Reporting on Reading
Feeling Let Down? Here's Some Much Better News

Buy *Heritage* now and pay later with 0% interest

Things might be uncomfortable at the moment, but there is no better time to look at the *Heritage* Library Management System, because it is now available under a ‘buy-now, pay-later’ arrangement.

If you feel that your system or supplier are not working for you, then *Heritage* could be the answer. Unresolved problems lead to inefficient libraries, which attracts pressure from managers and students alike. *Heritage* is easy to use and comes with a high quality support service, freeing you to get on with running a really effective library.

Call us on (01865) 481000 or visit our new website at www.isoxford.com for more.
The Magic Threshold: Step into New Worlds – Report from the SLA Weekend Course 2010
Steve Hird

Reporting on Reading: A Survey into the Reading Attitudes and Personal Reading Habits of Year 2 Children
Michelle Austin and Biddy Casselden

Effective School Libraries: Evidence of Impact on Student Achievement
Lynn Barrett

What’s in a Name? National Non-Fiction Day
Adam Lancaster

The Curriculum for Excellence: Knowledge, Engagement and Contribution by Scottish School Librarians
Christine Irving

Websites and ICT resources

Reviews editorial

Under Eight

Eight to Twelve

Poetry and Plays

Twelve to Sixteen

Sixteen to Nineteen

Professional

Index of advertisers

Index of books reviewed

Subscriptions

The current cost of annual membership of the School Library Association is £81.00 to include one copy of each quarterly journal, The School Librarian, or £111.00 to include two copies. The rate for retired and full-time student members is £42.00. Details and membership forms may be obtained from the SLA office. Members of the SLA receive this journal and info@SLA free; they may purchase other SLA publications and training courses at reduced rates; and may use our telephone advisory service and access members-only resources on the website.

Worldwide subscriptions to the journal only are available at £95.00 for the calendar year.

Cover photo: Michelle Austin
Without doubt we are living in very difficult times, and there will be those among the readership of this journal whose own job security is very precarious right now. The School Librarian always aims to present a range of relevant feature articles, as well as a more comprehensive book review section than any other comparable journal, and a regular overview of new websites and other ICT resources, in order to support school librarians in their work. With this in mind, several of the articles featured in this edition are particularly pertinent as financial restrictions begin to bite, and hopefully they may be of some assistance to librarians in re-stating the case for well resourced and well staffed libraries in our schools.

We start with a short résumé of the keynote speeches made at the recent Weekend Course, held at Nottingham University in June, on the theme ‘The Magic Threshold: Step into New Worlds’. Please visit the SLA website where a number of the presentations made may be found in full. Delegates delighted in the wise words of Anthony Browne, Stephen Heppell, Henry Winkler, Kevin Sutherland and SLA President Miranda McKearney, as well as joining a selection of workshops and seminars, which are always the main practical purpose of the course.

Michelle Austin and Biddy Casselden have undertaken a survey into the reading habits, and attitudes to reading, of Year 2 children at an infant school in the North East of England. Again, a fascinating and timely reminder of the vital importance of the work done in schools to encourage and develop young readers, and of the necessity to have staff who are enthusiastic and knowledgeable in the field of children’s literature and learning. Lynn Barrett has provided a comprehensive overview of the large body of recent research, both in the UK and overseas, which demonstrates the link between effective school libraries and academic achievement. There was perhaps never a better time to have such an overview to hand, and we are grateful to Lynn for her important work in this area.

It is perhaps surprising that there has never been a National Non Fiction Day. Well, there is now – or there will be soon – 4 November 2010 in fact. Adam Lancaster, the founder of the event, shares his passion for non fiction and tells us something of what to expect. If you want to know more, and to be involved on the Big Day, read on. Lastly, Christine Irving writes about Scotland’s new Curriculum for Excellence, which by encompassing information literacy gives school librarians an opportunity to be actively engaged in the new curriculum. She also reports on an associated survey which provides further evidence of the impact of Scottish librarians who are actively involved in developing learners.

I hope, as always, that you will find your School Librarian informative and useful to you in your vital work.

Steve Hird, Editor

Contributions

Editorial contributions should be sent to the Features Editor:
Steve Hird, 7 Clifton Bank, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S60 2NA; Email: sleditor@sla.org.uk

Articles for consideration are always welcome. The Editor is happy to receive enquiries from potential contributors and will be pleased to supply information about presentation.

Books and material for review should be sent by post to the Reviews Editor:
Chris Brown, 43 Stonehouse Road, Liphook, Hampshire GU30 7DD

CD-ROMs for review should be sent to: Elspeth Scott, Menzieshill High School, Yarrow Terrace, Dundee DD2 4DW; Email: ict@sla.org.uk

Advertising: Space Marketing, 10 Clayfield Mews, Newcomen Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9PA Tel: 01892 677740; Fax: 01892 677743; Email: sales@spacemarketing.co.uk

All other communications should be sent to the Production Editor: Richard Leveridge, School Library Association, Unit 2, Lotmead Business Village, Wanborough, Swindon SN4 0UY Tel: 01793 791787; Fax: 01793 791786; Email: richard.leveridge@sla.org.uk
The Magic Threshold: 
Step into New Worlds 

Report from the SLA Weekend Course 2010

by Steve Hird

While outlining the main points made by the keynote speakers at our annual weekend course, this summary makes no attempt at providing an overview of the weekend as a whole. A number of presentations made by speakers and workshop leaders may be found on the SLA website: www.sla.org.uk

The beautiful campus of Nottingham University was the setting for the 2010 weekend course, with the glorious weather outside hardly noticed by delegates in the air-conditioned comforts of the East Midlands Conference Centre. As well as a wonderful array of speakers to hear and practical workshops to attend, the weekend was the occasion for the launch of the SLA Library Design Awards, sponsored by Demco Interiors. This exciting annual award is for innovation, creativity and vibrancy in new or refurbished school libraries, and you can read more about it on the SLA website.

Anthony Browne, Children’s Laureate, began proceedings with a flipchart and pen, a willing volunteer and an amorphous shape on the paper – the Shape Game. Any shape can be made into a picture, as he deftly demonstrated, describing his own books as homages to the Shape Game. He skilfully reminded us of what we instinctively know but sometimes need to have explained, that young children are seeing the world for the first time, that this is hugely exciting to them, and that good picture books pick up this point, which is why they can be so powerful and influential. We tend to drag children away from picture books too soon, a tendency that may have a correlation with ‘reluctant’ readers, a factor in which librarians are well placed to intervene. Many of Anthony’s own picture books, of course, are certainly not for young children, and in illustrating the origins and development of many of them – playing the Shape Game with them – he captivated the audience.

Stephen Heppell is Professor of New Media Environments at Bournemouth University. He travels the world advising organisations about new ways forward for learning and learning environments, and giving inspirational talks like this one. At the heart of learning will always be libraries, but not necessarily as we know them today. He invited us to question our instincts and assumptions about libraries, and to believe that libraries are the prototype of 21st century, out-of-the-box and out-of-the-classroom learning styles. He urged us to trust children ‘without their stabilisers’, to let them go, and with examples of educational initiatives that are doing just that, such as ‘superclasses’ of 100+ students on crash courses learning subjects up to GCSE level in one month, he was able to show how they can astonish us with their levels of achievement. The ‘met before’ curriculum does not prepare students for the unexpected and is no preparation for the real world. Libraries, on the other hand, are full of the unexpected, and as such are vital for the development of critical reasoning, ingenuity, and scholarship. Professor Heppell’s address left this listener feeling breathless with the number and range of thought-provoking ideas that were floated. None more so than the modest claim that ‘we can mend the world with learning’. Let’s get cracking then.

After a much-needed lie down to recover from all that, and a delicious evening meal, Henry Winkler – The Fonz of fond memory, from 1970s and 80s American TV sitcom Happy Days – amused, delighted and moved us with his personal story of an unhappy childhood, growing up with severe reading difficulties, devising schemes to avoid being found out at school, and with low self-esteem stalking him into adulthood. Not until the age of 31 was he diagnosed as...
dyslexic. Now he writes funny books in which the main character, Hank Zipzer, is modelled on himself, in the hope that his own experience might help others with dyslexia. His campaigning work on behalf of children with dyslexia, as well as his best-selling Hank Zipzer books, may turn out to be a longer-lasting legacy than The Fonz.

Saturday is always the meaty part of the weekend course, the day when delegates go their different ways into their chosen optional workshops and seminars. But before scattering, they had the opportunity this year to hear the funny and irrepressible comic strip cartoonist Kevin Sutherland, and to see him create a comic strip before our very eyes, interacting with his audience to create the scary ‘Fabio Meets a Worm’ (well, it was the middle of the World Cup and England were still in it). Kevin works in schools of all ages, reaching otherwise unresponsive children by getting them to draw and write comic strips. ‘A great reading form, and an additional learning tool’, he claimed – undeniably so, when in the hands of a skilled practitioner like him.

After the SLA AGM on Sunday, our president, Miranda McKearney, Director of The Reading Agency, presented a summary of recent research into children's reading. The Arts Council has been looking into the value people attach to reading and barriers to it, while the National Literacy Trust has investigated the importance of self-perception in readers. Both these areas lead to the consideration of how to encourage children to recognise themselves as readers, the importance of role models, and the realisation of the link between reading and success. On writing, The NLT has shown that while on a simple reckoning, levels have not improved since 2006, nevertheless 75% of children write regularly, 56% have a social network profile, and 24% have their own blog – ‘outside the box’ again. The Power of Reading Project by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education confirms the importance of motivation and enjoyment, and of teachers’ confidence, creativity and knowledge of literature, while the UKLA Teachers as Readers Project demonstrates the importance of a good relationship between practitioners (including librarians) and readers – which could be useful ammunition for school librarians in the difficult days ahead. Miranda’s own organisation, the Reading Agency, has done much work with local authorities to build links between school and public libraries, and through projects such as the Headspace programme has worked to involve young people in the development and running of library facilities. Children’s book issues in public libraries have risen for the last five years, in contrast to adult borrowing – this trend must be tapped and levels of interest maintained. Partnerships between school and public libraries can achieve much – the Summer Reading Challenge is an obvious and well-established model, with research now showing the high regard in which schools hold the scheme for the way it helps to maintain reading enthusiasm and proficiency through the holiday period – while curriculum support, joint author events, CPD, joint services to the community are among other areas for development.

And so the end came and delegates departed, enthused and reinvigorated, having crossed the ‘magic threshold’ and ‘stepped into new worlds’. Which is more than can be said for the England football team, who crashed out of the World Cup the very same day.

Steve Hird is Features Editor of TSL.
Good reading ability is the key to success in school (Swalander and Taube, 2007) and reading is an important factor in many language and cognitive skills and in the development of general knowledge and vocabulary (Logan and Johnston, 2009). However, despite widespread efforts to prevent reading problems, reading continues to be exceptionally difficult for many pupils (Martinez, Aricak and Jewell, 2008).

Understanding the role of attitude in developing readers is important for two main reasons. Firstly, attitude may affect the level of ability eventually attained by pupils, through its influence on engagement and practice (Adam and Wild, 1997). Secondly, even for confident readers, poor attitude may lead to a choice not to read when other options exist, a condition known as aliteracy (McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995).

Consequently, teachers cannot afford to ignore the attitudes of pupils since these are often important in the attainment of reading skills and in the continued use of reading for information and recreation (Alexander and Filler, 1976).

The aim of this study was to establish the reading attitudes and personal reading habits of Year 2 children in an attempt to assess how one impacts on the other. Factors that have been shown to affect children's attitudes towards reading include age, achievement, gender, reading materials, home influences and the role of teachers, and several of these areas were examined in the study.

Methodology

The research was conducted within the post-positivism research paradigm, using a survey method (Pickard, 2007). Quantitative data was obtained about reading attitudes and reading habits by administering a questionnaire to an entire Year 2 class at one school in the North East of England, a total of 51 children (26 boys and 25 girls). The questionnaire contained questions relating to attitudes to reading at home and school, along with reading frequency, the types of materials read, the support children received from significant others and their attitudes towards this, and reading on the internet.

Qualitative data was also collected from three teachers (a literacy co-ordinator and two Year 2 class teachers) using face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, in order to establish their opinions and feeling towards assessing reading attitudes and reading habits and to give a better understanding of the practices used in schools.

Results

The findings from this study reveal that the majority of children have positive attitudes towards reading. In respect of attitudes towards reading at home, the mean figures reveal that 68.65% of children feel positively about this, compared with 31.4% who gave negative responses. However, there were some interesting results within the questions. Although 92.2% of the children felt very positively about reading for fun at home, when asked how they felt about reading in the holidays and reading instead of playing, this fell to 51% and 39.2% respectively, supporting McKenna’s (1994) theory that as more leisure options compete with reading in school holidays, or when there is a choice between reading and playing, even though children may view reading as pleasurable, other activities may be viewed as more so.

In respect of reading at school, 80.7% of children had a positive response to academic reading. Interviews showed that the teachers felt their role was vital in fostering the development of a positive attitude towards reading in children. Comments included:

'It's the foundation of a good reader – having a positive attitude towards reading. We begin with those steps and model how to be a good reader in terms of enjoyment, before we start to focus on reading skills.'

All the teachers viewed a positive attitude as more or equally important as the development of reading skills. This contradicts the findings of some researchers that emphasis on enhancing reading proficiency ignores the role played by attitude (Lever-Chain, 2008). The teachers listed a wide range of initiatives undertaken to promote reading in school, and the
enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers in this area appears to be paying dividends in encouraging the children's positive attitude development.

One of the main findings of the study was the lack of gender differences that were found in other research, which generally suggest that girls have significantly more positive attitudes towards reading than boys (Askov and Fischbach, 1973). Overall, scores for boys revealed that 68.25% had positive attitudes towards reading at home, compared with 69% of girls. Indeed, boys (82.08%) had slightly more positive attitudes towards school reading than girls (78.81%), although this was not significant. However, the results do concur with the findings of Mortimore et al. (1988) that gender differences were not seen in Years 1 and 2 and only became noticeable in Year 3.

Discussions with teachers revealed that although they agreed that there was a general assumption that girls had more positive attitudes towards reading than boys, they felt that this was not necessarily true. Two teachers commented that it was more a question of finding the right things for boys to read. McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) pointed out that gender-specific beliefs concerning what others expect may explain differences in reading attitudes of boys and girls. However, as the teachers in this school do not appear to subscribe to this view, this could explain why boys exhibit such positive attitudes in this sample. Another teacher stated that sometimes it might be the background of the child, rather than their gender, that influences them and therefore you’ve ‘got to look at the child, not just the gender issue.’

A further explanation for the very positive attitudes found in boys in this study was that in the recent past the school had experienced issues due to a gender imbalance in the school, with two-thirds of the children being boys. Consequently, the school placed a great deal of focus upon boys’ reading and took steps to address their needs by purchasing a greater variety of reading materials to appeal to them. As McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995, p.952) explain ‘encouraging a positive image of reading in the minds of boys may tend to offset the gender effect’ and it appears that the teachers in this school may have successfully achieved this.

In respect of where children do most of their reading, an overwhelming 80.4% said home, whilst only 19.6% said school. This figure is reassuring as it seems to suggest that children are engaging in reading outside school. A greater percentage of girls claimed to do more reading at home (88%) compared to boys (73.1%). This could be related to the fact that girls have slightly more positive attitudes towards reading at home than boys. It could also be that internet use and playing computer games is particularly prevalent in boys (Smith, 2004), which may be competing for their time.

In terms of how often the children read at home, 66.7% of children read every day or most days. However, a third of children do little or no reading at home, which is particularly concerning. Additionally, only about half of the children could confidently answer that they were read to at home. However, more encouragingly, 84% of children did say that a grown-up at home listened to them read and therefore the children do appear to receive support for their reading, although this study also found no significant relationship between the support received at home and the frequency of reading undertaken.

All of the teachers felt very strongly that the home background was very influential for a child's reading habits and ability and they tried very hard to work in partnership with parents to support their child's reading. Initiatives included literacy open mornings and family learning, with the aim of promoting a fun-based approach to reading and giving parents ideas to use at home. However, it must be remembered that a child's home background is hard to influence and teachers can only do so much in attempting to get parents on board. As one teacher commented:

'It's really hard as a teacher to develop skills and attitudes if parents don't see it as a priority.'

School factors can be easier to address and the teachers in this study appear to be working successfully to influence these.

In terms of where children get the books from that they read at home, the study showed that the majority of children have access to their own books at home and encouragingly, over half of the children questioned used the library. 43.1% of children read online, although it is not clear exactly what types of material they are reading.

Children’s favourite types of reading materials are story books (28%), comics (22%), finding-out books (20%), magazines (16%), newspapers (8%) and poetry (6%). The findings do reveal differences in the types of materials children read at home, compared with school, mainly in respect of comics and magazines. However, the literacy co-ordinator stated that she was looking to equip the school library with comic books, football programmes, sports magazines and High School Musical books, showing an awareness of the materials that children are interested in. She explained that children are consulted about the books they would like, supporting Clark and Foster’s (2005) view that an effective approach is to give pupils an opportunity to select and purchase reading materials for classrooms. The study revealed gender differences in reading preferences and interestingly, finding-out books, which are often associated with boys, scored more highly amongst girls. Teachers believed this could be due to the previous school focus on boys’ reading and the materials acquired to support this.

This child-centred approach to the reading materials used in school could explain why the children are so positive about reading at school and appears to dispel the notion that educators believe that they must exert control over the materials that are available for school reading or feel under pressure to provide and use quality literature in the classroom (Sainsbury and Schagen, 2004). The teachers have a positive attitude towards all types of reading matter and avoid limiting
the children to certain resources. As one teacher commented:

‘I don’t have a problem because I think that if it is getting them reading then it’s better than them not reading at all.’

The teachers confirmed that there is no formal assessment of reading attitudes or reading habits in children, although these are assessed informally, and there appears to be more emphasis on formally assessing reading skills. However, the teachers appear to have a good knowledge of the children in their care, mainly obtained by questioning the children and encouraging communication with parents via reading record books. As the children’s attitudes are so positive, it could be argued these informal assessments are sufficient in providing the information needed by teachers. Nevertheless, if there is no formal assessment, it does raise the question of how teachers can check how successful their strategies have been in improving children’s attitudes to reading (Francis, 1997) and exactly what types of reading materials are preferred by certain children.

Overall, the results reveal that there is a strong positive and significant correlation relationship between reading attitudes at home and the frequency of reading, with the more positive the attitude towards reading at home, the more often children read at home. However, no relationship was found in this study between attitudes towards reading at school and the frequency of reading at home. It is clear that the teachers in this study place great emphasis on children establishing positive attitudes towards reading and their role in assisting with this. They do consider children’s reading attitudes in curriculum planning and undertake many activities specifically to encourage these, with a considerable degree of success.

It is hoped that this study has provided a useful insight into the reading attitudes and reading habits of Year 2 children. However, the researchers acknowledge that the findings do only apply to one school, at one point in time. The small sample size may have limited the study and the extent to which these findings can be generalized to other settings cannot be ascertained without additional research. Further studies should examine the research aims with a larger and more diverse population, in terms of backgrounds, abilities and ages, perhaps employing a qualitative element to gain a deeper understanding of children’s attitudes. Additionally, longitudinal research would provide a valuable insight into how beliefs and attitudes towards reading change as children move through the primary years (McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995).

Although it is merely a starting point, it is hoped that the results can be used to enhance children’s attitudes towards reading which is particularly important since:

‘Encouraging the love of reading is a vitally important priority that has positive consequences for our students’ literacy growth, both now and in the future. Teachers and administrators who embrace this... will help develop future generations of citizens who not only are able to read but also want to read.’ (Sanacore, 2006, p.37)

Acknowledgements

The research was conducted as part of Michelle Austin’s dissertation for the award of MA in Information and Library Management at Northumbria University. It was funded by an award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

References


Michelle Austin BA (Hons), MA is a former Northumbria University student. Biddy Casselleden BA (Hons) is Senior Lecturer/Programme Leader in Information and Library Management by Distance Learning at Northumbria University.
There must be very few school librarians today who are not aware of the considerable number of studies, particularly in the USA, that show a positive correlation between an effective school library and academic achievement. However, in our very busy days, it is not always easy to track down the research and analyse what it means in terms of our own practice. Over the past several months I have had the opportunity to do just that and, although none of what I shall summarise here is new, hopefully it will be useful to have it pulled together in one place.

Before delving into facts and figures, it is important to define why we need empirical evidence of the effectiveness of school libraries. Most discussions about them start from the position that they are a good thing, therefore they must be supported. However, for any argument to hold water, the starting point must instead be the needs of today’s students in today’s educational landscape. From there it is necessary to unpick how the school library contributes to the fulfilment of those needs and then to underpin the resulting conclusions with research evidence.

The characteristics of 21st century education have been articulated by many and continue to evolve. However, in order to achieve within this developing context and beyond, it is accepted that students need:

- Reading literacy
- Information literacy
- Technological literacy
- Skills for personal knowledge building
- Oral literacy and numeracy

Research evidence from the USA, Canada and Australia shows that where school libraries are resourced effectively and managed by a qualified librarian with educational expertise, all of the above are fostered and student academic achievement on standardised tests is higher than in schools where these conditions do not exist. Studies over the last 50 years have supported this conclusion, but increasing numbers of investigations and improved methodology over the past decade have brought new credence and immediacy to this positive relationship. While Australia and Canada have each conducted one substantial impact study and several smaller ones, since 2000 nineteen major studies have been completed across the United States. They are largely based on a quantitative research model developed by Keith Curry Lance, originally conducted in Colorado in 1993 and again in 2000. An important alternative approach was taken by Dr. Ross Todd in Ohio in 2004 where qualitative information was gathered from students and faculty. All of this research is summarised in School Libraries Work!,1 and the information below from the USA, unless otherwise stated, is taken from that document. It is important to note that the research methodology in all of these studies allowed for socio-economic issues and the results are not explained away by:

- Parents’ lack of education
- Poverty
- Minority status
- Teacher-pupil ratio
- Per-pupil expenditure.

In identifying effective school library programmes, all of the studies assumed the presence of a qualified school librarian. In the USA, school librarians are generally known as school library media specialists and are granted credentials in individual states to fill the role of today’s students in today’s educational landscape. From there it is necessary to unpick how the school library contributes to the fulfilment of those needs and then to underpin the resulting conclusions with research evidence.

In identifying effective school library programmes, all of the studies assumed the presence of a qualified school librarian. In the USA, school librarians are generally known as school library media specialists and are granted credentials in individual states to fill the role of today’s students in today’s educational landscape. From there it is necessary to unpick how the school library contributes to the fulfilment of those needs and then to underpin the resulting conclusions with research evidence.

The characteristics of 21st century education have been articulated by many and continue to evolve. However, in order to achieve within this developing context and beyond, it is accepted that students need:

- Be highly qualified professionals
- Be learning specialists
- Work collaboratively with teachers
- Be information mediators
- Teach the skills of information literacy within the context of the curriculum
- Be reading experts
- Inspire, encourage, create, and model high quality learning experiences
- Be leaders in schools, regarded on a par with teaching colleagues.

With all of this in mind, an examination of the research by theme, rather than by geographical region, may prove helpful. The following will look first at the impact of school libraries on reading, then on overall achievement, and finally at the impact of four factors that are key to achieving an effective school library. These are:

- Professional librarian with educational expertise
- Information literacy teaching
- Integration into the curriculum through librarian / teacher collaboration
- Support of heads and policy makers.
Issues of stock, spending, access and planning are also key and feature in the survey carried out by Information Management Associates in collaboration with the School Libraries Group of CILIP and published on 20 July 2010. Key findings include the greater likelihood that professionally qualified librarians will be more integrated into the school management structure than those who are not, that where there is a Schools Library Service it makes a positive difference to the effectiveness of the school library, and, worryingly but unsurprisingly, there is a general trend for school library budgets to be shrinking.

Reading

OECD

In 2000, an OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) survey of 265,000 students in 35 countries showed a consistent relationship between reading enjoyment and higher student achievement. We all know that students need to be able to read in order to be successful, but the fact that enjoyment is significant will be new to many in education. The survey showed it to have positive associations not only with literacy but with maths and science results as well. The study also showed that reading enjoyment is more important for children’s educational success than their family’s socio-economic status.

Canada

In 2006 the province of Ontario conducted research with 50,000 students in over 800 publicly-funded elementary schools. The presence of a teacher-librarian in these schools was the single strongest predictor of reading enjoyment. Also, schools with teacher-librarians were shown to have higher reading scores by 8%. In the OECD survey of 2000, Canada was one of the highest scoring nations for reading enjoyment, but the Ontario study showed that over the period from 2001 to 2006 there was a steady decline in reported reading enjoyment. This was mirrored by a decline in the number of teacher-librarians during the same period due to cuts in funding.

USA

Delaware, 2005: Students in grades 3 – 5 saw the school library as strongly helping them to enjoy reading more.

Michigan, 2003: In elementary schools with the highest reading scores, teachers and students were four times as likely to visit the library on a flexible basis, compared to the lowest scoring schools.

Minnesota, 2003: 66.8% of schools with the highest reading test scores in grades 3 – 8 (ages 8 – 13) were where the librarian worked full time. Reading achievement was also related to increased school library programme spending.

North Carolina, 2003: School library programmes in elementary, middle and high schools had a significant impact on standardised reading and English tests.

Pennsylvania, 2003: The relationship between adequate staffing – at least one full-time credentialed school librarian and one full-time support staff – and reading scores was both positive and statistically significant.

Australia, 2006

In a replica of the Ohio study led by Dr. Ross Todd, 81.1% of students in 46 schools across Queensland and Victoria said that the library had contributed to their progress in reading and 81.4% indicated that the library helped them to enjoy reading.

Overall Achievement

USA

Delaware, 2005: 98.2% of students were helped in their learning process by the school library when they had access to a full-time school librarian, information literacy instruction, flexible scheduling and networked ICT.

Missouri, 2003: Students in schools with effective school library programmes score 10.6% higher than those in schools without effective school libraries.

New Mexico, 2002: Achievement test scores rise with the development of school library programmes.

Ohio, 2004: Todd’s qualitative study of 13,123 students aged 8 to 18 from 39 schools revealed 99.4% of them believe the library and its services help them to become better learners. In addition, 879 faculty members saw the school library as key to learning.

Texas, 2001: Library collections, staffing, technology and interaction with teachers and students all have a positive association with Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TASS) at elementary, middle / junior high and high school levels.

Wisconsin, 2006: The impact of library media programmes explained a positive variance of 7.9% to 19% in reading and language arts performance at the high school level.

Canada

In addition to the positive reading results mentioned above in the 2006 Ontario study, reading enjoyment was strongly linked to overall student achievement.

Australia

Students saw a clear link between the input of the school library and the grades they were awarded on projects and assignment work. 84.1% indicated that the school library had helped them learn how to work independently and over 90% said the library had helped them do their school work better. In all areas of this research, the impact of the school library and the librarian were higher in years 5 and 6 (10 to 12 year olds) than they were in years 11 and 12. Suggested reasons for this finding could be that skills are embedded in early years and practised independently in later years and that a crowded curriculum in later years leads to fewer opportunities for inquiry learning. This could lead to a strong argument that a greater emphasis on primary school libraries needs to be made.

Key Elements of Effective School Libraries

A. Professional school librarians

USA

A summary of the research shows that achievement scores rise 10% - 20% when:

• Number of professional librarians and support staff increase

• Quality information flows from the library into classrooms and homes
• Sustaining budgets keep the information rich environment current and of high quality
• School librarians promote reading
• School librarians collaborate with teachers
• School librarians teach information literacy
• School librarians are leaders in their schools.

Canada

In the 2006 Ontario study, the presence of a teacher-librarian was the single strongest predictor of reading enjoyment. At all levels, the research showed that the presence of a teacher-librarian correlated with improved student achievement in reading scores.

Australia

In the 2004 – 2005 study that replicated Todd’s qualitative Ohio study, 99.4% of respondents (6,676) indicated that school library services, including the teacher-librarian, helped them with their learning both in and outside of school.

England

In 2004, Ofsted surveyed 32 primary and secondary school libraries. Inspectors observed that the best school librarians had a positive impact both on teaching and on student learning. ‘The impact of a knowledgeable and well qualified librarian on all aspects of the service, including the quality of the stock, should not be underestimated.’ (p 18)

In 2001, Williams and Wavell produced a report for Re:Source, the Council of Museums, Libraries and Archives, which had been commissioned by the DfES to look at the impact of school libraries on student learning. The report noted that in England, pre-service training and CPD for both teachers and librarians should be considered to further both groups’ understanding of learning in libraries. The report also noted the reluctance of many school librarians in England to engage in an instructional role and the delivery of information literacy. While some embraced this aspect of their work, others did not. Although this research is now dated and more emphasis has been placed on this aspect of a school librarian’s work in recent years, it should not be ignored. It is still clear that school librarians in the UK are not required to have educational training and some are not able to access, for reasons of support or funding, CPD opportunities that can give them the curricular and pedagogical expertise that they need.

