

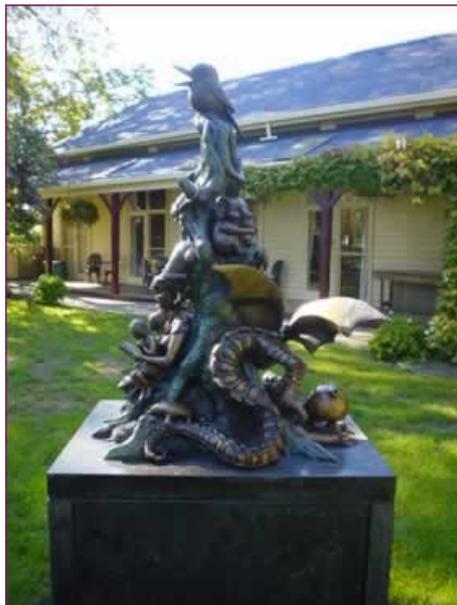
## Australia

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Memorial sculpture to Joyce and Court Oldmeadow, who established the Dromkeen Children's Literature Collection. The homestead is now owned by the publisher Scholastic Australia.

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## EDITORIAL

‘Advance, Australia’

(National motto, originally derived from an early nineteenth century poem, and used in Peter Dodds McCormick’s ‘Advance Australia Fair’ (1878) which became the Australian national anthem in 1984.)

When we decided to devote this issue of *IBBYLink* to children’s literature from and about Australia, I had no idea of the quantity (and quality) of material we were to receive on the subject. I had for long been aware of classics such as Ethel Turner’s *Five Little Australians* (1894) and Louise Mack’s *Teens* (1897), which Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard in *The Oxford Companion to Children’s Literature* (1984: 37) describe as being among the initiators of ‘a mature and distinctively Australian style that ‘emerged most suddenly and clearly’ at the end of the nineteenth century. Franklin Miles’ *My Brilliant Career* (1901) is another notable early work, while a book also awarded classic status, in a different genre, comic fantasy, is Norman Lindsay’s *The Magic Pudding* (1918). Some subsequent books have also become popular in the rest of the world, perhaps most notably James Vance Marshall’s *Walkabout* (1959), which became a significant film; both book and film raise controversial issues in their (slightly different) portrayals of the Aboriginal boy who helps two children who survive an air crash in the Australian desert. Alan Marshall’s *I Can Jump Puddles* (1956) and Ivan Southall’s *Hills End* (1962) date from a similar period, while the work of Patricia Wrightson, who recently died, has the particular distinction of bringing into focus Aboriginal folk myths and thus reminding Australians that their culture has Indigenous roots as well as those of the Europeans who settled there. More recently, Ruth Park’s time-travelling *Playing Beatie Bow* (1980) and Gary Crew’s postmodernist *Strange Objects* (1991) have brought various areas of Australian history to the attention of their young readers. At the same time, Australian literary critics, notably Clare Bradford, have contributed some incisive post-colonial readings of children’s literature from Australia and elsewhere.

The material in this issue of *IBBYLink* reveals the vigour and abundance of contemporary Australian children’s literature. It also displays

the extent to which writers are taking on board some of the troubled history of the colonisation of a continent that was already the home of an Aboriginal people whose remarkable artistic and narrative culture, having not been preserved in writing or durable stone buildings, was consequently undervalued by the incomers.

We start with a glance at the work of IBBY Australia as well as at some of the book prizes awarded to outstanding books. We have the usual invaluable contribution from Pam Robson’s database, while other articles feature such topics as mental-health problems, transgender issues, masculinity and sports culture, and Australian-Muslim identity. But the largest area featured relates to the historical background, and the way in which contemporary Australian education is collaborating in the attempt to give Aboriginal culture its rightful place.

This issue also includes news about recent developments in IBBY UK, connected with the impending Congress in 2012 and the need to become clearer about our structure in order to obtain charity status, something that is an essential part of the process. After many years of unstinting work as Chair of British IBBY, Ann Lazim has stood down to give her attention to organising the Congress, and we are happy to welcome Clive Barnes in his new role as Chair. Details about the current committee are provided in this issue, together with some reports about events. As usual, we also have a wide range of reviews, including some that discuss books from ‘down under’. BETTER TO PUT END OF EDITORIAL HERE AND FOLLOW BY THE OTHER NOTICES??

An incidental result of working on Australian material was the realisation that we need to give space to children’s literature related to South Africa, so *IBBYLink* 31 will focus on that ‘rainbow nation’.

We apologise that in our last issue, *IBBYLink* 28, a review attributed Keren David’s *When I Was Joe* to the non-existent reverse-named author David Keren. The error has been amended in the archive copy.

**Pat Pinsent**

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## ARTICLES

### IBBY Australia

### AUSTRALIA

*Robin Morrow, National President of IBBY Australia*

IBBY Australia has a proud history. There has been an IBBY section since the 1960s and its dynamic president for many years was Ena Noel, who also served on the IBBY International executive committee. Several successful conferences were held in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s. Australians love to travel: 55 attended the IBBY International Congress in Cambridge in 1982, and four years later when *two* Australians, writer Patricia Wrightson and illustrator Robert Ingpen, were the recipients of the Hans Christian Andersen medals, they were supported by 75 compatriots at the Tokyo Congress.

Since those heady days, IBBY Australia has had a lower profile, but has continued faithfully under three succeeding presidents to maintain links with the parent body, submit books for the Honour List, attend and contribute to international congresses, and administer the biennial Ena Noel Award to encourage emerging young authors and illustrators. To celebrate the Hans Christian Andersen bicentenary in 2005, a one-day seminar was held on The Fascination of Fairy Tales. After a long gap, in 2008 nominations were again made for the Hans Christian Andersen awards: writer Jackie French and illustrator Shaun Tan.

The section has for many years been a subgroup of the professional librarians' organisation the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), which generously paid the annual dues to IBBY International in Basel, but this status did not make it easy to attract non-librarian members. When Jenni Woodroffe and I became vice-president and president respectively, we felt compelled to work towards an independent IBBY section, able to fly free. To maintain this independence will require continuing and imaginative efforts. For the 2010 International Children's Book Day we sold hundreds of posters and held celebratory events in several states. Best of all, nearly 100 people have responded to our newsletters and become paid-up members of the section.

We see it as IBBY's unique role to maintain an awareness of the international scene, to promote Australian books in other lands and also to raise awareness here of books from other countries and languages. There is no point in duplicating the work of other bodies such as the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA), which organises the annual Children's Book Week with its major awards for children's and young adult books. Australia has a number of thriving children's literature centres and other organisations, such as the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). We aim to cooperate with all of these. The recently formed Australian Children's Literature Alliance (ACLA) is an umbrella organisation that is working towards the appointment of our first Children's Laureate.

The Australian children's book scene has changed radically in the 40 years since I first opened my children's bookshop with its one small shelf of Australian books and its many shelves of imports. In book-trade terms we were still a colony then. In fact the first Australian IBBY Honour Book, Nan Chauncy's *Tangara* (1961), had been entered as a British publication! We now have a buoyant children's literature, with many talented writers and illustrators producing books in which Australian readers can recognise their own places, ways of life and voices.

Early this year saw the passing of two outstanding women, Patricia Wrightson and Anne Bower Ingram, both of whom contributed much to this development. Patricia Wrightson pioneered the integration of characters and stories from Indigenous traditions into novels for contemporary readers. Her *The Nargun and the Stars* (illus. Robert Inkpen, 1973) tells of a young city boy who goes to stay in the country and meets some mischievous Dreamtime spirits and also the Nargun, a huge ominous stone creature. I have a

particular affection for *A Little Fear* (1983), expressing as it does the independent spirit of Mrs Tucker, a refugee from a nursing home for the elderly. Such books taught many readers to look with fresh eyes at the landscape around them. Anne Bower Ingram built up a strong list of children's books as editor at the publisher William Collins and elsewhere: the picture book by A.B. Paterson *Waltzing Matilda* (illus. Desmond Digby, 1970), Dick Roughsey's *The Giant Devil Dingo* (1973), other Indigenous stories in picture book form by Dick Roughsey and Percy Trezise, and important books by Junko Morimoto and Bob Graham – Anne's legacy is strong and wide-ranging. Many in the UK children's book world knew Anne from her regular visits to London and the Bologna Book Fair.

Such losses encourage a backward glance, but there is much to celebrate in the present. This year 455 books were entered in the CBCA book awards in the five categories; a television series was screened of *My Place* by Nadia Wheatley (from the book illus. Donna Rawlins, 1987); and Rosalind Price, an esteemed children's publisher, reported in our newsletter on her visit to Mongolia to run workshops in Ulaanbaatar for those eager to develop children's publishing there.

A two-day conference entitled *Imagine This! Imagine That!* marked the sixty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the CBCA when a special guest speaker was Maurice Saxby, one-time member of the international judging panel for the Hans Christian Andersen awards. Later this year a dozen or more Australians will attend the IBBY International Congress in Santiago del Compostela, Spain, about eight of whom will present papers.

Each country has its special challenges. Australia is huge, with many different landscapes and many Indigenous language groups. The phrase 'the tyranny of distance' formerly referred to our isolation from Europe, home of many Australians' forebears. This isolation has lessened with instant communication, affordable air travel and an increasing sense of being at home with our Asian and Pacific neighbours. But distances within the country continue to dominate. For the IBBY vice-president, who lives in Perth, and the president, who lives in Sydney, to meet, one of us must take a five-hour flight across a vast desert. As IBBY Australia continues to grow and develop, we hope it can make a vital contribution to overcoming the tyranny of distance.

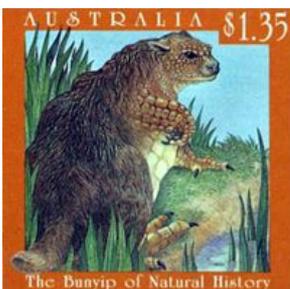
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## Bunyip and Patricia Wrightson

*Sally Newham*



An Australian word, 'bunyip' denotes a mythical amphibious monster said to inhabit inland waterways. (OED)

Prominent Aboriginal writers have in recent years challenged the right of non-Indigenous people to write children's literature based on traditional stories, claiming that 'most traditional stories written by non-Indigenous writers pitched at children were "patronising, misconstrued, preconceived and abused"' (Huggins in Janke, 2009: 9). Perhaps the most prestigious non-Indigenous Australian children's writer whose work is brought into question by this comment is Patricia Wrightson, who died this year (2010)

at the age of 88. Her work was lauded by the critics, winning prestigious prizes, including the 1968 Hans Christian Anderson Award for writing, but it has been criticised by non-Indigenous critic Clare Bradford for its 'colonising effects' (2007: 84). On the other hand, Professor Judy Atkinson believes Wrightson is 'totally underrated for her contribution to children's literature, and the bridges she has built in understanding Aboriginal lifeworlds' (2009: 10). It is my personal belief that *both* these kinds of interpretation are true of Wrightson's work, as I will attempt to illustrate below.

Robert Holden (2001) traces bunyip through children's literature from the 1850s up until the late twentieth century. He continually emphasises the apparent need for the British settlers/invasers to seek stories for their children that had a basis in the Australian land. He quotes one colonial writer of 1887 as pointing out that 'we cannot live for ever on the fairy and goblin stories of the home country' (Ferres in Holden, 2001: 159), while another in 1917 notes the need felt by Australian children for nursery rhymes more appropriate to their environment than the traditional English ones (Adams in Holden, 2001: 164). A similar impetus evidently motivated Wrightson. She claims that when she tried to write 'creative, contemporary fantasy with that strength that comes only from experience and belief', she found 'imported European folklore' inappropriate because of its inevitable lack of response to the Australian environment (1998: ix-x). Wrightson was not, however, oblivious to the effects of non-Indigenous interpretation of traditional stories. She makes explicit in the introduction to *The Wrightson List* (a 'source book' of Aboriginal mythology) her realisation that the 'interpretation' that is intrinsic to her work inevitably involves 'mistakes', notably in her portrayal of the bunyip (1998: xx). She goes on to explain her method and motivation when she herself deals with bunyip.

It became a labour of love to try to restore the bunyip to its old strength .... When the bunyip first appears I've used a technique of not-quite-seeing which I hope, from the outside, might heighten the sense of terror. From the inside it's a desperate effort to encompass the facts - for 'bunyip' is a white-man's composite of several closely related water-beasts, each with its own name, their habits and appearance differing slightly. What to do? Being stuck with the composite, try to suggest the variations and if possible make mileage out of them. Otherwise they will weaken the beast. (1998: xxi)

Wrightson seems to be torn between, on the one hand, a care and respect for the authenticity and power of the mythology, a desire not to corrupt or 'degrade' it, and, on the other, a Western, market-driven, interest in storytelling. This latter involves an awareness of the importance for an audience of 'heighten[ing] the sense of terror' and 'mak[ing] mileage' of that same mythology. Also at issue is the way Wrightson takes it on herself to 'restore' bunyip's strength. This looks very like what Clare Bradford identifies as the 'orientalist' position of representing and speaking *on behalf of* Indigenous people and culture as 'the other', a paternalistic and romantic 'othering' that always places the Indigenous in a place of inferiority even while apparently glorifying it. Clare Bradford looks at length at these issues in Wrightson's work and quotes Michael Dodson, Aboriginal academic and activist, who complains about the exclusion of Aboriginal subjectivities, aspirations, ways of seeing and languages, 'as if we have been ushered on to a stage to play in a drama where the parts have already been written'. He sees 'colonising culture [as] play[ing] with itself', while the colonised are fighting to survive (Dodson in Bradford, 2007: 72). I think this phrase also implies a lack of true engagement or relationship; while non-Indigenous culture may sometimes *look* as if it's engaging with Indigenous culture, it's mostly engaging only with itself.

Another issue within Wrightson's work is whether taking Aboriginal mythology into the context and tradition of European styles of storytelling is itself a colonising and conquering tool, a way of subsuming and swallowing Indigenous Australia into the post-colonial national imagination, or whether it can be a 'bridging' practice between cultures. Bradford distinguishes between fiction that thematises Indigenous cultures and characters, which she suggests can be written by non-Indigenous authors, and the retellings of Indigenous narratives which she feels are best retold by those from that culture (2007: 71). However, the line between a retelling and a work of fiction can be quite fine when drawing on Aboriginal mythology. Bradford goes on to problematise the

effect of form in Wrightson's work, suggesting that the Aboriginal characters, motifs and spirit figures that it deploys are drawn inexorably into Western frames of reference (2007: 83).

A related issue to that of form/genre is the idea of 'folklore'. Wrightson (1998) repeatedly uses this term with regard to Aboriginal traditional-story figures and mythology without any reflection on the problems of its use, even though at that time there had already been considerable debate about the applicability of the term, as discussed by Blakeney (1999), who subsequently adopts the more acceptable term 'traditional knowledge' for the rest of his paper, stating at one point that 'today in Australia, Indigenous peoples regard the protection of traditional knowledge as an issue of self-determination' (1999: 13).

While Wrightson's work thus can be seen as lacking the required respect for Aboriginal culture, many readers have responded to her work as if it is a 'bridge'. In 1978, as reported by her publisher, Mark Macloud, Aboriginal poet Jack Davis encouraged her to be bold in representing Aboriginal culture, despite her admitted terror of getting it wrong (Macloud in Wrightson 1998: vii). On her death, Macloud recalled how, over the years, Wrightson's project began to appear inappropriate, as Indigenous Australians no longer needed anyone to speak for them and 'the idea of a non-Indigenous woman writing about Indigenous subject matter to some readers began to feel like cultural appropriation, imperialist exploitation all over again' (Macloud, 2010).

I think it *is* important to recognise the historical context and cultural environment of the day, when reflecting on Wrightson's handling of bunyip and other figures of Indigenous mythology and tradition. While Wrightson may not always have been in touch with changing times, she had previously been ahead of much contemporary thinking, and provides the seeds of a model of sensitivity and courage for future non-Indigenous writers of Australian-based fantastic fiction for children or adults. While the voices of Indigenous people with respect to their intellectual property rights, privacy and traditions need to be attended to, non-Indigenous Australians still have a need to find a home for their imaginations within the land on/in which they live. I would argue that this is not a trivial matter but one of great importance for the health and sustainability of life on this continent. If the imaginations of the greater majority of Australians continue to wander and seek refuge offshore while our physical lives go on here, I believe there is a danger of a great emptiness of relationship with the land, which can take the form of any number of negative environmental and social repercussions. And I would argue that facing up to individual and collective implications as privileged beneficiaries of the colonising process is a vital aspect of this creative engagement for any Anglo-Australian, as authentic relationship cannot be based on anything but recognition of the truth. With the Apology to the Stolen Generations (a formal apology given by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 13 February 2008), I believe this facing up has begun. In its aftermath I look forward to reading an emerging Australian children's literature that bravely and respectfully attempts to form 'right' relationships with bunyip and its kin.

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## **The Changing Face of the Children's Book Council of Australia's Book of the Year Awards**

*Chloe Mauger, Children's Book Council of Australia*

The Children's Book Council of Australia's (CBCA) Book of the Year awards are the oldest literary awards in Australia, predating the Miles Franklin Award by 10 years. The first Children's Book Week was held in November 1945 with the slogan 'United through Books', pointing to a more hopeful future after six years of world war. From 1946–1955 there was only one Book of the Year Award annually, judged and presented by CBCA New South Wales, the first being to *Karrawingi the Emu* by Leslie Rees in 1946, who was presented with a carnation as his prize! The Book of the Year could be awarded for either fiction or non-fiction.

From 1948 on, a winner and several highly commended books were acknowledged.

1952. Judging expanded to two categories: Under 8 and 8–15 years.

1953. Best Illustrated Book of the Year Award (only awarded once).

1955. First Picture Book of the Year Award (no winner, but two highly commended). Strangely, until 1973, picture-book winners were infrequently awarded, though commended titles were listed.

From 1957–1963 judging was conducted by the state forming the National Executive. In 1964 judges were drawn from six state branches (now eight).

1982. Two categories: Book of the Year and Junior Book of the Year. Titles changed to Older Readers Award and Younger Readers Award in 1987.

Introduction of the Short List (1982) and Notables List (1990).

In 1988, as a special one-off to celebrate Australia's bicentenary, the Eve Pownall Award for an information book was awarded to Nadia Wheatley with *My Place* (illus. Donna Rawlins). There was a gap of five years before this category was awarded again, but now regularly since 1993.

2001. Book of the Year Early Childhood category instituted.

2010. The CBCA Book of the Year awards are judged in a unique and comprehensive process. The ever-changing composition both of judging panels and books submitted ensures that no entrenched influences can exist.

Currently there are four fiction categories: Older Readers, Younger Readers, Early Childhood, Picture Book, all judged by an interstate panel of eight judges (one judge per branch). Every year brings a completely new crop of books to a changing panel of judges (each year there are four judges in their first year and four in their second year of judging). The fifth category is the Eve Pownall Information Book Award, judged by a panel from the current National Branch. If necessary, books may be referred to experts for advice on accuracy.

## **Highlights and Trends**

### **1940s and 1950s**

Before the concept of young adult fiction, most books in the awards, by current standards, seemed to be aimed at quite a young readership. Major themes were distance, danger, isolation, harsh environments, exploration, outback adventures both factual and fictional (e.g. Frank Hurley, Alan Villiers, Reginald Ottley and, later, Colin Thiele and Ivan Southall). Aboriginal tales were popular (sometimes in forms that are now seen to be insensitive) and also Australiana in many forms.

### **1960s**

Fewer 'commended books', but a clear winner named annually.

Emergence of established children's writers, e.g. Joan Phipson, Patricia Wrightson, Nan Chauncey, Eleanor Spence, Ivan Southall (winner four consecutive years, 1966–1976), Hesba Brinsmead, Colin Thiele, Christobel Mattingley.

Realistic treatment of middle-class Australian family life.

Fantasy incorporating Aboriginal folklore (Patricia Wrightson, Nan Chauncy, Max Fatchen).

Growing attention to teenage issues of isolation and character development (Hesba Brinsmead, Ivan Southall, Margaret Balderson, Reginald Ottley, Lilith Norman).

Historical novels in Australian environments.

### **1970s and 1980**

Flourishing of picture books – new printing technologies, recognition of the art form.

Aboriginal Dreamtime stories (Dick Roughsey). Bush ballads in picture-book format.

Increasing number of children's books published.

Increased promotion through Children's Book Week activities.

Growth of children's lists from major publishers.

Rise of independent children's publishers: Omnibus (1980), Walter McVitty (1985), Jam Roll Press (1987), Margaret Hamilton Books (1988).

International recognition of excellence of Australian children's books (Bologna Book Fair). Overseas editions of Australian authors.

In 1986 the Hans Andersen awards were given to Patricia Wrightson (writer) and Robert Ingpen (illustrator).

Growth and development of the awards in many directions, including the rapid increase of the number of books entered in the CBCA awards: 1977 (38), 1987 (113).

### **1990s and 2000s**

Number of entries to the awards continuing to grow: 1992 (183), 2006 (355), 2008 and 2009 (approximately 450 entries each year).

Many new authors and illustrators recognised.

Growth of self-publishing.

Some smaller publishers subsumed by overseas publishing houses.

Eve Pownall Information Book Award receives more entries each year.

Increasingly challenging themes in the Older Readers category – reflecting changing community attitudes and social realities.

Rise of the crossover novel (some published with different young adult and adult covers).

Continued breaking of new boundaries in the picture-book category (e.g. Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, Matt Ottley's *Requiem for a Beast*).

The rise of the graphic novel and manga.

### **Controversial Issues**

The awards are granted for literary excellence, with child appeal as one of the criteria, whereas children's choice awards such as the West Australian Young Readers Book Award (WAYRBA) rewards popular books.

There will always be some books that challenge the status quo – and those who criticise them. The range of reasons for the criticisms are varied – sometimes justified, sometimes seemingly trivial.

### **Perception of what Is Outrageous Changes over Time**

Just look back at some earlier controversies to see how the world – and the world of children's publishing – has changed.

1952–1972. No picture-book winners: only five such winners during those years, although picture books were listed as highly commended. [No picture-book winners.]

The Wirrun Trilogy (Patricia Wrightson) Book 1: winner (1977); Book 2 'not a children's book' (1978); Book 3 highly commended(1982). [What is a children's book?]

1978. *A Candle for Saint Anthony* (Eleanor Spence) highly recommended. [Connotations of homosexuality]

1987. *Kojuro and the Bears* (Junko Morimoto). [Too challenging for younger children.]

*The Nativity* (Julie Vivas). [Sacrilegious]

Recognising that picture books appeal to a much wider age group, criteria for evaluating picture books dropped the words 'primarily for younger children.'

1983. *Breaking Up* (Frank Wilmott). [Parents called by their Christian names; masturbation.]

1984. *The Paw* (Natalie Jane Prior). [Condemned by the police in Geelong as it may encourage children to steal.]

1985. *The True Story of Lilli Stubeck* (James Aldridge). [Not a children's book.]

1994. Eve Pownall Award: *V is for Vanishing: An Alphabet of Endangered Animals* (Patricia Mullins). [An 'imaginative presentation' not 'documentation of facts'.]

A minor error in an illustration disqualified a book of great interest and beauty.

1994. *Honey Sandwich* (Elizabeth Honey). [A book of poems that roused criticism in Tasmania on the grounds that it made fun of the elderly and of the Meals on Wheels service.]

2000. *Hello Baby!* (Jenni Overend, illus. Julie Vivas). Shortlisted on the picture-book list. [Really an information book.]

2001. Early Childhood category introduced. [Should it encompass short novels as well as picture books?]

A growing number of very short novels with many illustrations being published. [Differing interpretations of 'early childhood'.]

2006. Ironic *The Short and Incredible Life of Riley* (Colin Thompson). [Objections to the cherubs smoking; inauthentic rat behaviour.]

2008. Challenging picture book *The Island* (Armin Greder). [Depiction of a naked man.] (In fact, a strong visual representation of his vulnerability, integral to the story.)

Differing legal definitions of 'a child' in different states – some as up to 16, some to 18 (as in Western Australia). Controversy over the word 'Children's' in 'The Children's Book Council'. [What is a child?]

