ian Whybrow, ill. Anthony Lewis, Walker (Jun 95), 0 7445 3695 2, £3.50

Edward's Grandad is a retired seaman, a curmudgeonly old git who alienates his family and refuses to say 'please' and 'thank you'. This puzzles Edward, as do the mysterious watch and faded photograph he isn't allowed to touch - until the day that Grandad decides 'the time is ripe' for his faithful young visitor to learn about the past by experiencing it.

# NEW \* A&C BLACK \* NEW

## FLASHBACKS

An exciting new series each set at a different time in history, packed with historical detail and accurate illustrations.

### A Candle in the Dark

ADELE GERAS

### The Saga of Aslak

SUSAN PRICE

### A Ghost-Light in the Attic

PAT THOMSON

### All the Gold in the World

ROBERT LEESON

lam boards line drawings £6.99

## JETS

'You are certain to need several sets of these in every class where there are readers, no matter what their age' Jill Bennett, BOOKS FOR KEEPS

### Harry the Superhero

CHRIS POWLING & SCOUALAR ANDERSON

### Ivana the Inventor

DAMON BURNARD

### The Thing-on-two-Legs

DIANA HENDRY & SUE HEAP

### Mum's the Word

MICHAEL MORPURGO & SHOO RAYNER

lam boards black & white illus £5.50

## JUMBO JETS

### The Curse of Brian's Brick

JAMES ANDREW HALL & JUDY BROWN

### Finlay MacTreble and the Fantastic Fertiliser

SCOUALAR ANDERSON

lam boards black & white illus £5.50

## COLOUR JETS

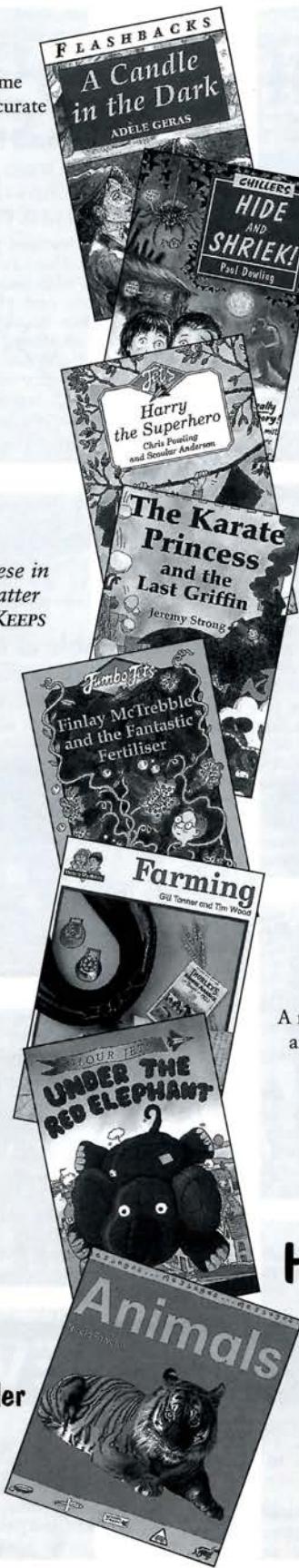
### Captain Skywriter and Kid Wonder

STEVEN ELBOZ AND JOHN EASTWOOD

### Under the Red Elephant

JAN MARK & JEFFREY REID

lam boards full colour illus Jan £6.50



## CHILLERS

'These books will certainly interest the most reluctant of readers.'

BOOKS FOR YOUR CHILDREN

### Sarah Scarer

SALLY CHRISTIE & CLAUDIO MUÑOZ

### The Dinner Lady

TESSA POTTER & KAREN DONNELLY

### Hide and Shriek!

PAUL DOWNING

### Ghost from the Sea

ELEANOR ALLEN & LEANNE FRANSON

lam boards b & w illus £5.50

## CRACKERS

'One of the best and most amusing series of books for competent readers of seven to eleven' JUNIOR EDUCATION

### The Desperate Adventures of Sir Rupert and Rosie Gusset

JEREMY STRONG

### The Karate Princess and the Last Griffin

JEREMY STRONG

lam boards black & white illus £6.99

## MESSAGES

NICOLA EDWARDS & ZUL MUKHIDA

A new series which shows children how they recognise and interpret the symbols, pictures and sounds which surround them.

### Animals The Body

### Plants Keeping in Touch

lam boards colour photos throughout £6.99

## HISTORY MYSTERIES

GILL TANNER, TIM WOOD & MAGGIE MURRAY

'These books are the next best thing to having artefacts' CHILD EDUCATION

### Farming Eating

### In the Street Dressing

lam boards colour photos throughout £7.50

This is both a humorous adventure story about time travel, and an evocation of life by the Thames both now and in the 1910s (an octogenarian friend recognised the references immediately). It's also about the abrasive warmth of family frictions, and how a child might respond to them. In short, it's a rich and fascinating story that will appeal to a wide range of readers.

GH

## The Garden

Dyan Sheldon and Gary Blythe, Red Fox (Jul 95), 0 09 950171 6, £4.50

In this new book by the author and illustrator of the quietly spectacular *The Whale's Song*, a child finds an old arrow head in a modern American garden, and through it experiences a romantic dream in which she's visited by Indians who tell her of the days when '*the land was large. When there were stories in the stars and songs in the sun*'.

Sheldon's text is economical to the point of scantiness, but Blythe's paintings, resembling old sepia photographs miraculously imbued with the sumptuous flames of a New England autumn, are startlingly beautiful. This is a visually striking and highly atmospheric book, which hints at the presence of many more stories than it attempts to tell.



We've all seen, and some of us have had that dubious pleasure of being, the white-clothed, blonde angel of the Bethlehem story, but Bob Hartman takes a fresh and invigorating look at angels. He asks some really penetrating questions leaving us wondering why we hadn't thought to query that before . . . Like, 'Are angels all the same?'. God created a vast diversity of animals and plants, why not angels with skills to match their allotted tasks? My favourite was the angel who really could handle the lions, and why shouldn't angels have a sense of humour! At the end of each short story there's a reference back to the original story in the Bible, so a comparison of texts can be made; but read and enjoy these for the sheer fun of it all first.

PH

## Hares and Tails of Shadow Wood

F Smith, ill. Simon Pell, Pentland (Jun 95), 1 85821 291 X, £6.50

You'd think life would be simple and uncomplicated living in a wood, but it's not, most emphatically not! Written in an easy to read style that begs for silly voices and accents, this book shows how difficult life can be whether you're in the middle of a city or elsewhere. The hilarity is that we can see the triviality of it all in woodland terms.

## South and North, East and West

### The Oxfam Book of Children's Stories

Ed. Michael Rosen, various illustrators, Walker (Aug 95), 0 7445 4366 5, £7.99

Jewel-like tales encapsulating in one volume 25 stories from all over the world. Some of these were written by children, some passed on by word of mouth, and each in their own way fascinates and delights - reminding us of our similarities rather than our differences. Equalling the text and expanding our imagination, each illustrator has given even greater individuality to each tale.

PH

### Croco'Nile

Roy Gerrard, Gollancz (Jul 95), 0 575 06117 0, £3.99

Once in a while a book comes along that says and does it all. This is the one!



## Two By Two By Two

Jonathan Allen, Orion (Aug 95), 1 85881 215 1, £3.99

Based very loosely on the story of Noah and the Ark, in come the animals two by two: two flower-faced bats, two macaroni penguins, two nine-banded armadillos . . . in fact a veritable encyclopedia of animals each with its own name label. Soon settled, the animals begin to get to know each other, engaging in witty exchanges: 'What do you like doing best?' asks the Two-toed sloth; 'Just hanging around I guess,' replies the Greater fruit bat; and indulging in various activities such as the Chimps' 'Fur and Feather' clinic with Hedgehog hairbrushes and a game of skittles using live penguins as targets and armadillos for balls. Noah himself is an unconventional character: he sets up a 'Cleaning Station' for his charges, organises weekly shows and tries his hand (and feet) at water-skiing.

A real riot of a book for a wide age-range, with much to look at, discuss and laugh over.

JB

## Angels, Angels all around

Bob Hartman, ill. Jessica Curtis, Lion (Jul 95), 0 7459 3212 6, £3.99

A delightful story of the pleasures and pitfalls of living in ancient Egypt. Not only this but the illustrations have to be seen to be believed - they manage to be detailed, thought-provoking and funny all at the same time. All that and it enriches the KS2 topic of Ancient Egypt. WOW! PH

## The Secret of Platform 13

Eva Ibbotson, ill Sue Porter, Macmillan (Jul 95), 0 330 33748 3, £3.50

Inventive magical mayhem as a rescue party attempts to capture a nine-years kidnapped prince and return him through the gump\* to their island kingdom beneath King's Cross. What they haven't reckoned with is that he's become a spoilt, whining brute and his putative, ruthless mother is determined to keep him safe and cosseted.

Fast, fun, full of bizarre characters and ideas, this is a real imagination tickler that deserves to be promoted.

DB

[*What's a gump?* Ed . . . 'Gumps are doors leading to other worlds' says the blurb on the back of the book.]

## Adventures of Goldhawk: Darkmoon's Curse

0 14 036939 2

### The Demon Spider

0 14 036940 6

Ian Livingstone, Puffin (Jul 95), £3.99 each

I enlisted the help of two Year 8 boys for these adventure game books with very eye-catching wrapping and arresting comic-book-like presentation throughout. They liked the unusual, exciting storylines which in these two titles both stand-alone and follow on from 'Darkmoon' to 'Spider' and they were impressed by the introductions, which contain plenty of information. The language was no problem and my tests suggested 8-year-olds upwards would cope. The books are meant to be played as a game, but work just as compellingly as straight stories.

Both Chris Vila and Edward Longden are on the lookout for more in this series . . . and they're very discerning experts!

DB

### The Sea Horse

Anthony Masters, ill. James Mayhew, Macdonald (Aug 95), 0 7500 1704 X, £3.50

An inspired story of Jamie's magical encounter with a sea horse. The sea's power and danger are as real as its many unexplored depths; loneliness and fear of drowning as real as the sea's vastness; the intensity of Jamie's emotion as real as the strength of the strongest wind. As the sea horse saves him so he too must enable its return to a wild ocean home.

Credible details of Jamie's family, of a typical Cornish coastal town, and of safety preparations for the forecast storm all add to the 'reality' of Jamie's special experience.

A wonderful tale, beautifully written and illustrated, which is sure to encourage confident readers and further a love of stories generally.

GR

## Catfoot and the Case of the Missing Bits of London

Alan Davidson, ill. Noel Ford, Puffin (Jul 95), 0 14 036972 4, £3.50

A striking cover and boldly printed text ensure immediate attraction, not to mention Davidson's opening assurance that his 'readers are lucky' and 'the first to know about some of the most astounding crimes ever committed', i.e. the theft of Nelson's Column, Eros, Marble Arch and more of London's famous monuments . . .

Recounting the story in the first person, Catfoot Foot urgently dons his magic and secret catsuit, determined to solve the mystery - and also save his father's endangered reputation as Augustus Foot, world-famous private-eye.

GR

## The Werepuppy on Holiday

Jacqueline Wilson, ill. Janet Robertson, Puffin (Jul 95), 0 14 037466 3, £3.25

A second eventful adventure with Micky and Wolfie in which Micky is torn terribly between wanting to go on holiday (it's his idea and hotel choice) and wanting to be with Wolfie who apparently can't go. Despair is at torture level as he's forced to leave Wolfie in kennels. Then, due to luck, baby werewolf magic, telepathy or sheer willpower, there's an amazing turn of events with fun-filled days and nights and a fitting ending.

This is a warm story with credible family characters, lots of humour and action, and appeal for fluent readers or younger listeners (the print is a bit small).

GR

## Chandra

Frances Mary Hendry, Oxford (Mar 95), 0 19 271712 X, £5.99

Since winning the Quest for a Kelpie Award in 1986, Frances Hendry's novels have been historical, usually set in her native Scotland. A change of publisher and editor has now produced an exceptionally fine book. Chandra is 11 and about to be married to a boy of 16. It's a fine match and her parents are well pleased. Chandra too saw a bright future and although she had not met her intended husband, she was sure they would be happy. The wedding takes place with Chandra resplendent in a magnificent, crimson silk sari and her first glimpse of her new husband reveals a round, cheerful face. They are then separated, as is the custom, until Diwali and Chandra sets out to make the long train journey to her husband's village. When she arrives, she finds not a welcome but terrible hostility as he has died of a fever and she is cursed as a devil woman. At 11 years old she's a widow and destined to be shut away, deprived of an education, a home, an identity, a life. This is an incredibly moving book, which is highly recommended.

VB

# Middle/Secondary REVIEWS

## Head and Tales

Susan Price, Faber (Jul 95), 0 571 17488 4, £3.99

An old storyteller dies in one of the squalid labour camps that surround the building of Britain's canals. His final wish is for his children to find the safety of their grandmother's house. In order to help them, he asks that the head be cut from his corpse to guide the children home. The camp butcher obliges, and the children set off on their perilous journey. But whenever they face danger or despair, the head comes to life and tells a story. Stories chilling and hilarious, stately and scurrilous, are strung on a narrative thread that is quite literally spell-binding; a class of 9-year-old children I shared this with were mesmerised by the exhilarating dread and delight of the adventure.

This is a great book. GH

## The Gizmo

Paul Jennings, ill. Keith McEwan, Puffin (Aug 95), 0 14 037090 0, £3.50

A lurid and slightly risqué story about a boy who is bullied into stealing a mysterious electronic gizmo from a market stall. Sick with guilt, he tries to dispose of it, but do what he will, the device keeps coming back to him. Then he discovers another of its powers: it mischievously swaps the clothes of its owner with those of anybody he happens to be looking at.

Loudly illustrated with shouting colours, this short and helter-skelter book might well appeal to older readers who are more at home with comics. GH

## The Phantom Hitchhiker and other ghost mysteries

1 85697 356 6

## The Riddle of the Stones and other unsolved mysteries

1 85697 355 7

Daniel Cohen, Kingfisher (Jun 95),

£2.99 each

Two plainly presented collections of those truish stories that we've all heard before, but never tire of hearing again.

The first book re-acquaints us with both historical ghosts and more recent apparitions, including, of course, the shivering girl in the white dress who accepts a lift from a compassionate motorist, dons his coat then vanishes, leaving him to reclaim the coat from her grave. A schmaltzy cliché, but still oddly poignant.

The unsolved mysteries include Kaspar Hauser, Spontaneous Human Combustion and the Bermuda Triangle, as well as less well-known phenomena, such as the treasure pit of Oak Island, which has swallowed all the resources poured into its attempted exploitation. Throughout this book, Daniel Cohen takes a shrewdly sceptical approach.

