

Beyond the Paperbag Princess

Books with strong female characters

Term Three, 2003

Contributors to this booklist are – Carol Ardern, Helen Beckingsale, Anne Coppell, Ann Luxton, Wayne Mills, Lorraine Orman, Frances Plumpton, Rosemary Tisdall.

Angelina Ballerina

Katharine Holabird

Illustrated by Helen Craig

ABC, 2003

Pb, 0733312616

This is the first in a series of stories about a little mouse who longs to be a ballerina, and has been a great favourite of many children since it was first published in 1983. Helen Craig's careful illustrations capture the small everyday details of the mouse household, mother's despair at her daughter's single-mindedness, and her welcome resolution to the family's dilemma. Other titles about Angelina, who now stars in a TV show are: *Angelina and Alice*, *Angelina and the princess*, *Angelina at the Fair*, *Angelina Ice Skates*, *Angelina on Stage*, *Angelina's Baby sister*, *Angelina's Birthday*, *Angelina's Christmas*. FP

Milli, Jack and the Dancing Cat

Stephen Michael King

Allen & Unwin, 2003

HB, 1865087483

Milli has a gift for making amazing things out of the bits and pieces that other people throw away, but seems doomed to a life of making boring practical footwear for the local townsfolk. However two wandering minstrels discover her remarkable talent, and give her the confidence to follow her dream. King's lovely illustrations, which have the energy of those by Quentin Blake, celebrate Milli's choice to follow her heart in this whimsical story. F.P.

Susan Laughs

Jeanne Willis

Illustrated by Tony Ross

Red Fox, 2001

Pb, 0099407566

Susan can do all the things that the other kids can. Tony Ross has portrayed an active little girl playing, teasing, tackling life full on, doing all the things that other kids do, except, as his last picture shows, and the text never discloses, she needs a wheelchair at times. FP

booklist

Stella, Fairy of the Forest

Marie-Louise Gay
Allen & Unwin, 2002
PB, 1865087521

Stella, who trips through life with enthusiasm, and her younger brother Sam, are full of wonder about the world around. Stella's vivid imagination has her seeking for fairies in the forest, but Sam can only find a butterfly and wonders whether yellow butterflies eat butter? Stella's creative statements are countered by Sam's pragmatic observations. Canadian Marie-Louise Gay's painterly illustrations capture the joie de vivre of her engaging heroine, who with Sam, shares many of the questions about the everyday world that intrigue small children, and has inventive answers that delight this audience.

Also available – Stella, Star of the Sea and Stella, Queen of the Snow. F.P.



Princesses are Not Quitters!

Kate Lum, illustrated by Sue Hellard

Bloomsbury, 2002
ISBN 158234762X (hbk)

Princesses Allie, Mellie and Libby live in a beautiful castle by the sea, but they're bored. So, in the traditional manner, they trade places with three servant girls. Off the princesses trot to be servants, but it tires them out and they're too late for

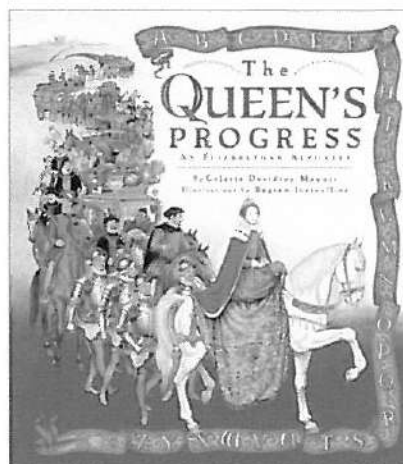
lunch and dinner, because the jobs take too long, and they don't do too good a job. But "they didn't want anyone to say that princesses are quitters." They keep going until they finally finish their tasks at midnight. The next day, after sleeping in, they make a proclamation about servants' conditions, and from then on things change – particularly the princesses – and all because princesses are not quitters! 4+. AC.

Prue Theroux, the Cool Librarian

Gillian Rubinstein
Ill. David MacKintosh
Random House, 2001
ISBN 0-091-83886-X

All librarians will relate to the wonderful librarian at Numbat Gully Primary School. How clever she is at finding just the right book for each child! Then she gets sick – and the replacement librarian is not a patch on Miss Theroux – he "Doesn't have a Best Books list, Never reads us *Round the Twist*, Never picks our favourite choices, doesn't read in funny voices". The children have to do something to get Miss Theroux back!

