

Facts rather than Fiction: Information Books

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An endpaper illustration by Jackie Morris for her book *Song of the Golden Hare* (2013). Copyright © 2013 Jackie Morris. Reproduced with permission. (See under Reviews.)

EDITORIAL

I am a story addict. I find it strange when someone tells me that they never read fiction. But looking back over my childhood, I realise that I didn't consciously make a distinction between fiction and non-fiction (so called) at the time. I suppose that my first reading primers were factually based; certainly there was not much story about them as I followed Old Lob the farmer in his activities round the farm with Shep the dog and Dobbin the horse, not to mention other assorted farm animals. Then there were those solid Edwardian books inherited from my parents – the one from which I learnt about geology and the formation of the earth and rocks presented through the conversations between an uncle and his nephew as they wandered through the hills; or that wonderfully hagiographic Lives of Great Men series. I read them again and again just as I did *Our Island Story* together with *Scotland's Story* – H.E. Marshall's romantic presentations of history. I read *The Map that Grew* (Selwyn Dewdney) and *A Valley Grows Up* (Edward Osmond) with as much passion as *Little Women* (Louisa M. Alcott), *The Eagle of the Ninth* (Rosemary Sutcliffe) and *Old Peter's Russian Tales* (Arthur Ransome) – learning as much from each.

I am not sure, however, I would have been so attracted to the current shelves of non-fiction books organised neatly in Dewey order. They are so relentlessly uniform. It is not the factual nature of the content – I loved Arthur Mee, and my father's Victorian *Encyclopaedia of the Animal Kingdom*, multi-volumed and beautifully illustrated, it was seen as a treasure trove, while history lessons were made interesting by R.J. Unstead. I can see that there is a great attraction in the 'sound-bite' approach attached to a photograph that will be reused again and again linking closely to a curriculum topic, but 'reading' such offerings is curiously unsatisfying.

However, this is not the whole story. While children are increasingly using the Internet to chase down facts, authors are once more looking to use

informational texts as a way to inspire. Both Nicola Davies and Mick Manning with Brita Granström are keen to harness the curiosity of the young reader, instructing yes, but attracting attention and creating a desire to explore. Their articles describe how they approach creating information texts and why. These are contemporary works, but, as Matthew Grenby shows, the history of such an approach is a long one.

Then there is the problem of nomenclature – 'non-fiction' is a term that firmly distances such texts from fiction. In the past 'story' was held in suspicion. Children's reading should be informational. Today, non-fiction is seen as the poor relation. However, both Chris Brown and Zahra Amlani argue against such an attitude, Chris Brown in his account of the School Library Association's (SLA) Information Book Award and Zahra Amlani in her defence of the factual being as inspirational to the imagination as any fantasy. This is the key word – inspirational. Big Picture Press has taken this to heart. Though the name might suggest its list will engage in published picture books for younger readers, this is not the case. Here information is being seen as an area that can be visually attractive – and interactive – providing the readers of today with another path to finding out about the world around them.

No one would deny the importance of the World Wide Web in providing information. However, books do have their place, as is recognised through such awards as the SLA Information Book Award and also the Royal Society Young People's Book Prize; there is nothing dull about this year's shortlist, as Jennifer Harding shows. Indeed, all our contributors demonstrate that the day of the informational text is far from over. The book still has a key role to play, one that is being explored by authors and artists in ways that excite the imagination as surely as any fictional approach. Fact rather than fiction? Surely fact and fiction.

Ferelith Hordon

Rewarding Information

Chris Brown

INFORMATION
BOOKS

The School Library Association Information Books Award is now in the fourth year of existence. Originally it evolved from a concern of mine that, with the demise of The Times Educational Supplement Award, there was no other UK celebration of the finest qualities of books of information aimed at young readers. The Blue Peter Award does have a best book with facts section and some other awards do not exclude this genre, but there was no scheme dedicated solely to such books. Yet information books generally account for a large proportion of all library, and school library, stock. Also a number of publishers specialise in this sector, whilst some whose work is with books for children in general include it as an element of their annual titles listings. The School Library Association (SLA) board took up the cause and set up a working party to investigate the feasibility and practicality of establishing such an award. Whilst the association has quite splendid full-time office staff to deal with administration, it was determined that none of the actual costs of the award should come from SLA funds, but all has to be raised by sponsorship. Our indefatigable Chief Executive, Tricia Adams, then secured the support of Hachette Children's Books, who have been invaluable in their continuing assistance and financial provision, whilst being impressively professional in supporting the independence of the award operationally.

From the outset, this has been quite definitely not a non-fiction award; the title uses the term 'Information Books' precisely and deliberately. The commonly applied term 'non-fiction' is such an inexplicably negative descriptor. It implies, indicates and continuously reinforces a concept that books dealing with facts are an underclass in the world of books; that information books are a mundane non-art being merely a functional tool, useful but not capable of any of the uplifting inspiration that might be discovered in more positively defined and classified books. In *The Guardian* (21 September 2012) the novelist Lisa Appignanesi wrote:

The term non-fiction has always seemed to me a strange sort of negative beast, as if fiction, the making up of stories, has always come first and was the primary form of putting words together. It ... makes as much sense as defining all prose as non-poetry.

She went on to elucidate that it seems only in English classification does such negativity occur.

It might be considered that being so particular over a word constantly applied in general everyday use is really rather pointless; everyone is so accepting of the non-fiction term that it has no impact, importance or inference. But my concern is with education, the development of learning and experience in youngsters: they inherit our accepted patterns of language use, they as young children encounter books of facts as being non... and I wonder what lasting impression that creates in an expanding mind.

We are told over and over again that we live in an 'information age' and that we are in the midst of an 'information revolution'. All educationalists alert to the value of books are, I trust, committed and active in ensuring that books take their rightful place at the heart of seeking information. We institute a variety of tactics to ensure that books give results, tangibly useful results, alongside and integrated with other sources of information. Electronic technologies give access to so much, but in the end tend to present an information overload, non-selective and in enormous quantities. But it is all information. There must be sound, commercially sound, reasons why we use a search engine to investigate information and quite definitely not non-fiction. It does seem extraordinary to me that facts online are an informative wonder, whilst facts in books are non-fiction. We really do need to question and ponder on our terminology and do

all we can to ensure that the book is a positive and valued factor in the acquisition of information.

Within the world of books for children, coverage and attention to books of information is so minimal it might seem to appear almost grudging at times. Reviews receive nothing like the attention, or indeed space, given to the various forms of fiction. Indeed, information often is not covered at all. In our conferences, professional workshops, various forums, specialist meetings and discussions, information books, or their creators, rarely feature. When national papers have a supplement on books for children, information books usually feature as an added extra with a broad age appeal survey over a page or two at the most. I repeat the observation that a considerable proportion and often the majority of books on our library shelves are information books. Those who work in schools, as well as many parents, are well aware that fiction, in book form, holds little or no appeal for many young readers or potential readers; they are interested only in what is real, in information. We might, and do, try to encourage and develop a breadth of reading experience and enjoyment, but our launching point has to be whatever enthuses the individual.

The enthusiasm and dedication with which many creators of information books research, select and structure their work, the fine and purposely targeted writing and word skill of many authors can be of the highest order. The craft of analytical construction of both content and writing can be evangelical in promoting enthusiasm and stimulating interest. The applied creative skills of illustrators, designers, editors and the whole team behind such books pursue effective and often startlingly imaginative ways of conveying truths to young minds. We do need to ensure that we relish, cherish, celebrate and promote information books and that is the purpose of the SLA Award.

How the Award Functions

In the latter part of each year publishers are invited to send in submissions of books published in that same year. So the award is for books first published in the UK in the previous year to the judging: the 2014 award is considering books first published in 2013. Publishers are required to send in six copies of each book and to make a commitment, as far as is reasonable, that any book subsequently shortlisted will continue to be available throughout most of the year. The SLA office coordinates the invitations and receives the submissions before the books are distributed to our four judges and myself, as chair, with one complete set of the books to be available as needed at judges' meetings. The judges then begin to assimilate all the titles, to read and consider each one and, by email, to begin to compare initial impressions. Our email messages continue and intensify as we discover those books receiving approbation from a number of judges. Eventually we each suggest specific proposals and then make decisions on which titles will be longlisted.

The judges currently include three school librarians, each with differing school-sector and pupil-age backgrounds, and a representative from Peters library suppliers as someone with a broad range of applied experience. As chair, I was a primary teacher, for 23 years a headteacher, and for 15 years reviews editor for the SLA journal *The School Librarian*. The award has been set up divided into three age groups – Under 7, 7 to 12, 12 to 16 – and so we create three longlists. Next in the sequence we meet to focus on those initial lists and, after intense deliberation, determine our shortlists. Our aim is for three books in each age category although that has some flexibility and occasionally there will be four for one group. Richard Leveridge, the SLA production editor, then creates the design for a poster featuring all the shortlisted books and this is printed and distributed with practical help from Peters.

With our timing aimed at getting all that stage complete by Easter, the Summer Term is then the time for schools to become involved through our Children's Choice system. The

shortlisted books are made available at an advantageous price for school librarians or teachers to share and discuss the books with youngsters, and to gain individual assessments and appreciations. The pupils are then invited to vote for their choice of a winner in their relevant age category. These votes are then received at the offices of the SLA, where counting will take place. Meanwhile, we realised early on that a factor not evident in other such programmes has to be explored. So the judges seek advice from all kinds of person with subject specialities and particular knowledge to ensure that each of our shortlisted books is factually accurate in every detail; it may be a surprising concept, but neither librarians nor teachers know everything!

We have been working with the basic criteria of seeking out the very best books, those that are most successful in conveying to young readers the essence of the featured subject or aspect of a subject. Of course, design and presentation, the accuracy and appropriateness of illustrative material, as well as the qualities of the writing, all play a crucial integrated part. But our criteria do not focus heavily on specifically library or classroom-use aspects; a contents list, an index, a glossary and so on are all useful, provided they are accurate of course, but these are not essential for us as judging factors. If the content of the book is superb then the book is superb. We become increasingly aware that creating a successful book for the youngest readers may be the most difficult task of all. The need is to be selective in the choice of facts and to present these in an attractive manner in plain simple language, yet without distorting the truth in any way. To achieve that within a book attractive to the youngest ones is remarkable, as so often for this age group books offer merely a succession of facts rather than any progression of information.

Discussions continue and sometimes we get down to really very fine detail in making a final decision on our judges' choices for a winning title in each age category. Then things become ever more finicky in text examination and the dissection of visuals as the judges' task gets even more specific with a need to elect one of the three to become the overall judges' choice winner for the year. Meanwhile the Children's Choice votes are amalgamated to calculate which, in their view, is the most popular, as that will become their winning Book of the Year. We do not integrate judges' and youngsters' judgements as the differences can throw up some interesting aspects, and often the youngsters latch onto a title that only by an extremely narrow margin missed out in the judges' selection.

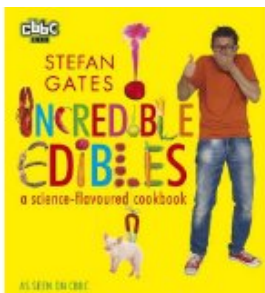
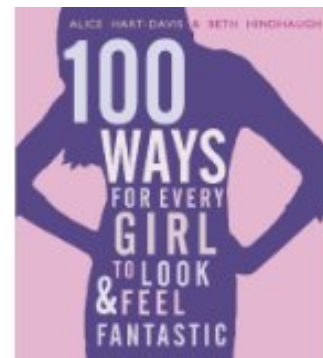
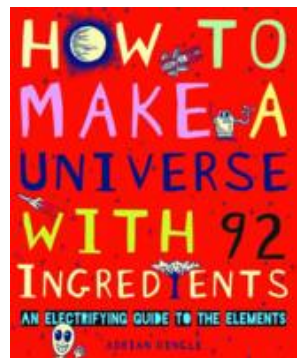
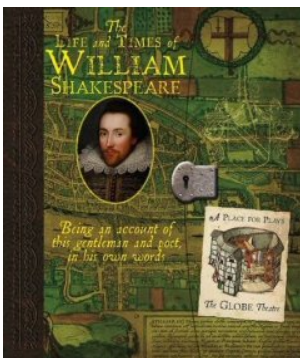
I had observed over many years that with a number of book awards only an actual winner receives any tangible recognition or acknowledgement. Also I have noticed that an author/illustrator might be shortlisted a number of times over the years, demonstrating a totally extraordinary consistency of high quality, but if not an actual winner at one time there is nothing to show for that astonishing achievement. Consequently our sponsorship allows for each creator of one of our shortlisted books to receive an award. In addition there is a presentation to the winners in each age group for both the Children's Choice winners and also for the judges' choices. Finally there are two announcements and further presentations: first for the overall winner determined by youngsters and finally for the judges' award of the SLA Information Book of the Year. Our presentations and awards ceremony in 2013 became associated with the annual Bath Children's Literature Festival and will again be part of that festival this year, in Bath on 30 September 2014.

The Books

We have received many brilliant books over the four years of this award, demonstrating that, in spite of commercial uncertainties and market pressures, the publishing of information books can continue to meet challenges and aim high. Our longlists of around ten books in each age group and in each year bear tribute to that fact. Of course, we have received some that do not thrill us. In our first years we were receiving a few books not published in the required and stated year. We've also

received fiction based on facts and have carefully perused the balance within the tale to decide if it is more fact than fiction or if there's enough fact to justify inclusion. Not unexpectedly we needed to make some decision about folktales, which are not considered to be fiction under Dewey; we follow the lead of the folklorist Katherine M. Briggs, who divided her massive *Dictionary of British Folk-Tales in the English Language* (1970) into stories and legends. She defines legends as being matters people at some time believed to be true and we have chosen that distinction in selecting whether or not a book of folktale material has shared, often orally, fiction content or if we accept it as being information.

Our winners are mounting up into a fantastic listing of the cream of the very best. In our first year, 2011, the Children's Choice winner was for *The Life and Times of William Shakespeare*, compiled by Kristen McDermott and Ari Berk with various illustrators, published by Templar. The judges' choice of Book of the Year went to *How to Make a Universe with 92 Ingredients*, an amazingly comprehensive yet accessible book covering the 92 elements by Adrian Dingle, published by Scholastic. The author flew from America to be with us at the presentation.



In 2012 the Children's Choice and our judges' Book of the Year coincided, and both awards went to the stunningly illustrated and clearly concise text of *Can We Save the Tiger?* by Martin Jenkins and with drawings by Vicky White, published by Walker. Last year, 2013, the youngsters chose *100 Ways for Every Girl to Look & Feel Fantastic* by the mother-and-daughter team of Alice Hart-Davis and Beth Hindhaugh, published by Walker. After the prize event it was quite special to see Beth Hindhaugh signing copies of the book, including one for David Almond to give to his daughter, and then leaving to catch the train back home ready to go to school the next day! Our award for Book of the Year went to Stefan Gates for the superbly quirky yet practical cookery of *Incredible Edibles – A Science-Flavoured Cookbook*, also published by Walker. In his acceptance, Stefan Gates gave an entertaining demonstration of a few facts that was not entirely fitted to the squeamishness of some adults.

This year the shortlists have turned out to be just as eclectic and varied as in our previous awards.

Under 7

Questions and Answers about your Body, by Katie Daynes and Marie-Eve Tremblay, Usborne.

What's it Like to Be a Bee?, by Jinny Johnson, illustrated by Desiderio Sanzi, Franklin Watts.

The Story of Stars, written and illustrated by Neal Layton, Hodder.

7 to 12

Get Into Art – Animals, by Susie Brooks, Kingfisher.

The Secrets of Stonehenge, by Mick Manning and Brita Granström, Frances Lincoln.

Bugs, by George McGavin and Jim Kay, Walker.

The Book of Languages, by Mick Webb, Franklin Watts.

12 to 16

Starving the Anxiety Gremlin, by Kate Collins-Donnelly, Jessica Kingsley.

Weird Sea Creatures, by Erich Hoyt, Firefly.

How to Draw Like a Fashion Designer, by Celia Joicey and Dennis Nothdruff, Thames & Hudson.

One of the rewarding factors for us as organisers and judges of this award has been the reaction of information-book professionals. I well remember an author at one of our presentation evenings saying she felt overwhelmed and overjoyed that after decades of writing and publishing books she was receiving some recognition, that somebody cared enough to analyse and realise the effort and research as well as the care and precision in pitching the writing. At each annual event all the shortlisted books are displayed, and publishers relish the opportunity to see their books alongside others and to discuss the finer details of information books for young readers. The Children's Choice section of the awards has potential for much future expansion and progression that we hope will build up year on year. There will also be opportunities in the future to explore specific information-literacy aspects based on the shortlisted and winning titles. The open-access pages of the SLA website www.sla.org.uk gives information on past years, on the progress of the award this year and on how to join in with the schools already taking part.

Wholehearted thanks to all the team who support and enable this whole edifice to exist and function: the SLA board and staff, Hachette Children's Books, Peters library suppliers, the judges – who demonstrate astonishingly perceptive awareness. Finally I'd like to thank all those whose work brings us wonderful books that both inform and inspire, books that do not teach in any preachy sense, but that aspire to enthuse and therefore, in a fundamental way, truly educate readers. Of course I mean all the publishers as well as the authors, illustrators, photographers, editors, designers and more who keep on giving us such rich treasures of delight within the covers of books.

[Chris Brown has been a primary teacher and, for 23 years, a headteacher – constantly with an active concern in getting children and books together and all that that implies. He has been a member of the SLA for 48 years, a former board member and chair, and reviews editor for *The School Librarian* for 15 years. His many experiences include BBC Schools radio on books for children, a member of a number of working parties including a Booktrust/British Library *Books in Schools* report and involvement with in-service education. He was given the Eleanor Farjeon Award in 2008. He currently chairs the SLA Information Books Award.]

