



children's literature

FOUNDATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC.  
Te Kaitiaki Takekōwhiri o Te Kaitiaki Takekōwhiri

# Read Alouds Term One 2001

# booklist

Oral reading TO children is an important part of the language programme in every classroom.

Readalouds provide the opportunity to introduce children to a variety of authors, genre, and themes. We strongly recommend that teachers pre-read every text that is shared to ensure that the theme of the book is appropriate for their emotional maturity.

Many parents share stories with their children and the habit of reading aloud should be continued for as long as it is well received, and well past the age when children can read independently. Parents can expand the child's literary experience by sharing something of interest to the child that may be too challenging for them to enjoy alone. Or, perhaps share the reading of set texts, then discuss and share understandings and opinions.

These criteria will help you to choose a good read aloud text. The book should have:

- A particular strength eg humour, suspense, drama, adventure, fantasy
- Main characters easily identifiable to listeners
- Vivid descriptions of settings
- A balance of strong dialogue and interesting narrative for variety in use of voice to develop listeners' aural perception
- Skilful writing that exposes children to rich vocabulary and expressive language
- A good story line that is carefully paced to suit the plot
- A structure that lends itself to serial reading with suitable suspenseful places to leave the story for the following instalment

Never share a book that you do not enjoy. It is impossible to do the story justice. Be aware of the listeners' reactions. Stop reading if it is not succeeding with your audience.

If you have any great readalouds that you have used successfully, and would be happy to recommend to others, please send details in the above format to Carol Ardern, [No.5@xtra.co.nz](mailto:No.5@xtra.co.nz)



**Galax-Arena**

Gillian Rubenstein  
Puffin Books 1994

ISBN 0-14-036111-6

In this story three Australian children are kidnapped and taken to what they believe (and you believe) is another planet. Rubenstein is utterly convincing and the eventual truth never fails to take everyone by surprise. There are many issues to discuss and the range of characters provide plenty of opportunity for readers who enjoy accent and dialect. Enjoyed wholeheartedly by both boys and girls 12 to 14 years. SG.

**Holes**

Louis Sachar  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux  
1998  
ISBN 0-374-33265-7

Holes throws you into an episode in the life of Stanley Yelnats, a boy for whom children feel an instant empathy. He is a misfit among his peers and an underdog in an unfair and punitive system. Also intriguing is the clever interweaving of other stories – past family bad luck, a great great grandfather's love affair, a women teacher turned outlaw - incidents that end up being mysteriously linked to Stanley's present situation. A totally involving unforgettable story for 12 to 15 year olds. SG.

**Hating Alison Ashley**

Robin Klein  
Puffin Books 1984

ISBN 0-14-031672-8

Written from the viewpoint of the unpopular girl who eventually comes to recognize her own strengths, this story of friendships, rivalry and families is one that all children will find easy to relate to. Witty and entertaining and very authentic in its characterisation and dialogue. 11 to 13 year olds. SG.

**The Midnight Fox**

Betsy Byars  
Puffin 1994  
ISBN 0-14-037033-1

Through the incidents following the discovery of a wild fox and it's cub, Byars shows that gradual "unfolding" of a shy and fearful city boy, sent unwillingly to his uncle's farm for the holidays. Particularly good for it's discussion of feelings in a humorous yet sensitive way. And the interaction between the characters especially the boy and his uncle. If you're teaching, try this story at the beginning of the year. 11 to 12 year olds. SG.

**The Machine Gunners**

Robert Westall  
Macmillan 1994  
ISBN 0-330-33428-X

Set in England during the Second World War, this story centres around the finding and hiding of a German machine gun by a

group of children determined to play their own part in the war. Westall writes with great authenticity – his directness and understanding of young minds makes for a powerful and involving story. Interesting also for its depiction of life and attitudes at that time. 12 to 14 years. SG.

**Freak The Mighty**

Rodman Philbrick  
Scholastic 1993  
ISBN 0-590-47412-X

Try this if you have a number of unwilling readers, and/ or poor listeners. It is a fast moving, straight talking story about friendship, courage and self worth. It features two boys both misfits in their own way who together find they can take on the world. Humorous but also very moving and believable. 11 to 13 year olds. SG. (Film version available on video titled The Mighty)

**The Battle of Pook Island**

Jack Lasenby  
Longacre 1996  
ISBN 1-877135-00-3

This story features the adventures of a gang of children growing up in a small New Zealand town during the Depression. Lasenby has a gift for characterization capturing the fun and the fears, the mischief, rivalry and friendship in vivid and authentic detail. Adults are not forgotten, playing a strong and often entertaining

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part in the plot. There are many interesting observations of life in those days, for instance the shielding of children from death. Very enjoyable to read aloud. 9 to 12 years. SG. (Third in the series, but able to be read alone.)

