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## Editorial

As writers we try to avoid clichés but this one can't be avoided- better late than never! It seems that writing two books (*Here Comes the Bogeyman: Exploring Contemporary Issues in Writing for Children* and *Monsters Under the Bed: Critically Investigating Early Years Writing* - both forthcoming from Routledge), completing (and passing) a PhD and having surgery are quite prohibitive when trying to produce a journal. We thank you for your patience and hope you enjoy the eclectic mix of articles included in this edition of *Write4Children*.

Amongst our collection of articles there is a follow-on from Meg Rosoff's article 'How I Write' which appeared in the last edition, this time it is Kim Scott Walwyn Award nominated editor, Lucy Cuthew (<http://lucycuthew.co.uk/>), who talks about the processes she goes through when editing. Lucy is a freelance editor who specialises in literary young adult fiction including Miriam Halamy's acclaimed novel *Hidden* (Meadowside 2011). This particular edition of *Write for Children* also highlights the advantage of being online because it means we can include colour pictures that can really bring an article to life. For example, look at Prof. Jeri Kroll's article on Margaret Mahy's *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*.



We are pleased to welcome two new people to the fold. Meg Rosoff has kindly agreed to be a member of our editorial board. As mentioned in the last edition Meg is the acclaimed and prize winning author of *How I Live Now*; *Just In Case*; *What I Was*; *The Bride's Farewell*; *Vamoose!* and the soon to be published, *There is No Dog*. We are delighted that she is now part of the team.

And the second person to join us is Jen Morgan, who is our new editorial assistant. Jen previously studied at Winchester gaining a distinction in her MA Writing for Children and now teaches writing for children just outside Cambridge whilst endeavouring to finish her latest novel. Jen will be helping us with a lot of the admin side. She can be contacted on [write4children@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:write4children@winchester.ac.uk). We are both very relieved and welcome Jen on board.

In November the Australasian/Oceania Special Edition of *Writing4Children* will be published. It is being edited by Dr Tony Eaton of the University of Canberra. Anthony's final book in his *Darkland's Trilogy*, *Daywards* (UQP 2010) was selected as CBCA notable Australian Children's book this year. Read more about Tony's writing and his academic career later in this edition. The Special Edition in November should be an interesting one as Tony says that the quality of articles is very high. We are also interested in hearing from anyone else who might have a special edition in mind - anyone in the USA?

Andrew Melrose and Vanessa Harbour  
Editors

PS as we are putting lots of photos in this edition we thought we'd better let you see what we look like!



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## Re-visioning the picture book: A case study of Margaret Mahy's *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*

Professor Jeri Kroll

Flinders University

The term 'revision' usually suggests restructuring or refining a verbal text in order to improve it. In the case of picture books, it has also sometimes applied to re-illustrating an already published artefact. In a publishing culture dominated by global marketing imperatives, where quality must compete with saleability, what factors might influence the substantive revision and re-illustration of a text? New Zealander Margaret Mahy's *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*, first published in London in 1972, with collage illustrations by Brian Froud, and then republished thirteen years later in 1985, with illustrations by Margaret Chamberlain, provides an instructive case study of how revising both visual and verbal elements reconceives, or re-visions, a picture book to give it a second life. In particular, Mahy as creator had to step back from a supposedly finished artefact, with its own identity in the marketplace, and critically engage, or textually intervene, with what she had produced. In fact, the revision process has multiple benefits, emphasising the poetic narrative as well as clarifying the book's themes. This case demonstrates some of the complexity the late twentieth century picture book offers readers or 'viewers,' controlling the speed with which they read or view, manipulating the imagination, offering keys or remaining intentionally ambiguous to control responses to both verbal and visual texts. The 1985 incarnation of *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate* displays the "seamlessness" (Lukens 2007:45) that creator Maurice Sendak speaks of as being a vital factor in the success of a picture book, where verbal and visual dimensions form a harmonious entity.

Keywords: picture book revision, Margaret Mahy, adventure, gender roles.

### 1 Introduction

Walk into any chain bookstore or specialist children's bookshop in the developed world in the twenty-first century and the shelves contain an amazing variety of picture books. Children encounter them on adult laps, in the bathtub, at childcare and even the supermarket checkout. They might be sophisticated artefacts displaying a high level of design and artistry or they might suffer from what I call 'terminal cuteness.' Clearly they serve a myriad of purposes, and those purposes condition how the writer, illustrator, designer and publisher collaborate[i] in the initial production of this artefact that needs to appeal to both adults and children, who possess differing experiences, tastes and skills. [ii]

Given these initial complex pressures, how can we understand not only the process of but also the reason for picture book revision? The term 'revision' normally suggests restructuring or refining a verbal text in order to improve it. In the case of picture books, however, it can also apply to re-illustration. In a publishing culture dominated by global marketing imperatives, where quality must compete with saleability, what factors might influence the substantive re-illustration of a text? New Zealander Margaret Mahy's *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*, first published in London in 1972, with collage illustrations by Brian Froud, was one of the texts that established Mahy's reputation. Republished thirteen years later in 1985, with illustrations by Margaret Chamberlain, it provides an instructive case study of how revising both visual and verbal elements reconceives, or re-visions, a picture book to give it a second life.

In particular, Mahy as author had to step back from a supposedly finished artefact, with its own identity in the marketplace, and critically engage, or textually intervene, with what she had produced. In fact, the revision process has multiple benefits, emphasising the poetic narrative as well as clarifying the book's themes. This case demonstrates, therefore, some of the complexity the late twentieth century picture book offers readers or 'viewers,' controlling the speed with which they read or view and manipulating their responses to verbal and visual texts. If, as Perry Nodelman says, 'because the words and pictures...both define and amplify each other' and, thus, 'neither is as open-ended as either would be on its own' (1988: viii), Mahy does not succeed alone in this enterprise. The revision of both words and pictures must affect the new product profoundly. Anyone involved in the production of a picture book understands that a concept is not a finished product; a picture book does not exist until all creative, editorial and technical processes are complete. It is a collaborative art form. Mahy recommits herself to the text and enhances the virtues while reducing the vices, bringing this refreshed vision to a new partner whose visual input is critical. Compared to the original version, the 1985 incarnation of *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate* displays the "seamlessness" (quoted in Lukens 2007: 45) that author-illustrator Maurice Sendak speaks of as being a vital factor in the success of a picture book, where verbal and visual dimensions form a harmonious entity.

Here is a summary of *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*. A respectable little man works in a soulless office in a great city. His old mother expresses her longing to see the sea again. The little man, who has never seen the sea, takes leave from his crusty boss, Mr Fat, to fulfil her wish, pushing her in a wheelbarrow with the additional wind power of a kite, and the journey itself begins to transform him as they pass through the countryside. Once at the shore, he and his mother lose their inhibitions and dance - she is invigorated enough that she's finally out of the wheelbarrow. A sea captain who notices them cavorting invites them to become his crew and they agree. A year later, the little man's boss receives a letter in a bottle that tells him his former employee is having a wonderful time. It suggests that he run off to sea too. A cryptic sentence closes the story: 'And if you want any more moral to the story than

this, you must go to sea and find it.'

This bare summary of the text reveals how inadequate summative words are to encapsulate this multilayered picture book, which could be described, using Maurice Saxby's words, as a 'picture book of ideas' (Saxby 1993: 86-89). As we shall see, in the 1985 edition, the story's philosophical flavour is embodied as much in its poetic language as in its free-flowing, vibrant illustrations. Together they express themes that can be summarised variously as: freeing the imagination can give rise to self-realisation; gender should not determine identity; taking risks (heeding a call to adventure) improves quality of life; a break from routine is necessary for psychic health, ergo some change is positive; and being a cog in someone else's machine (such as Mr Fat's) stunts the personality. The characters' reversal of gender roles, their eventual transformations and the open-ended conclusion all relate to notions of physical and imaginative release, an embracing of possibilities.

One more aspect of pictures books should be mentioned before we turn to explore the two versions in detail. Both overtly and covertly, depending on their 'agendas,' picture books are embedded with their creators' ideologies - they are not exempt from the truism that 'no text is innocent.' Jane Doonan's assertion that 'pictures reflect the values of the society that produces and "uses" them' (1993: 8) and Peter Hunt's that neither words nor pictures can 'be "neutral"' (2001: 289), are expressed more specifically by John Stephens, who focuses on landscape portrayal as a medium that 'communicate[s] particular ideas about social organisation and social meaning' (Stephens 1994: 69). If it is accurate, therefore, to say that illustration as well as text embodies the cultural values and biases of creators, looking at the pictures in both versions should suggest, in particular, what synergy exists between each visual interpretation and the verbal text and what preoccupations each illustrator has. To complicate this interaction we should add portrayal of landscape, here urban and rural, the city and the sea, since these are key oppositions on which the ancient narrative of the call to adventure and the journey depend. Most significantly, the dominant image of the sea bears the weight of the theme of positive change that, aided by the imagination, can free individuals, thereby helping them to actualise their potential.

## **2 The Man and the Mother: Heredity and Environment**

Peter Hunt designated around 1970 as the start of the twenty-first century (Hunt 1998: 30-31) for children's literature. He argues for this date by analysing a range of characteristics in the global Zeitgeist, including the rapid advance of technology, which transformed the publishing industry from the 1960s in the United Kingdom (Hunt 2001: 290-91) and the United States, with Australia soon after

following this lead in the 1970s (Saxby 1993: 77-82; Claire Scott-Mitchell 1991: 75-78). The Mahy-Froud collaboration in the original version of *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate* (1972) shows that it is a product of its time. This is no bland animal fantasy or conservative story of domestic life (Saxby 1993: 7-10; Claire Scott-Mitchell 1991: 77-78), but one that begins to tackle concepts of individuality; it urges readers to a kind of rebellion, rather than encourages them to resist change, staying put, as the farmer says, 'the way a good hill does' (Mahy 1985).<sup>[iii]</sup> Brian Froud's non-realistic collage constructions are innovative for the period.<sup>[iv]</sup> By the time Margaret Chamberlain reworked the visuals in 1985, and the picture book industry was booming, we notice not only the higher technical production values, but also the foregrounding of certain aspects of the text, in particular the discourses relating to gender and imagination. This foregrounding demonstrates revision as it functions in the context of cultural change.

What exactly is revision as a concept? The 1970s were a decade of cultural upheaval in the United States; the feminist movement, for example, blossomed then. Poet Adrienne Rich published a seminal essay in 1971, the year before Mahy first published *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*, called 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision.' She employs a visual metaphor to explain the kind of radical emotional, linguistic and epistemological re-visioning she hopes can be applied not only to literary history, but also to social relations. Re-vision' (90), as she defines it, is 'the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction' (9). That is, in fact, what Mahy had to do with her original text - to see it with fresh eyes - to interrogate the words for precision, grace and meaning. Mahy does substantive revisions as well as copyediting, although the trajectory of the story remains the same. This is the concept that would have sold the book to the publisher. The quality of the language, however, is paramount, given that the power of the imagination is a central figure around which the story builds. Mahy recasts clumsy passages and, in so doing, emphasises this feature.

There are two ways in which we might understand an illustrator's concept of revision: in the sense of touching up or redrawing certain aspects of a picture and a wholesale re-execution of one or more. Chamberlain as the new artist seems to have been given a free brief. She does not use collages and she not only discards the central visual concepts of the pirate woman and her son, reconceiving them and their body language, but she also re-visions the landscapes in which they function. Verbal and textual re-visionings, therefore, highlight questions that the text implicitly asks readers about themselves and about their society, including:

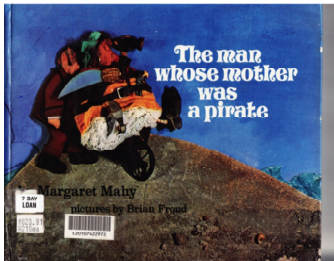
How do we expect mothers to behave?

Is there an ideal balance between work and play?

Can language help to shape reality? and



How do we find our rightful place in life?



I do not have space to document every difference between editions, so I will concentrate on characterisation and on a few key scenes. Let us first consider the pirate mother and her son as illustrated by Froud. There is, of course, an implicit role reversal embedded already in the title and the cover. The pirate woman is female, not male, and portrayed as elderly, overweight and incapacitated. This is no Brechtian Pirate Jenny, attractive, bloodthirsty and ruthless. The landscape overlooking the shore seems lifeless - only a few waves peek from either side of a rough-looking hill. Coloured a faded grey-green, the surface resembles mangle rather than grass. Notice that the little man is buttoned up in his respectable suit. His face expresses passive frustration at the task of hauling his massive mother thus far, so the journey has not yet proved transformative. As a whole, the cover is not striking in its colour scheme. The characters' heads seem to merge, their features do not stand out.

