

Sophisticated Picture Books Term Three, 2005

Sophisticated picture books are books which enlarge the traditional idea of a picture book. Not just for pre-school readers, they convey meaning through illustration as well as text, and often deal with quite complex concepts.

Contributors to this booklist are – Kerry Aluf, Helen Beckingsale, Crissi Blair, Anne Coppell, Bronwyn Fox, Lois Huston, Ann Luxton and Frances Plumpton.

booklist

The DAY I swapped my DAD for TWO GOLDFISH

Neil Gaiman, ill. Dave McKean
Bloomsbury, 2001
ISBN 0747575185

A young boy swaps his Dad (a silent guy behind an open newspaper) for two goldfish. Mother is not at all pleased and sends the boy and his little sister out to get Dad back. Unfortunately he has since been traded, several times over, for other treasures - an electric guitar, a gorilla mask, and an endearing rabbit called Galveston. Dad is finally found eating a carrot, surrounded by chicken wire –and still reading the paper!

This is an original story that successfully conveys childhood logic. The detailed multimedia illustrations can be pored over for hours, and the humorous vignettes of sibling rivalry, during the prolonged search for Dad, resonate with readers. Highly recommended. BF

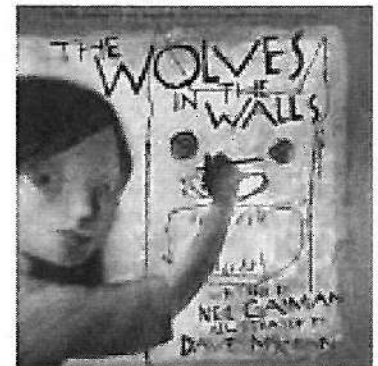


The Wolves in the Walls

Neil Gaiman, ill. Dave McKean
Bloomsbury 2003
ISBN 0747569533

Lucy hears noises coming from inside the walls of the family home. One by one, she tells her mother, father, and brother that there are wolves in the walls. They are indifferent and dismiss her fears, but nevertheless issue a warning: *'If the wolves come out of the walls, it's all over.'* Then, one day, the wolves do come out and the family is forced to flee. They spend a chilly night at the bottom of the garden until Lucy, drawing strength from her toy pig-puppet, finds a way to rid the house of its unwelcome visitors.

Gaiman's quirky text, and McKean's brooding images capture the reader from the outset. At times scary, suspenseful and with a comical ending that brings the story full circle, *Wolves in the Walls* is a skillful and absorbing journey into Lucy's imaginative world. Highly recommended. BF



Snow White in New York



Fiona French
Oxford
University
Press 1989
Pb ISBN
0192722107

Snow White's mother was a New York society dame (complete with sequined cloche cap and fox fur stole), but she was also the Queen of the Underworld. When she read in the paper "Snow White the Belle of New York City" she became very jealous and plotted to get rid of her stepdaughter. Fortunately the bodyguard who was given the job of killing Snow White couldn't bring himself to do so and he left her in the deepest, darkest streets of the city... and you will probably know how the story ends.

Winner of The Library Association Kate Greenaway Medal, this is a beautifully produced art deco variant of the story of Snow White, well told and presented in a format that will attract any teenager with an eye for image and design. AL



Cinderella: an art deco love story
retold by Lynn Roberts, ill. David Roberts
Pavilion Books Ltd 2001
Hb

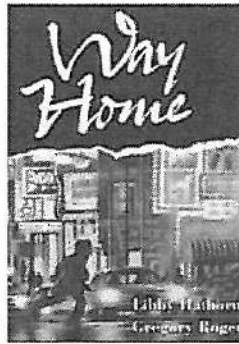
ISBN 1862054878

Greta's father was a kindly, rather forgetful man with poor eyesight, but they lived happily and quite comfortably together. After being away at the city for a couple of weeks Greta's father returned with a new wife - a very unpleasant woman - and her two nasty daughters. Poor Greta's life just wasn't the same again ... but you will probably know this story as well.

