

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

May 1996 No. 98
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the children's book magazine



PICTURE BOOK ISSUE

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CoverSTORY

Our illustration
this month is
from **Going to
Playschool** by
Sarah Garland
(see Authorgraph
on page 14). We
are grateful to
Bodley Head and
Puffin Books for
their help in
producing this
cover.



Sarah Garland

BOOKS FOR KEEPS
the children's book magazine

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Editor's PAGE



CHRIS POWLING

Reading Words and Pictures...

It's been an odd couple of months since our last issue. Here at BfK, we've been suffering something of an editorial double-whammy – on the one hand preparing this Spring Picture Book edition of the magazine and on the other making final arrangements for our updated Guide, *Poetry 0-13*, which is published in the next fortnight. For me, the constant switching of attention from pictures that are worth a thousand words to words that are worth a thousand pictures has been... well, *interesting*.

Admittedly, the two are far from antithetical. You don't have to view a poem as a kind of Verbal Icon like a nineteen-fifties New Critic (now utterly Old Fashioned, of

course) to appreciate that its appearance on the page makes a huge difference to the way we contemplate it. Oscar Wilde's famous quip that a 'poet can survive anything... except a misprint' is, as usual, a much more serious observation than it first appears. The very brevity of verse, compared with prose, means that a typographical twitch, however minor, can so catch the eye that the rest of what's printed blurs out of sight. Suddenly, especially if you're the writer, your vision is filled with Fly. There's no room for any surrounding Ointment. Once, I asked Charles Causley to sign a copy of *Jack the Treacle Eater* which had just won him, along with Charles Keeping, the Emil Award for the year's best combination of text and illustration. 'Certainly,' he said, 'but before I do that, may I...' and he turned to the one spread in the book with a pair of misprints *and corrected and initialled them*. I got the distinct impression he'd have been only too happy to put the errors right, by hand, in every single copy of the print-run.

Appearances matter, then. As the redoubtable Oscar also remarked, only the superficial person does *not* judge by them. It's enough to make you wonder, for instance, how much your response to a poem is affected by such details as the type-face in which it's set:

Moor-hens

Living by Bate's Pond, they
(Each spring and summer day)
Watched among reed and frond
The moor-hens prank and play.

Moor-hens

Living by Bate's Pond, they
(Each spring and summer day)
Watched among reed and frond
The moor-hens prank and play.

Moor-hens

Living by Bate's Pond, they
(Each spring and summer day)
Watched among reed and frond
The moor-hens prank and play.

Three versions of the first stanza of *Moor-hens*, *Moor-hens* or *Moor-hens* by Charles Causley, Charles Causley or Charles Causley. Now I haven't the slightest doubt which of these I prefer, prefer or prefer . . . but I'd be amazed if there was total, or even general, agreement with my choice. So where does this leave any chance of establishing a consensus when it comes to the *illustration* of text? For entirely valid reasons, some people would claim that, in the case of poetry especially, any attempt to match word and image is downright destructive of the vision of each individual reader. Interestingly, Charles Causley himself wouldn't agree. When asked which of Charles Keeping's pictures for *Jack the Treacle Eater* he liked best, he cited the illustration to the poem quoted above on the grounds that it made him take a fresh look at its subject.



Does all illustration do this, though? Or only the best? Furthermore, while we're in rumi-

nation mode, what contribution to a book's success or failure is made by the element of overall design – the bringing together of word and image through a combination of typeface, layout, paper and even binding?

There, now . . . and you thought editing a children's book magazine must be fun!

Actually, it is – providing you resist the temptation to seek a definitive answer to all these questions at once. For a book is an object in itself as well as a medium of meaning. Any number of variables may be crucial to the impression we form of it. Add to these, moreover, the factors we bring to the equation as readers – our own tastes and experience and expectations – and it's pretty clear that what we've got here 'ain't table-tennis, 'arry', as Frank Bruno remarked of a rather different human activity. The mere scoring of points is one thing but deciding which books are winners is quite another.

That, however, is precisely what *Poetry* 0-13, and this issue of the magazine, are about. In the former case, which of the thousand-or-more verse collections and anthologies published since our 1988 *Poetry* Guide are most worthy of our continuing attention? In the latter, which of the Spring List of picture-books is likeliest to last? Neither can be decided in absolute terms – every single BfK reader has the right, not to say the duty, to make up her or his own mind about the opinions our commentators offer.

Mind you, we've done our best to provoke *quality* disagreement. In the pages which follow, we've backed up our regular reviewing team with the likes of Brian Alderson, Julia Eccleshare, Stephanie Nettel and

Korky Paul. And our updated *Poetry* Guide, produced in collaboration with Prof. Viv Edwards's Reading and Information Centre at the University of Reading, is co-edited by Morag Styles, with contributions from, amongst others, Prof. Brian Cox, Prue Goodwin, Iona Opie, Jill Pirrie and Michael Rosen in support of the best set of poetry critics we could assemble.

Yes, such expertise is formidable. But I still relish the 'phone call from an unidentified subscriber we received a few weeks ago. She was consumed with embarrassment because she'd 'never made such a call before', but was also hopping mad about a new picture book she'd just read. In her view, it was a 'betrayal of childhood' and she felt she had to share her anger with *someone*. Try as we might, we couldn't persuade her to leave her name or address . . . though the book itself is reviewed, in very different terms, elsewhere in this BfK. No, I won't reveal its title. If she reads this, we're still hoping that a certain librarian 'somewhere in Northern Ireland' will contact us again so we can give due credit, and prominence, to the point of view she expressed so persuasively.

Enjoy the issue, then. And send for *Poetry* 0-13. Better still, if you possibly can, attend the Conference at Reading on 8th June where we'll be launching it. We'd love to say hello . . . whether or not you're a librarian from somewhere in Northern Ireland!

Chris

The Poetry Conference

9.30am to 1.30pm SATURDAY 8th JUNE 1996

at the
READING & LANGUAGE INFORMATION CENTRE
University of Reading



PROGRAMME

- 9.00am Coffee and registration
- 9.30am Welcome from the chair **Chris Powling**
Opening speaker **Morag Styles**
- 10.30am Choice of seminars
 - 1 Pictures with words **Anne Rowe**
 - 2 Poetry across the curriculum **Michael Lockwood**
 - 3 Collecting words to play with **George Hunt**
 - 4 All join in **Angela Redfern** and **Prue Goodwin**
- 11.30am Coffee

11.50am Poets in action **Gareth Owen** and **Brian Moses**

1.00pm Poets in the bookshop

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Telephone: 01734 318820 Fax: 01734 316801

A GUIDE TO POETRY 0-13

Co-published by

Books for Keeps & The Reading and Language Information Centre
Edited by **Chris Powling & Morag Styles**

Bibliography compiled by **Jill Bennett, Robert Hull, John Lynch, Jack Ousbey,**
Chris Powling, Susanna Steele, Morag Styles and Helen Taylor

Price: **UK** – £5.50 (range of discounts available); **Overseas** – £7.50 (Airmail)
A4, 52 pages; ISBN: 1 871566 03 4

*'Writing verse is so much fun,
Cheering as the Summer weather,
Makes you feel alert and bright,
'Specially when you get it more or less the way you want it.'*

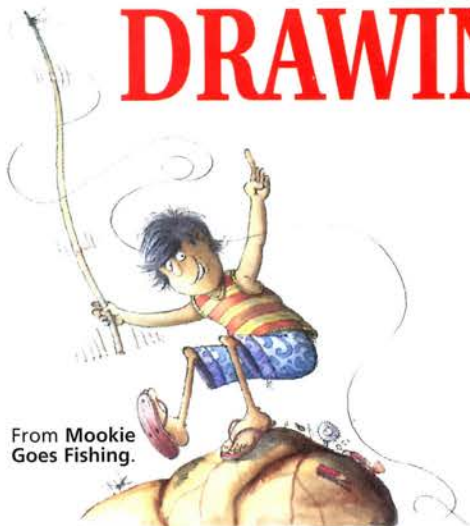
(Wendy Cope from *The Orchard Book of Funny Poems*)

Poetry: 0-13 is a complete revision and update of BfK's *Poetry 0-16*, published in 1988, which sold more than 10,000 copies. The new Guide, in a condensed format of 52 pages, incorporates the most successful features of its predecessor while taking account of the wealth of new verse for children published in the intervening eight years.

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DRAWING PICTURE BOOKS

Korky Paul



From *Mookie Goes Fishing*.

On the first day of my first job as a young art school graduate at an advertising agency in Cape Town, the boss's secretary wandered over to my drawing-board and said, 'Hello, howzit. So you're Korky Paul the New Drawer?'

Not, 'So you're the New Art Director?' or even, 'The New Artist?'

Just, 'The New Drawer?'

On reflection it was a fair description of what I did then and years later a fair description of what I do now. Draw picture books. I like the word, too. Prefer it to artist or even illustrator.

A fair description, but not a full description for someone creating a picture book. Because, I liken a picture book to a movie. As the drawer, you are not only the cinematographer but also the director, the casting agent, the costume designer, set designer and responsible for the locations, lighting, props and continuity!

The text is the soundtrack and it's that special combination between words and pictures that makes for good storytelling in a picture book. As in a movie, neither can exist properly on their own.

For me a picture book starts with someone else's manuscript. I am not a writer, I am a drawer, remember?

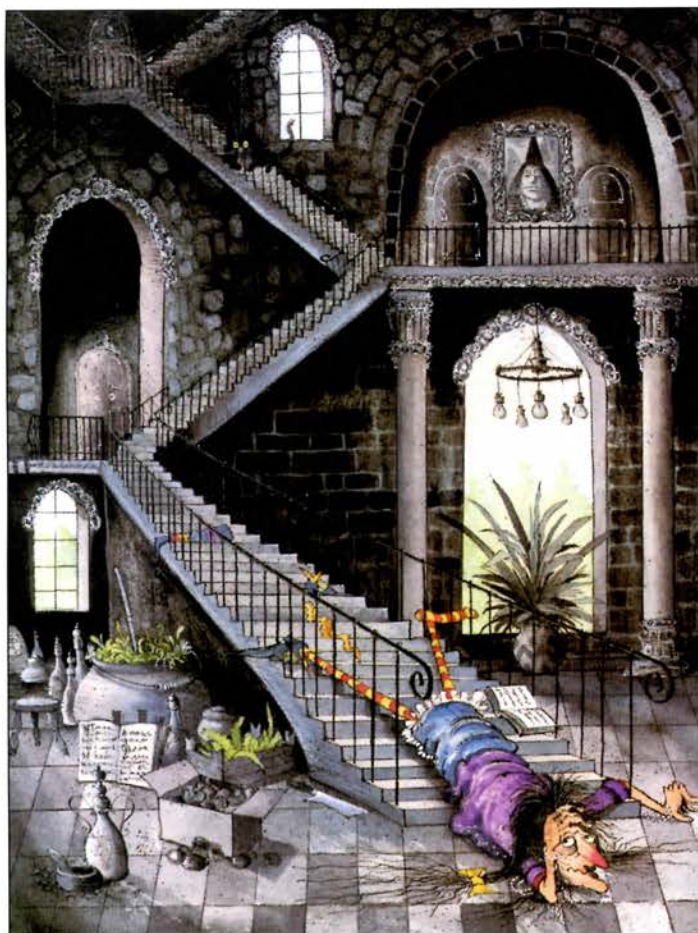
This means I am constantly searching for new stories which can turn up in a variety of surprising and unlikely ways. Take *Winnie the Witch*, by Valerie Thomas. At the end of my first meeting with Ron Heapy, the Children's Book Editor at Oxford University Press, he presented me with a manuscript about a witch who lived in a black house and suggested I attempt two or three drawings. It was early days in my career and at the end of 'first' meetings, photocopies are made of your portfolio, pleasantries exchanged and the parting words are inevitably, 'Don't 'phone us, we'll 'phone you ...' I'm extremely grateful to Ron for not going near the photocopier or muttering those dreaded parting words.

Something similar happened with Robin Tzannes (the 'Tz' is pronounced as a 'J' in

English). One hot summer in Greece she saw a doodle I'd scribbled of a mad professor. 'Write a story about him,' I joked. That winter she sent me the wonderful story about Professor Puffendorf and followed it with the fable *Sanji and the Baker*. Then came the story of a child triumphing over an adult in *Mookie Goes Fishing*.

What do I look for in a story? The subject matter is irrelevant; I will draw anything. What does appeal to me are stories with an unexpected ending or a neat and clever twist. If on the first reading the story inspires me and fills my head with images I feel confident I will do justice to it. *The Dog that Dug* by Jonathan Long and *The Rascally Cake* by Jeanne Willis are two stories that fired my imagination immediately. I will discuss ideas or themes with a writer but choose not to be involved in the writing of rough drafts or final manuscripts. I've tried it but without success. Once I had Robin Tzannes yelling at me in her best New York accent, 'Korky Paul! I don't tell you how to draw so DON'T tell me how to write!'

I prefer to work from a finished manuscript the writer and perhaps the editor are satisfied with. The majority of picture books contain 32 pages. Pages 1 and 32 are glued to the inside front cover and inside back cover respectively. Pages 2 and 3, and 30 and 31, are the endpapers. Page 4 has the copyright details and page 5 is the title page. This makes a total of 8 pages leaving 24 pages, or 12 'double page spreads' for the text and the illustrations.



Winnie in her 'stately home,' from *Winnie the Witch*.



The Professor's laboratory, from *Professor Puffendorf's Secret Potions*.

Now the fun begins. My first task is to divide up the text and arrange it over the 12 spreads. I firmly believe this is the drawer's responsibility, as it's such an integral part of how you design and interpret the story visually. To go back to the analogy with a movie, it's the drawer taking on the role of director planning out the shooting script. There are no hard or fast rules, but generally the first thing I look for is the beginning, middle and end. Spreads 1 and 2, 6 and 7, and 11 and 12 are pencilled in. This leaves spreads, 3, 4, 5 and 8, 9, 10.

I now look for things happening: an introduction of a new character(s), a change of scene, or a 'cliff-hanger' sequence where you have to turn the page to discover the outcome. These are all obvious cues for a new spread. A good tip is to treat each spread as a chapter. Simultaneously, I have to be aware of the pace, the rhythm and the drama of the story and try to reflect that (as well as the style of the writing) in the breakdown of the text.

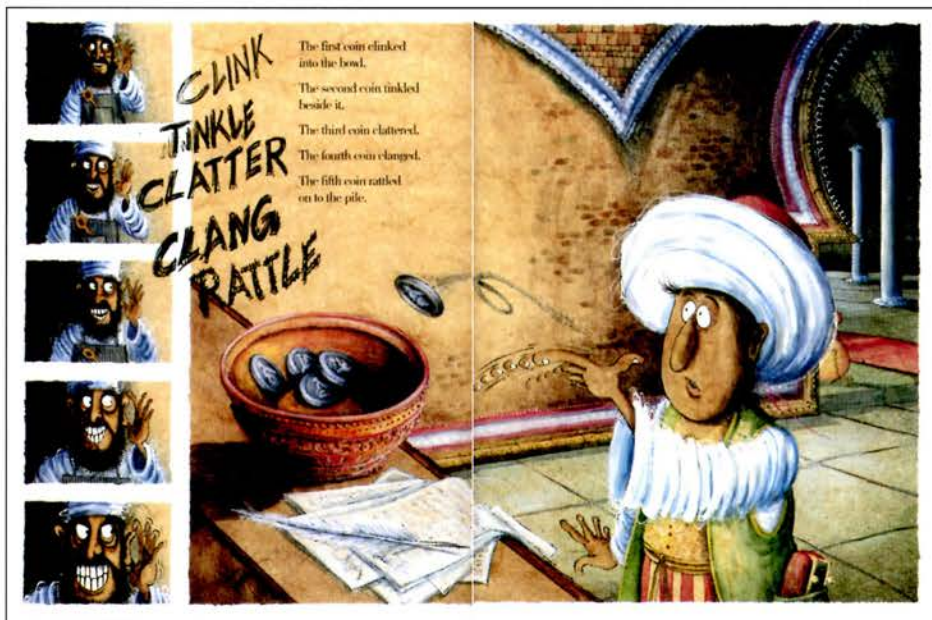
In most of the picture books I've illustrated the writers offer little or no description of the characters' physical appearances or their clothing. In a picture book it's redundant. Now the drawer becomes casting director and costume designer. Some characters require hours of doodling and sketching before I feel they're right. It's difficult to articulate how you decide on a look or a face, as it's something that comes from within you. I'd spent hours drawing dopey-looking muts for *The Dog that Dug* and wasn't happy with any of them. One day while yacking on the 'phone and doodling away, I inadvertently drew the dog I'd been attempting to sketch for days!

There are those rare occasions when a character is so clear in my mind's eye after the first reading of a story, that the first sketch is absolutely right. Mr Rufus Skumskin O'Parsley from *The Rascally Cake* was one such character.

Whether I'm drawing witches, pirates, mad professors or Middle Eastern travellers, there are certain items of clothing (clichéd as they may be) which instantly communicate who or what they are. For example, take head gear. A tall, pointed hat emblazoned with stars; a three-cornered hat with the skull 'n crossbones stitched onto it; the little lamp strapped to a forehead or a flowing silk turban. I'll exaggerate them, distort them and add little embellishments so they're no longer clichéd. I bring something of myself, the Korky Paul look, to the appearance of that character. Then I could add other items of clothing with unique details to make them distinctly mine – Winnie with her bright red-and-yellow striped stockings, Cap'n Teachum with his row of medals for plundering and pillaging, Professor Puffendorf's pockets stuffed with pipettes and test-tubes.

Black stately homes, rotting borer-beetle infested galleons, and exotic domed desert cities are just a few of the sets I've been lucky enough to design. As with the costumes, I delight in taking the obvious then imbuing it with that exaggerated and distorted Korky Paul look. In *Winnie the Witch*, Valerie Thomas used only one adjective to describe our heroine's home – 'black'. My initial sketches showed a picturesque cottage complete with thatched roof and exposed timber beams. The results were dull, boring and obvious. 'What's the opposite of a cottage?' I asked myself. 'Stately home.' Once I'd hit upon this idea the book opened up for me. All the rooms and paraphernalia of a stately home would serve as a wonderful and dramatic backdrop for Winnie's antics with her cat, Wilbur. The real challenge lay in illustrating it all in black!

Having decided on the location, built the sets and found the props, resolving the problems of



Above, a spread from *Sanji and the Baker*.

composition, design and layout over 24 pages is a lot easier and clearer. Design and layout is the arrangement of text and illustrations on the page. In a picture book it's essential these two elements are tightly integrated to tell the story successfully.

I frequently use a comic-book layout, which in turn is rooted in cinema. Close-up shots, long-shots, events happening 'off camera' are all cinematic devices used to tell a story effectively and dramatically. An example of this is in *Sanji and the Baker* on the spread featuring a large picture of Sanji sadly tossing his borrowed five silver coins into a copper bowl. Running down the left-hand side are five small pictures showing the evil Baker. The first picture is a medium-shot of him smirking. In the following four pictures the 'camera' zooms in and on the final shot we see him in extreme close-up grinning feverishly. These five shots represent the Baker's greedy response to the coins as they land in the bowl. He is seen from the judge's viewpoint (who is off-camera) which underlines or highlights Sanji's, as well as the reader's, sense of injustice.

Linking the large picture to the strip of small shots are the onomatopoeic words of money falling into the bowl, printed in a bold, comic-book style typeface. This device tells the reader the two events are happening simultaneously in the same room. The five silver coins are based on the Zimbabwean dollar. I keep one in my wallet for good luck.

