

Number

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Editorial

Why did I write? What sin to me unknown
Dipp'd me in ink, my parents' or my own?
As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I liston in numbers, for the numbers came.

(Alexander Pope, *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*)

These well-known lines by the dominant English poet of the first half of the eighteenth century do not, of course, refer to numbers in the sense in which we are using them in this issue of *IBBYLink*. Pope is recalling how as a mere infant he had spoken in verse, simply because it was natural to him, and long before he had any aspirations to fame. Some poets – perhaps Keats and Tennyson also spring to mind here – seem to have found poetic measures, and the sound qualities that go with them such as alliteration and onomatopoeia, almost instinctual. Indeed, given the evidence from those who have taped their own children's early language, and children's delight in jingles and rhymes, there would be grounds for claiming that poetry of some form or another is innate to humanity. And poetry's rhythms of course do rely on number in establishing metre.

In this 'number' of *IBBYLink* we are focusing on the more usual meaning of the word number, and here too there would seem to be evidence that there is something built in to the human psyche that relishes in particular the serial quality implied by this fundamental attribute of the world. From

the rhymes loved by very young children throughout the ages: 'One two buckle my shoe', 'One two three four five/Once I caught a fish alive' and others, through the innumerable (!) fairy and folk tales featuring certain numbers of individuals, to the dictates of religion and the puzzles of detective fiction, numbers seem always to have fascinated human beings (in spite of the problems that some people unfortunately have with manipulating them).

Janet Dowling's article in particular, drawn from her experience as a storyteller, shows how important numbers are in narrative, while Pam Robson has given us yet another section from her database, revealing some of the multitude of children's books that feature number – not forgetting the kindred area of codes, elucidated here by Jennifer Harding. Elsewhere we show how counting books and contemporary fiction alike attest to the enduring fascination (and marketability) of books focusing on number. We also have, as usual, a substantial number of reviews and reports.

This will be the second issue of *IBBYLink* to be sent out mainly by electronically means, and we hope this hasn't caused problems to many of our members – in fact, there has been much favourable feedback about *IBBYLink* 25.

Pat Pinsent

The Alchemy of Number in Storytelling

Janet Dowling

There is a secret about stories and storytelling. If you know the secret then your stories and storytelling become all the more powerful. But first you have to appreciate the underlying basis of the secret – and that is the role of number in stories:

One becomes two: two becomes three; and out of the third comes the fourth, the One.
(The ‘Axiom of Maria’ in alchemical literature)

The alchemists were fascinated by numbers, the relationships between them, and how the different relationships developed. But no aspect is more fascinating than the impact on the human mind of the number relationships in story.

There are various forms of story, but to consider the role of number in stories I shall give a very basic form of the mythic structure, loosely derived from the work of Joseph Campbell, which ‘fits’ most (but not all) stories. Stories begin with the initial situation, in which we are introduced to the hero (or heroine) and the setting for the story. Then ‘something’ happens – the problem or change – to which the hero is called upon to respond: there may be something dark to overcome, or a partner to be wooed and won. The hero may then make preparation for the quest, in which the hero may be given advice, meet helpers, find magical objects, learn skills or nothing at all. Then arise challenges, obstacles and hazards, which have to be overcome in order to achieve transformation; what needed to be addressed is resolved, which leads to a celebration. With the celebration, then the story goes full circle so that the outcome of the celebration (often a marriage) becomes the new initial situation and it starts all over again.

Christopher Booker (2004) identifies the One as the central character with whom the story begins and ends. In astrology, one is represented by a circle so that there is no beginning and no ending – just a continuous path. One is neither good nor evil – that can be judged only in context of the relationship with the other characters. In order for the story to develop there needs to be a secondary character to make the Two and the story becomes about the relationship. The relationship can be based on either resolving conflict or the need to effect a union between them. The conflict can be something or someone that is dark: something happens within the land, or to the characters. There is a loss, a need, something stolen away, which needs to be addressed by some One. Or the union can be to find the partner, the soulmate or other half who will make the One become whole.

Most people are familiar with the concept of three in stories: the three bears; the three pigs; three billy goats gruff. It is the youngest brother of three who wins the princess, the fortune, the kingdom. And often it is three challenges, obstacles or hazards for the hero (or heroine) to overcome before they can reach their goal. How has this fascination with three developed? Booker (2004) provides a useful outline of four different groupings and functions of three in storytelling.

The simple or cumulative three in story is where three things have to occur cumulatively for them to have the desired effect so that the hero can move on. Thus Cinderella goes to the ball three times; Aladdin has to go through three caves; and Jack goes to the giant’s house three times.

There are ascending threes where each of the tasks is progressively more difficult: each has a positive value but each is more important or valuable than the previous. Treasures found might initially be bronze, then silver, then gold. There are times when the threes are of negative value, such as Red Riding Hood’s three questions to the wolf: What big ears you have?; What big eyes you have?; What big teeth you have? – which lead to the climax of the story.

Then there is the contrasting or double negative three – for example, the two ugly sisters who are the opposite to Cinderella; or the two older brothers (or pigs) do things the same and wrong way, whilst the younger brother achieves the goal.

Another is the dialectical three where something is first wrong in one way – too hot – the second is wrong in another way – too cold. But the third – in the middle – is just right! Goldilocks takes the middle path three times.

P.L. Travers (1989) writes about the stories of three brothers where typically the youngest son succeeds where his two older brothers have failed. She asks whether they are three brothers or just three aspects of one man. The older two brothers believe themselves to contain all they need to achieve the quest, and thus are not open to advice and help from others. However, the youngest son realises that it does not all depend on him, and he is open to learning from others ‘unknowing and knowing that only unknowing can bring him to knowing’. He learns from the mistakes of his elder brothers.

Both Booker and Travers touch on threes as developing experience over time. This can be related to signal theory in psychology – the function of the three Rs: register, recognise and remember. When you first experience something, you have to register that it has occurred. The second time it occurs you recognise that it has occurred again. The third time it occurs, you remember that it has happened before and can start to anticipate what happens next. With anticipation comes learning. The spirit of ‘try, try, and try again’ is the power of three.

And here is a conundrum. How many readers of this paper flinched when I mentioned that Jack goes to the giant’s house three times or that Cinderella goes to the ball three times? Maybe you only know the versions where they do these things once. In the earlier versions of the stories they *do* go three times. There is none of this ‘do it once and it leads to success’ that prevails in many modern stories. In today’s harum-scarum world, listeners learn that you have to try only once, and you will succeed. The lesson of application and try, try, try again is not learned or understood, and listeners feel failures as they pass through life and don’t succeed on the first try.

And after try, try, try again ‘something’ happens – and the transformation (i.e. anticipation and learning) becomes the fourth element of the story – the realisation, acquisition, the success that the story then pivots on. Booker (2004) describes the power of the fourth element that allows the main character to move on to the next phase in life, and become the One in the new initial situation. They have learned new things and matured into their new role for the next phase of their life. In Western tales, they have probably improved their station in life, but in Asian tales they may have initially lost their status, and now restored it.

The repeated exposure of the progression in storytelling of one, two, three and four can lead the listener or reader unconsciously to expect a patterning in storytelling that retains the same structure. When the patterning is ‘recognised’, the story is ‘accepted’ by the listener. By understanding the role these numbers play in structure, a story becomes more powerful. The Axiom of Maria holds strong. Which of us has not sought the philosopher’s stone for storytelling?

The story bent back to its beginning. And now it is through. (Traditional story ending, Nigeria)

Works Cited

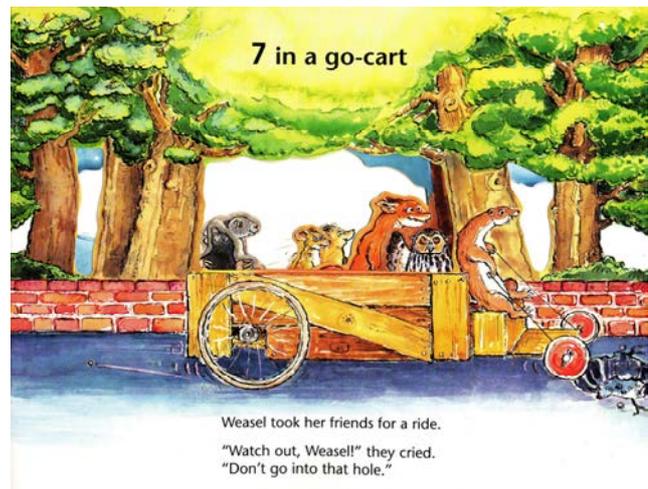
Booker, Christopher (2004) *Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*. London: Continuum Books.

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Five Variations on the Traditional Number Book

Pat Pinsent

There must, by the nature of things, be an infinite range of possible ways to exploit the potential of number in helping young children learn to count. The paradigm of the genre is a depiction of the correspondence between the figures and words of the numbers up to ten, and the appropriate number of objects. From time immemorial however, writers and illustrators have moved on to more sophisticated thematic treatments of numbers and the rhymes associated with them, seeking to engage a young audience, while publishers have realised that there will always be a potential market of parents and teachers.



Copyright © 1995 John O'Leary and Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

A recent very attractive variation on the traditional counting book is John O'Leary's *Ten on a Train* (Frances Lincoln, 2007, 978 1 84507 715 0), a cut-out book which starts with Badger taking nine of his friends for a ride on a steam train. Unfortunately the train is going the wrong way, so while Badger is turning it round, Squirrel takes the remainder of the guests on a bus. But it runs out of petrol, so Frog ... and so on! The cut-out effect means that throughout the book, the reader can see all the passengers, who eventually arrive at the destination to find Hedgehog, who completed the journey on roller skates, has arrived first and eaten all the food. The wit and delightful detail of the illustrations would make this a book to be gone back to time and time again, since it provides so much entertainment for both children and adults.



One, Two, Tree! (2003; text by Anushka Ravishankar and Sirish Rao, illustrations by Durga Bai) is a joint Anglo-Indian publication by Tara Books (81 86211 80 2). Its

simple title gives no hint of the originality of the concept: after ‘One dizzy ant totters up the tree’, it is followed by ‘Two dreamy lizards’ and eventually ‘Ten hefty elephants’ (all animals portrayed as similar in size!). In the penultimate picture, with all fifty-five animals ensconced, the birds dispossessed by the invaders wait disconsolate at the bottom of the tree, but the final picture shows that they too have found room there. There is much scope for checking that the number of animals is correct in each picture, and, for the adult, the interest of seeing how the illustrator has used the traditional skills of Gond tribal art in such an original way.

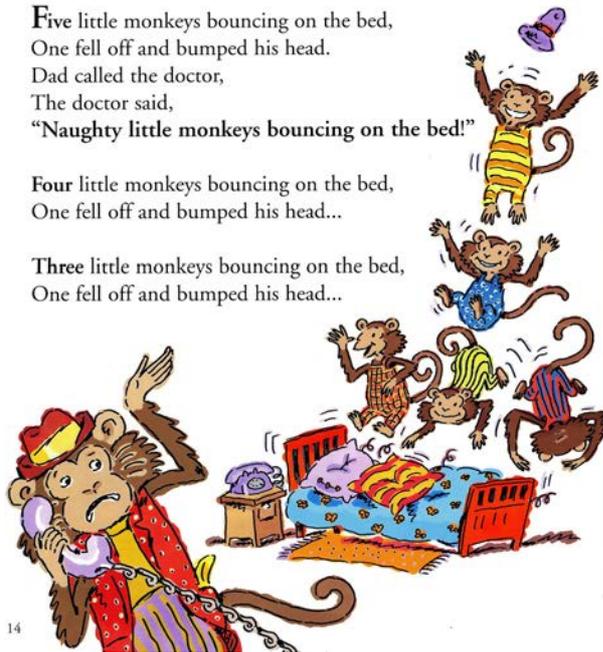
The three following Frances Lincoln books all incorporate texts by specialist early-language educator Opal Dunn.

Naughty little monkeys

Five little monkeys bouncing on the bed,
One fell off and bumped his head.
Dad called the doctor,
The doctor said,
“Naughty little monkeys bouncing on the bed!”

Four little monkeys bouncing on the bed,
One fell off and bumped his head...

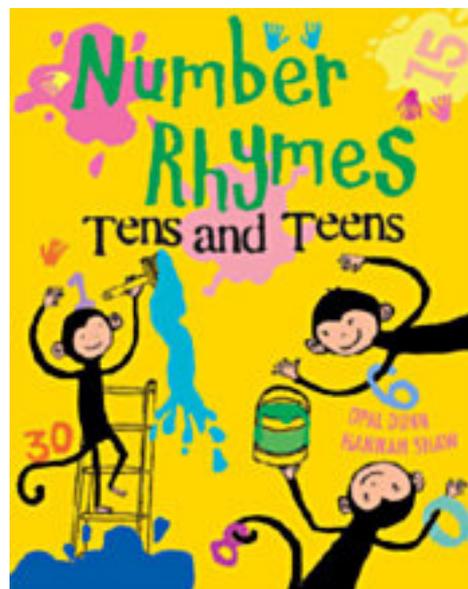
Three little monkeys bouncing on the bed,
One fell off and bumped his head...



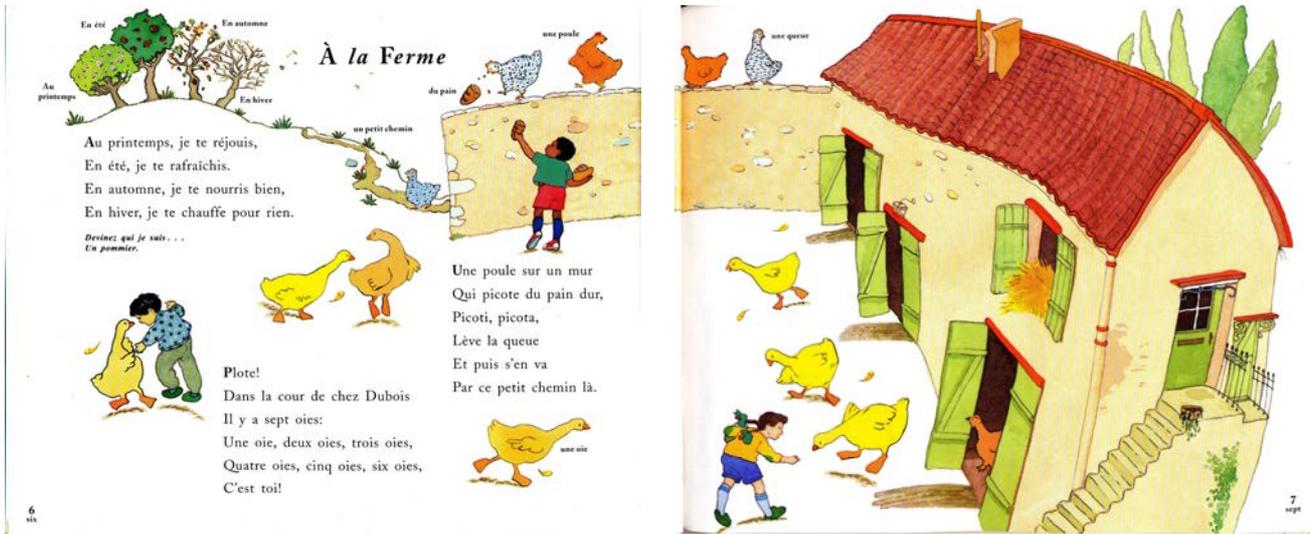
HOW TO PLAY
Hold up five fingers to represent the monkeys.
Bounce these fingers on the palm of your other hand.
Hold your head to show it has been hurt
and make a face as if you are in pain.
Pretend to use a phone to ring the doctor.
Shake your forefinger angrily to the rhythm of the last line.

