



BfK Briefing ? November 1998

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National Year of Reading

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* Libraries, schools, businesses, community projects and local authorities all round the country are organising events for the Year of Reading from storytelling sessions, to festivals, to reading advice surgeries to writing competitions. Further information from The National Year of Reading Team, National Literacy Trust, Swire House, 59 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6AJ (0171 828 2435).

* The National Year of Reading has launched an online magazine, Read Me, featuring the work of poets. More poets and authors are wanted to take part in interviews and online discussion. Further information from Leon Thompson (0171 828 2435 x231).

* The new Readathon pack (Readathon is a national sponsored read in aid of sick children) is now available with a newly designed organiser's booklet full of good ideas for implementing Readathon in your school. Further information about enrolment from Readathon, Swerford, Chipping Norton, Oxon OX7 4BG (tel/fax: 01608 730335).

Creating a Children's Laureate

Michael Morpurgo explains the thinking behind this exciting new venture.

Parents, teachers, publishers, writers, illustrators, librarians, bookshops, bookclubs ? even government now ? we've all been trying to encourage more children to read. Great literacy campaigns are in full swing, and they are great too. Yet at the same time, **Treasure Islands** comes off the air, **Jackanory** has been cancelled and the amount of space for reviews of children's books is minimal. The adult world wants our children to read, to be literate, but only in theory I'm afraid. They neglect almost completely the people who produce and promote their children's books. Children's literature is sidelined as a sort of subspecies of literature. Yet the very people who often do the sidelining are so often the highly literate, who were themselves brought to a love of books through a children's book. Strange.

So what to do? Shrug shoulders and say it's hopeless, or try to find a new way of raising the status of children's writing and illustration, and in so doing bring the best of children's books to the attention of adults and children alike. The Children's Laureate is a new way.

Nominations are now coming in from all over the country. IBBY, who will be the judging committee, will be coming up with a list of 20 nominations by the time Chris Smith launches the project on 14 November, and by June next year they will have selected our first Children's Laureate. He or she will hold office for two years, receive a prize of £10,000 and be invited to make occasional appearances as Children's Laureate. The Laureateship will be awarded to an author or illustrator who is judged to have made a major contribution to the world of children's books. We need heroes, I think. Let's celebrate our best, our finest, let's acknowledge how they have enriched all our lives, adults and children alike. It may help some child somewhere to pick up their first book.

BFS

BEST SELLER CHART

TOP 10 FILM AND TV TIE-IN BOOKS

April-September 1998

1 Flubber, Ladybird, 0 7214 7711 9, £1.99

2 The Demon Headmaster, Gillian Cross, Puffin, 0 14 031643 4, £3.99

3 Cliffhanger, Jacqueline Wilson, Yearling, 0 440 86338 4, £3.99

4 Aquila, Andrew Norriss, Puffin, 0 14 038365 4, £3.99

5 Teletubbies: Po's Blowy Day, BBC, 0 563 38072 1, £1.99

6 Teletubbies: Dipsy's Hat, BBC, 0 563 38071 3, £1.99

7 Little Kipper: Splosh!, Mick Inkpen, Hodder, 0 340 71633 9, £3.50

8 Anastasia ? book of the film, Golden, 0 307 12965 9, £2.50

9 The Demon Headmaster Takes Over, Gillian Cross, Puffin, 0 14 130024 8, £3.99

10 The Borrowers Sticker Story, Ladybird, 0 7214 2758 8, £2.99

The power of television is very much in evidence here ? despite the grander, special-effects laden thrills of Hollywood, only three out of these ten are based on movies. Even so, it's encouraging to see that a range of other titles are managing to hold their own against the all-conquering Teletubbies!

This listing has been specially compiled for **BfK** by **Books for Students** from their sales data. **Books for Students Ltd** is a major specialist supply company to schools and libraries.

News

Harry Potter in the News (again?)

Heyday Films (part of Warner Bros) has bought the film rights in J. K. Rowling's two Harry Potter novels for a ?seven figure sum?.

Ladybird Flies Away Home

Penguin UK is taking over the management of Ladybird, its children's publishing subsidiary. Publishing Director Michael Herridge and Operations Director Mark Evenden will report to Penguin Managing Director Anthony Forbes Watson. Ladybird Managing Director, Laurence James, has been made redundant.