These straightforwardly written books will appeal to a universal appetite for mystery, and provide a good resource for inspiring discussion and writing amongst children. GH

## Gold Dust

Geraldine McCaughrean, Puffin (Jul 95), 0 14 036886 8, £3.99

Geraldine McCaughrean has the confidence of a gifted storyteller and has already shown how to take children's books well beyond the usual range. A sleepy Brazilian town has forgotten the thrill of the gold rushes until a large hole is dug in the main street. Why, we never discover, but the lure of the reason – it must be gold – unleashes a new gold rush which tragically and comically undermines the whole community. Inez and Maro suffer the invasion before helping to stop it in a wonderfully ingenious way. The book is part myth and part allegory, showing insights into human life which are witty and profound. AJ

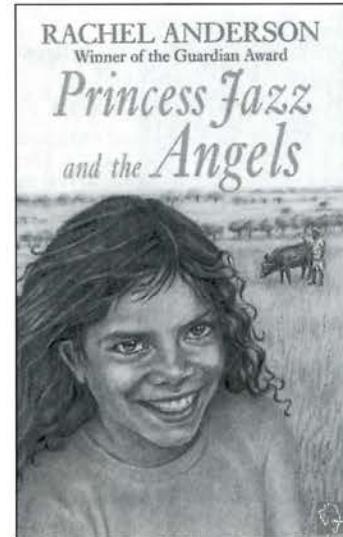
## The Shadows of Owlsnap

Angela Bull, Dolphin (Jul 95), 1 85881 089 2, £2.99

A powerful time-shift ghost story which wastes no time in moving out of the ordinary. The new house's reputation for being haunted turns from a game into something more serious for Alistair, who finds he can help the young girl from the past escape literally and metaphorically the dangers which face her and her brother. An eighteenth-century world is vividly created and the plot to clip gold coins and the dangers of capture are excitingly real. At the end of this brief, action-packed story Alistair learns (and readers can too) when to become involved and when to leave well alone. AJ

## Princess Jazz and the Angels

Rachel Anderson, Mammoth (Jun 95), 0 7497 2391 2, £2.99



Having a Sikh father, Irish mother and living in Scotland, Jazz wonders

where she belongs. Her father has been killed and when her mother can't cope Jazz is sent to stay with her father's relatives in the Punjab. It's a hard adjustment to accept and it takes the 'Haggis-Indian' doctor, Elspeth, to help her understand the richness of belonging to more than one place. Their exchanges, in exuberant Scottish dialect, set in a Punjabi hospital, are the start of a wonderful bridging between cultures and people. This book is short, powerful and moving. AJ

## The Bellmaker

Brian Jaques, Red Fox (Jun 95), 0 09 943331 1, £4.50

A further adventure in the 'Redwall' sequence which maintains the drama of the heroic deeds of the mice and their allies. It's a confident fantasy which requires no explanation of why these animals – the battles, the intrigue, the dangers and the intercutting between the stories – keep the reader so wonderfully involved by the sheer excitement of storytelling. Once hooked, there's nowhere to go but deep into the book, and when that's finished you look for the next one. AJ

## The Book of Three

### The Chronicles of Prydain, Part One

0 7497 1775 0

## The Black Cauldron

### The Chronicles of Prydain, Part Two

0 7497 1773 4

Lloyd Alexander, Mammoth (Jun 95), £3.50 each

If they've ever been away it's good to have these back, with new covers from a new publisher.

The five-book sequence has always had a powerful hold over readers which the Disney film supported (although a pale version of the stories). Against other equivalent sequences by Cooper or Le Guin it may lose out, but the main character's well-meaning ineptitude (and his title of Assistant Pig Keeper) keeps a nicely ordinary and humorous place for the reader to observe and take part in the intense battle of good against evil. AJ

## Hideaway

Ruth Thomas, Red Fox (Jul 95), 0 09 938551 1, £3.50

Once again Ruth Thomas follows a group of city kids; the trio here are nosing through a camper van until they discover stolen jewels, are kidnapped and then dumped in Devon. The story is always thrilling, but what grips is the complexity of the children: irrepressible Jack, asthmatic Charlie determined to be brave, and Leah continually wanting to do what she knows is right but always giving in to the others. Jack would rather be a kidnapper and stay in Devon wallowing in the excitement of being with animals and fending for himself. Rescue is no

simple business.

This book catches the children's inner worlds with engaging precision. AJ

## Bubble and Shriek

Paul Stewart, ill. Annabel Large, Puffin (Jun 95), 0 14 036275 4, £3.50

Over-concern for appearances and fear of what others might think or say lie at the heart of this readable and clever story for smart readers.

Charlie hates the limelight in his career as a child star of adverts; Vinny hates the pressure to succeed put on him by his father. At a fairground the two seeming enemies come to understand fear, each other and their lot, thanks to the amazing bottle of bubbles given by a modern-day fairy godmother, Madame Tatiana. DB

## Whispers in a Graveyard

Theresa Breslin, Mammoth (Jun 95), 0 7497 2388 2, £3.50

This is a Carnegie Medal winner that has quality etched right through it. It's a bit of a challenge, since it tackles so many themes and ideas at once and there's much tension and anger requiring considerable emotional input from the reader.

The central character, Solomon, is a dyslexic who must face up to many challenges in life, at school, at home and in the strangely barren part of the kirkyard that he chooses as a refuge. His realisation at the end, '...Admit what you are. Accept that your problems are part of yourself. Know them. Know yourself. Then deal with them.', lies at the core of the novel. DB

## Shadows on the Lake

Catherine Sefton, Puffin (Jul 95), 0 14 037417 5, £3.50

Heroines seldom come much more forceful and up-front than Annie Orr, 13-year-old Irish lass, going on 35 and working 'on the Black Economy' in an Hungarian restaurant. When she decides that her brother, Baxter, needs saving from himself, then saved he will be, kidnappers or terrorists notwithstanding.

This is a lively read, tailor-made for girls who are looking for a strong female character and plenty of action. DB

## The Shakespeare Connection

Avril Rowlands, Puffin (Jun 95), 0 14 037196 6, £3.99

Cal is bored: his mother has sent him to England with a school party visiting Stratford. He has no empathy with the playwright's work until he's transported back to Shakespeare's time where he becomes player and family friend entrusted with the task of finding Shakespeare's lost manuscript 'Love's Labour's Won'.

The historical detail is fascinating, but it's Cal's friendship with Hamnet and the tension in the search for the manuscript which really hold the reader. There are emotional paral-

lels between Cal's situation and Judith's, Shakespeare's daughter, but it's greed which echoes most forcibly down the centuries when Cal accidentally brings the manuscript back to the present.

A thoroughly enjoyable and often thought-provoking read. VR

### The Woven Path

Robin Jarvis, Collins  
(Jul 95), 0 00 675012 5, £4.99

The first in a series of 'Tales from the Wyrd Museum'. Neil and Josh's mother has left and their ineffectual father has secured a caretaker's job in the museum, which is eerily inhabited by three elderly and eccentric sisters.

This is a massively long book - well over 400 pages - and suffers from an over abundance of adjectives and laboriously detailed descriptions. The subject-matter is intriguing - time slips, monsters, legends and the struggle between good and evil - but fans of *The Deptford Mice Trilogy* will be shocked by the lurid descriptions of agonising deaths and grotesque monsters - all too reminiscent of the worst excesses of Stephen King.

The ending transparently paves the way for a sequel and I suspect readers will be eager to meet the charac-

ters again, despite the book's flaws. Don't regard this is typical Robin Jarvis - this is definitely for older readers with strong stomachs. VR

### Dragon's Rock *ORIGINAL*

Tim Bowler, Oxford

(Jun 95), 0 19 271693 X, £5.99

What next after 'Point Horror'? Try this.

Toby and Benjamin are opposites and have no affection for each other, so when Benjamin arrives to spend the holidays with Toby's family the stage is set for intense confrontation. Ben stole a stone from the Dragon Rock and Toby steals it from him, sharing his terrors. The tension builds towards a conundrum at the end of the book and a change of heart for Toby.

This is mysterious, threatening and likely to appeal to Year 8 and 9 boys who like to be frightened and don't want all the questions answered for them. VR

### Bring Out the Banners

Geoffrey Trease, Walker  
(Aug 95), 0 7445 3618 9, £3.99

Geoffrey Trease's first novel was published in 1934 and, 61 years later, he's still writing first-quality novels

for young people.

The suffragette movement is the subject of this latest book and, as ever, it's through his adept character creation that Trease ignites the spark of interest in his story. Belle, Flora and Guy, all from very different backgrounds, are drawn into the same cause with consequences that are both moving and exciting. This is not merely an historical treatise, but a commentary on the lives of women in contemporary society. It would serve both as class reader and library copy for able readers in Year 9. VR

### Charlie on the Spot

Sue Welford, Oxford

(Jul 95), 0 19 271676 X, £5.99

It's hard having a boyfriend who's more interested in football than you, a politically correct, green, feminist, pregnant mother with a toy-boy and real dad whose idea of housework is to change TV channels. 14-year-old Charlie's dearest wish is to become an actress and she thinks her big chance has come when her drama teacher, Sonia Scissor Hands (of the long nails) is casting the school play, 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs'. Charlie's joy is decidedly short-lived as her mum explodes - 'A story about a girl who devotes herself to seven small persons, does their housework



and cooking while they go off to some paid employment every day and then swaps them for some stupid prince who sexually harasses her in the woods...'. Mother takes charge, rewrites the whole thing and 'Snow White and the Seven Small Persons' is eventually performed to triumphant applause, a rampage of pensioners and a baby being born in the midst of the mayhem. Hilarious chaos! VB

## Older Readers REVIEWS

### Captains Courageous

Rudyard Kipling,  
Oxford (Jun 95),  
0 19 282929 7, £4.99

The obnoxious son of a millionaire falls off a luxury liner, is rescued by a fishing schooner, spends the summer as a crew member, and after a manly diet of toil, chowder and chastisement returns to inherit the family wealth as a more deserving character.

Kipling's tale of the nineteenth-century Atlantic fisheries, accompanied in this edition by a scholarly introduction and entertainingly pedantic notes, should read as coldly as a manuscript chiselled out of an iceberg. And in many ways - with its dense nautical terminology, its attempts at faithful transcriptions of several dialects, its Tarantinoid insouciance over the use of the word 'nigger', and its apparent assumptions about wealth and status - it is indeed a troublesome yarn.

However, in the hands of such a powerful storyteller, the theme of redemption through ordeal remains a seductive one. At the very least, this is an interesting cadaver to serve up at the dissecting table, but don't be too surprised if it sits up and embraces you. GH

### The Golden Gate Murders

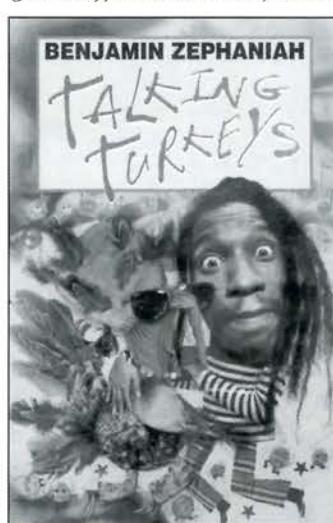
Marilyn Sachs, Oxford  
(Jun 95), 0 19 271687 5, £5.99

Mathew and Mathilda are threatened with separation when their parents split up. They run away intending to stay with an uncle but end up having to live in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. This is a story of murders (I was convinced the twins would not

survive) but it's also about the characters who live in the Park, people who've been demonised but who turn out to be sad human beings. An exciting story, with clever use of a prologue and pages of newspaper headlines. AJ

### Talking Turkeys *ORIGINAL*

Benjamin Zephaniah, Puffin  
(Jun 95), 0 14 036330 0, £3.50



Here is the liveliest looking (and sounding) poetry for teenagers. The design on the page is inviting in its own way and frequently adds to the immediate quality of poems.

There's 'According To My Mood' ('I have poetic licence, I write the way I want...') with its mix of fonts, size and case displaying the freedom of expression, and 'De Generation Rap'

where the vocabulary of the streets is given a similar range of presentation.

The issues and targets, the humour and music of the lines are an invitation to read, and read aloud: 'I used to think poets / Were boring / Until I became one of them.' AJ

### Seeing in Moonlight

Andrew Matthews, Mammoth (Jun 95), 0 7497 1702 5, £3.50

Original, witty, bitchy, sensitive and wise, Wayne's only real friends are two girls, with whom he has an intense and purely platonic relationship, known as the 'Great triangle'. When this ends in tragedy he must cope with a myriad of emotions and, mixed with the grief, he must come to terms with his own sense of self and take control of the rest of his life. This sequel to *Writing in Martian* is both fast and moving and presents a convincing picture of the softer side of the male of the species. DB

### Cherie

Anne Bailey, Faber  
(Aug 95), 0 571 17138 9, £4.99

Cherie is 16 - intelligent, industrious and set on a career in medicine. Then one night, when her father and sister, Suzy, are out, she's raped by burglars. The book sets out to deal with this sensitive and emotional subject and relationships are presented realistically and harshly.

Suzy is determined to support her sister, expecting tears and pleas for comfort, but is confounded when Cherie retreats into a hard shell. Their father is simply determined that everything must return to normal and fails to respond to Cherie's needs. On this level the

book succeeds, but is less effective from a literary standpoint. Bailey has a curious style which employs long series of abruptly truncated statements and sentences which end in illogical places. This irritation aside, Year 9 girls upwards will probably find that *Cherie* gives them a good deal to think about. VR

### Seeing Things

Robin Klein, Puffin  
(Jun 95), 0 14 036383 1, £3.99

A lazy, domineering uncle, a dreamy younger brother, a constantly fretful baby and a well-meaning but overstretched grandmother mean that Miranda gets little attention. After the deaths of her parents she's become used to shutting herself off from relationships, fearful of being abandoned again.

Her need for self-esteem leads her to invent a psychic gift and she's suddenly centre-stage - rather too much so when her sister's criminal boyfriend wants to make use of her 'talent' to commit a crime. The plot sometimes appears contrived - events become convenient rather than credible and some characters, notably Uncle Bernie, lean towards caricature.

Less able readers would find the slow pace of the first few chapters discouraging, but would probably welcome the inevitable happy ending. VR

### 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.

# Oxford Books for Children & Young Adults

'95



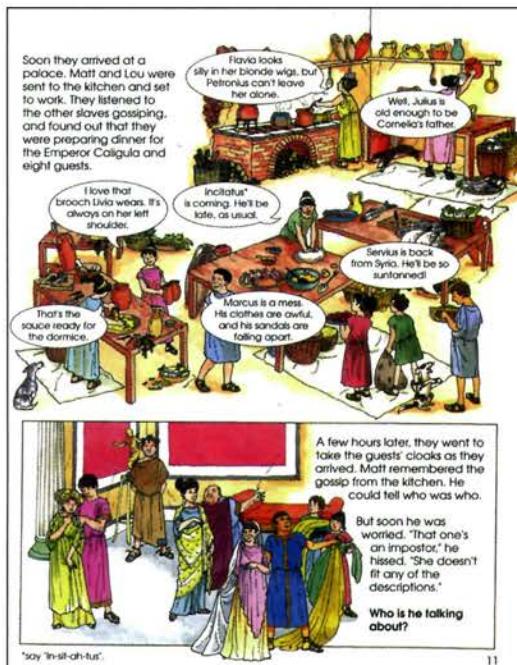
## Leading titles for Autumn

# Puzzling over PUZZLES

## Steve Rosson on an ever-popular pastime

I've always been a sucker for puzzles. The first ones I can remember were the picture crosswords in the London Evening News and I even enjoyed ploughing through the books of verbal and non-verbal reading tests that dear old Mrs Lugg persuaded my parents to buy in order to give me some practice for the 11+. Solving the Mensa ads always gives my ego a boost though I realise it means absolutely nothing – and I've sometimes been known to stock up for the summer holiday in the sun with some of the huge range of puzzle books now available from the bottom shelf of the newsagents. So what did I make of the children's puzzle books I was sent for review?

Usborne Publishing are the major players in this field and this year are celebrating their 10th Anniversary of puzzling with a special competition which it's not too late for kids to enter. 'Young Puzzles' are aimed at 4-year-olds and upwards, though the one I was sent – *Puzzle Journey Through Time* – seemed to be



Above, from *Puzzle Journey Through Time*; right, from *The Missing Clue*.

more suitable for 8-year-olds. I thought this was rather fun with its strip cartoon format. Matt and Lou time travel to a Viking village, Ancient Rome, The Middle Ages and sundry other times doing battle with a baddie from the future called Anna Kranism (they go in a lot for punning names at Usborne). The drawings were historically accurate, apart from the intentional plants, but the puzzles were rather feeble being based largely on close observation of the pictures with a couple of map questions involving following instructions.

'Young Puzzle Adventures' are again aimed at the 4-7 year-old range with the emphasis that these are books than can be shared by children and adults together. 30-odd pages of cosy story with large, competent, but inspiring, colour illustrations. Each double-page spread has a puzzle to solve. There are five of these in print at the moment compared with 25 of the 'Puzzle Adventures' for 8-13 year-olds. Think of a setting or a theme for a mystery story and it's here somewhere – sunken cities, lost temples, castles, haunted towers, pirates, jungles, smuggling, etc, etc, etc. Lots of cartoon drawings, again with a puzzle on each double-page – codes, maps, mazes, number games, picture observation and such – with a page of clues at the back followed by the solutions. For the real fan there are three 'Advanced' level adventures with much more difficult puzzles to crack.

Now with all these series you don't actually have to solve the puzzle in order to continue with the story – which has the advantage that you do get to finish the book, along with the disadvantage that there's no real incentive to stick at any of the puzzles.

