

Refugees

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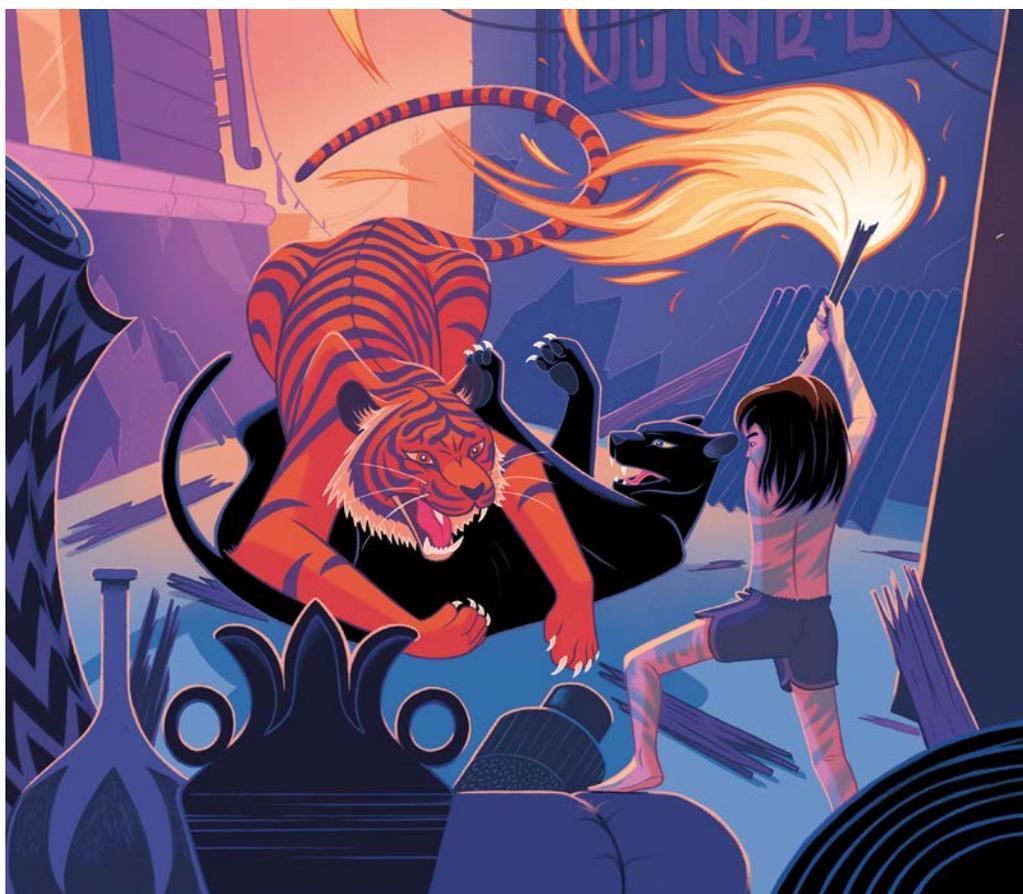


Illustration by Robert Hunter, *The Jungle Book* (2016), p.18. Copyright © 2016 Robert Hunter. Reproduced courtesy Frances Lincoln Children's Books. See review on page 34.

EDITORIAL

The subject of refugees is never a comfortable one, and choosing it as our theme has emphasised this. For most of us, this discomfort can be kept at a distance. Not so for Elizabeth Laird who talks about the work that has inspired her latest novel. It all started when she saw Syrian refugees arriving in Germany and witnessed the conditions they were being greeted with. From this, she herself has been working with refugees in Jordan. Her account is both devastating and inspiring – food for thought. Nor can we ignore refugees here in the UK; they are our neighbours and in need. Around London volunteers and charities are working to support them. The Islington Refugee Centre is one of these and we are privileged to hear from a couple of the volunteers. While the everyday essentials are easy to identify and, perhaps, supply, surprisingly books have also proved to be both important and invaluable in helping these people to find a place in our society – but it soon becomes clear it is very much ‘the right book at the right time’. And books are at the heart of the project managed by REFORMA and USBBY as they work to support child

refugees travelling from their troubled South American homes in search of a new, safe life in the United States. Again it is a distressing story – but what an example of what can be done with determination and cooperation. If refugees need books, so do we and our children. How else can we share their experiences. This is true also of understanding war – the background to the lives of the majority of refugees. Picture books are as important as longer texts in fostering empathy and understanding, and are international – as the exhibition mounted by the International Youth Library in Munich demonstrates. For a British audience, the books on the list created by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education provide an insight into the experience of the refugee.

Books provide the imaginative release – a touch of magic. This is what is on offer at The House of Illustration, King’s Cross, London, through the work of Quentin Blake. We all need such magic whatever our life experiences.

Ferelith Hordon



From *The Parrot and the Merchant*. See review on page 46.

Books for Unaccompanied Children @ the Border REFORMA's Children in Crisis Project

REFUGEES

Oralia Garza de Cortes



REFORMA was meeting at the annual meeting of the American Library Association in hot Las Vegas, Nevada, in the summer of 2014. But our attention was far away, on the border, where new stories kept flashing dramatic, haunting images of unaccompanied children, mostly poor, mostly brown and mostly unaccompanied young people from the Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, riding the dreaded trains they named 'la bestia', the beast, on a very dangerous journey to cross the border into the United States. Once on US soil, the young people were turning themselves into the Border Patrol en masse, declaring themselves refugees. The event was unprecedented in the history of immigration and border studies. As an advocacy group of professionals, we knew full well that it was not enough to watch helplessly along with thousands of helpless spectators watching the events unfolding at the border. We watched as a humanitarian crisis unfolded before our eyes, particularly as we later discovered that the children were being detained in deplorable conditions at what soon came to be known as 'hieleras' or ice houses, a reference to the freezing temperatures maintained at the detention facilities (designed to keep temperatures low to ward off widespread diseases or infections) where the children were being detained. It was at this juncture that the Children and Young Adult Services committee of REFORMA, the non-profit organisation founded in 1971, decided to take action. We quickly formed the REFORMA Children in Crisis Task Force, a committee of dedicated library professionals with the distinct mission of obtaining and distributing Spanish and bilingual books for the unaccompanied minors coming from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras who had undertaken the treacherous journey crossing the Mexican border and arrive at the US border to seek asylum status in the United States. With the help and support of the broad community of librarians, publishers and distributors of books in Spanish, who have supported efforts to build up the community of readers in Spanish in the United States for over half a century, the Task Force quickly went to work, putting together a comprehensive list of children's and young adult books that could be used for the purpose of developing a collection of books suitable for the children crossing the border.



Reviewing the Southwest Key's Craft Project

Members of REFORMA from throughout Southern California, primarily in Santa Ana and San Diego, who work on the front lines in libraries, got to work asking Spanish books distributors to donate books for free or at heftily discounted prices. They also reached out to non-profit organisations that are sheltering the children to invite the children to come to the public library for a story-time and exploration period. The children now come on a regular order, even if it is different children that are exposed to the services of a public library. Ultimately it is this very act that we hope to impress upon the young people – that the library can be that place of refuge for them where they are free to explore and discover all those ideas they may have only dreamed of. In the meantime, a dedicated group of librarians began to work online to put together a list of hundreds of beautiful recommended children’s books in Spanish or bilingual editions. The booklist is available at <http://refugeechildren.wix.com/refugee-children#!reforma-recommended-book-list/cbxg>.

The committee was inspired by IBBY’s involvement with its own Children in Crisis project. REFORMA’s Children in Crisis co-chair, a member of USBBY, attended the International Congress held in Mexico City in 2014 and met with IBBY President Patsy Aldana to explore a possible collaboration. In August of 2015, an international delegation of IBBY, USBBY and IBBY Mexico (A Leer), led by REFORMA, undertook a fact-finding and book-delivery trip to the border cities of Brownsville and McAllen, Texas, visiting libraries, detention centres and the refugee centre in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. The Catholic Charities Centre is operated by Catholic Charities under the charismatic leadership of Sr Norma Pimentel, featured during Pope Francis’ visit to the United States in September 2015. The centre serves as a way station for the refugee young people who have been apprehended at the border but have gained their release, at least temporarily until their court appearances become due.

Two and a half years into this project, we have learned much about a very complex system that has been developed to deal with children fleeing economic and violent conditions in Central America that compel children to come north, in many cases in search of parents who left them behind years earlier during the horrid civil-war years in Central America that compelled many immigrants to come north in search of a better life.

We embarked on a book project to collect books in Spanish for the children so that the children could have a book to read on their continued journey, wherever this journey took them. We wanted to make sure a good book in their hand would serve as a source of light and comfort for their journey. To that end, we proposed that each book would have a bookplate with that very message created by the beloved Latina children’s author Lucia Gonzalez, also a librarian and co-chair of the Children’s and Young Adult Services Committee of REFORMA. The children would then be able to write their own name on the bookplate of the book they are given.

That was our simple strategy, which we took to the REFORMA board and was unanimously approved at that meeting in Las Vegas that hot summer day. All other details were developed and rolled out as the committee gained both political intelligence and knowledge about how and whether the children were being moved around from centre to centre in search of beds while the detention system was concocting their further criminalisation. We also learned much about a sprawling private prison system that has discovered a lucrative business in incarcerating children. Children may be found at one of several types of facility: The first is the Border Patrol processing centre, where large numbers of children are first detained en masse in cage-like cells. From there the children are found a bed at two of the major detention centres established in Texas and run by private, for-profit contractors who are charged with the lives of large numbers of detained children. Finally there are the non-profit agencies that contract with Homeland Security to house children under detention in foster home-like environments where children are housed as they await word from



A young boy signing his book.

their family members that they will be able to put up the bonds needed for their release. A graphic chart of this process (see <https://www.dhs.gov/unaccompanied-children>) established by the Department of Homeland Security best explains the deportation process and the many federal agencies involved in the business of detaining unaccompanied young people. Regrettably, the young people held at the detention centres are not allowed visitors, including librarians or any other adult who could read to the children, conduct story-time programs or engage children in learning activities designed to keep their minds active and their vocabulary enhanced. The only visitors allowed are lawyers, many who are volunteering their time pro bono, to help them with their deportation proceedings. But the children are in dire need of adults in their lives who can help them navigate their needs. Many are traumatised and need psychological services as well.

The media coverage and continued critique of the evolving private prison system has led to many calls by immigrant advocacy groups to condemn this lucrative cottage industry. As a result, the pressure to release the children from the detention facilities has led to increased pressure to release the detained women and children. Many are taken to the Greyhound bus station in downtown San Antonio where they board a bus to their family members' homes, living in any of the hundreds of cities throughout the United States. It is here that a small contingent of librarians have found a way to reach the children and begun to interact with them more directly, if only on a very limited basis.



A family at the bus station.

Parents who board the buses here are in dire need of basic information that a simple cell phone or any smart device with a Google map could provide. The children are fascinated with the new technology, and the technology helps the children make connections about the distance, miles and destinations that await them. The gigantic folders and all of the legal responsibilities they face upon their arrival at their next destination can be quite overwhelming.

As of this writing, the most recently released figures from the governmental agencies reveal a surge in the number of new arrivals of children, with approximately one third of the children coming as unaccompanied youth, and another one third arriving with a parent, primarily their mothers. At the same time, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) requested and has issued child care licences to the Karnes Residential Centre in Karnes City and the South Texas Family Residential Centre in

Dilley, currently detaining 1,800 women and children, many of whom are fleeing abuse and death threats.

Legal issues aside, the REFORMA Children in Crisis Task Force challenges adults who care about children to think hard about how they can best partner with the many non-profit organisations who are caring for these children. Many are hiring adults to work with the children as teachers and counsellors with the children during their temporary stay in their refugee shelters.

The partnership and collaboration with these non-profit organisations should be of upmost importance to us as we discover yet another group of adults who can introduce great books to children at a very crucial nexus in their life and who have the power to transform children's lives through literature in a time of crisis.

As the refugee children trek their way through our America's cities, they run great risk. But for their day beds, they have become all but invisible. In thinking about their human needs, we must recall the words that our muse, the Chilean Gabriela Mistral, the noted Nobel Peace Prize winner for literature, wrote about children: 'Many things in life can wait. The Child cannot. Now is the time his bones are formed, his mind developed. To him we cannot say Tomorrow. His name is Today.' These are among our most vulnerable children, who deserve a chance at childhood, to learn and grow and develop to their fullest potential. The least we can do is lead them to that path through literature and stories, and a good book that can be their friend.

[Oralia Garza de Cortes is past president of REFORMA and a member of USBBY.]

Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants

Carol Thompson, Monica Dobson and Elaine Marriott

Sometime during 2016, members of IBBYUK committee agreed that we should make contact with groups or organisations involved with and supporting refugees and migrants seeking sanctuary in the UK.

IBBY had access to books – due to the generosity of publishers, and we wanted to place these books where they were most needed. Putting out feelers, a quick and enthusiastic response came back from two volunteers at the Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants – Monica Dobson and Elaine Marriott – who were working with groups of refugees: teaching English, and reading and sharing books for both pleasure and learning.



It seemed straightforward – to hand over books freely offered by the publishers – but not quite. In fact, not just any book would do. After much discussion and deliberation, the books suggested were firmly but politely turned down as being ‘not quite suitable for our needs’. Also, space was a problem, just nowhere to store or display books. The solution was obvious – that the volunteers should choose their own books. They would go to the publisher and select titles for themselves – books that suited their very specific requirements, which is what they did. They came away (Thank you! Walker Books) with ‘armfuls of treasure’ – and the promise of more to follow when needed. Monica Dobson and Elaine Marriott write below about the books they enjoy and share with their groups.

The refugees and asylum seekers using the Islington Centre want to learn the English language. They want to integrate into their new city, but are not allowed to work. Many are staying on floors and sofas of friends – often without enough food. Over 2,000 people, many who have experienced war and persecution, have found practical support, education, friendship and sanctuary at the Islington Centre since it opened in 1997. Yet it struggles to remain open for lack of funding– which means it can’t open enough days to meet the needs of the vulnerable people it serves.

It’s a privilege for IBBY UK to have helped with what seems a small gesture.

If you’d like to find out more, take a look at: www.islingtoncentre.co.uk.

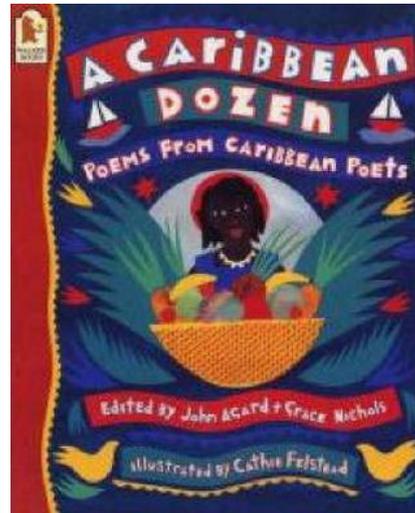
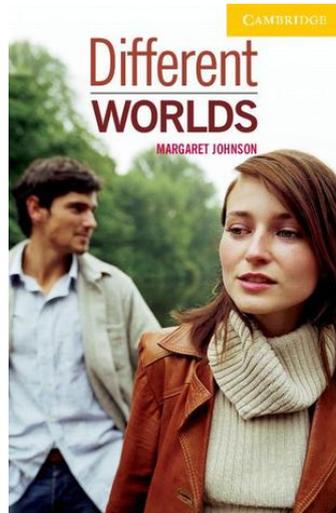
Carol Thompson

[Carol Thompson is a children’s picture-book illustrator/author. She has illustrated over 60 books. Her work has been translated into more than 20 languages, including Lebanese, and two indigenous Sioux languages, Dakota and Ojibwe. She is a committee member of IBBY UK and strongly believes that books really do help to break down barriers.]

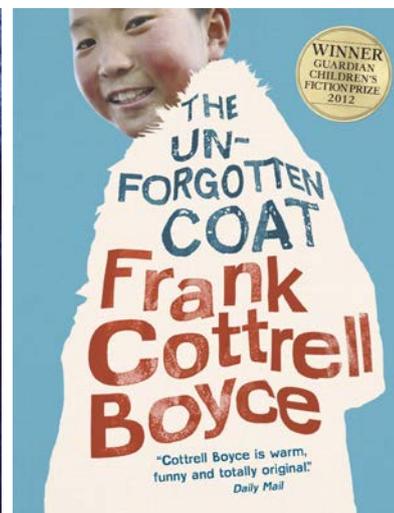
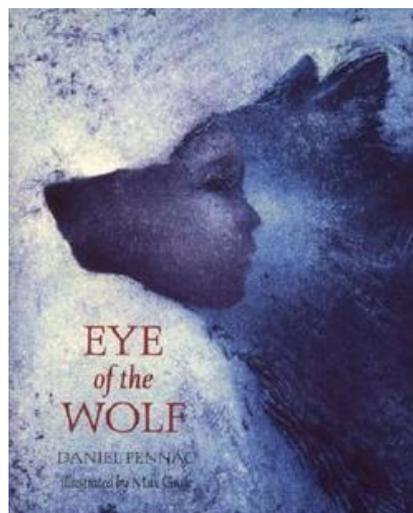
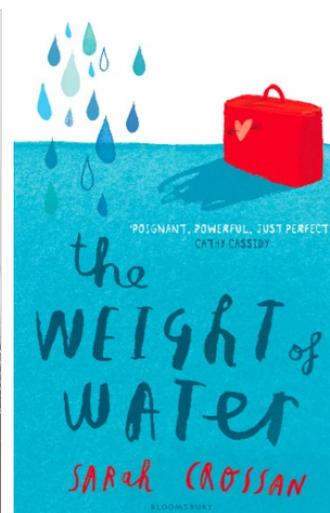
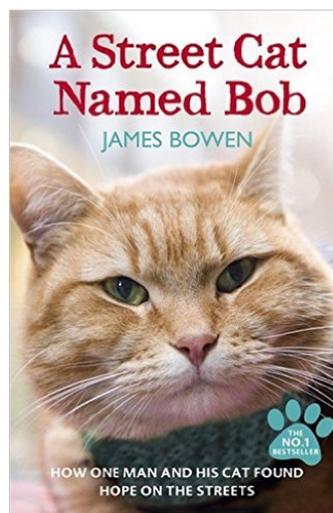
The Book Group at Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants

Our book group has been running for over a year. We started meeting at Islington Library which had sponsored a project called Six Book Challenge to encourage reading in the local community. Each week 6–10 centre users come to our book group, which lasts about 1½ hours. They come from a range of countries, e.g. Sudan, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Russia, Cameroon, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Turkey. Their level of English varies. What they really love is the opportunity to read aloud to the group. This seems to be an empowering experience. We pause from time to time to look at vocabulary and to discuss meaning and themes from the books. It has been a challenge for us to identify suitable books for the group because members have differing levels of comprehension and fluency. We have sought books that are relatively easy to read but have sufficiently adult themes to hold people’s interest and provoke discussion.