Rhyming, with fun illustrations.
Ages 5 – 10. RT



The Queen's Progress: an Elizabethan Alphabet

Celeste Davidson Mannis,
illustrated by Bagram
Ibatoulline
Viking, 2003

ISBN 0670036129 (hbk)
You'd be hard pressed to find a gutsier girl than Queen Elizabeth I! A magnificently illustrated introduction to the Elizabethan era. Each letter is described by a four-line poem, and accompanied by a paragraph on the background to the subject. The little details in the illustrations are wonderful – watch for the dog on each spread. Another highlight is the queen being saved from assassination by her jester (dwarf Thomasina), a page and a maid (who happens to be red-headed). 6+. AC.

Unplugged!

Glenda Millard
Ill. Dee Huxley
Margaret Hamilton Books, 1999
Grandma wants to take a bath but Grandpa has filled the bath with honey. Undeterred she decides to take her bath in the old bath outside under the plum tree. All goes well until the plug is accidentally removed and her bathrobe also. Despite the possible embarrassment, Grandma gets out of the bath clutching a sheet from the clothesline. The beautifully descriptive illustrations add to this delightful, funny picture book. Ages 6 – 10. RT

Miss Happiness and Miss Flower

Rumer Godden
Originally published 1960
Harper Collins 2002
ISBN 0060291931
Nona has been orphaned and has returned from India to live with cousins, when they are sent two Japanese dolls by an elderly

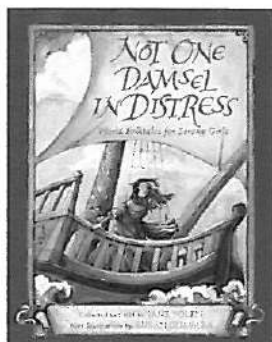
aunt. Nona becomes so interested in providing the dolls with an appropriate house that she overcomes her intense shyness and braves the grumpy bookshop owner and many other adults to gain the information and materials she needs. This is a heartwarming story of a lost and lonely child finding her place in a new country and a new family. 6-10. HB



Uncommon Traveler: Mary Kingsley in Africa

Don Brown
Houghton Mifflin, 2000
ISBN 0618002731 (hbk)

In 1870 eight-year-old Mary lives virtually alone, nursing her mother and, when he's home, helping her travelling father. During her lonely years Mary lives through books, which help out with difficulties (like leaks and things). At 30 Mary's parents die leaving her to make her own life. Inspired by her father's travels and the books she'd read, Mary sets off for West Africa. Her adventures are vividly depicted in the text and illustrations, with judicious use of quotes from her memoirs. There are also notes at the back. A wonderful introduction to an extraordinary woman. 8+. AC

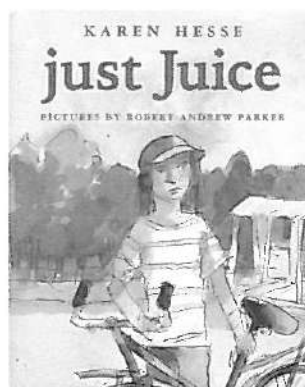


Not One Damsel in Distress: World Folktales for Strong Girls

Collected and told by Jane Yolen, illustrated by Susan Guevara
Harcourt, 2000
ISBN 0152020470 (hbk)
This is a book of tales about girl heroes – not heroines or sheroes (the point is explained in Yolen's introduction) – but honest-to-goodness heroes, who happen to be female. They throw spears, defeat villains, and rescue others, just like male heroes do. The tales come from all over the world, some are well-known, others less so. There's Atalanta and Molly Whuppie, as well as Nana Miriam – a Nigerian warrior. Teachers might find the 'Notes to Sources' section helpful if they wish to investigate the stories further. 8+. AC.