Royal Society Young People's Book Prize

Jennifer Harding

History

The Royal Society has awarded a junior book prize since 1988. In 1988 and 1989 the prize was known as the Science Books Prize Junior Prize, from 1990–2000 it was known as the Rhône-Poulenc Prize for Science Books Junior Prize, from 2001–2006 it was known as the Aventis Prize for Science Books Junior Prize and in 2007 and 2008 as the Royal Society Prize for Science Books Junior Prize. No awards took place in 2009 and 2010 when there were funding problems.

Overview

This book prize celebrates the best books that communicate science to young people.

The prize is open to books in which science is a substantial aspect of the book's content, narrative or theme and that are written for young people aged up to 14. The prize aims to inspire young people to read about science and promotes the best science writing for the under-14s. Books submitted for the prize must have been first published in English in the previous calendar year. The authors of the shortlisted books each receive £1,000 and the winner receives £10,000.

Publishers across the UK submit their best recent books that communicate science to young people. An adult judging panel narrows down the choice to a shortlist of six books. The winning book is then selected entirely by groups of young people from schools and youth groups around the UK. These groups together form a judging panel that looks at all the shortlisted books and chooses a winner.

Timetable for 2014

Publishers submit books by 31 January 2014.

Shortlisting panel chooses six books by 7 May 2014.

Young people's judging panel selects a winning book by 15 November 2014.

Steps in Choosing the Winner

Step 1: Publishers across the UK submit their best recent books that communicate science to young people by the end of January. The books must have been published during the previous calendar year.

Criteria:

- 1 Science must be a substantial aspect of the book's content, narrative or theme.
- 2 'Science' includes scientific knowledge and understanding, the practice of science, depictions of real scientists living or dead, and the history of science. 'Science' is used as shorthand for science, engineering, technology, medicine, mathematics, the relationship between science and broader society, and the social function and history of science.
- 3 Judges will look for books they deem well written, interesting, stimulating, engaging, accessible and high quality.
- 4 Pure reference works including encyclopaedias, educational textbooks and descriptive books are not eligible.
- 5 The judges' decision on the eligibility of an entry is final.
- 6 Books in the same series may be judged together or separately, at the sole discretion of the judges.
- 7 The first publication in English must have been between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2013 inclusive for all books entered. The only exception is for any books in which any member of the judging panel has a direct involvement, which may be deferred for consideration in the following year.
- 8 Books entered must be in the English language.
- 9 Books entered must be available for purchase in the UK through a UK bookstore or through an online retailer at the time of entry. Books that are in the process of being reprinted at the time of entry (e.g. as paperback when originally published as hardback) are acceptable.
- 10 There is no restriction on the geographical location of the publisher of any entry. There are no restrictions on the nationality, age or any other characteristic of the author(s) or illustrator(s) of any entry.

- 11 The copies entered must be paper based and bound. For printed books the latest edition of the paperback or hardback is expected. For ebooks the current edition of the eBook, printed and bound is expected. Electronic book submissions will not be accepted.
- 12 Publishers may submit as many books as they wish and are encouraged to do so.
- 13 There is no charge to enter.

From reading these criteria, it is obvious that this is an 'information' book award. See particularly point 2, which gives a very broad range of books that would not be described as 'non-fiction'. Note also that reference books and purely descriptive books are excluded.

Step 2: An adult shortlisting panel narrows down the choice to a shortlist of six books. The judging panel for the current prize is as follows. It is a list of eminent and well-respected people from different areas of science and in different capacities.

- Professor James Hough FRS (chair) – Associate Director of the Institute for Gravitational Research, Glasgow University.
- Dr Rhaana Starling – Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Fellow at the Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Leicester, studying black holes and gamma-ray bursts.
- Mr Michael Heyes – Science and Maths Specialism Coordinator, Winston Churchill Fellow, the Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls.
- Professor Iain Stewart – Professor of Geoscience Communication, University of Plymouth and presenter of BBC science programmes.
- Dr Anjana Ahuja – Freelance science journalist, writing for the *Daily Telegraph*, *Prospect* and the *Financial Times*.

Step 3: The winning book is selected entirely by groups of young people from schools and youth groups around the UK. These groups together form a judging panel that looks at all the shortlisted books and chooses a winner. These are diverse groups in schools, libraries and other institutions. Each makes a choice and then representatives agree on the final winning book.

The groups apply to become judging panels in advance (this year around 175 groups applied) and 75 were selected. These receive free copies of the books, which come directly from the publishers, and is a condition of entry when the publishers submit their books. The 75 groups are chosen based on whether or not they have taken part before and whether they would be able to take part without receiving a copy of the books for free – the aim is to get a good geographic spread and a range of group types.

In addition to these groups, there are a number of groups that don't receive books from the society, but let the society know they would still like to take part (the society arranges a discount with an online bookseller to allow these groups to purchase their own books). These groups still receive various resources from the society and are included in the correspondence that is sent to the panels on a fortnightly basis. The society's [associate schools](#) are also invited to take part and the ones that do are also sent books and judging materials. In total, there are 125 groups – mostly made up of schools, but with some guide and scout groups, and science centres – taking part.

The judging process runs from May to October and the groups are sent a variety of resources that help them judge the prize. The society also runs an online component to the prize each year: this year that includes the usual [prize blog](#) and a new 'Ask the [author](#)' feature.

2014 Royal Society Young People's Book Prize Shortlist

The Royal Society Young People's Book Prize 2014 is now underway and groups of young people from across the UK are choosing a winner.



Gill Arbutnott. *What Makes You YOU: From DNA to Dolly the Sheep...: The Story of Genetics*. London: A&C Black.

This book takes a contemporary look at genetics, telling the story behind some of the key discoveries and scientists in the field. It has a great narrative, and discusses some of the topical issues of today.

Christiane Dorion (illus. Beverley Young). *How Animals Live: A Guide to the Animal World*. Dorking: Templar Publishing.

This pop-up book shows a range of different habitats and the animals that live in them. Beautifully presented, this is a lovely introduction to ecosystems around the planet.

Clive Gifford with consultant Anil Seth. *Eye Benders: The Science of Seeing and Believing*. Lewes: Ivy Kids.

Warning: this book will try to trick you! It is full of optical illusions you can try for yourself, and it is very interactive. What this book does really well is explain each trick of the eye through the science behind it. Both fascinating and fun.

Mukul Patel. *We've Got your Number: Why Everything in the Universe is Numbers... Including You....* London: Kingfisher.

Maths is all around us, and this book has great way of presenting this. Mathematical concepts are explained through their application, and the author's passion for the subject really shines through.

Emily Bone. *The Usborne Big Book of Stars and Planets*. London: Usborne.

This book is jam packed full of information about the Universe, from the Solar System to distant galaxies. The eye-catching illustrations are beautifully done, and are based on real astronomical images. This book really conveys the wonders of our universe.

Katie Daynes. *Lift-the-Flap Questions and Answers about your Body*. London: Usborne.

This bite-sized question-and-answer book with informative illustrations is sure to satisfy inquisitive minds, answering the kinds of question young children have about their bodies in a fun lift-the-flap style.

Looking at the descriptions of these books, I think you will agree that they are definitely informational and accessible to any child/young person within and possibly beyond the specified age group of under 14. I have used the list in the past to supply many presents and all have been pounced on and enjoyed by the receivers.

Comparison with the SLA Information Book Awards

The SLA awards have a much wider range of course as the Royal Society awards are only for science books – in the broadest sense as described above. But there is overlap as the SLA lists include many science books and, occasionally, mathematics books. They also include dictionaries and encyclopaedias and purely descriptive books. The upper age range is higher by two years in its 11–16 age group. To my mind a great advantage for a buyer like myself is the categorisation into three age groups. When looking at the Royal Society shortlist, I often have to research the age range for which each book is suitable.

It is interesting to compare the shortlists, bearing in mind that the SLA has only undertaken its information awards since 2011. The SLA shortlists are longer than the Royal Society's, with up to 12 books, whereas the Royal Society restricts the lists to six. Only one book occurs on both lists, although the same authors, illustrators and series occur. The book on both lists is:

Richard Platt, Mary Platt and John Kelly (2012) *Don't Flush: Lifting the Lid on the Science of Poo and Wee*. London: Kingfisher.

Mathematics is represented on the SLA lists with only one book:

Kjartan Poskitt (illus. Rob Davis) (2010) *The Murderous Maths of Everything*. London: Scholastic.

Science is represented on the SLA lists with:

Jonathan and Marilyn Baillie (2012) *Animals at the Edge*. London: Franklin Watts.

Christiane Dorion (illus. Beverley Young) (2012) *How the World Works*. Dorking: Templar.

Adrian Dingle (2010) *How to Make a Universe with 92 Ingredients*. London: Scholastic.

Nicola Davies (illus. Brita Granström) (2011) *Dolphin Baby!*. London: Walker Books.

Robie H. Harris (illus. Nadine Bernard Westcott) (2011) *Who Has What? All about Girls' Bodies and Boys' Bodies*. London: Walker Books.

Martin Jenkins (illus. Vicky White) *Can We Save the Tiger?*. London: Walker Books.

Mick Manning and Brita Granström (2011) *Nature Adventures*. London: Janetta Otter-Barry Books/Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

Nick Dowson (illus. Patrick Benson) (2011) *North: The Greatest Animal Journey on Earth*. London: Walker Books.

Alan Dyer (2011) *Star: From Birth to Black Hole*. Dorking: Templar.

Nicola Davies (illus. Salvatore Rubbino) (2012) *Just Ducks*. London: Walker Books.

Judith Heneghan (2012) *Your Perfect Pet: Love Your Hamster*. London: Wayland.

Penelope Arlon and Tory Gordon-Harris (2012) *Discover More: Penguins*. London: Scholastic Children's Books.

Steve Parker and Raman Prinja (2012) *Science Crazy*. London: QED Publishing.

Clive Gifford (2012) *Discover More: Technology*. London: Scholastic Children's Books.

I can only guess at the reason for the non-overlap of the shortlists of these awards. The Royal Society is more concerned with the academic level of the books whereas the SLA books often have more books where the science is woven around a story and may be purely descriptive. Both awards should be the concern of all those who buy books for young people and particularly to those with influence in guiding young people's reading choices.

[Jennifer Harding is Associate Editor of *IBBYLink* and an IBBY UK committee member. She used to work in her school holidays and vacations at the Stafford branch of Bookland. Sadly the company is no longer a commercial enterprise.]

Fact Rather than Fiction

Nicola Davies

That statement implies that fact and fiction are different things, but, as the author of both non-fiction and fiction titles for children, I don't see that there is a hard boundary between the two. Look at any great works of fiction and you find truthful information about the real world – portraits of Victorian poverty and social injustice in Dickens (1812–1870) and the pin-sharp critique of the Russian revolution in Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). Photography is supposedly the most 'non-fictional' medium of all, but you have only to reflect for a moment about how you've cropped your own pictures on Facebook to know that a photograph's credentials as non-fiction are not impeccable. Robert Capa's photograph of the Spanish Civil War *Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death* is one of the most famous documentary pictures of all time, not for what it is supposed to portray, but for the debate about whether or not it was staged.

My point is that the line between fiction and non-fiction is at best made with a wiggly crayon and that trying to draw it with an indelible marker is not useful, certainly not useful to me in my desire to communicate with my audience. My motivation to write comes from my deep desire to share my love of and my knowledge about the natural world with my young readers. But I am not really interested in simply giving them lists of facts, not least because lists are pretty hard to remember. So in my books I use that ancient and marvellous human device – narrative. Narrative is an incredibly flexible and robust container – it can hold information about the deepest tides and currents in our nature, the instructions for making a soup or the life history of a polar bear. It can take many forms, from a haiku to a novel the size of *War and Peace*, from a song to a picture book. Narrative creates story space, that liminal region between the exterior world and the interior world of emotion and reflection. In it, boundaries are dissolved, the real and the imagined are combined in unique cocktails of experience, allowing us new insights into the world and our place within it. Story space allows us to see things differently; it facilitates fresh thinking and helps both artists and scientists to formulate new questions, theories and new ways to describe the world. It is the business of the writer to create the narrative, to shape the story space; what goes in that space is information, either drawn from imagination or evidence from the real world.

One of the wonderful things about writing for children is that they understand the nature of story space and what can happen there. They are happy with narratives – both visual and verbal – that convey all sorts of information, factual, emotional and spatial, real and imaginary.



This was vividly demonstrated to me a few years ago when I was working with Tate Modern, talking to groups of children about particular works in its collections. Their responses to the works I'd chosen for us to look at were a total inspiration to me. One in particular has stayed with me. The work *Gothic Landscape* by Lee Krasner, was particularly popular with the children with whom I worked – I probably should say here that these children had never been to any sort of art gallery before. A little girl said

'This painting is about a bird landing in a tree. It's about how the wings beat and how it feels to land in the tree going fast and then slow'. I think it's telling that she used the word 'about'; not this 'painting is a picture 'of' or 'this painting shows', but this 'painting is about'. So this little girl was perfectly happy that the painting was a narrative that told a story about *space* – the tree and the bird; about *time* – the bird going fast then slow; and about *emotion* – how it feels to land in a tree. All real things, represented in an obviously fictional, abstract painting.

I create narratives that hold information about the natural world. Sometimes those narratives are found stories – real things that I pick up off the ground and sometimes they are entirely invented, or poetry, made only from a weave of words. Sometimes the information I put in the story space is factual – the diet of a bat, the number of eggs a turtle lays – and sometimes it's emotional – how you feel when you are close to a wild animal, or how you might feel if you had promised to plant a whole forest! What this combining of fact and fiction offers me is the opportunity to convey the emotional roots that every natural-history fact has put down in my own soul. A kind of fizzing butterflies in the tummy joy – the passion for my subject that is, in my experience, the most happily contagious feeling.

What I'm making the case for here is narrative non-fiction, with attitude, with voice, with personality. And far, far from being obsolete in a world where information is just a click away, passionate narrative non-fiction has never, ever been so important. With so very much information easily available, a child is at risk of being swamped by an overload of facts, demotivated by overexposure. What narrative non-fiction offers is a route, a guide, a companion, a means and motivation for finding out, and a structure in which to place new information. A good narrative doesn't carry all the facts – just enough to make the reader want more; it infects the reader with curiosity, the most virulent and powerful way to create self-motivated learners who will become the curators of their own minds throughout life.

Somebody asked me the other day if I'd ever written a real picture book. I suppressed my sigh and told them about *The Promise* (illus. Laura Carlin, 2013), which is an entirely fictional narrative. But it holds truths about the environment and the possibility of personal change and has roots deep in the real world. In my research for my book *Gaia Warriors* (2009) about climate change and in my work as an ambassador for the World Land Trust, I have seen how urban tree planting could keep cities cool and how forest conservation helps lock up carbon and holds onto biodiversity. But there are more intangible roots too. I've seen many kids who get off to a bad start in life and I wanted to write something that said a bad start doesn't mean a bad finish. The story of *The Promise* was inspired by the book *The Man Who Planted Trees* (by Jean Giono, first published 1953), perceived by many as non-fiction (National Geographic were scandalised when they heard it wasn't) and the inspiration for real-tree planting and environmental action around the world, but entirely fictional. *The Promise* in turn is inspiring real-tree planting and green thinking in readers all over the world. So I have no idea where I would place *The Promise* if I had to put it on one side or the other of that line between fiction and fact.

There is another very bad thing about trying to divide fact from fiction, I think it is one of the ways in which libraries have been undermined. I think the line of thought goes something like this. Learning is about putting facts in your head. Facts are things you look up, and you used to look up facts in a library. That's what libraries were for. But if facts come from the internet, why then do you need a library?

But ramming in lists of facts is *not* how we learn. We don't even learn only with our brains, but with our bodies, our hearts, our souls. We need to rethink our concept of learning, and of how we learn best. We are, to paraphrase the conclusion of Philip Reeve's marvellous science-fiction story cycle *Mortal Engines*, 'engines for making stories'. We are made of story, our very lives have a beginning, a middle and an end,

and to learn about the world, to learn how to be the best of ourselves, we need all sorts of stories and that's what writers, and publishers and libraries, are for.

[Nicola Davies is an award-winning author whose many books for children include *A First Book of Nature* (illus. Mark Hearld, 2014), *Ice Bear* (illus. Gary Blythe, 2005), *Big Blue Whale* (illus. Nick Maland, 1997) and the Silver Street Farm series (illus. Katharine McEwan, 2011–2012). She graduated in zoology, studied whales and bats, and then worked for the BBC Natural History Unit. Underlying all her writing is the belief that a relationship with nature is essential to every human being, and that now more than ever, we need to renew that relationship.]

Squelch! Bang! Ooh! The Transformative Potential of Children's Non-Fiction

Zahra Amlani

Once upon a singularity, the entire mass of the universe was squashed into an inconceivably dense, hot point. An explosive event later and space expanded faster than the speed of light. By the age of three minutes, the universe's temperature had dropped from 100 billion Kelvin to below 1 billion Kelvin and protons and neutrons fused forming nuclei. Eventually, electrons became trapped within their orbitals and started spinning around these nuclei, the first atoms for life formed and the universe as we know it was taking shape. 13.73 billion years later, turning the pages of her non-fiction book, the mindscape of a child, like the fabric of space is similarly expanding.

Those amongst us who can describe an analogous experience with non-fiction recognise its ability to elicit an aesthetic and personal response, to inspire and to transform. Yet we have often had to legitimise the appeal of these texts which are cloaked in the stygian vestments of didacticism (cue appropriately villainous musical accompaniment!). These texts have been systematically denigrated and at one time or another described as ugly sisters, lowly peasants and likened to battery chickens. Non-fiction texts are rarely chosen to be read out loud to children and are thus excluded from the 'contact zone' created when reading with a child (Tatar, 2009). These texts are shelved separately within bookshops and libraries, under discrete topic headings. Surely we cannot reduce the complexity of a non-fiction text into a single topic, any more than we can decide that *Wind in the Willows* is about a mole and shelve it under 'subterranean mammal tales'? The ill-fitting garb of children's non-fiction tomes, with their 64–96 colour-illustrated pages accessorised with sidebars is severely restricting. The conventional hardbound presentation of non-fiction texts makes the books cumbersome for smaller hands. Non-fiction books are thus non-portable entities: guaranteeing for themselves a resting place far from the intimacy of the child's pillow.