Copyright © 2003 Opal Dunn, Adriano Gon and Frances Lincoln Children’s Books.

Number Rhymes to Say and Play (2005, 0 7112 2167 7, illustrated by Adriano Gon) makes its pedagogical intent explicit by starting with an address to parents, carers and teachers about how the rhymes can be used, and the importance of developing positive attitudes towards numeracy from an early stage.



Number Rhymes: Tens and Teens (2009, 978 1 84507 957 4, illustrated by Hannah Shaw) again makes its didactic purpose clear, with an introductory section ‘Crack the codes’ supplying advice to the child reader on how to understand number words beyond ten. Despite the title, the first five rhymes do not venture beyond ten, the next two reach twelve, and only one exceeds twenty.



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Un, Deux, Trois: First French Rhymes (2006, 1 84507 623 0, illustrated by Patrice Aggs) includes a CD – presumably to ensure that the pronunciation of the eighteen rhymes and games will be correct – and English translations are also included.

All three books would certainly provide plenty of scope for interaction between adult and child, though by their nature they have rather less to offer to an adult perusing them in a childless situation. These books are highly recommended for parents and grandparents of younger children.

You can ‘Look Inside’ all these books except *Number Rhymes: Tens and Teens* on amazon.co.uk.

‘Hidden Mathematics’: Numbers and Codes in Fiction

Pam Robson

Certain numbers have a particular significance in both adult and children's fiction: Bettelheim writes in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), ‘Three is a mystical and often holy number, and was so long before the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.’ He analyses the significance of number in fairy tales, particularly the number three: ‘The number three in fairy tales often seems to refer to what in psychoanalysis is viewed as the three aspects of the mind: id, ego and superego.’ Bettelheim goes on to analyse the significance of the third child as fairy-tale hero or heroine: ‘When in a fairy story a child is the third one, the hearer easily identifies with him because within the most basic family constellation the child is third down, irrespective of whether he is the oldest, middle or youngest among his siblings.’ He discusses the significance of the number seven in the fairy tale ‘The Seven Ravens’: ‘It is possible to view the seven brothers as representing that which had to disappear for Christianity to come into being. If so, they represent the pre-Christian, pagan world in which the seven planets stood for the sky gods of antiquity.’

David Hewson has based the plot for his adult thriller *Dante's Numbers* (2008) on the significance of the number nine to Dante.

It's in the numbers that the secret lies, and in particular the number nine, which was regarded as the ‘angelic’ integer, since its sole root is three, representing the Trinity,

which itself bears the sole root one, representing the Divine Being himself, the Alpha and the Omega of everything Nine meant everything to Dante Nine are the spheres of Heaven Nine are the circles of Hell. (p.16)

'Hidden mathematics' frequently features in fantasy novels to evoke the cultural superstitions of readers: unlucky thirteen, seventh child of a seventh child and seven for a secret are familiar leitmotifs. The following suggested reading list is an eclectic collection of children's titles all of which employ hidden mathematics either explicitly, as in number-concept picture books, or implicitly. As well as the titles listed below, there are innumerable books which feature three characters, three wishes, three magical objects, etc.

One, Two and Three

Allan Ahlberg, illus. Gillian Tyler (2000) *The Snail House* (picture book), London: Walker 0744561647

Grandmother tells her three small grandchildren three adventure stories about three children who shrink and set up home inside the shell of a living snail. A falling apple sounds like an earthquake; a hungry thrush seems like a tiger; the baby flies away on a dandelion parachute. Then normality returns. Detailed realistic artwork presents the garden as seen by the miniature characters. Some comic-strip sequences.

Bryce Courtenay ([1989] 2007) *The Power of One*, London: Puffin 0141304898

A South African setting for this story aimed at older readers, first published in Australia in 1989 and regularly reprinted since. Peekay, the narrator, is a small, but tough, English boy. The story opens in 1939 and spans the war years. Peekay is only six years old and is bullied remorselessly at his boarding school by both staff and pupils. He befriends two adults who transform his life: one introduces him to boxing, the other to natural history and music. The narrative is hilarious but so full of pathos that Peekay becomes a real personality for the reader. Racism is overt, but Peekay becomes the idol of black prisoners in the local prison where he learns to box. *The Power of One* is about remaining true to oneself against all odds.

Angela Elwell Hunt, illus. Tim Jonkem ([1989] 2002) *The Tale of Three Trees* (picture book), London: Lion 0745946496

This picture book for 5–7 year olds has a challenging text with lovely illustrations. Christianity is the theme as young readers learn how three trees were used to build three different things; the manger, the fishing boat on Galilee and the cross. First published 1989, new edition 2002.

Diana Wynne Jones ([1976] 2001) *Power of Three*, London: Collins 0007113706

A fantasy for older readers first published in 1976; a new edition appeared in 2001. Parallel worlds exist within the real world; two 'tribes' inhabit the moors unknown to the 'giants'. Readers eventually understand that the 'giants' are humans. The Dorigs live beneath the waters of the moor; Gair's people, Lyman, live in small villages camouflaged from the eyes of 'giants' by magic 'words'. The two tribes hate each other. The three powers are Earth, Moon and Sun. All three powers are in conflict; the moor is to be flooded by the 'giants'. Eventually the power of the ancient curse compels all three to come together and talk. Only then do they discover that they are not so different after all.

Joan Lennon (2007) *Questors*, London: Puffin 9780141381510

A fantasy in which three worlds coexist but the order of things has been disturbed and all three are threatened. Three heroes, one for each world, are called upon to find three objects to restore the balance. Madlen, Cam and Bryn discover that they are siblings and meet their mother for the first time. Mrs Mac, housekeeper at London House where they meet, has unusual powers disguised within household objects. The three objects are not the usual 'quest' objects and the heroes blunder their way to success despite evil opponents. Much humour and ingenuity make this a good read.

Madeleine L'Engle ([1962] 2003) *A Wrinkle in Time*, London: Puffin 0140372318

First title in a science-fiction fantasy trilogy first published in 1962; winner of the Newbery Medal 1963. A 'good versus evil' saga. Charles, his sister Meg and friend

Calvin travel through the eponymous ‘wrinkle in time’ into a fifth dimension in search of their father. The three are aided by three guardian angels; the power of love is highlighted. The sequel is *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* (1978).

Eugene Trivizas, illus. Helen Oxenbury ([1993] 2003) *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (picture book), London: Egmont 1405208481

The familiar tale of the Three Little Pigs is given a whole new twist although it begins ‘Once upon a time’ and ends ‘happily ever after’. Three little wolves set about building a house of bricks which is destroyed by a bad pig with a hammer. Then a house of concrete is drilled to the ground and finally a fortified bunker is blown up. The only structure to withstand the pig is a house of flowers which softens his hard heart. Eventually all the characters become friends. Superb watercolour artwork.

Kaye Umansky, illus. Chris Fisher (1997) *Beyond the Beanstalk*, London: Hodder 0340673060

A hilarious sequel to *Jack and the Beanstalk*, subtitled *Whatever Happened to Jack?*. Each chapter is headed with a key sentence summarising its content. Jack and his mum are once again penniless. The local witch gives him three more beans and three magical items and off he goes up the beanstalk, accompanied by a talking crow. In the land of giants he finds a young lady held prisoner by a giant child. They finally escape after some slapstick adventures.

Five

Kevin Crossley-Holland, illus. Peter Melnyczuk ([1989] 1991) *Sleeping Nanna* (picture book), London: Orchard 1852133562

A lavishly illustrated book which takes the reader on a misty dream-like journey through the five senses. Nanna is taken by a small boy in a boat while she sleeps. He leaves her to visit four islands, each of which prompts the use of one of the five senses.

Sarah Dyer (2001) *Five Little Fiends* (picture book), London: Bloomsbury 074755949X

This book has a deceptively simple text and huge bold images in cartoon style with many layers of meaning. Five red fiends each live inside a stone. One day they emerge and marvel at the world: the sky, the sun, the moon, the land and the sea. Each chooses one of these to take back inside their stone. But the five ‘pieces’ of the world mean nothing separated – they need each other to have any meaning.

Ann Halam (2002) *Taylor Five: The Story of a Clone Girl*, London: Orion 1858817927

A powerful novel for older readers with a strong ecological message, set in Borneo. The eponymous Taylor Five is a young girl living with her family on their orang-utan reserve in the forest. Taylor Five has realised that she is a clone when rebels kill her parents and she escapes into the forest with her brother. They are accompanied by Hunter, an almost human orang-utan. On the way to safety her brother dies; Taylor must learn to come to terms with her grief and her cloning.

Margaret Mahy, illus. Patricia McCarthy (1996) *The Five Sisters*, London: Puffin 0140382356

A charming fantasy: Sally’s grandmother cuts out a chain of five paper dolls for her but only puts detail on the first doll. The chain is carried away by the elements to be found by various people. Their lives are magically changed when they each fill in the next doll’s features: one becomes a composer, one an artist, one a scientist. The dolls eventually return to Sally, now married to the scientist and with children of her own. The dolls gain their freedom at the end of the story.

Edith Nesbit ([1902] 2008) *Five Children and It*, London: Puffin 0140367357

First published in 1902, this classic is said to have been inspired by the fairy tale ‘The Three Wishes’. The five children have been left in the care of servants when they discover a sand fairy, the Psammead, which grants them a wish daily. The children soon learn that they must be careful what they wish for.

Pamela Paparone (1995) *Five Little Ducks* (picture book), New York: North-South 1558587004

This is a number-concepts title based on an old rhyme, beautifully illustrated in a precise detailed style. An anthropomorphic Mother Duck prepares for winter. Each day her five ducklings go out; each day there is one less when they return. When they are all gone, mother calls and they return together. A simple, repetitious rhyming text in large, bold print, with much use of onomatopoeia.

Seven

Vivien Alcock ([1980] 1991) *The Haunting of Cassie Palmer*, London: Mammoth 0749707089

Thirteen-year-old Cassie is the seventh child of a seventh child. Her mother is a medium who once had real talent but is now reduced to trickery to fool her clients. She now believes that Cassie has inherited her psychic powers. Cassie has no wish to become a medium but manages to draw a dead spirit in physical form from his grave; this is a bad spirit. Eventually Cassie calls upon good spirits to save her family from him.

Jane Hissey ([1994] 1999) *Ruff* (picture book), London: Red Fox 0099327813

The eponymous Ruff is a homeless soft-toy dog who has never experienced a birthday. The toys arrange for Ruff to have seven birthdays to make up, one for each day of the week. A substantial text in narrative and dialogue; realistic artwork with lovely detail.

Meredith Hooper, illus. Terry Mckenna (1985) *Seven Eggs* (picture book), Patrick Hardy 0744400406

A novelty title with cut pages and flaps revealing different creatures hatched out of eggs each day of the week. On Monday a penguin hatches, on Tuesday a crocodile, on Wednesday an ostrich, on Thursday a frilled lizard, on Friday a turtle and on Saturday a barn owl. There are seven chocolate eggs, one for each animal and one for the author. As the pages get bigger the animals are shown playing together.

Anthony Horowitz ([1988] 2004) *Groosham Grange*, London: Walker 0744547121

A gripping read for older readers which swings between humour and horror, maintaining a fine balance between the two. Three children are sent to the eponymous boarding school only to discover gruesome goings-on. Eventually they discover that black magic is behind it all. It seems they are destined to be magicians as seventh children of seventh children. Even the hero, David, finally succumbs.

Pete Johnson ([2000] 2009) *Bug Brother*, London: Puffin 0141307420

Jamie and his younger brother Harry are always arguing. Harry, though younger, is the bigger of the two, but when Jamie finds a cape bearing the number seven he discovers that he has magic powers and turns Harry into a bluebottle. All is resolved and Jamie and Harry finally become friends. Jamie finds that Harry needs him because, at night, he is scared of the dark.

Garth Nix (2003) *Mister Monday*, London: Collins 0007175019

First title in a series of fantasies for older readers with time and the construction of the universe as theme – there are seven days and seven keys to find. The eponymous Mister Monday is one of those who have torn the ‘Will’ into seven fragments and hidden them. Sequel is *Grim Tuesday* (2004).

Katherine Roberts (2001) *The Great Pyramid Robbery*, London: Collins 0007112785

First title in a fantasy series for older readers; each title is constructed around one of the Seven Wonders of the World. This title is set at the time of the construction of the great pyramids. The author has used translations of spells from Ancient Egypt as chapter headings. Echoes of Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy here; characters have a ‘ka’ which remains with them until their ‘ka-tail’ is cut off. Senu has strong powers of which he knows little until he confronts Lord Khafre, ruler of the Two Lands. He must save his friends from death after they are caught stealing.

Ethel Turner ([1894] 1999) *Seven Little Australians*, London: Puffin 014034733X

This classic, first published in 1894, is set in Australia. It is a lively family tale for older readers, pulling no punches and confronting death. The severe Captain Woolcot has

fathered seven children to whom his new young wife must become mother whilst caring for her own new baby. The seven siblings are ‘real’ children who behave badly.

Brian Wildsmith (1999) *The Seven Ravens* (picture book), Oxford: Oxford University Press 019272407X

A retelling of a familiar fairy tale. Anna is the only girl in her family; her seven older brothers were turned into ravens when she was born. She determines to find them and does so with the help of magic. Her journey takes her to the sun, moon and stars, and finally to the Glass Mountain. Wildsmith has used a range of media for his colourful cartoon-style artwork.

Nine

Diana Wynne Jones ([1988] 2008) *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, London: Collins 0001857320

First published in 1988, this is an open-ended fantasy for older readers from the Chrestomanci series. The story opens in what seems to be Victorian England, but readers will soon discover that this is a world in which magic is the norm. Christopher has Nine Lives; thus he is next in line to be the Chrestomanci, Chief Magician and policer of the magic world. There is excitement and plausibility; fantasy and morality. Readers enter strange parallel worlds. Characterisation is superb.

Norman Silver, illus. Jan Ormerod ([1995] 1999) *Cloud Nine* (picture book), London: Red Fox 0099359413

The saying ‘on cloud nine’ is brought sharply into focus in this fantasy picture book. Armstrong is a small boy who despairs of finding some peace and quiet in his noisy home. He builds a ladder into the sky and finds himself on the ninth cloud to come along – a cloud shaped like the number nine. There he has a wonderful time until the mountains cause the cloud to break. But his family is waiting for him when he crash lands and is pleased to see him despite being soaked by the rain. Above them all is a lovely rainbow.

Thirteen and Above

Hazel Townson (1993) *Who’s Afraid of the Evil Eye?*, London: Red Fox 0099185415

An amusing tale about an extremely superstitious boy called Adam Adler, who is particularly wary on Friday 13th when he meets Coral, a black British girl, and they play truant together, though for different reasons.

Nick Warburton (1993) *The Thirteenth Owl*, London: Red Fox 009922061X

A fantasy tale set in the past in an indeterminate period of history. Imogen’s scarred face sets her apart from the villagers. Her mother is dead; her father, the village potter, is commissioned to make twelve owls for their unpleasant landlord, Mr Balik. A thirteenth owl is made which Imogen keeps. A past tragedy is finally resolved through the magic of the owls, which are symbolic of a misdeed committed by the landlord.

Barbara Sleigh, illus. Gunvor Edwards ([1974] 1979) *Ninety-Nine Dragons*, London: Puffin 0140309217

First published in 1974 this is a read-aloud story for younger readers. On a hot summer night Ben and Beth cannot sleep. Beth counts sheep and Ben counts dragons. Dragon Ninety-Nine is too small to get over the gate and lands on Ben’s bed. They all enter into a strange dream world where talking sheep and dragons are, unfortunately, in the same place. The sheep must be rescued.