Molly Moon's Incredible Book of Hypnotism

Georgia Byng
Macmillan, 2002
Orphan Molly Moon was found as a baby in a box marked "Moon's Marshmallows". For ten miserable years she has lived under the cruel rule of Miss Adderstone in grim Hardwick House. But life changes overnight when she finds a mysterious book on hypnotism and she discovers she has an amazing talent in this area. She also finds out what is really important in life. Upper Primary. RT



Just Juice

Karen Hesse
Illustrated by Robert Parker
Scholastic Press New York
ISBN 0590 03382 4
Life isn't easy for Juice, she finds school work a challenge and prefers to hang around her Dad in the workshop. The domestic situation is difficult and her Dad's illiteracy compounds the family's problems. However when it matters Juice rises to the occasion. A poignant story about resilience and survival. 11 to 13 year olds. CA

Mary, Queen of Scots

Kathryn Lasky
Scholastic 2002.
Set in 1553, Mary, the child Scottish Queen, is sent a diary by her mother in which she records her experiences living at the court of King Henry II in France, as she awaits her marriage to Henry's son, Francis.

Also, Elisabeth, the Princess Bride

Barry Denenberg
Scholastic, 2003
The diary Princess Elizabeth could well have written in 1853 – 1854, describing her engagement to her cousin, Franz Joseph I, Emperor of Austria. Historical notes are included at the end covering her life as Empress.

A readable look at history and what life was like in those times.

Both from a series from The Royal Diaries all set in different historical periods, written in diary form. Upper Primary, Intermediate. RT

Parvana

(also known as "The Breadwinner")

Deborah Ellis

Allen & Unwin, 2002

ISBN 1-86508-694-0

Parvana lives in Afghanistan where life is very strict, especially for females. When her father is dragged off to prison, Parvana has to help keep the family fed by risking her life dressing up as a boy, and selling things in the marketplace. Upper Primary/Intermediate. RT

Limelight

Tania Roxborough

Scholastic, 2002

ISBN 1-86943-493-5

Nicole desperately wants to play the lead role in Cinderella. But how can she compete with the pretty, confident and clever Jasmine? It's hard enough without someone trying to jeopardise her part by playing tricks on her – can it be Jasmine? Determination helps her win through in the end. Upper Primary. RT

The Homecoming

Atheneum 1981

Collins 2001

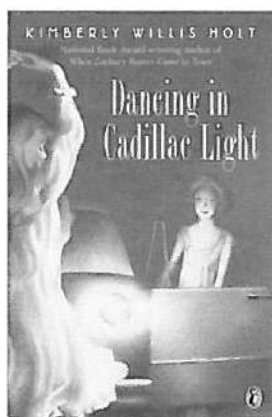
ISBN 0007119216

Cynthia Voigt

Dacey is 13 when her mother inexplicably disappears leaving her and her 3 younger brothers and sister alone in a carpark. Somehow she has to keep them together, feed them and find them somewhere safe to stay. How Dacey and her family walk, first of all to the home of a cousin, and when she threatens to split up the family, to the grandmother they didn't know they had is an amazing story of initiative, endurance and sheer stubbornness. There is no easy happy ending as their reclusive grandmother does not

welcome them with open arms so the suspense remains almost to the very last page. 10+

The story of Dacey continues in Dacey's Song and Seventeen Against the Dealer. HB

**Dancing in Cadillac Light**

Kimberly Willis Holt

Puffin, 2002

ISBN (pbk) 0698119703

In 1968 Jaynell's world changes when her Grandpap moves in, a year after his wife's death. Jaynell's father sets her the task of following Grandpap around – to see whether he's crazy or not. Jaynell comes to learn more about her family's history and herself. One of Grandpap's regular stops is the Pickens' house, and the Pickens are the poorest of the poor, looked down upon by everyone. Jaynell's sister, Racine, is a real girly girl – into nail polish and dancing. When she has the chance to realise her dream of attending dancing lessons, she has to have the courage to stand up to the snobby girls. Then there's the girls' mother, who finds the courage to face her past, accept it, and then make the future she wants. These females exhibit courage in many forms. Recommended for ages 10+. AC

A Question of Courage

Marjorie Darke

Kestrel 1975, Barn Owl Books 2002

ISBN 1903015219

Emily is a discontented seamstress whose life is changed when she meets Louise, an upper-class advocate of votes for women. This is an excellent portrayal of the suffragette movement and of the English class system of the time. 11+. HB