We have tried to avoid books with violence or excessive unpleasantness as we want the book group to feel like a safe and calm experience. Initially we discovered the Quick Read series and this was successful. It did, however, require searching libraries and bookshops for multiple copies, which was a bit time consuming. The first book we read in this series was *A Street Cat Named Bob*. Apart from a great human and animal interest story, it resonated with the group as the author had lived in the Tottenham area and wrote about the neighbourhood near to the Islington Centre. We then read *The Weight of Water* by Sarah Crossan, an excellent book about an immigrant family’s experience in Coventry. We were delighted when the author visited us, talked to the group and answered their questions. She signed copies of her book and gave all our members a copy.



Recently we have been very fortunate to have been introduced to the publishers Walker Books. They have very generously donated multiple copies of a number of excellent books, e.g. *The Eye of the Wolf* and *The Unforgotten Coat* (which contains great irony and humour!). It has been a great pleasure to have enough copies for everyone to have their own book during the group and then to be able to keep their own book when we have finished reading it. This feels very special, to be able to give group members their own book to keep.



The books we have read cover a range of themes, including people coming to this country, experiencing the challenge of trying to find their way. A common theme in a number of the books has been people living on the margins of society and people who

are perceived not to fit in. The books address differences, and how people connect and form meaningful relationships. Recently books like *The Little Prince* and *The Eye of the Wolf* have described the crossing of continents both real and imaginary, embracing environmental issues and with vivid descriptions of Africa and other landscapes. We have also read some local East End history and some English history at the request of the group.



These are the books we have read so far:

Quick Reads

A Street Cat Named Bob: James Bowen and Gary Jenkins. London: Hodder 2012.

East End Tales: Gilda O'Neill. London: Penguin 2002.

Traitors in the Tower: Alison Weir. London: Vintage 2010.

Emil and the Detectives: Erich Kästner, illus. Walter Trier, trans. J.D. Stahl. London: Red Fox 2001. First published in German 1929.

A Caribbean Dozen: Poems from Caribbean Poets: ed. John Agard and Grace Nichols, illus. Cathie Felstead. London: Walker Books 1996.

The Weight of Water: Sarah Crossan, illus. Oliver Jeffers. London: Bloomsbury 2012.

Different Worlds Level 2 (Cambridge English Readers): Margaret Johnson. Cambridge University Press 2003.

The Little Prince: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, illus. the author, trans. Richard Howard. San Diego, CA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2000. First published in French 1943.

The Eye of the Wolf: Daniel Pennac, illus. Max Gafe, trans. Sarah Ardizzone. London: Walker Books 2003. First published in French 2002.

The Unforgotten Coat: Frank Cottrell Boyce. London: Walker Books 2011.

We are always interested in suggestions of suitable books and hope that our experience may inspire other similar groups.

Monica Dobson and Elaine Marriott

[Elaine Dobson and Monica Marriott have both spent busy, stimulating working lives as social workers in various London boroughs. For some years they worked together as team managers in a job share. Following retirement they wanted to get involved in voluntary projects; their professional and personal experiences inspired them towards services for refugees. They teamed up again at the Islington Centre where they developed the book group as a way of offering a supportive and focused space for people to connect and communicate through books – to enhance their enjoyment of reading, share ideas and build their confidence.]

The only Good Thing about this Place is Peace

Elizabeth Laird

It all seems to have happened so quickly. A few years ago, we were watching with excitement the birth of the 'Arab Spring', when brutal dictatorships were falling and men and women were taking to the streets to demand new freedoms. Now the region is in turmoil. Hundreds of thousands have died. The prisons of new dictators are full, and millions have fled their homelands to become refugees.

Last October, my husband and I were on holiday in Germany. On the last night of the Oktoberfest, we found ourselves in Munich at the Hauptbahnhof, the main station, to which over the previous many weeks, refugees had been arriving from southern Europe.

The station was packed with merry revellers, men in gingham shirts and lederhosen, women in dirndl skirts with little frilly aprons. As we circulated through the crowd, however, we began to notice others who were not in the party mood, small clusters of very young men, scarcely more than boys, who looked like Eritreans, and groups of Arab men with a few head-scarfed women and some small children among them.

Curious, I asked a policeman about the facilities for newly arrived refugees.

'Go down to the end of the end of the station,' he said. 'Turn left, and you'll see.'

The refugee reception centre was in a large room with big glass windows through which we could see crates of water, trays of paper bags that looked as if they contained sandwiches, and piles of blankets. There were crash barriers to protect the entrance from nosy onlookers like ourselves. A few posters, in English, read 'Welcome to Germany'. They had been brightly crayoned, and looked like the work of children. Other posters, in German, politely asked journalists and 'interested people' to keep away and leave the exhausted new arrivals alone.

The arrivals board was flashing up trains from further afield in Europe. One was due in from Prague.

The hairs rose on my arms as I stood on that great German station, late at night, watching the single bright eye of a huge train come down the tracks towards us from the east, a train that was very likely carrying a new influx of refugees. I'd seen too many films and read too many harrowing accounts of the Second World War not to make connections with the bad old days.

But this was Germany in 2016, a country renewed and transformed with a deep moral conscience. The train slid to a halt. The doors opened. Crowds of Germans returning home after their holiday poured out. Among them was a little group of exhausted looking people, four men, and one woman in a white hijab, a colour favoured by many Syrian women. Two policemen and one policewoman approached them, shepherded them gently out of the crowd, and led them to the reception centre. For one small family, at least, the desperate journey was over.

I was very moved by what I had seen.

This is one of the great stories of our time, I thought. I must write about it.

Plots and characters began to weave themselves in my head, but as soon as they appeared, they fled again. The numbers arriving in Germany were already greatly reduced as border after border further to the south was closing and razor-wire fences were being unrolled. Soon enough, the panicked governments of Europe would find ways to stem this tide of desperate humanity. In any case, the numbers fleeing to the north were a tiny fraction of the five million displaced by the conflict in Syria.

I realised with a kick of fright that the story I needed to tell was back in the Middle East, in one of the countries to which so many Syrians had fled. I would have to go there to find it. I began to look around for openings.

It was only a short search. It happened by chance that Laura Marshall, one of my son's best friends, was working for the Norwegian Refugee Council in Amman, organising educational programmes in refugee camps near the Jordan–Syria border. By an even greater chance, Laura had been working on a small project to help teachers in the camps produce good home-made picture books for their traumatised small pupils. She suggested that I work with the same group of teachers to help them write stories for older children. A few weeks later I was in Amman.

Jordan is a small country with a population of around 9,500,000 million. It's a sea of relative tranquillity, bordering the turbulent whirlpools of Iraq and Syria in the north and east, with Israel its prickly neighbour to the west. Half the population of Jordan consists of the descendants of Palestinian refugees, who fled during the violence that accompanied the birth of the state of Israel in 1947. Since 2011, they have been joined by 1,250,000 Syrians (only 639,000 of whom have been registered as refugees by UNHCR – the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees). It's estimated that about 12% of the population of Jordan is now made up of newly arrived Syrian refugees. To put this figure into perspective, 12% of the population of the UK is nearly 8,000,000.

The news that filters through to us from Jordan is all about the refugee camps. Za'atari, the biggest, is now 'home' to nearly 80,000 residents, with more based in two other camps very close to the Syrian border. It's to the camps that the aid money goes, and it's from the camps that our government is looking to resettle in the UK 20,000 people over the next five years.

But more than 80% of Syrian refugees in Jordan are not living in a refugee camp. They are camping around the cities in makeshift tents and shelters, or eking out the barest possible living as illegal workers on farms. Some were able to bring money or possessions with them from Syria, but their resources have rapidly been depleted. Others were able to bring nothing at all, and are living in abject poverty. These people are collectively known as 'urban' refugees.

Amman is a pleasant city. Spread over the slopes of several steep hills, its creamy white buildings dazzle in the bright sun. It was my first visit, and I was instantly impressed, not only with the interest of the country, but the kindness of the Jordanians towards their afflicted neighbours.

My first encounter with a family of urban refugees was in the cramped, freezing room they rent in a poor part of Amman. The father was tortured, and now has difficulty in walking. One of the five children has cerebral palsy. He's a clever, ambitious boy but his chances of further education are vanishingly slim. The family are registered with the UN, and receive monthly handouts of rice, flour, lentils and bread, but even these minimal supplies are being reduced as the World Food Programme runs short of money. For a couple of years, the family's only income was provided by the 14-year-old son, working illegally as a waiter, from dawn till dusk, at very low wages. Other relatives, who fled later from the conflict in the south of Syria, have managed to bring some assets with them, and the family is now more comfortable, but this new source of funding won't last much longer. What's the solution for families like this?

'We don't want to go to Europe or America,' the father told me. 'We just want to go home to Syria.'

A day or two later, I was on the road north to Za'atari refugee camp, a vast encampment of white cabins, dazzling in the bright winter sun. Security is tight, and it

took a little while to get in through the main entrance, which is guarded by soldiers from the Jordanian army.

Za'atari is a remarkable phenomenon. Since 2012, thousands of people have arrived, many traumatised, most bereaved, some horribly injured. They have walked for miles across stony deserts, or scrambled up and down the steep sides of gorges, often by night, terrified of snipers. A large proportion are women with children, whose husbands are either dead, in prison, or fighting. There are many unaccompanied children, some of whom have lost their entire families.

The early months at Za'atari were confused and chaotic. The UN and the aid agencies were struggling to cope with the huge influx in a desert area without much in the way of water or other resources. Tents were the only shelters, and the first winter, when temperatures plunged below freezing, there were heavy snowfalls, and the ground, turned to thick, soaking mud, was miserable. There was violence too, from children traumatised and out of control, and young men with nothing to do.

A remarkable transformation slowly took place. Cabins replaced the tents. Oxfam and Actaid provided a decent water supply. Médecins Sans Frontières opened a hospital. The Jordanian government sent in a police force. Schools were opened. But it was the actions of the refugees themselves which really transformed Za'atari. They learned how to move their cabins around so that family members and old neighbours could live side by side. Entrepreneurs opened small businesses. Soon, there was a souk (market) running the length of the huge camp, which aid workers dubbed 'the Champs Elysées', a name that has stuck.

Life at a physical level is more or less bearable in Za'atari, but it's wretched, too. I was careful not to question the participants in the little course I was running. They have enough to cope with without nosy foreigners digging out their personal circumstances. But they volunteered their feelings about their present situation.



Participants in the writing course

The people I was working with, trained and experienced teachers and youth workers from Syria, had come from comfortable, professional homes. They could never have imagined themselves ending up in a camp stuck in a desert, their children deprived of any hope of further education, and with no end to it all in sight.

'I'm pregnant,' one woman told me. 'My child will be born in this camp and have the label 'refugee' on his passport for the rest of his life. What hope for him is there? A poor education, no career prospects, no hope.'

'The only thing good about this place,' said another, 'is *salaam*, peace.'

One 'exercise' I gave the class was to imagine a meal they had once enjoyed, to describe the room in which they had eaten it, the people who were there, the person

who had cooked it and the food they had eaten. They produced lyrical descriptions of special times with their family at home in Syria, and there were eyes wet with tears.

If life in Za'atari is depressing, it is wretched in Azraq, the second largest camp. This vast township of cabins is set in an even more hostile desert. Snakes and scorpions are a danger here. Electricity has not been provided to the cabins. Solar lamps last only a few hours, but in Jordan in the winter, darkness falls at 5pm. Without electricity, there is no chance of acquiring a fan to temper the searing summer heat, or a heater in the bitterly cold winter. There is no souk at Azraq to provide variety, choice, job opportunities, a focus for the community and a sense of normality. The authorities have not yet given permission. Although the people here are physically safe, with a minimum of food, shelter, education at least for younger children and a certain amount of medical support, the hopeless feelings they suffer are so strong that many choose to return to the murder and mayhem of Syria. Those who can, slip away to join the many scratching a living somehow as urban refugees.



View of Azraq camp

What can we do to help?

I saw many aid agencies at work in Jordan, and was very impressed by their efficiency, their knowledge and their mutual collaboration. In the camps, Oxfam and Actaid are sorting out the water supply, and working in urban centres to provide clean water too. Unicef has opened schools. Médecins Sans Frontières is doing impressive work with trauma patients, of whom there are very many, suffering from shrapnel injuries, bullet wounds and the aftermath of torture. Save the Children is doing excellent work with a variety of programmes. You can take your pick.

But if you would like to support a smaller, more individual, locally based project, go to <https://www.facebook.com/HelpingSyrianRefugeesJordan/>, and read about the work that Helping Refugees in Jordan is doing. You can donate to them through <http://www.gofundme.com/HelpingRefugeesJordan>.

The refugee crisis in the Middle East is as great as that of Europe after the Second World War, when millions upon millions were on the move. We can't turn away.

[Elizabeth Laird has written more than 20 novels for children and young adults. She has won many awards, and has been shortlisted six times for the Carnegie Medal. Her books have been translated into more than 25 languages. She has travelled throughout Ethiopia to preserve a unique collection of folktales, and is the author of several retellings of stories from Africa and the Middle East. Elizabeth Laird recently visited Jordan and worked with Syrian refugees in camps near the border. *Welcome to Nowhere*, her novel based in this experience, will be published by Macmillan in January 2017.]

Hello, Dear Enemy! Picture Books for Peace and Humanity: An exhibition by the International Youth Library in Munich

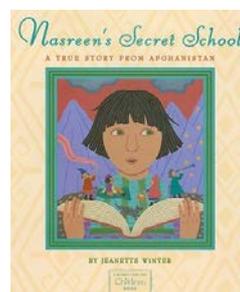
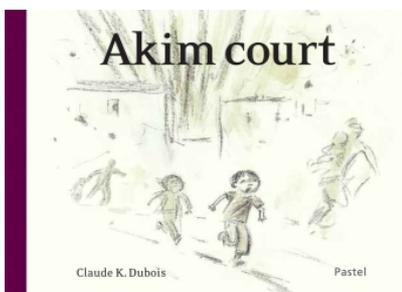
Christiane Raabe and Claudia Soeffner

At the International Youth Library, the topics of war and peace, terror and violence, insurmountable walls and borders have been of utmost importance for decades. One aspect that the library is especially interested in is how picture books narrate these topics. Children's lives in particular are turned upside down by war, hostility and escape in many different ways. Although picture books dealing with this topic in literary and artistic ways won't be able to answer all questions or still all fears, they can inspire readers to reflect on and discuss the foundations for a peaceful future.

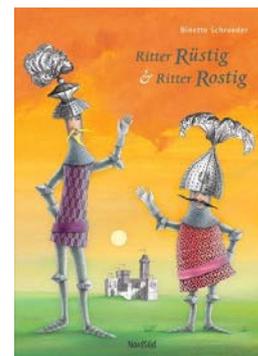
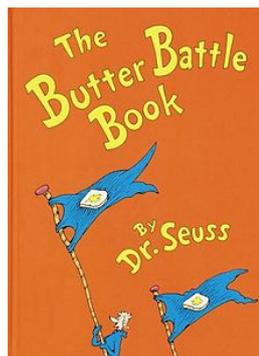
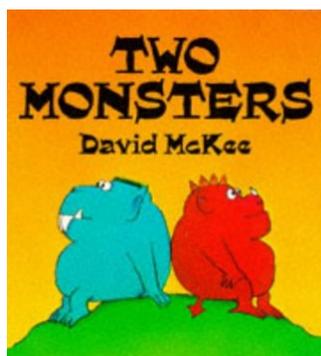
In 1998, the International Youth Library sent a 'peace and tolerance' collection of 40 picture books to the IBBY International Congress in New Delhi. International interest in the books was so strong that during the following years, the collection was reworked several times, accompanied by informational panels and a catalogue with commentary. This book exhibition travelled the world for years: from Japan to Russia and Europe, all the way to the United States and Latin America.

In the fall of 2014, the exhibition was thoroughly updated in terms of its content. In addition, a staging design for the presentation of the books was also developed. The new exhibition now carries the title Hello, Dear Enemy! Picture Books for Peace and Humanity and contains 60 picture books, the majority of which were published within the last 15 years. The exhibition is thematically divided into four groups. In contrast to earlier book selections, this exhibition focuses its content on the present, so picture books on the First World War and the Second World War, which were featured prominently in earlier versions of the exhibition, were not included.

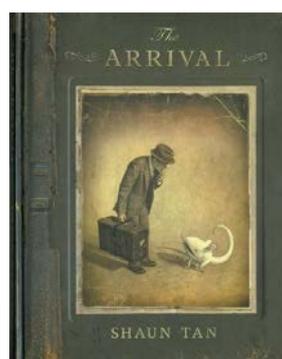
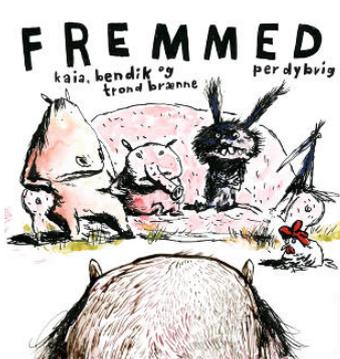
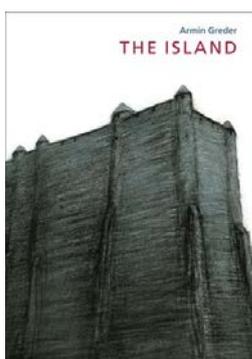
The picture books in the first category, called 'Lived experiences of war, destruction and escape', deal with everyday life in crisis areas and with the reality of war, dictatorship, escape, homelessness and uprootedness. Since traumatising experiences are usually not described and depicted directly, young readers are able to tackle the brutal reality of war in a more abstract way. Books in this group include the award-winning picture book *Akim court* (*Akim runs*, 2012) by the French author Claude K. Dubois, the elaborately constructed fanfold book *Migrar* (*Migrate*, 2011) by the Mexican illustrator Javier Martínez Pedro and author José Manuel Mateo, American Jeanette Winter's *Nasreen's Secret School. A True Story from Afghanistan* (2009), and the German book *Ein roter Schuh* (*A red shoe*, 2012), written by Karin Gruß and illustrated by Tobias Krejtschi.



