

## Children's Books and Environmental Issues

Since country is so tender  
To touch...  
Where we, even when we mean  
To mend her we end her...

(Gerard Manley Hopkins,  
'Binsey Poplars', 1879)

Hopkins seems to have been prescient about the dangers to the environment of human activity – what he would have thought about the way in which humanity has encroached on it since he first mourned the felling of an avenue of trees near Oxford hardly bears conjecture! But in his wake many writers have sought to make their readers alert to the need to live lightly on the Earth. It is evident that arousing this kind of ecological awareness in children is particularly important, besieged as they are by commercial forces encouraging them to consume more in order to be up with their friends. But what is the best way to do this?

In this issue of *IBBYLink* we look at a number of children's books which have the laudable aim of helping young readers to value the natural environment, and also, especially in the case of adolescents, to be aware of the dangers to which it is prone because of human action. Some of these texts can be quite daunting in their vision of a future world after some environmental catastrophe, but I wonder if, particularly for younger children, a positive approach may be more successful in catching their interest than one which relies on threats.

Some years ago I spoke separately to four of my granddaughters, then aged between six and twelve, about the messages in two picture books, John Burningham's *Oi Get Off our Train!* (1989) and Susan Jeffers' *Brother Eagle Sister Sky* (1991) which uses the words of Chief Seattle. Though there was an occasional literalism in their comments, such as the suggestion that Burningham's animals should have got on the train at the station, it was clear

that the children were very much in sympathy with the themes of the books, relating them both to the way they intuitively felt about animals, trees and the rest of the natural environment, and to what they had been told at school. The oldest girl said in response to Jeffers' book, 'I like the bit [about] the Earth is not ours but we are its. I imagine the Earth like a big mother.' The eight-year-old observed about both books that their message was 'not to make our world all horrible – don't make animals lose their homes.' The children were already aware of the dangers of extinction, but the books succeeded in bringing out in a visually vivid manner a positive message about human attitudes. Whether or not humans can in fact at this stage do anything to 'save the planet' is of course a matter for debate, but it seems to me essential that each new generation should carry away from their reading a message of hope rather than of despair, and a feeling that what we have now is of immeasurable beauty and value.

Pat Pinsent

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## A Sentence for the Arctic

Chris d'Lacey

Way back in the early 1980s (the exact year escapes me now) we had a winter. A proper winter. One with iced-up windows, freezing pipes and snow – the deep, crunchy, Wellington-boots variety. So good was the fall that one frozen chunk of snow lasted well into April. It was four inches thick and a couple of feet in diameter. It nestled at the end of the pathway to my flat, beneath the broken end of a privet hedge. I would see it every day on my way to work, but it was only when the postman tripped over it one morning that I really began to *notice* it.

The general temperature that April wasn't high, but every other scrap of ice had disappeared – except mine. I became absurdly protective of it. If people dropped litter and it landed on my wilderness, I cleared it up. If dogs stopped by the hedge, I moved them on to cock a leg elsewhere. Every day I admired my ice. In my mind I measured it, recording any changes in texture or shape. Had a crevasse formed, for instance, during the night? Or a miniature iceberg hewn itself off with a plangent groan and floated away down the slope of the road? Most people don't think like this. Writers do. I came to see my piece of ice as a symbol of the Arctic. I imagined tiny polar bears roaming nomadically across it. I saw explorers in furs heaving sleds to its pole. I saw the aurora borealis skittering down in amber ribbons from street lights. I watched my ice glisten in the sharp morning sun.

I thought about the dangers of warming. One day, I poured these imaginings into a story. A kind of spiritual parable about the Arctic and the dangers faced by the polar ice cap. I called it simply 'Ice'. I sent it around to small-press magazines. No one bought it. I was surprised. The story was topical. In those days, just like now, folks talked a lot about global warming, with particular emphasis on something called the ozone layer. On weekends, like-minded people, having ventured out for the Sunday papers, would gather on street corners, stroking their imaginary beards and pondering 'the greenhouse effect'. It would be unkind to label these people 'hippies', but in those days if you worried about the environment it was safe to assume that you only washed your hair once a week and wore a parka.

Strangely, no one chuntered very much about carbon dioxide emissions. All the talk was of CFC gases, found in aerosols and fridges, which, if released, could make a nasty hole in the atmosphere and expose us to too much ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Test cricketers were sufficiently worried about this to wear visible splodges of sunblock on their noses. For months I thought they were just being sloppy about eating their interval tea (you try having a cream cake wearing wicket-keeping gloves), but they were just taking sensible precautions, of course.

I put my story in my bottom drawer. This is a phrase writers commonly use to say 'I forgot about it'. And I did, until a competition came up to write a story for children, something which, at that point, I had never attempted before. I wondered if 'Ice' might work from the viewpoint of a nine-year-old boy concerned about 'mending' the ozone layer. I retitled the story 'A hole at the Pole' and lo and behold it became my first children's book.

I was very proud. I still am, because the boy I wrote about was really me, worrying about the state of the planet. Overnight, I'd become a children's author and a 'conservationist'. I realised even then that it's hard for an individual to make a real difference about something as global as the Earth and its environment, but I also knew that writing a story about it might make more people aware of the problem. I don't imagine that my boy and his talking polar bear made *that* much of an impact, but gradually laws were brought in minimising the use of CFC gases and we all breathed a little easier.

Yet, here we are, twenty-five years on, and the ghost is still with us. Everywhere we look we read dire warnings about global warming. The Earth is heating up, of that there is no doubt. The ice caps are melting. Polar bears are beginning to struggle for survival because their seasons are changing and they cannot hunt for food for as long as they could just a few years ago. It's worrying. Once again people are gathering saying, 'What can be done?' Not just on street corners. This time we have major international conventions. This time it's a mainstream issue.

### IBBYLink 19

The British IBBY  
Newsletter  
Summer 2007

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No one quite knows what's causing the problem. Some scientists are arguing that the increase in temperature, particularly the accelerated rate of it over the last two decades, is directly related to the amount of carbon dioxide being trapped in the atmosphere. If we save energy, they say, stop pumping out toxic fumes from our car exhausts and train cows not to be so flatulent, we'll survive. Others are saying this is nonsense. The temperature of the Earth has always been variable. It's a natural cycle.

While they're arguing, polar bears are dying.

How can we stop this? How can you and I non-scientists make a difference? We could, like David Rain the hero of my dragon books, all write a story, of course. But it's actually not necessary. You can bring about a solution to global warm-

ing with a single, well-placed sentence. Someone once told me that even the most complex novels can be reduced to one sentence. Take Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* for instance: 'Small people go to extraordinary lengths to destroy precious jewellery.'

See what I mean?

Global warming is a complex story. And here's the answer to it in just six words: 'Make polar bears an endangered species'. Tell this to the big industrial nations. If they approve it, they will be forced to protect this magnificent creature's habitat. And in doing so, they might just save the world.

[Chris d'Lacey is the author of the dragon adventure stories *Icefire* and *Fire Star*, two books with strong environmental themes. His new novel *The Fire Eternal* will be available in September.]

## A Chronological View of 'Green' Children's Books

*Pam Robson*

A pivotal moment in the history of 'green' titles for children happened in 1989 with the publication of the anthology of short stories and extracts *Once Upon a Planet* in aid of Friends of the Earth. Jonathan Porritt, director of Friends of the Earth between 1984 and 1990, wrote the foreword for this accomplished collection; he describes books as 'passports to the natural world'. In 1991, *Books for Keeps*, sponsored by HarperCollins, published *The Green Guide to Children's Books*. This comprehensive publication lists 453 titles, including fiction, poetry and non fiction, selected by Pat Thomson, Morag Styles and Ted Percy respectively. Half of these 'green' titles were published between 1989 and 1991, and one third of these are novels. Jonathan Porritt, who also wrote the introduction to *The Green Guide to Children's Books*, writes:

To flick through the pages of this guide is to realise not just how much rich material has always been there ... but to revel in how many new and inspiring books have become available over the last few years.

Pat Thomson echoes the words of Porritt when she points out, in her introduction to the fiction section of the guide, that children's literature has a long tradition of books which celebrate the natural world. Students of children's literature will be familiar with the work of authors such as Henry Williamson and B.B (Denys Watkins-Pitchford 1905–1990), to name but two. While this trend continues, in more recent times writers of children's fiction have actively addressed ecological issues through their imaginative depiction of the devastating impact of human interference in the natural world. Today's doom-laden newspaper headlines, which foretell the catastrophic effects of global warming, carry resonances of the plots of futuristic teenage stories featuring dystopias which portend the destruction of natural worlds. Catastrophes of this kind have been portrayed by authors such as Caroline MacDonald and Philip Gross.

The following lists have been organised chronologically in order not only to illustrate the truth of the words of Jonathan Porritt and Pat Thomson, but also to highlight the wealth of 'green' children's literature that has been published since they were written. Original publication dates are given. The annual Earthworm award was first introduced by Friends of the Earth in 1987 to encourage and reward the writing of books that help young people enjoy and care for the Earth and its population.

## Short stories

Christina Martinez (compiler), illus. Michael Foreman, (1989) *Once Upon a Planet: An anthology of stories and extracts in aid of Friends of the Earth*, Foreword by Jonathan Porritt, Puffin Books, 0140321799

This collection contains 16 stories and extracts, each with an introduction, written by a variety of well-known authors, past and present. There are extracts from *The Secret Garden* (1911) by Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Jungle Book* (1894) by Rudyard Kipling, *One-Eyed Cat* (1985) by Paula Fox and *The Cay* (1969) by Theodore Taylor. Short stories, like 'The Nest-Egg' by Philippa Pearce, have been written specially.