'Whodunnits', of which there are three in print, adopt a different approach altogether. Aimed at the 9+ age group, there is a lot more reading to be done both in the narrative itself and a range of other types of writing such as newspaper cuttings, reporters' notebooks, magazine articles, letters and so on. Numbered magnifying glass symbols are placed at critical points in the plot to direct the reader to more careful study and the solution is explained in mirror print at the back to deter any sneaky cheating. *The Missing Clue* revolves around the cast of a US soap opera in the run-up to the Bravo awards. Dirty work is afoot in a hugely complex plot but all is solved by young Jack who's won a week as a trainee reporter covering the showbiz scene – and solved by you too if you follow all the clues. I'd like to meet the 9-year-old who can crack it.

Usborne have given their illustrators some time off for the 'Solve It Yourself' series (three out by the end of the year). This time you get close-up photographs

of everyday messes – the victim's desk, the front seat of a car, the spilled out contents of a handbag – and here again it's close observation of the picture and linking of clues that are needed.

They're very proud of their puzzle books at Usborne and tell me they 'can't get them out fast enough' to satisfy the demand, though I have to say I was disappointed by them. All the books are well-produced with lots of colour on well designed pages but for me they fall between two stools. They're not good stories as the need to progress a double page at a time imposes a wholly artificial structure on them and the puzzles play no part whatsoever in the development of the plot. Using the acid test of 'Would you want to read these books again?' the answer would be a resounding 'No'. I think I'll stick to the bottom shelf at my newsagent.

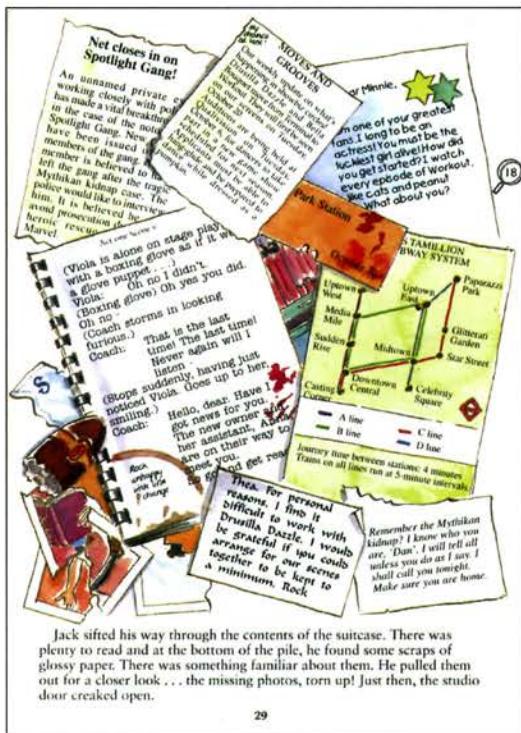
Mind you, that's only my adult opinion. All the evidence suggests a very different response from the children... so that's another puzzle to solve.■

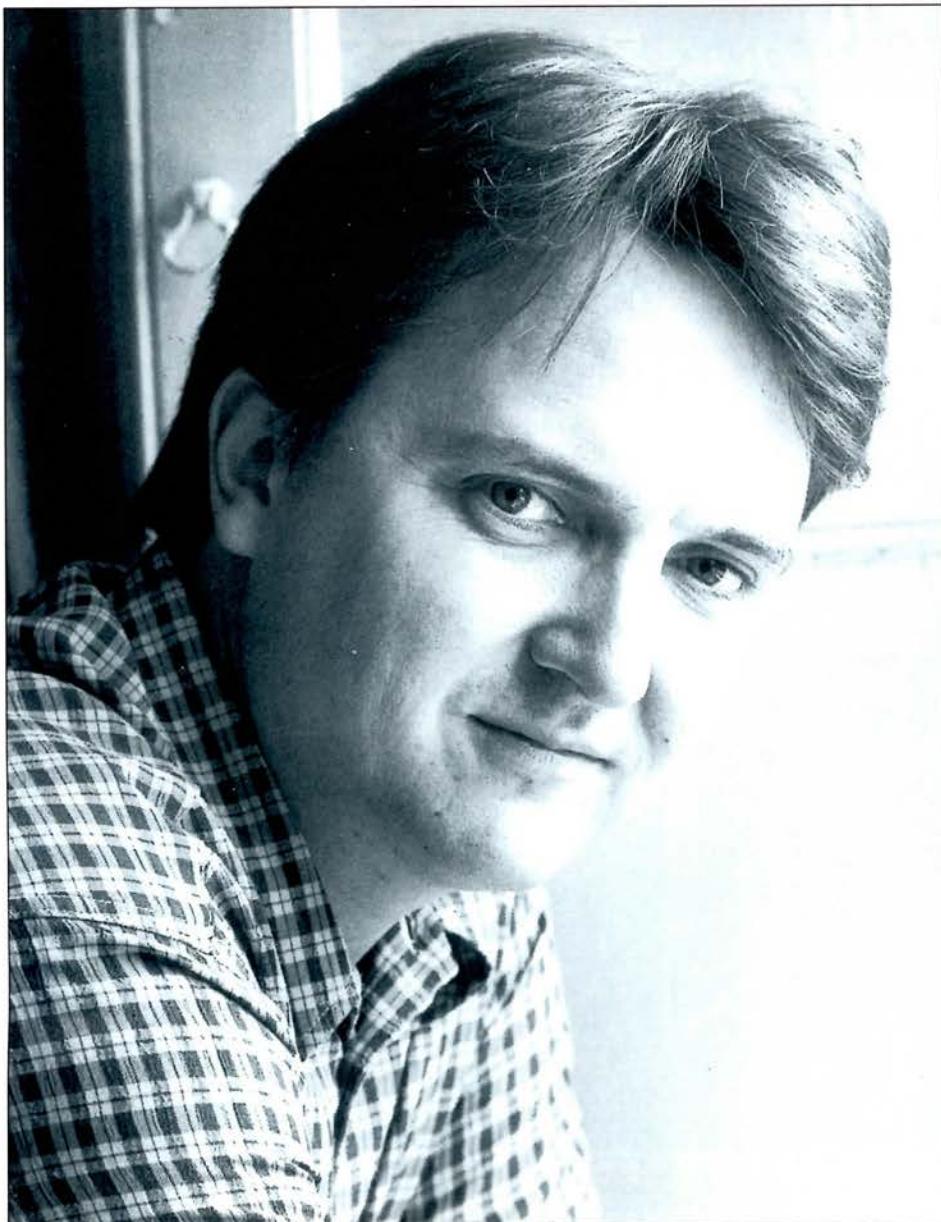
### Details of titles mentioned:

**Puzzle Journey Through Time**, Usborne, 0 7460 1657 3, £5.99; 0 7460 1666 5, £3.99 pbk

**The Missing Clue**, Usborne, 0 7460 0599 7, £4.99; 0 7460 0598 9, £3.50 pbk

For information about the **10th Anniversary Competition**, write to Usborne Publishing, 83/85 Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8RT.





*'I suppose that's my niche really. A certain ability at draughtsmanship, an interest in history and a plodding work ethic.'*

Hardly how I would have thought of Stephen Biesty whose finely drawn, exquisitely detailed 'cross-section' books have had such a profound effect on the look of contemporary information books and whose very first book, **Stephen Biesty's Incredible Cross-Sections**, sold over a million copies.

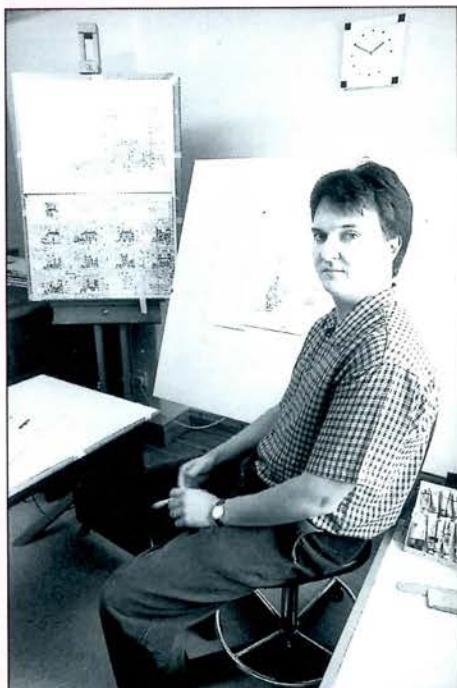
But Stephen is genuinely unassuming and modest. It's not that he doesn't know how good his books are. He does, and he's delighted they've given pleasure to thousands of children. He has a healthy mailbag of letters from both adults and children and was especially touched recently when asked by a hospital for very sick children in Illinois if they could use his illustrations for their walls. They'd found that looking at his pictures had provided such a good way for children and their parents to talk together.

He says that as a non-fiction illustrator I've been very lucky. I don't expect this level of success to continue.' His modesty

lies in the fact that he makes no claims for being more than a very serious worker. 'I know it's a cliche but my work is 10% inspiration, 90% perspiration. It's unglamorous being an illustrator. It's mostly a question of work.' And that Stephen certainly does. His work area occupies one end of the Biestys' beautiful Somerset cottage - an old school house nestling right under the church. The school room has been bisected by a floor to make bedrooms above and an elegant sitting room below. Stephen's work end has his library, an essential source of reference, on the ground floor and his studio, with a breathtaking view of the church, above.

## Authorgraph

For all the busyness of his illustrations he's a naturally tidy person. A perfectionist who hates clutter and disorder - 'I try to confine my tendency to be very thorough to my work; I wouldn't want it to spin into other aspects of my life' - his studio is immaculate with no distracting illustrations on the wall or noticeboard, merely some functional information such as, most importantly, Dorling Kindersley's phone and fax numbers.



It was Dorling Kindersley who revolutionised Biesty's life by giving him the opportunity to turn his passion for detailed historical illustration into a lucrative professional commitment. Stephen's love of history combined with his training in art at Brighton Art School and capped by an MA in graphic design concentrating on historical reconstruction, had given him the idea that he might work somewhere like the National Trust or English Heritage. But sticking to the architectural side alone he soon found limiting: 'there was no freedom of expression and everything was on an extremely modest budget.'

Seeing no rewarding employment there, Stephen 'drifted into adult publishing and then children's publishing, just to find work'. The drifting only implies that it

# No.95

*Biesty*

happened by chance. There's nothing uncommitted or casual about his attitude. It was the quality of his illustrations for Mitchell Beasley and Octopus that brought him to the attention of DK who took him on for their new project. Stephen was a clever find and, given that he likes to produce very detailed, labour-intensive illustrations, it was a stroke of incredible good fortune for him that he ended up working on something where the volume of sales can easily justify the 18 months to two years each book takes.

The process for the cross-sections is a complex one. He insists they're very much a group enterprise. 'I was puzzled at the beginning why they needed to put my name across the top of it. I mean, it's not just me. There are lots of people involved in these books, seven or eight at least. Like many DK projects, Peter Kindersley had been turning over the idea of doing such a book for a long time.'

As a child, Stephen had been influenced by the cut-through artwork of Lesley Ashwell Wood in *Eagle*, rather on its last legs when Stephen was a boy in the 1960s. His curiosity for this kind of illustration fitted in well with Kindersley's ideas for books of cross-sections and both clearly enjoyed poring over an old copy of *Eagle* which Stephen tracked down.

'On individual projects, the idea for the books comes from DK and then I put flesh on the bones. They're illustration led, with seven stages before the finished colour artwork is added. I start by getting together a lot of reference material. I go to libraries, bookshops, museums and collect as much information as possible before I begin drawing. Then DK and Richard Platt (the author) come up with other pieces of information and I add on. It doesn't matter how much you put in. The readers seem to love more and more detail.'

Driven by his own love of history, Biesty spends hours on research to get everything just right. 'I'm interested in social history, especially the eighteenth century so I liked getting across the feeling of how people lived in *Man-of-War*. Lots of them enjoyed being at sea because they were properly fed and had plenty to drink. Life on the land was very poor, you have to

remember. There are some nasty things that happened, too. When I put in gory bits, I make sure they're in context. It would be wrong to gloss over them. It brings out how different life was in those days. I like to put in extras that the reader wouldn't necessarily expect – humorous touches like people on the toilet. I have great fun with the schoolboy jokes.'

Stephen's enthusiasm for his subjects is infectious and he's clear he couldn't bring the same integrity to subjects that didn't interest him. Modern warfare, for example, has been suggested as an obvious topic and it would clearly be appealing but, for him, it lacks the human ingredient he so much enjoys.

Ideas that do appeal to him are concerned with looking at one place and how you can strip back the layers to find one bit of history piled on top of another, or considering the world through a magnifying glass to show things in ever greater detail. Always, for Biesty, it's the detail that fascinates.

His interest in social history has also shaped the kind of artists whose work appeals to him. 'My early influences were Hogarth, Bruegel and Bosh. I loved their fantastic crowd scenes because they're full of character and humour. On the film side, it was the great epics such as *El Cid* that really inspired me. They were teeming with life and visually exciting.' All Stephen's illustrations share that quality of 'teeming with life'. 'I want to know how people lived. The minutiae of their lives such as cooking, clothes, beds. I'm an enthusiastic amateur when it comes to history and I think I'm interested at a child's level.'

Research provides him with the knowledge to draw his subjects accurately and he believes it's because some of his imitators lack the ability to invest their books with historical value that they've been less successful. 'If there's no depth or extra details, it's hard for children to be drawn in,' he claims. But, it's also his style of illustration that makes the looking so easy. He's drawn since he was a child, always concentrating on cathedrals and castles, while his elder brother drew cars and aeroplanes. Despite the attention to detail, the illustrations are never formal or stiff. 'Children seem to find drawings that look a bit hand done more appealing... certainly do, and I never wanted to be an

airbrush artist.' But the hand done, lightness of touch isn't produced quickly or easily, however homespun it may look.

Biesty's work schedule is demanding and highly disciplined. Committing yourself to a two-year project and not allowing yourself to become distracted along the way is a challenge most would find daunting. Stephen drives himself hard. 'I work for five days a week now,' he says, apologising because some artists in London apparently work six or seven. 'I always start by eight-thirty and I finish around half-past-five.' He has no interruptions apart from a quick lunch with his wife, Liz, and three-year-old Richard. 'Liz is my first

critic. I need her fresh eye on things sometimes.' But Liz and Richard never interrupt and it's clear that Stephen doesn't waste time on anything outside the project in hand. He goes to London rarely, relying on phone calls and faxes whenever possible. When the research is done, his mind is on the artwork, which, for each of the big cross-sections books,

goes through the stages of design drawings, flow-charts, layouts, drawings, alterations, inking-in, artwork and then a staggering 14 weeks on the endpapers alone.

The detail is all done with propelling pencil and then, when it's right, gone over in rotary pen. The rich tones of the water-colours are added on top so the lines can remain visible. He uses one sheet of paper for the whole process, preferring it to fiddling with overlays. 'I'm methodical and I hate working in a rush. I like to work to a regime and to keep on schedule. Of course, working on your own can be isolating, but I've grown used to it.'

And it's clear from the quiet satisfaction he radiates, transferring his relish for accuracy into visual treats for the reader, that this professional privacy is far more of a pleasure than a torment.

Photographs by Richard Newton.