Codes and Concepts

Emma Chichester Clark ([1997] 2009) *Little Miss Muffet Counts to Ten* (picture book), London: Red Fox 0099256096

A beautifully illustrated number-concepts picture book. The familiar rhyme *Little Miss Muffet* is the starting point for the rhyming text, but after the spider appear two lemurs, followed by three magpies, four foxes and so on. All carry party gifts and food for Miss Muffet. Finally ten crocodiles appear with a box and inside is a birthday cake. Boxed text is superimposed upon the detailed illustrations.

Hans M. Enzensberger ([1998] 2008) *The Number Devil*, London: Granta 1862073910

Translated in 1998 from the German by Michael Heim, the language is child-friendly and colloquial. 12-year-old Robert cannot understand his maths teacher and has bad dreams. Then the eponymous Number Devil appears while Robert sleeps and soon he begins to understand the magic of numbers. An interactive title that allows readers to try various mathematical tasks.

John Foster (ed.), illus. Carol Thompson (1997) *Counting Rhymes* (poems; picture book), Oxford: Oxford University Press 0192761412

A colourful number-concepts picture book. Rhythmic, repetitious verses to help very young children learn to count. The first entries deal with simple counting up to two then progress to counting backwards and finally to counting in twos. Poems by John Agard, Eric Finney, Linda Hammond and others. Action-packed watercolour artwork with speech bubbles. Cassette available.

Mike Inkpen ([1987] 2007) *One Bear at Bedtime* (picture book), London: Hodder 0340428414

An interactive, small format picture book; a number-concepts title – counting from one to ten. Cumulative, with nine caterpillars hidden on nine separate spreads. Large bold print and lots of humour; these are very naughty animals. Cartoon-style watercolour artwork; first published in 1987.

Gene Kemp (2003) *Seriously Weird*, London: Faber 0571218245

A compelling story for 9–12 year olds narrated by Claire, the middle child in an unusual family. Troy, the youngest, is obsessed with numbers; each chapter begins with a number puzzle or trick. Troy does not see the world as others do and so he makes people angry. Claire feels neglected because Troy demands so much attention. Eventually Troy's genius is recognised.

Brian Moses (ed.), illus. Vanessa Henson (1993) *My First Has Gone Bonkers* (poems), London: Blackie 0216940206

An interactive collection of puzzling verses, riddles and coded rhymes intended to involve readers totally. Answers are provided at the back. Poems by John Rice, Charles Thomson, John Foster, Wes Magee, Judith Nicholls, Vyanne Samuels and others. C. Thomson's 'Counting Horrors' is a number puzzle, as is Ian Souter's 'Word Maths'. Lots of fun and an introduction to poetry structure. Acrostics and haikus also feature.

Mary Rayner (1994) *One by One: Garth Pig's Rain Song* (picture book), Basingstoke: Macmillan 0333627547

An attractive, small format, anthropomorphic tale about the eponymous Garth Pig. Music (*The Animals Went in One by One*) is provided to accompany the rhythmic rhyming text. An interactive-concepts title that allows the very young to assimilate number concepts through song. Garth Pig and his nine friends are marching home, one by one, two by two and so on. Superb artwork allows for simple computation exercises. Large, bold print on the left of each spread with a large digit alongside. Artwork is on the right.

Harriet Ziefert (ed.), illus. Emily Bolam (1999) *Mother Goose Counting Rhymes*, London: Puffin 0140563911

A rhythmic selection of nursery rhymes involving counting; colourful cartoon-style artwork.

Is your Number up?

Pat Pinsent

I have always admired ... the secret magic of Numbers.

(Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, 1642)

It would be difficult to deny that numbers are in some way mysterious. Like most words which we use constantly, the concept of number is difficult to define (try 'time' as another challenge!). The dictionary isn't very helpful, tending to become somewhat tautologous: the definition 'that property of things according to which they can be counted or enumerated' would be rather difficult to understand for anyone who didn't already know what the word meant. Incidentally, the mathematical definition is even less comprehensible.

As a person who sometimes counts herself to sleep by going through the prime numbers, or the squares, up to 1000 or more, I have come to realise that I am unusual. I can never rest content in a hotel room unless I have either factorised its number or decided that it is prime. I nearly always count steps, even the stairs at home that I know perfectly well are fifteen (after all, an extra one might have been added during the night!). I once thought this behaviour was general, but have learned that it does not characterise everyone. In fact my husband, a fellow maths graduate, disavows any such activities. Nevertheless, similar behaviour does occur in stories. If numbers really have a secret magic, this might account for their popularity in children's literature and fairy tale.

The earliest rhymes encountered by most children are certainly lavish with numbers. In the Opies' *Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (1951), approximately 7% have a number word in their title or first line, but there are many more which have numbers later in the verse. Partly this results from rhymes intended to help children learn their numbers, partly from 'counting out' chants to select who is going to be 'it', but I suspect it also has a link with the feeling that numbers can help control nature, evidenced by the many spells (and even prayers!) which are enjoined to be recited a specific number of times. From the seven days of creation to the ten commandments, the twelve apostles and tribes of Israel, and to the forty years in the desert and the forty days Christ fasted in the wilderness, numbers are also as plentiful in the Bible as the scholars who have attempted to explicate them.

Numbers are prolific in fairy tales: three wishes, seven dwarfs and twelve brothers spring to mind immediately, but there are many more. In my collection of the Grimms' fairy tales (translated and edited by Jack Zipes, 1987), approximately 10% of the titles explicitly include numbers, but there are very many more whose subject matter includes three sons or seven fairies. I suspect that as well as factors similar to those related to rhymes, there is the additional consideration that number is of great assistance to oral storytellers in holding the attention of their audience. If early in the story a certain event occurs in relation to a single character, and there are three or seven such characters, listeners will be waiting to find out what happens to them too.

The attraction towards number is also to be seen in later fiction. Detective and mystery writers in particular seem to have a special relationship with number – Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four* (1890) and John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) are merely the first of many that come immediately to mind.

So what of children's literature? Is there a particular attraction in the titles of Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* (1942–1963) and *Secret Seven* (1949–1963) that fascinated the child reader independently of the enticement of her name? I suspect that she subconsciously realised that children might feel themselves included by titles which involved a number of protagonists, thus allowing more scope for identification.

Mark Haddon's recent best-seller, on both adult and children's lists, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003), features a boy who exhibits the kind of fascination with numbers that characterises many individuals who suffer from Asperger's syndrome, often to the extent of their being 'savants' who can perform

instantaneously calculations that would take most people hours. The chapters of this book are in the sequence 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, . . . , that is, the prime numbers. Christopher's precision about the time at which events occur is a key element of the story, and the appendix to the book makes use of Pythagoras' theorem concerning right-angled triangles. Such mathematical aspects might well be expected to deter many readers, but in fact Haddon's book won high acclaim, perhaps because it gave access to a way of thinking that is very unlike most people's. While that, and the deceptively simple style, would not be enough to account for its success without the central mystery holding the reader's attention, the book certainly creates empathy with individuals who are too often misunderstood or even patronised.

There are many other books which have some form of number in their titles, such as Frank Cottrell Boyce's *Millions* (2004), but I know of few that make quite so explicit a use of it as Rachel Ward's *Numbers* (2009). The narrator and protagonist, Jem, always sees the dates of people's deaths when she looks into their eyes: presumably this is when 'their number is up'. The effect of this 'gift' on her relationships with everyone she meets, and indeed on larger-scale events, forms the basis of the plot; to outline this would be to detract from the enjoyment of those who have not yet read this powerful and gripping story. By its nature, this story raises the same kind of issues about mortality as do many of the fairy tales.

Number is indeed fundamental to human existence!

Can you Count a Light Year?

Farah Mendelsohn

William Sleator's science-fiction books for children and young adults frequently have mathematics themes. *The Green Futures of Tycho* (1981), *The Last Universe* (2005), *Strange Attractors* (1989) and more, provide basic introductions to possible worlds theory and chaos theory, both of which are essentially mathematical conceptualisations. *Marco's Millions* (2001) tackles one of the other big issues in maths (and physics), the relationship between time and gravity and aims at an audience of 8–12 year olds (Marco is 13, his sister Lilly is 12). This is why Sleator is so impressive. He is convinced that tackled in the right way, higher maths and physics are accessible to many children. He doesn't make the mistake of thinking all children will be fascinated: Marco's sister tries, but her mind doesn't work that way – she never stops trying however, and never writes off her own abilities. Sleator does, however, assume that children who are interested are by definition old enough to understand.

In *Marco's Millions*, Marco is an inveterate traveller who has (unbeknownst to his parents) been exploring buses and trains since he was 6. When his sister shows him a hidden tunnel in the basement, he agrees to explore it on her behalf because Lilly, naturally timid, can't bring herself to do so. Marco finds himself on an adventure to secure the safety of the universe, but it is one that is very time specific. C.S. Lewis had his adventurers return within seconds, while time passed in Narnia. Sleator reverses this: seconds pass in the world through the tunnel while hours pass on Earth. Lewis refuses predictability – from *Prince Caspian* to the *Dawn Treader*, one year seems to equal sixty, while from *The Silver Chair* to *The Last Battle*, one year on Earth sees many generations pass on Narnia – almost certainly on the basis that God can control time. Sleator's Marco, however, is tied to relativity, and Marco works out that on the other side of the tunnel, time passes at a ratio of 21:1, a sum he works out in order to plan for a longer trip later in the book, a trip long enough to complete his quest.

Marco is to go to the singularity that occupies the sky, and to bring back something important that the aliens by the tunnel want. To do this he has to move towards the singularity, and into heavier gravity as he does so. But Marco has been tricked, he will be away longer than the three days planned – not because he has been lied to, but because he has lacked information. Only as the gravity deepens as he approaches the singularity does he make the connection, and work out that the deeper the gravity well,

the faster time is passing. When Marco looks back, activity in the village he came from is moving at top speed. At the end of the quest, Marco finally returns to his own time to find that twenty-three years have passed while he has spent only ... well, here Sleator cheats. One might be tempted to keep to that 21:1 ratio, in which case Marco would have spent 400 days. Except that we know he hasn't, as he hasn't aged that much. But a thinking child might realise that in order to figure it out, we need to know the speed of time at each stage of the adventure, and that the only way to visualise it would be a graph. Such a graph could then provide an average answer (the higher speed at one end of the graph possibly balancing out the lower speed at the other end), and that way lies basic algebra and, should that graph curve, we'll be well into exponential equations.

Hermione Granger and the Magic Numbers

Rebecca R. Butler

In the Harry Potter books, J.K. Rowling's Hermione Granger famously abandons her studies in Divination because she finds the subject too imprecise and woolly, and excessively dependent upon the subjective interpretations of the teacher, Professor Sybil Trelawney. Hermione contrasts the fuzzy logic of Divination with the precise formulations of Arithmancy, taught by Professor Vector. In this piece I want to examine the basics of what Hermione would have learned, consider by practical example whether her claims for Arithmancy are justified, and finally suggest what her choice tells us about the brightest student of her year at Hogwarts.

Arithmancy has its roots far back in the ancient world. The name comes from two Greek words, *arithmos* meaning 'number' and *manteia* meaning 'prophecy'. In the ancient world it was believed that Arithmancy could unveil many secrets, including those of the future. The Roman poet Horace advised his readers to avoid what he called the 'Babylonian numbers'. Hermione would have found his reasons interesting. Horace seemed to acknowledge that Arithmancy could indeed tell the future, but insisted that such knowledge was *nefas*, unholy.

Two methods of Arithmancy survive from the ancient world, the Chaldean and the Agrippan. The Chaldean method has less appeal today because the Aramaic numbering system on which it is based had no number 9. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa in the sixteenth century devised the method that bears his name. Arithmancy could be used for many purposes. It would serve for example, to determine the best day for undertaking a particular task. But one important application of Arithmancy is to determine the true character of a person from his or her name.¹

Each letter of the alphabet is assigned a numerical value as follows.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	

To analyse a name, write it down and put the numeric values underneath:

H	E	R	M	I	O	N	E		G	R	A	N	G	E	R
8	5	9	4	9	6	5	5		7	9	1	5	7	5	9

The total is 94. This number must be simplified by adding its digits, $9 + 4 = 13$. Simplify again, $1 + 3 = 4$. Hermione is a four. Actually the process is made to deliver another three numbers. The addition of all the numbers yields the character number, which reveals what kind of person Hermione is. The addition of only the numbers corresponding to the vowels yields the heart number, revealing Hermione's inner and perhaps secret desires – like the mirror of Erised. The addition of only the numbers corresponding to the consonants reveals the social number, the face Hermione turns to the outside world, what psychologists might call her persona.

There are, of course, nine categories of result, one each for numbers 1 to 9. Briefly they are:

1s are loners, good innovators but poor team players. They may be egotistical.

2s are communicators, sharers. But sometimes they bring conflict too.

3s are integrators, they like wholeness and completeness.

4s are dependable and predictable, but may be stubborn or relentless.

5s are mercurial, driven by fancy, rarely sticking to any task for long.

6s are great company and like people, but they rarely excel at practical tasks.

7s are clever and love hard work. They like the mysterious.

8s are go-getters. They succeed in business and politics. They can be ruthless.

9s are dedicated helpers, often teachers. They have a noble idea of service, but can become arrogant.

Of course what is described here is just the elementary framework of Arithmancy. No doubt the whole syllabus as taught by Professor Vector would be much more detailed and elaborate. Hermione's book on Arithmancy is often described as a massive volume.

Hermione's heart number is also 4, like her character number. Her social number is an encouraging 9. Harry is a 2. His heart number is 3 and his social number 8. Ron Weasley is a 2, 3, 8. Perhaps the fact that Harry and Ron share two numbers explains why they become such good friends. Personally I should have thought Hermione was a typical 7. Interestingly enough, if you take Hermione JEAN Granger, a 7 is what she becomes. The system seems easy to manipulate. Albus Dumbledore is a 1, 5, 5 and Tom Riddle is a 1, 2, 8. Dumbledore taught at Hogwarts for over fifty years, which doesn't sound like a flighty 5. Riddle would have done well in politics, which shouldn't surprise us.

Hermione loses patience with Divination.

'This is such a waste of time,' Hermione hissed. 'I could be practising something useful. I could be catching up on Cheering Charms.' (1999: 219)

Hermione abandons Divination because she has no faith in Professor Trelawney's inner eye. She is not alone. The other teachers, especially McGonagall, love taunting Trelawney. When Trelawney asks where Lupin is, and is told he is ill, McGonagall (ibid.: 170) remarks that she must have known that already. Trelawney does not enhance her own credibility. She is sometimes found wandering the corridors smelling of cooking sherry.

However Trelawney does make two prophecies which are clearly demonstrated to be valid and hugely significant. She foresees (2003: 741) the conflict between Voldemort and a newborn child, though her prophecy leaves it moot whether the child is Harry or Neville. She also enters a trance (1999: 238) and predicts that Peter Pettigrew will rejoin the Dark Lord. Dumbledore regards Trelawney's second accurate prophecy as such an unlikely occurrence that he might, he jokes, have to offer her a pay rise. But here, as so often in the Harry Potter books, J.K. Rowling employs a splendid sense of irony. In fact Trelawney's accurate predictions are far more frequent than first sight suggests. In Harry's teacup (1999: 82) and in his crystal ball she sees a huge dog, which she mistakes for the Grim (ibid.: 220). But she is right about the dog: a huge dog will in fact play a pivotal role in what follows, namely the animal form of the animagus Sirius Black. When in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* Dolores Umbridge challenges her (2003: 281) to make a prediction, she replies that Umbridge is in grave danger. Umbridge scoffs, but soon afterwards is dragged off in the Forbidden Forest by a crowd of angry centaurs. Finally in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005: 507), Trelawney's tarot cards, despite her own incredulity, keep predicting Death on the Lightning-Struck Tower 'again and again, no matter how I lay them out'. This is the

very fate that befalls Dumbledore. Hermione, Ron and Harry fail to spot any of these accurate predictions.

