

Fluent



Heretic

Written by Sarah Singleton
Simon & Schuster £5.99
ISBN: 1 416 90403 4

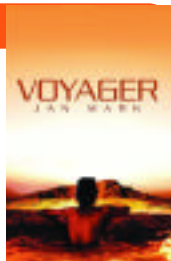
Three strands interweave in this richly layered book. One, the story of a Catholic family in Elizabeth I's time. A

fugitive priest is brought to their house and the Queen's priest hunter strikes. Their daughter, however, has found a strange, green girl in the forest. In the thirteenth century, the girl's family had endured a similar persecution when her mother was taken for witchcraft. These two strands are drawn together by the actions of the crow people (faeries) who are not bound by ordinary time. Cruelty and kindness, friendship and hate, this world and another, all feature in this second strong book from an accomplished author who has produced a different story for girls who need a change from those which are solely self-referential.

Pat Thomson

Voyager

Written by Jan Mark
Macmillan £10.99
ISBN: 0 333 99774 3



Demetria escapes from her terrifying prison-like homeland where the women are weighed down both mentally and physically by their never-to-be-cut hair and their endless knitting. And where the men are conditioned to see them as lesser creatures. In this fine stand-alone sequel to *Riding Tycho* Jan Mark has created a totalitarian state which is all too believable. But within the grimness of the world, set in the not-so-distant future there are brave individuals who fight the system with humanity and humour, who believe that freedom is worth fighting for and that to be passive is to submit to a living death. As with all her books there is wit and wisdom combined with a cracking story.

Enid Stephenson



North Child

Written by Edith Pattou
Usborne £6.99
ISBN: 0 7460 6837 9

'Once upon a time there was a poor farmer with many children...' so begins the story of Ebba Rose and the White Bear, an inspired

retelling of the fable *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, with more than a hint of *Beauty and the Beast*. This is a proper fairy tale, set in an enchanted world of cruel seas, dark forests and deadly ice fields, and populated by heroes and heroines, villains and villainesses, enchanters and the enchanted. The story is narrated by several characters in turn, including the Bear, the Troll Queen and the heroine, Ebba Rose; giving each the chance to tell their side of things. At over five hundred pages this is for the able, determined readers, who will be richly rewarded. I was spellbound.

Jean Allen



Just Don't Make a Scene, Mum!

Written by Rosie Rushton
Piccadilly £5.99
ISBN: 1 85340 862 X

Rosie Rushton is right on form with this intertwining story of a group of loosely

connected teenagers. The book shows us the many aspects of typical relationships at this age, especially within the family, and it does it with wit, verve and true insight. Sometimes sad, sometimes dysfunctional and always inescapable, 'the family' is almost a character in its own right. The joys, frustrations, desires and dreams bubble away visibly through the story lines. Teenage-hood is there in all its glory: casually cool one minute, behaving like toddlers the next, before swinging back into impressive maturity, and all at a speed many performance motor cars would struggle to match.

Yvonne Coppard

Endymion Spring

Written by Matthew Skelton
Puffin £10.99 ISBN: 0 141 38239 2

Gutenberg's young apprentice, Endymion Spring, takes custody of a blank book made of enchanted paper. Only the innocence of a child's blood can release its hidden content. Hundreds of years later, in modern Oxford, the book reveals itself to Blake, the son of a visiting American academic. He can unlock its power but there are adults ready to use him. Fifteenth century Mainz is well drawn and there is a nice undercurrent of menace. The central, mystical theme is less convincing, as is the villainess who seems straight



out of (several) other books. The designer deserves credit for a handsomely presented volume.

Pat Thomson

E.L. Konigsburg Silent to the Bone



Written by E.L. Konigsburg
Walker Books £5.99
ISBN: 1 84428 953 2

Bramwell Zamborska has been taken to a Juvenile Behavioural Centre where he is chief suspect in an investigation concerning his

baby sister, Nikki. She lies in a coma after suffering brain injuries, and the evidence given by Vivian, the Zamborska's au pair, points the finger at the thirteen year old boy. The narrator of this powerful story is Connor who is positive his friend would never hurt Nikki, but is hampered in his efforts to help when Bramwell refuses to speak, as if the appalling events have robbed him of speech. *Silent to the Bone* is an exceptional novel, gripping the reader from page one, and unfolding with all the unexpected twists and tensions of a good detective story. E.L. Konigsburg writes with insight and sensitivity as she carries us into the dramatic reaches of lies, silences, betrayals and the complicated relationships of people trying to come to terms with horrifying events. Above all, this is a story of a remarkable friendship between the two young, central characters.

Jack Ousbey

Dragon Keeper

Written by Carole Wilkinson
Macmillan £8.99
ISBN: 0 330 44108 6



The setting for this book is the Han Empire at the beginning of the reign of Emperor Wudi, who ruled China from 140BC to 87BC. It is a novel about friendship and betrayal which follows the adventures of a young slave girl, a dragon and a rat as they all go in search of the waters of the Ocean, where the ageing dragon longs to find peace. They carry with them the mysterious dragon stone, which Ping, the slave girl must hold on to even in times of great danger. Beautifully written, the story weaves its way through the Han countryside, from the craggy, barren peaks of Huangling, and the little villages nestled in the great gorges carved out by the Yellow River, to the opulence and treachery of the Imperial cities. It is reminiscent of Christopher Paolini's *Eragon* in places, and is a charming and immensely enjoyable read for more able older readers.