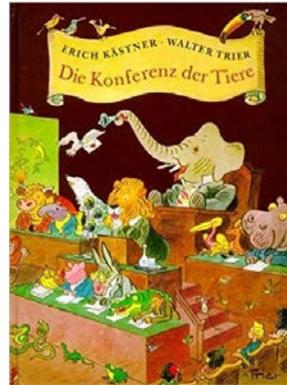
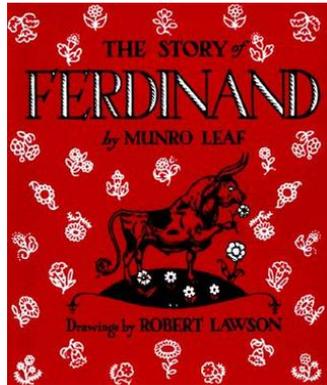
The second group is called 'The creation and escalation of war and violence'. The books featured here tackle the devastating consequences of escalating conflicts in original and surprising ways, often using animals as their main characters. Through the fable form and in compelling, sometimes even funny ways, these books show how disputes can take on lives of their own. Within a split second, friends, neighbours and brothers become enemies who fight each other fiercely. The majority of the stories we have included offer a reconciliatory end. This group contains classic picture books such as David McKee's famous fable *Two Monsters* (1984) and Dr Seuss' *The Butter Battle Book* (1984), but it also presents more recent publications such as Swiss illustrator Kathrin Schärer's *So war das! Nein, so! Nein, so!* (It was this way! No, this way! No, this way!., 2007) and German artist Binette Schroeder's *Ritter Rüstig & Ritter Rostig (Sir Lofty and Sir Tubb*, 2009).



'Prejudice, exclusion and views of the enemy' are the themes dealt with in the third group. Readers will experience how easily prejudice and xenophobia turn into violence, but also how they can be overcome with impartiality and humanity. In many of these books, a single individual has to face a hostile crowd. While Swiss-Australian illustrator Armin Greder creates a particularly oppressive atmosphere in *The Island* (2002), the Norwegian picture book *Fremmed* (Foreign, 2010) by author trio Bendik, Kaia and Trond Brønne, illustrated by Per Dybvig, shows this in a funny way. Most picture books tell the experience of meeting a foreigner from the outside, instead of showing how it is experienced by the displaced or foreigner himself. The most compelling and well-known exception is Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (2009).



The fourth group is a selection of 'Peace utopias' that follow in the footsteps of post-war pacifist children's literature. It comprises both children's classics, such as the American *The Story of Ferdinand* by Munro Leaf (1936), and the German *Die Konferenz der Tiere* (The animals' conference, 1949) based on an idea by Jella Lepman, written by Erich Kästner and illustrated by Walter Trier, and books with more recent anti-war angles such as the French *Le baron bleu* (The blue baron, 2014) by Gilles Baum and Thierry Dedieu and the parable *Le petit soldat qui cherchait la guerre* (The little soldier in search of the war, 2000) by Mario Ramos. These books paint a mostly positive picture of human beings as a good and peace-loving species that, nevertheless, sometimes needs to be forced to find peace and happiness.



The exhibition is on display at the International Youth Library in Munich until 3 October 2016. A programme of educational offerings directed at children and teenagers was developed alongside it. Currently, the Hello!, Dear Enemy exhibition is accompanied by an exhibition catalogue in German (an English version is going to be published soon).

The exhibition is available as a travelling exhibition in two different sets. For questions and bookings, contact: Maria Luise Weber, Tel.: +49 (89) 89 12 11-21, email: wanderausstellungen@ijb.de, or have a look at our website: www.ijb.de/en/about-us.html for general information on the IYL in English or at www.ijb.de in German. Information on the Hello! Dear Enemy exhibition is at www.ijb.de/en/ausstellungen/single/article/guten-tag-lieber-feind-1/48.html?noMobile=%2Fproc%2Fself%2Fenviromon&cHash=5e753fa733729f7626b478c56be55490.

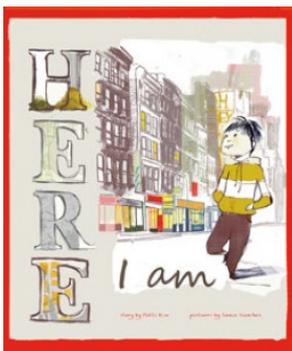
[After completing her PhD in history, Christiane Raabe worked in several positions, including as the head of the scholarly texts editorial office at KG Saur Verlag, the leading publisher for international library science. Since 2007, she has been the director of the International Youth Library. She is a member of the boards of the Foundation International Youth Library, the Binette Schroeder Foundation and the Ellis Kaut Foundation, as well as the board of trustees of the Bavarian Academy of Science and member of the literary council of the Goethe Institute. In 2014, she was decorated with the Europe Medal of the Free State of Bavaria.

Claudia Soeffner graduated from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitaet in Munich with an MA degree in English literature and linguistics. Since 2001, she has been working at the International Youth Library, where she is responsible for the English-language section.]

Books about Refugees and the Experience of Migration

Ann Lazim

This article is a roundup of some recent picture books and novels that focus on children in situations relating to migration and/or conflict.



In *Here I Am* (2013) the only words are jumbled up on signs or heard as a wall of incomprehensible sound to a child who has just arrived in a new country with a different language and culture from what he is used to. Sonia Sánchez's expressive pictures tell a story based on Patti Kim's own experiences as a child moving from Korea to the USA 40 years ago. This picture book has a graphic-novel style with the layout, shapes and sizes of the pictures varying on each carefully designed page. Sometimes a full-size-page picture captures a significant moment in the child's transition to his new life, such as remembering his former home and approaching another child and making a friend in his new one. In the final picture the child stands on a bridge, smiling at his reflection in the water and the words 'Here I Am' appear clearly.

A red seed that the child in *Here I Am* has carried with him in his pocket plays an important part in the story, and this idea of planting seeds and growing new life in a way that makes connections between communities appears in other picture books.

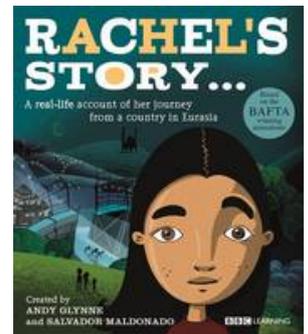
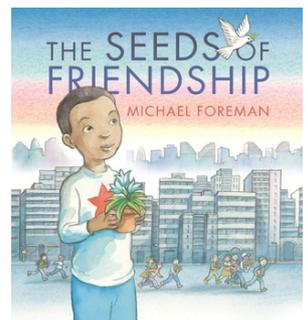
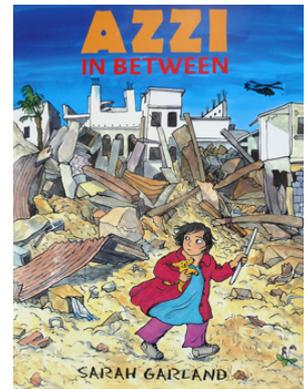
In Sarah Garland's *Azzi in Between* (2012), she also uses a comic-strip format to tell the story of Azzi who has to flee her own country with her parents, leaving her grandmother behind, and settle as a refugee in a new country. At school she shares her knowledge of growing beans by planting and harvesting some brought from her home country and this helps her to grow into her new life. The two countries involved are not specified, enabling identification with the stories of many refugees and migrants.

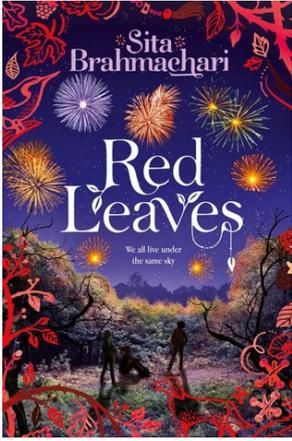
In Michael Foreman's *The Seeds of Friendship* (2015) it is not explained how Adam came to be in an urban high-rise flat where he feels he is 'living in the sky'. He loves his new home but he misses 'the faraway place where he used to live'. He makes friends by bringing his own knowledge and experience to his new environment, linked to the seasons, and outdoor play. In winter they make snow animals. Then the growth of the seeds planted in their school garden and window boxes encourages them to make gardens throughout their community.

A set of picture books has been published based on a series of BAFTA winning animated films entitled *Seeking Refuge*, using the voices of real young people who have fled their homelands and sought asylum in the UK.

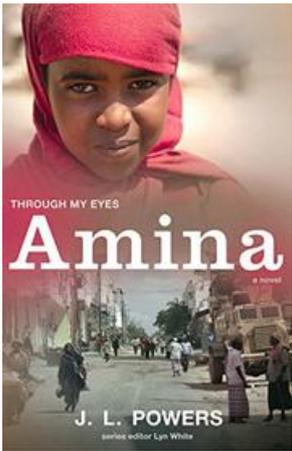
The texts, adapted from the animations, have been edited by Andy Glynn from the original soundtrack and each illustrated by a different artist. The series explores themes that include immigration, persecution, separation and alienation. For example, *Rachel's Story* (2014), illustrated by Salvador Maldonado, is an account of a family's journey from Eurasia (a map shows the countries this encompasses) to escape religious persecution. They believe they have found safety in a new country, only to find that their appeal for leave to remain has been rejected and they are returned to their country of origin. However, they don't give up their struggle. Rachel's bewilderment at being imprisoned when she has done nothing wrong is well expressed with gigantic figures looming over the family in a darkened landscape. The films are at: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01k7c4q/clips.

Images of larger-than-life authority figures also appear in Francesca Sanna's stunning first picture book *The Journey* (2016). Here the author-illustrator has combined stories she heard from recent refugees from many countries, beginning with two girls she met in Italy. The text in this book is easy to read in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure, but this apparent simplicity combined with the memorable illustrations have great power to move readers of all ages. Each spread features a carefully chosen colour palette depicting the variety of landscapes, real and emotional, through which the family passes. The pictures are all so striking, it's hard to choose which to highlight, but for emotional power the twin images of the mother encircling her children for protection in the darkness of the forest will linger long in the mind. On the left-hand page they are all awake and gazing at each other. On the right-hand page, the child's words 'But mother is with us and she is never scared' belie the image of the mother's tears cascading down as her children sleep. Images of the natural world permeate the book, one of the most delightful pictures being of a variety of birds migrating, causing the narrator to consider that they do not have to cross borders as people do. The book ends on a hopeful note, but makes it clear that most refugees live with continued uncertainty, even when they hope they have reached a place of safety.

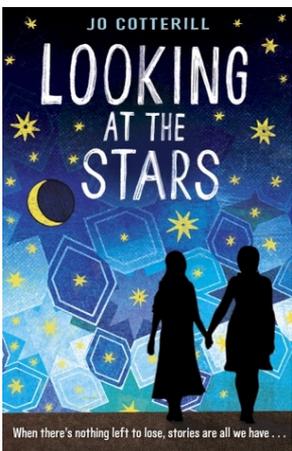




In her novel *Red Leaves* (2014), Sita Brahmachari writes warmly about a multicultural cast of characters living in a fractured world, focusing on three young people who escape from their everyday environment and come together in an autumn wood. Not a fairy-tale forest but an urban wood that still cloaks them while they seek to come to terms with their own identities and the relationships within their respective families. Zak is deeply anxious about his mother, missing while reporting from a war zone. She is separated from his father, a historian working in New York, while Zak is cared for by Shalini, many miles away from her own son. Somali refugee Aisha is distraught because her loving foster mother believes it would be better for her to live with a family from a similar cultural background. Iona has fled from an abusive home situation and fends for herself, her only companion being her dog Red. The story is threaded through with Zak's discoveries about past inhabitants of Home Wood and the children's association with an elderly woman who has made the wood her home.



Amina (2013) by J.L. Powers is one of a series of novels entitled *Through My Eyes*, edited by Lyn White and published in Australia. Other books in the series, by a variety of authors, tell the stories of children and young people from Kashmir, Afghanistan, Mexico, Sri Lanka and Syria. Amina's story is set in Mogadishu, Somalia, in 2011, where Amina lives with her family in an area of the city controlled by an Islamic fundamentalist group al-Shabaab. Amina is a talented artist like her father, and a poet too. When her father and brother are taken away, how will she and her grandmother and heavily pregnant mother survive? Amina is brave and reflective and her story challenges some of the stereotypes about Muslim girls. We get an insight into how life was different in Amina's mother's youth and how things seem to be shifting and changing in a country torn by conflict. The author has done a considerable amount of research into Somalia's recent history, consulting Somali communities in the USA and drawing on her own experience of getting to know Somali people in Kenya.



The main character in Jo Cotterill's *Looking at the Stars* (2015) is also called Amina. Unlike J.L. Powers' book, this is a first-person narrative, and the author has been careful not to set her story in a specific location and she explains her reasons for this in an enlightening interview at the end of the book. However, there are many parallels with Somali Amina's story. Both girls live in a situation where there is a local militia which confines and restricts the behaviour of women. Both lose their father and brother in similar circumstances and need to draw on their own strengths to help their families. Both develop relationships with boys around their own age and the first stirrings of romantic and sexual feelings are intimated sensitively. Most importantly, they are both very creative and this has an important bearing on their stories. Jo Cotterill's Amina is a fine storyteller, inspired by the stars in the sky, and this helps to give hope to the people in the refugee camp where she and her sister find themselves.

Several of these books are open ended. They often expose the harsh conditions under which children and young people are suffering around the world, forcing them to flee. However, even though we sometimes leave the characters not knowing what their future will be, there is always at least a note of hope, thanks to the human resilience of the people portrayed, especially the children.

Works cited

- Andy Glynne (illus. Salvador Maldonado) (2014) *Rachel's Story: A Real-Life Account of her Journey from a Country in Eurasia*. Hachette Children's Books 978 0 7502 9289 4.
- Sita Brahmachari (2014) *Red Leaves*. Macmillan 978 1 4472 6298 5.
- Jo Cotterill (2015) *Looking at the Stars*. Corgi 978 0 5525 6670 4.
- Michael Foreman (2015) *The Seeds of Friendship*. Walker 978 1 4063 5650 2.
- Sarah Garland (2012) *Azzi In Between*. Frances Lincoln 978 1 8478 0651 2.
- Patti Kim and Sonia Sánchez (2013) *Here I Am*. Curious Fox 978 1 7820 2226 8.

J.L. Powers (2013) *Amina* (Through My Eyes series). Allen & Unwin 978 1 7433 1249 0.

Francesca Sanna (2016) *The Journey*. Flying Eye 978 1 9092 6399 4.

These books are included in an annotated list titled 'Refugees and Migration' produced by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE). See <https://www.clpe.org.uk/library-and-resources/booklists>.

[Ann Lazim is Literature and Library Development Manager at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, London, and a member of the IBBY UK committee.]

Seven Kinds of Magic: An Exhibition to Launch the Quentin Blake Gallery at The House of Illustration

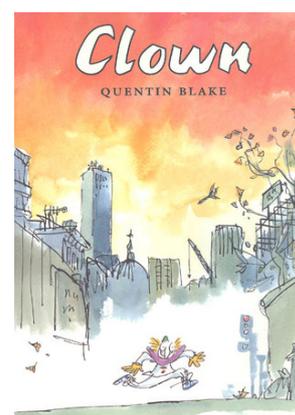
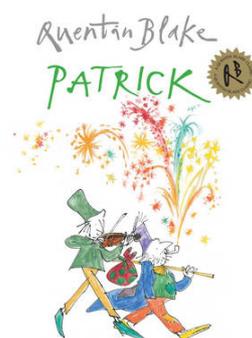
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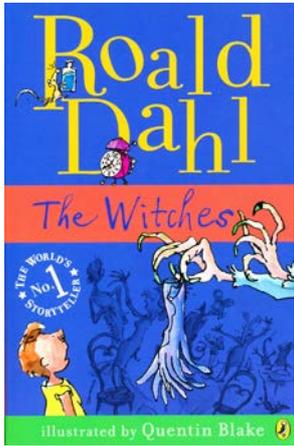
Seven Kinds of Magic is the first of a continuous series of exhibitions showing various aspects of Quentin Blake's work, drawn from his own archive of original artwork, his rough sketches and preparatory drawings. As the first Children's Laureate (1999–2001), this most prolific of illustrators celebrated children's books and children's-book illustration with many projects and exhibitions, and conceived the idea for a centre dedicated to the art of illustration in its various forms. This is how The House of Illustration, of which Blake is a trustee, came into being.

In this small exhibition are drawings and watercolours from some of the children's books written and illustrated by Blake, who received a knighthood in 2013 for his services to illustration, as well as examples of his highly successful collaborations with authors Roald Dahl, Russell Hoban and John Yeoman. The exhibition is partly Blake's 'salute' to these authors' imaginations. There is an interesting example, too, of Blake's illustrations for a children's book by scientist J.B.S. Haldane.

One's first impression on entering the Quentin Blake Gallery is one of light and airiness and white walls against which Blake's unmistakable style of illustration, with its liveliness of line and particular colour palette, shows to advantage. And if one is familiar with the books for which these illustrations were created, so much the better for there is the extra pleasure of recognition and seeing the original artwork at close quarters.

To see some of Blake's original illustrations for *Patrick* (1968), the first picture book both written and illustrated by him, is certainly a real pleasure. This is a heart-warming story about a young man, Patrick, who buys a violin from a market stall. The violin seems to have magic powers for when the young man plays it life becomes transformed for those around him. Amongst other magical happenings the apple trees 'grow pears and bananas and cakes and ice-cream and slices of hot buttered toast', much to the delight and amazement of two children who meet Patrick along the road. One of the four double spreads on display in this exhibition illustrates this episode and bursts with exuberant colour and joie de vivre. Rather like the title character that Blake created several years later in his masterly wordless picture book *Clown* (1995), and a character type that Blake is so good at describing pictorially, Patrick appears to be a good-hearted fellow who cannot help but spread happiness.

