

## Wars and Conflicts

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Andersen Press, one of the leading independent publishers of children's books, has sponsored IBBY UK for £1000 for the current calendar year to help support its work. IBBY UK relies on subscriptions from its members to help fund a range of activities to promote British children's books abroad, as well as to publicise the best children's books published in other countries. However the fall in the value of sterling has increased the cost of our international activity and so the generous sponsorship by Andersen Press will help meet some of the shortfall.

It is good to see Satoshi Kitamura's *Millie's Marvellous Hat*, published by Andersen Press, among the titles on the shortlist for the 2010 CILIP Kate Greenaway award.



## EDITORIAL

War makes rattling good history; but Peace is poor reading.

(Thomas Hardy, *The Dynasts*)

Even without agreeing wholeheartedly with the sentiments expressed by a character in Hardy's only dramatic work, or assuming that this was the view of the writer himself, it would be difficult to deny that war stories have often had an appeal, perhaps especially to young male readers. In the Spring 2010 issue of *Carousel*, Pat Thomson writes of how she has been increasingly alienated by books which feature a 'particularly repellent macho male hero and his delight in power through weaponry or inflicting pain on others' – a statement with which many of our readers may well sympathise. While, however, there is no doubt that the topic of war does by its nature permit the portrayal of a degree of violence that would be inappropriate for many other themes, the best children's books about war are not gender specific or 'macho'. Rather, their characters are often drawn into the conflict in spite of themselves, and issues such as the morality of conflict itself are highlighted.

This issue of *IBBYLink* carries a list of books on the topic, by the ever reliable Pam Robson from her database, supplemented by a few other choices. The list is longer than usual, even though we have omitted many books as being already very familiar – a testimony to the popularity of war as a theme. We have also an inspiring piece from Janet Dowling about a visit to Israel/Palestine, a region which has been constantly war-torn throughout the lives of all who live there.

The line between war fiction and historical fiction is not easily drawn, but in this *IBBYLink* we have concentrated largely on wars within living memory, though clearly books about the First World War and increasingly the Second can also be classified as historical. It would be interesting to carry out an analysis of the differences between war fiction as written by those who were adults at the time, those who were children, and those who have grown up

subsequently. As far as the Second World War is concerned, notable in the first category are authors such as Eleanor Brent-Dyer and Captain W.E. Johns (both of whom incorporated war themes into their existing series), together with wartime Carnegie medal winners Kitty Barne (*Visitors from London*, 1940) and Mary Treadgold (*We Couldn't Leave Dinah*, 1942) who wrote about the war while it was very much in action. Notable among a younger generation recalling their childhood memories of war are Nina Bawden (*Carrie's War*, 1973) and Robert Westall (*The Machine Gunners*, 1975), together with Judith Kerr (*When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, 1971), whose recollections provided probably the most moving moments of the recent Federation of Children's Books conference.

Some of the younger children's authors now producing fiction about the Second World War may be inspired to do so by the recollections of their parents and grandparents, though they obviously need to reinforce these anecdotes with their own research. Val Rutt writes in this issue about how the idea for her recent book, *Out of the Blue* (2009), arose out of a tragic wartime incident in her father's past; she concludes her brief account of the book's origins with the affirmation that her story's main themes are 'love and hope; two things that war, however devastating, does not destroy'.

In spite of the fecundity of the theme of war, much of this issue of *IBBYLink* consists of reviews rather than articles. One of the reasons for this is that 'Conflicts and Controversies' is the title of the forthcoming IBBY/NCRC MA November conference, so we anticipate that next spring's issue will provide a variety of different perspectives from the contributors to that conference.

Our next issue (copydate 31 July) features children's books concerned with Australia – we shall be happy to include articles on this theme, but also welcome any on other interesting areas of children's literature.

**Pat Pinsent**

*Janet Dowling*

It was May 2008. I was in Glastonbury when I first heard the call for participants for the proposed 'Healing Words: Storytelling as a Pathway to Peace' tour in the Holy Land. I had two simultaneous thoughts: Who on earth would want to go out to a place in conflict like the Holy Land, and expect to bring peace by telling stories? At the same time I was thinking: Me – I want to be there!

The whole adventure was a vision of Roi Galor, the organiser of the storytelling course at Emerson College in East Sussex. An Israeli himself, he had been in Israel when the bombs were targeting the Galilee in 2006. Confronted by a group of angry Palestinian men, he found himself telling them about the two mice who both laid claim to a piece of cheese. As he finished telling, the Palestinian men nodded: 'That's about us isn't it?' Their anger subsided as they reflected on the story.

### **The Mice, the Cheese and the Fox**

Two mice both laid claim to a piece of cheese. A fox offered to split it in half for them, and then sliced pieces off to even up the two pieces (eating the bits as he went). Eventually the fox ate all the cheese.

Inspired by this experience, Roi called on the members of his home community at Kibbutz Harduf (in the north part of Israel), to set up a festival for peace in 2007. He encouraged them to use storytelling and other ways of sharing personal experiences. Students from Emerson College went out to help prepare the site under trees in the forest outside Harduf – clearing stones and raising canopies. He determined that for 2009 he would bring an international group of storytellers to work more intensively on storytelling as a pathway to peace. He believed that with a well-placed story, listeners could learn to see the conflict differently.

### **Hitting the Target**

An archer was the best shot in the world, or so he thought, until he saw arrows slap in the middle of the target. He eventually found the better archer – who turned out to be a boy who shot the arrow and then painted a target around it.

[As we shoot the story as an arrow, the audience will let it find their own targets in their life stories.]

Eventually 11 storytellers from eight nationalities met at Emerson College. Each of us had been through a selection and interview process with Roi. All of us had paid fees to take part in this experience. We were joined by Muna Sheehan, an Arab who lived in Israel, who would work with us and be our Arabic translator in the Holy Land. The Israeli translation would come from Roi and Raphael (one of the course participants). Ethan Friedman joined Roi as course leader.

We had each brought a programme of stories to tell, ones that we felt spoke of the meaning of peace, collaboration and forgiveness. For four weeks we were coached in ways to improve our storytelling, We learned new songs, a few dances and lots of games. We shared our experiences and skills that we thought would be relevant for working with different groups in the Holy Land. All with the emphasis on how to bring people together through sharing activities. We also learned new ways to encourage people to think about their personal stories, became adept at asking 'When did you first become aware of the conflict?', and began to understand how questions like this could facilitate others in their personal storytelling.

### **Two Wolves**

An old man tells his grandson how there are two wolves inside him who are in constant tension. One wolf is full of hate and anger, the other is full of love and forgiveness. The child asks the old man who will win. The old man replies 'The one I choose to feed.'

[And which wolf do you choose to feed?]

We set off on 15 May 2009, one year and a day after I first heard about the project.

Sensitive to the conflict that could arise by saying either Israel or Palestine, we chose to refer to going to the 'Holy Land' as the path of least offence, and in the main this seemed to work. For the first 10 days we were offering workshops and performances to groups with an interest in coexistence. On our first day we were taken across the border into Palestine to meet with members of Combatants for Peace, former soldiers from both the Israeli and Palestinian sides. We were invited to the homes of some of the Palestinians in Tul Karim, a Palestinian refugee camp. Special insurances had to be obtained for the three hours that we were there. But it was important to them to feel that their stories were being heard, and that their experiences of living in Tul Karim were witnessed. And that, we found, was the crux of a lot of the work. *The need for their personal stories to be heard, and to feel that someone was witnessing their experience and pain.* With that, they could hear other peoples' experiences and eventually move towards finding a pathway to peace.

We returned to the venue where Israelis and Palestinians could meet. It was a makeshift tarpaulin over some olive trees, on a patch of land that was neither in Palestine nor Israel – a no-man's-land that was the only place where Israeli and Palestinian could meet without necessarily getting a permit to pass the boundary. There one former combatant from each side told his/her personal story to a mixed company of over 80 Israelis and Palestinians. Then they split into four groups, and we, seen as neutral, facilitated the telling of their stories. For many this was the first time they had spoken about their experience to someone from the other side. For the Palestinians, it was the first time they had seen an Israeli out of uniform, and not carrying a gun. For some of the Israelis, it was the first time they had ever met a Palestinian face to face. But they were there to share, and explore possibilities for peace.

### **Two Warriors**

A mighty battle had been fought, and the two remaining warriors faced each other to fight. As the sun went down they agreed to rest, then fight to the death in the morning. During the night they talked of their children, families, homes and experiences. In the morning they put their armour back on, saluted each other, then turned away to return to their homes. It is hard to fight a man when you know his stories. (Dan Keding)

But nothing ever goes quite to plan. The Israeli army turned up. Leaving their vehicles on the Israeli side of no-man's-land, they walked towards the canopied area, and tried to break up the meeting. The organisers very quickly told them about the international group of storytellers from the UK. This caused the army to reconsider (they didn't want an international incident) and withdraw, only to contact the police and ask them to attend! After all, this was a civilian matter, wasn't it? And, while all this was going on, we continued to ask 'And when did you first become aware of the conflict?'

Tensions rose. Some people were reluctant to talk with the army around – so out came a short story, or maybe a song or two that cut across languages. Eventually the listening circles finished, thanks were given for persisting and there was positive feedback from all. As we left, the police arrived. Timing was everything.

### **Nothing to Do with Me**

The king and his adviser were eating honey cakes. A drop of honey fell onto the balcony wall. The King said, 'It's nothing to do with me. Someone else will deal with it.' The honey drop slid down the wall until a fly landed on it, and then a gecko caught the fly. But a cat had seen the gecko and lunged for it, just as a dog did. The noise of the two fighting caused the king to say again, 'It's nothing to do with me.' Eventually the owners of the cat and dog arrived and started fighting, then the whole town took sides, and eventually the country was in ruin. The King finally realised that it was most certainly to do with him – if he had only wiped up the honey drop, none of this would have happened.

We met different groups all around the Holy Land. Some were in current coexistence projects, or were part of communities who hoped to set up new groups. We were able to

show the facilitators how storytelling could enable participants to share their stories by either directly working with the participants or developing skills for the facilitators. At the YMCA in Jerusalem, we worked with teenagers, kindergarten teachers and parents, all keen to use storytelling as a way to share experiences in a more meaningful way.

### **The Brave Little Parrot**

The jungle is on fire, and all the animals run away. But the little parrot fills its wings with water to try to douse the flames. The God Shiva looks down, and in the form of an eagle asks why the parrot doesn't give up. The parrot replies, 'Because I want there to be a forest for the others who come after me.' Shiva is so moved by this, that he returns to the heavens and weeps, his tears putting out the flames.

We met a mixed group of people in a theatre that was nothing more than a shell. I worked with a group of bereaved parents who went into schools, one Israeli and one Palestinian together, to share their stories. Some of the men had come from Hebron – a two-and-a-half-hour drive away. They had to leave precisely on time, because they could not be back a minute later than the time on their permits. And yet they wanted to use every minute of the available time to help them to use storytelling to facilitate their work. We shared some examples of stories that were neutral to both Palestinian and Israeli, and they were happy to identify similar stories from within their cultures.

### **Red Coat, Green Coat**

There was a village, split by a road. One day a man walked down the road. Neither side of the road would agree on the colour of his coat – red or green? A war broke out between them. Much later, when the village was in ruins, the man came back the other way. This time everyone looked – and realised that on one side his coat was red, and the other side it was green.

[You need to look at both sides of the argument.]

We met with one group of 40 women who had been a developing co-existence group until six months previously. With riots, disturbances and death on the streets in their hometown, they had not felt comfortable to meet together. With a combination of storytelling, sharing games and songs, they were able to start dialogues with each other, and plan to continue the work with their local storyteller and facilitators.

### **Jo and the Carpenter**

Jo and his neighbour are good friends, until there is a dispute. Jo decides he will fence off his land and the river away from his neighbour. He engages a carpenter to build a fence. When he comes back, he finds the carpenter has built a bridge over the river, and on top of the bridge stands the neighbour, who is delighted to become friends again.

We arrived at the peace festival at Kibbutz Harduf – an Israeli settlement nestled between several Arab villages. Canopies were erected over the two storytelling spaces we were going to use. Over the next two days, we told stories for adults and children, and time after time people came to speak to us to tell us the meaning they had found in our stories. Artists came from the local Arab villages to show their traditions, dances and songs, while local Israeli storytellers told their stories, and there were musicians everywhere.

Coming from the multicultural setting of the UK, it might have been easy for us to be nonchalant about the mixture of cultures. But for many of the participants it was the first time they had made that move to understand and appreciate someone from a different culture. In the eating area, a group of Palestinian women started singing. A group of Israeli women, sitting nearby, joined in the singing, and then they were swapping songs. The spontaneity of the exchange moved some people to tears. I heard time and time again people say, 'This is what it is all about.'

### **The Mother-in-Law**

A young wife was finding it difficult to get on with her new mother-in-law. The local wise woman gave her a potion to massage into the mother-in-law every night, which would 'solve the problem'. Believing she was poisoning her mother-in-law by doing this, she was diligent in applying it every night. In time she came to know and understand her mother-in-law better, and was horrified when the oil bottle was nearly empty. She sought out the wise woman for an antidote, and was reassured that there was no poison, but wasn't her problem with the mother-in-law now solved?

Many of the people we had worked with in the previous two weeks, came to the festival and greeted us as old friends. We were touched that they had come, and they were pleased we remembered them (as if we could forget!). We had found that people wanted to be heard, and for their experience and pain to be witnessed. For the participants in the events when we were facilitating Palestinians and Israelis to meet for the first time, our neutrality was what made us acceptable. Our willingness to hear their stories and facilitate them to share their stories with others from across the cultures was the second step. Telling the stories we had to share enabled some people to think of their situation in a different light – the third step. Every journey starts with just one step.

### **The Starfish**

There had been a storm, and the beach was full of starfish. One man was walking along, picking up each one and putting it back in the sea. His friends called out to leave them – they would all be dead soon, it wouldn't make any difference. But the man kept picking them up, and as he put them in the sea one by one he said, 'Made a difference to that one, made a difference to that one, made a difference to that one.'

Whatever else we achieved, I know that when I remember the people we met, I can say, 'Made a difference to that one, made a difference to that one.' Any one of those people we met and shared stories with may be the very one who inspires future generations to the peace process.

[This article first appeared in *Facts & Fiction* Autumn 2009, the UK's only independent magazine devoted to oral storytelling ([www.factsandfiction.co.uk](http://www.factsandfiction.co.uk)). It has also appeared in *Network* 102.

Janet Dowling would be happy to talk to groups about her experiences, and to run workshops in storytelling in mediation and reconciliation. Contact her at [JADowling@aol.com](mailto:JADowling@aol.com) or 07834 194215. Website: [www.JanetTellsStories.co.uk](http://www.JanetTellsStories.co.uk).]

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## Out of the Blue

Val Rutt

I grew up believing that my father had a good deal of fun during the First World War. Whenever he met with his old army friends to reminisce, roars of laughter echoed round the room. Dad was a good storyteller but he never spoke directly about the incident that inspired my book *Out of the Blue*. Sometime after his death I started to wonder about the tragic event that occurred towards the end of the war that changed my parents' lives.

My mother and her family had stayed in London all through the Blitz, but in 1944, a few weeks after D Day (6 June 1944 – the day of the Normandy landings – initiating the Western Allied effort to liberate mainland Europe from Nazi occupation), my father arrived home unexpectedly. He insisted that she packed her bags and got out of London. He was on compassionate leave – two days earlier, with his battalion camped in a Kent field waiting to go to France, my father had survived one of the first V1 doodlebug explosions – 52 of his comrades had not.