Delightful and amusing art deco illustrations combine well to revitalise this classic tale of family and sibling abuse and paternal neglect. David Roberts has a background in fashion design and includes explanatory notes on his artwork. AL

Way Home

Libby Hathorn
and Gregory
Rogers
Red Fox 2001
ISBN
0091829186



The story is set in the dark backstreets of a big city. A young boy, Shane, finds a little cat, befriends it and sets out to take it home. The journey across town is fraught with danger. Though the cat escapes once, Shane gets him back and they continue on their way, past ferocious dogs, brightly-lit shops, down alleyways until they reach the safety of home - and "home" is what and where you make it.

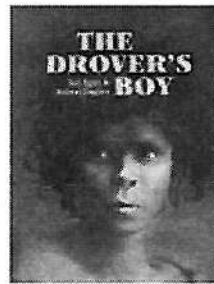
A moving and powerful story about a side of life many of us won't know, but one that is known to too many children living in our cities. AL

The Drover's Boy

Ted Egan and Robert Ingpen
Thomas C. Lothian 1998
ISBN 0850918405

Though a work of fiction "The Drover's Boy" is based on fact and tells of the affection of a white drover for his Aboriginal "boy", and his great sadness when the "boy" dies. This is a moving and sensitively illustrated tribute to the Aboriginal women who lived and travelled with the drovers in Australia, pioneer women who made a huge contribution to the cattle industry. It also tells of the "massacre in the west" where the Aboriginal men were killed and their women abducted as slaves, acknowledging the violence perpetrated on the Aboriginals as their land was taken from them.

The words are printed in large type throughout the book, then repeated with the music, and accompanying explanatory notes. AL



John Britten: the boy who did do better

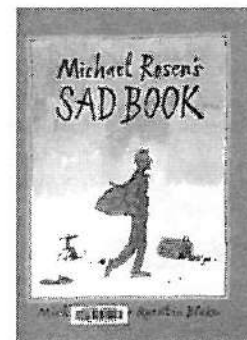
Jennifer Beck
Scholastic 2004
ISBN 1869435486

John Britten was a lad who didn't excel at school, a boy whose report cards were marked with the damning phrase "could do better" - a boy who went through school at a time when dyslexia was not recognised.

Fortunately he grew up in a supportive family, he was good at art and, best of all, his father ran a bicycle shop. John was a boy with ideas, and through developing those

ideas, he became a designer first of go-carts and, many years later, the ultimate racing bike.

This is a well illustrated, informative and motivating story for anyone who has had a dream they had to fight for. It tells how John proved that learning disabilities aren't necessarily a barrier to achieving what you want in life. AL



Michael Rosen's SAD BOOK
Michael Rosen, ill. Quentin Blake
Walker Books 2004
Hb ISBN
0744598982

Michael Rosen tells his personal story of the death of his son Eddie and how he deals with the grief that followed. This touching story deals with sadness that can come to all of us and ways to get through it, whilst acknowledging that the sadness never quite goes away. Quentin Blake's spare illustrations complement the text with some colour and other grey-toned pictures echoing the emotions of the story. This book needs to be shared with awareness of the theme and appropriate discussion of the issues involved. For any family dealing with grief this book should be essential reading. CB

Tomorrow
Connah
Brecon
Lothian,
2004; Hb
ISBN
0734407300



You can tell from the cover image that this book focuses on

reflection. It is a look back at the joys of childhood and the uncertainty as you move towards adolescence and looming adulthood. The end papers are stark, in the style of chalk or scratching - "tomorrow is where we keep our dreams." The illustrations are similar in style to the work of Shaun Tan, and have a muddy feel to them. There is so much in this for exploration and discussion, including the subtle use of pronouns, changing it from a first-person narrative to something all-inclusive. For ages 8 and up. AC



Riding the Tiger
Eve Bunting, ill.
David Frampton
Clarion Books
2001
Hb ISBN
0395797314

This is a story about the allure of gangs. Danny is the new boy and he feels a bit lost and bored. He is proud when the tiger comes and invites him along for a ride. As the journey continues, Danny becomes more and more uncertain, but finds it difficult to stop riding the tiger. The woodcuts emphasise the harshness of the tiger and the message - the importance of individualism and choice. The limited colour palette makes the occasional use of other colours all the more powerful. For ages 8 and up. AC