Trelawney's first name is Sybil, a reference to the prophetess at the Delphic oracle. We learn that Trelawney's great-great-grandmother was called Cassandra, presumably after the princess of Troy. Cassandra's fate was always to tell the truth, but never to be believed by the Trojans, another ironic touch.

All in all, Hermione's liking for the magical numbers and her disparagement of Divination give some credence to the view shared by Trelawney and Xenophilius Lovegood (2007: 333) that she is 'not unintelligent, but painfully limited. Narrow. Close-minded'. Numbers have much to tell us but they do not provide the answer to everything.

Note

¹ Much of the information about Arithmancy was derived from www.geocities.com/hpotterspew/arithmancy.html.

The Harry Potter Books

Author J.K. Rowling, published in the UK by Bloomsbury.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (1997)

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (1998)

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (1999)

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (2000)

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2003)

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (2005)

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (2007)

Codes and Ciphers

Jennifer Harding

Bletchley Park is a fascinating place. Now within the city of Milton Keynes, it stands hidden behind trees in Bletchley behind the college where I used to work. It is the site of the National Code Centre and also of the National Museum of Computing. Originally a group of buildings that no one knew existed, it is now well known as the place where the Enigma codes were broken and it is generally acknowledged that the Second World War victory for the Allies depended on the group of people who worked there. Some of those who did this work, unknown by their families at the time, still live in Milton Keynes.

A guided tour of the site is essential as the guides are mainly retired people who although not necessarily ex-codebreakers worked in related war work. Their asides and stories are fascinating. I have been a few times but found that the mathematics of the coding and decoding too complex to take in without paper and pencil. After my first visit I bought two booklets in the shop on the Enigma but on my second visit I was recommended to read Simon Singh's *The Code Book: The Secret History of Codes and Code-Breaking* (1999, 2000). However, I then found that HarperCollins Children's Books also publish a reversioned (more on what I mean later) edition *The Cracking Codebook: How to Make it, Break it, Hack it, Crack it* ([2002 in the USA], 2004).

It is not only adults who are fascinated by codes and secret messages. Haven't we all passed coded notes when at school and tried out invisible ink? Children love to send hidden messages and to decipher secrets. I now concentrate on the children's version of the Singh's book.

The book starts with an account of Mary Queen of Scots' trial for treason. She was convicted on the evidence of her plotting against Elizabeth I contained in a coded letter

that was deciphered by Walsingham. In the course of this first chapter, nomenclature is defined such as 'plaintext', 'ciphertext', 'algorithm', 'transposition', 'substitution', 'steganography' and 'cryptography'. Examples of codes and decoded texts are scattered throughout the book and occupied me happily in testing myself that I could work them out before I checked the book's explanations. The history of coding is described from the earliest times with examples. Clear diagrams are given throughout the book to aid the explanations.

The chapter 'The Anonymous Codebreaker' concentrates on the Vigenère cipher and includes a tale of buried treasure that has never been found because the key to the code was not deposited as told.

A long chapter 'The Mechanism of Secrecy' describes the Enigma machines and includes a history of the Second World War in relation to the importance of the work at Bletchley Park. The horrific treatment of the genius and major codebreaker Alan Turing is shocking to read. Biographies of other important workers who should be better known are given in imaginative style.

'The Language Barrier' tells of the use of the Navajo language to speed up Allied communication when time became essential in the war in the Pacific. Archaeology is then discussed in an apologetic aside with particular reference to the Rosetta Stone (in the British Museum).

'Bob and Alice Go Public' moves on to modern cryptography. It was the Colossus codebreaking device that was built to decrypt the German Lorenz cipher that is really the 'mother of all computers'. But 'the Colossus, as with everything else at Bletchley Park, was destroyed after the war, and those who worked on it were forbidden to talk about it. Tommy Flowers ... took [the blueprints] to the boiler room and burned them. The plans for the world's first computer were lost for ever.' It is the ENIAC, built by J. Presper in 1945, that 'for decades was considered to be the mother of all computers'. Binary arithmetic, bits and ASCII (American Standard Code for Information) are then described and illustrated. Modern ideas on security codes and encryption using the Alice and Bob exchange to discuss public and private keys forms part of this chapter. The breakthrough for secure communication being the idea of asymmetric keys for coding and decoding. Modular arithmetic will be familiar to all pupils and public and private key cryptography may well be discussed in IT curricula.

The final chapter 'Pretty Good Privacy' discusses just that – PGP. The system invented by Phil Zimmermann who believed that 'everybody deserved the privacy offered by RSA [Rivest Shamir Adleman – the name of the public-key cryptography inventors] and [who] directed his efforts to developing an RSA encryption for the masses'. The chapter also discusses the politics of privacy – a topic much in the news at the moment – the future of cryptography and the quest for an uncrackable code.

The appendices include 'The Codebreaker's Challenge' with four codes to be deciphered. I am stuck on the second and need a larger piece of paper to try out mor alphabets – no answers given. All the appendices are interesting and I found the one giving a simple example of 'The Mathematics of RSA' very illuminating.

This book has given me many happy hours with paper and pencil at hand. I must admit to not really understanding the Enigma scramblers although able to follow through all the examples. So how would a child react to this book? I think anyone over the age of 12 would find it fascinating but it needs to be read carefully and in shortish doses as there is so much to take in and half the enjoyment is in working through the examples. I said 'reversioning' in relation to the adult book. The young-adult version is much shorter than the adult version. Chapters have been shortened mainly by cutting out whole sections. Some chapters have then been run together and the last two chapters split. Some of the appendices have been shortened and changed. But what I can't see (without going paragraph by paragraph with the two books side by side) is that any of the language has been changed, apart from a little updating, e.g. the 2000 version has 'the Internet, still in its infancy', whereas the 2004 version has 'the Internet has provided'. The 'Further Reading' section has selected a few items from the adult version

and there are none beyond 1999. The text that remains in the young-adult version is virtually the same as that in the adult version. Singh's style is very readable but the child reader will need to be a sophisticated one as he or she is really reading a shortened version of an adult book.

I suggest that all those with teenage children take them first on a visit to Bletchley Park and then gain a few peaceful weeks as their child takes on the role of a codebreaker while immersed in *The Cracking Codebook*.

Here is a code for you to crack. I assure you that it does not reflect the complexity of this book – this is from p.15.

Plain alphabet	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
Cipher alphabet	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C
Plaintext																										
Ciphertext	L		F	D	P	H		L		V	D	Z		L		F	R	Q	T	X	H	U	H	G		

REVIEWS

Books about Children's Literature

The Child that Haunts us: Symbols and Images in Fairytale and Miniature Literature
Susan Hancock, London: Routledge, pb. 978 0 4154 4776 8, £18.99, 2008, 168pp.

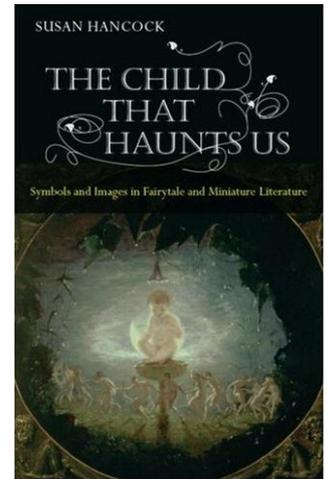
Other than for fairy tales, the vast majority of critics who adopt a psychoanalytic approach towards children's literature write from a Freudian perspective, so it is quite refreshing to have Susan Hancock's Jungian slant on an interesting range of literature. While she does not exclude some fairy tales relevant to her theme of miniaturisation, such as 'Tom Thumb', 'Thumbelina', 'Mopsa', and the less-familiar (to Europeans) Japanese 'Issun-boshi', much of her attention is given to fictional writing from the immediate post-Second-World-War era. This allows her to create a more broadly based argument, consistently related to the child motif and its linkages with other Jungian archetypes: the trickster, hero, shadow, anima or animus.

She begins by drawing attention to the paradox that children are seen in contemporary society as both vulnerable beings who need protection from predatory adults, and as child soldiers or gun-toting murderers of their classmates and teachers. This duality of the concept of the child is not, Hancock claims, unique to modern society, but is to be detected in writings from many preceding ages. The conjoining of the child archetype with the shadow or the trickster, on the one hand, or the hero on the other, may be recognised in a range of literary and folk tale antecedents.

Hancock's discussion of B.B.'s *The Little Grey Men* (1942) and Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* series (1952 onwards) is particularly interesting in relation to the period in which these books were produced. Hancock suggests that though B.B.'s novel omits any specific reference to the war that was raging at the time, it tacitly acknowledges the conflict in references to the warlike toys owned by a small boy, while his later novel, *The Little Grey Men Go Down the Bright Stream* (1948), has fairly explicit references to bombing. The archetypal strands that emerge in these texts would seem, she claims, to 'offer a metaphorical enactment of patriarchal myth' (p.94), in that the decline which characterises the situation of the eponymous little grey men can only be averted, if at all, by 'an all-powerful image of masculine fathering, associated with nature and myths of Pan' (p.90). Echoes of the Second World War enter *The Borrowers* when Arrietty and her family are threatened by Mrs Driver, 'a conjoint image of shadow-mother ... [who] tries to exterminate the tiny family by having them gassed' (p.98). Arrietty herself can be seen as a 'powerful image of anima' (p.106), in being 'wiser and more independent than the human boys she effectively "tames" and "mothers"' (ibid.).

Other texts analysed in this thought-provoking book include two books by the Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf about the adventures of Nils Holgerssons (1906, 1907) and Erich Kästner's *Der Kleine Mann* (1963). These, and other texts discussed, lead Hancock to the conclusion that 'the "child that haunts us" is the child of futurity, the one we periodically fear will not grow according to our desires, the one we periodically fear we can never protect, and the one we ultimately know will move beyond our care' (p.138). As Susan Rowlands, a professor of English and Jungian studies, is quoted on the jacket as commenting, 'This is an invaluable book for clinicians and the humanities alike.'

Pat Pinsent



Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices

Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (eds.), Farnham: Ashgate, hb. 978 0 7546 6460 4, 2009, £55.00, 254pp.

This absorbing and ground-breaking collection of essays examines a variety of ways in which cultural and social beliefs, values and practices were transmitted to children in the long eighteenth century. Bringing together contributions from a range of disciplines, including cultural history, biography, gender studies, history of education, religion, and literary and book history, it aims to redefine education as a cultural rather than a purely pedagogic activity. The editors' introduction provides a scholarly but concise justification for this approach.

Much eighteenth-century educational debate centred on the issue of whether children should be taught privately at home, or publicly at school. In the first chapter, Sophia Woodley provides a lucid analysis of the political, philosophical and religious thinking which informed the debate. She shows how censure of schools as places where young people were oppressed and corrupted was linked to criticism of society as a whole. Home education was seen not only as more effective for the child, but also as a vehicle for the moral regeneration of society. Woodley highlights the heavy responsibility this thinking placed on parents. In a later chapter, Michèle Cohen looks closely at the home education of girls. She draws extensively on contemporary letters, diaries, educational texts, conduct literature and novels to demonstrate how polite conversation among family members made a crucial contribution to the intellectual as well as the social training of girls. Of particular interest to students of children's literature is her ensuing discussion of the construction of popular didactic texts as conversations. A quite different perspective on education conducted outside formal institutions is provided by Jennifer Mori's essay on the Grand Tour as a means of transforming the sons of the elite into 'polite gentlemen'.

Formal schooling is, however, not neglected in these essays. They offer insights into a range of institutions ranging from the illegal 'hedge schools' for the Irish poor, where children were taught to read using the moral tales produced by an English, middle-class and Protestant culture, to the Jesuit Stonyhurst College, which in 1808 became the first public school to boast its own fully equipped science laboratory. Anne Stott focuses on the educational agenda of Hannah More which drew on the apparently contradictory traditions of Locke and evangelical theology. She describes how More effectively synthesised them in practice in her Mendip schools where children were stimulated to learn through kind treatment and imaginative teaching. Mary Clare Martin examines the work of the Methodist educator Mary Bosanquet, using an account of her residential community for destitute orphans as a springboard for the wider role of women in Methodist education. The Roman Catholic contribution to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century schooling is considered in Maurice Whitehead's essay on the history of English Jesuit education. This was constantly disrupted by persecution and political upheaval, but Whitehead argues convincingly that adversity stimulated rather than impeded the growth of the order's educational and cultural work.

The remaining contributions focus particularly on teaching content and methodology. Carol Percy examines the teaching of English grammar in schools for elite girls. Because it was not taught to children attending dame, charity or Sunday schools, mastery of grammar conferred social status on pupils. At the same time, the ability to teach it enhanced the professional standing of women teachers. Percy shows how the learning of grammar was also seen as providing good mental training and as fostering moral virtues such as diligence. Jill Shefrin's focus is on pictures and educational materials. Using the example of the Darton family as a case study, she shows how booksellers responded to the rapidly growing demand for visual aids and other teaching apparatus in infant schools. She goes on to demonstrate how child-centred theories and practices were applied to the education of working-class children in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The two remaining essays consider the use of books. Deirdre Raftery looks at ways in which novels, textbooks and readers by English writers such as Hannah More and Sarah

Educating the Child in
Enlightenment Britain
Beliefs, Cultures, Practices

Edited by MARY HILTON and JILL SHEFRIN



ASHGATE STUDIES IN CHILDHOOD, 1700 TO THE PRESENT

Trimmer were used in Irish schools of the period, and identifies some of the practical and ideological issues raised by the use of such material. M.O. Grenby investigates both the theory and practice of the more general use of books in children's education in Britain. Much of the interest of his essay lies in its exploration of the gap between the two. But perhaps even more fascinating is the writer's identification and critical examination of the different types of evidence he juxtaposes to illuminate the vital interaction between rhetoric and actual book use.

Although these essays cover a wide, and in some respects disparate, range of topics, they are given cohesion by the way in which they all challenge commonly held assumptions about eighteenth-century education. For instance, Cohen is forceful in her refutation of the view that the domestic education of girls was 'unsystematic' and 'superficial'. Whitehead and Martin demolish the stereotype of much denominational education as repressive and reactionary, citing evidence to show how both Methodist and Jesuit educators were influenced by enlightenment educational thought.

Such arguments are convincing because of the writers' meticulous use of an extensive range of primary material, much of it drawn from outside conventional educational sources. Shefrin, for example, examines the records of the two publishing houses of the Darton family. Percy uses contemporary advertisements for girls' schools to show how they linked both mental and moral training with the teaching of grammar. Mori analyses Grand Tour correspondence between fathers and sons. Grenby studies date marks and marginalia in books used by children to try to determine how the books were used in practice. Such material provides a wealth of insights into the period. Because it is used critically as well as creatively, it also opens up tantalising new avenues and agendas for further research.

Judy Bainbridge (Research Student, Roehampton University)

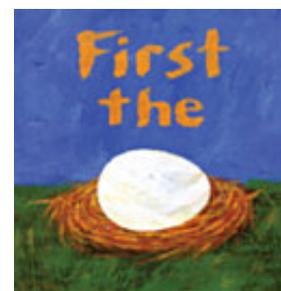
Children's Books – General

First the Egg

Laura Vaccaro Seeger, hb. 978 1 84507 969 7, London: Frances Lincoln, £10.99, 2009, 26pp.