B. Information literacy teaching

USA – in addition to the summary above:
Alaska, 2000: The more often students received library/information literacy instruction from library media specialists, the higher their test scores.
Ohio: One aim of the 2004 Ohio study by Todd study was to unpick the school library’s role in knowledge building. Student responses made clear that they saw the library as a dynamic rather than a passive source of support, teaching them how to conduct research effectively through:
• Identifying key ideas
• Evaluating, analysing and synthesising information
• Developing personal conclusions

‘The study shows that an effective school library, led by a credentialed school librarian who has a clearly defined role in information-centered pedagogy, plays a critical role in facilitating student learning for building knowledge.’

New Jersey, 2006: A study of how students learn through a library based guided inquiry unit revealed two levels of research outcomes. The first was an additive approach in which students sought more and more facts and their output remained at a descriptive level. The second was an integrated approach in which students were able to synthesise, build explanations, draw conclusions and reflect. While the latter is at a higher level, which may be down to student ability or assignment construction, both approaches led to greater subject knowledge and students’ perceptions that they knew more as they progressed through the unit.

Australia, 2004–2005:

In the Queensland and Victoria studies, the school library was identified as helping students to develop a focus and define learning tasks. Assistance with concept mapping software was particularly noted as helpful. Also, the teacher-librarian was instrumental in developing students’ search strategies and teaching them how to select relevant information, learn to synthesise and acknowledge sources. Older students noted the importance of the library and the teacher-librarian in more advanced skill development and their resultant deeper understanding of curriculum content.

Canada, 2002:

Public Libraries in Edmonton reported that the decline of school libraries and teacher-librarian posts was resulting in a 30% increase in public library circulation, but that students were exhibiting a significant decline in research skills.

England, 2004:

Ofsted Inspectors observed a great deal of information literacy teaching. However, the quality of many of the sessions was poor. The lessons were superficial and not integrated into the curriculum. The survey found many weaknesses in students’ understanding of effective use of information. ‘This limited their achievement in reading and, more generally, in learning across subjects.’ Crucially, inspectors concluded:

• Schools did not think carefully enough about the skills pupils would need to continue with their studies beyond school, either in further and higher education or in the workplace. Stronger provision needed to be made for independent research and learning.

C. Collaboration

USA

Ohio: A study undertaken through Kent State University over a three year period, 2003–2005, looked at the impact of instructional collaborations between classroom teachers and school librarians. Benefits for both parties were listed as development of professional skills and a more profound insight into pedagogical processes. Teachers noted greater understanding of information literacy skills and an appreciation of library resources. Students were motivated and focused, learned the content and improved their information literacy skills.
Indiana, 2007: In 2006, 293 school library media specialists, 99 principals and 422 teachers responded to surveys in The Indiana Study by Lance, et al. Results showed that both elementary and high schools averaged better test results when:

- Teachers and librarians collaborated and were both familiar with the state document that correlates information literacy and academic standards
- Principals valued the librarians and teachers saw them as fellow teachers.

Colorado, 2000: Elementary school students with the most collaborative teacher-librarians scored 21% higher on statewide reading tests than those with the least collaborative teacher-librarians.

England, 2004

Ofsted Inspectors noted that none of the schools observed felt that they were successful in involving all subjects in collaborative work with the school librarian in delivering information literacy skills. Collaboration was left to a proactive librarian and interested departments. Senior managers were not sufficiently involved in making this happen.

D. Support from Senior Managers and Policy Makers

All of the research studies noted above found that the support of head teachers was crucial to the development of effective school libraries at all levels. Government policy makers also played a huge role in establishing standards and recommending good practice that guided schools to commit to development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, several things need to be done to improve the development of school libraries in the UK. Librarians need to be trained to become school librarians, well versed in pedagogy and curricula. Only by developing an expertise in the educational arena will they be able to collaborate successfully with teachers, be valued as leaders in their schools and fulfill their potential to contribute to the academic success of their students. Teachers need to receive training about the skills of information literacy and the techniques of effective inquiry learning where students are challenged to engage with the glut of sources available to them, and to question, select, analyse and synthesise until they are able to discern paths to new understandings and knowledge construction.

Claims have been made that the research presented here is not applicable in England. However, an analysis of the data from the Ohio study and its replica in Australia, shows only a few percentile points difference in student responses to the 48 questions posed. This is despite curricular, pedagogical and cultural differences and would suggest that the conclusions of these studies are relevant to English education and should be considered seriously in the planning of future developments.

Underpinning all of the above are heads and policy makers who need a vision of what effective school libraries can do for the education of our young people. Headteachers need to be made aware of the impact effective programmes can make on student achievement through spotlighting school libraries at their conferences and through their own training. Policy makers need more UK research to inform them and to give them substantive reasons to encourage development.

Armed with the evidence of international research, we can all hold meaningful conversations within our schools and work towards developing the vision that we know is achievable. Hopefully the findings of the School Library Commission, to be published in the autumn of 2010, and the results of current UK research, will help to chart a forward path and actions can be implemented that will bring about effective school library programmes in all of our schools.

References

6 Hay, Part One
12 Klinger.
13 OFSTED, p. 18
16 Indiana Department of Education. Indiana Standards and Resources: Correlation of the Library Information Literacy Standards and Indiana’s Academic Standards. IN.gov http://dc.deo.in.gov/Standards/AcademicStandards/PrintLibrary/ILS_Correlations.shtml

Lynn Barrett is a retired former librarian at Dixon’s City Technology College (now Dixon’s City Academy), Bradford.
Over the years there have been many famous siblings: Cain & Abel, Anne & Emily, Alec & Stephen and more recently ‘Jedward’.

The one thing all these siblings have in common is that there is always one that is more famous than the other. Poor Abel forever remembered as Cain’s murder victim, lowly Anne forever in Emily’s Wuthering shadow and Stephen, never quite managing to head the Baldwin acting clan. As for ‘Jedward’, well I’m not too sure which is which but I’m sure one’s hair isn’t quite as tall as the others.

In the long history of sibling rivalries and poor relations one features more unjustly than the other. Two brothers of literature, one forever in the other’s shadow, always fighting for attention and recognition. For one the slice of cake has always been bigger, the Christmas presents more expensive and the birthday party better attended.

Some of you may at this moment be caught in painful childhood memories. Many of you may have paid fortunes in counselling trying to get over this fact but spare a thought for the eternal struggle that Non Fiction faces over its better known sibling Fiction. Non Fiction is not only unable to seek counselling for the way it is treated but in a world where names are so important it has to put up with being something that is not something else. Having lived with no real identity we only know it by the fact that it is not fiction. That it is not something else.

Non Fiction is beginning to be understood a little more. Its foundations that the ‘book’ is built upon. It is not quite as tall as the others.

Hang on a minute...You mean Non Fiction, which is all about reality, truth and knowledge, is known because it is not made up. Surely this has to be the wrong way round. Surely we should be saying anything that is made up is not real. That fiction books really should be called ‘non non-fiction’, but then I suppose that really is quite silly.

It does though raise the question about our feelings on Fiction and Non Fiction books. By giving them those titles, by naming them in those ways we are immediately putting one above the other. We are giving our preferences to fiction and saying ‘well there is that other type of book, but it’s not quite fiction though is it?’ By giving something a negative to start off with it’s no wonder Non Fiction books have felt hard done by over the years.

Remembering back to when I was at school I must admit Non Fiction books weren’t the inspiring, creative books that we see today. In fact they were downright dowdy. A quick trip down the photo library for some American kids in bent over poses to illustrate the indigestion system and some truncated explanation cut and pasted from a 1950’s medical journal by Prof Heinmann Scherlicker was about all publishers seemed to stretch to. Maybe it was almost a self-fulfilling prophecy that Non Fiction was suffering so much from a lack of identity that it also suffered a lack of funding, drive and understanding.

In recent times though there seems to have been a revolution. A factual revolution. A revolution to finally give Non Fiction its true identity. The peasants are revolting, so says history, and as Jefferson remarked ‘every generation needs a revolution’. Even The Beatles were fond of a revolution, or Nine. In my opinion it’s been a long overdue revolution, but nevertheless things are changing. When you walk into a book shop or library the Non Fiction shelves are no longer filled with dust coloured door stops. Instead they are inviting, colourful, and fun. The booksellers are now proud to display them. To enter them into their top 10’s. To promote them. There are some amazing authors and illustrators of Non Fiction. Authors and illustrators that write and create books and pieces of artwork just as awe-inspiring as those we crow over in fiction book awards.

Non Fiction is beginning to be understood a little more. Its importance is being seen as not just a tool for learning but as a vehicle for enjoyment. When we talk about reading for pleasure we immediately seek the fiction books on the shelves, the authors that delight many a child and adult alike, and quite rightly do we do this. We are living in a golden age of children’s writing. But we fail to be all inclusive. We fail to give all readers a chance, to allow everyone into this circle. How little do we mention Non Fiction when we talk of reading for pleasure? We do this to our detriment. To not recognise the power of all types of reading is to go against the very foundations that the ‘book’ is built upon.

You may at this point disagree that this is the case. You may believe you do fully encompass all types of reading in your library and your work place. This may be the case but look me in the eye and tell me that when confronted with finding a book that young people read for pleasure you don’t automatically head for the fiction shelves? It’s not your fault though. It’s something we can’t help, it’s almost ingrained in us. But even if you do feel you do your best in promoting Non Fiction, where is the national agenda? Where is the guiding light that we so often rely on? There are so many book awards for fiction authors and illustrators, so many special days that we use to promote in our libraries to get people reading and engaged with fiction. But where are those awards and days for Non Fiction? Where are the celebrations? Non Fiction is doing its part, changing our perceptions, so maybe it’s time we did our bit to help it along.

Non Fiction has been a passion of mine for a long time. As a
lover of facts and a ‘believer’ in the multi-faceted nature of Non Fiction I’ve always argued its corner, even in its darkest days. As an advisory librarian I spent many a happy Friday morning ploughing through approvals meetings enjoying all the types of Non Fiction that had been recently published and now as a school librarian I enjoy the long buying trips spending my time in the Non Fiction aisles. But it’s been a passion that I’ve only managed to show on a small scale. A passion that has spent a long time waiting.

All through my time working in the children’s book world I’ve waited for someone to come along and create a celebration for Non Fiction. For someone to release the shackles, to shine the light, to revitalise, to regenerate, to understand and to give Non Fiction an identity. It was a long wait and a wait that only ended when I realised that if I wanted this to happen it was going to have to be me to do it.

As those that know me understand, I’m more of a believer in the underrated rather than one to crave the limelight, but I have been bought up to see that if you truly believe in something and know you can make a difference then it is down to you to do something about it.

That is why when I became Chair of the reading charity, the Federation of Children’s Book Groups, I knew it was my chance to create the national agenda that I felt Non Fiction needed. An agenda to try and help give Non Fiction its identity and a way to make sure our charity was being fully inclusive of all readers.

For those of you who aren’t familiar with the Federation, we are a charity that has reading at its heart. We aim to bring as many books to as many children as possible. We do this through a number of groups dotted around the country, each running their own events, working with different partners. We own and coordinate a number of national events such as National Share A Story Month throughout May and the Red House Children’s Book Award, an award that has young people and reading at its core. We have though been guilty, as all other reading bodies, of not being fully inclusive of all readers. Guilty to a certain extent of ignoring the large readership which accesses Non Fiction for pleasure.

As if the stars had aligned, everything pointed towards a celebration of Non Fiction. A celebration that would finally give the Non Fiction readership something to be happy about and something that would even up the sides in our charity and in the book world in general.

Launched along with one of the great Non Fiction publishers, Scholastic, the idea of National Non Fiction Day was announced at the Federation’s annual conference. The day is truly a celebration to encompass all that is great about Non Fiction. I want to have as many people participating in the event as possible, whether they be publishers, schools, libraries, teachers or just simply individuals wanting to take part.

The day will revolve around our website (www.nnfd.org) which will contain ideas for activities, contacts for authors, fun downloads and loads and loads of information. Already the ball is rolling. Since the launch of the idea we have been inundated with requests for more information. Requests for people wanting to be involved, to join in with the celebrations. The thing about Non Fiction is that it covers all areas. It has so much potential, potential for learning, potential for enjoyment and the potential to create some of the most imaginative events thought of. I have been told of events happening in observatories, in an amphitheatre in London, and in World War II museums amongst many others. But it is not the size of the events that matter, it is the taking part in the celebrations. Whether you have a small display in a library or a themed lesson at school, an individual downloading a fun activity from the website or a book group choosing a Non Fiction book to discuss. It all counts. It all matters.

I hope that this day will be the start of something big. Something that realigns Non Fiction and brings it on to a par with Fiction. I don’t believe Non Fiction is any better than Fiction or vice versa but I do believe it is just as good, just as important and its authors and illustrators are just as talented as any Fiction authors and illustrators. National Non Fiction Day on 4 November 2010 and every first Thursday in November thereafter will celebrate that fact and Non Fiction will no longer be the poor relation but an equal partner. Plus, you never know, one day we may just refer to it in the positive as ‘Knowlogy’ books, rather than the negative!

To find out more about National Non Fiction Day look at the website: http://nnfd.org/

Adam Lancaster is Librarian at Monk’s Walk School, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, and Founder of National Non Fiction Day.
Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

Scotland’s new curriculum aims to ‘achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18’ (CfE, 2009). Its stated purpose is to ensure that:

all the children and young people of Scotland develop the attributes, knowledge and skills they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work, now and in the future. (CfE, 2009a)

To assist in the achievement of these aims and purposes ‘Learning Experiences and Outcomes’ were developed by curriculum teams consisting of seconded teachers. The experiences and outcomes are seen as an ‘essential component’ of the new curriculum which will ‘signpost progression in learning’ and ‘set challenging standards that will equip young people to meet the challenges of the 21st century’ (CfE, 2009b). They describe ‘national expectations of learning and progression from early level to fourth (pre-school to S6).’

However, the role of the school librarian and the school library was not as visible as hoped by the profession. The question as to why the contribution of librarians in supporting Curriculum for Excellence was not indicated, was raised. Some success was eventually achieved with the contribution of the school library noted within the CfE Principle and Practice Paper (CfE, 2009c).

Other success included the inclusion of information literacy (Scottish Information Literacy Project, 2009) within the Literacy Across Learning experiences and outcomes CfE, 2009b) most notably within:

- finding and using information in the listening and talking, and reading sections
- understanding, analysing and evaluating in listening and talking, and reading sections ‘to encourage progression in understanding of texts, developing not only literal understanding but also the higher order skills’ (CfE, 2009c)
- organising and using information in the writing section.

The project saw this as an important achievement for information literacy and an opportunity for school librarians to be actively engaged in the new CfE and learning experiences and outcomes. Whilst anecdotal evidence suggested some initiatives by individual school librarians and local authority library education resource services, what was needed was information on a national scale of not only their engagement but also their knowledge and understanding of the new curriculum.

School librarian survey

With the help of funding from Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Literacy Team, a questionnaire was designed, piloted and administered by the Scottish Information Literacy Project. It ran between 16/07/09 and 04/09/09. There was a total response of 74 of which 72 were from the secondary sector. There are 375 Scottish secondary schools (Scottish Government, 2009) although not all of these have a school librarian. Given the 72 responses from the secondary sector where school librarians are situated, the response rate can be said to be at least 20%, a better than average response for a survey of this kind.

Of those that responded 86% (64) read Curriculum for Excellence (CfE): Learning Experiences and Outcomes, Principles and Practice papers.

Out of a total of 16 Learning Experiences and Outcomes the respondents’ top ten are shown in Graph 1.

75% of respondents had identified ways in which information literacy can be used to achieve or assist achievement of the experiences and outcomes. These included:

‘Due to undertaking an S1/S2 Library Audit I have identified a number of information literacy skills in the programme which can be directly related to the Literacy Outcomes’

‘I’ve found the Literacy Experience and Outcomes paper most useful because so much of it fits with library and information...’
skills. I am line managed by the Head who has agreed to make me a key member of the Literacy Strategy working group and will support efforts to take library skills to even hard to reach departments’

‘I am currently looking at courses I provide within the Library to determine where they fit into the experiences and outcomes’

‘Mapped library services to the four capacities for citizenship, as part of our information literacy strategy. Purpose is to inform various stakeholders – teachers, curriculum managers, CLD [Community Learning and Development], other learning partners – of how the library sits in relation to CfE’.

In response to what information literacy related activities they had identified within the experiences and outcomes, the main responses (12 of the 15 listed in the survey) are shown in Graph B. Almost all the key issues of information literacy are recognised here and in an order which might be expected, although curiously problem solving received a very low rating 44.7% and is not shown in the graph.

53% (26 respondents) were or had been involved in piloting activities, created new activities or updated existing activities based upon the experiences and outcomes. The list of activities reported included 14 working with S1 and S2 pupils (first and second year of secondary school) and only three working with S3 and S4. As well as information skills, activities included author and storyteller visits and essay preparation. Encouragingly there were five reports of work with S5 and S6 pupils which included research skills for S6, training for Advanced Higher pupils and pre-university training seminars which includes plagiarism awareness.

Subject areas mentioned included: English, languages, social studies and cross departmental programmes. Specific examples were given of cross departmental work/projects:

- Project about the local community – tied into the 40th anniversary of the housing estate in which the school is located. Project involved local history research; creation of a blog for the public to read and contribute to; visits to local gallery, museum and archives; presentation of work to local community. It is hoped the project will continue and include a community action element, giving pupils the opportunity to effect change in the community.

- Interdisciplinary week – Rich Task. Working with Humanities and Languages departments on a three day task based on Lachlan Macquarie, Father of Australia. This was with S1/2. It involved planning the task, finding resources to be used, then working with students to look at primary and secondary sources of information; plan, carry out research and communicate results at the end of the week.

- Piloting development of a cross departmental programme of research and investigation skills for all S1 pupils developed and taught by a range of subject teachers and the librarian. It is hoped that this will soon be made available through GLOW [GLOW is the national intranet for education within Scotland.]

With reference to piloting the respondents were asked if they were working on their own or with a particular subject teacher. 30 people replied – half worked on their own and half with a subject teacher. Eleven reported work school-wide and ten with other school librarians.

The last major question was: …how can school librarians optimise their efforts to support information literacy and the Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes locally and nationally?

This generated 28 responses. The main points which were frequently repeated were: becoming involved in school activities through school committees such as literacy teams, by getting the support of the head teacher, by demonstrating an understanding of the aims of CfE, by supporting cross curricular activities, by developing links with primary schools, being involved in all discussions and training and in-service opportunities, liaising closely with subject departments, working with other school library colleagues, working with teachers to standardise terminology, by promoting a whole school approach and by involving Learning and Teaching Scotland.

Conclusions – engagement, opportunities and issues

A number of overview conclusions can be reached from both the statistical data and the respondent comments. Clearly the CfE is an excellent advocacy tool and must be understood and used by all Scottish school librarians. Literacy across learning experiences and outcomes are a key component and opportunity. It is encouraging to see that some school librarians are engaging wherever they can see experiences and outcomes that they can contribute to.

However engagement and implementation raises several issues. Too many intra school links are informal and direct curriculum involvement is very varied and frequently unstructured. Two factors are crucial: the support of the head teacher and school management and direct involvement in curriculum planning.

Behind the support of the head teacher and SMT lies the wider question of the role and status of the school librarian.

One or two respondents admitted to despondency due to lack of influence/direction. Amongst other things, is the issue of reporting to ‘a School Manager rather than directly to the Head Teacher’. Often this Resources Officer/Business Manager’s direct responsibility involves administrative and personnel duties and they are not involved at curriculum planning level. It is therefore understandable that school
librarians feel unhappy with this situation, especially when previously this was not the case. The role and status of the school librarian and the support or lack of support by a head teacher or senior management in Scotland has been reported elsewhere most notably by Ritchie (2008, 2009, 2009a).

Regarding direct involvement in curriculum planning, school librarians must be members of literacy planning groups or CfE groups to ensure that information literacy is built into curriculum planning. As one respondent stated, school librarians should always be involved in in-service training days to ‘learn’ and to ‘raise awareness of the role they can play in curriculum development’. Some respondents mentioned the advantages of working with other school librarians and also with primary schools, thus raising the transitional agenda.

The survey suggests that awareness of the value of CfE is only translated into action to a limited extent but then the curriculum is still very new and it is totally different to the 5–14 guidelines and the A–F levels of attainment.

Direct curriculum involvement is very varied and largely unstructured. Much of the work takes place with S1/S2. There was some evidence of involvement with S3/S4 which included information skills training and essay preparation. However, probably because of the need to prepare for Intermediate and Standard Grade examinations, this is usually the area where least activity takes place. There is some activity to support a transitional/independent learning agenda and also information literacy as a transitional skill. Reports indicate that all the customary information literacy skills are taught with the notable exception of intellectual property rights. There is also no mention of Internet safety issues. However anecdotal evidence received through the course of the project suggests that these issues are taught/tackled by some school librarians.

Another issue which surfaced and which seems to be common to all aspects of information literacy promotion is the question of a common vocabulary. Teachers and librarians use different terms for the same thing. Vocabulary is also not standardised across the different experiences and outcomes.

A final issue is the Principles and Practice papers:

**essential reading for staff as they begin, and then develop, their work with the experiences and outcomes. They describe, for example, the purposes of learning within the curriculum area, how the experiences and outcomes are organised, features of effective learning and teaching, broad features of assessment, and connections with other areas of the curriculum.** (CfE, 2009d).

Specifically the statement with the Literacy across learning Principles and Practice Paper which refers to their own contribution:

**It is expected that the literacy experiences and outcomes and this accompanying paper [principles and practice], will be read by a range of practitioners, including those who work in school library resource centres, who make an enormous contribution to the literacy skills of children and young people.** (CfE, 2009c).

For school librarians the above quote is important as it recognises their contribution to literacy skills and could be used in their advocacy work with Head Teachers and the senior management team. Unfortunately it seems like it is the only time the work of the school library is mentioned within the CfE papers. Hopefully teachers, senior management teams and Head Teachers are reading and taking note of the above quote; if not then it needs to brought to their attention.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks are given to all who participated in the survey and to my colleague John Crawford who analysed the data.

### References


Scottish Information Literacy Project (2009), Information Literacy in Schools, available at: http://www.gcu.ac.uk/ils/InformationLiteracyinSchools.html (accessed 10 February 2010)


Christine Irving is Research/Project Officer at The Scottish Information Literacy Project.
Using engaging technologies to develop independent, motivated readers and learners for life.

Why not book a free online demonstration to compare it to your existing library management system?

www.microlib.co.uk | Telephone: +44 (0) 161 449 9357 | Email: info@microlib.co.uk
National Education Network
http://www.nen.gov.uk/

The National Education Network comprises 13 national and regional networks, including Scotland’s national intranet for schools, GLOW; Classroom 2000 in Northern Ireland; National Grid for Learning Cymru; and broadband consortia all around England. This collaborative network aims to provide schools with ‘a safe, secure and reliable learning environment’ and connect learning communities across the UK. Many of the free online resources it provides are the result of partnerships with museums, libraries, galleries and archives: ‘We bring art, history and culture into homes and classrooms.’

As a first stage, students can access this rich content via NEN’s portal without having to go out onto the internet at all. The resources in the Teaching and Learning area can be easily browsed by Key Stage and subject. The resources to support the teaching of citizenship at Key Stage 4, for example, include a video on the life of a young girl who came on the Kindertransport from Nazi Germany to London in the 1930s; oral histories and photographs exploring the lives of communities linked with the sea in the North East of England; an animation about the life of Grace Darling; original documents on crime and punishment in the Victorian period; and World War II footage from the Pathé archive. The resources can also be searched across all categories by keyword and organised either alphabetically or by Key Stage. A search for slavery turned up satirical drawings by James Gillray, tracks of slave songs, and an online tool to help students create a digital museum box of artefacts related to slavery.

Many of the resources have teachers’ notes and suggestions as to how they might be used in the classroom; they may be freely included by all schools connected to the NEN on their own learning platforms and websites – in only a few places are there copyright restrictions. An RSS feed generator can produce a constantly updated list of specific resources which could go on a library or departmental VLE; for example all the geography resources for Key Stage 3, with the most recently added listed first.

If the student needs to conduct more detailed research, a managed search of the internet can be launched from within the NEN site, with filtered and appropriate results. While a standard Google search for ‘slavery’ yields nearly 21 million results, with the Wikipedia article in the top slot, a Google search launched from the National Education Network returns fewer than 50.

While the Teaching and Learning pages have some excellent resources, the rest of the site is rather dry. There are a good number of policy documents about broadband entitlement, good ICT practice and e-safety; worthy and useful, but of more interest to teachers and librarians than to pupils.

There was also a significant amount of content in need of updating. The 'Media Centre' advertises a competition for budding young journalists with an entry deadline in November 2009, and the calendar of events was completely blank. I came across a few links to resources which no longer worked, and the copyright date on all the pages I visited was 2007. Despite the fact that there were very recent articles on the home page, and a lively news archive, I still formed an impression that, contrary to its stated aims, this was not a ‘growing range of online services and content’.

The site and its resources are the direct result of the National Grid for Learning initiative in 2000–2001, and the subsequent rolling out of broadband to all schools a few years later. It would be a real shame if the Teaching and Learning resources were not further developed and extended now that the initial impetus has passed.

Marianne Bradnock

Editor’s note:
All the reviews in ict@sla are also available online in the members-only section of the website: www.sla.org.uk/ict-at-sla. The site contains the full text of the reviews and readers are able to click directly onto links. Reviews are available in chronological order or through tag cloud searching by keyword.

Read online at www.sla.org.uk/ict-at-sla
Crisis Point
http://euroacademyonline.eu/crisis-point/

Crisis Point is a role-play game based on ‘a fictional scenario in which students have to work as citizens, MEPs and European Commissioners to save Europe from a pandemic’. It has been developed to meet the needs of the Key Stage 3 and 4 Citizenship curriculum, as an engaging way for students to learn about the workings of the EU, the different roles of the European Commission and European Parliament, and the importance these institutions have in the lives of citizens right across Europe. It is endorsed by the Hansard Society, winner of the 2010 Nominet Internet Awards for its success in ‘empowering young people and citizens’ (see http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/).

Crisis Point is designed to be run as a full day citizenship event, with comprehensive downloadable resources. These include a detailed outline for the day for teachers to follow, a series of lesson plans, background information, worksheets and videos; the core printed material alone runs to 174 pages. The day begins with investigation into the EU and its institutions, and the ‘game’ is launched with a video news clip about the highly infectious TB-like bacteria which is facing Europe with the biggest threat in four centuries. The aim of Crisis Point is to give students the opportunity to participate actively in formulating policies to deal with the crisis, and to engage in the broader issues of being a citizen of Europe. It calls on skills of research, discussion, presentation, analysis and critical thinking. Students have to put themselves in the position of a range of EU citizens of different ages, analyse news reports, read records of past pandemics and interpret information in polls and statistics. They are presented with a range of possible solutions and, weighing up all the information, must decide on the best. Taking on the role of EU commissioners, students have to defend their chosen solution to fellow commissioners. In the final stage, students adopt the role of MEPs from all the member states and the full spectrum of political parties to debate the proposed legislation in a mock European Parliament.

The free Crisis Point resource is part of the EuroAcademy website, created and run by the UK Office of the European Parliament (http://euroacademyonline.eu/). It is further supported by a number of free publications which are available on request. The student area (http://euroacademyonline.eu/crisis-point/student-area/) contains links to further useful online resources including EuroparliTV (reviewed in the Spring 2009 issue), the EUTube channel on YouTube and a number of useful and authoritative sites such as the European Union portal site Europa (http://europa.eu/). Having myself had the challenge of trying to bring European politics to life for Year 10 students, I know that I would have welcomed Crisis Point. Even if your school does not decide to dedicate a day as envisaged, the resources contain a great deal of material to support the teaching of citizenship and politics to 11–16 year olds.

Marianne Bradnock

Round Up of Book-Related Websites

Wired for Books http://wiredforbooks.org is a wonderful site, inviting visitors to enter through The Red Door which reminded me very much of a childhood spent watching Playschool, but I digress. The red door in question here is a picture of the entrance to the Temple of Literature in Hanoi. Entering the site the visitors will find themselves invited to celebrate books, literature and reading. A busy page shows how full of features this site is. Primarily aimed at adults and possibly older teens there are plenty of opportunities to listen to audio dramatisations of classic texts as well as selections of poetry and short stories all read by notable people. It was however the children’s section that I was most obviously interested in visiting and this carries a large feature on Beatrix Potter. The text and features from her stories can be accessed in English or Japanese! There are then audio versions in four languages, and a multimedia slide show. As well as all this there is a complete and unabridged audio version of Alice in Wonderland, Charles Dickens, Grimm and Just So. The content here may be limited but it is a great opportunity to listen to some of the most popular and yet perhaps least shared stories from the history of children’s literature. This is not a site designed for children but it is a great one for adults to indulge in and families to share.