Each spread is worked out first in rough form on light-weight cartridge paper. The finished art is executed on a medium weight water-colour paper. All the artwork is done 25% larger than the printed size. On the cartridge paper I draw in all the information I need to plan out and design the spread. Page size, illustration size and spine. On a separate piece of paper I have the typesetting of the text. With a pencil I sketch in my ideas, moving the text around to fit it in with the illustration. When I'm satisfied with the pencil sketch and position of the typesetting I redraw over the pencil lines in black indian ink using a dip-pen, making alterations where necessary. The roughs end up as a collage of drawings done on separate pieces of paper and glued into position. Sometimes a drawing is exactly what I want but is the wrong size. I'll enlarge or reduce it on a photocopier and glue it into position on the cartridge paper.

I now tape the finished rough onto a light-box.

(A light-box is a drawing board with a glass worktop and strip lights beneath the glass.) Over the rough I tape down the watercolour paper, flick on the lights and the rough sketch below shows through. With an HB pencil I lightly trace in the illustration, again marking where necessary. The primary reason for tracing the rough onto the watercolour paper is to position the illustration(s) exactly where I want them. It also helps to avoid drawing too close to the edge of the page, into the area reserved for the type or drawing crucial details over the spine.

I remove the watercolour paper from the light-box and start *drawing* – not tracing. There's a great difference between the two. I don't slavishly follow the pencil lines as this would produce dull and lifeless work. They are there simply as a guide. The 'trick' is to recapture the spontaneity and freshness so often found in the rough drawings.

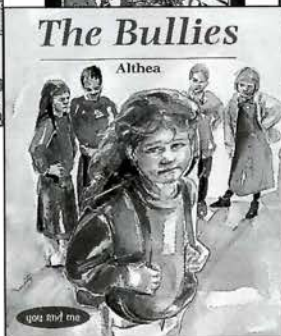
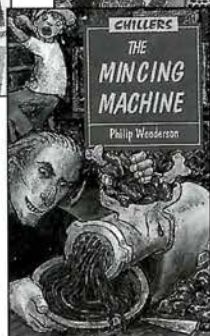
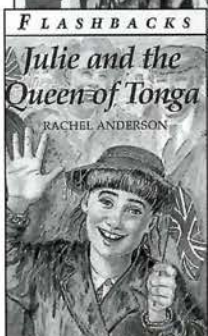
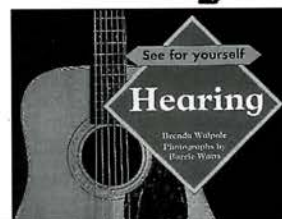
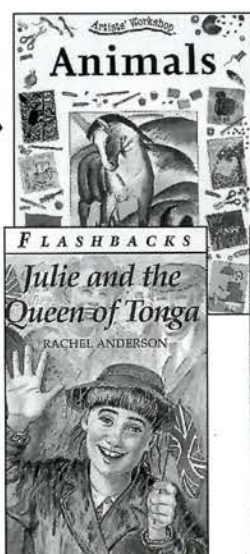
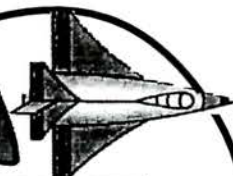
I draw mainly with a dip-pen using black or waterproof coloured inks. The colour work is done with watercolours. Toothbrushes, porcupine quills and wall paint have all been used at some time to achieve certain effects. In the scene where Cap'n Teachum forces his crew to walk the plank, I had great difficulty in getting the stormy sea right. Every colour of blue in my studio was tried, but without success. Then I spied a bottle of Quink Ink. 'For fountain pens only' read the label. Ignoring that I splashed it on recklessly. The effect was remarkable, it was exactly what I wanted. I have yet to use it again.

As in a movie, continuity is important. As is making sure the geography of the world you create makes sense to the reader. In Winnie's home the bathroom in the first spread appears on a different floor in the final spread. Cap'n Teachum has his pegleg strapped to the wrong thigh on two occasions.

The other thing I do is give existing characters walk-on parts in new books, or include them in crowd scenes. In *Sanji*, Cap'n Teachum appears uninvited in two scenes. It took my daughter, Zoe, aged seven at the time, to spot the mistake the night before I was to deliver the artwork to Ron Heapy. Children spot these mistakes and write to me pointing them out. Initially these were genuine errors in continuity, but now I put them in deliberately and wait for the letters...

The illustrations I leave for last are the endpapers, title page and front cover. The endpapers I use as an opportunity to design a bold graphic

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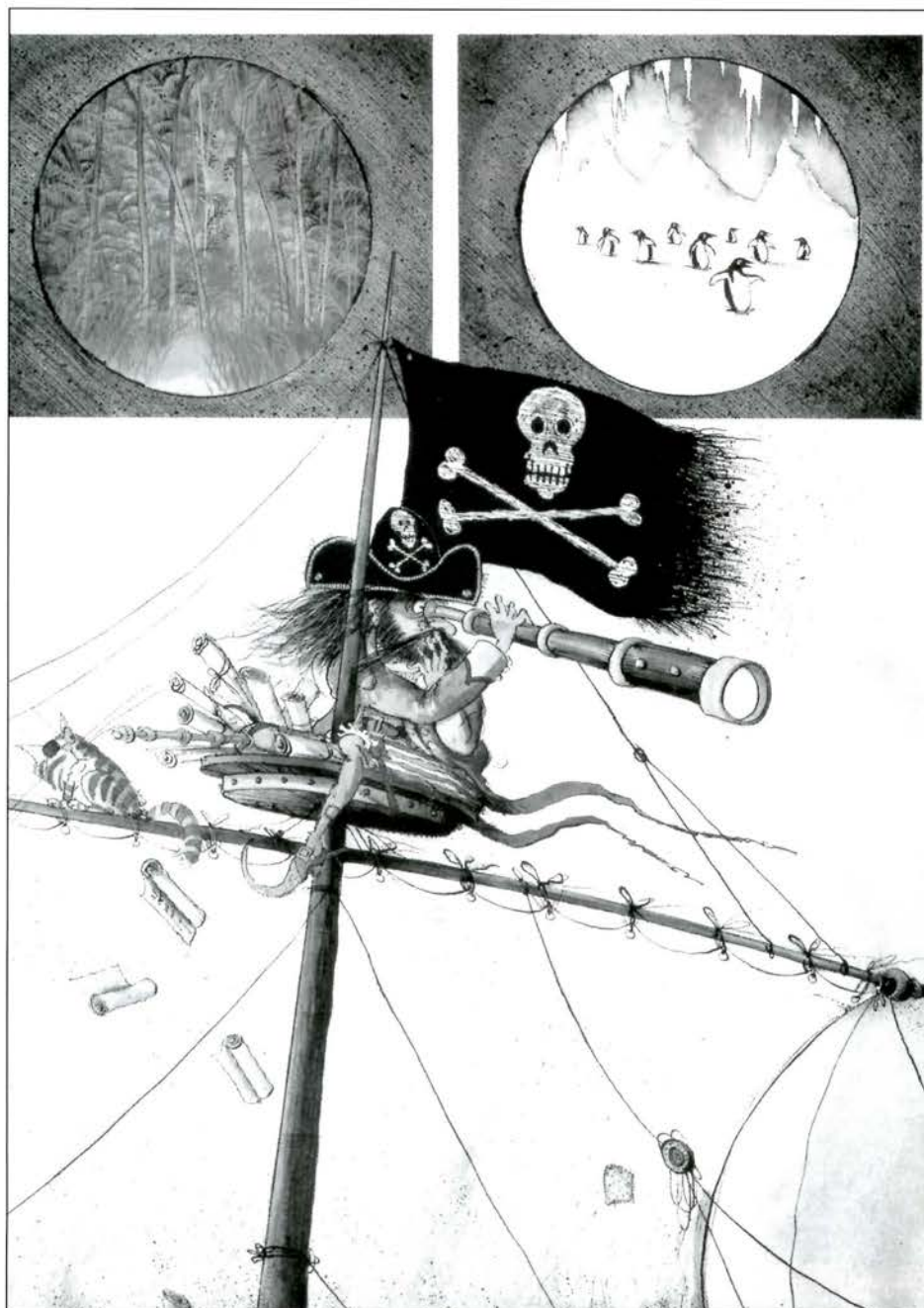
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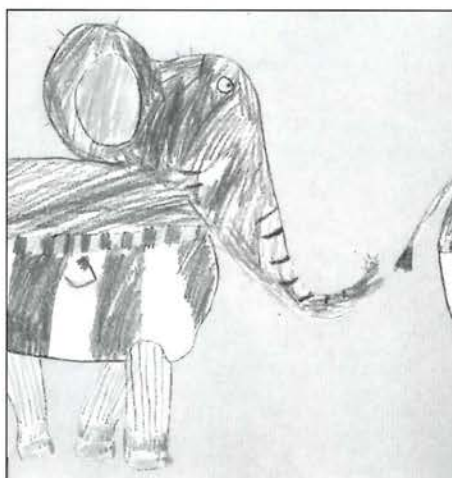
Cap'n Teachum looking everywhere for his treasure, from *Cap'n Teachum's Buried Treasure*.

statement to express the essence of the book. It's an enjoyable mental exercise and can prove quite difficult to find a neat, simple solution.

The splashes of colour I used in *Winnie* is a good example of a bold graphic design giving a flavour of the story. Sometimes I give them a more illustrative treatment as in the endpapers for *The Cat that Scratched* by Jonathan Long. I drew an extreme close-up of the cat scratching furiously using the comic-book device of lines of force to show the cat's actions. In *Monster Poems*, edited by John Foster, I used drawings done by my wife's god-daughter, Joanna Mitchell, aged 5½. In *Billy Bumps*, our daughter, Zoe Paul, contributed the endpapers.

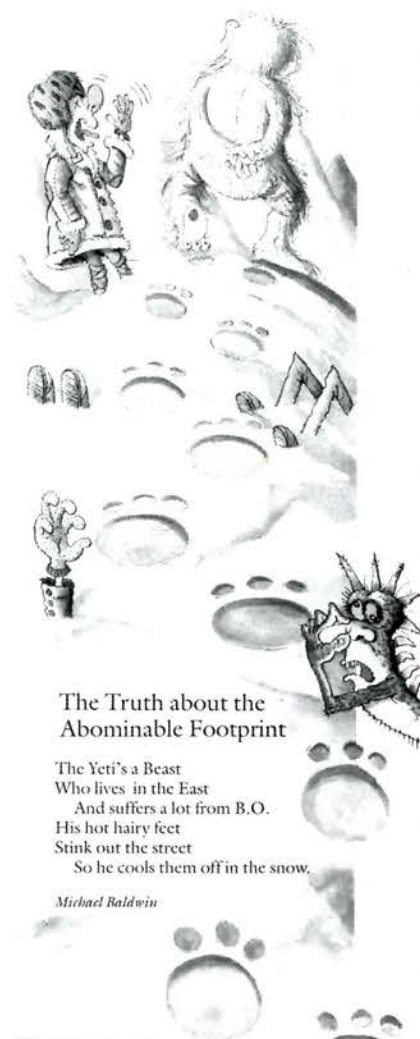
The final illustration is the front cover. The reason for this is that I base it on one, or a combination of illustrations from the book. What I look for is a scene that is a synopsis, a visual shorthand of the story without revealing any twists or surprise endings. It must also clearly show the main protagonist. Look at any of the books I've illustrated and you'll find the front cover buried somewhere within.

The front cover is the most difficult illustration to get right, and I frequently fail the Oxford



Daughter Zoe Paul's elephant endpaper from *Billy Bumps*.

University Press Front Cover Examination. This finds me scuttling back to my studio a sad and depressed man. I have to admit they're normally right and my second attempt is a vast improvement. These pass the test.



The Truth about the Abominable Footprint

The Yeti's a Beast
Who lives in the East
And suffers a lot from B.O.
His hot hairy feet
Stink out the street
So he cools them off in the snow.

Michael Baldwin

From *Monster Poems*.

I enjoy illustrating ideas which are not in the text but are inspired from it. This is all part of enhancing the story. They are embellishments, tales within tales to tempt the reader into the book. If I have a good story that inspires and excites me, it's a delight. A joy to work on. More importantly I hope children (and adults!) will find it a joy to explore and read. But, that is what we all hope for. ■

All books mentioned are published by Oxford University Press, unless otherwise stated:

Winnie the Witch, Valerie Thomas, 0 19 279847 2, £6.99; 0 19 272197 6, £2.99 pbk

Professor Puffendorf's Secret Potions, Robin Tzannes, 0 19 279925 8, £6.95; 0 19 272261 1, £3.99 pbk

Mookie Goes Fishing, Robin Tzannes, 0 19 279978 9, £7.99; 0 19 272290 5, £3.99 pbk

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The Rascally Cake, Jeanne Willis, Andersen, 0 86264 477 1, £8.99; Puffin, 0 14 055472 6, £4.99 pbk

Cap'n Teachum's Buried Treasure, Peter Carter, 0 19 279869 3, £6.95; 0 19 272230 1, £2.95 pbk

The Cat that Scratched, Jonathan Long, Bodley Head, 0 370 31894 3, £8.99

Monster Poems, ed. John Foster, 0 19 276140 4, £7.99; 0 19 276147 1, £3.99 pbk

Billy Bumps Builds a Palace, Korky Paul, 0 19 279972 X, £7.99; 0 19 272245 X, £3.99 pbk



Brian Alderson

EZRA JACK KEATS: Making Picture Books

Brian Alderson on the life, career and books of a distinguished American illustrator



Ezra Jack Keats

In this issue of **Books for Keeps** there are, I suppose, about 90 notices of current picture books. They go to join the hundreds that have appeared over the last twelve months, and the thousands over the years since the magazine was founded. Much of the notice-writing has been appreciative in a descriptive sort of way, but rarely, if ever, have reviewers sought to probe the source from which the idea for a picture book might come, or trace what may well be its switchback progress towards completion as a printed book. Perhaps the very smoothness of today's technology may help to give the impression that picture books are easy.



With the publication of **The Snowy Day** in 1962 Keats did not merely produce a charming 'everyday' picture book for young children. In graphic terms he brought a new fluidity to the difficult art of collage, and in terms of content he produced the first modern picture book which featured a black child who was simply a child – neither patronised nor politicised.

It so happened that in 1980 Ezra Jack Keats was awarded that Festival's Silver Medallion, and when he visited the University to receive it (he, a New Yorker, in such unfamiliar territory!) he was deeply impressed by the scale and the highly professional curatorship of the deGrummond Collection. He expressed a wish that his work might eventually have a place there, and, after his death in 1983, the Foundation that bore his name negotiated the handing over of his whole archive to the Collection. (Eventually the Foundation donated many of his paintings, too.) At the same time, provision was made for the promotion of Keats's work in various ways and for the establishment of an Ezra Jack Keats Lecture as an annual event at the University. The first of these lectures was billed to be given by Keats's friend, Selma Lanes, the author of that

majestic volume **The Art of Maurice Sendak**. A special mini-festival was organised for the occasion and, since I happened to be in the USA at the time, and since I too was a friend of Selma's, I was asked to come along and do the introductory honours.

Well – at the last moment Selma unfortunately fell ill, and the Introducer suddenly found that he was going to be giving the lecture. Towels soaked in iced tea (the local beverage on a dry campus) were the order of the day; much call was made on the resources of the deGrummond Collection; the lecture got given – and repercussions began. The President of the EJK Foundation, Keats's boyhood friend, Martin Pope, got the notion that the hapless lecturer would be the chap to tackle a catalogue of the Keats archive at Southern Mississippi and debates were held to see if that could be done.



But easy they are not – and something of the complications that attend their creation has been brought home to me in the last few years as I have worked on a study of the American illustrator, Ezra Jack Keats. He is not now a figure so well-known to English children's-book aficionados as he would have been 20 years ago; nor is he a figure whose work automatically appeals to my own critical faculties. But in 1989 I was given an unusual opportunity to look closely at a large portion of his creative work, and it seemed to me that the very exercise of getting behind the print on the page of the finished book would be an enlightening experience. Perhaps it might offer, too, some general insights about the making of picture books.

The job came about in accidental fashion, for which my peculiar association with the University of Southern Mississippi is to blame. This university is not one that springs readily to mind when the great academies of the West are under consideration, but it has for many years played an energetic part in the field of children's literature. I got involved with it through its annual British Studies Course (coming to England to avoid the steamy South) and later became a regular attendee at its Children's Book Festival, where a Silver Medallion is awarded each year to the great and the good 'for distinguished services to children's literature'. There, too, I discovered the University Library's deGrummond Collection which turns out to be one of the finest assemblages of original manuscripts and illustrations for children's books in the whole of North America.



From photograph to sketch to final acrylic painting for Apt.3.

Now Martin Pope (who is a very distinguished bio-chemist) and his wife Lillie (who is a very distinguished child psychologist) are persuasive people. They talked the University into making provision for the writing of a catalogue; they offered substantive help in New York – Keats's stamping-ground – with visits to bashed-up bits of Brooklyn and introductions to a host of Keats's friends and associates. And by a series of neat double-shuffles they guided the innocent cataloguer into a position where he would not only prepare a detailed account of the deGrummond holdings, but would write 'The Life and Works' as well.

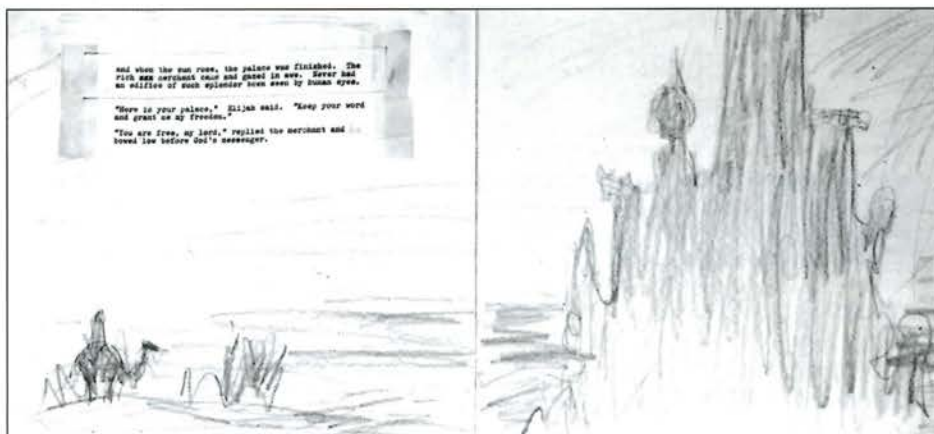
So began my stint in the Ezra Jack Keats archive – all 165 boxes of it, to say nothing of outside material stored in a plan-chest and on special shelves. By great good fortune these boxes had been organised and given a hand-list by Dee Jones, the deGrummond curator, who is not only a superb librarian but also a bibliographer, so she was well aware of the need to group things in a significant, as well as an orderly, way. My job, in compiling the extended catalogue, was to refine this preliminary piece of organisation in order to elaborate as best I could the working-life of the artist. The catalogue necessarily had to precede the discursive study, so I set about opening up the boxes.

Half a lifetime was there. Thanks to Dee Jones's careful sorting I found personalia (family papers, appointment books, passports, etc.); correspondence (most importantly, with publishers and with the film-makers, Weston Woods, but also, in 17 boxes, letters and *objets* from schoolchildren); records of journeys and celebrations – for Keats had not only won the American Library Association's Caldecott Medal for his 'breakthrough' book **The Snowy Day** in 1963, but from that time on he had been fêted around the nation (a library was named after him in Ohio, a Keats procession took place in Portland, Oregon – and indeed, his book **Skates** inspired the citizens of a Japanese town to get themselves a roller-skating rink and he went there to open it).

Crucially, though, alongside all these papers, there were boxes that contained the preparatory and finished material for 35 of the 84 books illustrated by Keats. That may not seem an altogether satisfying percentage, but, like many freelance artists, Keats had taken on a host of commissions in his early years for which the artwork was bought outright by the publishers and hence not returned to him. With his discovery of his metier in the 1960s however – initially with **My Dog is Lost!** (1960), a book never published in Britain – he began to save material, and the period of his prominence is marked by holdings of material that can document almost every step in the making and printing of his books.

