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Faber have made somewhat abortive attempts to launch a children's paperback list on a previous occasion - remember Fanfares? - but one hopes that this latest venture which again draws exclusively on their well-established hardback list will be more successful. The list is launched with two selections: one for 'older readers 8-12 years' and the other comprises these six titles 'for younger readers 5-8 years'. I would argue strongly that this is misleading: very few solo readers of under eight would be able to tackle successfully the texts in any of these books although many would enjoy hearing the stories read aloud. And to limit Ted Hughes' brilliant **The Iron Man** to the under-nines would be doing a great disservice both to the book and many potential older readers.

Melanie Brown Goes to School, first published in 1970, is now rather dated in some respects. 'Wendy houses' have now become home corners, domestic play areas and so on, and in many places crates of school milk bottles have become a victim of the education cuts. However, these short stories could still be read aloud to, and enjoyed by, those of around Melanie's age (five) who should respond to this rather self-possessed young miss with a tendency to overdo things in her attempts to please.

A Time to Laugh is a collection of fifteen amusing tales selected by the Corrins who have given a global perspective to their collection with the inclusion of folk tales from India, Africa, Russia and Rumania alongside more modern stories by writers such as Ruth Ainsworth and Alf Prøysen. A strong vein of humour runs right through the book which offers hours of happy listening for infants and can be enjoyed by confident solo readers at the lower end of the junior school. Alison Uttley has a quiet, distinctive, spellbinding charm which can still transport her audience into the idyllic countryside of Tim Rabbit, the Little White Hen (will they see a resemblance to that more famous Red Hen?), and the mice, Jemima and Jeremy. Try **Lavender Shoes** and see.

I was greatly impressed by Ruth Tomalin's **The Green Wishbone** some fourteen years ago when at the beginning of my teaching career I wished I had the right audience with which to share it (I was working with mixed 4s to 7s). Having read the book again I am still impressed by its directness and the way it catches the absolute straightforwardness of children around seven like Holly and Jon in the story who find a 'wishbone' brooch (really a sprig of mistletoe) which helps them in the realisation of their dearest wishes. Try offering to confident readers of around eight.

Bottle Rabbit is the only one of the batch first published in the last year or so by an author new to me and a real find. There are seven tales which feature the endearing Bottle Rabbit and other interesting animal characters not the least being the marauding and perfectly named Crad, the vulture, who should delight both young listeners and able solo readers. This charming rural fantasy would make an interesting comparison with Alison Uttley's tales for those readers who are able to think about 'how does the author do it?' as well as 'what happens next?'

There can be little left to say about the now classic modern fantasy, **The Iron Man**, which holds readers in its thrall from its gripping opening chapter right through to its equally powerful climax. This multilayered tale of light against dark is one which every child ought to encounter in his or her journey as reader and each re-reading will bring fresh insights and enjoyment. Now with Andrew Davidson's new illustrations and cover design, the book is even more dramatic.

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