## Novels

Henry Williamson (1927) *Tarka the Otter*, Puffin, 0140366210

This true story, now a modern classic, is a close study of a past way of life in rural Devon, a time when otter hunting was common, and presents a superb picture of the natural world of the river.

B.B. (D.J.Watkins-Pitchford) (1942) *The Little Grey Men* (1942), Oxford, 0192719467.

B.B., himself a naturalist, also created the illustrations for this classic tale. It is a substantial read, with some lovely descriptive passages, which tells the story of the last four gnomes in the world. When one gnome disappears the rest go in search of him. Their journey takes them through the seasons of the year, along the river and through the woods. The death of the cruel gamekeeper causes the animals to rejoice. A Carnegie Medal Winner.

B.B. (1948) *Down the Bright Stream*, Oxford, 019271869X

This sequel to *The Little Grey Men* also reveals resonances of *The Wind in the Willows*, with mystical references to Pan. The gnomes, squirrel and owls travel down river to the sea, to escape the changes wrought by men who divert the stream. The friends are heading for Ireland, but face one crisis after another. The wild animals retain their animal natures but are given a voice.

Ted Hughes (1968) *The Iron Man: A Story in Five Nights*, Faber, 0571207618

The eponymous Iron Man saves the world from destruction when he destroys the monster from space – this event is an allegory for all that is wrong with the world. This deceptively simple story has so many layers of meaning that it has appeal for all ages.

W. J. Corbett (1982) *The Song of Pentecost*, Mammoth, 074970926X

This is the first story in a trilogy and the winner of the Whitbread award in 1982. Pentecost is the name taken by each new leader of the harvest mice who set off with sly snake and lying frog to escape urban pollution. These are character studies in human deviousness. A humorous but thought-provoking story with many layers of meaning.

Judy Allen (1988) *Awaiting Developments*, Walker Books, 0744560942

This title won the Whitbread award in 1988 and the Earthworm award in 1989. Jo loves the huge garden that is her secret place, it is a green oasis in an urban environment. When it is sold to a developer Jo campaigns to save it with some success

Caroline MacDonald (1989) *The Lake at the End of the World*, Collins Educational (Cascades), 0003300773

This futuristic story depicts a dystopia; only one family survives beside the eponymous lake, which is a bird sanctuary. Disaster and pollution have devastated the population. Then others are discovered living underground. The story is told by two voices alternately, Diana, who lives by the lake, and Hector, who lives underground under the leadership of a tyrant. A new future must be created without tyranny.

Philip Ridley, illus. Chris Riddell, (1989) *Mercedes Ice: An urban fairy story for modern children*, Puffin Books, 0140368922

This modern fairy tale, concerning a gigantic tower block, spans a broad period of time and events move along rapidly for the larger-than-life characters with their grotesque behaviour.

David Belbin (1990) *The Foggiest*, Scholastic, 0590193767

In this action-packed thriller political fanatics play upon people's fears about weather changes caused by global warming and pollution. Their aim is to bring about chaos and disorder in the country and to this end they create a countrywide fog. The action takes place in rural Derbyshire, where Rachel and Matt go to live with their father, who is a weather expert involved in research.

Ted Hughes (1993) *The Iron Woman*, Faber, 0571214363

In this sequel to *The Iron Man*, the eponymous Iron Woman rises from the marsh in search of revenge for the pollution caused by the nearby industrial waste disposal plant. She explains to Lucy, who lives next to the plant, which employs the whole community, the anguish of the creatures living in the water. After many amazing happenings a whole new system is created. An overwhelming sense of despair is conveyed throughout this story.

Richard Stilgoe (1995) *Brilliant the Dinosaur*, Pavilion Books, 185793633

This superbly funny, but thoughtful, novel is also a musical play. The setting is Britain of the future, suffering the effects of global warming and pollution. After a dreadful storm, the children find the eponymous dinosaur, which has slept for thousands of years.

Lesley Howarth (1995) *Weather Eye*, Walker Books, 0744543053

The setting is the end of the 20th century; Telly is a 'weather eye' who sends weather information across the internet. During a storm she is struck by the blade from a wind turbine on her parents' wind farm, and experiences near-death trauma. When freak weather conditions threaten to change the weather patterns of the world she feels empowered to take action. A gripping read with appeal for those concerned for the environment.

Melvin Burgess (1997) *Kite*, Puffin Books, 0141300418

This powerful rural tale is set in the 60s. Tension builds as two boys struggle to rescue a wounded red kite, a protected rare species, from the estate of an angry bigot determined to kill the bird.

Bel Mooney (1997) *Joining the Rainbow*, Mammoth, 0749728175

A strong 'green' message is conveyed in this semi-autobiographical novel about environmental protesters. Developers are destroying an ancient woodland to build a bypass. Fourteen-year-old Kaz gets involved and draws her family into the protest. The protesters build tree houses but fail in their efforts.

Philip Gross (1998) *Psylicon Beach*, Scholastic, 0590198084

This is a cult cyberfiction novel with a futuristic setting. The Earth has been flooded due to global warming, seas have risen, and pollution and toxicity have destroyed the natural world. Civilisation is governed by virtual reality and illusion for the zombie-like civilians. Outside all of this are the ratkids, trashtypes and mutant creatures. A challenging, disturbing read which is open-ended.

Eva Ibbotson (1999) *Monster Mission*, Macmillan, 0330372629

This excellent title is brimming with 'green' ideology. Three aunts inhabit a secret island on which they tend a variety of strange monsters, including mermaids, and a baby kraken, which sets out to save the sea from pollution. The aunts kidnap children to assist them in their work.

Lesley Howarth (2001) *Ultraviolet*, Puffin Books, 0141310782

This is a powerful futuristic novel set in a world in which the population is confined indoors for much of the year because the sun's rays have become deadly. Violet spends most of her life playing Quest computer games. The story swings between reality and virtual reality so that the reader is kept guessing.

Philip Ridley (2005) *Zip's Apollo*, Puffin Books, 0141313846

Supermarket trolleys come alive in this zany, fast-moving fantasy. The eponymous Zip lives on a 'plastic' new estate since the death of his father, an environmental activist who died protecting an ancient oak tree. The children are the responsible characters, adults are limited by prejudices and emotions.

Helen Dunmore (2005) *Ingo*, Collins, 0007204884

This is the first title in a fantasy trilogy, with interaction between land and sea people. Many references are made to the damage done to the sea by humans. The sequel is entitled *The Tide Knot*. *Ingo* won the Manchester book award.

Ann Halam (2005) *Siberia*, Orion Children's Books, 1842551299

The setting for this fantasy is Russia of the future, with an emphasis on the seed banks created by the mother of the protagonist, Rosita, to preserve endangered creatures of the wild. This living treasure is the only hope of survival for the natural world.

**Picture books** (the writers are also the illustrators unless otherwise noted)

Michael Foreman (1972) *Dinosaurs and all that Rubbish*, Puffin Books 014055260X

The dinosaurs stir beneath a wasted world and emerge to discover the mess left behind by humans. They clear up the mess and give the Earth another chance. The moral is that Earth belongs to all living things.

Brian Wildsmith (1980) *Professor Noah's Spaceship*, Oxford University Press, 0192721496

Using a biblical parallel the author/illustrator actively highlights, for the very young, the consequences of the pollution of the Earth by humans. The animals are anxious and want to escape this dying world. They travel for 40 days in Noah's spaceship only to discover that they have travelled back in time and now have a second chance, they have returned to a clean Earth. Stunning collage artwork illustrates this hopeful story.

Helen Cowcher (1988) *Rainforest*, Corgi, 0552525537

A large, bright picture book with a powerful ecological message conveyed in visual terms. The creatures of the forest are disturbed as machines cut down the trees. Floods follow and soil is washed away. The animals flee to higher ground but humans are carried away. This title was runner up for the Earthworm award in 1989.

John Burningham (1989) *Oi! Get Off Our Train*, Red Fox, 009985340X

A small boy, playing with a toy train at bedtime, dreams of a train journey during which various animals – elephant, seal, heron, tiger and polar bear – join the train, seeking survival from human depredation.

Charles Keeping (1989) *Adam and Paradise Island*, Oxford University Press, 0192798421

A toll road is about to be constructed across Paradise Island and all that will remain is a piece of waste land. While the adults squabble the children convert the wasteland into a playground. Eventually even the estuary birds colonise the area.

Helen Cowcher (1990) *Antarctica*, Corgi, 0552526614

Magnificent double-page spreads illustrate the pattern of life for Emperor and Adelle penguins, and seals. The natural food chain holds dangers, but the real threat is humans and their machines. Text is minimal; the illustrations speak volumes.

Ruth Brown (1990) *The World That Jack Built*, Red Fox, 0099789604

A visual moral tale based on the familiar nursery rhyme. Subtle, but powerful, artwork extends the minimal text to convey the full horror of human abuse of the environment.

Simon James (1991) *Sally and the Limpet*, Walker Books, 0744582881

A 'green' message is conveyed in this amusing story. The eponymous Sally, who dislodges a limpet from a rock, finds that it adheres to her finger and nothing will move it. When Sally returns to the beach and enters the water, the limpet recognises its environment and reattaches itself to its own rock.

Laurence Anholt (1992) *The Forgotten Forest*, Frances Lincoln, 0711211418

A simple story illustrates how a land once covered by forest has been reduced to an urban sprawl. Only one tiny area of forest remains, but even this is threatened. Only the tears of the children who have always played in the forest touch the conscience of those about to destroy it. Instead they break down the fence and begin to plant trees.

Simon James (1993) *Dear Greenpeace*, Walker Books, 0744530601

The story charts the correspondence between Emily, who has a blue whale in her garden pond, and Greenpeace, who express disbelief. An implicit message here about caring for wild creatures.