The mission statement on Read Write Think http://www.readwritethink.org on the other hand states that their mission is to ‘provide educators, parents, and after-school professionals with access to the highest quality practices in reading and language arts instruction by offering the very best in free materials’. This refers to the lesson plans for teachers, interactive resources for students including a resource on writing poetry and another on not only how to write prose but also how to be published. For parents and after school activities there are activities for children of all ages ranging from a book hunt for the youngest to poetry Blogs for teens. This is a great, well resourced and easily accessible site.

Smories http://www.smories.com is a site packed with stories submitted by children and provides a brand new story each and every day – a tall order! It aims to be a continuous flow of stories, for kids and read by kids, an unthreatening place for them to share stories they have created and those they have loved. This is a great site to visit and enjoy, be surprised. Writers of the stories can be any age but readers must be under 16. There is a tremendous wealth of stories here so far, I urge you to dip in and have a go, surprise yourself and enjoy yourself exploring the wonderful world of stories!

Finally if you have youngsters who are reluctant for any reason then they or you may like to have a look at Read Kiddo Read http://www.readkiddoread.com/home. Illustrated books, transitional, page turners and recommendations for older readers provide plenty of opportunity to encourage the whole family to find something they will enjoy. Whilst the choice is limited it is very current and there are lots of recommendations within genre so there really is something for everyone. If nothing else these sites should prove that reading and enjoying reading is still a popular option, regardless of the plethora of technology which surrounds us. Visit one or two, be surprised and surprise a child or two!

Louise Ellis-Barrett, Librarian, Downsend School

Read online at www.sla.org.uk/ict-at-sla
**Book Trailers**

**Coming soon to a school library near you!**

Book trailers are short movies that promote books rather than films. At their best they provide a glimpse of the story and just enough of the action to entice you to want to go on and read the book itself. Some say that they spoil the book because the trailer has already given you an interpretation of the setting and perhaps the characters and you are no longer able create your own visuals of how you think characters and settings might look in the story.

As well as being used to promote titles trailers can also form the basis of a lesson. Students could assess trailers and identify the features that make some trailers more effective than others. Students could also create their own trailers using Photostory, Animoto or using other video recording options. The list below is by no means definitive, however it is I hope a good starting point and I am sure you will locate some other gems along the way.

**Hints and tips websites for students creating book trailers**


- [Book Trailers](http://bookleads.wikispaces.com/trailers+and+videos) the wiki is of interest too and certainly worth investigating thoroughly:

- [Storytubes](http://www.storytubes.info) is slightly different but might give you ideas for developing book trailers in a different way. Students video a 2-minute or less talk on ‘my favorite book’ to promote it and for kids to learn about new titles by watching them.

  Ingrid Hopson, George Abbott School

**Locating book trailers**

It is easy to spend ages looking for trailers and they do vary in quality. Some are created by publisher and authors, some for competitions, some by fans and others by students in lessons. Searching [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com) for a book title plus the word trailer will bring up loads. [http://www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

**Trailer competition winners**


The Book Video Awards are now in their second year and are organised by the National Film and Television School, Play.com, Random House, and *The Bookseller* magazine.

**Publishers and book shops**

Increasingly publishers and book retailers offer feature trailers on their websites. As I write this *Waterstones* features Eoin Colfer talking about *Artemis Fowl and the Atlantis Complex* and a trailer for *Linger*, Maggie Stiefvater’s follow-up to the bestselling *Shiver*. You can also find these trailers by searching YouTube for ‘Waterstones’.


*Scholastic* also offers ‘booktalks’ videos:


**Blogs and other non-commercial websites**

Digital Book Talk has 101 trailers from the University of Central Florida and their partners. If you register with the site as well as viewing the trailers you will be able to access material on how they made the trailers including a video on how creating book trailers has changed students views on reading:


Books 4 Teens, ‘The Blog For Young Adults Who Love To Read’, has a trailer of the week feature. [http://www.books4teens.co.uk/](http://www.books4teens.co.uk/)

Naomi Bates ([http://naomibates.blogspot.com/](http://naomibates.blogspot.com/)) is an expert on Book Trailers and has inspired lots of other librarians to get students to create trailers: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVesRUBrTPs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVesRUBrTPs)

Look also at her prezi on book trailers:


The Bookleads wiki has this great list of links for trailers. In fact the rest of the wiki is of interest too and certainly worth investigating thoroughly:

[http://bookleads.wikispaces.com/trailers+and+videos](http://bookleads.wikispaces.com/trailers+and+videos)

Read online at [www.sla.org.uk/ict-at-sla](http://www.sla.org.uk/ict-at-sla)
A History of the World in 100 Objects

From wireless to website

http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/

A History of the World in 100 Objects is a radio series which has been running in blocks on BBC Radio 4 since the beginning of 2010 – the next set of broadcasts starts in September 2010 – and a comprehensive website accompanies it. The programmes themselves focus on 100 items from the British Museum (http://www.britishmuseum.org/), chosen and described by the director Neil MacGregor; but the BBC website itself is far more wide-ranging. Hundreds of other objects have been submitted by museums across the country and members of the public can also submit items for inclusion.

There are several methods of navigating the site. There are tabs across the top for Home; Explore; Programmes; In your area; Blog; Learning; Get involved; About; and My profile. The Explore tab brings up a cloud of objects. You can zoom backwards and forwards in time using the arrows, move to a particular time period using the timeline on the right of the screen or filter the objects by six different filters: location, culture, period, theme, size, colour, and material. Unfortunately it doesn’t seem to be possible to combine these to find for example Roman money or 19th century travel. Pupils like the serendipitous aspect of this clicking merrily all over the place; as a librarian trying to help people find specific information it is extremely frustrating, compounded by the lack of a search facility. It is possible to narrow the search to objects contributed by the British Museum, or other museums, or individuals or to objects contributed from particular areas of the country – note this means submitted from the area, not that the object originated there, so for example Dundee has submitted a south-east Asian feather tippet (http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/UpGk2M9L9QdeoArihVntnSHA).

Each object has a record showing location; culture; period; theme; size; colour; and material. Each of these can also be used to explore other related items, so for example one can explore Inca objects, mediaeval objects or even purple objects! The contributor supplies a brief description of the object and why it is important, and there is the facility to add comments. For some objects comments have been added by other museum curators, expanding on the detail of the original annotations; in other cases the comments are from members of the public which makes the site feel very inclusive. If it is one of the 100 in the radio series, there is also a direct link to the broadcast which can be listened to online or downloaded.

The schools section links to the BBC Primary history area. This currently has 13 objects to explore, with child-friendly information, clearly subdivided; links to photographs and in some cases video-clips; fun facts of the kind particularly popular with boys; a quiz; and links to related BBC online information and to the original museum link for the object. For teachers there is a range of lesson plans and worksheets covering sources, world trade, chronology and local history.

There is also a linked CBBC series, Relic: Guardians of the Museum http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00qgyvz and accompanying game. Many of the museums involved are also running their own relic trails, encouraging children to visit and explore their collections and perhaps giving a focus for a school extra-curricular activity.

An interactive map allows you to find items which have been submitted by your local museums; sometimes these clearly have local links or relevance but others are more eclectic.

This is a fascinating site to browse and could be used to stimulate interest and discussion. Linking it to the curriculum and making sure that pupils find the objects they need will entail a fair amount of preparation by the teacher or librarian, but there is much which could usefully be embedded in a VLE or linked from a website or intranet – and there is always the joy of happy discovery of the unexpected, the beautiful or the downright odd to encourage the enjoyment of information.

Elspeth S. Scott
ipl2 is the result of a merger in January 2010 between the Internet Public Library and Librarians’ Internet Index. As a public service organisation and a learning/teaching environment, ipl2 is hosted by the iSchool at Drexel College of Information, Science and Technology. This venture is managed and supported by a consortium of colleges and universities.

There are three elements to the website: a neatly structured resource supplying links to trustworthy information, an ‘Ask an ipl2 Librarian’ service and a Learning Community, for which you need to register in order to post questions and comments. It is the first element that I propose to explore.

Initial signposting routes are Resources by Subject; Newspapers and Magazines; Special Collections created by ipl2; For Kids and For Teens. The bias is, as you might expect, towards American sites and content. However, there is still a remarkable attempt made at world coverage. This is particularly evident in the newspaper section where you can use the menu to arrive at the free content of daily and local newspapers, for example The Guardian or The York Press.

Resources by Subject offers annotated collections of high quality internet resources selected by ipl2 staff. The emphasis is on providing accurate factual information.

All of the links provide free information, but it is pointed out where some sites require payment for additional content and enhanced services. Within this category you can select broad subject areas such as Regional and Country Information. This contains 504 resources broken down by continent or recognised geographical area like The Middle East. Sources include The BBC and official government websites. Searching for the population of Slovenia yielded several sites with that information plus sites offering one or the other. There is a Reference section and Arts and Humanities section, plus several more headings all of which break down to further subdivisions. Navigation is easy and the labelling is very clear.

For Teens, ipl2 offers sections on money matters, graphic novels, answers to ‘Frequently Asked Embarrassing Questions’ amongst other interesting headings. The kind of knowledge found here is largely devoted to teen issues and interests. For Kids has a much more educational, traditional feel. The authors and booklists refer to mainly American authors and sites. Whilst some of the sites grouped under the two headings are helpful, these are possibly the least useful parts of the site to use exactly as they are.

All of the headings are straightforward except for Special Collections created by ipl2.

There are 24 separate packages of sites, four of which are flagged as ‘Most Popular’.

The A+ Research and Writing Guide also appears in the Teen section, but does, however, give advice and links to websites that are valuable for any age. It could be used as a quick guide for supporting pupils undertaking Extended Project Qualifications. The Literary Criticism collection is another set of links covering a wide range of authors likely to be interest to pupils. The WWII collection includes sites you would expect to find, such as the BBC, as well as European and American sites on the same subject. There is also an eclectic range of Pathfinders to peruse, but some of the subjects are not relevant to schools.

Given the number of sites that are gathered into the structure of this site it makes sense to be able to use power searching to retrieve exactly what you want. This was, in my opinion, the weakest part. The absence of searching tips (apart from delving in the actual research guides) leaves the user guessing as to how to obtain the best results. Trying to find resources for Jane Austen gave the same number of hits whether or not inverted commas or Boolean logic was applied and the results were not all relevant.

This site could be a useful addition to any online reference library. Verified sources and accuracy of information are always important and this is the strength of ipl2. Where third parties are responsible this is clearly pointed out, so you can choose whether to use what is on offer.

Pat Chandler, St Peter’s School
Introducing an enchanting storyteller...

Two exciting new stories by Tracey Corderoy

d_skin protect standard size discs from scratches and other forms of damage even while they play!
No adhesive is used - eight tiny tabs keep the skin secure.

Never replace expensive CDs, CD-ROMs, DVDs, video games and software discs ever again!

"An amazing product! I've been recommending d_skin to other librarians and anyone who will listen. We don't need to replace scratched or damaged discs anymore - and have consequently saved the school a small fortune!"
- Valerie Dewhurst, Head Librarian, Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School in Blackburn

For more information, please contact Lauren Ace
Tel: 020 7385 6333 • E-mail: lace@littletiger.co.uk
To order, please contact Macmillan Distribution Limited
Tel: 01256 302 692 • E-mail: mdl@macmillan.co.uk
www.littletigerpress.com
As I write this in July it is a month since another cycle of the Kate Greenaway and Carnegie medals reached its concluding ceremony. I have said before, and I’ll continue saying, that the real deep value for readers in all awards comes from the shortlists. That is not to detract in any way from the merit or glory of the winners (originally I reviewed The Graveyard Book myself in this journal, Vol. 57, No. 1, because no other review seemed to compare both editions of the book). The shortlists give a ready reference of a careful and considered booklist summarising the best of the best and a look back over the shortlists of these two awards over, say, the last five years demonstrates an astonishing and exhilarating vibrancy of quality in the variety of writing and illustrating of books published for a young audience. It is so valuable not to neglect, or to overlook, the shortlists after an actual agreed winner is announced. For the reader who finds the affinity of deep satisfaction in a book that book is the winner; no announcement or presentation, not even awareness for the author, but it happens, have faith.

Publishers do appear to live by the adage of ‘Behold I make all things new.’ There is such emphasis, such wholesale focus, such single-minded enthusiasm lavished on the newest, the ‘lead’ titles, the latest or even the soon-to-be forthcoming that grand favourites so easily slip further into promotional backlist obscurity and fade, and fade. A broader picture, a wider awareness, is essential if we as educators are really serving the needs of our own readers. In this latest Carnegie list appeared Rowan the Strange, categorised as historical fiction, which I have no hesitation in stating is simply a superb novel with the added advantage of accessibility to young adult readers. But this book is also the third in a trio, not a trilogy, of novels by Julie Hearn: Ivy, Hazel and finally Rowan. The writing throughout is a delight and to be able to sustain plausibility and convincingly create the sustained humour – very, very funny rather than a jokey belly-laugh – of the opening chapters of the first book through to the heartrending power of a tragedy in the last is a wonder. Read on, readers, read on with awe and that breathless sense of being in touch with something so special which comes from the best of books.

In America, the Children’s Literature Association presents an annual Phoenix Award for a title which has maintained reader satisfaction for 20 years. The 2010 award has gone to that doyenne of historical fiction Rosemary Sutcliff for The Shining Company. This story is based upon the ancient poem Y Gododdin and was published, a couple of years before the death of the author, by The Bodley Head in 1990; it is not one of her most appreciated books here in the UK. (I cannot resist pointing out a fine irony that US publishing sensitivities currently appear to be denying their readers the richness of Rowan the Strange.) In 2008 the winner was Peter Dickinson for Eva and in 2004 Berlie Doherty for White Peak Farm. Not a headline grabber, this award, not a reason to emblazon special editions of the books with eye-catching medallion stickers, often not even a cause for celebratory new editions in spite of the possibility that the sales pitch ‘New’ might be applied yet again. But with winner and ‘honor’ lists what depth, what quantities, what immeasurable wealth of reader satisfaction has built up over twenty years. Read on, and on, and on.

Chris Brown

Books and material for review should be sent by post to the Reviews Editor: Chris Brown, 43 Stonehouse Road, Liphook, GU30 7DD
Bergman, Mara, and Thomas, Cassia

Lively Elizabeth!

 Hodder, 2010, pp32, £10.99
978 0 340 98804 6

Here’s the cautionary tale of what happens if you push and shove. Lively Elizabeth, a disorderly child, sets off on a chain reaction when she thoughtlessly pushes Joe, a sweetly passive looking little boy who is standing in front of her. He falls on to Johnny and in no time at all the rest of the class goes down like skittles, the bookshelf topples, music stands crash, curtains are wrenched loose, the cat scrams. Fittingly, Joe gives Elizabeth a well deserved ticking off and wrings an apology (of sorts) out of her. Elizabeth is forgiven, peace restored.

The sequence building up to the cumulative disaster is well paced. The page turn plays a major part in creating waves of suspense leading to the climax, with the size of the typeface signalling high decibel levels. There are opportunities for prediction, joining in with sound effects, even counting.

In a style reminiscent of the work of Shirley Hughes, the robust participants, caught in totally natural poses, are the very essence of childhood. In landscape format with cream paper stock, this is an elegant picturebook about a chaotic episode at playgroup.

Jane Doonan

Boothroyd, Jennifer

What is Taste?

978 0 7613 5415 4

A useful book for Key Stage One because the approach is simple, the text clear and the illustrations colourful. A contents list, index, glossary and reading list encourage information skills, even though they are all very simple. There are five books in the series covering the main senses, and if the text of the others is similar giving basic but accurate facts with suggested lines of investigation, the series will be a real help to pupils and teachers starting science studies.

Delvene A. Barnett

Braun, Sebastien

The Ugly Duckling

(based on the story by Hans Christian Andersen)

978 1 907152 03 0

This is a very fine retelling of the Andersen fairy tale. Mother duck is surprised to discover an extra egg in her nest but is determined to love the ugly duckling as her very own. After a year of wandering and loneliness he discovers his true identity. This is the first book in a new ‘Story House’ collection – a series of classic fairy tales illustrated by contemporary artists.

Stylized illustrations with vibrant green and gold colours fill each page. The strong pen and ink line silhouetting each picture serves to emphasize the duckling’s dilemma. A very good tale to read aloud to the very young, big bold typography also creates an ideal story for the emergent reader. The timeless theme provides an excellent trigger for discussions about difference and inclusion for the under eight.

Rosemary Woodman

Browne, Anthony

Me and You

978 0 385 61489 4

Anthony Browne offers a new perspective on an old tale with his re-interpretation of ‘Goldilocks and the Three Bears’, which he dedicates ‘to all underdogs’. Characteristically he gives his readers plenty to puzzle over since the structure of the picturebook’s layout allows for a double viewpoint. Goldilocks’ wordless story is shown on the verso in a sequence of small scale frames in monochrome. The Bears’ tale, with a text, appears on the recto in page frames with images on a large scale, lightly coloured in crayon and inks. The Goldilocks’ family lives on mean streets, where as the Bears have a spacious property near the park. The striking class difference, with the material advantage enjoyed by the Bears is counter-balanced by contrast in the behaviour of the two sets of parents. Colour, as a coded clue, has a negative value in the Goldilocks’ sequence until the final frame when the action is bathed in radiant golden light which out-shines anything shown in proximity to Baby Bear. This apparently — and deceptively — simple picturebook could keep discussions going for a very long time.

Jane Doonan

Elliott, Rebecca

Just Because

Lion, 2010, pp32, £5.99
978 0 7459 6235 1

The heart has its reasons, but in Toby’s case, he can’t put them into words. Toby loves his young sister, Clemmie, for who she is — ‘just because’ rather than because of what she can do. Clemmie is severely mentally and psychologically handicapped. As he says, she’s a bit like a princess really; they don’t have to do much. Clemmie’s very presence in Toby’s life is enough. Toby may not be able to explain why time shared with Clemmie is especially enjoyable and rewarding, but as the pages turn we can see that he delights in the games he invents and plays in her company. His enthusiasms carry them both along and whatever response he has from her, he interprets positively. Despite the underlying seriousness of the theme Elliott’s approach is through humour. Her illustrations in juicy, textured, painterly cartooning with cheerful saturated colour are an appropriate symbol for Toby’s take on life. Why not buy a copy for the classroom bookshelf ... ‘just because’?

Jane Doonan

Faundez, Anne and Littlewood, Karin

The Day the Rains Fell

Tamarind, 2010, pp30, £5.99
978 1 848 53015 7

Lindwre visits the Earth with her daughter, Thandi, to show her all the beautiful plants and animals but notices that they are sad and droopy because they have no water. She then sets about creating water holes so that when it rains they will be filled and the Earth will be well again.

The soft watercolour illustrations are wonderful, adding to the text, expanding the story, and are varied and interesting. They make good use of the page with different perspectives ranging from vast open plains to close-up's of Thandi making beads and her mother looking down on the
Earth. The drawings also give the animals character and invoke a sense of the hot dry African sub-Sahara, with the colours changing from sizzling reds and oranges to vibrant blues and purples as the story progresses. A lovely African creation story aimed at younger readers up to age 7, it also has two information pages about making clay pots and beads.

Barbara Band

Fromental, Jean-Luc and Jolivet, Joëlle

Oops!

Translated by Thomas Connors

Abrams, 2010, pp38, £10.99
978 0 8109 8749 4

Going on holidays is supposed to be fun, but for one Parisian family their holiday adventure starts rather badly as soon as they’re ready to set off. Suddenly they have to face a chain of crazy obstacles which delay their journey to the airport: they find themselves stuck in a huge traffic jam, experience delays on the tube, run into elephants and the befuddled warthog to the bewildered baboon tossed unceremoniously from his hammock. However, the zany shrew in her tutu still has the last word in a joyous surprise ending.

Angela Redlen

Hadithi, Mwenye and Kennaway, Adrienne

Bumping Buffalo

Hodder, 2010, pp32, £10.99
978 0 340 98335 7

Hooray! Another book in the ‘African Folk Tale’ series by the well-known award-winning partnership of Hadithi and Kennaway. As always their books are beautiful to look at and to feel, and perfect for reading aloud to a class. The illustrations here in gorgeous, glowing colours are superb and right away the reader is drawn in to the heat of the African plains along with the characters. Buffalo, with his tough horns and wide forehead pad, has the ideal equipment for charging into things. He bumps his way round all the other animals, elephants, rhinos, even rocks and baobab trees, ‘looking for trouble’, until one day when he encounters a pack of wild dogs in a cave. And do they know how to attack and to hurt? They are much more trouble than Buffalo had bargained for. As a result, he becomes a reformed character after that … well, almost.

Bumping Buffalo, in my view, is not quite up there with the best of them, Hot Hippo or Crafty Chameleon, for example, but a very entertaining read nevertheless.

Angela Redlen

Fuge, Charles and Conway, David

Bedtime Hullabaloo!

Hodder, 2010, pp32, £10.99
978 0 340 98125 2

A bedtime story for the early years, told in rhyme with alliteration aplenty and a catchy rhythm thrown in for good measure, but there’s a difference: we’re not in a cozy English home, we’re in the Silly Savannah with ludicrous leopards and hat-wearing hyenas, who cannot get to sleep because of an appalling racket that shatters the peace. Expectations are upset when the large beasts eventually discover who is causing all the trouble, a nicely pointed contrast between the volume of noise and the tiny perpetrator.

Eagle-eyed youngsters will delight in the details of the splendid, colourful illustrations, full of lovely humorous touches such as the paw-print lamp in leopard’s bedroom, his leopard print bedcover, the motif on giraffe’s mug of bedtime cocoa, baboon’s bedtime reading material, not to mention the marvellous expressions on all the animals’ faces, from the sleepwalking lion, the outraged ostrich and the befuddled warthog to the bewildered baboon tossed unceremoniously from his hammock. However, the zany shrew in her tutu still has the last word in a joyous surprise ending.

Angela Redlen

Helmore, Jim and Wall, Karen

Hold on Tight, Stripy Horse!

Egmont, 2010, pp30, £10.99
978 1 4052 4826 6

Another tale from the bric-a-brac shop begins with wet and windy magic. Stripy Horse and the gang have to don wet weather gear as the rain starts to fall inside the shop. A gale blows up lifting Ella, Stripy Horse and Herman into the air. The trio are blown towards the storm in the picture. They land on the shelf where they watch the flood waters below and the weatherwane parrot, stuck facing north, who is the cause of the rain. It’s up to the trio to hatch a rescue plan. They have to work together to fix the weathervane and save Pitch and Roly, before they can finally relax in front of the tropical sunshine picture. Action and adventure fills the pages. The colourful tones of Ella the flamingo umbrella, Herman’s patchwork patterns, the cranky parrot and of course Stripy Horse stand out well against the watery and sunny backgrounds. The parrot helps the plot along with encouraging phrases: ‘ALL’S WELL THAT ENDS WELL!’ This is great fun to read aloud and for young children to follow the story for themselves through the pictures.

Wendy Worley

Hodgkinson, Jo

The Talent Show

Andersen, 2010, pp32, £10.99
978 1 84939 046 0

This is a debut picturebook from Jo Hodgkinson, who like her characters, has an abundance of talent. The themes she explores are the importance of not judging by appearances, and the merit of trying again if at first you don’t succeed. Bear, Lion, Croc, and Snake form a band to see if they can win a talent contest. They need a singer, but Bird, who shows up for an audition is turned down point blank; he’s deemed to be much too small. The band has forgotten that birds are very good at singing. Bird gives them a chance to remember when he re-appears in a towering disguise, and waltzes his way to success. The text beats to the bar in rhyming couplets, and the frames change scale in syncopated rhythms across the page spreads; you can almost hear the music. The animals’ expressions – just a few dots and lines – display a huge range of human feelings: attentive, admiring, scornful, bewitched, bemused, apprehensive, embarrassed, and proud. At the end of a perfect performance – play it again Croc – all you can wish for are encores galore from Hodgkinson. Brava!

Jane Doonan

Hodgson, Karen and Collins, Ross

Hugh’s Blue Day

978 1 907432 00 2

Hodgson, Karen and Lambert, Sally Anne

The Teeny-Weeny Walking Stick

978 1 907432 02 6

Hodgson, Karen and Madalina, Dina

The Robot Who Couldn’t Cry

978 1 907432 01 9

Madness, the commercially-minded marketing persons will proclaim, to simultaneously publish three picture books by the same author is just crazy! It’s likely any reviewer who does give
coverage will simply and logically pick on just one of the three to review! But I like this crazy simply because it is so self-evident that great care and attention to detail has been given to each book, to the choice of good illustrators and the total presentation. I hope that this particular madness goes against the sometimes limiting vision of retail wisdom and proves to be a success. All three books have appeal for the 3 or 4 to fish ages and to take them in a rough age order makes sense. Hugh’s Blue Day involves a small boy in a grumpy ‘don’t want to’ mood. His wise mother goes with the flow and imaginatively, and enjoyably, ensures everything in his day turns blue, even to stories of Bluelocks and Little Blue Riding Hood. The accompanying pictures, interspersed with segments of text, are lively and exuberant, they add detail and focus throughout.

In The Teeny-Weeny Walking Stick a small boy keeps interrupting his older sister with a sequence of assurances that he’s found evidence of little people at the bottom of the garden. She is far too worldly to be deceived by his visions for the walking stick, hat, slippers and a wing he brings her. Yet in the end when she leaves the practicality of her sums homework for her own dreams then it is that a maybe creeps in. The artwork for this book is soft, subtle and homely with gentle colouring and lines.

The third book features Rusty (a sad name in the circumstance) whose friends can all cry but he, as a robot, cannot. Sourful music, a weepy story, chopping onions: nothing works until uncontrollable laughter sets in, the logic may be loose but the story works. These illustrations, by a Romanian artist, are fun, they are fittingly quirky loose but the story works. These illustrations, by a Romanian artist, are fun, they are fittingly quirky, with new experiences in her usual warm and worldly to be deceived by his visions for the walking stick, hat, slippers and a wing he brings her. Yet in the end when she leaves the practicality of her sums homework for her own dreams then it is that a maybe creeps in. The artwork for this book is soft, subtle and homely with gentle colouring and lines.

The second book features Cheryl Willis and Velasquez, Eric

Hudson, Cheryl Willis and Velasquez, Eric

My Friend Maya Loves To Dance


978 0 8109 8328 1

This picture book tells the story of Maya and her love of dance. She loves all aspects of dance from ballet to street dance. Maya is shown in a wide variety of circumstances from church to shopping mall and the idea that dance is totally integrated into her life is explored.

The text is short and often rhyming, and whilst commenting on the pictures and explaining some of the ballet moves, it is subordinate to the pictures themselves. The colour palette is quite dark with only three full page spreads having a light background. This gives a somewhat sophisticated feel to the images, but fails to reflect the exuberance that she is supposed to be feeling when she dances. The images themselves are well crafted, but often miss that sense of movement which we should get. This is particularly obvious in the picture of her ‘Jete’, which appears somewhat posed and lacking in animation.

The story is told from the perspective of Maya’s friend and at the end of the story there is a picture of the two young girls, one of whom is in a wheelchair. The message of the book is that everyone can enjoy dance either as a participant or as a spectator. The book can be read for enjoyment by young children and can be used with KS2 to discuss aspects of PSHE.

Margaret Pemberton

Hughes, Shirley

Don’t Want To Go!

Bodleian Head, 2010, pp32, £10.99

978 0 370 32962 8

Don’t Want To Go! is a delightful new tale from the Grande Dame of children’s literature. The book introduces a new character, Lily, who wakes up one morning to the news that her mum is ill in bed with flu. Daddy has to go to work so Lily is to go to Melanie’s house to play. Shirley Hughes deals with Lily’s reluctance at going to a new house, meeting new people and generally dealing with new experiences in her usual warm and inimitable style. When Lily arrives at Melanie’s she meets baby Sam, his older brother Jack and dog Ringo. Lily soon overcomes her reservations and when dad comes to collect her she doesn’t want to leave! Don’t want to go! maintains Hughes high standard of illustrations and narrative and will be enjoyed by all but will be particularly well received by fans of her other classic titles Alfie and Dogger.

Frances Breslin

Kemp, Anna and Ogilvie, Sara

Dogs Don’t Do Ballet


978 1 84738 474 4

Quirky and novel, and I suppose that is the point of book and title. Humorous illustrations maintain the tone as the little girl struggles to convince a doubting world that her dog does do ballet. Of course the two of them prove the world wrong as Biff, the Pug gets a standing ovation for his tour de force on stage as a last minute replacement for the injured ballerina. Obviously every ballet-dancing girl with a pet dog will love the idea, but perhaps the appeal is wider than just that. The language is not simplified for this is not a teach you to read book. This is a parent and child read together, laugh together and have fun with picture, story and words sort of a book. This is to be enjoyed repeatedly at bedtime or whenever a book can be shared between adult and child.