Dealing With Dragons

Patricia Wrede

Harcourt 1990, Magic Carpet Books 2002

ISBN 015204566X

Princess Cimorene is determined not to do the conventional thing and marry one of the princes who come courting so she offers her services to a dragon to cook and to catalogue her library, cooking and reading Latin being the two unprincess-like skills she had insisted on learning. Any knights foolish enough to try and rescue her are given a piece of her mind and sent on their way. This a funny fantasy with a most unconventional heroine. The Enchanted Forest Chronicles continue in Searching for Dragons, Calling on Dragons, and Talking to Dragons. 11+. HB

Make Lemonade

Virginia Euwer Wolff

Scholastic 2003 (reprint)

ISBN 059048141X

14 year old LaVaughn is determined to rise above the poor neighbourhood she lives in and earn enough money to go to College. To do this she takes on the job of babysitting for a teenage mother with two small children and is drawn into their struggles and difficulties. 11+. HB

Alex

Tessa Duder
Puffin 1989, 1996, 2003
ISBN 0195581695

This award winning tale of 15 year old Alex's determination to be herself despite the restricting social conventions of New Zealand in the late 1950s is as appealing to today's teenagers as it was to their parents when it was first published. Alex is a champion swimmer and this is the first in a quartet of novels following her to the Olympic Games in Rome and on to university.

The other titles in the series are **Alex in Winter**, **Allesandra**, **Alex in Rome** and **Songs for Alex**. 11+ HB

Black Angels

Rita Murphy
Macmillan, 2002
ISBN 0330399098

Celli is eleven, and she keeps seeing black-skinned angels sitting on the barn roof. Turns out they've come to see her through a crisis in her life. Celli lives in a small southern American town in 1961, and she thinks she's white. But then she meets her maternal grandfather for the first time... It's a hard-hitting story about racism, given a piquant flavour by a touch of the unreal. For good intermediate-aged readers. LO

Rules of the Road

Joan Bauer
Putnam 1998, Puffin 2000
ISBN 0698118286

Jenna is 16, her father is an alcoholic, she has a part-time job selling shoes and is a great salesperson. The elderly owner of the chain of shoe stores she works for thinks she would be just the person to drive her from Chicago to Texas for the annual share holders meeting. During the journey Jenna learns a lot

about loyalty, diplomacy, good and bad business practice, faith and grief and becomes a shareholder. She also finds the strength to deal with her father's alcoholism on her own terms. "I always wondered why I had a father who was an alcoholic. Now I knew. It made me strong. It made me different. It showed me how to say no to the darkness." As well as having a strong and gutsy heroine this book also gives a positive picture of a couple of gutsy old ladies, in full possession of their faculties and ready to fight for the right to stay in the mainstream of life. 12+ HB

Spellbound

Janet McDonald
Collins Flamingo 2003
ISBN 0007143028

Raven is a teenage mum but is determined not to be a high school dropout. On finding there is a spelling competition which offers a chance of entering a college prep programme and going to college on a full scholarship Raven is determined to work towards this and to rise above her current circumstances. Janet McDonald grew up in a public housing project and was the only one from her large family to go to college so this humorous tale is based on her own observations. 12+. HB

When Lightning Strikes

Jenny Carroll
Simon Pulse 2001
ISBN 0743411390

Jess is a teenager who is always in trouble- she has fist fights with members of the football team and spends a lot of time in detention. When she is hit by lightning she finds she has a disconcerting new ability- one which the FBI is interested in. Jenny Carroll is Meg Cabot by

another name and this series is just as entertaining as the Princess Diaries. Jess behaves outrageously but not unbelievably, and usually gets away with it. 12+

This is the first in the 1-800 Where-R-U series. The other titles are **Code Name Cassandra**, **Safe House** and **Sanctuary**. 12+ HB

Homeless Bird

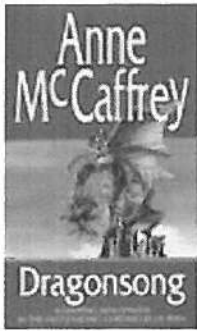
Gloria Whelan
Harper Collins 2000
ISBN 0064408191

As is usual for 13 year old Indian girls Koly enters on an arranged marriage but is soon widowed, cheated by her parents in law and seemingly doomed to a life of begging. However her own talent and determination allow her to take control of her own future, to earn an living and to take the chance for happiness with a second husband of her own choice. 12+ HB