Stephen Biesty's books are all published by Dorling Kindersley:

Incredible Cross-Sections, 0 86318 807 9, £12.99

Cross-Sections Man-of-War,

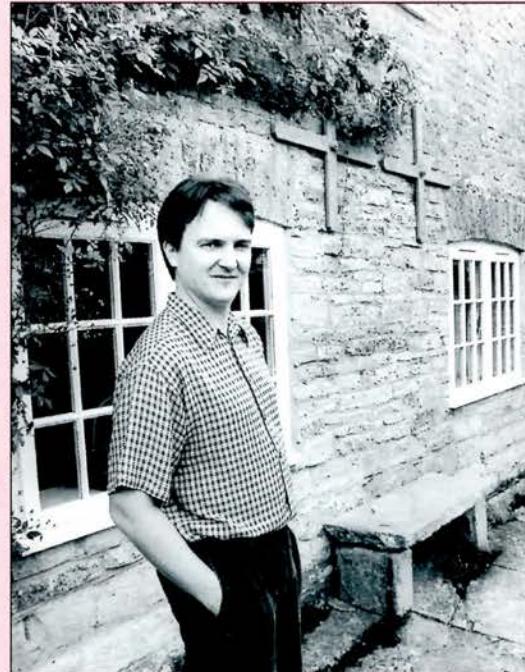
0 7513 5045 1, £12.00

Cross-Sections Castle, 0 7513 5046 X, £12.99

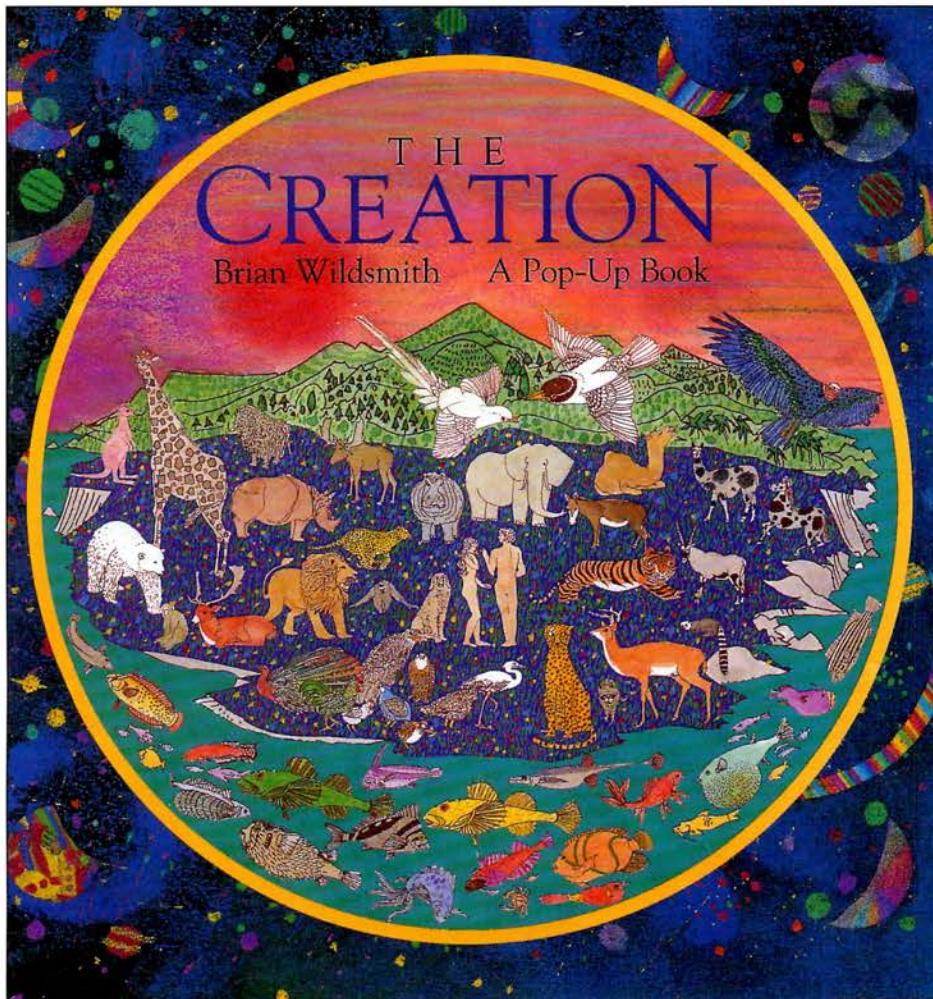
(the above three titles were written by Richard Platt)

Incredible Pop-Up Cross-Sections,

0 7513 5342 6, £9.99



# CREATING



**Brian Wildsmith interrogates himself about his latest pop-up**

**Q:** Your first pop-up was *Noah's Ark*, and now you follow it with *The Creation*. Is there very much difference in creating a picture book (a 'flat' as the trade calls it) to creating a pop-up?

**A:** Yes there is. Of course, the essential difference is that a pop-up has to be conceived in volume; any volumetric shapes have to be made to fold flat when the book is closed. Many pop-ups merely have a flat surface, which rises upright when opening the book. This is a simplistic approach and doesn't utilise the full potential of what can be achieved.

**Q:** How do you begin the process?

**A:** Well, as a child once said, 'I think and then I put a line around it.' Once the image is firmly in my mind I make a rough model. This is then sent to Intervisual Books in Santa Monica, California. They have wonderful talented paper engineers there who

work out how to make the image fold. Each shape is dissected into its separate pieces and then sent to me to paint.

**Q:** A picture book has so many more pages to it than a pop-up, which is usually about five or six spreads. Why?

**A:** Simple economics always rule a product. In comparison to a pop-up, a picture book is an uncomplicated manufacturing operation. ALL the pictures are printed on one or two large format sheets of paper, folded and then bound. ALL operations are carried out by machine. A pop-up is printed on thin card (again two sheets normally) but then all the pieces that are effectively to pop-up have to be cut out, assembled and glued into place ('glue points' as they're called) by hand.

**Q:** How many glue points are there to *The Creation*?

**A:** There are 175 glue points in the final assembly, with over 100 different cut-outs to be glued into place. When you think of it, for the amount of intensive manual labour involved, pop-ups are amazingly cheap to buy and they can soon become collector's items.

**Q:** Creatively, what is it that attracts you to pop-ups?

**A:** It's the combination of flat art and a kind of sculpture, which is painted sculpture. The ancient Greeks painted their sculptures. Pheidias carved a 36ft high wonder, Pallas Athena, which stood in the centre of the Parthenon. It was then painted in various colours and adorned with gold jewels. Sadly, as with so many great masterpieces, it's been destroyed but it must have been inspiring – sorry, I'm digressing.

**Q:** How do you begin? What was the starting point?

**A:** In a subject like Creation you have to decide just where you stand on the issue, i.e. Genesis or the Big Bang theory. I came to the conclusion that there wasn't a great deal between the two concepts, the main difference being Time (the concept of Time). Genesis: God created the world in six days, i.e.  $6 \times 24$  hours. If you remove the time element from Genesis and make a day = millions of years, where's the difference? God = what? – a super power that made or caused the Big Bang, sending matter to swirl and form into the infinite that with time became the universe.

Of that same super power, or God as we conceive of Him, the Bible says God made man in his own image, and our imagery of God is as we are. We need images we can relate to. It does help us to come to terms with an infinite so vast that it's quite beyond our comprehension.

**Q:** So you walked through the Gates of Genesis towards the Garden of Eden?

**A:** Yes, I decided to make my image of God = Male-Female-Black-White-Coloured-Oriental, making a cruciform shape standing upright on a panorama of flat art representing the universe.

**Q:** I see that your cruciform God is holding up high in glory our lovely planet earth, whilst supporting stars and moons with the other hands.

**A:** Yes, this was all necessary in order to give stability, and bind the structure to the base page, ensuring that the whole structure pops up correctly and doesn't collapse.

**Q: Spread Two has a very complex base painting of many different shapes and colours.**

**A:** In this painting I wanted to convey the mystery and wonder of the first growth of plants, trees and foliage emerging from the deep blue of the third day.

**Q: The pop-up flowers and revolving wheel on this spread - do they have a significance other than being beautiful flowers?**

**A:** The simple delicate pop-up flower is an expression of the purity of the world as it was then. But if you turn the wheel, you'll expose the Datura flower, lovely, seductive but deadly if it is misused, a perfect symbol of temptation to come into our world. The Datura flowers I drew from my wife's garden. I love the Revolving Wheel effect. It was first used at the end of the nineteenth century by Ernest Nister of London in his enchanting Victorian revolving picture books.

**Q: There are lots of fish swimming around on the third spread. Are they accurate?**

**A:** Yes, the shapes and forms are all accurate but I've allowed myself a



little artistic licence in the colouring. They were great fun to paint and really gave me very little trouble. However, the sky was a different matter. I wanted a very special sky. A sky as it would have been at the dawn of creation. How would it look? One day looking over the mountains behind my house there appeared such a sky. God had sent us the best he had. It was so beautiful. On Spread Three, I share it with you.

**Q: I think you like birds?**

**A:** Indeed, I do. Birds symbolise man's eternal search for freedom. They sing and soar and bless our earth with

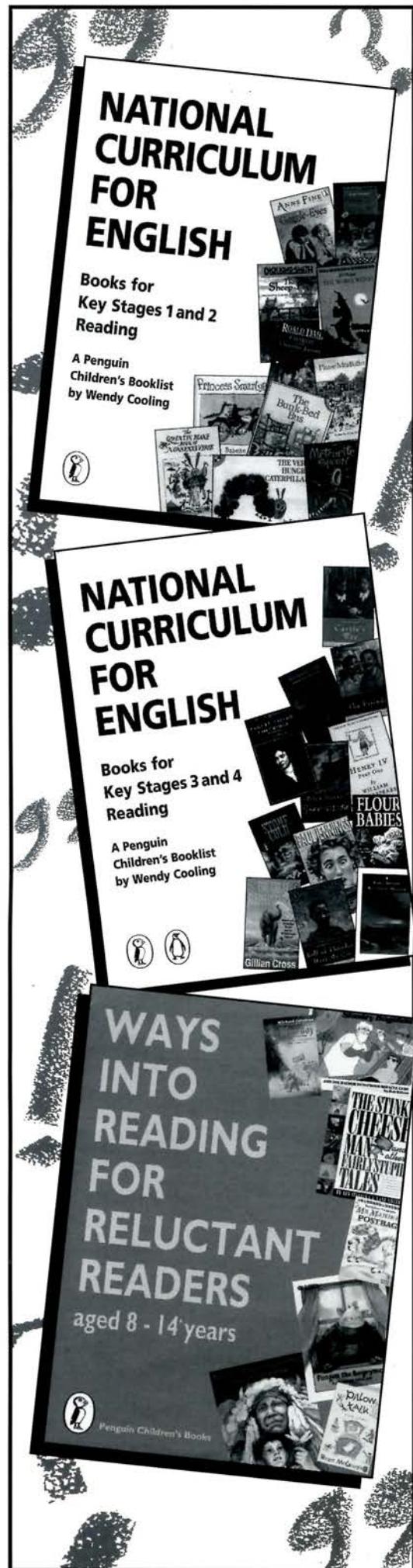
their plumed beauty. They're lovely to draw and a joy to paint.

**Q: Did this spread pose any particular problems?**

**A:** Originally I placed the pop-up tree trunk in the centre of the double-spread but the paper engineers couldn't make it fold satisfactorily in that position and so they moved it out to centre right hand page. Also I'd have liked the woodpecker to be able to tap the tree trunk, but for mechanics to do this it would have involved more cost. All you need is brass, as my father used to say.

**Q: The Garden of Eden – I looked closely but can't find the serpent.**





# Children's Books from Penguin for the National Curriculum for English

## KEY STAGES 1 - 4

In January 1995 the revised orders for the National Curriculum for English for England and Wales were sent out to schools. The long list of prescribed authors and titles have gone and have been replaced with a new emphasis on encouraging children to read widely for pleasure and enjoyment.

Although the National Curriculum stipulates a wide range of literature that children should be reading, it does not provide guidelines as to which books are appropriate. In our two new booklists Wendy Cooling has chosen a range of books from the Penguin Adult and Children's lists which fulfil the criteria laid down for Key Stages 1&2 and 3&4.

Puffin have also produced a booklist for children and teenagers who have mastered the mechanics of reading but who need encouragement to read for pleasure. Written by Wendy Cooling, **WAYS INTO READING FOR RELUCTANT READERS AGED 8-14 YEARS** is a selection of books guaranteed to generate enthusiasm in even the most reluctant readers.

All three booklists are available FREE.  
Call Puffin on: 0500 807 981.

*Wendy Cooling is an ex teacher and former Head of the Children's Book Foundation. She is now a freelance children's book consultant, reviewer and in-service trainer.*



**Penguin Children's Books**





Part of *The Creation* as laid out, glue points and all, for the printer.

**Q: Yes.**

**A:** Sod's Law came into instant operation. Two tiny blobs of water fell on the bare green, discolouring where they fell. I simply couldn't get the green back to its earlier pristine state. I just couldn't match the colour.

**Q: So you had to repaint the whole area again?**

**A:** I was going to but my little granddaughter looked at it and said, 'Brian, why don't you paint two little beetles on the spoilt part', and so, that is why two little creatures are crawling across the page. Glory, love and admiration to ALL CHILDREN – our hope and our future. ■

Both books mentioned in this piece are published by Oxford University Press:

*Noah's Ark*, 0 19 279979 7, £12.99

*The Creation*, 0 19 279990 8, £12.99

**A:** Darned right you can't. Whilst working on this spread I went into the garden to water my tomatoes and was bitten on the ankle by an adder. Right, I thought, Adder you have had it. There and then I decided I *wasn't* having a serpent in my Garden of Eden. The apple tree is there, though.

**Q: What happened to your ankle?**

**A:** My foot and ankle swelled up to twice the normal size. The local barman told me not to worry as after eight days they'd shrink back to normal.

**Q: Did they?**

**A:** Yes, thank heavens, if it hadn't been for the barman I'd have gone to the hospital and they would have pumped me full of anti-snake serum. Ughh!!!!

**Q: Tell me about the final spread.**

**A:** In the final spread, I placed animals and man and woman in a stage setting ready to act out the opera of life in which we are all cast in supporting roles. We've all lost our wonderful fertile Garden of Eden but our souls are forever searching to find it once more.

**Q: Any problems with this page?**

**A:** The base page has a border of flowers, insects and small animals which surround a large area of flat green. Just before I was ready to pack up all the work ready for delivery to OUP, I noticed I'd forgotten to colour the spider.

**Q: Yes.**

**A:** I dipped my brush into the water pot and . . .



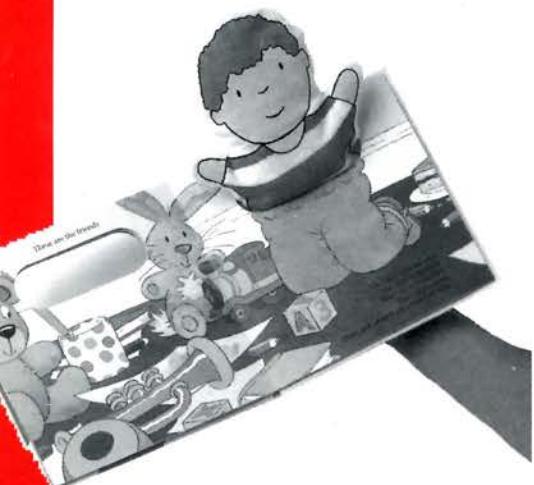
'Why don't you paint two little beetles on the spoilt part?' Herewith the result . . .

The magic book is a fictional motif with a long and varied history. In the last year I've read of books that write themselves, a book with no last page so that you can read it forever, a book whose pictures come to life, and another whose characters crawl out of the pages to pester its author.

Now the real life world of publishing seems to be striving to actualise such wonders. In the last month I've had delivered to my door books that give birth to other books, books that convert into ships, streets and dolls' houses, a book that discloses human innards as gorily as an anatomy lab, a book blossoming into a garden, books concealing secret circuits and books that breed new characters at the turn of a page. Spread out open on the floor around my desk, they resemble a realm of fabulous cities and visionary landscapes. If this efflorescence of magic books is a response to the visual fecundity of the CD-Rom format, then the publishers have succeeded in demonstrating the limitless versatility of paper. What a pity, though, that none of the books used languages other than English, scripts other than Roman and none of the publishers have taken into account the multicultural nature of the intended audience.

In order to help me evaluate this haul, I enlisted a team of consultants: Anita (2), Lee (5), Katie (7), Catriona (8), Laura (8), Nick (10), Eleanor (12) and Chris (14).

Anita's favourites were the puppet books, *Jack in the Book* and *Giraffe in the Jungle*, from David Bennett Books. In these, a glove puppet is tucked into the back of the book, and an aperture in each page allows the reader to turn the pages over the head of the puppet as the rhythmic and recurrent story is read. This, almost literally, brings the book to life for the listener, but is rather awkward for the reader.



Glove puppet in use in *Jack in the Book*.

