

## Boy Overboard

Written by Morris Gleitzman  
Puffin £10.99  
ISBN: 0 670 91408 8

The story of one family and their life in Afghanistan. Stories about playing football, avoiding landmines, of hunger, terror and ultimately of hope of a new life in Australia. A tale of the truly awful journey on a smuggler's boat and of the dubious welcome that awaits them as refugees. A book full of pathos and humour and an indictment of governments attitude to those fleeing persecution.

Enid Stephenson

## Short and Shocking

Written by Maggie Pearson  
Oxford University Press £4.99  
ISBN: 0 19 278191 X

This is a brilliant book to dip into, although once you have read one short story, you may find you can't put it down. And the stories are short, extremely short - some are less than a page long - but each one a little amusing or fascinating gem with a twist at the end. Horror stories? No. Creepy and curious? Most certainly, and just right for older readers with a short span of concentration.

Janice Knight

## Locomotion

Written by Jacqueline Woodson  
Puffin £4.99  
ISBN: 0 14 131608 X



Lonnie has lost his parents in a fire. Both he and his sister are taken into care but they are not allowed to stay together. This book charts how he comes to terms with these traumatic happenings through poetry. Not a particularly exciting story line you may think, but it is a truly compelling read. All kinds of poetic forms are used, some make you laugh out loud, and some make you cry. But through them all you get an insight into Lonnie, and realise the extent of his

# Older Readers

suffering. However, more importantly, you get to know how he is coping with his troubles.

Pat Tate

## Wolf on the Fold

Written by Judith Clark  
Allen & Unwin £5.99  
ISBN: 1 86508 796 3

At the age of fourteen Kenny Sinclair loses his father. It is midwinter, 1935, the Great Depression has hit Australia too, and now Kenny has a family to support, his mother and four siblings. On the morning that he sets out to work he falls into the hands of a murderer and escapes death by standing fast. In the five subsequent chapters Kenny is a father, grandfather, neighbour, never again the central character, but it is his moral courage that is passed down the generations and in each story we see various Sinclairs at a moment when they are instinctively guided to do the right thing; this is Kenny's bequest. The writing is fine, uncluttered; the belief in essential goodness unemphatic. A strange flash of the supernatural at the very end may seem out of place but it is, I think, a rare example of a thoughtful author's gentle reminder to young readers of the story's centre and purpose.

Jan Mark

## The Shamer's Daughter

Written and Translated by Lene Kaaberbol  
Hodder Silver £4.99  
ISBN: 0 340 85067 1

A Shamer is one who can look in another's eyes and not only tell whether that person is being truthful but also get him (or her) to face up to any deceptions or unkindnesses of which they may have been guilty in the past. This gripping tale is a rich fantasy - full of action, betrayals and struggles. The Danish author shows a wonderful command of both languages by providing a most readable book, with more to come

including *The Signet Ring* which is to be published soon.

John Sheppard

## Death and the Arrow

Written by Chris Priestley  
Doubleday £10.99  
ISBN: 0 385 604 920

This is that rare beast - an intelligent, gripping thriller with an original plot, credible characters with strong relationships and a sense of place and time so vivid that you can virtually see, hear and taste eighteenth century London. Through fifteen year old Tom we can experience the fairs and public hangings which are, for him, like theme parks and rock concerts. A man is murdered by an arrow, and left clutching a Death card - but records show that he died years before in America. More murders follow as Tom is drawn to uncover a great wrong involving a lone Mohawk Indian. Vivid, exciting, unpredictable, with some good-humoured fun and a really satisfying ending.

Tina Massey

## Malka

Written by Mirjam Pressler  
Macmillan Young Picador £9.99  
ISBN: 0 330 40099 1



I began this book with one or two negative thoughts drifting through my mind: another refugee story; another Jewish child facing insurmountable odds in Nazi Germany; another tale of brutality and misfortune, which is going to end in some kind of small triumph over the forces of darkness.

The doubts began to dissolve as, imperceptibly but surely, I became involved in the lives of Malka and her tough mother, Dr Hannah Mai.

Stories like this, where the reader begins to stand in the shoes (or in this case the blood-soaked bindings and linoleum strips Malka wore on her feet) of the protagonist, are always upsetting, but we do need to remind ourselves, not only of the bestiality of humankind, but also the grit and guts and goodness of ordinary folk. Written by the chronicler of the Anne Frank story in a simple, unadorned style, this is a book to be read, and discussed by older children. Strongly recommended.