What a Truly Cool World

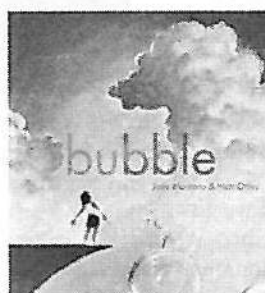
Julius Lester, ill. Joe Cepeda
Scholastic 1999
Hb ISBN 0590864688

When God finished making the world he felt as bright and sunny as love. He had never made a world before and, if he said so himself (and he did), he thought he had done a very good job. African-

American God and all his angels, including his wife Mrs Irene God - are lively, down-to-earth - and they have fun. Their hip-ness is emphasised by the bright and funky oil-painted, folk-art/cartoon-like illustrations. The text rollicks along, making this a truly cool book to read aloud. "God! God! He's our man! If he can't do it, nobody can!" - God can, but only with the help of others, particularly Shaniqua (the angel in charge of everybody's business). There's a sequel, **Why Heaven is Far Away** (Scholastic, 2002; Hb ISBN 0439178711). For ages 8 and up. AC

The Bubble

Josie
Montano
Ill. Matt
Ottley
Lothian
Books 2004
Hb ISBN
0734406843



This book details a girl's journey through depression. The uses of images and colour have been carefully chosen to express the emotions as Aditi (Hindi for free and unbound) travels. It is surrealist in its approach, with the subtext stronger in the illustrations. The author has written notes for each piece of text and illustration (http://www.users.tpg.com.au/jsanto/aut_horsnotes.htm); these can be used to explore the book more fully. It is a story of hope and healing, without being prescriptive. For ages 8 and up. AC

The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq

Jeanette Winter
Harcourt 2005
Hb ISBN 0152054456

As the war comes ever closer to Basra Alia Muhammad Baker, the librarian of Basra, worries that the books - including 'a biography of Muhammad that is seven hundred years old' - will be lost. When the governor refuses to help relocate the books, Alia does it herself. When rumour becomes fact, Alia seeks help from her friends and neighbours to save the books. The acrylic illustrations are in folk-art style and convey the horrors of war, without

being too graphic. The colours used subtly underpin the mood of the story. For example the last pages, showing Alia's dreams of peace - and a new library - have blue backgrounds. This book would be useful for starting a discussion about war and its impact on ordinary people, and the emotional value of books. For ages 8 and up. AC

Jabberwocky

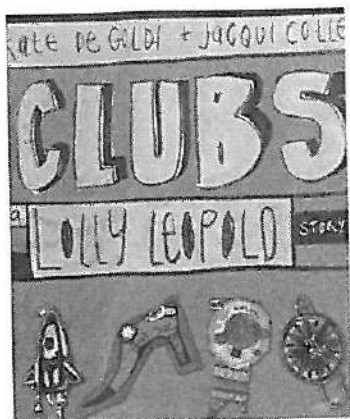
Lewis Carroll, ill. Stéphane Jorisch
Kids Can Press 2004
Hb ISBN 1553370791
Series Visions in poetry
Activity available from:
www.kidscanpress.com

When Alice hears 'The Jabberwocky' she says "It seems very pretty, but it's rather hard to understand." Jorisch's illustrations back up this summation. Rendered in pencil, ink, watercolour and Adobe Photoshop, the illustrations are surreal and bizarre. They lead the reader down other paths, and to explore deeper meanings - individuality, love, creativity, the aftermath of war, and that's just the beginning. Overall, more appropriate to older audiences. For ages 10 and up. AC



The Highwayman
Alfred Noyes
Ill. Charles Keeping
Oxford University
Press 1999 (reissue
& new cover)
Pb
ISBN 0192723707

Noyes' poem gallops along and is dark and atmospheric. In this Kate Greenaway medal winning book (1981) Keeping's illustrations - in black, white and sepia tones - intensify the emotion of the text. The Highwayman is suitably dapper and handsome in his lace-edge coat and tricorne hat, while King George's men and the landlord, are pockmarked and have bad teeth. Bess is wide-eyed and stoic at the end, with her death shown through stark black stains. The last pages, with the ghosts, are replicas of earlier illustrations, but coloured in negative - the figures in glowing white. For ages 10 and up. AC



CLUBS. A Lolly Leopold Story
 Kate De Goldi Ill. Jacqui Colley
 Trapeze 2004
 Hb ISBN 047600912X