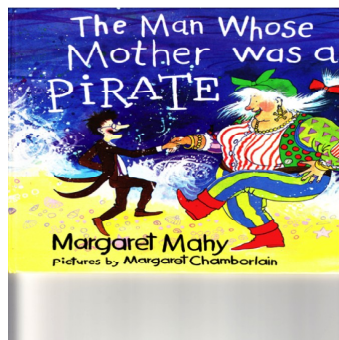
A closer inspection of the characters in the intimacy of their home reveal that the pirate woman is nearly toothless in a literal as well as metaphorical sense. Except for the conventional trappings of piratehood - earrings, patch, belt (sans sword) and green headscarf - she does not appear threatening. Her son has inherited her stolid build; overweight, they are reminiscent of Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee, although only she smiles. Either the little man has not inherited her disposition, or whatever propensity he had for fun has been stifled as an adult. Marooned in a sterile city at a sedentary job, his non-piratical life has formed him. He looks apprehensive and readers cannot see his mouth beneath the moustache. Colour contrast is also what distinguishes mother from son - she dresses in the bold primary colours of red, yellow and green.



In fact, the setting suggests the nineteenth rather than the twentieth-century, especially the ornate drawing room wallpaper, the grandfather clock and the fat-bellied Dickensian man in the picture.



Here Stephens' assertion about social organisation and meaning seems apt. The little man has been brought up in a conservative environment, no matter that his mother had been a pirate. That was her past; this is their civilised but unimaginative present. The collages are static and have a decorative feel, a weakness prevalent in the book as a whole. Froud does not attempt realism; he has opted for exaggeration to make the characters humorous, but it is not the breezy humour of cartoons. The scenes offer little else to entice viewers. In a story such as this, where the text anticipates that adventure and excitement await the characters at the sea, more illustrative wit, colour, motion and detail might be expected to maintain interest before that promise is fulfilled.

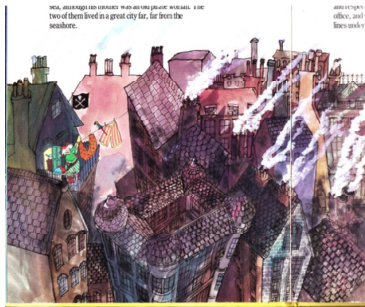


and is tightened in the revision. From this early section Mahy deletes the pirate mother's comment about wanting to leave the city smoke and the little man's coughing "'Hrrrrrm!'" every so often. Mr Fat, although cross in both versions, seems envious in 1985 of the little man going off to the seaside and of the concept of being a pirate.

Now let us turn to Margaret Chamberlain's 1985 cover of *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*. Bold primary colours are to the fore, not only in the pirate mother's dress but also in the golden sand and the shadings of the blue sea flecked with foam. The characters, contrasted by size and body shape (short and thin, tall and buxom), are nevertheless both active rather than passive. The first view of Chamberlain's pirate mother is not as a washed out, overweight senior. In fact the swirls of the waves and the dancing of the pirate mother and her son suggest that they enjoy being in motion. Her hair and clothes also indicate a shift in perspective from the original cover. The pirate mother has a windswept coiffure, indicating that she knows how to let her hair down. The scraggly grey plait has a youthful touch - the ribbon. She wears pants with boots, rather than a dress. She is freed of gender-typed clothes and, in her relationship with her son, clearly she wears the pants in the family.

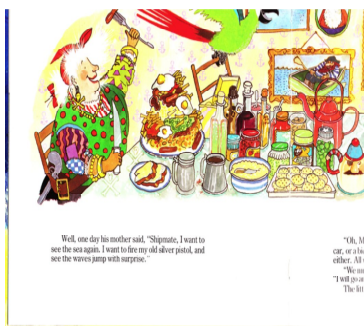
Although still dressed in brown, the man is not 'buttoned up' in his clothes or in his behaviour. Unlike Froud, Chamberlain allows mother and son to communicate. The little man's mouth mirrors his mother's

as they smile, looking into each other's eyes. They relate to each other and their happy dance would likely engage a young audience. The sea as backdrop promises that the journey to the sea will be successful.



The next two double-page spreads in the Chamberlain edition are absent from the original and advance the visual narrative significantly. We do not have initial close ups of the characters, but Chamberlain has panned back to reveal how the home that the pirate mother has made - the only

spot of colour - forms a haven of warmth, light and humour in a grim city, reminiscent of the nineteenth century. Smoke pours from chimneys, therefore Mahy's text now does not need to mention it. The illustration itself calls into play for adults, if not for children, the negativity of pollution caused by industrialisation. The social subtext that the story develops, as we shall see, is the conservative belief that the rural life is healthier and more natural than an urban one. The pirate mother's colourful pants, her parrot perched on the wash line strung out over the rooftops and the pirate flag all maintain her identity in a regimented world. Her face smiles out at readers while across the city, directly opposite, her son, like a malnourished Dickensian clerk, labours away at a soulless job. Nevertheless, in this vast city, they both appear diminished.



The double-page spread breakfast scene that follows adds another narrative line to the story, setting up a contrast between exuberance, even excess, and joyless restraint. This deepens and

extends the opposition between urban and rural that underpins the call to adventure. The Heart Association would not give this book a tick. Enjoying her mountain of sausages, eggs, chips, peas and beans shows that Chamberlain's pirate woman is not dentally challenged but has a full set of teeth, although she might be testing her arteries. The cautious little man has a napkin neatly tied around his neck, although all he consumes is a boiled egg and a slice of toast. The excess of the groaning table on the mother's side is complemented by the humour of pirate teapot and pictures with a sea motif. To summarise, in the 1985 edition the mother and son are physically distinguished in a manner that reflects their psychological differences - a strong, assertive, uninhibited, secure-in-herself mother versus a weak, apprehensive and meek son. Comedy of size underpins this dynamic. [\[V\]](#)

## 3 The Call to Adventure: The Sea

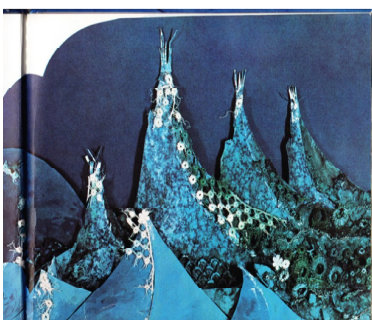
The pirate mother instigates the journey, calling her son to adventure and driving the story forward (leaving the transportation details to the little man). This traditional plot, a type of quest narrative with the sea as the initial goal - is a challenge for writer and illustrator because of a picture book's length. The 'There and Back Again' (Tolkien's *The Hobbit*) formula within roughly thirty-two pages means each word and illustration must count. In *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*, Mahy manipulates the template so there is no 'Back Again.' The 1985 version succeeds in embodying the adventure story successfully, while the 1972 Froud edition loses the chance for narrative suspense early on, the kind that entices young readers to turn the pages. Instead of allowing the little man, who has never seen the sea, to anticipate as his mother sings the praises of wind and wave, without visualising, Froud renders those dreams in static, decorative collages, his visual conception of the little man's imagination.

On the way, the travellers pass a farmer and philosopher who, each in their own ways, denigrate the sea, which is a metaphor for change and aspiration. The philosopher warns the little man that:

...the wonderful things are always less wonderful than you hope they will be. . .The sea is less warm, the joke less funny, the taste is not as good as the smell.

( Froud)

And, in fact, he is more or less right in the 1972 version. There is no effective surprise for readers or the little man, for the sea is a blue collage virtually the same as the man's imaginings previously, the cut-out waves tipped with what appear to be lace doilies. As a climax for characters and readers, it fails. The sea voice in the little man's head growing louder, giving him strength to push on, and the mother's wish transformed into poetic language as she sings the sea's praises to bolster him, demand something flamboyant.



The original version, however, buries the climax in a block of text, so that readers cannot be prepared for the shock of its 'BIGNESS.' The accompanying text is also wordy and clumsy. Mahy not only tightens and simplifies it in 1985, but the text has been divided to force readers to

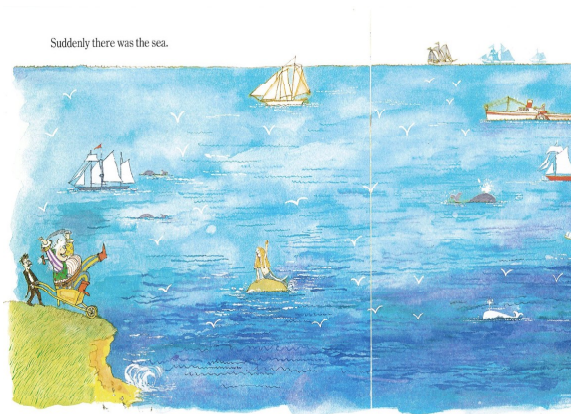
turn the page to emphasise the element of surprise. A one-sentence paragraph sets the stage: ‘Suddenly they came over the hill.’ A double-page spread with one unobtrusive sentence on top - ‘Suddenly there was the sea’ - allows the little man’s amazement to be shared by readers, who by implication do not need further words here, which would be inadequate to the experience. (Note that ‘Suddenly’ is used twice to emphasise surprise.) His expression is one of awe, the pirate mother’s one of unabashed joy at being back where she presumably spent her youth. The wash of the sea over two pages also changes the story’s pace. Readers can mull over details such as the ships and the waving mermaid (breasts sedately covered). They have finally arrived and for the moment characters (and readers) are satisfied. But this cannot be all. What next? Could the mother and son contemplate returning to the life that they have left?

Before they need to make this decision, the story allows the characters to revel in the experience. The illustrations and text mirror the physical and mental stimulation of being at the seaside. They also signal a demarcation - something has changed already and more change will occur. This double-page spread indicates a moment of awe but also of stasis. Carole Scott speaks of the way in which

the relationship between frame and image fluctuates and serves to intensify the emotion expressed in the story and experienced by the reader. The framing does not serve to bring order to the picture; rather it responds to the image that the eye and emotions perceive...this is what I term perceptual framing, which selects what is pertinent to be included, and what is not.

(Scott 2010:103)

This description of the symbiosis between frame and image clarifies how Chamberlin’s illustration interprets Mahy’s text. It emphasises the sea’s vastness. The water’s blue is smudged at the edges, framed by one centimetre of white or less on bottom and sides. The three-centimetre white border on the page’s top contains the only line, ‘Suddenly there was the sea,’ and four ships of varying sizes sailing on the dividing line between blue and white, giving a sense of perspective. The man and his mother are placed far left, perched on the cliff that drops suddenly into the sea. They are small in terms of the picture’s scale, but their gestures and expressions do not indicate disappointment or fear. The little man seems in awe, while his mother throws her arms in delight, revelling in this view of a natural force unconstrained by the vertical, horizontal and angular planes of the smoky city that they have left. Details enhance the contrast with the man and his mother’s physical past. Only ships, a lighthouse, whales and birds are visible on and in the sea that washes across two pages; no humans are present, only a waving mermaid. To summarise, Chamberlin here offers readers a view that simulates the character’s perceptions - the sea dominates all else, but upon and within it human and animal life flourish.



While Chamberlain's illustrations attempt to capture the environment's effect on the man and his mother's bodies, the salt breeze acting like a drug to intoxicate them, Mahy's language attempts to capture the sea's colours, sounds and motion.

The little man could only stare. He hadn't dreamed of the BIGNESS of the sea. He hadn't dreamed of the blueness of it. He hadn't thought it would roll like kettledrums, and swish itself on to the beach. He opened his mouth, and the drift and the dream of it, the weave and the wave of it, the fume and foam of it never left him again. At his feet the sea stroked the sand with soft little paws. Farther out, the great, graceful breakers moved like kings into court, trailing the peacock-patterned sea behind them.

(Mahy 1985)

This verbal translation of the sea's effect on the little man is lush, exuberant and playful. Self-consciously poetic, it might be called excessive, although compared to the 1975 version it is considerably pared down. As other parts of the text, it does introduce children to the texture and colour of figurative language. Mahy's comment about the ability of words to "intensify experience" (Kroll 1987: 28), made two years after the reissued book, points to a focus on "considered language" (Kroll 1987:28) in all her work.: "Language makes things as true as they possibly can be" (Kroll 1987:28). The text's revision complements the illustration rather than overwhelms it, as it did in the original. Here are two sentences from the original that have been deleted:

He heard the strange, wild music of waves and seabirds, and smelled wet sand and seaweed and fish and ropes and driftwood....Farther out the waves pounced and bounced like puppies.

( Froud)

The profusion of images detracts from the overall effect; especially in the first sentence, the information can be provided by the illustration. With a good poetic eye, Mahy has edited out the weaker images. This improves the rhythm of the text as well. [\[vi\]](#)



## 4 The Sea as Romantic Landscape and as Quest

It is worth considering whether the illustrations in the 1985 version have foregrounded any of the book's themes significantly. I have argued that the setting in the 1972 version suggests a nineteenth-century cityscape. The only allusion to contemporary technology is Mr Fat's threat to replace the little man with a computer if he is not back in two weeks. The rural scenes as well hark back to a bygone era. This does not alter appreciably in the 1985 version; the countryside recalls paintings that idealise pastoral life.