Out of an abundance of ABCs and counting books, the most popular with the younger children were Paul Stickland's *Bouncy Boxes*. These consist of two compact packages, one an ABC and the other a counting game, 123. When the packages are opened, six surprisingly large and brightly embellished cubes leap out of them, the flattened nets springing into three dimensions as the elastic bands stretched inside them contract. The cubes are accompanied by matching board books which were promptly incorporated into a variety of games, though adults had to help with the repackaging of the very lively cube afterwards.

## A POP-UP ROUND-UP

**George Hunt reviews the latest batch of books that do things ...**

Robert Edward Murdoch's *Zuzzlepuzzles* also inspired a lot of activity. Each double spread of these books is devoted to a pair of words, numbers, colours or shapes, and shows appropriate pictures with their middles missing. In the corner of the spread, a wallet holds a pair of cards, each of which has been slit so they can be twisted together in two different ways to form the missing picture portions with the matching words on the obverse side. Although these are aimed at developing 'hand eye co-ordination and early recognition skills' they were more popular with the eight-year-olds than the younger children, who found them rather fidgety. Eleanor pointed out disapprovingly that the 'mum' and 'dad' pictures show a housewife making a cake in the kitchen, and hubby doing a bit of DIY.

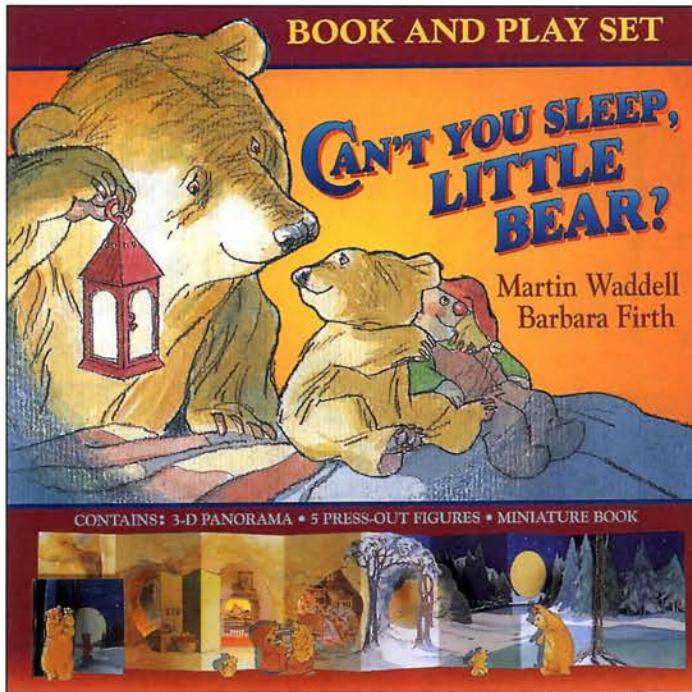
Honourable mention should also be made of John O'Leary's *Ten on a Train*, which combines an amusing story with a counting down game, of Sian Tucker's *A is for Astronaut*, and of Robert Crowther's *Pop-up Animal Alphabet*. These are brightly illustrated and uncomplicated tag and flap books which are far more sturdily constructed than some of the more elaborate confections described below. They were also successful at encouraging older and younger children to read together.

Several of the books are spin-offs from conventional originals. Thomas the Tank Engine appears in a seaside rescue adventure in *Thomas and the Helicopter Rescue*, where several words have been concealed under picture flaps, thus providing a kind of pictorial cloze game that Katie enjoyed playing with Lee. Martin Waddell and Barbara Firth's *Can't You Sleep Little Bear?* arrives in miniature format, tucked into the endpaper of a zig-zag book which concertinas out into a diorama of the bear cave and the moonlit wilderness outside it. Press-out figures allow the children to move the characters around as the story is read. This was one of Laura's specials, and can again help an older child to share a favourite book with a younger sibling.

A more disagreeable vehicle for the conveyance of familiar characters is provided by the 'Noisy Books' series. Here, *Winnie the Pooh*, *The Animals of Farthing Wood* and *Biker Mice* are presented in diluted prose. The sentences are punctuated by picture prompts linked to particular characters, which cue the child to press the matching button on a control below the page. A speaker then emits inane cacophonies reminiscent of the din of a loutish personal stereo. For some reason, Katie considered these 'brilliant', and I actually had to confiscate them from Nick, he was enjoying them so much. His mum pointed out that this was the most enthusiastic response to a book he'd shown in weeks, and that he was being enjoyably enticed through the stories by the gimmickry, but I didn't consider these benefits worth the noise pollution caused by this clear misapplication of technology to literature.

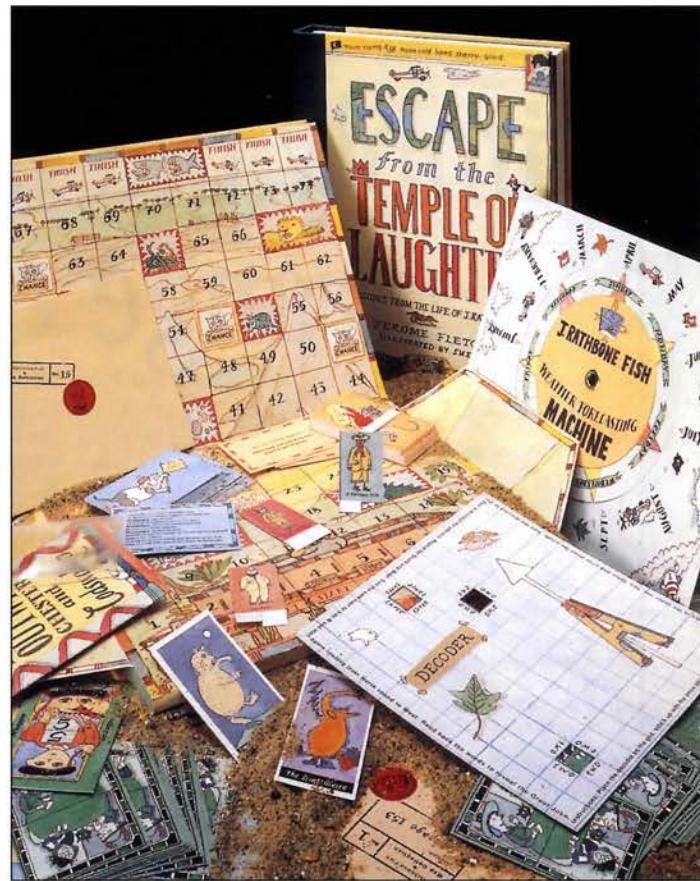


A double-page spread from Robert Crowther's *Pop-up Animal Alphabet*.

Cover of *Can't You Sleep Little Bear?*Two permutations of the elfin guests in *The Perfect Match*.The little-known 'dalmizar' from *Animal Allsorts*.

favourite here was Wayne Anderson's *The Perfect Match*, which depicts over 8,000 elfin guests at a supernatural New Age wedding, and challenges the reader to reconstruct the bride and groom from their extravagantly fay descriptions in the appendix. Norman Messenger's *Famous Faces*, where one is invited to shuffle the features of such luminaries as Jagger, Thatcher, and Chas and Di comes in the same format, but was less well received. Only Chris and Eleanor recognised more than a couple of the celebrities, and were disappointed at their scant resemblance to the real faces. 'They aren't famous because you can't tell who they are,' was Chris' comment.

My own favourites in this format were a couple of re-issued little books by Helen Oxenbury, *Puzzle People* and *Animal Allsorts*. Here each pagelet is accompanied by a chunk of writing, so that children can play about with linguistic as well

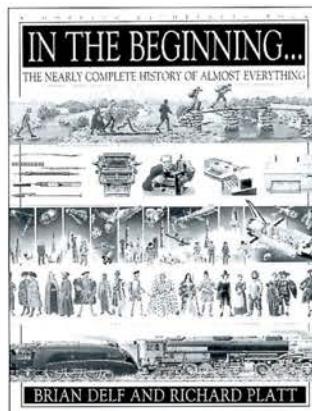
A compendium of maps, games and mini-books from *Escape from the Temple of Laughter*.

as pictorial rearrangements. In *Puzzle People*, the pagelets bear the heads, bodies and legs of sundry caricatures, together with phrases which can be permuted into surreal sentences. In *Animal Allsorts*, the spelling patterns of animals names are recombined into neologisms which identify the new creatures created by recombing the heads, bodies and legs of familiar creatures. These books have a bit of a dated feel to them (they were first published in 1980) but the format is a promising way of illustrating the playful generativeness of language.

The most visually dramatic of the books were those which unfolded into objects or landscapes. Everybody was impressed by *Noah's Ark* (created by a team from Heinemann) and Bateson and Leile's *Victorian Market*, both of which expand into large and meticulously intricate facsimiles of their subjects. *Noah's Ark* is accompanied by a booklet retelling the story of the flood, while a somewhat idealised account of the Victorian market is set out on the rear of its stalls (I noticed there didn't seem to be any evidence of poverty or squalor in this street scene.) Both books are accompanied by movable cardboard pieces which both Laura and Catriona were content to play with for ages, though retrieving a full complement of these flimsy items was difficult.

The clear winner in this category, and the most popular book amongst adults, was *A Walk in Monet's Garden* by Francesca Crespi. A robust, elegant folder contains a mini biography of Monet and a tableau which opens into a resplendent 75cm x

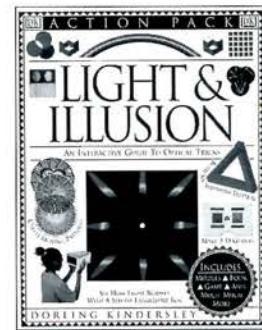
# Simply the most amazing range of books



ISBN: 0751353183

Price: £14.00

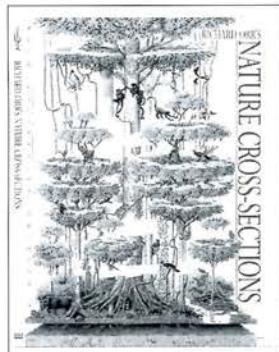
Published 24 August



ISBN: 0751352683

Price: £12.99 inc VAT

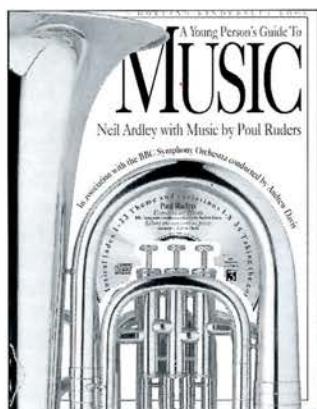
Published 21 September



ISBN: 0751353256

Price: £12.99

Published 21 September



ISBN: 0751353205

Price £16.99

Published 5 October



*Wherever you are...*

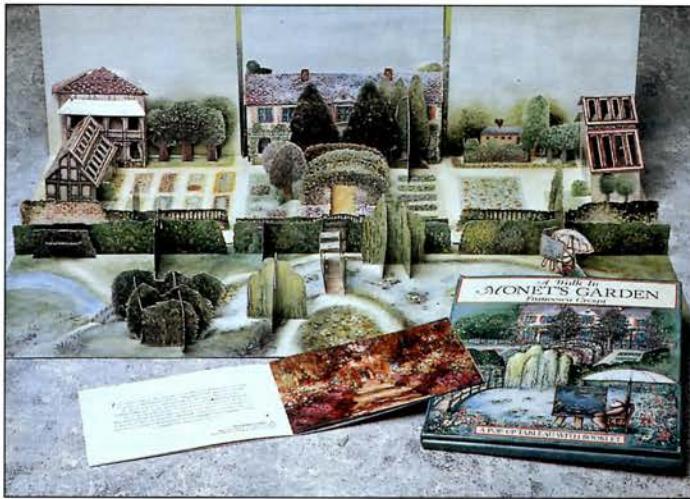


ISBN: 0751353272

Price: £9.99

Published 24 October





The tableau from *A Walk in Monet's Garden*.

47cm x 24cm replica of the gardens at Giverny, supported by an ingenious system of braced hinges. All the children found this fascinating, but after a few minutes of awed admiration, were unsure of what to do next with the beautiful thing. It would provide an excellent centrepiece for a classroom display, alongside some reproductions of the paintings inspired by the gardens.

At the other end of the aesthetic spectrum, Robert Crowther's *The Most Amazing Night Book* proved surprisingly popular. Depicting a train moving from a cityscape to the coast through a nocturnal phantasmagoria of mundane and unearthly events, its illustrations are almost entirely done in black and dark blue. Minute speech balloons and flecks of light from lit windows provide the only illumination. The train can be pulled through its journey on a sliding tag, and Anita was so eager for it to continue beyond the last page that she gave the tag an almighty tug and wrenched it clean out, a warning that the durability of these contraptions is in inverse proportion to the interest they excite in their readers.

The three most ambitious books shared a clearly didactic purpose. Stephen Biesty's *Incredible Pop-Up Cross Sections* limits itself to three models: a fire engine, a space shuttle and a rescue helicopter. Chris and Nick, both great fans of Biesty's 2D books, differed in their responses to these working versions. Nick was delighted, but was too busy providing rhapsodic sound effects for whirling rotors, blast-offs and high-pressure hoses to pay much attention to the information content. Chris pointed out that some of the moving parts actually obscured the captions, and that the 3D format didn't provide much in the way of additional elucidation.

**The Most Amazing Pop-Up Science Book**, produced by Jay Young in association with the London Science Museum, shares the strengths and weaknesses of the interactive displays at that worthy institution. The working models of a record player, compass, microscope, camera obscura, sundial, kaleidoscope and periscope built into the pages of this book are excellent, but they're surrounded by a patchwork of fact boxes

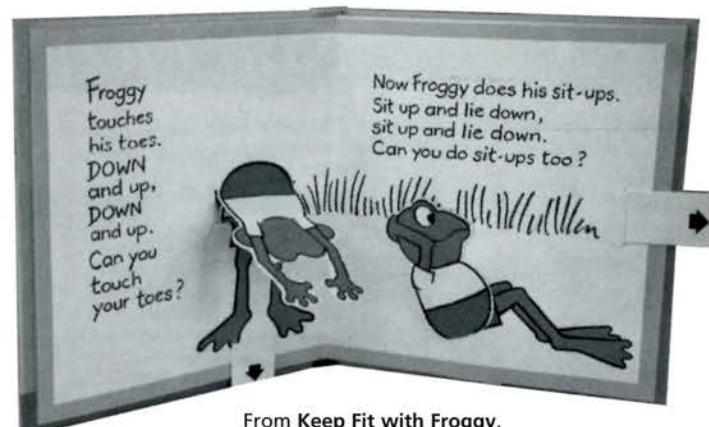
that fail to provide a unified account of the relevant concepts. This book was Eleanor's favourite, and all the children had great fun playing with the models, but I was reminded of the response given by one of my pupils when I asked what he'd learned from a working model of the water cycle he'd been subjecting to some vigorous interaction at the Science Museum. 'Well,' he said, 'when you spin this handle round hard, the water goes squirting about all over the place.'

The re-issued *The Facts of Life* by Jonathan Miller and David Pelham was the most controversial of the books. Chris considered it X certificate, and his parents were grateful at the heroic restraint shown by the designers in eschewing some of the lewder possibilities of pop-up technology in their depiction of genitalia and copulation. The illustrations are almost frighteningly vivid, the most striking being a picture of the moment of fertilisation which resembles a giant medusoid harried by cobras. The writing is warm and lucid, but conceptually dense.

These three books, in conjunction with more conventional resources and the guidance of a teacher, are excellent education resources, but perhaps they also demonstrate the dangers of what Margaret Meek has referred to as the tyranny of the double-page spread. A plethora of facts and graphics, compressed into too small a space, can break down into a gaudy turmoil of text and imagery that is both as alluring as a skyful of fireworks, and as ephemerally illuminating.

My own favourite amongst all of the books has little to do with education. Jerome Fletcher's *Escape from the Temple of Laughter* is a collection of bizarre adventures, scintillating with the play of words and ideas, claiming to be episodes from the life of an eccentric inventor. The stories could stand without embellishment, but they come in a folder containing a lavish compendium of maps, games and mini-books, all entertainingly cross-referenced to the narrative.