Let me give one example: the tough struggle over **Apt.3**, which was published in New York in 1971 and in London, by Hamish Hamilton, in 1972 (the correspondence shows that the publishing problems associated with costing this book caused Keats's usual English publisher, the Bodley Head, to decline it, with the result that he moved to Hamish Hamilton for several of his later picture books).

Apt.3 is a book that meant a lot to Keats: an atmospheric, Keepingsque study of two boys mooching through a decrepit apartment block and discovering friendship with a blind harmonica-player who lives at No. 3. The archive reveals a succession of manuscripts that show Keats's difficulty with his text (at one point it seems to be related to the stories about Peter and Archie than began with **The Snowy Day**, but eventually it emerges as an independent, 'one-off' picture book). At the same time, Keats is working at the images that will form the basis for his illustrations. There are no fewer than 196 photographs from which he will derive both backgrounds and the broad features of his two boy-characters, and there is a profusion of separate sketches and story-boards which show him planning the progress and relationship of the



Although not in the text of this article, above is a dummy spread of **Elijah** and below a printed spread from **The King's Fountain**, which graphically show Keats's process of working from sketch to finished concept.



book's endpapers, title-page, and 16 double-spread illustrations. And finally, there is the array of finished artwork that will become these illustrations: paintings in acrylic on board, which was to become Keats's favourite medium, although there is one tiny patch of collage which is the technique for which he is most renowned.

The paintings, even when muted as in **Apt.3**, and the collages bear witness to Keats's genius as a colourist (he was a wonderful paper-marbler, too) and many of his original illustrations now tour as dramatic subjects in their own right. Nevertheless, for all the privilege of being able to work with this material over a long period, I found that the most exciting part of writing the two books was the opportunity to watch ideas germinate and allow themselves to be shaped into the straitjacket imposed by picture-book formats. What happened with **Apt.3** recurs time and again but always under the governance of the ruling idea for each story. Paper mice modelled for **Dreams**, a gorgeous green-faced puppet for **Louie**.

Against such evidence of creative energy, however, there was always the disheartening supplement of post-publication responses. Here and there in the 165 boxes would be folders with carefully preserved clippings of book reviews and these, together with ones that I added after a trawl through specialist journals, gave a fairly depressing picture of the level of contemporary critical thought. Ignoring Hicksville notices that talked about 'Mrs Keats' or 'Ezra Jack Yeats', and leaving aside an unedifying attack on the artist by the Council for Interracial Books for Children which showed primitive politicisation at its worst (his chief critic mistook Willie the dog for Peter the boy) the degree of thought applied to his work – even in the pages of the main specialist journals – was negligible.

Obviously, one does not expect reviewers to know the tussle that may have gone into making a particular book (although an awareness that tussles exist may help). Obviously, extensive reviewing may be precluded by the number of books queuing up to be

noticed. Nevertheless, the disparity between the artist's effort to get words and images working together through the pages of a book and the reviewers' failure even to perceive that such a thing needed to be assessed was striking.

Fortunately, the happy enthusiasm with which Americans greet their most popular authors meant that the failings of critics were not reflected among those who work with children. The mountains of children's letters in the archive (by no means all of them 'class exercises') were evidence of this. And, supported as they were, by other correspondence, by films and by news of such things as Keats's paper-marbling sessions, they revealed an artist as endearing as he was dedicated. ■

Brian Alderson's book, **Ezra Jack Keats: Artist and Picture Book Maker** (1 56554 006 9), from which the illustrations on these pages are taken, is published by Pelican and costs £35.00.

Sadly, none of Ezra Jack Keats's books mentioned in this article are currently available in the UK. **The Snowy Day** is due for a reprint by Puffin in November this year.

The Art of Maurice Sendak by Selma Lanes is published by Harry N Abrams.

Brian Alderson, who is a technological drop-out, wrote his two-volume work in pencil on sheets of yellow paper. These were deciphered and typed onto discs by a graduate assistant.

Note: The Silver Medallion 'for distinguished services to children's literature' usually, but not always, goes to North Americans. In 1984 the recipient was Quentin Blake.

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

Not Like That, Like This!

Tony Bradman, ill. Joanna Burroughes, Mammoth, 0 7497 2415 3, £4.50

Dad falls into the parental trap of showing Thomas he shouldn't put his head through the park railings 'like this!' and gets stuck. Tony Bradman and Joanna Burroughes take us through an accumulating set of hilarious helpers with ever more bizarre methods of releasing Dad. This proved very popular and the ending is guaranteed to have children giggling uproariously. JS

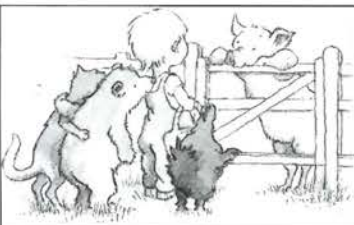
Dilly's Muddy Day

Tony Bradman, ill. Susan Hellard, Mammoth, 0 7497 0403 9, £2.99

Dilly's ultra-special, 150-mile-an-hour super-scream appears again in this book . . . with a vengeance! Another virtuoso performance by the naughtiest dinosaur in the world. Bradman's wonderful snippets of his long-suffering family make the books a delight to read for any adult and Dilly makes a worthy successor to 'My Naughty Little Sister'. JS

It's My Birthday

Helen Oxenbury, Walker, 0 7445 4344 4, £3.99



This is a lovely simple story in which Helen Oxenbury manages to transcend ordinary life and makes it glow with warmth and love. It tells of a bear, with many kind friends who assist him in finding the things he needs to make his birthday cake and then help him eat it! Young listeners will cheerfully join in and thoroughly enjoy the repetition and rhythm. JS

Monkey Tricks

Camilla Ashford, Walker, 0 7445 3168 3, £4.50

To really appreciate this book you have to have shared the world of James and Horatio before, because,



Monkey arrives with a great fanfare, in *Monkey Tricks*.

although it stands on its own as a story, the themes of their little world are developed in a very interesting way. Monkey arrives with a great fanfare, creating excitement and havoc. He then, literally, disappears. Normality returns; there are no moral judgements made; James, the wise bear, quietly restores life to its previous order. It's interesting how children just accept this. They're fascinated by the exotic drama and inventiveness of Monkey and his tricks and love tracking them down into their component parts, but still see James's restoration of things as the only obvious and satisfying solution to the book. JS

Hilda Hen's Scary Night

Mary Wormell, Gollancz, 0 575 06230 4, £3.99

It's a delight to see the return of Hilda Hen. Mary Wormell's lino cuts and her use of colour are magic and match the atmosphere of this book perfectly. When Hilda Hen wakes up, after having fallen asleep on a hot, sunny day, she finds her normally safe garden turned into a world full of dangerous creatures. As darkness falls she uses her ingenuity to make the journey back to the hen house, proudly relating her skills to herself all the way. Children love to identify the everyday objects she meets as monsters. They show a lot of sympathy for Hilda Hen yet feel

satisfyingly superior as they bring the knowledge they have, but which she hasn't, to shed light on her adventure. JS

Poor Monty

Anne Fine, ill. Clara Vulliamy, Mammoth, 0 7445 2749 7, £4.50

This is a splendid book which will entertain any child of a working mother, and her, too, if she has time to read it!

Monty's mother is a doctor and when she gets home from her busy day 'all she wanted was to put her feet up and have a cup of tea and a quiet little read of the paper' . . . (sound familiar so far?). Poor Monty, however, is trying to tell her something really important. His head hurts, his tummy feels funny . . . in fact, he has chicken pox, as mummy suddenly realises when he flashes his spotty tummy at her.

This story couldn't be more simply and briefly told – 17 sentences from beginning to end – it will strike chords in the hearts of many children and parents. LW

Dog Dottington

Diana Hendry, ill. Margaret Chamberlain, Walker, 0 7445 4367 3, £4.50

Margaret Chamberlain's slightly batty illustrations suit this story very well. The Dottington family members are all frightened of something, from grandma, who's frightened of spiders, to Dad, who's frightened of brown envelopes! They decide they need a large dog, who will frighten away the nasties (not sure it works on brown envelopes, though) and so Hero comes to the house. Unfortunately, he's even more of a coward than the rest of the family, so it's through protecting the dog that they come to terms with their own fears. Comic, but with an interesting message. This odd-ball picture book will be popular with all who have irrational fears . . . or rational ones – like a fear of brown envelopes. LW

A Present for Big Pig

Debi Gliori, ill. Kate Simpson, Walker, 0 7445 4369 X, £4.50



A book for anyone who, like me, lacks dexterity and has never managed to produce those beautifully decorated and be-ribboned birthday and Christmas presents that are so enticing in *Good Housekeeping*. Little Pig tries hard, but the sticky tape and wrapping paper just will not go round his awkward-shaped gift and, even with the help of his friends, he ends up in tears of frustration. Luckily, a friendly spider has the final solution and all ends happily. We even get to find out what was in the box and share Big Pig's happiness.

Good fun, this one. Attractive, too, with its large illustrations in slightly muted colours. Young children with dubious muscle control will feel for the hero. LW

Infant/Junior REVIEWS

Looking for Atlantis

Colin Thompson, Red Fox, 0 09 964521 1, £4.50

When a 10-year-old boy's grandfather dies after a picaresque life on the seven seas, he leaves the child his sea chest, and an exhortation to seek Atlantis. The child opens the chest

and, 24 teeming pages later, succeeds in his quest by accepting both the old man's death and the perpetual life of his oceanic memories. The storyline is slight and allu-

sive, but the rhapsodic graphics of this picture book spill before the reader's eyes a bewildering wealth of worlds within worlds. A full fathom five fantasy. GH

Captain Daylight's Birthday Bash

David Mostyn, Puffin,
0 14 037633 X, £3.50

The humorous tale of a small and untypical, unassuming highwayman, Captain Daylight. With the spontaneous help of his horse, he belittles once and for all the huge and terrifying Black Jack Midnight, a typical highwayman intent on re-educating easy-going Captain Daylight.

Full of fun, drama and well-known jokes, this could really grate or infect with riotous and silly giggles. My seven-year-olds who are beginning to develop a sense of humour hadn't read anything quite like it. One or two of the more keen and able were able to manage it for themselves, but it's probably best appreciated as a humorous and easy read by over-8s.

GR

Squeaky Cleaners in a tip!

0 340 64065 0

Squeaky Cleaners in a stew!

0 340 64064 2

Vivian French, ill. Anna Currey, Hodder, £2.99 each

The Squeaky Cleaners comprise business-like Nina, hardworking slightly nervous Gina, and Fred, who can be relied upon to save himself from too much hard work and them all from being the 'nice mice' ingredients of Miss Kitty Plush's mouse stew. 6- and 7-year-olds followed the storylines with apparent concentration and became totally involved in solving the stew predicament and aware of the strange mystery surrounding the mess in Sir Rattus' castle.

On average, four lines of clear type per page are accompanied by large attractive, black and white illustrations, so many Year 2 children could, and wanted to, read these for themselves.

GR

A Treasury of Funny Stories

Chosen by Andrew Matthews, ill. Frank James, Kingfisher,
1 85697 289 5, £4.50



My favourite story in this useful collection of 16 ten-minute-or-so tales was Jan Mark's account of an infant version of the three little pigs. My 9- and 10-year-old consultants loved Mike Rosen's nightmarish tale of five freaks gatecrashing the dreams of a neurotic family tyrant,

and Margaret Mahy's twisting tale of love between a deceptively stereotypical librarian and the robber who kidnaps her, was also popular.

This is a wide-ranging and well-produced book with a robust feel to it; a handy volume for primary teachers to keep within reach for emergencies.

GH

Amazing Mark in Creepstone Castle

Scoular Anderson, Young Puffin, 0 14 036564 8, £3.50

Amazing Mark is a reluctant hero. Scoular Anderson's illustrations and text launch him into an adventure which is guaranteed to have every solo reader enthralled and supported. Mark loved to listen to 'The Adventures of Mandy Marvel' on his walkman but when he found that she was speaking directly to him and asking him to embroil himself in foiling a crime and unravelling the mystery of the missing jewels, well... he discovers unknown talents.

JS

Jafta - The Homecoming

Hugh Lewin, ill. Lisa Kopper, Puffin,
0 14 054467 4, £4.99



Every child should have access to the Jafta books. Following Jafta's own story which analyses and values his feelings and moods, through to one of the most powerful evocations of motherhood that has ever been penned for children of this age in Jafta - My Mother, we move on to the bitter-sweet exploration of a family divided by politics yet held together by love in Jafta - My Father. Lewin and Kopper chronicle the reality of family life in a culture different from our own, yet with universal truths. Sharing concepts such as these with infants isn't easy, but they're a vital humanising force to help us grow and understand this difficult world.

In Jafta - The Homecoming there is no shirking the issues of a child's mixture of anticipation, happiness and nervousness at the changing pattern of his life and sadness at the things his father has missed; but it is all implied by Lewin's deliberate yet delicate choice of words and Kopper's incomparable illustrations of mood.

JS

Copycat

Ruth Brown, Red Fox,
0 09 960411 6, £4.50

Ruth Brown weaves her magic with this Flip-the-Flap book about a family of cats and their long-suffering friend, Bessie the dog. Holly's kittens, Baby and Buddy, have very different personalities. Baby is shy

and gentle but Buddy is into everything especially when it comes to copying Bessie. In spite of Holly's watchful eye, he finally goes too far leaving himself even more firmly identifiable as the 'copycat'. Ruth Brown excels at taking a simple yet universal theme and exploring it with sumptuous illustrations that entice the reader on and on until, almost with disappointment, we reach the end. This is a lovely book for sharing and for reading with young children. It's also a marvelous gift for cat lovers of all ages.

JS

The Witch's Tears

Jenny Nimmo, ill. Paul Howard, Collins,
0 00 674682 9, £2.99



From its opening lines - 'It was an icy day. The wind was cold enough to freeze your breath and dark clouds tore across the sky like ragged horses.'

Jenny Nimmo's story gently but firmly holds you in its grip as brother and sister, Theo and Dodie, await their father's return from a business trip. The whole drama unfolds in just 24 hours - or does it? All the clocks have mysteriously stopped ticking since Mrs Scarum's arrival. But is she, or is she not, a witch? That's what Theo and Dodie can't quite agree on. So why does she call telegraph wires 'dangerous things', why does she want to keep the children's cat, Flora, beside her overnight? And where is Flora next morning? And what about those icy crystal tears that rattle onto the floor when their visitor cries? ... Like the children in this splendid tale, readers and listeners will have to make up their own minds.

JB

Zot Goes Camping

Ivan Jones, ill. Judy Brown, Young Puffin,
0 14 036442 0, £3.50

Zot fans fell on this new story with gusto and found it to their satisfaction. The book is an hilarious romp through the joys of a wild camping holiday when Clive and his 'dog' Zot take on the dastardly duo of Master Rat and his brother Macho Rat. I have to say the children loved it as much as they love the other sequels, but for me none of them quite touches on the power of the themes explored in the first book, Adventures of Zot the Dog.

JS

Mookie Goes Fishing

Robin Tzannes, ill. Korky Paul, Oxford,
0 19 272290 5, £3.99

Set in the tropical jungle of South America, this story tells of Mookie, 'too young' to join his father on a fishing expedition, who decides to embark on one of his own. Which of the two is more successful on that particular day? Of course, it's the ever-resourceful Mookie. But what

were those items of treasure - tangled string, crayon, marbles and so on doing in his pocket in a tropical jungle? How did he just happen to have a safety pin holding up the hem of his shorts? If you can suspend disbelief sufficiently to accept such unlikelyhoods, you'll probably enjoy this crazy tale, as I'm sure many readers of 6-8 will. Korky Paul's suitably zany and detailed illustrations of the incongruous family in this lush landscape are guaranteed to bring many smiles.

JB

Harriet's Hare

Dick King-Smith, ill. Valerie Littlewood, Corgi,
0 440 86340 6, £3.50

A hare that talks - that can't be possible, thinks Harriet when she's confronted by such a creature in the cornfield one midsummer morning. But this one is different; he's come from Pars and his spacecraft has created a corn-circle in her father's field. Soon Harriet (who has only her father for company) and the magical, wise hare who can speak any language and take on any shape, are firm friends. As July gives way to August and the September full moon - the day for Wiz's departure - approaches, Harriet becomes sad despite Wiz's promised surprises. But even she cannot remain miserable when she learns of his best surprise of all.

Seldom do I get really enthusiastic about fiction for this younger age range in the same way as I do picture books or writing for older readers, but this was one book I couldn't put down. I found myself wishing there were some 7(ish)-year-olds around into whose hands I could immediately thrust it.

We earthlings could learn a few lessons from Wiz and his companions on Pars where, as he tells Harriet, they have money but... 'we treat it sensibly. Here on earth some human beings have so much money they don't know what to do with it, and some are desperately poor. On pars, everyone's equal. Much fairer... There's no such word as "enemy" in the language.' A must for sharing with those around seven and for confident readers to take on for themselves.

JB

Trouble with Trolls

Jan Brett, Puffin,
0 14 054817 3, £4.99



A first-person narrative by a small girl named Treva who tells of her encounters with the marauding, but somewhat dim-witted, little folk, when she and her dog set out to visit her cousin on the other side of Mt. Baldy one morning in early spring.

In the detailed illustrations we're shown two stories simultaneously: Treva's adventure as it happens above ground and the domestic scenes taking place in the subterranean home of the trolls (who, despite their efforts to rob Treva, seem rather endearing) where a subplot is unfolding.

This is surely a book where close reading of the pictures as well as of the text is vital: it will yield another (unwritten) story. There's much to develop the imagination of the audience – be that class, group or individual. **JB**

The Snow Leopard

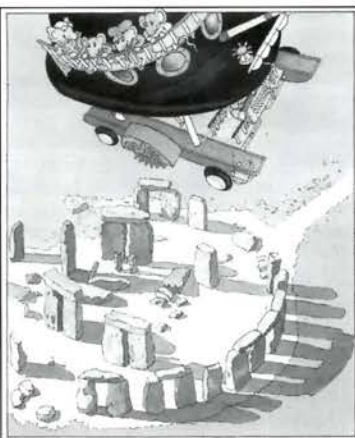
Theresa Radcliffe, ill. John Butler, Picture Puffin, 0 14 054989 7, £4.99



A beautifully illustrated book about the winter journeys of a snow leopard and her cub. It assumes some knowledge of the creatures, and the language is formal. This, together with the slender italics of the print, suggests an older age group, although younger children would enjoy the pictures which are finely drawn and painted. There's the usual uncertainty about anthropomorphising which books like this always cause; how far can animals wonder, think about the future or plan ahead? However, **The Snow Leopard** suffers less than others in this respect and it does give some idea of the struggle to survive that is wild life. **LW**

The Mice and the Travel Machine

Rodney Peppé, Picture Puffin, 0 14 054561 1, £4.99



The Mouse family are constructing and creating again. This time a bowler hat provides the basis for a wonderful travel machine which takes the whole family off on a trip round the world. Unfortunately, D Rat has spotted the money-making potential of such a contraption and is out to get it, by fair means or foul. The moral of the story is never sign a contract without reading the small print and whilst teaching this admirable precept it also introduces us to the major landmarks of the world and half the KS2 Geography curriculum. Very jolly pictures are, as always from Rodney Peppé, an added attraction. **LW**

A Treasury of Stories for Six Year Olds

Ill. Tizzy Knowles, 0 86272 807 X,

A Treasury of Stories for Five Year Olds

Ill. Polly Noakes, 0 86272 806 1, Edward and Nancy Blishen, Kingfisher, £4.50 each

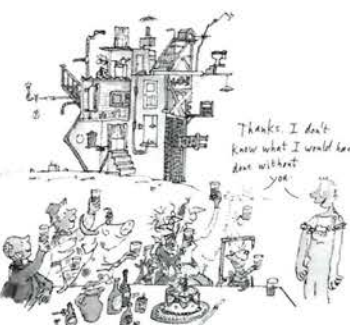
Lively anthologies from a team who believe that certain stories are especially well-suited to particular ages. In the first collection we have old and new tales from all over the world with such contemporary delights as Margaret Mahy's 'Don't Cut The Lawn!' and Philippa Pearce's marvellous 'Brainbox' (about a horse who doesn't quite live up to his name but is determined to find another horse to be his friend), rubbing shoulders with traditional stories like 'Teeny-Tiny' and Edward Blishen's retelling of a Ugandan tale 'Hare and Crocodile', which is great fun.