As a bookseller I am shown so many books that almost inevitably I periodically miss something rather wonderful. This was certainly the case with the author's last book *Lemons Are Not Red* also published in UK by Frances Lincoln. It may in part have been because it is all too easy to dismiss or undervalue first-concept books as being just a means to an end in teaching first skills. The obvious enthusiasm for the book's creativity expressed by a tutor delivering the SAPERE course Philosophy for Children (P4C) in a local school made me go back and realise what I had been missing.

It was with some excitement then that I greeted this new title and I was not to be disappointed. Let's first explore some of the design factors. The current mantra is there is a diminishing demand for hardback picture books and many retail outlets no longer stock them. My chief response to this is that if the book is good enough and likely to be read repeatedly – as this most certainly is – then a hardback edition constitutes far better value and will have a longer shelf life than the cheaper but less robust picture flat. I do have difficulty with dust jackets on picture books as they often become damaged by customers while still on our shop shelves. However in this case the jacket cleverly reinforces the book's central message about transformations, as removing it changes the depicted white egg into a grown chicken of the same hue by means of a simple but effective cut-out. Now cut-outs also tend to worry customers as they often envisage that the explorations of small investigative fingers will lead to damage. Here this problem is thankfully avoided by utilising robust and high-quality paper. Each two-page spread then uses this technique to good effect as an egg becomes a chicken and a tadpole a frog, until finally paint is used to create a picture of a chicken and then – yes you guessed it – an egg!



Laura Vaccaro Seeger is an award-winning author-illustrator in the USA and her deceptively simple use of bold and brightly coloured colour washes form a wonderful background to her figure drawings. This is an endlessly entertaining picture book and it is to be hoped that more of her work is made available in the UK soon.

John Newman

The Ogress and the Snake, and Other Stories from Somalia

Elizabeth Laird, illus. Shelley Fowles, London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 84507 870 6, £7.95, 2009, pp.96.

For thousands of years, caravans of merchants have carried stories as they crossed and recrossed Somalia on their camels. In this slim volume Elizabeth Laird has selected eight desert tales that she heard on her travels and retold them. Laird has travelled extensively throughout her life, using her experiences to inform her extensive and varied range of fiction. She is also renowned for her work in collecting folk stories from traditional storytellers in Ethiopia. She has now turned her attention to stories from the nearby war-torn country of Somalia and introduces readers to the amazing oral tradition which, against all odds, survives in the Somali region of Ethiopia, where many Somali people live. Having visited Somalia itself forty years ago, Laird is able to root the stories knowledgeably and sympathetically within the landscape and culture of that country.

As Laird explains in her introduction, the eight short tales were told to her by a wide variety of people, and the storytelling tradition continues as strongly amongst the young as it remains revered amongst the older people. Laird finishes her introduction by repeating the traditional phrases which Somali storytellers use to preface their tales, indicating that ‘we are leaving the concrete world of ordinary reality’ (Bettelheim, 1976), and comparable with fairy-tale use of ‘once upon a time’ and the West African and Caribbean use of ‘crick crack’ to introduce a folk tale.

In content and style these tales sit firmly within the universal tradition of fable, folk and fairy tale, with villainous tricksters, stepmothers, princes and talking creatures of every shape – including a Miraculous Head – revealing, exploring and offering resolution for the eternal questions of human experience. A particularly interesting tale is that of ‘How the Dog became Man’s Friend’, a variant of the Old Testament story of the Garden of Eden.

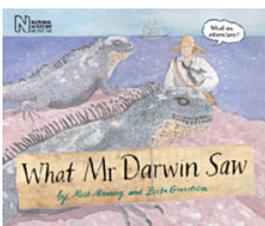
As well as being a delight in themselves, these tales will serve to emphasise to young readers that however different we may look and however differently we may live, nevertheless we share a common existence in which we all face the same basic uncertainties and fears. As ever, the underdog triumphs, and considerable humour (well expressed in Shelley Fowles’ illustrations) leavens the magic and underscores the moral of each story. This is an immensely enjoyable and valuable collection for adult and child readers alike.

Bridget Carrington

What Mr Darwin Saw

Mick Manning and Brita Granström, London: Frances Lincoln Children’s Book in association with the Natural History Museum, hb. 978 1 443 84507 970 3, £12.99, 2009, 48pp.

Inside both the front and back covers of this landscape-format picture book is a very clear double-spread map of the world showing the 1831–1836 voyage of HMS *Beagle*. Diary and inset style is used throughout, overlaid on a double-spread illustration, with speech bubbles used in both the insets and the background illustrations. Each inset, containing an illustration and a caption, adds important information to this combination of an adventure story with an account of Darwin’s important scientific discoveries leading eventually to his theory of evolution.



The opening spread has the diary 'page' headed 'Early Days 1809–1825', which begins 'I was born on 12 February 1809'. There is an inset with an illustration of Darwin holding a rat; a speech balloon says 'It's a big 'un' and a caption informs us that 'As a young lad Charles spent a lot of time hunting rats' There is also an inset of Darwin's grandfather Erasmus Darwin. The background illustration is of Darwin out shooting birds accompanied by his dogs. A later spread of 'Punta Alta Fossils October 1832' shows Captain Fitzroy, Darwin and a crew member examining fossils on a beach, with Fitzroy saying 'These fossils show evidence of the biblical flood, Darwin', to which Darwin replies, 'I think not, Fitzroy'; an inset opposite points out the disagreement between the two men 'about the truth of Bible stories like the Creation and Noah's Ark'.

The story of Darwin's university days at Edinburgh and Cambridge is brief, and the third spread 'Adventure Begins! Autumn 1831' shows him sailing from Portsmouth on HMS *Beagle*. The ship had the task of surveying the coastline of South America and taking time measurements. The hardships are not glossed over and the illustrations convey the details of the life and thoughts of the various crew members: one crew member starts a letter, 'My dearest wife ...', while another resolves, 'I must try not to feel sea-sick.'

Darwin reads Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* on board and quickly starts being fascinated by what he sees on their shore visits. 'I have been wandering in the Brazilian rainforest! It is hard to say what is the most striking: the vegetation, ... the grasses, ... the flowers I collected numberless small beetles and a most beautiful large lizard.'

The book keeps a well-conceived balance between descriptions of the scientific work and of the deprivations and jollity of shipboard life. The background illustrations are fantastic in setting the atmosphere of the flowing story – a moment of scientific discovery or the horror of a storm when far at sea, for example.

The journey signposts include: 'Crossing the Equator January 1832', 'Soldier Ants', 'The Argentine Pampas August 1833', 'Galapagos Tortoises September–October 1835', 'Home to England', 'The Oxford Evolution Debate 1860'. The final spread is a description given as if the summary of a lecture on 'This is how Natural Selection works'. There is a short glossary, three brief biographies and a brief note on other voyages of HMS *Beagle*.

This is a stunning book that combines a compelling adventure story with descriptions of major scientific discoveries and Darwin's theory of evolution. The illustrations hold the eye of the reader with their content and ever-changing colours and scenes. The book is one to return to many times from perhaps guided use for a child interested in adventure and nature study to an older child wanting an adventure story and scientific information. However, I read it for both the compelling storyline and a summary of these important scientific ideas.

Jennifer Harding

B is for Bangladesh

Urmi Rahman and Prodeepta Das, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 85407 918 5, £11.99, 2009, 32pp.

B for Bangladesh is a welcome addition to this well-loved series of books, each one of which is a photographic alphabet introducing a particular country to young children. This is a very inviting book, beautifully designed for parents or teachers to share with children and to enjoy a stunning selection of photographs which present aspects of life in Bangladesh of particular interest to children. Both the author Urmi Rahman and the photographer Prodeepta Das have lived and worked in the area, and their own love for the country and its people gives the book a very warm and personal atmosphere.

Starting with the inviting and colourful cover and the endpapers showing traditional embroidery on scarlet cloth, the book presents an alphabetical sequence of photographs accompanied by a short explanation, selected to be both a celebration of an ancient

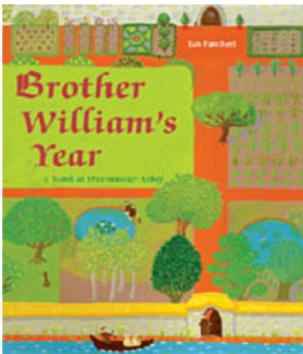


cultural heritage and a fascinating introduction to daily life in the relatively young country of Bangladesh.

This has been designed to be a book to spend time with, to gaze at and to discuss. There are no more than two photos on a single page and three on a double spread, in an uncluttered layout that allows each picture to speak for itself. Each side margin has a motif and colour which is taken from one of the pictures and is echoed in the illuminated capital letters for each photo, which is also edged in the same colour. It has the effect of a very personal scrapbook, specially chosen for children.

Overall this book is a visual delight, and because it presents a world beyond the experience of most children, it is wonderful fuel for imaginative writing. Teachers and librarians will also find this book has potential as a support for other curriculum areas as well as Literacy and Geography (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/geography/). An example would be Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and Citizenship (see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/ks1-2/citizenship/cit05/?view=get) in which children are encouraged to develop an understanding both of their own communities and of their links to other communities and countries abroad. In this book children can discover how their lives and their families may be linked over distances and over time to children living in such a geographically distant country as Bangladesh. In celebrating what is different and uniquely special about Bangladesh, children have been given the opportunity to discover how much they have in common.

Rachel Johnston (Librarian, Manor Lodge School, Shenley, Hertfordshire)



Brother William's Year: A Monk at Westminster Abbey

Jan Pancheri, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 84507 953 6, 2009, £11.99, 36pp.

This delightful hardback picture book has been produced by the head gardener at Westminster Abbey. Jan Pancheri has made a study of the monks who lived there until the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century. She is a qualified art teacher and runs summer workshops for children. Her grandfather was an Italian immigrant and he and her father were both woodcarvers. She is passionate about encouraging youngsters to love gardens, nature, and the history around them. From its beautifully illustrated endpapers and dust cover, to every single page of the book, the reader will be intrigued and enchanted by its contents.

The story of the life and work of Brother William, a medieval gardener at the abbey, proceeds month by month, season by season, throughout the monastic year. First of all the reader is introduced to some other important members of the community, not least William's dog. There is Brother Adam the Infirmarian (abbey doctor), Brother Hugh the Cantor (who leads the singing), Brother Gregory the Almoner (responsible for money), Brother Barnabas the Cook, and the Abbot. All the brothers live by the rule of St Benedict – they work very hard but also play at times, and wear faded black habits.

Pancheri's book is clearly an invitation to find out more about what it meant to be a monk living in an abbey in the year 1383. Each month's double-page spread offers a wealth of pictorial information, with an attractively illuminated capital letter, simple enough to be imitated by children in art work. Every picture is rich in detail and tells its story simply and clearly. The accompanying text is brief, but designed to provide enough relevant vocabulary to enable children to take part in a fluent discussion of the illustrations.

The monastic seasons, with both religious and secular festivals, provide a rich background: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Midsummer Day. The description of the growing, eating and drinking of the produce from the gardens also involves delicious recipes from our medieval past: fidget pie, pease pottage, cherry pottage, syllabub and spiced ale, not forgetting the much used Lenten leek soup. Every aspect of the monks' life is covered: the abbey services, mealtimes, hygiene, sleeping arrangements and medical care.

In the primary classroom, this book would be a gem of a resource, not only for teaching but also for associated creative enterprises ranging through painting, drama, cookery, music and singing, gardening and games. It could form the basis for a whole term's exciting activities and provide a great time for both teachers and pupils.

The King and the Seed

Eric Maddern, illus Paul Hess, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 84507 926 0, £11.99, 2009, 32pp.

This is a European version of a traditional Chinese Mandarin tale, known as 'The Seed'. A previous retelling by Charlotte Demi Hunt Huang, *The Empty Pot* (1990), orally mediated by several intermediaries, was Eric Maddern's inspiration for the current text, which has a medieval flavour and setting. It takes place in and around a king's castle, and the dramatis personae also include hundreds of lords and nobles, all 'splendidly arrayed in armour and riding handsome horses', together with a handful of local peasants and, in particular, a farmer's son named Jack.

Paul Hess's large, luminous and decorative illustrations are not merely a colourful backdrop to the text. The artist's dramatic sense of fun and fantasy and his unusual perspectives, beckon the reader right into the heart of the action. We are no longer merely spectators but in there, close up, mingling with the crowd. And a special challenge for the young reader – look out for Hess's characteristic signature, 'three blind mice', to be found on one of the pages.

I enjoyed Maddern's lively and humorous telling of the story. There are instances of behaviour that children will readily recognise, for example when the knights are told to 'form an orderly queue'. In fact the story is a simple parable, a moral tale of honesty, courage and truth that win the day over guile, laziness and greed – a theme every child with a strong sense of justice will immediately recognise. The ending is a surprise for the reader, just as it is to the winner of the unusual competition in the story.

Joyce Holliday

Letters to Anyone and Everyone

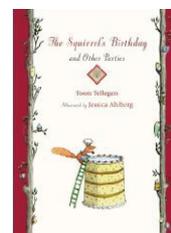
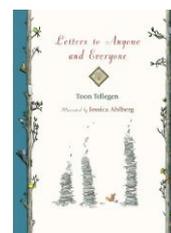
Toon Tellegen, illus. Jessica Ahlberg, London: Boxer Books, hb. 978 1 906250 94 2, 2009, £9.99, 156pp.

The Squirrel's Birthday and Other Parties

978 1 906250 92 8

For many years I have heard enthusiastic reports of the unique imagination of Toon Tellegen, a Dutch poet writing for both adults and children. *About Love and About Nothing Else*, translated by Judith Wilkinson and published in 2008 by Shoestring Press, introduced Tellegen's quirky take on love and life to an English-language readership; now Boxer Books have issued two small volumes of his prose poems for children, with illustrations by Jessica Ahlberg. No translator is credited with the English versions of *Letters to Anyone and Everyone* and *The Squirrel's Birthday and Other Parties*, although – judging from the English versions alone – the translation of Tellegen's idiosyncratic style cannot have been an easy task. *Letters* is a fragmentary, surreal set of notes written from one animal to another and delivered by the wind. Squirrel, for example, is short of a correspondent and decides to write a letter to a letter when the blank white paper in front of him rustles impatiently. This naturally raises mind-stretching questions as to how the letter will read itself; whether a letter can write back, and so on.

The Squirrel's Birthday is more readily accessible to the child reader, since each section delivers a self-contained story. There are echoes of *Winnie-the-Pooh* in the network of animals living in the forest and the emphasis on honey, birthdays (indeed, birthdays loom large in both books) and cake. In 'A Cake for Someone who Doesn't Feel Like Cake' we meet a towering cake with iced pinnacles, thick cream, and wafting a sweet



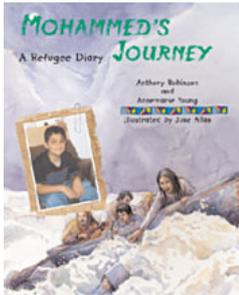
scent in the direction of passers-by: the cake of every child's desire. Yet this is not A.A. Milne's English wood. Tellegen's animals include the rhinoceros and the flamingo, and there are some odd alliances. In *Squirrel's Birthday* a giraffe and a snail share the experiences of a morning ache in their horns, with the comment that they couldn't possibly discuss such things with a sparrow ...

Is all of this mere whimsy, or does it go deeper? Beyond a surface tone of old-fashioned quaintness there really is something strangely compelling in the surreal and absurd world Tellegen has created. It will not appeal to all readers, young or old – but these books are a welcome breath of difference and the unexpected.

Gillian Lathey

Mohammed's Journey: A Refugee Diary

Anthony Robinson and Annemarie Young (eds.), illus. June Allan, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8450 7653 5, 2009, £11.99, 32pp.