This is surprising when we consider how deeply embedded non-fiction is in children's daily lives. The sleepy-eyed child encounters minty messages on her toothpaste, her breakfast is sugared with the honey monster's tagline and her journey to school is enlivened through the cadence of the *Metro* newspaper. In class she is expected to decipher instructions, understand the purpose of historical documents and consult a dictionary. Curled up in bed by moonlight she surfs her way through Wikipedia and checks the weekend sporting fixtures; she is immersed. However, even amongst children's literary scholars non-fiction is afforded little more than a cursory (and decidedly pitiful) glance. Is this all beginning to seem like a conspiracy? If so, it is one in which we are all culpable.

Despite some early promising examples, the typical non-fiction text had a strangely artificial feel, even when relaying the most extraordinary of natural phenomena. As Alice explored Wonderland, Max tamed wild things and the bridge to Terabithia was

under construction (the 'coming of age' of children's literature (Nikolajeva, 1996)), non-fiction stubbornly refused to join in. Yet in gardens, verges, urban sprawls and dusty pitches, real children were exploring, taming and building; taking their first steps as scientists. This was bolstered by science in the primary classroom with its whizzes, squelches, bangs and oozing which baffled and bewitched. Wanting to know more, many of these children (myself included) turned to non-fiction books, but we found them wanting. As Helen Arnold (1992) says these texts bore 'no relationship to anything encountered outside school'. On all matters that drew us closer, wide-eyed and expectant, non-fiction was eerily silent. These non-fiction texts were unwilling to divulge secrets and to open up, remaining resolutely impenetrable.

Adults have much to answer for; in conferring precedence on the information value of a non-fiction text, the aesthetic qualities of these texts are arguably considered irrelevant. Additional elements are, arguably, considered peripheral (irrelevant even?) to this. Pedagogical imperatives that have often driven the production of non-fiction, instead of enriching these texts have instead delivered an entrenched notion of *learning by the book* – which is not remotely akin to children's experiences. But a quiet revolution has been taking place and it would appear that non-fiction, far from being absent, has been taking note. Nourished by the best that children's literature (particularly poetry and picturebooks) has to offer, non-fiction has evolved. I am not suggesting that these texts are better or improved, simply that they are *better adapted* to meet the demands of a new age of children. Described as 'lyrical' by Margaret Mallett, these non-fiction texts harness 'some of the devices of fiction to capture young learners' imagination' (2010: 223). The selected examples listed below are part of a growing chorus of voices that are reaching a crescendo in their impact and influence.

Really Rotten Experiments (2004) by Nick Arnold revels in irreverent and subversive prose and illustrations;

Jean Craighead George's *The Wolves are Back* (2008) uses watercolour paintings by Wendell Minor to beautifully depict the restoration of balance in the Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, USA;

Bill Bryson's *A Really Short History of Nearly Everything* (2010) is an exemplar of the curious hybrid texts with their interplay of comic-book styling and photography;

Linda McReynolds *Eight Days Gone* (2012) recounts entirely in poetic form Apollo 11's journey to the moon;

Sandra Markel's *What if you Had Animal Teeth?* (2013) wonderfully utilises picturebook conventions, 'with contrasting settings on verso and recto' (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006).

To judge these texts, however, purely (or predominantly) for their aesthetic merits would be a falsehood. It would be denying their *raison d'être*. As Mallett says:

texts can amuse and entertain, but their main, indeed their defining purpose is to inform and to extend knowledge. (2010: 219).

Children still pick up a non-fiction text because their own expectations of it are that it will, in some way, inform or enhance their knowledge about the world. Therefore the complete picture will involve elucidating *how* the aesthetic dimensions of lyrical non-fiction bring about an *information event*. Meek (2006) identifies the information event as one that 'makes a change in our consciousness or mental context if we pay more than passing attention to it' (p.14). In keeping with the loftier, more idealistic nature of our collective understanding of the purposes of literature, I want to consider this not an information event but a *knowledge event*. A text that is able to share information in such a manner that children can form the sinews of their souls (to make of themselves) reaches far beyond the immediacy of the reading moment and into the future and the unknown. This knowledge, I believe, is cultivated by reading lyrical non-fiction.

Using Louise M. Rosenblatt's transactional theory of literature, we recognise that a transaction of knowledge takes place between the child and the adult. The transactional nature of this process 'underlines the essential importance of both elements, reader and text, in any reading event' (1994: 18). Too often, however, in children's literary theory, our attention is drawn toward the power-based nature of children's reading experiences. The child, conceived to be powerless, is conceptualised as a receptacle whose role it is to receive the adult's knowledge. In this model she is consigned to passivity. Clementine Beauvais (2013) succeeds in her attempt to 'unify the increasingly power-oriented theories of children's literature criticism' by calling for a 'more nuanced definition of "power"' that examines the concept 'according to the carefully delineated axes when dealing with the particular aesthetics and poetics of the children's book' (pp.74–76). In particular, this power needs to be 'redistributed between the two figures in the transaction' (p.78). Beauvais identifies the ability of a text to appeal to the 'might' of the child, which she defines as '*a form of power intrinsically linked to the "possession" of a future*' (p.81, emphases in original). This appeal can be recognised as the *future orientation* of the information contained within non-fiction texts. This is not an era for static facts that root the reader in the place in which she stands. It is an era for lyricism (in the forms of humour, irreverence and poeticity) acting as a lodestar by which the child navigates her own learning journey. Those squelchy, whizzy, oozy moments once reserved to classroom and playground science have become an integral part of the text. In applying Beauvais' reconceptualisation of power we come to understand that the child has much to contribute. She cannot and will not stand idly by as texts teach, but will take a 'active role ... in making the knowledge [her] own' (Young and Muller, 2010: 15).

Glancing back toward the reading child whom we left at the start of this article, what do we notice? Ignited by the lyrical non-fiction she is reading, this child is beginning to know herself, to know her place in the world. Soon she will move into new uncharted territories. One of the central paradoxes of children's non-fiction is that an adult author is teaching a child to question the veracity and authority of that adult. If this is truly successful, the adult may well become usurped. Lyrical non-fiction cedes to the potency of this 'mighty' child and in doing so has transformative potential.

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Persistent Pedestrianism: The ‘Tour Book’ as an Enduring Form of Children’s Instructional Literature

M.O. Grenby

You may recently have noticed in your local bookshop some tables full of large-format children’s picture books, each promising to take the reader on a tour around a major city. There’s Salvatore Rubbino’s *A Walk in London* for example, its publication nicely timed to coincide with the London 2012 Olympics (though it was preceded by *A Walk in New York* (2009) and has now been followed by *A Walk in Paris* (2014)). And there are reissues of Miroslav Sasek’s classic *This is ...* series, which began with *This is Paris* in 1958 and progressed to London (1959), Rome (1960), New York (1960), Hong Kong (1965) and a dozen or so other destinations, until his grand tour finished with *This is Historic Britain* in 1974.

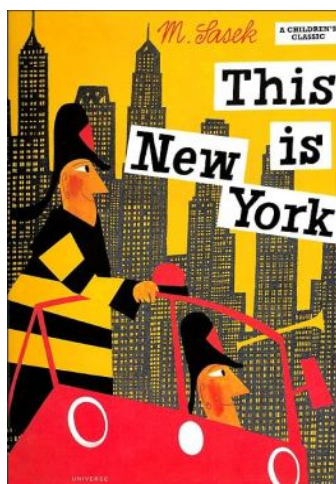


Figure 1. Covers of two modern tour books by Miroslav Sasek (left), Salvatore Rubbino (right).

Sasek’s books are undeniably charismatic, with concise, eager text (‘There are ten thousand streets in London. When in doubt about how to get to one of them, ask a policeman.’) and crowded, kinetic illustrations (‘In exciting pictures in the modern style Here is London!’). The successful twenty-first-century reissue of the whole series owes much to their retro appeal: the rather flat images in muted colours. Rubbino’s books trade on the same aesthetic. His images are distinctly low-tech, their texture, palette, two dimensionality and style establishing an aesthetic that seems deliberately opposed to the digital imagery of the smartphone era. His city has changed very little from Sasek’s. Even if modern landmarks make an appearance – the London Eye, say – London is still friendly bobbies patrolling the streets, red double-decker buses, sudden showers forcing people to scurry along under their black umbrellas, and all the familiar

sights. 'London – the perfect place for a girl and her mother to spend the day!' says the blurb, and we are invited to 'Follow them as they board the classic red bus and begin a whirlwind tour of some of London's most iconic landmarks.' Little, it seems, has changed from the 1950s to the 2010s. In fact, little has changed since the 1740s.

The middle of the eighteenth century was when children's literature as we know it began. A few recognisably modern children's books had been published earlier, but it was in London, in the 1740s, that a critical mass was achieved. A triumvirate of publishers was at the core of this: Thomas Boreman, Mary Cooper and John Newbery. What is remarkable is that, among their first ventures into publishing for young people, they all produced children's guides to sites of historical interest not at all dissimilar to Sasek's and Rubbino's.

From Boreman's shop at the Guildhall came a series of tiny books called, with deliberate irony, the Gigantick Histories. The first, in two volumes, was *The Gigantick History of the Two Famous Giants, and Other Curiosities in Guildhall* (1740). Then came *The Curiosities of the Tower of London* (1741), *The History and Description of the Famous Cathedral of St. Paul's* (1741) and *The History and Description of Westminster Abbey* (1742–1743). Here, in small print accompanied by miniature woodcuts, Boreman set out the chief attractions and curiosities of each place, and their architectural splendours.

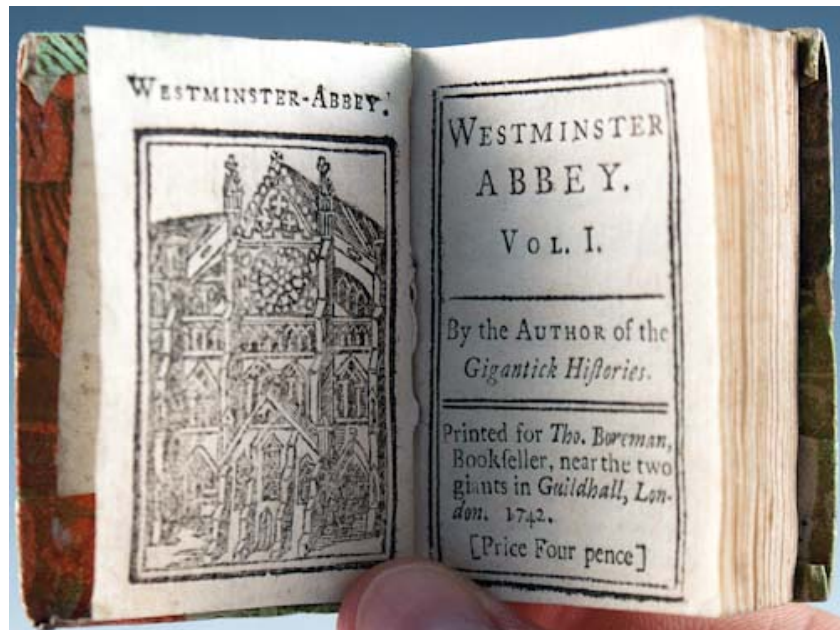


Figure 2. Westminster Abbey Vol. 1 from Thomas Boreman's Gigantick Histories series.



Figure 3. *Curiosities in the Tower of London*. A Thomas Boreman book.

A few years later, John Newbery was offering much the same, though in a larger format and at greater length, in his *Historical Account of the Curiosities of London and Westminster* (1753) written by David Henry. From 1753 it appeared in numerous editions, both as a single volume and in its three constituent parts (the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, and St. Paul's Cathedral). Evidently it was a successful formula, for both of Newbery's contending successors – Francis his son and Francis his nephew – brought out similar works: a guide to *Windsor, and its Environs* (1768) from the son, 'containing the curiosities of the town and palace, the Royal chapel of St. George, and the seats in the neighbourhood', and a much expanded, better illustrated and more child-friendly *Curiosities of London and Westminster Described* (1770) from the nephew, including sights like the Bank of England, the British Museum, Bethlem, Bridewell and the Foundling Hospital.

THE
T R A V E L S
 O F
T O M T H U M B
 O V E R
ENGLAND and WALES;
 CONTAINING
DESCRIPTIONS of whatever is most
 remarkable in the several Counties.
 INTERSPERSED WITH
 Many pleasant ADVENTURES that
 happened to him personally during the
 Course of his Journey.

~~Written by Himself.~~

L O N D O N:
 Printed for R. AMEY at *Charing-Cross*; and
 Sold by M. COOPER in *Pater-noster Row*.
 M.DCC.XLVI.
 [Price 1 s. 6 d. Bound.]

Figure 4. *The Travels of Tom Thumb over England and Wales*. Sold by Mary Cooper.

As for Mary Cooper, from her shop could be had probably the most daring of these guidebooks (if that is what they are): *The Travels of Tom Thumb over England and Wales* (see Figure 4 above), which appeared in 1746. Here children were being shown curiosities and splendours from far beyond London (though London also features), all in the appealing company of Tom Thumb, newly retired from his adventures with giants, his exploits at King Arthur's court, and his passage through a cow's digestive system.

'After the many strange Adventures of my Youth, and the many Perils and Dangers I had escaped,' he explains, 'one would have thought I should have been very glad to have spent the Remainder of my Days at Home in Ease and Safety'.

But, he says,

Ambition, and the Love of my Country, excited me to undertake the vast Design of travelling to distant Counties, and viewing all the Cities, Towns, and remarkable Places in the whole Kingdom of *England*, and the Principality of *Wales*.

Tom's tour would map neatly onto many modern itineraries. He marvels at the colleges in Oxford, wonders at Stonehenge, pays homage at Shakespeare's grave, enjoys a visit to Warwick Castle and inspects 'the Ruins of the famous *Pict's Wall*' – we now call it Hadrian's Wall – built, he says, 'in order to restrain the Northern People, who have always been very troublesome to those of the South' (the Jacobite invasion launched from Scotland had been repulsed only a few months before publication).

It would be no exaggeration I think to say that these 'tour books', as I call them, formed one of the foundation stones of modern children's literature. And what Boreman, Cooper and Newbery began, many others continued. Over the decades dozens, perhaps hundreds, of inventive and talented authors, illustrators and publishers turned their hands to the children's tour book, with the result that they have appeared in a variety of formats, with many different frame narratives employed to justify the travels. From the quite staid London tours of the later eighteenth century emerged more affable guides like *Instructive Rambles in London* (by Elizabeth Helme, 1798), *A Visit to Uncle William in Town, or a Description of the Most Remarkable Buildings and Curiosities of the British Metropolis* (London: J. Harris, 1818) and *London Sights for Little Folks* (London: Charles Tilt, c.1835). More gimmicky titles were emerging by the mid-nineteenth century: Henry Mayhew and George Cruikshank's *1851: Or the Adventures of Mr and Mrs Sandboys and Family who Came up to London to Enjoy themselves and to See the Great Exhibition* (1851), for instance, or *Puck and Peasblossom in London*, a Routledge toybook from 1858. Few parts of the country were left untoured. A child of the mid-nineteenth century might enjoy Louisa Weston's *The Cambrian Excursion, Intended to Inculcate a Taste for the Beauties of Nature* (1826), or *Reuben Ramble's Travels in the Western Counties of England* by Samuel Clark (1845), or George Mogridge's *Loiterings around the Lakes of Cumberland* (1849). Other titles, like Isaac Taylor's series of books for 'tarry-at-home travellers' – *Scenes in Europe* (1818), *Scenes in Asia* (1819), *Scenes in Africa* (1820) and so on – expanded children's horizons still further. By the twentieth century tour books were giving global coverage. Their pictures were also steadily coming to dominate over their text.

Much more striking than any changes in the format and purview of the tour book, however, are the continuities. New sights are added to the roster, but the basic itineraries remain familiar, as do the descriptions of what heritage professionals now call the 'historic built environment'. 'Those who first visit *London* seldom fail of going up St. Paul's, where they take notice of the famous whispering Gallery', says Tom Thumb in the 1746 book. Quite so. Boreman had given meticulous detail: 'the first two hundred and sixty are so exceedingly easy, that a child might go up them', he writes of the ascent of St Paul's dome. And having ascended,

you will be ask'd to see the whispering-gallery, which will cost *Two-pence each person*. This gallery is a very great curiosity: ... leaning your head against the wall, you may easily hear all that is said, though it be ever so low, and at the most distant place from you in the gallery: which affords great matter of surprize and innocent diversion to all young persons who come to amuse themselves with this curiosity.

Rubbino's 2011 account differs merely by a single step: 'There are 259 steps up to the Whispering Gallery', he relates. But his young tourist would certainly agree that the gallery 'affords great matter of surprize': 'Mum makes us stand in different places, then "Hello?" she whispers – and I jump! It sounds as if she's right behind me.'

That Boreman and Rubbino both gave a count of the number of steps to the whispering gallery is a significant marker of the continuities across three centuries. Such empiricism – observing, surveying, ascertaining – was the underlying principle of the travel literature of the eighteenth century. While ‘ancient travellers guessed; modern travellers measure’, as Samuel Johnson put it. Rubbino abides by Johnson’s rule. ‘Over a thousand trees grow in St James’s Park’ he tells his readers. Admittedly there is a little imprecision here, but Rubbino makes up for it with his scrupulous corroboration of the fact that ‘London is Europe’s third rainiest city’: ‘About 580 millimetres of rain falls here every year’ he notes, impressed rather than dispirited.