The selection for 5-year-olds includes some newer 'old favourites' such as 'My Naughty Little Sister' who features prominently in 'The Cross Photograph' and one of David Harrison's giants – the tantrum throwing one, as well as Blishen's own (autobiographical?) delightful account of infant misadventure, 'Round the World with a Tyre'.

These make worthwhile additions to the primary staffroom bookshelf and are a good investment for parents, but don't be tied too much by the title age. There's plenty of variety in terms of mood, style and length so adult readers should find something for almost any occasion. **JB**

The Do-It-Yourself House that Jack Built

John Yeoman and Quentin Blake, Picture Puffin, 0 14 055323 1, £4.99



The words are absolutely deadpan, just the old rhyme of 'The House that Jack Built' reprinted in good clear print. The pictures, however, are quite a different matter. Quentin Blake's loony builder, aided by a range of odd-ball characters and John Yeoman's wry and witty captions, makes you realise that this author/illustrator team is this rhyme's destiny. Has it ever occurred to you to wonder how the dog worried the cat? – By telling him that the ghost of the rat will return to haunt him, that's how. Buy this for yourself, even if you never mean to go near a child again. **LW**

My Grandad

Sheila Isherwood, ill. Kate Isherwood, Oxford, 0 19 272150 X, £3.99

Books about the death of a grandparent are much more available now

than they were. This is a sensitive addition to the genre which follows the usual approach. A young girl is remembering the happy times she had with her Grandad – gardening, going out, the time he left his hat on the car roof when they drove off – and concludes, 'I still have my Grandad in many ways even though he died'. The story would help children talk about their own memories of a loved relative. I have some reservations about the illustrations – they have a blurred quality which is not unattractive but may lack enough definition for younger children to make sense of them easily. **LW**

The Dinosaur's Packed Lunch

Jacqueline Wilson, ill. Nick Sharratt, 0 552 52818 8

Happy Mouseday

Dick King Smith, ill. Peter Kavanagh, 0 552 52820 X

Corgi 'Pups', £2.99 each

Well, I can hardly believe the world is waiting for yet another variety of series books, 'perfect for new readers' or not. These two examples of Corgi's addition to a very overcrowded and largely undistinguished market illustrate perfectly the pointlessness of the series when it means a random collection of unrelated, cheaply and drably produced stories of variable quality.

The Dinosaur's Packed Lunch is just silly. Like too many stories for the 'Kids' market, the plot is about an unexplained trick (girl turns into dinosaur) which happens for no particular reason and to no particular purpose. A lazy book which invites, in its lack of intelligent thought, comparisons with junk food.

Happy Mouseday does work in a reasonable and well thought out fashion and the story of a little boy's longing for a pet mouse is simply, but convincingly told. It cries out for better quality paper, printing and colour illustrations; for being published in its own right in fact, not bundled together in this wretched format. If a book is worth publishing, publish it properly. If not, don't publish it at all. Fewer mediocre books would mean a better deal for the rest. **LW**

Junior/Middle REVIEWS

The Voyager's Return

Peter Weigall, Good Company for Children, 1 900197 01 4, £4.99

This version of Homer's *Odyssey* is carefully constructed in 21 episodes and meant to be read aloud to children of all ages. Much thought has gone into aiding the storyteller with dialogue printed in italics, pronunciation guides and plenty of suspense artfully built in. The language is very approachable and written with a listener in mind and so doesn't lose the sense of an oral version of the epic adventures of Odysseus's eventful return to Ithaca after the Trojan wars.

Knights of the Grail by Linda Proud (1 900197 02 2) and **The Monkey's Tale** by Peter Bonnici (1 900197 00 6) are available in the same series. All three are well illustrated in black and white, as a further temptation to solo readers.

Alex, a Year 8 myth enthusiast, tried reading them aloud to his young sister and reports that both enjoyed all three titles immensely. **DB**

The Green Hand

Tessa Kraling, ill. Alex de Wolf, Hippo, 0 590 13598 8, £2.99

When you're starting a new school



it's hard making friends and getting used to the teacher without a ghostly Green Finger getting you into trouble

too. But Dom manages to muster stamina enough finally to reveal the true identity of the Green Finger, gain real insight into the school's past and receive much appreciated praise for a Victorian edict written in true Victorian hand. Not an original idea, but nonetheless entertaining, it motivates finding out about school in days gone by and fits in well with History topics at KS2. **GR**

The Brainwasher

John Escott, ill. Rowan Clifford, Puffin, 0 14 036848 5, £3.50

Quite logical really... brainwashing is done by special shampooing, a

spot of hypnosis and the consequences are frightening. All those who've been so against school closure are, suddenly, definitely in favour. Then Chloe and Jake discover what's really happening and Madame Rosetta has her own special 'hair do'. An entertaining story with lots of action about a very real issue. Watch out for Madame Rosetta!

Accessible to over-8s with an inviting cover by Derek Brazell. **GR**

Birdspell

Helen Cresswell, ill. Aafke Brouwer, Mammoth, 0 7497 2689 X, £2.99



Tom can't legitimise his horror of fairgrounds when all his friends love them, so he suffers further guilt and torment by fibbing his way out of going. This intimate sharing of a real (and common?) dilemma helps to make Tom's future experiences honest and acceptable. His not going takes him to the Square where he's subject to 'Birdspell'.

It's when the sun comes out 'in a long sweeping band as if blown there by a wind' and 'the bird fancier had no shadow' that wonderful magic begins to unravel. With it comes an important message – that for others to see what we see, we must make it real for them. Great, inspirational stuff! **GR**

The Diary of a Killer Cat

Anne Fine, ill. Steve Cox, Puffin, 0 14 036931 7, £3.50



Humans can really complicate life for a cat. In his diary, Tuffy relates just what it's like to bear the brunt of everyone's mood – being misunderstood, under-appreciated and having to suffer human stupidity in hurrying to the wrong conclusions.

Of course, there was uproar when Tuffy brought in next door's much loved rabbit, a bit bedraggled (and dead), but then 'no-one gets dragged the whole way across a garden and through a freshly oiled cat flap and

ends up looking as if they're just off to a party'. This had me laughing aloud. It's an hilarious and easy read, best appreciated by over-9s. **GR**

The Giant's Boot

Charles Ashton, ill. Peter Melnychuk, Walker, 0 7445 4333 9, £3.50

Ritchie savours his secret find, an old boot with amazingly detailed stitching, turned to stone and embedded in a stream. When the water level rises after long and heavy rain, he wrongly assumes his secret is safe. He re-identifies the boot (lost by a giant thousands of years ago) in the garden of the authoritative nurse who must visit his Mum.

Mum's illness is rather a mystery, its effects on the family considerable and only when the giant is reunited with his boot is the oppression lifted. Mum's health improves, Dad's energy is greater and everyone is happier. An outstanding story, perfectly illustrated, in which hard reality is outshone by optimism and magic. **GR**

Oliver Sundew, Tooth Fairy

Sam McBratney, ill. Dom Mansell, Walker, 0 7445 4375 4, £3.50



It's said that Oliver Sundew isn't an obvious choice for the special team of tooth fairies set to bring back a particularly special tooth. But, though disappointment is great, he's good-naturedly pleased at his friends' selection, and then, dramatically, his swimming talents make his help crucial to the final success of the expedition.

Full of urgency and fun, this well-illustrated tale also suggests that tooth fairies consider a tooth's condition when assessing which coins to leave! Subject interest from 6+ but the humour was more fully appreciated by slightly older children. **GR**

The Outlaw Robin Hood

Julian Atterton, ill. John Dillow, Walker, 0 7445 4338 X, £3.99

A re-publication of two stories that first appeared in 1987. Straightforward re-tellings of the early days of Robin and his men. 'Robin Hood and the Miller's Son' has Robin rescuing Mutch from the clutches of the dastardly Guy of Gisburn and being forced into hiding in the forest... and you can probably guess what 'Robin Hood and Little John' is about. Good sized print,

short chapters and some lively line drawings make this an attractive book for reluctant 10-year-old boys. **SR**

Jumanji

Todd Strasser, Puffin, 0 14 038021 3, £3.99

Would you believe that this is 'A novelisation by Todd Strasser. Based on a screenplay by Jonathan Hensleigh and Greg Taylor & Jim Strain. Based on a screen story by Greg Taylor & Jim Strain and Chris Van Allsburg. Based on the book by Chris Van Allsburg.' I'd dearly love to know the difference between 'and' and '&' in the Hollywood machine. Anyway, by the time this review is printed the much-hyped film will have run its course and Robin Williams will be a few squillion dollars richer. Needless to say the book is utter tosh with each chapter being merely a description of yet more amazing special effects (which they probably are... in the cinema).

Question – How does anyone even think about writing the sentence, 'Carl Bentley, a twenty-year-old man with dark skin, looked up and smiled'? **SR**

Beware! This House is Haunted

Lance Salway, Hippo, 0 590 13599 6, £2.99

In a rain-sodden holiday cottage in Cornwall, two sets of offspring, brought together by a re-marriage, spar against each other until a series of threatening scrawls from beyond the grave unite them in dread. Eventually they confront the ghost, a malicious child still angry half a century after her death in a cycling accident. The living children eventually humanise her, but go a step too far in inviting the ghost's living siblings to a tea party. Slick shifts of pace and atmosphere, and a realistic backdrop to the supernatural theme, provide an entertaining and suspenseful read. **GH**

The Herring Girls

Theresa Tomlinson, Red Fox, 0 09 936311 9, £3.50

In a good, honest, unadorned voice reminiscent of that of Laura Ingalls Wilder, Dory Lythe, a nineteenth-century villager from the Yorkshire coast, recounts her experiences as a 13-year-old herring gutter. She's forced by family tragedy to work alongside the gangs of formidably tough Scottish girls who descend on Whitby every season. The story in itself is fascinating, but what makes the book indispensable (and wonderful value for money) are the reproductions of contemporary photographs of fishing village life taken by Frank Meadow Sutcliffe, the 'picture man' who also appears in the story. Very highly recommended for readers and browsers of all ages. **GH**

When the Snow Falls or Fifty Fifty

Michael Lawrence, Hodder, 0 340 62671 2, £3.99

Whenever a human life confronts an instance of fifty fifty probability, be it surviving or succumbing to injury, giving birth to a boy or a girl, passing or failing a test, the universe bifurcates, and two lives run on in paral-

lel, one for each outcome – neither aware of the existence of the other. This fascinating premise is the key to the mystery of how Rob and Bobby find themselves able to step into and out of each other's disconcertingly similar but different worlds, using a snow storm paperweight as a vehicle. But what might happen if the vehicle gets broken? The book's two endings explore the possibilities.

This is one of the most thought-provoking books I've read in a long time. It touches upon a metaphysical enigma at just the right level for curious children, while the tale of bereavement, acceptance and renewal that it tells is both moving and intriguing. **GH**



Dog Friday

Hilary McKay, Collins, 0 00 675123 7, £3.99

A glittering story of summer holidays and fun on the sand, but finding a stray dog is the most thrilling thing of all. Robin's fear of dogs gradually subsides as he waits to see if the real owners of 'Friday' will come to claim him. All the time his love and affection grow. The crazy exploits that happen remind us of how much he loves the dog, they fill the story with fun and keep us biting our nails in excitement. **PH**

My Dad's Got an Alligator!

Jeremy Strong, ill. Nick Sharratt, Puffin, 0 14 036584 2, £3.50

As if totally eccentric parents (Dad has a weird, apricot, shaving foam beard and Mum a wild taste in earrings), a dotty, deaf granny and a son who has an uncomfortably firm grasp of the sensible weren't enough, Dad has to bring home an alligator – real, live and unstuffed. Crunchbag is soon causing mega mayhem, and there seems to be no limit to the mischief he can create. Jeremy Strong's feel for the funny throw-away line is sound to the last page and had my class clammering for more. **PH**

Upside-Down Harry

Jean Willis, ill. Mary Rees, Scholastic, 0 590 13344 6, £3.50

When your name is Harry Longhopper, I suppose you must expect some things in life to be

Authorgraph No.98

Sarah Garland

Sarah Garland interviewed by Julia Eccleshare

But where's the clutter - the cats and kittens, the babies and the washing?' is the first thought when walking into Sarah Garland's beautiful Cotswold house. For those who know Sarah's picture books, all is instantly recognisable - the cream-coloured Aga, the home-made pottery, the rugs on the chairs but it's all as neat as a new pin. Even the open fire burns tidily.

'I cleared up specially for you,' Sarah says laughingly, but it's obviously not true. 'Well, no. I've certainly got more orderly since the children went. It was completely chaotic. I didn't mind then. Now, I want more order. I can quite imagine myself being the sort of granny who meets her grandchildren at the door and makes them take their shoes off so they don't get the floor dirty. I would never have thought that was how I would be.'

Indeed, everything in Sarah's house is orderly, especially her work room. Her considerable output is neatly shelved, her new stories carefully filed and her precious notebooks of sketches, the source of her characters, preserved in a huge plan chest. In a light-hearted way, Sarah is entirely organised about her work and very driven by it, too.

'It's the same sort of drive as writing a diary. It's really putting down my life and the things that make me want to laugh. I mean, you want to share a joke, don't you. When I get my PLR returns and see the number of people who have enjoyed my books I get enormous pleasure.'

It's this desire to share pleasures that has shaped all Sarah's work. The picture books with which she made her reputation - *Going Shopping*, *Coming to Tea*, *Having a Picnic* and the rest - are upbeat and optimistic, even though the mother is somewhat harassed. Her recent fiction, such as *Dad on the Run* titles, shares the same amused view of domestic chaos. 'I have endless private jokes. I find my family extremely amusing. The washing on the line, the shopping list, the ridiculous things in the classified ads - they all make me laugh.'

Perhaps because Sarah is not actually very sociable - rather to her surprise as she'd always thought she would be - she shares jokes through her words and pictures. 'Once you've got the idea it's unbearable not to communicate it. Recently I felt completely bloated with a story. It's a horrible word, but that is what it felt like. I simply *had* to write it down. Drawing is different. I quite often think that I don't want to illustrate what I've written, but then I find I can't not do the illustrations. I long to record what's around me.'

Sarah's assumption that everyone has both



the need and the gift to communicate in this way is an indication of her total immersion in her books.

Brought up in a family in which her father wrote and her mother was an illustrator, Sarah has always known that writing is an entirely possible thing to do. 'I do remember my father talking to me about plot,' says Sarah. And certainly there was the example of creativity to follow. 'I started writing when I was a child, like most writers, I suppose. Lots of little stories which started off marvelously. Millions of beginnings. I remember writing the Massacre of Glencoe, whizzing through it for four foolscap pages and then teetering off. I was a mad, passionate reader. Rosemary Sutcliffe, Henry Treece - all those historical novels.'

Home provided an eclectic mixture of books that gave Sarah some early illustrative models. 'A lot of old bound copies of the *Strand* magazine with frightening steel engravings - I was a pretty morbid child. Old issues of *Punch*. A complete set of a French surrealist magazine, *Minotaure* and the Goya painting of the execution which my parents kept on a top shelf and which I used to climb up to look at. I liked to be frightened. It was a way of testing myself.'

Sarah's description of herself as a morbid child who rather liked pictures of death and dying is a surprise given her amused adult view of the world. Perhaps that came from other influences - lots of comics and later, Edward Ardizzone. School also played an important part. Sarah went to Bedales

which had an excellent art department and included life classes from about the age of 14. Her friends were also budding artists 'wearing black stockings, long skirts and being existentialists. We lived a bohemian existence in a hut in the grounds - which is almost identical to our house today.'

The move from school to her current life has in many ways been a small one. 'My son recently asked me if I was what I had expected to be - and I am. It sounds a bit boring, doesn't it?' But Sarah isn't bored by it. 'I am extraordinarily happy. Of course, I teeter between hope and despair but mostly I'm very happy. This is the kind of life I like.'

The kind of life is living at the top of a village with a view across the garden and over other people's roofs to glorious open countryside. She works from home, as does her husband David whose pottery is in an addition to the house. And between this happy living and Sarah's work there is another contradiction. 'I don't like drawing country much. I find it pretty dull. I like drawing car parks, and high rise flats and suburbs. I like houses and people in landscapes. And yet I love to live in landscape that is unpeopled. I like going into the city and drawing and drawing and then coming back and being quiet. For me, the surroundings don't mirror life but the details and experiences do.' The days of three children under five are long gone and only the fourth, Jack, now 15, still lives at home. But it was from her early experiences as a rather harassed mother that Sarah drew her first ideas. 'I took my portfolio (in the



rain) to Phyllis Hunt at Faber and she took *Rose and her Bath* which was my first book.' Will was two and Laura and Kitty followed in fairly quick succession and books became 'few and far between'. Instead, Sarah taught A-level art which combined perfectly with being at home.

But the drawing was always there and then more books, especially when Jack was a baby. 'I thought of *Going Shopping*, *Coming to Tea*, *Having a Picnic* and *Doing the Washing* as books for babies strapped into cars and needing to be entertained. I was pretty overwhelmed at the time with four children and feeling desperate about money. I find it difficult not to be autobiographical. I'm always trying not to be. In the book I'm doing now, I'm trying to make the mother have really tidy hair. It's incredibly hard. My pen goes skittering off and does these awful rough bits.'

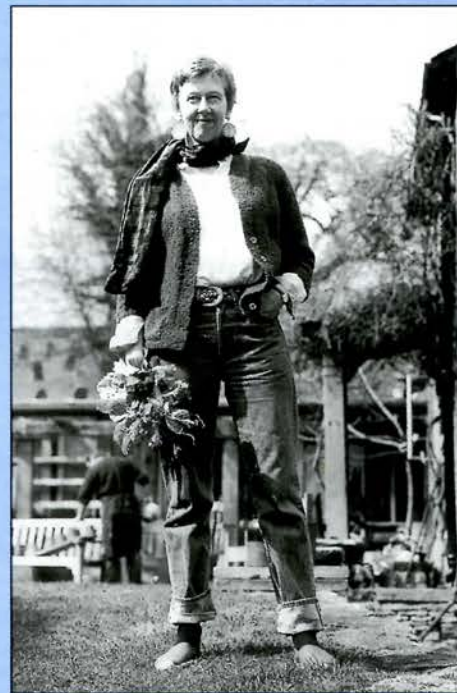
So now, with no babies around, Sarah has been moving into books for older children, but not without some regrets. 'Yes, I am getting more and more interested in writing, although at the moment I'm doing a picture book in the day time and then, in the

evening I'm writing a short story. I love doing the picture book. I've found a new family in the village with four or five young children and I just sit in their house and sketch and remember it all. I'm afraid I use people terribly. I use their houses and I use their children. Certainly drawing gives me the greatest pleasure. Writing doesn't give me pleasure, it gives me pain but I am driven to do it. I couldn't bear to give up either.'

Combining both, as in the 'Jets' and 'Chillers' she's done for A & C Black, is an almost perfect combination. 'I enjoy doing those. I feel I can be really free in them. It's just like writing an illustrated letter.' Junior novels with illustrations, such as her most recent title, *The Survival of Arno Mostyn*, allow her to write for her favourite audience – 7-10 year-olds – without losing the drawings. 'I love that age. They're so open and imaginative and responsive.'