Prizes

Smarties Books Prize

The shortlisted titles for this award are:

In the **Five Years and Under** category, **Secret in the Mist** by Margaret Nash (Levinson Books), **Come on, Daisy!** by Jane Simmons (Orchard Books) and **Cowboy Baby** by Sue Heap (Walker). In the **Six to Eight Years** category, **The Green Ship**

by Quentin Blake (Cape), **The Runner** by Keith Grey (Mammoth) and **The Last Gold Diggers** by Harry Horse (Puffin). In the **Nine to 11 Years** category, **Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets** by J. K. Rowling (Bloomsbury), **The Crowstarver** by Dick King-Smith (Doubleday) and **Aquila** by Andrew Norriss (Puffin).

The Angus Book Award

Now in its third year, this award encourages teenagers in Angus schools to read a broader range of quality teenage fiction. This year's shortlisted titles are **The Spark Gap** by Julie Bertagna (Mammoth), **Broken Bridge** by Lynne Reid Banks (Puffin), **The Powerhouse** by Ann Halam (Orion), **Which Way is Home?** by Ian Strachan (Mammoth) and **The Unbeliever** by Robert Swindells (Puffin).

The NASEN Special Educational Needs Children's Book Award

Designed to offer young readers an enjoyable route to a greater understanding of special needs, the 1998 shortlisted titles for this award are **Pig-heart Boy** by Malorie Blackman (Doubleday), **When It's Hard to Hear/See/Learn/Move/Eat/Breathe** by Judith Condon (Watts), **The Crowstarver** by Dick King-Smith (Doubleday), **Me and My Electric** edited by Elizabeth Laird (Mammoth), **Alwena's Garden** by Mary Oldham (Pont/Gomer) and **Secret Songs** by Jane Stemp (Hodder).

People

This year's winner of the Eleanor Farjeon Award (for outstanding services to children's literature) is **Gina Pollinger**. Now retired as a literary agent, Pollinger is active on behalf of the Dyslexia Association and is a member of the committee of the National Year of Reading. Her advice in her acceptance speech was 'Hold fast to that which is good' in publishing for children.

Children's writer **Martin Booth** (**War Dog** and **Music on the Bamboo Radio** ? Puffin) has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize for his adult novel, **The Industry of Souls**.

Mark Fisher has been replaced following the government reshuffle in July. His replacement as Minister for the Arts at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is **Alan Howarth**, MP for Newport East.

The judges for the next Smarties Book Prize will be children's authors **Henrietta Branford** and **Nicholas Allan, Anita Bevan** (editor of the BBC's **Family Life** magazine) and **Liz Gregory** (associate editor of **She** magazine). **Julia Eccleshare** (The **Guardian** children's books editor) will chair the panel.

Penny Morris has been appointed Publishing Director for picture books and fiction at Penguin Children's Books.

Chester Fisher has been appointed Publishing Director at Belitha Press.

Gavin Lang has been appointed sales and marketing director at Scholastic Children's Books.

Mandy Suhr has been appointed Editorial Director for Levinson Children's Books. She was formerly at Orchard Books.

Ingrid Selberg has been appointed managing Director of Publishing at HIT Entertainment. She was previously Head of Fiction at Dorling Kindersley.

Catherine Bell has been promoted to Marketing Manager at Penguin Children's Books. **Helen Dunning** has been promoted to Deputy Publicity Manager.

Katherine Toseland has joined Random House Children's Books Publicity to cover **Ruth Jones'** maternity leave.

Joanna Devereux has been appointed Senior Managing Editor for children's fiction at Dorling Kindersley. She was formerly at Macdonald Young Books.

Publications

The Roald Dahl Club Teacher's Pack has been designed to assist teachers of KS2 to implement the Literacy Hour by capitalising on children's enthusiasm for Dahl books. It includes support materials and offers suggestions for activities and writing related to Dahl titles. Each pack costs £20. It contains 25 class projects and incorporates six of Dahl's most popular books. From The Roald Dahl Club, PO Box 3210, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 4YX (tel: 01935 817163).

Outstanding Books for Children and Young People: The LA Guide to Carnegie/Greenaway Winners 1937-1997 (Library Association Publishing, 1 85604 287 1, £15.95) is an annotated listing by Keith Barker which serves as a useful reference to the winners of the UK's most prestigious awards.