In striking contrast to this extravagant publication, the book which inspired the most laughter and affection amongst my



From *Keep Fit with Froggy*.

team of helpers was also the least complicated. The hero of Ruth Tilden's *Keep Fit with Froggy* is an irresistible amphibian who demonstrates a set of elementary exercises, powered by basic paper engineering that children could be taught to construct themselves. Froggy hasn't had much rest since he arrived, because everybody who's picked up this book has had difficulty in putting it down again, and as he goes through his interminable regime of push-ups and star jumps, he reminds me of the enduring strength of a nice, simple idea. ■

#### Book information:

**Jack in the Book** by Andy Ellis, 0 85602 200 5; **Giraffe in the Jungle** by Stuart Trotter, 1 85602 239 0, David Bennett Books, £6.99 each

**Bouncy Boxes: ABC**, 1 87514 082 6; 123, 1 87514 085 4, Ragged Bears, £8.99 each

**Zuzzlepuzzles: Shapes**, 0 00 156014 0; **Numbers**, 0 00 156016 7; **Words**, 0 00 136013 2, **Colours**, 0 00 156015 9, Collins at £4.99 each

**Ten on a Train**, 0 7112 0944 8, Frances Lincoln, £8.99

**A is for Astronaut**, 1 85215 819 X, Orchard, £8.99

**Pop-Up Animal Alphabet**, 0 7445 2583 7, Walker, £10.99

**Thomas and the Helicopter Rescue**, 0 454 96794 7, Heinemann, £7.99

**Can't You Sleep Little Bear?**, 0 7445 3798 3, Walker, £9.99

**Noisy Books: Winnie the Pooh**, 0 416 19116 9; **The Animals of Farthing Wood**, 0 454 96796 3; **Biker Mice**, 0 434 96797 1, Reed Books, £9.99 each

**The Perfect Match**, 0 7515 5329 9, Dorling Kindersley, £8.99

**Famous Faces**, 0 7515 5275 X, Dorling Kindersley, £9.99

**Puzzle People**, 0 7445 3706 1; **Animal Allsorts**, 0 7445 3705 3, Walker, £2.99 each

**Noah's Ark**, 0 454 96702 5, Heinemann, £10.99

**Victorian Market**, 0 454 96807 2, Heinemann, £12.99

**A Walk in Monet's Garden**, 0 7112 0961 8, Frances Lincoln, £14.99

**The Most Amazing Night Book**, 0 670 85074 8, Viking, £9.99

**Incredible Pop-Up Cross-Sections**, 0 7515 5342 6, Dorling Kindersley, £9.99

**The Most Amazing Pop-Up Science Book**, 0 7496 1481 1, Watts, £14.99

**The Facts of Life**, 0 224 04680 2, Cape, £12.99

**Escape from the Temple of Laughter**, 0 590 54061 0, Scholastic, £19.99; book only, 0 590 54207 9, £6.99

**Keep Fit with Froggy**, re-printing 1996

**George Hunt** is a Lecturer in Education at the University of Reading. Before that he taught primary age children in south-east London.

# Non Fiction REVIEWS

## All Pigs Are Beautiful

Dick King-Smith, ill. Anita Jeram  
0 7445 3635 9

## Caterpillar, Caterpillar

Vivian French, ill. Charlotte Voake  
0 7445 3636 7

## Think of an Eel

Karen Wallace, ill. Mike Bostock  
0 7445 3639 1

Walker Books (Read and Wonder series), £4.99 each pbk

## INFANT UPWARDS

'And now for something completely different' was a description for once justified when Walker first produced their 'Read and Wonder' titles. Here were books that stood out from the crowd, each one real and individual in its own right and the whole lot as different from most other series non-fiction as Tasty Lancashire is from processed cheddar or Old Peculiar is from keg lager. And they were virtually unclassifiable - Fiction? Poetry? Biography? Information? Picturebook? - in different ways each was all of these. They won lots of critical acclaim (not least from us at B/K) and Think of an Eel went on to win lots of prizes too - my saxophone teacher said it was 'as good as William Mayne'.

So the news that Walker are bringing out the whole lot in paperback between now and next Christmas is glad tidings indeed. It means that if you missed them the first time round, or you just believe you can't have too much of a good thing, then, as Plum MacDuff would say, it's stocking up time. TP

## The Body

1 85103 225 8

## The Owl and Other Night-Flying Animals

1 85103 216 9

Sylvaine Perols, Moonlight (First Discovery series), £6.50 each

## INFANT/JUNIOR/MIDDLE

If you thought a 'double sided printed overlay' was a kind of duvet cover, then I've got news for you - it's actually, Moonlight inform us, the technical term for what you and I know as the transparent page. Moonlight have been anglicising the Gallimard 'First Discovery' series for years now; the first few (I particularly remember Egg and Flowers) were superb and used transparency to show things that opaque pages never could. Successors often verged on the pointless with transparencies adding nothing, but here are two which take us very nearly back to Square One (well, almost square - 16 x 18 cm.)

Owl shows us particularly the family life of the barn owl before going into bats, and the overlays most effectively illustrate the features of the creatures we see first in silhouette.

In The Body the transparencies are grouped together in the middle to allow dissection (right hand page) and reassembly (left) of the living miracle that is you (well, almost . . .). On either side of this middle, some body-parts are examined in close up.

Experience shows the format of these books to be surprisingly durable and their appeal and shareability fit them well for a wide age-range - wider still if you include those with learning difficulties. So there's good library value here. TP

## Daily Life in a Wartime House

Laura Wilson, Hamlyn (Daily Life in series), 0 600 58694 4, £9.99

## JUNIOR

Boosted by this year's V.E. Day anniversary celebrations, the spate of books about life during the

Second World War continues unabated, despite the fact that authors and publishers seem to be finding it increasingly difficult to come up with fresh perspectives on such a popular topic.

Laura Wilson's solution has been to feature the reminiscences of a family who lived in Clapham, South London, during the early years of the War. Four Allpress brothers and sisters (their ages ranging from 10 to 28 years old) were still living at home at the outbreak of hostilities, thus enabling the author to draw upon a wealth of recollections and experiences. In her wide-ranging narrative, she skilfully combines their direct personal comments ('fresh eggs are what I miss most') with more general observations ('Large families, like the Allresses, were better off than single people because they could pool their rations') to depict life as it must have been for the majority of the population at this time.

The book's large, attractive format, containing a good balance of text and illustrations (contemporary photographs, artefacts, posters, interiors) adds further to our enjoyment of this informative and engaging chronicle. VH

## Bodies From the Past

Robin Place, 0 7502 1430 9

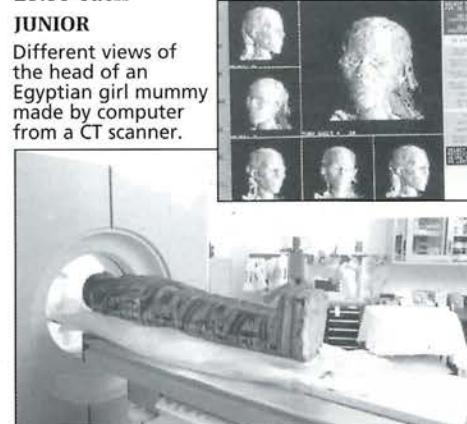
## The Search for Dinosaurs

Dougal Dixon, 0 7502 1429 5

Wayland (Digging Up the Past series), £9.99 each

## JUNIOR

Different views of the head of an Egyptian girl mummy made by computer from a CT scanner.



The Ice Man, Egyptian mummies and the Bog bodies of Northern Europe are just some of the examples used by Robin Place to explain how archaeologists can find out so much more about what ancient peoples ate, wore and how they died, by studying actual bodies rather than skeletons.

Moreover, they are continually making new discoveries, sometimes as the result of recent finds and sometimes by using modern technology - the CT scanner, for example, enables them to look inside mummies without unwrapping the bandages. Often fresh evidence, from whatever source, obliges them to revise their previous calculations.

Dougal Dixon reiterates this point in his book. Dinosaur remains began to be uncovered in large numbers in the second half of the last century (and his account of the exploits of some of the early dinosaur 'hunters' is almost as exciting as the discoveries themselves) but fresh finds are still being made. As a result many new and exciting theories are being put forward and we still only know of about a fifth of all the species that existed.

In both these clearly written and presented titles, knowledgeable and enthusiastic authors succeed in making the past come alive for young readers. VH

## The Best Ever Book of Horses

Jackie Budd, Kingfisher, 1 85679 287 9, £9.99

## JUNIOR/MIDDLE/SECONDARY

With a title like that, soppy cover-pictures, a 'fantastic fold-out stable inside' and a publisher's

puff which promises 'Saddles and stirrups, bridles and bits . . . and much much mare!' this volume was lucky to get opened at all. These hurdles surmounted, however, it's an excellent turn-out logically assembled, clearly written and well presented by a household word in equestrian journalism.

Starting with the characteristics of the horse and its evolution into a mount, we go on to discover how to start riding and how horses are fed, housed and cared for. It's all good sensible stuff and never assumes, as so many such books seem to, that the reader owns a pony. Then we go on to horses in history, at work (nice to see recognition of the part played in the Industrial Revolution by canal horses) and in sport.

For the un-equinitiated this is an excellent introduction to one of man's best-ever friends; for the committed hippophile there's a lot of practical help and information. Altogether a good tenner's worth (even with hay the price it will be this winter) and don't worry about the fold-out stable, it's quite odourless. TP

## Tales of Real Survival

Paul Dowswell, Usborne, 0 7460 1725 1, £4.99 pbk

## MIDDLE/SECONDARY

Any book that keeps me, my 14-year-old son and my 75-year-old dad intrigued and entertained has got to be a winner. Sixty-five pages jam-packed with fascinating stories of survival in the most desperate circumstances that leave you wondering how you would cope and thankful for a quiet life. Some of the tales are well known - Apollo 13, the three survivors of the sinking of HMS Hood, the Hindenburg disaster - whilst others were new to me. One of my favourites was the tale of the Yugoslav air stewardess who was the sole survivor of a terrorist bomb in 1972 when the tail section of the plane in which she found herself fell 10,000 feet and landed in a pond.

With a couple of pages on survival skills, a couple on what happened to some of the people 'After the Ordeal' and plenty of photos, diagrams, maps and well-drawn colour illustrations, this is worth a fiver of anyone's money. I can't wait to get my hands on the companion volume - Tales of Real Escape. SR

## Genetics

Robert Snedden, 0 7502 1236 5

## Optics

Gill Lloyd and David Jefferis, 0 7502 1239 X

Wayland (Science Discovery series), £9.99 each

## SECONDARY

Plastic from potatoes, petrol from sunflowers is the vision of the genetically engineered future with which Snedden's book ends. Before that we've had the Darwin and Mendel stories and a good explanation of how cell knowledge had to catch up with Mendel before chromosomes and genes could be shown to be working in the way he'd foreseen - preparing the questions which the discovery of DNA was to answer.

Lasers and fibre optics may not be as dramatic as genetic engineering but their effect on our lifestyle may be more immediate as the optical superhighway develops and laser-probes approach the speed of light. All this and the conventional stuff too in Optics - I particularly liked the bits on the development of photography but distrusted the optical illusions chosen.

Good glossaries and generous history timelines together with clarity of illustration and layout lift these two a little above the run of the mill, fitting them for useful addition to library shelves. TP

**The History of the African and Caribbean Communities in Britain**  
Hakim Adi, 0 7502 1517 8

**The History of the Asian Community in Britain**  
Rozina Vizram, 0 7502 1518 6  
Wayland, £9.99 each  
SECONDARY



'Asian women marching for the vote in the procession organized by the suffragettes in London in 1911'. From *The History of the Asian Community in Britain*.

There is a pressing need for more books that speak to young people about the experience of the minority communities in Britain and these books will fill a gaping hole on many library shelves. They are very much history books and take the long view which means that the post-war period, which saw the major development of these communities, only takes up four of the forty-five pages of text.

The narrative at times is rather rushed, seeking to explain the economic, social and political factors involved in such huge issues as the growth and

break-up of Empire. For me the major interest lay in the many and varied case studies of individual Black and Asian people and their contribution to the development of this country – but then I'm a big fan of empathy in the study of History despite the bad press it often gets.

Well-designed with plenty of original photographs and contemporary drawings, these books are much to be welcomed – but I'd still like to see some books that deal more fully with the history of these communities in the post-war period. SR

**Giotto and Medieval Art**

Lucia Corrain, 0 7500 1677 9

**The Story of Sculpture**

Francesca Romei, 0 7500 1676 0

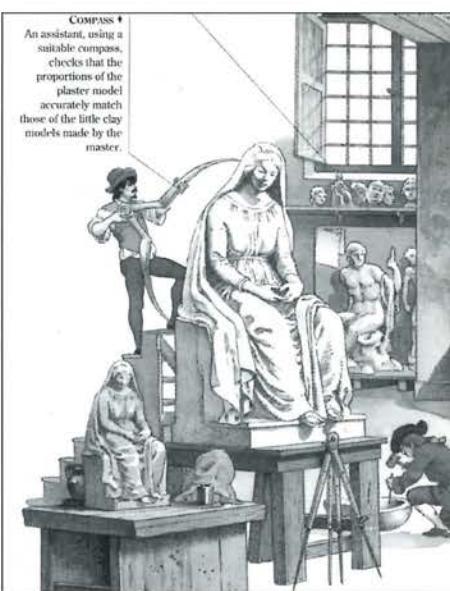
Macdonald Young Books (Masters of Art series), £12.99 each  
SECONDARY

Outlining the history of sculpture from pre-history to the present day in sixty pages is an ambitious undertaking. However each spread is of the profusely illustrated, large-format variety, so what might have been a daunting task is tackled with equanimity, and the result is a triumph of scholarly detail conveyed in an immensely readable style.

Worldwide developments through the centuries, beginning with the Stone Age and ending with the new opportunities created by twentieth-century technology are clearly and logically explained within the social and cultural background of their times.

Illustrations are an excellent blend of colour photos and artwork, the latter often being used to great effect to depict techniques and working methods employed through the ages, for example, every stage of the lost wax process of casting is clearly explained and shown.

**Giotto and Medieval Art** is an equally successful companion volume. Its narrower focus enables the artistic and cultural achievements of the era to be explored in great depth and to set in context the



Using a compass on the statue of Mildness from the tomb of Pope Clement XIV, created by Canova between 1784 and 1787. From *The Story of Sculpture*.

life and work of the genius that was Giotto.

Amongst the plentiful works of art reproduced are three of Giotto's great fresco cycles, shown almost in their entirety, and this unstinting approach is characteristic of every aspect of this splendid production. VH

**Non Fiction REVIEWERS:**

Vee Holliday, Ted Percy and Steve Rosson.  
Non Fiction Reviews Editor:  
Eleanor von Schweinitz

**THE YOUNG OXFORD BOOK OF CINEMA**  
DAVID PARKINSON

# THE YOUNG OXFORD BOOK OF CINEMA

## The only complete cinema book for young people

December 28, 1995 is the centenary of cinema. To mark this historic event Oxford brings you the fascinating story of the big screen and its stars. A lively readable text deals with the history of cinema world-wide, different film genre, and how a movie is made.