Books being shortlisted in more than one category. Judging criteria permits this, but there is an argument that spreading the awards benefits more creators.

Difficulty in convincing the reading public that picture books are not only for very young children. Increasing sophistication of some picture books for mature readers.

Visual literacy increasingly taught in secondary schools, e.g. Year 9 art and English students analyse picture books with great perception and understanding.

Older Readers category: many controversial books and challenging themes. Strong writers such as Sonya Hartnett and Margo Lanagan (among others) continue to challenge their readers and critics. When is a book suitable for children? The UK Carnegie Medal also encounter these criticisms.

Challenging language – frequently controversial over the years.

Continued condemnation of ‘bleak’ books. [The judges don’t write the books!]

Changing community standards on issues of family breakdown, sexuality, racism. Conversely, some books now criticised for being too politically correct or dumbed down.

Criticisms that ‘humour never wins awards’.

Criticisms that ‘the judges always choose the same authors’. [Many first novels have won – also some creators demonstrate a continuous quality, strength and originality.]

Some criticisms clearly indicate that the critics have not actually read the book they are attacking, but are responding to media headlines or buying from the short lists or bookshop shelves without opening the book. Staff of specialist children’s bookshops can give advice on specific titles. There is no substitute for reading the book yourself before adding it to your collection!

In 1998, in his *Offered to Children: A History of Australian Children’s Literature 1841–1941*, Maurice Saxby wrote:

Along with the widening of genres of children’s writings has come an increasing sophistication of form and technique, so that although the implied audience is less compliant than the Saville children in *A Mother’s Offering* – and possibly less linguistically able – readers are now expected to handle metafictional novels and postmodern writing. Today the spectrum of writing for children from the ‘literary elite’ to the reluctant and/or inexpert is as wide as it was narrow in 1841.

Jo Goodman gives a broad overview of the criticisms of the Book of the Year awards in an article ‘*That Infamous Picture Book ...*’. She concludes that:

If the CBCA stuck to safe and predictable choices for its awards, it would be seriously letting down not only Australian creators, and the publishers who support them and take risks with innovative works, but also the audience of readers who ought to be exposed to exciting and imaginative responses to the society in which we live.

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[Compiled by Chloe Mauer for the Australian School Library Association’s (ASLA) XXI Biennial Conference, Perth, September 2009.]

# The Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards: Observations of a Judge

*Judi Jagger*

As a child, I could always count on receiving a book with a special sticker as a Christmas or birthday gift. My mother would seek out the titles of books that had received accolades from the Children's Book Council and they would find their way onto my bookshelves. Little did I realise that, many years later, I would be one of the people who had the great honour and responsibility of allocating those stickers.

The Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) awards began in 1946 and are the longest serving and most prestigious children's literature book awards in the country. They have evolved over the years and currently five Book of the Year awards are made: Older Readers, Younger Readers, Early Childhood, Picture Book and the Eve Pownall Award for an Information Book. There are commendations in each category as well as a Book of the Year.

Eight judges select the four fiction categories; while a panel of five is responsible for the Eve Pownall awards. Each year four judges leave the fiction panel and another four come on-board, with each judge serving a two-year term. This system ensures both diversity and continuity. Each of the eight states and territories that comprise the Commonwealth of Australia is represented on the judging panel, which is overseen by two awards coordinators. Judges are appointed by their local CBCA branch after a call for expressions of interest.

Titles for consideration must meet Australian eligibility criteria, have been published in the previous calendar year and be entered by the publisher. For the 2010 fiction awards, 395 titles (all published in 2009) were considered. Boxes of books arrive at regular intervals over the year and each box is discussed, initially by email but again in much greater depth at a national Judges' Conference in March or April of the year of the awards. At this conference a shortlist of six titles for each category emerges after discussion and voting; winners are decided and lists of Notable books drawn up.

The announcement of the Notable books, and a few hours later the shortlist titles (bearers of those all-important stickers), comes the day after the Judges' Conference and is a much-anticipated event in schools and libraries around the country. Although the judges have also determined the winners and honour books, these are kept confidential until the opening of Children's Book Week in August, when there is a national celebration of children's literature. Until the announcement of the winners, many children read the shortlisted (and hopefully the Notable) titles and make their own assessments about possible winners.

Each Children's Book Week is marked by a theme that is expressed through many different displays in libraries around Australia. In 2010 it is 'Across the Story Bridge', which not only nods to the real Story Bridge in Brisbane, where the Judges' Conference was held this year, but also offers rich possibilities for interpretation. The 2011 theme is 'One World, Many Stories'. All merchandise for Children's Book Week – posters, booklets, bookmarks, etc. – are designed by the previous year's winning illustrator of the Picture Book of the Year.

Picture Book and the Early Childhood categories do not necessarily overlap, as titles in the Picture Book category can contain mature themes. The awards are made for an age range (in the appropriate category) from babies to 18, but there is still a perception by some in the community that picture books are only for young children. Whenever an 'older' picture book wins, controversy unfortunately usually follows.

Clear criteria for judging each category assist the process, and although it is always disappointing when a personal favourite doesn't make the shortlist, the integrity of the awards is ensured by a system that has been refined over time. The Notables lists are titles that have been commended by the judges and provide a snapshot of the best in children's publishing over the previous 12 months. These are not popularity awards

(there are many children's-choice awards in Australia too), but are awards that reward literary and artistic excellence: the cream of the publishing crop.

To have been a judge of the 2010 CBCA awards was a wonderful experience, and already the reading has commenced for the 2011 awards. It is a rare honour, and a great privilege and responsibility, to help put on those stickers. The wheel has come full circle.

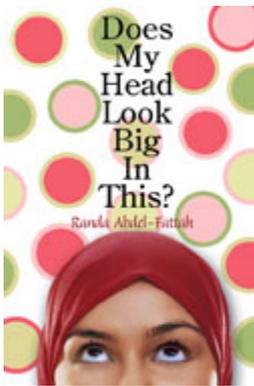
[Judi Jagger is Western Australian Judge, 2010–2011. The 2010 awards were announced on 20 August 2010. Details are on the CBCA website <http://cbca.org.au/index.htm>.]

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## Hyphenated Girls: Australian-Muslim Identity in the Novels of Randa Abdel-Fattah

*Alice Nuttall*

Randa Abdel-Fattah is a 26-year-old lawyer. *Does My Head Look Big In This?* (2006) is her first novel, and, like its fictional heroine, she has her own identity hyphens to contend with as an Australian-born-Muslim-Palestinian-Egyptian-chocaholic (Read Zone, 2006).



Even before *Does My Head Look Big In This?* begins, the importance and the complex nature of identity in the novel is established. Abdel-Fattah describes her age, profession and cultural background, but while no further explanation is required for her status as a 26-year-old lawyer, her description of herself as an Australian-born-Muslim-Palestinian-Egyptian-chocaholic immediately suggests two important elements of the novel: that cultural identity will play a significant role in her work, and also that any labelling will be vouchsafed with her tongue firmly in her cheek. Abdel-Fattah confirms this with her assertion that 'I wanted to write a book which allowed readers to enter the world of the average Muslim teenage girl and see past the headlines and stereotypes – to realise that she was experiencing the same dramas and challenges as her non-Muslim peers – and have a giggle in the process!' (Read Zone, 2006).

Amal, the heroine of *Does My Head Look Big In This?*, fulfils these criteria exactly. Although Amal describes herself as 'an Australian-Muslim-Palestinian. That means I was born an Aussie and whacked with some seriously confusing identity hyphens' (Abdel-Fattah, 2006: 6), and although she faces racism and cultural stereotyping at several points in the novel, she is never portrayed as a victim of either the Australian or Muslim elements of her culture. The majority of the problems she faces will strike a chord with teenagers from any ethnic background.

I wasn't one of those children who had a mixed-up 'syndrome' childhood. Yeah, sure, it didn't matter how much my parents told me to feel proud of my identity, there was always somebody in the playground telling the wogs to go home. But as it turns out, I was pathetic at sport and obsessed with boy bands featured in *Dolly* magazine, so there were plenty of other ways to make me feel like an idiot. (2006: 11–12)

*Does My Head Look Big In This?* follows Amal's experiences in Year Eleven at a prestigious grammar school following her decision to begin wearing the hijab full-time. Significantly, Amal's decision is not sparked by a religious text or any element of Islamic culture, but by an episode of *Friends*: 'Rachel from *Friends* inspired me. The sheikhs will be holding emergency conferences' (2006: 2). Abdel-Fattah subtly implies that Islamic culture is not alien to or separate from Western teenage culture, but that the two can easily coexist. Throughout the novel, Amal is sure of her identity both as an Australian and a Muslim; her challenge is to remain secure in this identity in the face of ignorance and of outright racism. The former is often treated with Abdel-Fattah's characteristic humour.

'Did your parents force you?' Kristy asks, all wide-eyed and appalled.

‘My dad told me if I don’t wear it he’ll marry me off to a sixty-five-year-old camel owner in Egypt.’

‘No!’ She’s actually horrified.

‘I was invited to the wedding,’ Eileen adds.

‘Really?’ This is definitely a case of dropped from the cradle. ...

Kristy passes me a note with exclamation marks and smiley faces all over.

*I’m really glad your dad didn’t go through with the wedding! :) :)*

Sweet of her. But cradle theory confirmed. (2006: 69–70, 72)

However, while ignorance is often portrayed as benign and forgivable, the damaging effects of deliberate racism are also acknowledged.

As we talk, I suddenly become aware that the volume of the radio has been raised so that it blares out through the bus. A voice on the early-morning talkback shouts words of outrage about ‘Muslims being violent’, and how ‘they’re all trouble’, and how ‘Australians are under threat of being attacked by these Koran-wielding people who want to sabotage our way of life and our values’. My face goes bright red, and my stomach turns as the driver eyeballs me through the reflection of the mirror, looking at me as though I am a living proof of everything being said. I feel almost faint with embarrassment as the angry voice blasts through the bus for everyone to hear.

The bus driver keeps watching me, and my face burns with shame. Shame that I have let him get to me. (2006: 157)

Despite pressure from society, classmates, friends and even family, Amal refuses to compromise her identity. By contrast, the heroine of Abdel-Fattah’s second novel, *Ten Things I Hate About Me* (2007), sets out with her identity already compromised – even more significantly, this is her own decision.

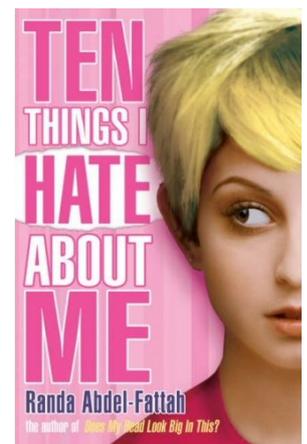
[Nobody] in my class has any idea about my Lebanese-Muslim background. In fact, my real name is Jamilah Towfeek but I’m known as Jamie when I’m at school because I’m on a mission to de-wog myself. ... Ever since Year Seven (I’m in Year Ten now), I’ve hidden the fact that I’m of Lebanese-Muslim heritage to everybody at school to avoid people assuming I drive planes into buildings as a hobby. (2007: 5–6)

Not only does Jamilah/Jamie change her name, she attempts to purge all traces of her Lebanese-Muslim identity from her appearance, dyeing her hair blonde and wearing blue contact lenses in order to fit in with the ‘Caucasian ... yardstick against which all Australians are measured’ (2007: 9). However, it is only the stereotypes surrounding the Muslim aspect of her identity that Jamilah/Jamie resents; her Lebanese-Muslim background can provide a refuge from the stress of her life at school.

[M]adrassa is like a sanctuary for me. There I’m Jamilah. I play the *darabuka*, eat my Lebanese food and listen to Arabic pop music. I’m not a walking headline or a stereotype. I’m just me. (2007: 31)

The influence of her friends and teachers at the madrasa, her family (particularly her older brother and sister) and Timothy, a classmate who refuses to compromise himself in order to fit in with the crowd, eventually helps Jamilah gain the strength to be open about her identity, an achievement symbolised by her decision to play with her band from the madrasa at her high school formal.

Both *Does My Head Look Big In This?* and *Ten Things I Hate About Me* feature female protagonists who overcome personal and social difficulties in order to negotiate their identities while avoiding stereotypes and labels. However, the differences between the outlook on life of the two protagonists, and the decisions they make, counter the idea that there is such a thing as a typical teenage Australian-Muslim experience. The overall message of Abdel-Fattah’s work is that everyone, no matter what their age, gender, race or class, is an individual, and that stereotypes are ridiculous at best, dangerous at worst.



[Alice Nuttall is a PhD student at Oxford Brookes University researching the themes of post-colonialism and racism in children's literature. Her special interest is the changing portrayal of Native Americans in children's literature over the twentieth century. One of her poems was shortlisted for the university's Love and Justice Poetry Competition.]

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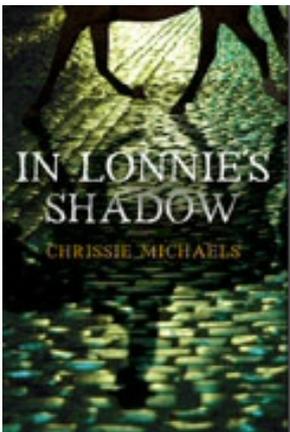
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## *In Lonnie's Shadow*

*Chrissie Michaels*



When Charles Dickens wrote at the beginning of *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times', he could easily have been referring to Melbourne in 1891. By then Marvellous Melbourne had already hit the glory of being equal in architecture, culture and economy to the grand European cities. The Victorian gold rush had brought wealth beyond past imaginings, catapulting many fortune seekers into a better, more extraordinary way of life. Speculators were developing the nation at a frenzied pace. Collins Street was the Mecca of high society, who spent their leisure time 'doing the Block'. The Princess Theatre was welcoming renowned performers like Sarah Bernhardt. Arcades housed tea houses, music stores and bookshops. Hobsons Bay was a busy port, filled with fast tea clippers and travellers. Cable trams ran down most city streets.

But by 1891 things were starting to turn sour. The boom time was giving way to bust. A grand recession was hitting, and hitting hard. This is where the four teenage characters of my latest novel *In Lonnie's Shadow* find themselves. Not only in the Melbourne of 1891 but in Little Lon, that intricate web of lanes and alleyways within a grid of four main city streets, flanked at the northern end by the grand Exhibition Building – home to Melbourne's World Expo in 1888 – and to the east, Parliament House. Close to all the places considered great in Melbourne, Little Lon was perceived as its underbelly, a place of shadows, a haven for slum and vice, frequented by the rich as well as the poor. Well known for its brothels, lack of sanitation and criminality, it was a place for 'low degraded broods' as C.J. Dennis (1915) put it. And this is how it lingered in the Australian psyche until recent times.

Indeed this was common belief until several contemporary archaeological digs revealed another side to the story of Little Lon. Of course, there is no denying that violence and crime were a part of life there. The area was filled with brothels and gangs, and this dark side is significantly portrayed in my novel. But what struck a chord most of all was how perceptions of the area had been revised because of the discoveries made there – that in spite of the adverse conditions, Little Lon had its fair share of ordinary working families. It was cosmopolitan; people from diverse cultures and backgrounds lived side by side in a close knit community. The excavations brought a living, beating heart back to the area.

I wanted to recreate this aspect of Little Lon life through my own characters. The four teenagers, Lonnie, Pearl, Daisy and Carlo, are all trying to make a fair go of life, although many things are making it difficult. In true Australian spirit, and with his hint of Irish ancestry, Lonnie believes in everyone having a fair go, and he will go to the very edge of the law to right what he considers are the wrongs done to himself and his mates. By 16, Pearl has already been hard hit by life, but she has a strong will and a cheeky sense of humour and is determined to deal with what life throws at her. Sometime it's hard to know who they can rely on. Secrets are kept and promises made. There's plenty of action and the characters find themselves facing many adversities – theft and kidnap, gang warfare and murder – and they have to make some pretty serious choices.

The structural idea for the novel came from a visit I made to a Museum Victoria exhibition based on the Little Lon diggings. Indeed the collection now has 500,000 artefacts from Little Lon. *In Lonnie's Shadow* has chapter headings that use labelled objects found over the past 15 years. Clay pipes, frozen Charlottes (penny dolls), bone hat pins, jewellery, bottles, coins and tokens, jars of ointment and a spur, to name a few which took my fancy, were all objects found in the digs. However, not all the items used for the chapter headings ended up being from the digs. There are imagined objects worked into my story too. After all this is a novel, not a history lesson! I deliberately blurred the line between what is real and what is imagined. Hopefully, a reader may feel inspired after reading the novel to test out fact from fiction with a little bit of their own research.

Teen readers need to connect with a historical novel. They need a link to the present. The idea for a street race formed the central point of action for me early on in the process of writing the novel, coming from the 'spur' in the museum exhibition. The idea that people illegally raced horses through Melbourne's streets in the dark of night connected with me because this issue of teen drag racing through the streets is one that hits the news every so often. The comparison seemed obvious. Gang warfare is another theme that concerns modern times as much as it did in the past. My larrikin gangs – the Push and the Glass and Bottles – came from the *Argus* newspaper of the period. Sadly, on a Saturday night there are still people being 'bottled' in fights.

The challenge is to come up with meaningful characters and themes. They need to appeal to modern readers. I thought about what doesn't change through time. For me, young people are still concerned about friendships. They fall in and out of favour. They fall in and out of love. They have a desire to change the world, right the wrongs, make life fairer. Lonnie, Pearl, Daisy and Carlo reflect this camaraderie. They have a deep sense of friendship and community spirit. Yes, they have to live on the edge. Sometimes their survival depends on it. However, all are fundamentally honest, determined and resilient. They stick by each other. In the course of the novel, Lonnie is reminded by the people who care for him, as well as through his own experiences, that everyone must face the consequences of their actions.

Much of Little Lon has now been swept away. The 'scowling slums' myth, in C.J. Dennis's words (Dennis, 1916), took root and drove in the developers. Casselden Place where Lonnie lived and Pearl worked is now home to an office block. Cumberland Place, home to Carlo and his family, Moon, the Syrian hawker and the ever-welcoming Auntie Tilly, no longer exists. Two terraces, nearby the Leitrim hotel where my Daisy lived, are up for redevelopment. I hope that *In Lonnie's Shadow* will remain as a testimonial, a voice whispering some of the secrets of this vanished community.

[Australian author and teacher Chrissie Michaels writes historical fiction. Her other novels include *On Board the Boussole*, *the Diary of Julianne Fulbert* (written as Christine Edwards (2006)), which traces Lapérouse's famous and tragic voyage that touched on Australia's shores at the same time as the First Fleet were anchored in Botany Bay. Originally from Lancashire in the UK, Chrissie has lived in Australia for most of her life.]

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# An A to Z of Embarrassing Author Moments

Hazel Edwards



This A to Z was compiled from my experiences as the travelling companion of an imaginary cake-eating hippo on his thirtieth anniversary. The Cake-Eating Hippo series currently consists of seven books and also a book of plays. All the books except one are illustrated by Deborah Niland (see below for the exception).

**A for Age.** Question: ‘How old is the Cake-Eating Hippo?’ Answer: Ageless, or ‘The age of the reader’. Actually the imaginary friend is 30 years old. Imagine the embarrassment of retrieving a hippo with a baggage tag from the airport carousel when surrounded by business travellers in suits. Luckily, Hippo, detachable cake and library bag travel with me as tools of trade rather than excess baggage.

**B for Breathalyser.** When the police waved me down to be breath tested (only had coffee), they were so astonished by the large stuffed pink hippo strapped into my front passenger seat that they waved me on.

**C for Candles and Cake.** A bookstore kindly provided candles on the Hippo cake. I blew them out quickly, just before the smoke detector above shrieked.

**D for Dirty.** After a literary festival, the over-loved Hippo needed cleaning. Dry cleaners wouldn’t touch him because the head had paper inside. Too big to fit into a washing machine, Hippo had to be emptied of the filling of polystyrene balls and the ‘skin’ washed by hand in baby soap flakes. Experts advised removing the filling either in the car park or in a bath. I found out why ... the polystyrene balls went everywhere, even clung to our underwear. Once when I hand washed ‘skinny’ hippo in our bath, a visitor freaked out on opening the bathroom door because Hippo was hanging from the shower to dry.

**E for Embroidery.** A request for an embroidered square for a favourite-author quilt. Flattering, but I’m hopeless at sewing. My neighbour came to the rescue and did it within the 48-hour limit.

**F for Facelift and for Fan mail.** I don’t sew, so a friend mended Hippo when his seams split and the original ‘pattern’ couldn’t be traced. The facelift altered his expression and his eyebrows became menacing rather than kindly. So quick nips and tucks were necessary. Fan mail peaks at Book Week and Hippo gets his own, via snail mail and also email. This week I was asked, ‘Does the Hippo talk to Plato the Platypus Plumber?’ (in a recent picture book by illustrator John Petropolous). Imagine if one imaginary creature from one book could talk to another! What a fantastic idea. I played with the idea of a party inviting them all. Catering could be a challenge.

**G for Gender change.** For a number of reasons, *Hand-Me-Down Hippo* was illustrated by Mini Goss, whereas the original hippo was illustrated by Deborah Niland. They coexist like favourite cousins because the female mini hippo was ‘handed down’ to a new generation of readers in the way in which favourite toys or clothes are hand-me-downs. But remembering whether to say ‘he’ or ‘she’ for the same hippo ‘prop’ is a challenge.

**H for Hand-me-down.** A Queensland special-school student designed a patchwork Hand-Me-Down Hippo by sticking on bits, and I thought it was a brilliant idea. A patchwork is made from bits of other treasures. And the Hand-Me-Down-Hippo has been passed onto the next generation as the treasured idea of friendship and reassurance.

**I for Identity.** During a family crisis, I was dropped at Tullamarine airport by my daughter, who raced off with my handbag containing my ticket, credit cards and ID. Helpful air staff accepted my author photo on the back of my book as ID, reissued a ticket and sent my handbag on the next flight to Launceston. Being known as the hippo author has some advantages, but not size-wise when there are too many slices of birthday cake.



**J for Journeys.** Translated books often travel further than their creators. My hippo is becoming a film, going on iPhone and being translated into Chinese. I'm especially proud of the Braille version for blind students and the Auslan signed edition for deaf students.

**K for Knowledge.** I do know that real hippos eat carrots, but mine eats cake.

**L for Ladder-climbing competency.** Due to Education Department regulations, staff need a ladder-climbing competency certificate. We forged one for Hippo so that the local newspaper photographer could capture Hippo climbing the ladder onto the mobile library van roof.

**M for Mobile library van.** Being driven by the librarian in a van which had my hippo character painted outside and the books inside was surreal. Rural children chose the hippo character to be painted on the side of the van that visits small rural schools.

**N for Naming books and characters.** Apt titles matter and similar series books must start with different words for easy cataloguing. The current book is my thirty-ninth title.

**P for PJs (Pyjamas).** An American couple emailed a request for advice on where to buy 'his and hers' hippo pyjamas. Fortunately a salesgirl was most helpful.

**Q for Question-mark candles.** The party shop didn't have any. So they made a special order and now they've become fashionable, not just for Hippo cakes (to match any age readers), but also for people of indeterminate age.

**R for Remote.** One Book Week I was invited to a remote Western Australian mining settlement. Most of the population is under five so the imaginary hippo was a great attraction. No cake-eating camels in stories yet, but ....

**S for Salesman and Sculpture.** The Toyota car salesman was a little surprised when I asked, 'Do you think a hippo would fit in this car?' It did. Hippo has been immortalised in an outdoor sculpture of favourite book characters in the gardens of Dromkeen Children's Literature Homestead in Victoria.

**T for Travel.** A friend suggested that I could legitimately travel in the freeway fast lane to the airport as the front-seat belted Hippo qualified as a passenger.

**U for Unusual events and fiction prediction.** During a heavy storm, children told the librarian it must be Hippo on their school roof. Several ducks have been named after my character 'Stickybeak'.

**V for Viewpoint.** When the publishers wanted to change the word 'smack' to 'growled', in line with contemporary families, there was a great fuss and hundreds emailed and discussed the issue on talkbacks and web chats.