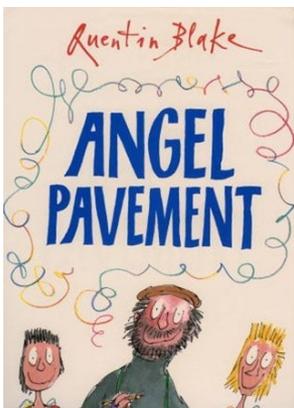




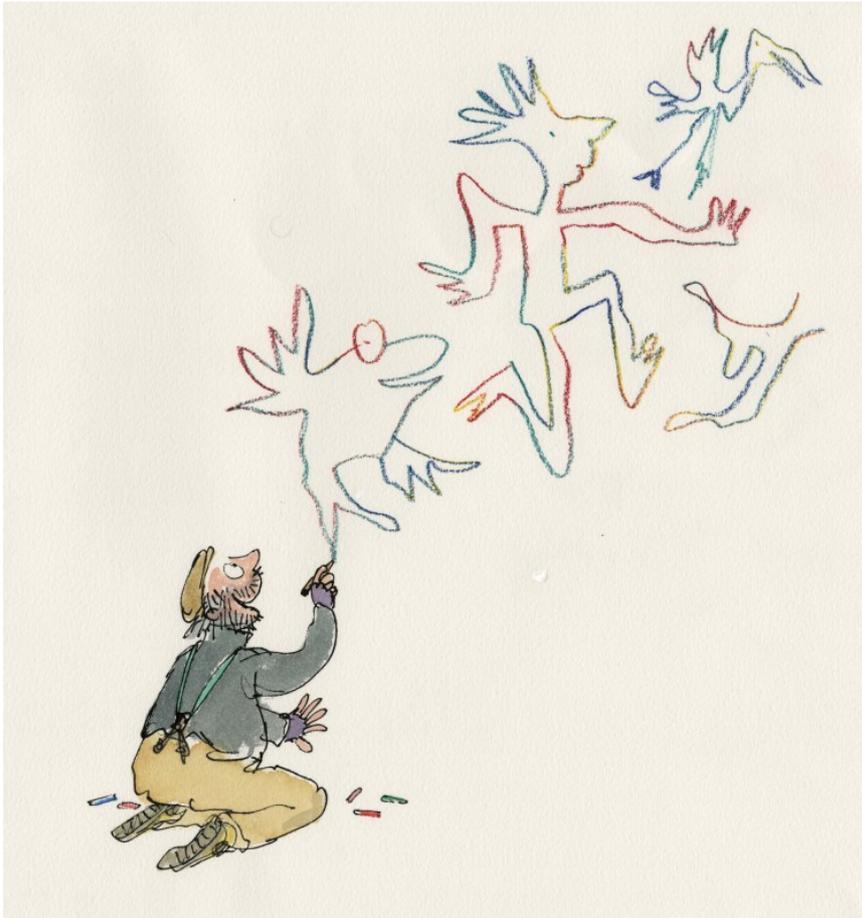
Blake has illustrated many of the children's books of Roald Dahl (1916–1990), the first being the picture book *The Enormous Crocodile* (1978), and the collaboration has proved to be one of the most successful in children's literature. On display are four colour and two line illustrations by Blake for Dahl's *The Witches* (1983). In one of these macabre tales the Grand High Witch frizzles to death 'like a fritter' a witch who has dared to contradict her, and it is with obvious relish that Dahl describes the horrifying details. Blake responded to the dark humour in this and other episodes with both fluid and squiggly black lines and smudgy pencil marks, his cartoon style and his exaggerated depictions of the characters striking just the right note. On display also is Blake's original colour design for *The Witches* Royal Mail postage stamp, one of several stamps he designed based on some of Roald Dahl's characters, with the printed postage stamp, a delightful little framed miniature, alongside.



From *The Witches*, p.178, 'Suddenly all the witches began to scream and jump'. Copyright © 1983 Quentin Blake.

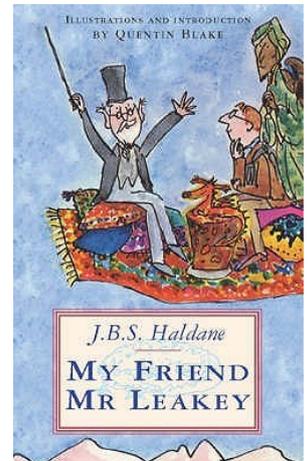


Written and illustrated by Blake, the picture book *Angel Pavement* (2004), the title a humorous nod to the title of the novel (1930) by British author J.B. Priestley, tells the story of Corky and Loopy, two seemingly ordinary girls who also happen to be angels. One day, they go to see Sid Bunkin, the pavement artist. He wants to take part in an important drawing competition, but cannot see how he can enter pavement pictures. Corky and Loopy come to the rescue: they give Sid a special pencil that draws in the air. This picture book is full of energetic and colourful illustrations, two of which are on display here, and it shows Blake's quality of line at its most fluid. It is interesting to see, in the picture showing Sid drawing in the sky, how Blake added a small paper patch on which he has redrawn part of the picture: it's a fascinating insight into the artist's work in progress.

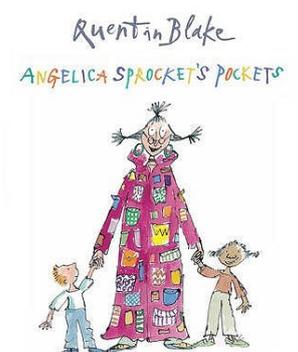


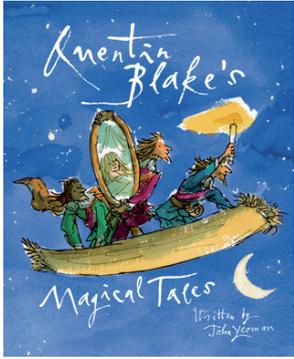
From *Angel Pavement*, pp.119a–025b. Copyright © 2004 Quentin Blake.

I was particularly pleased to see in this exhibition some of Blake's original illustrations for *My Friend Mr Leakey*. This is a whimsical, comic children's book comprising six stories by British-Indian biological scientist and mathematician J.B.S. Haldane (1892–1964), and first published in 1937. Mr Leakey is a magician and features in the first three stories that make up the bulk of the book. Here, the narrator describes his extraordinary adventures with this wizard who, amongst other remarkable abilities, can make himself invisible. This unusual gentleman, who has large tufted ears and wears a top hat, is a perfect subject for Blake's cursive, cartoon-like style. The exhibition shows six original line drawings, unfussy and direct, and one colour double-spread illustration, which was used for the book's cover, showing Mr Leakey and friends, including his dragon, on his magic carpet. This Haldane/Blake edition of the book, published in 2004, has an introduction by the artist.



Blake excels at picturing characters that refuse to conform and who generally stand out from a crowd. Angelica, in *Angelica Sprocket's Pockets* (2010), with her hair in spikey bunches and her spectacles slipping off the end of her nose, is one of these characters. Both written in rhyme and colourfully illustrated by Blake, the picture book shows this remarkable lady surrounded by captivated children and producing an endless succession of unlikely items, such as mice and goats, and even a pink and green elephant, from her countless pockets. On display are four of the original illustrations, including the one of Angelica with the children on skateboards, and these are placed against the white of the pages to give all the action extra emphasis. A few lines from Blake's rhyming text are displayed adjacent to these pictures.

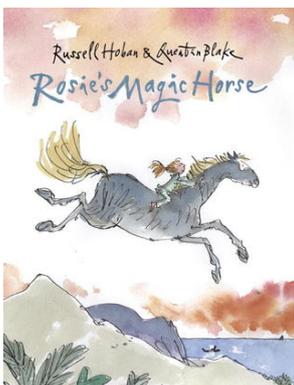




Another fine example of Blake's imaginative skills is *Quentin Blake's Magical Tales* (2010). This is a collection, vividly retold by John Yeoman, of less well-known and originally oral folktales from around the world, and they are imbued with magic. Blake's vibrant pictures, and in particular his full-page colour pictures, are our visual entry into this other world as they set the scenes and give the stories a sense of place. On display here are four of the original colour pictures from the book, including a scene from the story 'The Five Strange Brothers'. One brother 'could swallow the ocean in one gulp' and then with ease collect all the fish that were stranded. He can only hold his breath, and the seawater, however, for half an hour, and when he reluctantly agrees to take the townspeople's sons on a fishing trip, the outcome is disastrous. Blake's energetic illustration of this episode, effectively placed, as before, against the white of the page, shows the pale, inky blue of the swirling seawater issuing from the brother's mouth while the drowning children are described with scratchy and agitated pen marks. Blake has collaborated with Yeoman on several children's books, *A Drink of Water and Other Stories* (1960) being the first, and the very first children's book that Blake illustrated.



Sketch for *Quentin Blake's Magical Tales*. Copyright © 2010 Quentin Blake.



Blake provided some energetic and colourful illustrations for the picture book *Rosie's Magic Horse* (2012) written by American-born, London-based author Russell Hoban (1925–2011) whose children's books include *The Mouse and his Child* (1967), the tender and moving parable of wind-up toys that long to be self-winding. *Rosie's Magic Horse*, just one of the many children's books by Hoban that Blake has illustrated, is a story of a little girl who collects lolly sticks. One midnight the sticks turn into a horse called Stickerino, and Rosie jumps onto his back and they set off on an adventure to look for treasure that will help Rosie's Dad pay his bills. On display are four colour double spreads of Stickerino flying through the air with Rosie gamely riding on his back. I particularly liked the way that Blake, seemingly spontaneously and applying the watercolour with a broad paintbrush, used the white of the page to emphasise the horse's sturdy form. When one sees the original artwork, such skilfulness does become more apparent. Sadly, Hoban died before this entertaining picture book was published.

In this new, small gallery at The House of Illustration an informal and approachable ethic has been very successfully achieved, and here there is a wonderful opportunity for children and adults to see at close quarters Blake's original artwork. Blake's hope that 'these pictures demonstrate the way a recognisable style of drawing can be adapted to different moods and situations' has certainly been fulfilled.

Seven Kinds of Magic is at The House of Illustration, 2 Granary Square, King's Cross, London N1C 4BH, Friday 29 April – Sunday 28 August 2016.

Websites

Watch and listen to *Angelica Sprocket's Pockets* with illustrations by Quentin Blake: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCy3klU1RP4>.

Watch *Patrick* with illustrations by Quentin Blake; a musical animation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NuuxWKD7N0>.

Listen to Quentin Blake talking about creating his own picture books including *Angel Pavement*:

<http://www.webofstories.com/play/quentin.blake/46;jsessionid=67A81039B05D8F7D4F961D84F4B8073A>.

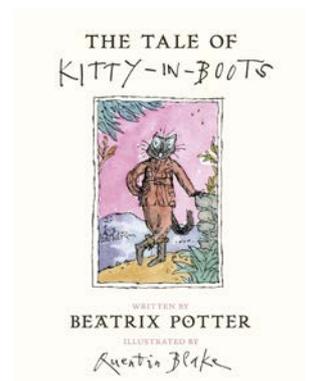
Current and Forthcoming Quentin Blake Exhibitions at The House of Illustration

June Hopper Swain

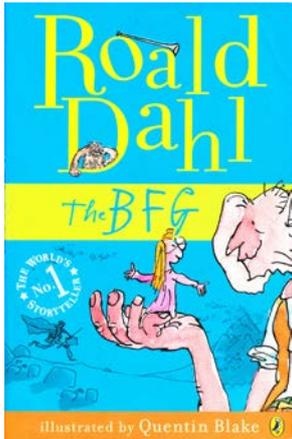


From Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Kitty in Boots*. Copyright © 2016 Quentin Blake.

Early in 2015, Quentin Blake embarked on an exciting new project: it was to provide illustrations for an unpublished story, discovered in 2013, by Beatrix Potter (1866–1943), the British-born author and illustrator of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), the first of her many stories for children. Called *The Tale of Kitty-in-Boots*, about a cat that leads a double life, and for which Potter had only completed one drawing, it is to be published in September 2016 by Frederick Warne of Penguin Random House Children's Books. The story also features three of Potter's much-loved characters: Mr Todd, Mrs Tiggywinkle and a grown-up and rather portly Peter Rabbit. This was revealed in a television programme, *Beatrix Potter with Patricia Routledge*, first broadcast on More4 in January 2016 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Potter's birth. Viewers were given a brief and tantalising glimpse of a few of the pictures that Blake has created for this story. We can, however, look forward to The Tale of Kitty-in-Boots exhibition to be



held at The Quentin Blake Gallery from 2 September 2016 until 5 February 2017. This exhibition will feature about 50 of the original illustrations.



There will also be an exhibition of Quentin Blake's illustrations for Roald Dahl's *The BFG* (1982) in the South Gallery at The House of Illustration from Friday 24 June to Sunday 2 October 2016. As well as the original illustrations for the published book there will be on display Blake's earlier pictures that were never used.



Sketch for *The BFG* by Roald Dahl. Copyright © 1982 Quentin Blake.

The Tale of Kitty-in-Boots Exhibition will be in the Quentin Blake Gallery at The House of Illustration, Friday 2 September 2016 – Sunday 5 February 2017.

For all these exhibitions: Tuesdays–Sundays 10.00am – 6.00pm, final admission 5.30pm. Closed Mondays. Enquiries: 020 3696 2020; www.houseofillustration.org.uk/.

Websites

Beatrix Potter with Patricia Routledge, also Patricia Routledge in conversation with Quentin Blake: <http://www.channel4.com/info/press/news/beatrix-potter-with-patricia-routledge-video-embed-included>.

[June Hopper Swain had been writing articles on children's books for several years when she enrolled on the MA Children's Literature Distance Learning Course at Roehampton University with Pat Pinsent as her tutor. She gained her degree in 2004. She has since written papers that have been published in the *Journal of Children's Literature Studies* and the *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*. For *IBBYLink* she has written short articles, reports on exhibitions and reviews of children's books.]

REVIEWS

About Children's Literature

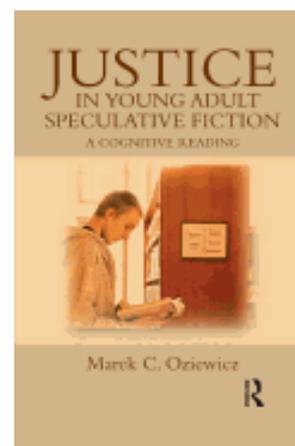
Justice in Young Adult Speculative Fiction: A Cognitive Reading

Marek C. Oziewicz, New York and London: Taylor & Francis, hb. 978 1 1388 0943 7, 2015, £68, 258pp. [About Children's Literature. Age range 18+. Keywords: academic; justice; reviews; literary studies; young adult fiction.]

It would probably be generally agreed that the notion of justice, at least as conceived in the democratic parts of the world, has evolved considerably in the past 300 years, perhaps most notably during the twentieth century. Against this developmental background, Marek Oziewicz examines a number of significant works in another area displaying considerable changes during the same period, that of young adult fiction. He focuses particularly on what he terms 'speculative', defined as including 'a great number of nonmimetic genres such as the gothic, dystopia, zombie, vampire, and postapocalyptic fiction, ghost stories, superheroes, alternative histories, steampunk, magic realism, retold or fractured fairy tales and so forth' (p.3). His analytic tool is that of the 'spectacular advances in the cognitive sciences as applied to literary studies' (p.4) and most notably the role of narrative fiction within this process – because, as human beings, 'we are hardwired to detect and remember stories' (p.6).

He begins this ambitious project by outlining the history of justice, starting with the 'Old Justice' mindset, the dominant framework in literature as in life from pre-Homeric epics to at least the mid-seventeenth century. It assumed that 'authority flow[ed] from god(s) to king to nobility and only then to common people and the world, – a world, in which one's social standing determined one's claim to justice' (p.35). This model implied obedience and acceptance, behaviour particularly appropriate to the young. The Old Justice concept was in due course superseded by 'New Justice', which was non-hierarchical and embodied the notion of universal human rights; this model is reflected in a great deal of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, especially the novel. Particularly in the twentieth century however, literary narratives for young adult readers have foreshadowed the realisation of the inadequacy of such a model in a world far too complex for any simple rules. Novels such as '[Natalie] Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* (1975) and [Mildred] Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry* (1976) [reveal that] justice is plural, blurred, and, if achieved, incomplete and provisional' (p.38). Thus during the latter part of the twentieth century, the New Justice model has been superseded by 'Open Justice', a concept that embraces 'environmental justice, global justice, transitional justice, and restorative justice', while at the same time the established 'foci [of] social justice and retributive justice' (p.41) have been revised. All of these, with the exception of transitional justice (appropriate to periods post the fall of autocratic regimes), form the subjects of chapters in Oziewicz's book; additionally he looks at the idea of 'poetic justice', frequently evident in traditional forms such as the fairy tale.

After reviewing the development of concepts of justice, Oziewicz goes on to examine how 'when seen from a cognitive angle, fiction emerges as an evolutionary adaptation that recalibrates the mind, sharpens social cognition ... [and thus] reinforce[s] expectations related to specific scripts, including scripts about justice' (p.54). Since, as indicated by Roger C. Schank (*Tell me a Story*, 1990), human beings constantly 'correlate the story we are hearing with one that we already know' (p.58), it is apparent that this process is central to the development of an empathetic response, itself fundamental to concepts concerning justice. Oziewicz defines story as comprising schemas ('the "genes" of understanding ... that help us to identify objects, events and agents', (p.58)) and scripts ('higher-level units built from schemas ... [which] obviate the need to think [,] and enable "automatic" understanding of sequences of events' (ibid.)). Our 'cognitive fluidity', Oziewicz claims, has led humans not only to



‘understand others as intentional agents’ (p.62), but also to develop both consciousness and art – partly as a result of our habits of imaginative exploration (p.64). Engaging with stories is largely an activity of ‘the right hemisphere, which is the place of convergence of our experience of the external world and a nonverbal, imaged narrative [which has been] described ... as the foundation of consciousness’ (p.66). The analysis of such stories however, appears to be the domain of the left hemisphere, which gradually builds up ‘a reference library of schemas and scripts, most of which are packaged as stories, inasmuch as stories are the easiest to remember and retrieve. ... [Thus] scripts, schemas and stories ... are the basic blocks of our understanding’ and consequently are highly relevant to the way we envisage the central tenets of justice – among the other concepts important to humans (p.67).