Judy Allen, illus. Tudor Humphries, (1994) *Whale*, Walker Books, 0744563569

One title from the series 'Animals at Risk'. The plight of the whale is revealed through the medium of story. A female nursing whale is close to death because of an oil slick. Superb artwork in oils.

Brian Wildsmith (1994) *Jack and the Meanstalk*, Oxford University Press, 0192723138

The familiar pantomime story is given an unusual twist when Professor Jack decides to make his vegetables grow faster with a new chemical mixture. It works too well and soon the whole world is endangered by the gigantic plant that results. Only the tiny gnawing animals can save the planet; they eat through the roots and the plant is destroyed. The moral here seems to be, leave nature alone.

Meredith Hooper, illus. Bee Willey, (2000) *River Story*, Walker Books, 0744582105

An outstanding, informative, landscape title with a lyrical narrative which describes the journey of a river. The stark contrast between the beginning and end of the river's journey is highlighted by references to man-made pollution.

Simon James (2003) *The Wild Woods*, Walker Books, 0744536618

A small girl, Jess, walks through the woods with her grandfather, learning that the wild-life belongs there.

### Poetry anthologies and collections

Brian Patten, illus. Chris Riddell, (1985) *Gargling with Jelly*, Puffin Books, 0141316500

Hilarious black and white cartoon-style artwork enhances this amusing, clever collection, some poems, especially those with a 'green' theme, being more serious than others.

Judith Nicholls (ed.), illus. Alan Baker, (1989) *What on Earth...? Poems with a conservation theme*, Faber, 0571152627

An outstanding anthology of poems from various cultures by poets past and present. A quote from Henry David Thoreau (1817–62) is used: 'In wildness is the preservation of the world'.

Brian Patten, illus. Chris Riddell, (1990) *Thawing Frozen Frogs*, Puffin Books, 0141316519

Humour and philosophy combine in this thought-provoking collection, which touches on acid rain and river depletion.

Jennifer Curry (ed.) (1990) *The Last Rabbit, A collection of green poems*, Mammoth, 0749702524

This 'green' anthology won the Earthworm award in 1990. These poems present the reader with both human and animal viewpoints, some describing the beauty of the natural world, while others are warnings.

Judith Nicholls (ed.) (1993) *Earthways Earthwise* Oxford University Press, 0192722484

A superb picture-book collection of poems about conservation, with artwork by various illustrators.

## Cautionary Tales for the New Millennium

Kerry Mallan, Queensland University of Technology

Al Gore's Oscar-winning 'slide-show' documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* (dir. Davis Guggenheim, United International Pictures) has brought to the attention of a global audience the unprecedented problems of global climate change. The film's scientific and graphic presentation reinforces what numerous others have been warning for decades, that we are the first generation in human history to question whether subsequent generations will survive or inhabit a planet capable of sustaining healthy human life. Not only do we face the consequences of global warming, but overpopulation, pollution, and accelerating loss of plant and animal species are other significant environmental problems that also threaten the future of the planet. In this context of uncertainty, safeguarding the future ultimately depends on changing our ways of thinking, and laying down the foundations for a sustainable and socially just future, so that present interests are not realised at the expense of future needs. In preparing citizens for the future, there is an intergenerational responsibility not only to equip children with information, but also to develop their capacity to think and to act in ways that will contribute to the solution or de-escalation of significant environmental challenges.

Children's environmental texts reflect shifting global political and social issues, and predict future possibilities, with the intention of socialising young people into becoming responsible and empathetic adults of tomorrow. Therefore, these texts advocate ideal social practices with respect to responsible citizenship in an increasingly ecologically threatened world, often doing so by depicting the consequences of environmental degradation. As Hollindale (1990:17) notes: 'Children's books are not going to change the world, or perform any rescue acts. But they can help some children to think radically about their own species and the global habitat.' One of the most effective ways in which environmental texts can assist children to think about the environment and human-ecological interactions is through an engaging narrative. Scientific information alone

cannot change hearts and minds, but the capacity for literature may not only provide additional insights to eco-critical practice, but also create a new form of knowledge about the environment (cf. Arnold et al., 1999:1089).

Writers are increasingly addressing environmental themes, such as: cultural identities and their connections to place (e.g. Isabel Allende, *City of the Beasts*, 2002); interrelationships between human and non-human (e.g. Anthony Browne, *Zoo*, 1992); depictions of nature and animals (e.g. Narelle Oliver, *Sand Swimmers*, 1999); loss and disaster (e.g. Ruth Brown, *The World that Jack Built*, 1991); and human accountability to the environment (e.g. Julie Bertagna, *Exodus*, 2002). Invariably, predictions of the future reflect a sense of crisis, taking the view that some conclusive catastrophe is imminent. This sense of pending catastrophe is addressed in the above texts which consider directly or indirectly the potentially disastrous effects on the environment and on human and animal life through: industrial pollution (*The World that Jack Built*); global warming (*Exodus*); destructive viruses (*City of the Beasts*); and lack of environmental knowledge (*Sand Swimmers*). Thus, environmental books often serve as new cautionary tales warning readers of what might happen if present ways continue. However, given the intended audience of the genre, children's literature invariably offers hope, rather than despair.

To grasp what environmental texts propose in terms of the interplay between the environment and human actions is to see what adults regard as desirable possibilities or cautionary tales 'in the face of a diverse, uncertain, and complex future' (Bindé, 2000:57). Environmental texts and the themes they embody are mediated by adults – writers, publishers, parents, teachers, librarians – who contribute to the complex process of shaping children's attitudes to both story and meaning. Those of us who work with children's literature in a professional capacity may find the following characteristics offered by Buell (1995) useful as criteria in our selection of environmental texts.

- The nonhuman environment is present not just as a framing device but as a presence that implicates human history in natural history.
- Human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest.
- Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation.
- Environment as process rather than a constant or a given is implicit in the text.

In thinking about these characteristics we might be able to extend our own understanding of the more subtle workings of environmental texts that may otherwise be overshadowed by the more familiar 'big-issue' items such as pollution and global warming.

Conversely, these characteristics might also open our minds to the ways in which environmental texts may be blind to their own prejudices and exclusions. Stephens (2006:40) contends that textual representations of the natural world in children's literature tend to take up one of three ideologically grounded perspectives.

1. Human mastery over nature
2. An awareness of environmental issues
3. A deep ecology: intrinsic value is ascribed to all beings, and human beings are not ascribed a privileged status.

Stephens' third point resonates with Buell's characteristics, and as adults we might find the notion of 'deep ecology' a challenging concept, given our immersion in literature and life which privileges Stephens' points 1 and 2 above.

Environmental children's literature is both a popular and a necessary genre. The discourses that inform these texts are drawn from science, technology, ethics and ecology. While the majority of the texts tend to offer cautionary tales that warn of a bleak future unless changes are made in the present, there is a reluctance on the part of the writers and publishers to take a deep ecology perspective as Stephens describes above. Perhaps to do so would be to offer another 'inconvenient truth' that we are not yet ready to contemplate.

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## Not Wrecking the Planet

Cheri Lloyd

A discussion with Pat Pinsent at the Federation of Children's Book Groups conference on the theme of this edition of *IBBYLink* led me to wonder whether *Stig of the Dump* was the first children's book with an environmental theme. It is the only one on such a theme that I recall from my own childhood. This led to a trawl through my local library catalogue which revealed very little environmentally themed fiction, especially for children. The library did, however, produce three books using the search fiction+environmental or fiction+ecology. These were: Michael Foreman's picture book *One World* (2004); Carl Hiaasen's *Flush* (2005), a humorous thriller that considers what happens to the environment when what we flush down the loo ends up where it shouldn't; and Jan Mark's *Useful Idiots* (2004), a disturbing futuristic novel.

Many people will recall *Stig* fondly, as today's child readers seem to enjoy it as much as my generation did. Stig, with his shaggy black hair and bright black eyes, is a caveman who lives at the bottom of an old unused quarry close to Barney's grandparents' house. Stig lives in a den built from other people's discarded rubbish. Barney literally stumbles across Stig when he tumbles into the quarry. Despite the lack of a common language, Stig and Barney get on well, improve the den by putting in a chimney and windows using unwanted rubbish, and have a series of adventures that include catching burglars that break into Barney's grandparent's house, trapping an escaped circus leopard and, with Barney's sister, assisting Stig's tribe with the erection of a henge on the North Downs. Although the travel between periods is not clearly explained, this does not matter. The interest is the partnership between the boys and the recycled use of discarded junk. The book is over forty years old but treats issues relevant to today's readers, although I believe that the recycling that King depicts arises more out of a lingering nostalgia for the 'make do and mend' attitude of the Second World War and post-war eras than from a concern for saving the environment. However, the fact that *Stig of the Dump* was remade into a children's series only a few years ago suggests that it still has relevance today, especially with its recycling message.

*Flush* by Carl Hiaasen is a gem of a book written for nine year olds and over, but also appealing to older children and adult readers. Hiaasen is also the author of *Hoot*, another ecological mystery that was made into a film last year. Set in the Florida Keys, *Flush* is the story of Noah and his sister Abby, whose father has been thrown into gaol after attempting to sink the local casino boat because its owner, Dusty Muleman, is illegally flushing the effluent from the boat's toilets directly into the water to avoid the cost of disposing of it safely. Although sewage has contaminated the local beaches, the authorities are turning a blind eye because Muleman has blackmailed them into tipping him off when a raid is imminent. Noah and Abby have several adventures and encounters with a number of larger-than-life local characters, such as the repulsive Lice, and the mysterious 'pirate' who rescues them more than once when they are in danger. Assisted by the eccentric characters, the daring duo finally devise a plan that will not only clear their father's name but will also convince the authorities that Muleman is guilty of causing environmental pollution.