Richard Monte

A Darkling Plain

Written by Philip Reeve
Scholastic £12.99 ISBN: 0 439 94997 1

This concludes the extraordinary story which started in *Mortal Engines* (see *Carousel* Issue 22) and continued in *Predator's Gold*. We are in an



unsettling future world where cities have turned themselves into vast wheeled pantechnicons and roam the earth seeking whom they may devour. This world is in a perpetual state of war, between piratical cities and against those who do not wish to grow wheels but

rather stay where they are. In this world the dead are recycled, to reappear as clanking semi-robots. The characters who play out this drama, Theo, General and Lady Naga, above all Hester, Tom and their daughter Wren, are merely a few among a mighty gallery of people and things. A work of staggering imagination, a vision which, though highly complex, is consistent, watertight and structurally flawless, marking a remarkable intellectual achievement. The teeming whole is held in a wonderful balance, couched in a prose which is controlled, elegant, often playful. And the beautifully worked ending shows that this cosmic drama is, after all, a mere aberration in the history of the earth, already receding into myth and legend.

Dennis Hamley

Malvolio's Revenge

Written by Sophie Masson
 Hodder £5.99 ISBN: 0 340 88364 2

A glorious spellbinding mystery about a troupe of actors touring *Malvolio's Revenge*, a sequel to *Twelfth Night*. New Year's Eve 1910, in the deepest



Southern States of America their horses, Slender and Shallow, stop outside a house called Illyria in the pouring rain. They are welcomed by a young girl, Isabelle de Castelon, and her black nanny, Marie Laroche. What is the mystery of her parent's death? Does voodoo still exist? Who is the fiddler, Tom Nashe and what is Gabriel Harvey's secret? The book echoes with illusions to *Twelfth Night* and is in the tradition of those historical adventure stories of the late 19th and early 20th century. There is also a tantalising glimpse of Louis Armstrong, as a child, on the streets of New Orleans.

Enid Stephenson

The New Heroes: The Quantum Prophecy

Written by Michael Carroll
 Harper Collins £5.99 ISBN: 0 00 721092 2

Ten years before this tale begins a great battle had wiped out all the superheroes and supervillains. Two teenagers, Colin and Danny, begin to develop strange powers, and in a series of action packed incidents the boys discover how to use



these powers to combat a terrifying new threat from an emergent supervillain with apparently limitless resources and a ruthless desire to win. Separated from his family, whose lives are at risk, Colin must find a way to travel incognito to seek help. On the way he finds Razor, an amoral teenage mugger who attempts to rob him at knife-point and later shows him how to survive by his wits, at others' expense. This is a credible and memorable relationship in a terse, fast-moving, compulsively readable – often violent – page turner, with clear moral values at heart.

Tina Massey

Marco's Pendulum

Written by Thom Madley
 Usborne £6.99 ISBN: 0 7460 6760 7

Marco's conventional parents send him to spend the summer with his drop-out hippie grandparents in Glastonbury, a place of myth and legend. Trouble is brewing, and Marco becomes embroiled in the struggle between old and new, good and evil. The book is set in the real, if mysterious, town of Glastonbury, and the author blends local history and folk-lore together with a fast-paced plot to make magic and fantasy believable.



Jean Allen

NOW DON'T GET ME WRONG...

Chris Powling NUMBER 17: Professional Librarians

...all librarians, whether qualified or not, are on the side of the angels in my opinion. I've come across mums who keep a school library going almost single-handed, untrained local recruits without whom a High Street branch would have closed, a retired nurse who took over the legwork of an author-visit when a teacher changed her job... angels all of them, say I.

Recently, though, when sorting out my files prior to moving house, I was reminded of how formidable a trained professional can be. What caught my eye was a letter I'd received, some years ago, following a talk I'd given about poetry. As I recall, I'd referred to T.S.Eliot's famous observation that a poem can often "communicate before it is understood." Sometimes, I continued, a line can go on resonating in your head even when you've never understood it. As an example, I quoted a verse from Dylan Thomas:

"Abaddon in the hangnail cracked from Adam..."

Here's how the letter began:

"Very rash, you know, to read such a thing out to an audience of librarians! Even rasher to say you weren't sure what Abaddon meant – and to read it out two or three more times! Assuming you haven't had other replies (I can't be the only librarian who still responds to the thrill of the chase...?) I'm

enclosing your own DIY 'meaning injection kit'.

In the 'Abaddon' column you can have:

Destroyer; Angel of bottomless pit; Abyss of Hell itself; Abode of the Dead; or even 'thief turned informer'.

In the 'hangnail' column (I had to check this because I wasn't sure myself...): Bit of skin detached near a nail; corn or ulcer; detached nail itself.

My advice is:

- 1. Perm any 2 or 3 from the list.*
- 2. Choose your favourite most likely meaning.*
- 3. Tell me what you choose.*

Thanks a bunch, Alec Williams.

Serve me right, too... which is why I've viewed with alarm recent reports about the decline of librarianship as a professional career (especially with regard to specialist children's librarians). Of course, not every professional librarian is as alert or as witty as Alec. But we need as many of them as we can get in an age when more and more titles are being published with shorter and shorter print-runs. Along with all their other skills, knowledge and meaning-injection kits, that 'thrill of the chase' Alec mentioned helps the rest of us to raise our game.