My mother was able to tell me her side of the story: how she, at 23, with a one-year-old son, along with her mother and her younger brothers, ended up in a remote cottage in Worcestershire with no electricity, no running water and bats in the upstairs bedrooms. Dad stayed long enough to fix the well in the garden, then returned to his battalion. Within three weeks the company numbers were brought up to full strength and the battalion sailed for France.

My mother heard nothing for six weeks until, at last, a military field postcard arrived. Dad had ticked the box indicating 'I am well'. This news, which might seem to us like a lack of news now, was a relief to her, and preferable to an alternative box 'I have been wounded'. A week before, she had heard that her cousin Reg had been killed during the battle for Caen.

To find out about my Dad's side of the story I read documents at the National Archive in Kew, and letters and diaries in the reading room at the Imperial War Museum. My mother gave me some letters that my father had received from fellow survivors when he helped to organise a memorial service in 1994 (see extract below). I got in touch with Dad's regiment and through that contact met the families of other victims and survivors of the V1 explosion in Lenham. I made a new friend, Gail, whose house adjoins the field where men from the 6th Guards Tank Brigade REME were sleeping when the 'buzz bomb' fell, shortly after 6 a.m. on 24 June 1944. Gail and her neighbour kindly allowed me to explore the place where the tragedy occurred.

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meeting to <sup>(sorry!)</sup> ~~the~~ honour. They must never be forgotten. By us they never will be forgotten!  
So I shall be joining with you on 26<sup>th</sup> June, in remembrance, of those lads - our pals - who to us will forever be - 'LADS'! And our thoughts too will be with those they loved, and who loved them.

My Greetings and Very Best Wishes to you and to all those gathered together on 26<sup>th</sup> June.

Yours Sincerely

My book *Out of the Blue* is fiction, but I borrowed facts from what actually happened and descriptive details from eyewitness accounts of survival from V1s. I tried hard to get the language right in my dialogue – reading newspapers and *Picture Post* magazines from 1944, and listening to archived radio broadcasts from that era helped me with that.

Although my Dad chose not to speak about what happened, it was important to him that the men who lost their lives that day would be remembered. His anecdotes from the war, including the hilarious stories of the various pranks they played, reflected the camaraderie he experienced and the love he had for the many friends he lost. And out of respect for this, though I do describe the great cost to human life caused by the V1s, the story's main themes are love and hope; two things that war, however devastating, does not destroy.



[Val Rutt's website is at [www.valrutt.com](http://www.valrutt.com), and her blog can be read at [www.valruttblog.blogspot.com/](http://www.valruttblog.blogspot.com/). *Out of the Blue* is published by Piccadilly Press, 978 1 8481 2014 3,

'*Out of the Blue* is a poignant, gripping read. Val Rutt portrays beautifully how passion, pain and betrayal are evoked by an unexpected letter.' (Jamila Gavin, author of *Coram Boy*)]



## Wars and Conflicts

*Pam Robson\**

Themes of war and conflict, real and imagined, appear with depressing frequency in children's books for every age and genre. Though this seems a sad indictment of the world in which we live, it does suggest that these themes are popular reading choices. Authors of such titles do, of course, have access to action-packed settings into which stride 'larger than life' characters: heroes, cowards, victims and bullies.

The word 'conflict' can be used to describe tensions within or between groups of people, large and small. Religion is frequently a source of dissension. The generic conflict 'good versus evil' is a familiar device in fantasy and fairy tale. Titles for younger readers often reveal an implicit moralistic tone that attempts to highlight the futility of conflict and David McKee's picture book *Tusk Tusk* (1978) is a prime example.

The more specific theme of war has always been a popular choice of children's publishers and much historical fiction is set against a factual backdrop. Rosemary Sutcliff used conflicts of the distant past as settings for her novels that she has rendered so authentic with her eloquent dialogues composed in a 'register of antiquity' (John Stephens). The First and Second World Wars feature most frequently as wartime themes. Futuristic titles either suggest the end of the world, or at the very least a dystopia, as a consequence of devastating technological warfare or some 'brave new world'. Optimism and pessimism are represented equally in stories of war and conflict, whether fantasy or reality based, because they portray both the best and the worst of humanity. 'Life is beautiful, but the world is hell' (Harold Pinter).

The list that follows deliberately omits such classic titles as Nina Bawden's *Carrie's War* (1973), Christophe Gallaz and Ian McEwan's *Rose Blanche* (illus. Roberto Innocenti) (1985), Anne Holm's *I am David* (1965), Judith Kerr's *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971), Penelope Lively's *Going Back* (1975), David McKee's *Tusk Tusk* (1978), Ian Serrailier's *The Silver Sword* (1956), Noel Streatfeild's *When the Siren Wailed* (1974), Jill Paton Walsh's *The Dolphin Crossing* (1967), Robert Westall's *The Machine Gunners* (1975) and *Blitzcat* (1989), and Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* (2001) and *Briar Rose* (1994). It is worth noting that several of the authors named below have written further, equally significant, books on the theme of war. See also Kate Agnew and Geoff Fox, *Children at War: From the First World War to the Gulf*, London: Continuum, 2001, for both a critical discussion and many additional titles.

\*With some further titles from Sue Mansfield and Jennifer Harding.

### First World War

#### **Theresa Breslin, *Remembrance, Corgi, 0552547387, 2003***

In this teenage war story, which raises gender issues, the setting shifts between Stratharden, a Scottish village, London and the Western Front. A compelling story of love across classes, war service and tragedy reveals a war that seemed pointless to many.

#### **Michael Foreman, *War Game, Puffin, 0140371397, 1993***

Dedicated to Foreman's four uncles who died in the First World War, this book is based on the true story of a Christmas Day football match, evoking life in the trenches. The tragic ending serves to emphasise the futility of war. Black-and-white artwork is interspersed with wartime memorabilia. A taut text says much in a very few words.

#### **Iain Lawrence, *Lord of the Nutcracker Men, Collins, 0007135572, 2001***

A well-researched novel for older readers: the eponymous Nutcracker Men are wooden soldiers given to Johnny by his toymaker father, who enlists in 1914 and writes letters from the front, while at home Johnny plays war games with his soldiers, creating deadly parallels.

**Elsie McCutcheon, *Summer of the Zeppelin*, Puffin, 0140316612, 1983**

The setting for this gripping novel is Suffolk in 1918. Elvira's father is away at the front and, feeling neglected, she befriends a German prisoner of war and gains a new perspective on life. Anti-German feelings are well portrayed.

**Michael Morpurgo, *War Horse*, Egmont, 0769704454, 1982**

First-person narrative from one of the many horses ridden by the men who fought on the Western Front.

**Michael Morpurgo, *Private Peaceful*, HarperCollins, 0007150075, 2003**

During a long, tense night, Private 'Tommo' Peaceful looks back at his childhood in the countryside, his close family ties and his time in the army in France with his brother Charlie.

**Michael Morpurgo, *Why the Whales Came*, Mammoth, 0749746939, 1999**

A fact-based story for older readers set in the Scilly Isles in 1914. A reclusive character, the Birdman is accused of spying, but attempts to save beached whales unite the islanders.

**James Riordan, *War Song*, Oxford, 0192718541, 2001**

Sequel to *When the Guns Fall Silent* (2000), this is the story of two girls' part in the war effort, first working in munitions, then as Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses at home and overseas.

**Marcus Sedgwick, *The Foreshadowing*, Orion, 1842555170, 2005**

Seventeen-year-old Sasha finds to her horror that, like Cassandra in the Greek myth, she can foresee the deaths of people she meets. Volunteering as a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse, she runs away to Flanders to try to save the life of her brother.

## **Second World War**

**Joe Layburn, illus. John Williams, *Ghostscape*, Frances Lincoln, 9781845078263, 2008**

When Aisha comes across a pale, skinny boy called Richard in the school washrooms, of all places, she is as surprised to meet a 1940s boy as he is to see a black girl wearing a headscarf. Aisha is transported back 60 years to the time of the Blitz, when her school was a sanctuary for East Enders fleeing the bombing. The narrative is based on a true story about a present-day East London school.

**Rachel Anderson, *Paper Faces*, Oxford, 0192751654, 1991**

This moving story for older readers begins in London on VE Day (Victory in Europe Day, 8 May 1945). Through the eyes of little Dot the reader observes the effect of war on the city, and the return of her scarcely known father who has had a breakdown.

**Elizabeth Beresford, illus. James Mayhew, *Lizzy's War*, Hodder, 0340795174, 1993**

A story for the very young set in Brighton. Lizzy and her mum are bombed out of their home and Lizzy is evacuated to the countryside to live with the elderly, scatterbrained Miss Damps and her little dog. In the sequel *Lizzy Fights On* (1996), Lizzy's dad returns from the war.

**Martin Booth, *Music on the Bamboo Radio*, Puffin, 01403833662, 1997**

Set in Hong Kong in 1941, this book portrays the Japanese invasion and the young protagonist's life in disguise as a Chinese peasant. The horror of war is ever present, but never overdone. A happy ending.

**John Boyne, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, Random House, 0099487821, 2006**

This novel for older readers focuses on a German boy, 9-year-old Bruno, whose father becomes commandant of Auschwitz. Bruno befriends a young inmate, Shmuel, but remains totally oblivious of the reality until the bitter end. Adapted as a film.

**Herbie Brennan, *Final Victory*, A & C Black, 0713654260, 2000**

Set in Berlin in 1945, this book shows 12-year-old Jurgen Wolf, a member of the Hitler Youth, refusing to face reality and endeavouring to follow Hitler's order to kill the Russians, thus leading his troop of boy soldiers to certain death.

**Susan Cooper, illus. Margery Gill. *Dawn of Fear*, Puffin, 0140307192, 1970**

A novel for older readers, set in a new town on the edge of London. The bigger conflict is reflected in a lesser one between rival gangs of boys. Against a background of sirens and air raids the two gangs, clash and fists fly. Then one boy's best friend and his family are killed by a bomb and the boys have a common enemy.

**Michael Cronin, *Against the Day*, Oxford, 0192750399, 1998**

A teenage fantasy that takes the reader back in time to 1940 Britain but changes the outcome of the Nazi invasion. The Germans have occupied the country and in the village of Shevington the community gets on with daily life. Cronin paints a fascinating picture of the reactions of various characters to the situation.

**Terry Deary, *Put Out the Light*, A & C Black, 9781408130544, 2010**

The stories of two separate groups of children, in Germany and in Sheffield, eventually coalesce, in a narrative that highlights many aspects of the war: air raids and the blackout, German forced labour camps and rationing.

**Michael Foreman, *War Boy: A Country Childhood*, Puffin, 0140342990, 1989**

This autobiographical illustrated text is an excellent source of authentic background material with lots of amusing details. Sequel: *After the War Was Over* (1995).

**Dennis Hamley, *Ellen's People*, Walker, 1844282198, 2006**

An outstanding crossover novel narrated by the eponymous Ellen, set in a village in Sussex during the Second World War. Ellen, the eldest girl in a poor family, works as a maid while her brother and his friends enlist. Hamley presents class and national barriers, and the physical consequences of the war.

**James Heneghan *Wish Me Luck*, Orion, 1858816106, 1998**

A powerful novel for older readers, set in Liverpool. Three children of Irish background are evacuated by liner to Canada, but their ship is torpedoed by a U-boat; they survive but most of the other children are drowned, and back in Liverpool they become friends. Superb character development.

**Jenny Koralek, *War Games*, Egmont, 140520074X, 2002**

A story of a Jewish boy taken from Czechoslovakia to England in 1939, and whose parents die. The war is viewed through his eyes and those of a South African girl also brought to England.

**Christa Laird, *Shadow of the Wall*, Red Fox, 009940057X, 1989**

Set in the Warsaw ghetto, and based on a true story, with a tragic ending when orphans and the doctor who cares for them are 'sent east'.

**Joan Lingard, *Tug of War*, Puffin, 0140373195, 1989**

Set in Latvia during the Second World War, this book describes the respective experiences of twins separated by the Russian invasion. The sequel, *Between Two Worlds* (1991), follows the family after they reach Canada.

**Michelle Magorian, *A Little Love Song*, Mammoth, 0749710616, 1991**

This powerful, sexually explicit teenage novel, published 1991, is set in a British seaside town during the Second World War. Moral issues, gender differences and romantic relationships are explored, together with the treatment of unmarried mothers.

**Michelle Magorian, *Back Home*, Puffin, 0140319077, 1985**

This novel for older readers, set in 1945, depicts a 12-year-old girl who has spent five years as an evacuee in America. During her absence, her mother has become a car mechanic. The girl is torn between two cultures, while her mother is divided between old loyalties and new-found independence.

**Michelle Magorian, *Goodnight Mr Tom*, Puffin, 0140315411, 1981**

A deprived child finds warmth and kindness when he is evacuated, but his neglectful mother summons him back home.

**Michael Morpurgo, *Adolphus Tips*, HarperCollins, 0007182457**

The focus of this book is the preparation for the Allied D-Day landings, seen through the eyes of a local girl, whose journal of the time is the means of, much later, relating the story to her grandson.

**Linda Newbery, *Sisterland*, David Fickling, 038560470X, 2003**

This teenage novel is constructed around events of the Holocaust. There are flashbacks to the childhood of German–Jewish grandmother Heidigran, who lied about her Jewish background. She is suffering from Alzheimers and the truth gradually comes to light. There are also issues concerning the Palestinian conflict, homosexuality, racism and pregnancy. Factual quotes from history preface each chapter.

**James Riordan, *The Enemy*, Hodder/Wayland, 0750234393, 2001**

Set in France during the evacuation from Dunkirk, the narrative opens in the present and moves into the past as the narrator, then a girl of 12, tells how she and her mother harbour an English and a German soldier on their farm; they become friends, raising the question ‘Who is the enemy?’ Facts and a glossary are listed at the back.

**James Riordan, *The Prisoner*, Oxford University Press, 0192751263, 1999**

Two British children hear the other side of the story from a German pilot who has baled out.

**Robert Swindells, *Blitzed*, Doubleday, 0385410425, 2002**

In this time-slip novel for older readers, a boy fascinated by the Second World War finds himself in London in 1940, where he meets up with young people orphaned by the war: together they identify a German spy.

**Victor Watson, *Paradise Barn*, Catnip, 9781846470912, 2009**

Watson’s first novel uses wartime England as a background, showing a time when children were left to their own devices and danger was a part of everyday life.

### **Other Conflicts**

**Tony Bradman (ed.), illus. Jon Riley, *Gripping War Stories*, Corgi, 0552545260, 1998**

A collection of 10 war stories for older readers, covering a number of conflicts, from the Falklands to North American Indian tribal warfare, and raising a variety of issues. Writers include Anthony Masters, Linda Newbery, Robert Leeson and Laurence Staig.

**Elizabeth Laird, *Kiss the Dust*, Macmillan, 0230014313, 1991**

Tara and her Kurdish family flee Iraq at the time of the first Gulf War, finally arriving to try to find shelter in the UK.

**Elizabeth Laird, *A Little Piece of Ground*, Macmillan, 0330436791, 2003**

This story of Palestinian boys desperate to find somewhere to play football highlights the plight of ordinary children in this conflict.

**Jan Mark, *The Hillingdon Fox*, Puffin, 0140372911, 1991**

The plot of this novel for older readers is based on the diaries of two brothers, written 10 years apart, which record the Falklands War and the Gulf War.

**Robert Westall, *Gulf*, Egmont, 1405200901, 1992**

The viewpoint of each side in the Gulf War is seen through the eyes of Figgis, who dreams about, and becomes, an Arab boy living in Baghdad during the war. Tom, his brother, watches events but is helpless to intervene.

### **Civil War**

**Elizabeth Laird, *Oranges in No Man’s Land*, Macmillan, 9780330450270, 2006**

Set in Beirut during the civil war in Lebanon, this book tells the story of Ayesha who travels across no-man’s-land to help her sick grandmother.