Mohammed is an Iraqi Kurdish boy who came to England with his mother, Susan, in 2000 when he was six years old, to seek asylum. This desperate action followed brutal treatment of the family by soldiers who, as they took his father away, threatened to return the following day. Saddam Hussein's brutal regime had menaced the Kurdish community since the early 1990s. Mohammed grew up with the knowledge that both his parents had suffered at the hands of soldiers, his mother when she was pregnant, and that before his birth his grandmother had witnessed her son's execution on her doorstep. Mohammed and his mother embark on a terrifying journey, crossing mountains, rivers and oceans, negotiating national checkpoints and borders, sometimes on foot or horseback, and then travelling on in buses, small boats, large boats and lorries, always in cramped and terrible conditions, before arriving in Dover. 'Leave to stay' was granted in 2002. Family life and a home that is still 'temporary' now includes mother's new partner Fuard, also an Iraqi Kurd refugee awaiting permission for 'leave to stay', and Sara his little half-sister. Now thirteen years old, Mohammed attends Islington Arts and Media School, which he likes.

This summary is the bare bones of Mohammed's life which, remarkably, has been made into a story; a true story related in his own words to two writers whom he met through the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. Both writers have backgrounds that contribute to a special interest in recording the lives of children from different cultures. It is a testament to the personnel of the Medical Foundation and to the writers that Mohammed could reveal his story. Mohammed's courage is incontestable.

The format of the book works well as a diary. Each page carries a section of the story: the departure, the journey and the steps towards the hope of a secure future. The writing is spare and clear, and is complemented by the watercolour illustrations, while the occasional photograph confronts the reader with the stark reality of this narrative. A patterned border runs down the side of the pages up to the arrival in England. It reminded me of embroidered braid or tapestry, a representation of traditional craft, standing also for the narrative strand that is necessary to tell a story – particularly one that is so fragmented by separations and losses. The pattern colours also resemble jigsaw pieces, possibly suggesting how elements of experience and memory fit together. The coloured parts of the map, provided at the beginning of the book and tracing the journey to freedom, are also those in the pattern. The book cover graphically illustrates the plight of desperate people. A photograph of Mohammed faces the reader with a frank and serious gaze. If he is smiling, it is with closed lips, and the strain on his face is evident. The back cover includes an illustration of a toy engine, a precious gift from father; a backward glance to childhood before it was irrevocably disrupted. The book ends with an illustration of a contemplative Mohammed seated by a computer whose screen is filled with the image of the Iraq national flag. The closing words are 'I intend to work hard at school. I want a good life, but most of all I want what I can't have. I want my dad back'.

This book tells an important contemporary story from the perspective of a child: of one family's struggle to survive; of their escape from a cruel and inhuman military regime to seek refuge in a country where they are granted the opportunity to establish a life free from persecution and brutality. The final pages of the book augment the personal account with factual political and historical information about Iraq. Children who read this book and relate empathetically to the experience of Mohammed may already have contact with other children who are refugees, and in consequence may extend their understanding of the experiences of such children. The recently published sixtieth-anniversary illustrated edition of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights would complement the reading of *Mohammed's Journey*.

Louis' Dream Plane

Terry Milne, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 84507 925 3, £11.99, 2009. 28pp.

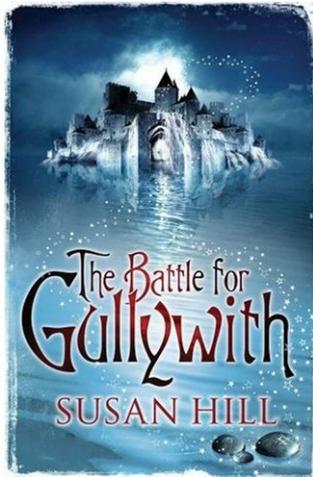
Once small boys dreamed of being engine drivers and some dreamed of flying planes Biggles style. Louis, a boy of the twenty-first century, has dreams that are airborne, not earth bound. The cover of this appealing book, which children who have similar dreams will enjoy, portrays Louis wearing goggles piloting a Gypsy Moth biplane (an early model, to connoisseurs of such matters), his jaunty little terrier his passenger. Inside the covers, the endpapers are crowded with illustrations of neatly labelled model aircraft, ranging from early monoplanes to modern jets and helicopters. The title double-page spread has the small lone figure of a boy standing in an open landscape gazing up into the sky following the flight of a plane emerging from the clouds. The shadow cast by this little figure forms the giant shape of a plane. These preliminary images lead the reader into the first sentence, 'Louis loved planes.'



This passion fuels Louis' activities and his imagination. On the last day of school he comes across an untended model of a Gypsy Moth biplane in the playground. He scoops it up in delight and is transported immediately into the heaven of his daydreams, shutting himself off from acknowledging that the plane will have an owner who, he later learns, is his classmate Charlie. Unable to entertain the idea of relinquishing his treasure, Louis takes it home. The reader becomes witness to the slow, painful process of Louis' disengagement with the precious container of his dreams as he faces up to his dishonesty. His first attempt to redress the situation fails because Charlie does not return to school, as his family move away from the locality. Louis has to confide his distress to his mother and with her help he discovers that it is possible to make amends and to gain a friend whose passion and interests match his own. The penultimate double-page spread shows the two small boys running in an open space, planes in hand, pursued by Louis' faithful little terrier. The shadows cast by the boys are in proportion to their size; their shapes resembles that of planes.

Terry Milne is the author and illustrator of this imaginative book. The illustrations are the principal conveyors of the story, and the colours and tones used are soft and pleasing to look at. This is a story with a moral but told sympathetically from Louis' point of view. Louis' inner and outer worlds are depicted clearly – his inner world states have a vitality that convey the immediacy of his experiences. The narrative words clarify the story, whilst the pictures heighten the action and the feelings. As the story draws to a close, the boys are shown in close-up, which suggests the developing friendship between them. This has the effect of drawing readers/beholders more closely into the world of play, and becoming appreciative participants in a glorious and exciting imaginative realm of action in the air, as the final double-page spread takes us with the boys.

Judith Philo



The Battle for Gullywith

Susan Hill, London: Bloombury, hb. 978 0 7475 9402 4, £10.99, 2008, 320pp.

Olly Brown is preparing to move from his childhood home in the London suburbs to a ramshackle farmhouse 309 miles away, which has been empty for a length of time, and is said to be uninhabitable by the locals. The story follows Olly's arrival and friendship with KK, who draws him into a magical world involving the mystical character Nonny Dreever, the Stone King, and his army deep beneath Withern Mere, and the tortoises which become the rescuers.

The link between the real world of Olly's family settling into their new home and Olly's magical adventures with KK is the small stones that appear to move of their own accord. The stones appear before Olly moves, and seem to cause the problems with his new home, which are eventually cured by the Polish builders whilst Olly, KK and Nonny Dreever along with the tortoises are able to return the stones to their origins.

I imagine that all authors are faced with comparison in this post-Harry Potter era; this story appears to be aimed at a slightly younger reader, given the improbable moving stones and tortoises as superheroes. It isn't too frightening a story. At some points the story seems to stop before the storyline had been fully explained and some events, which appeared to be significant, are not mentioned again.

The background of a move, new home and school may be a familiar element to children and the imaginings of what could happen in a new environment are drawn upon. However, there is a little too much crossover, with peculiar events happening in the local book store and the intervention of the friend his mum foists upon him.

It is a straightforward read with simple characters. There is one short section present where Olly is faced with temptation, but this felt out of place with the nature of the characters up to that point.

It is a good introduction to fantasy books, written in a direct and clear style. However, it would need to be read at the right time, otherwise the story could feel flat to those used to more intriguing books of a similar vein.

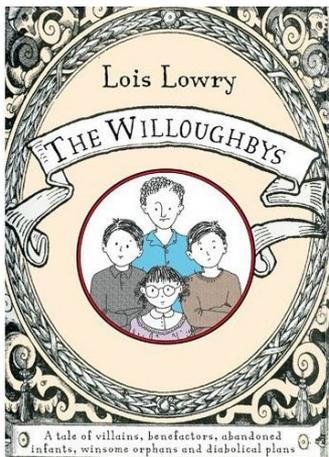
Rachel Underwood

The Willoughbys

Lois Lowry, London: Boxer Books, hb. 978 1 9062 5096 6, £10.76, 2009, 156pp.

Although Lois Lowry seems to be comfortable writing in a variety of styles for children of widely differing ages, I am more familiar with her books for adolescent readers. So, having quite forgotten her Anastasia Krupnik, Sam Krupnik and Gooney Bird series, I was surprised to find myself reviewing a book quite different in tone from Lowry's thought-provoking Newbery Medal winner *The Giver* (1993). The cover of this uncorrected proof, with effective and amusing semi-naive drawings (also by Lowry) and blurb heralding a 'tale of villains, benefactors, abandoned infants, winsome orphans and diabolical plans' immediately corrected my false expectations. Early into my reading, I was agreeably surprised to find that Lowry's venture into the currently popular world of 'comic noire' for children (think 'Lemony Snicket') is, in my view, a very successful one. The book is much less the 'playful homage to literature of the past' promised on the dust cover than a distinctly moral yet often pleasurable acid 'take' on fiction served up for children, from the fairy tale 'Hansel and Gretel' to P.L. Travers' fairy-tale-style character Mary Poppins.

Lowry asserts on her website that although '[her] books have varied in content and style ... it seems that all of them deal, essentially, with the same general theme: the importance of human connections' (www.loislowry.com, accessed 20 July 2009). Certainly the tales taken into *The Willoughbys* are unmistakably those which confront egocentric adults and their often appalling, yet here made incredibly funny, relationships with the children who should be in their care. In her vividly painted yet surreal world, parents and children strive to rid themselves of or escape from each other. Predictably,



though not always *wholly* deservedly, the children are the ultimately winners. For example, the Willoughby parents freeze to death – through their own stupidity – in the Swiss Alps, whilst the children, who lured them into choosing a highly dangerous vacation package, are adopted by a reclusive millionaire. The nanny’s is the only sane adult voice, despite her choice of disguise (posing as a talcum-powdered semi-nude Greek statue) when she and the children are attempting to prevent the Willoughby parents from selling the house and turning them out, penniless, onto the streets.

Keen to see whether the book might be popular with child readers, I asked my granddaughter (aged 11 years) to read it and write her own review. Even before seeing her comments, I knew the book was a success, since she read it at one sitting, reluctant to put it down from first to last page. In her words:

It enthrals you, pulls you in. From the very first word you’re there. It has a very funny – and somewhat bizarre! – storyline, which once started you’d never want to put down. The characters seem to jump out of the page, making you want to read more. You’d never ever want to put down this hilarious book. It’s very, very funny! I like the way the characters do some very mean things in a way that doesn’t seem that mean, when really it is! It all seems to come to life in front of you!!!

(Caitlin Day)

Bizarre is a good choice of word to describe incidents such as the one where the children find an abandoned baby on their doorstep. Having been told to get rid of it by Mrs Willoughby, Jane, the youngest child, is reluctant, suggesting that the baby is ‘cute’ because of its curls. Jane’s mother calmly takes out her scissors and cuts off the baby’s curls, telling the children to: ‘Dispose of it. I’m busy with a shepherd’s pie.’ (2009: 18).

There are countless instances of this kind of dark humour in a plot which is likely to speak to both child and adult audiences. Ultimately, although it does not have the seriousness of tone of Lowry’s books for adolescents, in its caricaturist’s picture of ‘failing’ adults, it is just as chilling when you really take the time to think about it.

Susan Hancock

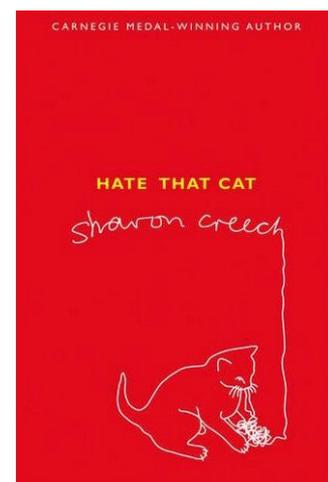
Hate that Cat

Sharon Creech, London: Bloomsbury, pb. 978 0 7475 9980 7, £4.99, 2008, 160pp.

This sequel to Sharon Creech’s much acclaimed *Love that Dog* (2001), which tells the story of Jack’s loss of his beloved dog, Sky, is, like the earlier book, in free verse. This medium succeeds both in making the book easy reading and in offering stimulus to child readers to write their own stories. The satisfying completion of Jack’s story is that despite his ostensible hatred of cats, he learns to love the kitten his parents give him for Christmas. Not only does he forget his hatred of cats and react by ‘smiiiiiling/ all/ over/ the/ place’ when the kitten wobbles over to him, but he also comes to terms with the ‘FAT black cat’ that drops a nut on his head. The latter transformation comes about when the black cat conducts the kitten back home after it has been lost for a week.

This simple story is also a vehicle for an underlying message about poetry – that it doesn’t have to rhyme or have a regular metre, but often works instead through alliteration and onomatopoeia. Jack’s teacher, Miss Stretchberry, narratee of Jack’s writing, introduces him to poems (reproduced in the text) by William Carlos Williams (famous for ‘The Red Wheelbarrow’), T.S.Eliot and Edgar Allan Poe, among others. That these have inspired Jack’s writing is made very clear, but Creech doesn’t shirk the criticism that verse by Williams (and by implication, that of Jack and his creator) is not real poetry. Jack’s Uncle Bill says ‘a poem has to rhyme/ and have regular meter [sic]’, a debate to which Creech puts a stop in an effective manner by describing Jack’s relief when he realises that because Uncle Bill is allergic to cats he won’t be visiting them any longer.

We learn incidentally that Jack’s mother is deaf, as she recognises by touch both the kitten’s purring and Jack’s laughter. Throughout the story the emotional content is never

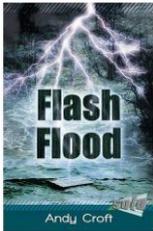


overstated; even hard-headed non-cat-loving boys should be able to share in Jack's gradual recovery from the trauma of losing his dog, and his growth towards the confidence of being able to 'sign' for his mother the poems recited at a parents' day, enabling her to become part of the school community.

Pat Pinsent

Children's Books for Young People who Find Reading Difficult

The following are all published in 2009 at £5.99, Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke. RA = reading age, IA = interest age, KS = Key Stage. Books are reviewed by staff of the English Education Department, Roehampton University, London.



Flash Flood

Andy Croft, illus. Aleksandar Sotirovski, 978 1 84299 607 2, 64pp. RA 6.5, IA 10–14.

Flash Flood is a contemporary adventure story about two best friends Toni and Jaz who spend a wet summer week at a caravan site with Toni's parents. Young readers will quickly empathise with the two girls' boredom and frustration as their holiday becomes a washout due to the persistent rain. Eventually, the girls decide to head into town in order to relieve their boredom and in so doing, take a short cut by the river. This proves to be a mistake as a flash flood causes the river to break its banks. Being cut off, the girls seek safety in a deserted house; deserted that is, apart from the odd rat. However, they are far from safe as the water level continues to rise dangerously. Realising that they are trapped, the girls are forced to use their initiative in the building of a raft. Eventually, the raft floats from the house, across the fields and they heroically rescue Toni's parents, who are by now marooned on the top of their caravan. The characters are carefully developed in the story, with each girl, through the experience of facing adversity together, learning to appreciate the other's personal qualities.

The book is written in short chapters with the final one taking the story forward a year, as well as using a flashback device to tie up loose ends. The unfolding plot is carefully carried through the short chapters, with the concluding chapter's internal structure providing an interesting challenge for the developing reader. The experiences and emotions are familiar to many children and there is enough action to help retain engagement with the text. The theme of boredom is perhaps a little overworked in the opening chapter but is cleverly returned to at the end of the story. The black and white illustrations support key themes in the narrative. The book would be suitable for a KS2 struggling reader.

