



AWARDS - Mother Goose, The Children's Book Award & The Guardian Award

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Awards

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Three pages of winners.

The Mother Goose Award

Winner - **Jan Ormerod** for **Sunshine**

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Chris Powling - one of the judges - un-scrambles the Mother Goose Egg

Back in 1978, when Clodagh Alborough convened the first Mother Goose panel, it all looked so simple. The new award was for 'the most exciting newcomer to British children's book illustration'. It was to be presented soon after Easter each year in the form of a Cheque plus an elegant bronze egg. Our aim was to encourage young illustrators at the *outset* of their career, to urge publishers to invest in new talent and to promote the cause of children's book illustration generally.

Straightforward enough? Four years of panel membership has convinced me that it's far easier to lay an egg than to present one. Not, let me hasten to add, that I've ever lost any sleep about our final choices - it's the way we get there that keeps me awake far into the night. If a half-dozen impartial 'experts' who like each other enormously, share a mutual enthusiasm and are far too busy to waste even a split-second can still take so long to reach agreement then I'm astonished that - say - a jury, or a parliamentary committee, or the security council of the U.N. ever comes to any decisions at all.

Part of the problem, of course, is that no definition is ever quite tight enough. What constitutes a 'newcomer' for example? Clearly we don't mean someone actually setting pencil to paper for the very first time but does that mean the first children's book illustrated by the President of the Royal Academy qualifies? And does a pop-up book count as illustration? To both we said 'yes' . . . eventually. Even tougher issues to resolve, since they affect almost every entry, concern the vexed question of the relationship between the pictures and the text they're serving (or should it be the other way round?) and how well or not a young artist's work has emerged from the printshop. With regard to the latter, our horror-stories increase annually: heavy ink and bad register on poor paper; cramped, dull lay-out in which even the height of the type had not always been checked; even- believe it or not- printing so erratic that one side of a double-spread is in hard focus and the other in soft. Perhaps our all-time Mother Goose Bad Egg goes to the publisher who this year seemed to have commissioned pictures in full colour but reproduced them in black--and-white half-tone to cut

costs. This device ensured that a young talent appeared, quite literally, as a pale shadow of its true self.

After all this, it's time for the real fun to start. After umpteen hours spent on a hard-won shortlist, it's the calendar as much as the clock that commits us to a winner. For what we're backing is corporate hunch - our favourite from the year's dark horses who's most likely to keep up the running.

This year we are putting our money on Jan Ormerod. In **Sunshine** through a highly skilled use of texture, colour and line she tells the story of a family (small girl, Mum and Dad) getting up. There is no text; the book is a sequence of frames drawn and positioned with perfect judgement, each one advancing the story without apparent effort or insistence. Nothing much happens and nothing at all is said. Yet what comes across is *affection* - for the child, for the family, for the new day that awaits them. Jan Ormerod has an uncommon grasp of the common touch; she makes the ordinary luminous. **Sunshine** leaves you feeling good to be alive.

But the prize has never been harder to win. This year the panel are more than happy to make an each-way bet that the runners-up, Roy Gerrard, Valerie Littlewood and Terry McKenna, will be making the running in the years to come.

So far, as tipsters, our track-record isn't bad: Michelle Cartlidge (1979), Reg Cartwright (1980), Juan Wijngaard (1981) and now, in 1982, Jan Ormerod. Each is very different but one thing they all share ... in hands like theirs picture-books aren't just pretty they're *potent*. Already I'm looking forward to next year.

Sunshine is published by Kestrel, 0 7226 5736 6, £3.95.

The runners-up:

Roy Gerrard for the illustrations in **Matilda Jane** by Jean Gerrard, Gollancz, 0 575 02897 1, £4.95.

Valerie Littlewood for the illustrations in **Only the Best** by Meguido Zola, Julia MacRae Books, 0 86203 047 1, £4.95.

Terry McKenna for the illustrations in **The Fox and the Circus Bear**, Gollancz, 0 575 02918 8, £3.95.

Pat Triggs talks to Jan Ormerod

For Jan Ormerod 1976 was something of a watershed. 'Until then I hadn't thought much about children. I'd never been very maternal and children had never really been a part of my life.' Studying art and design in Western Australia where she was born had led not to book illustration but to teaching, lecturing and freelance designing. 'I did things like wall hangings and murals.' Two people changed all that: her husband, Paul, who is a children's librarian, and their daughter, Sophie who was born in 1976. 'That was the start of my interest in children's books.' Paul fed that interest with a steady stream of picture books and Jan was delighted with the 'human qualities' she found in books by artists like the Ahlbergs and Shirley Hughes.