### **The Halfmen of O**

Maurice Gee

Penguin

ISBN 0140317120

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Gee's tale of good versus evil in a world not far removed from our own is another favourite with plenty of scope for dramatization in a memorable range of characters from the evil mastermind, Odo Cling, to the shifty and blustering Jimmy Jaspers. The first in a series of three, this is another good choice to motivate children to read further on their own. 9 to 12 year olds. SG.

### **Frindle**

Andrew Clements

Aladdin Paperbacks 1998

ISBN 0-689-81876-9

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Nick Allen challenges his teacher on the origins of words in the dictionary. He decides to invent a new word of his own. The outcome is more than he imagined, the constant challenges with his teacher plus becoming famous! A useful book to start discussions on the origin of words, the loss of some words in our language and the adoption of commonly used words. 9 to 12 years. RT

### **See Ya, Simon**

David Hill

Mallinson Rendel 1992

ISBN 0-908606-85-0

A very funny, and yet extremely moving book of Nathan's friendship with Simon, who has muscular dystrophy. 10 to 12 year olds. RT

### **Bad Girls**

Jacqueline Wilson

Doubleday 1996

ISBN 0-385-40702-5

Issues like bullying, friendship, parental approval, decision-making are introduced in this book - issues children are confronted with every day. Mandy has been picked on at school for as long as she can remember. That's why she can't believe it when cheeky, daring, full-of-fun, Tanya wants to be her friend. Mandy's delighted - but her mum isn't; she thinks Tanya is a bad girl. 11 to 13 years. RT

### **The Cricket in Times Square**

George Selden

Cornerstone Books

ISBN 1-55736-170-3

The adventures of a country cricket who unintentionally arrives in New York and is befriended by Tucker Mouse and Harry Cat. They look out for Mario, a young boy trying to make a living with his family selling newspapers in the subway. 8 to 10 years. RT

### **Take It Easy**

David Hill

Mallinson Rendel 1995

ISBN 0-908783-04-3

An ideal story to read in preparation for a class camp or tramp. Despite all the knowledge and experience of what to do on a tramp, Rob cannot stop his party of six teenagers from plunging into increasing danger and disaster. 11 to 13 years. RT

### **The Iron Man**

Ted Hughes

Faber and Faber 1985

ISBN 0-571-14149-8

The people are wary and frightened of the Iron Man. He roams the world eating old metal, cars, machinery and fence posts. However, when a dragon arrives from Outer Space it is the Iron Man who saves the human race. A wonderful story of co-operation, conservation and world peace. 8 to 12 years. RT

### **Prudence M. Muggeridge, Damp Rat**

Gaelyn Gordon

Williams Collins 1991

ISBN 1-86950-027-X

Fifteen year old Prudence Mellicent Muggeridge has been brought up by her rich grandmother isolated from the outside world. She manages to escape from the high walled estate to discover life is very different from what she'd been led to believe. She is befriended by a group of street kids. She is hunted by her grandmother but Prudence manages to



overcome all odds and extract revenge. 11 years plus. RT

### **Stormbreaker**

Anthony Horowitz  
Walker Books 2000  
ISBN 0 7445 5943 X

This is the just the best book for boys aged 13-16 that I've read for awhile. It would read aloud as it's all action and suspense. Young 14 year old Alex Rider is left an orphan when his Uncle Ian Rider dies in mysterious circumstances. He is recruited by MI6 to infiltrate a computer company in Cornwall in order to discover just why its owner, Herod Sayle, is supplying every school in Britain with a free Stormbreaker computer. The structure is tight and crisp with a sense of humour and a precise attention to detail. This has to become a future movie. The ending caught me by surprise. WM.

### **The Killer Underpants**

Michael Lawrence  
Orchard 2000  
ISBN 1860398375

Jiggy's mother buys him a hideous pair of underpants at the local market. Jiggy finds that once donned, the underpants can't be removed! Worse still, every now and then the underpants start to itch madly, and Jiggy finds that everyone (friends and teachers) must do as he says. It's very funny, often rude and sometimes revolting, so be prepared for general hilarity when reading it

aloud. 8 to 10 years, particularly boys. LO

### **The Ghost and Bertie Boggin**

Martin Waddell  
Walker 2000  
ISBN 0744577896

First published in 1980, this whimsical tale tells of Bertie's adventures with the ghost of an elderly military gentleman who takes up residence in the coalshed. Of course, only Bertie can see the ghost because he believes in him. Delightful child-focused humour, and arranged so that each chapter is a complete story in itself - great for serial reading. 8-10 years. LO

### **The Deltora Quest Series**

Emily Rodda  
Scholastic Australia 2000  
The first title in the series is The Forests of Silence, and the whole series is now available. Lief and his band of supporters must find the seven gems that are missing from the magic belt - a belt that keeps Deltora safe from the Shadow Lord. An action-filled quest/fantasy series for younger children of about 9 to 11 years. Adventure, mystery, and monsters - and no horror or extreme violence. LO