**Mark O’Sullivan, *Melody for Nora*, Wolfhound Press, 0863274250, 1994**

This teenage novel is set in Ireland in 1922, depicting the civil war at the foundation of the new Irish Free State. Nora becomes involved in hostilities when a wounded irregular seeks her help.

**Gary Paulsen, *Sarny*, Macmillan, 0330351516, 1997**

This teenage story, the sequel to *Nightjohn* (1994), portrays a newly freed slave in the American south, recalling her experiences, which involve the loss of her family.

**Billi Rosen, *Andi's War*, Faber, 0571153410, 1988**

Set in Greece after the Second World War, this novel depicts the civil war between communists and monarchists. Descriptions are brutal in this riveting story that is packed with emotion and stormy relationships.

**James Watson, *The Freedom Tree*, Puffin, 0141300329, 1976**

This teenage novel is an indictment of war. Will's father has been killed in Spain so the teenager decides to go there, and encounters grim brutality and the futility of the war, especially the bombing of Guernica.

### **Refugees and Child Soldiers**

**Bernard Ashley, *Little Soldier*, Orchard, 1860398790, 1999**

A powerful teenage novel about an East African boy 'rescued' by do-gooders and brought to London's Docklands to live with foster parents. His dreadful experiences cause emotional trauma.

**Peter Dickinson, *AK*, Macmillan, 0330482041, 1990**

Set in a fictitious African state, this novel recounts tribal differences and corruption leading to torture and bloodshed. The conclusion is open-ended.

**Deborah Ellis, *Parvana's Journey*, Oxford, 0192753487, 2002**

This sequel to *The Breadwinner* (2000) is set in Afghanistan during the days of the Taliban. After Parvana's father dies she sets off to find her mother and siblings, a search during which many traumatic events occur.

**Stewart Ross, *Only a Matter of Time: A Story from Kosovo*, Hodder/Wayland, 0750237333, 2001**

The story of a Kosovan Albanian family when the Serbs practised ethnic cleansing. The narrator is Drita, a teenager who tells of her love for a Serbian boy, Zoran, and how they are determined to defy racism. The horrifying story of massacre and plunder is based on a Human Rights report of the time.

**Benjamin Zephaniah, *Refugee Boy*, Bloomsbury, 0747550867, 2001**

This novel for older readers is set in London's East End and depicts the plight of Alem, from Ethiopia, who is denied refugee status until he loses both his parents.

### **Religious Conflicts**

**Lynne Reid Banks, *Broken Bridge*, Puffin, 0140366075, 1994**

This teenage novel, sequel to *One More River* (1973), is a hard-hitting indictment of the situation in Israel in the 1990s, prior to peace negotiations. Themes include murder, terrorism and sectarian violence, but the tragic ending offers a glimmer of hope for peace in the future.

**Anita Desai, *The Peacock Garden*, Mammoth, 0749705922, 1979**

An autobiographical novel for 9–12 year olds, based on the author's own childhood, set in the Punjab in 1947, during the Hindu/Muslim conflict. A useful discussion tool about tolerance of the beliefs of others.

**Suzanne Fisher Staples, *Under the Persimmon Tree*, Walker, 0744555973, 2006**

This powerful, fast-moving teenage novel is set in war-torn Afghanistan during the conflict between the Taliban and the USA. The image of the persimmon links two female characters, Najmar, fleeing in disguise from the horrors of war, and Elaine (Nusrat), an American married to an Afghan doctor. There are no happy endings, but the author presents a balanced view of Islam and provides details about Amnesty International.

## **Moral Conflicts**

**Malachy Doyle, illus. Jac Jones, *Little People, Big People*, Faber, 057119320X, 1998**

A new version of an old Irish folk tale for younger readers. The eponymous 'little people' live in a kingdom beneath the ground and when they meet the big people a romance begins that unites the two groups, producing new people who are neither little nor big. The moral here seems to suggest that a tolerant society is preferable to conflict.

**Jeanne du Prau, *The People of Sparks*, Corgi, 0552552399, 2006**

The sequel to *The City of Ember* (2004), this book presents conflict between the refugees from the underground city and their reluctant hosts. The message is of the need to live together.

**Neil Gaiman, illus. Chris Riddell *The Graveyard Book*, Bloomsbury, 9780747594802, 2008**

Winner of the Newbery Medal 2009, this fantasy for older readers opens with the horrific knifing to death of the family of a toddler, who escapes by wandering into the local graveyard. He is named Nobody (Bod), and is 'adopted' by the ghostly residents. His ghostly skills protect him from the evil men who killed his family and are intent on murdering him, thus causing them to die, but raising ethical questions.

**Diana Wynne Jones, *Power of Three*, Collins, 0007113706, 1976**

A fantasy for older readers reissued in 2001. Parallel worlds exist within the real world; two hostile tribes inhabit the moors, unknown to the 'Giants' whom the reader eventually realises are humans. At last the power of an ancient curse compels them to come together and talk, and they discover that they have more in common than they had realised.

**Nick Manns, *Control-Shift*, Hodder, 0340765119, 2000**

A thought-provoking ghost story for older readers with much reference to ethical and moral issues raised by the use of lethal weapons. Graham's father designs a war plane and, in their new home, Graham and his little sister Matty realise that ghosts, victims of war, have been raised by their father's work.

## **Diaries**

**Marcia Williams, *Archie's War*, Walker, 9781406304275, 2007**

In 1914, just before the outbreak of the First World War, 13-year-old Archie is sent a scrapbook in the post from his Uncle Colin. In the years that follow, until the war ends in 1918, we experience life via Archie's eyes and learn about his world and his family through an exhilarating collage of strip comics, doodles, drawings, cartoon characters, mementoes, photos, thoughts and jokes, giving an insight into what it was like being a child at this important time in history.

**Mick Manning, illus. Brita Granström, *Tail-End Charlie*, Frances Lincoln, 9781847800756, 2009**

As a boy, Mick Manning listened to his father's hair-raising tales about life as an RAF air-gunner during the Second World War. Now, years later, he has carefully recreated his father's stories, writing them down as if his father were speaking the words. The reader can find out what it was really like to put up with food rationing, undergo RAF training, take off in a bomber, face enemy fighters, and survive the Battle of the Bulge (1944–1945).

**Anthony Robinson and Annemarie Young, illus. June Allan, *Mohammed's Journey: A Refugee Diary*, Frances Lincoln, 9781845076535, 2009**

A book for the pre-teen reader. The matter-of-fact text and the restrained illustrations resist the exploitation of suffering and indignity and offer enough support to the text to provoke the reader's empathetic imagination. Colour photographs mounted as if in a scrapbook of snapshots, remind the reader that this happened not so long ago and is still happening to children who sit in British classrooms.

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## REVIEWS

### Books about Children's Literature

#### *The Sands of Time – Children's Literature: Culture, Politics and Identity*

Jenny Plastow and Margot Hillel (ed.), Children's Literature Annual No. 3: Papers and Presentations from the 2008 Conference, Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire School of Education, pb. 978 1 9053 1380 8, £14.99, 2010, 176pp.

The intention of the conference at which the papers collected in this book were presented was 'to locate children's literature in the changing landscape of politics, and to examine the ways in which it is used to induct, coerce and indoctrinate as well as to educate and inform' (p.1). After a brief but illuminating survey of the ways in which children's literature through the ages has challenged accepted norms, the editors introduce the rationale for the tripartite structure of the book and the place of the 12 articles within it.

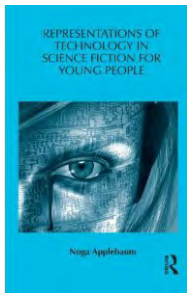
Two of the four writers in the 'Culture' section focus on education: Roxanne Harde writes about the construction of class in writing by the New England author Elizabeth Scott Phelps, while Judith Humphrey highlights how the girls' school story could be conducive to scholarship in young women. Mary Clarke looks at how fairy-tale structures can be found in the work of both Dickens and Margaret Mahy, and Karen Schuitema presents the evidence for a strongly intercultural strand in recent British children's theatre, on the basis of dramatised versions of Eileen Browne's *Handa's Surprise*, Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Jamila Gavin's *Coram Boy* and the fairy tale 'The Nightingale'.

Two distinguished writers of children's literature about conflict, Beverley Naidoo and Elizabeth Laird, feature in the 'Politics' section. Naidoo confronts the human tendency to 'build fences' between ourselves and what seems 'other', and, with reference to a range of her own fiction, discusses what happens when we discover commonalities with those on the other side of the fence. In an interview with Richard MacSween, Laird justifies both her habit of writing about conflicts outside her own direct personal experience and her reliance on information derived from the people directly involved. The other articles in this section are a study of Australian picture books by Margot Hillel, one of the editors, and Karen Argent's consideration of the picture books depicting disability that were used in a small selection of nursery schools.

The final section, 'Identity', is perhaps the most various. It features E. Nesbit's *The Magic City* (Madelyn Travis), changing perspectives on Robin Hood (Chris Clark), Theresa Breslin's *Remembrance* (Andrea Peterson), and a parallel study of Maurice Sendak's *The Sign on Rosie's Door* and Christina Stead's *The Man who Loved Children* (Philip Stogdon).

With a collection as varied as this, the question inevitably arises as to its degree of cohesion. Here I think the words of the editors, about their wish to examine how authors are constantly seeking to influence young readers, are surely fulfilled by all the contributors in their presentations of the variety of different perspectives offered within the changing landscapes of politics. The volume is a worthy successor to its predecessors on children's literature in relation to Marxism (Annual No. 1) and psychoanalysis (Annual No. 2).





***Representations of Technology in Science Fiction for Young People***

Noga Applebaum, New York and Abingdon: Routledge, pb. 978 0 4159 8951 0, £80.00, 2010, 214pp.

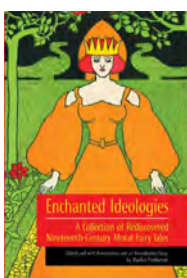
It has been a matter for concern for some time that, in literature for young people, computers and information technology in general appear often to be represented in a negative way, reflecting adults' ambivalence towards children's interaction with the internet and computer games. In this study, which involves the analysis of a very wide range of post-1980 novels and short stories, digital fiction, films and computer games in the context of an impressive list of theoretical works, Noga Applebaum finds evidence to support this assertion, and confronts readers with the need for changing attitudes towards technology.

After a brief survey of the genre, Applebaum provides a justification for her choice of themes: the relationship between technology and nature; the cultural rift between the humanities and the sciences; the impact of modern technology, especially digital media, on the narratives of juvenile fiction; the adult-child power dynamic; and finally the engagement with biotechnology, especially cloning.

The first chapter looks at social attitudes in 16 science-fiction texts for young people, taking as a framework three models: mechanism, for a society in which technology is used to exploit and dominate nature; naturalism, where technology is perceived as dangerous; and equilibrium, where a partnership has been formed between humanity and nature. Disquietingly, most of the novels analysed depicted mechanistic societies, generally taken as warnings, with a non-technologised primordial world generally being offered as a desirable alternative. Only a quarter of the texts were prepared to offer a balance between technology and nature conservation as a viable alternative to this. Similar apprehension about the future is displayed in the novels analysed in the second chapter, which tend to present their young protagonists looking to the past rather than the future. The third chapter shows that, while technology features in a wide range of novels, very few authors of science fiction seem prepared to engage with it structurally and stylistically; instead they reject the possibilities offered by narratives, such as those of computer games, with which their young readers are already very conversant. Applebaum's discussion moves in chapter four to a consideration of how childhood is seen as both vulnerable and dangerous, while few books for young people offer them the same kind of empowerment as they themselves already experience in their own online writings. The texts examined in the final chapter take on the current debate about cloning, rejecting it as an agent of social transformation.

Applebaum voices her concern about the extent to which literature for young readers displays a degree of technophobia, making more vivid the fears that adults hold of technologies, which they see as dangerous rather than beneficial. Her meticulous and thorough study has the well-justified closing words: 'The gatekeepers of children's literature – parents, educators, authors and publishers – must come to terms with this savvy audience by offering a wider range of literary perspectives on technology or potentially face a further decline in the relationship between young people and the printed book' (p.161).

**Pat Pinsent**



***Enchanted Ideologies: A Collection of Rediscovered Nineteenth-Century Moral Fairy Tales***

Marilyn Pemberton (ed.), Lambertville, NJ: The True Bill Press, hb. 978 0 9791 1165 5, \$45, 2010, 302pp.

The origin of this volume lies in a conference paper given in the USA in 2006, in which Marilyn Pemberton examined the use of the past in three Victorian fairy tales 'to ensure a happily ever after'. She was then encouraged to collect 18 further examples from this largely forgotten genre, written between 1819 and 1899 and published in popular journals whose intended audience was children or their parents. She presents them here as indicators to prescribed family values and the changes in these that occurred over the



century. Few, if any, of the stories have been reprinted since their original publication in generally obscure sources. Prefaced by Pemberton's scholarly introductory essay, and accompanied by her annotations that document contemporary references and places, people and concepts mentioned, it fills a gap in the resources readily available to students of fairy tales and the nineteenth century alike.

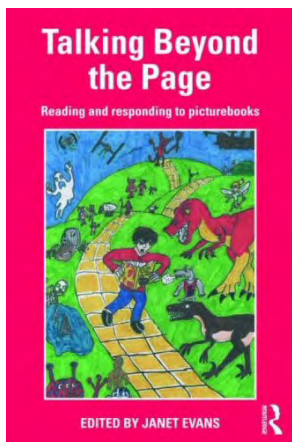
Pemberton emphasises that these tales were written not only to entertain but also to instruct both children and their parents in the principles of approved social conduct during a period of unprecedented changes, notably in the structure and internal function of the family unit, itself considered to be a microcosm of society. Among the authors are Dinah Craik, Edith Nesbit, Mary Louisa Molesworth and Mary Sherwood; given the purpose of these tales, the sparsity of male authors is unsurprising.

The introduction to this anthology first attempts to define the fairy tale and to position the texts in this collection as being written for, and read by, the burgeoning middle class. There then follows an explanation of how and why the family evolved over the centuries, depending on the dictates and influences of such external elements as the religious, the social and the political. Pemberton considers that although the role of the female continued to be one predominantly of submission, passivity and nurturance, by the end of the nineteenth century it had to change radically, resulting in a move from the confines and security of the private sphere, as a result of the lack of marriage partners and the desire for financial independence. The social construct of the child was also transformed from being merely that of an unformed adult, inherently sinful from birth, to one warranting his/her own time (childhood), own clothes and own literature.

All the tales included here reflect the prevalent societal values pertaining to 'proper' behaviour, and the gender roles accepted and expected during the period. Those from the first half of the nineteenth century tend to be supportive, focusing very much on the need for a female to be worthy and 'amiable', a much used word in these texts. Pemberton asserts that from the 1850s onward there is then a definite tendency to focus on domestic ideals, with the fairy tales emphasising the correct gender roles within the idealised home and family. The fairy tales from the second half of the century tend to derive from children's magazines and many are less supportive of the accepted social values, with the subversion of the fairy-tale conventions themselves epitomising a challenge to social ones. Some tales particularly disavow material gain, which is perhaps ironic in a genre that traditionally celebrates it. Finally, toward the turn of the century, some fairy tales tell of independent, brave and active heroines, signalling the changing role of the female in society and the emergence of the 'new woman'.

This is a fascinating collection, giving us a new perspective on many forgotten authors in addition to the social gloss that is Pemberton's primary interest. It is a pity that the physical presentation and arrangement of Pemberton's book do not always do justice to the text. A particular shortcoming is the table of contents that does not include the authors' names beside their tales. There are some deficiencies in proofreading and the organisation of the footnotes detracts from the appearance and content of the tales themselves. I also have concerns about occasional inaccuracies in footnotes, such as note 94 that confuses public schools and preparatory schools (p.44).