**W for Website.** Hippo has his own website [www.hazeledwards.com](http://www.hazeledwards.com). But I do not need any more hippo bath plugs, toothbrush holders or even hippo mugs.

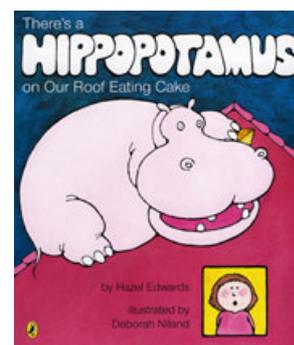
**X for the Unknown, as yet unwritten, story.**

**Y for Why not?**

**Z for the Zoo** where the first Hippo book was launched 30 years ago beside the hippo enclosure, with hippo-shaped food, including white marshmallows (hippo dandruff), and hippo blood (red wine).

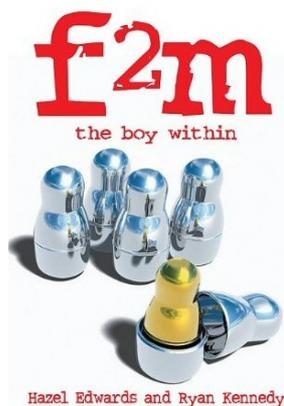
[Hazel Edwards was born and lives in Australia. She was nominated in 2009 by IBBY Australia for the Astrid Lindgren Award. The first book of her Hippo series is *There's a Hippopotamus on our Roof Eating Cake* (Camberwell, VIC: Penguin, 2005).]

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## Collaborating on a Controversial Young Adult Novel about Transitioning Gender: Co-Writing *f2m: The Boy Within*

*Hazel Edwards and Ryan Kennedy, authors*



Being geographically separated, we decided to collaborate online to co-write our controversial young adult novel on transitioning gender. We're both Australian, but Ryan was working in New Zealand during the 18 months it took us to complete the 40 drafts of the manuscript. What has amazed us since the early 2010 book launch by Ford Street Publishing is the speed at which international young bloggers have used social media to review and comment on this transgender 'coming-of-age' novel. In the past, print reviews took months to appear. Now the e-comment is instant via guest blogs, Twitter, Facebook and literary e-review journals.

The process of writing this novel has been as intriguing as its controversial content has been to research. But we have had a special advantage. Ryan is an ftm (female to male).

As a family friend, I've known Ryan since he was presenting as an 11-year-old girl. He's now a recently married man of 33. His life is balanced. Some transguys suffer greatly from other people's reactions to their choices, and sometimes the consequences are tragic. Gender transition is an unusual subject, but its advantageous when a co-author has experienced the medical and psychological process. Research time was reduced, but facts such as genetic mosaic were still checked.

Our aim was to show the universal theme of 'coping successfully with being different', via a coming-of-age story – with humour and compassion plus punk music. Our character Skye, who transitions to Finn, is 18, a legally significant age for a driver's licence, identity card, etc. Extended family members, including Gran and brother Victor, react differently to the teenager's ftm transition.

*f2m: The Boy Within* (2010) is not a medical text or an autobiography, nor is it a piece of propaganda. It's about an 18 year old making crucial decisions. There is ironic humour but also the awareness of the impact on family and friends. Only one young adult novel, Ellen Wittlinger's *Parrotfish* (2007), existed on this ftm transgender topic in 2008 when we started writing, but ours is internationally the first by a ftm trans-co-writer. The young adult novel by Julie Anne Peters *Luna* (2006), a very well-written book, is about transitioning from male to female (mtf, more common than ftm).

Technologically, the process of writing was equally significant. We collaborated via email, Skype and web cam. We also used an electronic book trailer, and now many young adult bloggers have guest interviewed us. A candid W.I.P. (work in progress) log was my way of keeping track of medical, literary and technical challenges before we forgot the details of genes, dates, sexist terms, fake family-history trees, electronic glitches and the embarrassing moments. Ryan was in New Zealand, so we worked electronically, with him emailing me a raw first draft as a chapter each week, usually on a Sunday night. Then I would work on this version, before returning the chapter to him later in the week. We used tracking in Microsoft Word, but also colour coding the bits which needed later fixing. In the last month, we were editing via Skype and exchanging daily on the 70,000-word draft.

*f2m* is fiction. Although Ryan plotted the original sequence, based on his earlier private online diary kept during his treatment, we structured the synopsis, choreographed the characters and crafted the fictional story.

Working together, the pronouns were the first challenge for me. It's so hard to start saying 'he' when you are used to saying 'she' or 'her'. My compromise was to use a name more, rather than the pronoun. Now, however, I have no problem with 'he' and 'his' and I think of my co-writer as a thoughtful male with keen observation skills from 'reading' others in gender roles.

Gender transitioning has its own language, and simplifying too much makes a complex psychological story sound glib. The pronouns also become problematic in a blurb of a

few lines. Trying to indicate in a single sentence that a young female became an older male, with the right names, meant using neutral words like ‘teenager’ or ‘sibling’, rather than ‘she’. Writing with no pronouns is the way. So I used terms such as ‘school-leaver’ and ‘love their teenager’ to cover for the pronouns. It’s hard to summarise the ironic humour, the punk scene and f2m transitioning in the candid, vital, energised style of the book, without being bland. Additionally, real transitioning takes several years, not the time frame of one sentence. Summarising takes out the ‘youth’ language, while it is difficult to deal with the several cultures in the book: punk music, gender change, medical and others.

Family-history mystery is a sub-theme. I later constructed a fake family tree to include the fictional intersex ancestor who would have been infertile, and plotted the recessive gene that may have been carried into our character’s generation. This accurately portrays tendencies for intersex to run recessively in families, despite no direct line via children. Creating a fake history to fit war dates and medals was another challenge. Medical sequences required constant checking, portraying Finn as suffering fatigue from injections not yet given.

There were possibly 40 drafts, involving 18 months concentrated work. That’s the joy of a co-author in another time zone. You are alert at different times. And if you’re a techno-tragic like me, to have an IT expert as co-author is a bonus.

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Co-authors’ websites. [www.ryanscottkennedy.com](http://www.ryanscottkennedy.com) and [www.hazeledwards.com](http://www.hazeledwards.com).

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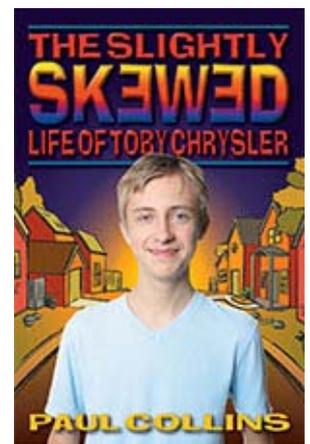
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## **A Book’s Journey**

*Paul Collins, author and publisher*

I started writing *The Slightly Skewed Life of Toby Chrysler* about three years ago. However, about that time I thought I’d like to start publishing other authors’ books so I had two careers happening at once. The trouble is that I’d created a monster with Ford Street Publishing. Although publishing seven to eight books a year doesn’t sound too hectic, it’s easy to forget that the major publishers have staff to edit, do accounts, marketing and publicity, proofread, design, liaise with authors and illustrators, write contracts, etc., etc.

So I wrote this book whenever I had a chance. I knew I wanted a character, Fluke, to have a certain character trait. I didn’t know what a malapropism was till I started researching for Fluke’s character. They’re sentences that have a substitution of a word that doesn’t really make sense, but has a comic effect. So a decaffeinated coffee becomes a decapitated coffee; for all intent and purposes becomes for all intensive purposes; charity begins at home becomes clarity begins at home. The trick is to make sure the verbal gaffes all relate to the actual story. Some of my favourite malapropisms are: the town was flooded and everyone had to be evaporated; dysentery in the ranks; and, of course, Kath and Kim’s friends who are very affluent.



The characters' names come from anecdotal stories. Toby is nicknamed Milo, because he's not Quik. Fluke was named after his mother tried conceiving on the in vitro fertilisation (IVF) programme, gave up, then conceived. Hence, Fluke.

Once I'd finished *The Slightly Skewed Life of Toby Chrysler* I wondered which publisher I could send it to. After all, most know me as a science-fiction writer – I don't know why, as I've written many more fantasy novels than science fiction novels, but there you are! So taking a leaf from Doris Lessing's book (she also sent two manuscripts to publishers under a pseudonym), I sent the manuscript to all the major publishers under another name. Like Doris Lessing's submissions, it was rejected. One publisher did say I could send more of my work because I 'showed promise'. But one editor loved it and recommended another publisher because his company was being subsumed by another publisher.

I took up his suggestion and waited ... and waited. Five months later I withdrew the story. I was then faced with a dire predicament. Where could I send my new book? I was judging a writing competition called the Charlotte Duncan Award for Celapene Press. So under a pseudonym I sent *Toby* to Kathryn Duncan, the publisher at Celapene. It was accepted within the week and within four months it was published. So there you – a wayward journey that reads more like the slightly skewed life of an author ....

[Paul Collins has written over 130 books and 140 short stories. He is best known for *The Quentaris Chronicles* (2004–), which he co-edits with Michael Pryor, the *Jelindel Chronicles* (2004–2009), *The Earthborn Wars* (2007), and the *World of Grrym* trilogy (2008) in collaboration with Danny Willis. He has been shortlisted for many awards and has won the Aurealis, the William Atheling and the inaugural Peter McNamara awards. He has had two Notable books in the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year awards.]

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There is a trailer for this book at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lclytl3DB-4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lclytl3DB-4).

Celapene Press. [www.celapenepress.com.au](http://www.celapenepress.com.au).

Paul Collin's websites. [www.paulcollins.com.au](http://www.paulcollins.com.au), [www.quentaris.com](http://www.quentaris.com) and [www.fordstreetpublishing.com](http://www.fordstreetpublishing.com).

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## **Australian Children's Literature and Explorations of Indigenous Australian History in a Primary School**

*Margaret Zeegers*

This is a brief account of a project, started in 2006, establishing an Indigenous Australian artists-in-residence programme at the regional Buninyong Primary School, Victoria, Australia, to foreground its Indigenous Australian history. The University of Ballarat initially funded the project. Teachers and children work with a reference group made up of the local Indigenous Australian elders and community representatives, volunteers and artists of the region. Children's fiction and non-fiction literature texts are used in discussions to explore issues of traditional Indigenous Australian custodianship of the land on which the school is placed and, through this, to gain Indigenous Australian perspectives on Australian society. Indigenous Australian storytellers, artists, dancers and musicians help to develop a critical appreciation of the ways in which the school has been positioned in the physical, literature and pedagogical landscapes.

Clare Bradford's (2001) analysis of the fiction and non-fiction literature that Australian children have traditionally engaged in about their own country's people indicates systemic and deeply ingrained racism within those texts, a racism that has yet to be

addressed in school textbooks. It is with some hope that we look to the future in this regard, for the proposed new National Curriculum to be introduced by 2014 specifically refers to embedding Indigenous Australian perspectives in what is taught and learned, and how it is taught and learned, in Australian primary and secondary schools: ‘Students will understand that Australia’s past pre-dates British colonisation and can recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander influences on our present day society’ (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority, 2009: 8).

The non-fiction texts are those that have traditionally informed school programmes in relation to Indigenous Australian history and current social positioning. The fiction texts are those that focus on Indigenous Australian issues and perspectives. As a preliminary exercise, the children engage with a rather beautiful picture book, *My Place: The Story of Australia from Now to Then* (Wheatley and Rawlins, 1987) as a foundation for both the students’ literacy needs and the needs of the project’s visual literacy focus. The gaps in such literature have been addressed by other books selected for the project, written and illustrated by Indigenous Australian authors and artists. These include such books as *Papunya School Book of Country and History* (2001) by Anangu staff and students at Papunya School, Anita Heiss’ *Who Am I?: The Diary of Mary Talence* (2006), Mary Malbunka’s *When I Was Little, Like You* ((2003), Pat Torres and Magdalene Williams’ *The Story of Crow: A Nyul Nyul Story* (1987) and Percy Trezise’s *Land of the Dingo People* (1997). Such books tell a bigger story than those written by non-Indigenous Australians, and provide more than European perspectives for the children. The project is designed to help fill the gaps we might well argue have been deliberately created in children’s concepts of the Indigenous Australian role in history, as shown in the following pictures of the texts the children themselves have created in a mural positioned at the entrance to the school.



Entrance with visual texts produced by the children (left). A detail of the mural (right).

The mural is a sophisticated visual representation using a combination of the children’s understandings of Indigenous Australian representations of a story that can be told in the landscape in which their school is built, taking the form of tangible, durable artefacts of acknowledgement of their own school’s background within a bigger picture of Australian history.

Since the original production of the mural, the school has extended the project as part of its commitment to embedding Indigenous Australian perspectives into the curriculum that it offers its children. Each new group of children explores print, visual and oral texts, and each produces its own responses to those texts in writing and performing their own songs, making their own props and performing their own stories in dance, as informed by their own engagements with the various texts and with the various Indigenous Australian artists. The school has produced two original annual Indigenous Australian-influenced concerts, is in the process of planning another in 2010, and won a Victorian Education Excellence award for Partnership with Parents and Communities in 2009 for its achievements in this area. As Anstey and Bull (2004) say, we learn a lot about what children acquire from their engagements with texts when we ask them to produce their own. We are learning a good deal from the children in this project.

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- [Margaret Zeegers lectures in Literacy Education in the School of Education at the University of Ballarat. She has considerable experience in research, curriculum development and delivery of programmes in education institutions in Australia and abroad, and is the immediate past president of IBBY Australia.]

## Australian Children's Literature

*Pam Robson*

Sixty kilometres outside Melbourne, in the rural setting of Riddells Creek, stands an old colonial residence. This is Dromkeen, home since 1973 to Australia's unique collection of children's literature. Here can be found manuscripts, original illustrations, books in the making and much more. Dromkeen won the coveted Eleanor Farjeon Award in 1976, and in 1988 the Dromkeen travelling exhibition visited every state in Australia: a representative from Dromkeen even travelled to London to speak at a Children's Book Circle meeting in the Groucho Club. The Dromkeen Medal is awarded annually in Australia to someone who has made a significant contribution to children's literature: winners include Patricia Wrightson (1985), Robert Inkpen (1989), Paul Jennings (2000) and Ivan Southall (2003). Over the years, Australian writers and illustrators have made a significant contribution to the world of children's literature. In 1986 Australia dominated the Hans Andersen Awards when writer Patricia Wrightson, who sadly died this year, and illustrator Robert Ingpen took both awards. For a list of winners of the medal, see [www.scholastic.com.au/common/dromkeen/medal.asp](http://www.scholastic.com.au/common/dromkeen/medal.asp). The following is a selection of books for children by Australian authors and illustrators. It deliberately omits such well-established works as Franklin Miles' *My Brilliant Career* (1901), James Vance Marshall's *Walkabout* (1959), Ivan Southall's *Hills End* (1962), Ruth Park's *Playing Beatie Bow* (1980), Ethel Turner's *Five Little Australians* (1894) and Alan Marshall's *I Can Jump Puddles* (1955), in favour of less-known titles.

### Folk Tales

**Sally Morgan, *The Flying Emu* (1992) Pavilion Books 1851458387**

This attractive title is a collection of 20 Australian stories vividly illustrated using primary colours. The preface provides fascinating detail about Aboriginal culture.

**Joanne Troughton, *What Made Tiddalik Laugh?* (1993) Puffin 0140506748**

This Aboriginal folk tale, beautifully illustrated by Troughton, is based on the fact that Australian frogs drink excessively and then bury themselves during times of drought. When Tiddalik the frog drinks all the rivers dry the animals perform all kinds of jokes to make him laugh. The platypus succeeds, simply because of its appearance.

## Picture Books

### **Pamela Allen, *Waddle Giggle Gargle!* (1996) Puffin 0140559914**

A small format title for the very young. Exquisitely executed artwork inside bordered pages with large, bold text beneath. Text and pictures work together to tell the story. Jonathan and his grandparents live in the blue house at the end of the street, the magpie lives in the gum tree at the other end. After the bird lays its eggs it attacks the family as they pass by and they design some inventive 'green' devices to frighten it away. The reader must guess what it is they are making. Lots of onomatopoeia.

### **Jeannie Baker, *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* (1987) Walker 0744563011**

Baker uses superbly realistic collage artwork to create a 3D effect. The setting is real, the only remaining prehistoric rain forest left in north-east Australia. A small boy and his father travel by boat (*Time Machine*) to visit the forest. The artwork cleverly reveals the ghostly outlines of creatures from the past. Then the reader is shown what future commercialisation holds. Past, present and future come together. The boy provides a simple descriptive narrative as he explores.

### **Graeme Base, *The Eleventh Hour: A Curious Mystery* ([1988] 1993) Puffin 0140541489**

Melbourne-based Graeme Base is renowned for his interactive picture books. This large format title is a surreal anthropomorphic puzzle book. The mystery of the missing birthday feast must be solved. Clues are hidden within the massively detailed illustrations; answers are given at the back. This is a complex, challenging title, an exercise in concentration and observation. The story is told in a substantial rhyming text. Horace the elephant invites 11 animal guests to his party; each wears fancy dress. Food will be eaten at the 11th hour, after playing 11 games. Graeme Base's most recent title is *Enigma* (2008). Winner of the 1998 Dromkeen Medal.

### **Libby Hathorn, illus. Gregory Rogers, *Way Home* ([1994] 2003) Andersen Press, 1842702327**

A title for older readers, with a striking cover design. Winner of the 1995 Kate Greenaway Medal. Realistic artwork makes much use of black to convey the inner city at night. Shane is homeless, alone in the streets. He finds a stray kitten and they head for 'home', which is Shane's patch of territory. Dangers lie in their path – thugs and aggressive dogs. The dialogue is Shane's monologue with the kitten. The narrative is direct and repetitive with much use of the phrase 'the boy called Shane'. Print is white on black.

## Autobiography

### **Meme McDonald and Boori Monty Pryor, *My Girragundji* (1998) Allen & Unwin 1864488182**

This is the first of three autobiographical titles based on the harrowing life story of Boori Pryor, the Aboriginal performance artist and storyteller. Design and illustration are outstanding, with black and white photographs and line drawings. The first person narration employs many similes and metaphors, and colloquialisms. Boori was bullied at school; 'Girragundji' is the pet frog that becomes his guardian spirit, until eaten by a snake. An award-winning title in Australia with details about the author at the back.

The second title in this series, *The Binna Binna Man* (1999), is more appropriate for slightly older readers, the language is stronger and there are references to pubertal changes.

### **John Marsden, *So Much to Tell You...* ([1987] 1988) Walker 0744514495**

Australian Children's Book of the Year 1988. The narrative is diary/journal genre, a story based on fact. The unnamed narrator, a 15-year-old girl, is traumatised by an unnamed incident involving her father and is unable to speak.

## Novels

**Ursula Dubosarsky, *The White Guinea Pig* (1994) Puffin 0140366326**

This is a strange story with many threads to follow. Geraldine's expectations of her pets are always too high. Caring temporarily for Alberta, the eponymous white guinea pig preoccupies her whilst family traumas erupt around her.

**Elaine Forrestal, *Someone Like Me* (1996) Puffin 0140386440**

This story is so well-written that it is not until the final punch line that the reader understands the meaning behind the title. Narrated by the central character Tas, who is in danger because he knows too much about a terrorist. An understated theme of disability.

**Morris Gleitzman, *Two Weeks with the Queen* (1989) Puffin 014130300X**

Colin must cope with his young brother's impending death from cancer, a subject treated with sensitivity and humour. Colin pursues futile attempts to find someone able to cure his brother Luke, starting with the queen, but finally accepting the situation.

**Morris Gleitzman, *Toad Rage* (1999) Puffin 0141306556**

An hilarious anthropomorphic title for younger readers. Life is viewed through the eyes of a cane toad who is determined to save his fellow toads from extinction, particularly beneath the wheels of lorries.

**Sonya Hartnett, *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* (2007) Walker 0744565944**

This gripping title, set in south-east Australia, is centred on Satchel O'Rye, an only child who is determined to look after his parents since his deranged father refuses to do so. Satchel and his friend Chelsea, also with problems, are helped by their concern for the survival of a Tasmanian tiger, thought to be extinct.

**Paul Jennings, illus. Keith McEwan, *The Gizmo Again* ([1996] 2005) Puffin 0140378073**

A brilliant sequel to *The Gizmo* (1995). An attractive title with full-colour artwork. The story is narrated by Jack who is bullied at school, becoming a bully himself. He is handed a gizmo which sticks to his hand. Every step he takes forwards makes him smaller, to grow again when going backwards.

**Gillian Rubinstein, *Space Demons* (1986) Orion Books 1858814383**

This is the first title in a trilogy about a terrifying series of computer games. Andrew, a spoilt only child, receives the eponymous Space Demon Game from his father on his return from Japan. The game thrives on hate, literally pulling them inside, but as it reaches out into the real world the group learn to control their hatred and win by learning to care. Sequels are *Skymaze* (1990) and *Shinkei* (1996).

**Moya Simons, *Dead Meat!* (1996) Orchard 1860390595**

An hilarious collection of 11 short stories about Danny Thompson and his family in Australia. Themes include the power of conscience, bullying, and friendship.

## Teenage

**Libby Hathorn, *Feral Kid* (1994) Hodder 0340651245**

A powerful novel about street children, with violent scenes and strong language, involving drug addicts, but finishing on an optimistic note.

**Caroline MacDonald, *Spider Mansion* (1996) Puffin 0140369945**

A powerful thriller, based on gourmet holiday weekends at an isolated homestead, the eponymous Spider Mansion, where huntsman spiders live in the outsheds.

**John Marsden, *Tomorrow When the War Began* (1993) Macmillan 0330337394**

A thrilling read, the first title in a series set in an Australia of the future which is suffering from invasion.

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## Tea and Cakes with the Terminators: Teaching Real History with Historical Science Fiction

Sean McMullen

Getting the young adult readership excited about Australian federation has to be one of the more thankless tasks in teaching. There were no wars, revolutions or assassinations leading up to it, just a lot of politicians who were arguing with each other for years about when to do it, how to do it, and whether to do it at all.

On the other hand once the decision had been made to merge the colonies into a single nation, the general public suddenly became very excited. The colonial capitals, especially Melbourne, displayed rather more enthusiasm than style, as ordinary Australians from the social elite to working-class battlers celebrated the birth of their nation. There were parades, grand balls, parties, fairs, maypoles, floats, temporary triumphal arches, concerts, public holidays and patriotic articles in the newspapers.

Those with no money to spare on conspicuous celebration, needed only a hammer, a stout nail and a large tin can to produce an outline of Australia with holes that could be lit from inside by a candle. This would be hung in the front window, to show that here was yet another household that was proud to be Australian rather than just Victorian.

It must have been a very exciting time to be at school, because schoolchildren were heavily involved with the celebrations. So what was it like to be at school while your nation was being born? In general, we do not know. Class essays tend not to be preserved, phone cameras were a century in the future, and internet blogs had not even been invented in science fiction. So how are we to get a sense of connection between the young people of today and those who witnessed the separate colonies merging into Australia?

In my novel *Before the Storm* (2007) I decided to tackle this problem by simply inventing something dramatic. In May 1901 the first Australian parliament is bombed, bringing down the roof of the Exhibition Buildings on top of Australia's elite, and a few royal visitors. Germany is accused, falsely as it turns out, and an enraged Britain declares war. Acting with great presence of mind, Germany manages to invade Britain before it manages to get its imperial act together, and the British Empire spends the next century fighting a series of world wars to get Britain back.

For the young readers to whom I have spoken, this represents a much more interesting scenario than a lot of men with scruffy beards and wire-rimmed glasses arguing about state rights. What is more, if the story has been set in the weeks leading up to the bombing of parliament on 9 May, it is possible to craft a picture of teenage life in 1901 as the teenagers go about their routines in a rather more constrained society than we have now. In one sense it is the eternal lot of the teenager to feel frustrated, helpless and generally put upon, but it can be a lot easier to endure if they know that this is something that happened to their great grandparents, and that life improves as you get older.