Nick Hunt

Hoffman, Mary and Asquith, Ros

The Great Big Book of Families


978 1 84507 999 4

Families nowadays can come in all shapes and sizes, and this picture book is an entertaining look at all these possibilities, from the traditional to one-parent, same-sex, adopted and step. It also covers the kinds of homes families can live in, work, holidays, school, food, pets, celebrations, hobbies, feelings - there’s something for everyone in this truly multicultural exploration. Ros Asquith’s illustrations are witty and wonderful, full of small details on every page for parent (or teacher) and child readers to talk about, as for example on the ‘Jobs’ page, where the main pictures are bordered by lots of items connected with work – a saw, scissors, computer, brush, iron, stethoscope etc. An excellent choice for the primary school library.

Gerry McOurley

Jones, Lis and Coplestone, Jim

A Walk in the Wild Woods


978 1 84507 956 7

Ruby and her toy rabbit Rabby are scared of the fox, but her daddy looks after Ruby and, as it happens, the fox looks after Rabby. A happy ending, as would be expected, and another example from children’s literature of the big bad fox being, well, not so big and not so bad. The style of this book is typical Jones; a gentle rhythm, a cuddly friend and a nice surprise at the end. Coplestone’s illustrations are charming and show more emotion in the characters that the text describes; perfect for children. A nice story.

Rebecca Carter

Krebs, Laurie and Wilson, Anne

We’re Roaming in the Rainforest


978 1 84686 330 1

This Amazon adventure is a story told in rhyme of a journey through the rainforest spotting en route parrots, monkeys, sloths, pink river dolphins, huge butterflies, caimans, dart frogs, leaf-cutter ants, spiders, lizards, snakes, geckos and otters. From start to finish in glorious technicolour, the book is a magnificent feast for the eye. The endpapers are exquisite and set the tone for what follows. Careful, vibrant depictions of each of the creatures and the surrounding vegetation will encourage children to draw and paint their own pictures.

This is not just a storybook, however, it is also a teaching tool about the current situation in the Amazon region. Much factual information is provided after the story ends about the geography of the area, including a large map of South America, about the Amazonian rainforest.
itself and the people and creatures who inhabit it. Perhaps most importantly, there is also a section on conservation. A marvellous starting point for a full-blown project across the curriculum for KS2, this book will serve just as well at KS1 as an initial exploration of life around the Amazon.

Angela Redfearn

**Manham, Allan and Dann, Penny**

**The Giant Carrot**

Orchard, 2010, pp32, £10.99 978 1 84362 591 9

This version of the well-loved Russian folk tale has been updated and made even more palatable by swapping an enormous carrot for the traditional giant turnip. It is a cumulative tale with a progression of people and animals joining Jack, who has grown the giant carrot, in his attempt to pull it up. He is a grandfatherly figure, joined first by his friend Bertha, then by two children and an assortment of animals in descending order of size until, as in Tolstoy’s version, a mouse joins the tug-of-war and with that the carrot shoots out of the ground to end most satisfyingly as soup for everyone involved. It is a most attractive book, with cheerful characters and a bright yet light and airy feel to the palette.

Dann makes judicious use of collage in her illustration, using both photographic images of textiles for clothing and what look like old garden plant prints of the type one might find in 19th century seed catalogues. She plays with scale (clearly indicated by the theme of giant vegetables) in her illustrations but in a subtle way. Do I detect a nod to the early botanical drawings of the likes of Maria Sibylla Merian and her followers? The effect is entirely fresh and modern of the likes of Maria Sibylla Merian and her followers? The effect is entirely fresh and modern.

Montanari, Eva

**The Alphabet Family**

Meadowside, 2010, pp32, £5.99 978 1 84539 405 9

Montanari’s delightful and moving alphabet book based on the delightfully different and charmingly rich world of the Montanari family has been updated with brand new illustrations and a work of custom designed by the author herself, that includes notes from a journey where she meets various unusual characters — all characters or letters from the alphabet. As her journey continues, so does the variety of situations that she encounters, thanks to the rich imagination of Montanari. For it is not just members of the alphabet that the reader will enjoy, but what happens to the letters, what each one does, and the differing circumstances one meets page after page. This is

McAllister, Angela and Smith, Alex T.

**My Mum Has X-ray Vision**

Scholastic, 2010, pp32, £6.99 978 1 407105 38 3

Milo is so impressed by his Mum’s ability to see when he is up to mischief (we see what Milo is up to in his imaginative play), even when she is in a different room, that he is convinced she must be a superhero. He hides in the wardrobe to test her powers, but Mum takes so long heroically seeing through a lorry and saving her next-door neighbour from a nasty fall, that he loses faith in her ability to see him through doors. However, at the end of the book, as she shouts after him to remove that packet of crisps from up his jumper, he and his friend Lola agree that she must have eyes in the back of her head.

It will probably help to say that Milo and his glamorous Mum appear to be of Afro-Caribbean origin, and that the other Mums, although mostly dressed in dustcoats and suits reminiscent of the Fifties, include one with a South Asian bindi on her forehead and a dupatta draped across her shoulders.

The short period in which a child is utterly impressed with a parent is surely to be treasured, and this story told with gentle humour and cartoon illustrations (note Milo imagining his Mum as Wonderwoman) will be fun to read and share.

Diana Barnes

**New Editions**

*Oliver Who Travelled Far and Wide* (09) by Mara Bergman and Nick Maland, a Booktrust early years winner, is a night time search for a missing teddy which ranges across sea, jungle and ice in an intrepid adventure. Hodder, £5.99, 978 0 340 98164 1. Way back in 1970 Quentin Blake gave me a copy of his then new book *Angelo* when we were both guests at a school. I’m delighted to find that the delights of the book are not just nostalgic memory as it really is terrific as the thrilling acrobatic player Angelo puts his entertaining talents to very good use. Red Fox, £5.99, 978 1 849 41046 5. Quentin’s distinctly joyful picturing also adorns the story of *The Bear’s Water Picnic* (69) by John Yeoman. The noise of frogs disturbs the peace but then in a crisis it is these same creatures who save the day and the picnic, and friendships, are restored. Andersen, £5.99, 978 1 84939 004 0.

Another classic name in illustration is that of Michael Foreman, *Dinosaur Time* (02) has Tom transported by a kitchen timer into prehistory and most of the dinosaurs are not at all friendly. But all turns out safely and with some touching understanding too. Andersen, £5.99, 978 1 84939 047 7.

A number of paperback picture books featuring small girls have arrived together. Another splendid Daisy episode comes from Kes Gray and Nick Sharratt in *You Do!* (03) as irascible Daisy again explains home truths to her Mum. This charming story is also told on an attached CD read by Jenny Eclair. Red Fox, £6.99, 978 1 862 30662 2. Another lively youngster appears in *Don’t Dip Your Chips in Your Drink, Kate!* (09) by Caryl Hart and Leigh Hodgkinson. A multitude of text devices emphasise the action as Kate’s manners get a sudden lesson when she goes for tea with the Queen. Orchard, £5.99, 978 1 40830 498 3. Red Fox have published an absolute plethora of books of the gentle island based stories about the delightful lass Katie Morag, altogether a lovely creation from Mairi Hedderwick. Titles and formats vary from four complete picture books combined into *More Katie Morag Island Stories*. £9.99, 978 1 849 41090 8, to individual books such as *Katie Morag Delivers the Mail* (94) when the muddled up mail is sorted and delivered by tractor with the aid of Katie and, of course, Grannie Island. £5.99, 978 1 849 41091 5. Suzy Sue and her animal friends reappear in *Atchoo!* (09) by MJ Kelly and Mary McQuillan. Here Sue learns how it would be so much kinder towards her friends if she’d bother to use a hanky, basic essentials of a guide to life in picture-book form. Hodder, £5.99, 978 0 340 94526 1.
The Fantastic Galactic Construction Kit

On Christmas morning, Philip King receives an unexpected and mysterious gift, a cabinet full of ivory building bricks and an instruction manual with a mind of its own. Can it really, as it says, bring models to life? He and his new friends find out in exciting, dangerous and wonderful ways. Life returns to Philip and his father in this vivid adventure for children aged 9 and over.

Author: Sarah Lee Hope   Published: 10-10-10

Unusual fiction for adventurous readers!
www.hawkwoodbooks.co.uk
not a book to be read once only, but one to be turned back to many times — there is always something else begging to be noticed. And just as you think the story is over, Montana springs one more surprise on the reader! This book is well worth poring over and sharing, and will be equally at home in the classroom or library or wherever.

Rudolf Loewenstein OP

Murray, Alison

Apple Pie ABC

Orchard, 2010, pp32, £10.99
978 1 40830 801 1

A first picture book from this writer/illustrator, this is more of a story than a traditional ABC, thus creating many talking points to share with a young child. A little girl bakes an apple pie, which her dog is determined to share. (In the end of course he does!)

The page layout is uncluttered with minimal use of words, which lets the illustrations speak for themselves. The style has a retro 1970s feel with flat clearly drawn shapes using a limited range of matt colour and minimal shading.

Very enjoyable for both the reader and their recipient!

Dianne Southcombe

Myron, Vicki and Witter, Bret with James, Steve

Dewey: There’s a Cat in the Library!

978 1 84738 814 8

Based on a true story, a small marmalade kitten arrives in the return box of the library in Spencer, Iowa, USA, one cold winter night. Adopted by librarian Vicki Myron and affectionately named Dewey Readmore Books, he quickly establishes himself as the library cat. Dewey’s playfulness, inquisitiveness and affectionate nature win him friends throughout the establishment. Dewey is particularly popular with the library’s youngest visitors and seems to have a natural gift of empathy for those who need encouragement. The therapeutic advantage of animals in social centres is well-known and the real-life Dewey spent 16 happy years in Spencer Public Library.

The attractive full colour illustrations have a photographic quality while the children reflect a variety of backgrounds. Paw print end papers are well-matched to this heart-warming story. A slightly retro cover doesn’t do justice to the story. The observation that Dewey ‘read with the mummies and grandmas [and] helped the daddies work’ may well be true but could be interpreted as gender stereotyping in a 21st century library.

Nonetheless this is an endearing read which will appeal to children under eight and librarians/cat-lovers of all ages.

Rosemary Woodman

Naidoo, Beverley and Das, Prodeepa

S is for South Africa

978 1 84780 018 3

The timing of this book is excellent with children being intrigued and fascinated by South Africa due to the FIFA World Cup. It is a beautiful alphabet book with a real difference and is packed full of photographs and informative text.

For example: ‘Nn is for Ndebele house painting, taught by mother to daughter. No rulers for straight lines needed here! How skilfully hand and eye show land and sky and secret signs unknown to passers-by.’

Children will come away from this book with an appreciation for the landscape and culture of South Africa. It stands alone but it is also a welcome addition to the highly acclaimed World Alphabet Series. It carefully deals with such subjects as apartheid and promotes a positive vision for the future. A welcome addition to any library

Rebecca Chappell

Newton, Jill

Crash Bang Donkey!

Gullane, 2010, pp32, £10.99
978 1 86233 720 6

Aimed at 3 to 6-year-olds, this large-format picture-story book, impressively illustrated by the author with a kind of humorous extravagance, tells the tale of a donkey who makes music with a wide range of instruments. He disturbs other animals. He deeply irritates Farmer Gruff. It may well be that some of the youngest readers may be less than familiar with the few ‘jazzy’ language elements within the text. However, that said, the youngsters who are lucky enough to meet the book will see that the donkey’s skills are eventually put to a purpose that Farmer Gruff readily welcomes.

Trevor Dickinson

Rayner, Catherine

Norris: The Bear Who Shared

Orchard, 2010, pp32, £10.99
978 1 84616 308 1

A new picture book from Catherine Rayner must always now be an event. She firmly established her position among our leading young illustrators with the Greenaway award for Harris Finds His Feet. Earlier her tiger Augustus and his search for his lost smile won the hearts of many young readers. Norris, the bear, can safely join that pantheon of charming animals. He is a sentimental old fellow and despite his great patience in waiting for his favourite fruit - a plorringer - to fall from the tree, he is still prepared to share its deliciousness with two small animals who have been waiting a little less patiently. He knows, and the artistry suggests he is a knowing old bear, that sharing helps to create friendships.

The story will make a great bedtime read.

New Editions continued

The name of Satoshi Kitamura on a book is now synonymous with expectations of an unusual treat and Millie’s Marvellous Hat (09) is just that. Whatever head-wear Millie adopts, and some are fabulous, appears to influence, and be influenced by, her immediate surroundings which then in turn starts off a fashionable trend, brilliant. Andersen, £5.99, 978 1 84270 948 1.

The Koala-like cuddly toy Arthur is the very special comfort and joy of Bella so Bedtime Without Arthur (09) threatens to be a disaster with good dreams banished and only monstrous possibilities to intrude, but all ends with peace in this lovely book by Jessica Meserve. Andersen, £5.99, 978 1 84270 943 6. Have You Ever Seen a Sneep? (09) by Tasha Pym and Joel Stewart also has such fun spoilers as a Snock, a Grullock and even a Knoo in a gentle rhyming amusement. Picture Corgi, £5.99, 978 0 552 55698 9. A cautionary tale is Super Dooper Jezebel (09) by Tony Ross; a perfect in every way small girl, surrounded by misbehaviours to delight readers, finally gets her come-uppance. Andersen, £5.99, 978 1 84939 016 3.

Best friends, identical in tastes except in terms of trepidation are quirky dog and cat couple Bella and Monty: A Hairy Scary Night (09) by Alex T. Smith. One friend guides the other through all night-time fears and even phobia of a classroom spider. Hodder, £5.99, 978 0 340 95984 8. A rhyming text and humorous pictures make for great amusement, and a terrific readaloud, in Crocodiles Are the Best Animals of All! (09) by Sean Taylor and Hannah Shaw as crocodile tries to show that anything they can do he can do better. Frances Lincoln, £6.99, 978 1 84780 132 6.
At LFC you’ll find a great range of products to help improve literacy skills and let children enjoy reading and writing again. Along with an expanded range of learning essentials our 2010 Annual features exclusive ranges of high quality specialist children’s library furniture to create inspiring learning environments for children of all ages, whatever your budget.

Call us Today on 08458 506507 for Your FREE copy alternatively view and order on-line www.LFCcatalogue.co.uk

Great fiction for all ages from Templar Publishing

To download chapters and for a free sampler book of Templar’s new fiction, visit wwwtemplarco.co.uk/fiction

Make the Learning Experience more Fun and Rewarding

Promote a love of reading

At LFC you’ll find a great range of products to help improve literacy skills and let children enjoy reading and writing again. Along with an expanded range of learning essentials our 2010 Annual features exclusive ranges of high quality specialist children’s library furniture to create inspiring learning environments for children of all ages, whatever your budget.

Innovative Solutions
1st Class Service
No-Quibble Guarantee

Call us Today on 08458 506507 for Your FREE copy alternatively view and order on-line www.LFCcatalogue.co.uk

Templar Publishing

To download chapters and for a free sampler book of Templar’s new fiction, visit wwwtemplarco.co.uk/fiction

Templar Publishing

www.templarco.co.uk

Great fiction
for all ages
from Templar Publishing

Make the Learning Experience
more Fun and Rewarding

Promote a love of reading

At LFC you’ll find a great range of products to help improve literacy skills and let children enjoy reading and writing again. Along with an expanded range of learning essentials our 2010 Annual features exclusive ranges of high quality specialist children’s library furniture to create inspiring learning environments for children of all ages, whatever your budget.

Innovative Solutions
1st Class Service
No-Quibble Guarantee

Call us Today on 08458 506507 for Your FREE copy alternatively view and order on-line www.LFCcatalogue.co.uk

Templar Publishing

www.templarco.co.uk

Great fiction
for all ages
from Templar Publishing
short enough to be read twice and then talked about. The book is for very young children but many in the reception class will enjoy hearing about Norris and his ploring and, perhaps, want to think and talk about the original illustrations. Catherine Rayner’s illustrations will always intrigue, sometimes even puzzle, but children will respond to them enthusiastically, especially with a good storyline. Her illustrative work is strong enough to carry a book but it should be remembered that a wholly successful picture book also needs an absorbing and strong text.

Michael Holloway

Rickards, Lynne and Wildish, Lee
Jacob O’Reilly Wants a Pet
 Hodder, 2010, pp32, £10.99
978 0 340 98838 1

Jake, like many a child we have all come across, is desperate to own a pet. He tries every trick in the book to persuade his parents to comply. He is very flexible, it has to be said, willing to consider anything – a cat, a dog, a hamster, a gerbil, a mouse, an iguana, (and getting more outrageous as his desperation increases,) an emu and even a walrus! His parents are not for turning, however, and come up with a wily solution of their own: a pet-sitting service. After two weeks of caring for a python, some donkeys, some sheep, a horse, a zebra, some rabbits, hares, and goodness knows what else, Jake is more than happy to settle for a nice slow snail! The endpapers alone will lend themselves to hours of poring over and every page encourages close attention with lots to absorb and discuss. The text is written in rhyme with a recurring refrain and youngsters will be eager to join in after a few readings. This book will be a welcome addition for a project on pets and will appeal not only to Nursery and KS1 but lower KS2 as well.

Angela Redfern

Souhami, Jessica
The Sticky Doll Trap
978 1 8478 0017 6

This is a delightful picture book story of a cunning hare who tricks and out manoeuvres the monkey, the hyena, the hog and the leopard. It is a skilful retelling of a West African tale, upon which the Uncle Remus Brer Rabbit story was based. The retelling of a West African tale, upon which the hyena, the hog and the leopard. It is a skilful

Stanley, Malaika Rose and Wilson-Max, Ken
Baby Ruby Bawled
Tamarind, 2010, pp24, £5.99
978 1 848 53017 1

A humorous and tender family story with special parent appeal: a daily drama played out so often in real life. Yes, Ruby is one of those babies who won’t sleep and who certainly don’t want to be put to bed, so she cries non-stop. The whole family is called in one after the other to try to get Ruby to go to sleep – Mum, Dad, Nana, Grandad, Uncle Clyde, even a doctor, but to no avail. You name it, they have tried it – Ruby has been bathed, fed, driven around in the car, walked round the garden, rocked and played with until brother Theo has had enough. He makes up a song of his own to lull her to sleep. Of course, readers are expecting him to do the trick but… oh no, everyone else falls asleep exhausted while Ruby lies awake taking it all in. The large, bold illustrations in strong colours are simple yet striking and suit the text well. Nursery and KS1 children will love it.

Angela Redfern

Stewart, Joel
Dexter Bexley and the Big Blue Beastie on the Road
978 0 385 61772 7

Dexter Bexley and the Big Blue Beastie return for a second instalment of their adventures. The most unlikely pair are, this time, on the road. This is a glorious story packed full of colour and humour in both the text and full-page, full-colour illustration. Dexter and the Beastie have been thrown out of town because their hooting is keeping everyone awake. They love their hooting and can’t stop because they are not sleepy and well, there is just ‘so much hooting to do.’ Venturing into the deep dark forest they soon stumble on an adventure. Firstly they have to wake a beautiful princess from her slumber then they must hunt down and slay a ‘frightful dragon.’ Never afraid of the challenge an unlikely team of Dexter, the Beastie and the princess set off in search of adventure and what turns out to be a tap dancing dragon. Packed full of humour and unlikely exploits, this is a charming take on fairytales. Packed with fun and lots of hooting, it is a perfectly surprising bedtime story for reading to young children. Older, independent readers will enjoy the way in which spoken word and narrative text have been separated – spoken text is in speech bubbles and the narrative is used as a supportive text. Much of the additional information, is, as one would expect from any picture book author and illustrator to be found in the glorious page-filling illustrations.

Louis Ellis-Butter

Walton, Ruth
Let’s Bake a Cake (Let’s Find Out)
978 0 7496 8854 7

This is a recipe book with a difference; it ends with the recipe for the cake but rather than filling the pages with a wealth of recipes for different cakes it describes each ingredient. Sugar, Eggs, Cocoa, Flour, Butter are each explained in such a way that the child will learn where they come from and what processes are required before they can be added to the mixture. Some history of the ingredients, the concept of Fairtrade and many other issues are included in this clever book. It is lavishly illustrated in an engaging manner and would intrigue a girl browsing in the school library during a rainy playtime, could be a valuable tool for a motivated parent to use with her child but is not designed to be a text for a food lesson. The glossary is as thorough as one expects from Franklin Watts, who deserve their place as a respected and consistent producer of information texts.

Nick Hunt

Wood, Douglas and Pham, LeUyen
Aunt Mary’s Rose
978 0 7636 1090 6

Aunt Mary’s Rose is based on the life changing moments of the author himself. Being from Minnesota, there are a number of Americanisms which may need explanation such as ‘fawcett’, ‘Band Aid’ and ‘jelly’. Douglas whilst at his Aunt’s house is asked to look after the rose bush so that he can become part of it and it part of him. Douglas struggles to understand this concept so his Aunt recalls childhood memories in order to explain. She reminisces about their family, its joys and sorrows over the years and how each person’s tending of the rose bush makes her feel closer to them, even though they are no longer here. Despite its uplifting ending I can’t help but feel that this is a very sad and moving story, however, I do believe it contains some useful lessons about coping with loss. It is beautifully written and has a gentle soothing pace which is complimented by the subtle illustrations of Pham. The book would be suitable for KS1 and 2 but it does touch on some tricky themes for younger readers/listeners such as adoption, death and war, which may need explanation.

Elizabeth Baskeyfield

Help us to keep your membership details up to date – please email any change of address or other contact information to: membership@sla.org.uk
**8 to 12 Fiction**

**Barker, Dominic**  
*Adam and the Arkonauts*  
Bloomsbury, 2010, pp313, £5.99  
978 1 4088 0025 6

Never having known his mother, who was abducted by the evil Professor Scabellax ten years before, Adam has searched the world for her in the company of his father, Doctor Will Forest, on their yacht, The Ark of the Parabola. They have found their way to Buenos Sueños, the most isolated Southern American city on earth, whose citizens are noted for their siestas and where every member of the police force appears to be called Grivas (a name shared with the undertakers).

Adam and his father speak Animal fluently, and their crew of animals, the Arkonauts, include among others Sima the spider monkey who argues against Darwinism, Malibu the cat constantly catching up on his wins of sleep, who has undergone the Twelve Paw Programme of therapy, and Vlad the vampire bat who flies around in a sombrero during the day.

Inevitably, Doctor Dottilet springs to mind, but a story that has its villain appearing on page 5 dressed in an immaculately pressed brown suit, in the middle of the Amazonian jungle, suggests a certain nonchalant originality.

This tall tale continues in similar vein, with numerous running jokes – the SAS (Special Ant Services), with its single conscientious objector, is a delight – contributing to the fun and the momentum of the action.

Professor Scabellax with his plans for world domination by means of this Dreadful Alarm which keeps people awake until they become zombies performing the Hokey Cokey to order is a mountain reminiscent of one of the Bond films.

All told, the complete conviction with which the story is told, its zany logic, the swift-moving series of events and convoluted comic dialogue should appeal to any reader with a sense of the ridiculous – this reader was laughing – and the open ending suggests that a sequel might follow.

Peter Andrews

**Barlow, Steve and Skidmore, Steve**  
*Return to the Lost World*  
Usborne, 2010, pp312, £5.99  
978 1 4095 2017 7

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s story of an expedition to an inaccessible South American plateau where dinosaurs are still living is given a sequel in this action-packed adventure, in which Professor Challenger’s 14-year-old grandson Luke returns to the lost world his grandfather discovered. With echoes of Alex Rider, and set in 1933, the book sees Luke and his best friend Nick come up against a murderous secret society which plans to take over the world, and which is exploiting the diamonds found on the plateau, enslaving its native Indians to work the mine.

Luke is a hero who will appeal especially to boys, and they will also appreciate the blood-and-guts plot (particularly when the dinosaurs attack!).

Gerry McSourley

**Beardsley, Martyn**  
*Black Death*  
Illustrated by Martin Remphry  
Barrington Stoke (FYI), 2010, pp60, £5.99  
978 1 84299 765 9

The cover of this Barrington Stoke book states that it is ‘fiction with stacks of facts’ and indeed there is plenty of information included in this story of orphans Will and Anne. When the Black Death comes to their village, people blame the sailors newly arrived from France – of whom Will is one. Cast out by their uncle and aunt and driven out of the nearby town, they wander the countryside looking for safety before being taken in by a kindly old farmer and his wife. The story is slight – the book is less than 60 pages long – but it works well to convey the basic facts about the Black Death without the information getting in the way of the narrative. For instance the symptoms of the disease are listed breathlessly and with salacious delight by a small boy. The superstition and fear of the villagers is shown in their dialogue without too much explanation, and the book does not gloss over the serious nature of its topic.

The illustrations are in familiar cartoon style yet the period detail is accurate and they often add to the information in the story. On one page, Anne is referred to as playing with a cup and ball and the accompanying illustration makes it perfectly clear what this is without need for further detail in the text. At the end of the book a section of Black Death Facts expands on the information contained in the story and goes into a little more detail about Black Death in Europe. A useful addition to the primary school library.

Lesley Martin

**Binch, Caroline**  
*Road Horse*  
Frances Lincoln, 2010, pp159, £5.99  
978 1 84780 070 1

Sammy is the member of a traveller family whose father races trotting horses. It is Sammy’s greatest dream to own a horse of his own, but he does not think it will ever happen, until his father announces that they are going to attend Appleby Fair; the greatest horse fair in the country.

This is the story of the journey to the event, the people they meet, the prejudice they encounter and the fair itself.

Caroline Binch has written a charming story explaining some of the historic ways of travelling families. It is well illustrated by Caroline herself and the pictures complement the story throughout. It is unfortunate that the text itself takes a while to flow. The first few chapters feel quite stilted and the message seems to be overwhelming the story. However it does eventually settle and we get a vivid picture of the excitement of the fair.

This book works well, not just as a good story, but also because it reflects the culture of a small ethnic community in this country. It can act as a source of discussion and is a welcome addition to the small number of books dealing with travelling families. The book is aimed at KS2, but will work with able younger readers as well as those further up the school.

Margaret Pemberton

**Brown, Kate**  
*The Spider Moon – Book 1*  
978 0 385 61827 4

Here is a graphic style tale originally published as episodes in the DFC Comic. The story is good and the illustrations, frames and pages are extremely well created. A girl from a doomed island race gains her diving permit, whilst returning from one such expedition she finds her parents have been taken on board a transport ship to a distant Kingdom. Using ingenuity she stows away, infiltrates the palace, finds an unexpected ally and tries to discover what is going on. Just as they are in position and beginning to over hear they are captured in mid-

And that’s it! It stops! The fact that the story and artwork are really well done promoting enjoyment, interest and involvement makes the stop, the wholly unexpected stop with nothing at all resolved, all the more of a let down. Yes it is clearly ‘Book 1’ but by convention any such book has some resolution whilst leaving matters to re-

Chris Brown
This is a delightful story which will really make you smile. It’s an adventure story with a bit of a twist and a great example of how geography can be combined with literacy. A group of bats take on a mercy mission to help a poor lonely Fruit Bat called Freddy who wakes to find himself in chilly Cardiff after falling asleep in a crate of bananas aboard a ship in sunny St Lucia. They help him to fly the length of Wales, passing sights such as Castell Coch, The Royal Welsh Showground, Cadair Idris and the Menai Strait on the way so that he can catch a ship home. This book is a must if you live in Wales but also perfect if you want to do some research on another place in the United Kingdom. The author was inspired to write this book because she was fed up with the negative press that bats receive. She wanted to show to the children through her story that bats are often found in tight knit, loveable family groups and she certainly achieves this. Witty line drawings from illustrator Nicola Robinson, make the book a very enjoyable and accessible read for children just starting out on chapter books.

Rebecca Chappell

Davies, Corinne

Ralph is (not) a Superhero
Illustrated by El Ashfield
978 0 9556905 1 8

‘... everyone’s a superhero – in their own special way. It’s how we choose to USE our powers, that guides us on our way!’

Ralph avoids attention by sitting quietly reading. His other serious interest is playing chess. However this peaceful existence is disrupted by a series of incidents which lead his classmates and eventually, adults as well, to believe that he has special powers. The story is told in verse which is most imaginatively laid out sometimes swirling across the page in a great flourish, at others presented in butterfly-shaped verses before returning to more conventional arrangements. Ralph’s superhero experiences, ranging from cat rescue to preventing a bank robbery, are brilliantly illustrated by El Ashfield and complement the text with gusto! This is such a fun book with an uplifting message for those of us who feel we don’t quite fit in. Ralph is likely to be a popular character and this has to be a highly recommended junior school read.