These reservations aside, it is certainly good to see these works reappear in print, and to have them set within their literary and cultural context. The book opens our eyes to the wider world of fairy tales and to the writers who chose them as a lesser-known outlet for their ideas.



### ***Talking Beyond the Page: Reading and Responding to Picturebooks***

Janet Evans (ed.), Abingdon: Routledge, pb. 978 0 4154 7696 6, £23.99, 2009, 224pp.

It is more than 10 years since Janet Evans' *What's in the Picture* was published, and the Senior Lecturer in Education at Liverpool Hope University has now edited a new book on the subject, in which she explores the educational value, to children of all ages, of different kinds of picture book, analyses how the children react, and highlights developments in teaching, talking and thinking about picture books. The papers offer work from internationally acclaimed academic experts, from the UK, Canada, the USA and Australia. The concluding chapter is an interview between Evans and the much-acclaimed children's picture-book author Anthony Browne – winner of many international awards including the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen illustration award, and who is also the current Children's Laureate.

This is an enormously accessible book, and Evans clearly is aware of the time constraints and workload which currently dominate primary teaching, leaving minimal time to research beyond the immediate and essential. She organises the papers into three sections. In her introduction to the first of these she emphasises the importance of talking about picture books with young readers, and briefly indicates the focus of each section. This first section, titled 'What to Respond To? Attending to Aspects of Picturebooks', commences with 'Understanding Visual Images in Picturebooks' (Frank Serafini), which examines the work of Anthony Browne in the light of theories of semiotics and visual grammar. The following chapters discuss 'Developing New Literacies: Responding to Picturebooks in Multiliterate Ways' (Michèle Anstey and Geoff Bull), 'Exploring Children's Responses to the Postmodern Picturebook: Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?' (Sylvia Pantaleo), 'Picturebook Endpapers: Resources for Literary and Aesthetic Interpretation' (Lawrence Sipe and Caroline E. McGuire) and 'Making and Breaking Frames: Crossing the Borders of Expectation in Picturebooks' (Vivienne Smith). Each of these chapters examines responses to aspects beyond the immediate text or image.

In the second section, 'Different Texts, Different Responses', Evans again prefaces her contributors' papers with reflections of her own, this time on 'Reading The Visual: Creative and Aesthetic Responses to Picturebooks and Fine Art', indicating that the multiplicity of the reactions displayed by children, linked with experience, can help them deal with complex issues in their lives. Three papers follow: 'Thinking in Action: Analysing Children's Multimodal Responses to Multimodal Picturebooks' (Morag Styles and Kate Noble), 'Sharing Visual Experiences of a New Culture: Immigrant Children's Responses to Picturebooks and Other Visual Texts' (Evelyn Arizpe) and 'Developing Understanding of Narrative, Empathy and Inference through Picturebooks' (Prue Goodwin). Each chapter here again is prefaced by a brief abstract of its argument.

In the final section, 'Thoughts from an Author Illustrator', Evans interview with Browne is contained in the only chapter in this section: 'A Master in his Time'. Browne shares thoughts about his work and the unique way children think about and respond to visual images and other aspects of picture books. This makes an interesting chapter to compare with an earlier interview that Evans had included in *What's in the Picture* (1998), and allows readers to gauge the development of Browne's thoughts during the intervening years.

A worthy successor to that text, *Talking Beyond the Page* is richly illustrated (which, regrettably, cannot always be taken for granted in academic discussions of images), and meticulously referenced and indexed. As a champion of reader response, Evans has also ensured that a substantial proportion of the text comprises the opinions (and images) of the readers themselves, again an area often overlooked in scholarly discussions of children's literature!

**Bridget Carrington**

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***Pagan Themes in Modern Children's Fiction: Green Man, Shamanism, Earth Mysteries***

Peter Bramwell, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, hb. 978 0 2302 1839 0, £50.00, 2009, 256pp.

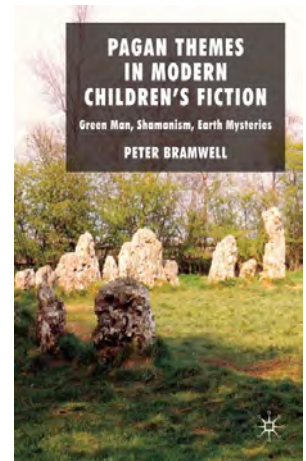
Pagan themes have provided rich material for children's authors over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In this scholarly study, Peter Bramwell brings to light a wide range of novels and short stories for young readers that deal in matters of myth, belief, practice and politics pertinent to modern paganism. Indeed, the broad scope of Bramwell's work is one of its many strengths, especially as a number of his key texts have not previously been critically examined. Fiction by several familiar authors helps provide a mainstream interest, however, as *Pagan Themes* discusses Rudyard Kipling, John Masefield, Susan Cooper, Penelope Lively and Philip Pullman alongside less well-known novelists.

Bramwell begins by 'locating' paganism within a number of critical and theoretical frameworks. The pagan chronotope allows him to explore ideological tensions that exist in many books aimed at children. The importance of the local and specific is set against shared, global concerns, for example, while cyclical time clashes with trajectories of impending apocalypse. Models of magic and fantasy are also invoked to help discuss aspects of identity that are worked through in pagan themes: the most important of these are the relationship between spirituality and childhood, the balance between masculine and feminine, and the potential for conflict between, or assimilation of, different cultures.

The rest of the book is organised into three long chapters: 'Herne the Hunter and the Green Man', 'Shamanism and the Pull of the North' and 'Prehistoric Monuments, Witchcraft and Environmentalism'. Each chapter is dedicated to identifying and analysing these tropes in children's fiction and the result is a treasure trove of fascinating literary examples and well-researched background information on the surprisingly varied beliefs and practices subsumed under the banner of paganism. The texts are also varied. For instance, Bramwell's section on the growing importance of the Green Man as literary god introduces Bel Mooney and Helen Cann's picturebook, *The Green Man* and a short story of the same title by Jane Gardam, as well as novels for young adults; and his discussion ranges from consideration of earlier literary loyalty to the classical god Pan, to foliage heads found in churches, and the Green Man's potential as an ecological warrior.

The chapter on shamanism is perhaps the most fully worked through – Bramwell has written on this topic before and notes that 'a whole book could be written about [it]' (p.84). It provides particularly detailed readings of primary texts, chiefly Michele Paver's *Chronicles of Ancient Darkness* series and several novels by Susan Price. Bramwell carefully considers the role of the shaman in modern Western contexts and asks how far it can reflect individualistic, self-determined and counterculture trends rather than conventional patriarchal and conformist approaches to apprenticeship and magical ability. The profuse nature of the material is managed by focusing on northern traditions, including Norse mythologies, and earlier in the book Bramwell makes a compelling case for thinking about fictional representations of northern shamanism as a kind of 'borealism' along the same lines as Said's orientalism 'as forbidden – often erotic – fantasies have been located in the orient ... savage aggression is retrojected into the northern Heathen past' (p.20).

Bramwell's discussion of prehistoric monuments such as the Rollright Stones and Stonehenge is especially enlightening, although tying in Wiccan themes in this final chapter is possibly more distracting than enriching. The complex tensions between heritage and development, environment and technology are fully explored through a chronological survey of children's books focused mainly on stone circles. That only tantalising glimpses are given of other pagan landmarks such as barrows, ley lines and white horses demonstrates just how extensive a study might be made of prehistorical monuments alone in children's literature.



Although convincing literary readings are provided throughout, the main purpose of *Pagan Themes* is not to construct an overarching theory but to argue that ‘Pagan elements in children’s literature merit disciplined critical scrutiny’ (p.1). Bramwell certainly succeeds in submitting a huge number of texts to this scrutiny, but there are times where I would like to have encountered a little more in terms of broad argument or conclusions. Personally, I required more consideration of how paganism is portrayed through realist or fantasy traditions, although other readers may not miss this discussion. There might also have been more room made for clear historicising: it is never made explicit what is meant by ‘modern’ children’s fiction, for example. There are also instances where publication dates in the 1960s and 1970s have crucial implications for the role of female magic and agency and Bramwell does not always provide comment. One final small objection is that some very grave issues are raised without ever being fully addressed. One such issue is the exploration of conservation in children’s fiction, which is politically troubling when it implies ‘parochial rejection of the non-native, with all that implies in human terms, for example in the treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers’ (p.77).

These are minor complaints, however. Bramwell’s book includes a wealth of knowledge about modern paganism and the debates surrounding its status, meaning and influence in literary and cultural spheres. As a thoughtful critical study and an introduction to an exciting tradition in children’s literature, *Pagan Themes* is well worth reading.

**Alison Waller**

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### Children’s Books

#### *In the Land of Punctuation*

Christian Morgenstern (illus. Rathna Ramanathan, trans. Sirish Rao), London: Tara Books, hb. 978 8 1907 5460 6, £9.99, 2009, 36pp.

Written in 1905 by the German poet Christian Morgenstern, *In the Land of Punctuation* is described as a ‘comic poem on language ... a linguistic caprice ... populated by punctuation marks as characters with their own agendas ... and yet the political undertones are unmistakable, suggesting systems of control that go beyond language’. This description is on the back cover of the English edition. I turned to it after looking through the book and wondering what it was about and how I should be interpreting these pages. The descriptions goes on to say that with ‘typographic illustrations [see below], this is a picture book for all ages’. It is a hardback that is a pleasure to hold and to turn the high-quality 120gsm pages.

The title page gives that title as /’PUN(C)TU-’A’{T}IO;N, thus incorporating several punctuation marks. The poem is presented a verse at a time on each double spread, Figure 1 showing the opening spread and the first verse. The red of the figures as reproduced here does not do justice to the book, which uses a more muted and browner red.

To me the book makes a play on the battle that seems to exist between formal and informal writing. I find that I puzzle over semicolons and feel that I should use them in formal writing but my letters and emails never contain any. In informal writing the dash is far more common as my thoughts spill out. The liveliness of the double spreads showing the battles between the various punctuation marks will be interpreted by each reader in a different way and will make them rethink their use of them. A young reader may well be more taken up by the design which would certain give ideas for art classes and for informal doodling.



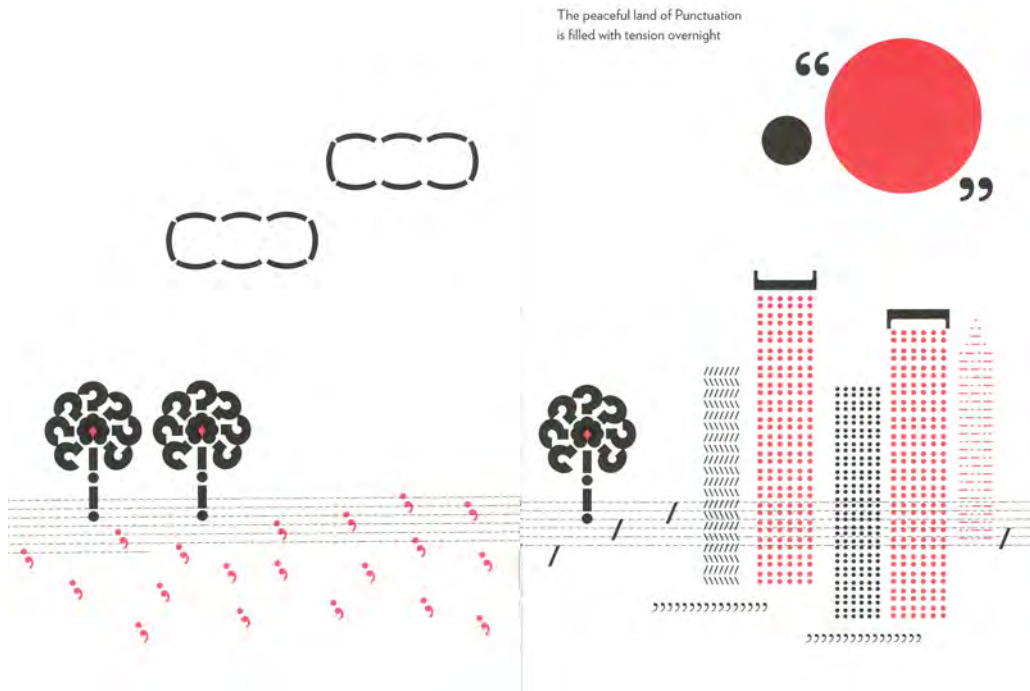


Figure 1. First verse and first double spread, right-hand page.

Figure 2 shows the capture of the semicolons by the parentheses and Figure 3 shows the demise of the semicolon page. Paul Robinson in his essay ‘The Philosophy of Punctuation’ says:

Semicolons are pretentious and overactive. These days one seems to come across them in every other sentence. ‘These days’ is alarmist, since half a century ago the German poet Christian Morgenstern wrote a brilliant parody, ‘Im Reich der Interpunktionen,’ in which imperialistic semicolons are put to rout by an ‘Antisemikolonbund’ of periods and commas. Nonetheless, if the undergraduate essays I see are representative, we are in the midst of an epidemic of semicolons. (2002: n.p.)

The original German poem is given alongside an English translation on the book’s final page. The translation is obviously a liberal one, even to me as someone not familiar with the German language. I love the poem, as any editor would, with its characterisation of the various punctuation marks. The parody in which imperialistic semicolons are attached and defeated by an army of full stops and commas is very appealing (see the verses on Figure 2 and Figure 3).

The verse for the dashes is sad, as they ‘creep blackly behind the mourning train’. The double spread, however, shows ellipses not dashes, with the illustration very cleverly drawn to give the impression of a train in movement, the train in black and white with the only colour being the dots of the ellipses.

But although the book is about punctuation, its original publication date of 1905 in Germany sets it in the politics of that country in that era of the rise of fascism and the possibility of war. For the punctuation marks are at war with each other and there are victors and the vanquished.





And then the captured creatures freeze  
Imprisoned by parentheses

Figure 2. Sixth verse and sixth double spread, right-hand page.

Both semicolon types they bury  
in silence in the cemetery

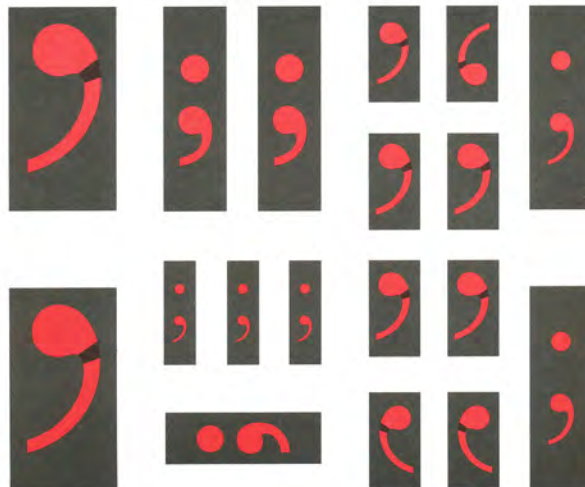


Figure 3. Twelfth verse and twelfth double spread, left-hand page.

**Jennifer Harding**

### ***Catherine's Story***

Genevieve Moore and Karin Littlewood (illus.), London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb, 978 1 8450 7655 9, £11.99, 2010, 24pp.

This is a picture book for children aged 3–7, based on a real-life person who, we are told in a footnote, has profound and multiple cognitive and physical disabilities. Littlewood's pictures of Catherine are not only beautifully crafted but also astonishingly physically accurate, as could be verified by a visit to a special-needs school. The foreword by Jacqueline Wilson underlines the worthiness of this publishing venture.