Mine



Joanna Kenrick, illus. Julia Page, 978 1 84299 637 9, 64pp. RA 7. IA 14+.

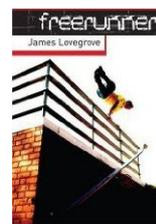
The front cover of Joanna Kenrick's *Mine* includes a warning – 'Strong Content' – and teenage readers will not feel duped by this promise. This fast-paced love story is typical of the genre: boy loves girl, loses her to his best friend, temporarily gets her back but makes a mistake and loses her for good. The 'mistake' is taking advantage of her while she is drunk – a rape. The story ends with the boy, Matt, reflecting on how selfish and stupid he has been.

Mine, without labouring the point, explores teenage realities, and Matt, despite what he does, is a likeable narrator. The unsophisticated language, the large black and white pictures and the compelling plot make this a suitable book to recommend to struggling readers at the higher end of KS3.

Free Runner

James Lovegrove, 978 1 84299 606 5, 96pp. RA8+, IA 14+.

From the dramatic opening of this story, Taj, the main character, is involved in a race against time to save his father from suffering his fate at the hands of a gangland hit man. Through first person narrative, the reader learns about the world in which Taj lives – one of gang warfare and deprivation. Yet having grown up in this environment, Taj is known as the best free runner on his estate. His story also offers insight into what is involved in the fascinating athletic skill of free running. Each chapter counts down the minutes remaining for Taj to prevent the murder of his father. The fast-paced narrative complements the idea of free running to provide an engaging and action-packed adventure.

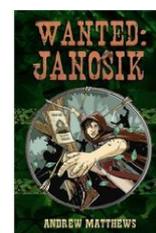


The book makes references to popular culture, sports and modern technology, which would appeal to the reader. The chapters are short and the language is accessible to struggling readers. Dealing with issues which are prevalent in today's society, the themes of the book would be suited to children in upper KS2 and in KS3.

Wanted: Janosik

Andrew Matthews, illus. Dylan Gibson, 978 1 84299 612 6, 72pp. RA 8+, IA 10–14.

Wanted: Janosik is a traditional tale set in the Tatra Mountains of Poland. The main character, Janosik, is a Robin Hood-like character who steals from the rich and gives to the poor. At the date of the book, the Tatra Mountains are ruled by an evil duke who terrorises the local peasants and threatens them when they do not pay the rent. Janosik takes the side of the peasants and regularly protects them against the duke. He is helped by some magic garments given to him by three mysterious women. The narrative follows the various encounters of Janosik and the duke until Janosik manages to escape and the reader is left with an open ending.



The story is exciting with a variety of climaxes to encourage the reader to read on. The language is appropriate for less experienced readers and along with short chapters and clear black and white illustrations this makes it an appropriate story for a KS2 or KS3 struggling reader.

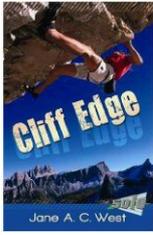
The Great Green Monster

Maggie Pearson, illus. Jotta Studio, 978 1 84299 636 2, 72pp. RA 8+, IA 10–14.

Set in a small village in Africa, the story begins with the horror of the actions of the Great Green Monster. Mysteriously the animals of the village start to disappear and not long afterwards so do all the people. They all fall victim to the predatory ways of the monster except for one clever woman and her baby. Within minutes the baby grows up into a young boy, named Akim, who is faced with a village of emptiness. Akim makes it his mission to search out the monster and to kill it. He miraculously achieves this and becomes the hero of his village to all of the returned inhabitants except for one: Old Man Misery. An ongoing battle of wills between Akim and Old Man Misery concludes with Akim coming face to face with Death personified as a one-eyed giant. Again Akim outwits his challenger and escapes. Or was he dreaming?



The action-packed adventure style of this story will particularly appeal to older KS2 and KS3 readers. Children will relate to the character of Akim and his determination.



Cliff Edge

Jane A.C. West, illus. Stephen Elford, 978 1 84299 610 2, 64pp. RA 6.5, IA 10–14.

Danny and Cristo live on the edge of California’s Yosemite Park and are avid climbers. But they watch the ‘freaks’ – ‘free climbers’ who climb without ropes – with a mixture of awe and fear. However, Danny is forced to face up to this fear when Cristo falls and he has to get urgent help to save his friend’s life; the fastest way to do this is to climb free solo.

The book is written in a pacy, almost urgent style that propels the reader along. It’s appropriately gripping (grip is all important when free climbing!) and the excitement and suspense of the climb are powerfully drawn. The balance between text and illustration is well judged and the ingredients are all here for a non-patronising read for an older, less experienced reader.

My only quibble is with the language which occasionally reads in a staccato way and is peppered with non-sentences. These contribute to the pace of the text but inexperienced readers, whose reading diet may be limited, need experience of quality, well-written text that they can tune in to.

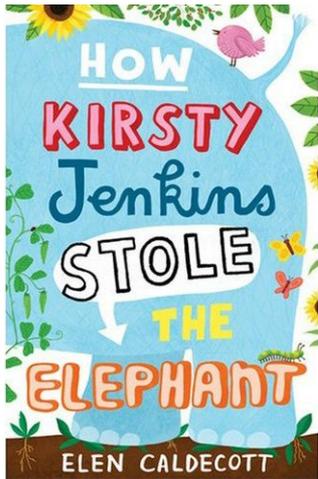
Fiona Collins, Kerenza Ghosh, Stephanie Laird, Alison Kelly, Philippa Hunt and Anne Washtell

Children’s Books – Short Reviews

How Kirsty Jenkins Stole the Elephant

Elen Caldecott, London: Bloomsbury, pb. 978 0 7475 9919 7, 2009, £5.99, 259pp.

A splendidly lively and entertaining story with a serious subtext – Kirsty, who was deeply involved with her grandfather’s allotment, wants to take it over when he dies, but is likely to be superseded by an adult gardener. She evolves a complex plot about ‘borrowing’ a stuffed elephant from the local museum, partly to draw attention to her plight and partly to draw her father from the depression that has engulfed him since his father’s death. In the process, Kirsty’s relationship with her co-plotters, her step-siblings from her father’s first marriage, considerably improves. The ‘community service’ with which Kirsty is ‘punished’ for her prank is actually to cultivate the allotment. Messages about greenness, blended families and the limitations of adults should in no way interfere with the reader’s enjoyment.



Hot Like Fire and Other Poems

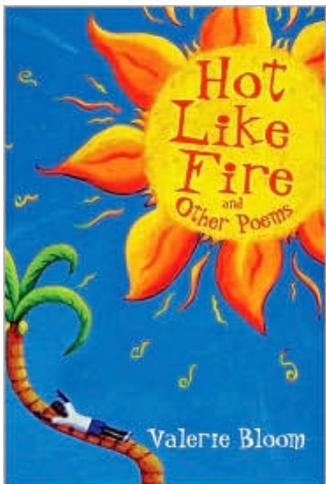
Valerie Bloom, illus. Debbie Lush, London: Bloomsbury, pb. 978 0 7475 9973 9, 2009, £5.99, 192pp. (comprising *The World is Sweet*, 2000, and *Hot Like Fire*, 2002)

Perhaps the most attractive feature of these lively poems is that so many of them have a ‘twist in the tail’; the addressee of ‘Eat your Veg’ who has to be persuaded that peas, tomatoes, onions and peppers are worth sampling, turns out to be ‘Mummy’; and this is the final verse of another poem:

My best friend is an alien
A changeling, swapped at birth.
She has two hands instead of three,
I think my best friend is from Earth.

Other witty verses include those about the ‘Baffled Turkey’ which doesn’t understand why it is having such a good time in preparation for Christmas, and the ‘Old Year’ which is puzzled to have been welcomed with such festivity at its start but ‘not a single soul it seems/ Is sad to see me go.’ On a more serious note is ‘Heather’, a poem about a young carer. Certainly a collection which should inspire young readers to enjoy and to write poetry.

Pat Pinsent



REPORTS

Campaign for the Book Conference

King Edward School, Birmingham. 27 June 2009.

The first Campaign for the Book conference was convened by writer Alan Gibbons in June. The campaign itself was born in response to increasing attacks on library services both in schools and in local authorities. It had focused in particular on two instances which Gibbons's campaigning had brought to national attention: the closure of the school library at Meadows Community School in Chesterfield and the consequent redundancy of the school librarian Clare Broadbelt, and proposals to close a number of branch libraries in the Wirral. Sadly, despite local and national protest, the Meadows Community School library has been closed, but, more hopefully, there is a public enquiry into the Wirral proposals.

Anyone who works in school or public libraries knows that this latest round of cuts, and those that are likely to be proposed in the even more stringent climate of public spending in the future, come after many years of reduced spending and reductions in professional staff which have affected many services across the country.

The most important aspect of the campaign has been the mobilisation of a large body of opinion, including writers, librarians, publishers and others in the book and reading world, to resist further cuts in library services and to find ways of protecting them. The conference was a first opportunity to bring these groups together.

Plans for the future of the campaign include a call for school libraries to be made mandatory by statute (as they are in Scotland). There is an e-petition on the No 10 website (www.number10.gov.uk/) which I would urge you to support. The campaign will also be seeking to establish a network of local groups to support libraries and resist cuts. If you are interested in hearing more about the campaign or in offering your support, read Alan Gibbons' blog on www.alangibbons.net.

(Clive Barnes)

Moving Pictures

Faber & Faber, London. 28 May 2009.

The first speaker at this Children's Book Circle evening was Lucinda Whiteley, who has produced several animation series, including adaptations of Francesca Simon's *Horrid Henry*, two of the Terry Pratchett 'Discworld' books, and Lucy Cousins' *Maisy*. She emphasised the need to be faithful to the text and to work closely with authors so that additional material that had to be created was in accord with the expectations of the audience. The second speaker, Philip Hunt, who has also been responsible for a number of familiar Lloyds Bank commercials, spoke about directing and adapting Oliver Jeffers' *Lost and Found*, an animation about a penguin who arrives on a little boy's doorstep and has a trip with him in a boat to the South Pole, before the two of them realise that what they truly want is friendship. A showing of this enchanting and beautiful film concluded the evening.

Timothée de Fombelle and Sarah Ardizzone in Conversation with Nicholas Tucker

Walker Books, Wednesday 3 June 2009.

Walker Books and 'Inside Out' were joint hosts of this lively occasion which took place in a light spacious room whose walls were decorated with a colourful collage of leaves, branches and tree trunks, mirroring the covers of Timothée de Fombelle's books. These were on sale from the bookshop Au Fil Des Mots, Librairie Francaise. A variety of delicious food and drinks were provided. The atmosphere promised adventure.

The conversation with Nicholas Tucker was organised by the two bodies as an interlude from a programme for the author Timothée de Fombelle and translator Sarah Ardizzone to tour the country with a series of workshops for children (they had just returned from a week spent at The Eden Project). The background was the promotion of de Fombelle's two books, the very successful and much translated *Toby Alone* and its sequel *Toby and*

the Secrets of the Tree. These provided a focus for the exploration of ecological themes and the experience of translation in literature – translation having a particular relevance for children who are bilingual and whose first language is not that of the country in which they live. During the course of the discussion we heard how the process of translation has a creative potential for children whose life experience has included some form of displacement: children who have been fostered or adopted or whose families are refugees. The experience of translation, an experience between words as it were, can contribute to a child finding a clearer understanding of their life, circumstances and sense of identity.

Nicholas Tucker was a witty interviewer and asked some searching questions. He reminded the audience that Jonathan Swift, in the eighteenth century, first wrote about miniature worlds; on the publication of *Gulliver's Travels* a bishop had declared that he did not believe a word of it. Nicholas Tucker asked Timothee de Fombelle if in the process of writing he had felt that his little hero and the story were specifically French. The first publishing house had denoted the tree – the central, elemental and eternal presence of the story – as an oak; this was before the success of the book resulted in it being much translated worldwide. De Fombelle said that he saw the tree as the tree of childhood; this primary image would naturally take on the character of whatever big tree was representative of the country of the reader. On an autobiographical note, he said that he had experience of living in different countries as he grew up and this contributed to his sense that the story was not French but universal in its application. His grandfathers had both had dramatic wartime experiences, which he heard about as an impressionable six year old, and the drama of these anecdotes had influenced some of the harsher themes in the books.

Nicholas Tucker posed the question of a moral dimension: How does a writer deal with issues such as cruelty and torture, and convey that these are matters of reality deserving consideration and not simply for gratuitous effect? It was acknowledged that attitudes regarding the practice of torture were not universally set but could be influenced by cultural differences. The question of how character was portrayed in relation to goodness or badness was considered and whether a villain depicted as a hunchback might be reinforcing negative stereotypes. De Fombelle felt that through his hero, Toby Lolness, he was exploring the idea of how one individual learned to face the complexities of life, but he was not providing the answer or solution to whatever parallels with the contemporary world might be drawn from his narrative.

The question of the author's relationship with the translator and with the illustrator brought Sarah Ardizzone into the dialogue. The two speakers emphasised how important the sense of complicity was in getting to know each other: the value of puns, slang and turns of phrases which were enlivening and fostered playfulness and trust between them. Ardizzone said that the essence of the translator's task was finding the voice, the primal quality of the narrative, and that this was akin to acting as a ventriloquist. There were lively exchanges between the two of them and in their responses to Nicholas Tucker. De Fombelle also acknowledged the influence of the illustrator of the books, François Place, on his imagination, the unfolding of his characters and the landscape when the second book was in embryo. Overall his relationships with illustrator and translator had been ones of pleasurable and creative collaborations.

The spirit of adventure was realised when first the author and then the translator read the dramatic opening paragraphs of *Toby Alone*; French and English versions were equally gripping as the hero, one and a half millimetres in height, burst upon our consciousness. Before the occasion drew to a close the audience contributions amplified the wide-ranging discussion further.

(Judith Philo)

Branford Boase Award: Winner Announced

Walker Books, London. Thursday 9 July 2009.

The Branford Boase Award was set up to reward the most promising new writers, as well as to reward excellence in writing and in publishing.

The Traitor Game by B.R. Collins, edited by Emma Matthewson and published by Bloomsbury, has won the Branford Boase Award, awarded for an outstanding debut novel for children. A powerful novel that explores the way boys create friendships and how fragile these relationships can be, *The Traitor Game* encompasses issues of bullying, homosexuality and peer pressure. Set in two worlds, it mixes the contemporary teen 'issue' novel with a traditional fantasy story. The worlds may be different but the actions, emotions and eventual betrayals within them are very much the same.

Bridget R. Collins lives in Tunbridge Wells, Kent and is only 27 years old, so this is a fantastic start to what will undoubtedly be a glittering career. Her second novel is scheduled for publication by Bloomsbury in September 2009.

Editor Emma Matthewson said, 'I couldn't be more pleased for Bridget, who I truly believe has an incredible voice.'

Jacqueline Wilson, former Children's Laureate, presented Collins with her award (a cheque for £1000 and a hand-crafted, silver-inlaid box). Past winners, some of whom attended the ceremony, include Jenny Downham, Mal Peet and Meg Rosoff, as well as Siobhan Dowd who was posthumously awarded the Carnegie Medal this year.

The judging panel, chaired by Julia Eccleshare, included John Dunne, librarian, Caroline Horn of the *Bookseller*, Jane Churchill of the Cheltenham Literary Festival and last year's winner, author of *Before I Die*, Jenny Downham.

(John Dunne)

CLPE Poetry Award 2009

CLPE, London. Tuesday 7 July 2009

Shortlisted for this successor to the *Signal* poetry award were:

John Agard's *The Young Inferno*,

Allan Ahlberg's *Collected Poems*,

Sharon Creech's *Hate that Cat* (see review elsewhere in this issue of *IBBYLink*),

Sophie Hannah and John Hegley's *The Ropes*,

JonArno Lawson's *Inside Out*.