Sarah's enjoyment of her work, and the direct contact with readers by way of her many school visits, comes partly from her comfortableness with children and childhood. She doesn't compartmentalise life or books into child/adult, seeing them instead as a continuum. 'There isn't any point at which I became grown-up. To me it is simply a progression. When I'm writing for children, I'm writing as both an adult and a child. It's all the same. I feel terrific compassion both for the child who is struggling to come to terms with the world, who is interested, observant and aware, and for the adult who is wanting to help that child but who is distracted by all the other demands.' She hates writers who patronise their readers by writing down, 'but it's terribly easy to do. I can sometimes feel myself slipping and have to haul myself out of it, often.' Nor does she like writing that is too message-laden though she was once, to her surprise, described as 'incredibly politically correct'. 'I wasn't intending to be. I was just trying to show things as they are. I go to London and sit in cafes or on buses and draw and draw, so, of course, I see all races. In one book I used a mixed race family because I have friends who are. It wasn't meant to be an issue.'

Working so much for her own pleasure and



amusement, Sarah has no fixed approach to her work. For her picture books she does vigorous dummies which are then very difficult to reproduce. 'It's so hard to capture the freshness again because it's hard not to be self-conscious.' Sarah plays a variety of tricks on herself to help keep up the spontaneity. But the books go on coming and the balance between drawing and writing continues. She's recently done a picture book story, *Seeing Red*, which has been illustrated by Tony Ross because she didn't want to do it herself. She'd like to do that again, but not exclusively. She has many publishers and, unusually, is full of praise for her various editors. More time has given her the opportunity to write more and to draw from a wider background. What next? 'I couldn't bear to give up either writing or drawing so I'll go on combining the two. I was recently asked to give my motto to one of the schools I was visiting. In the end I put "Don't Look Down". And afterwards I thought how horribly true that was. If you look down, you see the cracking ice. You need to keep skating on, and I do that.' ■

Photographs by Richard Mewton.



Some of Sarah Garland's books

(published in hardback by Bodley Head and in paperback by Puffin, unless otherwise stated)

Going Shopping, 0 370 30446 2, £7.99;
0 14 055400 9, £3.99 pbk

Coming to Tea, 0 370 30665 1, £7.99;
0 14 055399 1, £3.99 pbk

Having a Picnic, 0 370 30560 4, £7.99;
0 14 055395 9, £3.99 pbk

Doing the Washing, 0 370 30948 0, £7.99;
0 14 055397 5, £3.99 pbk

Going to Playschool, 0 370 31539 1, £7.99;
0 14 055363 0, £3.99 pbk (an illustration from which is featured on our front cover this month)

Dad on the Run, A & C Black, 0 7136 4186 X, £6.50; Young Lions, 0 00 675009 5, £3.99 pbk
The Survival of Arno Mostyn, HarperCollins, 0 00 185614 6, £8.99

Seeing Red, ill. Tony Ross, Andersen, 0 86264 623 5, £8.99

rather unusual, but walking on the ceiling is something else. The fact that it can all be put down to heredity doesn't really make things much easier. This very amusing fantasy explores many of the difficulties of trying to conceal a personal idiosyncrasy. It's a good job Harry's Uncle Max is around to warn him of the less obvious perils of defying gravity –

floating into space, for instance. There's a comforting ending, but what will happen next? **PH**

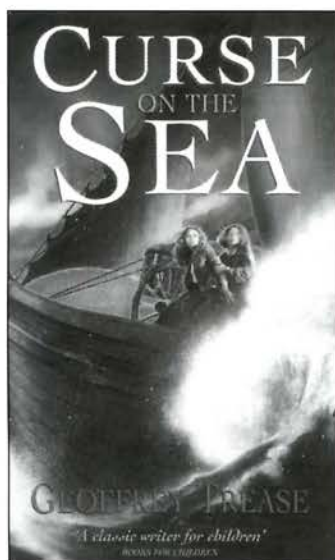
The Dreamfighter and Other Creation Tales

Ted Hughes, Faber,
0 571 17567 8, £4.99

This is Hughes' third volume of creation stories and the most disappointing. The flair and ingenuity of the two earlier volumes is missing, replaced with convoluted plots and a far less convincing central character. God has become a defeatist, a grumbler – where is the glorious anarchy of *Tales of the Early World*?

The stories tend to be too long. Sheer volume of narrative doesn't convince the reader as much as the taut, ironic humour did in the earlier collections. **VR**

Middle/Secondary REVIEWS



Curse on the Sea
Geoffrey Trease, Hodder,
0 340 63598 3, £3.99

As historical tales go, this is more human interest than high adventure. Set in 1663 with a background of real events (King Charles' progress to Edinburgh for his Scottish coronation), the central character is a London boy player who wishes to visit his relatives in Leith. There he encounters the lovely Barbary whose knowledge of the mysterious ways of the wise women lands them both in deep trouble.

Plenty happens and there's much to learn from this well-crafted yarn from a well-respected author. **DB**

Ransom

Lois Duncan, Macmillan,
0 330 33716 5, £3.99

Just because you live on a posh estate doesn't mean that your parents are able to (or even want to) hand over \$50,000 to a bunch of desperate kidnappers. This certainly proves to be so for the five disparate teenagers at the centre of this tightly plotted, exciting thriller. That aside, what all the parties learn about each other now that they're in crisis makes just as compelling reading and keeps the pages turning. I'm surprised it's taken 20 years for this title to reach us. **DB**

Feral Kid

Libby Hathorn, Hodder,
0 340 65124 5, £3.99

Robie may be a street kid but his newness to the life makes him far from street-wise and definitely vulnerable. He meets with very little real kindness and a deal of low-life nastiness and manipulation as he tries to make it in the city. His ulti-

mate salvation comes from one of his victims in a mugging and that's where the story demands a sequel!

Eventful and well-paced, the hopeful ending makes up for some of the all too realistically depressing incidents along the way. Bits of the story might enrage sensitive adults. **DB**

Run, Zan, Run

Catherine MacPhail,
Puffin, 0 14 037528 7, £3.99

Catherine MacPhail's powerful story not only deals with bullying but raises our awareness of the varied and heart-rending reasons for people finding themselves living on the street. Zan (we never know her real name, we don't need to) is an expert at hiding from the law, the truth and even those who want to help her. She has more street skills than Katie and her dad put together, yet there are still some friendships she's prepared to form and some feelings she allows herself to feel. The way Katie handles her new image is crisply defined. It had my class all wondering if there really were two girls or one. **PH**

A Treasury of Stories from Hans Christian Andersen

1 85697 353 0

A Treasury of Stories from The Brothers Grimm

1 85697 352 2

Retold by Jenny Koralek, ill.
Robin Lawrie, Kingfisher,
£4.50 each



Hans Andersen and Grimm stories are so well known, yet familiarity with the text only serves to deepen the joy when listening or reading alone. These fresh re-tellings bring out all the mystery and magic of the original versions. The illustrations are small and very detailed, reflecting appropriately the varying atmospheres of each story. My favourites have to be Andersen's little mermaid sitting so elegantly demure on her bed of sea flowers and Grimm's evil wolf in 'Little Red-Cap' – just look at those eyes... **PH**

Goodbye Buffalo Sky

John Loveday, Bloomsbury,
0 7475 2329 0, £6.99

This is a frontier tale related by two adolescents entangled in a racist struggle between settlers and Indians. All the traditional ingredients of the western appear here: a lurking murderer's flaming arrows, a philosophical itinerant salesman, a cavalry patrol with handsome young officers, a lovable drifter with a dubious past, a beautiful squaw torn between two or three cultures, even a lethal dose of fire water. Yet the author has managed to blend these elements into a fresh and compelling yarn, its strangeness enhanced by the youthful, wistful conversational simplicity of the narration. **GH**

Robin's Country

Monica Furlong, Puffin,
0 14 036278 9, £4.99

Some traumatic event in the past has left Dummy with only the vaguest memories of better times in his childhood and he has lost the power of speech. He's determined to escape from the hell which is life as a servant to a farming family and, after a particularly ferocious beating, takes his opportunity. In a delirious fear he stumbles across the entrance to the Domain, Robin Hood's headquarters in Sherwood Forest. Despite initial suspicion from Marian, Dummy soon becomes a valued member of the community, takes part in a number of Robin's adventures and finally plays a key role in resisting the siege of the Domain in the depths of winter. The arrival of King Richard reveals Dummy's true identity. A nicely judged yarn with some religious undertones. **SR**

Has Anyone Seen This Girl?

Jean Ure, Bodley Head,
0 370 31912 5, £8.99

A very short novel told in a diary format. New girl on way to boarding school, desperate to make friends, meets girl in same uniform on train, befriends her, finds she is school outcast because of strange behaviour, dilemma – should she stay true to her friend or ditch her to be part of the larger group? There's no easy answer to this problem just as there are no easy answers about any of the girls in this book including Caroline, the narrator, who admits her own failings and her own responsibility for Rachel's eventual disappearance. Much to think about on the themes of friendship, loyalty and peer group pressure, but what a price for 86 pages! **SR**

ORIGINAL

Driver's Dead

Peter Lerangis, Scholastic
'Point Horror',
0 590 13346 2, £3.50

Kirsten is new in town but soon becomes acquainted with Maria, Rob, Virgil and the ghost of Nguyen Trang, killed in a car crash and attached to Earth by his restless search for a locket containing a photograph of his parents. The connection between Nguyen, Virgil, Rob and the alcoholic ex-Marine driving instructor, Mr Busk, becomes clearer only with agonising slowness.

This is over-long, over-written and, sadly, probably irresistible to Year 8/9 and above. **VR**

Jan's Journey

Bette Paul, Scholastic
'Point Nurses',
0 590 13348 9, £2.99

Yet another string to Scholastic's bow: the public's preoccupation with all things medical is exploited in this 'Nurses' series.

Jan has fled the civil war in Russia and is working as a student nurse in a British hospital. He's reluctant to take up his Mental Health placement but finds himself deeply involved in the centre – as a patient, dealing with the post-traumatic stress accumulated as a result of his involvement with the war. Hospital routine, romance, social comment – a palatable mixture competently delivered by Bette Paul and likely to appeal to Year 8 and 9 readers. **VR**

Nightmare Express

Linda Hoy, Collins,
0 00 674926 7, £3.99

Yet another horror story but it's funny, full of terror and awful jokes, as it weaves three stories together. Marie and Teresa take a day trip away from their convent school to research the saint with the severed hand; Don Valley escapes from the mental hospital; and the pub quiz team battle for the final. All three come together in a wonderful pantomime of a story that has a nicely cathartic ending for Don. If only all teenage horror stories had as much life in them. **AJ**

Snatched

Nicholas Fisk, Macmillan,
0 330 33815 3, £3.99

Like a number of recent teenage books, this focuses on being a hostage. It's not Lebanon or the depths of Brian Keenan's writing, but an exciting story is spun out of the conflict between captives and captors. The kidnap of Gemma and her brother, Mo, from an embassy is the sudden opening. From then on we're shown the tense and often

harsh interactions between the characters until the final . . . well, you'll have to read it. **AJ**

BEL-MOONEY The VOICES of SILENCE



The Voices of Silence
Bel Mooney, Mammoth,
0 7497 2644 X, £3.99

This is a tremendous story, set in Romania just before the fall of the Ceausescu, which vividly creates the physical reality of austerity and the closed manner of people fearful of the ever-watching eyes of the state. Bel Mooney realises all this through Flora and the relations with her family but, above all, with other children at school. In miniature we have the hopes, fears and betrayals of the larger world. It's fine writing, cleverly capturing the precious elements of childhood and casting a line for young readers into the different lives of nations just a few hours' journey from us. **AJ**

A Lane to the Land of the Dead and other stories

Adèle Geras, Puffin,
0 14 036942 2, £4.99

Ten very different stories linked by the focus on the supernatural and the measured, unsensational quality of the writing. All have a nicely physical grounding in the geography of Manchester and the best of them then take off into more fantastic places: the Angel of Death as a leather-clad attractive young man, the cat which becomes a baby, the Dracula mask which takes over Imran, the wonderful green candle which allows everyone in the old-people's home to remember a special moment. These gently unsettle and suggest other possibilities, frequently dominated by a warmth for people and their lives. **AJ**

Loch

Paul Zindel, Red Fox,
0 09 954261 7, £2.99

A fairly nasty, bloody and empty-headed book which seems to have been cobbled together from a pile of horror film clichés. Hard to believe this is a new Zindel book . . . perhaps he reasoned who needs wacky long

titles and another thoughtful attempt to explore teenage lives when you could have a single word title and the kind of horror which Hollywood seems to love – prehistoric sea monsters, with the habits of Jaws and the cuteness of Free Willy. I hope Paul Zindel is all right. **AJ**

The Dark Stairs

Betsy Byars, Red Fox,
0 09 949371 3, £2.99

A Herculeah Jones mystery which may seem like yet another horror book but Betsy Byars invests it with her style and those characters of hers who are frail and human. Herculeah has a 'private eye' for a mum, a detective for a dad and an insatiable appetite for horror films. This may not be the best of Byars but the plot is tense and exciting. The main character and her friend Meat, playing second-fiddle to the story here, may yet turn out to have more than two dimensions. **AJ**

Older Readers **REVIEWS**

The Secrets of Sarah Byrnes

Chris Crutcher, Macmillan,
0 330 340555 7, £3.99

Both cover and blurb strike a chord of melodrama far removed from this compelling and wittily written story, which has a real sense of pace and tension. Crutcher has command of the gamut of emotions – he crosses adeptly from humour and friendship to terror and animosity.

Moby and Sarah Byrnes are two social misfits who form a friendship which protects them against the attentions of a playground bully and, later, Sarah's violent father.

This is an excellent piece of fiction which should find its way into able Year 9 readers' hands. **VR**

do not ring true; shadowy figures who have occupied her consciousness for as long as she can remember.

This is a convincing read – both plot and characters hold the reader's attention. However, a parallel narrative thread gives far too much away too early and the denouement is thus too readily anticipated. **VR**

The Shadow Man

Cynthia D Grant,
Mammoth,
0 7497 2304 1, £3.99

Gabriel McCloud was the small town badlad from a notorious family, whom almost everyone liked and even loved. Reactions to his untimely death in a car crash are told by many voices in this absorbing, tense novel. Gabe's shadow lies over their lives and forces them all to face truths that have long lain unacknowledged; no amount of 'what ifs' or 'if onlys' will change the fact that a son, lover, pupil, friend, brother, is in the funeral parlour.

Ms Grant unfolds the story and its deep emotions convincingly without hysteria or sentimentality. Highly recommended. **DB**

The Gathering

Isabelle Carmody, Point,
0 590 54215 X, £8.99

'You have to believe in justice to make it happen. You have to believe in the light, or you live in darkness. Believing is the magic.' This chunky thriller/horror tale is at the thinking reader's end of the Point spectrum, so give it shelf space. Despite its 284 pages I couldn't put it down until it had been read. The central character and his four co-members of 'The chain' are fighting the manifest evil in their neighbourhood of the present, which itself is a re-run of the past, and on a personal level they are confronting the damage perpetrated by the dark intentions of the adults in their lives. Powerful stuff!

My teenage tester – the bookish, always candid, Samantha – read it in

one night and allowed it to be 'brilliant'. **DB**

Lizard

Dennis Covington,
Bloomsbury,
0 7475 2415 7, £3.99

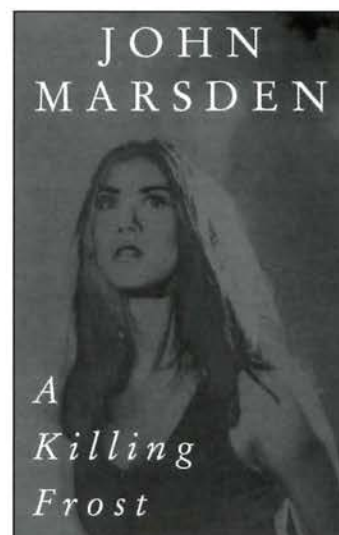
An unusual and compelling first novel. When Miss Cooley finds herself a new beau, Alton Broussard, she packs young Lucius Sims, her ward, off to the Leesville State School for Retarded Boys. Here, because of his strangely deformed face, he's given the nickname, Lizard. Already you can see the territory this story inhabits – we're in rural Louisiana in the 1970s with a cast of misfits, weirdos and eccentrics. Lizard escapes from the school with the aid of a pair of itinerant actors who need him to play the part of Caliban in a two-bit production of *The Tempest* in Birmingham, Alabama. On the road he meets some amazingly strange characters, hears any number of richly embroidered tall stories and continues to ponder the question of who was his father?

Recommend this to older students who prefer character and atmosphere to action and plot. **SR**

Tunnel Vision

Malcolm Rose,
Scholastic Adlib, 0 590
54216 8, £8.99

A tense, thought-provoking thriller in which the charismatic Pat redeems a series of lost teenagers and brings them into the family of the Fellowship. The central character Joel is one of these, scarred by leprosy but able, through Pat, to release a great talent as a long-distance runner. Maria, deeply traumatised by her experiences in Uganda, is first helped by Joel and then helps him to understand what Pat is doing – he's a racist, using the Fellowship to further his aims and determined to plant a 'dirty' bomb in an athletics stadium. It's a great read with a marvellously dramatic climax. **AJ**



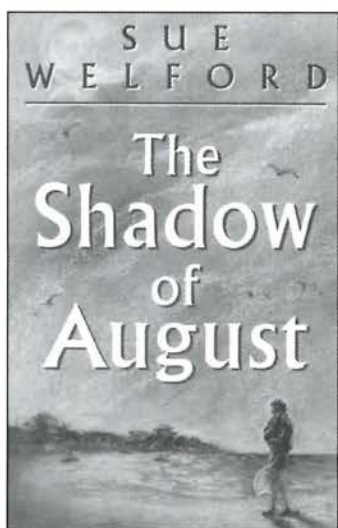
A Killing Frost

John Marsden, Macmillan,
0 330 34523 0, £3.99

The final part of a trilogy set in an imagined future when Australia has been invaded and a small group of teenagers conduct their own guerilla warfare. The story may seem like wartime heroics but the intensity of the writing makes this a powerful and compulsive read which crosses the divide between children's and adult writing, partly for the epic drama of its plot and some depth of thought and feeling in the central character, Ellie. It's gripping and emotion-straining and leaves you feeling as battered as the kids themselves. **AJ**

REVIEWERS in this issue:

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



The Shadow of August

Sue Welford, Oxford,
0 19 271595 X, £5.99

When Mattie's mother dies of cancer Mattie is left alone, save for her boyfriend, Bram. Together they try to unravel the mysteries she is faced with: details of her childhood which

Russell's Law

Charles 'Pee Wee' Russell was probably the most original jazz clarinettist ever – his playing a perfection of harmonic nailbiting surprises. When, in an oft-quoted anecdote, a fellow musician congratulated him with 'that solo was brilliant,' Russell, with a perceptivity worthy of his namesake 'Bertrand,' replied, 'No, it was *unusual*.'

Surrounded, as I have been, by piles of pop-up, a phalanx of fold-out and whole sequences of see-through, stick-in and cut-up material, it's been all too easy to confuse the brilliant with the unusual. The application of Russell's law has been very necessary as I've tried to establish what information books which 'do things' *achieve* by doing them. Notice I use the word 'books' ... for what follows is a look at objects that are books first and foremost – self-contained, sequentially arranged between a front and back, shelveable and re-usable. Kits and games in bags and boxes don't come into it.