The first person narrative by Noah alerts the reader to how he is growing up as he learns to deal with conflict and take responsibility for his actions, especially as it often seems that Noah is the adult and his father the child. The ending is realistic rather than happy-ever-after, but the story's realism portrays the problems of sea pollution and other environmental issues in a way that children can easily understand; it could lead to discussions about other environmental problems. Although this book is highly entertaining and swiftly paced, it is clear that Hiaasen's message is that children should be able to play safely on unpolluted beaches, and that people and the sea creatures should be able to swim without fear of contamination. Using examples such as the loggerhead turtle who is about to swim through the effluent to the polluted beach to lay her eggs, but who is prevented from doing so by Noah wading through the sewage-ridden sea to scare her away from the beach, Hiaasen clearly reveals his own disgust at human pollution of the environment. Throughout the tale he provides strong,

graphic imagery of the beautiful land and seascapes that are being ruined. His message is summed up by Noah, quoting his father, 'Dad says it's our duty to clean up after the brainless morons. He says the smart humans owe it to every other living creature not to let the dumb humans wreck the whole planet' (p.156).

A darker novel for older readers is Jan Mark's *Useful Idiots*. This term apparently denotes people that are naïve, foolish, or in wilful denial, and are being cynically used by the state/authorities or someone who is perceived to be manipulated by a form of political movement. Mark uses the 'what if' of climate change to portray a post apocalyptic world set in 2255 following '...the onset of global warming in the late twentieth century and the loss of the Gulf Stream in the twenty-second' (p.79) – a world in which history is feared and archaeology is a controversial science. New countries have emerged as the old borders have been lost through flooding; the lowlands of Britain now form the 'Rhine Delta Islands'.

After a hurricane has stripped away the golden sands of a beach and revealed an ancient skeleton, the English/Aboriginal Britons, known colloquially as 'Oysters', and the people from the mainland fight over ownership of the skeleton. The story explores the prejudices of the 'new' races and the theme of cultural control, as well as the loss of knowledge and fear of the past. It is clear that the characters from both sides of the border are the useful idiots who are being manipulated by the authorities. The conspiracy at the centre of the plot allows Mark to consider wider issues. More of a political thriller than an environmentally themed novel, the setting of what the world would be like if climate change should occur provides a thought-provoking novel for the teenage and older market.

Michael Foreman's *One World* (2004) is a picture book which begins: 'One sky, One sun, One moon, One world.' A little girl is watching the changing day/sun and night/moon. This is followed by an illustration that clearly depicts the magnificent animals that need to share the planet with humans, animals that will become extinct if humans do not stop the desecration of their habitats. Then we are shown two children spending a day on the beach, playing by a rock pool that contains fish, seaweed, shells and pebbles as well as two feathers and a blob of oil.

The children begin to recreate the rock pool in a bucket. As they slowly remove items from the rock pool, the bucket becomes overcrowded, leaving the rock pool almost empty apart from the feathers, and the oil which spreads and begins to pollute and cloud the water.

In this simply told tale, Foreman is bringing to the reader's attention the fact that the Earth is all we have and by treating it as badly as we do, it will soon be ruined. The children are reminded how fragile and easily spoiled the environment is and Foreman declares harshly, 'It reminded them of the world they knew, where forests were disappearing in clouds of smoke and people in towns were poisoning the land and the seas... where creatures...were not safe.' This leads the children to rectify what they have done; they remove the feathers and oil and return the things in the bucket back to the rock pool. They decide to ask the other children on the beach to help do this to the other rock pools too. The ecological message (at the time the story was first published in 1990) is that the problem is reversible but that individuals alone cannot repair the damage; what is needed is collaboration. It is sad to realise that nearly two decades after this remarkably powerful parable was written, the message in the book that humans are polluting the planet is only just filtering through to politicians and the public alike.

*Flush* and *One World* are clearly and unashamedly a stark reminder to the reader of the pollution that humans cause to the environment. *Useful Idiots* is an imaginative view of the future that could become a possibility. *Stig* may not have been the first environmentally themed children's book but it is an enduring tale that many readers can relate to now, especially with the focus on recycling. Each of these books has a strong and valid point to make. Whether what we do now to stem the tide of deterioration of the current world will have any effect on climate change, or prevent the loss of land Mark envisages, remains to be seen. No doubt the recent central and local government focus on climate change and environmentally friendly alterations to our lifestyles and behaviour will drip down into the canon of children's literature. Let us hope that this does not lead to a plethora of mediocre environmentally themed novels, but that such well-intentioned texts remain at the high level of these four!

## The Lorax

Jessica Yates

Dr Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel, 1894–1991) was a beloved American children's author who wrote and illustrated dozens of colourful books, most in rhyme, peopled with real and invented animals, human beings, exotic buildings and machines. After a university education when he worked on the college newspaper, he became an advertising cartoonist, then, during Second World War, first a political cartoonist and then a maker of animated films to help the war effort. His first rhyming children's book *And to think that I saw it on Mulberry Street* came out in 1937, and after the war he returned to this speciality. Commissioned to write a beginning reader using only 250 words, Seuss wrote *The Cat in the Hat* in even fewer, and developed a new speciality, Beginner Books. Millions of American and British children learned to read with pleasure through the books of Dr Seuss, and today his birthday, 2 March, is celebrated as Read Across America Day.

Seuss's liberal political philosophy comes out in his longer rhyming narratives, particularly *The Sneetches* (1961), which ridicules racism and class snobbery, and *The Butter Battle Book* (1984) about the arms race. It was in the prime of his career that he wrote *The Lorax*, which was published in 1971 (UK 1972) just before the United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm in June 1972. *The Lorax* begins in a dismal setting at the far end of town where a small boy goes to hear the tale of the Once-ler, who lives in a rickety old house and never comes out. The story is told through a long hose into the boy's ear. In flashback, everything brightens up with colourful Truffula Trees, Swomee-Swans, Brown Bar-baloos and Humming-Fish. The Once-ler arrives in his cart and proceeds to chop down a tree and knit a Thneed – a kind of woolly but unwearable sweater in a peculiar shape. Up comes the Lorax, a short brown gnome, out of the tree stump, and asks the Once-ler, on behalf of the trees, to stop chopping them down. The Once-ler brushes him off and calls his relatives to join him. They build a factory, pollute the neighbourhood and unintentionally deprive the Bar-baloos of their Truffula Fruit. The Swans flee from the smog and the Fish walk out of their pond because it is so polluted. The Once-ler, whose

face we never see, refuses all the Lorax's pleas:

And at that very moment, we heard a loud  
whack!  
From outside in the fields came a sicken-  
ing smack  
Of an axe on a tree. Then we heard the  
tree fall.  
*The very last Truffula Tree of them all!*

The relatives depart, the factory closes, and finally the Lorax lifts himself away into the sky. In the hopeful and sentimental ending, the little boy is entrusted with the last Truffula Seed, to plant it in the hope that he will bring back the trees and wildlife 'Then the Lorax and all of his friends may come back.'

*The Lorax* became an animated film in 1972 and has subsequently been attacked by the logging industry. A rhyming riposte, *Truax*, describes a conversation between a woodland spirit, Guardbark, 'protector of trees' and a decent logger, Truax (i.e. True axe). Truax works for a responsible company which believes in planning new trees to replace the felled ones, and which supports the creation of national parks to preserve wildlife in a natural state. He convinces Guardbark that humans can balance their need for wood with responsible protection of forests, for example, against forest fires. This picture book was sponsored by the National Wood Flooring Manufacturers' Association and is currently available on the internet at the NOFMA website, linked from the Wikipedia article on *The Lorax*. The author, Terri Birkett, has adopted Seuss's metrical style of four stresses to the line and also his way of sprinkling the poem with nonsense words; while the illustrator has drawn trees with pink and yellow tufts in the Seuss manner, though to be fair he also depicts realistically gnarled trees.

In a democratic society *Truax* has a right to put forward its views, though I was sorry to hear of an attempt to withdraw *The Lorax* from some schools in California (see Wikipedia again). I would make these points: that the Once-ler is an entrepreneur, not a company with a public image to maintain. The principle of managing forests developed over a long time.

Moreover, *The Lorax* is a fable which happens to be set among pleasant woodland; a really truthful narrative about humankind's despoliation of nature could not make a relatively cheerful children's book: imagine a Seuss-style poem about an oil slick or sewage outfall ruining a long stretch of shore and sea for the fishermen, families, seabirds, fish and shellfish which depend on it. Or a story of the effects of chemical or nuclear pollution: just enter the dreaded words Minamata, Seveso, Bhopal or Chernobyl into Google search. The fight to save the tropical rainforest, the lungs of Planet

Earth, goes on every day. *The Lorax* is far more optimistic, with its promise that the woodland will rise again if the boy plants and nurtures the Truffula Seed.

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## Reports

### Happy Birthday Miffy! An Exhibition at the Museum of Childhood<sup>1</sup>

Now why did it surprise me to find, on entering the Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green, London, for the first time, that it was full of children? Noisy, excited children were everywhere, clutching clipboards, enjoying the hands-on exhibits or sitting on the floor in class groups listening to their teachers. To add to the scene, there were also present many preschool children and babies with parents and grandparents. There were no hushed tones in echoing galleries here but a place full of energy and enthusiasm: how appropriate for an institution which celebrates the pleasures of childhood. It is not, I understand, always so boisterous: I must have arrived on a weekday morning when school visits were on the agenda. For me, it was an exhilarating introduction to the place.

There is a lot to see, with toys on display dating from centuries past through to the present day, but the main reason for my being there was the exhibition which features the work of the Dutch artist Dick Bruna. The exhibition 'Happy Birthday Miffy!' is touring around Britain; opening in London in December 2006 and continuing until 18 March 2007, it celebrates the 50 years since Bruna first created his iconic picture book character.

