



## BfK News ? May 1985

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Article Category:

BfK Briefing

Byline:

News about what's happening in the children's book world.

### **Musical chairs in Bookland**

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More changes in the book world as another round of mergers and take-overs takes everyone by surprise.

- W H Smith in a deal with Paul Hamlyn has bought Websters Bookshops and Books for Students. Early days to see exactly what this means for school bookshops and school supply. WHS clearly wants to expand its business in the schools area and sees BFS as a good vehicle for doing this.
- Hutchinson, one of the oldest names in publishing, has merged with the very young Century Publishing to become Century Hutchinson. Hutchinson will continue to publish children's books under the old imprint. The paperback division will consist of Arrow, Arena and Beaver (incorporating the current Sparrow titles)
- Penguin have acquired Thomson Books (Michael Joseph, Hamish Hamilton, Rainbird and Sphere). Hamish Hamilton will preserve a separate publishing identity within the new group.

### **Worcester College Summer School on Children's Literature 21st-26th July 1985**

Lectures, workshops, seminars and visits are included in this week-long course for those seeking to update their knowledge of books, trends and issues. Speakers include Geoffrey Trease and Nicholas Tucker.

Details from The Director of Summer School, Worcester College of Higher Education, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ.

### **Own Brand Books**

Busy parents who have access to any of 200 selected branches of Sainsbury's can now fling a book of fairy tales into their supermarket trolley, along with the baked beans and cornflakes or pacify an irritable two-year-old with a Helen Oxenbury board book instead of a packet of crisps. 26 hardback titles launched the new line at the end of March; 26 more are coming in the Autumn - all published in conjunction with Walker Books, and of course obtainable only at Sainsbury's. Sainsbury's are no strangers to retail book-selling; they have already sold over 10 million copies of the 70 titles the stores already carry - mostly food guides and recipe books. But this is their first venture into children's books and in this deal with Walker they feel they have got hold of the 'best end of the children's market'.

There is no doubt that the books are quality products and very recognisably from the Walker stable. Authors and artists include John Burningham, Helen Oxenbury, Nicola Bayley, Michelle Cartlidge, and the books are in the main beautifully designed and produced. The prices are guaranteed to make ordinary booksellers gulp and teachers with

limited book funds rush to buy.

There are eight board books with single word captions - four about a classic Oxenbury baby which would be a valuable addition to any nursery class as a basis for talking and story-making and four featuring a Michelle Cartlidge teddy bear. (75p each) The **Play and Learn** series includes two collections of traditional nursery rhymes illustrated by Christina Gascoigne and two of other rhymes by Nicola Bayley; four 'concept' books by John Burningham - Colours and **Opposites** are particularly delightful; two **Machines at Work** stories - **The Dump Truck** and **The Helicopter** - and two My Day stories by David Lloyd and Gill Tomblin which include my favourite title - **Today I Was a Pirate** about a day at the seaside with a very lively Gran. The text makes good early reading material. (95p each)

The **Read Me a Story** series - six titles, each with at least three traditional tales - is amazing value at £1.25 each - good paper, generous margins, clear, well-spaced text, full-colour illustrations throughout in 'classic' style and Sarah Hayes' retellings respect the nature of the stories.

What does all this mean for the book world at large? Sainsbury's and Walker Books believe they are creating a bigger market for *good* children's books; parents and children who enjoy these books, they say, will want more than the limited range Sainsbury's can offer and will seek out bookshops. Booksellers are concerned that if they do they will be put out to be asked to pay £1.50 for a book very like one they paid 95p for in Sainsbury's. To get that low a price you need huge print runs - the sort that are only possible with a Sainsbury's-style deal or international co-editions. Consumers can't be expected to understand the economics of publishing and bookselling, say booksellers; 'they will think we are overcharging.'

We'll have to wait and see.

### **New face at Bodley Head**

Fiona Waters, well-known children's bookseller (senior manager with Heffers bookshops in Cambridge), consultant to Yorkshire TV, judge of the Emil/Kurt Maschler and Mother Goose awards, is leaving bookselling and starting a new career in publishing. Later this year she will be joining the children's department at The Bodley Head as a senior executive working with Margaret Clark, the children's editorial director.

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