The romantic notion of the sea being the gateway to adventure as well as more natural and healthy than the city is a traditional one, prominent in both versions. In one sense, the book remains conservative in this way, idealising the sea

voyage. Mahy has said that, since she was a great reader as a child, she saturated herself in traditional reading: "Particularly for younger children, I make use of quite a lot of patterns and forms that exist in folk tale," but they "do have to carry some sort of adult resonance" (Kroll 1987b: 63). The call to adventure, the hero's journey or quest narrative, is adapted and reinvigorated here for children and adults. The elderly mother, whose youth has passed, and the son, who does not seem youthful but rather middle-aged, both need rejuvenation. The call transforms them both.

This recasting of the traditional adventure is integrated with the gender reversals of the text, however, and lets us consider the landscape of the sea in the broad sense of romance as a genre that deals with scenes remote from ordinary life, where conventions relax and characters are tested. Rather than being unrealistic or idealistic in a fantastic mode, the text pushes toward the concept of self-realisation. The pirate mother, the woman, is the initiating force behind the journey. Her spirit has been restrained but not stifled, since the sea captain can recognise her as a kindred spirit. She tells her son, a little man with little will, her 'shipmate' on their voyage through life, that she wants to see the sea again - presumably before she dies might be the unspoken thought in an adult's mind. Yet by the end of the journey, she faces beginning her life again as a bo'sun, whether for one last voyage or many. After all, she has always liked change. Her son, too, is transformed and named for only the second time in the text, but 'Sam' now has been qualified. 'Sailor Sam' in going to sea has finally found an identity worth having, one that cannot be replaced by technology. His occupation becomes his vocation:

“Say, ‘Aye, aye, sir!’ roared the captain.

‘Aye, aye, sir!’ replied the little man just as smartly as if he’d been saying, ‘Aye, aye, sir!’ all his life.’

(1985)

Sailor Sam has also in a sense regained his youth, no longer a ‘little man’ but a ‘cabin boy,’ ready to learn how to sail and by implication how to live.

The traditional quest here is, thus, reconceived, as the pirate mother and son do not find something that they physically bring back to their community to heal or defend it. They find what they both had lost - a lust for life, a desire for action, which helps to heal them. Yet Mahy does have them send something back in the form of a proxy for their presence: the green glass bottle with a message. What will Mr Fat and, by extension, the corporate world of the city, as well as Mahy’s audience make of it? Here again Mahy refashions the traditional idea of concluding with a lesson, common in fairy tales and fables. She says: “‘There’s still quite an expectation in children’s stories that they will teach something, that the morals will be socially acceptable and that children reading those stories will be improved along socially acceptable lines’” (Kroll 1987b: 64). She challenges the audience to find the moral; in order to do so, will they have to down books and run off to sea or the circus? Is this a call to irresponsibility or a device to call attention to the misguided desire to offer neat solutions in children’s books? Does responsibility always have to be stifling?

In an interview Mahy explains that she does not take the ‘lessons’ in her stories seriously and enjoys manipulating audience expectations. Released in the same year as the revision of *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*, *Jam* (1985) also plays with role reversals. It concerns a scientist-wife who does important work with sunspots and a super-efficient house-husband keen to turn all their plum tree’s fruit into jam. Speaking about this gender play, Mahy has said: “‘The role reversal...is meant to be a bit of a joke....I suppose it’s quite a complicated joke in a way, because there was a time a while ago, where people thought that breaking down existing stereotypes in children’s stories was a simple matter of role reveals. I don’t really think it is...’” (Kroll 1987b: 64). This statement applies as well to the gender roles in *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate* and to her strategy of questioning whether one should present a moral to an audience. The narrator’s refusal to heed the call to preach to a young audience reinforces the book’s emphasis on transcending conventions and boundaries, as many late twentieth and twentieth-first century illustrators allow images to transcend frames. Scott speaks about



our children an understanding of boundaries and how they might be broken. This, of course, includes the boundary between imagination and real-life experience, and the notion of fictionality.

( Scott 102)

Perhaps the basic thrust of this book, as of other Mahy work, including her novels, is the sense of freedom that moving beyond boundaries, whether closed endings or social roles, offers. The imagination is what helps individuals to envisage other ways of being. Chamberlain's dressing of the pirate mother in colourful, mismatched clothes emphasises the power of individuality by embodying the character's disregard of fashion or taste. She pleases only herself. The conventional cutlass, pistol, parrot and flag blend with rings, bracelets, two earrings, pipe and boots - male and female accessories - her fashion statement that this is what the well-dressed pirate woman wears. Whether journeying in or out of the wheelbarrow, the pirate woman is a dominant presence. She calls her son to adventure, she first scents the sea, announcing dramatically, "Glory! Glory! There's the salt!" (1985). The end of this part of the journey is near, but as the book concludes, the audience realises that the characters now are open for others.



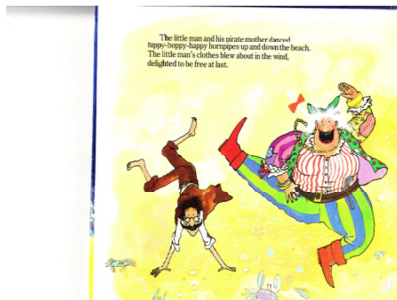
The way in which the little man's clothes alter as he nears the sea parallel his psychological transformation. At first dressed neatly in a brown suit and shoes - the corporate uniform of the minor clerk - the little man's clothing charts the gradual transformation or loosening of his personality. In a kind of illustrative and verbal displacement, the little man himself does not have to state that he has changed. His apprehension turns to curiosity and then acceptance, just as his clothes free themselves. As he dances the hornpipe with his mother, finally 'unbuttoned,' the text states:

'The little man's clothes blew about in the wind, delighted to be free at last' (1985).

'How the little man's neat clothes grew wild and happy to be free' (1972).

[Note the addition of 'at last' in 1985, as if they had been longing for release. Note the deletion of the adjectives 'wild and happy.']

The clothes express the exuberance of the imaginative life and the little man in the 1985 version has reverted to youth enough to be able to do a handstand. Both he and his mother look directly at the audience, communicating their delight. [\[vii\]](#)



## 5 Conclusion: Choose Your Own Adventure

A comparison of the closing scene in both versions of *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate* sums up why the 1985 edition is more effective than the original in aesthetic terms.<sup>[viii]</sup> Its text and illustrations form a harmonious unit. In the Froud edition the characters are still on the jetty, walking single file after the captain toward the boat, which is moored at the end. Executed in browns, beiges and yellow, it is not a big sailing ship, but has a paddle wheel and two masts with no sails evident. Although the characters smile, there is little sense of release. The vast blue sky is bare except for two birds.



In the Chamberlain edition, vibrant primary colours are again dominant as a new adventure begins, all three characters together as a crew in a boat that the captain rows toward his ship anchored at sea. Although the sails are furled, this looks more like a seagoing vessel. The characters stare straight at the audience, with Sailor Sam waving goodbye. The rowboat, jumping

fish, waves, in fact the entire scene express motion and anticipation. This last illustration, thus, while visually summing up the narrative of the journey in one sense, opens it out rather than closes it off in another. The characters, who have reached the sea, their first goal, row away from the shore to board a ship that will take them on other journeys towards unknown goals, which might mean risk but also possibility. The pretence of a moral here plays with the concept of closure. Morals, especially in traditional fables, click a story shut, answering questions about meaning and value. If *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate* is a fable, it is a contemporary permutation that refuses to offer traditional wisdom.



The synergy between illustration and text in the Mahy-Chamberlain collaboration, therefore, encourage one to undertake a close reading of *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate* as if it were a poem. Words and pictures, exuberant illustrations and poetic text, together help to develop

children's aesthetic sense. They carry the burden of meaning, denotation and connotation; verbal texture and visual technique, tonal contrasts, page breaks and text placement (like poetry's syntax and line breaks), convey the narrative's nuances. Australian Mem Fox, author of *Possum Magic*, the best-selling picture book in her country's history, frequently speaks about the classic thirty-two page picture book as a poem because of the manner in which language can be exploited; at its most effective it is concise, multi-layered, rhythmic. Mahy's language abounds with images, the verbal equivalent of the pirate woman's personality. The text sings, especially of the sea. Chamberlain's art captures this rhythm visually. The last illustration and the pseudo-moral that refuses to end the journey, but instead turns back interpretation to readers, has the resonance of a short lyric, or a sonnet's couplet. The concluding scene and accompanying text click into place but resonate with possibilities.

One of the themes of *The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate*, as I have argued, concerns the power of the imagination to usher in positive change, for both male and female. Individuals need to choose their own adventure. Critics might suggest that the book sounds a call to irresponsibility, the romantic ideal of the footloose sailor's - indeed the lawless pirate's - existence. Mahy's knowing refusal to offer a pat moral at the conclusion, however, argues against this view. The sea functions as a metaphor for renewal as much as anything. The pirate woman is no longer young, but at the conclusion she has recaptured some of her youthful exuberance, and is set to become a working crew member again (not a pirate). Mahy does not leave the story there, however. The last lines in fact challenge the audience - 'Don't expect the conventional response.' If the imagination can free the individual, freedom means finding your own way, not society's. Mahy has commented about her work:

'I do think that I can claim that my stories suggest that there are times when it's appropriate for any individual, male or female, to surrender to the amazement of the moment and to break away from the forms necessarily that control our day to day life and enter upon a rather freer and more anarchic type of existence. And I think that the stories I write could be said to break down stereotyping in that particular way.'  
(Kroll 1987b: 64).

Mahy's text suggests that the key to the best way to live your life will not be found in a bottle washed up on the shore, or in a fortune cookie, or even in a children's book that has a history of didacticism.

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[i] This dynamic alters in the case of an author who is also the illustrator. As well, educational books are subject to other imperatives than trade books. In this essay, I focus on the classic thirty-two page trade picture book.

[ii] For example, a picture book can offer readers aesthetic pleasure, 'function[ing] as an art object (Doonan 1993: 7) and, as any sophisticated work, become 'histories of style and form' (Doonan 1993: 7; Stanton 1998: 4) that engage adult audiences on a more complex imaginative level that is not necessarily apparent to child readers (Stanton 1998: 3). This leads us to another feature picture books exhibit - their ability to entertain in various ways, depending on the age and cultural dispositions of the audience. Finally and perhaps most obviously, they can teach, specifically designed for literacy or more generally embodying the desire to gain information.

[iii] In the original version, Mahy has the farmer say about the sea: "'It's wet and cold and gritty, I'm told...not comfortable like a cowshed'" (1972). Note how in the 1985 edition the concept of change is emphasised. The little man in that version responds to the farmer: "'My mother likes things that don't stay put.'"

[iv] Interestingly, the majority of New Zealander Mahy's work has been 'illustrated by UK-based artists' (Fraser 2001: 12), who, along with their American counterparts, helped to revolutionise the picture book.

[v] Mr Fat's as well as his dog's appearance play on this opposition too. Both are big and unhealthy-looking. Both have food before them, but Mr Fat's cream bun with cherries, sweets box and bottle of port or sherry denote excess.

[vi] As Mem Fox has said, 'Don't forget that the rhythm of the text is the element which will, or will not bring the reader back to the story again and again' (Fox 1999).

[vii] A note on the sea captain's dress. Unlike the more modern (mid-century?) dress of Froud's captain, the dress of Chamberlain's harks back to the eighteenth or nineteenth century (hat, shoes, etc.). This could be understood as nostalgia for the kind of adventure common in the romance genre. Another noteworthy change concerns the able-bodiedness of the captain. In Froud's version, he has a peg leg (like a conventional pirate). In Chamberlain's, he does not.

[viii] The book remains in print and in Australia has been adapted for the stage by Patch Theatre.

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# Write4Children



## How do you edit a book?

Lucy Cutheo

Freelance Editor

Suffice to say that there are probably as many ways to edit a book as there are to skin a cat. I'm glad to say though, that I've been lucky enough to edit many wonderful books and have never once been required to skin a cat. I did once end up in the middle of nowhere in Iceland editing a book and a cat gave birth to four kittens on my lap, but that's a different story.

So, how do you edit a book? Or rather, how do *I* edit a book? The answer for me is: by asking a lot of questions. The tricky thing about editing, is that it's a difficult thing to *learn*. Before I worked in publishing, I pictured myself working for one of those wonderful old-school editors in publishing with little black glasses and a degree from Oxford. I would stand over a shoulder and watch, listen and learn. I imagined that someone would *show* me how to edit a book. But when as an editor I quickly realised that the only way to learn to edit a book is to actually *edit one*.

My publisher placed a great deal of trust in me, and arming me with a pile of manuscripts, sent me on my way. After trawling through a tower of submissions, I finally found something I thought was, '*Good*'. This, spoken with cautious emphasis (before acquisitions one should be frugal with adjectives, I learned). It was commissioned. Triumph! But then, came a scary thought: 'How on earth do I edit this?'

Through working on that first book, I came to realise that editing a book is really about understanding it. When you start to understand what it is that a book wants to be, then all you need to do is help it become that. You simply need to highlight the places where the text is not helping the book become it's 'best self'. Then, if you are really brave, you can suggest ways to help it do that. I suppose that's how I edit a book: by trying to make it be the best version of itself that it can be.