In a chapter titled ‘The World is not Fair’, Oziewicz begins his analysis of his chosen justice foci with Poetic Justice, a branch of Old Justice. He divides this into the traditional, feudal, pre-Enlightenment track which denies injustice, and the transcendentalist one which acknowledges it but denies redress. Under the first heading he considers the fairy tales of Perrault and the Grimms. The latter in particular, writing during a period in which Old Justice had been superseded, seem to have been torn between the traditional portrayal of the protagonists’ passive acceptance of injustice towards a creation of happy endings in which moral desert is rewarded. Many tales, such as ‘Hansel and Gretel’, showing children abandoned by their own parents but never bearing a grudge against them, represent the old model. However the grafting on of a happy ending in a well-nigh miraculous way reflects the Grimms’ less than total adherence to the tradition. Later tales, such as those of Oscar Wilde, are more explicit in their awareness of social injustice, yet offer no solution. Oziewicz suggests that the transcendentalist track of the poetic justice script survived longer on the continent than in Anglo-American literature, though even in English literature its effects can still be discerned as late as the 1950s in fantasy such as that of Tolkien and Lewis; their Christian beliefs meant that they were more likely to suggest that ‘the achievement of justice in this world is at best temporary’ (p.106), to be sought in some afterlife or in an idealised future vision. Oziewicz concludes this chapter by suggesting that contemporary dissatisfaction with the Poetic Justice mode is the reason why so many traditional stories have been reworked to make them seem fairer to a modern audience.

Retributive Justice is discussed in a chapter titled ‘Find them and Kill them’. Despite its Old Justice origins, this form was ‘modified to the New Justice paradigm’ (p.114), shedding much of its excessive violence in favour of the unavoidable minimum necessary to such situations as ‘defensive war, Darwinist survival, and rebellion’ (p.115). Variations on these themes are to be found, for instance, in young adult fiction such as Brian Jacques’ Redwall series (war) and Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials trilogy (rebellion) – this justice script ‘recounts how harm done to a humble individual becomes a pebble that brings down an oppressive regime’, as eventually happens as an indirect result of Lyra’s quest for Roger in *Northern Lights* (or, as Oziewicz transatlantically names it, *The Golden Compass*).

‘No Future without Forgiveness’ is the title of the chapter dealing with Restorative Justice scripts, which discusses books by Terry Pratchett and Jeanne DuPrau among others. These offer ‘viable alternatives to the destructiveness of violence as a strategy of conflict resolution’, thus advancing ‘a new understanding of justice and ways to achieve it’ (p.162). Environmental Justice (‘Humans are Animals too’) is a much more recent phenomenon, one increasingly prevalent in young adult and other literature since the 1990s. Oziewicz focuses on the unexpected survival of dragons in Susan Fletcher’s *Ancient, Strange and Lovely* (2010) and on preservationist expeditions in Isabel Allende’s *City of the Beasts* (2002) to show how arguing for the rights of animals and presenting humans as part of ‘an intricate web of life’ (p.190) characterise this

script which is ‘the most powerful cognitive tool we have to steer clear of a [disastrous] future’ (p.191).

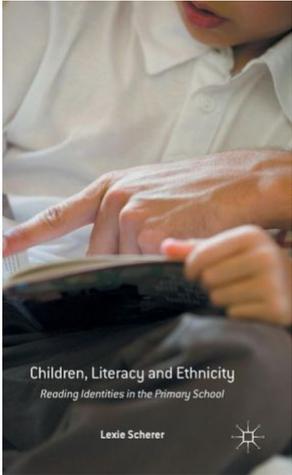
The book concludes by discussing Social Justice (*‘We all Have a Dream’* – italics original) and Global Justice (*‘Against Unseen Exploitation’*). Looking, for instance, at Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* (2008), Oziewicz quotes Nikolajeva’s description of dystopia as ‘a particularly “gratifying mode”’ because it portrays young protagonists in situations that allow “an exploration of the boundaries of a young person’s body and mind” that reflects the dynamics of power and repression’ characteristic of the young adult novel (p.207). Thus, in a fantasy mode, young readers are given ‘formulas for resistance’ (ibid.) relevant to their own situation in life. In a sense, the global justice script is an expansion on a worldwide stage of social justice, though fiction reflecting it is likely to have a broader setting. An example of this development is the way in which Jonathan Stroud’s *Bartimaeus* series progresses from the quest for social justice in the first two books towards the necessity in *Ptolemy’s Gate* (2006) for the protagonists to deal with global justice. Oziewicz sees the global justice script as particularly important in narrative fiction today, reflecting as it does the common encounter between societies of unequal power in an interaction where one of them is treated unfairly. Additionally, works related to this script are likely to present a positive appreciation of difference. The fantasy framework adopted by many novels in this mode means that alien species can be presented, with all the problems that their encounter with humans entails.

In the light of what he has already said about the importance of fiction in creating empathy, Oziewicz’s final words seem worth quoting:

In a global world, the key challenge for the future is not a return to isolated localism but making our local lives part of global relations built on fair cooperation and mutual responsibility. The first step toward this goal is to acknowledge the current global injustice, stir emotions and intellect to challenge it, and imagine principles on which it can be redressed. And that, in short, is the cultural, affective-cognitive function of the global justice script. (p.248)

Oziewicz’s book itself can also be seen as instrumental in this unquestionably important aim, though it has to be said that his worthy attempt to present the complexities of cognitive theory as applied to children’s literature is not always likely to encourage his audience to read on. It is perhaps inevitable too, given the nature of his endeavours, that many of his references are to less than familiar fictional texts. I also found myself wondering why the name of Jerome Bruner didn’t even figure in the index, whereas I would have thought his ground-breaking work on narrative as a primary act of mind, presented in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1986), deserved integration into Oziewicz’s argument. For, as Bruner concludes: ‘The power to recreate reality, to reinvent culture ... is where a theory of development must begin its discussion of mind’ (p.149) – a thought that chimes very much with both the argument and the conclusion of Oziewicz’s demanding book.

Pat Pinsent



Children, Literacy and Ethnicity: Reading Identities in the Primary School

Lexie Scherer, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, hb. 978 1 1375 3735 2, 2016, £68.00, 198pp. [About Children's Literature. Age range: 18+. Keywords: academic; primary school; literacy; ethnicity; reading development; multicultural picture books.]

Lexie Scherer's focus in her account of her qualitative research into the early stages of reading development is on young children's own perception of what is involved in this process, with particular reference to picture books. Consequently her book is interdisciplinary in its approach, using insights derived from the fields of educational psychology and sociology as well as of literacy development and children's literature as such.

Early in her research project at 'Three Chimneys', a failing primary school with an ethnically diverse intake, she realised that her personal reasons for being drawn to the topic related to her own background. Her family origins in Russia, Kosovo and Angola mirrored the variety of origins of the children, whose families had migrated from places as diverse as Kurdistan and Bangladesh: 'Given the fact that I wanted to talk to minority children about their storied selves, it was important that I shared mine with them' (p.9).

Impetus for her study was provided by the paucity of research into what children actually 'do' when they read multicultural picture books. She found that there was 'a lack of theorisation of minority children's raced and ethnicised identities at school as readers' (p.13). How do such children negotiate their own identities in the face of reading matter that confronts them with various patterns of social discourse? Scherer complains that a good deal of other research into children reading picture books focuses on the books rather than the children reading them; she placed greater emphasis on the children's own voices, together with non-verbal aspects of their reactions to the books. She was also involved with the children in extra-curricular activities such as an after-school reading group and a school visit to the Science Museum.

The books she chose for her research consisted of well-regarded multicultural picture books, such as Jeannie Baker's *Mirror* (2010), which features two families – from an Australian suburb and the Moroccan desert – who nevertheless share similar daily routines. There were also some titles from the school's reading scheme (the Oxford Reading Tree) which featured black characters. The children were asked to keep a picture diary about the books (this venture had a limited degree of success as the children's responses were often irrelevant or even destructive!), and Scherer also interviewed them in pairs, analysing her results in terms of age, gender and ethnicity.

Many of the children had had negative experiences of learning to read, perceiving any failure in this area as a defect in 'cleverness'; the 'banding' of class reading groups meant that they had few illusions about their own ranking. Some individuals reacted to any comments about reading with a surprising degree of hostility – like the girl who, when asked why some people were better at reading than others, put her hand inside a lizard puppet and clamped its jaws on the researcher's hand! (p.57).

The children's responses to multicultural picture books were often resistant, as they seemed to prefer to identify with white rather than black characters, in an attempt to fit in with the society around them. Scherer conjectures that in rejecting characters looking like themselves, the children are thus 'resisting being assigned to the category of "Other"' (p.95). Books portraying non-industrialised rural societies also tended to be rejected by these London-based children.

One of the books, Baker's *Mirror*, was also used as a springboard which encouraged Muslim pupils to talk about their religious identities. In this picture book, there are culture-specific pictures of women in Hijabs together with some Arabic text. The children interviewed seem to have seen Scherer as an outsider who needed to be

instructed in the practices of Islam. She was particularly struck by the extent to which, in their own stories triggered by this book, the children referred to their places of origin as 'my country', even though in some cases they were aware that returning there would be dangerous.

Scherer's chapter on race presents some disturbing findings concerning the responses of children aged six and seven to skin colour as portrayed in the picture books they were reading. The respondents, who would probably best be termed 'brown', overwhelmingly aligned themselves with whiteness and rejected black characters as unsuitable as friends, having unpleasant hair, and likely to be dirty and to smell. This reaction was however often contradicted by their actual behaviour: they were quite likely to be friendly with the black children in the class. It does however suggest that 'there would be strong value in addressing anti-racism education with children from a younger age than current policy and practice dictate' (p.152).

The final chapter reflects on the issues which arise from Scherer's research. For instance, given the prevalence of non-English home backgrounds, she suggests it would have been useful for the school to make more creative use of the home languages. There was evidence of the children's literacy practices outside school, which might be quite different from those in school and involve, for instance, more material not directly text based: 'If English primary schools could build on children's home cultures' understanding of the importance of literacy, then progress with "poor readers" might improve' (p.167). Scherer recommends what she terms the 'Super Seven' of reading: silent reading; reading shared with a peer; oral stories; faith literacy; reading pictures; bilingual reading; and cultural reading (p.168) – as she observes, the first three of these are quite common but the remaining ones less so.

Scherer also concludes that current policy which postpones consideration of racist language until quite late in the primary school needs to be revised in the light of young children's actual usages. The presence of multicultural picture books by itself is not sufficient to challenge the prejudices rampant in society. Finally she asserts the 'value of including children in research about their lives' (p.174) – research from which she has derived some unexpected findings which could, if taken proper account of, lead to significant shifts in policy.

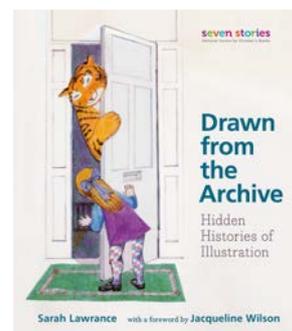
Some of the findings in this book are uncomfortable for those of us who had hoped that the multicultural and anti-racist policies that have been in place for the best part of forty years would have led to a 'colour-blind' and tolerant society. Though they are based on a single research project at a failing school, which has now become an academy, they have the potential to point at a malaise in wider society, and certainly need to be more generally known.

Pat Pinsent

Drawn from the Archive: Hidden Histories of Illustration

Sarah Lawrence (ed.), Newcastle upon Tyne: Seven Stories in association with Walker Books, pb., 978 0 9928 8270 9, 2015, £9.99, 128pp. [About Children's Literature. Age range: Adult; students. Keywords: Illustrations; illustrators; archive; collections; book production; book history; 1930–2013.]

Sarah Lawrence, the Exhibition Director of Seven Stories since 2003, has been instrumental in building the Centre's archive collection. She has, in this book, made an inspired and inspiring selection of 27 well-known illustrators represented in the collection, ranging from the 1930s to 2013. Each illustrator is treated with a different approach to the archive material, but in all cases wonderfully well-produced illustrations or archival sources are used to explain or support her commentary. There is a mixture of background information about the way the illustrator works, or the way the collaboration with an author works, or on technical aspects of the way illustrations



have changed during the book's production, an exploration of drafts and mock ups. The variability of this approach adds greatly to the book's appeal and usefulness. Also included in each section are extracts from contemporary reviews of the artist or the works. This is an excellent use of an archive collection as it works as a practical demonstration of the ways in which archive collections can provide insight both into the work of an individual artist and into the history and techniques of book production.

Sarah Lawrence provides a wise and interesting commentary throughout: about individual illustrators and their historical significance; about the quality of their work and their techniques; and about the ways in which an archive collection can be used.

She includes illustrators who write their own books as well as illustrators who work in close collaboration with an author, and those illustrators who never meet the author whose work they are illustrating, so their work is totally separate.

This is a beautifully produced book, lovely to own and browse, but it will also make the reader want to rush off to the archive to do further research.

[For illustrations and further details of the book, see Sarah Lawrence's workshop PowerPoint from the 2015 IBBY UK/NCRCCL conference at www.ibby.org.uk/parallel-sessions-151015.php?s=560.]

Pam Dix

Novels and Tales

Wildwitch

Lene Kaaberbol, trans. Charlotte Barslund, illus. Rohan Eason, London: Pushkin Children's Books, pb. 978 1 7826 9083 2, 2016, £9.99, 160pp. [Novels and Tales. Age range 8–12. Keywords: fantasy; Danish; cats; chimera; witchcraft; magic; illustrated; translation.]

Clara Ash is a 12-year-old Danish girl. As she is leaving for school one day she is attacked and scratched by a huge black cat. Her mother, very attached to normality, is upset by the attack. Clara suspects the attack has some unexplained significance for her mother and for her.

Her mother takes Clara to visit her estranged aunt Isa, who lives in a remote country location surrounded by animals. Back home, Clara finds herself confronted by a strange flying creature, which she learns is a Chimera. Clara must now go and stay with her aunt. The Chimera wants to capture Clara. Her aunt, a Wildwitch, has magical powers that can oppose the Chimera. Clara learns that she too is a Wildwitch.

Can Clara defeat the Chimera? Will she be taken as the Chimera's slave? The cat will help her survive.

The text of this edition reads so smoothly it is hard to remember it is a translation. It sustains a lively pace. The characterisation is worthy of J.K. Rowling. The illustrations enliven the text and make it more readable. There are other volumes to follow. The publisher may come under pressure to publish them sooner rather than later.

Rebecca R. Butler



Boy23

Jim Carrington, London: Bloomsbury, pb. 978 1 4088 2277 7, 2015, £7.99, 352pp. [Novels and Tales. Age range 10–14. Keywords: fantasy. dystopia; thriller; captivity; solitary confinement; disease; dictatorship; Germany.]

At the beginning of this dystopian thriller, Jesper (Boy23) is mysteriously released from captivity to survive in a hostile and unfamiliar world. He has spent most of his childhood in a comfortable solitary confinement, communicated with through a television screen and a faceless Voice.

His story proceeds through three voices: his own; another belonging to Carina, the inmate of a kind of nineteenth-century boarding school run by monks; and Blake, an adult, who, we gradually learn, holds some authority in the institution where Jesper has been kept. The story develops ingeniously, but rather slowly (it's over 300 pages), to draw a picture of a disease-devastated society ruled over by a fascist-like dictatorship called New Dawn (the name of a right-wing party in Greece in our own place and time); and to bring the three protagonists together on the side of liberation and on the run from the authorities.

There is tension, surprise and action in the plot, but there are some places where it could have been tightened up and the background sketched in more quickly (sometimes there is something to be said for an omniscient narrator). Some aspects of the story remain mysterious or underdeveloped. It is set in Germany, but Jesper speaks English. He also thinks in a restricted idiosyncratic language, where, for instance, he 'squizzes' around to see if anyone is 'prying', and thinks of rabbits as 'hoppers' and birds as 'squawks'; perhaps a result of an upbringing in which language and experience have been restricted. But this is used so sparingly as to be regarded as odd or eccentric rather than as a defining characteristic, and the three voices do not emerge as significantly different in their manner of thought or speech. So many parts of the tale are left unresolved that we must expect it to be continued: Jesper says at the end of this episode: 'we have to save the world'. That should require at least one more book.

Clive Barnes

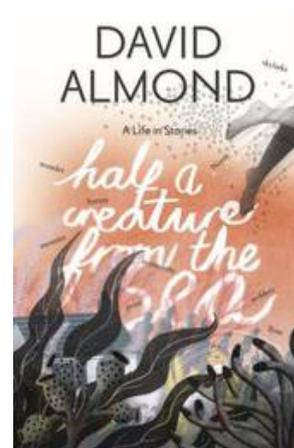
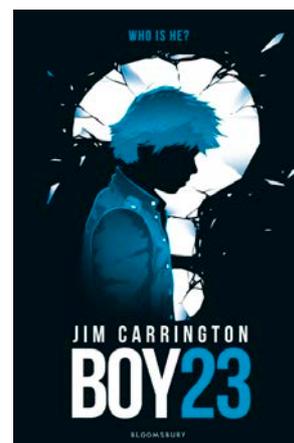
Half a Creature from the Sea: A Life in Stories

David Almond, illus. Eleanor Taylor, London: Walker Books, hb. 978 1 4063 5436 8, 2014, £10.99, 240pp. [Teenage fiction with autobiography. Age range 12+. Keywords: Short stories; autobiography with matched fiction; illustrated; looking back; Tyneside; North Sea; religion; spirituality.]

All David Almond's novels are rich with stories of people and places that he has known and grown up with, though this in no way narrows his work, his appeal, nor does it prevent him from commenting on life's big issues. From these experiences, universal themes and issues emerge and are drawn out. As he says here:

I find myself writing more and more about that little place. Many of my stories spring from it. They use its landscape, its language, its people, and turn it into fiction – half imaginary, half real. The stories in this book are all in some way connected to that 'ordinary' place. I try to do what many writers have done before me: show that ordinary places can be extraordinary.