Much else has remained the same too. There is delight at the heterogeneity of the city, with specimens of its different ethnicities provided for the reader’s inspection (Jews, usually, in the eighteenth century; the black London Underground ticket inspector, several ostentatiously depicted Sikhs, and ‘the West African visitor’ on a shopping trip in Sasek; the ‘over 300 languages’ spoken in London in Rubbino). But perhaps the most striking continuity is the celebration of the balance between tradition and innovation on show in almost all these books. Tom Thumb in 1746, for example, is as enthusiastic about London’s newly built hospitals – Bethlem, the Foundling and ‘the magnificent New Hospital for exposed and deserted young Children, one Wing of which is already built and filled’ – as he is about the ancient monuments like St. Paul’s and the Tower. He talks admiringly about the works of ‘our noble modern Architect the earl of *Burlington*’ and says that ‘*Westminster Bridge*, when finished, will be the grandest Thing of the Kind in all *Europe*.’ Precisely the same excitement informs the later titles. For all Sasek’s revelling in London’s quaint curiosities and historic landmarks, his city is full of neon, reverberates with the rush of buses, taxis and Tube trains, and is a playground for the automobile (cars whizz freely round St Paul’s, and handy parking is to be found in front of the west door of Westminster Abbey). Rubbino’s words and pictures likewise celebrate a constantly renewing city: ‘Londoners often give new buildings on their skyline nicknames: this one is known as “the Gherkin”’. All these Londons are cheerful and flourishing, characterised by a progressive optimism founded on a secure history.

There is still much to be discovered about these children’s tour books. Who read them? Who still reads them? Are they for children who have never visited the sights portrayed, nor are ever likely to? (We should remember that in the eighteenth century London was impossibly remote to many Britons: Jane Austen, for instance, never visited.) Or are these publications genuine guidebooks, to be used on a real trip, or to be bought as souvenirs of a visit? Or should we think of them as designed chiefly for children who live their day-to-day lives in these places and will recognise the places described? (The listed subscribers to Boreman’s books mostly reside no more than a few hundred metres from his shop at the Guildhall.) Has the purpose of the tour book changed over time, or stayed broadly the same? And what role have such books had in establishing ideas of civic and national heritage and identity? Much is left to investigate. If you decide to explore this territory, I can only suggest that, as the back-cover blurb of Rubbino’s book helpfully advises, you ‘wear a pair of comfy shoes and stop as often as you feel like.’

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Terezin, A Story of the Holocaust – A Non-Fiction Narrative

Ruth Thomson

When people ask me why I wrote *Terezin, A Story of the Holocaust* my answer is that, once I had learned of the story, how could I *not*. There are, of course, hundreds of books already written about all aspects of the Holocaust. It seemed to me, however, that telling the account of what went on inside a single place (the Czech fortress of Terezin) within a defined space of time (1942–1945) was an opportunity to provide a microcosm of this chilling subject specifically for young people. It reveals the Nazis' systematic determination to annihilate the Jews and their cynical propaganda attempts to deceive the world about what they were doing, and also documents the Jews' own experiences.

I had never heard of Terezin until, whilst doing research for an educational pack on Holocaust art, I discovered haunting prints by Leo Haas, one of the Jewish artists imprisoned in Terezin. I was intrigued by their unusual subject matter: a uniformed Nazi, arms akimbo, guarding an empty street; gaunt people crowded together on the floor of a filthy attic; and a line of wide-eyed people carrying suitcases, leaning towards their unknown future.

In a place where photography was forbidden, Haas, along with many other accomplished artists, worked for the Nazis in a technical-drawing studio, illustrating official reports and charts. With ready access to art materials, these artists also drew in secret, vividly depicting the harsh daily life of Terezin's inmates – the overcrowded dormitories, work conditions, food queues and deportations to Auschwitz.

I realised that these artworks would offer compelling visual primary evidence for an accessible book for young people about the Holocaust. Further research revealed a wealth of other potent visual primary resources that I could incorporate in such a book – both official documents and ephemera, such as bank notes, ration books, vaccination certificates and concert tickets, as well as thousands of children's drawings. It also felt important to include contemporary photographs of the town as it is today, to show that the places depicted in the artworks are completely real and still stand as a tangible legacy of a terrible moment in history.

In addition to images, I also came across diaries, published memoirs and other first-hand accounts about living in Terezin, and listened to oral testimonies of survivors at the Imperial War Museum, London. It soon became apparent that using the words of those who had lived through the experience of being at Terezin would be the only adequate way of providing an authentic narrative thrust and the most appropriate counterpoint to the visual evidence.

Inevitably, the quotes are selective and fragmentary, chosen, in part, to provide coherent narrative continuity. My role was to organise these quotes with their variety of perspectives into a telling story within a loose chronological frame. In addition, I had to interweave carefully the artworks and ephemera into relevant points in the account. Captioning the pictures was a useful and unobtrusive way of including extra contextual information.

Since the book was directly targeted as a non-fiction title for secondary-school readers, the publishers were keen to retain many of the elements of a non-fiction book that teachers traditionally expect – a contents page, main headings, text broken up by subheadings, every picture captioned, maps, a timeline, a glossary, sources for further research and an index. Chapters are distinguished by coloured panels and the first-hand accounts have large quote marks to identify them.

The book diverges, however, from conventional non-fiction. After setting the scene for each chapter with a short third-person introduction, the bulk of the story is elaborated

in multiple, juxtaposing first-person accounts, supported with vivid pictures. My job was simply to bring these voices and images to light. It is left wholly to the reader to imagine, interpret and empathise.

Terezin, A Story of the Holocaust (London: Franklin Watts, 2011). See Amazon Look Inside! at http://www.amazon.co.uk/Terezin-Story-Holocaust-Ruth-Thomson/dp/1445116553/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1398686638&sr=1-1&keywords=Terezin%2C+A+Story+of+the+Holocaust#reader_1445116553. The book won the SLA (School Library Association) Information Book Award 2012, and the 2012 ALCS (Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society) Education Writing Award.

[Ruth Thomson has an MA in Museum and Gallery learning. She specialises in writing books on art and history. Her art books include *Grisly & Gruesome* (2003) and *Saints* (2005) in the Discovering Painting series for the National Gallery, London; *Looking at Paintings: An Introduction to Art for Young People* (Disney Organisation/the National Gallery, London, Bunker Hill Publishing, 2003); and *Adventures in Art*, a series combining art appreciation with hands-on projects. She has also written *Posters and Propaganda in Wartime* and a short biography of Georgia O'Keeffe. Her history books include a four-book series on Victorian childhood and books about Plains Indians and Aztecs.]

Ways of Working and Illustrating Information Books

Mick Manning and Brita Granström

Mick

Brita and I began working together over 20 years ago. Since then, we have collaborated on about 80 books and on four children.

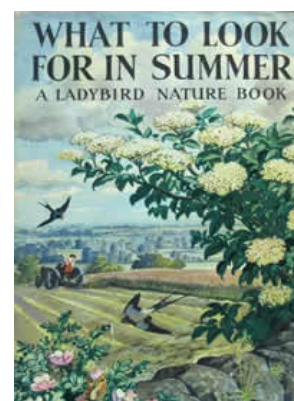
Brita

I grew up on a small farm not far from Stockholm, with a schoolteacher mum and a policeman dad. One year when I was about eight, mum threw out the TV! So books and drawing became even more important. I think the riches of two languages and two cultural heritages: books, rhymes, songs and art educations (now shared and exchanged) can't help but be reflected in the books Mick and I make.

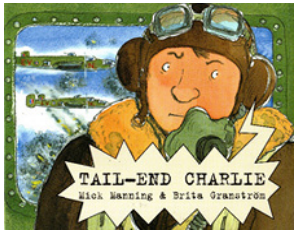
Mick

When I started school in the very early 1960s, I lived close to Haworth Moor. I became very *curious* (remember that word as we'll revisit it later) about the everyday birds, mammals and insects that I saw there. I soon found the Ladybird series bookshelf at school (next to the 'nature table' and a jar of frogspawn). Ladybird authors such as Grant L. Watson explained to me about lapwings, curlews, snipe, tawny owls and emperor moths and Charles Tunnicliffe brought them to life with his illustrations in Series 536: *What to Look for in Winter* (1959), *What to Look for in Summer* (1960), *What to Look for in Autumn* (1960) (see margin illustration) and *What to Look for in Spring* (1961). I fell head over heels for those books – if you look at them today you can still marvel at the amount of factual information crammed into them, done in such a way that you hardly notice you are learning as you read. In each pocket-sized page Charles Tunnicliffe manages to cram so many creatures into his seasonal landscapes, including beautifully observed people. They are works of genius about the British countryside and the human relationship with it.

Other books such as a classroom set of British history books illustrated by Alan Sorrel were further discoveries. At home in our glass-fronted sitting-room bookcase sat Frederick B. Kirkman and Francis C. Jourdain's *British Birds* ([1930] 1966). This fat, Edwardian book, loaded with evocative full-colour illustrations by artists such as George Lodge, fed my curiosity with its depictions of nature red in tooth and claw:



moorland curlews dive-bombing piratical ravens and glaucous gulls riding shipwrecked barrels. Such books reinforced many happy hours spent in Cliff Castle, a wonderland of glass-cased taxidermy, Roman coins, arrowheads and a sabre-toothed tiger's skull discovered on the moor. Next to a tropical fish tank in Keighley Children's Library stood a shelf boasting books by Edward Ardizzone, Lewitt-Him and Lesley Wood, and next to that was a table where *Look and Learn* magazine waited for me.



My dad was a middle-school deputy head (later becoming a headmaster), and at weekends from the age of about five we would walk up to the top of Rivock's Edge together or explore ruins like Wycoller Hall. As we walked my dad would recite poems such as Tennyson's 'Eagle': 'He clasps the crag with crooked hands;/ close to the sun in lonely lands,/ ...' and this memory inspired *Nature Adventures* (2012). He would also tell me stories about my grandfather, a steelworker, and the First World War veteran from Sheffield that later inspired *Charlie's War Illustrated* (2013). I would drink tea, listen to his stories, listen to the skylarks and ask questions. These walks and child-friendly accounts of his own escapades in the RAF during the Second World War were a sort of catharsis for him and also later inspired me to spend four years writing and researching *Tail-End Charlie* (2009).

Brita

There are many talented non-fiction authors and illustrators in the UK just now: Nicola Davies, Marcia Williams, Richard Platt, Emily Sutton and Mark Hearld, to name a few. They all have their own very original approach to non-fiction. As a double act, Mick and I make books that we should have liked to read ourselves. We try to catalyse that information exchange in a book-making process that is an intense collaboration, involving words and pictures, and that is in some way an intimate and playful extension of our relationship. The images don't always rely on the words; sometimes we draw and doodle to inspire the right sorts of word. Like any picture book, our books begin with an idea that we think has potential. This is roughed out into 'pencil visuals' and then, after the publisher's input, which is invaluable, the roughs are tweaked or redrawn.



When everyone is happy with word and image, we work on the final artwork and at the same time edit and focus the final text. The accuracy and up-to-date quality of our books is very important to us and often we have a consultant who helps us get the information bang on. Colin Hall, the custodian at Mendips (the childhood home of John Lennon, now a National Trust property) helped us with our biography *The Beatles* (2014) and Susan Greaney from English Heritage helped with *Secrets of Stonehenge* (2013). It was exciting to be tipped off about Stonehenge discoveries before they were officially released! We like to use all sorts of word to stimulate curiosity in our readers: main text, side text and fact strips, hand lettering, comic strips and speech bubbles. The research is the biggest part of any book and often the hardest decisions are what bits to leave out due to space restrictions.

We are often asked, as a double act, who does what. It varies from book to book. It is often wrongly presumed that I am the illustrator and Mick is the author, but it is much more complex and interwoven than that. I always draw the humans and make the hand lettering. Mick writes the initial text and does a lot of the research.

But, depending on the subject of the book, we share the rest; Mick or I may draw the animals, birds, aircraft, RAF airfields, mammothscapes, dinotopias, vikingscapes, etc. Sometimes we may even collaborate on the same artwork.

Our long-term editorial and art directors, at Franklin Watts and Frances Lincoln for example, have been brilliant and supportive and have become friends. One well-known editorial director even brought her daughters out to Sweden for a summer holiday with us.

Mick

Many of our books are self-initiated. Others such as *Secrets of Stonehenge* (English Heritage), *Dino Dinners* (2006) and *What Mr. Darwin Saw* (2010) (both for the Natural History Museum) are in response to specific commissions. One book was an answer to our own daughter Charlotte who was six at the time. She asked me, 'How did I begin?' This gave us the title, and then her curiosity and questions dictated the layout. The lyrical text and our bright playful collage illustrations were our way of explaining things to her in a gentle yet factual way. Not all parents are fortunate enough to be able to publish their 'birds-and-the-bees' chat as a book!

Brita

The fact that this book, *How Did I Begin?* (1997) was a personal response to our own child's question gave the book an integrity. It was shortlisted for the 1998 Royal Society Young People's Book prize (then the Rhône-Poulenc). It also appeared on Blue Peter, so imagine our shock 15 years later when we saw it on a list of offensive sex education books drawn up in a dossier compiled by a radical Christian pressure group, the Christian Institute. This was published in *The Daily Mail* (Loveys and Roberts, 9 March 2011) and other national press, perhaps as part of ongoing right-wing attempts to interfere with primary education in the UK. We felt very angry but decided that silence was the best response.

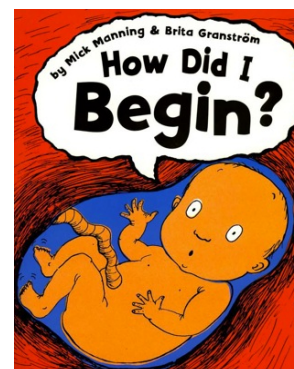
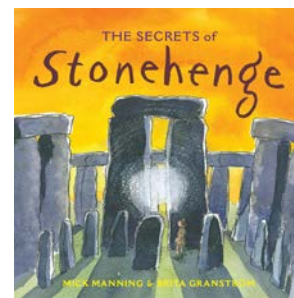
Mick

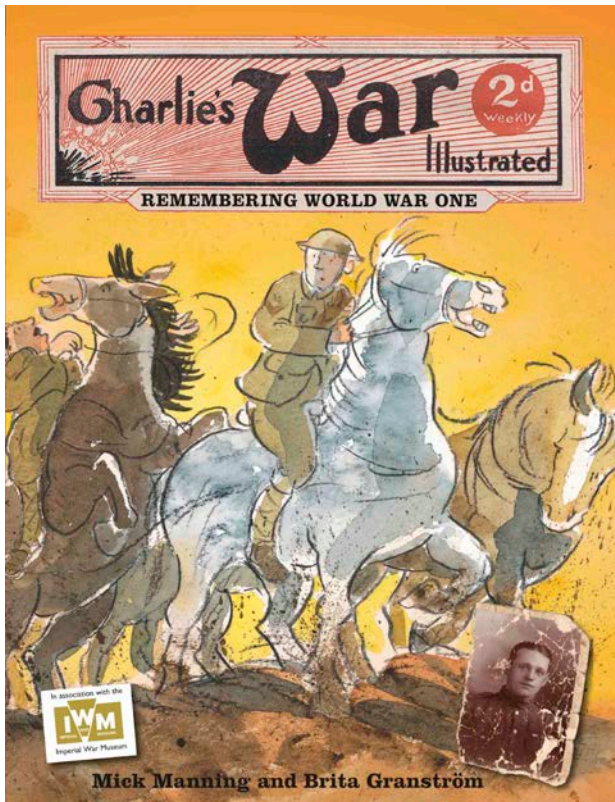
In a book we did with the Imperial War Museum to commemorate Operation Dynamo, *My Uncle's Dunkirk* (2011), we had a problem in that there was no 'story' to tell. My uncle never spoke of it even to his wife and yet, after he died, my aunt had found his army pay book and some memorabilia hidden in his tool shed. She had passed them on to me and with this and by obtaining his army record I found out he had been one of the last off the beaches on the final day before the German tanks rolled onto the beach. He witnessed the full horror and there was no doubt in my mind that he had suffered posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) ever since.

How do you write a story when there is no story? Obviously, to put words my uncle didn't say into his mouth would have been unforgivable. So instead we found parallels. He had been a telephone engineer in the Royal Artillery during the war; and after the war he had done the same for the General Post Office (GPO), living by the sea in Colwyn Bay. We had often spent holidays there when I was a boy so I knew the area well and could draw on a rich hoard of memories.

Brita and I started to make visual comparisons comparing and contrasting my uncle's life during and after the war so that on the page turn the seagull becomes a Stuka dive bomber; the peaceful queue for ice creams becomes a line of wet soldiers trying to get onto a boat.

We show the reader that even in the middle of a peaceful seaside idyll the war replays over and over again in my uncle's head. Children can explore the concept of war – but from a safe vantage point, a seaside holiday that can be returned to on every other page turn.





Brita

A few years ago when we were in Dallas to promote our book *Charles Dickens: Scenes from an Extraordinary Life* (2011) at the 2014 American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting we were asked to visit a local school. It was a Hispanic school and before we went on stage in front of 300 kids aged from 8 to 15 the teacher took us to one side and said 'there may be some behaviour problems'. We looked at each other and thought HELP!

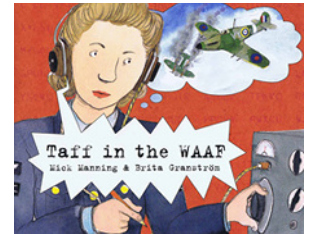
But as we stood on stage and projected large images onto the cinema-sized screen of their lecture theatre, as we read them extracts from our book and I drew 'live' with a camera feed to the screen, it was just the opposite. They were *curious* (that word again) and they listened, occasionally making only ooohs and ahhhhs of appreciation. It was a thrill for me, a Swede, speaking in English about a British author to a Hispanic audience in Texas. At the end of the book reading a forest of hands and clever questions kept us back for over an hour until the principal called a halt for home time. I'd like to say it was all due to our fantastic biography – but that's for you to say. What I will say is that those deprived kids saw a reflection of their own lives and hope for the future in the bleak childhood and rags-to-riches story of Charles Dickens we had laid before them.