One of my first impressions on approaching this exhibition was of colour: bright, poster-paint-like colour; these particular shades of red, blue, green and yellow are those which Bruna always uses when creating his children's picture books. This particularity in colour choice is matched, as the exhibition reveals, by the meticulous care Bruna takes in drawing a figure like Miffy. The simplicity of the finished drawings and texts belies the amount of work that goes into them; Bruna draws a great many pictures and writes endless words until he gets them all just right. On display, a series of photographs, with the relevant art work below, shows in detail how Bruna arrives at a finished picture of Miffy, while a film which is screened continuously also shows the artist at work. These describe how, when Bruna is satisfied with an image, he traces it in black line onto a photographic transparency. The coloured shapes, which will lie adjacent to this black line when the finished image is printed, are then carefully cut out from sheets of coloured paper, and each colour is placed on a separate transparency. These transparencies are then put in order and made up into a book which is then ready to send to the printers.

As the exhibition explains, while the format of the Miffy picture books has stayed the same (quite early on Bruna decided that the small square shape was the best for small hands), Bruna has modified the shape of Miffy herself over the years. She originally looked like the artist's son's toy rabbit on which she was modelled, but now she has become more rounded. Miffy – who, Bruna decided, was a girl so that he gave her a dress in 1970 – is never seen in profile. Bruna never felt comfortable drawing her from that angle; instead she usually looks out at the beholder or, occasionally, is seen from a back view. She is invariably in close-up. One of my favourite Miffy picture books (I have read somewhere that it is Bruna's favourite too) is *Miffy at the Gallery*; in it some of the pictures show a back view of Miffy, head tilted slightly on one side, contemplating works by Bruna's heroes, Piet Mondriaan and Henri Matisse among others. I was delighted, therefore, to discover two large pictures of Miffy from this book on display in the exhibition. As the exhibition explains, Bruna's inspiration for his art comes from the Modernist painters. He has used Matisse's technique of cutting simple shapes from coloured paper to produce his own collages, while the simplicity of line and shape in his images reveals the influence of his fellow countryman Mondriaan.

Besides all the artwork associated with Bruna's picture books for children, there are other items on display which will be of more interest to adults, and these show Bruna's versatility and the effectiveness of his work in different areas. He has designed posters and cards for organisations such as UNICEF and the Red Cross, as well as some to promote holiday reading. He has also designed a logo for World Aids Day. On dis-

<sup>1</sup> This report first appeared in the spring issue of *Network*, the journal of Women Word Spirit.

play, and in contrast to his bolder images, are delicate little sketches in watercolour and in ink. There are also railway station posters to advertise the books produced by his family's publishing house, Black Bear; these, like his other posters, are bold and eye catching. It was fascinating to see some of the book jackets that Bruna has designed for Black Bear. These are for novels by, among others, Georges Simenon, Leslie Charteris and Peter Cheney and, like the posters, are bold, eye-catching two-dimensional designs. Bruna's style lends itself well to silk-screen reproduction; there is a gorgeous little picture on display in blue, yellow and two shades of green entitled 'Open window with rising sun'. Dated 1967, it shows the sun rising successively through three small and variously shaped apertures which are framed in black. Bruna often uses windows in his pictures because, he says, 'windows represent freedom'; he has used the device to telling effect for a picture, also on display, created for Amnesty International.

The Museum of Childhood is a light, airy venue for educating and entertaining both children and adults. It was reopened, after renovation, in December 2006, and 'Happy Birthday Miffy!' is the first temporary exhibition to mark this. In 2000, her anniversary year, Miffy received no less than 37,865 birthday cards from fans, both children and adults, around the world. Those visiting the exhibition at the Museum of Childhood are invited to send Miffy a birthday message, cards provided, which they can post in the red letter box in the gallery.

Miffy's continuing popularity seems assured. In the picture books in which she features, Bruna uses themes with which a young child might easily relate: there are the pleasures of a visit to the seaside or the zoo, for instance, or a day at school or coping with a stay in hospital. Each story, even one that describes a more adventurous outing when Miffy goes flying in an aeroplane, unfolds in a calm and reassuring way. With *Miffy at the Seaside* alone having been translated into 16 different languages – the covers for all 16 picture books are on display at the exhibition – it seems that Miffy and her friends will continue to delight her fans for many, many birthdays to come.

**June Hopper**

### **Marsh Award for Children's Literature in Translation**

The presentation of this award was made on 23 January 2007 at the Arts Club in Piccadilly to the distinguished translator Anthea Bell for her work on *The Flowing Queen* by Kai Mayer (Egmont, 2005). This book, published in Germany in 2001, is set in a mythical nineteenth-century Venice under siege from armies of mummies led by an ancient Egyptian pharaoh. It is the first of a trilogy of which the remaining volumes are *The Stone Light* and *The Glass Word*. In presenting the award, Wendy Cooling spoke of the high quality of the books on the shortlist, which also included Guus Kuijer's *The Book of Everything* (Dutch, translated by John Nieuwenhuizen), Henning Mankell's *A Bridge to the Stars* (Swedish, translated by Laurie Thompson), Cornelia Funke's *Dragon Rider* (German, also translated by Anthea Bell), Faiza Guène's *Just Like Tomorrow* (French, translated by Sarah Adams) and Lilli Thal's *Mimus* (German, translated by John Brownjohn). In her acceptance speech, Anthea Bell reminded her audience that all our reading histories include books in translation. Good stories may not be in our mother tongues but travel easily between languages: 'Enabling such books to enter the English-speaking world is what the Marsh Award is all about'.

### **School Librarian of the Year Award Honour List**

The ceremony was held on 1 May 2007 in the Armouries Building at the Tower of London. Michael Morpurgo presented certificates to the six shortlisted librarians and their head teachers or principals. Michael pointed out the immense value of school librarians in passing on to children the feeling that literature belongs to them and not just to some kind of elite. The librarians had all in their various ways fulfilled a distinguished role: a particular strength of Fay Dowding from Kirkby Lonsdale was in teaching research skills; Amanda Gough runs a Book Week in her Hong Kong school; Barbara Hickford promotes reading in her Abingdon school by a scheme for

children to decorate their classroom doors as book covers; Ingrid Hopson manages two libraries in a Guildford school; Helen Pallett has coordinated a library culture that has helped a Nottingham City Academy towards a great improvement in exam results; and Helen Roberts, from Enfield, has introduced Careers Months as a way of motivating pupils to use the school library. It will have been difficult for the panel to choose the overall winner – Ingrid Hopson. Those who attended the ceremony had the opportunity to wander round the Tower afterwards, and muse on the suggestion by Geoff Dubber, the vice-chair of the School Library Association, that this major medieval royal palace must have had its own librarian to deal with all the state documents.

## Reviews

### *Give Me Shelter*

Tony Bradman (ed.), 2007, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 971845075442, £10.99.

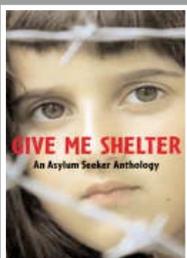
This is an anthology of eleven original short stories with the theme of asylum seekers, some factual and some fictionalised. The stated readership is 9–11 year olds and the aim is to give them an understanding of the experiences behind the newspaper headlines of what are often rather slanted stories.

Below is a brief summary of three stories, to indicate the types. The reading experiences are as varied as the stories. The narrators of these stories include a nine-year-old Shona girl in Zimbabwe (Kathleen McCreery 'Writing to the president'), a moody teenager from Kosovo living in London (Leslie Wilson 'Cherry strudel'), and an English adult recalling her childhood friendship with her mother's cleaner from Kurdistan (Gaye Hicyilmaz 'A nice quiet girl'). The countries from which asylum is being sought include also the Congo (Nicki Cornwell 'Baa and the angels'), Eritrea (Sulaiman Addonia 'Only up from here'), Iraq (Miriam Halahmy 'Samir Hakkim's healthy eating diary'), Vietnam (Kim Kitson 'Little fish'), Ethiopia (Solomon Gebremedhin 'Give me shelter'), Darfur (Rob Porteous 'A place to hide') and Somalia (Lucy Henning and Saeda Elmi 'Beans for tea'). Some of the situations described have been headline news – boat people, harassment of immigrants and deception by paid traffickers of those who seek to reach Europe from afar.

The first story ('Baa and the angels') is about a family caught up in the civil war in the Congo who escape to England. The threats that are the reason for their leaving and the course of the journey to safety are described. The story ends with their first night in London in a hostel. Somehow the dreadful happenings causing them to leave didn't engage me in the same way as the novel about a similar journey in *Christophe's Story* (see *IbbyLink* 17).

Another story ('Only up from here') is that of a 13-year-old boy who is sent from Eritrea by his mother to escape the war with Ethiopia. He is passed through the hands of various people, including smugglers, spends time in Khartoum and eventually arrives in London. Because of his false papers, he starts off in a house with four male adult East European refugees – the descriptions of their behaviour to him frightened me – but he then tells them his real age and restarts his life in a house for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. A frightening story that ends with the boy's optimism.

The description of Jusef ('Cherry strudel'), a teenager in London living with a foster family, will cause a grimace from those with teenagers at home. His moodiness, lack of engagement and inability to perceive the effects that his behaviour is having on others will be all too familiar. His adjustment and reconciliation with himself through Old Her Next Door, his German-Jewish neighbour who herself escaped from the Nazis, had me on edge wondering if he was going to ruin her much-loved garden when she asks for his help in recompense for breaking the roof glass of her greenhouse with his football!