However, before that realisation, two pressing questions came to mind. 'What am I going to say?' and 'How am I going to say it?'. At the time I'm glad I didn't know that there were a million other questions waiting for me: Should I print it? Should I write in pencil? Should I write all my thoughts in the margin? Do I need a separate sheet? Should I edit on the computer? Is it okay if I put it in a more legible font? Should I track my changes? Should I track *all* my changes? Should I put a comment *every* time I change something? Did the author mean to put that word twice in the same paragraph? Should I ask the author to change this? Should I mention that I love this bit in case the author takes it out? Is it intentional these characters look almost exactly the same? Will this cause readers offence? Should thoughts be in italic? Should I correct the typos now or at the end? Is this line too intrusive? Is the plot moving fast enough? Am I being *too* critical? There were more. A lot more.

These questions form the structure of my day. Morning, 9.00 am, I make tea, and sit down to read. Reading is easy. I'll just *read it*, I think to myself, naively. 9.30 am, still only on page three (pages one and two were title pages). Why doesn't this bit work? Would Mike really be able to leave the house without Mum seeing him? Or is it the directness? Perhaps we need to slow it down here? I insert a



comment: Perhaps we should add more here? Hmm. I extend the comment: Or would that disrupt the pace? Hmm. Am I being overly technical? Delete comment. I wish I could ask someone else. I e-mail a friend, knowing that the subtleties of my quandary would take days to explain. Response is infuriating: I doubt anyone will read it *that* closely. Frustrated and lonely, I return to page three (which is really page one) and decide to put a cautious comment to myself to return here later. I press on. 11.00 am I am on page five. Hurrah! I am... (open calculator) ...2.09% of the way through. Oh. Is that all? More tea.

Several weeks later, I have finished. There are 682 comment bubbles on the nove. That's an average of almost three per page. Plus three pages of notes. I have read them all over and over. None of the comments are overly negative (must be constructive). None of them are overly picky (Mike's mum could be in the kitchen with the radio on, I reason). Many of them are encouraging. I can send it. Oh, hang on, there's a typo in my notes. I read them all again and then once more for good measure.

Finally, I e-mail the author attaching the document. Then I wait. Several days pass. Anxiety sets in. Has the e-mail arrived? Has the author read it? Does the author hate me? Will the author want to work with me again? Am I going to be responsible for a suicide? The phone rings. A delighted author on the phone. 'Your comments are so insightful!' Phew! I reply, 'It's a wonderful novel.' There is mutual praise, then the work starts. We sit together over more tea and author's choice of snacks (from macadamia nuts in north London to dried cod in Iceland, I've enjoyed a variety of snacks over a manuscript) and talk about the novel. Sparks fly. Ideas and solutions are born, clarified, crystallised.

Several more weeks pass, the re-writes are complete. The novel has shed its old skin and is beautiful and shiny-new. Everyone is excited. The sales team wait hungrily at the printer. PDFs whoosh across the Atlantic. Advance copies go out for review. Author and editor wait with baited breath. Ideally responses roll in: Reviews... an award nomination... a foreign sale. Hat trick!

Books are subjective, as writing is, as editing is. It's a discursive process, not an exact science. When the book is published, I reflect. Have I done a good job? Is it the best it could be? Are there any typos? Can I finally stop asking questions? But I know now that asking a lot of questions is what makes me a good editor. I'm not paranoid, insecure, uncertain. I'm asking questions, checking things and checking them again. On the page and in my mind. That's just how I edit. I think it's only through constant careful weighing up of the whole picture that you can hope to do a good job - for the author, for the reader, for the book.

So how do you edit a book? Well, by being patient, inquisitive, careful, kind and finally by being the sort of (slightly annoying) person who asks *a lot* of questions. Now I wonder to myself... Are there too many questions in this piece?

Lucy wrote an MPhil thesis on children's literature at Birmingham University before becoming commissioning editor at Meadowside Children's Books for five years. She has recently gone freelance. She lives and works in Cardiff on YA fiction and other children's book projects for a number of publishers and authors. She especially enjoys finding new writing and working closely with authors developing their work.

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## ‘That’s how it goes’: nursery rhymes and the young child

Virginia Lowe

The nursery rhyme, which by tacit and universal consent may be either said or sung, is resorted to by the mother for the soothing and amusement of her child without thought of its origin, except in that usually she remembers it from her own childhood.

(Opie, page 3)

I kept a diary of the book and literary experiences of my daughter and son, from birth to adolescence. (6000 handwritten pages) with particular emphasis on the years before eight, published as *Stories, Pictures and Reality: Two Children Tell*. Various aspects of their book experience have been explored in print, including recent chapters on poetry (Lowe 2010) and on their earliest experiences (Lowe 2011).

For simplicity I have defined ‘nursery rhymes’ as those in *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*. Adult comments are indicated with square brackets. While their father read the words, I usually sang them.

### ‘My heart will break if you don’t’: Language acquisition

Both children had heard nursery rhymes sung by their mother from the day of their birth. At 0-8 (eight months) both children responded to ‘Baa baa black sheep’ with great enthusiasm, even sung on tape. They were also shown Wildsmith’s *Mother Goose* from 0-3. The most used ‘toy’ in Rebecca’s playpen (where she was confined when there was cooking in the kitchen) was Eve’s collection (200 pages, 208 rhymes). At 0-10 she would sit and study the pictures carefully, and crawl around to look at them the other way up. Among her first words were ‘Oh dear’ and ‘Awfawdow’ (‘All fall down’ or ‘Ring-a-ring o’ roses’) which were her terms for nursery rhymes in general as well as for the specific ones. After a visit from her musical grandmother at 1-4, she would stand beside the piano and beg ‘Oh dear’ - meaning ‘play for me’.

We bought Briggs *Mother Goose Treasury* (220 pages, 450 rhymes) when Ralph was 1-2. He laughed with delight and surprise at 'Baa baa black sheep' - finding something so familiar in an unexpected place. His first nursery rhyme quote was to a counting book, Oxenbury's *Numbers of Things*. Among her 'seven chairs' is a rocking chair, and at 1-4 he pointed to it and sang 'baby baby' with the same intonation he used for 'Rock a bye baby. Both could sing a number of rhymes in tune and with most words, by 2-0. Ralph knew many by 2-7. When he had sung one he would remark with satisfaction 'that was a nice song' or 'that's how it goes'.

Neither child learned to speak early. Rebecca, perfectionist as she was, chose to use a word only when she was sure it would be understood, consequently she only had fourteen words at 1-2, 37 at 1-7, but 350 by 1-9, and then it exploded - I counted 1147 at 2-3 (excluding names and inflected verbs), by when it seemed that any word in our adult vocabulary or that of her books, was available to her. Between two and three, it seemed that every second utterance was a quotation from a book - and frequently these were poems or nursery rhymes. Ralph's pattern was completely different. As a second child, there was much more language in his environment that was not specifically addressed to him, which may be the reason that for him, language was about socialising first, rather than actual communication. He had 29 words at 1-4, but only 203 at two.

Their patterns of book-reception were also different. Ralph asked many questions, including the ubiquitous 'why'? Consequently he heard many more explanations and definitions. Rebecca preferred to work things out for herself, rather than ask - she would take in literary vocabulary then produce it either in play for the sound, or correctly in communication some time later. Between two and three her conversation seemed to consist largely of quotes from books, many of which were nursery rhymes or other poems.

Wordplay comes naturally to children - infants learning to speak play with the sounds in rhyming and alliterative patterns, so nonsense words are enjoyable - 'hey diddle diddle' or 'perrie, merrie, dixie, dominie' in Ralph's 'favourite, favourite, favourite' at 3-2 ('I have four sisters').

They showed they could recognise words before they could talk. At 1-1 Rebecca would attempt the 'itsy bitsy' finger actions whenever she heard the word 'spider' in normal conversation, or saw the picture of one. At the rhyme 'If all the seas were one sea/And all the seas were ink/...What would we have to drink?' the still breastfed Ralph (1-2) made a dive for my breast, clearly recognising the word 'drink' out of context. There was an extensive period of animal noises too (all nursery rhyme collections feature copious illustrations of animals) - first demanded from the parent by pointing and shouting 'ah!' (and in the process demonstrating that they could 'read' the pictures at 1-1). A long drive with the adults

singing raucously from Eve, was punctuated by Rebecca's demands for the animal sounds. Of course only a few months older and they could make them themselves.

Rebecca enjoyed filling in the rhyming words at the ends of lines: 'Once I saw a little bird coming hop, hop' 'HOP' she would chime in. At 1-10 she was very excited to encounter Eve again after about four months and was looking at it alone. Her longest utterance to date was 'Nut tree - Mummy sing!' on the correct page of 'I had a little nut tree'. Then she requested 'Hey diddle, cat and fiddle, cow - MOON', which was not on that page. I had no idea she knew the words so well. She would often remark from 2-5, on hearing a dog bark in the distance 'Hark! Hark! The dogs do bark!' At this age she could sing or recite many, including two verses of 'Pop goes the weasel'. Ralph did not use quotes as Rebecca had, but could still sing many of the rhymes in tune at 2-7, with some of the words correct and some jargon.

Starting a long session with Eve's *Mother Goose* when he was 2-7, Ralph asked 'Read this "Rowley powley" book' pointing to the top-hatted frog on the cover. I duly located 'A frog he would a-woooing go', then we read on from there. He asked 'Why?' at the end of many (often a challenging question, with the only answer 'it's just a nonsense song!') Sometimes it was more specific. He wanted to know why they woke up 'Little Boy Blue'. In 'Old Mother Hubbard' the sixth stanza ends with 'The dog said bow-wow'. 'Why?' he asked, as so often. [Isn't that what dogs say?] 'No.' [Do they say "woof woof" then?] 'No. They say "meow meow"! Cats I mean!' and grinned. 'Tom Tom the piper's son' inspired a singing of 'Five little ducks went out one day' because of the line 'over the hills and far away'. There was a problem with 'Where are you going to, my pretty maid?' 'Where is she going?' he asked. [She's going to milk that cow]. 'But the song says she's leaving! Going means leaving' he objected. It was difficult to explain.

The animal names were another variety of vocabulary learned from nursery rhyme books. We might not have talked about sheep, cows and lions, let alone hedgehogs and unicorns, without the pictures in the nursery rhyme collections. But they knew all these animals and many more, both in illustrations and in the actual creatures.

At the same session, at 2-7, the illustration for 'There was an old woman tossed up in a basket' features bats flying in the sky. He queried them and I told him they were 'bats'. 'Wombats?' he asked. We had been talking about wombats and numbats for the last week, having seen a wombat at the Agricultural Show. At 'The Lion and the unicorn' we discussed Nelson's Column ('that's a lion and that's a lion and that's a lion') and other London landmarks in the picture, describing their visit a year before and promising to find relevant photos. He asked what the lion and unicorn were doing [they both want the crown] and suggested that perhaps the soldier holding the crown wanted it for himself. And to another

soldier: 'He's drumming them out of town'.

A couple of days later we went through Wildsmith. At 'Hark hark the dogs do bark' it says 'one in a velvet gown' He pointed out one of the beggars and said 'that one looks pretty'. I was interested that he'd interpreted 'velvet gown' as being 'pretty'. At 3-8 Ralph started singing 'Doctor Foster' but stopped abruptly: 'I'll sing the rest in nineteen years' he told me.

One of his more frequent quotes in conversations was 'I'm sure I don't know' (from 'Oranges and Lemons') and in the bath he would sing 'Row row row your boat'. Or he might remark 'We're all monkeys. Like [sings] "There was a monkey climbed up a tree. When he fell down, then down fell he"'. Getting undressed he sang 'cos I have no trousers to put on' (from 'Soldier, soldier' - which isn't in Opie, but was on one of his nursery rhyme tapes). 'It's raining, it's pouring!' was sung as appropriate. To a book about giants, he said 'That's Fee fi fo fum - I want it!' using the name of the book and of the giant's chant, instead of 'giant' - which he had presumably forgotten.

A phrase which resonated with both of them came from 'There was a lady loved a swine'. At 2-8 Ralph had climbed a fence and was perched there safely when he called 'help!' I said 'you're okay there!' but he replied 'but my heart will break if you don't!' Two weeks later he asked his grandfather to do something using the same phrase. Rebecca at 3-6 still occasionally used baby terms. So one day she asked me to pick her up: 'Uff uff me, or my heart will break'.

The words were wonderful playthings. At 3-1, Rebecca enjoyed changing words to their opposites ('Jack and Jill went down the hill') or changing the initial letters ('Sack and Sill went sown the sill') Passing a MacDonald's both sang 'Old MacDonald had a hamburger'. They also played with other ways of using words. Rebecca at 4-1 invented a metaphor: 'I've got a pail of water. I'm going to Jack and Jill Ralph!' At 6-7, Ralph met the Lion and the Unicorn again in *Through the Looking Glass*, and turned around the rhyme so that the unicorn won.

Syntax was learned too. When Ralph was 3-4, there was a song about Robin Hood on the radio. He asked me 'What does that remind you of?' [I don't know] 'It's like Old King Cole 'acause it says about "he"'. The line had been 'An outlaw bold was he' and he'd connected this with 'a merry old soul was he', as a noteworthy syntactical construction.