### **Kensuke's Kingdom**

Michael Morpurgo  
Heinemann 1999  
ISBN 0434804185  
Twelve-year-old Michael is stranded on a remote island in the Coral Sea. He thinks

it's deserted but one night some food and water appears, and he is saved from death. He discovers that he is sharing the island with an old Japanese soldier. It's an absorbing story of survival, friendship, trust, and developing wisdom, and the author's straightforward style makes it a great readaloud. 9 to 12 year olds. LO

### **Black Gold**

Julia Owen  
Scholastic NZ 2000  
ISBN1869434277

Another title in Scholastic's excellent Extreme series, this is a fast-paced adventure story that will have the audience on the edges of their seats. Rimu and Ollie just want a peaceful week at the beach, camping and fishing, but they get involved with a gang of paua smugglers. They try to foil the smugglers' plans, but suddenly find themselves in very deep trouble. 10 to 13 years. LO

### **The Knight and the Squire**

Terry Jones  
Puffin 1999  
ISBN 0140388044

Tom wants adventure, so he sets off to become the squire of a grand knight. After many adventures involving a forest, wolves, a fire, and a fair dollop of magic, Tom finds a knight. However life as a squire turns out to be not what he expected. Written in a chatty and often humorous style that makes it a great readaloud, this story dashes

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from one exciting adventure to the next. 10 to 12 years. LO

### **Centuries of Stories**

Ed. Wendy Cooling  
HarperCollins 2000  
ISBN 0006754155

Twenty top children's writers were asked to produce a story relating to a particular century. For example, Michael Morpurgo has the 1st century, Jenny Nimmo has the 13th, and Margaret Mahy has the 20th. The stories vary considerably in length, style, and subject matter, but it's intriguing to see how each author tries to capture the era. Reading the book aloud could be both entertaining and educational for 11 to 13-year olds. LO

### **The Wind Singer**

William Nicholson  
Mammoth 2000  
ISBN 0749744995

Winner of the Nestle Smarties Gold Award in the 9 to 11 category (extend that to 13-year-olds), this fantasy will have your listeners demanding more. It's a classic quest fantasy, and luckily it's the first in the series called The Wind on Fire, so there will be more. Kestrel and her twin brother Hath must find a talisman which will release their city from an evil power. Non-stop action, imaginative settings, and thrilling adventures will keep you rushing towards the desperate climax. Strongly recommended. LO

### **A Long Way From Chicago**

Richard Peck  
Dial Books 1998  
ISBN 0803722907

A Year Down Yonder (Hodder Moa Beckett, 2000) was recommended in the last CLFNZ booklist. This earlier book is also about the magnificent Grandma Dowdel and her astounding exploits. There are 8 chapters, each one a tall story about Grandma, seen through the eyes of her grandchildren as they grow up from 1929 to 1942. Very funny, very evocative of the era, and the chapter format would make the book ideal for serial reading. LO

### **Nim's Island**

Wendy Orr  
Allen & Unwin 1999  
ISBN 1-86448-843-3

Nim lives on an isolated island with an assortment of strange pets. Her scientist father is away studying plankton and when he doesn't return as scheduled, Nim begins email correspondence with Alex Rover, the author of adventure books. A fantasy story with plenty of action to hold the interest of the listeners. 8 to 10 year olds. CA.

### **A Villain's Night Out**

Margaret Mahy  
Puffin Books 1999  
ISBN 0-141-30153-8

Squidgy Moot is to be the villain in the book Formby Mackinaw plans to write. However, Squidgy himself

and the little sisters of both of them have other ideas about how the story should go. Highly imaginative, this is a funny book to share with 8 to 10 year olds. CA.

### **No More Moas**

Duncan Scott  
Scholastic 1997  
ISBN 1-86943-366-1

A family of cheeky keas are the characters in this funny book about the filming of a wildlife documentary. The birds tire of the attention of the film crew, so with the advice of the morepork, and using an old mower and other junk from the dump, they create a moa which of course leads the unwanted journalists out of their territory. Some clever play on words and lots of dialogue make this suitable for 8 and 9 year olds. CA.

### **Biddy Alone**

Wanda Cowley  
Mallinson Rendel 2000  
ISBN 0-908783-59-0

Wonderful to see this book back in print, now in soft cover. Biddy smuggles her pet cat onto the island sanctuary where her father is working. Interesting and accurate settings and situations focus on New Zealand bush and birds and highlight conservation issues. Will be enjoyed by 7 to 9 year olds. CA.

Reviewers this issue are:  
Sally Gallagher, Lorraine Orman, Rosemary Tisdall, Wayne Mills, Carol Arden.