One of the things that books with moving parts can do is show how things work. Coincidentally, two of the most approachable here are about aeroplanes. Angela Royston and Colin King's **Plane** (paper engineering by Mark Hiner, Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 0822 0, £8.99) has flaps-a-plenty to show what's behind the many smooth facades featured in air travel – especially the tiny toilet and mini-kitchen. Its basic illustration, though, isn't all that inspiring and a more lasting impression is made by Ken Wilson-Max in his **Little Red Plane** (David Bennett Books, 1 85602 226 9, £7.99). Here, chocks really do come away and the 'plane flies', free of apostrophe, behind buildings and through clouds before being safely landed and refuelled by the reader. Great fun for two at a time. More complex, with helicopter, fire engine and space shuttle is Stephen Biesty's **Incredible Pop-Up Cross-Sections** (eng. by Iain Smyth and Heather Vohs, Dorling Kindersley, 0 75135 342 6, £9.99). Biesty's draughtsmanship is meticulously demonstrative and the text is well-planned so that all the devices used (pull-tabs, vertical and horizontal pop-ups, rotors and slides) amplify it to tell us more about the machines than two dimensions could.

An old favourite of mine is Jan McHarry's **The Great Recycling Adventure** (ill. Edmond Davies and Piers Sandford, Watts, 0 7496 1850

7, £9.99), which uses flaps, tabs and rotors to illustrate fancifully and with great humour the recycling processes for glass, paper, metal and plastic. Here also we find these devices used to reveal parts of the text initially hidden from the reader and to provide the extra surprises which are an important feature of moving-part books. More surprises and adventures in Robert Crowther's **Pop-Up Olympics** (Walker, 0 7445 3734 7, £12.99) to which Bob Hull awarded 13.2 out of 10 in BfK's March issue. No apologies for reminding you about it (or about Bob's rib-tickling review) for this is Leap Year and, like it or not, we're all in for the Atlanta High Jump. See the vaulting vicar cross the bar, runners overtake on the home straight and thrill to the Turkish tearaway in this antidote to sports books. Its simple engineering and humour betoken a collection with instant appeal and relative long life.

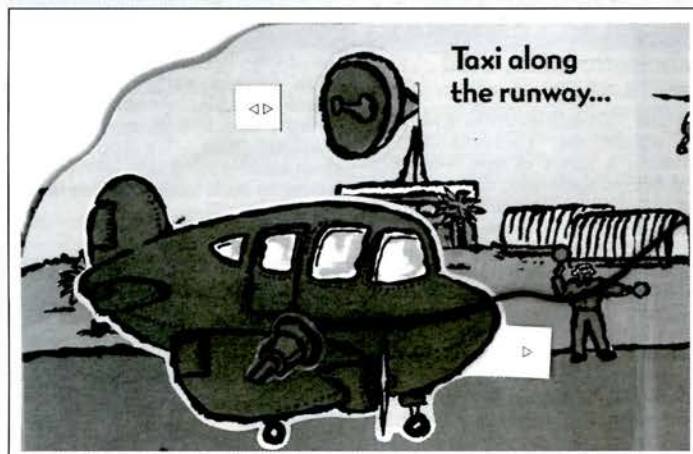
Thirteen years ago Jonathan Miller and David Pelham's **The Human Body** (eng. by Vic Duppa-White and David Rosendale, Cape, 0 224 04210 6, £12.99) came out – literally. It's a classic of the genre – an anatomy textbook in its own right and the next best thing to human vivisection. The working model of the heart, with accompanying text, is alone worth the price *provided the text is read*, for it's all too easy to be seduced by the moving parts which are, after all, only illustrations and, on their own (as George Hunt observes in BfK November '95) are 'ephemeral'. Despite its alluring subject the good Doctor's **Facts of Life** – again with David Pelham (eng. John Strejan, James Diaz, David Rosendale and David Pelham, Cape, 0 224 04680 2, £12.99) – lacks the impact of its all-body predecessor, probably because it's in irreproachable taste, but the fertilisation spread with its crash-diving sperm is memorable.

The lift-flap's potential to show 'What's inside' makes it a natural device for Body Books. In **Your Senses** (0 7112 0736 4)

and **Getting Better** (0 7112 0911 1) both from Frances Lincoln at £8.99 each, Angela Royston and Edwina Riddell show beginner-explorer's bits of their insides, how they work and how they go wrong: 'Lift up the flap to see how Sarah's tummy is pushing up everything she has eaten.' These two graft painlessly onto the initial keystages of NC Science. A look at the senses in greater depth is afforded by Jenny Bryan's **Your Amazing Brain** (ill. Graeme Chambers, Joshua Morris, 1 85724 189 4, £8.99) which uses successive transparent overlays to dissect and rebuild cranial contents. The transparencies – not whole pages but panels inlaid into robust card – show the structure and the accompanying text – straightforward and accurate – explains the function. This, and its companion **Miracle of Birth** (1 85724 985 2) demonstrate what can be done with careful planning of text and an unhysterical approach to the added overlay device – nice to see that the impressive array of consultants has resulted in something really useful.

The benchmark for effective see-throughs was set some years ago by Gallimard with their 'First Discovery' series which, published in the UK by Moonlight at £6.99 each, now extends to over 50 titles. These use a small square format with a spiral spine in a hard case to provide ease of use, and, at their best, employ the transparencies to show change within a given situation. For example, in the recent **Plant Atlas** (ill. Sylvaine Perols, 1 85103 228 2) and **Animal Atlas** (ill. René Mettler, 1 85103 229 0), when a transpage is turned a flower turns into a fruit or an animal is placed in its habitat. Clever stuff, dead simple to use and understand, very durable, quite cheap and really pleasant. Adding a considerable dash of humour to this mix is Tony Ross's **Animals** (1 85103 201 0) in the 'First

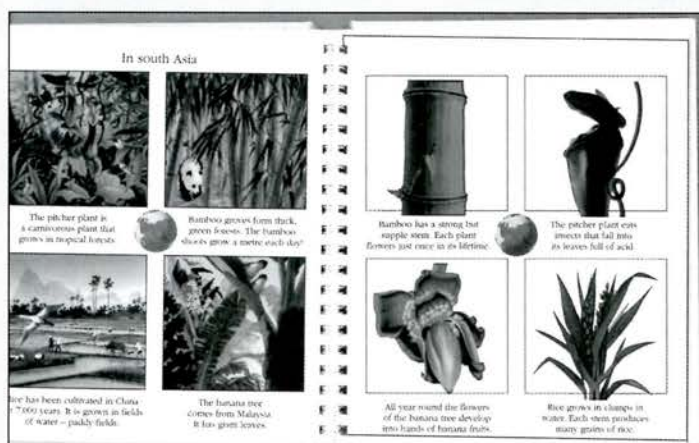
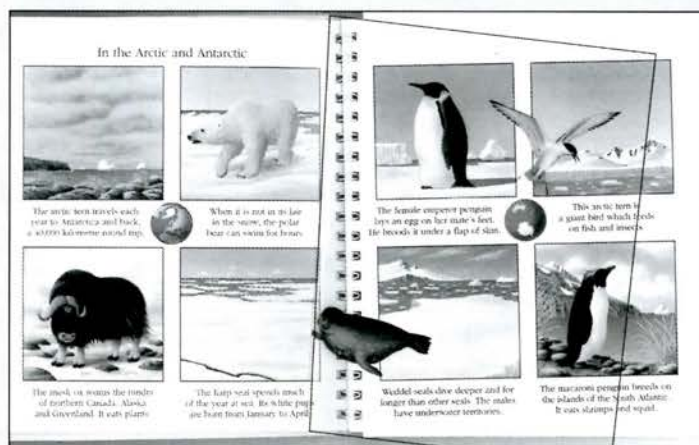
*Ted Percy on
information
books which
... well,
do things.*



Taxi along the runway and refuel in **Little Red Plane**.



'Lift up the flap to see how Sarah's tummy is pushing up everything she has eaten.' From *Getting Better*.

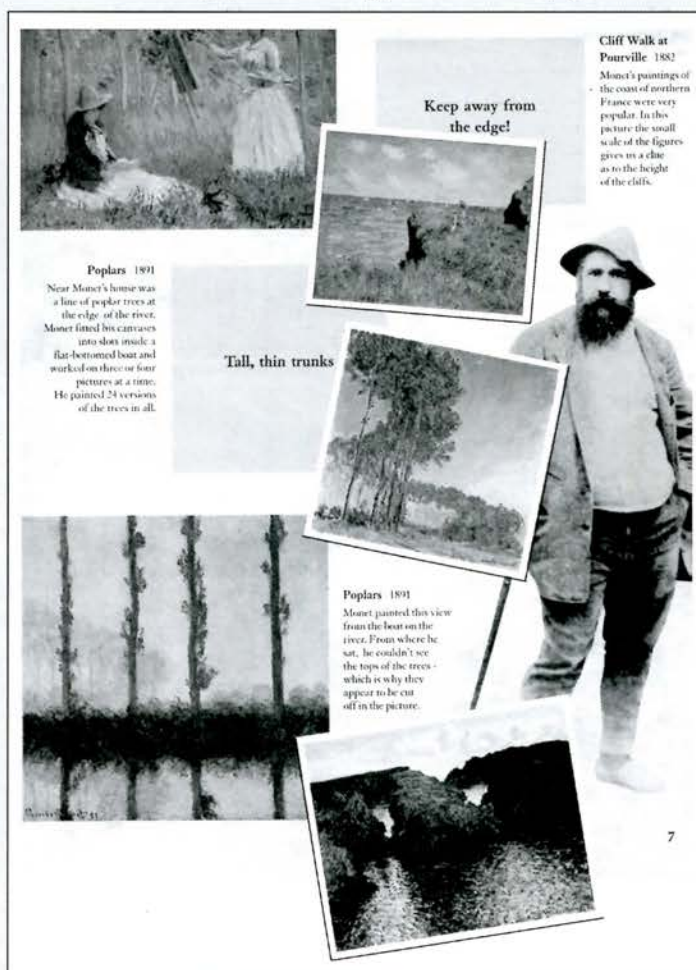


Transparent pages in use in *Animal Atlas* and *Plant Atlas*.

Discovery' Art collection. Here insight into artists' minds is provided by an enlightening dissection of artistic achievements from Lascaux to Giacometti – all properly documented at the back.

And, talking of painters, who better to talk of than the Impressionist of the Year. In *A Walk in Monet's Garden* (Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 0961 8, £14.99) Francesca Crespi has delivered an open-out, set-up tableau of the famous Giverny acres with Claude himself dabbling away by the lily-pond. The whole thing is a delight to assemble and look at – an engineering lesson in itself – but there's not a lot about the man or his paintings in the little booklet that accompanies the model. It's fortunate then, that the tableau's publisher has produced Carole Armstrong's *My Sticker Art Gallery – Monet* (0 7112 0962 6, £4.99). Here you get a good selection of the master's finest. Some are reproduced straight onto the page and others onto stickers that can be chosen to match the clued frames on the pages, which are initially blank. A Monet scrapbook? Yes, but more than this, for the stickers really are as re-usable as claimed so the discovery experience is repeatable. It seems to me that this is a really good way of encouraging second and third looks at subject and treatment in preparation for an eventual look at the real thing. Next stop l'Orangerie!

The fold-out handily provides a bigger than normal page in a book.



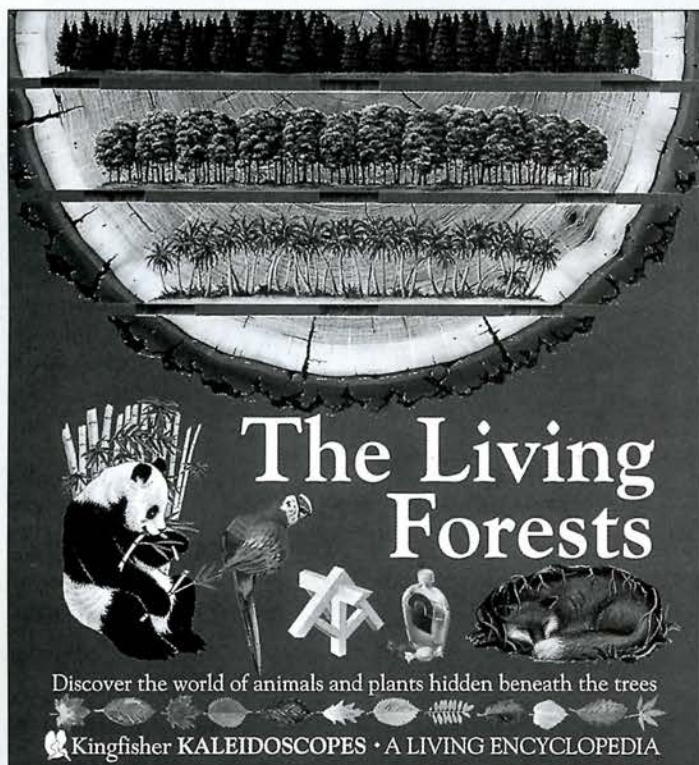
Re-usable stickers in use in *My Sticker Art Gallery – Monet*.

Viking's 'World Unfolds' titles at £8.99 have one page each, but what a page! – seven feet long and double-sided. The idea is you unfold it and learn as you go and the Big Picture gradually establishes itself, with many minor illustrations and lots of (very) small-print captions. *Aircraft* (ill. Martin Woodward, 0 670 86228 2) and *Dinosaurs* (ill. Steve Kirk, 0 670 86230 4) unfold horizontally, while *Human Body* (again!), (ill. Debra Woodward, 0 670 86232 0) and *Skyscrapers* (my favourite), (ill. Stephen Conlin, 0 670 86229 0) do it up and down. When fully extended their natural habitat is the wall, but then you lose the other side and the case becomes too heavy to hang. I wouldn't give them long (despite their length) in a family or classroom but they're a good way of getting a really big picture. Added luminescence distinguishes the foldout in Anita Ganeri's *Creatures That Glow* (Gollancz, 0 575 06147 2, £12.99). Actually this isn't so much a fold-out as a tear-out – it's called a poster –

which you hang in a dark place to observe the phosphorescent outlines of some deepest-sea fishes. Very much a one-off gimmick, this, and non-swimmers shouldn't switch the light off.

Holes in pages are nothing new – the autograph **Tristram Shandy** probably had several – but they're used to excellent effect in A J L'Hommiedieu's **Children of the Sun** (Child's Play, 0 85953 931 8, £4.99). This is a spatial catalogue of our solar system done in the form of a cardboard concertina. We journey from the sun to Pluto, finding each planet in its proper sequence and observing details of its vital statistics as we look at both shiny and black sides. A cardboard orrery, almost.

Then there are books you can listen to. **A Young Person's Guide to Music** (by Neil Ardley, music by Poul Rouders, Dorling Kindersley, 0 7513 5320 5, £16.95) was reviewed in the March '96 BfK. It's just a book with a CD stuck in the front. Text and disc interact most satisfyingly, but there's a real danger of the disc slipping out irretrievably. My solution is a central perforation of the disc-holder with a treasury tag through it. The other phono-book has a disc permanently attached and a cardboard amplifier to demonstrate the principles of Edison's original record player. Again, we've seen and loved it before, and it's won a prize or two. It contains lots of optical devices as well as a compass. The dense text repays gradual exploration and the 'devices' stand lots of wear. Yes, it's **The Most Amazing Pop-Up Science Book** by Jay Young (Watts, 0 7496 1481 1, £14.99).



Perhaps the most ambitious multi-dimensional effort of recent years is Kingfisher's Gallimard-derived 'Kaleidoscope' (that word again!) series, which cost £12.99 each. At the moment there are about a dozen of them spread evenly through the popular arts and sciences, and inside their board-cased spiral bindings these books do all kinds of tricks. I've looked particularly at two. First, **The Living Forests** (1 85697 283 6), which won the Earthworm Award and the Peter Kent Conservation Book Prize. It folds out, tears off, flap-lifts, has tactile bark-prints, cutaways, see-throughs and a sheet of stickers as it introduces picturesque aspects of the sylvan scene from Arctic to Equator as reinforcement of its conservation message. It's a great appetite-wetter but its arrangement seems arbitrary and much of the paper is so desperately glossy that it's hard to read in a less than perfect light. In all, it doesn't reward the sustained attention span, so bitty is it. If the stickers had made a significant contribution to the experience, I'd worry that they're definitely not re-usable. In contrast, **The Art of Painting** (1 85697 279 8), which does all the tricks, too, is logically arranged, developmentally and technique by technique, and the stickers are definitely contributory to the sense, which of course does mean that the book's less effective when they're stuck. Shiny paper again, much of it black, doesn't help, but the impression here is of a definite treatise rather than the mish-mash of **Forests**.



Some of the tricks from **The Art of Painting**.

One device we haven't yet featured is the Rip-Off. Examples are, regrettably, all too common. Not unusual and by no means brilliant; Russell's law finds against them. One such is **The Earth in Three Dimensions** by Keith Lye (Electric Paper, 1 897584 04 0, £14.99). A handsome executive-style, press-studded cardboard folder opens to reveal – a revolving terrestrial globe! Wow! Whatever next!? Very little, actually. An 'atlas' fits into a wallet inside the folder and that's it. Trouble is the atlas isn't an atlas, the axis isn't an axis and the globe isn't globular, not does it contain much information and the most entertaining thing you can do with it is watch the paper globe collapse when you shut the folder. Definitely end of story.

Well, they're all unusual and some approach brilliance. What they all have in common is that they *positively invite and reward curiosity* and they're fun to play with. I think that, when done well, the sort of physical interactivity they demonstrate can do a lot for information-provision. Also, most importantly, here are productions that can often reward skills beyond those of just decoding print and pictures. This immediately gives them a wider reader-scope than their more conventional cousins and an enhanced potential for use amongst those with learning difficulties. Now, looked at conventionally, Pee Wee Russell had learning difficulties – and how! – but, by heavens, he was brilliant, no question. ■

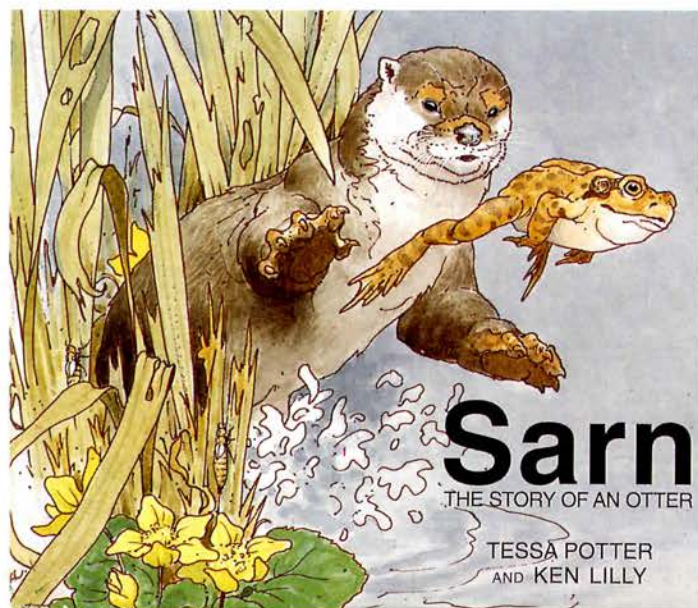


RUTH BROWN THE TALE OF MONSTROUS TOAD

0 86264 702 9 £8.99

Monstrous toad is in for a surprise, but the monster who tries to eat him gets an even greater shock!

Monstrous toad lives in the stagnant, smelly swamps. He is slimy, warty, and *very* ugly, but he is quite happy with his fly-munching, bug-crunching life. What he doesn't realise is that a fearful monster is stalking him, and being a careless, unwatchful toad, he waddles right into the monster's open jaws. The monster snaps his mouth shut, but he is in for an even bigger surprise than monstrous toad...



TESSA POTTER AND KEN LILLY SARN - THE STORY OF AN OTTER

0 86264 440 2 £8.99

Part of a unique collection of four animal picture books carefully designed to entertain and inform.