At 4-8 Rebecca was reciting the other 'This little piggie' rhyme (in Briggs) including 'crash bash'. Her version didn't rhyme, so I asked her about it. Her reply: 'Well that's how it is. They don't always rhyme'. Both children were able to articulate 'that rhymes' when rhyme occurred unexpectedly, at around 4-0.

At 5-3, Rebecca still heard nursery rhymes read and sung to Ralph. At 'Monday's child' she queried 'What day was I born on?' [Monday] Then 'What day was Ralph born on?' [Thursday] 'But he hasn't got "far to go", 'cos he's come back from overseas.' After some deliberation she decided it should have been Wednesday ('full of woe') but then decided that it was only a poem anyway, so could not be taken seriously.

Ralph often acted out the rhymes. After singing 'Hey diddle diddle' (2-7) he began jumping vigorously on the sofa, being the cow jumping over the moon: 'I can't do it acause I'm too small. The cow can do it acause he's long'. Clearly in the mode of falling, he fell off my knee at 'Jack and Jill.' A few weeks later they had a jumping board out in the back yard. 'I jumped over the moon!' To Rebecca (he 2-10, she 5-1) as he balanced across from his window sill to his bed. 'You be someone who goes underneath and says "London Bridge is falling down!"' Which game of course turned into a wild rumpus between the two, as did 'You be Miss Muffet and I'm the spider' (3-7).

Rebecca similarly quoted phrases to Ralph, inconsequentially as a child will. 'The man in brown soon brought him down' she said as she tussled with him at 4-5 (he 1-3). In another game with Ralph (about kings and prisoners), Rebecca (5-8) commanded 'Do it, or I'll beat you full sore' (from 'The Queen of Hearts'). She could sing them with the traditional words, but invented versions as well. A lullaby specifically for her little brother (she 4.5):

Rock-a-bye baby, on the tree top  
When the wind blows the cradle will rock  
When the bough breaks Big Sister will sing to you,  
When you fall down, Big Sister will catch you.

Other vocabulary acquired from the nursery rhymes included 'topknot', 'quench', 'Christening', 'shroud', 'pall', 'thrive', 'a-wooing' 'water spout'.

**‘That page doesn’t know it’: the book as artefact.**

Although nursery rhymes are essentially from oral tradition, today they are likely to be met in books as well, and these collections occupy a unique place in a child’s book experience. Older, they may well encounter two versions of, say, *Cinderella*, but different versions of Mother Goose is something they can encounter almost from birth. The first version will still be the oral one, sung by parent or grandparent, so that their first encounter with a nursery rhyme book will already involve something familiar. They have heard ‘Baa baa black sheep’ or ‘Twinkle twinkle little star’ sung - possibly many times - and suddenly here it is, sung again but accompanied now by bright pictures in this thing called a ‘book’. Fascinating. They are also likely to meet versions sung on DVD (or tape or record), on television. or on the internet.

Then they may well go on to encounter, over these early years, two or three different printed versions, by different illustrators. So the understanding grows that books are created by different people. The illustrations accompanying the rhyme will be completely different, while the rhyme remains the same - it is just interpreted in different ways by different him. The verse may differ as well of course (look at the many variants over time, discovered for each rhyme by the Opies) but will be still recognisably the rhyme - fitting the same tune, and maybe accompanied by the same actions (if the reader is dexterous enough to hold book and baby at the same time as playing finger games).

Humpty Dumpty was significant here. It happened that the first picture infant Ralph paid attention to, was a big poster of Humpty Dumpty in a mother’s rest room in the city. He was thirteen weeks when he stared fixedly at it while I was feeding him. We did not show him an actual nursery rhyme book until some months later (though he would have heard me singing - how different a second child’s experiences are! Rebecca was introduced to Wildsmith’s *Mother Goose* at 0-3) while Ralph met it at 0-7). At 0-8, he put his open mouth onto Humpty, as if kissing - and not onto any other of the rhymes. At 0-10, I used to sing it slow the first half, and livelier in the second. He sat solemn in the first part, and laughed and jiggled in the second. Humpty Dumpty is a special case, because he is always egg-shaped so recognisable. But he is often dressed differently, has a different expression on his face, and at a different stage of falling off, too. Rebecca recognised him depicted by four different artists at 1-6.

We had a new book from the library, *Tasha Tudor’s Nursery Rhymes*, when Ralph was 2-10. He had been looking at it in his room, and suddenly came running through the house. ‘Mummy, come and look. Something’s gone wrong here! Look Becca! It’s Humpty Dumpty!’ On the front cover, Humpty is depicted



wearing unfamiliar old fashioned military garb. Ralph had recognised him, and wanted us to share the experience, pulling Rebecca and myself through the house by our hands until we also could see this unexpected phenomenon. A few weeks later he remarked of the book 'There's lots of Mother Goose rhymes in here!' Someone sitting on our low front brick fence would lead to a remark about 'Humpty Dumpty'. At 2-7 when John was about to start the bedtime story, Ralph fell forward on his face. [What's the matter? Are you tired?] 'No - I want Humpty Dumpty' so they went off together and found Eve. I had already seen this performance the day before. 'Why is his mouth like that?' [What do you think he's saying?] 'Heeeeelp!' (and falls forward - this several times.) When reading Wildsmith at 3-6 he announced at the Humpty picture 'I want the one with men in', so he was quite definite in his preference for the Eve version, which does have much more activity and detail than Wildsmith.

The fact that 'Humpty Dumpty' is a riddle, is often forgotten - though it is always there in the egg-shaped illustrations. It is among the riddles that Old Brown asks in *Squirrel Nutkin* (Ralph's favourite Potter). At 2-7 Ralph was asking 'why?' at almost every rhyme, and did so at Humpty. I told him the reason was that you can't put a broken egg back together again.

The predictability of a book is something else to be learned. This is not specific to nursery rhyme books, but these may be the first ones encountered, and are often read/sung in random order. If the child is reading it with an adult, they know they will always come upon 'Baa baa black sheep' and the picture will always look the same in that book. We let the children, as infants, turn the pages themselves, and of course this was in clumps, so they had not yet realised that the pages were always in the same order..

Not only did different books have different versions of the pictures, but sometimes the words were different too. Probably in the beginning we would have recited them the same way (after all, the 'right way' for us adults, was the one we knew as children). But soon, especially after we obtained a couple of tapes of nursery rhymes, they realised that alternatives were possible. Rebecca (4-9): 'There seem to be a lot of different versions of that', hearing on tape 'There was a frog lived in a well' at 4.9 (they were more familiar with 'A frog he would a-woooing go'.)

Rebecca at 6-5 remarked 'Look these are different versions' of 'Jack and Jill' (in Crane and Wood). They often had a specific version they wanted, usually based on the pictures. At 2-4 Ralph was in bed, and held his round dummy up toward the sky saying 'moon'. I sang 'Hey diddle diddle' for him, but hearing it wasn't enough - 'find that book!' At 2-3 he asked for 'Fee fi fo fum' by name while I was reading Eve. I tried to read the verse from there, but that wasn't good enough. We had to find the actual book with that title, and read it through. (Briggs *Fee Fi Fo Fum*) I was surprised at him asking for a book we hadn't

had recently, and also at him remembering the title. In *Cakes and Custard*, he wanted to know ‘where’s his bag?’ (which was prominent in the other versions of ‘Dr Foster’.) At 3-2 he insisted on the version of ‘London bridge is falling down’ from Wildsmith, rather than one in Eve.

There were other things to learn about books too. ‘Where’s the dish and the spoon?’ Ralph asked of ‘Hey diddle diddle’ in *Cakes and Custard*. at 2-7. [They’re just not in the picture] ‘But the words say it!’ he objected, clearly understanding by now that it was the written symbols that carried the words spoken by the adult. A few days later he complained that the beetle verse in ‘Cock Robin’ was ‘wrong’ in Eve - ‘That page doesn’t know it!’

Titles don’t necessarily indicate the contents. Rebecca had heard the title of Oxenbury’s *Cakes and Custard*, and had told her doll that it was about what to feed babies, and written by the Nursing Mothers (with which Association I was doing voluntary work at the time). When she eventually sat down to share it, she was disappointed: ‘It’s only got rhymes in! Why is it called *Cakes and Custard*?’ (5.10).

Something common with nursery rhymes is their intertextuality. One frequently encounters them quoted in children’s stories, and that again brings home the point that they have an independent life of their own - unlike stories, they are not written by anyone (or not attributed to anyone - we knew about Jane Taylor and ‘Twinkle twinkle little star’ but wouldn’t have attempted to explain the origin of any of them to the children). They are in *Through the Looking Glass*, but much younger they met them in Beatrix Potter (*Squirrel Nutkin*). Ralph tried to guess all the riddles there at 6-0, most of them familiar from the nursery rhyme collections. Rebecca was delighted to discover them also in *My Naughty Little Sister*, *A Day at Bullerby*, *Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf*, *Five Dolls in a House* and *Little House on the Prairie*.

Some specific rhymes have become books as well - another demonstration that the rhymes have an autonomous life. In their childhood, my children had books of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, *A Frog He Would A-wooing Go*, *To Market to Market*, *Who Killed Cock Robin*, *The House that Jack Built* and *Hector Protector and As I Went over the Water*.

Eventually the books also found their place as tools for reading practice. Neither child found learning to read an easy task - both were eight before they read at their interest level. Rebecca was 6-5 before it occurred to her to try to read the familiar rhymes, and by then she could do it quite well - so well that she started picking out differences. It had started with the two children on the floor, with two nursery rhyme books, Crane and Wood. ‘You have this hymn book, Ralph’, and presumably gave him Crane,

which has music in. Rebecca was comparing them line by line, and commented 'Look Mum, these are different. This says "wat-er" and this says "water"' (at 'Jack and Jill'). The next day she discovered of 'Baa baa black sheep' 'These are different versions!' She also started writing a list of their rhymes in common. When he was 7-4 Ralph was actually reading *Fee Fi fo Fum* because he queried 'What does KNAVE spell?'

They were both able to recognise an artist's illustrative style. I had *A Child's Garden of Verses* illustrated by Wildsmith, and asked Ralph at 3-0, what it reminded him of? 'Hey diddle diddle' he replied (i.e. *Mother Goose*) which was what I expected, as they have the same layout. However Rebecca (6-3) later said it reminded her of *The Hare and the Tortoise* and *Puzzles* (two other titles by Wildsmith). At 5-10 she asked for *Cakes and Custard* as 'The book by the person who did the book about the tree' - which I worked out was *Meal One* (also illustrated by Oxenbury).

## **'What made him killed?': death and violence**

A statistical analysis of nursery rhymes has revealed that just about half of the old favourites contain a measure of violence, law-breaking or personal injury.

(Tucker, p.261)

It is often said that nursery rhymes originally prepared children for life - it is all there, birth, death, love, sex, violence. But life is different now - the average child is unlikely to meet a death more immediate than that of a pet or a grandparent. I must admit that I didn't read some of these to Rebecca. Fortunately Wildsmith does not contain 'Who killed Cock Robin?' though it is in Eve. When we came upon it there, I either skipped over it or read the first stanza or so, as boringly as possible. As Rebecca rarely questioned what she heard, I wasn't called upon to explain when she was young.

As in so many ways, the experience of the younger child is different. By the time Ralph was able to join in readings, Rebecca was four, and requesting the nursery rhymes in the collections - there was no way of skipping over them. Also we listened frequently to the nursery rhyme tapes, one of which featured 'Cock Robin' in all its stanzas. At 2-7 Ralph said, several times 'I like that one' to the tape. I felt that at the time he had no concept of death. Others I had avoided with Rebecca were 'There was a little man and he had a little gun' and 'Solomon Grundy'. I didn't think to protect her from the ones with violence in the form of hitting, fighting, or accidents like the throwing down the stairs in 'Goosy Goosy Gander', but I did change to 'Ten little naughty boys' as on one of our tapes. Ralph of course wanted to know

‘why he chopped himself in half?’

When I read the title of the book, *Who Killed Cock Robin?* he answered it confidently ‘A sparrow with an arrow - see?’ (2-9). Despite the seeming assurance of this answer, he put the question to Rebecca three months later: ‘what made him killed, Becca?’ She replied ‘They must have been playing naughty games’. A week or so later he was still fascinated by the concept. ‘How was Cock Robin killed?’ he asked me. I suggested it was a mistake, but he told me ‘He was trying and trying to kill him, and he did!’ and a fortnight later ‘I’ll tell you how Cock Robin was killed! That bird was playing with his bow and arrow and he got in front and he tried to kill him and then he did. P’raps he was trying to kill another bird.’ There was another rise in popularity of ‘Cock Robin’ at 4-1. This time he asked for definitions of all the strange words - ‘coffin’, ‘pall’, ‘shroud’, ‘bull’ (bullfinch). “Mummy, why were they playing with bows and arrows?” and ‘It is a small coffin, because robins are just the same size as sparrows, aren’t they?’ He wanted the refrain with each verse - five or six times, but then asked ‘why did they keep saying that, the ruddy idiots?’ [I guess someone thought it sounded right]. Ralph: ‘But we don’t, do we?’ ‘Two cats of Kilkenny’ fascinated him at this session also. He asked ‘what happened to them?’ I made my usual reply ‘It’s just a nonsense poem’ but he insisted ‘But what do you *think*?’ [They fought until they just disappeared] ‘The blue one is going to die first, because look at all the fur that’s come out!’ it is interesting that I avoided mentioning ‘death’ - the cats are fighting - though Ralph saw it as relevant at once.