In this beautifully illustrated exploration, he introduces people and stories from his life, demonstrating how they became the sources of his inspiration for various pieces of writing. They are presented in the book sequentially. Each on its own is a wonderfully well-written narrative of memory and is then matched by the fictional story that arises from it. This provides insight into his work and is a great inspiration for aspiring writers. Of course, Almond being Almond, each of these remembered tales is a beautifully written account in its own right and a great example of the writing of a historical



narrative of the lives of ordinary people. Eleanor Taylor's illustrations and the layout of the book make it a light and accessible read. The book has a lovely jacket which allows glimpses through a transparent underwater scene of the world of the stories represented on the hardback cover inside.

Reading this has added greatly to my appreciation and understanding of David Almond's work and I highly recommend it.

Pam Dix

Sweet Pizza

G.R. Gemin, illus. Tom Clohosy Cole, London: Nosy Crow, pb.978 0 8576 3630 0, 2016, £6.99, 250pp. [Young adult fiction. Age range 11–14. Keywords: Italian community; diversity; immigrants; people expulsion; South Wales; social history; internment; Second World War.]

G.R. Gemin's first book *Cowgirl* was a delightful introduction to a culturally diverse community in South Wales, a humorous and accessible story for 11–14 year olds. It was shortlisted for the 2015 Branford Boase Award. To coincide with the publication of his second novel, *Sweet Pizza*, *Cowgirl* is to be reprinted with a new cover, which is excellent news as the original cover had little appeal. He has returned to South Wales again for the setting for this new book, which is suitable for the same age range. Here he explores the experiences of the Italian community in Wales, a long-established group whose cafés and ice cream parlours still populate the Welsh towns. His story juxtaposes the historical experiences of this community with contemporary issues, particularly through the trope of grandfather's memories, grandfather–grandson relationship with the intervening generation as the point of dispute, conflict and the desire for change.

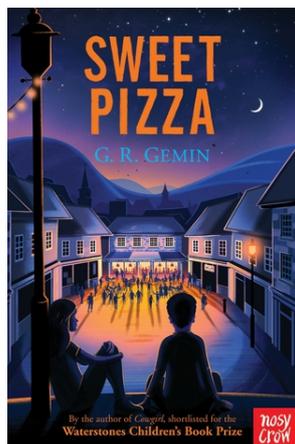
The story provides many interesting insights into the experiences of migrant communities, where the desire to work in areas that are known and familiar conflicts with the desire for change and to move on from the past. The future of the café is the point of conflict in this case, and as in *Cowgirl*, the strong sense of community, the feel-good factor of communities coming together, provides the vehicle for the decision making about its future.

Alongside this storyline, Gemin tells the very sad and little-known story of the internment of the Italians in Wales during the Second World War and the forced sending of a large number of them to Canada. He is very good at exploring that key point – that we are all the descendants of previous generations who made decisions that we may not now agree with. To apply guilt retrospectively is difficult, because, of course, the present generations cannot be branded with the sins of the past.

The book is full of food and cooking, and ends with menus for some of the key dishes cooked.

Gemin is particularly good at embracing diversity easily and lightly with the result that both these books have a rich and ethnically diverse cast of characters, something that we do not see enough of in contemporary young adult fiction.

Pam Dix



Picture and Novelty Books

The Princess and the Castle

Caroline Binch, Burley Gate, Herefordshire: Otter-Barry Books, pb. 978 1 9109 5948 0, £6.99, 2016, 32pp. First published by Jonathan Cape, London, 2004. [Picture Book. Age range 4–8. Keywords: fantasy; princess; absent father; jealousy; friendship; Cornwall.]

The Princess and the Castle, written and illustrated by Caroline Binch, who also illustrated Mary Hoffman's highly successful *Amazing Grace* (1994) and some of the other stories in the series and, with Rita Phillips Mitchell, the award-winning *Hue Boy* (1993), has been reissued to launch Otter-Barry Books, a new children's imprint. This perceptive picture book is about a little girl, Genevieve, who lives by the sea in Cornwall with her mum and younger brother Jack. She longs to visit the castle across the bay and live out her fantasy of being a princess and finding her father, the king, waiting for her there. But her dad, whom 'she could just about remember' and misses dreadfully, had been lost at sea in his fishing boat when she was quite small and she is now afraid of the water. How her mum befriends a local guitar-playing fisherman, Cedric, a giant of a man whom Genevieve at first finds 'scary', and how he gradually transforms their lives is sensitively described in both words and pictures.

Binch's beautifully detailed and very realistic watercolours, based on the many black-and-white photographs that she took for the project, skilfully tell us so much more than words can: for instance, there is the apprehensive look on little Jack's face when he first meets Cedric; and with Genevieve's growing awareness that Mum and Cedric are becoming close and her fear that Cedric will 'capture' her mum, we see, in a small pictorial vignette, the mental picture that she has of them, walking away from her, hand in hand.

The pictorial narrative unfolds against a very convincing Cornish setting (Binch herself lives in Cornwall) and one can almost smell the ozone and feel the sea breeze on one's face. This is a delightful and satisfying picture book with a happy ending and, with its themes of imaginary play, fairy-tale references and realistic situations skilfully entwined, will, no doubt, in this new edition, give pleasure to many more children and adults too.

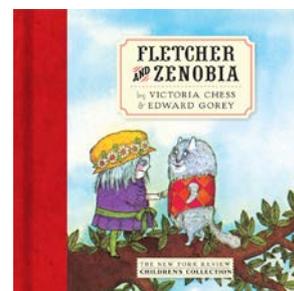
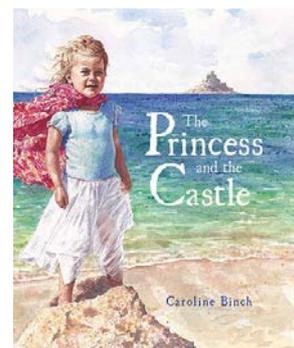
Some inside illustrations can be viewed <http://www.otterbarrybooks.com/>. Look for the book under the Books heading.

June Hopper Swain

Fletcher and Zenobia

Edward Gorey, illus. Victoria Chess, London: The New York Review Children's Collection distributed by Faber Factory Plus, hb. 978 1 5901 7963 5, £9.99, 2016, 72pp. First published by The New York Review of Books, New York, 1967. [Picture Book. Age range 4–8. Keywords: fantasy, cat, andromorphs, doll, party, cooking, hats.]

This is a highly imaginative little picture book about a cat called Fletcher who lives in a very tall tree because one day he had recklessly run up into its branches and had been unable to get down again. In this tree there is also a big leather steamer trunk that contains, among other things, a variety of hats, but as Fletcher's social life is extremely limited he never finds the right occasion to wear any of them. One day he discovers at the bottom of the trunk a large papier-mâché egg that has a label attached to it on which is written 'For the attic (unwanted by Mabel)'. When he opens the egg he finds that it contains an old-fashioned cloth doll. Fletcher and this doll, who can talk and whose name is Zenobia, strike up a firm friendship, and it is she, more worldly and practical than Fletcher, who suggests that they should try and find a way to get down from the tree and out into the great big world; but how? In the meantime, to cheer each other up, they decide to have a party and Zenobia bakes a cake and Fletcher



makes some ice cream and a quantity of punch for which all the ingredients magically appear. This is a delightful wish-fulfilment scenario in which a giant moth, an unexpected guest at the party, ensures that all ends happily.

Out-of-print until now, the droll text is by Chicago-born author-illustrator Edward Gorey (1925–2000) and the pictures, bold and colourful, are by Victoria Chess, also born in Chicago, and for them she was awarded the Brooklyn Art Books for Children citation from the Brooklyn Museum and the Brooklyn Public Library.

This humorous and quirky story, neatly enclosed in a format ideal for little hands to hold, has had something of a cult following in the USA, and will no doubt, with this new edition, delight a new generation of children there and in the UK.

June Hopper Swain

The Jungle Book

Robert Hunter, Frances Lincoln Children's Books, large format hb. 978 1 8478 0797 7, 2016, £9.99, 40pp. [Picture Book. Age range 6–10. Keywords: jungle; myth; anthropomorphism; animals.]

This book is a retelling of Rudyard Kipling's story of Mowgli, the little boy brought up in this version by a pack of dogs. The publication of this book seemed to be an exciting event, one to look forward to with anticipation.

However the presentation of this book is strangely and infuriatingly inconsistent. The drawings are truly exquisite, matching the power of those by Douanier Rousseau. But in some places the text is printed in black on dark blue and is almost impossible to read – for an adult reviewer let alone for a child. The typeface is also surprisingly small, given the huge page format employed.

For an admirer of this publishing house and of the author's artistic skill, it is a painful conclusion that this worthwhile mission has sadly misfired.

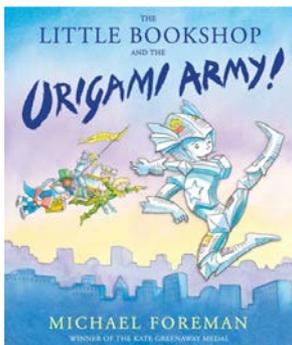
Rebecca R. Butler

The Little Bookshop and the Origami Army

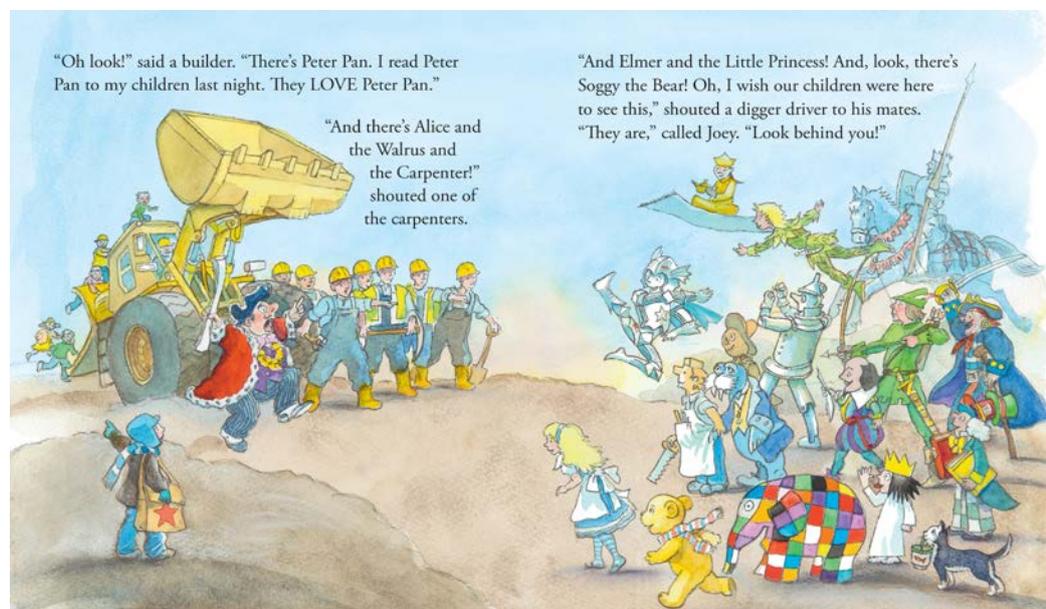
Michael Foreman, Andersen Press, London, hb. 978 1 7834 4120 4, 2015, £11.99, 32pp. [Picture Book. Age range 4–8. Keywords: Friendship; community; fantasy; opposition.]

Joey is a newspaper boy, who, when he learns about a plan to demolish the local bookshop and build a new superstore, sets out to save the small business. He calls on Origami Girl, who magically forms from the folded pages of the newspapers Joey carries in his satchel. Origami Girl then in turn brings to life characters from the leaves of the books that stock The Little Bookshop, and together they form the Origami Army. Amongst the cast are recognisable figures such as Tony Ross's Little Princess and David McKee's Elmer the Elephant, who are mentioned in the dedication. The united Origami Army then seek the help of the government to stop the demolition of the bookshop that Joey's community loves so well, but it may take reinforcement before the army's voices are listened to!

The lively characters of this book spring from its pages, against the backdrop of Foreman's characteristically beguiling pastel watercolour washes. There are many visual clues and metaphors used in this book, some of which are political and literary references that may trigger conversations between adult and child readers, and point to further reading. The beautiful rendering of the story is a visual delight for the imagination, bringing to the fore picture-book characters that have endured across many generations of young readers. *The Little Bookshop and the Origami Army* is a story with a strong message of friendship and tells of the importance of holding onto shared spaces in order to prosper as content and cohesive communities. It is a



thoughtful reflection on the modern, digital world, where commerce and communication is so much mediated through online, transient platforms. Foreman's feeling on books is succinct in the illustrated endpapers, which open the book with a silhouette of the city, and close it with a rainbow arching over the same scene, reflecting the line in the story: 'a great rainbow of fairy tale, myth and legend arched across the city'. This picture book is an excellent addition to the canon of literature for children that it celebrates.



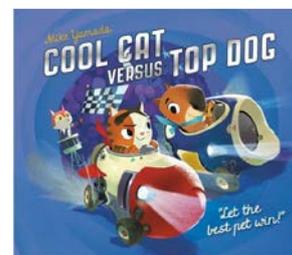
From *The Little Bookshop and the Origami Army*. Copyright © 2015 Michael Foreman. Reproduced with permission Michael Foreman and Andersen Press.

Katie Forrester

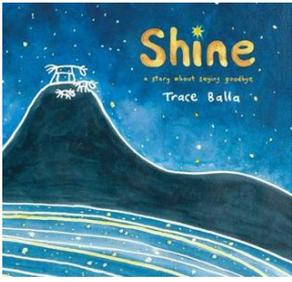
Cool Cat Versus Top Dog

Mike Yamada, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 8478 0738 0, 2016, £10.99, 32pp. [Picture Book. Age range 4–8. Keywords: rivalry; anthropomorphism; cats; dogs; cars; cartoons.]

Mike Yamada is an animator and illustrator who has worked on films like *Kung Fu Panda 2* (2011), and *How to Train your Dragon* (2010). This tale concerns a vicious pet rivalry played out annually in an animal Grand Prix around the midnight streets of the town. It's the race that takes up most of the book: the preparations of the cars and then the various tricks that the rivals play on one another on the circuit, including deploying some ingenious James Bond-like weapons. Yamada's cartoon illustrations, in storyboard style, are brilliantly coloured and action packed. As you might expect, a reader can almost do without the meagre text. Cat and dog become friends at the end of the story, but this cooperation is only to prevent someone else from winning the race; and, of course, all the fun stems from their rivalry. It's enjoyable enough but I can't help thinking that this kind of story would be so much more effective as an animated film.



Clive Barnes



Shine: A Story about Saying Goodbye

Trace Balla, Crows Nest, NSW, Australia and UK: Allen & Unwin, hb. 9 781 74336 610 3, 2015, £10.99, 24pp. [Picture Book. Age range 3–6 years, with adult. Keywords: bereavement; fantasy; death; grief; family; horses; myth.]

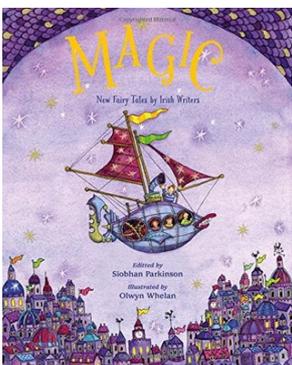
Trace Balla's *Shine*, the story of a celestial horse who has to return to his star leaving his loving family behind, shows a beacon of hope to those dealing with the profound darkness of personal loss. In a moving note at the start, we are told that Balla created the picture book for her sister's children when they lost their father. 'We all come from the stars, we all go back to the stars ...'. This idea, which we often resort to when explaining death and bereavement to young children, is at the heart of the story, elevating a deeply personal experience to a poignant and universal one.

The setting is a faraway planet, amidst stars, where a beautiful, kind horse, Shine, meets a kindred spirit in Glitter. They have little ones, Sparky and Glimmer, and are the glowing picture of a happy family, galloping together. When Shine has to return to his star as all horses must, 'because his time has come', the family are heartbroken. They shed golden tears of grief all night, making a huge ocean of love. The story, told through metaphors of colours and the elements (ocean of tears, mountain of grief, light of love), is of the family holding each other together in their shared sorrow. Eventually they take solace from the brightest star in the sky, their daddy, whose love shines down on them forever. The title of the book, *Shine: A Story about Saying Goodbye*, resonates in the colour palette – the dark hues of blue and indigo evoke emotions of sadness as well as the vast spaces of the universe. The moody blue expanse is offset by the white horse figures, the gold text and the luminous stars.

Reading this, I was reminded of lines from a firm family favourite, Debi Gliori's *No Matter What* (1999) – Small, the little fox asks his mother 'But what about when we're dead and gone, would you love me then, does love go on?', and Large, mummy fox, showing Small the infinite night sky says, 'Small, look at the stars – how they shine and glow, but some of those stars died a long time ago. Still they shine in the evening skies. Love, like starlight, never dies.'

Shine is a beautiful and powerful book. Written in simple prose, deep, cathartic and positive. I do believe it wouldn't be easy for someone who has experienced loss to read this book, either to themselves or to a child, without getting moist eyed. But as in the way of all great literature, this book brings us close to the real thing, grief in this case. Yet, all the while, it holds us secure in a warm embrace, and assures us with hope for carrying on.

Soumi Dey



Magic!: New Fairy Tales by Irish Writers

Siobhán Parkinson (ed.), illus. Olwyn Whelan, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books (Janetta Otter-Barry Books), hb. 978 1 8478 0537 9, 2015, £14.99, 64pp. [Picture Book. Age range 3+. Keywords: stories; myth; folk tale; sorcery; enchantment; Ireland; wizards; dragons.]

This book is a collection of new fairy tales by well-known Irish authors John Boyne, Malachy Doyle, Paula Leyden, Maeve Friel, Deirdre Sullivan, Darragh Martin and the editor Siobhán Parkinson.