Lolly is the star of *Clubs*, along with her zany teacher, Ms Love. A plague of clubs – from Barbie to Lego, has broken out at school and Lolly's having none of it, until she comes up with her own Grass Growing Spectators Club. The vivacious artwork captures many aspects of school life, from the hand-lettered cover, complete with badges, blackboard style endpapers and complex, multi-layered collage illustrations, complementing and extending the colloquial yet adventurous language. Suitable for 7 years and up and rewards repeat readings, there's always something new to be discovered. Winner NZ Post Children's Book Awards 2005. CB

The Whisperer
 Nick Butterworth
 Harper
 Collins 2004
 ISBN
 0007120176



This Romeo and Juliet style story starring cats is narrated by a rat that has a vested interest in keeping the cats feuding so that they don't have time to chase him. Although the story is simple enough to interest beginning readers the Romeo and Juliet theme, obvious to older readers, makes this a picture book which can be read at different levels. Shortlisted for this year's Kate Greenaway Awards. HB

Science Verse
 Jon Scieszka, ill Lane Smith
 Viking 2004
 ISBN 0670910570

This book presents science concepts by cleverly parodying a number of well-known poems. I think it would be best appreciated by older children who are familiar with the original poems but the rhythm and humour may well appeal on its own. Lane Smith's zany full page illustrations will also appeal more to older children. 9+ HB

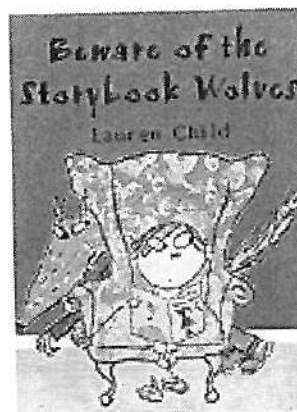


Two Frogs
 Chris Wormell
 Jonathan Cape 2003
 ISBN 0224064746

A deceptively simple story about two frogs, one of whom has a stick in case a dog should swim out to fetch a ball thrown by a hypothetical champion javelin thrower. It can be read by a young child as a simple story and appreciated by an older child or adult as a clever fable. The beautiful full page illustrations of the frogs earned this book a place on the Kate Greenaway shortlist for 2003. HB

Two summers
 John Heffernan
 Ill Freya Blackwood
 Scholastic Australia, 2003
 ISBN 1865045969

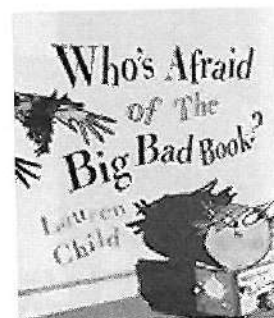
This book gives a realistic portrayal of the effects of drought on an Australian farm as a country boy anticipates the return of his friend from the city. He remembers how things were 12 months ago and compares this with the dried up river and dying animals which have resulted from the drought. This book won the 2004 Crichton Award for a new Australian illustrator as well as being shortlisted for the Picture Book section of the Australian Children's Picture Book of the Year. HB



Beware of the Story-book Wolves
 Lauren Child
 Hodder 2001
 ISBN 0340779160

Most people are probably familiar with this very funny story of how the storybook wolves emerge from their book into Herb's bedroom and are vanquished by Cinderella's fairy godmother. Lauren Child's clever collage illustrations and the zany story will appeal to teens and adults as well as children from about 6- 10. HB

Who's afraid of the big bad book?
 Lauren Child
 Hodder 2003
 ISBN 0340805552



In the sequel to *Beware of the storybook wolves* Herb finds himself inside his book of fairy tales and extremely unpopular with the fairy tale characters who have been doodled on and in some cases completely removed from the book. The text and font change shape and size, and in some cases sections of text turn upside down as Herb attempts to repair the damage he has caused so this is a book for confident and competent readers who are familiar with the fairy tales and can enjoy a joke. HB



The Harmonica

Tony Johnston
Ill. Ron Mazellan
Charlesbridge 2004
Hb ISBN 1570915474

Based on a true story. A young Jewish boy plays Schubert on his harmonica in a concentration camp after being separated from his parents. In his heart he knows that they are now dead. His musical talent catches the attention of the camp commandant who orders the boy to play Schubert for him every evening. Playing for this man who represents death and ugliness, but can still appreciate the beauty of Schubert's music is almost too much for the boy. Then he realizes that the other inmates take solace in his music and he is inspired to continue. Mazellan's illustrations range from warm orange and rich browns through to grim blue-greys in this story of hope. KA