John was reading Eve. ‘Read those two birds’ Ralph asked. John replied that they were just decoration - there was no rhyme to go with them. One is on its back with its feet up, which Ralph obviously read this as dead: ‘Maybe it’s poor Cock Robin!’

‘Oranges and Lemons’ is illustrated in Eve, with all the steeples. Outside St Martin’s there are children playing. ‘What are they doing?’ he wanted to know at 2-7. I described the game, and he remembered a birthday party. ‘Sarah and Lucy and the girls did it. It was outside. Lucy said “Last man’s dead!”’ and he fell dramatically off the sofa. (He did seem to understand about death at this point). The next day he was hearing Eve again. I read ‘There was a little man and he had a little gun’ who shoots a duck through the head. This led him to remark ‘In a film I saw they bumped the head off a snake. The snake was very bad’. (This was actually the film of *Storm Boy*.)

## **‘It’s just a nonsense poem’: through nonsense to sense**

With the help of fantasies, tall tales, fairy tales, and topsy-turvies of every type, children confirm their realistic orientation to actuality. (Chukovsky, page 113)

Infant Ralph was sitting in his high chair, and I was entertaining Rebecca with nursery rhymes while spooning in food. At the end of ‘Little Jack Horner’ she asked ‘Why did he say he was a good boy?’ My reply, as so often, was that it was just a nonsense rhyme. She turned to her little brother and explained seriously to him ‘It’s just nonsense, Little Man’.

Ralph queried songs and stories much more extensively than she had ever done, and much younger (Rebecca didn’t like asking questions - she would rather work it out for herself), so he in fact heard this same explanation from me very often. If there was a logical reason I would explain it, but if not, reply as above. He understood what is real, as opposed to what is imaginary or pretend, much younger than Rebecca did - or perhaps it is just that he was able to articulate it earlier. By the time he was beginning to talk, the most interesting person in his environment - Rebecca - was very much occupied with the dichotomy real/pretend. She talked about it often, so gave him the terms to use - doubtless leading to the earlier grasp of the issue.

At 1.11 when Rebecca sang a nursery rhyme and had forgotten some of the words, she would sing nonsense syllables, then (obviously to reassure me that she did know the difference) tell me ‘funny song’. Years later she was still doing it. A song of her own was, ‘Pigs and pigs in a cowboy hat’ and told me ‘it’s just a nonsense poem’ (3-8).

‘Four and twenty tailors went to kill a snail’ is illustrated by Wildsmith with a huge brightly coloured snail in the foreground. At 2-7 Ralph remarked ‘Snails don’t really have colours like that!’ In the same session, to ‘Hey diddle diddle’ he said ‘That’s a plate. But it’s got eyes on - I don’t want that one!’ (although fantasy drawings didn’t usually bother him).

A number of traditional nursery rhymes play with the concept of the actual words in nonsense verse rather than telling a story. The children eventually realised the meanings of them, without being told. ‘Two children sliding on the ice, all on a summer’s day’ - Rebecca asked at 4-5 ‘how can there be ice on a summer’s day?’ ‘There was a monkey climbed up a tree’ - she enjoyed using the phrase ‘when she’d eat two she’d eat a couple’. At ‘In a cottage in Fife’ she at last realised at 5-7 ‘That’s a funny one!’ ‘Mr Frog jumped out of the pond one day’ (which isn’t in Opie I must admit) delighted Rebecca at 4-8. ‘That’s a silly poem. It’s all wet and cold in the water too!’

Logical questions asked to nursery rhymes, which can only be answered by 'Because it says so' , because it's quite ridiculous, were another indication of the nonsense status of many . Ralph asked many of these, among them at 3-2 to 'The three little kittens': 'Why did they still cry [having found the mittens]? It was the sort of crying like shouting, wasn't it Mum?'

It was the taped version of 'A frog he would a-wooing go' that led him to the sudden realisation 'It must be pretend 'acause it's really people. They can't talk, can they? Animals can't talk' (at 3-3). A month later, to 'Peter Peter pumpkin eater', 'you can't live in something to eat!' Rebecca (4-9) to 'When I was a little boy', at 'pulled out golden fishes' 'He couldn't really'. In the first reading of 'As I went over the water' (Sendak's version in *Hector Protector*) at 'knocked out all their teeth' they exclaimed simultaneously: Rebecca (6-2) 'I didn't know crows had teeth!' Ralph (3-0) 'Huh! Crows haven't got any teeth!' At 3-9 Ralph called to his father from his bedroom, where he was having a 'reading rest' with Briggs. To 'I had a little moppet' - 'Why is he taking the doll away?' [It's in the rhyme] 'I wish someone would read that rhyme to me sometime' Daddy read it of course, and it was followed by 'what's a beggar?' and 'Why did the beggar take it?' [It's just a nursery rhyme].

Despite, or perhaps because of, their long history (some the children knew are 500 years old, and almost all over 100) it can be seen that both the oral and the illustrated versions of the nursery rhymes were important as the two children grew in their language development, their understanding of reality, and of the nature of books and the nature of life.

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# Write4Children

## *Questions and answers: your guide to facing the media*

Elaine Rivendell

Broadcaster and Writer

Interview: “a conversation between a journalist or broadcaster and a person of public interest.” So says the Concise Oxford Dictionary. A very gentle definition, I’m sure you’ll agree. Yet the humble interview has been rated almost as terrifying as spiders or the dentist and is dreaded by many.

Have you ever been interviewed? Was it as nerve-wracking as you feared? Did you come away satisfied or did you feel there was much left unsaid?

It is quite possible that in your work as a writer, publisher, editor or illustrator you may be called upon to answer questions about what you do and how you do it. Here are just a few strategies to help you triumph.

### 1. Be prepared.

Know your own work. This sounds obvious but it is not unusual for months or years to elapse between the writing of a manuscript and its final publication. The work you are asked to talk about may not be fresh in your mind. Re-read it if you can; re-acquaint yourself with what you wrote and why you wrote it. Hunt out old research notes, including those you chose not to use. Learning more about the subject than you covered in the published work could add depth to your responses.

In 2003, I wrote a play about the thylacine or Tasmanian tiger, listed as extinct since 1936. The work was published in the New South Wales School Magazine in 2007. However, if it is ever staged or re-published, I would certainly need to follow the advice I have just given; the thoughts and ideas in my mind at the time of the creation are by no means fresh.

### 2. Who are you?

It is not unusual for an interviewer to ask about you as well as your work. Re-read and update your CV and do what the journalist may have done before you speak: Google yourself. (We discovered some interesting and inspiring namesakes as well as one accused of shoplifting.) Remind yourself of your strengths and interests. Try thinking in the third person and wondering what questions you would ask if you were the interviewer.

### 3. Read your own publicity.

Make sure you know what your publisher has written about you and your work; you may know your work but are there comments in the press-release that didn’t come from you? One of the most embarrassing interviews I ever conducted was with actors from a local theatre company. They no doubt knew their lines but had not read their own press-release and consequently knew little of the play’s history or the playwright.

### 4. Know your audience.

Do you know the magazine for which you are being interviewed? Have you read previous work by the journalist you are to meet? Familiarize yourself with the programme or publication in question. When do they broadcast and what geographical area do they cover? Who is their target audience? What types of

topics do they generally discuss?

Knowing something of your audience as well as being familiar with your own material can apply equally well to public speaking. You showing some interest in their organization should encourage them to warm to you. Public presentations usually terminate in questions from the floor and the content of such questions can rarely be predicted.

## 5. Questions and planning.

A list of set questions may sound like a comforting prop but is not always in your best interests; it can stifle spontaneity as well as sound dull and plodding. Often what an interviewer asks will depend at least in part upon what you say, which can lead to all sorts of interesting tangents and revelations. This does not mean you cannot plan. Jackie French, a dear friend and well known, best-selling Australian author and I have designed a number of interviews in recent years, usually by nominating topics we wanted to cover. I shaped these into a loose plan, more guide than map, on which we based our discussions. In spite or because of such planning, on several occasions we have succeeded in surprising and impressing one another while still learning something along the way.

The exception here is if your topic is technical and complex; then a list of suggested questions and a loose chronology supplied by you can be helpful but keep it as flexible as possible.

## 6. Offering guidance.

It is wise to assume that not all interviewers will have read every word you have written, especially if they are conducting a few dozen interviews a week. It happens. Do not despair. Any interviewer worth their salt will have done as much research as possible, coupled with a hearty dose of general knowledge. There are also ways in which you or your publisher can help. Some press-releases contain annotations detailing page numbers or chapters where specific topics can be found. This is particularly useful in complex nonfiction works. You can also recommend which chapters you think will be most helpful.

Tips and traps:

Try not to keep repeating the phrase, “In the book”. It sounds like a sales’ pitch and probably is one.

If radio, ask roughly how long the interview will run. It should help you pace yourself. If you know you have been allotted fifteen minutes rather than seven, you can add more detail to your responses, illustrate your replies with examples or brief stories: how you became side-tracked while researching and where those tangents led; what details of the topic inspired or appalled you; how you discovered some crucial, hard to find fact.

Stay calm and friendly even if ruffled. A little adrenalin is healthy. If the interviewer loses their cool you’re not the one left looking foolish.

Leaving the table wanting more is good; feeling as though important points were left out is not. Find a way of weaving what is most important to you into the discussion. For example, if your story concerns the pressures on the environment and your main character is coming to terms with the power of the individual to effect change, it could be that the interviewer will focus on the negative. Use the opportunity to emphasize that your message is one of hope; refer to some of the practical steps we can all take instead of being overwhelmed by the enormity of the problem. If appropriate, cite instances of individual efforts leading to major campaigns or a catalyst for change. The possibilities for expanding an idea are endless and will be determined by your topic.

# Write4Children

Remember that crucial word “Conversation” in the definition. There are no right or wrong answers. It is not a test to pass or fail. The more you shine, the more listeners or readers will be attracted to you and your work. The more articulate, informed and informative you are, the more likely it is that you will be invited back in the future to talk about other work. Word soon gets around within the industry when someone is labelled as “Good talent” by journalists or producers.

You have nothing to lose. Good luck!

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## The world is a small place...

Vanessa Harbour

On November 1<sup>st</sup> the Australasian/Oceania Special Edition of *Write4Children* will be published. It seeks to provide a range of perspectives from Australia, New Zealand, Oceania and Asia on writing for children and is being edited by Dr Anthony Eaton of Canberra University. As you can imagine Anthony has a burgeoning academic but he is also an award winning author and we thought you might be interested to know a bit more about him.

Anthony has been writing for children professionally since the late 1990s whilst he was also a Secondary school teacher and head of year, teaching English Literature, English Language, Creative Writing and Drama. He left secondary teaching to become a 'full time writer'. Then, despite having four books already published and receiving some critical success in Australia, he was tempted to do a PhD for no other reason than it was there. A bit like a mountaineer and Mount Everest he says! He was looking for a challenge and was introduced to Professor Van Ikin from the University of Western Australia, whose field of expertise is creative writing and speculative fiction. And the rest, as they say, is history.

We asked him whether he thought having a PhD had changed his writing. His honest answer was that he didn't know but assumed yes, on the basis that everything he does changes the way he writes. Anthony went on to suggest that that is what he loves the most about writing - the idea of being completely open to being changed and affected by everything around you, everything that you experience, and then allowing that experience to shape the words as you write them. He referred back to Meg Rosoff's (link) article as he felt it was a similar feeling to her 'throughness and connections'.

He has continued to write to much acclaim throughout his academic career - he is now an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Canberra. At the end of 2005 he travelled to Antarctica to research his novel *Into White Silence* which has received critical acclaim, including an Honour Book Prize in the 2009 CBCA awards (Children's Book Council of Australia) and a shortlisting in the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards. In late 2011, Random House Australia will publish a literary edition of *Into White Silence* for the adult marketplace.

But that is not all...as previously mentioned Anthony's *Darklands Trilogy* have been shortlisted and awarded in the *Aurealis Awards* for Australian Speculative Fiction. The final book of the trilogy, *Daywards*, was released by UQP in March 2010, and was a CBCA notable Australian Children's book in 2011. Thereby proving that having an academic career does not stop you being a great writer!