When the family came to England three years ago Jan took her portfolio round the children's publishers. Kestrel was the second. In among her other work were some strip-style black and white drawings of a little girl waking up. Martin West, the editor she saw, suggested she 'expand it'. Within a week she had produced a full colour 'dummy' book. Kestrel took it to the Bologna International Children's Book Fair where it was 'well received' by other publishers. That was Spring 1980. A year later **Sunshine** was published and this Spring, co-incidentally with the Mother Goose Award, comes **Moonlight** (our cover book) about the same little girl going to bed.

Both books are about the Ormerod family. 'I did the first drawings when Sophie was about four. I was so delighted by the beautiful relationship between us three - and by the resourcefulness of our four year old.' Intensely personal as they are the books strike an immediate chord with many readers. They are a marvellous celebration of the warmth of family life.

Jan designed the books for sharing. 'I imagined people being very close together while they looked at it. I wanted to tell the story in the simplest possible way. I tried always to use the frames not as limitations but as part of the storytelling. I

learned a lot from Shirley Hughes. I pored over **Up and Up** for hours!'

There are more Jan Ormerod books on the way. From Kestrel, **Rhymes Around the Day**, a collection of about thirty traditional rhymes chosen by Pat Thomson which Jan has illustrated with pictures of a present-day family (five-year-old twins and a boy of two) throughout the day. And from Dent, **Be Brave Billy** (provisional title) a picture book with words also about a family.

Jan has also illustrated other people's work. She has done black and white illustrations for **Chewing Gum Rescue** (a collection of Margaret Mahy stories, Dent) and **Hairs in the Palm of my Hand** (two stories by Jan Mark, Kestrel). 'It has extended me. I'm asked to draw things I would never ask myself to draw so I get pushed beyond my limits. It's hard work but I enjoy it.'

What of the immediate future? 'Well, I'm expecting another baby in November. And we are going back to Australia, to Melbourne, for a while, though we hope to return. I shall keep working on children's books. I've got a lot of ideas but I feel I need to stop for a minute to see where I am, where I've been and where I'm going.'

The Children's Book Award

Winner - **Fair's Fair** by Leon Garfield

The Children's Book Award, now in its second year, seems already a well-established part of the children's books scene.

It is given by the Federation of Children's Book Groups for a work of fiction for children under fourteen, and is unusual in that children play a large part in deciding which book shall be the winner. In the main, members of the Federation of Children's Book Groups are parents and through their activities in families, playgroups, schools and libraries they are able to collect information about children's responses to books all over the country.

Pat Thomson who co-ordinates the award says, 'We seek a high standard in literary and physical terms but we use the Federation's unique opportunities to see how the children judge the books, and we give them the last word. The Award expresses our concern for fiction at a time when cuts are operating against children's books, and our concern that standards are maintained. Nothing in our search has suggested that children automatically prefer lower standards.'

The very special prize takes the form of a book filled with comments, letters and pictures from the children who took the winning title to their hearts.

Announcing the Award, the Federation said, 'It is with particular pleasure that we find that this excellent writer is accessible to younger readers. The eldest thoroughly enjoyed it, the middle age range lived through every moment, and the five to sevens, having been reassured by the first reading that all would end well, clamoured for it again.'

'The book is a mystery story, well illustrated in colour by Margaret Chamberlain, and tells how two poor children with courage, honesty and tenacity win through to happiness. Whatever has happened to our world, children clearly still admire these qualities and want to see them celebrated in their books. The adults of the Federation can only respect their clear-sightedness and learn from their optimism. We applaud their choice.'

Fair's Fair is published by Macdonald, 0 354 08126 8, £3.25.

Copies of a specially designed poster featuring the winning book and listing the 'top ten' are available FREE (send large sae with 12½ p stamp to the SBA). This year it is designed by Margaret Chamberlain and features lots of snow and the huge black dog of the story. 'Great for Christmas book fairs,' says Pat Thomson.

Also available, Pick of the Year, an annotated booklist featuring the 'top eleven' *plus* thirty other recommended titles. From: Jan Ryan, 79 Moorhouse Road, Off Willoughby Road, Hull, North Humberside HU5 5PP. Price 20p including postage.

The `Top Ten' runners-up are:

Peepo!

Janet and Allan Ahlberg, Kestrel, 0 7226 5707 2, £4.95

The baby's day, seen through a peephole which makes the book as much fun as the game. 0+.

Sunshine

Jan Ormerod, Kestrel, 0 7226 5736 6, £3.95

Every child makes this book its own by supplying the words to go with the clear, witty pictures. 2+.