Mick

Of all our books our personal favourites include *What's under the Bed* (1996) (this earned a much-treasured letter of praise from Tove Jansson), *Secrets of Stonehenge* (2013), *Stone Age, Bone Age!* (2000), *Nature Adventures* (2012) and our most recent title, *The Beatles* (2014). However, the books about my own family are heartfelt. My grandfather's experience of the Second World War (*Charlie's War Illustrated* (2013)) and the ones about my mum and dad (*Tail-End Charlie* (2009) and *Taff in the WAAF* (2010)) are tributes to the millions of everyday people who got caught up in the Second World War.



Taff in the WAAF is about my mum's work as a Y-station listener for Bletchley Park, the central site of the UK's Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS). She is still alive at 89 and she is very proud of our book about her. *Tail-End Charlie* takes me back to my childhood, sitting with a flask of tea on Rivock Edge near Keighley. I lost my dad in 1977 when I was only 17. Now Brita and I have shared those stories that he told me as an act of largesse, not just for the grandchildren he never met, but for children the world over. When my mum saw Brita's drawing for *Tail-End Charlie* she couldn't understand at first how Brita could draw my father so well, never having met him. Brita smiled and said to my mum, 'I drew Mick'.



From *Nature Adventure* p.19.

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[Mick Manning and Brita Granström's recent 2014 win for *Charlie's War Illustrated* made them a five times winners of the English Association 4–11 Award. They have also won the 1996 Silver Smarties Award 0–5 category for *The World Is Full of Babies* (1996) and the 1997 TES Junior Information Book Award for *Wonderwise: What's under the Bed?* (1996). In 2013 and 2014 they were nominated, as a double act, for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA). A recent book, *Secrets of Stonehenge* (2013) has been shortlisted for the SLA 2014 Information Book Award in the 7–12 category. The entire body of work made for their book *Greek Hero* has been deposited in the archive of Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children's Books.]

Templar Imprint 'Mapping' its Way to the Big Picture

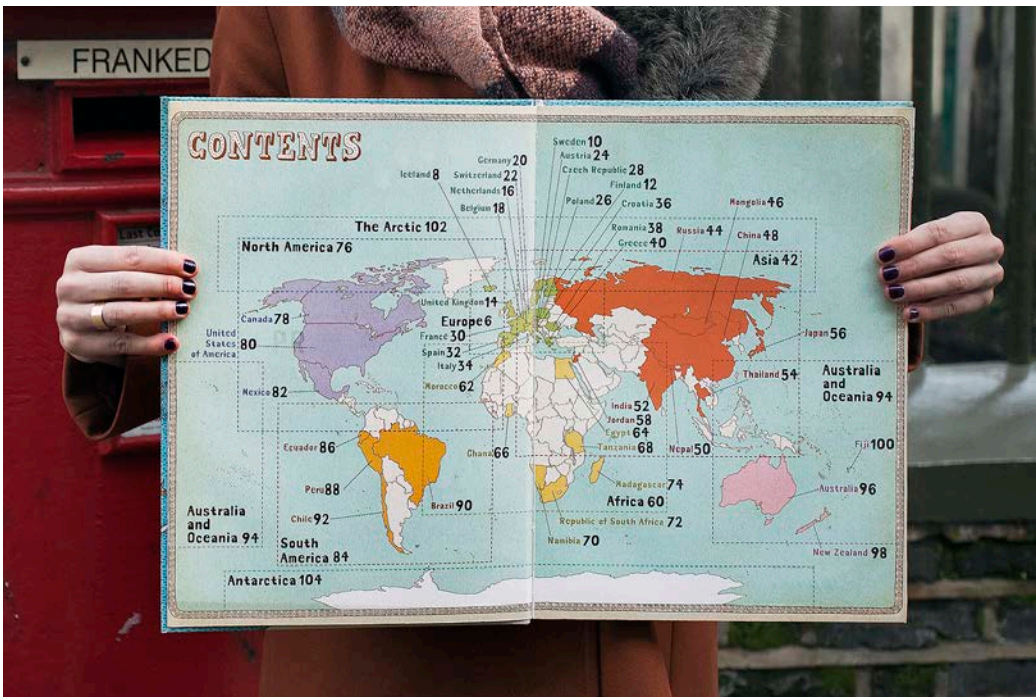
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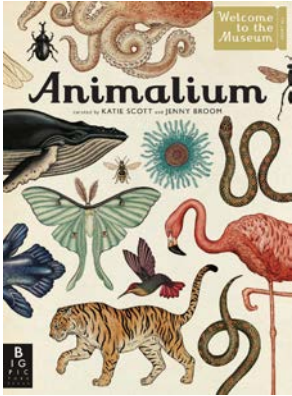
Templar Publishing is thrilled to announce that their incredibly diverse and innovative imprint Big Picture Press was nominated for Imprint of the Year by the Bookseller Industry Awards 2014. Created by and made for the indelibly curious, Big Picture Press features some of the most exciting artists and designers today, each book uniquely conceived to delight your senses, awaken your curiosity and boggle your mind. The aim is to celebrate the book as an object, with contemporary artwork showcased in stunning new formats. Big Picture Press is a new list of highly illustrated books launched in September 2013. We believe that books should be visually intelligent, surprising and accessible to readers of all ages, abilities and nationalities. These are books to be pored over and then returned to, again and again. We also recognise that visual excellence enhances the way we read and the stories we are told – whatever corner of the globe you're reading in. And thus our motto, taken from an old Navajo proverb: 'many tongues – one eye'.



So what is on offer? One title that has taken the bookshops by storm is *Maps*, our unique atlas with a twist. Shortlisted for the Waterstones Book of the Year 2013, it has sold over 40,000 copies since its publication in October 2013. It is the sort of book you can't help touching and it is as likely to engross adults as it is 7–10 year olds.

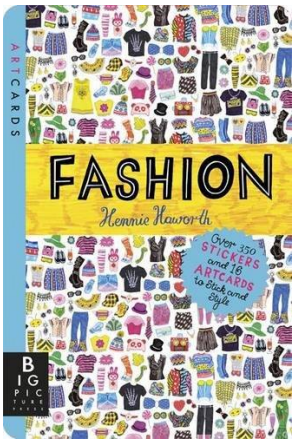
Owing to its popularity, authors Aleksandra and Daniel Mizielinski have created a marvellous *Maps Activity Book* for Big Picture Press, to be published in July 2014. This companion activity book is bursting with fascinating facts and puzzles, featuring flora and fauna and friendly faces from around the world. Highly detailed, it offers hours of entertainment to adventurers of all ages. Informative and inspiring, the variety of activities in this book challenge the reader to discover something new and explore their imagination to draw, decorate and design every pull-out page.





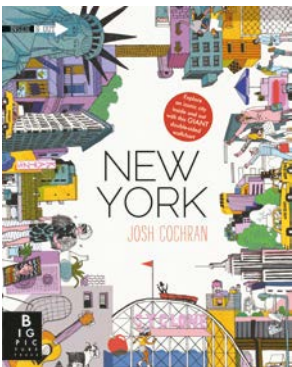
Mick Jolley, Artistic Director at Big Picture Press explains some of the thinking behind this approach:

After the success of the launch list, our aim is to keep Big Picture Press titles focused and desirable, publishing a range of fresh and exciting formats with high production values, and showcasing new and unique illustration styles. *Maps*, the runaway success from our launch list, was the result of the complete vision of just two people. Apart from a few minor editorial suggestions the book is exactly as the creators wanted it to be. Aleksandra and Daniel Mizielinski created a truly amazing body of work that celebrates the book as an object of desire. The ethos at the very heart of what Big Picture Press stands for. We are very proud to have published their book.



Designed to be informative for young readers and beautiful for all ages, the original title and the imaginative development are very different from most information books for the young. How do the authors, Aleksandra and Daniel Mizielinski, approach their subjects?

We discuss many ideas for the books we'd like to create and we always make them together. We choose interesting topics that we also think will be great to talk to children about. It was the same with our book *Maps*. *Maps*, in general, are very inspirational and powerful things – that's why so many people love them. They are full of stories and there is something absolutely compelling in a way they can describe and simplify the world around us. Although we often work on various projects at the same time, *Maps* is one of most exciting books yet. Fortunately, it seems others agree with us.



Maps is just the start. Looking forward we are particularly excited about *Animalium*, the first in the Welcome to the Museum series. Open all hours, this virtual museum allows you to discover more than 160 exhibits. Created by Jenny Broom and Katie Scott, this amazing hardback will be published 1 September 2014. In addition, a limited edition bespoke collector's cabinet will also be available. Each copy will be beautifully produced with ten prints individually wrapped in tissue paper. They will also be numbered and signed by illustrator Katie Scott. In this unique museum you can wander the galleries – open 365 days a year – and discover a collection of curated exhibits on every page, accompanied by informative text. Each chapter features a different branch of the tree of life, from the simple sponge to the enormous elephant.

Other highlights include *Fashion* (August 2014), which contains over 600 stickers and 16 artcards. You become the stylist in this fresh take on a favourite activity format from Topshop designer Hennie Haworth. Then there is the stunning concertina fold-out book *New York* (September 2014) by Josh Cochran. Containing a detachable two-metre-wide panoramic scene of New York's iconic skyline, you can spot over 80 objects – from famous buildings to finger-licking frankfurters – then flip the page to see a cutaway replication of the same scene, showing what New Yorkers get up to behind closed doors.

Despite not being your average books on the curriculum, Big Picture Press titles are designed to attract visually, and to inspire. We strongly believe that curiosity needs to be stimulated as much as the imagination ... and where better to feed this than a book?

You can find out more about Big Picture Press by visiting our website www.bigpicturepress.net. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BigPicturePress>. Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BigPicturePress>.

[Jamie-Lee Nardone is the PR and Events Manager at Bonnier Publishing. Email: Jamie-lee.nardone@bonnierpublishing.co.uk.]

REVIEWS

About Children's Literature

All-American Boy

Larzer Ziff, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, hb. 978 0 2927 3892 8, 2012, £12.99, 154pp.

This is the fourth of the Discovering America series, which is designed to throw light on episodes in American history that have not yet been explored. In this volume, Professor Ziff, author of a number of books on American literary culture, looks at eight 'classic examples of the all-American boy', ranging from the young George Washington through Tom Sawyer to Little Lord Fauntleroy, as well as what are described as 'two notable antitheses – Huckleberry Finn and Holden Caulfield'. He considers how the changing character of young fictional male figures reflects the changes in society that occurred from 1800 onwards

Perhaps inevitably, several of the case studies refer to the work of authors little known this side of the Atlantic. Ziff begins the first chapter with the striking sentence: 'George Washington first chopped down the cherry tree in 1806, seven years after his death', referring to this legendary incident, first narrated in the second edition of Parson Mason L. Weems' *Life of Washington* (first edition 1800). In this book, directed to young readers, Weems dramatises a range of 'model deeds ... especially those that emphasised submission to paternal authority' (p.15). Ziff suggests that the image of the paradigmatic American boy changes during the nineteenth century: 'Only after 1868 was the boy who would be president mischievous and full of pranks. Before that, he was ideal because well behaved, even gentle, considerate of his fellows, and respectful of authority' (ibid.).

Among the other texts examined are the 26 'Rollo' books (1835 onwards) by Jacob Abbott, a Congregational minister; in these, the title character receives an education in both moral and social responsibility. The whole emphasis changes, however, with the arrival on the scene in 1876 of Mark Twain. Ziff suggests that Tom Sawyer 'was the first to embody the qualities that after him were trumpeted as the attributes of the typical American boy' – a combination of mischief and tender-heartedness (p.54).

It would appear that Ziff sees the contrast between Tom Sawyer and Frances Hodgson Burnett's Cedric Erroll (*Little Lord Fauntleroy*) as more apparent than real, for the origin of Burnett's classic novel is in her attempt 'to imagine a brilliant little republican in contact with a real duke' (p.79). She tells the story of how 'the little republican in training to be an aristocrat unconsciously trains the elderly autocrat to be what he in his innocence always believed him to be, a paternal benefactor to all below him', and thus manages to tell a story dealing with 'high life ... while at the same time asserting the natural superiority of republican principles' (p.81). Cedric is characterised by his goodness of heart and appreciation of the value of people of all ranks, rather than by the effeminate image that many readers have retained, largely from the book's illustrations: 'a boy who was thoughtful, kind and considerate could still be as manly as any boy who played hooky from school or lit firecrackers in the house' (p.87).

Finally, Ziff presents his 'Antithesis'. His focus on the character of Huckleberry Finn reveals that what seemed most shocking to contemporary readers was not the naughtiness of the protagonist but the fact that those who support the racism that Twain indicts are in fact the respectable folks who create the 'sivilization' from which Huck seeks to escape.

J.D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield (*The Catcher in the Rye*) is often seen, Ziff claims, as the twentieth-century heir of Huck Finn. Like him, he survives by lying (which he evidently



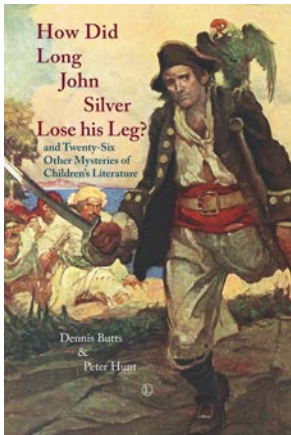
enjoys). Additionally, his behaviour often succeeds in exposing the falsity of many of the attitudes of mid-twentieth-century American society.

I have focused here on books that are likely to be familiar to the British reader; there are also illuminating discussions of such texts as Thomas Aldrich's *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1869), Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* (1868) and George Wilbur Peck's *Peck's Bad Boy and his Pa* (1883). The interconnections that Ziff traces between these books and the social history of the periods in which they were written are also very informative to readers who, like me, are ignorant of all but the broad brush strokes of American history, as well as of these lesser-known children's texts.

Pat Pinsent

How Did Long John Silver Lose his Leg?: And Twenty-Six Other Mysteries of Children's Literature

Dennis Butts and Peter Hunt, Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 978 0 7188 9310 1; 2013, £18.00, 154pp.



As might be anticipated from a collaboration between these two eminent yet highly readable scholars of children's literature, this collection of explorations of some of the unanswered questions implicit in the classics of children's literature is both entertaining and thought provoking. Not only does it reveal their extensive knowledge both of the books considered and of the canon generally, but it also touches on some deeper issues which such apparently simple questions bring to the fore. The authorship is fairly equally divided: Hunt 13 chapters, Butts 14 chapters; it is an interesting exercise to guess, without looking at the contents page, which of the authors is responsible for which topic.

The (Butts) essay that lends the book its title (and also raises the question of how Silver acquired his parrot) presents altogether too much information about the painful process of amputation, but also draws the reader's attention to the pirate's use of a more standard mode of English expression than that of the rest of the crew.

It is impossible here to give details about the many fascinating puzzles that are confronted: whether the train would have stopped in time in *The Railway Children*; how Mary got to Misselthwaite Manor in *The Secret Garden*; the problem of the skates in *Tom's Midnight Garden*, and many more. Some of the final essays, by Hunt, pose more general questions, and demand a little more attention. First, in looking at a range of major children's writers, he asks, 'Does anyone really write for children?' (ch.24), thus engaging with the vexed question of what children's literature is. Quoting such writers as Beatrix Potter, Arthur Ransome and J.R.R. Tolkien, he shows how their fiction became detached from any 'real' children. He concludes, 'Perhaps the only "pure" children's book is one written by a child, for a child, and that is something that adults should never read' (p.130).

He goes on (ch.26) to tackle the problem posed by the work of William Mayne, who was, until his conviction for 'abusive behaviour' in 2004, one of the most highly regarded (by adults) children's writers. Hunt uses this as a way in to the question, 'Do writers for children have to be nicer than other writers?', or 'Would you let them [Lewis Carroll and J.M. Barrie] babysit your children?' (p.136). Hunt has no final answer to such questions, though no doubt, now that it is three years since Mayne's death, his literary reputation will soon be subject to further examination.

Finally, in 'Who is killing Cock Robin?' (ch.27), Hunt looks at the question of the crossover between children's books and the adult market, as well as the whole matter of the future of the printed book. Again, he has no final answers, but the questions he poses are well worth attention.

By drawing attention to some of Peter Hunt's essays, I would not want to undervalue the generally more specific ones contributed by Dennis Butts. These are equally thought provoking and challenging. I recommend this book not only for its entertainment value but also as a very valuable contribution to scholarly debate generally.

Pat Pinsent

Information Books and Non-Fiction

The Secrets of Stonehenge

Mick Manning and Brita Granström, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 8478 0346 7, 2013, £11.99, 32pp.

Husband-and-wife team Manning and Granström have collaborated on many excellent picture-book introductions to history, both natural and temporal, and their look at the mysteries of Stonehenge follows in this fine tradition. As the World Heritage Site opens its new English Heritage experience to visitors, with modern, state-of-the-art facilities and interpretation, and the site itself is released from the nearby presence of modern buildings, we can again wonder at the history, ritual and meaning of the stones, all aspects of Stonehenge that are examined in this book. Helped by a brief but useful glossary, the authors/illustrators explain the possible development of the site, and its relationship to the landscape and other nearby ancient sites, introducing readers to the different prehistoric cultures which adapted it for their own purposes. The book also highlights its recent history as a pagan ceremonial and tourist attraction, and its enduring fascination.

The illustrations aid the main text immeasurably, adding humour and expanding the information with further diagrams, timelines, and additional, more detailed text, placed in a separate area to one side of each spread. This is a serious introduction to this fantastic site for Key Stage 1 readers.