And, indeed, it is doubtless a worthy venture. However, as a reviewer who is herself disabled, I have two points of criticism. On every page Catherine is described as 'special'. The way she does everything, from the silent clapping of her hands to the way she walks with splints, is 'special'. At another point Catherine is described as walking 'slowly and smoothly' in her orthoses. Let me assure the reader that in these circumstances 'smoothly' is very far from what actually happens.

These two points are symptomatic of a deeper problem. The book is a valiant attempt to depict disability in an emancipatory light for young readers, avoiding the use of discriminatory concepts and language. However, even such a praiseworthy attempt runs the countervailing risk of casting a gloss over disability. Every disabled person lives with the daily reality of his/her impairment. To aggregate the whole picture – positive and negative – as just 'special' is a dangerous oversimplification. Other words such as 'different' might have been used. And it should have been possible to explain in a straightforward and honest manner some of the things that Catherine can't do. Her limited cognitive ability, for example, is mentioned in the footnote but in the main text it is simply ignored.

Writing about disability for young readers is a notoriously tricky terrain, as critics such as Louis Keith and Pat Pinsent have illustrated. The presentation of disability to young readers in a positive and benign light is not just a worthy task, but an essential one, if prejudice about disability is not to be fostered in the young. However it is a valid question to ask whether such representation may be bathed in such a rosy light that it glosses over the tough reality of disability.

This text is a worthy addition to the genre, even if it falls into certain traps. No praise is too high, however, for Littlewood's illustrations: elegant, stylish and spot on in accuracy.

**Rebecca R. Butler**

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### ***Big City Butter-Finger***

Bob Cattell and John Agard (illus. Pam Smy), London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, pb. 978 1 8450 7954 3, £5.99, 2010, 112pp.

The dedication in this book reads: 'To Calypsonian Lord Kitchener of London is the place for me fame, and to the West Indian "Legends"'. These themes, of calypso, London and West Indian cricket, provide the narrative threads of Trinidadian Riccardo Small's first visit to England. He has come, as a budding calypso singer, to perform at the London Caribbean Festival, staged at the Festival Hall, accompanied by his old friend and mentor, Count Crawfish, himself a star performer associated with venues such as the Notting Hill Carnival. Once a butterfingers on the cricket field, Riccardo has become Butter-Finger the performer, since his talent for catchy improvisation of calypso has been discovered. We meet him standing on Westminster Bridge (surely a poetic reference), shivering with cold in the late evening sunshine as he watches the river swirling below. Big Ben strikes nine o'clock and Londoners dressed in tee shirts and shorts hurry by. Count Crawfish observes:

Sun don't shine much in England, when it comes out it got no fire in it, it just up there like a force-ripe orange – but these English tell you it a heat wave.



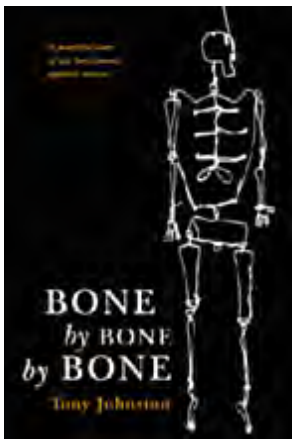
This vivid depiction of the odd experience of being a tourist in a strange yet familiar place is heightened by Count Crawfish's wry comment and it is extended when Riccardo suddenly confronts the imposing statue of Boadicea. Count Crawfish regales him with the story of the fierce warrior queen who stirred up trouble for the occupying Roman forces and earned the accolade from the British of 'freedom fighter'. Count Crawfish points up an irony when he associates Boadicea and her deeds with the early nineteenth-century Jamaican heroine and mountain queen Nanny, who led her rebel slaves to freedom, but who in their challenge to British imperialism were called savages by the British. Historic landmarks are identified on a river trip and their stories told with a 'corrective twist': the old West Indian docks, now disused, where imports of sugar and bananas from the different islands were once unloaded; and the National Maritime Museum, whose records include those of African slaves and which might deserve to be called the British Slave Trade Museum. We are reminded that the pride of British sailors were slave traders; and that Lord Nelson voted against William Wilberforce's Bill of Abolition.

Riccardo later composes and performs to great acclaim his song 'Pigeon on Lord Nelson Statue'. The pigeon in Trafalgar Square, carried on 'the wind of history', can challenge this hero with a different point of view 'where your one good eye can't see me ... where your one good arm can't reach me'.

The song links with Riccardo's own story. A photo of his father standing in Trafalgar Square with a pigeon on his arm accompanied chatty letters sent home after he came to London to find work three years ago. The letters ceased abruptly. Such wounds are hard to speak of, so Riccardo has no address to follow up on this visit and challenge his father as the pigeon challenges Nelson. When they do meet, because the passions that bind and enliven the West Indian community are strong, it is not calypso music that eases their rapprochement but cricket and the test match at Lords.

A visit to Lords is always top of Riccardo's list. When chance allows this to happen (because his father's new partner is the MCC press officer), Riccardo meets the 'legends': Brian Lara, Sir Viv Richards, Sir Gary Sobers and Michael Holding. They watch a tense match turn from being a defeat into a draw, in part due to the vagaries of the weather and the antics of a pigeon who refuses to be shied away from the pitch. (I believe that this story is in the annals of cricketing history.)

This is a most enjoyable book to read. Told in the West Indian vernacular, the narrative has an immediacy that stimulates imaginative responses. It reminds us to be more questioning about what we accept as our received versions of history. Bob Cattell and John Agard have collaborated in writing a lively story, and the many playful and humorous verses woven into the narrative enliven it delightfully. Pam Smy's illustrations are simple and expressive and complement the text.



***Bone by Bone by Bone***

Tony Johnston, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, pb. 978 1 8450 7174 5, £6.99, 2010, 205pp.

The book cover is simple and arresting. Imposed on a black background, in white, are the image of a suspended skeleton and the stark words of the title. The dedication reads: 'For Daddy. Some Wounds Never Heal.' In the preface Tony Johnston tells us that she has written out of her own experience of growing up when life was 'more innocent and slower than now ... those were mean days when black people had to fight to get an equal chance in life ... especially in the South'. Black people and their children suffered terrible indignities, and worse were atrocities, such as murder and lynching. When she was thirteen her father told her: 'You ever bring a nigger home, I'll shoot him.' She continues: 'Then as now that word is the worst racial slur you can make.' The preface ends: 'I am haunted by my father.'

This is a profoundly affecting novel set in Tennessee in the early 1950s. It is written in the voice of 13-year-old David Church, a white boy, whose father is the doctor in a mixed race but segregated community. Dr Franklin Church, who in his own words is 'a



modern-day Aesculapius', is a proud father who wants his son to follow in his footsteps. His first gift to his baby son is a human skeleton, suspended from the bedroom ceiling, each bone tied with an identifying label. David is expected to learn the composition of this structure as accurately as the alphabet. As he grows up David cannot comprehend his father's inconsistencies, treating a dying friend with tender compassion yet killing indiscriminately when hunting and being cruel to cats. David is numbed by his father's implacable attitude towards his best friend, Malcolm, a black boy, and his threat to shoot him if he ever crosses the threshold to their house.

David and Malcolm have performed a solemn ceremony of mixing their blood and vowing to be 'friends forever'. The book starts as David remembers their first meeting at Halloween three years previously when he rescued his friend who was dressed as a ghost and was being attacked by a fierce 'free-range rooster' Hell-with-Feathers. David is instantly attracted by his friend's lively eyes and the fact that he reminds him of Brer Rabbit: 'my favourite story-book character, full of spunk and sass'. The joys, endeavours and trials of this unwavering friendship provide the main story, in a context of social disapproval. The boys share a literary heritage in their love of Brer Rabbit and his escapades, and dare devilry is a natural and exciting element of their games together. Their families both observe Sunday worship of which hymn singing is a joyful part, while the preachers talk of 'loving thy neighbour'. From time to time an atrocity is committed against a black person and David begins to suspect that his father belongs to the Ku Klux Klan. David seeks out Tinney Wilkes, a wise old woman, his father's childhood nurse, the only black person he has ever seen his father admit to their house. Tinney can face with David the terrible paradox that he struggles to understand. 'Klansmen, as scared as little chil'ren' because they fear that 'coloureds'll take something belongs to them', she tells him. '[T]he one who hates has already lost the most important thing of all ... his own human self.'

The evening after David's thirteenth birthday, he protects Malcolm from the Ku Klux Klan, and his father fires. Is it chance that the gun Dr Church snatches up is loaded with rock salt, the gun he uses to torment the local cats? Malcolm waits to ensure that David is alive, and then escapes. David's bonds with his father are severed and he leaves home, determined to find a different way to live. The skeleton of his upbringing will never have the flesh on it that his father had desired, and David's act of independence suggests that he has chosen to grow into his own skin and shape his own human destiny.

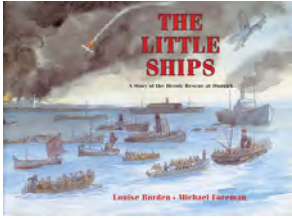
This is a beautifully and sensitively written novel. The theme of racism and its destructive effect on everyone who encounters it is unflinchingly conveyed, with some very effective animal symbolism, while the association between David's name and the biblical giant slayer seems deliberate. In particular, parallels with the story of Christ's passion, and the theme of ultimate sacrifice, occur to me. I recommend this book wholeheartedly as an important and deeply moving novel, not just a book about an 'issue'.

A single short, stark poem that conjures up a recurring dream image precedes the opening chapter. It is a fitting epigram to begin and end with, as it contains within it not only one individual's anguish but also the anguish that racism causes humankind.

Last night I dreamed that I had died.  
For that dread hallucination keeps returning.  
I am standing on the porch of that old house.  
Frantically pummelling the screen door and screaming,  
'He saw me! He's after me! Lemme in!'  
A man opens the door. In slow motion  
He brings up his shotgun, takes aim for my heart, fires.  
The man is my daddy. And I am dead.

**Judith Philo**

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***The Little Ships: A Story of the Heroic Rescue at Dunkirk***

Louise Borden and Michael Foreman (illus.), London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8478 0081 7, £6.99, 2010 [1997], 32pp.

Although this book involves fictional characters, it is based on the real story of the 1940 rescue, by small boats, of soldiers from the Dunkirk beaches. I was immediately attracted to it because the *Lucy*, the fishing boat central to the narrative, set out from my home town of Deal, on the Kent coast. I returned home from evacuation just after Dunkirk, and Michael Foreman's illustrations of the fishing boats of the story, lined up on the beach with familiar-looking houses in the background, evoke emotive childhood memories. The girl who is first-person narrator goes to Dunkirk, assisting her father in the absence of her brother, who is serving as a soldier, and is among those fleeing from the French coast (though the author spares us the coincidence of the *Lucy* picking him up – he is rescued by a Belgian tug). The text is set out in a free-verse format, its simplicity and emphasis on physical sensation makes its effect all the more powerful.

I had to pretend that my arms didn't ache  
from hauling soldiers, dripping wet,  
onto the rocking deck of our boat.  
My hands were rubbed raw inside the work gloves  
that fit my father, not me ....

Michael Foreman's illustrations are as powerful as ever, perhaps especially the one with the burning town in the background and the lines of soldiers, together with myriads of little ships, in the foreground. Certainly recommended in this year of the seventieth anniversary of the withdrawal from Dunkirk, to alert a new generation to this episode from our history.

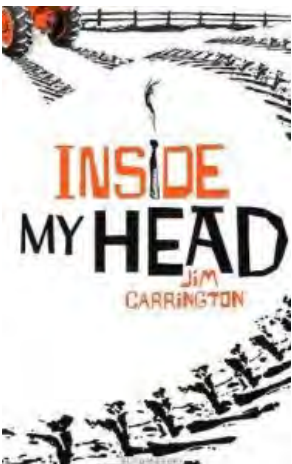


***When I Was Joe***

Keren David, London: Frances Lincoln, 978 1 8478 0100 5, £6.99, 2010, 384pp.

This gripping and well-written story deals with the effect on a boy of assuming another identity when he goes into hiding in a witness protection scene, after seeing another boy knifed. As 'Joe', Ty is far more attractive, both to the girls at school and to the reader, than he was in his original personality. There are however many complications in his life, while we gradually learn more about the initial crime. To disclose more of the story here would detract from the enjoyment of potential readers. I gave the book to my 15-year-old grandson, wondering if the fact that the protagonist is younger than him might be a deterrent to his enjoyment. On the contrary, he was really keen to read on and finish the story, with a lively interest in the character of 'Joe'.

This book is highly recommended for both sexes – I'm impressed to see this very competent handling of plot and character from a newly published author. The forthcoming sequel, due in August, is entitled *Almost True*, but this volume should be read first!



***Inside my Head***

Jim Carrington, London: Bloomsbury, pb. 978 1 4088 0271 7, £6.99, 2010, 352pp.

This first novel by the son of one of our most reliable contributors combines page-turning readability with a thoughtful and original treatment of the issue of bullying. The story is told from the perspectives of three first-person narrators: Zoe, whose family moves to rural Norfolk, much to her distress; Gary, the 'farmer's boy' who is always picked on by the unpleasant Knaggs; and David, Knaggs' generally complicit but sometimes uncomfortable henchman. The alternation of viewpoints means that the incidents that make up the plot can be set against each other effectively, thus building up suspense. What is more important when dealing with an emotive subject like this is that this technique also allows readers to experience empathy with the characters' attitudes and motivations. This is most important in the case of David, whose loyalty to Knaggs wavers during the course of the novel, thus provoking a critique of the 'schoolboy' (exclusive language seems appropriate here) code of honour.

The serious topic does not, however, make for solemn reading. Many episodes are likely to generate a wry smile or even a laugh from the reader, while the tractor ride undertaken by Gary, accompanied by a reluctant Zoe, awakens echoes of comedy epic rides such as that of William Cowper's John Gilpin. Carrington also has a keen ear for the kind of abuse all too likely to be heard in the classroom – probably profiting from his own experiences as a teacher. The ending is satisfying without being over facile, and leaves scope for the possibility of further stories in the same school setting.

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### *Fran's War*

Sally Trench, London: Hodder & Stoughton, pb. 978 0 3407 4560 1, £11.00, 1999, 231pp.

The chief interest of this book for many readers will lie in the fact that it is a work of fiction based on the experiences of its author in leading 30 convoys of aid to war-torn Bosnia. As Sally Trench (already well-known for *Bury me in my Boots* (1968) about her work as a teenager among London down-and-outs) explains, she finds it difficult to write a factual account with herself central, 'My own sense of vulnerability and precariousness leaves me unable to express my experiences of war, so I have written about them through the eyes of a child called Fran' (p.17).

The first-person narrator, Fran, is writing at the age of 15, but most of the scenes described occurred when she was 12. The narrative begins five years earlier, however, as she recalls her pleasantly situated home, her friendship with a young Moslem neighbour Assad, and her childhood notions about God and Jesus. In a key incident she meets an Englishman who speaks her language, rescues her from a fall on the ski slopes and gives her some chocolate. Because of his strength and size, his power and generosity, she decides that he must be 'God', though implicitly her more mature realisation leads her to write about him with a lower-case 'g' when, later, he reappears in the narrative.