Promoting Literacy Through the Primary School Library by Janet McGonagle (School Library Association, 0 900641 90 8, £5.00 inc. p & p) looks at ways that primary school staff can use library resources to promote a love of reading and interest in books. From School Library Association, Liden Library, Barrington Close, Liden, Swindon SN3 6HF.

Research Fellowship

The Eileen Wallace Research Fellowship in Children's Literature, valued up to \$5,000 (Canadian) per annum, invites proposals for research and scholarship using the resources of the University of New Brunswick's Children's Literature Collection. Proposals are welcomed from anyone who can provide evidence of competence and scholarly background and outline a practical and worthwhile project using the resources of the Collection. Application forms are available from: Office of the Dean of Education, The University of New Brunswick, P.O. Box 4400, Fredericton, N.B. Canada E3B 5A3 (tel: 001 506 453 4862). Deadline for application is 1st March of any year, with fellowship to be awarded after 1st July of the same year.

Exhibitions

The Centre for the Children's Book's first venture is an innovative exhibition featuring Colin McNaughton's work as a picture book artist. **Daft as a Bucket** displays over 125 pieces of original artwork including sequences of rough drawings to finished artwork and first jottings to completed manuscripts. The exhibition is set inside scenes from McNaughton's best known books. There is also a programme of performances, readings and educational events. Open until 21st November at The Discovery Museum, Blandford Square, Newcastle upon Tyne. Further information from The Centre for the Children's Book (0191 274 3941).

Obituary

Kenneth Lillington 1916 ? 1998

After moderate success as a children's writer, Kenneth Lillington's career took off in 1979 with the publication of an historical novel, **Young Man of Morning**. This was followed by novels aimed mainly at teenagers with supernatural and romantic themes. With **An Ash-Blonde Witch** (1987) set in the 22nd century, Lillington combined science fiction with fairy tale and fable to create an original and appealing blend. A number of similar novels were to follow. Lillington was twice short-listed for the Guardian Children's Fiction Award.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

All white covers?

Dear Editor

I would like to express my disappointment at not seeing the jacket of one of Benjamin Zephaniah's books on the front cover of your magazine. Just a quick query. Have you ever featured a black child, a whole black child and nothing but a black child on the cover of your magazine? I do realise that it's only possible to show book covers from featured

Authorgraph writers about 90% of the time. As I have about seven issues of **Books for Keeps** missing from my collection (which dates back to 1990), I look forward to hearing that amongst the issues I've missed were a multitude of black faces.

Best regards

Malorie Blackman

P.S. I'm not for one moment suggesting that the absence of black faces on your magazine covers is a deliberate policy.

The cover of **BfK** no.4 (Sept. '80) had an illustration featuring one black, one Asian and two white children (from **Mother Goose Comes to Cable Street**, ill. Dan Jones); the cover of **BfK** no.39 (July '86) featured a photograph of two Travelling children (from **A Traveller Child** by José Patterson); the cover of issue 44 (May '89) had an illustration of Uncle Remus by the Black American illustrator Jerry Pinkney from Julius Lester's retelling of **Tales of Uncle Remus**; the cover of issue 88 (Sept. '94) had an illustration of two Indian children and their grandfather by Caroline Binch from Jamila Gavin's **Grandpa Chatterji**. Over 113 issues then, there has not been a cover featuring 'nothing but a black child'.

BfK cover illustrations always feature artwork from a new book and do not therefore, always tie in with our Authorgraphs. They also require the relevant publisher's willingness to pay the costs - the cover is one of the areas of the magazine for which we are obliged to ask for publisher support and thus an area over which we do not have complete editorial control.

In 1985 **BfK** published **Children's Books for a Multi-Cultural Society**, one of the first such guides in the UK. This was updated and reissued in 1994. **BfK** has an anti-racist policy and we are glad to have matters of concern - and we consider the overall representation of Black images in the magazine and the prominence given to them to be a matter of concern - drawn to our attention. In the last two years our team of reviewers has been extended to include Black, Asian and Irish children's book specialists so that such perspectives inform the critical debate around children's books rather than being simply their occasional subject matter. *Ed.*

First Books in French

Dear Editor

Thank you for the excellent review of our books in Ted Wragg's article, **Entente Cordiale: French for Young Children** (**BfK** 112). We are a small publisher but language learning books for young children is our specialisation (almost a mission!) and this coverage will help to spread the word.