MICHAEL FOREMAN SEAL SURFER

0 86264 685 5 £8.99

'At last, an imaginative story by a prominent artist that, with no patronising assumptions, just includes a disabled boy. All children will grow in heart and mind by reading this beautiful book' — Richard Rieser, Campaign for Disability in Education and the Media

One springtime, a boy and his grandfather witness a seal giving birth on the rocks and from that day on a friendship forms between them. All summer long, the boy surfs with the young seal and one day the seal saves his life when a huge wave tosses him into the sea.



TESSA POTTER AND KEN LILLY DIGGER - THE STORY OF A MOLE

0 86264 442 9 £8.99

Non Fiction **REVIEWS**



'Families are made of people who love each other. There are small families with just two people.'
From *Families*.

Babies

0 7496 2176 1

Families

0 7496 2175 3

Friends

0 7496 2174 5

Homes

0 7496 2173 7

Nicola Baxter, Watts (Topper series),
£7.99 each

INFANT

Here, four bright primers tell us about our innermost social circles.

Homes shows first the diversity of places people live in from skyscraper flat to the narrowboat 'Bliss' – and goes on to show a home's typical features – stove, bed, storage, etc. **Babies** looks mainly at what babies can and can't do, what we can do for and with them and the difference they make in a family. Again, there's a diversity of samples. **Friends** ('a friend is someone you feel happy with') explores the nature and benefits of friendship; it has room for animals (just) but none for the imaginary companions beloved of many. **Families** looks at interactive groups – from duo to multitude and at the sort of things family members do together.

These are very much 'do-together' books – mini-

mal texts are there to prompt the mature readers with whom these four are best shared by the beginner. All feature bright photographs of happy characters enjoying their lives and plenty of discussion-starting questions. A family of homely, friendly baby-books actually. **TP**

Starting Chess

Harriet Castor, Usborne (First Skills series), 0 7460 1387 6, £5.99

JUNIOR

Chess often seems a bewilderingly complicated game to get to grips with, but the user-friendly format of this Usborne publication should tempt any young novices who are contemplating their first moves.

Written in a friendly, direct manner, the rules of the game and the various pieces are introduced at well paced intervals and there are numerous helpful suggestions to bolster confidence (such as playing one's first game using only pawns, kings and queens). Green instead of conventional black squares enable moves to be clearly illustrated, whilst blue puzzle boards test recently acquired knowledge (answers at the back).

As is often the case with chess books for young

beginners, the individual pieces have been given cartoon-style personalities, but, unlike some, these are neither garishly coloured nor obtrusive and they bring the game to life in an amusing way.

Special moves, openings, and chess notation round off an ideal 'first' book. **VH**

Aborigines

0 7502 1421 X

Native Americans

0 7502 1402 1

Helen Edmonds, Wayland (Peoples under Threat series), £8.99 each

JUNIOR/MIDDLE

These are hugely simplified versions of the same titles in the 'Threatened Cultures' series published by Wayland in 1992. The chapter arrangement, photos, drawings and maps are all exactly the same but now the text is roughly a quarter the length and seems aimed at Years 6/7 rather than Years 10/11. Inevitably a lot of the subtlety and detail in the original books has disappeared and some of the illustrations no longer have a reference point in the text, but the social and political messages still hit home hard.

I suppose it makes good business sense to keep the same layout and change the text, but when you look at the books from the two series side by side you find that the illustrations, whilst the same size, tend to dominate in the simpler books, almost encouraging you to ignore the text – but in the original books illustrations and text seem altogether more harmonised. **SR**

Birds

Mark Evans, Dorling Kindersley (How to Look After Your Pet series),
0 7513 5402 3, £3.99 pbk.

JUNIOR UPWARDS

My sister had a canary called Myrtle that used to sing with its beak shut. I thought this was a freak activity but I find here that cock birds actually should sing this way – another gender mystery solved. I also found that budgies like to play football, in fact there's a footballing budgie here in Norwich City colours which, of course, makes him a Canary as well.

Seriously, though, this is a comprehensive, explicit, well written friendly guide to keeping little birds in cages. It's one of the publisher's successful hardback series by glamorous TV vet and all-round good egg, Mark Evans, which they are now paperbacking. Companion volumes cover *Fish*, *Guinea Pig*, *Hamster*, *Kitten*, *Puppy* and *Rabbit*.

This is a good contribution from Dorling Kindersley, for if you're going to keep a pet you've got to do it properly, and next to experienced practical assistance the best thing is a simple, thorough, well illustrated book. For D.K. to provide these at a bargain price should help a lot of pets. **TP**

Looking at Scottish Art

Brian McGeoch and Steven Porch,
Wayland, 0 7502 1749 9, £10.99

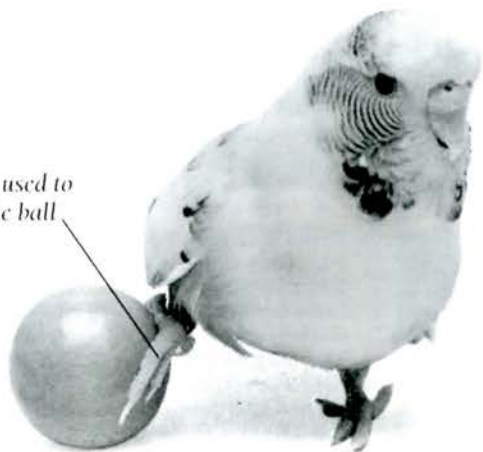
MIDDLE

'The most important thing is that we enjoy art' say the authors (both art teachers working with children in museums and galleries around Glasgow) who succeed admirably in getting their message across in an engaging narrative which reflects their expertise and enthusiasm.

They are also emphatic that art is not just paintings and sculptures. 'It can be printed or photographed, welded or woven, made on a computer or made with a video.'

Using skilfully chosen examples of the achievements of artists who have lived or worked in Scotland, they show how different artists respond to a subject in their own unique style whether employing natural materials, found objects, wall

Foot is used to
push the ball



Wooden ball

Budgies are very curious. They will be fascinated by anything that moves. Give your birds a small wooden ball and they will play their own sort of carpet football!



Left: the footballing budgie from *Birds*.

Above: 'These wind turbines in Anglesey convert the energy in the wind to electricity.' From *The Environment*.

hangings, metal panels or more traditional media. In this exploration of Scottish art, the authors have produced a stimulating and accessible appraisal which should extend the horizons of young people wherever they live. **VH**

What Do We Know About Judaism?

Doreen Fine, Macdonald Young Books, 0 7500 1730 9, £9.99

MIDDLE

Do you get kids descending on your library with RE homework questions like: 'What is Mezuzah?', 'What is a Bar-mitzvah?' or 'Find a list of the Ten Commandments'. If so, this highly attractive book would be very useful as short paragraphs of information are presented clearly under bold sub-headings and there is a particularly comprehensive index. On the other hand, if your students come asking 'What are the main beliefs of the Jewish religion?' or 'Why were Jews persecuted over the centuries?' the book would be something of a disappointment as it tends to concentrate on the ritual and observances of the faith – indeed those aspects which are most conducive to a visual presentation. **SR**

The Environment

John Baines, Wayland (Britain Today series), 0 7502 1537 2, £10.99

MIDDLE/SECONDARY

This book's simple mission is to describe Britain's environment today – all of it – and this it does with the kind of methodical clarity we have come to expect from a writer with the skill and experience of John Baines. He starts off portraying our land's basic physical environment and then shows what changes human activity has wrought in it – from woodland to wetland and mountain to sea. He considers deleterious activities like mining and motoring alongside rural conservation measures and 'alternative' energy sources.

Everywhere, Baines is utterly objective. For instance, he reports that catalytic converters are only effective on 40% of car journeys (the others being too short), that the Channel Tunnel Rail Link entails the demolition of 60 homes and the noise-pollution of 400 more, and that MORI finds that more people are worried about radioactive waste and dog dirt than any other environmental fouling, but he leaves us to draw our own conclusions. So although the book has a mission we make our own message.

This is a truly helpful contribution to environmental awareness, and as the concept of Sustainable

Development gains ground in public consciousness it could have few better allies than John Baines. **TP**

Exploitation of Children

0 7502 1175 X

Judith Ennew

Gender Issues

0 7502 1515 1

Kaye Stearman and Nikki van der Gaag

Wayland (Global Issues series), £10.99 each

SECONDARY

Two very worthy, immensely detailed and thoroughly researched tomes but the prose in both is just so pedestrian it could send you to sleep within ten minutes.

Aimed very much at older students, both books take a world perspective looking at 'real life' cases and drawing comparisons between cultures. Equal opportunities, women's rights and changing gender roles are familiar territory which *Gender Issues* covers competently. *Exploitation of Children* covers an area of life which is not so much at the forefront of our minds and retains the capacity to shock and horrify. Whilst focusing mainly on the developing world, the author is not afraid to point the finger at problems in the West where necessary. Perhaps most shocking of all is the chapter on sexual exploitation – looking at child prostitution and sexual tourism. **SR**

The Young Oxford Book of Archaeology

Norah Moloney, Oxford University Press, 0 19 910067 5, £12.99

SECONDARY

'At one time archaeologists were content to excavate objects so that they could be displayed in museums or private homes... the aim of archaeology today is to discover as complete a picture as possible of life in the past.'

In her well-researched, authoritative yet thoroughly approachable book, Norah Moloney explores and analyses the many ways in which archaeologists currently find and interpret evidence.

Within 160 profusely illustrated, fact-packed pages, she covers a tremendous amount of territory both historically and geographically, but has wisely chosen to involve the reader through a



'Teenage girls from poor rural villages in northern Thailand travel to the capital, Bangkok, in search of work but often end up as prostitutes.' From *Exploitation of Children*.

series of carefully selected case studies. These range from Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania where our earliest known ancestors lived, to the Garbage Project which began in the U.S.A. in 1973 and uses archaeological techniques in order to gain a more accurate picture of modern life.

This is a fascinating book which will appeal to discerning teenagers who enjoy getting their teeth into something a lot more demanding than bite-size chunks served up in double-page spreads. **VH**

Non Fiction REVIEWERS

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

PICTURE BOOK ROUND-UP

Stephanie Nettell assesses the Spring lists

Today, any kids confronting the Pic-'n-Choose counter for picture books are lucky indeed. What a range of de-luxe confections, what top quality ingredients, what bright colours, what a variety of flavours! Where to start?



going to be milked

From *Cock-a-doodle-doo*.

There'll be books for the absolute youngest, of course. *Cock-a-doodle-doo* by Steve Lavis (Ragged Bears, 1 85714 088 5, £8.99) is a counting book with the usual quota of farmyard noises, but they're in huge bold print that bounds in and out of the exuberantly fluid animal portraits, above one clean line of rhythmic (not rhyming) text, climaxing in a glorious jumble waiting to be uncouneted. *BIG FISH, little fish* by Alan Durant and Ant Parker (Macmillan, 0 333 63337 7, £7.99) plays with proportions using font sizes, unfolding pages and crisp, uncluttered, wildly bright drawings - their jokey style deliberately shuns subtlety, while their message is itself nicely subtle.

Anna Currey's *Tickling Tigers* (Hodder, 0 340 66112 7, £9.99; 0 340 63635 1, £4.99 pbk) packs all sorts of subtlety into both her drawings and her story of how a boastful jungle mouse has his bluff called and, wholly undeservedly, emerges a hero. Lively emotions are magically sketched with a line here, a smudge there: tigers seem to be *in* this year, but hers were the ones that captured my heart. The sopppiness - surprise kittens, aa-aah - lurking on the edges of *This and That* by Julie Sykes (Magi, 1 85430 131 4, £3.99) is kept at bay, like Cat's nosy companions, by her repeating the smugly uninformative answer, 'This and that', and especially by the roguish humour of Tanya Linch's collage-like illustrations.

Then there's reassuring solutions to the worries of everyday life, with a familiar baby character to identify with. Ian Beck's highly personal style lights up the simplicity of his little stories, with gentle refrains, about a small girl who seems to live alone with her dog (and whose hair is always alarmingly storm-tossed, even in bed) in *Poppy and Pip's Bedtime* (0 00 198150 1, 0 00 664541 0 pbk) and *Poppy and Pip's Walk* (0 00 198149 8, 0 00 664540 2 pbk) both from Collins at £6.99 hbk and £3.99 pbk. Ellen (who's the striking image of her mum) has Penguin as a companion and his emotions uncannily mirror her own when a new brother



This picture, and that foliage behind the title, from *This and That*.



From *Poppy and Pip's Bedtime*.

proves such a pain. Penguin, however, manages to cheer the baby up, and I must say, I've fallen for him myself. More Penguin please, although Clara Vulliamy's rich watercolours for *Ellen and Penguin and the New Baby* (Walker, 0 7445 3431 9, £8.99) ironically do make the text seem pale. *Little Bean* by John Wallace (Collins, 0 00 198182 X, £7.99) is a paean to the power of the book, of sharing a story. Simple (no dramatic spreads here), idiosyncratic and touching, there won't be a dry eye in the house as Daddy finally makes time in his busy, busy life to buy and read a bedtime sequel for his Little Bean.

But the best of all these homelife portraits are the Frances stories by the Hobans - after 30-odd years! I was thrilled to see the five of them again: *Best Friends for Frances* (0 224 04601 2), *Bedtime for Frances* (0 224 04661 6), *A Birthday for Frances* (0 241 04621 7), *A Baby Sister for Frances* (0 224 04611 X) and

Bread and Jam for Frances (0 224 04591 1) from Cape at £9.99 each. But how would they fare, with their longer texts, sophisticated teasing and a few pastel crayons, against today's glories, the bright young artists and short easy stories? They may not be visually dazzling, but for affection and wit, wisdom, observation and loving warmth, the pairing of Russell Hoban's words and Lillian's expressive little badgers remains unbeatable.

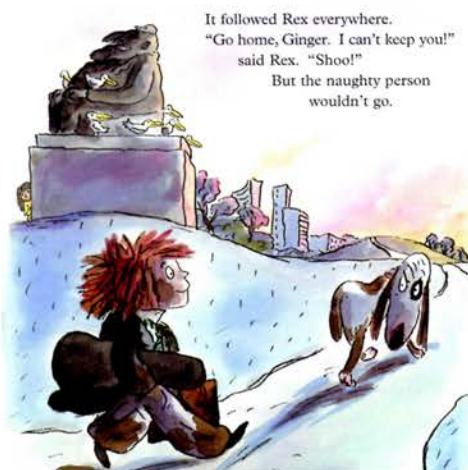
The perfectly named Mr Davies is a Scottie, who's too energetic and friendly for his own good. Charlotte Voake's *Mr Davies and the Baby* (Walker, 0 7445 2525 X, £8.99), with its hand-scripted story and jolly sketches, has the fresh feel of a manuscript, and tells a cleverly simple story involving, but not centring on, a baby in a pushchair. And there's a deliciously shattering climax. Surprise babies, this time chicks, are again the denouement in *The Little White Hen* (Scholastic, 0 590 54208 7, £9.99), but Philippa Pearce's gentle and experienced storytelling with Gillian McClure's fertile evocation of a hillside farm in spring give the story a special atmosphere. Animals and plants spill out of the frames, and the air is thick with expectancy.

Throughout *Kip* (Julia MacRae, 1 85681 592 7, £8.99) Benedict Blathwayt employs the film technique of eye-in-the-sky, instantly graspable by today's telly-babies. We immediately home in over the hills to a farm and a yard and a kennel, where Kip is waiting to start his day, we pan and zoom, draw back and close in through all the furious action, and soar away up again after he's gone to bed. With just the occasional speech bubble, it's another of Blathwayt's opportunities for us to tell our own story, with delicately drawn wildlife as well as events to pore over. Cinematic techniques, too, are brilliantly exploited in *Top Secret - Don't Breathe a Word* (Scholastic, 0 590 54217 6, £9.99), where Ted Dewan explores odd angles and scale from the viewpoint of his strange little blobby-faced creatures as they embark on a night-time thriller, armed with the latest technology. The suspense relaxes into humour as the crack team's target is revealed (a tooth, but don't say I told you).



From *Top Secret - Don't Breathe a Word*.

Even the very young appreciate an inside joke, a touch of wit or farce, some baby sophistication – and for a reviewer it's like a G & T after a long day. John Prater's **Once Upon a Picnic** (Walker, 0 7445 4414 9, £8.99) is a delight. Only the reader is in the know about what's really happening – the central small boy half-guesses, but dozy Mum and Dad are right out of it. A familiar notion about nursery characters turning up in real life is treated with panache, each intriguing spread adding to the joke and hinting at what's to come, so that it's a pleasure to go back to the beginning and recapture the clues. The same frisson of being one up on the characters adds to the 'It's behind you!' joke that builds into the furious chase of **Scared of a Bear** (Hodder, 0 340 62683 6, £9.99; 0 340 65350 7, £4.99 pbk), another superb bit of fun from Hilda Offen. **The Pet Person** comes from a couple of old-handers at this game, and is a wonderfully daft inversion of the lonely-child-forbidden-to-have-a-pet theme. 'Barking by Jeanne Willis, Scratching by Tony Ross, Taken for Walkies by Andersen Press' – say no more. (Except 0 86264 666 9, £8.99, published in June.)



From **The Pet Person**.

Beneath David Macaulay's few plain words and burlesque pictures lies a challenging puzzle, demanding logic, deduction and detection. Perhaps only over-sixes will catch the true relish of **Shortcut** (Dorling Kindersley, 0 7513 7036 3, £9.99) by themselves, with its cross-references and necessary back-tracking, but once kids get the idea they'll find it hugely satisfying, and may even be able to see their own day in a different light. **The Megamogs and the Dangerous Doughnut** (Bodley Head, 0 370 32480 3, £9.99) is much more than an ebullient cartoon: Peter Haswell's spreads are imaginatively laid out, his Searle-like cat gang speak in marvellously inventive language, slyly packed with rhymes and rhythm, and there's a wealth of small satirical detail. It's grand entertainment for any age.

Now two treasures, where language and pictures are brilliant enough in their own right, but together make a special product. I was hugely taken with **James and the Rain** (Hodder, 0 340 66759 8, £9.99; 0 340 66751 6, £4.99 pbk); Karla Kuskin plays affectionately with words, her verse capturing listeners (pre-readers will love it as a counting book, so too will any under-nine) with repetition and metre, surprise and humour. She's a modern A A Milne, partnered by Reg Cartwright as skilful as ever, his sturdy birds and animals marching with a yellow-sou'westered James ecstatically through the rain. Roy Gerrard seems indefatigable – verbally and visually. Once again, in **Wagons West!** (Gollancz, 0 575 06094 8, £8.99), his is that rare offering, a picture book for older readers. His strange little folk, as if tapped down by a giant



From **James and the Rain**.

hammer, are this time pioneers facing danger and privation before finding paradise. Their story is told by the girl-hero as a country and western ballad you could barn-dance to, with pictures so rich in action and social and wildlife detail they'll never pall.

An old-fashioned story, not just a slice of life, a moral or a joke, is not as common as you'd expect. Joyce Dunbar's **Indigo and the Whale** (Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 1023 3, £9.99) has all the eternal feel of a fairy tale, replete with allegory, magic and redemption; it tells of saving the world, and of a battle between 'useful' skills and 'useless' talent. Geoffrey Patterson's sweeping paintings are thick with hot tropical colours – but surely not, as the press blurb says, those of the Mediterranean? We have the original article in Searle-cats for Lee Wardlaw's **The Tales of Grandpa Cat** (Pavilion, 1 85793 751 1, £8.99); there's no clue about when Searle painted them, but they burst with youthful *joie de vivre* and cheerful malice, matching exactly these tongue-in-cheek tall tales about the exploits of an apparently dodderly generation.



Calico Jane, from **The Tales of Grandpa Cat**.