**Age 12+**  
**Lavishly illustrated 160 pages**  
**Jacketed hardback, only £12.99**

0-19-910071-3



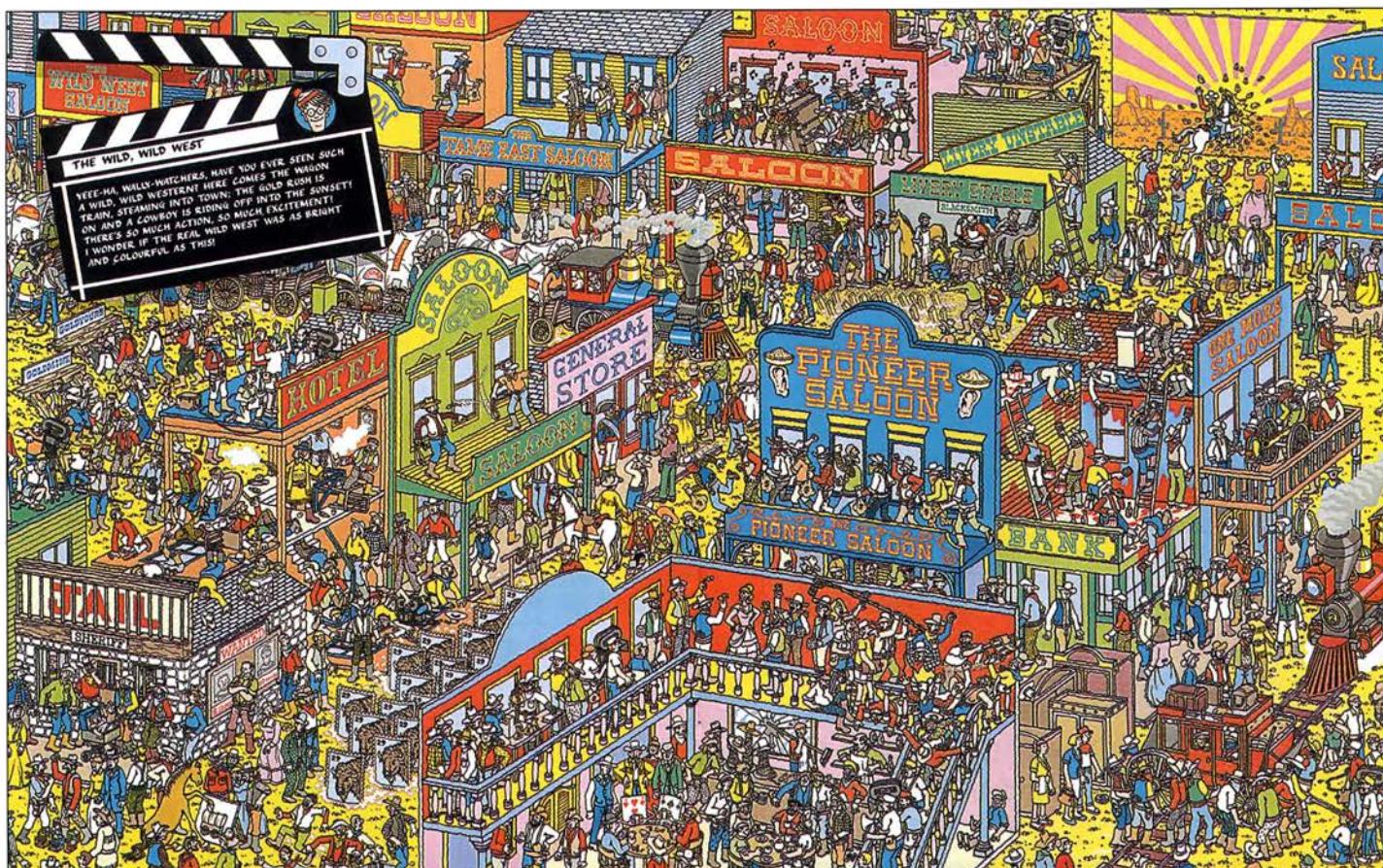
## Martin Handford, creator of the Where's Wally? phenomenon, discusses, with Chris Powling, his hero's visit to Tinseltown

It's all in the detail, of course. The hunt for Wally, not to mention his latterday companions Woof, Wenda, Wizard Whitebeard and the baddie Odlaw, is only part of the fun as we scour locations (**Where's Wally?**),

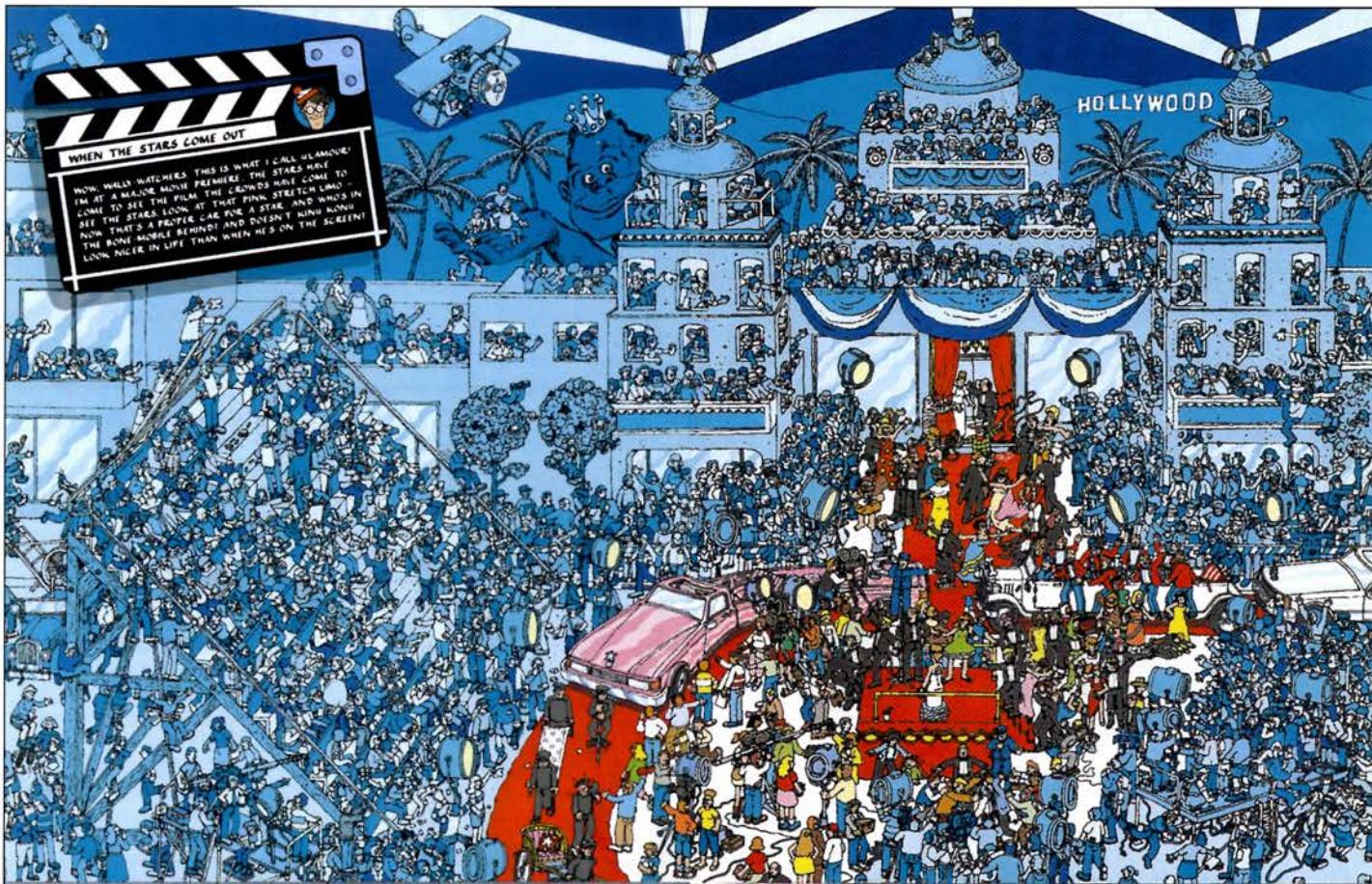
historical periods (**Where's Wally Now?**) and fantasy lands (**Where's Wally? 3: The Fantastic Journey**) across immaculately laid out double spreads that team with slapstick, visual gags and relentless needle-sharp observation. Wally's wide-eyed walkabouts have been a runaway success for years now – with over thirty million books sold world-wide plus a top-rating children's TV programme and a full-colour comic-strip in one of our national dailies to their credit. Clearly, this is a show which will run and run.

So Wally's trip to Hollywood, the ultimate fantasy-historical location, was pre-ordained, perhaps. 'I was particularly interested in history as a child,' says Martin Handford. 'And anything that brought that subject to life was captivating for me . . . historical movies were the ideal way of telling historical stories.' Especially alluring, for him, were 'the costumes, the crowd scenes, the Good Guy/Bad Guy element - the sort of films that were fully-fledged epics on which care and expense had been *lavished!* If uniforms, for instance, were unusually colourful or battle scenes shown in a particularly exciting way then I was thrilled. My interest in films was more in how the film-makers made the scenes rather than controlled the performances of individual actors.'

In short, he's a natural second-unit director. **Where's Wally? In Hollywood** offers a series of wide-screen movie 'stills' which combine the swashbuckle of Michael Curtiz, the eye for action of Yakima Canutt and the sublime choreography of Busby Berkeley. For all his warm feelings towards **The Sea Hawk** or **Ben Hur**, in fact, Martin's own favourite spread is 'A Tremendous Song and Dance' which could have been lifted straight from **42nd Street** or **Gold Diggers of 1933**. 'This is simply because the subject-matter offered the most scope for the best use of a crowd scene in that the formations you get in musicals are perfect – straight lines, the same clothes or uniforms, visually striking blocks of colour – harder to design, of course, because you can't deviate too much from the shapes you're trying to make but incredibly satisfying.' Also, he admits, they were even more laborious to draw than usual: two months, probably, of overnight effort (his preferred working time) on this particular double-spread instead of the usual six weeks, working actual size, with every line done free-hand – if that's the right word for the curiously cramped way in which he holds his pen. Didn't his teachers ever try to correct this? 'Well, yes they did . . . in primary school. But I think I must have been a bit stubborn and just didn't want to change.'



The Wild, Wild West spread from **Where's Wally? in Hollywood**, © 1993 Martin Handford.



When The Stars Come Out from *Where's Wally?* in Hollywood, © 1993 Martin Handford.

He's stubborn, he says wryly, in other ways, too – about the sort of scenes in which he's willing to place Wally, for example. Notable for their absence in this case are disaster-movies, gangster films and accounts of contemporary warfare. 'Real tragedies are much too close for comfort,' he insists. 'There's a level of violence beyond which I just won't go especially where people are alive who might recall what actually happened.' Crucial, here, is his clear image of the central character on whom all his books are based. 'My vision of Wally is of a sort of Everyman – young, and with a very open mind, who's happy to travel to places and observe everything that goes on around. He's got no motivation or ambition. He just soaks up everything – someone who's well-meaning and never gets phased or frightened by situations. He always sees things with a sense of wonder. It's essentially a *child's* vision of the world.'

Quite . . . and in a world full of people who are overly motivated, or only too ambitious, is none the worse for that.

For Martin, in fact, the perfect Wally would be James Stewart as he appeared in *A Wonderful Life*. He has equally strong preferences for casting his other characters – Terry Thomas as Odlaw, Burgess Meredith as Wizard Whitebeard and that wonderful performer Rin-Tin-Tin (somewhat disguised) as Woof. More problematic is the part of Wenda who needs to be 'wholesome' and 'a good sort'. Ginger Rogers, I suggested? 'The wrong colouring.' Katharine Hepburn? 'Free-spirited, yes . . . but too hard-edged.' At this point I desisted in case we had to settle for Emma Thompson.

Wait, though. Is 'Where's Wally? – The Movie', a wide-screen epic in glorious technicolor so far-fetched a notion? Surely such an internationally valuable property is a natural for today's Hollywood? Martin looked a little guarded when I put this to him. 'Er . . . I hope you don't mind me being cagey,' he apologised. 'You see, the more you reveal in these matters, the less likely they are to happen.'

It turns out he's already been approached about the possibility of a cinematic Wally (though Hugh Grant will not now be considered for the central role) but there are still umpteen obstacles to be overcome before, if at all, the film goes into production. Wisely, and with another hint that deep in this shy, unassuming man there's more than a touch of steel, he's retained script-approval and insists on the involvement of his lifelong friend and colleague, Mike Gornall, who made such a success of the TV

series. So, in the words of Sam Goldwyn, 'Where's Wally? – The Movie' remains no more than 'a firm maybe' for the moment.

This doesn't seem to bother him much. 'If it doesn't happen, I won't be all that upset,' he says with a shrug. 'The books are my first love and I always look forward to the next one . . . which is another fantasy book with a very strong theme to it. Do you mind if I don't say any more about it than that right now? You see, I've still got a long way to go on it.'

That hint of steel again. A crucial trait, I'd have thought, in a man at the centre of a multi-million pound industry who's determined to keep his integrity alive and well. As someone whose chances of finding Wally on some Handford spreads are about as slim as winning the National Lottery, though, I couldn't resist one final question. 'Are you ever tempted to drive everyone mad by leaving Wally out altogether?' I asked him. 'Well,' he replies with a sideways look, 'I have thought of radical things like that, yes. But it just wouldn't be fair, would it?' Indeed, it wouldn't.

And that's enough to settle the matter for Martin Handford. Behind his dazzling feel for design and meticulous craftsmanship, there's an honesty, a lack of pretension and, in the best sense of the word, an *innocence* which reaches right to the heart of that which is childlike in all of us whatever our age. Long Live Wally, say I. ■



Martin Handford, October 1995.

'Where's Wally?' books are all published by Walker – hardbacks are £8.99, paperbacks £4.99. We give here details of those mentioned:

**Where's Wally?**, 0 7445 0413 9 hbk, 0 7445 1099 6 pbk

**Where's Wally Now?**, 0 7445 0711 1 hbk, 0 7445 1325 1 pbk

**Where's Wally? 3: The Fantastic Journey**, 0 7445 1144 5 hbk, 0 7445 2001 0 pbk

**Where's Wally? In Hollywood**, 0 7445 2232 3 hbk, 0 7445 3670 7 pbk

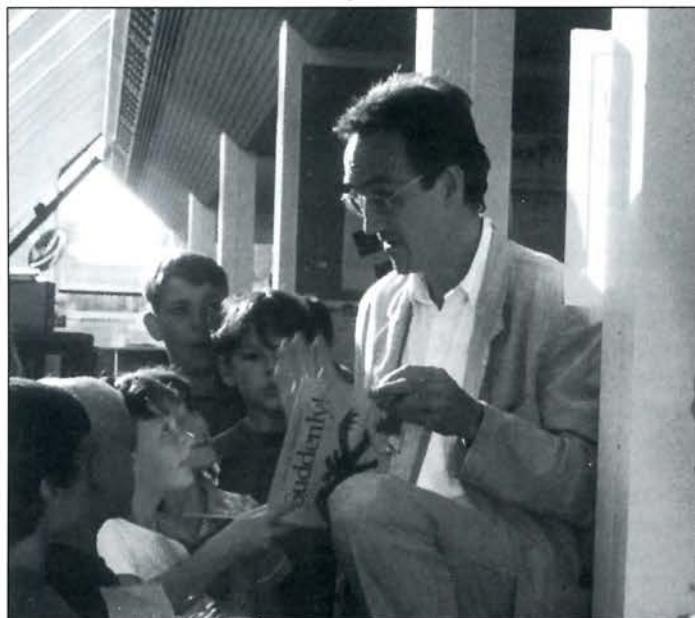
# BfK News

## • AWARDS UPDATE •

### Young Telegraph Paperback of the Year

Launched in May this year, and judged by children from 50 schools across the country, this award goes to Jacqueline Wilson for *The Bed and Breakfast Star* (Doubleday, 0 385 40434 4, £8.99; 0 440 86324 4, £2.99 pbk), plus a trophy and £1,000 in prize money.

### Nottinghamshire Children's Book Award 1995



Colin McNaughton with young readers.

Again chosen with the involvement of young readers themselves, the Acorn Award was won by Colin McNaughton for *Suddenly* (Andersen, 0 86264 540 9, £8.99) and the Oak Tree Award by Anne Fine for *The Diary of a Killer Cat* (Hamish Hamilton, 0 241 00213 3, £5.99; Puffin, 0 14 036931 7, £3.25 pbk).

### Library Association / Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award

This goes to Sunderland Libraries for their BOOKSTART Project – providing books for encouraging readership amongst the very youngest children in deprived parts of the city.

Runners up:

Roker Youth Library – for work with teenagers in Glasgow

Newcastle Libraries – for their creative writing project amongst primary schoolchildren

### IBBY Nominees

British nomination for the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Awards of The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) are Anthony Browne (illustration category) and Nina Bawden (author category).

The international jury will consider nominations in April 1996 at the IBBY secretariat in Basel prior to the Bologna Children's Book Fair where the winners will be announced.