The Patchwork Cat

Nicola Bayley and William Mayne, Cape, 0 224 01925 2, £3.95

Beautiful pictures, fascinating word play. A book of great quality, with an appealing tabby cat heroine. 6-9

World Eater

Robert Swindells, Hodder and Stoughton, 0 340 26576 0, £4.95 (reprinting January 1983)

Science fiction, well paced for younger readers. Tension as the young hero finds himself the possessor of a terrible secret. 9+

Rainbow Cake

Alan Spooner, Kestrel, 0 7226 5675 0, £4.95

An evacuee, Brian never imagined he would actually meet a German one day and see him as a real person. Honest, absorbing war story for the 9-12s.

The Highwayman

Charles Keeping, OUP, 0 19 279748 4, £4.50

Alfred Noyes's poem brilliantly realised in striking illustration. A superb picture book for everyone over 10.

The Hollow Land

Jane Gardam, Julia MacRae Books. 0 86203 023 4, £5.25

Beautifully written stories of a life-long friendship and a landscape. For younger if read aloud, otherwise about 11.

Playing Beatie Bow

Ruth Park, Kestrel, 0 7226 5771 4, £5.50 (now in Puffin)

Absorbing time fantasy. Very modern Abigail moves in to Sydney's Victorian past when the children play the old game of Beatie Bow. 11 +

The Seventh Raven

Peter Dickinson, Gollancz, 0 575 02960 9, £4.95

Drama in the setting, the events and the emotions. Excellent thriller for teenagers. 13+

See You Thursday

Jean Ure, Kestrel, 0 7226 5724 2, £4.95 (Puffin in June)

A romantic novel about a young girl's growing love for a wise young man. Went straight to the heart of every female reader.

The GUARDIAN Award

Winner - **Goodnight Mister Tom** by Michelle Magorian

The only first novel to have won the Guardian Children's Fiction Award until this year was **Watership Down**, a difficult act to follow.

Tony Bradman talks to Michelle Magorian

There's no doubt that **Goodnight Mister Tom** deserves the praise it's getting (and has got every since it was published last year). It's a classic, tear-jerking story of how an irascible, solitary old man and a battered, emotionally starved young boy develop a close relationship when the boy is evacuated to the country from London in 1940.

The background to the novel is so vividly realised it was something of a surprise to discover that Michelle Magorian was born two years after the end of the war in which her novel is set. Another surprise is that she is an actress.

'In repertory touring around I discovered writing was a good thing to fill in the gaps when I wasn't working. But all the time I knew I wanted to write something substantial, something more creative.'

She decided to set herself the task of writing a book of short stories based on colours. One of them 'Green and Brown' was about an evacuee dumped on an old man. 'I was sitting in the launderette and I just had this vision of a small boy standing in a graveyard with a label round his neck.' Another story was about the young Mister Tom and his wife Rachel, who in the novel is only a memory of a dead young wife.

Having finished ten short stories, Michelle realised that she could tackle something bigger. 'I realised that if I could write ten short stories I could write ten chapters. So I set out to do it.' Writing the novel took four years and a lot of research. (Michelle's father generously supported her when work was scarce.) She did loads and loads of reading and also haunted junk shops. 'I got some women's mags from the war which were a great help.'

Other parts of her background also went into the book. 'My mother was a nurse in the London Blitz, and she'd met lots of kids from the slums. She told me the story about a little boy who was badly grazed, and they had to cut him out of his underwear to treat him. His mother was furious - she'd sewn him in for the winter.'

Michelle is very shy and modest, evident in the slight worry she expresses about the Guardian Fiction Award. It's a prestigious award, and she also won an American award - The International Reading Association Children's Book Award - and was a runner-up in the Young Observer/ Rank Organisation Fiction Prize.

'I'm afraid people might have great expectations of me and they also might want 'Mister Tom Revisited' for years to come. I've been in the background for so long, struggling, that actually to make it is unfamiliar and a little uncomfortable. I don't want great expectations to be left unfulfilled.'

'But on the other side of the scale, I hope more bookshops will take the book so that more kids will read it. I have heard that some adults don't like some of the harshness and reality in the book - but I've had good feedback from kids. When I was a child I always wanted to read books about real feelings and situations, books about children's fears and problems. Those are the sorts of books I want to write.'

Goodnight Mister Tom is published by Kestrel, 0 7226 5701 3, £5.50.

Runner-up - **Playing Beatie Bow** by Ruth Park (Kestrel, 0 7226 5771 4, £5.50 and Puffin, 0 14 03.1460 1, £ 1.25)

Abigail, a resilient Australian teenager, is drawn back in time and finds herself part of the Victorian working-class life which existed where her own modern Sydney flat block now stands. A powerful and compelling fantasy. Winner of the 1981 Australian Children's Book of the Year Award.

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