Mary Crawford

Deary, Terry

Put Out the Light
978 1 4081 3054 4

This is a thrilling tale following the adventures of two groups of children during World War II. This is a really substantial book which is a great example of history combining with literacy. Set in 1940 in war-torn Sheffield, a brother and sister set out to solve the mysteries of the air raid signals. Meanwhile in Dachau, Germany two boys come up with a bold plan to bring an end to the war and help a Polish prisoner escape. As the reality of war strikes the children’s adventures become quite terrifying as they fight to stay alive. Every chapter is a history lesson with the author paying great attention to detail leaving the children feeling that they are experiencing the war first hand.

Rebecca Chappell

Doyle, Malachy

The Lambton Curse
Illustrated by Dylan Gibson
Barrington Stoke, 2010, pp50, £5.99
978 1 84299 757 4

Young Lambton (even when he is an adult he is still referred to as Young Lambton!) is a rude, selfish boy who decides to go fishing one Sunday instead of going to Church. When he pulls the Worm of the Wild from the river, he brings a curse onto his family. He cannot get rid of the Worm back into the river so throws it into the well and leaves hoping the curse is left behind also. But the Worm grows and feeds on livestock until the whole village is destroyed. Even several knights who try and kill the Worm are unsuccessful. Finally, young Lambton returns having found out how to kill it, part of which involves killing the first thing he sees after he has attacked the Worm. Unfortunately that is his father...

This old folk tale is a strange mixture in this telling as it is set on an estate with a Lord of the Manor and knights, a lifestyle that most children may not be able to identify with and yet they will find it a very scary story. The Worm seems frighteningly real, especially as the text has some wonderful black and white graphic illustrations. Published by Barrington Stoke under their ‘Reloaded’ series, this would make a good addition to the quick read section of the library.

Barbara Band

Duncan, Charlie

Gastronimus and the Legend of Mr Grrrrumbleum
978 0 9562 6781 8

‘Food is the most SCRIDDLY fun you can have without turning into a PUMPKIN’.

Gastronimus the chef from outer space lands on earth accompanied by his sidekick, Scrumlix, the diner-saur. After being buried in a snow drift, they are rescued by the earth creatures (humans) Jack and Yooki. A frantic series of adventures follows as Gastronimus battles against the wicked Mr Grrrrumbleum and his army of Grrrrumble Brats. All Mr Grrrrumbleum needs is the Recipe for Disaster which will make the world so hot ‘it will become Fondu de Terre’. The book begins with Starters and, 27 short courses later, concludes with Desserts. The substantial appendix entitled ‘Recipes for a Happy Planet’ lists recipes annotated with star alerts for the evil ingredients: sugar, salt and bad fats. The humorous tone aids digestion of the healthy eating message fundamental to the story. This is a fun book, ideal for reading aloud or for young confident readers:

a recommended addition to the junior library.

Mary Crawford

Forward, Toby

Dragonborn (The Flaxfield Quartet)
978 1 4063 2043 5

This is the first in a quartet and features the young hero Sam and his fight against the evil which seems to follow him. Sam had been apprenticed to a powerful magician called Flaxfield, but when the latter dies, Sam has to deal with the consequences, in a world where enemies see the chance to extend their own evil magic. He is forced to stop being an apprentice and start his role as a magician, even though he is not convinced of his power. The dragon of the title is Sam’s pet Starback, but even this relationship is put under pressure by the circumstances they find surrounding them.

This is a complex fantasy story full of many twists and turns. As the first part of a series it spends time introducing the cast of characters and this can become slightly confusing at times. It is a book for the serious aficionado of the genre rather than the casual reader as it twists and turns through the storyline. There is an interesting layout to the book as the narrative text is broken turns through the storyline. There is an interesting layout to the book as the narrative text is broken

Margaret Pemberton
about their lives and as their lives begin to intertwine Andi and Bernado become a part of our own life, we live their hopes and dreams, their anguish and upset. Most of all we enjoy their story. A brilliant book.

Louise Ellis-Barrett

Guarnaccia, Steven

The Three Little Pigs: An Architectural Tale

978 0 8109 8941 2

What a terrific re-telling of the age-old folk tale we have here, one to be welcomed with open arms. We have had numerous books over the years celebrating famous artists, hoping to inform and to encourage young artists of the future, but architecture has remained something of a Cinderella subject… until now. Here, for the first time as far as I know, the world of architecture and design has been highlighted in the same way. Clothing it in a well-known tale makes this book the perfect introduction for children to the field. Fittingly, it is published on smooth, silky paper with the endpapers showing the work of each famous architect featured inside. Quite a sophisticated idea, but it works brilliantly. These days, Primary school children have heard of Picasso and Van Gogh so why not of Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Frank Gehry et al. At Nursery and KS1, it works as an interesting new version of the Cinderella tale. A dangerous old god has emerged and the reader has doubts to win through. Red Fox, £5.99, 978 1 862 30352 2. A murder mystery and intrigue which takes three children from their home Hilltop Farm to Paris makes a story for family loyalties and relationships at the core in The Secret (08) by Ellis J. Delmonte. Hawkwood Books, £6.99, 978 0 9555096 2 9.

Follyfoot (71) is the Monica Dickens favourite, a classic of horsemanship, reissued thankfully without any text tinkering and with an eye-catching photo cover. The story is set in a home for discarded horses with three young stablehands and a couple of villains to disturb the equilibrium of the everyday equine details. Andersen, £4.99, 978 0 9555096 2 9.

The Werewolf and the Ibis (07) is a story about Stanley Buggles from Chris Mould’s ‘Something Wickedly Weird’ series. A seaside summer holiday seems ordinary but not in a place with three-legged dogs and with werewolves and pirates looming on the horizon, copious drawings by the author adorn the pages. Hodder, £4.99, 978 0 340 93102 8.

Another series – Charlie Bone and the Red Knight (09) is the eighth and final of these fantasies by Jenny Nimmo. These books have built up a large readership by their consistently high standards of plotting with adventure and thrills. Egmont, £5.99, 978 1 4052 4960 7. A couple of Ian Ogilvy’s ‘Measle Stubbs’ books are re-titled for new editions. So ‘Measle and the Wraithmonk’
(04) is now The Train Set of Terror and ‘Measle and the Dragodon’ (also 04) has become The Funfair of Fear! They remain thoroughly enjoyable romps, crazily delightful and with particular reader-friendly boy-appeal. Oxford, £5.99 each, 978 0 19 272970 5, 978 0 19 272971 2.

Lauren St John’s distinctive series of stories set amidst African wildlife continues with a fourth book The Elephant’s Tale (09). School holidays, the nature reserve and an ominous threat of repossession to challenge everything worthwhile; classic elements with a contemporary conservation awareness. Orion, £6.99, 978 1 84939 116 0.

The first three of Sophie Smiley’s delightful family and footie stories about Bobby and Charlie (from 03 – 07) appear as a 3 in 1 book Football Fever. Charlie is a girl and Bobby has special qualities which need care and attention giving these tales far broader appeal than for football fans alone and the large print size, Michael Foreman drawings, cracking characterisations and stories make this perfectly inviting to either competent or less confident readers. Andersen, £5.99, 978 1 84939 116 0.

G. P. Taylor’s Mariah Mundi and the Ship of Fools (09) has Mariah stalked by an assassin besides racing across the Atlantic in this third fantasy adventure. Thrills, spills and cliffhangers abound in a non-stop adrenalin rush for aficionados. Faber, £6.99, 978 0 571 25188 9.

Kevin Crossley-Holland contributes the introduction to another splendid, and very useful historical facts. This is a fast moving story with chapters that work out how to work out how to become popular girls. This scrapbook style notebook/graphic novel is a record of their research and observations on how to achieve that goal. The hilarious and heart-rending complications that beset them nearly destroy their relationship but do lead them to explore the real meaning of friendship. Debut author/illustrator Amy Ignatow has written a journal with full colour illustrations on every page. Two distinctive handwriting style fonts lend an extra note of authenticity to the diary. This entertaining and insightful look at the dynamics of American pre-adolescence is reminiscent in part of Jacqueline Wilson and Oprah Winfrey. Lydia’s single mom and Julie’s two dads are supportive if sometimes perplexed parents. The American setting and spellings may be distracting for some readers. But the themes addressed are universal to tweens on both sides of the Atlantic and should particularly appeal to girls of 9+.

Ibbotson, Eva
The Ogre of Ogletfort
978 0 230 74647 3
Eva Ibbotson tells a story of things not being what they seem. How an unknown place is feared until it is visited and then found to have much that is familiar and attractive. How an ogre can be dreads as a loathsome and flesh eating monster with a nasty way with princesses, until we discern he may be just a distant cousin of Shrek and has all kinds of interesting foibles. How wizards, trolls and hags are really quite humane when you get to know them. Those traditional heroes, the princes, on the other hand are found to be weak and self-seeking with laddish tendencies that arouse little admiration in the eyes of the story’s princess, Mirella.

There are a large number of characters to be introduced early in the novel and consequently it is some time before our assembled motley band from the Boarding House of Unusual People together with Ivo, a human orphan from the Riverdene Home for Children in Need, begin their journey to menacing Ostland to rescue Mirella from the Ogre. This is the Summer Task, an annual event, set for the Unusual People by some strange apparitions known as the Norns, the Old Ones, who apparently, must be obeyed. Once in Ostland we are drawn into a faster moving story of adventure and magic. There are many strands to follow and there is a hierarchy of magic to interpret and some dangerous moments with the Ogre’s evil sisters. It all concludes well enough and the unlikely group create a commune where they grow their food and tend their chickens and all is peaceful. The Ogre decides he can go on a cruise and leave them to care for his castle.

It is difficult for the reader to identify with the characters. It is not just their oddness, it is that there are so many of them. I am uncertain also about the turning upside down of European folklore and traditional fairy tales in order to extract humour. There is much humanity to be admired in Eva Ibbotson’s writing but it is important not to forget the more serious cultural role played by enchantment.

Michael Holloway

Ignatow, Amy
The Popularity Papers: Research for the Social Improvement and General Betterment of Lydia Goldblatt and Julie Graham-Chang
Illustrated by the author
978 0 8109 8421 9
Eleven-year-old Lydia Goldblatt and Julie Graham-Chang have been best friends for nearly all of their lives. With middle school looming they have one mission in mind — to work out how to become popular girls. This scrapbook style notebook/graphic novel is a record of their research and observations on how to achieve that goal. The hilarious and heart-rending complications that beset them nearly destroy their relationship but do lead them to explore the real meaning of friendship.

Debut author/illustrator Amy Ignatow has written a journal with full colour illustrations on every page. Two distinctive handwriting style fonts lend an extra note of authenticity to the diary. This entertaining and insightful look at the dynamics of American pre-adolescence is reminiscent in part of Jacqueline Wilson and Oprah Winfrey. Lydia’s single mom and Julie’s two dads are supportive if sometimes perplexed parents. The American setting and spellings may be distracting for some readers. But the themes addressed are universal to tweens on both sides of the Atlantic and should particularly appeal to girls of 9+.

Johnson, Pete
The Vampire Blog
Corgi Yearling, 2010, pp230, £4.99
978 0 440 86935 1
As vampires are in vogue this book will undoubtedly be popular with the upper primary/lower secondary school age group. It is not the usual type of vampire story though, it is light-hearted with plenty of humour and it lacks the usual darkness although there is great tension towards the end. There are also a few scenes which are sufficiently disgusting to be deemed ‘yucky’. The most unusual aspect is, however, that it chiefly concerns half-vampires. It is not easy to identify half-vampires as outwardly they appear to be perfectly ordinary humans just like the parents of the protagonist, Marcus. It comes as a great shock to him as he reaches his thirteenth birthday to be told that not only are his parents half-vampires but he will soon become one. He is horrified about this so he secretly blogs about the changes taking place in his body – his two fangs, his bad breath and his overwhelming hunger for blood. He begins to fight against the changes, not realising his life is in grave danger. Once again award winning Pete Johnson has produced an accessible, amusing and enjoyable story.

Audrey Baker
In Seven Sorcerers, Caro King showed her skill and inventiveness in creating a panoply of strange animals and beasts, inhabiting a complex fantasy world. This is the sequel, which shows many similar strengths, but it may possibly confuse the 8+ year-olds at which it is aimed because of the intricacy of created world. In many ways, Shadow Spell is a traditional tale of good against evil, light against darkness. The Land of Drift is threatened by the evil Mr Strood and can only be saved by the Sorcerer Simeon Dark; it is Ninevah Redstone’s quest to find him.

This book will not appeal to everyone, but for those who like their myth and magic ladled on in enjoyable doses, it is strongly recommended. The Land of Drift is an ideal setting, with the elephant on page 2 is reminiscent of that episode. The unpleasantness exceeded that even of a Midsomer Murders single.

**Landman, Tanya**

**The Scents of Blood**


978 1 4063 2371 9

Poppy Fields and her side-kick, Graham, are involved in their seventh case—a series of murders at Fairleigh Manor zoo park: the body count—nine if I got it correct—exceeded that even of a Midsomer Murders single episode. The unpleasantness with the elephant on page 2 is reminiscent of that of Ham’s accident in Rosemary Harris’s *Moon in the Cloud*, although told less elegantly.

The intrepid Holmes and her Watson, a mine of information at crucial points in the story, are spending a prize weekend at Fairleigh Manor and its hotel: Poppy’s mother is there with a friend for the luxury relaxation. A series of brutal murders involving various animals disrupts proceedings, apparently in revenge for the death of “S.M.”, presumably a keeper who died during the previous year. The deaths, including that of the owner, don’t result in the cancellation of the holiday weekend, however, which leaves Poppy and Graham free to pursue their enquiries, even though the zoo is closed at one stage.

Sparky dialogue mixed with cynical observations—the comment on the zoo staff’s ability to ignore the public is suitably ironic—will amuse readers, while the elimination of various suspects will spur them on to identify the criminal before Poppy and Graham are cornered by the culprit. The flaw with the zoo is closed at one stage.

Highly decorative borders surround but don’t flow over the borders into the surrounding spaces. The twins look as if they might have escaped from one of Ronald Searle’s heavily patterned, and the endpages are one of one of Ronald Searle’s heavily patterned.

Rights activists don’t come out of the case with too much credit, while the fact that wild animals are dangerous and not domestic pets is usefully and unsentimentally stressed.

**Peter Andrews**

**Lane, Andrew**

**Young Sherlock Holmes: Death Cloud**


978 0 330 51198 8

The ‘prequel’, for want of a better description, is fast becoming a popular genre, especially following the deserved success of Charlie Higson’s *Young Bond* series. Andrew Lane has created a fourteen-year-old Sherlock Holmes with, as we are told, the authorization of the Conan Doyle Estate Ltd. Whilst not matching Higson’s skill and literary élan, Lane has produced a creative and inventive story which will probably appeal to rising teenage readers.

The young Sherlock is forced to spend a potentially boring and tedious summer holidays in Farham with his ageing and taciturn uncle. Things look up when Amyus Crowe, an eccentric American with a pretty young daughter, is appointed as his tutor and he also meets Matty, an orphaned youngster who owns a canal barge. Between them they manage to foil the plot of Baron Maupertuis, who aimed to destroy the British Army with a strain of killer bees.

Whilst Lane ensures that we have plenty of examples of the ‘deductive process’, this is not really Sherlock Holmes as we know him. There are kidnaps, abductions, druggings and all manner of violence—and both Sherlock and Matty murder someone. Not quite cricket. The evil Baron is thwarted, but he lives on, giving ample opportunity for the sequel to the prequel.

**Robin Barlow**

**MacDonald, Alan**

**Oi, Caveboy! (Iggy the Urk)**

Illustrated by Mark Beech

Bloomsbury, 2010, pp192, £4.99

978 1 4088 0334 9

This is the first of a new series of stone age adventure stories. Iggy likes messing around and inventing things such as ‘scootboards’—his own, Neanderthal skateboard. He is faced with a hunting initiation ritual in a snake pit, but his enemy, the evil Borg, has tampered with the test. Iggy faces a series of dangers and escapades, as he embarks on a quest. He travels through the Farlands where the Nonecks live to find the Stankwort plant that will heal his uncle. Only Iggy can save the tribe from the dastardly Borg’s attempt to become chief. There is lots of lively dialogue, an entertaining stone age dialect and lovely invented words. The text is simple and accessible, perfect for independent readers gaining confidence. The use of sounds—‘whump’, ‘clug’, ‘thlluuuu’, etc.—captures some of the fun and slapstick of a comic. Jokes and puns, tribes and catapults, abound and will appeal to young readers. There are some great comic descriptions, such as ‘He looked like death, only dirtier.’ Mark Beech’s scratchy, energetic, expressive ink drawings work brilliantly with the story, adding to the humour. The combination of words and pictures will be much enjoyed; a great addition to a school library.

**Sophie Smiley**

**Mitton, Tony, and Warburton, Sarah**

**Sir Laughalot**

Orchard, 2010, pp32, £10.99

978 1 40830 274 3

Brave Sir Laughalot, accompanied by his dog—the tilt of nose/snout and beetle eyebrows not dissimilar—is bored and looking for adventure, which comes in the forms of dragon, giant and damsel in distress (à la Rapunzel). Both dragon and giant are defeated by ridicule: the damsel is rescued by laughter—her own, the witch who has imprisoned her being fed-up with the girl’s giggling. So a wedding follows soon and then the arrival of twins, as ‘chuckly’ as their parents.

Bouncing, rhythmic text accompanied by sharply colourful illustrations make for a cheerful tale where nobody is as bad as their reputation suggests: dragon, giant and witch (in simpering mode) all attend the wedding and look happy to be invited. The mean-looking dragon has horizontally stripy tail, arms and legs, which don’t increase his dignity, lessened even further by the hairs curling out of his nostrils. The bristly chinned giant with hair and eyebrows to match wears a horizontally striped hat that doesn’t add to his fierceome looks, particularly as the hat sports a bedraggled feather. The blue-skinned witch, kohlmed eyes matching those of her pet owl, and claw-like finger nails looks a suitably doughty foe but is maddened by the girl’s ‘tee-hee-heeing’, and gives Sir Laughalot a pure white charger on which to carry away his bride.

Highly decorative borders surround but don’t restrict most of the pictures—characters simply flow over the borders into the surrounding spaces. The twins look as if they might have escaped from one of Ronald Searle’s less-dreadful schools, and the endpages are heavily patterned, which enhances the medieval style of this enjoyable romp.

**Peter Andrews**
FREE PLAYAWAY PRIZE DRAW!

AudioGo (formerly BBC Audiobooks) has 20 Playaways to give away in a free prize draw. To be in with a chance of winning one, email emily.milroy@bbc.com by 27th September 2010.

PLAYAWAY is an all-in-one digital audiobook - it’s smaller than a pack of cards and comes ready-loaded with great digital content from bestselling children’s authors.

Terms and conditions apply. See www.bbcaudiobooks.com/libraries.
The mood darkens. Can this be the work of a devilish local butcher who kidnaps dogs? (Don’t ask what he does with them). The action heats up involving more hooligans (history has a way of repeating itself). An ingenious plot, woven round a ribbon and a recorder, is guaranteed to keep viewers scanning the frames. It would take two thousand words rather than two hundred, to do justice to Roger’s splendid picturebook which could entertain Upper Junior and Year 7 students, as well as encourage a little research project triggered by the absorbing visual detail.

Jane Donnan

Smiley, Jane

Nobody’s Horse

Faber, 2010, pp266, £6.99 978 0 571 25354 8

Nobody’s Horse is ideal for young readers who are mad about horses. It is a heart warming tale, not action packed but a comforting read. Every page is full of Abby’s day-to-day dealings with horses and her struggle to train a horse called Grumpy George. Teenagers will relate to her struggles at home but also to her struggles at school as the Big Four turn against her. Abby shows great strength of character and courage making for an inspirational read. Horses are her life and a great escape from her troubles. There are many horse lovers out there who will relate to such a beautiful story.

Rebecca Chappell

Sparkes, Ali

Wishful Thinking


The cover blurb gives an excellent introduction to the rollicking adventure – ‘After a visit to Cambridge with his Nan Kevin comes back with some local fudge, a scented candle for his Mum and Abandinus, a little known Celtic deity...With God on your side, life’s going to get a whole lot easier, isn’t it?’

Kevin has a comprehensive wish-list and reckons that achieving some of his dreams could be worth some effort on his part. He enlists the help of his friend Tim and of Gracie, an American student visiting their school. Together they set up a shrine at the bottom of Kevin’s garden. They compose a hymn and begin worshipping their god. It seems nothing can go wrong – until other gods begin to appear.

It might seem damming to suggest that Wishful Thinking is thought provoking on issues such as religion and material values but it is so even though the story is first and foremost a funny adventure. I found it has the same feel-good factor as Frank Cottrell Boyce’s Millions, with a bunch of warm-hearted, well-meaning, likeable young teenagers at its heart. The modern take on gods dabbling in mortal affairs has the sense of a comedy film, especially when coupled with a climactic car chase. Perfect for older primaries and well into secondary level.

Wendy Worley

St John, Lauren

Dead Man’s Cove


Dead Man’s Cove is a Famous Five-esque romp in a modern setting. A young orphan with a keen interest in detecting is taken in by her long lost uncle and immediately plunged into a world of mysterious foreigners, suspect housekeepers, messages in bottles and secret smuggler routes. In her detecting she is supported by a resourceful and loyal dog and in true Blyton fashion her detecting skills triumph in the end over the adults who didn’t listen to her when they should have.

This book will be enjoyed by relatively good readers at the late primary school stage. It is a good read and while Blytonesque it also tackles worthy issues. It transpires that the smugglers cargo is in fact children who have been bonded into slavery from overseas. This issue is introduced sensitively and seamlessly into the action and highlights to children that there are many different forms of slavery and that slavery still exists in Britain today. The only criticism of the book is my disappointment that characters introduced early in the book as suspect do actually turn out to be the baddies – a couple of twists here would be beneficial but otherwise this is a worthwhile read.

Frances Breslin

Rogers, Gregory

The Hero of Little Street

Allen & Unwin, 2010, pp32, £10.99 978 1 74114 524 3

In his wordless picturebook Rogers gives viewers a rewarding challenge in return for their hard work which involves constantly making decisions as to what is significant in the sequence of frames. (Wordless picturebooks of his kind are not for slouches).

In Book 3 of the ‘Boy Bear’ series Rogers transports his butterball of a hero from contemporary London to 17th century Holland. Consume cartooning in graphite pencil, inks, watercolour, and coloured pencil is what it takes. The scenario opens in Trafalgar Square, above Lancaster bombers. The book reaches its conclusion as American and Russian forces converge in central Germany, and all loose ends are neatly tied up in the final chapter. Morpurgo is on excellent form here, and this should be suitable for confident readers aged 11 to 14.

Stephen King

Gold Hunter

Y Lolfa, 2010, pp112, £4.95 978 1 8477 1200 4

Gold Hunter, from a publisher based in Wales, is written to appeal to 10 to 13-year-olds. The Plot involves William, a young lad who having stolen his widowed mother’s money, sets off to find gold in Australia in the 1860s. He encounters dangers, meets friends and encounters native Australians during his quest. When he finally discovers potential wealth, he realises that there is more to life than riches.

This story has a whiff of the early pioneering Wild West stories, is carefully written to draw the reader into the early days of the gold rush and explores an ever pertinent theme through an entertaining and exciting story. The character of William is particularly well-drawn; we grow to like
Wilson, Jacqueline
Little Darlings
Illustrated by Nick Sharratt
978 0 385 61443 6

Wilson fans will be queuing to buy this latest offering – though their parents might jib at the £12.99 hardback price tag! (Why do they insist on printing popular authors work in hardback? – bulky, and awkward to hold as well as expensive to buy.) This book is about two girls Sunset and Destiny; one is used to a celebrity lifestyle with her family, and the other lives on an estate. Sunset feels that she is a misfit in the glitzy lifestyle and secretly writes poems. Destiny on the other hand is a talented performer. When Destiny's mother brings her daughter to London to see stars arrive for a film premiere, they fail to make the contact with Danny Kilman so Destiny's mother decides to go to his house and see him there, hinting to Destiny that there is a special reason why Danny would want to see her. Destiny and Sunset meet and form a friendship, discovering eventually that they are half-sisters, both daughters of a Danny Kilman.

As usual with Jacqueline Wilson stories, the girls save the day forming a singing and lyricist duo for a talent show and changing the lives of their relatives. With a ready made fan base this one will not fail to please!

Rosemary Good

8–12 Information

Ardagh, Philip
Knights and Castles
Illustrated by Mike Gordon
Scholastic, 2010, pp64, £5.99
978 1 40710 722 6

This is another in the Henry’s House series, each book focusing on facts about a particular topic experienced by Henry in his extraordinary house, through Mike Gordon’s familiar amusing drawings. Each drawing is annotated and enhanced by clear speech bubbles from Henry and the people in the castle which he meets. In this book a contents page, augmented by an index and glossary, gives a list of the parts of the castle that Henry and his dog, Mothball, visit and the things they find going on. At the end of the day Henry is retrieved by Jaggars, the knowledgeable caretaker of the house and returns to his everyday life, musing on what he has seen.

Although aimed at emergent readers the lively illustrations and compact A5 size means this book will appeal to children with a wide range of ability who will enjoy the humour and the many quirky facts.

Dianne Southcombe

Hanbury-Murphy, Trudy
Solving the Mysteries of Ancient Rome
978 0 7496 9494 4

Ancient Rome is another book in the series of digging into history. This short, but well illustrated, hard back book investigates the history of ancient Rome using the evidence of what has been ‘dug up’. The print and layout are easy to read with large colour photographs of landmarks and finds. The book covers the rise to fall of the Roman Empire in short but informative sections covering roads, the army, lifestyle and why Rome fell, utilising the latest technology and new discoveries. A good reference for the 7+ reader.

Alisa Vanlint

Jennings, Terry
Earthquakes and Tsunamis (Amazing Planet Earth)
978 0 7496 8804 2

Part of the ‘Amazing Planet Earth’ series, this grimy factual, large format book illustrates the effects of the frightening phenomena by showing their results in the major historical disasters in such places as India, Afghanistan, San Francisco, Alaska and Indonesia. The reasons why they occur

8 to 12

Bingham, Jane
Henry VIII (Extraordinary Lives)
Wayland, 2010, pp32, £12.99
978 0 7502 6047 3

In my experience, history books from Wayland are usually accessible, innovative and useful additional titles for the school library. Here is another from a series which is also exciting in approach. Henry VIII, aimed at upper primary or lower secondary students, takes a chronological stroll through Henry’s life as King. A brief flashback to his childhood to complete the biography, each double page considers his wives, his wars, his conflict with the Pope and ends with an examination of Henry’s influence today. As well as the contents, index, time-line and glossary there is a useful ‘cross-curricula links’ page, a helpful addition for teachers planning a topic based approach.

Janet Sims

Green, Jen
Cities (The Geography Detective Investigates)
Wayland, 2010, pp32, £12.99
978 0 7502 5674 2

Cities as a concept, aspects of their development and the social implications form the basis of this simple introduction to urbanisation. It provides a spring board from which to explore topics such as the urban infrastructure – a useful comparison between a photograph and map of Sydney is used here, employment, buildings, the development of tourism, transport and other aspects of urban living. Suggestions are given as to resources that might be used in compiling projects in those various topics.

Rather than the global approach – from Mumbai to Paris and elsewhere (obviously to appeal to as wide a market as possible), it might have been better if the author had concentrated on one or two cities, providing a more focused picture of the subject. We simply flit from one location to another with no great depth given to the different aspects of urban life.

In the British context, I have always understood that a city grew up around a cathedral, but no mention is made of this. The listing of cities’ names in the index appears arbitrary; a more consistent listing would have been more useful because of the photographs than an entry such as that for ‘leisure’ that refers to the photograph of Silicon Valley and a caption referring to ‘housing and shopping centres’ but no leisure activities, unless shopping is regarded as such. An attractively produced book such as this needs more focus: it is good that it directs readers beyond its binding but a pity that so many topics are mentioned only in passing.

Peter Andrews

Be An Eco Hero At Home
978 0 7496 9336 7

‘At Home’ is a companion volume to ‘On the move’, ‘Outdoors’ and ‘At school’. Each double page spread tackles an aspect of environmental awareness, focussing on energy and water conservation and recycling. Colourful photographs and superheroes (both boys and girls) inform the text: a picture of a power station is linked to a picture showing power lines going into houses. Reasons are given for environmental care: these are followed by practical suggestions and activities for the eco hero to try out. The book concludes with a glossary, a list of useful websites and an index. While this is familiar territory, this book is a superbly presented hardback with highly accessible text suitable for an introduction to the subject for young children. The series would therefore be a valuable resource in junior schools.