The vividness of the traumatic experiences of the growing hostility in the village between Christians and Moslems, the hiding in the cellar, the probable death of her mother (later confirmed), and her escape with Assad and Ben, is enhanced by the way in which, as a young child, Fran cannot comprehend what is happening. Later she and Assad travel, first in the country and then in the city, with a group of orphaned children and a dog, Baked Bean (BB); this companionship helps give her the strength to continue. In this very difficult period, she meets 'god' again in one of the kind of coincidences that sometimes make war fiction about children difficult to believe though they may in fact reflect the author's belief in a benign Providence (I recall Anne Holm's award-winning *I am David* (1978) in this context). Her friend god is with a relief agency, and is badly injured. While he is in hospital, Fran gets hold of a supply of antibiotics and morphine, and eventually god is discharged. The children are taking refuge in a cemetery and god comes to live with them. Fran discovers that he is a priest, but he has had a breakdown, one sign of which is that he eats all the children's scanty food. Fran cannot forgive him, and he leaves, but later he redeems himself by working at a first-aid post; Fran is reunited with him when her friend Assad is killed and eventually she manages to forgive god, whose name she discovers is Patrick. He teaches her to use a computer before he finally departs for England.

This is not the final scene, however. Fran witnesses an atrocity involving a small girl on the road, she prays in a bombed-out church, and at last there is some kind of positive resolution of the conflict as she and her friend Ben are reunited with their fathers, who have been in a detention camp. Their families will now adopt the orphaned children.

As can perhaps be seen from this summary, it is not easy to determine the implied audience of this book. The language often seems too mature for a 15-year-old narrator, but the experiences Fran has undergone would undoubtedly have a considerable effect on her sensibility and style. The central relationship, between Fran and Patrick, suffers from the disparity between their ages which precludes further development, even without the problem posed by his vow of celibacy. Relationships between her and

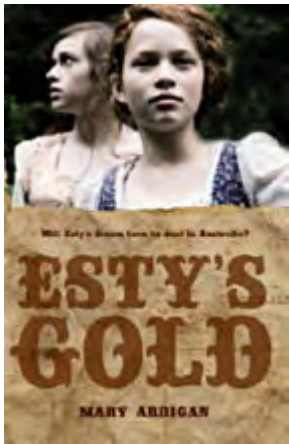


friends nearer her own age are not fully worked through, and in a sense the end seems something of an anticlimax. But in so far as the book is intended to make the reader aware of the horrors of a civil war and its dreadful effects, particularly on the young, it is certainly successful. It also serves as a contrast to the inevitably egocentric accounts of involvement in missions to those in need – Sally Trench’s aim to convey the reality of war without putting herself as central character is certainly successful.

(This review first appeared in *Network* 102, Spring 2010. Copies of this book are available for £11 each, including postage, from [Suemacliammor33@hotmail.com](mailto:Suemacliammor33@hotmail.com).)

### Pat Pinsent

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#### *Esty's Gold*

Mary Arrigan, London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8450 7965 9, £6.99, 2009, 224pp.

Mary Arrigan is a versatile writer from Ireland, whose work extends across many subjects, in real and imaginary historical periods, for all age ranges, and in more than one language. That Arrigan is immensely proud of her Irish homeland and its people is evident from the detail and verisimilitude of her atmospheric works, which are always lively, engaging and thought-provoking.

Her latest novel is a thoroughly researched historical adventure story, set in Ireland and Australia. Esty’s childhood world is shattered when her father is killed defending starving peasants during the Irish potato famine of the late 1840s. She is forced to leave home and work as a maid, but there learns that many Irish families are setting out to search for gold and a better life in Australia. With stubborn determination, she gets her family to the goldfields of Ballarat, where harsh conditions, deceit and rebellion threaten to thwart them. Esty keeps a record of their journey, and her account ultimately leads to a career on the local newspaper. While the family find only a modest amount of gold, through their ingenuity, integrity and sheer perseverance they build up a restaurant business to service the workforce in the goldfield, while her grandfather opens a school.

In the course of her narrative, Arrigan introduces her readers not only to the Irish potato famine, but also to an event of 1854 far less known in the UK, the rebellion known as the Eureka Stockade. This, an uprising of Australian gold miners (diggers) against the unfair British regulation of the goldfields, the punitive prospecting laws and inequalities in suffrage, is thought by many to have been a pivotal point in the development of Australia’s democracy and identity.

This is no dry history lesson, however. Like many migrants today, Esty and her family strive for a better life than that in their homeland, and it is their story that shines through Arrigan’s text. Readers will certainly engage with Esty’s experience, a tale of endeavour from which we could all take inspiration.

### Bridget Carrington

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#### *Monster Day at Work*

Sarah Dyer, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8478 0069 5, £11.99, 2010, 32pp.

The blurb of the sixth book written and illustrated by Sarah Dyer boasts that it shows a ‘wonderful, child’s-eye view of the world of work’. To this adult eye, the pictures are weird, even ugly, and the words unadventurous. I tried it out on Key Stage 1 in my village school where it had a head start as a novelty and not part of the Oxford Reading Tree. One child pronounced it ‘fantastic’, and it is certainly that, with the monsters enjoying the rush hour to work on scooters, mopeds and even a go-kart. There is indeed a great deal of enjoyable detail: the turquoise matching tie and socks, the melancholy fish with lemon among the dishes available for lunch, the mouse in the out tray. Even the grotesque piggy bank amused the children who had never heard of piggy banks. Only one word stumped the six-year-old reader: ‘allowed’.

### Ann Thwaite

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### ***Pea Boy and Other Stories from Iran***

Elizabeth Laird and Shirin Adl (illus.), London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8450 7912 3, £14.99, 2009, 64pp.

Congratulations to Elizabeth Laird for her collections of stories from parts of the world not well represented in mainstream editions of traditional tales. Following the publication of *A Fistful of Pearls and Other Tales from Iraq* in 2008 and *The Ogress and the Snake and Other Stories from Somalia* in 2009, Laird turns her attention to Iran in *Pea Boy*. In an introduction that whets young appetites for ancient tales, as well as relating these to life in modern Iran, Laird intersperses an account of her own travels in the country with enticing references to the settings of several of the stories. She is also refreshingly open about her sources, all of them English-language collections of Persian tales that date back as far as 1919.



Laird's accomplished storytelling voice begs to be read aloud to young listeners who will find here both familiar patterns with new twists, and stories that display intriguing cultural differences. In universally applicable tales of retribution and natural justice, vain, silly Miss Cockroach learns an important lesson as, inevitably, does the merchant who seeks the unattainable cloth of eternal life. The Pea Boy of the title, however, is a walking, talking brown chickpea rather than a green one, and there is mention in a number of stories of the Shah and his advisory viziers. There is plenty of humour, too, in the accidental and unsought courage of 'Kayvan the Brave', and the close of 'The Sparrow's Quest', where the bird's search for the most powerful thing on earth (echoes of 'The Fisherman and his Wife' here) ends with the humble earthworm – who is then promptly gobbled up. Shirin Adl, who grew up in Iran, illustrates the tales with stylised clarity; this is a book that will bring much pleasure and broaden a few horizons too.

**Gillian Lathey**

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### ***Shapeshifters: Tales from Ovid's Metamorphoses***

Adrian Mitchell and Alan Lee (illus.), London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8450 7536 1, £14.99, 2009, 144pp.

In this handsome book, published in the year following his death, Adrian Mitchell's retellings of Ovid, sometimes in poetry, sometimes in prose and sometimes in a mixture of both, are matched by Alan Lee's evocative illustrations. Characteristically down to earth, Mitchell's reworking of these ancient tales of gods and humans, and the extremes of their passions seems to me unusually restrained. Only occasionally is he tempted to hint at a contemporary reference. In the poem 'Iron' he writes: 'Greed for money, greed for power/ the Iron Age was a poisonous flower./ Did I say was? Is it safe to say/ that the Iron Age has passed away?' There is humour here, too, but it is rarely given free reign, and in only a few poems – in his tales of Actaeon and Midas – does he allow rhythms that drive or sing. For the most part, these are sombre and poignant meditations, perhaps most fully sustained in the poem 'The King of Hunger' about Erysichthon, the defiler of Ceres' sacred grove, whose curse of insatiable hunger causes him repeatedly to sell his daughter into slavery and eventually to devour his own body.



It is not by chance that Alan Lee's palette is so often grey, blue and violet. His illustrations are, once more, remarkable. They subtly suggest influences from Ovid's period itself as well as the classical world seen through the lenses of the Renaissance and the Baroque. Sometimes illustrating the mood of the story, sometimes showing a dramatic moment and sometimes providing an image that is emblematic of its theme, Lee appropriately fills the spaces left by Mitchell's brisk storytelling voice, sometimes with energy and excitement, sometimes with languor and sadness, but always with colour and richness of detail, particularly in his rendering of the metamorphoses between human, animal and plant that are the subject of this fine collection.

**Clive Barnes**

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## Books for Learners of English as an Additional Language

This series of books, intended to help speakers of English as an additional language to develop their skills, began with five titles published between 1987 and 1994. The two latest titles have been added after a competition to encourage women to tell their own stories and thus to provide inspiration for others in similar situations. These small books (the other five are still available) tell some very painful stories, but reveal the potential for hope in the human spirit. They should attract an audience wider than that of English-language learners – in particular I feel that they would have much to say to teenagers from a variety of backgrounds.



### *Achieving against the Odds*

Helene Ramzani, Our Lives & Longstone Books, South Norwood Centre, Sandown Rd., London SE25 4XE, pb. 978 0 9554 3738 0, £3, 2009, pp.

Helene Ramzani, from Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recounts how she arrived in Britain as a political refugee, leaving her three children behind; she found work, had two more children, and was eventually able to reunite her whole family in this country. In simple, clear and concise style, she tells the traumatic story of the death of her mother, the abuse by her first husband, her political work and subsequent escape from the Congo, her difficulties on first arriving in England, her work in an old people's home, and eventually being granted refugee status. Finally she was reunited with her other children and the whole family was granted British citizenship. Helene has also achieved examination successes and her story is certainly inspirational.



### *Never Give Up*

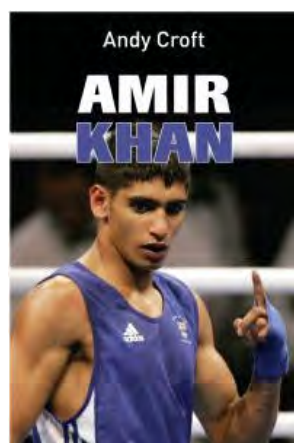
Kristy Krasniqi, Our Lives & Longstone Books, South Norwood Centre, Sandown Rd., London SE25 4XE, pb. 978 0 9554 3739 07, £3, 2009, pp.

Kristy Krasniqi, from Albania, was 'sold' by her father and trafficked to Italy, France and Belgium before arriving in Britain, where she was forced to work as a prostitute before escaping with the help of a friend. Unfortunately her troubles were not over, as the man she was living with beat her, and it was difficult for her to get help as she had not yet been granted refugee status. She escaped again, but was initially refused asylum, though it was granted on appeal. At last she was able to settle down with her young daughter, and to concentrate on learning English.

## Pat Pinsent

## Books for Young People with Reading Difficulties

The following books are all in the Barrington Stoke series designed specifically for young readers who have reading difficulties.



### *Amir Khan*

Andy Croft (illus. Dylan Gibson), Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke, pb, 978 1 8429 9752 9, £5.99, 2010, 50pp.

On the face of it the choice of a boxer for such a book – a man who makes his living by inflicting physical damage on other men – is a puzzling option. And indeed the author admits that he shares reservations about the trade of the boxer.

Croft however concentrates the reader's attention not on the sport itself but on the qualities of courage, dedication and resolution shown by Khan, using the sporting background only to illustrate these attributes. He also highlights the work that Khan does outside his sporting career to help others.

Khan has a role as a prominent member of the Muslim community, countering the tide of Islamophobia. One of his fights took place shortly after the London 7/7 bombings. Khan emerged into the spotlight carrying a Union Flag bearing the word 'London'. His

aim was to demonstrate to the world that a young Muslim could be a patriot and an enemy of terrorism.

Like many other boxing champions, Khan found at an early age that the regulated conflict of the boxing ring was an alternative to less orderly combat. He got into fights at school and saw the boxing gym as a place where he could unleash his aggression in a controlled and approved manner. Qualifying for the 2004 Olympic Games was a process that demonstrated both Khan's precocious talent and his determination. Aged 17, he was told by the Olympic selectors that he was too young to compete in the games. He was set a series of qualifying fights, in the expectation that he would fail and learn a lesson. He won them all, went to the games and won a silver medal, losing only to the Cuban world amateur champion. Khan admits that at the games he was too nervous to speak to any of the other competitors.

Amir Khan is a charity icon. He regularly pays Christmas visits to children in hospitals. He has spent a million pounds of his own money building a gym in Bolton, his local area. He has handed out food-aid parcels in Pakistan and promotes sport in British schools. He ran a half-marathon for the victims of the Asian tsunami.

The text of this book, as indicated above, makes a good job of concentrating on Khan's individual qualities, his personality and charisma, and his good works, rather than on his boxing career. The illustrations, however, fail to match the text. Most of Dylan Gibson's illustrations are Roy Lichtenstein inspired action shots of boxing matches. They will probably please the intended readership of this book – predominantly a young male cohort – but they do undeniably undercut the praiseworthy aims of Croft's text.

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***The Perfect Rebel: The Life and Death of Emily Davison***

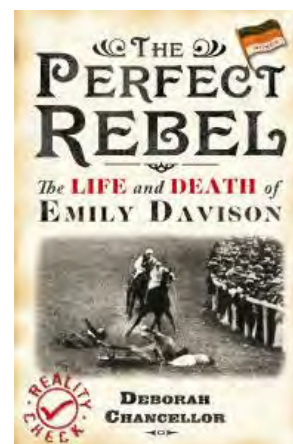
Deborah Chancellor and Julia Page (illus.), Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke, pb, 978 1 8429 9754 3, £5.99, 2010, 64pp.

This is the story of the famous suffragist who threw herself under the hooves of the king's horse Anmer in the 1913 Derby. She became a martyr to the cause of votes for women. It also adopts an approach to this famous incident that is, in my experience, unique. Most accounts of this episode examine it in the setting of the social and political struggle. Chancellor does, indeed, give an account of the struggle, but her main focus is on the life of Emily Davison leading up to her fatal moment. In short this book is a prosopography. Julia Page's illustrations are black and white two tone and unflinching. Force feeding is illustrated, as is Davison with a bomb in her hands. The illustrations help to ease a young reader's path through what would otherwise be a very dense narrative.

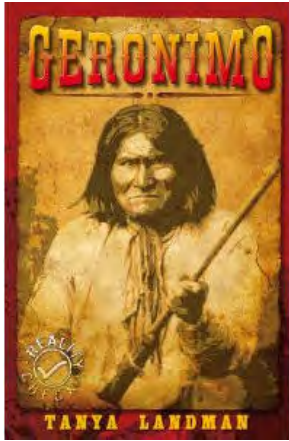
What inspires Chancellor is the quest to understand the motivation of Davison and her comrades in arms, the motivation that led women to lay down their lives for the cause. It is almost equally interesting for the reader to witness the struggle going on in the mind of the author. Chancellor sets out with the worthy aim of striking a balance between the cause of women's emancipation and the defenders of the political and social status quo. As the book advances, however, Chancellor finds it harder and harder to maintain the equilibrium, to conceal from the reader the admiration and sympathy she feels for the martyrs of the suffrage movement – as which of us could?

Chancellor uses a young boy, acting as a bookie's assistant, as a witness to the fatal event. He is reported as seeing Davison on her way to the race track. He sees her die and decides to attend her funeral. Her cause is not only for women.

The back cover of the book conveys a startling message under the heading 'Freedom fighter or terrorist?' Davison was certainly widely regarded as a terrorist by her contemporaries. The idea that in conflicts the terminology is relativistic, that heroes like Mandela were once unquestioningly categorised by their enemies as terrorists and, indeed, legally convicted as such, is fraught with uncertainty for many adults. To place this complex notion in front of children who struggle with reading is an act of breathtaking courage.







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### ***Geronimo***

Tanya Landman (illus. Seb Camagajevac), Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke, pb, 978 1 8429 9753 6, £5.99, 2010, 67pp.