Manning and Granström have also collaborated on other historically based picture books that are to be recommended, such as *What Mr Darwin Saw*, *Charles Dickens*, *Woolly Mammoth*, *Tail-End Charlie* and *Taff in the WAAF*.

Bridget Carrington

Orang-Utan (Eye on the Wild series)

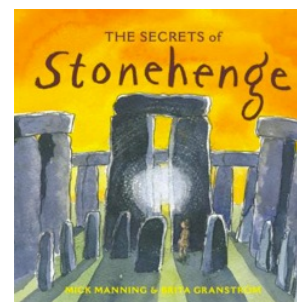
Suzi Eszterhas, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 8478 0313 9, 2013, £10.99, 32pp.

How closely related is it legitimate to picture humans and animals? It is hopelessly discriminatory to imagine that we are unique in the world, appointed by a creator to rule and misrule the rest of the Earth's populations. But equally to ignore the differences between humans and animals is to indulge in an anthropomorphic fallacy.

Eszterhas's book treads a fine line. It is a lavishly created portfolio of full-colour photographs illustrating the life and times of a female orang-utan and her child. The book is designed for pupils at upper Key Stage 1 or lower Key Stage 2, and it is quite certain that children will enjoy reading it and looking at the pictures, even though a price tag of £10.99 may deter some school librarians and parents.

The book underlines all the similarities a young reader would recognise between a human mother-and-child relationship and the relationship of the (laudably unnamed) orang-utan mother and her offspring.

Children may also learn a great deal about these interesting creatures from a factual appendix to the book. They share 96.4 % of our DNA. They use tools, making umbrellas



out of leaves when it rains. How many people can do that? They are seven times stronger than humans.

The orang-utan is, of course, an endangered species as we destroy its habitat for profit. The merit of this book is that it brings a young reader face to face with the reality of an extinction level threat to an animal not that different from ourselves.

Rebecca R. Butler

Look at This: Play

Ifeoma Onyefulu, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 8478 0267 5, 2013, £11.99, 32pp.

Onyefulu's book is designed to appeal to any Key Stage 1 child (5–7) who has found the introduction to world geography a baffling experience and who views countries 'over there' as strangely alien and forbidding places.

The book contains two dozen colour photographs of children at play in Mali. The author is Nigerian, but she set her book in Mali because she learned as a child that Mali has the most fascinating regal history.

Compared with children in the developed world, these African children lead lives that seem very different. Yet this book reveals both the differences and the similarities. Some of the games depicted would be familiar to British readers. These children play football, they skip, they use marbles and they play hopscotch. They play Jacks with small stones, as also did Roman legionary soldiers. Other games are less familiar. They play a mud game, a Malian dancing game named 'A ay' and a traditional African board game named 'Waly'.

Whether the games they are playing are familiar or strange to European readers, the vibrant colour photos of the children at play remind us that children all over the world, however different their circumstances, show the same enthusiasm and zest for life and companionship. This book will bring value to children at home and in school and initiate revelatory discussions. My only misgiving about the book is that at £11.99 many homes and school libraries might find it too expensive to make their buy list.

Rebecca R. Butler

Poetry

Let's Play! Poems about Sports and Games from around the World

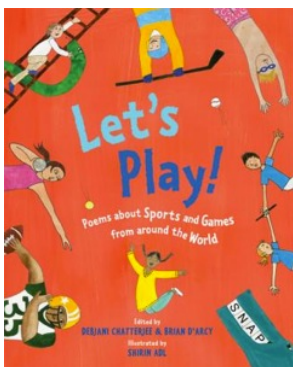
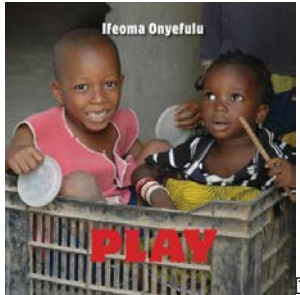
Debjani Chatterjee and Brian D'Arcy (eds), illus. Shirin Adl, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 8478 0370 2, 2013, £12.99, 56pp.

This book contains 37 poems about different sports and games. Most of the poems refer to games played in Britain, India or the USA, though there is one import from Japan.

Some of the poems are written by the two editors, some are collected from folklore. Some have been written by such diverse authors as Sir Henry Newbolt, Robert Louis Stevenson and Muhammad Ali. What a launch party this book might have had!

The poems are illustrated by Shirin Adl. So vibrant and compelling are the full-colour illustrations that it might be more accurate to describe this as a book of pictures illustrated by some text. All young readers will find that these pictures provide a lively and inviting path of access to the book.

Many sports-loving children are also collectors of facts and figures about sports. For them there is a compendium of statistics appended to the book. Did you know that



women have been playing football since 1895? And did you know that Japan boasts a sport named 'kite fighting'?

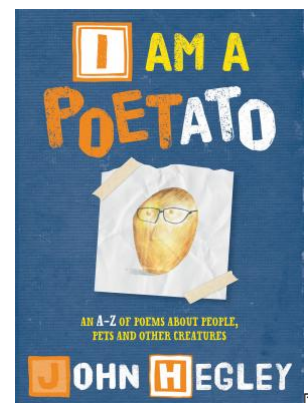
One admirable feature of this book is its freedom from gender branding. A book about sports could easily have identified itself as a boys' book. The quality of the illustrations and of the verse means that girls will enjoy the book just as much.

Rebecca R. Butler

I Am a Poetato: An A-Z of Poems about People, Pets and Other Creatures

John Hegley, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 987 1 8478 0397 9, 2013, £12.99, 80pp.

How does a Poet morph into a poetato? Is the title of this volume the answer to a riddle? Does it pose one? The book cover certainly grabs attention with the title and the poet's name printed in yellow, orange and white on a blue denim background. A bespectacled potato face, printed on a scrap of paper, roughly taped onto the background is the centre of the layout. The letter 'I' of the title is enclosed in a 'letter box' as are the 'J' and 'H' of the poet's name. Inside the end pages are filled with letter boxes containing sequentially the letters of the alphabet and the nine single numbers, all individually framed, and differently represented, using only orange and white as contrasts. They reminded me of nursery bricks, building blocks. We all know that nurseries are places where constructions, inventions, stories, songs and experiments happen. In this book the alphabet and numbers are there to be configured in many different combinations.



A look at the contents page establishes that most of the titles of the compositions require a second look. Glancing at the list, the order is alphabetical but the reader is soon taken by surprise, and thereafter nothing is predictable. There are three poems for A, one of which is entitled 'A Mosquito'. Two Cs bring up 'Christmas Caterpillar'. D for 'Dogs' but also 'Differences between Dogs and Deckchairs'. 'Eleph Ant', 'Fishtoes' and 'Hamstar' all conjure strange images. Another unexpected twist gives us 'Invisible Hamster', correct spelling, but this poem is about a secret. 'Isabelle's Complaint' may be her justifiable annoyance with a father who plays jokes with her packed lunch. M is for 'Micetroes', and 'Micycle'. We are only halfway through the alphabet and this mischievous concoction of sounds and images continues its unorthodox way.

Delightfully subversive, John Hegley engages with the reader tirelessly. He plays with words, rhymes and sounds. He draws rudimentary pictures, some of imaginary creatures. He has conversations with Isabelle, with his Gran, and with the class expecting the Nit Nurse. He also includes drawings attributed to small companions. Still fresh by Z, there are four separate contributions, one about a zebra who is spotty not striped. 'Zombie' plays with rhymes like 'frombie' and 'combi'. A very short improvisation on 'Zoë' brings us to 'The Dog Runs (Zoom)'. This is an action picture poem that ends with the word 'Nothing' in an empty frame. Here the reader might choose to continue with their own ideas.

This is not a conventional book of poems or rhymes to be recited, though they might translate into playful action. John Hegley writes in a way that many children will enjoy, apparently with no rules other than to please himself or to let the subject run away with him. Sometimes the pages resemble scraps of paper. It is not a book that sets out a standard of perfection. Often it revels in the ridiculous. This author is not a reproofing figure, he offers freedom and fun to his readers. Not Humpty Dumpty but a poetato who implies 'When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean.' In a similar vein I remembered those books whose pages are divided into three sections of heads, bodies and legs, which offer the reader the opportunity to create an infinite variety of quaint and comically incongruous beings. This book stimulates imaginative interaction that has no limits. It suggests that each one of us can play with ideas and let them lead

us to strange and sometimes ridiculous places. When we sober down we may be ready to discover other forms of poetic expression aided by John Hegley himself who has made more than one reference to well-known poets from the past in this collection.

Judith Philo

Cosmic Disco

Grace Nichols, illus. Alice Wright. London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, pb. 978 1 8478 0398 6, 2013, £6.99, 80pp.

Although not labelled as a Janetta Otter-Barry Book, this is a continuation of her economically produced poetry books for children. She publishes two such books in May and August and includes at least one new author and pairs that book with an established author. This book is of course from a very well-known author who although from the Caribbean has been living in the UK for many years. However, many of her poem titles display her origins.

The title of the collection indicates the themes of both the cosmos, which includes the sky and the earth, and 'disco', which includes dancing, fun, games, riddles and humour.

The 'cosmos' theme has poems to make us look up: 'Sun, You're a Star', 'Sky-Artist', 'Moon Mad' and 'Reminder of Saturn'. Looking around on earth has poems 'Water, Grass and Dirt', 'Miss Spring' and 'Sonnet to an Earthworm'. The 'disco' theme is very enterprising, with such poem titles as 'Lady Winter's Rap', 'Cosmic Disco' and 'Still-Hip Dad Looks Back'. Other poems can't really be classified under either theme but all are very enterprising. The length of the poems is very variable; for example 'Winter Trees' is three short lines and illustrated by bare trees seeming to reach upwards:

Gnarled hands
in upward prayer
for green. (p.54)

Others are quite long. For example, 'When the Colours Spoke' occupies three sides:

Use me, said Green
I'm essential as the grass and trees
with every shade from deep-leaf to jade.
My emerald green gives hummingbird its sheen.
You can't leave me out of a landscape.

Use me, said Blue. ...

and the colours Yellow, White, Black, Purple, Red, Pink, and finally

But the painter only said:
No. Today I will use no colour.
Today I will work on a piece of sculpture.

Here is one of my favourites, 'Ancestor-Stars':

What is it you're trying to say,
ancestor-stars
when I glance up at you
in the galley of dark?

Through the eons of time
through the light-years of space
no answer comes back.
Not a single syllable hangs in the air.



The black-and-white illustrations are sometime full page or below the poem and well complement each title, adding their own expression of the subject.

I have enjoyed reading this book very much and suggest that to appreciate the subtlety of the poems, the book would be best for the 11+ reader.

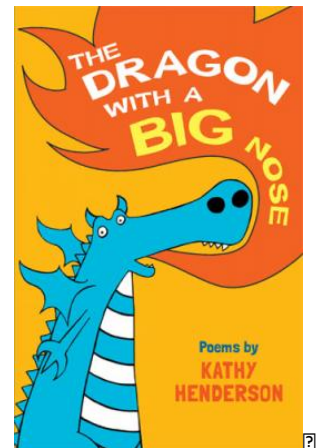
Jennifer Harding

The Dragon with a Big Nose

Kathy Henderson. London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books/Janetta Otter-Barry Books, pb. 978 1 8478 0365 8, 2013, £6.99, 96pp.

This book is in the same series as *Cosmic Disco*, reviewed above. It pairs with that book, which is by a well-known author, as being a debut poetry collection by an established picture-book author. Henderson has provided the black-and-white drawings to her poems in this book – line drawings being the style for this poetry series. Her picture book *The Storm*, where she is both author and illustrator, was shortlisted for the 2000 Kate Greenaway Medal. Interestingly, not all her picture books are also illustrated by her. For example, *Hush Baby Hush: Lullabies from around the World* is illustrated by Pam Smy and she has authored books that are illustrated by Jane Ray, Patrick Benson, Brita Granström and Paul Howard, among others.

The illustrations vary from pale sketches, some beneath the text, forming part of the poem and others surrounding the poem and taking up more space than the words. The use of greyscale shades up to a full black is excellent and gives the pictures clear detail and are stories in themselves. I really enjoyed them and they set me thinking.



The poem of the title is not until page 18:

The dragon with a big nose	swallows them all
and twelve toes	quite whole ...
on each foot,	No one's ever seen him coming.
eats flies	They can't see him leave.
and mince pies	No one ever seen him anyway.
and sometimes,	... except me.
when he's very bad,	
whole towns	
upside down, ...	

This is typical of many of the poems as they describe adventures and virtual adventures in a large city – that could be any city. The poems have a real feel for life in such a place and how any child might imagine its secret life – such as the dragon in the poem above.

Readers will have fun with the tongue twister 'Digger Ditty' (p.37):

Did you ever see a digger dig a deep damp ditch
or a dozer digging drains in the road ...

The city's domestic cats are given a few poems such as 'Ellie' ('We've got a cat and her name is Ellie, ...' (p.92)), 'Our Cat' ('Our cat drinks/ from dripping taps ...' (p.92)) and 'Silver' ('Silver the cat has work to do, sleeping. ...' (p.93)). Many other creatures and aspects of family life in the city are also given voice.

As someone whose roof leaked rain into a bedroom in the recent storms, I like this short poem 'A House Is':

A house is like a skin
for keeping people in
and the weather out ...
just about. (p.27)

And how about this word of warning – with a note of defiance and a surprise as to the teller? ‘I Must not Play with Sockets’ (p.49):

I must not play with sockets
I must leave the lights alone ...
but
they can't keep the words from me.
And
it they can't keep the words from me
I can make things of my own.
I can cast electric spells
say a plug and a cable and a junction box, ...
I am an electric witch!

A lovely book of evocative poems that give life to the imagination of any reader of what every age. And illustrations to be pored over.

Jennifer Harding

Picture Books

Going Swimming

Sarah Garland, London: Frances Lincoln, board book, 978 1 8478 0470 9, 2013, £5.99, 24pp. First published Bodley Head, 1990.

Going to Playschool

Sarah Garland, London: Frances Lincoln, board book, 978 1 8478 0469 3, 2013, £5.99, 24pp. First published Bodley Head 1990.

These two board books, featuring the by now familiar characters of mother, young daughter and toddler son, are firmly placed in contemporary, urban, multicultural settings. Other titles deal with familiar events from daily life such as shopping and doing the washing, as well as outings like the two in these books. Great for children of the youngest age up to five years.



The style transfers well to the board-book format. The text is minimal and the pictures are spread across the double pages. There is plenty going on in the pictures to engage and stimulate the young reader, but the gem here as ever is the portrayal of the emotions and relationships in body language and facial expression so expressively portrayed by the expert brush of Sarah Garland. She deftly illustrates familiar situations, such as the toddler who doesn't at first want to get into the swimming pool, but after being gently won over shows his reluctance to leave by throwing a wobbly to the disapproving looks from some other bathers; a scene of almost losing a favourite toy rabbit at playschool, rescued at the last minute from the real rabbit's hutch by the insistent toddler; and filling mum's wellies with sand from the sand tray whilst she is unaware.

The pictures are full of life and activity but also relationships: mother and child, father and child, and child and child. Positive portrayals abound, and the featured family is always seen as a single-mum family. Colours that are gentle but never wishy-washy are the perfect medium for this blend of activity and emotion.

Julie Mills

The Prince's Breakfast

Joanne Oppenheim, illus. Miriam Latimer, read by Hugh Bonneville, Oxford: Barefoot Books, hb. with CD, 978 1 7828 5074 8, 2014, £10.99, 32pp.

In this story for 4 to 7 year olds we have a petulant prince – which makes a change from the rash of stories currently available featuring pink and pretty princesses. There are echoes of 'The King's Breakfast' by A.A. Milne – 'I do like a little bit of butter on my bread'. Here we have a tale that turns out to be another tribute to condiments! With all the rhyme and rhythm of Milne's classic, much of the humour and a repeated refrain ('No, not I!', from 'Puppy and I'), this story jogs along taking the fussy-eating Prince around the world in search of food he will eat.

Along the way we can enjoy comic touches in the pictures such as the Prince's pet dog mimicking the facial expressions of the Prince, and the kitchen sink on the top of the horse-drawn carriage that bears the royal family on their foodie tour.

True to its mission, this book celebrates world food. The Prince is offered dosas and chutneys in India, congee and pickles in China, fresh fruit served on giant leaves in Zambia, and avocados and fried eggs in Mexico – where a great rhyme is achieved when the family is exuberantly greeted by moustachioed and sombrero wearing waiters shouting 'buenos días' offering 'trays of tortillas'. The waiters and dignitaries in each location are somewhat predictably portrayed, attired in sombreros, turbans and the like, but we are in an undefined fairy-tale type world where there are still maharajahs and mandarins, and the king wears his crown whilst on safari.

The Prince cheers up on his travels and appreciates the animals he meets and we begin to like him a little better, but he persists in refusing all food until in Zambia a 'bright-eyed old man' produces a bottle of ketchup which elicits mixed reactions:

'What's this?' asked the Prince. 'It smells so delicious!'

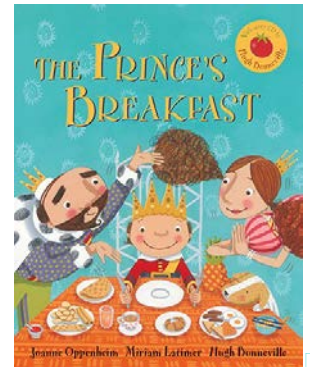
'Oh dear', frowned the Queen. 'Are you sure it's nutritious?'

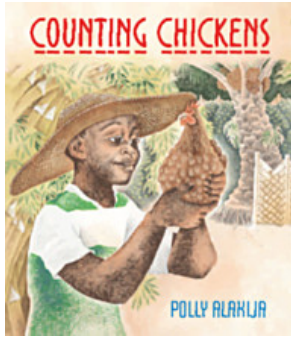
The Prince is won over and from then on he will eat anything as long as it is accompanied by ketchup – and many an ordinary everyday parent might recognise that scenario. It seems that all the pomp and refinement of royal catering does not live up to a simple everyday product supplied by an ordinary citizen.