Containing eleven very diverse stories, evoking many different emotions, this seems the sort of book that a teacher might give to a pupil for him or her to read one story in a particular context. The whole book seems rather indigestible for a child to read, and each story would lose its impact in the diversity. Children could be perhaps directed towards a single story and then perhaps to a novel with a similar theme. To 'experience', for example, the wanderings, frustrations and feelings of hopelessness of the boy who dreams of reaching Vienna, thinks the smugglers have taken him across the border into Austria only to find himself in the hands of the police in Moldova, the reader needs the engagement that is given by a longer novel (Lily Hyde 'The final border').

However, this book is highly recommended to all those parents, teachers and librarians trying to give children an idea of the backgrounds of the asylum seekers whom they are now meeting socially and at school. Since children in the UK cannot have the same experiences as these asylum seekers, it is up to adults to point them to literature which will enable them to 'live' such experiences. The stories here also give a different viewpoint on what are often rather emotive headlines about asylum seekers – their reasons for 'escaping' and their impact on the community that they join in their new home country.

**Jennifer Harding**

### ***Toby Tucker: Dodging the Donkey Doo***

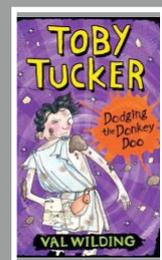
Val Wilding, illus. Michael Broad, London: Egmont, 2007, pb. 9781405225472, £4.99.

History in fiction, or fiction in history? Curriculum-based historical series fiction or historical novels? Historical novels have changed considerably since the golden days of writers such as Geoffrey Trease, Cynthia Harnett and Rosemary Sutcliff. The onset of the National Curriculum in schools 20 years ago opened the publishing floodgates for a vast amount of curriculum related material, much of it of questionable use, and deeply unexciting for young people. Publishers then realised that they could reinvent the historical novel, for if the facts were wrapped up in a fictional framework, learning would be made enjoyable and the facts would leap from the page and embed themselves in the brains of the readers.

Unfortunately it isn't that simple, and many of the current tsunami of short series novels (usually involving timeslip) based on QCA units for the Key Stage 2 history curriculum threaten to overexpose the intended audience to information overload within mediocre narrative frameworks. There are two extremes: the first is those series where one feels the author wanted to write a *real* book, and the timeslip is a long time coming while the author frames the historical gobbets in a gritty 21st century social drama. There are well-respected authors at this extreme, yet their books clearly display the intention that their work should provide a useful basis for teaching the history.

The other extreme reverses the ratio of modern to historical action in the story, though may still retain the element of gritty social drama. Wilding's *Toby Tucker* series belongs to this interpretation of how to get a modern historical novel published. Egmont produced all six short books at the same time (imagine chapters of the legendary R. J. Unstead appearing as separate books!), with trendy titles which involve poo, sewers, muck and pig swill, presumably designed to attract younger children who generally relish all things dirty, smelly and unpleasant.

Wilding doesn't do a bad job: Toby – newly placed in a foster family – is investigating his family tree and, once he has decoded a name-related magic spell, slips back in time to find his ancestors conveniently placed at crucial points (in relation to QCA) in history. In *Dodging the Donkey Do*, readers find out a little about everyday life in Ancient Greece, and slightly more about the original Olympic Games. Toby is a hapless child who will engage readers, especially boys, and he narrates his adventures



and misfortunes with humour. Broad's illustrations adding an extra comic dimension. However these books are designed for mainstream education, and while Key Stage 1 readers would find the book of a suitable length and style, most of the QCA units are studied at Key Stage 2, and I am doubtful whether the tone of the writing and the relatively slim historical content would sufficiently engage or inform an average or gifted reader of that age. Perhaps fewer repetitive new series like this, and more re-publication of Sutcliff, Trease and Harnett could be a future goal in publishing?

**Bridget Carrington**

### ***Toby Tucker: Keeping Sneaky Secrets***

Val Wilding, illus. Michael Broad, 2007, London: Egmont, pb. 978 1 4052 1840 5, £4.99.

Another fascinating title in the historical series entitled *Toby Tucker*, the name given to the central character whose role is to transport the reader back in time. Each title reveals, through story, the fascinating minutiae of daily life in one period of history and *Keeping Sneaky Secrets* takes the young reader to Ancient Egypt.

The eponymous Toby forms the name Seti from torn papers in his magic chest and is transported back to Ancient Egypt to become his own ancestor. Toby is moving into the home of his new foster parents, Evie and Don, when this dramatic change in character focalisation occurs and he becomes Seti. The narrative style changes from third person to first person, allowing Seti to tell his own story and so talk directly to the reader. Interesting facts about Ancient Egypt begin to emerge immediately and the reader starts by learning how to make coloured inks. The plot is constructed around a family feud between Seti's father and his uncle. The former is a farmer, the latter an embalmer. Unfortunately Seti would prefer to learn embalming, while his cousin, Neb, would prefer to learn farming. As the two cousins secretly learn each other's trade, so the reader learns details about these activities. Seti finds himself learning how to embalm by practising on a dead rat. The feud is finally resolved and the boys achieve their preferences, but not before the reader has learned a wealth of fascinating facts about Ancient Egypt. There are even stories within stories when Seti tells his small sister some of the familiar Egyptian myths and legends.

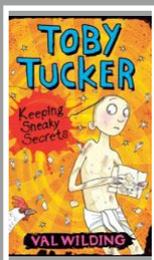
Reluctant readers will be attracted immediately by the colourful, cartoon-style jacket design. The title is highly illustrated from the opening page with black and white cartoon-style artwork. The numerous illustrations are detailed and informative, so enhancing the factual descriptive narrative. Surprisingly this author does not make excessive use of the vernacular or colloquialisms, as is often the case with this genre of children's literature. Instead an element of onomatopoeia and humorous dialogue is used to good effect.

There is no definitive chapter structure to the story – rather the opening header 'The Allen house, present day' is suggestive of scene setting for a drama. Using these subtle devices the author cleverly creates a degree of realism, effectively allowing young readers to view Ancient Egypt from the inside, through the eyes of Toby aka Seti.

### ***Don't look Back!***

Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore, illus. Tony Ross, Barn Owl Books, 2006, pb. 190301543X, £4.99.

The writing partnership of the 'two Steves', Barlow and Skidmore, can be relied upon to create zany, action-packed stories with immediate appeal for pre-teens. What readers may not realise is just how much they are learning from the authors' apparently slapstick narratives. *Don't Look Back!* is the latest title in the 'Mad Myths' series in which familiar characters from the Greek myths are deployed in contemporary settings. This time the four 'heroes', Perce (Priscilla), Andy, Eddie and Well'ard, find themselves drawn into the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. They meet Orpheus, in



modern dress, busking with his lyre on the London Underground. The friends are lost in the city after a school visit to the National Gallery, where they have seen the painting *Orpheus Descends into the Underworld to demand the return of Eurydice* by Jean Restout.

Orpheus, clutching a broken lyre, joins the intrepid four and soon they stumble across the entrance to the Underworld, via a lift. They cross the River of Woe (Acheron), trick Cerberus and cross the Plain of Asphodel (by train) before reaching the Barbican, the entrance to Hades's Palace. There they are greeted by an angry Eurydice and the crumpled figure of Hades wearing a woolly jumper and carpet slippers. After some tricky negotiation, relating to a befeater snow globe, Hades is persuaded to allow Eurydice to leave with Orpheus. Finally the friends meet up with their school party and end the day at the Royal Observatory where they are able to view the stars and the constellation of Orpheus and Eurydice.

This title has 12 short chapters and concludes with a who's who of Ancient Greece. It is magnificently illustrated in black and white cartoon-style artwork by Tony Ross. The third person narrative leans heavily upon the vernacular, particularly in the opening chapters, and the abundant dialogue makes full use of colloquialisms. This may not appeal to the adult reader, but is appropriate for the target audience. The eye-catching front cover design will draw in even reluctant readers to enjoy a non-challenging reading experience, which also happens to be a fun introduction to characters from the Greek myths.

**Pam Robson**

***Telling Tails: fun with homonyms***

Laura Hambleton and Sedat Turhan, illus. Sedat Turhan, pb. 1840594985.

***Strawberry Bullfrog: fun with compound words***

Laura Hambleton and Sedat Turhan, illus. Sally Hagin, pb. 1840595000.

***Monkey Business: fun with idioms***

Laura Hambleton and Sedat Turham; illus. Hervé Tullet, pb. 1840594993.

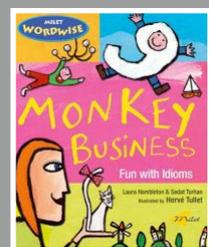
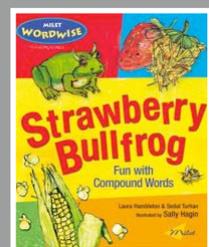
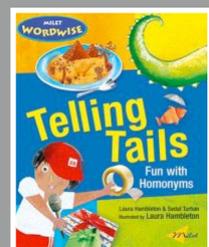
Milet Wordwise series, 2006, Milet Publishing, 2006, £5.99.

These three texts form part of a series of fun, colourful picture books about language which will generate laughter and discussion about the meaning of words, help young readers and writers to enlarge their oral and written vocabularies and support learners who are new to English.

Each book features 11 words or phrases in lively double-page spreads that use collage and drawing to illustrate idioms ('You read my mind'), homonyms ('I'm washing my hare') and compound words ('A dog with a watch? Watchdog'). The books also contain useful glossaries of pictures, words and phrases that explain meanings clearly ('When you read my mind, you knew what I was thinking'). They also illustrate the different spellings of words that have the same pronunciation ('Rain, Reign') and illustrate components of compounds ('Rain, Bow, Rainbow').