Tanya Landman tells the story of Geronimo, the Apache chief who led a valiant but eventually unsuccessful campaign to save his people's ancestral lands. Unlike most accounts of this period of history, Landman's narrative is openly favourable to the cause of the native Americans and even appears at times to be biased against the settlers.

In 1845 the US government pronounced the policy of 'Manifest Destiny' which it claimed gave it an unchallenged right to occupy the whole North American continent. When Geronimo was 24 years old there followed the Gadsden Purchase, by which the Americans bought land from Mexico in New Mexico, Arizona and California. These two acts of policy gave white settlers a claim to legality when they occupied land, and spelt out unambiguously the fate of the native American people. Initially Geronimo viewed the migration of settlers into native American lands with equanimity. It was a huge and in many areas untenanted country. However he came to see the arrival of settlers as a threat when his wife and three children were killed by Mexican soldiers, and saw it as his duty to resist the tide of settlement.

From 1861 to 1863 the Apache tribe fought the 'White Eyes' as they named the white settlers under the leadership of Cochise and Mangas Coloradas. By 1876 Mangas had been brutally murdered and Cochise had also died. Only 11 years after the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, the US government, ordered the removal of Geronimo's Chiricahua Apache tribes from their lands in Arizona, transporting them to Florida, where they were held in what would later be termed concentration camps. Geronimo died in exile in 1909. Seb Camagajevac's illustrations, which fit well with the text, show vivid pictures of armed conflict and piteous scenes of slaughtered native people.

Though Landman is English, she has written widely on the history of the native Americans. Her books have been attacked by American critics, including some of native origin, for their historical inaccuracies. It is one thing to argue that the native Americans had a genuine grievance for the way they were treated, but it is another to depict every single member of the settler community as villainous and heartless. It seems unlikely that young readers will learn to take a balanced view of disputes they may encounter if they are encouraged to read such partial and one-sided accounts as this.

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### ***Lewis Hamilton***

Andy Croft and Dylan Gibson (illus.), Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke, pb, 978 1 8429 9751 2, £5.99, 2010, 44pp.

Andy Croft is the author of another book in this series, featuring the boxer Amir Khan. The text of that book placed less emphasis on Khan's sporting career, paying more attention to his personal attributes and his activities as a charitable ambassador and a role model for the Muslim community.

The emphasis in the Khan book may be explained by Croft's reluctance to major on a violent sport like boxing. Here he has no such qualms. This book focuses almost entirely on Lewis Hamilton's career as a racing driver. There is mention of extra-curricular likes and dislikes (he supports Arsenal football club), but no mention of charities or public roles.

Hamilton is the first black Briton to have won the world Formula One racing championship. His achievement is seen as a powerful force in the battle against racial prejudice. Hamilton's own view is that his ethnic origin is actually an advantage, since it distinguishes him from other Britons who have won the world title.

Hamilton certainly showed precocious talent, being signed up for McLaren at the age of 13. Croft's book gives a chronological account of Hamilton's progress through the



ranks, from karting, through Formula racing, Formula 3, Grand Prix 2 and finally to Formula 1. He seemed to have a gift for starting each grade badly, with a crash or some other disaster, only to recover quickly and advance to the next stage. His progress, despite these shaky starts, is regarded as uniquely meteoric.

Hamilton came very close to winning the Formula 1 world championship in his very first season, only to fail narrowly. In November 2008 at the Brazilian Grand Prix he won the title at his second attempt. His loss of the world crown to Jensen Button in 2009 is not mentioned in this book. There are other significant omissions. The book mentions Hamilton's brother Nicholas, but fails to mention that Nicholas has cerebral palsy. Since these books are intended for readers with reading difficulties, this fact might have had a certain relevance. Some differences, it seems, are to be celebrated. Others are to be quietly ignored.

When Hamilton decided to leave Britain and make his home in Switzerland, the main reason he gave was to avoid excessive publicity. He later admitted however that escaping high taxation was also a motive, and was publicly criticised by some members of parliament. This episode is also not mentioned in the book, partly perhaps because it might not interest the young readers for whom the book is intended.

The picture that emerges of Hamilton is distinctly two-dimensional. He seems to be a man set on only one objective, the attainment of his personal sporting goals, without much feel for or involvement in the wider world. Dylan Gibson's illustrations depict scenes from motor races and suit this book much better than his illustrations suited the book about the multidimensional Amir Khan.

**Rebecca R. Butler**

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## REPORTS

### ***Hetty Feather* Launch**

Foundling Museum, London. 7 October 2009.

An early October evening of torrential rain in Bloomsbury saw the launch of the first full-length historical novel among the 90 already written by the 2005–2007 Children’s Laureate. In her role as the inaugural Thomas Coram Fellow of the Foundling Museum, Professor Dame Jacqueline Wilson (her editor told us that was the correct order for her titles) was feted in the building that commemorates and celebrates the work of London’s first home for abandoned children. The launches of books for children rarely cater for their intended audience, and, as usual, regrettably few young faces were to be observed among the portraits of the notable early benefactors (notable among whom were Handel and Hogarth), and the assembled representatives from the wider book world, from academe to publishing. It was noticeable however that Wilson gravitated towards the handful of youngest guests, signed their books, insisted they had their photo taken with her, and discussed their reading with enormous vigour. As Fellow, she is involved in developing creative initiatives for children, and during the weekend following the launch, the Foundling Museum also held a *Hetty Feather* Day, in which many more young people could engage with the Victorian foundling world in which Wilson has set *Hetty*’s story. In her brief address, Wilson described the impetus for *Hetty Feather*, largely completed during her recent convalescence from heart surgery. Encouraged to recuperate gently by gardening (‘a garden is for deckchairs’) or cooking (‘I don’t even know where my stove is’), Wilson decided instead to use the time to write the novel suggested by her new connection with the Foundling Museum. Jamila Gavin’s enormously successful *Coram Boy* had been set in the early years of the Foundling Hospital in the eighteenth century, engaging with an older audience of readers, and focusing on the experience of orphan boys. Wilson, a devotee of Victorian children’s fiction in general (see *IBBYLink* 26), and Mrs Molesworth in particular, decided therefore to focus on a girl in the 1870s, and to write for a younger audience than Gavin.

Illustrated by Nick Sharratt (who was also at the launch), *Hetty Feather* introduces us to an engaging, feisty heroine, who would be instantly recognisable by readers as an ancestor of Tracy Beaker. Delivered as a tiny baby by her unmarried mother to the Foundling Hospital, she is farmed out to a foster family in the country, and her return to the Hospital at the age of five, together with another foundling foster sibling, is a traumatic experience. *Hetty* is determined to uncover her natural parentage, and to escape both the institutional drear and the inevitable future as a household servant. She fixates on the memory of an acrobatic artiste in a travelling circus, and pursues her, convinced by a chance remark that she is her mother. Ultimately she discovers that her mother is a far less glamorous but thoroughly dependable woman, and we feel certain that *Hetty*’s future will be as positive as her past was uncertain. Wilson skilfully creates a literary style that painlessly incorporates elements of late nineteenth-century usage into a twenty-first-century narrative to produce a fast-moving, meticulously researched historical novel for her youthful modern readership. See the review of *Hetty Feather* in *IBBYLink* 27.

The background to *Hetty*’s experience can be found at [www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk/](http://www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk/).

(Bridget Carrington)

### **Museum of the Future of the History of the Book (MOFOHOB)**

Free Book Centre, London. 2 February 2010.

This event featured an evaluation of a Booktrust project intended to stimulate engagement with literature among younger secondary school pupils, especially those who might be expected to have less interest in reading than some of their peers. It involves an imagined museum curator from 1000 years in the future contacting a school and asking for help in selecting the best examples of English literature from its beginnings to ‘the Great Wipe’, a catastrophic event in the late 2900s, from which only

jumbled fragments of earlier literature survive. Students are asked to select from these the pieces they think are worthy of becoming exhibits in the curator's museum. Each week a 'litch batch' related to a specific theme (nature, war, love, etc.) is sent to the school and students not only rate these but also supply their reasons for their choice.

Many pupils at the schools involved seem to have enjoyed participating in the project, and displayed an increased interest in literature. Those of higher ability were, however, seen to have profited less from it, and expressed some frustration at its ambiguity. The results presented seem to suggest it might be worth investigating for lower ability pupils in particular. See [www.futureofthebook.org/](http://www.futureofthebook.org/) for more information.

### **Celebration of Michael Foreman's Work**

National Army Museum, London. 16 February 2010.

Templar Publishing commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Michael Foreman's first picture book, *The General*, by producing a new edition. This celebration, at the National Army Museum, coincided with a free exhibition of the illustrator's work, focusing on *War Boy*. (The weather that evening was such as to remind us of the intense rain that made the First World War trenches so unpleasant!)

### **Philip Pullman's Latest Book**

Free Word Centre, London. 13 April 2010.

Although *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ* is not addressed specifically to a young audience, there is little doubt that all those in the world of children's literature who have read the His Dark Materials trilogy are likely to be interested in his venture into scripture/theology as part of Canongate's Myths series. Probably by now everyone knows the basic premise. Mary has twin sons: Jesus, whose preaching is much as described in the gospels, and Christ, who notes down everything his brother says but makes significant changes with an eye to posterity. He impersonates Jesus after the crucifixion, thus giving rise to resurrection stories, and is, in effect, the instigator of a church that preserves the memory and teaching of Jesus, but with the kind of distortions that Philip Pullman excoriates elsewhere.

I had not read the book when I attended this discussion between Pullman and Richard Harries, the former Bishop of Oxford, arranged by PEN. Nevertheless I found it a stimulating occasion in which there was more agreement than might have been expected between a former bishop and an avowed atheist. In fact many Christians share some of Pullman's reservations about religious institutions, and are likely to welcome this book as a way of encouraging people to read the Bible (I would estimate that in some places about 90% of Pullman's text is derived from the gospels – as the chair, Jonathan Haywood suggested, it reads rather like a nineteenth-century children's Bible, partly as a result of Pullman deliberate eschewing novelistic approaches to character and description).

This was an entertaining, well-attended evening. The discussion between the speakers was followed by intense competition from the floor to get our views heard. I would suggest that the book is certainly worth reading, but, rather like some of the critics, I think that Pullman ought to give his attention to the long-awaited *Book of Dust* that we anticipate as a culmination of his trilogy.

### **Learning through Literature**

School of Oriental and African Studies, Bloomsbury, London. 23 April 2010.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of Beverley Naidoo's *Journey to Jo'Burg* was the inspiration for a celebration at the School of Oriental and African Studies, sponsored by the British Council and the Canon Collins Trust. The panel discussion chaired by Michael Rosen involved Gillian Slovo (daughter of anti-apartheid campaigners Ruth First and Joe Slovo, and a prize-winning author), Njabulo Ndebele (an academic and a prize-winning author), Ret'sepile Makamane (a broadcaster, now working on her first novel), as well as Naidoo herself. It was particularly interesting to learn that *Journey to Jo'Burg* was written as the result of research that revealed the

paucity of good books about South Africa in the early 1980s, the conviction that something needed to be done about this, and the decision of an anti-racist committee in Hertfordshire that Naidoo was the right person to do it. The story had been inspired by her own experience as a child in Johannesburg, when the black woman who was a joint carer with her own mother had been informed of the death of two of her daughters back at the township where she had had to leave her family. The panel also recalled their own childhood reading and speculated on how it had influenced their writing. We learned of the impending publication of Beverley Naidoo and Prodeepta Das' *S is for South Africa*, the latest in Frances Lincoln's illustrated alphabet series.

Also available at the event was IBBY South Africa's list of recent South African books for children and young people. Contact [info@ibbysa.org.za](mailto:info@ibbysa.org.za) for details.

### **Manga and Graphic Novels Workshop**

The Library, Central Milton Keynes. Wednesday, 28 April 2010.

The workshop was given on Free Comic Book Day – a day celebrated in the USA but barely heard of here. My only other experience of a workshop was at last year's Children's Book History Society's annual conference when Robert Crowther led a workshop on pop-ups. So I am probably being unfair when I compare the Milton Keynes event with that one. The head librarian's introduction said nothing about manga nor graphic novels and just introduced the staff. Various bits of paper appeared but no explanations given. A book stall was provided by Close Encounters from Bedford. The audience consisted of many under 12s, with mothers, a few fathers with their children, a group of teenagers and a few solitary adults. There was a 'cosplay' competition – some wonderful costumes, won by a young man in a military comic-style uniform. We were told that any drawings we made could be handed in for display on the library's website. There were no free comics as these had not been received from the USA due to the Iceland volcanic cloud. At least it gave me an opportunity to find where the various types of graphic novels are kept and to see what is in stock. The library has a good selection of graphic novels but the 'how to' selection had nothing for a beginner. The manga selection seems a little haphazard and I think relies on suggestions.

(Jennifer Harding)

### **Celebrating the Imagination**

Penguin, The Strand, London. 6 May 2010.

This Children's Book Circle event at the Penguin offices began by asking the panel about which books had influenced them as children. Michael Rosen recalled that as a result of his parents' international perspective, he grew up being aware of foreign books, as well as enjoying, for instance, the Molesworth saga (Geoffrey Willians and Ronald Searle's stories of Nigel Molesworth, 'the curse of St Custard's'). Nicolette Jones testified to the effect of Puffins on her reading development, while Peter Hunt seems to have discovered adult books before he did so for children's. Giles Andreae stressed the importance of playfulness, while Amanda Punter who is responsible for Razorbill, a new Puffin imprint, wants to provide enticing quality reading for an audience turned on to reading by vampires and the like. For information see [www.childrensbookcircle.org.uk/](http://www.childrensbookcircle.org.uk/).

### **Anderson Press New Illustrators**

Anderson Press, London. 19 May 2010.

This event for four of its new illustrators was chaired by Michael Foreman. John Fardell, Sarah Garson, Jo Hodgkinson and Mei Matsuoka talked about their early encounters with illustration, their influences and training, and their approaches to creating their own books. There was a lively question-and-answer session with the audience, which touched on the balance of text and illustration in books, the role of the editor and the state of the chapter and picture-book market. An enjoyable evening rounded off with food and wine, and an opportunity to buy books and have them signed.

(John Dunne)

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### **Modern Language Association's Annual Convention**

Los Angeles, USA. 6–9 January 2011.

The title is 'Narrating Lives' and includes a panel by the International Research Society for Children's Literature, with the theme 'Nostalgia'. Contact Lee Talley [talleyl@rowan.edu](mailto:talleyl@rowan.edu) for further information.

### **Federation of Children's Book Groups**

Worth Abbey, West Sussex. 15–17 April 2011.

The title is 'Box of Delights'. Speakers will include David Almond, Jonathan Stroud, Justin Somper and Kevin Brooks. A booking form and further information is available at [www.fcbg.org.uk](http://www.fcbg.org.uk).

### **Bridlington Poetry Festival**

Sewerby Hall, near Bridlington. 11–13 June 2010.

This is the first Bridlington poetry festival and there is a very full programme of events, including events for children led by Adam Strickon, Nigel Forde, Vicki Hackett and Kate Boddy. See [www.bridlington-poetry-festival.com](http://www.bridlington-poetry-festival.com) for further information.

### **National Non-Fiction Day**

Thursday 4 November 2010.

The aim of this event, launched in a collaboration between Scholastic and the Federation of Children's Book Groups, is to dispel the myth that non-fiction belongs solely to the classroom. The intention is to show that non-fiction can inspire and amuse as well as educate, by indicating some of the available resources. See [www.nnfd.org.uk](http://www.nnfd.org.uk) for further information.

## NEWS

### **2010 CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Awards**

The shortlists were released on 23 April 2010. The winners will be announced on 24 June 2010 at BAFTA, London.