In *Before the Storm*, the great-grandchildren are BC and Fox, teenage imperial cadets with training and attitudes that would make the most predatory mugger turn round and run for his life. Although they are unimaginably dangerous, however, their militaristic society has raised them to be meticulously well mannered and behaved. This is the future society's way of protecting itself from its own warriors. What it cannot do is protect itself from moral questioning, however, and when the cadets learn that a time machine has been built to send nuclear bombs into the past to destroy enemy cities, they rebel.

BC and Fox shoot their way into the research building and escape into the past, leaving behind a bomb to destroy the time machine. Wounded and confused, they arrive in Melbourne in April 1901, a few weeks before the bombing of Australia's first parliament. They fall in with four local teenagers: the dynamic but frustrated Emily, her ground-down brother Daniel, Daniel's lower-class friend Barry the Bag and the



beautiful artist Muriel. The title of the book is *Before the Storm*, because the ‘storm’ that is a century of warfare never happens, thanks to the efforts of the characters. Nevertheless, Australian federation has suddenly become a lot more interesting for the reader.

At another level the book is about aliens, for all six of the main characters are from societies that are pretty well off the scale in terms of being politically incorrect. The Australia of 1901 sees nothing wrong with shockingly sexist and racist attitudes, while the alternative future British Empire is rabidly militaristic after a century of total war. Fox was born in a hatchery, and has been flogged just for singing an unauthorised song. BC is a privileged officer from the lower aristocracy, but her chances of surviving her battle missions and reaching her twentieth birthday are effectively nil. By contrast, Emily believes girls should have the right to do radical things like going shopping alone and reading novels. Her only escape from her restricted circumstances is to dominate her brother Daniel, who spends his life trying to live up to the expectations of everyone else.

Perhaps the most modern characters are Muriel and Barry. Barry is working class, from a broken home, and is practising to be a petty criminal. He is, however, sensible and streetwise, knowing how to survive in dangerous company, and he has contacts who can get things done, supply things and make things disappear. While Barry lives in the cracks of mainstream society, Muriel Baker is already establishing herself as an artist in Melbourne’s bohemian subculture. In 1901 Melbourne was known as the ‘Paris of the South’, and a female teenage artist could have a lot of freedom that was forbidden to girls like Emily, whose respectable families kept them in something approaching house arrest.

By the end of the book the bombing of parliament has been prevented, history has been changed, Daniel is dating Muriel, and the cadets from a future that no longer exists are looking at a change of career. The young readers have also willingly learned a little about one of the most significant events in Australian history, and hopefully a few educators will have learned that a good story is the best way to make a boring subject fascinating.

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Sean McMullen’s website. [www.seanmcmullen.net.au/](http://www.seanmcmullen.net.au/).

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## **When the Boys Come Out to Play**

*Shane Thamm*

My greatest moment on the sporting field was hitting the winning runs of a cricket game when I was 12. I can’t think of too many other moments to boast about – in fact many were the reverse! Overall my involvement in school sport was benign. A few soccer teams here, a cricket team there, the odd rugby league match on the high school oval. I never excelled and often didn’t play – because I lacked confidence not desire. I remember the ensuing animosity of my team mates when on one occasion I disgraced myself in a school football match. I melted under glares of sheer contempt, like butter under the stinking subtropical sun. It was a classic example of how boys are measured by their sporting quality in male teenage culture. There was a code for how you were meant to behave and perform, and if you deviated from it – deliberately or otherwise – you were quickly chopped from the fold.

This culture is commonly expressed in Australian realist novels. Typically the protagonist fits so awkwardly into this social mix that he ends up in conflict, has multiple enemies and has other challenges to overcome. Usually by the end of the novel he overcomes these adversities, either by overthrowing his enemies or proving he doesn’t need their approval – or culture – to achieve self worth. A classic example is

Phillip Gwynne's *Deadly Unna?* (1997), the story of teenage boy Blacky who has to negotiate life with a domineering father in a racist town. Blacky is sensitive, he sympathises with the Indigenous residents of the nearby community, and contrasts his drunken father's violent outbursts with humour and emotional sensitivity. In *Blacky*, Gwynne proposes a form of masculinity that is better than the more 'traditional' form represented by the beer-loving men like Blacky's father and others of his generation.

In my novel *My Private Pectus* (2009) I explore similar themes. The protagonist Jack (or Sticks to his mates) also battles to win the affection of his ex-army Dad and overcome prejudice in different forms. Yet, unlike Blacky, Jack is happy to participate in prejudice if it maintains his status in the social order. Jack's vice is a hypocritical view of himself and the world. He'd rather reject friends, based on their appearance, than own up to his own deformity, a chest condition called pectus excavatum (sunken chest syndrome). Jack's fear of exposure is based on two desires: to be revered by his peers and to be loved by his father.

Influential on my writing was a passage I reflected on as I studied masculinities for my Master of Arts thesis in which *My Private Pectus* was the creative component. Social scientist and gender expert David Buchbinder remarked on the relationship between fiction and real life. He said, 'cultural texts are more than simple narratives or images. They reflect models and ideologies abroad in the culture' (1998). So I started looking for fresh themes and debates that were pertinent in today's society, particularly discussions that were important to my teenage readers. I decided to explore body image from a teenage boy's perspective. I also wanted to explore some 'hidden' traits of male teenage culture, and how that culture interacts with family, school and the opposite sex.

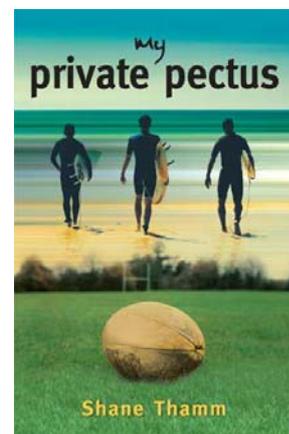
According to Mission Australia's National Survey of Young Australians 2008, one in five boys and one in four girls consider body image as a major concern. It rates alongside drugs and family conflict as a serious concern. This doesn't surprise me as body image was a key concern in my adolescence, and had a complex relationship with my low self-esteem. I would have loved an athlete's pecs and a flat stomach.

In my novel, I used sport as an entry point to explore body image and Australian teenage male relationships. At first I feared that sport was a clichéd way to explore these themes. After all, football is so common in young adult novels for and about boys that it often becomes banal. But Australian society is one that celebrates boys' clubs in their many forms, and footy is the pinnacle. There was also plenty of footy controversy going on in the Australian press when I was writing *My Private Pectus*. Clearly, it was a relevant tool worth exploiting. Football players have been involved in cases concerning violence against women, and now, perhaps more than ever before, Australian young men are scrutinised for bad behaviour, boozing (a pastime seemingly expected of them) and sexual misconduct.

But despite incessant controversies involving many of our leading footy players, they are still given hero-like status even if their bad behaviour is proved. And while much of our society, including some politicians, publicly shun such behaviour, we rarely explore deeper and try to understand the nuances of men's relationships and why some men behave as animals in masculinised arenas. We focus instead on their final actions.

Perhaps professional sport has narrowed the circles and cliques of our sporting 'heroes'. No longer required to find a real job in the nine to five of Monday to Friday, the sportsmen's social unit has become their team, and for many, their team alone. In those environments, attitudes and behaviours can become ingrained, unchallenged and rarely analysed. But this is where I think we can employ literature to excellent effect. Most often, books are about everything that leads up to the final act, the nuances that influence characters' opinions and behaviour. Books like, I hope, *My Private Pectus* provide schools a space for discussion and analysis that is actually much better than media headlines.

Reflecting both the scrutiny some young men face, and the culture they may live in, the main character of *My Private Pectus* confronts cultures of booze, sport and sex talk. In fact, the messages Jack gets from his father and friends are that sport, sex and booze are



all central to the making of a man. He's left to negotiate his way towards these visions, determined to try almost anything to achieve them. So Jack drinks, he aims to lose his virginity, and wants to conquer the sporting field. He goes on a shambolic and often hilarious journey to realise that neither sport nor sex define him as an individual. And it's not until he's made that discovery that he's able to make decisions for himself, realise his own goals, and face up to his body image anxieties.

*My Private Pectus* is not about pulling down national heroes – footy stars, or others – but a fun story about a boy growing up. It also points at the odd dichotomy between wanting to be a hero, and realising that many of the heroes he holds dear are no less flawed.

[Shane Thamm lives in northern New South Wales. *My Private Pectus* is his first novel. He is currently working on a story about a boy whose father is in Afghanistan. See [www.myprivatepectus.com](http://www.myprivatepectus.com).]

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## REVIEWS

### Books about Children's Literature

#### *Embodying an Image: Gender and Genre in a Selection of Children's Responses to Picturebooks and Illustrated Texts*

Sarah Toomey, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, hb. 978 1 4438 1413 3, £44.99, 2009, 241pp.

For those of us who have worked with Key Stage 1 children, as carers, librarians or teachers, one of the greatest delights is in observing their reactions to books, and in particular to picture books and illustrated texts. We have all seen how at different stages boys and girls select and react to their reading. Sarah Toomey's research (for her MA at Roehampton University) is therefore all the more interesting for the comparisons we can draw from our own experiences of young readers.

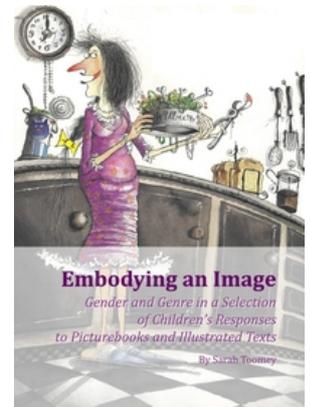
Toomey selected 24 children from a variety of backgrounds, from two schools, to choose and comment on illustrated books. Gender was a major focus of her study, and because she was particularly interested in 'the way that girls appeared to use their femininity as a form of resistance to some of the dominant cultural storylines made available to them' (p.7), three times as many girls were selected as boys. I am not sure that this was a wise decision, as I think it obscures the result by weighting the outcomes in favour of the overtly feminist slant. Therefore we have a far clearer idea of girls' responses than we do of boys'. In the circumstances perhaps it might have been better to interrogate only girls, as the inclusion of such an unequal number of boys' responses has added little from which valid empirical conclusions can be reached, and their reactions might have been better served by a separate and larger piece of work. Indeed Toomey herself indicates that further research is needed to examine the effects of gender-differentiated responses.

Nevertheless this is a valuable piece of research, well presented, fully illustrated (both by children's comments and pictorially) and it offers fascinating reading to students of both children's literature and children's behaviour. The appendix provides extracts from the interviews, verbatim accounts, which, as discussions with young children always are, make delightful and revealing reading. The book is organised into three parts, which reflect the genres chosen by the children: 'Vampires, Witches and Monsters', 'Princesses, Pirates and Female Adventurers' and 'Bears, Wolves and Dragons', each concentrating on the responses from a particular age group; from Reception (who apparently enjoy the macabre) through Year One's fixation with princesses and pirates, to Year Two's animal focus. It is clear from the responses that many children feel they have a guilty secret about what they are reading that they feel they need to keep hidden from the adults who oversee them. Championing their right to choose, Toomey finds that much of their chosen reading, and play, is driven by their toys or other visual media, but that they use the experience to explore vicariously other roles and other worlds, and to offer 'sophisticated or instinctive responses' (p.134).

In such an attractive book, the presentation of which challenges the all too common habit of publishing books about illustrated texts, but which themselves have no illustration, it is surprising to find that a correct version of Shirley Hughes' surname has escaped the eye of the proofreader both in the text and the index.

**Bridget Carrington**

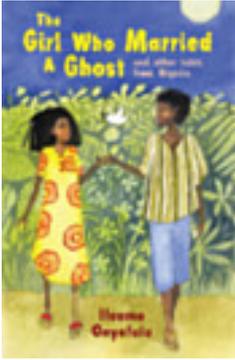
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## Children's Books

### *The Girl who Married a Ghost and Other Tales from Nigeria*

Ifeoma Onyefulu, London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8478 0011 4, £5.99, 2010, 112pp.



I read this book with my daughter, Charlotte, who is 10. She enjoyed the tales more than I thought she would – we tend to read long stories, and I had forgotten that short stories can have great appeal. Each story is just the right length for a bedtime story!

These tales have been handed down through the generations in Nigeria, and although each tale is a fable and ends with a moral, this does not detract from each one being a fascinating story in its own right. Some of the stories are comical, and some could be frightening but are resolved to a satisfactory ending. Many of the characters in the stories are animals, and some stories are far-fetched, but my daughter was intrigued by all of them and always keen to read another.

Sometimes the moral came as a surprise. My daughter was sometimes caught out by the moral after being swept along by the story: the moral of ‘The child who never went out’ is always to listen to your parents and do as they tell you! We tended to follow each story with a discussion about the moral, and I am sure we will refer back to these stories when moral dilemmas arise!

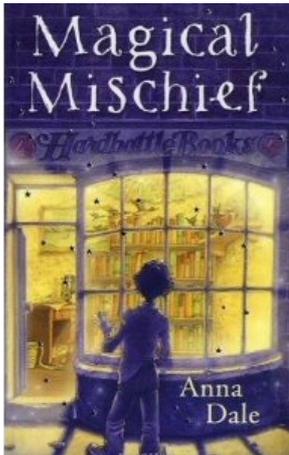
I don't think that fables are a popular type of story for children these days, but this is a beautiful collection of short stories. The stories would be suitable for children of almost any age and definitely suit being read aloud with a child.

### Rachel Underwood

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### *Magical Mischief*

Anna Dale, London: Bloomsbury, pb. 978 1 4088 0043 0, £6.99, 2010, 301pp.



The fourth of Anna Dale's junior novels, its subject matter reflecting her continuing fascination with magical matters, is a meaty volume. However, it is an absorbing, humorous and accessible novel for readers in the crossover between Key Stages 1 and 2. For me, it combines some of the best elements of Edith Nesbit's child-based fantasies with twenty-first century magical-fantasy writing, including J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series and Cornelia Funke's Inkworld trilogy.

The blurb hardly does it justice.

How do you deal with magic? Magic that has got completely out of control and taken over your shop and your home? This is the challenge facing Mr Hardbatttle and his new friends, thirteen-year-old Arthur and Miss Quint!

Hardbatttle Books is no ordinary bookshop. Magic has settled there in every corner and over the years has brought chaos to Mr Hardbatttle's life and driven away most of his customers. His livelihood threatened, Mr Hardbatttle is finally forced to take action. Together, Mr Hardbatttle, the resourceful and down-to-earth Arthur and Miss Quint embark upon a quest to find a new home for the magic!

This is entirely accurate but does not reflect the deeper qualities of the book, which allow it to be approached through several levels of reading. Mr Hardbatttle is aptly named, and he battles against far more mundane threats than magic. Although the author creates a beguiling cast of characters, which she puts into some intriguing and carnivalesque situations, Hardbatttle faces eviction from the bookshop he has tended for many years, and his initially fruitless search for a home for the magic which he loves but which threatens his livelihood leaves him defeated and depressed. He is caring and compassionate, and cannot himself contemplate leaving the magic homeless. Arthur, at heart a bookish and introspective early teenager, seeks solace at the bookshop because he feels overlooked and overwhelmed by his large family. Miss Quint's irresponsible and cavalier attitude to magic, and the chaos she causes by releasing characters from their books reminds me both of Nesbit's child characters who frequently wish unwisely, particularly the disastrous and frightening episodes in *The Enchanted Castle* (1907), as

well as of Funke's Inkworld trilogy (2004, 2006, 2008). While the book-character adults who turn to crime are eventually returned to the confines of the pages, Susan, the initially characterless girl from an uninspiring 1950s children's book, is allowed to develop, and is rewarded for her initiative in capturing the miscreants by being permitted to return to a far more interesting adventure novel which will allow her to be the central character.

Dale describes the magical uproar in the shop with considerable enjoyment, and the resulting word-based images are deliciously funny and imaginable. There are creatures from pictures on the walls escaping and causing havoc, books becoming as unruly as the playing cards that attacked Alice at the end of her trip to Wonderland, and a delightfully insecure toy elephant forever (tentatively) seeking its lost owner. Magical mischief indeed, and likely to engage, entertain and make readers young and old think more deeply than might at first be apparent.

### ***Street Heroes***

Joe Layburn, illus. John Williams, London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8478 0077 0, £5.99, 2010, 144pp.

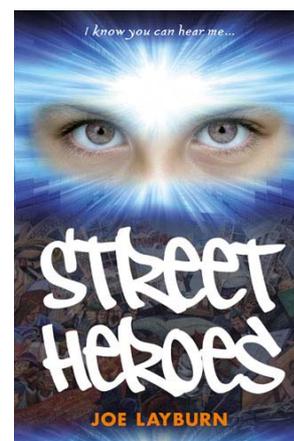
Layburn's short novel, ideally suited to older primary and younger teenage readers with a taste for the slightly supernatural, tackles the issue of racism at its extreme, and visualises a fascist British movement that seeks to emulate Oswald Moseley's 1936 march on the Jews of Cable Street in East London. We hear four young teenage voices, each telling the story from their own viewpoint: Georgie, the son of the British Party leader; Omar, a Muslim who lives in the Cable Street area and who fears his brother is becoming involved in extremist activity; Melissa, a black girl with learning and behaviour issues; and Fatima, Omar's blind sister, who has the ability to communicate telepathically.

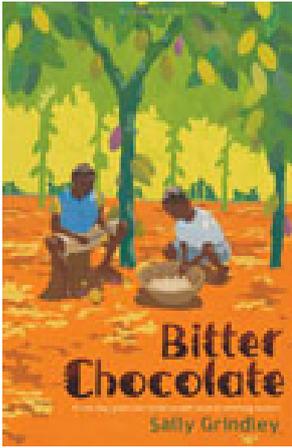
Fatima is able to send thought messages to both Georgie and Melissa, though neither knows anything about her except her name. Georgie is unhappy about his father's extreme views (as are his mother and sister), but lacks the courage and impetus to challenge him until he hears Fatima's voice in his head. We also see that others are as bigoted in their assessment of him as his father is of the non-white British, and that Georgie is drawn into conflict against his will just because others refuse to accept he can think for himself and might not hold his father's extreme views. However, Fatima's messages to him give him the impetus to act on his own views, and to avoid matters escalating into a tragedy.

Melissa is frustrated by her special needs and cannot develop relationships with others until she is calmed and given a purpose by Fatima's messages. Through her, a group of non-white children are enabled to challenge the fascists' march on their area. Fatima herself is shown not exclusively as a Muslim but as a thinker, someone who, despite physical blindness, has insight into people and situations which is lacked by those who can see. Layburn uses his characters to revisit a historical event which he (rightly) feels is overlooked, as well as twenty-first century race issues which increasingly call upon young people to make difficult, uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous choices. We are left with a final chapter that promises a future telepathic interaction for Omar, and another insight into current social issues.

### **Bridget Carrington**

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### ***Bitter Chocolate***

Sally Grindley, London: Bloomsbury, pb. 978 0 7485 9502 1, £5.99, 2010, 192pp.

This story of child soldiers in West Africa is rather more shocking and painful than might have been expected from the cover and style of presentation. The situation that these young boys find themselves in after the war and border insurrections in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea is extremely harsh. Grindley attempts, not totally satisfactorily, to make this more bearable by describing the strength of friendship between her two main boy protagonists. However, the characters are not sufficiently drawn for this to work and the overwhelming difficulties of their lives dominate. The recruitment of child soldiers and the immediate aftermath of war is an important topic for all children to know about, but there are other books available that have done this rather more effectively. It is a subject that is more suited to a slightly older child readership so that the contexts and experience can be more fully explained.

### ***Food Chain***

M.P. Robertson, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8450 7929 1, £11.99, 2009, 32pp.

This is a humorous and wicked picture book about the food chain, based on sea creatures. Wicked because our boy protagonist's cruel deed at the start of the story rebounds in a rather unexpected way when he himself gets swallowed by a whale. It was much enjoyed by the class I shared it with who said they would recommend it without hesitation to others – liking the colourful cartoon-like pictures and simple text. Their recommendation was to make it a bit more scientific by adding a fact sheet or a page about food chains generally.



### ***Pam Coles Dix***

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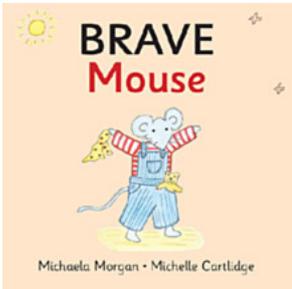
### ***Brave Mouse***

Michaela Morgan, illus. Michelle Cartlidge, London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8478 0110 4, £6.99, 2010, 32pp.

This generously illustrated story belongs to the genre of books dealing with things that frighten the very young. Little Mouse doesn't like dark shadows, bright lights, loud noises ... even silence scares him. He doesn't want to do what other little mice do.

The reader will be aware of different voices in this story in addition to that of the narrator. These are mainly reassuring ones, as also are the gently soft colours of the pictures – golds, blues and pinks. Little Mouse's parents are firm but encouraging, and as the tale progresses his inner voice becomes braver as he internalises the reassuring messages he is given. Finally he is well able to stand up for himself, and to choose when to say 'yes' or 'no' to his friends.

This is a charming portrayal of a small child's anxieties, and developing confidence.



### ***The Great Big Book of Families***

Mary Hoffman, illus. Ros Asquith, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 84507 999 4, £11.99, 2010, 40pp.

Mary Hoffman has written over 90 books for children and Ros Asquith has illustrated more than 60. This is a lively account of the great diversity to be found in today's families. Every possible model is celebrated as normal. Readers are invited to identify their own unique family's culture, style and structure. Parenting patterns depicted include by one or two, same sex or different, foster or adoptive. The extended family is there too, in all its colourful range and variety. Every aspect of family life is illustrated: homes, schools, transport choices, food purchases, hobbies and interests, clothing styles and pets. Nothing is forgotten. Feelings are also explored – families may be happy or sad, rich or poor, loud or quiet, worried or happy-go-lucky. Family celebrations matter, and include Diwali, Eid, Hanukkah and Bar Mitzvahs, and even the Chinese New Year.

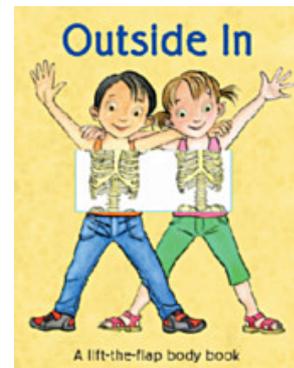


This is a thoroughly heart-warming and fun book, which joyfully celebrates cultural diversity with warmth, wit and sensitivity. It challenges all our possible preconceptions, or misconceptions, inviting a wealth of discussion and sharing.

### ***Outside In***

Clare Smallman, illus. John Shelley, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8478 0022 0, £11.99, 2010, 32pp.

This is a lift-the-flap body book, providing a very acceptable account of human anatomy for young people. This sturdy hardback will withstand a good deal of handling and flap lifting, to reveal the vital organs that lie hidden beneath the skin. John Shelley's illustrations of children playing and enjoying life are bold and colourful; they reveal, beneath the surface, muscles, skeletal structure, blood vessels, heart, kidneys, digestive organs, etc. Functions as well as structures are explored. Health messages are implicit in the text and the lively illustrations. There is plenty to read, with a usefully enriched vocabulary. A range of easy experiments invites participation, and helps to answer some of the questions the reader may have. This is a fun yet fact-filled book.



### **Joyce Holliday**

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### ***Sticky Doll Trap***

Jessica Souhami, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8478 0017 6, £11.99, 2010, 32pp.

The story is an adaptation of a West African folk tale of Hare, perhaps the original version of the Uncle Remus story of 'Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby'. It is adapted here to a picture book, retaining its West African setting tradition of Hare not Brer Rabbit as the trickster. I am intrigued by the name 'sticky doll' instead of the more familiar 'tar baby' which strikes me as more understandable for the intended age-group target nowadays.



The book opens with 'I am going to tell you a story about that cheeky rascal, Hare. And this is how it goes ...' on the right-hand page of an attention-holding double spread. The top of the spread is bordered by a stylised landscape of hills, trees and bare earth – which is repeated through the book with variations of colour and the trees' outlines, portrayed to show that a wind is blowing. The text is framed with small bunches of grass, larger ones at the bottom, and the main illustration occupies the left page, creeping onto the right page. The font of the text is excellent, clear and well spaced, inviting reading. The book is aimed at three to six year olds so emerging readers will be encouraged to try their new skills.