No one other than David McKee could know how to bring together the words and pictures that his own quirkily surreal vision of life throws up. There's a nice black humour to **Charlotte's Piggy Bank** (Andersen, 0 86264 700 2, £8.99)



From **Indigo and the Whale**.

that matches the odd perspectives, internal gags (**I Hate My Teddy Bear** reprise) and running jokes (a developing lonely hearts romance) of his busy full spreads. Charlotte seems to live, like McKee, in a south of France resort bubbling with tourists, lovers, punks, pickpockets and (to my evil-minded eye) ladies of the street. There's a whole world going about its business quite outside the jovially jaundiced little story, and observant youngsters will revel in it.



From **Charlotte's Piggy Bank**.

Speaking of quirky . . . Sara Fanelli has got to be a one-off. She's now come up with **My Map Book** (ABC, 1 85406 225 5, £8.95), an interactive drawing book that's anarchic and stimulating, and in such an authentic infant-school style that it is surely bound to prompt its young readers into imitation (even on the page itself). Who else could have drawn a map of their day, their tummy or their dog as well as their bedroom? For older imaginations, but with a high quirkiness quotient, comes Marian and Ruth Waller's **The Leaping Llama Carpet** from Australia. It's totally gorgeous. It fools around with alliteration and rhyme, crazy typesetting, innovative design and magical notions; it's funny, exciting and mysterious, rich, beautiful and captivating. I'd be pushed to explain the story – how dream llamas woven into a carpet defeat its thieves – but, I do believe, this one's my favourite book (Allen & Unwin/Little Ark, distributed by Ragged Bears, 1 86373 958 0, £9.99).

It is the personal stamp of the artist that marks each of the next three. There's something of the

PICTURE BOOK ROUND-UP
continued on page 28 . . .

BfK News

CLIFFHANGERS

Have you ever been lured into a movie by the sort of 'trail' which makes a return to the cinema the following week an absolute imperative? Malcolm Macneill, of Renfrew District Libraries, reckons the same strategy will work for books . . . hence **CLIFFHANGERS**. Here's one of them:

Round, and round, his voice went and through it came a noise. It was low and vibrant, like wind in a chimney. It grew louder, more taut, and the wall blurred, and the floor shook. The noise was in the fabric of the church: it pulsed with sound. Then he heard a heavy door open; and close; and the noise faded away. It was now too still in the church, and the footsteps were moving over the rubble in the passage downstairs.

'Who's that?' said Roland.

The footsteps reached the stairs, and began to climb.

From Alan Garner's *Elidor*, chosen by Anthony Masters . . . who's joined by Anne Fine, Gillian Cross, Martin Waddell and an assortment of other contributors, including child readers, all of them nominating a favourite 'trail'.

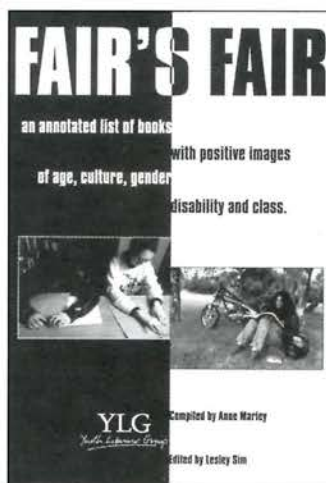
It's fun, revealing and – best of all – can be customised to any group of readers, child or adult. For a free copy of **CLIFFHANGERS** and **CLIFFHANGERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**, contact Malcolm Macneill at Library HQ, Marchfield Avenue, Paisley PA3 2RJ (tel. 0141 887 2468).

From other Libraries . . .

Beset as they are with re-organisation, ever diminishing budgets and the utter shame of being a public service, Libraries have every excuse, these days, to batten down the hatches, keep stum and wait for better days to come. Not so, though . . . enterprise, thankfully, abounds in their recommendation of reading generally and certain books in particular. Here are a couple of recent initiatives which have caught BfK's eye:

FAIR'S FAIR

No bet-hedging here. This, along with commentary from luminaries like Bernard Ashley, Sally Greengross and Bev Mathias, is 'an annotated list of books with positive images of age, culture, gender, disability and class'. **FAIR'S FAIR** is compiled by Anne Marley, edited by Lesley Sim, and has a foreword by Christine Dyer, current Chair of the Youth Libraries Group National Committee. It's wide-ranging yet sharply focused – but, above all, has a warmly generous feel to it. Such lists all too easily present themselves in a pharisaic thank-God-we-are-not-as-other-readers kind of way but there's no trace of such self-approval in these pages. On the contrary, there's a beguiling sense of balance kept throughout between 'literary' and 'content' issues together with the recognition that the two, in the end, are inseparable. Punches aren't pulled, though. Melvin Burgess's



The Baby and Fly Pie is summarised in two terse sentences:

A hard look at the world in the not-too-distant future, where the gap between the haves and the have-nots is cruelly delineated. A bleak story which will give teenagers much food for thought on the class system.

The class system? Oh dear . . . three more librarians struck off the Christmas card list of that nice Mr Major. Highly recommended, **FAIR'S FAIR** costs £6.00 and is available from James Askew and Son Ltd, 218-222 North Road, Preston PR1 1SY (tel. 01772 555947).

TODDLE ALONG TO YOUR LIBRARY

Nick Butterworth's appealing library promotion poster for under-fives has been produced by Peters Library Service, with Collins Children's Books, to encourage parents and carers to take babies and toddlers to their local library.

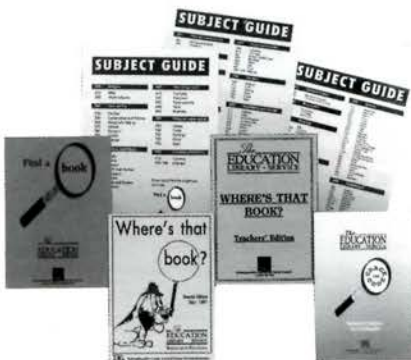


It's a toddle! Nick Butterworth with the toddler library promotion poster which has been a run-away success for Peters Library Service.

54 library authorities have taken part in the project and Patsy Heap, Principal Officer at Birmingham Libraries, says, 'This is a lovely poster, well-suited to the age group and very attractive!' . . . It certainly is. For further information contact Lynne Taylor, Peters Library Service, 120 Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham B5 6RL (tel. 0121 666 6646).

WALL-MOUNTED SUBJECT GUIDES

Each of these A2-size wall charts features some of the most frequently used subject headings together with the appropriate classification number. These colourful, visually striking charts can provide pupils and staff with a quick guide to locating stock and refer the user to the relevant subject index booklet.



SUBJECT INDEX BOOKLETS

Produced for different phases (Infant, Junior/Primary, Secondary), each comprises an alphabetical list of subjects against which is given the appropriate Dewey classification number.

The wall-mounted subject guides cost between £5 and £6.50 each and the subject index booklets range from 80p to £2.40. For an order form, contact The Education Library Service, Central Library, Four Seasons Centre, Westgate, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 1NH (tel. 01623 647229).

Dunblane Primary School – Rebuilding with Books



After the tragedy of mid-March, a quiet and sensitive show of support has been instigated by the Scots poet and storyteller John Rice who lives in Kent. He has been encouraging all writers, illustrators and makers of children's books to become involved in the process of rebuilding the spiritual fabric of the school by contributing a copy (or copies) of their book signed with a special message of love and support.

'It's a simple yet effective way of enlisting the support of all those whose main aim is to amuse, entertain, educate and enthrall children through the medium of the printed word and image,' says Rice, 'and if it's true that the single greatest power in the universe is the imagination, maybe we can commandeer some of it to benefit the children, staff and parents at Dunblane Primary School.'

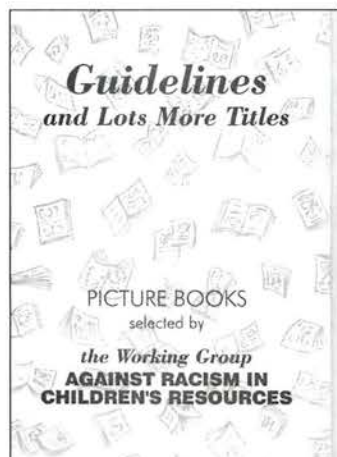
If you are a writer, illustrator, publisher and you'd like to express your support in this way, simply sign a copy of your book, add a personal message and send it to The Library, Dunblane Primary School, Dunblane, Perthshire, Scotland. And a final word from Rice, 'Send your contribution quietly – the less fuss the better.'

VIEWPOINTS

Children's Literature Conference, 5th-6th July 1996
Worcester College of Higher Education

This year's conference speakers are Martin Waddell (Catherine Sefton), Graham Watkins and Robert Dunbar.

Booking forms and further information from 'Viewpoints', The Professional Development Office, Worcester College of Higher Education, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ (tel. 01905 855056 or fax 01905 855132).



Guidelines and Lots More Titles ... Picture Books

This, from The Working Group Against Racism in Children's Resources, follows up the 1993 Guidelines which sold more than 5,000 copies:

All the books had been carefully selected by a large group of reviewers who had a wide range of cultural backgrounds and linguistic and professional skills.

The new edition has updated guidelines for selection criteria; an introduction by prize-winning children's author, James Berry, and reviews of almost a hundred more recently

published, recommended books. Titles, still in print, from the first are also included.

So far, so admirable – a hugely important cause pursued with irreproachable consistency. If only the 'sensitivity to terminology' exhibited here were matched by a corresponding sensitivity to language, though. For instance, the self-imposed 'standardisation' of the reviews 'in an effort to make comparisons meaningful' (should books themselves be standardised for the same reason?) results in annotations which all too often read like telegrams sent to delegates at a Convention for Human Rights:

Rapunzel

Classic fairy tale style. Good choice of background colour. Print easy to read. Illustrations excellent, although

extremely stylised, faces with rosy cheeks. All black characters. Very popular.

Fair enough if what you're after is assent to some sort of Composite Resolution ... but a long way short of the celebration of human diversity through reading which is, surely, the main point of the enterprise. Trust the list, then. In its range and detail, it's superb. Try FAIR'S FAIR, however, for an approach which is just as well intentioned but won't set your teeth on edge even as you nod approval.

Single copies of the publication cost £7.00 (trade and multiple copy discounts available). Details from WGARCRC, 460 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 3LX (tel. 0171 627 4594 or fax 0171 622 9208). ■

❖SPECIAL OFFER❖

TRADE & PLUMB-CAKE FOR EVER, HUZZA!

That is the title of John Rowe Townsend's study of John Newbery, the enterprising and amiable bookseller who pioneered the children's book trade 250 years ago.

Until June 30, 1996, Colt Books are offering this illustrated work – essential to



everyone with an interest in the story of children and their books – at £15.00 + p&p £1.50 (UK only), saving £8.45 on the normal price of £24.95. Send payment to Colt Books Ltd., P.O. Box 443, Cambridge CB2 2HL, or ring 01223 357047 with credit card details.

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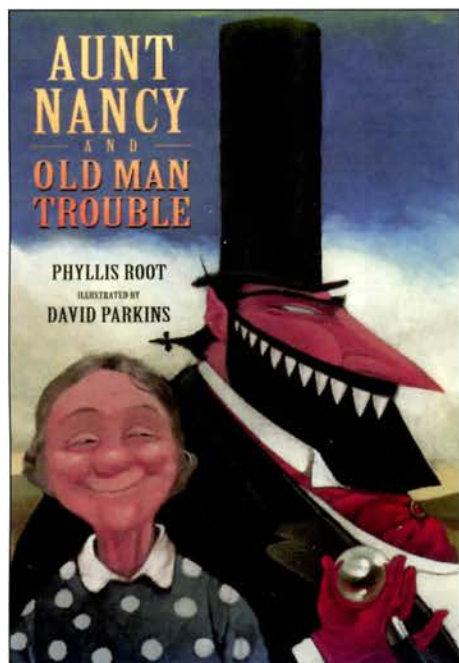
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Invoice will be sent with order

PICTURE BOOK ROUND-UP

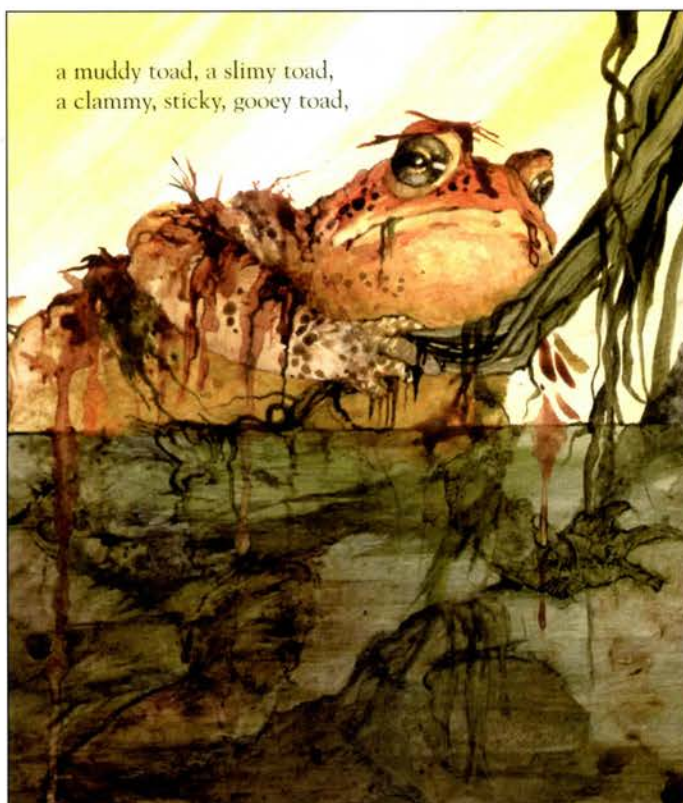
continued from page 25 . . .

'policemen getting younger' syndrome about my surprise at how Charles Fuge has become such a recognisable part of the picture book scene. His illustrations for James Riordan's retelling of Grimm's **The Barnyard Band** (Macmillan, 0 333 62099 2, £7.99; 0 333 64758 0, £3.99 pbk) turn it into a sophisticated animated film in intense colour, full of shadows and grotesquerie, powerful and with a brutal edge to its humour. Enormously impressive and visually educative, but perhaps not very likeable. There's a similar intensity in Ruth Brown's painting, but also a lushness and a poetically heightened reality that softens it for popular consumption. Even her horribly warty toad, stalked by a scaly reptile of dinosaur proportions as he lurks in his slimy pool, and described with a spectacular collection of loathsome adjectives, is somehow not really repulsive. The colours of **The Tale of the Monstrous Toad** (Andersen, 0 86264 702 9, £8.99) are the dank browns and fetid greens of a rampantly fertile swamp, against a sinister pale gold sky, yet still the book manages to glow attractively. I imagine Fuge would die rather than glow.



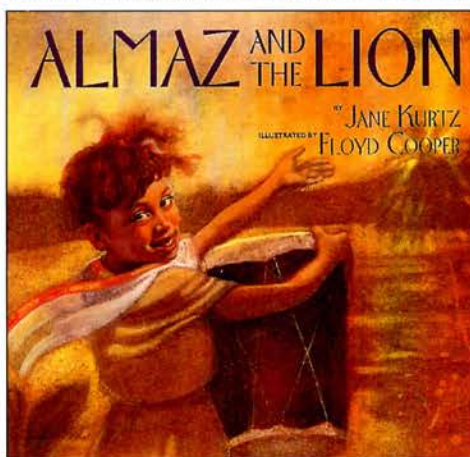
Some of Fuge's effects with silhouettes and shadows contribute to the air of menace with which David Parkins cloaks Phyllis Root's **Aunt Nancy and Old Man Trouble** (Walker, 0 7445 4002 X, £8.99), a traditional trickster except that Root has invented a laid-back old lady to outwit her sinister visitor. It's told in a rural American drawl, and her final beam of self-satisfaction leaves a similar one on the reader's face.

From the fantasy world into the real one. Jakki Wood's **Animal Hullabaloo** (Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 0945 6, £8.99), 'a wildlife noisy book', looks at first like an ordinary, pleasant enough attempt to encourage babies to recognise animals and their calls. Then it dawns that there are an awful lot of animals, becoming more and more exotic, and their noises are surprisingly well suggested, not only onomatopoeically but in the very lettering. It proves great fun, and the back endpapers provide an indention list. **Ms MacDonald Has a Class** (Bodley Head, 0 370 32360 2, £9.99) isn't quite what it seems, either. Jan Ormerod, with her unequalled talent for bringing small figures to life, sets the whole chaotic business of an infant class putting on a performance – plans, costumes, rehearsals – the familiar song, but with such scrupulous care and detail that it will take dozens of siftings to grasp it all. A fantasy that perfectly mirrors real life.



From *The Tale of the Monstrous Toad*.

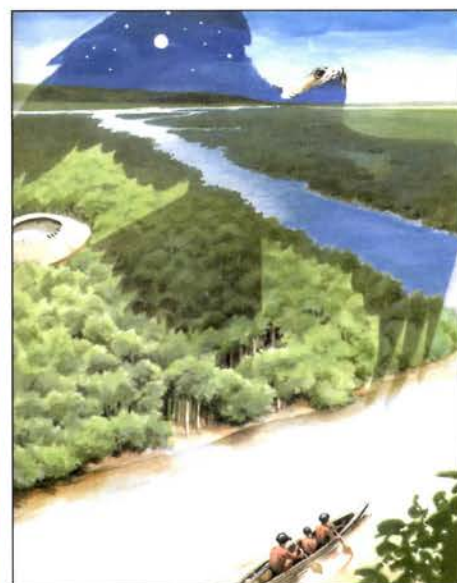
Gollancz have a picture series portraying children's lives in other cultures. **Muhammad's Desert Night** (0 575 06291 6, £8.99; 0 575 06292 4, £3.99 pbk), in Cristina Kessler's short, direct story set among the endangered Tuareg, is one of darkness, brilliance, heat and cold, all magnificently suggested in the vast skies and towering uncluttered dunes of Ian Schoenherr's paintings. Together they make poetry of a kind, clean and spare. **Almaz and the Lion** (0 575 06215 0, £8.99; 0 575 06216 9, £4.50 pbk) by Jane Kurtz, a traditional tale adapted to show the life and manners of an Ethiopian village girl, is tender and more diffuse;



Floyd Cooper's soft-edged pastels reflect a story about love and trust. More straightforwardly educational are the 'Discovery Flaps' from Child's Play, in conjunction with Oxfam (£3.99 each), unpretentiously illustrated by Annie Kubler and Caroline Formby, who make valid use of the flap for entertaining details. Food, play and transport follow the formula of **Come home with us** (0 85953 791 9), describing children's homes all over the world. Conventionally neat but not at all dull.

Richard Kidd takes us for a romp through the art world, as Daisy and her dog set off on a round-the-world search for favourite things to paint in a competition. With a special kind of *trompe-l'oeil* we see through the eyes of five great artists as well

as Daisy's, before she returns to find them all in her bedroom. Nothing new in tucking great works of art into a picture book, but, like Daisy's picture, **Almost Famous, Daisy!** (Frances Lincoln, 0 7112 0981 2, £9.99) deserves its red rosette for vivacity and exuberance.



From *Children of the Moon*.

And to finish with something for any age, even adult, the 'Tales of Heaven and Earth' series from Moonlight (£6.99 each) are aesthetically ambitious. Illustrated precisely and delicately, and with a wealth of exquisite miniatures decorating the borders of the text, they offer some of the great stories of the world's religions, with explanatory notes in the margins as they go along and full-scale back-up material at the end. **Children of the Moon** (1 85103 192 8) uses the everyday experiences of a Yanomami boy of the Amazon to explore their beliefs and legends, and **The Prince Who Became a Beggar** (1 85103 208 8) more formally retells episodes from the life of the Buddha.

There. The kids have gorged themselves and learned something. ■