In *Telling Tails*, the book about homonyms, readers will readily see through the quirky cartoon artwork how a change in spelling can radically alter meaning ('The tap has sprung a leek!'). *Strawberry Bullfrog*, through words and pictures, breaks each compound word into its constituent parts to enable readers to see and discuss metaphorical and concrete meanings ('A moon made of honey? Honeymoon').

In most instances, the illustrations will support understanding. But some of the images might confuse or bemuse a learner who is new to English. For example, in



*Monkey Business* (which features no monkeys!), the idiom ‘Put your best foot forward’ is illustrated by showing a child with two extra arms; the idiom ‘Play it by ear’ is illustrated by a haphazard map and a profile of a face. Likewise, *Telling Tails*, on homonyms, prompts awareness of how spelling affects meaning with questions like ‘Does the forest have fur trees?’ alongside an image of a furry forest, but does not immediately offer the correct spelling; readers must go to the glossary at the back of the book to see and read ‘fur’ and ‘fir’. These areas of visual and textual confusion however can provide opportunities for discussing wordplay and how texts can have multiple and implied meanings.

Books such as these are reminders that vocabulary work can offer plenty of scope to explore the links between language and culture. Using these books as models, developing readers and writers could collect phrases from proverbs, slogans and advertising and create their own picture books of idioms. Pupils can also use these books as starting points to explore common English language collocations (flesh and blood, sugar and spice) and the range of different meanings and uses of words such as ‘face’ or ‘round’. Learners could go on to examine the ways in which pronunciation alters meaning (for example, ‘entrance’ and ‘read’) and to study homophones (there, their and they’re) as well as homographs (bark – a dog’s or a tree’s), synonyms, prepositions and phrasal verbs (turn off, turn on, turn up, turn down). An excellent resource to extend these picture books would be Norah McWilliam’s *What’s in a Word? Vocabulary development in multilingual classrooms* (1998, Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books).

*Telling Tails*, *Strawberry Bullfrog* and *Monkey Business* are books that will stimulate learners’ curiosity about language and the diverse contexts, audiences, purposes and registers of oral and written English. The surface simplicity of these picture books should not mask their complex pedagogic point, that learning about language involves learning about culture.

**Kimberly Safford, Senior Lecturer, Education, Roehampton University**

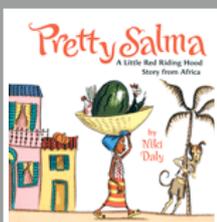
### *Pretty Salma*

Niki Daly, London: Frances Lincoln, 2006, hb. 9781845074777, £10.99.

A West African version of *Red Riding Hood* set in a Ghanaian village with a crazy-eyed rooster, Anansi the storyteller and a no-good Mr Dog. Salma runs an errand at the market for her Granny, but the heat of the day makes her forget her Granny’s warning never to talk to strangers. When Mr Dog asks her all about herself and then tricks her into borrowing her clothes, she runs away from him. Luckily she finds her grandfather telling stories to her friends. Helped by them, she dresses as Ka Ka Motobi the Bogeyman, and they all chase Mr Dog away and save Granny from becoming Granny soup! Next time Salma goes to market she is very careful whom she talks to....

Daly has produced a delightful picture book in which text and illustration occupy every page on an equal footing, both having a vital contribution to make to the reader’s understanding of the story. Just as the text tells us about families, life and culture in West Africa, so the detail of the splendidly humorous illustrations not only brings the text to life, but also itself adds significantly to non-Ghanaian readers’ knowledge of that country. There is a great vibrancy about the pictures which, together with their humour, serves to prevent young readers being anything other than comfortably and deliciously frightened at Mr Dog’s evil appearance and behaviour. As well as prompting recall of the European *Red Riding Hood* tales, the text contains many devices to invite participation: lists, repetition, and Ghanaian words to describe the sounds made by Ka Ka Motobi and his gang.

As we have grown to expect from Daly, *Pretty Salma* manages to be both hugely entertaining and amazingly instructive, continuing to bring the modern, everyday life of African children to a new audience far away.



## *Look! Seeing the Light in Art*

Gillian Wolfe, London: Frances Lincoln, 2006, hb. 9781845074678, £12.99.

Well-produced books to encourage the enjoyment and understanding of 'works of art' among young people are not hard to find these days, and as well as studies of the work of individual artists, thematic guides are also popular. In contrast to the multiplicity of books which look at the slightly tenuous connections between numbers or letters in art, Gillian Wolfe views her subject from a refreshingly artistic aspect – different artists' use of lighting to enhance their subject.

Wolfe, Head of Education at Dulwich Picture Gallery, is recognised as one of the world's leading art educationalists. In this book she examines 16 pictures by artists spanning the 15th to 20th centuries to see how light has been used to create drama, emphasise weather conditions, shape and form, and to infuse the subject matter with life or movement. She chooses a catholic spread of works, illustrating a variety of artistic genres, from Dutch landscape to the strip cartoon *Dan Dare*. Each double spread reproduces one or two pictures in their entirety, also using close-up images of small areas to draw the young reader's attention to specific parts where the use of light is significant, and showing how it is used. Having done this, she then suggests practical ways in which readers could use the technique in their own artwork to see the difference it makes. Her explanation is straightforward and well directed towards the age group she is addressing (Key Stage 2). Her prose is simple, often humorous and colloquial without ever being patronising.

An excellent book which could also be used for shared reading between carers and children of a much younger age.

**Bridget Carrington**

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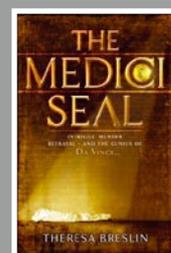
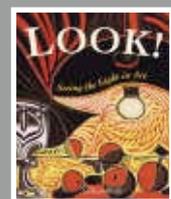
## *The Medici Seal*

Theresa Breslin, London: Doubleday, 2006, 978 0 385 61020.

The armchair historian in me finds much to enjoy in *The Medici Seal*, which brings a convincing vitality to its portrait of Leonardo Da Vinci and some of his best known creations. Breslin dares to explain the Mona Lisa's enigmatic expression and lends tragedy to Da Vinci's exploits with flying machines. I believe Breslin when she confesses that she enjoys the research for her work so much that she attempts to put off the actual writing (<http://www.theresabreslin.com/research.htm>). *The Medici Seal* is firmly anchored in Leonardo Da Vinci's sixteenth-century Italy and is clearly the product of rigorous research. Ostensibly the tale of young Matteo, who fights for his life throughout Breslin's saga, *The Medici Seal* actually charts Breslin's love affair with Da Vinci himself and the period in which he lived.

Indeed, Matteo's coming of age and his journey from illiterate thief to educated nobleman is intricately (if not always credibly or tightly) plotted. *The Medici Seal* is a bildungsroman, in which the boy with a secret becomes the secret himself ... and yet it is not. A bildungsroman ought to privilege its young hero, but Breslin often cares more about the use to which she can put her young protagonist as an observer of Da Vinci, the Maestro. Narrowly escaping murder at the hands of the villainous Sandino, Matteo is rescued by the Maestro, who then allows Matteo (and so the reader) access to his intriguing world of cadavers and artistry. The sections of the book devoted to Da Vinci are those to which Breslin's pen lends its passion, and Breslin slows down during these scenes, building Da Vinci's world in elaborate detail. Unfortunately, the central narrative is forsaken during these extensive, historicised diversions and so the rhythm of this long book is frequently disrupted. The very best children's historical fiction (think Sutcliff's *Eagle of the Ninth*, or Uttley's *A Traveller in Time*) fuses historiography and narrative to such an extent that they are impossible to unpick.

*The Medici Seal* is a weighty tome, effectively because it is two books in one: two books that don't quite come together. Matteo's turbulent, often violent, adventures may well



appeal to many young adult readers, as might Breslin's painstaking portrait of Da Vinci's world – but it is debatable as to whether the *same* young reader will enjoy both strands of *The Medici Seal*.

**Lisa Sainsbury**

### Shorter notices

***Under the Spell of the Moon: Art for Children from the World's Greatest Illustrators***  
Katherine Paterson, Frances Lincoln, 2006, 1-84507 527-7.

A collection of poetry from all around the world, illustrated by picture-book artists including Anthony Browne, Quentin Blake and Peter Sis – a beautiful book ideal for introducing children to the variety of approaches to illustration, and to the range of different languages used by children in other countries.

***Canticle of the Sun: A Hymn of St Francis of Assisi***

Fiona French (illus.), Frances Lincoln, 2006, 1-84507-485-8.

A book with beautiful, rich, mosaic-like pictures. The text of course has existed for hundreds of years, but why use exclusive language in its translation? I have no objection to Brother Sun and Sister Moon, but why 'no *man* is worthy to speak thy name' at the beginning and 'praise and bless my Lord. Thank *him* and serve *him*...' [Italics mine] at the end, when a simple substitution of *one* and *God* would have removed the impression that all humans, and God, are male?

***Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak***

Deborah Ellis, Frances Lincoln, 2007, 978-1-84507-743-3, preface by Beverley Naidoo.

The simple idea of asking children from both sides of the conflict to express their wishes creates a moving picture of children who have had the kinds of experience to which no child should be exposed, and whose desires range from wanting the war to end, or poignantly 'I would like to go to heaven. Maybe there is happiness in heaven.' to 'I would walk again [from a youth traumatised by war], I would play football, and I would go to beautiful places.'

***Rift***

Beverley Birch, Egmont 2006, 978-1-4052-1589-3.

Written by an author who grew up in Kenya, this novel about English teenagers on a school trip to Africa reveals both the latent archaeological riches and the stresses existing in a developing society.

***Set in Stone***

Linda Newbury, Definitions (Random House), 2007, 978-0-099-451334.

Winner of the Costa Children's Book Award. As might be anticipated from this mistress of both plot and style, this is a book which holds the reader's attention throughout, with a mystery set in a country house; the comparisons with George Eliot and the Brontës, which some critics have made, amply convey the flavour of this text.