*The Australasian/Oceania Special Edition of Write4Children will be available at [www.write4children.org](http://www.write4children.org) from November 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.*

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## Book Reviews

***Poetry and Childhood*, Morag Styles, Louise Joy, David Whitley (eds) (London: Trentham, 2010), 270 pages (paperback), ISBN 978-1858564722**

Review by Kass Boucher - lecturer and Poet

Sir Andrew Motion has certainly been busy. As well as recently chairing the Poetry and Young People Project Review Group who, after investigating the teaching and appreciation of poetry in schools came to the conclusion that the range of poems and poets studied is 'limited', he also wrote the foreword to this collection of essays. *Poetry and Childhood*, a vast perspective on all aspects of, well, poetry and childhood, is a compilation of papers presented at an international conference on the same theme at which Motion provided the closing speech. He would, we can therefore assume, agree with Isaac Watts that, '*What is learnt in Verse is longer retained in Memory, and sooner recollected... There is something so amusing and entertaining in Rhymes and Metre, that will incline Children to make this part of their Business a Diversion... This will be a constant Furniture, for the Minds of Children...*' Watts, as you've probably guessed, is quoted in one of the aforementioned essays; 'What is Children's Poetry? Children's Views of Children's Poetry'. This illuminating discussion of, interestingly, *children's* thoughts about poetry is Stephen Miles' contribution to the collection.

This is a book, however, that does not limit itself to a discussion of poetry written *for* children but fully explores the links between poetry (in all its forms) and childhood. Hence Miles' decision to expose the children that he observes discussing poetry to a range of poems, not necessarily written for children. Placing the child's role in the appreciation of poetry (albeit that written specifically *for* children) under further scrutiny in his essay, 'Confronting the Snark: the Non Theory of Children's Poetry', Peter Hunt raises a wry eyebrow at conferences on children's writing 'at which no children are present'. After all, as Hunt quotes Margaret Meeks, 'Children are natural poets, singing before they speak, metaphor-making before they prose their way to school'.

Therefore, whilst this is a book that examines the poetic past, what is often more interesting is the focus on poetry as a force for literary good in a contemporary childhood. As Morag Styles discusses in her introduction, perceptions of what childhood signifies have 'transformed' through different eras in history. So too then, we can assume, has the role of poetry in each 'regenerative' childhood. And the fact that poetry *has* a role in childhood is the pervading message here.

This isn't a book of dry facts and statistics, but one that does stand out is this: 22% of school teachers surveyed were unable to name even *one* poet. Reason enough, perhaps, for anyone with the motive and opportunity to engage children in their appreciation of poetry to refer to this book. It will serve to only further remind them why knowledge, passion and an understanding of the important role that poetry has to play in childhood are important concepts to be addressed in this context. This all encompassing examination of the subject crackles with just such knowledge, passion and understanding; as it should, with contributions from such luminaries as Michael Rosen and Philip Gross. Therefore, as 'limited' as the appreciation of poetry in mainstream education may well be, this collection inspires confidence in the case it makes for its defence. Besides which, as Sir Andrew Motion points out in his foreword, this book both appreciates and celebrates poetry for children and its tone is resolutely and rightly optimistic about the future of poetry and its continuing role in childhood.

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***The Black Book of Colours*, Menena Cottin, Rosana Faria (London: Walker Books, 2010), 24 pages (hardback), ISBN 978-1406322187**

Review by Elaine Rivendell, radio broadcaster and writer

I suspect it is more by accident than design that I find myself a fluent reader of Braille, a Guide Dog owner and an experienced broadcaster; over the years I have received invitations from schools to talk with students on one or all of the above. However, in the past two years since my husband became a full-time Bachelor of Education student, such talks have been enriched by careful preparation and follow-up lessons. It all ties in with the SOSE or Study of Society and Environment part of the curriculum, which can also encompass literacy, inclusion and accepting of difference.

Before our visit, Chris will show the class videos of Guide Dogs, discuss the history of their work and examine what their job actually involves. He then moves on to Braille: its beginnings as a system of silent communication for the French military; its necessary refinement by Louis Braille; its logical formation and why the letter W does not conform to the pattern - there is no W in French and the letter was added as an afterthought when translation became necessary. After our visit I supply each member of the class with a sheet containing the full Braille alphabet and a short message to transcribe. Each message is different and even the most reluctant readers become quite passionate about the task. We also emphasise very strongly what Braille is not. In spite of dictionary definitions to the contrary, Braille is not a language in its own right. Instead, not unlike the print you are reading now, it is a means of conveying information, a conduit if you like, and can be used to communicate that same information in many different languages. (For example: the contracted symbol for the letters "for" in English Braille signifies E Acute in French.)

The concept of "Shared Reading" books was introduced to libraries a number of years ago: picture-books with the text in both print and Braille that could be shared by parents and children, friends or siblings, whether they have 20/20 vision or no sight whatsoever. Two inspired women from Venezuela have taken the concept a major step further; what's more, in the same book they deal with the curly question of appreciating colour through senses other than the visual.

"The Black Book of Colours", written by Menena Cottin and illustrated by Rosana Faria, was published in Australia by Walker Books in March 2010. The story concerns a young boy and his appreciation of colour through various senses. The red taste of a strawberry, the green smell of freshly cut grass and the rainbow sound of shuffling through crunchy, multi-coloured autumn leaves. The text in both print and Braille is shown on the left-hand page of each double-page spread. The textured picture features on the opposite page and is entirely black. Some of the pictures are matt black and others so astonishingly shiny that they reflect the light and seem almost to shimmer. The entire Braille alphabet is also included at the end of the book. When I asked Walker Books' UK Commissioning Editor, Deirdre McDermott, about initial reactions to the book, she said many people responded with "Oh, it's a book for blind children." It isn't. Look again. Although there is every reason why it can and should be enjoyed by a child with no or low vision, it is actually designed to open the eyes and minds of everyone blessed with full sight.

It also unlocks a fascinating and often heated artistic and philosophical debate. Is black merely the absence of colour or a colour in its own right? We tend to gravitate to the latter explanation. Your red jumper does not cease to be red simply because you are not looking at it. Children are fascinated by this conundrum and most find it all but impossible to grasp the concept of nothing. "Is everything black to you?" is an inevitable question whenever we visit a classroom. No! How can it be when I have no recollection of black? (Although born with full sight, I lost it all by the age of around fifteen months,

through illness and surgery rather than carelessness.) I cannot say that everything is dark to me when I do not even recall light; defining nothing is not easy. On the other hand, I have always adored those delicious descriptive passages that Dickens, L. M. Montgomery and Richard Adams, to name but a few, write so well and lap up any reference to colour and word association.

Many concepts, ideas and emotions can be ascribed to the one colour and they can sometimes be contradictory. Red can be enveloping warmth or fiery anger, a signal of warning, or danger, a command to “stop!” Green can mean fresh and clean, like the scents that greet you as you open the door after a shower of rain. Does celery taste green because we know it to be so? Equally, green can denote envy, nausea, an instruction to “Go” and, more recently, environmental leanings or credentials. Helen Keller’s celebrated question “What colour is think?” was not without precedent when it comes to ascribing colour to emotions. Our own Beyond blue organisation owes its name to the concept.

You will doubtless begin to notice more examples of colour, language and the senses as today unfolds; believe me, they are everywhere. As writers and communicators we are blessed with a very colourful language - though not in the accepted meaning of the phrase - and not to use it to its full potential would be sad indeed. It doesn’t have to be clichéd: being “born to the purple”, feeling “in the pink” or “browed off” have their place perhaps but the possibilities are as endless and varied as the contents of an artist’s palette. What do you think, shall we give it the green light?

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***The Wandora Unit*, Jessy Randall (USA: Ghost Road Press, 2009), 204 pages (paperback), ISBN 978-0981652580**

Review by Derek Rowley teaches writing and literature at Maplewood  
Richmond Heights High School in St. Louis, MO.

*The Wandora Unit*, a young adult novel about the teenage literary crowd, offers a non-curricular view of poetry. Two best friends, Wanda and Dora, a “unit” because of their apparent inseparability, are co-editors of *Galaxy*, their school’s literary magazine. They spend their senior year leading poetry discussions, hanging out, writing, and exploring the meaning of friendship. They embody the tension between expressing one’s individuality and the desire to conform to a group, even if it’s a group of two.

The girls’ bookishness extends beyond poetry. At one point they take turns reading a single copy of *The Mists of Avalon*, and Dora says, “We understand all other books in relation to this book. We begin to think of our own lives in its terms ... We read the last 50 pages together, lying on Wanda’s living room floor on a Sunday afternoon, turning the pages after glancing at each other to be sure we’re ready. We laugh helplessly at how our noses are running, how the tears are falling onto the pages. But neither of us can leave the book to get a tissue.”

Is my love for this book related to my nostalgia for a world that is gone in which a printed text elicited such joy, before most people did most of their reading of short texts online? A world in which I, a teacher of eleventh grade English, must now teach students how to become engaged in a novel? In this novel, even an act such as reading, typically so intimate and solitary, becomes a shared experience, and is the richer for it.

Another noteworthy aspect of the book is its multigenre quality. There are passages of standard narration; passages from the *Galaxy* scroll (a roll of paper towels in which staff members take turns typing, typos and all); quotations about poetry; journal entries; two column texts depicting conversations; assignments from English class; a newsletter page; textbook marginalia; and literary analyses from *Galaxy* staff meetings. (These passages are possibly the strongest parts of the book - the characters are variously sincere, earnest, annoyed, self-important, and bored, but still connected in their desire to write and produce a magazine and also remain a part of a pre-Facebook era social network.) The full text of the year’s edition of *Galaxy*, made up of poems by actual high school students in the U.S., serves as the conclusion to the novel.

*The Wandora Unit* brilliantly captures the essential qualities of high school friendships, the joy of words and of discovering their capacity for playfulness and artistic expression, the pleasure of immersing oneself in the writing of others and of producing it oneself, the extreme seriousness with which high school students regard themselves at some moments, the utter silliness of other moments, the simultaneous presence of kid and adult present in all teenagers, their absolute conviction that their world, the world that exists for them at a particular moment, will last forever, and the ultimate realization that everything is ephemeral.

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***Tender Morsels*, Margo Lanagan (London: Vintage Books, 2010), 496 pages (paperback), ISBN 978-0099546139**

Review by Lydia Kokkola, TIAS (Turku Institute for Advanced Studies), The University of Turku, Finland

Up until now, I have felt that my favourite novel by the deservedly acclaimed Australian novelist Margo Lanagan was whichever novel I happened to be reading or rereading. Richly varied in terms of topic, writing style, genre and viewpoint, each novel offers deeply sensitive insight into the human condition. Deeply disturbing, yet crafted with such a light, tender touch that one can bear to face the extremes of human emotions, each of Lanagan's novels is a gem in its own right. That said, her latest novel, *Tender Morsels*, still manages to surpass all her previous works. This is a novel of such genius, crafted with such sensitivity to the full range of human emotions and displays such linguistic versatility that it stands out even amongst Lanagan's own work. To my mind, *Tender Morsels* is not merely the greatest YA novel from 2010, it is a novel that will challenge the way in which we think about feminist fairy tales and fantasy hereafter.

*Tender Morsels* is a richly complex engagement with the fairy tale of *Snow White and Rose Red*. It probes a multitude of unstated assumptions in the Grimm Brothers' version of this tale. Questioning first and foremost how the mother came to live in such an isolated location and who the fathered the daughters, Lanagan goes on to examine the masculine intrusions of the bear and dwarf into the feminized, Edenic world of the forest. Her solutions bring us face to face with incestuous abuse, gang rape, the splitting of the mind and the potential of female solidarity to counterbalance such horrors. The mother, Liga, raises her daughters Branza (Snow White) and Urdda (Rose Red) in the land of her fifteen year old's heart's desire. It is a place where people "smile and smile, and be kind. They have no opinions, and never want to go anywhere or do anything new. It is", as her fiery daughter, Urdda, puts it, "terribly dull" (p. 251).

Urdda leaves her mother's paradise in search of knowledge; she knows another world exists because of the intrusion into her world by human-bears and greedy dwarves. Forced into the primary world of the novel, the three women must reorient themselves to the patriarchal society. The transition between the worlds, expressed first in images evoking the breaking of the hymen and later in images alluding to other acts of penetration both desired and unwanted, the novel addresses the role of sexuality in the transition between childhood and adulthood. The contrast between the virginal, lapsarian Branza and her knowledge-seeking sister, Urdda, serves to underline the conservative message "that sometimes grown women *did know better* than ungrown ... They already knew what anguish they were sparing those younger ones, because they carried it with them everywhere" (p. 437). Guided and protected by Annie, the untrained witch who helped Liga create her paradise, and overseen by the formidable Miss Dance, both sisters manage the transition into adulthood with grace.

Unlike the traditional fairy tale, however, Lanagan is not content to focus exclusively on the transition into womanhood. The novel also opens up the world of the crone by exploring the transition from young womanhood into middle age, eventually painting an exceptionally touching portrayal of the interior world of an older woman. The transition into womanhood interrogated through the two sisters, Branza and Urdda. Similarly, the aging woman is presented through the contrasts between the virginal Liga and the sexually experienced, Hotty Annie.