Mary Crawford
and methods currently employed to limit devastation are simply described, such as in the Torre Mayor building in Mexico City, which is 225 metres tall, has steel and concrete foundations that are 40 metres deep, shock absorbers and is designed to bend during earthquakes.

Clear diagrams, dramatic pictures and a good glossary complement the simple but informative text from which top junior and lower secondary students should learn comfortably.

David Churchill

Kramer, Ann

Secret War (Taking Part in the Second World War)

978 0 7496 9209 4

This coherent account of espionage during the Second World War is to be welcomed. For once the format of the two-page spread with short paragraphs and a liberal sprinkling of photographs is not limiting, perhaps because of the grouping of material around ongoing accounts of Bletchley Park and the Special Operations Executive (SOE), accounts prefaced by a short introduction about the need for information about Axis activities, in particular those of the Germans. Here lies a criticism, however, because some information about the counter-offensive would have been useful, if difficult to give in so short a book.

The growth of Bletchley Park during the war and its swift demise afterwards and its work on Enigma (the German coding system) are recounted, together with mention of Colossus, the first programmable computer. Far more of the book is devoted to the SOE – its recruitment activities, the training of operatives, the equipment they used (some of it remarkably sophisticated), and their work behind enemy lines (precarious and deadly). A remarkable number of people were involved – and this is reflected in the photographs and short biographies used to give personal interest to the story. The index is not the photographs and short biographies used to give personal interest to the story. The index is not

Jane Doonan

Manning, Mick, and Brita Granström

My Uncle’s Dunkirk

Watts (in association with Imperial War Museum), 2010, pp32, £10.99
978 0 7496 9341 1

The story of the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from the beaches of Dunkirk in June 1940 is told in Mick Manning’s memoir of his uncle, Gil, a Dunkirk veteran.

Inevitably the question arises of whether, used as children are to graphic, digitally processed imagery, a picture-book format can tell this story successfully without the use of such aids. The answer is a resounding ‘yes’.

The author’s memories of seaside holidays in the 1960s are contrasted with his uncle’s memories of the Dunkirk seaside of 1940, using alternating double-page spreads, the pictures of each era mirroring each other. Uncle Gil appears in the same place and pose on each page, his 1960s self reflecting that of the young soldier of 1940.

Groups of 1960s figures appear in similar poses to those of the soldiers in 1940. Holiday makers are helped down the gang-plank of a pleasure steamer by a uniformed sailor, while soldiers are stopped from boarding a pleasure steamer by a uniformed officer because the ship is full of evacuees, in 1940. In the 1960s, people queue for ice creams and go paddling; in 1940, soldiers queue for a place on board the relief ships, paddling in waist-high water – Uncle Gil hated queues and never went paddling when on holiday. The heroics of the evacuation are implied rather than portrayed graphically.

Impressionistic portrayals of the chaos of an army trying to evacuate its troops contrast with the busyness of a seaside holiday. Conventionally set text in the 1960s’ scenes contrasts with the boxed text superimposed on the scenes from 1940. A collage of Uncle Gil’s souvenirs from his army life, discovered after his death in the 1990s, closes the story, which began with Manning’s reminiscences of reading his uncle’s Second World War magazines in the 1960s.

Both author and artist have produced a moving tribute to the Dunkirk events. One caveat: it would have been useful to have a fuller introduction, explaining more fully the events leading to Dunkirk, to match the concluding summary of the course of the war that followed. This, not withstanding, the book is impressive – its recognition of the long-lasting effects of war through the representation of Uncle Gil’s reaction to Dunkirk are to be welcomed, particularly in view of our current military engagements: events may pass but their effects can last for decades.

Peter Andrews

McKirdy, Alan and Moira

Scottish Rocks and Fossils

978 1 905267 29 3

This is a new addition to the delightful series of Scottie Books published under the auspices of National Museums Scotland. It is an exciting, full-colour information book for junior school age readers. As well as containing interesting facts, the books aim to stimulate activities both at home and in the classroom. There is a list of websites and suggestions for places to visit. The Scottie series was first published in the early 1990s but have now been rewritten and redesigned in a striking new format. We are introduced to Lizzie (or Westlothiana lizziae) who was found in a small quarry and lived 330 million years ago. She is an extremely important fossil as the ancestor of all other reptiles, birds and mammals, including Man. With Icelandic volcanic action so topical we learn about the volcanic activity and glacial erosion which brought about the striking appearance of Edinburgh. Do not worry, that volcano is now extinct. A must for junior school libraries on both sides of Hadrian’s Wall.

Joan Hamilton Jones
Whether working with classic EM or the latest RFID systems, we deliver security and self-service packages for school libraries.

- Standard and bespoke
- New or refurbished

tel: 0845 88 22 778
email: info@2cqr.com
web: www.2cqr.com

Your school library partner

SOLUTIONS / SUPPORT / CONSULTANCY / RFID & EM PRODUCTS
Murphy, Glenn
Evolution, Nature and Stuff
Science Museum (Macmillan), 2010, pp210, £5.99, 978 0 330 50894 0

Parker, Steve
Planet Earth
QED, 2010, pp118, £9.99 978 1 84835 277 3

Sonneborn, Liz
The Egyptians: Life in Ancient Egypt
Illustrated by Samuel Hiti
Lerner, 2010, pp48, £6.99 978 0 7613 5381 2

Thielbar, Melinda and Helmer, Der-Shing
The Kung Fu Puzzle
Lerner, 2010, pp48, £6.99 978 0 7613 5392 8

Welsh, C. E. L. and Singh, Lalit Kumar
Harry Houdini
Campfire, 2010, pp77, £6.99 978 9 3800 2825 5

Taplin, Sam
The Usborne Official Pharaoh’s Handbook
Illustrated by Paddy Mounter
Usborne, 2010, pp80, £7.99 978 0 7460 9380 1

This notebook sized book had me smiling from the moment I opened the weighty outer cover to reveal a spiral bound handbook containing ‘Everything a beginner Pharaoh needs to know’ until I finally closed the back cover. Within its 73 pages this book, written in a tongue in cheek, irreverent style that would appeal to KS2 readers, manages not only to impart far more facts about the life and role of the Pharaoh than would be normally found in a book for this age group but also includes plenty of information about clothing, adornment, everyday life and religion; with plenty of suitably gory descriptions of mummification and the journey to the Afterlife. Much of this additional information is included via the comic book style illustrations and humorous asides.

The content is generally sound apart from a reference to Mannut as the swallowing monster, rather than the usual Ammut. The contents and index pages are clearly set out and there is also a useful Guide to the Gods. Although there are no suggestions for further reading or websites I’m sure any 7 to 11 year-old reading this book would eagerly search for further information. Your class will be queuing up to read this one!

Mary Crawford
Nichols, Grace
*I Have Crossed an Ocean: Selected Poems*

Bloodaxe, 2010, pp192, £9.95

978 1 85224 858 1

This Bloodaxe anthology gathers a selection of work from collections published between 1983 and 2006, and ends with nineteen ‘Poems for Younger Readers’ drawn from various collections of verse for children. There is a glossary explaining unfamiliar terms, particularly useful for proper nouns. This collection demonstrates all that is great about Grace Nichols’ poetry: the musical, rhythmic quality greatly aided by the blend of Standard English and patois; the tactile, sensual imagery from ‘the black swinging of hair to the grease which caresses the skin of my tablecloth’, and the sea which becomes ‘the throbbing fruit in me’; the humour, which is warm and infectious, but not always comforting as the Fat Black Woman, the Long Memoried Woman and the Lazy Woman remind us of the struggle to emerge from stereotype and oppression. The collection ‘Sunris’, from 1996, begins with an interesting prose introduction which explains some of the poet’s ideas and intentions with a playful dig at the English weather. The poems are wonderful to read aloud – the exuberance of the various ways the English weather. The poems are wonderful to read aloud – the exuberance of the various ways

Frank Startup

**New Edition**

Thanks to the blessed Ann Jungman once again; her Bam Owl Books has revived in print *Plum* (98) by Tony Mitton. This books is firmly ensconced in my own personal Top 10 of single author collections of poetry for the young and it reappears with the same distinctive cover, a wholly unaged old friend. Why *Plum*? That poem and the book concludes with the lines ‘you bear a mystery / you hold a key / you have the making / of a whole new tree’. There’s all-sorts here united by quality. *Green Man Lane* stands stoutly alone but would also serve alongside reading Linda Newbery’s lovely recent tale of ‘Loi’. Nonsense snippets like ‘Freak Cat-Flea’: wordplays, ‘The Alphabettale’, as well as stories in verse and observations both gentle and more pointed: all-sorts and all quite splendid.

£5.99, 978 1 903015 85 8.

**12–16 Fiction**

Augarde, Steve

*X Isle*


978 1 84999 2012 4

In the not too distant future the UK is mostly underwater following a global catastrophe. The remaining population cling to the high ground scavenging what they can to stay alive. Only the Eck brothers can offer some hope; once in a while a boy can barter his passage on their boat to X Isle – a place of safety and three meals a day in return for hard work salvaging goods from the flooded land. At the beginning of the book we meet Baz and Ray who have left behind what remains of their families to try for a new life on the island. But when they get there they find the stories of good treatment and plentiful food are untrue and they join a group of boys who are no more than slaves, pitted against one another by Preacher John, the patriarch of the family. The story follows their attempt to escape from the island.

Augarde has produced an exciting and tautly written plot. The characters of the various boys are well defined and their relationships with one another are convincing. The friendship between Baz and Ray is touching although Ray’s secret was not too hard to guess. We feel a real empathy with the boys and even the bullies have their sympathetic side. Boys especially will recognise themselves and their friends in this disparate group who end up united against a common enemy. The Eck family are the real villains of the piece and although they are a little one dimensional, and Preacher John a caricature of the religious maniac, they are satisfyingly evil so we rejoice in their final come-uppance. There are moments of real danger and tension, and the boys’ plan to capture methane gas to make a bomb is pure genius. This is a substantial and satisfying read which zips along with action, excitement and touches of humour.

Lesley Martin

Barker, Dominic

*Sharp Returns (Mickey Sharp)*


978 1 90647 050 9

Mickey Sharp is a private eye for teenagers: he has solved a number of cases (all low-profile, though he may think otherwise). His self-esteem is high and he’s ready to take on another much cooler case – and do it well. Unfortunately, he ends up with a very uncool columnist on the school newspaper asking him to investigate election-rigging in the race for Head Boy. His geeky new client, Carl Marks, is up against the handsome and attractive Tony Lejeune. Although Carl may lack charisma, he makes up for it by pleasing the students with his popular policies. So why do his fellow reporters think he hasn’t got a hope in the world? This is the point at which Mickey is called to come to the rescue. He finds himself in competition with his enemy Katie Pierce and makes matters worse by falling for the wrong girl, a sassy school reporter called Nicola Cohen. This is a fun, wise-cracking tale by Dominic Barker pushing Mickey to the limit. Is he up to it? Let’s hope so!

Eve’s Morley Jones

Bell, Alex

*Lex Trent Versus The Gods*

Headline, 2010, pp344, £6.99

978 0 7553 5518 1

17-year-old Lex Trent had been born a penniless farm boy who soon tired of the agricultural life ‘getting straw in your hair and blisters on your palms’ and had turned to a life of crime for which he found he had a natural aptitude. His story is set in a fantasy world, *The Globe*, buzzing with magicians and crones and presided over by a number of rival gods and goddesses. The Goddess of Luck, having heard of Lex’s reputation as a swindler, cheat and liar, recruited him as one of her official followers, in return for her patronage. By nefarious means he became an apprentice lawyer in a prestigious firm in ‘the legal capital of the Globe’, Wither City – could this be the City of London? He conned the senior partner, convincing him that he was a most conscientious and dedicated student; another partner, Mr Montgomery Schmidt, however, was one of the few people who could see right through him. The novel recounts the adventures and interactions of these two characters: the loveable rogue and the apoplectic Mr Schmidt.

The plot bounces forward at a crisp pace and page upon page is laced with a fairly sophisticated, understated humour which is a delight to read. It is sure to be very popular with young adults.

Elizabeth Finlayson

Black, Holly

*White Cat*


978 0 575 09670 7 / 978 0 575 09671 4

Holly Black is famous as the author of *The Spiderwick Chronicles* and found an even wider audience with her books, *Tithe*, *Valiant* and *Ironside*. This is the first in a new series entitled
‘The Curseworkers’ and whilst the blurb describes it as an adult novel, it is actually aimed at the young adult market.

The central character is called Cassel, a young man getting to grips with the fact that he killed the girl he loved. However this is not the world as we know it. This is a world where magic has been banned and yet is still wanted. This has led to the growth of five major crime families, who are magic workers. Cassel belongs to one of these families, but does not know what his talent is supposed to be. He is bullied by his brothers, his father is dead and his mother in prison for working magic. Added to this he is haunted by dreams of a white cat which somehow links to the death of his friend Lila, a crime he cannot remember committing. The story is about how Cassel uncovers some of the secrets at the core of his family, secrets which change his perception of himself and those around him.

This is an extremely complicated story with amazing twists and turns. The back cover quotes it as being ‘The Sopranos meets Six Feet Under’, something which will no doubt attract a new group of readers. Holly Black is amazingly imaginative in her plot lines and mixes the everyday with the magical. She has created a story that is compelling and repelling, but which you want to follow to the end.

Margaret Pemberton

Brashares, Ann

The Summer that Changed Everything

Corgi, 2010, pp275, £5.99
978 0 552 56098 6

Following on from her success with the ‘Summers of the Sisterhood’ series, Ann Brashares has created a trio of friends for younger readers. Polly, Jo and Ama are drifting apart as they make the transition from Junior to Senior High. Their different plans for the summer seem designed to drive them away from each other. Afro-American, highly academic, Ama, wins a scholarship placement on a summer camp but is horrified that she has been selected for an outdoor survival expedition rather than the academic school she had set her heart on. Polly decides that her life would be better if she could become a supermodel; she diets and baby-sits for local families to earn the money for the modelling course she wants to attend. Jo’s father is dead and his mother in prison for working magic. Added to this he is haunted by dreams of a white cat which somehow links to the death of his friend Lila, a crime he cannot remember committing. The story is about how Cassel uncovers some of the secrets at the core of his family, secrets which change his perception of himself and those around him.

This is an extremely complicated story with amazing twists and turns. The back cover quotes it as being ‘The Sopranos meets Six Feet Under’, something which will no doubt attract a new group of readers. Holly Black is amazingly imaginative in her plot lines and mixes the everyday with the magical. She has created a story that is compelling and repelling, but which you want to follow to the end.

Margaret Pemberton

Bush, Penelope

Alice in Time

Piccadilly, 2010, pp250, £6.99
978 1 84812 077 8

This is an engaging and deceptively undemanding novel which will appeal to girls who enjoy relationships-based fiction. The novel is narrated in the continuous present which helps to establish an informal and conversational tone. The narrator is fourteen-year-old Alice who at the start of the novel is standing in the rain in a pink nylon bridesmaid’s dress with her seven year old brother because the taxi has dropped them at the wrong venue for her dad’s wedding. Alice fantasises about going to live with her dad and his new wife; anything to escape the dingy Victorian house she has to call home and her mother’s constant criticisms. School isn’t much better; her only friend is Imogen who fails to cover for her when Alice sneaks out for a date with a sixth-former.

But everything changes when Alice takes a ride on a roundabout which takes her back to the past – and she has to re-live her life as a seven year old. Alice gains insights into her parents’ relationship which transform her feelings for her mother. She learns to handle friendships at school more effectively too and realises that she can be happier if she becomes less self-absorbed. When she returns to her future she discovers that she has become a more confident and contented person. Alice is an appealing character despite her selfishness and girls who enjoy Cathy Cassidy and Karen McCreombie will respond positively to her story.

Sandra Bennett

Carrington, Jim

Inside My Head

Bloomsbury, 2010, pp341, £6.99
978 1 4088 0271 7

This is a welcome addition to the growing number of anti-bullying novels. There are four main characters: Zoe, who has just unwillingly moved to rural Norfolk, Gary, who is having a rough time at home, Knaggs, the school bully and David, Knaggs’ friend. The story is narrated by three of these teenagers, Zoe, Gary and David. While each furthers the story, each has a different perspective as well. The author chooses not to use the bully as a narrator so the reader cannot learn why he is a bully and he seems to have no redeeming features. This ensures the readers have no sympathy towards him. Knaggs is constantly goading and ridiculing Gary unmercifully, not because he is small and weak but because he is a loner and has a temper. Carrington shows great skill in building up the tension as Gary struggles against incessant and unbearable provocation by Knaggs. There are a couple of incidents when Gary does lash out at his antagonist, and then gets into trouble, but Knaggs continues and right up to the end of the book the tension rises as Gary is driven to desperate measures. Zoe, as a newcomer and outsider, is his only ally but he has difficulties in forging any sort of relationship. David is uncomfortable with Knaggs’s cruelty but takes no action struggling between guilt and fear. This is a very well written and well crafted book which examines, from several angles, bullying and its possible consequences. Highly recommended with a note that it contains strong language.

Audrey Baker

Cotterill, Jo

Star Crossed

Red Fox, 2010, pp263, £5.99
978 1 849 41205 6

Limb, Sue

Girl 16, Five Star Fiasco

Bloomsbury, 2010, pp301, £5.99
978 0 7475 9916 6

Hopkins, Cathy

Million Dollar Mates

978 1 849 41205 6

Mlynowski, Sarah

Gimme a Call

Orchard, 2010, pp328, £5.99
978 1 40830 427 3

Plaja, Luisa

Swapped by a Kiss

Corgi, 2010, pp244, £5.99
978 0 552 56096 2

Stainton, Keris

Della says: OMG!

Orchard, 2010, pp270, £5.99
978 1 40830 427 3

Having sorted varieties of titles to send to each reviewer those left behind with the Review Editor invariably reflect the over-subscribed genres of publishing. Novels of a romantic inclination aimed at female young teen readers, dealing with trivia which can seem so crucial, absurd and after some have gone to some reviewers there’s still a dozen, so here goes: a collective review. Star Crossed is from the ‘Sweet Hearts’ series with a yucky hearts all-over cover. The wholly unoriginal plot device has the unattainable ‘cutest boy ever’ cast as Romeo in a drama club production. Unassuming Floss is to be Juliet whilst brash and bold Samantha is the thorn of this red-rose
headed situation. In spite of a mis-spelling in the first direct quote from the play itself this whole confection is perfect for those who love to suspend disbelief in cliché close-clinches with the surety of a safe liaison eventually.

In setting out on such a mass-review of this genre some equilibrium of sanity is maintained by having a Sue Limb book to save to be read last of all. Here in Girl 16, Five Star Fiasco there’s no ‘cutest’ boy, certainly not the actual boyfriend, and any stunningly cute girl is merely given a walk-on, and stalk-off, role. Jess Jordan’s wayward life continues as happily crisis ridden, and very funny, as in previous stories. This time she and the individualist Fred set out to organise a charity dinner-dance, the inevitable mis and dis organisation threatening disaster looms but all turns out right. Excepting that a major relationship wedge comes to upset Jess’s triumph as yet again perfection, fortunately for the reader, eludes her.

I could not be bothered with the books about the worldly wealthy set in a style echoing ‘Gossip Girl’: sort of up-market panto routines. Likewise the variant stories of girls at some very select school and, would you believe it, with some even more sub-culture power group lurking. However Cathy Hopkins does have a track record of writing originality and her device in Million Dollar Mates could not be bothered with the books about the eludes her.

The relationship wedge comes to upset Jess’s triumph as yet again perfection, fortunately for the reader, eludes her.

De Goldi, Kate
The 10pm Question
Templar, 2010, pp251, £10.99
978 1 84877 467 4
Frankie Parsons lives with his mother, father (known as Uncle George), sister Gordana and demanding cat ’The Fat Controller’. His extrovert elder brother Louie, who has now left home, makes the occasional welcome appearance. Life in Year 8 ought to be happy enough. He has a close friend Gigs, with whom he shares many interests including a secret language they call Chilun, and a new and colourful friend Sydney, with her lovely and direct way of communicating. But something is badly wrong. Why is Frankie the one who seems to hold the household together and why is he continually plagued by what he describes as ‘rodent thoughts’ and worries about his cake-making mother who never leaves the house?

The 10pm Question is a subtle book about what it is to be a teenager in a dysfunctional household where nothing seems to work and where one young member is burdened beyond his capacity. De Goldi is a witty writer who gradually builds the story of her characters, depicting their strengths, weaknesses and passions. Frankie’s family is well drawn throughout and there are some wonderful portraits here of ‘The Aunties’, Mr A, Frankie’s teacher, and Frankie’s family and friends, Gigs and Sydney, but it is perhaps in the exploration of the close relationship between Frankie and his mother that De Goldi writes most profoundly. As they sit in his mother’s room just before going to bed, Frankie asks his 10pm questions and his mother patiently tries to put his many fears to rest. The reader eventually comes to understand his mother’s fragile personality and how seriously she...
silence in the family about her condition impacts upon them all, but especially on the highly-wrought and sensitive Frankie, who in the end desperately needs support himself.

Rachel Bowler

Fisher, Catherine

Crown of Acorns
978 0 340 97007 2

Crown of Acorns follows three parallel stories brought together by the mystery behind a sacred spring and the world’s first circular terraced street – the King’s Circus in the city of Bath. The first narrative, given by Bladud, the mythical builder of the city, provides the basis for all the strands of the novel and it sets the tone of the book. The myth of the Leper King attracts the interest of Jonathan Forrest, an eighteenth century architect with a vision, whose story – the second narrative – is told by Forrest’s young apprentice Zac. Finally, the architect’s project – the King’s Circus – becomes the setting for the third narrative, given by a contemporary teenage girl who is trying to escape her haunting past.

The way the three stories work together is masterfully accomplished, which makes it easy for the reader to jump from one time frame to another. There is something intriguing, puzzling, dark and almost mystical about all three stories and although initially I was not fully convinced by the impact of Sulis’s horrific childhood experience leading to putting her in an almost witness-protection-type of programme, I became intrigued by the girl’s obsession and I was pleasantly surprised to find that her story turned out to be far less straightforward than I originally thought. A sophisticated and beautifully written novel with a brilliant climax.

Marzena Curie

Grant, Helen

The Glass Demon
Puffin, 2010, pp405, £6.99
978 0 141 32576 7

You rarely find a book that’s gripping, full of chills and keeps you hooked from the first page. But, if you’re looking for one, then this is it. The Glass Demon is Helen Grant’s second book. It is written from the point of view of Lin, aged 17, who moves to a remote part of Germany for her father’s job. She isn’t expecting to find a lot of interest or excitement there, but a chilling and gruesome discovery on their arrival makes her think she might be wrong. This discovery is followed by a number of deaths; Lin knows that someone is after her and whoever it is wants her out of the way. And they aren’t going to rest until she’s gone… she can trust no one. Lin’s voice is intriguing and you won’t want to put this book down. But be warned – it’s not for the faint-hearted!

Eirys Morley Jones

Green, John

Paper Towns
Bloomsbury, 2010, pp312, £6.99
978 1 4088 0659 3

It’s May in Orlando, Florida, with Prom and High School exams just weeks away. Quentin ‘Q’ Jacobsen aims to avoid the former and keep a generally low profile; he likes routines, he likes being bored. Until the night of May 5th when he is dragged into the crazy world of Margo, the girl next door. Margo is beautiful and charismatic and insists that Q accompany her on a night of vengeance. Margo’s boyfriend has been two-timing her and Margo’s plans for the night involve spray paint, dead fish and compromising photographs of her enemies. At one point during the night Margo and Q look down at their town from the SunTrust Building and Q begins to see with Margo’s eyes how fake it all is. This is where the novel goes into a gear most teen fiction never uses, exploring the superficial values of urban life: where paper people live in their paper houses, burning the future to stay warm. The finale of this crazy night is breaking into SeaWorld and dancing to the piped muzak. But events take a more bizarre and potentially sinister turn the next morning when Margo doesn’t appear at school. Soon the police are involved in investigating her disappearance – but Q realises that she has left him clues which take him on a journey across several states and into a more complex world than the one in which he has been living.

Paper Towns is gripping, thought-provoking and witty. It uses the by now familiar world of high school, teenage angst and rivalries as a springboard into more existential territory. It will entertain mid to older teens and extend their expectations of fiction. An outstanding novel.

Sandra Bennett

Grisham, John

Theodore Boone: Young Lawyer
978 1 444 71304 6

John Grisham’s first foray into teenage fiction has resulted in a curate’s egg of a book. It is obviously the first in a series and we are being introduced to a clean living, serious young man, earnest in that very American way, who is fascinated by the law and very close to it because both his parents are lawyers. In some ways he’s a curiously innocent lad who reminded me of Emil in Emil and the Detectives. The very straightforward story rolls along although it isn’t exactly action-packed as Theo discovers that an illegal immigrant has vital evidence which will change the verdict in a murder trial. The problem – very sympathetically presented – is how to persuade the witness to risk all by drawing attention to himself.

It is, however, a tiresomely didactic book (in the same way that Jodie Picault’s ‘issues’ novels are or Jostein Gaarder’s Sophie’s World is). Again and again Grisham contrives to have one character explain points of law and legal principles to another. It’s well enough written and not boring, but in places it feels like a thinly disguised law lesson for Year 8. In fact you could do worse than use it as a class reader for a citizenship class provided you take account of the minor differences between UK and US law.

I also found it distractingly implausible. Yes, of course a degree of implausibility is integral to all fiction – but the best makes you believe it anyway. In this case I found it very hard to convince in the premise that adults at his school would consult the 13-year-old Theo for legal advice or that he’d be able to sneak into the cellars beneath the court to watch proceedings unbeknown to the adults, or be able to hack into so many protected websites. I’m not sure, either, why Grisham included the sub-plot in which a friend of Theo’s is awaiting a custody verdict because it didn’t seem to go anywhere – perhaps it will be picked up in the next book.

Susan Elkin

Han, Jenny

The Summer I Turned Pretty
Puffin, 2010, pp276, £6.99
978 0 1413 3053 2

Every girl has one boy who she really likes but who never gives her a second glance and every girl remembers the day that boy noticed her for the first time. During the summer Isabel has this moment – except for her it’s twice as good… because she’s got TWO boys! Every summer Isabel spends the summer at her family friends’ house and notices all the boys, but this year is the summer they’re going to start noticing her. She has Conrad – who she’s been in love with for longer than forever and who is always unavailable – and there’s Jeremiah – funny, friendly and the only boy who has ever paid her much attention. Isabel’s got a beautiful stretch of sand, a swimming pool, friends and two boys. Absolutely anything could happen...

This book is the first in a romantic series and is an ideal read for teens, especially lazing in the sun on the beach.

Eirys Morley Jones
D-Tech is top of the class in library security

To order books or organise a visit, call 07931 320949 or email info@bollywoodseries.com
www.bollywoodseries.com

Best School Library Security System

Rely on us to protect your books & multi-media

To access the full range of resources on the SLA website, login using your membership username and password.

If you have lost your login details (shown on the contact sheet sent with your invoice) please contact the SLA office.

www.sla.org.uk
Worldshaker
Templar, 2010, pp370, £6.99
978 1 84877 527 5

On reading the first line of the blurb of Worldshaker, alarm bells rang as thoughts drifted to Reeve’s Mortal Engines and the similarity of the giant ‘mobile cities’ in both. This was going to be another ‘fantasy’ using a theme already written about. How wrong one could have been? Set 150 years after Worldshaker was built, Queen Victoria II and Prince Albert are on the throne, and the world is traversed by several juggernauts who trade with the natives on the ground but leave a wake of destruction behind them. It quickly becomes apparent that this distinctive novel is more alternative history than fantasy with a very distinctive Victorian undertone and references to ‘the Old Country’, making it fit into the steampunk subgenre.

From the first page the author may have the reader hooked as the ‘upper deck’ Colbert Porpentine, future Supreme Commander of the juggernaut ‘Worldshaker’ encounters a ‘Filthy’ girl, Riff, from below who had escaped from being changed into a ‘menial’. For reasons unknown to him Col, finds himself helping her avoid recapture and return to below. In the process Col learns that he has been lied to about the filthies, and that they are people like him. As the book progresses, the author cleverly gives the reader snippets of the history of the juggernaut and the world at the pace Col learns about them.

Col’s world is turned upside down as the true realities of what goes on below decks hits him literally when some time after helping Riff, he is followed by school bullies (sons of rival families to the role of commander) to the feeding chutes to send a ‘gift’ to Riff. He is pushed down the chute literally when some time after helping Riff, he is changed into a ‘menial’. For reasons unknown to him Col, finds himself helping her avoid recapture and return to below. In the process Col learns that he has been lied to about the filthies, and that they are people like him. As the book progresses, the author cleverly gives the reader snippets of the history of the juggernaut and the world at the pace Col learns about them.