Search of the Moon King's Daughter

Linda Holeman
Tundra Books, 2002
ISBN 0887765920

Emmaline is an amazingly brave heroine of the Industrial Revolution. Her mother is injured in the cotton mill and becomes addicted to laudanum. To feed her habit she sells Emmaline's younger brother to a chimney sweep. Emmaline goes to London to find him. She manages to get a servant's position in a big house, but finding her brother proves almost impossible. It's a riveting tale of adventure, hardship, and eventual success - for mature readers of 12 to 14. LO



Dragonsong

Anne McCaffrey

Corgi, 1978

ISBN 0552106615

Pern is a world where harpers teach the young. They are the singers, the keepers of the past, the mentors of the future. Menolly, the daughter of Yanus Sea Holder, musical from her fingers to her toes, wants desperately to become a harper. But in Pern, this is unheard of. Dragonsong is the story of a teenager's struggle against the society in which she lives. Though classed as science fiction, it is a story that every girl will understand, when outdated attitudes shape the world around you. Constantly in print, Dragonsong is a classic. Suitable for ages 13 and up. LH



Dragonsinger

Anne McCaffrey

Corgi, 1978

ISBN 0552108812

The sequel to Dragonsong, above, Dragonsinger continues the story of Menolly as she fights for her position as Pern's

first female apprentice harper. Suitable for ages 13 and up. LH



Black Taxi

James Moloney

Angus & Robertson, 2003

ISBN 0207199892

Rosie Sinclair's normal life would be unusual for everyone else. Her mother is a hairdresser, her best friend is an exotic dancer, and her grandfather has just been put in jail for carrying stolen goods. So when Rosie's grandfather gives her his Mercedes to look after while he is "inside", Rosie shouldn't have been surprised by the strange phone calls she starts getting, and the fact that completely strange old age pensioners seem to want to use her as a taxi service. How Rosie copes is a hilarious read. Enjoyable, for ages 13 and up. LH



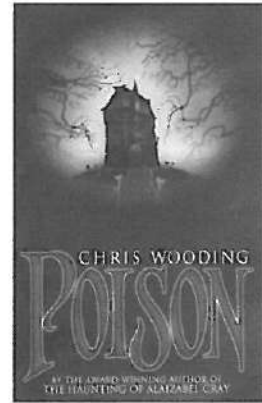
Watermark

Penelope Todd

Longacre Press, 2003

ISBN 1877135836

Zillah is dared to leave her safe, planned holiday and travel to Roimata, an empty shack on the wild West Coast. She succumbs to the temptation and while there sees her life in a new way, as she copes with loneliness, fear, birth, death, and emerging relationships. Suitable for ages 13 and up. LH



Poison

Chris Wooding

Scholastic 2003

ISBN 0-439-97725-8.

Poison lived in the heart of the Black Marshes (on nameday when aged 14 she changed her name to Poison). Always a little more unaccepting than others in her community she was damned if she was meekly going to accept the disappearance of her baby sister. She set off to demand answers and help from the Phaerie Lord. Along the way she dealt with weird characters and tough challenges. Finally she got her answer but this left the reader wondering about deeper philosophical questions like determinism vs fatalism. This was must-read fantasy. Wooding is one of the best creators of atmosphere around. 13 plus. WM

Big Mouth & Ugly Girl

Joyce Carol Oates
HarperCollins, 2002
ISBN 0066237564

Ursula Riggs is a loner, proud, tall and strong – and a sports jock. She thinks of herself as Ugly Girl. A popular boy at her school, Matt Donaghy, makes a stupid joke about blowing up the school – and is reported to the police as a potential terrorist. Ursula heard the comment, and makes sure people know the truth. But the trouble doesn't end there. Together Ursula and Matt find the strength to overcome their difficulties. Recommended for teens. LO

Elske

Cynthia Voigt
Atheneum, 1999
ISBN 0340787759

Not one but two memorable heroines in this unusual fantasy. Elske escapes from the Wolfers, and becomes handmaiden to Berial, a princess who's been betrayed by her brother. She was raped, and is pregnant. They travel back to Berial's country, where the princess rallies support and defeats her enemies. Elske's loyalty and uncompromising honesty impress all who meet her, and she eventually marries a nobleman. For teenagers. LO