The Shape Game

Anthony Browne
Doubleday 2003
Hb ISBN
0385601360



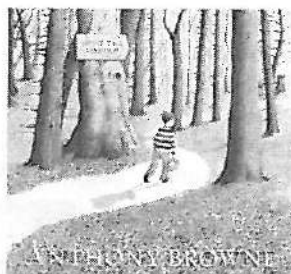
A family visit to the Tate Gallery in London is a birthday treat for mum but seen as an ordeal by the father and two sons who would rather stay home watching the weekly football on TV. Their humorous and spontaneous responses to the artworks on display as they progress through the gallery are vividly brought to life by Browne. On the way home the mother introduces the shape game to the two boys. This surreal look at art at the Tate was created by Browne during his time as writer and illustrator in residence at the Tate in 2001/2002. KA

Into the Forest

Anthony Browne
Walker Books 2004
Hb ISBN 0744597978

Anthony Browne journeys into the emotional and anxious world of a boy who wakes to find his father missing. His mother sends him to his grandmother's house with a cake and urges him to take the long way around and not to

venture through the forest which is a shortcut. He enters the forest which is stark and

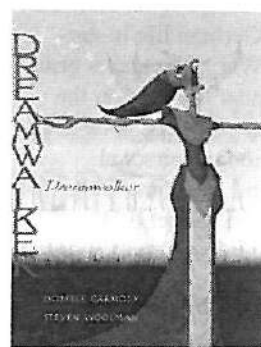


devoid of colour. Following the path he meets up with several folktale characters, all portrayed in grey tones. On each page the forest has significant details in the background enriching the complex emotional themes that run like an undercurrent through the book. There is even a red cloak that the boy finds and wears adding to the fairy tale symbolism in the story. The story ends safely with his arrival at the grandmother's cottage where he is also reunited with his father. KA

The Spider and the Fly

Mary Howitt
Ill Tony diTerlizzi
Simon & Schuster 2002
Hb ISBN 068952894

This cautionary tale, written by Mary Howitt in 1829, is given a darkly gothic workover by illustrator Tony diTerlizzi. The old world charm of the poem and the dramatic black and white illustrations inspired by diTerlizzi's love of classic Hollywood film noir perfectly capture the interplay between the sweet naive fly and the predatory spider. The fly is depicted as a slim, pretty flapper with flower umbrella, and the spider, a resplendent villain, in top hat and tails. Set in a spooky attic, ghosts of previous victims hover, trying in vain to warn the fly of her impending doom. A Caldecott Honour Book. KA.



Dreamwalker

Isobelle Carmody
Ill. Steven Woolman
Thomas C. Lothian 2001
ISBN 0734400071

Ken alternates between violent dreams and sleeplessness. He feels like a freak, an outcast. He doesn't fit in. He hangs around the library and draws, trying to recreate the dream world of his nightmares. His parents want him to be a doctor or a lawyer. He wants to be an artist.

Enter Alyssa, blond and blue eyed. She sees his artwork and is immediately intrigued. Ken is intrigued by her. Together they explore this alternate world, first through sketches, then through their own dreams.

This is an engrossing fantasy, suitable for teenagers. There is a large amount of text – this 46 page book is divided into 7 chapters – but the pencil drawn illustrations are evocative and bewitching. Highly recommended. LH

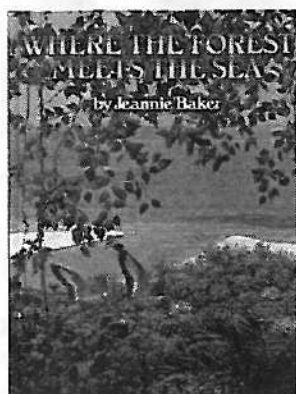
Rose Blanche

Roberto Innocenti
Text by Ian McEwan
Jonathan Cape 1985
ISBN
0224028413

Rose Blanche lives with her mother in World War II Germany. She is German; her way of life is taken for granted. Soldiers and food shortages are common and expected. Her innocence shields her from the knowledge of what is really happening. However, one day she discovers a concentration camp, full of children, and her discovery leads to a tragic finale.