## LIBRARY UNDER THREAT

Winner of the CBC's Eleanor Farjeon Award in 1988, the National Library for the Handicapped Child needs to raise £10,000 in the next three months in order to survive, following a decision by the Enid Blyton Trust to reduce its funding. Director, Bev Mathias, quoted in the *Bookseller*, says 'We are very well supported by publishers in terms of the books that they donate but we still need funds for our overheads and services. Although we have just received £25,000 from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, we desperately need help from other sources as well.'

It's about as good as a cause gets, says BfK... Readers interested in helping should contact Felicity Trotman, who is co-ordinating fund-raising efforts, at Downside, Chicklade, Salisbury, Wilts SP3 5SU (tel/fax: 01747 820503).

## FAREWELL TO LIZ

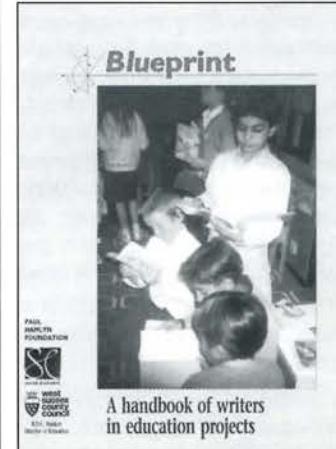
Comings and goings amongst children's book publishers are normally of consuming interest only to insiders... but the departure of Liz Attenborough from Penguin, after 18 years, is something special. There's nothing sinister afoot, though – simply a career re-think. Liz Attenborough herself comments: 'When I took over Puffin in 1983, I told friends I thought ten years would be enough time for anyone to do the job and stay fresh. I have had a marvellous, stimulating time at Penguin and am proud to have worked with the best children's authors and illustrators, but I feel it's time for someone else to take over through the coming years, which will be a challenging period for the children's book market. I know that my successor and the team will do a great job for our authors and for Penguin.'

Liz's replacement is Philippa Milnes-Smith who assumes overall responsibility for Puffin, Dutton, Hamish Hamilton and Viking children's books leading a redoubtable group which includes Jane Nissen and Rosemary Stones.

Liz will be sorely missed, though. BfK sends congratulations and thanks for her invaluable contribution to children's reading over the years – also best wishes for what's sure to be an eye-catching future whatever she undertakes.

## BACK-UP BOOKS

Two very different, but very welcome, recent publications in support of children's reading... or, indeed, writing:



### BLUEPRINT

This 'handbook for writers in education projects' comes from West Sussex County Council, with the help of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. It's written by Liz Fincham, Literature Development Consultant for West Sussex, and provides detailed examples of how working with writers can enrich the curriculum – advice, in fact, about all aspects of organising an author visit. Also included is a comprehensive database of information about literature professionals who have worked successfully in West Sussex schools. Invaluable, says BfK, both for schools familiar with this kind of work and those attempting it for the first time. Lovely, too, to see so many splendid examples of children's work... the best possi-

ble endorsement of Liz Fincham's approach. Copies cost £3.00 within West Sussex, £5.00 beyond (inc. p&p). Apply to Dot Slattery, NE Area Professional Centre, Furnace Drive, Furnace Green, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 6JB (tel: 01293 615837 or fax: 01293 533359).

### BA CHILDREN'S DIRECTORY

From The Booksellers Association comes the fourth edition of their *Directory of Specialist Children's Booksellers* – details of around 100 committed children's booksellers in Britain and Ireland. With the Net Book Agreement a thing of the past, here are the enthusiasts who may soon be experiencing the chill wind of the new order... and who need all our backing if they're to survive. Do you know who your local specialist is? If not, or if you'd like information on others in your vicinity, send for a free copy from Meryl Halls, The Booksellers Association, Minster House, 272 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1BA (tel: 0171 834 5477 or fax: 0171 834 8812). ■

### January BfK offers

- Julia Eccleshare's overview of the current situation in children's books
- Susan Price on writing historical fiction for children
- Tony Bradman on writing for 5s to 8s
- Louis Baum on the Collapse of the Net Book Agreement
- Beverly Naidoo on her novel, *No Turning Back*
- Philippe Dupasquier in Authorgraph plus Reviews, Comment and News

## CORRESPONDENCE

Michael Ryan, Assistant County Librarian (Primary and Special Schools) for Buckinghamshire County Council writes:

I have always admired Books for Keeps for being a perceptive and reliable guide to the world of children's books and so was somewhat alarmed to read in Mary Hoffman's review of the School Library Campaign (Sept '95) that the primary school library service in Buckinghamshire had been closed down. What, I thought, does Mary Hoffman know about the next Policy and Resources Committee meeting of Bucks County Council that I don't? I am pleased to report that her statement is not true and that the service to primary schools in this county is, at least at the time of writing, alive and kicking.

**ED:** Oops! When we checked with Mary Hoffman we discovered that, quite uncharacteristically, she'd slipped up. She adds her apologies to ours – and joins us in wishing the Bucks primary library service a long and healthy future.

Rosemary Lanning of North-South Books writes:

Thank you very much for the generous and perceptive article on Alan Marks by Shirley Hughes. Contrary to the suggestion in the box 'Details of the books mentioned', Alan's book *Over the Hills and Far Away* is happily very much in print, as is his earlier nursery rhyme collection *Ring-a-Ring O'Roses*. I hope you are able to correct this misunderstanding in a future issue.

Alan Marks writes:

It's always galling to hear people report that, on trying to order my recently published book (or even one in its second or third print run), 'the man in the bookshop said it's out of print!' I suggest no blame, but wonder how booklists are updated and maintained. With the collapse of the Net Book Agreement, and the likely loss of space on the shelves for less well known authors, it seems all the more important that books are not written off before they are dead.

Vanessa Doughty of Oxford University Press writes:



Thank you for agreeing to put right the errors in the September issue of BfK.

As I mentioned, *The Green Children* and the collection of poems, *Peace and War*, both with illustrations by Alan Marks, are still very much in print.

I was also a bit concerned to read in the Authorgraph on Gareth Owen that Gareth's first novel with us, which will be published in April of next year, is listed as two: 'Rosie No Name' and then 'The Forest of Forgetting'. In fact, the title is *Rosie No Name and the Forest of Forgetting* and will be published by us – not Harper Collins!

**ED:** Again, apologies are in order and are happily offered... though this time with a suppressed but heartfelt scream of frustration. As every librarian and bookseller knows, the rapidity and unpredictability with which particular titles go into and out of print these days means that – however carefully and recently their status is checked – there's an in-built 'so far as we can tell at the time of writing' factor about *any* book details we print. In every single case above, for instance, we consulted the latest catalogues, CD Rom Book Find or the actual publishing house... and *still* got it wrong! Of course, the same applies to titles we list as in-print which may turn out to be no longer available by the time our readers try to buy them. All we can do is our best – pending the arrival of more consistent and reliable systems within the book trade itself. ■

### CORRECT DETAILS:

The books illustrated by Alan Marks are:

*Over the Hills and Far Away*, North-South, 1 85618 047 6, £9.95

*Ring-a-Ring O'Roses*, North-South, 1 55858 363 7, £9.95

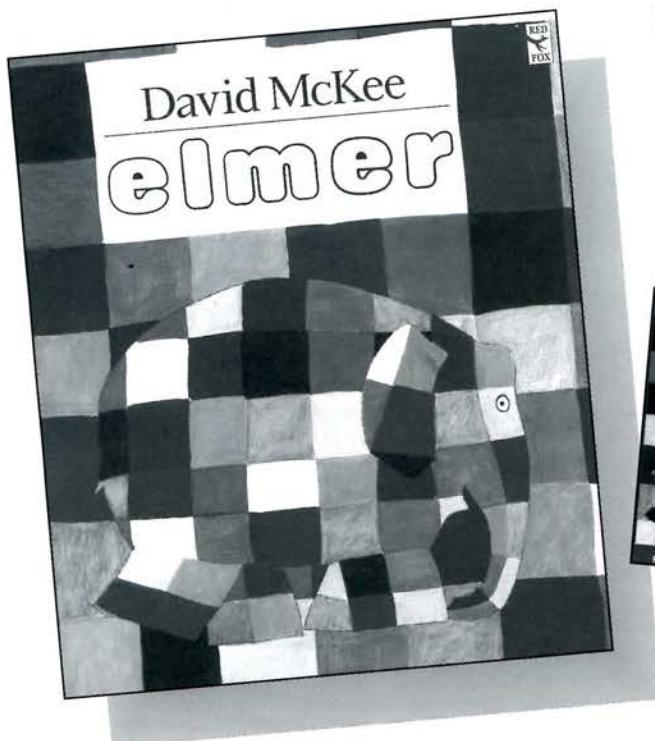
*The Green Children*, Kevin Crossley-Holland, Oxford, 0 19 279958 4, £7.99

Gareth Owen's novel is:

*Rosie No Name and the Forest of Forgetting*, Oxford, 0 19 271550 X, £5.99 (due April '96)

# IT'S ELMER!

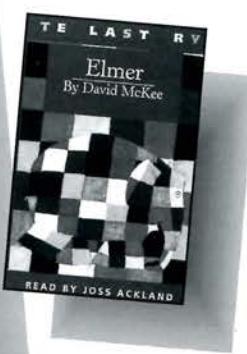
'A celebration of individuality and laughter' *Publishers Weekly*



Now you can listen to Elmer and his friends on tape!

Elmer is read by Joss Ackland and accompanied by original music.

ISBN: 1856563472 £5.99



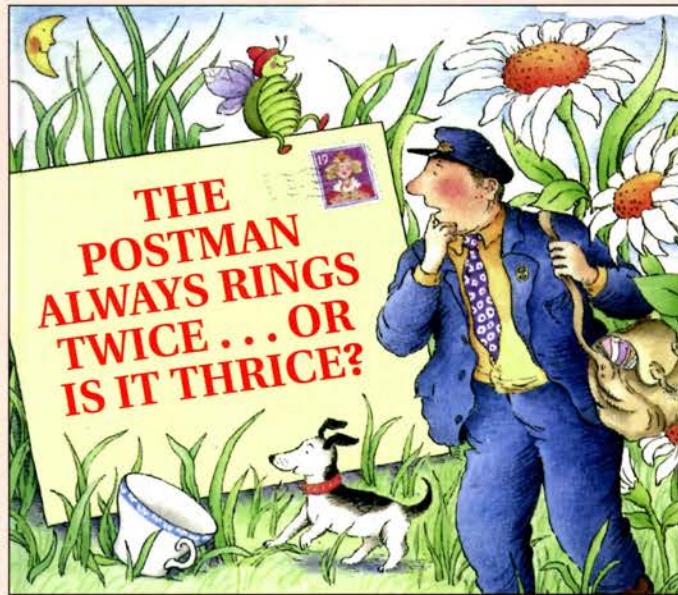
Look out for a new Elmer story - *Elmer in the Snow*, published by Andersen Press,

ISBN: 0862646154 £7.99



Random House Children's Books

THE BODLEY HEAD · JONATHAN CAPE · HUTCHINSON · JULIA MACRAE BOOKS  
RED FOX · TELLASTORY



## Julia Eccleshare talks to Allan Ahlberg about *The Jolly Pocket Postman*

Janet and Allan Ahlberg's *The Jolly Postman* will always have a place in history because it's the last book Janet illustrated before her death in November 1994.

But it also plays an important part in marking Janet and Allan's development as creators of original books and particularly of novelty picture books.

Never ones to stand still with ideas and having already broken traditional barriers by doing a 'catalogue' book – *The Baby's Catalogue* and a book which tells the story through a hole – *Peepo*, the Ahlbergs created *The Jolly Postman* based on an idea which came from watching their daughter Jessica's delight at opening letters. 'We thought it was sliced bread,' says Allan. 'We both loved the idea of spinning stories off fairy stories and we came up with many versions of a book before we came on the final one. We sent a letter of explanation to our publisher but she couldn't see exactly how it would work. "What will they do with the letters when they've read them?" she asked. We decided we'd have to make a dummy to show people exactly how it would be.'

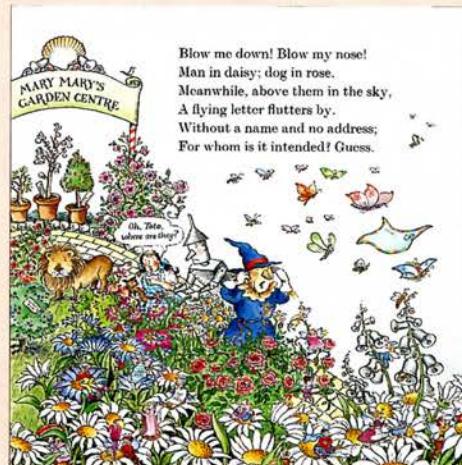
The whole process took a long time. Jessica was two when the idea was first conceived and seven when the book was published. And the Ahlbergs were right. It was sliced bread.

'Sequels are mostly a mistake,' says Allan, but the Ahlbergs couldn't stop having ideas after the success of *The Jolly Postman*. *The Jolly Christmas Postman* followed and now *The Jolly Pocket Postman* has added an extra small-scale dimension. 'We could have done a fourth and in it we'd have gone backwards in age. We wanted to do a really simple "parcel" book for the very young and for a fifth we'd thought of letters to a sick child from visiting relatives.'

To be truly successful a novelty book must exploit its novelty to a purpose. The letters in *The Jolly Postman* tell the parts of stories that are missing from their fairy tale originals. The sequel, *The Jolly Christmas*

*Postman*, depends, as any good Christmas book should, on the idea of gifts.

'The trick is to match the device – the flap, the hole, or whatever – with the narrative story,' Allan says. 'The jigsaw in the Humpty Dumpty envelope comes from the idea of "putting together" Humpty Dumpty. You have to find the right match between the mechanism and the idea.' Of course, not all ideas come to fruition when you hope or expect them to. 'We wanted something with glitter in the first book but we didn't get it. We didn't get it in the second either, but we did get it in the third.'



The third is *The Jolly Pocket Postman* which had an unusual provenance for the Ahlbergs who usually draw so closely from their own experience. 'We had a whole pile of letters from a school in Texas. There were about 30 of them, written by kids of 10 or 11. "You must do another one," they wrote, and they gave us various suggestions. One was that Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* would meet a cute boy, who would be – *The Jolly Postman*. We both downed tools and Janet drew a spread of the winding path. There's a kind of symmetry between the Oz story and Alice – Dorothy follows the Yellow Brick Road to find the magician of Oz and Alice falls down a rabbit hole and reaches

Wonderland. So we put Alice in and I also put in some of my favourite story (though not Janet's), 'The Constant Tin Soldier'. We worked away at all this for three or four days, then we found the teacher's letter. It gave the game away. The whole thing was an assignment – "Can you persuade these guys to make another book?"

Allan is rueful that it wasn't the children's own idea but, by the time he and Janet had discovered the truth, the seeds had been so well planted they had to go on.

'From when the letters came, to the overall shape of the book took about five days. We didn't think of the audience. It was never there. Janet and I were playing a fast game of table tennis. The fun was chasing the idea until we got it.'

And get it they did in a book that has all the warmth and immediacy of the original but which also plays clever games with the idea of narrative. A book within a book has long been a conceit of the Ahlbergs and in *The Jolly Pocket Postman* the idea is extended as the pocket version tells a different story by altering the starting point.

Allan's love of many-layered storytelling, matched by Janet's rare talent for combining beauty and humour in her illustrations, has



given us, in addition to all their other books, three novelty books which show clearly how quality, and what may easily be dismissed as gimmickry, can be most creatively united. ■

### BOOK DETAILS:

- The Jolly Postman*, 0 434 95635 X, £10.99
- The Jolly Christmas Postman*, 0 434 92532 2, £9.99
- The Jolly Pocket Postman*, 0 434 96942 7, £10.99 (all from Heinemann)
- The Baby's Catalogue*, Viking, 0 670 80895 4, £8.99; Puffin, 0 14 050385 4, £4.50 pbk
- Peepo*, Viking, 0 670 80344 8, £8.99; Puffin, 0 14 050384 6, £3.99 pbk

Julia Eccleshare works as a freelance book consultant and is the Editor for children's books coverage in *The Bookseller*. This year she is Chair of the judging panel for the Smarties Book Prize.