Regarding the comments on pronunciation, I completely take Ted Wragg's point about the inadequacy of simplified systems. As an ex-language teacher, they make me squirm and most teachers hate them. However, when children or parents are faced with foreign words they have absolutely no idea how to pronounce, these systems can help get them close to the correct sound. A simple example is the word 'a' in Italian or Spanish. An English child or non-linguist adult will automatically pronounce this 'ay'. So the simplified 'ah' helps a little. We make it clear that our system is not perfect and a native speaker or good linguist should be recruited to help if possible. As our books are not text books but are bought by the general public, we feel we have to tackle this issue, however inadequately. The good news is that we are now publishing audio cassettes of our hardback French-English stories. The recordings are by a native speaker. Listening to the cassette while looking at the book is obviously the best way to enjoy the stories and gain some confidence in simple French.

Catherine Bruzzone

b small publishing, Pinewood, 3A Coombe Ridings, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7JT

Standing Up for 'Real' Drawings?

Dear Editor

I recently re-read Lisa Kopper's article, 'Will the Real Drawings Please Stand Up?' (**BfK** May '98) and my blood began to boil all over again.

I am writing now to correct the erroneous impressions that were created by illustrating Lisa's article with the covers of my book, **The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey**, and those of two other artists who use similar techniques. The most offensive insinuation was that our illustrations are in fact photographs that have been processed through a computer to make them look like paintings. This is utter nonsense.

Throughout her article Lisa implies that using photographic reference is an 'easy' way to achieve impressive results. At a very basic level this may be true, but I assure you there was nothing easy about the way I created the illustrations for **The Christmas Miracle** or **When Jessie Came Across the Sea**. I spent months researching periods and settings and searching for the right models. When I photographed the models the sessions were gruelling and often emotionally exhausting for everyone involved, and that was just the beginning of the process. To convincingly combine figures derived from photographic reference with sometimes wholly invented props, costumes and settings, requires a profound understanding of light, form, colour and perspective and a sound painting technique. Each book took a full year of hard work. So much for what Lisa describes as 'the quick fix of photo aids'.

If you had asked me, I would have been happy to demonstrate my technique as I have done many times on television, in magazine articles and in slide presentations. Instead you took part in that bizarre stunt with Lisa and Selda, aged 8. Perhaps in the next issue the three of you will take up your watercolours and show us how to do a Michael Foreman.

The camera can be misused by lazy or untalented artists, but it can also be a wonderful tool, and has served the creativity of many great artists as diverse as Vermeer, Degas, Rockwell and Warhol. I share Lisa's enthusiasm and concern for the art of good drawing, but I feel that the biggest threat comes, not from photography, but from the way drawing is neglected at Art colleges.

P. J. Lynch

22 Upper Mount Pleasant Avenue, Ranelagh, Dublin 6

P. J. Lynch has taken my article rather personally. I certainly wasn't intending to focus on any particular artist. The prize-winning books at the front of my article were from six artists with a variety of styles and were selected by the editor and not myself. I think Mr Lynch has missed the point. I wasn't suggesting that *all* photographic illustration is computer derived, but demonstrating *three* common photo-transfer techniques. To suggest that photo-realism is a simple referral to photos is incorrect.

We used a child for our demonstration not to suggest that she 'could do it?', but to show how tracing *changed* her creative drawing. I am very much against the 'culture of copying' which is now prevalent in children's art education. Of course, photo work is not 'a quick fix' in terms of time and energy. On the contrary, it is bound to take more time than hand to paper drawing because of the intermediary process. I clearly stated, those who *can* draw use photographs much more successfully than those who can't. But for many artists, photos have become a way *around* drawing, and that is the problem.

Photo-realism is a matter of taste. I personally think that all photo-derived images lose character and feeling by the very nature of the technique. But whatever one's view, I believe the public has a right to know how certain effects are achieved so they can make educated choices. On one thing we certainly agree, more emphasis on free drawing is important regardless of which techniques we choose.

Lisa Kopper

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