John Agard's version of Dante featuring the experiences of a modern teenager (see *IBBYLink* 24) was the winner.

Jackie Kay, last year's winner, interviewed Agard, who spoke of how his Jesuit education, and an inspirational English teacher in particular, had been significant in encouraging his writing. He also mentioned how numbers, especially the number 3, had meant a lot to Dante, who inbuilt various numerical relationships into his work, an aspect that Agard had imitated.

CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Children's Book Awards 2009

BAFTA, Piccadilly, London. Thursday 25 June 2009.

The Carnegie Medal is awarded by children's librarians for an outstanding book for children and young people. Forty-four nominations were received.

The Kate Greenaway Medal is awarded by children's librarians for an outstanding book in terms of illustration for children and young people. Thirty-nine nominations were received.

The selection process is organised by the Youth Libraries Group (YLG), one of CILIP's Special Interest Groups, which itself has over 3000 members. Twelve children's librarians – members of the YLG – form the panel of judges.

The shadowing scheme involves library reading groups and schools across the UK.

CILIP Carnegie Medal (awarded posthumously to the author)

Dowd, Siobhan (2008) *Bog Child*, London: David Fickling Books (12+).

CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal

Rayner, Catherine (2008) *Harris Finds his Feet*, London: Little Tiger Press (3+).

Launch of Brother William's Year

Westminster Abbey, London. 14 May 2009.

To celebrate the publication of a book devoted to the life of a fourteenth-century monk gardener, written and illustrated by Jan Pancheri, head gardener at Westminster Abbey, Frances Lincoln Publishers organised a launch party at the Abbey. It was held in the delightful space of St Catherine's Chapel garden, located on the site of the medieval infirmary chapel, a peaceful green oasis belying its proximity to the bustle of Parliament, near the cloisters and much larger adjacent gardens. (See review of the book elsewhere in this issue.)

New Children's Laureate

Centre Point, St Giles Circus, London. 9 June 2009.

The impressive location of level 31 of Centre Point (incomparable views of London!) was the venue for the announcement of the new Children's Laureate, the renowned picture-book author and illustrator Anthony Browne. Sue Wilkinson, representing the Museums and Libraries Archives Council, paid tribute to the work of Michael Rosen as a passionate advocate of libraries over the past two years. Toby Bourne from Waterstones spoke of the different interpretations of the role by the various laureates so far, and Elaine McQuade of the Publishers' Association thanked the laureates for their promotion of children's books. Lord Chris Smith, who had been Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in 1999, recalled the inauguration of the post, and remarked that the fact that each laureate had a tenure of only two years had meant that all of those appointed so far have continued to be active in supporting children's literature. Julia Eccleshare on behalf of the Children's Laureate committee described some of the projects that Michael Rosen has been involved with during his tenure, and Michael Rosen himself emphasised the importance of children reading for pleasure. At last the name of the new laureate was announced by Andrew Motion, former Poet Laureate and chair of the selection panel, who paid tribute to Anthony Browne as a distinctive artist whose work 'entrances' children and has inspired many other illustrators.

In his acceptance speech, the new laureate gave an indication of where his emphasis would lie, inviting everyone to 'look at what you see and to read beyond the words'. He involved some of the young people present, who had assisted in the selection process, to demonstrate 'the shape game' – an activity designed to get everyone, young and old, both looking closely at pictures and drawing for themselves.

Our best wishes to Anthony Browne, who has been a popular figure at IBBY conferences and international occasions.

Jacqueline Wilson Lecture

National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, Roehampton University, London. 17 June 2009.

The NCRCL at Roehampton University has been fortunate enough to have the former children's laureate giving a series of creative-writing workshops during the past few months, and the culmination of this was a public lecture entitled 'From Tracy Beaker to Hetty Feather: Writing for Children nowadays' at Froebel College, Roehampton University. Jacqueline Wilson, who was awarded an honorary Roehampton doctorate in 2007, spoke first of how as a young child she had always wanted to write but was discouraged by her secondary English teachers who thought her style was too colloquial.

Eventually she was encouraged by the publication of a short story by D.C. Thomson, who then employed her in writing readers' letters and horoscopes for their magazines, including *Jackie*. Her advice to aspiring children's writers included: be different, don't sit back – there is no such thing as 'writer's block', look at series aimed at reading development and imagine what it is like for a child.

She also spoke of her new venture, a historical story for the Coram Foundation featuring an 1870s orphan, Hetty Feather, and inspired by the authors who are the subject of *A Victorian Quartet* (Molesworth, 'Brenda', Hesba Stretton and Flora Shaw – see review in *IBBYLink* 25). It is to be launched at the Foundling Museum, London in October.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Phillipa Pearce Memorial Lecture

Auditorium of the Mary Allan Building, Homerton College, Cambridge. Thursday 10 September 2009 at 5 pm.

Phillippa Pearce died over two years ago, but respect and affection for her writing is as strong as ever. In her memory, a series of five lectures is now under way, each intended to celebrate excellence in writing for children and to emphasise its continuing importance.

The 2009 lecture will be given by Michael Rosen and is entitled 'What is children's poetry for? Towards a new, but child-specific, 'Apologie for Poetrie' (Sir Philip Sidney, 1595)'

More information can be found at www.pearcelecture.com. Tickets are free, but you will need to book a place on the lecture website. Seats are limited, so early registration is advised.

The Bookstart Impact: The Importance of Early Years Parenting

Signet Library, Edinburgh. 10 September 2009.

The keynote speaker will be Michael Russell MSP, Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution. See www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookstartconference for more details.

Beyond Borders: Art, Narrative and Culture in Picture Books

University of Glasgow. 18–20 September 2009.

The conference will include presentations that provide a new focus for research and scholarship through questions of what it means to go beyond borders in art, narrative and culture in picture books. Speakers include Sandra Beckett, Teresa Duran, Barbara Kiefer, Bettina Kummerling-Meibauer, Maria Nikolajeva, Perry Nodelman, Martin Salisbury, Morag Styles, Sophie Van der Linden and Jean Webb. Contact e.arizpe@educ.gla.ac.uk.

Poetry Right Now!

CLPE, Webber Street, London SE1 8QW. Two whole days and four after-school sessions, starting 23 September 2009.

A series of practical workshops with Michael Rosen. For further information see www.clpe.co.uk.

CLPE's Multicultural Book Fair 2009

CLPE, Webber Street, London SE1 8QW. Wednesday 30 September 2009, noon – 6.30 pm.

This event is for teachers, Early Years practitioners, parents, librarians and students. Guest author is Malorie Blackman. There will be stalls and displays by booksellers and publishers. The programme includes: creating an audio story CD; demonstration of TalkingPEN (Mantra Lingua); Hill Mead Primary School gospel choir; and Malorie Blackman talk and book signing. For further information see www.clpe.co.uk.

(Ann Lazim)

Past Continuous: Historical Fiction for Children

Bedson Teaching Centre, Newcastle University. 10 October 2009.

Among other things, this conference is celebrating the centenary of the birth of Geoffrey Trease. Speakers include Jamila Gavin, Jerome de Groot, Kate Chedzoy, Matthew Grenby and Kim Reynolds. For further information contact Matthew Grenby (m.o.grenby@newcastle.ac.uk).

IBBY/NCRCL MA Annual Conference ‘Comics and Graphic Novels’

Froebel College, Roehampton University. Saturday 14 November 2009.

Keynote speaker Dr Mel Gibson. Contact Ann Lazim, Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, Webber St., London SE1 8QW, annlazim@googlemail.com.

Bill Naughton: A Centenary Celebration

Octagon Theatre, Bolton. 24–25 November 2009.

This conference is hosted by the University of Bolton, Bolton Museum and Archive Service, and the Octagon Theatre. Keynote speakers include Neil Sinyard, Stephen Lacey and David Thacker. Contact Professor David Rudd, d.rudd@bolton.ac.uk.

Building a Book Culture

New Delhi, India. 4–6 February 2010.

The Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC), the Indian section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), is holding a three-day international conference on children’s libraries. The presence of IBBY-Asahi award winners will be the highlight of the conference. For further details contact The Conference Organiser, Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC)/Ind.BBY, Nehru House, 4, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110002, India. Fax: 91-11-23724067, email: awicbooks@yahoo.com. Registration fee \$350. See also www.awic.in.

NEWS

Waterstone's Illustration Award 'Picture This'

'Picture This' is Waterstone's search, alongside Macmillan Children's Books, for an unpublished illustrator to work with Britain's biggest-selling picture book author, Julia Donaldson – writer of *The Gruffalo*, *The Princess and the Wizard* and *Tyrannosaurus Drip*. The prize is the opportunity to illustrate a book to be published for Christmas 2010.

In April anyone who had not worked professionally as a children's book or children's cover illustrator was invited to submit full-colour character sketches of the three main characters in Julia Donaldson's story (*Freddie, The Fairy and the Fairy Queen*). Almost 1000 entries were received and these were whittled down to a shortlist of six. These six have been invited to submit further artwork for the final stage of judging. The overall winner will be announced at the Bath Children's Literature Festival in September.

The judging panel consists of Julia Donaldson, Lauren Child (children's author and illustrator), the editorial director for picture books at Macmillan Children's Books, a literary agent, Waterstone's picture-book buyer and a children's book reviewer.

The following illustrators have been shortlisted.

Alex Paterson

Anna Collison

Esther Johnson

Karen George

Maria Nilsson

Rod Waters

Examples of each of the shortlisted illustrator's work and the text that is to be illustrated can be seen at www.waterstones.com/waterstonesweb/navigate.do?pPageID=1789.

Nominees for the IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Awards 2010

The Hans Christian Andersen Awards are presented every two years by IBBY to an author and an illustrator whose complete works have made an important and lasting contribution to children's literature. IBBY national sections from 33 countries have made their selections, submitting the following 29 authors and 27 illustrators as candidates for the 2010 Hans Christian Andersen awards.

Country	Author	Illustrator
Argentina	Liliana Bodoc	Luis Scafati
Austria	Heinz Janisch	Linda Wolfgruber
Belgium	Pierre Coran	Carll Cneut
Brazil	Bartolomeu Campos de Queirós	Roger Mello
Canada	Brian Doyle	Marie-Louise Gay
China	Liu Xianping	
Croatia	Svjetlan Junaković	
Cyprus	Maria Pylidou	
Czech Republic	Pavel Srut	Jirí Salamoun
Denmark	Louis Jensen	Lilian Brøgger
Finland	Hannu Mäkelä	Salla Savolainen
France	Jean-Claude Mourlevat	Grégoire Solotareff

Germany	Peter Härtling	Jutta Bauer
Greece	Loty Petrovits-Andrutsopoulou	Diatsenta Parissi
Iran	Ahmad Reza Ahmadi	
Ireland	Eoin Colfer	P.J. Lynch
Japan	Shuntaro Tanikawa	Akiko Hayashi
Lithuania	Kestutis Kasparavicius	
Mexico	Alberto Blanco	Fabricio Vanden Broeck
Mongolia	Dashdondog Jamba	
Netherlands	Peter van Gestel	Harrie Geelen
Norway	Bjørn Sortland	Thore Hansen
Russia	Nickolay Popov	
Serbia	Zoran Bozovic	
Slovak Republic	Ján Uliciansky	Peter Uchnár
Slovenia	Tone Pavcek	Ancka Gosnik Godec
Spain	Jordi Sierra i Fabra	Xan López Domínguez
Sweden	Anna-Clara Tidholm	
Switzerland	Etienne Delessert	
Turkey	Muzaffer Izgü	Can Göknil
Uganda	Evangeline Ledi Barongo	
United Kingdom	David Almond	Michael Foreman
USA	Walter Dean Myers	Eric Carle

The elected chair of the international Hans Christian Andersen awards jury, Zohreh Ghaeni (Iran) and jury members from Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA will meet in March 2010 to select from among these 56 nominations the winners of the 2010 Hans Christian Andersen awards. The results will be made public at the Bologna Children's Book Fair on Monday 22 March 2010 and the awards will be presented to the winners at the 32nd IBBY Congress in Santiago de Compostela, Spain on 11 September 2010.

The Children's Bookshow: Children's Writers on Tour

This year's events have an international flavour and focus on picture books and poetry.

Bexhill, Friday 25 September, Michael Rosen.

Bristol, Tuesday 29 September, Daniel Morden.

London, Thursday 8 October, Yue Guo and Clare Farrow.

Newcastle, Friday 9 October, Yue Guo and Clare Farrow.

Ilkley, Monday 12 October, Daniel Morden.

London, Tuesday 13 October, Alexis Deacon and Malachy Doyle.

Liverpool, Wednesday 14 October, Michael Rosen.

Oxford, Friday 16 October, Alexis Deacon and Malachy Doyle.

Manchester, Wednesday 4 November, Yue Guo and Clare Farrow.

London, Wednesday 25 November, Michael Rosen and Grégoire Solotareff.

For details about places, times, tickets and information about speakers, see www.thechildrensbookshow.com.

Old Possum's Children's Poetry Competition 2009

Carol Ann Duffy, the new Poet Laureate, is to chair the judging panel for the worldwide poetry competition for 7–11 year olds, organised by the Children's Poetry Bookshelf (CPB). Children will be asked to write a poem in English on the theme of 'Heroes and Heroines'. Entries will be accepted from 10 September until 19 October, with the winners announced in London in December.

For further information about the competition contact Hilary Davidson (hilary@poetrybooks.co.uk) or Chris Holifield (chris@poetrybooks.co.uk) at the Poetry Book Society (phone: 020 7833 9247). A booklet featuring the winning poems from this year's competition will be produced by the CPB. Schools and individuals will be able to enter the competition via the website (www.childrenspoetrybookshelf.co.uk) or by post. Entry is free. Cash prizes and books will be awarded to the winning UK-based poets in each age category (7–8 year olds and 9–11 year olds).

Information from the IBBY President

Patricia Aldana, who has been re-elected as IBBY president, has written a report on IBBY's activities around the world, involving a good deal of international cooperation. Dutch and Irish sections have been supporting Uruguayan and Zimbabwean sections, respectively, while South Africa has also been supporting the Zimbabwean section. IBBY Sweden, who successfully nominated the Tamer Institute in Palestine for the Astrid Lingren Memorial Award (ALMA), have also been encouraging developments in Cambodia. Other projects include the Haitian section using the healing power of storytelling in the context of destructive hurricanes, the fostering of a reading culture in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and the encouragement of reading clubs for children in Columbia. For details on these and many more, see <http://www.ibby.org/index.php?id=thepresident>.

IBBY/NCRCL MA Annual Conference ‘Comics and Graphic Novels’

Froebel College, Roehampton University. Saturday 14 November 2009.

Keynote speaker Dr Mel Gibson. A booking form and preliminary program will be available soon.

Contact Ann Lazim, Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, Webber St., London SE1 8QW, annlazim@googlemail.com.

The next issue of *IBBYLink* (Spring 2010) (copydate 15 December 2009) will contain the papers from the annual IBBY UK/NCRCL MA conference of 14 November.

The topic of the Summer 2010 issue of *IBBYLink* is ‘war and conflict’ – articles on all aspects will be welcomed.

Articles on other subjects, reviews, reports, information about conferences and similar items are also welcomed for both issues. Contributions to PatPinsent@aol.com.

IBBYLink 26 Autumn 2009

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

Editor: Pat Pinsent, 23 Burcott Road, Purley CR8 4AD

Associate editor: Jennifer Harding

To sponsor a future issue of *IBBYLink*, contact PatPinsent@aol.com.

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