Jack Ousbey

## Going for Stone

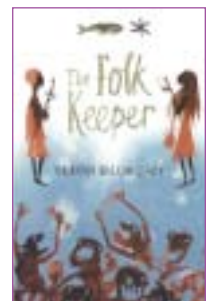
Written by Philip Gross  
Oxford University Press £6.99  
ISBN: 0 19 271905 X

This most original novel about living statues is fascinating, and will engage even the most reluctant reader. Nick leaves home after a row with his mother's boyfriend. Homeless, penniless and alone he meets some street performers and discovers he has a flair for playing a statue. He becomes involved with a girl, Swan, and they are drawn into a secret academy run by a sinister maestro, Antonin. Gross skilfully demonstrates how vulnerable are young people's desires for freedom, how susceptible are their needs to explore and develop their emerging expertise.

Pat Tate

## The Folk Keeper

Written by Fanny Billingsley  
Bloomsbury £5.99  
ISBN: 0 7475 6054 4



A curious, amusingly grisly cover barely hints at the ferocity of this tale. A 'boy' who is a girl, with translucent skin, silver hair and a hard, suspicious individualism, Corrina battles through one horrific task after another in the cellars of the estate.

The quest to find the truth of her birth takes her above ground, where Sir Finian, an engaging and intelligent suitor, watches anxiously for her. Constantly drawn by the sea, if she survives the perils below and above ground, she must decide between her shared ancestry with the Sealfolk and the human love and freedom offered by Finian. Never sugary, vegetarians will quail at the intense description of her physical anguish as Corrina makes her final choice. A vivid, credible character whose self knowledge is hard won through a mixture of glib pretence, unexpected powers and pig-headed persistence.

*Tina Massey*

## Hero

Written by Catherine R. Johnson  
 Oxford University Press £4.99  
 ISBN: 0 19 271853 3

Hero packs a punch. Her father, a former slave from Barbados, is now the landlord of 'The Feathers' in London's Old Compton Street. Her mother was Lily Reubens, a Jewish girl who died while giving birth to Hero. Three times an outsider, Hero is a black girl in a Jewish family, a Jew in a Gentile community, and a half-caste of no fixed abode living in

London after the abolition of the slave trade but before the abolition of slavery. Her father disappears and this compelling story is about Hero's efforts to find him. Etched as sharply as Dickens these London streets are mean and dirty, full of folk who cannot be trusted. The worst are evil, the best complacent. Surrounded by enemies (and when she instinctively clenches her fist she is often her own worst enemy) Hero's love for her father and angry demand for justice drives this story to a satisfying conclusion. Powerful and passionate - great stuff!

*Mike Maran*

## The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents

Written by Terry Pratchett  
 Corgi £5.99  
 ISBN: 0 552 54693 3



Maurice is a tatty, scrappy, street-wise talking cat who teams up with some mentally developed rats and (in the best of traditions) a boy with a pipe. Much fun is poked at small-town minds, at officialdom and at preconceptions. This book won the Carnegie Medal and the paperback should find its way into many schoolbags.

*Enid Stephenson*

## Gunner's Boy

Written by Anne Turnbull  
 A & C Black Flashback £8.99  
 ISBN: 0 7136 6197 6

Fiction of real quality can bring the past alive with painful realism and this book is a prime example. The Armada is expected: the British Fleet is preparing at Plymouth. John Emery is only twelve, but Spaniards killed his father so he walks to Plymouth to enlist. He joins the *Fortune* and is put with other boys on the larboard watch. He soon gets into the hard regime of ship life, though he has, in another boy, Luke Fewings, a worse tormentor than even the harsh discipline of the boatswain. The fleet moves out to meet the Armada and the account of the protracted epic campaign is accurate and vivid:

seen through John's eyes it has shocking immediacy. At its end he understands Luke Fewings' angry jealousy and helps the sorely wounded boy to a better life. He also learns compassion for his defeated enemy and finds that revenge is not always sweet.

*Dennis Hamley*

## Faerie Wars

Written by Herbie Brennan  
 Bloomsbury £12.99  
 ISBN: 0 7475 5944 9

Brennan's much-awaited longest work of fiction for children and young adults is not a disappointment. Complex, involving, exciting - it takes the reader to faraway worlds and fantastical places and yet brings them back to earth again with a gritty contemporary storyline. Henry's escape from his family strife is unusual. He hooks up with a band of fairies that have accidentally crossed from their realm into his garden, and goes back with them to help fight the mother of all fairy conflicts. If *Artemis Fowl* was 'DIE HARD with FAIRIES' you could say this is like 'TERMINATOR with FAIRIES'...with black magic and the devil thrown in for good measure.

*John McLay*