Worldshaker is a novel of many parts touching on the themes of class, snobbery, elitism, slavery, subjugation, environment destruction, power and relationships. It is a rolling adventure with twists and turns which keeps one wanting to read on.

Frances Sinclair

Hooper, Mary
Fallen Grace
Bloomsbury, 2010, pp309, £8.99
978 0 7475 9913 5

We are first introduced to Grace Parkes as she travels on the Necropolis Express to Brookwood Cemetery to bury her still born baby by hiding it in a rich lady’s coffin. From this promising beginning Hooper weaves a narrative of life in Victorian London which includes fraud, deception, friendship and love. Grace and her sister Lily are orphans in poor circumstances; unknown to them their father died overseas and left them a fortune which the unscrupulous Unwin family plan to defraud of them. The Unwins run a successful undertaking business and Hooper includes a myriad of fascinating detail about Victorian attitudes to death and mourning without them ever intruding on the story, and the chapter headings of contemporary newspaper accounts, advertisements and epitaphs give a pleasing sense of the historical context of the story.

Grace is a strong character, resourceful and resilient, who has to protect and provide for her simple sister. The secondary characters are well drawn and the relationships between them convincing, the plot is satisfying and the narrative pace. Throughout the language is consistent with the book’s setting, without either archaisms or anachronisms. Any book set in Victorian London attracts the epithet ‘Dickensian’, in this case it would not be undeserved as Hooper has given us a rich and textured historical novel, which should appeal to boys as well as girls.

Lesley Martin

Jago, Lucy
Montacute House
Bloomsbury, 2010, pp282, £10.99
978 1 4088 0376 9

Appealing mainly to girls, Jago tells the story of Cess, the poultry girl on the Montacute estate who becomes embroiled in a harrowing adventure of witchcraft and wizardry in an attempt to foil a plot to murder the queen. The story has many unexpected turns which help to maintain the pace. Set in the 1500s, Jago introduces speech which the reader may be intimacy with, however its context aids understanding and only serves to make the story more authentic.

This is Jago’s first novel for teenage readers and should prove popular with settings and themes not often seen in this market. This book would be very suitable for KS3 and 4 libraries.

Elizabeth Baskeyfield
Lanagan, Margo
White Time
978 1 84992 055 1

An eclectic collection of short stories from the author of Tender Morsels... Sheeneel draws the short straw with her work experience assignment and finds herself at the White Time Labs whilst all her friends get assigned to Release Parties, so whereas they’re meeting celebrities and having fun, she’s redirecting entities with Lon. In another story Dybbol is a worker ant, scurrying about his business but with more of a practical romantic streak. Puffin, £6.99, 978 0 141 32340 4.

Revolver (09) is a relatively short book which is phenomenally taut, brilliantly paced and astonishingly written. Set in the Arctic in 1910, we meet Sig, alone except for the frozen body of his father, then a stranger’s arrival triggers, literally, terror and revelations: this is a thrilling literary thriller from Marcus Sedgwick. Orion, £6.99, 978 1 444 00005 4.

Finally two revitalised titles from the enterprise of Five Leaves Publications. Follow a Shadow (89) is a time-lapse of a story as well crafted as ever by the masterly Robert Swindells. In revisiting his own plot involving a school visit to Haworth the author has cleverly wove his own time-play to bring things up to date at one end of his spectrum whilst the Bronits remain just as ever at the other. £5.99 978 1905 512867.

Gill Vicker's The Ivy Crown (01) won her the Fidler First Novel Award, the story involves the aftermath of the death of a mother, a valuable violin and a centuries old accusation of witchcraft, altogether an intriguing and rewarding book. £5.99, 978 1905 512850.

Lo, Malinda
Ash
 Hodder, 2010, pp291, £5.99
978 0 340 98837 4

This is an engaging and absorbing reworking of the Cinderella fairy tale. Orphaned as a child, Ash is forced to work as a servant to her cruel stepmother and thoughtless step-sisters whose sole ambitions are to marry well at court. As she grows up Ash becomes aware that her beloved mother’s legacy has given her gifts which enable her to see into the mysterious world of magic and the old ways. Befriended by Sidhean – a handsome and charismatic fairy, she is increasing drawn into his circle. But she also meets Kaisa, the King’s magnificent huntsman who awakens deeper longings and desires within her.

This is lush and sensuous retelling of an archetypal story by a talented debut author. Ash’s world with its heady mixture of magic and reality is carefully crafted and conceived. The passion and intensity of adolescence is well-conveyed as Ash struggles with her conflicting desires. Although not described in detail, it is clear that she must pay a sexual price to be released from her debt to Sidhean. Living apart from the structure of conventional society, Ash is free to explore her growing attraction to Kaisa without reference to what others may think of her situation. A young fantasy author to watch, Lo has written a fascinating novel for mature teens.

Rosemary Woodman

Lord, Gabrielle
Conspiracy 365 – Book 6 – June
Hodder, 2010, pp181, £5.99
978 0 340 99649 2

These Conspiracy 365 books are appearing each month so this June title, halfway through, is therefore the 6th of 12 segments of the whole story. Cal Ormond is on the run: on his 15th birthday his father was killed and someone is out to ensure he never reaches the age of 16. Not only is he hunted by relentless gangsters but also pursued by an inheritance of family stories, lore and interpretations. There’s a great secret, ‘the Ormond Singularity’, a great treasure, ‘the Ormond Jewel’ and unfolding revelations seem linked with the constant threats. Cal himself survives by being extraordinarily resourceful, he piloted a jet out of May’s episode and during one element of this June action a real cliff-hanger is avoided by his being able to hijack a convenient hang glider. Although framed to be wanted by the police so he cannot find official aid anywhere Cal does have friends to help him. This includes a burgeoning relationship with a girl, Winter, who may well have her own secretive background.

This book carries a helpful reminder that the story is set in Australia where June is a winter month. Fans of tales with loads of action who like to get fully immersed in a fictional situation will be getting caught up in this sequence and anticipating each new addition with alacrity. The whole device is supported by a website and there’s every opportunity to become wholly saturated. As a 12-volume thriller the actual books may well have an in-demand shelf-life in libraries long after topical currency fades.

Chris Brown

Lynch Williams, Carol
The Chosen One
978 1 84738 938 1

Kyra, aged thirteen going on fourteen, has grown up in a polygamous religious community where behaviour, dress, thinking and marriage are tightly controlled and where men are expected to take at least three wives and father many children. Books are banned and there is no regular contact with the world outside the Compound where the sect is sequestered. When her family receives a decree
from Prophet Childs himself informing them that Kyra must marry her Uncle Hyrum, a man who is not only part of her family but considerably older than herself, she rebels. Already in love with another member of the sect, the young Joshua Johnson, Kyra faces a terrible dilemma. Does she make a bid for freedom or stay and settle for a life of subservience? The Chosen One is part love story, part dystopia, part attack on religious tyranny with echoes of John Wyndham’s The Chrysalids and Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale. Readers should expect to be shocked and challenged by this angry, brave and tender book. One of the most chilling lines in the novel is Kyra’s realisation, later echoed by Joshua, that the girls are the property of the older men in the community: ‘We are here for the men’. Her own mother is ill and pregnant for the eighth time in the story and Lynch Williams, while not exactly calling for militant feminism in this book, reminds us all too clearly that one of the chief indicators of a civilised society is the way in which it treats its women and children. It is plain from this novel that the author feels we have a long way to go in terms of gender equality. She has created a spirited heroine in the form of Kyra, already rebelling by reading harmless but forbidden books from the Ironton County Mobile Library on Wheels and meeting a young sect member in secret. While Kyra faces brutality and coercion as a consequence of her desire for self-determination, there is hope in the story, mostly in the form of female solidarity from within her own family, but unfortunately this does not translate into practical help, which Kyra must seek elsewhere. The Chosen One is a heart-breaking book which is highly recommended for the library from the upper end of KS3 onwards, but also as a starting point for discussions in the classroom about personal freedom and choice.

Rachel Bowler

Mackintosh, Samantha

Kisses for Lula

978 1 4052 4962 1

The decorative, predominately pink cover and the title make it clear from the start what type of book this is. It is narrated in the form of a diary by the protagonist, Tallula, whose sixteenth birthday is just days away. This is the cause of considerable worry, even panic, for her as she has not yet been kissed. It is apparently vital to achieve this before she is sixteen or she will be doomed for life as jinxed. All her previous efforts have resulted in some injury or other accident, hence the idea that she is jinxed. The novel traces her renewed efforts. There are some secondary problems mainly concerning Lula’s family; apart from sibling rivalry, Lula’s father is drinking too much and she suspects he is having an affair while her mother, a librarian, has lost a valuable document which is vital to stop an unscrupulous developer destroying a site of special interest. Lula is the narrator, using a very informal voice and a great deal of teenage vocabulary like ‘friking’ or ‘eew’. There is plenty of humour and a degree of suspense. It is a quick, light-hearted read which will appeal to girls from 12 up.

Audrey Baker

Malley, Gemma

The Returners

Bloomsbury, 2010, pp257, £6.99
978 1 4088 0090 4

The Returners is set in the near future, but against a background all too familiar today. This chilling and thought provoking book is not just a good story but a good story well told. Will suffers the pain of the memories that possess him, the pain of losing his mother in a mysterious ‘suicide’, memories of evil and atrocities through history and of being followed and watched by strangers with odd eyes. Will’s father is a lawyer. His father’s friend Patrick was a former policeman but is now leading a group who are determined to send immigrants home, and not averse to planting evidence to gain their ends. He exerts a great deal of influence over Will’s father.

Eventually Will discovers from the mysterious followers that he, like them, is a ‘returner’ destined to keep returning through different periods of history, to take up a new life and to absorb the sorrows and atrocities of humanity. To his horror he finds that he is an oppressor rather than one of the oppressed. He decides to fight back against his ‘destiny’ and in the process makes some surprising discoveries about himself, his father and his past.

Rosemary Good

Ness, Patrick

Monsters of Men

978 1 4063 2594 2

This powerful and eagerly awaited conclusion to the ‘Chaos Walking’ trilogy will not disappoint fans. Over 600 pages the warring factions of the psychopathic ‘Mayor’ Prentiss, power-hungry Mistress Coyle and the vast army of indigenous Spackles – with the late intervention of the spaceship of settlers from Earth – do battle on an epic scale. The story is narrated in turn by Todd, Viola and a third, bent on vengeance. The use of contrasting fonts helps distinguish them and is particularly effective in communicating the Noise, or thoughts, of the male characters. The connection that this provides, for those who are tuned in or can project their own thoughts into others, becomes increasingly significant. Though the story rockets along with its violent battle scenes and endless cliff-hangers, it is also a complex exploration of war, the nature of power and the price of peace. All the protagonists are faced with moral dilemmas in which the reader is closely involved, weighing up personal loyalties and desires against the greater good. Many of the loose ends from the previous books are tied up satisfactorily, but much is left unresolved at the end. A thought provoking read, and an exciting one.

Marianne Bradrock

Nicholson, William

Rich and Mad

978 1 4052 4739 9

Rich and Mad tells the story of first love, first sex and everything in between. Main character Maddy Fisher decides it is time she fell in love while likeable geek Rich Ross is trying to woo Maddy’s glamorous best friend. Rich and Maddy are supported by a cast of other likeable (and some not-so likeable) characters on their quest for true love. The book is an enjoyable read and readers will care about what happens to the characters – particularly as the path to true love does not run smoothly. Readers will be delighted when Maddy and Rich realise that in fact they belong together.

This book is, however, one which may not be suitable for all school libraries due to sexual references. Maddy and her peer group seem to equate falling in love to having sex. The early stages of her ‘falling in love’ campaign involve arranging contraception with her doctor and watching pornography with her best friend for performance tips. In addition after Rich and Maddy decide that they are meant for each other they very quickly consummate the relationship. There is also a teen character who gets sexual kicks from physically abusing his girlfriends.

Rich and Mad is not a fairy story or a book likely to be suitable for younger teens. However, it is one which will be enjoyed by those at an appropriate stage for its content.

Frances Breslin

Rees, Celia

The Fool’s Girl

Bloomsbury, 2010, pp308, £10.99
978 0 7475 9732 2

Twelfth Night is the inspiration for this story. Celia Rees looks beyond the ending of Shakespeare’s play and imagines the lives of the characters afterwards. The Fool’s Girl of the title is Violette, the daughter of Viola and the Duke of Illyria but Illyria has become a country torn by war, the Duke has been killed in the coup led by Sebastian, his
THE STORY OF BRITAIN

From William the Conqueror to the discovery of DNA, from Henry VIII to highwaymen, from Saxons to suffragettes, this is the definitive story of the British Isles and all the people, Scottish, Irish, Welsh and English, who have lived in them.

- This modern classic unlocks the history of Britain for a new generation.
- Each chapter includes a timeline and map, and is introduced with lavish illustrations by Kate Greenaway award-winning P.J. Lynch.

“What a delight: a book combining the very best of old-fashioned values with the highest qualities of modern writing, illustration, design and production... The artistic lynch-pin of high-quality information books for young readers is simplification without compromising accuracy, and in both the words and the pictures The Story of Britain is a prime example.”
- Chris Brown, Reviews Editor, The School Librarian

www.walker.co.uk

Listening Books runs an audiobook library service for children who struggle to read due to an illness, disability or learning difficulty. We support the National Curriculum from Key Stage 2 to A-Level and our library contains many books on audio unavailable elsewhere. For a yearly subscription of £20*, your pupils can:

- listen direct to a choice of over 1000 study guides and set texts online via our website.
- download hundreds of great titles to an iPod or other portable device to listen and learn on-the-go!

*A £20 membership will give you a username and password to licence the service across 10 different computers in your school library. Pupils can even access the service from home, making this a perfect tool for revision and homework!

Our inhouse library team will be happy to help you with any technical questions you might have throughout the course of your membership.

Bring your school into the 21st century: get your own digital library for just £20 per year!

Visit www.listening-books.org.uk or call 020 7234 0522 to join today! As soon as you receive your username and password, your pupils will be able to log on to our website to start streaming or downloading our fantastic range of audiobooks.
beloved Viola long dead. Violetta, the rightful ruler of Illyria, is to be sold into slavery by Sebastian, who is even prepared to kill his own son, Stephano, when he protests against Violetta’s fate. However, the loyal Feste rescues Violetta and the two travel to England in pursuit of Malvolio, who has become a Jesuit and who has stolen the sacred relic of Illyria. Some deft plotting brings Violetta and Feste in contact with Shakespeare, still a struggling playwright and the other characters from Twelfth Night make cameo appearances. Before Violetta is restored to her position as ruler and her true love, Stephano, many obstacles must be overcome.

The novel works well as a historical adventure story. The world of Elizabethan England is recreated with loving attention to detail and the plot is one of absorbing complexity. The book will appeal to teens who enjoy the genre — and of course to all who love Twelfth Night.

Janet Sims

Ryan, Carrie
The Dead-Tossed Waves
978 0 575 09089 7

A sequel to The Forest of Hands and Teeth, this story takes place some twenty years later and is told, in the present tense, by Gabry, the daughter of the first book’s heroine. In the opening chapters Gabry and her friends break the strictest of their town’s rules, going beyond the fence which keeps out the zombie Mudos. When they are attacked and several are infected, a chain of events is set in place which sees Gabry and her companions trying to escape from both Mudos and the Recruiters, the town’s army/police force.

The novel is at times clumsily written but its breathless pace and mixture of teen romance and gruesome horror may appeal to fans of the genre. Gabry is an annoying heroine: she dithers about which of the two boys, Catcher and Elias, she really loves, has an unerring ability to do the wrong thing in a crisis, and is totally self-centred — though other teenage girls may identify with this. Horror is a popular genre, so for people who like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing they will like.

Gerry McSourley

Sachar, Louis
The Cardturner
Bloomsbury, 2010, pp352, £12.99
978 1 4088 0850 4

When Alton’s rich, practically blind and usually unapproachable uncle requests that he becomes his ‘cardturner’ and accompanies him to his bridge tournaments, his family see it as a perfect opportunity to try to win the old — and ill — man over; hoping that he will leave them a handsome sum in his will. For Alton it’s just a job — at least at the beginning — but soon he grows to respect and even like his eccentric uncle. Surprisingly, he also starts to enjoy the game and, finally, it is due to his new job, his uncle and his newly found passion for the game that he finds a girl who he not only fancies, but who also understands him better than anyone else, especially when Alton experiences something too crazy to understand himself.

Admittedly, I had reservations before I started reading this novel; not knowing and, frankly, not caring much about bridge, I was instantly biased, especially when I browsed through the book and found that it had what looked like a number of very descriptive paragraphs on how to play it. All this changed when I started reading and I must say that even the bridge-devoted-chapters kept me hooked: not only do they successfully make the novel very atmospheric, but they also give simple and straightforward instructions, which are easy to follow if you actually wish to learn to play bridge. To be perfectly honest, I felt that Alton seemed very immature and young for his seventeen years — it was almost as if a thirteen-year-old was suddenly made older to fit with the practicalities of the story — but this is a minor flaw that doesn’t spoil the book. For some reason, reading The Cardturner reminded me of the first time I read Catcher in the Rye, and I hope that it will become just as successful and popular because it really is an extraordinary and wonderfully quirky novel, and one of very few non-action, non-fantasy books for boys (although girls will enjoy it, too).

Marzena Currie

Sedgwicke, Marcus
White Crow
Orion, 2010, pp278, £9.99
978 1 84255 187 5

When Rebecca reluctantly joins her policeman father for the summer in the remote and rapidly eroding town of Winterfold with its ruins and strange history, she finds herself drawn into a dangerous friendship with the enigmatic Ferelith, and soon her strained but familiar world is beset by uncertainty and menace. What is the truth behind the stories about Winterfold Hall and the legend of the eighteenth-century rector and his friendship with the mysterious Frenchman, Dr Barrieux? And how do they connect with Ferelith and her obsession with death and the afterlife and the idea of a white crow?

This modern gothic thriller is an engrossing read from start to finish. Sedgewicke weaves his layers of mystery with great subtlety and his use of multiple perspectives, namely those of Ferelith, the eighteenth-century rector and the third person present, which might have resulted in a dilution of narrative power in the hands of a less skillful writer, works well here. The shifts from the twenty-first century back to the eighteenth century occur seamlessly and the reader is led into a complicated warren of metaphysics, murder masquerading as the search for truth or science, and psychotic behaviour. At the novel’s heart, though, we have a female friendship in which the
forces of love and hate grapple with equal intensity. This book is not a comfortable read and some readers may find Sedgwick’s theme disturbing, but it is a compelling tale, and we are swept along by the writer’s dark vision as the story moves towards its terrifying denouement.

Highly recommended for the school library at both KS3 and KS4.

Rachel Bowler

Shaw, Tucker
Anxious Hearts
978 0 8109 8718 0

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s long narrative poem, Evangeline, is an idealised love story set in Arcadia where Gabriel falls in love with his childhood playmate, the very beautiful Evangeline. On the day of their wedding, the lovers are separated. After many years of searching they are united again but Gabriel is on his death bed. This is the inspiration for Tucker Shaw’s Anxious Hearts. In this novel Shaw re-tells Longfellow’s story twice. Shaw keeps close to the original with the romantic characters of Gabriel and Evangeline. Then in alternate chapters she has created a modern version with another pair of teenagers, Eva and Gabe.

While the two stories parallel one another there are necessary differences, for example Gabriel and Evangeline are separated by an attack on their village while Gabe leaves home and disappears in the second version. Shaw uses a different style of writing for each, very ornate, flowery language for the older story and rather sparse, plain language for Gabe and Eva. The former is really overwritten with adjective piled upon adjective and is the weakest part of the book.

Eva and Gabe’s tale leaves several unexplained issues and the ending is left open but may appeal to those with a very romantic outlook.

Audrey Baker

Singleton, Sarah
The Island
978 1 84738 296 2

First part of a trilogy, this is a ‘teenage’ novel which makes few concessions to its readership apart from its being about older teenagers who have just left school. It deals, in passing for apart from its being about older teenagers who have just left school. It deals, in passing for

Highly recommended for the school library at both KS3 and KS4.

Rachel Bowler

Shaw, Tucker
Anxious Hearts
978 0 8109 8718 0

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s long narrative poem, Evangeline, is an idealised love story set in Arcadia where Gabriel falls in love with his childhood playmate, the very beautiful Evangeline. On the day of their wedding, the lovers are separated. After many years of searching they are united again but Gabriel is on his death bed. This is the inspiration for Tucker Shaw’s Anxious Hearts. In this novel Shaw re-tells Longfellow’s story twice. Shaw keeps close to the original with the romantic characters of Gabriel and Evangeline. Then in alternate chapters she has created a modern version with another pair of teenagers, Eva and Gabe.

While the two stories parallel one another there are necessary differences, for example Gabriel and Evangeline are separated by an attack on their village while Gabe leaves home and disappears in the second version. Shaw uses a different style of writing for each, very ornate, flowery language for the older story and rather sparse, plain language for Gabe and Eva. The former is really overwritten with adjective piled upon adjective and is the weakest part of the book.

Eva and Gabe’s tale leaves several unexplained issues and the ending is left open but may appeal to those with a very romantic outlook.

Audrey Baker

Singleton, Sarah
The Island
978 1 84738 296 2

First part of a trilogy, this is a ‘teenage’ novel which makes few concessions to its readership apart from its being about older teenagers who have just left school. It deals, in passing for instance, with issues such as one character’s being shockingly beaten to make a point about power and then dying from his injuries — no implausible eleventh hour recovery. And The Island is all the better for its casual use of words such as ‘immanent’, ‘precipitously’ and ‘ambled’ and the assumption that intelligent young people speak articulately to each other. If you want dumbing down, look elsewhere.

Otto, Charlotte and Jen are in Goa on their gap year. Otto arrives at beachside partyland first and falls for a pretty girl who is then mysteriously murdered. By the time Charlotte and Jen arrive it is clear that Otto is a suspect and that there’s something very unpleasant going on. Yes it’s drugs but there are some unusual twists to do with the water which is sold in the beach bar and the nearby island which gives the novel its title.

I found The Island quite a page-turner and it is very strong on complex relations between boys and girls which may or may not be sexual. It is also a compelling ‘whodunnit’. Although Singleton promises two more instalments this first part works perfectly well as a standalone whose ending is mildly unresolved but satisfactory. There’s no irritating cliff hanger.

Susan Ekin

Suzuma, Tabitha
Forbidden
Definitions, 2010, pp418, £6.99
978 1 862 30816 9

Over the past several years, YA fiction has broken many boundaries. Drugs, sex, mental illness, murder and death have come to seem almost pedestrian. In this book, Tabitha Suzuma, never a writer to shy away from a difficult subject, tackles what really is, perhaps, the last taboo – consensual sibling incest.

Her central situation, the growing sexual attraction between the protagonists Lochan and Maya, is carefully contextualised in the first third of the book. Forced by inadequate and neglectful parents to become responsible for their younger siblings, the teenagers have to cope with A-levels, survive at school and manage an increasingly chaotic family life. Unable to ask for help from social services – they believe (probably correctly) that the family will be split up if they do – Lochan and Maya, always close, can rely only on each other.

Lochan is a convincing character, fiercely intelligent and passionate but crippled by intense shyness. He is overwhelmed not only by his feelings for Maya but his sense of responsibility to his younger brothers and sister and this comes through clearly in Suzuma’s lyrical and flowing prose.

Maya, I feel, is a less successful character. The alternate first person narrative is not distinctive enough and Maya’s voice not strong enough as a separate character. We do need to hear her side of the story, but, especially in the middle third of the book, it becomes a bit repetitive as she and Lochan try to overcome their feelings for one another. There is not enough plot to sustain the length of the book; once the situation has been established we need to move on to the resolution.

Suzuma excels at portraying the dynamics of this damaged family and the reader is immediately involved and empathetic. We know that what Maya and Lochan are feeling is wrong but we can’t help hoping for a happy ending, even though we know it is not possible. The denouement is expertly handled: from the moment they finally give way to their feelings we are tumbled quickly to the inevitable tragic ending. An epilogue manages to restore some hope, but this is still, as it should be, a difficult and challenging novel.

Lesley Martin

Welsh, Melanie
Mistress of the Storm
978 0 385 61766 6

It has to be said that this is a very weird tale. It might be described as genre free though there are echoes of steampunk in the mixing of technologies and time. Fantasy too, perhaps, but the stories of old are not myths and not all that old as they tell of only three generations. At times it is a straightforward adventure though it takes some time to get there and we should not forget the undertones of pirates of the Caribbean and just a touch of vampirism for the reader in need of blood.

Verity Gallant – a true heroine – is bullied at school and does not get on too well at home, especially after the unexpected arrival of a mysterious and power hungry step-grandmother. However, she has two worthy friends, Henry and Martha, who support her through her trials, which are legion. There is also a friendly old lady, Alice, who appears early on and sports an MG two-seater but who then goes away to Verity’s consternation but luckily returns in the nick of time.

Help – as one might expect – is on hand for our true heroine from the local library. It is run by a lady whose name has something of a contemporary ring: Miss Cameron. As Verity, Martha and Henry seem to be almost the only readers one cannot but be anxious about the library’s survival. But, Miss Cameron is a librarian with more than the usual skills and much arcane knowledge so our anxieties are probably unnecessary. This wonderful and sometimes hilarious melee develops into a really exciting denouement that teeters between success and catastrophe and the last fifty pages leave the reader breathless and stunned. What more can I say?

Michael Holloway
Information

Anniss, Matt
Djing (Master This)
Wayland, 2010, pp32, £12.99
978 0 7502 5836 4
Matt Anniss, a professional DJ and writer for DJ magazines, has produced this useful guide in the 'Master This!' series; in two-page chapters, he covers what the budding DJ needs to know, from equipment to mixing to throwing a party and producing re-edits. Each chapter is amply illustrated with photographs, and in addition there are lists of books, websites and DJing organisations; the book also provides a glossary and index.

Gerry McSourley

Asso, Bernard and Bergère, Francis
Battle of Britain
translated by Luke Spear
978 1 84918 025 2
46 large pages, in comic-book style, cover the Battle of Britain in 1940 and the bombing of Germany from 1943 to 1945. The events are seen through the actions and decisions of the main personalities on both sides of the conflict and through the statistics concerning aircraft production and losses and the casualties in the air and on the ground. It does not deal with the civilian suffering and the activities of the rescue services during the Blitz. Excitingly drawn, of course, with brief conversations in speech bubbles and helpful commentaries in yellow boxes above many pictures, the book is not entirely a soft option, requiring some concentration to follow the twists and turns of the events, and it may well have a place in the secondary school library.

David Churchill

Downs, Jonathan
The Industrial Revolution
Shire (Living Histories), 2010, pp88, £8.99
978 0 74780 781 0
This is a methodical social history of the period. It gives a thorough account of the life of ordinary people living, working and playing during the social upheaval that was the Industrial Revolution. Education, health, diet, transport and every other aspect of daily life is described. The illustrations, many from appropriate contemporary sources add to the comprehensive coverage. I was held, enjoying the chapter on entertainment, as it is a subject rarely given space in such a book. Travelling fairs, theatre, prize fighting, cricket and of course the many ways of gambling either for the gentry or the commoner are all described.
I did not find the prose welcoming and it may not draw in a browsing young person but will reward a serious minded student. It is always a difficult line to tread between being too serious and risk being dull or being too light and risk being frivolous. Mr Downs certainly does not make the second error. The text is concluded with a list of places to visit – a fine way to bring the subject truly to life and much better than the more usual list of websites, but perhaps we could have been given that too.

Nick Hunt

Gifford, Clive
The Who’s Who of... The Cold War
Wayland, 2010, pp32, £12.99
978 0 7502 5746 6
The Who’s Who of The Cold War is aimed at KS3 with smaller font and denser text than in Wayland’s 32 page books for younger readers. As the series title implies, each double–page is a fact file on an important individual of the 20th century; the cover shows Castro. Other names include: Joseph McCarthy, Gary Powers, Ethel Rosenberg as examples. A photograph as well as contextual information is included and captioned images brighten up what might otherwise be overly crowded pages. The book includes contents pages, glossary, index, time-line and website recommendations as well as information about other titles in the series. I like these books and just wish that children could be persuaded to use some of these super non-web based resources first before galloping off to Google!

Janet Sims

Harris, Joseph
Space Exploration (The Impact of Science and Technology)
Watts, 2010, pp64, £12.99
978 0 7496 9245 2
The series sets out to indicate how the world we live in today has been transformed both positively and negatively by recent developments in various fields of exploration. This specific book deals with the politics of space, the realities of living in space, satellites and space probes, space spin-offs and the future of space exploration, space tourism and space elevators. The use of colour illustrations and the layout of the text lead the reader through the story of space exploration very expertly. This book would be a very useful addition to any school library.