***Tug of War***

Catherine Forde, Egmont 2007, 978-1-4052-2005-7.

A rather frightening scenario of children evacuated from 2012 Glasgow because of terrorism provides a background to a story about a girl torn between the lavish generosity of her foster mother and her very real love for her frumpish and sometimes embarrassing mother. Forde doesn't let her serious subject matter detract from the humorous tone of the young narrator.

**Pat Pinsent**

### New programmes and projects

On Tuesday, 24 April 2007, at the Bologna International Children's Book Fair, IBBY announced its extensive new programme of workshops and three new projects for Children in Crisis.

IBBY called on publishers around the world assembled at the Bologna International Children's Book Fair to support IBBY's national sections in their work of bringing children to a lifelong love of reading, to work with them in the stimulation of national publishing programmes and to actively work for the translation of works from all languages into all languages – an activity which is sadly decreasing.

President Patricia Aldana congratulated our long standing nation section in Venezuela, Banco del Libro, on winning the 2007 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA) and praised the ALMA committee for using this prestigious award to promote reading and to support the Banco's pioneering work in bibliotherapy. On a more disheartening note, the IBBY president expressed IBBY's dismay at recent actions taken by the government of Mexico to cut back on the funds available to what is widely seen as being the most enlightened government programme in support of reading and a model in the world – the Bibliotecas del Rincón/Bibliotecas del Aula of the Secretaría de Educación Pública.

IBBY has launched a worldwide appeal for funds in support of the Children in Crisis programme and, in particular, for the newly approved project to bring reading clubs to displaced young people and children in Colombia who are victims of the armed conflict. Furthermore, they are appealing for funds to support projects in development in Afghanistan and the Ixchil region of Guatemala. They are asking for help for the many children whose lives are disrupted by natural disasters, war and other civil disorder. IBBY announced that it has received a guaranteed donation that will match any funds donated up to CHF100,000. Please contact the IBBY Secretariat or any of the IBBY executive committee if you wish to give support in this increasingly necessary endeavour.

### Children in Crisis

The first project to be run under the Children in Crisis programme is currently being undertaken in Lebanon. The recent war that so badly affected the country and in particular the people of southern Lebanon, has left many of the children traumatised. The project under the title Conflict Control is organised by Julinda Abu Nasr of IBBY Lebanon with a team of experts from the Lebanese American University and the American University of Beirut. The project calls for the use of storybooks and other art forms, which they can use to deal with the human emotions that have been strained during the conflict. Teachers will be trained in the use of bibliotherapy, thus ensuring long-term benefits in the region.

Thanks to a most generous contribution by Katherine Paterson, winner of the 1998 Hans Christian Andersen Award and the 2006 ALMA, IBBY will be able to support a project in Gaza, Palestine, where children are experiencing terrible trauma due to deprivation and the constant disruption brought about by the occupation. The project will create two libraries in community centres. In addition, it will run a training programme for the library staff, and include outreach training throughout Gaza in bibliotherapy. The Tamer Institute for Community Education, IBBY's Palestinian section based in Ramallah, will manage the project.

The project in Colombia, which urgently needs funding, will create reading clubs for 1,000 children, many of them living in shelters after being displaced as a result of the sixty years of conflict that Colombia has been suffering. Young people, also victims of the war, will be trained in bibliotherapy and will lead the clubs. The project will also provide circulating libraries of books specially selected for their suitability for children in crisis. The aim of the project is to encourage the children to acquire verbal ways of understanding their experiences and for dealing with their resulting trauma.

This project will be managed by 2007 ALMA winner the Banco del Libro, a pioneer in bibliotherapy, together with Asolectura, an organisation that has been working with street children in Colombia for many years.

### **IBBY–Yamada workshops and projects**

In 2007, under the banner of the IBBY campaign ‘The Child’s Right to Become a Reader: Books for Children Everywhere’, there are nine different projects around the world aimed at bringing children and books together. In Havana, Cuba, there will be a workshop on writing and illustration; in India the project will establish libraries in two community centres: in Arunachal Pradesh (north India) and in New Delhi. Training sessions will be organised with parents, social workers and teachers to teach them how to promote the reading habit; in Jakarta, Indonesia, a publishing workshop designed to equip the participants with basic knowledge and some of the skills needed to publish and distribute quality books for teenagers; in Antananarivo, Madagascar, the Bobiko project is designed to develop a children’s book culture: books in the local language as well as bilingual books; in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, the workshop comprises a five-day course to study design, layout and illustration; in Ramallah, Palestine, a workshop for professional editing of children’s literature; in Cape Town, South Africa, ‘Books where there are no books’: the project is designed to encourage children to gather stories from their parents, grandparents and neighbours and subsequently turn them into written stories; in Kampala, Uganda there will be a workshop on writing and illustrating skills for children’s storybooks; in Montevideo, Uruguay, the project is designed to promote support and training for people who work with children and young people, concentrating on training modules for public schools. Most of these projects are organised by national sections in their own countries, and in some cases by twinning with another section.

The 2005 virtual exhibition project ‘Books for Africa. Books from Africa’, will be updated and continue to highlight books from and for Africa. We are pleased to confirm that the management of the project will be done in the future by Carole Bloch, coordinator of the Early Literacy Unit, PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa) in Cape Town. We thank her for her support of this worthwhile project.

These projects are funded by the IBBY-Yamada Fund, which was initiated thanks to the generosity of Hideo Yamada of Japan.

### **Other IBBY activities**

The 2007 selection of Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities was launched at the press conference. Heidi Boiesen, director of the IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People, which is based at the Haug School and Resource Centre in Bekkestua, Norway, has selected 62 outstanding books from around the world. This is the largest selection ever and demonstrates the growing interest that these books are creating.

Important information has been made available concerning the next IBBY World Congress. The 31st IBBY Congress will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, 7–10 September 2008 under the theme Stories in History – History in Stories.

IBBY’s regular projects continue to be the backbone of IBBY’s work around the world: the IBBY Honour List, the Hans Christian Andersen Awards, the IBBYAsahi Reading Promotion Award, IBBY’s quarterly journal *Bookbird* and the International Children’s Book Day – this year presented by IBBY New Zealand. Information about the above activities and the IBBY national sections can be found on the IBBY website at [www.ibby.org](http://www.ibby.org).

## Events, Exhibitions and Conferences

### British IBBY/NCRCL MA annual conference

Roehampton University, Saturday 10 November 2007

The topic of the conference is 'What do you see? International perspectives on illustration'. The conference will explore the diversity of children's book illustration and consider its potential as a space for cultural dialogue and exchange. See enclosed flyer.

### IRSCCL 18th Biennial Congress 'Power and Children's Literature: Past, Present and Future'

Kyoto, Japan, 25–29 August 2007

Keynote speakers: Tadashi Matsui, Susan Napier, Masahiko Nishi and Roberta Seelinger Trites. Details <http://www.irsccl.info/index.htm> or [irsccl2007\\_kyoto@hotmail.co.jp](mailto:irsccl2007_kyoto@hotmail.co.jp).

### Illustration Cupboard exhibitions

22 Bury Street, London SW1

10–28 July 2007, Shirley Hughes at 80; 1–31 August, Michael Foreman; 18 September – 6 October, Babette Cole's *Princess Smartypants*; 16–31 October, Robert Ingpen's illustrations to *The Wind in the Willows*. See [www.illustrationcupboard.com](http://www.illustrationcupboard.com).

### Bath Festival of Children's Literature

21–30 September 2007

Contributors include Jacqueline Wilson, Eoin Colfer, Anthony Horowitz, Louise Rennison, Darren Shan, Lauren Child, Julia Donaldson, Francesca Simon, Tony Ross, Garth Nix, Brian Jacques and Geraldine McCaughrean. See [www.bathfestivalofchildrensliterature.co.uk](http://www.bathfestivalofchildrensliterature.co.uk) for details or contact the director, John McLay [john.mclay@btinternet.com](mailto:john.mclay@btinternet.com).

### Relevant Across Cultures: Visions of Connectedness and World Citizenship in Modern Fantasy for Young Readers

University of Wrocław, Poland, 28–31 May, 2008

For details contact conference organisers: Dr. Marek Oziewicz and Dr. Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak, The University of Wrocław Institute of English Studies, Center for Children's and Young Adult Fiction, ul. Kuznicza 22, 50–138 Wrocław, Poland; [marekoziewicz@uni.wroc.pl](mailto:marekoziewicz@uni.wroc.pl) and [deszcz@yahoo.com](mailto:deszcz@yahoo.com).

### Independent Publishing Awards

Several children's publishers were amongst those honoured by the Independent Publishers Guild. In particular, **Frances Lincoln** were awarded the IPG Diversity Award for publishers demonstrating commitment to publishing for black and minority ethnic communities in the UK 'for its outstanding range of children's books'. **Tamarind Books** were also highly commended in this category. **Barrington Stoke** received the Lightning Source Children's Publisher Award for commitment to children who find reading difficult, while **Catnip Publishing** and **Piccadilly Press** were highly commended for innovative approaches. British IBBY is delighted to see that the merits of these publishers are being recognised!

### CY

A new children's magazine, *CY*, has been launched 'for curious kids who want to see why.' For more information see [www.cymagazine.co.uk](http://www.cymagazine.co.uk).

The autumn issue of *IBBYLink* (copydate 31 July 2007) will be devoted to 'Scotland and Children's Literature'.

The spring issue (copydate 31 December 2007) will be devoted largely to the proceedings of the British IBBY/NCRCL MA conference on 10 November 2007 titled 'What do you see? International perspectives on illustration'.

Contributions on these themes, together with reviews of recent books, will be welcome. See the enclosed flyer.