This book contains detailed, realistic illustrations of German life in the Second World War. The text is brief, allowing the reader to focus on the illustrations. An excellent book to begin a discussion on personal responsibility and freedom. Suitable for upper primary and above. LH



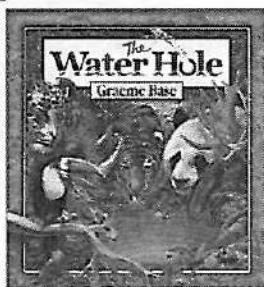
Where the Forest Meets the Sea

Jeannie Baker
Walker 1989
Pb ISBN 0744513057

A young boy is taken by his father to visit a remote beach on the edge of the Daintree Rainforest in North Queensland, Australia and told of life there in earlier times. As the boy explores his surroundings he imagines the creatures and the children who would have lived there so long ago. With spare text and stunning, meticulously detailed three dimensional collages constructed from natural materials, Jeannie Baker subtly challenges the reader to consider the benefits of modern civilisation. FP

The Waterhole

Graeme Base
Viking 2001
Hb ISBN
0670889288,
Pb Puffin,
ISBN
0140567534



At first glance this is a very attractive counting book of a variety of animals venturing to an ever-diminishing waterhole, but closer inspection of Base's richly-textured watercolour, gouache and pencil illustrations reveals so, so much more.

Each double-page spread features a specific region and is framed with silhouettes of local wildlife which can be discovered hidden away within the details of each illustration. A fascinating combination of counting, puzzle and ecology that will appeal to a wide variety of readers. FP

Memorial

Gary Crew
Ill. Shaun Tan
Thomas C. Lothian 1999
ISBN 0850919835

In New Zealand and Australia, Anzac Day is celebrated every year, but with fewer participants. The memory of the wars



are fading, our children are growing up in peace. Do not misunderstand me, peace is good. But there is danger in forgetting. Memorial is a book that focuses on a tree, a Moreton Bay Fig that was planted to remember the soldiers of World War One. When the local council proposes removing it, a boy learns its history, and also how important it is to fight for what you believe in. LH

The Last Alchemist

Colin Thompson
Hutchinson Children's Books 1989
ISBN 0091769426

The story of a king and his alchemist, who dreamed that all power would be theirs if they could only find the secret of creating gold. However, as everyone knows, true gold is more than yellow metal. The alchemist destroys himself



in his greed, but this allows the king to remember what is really valuable in life. Colin Thompson is famous for his thoughtful, fascinating picture books. The intricate cartoon-style illustrations invite rapt study, telling many stories beyond the one in the text. This is a book suitable for all ages. Classic, fairytale concepts, but modern whimsical humour. LH

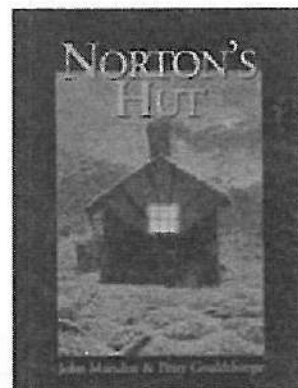
Norton's Hut

John Marsden
Ill. Peter Gouldthorpe
Lothian 1998
ISBN 0850917395

Teenagers on a tramping trip through southern Australia are trapped in a mountain hut by a sudden blizzard. They spend three nights in the hut, the first sharing with a silent man, the other two on their own. Only after they leave the hut and travel back into civilization do they find that the place where they stayed is no longer there. The hut burned down over forty years ago.

John Marsden, better known for his young adult "Tomorrow When the War Began"

series, has written this ghost story simply and with a believable reality. The illustrations by Peter Gouldthorpe are in the style of a landscape artist, showing the grandeur of the terrain and the impact of the elements. The centre spread is particularly evocative. Wordless, in a series of almost photographic stills, he shows the passing of the three days, the playing of cards, the sharing of chocolate, shadows on the wall.



This book is more suited to teenagers, because they would empathize with the characters, but the simple language means that children from ages 10 and up would be able to enjoy this book. LH