This year is the first time for 30 years that a title has appeared on both the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway shortlists: Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*, illustrated by Chris Riddell.

#### **Carnegie shortlist**

- Laurie Halse Anderson (2009) *Chains*. London: Bloomsbury. [9+]  
Neil Gaiman (2008) *The Graveyard Book*. London: Bloomsbury. [9+]  
Helen Grant (2009) *The Vanishing of Katharina Linden*. London: Penguin. [14+]  
Julie Hearn (2009) *Rowan the Strange*. Oxford University Press. [12+]  
Patrick Ness (2009) *The Ask and the Answer*. London: Walker. [14+]  
Terry Pratchett (2008) *Nation*. London: Doubleday. [11+]  
Philip Reeve (2009) *Fever Crumb*. London: Scholastic. [9+]  
Marcus Sedgwick (2009) *Revolver*. London: Orion. [12+]

#### **Kate Greenaway shortlist**

- Grahame Baker-Smith (2009) *Leon and the Place Between*. London: Templar. [8+]  
Freya Blackwood (text by Margaret Wild) (2009) *Harry and Hopper*. London: Scholastic. [6+]  
Oliver Jeffers (2008) *The Great Paper Caper*. London: HarperCollins. [4+]  
Satoshi Kitamura (2009) *Millie's Marvellous Hat*. London: Andersen Press. [4+]  
Dave McKean (text by Neil Gaiman) (2009) *Crazy Hair*. London: Bloomsbury. [6+]  
Chris Riddell (text by Neil Gaiman) (2008) *The Graveyard Book*. London: Bloomsbury. [9+]  
David Roberts (text by Paul Fleischman) (2010) *The Dunderheads*. London: Walker. [8+]  
Viviane Schwarz (2008) *There Are Cats in this Book*. London: Walker. [2+]

### **School Library Association: The Primary School Library Charter**

The School Library Association (SLA) argues that investment in school libraries must start early, with appropriately trained staff, dedicated space and investment. Children need this in order to widen their reading experiences as well as accessing information and building their research skills. The SLA charter outlines the benefits of a well-supported and resourced primary school library, and includes providing community space for out-of-hours learning. The SLA's suggestions for schools include working in partnership with other schools, federations and public libraries, and making librarians part of the school's teaching and learning team. Lucy Bakewell, librarian at Hill West Primary School in Sutton Coldfield and the first primary winner of the SLA's School Librarian of the Year award (2009), believes that a primary school library plays a unique role in 'grabbing children when they are building their vocabulary and growing their imaginations to introduce them to reading habits and information handling skills which will stand them in good stead later'. She adds: 'Primary school librarians are also well placed to reach parents and help to create a reading ethos in families as well as in schools.'

The SLA Primary School Library Charter is available at [www.sla.org.uk/primary-charter](http://www.sla.org.uk/primary-charter).

### **The Sussex Centre for Folklore, Fairy Tales and Fantasy**

This centre at Chichester University focuses on developing a wide European network of fairy tale, folklore and fantasy scholars, with a special emphasis on the (under-appreciated) areas of Central and Eastern Europe. Malini Roy and Bill Gray are hoping to facilitate interdisciplinary discussion of folk tales, fairy tales and fantasy literature through research enquiries and the dissemination of news of relevant publications and events. See <http://sussexfolktalecentre.org/>.

### **Books about Books**

To celebrate their seventieth anniversary, Puffin have just brought out *The Puffin Handbook: The Perfect Little Guide to the 70 Best Books for Children*. More than just a catalogue, it is lavishly illustrated, contains articles by Eric Carle, Jeanne Willis, Jeremy Strong and Eoin Colfer, and is free in bookshops and libraries or can be downloaded at [www.puffin.co.uk/static/grownups/downloads/handbook.pdf](http://www.puffin.co.uk/static/grownups/downloads/handbook.pdf).

Also worth looking at are *Riveting Reads Plus* published by the School Library Association. These are listed at [www.sla.org.uk/riveting-reads.php](http://www.sla.org.uk/riveting-reads.php): some are downloadable or can be read online free, others must be purchased. The most recent items are dated 2008.

*The Ultimate Teen Book Guide* (ed. L. Flynn and D. Hahn, with an introduction by David Almond) is not free, but is comprehensive, with over 750 titles. It joins A & C Black's guides for other age groups. See [www.ultimatebookguide.com](http://www.ultimatebookguide.com).

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## IBBY NEWS

### Report on IBBY UK AGM 2010

Hachette Publishing, London. 28 April 2010.

The IBBY Annual General Meeting went up in the world this year: to a board room at the top of a tall glass building on Euston Road, as guests of Hachette publishing. As well as the AGM we had an opportunity to hear one of Hachette's major corporate assets, Mick Inkpen, reflecting on his career in picture books.

The AGM itself proved more interesting than the agenda had promised. The chair's report (see separate item) presented some positive achievements: the website, the 2009 conference and progress towards the 2012 IBBY Congress, as well as the Hans Christian Andersen writing award being won by our nomination, David Almond.

As so often, the treasurer's report was not such good news, especially when it was explained that what looked like a reasonably healthy balance, £8000, actually reduced to under £2000 when outstanding or anticipated commitments were taken into account. The heaviest of these continues to be the £4500 we pay as annual subscription to IBBY headquarters, which has been inflated by the fall in sterling against the euro in recent years. In short, we are still walking a financial tightrope.

Still, stretching the metaphor, there are signs of a financial suspension bridge in progress. The committee continues to grow, so hopefully more ideas and energy will be put to the task. If you would like to join us, we have space for even more (contact Ann Lazim, chair of IBBY UK, acquaintances of Rumpelstiltskin especially welcome).

Further down the agenda, there was the matter of agreeing a new constitution. This was necessary for our application for charitable status, which has been masterminded by Pam Dix. When completed, hopefully in the next couple of months, this will give us some financial advantages: gift aid on membership subscriptions and the opportunity to apply for grants for projects.

The constitution itself is blessedly short and to the point, but with all the necessary democratic and financial checks and balances in place. It will require us to be a little more formal as a committee, most significantly in the creation of the role of secretary, whose work, at the moment, is picked up mostly by Ann Lazim, as the chair. There will be plenty to occupy us in the next year as the international congress (2012) gets even closer. John Dunne also reminded us that, although there was still a year of Anthony Browne's children's laureateship to go, the process for nomination for his successor will soon begin.

Mick Inkpen's talk, which was based on a master class in illustration that he had given at the Edinburgh Festival in 2000, was both revelatory about his own approach to illustration and wide ranging in its consideration of possible future developments in the picture book, in view of the rapid development of digital media. The talk also marked the twenty-first anniversary of *The Blue Balloon*, Mick's first solo picture book creation; it was illustrated by original art work for some of his best-loved books.

Mick's advice to would-be illustrators is 'to keep it simple' and to try to discover their own voice. Unlike some other illustrators, he was not a compulsive drawer and was not interested in incidental detail for its own sake. He regarded the page and the book as a minimal stage set on which a drama could take place, using only the necessary characters and props. Thus he uses a white background most often. Incidentally, this meant that Mick's books sell well internationally, having very few explicit cultural markers.

Finding your own voice is a more difficult process for him to describe, being part conscious and part unconscious. The conscious side consists of a rigorous questioning of every aspect of the work, as it grows, particularly the storyline. If something doesn't feel quite right, then it almost certainly is not and needs to be rethought. His own stories



have developed in different ways. *The Blue Balloon* came in an afternoon and was based on a list of characteristics and possible uses of a balloon.

In his talk, Mick returned again and again to the playfulness of the picture book. He sees himself as working for an age group where imagination coexists happily with reality and disbelief is readily suspended, or perhaps has not yet been fully developed. He wants his work to celebrate these possibilities and to communicate with his readers as clearly and directly as possible. The book should invite its readers to participate, sometimes by the playfulness of its design (flaps and holes), sometimes by the gentle subversion of the conventional gap between story and reader, by inviting the reader to make decisions in the story, and always by encouraging the reader to empathise with its characters. Mick deliberately keeps the facial expressions of his characters simple and limited (he talked about the single raised eyebrow, for which he is indebted to Nick Butterworth) so that there is an encouragement to readers to work out the character's feelings for themselves. He wants children to feel that the story and the book belong to them.

He feels himself very lucky to be working in a field that requires playfulness in its creators; where it is still possible for one person to reach a wide audience with very few intermediaries; where criticism is largely benevolent; and where a creator's characters can become famous while he himself remains known only through his work. His thoughts about the impact of digital media are necessarily tentative. Certainly, the ebook opens up possibilities for more interactivity, more reader participation in the story. However he thinks that, by comparison with a novel, a picture book is reliant on its physical form for its effects – perhaps, interactivity can be pushed too far, wresting control from the storyteller, turning the book into a toy and destroying the relationship between creator and reader that is at its heart.

The evening ended with the opportunity to buy some of Mick's books. Thanks to Mick, to Hachette for supporting his talk and for providing a venue and some excellent chocolate biscuits, and to John Newman for arranging a very enjoyable evening.

(Clive Barnes)

### **IBBY UK Chair's Report 2009–2010**

Presented at the IBBY UK AGM at Hachette Publishing, London. 28 April 2010.

First of all I'd like to thank the committee 2009–2010: Clive Barnes, Julie Barton, Bridget Carrington, Pam Dix, John Dunne, Nikki Gamble, Michele Gill, Jennifer Harding, Nicki Jones, Sophie Mackay, Kathleen Milne, John Newman, Pat Pinsent, Judith Philo and Pam Robson.

**Annual Conference** On 14 November 2009 we held our annual joint conference with the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (NCRCL) at Roehampton University, London, on the theme of 'Comics and Graphic Novels'. Our keynote speaker Mel Gibson had to back out at the last minute due to an accident and we were very fortunate that Paul Gravett was able to take her place. The other plenary speakers were Janet Evans, David Fickling and Marcia Williams, and there was also a panel session with John Harris Dunning, Sarah McIntyre and Emma Vieceli, chaired by Ariel Kahn. A book of the conference papers, edited by Bridget Carrington and Jennifer Harding, will be published by Pied Piper Press. The NCRCL team are taking the lead on this year's conference which will take place on 13 November 2010 with the theme 'Conflicts and Controversies'.

**Hans Christian Andersen Awards** A fund-raising event was held at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education on 3 December 2009 with our nominees for the 2010 Hans Christian Andersen awards, David Almond and Michael Foreman, as speakers. More recently, everyone was very happy to learn that David Almond has won the author award, announced at the Bologna Book Fair. David Almond will receive the award at the IBBY Congress in Santiago de Compostela, Spain in September. Michael Foreman kindly donated the illustration for our Christmas card, the second year we have produced a fund-raising Christmas card.

**IBBY Honour List** Our nominations for the IBBY Honour List 2010 are Linda Newbery's *The Sandfather* (writing), Emily Gravett's *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears* (illustration) and Fridrik Erlings's *Fish in the Sky* (translation, from Icelandic).

**IBBYLink** Our newsletter is now distributed as a PDF by email and three issues have been produced in this way with themes 'The Family' (No. 25, Summer 2009), 'Number' (No. 26, Autumn 2009) and 'Comics and Graphic Novels' (conference theme) (No. 27, Spring 2010). Pat Pinsent is still its admirable editor with Jennifer Harding as associate editor. Sue Mansfield has recently joined the IBBY committee and Pat hopes to hand over the editorship to her in due course. *IBBYLink* continues to be important as a means of communication with our members and the move to email distribution, brought forward due to financial constraints, has on the whole been received positively.

**Website** Our website [www.ibby.org.uk](http://www.ibby.org.uk), was launched during the past year and is maintained and updated by Kathleen Milne.

**2012 IBBY International Congress** The UK section of IBBY is organising this in London, with the theme 'Crossing Boundaries: Translations and Migrations'. Nikki Gamble is directing the congress and has gathered together an active committee and subcommittees to organise this. Nikki is currently on the international executive of IBBY and we have nominated her to stand for election for a further two years until the 2012 congress.

**Fundraising** This has increasingly become an issue in the run-up to the congress. As we are not a charity, it is proving difficult to attract funding. Therefore the committee has taken the decision to apply for charity status and we have begun the process towards this, led by Pam Dix. This necessitates looking at and amending our constitution.

**The future** The UK section of IBBY faces challenges, not least taking on the organisation of the 33rd IBBY Congress in 2012, although those challenges are often different from those faced by other member sections of the IBBY family. Imagine the pressures faced by our friends and colleagues in, for example, Haiti, Palestine and Zimbabwe. However, we have strong and enthusiastic committees running the section's general affairs and organising the congress and we look forward to the forthcoming year's activities and welcoming the world to London in 2012.

(Ann Lazim, Chair, IBBY UK)

### **David Almond Wins the Hans Christian Andersen Award for 2010**

IBBY have announced that Jutta Bauer from Germany has won the award for illustration and David Almond the award for writing. The awards are given for the entire body of the author's and illustrator's work.

David Almond is only the third British author to win this prestigious award, for which nominations were made from 28 countries. His predecessors were Eleanor Farjeon (1956) and Aidan Chambers (2002). His work has been widely acknowledged; he received both the Whitbread Children's Book award and the Carnegie Medal in 1998 for *Skellig*. The international jury recognised his 'unique voice as a creator of magic realism'. He will receive the award at the IBBY Congress in Santiago in September 2010.

### **IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Awards**

This is the twentieth anniversary of the awards given by IBBY and the Asahi Shimbun newspaper company for international projects run by groups or institutions judged to be making a lasting contribution to reading for young people. The award is given every other year to two organisations. The winners of the 2010 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion awards are the Osu Children's Library Fund, Ghana, [www.osuchildrenslibraryfund.ca](http://www.osuchildrenslibraryfund.ca), and Convenio de Cooperación al Plan de Lectura, Medellín, Colombia, <http://bit.ly/9kSlvg>.

Each will receive US\$10,000, which will be presented at the 32nd IBBY Congress in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, at a special event on 10 September 2010.

The Osu Children's Library Fund (OCLF) consists of two teams, one in Canada and the other in Africa, that share the mission of bringing books and literacy skills to African children and adults. OCLF works at the grass-roots level, seeking support and participation from elders and members of the host community.

Convenio de Cooperación al Plan de Lectura is a non-profit organisation that encourages reading and literary creation by means of awareness, training and research programmes, including workshops, storytelling and sessions with authors and illustrators.

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**IBBY/NCRCL MA Annual Conference 2010**

Froebel College, Roehampton University, London. Saturday 13 November 2010.

The topic of the conference is to be 'Conflicts and Controversies'.

The conference will address controversial subject matter in children's fiction and the fictional coverage of national and international conflicts. It will challenge any lingering assumptions that children's literature is, or should be, apolitical. For more information as it becomes available, see [www.roehampton.ac.uk/ibby/index.html](http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/ibby/index.html) or contact Laura Atkins, [l.atkins@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:l.atkins@roehampton.ac.uk).

The next issue of *IBBYLink* (Autumn 2010) (copydate 31 July 2010) will be titled 'Australia'. Articles on all aspects of Australian children's literature are invited, including considerations of earlier settler life and the colonial heritage; aboriginal written languages, folklore and dreamtime stories; bush life and the home education of some children; national and state collections; Australian book numbers cf. UK and US imports; and recent immigration (e.g. Asian and boat people) and its effects on children's literature.

The Spring 2011 issue of *IBBYLink* will be devoted to short summaries of papers and presentations from the annual 2010 IBBY/NCRCL MA conference 'Conflicts and Controversies' to be held in November (copydate 10 December 2010).

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

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To sponsor a future issue of *IBBYLink*, contact [PatPinsent@aol.com](mailto:PatPinsent@aol.com).

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