

# First Steps

## Dimity Dumpty: The Story of Humpty's Little Sister

Written and illustrated by Bob Graham  
Walker Books £10.9 ISBN: 1 8442 8067 5



Dimity, in contrast to her brother, is as shy and timid as a fieldmouse. She refuses to join in the circus acts with her parents but delights in playing – very, very quietly – her silver flute. But it is quiet Dimity who rescues her bombastic brother

from his fall and summons help. A delightful, gentle story reflected in warm, involving pictures.

*Enid Stephenson*

## The Wolf's Story

Written by Toby Forward  
Illustrated by Izhar Cohen  
Walker Books £10.99  
ISBN: 1 8442 8016 0



If you have ever wondered what happened to Little Red Riding Hood then this is for you. The story is told as if the wolf is sitting right next to you and his version of events is so very plausible. The final picture of Wolf heading off, complete with a spotted handkerchief on a stick and a bloodied, bandaged tail, says it all. The changes in print style help to emphasise the story for telling aloud and children will soon have the words off by heart to share with anyone who will listen.

*Susan Poulson*

## The Wizard, the Ugly and the Book of Shame

Written & illustrated by Pablo Bernasconi  
Bloomsbury £10.99 ISBN: 0 7475 8123 1



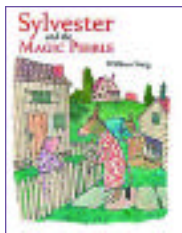
Now here's a picture book that's really different, where a magical text joins up with fantastic collage figures set against unpredictable backgrounds. Dragons and other weird-looking creatures jostle the page, all looking very strange and just a bit scary. There is so much to

pore over in this sorcerer's apprentice-type story of a sad 'blue' assistant to a wizard tired of being the butt of everyone else for looking so ugly. Seldom has collage looked quite so menacing, even though a happy ending is on hand to make everything right. This book is a genuine eye-opener.

*Nicholas Tucker*

## Sylvester and the Magic Pebble

Written and illustrated by William Steig  
Simon and Schuster £5.99 ISBN: 1 416 90489 1



When Sylvester the donkey finds a magic pebble that grants all his wishes, he thinks all his troubles are over. Not that he has many troubles because he belongs to a loving family. But, faced by a lion, Sylvester wishes for the wrong thing.

"I wish I were a rock," he says and... yes, he turns into a rock. Now Sylvester's problem becomes his mum and dad's problem because they miss him dreadfully. Weeks, months, a whole painful year passes, but there is a happy ending, for this is a fairy tale. William Steig is the author of *Shrek*, but Sylvester came first. Originally published in 1969 it is a welcome reissue. The words are witty, the illustrations charming. Expressive line drawings depict strong emotions. Watercolours, subdued but never dull, convey the gentleness that infuses this lovely story.

*Julia Jarman*

## Oscar and the Moth

Written and illustrated by Geoff Waring  
Walker Books £7.99 ISBN: 1 84428 738 6

This is a book about light and dark, with Oscar the kitten asking the questions, and Moth, his friend providing the answers. This format gives Geoff Waring the chance to provide a parade of pictures in beautifully muted tones which clarify and extend the reader's understanding. The story takes in notions of warmth, illumination, shadows, sleepiness and brightness, and also introduces the young reader to fireflies, millipedes, snails and jelly fish. This is a challenging, thoughtful and unusual way of presenting science through story and will appeal to curious five and six year olds.

*Jack Ousbey*

## Why do I have to eat off the floor?

Written by Chris Hornsey  
Illustrated by Gwyn Perkins  
Little Hare £10.99 ISBN: 1 921049 02 2



Small children can be infuriating when they discover the word *why?*. However, in this story, Murphy the dog has all the questions. *Why can't he jump off the chair? Why can't he dig in the garden? Why can't he sleep in his owner's bed?* Each double page spread has a wonderfully amusing illustration of Murphy's imaginings, with questions and answers on the opposite side. There is large clear print for young fingers to follow,

with questions differentiated by italics. Would-be readers will relish the humour and perform with much expression.

*Janice Knight*

## Stanley Bagshaw and the Twenty-Two Ton Whale

Written & illustrated by Bob Wilson  
Barn Owl Books £4.99 ISBN: 1 903015 50 2



First published in 1983, this affectionate story told in comic strip is well worth bringing back, so many thanks to the splendid Barn

Owl Books for doing so. Bob Wilson's tale is firmly rooted in the past, with black and white photographs, old fashioned phones and working canals all on show. The rhyming couplets which tell this story also seem dated now, but in a pleasantly nostalgic type of way. With each page crowded with period detail, there is always plenty to look at as well as to enjoy.

*Nicholas Tucker*

## All Because of Jackson

Written by Dick King-Smith  
Illustrated by John Eastwood  
Young Corgi £4.99  
ISBN: 0 552 55429 4



*All Because of Jackson*, first published in 1995, tells the tale of a seaside rabbit who wants to leave his sandy burrow and see the world. He invites his friend Bunny to join him as a stowaway on the clipper Atlanta, bound for Australia. The year is 1842. The adventures the two friends have on board the ship are told with the special brand of exuberant humour we associate with Dick King-Smith. Winner of a Smarties Book Prize in 1996 this ingenious account of how rabbits were introduced to Australia is an excellent buy for six to eight year olds.

*Jack Ousbey*

## This is the Bear (Audio)

Written by Sarah Hayes  
Illustrated by Helen Craig  
Music by Barry Gibson Audio cd  
Walker Books £7.99 ISBN: 0 7445 8655 0



This is a delightful rhyming story of a bear who fell in the bin – by a dog who pushed him deliberately! The CD has four complete stories

and plenty of musical activities encouraged by such luminaries as Jane Horrocks, Brian Blessed and Bill Oddie. Pre-schoolers will enjoy listening and those newly fledged readers will gain huge satisfaction from following the large clear text in the accompanying books.

21 minutes listening time

*Valerie Bierman*