Anthony Hamilton Jones

Jeffrey, Gary and Riley, Terry
Autopsies: Pathologist at Work (Graphic Forensic Science)
Watts, 2010, pp48, £12.99
978 0 7496 9245 2
Forensic science is used to help solve crimes as physical evidence is presented in a court of law. The pathologist, the scientist who examines the dead body, is particularly interested in the position of the corpse, any obvious wounding and any material evidence located on or near the body. The body is then removed to the mortuary where a more thorough examination, post mortem, is carried out. This book sets out the procedures used very succinctly and graphically, so that a young reader will understand the information given very easily. The Pennsylvania Poisoning Mystery case is illustrated in detail, and other famous cases such as the Dead Man’s Grip and the Black Widow Poisonings are referred to. A book that will appeal to readers who enjoy the macabre.

Anthony Hamilton Jones

Levete, Sarah
Talk about Family Break-Ups
Wayland, 2010, pp48, £12.99
978 0 7502 5737 4
I like the open ended, sensible but sensitive, approach of this book very much. It deals, most informatively, with an issue that many thousands of children have to deal with every year. How do you cope when the adults in your family decide to live apart?
Levete starts with a chapter on defining family break-up, using adult, but accessible, language with short sentences and plenty of boxed out panels with statistics, questions to think about or discuss and other information including mini celebrity case studies of people such as Barack Obama, Madonna and Britney Spears. Subsequent chapters take the reader through matters such as ‘How do people feel in a family break-up?’, ‘The law and family break-up’ and ‘Moving On’.
There is some unequivocal, but gentle, advice about not putting up with abuse or allowing yourself to be used as a pawn in arguments between adults. On almost every page the author tells the reader to talk to others when feeling unhappy. It ends with a helpful glossary explaining terms such as ‘sibling’, ‘stereotypical’, ‘counsellor’ and ‘court’. There’s also a list of websites and helplines.
This book feels pleasant in the hand with its shiny paper and coloured photographs so that it makes an upbeat statement to reinforce the idea that this situation is happening to you but that it isn’t your fault.
I’d put several copies of this book in the library (because I suspect it could be stolen by needy students not wanting to be seen reading it) and
Lydon, Dan
Africa and the Slave Trade (Black History)
978 0 7496 9030 4
Part of the ‘Black History’ series, this book explores the history of the transatlantic slave trade during the 15th to 19th centuries. The information is clearly laid out and well organised into double page spreads following the progress of slaves from capture to the slave trading ports on the African coasts and across the Middle Passage, and what life was like for them once they arrived in the Americas. However, this section focuses almost exclusively on the sugar plantations of the Caribbean and the Southern States with little mention of slavery in other contexts. An excellent section shows ‘the triangular trade’ where British ships sailed to Africa to buy slaves, to America to sell them, and back to Britain with the crops grown on the slave plantations. Other pages tell of Oludah Equiano who became one of the leading figures in the abolition campaign, and Mary Prince who gained her freedom when her owners moved to Britain, where slavery had already been abolished.

Further chapters examine how the African culture was maintained in slavery, and the legacy of slavery in Africa today – racism, war, debt and inequality.

The book is illustrated throughout with contemporary engravings and paintings and other features include a timeline, a comprehensive glossary, and suggested websites and books for further reading. This would be a very useful book for pupils in KS3/4.

Lesley Martin

Madavan, Vijay
Cooking the Indian Way
Lerner, 2009, pp72, £7.99
978 0 7613 4395 0
This well illustrated book is a good introduction to Indian cooking and culture. An introductory chapter talks about India, its varied people, traditions and festivals, and the part which food plays in its culture. A section on spices and how to prepare them is particularly interesting. After an introduction to the ingredients and techniques used in Indian cooking, the recipes are set out from starters and snacks to the sweets at the end of a meal, and a couple of menus are suggested for a lunch or a vegetarian meal. There are a few dishes which will be familiar, and some more unusual ones. Each recipe is clearly set out with a description of the dish, how it would be served in India, and clear instructions including preparation and cooking time and how many people it will serve; however there are photographs of only a few of the finished dishes. An index makes it easy to find a particular dish or ingredient. This book is part of a wider series on cooking around the world and would be a very useful addition to any school library.

Lesley Martin

Nelson, S. D.
Black Elk’s Vision: A Lakota Story
978 0 8109 8399 1
Black Elk led an interesting life. Born in 1863 to the Lakota (Sioux) tribe – who were a feared, nomadic and warrior society – he witnessed the gradual decline of the Native American during his lifetime. The Wha-shi-choos (white men) conquered them by design and accident in what is now known as the ‘Clash of Cultures’. The arrogant belief in Manifest Destiny meant that white men saw it as their right to take everything in their path. They slaughtered an estimated thirty million buffalo (essential to the way of life of the Native Americans), leaving fewer than one thousand. Unintentionally, they brought diseases to which the Indians possessed no immunity. Hundreds of thousands of Native Americans died from measles, smallpox and influenza. Faced with this situation, Black Elk joined Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, spending three years abroad touring Europe. Following the Indian Wars of the 1880s, with the buffalo gone and facing starvation, the Native Americans moved to reservations, where the U.S. Government actually issued them with rations. In 1950, Black Elk died on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

All this is fact, and serves as an excellent introduction to the history of the Native American people in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition, the author tells of (and illustrates) Black Elk’s vision as a nine year-old, when he was summoned to the spirit world. Black Elk shared his vision and intended that his teachings would contribute to the common good of mankind. Human beings are not privileged beings who are above or separate from the world. We are part of the landscape and everything in it; with this awareness comes humility and the gift of harmony. A first-rate book.

Robin Barlow

Oxland, Chris
The Top Ten Inventions That Changed the World
Watts, 2009, pp32, £11.99
978 0 7496 9074 8
The inventions chosen are the printing press, steam train, camera, telephone, car, radio, aeroplane, television, microchip and the web. These double spreads are followed by two more spreads headed ‘Best of the rest’ (in case you don’t agree?) which include the wheel and the boat plus nine others. The usual contents list, glossary and index is accompanied by a really useful timeline (ancient to present) giving the invention, its influence and other world events to put things in context. Useful mainly for KS3, but could also be of interest to able KS2 and less able KS4. As it covers science, technology, history and general interest you might even need two copies. It could also be useful as a source of material for general studies discussion work. There are four other books in the series covering Events, Inventions, Leaders and Scientific Discoveries.

Delene A. Barnett

Shone, Rob
Ancient Treasures (Graphic Discoveries)
Illustrated by Spender, Nick
Watts, 2009, pp48, £12.99
978 0 7496 9237 7
This graphic novel style account of important archaeological discoveries is an entertaining approach to the subject. The first few pages give a short introduction to archaeology, its history, techniques and procedures is well thought out with straightforward information on one page and more detailed labelled pictures and diagrams on the other. This gives a good understanding of some of the modern techniques used such as CAT scans and facial reconstruction but those put off by the phrases such as ‘archaeological geophysics’ will still glean enough information to know roughly how a dig proceeds. The remainder of the book deals with Troy, Tutankhamen and the Terracotta Army in the familiar comic book style, setting the excavations in their historical context and giving the background story of how the remains came to be there. The illustrations are nothing special but are clearly set out and the colours are vivid and strong. A final round up shows each site on a world map and has photographs of some of the major finds. There is a good glossary of the technical terms used, suggested further reading (all books, no websites!) and links to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge and the British Museum. This would not replace more comprehensive books on archaeology or ancient treasures, but might be a good book for more reluctant readers.

Lesley Martin
Solway, Andrew  
*Climate Change (World at Risk)*  
Watts, 2010, pp44, £12.99  
978 0 7496 8866 0

A topical subject covered in six chapters (30 pages) giving most of the facts and questions relating to the effects that are observable and evidence available. The chapter on effects on wildlife covers the arctic, rainforests, disease (virus and tropical diseases that can spread) and has a small box headed planet watch giving statistics similar to the other chapters. There is a glossary, index and webfinder and a double spread giving some helpful graphs. A useful book for KS3 to 4 both for science and for general studies.  

Delvane A. Barnett

**Steele, Philip**  
*Campaigners (20th Century Lives)*  
978 0 7502 5822 7

This is beautifully presented and inspiring in its content. The collection of selected ‘lives’ includes the predictable Martin Luther King and Ghandi but some who will be less familiar to the pupils and their teachers who read this book. Abbé Pierre started the Emmaus movement to assist poverty in France and he has been an inspiration to many such equivalent groups but he does not often attract such notice. His inclusion is a sign of the world focus of the book, rather than listing only those with GB fame. Key facts on each are alongside the descriptive text and each profile ends with a legacy section many of which could and should act as spurs to personal consideration. The book is easily accessible to a KS2 pupil but equally informative to a KS3 and of value in a citizenship lesson even at KS4. Many schools have charity committees and such a book would be valuable to ensure that such a committee does not always support the same predictable causes but looks at a wider range of recipients for their efforts, practical and financial.  

Nick Hunt

**Thomas, Jeremy and Lewington, Richard**  
*The Butterflies of Britain and Ireland*  
978 0 7496 8861 3

A topical subject covered in six chapters (30 pages) giving most of the facts and questions relating to the effects that are observable and evidence available. The chapter on effects on wildlife covers the arctic, rainforests, disease (virus and tropical diseases that can spread) and has a small box headed planet watch giving statistics similar to the other chapters. There is a glossary, index and webfinder and a double spread giving some helpful graphs. A useful book for KS3 to 4 both for science and for general studies.  

Delvane A. Barnett

**Vaughan, Jenny**  
*Causes and Campaigns*  
978 0 7496 8866 0

For our students; the media is simply part and parcel of their lives in the 21st century. They fail to realise that it hasn’t always been this way and, more worryingly, fail to see the power that the media has over their every move. Literature such as this allows students to explore many aspects of the media and, in this particular book, enables them to debate the many issues surrounding media campaigns. Vaughan has a simple style to her writing which is informative and, yet, accessible for a wide range of abilities and age groups. The images are complementary to the text and there is excellent use of recent examples from the world of campaigning. Most importantly, Vaughan shows a balanced view of the role of the media, a balance that is not always seen in the media! This is a student friendly book which would provide many opportunities for debate within Media courses, but also within any Citizenship provision.  

Rebecca Carter

**Woodward, John**  
*The Deep, Deep Ocean (Oceans Alive!)*  
978 0 7496 9269 8

This book will appeal to pupils in the early years of junior schooling. The reader is set a mission – to find out what hides in the depths of the oceans. The reader will have to make the dangerous journey into the dark and come back to the surface again safely. Having been wished good luck, off the reader goes on a magnificent journey full of excitement, discovery and incredible creatures such as the cookie-cutter shark and the gulper whale. He or she visits the deepest place on earth, the Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench nearly 11 kilometres (7 miles) deep, and explores the shipwrecked Titanic and many other fascinating objects.  

Joan Hamilton Jones
KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON READING
The sunlight of literature can touch hearts and souls... — Michael Morpurgo

Making a difference to learning

A word or two about READING
THE MORE THAT YOU READ, THE MORE THINGS YOU WILL KNOW. THE MORE THAT YOU LEARN, THE MORE PLACES YOU’LL GO (or here)
The trouble with a book is that you never know what’s in it

Outside of a dog, a book is a man’s best friend. Inside of a dog, it’s too dark to read (Charles Dickens)

Reading is like jogging for the brain – get your feet up kids, and get reading!

Keep Calm... and view the full range of downloadable SLA posters online at www.sla.org.uk/posters
**Religious Studies**

Danes, Christopher; Danes, Simon; Lakhani, Seeta

*Philosophy of Religion for Today: For GCSE Religious Studies*

St Mark’s Press, 2009, pp158, £14.75

978 1 907062 05 6

I was sceptical of a book with no index, no glossary, and very little in the way of textual guides to help the reader find their way around some very dense text. But as RE is not my speciality I consulted an RE teacher with experience of teaching both RE and Philosophy of Religion for both GCSE and A level. She thought it was interesting how the authors had juxtaposed traditional Western philosophy of religion with the Eastern Hindu approach, but was concerned that the approach taken was more suited to A level than GCSE.

There are no chapter summaries or key points to provide the necessary content reinforcement for such a complicated subject for GCSE students. Instead each chapter finishes with questions for further thinking but their level seem to be again to be more geared for A level than GCSE level.

---

**Poetry**

Adcock, Fleur

*Dragon Talk*

Bloodaxe, 2010, pp64, £7.95

978 1 85224 878 9

This short collection of new poetry is the first to appear since the superb *Collected Poems* published by Bloodaxe ten years ago, and can be regarded as a postscript, fifty poems which look back over the poet’s life. The collection begins with the title piece, a wryly humorous account of the poet wrestling with an impersonal voice recognition machine, the ‘Dragon’ of the title, and its insistence on the literal: ‘Laughter’s not in your vocabulary: all you understand are words’, although the symbiotic nature of the relationship between poet and machine is recognised, again with much humour and warmth.

Following this are two sections, prosaically entitled ‘My First Twenty Years’ and ‘Next’, this directness being reflected in the spare, concise nature of the poems, which make their impact ungramatically and with effective understatement. We start in a schoolhouse in New Zealand’s ‘Kuaotunu’ with a variety of memories and nods towards their legacies, as in ‘the only chocolate I still like’ and the wonderful ‘illiterate’, recalling the impact of learning to read.

We move with the poet to England at the start of the Second World War and her impressions of places such as ‘Sidcup’ and ‘Tunbridge Wells Grammar School’, before a reluctant return to New Zealand in 1947, beautifully caught in ‘Signature’ as Adcock, remembering ‘dragging my feet through the ankle-deep snow’, declares baldly ‘I didn’t want to leave’. Dragon Talk, despite being the latest collection, would be an excellent place to start with Adcock as an accessible, humorous and rather moving introduction to her distinctive style.

*Frank Startup*

---

Simpson, Louis

*Voices in the Distance: Selected Poems*

Bloodaxe, 2010, pp176, £9.95

978 1 85224 861 1

This anthology gathers poems from thirteen collections published between 1955 and 2009, including eight from the Pulitzer Prize-winning *At the End of the Open Road*. It is extraordinarily powerful poetry using a variety of forms and styles to explore its themes and make observations on contemporary life and American society. One of the many reasons for reading this is the inclusion of some superb narrative poetry, a form which has become somewhat neglected lately by serious poets. ‘The Runner’, for example, is a war story, based on fact and set in 1944 about a soldier in the American army, employing all the conventions of prose, but in poetic cadences which render the incidents described all the more intense: ‘Day turned to dusk; the truck went jolting on;/The wind was drumming on the canvas hood/And prying coldly down the runner’s back’. This could be a serious piece of armoury in the long running battle to get boys interested in poetry.

The whole collection is peopled by characters in whose situations and circumstances the poet involves us, while topicality is to the fore: the collapse of banks; the stoning of two adulterers in Iraq; the experiences of a Professor of English in American universities. As Seamus Heaney is quoted as saying, ‘His poems win us first by their drama, their ways of voicing our ways.’ This, with appropriate direction, would be a very useful addition to a school or college library bookshelf.

*Frank Startup*

---

Chinn, Steve

*Addressing the Unproductive Classroom Behaviours of Students with Special Needs*


978 1 84905 050 0

‘... intervention at the lower levels may well pre-empt the development of more serious and entrenched behaviours’.

What a helpful book! Steve Chinn has been working with children with SEN since 1967 and surprisingly notes that Aspergers /autistic spectrum disorder was not recognised in the UK until 1991. It has taken some time for this knowledge to filter through to local authorities and as I write new facilities are opening up to address the needs of these students in mainstream schools. Other main areas of difficulty identified are: dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and its variants, speech and language disorder and physical disability.

A photocopiable screening test is included which is valuable as an aid to early identification. This is followed by recommendations for the most effective strategies for dealing with these difficulties including suggestions from pupils.
Professional

The book concludes with a section on educational theories including social competence, learning styles, self concept and a particularly succinct account of Transactional Analysis. Suggestions for further reading and a list of related organisations are also supplied. This highly accessible book provides a practical introduction to the complex needs of a substantial cohort of students for teachers and teaching assistants alike.

Mary Crawford

Horsfield, Karen
Making Ends Meet: Planning and Managing the Primary School Library Budget
SLA (Guidelines), 2010, pp32, £7.50
(£6.00 members)
978 1 903446 53 9

Managing the budget of any library is always likely to pose a challenge – either because of the level of funding or because of the experience of the budget holder. As libraries in primary schools become more widespread they are not always being staffed by trained professionals and as such may be staffed by those with little experience of handling a budget for a library and its particular needs. A primary school library will also differ in its needs from libraries in other institutions therefore to have a quick and accessible set of guidelines to steer the budget holder through setting up and maintaining a budget is without doubt a worthy resource.

Starting with an outline of what a budget is and why it is necessary – to ensure that there are defined aims and objectives alongside an evaluation of how to achieve them with the available funding – this title then presents a methodology for gaining, maintaining and using a budget. Complete with two case studies, one from a Junior School the other from a Community budget. Complete with two case studies, one available funding – this title then presents a evaluation of how to achieve them with the defined aims and objectives alongside an

Martin, Andrew
Building Classroom Successes
Continuum, 2010, pp223, £16.99
978 1 84706 560 5

It is the age old debate of fight or flight and, unfortunately, in today’s classrooms, it is more often than not the fight that prevails when students are faced with challenging learning scenarios. With constant media coverage of the diminishing standards in education and in student behaviour, practitioners are constantly seeking new ways to tackle the issues they face on a day to day basis. Dr Martin has produced here a straightforward and manageable guide to dealing with a myriad of student issues which are all rooted in self doubt and a lack of confidence.

The content of Dr Martin’s advice is accessible for both new and experienced teachers and delivers an interesting angle on dealing with issues arising in the classroom that is focused on dealing with the reason for the lack of engagement rather than simply dealing with the behaviour itself. Clearly if the students can become motivated and confident individuals, the academic results will follow.

Rebecca Carter

Merchant, Ed and Fuller, Rachel
Dad David, Baba Chris and ME
BAAF, 2010, pp20, £8.95 (+p&p)
978 1 905664 89 4

Published by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering, this brightly illustrated story book is aimed at children from 5-10 years old and attempts to find a way of explaining the diversity and difference that is reflected in modern-day family groups. Its overriding aim is to encourage an understanding of same-sex parents and the way in which this constitutes a family as much as having parents of either sex does. It attempts to break down barriers and dispel myths borne of misunderstanding in a gentle and sensitive way. Ben is nearly eight. He was adopted at the age of four. He lives with his two dads in an ordinary house on an ordinary street. He goes to an ordinary school and does ordinary things. Ben is just as normal as all his friends. Ben however is teased by other children at his school for these children do not understand Ben’s family circumstances. Ben is helped by his teacher and his dads to see that what matters is to be cared for. As his friends begin to see this too, Ben becomes more settled.

With a distinctive illustration style portraying the characters in a simple yet real style, this is an important book for young children who are trying to understand, or are being taught about, the varieties of families that can be found in modern society. It will be as useful to social workers and childcare professionals as to teachers and parents for its gentle and helpful approach to a complex and often misunderstood subject.

Louise Ellis-Barrett

Jones, Becky and Lewis, Clare
London Adventure Walks for Families
Frances Lincoln, 2010, pp208, £8.99
978 0 7112 3067 5

Although it is not obviously a school library book, librarians may well seek an excuse to add this entertaining, wide ranging and non-expensive pocket sized book to their collections. Certainly, leaders and parents of children over a wide age range may find varied uses for it. Twenty-five walks, from around three to five miles long, are described, some circular but most from one tube station to another. The walks are themed – some historical, as exploring the Great Fire, Florence Nightingale, the Romans or Kings and Queens, others have such literary bases as Peter Pan, Paddington Bear, Mary Poppins and Charles Dickens. Dockside London is featured as are Dulwich Village and its woods and the birds on Rainham Marshes. Some of these themes, and others, are component parts of KS1 and 2. Each walk is introduced with a little sketch map, a collection of information, then the walk itself with interesting details of what is to be seen and learned, followed by helpful advice on where to eat, where to find information on opening and closing times and prices, books to read, activities to try and wider areas to explore. It is a book that begs to be used and must surely find a welcome to try and wider areas to explore. It is a book that

Wendy Worley

Pennac, Daniel
School Blues
Maclehose Press (Quercus), 2010, pp273, £16.99
978 1 906694 64 7

This is one of the wisest books about teaching, teachers and pupils that I’ve ever read. Daniel Pennac, who is French, was not successful at
school and became a deviant or ‘dunce’ in the 1950s and 60s and stole from his parents. He remembers how it felt and what saved him: his lifelong habit of reading (not then, recognised as an asset, as he points out) and three inspirational teachers at the boarding school to which his parents sent him for a change of direction. Eventually he ‘became’ — a key word in Pennac’s philosophy — a teacher and best selling author of the ‘Belleville Quintet’, including Monsieur Malaussène, and children’s books. Here he reflects on, and recalls in a compellingly quirky style reminiscent of a French film, the essence of a good teacher like Mr Bal. ‘The idea that his students might be unruly had never crossed my mind.’ He was ‘calm and smiling, a mathematical Buddha’ with a passion for communicating his subject. Positive and upbeat, Mr Bal was quite different from most other teachers who criticised ‘this class’ en bloc, always using the ‘superlatives of inferiority’ — a type Pennac, who can be quite Bunyanesque, calls ‘Mr Rebuking.’

There are some wonderful tiny nuggets of wisdom here too. He asserts, for example, that a teacher’s key skill is sleep and that the good teacher goes to bed early. And he argues forcibly that all teachers need a sense of ignorance. You need to be ‘able to understand how it feels to be the person who doesn’t know what you know.’ Sadly, most teachers lose this as they grow up and immerse themselves in specialisms and strengths.

As an English reader and former English teacher I’m also struck, incidentally, by the sophisticated complexity of the formal grammar French school roams over the dynamics of some of the lessons students are expected to master – as Pennac describes. The ‘Belleville Quintet’ is a great example of how fiction can be used to complete the curriculum in this country.

I’m also struck, incidentally, by the sophisticated complexity of the formal grammar French school roams over the dynamics of some of the lessons students are expected to master – as Pennac describes. The ‘Belleville Quintet’ is a great example of how fiction can be used to complete the curriculum in this country.

As an English reader and former English teacher I’m also struck, incidentally, by the sophisticated complexity of the formal grammar French school roams over the dynamics of some of the lessons students are expected to master – as Pennac describes. The ‘Belleville Quintet’ is a great example of how fiction can be used to complete the curriculum in this country.

Available again from the SLA

Start With the Youngest: The Library for Nursery and Infant Children

Now back in print, our recent title, written by an experienced schools’ library service manager.

It is vitally important to introduce and familiarise our youngest children in nurseries and infant schools to the world of books, reading and libraries. This Guideline gives practical advice on how to set up and run a library for the youngest children.

Full of practical ideas, it discusses possible locations, furnishings, policies, use and much more.

This Guideline also includes two case studies – one with a reader development focus and the other outlining some work carried out with a top infant class who were using the library for topic research.

This compact text is competitively priced in our new ‘Guidelines Mini’ series.

£6.00 (£5.00 to SLA members)

Index of Advertisers

2 CQR 171
Andersen Press 163
BBC Audiobooks 167
D-Skin 151
D-Tech 177
Famous Books Bollywood Series 177
Hodder inside back cover
IS Oxford inside front cover
LFC 159
Hawwood Books 157
Lion Hudson 157
Listening Books 181
Little Tiger Press 151
Meadowside Books 171
Micro Librarian Systems 145
Pickabook 157
Raintree 167
Softlink outside back cover
Templar Publishing 159
Walker Books 181
| A | Adcock, Fleur – Dragon Talk | 189 |
|   | Anniss, Matt – Dingo (Master This) | 184 |
|   | Ardagh, Philip – Knights and Castles | 169 |
|   | Arlow, Bernard and Bergére, Francis – The Battle of Britain | 184 |
|   | Augarde, Steve – X Isle | 173 |
| B | Barker, Dominic – Sharp Returns (Mickey Sharp) | 173 |
|   | Barker, Dominic – Adam and the Arkonauts | 161 |
|   | Barlow, Steve and Stidmore, Steve – Return to the Lost World | 161 |
|   | Barracough, Sue – Be an Eco Hero At Home | 169 |
|   | Beardsley, Martin – Black Death | 161 |
|   | Beattie, Juli and Warner, Arabella – The Art Room | 189 |
|   | Bell, Alex – Lex Tvent Versus The Gods | 173 |
|   | Bergman, Mara, and Thomas, Cassandra – Lively Everything | 174 |
|   | Binch, Caroline – Road Horse | 161 |
|   | Bingham, Jane – Henry VIII (Extraordinary Lives) | 169 |
|   | Binch, Caroline – “Road Horse” | 161 |
|   | Brashares, Ann – The Summer that Changed Everything | 153 |
|   | Brooks, Hardcover – The Ugly Duckling | 153 |
|   | Brown, Kate – The Spider Moon Book 1 | 161 |
|   | Browne, Anthony – Me and You | 153 |
|   | Bush, Penelope – Alice in Time | 174 |
| C | Carrington, Jane – Inside My Head | 173 |
|   | Chinn, Steve – Addressing the Unproductive Behaviour of Students with Special Needs | 189 |
|   | Conway, David and Angaramo, Roberta – | 189 |
|   | Crossley, Sheena – Bats about Wales | 162 |
|   | Cotterill, Jo – Star Crossed | 174 |
|   | Crossley, Sheila – Bats about Wales | 162 |
| D | Daines, Christopher; Daines, Simon; Lakhanhi, Seeta – Philosophy of Religion for Today: For GCSE Religious Studies | 189 |
|   | Dashner, James – The Maze Runner | 175 |
|   | Davies, Corinne – Ralph is (not) a Superhero | 162 |
|   | De Goldi, Kate – The 10pm Question | 175 |
|   | Deary, Terry – Put Out the Light | 162 |
|   | Deas, Stephen – The Thief-Taker’s Apprentice | 173 |
|   | Downs, Jonathan – The Industrial Revolution | 184 |
|   | Doyle, Malachy – The Lambton Curses | 162 |
|   | Duncan, Charlie – Gastronimus and the Legend of Mr Grrrrumblebum | 162 |
| E | Elliott, Rebecca – Just Because | 153 |
| F | Faunzone, Anne and Littlewood, Karin – The Day the Rams Fell | 153 |
|   | Fisher, Catherine – Crown of Acorns | 176 |
|   | Forwood, Tony – Dogborn (The Flaxfield Quartet) | 162 |
|   | Frontenot, Jean-Luc and Jolivet, Joelle – Oops! | 154 |
|   | Fuge, Charles and Conway, David – Bedtime Hullabaloo! | 154 |
| G | Gifford, Clive – The Who’s Who of... The Cold War | 184 |
|   | Gleitzman, Morris – Now | 176 |
|   | Gourlay, Candy – Tall Story | 164 |
|   | Grant, Helen – The Glass Demon | 176 |
|   | Green, Jen – Cities (The Geography Detective Investigates) | 169 |
|   | Green, John – Paper Towns | 176 |
|   | Grisham, John – Theodore Boone: Young Lawyer | 176 |
|   | Hadithi, Mwenye and Kennaaway, Adrienne – The Three Little Pigs: An Architectural Tale | 164 |
| H | Haddini, Myrenwe and Kennaway, Adrienne – Bumping Buffalo | 154 |
|   | Han, Jenny – The Summer I Turned Pretty | 176 |
|   | Harrington, Mushty, Trudy – Solving the Mysteries of Ancient Rome | 169 |
|   | Harland, Richard – Worldshaker | 178 |
2010 HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARD WINNER, TWICE WHITBREAD CHILDREN’S AWARD WINNER AND CARNEGIE MEDAL WINNER

DAVID ALMOND

THE PREQUEL TO SKELLIG ‘ONE OF THE BEST NOVELS OF THE LAST DECADE.’ NICK HORNBY

‘My name is Mina is fantastic – witty and wistful, engaging and entertaining. I loved it.’ JONATHAN DOUGLAS

For a sneak peek of the first chapter visit www.davidalmond.com

MY NAME IS MINA
AND I LOVE THE NIGHT, ANYTHING SEEMS POSSIBLE AT NIGHT WHEN THE REST OF THE WORLD HAS GONE TO SLEEP

www.hodderchildrens.co.uk
Softlink’s Oliver can connect your school library to your learning platform in very clever ways. Ask us how.

The latest version of Oliver is delivering benefits to schools all around the world:

- **VLE integration**: Link in with other school applications. A gateway to the library
- **Web based**: available from anywhere, 24/7
- **Easy-to-use interfaces**: searching is fun and rewarding for your students from primary to sixth form and improves information literacy
- **Borrower account information** enables you to promote personalised and independent learning
- **Appealing catalogue interface** enriched with maps, book cover images and more...
- **Saves you time**: Quick cataloguing, alert systems and powerful reporting saves your time for more fulfilling tasks

**Oliver. Your Library Solution.**