There is plenty to examine in the initial illustration. Why is a rope being pulled over a tree branch to hoist up a basket? What is in the basket? There are more baskets – one being transported on the back of what looks like a pig and another being carried by a monkey on its head. What is the 'ditch' that three other animals are looking into or getting out of? Hm! Lovely colours and intriguing.

It is a very hot summer of drought, so the animals are short of water and are scratching in the earth for some – except Hare, who is lazing in the grass. The animals' work is rewarded when they find an underground spring that then bubbles up to form a pool. The water is so precious that they decide to guard the pool. Monkey is the first guard and when Hare arrives in the early morning he refuses lazy Hare's request to fill his calabash ... But Hare is such a clever trickster that he gets the better of Monkey and fills his calabash with fresh water from the pool. When the next guard, Hyena, is also tricked, the animals get to work to outdo Hare by making a sticky doll covered with gum to guard the pool instead of an animal. Does Hare get his comeuppance? At first we think yes ... but Hare of course ....

I was a little disappointed in the illustration for the making of the sticky doll – a little too folksy to be deciphered. The rest of the illustrations follow the story in a lively manner that will maintain interest and are colourful and expressive. I enjoyed the story and the

illustrations, and was keen to know if the animals would outwit Hare. The twists to the story maintain suspense and the final twist is not given away until the last page.

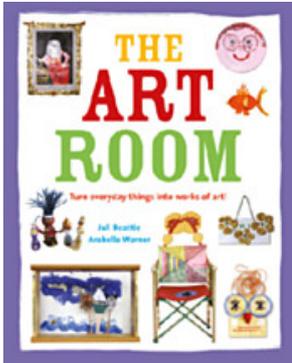
A lovely book to read and talk over with a very young child and also a lovely book for a learner reader with the helping eyes of an older child or adult. It is a hardback with good quality paper as required for easy sharing and child reading.

**Jennifer Harding**

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***The Art Room: Turn Everyday Things into Works of Art***

Jean Beattie and Arabella Warner, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 978 1 8450 7971 0, £11.99, 2010, 40pp.



This book offers a dozen projects that can be made from scrap materials and that are drawn from the experience of the Art Room, a charity that works with children who 'find it difficult to manage mainstream education'. There are any number of books that offer similar ideas and my feeling is that they are a poor substitute for being there and getting messy. That said, if you are going to put it into a book, then, for the most part, this is the way to do it, with ideas that have already been thoroughly child tested.

I've just a few quibbles. You can't assume that the child or adult who picks up the book will know what they are doing. The book starts properly with lists of equipment needed, how to be safe and tidy, where to get your scrap materials from, and some websites for potential inspiration. However, these are sometimes vague. 'Paint' covers a number of possibilities. The invitation to use 'gold and silver anything' in your project might be risky if you have any valuables. And an unguided trip to the British Museum or the Victoria & Albert website might be more confusing than inspiring for many children.

Once we get to the individual projects, it's much better. Sometimes these are drawn from works of art or design, encouraging children to look closely at established work and to adapt for their own taste. The projects are attractive, their instructions are straightforward, they are relatively simple to achieve for children of about eight or nine and above, and the examples in the photographs look like the work of children. There is a lot of space for individual creativity and, best of all, many of the projects are intended for children's own use and to reflect their taste and personality: for instance, a 'do not disturb sign' for the bedroom, portrait plates and shopping bags. I would imagine they would all go down well and give keen children lots of other ideas.

**Clive Barnes**

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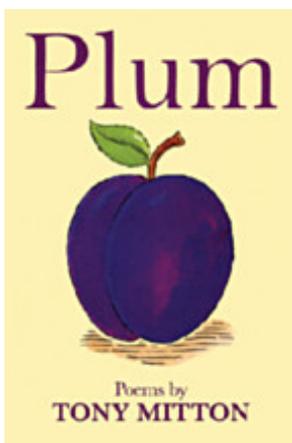
***Plum***

Tony Mitton, illus. Peter Bailey, London: Barn Owl Books, pb. 978 1 9030 1585 8, £5.99, 2010, 122pp.

Scholastic first published this illustrated collection of 49 poems in 1998.

The cover illustration is of one ripe purple plum; inside, the end papers are filled with this recurrent single image. The title tempted me to think of that boy who, with great satisfaction, 'pulled out a plum' from his pie. There are many such moments – and plums – to be had reading these poems. Tony Mitton finds inspiration in a diverse range of subjects and objects. 'The Bag' was written in response to being shown a bag full of disparate objects. From this the idea of a spell-bag full of possibilities, yet something to be wary of, is conjured up. Playfulness and a nod to the potency of magic are recurring themes. Some ideas develop from one poem to the next. 'Instructions for Growing Poetry' (found on the back of a packet) leads on to 'Growing', which begins as a reflection on a child's capacity to grow. Then surreal imagery takes over and the child becomes giant like, bending down to a diminutive adult.

In the garden, Tony Mitton's young daughter asks, 'What is under the grass, Mummy?'. This prompts a poem ('What is Under?') of questions and answers about the world around us and extends beyond the earth to the sky, stars and planets. 'Forbidden Poem'



and ‘Secret Passage’ toy with the child reader’s sense of curiosity, the desire to know and explore, the love of secrets. Thus the power of poetry stirs imaginative responses and opens doors to other worlds, and dimensions of experience. The poem ‘Early Walkman’ (a million years ago) illustrates such possibilities delightfully and simply in the way it portrays early humans discovering the sound of the sea contained in a seashell, drawing a parallel that has resonance in the modern world.

Ancient history, myths and legends, stories from the Old Testament, ballads, dreams, ecological themes, humour and slapstick are all grist to the poet’s capacity to play with rhymes, rhythms and language, and to engage the reader. There are haunting poems, sad ones and philosophical ones, and even one about having nits, ugh! ‘Mrs Bhattacharya’s Chapati Zap Machine’ (you’ve heard of slapstick, well, this poem is chapasticks!) is the most hilarious example of the humorous vein. ‘I Wanna Be a Star’ is a lively expression of every modern child’s wish to be a celebrity. Michael Rosen included it in his anthology *A–Z: The Best Children’s Poetry from Agard to Zephaniah* (2009), along with ‘My Hat’, the poem that introduces the collection. ‘Plum’ is the final poem and while the poet says ‘Don’t be so glum, plum’, the message is also for the reader who is developing a taste for poetry:

beneath your juicy flesh  
and flimsy skin,  
  
you bear a mystery,  
you hold a key,  
  
you have the making of  
a whole new tree.

Paul Bailey’s skilful illustrations are deft, subtle, hauntingly evocative at times, at others humorous as required, adding depth to the themes in the poems. I particularly liked his atmospheric drawings for ‘Ballad of the Little Boat’, ‘The Selkie Bride’ and ‘Child from the Future’. The flea in ‘Freak Cat-Flea’ put me in mind of William Blake’s *Ghost of a Flea*, while the image for ‘Old Noah’s Animal Dance-Hall Ship’ throbs with energy.

This small pocket-sized edition will suit many moods and occasions. I recommend it.

**Judith Philo**

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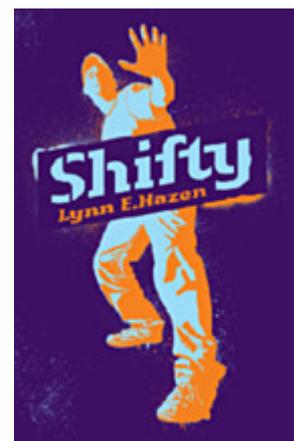
### ***Shifty***

Lynn E. Hazen, London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8478 0024 4, £6.99, 2008, 249pp.

Solomon ‘Soli’ de la Paz, aka Shifty, is fifteen years old and has lived in care all of his life. Abandoned as a new born baby on a Greyhound bus somewhere between New York and San Francisco, he has never known his birth family, or indeed any family, until now. After spending years in various care homes, as well as a spell in juvenile detention, Soli is now living with foster mum Martha and two younger foster children: Sissy who has been physically and emotionally abused by her family, and Thaddeus, ‘Chance’, a baby born addicted to crack cocaine. While the bleak backdrop creates an expectation of grim foreboding, this never actually materialises as Hazen displays an assured talent for drawing out the humour and humanity in everyday events. Although the precarious existence and vulnerability of children in the care system is never made light of, the story focuses on the ‘adventures’ of Soli and Sissy after they offer a lift to a homeless woman to avoid a parking fine and events begin to spiral out of their control.

Told through the first person narration of Soli, the story introduces the reader to an engaging young man who could be construed as ‘shifty’ but, more accurately, is living on his wits, a survival skill he has developed through years of taking care of himself. Learning to trust, however, is more difficult for him, something he has in common with Sissy. As events unravel, Hazen subtly portrays the creation of a family: a brother–sister bond, and an understanding that Martha will be there for both of them, a mother.

*Shifty* is an enjoyable, subtle novel, which highlights the problematic nature of family, especially when it is dysfunctional or simply missing. However, the narrative is never



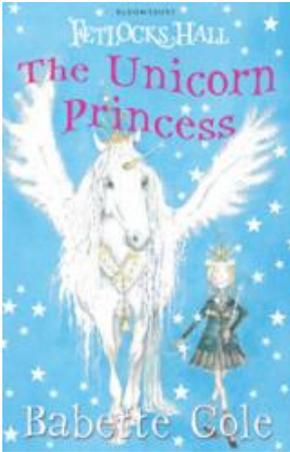
overwhelmed by ‘issues’, and the story moves at a fast pace, entertaining and humorous with an appealing narrator.

**Michele Gill**

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***The Unicorn Princess (Fetlocks Hall series)***

Babette Cole, London: Bloomsbury, pb. 978 0 7475 9931 9, £5.99, 2010, 160pp.

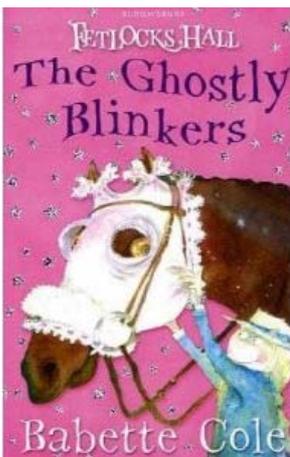


***The Ghostly Blinkers (Fetlocks Hall series)***

Babette Cole, London: Bloomsbury, pb. 978 0 7475 9932 6, £5.99, 2010, 128pp.

By Harry Potter out of *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, Babette Cole’s new series of pony stories, Fetlocks Hall, looks set to produce a promising string for publisher Bloomsbury. In *The Unicorn Princess*, ten-year-old Penny gains entrance to a boarding school for talented riders with magical potential. Penny’s qualities are soon recognised, and she turns out to be the next unicorn princess, gifted with the ability to speak Equalese, and able to save the world from the evil Devlipeds, who want to recruit the ponies to help them overthrow the good unicorns and make our world a ‘nasty place’ to live in (p.64).

*The Ghostly Blinkers* finds Penny saving the school from financial ruin with the help of a reluctant Irish steeplechaser and a family of ghosts who can leave their portraits (not to mention lending a pair of ghostly bloomers for Penny to use as blinkers). Somewhere in its pedigree, Fetlocks Hall was also crossed with Narnia, giving Penny access to such handy gifts as ‘the silver vial of Unicorn Tears with their healing powers’, the ‘Lance of Courage’ and ‘Queen Starlight’s Horn’ (p.16). Fortunately this is Babette Cole, so the eclecticism is more parody than mimicry.



The sparkly jackets of the Fetlocks Hall series tap shamelessly into the current pink and glittery pony-story market for the younger reader, and the novels tend to cover the same ground: princesses, unicorns, etc. However, the differences are interesting. For a start, the covers are designed by Cole, and therefore very clearly playful, signposting the reader to pick up the humour in the text. And although the fantasy and school-story elements might well be enjoyed straight by a reader at the younger end of the age range, older readers are likely to realise that Cole is not entirely serious, particularly in her caricatures of ‘horsy types’, who could be straight out of a Surtees novel.

Cole runs a stud yard in Dorset, showing and hunting her own horses, and intertwines a fairly realistic depiction of the UK horse world with the fantasy. At Fetlocks Hall, the stable chores have to be done, under the supervision of believable representations of stable staff, and protagonists take part in a very recognisable Pony Club. For readers who are keen to learn about horses and riding, or who are Pony Club members, the equine-related vocabulary and setting of Fetlocks Hall set a commendable standard of accuracy for the genre which is rarely cumbersome, and always combined with equal measures of fantasy and fun. Adult readers can hardly help noticing the references to (and wicked send-up of) such icons as C.S. Lewis. They might well feel that comedy occurs at the expense of characterisation, and that there is a measure of tension between a caricatured fantasy and a persuasive reality. Child readers, however, are unlikely to question the juxtaposition of romping humour and the consistent promotion of the Pony Club. The Fetlocks Hall series should be a winner.

**Jenny Kendrick**

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### ***Takeshita Demons***

Cristy Burns, London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8478 0115 9, £5.99, 2010, 144pp.

This well-written book is *exactly* the kind of story the children in my class would love. I teach Year 4. I am taking the same set of children up to Year 5 in September and will definitely use *Takeshita Demons* as a class-focus text. I have already taught a unit on Japan, which really captured their imagination.

This story contains all the basic elements that children aged 8–10 would find engaging: a familiar school setting: a child they can identify with, but with the added surprise interest of Japanese cut-throat demons! The pace is just right, and the language is accessible. All the Japanese-language references are correct, and the author has backed them up with translations that flow with the narrative. There seems to be more Japanese at the beginning of the story, which tend to tail off towards the end as the action picks up. The book initially reminded me of Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1993), a link which children are likely to make. The children in my class will love the simple, graphic manga-style illustrations in the book. The illustrations definitely add an extra appeal. I also like the fact the author has included appendices explaining the history of Japanese demons, as well as the kanji characters.

It's great reading a children's book that includes aspects of Japanese culture. This is something I've not come across before. I think the author has done a brilliant job of referencing all relevant cultural traditions such as taking shoes off when entering a Japanese person's home. What I thought was very interesting was the reference to Japanese people preferring not to make big displays of affection like hugging (p.59). However, as a Japanese family, the Takeshitas are not pigeonholed. They are as happy eating pizza as they are tempura or noodles.

**Anna Warren (Primary-school teacher and graduate in Japanese)**



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### **Children's Books from or about Australia**

#### ***The Hero of Little Street***

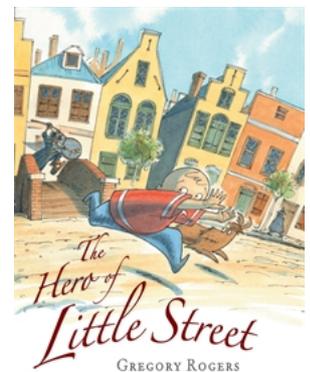
Gregory Rogers, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, hb. 978 1 7411 4524 3, £10.99, 2010, 32pp.

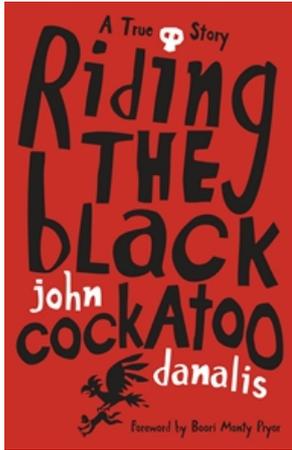
This book is a triumph of purely visual storytelling by one of Australia's finest children's book illustrators. The adventure begins in the familiar environment of Trafalgar Square outside London's National Gallery. The boy, left to wander alone, slips into the gallery unnoticed. It is the perfect hiding place, but he soon begins to find himself in trouble.

The artist Gregory Rogers admits that he often wonders about the real lives of the people in paintings such as those by Vermeer. This story plot allows him an opportunity to explore, together with the boy, that mysterious world within the gilded frame. Befriended by a small wiry dog who jumps out of *The Arnolfini Wedding* picture, the boy continues on until together they climb into another painting by Vermeer, and soon find themselves in seventeenth-century Delft with its colourful houses and narrow winding streets. Soon the boy and the dog are racing along Little Street, engaged in one action-packed scrape after another. The main event is an escape from the dog catcher. This is followed by the release of a large pack of dogs who are about to be turned into sausage meat but instead join in the adventure right to the end – where they escape into Trafalgar Square.

This graphic and fast-moving story could be followed easily by children on their own, but, better still, shared with an adult, it will certainly generate discussion and a creative response, including discovering more about the art and craft of storytelling.

**Joyce Halliday**



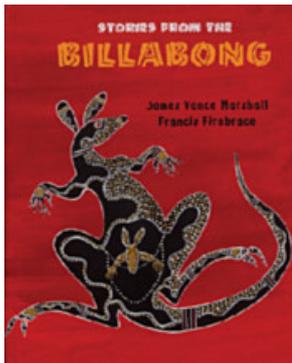


### ***Riding the Black Cockatoo***

John Danalis, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, pb. 978 1 7417 5377 6, £6.99, 2009, 276pp.

This account of the restitution of the skull of an Aboriginal man to his descendants is described on the advertising material as a ‘compelling true story ... a book for young and old’. While I have no doubts about the veracity of the story, it would seem to me that this kind of detailed account can be totally ‘true’ only if the events and conversations in it have been recorded in some way at the time. Better, surely, to see it as ‘faction’, a novel based on true events yet amplifying and shaping them to hold the interest of readers. But which readers? Personally I am rather doubtful of its appeal to young readers other than those studying the repercussions on current society of the uneasy relationship between the settlers and the original inhabitants in Australia.

Given these caveats, I am certainly prepared to applaud the action of Danalis in taking the initiative in giving proper respect to a skull which had been a mere mantelpiece ornament in his parents’ house. I also admire his honest attempt to display his own occasional lack of comprehension of Aboriginal culture, and the learning process he went through in his emotional journey not only to restore the skull but also to appreciate the values of fellow Australians of Aboriginal descent. I do feel, however, that the experience for the reader would have been richer if there had been less text and instead some illustrations which the author would have been well able to produce himself. This might have widened its appeal for those from other backgrounds, and certainly for younger readers.

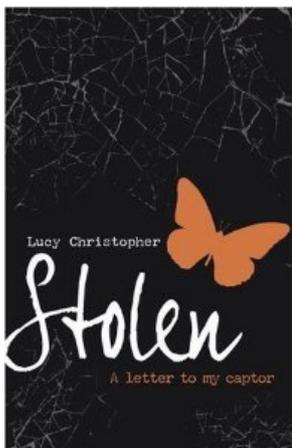


### ***Stories from the Billabong***

James Vance Marshall, illus. Francis Firebrace, London: Frances Lincoln, pb. 978 1 8478 0224 1, £8.99, [2008] 2010, 64pp.

This collection of Aboriginal stories retold by the author of one of the best-known Australian children’s novels, *Walkabout* (1978), is a beautiful source of information about the culture of the first Australians. Many of the stories are of the ‘just so’ variety – we learn how the kangaroo got her pouch (because of her generosity in helping what appeared to be merely a decrepit old wombat but was really the Spirit of the Creator) and why a frog can only croak (because he was so conceited that he thought he could make the moon tumble out of the sky at the beauty of his voice and consequently strained his vocal cords). There is a delightful creation story with a timely note of caution: the Rainbow Serpent makes the lands and wakes all the creatures that are sleeping in the earth. Finally she creates human beings, but warns them that they are not the owners of the earth, only its guardians, and if they abuse it, a new world would be created in which there was no place for them.

The 10 stories are brilliantly illustrated in a traditional manner by Aboriginal artist Francis Firebrace, mainly using black, white, red and yellow. There is a great deal of useful information about Australian animals, a useful glossary, and an interesting collection of Aboriginal symbols and their meanings. Highly recommended.



### ***Stolen: A Letter to my Captor***

Lucy Christopher, Frome: Chicken House, pb. 978 1 906427 13 9, £6.99, 2009, 320pp.

This powerful novel, the winner of the Branford Boase Award for new writing, presents the first person narrative of Gemma, who is abducted at Bangkok airport while on a trip with her parents. She is carried off to the Australian outback by her captor, Ty, a young man a few years older than she is. I think it would be wrong to disclose too much of the story, which despite being for most of the book’s 300 pages confined to interaction between Gemma and Ty in a single location, holds the attention of the reader by adroit use of suspense. Part of its inspiration is clearly derived from recent kidnappings, together with a desire to explore the ‘Stockholm syndrome’, the love–hate relationship that often develops between captive and captor in this type of situation.

Lucy Christopher, though born in Wales, spent her formative years in Australia, including studying at the University of Melbourne, and it is evident that the scenery of

the Sandy Desert, the setting of the habitation where Gemma is imprisoned, must have deeply impressed her. Gemma's vision of the desert when she is on a flight over it suggests the author's fascination, as well as the character's near reluctance to leave this kind of scenery and return to 'civilisation'.

The desert was made up of so many colours ... so many shades of browns and reds and oranges. White dried-out creek beds and salt pans. A dark river, curling like a snake. Burnt out blackness. Dark smudges of rocks. Everything stretching out in an endlessness of pattern. (p.286)

The snake image here chimes in with the significance of snakes in the plot. Another key inhabitant of the desert is the wild camel which Ty captures and attempts to break in; Gemma seems to feel an implicit kinship with this other captive.

I stopped by the camel. She was sitting and sleepy. I reached my hand to her forehead and rubbed between her eyes. Her eyelashes blinked against my wrist. I sat beside her, nuzzling into her warm dusty fur, and watched the pink and grey of the sunrise. (p.239)

I think the quality of Christopher's writing is displayed by these visually evocative passages, which also communicate much about Gemma's emotions.

### **Pat Pinsent**

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#### ***Mahtab's Story***

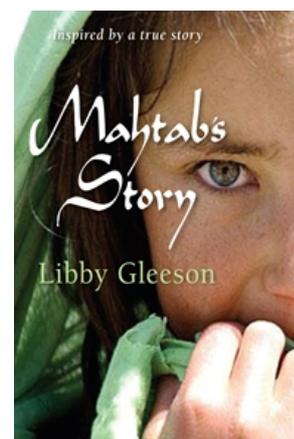
Libby Gleeson, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, pb. 978 1 7417 5334 9, £6.99, 192pp.

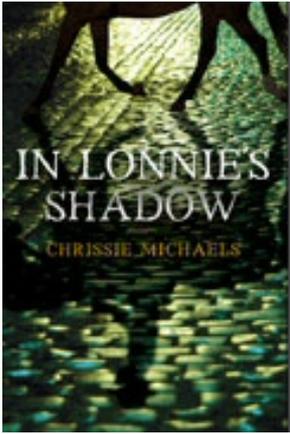
Inspired by interviews with young Australians of Afghan extraction, *Mahtab's Story* follows the flight of her family from Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Mahtab reaches her teens during her journey and begins her own journal in a detention camp in Australia. The story's tone is low key and, like the stories of Gleeson's interviewees, there is a happy ending, but, throughout, we are aware that it could easily have been different. Her grandfather is killed by the Taliban. Travelling across the mountains out of Afghanistan, concealed under the floorboards of a truck, she, her mother and brother could have been discovered at any checkpoint. Hiding in Pakistan, waiting for a flight out, they could be betrayed to bandits who will hold them hostage for ransom. The boat that carries them from Indonesia to Australia is old, leaking and overcrowded with refugees. The Australian detention centre is an isolated, desert limbo, from which they might be sent back, and which breeds anger, dejection and suicide. Everywhere, tragedy is their companion. There are, of course, many political issues involved here, but Gleeson is more concerned with the effects of Mahtab's flight on personal and family life: the old grandmother and relatives she has left behind and may never see again, and, most of all, her father, who has gone ahead to Australia, from whom she has not heard, and who may be dead. Mahtab is a resilient character who has to support her mother and share responsibility for a demanding younger brother.

This is a deeply-felt and moving study of the ultimate triumph of her love and hope which should have a powerful appeal to young teens.