On opening the book, I found a set of oval boxes set in intertwined leaves, mainly in primary colours. The boxes depict six fairy-tale characters, the verso the mirror image of the recto, intriguing! The only ones I can guess before I start reading are a queen, a princess and, perhaps, a mermaid. The title page has a more muted illustration of what I guess to be a pirate ship but the captain and the crew/prisoners are all children! The contents spread has a colour illustration above each title; for example the 'Badness,

Madness and Trickery' has a bee about to land on three balls of wool held together with a pair of knitting needles!

The preface letter from the editor says: 'This book is your chance to get a sprinkling of Irish storytelling magic and also to discover some of our best Irish writers.' The letter continues: 'If there is one thing children (and even some adults) love, it's a good fairy tale.' Looking at that last sentence, the age range given for the book and way the book is designed, I am wondering whom this book would suit. It is certainly a picture book as there are 13 full-page illustrations, 16 quite large illustrations interspersed within the text and each story is headed by a small illustration above the title. There are also a few border illustrations. The illustrations are bright and bold with plenty to look at as some are very busy. So these will delight a young child, with plenty to explore and to guess at the characters and stories of the various people, dragons, wizards, animals and birds.

But what about the text? The font could be darker and larger. If an adult is reading the book to a child, there is no problem for them, but for a child to try and also read the text or at least to follow it, it would have been preferable to use a darker, larger font.

But what about the words and the stories within the text? If a children is read to, the stories will be enjoyed by every child who is old enough to listen. However, to read the book alone, a child will have to be a good reader with a reading age of about 8+ (my guess). The stories average about four pages of text. The style of the text suggests that the age for maximum enjoyment is 7–12.

Now to investigate some of the stories. The first story, by Siobhán Parkinson, is 'The Princess and the Other Frog' at four and a half pages of text. It is, of course, headed with an illustration of a bright green frog. It tells of 'the Princess Finula who walks to The Other Side'. She has only her pet frog for company, a picnic basket on her arm and she is in disguise, trying to pretend she is 'That Other Girl'. She is going to meet her father on The Other Side, after she has had lunch and has gathered what her father requires. She meets the Big Bad Wolf, then the Fiery Red Dragon and then an Ogre. She grabs her pet frog Hildegard as it had leaped out of safety and was about to be squashed under the Ogre's foot, stuffs it under her cap as she scarpers off to meet her father. She introduces Hildegard to her father, who The illustration opposite gives the story away to me, a shame, but I don't think a young reader would get the message.

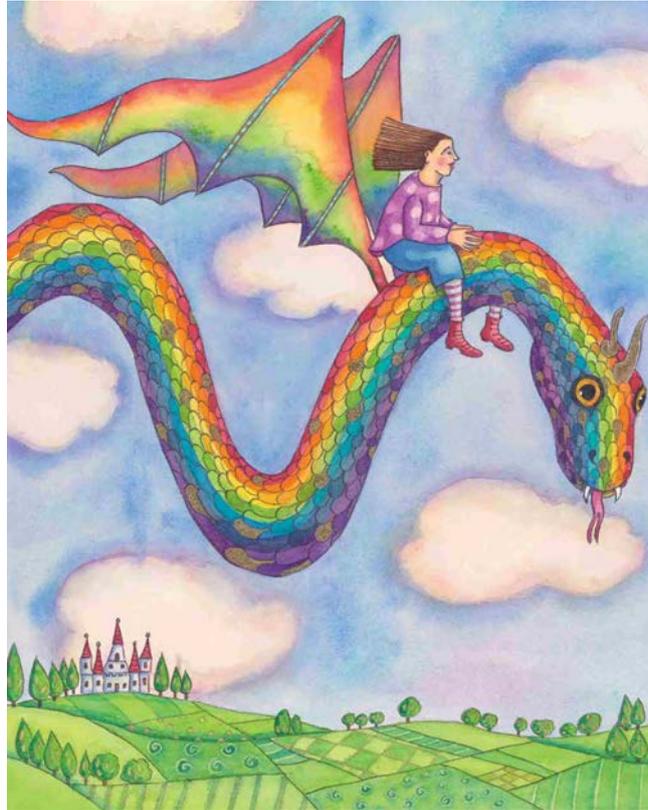


Fiery Red Dragon with Princess Finola, from 'The Princess and the Other Frog'. Copyright © 2015 Olwyn Whelan. Reproduced permission Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

Maeve Friel's story 'The Story of the Whispering Stones' is headed by a mermaid. 'Once there was a girl who lived out of a suitcase.' She was 'always in trouble because she had left her toothbrush, or her best trousers, or her school library book in the wrong

place'. One night she runs away – without her suitcase. After a while she comes to the Beach of the Whispering Stones, which she decides she hates and so continues running along to the far end where she sees a woman sitting on a red rock, looking out to sea. 'She must be a mermaid, thought the girl, listening to the songs of her mermaid family under the sea ... [she] took off her shoes and tiptoed, barefoot to the water's edge. The cold sea folded around her like a cold blanket.' The ending brings the reader back to the modern world with

I enjoyed these stories and looking carefully at the illustrations. They are very varied and imaginative. As is the wont of fairy tales, there is often a moral if the reader wants to take it to heart, but I hope an adult reading to a child will not spoil the child's enjoyment by pointing it out.



Nora and the Sky-Snake, from 'The Sky Snake and the Pot of Gold'. Copyright © 2015 Olwyn Whelan. Reproduced permission Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

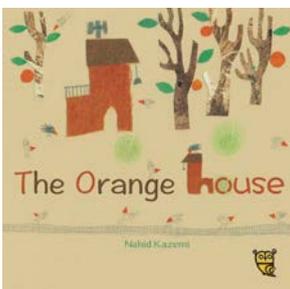
Jennifer Harding

The Orange House

Nahid Kazemi, trans. Azita Rassi, London: Tiny Owl Books, hb. 970 1 9103 2811 8, 2016, £12.99, 24pp. [Picture Book. Age range 3–8. Keywords: friendship; old and new; environment; heritage; fable; translation.]

On the cover, the house is cleverly depicted on the h of the title text, and in a further illustration above it that I assume is a view of another side. I am wondering if I like the rather stylised artwork.

On opening the book, white trees and the house at the top, with multiple birds (which we are later told are 'noisy crows') at all angles below sit on a warm reddish brown background, the colour used on the cover. However, on the next verso the house has acquired an eye, a nose and a mouth.



The first line of text 'The Orange House lives ...', immediately gives the house a life and personality.

The Orange House lives at the end of an alley with tall buildings on both sides. ...
The Orange House frowns down the alley at Turquoise. Turquoise was the first building to be built where an old house used to be.

Orange is the only one of the old houses left, the other new ones being Sky, Star, Sea and Moonlight. All the new buildings chat with each other, admiring each other – 'What beautiful windows!', 'The colour of the bricks is so pretty!' and so on. These are tall buildings in contrast to Orange's single storey. Turquoise tries to draw Orange into the conversation but Orange doesn't reply. The others also try to coax her: 'What have we done? We've never hurt you,' says Star.

Turquoise then remembers the past when there were other houses like Orange, gardens full of trees, also ponds, fish and birds. He continues with the history of destruction of the old buildings and environment, and its replacement with Sky and the others.

So now there is an appreciation on the part of the new buildings for Orange, as she retains her pretty garden, and sympathy for her. However, a new threat to Orange appears. This causes all the houses to work together and for all to become friends.

This is a fable with a message that is not thrust at you but told in such a way as to show that there are many sides to any rift. An older person reading this story to a young child will not need to point out the moral, the child will understand through the excellent telling of the story.

The illustrations are all in warm colours and you will have to judge them for yourself, according to your taste.

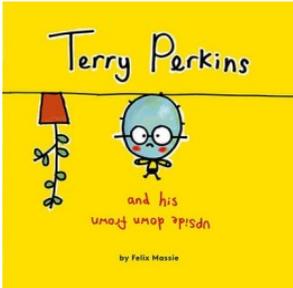


The text font is large and slightly cursive, and I think a beginner will follow it and like it.

"We like you as well, Orange! We like your pretty garden, your orange trees, and your noisy crows!" says Sky.
"Yes and in those days the air was cleaner. It was easier to breathe. It wasn't like now," says Turquoise.

Nahid Kazemi was born in Iran, although currently lives in Canada, and is among a group of Iranian children's book illustrators published by Iranian Tiny Owl Books, now based in the UK. See 'The Little Black Fish and other stories: Iranian illustrated children's books – in pictures' introduced by David Almond: www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/gallery/2015/nov/10/the-little-black-iranian-illustrated-childrens-books. Also see an interview with Nahid Kazemi: <http://tinyowl.co.uk/an-interview-with-nahid-kazemi-the-talented-illustrator-of-alive-again-and-the-orange-house/>.

Jennifer Harding



Terry Perkins and his Upside Down Frown

Felix Massie, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 9 781 8478 0620 8, 2015, £11.99, pp.32. [Picture Book. Age range 4+. Keywords: disability; bullying; rhyming text.]

From BAFTA nominee Felix Massie, whose metier is animation, comes this wonderfully quirky debut about being different and how to revel in it.

Little Terry is troubled: when he tries to speak, his words come out upside down. He becomes even sadder when, on the advice of the doctor, his mother turns him on his head. Now his words come out right, but his ('upside down') frown stays on. His playschool mates bully him and Terry becomes sadder than ever, until he meets young Jenny. She *speaks funny* too and soon they are rolling about with laughter, hanging around together and Terry realises, being different is fun!

The story and visuals are emotive: in the first half you cannot help but feel sorry for poor Terry who is unable to talk correctly, stand *up* or smile. Little wonder he daydreams about escaping into space where everything floats and there is no right way up. The double spread where he lands bump in his dark room at 'home' from a bright and friendly dream world of space, brings across Terry's utter dejection. The second half is buoyant and busy, with the two unlikely friends gambolling across the spreads. The bright yellows and greens are a stark contrast to the sad and forlorn greys. The linear narration and engaging visuals with panels and speech bubbles display a strong animation/graphic style. The rhyming text is fun for reading aloud as is the tactile element where readers have to turn the book around to read the upside-down text and sketches.

This heart-warming picture book will appeal to anyone who has had trouble fitting in. It is reassuring to know that in a world where often parents, therapists and doctors are at their wits' end, certain friendships are redemptive in their simple wisdom, turning 'enormous frowns' into smiles.

Soumi Dey



There's a Tiger in the Garden

Lizzy Stewart, London: Frances Lincoln, hb. 9 781 8478 0806 6, £11.99, 2016, 40pp. [Picture Book. Age range 4–6+. Keywords: picture book; fantasy; humour.]

Gran says there is a tiger in the garden; in fact there is a jungle – and a grumpy polar bear. Nora has doubts. However, she sets off on a journey of exploration with Jeff the Giraffe as companion. What will they find?

Bold shapes, bold colours, the colours of the tropical jungle burst off the page, not garishly bright but lush and saturated. The illustrations, whether full-page spreads or vignettes, are set off by the white space of the page. This not only concentrates attention on the image but subtly creates a sense of looking at the scene through a frame – a window, perhaps; we are watching Nora as she moves through a world that

is both real and imaginary. In this way Stewart successfully balances the two. Nora, with her thick chestnut bob and striped stockings is a very real little girl moving through a garden that has been populated by her imagination. The text, well designed with a clear font, sustains the illusion by avoiding any sense that Nora's experiences may not be real. Indeed, this is further emphasised with great humour by a clear reference to that great picture book where imagination and reality coexist – *The Tiger who Came to Tea* (Judith Kerr, 1968). Adults as well as children will appreciate such touches.

This is a delightful book that stands out, handling a familiar theme with confidence, humour and a distinctive style.

Ferelith Hordon

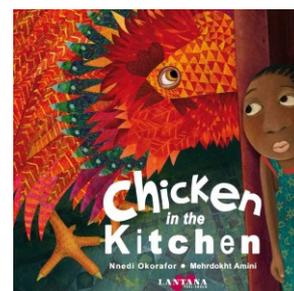
Chicken in the Kitchen

Nnedi Okorafor, Illus. Mehrodokht Amini, London: Lantana, pb. 9 780 9932 2530 7, 2015, £6.99, 32pp. [Picture Book. Age range 4–8. Keywords: Nigeria; tradition; humour; chicken]

The masquerade is central to Nigerian culture and celebration. Here it is central to this lively, enjoyable story in which tradition is presented not as something separate but as part of everyday life.

Anyago is a thoroughly contemporary little girl living in a thoroughly contemporary home. But into this modern Nigerian home (yes, we are in West Africa), bursts a wonderful, blazing flamboyant chicken intent on creating havoc. What can Anyago do? She cannot control this spirit of mayhem without help. Where can she find some? Enter the Wood Wit – but Anyago still has to use her own wits.

Bold designs, brilliant colours, humour, lively characterisation all combine to create a picture book that jumps off the shelf.



This is a story that should be shared, not just for the story with its Nigerian nature spirit, the Wood Wit, who could be a relation of our own Brownie or Hob, but for visual experience as well. Diversity is still very much a concern. How can the children in our schools see themselves, experience the other, find a connection with their roots, learn that difference is not so different? It books such as this – already a prizewinner – from bold new publishers like Lantana that will open such doors.

[For some inside pages, see www.lantanapublishing.com/shop/books/chicken-in-the-kitchen/.]

Ferelith Hordon



Lara of Newtown

Chris McKimmie, Sidney, NSW: Allen & Unwin, hb. 9 781 7601 1232 5, 2016, £11.99, 32pp. [Picture Book. Age range 4–8. Keywords: picture book, anthropomorphism, cat, urban life.]

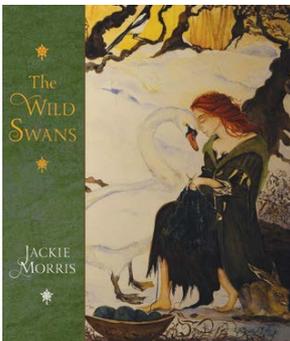
This picture book is a bittersweet combination of endearing storytelling with an underlying realism that strikes an emotional chord with the reader.

Lara is a cat who is longing for a place to call home and people to call family. At the beginning she has a comfortable life with crunchy biscuits for dinner every night, but Nana Banana becomes too old to look after her. Lara then is homed in various unsuitable places with people that don't appreciate her. A chance encounter with the Kafoopses, however, may be what she needs to make her a 'lucky boots'.

Chris McKimmie uses mixed media and scanned-in debris to make real Lara's story, which itself is a collage of different incidents and circumstances. At the back of the book there is a list of the materials McKimmie has used; among them are pencils, crayons, pastels, newspaper and rubber stamps. The juxtapositions of the collaged and drawn images create a hotchpotch of environments showing the liveliness and chaos of urban life. There are many subtle hints to the wider culture that create discussion points between adults and children such as a reference to song lyrics: 'The answer my friends, is in the sardine tin'. Lara's voice narrates her story with a very friendly manner of speaking: 'We drove home. I was as happy as Larry', which gives the book a happy and buoyant rhythm.

Lara's humorous narrative ('Nana Banana', 'lucky boots', 'happy as larry') doesn't blame but accepts her position, it is like she has an inherent hope for her life, a resilient hope that every child needs to know can be fulfilled.

Katie Forrester



The Wild Swans

Jackie Morris, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books (Janetta Otter-Barry Books), hb. 978 1 8478 0536 2, 2015, £10.99, 175pp. [Age 5–15 years. Keywords: fairy tale; Hans Andersen; picture book.]

This book is an impressive retelling of the classic Hans Andersen fairy tale, written and illustrated by Jackie Morris, in which life for Eliza and her 11 brothers is changed dramatically when their mother dies. Their father, the king, marries a mysterious woman in white who lives deep in the woods but decides to hide his children away from her. When she discovers where they are hidden she casts a spell on the brothers, turning them into swans. Only their sister Eliza can save them by painfully knitting suits from yarn she weaves from nettles. She is unable to finish the very last one for her youngest brother Cygfa, which leaves him only partially covered.

Jackie Morris has said of this story: 'The white birds haunted my dreams when I was a child, none more so than the eleventh brother, who is caught between two worlds. It is a story about love, endurance, magic, silence and communication, misunderstandings, mistakes, courage.'

The story is beautifully illustrated with many striking full-page spreads which together with smaller vignettes creates the visual world of this fairy tale.

[For illustrations and sketches for this book, see www.jackiemorris.co.uk/blog/book-list/wild-swans/.]

John Dunne

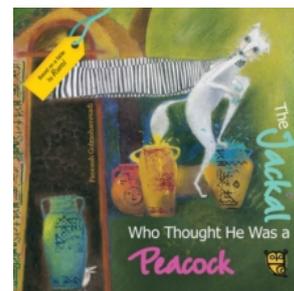
The Jackal who Thought he Was a Peacock

Fereshteh Sarlak, illus. Firoozeh Golmohammadi, trans. Azita Rassi, London: Tiny Owl, hb. 9 781 9103 2813 2, 2016, £12.99, 24pp. [Picture Book. Age range 6–8. Keywords: picture book, fable, Iran, anthropomorphism]

Tiny Owl has quickly acquired the reputation for beautifully produced picture books with distinctive content. They open the eyes to another culture, while emphasising the universal. A number of their titles look to Iranian stories for their inspiration. This title is no exception and will introduce children here to a fable of the great Iranian poet, Rumi. Here the retelling by Fereshteh Sarlak, we are told, expands the narrative, allowing the message to become clearer for a young audience. So we have a story about the futility of wishing to be something other than you are. This is a theme that has universal appeal and will be familiar. However the illustrations by Firoozh Golmohammadi introduce a very different visual experience; exotic, otherworldly, different. The palette is dark, colour saturated, the brilliance of the peacock feathers shining out. No wonder the jackal is so entranced. But just to ensure that we do not think this tale belongs to the past or to an unreal world inhabited by animals, the jackal, sporting a magnificent striped scarf, rides a bicycle of regal dimensions. It is this playfulness that offsets the sombre dreamlike background. It also enhances the text. This has been translated with great clarity by Azita Rassi, bringing it into the twentieth century.

Though children in the UK have a wealth of picture books to enjoy, a quick survey of the kinder boxes in libraries or the shelves in the bookshops suggests a certain uniformity of style; blandness even. Picture books such as this title are a welcome antidote, creating a sense of danger, of new possibilities, a challenge. Definitely one that should be in every library.