Bright colour and dynamic pictures illustrate the story perfectly, showing attention to detail in the depiction of different utensils such as chopsticks, willow-pattern china, traditional designs on the dishes in Mexico, and the large leaves used as plates in Zambia.

The book is accompanied by a CD of the story, opening with some cheery music and admirably read by Hugh Bonneville (*Downton Abbey*), who uses a subtle approach to the different accents for the dialogue, including when in Mexico the King and Queen exclaim 'por favor' and 'muy bien'. This is the only use of the vernacular in the book and it is not attempted in Zambia, Agra or Shanghai.

Julie Mills





Counting Chickens

Polly Alakija, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 84780 437 2, 2014, £11.99, 32pp.

To swallow gudgeons ere th' are catch'd,
And count their chickens ere th' are hatch'd.

(Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*: lines 923, 924)

Have you ever wondered where proverbs come from? Some books tell us the stories of them. This picture book perfectly presents one story and meaning of the famous proverb: 'Don't count your chickens before they are hatched'.

Tobi lives in a village in Africa. He has got a fine hen and his friends have different animals. Although the other animals give birth, and the number of baby animals increases day by day (one calf, two lambs, three kids, four kittens, five puppies, six piglets) Tobi's chicken lays only one egg each day. The hen lays seven eggs by the end of week but does not give birth to her chicks. This makes him sad. His friends play with their baby animals, while he sits with his hen sadly. After 21 days, Tobi's and his hen's 'brood of seven beautiful chicks' hatches. They grow quickly and have their own chicks. Patience brings Tobi and his hen happiness and Tobi has so many chickens that they are difficult to count. To be honest, I couldn't count the numbers of chickens at the end of book! I think children will love trying to counting them.

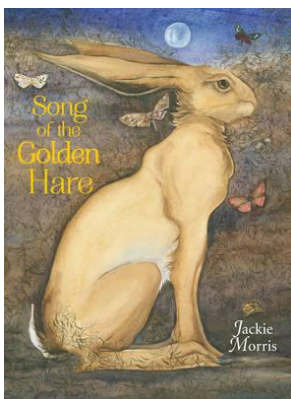
The British author and illustrator Polly Alakija, who has lived in Nigeria, illustrates this lovely story with shades of brown against the white dominant clothes of the villagers. The stimulating illustrations are worth more than a thousand words and even without the words it is possible to understand the plot.

This book kills many birds with one stone by teaching counting, the names of baby animals and the days of the week in a fun way! Also, this book can be used to develop children's empathy skills by asking them some thought-provoking questions about the villagers' lifestyle. Each child can benefit from this book according to his/her comprehension level. The suitable age would be children of 2 to 5 years old, but even older children would love reading and playing with this picture book.

Osman Coban

Song of the Golden Hare

Jackie Morris. London: Frances Lincoln: Janetta Otter-Barry Books, hb, 978-1-84780-450-1, 2013, £12.99, 40pp.



This is a magical, golden book. Jackie Morris uses both brush and pen in her imaginative telling of this tender story. The book is, in essence, a song of the soul. I shall describe the cover and end pages because they provide the overture to the symphony that lies between them. The cover portrays the still figure of a magnificent golden hare sitting in profile against a screen of gossamer leaf filaments beneath a night sky illuminated by a full moon. Woven into this backcloth are the ephemeral shapes of delicately coloured moths. Inside, the end pages continue to reflect this nocturnal landscape. At the front we see the small creatures that emerge from the undergrowth to forage, a frog, a snail, a mouse, while a predatory barn owl flies across the face of the moon. The back page depicts a young hare in full stride. In the backcloth are a pair of wrens, a pair of gold finches and moths. An observant owl, wings outstretched, broods over the scene. On the back cover the mouse crouches in the undergrowth, the owl resting is perched high above. This is a moment whose unfolding we can only guess at, but we have already been shown that the bright world of nature contains not only beauty but also darkness and death.

Jackie Morris has an affinity with the natural world which she records in exquisite detail. In telling her story she uses 16 double-page spreads. Thirteen of these are wide-angled landscapes which focus on the unravelling drama of the hare's story and include other wild creatures and birds that inhabit this wild terrain. The narrative in prose verse is inscribed on the surface of the earth or water as though giving voice to the elemental rhythms that are being related. There are three spreads which focus on the human characters, the boy, his sister and their grandfather. In the only interior scene, a simple farm kitchen, we see their faces in close up. They nurse a clutch of newborn leverets in their hands. This is the heart of the story, for the grandfather knows the special folklore of the hares and nurtures those orphaned young whose parents have been killed in the chase. He believes that one of them may, in their maturity, be the one who will woo and win with his song 'The Queen of the Golden Hares'. The hares' survival depends on this critical event which only occurs when the Queen nears her time to retire to the Island of the Golden Hares and when her succession has been ensured by the birth of a daughter.

The children, but especially the boy, are the inheritors of this precious legend and become custodians to its perpetuation. In the opening sentence of the book the boy and the hares are linked.

The boy loved hares for their twilight dancing
wildness, the light in their amber eyes, their long
velvet ears, their speed.

And he loved music for the way it made his heart
dance inside him. He often played, strumming
and plucking delicate tunes on his harp.

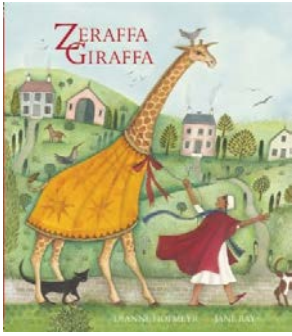
But he never sang. For some reason
he thought he couldn't.

Those qualities of loving and longing, and his innate musicality, keep him attuned to the life of the hares and so he recognises the imperative moment when the hares start to gather to meet the Queen. He and his sister follow the migration as pilgrims and protectors, for hunters with dogs are also in pursuit of the hares for their fur, and there are aerial predators who would feed off them.

It seems to me that the boy is the human embodiment of the task of caretaker to the natural world. He finds his voice at the critical moment, or perhaps his voice finds him waiting 'like a thought unborn' as John Clare says of the nightingale's nest. The female hare is a symbolic representation of fertility and mother nature. Theirs is the song of the earth. It is profoundly moving.

After she had completed her book Jackie Morris discovered that there is a real island off the shores of Northern Ireland, Rathin Island, where golden hares can be found. I think this is confirmation of a psychological idea, which is conceptualised as 'the unthought known', that sometimes we have intimations that are then borne out.

Judith Philo



Zeraffa Giraffa

Dianne Hofmeyr, illus. Jane Ray, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 8478 0344 3, 2014, £11.99, 40pp.

This book is based on the true story of an immigrant giraffe. The Great Pasha of Egypt decides to send an elegant gift, a small zeraffa (the name means elegance as well as giraffe in the Ottoman Turkish language) to his 'friend', the King of France. But there is a long distance between the two countries and the zeraffa is not strong enough to walk. How do you think she is transported 2500 miles by the technology of the nineteenth century? How did the French people respond to this first zeraffa guest of the country? How long did it take for her to arrive in Paris? What kind of influences did the zeraffa make on the cultural life of Paris? Have you ever held a giraffe stick, worn a giraffe hat, clipped your plants like giraffes or tasted giraffe biscuits?

The award-winning author, Dianne Hofmeyr, answers the questions above in an impressive way, along with the enchanting illustrations of Jane Ray. The colourful illustrations of the River Nile, African villages and the streets of France take the reader from today's complicated city life to a peaceful world.

When I saw *Zeraffa Giraffa* looking excitedly at another giraffe on the side of River Nile, I felt a sharp pain in my heart. This book makes the reader think about the issue of capturing animals for a zoo, an issue that led Hofmeyr to write this story:

I grew up seeing animals in the wild, so the concept of a zoo, as I saw in picture and story books as a child, seemed rather foreign and exotic to me. But the barbaric butchering of a young giraffe in public recently makes me wonder where we've gone wrong. (Press release of *Zeraffa Giraffa*)

I don't want to put an age limit for this influential picture book as it seems children from a variety of age groups would love this short story. As Pippa Goodhart beautifully puts it:

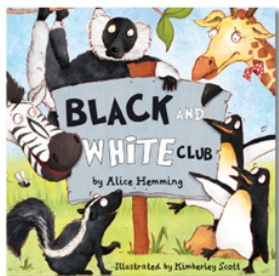
It sounds and looks wonderful! And maybe just the thing for a 98th birthday present for a dear aunt who can no longer cope with books of the usual sort. (23/4/2014, <http://awfullybigreviews.blogspot.co.uk/2014/04/zeraffa-giraffa-by-diane-hofmeyr.html>)

There is an information section at the end of book. However, I would like to warn the readers that they will probably want to visit La Rotonde in Paris where *Zeraffa Giraffa* and her keeper, Atir, lived for 18 years. This masterpiece is a great resource for those who want to develop a love of reading in reluctant readers. If you want to broaden your children's horizons and love to talk about books with them, don't wait any more to read this amazing zeraffa story because you will find many things to share!

Osman Coban

The Black and White Club

Alice Hemming, illus. Kimberley Scott, Horsham: Maverick Arts, pb. 978 1 8488 6096 4, 2013, £5.99, 28pp.



There's plenty of scope for young readers and listeners to spot animals and opposites in Alice Hemming's picture book about feeling left out. George the Giraffe discovers that his best friend has joined a club, and George would dearly love to be a member, but he's not black and white so he can't. He's very unhappy, and tries everything he can think of so that he is eligible to join, even painting himself black and white, but is dismayed when he is firmly told he still can't join. George decides to create his own club, but after realising that some criteria he chooses to select members are just too selective (for example 'giraffes only' is a bit limiting, as he's the only giraffe in the Wildlife Park), he decides on The Tall and Short Club. This is ideal, as it doesn't exclude

anyone, and even almost all the members of The Black and White Club are keen to join. Only the penguins, who are pictured as bouncers outside their club, refuse to join!

Feeling 'left out' is common to everyone, and Hemming's excellent text and Scott's splendid illustrations are immensely cheerful and reassuring. Quite apart from the story itself, there is much to discuss in the images: plenty of tiny details to discover, opposites in shapes and sizes, different colours and patterns, and types of animal to talk about. The penultimate spread with all the members of The Tall and Short Club enjoying a party is riotous fun! We are left feeling rather puzzled and sorry for the penguins, though, who would rather go on playing dominoes on their own than join in. But perhaps the message is that some of us are like that too, and that it's also fine not to join in anything, as long as you're happy.

Bridget Carrington

Eddie's Kitchen and how to Make Good Things to Eat

Sarah Garland, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, pb. 978 1 8478 0003 9, 2014, £6.99, 32pp.

Panic grips Eddie's household in the opening pages of this latest picture book from Sarah Garland, as the realisation that Grandad's birthday has been forgotten throws the family into a frenzy of last-minute preparation. Everyone has an idea about what they should cook for the party: his little sister, Lily, wants her favourite things, Mum thinks that a variety of healthy options would be best and it's left to Eddie to remind them quietly of Grandad's favourite cake recipe.

So begins a delightful tale of culinary creativity emerging from kitchen chaos. While the flapping and distractions repeatedly draw Mum's attention away from the task in hand, Eddie remains steadfast in his determination to ensure that this will be the best party that Grandad has ever had. His calm approach to food preparation and his concentration on knowing exactly what to do enable him to produce, almost single-handedly, a veritable feast for the many guests who appear towards the end of the story. Mum may look rather rattled and exhausted by their arrival, Lily may be completely covered in flour and a layer of overall stickiness, but Eddie has got the job done and his Grandad is utterly delighted.

Young readers will enjoy the tumultuous world of this story, and will undoubtedly laugh out loud at some of the more anarchic moments of Lily's behaviour and their ensuing implications for the birthday cake. Perhaps best of all, however, are the recipes at the end of the book, which should encourage would-be cooks and bakers of all ages to roll up their sleeves and make some good things to eat for themselves.

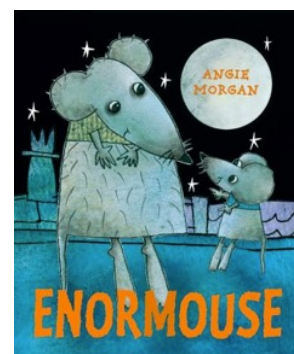
Sarah Stokes

Enormouse

Angie Morgan, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 8478 0448 8, 2013, £11.99, 32pp.

The eponymous character of this book leads a simple, idyllic life. He has a warm, comfortable house, plenty of friends and family, food to eat, places to go and a strong, overarching sense of purpose. Without him, the other mice would not be able to manage, due to his rather useful, enormous size, which enables him to carry the heaviest of things and reach up to the highest of places.

All is well until Enormouse and his friend, Tinymouse, discover all about rats in the pages of a dusty, information book that they are exploring, which marks the start of Enormouse's expedition to find out whether he is, in fact, a rat himself.

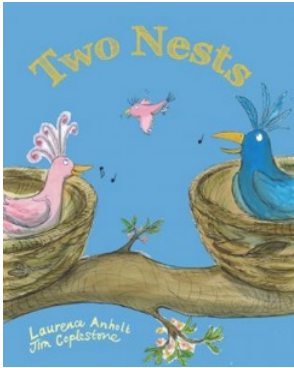


Morgan's captivating collage illustrations make this an enchanting adventure about self-discovery and a sense of belonging. Ultimately, it provides the reassurance for young readers that they will always belong best in the place where they feel most comfortable, and that diversity and difference are the most special kind of attributes to be celebrated.

Sarah Stokes

Two Nests

Laurence Anholt, illus. Jim Coplestone, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, pb. 978 1 8478 0496 9, 2013, £6.99, 32pp.



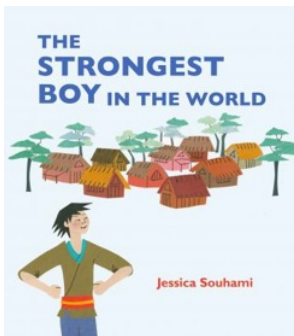
This charming picture book provides a tale of two birds who embark excitedly on family life, but find that the size of their nest makes it increasingly difficult to live together in harmony once their baby bird arrives. Ultimately, the difficult decision is reached that perhaps everyone would be happier if Daddy Bird lived in another nest. A second nest is duly built in the branches of the same cherry tree where the first was constructed, and Daddy Bird flies off to settle in this new home, with everyone feeling very sad about this new, unfamiliar situation. The parents then focus their attention on helping Baby Bird to fly between the two homes, while providing constant reassurance that he is still loved by them both as much as ever before.

The illustrator's dedication for this book is 'for all children who have more than one nest'. With its quirky pen-and-ink illustrations and its lilting, rhyming text, it should provide children of separated parents with the comfort that sometimes just such a separation will make for two happier and no less loving households.

Sarah Stokes

The Strongest Boy in the World

Jessica Souhami, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 8478 0411 2, 2014, £11.99, 32pp.



In the '60s it was Paul Galdone who ensured that traditional tales found their way into the hands of young readers and families in an attractive illustrated format. Now it is Jessica Souhami. This is the latest addition to what is an impressive and wide ranging body of work that boasts tales from around the world: *Leopard's Drum* from the African Continent, *Rama and the Demon King* from India and the Irish tale, *Mrs MacCool and the Giant Cuchulain* are just examples. In this book it is Japan, as she retells the story of Kaito, who dreams of becoming a champion wrestler and finds help from a somewhat unexpected source. Souhami's stylised illustrations capture the humour of the tale while the text is a gift to the storyteller.

Ferelith Hordon

For Reluctant and Hesitant Readers

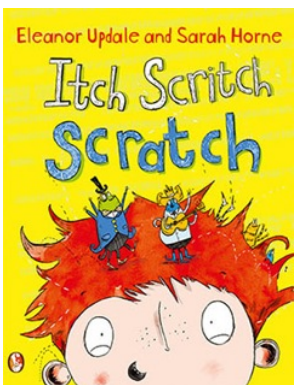
Itch Scritch Scratch

Eleanor Updale, illus. Sarah Horne, Edinburgh: Red Squirrel Books, pb. 978 1 7811 2294 5, 2014, £6.99, 32pp.

All I Said Was

Michael Morpurgo, illus. Ross Collins, Edinburgh: Red Squirrel Books, pb. 978 1 7811 2348 5, 2014, 32pp.

Red Squirrel is the new picture-book imprint of Barrington Stoke. The imprint was devised with two aims in mind, as stated by the publisher. The first aim was to bring picture books to children who have difficulty reading. The second aim was to provide

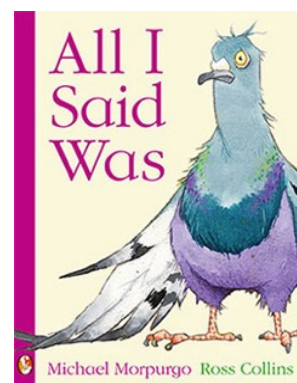


material for parents who may themselves have reading difficulties to read to their children.

Picture books in recent years have tended to favour elaborate ways of presenting text to the reader, running banners round and between pages, using horizontal and vertical shifts as well as multiple fonts to catch the attention of the reader. This tendency (exciting and attractive to an accomplished reader) reduces the accessibility of texts to readers with difficulties.

Updale and Horne's book charts the struggle of a family to cope with an infestation of head lice – hardly an author's first choice for an appealing topic, though Updale's rhythmic and humorous text and casually elegant rhymes go a long way to make the theme acceptable. Young children may be delighted by references to the excrement of the head lice. Horne's vibrant illustrations extract the maximum humour from this dire situation.