Saving Francesca

Melina Marchetta
Viking, 2003
ISBN 0670040452

The long-awaited second novel from the author of *Looking For Alibrandi*. Francesca goes to an all-boys school which has just admitted girls – and life is not easy. The worst problem of all is that her beloved mother has had a nervous breakdown, and the family is devastated. Francesca makes new friends,

falls in love, learns to cope with the family situation – and keeps her sense of humour throughout. For teens of about 13 to 16. LO

The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants

Ann Brashares
Delacorte, 2001
ISBN 0385729332

Four friends separate for the summer holidays – but they decide to share a pair of jeans which fit them all. In four interwoven stories, the girls face trials such as first love, first sex, death of a friend, and parental betrayal, and they all come up trumps in the end. It's a funny, warm-hearted story for early teens. The sequel is *The Second Summer of the Sisterhood*. LO

Tamora Pierce

If you're looking for books with girls who are determined to break out of their gender stereotypes and equal the boys, then Tamora Pierce is the author you need. Pierce is one of the most popular fantasy novelists for the over-10s – boys included! Due to her popularity her books are always in print, she's published mainly by Scholastic – so that information isn't included. For more details check out her website: www.tamora-pierce.com. At the moment her writing focuses on two universes – Tortall and Circle.

Circle – currently two series, and best read in the order below

The Circle of Magic Quartet
(able 8+ year olds)

Sandry's Book (The Magic in the Weaving – UK title)

Tris's Book (The Power in the Storm – UK title)

Daja's Book (The Fire in the Forging – UK title)

Briar's Book (The Healing in the Vine – UK title)

Four pre-teens, with magic coming out of their pores, become adepts at Winding Circle.

The Circle Opens (for 9+)

Magic Steps

Street Magic
Cold Fire



Shatterglass

These tales follow the adventures of the four as they acquire their first students.

Soon to come:

The Circle Reforged – a standalone novel bringing together Sandry, Tris, Daja and Briar as young adults.

Tortall – currently three series, and best read in this order
A mediaeval fantasy world of knights and magic. The earlier books in each series are suitable for the over-10s, but the latter ones more suitable for over-12s.

The Song of the Lioness Quartet

Alanna: the First Adventure

In the Hand of the Goddess
The Woman Who Rides Like a Man (also published as *The Girl Who...*)

Lioness Rampant

Alanna and her twin brother, Thomas, switch places so they can both achieve their dreams: Alanna as knight, Thom as wizard.

The Immortals Quartet

Wild Magic

Wolf Speaker

The Emperor Mage



The Realms of the Gods

Orphaned Daine travels to Tortall to find employment and instead finds her magic and a family, of sorts.

The Protector of the Small Quartet

First Test

Page

Squire



Lady Knight

Keladry is determined to be the first Lady Knight since Alanna, now that girls are permitted to do so.

Coming Soon:

Trickster's Choice and
Trickster's Queen – the

adventures of Alanna's daughter Alianne.

The Provost's Dog Trilogy – set 200 years before Alanna, the story of a street girl raised to be a manhunter: *Terrier*, *Bloodhound*, *Elkhound*. AC.



Robin McKinley

Robin writes the sort of stories she wanted to read as a girl – tales of adventure where the girl wears the sword, and doesn't need rescuing. Like Tamora Pierce, her books are popular and, generally, still in print in various editions. Most of her books are suitable for readers aged 12 and over.

Robin first came to prominence with her tale of female hero, Harry, in *The Blue Sword*, set in a country based upon British Colonial India. Harry, short of Angharad, discovers a dormant martial ability – wielder of The Blue Sword, Gonturan – and a destiny – after being kidnapped by Corlath, king of Damar. Newbery Honor Award 1983.



The Hero and the Crown tells the story of Aerin – first Damarian holder of Gonturan – and her battles. Newbery Award 1985.



More often Robin has focused on powerful retellings of fairy tales, with proactive heroines.

Beauty: a Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast
Spindle's End – the “Sleeping Beauty” story, with some fantastic twists and women.

Rose Daughter – a revisiting of “Beauty and the Beast.”

Deerskin – an exploration of an uncommon Perrault tale “Donkeyskin” – definitely for more adult readers, as it explores a woman's recovery as a victim of incest. Powerfully written. AC