### **Clive Barnes**

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### ***In Lonnie's Shadow***

Chrissie Michaels, Collingwood, VIC: Ford Street Publishing, pb. 978 1 8764 6291 8, AUD\$19.95, 2010, 186pp.

Casselden Place, situated in the inner-city precinct of Melbourne's Little Lon, which was known as a decadent district for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, became the site of an archaeological dig in 2002. Everything from clay pipes to bones was unearthed, and from these artefacts, a mosaic of early Australian life started to emerge. Now housed in Museum Victoria, these artefacts form the backbone of Michaels' debut young adult novel, *In Lonnie's Shadow*.

The novel is set in 1891 against a backdrop of grime and gaslight, and readers are introduced to the struggles of three teens: Pearl, a 'working girl' caught between two hard-hearted madams; factory worker, Daisy; and Lonnie, stable boy and righter-of-wrongs. Their story is brutal; it's a story of survival at a grass-roots level. But it is also a story that makes for compelling reading.

This may be a very different world to the one our children face, a harsher, dirtier world, but some things seem destined never to change. There are still dangers both physical and spiritual to be avoided, and so, too, there is still the inevitable search for purpose and place that we all must undertake on the eve of adulthood.

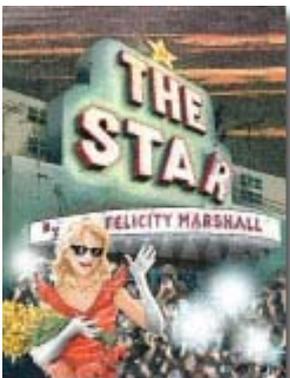
Michaels' extensive research is evident in these authentic characters – nothing has slipped her attention to detail: language, dress and mannerisms are all impossible to fault. A story of such historical significance would have failed on many levels if she hadn't been so diligent. Her narrative, too, is a joy to read.

A smudge of gaslight revealed the gloomy room beyond. The walls were mildewed from the damp and in need of a good scrub down. There was the same impassable gash of a window, planked up on the outside, as the one upstairs. There was no shimmering lace curtains blown by a sweet breeze here; only a bed as sorrowful as all the others where the girls were made to spend their working days and flea-bitten nights.

With its Melbourne streets and landmarks, *In Lonnie's Shadow* is *Oliver Twist* with a distinctly Australian flavour. The itinerary at the front of the book, which lists each artefact used in the story, is a worthwhile addition. Each short chapter is headed with a relevant artefact, making for a clever blending of fact and fiction. The only thing missing, I feel, is a map of the area.

Without a doubt, *In Lonnie's Shadow* will be invaluable in the classroom where history is a difficult subject to engage an adolescent mind at the best of times. So, too, will it find favour with fans of historical fiction.

**Jenny Mounfield**



### ***The Star***

Felicity Marshall, Collingwood, VIC: Ford Street Publishing, pb. 978 1 9216 6505 9, AUD\$16.95, 2010, 32pp.

Marion is a puppet longing for adventure. Her best friends, Harley and Polka, are happy with life as it is. A predator arrives in the guise of beauty and innocence. He appeals to Marion's longing by a profusion of compliments about her ability to become a star. But Harley and Polka think she's already a star, perfect the way she is. Marion is beguiled by the convincing promises of the smiling master controller who waits in the background. The transition from one world to another is instantaneous. Marion is introduced to important people who can 'pull strings' for her; a metaphor of great significance throughout the book.

She is trained by the bird to sing and by the bear to dance. The important people build her up and demand that she change who she is to become whom they want her to be. They create the perfect image.

Now she is a star with a bridge and a perfume that both carry her name. Marion dolls circulate. She has a private secretary, a dress designer, a make-up artist and hairdresser, but no room for Harley and Polka in her life. They are now ‘forgotten souls’. Her strings are pulled by the master controller. Until ....

Wear and tear from the dazzling life destroy her perfection. Her team of creators has disappeared. Marion begs her old friends help to restore her image. Harley works tirelessly but Marion’s used-by date has come and gone. She has been replaced by another disposable star who will, in turn, be discarded and left shattered. She returns to the friends who loved her just the way she was.

Strong metaphors are used to address themes of friendship, loyalty, loss of identity, control and the power of persuasion. It is an analogy of how people prey on, use, then discard, one another, all for material or personal gain. A powerful book in the genre of Margaret Wild’s *Fox* (2002). The text is superbly in tune with the outstanding illustrations. It is suited to readers from primary-school age to adult.

**Anastasia Gonis**

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### ***They Told me I Had to Write This***

Kim Miller, Collingwood, VIC: Ford Street Publishing, 978 1 8764 6284 0, AUD\$17.95, 2009, 204pp.

Clem is a teenage boy with something hidden in his past ... something he can’t bring himself to talk about; something he doesn’t even want to think about; something that is holding him back from living his life; something that affects the way he behaves and the way in which he relates to people. In order to face the future and ultimately find freedom, Clem will need to confront his past and bring his secret out into the open.

This is a confronting young adult novel about a boy who’s in trouble. His mother died during childbirth, his grandmother (whom he sees as the only person who really cared for him) has recently died, he doesn’t get along with his father, he’s been sent to a special school for troubled boys ... and this past looms over him like a dark storm cloud. From this description it may all seem like doom and gloom, but it isn’t. This novel is actually about Clem slowly coming around to face his problems and his past. So, although at times a dark novel, it is also one of hope and a potentially bright future.

Through a series of letters from Clem to his deceased grandmother, author Kim Miller manages to create a sympathetic and likeable character. Most important, he creates a very believable transition as Clem develops and changes his views of his life and the world. The format of letters from Clem to his grandmother is also a clever way of presenting a confronting story without getting too shocking in terms of description and language. It’s believable that a kid like this would tone things down a little in letters like this and not swear to his grandmother. It’s a good way of keeping the character believable, while ensuring the book will be palatable to parents. *They Told me I Had to Write This* is a good, engrossing read. Highly recommended!

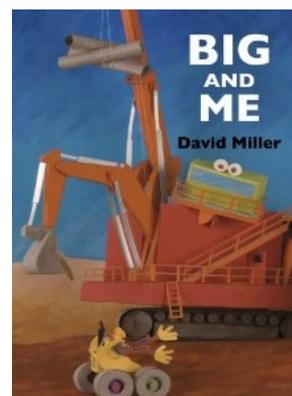
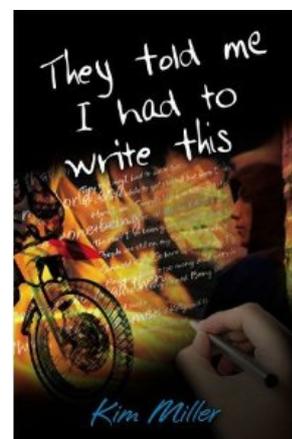
**George Ivanoff**

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### ***Big and Me***

David Miller, Collingwood, VIC: Ford Street Publishing, 978 1 8764 6269 7, £13.81 on Amazon Marketplace, 2008, 36pp.

*Big and Me* courageously and sensitively tackles the issue of mental health, a little written-about topic for young children. It is a story about two machines, one very big and one very small. They are good friends who work hard together as a team but they have to work even harder to overcome Big’s problems as it becomes clear all is not well with his ‘computer brain’. David Miller’s beautiful paper sculptures and simple, compassionate text introduce young children to the concepts around mental illness/wellness and what happens when someone close to you becomes mentally unwell. Profoundly honest and ultimately redeeming, it describes how someone who is



disturbed in their thinking may behave, and how decisions are made to get help for Big from the ‘tractor mechanic’, with Small’s help, and how Small manages to cope well with it all. The beautiful and detailed illustrations will help children understand the range of feelings both machines have in this situation – scared, confused, annoyed, loving and optimistic.

The book is illustrated with photographs of David Miller’s colourful, three-dimensional paper sculptures. Big is a very large and very complicated earth-moving or mining machine. Big’s body is a large red box-like structure sitting on a platform with a handrail all around. Stairs run diagonally up his front to a green cabin that can tilt and rotate like a head. Above the cabin are two headlights that function as eyes. A hydraulic arm with an earth-moving bucket works from Big’s right side. A trenching wheel and conveyor belt operate on an articulated arm from Big’s front, while a telescopic crane rotates and extends from his top. Big trundles about like a tank, on tracks. Small is a little bobcat-like machine.

Throughout the book, Big malfunctions in a variety of ways that suggest he is suffering from a range of mental illnesses. On one spread he wallows in water, telling Small he is a boat. Another time he holds Small high in the air, swinging from his crane hook, telling Small that the other machines are dangerous. Yet another spread indicates Big is suffering from depression.

Small elicits help from The Boss, a tall communications machine and Mechanic, a field workshop vehicle with many robotic tools. Big is prescribed medication and things go well for them until Big decides he is better and no longer needs his medication. The book ends with Small telling the reader that ‘Big will always have problems with his computer. But if he keeps taking his tractor medicine we can still be the best team ever. Well ... most of the time.’ Several issues are raised in this story and in the illustrations. These include:

- How someone may act or behave when they are experiencing the symptoms of a mental illness such as psychosis or depression;
- How this can be confusing for the person’s friends and family, especially children;
- How important it is to know how to get help and support for this person and for the family and friends;
- How important friendship and other relationships are when someone is feeling vulnerable;
- How important it is for children in particular to know where to get help or who to talk with to avoid them taking on too much worry or concern;
- How mental illnesses usually require ongoing treatment over time.

The story of *Big and Me* presents parents and teachers with many opportunities to explore the myths, truths and realities of mental illness. Mental Illness affects one in five adults; many children in the community will be living with a parent who is affected by some sort of mental-health disorder. Yet stigma and a general lack of information create many barriers for children and families against seeking help and support so that often they remain isolated in the belief that they are ‘bad’ parents. Many parents say they are too fearful to disclose that they are struggling with mental illness for fear of being misunderstood. Many adults struggle to talk about mental illness and may think that by never raising it with their children they are shielding them. Yet research tells us that giving children good explanations about mental illness generally and some understanding about what is wrong with their parent, provides them with a strong protective factor and can contribute to the child’s overall resilience. Primary-school teachers in particular are in a unique position to spot a child who may be living in a family where one or both parents have a mental illness and to promote an environment where there is permission for it to be raised.

**Rose Cuff, The Bouverie Centre, Melbourne**

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## Graphic Novels Published by Campfire (New Delhi, India)

### *Stolen Hearts: The Love of Eros and Psyche*

Ryan Foley, illus. Sankha Banerjee, New Delhi: Campfire, pb. 978 8 1908 2999 9, £6.99, 2009, 88pp.

My heart sank at the subtitle of this book. I didn't study the classical world nor ancient mythology at school and have not read any Greek myths nor felt inclined to do so. So would a graphic-novel adaptation of the Eros and Psyche myth convert me and how will it be received by today's young adult readers? The cover illustration is certainly alluring.

Opening the book alarmed me further as the title page tells that the book is published in India and apart from the author and the editor, all have Indian names. The facing page gives details of the author. He is an American, resident in the USA. His name and portrait show no trace of an Indian heritage. There must be plenty of excellent Indian authors living in India so I am surprised that an Indian publisher is hiring an author from the USA.

I then turned to the back matter and found 'About us' and 'Mission statement'. In 'About us' is stated:

Inspired by [the] enduring relationship between a campfire and the stories it evokes, ... Campfire [has] the vision of creating graphic novels of the finest quality to entertain and educate our readers.

Since this is a love story, why are readers to be 'educated' as well as entertained? Surely reading should be for pleasure unless of a textbook. The 'Mission statement' includes:

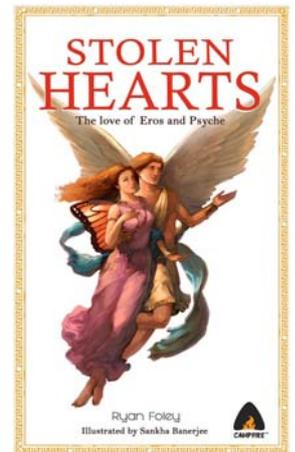
to recount stories of human values, to arouse curiosity in the world around us, and to inspire by tales of great deeds of unforgettable people.

*Stolen Hearts* is in Campfire's 'Mythology' category with the myth of Eros and Psyche told as a story within a story. The outer story is also set in 'The kingdom of Greece – in the time of legends and fables.' The teenage Aspirytus, of good birth, is in love, very moody and not wanting to get out of bed for her lessons with her astute and sympathetic tutor Demiarties. The text hints that there are problems with the love affair. Eventually she appears for her lessons but is not concentrating, so Demiarties decides to tell her 'a story of romance, trust, separations, second chances, and a very powerful disapproving mother'. And so the story of Eros and Psyche is introduced. During this introductory dialogue between pupil and tutor, settings are given in rectangular boxes and the speech balloons have coloured outlines to indicate the individual speakers – pink for Aspirytus and green for Demiarties.

The characters of the main story are illustrated and named on a page in the front matter so there are no problems identifying these characters when following the illustrations. Throughout the book, the illustrations are very telling, particularly in indicating moods and feelings by facial and eye expressions. The paper is glossy, highly coloured and high quality, although the binding is not very secure, my copy already having a loose page. The main story now proceeds and it is hard to concentrate on the text as the illustrations are so eye catching and tell the story without words. Rectangular boxes with green outline and shading give interjections by Demiarties for clarification or in answer to Aspirytus' questions (pink rectangular boxes with pink outline). Speech balloons are colour outlined for all the speakers in the main story – Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty and her son Eros initially. When Psyche joins the story, her speech balloons are left with black outlines. To recap the story from the back cover:

Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of beauty, has grown jealous of a young girl named Psyche. She is envious of the praise being heaped upon the mortal girl for her splendour. The goddess decides to dispatch her mischievous son Eros, the god of love, to perform a nasty trick.

When the trick goes awry, Eros finds himself falling in love with Psyche. Unable to resist her allure, he whisks her away to a palace in the sky. Wanting Psyche to fall in love with him for who he is and not for his name or looks, Eros hides his true identity



from her and forbids her to see him in the light.

Persuaded by her two jealous sisters, Psyche plots a way to see him by lamplight. Her plan backfires and, feeling spurned and betrayed, Eros abandons her. Not wanting to live with anyone but Eros, Psyche sets out on a quest to regain the trust of her one true love.

It took me a while to get into the story but I was soon gripped and couldn't put the book down.

The language of the book is sophisticated and assumes a good command of English. For example, the ocean is described as 'cerulean blue' (p.5), Eros requests his mother to 'rescind the curse' (p.16) and later 'an accord was struck'. In some ways the writing is rather old-fashioned in using the passive and in the use of 'shall' but it flows well. I am not sure that the bible quotations will be recognised by non-Christian readers, although it is not necessary in following the story to know their origin. For example, 'what these two have created let no man – or god – tear asunder' (p.79) and 'ask and you shall receive' (p.64).

The addition of 'sounds' seems rather out of place and unnecessary as the illustrations 'tell' the sound. For example where the knife falls from Psyche's hand the blade is shown to be moving but the word 'SPLLINNG' (p.45) is inserted alongside it. These words are not the ones I would associate with the sounds – 'GGRRRAHHH' (p.45) from Eros as he is woken suddenly. And I am stumped by 'BRRADOOOOM' (p.76) as Eros flies through the sealed door in which his mother has imprisoned him.

When the main story has ended, Asphyrtus asks Demiarties 'And so they lived happily ever after?' to which Demiarties replies 'Indeed'. But the reason for Demiarties telling this particular story to Asphyrtus is not lost on Asphyrtus who says 'Am I to perform some grand task to prove my love for [Promilion]?' with Demiarties's reply including 'we are made strong through hardships, struggles and challenges'. Thus nothing is left to the readers to draw their own conclusions and so the aim 'to educate' is fulfilled!

To try to come to a conclusion about this book is hard. It is beautifully produced, well written and a gripping story. But will Indian young adults in India be interested in reading a Greek myth and will they dislike having the moral spelled out to them? I think that any young adult reader fluent in English might find the language rather old fashioned. Personally, I enjoyed the book, and will be looking many times at the brilliant illustrations.

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### ***Kim***

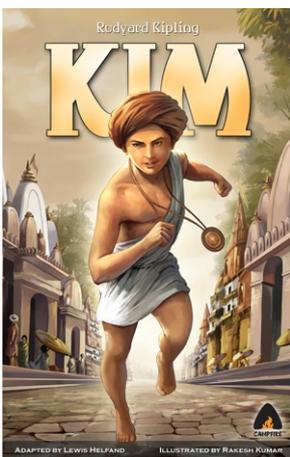
Rudyard Kipling, adapt. Lewis Helfand, illus. Rakesh Kumar, New Delhi: Campfire, 978 8 1907 3263 5, £6.99, 2009, 728pp.

This is another book from the Indian publishing company Campfire (see review of *Stolen Hearts*) but this book is in their 'Classics' category. The name of the adapter gives the impression of someone from the English-speaking world. The international network set up by Campfire for its publishing venture includes American and UK connections.

*Kim* is an exciting book that I have listened to recently on my mp3 audio player. I found it very atmospheric and imagined myself travelling through a dusty land on dirt 'highways' and enjoyed the language and characterisation. The story is summarised by Campfire on the back cover as follows.

The story of *Kim* follows our cheeky, fun-loving hero as he journeys across northern India – from Lahore to the vast beauty of the Himalayan mountains – in the company of the lama. The two of them have different goals, but the physical paths they follow are very similar.

Before leaving Lahore, Kim is entrusted by one of his father's friends to deliver a very special message. Through this he meets a member of the British Secret Service and discovers secrets he couldn't have imagined. As the story progresses and his



journey continues, Kim begins to learn more and more about what is known as the Great Game.

As we follow Kim, we see him transformed from a simple vagabond into a sharpened operative in the dangerous world of politics, betrayal and death. All the excitement of Kim's adventures takes place in the backdrop of a beautiful country full of amazing sights, incredible sounds and an extremely rich culture.

In what is considered by many to be Kipling's finest work, he draws on his own experiences of living in India to tell an unforgettable and action-packed story within a vivid and accurate setting.

This seems to me to play down the theme of Kim's spiritual journey as the Buddhist lama's chela (disciple) and his growing love and interdependence with the lama as they search for the 'River of Life'. It refers to Kim's 'adventures' and an 'action-packed story', but that downgrades this classic. It not only has spiritual and philosophical aspirations but gives a picture of how the British viewed Indians and were certain that they had the right to rule them. It is a novel of its time.

It is giving a story that is situated during the British occupation of India – an era that the grandparents of young Indian readers may recall with anger and repulsion – but it is also a gripping story. Will this graphic-novel adaptation succeed in also being gripping?

The illustration on the front cover may surprise you as much as it did me. 'Kim' is Kimball O'Hara of Irish parents. But this illustration with its raised eyebrows, large eyes and pointed chin reminds me of manga depictions, not the Irish boy with a white skin and wearing ragged clothes, small enough to squeeze between buildings and scramble noiselessly over rooftops. The story covers a period of about five years and Kim's maturing, however, is well depicted within the frames although some of the facial expressions seem a little exaggerated.

The main characters, Kim, the lama, Mahbub Ali, Mookerjee and Colonel Creighton are 'introduced' by name and portrait on the page facing the first page of the story. The storyline is placed in boxes in each frame and includes the background information given by Kipling with some additions. for example:

In 1901, [Kim] was living in Lahore which, at that time, was still a part of India. He stayed with a woman who was not his mother and she took care of him.

The language in these boxes strikes me as adequate, but not a substitute for Kipling's more evocative style. And I don't think 'Kim's real mother had been a babysitter.'! Kipling gives: 'His mother had been a nursemaid in a colonel's family'.

Speech bubbles are used to good effect with a more flowing language than in the boxes and the illustrations tell the story well. I had to backtrack a few times but although the summary did not describe Kipling's *Kim*, neither does it describe this book well, which follows the original story and gives equal weight to all the themes. Suspense is well held and the story depicted in the illustrations, including the landscapes, fit with my imagined one. The few 'sounds' are unnecessary and distracting as in 'SMAK!' (p.57) when it is obvious from the illustration that the Russian spy's fist has hit the lama hard. The lama's response of 'Uggghhhhhhh!' and Kim's of 'Argggghhh!' are also unnecessary distractions with such evocative facial expressions. 'ZZZZZZZ' (p.7) by the sleeping lama is also entirely superfluous, far too close to the use of such items in a comic and detracts from the serious telling of the story. The last page is satisfyingly close to Kipling's ending, although I noted that 'friend' has been substituted for Kipling's 'beloved' in the lama's reference to Kim having also found salvation – a sign of the times the world over?

My Pan Classic version dated 1978 has a glossary of indigenous-language words with translations and explanations of some sites and places. My Wordsworth Classic edition sadly omits this. Not many of the original indigenous-language words are used in the graphic-novel version but those that are have a footnote. For example, 'we should stay at the Kashmir Serai' is footnoted as 'The name of an inn'. It seems a shame to use the

word ‘disciple’ in place of Kipling’s *chela*. The word *fakir* is used – and without a footnote to explain it..

To see more of the illustrations from this book, a pdf of seven pages from this graphic novel can be viewed or downloaded from the Campfire website [www.campfire.co.uk](http://www.campfire.co.uk).

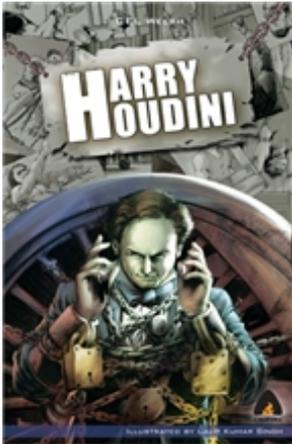
This graphic-novel adaptation is a gripping read that would enthrall any young adult fluent in English, not just those in India, and I hope would then lead them to read the fuller original version.

**Jennifer Harding**

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***Harry Houdini***

Cel Welsh, illus. Lalit Kumar Singh, New Delhi: Campfire, pb. 978 8 1906 9639 5, £6.99, 2009, 76pp.



This book is a brief graphic biography of Ehrich Weiss, better known as the great escapologist Harry Houdini. The account is fictionally credited to his friend Dr Buster Harper. Harper’s nephew William is sent to train with Houdini after the death of his mother, when his uncle feels he is directionless. In his role as trainee, William learns many of the great man’s secrets, which include that Houdini was indebted to Dr Harper. Certain spiritualists, whom Houdini believed to be fraudulent, had accused the great escapologist of preying on the insecurities of his audiences. Harper was investigating and rebutting the accusations made by these fraudsters.

To reach the point where George Bernard Shaw described him as the third most famous man who ever lived, wasn’t an easy journey for Houdini. He grew up in Appleton, Wisconsin, USA, the son of an impoverished rabbi. When his father was forced to seek better prospects in New York, the young Houdini decided to contribute to the family income by taking any job he could get, even shining shoes. In fact he found work as a trapeze artist, having practised tumbling to amuse his friends.

The most striking characteristic of Houdini, according to Welsh’s account, was not just his ingenuity, amazing as that was, but his determination. In the course of performing the illusion where he was chained inside a sealed box filled with water, he suffered a broken leg. He went ahead anyway. Houdini’s huge success arose from his willingness to confront any challenge, however daunting and difficult. Yet that same willingness also led to his death. Houdini had boasted of his ability to withstand any blow from any attacker, however violent. He was assaulted when his attention was diverted to another task, suffered a ruptured appendix and died.

Using the graphic form and including letters and newspaper articles, a remarkable amount of information about Harper and Houdini is condensed into the book. The characterisation, particularly of Harper, is vivid and convincing. There is, however, one disadvantage to the form of the graphic biography. The narrative jumps between time zones. On one page Houdini is a famous adult, on the next an aspiring youngster. The effect can be quite jarring.

Although the author is American, the illustrator and production team are Indian. As a result the book has a slightly unfamiliar, exotic feel to it which young readers may find refreshing. On the whole this collaboration works very well.

**Rebecca R. Butler**

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### ***A Journey to the Centre of the Earth***

Jules Verne, adapt. Lewis Helfand, illus. Vinod Kumar, New Delhi: Campfire, pb. 978 8 1906 9633 3, £6.99, 2009, 72pp.

### ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***

Mark Twain, adapt. Roland Mann, illus. Naresh Kumar, New Delhi: Campfire, pb. 978 8 1907 3261 1, £6.99, 2009, 72pp.

### ***The Hound of the Baskervilles***

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, adapt. J.R. Parks, illus. Vinod Kumar, New Delhi: Campfire, pb. 978 8 1907 3266 6, £6.99, 2009, 72pp.

I am reviewing these en bloc because my general comments refer to all three. There are, however, one or two specific observations to be made on the individual titles.

Older readers may recall the Classics Illustrated series – comic/graphic-novel versions of classic novels and a few films that were published in the USA and the UK between 1941 and 1971. The New Delhi-based imprint Campfire has adapted this idea to the tastes of a twenty-first century audience, whose graphic novel, animated film and Bollywood experiences engender different expectations of reading material from that of their grandparents' generation. The Campfire subjects are 'classic' literature in English, mainly British and American, a few European works in translation, stories from mythology and titles based on the lives of famous people. Many of the novels appearing on their list have been stalwarts of the Classics Illustrated series, and indeed reflect the early twentieth-century concept of a 'classic' novel for young readers.

Campfire have also commissioned 'Originals' – graphic novels that 'showcase exciting new characters and stories from some of today's most talented graphic novelists and illustrators', according to their website at [www.campfire.co.in](http://www.campfire.co.in). Readers are referred to Malini Roy's paper given at last year's IBBY/NCRCL conference, 'To Entertain and Educate Young Minds: Graphic Novels for Young People in Indian Publishing', the extended abstract of which is in *IBBYLink* 27 (p.19). The revised full article is due for publication later this year in the volume of collected conference papers *Going Graphic: Comics and Graphic Novels for Young People* (Pied Piper Publishing). In this paper, Roy looks at the Originals and clearly indicates that Campfire's agenda is different from that of the UK-based Classic Comic Store which, since 2008, has been reissuing many of the original Classics Illustrated titles with rejuvenated colouring to recapture their initial impact back in that essentially black-and-white world.

Campfire's mission statement 'To entertain and educate young minds by creating unique illustrated books' is clearly stated on the inner back cover of each book. It also guides readers to further material on their website, though most of this is not title specific, offering instead 'wallpaper' (computer, that is), competitions, and the chance to buy and review the titles. However, each novel adaptation provides an introductory page about the author, and two pages at the end that offer additional supporting information, some more useful than others. For example, 'Collectible Canines', with 'Did you know' trivia about five large dog varieties (referencing Scooby Doo ...) being outstandingly unhelpful to a better understanding of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Basic information on volcanoes for *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and on the geography and history of the Mississippi and slavery for *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are a better use of these pages.

An interesting view of the evolution of graphic-novel text and (particularly) illustration can be made through comparing the Classic Illustrated versions with their modern Campfire reinterpretations. As a child I loved my copy of *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and, along with other classics that I encountered through Classics Illustrated, this version has always provided my enduring image for the work. Looking back at a copy for the first time in 50-plus years, I now realise that there is an uncanny resemblance between the hero's fiancée and Grace Kelly, which hadn't struck me at the age of eight! However, that reflects the degree to which the mid-twentieth-century version tried to be based in popular culture, which in their turn Campfire have attempted by adopting the



bodybuilder's physique to portray Hans, the mountaineer who leads the party to the centre of the earth. Here arises my other major reservation with this graphic novelisation. Where the Classics Illustrated version retained Verne's original names for his characters, the Campfire rewriting uses the 1871 translation, which altered and abridged aspects of the plot, and inexplicably changed most of the characters' names. So perhaps Grauben *did* look like Grace Kelly, whereas Gretchen looks like a Sunday-school teacher of the severer kind.



*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* retains the correct names, but has lost much of the atmosphere of the original novel and, indeed, of its 1960s Classics Illustrated revisioning as a comic/graphic novel. In particular, the speech has been corrected, so that Huck and Jim now talk a language far closer to received pronunciation than to Twain's attempt to reproduce the rhythms and dialect of the Mississippi. Key moments such as Huck's encounter with his father, despite the more twenty-first-century nature of their illustration, have lost their terror, and with it key aspects of the original novel.

I have already indicated some of my reservations with the Campfire version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. As far as I am aware, this story did not feature among the offerings from Classics Illustrated, or, if it did, I never saw a copy. Of all Campfire's titles, this must be the most frequently revisited in other media: adapted, reset, rewritten and generally tortured. The Campfire illustrations owe much to the more adult visual reinterpretations of Conan Doyle's novel, with the object of Hugo Baskerville's passions being portrayed as a very well-built young woman, whose clothing is suffering badly from the force of the Dartmoor gales. Holmes looks uncannily like one of his screen interpreters, while the Hound itself can rustle up only a rather less than terrifying 'grrrrrrrr' while pinning its victim to the ground. After we've had Holmes' explanation that it was merely an underfed pet we can of course understand its lack of energy, but in the pages before that revelation its pictorial depiction surely ought to terrify readers more.

If these versions encourage readers to find out what *really* happened in the original novels, they will have served their purpose well. If they give readers the flavour of a book they otherwise wouldn't read, that's better than nothing. However I'm not convinced that they offer the right flavour, either in text or illustration, and I think that the revived Classics Illustrated offer a truer flavour of the texts. What is clear is that Campfire's illustration is as typical of its period (and therefore historically and culturally biased) as was the earlier attempt at graphic novelisation: fashions change, but a good book survives.

### **Bridget Carrington**

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### **Books for Young People with Reading Difficulties**

These books are the latest additions to the Barrington Stoke series designed specifically for young readers who have reading difficulties. All the books are published Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke, 2010, £5.99.

#### ***Black Death***

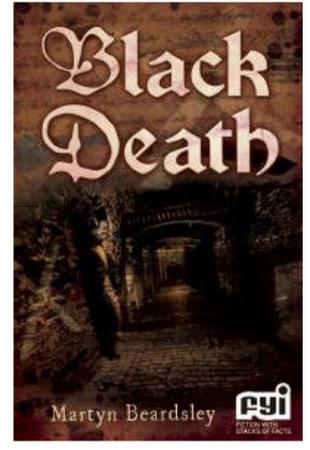
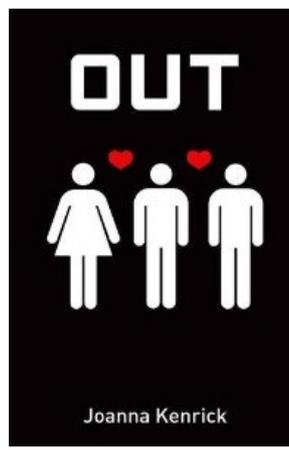
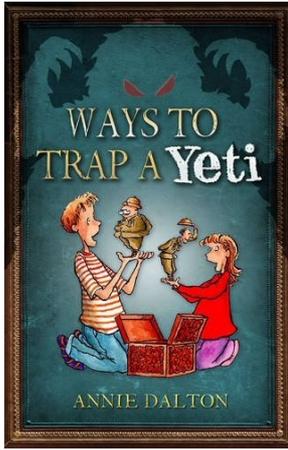
Martyn Beardsley, illus. Martin Remphry, *Black Death*, pb. 978 1 8429 9765 9, 80pp.

*The Black Death* is a historical novel about the time of that great plague.

#### ***Ways to Trap a Yeti***

Annie Dalton, illus. Mike Phillips, *Ways to Trap a Yeti*, pb. 978 1 8429 9761 1 77pp.

*Ways to Trap a Yeti* is an ingenious story that marries problems of contemporary gang culture with the misdemeanours of someone else's past.



### ***To the Extreme***

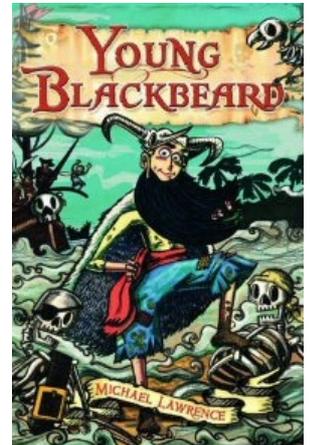
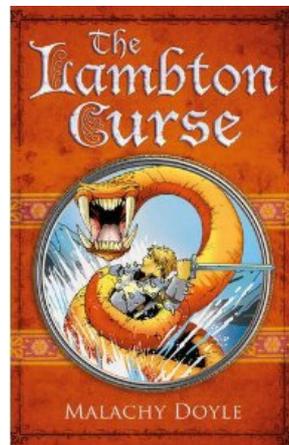
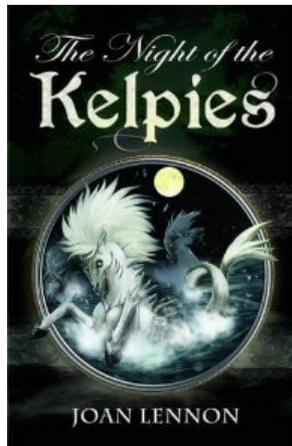
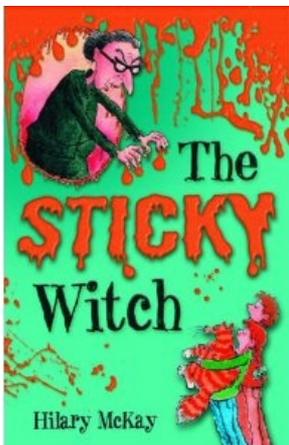
David Gatward, illus. Aleksandar Sotirovski, *To the Extreme*, pb. 978 1 8429 9895 3, 55pp.

Labelled on the cover 'FYI: Fiction with Stacks of Facts', *To the Extreme* melds a fictional story with a factual narrative exploring sky diving. Gatward gives a detailed account of how to dive out of an aircraft, which will be of huge interest to bold boys. I have some doubts, however, whether 'falling on your arse' is suitable terminology for this series. Humour plays a part in this book.

### ***Out***

Joanna Kenrick, illus. Julia Page, pb. 978 1 8429 9764 2, 56pp.

This book is one of the gr8read series – 'gripping and relevant teen stories'. *Out* examines the issues of discovering and announcing oneself to be homosexual. Kenrick handles a potentially tricky theme with delicacy and skill, though at times her restraint borders on evasion. The girl who helps the young male protagonist face his sexuality never tells him how she feels. There are some incidents described with humour.



### ***Young Blackbeard***

Michael Lawrence, illus. Donough O'Malley, pb. 978 1 8429 9769 7, 53pp.

*Young Blackbeard* tells the story of an apprentice pirate.

### ***The Sticky Witch***

Hilary McKay, illus. Mike Phillips, pb. 978 1 8429 9770 3, 72pp.

*The Sticky Witch* is a fantasy about a witch who has a treacle pond in her garden, written by the distinguished author of *Saffy's Angel*. At the end of the book the main human character ends up as an ill-tempered cat. So never antagonise a witch.

### ***The Night of the Kelpies***

Joan Lennon, illus. Daniel Atanasov, pb. 978 1 8429 9758 1, 58pp.

Sandy doesn't believe in kelpies – the evil sea horses that enslave humans. But one terrifying night will change his life forever. A haunting Scottish tale.

***The Lambton Curse***

Malachy Doyle, illus. Dylan Gibson, pb. 978 1 8429 9757 4, 46pp.

A wild young man brings down a terrible curse on the land and must risk his life to kill the monster he has let loose. A classic English myth.

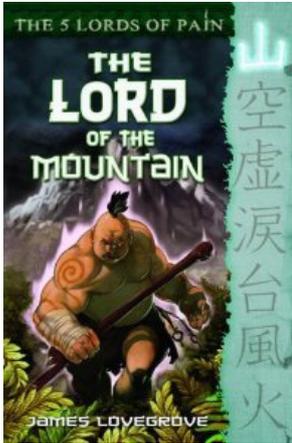
***The Lord of the Mountain***

James Lovegrove, pb. 978 1 8429 9759 8, 101pp.

Lovegrove is launching what I believe is be the publisher's first series based on a main character. If children who read with difficulty can be interested enough to read a book, it is an excellent plan to have further volumes in the same series to offer them. A website for the series is at [www.fivelordssofpain.co.uk/](http://www.fivelordssofpain.co.uk/).

This first book of the series sets out to introduce young readers to the terminology and mores of Japanese martial arts, though in a British setting. Tom Yamada is a 15-year-old boy. In each generation of his family, at the age of 30 the first-born son must fight the Five Lords of Pain. He should have years of training to prepare him to face these challenges. However, for reasons which Tom cannot influence, the timetable for the contests is shortened and as a teenager he must confront these monsters in human guise. He must kill them to save the world from being taken over by them. His first contest is against the Lord of the Mountain.

The pace of this book is well sustained and the battle scenes are memorably described. Readers are told how to access a website about the whole series, which may encourage some to join in the adventure. With the books and the website, the publishers may live in hope of launching a franchise with (who knows) merchandise and films. Maybe they even dream that their young warrior will tread the same path as the boy who discovered he was a wizard.



***The Lord of the Void***

James Lovegrove, pb. 978 1 8429 9767 3, 119pp.

*The Lord of the Void* is the second in Lovegrove's series of martial arts adventures titled Five Lords of Pain. Tom Yamada must fight the demon Lords of Pain in a series of duels called the Contest – with the whole world at stake. Tom's survived his duel with the Lord of the Mountain (in *The Lord of the Mountain*). Now he must face the Lord of the Void – the king of darkness, with a heart as black as his armour. Will Tom manage to defeat this Lord?

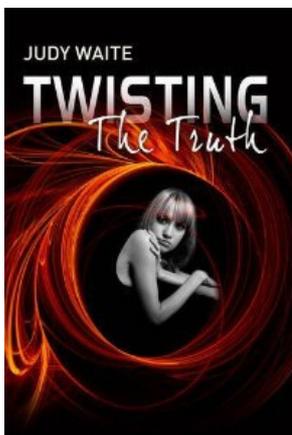
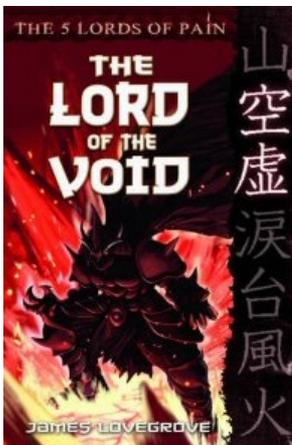
***Twisting the Truth***

Judy Waite, pb. 978 1 8429 9760 4, 75pp.

Waite sets herself a challenge of almost unequalled difficulty. Her book, designed for children who do not read well, deals with paedophilia – is a particularly praiseworthy endeavour, since reading difficulties may often be associated with cognitive difficulties. It is sad but true that such children are more vulnerable to exploitation.

Waite's protagonist Elsa has the disquieting experience of seeing the boy she fancies going off at the skate park with Amy, who is glamorous and a brilliant skater. Elsa knows that her mother's new partner, Steve, will be angry if she returns late. So she invents a story that an old man – who in fact did nothing but ask her where he could get petrol – had tried to abduct her. Ironically at the same time Amy actually is abducted. Now Elsa must admit that her story was concocted, or risk an innocent man being suspected of both crimes. As the title might suggest, the narrative closes with a telling and well-delivered twist.

**Rebecca R. Butler**



## REPORTS

### ‘Talking Pictures’

Random House offices, London. Tuesday 6 July 2010.

This event featured a discussion between Mini Grey, Chris Wormell, Sue Hendra and Nadia Shireen, chaired by Rosemary Stones, editor of *Books for Keeps*. She opened by quoting Brian Alderson ‘Every book has a private history of its own, both of its conception and its execution.’

Four illustrators took part in the session, each giving an audience of librarians, booksellers and students of children’s illustration insight into that private history of their work. Christopher Wormell named eighteenth-century wood engraver and ornithologist Thomas Bewick as an early inspiration but also thanked his children for giving him the impetus to write his children’s books. Considering the collaborative nature of creating picture books, another theme of the discussion, he thanked his editors for restraining his

Mini Grey thanked the creators of the old Hammer horror films for providing her with inspiration, likening Hilaire Belloc’s *Cautionary Tales* to horror films in the process, while raising the thought that the really terrifying part of Belloc’s ‘Jim’ is not actually being eaten by a lion, but the limits set on Jim’s life.

It was Sue Hendra’s father who made her an illustrator. The author of *Barry the Fish with Fingers* (2009) and the new book *Wanda and the Alien* (2011) said that it was his advice to do something you really like that set her on the path to becoming a picture-book author. She also thanked her agent for restarting her career by helping her to find a different style.

Nadia Shireen, whose debut picture book *Good Little Wolf* (2011) came out on the Jonathan Cape list last month, described the huge importance to her of the advice and suggestions from her peer group of students of illustration at Anglia Ruskin University: ‘Having someone else take a fresh look at what you are doing is invaluable.’

The evening concluded with a chance to examine the illustrators’ artwork, sketch books and dummies – fascinating evidence of the creative work that precedes a picture book’s publication.

(Books for Keeps)

### **The Branford Boase Award and the Henrietta Branford Writing Competition 2010**

Walker Books offices, Vauxhall, London. Wednesday 14 July 2010.

This award was set up in memory of Henrietta Branford and Wendy Boase, with the intention of honouring newly published children’s authors and their editors. Since its inception in 2000, winners have included several authors who have gone on to win wide acclaim, such as Mal Peet, Meg Rosoff and Siobhan Dowd, while some of those shortlisted, such as Patrick Ness, have also gone on to win prizes. This year’s shortlist consisted of the following books.

*Devil’s Kiss* by Sarwat Chadda, edited by Lindsey Heaven, published by Puffin.

*Stolen* by Lucy Christopher, edited by Imogen Cooper, published by Chicken House.

*Life, Interrupted* by Damian Kelleher, edited by Anne Clark, published by Piccadilly Press.

*Guantanamo Boy* by Anna Perera, edited by Shannon Park, published by Puffin.

*Big and Clever* by Dan Tunstall, edited by Ross Bradshaw, published by Five Leaves.

*Numbers* by Rachel Ward, edited by Imogen Copper, published by Chicken House  
[reviewed in *IBBYLink* 26]

*Paradise Barn* by Victor Watson, edited by Leonie Pratt, published by Catnip [reviewed in *IBBYLink* 27].

The winner was *Stolen* [see review in this issue of *IBBYLink*], a book which makes use of its author's recollections of her youth in Australia.

Also part of the celebrations were the winners of the Henrietta Branford Writing Competition for young people under the age of 19, together with their proud parents.

### **Launch of *Losing It***

Foyles bookshop, Charing Cross Road, London. Thursday 22 July 2010.

The launch of this collection of stories on the subject of teenagers and sex, edited by Keith Gray, was celebrated with a panel discussion between three of the contributors to the volume and chaired by its editor. The discussion touched on a variety of topics, from the variations in the age of consent between, for instance, Japan at 13 and Turkey at 18, to the problem of the realistic depiction of teenage speech: Patrick Ness's solution in his story is to black out all the unacceptable words, so that on some pages there is very little text in between the blackness! Bali Rai's story deals with the cultural importance of virginity in the Asian community, while Mary Hooper's, with a Victorian London setting, presents the situation of a girl who can only preserve her family from starvation by selling sex. Sophie McKenzie stated her wish, in her story which is told in the voices of both her female and her male protagonists, to indicate that sometimes it's OK to say 'No'. I've subsequently read the book and recommend it for its range of perspectives – to be put into the hands of teenagers of appropriate age, whichever that is!

### **Children's Book Circle, 'The Story behind the Cover'**

Puffin offices, The Strand, London. Tuesday 27 July 2010.

Illustrator Chris Riddell, editor Annie Easton and bookseller Joanna de Guia talked about their favourite covers (somewhat limited by the lack of visual illustration other than by copies of the books themselves – a slide show would have made what they had to say more vivid). The merits or otherwise of colour, especially silver and foil, and of handwritten text were debated, together with the question of how far, if at all, the author's own voice counted. While some books have survived in the market despite dull covers, there seems little doubt that generally the impact of the cover is crucial to a book's appeal to young readers.

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### **Daniel Pennac in Conversation with Michael Rosen**

Ciné Lumière, 17 Queensbury Place, London SW7 6DT. 6.30–8 p.m., Wednesday 22 September 2010.

Daniel Pennac's last book in English, *School Blues* (MacLehose Press, translated by Sarah Ardizzone) explores the many facets of schooling, including how consumerism has altered attitudes to learning. Daniel Pennac was a teacher before writing children's books. A continued interest in education and social affairs led to his book *The Rights of the Reader*, and then to *School Blues*. Michael Rosen is renowned for his work as a poet, performer, broadcaster and scriptwriter. He lectures and teaches in universities on children's literature, reading and writing. He has strong views on education.

Tickets £5, concessions £3. For further information: [www.institut-francais.org.uk/programme/daniel-pennac-michael-rosen-on-education](http://www.institut-francais.org.uk/programme/daniel-pennac-michael-rosen-on-education).

### **School Blues – Daniel Pennac in Conversation with Quentin Blake**

The Free Word Centre, 60 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3GA. 7.30–8.30 p.m., Friday 24 September 2010.

An English PEN event as part of the Free Word's FLOW festival.

Daniel Pennac has never forgotten what it was like to be a very unsatisfactory student, nor the day when one of his teachers saved his life by assigning him the task of writing a novel. His latest book, *School Blues*, grapples with the challenges of education in a multicultural society. Aided by Sarah Ardizzone's fluid translation, Pennac and acclaimed writer and illustrator Quentin Blake will be exploring the many facets of schooling – how fear can prompt children to reject education, how consumerism has altered attitudes to learning and how inventive thinking can captivate children, equipping them with the reading and writing skills needed for life.

Tickets £6, concessions £3. For further information: [www.freewordonline.com/events/?skey=Pennac&event\\_id=143](http://www.freewordonline.com/events/?skey=Pennac&event_id=143).

### **School Librarian of the Year 2010**

The London Zoo. Monday 4 October 2010.

The award ceremony will be at the London Zoo. This year's shortlist includes two men, Kevin Sheehan from Stockport and Duncan Wright from Edinburgh, together with another Scottish librarian, Shiona Lawson from the Isle of Bute, and three from English schools, Sue Bastone from Ascot, Rebecca Jones from Malvern and Denise Reed from Hurstpierpoint. It is always encouraging to hear about the impressive achievements of those shortlisted in promoting high quality reading and learning opportunities for all those in their schools.

Further information will be available at [www.sla.org.uk/slya.php](http://www.sla.org.uk/slya.php).

### **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.

**4th Children's Literature Association of India (CLAI) International Conference**

Bharatmatha College, Thrikkakara-Cochin, Kerala, India. 19–21 November 2010.

'(Re)reading Classics in Children's Literature'. Keynote speaker: Professor Alida Allison, San Diego State University, USA. Send proposals for papers to [laly.eugene@gmail.com](mailto:laly.eugene@gmail.com) and [antoct@yahoo.co.in](mailto:antoct@yahoo.co.in) or [childlitindia@yahoo.co.in](mailto:childlitindia@yahoo.co.in).

**Modern Language Association's Annual Convention 2011**

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.

Further details will be available in September 2010 at [www.mla.org/convention](http://www.mla.org/convention).

**Adaptation of Canonical Texts in Children's Literature Symposium**

Ghent University, Belgium. 20–21 January 2011.

300 word proposals for papers can be submitted to [sara.vandenbossche@ugent.be](mailto:sara.vandenbossche@ugent.be) and [sylvie.geerts@ugent.be](mailto:sylvie.geerts@ugent.be) by 30 September 2010.

**Frances Lincoln Diverse Voices Children's Book Award 2011**

Closing date for applications 25 February 2011.

The Award was founded jointly by Frances Lincoln Limited and Seven Stories in memory of Frances Lincoln (1945–2001) to encourage and promote diversity in children's fiction. The prize of £1,500 plus the option for Janetta Otter-Barry at Frances Lincoln Children's Books to publish the novel is awarded to the best manuscript for 8 to 12 year olds that celebrates diversity in the widest possible sense. Closing date for entries for the 2011 award is 25 February 2011. Entry forms are available from [diversevoices@sevenstories.org.uk](mailto:diversevoices@sevenstories.org.uk).