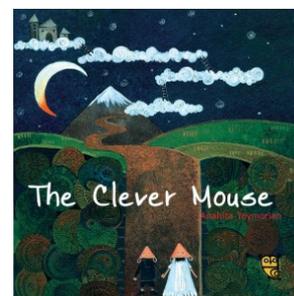
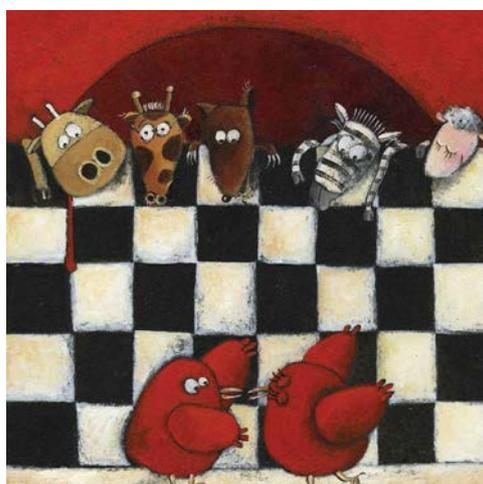
Ferelith Hordon



The Clever Mouse

Anahita Teymorian, trans. Azita Rassi from Persian, ed. Pippa Goodhart, London: Tiny Owl, hb. 9 781 9103 2801 9, 2015, £11.99, 25pp. First published in Persian by Chekkeh Publisher, Teheran, Iran, 2013. [Picture Book. Age range 3–5. Keywords: Arabian Nights; anthropomorphism; mouse; humour; princess.]

Mr Koochi is a clever little mouse. He builds his own house, grows his own food and cooks his own meals. But he would like a wife. It shouldn't be too difficult for a clever little mouse like him. That's what he thinks ... but is he right?



This is a very enjoyable story with an attractive message about the value of kindness over appearances. Accompanying the story are the illustrations by Teymorian, reflecting the country that brought us the Arabian Nights. She brings out the humour

through her portrayal of Mr Koochi and his bride, the Mouse Princess, while delighting our senses with her wonderful rich colour palate. This is another beautiful addition to our picture-book shelves and a very welcome one.

See www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/gallery/2015/nov/10/the-little-black-iranian-illustrated-childrens-books for more illustrations from Tiny Owl books.

Ferelith Hordon

Alive Again

Ahmadreza Ahmadi, illus. Nahid Kazemi, trans. Azita Rassi, London: Tiny Owl, hb. 9 781 9103 2805 7, 2015, £11.99, 24pp. [First published in Teheran, Iran 2010.] [Picture Book. Age range 6–8. Keywords: Iran; translated; Persian.]

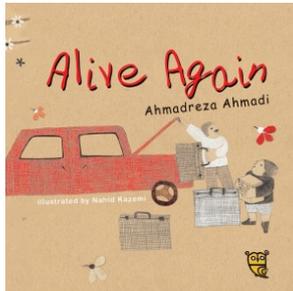
When I Coloured the World

Ahmadreza Ahmadi, illus. Ehsan Abdollahi, trans. Azita Rassi, London: Tiny Owl, hb. 9 781 9103 2807 1, 2015, £11.99, 32pp. First published in Teheran, Iran 2010. [Picture Book. Age range 6–8. Keywords: Iran; translated; Persian.]

Tiny Owl are new stars on the publishing block. Their mission is to introduce Iranian authors and illustrators to Britain. Visitors to the website www.tinyowl.co.uk will quickly realise what treasures are in store for those lucky children who are introduced to their books. Here are authors and illustrators of stature – including Hans Christian Andersen winner Farshid Mesghali, the texts translated by Azita Rassi so that we can read them.

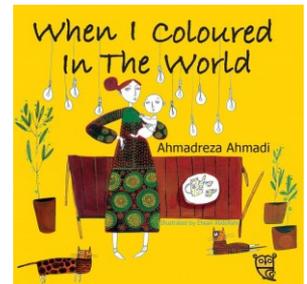
The stories range from the thoughtful to the playful, the traditional and the classic, featuring tales from the great Persian poet Rumi, to original stories that reflect these traditions. *Alive Again* and *When I Coloured the World* are both by Ahmadreza Ahmadi who is a prominent Iranian poet.

In *Alive Again* the text does not try to be a conventional poem as we might see it. Rather it aims to capture the feel of the Iranian original as the poet asks questions ‘When blossom goes, does the word blossom die? Can there ever be blossom again?’, but then spring comes again. However, the moral is left unspoken; it is up to the reader to take that step. As a poet, Ahmadi challenges the reader, leaving much that is unspoken, creating an opportunity for the imagination.



This characteristic is also at the heart of *When I Coloured the World*, where Ahmadi again highlights the importance of the word, linking words to colours, bringing them to life. Also bringing these words to life are the illustrations. Nahid Kazemi creates illustrations for *Alive Again* using textured collages and muted hessian colours so that the splashes of vibrant reds, greens and orange jump off the page, providing a subtle visual counterpoint to the text.

In *When I Coloured the World*, Ehsan Abdollahi looks to the heritage of Iranian art with his contemporary illustrations that are presented in a traditional way as single page spreads where the background colour reflects the colour referred to in the accompanying text.



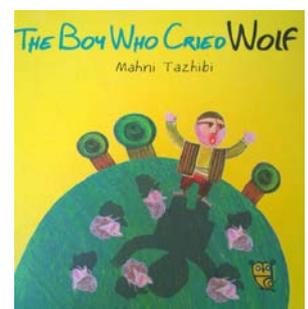
These two books are not just joyful exploration of language, but would also provide the basis for imaginative work and discussion. Here worlds are brought together, annihilating boundaries.

See www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/gallery/2015/nov/10/the-little-black-iranian-illustrated-childrens-books for more illustrations from Tiny Owl books.

Ferelith Hordon

The Boy Who Cried Wolf

Illus. Mahni Tazhibi, originally an Aesop fable, trans. Azita Rassi, London: Tiny Owl, hb. 9 781 9103 2804 0, 2015, £11.99, 24pp. [First published in Persian by Chekkeh Publisher, Teheran, Iran, 2013] [Picture Book. Age range 3–5. Keywords: Aesop; fable; sheep; wolf; translated; Iran; Persian.]



The Boy Who Cried Wolf will be familiar to many young readers who will have met it as one of Aesop's fables. But it is story that features in many different countries around the world, as it does here where it is from Iran; yes, stories really do join us all together. It is an old, old story here brought right up to date with Tazhibi's vibrant modern illustrations that drive the story on from the opening end pages with their fluffy sheep, to the final cover as a very satisfied wolf slinks off.

The Parrot and the Merchant

Illus. Marjan Vafaian, trans. Azita Rassi from a fable by Rumi, London: Tiny Owl, hb. 9 781 9103 2803 3, £11.99, 24pp. First published in Persian by Chekkeh Publisher, Teheran, Iran, 2013. [Picture Book. Age range 6–8. Keywords: Rumi; fable; translated; Iran; moral; love; freedom; Persian.]



A fable always has a moral, and so a moral is very much part of *The Parrot and the Merchant*, a tale based on a fable by Rumi. This attractive story is brought very much into today not only by making the central character a woman, but through the illustrations that both enchant and challenge. The artist, Vafaian looks back to the colours of Persian miniatures and their paradise gardens in the colours used for the flowing robes and the feathers of the birds. These are juxtaposed with the human characters who are disturbing and grotesque – perhaps, a subtle comment on the narrative with its clever twist at the end.

See www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/gallery/2015/nov/10/the-little-black-iranian-illustrated-childrens-books for more illustrations from Tiny Owl books.

Ferelith Hordon

The Seal Children

Jackie Morris, London: Otter-Barry Books, hb. 9 781 9109 5947 3, 2016, £12.99, 32pp. First published by Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2004. [Picture Book. Age range 5–11. Keywords: fairy tale; selkie; nineteenth century; fishing; emigration; poverty; Wales.]



Jackie Morris sets this story about the selkie (sea fairy) in the early nineteenth century on the west coast of Wales, where the people live a frugal life in a small fishing community.

In this story of the selkie, the mother leaves the sea, marries a local fisherman and they raise two children, who are twins. Eventually the mother decides to return to the sea with the agreement of her husband and children. In the meantime life has become precarious for the villagers and there is talk of emigrating to the New World where they can buy their own land and make a better living. Raising money for such a journey seems impossible until the children enlist the help of their mother, but when the community depart, one of the twins remains behind in the sea with her.

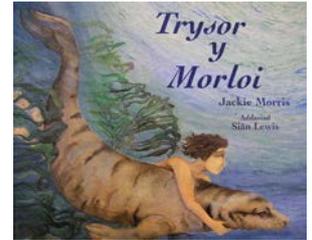


This is an imaginative story that blends the story of the selkie (as wife and mother) with the wider issues of poverty and eventual emigration, which was the fate of many rural communities in the early nineteenth century.

The sepia illustrations capture the landscape of the village and its community, while the sea, which is where the seals and selkie live, presents its own colour palette of blues.

The book is also available in Welsh, translated by Siân Lewis, published by Gomer Press.

John Dunne



Mabrook! A world of Muslim Weddings

Na'ima B. Robert, illus. Shirin Adl. London, Frances Lincoln Children's Books, Janetta Otter-Barry Books, hb. 978 1 8478 0588 1, 2016, £11.99, 24pp. [Picture book; Information Book. Age range: 5–11. Keywords: Ramadan, Muslim; weddings; religion; traditions; rituals.]

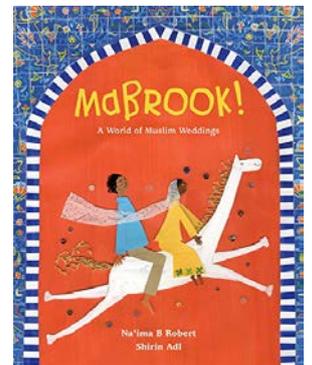
The collaboration between Na'ima Bint Robert and Shirin Adl began with *Ramadan Moon*, a beautiful introduction to the Ramadan religious festival and its significance for young children. Here the collaboration results in a joyous and informative exploration of the distinctive and specific traditions of Muslim weddings. The endpapers introduce the henna hand patterns associated with the weddings in beautiful pink-and-brown illustrations. This is followed by colourful double-page spreads with collage illustrations of the ways in which wedding are celebrated in different countries: Pakistan, Morocco, Somalia and Britain. Each illustration clearly identifies its specific community.

This section is followed by an account of the marriage processes and the rituals which underpin these. These are the same the world over. So an interesting point is quietly made about tradition and adaptation within one culture.

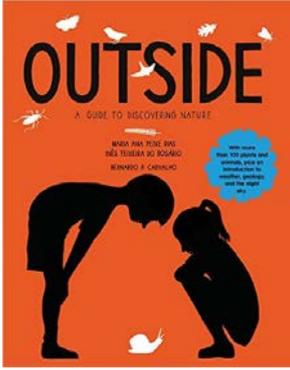
Specific vocabulary and terms are introduced into the text with contextual clues to their meaning, but there is also a glossary at the end for full definitions: for example, 'waleemah' is the wedding feast to which the community is invited in Morocco. This is always a good approach, as it does not interrupt the narrative to provide technical descriptions of specific words.

This is a good example of the use of a narrative non-fiction approach to explain the intricacies of a topic for a young audience.

Pam Dix



Information Books and Non-Fiction



Outside: A Guide to Discovering Nature

Maria Ana Peixe Dias and Inês Teixeira Do Rosário, illus. Bernardo P. Carvalho, trans. Lucy Greaves, London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, hb. 978 1 8478 0769 4, 2016, £18.99, 368pp. [Information Book. Age range 7–12. Keywords: environment; translation; habitats; flora; fauna; ecology; nature; prize winner; US English; illustrated, non-fiction.]

This introductory guide to the natural world won the Bologna Ragazzi Prize in 2015. Originally published in Portuguese, and now in an American translation, it is a beautifully designed and illustrated invitation to begin an exploration of nature on your doorstep. From there, the authors provide an introduction to the life of the major categories of fauna and flora in a variety of habitats, including the occasional technical term like oviparous (offspring develop in eggs outside their parent's body) and oviviparous (offspring develop in eggs inside their parent's body), which also feature in an extensive glossary. Alongside the glossary at the end of the book, there's a timeline of our developing ecological awareness, including the foundation of the National Trust and the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), and a list of useful websites.

The considerable strengths of the book are its leisurely and lucid style, with extensive use of bullet points, which is engaging and never patronising; the attractiveness of its layout and illustration, mainly using a two-tone palette (with a central insert of animals, birds and plants in full colour); and the geographical spread of its approach. It is rare to find a non-fiction book with such attention to illustration and design; and in which turning a page can provide you with a sense of pictorial beauty to match the wonder of the natural world itself. It's an approach that complements the authors' insistence that nature is not just there for our enjoyment, dissection or exploitation, but to be contemplated, wondered at, appreciated and cared for. It's a book that, while it does provide the sort of information you might need for homework, can also be read for pure enjoyment.

All that said, it is fair to point out a few things it doesn't do so well. Its attempts to suggest nature projects of various kinds are often no more than gestures; e.g. 'take inspiration from the platypus and invent funny animals'. Children in the UK should take in their stride terms like critters, sidewalk and poop (excrement, not the sound that Thomas the Tank Engine makes), but there are some other difficulties with the book's proper insistence on children exploring for themselves. It's a book that confines itself largely to Europe and North America (the platypus is an exception), but even within that, the breadth of its geographical approach means that it features many species that children in any one country will not find on their doorstep and necessarily excludes a lot that they will. So any child explorers will need to equip themselves with a local pocket guidebook, whether birdwatching or tracing mammal tracks. Certainly, given the book's size and weight, most children would think twice about following the authors' suggestion of putting this one in their rucksack.

Clive Barnes



Every Day is Malala Day

Rosemary McCarney with Plan International, hb. 978 1 7802 6326 7, 2016, £9.99, 32pp. [Non-Fiction. Age range 7–11. Keywords: Pakistan; women's rights; Taliban; Islam; religion; forced marriage.]

Malala Yousafzai is the young Pakistani woman who was shot by the Taliban for daring to go to school. She was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

McCarney's picture book describes to children aged seven and over Malala's story and values. The book also explains how in many countries women are forbidden to follow their own wishes for education and advancement, being subjected to forced marriage, ignorance and poverty.

The book also describes how young women all over the world have taken Malala as an icon for freedom and self-realisation. The book closes with excerpts from the address Malala gave to the United Nations on the occasion of her sixteenth birthday.

This book demonstrates the importance of education as the gateway to every aspiration in life. It also shows, in an age when the tide of history can seem massive and impersonal, how the actions of a single individual can have global significance.

Rebecca R. Butler

Professor Astro Cat's Atomic Adventure

Dominic Walliman, illus. Ben Newman. London: Flying Eye, hb. 9781909263604, 2016, £15.99, 64pp. [Information book. Age range 7–11. Keywords: Physics; Periodic Table; atomic structure; science history.]

This is another of Flying Eye's trademark retro-style large-format information books, a brand which is easily identifiable and is changing the face of non-fiction publishing. This book is a study of physics, a complex topic, where the reader is guided by the character of Professor Astro Cat. At first glance the book looks rather easier than it actually is. It deals with big complex questions, often those ones that children may ask: How do we see colours? How do planes stay in the air? With a deceptively simple mixture of illustration and text, the book explores and clearly explains very difficult theoretical concepts.

I showed it to a bright Year 5 pupil whose initial reaction was 'I know this', but who became quickly engaged with the book and found that he did not know it all at all and that he was learning a great deal from it. He very much liked the character who guided him on his journey through the 'laws of the Universe, the fundamental rules that describe the nature of our world and beyond'.

The information is presented through diagram, illustration, speech bubble and questions, as well as standard pieces of information text, and this variety allows the reader to roam the pages and find sections and topics that interest them. There is nothing linear or sequential.

Historical figures, the atom and the Periodic Table take the book beyond the standard science of the Key Stage 2 curriculum, yet the book's style and appeal is very much for this age range. It will be loved by the clever and curious individual reader.

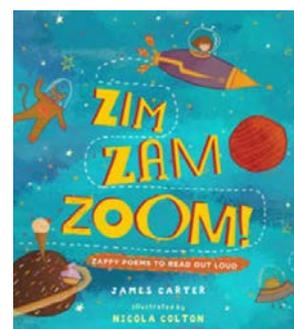
Pam Dix

Poetry

Zim Zam Zoom! Zappy Poems to Read Out Loud

James Carter, illus. Nicola Colton, Burley Gate, Hereford: Otter-Barry Books, hb. 9 781 9109 5954 1, 2016, £11.99, 32pp. [Poetry. Age range 4–8. Keywords: picture book; humour.]

There is Roger McGough, there is Michael Rosen – and here is James Carter bringing bright, lively words to children. Six of the 16 the poems in this big, bold picture-book format anthology have appeared in earlier anthologies, the rest are brand new. Carter's verses bounce off the page as we zoom into space, burst into stars as fireworks, hullabaloo on the farm, or grump, grump, grump with the Big Bad Troll. The



rhymes – often more subtle than might be expected – and the rhythms invite collaboration and movement. These are verses to be spoken aloud.

Then there are the illustrations. Against bold coloured backgrounds of ochre, red and green, Nicola Colton’s childlike images add to the joyful action. Picking up on the nature of the verses – short, snappy, fun – they decorate the pages adding a visual dimension to Carter’s snap, crackle and pop.



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This is a book that would be great fun to share with a class of enthusiastic children, or as a family at bedtime. You could even learn the verses and chant them in the car. This is how to introduce poems to the young.

Ferelith Hordon

The next issue of *IBBYLink* is *IBBYLink 47*, Autumn 2016 (copydate 31 August 2016), and will be on the subject of Childhood.

Articles on other subjects are also welcomed. Contributions to Ferelith Hordon: fhordon@aol.com.

If you are interested in becoming a reviewer for *IBBYLink*, contact Judith Philo: jphilo@waitrose.com. New reviewers are always welcome.

Titles for Review

Publishers and others with books to be reviewed in *IBBYLink* should send them to Judith Philo at 194 Tufnell Park Road, London N7 0EE; jphilo@waitrose.com.

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