For the bulk of the novel, Annie is depicted as an asexual crone, an untrained witch whose desire to help Liga is matched by neither her wisdom nor her understanding of the impact of her magical

powers. The prologue, however, depicts Annie as a desiring adolescent who revels in her sexual prowess. This brief passage provides the catalyst for many of Annie's later actions. Annie's sexual desires do not wither; it is simply that her body is no longer read as desirable. Liga's early experiences of sexual violence delay the onset of desire considerably, and when she first starts to recognise these emotions, she finds herself trapped by her fifteen year old longing to live in a world purged of men who find her sexually attractive. Liga's entry into the primary world of the novel exposes her to thrill of sexual desire, only to be confronted with the horror of discovering that her aging body, like Annie's, is perceived as asexual.

This complexly layered narrative is primarily woman-oriented, but it also offers a sophisticated commentary on the transition into manhood. It questions simplistic views of male sexuality as detached from the desire to nurture and instead offers a nuanced insight into sexual rites of passage from the male perspective.

*Tender Morsels* is a novel you cannot afford to miss. It will delight you, disturb you, haunt you and entertain you, but most importantly it will confront you with such a complex view of humanity, you will leave the reading experience enriched. I already look forward to rereading it.

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***The Language of Cat*, Rachel Rooney (London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2011), 96 pages (paperback), ISBN 978-1847801678**

Review by Jen Morgan

The Language of Cat is Rachel Rooney's debut collection of poems, having previously contributed sixty poems to a number of children's poetry anthologies. It is being marketed in the 8-11 year age range, although it would certainly appeal to young teenagers as well - especially those poems that bite down to the bone of adolescent angst such as 'The Trouble Is' which concerns not fitting in. For a short collection the poems cover an impressive range of diverse topic matter such as the environment, predictive text, mermaids and an exploration of poetry itself to name a few. There is plenty to appeal to everyone, and it would be a ripe resource for schools too.

The Language of Cat takes its title from one of the poems that appears early on in the collection. The poem is a light hearted and amusing insight into feline (and canine) characteristics, and there are plenty of others poems in the collection that will make you smile. But it is Rooney's more thoughtful poems, like 'Russian Doll' which explores the different layers of one personality, that demonstrate how powerful and thought provoking a short poem can be.

The collection includes a variety of rhyme, rhythm, length and shape, it has wordplay and riddles - and there is even a sonnet about an apple. This makes for engaged and active reading, and has something to fit any attention span.

At a recent seminar on children's poetry at the London Book Fair, Chris Holifield, director of the Poetry Book Society, warned that children's poetry was in danger of becoming extinct. In such times a book focussed exclusively on the work of one poet is an incredible rarity and a significant achievement. The quality of Rachel Rooney's poetry justifies this. As she writes in 'Defending the Title',

*I am the word juggler.*

*I juggle the words*

*like swords.*

*I slice sense*

*with poetic licence.*

Rachel Rooney is indeed a champion word juggler whose work deserves to be read.

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***The Midnight Zoo*, Sonya Hartnett (Australia: Penguin Group, 2010), 208 pages (hardback), ISBN 978-670074051**

Review by Tanya Kiermaier, PhD Candidate, University of Canberra

Australian author Sonya Hartnett's latest novel, *The Midnight Zoo*, is a beautiful book to look at, to hold, to smell. The cover is a rich aqua blue, with embossed markings reminiscent of an elaborate wrought iron gate. Silhouettes of animals surround the bright, white text. It is smooth and easy on the eye, with the print spaced generously on quietly white paper. It is an experience before you start reading and Hartnett exceeds expectations in this rich, haunting novel.

Set in Europe during World War II, two young Romany boys and their baby sister have, through sheer luck, survived an atrocity. Andrej the eldest sibling at 12, steps up to the responsibility of parent to nine year old Tomas and baby Wilma. Together they travel the war-torn countryside foraging for survival, relying on Andrej's resourcefulness and the cover of night for safety.

Arriving at another deserted and devastated village, they take refuge in what turns out to be a private zoo and find a collection of animals who have been abandoned. Locked in their filthy cages without food or water, the animals' state is even more precarious than the children's. Andrej and Tomas discover that the animals can talk, and each of them has a story of their own violent upheaval from family and homeland. Their conversations lead to the unravelling of stories within stories. The unbearable sadness of the children's story is a statement of the utter cruelty, the inexplicable and merciless horror of war on civilians. The story of the animals and how the zoo came into being reveals human vanity and power with scant regard for consequences. The story of the lioness and her cubs reflects the sense of loss shared with the children, a void of despair that can never be filled. The animals' characters are vividly real, and Hartnett shows such insight into their thoughts and feelings that it seems as though she really does have the ability to talk to animals.

As to be expected, Hartnett's prose is masterful. A bombed church stands "against the sky like a blunt unfinished question ". Aeroplanes come from "behind the broad platter of the moon" and Andrej feels "the power of their engines in the core of his bones, felt his blood shaken like foam in a bottle". It is beautiful writing and so seemingly effortless.

Through the power of stories Hartnett explores ideas on so many levels, including innocence, resilience, despair, freedom and hope. All of her characters shine, particularly Andrej whose wisdom, courage and determination have won the total trust of his younger brother, and the respect of the animals who think very little of humans in general.

Hartnett was recognized for her overall contribution to children's literature in 2008 when she received the prestigious Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. The range of her writing styles often defy neat categorisation which vexes some critics and has caused consternation at times. Her 1995 novel *Sleeping Dogs* still causes debate about its suitability as a young adult novel. *The Midnight Zoo* will definitely satisfy the children's literature classification, but hopefully this will not prevent it being read by grown-ups too, for the evocative and beautifully written novel that it is.

***Walk Two Moons*, Sharon Creech (London: Macmillan Children's Books, 1994),  
244 pages (paperback), ISBN 0-330-33000-4**

Review by Catherine Clark, MA student, MA in Writing for Children, Winchester University

*Walk Two Moons* was the Newbery Medal Winner, USA, in 1995 written by Sharon Creech. It was her second novel and is aimed at the 12+ age group. It is a beautifully crafted book with many layers. It is a story of love, pain, family relationship, jealousy, young love, a grandparent's death, not judging others and coming to terms with the loss of a mother.

Salamanca Tree Hiddle narrates the story during a week long drive with her grandparents from Ohio to Idaho to visit her mother. It is the account of how her mother suddenly leaves her and her father uproots her from her country life in Bybanks, Kentucky and takes her to the town of Euclid, Ohio, to a tiny house close to the home of a woman called Margaret Cadaver. As they travel Salamanca tells her grandparents about her new friend Phoebe Winterbottom, the disappearance of Mrs Winterbottom, the strange appearances of a 'lunatic' boy who is following Phoebe and the series of unexplainable notes left at Phoebe's house. The first note says 'Don't judge a man until you've walked two moons in his moccasins.' This note becomes a central theme through the book. The story of Phoebe and her mother is the story of Salamanca and her mother. We see Salamanca's life mirrored in Phoebe's experiences.

This is a tender and at times painfully emotional book. The characters are beautifully written. Salamanca is a country girl, afraid of man-made things like death or nuclear war but not afraid of spiders and wasps. She is trying to understand why her father has taken her from her secure country home to life in a town where there is no barn or swimming pool or maple trees. We learn about Salamanca's mother, a descendent of the Indian tribe of Seneca, who loves all nature and eats blackberries and kisses maple trees. Salamanca's father is a soul lost without his wife appearing to find comfort with Mrs Cadaver, who Salamanca and Phoebe decide is a murderess. Phoebe is passionate, strong-willed and determined to find out what has happened to her mother. Salamanca's grandparents are warm, loving, funny and gentle.

This is a book which makes you want to rush the narrative journey and peek at the end to find out what happens, but yet you want to stop and savour each page and drink in some of the wonderful images Creech creates with words like 'mapley smell', 'the cows were skittish' or 'smoothbeautifully folded world.' The American accents resound clearly through the sharp dialogue, and Creech makes you feel part of the vast landscape that Salamanca and her grandparents experience as they drive to their destination in Idaho.

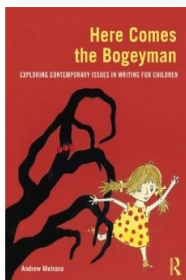
There are subtle clues along the journey leading to the inevitable conclusion at the end; that Salamanca's mother is dead. She died in a coach crash and there was only one survivor, Mrs Cadaver, who held Salamanca's mother's hand until she died. At the end Salamanca realises that terrible things happen in life and facing them is truly brave, like looking into Pandora's box, but there is another box to open of 'smoothbeautiful folds inside' where her mother is kissing trees and her grandparents are alive and together and she walking in someone else's moccasins helps you understand and love them more. On Sharon Creech's web page (<http://www.sharoncreech.com/novels/06.asp>) about *Walk Two Moons* is a Reader's Guide which can be used for discussion questions about the themes of the book for a school lesson or a reading group.

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# Write4Children

## FORTHCOMING BOOKS

In our editorial we mentioned that one of the reasons there was a delay in publication was because Andrew Melrose has been writing two books. We thought you might like some more information and an opportunity to pre-order them:

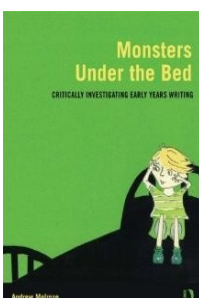


*Here Comes the Bogeyman* is an essential text focussing on critical and contemporary issues surrounding writing for children. Containing a critically creative and a creatively critical investigation of the cult and culture of the child and childhood in fiction and non-fictional writing, it also contains a wealth of ideas and critical advice to be shared with writers, students of children's writing and students of writing. With scores of published children's fiction books and films to his name, Andrew Melrose shares his extensive

critical, teaching, writing and research experience to provide:

- a critical and creative investigation of writing and reading for children in the early, middle and pre-teen years
- an accessible and critically important challenge to the latest international academic research and debates in the field of children's literature and creative writing.
- an evaluation of what it means to write for a generation of media-savvy children
- encouragement for critics, writers and students to develop their own critical, creative and writing skills in a stimulating and supportive manner
- guidance on writing non-fiction and poetry
- creative writing craftwork ideas which could be used as seminar topics or as individual reflections

Pre order here: [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Here-Comes-Bogeyman-Exploring-Contemporary/dp/0415617537/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1309266575&sr=1-2](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Here-Comes-Bogeyman-Exploring-Contemporary/dp/0415617537/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1309266575&sr=1-2)



*Monsters Under the Bed* is also a user-friendly textbook for students of creative writing explores the issue of picture books, literacy and writing for children in their early years. Andrew Melrose encourages students to examine the critical questions in child literacy through an exploration of the fusion of text and images. Accessibly written and lively in its approach, this textbook includes:

- a critical and creative investigation of early years writing and reading creative writing craftwork ideas which could be used as seminar topics or as individual reflections
- a road map to developing critical awareness of children's literature, allowing students to develop their critical and writing skills
- tasks for use in group or individual learning contexts
- end of chapter 'checkpoints', through which undergraduates are encouraged to reflect on their own creative and critical development so far
- a fully up-to-date exploration of critical approaches to children's writing, including theories of creativity and creative writing.



Pre order here: [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Monsters-Under-Bed-Critically-Investigating/dp/0415617502/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?ie=UTF8&qid=1309266379&sr=8-4](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Monsters-Under-Bed-Critically-Investigating/dp/0415617502/ref=sr_1_4?ie=UTF8&qid=1309266379&sr=8-4)

Both these critical and creative texts will be indispensable resources for critics, writers and students interested in the cult and culture of writing for children; on Creative Writing BA and MA programmes; Children's Literature BA and MA programmes; English BA and MA programmes; Teacher Training, PGCE students and for those studying at Doctoral and Post-Doctoral level who are interested in writing for children.

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# Write4Children

## Call For Papers

Special Australasian edition 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011

Next edition is 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012.

Submission Deadline 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011

### Instructions for Authors

All papers for Write4Children must be submitted via an email with attachment to [write4children@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:write4children@winchester.ac.uk)

1. Articles should be between 2000 and 5000 words. They should be accompanied by an abstract of not more than 200 words, and six keywords for indexing purposes.
2. All papers for the Write4Children must be submitted via an email with attachment to [write4children@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:write4children@winchester.ac.uk)
3. Papers should be submitted as one file with, where possible, all tables and figures in the correct place in the text.
4. Footnotes should be avoided. Essential notes should be numbered in the text and grouped together at the end of the article. Diagrams and Figures, if they are considered essential, should be clearly related to the section of the text to which they refer. The original diagrams and figures should be submitted with the top copy.
5. References should be set out in alphabetical order of the author's name in a list at the end of the article. Please use the Harvard Referencing style.
6. Once the refereeing procedures are completed, authors should supply a word-processor file (on disc, CD-ROM or by e-mail attachment) containing the final version of their manuscript. Files should be saved in Microsoft Word. Tables and Figures (TIFF or EPS format preferred) should be saved in separate files from the rest of the manuscript.
7. The author of an article accepted for publication will receive page proofs for correction, if there is sufficient time to do so. This stage must not be used as an opportunity to revise the paper, because alterations are extremely costly; extensive changes will be charged to the author and will probably result in the articles being delayed to a later issue. Speedy return of corrected proofs is important.

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