Morpurgo's book is the latest entrant in a great tradition that goes back to 1882 when Thomas Anstey Guthrie published *Vice Versa*, a novel in which a father and son exchanged identities. In this case, however, the exchange is across species. A boy sitting in his bedroom spots a pigeon on the windowsill and expresses envy. It must be wonderful to be able to fly. The exchange takes place. At first flight is exhilarating, but less appealing when attacked by a gang of seagulls, by crows and by a cat. When the bird/boy tells the boy/bird that the time has come to revert to the identities nature intended, he is told that the exchange is permanent. No switch back can be envisaged. Collins's illustrations are colourful and strong, depicting with vigour the various attacks on the airborne boy. The book ends with the boy's spirit still imprisoned in its avian frame.



Both these books are lively and exciting. The launch of this potentially important imprint will meet a genuine need. To those aware of the needs of children who read with difficulty, and with the needs of their families, it is left to wish this venture a great success and to ask why no other publisher thought of launching it years ago.

Rebecca R. Butler

Novels, Tales and Stories

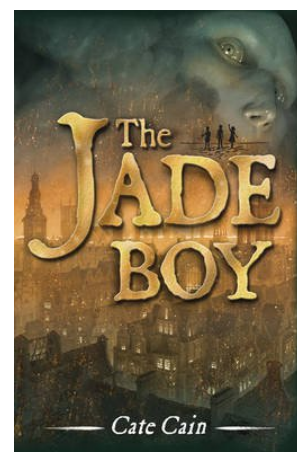
The Jade Boy

Cate Cain, Dorking: Templar Publishing, pb. 978 1 8487 7229 8, 2013, £6.99, 441pp.

A child hero and his two friends (a girl and a boy), a witch, mystery and an adult enemy who wants to be immortal What do these words remind you of? They reminded me of Harry Potter. But this time the three children are trying to recover London from the Great Fire. So this book is in the tradition of the hero phenomenon in children's literature: child characters who are fighting bad adults make children more enthusiastic about the story as they have the chance to see that children can beat adults who sometimes limit their rights.

This fantastic, historical and hair-raising narrative takes readers from the twenty-first century to seventeenth century Great Britain's crucial historic event, the Great Fire of London, from an imaginative but also educational perspective. With detailed depictions of the reign of Charles II, known as the Merry Monarch owing to the hedonism of his court, it is possible to feel the heat and the fear of the Great Fire and to walk on the streets of old London. Cazalon, the enemy of Jem, explains why he wants to burn the historical city:

Gentlemen, this is a new London. We shall be the masters here, free to create whatever we like - to build to the limits of our imagination and beyond. We shall create a phoenix from the ashes. (p.158)



The author brings a new perspective to this historical event.

Inspiring readers to 'adopt an era' for themselves is one of this fiction's aims, and it seems that the author, Cate Cain, succeeds in this by using young readers' favourite tools, including young heroes, extraordinary events, horror, witches and mystery. Using her own experience and interest in historical buildings, the author ties fiction and historical fact together:

Along with having a great deal of fun with my invented citizens of London (Jem, a lowly servant; Tolly, a page; Ann, an orphaned witch girl; Cleo, a monkey; and the horribly evil Count Cazalon) I knew I had to find out more about what really happened.

The story is a third-person narration, which gives the narrator more space than a first-person narrative. Twelve-year-old Jem's (Jeremy Green) point of view is dominant in the story, which might make it more appealing for child readers as they would love to access their fictional peer's world.

This book has been shortlisted for the 2014 Booktrust Best Story Award with Amazon Kindle in the 9–11 section. The harmony between the title, the book cover by Levi Pinfold, who was the winner of the 2013 CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal, and the content would make the book attractive to readers. The suitable age group might be children of 9–12 years.

For those who liked to look around the pages of history, *The Moon Child*, a sequel to *The Jade Boy*, is coming out September 2014.

Osman Coban

On Two Feet and Wings

Abbas Kazerooni, London: Allen & Unwin, pb. 978 1 7433 6135 1, 2014, £6.99, 258pp.

Set during the Iran–Iraq war in the 1980s, nine-year-old Abbas and his family are trying to escape Tehran before his tenth birthday when he will be eligible to be conscripted into the army. A plan to get him and his mother out of the country fails and only Abbas leaves and subsequently finds himself alone in Istanbul.

With only long-distance calls from his family to provide support and guidance, he begins to find his way around the city and copes with the dangers of being on his own when he leaves his run-down hotel. He eventually makes contact with the British Embassy to claim asylum, but even then his stay is longer than planned before his papers are approved and he is given a visa.

This story is based on true events and Abbas is an engaging character with great courage who survives using his own resources and growing maturity.

His experience of adults is mixed: some helpful, some not (he is attacked on one occasion), but his survival instincts kick in and he makes it through in the end.

A well-written story that provides an insight into the difficult political situation at the time and its disastrous effects on one specific family.

John Dunne



The Story of Gilgamesh (Save the Story)

Yiyun Li, illus. Marco Lorenzetti, London: Pushkin Children's Books, hb. 978 1 7826 9023 8, 2014, £14.99, 93pp.

The Story of the Betrothed (Save the Story)

Umberto Eco (from Allesandro Manzoni), illus. Marco Lorenzetti, London: Pushkin Children's Books, hb. 978 1 7826 9022 1, 2014, £14.99, 99pp.

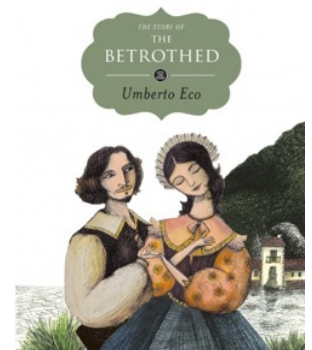
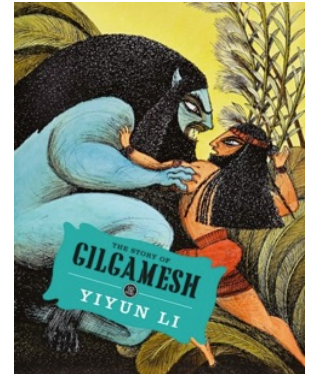
In their introductory statement to the Save the Story series, Pushkin explain that they created Pushkin Children's Books to 'share tales from different languages and cultures with younger readers, and to open the door to the wide, colourful worlds these stories offer'. They are determined that the stories will enthuse rather than overpower, and to this end they are emphatic that 'it is not very important that the books are a faithful reproduction of the original text; what counts is that the child experiences the magic of that story through the narrator's voice'. This could be a recipe for disaster, and we can all remember the uninspiring abridgements we have suffered as children, particularly when the original was set in a time or culture unfamiliar to us, or written in a language other than English. To avoid this, Pushkin have commissioned major authors to choose a favourite story and to retell it as if for their own children, in their own style and today's language but remaining true to the spirit of the original.

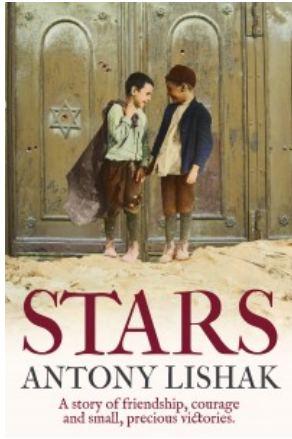
In *The Story of Gilgamesh*, episodes from the ancient Sumerian epic originally inscribed on twelve tablets are retold by the multi-award winning American author Yiyun Li. She succeeds in retaining the dignity of the formal style of possibly the oldest written text in the world, while using the frequent repetition of phrases to mimic an oral tradition and make each adventure an exciting part of the whole story. The illustrations by Marco Lorenzetti are stylised and add considerably to the reader's ability to interpret the text, sometimes also adding a degree of humour to an otherwise rather serious epic. Gilgamesh's story is analysed in the 'Epilogue' and in Li's answers to a final section explaining the history of the story itself, where she emphasises that through all the battles, monsters and adventures, true friendship lies at the story's heart.

Umberto Eco's recounting of *The Betrothed*, taken from Manzoni's original published in the first half of the nineteenth century, introduces young readers to the first notable Italian-language novel (since Dantè, of course). Eco's account is almost totally narrative, extracting from Manzoni's complicated, multi-layered text the essence of each of the interwoven pieces of action. Like Li's *Gilgamesh*, he uses the introductory paragraph in each of the sections to sketch in sections of the story that have been omitted, or to clarify why he has separated out the different strands to tell each character's story separately. The retelling may be only the bare bones of Manzoni's original, but it is remarkably true to the original in both action and in its emphasis on the story's underlying themes of history repeating itself, of fidelity and redemption. Again, the final sections of the Pushkin edition – 'Epilogue' and 'Where is the Story From?' – supply background to the writing, and why the story is still worth reading in the twenty-first century. Lorenzetti's illustrations manage skilfully to combine the nineteenth century with the story's original seventeenth-century setting, thereby offering the reader lively interpretations of the key action.

The ten books in Pushkin's Save the Story series were originally published in Italy, and have been translated into a dozen languages. Hardbound and physically spacious, each sturdy cream-coloured page offering at most two dozen lines within wide borders, liberally and well illustrated, this is a series whose literary integrity makes a serious and valuable contribution to provide 'tasters' of world literature, each of which deserves to be known by young readers in English.

Bridget Carrington





Stars

Anthony Lishak, London: Acorn Digital Press, pb. 978 1 9091 2268 0, 2014, £7.99, 284pp.

Set in Warsaw in 1939 just as war is declared and the Germans invade Poland, life is turned upside down for two Jewish families who live there. The story begins with two boys playing, one Jewish and the other Christian, and through them we see the changes in their daily lives and the lives of others. Stefan's parents run the local zoo and have to come to terms with changing circumstances as their animals are requisitioned by the Germans, while Marcus's Jewish family lose everything and end up in a ghetto. A plan is hatched whereby the zoo is used as a means of first sheltering Marcus and then his mother, although this nearly fails when Marcus is caught. Only quick thinking by Stefan's father enables him to escape and flee with his mother through an unused underground tunnel.

Stefan and Marcus are well-drawn characters and their understanding of what is happening and how they should respond is at times both adventurous and foolhardy, as you might expect for children of their age.

This is a story based on true events and although the two boys are fictional the use of the zoo to help escapees actually happened. Many hundreds of Jewish people were given food and shelter there and survived until the war ended.

John Dunne

Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings

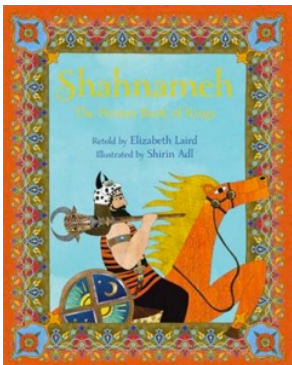
Retold by Elizabeth Laird, illus. Shirin Adl, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, pb. 978 1 8478 0497 6, 2014, £9.99, 120pp.

Children in the UK will be familiar with a range of myths, legends and folk heroes. However, these will almost all be drawn from the Graeco-Roman traditions, together with the Scandinavian, and, now, a few African and Caribbean stories. The world of the Middle East is relatively unknown, despite the enormous wealth of stories from those cultures.

Of all retellers, Elizabeth Laird has been tireless in introducing these treasures to young people here. In this book she turns her attention to the Shahnameh, the collection of stories written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi between about 977 and 1010 CE. They are stories about the early fabulous kings of that area – Jamshid, the Champion Sam and Zal, his white-haired son and, above all, the heroes, Sohrab and Rostum.

Despite their age, there is nothing dull or dusty about these tales, and Laird's lively storytelling gives them immediacy and vigour. She even includes snippets of verse – a nod to the original. The collection is further enhanced by Adl's lively and colourful illustrations. While very contemporary, they very much draw on the traditions of Persian art, both in the bold, jewel-like colours and in the decoration used to frame each page. This is a very welcome addition to the selection of traditional tales currently available and should find a place in every home, school and library.

Ferelith Hordon



Demeter and Persephone

Hugh Lupton and Daniel Morden, illus. Carole Hénaff, Oxford: Barefoot Books, pb. 978 1 8468 6833 7, 2013, £5.99, 40pp.

Orpheus and Eurydice

Hugh Lupton and Daniel Morden, illus. Carole Hénaff, Oxford: Barefoot Books, pb. 978 1 8468 6783 5, 2013, £5.99, 40pp.

Theseus and the Minotaur

Hugh Lupton and Daniel Morden, illus. Carole Hénaff, Oxford: Barefoot Books, pb. 978 1 8468 6781 1, 2013, £5.99, 40pp.



Here are three very familiar stories from Greek mythology. Stylishly presented by Barefoot Books – always elegant and attractive with well-spaced text and a clear font – they are a pleasure to look at and read. In addition, their size, one that will easily fit in a bag (or possibly a large pocket) furthers their appeal. Then there are the illustrations. Hénaff's style is contemporary but references that of Greek vase painting, while her palette echoes the colours we can see in the Minoan wall paintings, especially the cool blues and vibrant ochres.

However, these books are more than just decorative objects. The stories have been retold by two master storytellers. The result is outstanding, whether you want to read them yourself or read aloud to a child or class. Here are stories that were old by the time Homer and Ovid retold them, told for a modern audience in a way that makes them exciting and accessible.

But who is the audience? The production might suggest a child of 5–7. Rather, these should be given to Key Stage 2 (7–11) and Key Stage 3 (11–14) children. The authors tell the stories with all the violence, treachery and failure of the originals. These stories were never nursery tales – and this should be recognised. Perhaps productions such as these will help.

Ferelith Hordon

IBBY UK NEWS

IBBY UK/NCRCL MA Annual Conference

Froebel College, Roehampton University, London. Saturday 8 November 2014.

'Belonging Is... An Exploration of the Right to Be Included and the Barriers that Must Be Overcome'

The conference will include keynote presentations by writers, publishers and academics, and parallel sessions of workshop presentations on all relevant topics.

Ros Asquith. Children's book author and illustrator, and cartoonist. She illustrated *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman, which depicts a diverse range of families, and has followed this with *The Great Big Book of Feelings*.

Sarah Garland. Creator of many picture books. *Azzi In Between* won the inaugural Little Rebels Children's Book Award in 2013 and is IBBY UK's nomination for illustration to the international IBBY Honour List 2014.

Candy Gourlay. Children's writer, photographer and filmmaker, originally from the Philippines. Her novels *Tall Story* and *Shine* have both won the Crystal Kite Award, given by the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.

Mary Hoffman. Writer of over 90 books for children and teenagers. They include the picture-book series that began with *Amazing Grace*, *The Colour of Home*, the two books with Ros Asquith, mentioned above, and the Stravaganza series of fantasy novels.

Julia Hope. Lecturer in Children's Literature on the Postgraduate Certificate in Education Primary programme and the MA in Culture, Language and Identity at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her specialisms are controversy in children's literature, the education of refugee children and family learning.

Richard O'Neill. Professional storyteller and writer who works in schools, museums and libraries. Having learned from the very best traditional Romany and North Country storytellers, Richard O'Neill blends the old and new, producing and telling unique, exciting and original stories, workshops, books, and plays for adults and children of all ages and key stages.

Alex Strick. Co-founder of Inclusive Minds, which campaigns for inclusion, diversity, equality and accessibility in children's literature, and of Outside In World, which promotes and explores world literature and children's books in translation. Co-writer with Sean Stockdale of *Max the Champion*, illustrated by Ros Asquith.

Call for Papers

What does it mean to belong?

How can literature help children as they struggle to relate to different groups at home, in school and in the wider society?

Who does children's literature belong to? How can books help all children feel they belong?

Children's literature has traditionally been perceived as a place where all children can find a place and belong. But is this true?

The 21st annual IBBY UK/NCRCL MA conference will explore these questions and the concept of belonging in children's literature.

The conference will include keynote presentations by writers, publishers and academics. Proposals are welcomed for parallel sessions (lasting about 20 minutes) on any relevant issues from any period in the history of international children's literature.

These might include:

- traditionally excluded groups: LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and intersex), looked-after children, disabled children, fostered and adopted children, Romany and traveller children, refugees
- changes and developments in representations of ethnic diversity
- the effect of inclusion or exclusion on the reader
- the accessibility of children's books
- the place of issue books in exploring barriers to belonging
- the promotion of human rights through literature
- how children's books can challenge stereotypes
- the representation of children from all backgrounds
- socioeconomic status and stereotyping
- how gendered marketing excludes children
- reader versus revenue – what should be foremost in the mind of publishers
- national identity – finding your culture in the books you read
- learning about historically excluded groups through fiction and poetry

The deadline for proposals is 31 July 2014. Please email an abstract of approximately 200 words (for a 20-minute paper), along with a short biography and affiliation, to Sue Mansfield of IBBY UK at mansfield37@btinternet.com.

Details of past conferences can be found on the IBBY UK website at www.ibby.org.uk/ncrcl-conference.php.

The 21st Annual IBBY UK/NCRCL MA conference will take place at Roehampton University, London, on Saturday 8 November 2014. The title is:

'Belonging Is... An Exploration of the Right to Be Included and the Barriers that Must Be Overcome'.

The call for papers is on page 50 and will be available shortly on the website www.ibby.org.uk/.

For more information contact Ann Lazim annlazim@googlemail.com or Clive Barnes clivejbarnes@gmail.com.

The next issue of *IBBYLink* is *IBBYLink* 41, Autumn 2014 (copydate 31 July 2014) and will be on 'Books for Special Circumstances and Special Children'.

Articles on other subjects, reports, information about conferences, and similar items are also welcomed. Contributions to Ferelith Hordon: fhordon@aol.com.

If you are interested in becoming a reviewer for *IBBYLink*, contact Sue Mansfield: mansfield37@btinternet.com. New reviewers are always welcome.

Titles for Review

Publishers and others with books to be reviewed in *IBBYLink* should send them to Sue Mansfield at 37 Gartmoor Gardens, London SW19 6NX; mansfield37@btinternet.com.

IBBYLink 40 Summer 2014

The newsletter of the British section of the International Board for Books for Young People (IBBY UK), published three times a year.

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