**Federation of Children's Book Groups Annual Conference 2011**

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

The title of the 2011 conference is 'Box of Delights'. Speakers will include David Almond, Jonathan Stroud, Justin Somper and Kevin Brooks.

A booking form and further information ARE available at [www.fcbg.org.uk](http://www.fcbg.org.uk).

**Childhoods Conference: Mapping the Landscapes of Childhood**

University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. 5–7 May 2011.

Further information at [www.uleth.ca/conreg/childhoods/](http://www.uleth.ca/conreg/childhoods/). Abstracts by 1 October 2010.

**Multiple Childhoods/Multidisciplinary Perspectives: Interrogating Normativity in Childhood Studies**

Department of Childhood Studies, Rutgers University, Camden, NJ, USA. 20–21 May 2011.

A conference at the campus in Camden. Call for Papers and further information is available at [www.camden.rutgers.edu/multiple-childhoods](http://www.camden.rutgers.edu/multiple-childhoods).

**Fear and Safety in Children's Literature, 20th Biennial Congress of IRSCl**

Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. 4–8 July 2011.

Keynote speakers will be Mavis Reimer, David Buckingham and Gillian Whitlock. Abstracts for papers will be welcomed by Professor Kerry Mallan, [http://eprints.qut.edu.au/view/person/Mallan,\\_Kerry.html](http://eprints.qut.edu.au/view/person/Mallan,_Kerry.html).

Further details are available at <http://irsc12011.com/>.

### **Mervyn Peake and the Fantasy Tradition**

University of Chichester, and the Sussex Centre for Folklore, Fairy Tales and Fantasy.  
15 and 16 July 2011.

An international centenary conference. Keynote speakers include Joanne Harris, Michael Moorcock, Peter Winnington, Colin Manlove, Farah Mendlesohn and Sebastian Peake. There will be an exhibition of Peake's art. Proposals for papers (max. 300 words) to [b.gray@chi.ac.uk](mailto:b.gray@chi.ac.uk) (copied to [l.sargent@chi.ac.uk](mailto:l.sargent@chi.ac.uk)).

Further information is available at <http://sussexfolktalecentre.org> and [www.chiuni.ac.uk/english/MervynPeakeConference.cfm](http://www.chiuni.ac.uk/english/MervynPeakeConference.cfm).

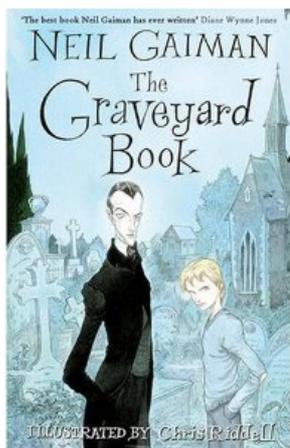
### **Jacqueline Wilson Festival: Reading Jacqueline Wilson**

University of Central Lancashire. 20 October 2011.

Proposals (300 words) to Helen Day [HFDAY@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:HFDAY@uclan.ac.uk) by 30 November 2010.

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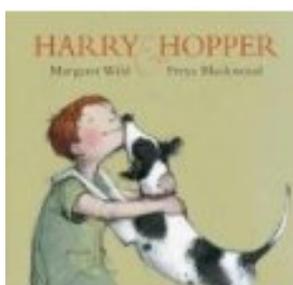
## NEWS



### 2010 CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Awards

The Carnegie Medal is awarded for an outstanding book for children and young people. The Kate Greenaway Medal is awarded for an outstanding book in terms of illustration for children and young people. Both medals are awarded annually by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and chosen by children's librarians. The winners of the 2010 medals were announced on 24 June 2010 at BAFTA, Piccadilly, London. The judges were chaired by James Naughtie, the BBC radio broadcaster and book expert.

The Carnegie Medal was won by Neil Gaiman for *The Graveyard Book* (illus. Chris Riddell) (2008), London: Bloomsbury [9+], a spooky reworking of Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. The book had also won the US Newbery Award, making Gaiman the first author to win the double. The book was also shortlisted for the Kate Greenaway Medal for the illustrations by Chris Riddell, along with another book by Gaiman, *Crazy Hair*, illustrated by Dave McKean.



The Kate Greenaway Medal was won by Freya Blackwood for her illustrations for *Harry and Hopper* (text by Margaret Wild) (2009), London: Scholastic [6+], a tender portrayal of a young boy, Harry, coming to terms with the sudden death of a much-loved dog, Hopper. Blackwood was born in Edinburgh and moved to Australia as a child with her parents. She has also lived in New Zealand and worked on the set of the *Lord of the Rings* films, painting thousands of Hobbit feet. She has illustrated 11 books for children. This book is also on the Australian Prime Minister's Literary awards shortlist (see below).

For information on the awards and the winners, see [www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/](http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/).

(John Dunne)

### Australian Prime Minister's Literary Awards 2010

The 'buoyant children's literature' referred to by Robin Morrow in her article in this issue of *IBBYLink* has been acknowledged by the Australian government. The Prime Minister's Literary awards have been made each year since 2008 in order to acknowledge the importance of literature to Australia's sense of national identity and to the economy. In 2010, for the first time, the awards have been extended to include children's and young adult fiction. The winner of each category will receive a prize of AU\$100,000. Entrants must be either Australian citizens or resident in Australia. The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony in November. This year's nominees, listed below, include some authors and illustrators familiar to UK readers, as well as others less well known here. Many of the titles are available here.

The criteria are strict.. All the books must be first published between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2009 and must be first published in the English language. Self-published works and works consisting of illustrations only are not eligible, nor are works with more than two authors/one author with one illustrator or photographer. At least 750 copies of the work must have been published by the entry date (16 April 2010). A panel of three judges considers both the Children's Fiction and the Young Adult awards.

#### Children's fiction

Works must be suitable for young adults aged 0 to 12 years old. In illustrated works for children, the literary and artistic merit of the work as a whole was considered.

Kate Constable, *Cicada Summer*.

Ursula Dubosarsky, illus. Andrew Joyner, *The Terrible Plop*.

Andy Griffiths, illus. Terry Denton, *Just Macbeth*.

Leigh Hobbs, *Mr Chicken Goes to Paris*.

Alison Lester, *Running with the Horses*.

Lorraine Marwood, *Star Jumps*.

Martine Murray, illus. Sally Rippin, *Mannie and the Long Brave Day*.

Jen Storer, *Tensy Farlow and the Home for Mislaid Children*.

Margaret Wild, illus. Freya Blackwood, *Harry and Hopper*.

#### **Young adult fiction**

Works must be suitable for young adults aged 13 to 19 years old.

Lucy Christopher, *Stolen*.

Judith Clarke, *The Winds of Heaven*.

Bill Condon, *Confessions of a Liar, Thief and Failed Sex God*.

Cassandra Golds, *The Museum of Mary Child*.

Phillip Gwynne, *Swerve*.

David Metzenthen, *Jarvis 24*.

Gabrielle Williams, *Beatle meets Destiny*.

For more information about the awards and details of all the nominated titles, see the award website at [www.arts.gov.au/books/pmliteraryawards10](http://www.arts.gov.au/books/pmliteraryawards10).

(Sue Mansfield)

#### **Making a Difference: Better Beginnings Family Literacy Programme**

In light of the strong evidence to suggest that reading to babies is essential for their future, the State Library of Western Australia developed Better Beginnings, a universal family literacy programme that targets children from birth to three years of age and their families. Delivered through libraries and community health centres, the programme provides parents with free children's books, nursery rhyme booklets/DVDs and literacy information. Among the other library provisions are story kits containing books, puppets and other resources which are available on loan. Analysis reveals that the programme has had a positive impact on parental early literacy practices, attitudes and beliefs, with a high proportion of mothers reporting reading more frequently to their children as a result. This year (2010) the programme has been extended to reach into remote and regional communities, providing resources to support the specific literacy requirements of Indigenous families and children up to five years of age.

See [www.better-beginnings.com.au](http://www.better-beginnings.com.au) for more details.

(Nola Allen)

#### **Launch of *Play the Shape Game* by Anthony Browne**

The launch of this book (publisher Walker Books) by the Children's Laureate Anthony Browne took place at Waterstone's bookshop, Piccadilly, London, on 26 July 2010. The book features the 'work' of more than 50 authors, illustrators and celebrities who took the opportunity to create their own picture from a shape outlined by Browne himself. The shape game is something he played with his brother as a child: they started with one shape and then created a picture from it. Emily Gravett, Shirley Hughes, Ken Livingstone, Nick Sharratt and Andy Stanton were some of those who took part in the launch and led sessions where children created their own shapes. Quentin Blake, Jo Brand, Michael Foreman, Philip Pullman, Emma Thompson and Dame Jacqueline Wilson were amongst many others who contributed to the book. Their original artwork was sold in an online auction during the week after the launch. All proceeds from book and auction sale were being donated to the Rainbow Trust, a charity that supports families who have a child with anlife-threatening or terminal illness.

(John Dunne)

### **Diverse Voices**

This year's Frances Lincoln Diverse Voices Children's Book Award was made at Seven Stories, Newcastle Upon Tyne, in June 2010 to Tom Avery, a teacher, for *Too Much Trouble*. It features a character described by the judging panel as 'an Oliver Twist for our time'. Janetta Otter-Barry of Frances Lincoln Children's Books will be working with Avery to prepare the book for publication. This year there were 42 eligible entries, from all over the world. Last year's winner was Cristy Burne's *Takeshita Demons*, now published – see review in this issue of *IBBYLink*.

See [www.franceslincoln.com/Diverse\\_Voices](http://www.franceslincoln.com/Diverse_Voices) for further information.

### **CLPE Poetry Award 2010**

The award is for a book of poetry for children or young people published for the first time in the UK or Republic of Ireland during the previous calendar year – in this case from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009.

The shortlist is as follows. The winner will be announced at the Centre for Primary Education (CLPE), Weber Street, London SE1 8QW on 30 September 2010 by John Agard, last year's winner.

James Carter and Graham Denton (compiled by) (2009) *Orange Silver Sausage: Poems without Rhymes from Zephaniah to Agard*, Walker Books.

Carol Ann Duffy (illus. Alice Stevenson) (2010) *New and Collected Poems for Children*, Faber & Faber.

Adrian Mitchell (2009) *Umpteen Pockets*, Orchard Books.

Michael Rosen (ed) (illus. Joe Berger) (2009) *Michael Rosen's A to Z. The Best Children's Poetry from Agard to Zephaniah*, Puffin.

Kit Wright (illus. Peter Bailey) (2009) *The Magic Box*, Macmillan Children's Books.

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## IBBY NEWS

### IBBY International Congress 2010

Nikki Gamble, who had been acting as the director of the 2012 Congress, reluctantly withdrew from that position earlier this year because of other pressing commitments. Ann Lazim and Kathy Lemaire have now taken up the reins as joint conference directors and are urgently looking for financial sponsorship (any suggestions about this would be welcome). We are pressing forward with organising the Congress, although our financial position and the present economic climate make this an uphill task for the directors and we are monitoring it closely. We are grateful to them and the other members of the organising committee for their continuing commitment and enthusiasm. Members of IBBY UK, led by Ann Lazim and supported by grants from the Arts Council and CILIP, will be attending this year's International Congress in Santiago, where they will promote the 2012 Congress. Anthony Browne has contributed a poster for the 2010 Congress, which has been supported by Walker Books. David Almond will receive his Hans Andersen Medal at the Santiago Congress, only the third British writer to do so in the award's 50-year history.

(Clive Barnes, Chair IBBY UK committee)

### IBBY UK Constitution and Committee

Because of the requirements of the application for charitable status, it was necessary for us to constitute ourselves more formally. This meant slightly amending our existing constitution, creating new posts on the committee and finding new officers to fill them. This was also necessary because Ann Lazim had been acting as chair and secretary for some time but she now needed to devote her time and energy to her role as joint 2012 Congress Director.

The members of the IBBY UK committee and their various roles are set out below, accompanied by a short biography as an introduction to those members of IBBY who don't know us.

We are happy to welcome new members on to the committee, particularly from those areas of the children's book world where our representation is not so strong. If you are interested, then please contact our new secretary, Bridget Carrington. Bridget will also be able to supply anyone who is interested with a copy of the new constitution for the section. Email: bicarrington@nasuwt.net. Address: 10 Hall's Drive, Gressenhall, East Dereham, Norfolk, NR20 4EJ.

### IBBY UK Committee 2010–2011

#### Clive Barnes, Chair

I am a retired children's librarian, with an MA in Children's Literature. Most recently I managed children's and young people's services in public libraries in Southampton. I review and write occasional articles for the online children's books magazine *Books for Keeps*. I have been a member of IBBY UK for about 10 years and have been on the committee for a year. I have responsibility for helping to organise events for International Children's Book Day next year (2011).

If I had to choose my favourite children's author now, I wouldn't be able to decide between Alan Garner, David Almond and Philip Reeve. No illustrator has ever had the same effect on me as Charles Keeping, but Dave McKean comes close.

#### Julie Barton, Membership Secretary

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of East Anglia, part-funded by the Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme. I am currently writing my dissertation on knowledge and morality in Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, while also an associate tutor in the Literature Department. I have a chapter in the forthcoming book *Crossing Textual Boundaries in International Children's Literature* (ed. Lance Weldy,

Cambridge Scholars Publishing), have published articles in the *Journal of Children's Literature Studies*, contributed to the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (ed. Jack Zipes, 2006) and written book reviews for the journal *Marvels and Tales* and the IRSL (International Research Society for Children's Literature) website. I also work in charity management and development, with past positions at the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Design Museum.

#### **Bridget Carrington, Secretary**

I am a retired primary school teacher, a parent, grandparent, teaching union activist, researcher and writer, with a wide-ranging interest in literature for young people. I have a doctorate in Children's Literature from Roehampton University, with a thesis on the early history of writing for young adult girls between 1750 and 1890. I have served on the committees of both IBBY UK and the CBHS (Children's Books History Society) for the last 10 years. I am associate editor (with Pat Pinsent) and reviews editor of the *Journal of Children's Literature Studies*.

Books from my childhood (though not necessarily published during it!) include many first encountered through BBC Children's Hour adaptations: all Edith Nesbit, especially the 'Woodebegoods' series, Noël Streatfeild's *Ballet Shoes* and *The Bell Family*, Cynthia Harnett's meticulously researched and lively historical fiction and William Mayne's *A Swarm in May*.

#### **Pam Coles Dix, Treasurer**

I have worked in school libraries and education for many years, and have an MA in Children's Literature. My key belief is that teachers need to be inspired about children's books so that they can share their enthusiasm with the children they teach, so part of my work as a librarian has always been to do lots of training. I currently manage the Education Library Service in Islington, which is a combined school library and museum loan service. I also teach children's literature on various education courses at London Metropolitan University. I am the chair of the Akili Trust, a charity working in rural Kenya to set up community libraries based in primary schools – [www.akilitrust.org](http://www.akilitrust.org).

My current favourite children's books is Tim Vyrer's *World Game*, not new, but a beautiful exploration of the universal language of football by a great illustrator – and a book that I would love to have written.

#### **John Dunne, Christmas Card Manager**

I have worked in children's and schools' librarianship for 40 years, in both Hertfordshire and Hampshire, until my retirement three years ago. During that time I have been involved in the Youth Libraries Group, IBBY and the Children's Laureate Steering Committee. One of my IBBY projects has been the introduction of an annual Christmas card, which has given a welcome boost to IBBY funds. My favourite area of reading is teenage fiction, which continues to challenge our perceptions of what a children's book is.

#### **Nikki Gamble**

I have worked in education and reading promotion for over 25 years. Formerly a teacher (secondary and primary) and teacher educator, I am lecturer, writer and education consultant. Following the completion of an MA in Language and Literature in Education at the University of London, I was head of English Education at Anglia Polytechnic University where I taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses in literacy and children's literature. I am now director of the education consultancy Write Away UK Ltd and also of the Just Imagine Story Centre in Chelmsford. I am also involved in consultancy, external examining, running in-service provision for teachers and the executive committees of both International IBBY and UKLA (United Kingdom Literacy Association). My publications include *Family Fictions* (with Nick Tucker, 2001), *Exploring Children's Literature* (with Sally Yates, [2002], 2008), *Guiding Reading* (with Angela Hobsbaum and David Reedy, 2002) and, most recently, *Writers Secrets* (2008).

### **Michele Gill**

I began my career as a children's librarian and have worked for a number of London boroughs since the 1990s. I studied part-time for an MA in Children's Literature at Roehampton University and, bitten by the research bug, went on to work for a PhD at Newcastle University, looking at the way contemporary boyhood has been represented in young adult fiction. I have been a member of IBBY UK for a number of years and a committee member for the past year. Previously I was a member of the Youth Libraries Group (YLG) in London, involved in organising day schools and author events. I am currently tutoring in children's literature for the Open University.

My earliest memory of books is reading with my grandmother as a small child and *Where the Wild Things Are* has been a nostalgic favourite ever since. I am currently a big fan of Phillip Gwynne, Barry Lyga and Philip Reeve ... and hopelessly addicted to Alex Rider!

### **Jennifer Harding, Associate Editor of *IBBYLink***

My mother worked in an independent bookshop in Stafford. As a schoolgirl I would take messages and books to the various libraries and later, in university vacations, I worked in the office on the backlog problem pile. Prepublication copies were brought home in brown paper covers and we read them barely open – the one I remember most is Guisepe di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*. Books I owned and that made a great impression on me include William Mayne's *A Swarm in May*, Cynthia Harnett's *The Woolpack* and Kitty Barnes' *Elizabeth Fry*.

With various academic editors I have copy-edited and typeset the last three IBBY/NCRCL MA conference books. My favourite illustration is the one on the cover of the 2007 book from Anthony Browne's *Hansel and Gretel*.

I hold a PhD in physical chemistry and Open University credits in mathematics. After lecturing in a college of further education, I worked as an editor at the Open University. I have qualifications in editing and indexing, with regular updates as the technology gets more complex! My special interest in children's literature, apart from illustration, is on literature from southern Africa, having twice lived in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and having family connections in South Africa.

### **Ann Lazim, IBBY 2012 Congress Chair, previously Chair of IBBY UK**

Enjoying and promoting literacy and children's books are the cornerstone of my life, expressed both in the work I do as librarian at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLIFE) (having previously been a secondary school librarian and a children's librarian in a public library) and in my involvement in IBBY, nationally and internationally, since we refounded the UK section in the mid-1990s. I did my BA in Librarianship at Birmingham Polytechnic in the 1970s and my MA in Children's Literature at Roehampton University about five years ago. My other interests – in films, languages, storytelling and history – have a way of intersecting with my passion for literature in all its guises.

It's difficult to name a favourite children's book. However, I feel strongly that traditional stories are the bedrock of literature, for children and adults, and this is something I've always shared with my own children, who are both now in their 20s. I'd name retellings by Kevin Crossley-Holland and Geraldine McCaughrean as among the best of these.

### **Sophie Mackay**

I am a qualified teacher. After completing an MA in Children's Literature at Roehampton University I worked for eight years part time at Roehampton University as a visiting lecturer and researcher in children's literature. The other part of my work has been on citizenship and diversity projects with primary and secondary schools in the London borough of Tower Hamlets. My current post is as a senior lecturer in education at London South Bank University, where I teach postgraduate students who studying to become teachers.

### **Sue Mansfield, Reviews Editor of *IBBYLink***

Like many others, I was a very keen reader as a child (my favourite book was always Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*!) and was encouraged in this at school and by my local library. My adult career has reflected this, the vast majority of it having been spent in school and college libraries in London. For the last 19 years I have worked with teaching and children's literature students at the library at Roehampton University.

As an IBBY committee member, I am assisting with the editing of *IBBYLink*.

### **Kathleen Milne, Website Manager**

I am South African and I worked in Cape Town for many years as a children's librarian before moving to the UK. My intention was to stay here until I got my MA in Children's Literature through Roehampton University, but I am still here after nine years. After working in Surrey for some time, I am now living in the Western Isles of Scotland where I look after youth library services. Back in South Africa I had several picture books for children published and I am hoping to get back to writing again soon. I was involved with the South African section of IBBY and so it is a wonderful opportunity to be able to work with IBBY UK.

A favourite book or writer? An impossible task, but I couldn't imagine life without Diana Wynne Jones' books.

### **John Newman**

I grew up on a council estate in Tower Hamlets and my primary school library and the public library system were crucial both in shaping me as a reader and in helping create me as an adult. After university I fell into social work but have also been associated with the Newham Bookshop since 1983. I love working in a community bookshop close to where I grew up. I have also enjoyed being chairperson of the Bookseller's Association Children's Bookseller's Group executive committee which has led me onto the World Book Day executive committee and IBBY UK, as well as enabling me to talk about book selling at national conferences and the London Book Fair.

I have a lifelong love and admiration for the work of Edward Ardizzone, Charles Keeping and Rosemary Sutcliff. Of today's writers and illustrators I love the work of David Almond, Shaun Tan, Dave McKean and Michael Foreman, among many others.

### **Judith Philo, Minutes Secretary**

I have been a member of IBBY for 10 years and a member of the committee for three years. Three years ago I became a volunteer at the local primary school for guided reading sessions with small groups of children from Years Five and Six. When working as a social worker I used stories and picture books in my work with children and families. As a Jungian analyst (nearing retirement), I find that the world of children's literature provides me with a rich source of associations. For my patients, memories of a particular book can open the door to imaginary worlds and new experience. I followed up my interest in children's literature by doing an MA at Roehampton University.

From my childhood I retain an affection for Rudyard Kipling's *Just so Stories* and a delight in nursery rhymes and poetry. As an adult, I have found my interest sustained by the Opies' research. Sharing picture books with my son when he was small gave us great pleasure; and later Tove Jansson's *Moomin Tales* became favourite reading. Most recently I have particularly appreciated David Almond's writing.

### **Pat Pinsent, Vice-Chair and Editor of *IBBYLink***

Although I first went to university to study mathematics and become a teacher in a girls' grammar school, I have spent most of my professional life at Roehampton University, lecturing in English and latterly departing from my initial specialism in seventeenth-century poetry in order to concentrate on children's literature, both in tutoring MA and PhD students and in writing and editing books and articles. Since I 'retired' in 1998, I have devoted more time to IBBY and have edited *IBBYLink* since September 2001.

Naming favourite books is always problematic – of the ‘classics’ I would probably pick Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*, and Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are* as a picture book. Mildred Taylor’s *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry* (1976), by no means as well known as it should be, also certainly ranks among my top choices.

### **Carol Thompson**

I’m an illustrator and author of children’s picture books, living in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire. Books, reading and writing have helped shape my life and are central to who I am. As a long-time member of IBBY, I’ve never failed to be engaged by the invaluable and thought-provoking *IBBYLink* newsletter dropping through my letterbox, and now I’ve jumped the fence and joined the committee. As a very new member I feel both nervous and excited – and not certain yet of what I can contribute – but I think I may be the only author/illustrator on the committee, which could be useful! I’m already mulling over ideas for International Book Day next year (2011).

### **IBBY UK Status**

During the discussions about the 2012 Congress, it became clear that constituting ourselves as a charity would give us a necessary legal status as a body, and enable us to apply for grants that would otherwise be inaccessible. So Pam Coles Dix has been overseeing an application to the Charity Commissioner. At the time of writing (end of July), this is still in process, but looks very likely to be complete by the end of the summer holidays.

(Clive Barnes)

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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* (Spring 2011) (copydate 10 December 2010) 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.

The Summer 2011 issue of *IBBYLink* will be titled 'South Africa'. Articles on all aspects of children's literature from and about South Africa are invited, including a focus on the work of Beverley Naidoo as a celebration of the 21st anniversary of the publication of *Journey to Joburg*, publisher Nutrend and Nelson Mandela.

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).

Sue Mansfield has taken on the role of reviews editor. Publishers and others with books to be reviewed in *IBBYLink* should send them to her at 37 Gartmoor Gardens, London SW19 6NX. Email: [mansfield37@btinternet.com](mailto:mansfield37@btinternet.com).

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

Associate editor: Jennifer Harding

Reviews editor: Sue Mansfield

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

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