

# Special Interests

Reading through an author, through a series or following a particular theme are all good starting points when searching for new material. (*The Bloomsbury Good Reading Guide*, Bloomsbury, London 1996 explores these approaches as a guide to choosing adult fiction for those of you who stand staring in frustration at the library shelves). Another way is to explore genre. For this list we have chosen five categories and limited our selection to books published within the last fifteen years.

Reviewers are identified by their initials thus:

Carol Arden - CA, Judy Coleman - JC, Helen Beckinsale - HB, Jill Stotter - JS, Rosemary Tisdall - RT and Sally Gallagher - SG.

## Historical

### *Tides of Time* ✓

by Zana Bell  
Scholastic, 1995

Jaz is feeling upset at her parent's separation and is resentful of her new stepfather. An accident sends her back in time to the 1880's. She meets Martha who helps Jaz learn about what is important in life. A great story with excellent insight into life one hundred years ago, helping to compare with life today. For 10 years plus, perhaps more for girls or classroom teaching. (RT)

### *The Runaway Settlers* ✓

by Elsie Locke  
Hazard Press, 1993

A popular story set in 1859 of Mrs Small and her family of six children, who leave their cruel husband and father in Australia for a better life in New Zealand. The story highlights the way of life in those days and the

hard work involved in making a living, but it shows the love this family has to keep them going. A favourite with many people, for 10 years plus. (RT)

### *Young Exile* ✓

by Eliane Whitehouse  
Scholastic, 1996

Set in 1849, Jess loses all her family to typhoid. She is sent away to New Zealand, alone, enduring the journey on the sailing ship and many other hardships in pioneering communities. Her mother's journal is a great comfort to her and this journal plays an important part in turning events in her favour. 10 years plus. (CA, RT, JC)



### *The Midwife's Apprentice* ✓

by Karen Cushman  
Macmillan, 1995

Set in 14th century England, when life is very different from now. Brat doesn't know her real name or her age. She is an orphan on her own with no home, or anyone to care for her. Life changes for her when she meets Jane, the midwife, who needs a helper. An enlightening story of time gone by, attitudes and changes in medicine. For 11 years plus. (RT)

### *Shearwater Bell* ✓

by Margaret Beames  
Scholastic, 1997

Rona is sent to stay with her Grandmother, who she doesn't know, in the country. She meets up with Wiri who finds a diary they eventually work out was written by one of Wiri's ancestors. It describes his shipwreck and subsequent life among a Maori tribe. Rona and Wiri search for the lost treasure and find some answers from the past. An exciting story for 10 years plus. (RT)

### *Waiting for Anya*

by Michael Morpurgo  
Viking Penguin, 1990

Set in Vichy, France, in World War Two, Morpurgo writes a gripping war story from the viewpoint of a young country boy who discovers that a local farmhouse is being used as a collection point for young Jewish refugees who are then smuggled over the mountains into Spain. 10 - 14 years. (SG)

### *The Dragon's Boy*

by Jane Yolen  
Harper and Row, 1990

Like Karen Cushman, Jane Yolen has a gift for bringing the past to life. Set in the 1600's, *The Dragon's Boy* is the story of a young adopted boy, Artos, who, through a series of surprising discoveries, comes to realise his true identity. Children who know something of Arthurian legends will enjoy putting two and two together. A completely fresh perspective on the life of the legendary King Arthur. 9 - 13 years. (SG)

### ***Goodnight Mr Tom***

by Michelle Magorian  
Puffin Books, 1983

This moving story tells of the torments and triumphs of Willie, a youngster evacuated from London at the beginning of the Second World War and placed with an old man in the countryside. The development of both characters is very astute. The story has a tragic twist, when Willie is called back to London at the height of the bombing, but a very satisfying conclusion. 11 plus readers. (CA)

### ***Baptism of Fire***

by Christine Harris  
Random House, Australia, 1996

Set during the missionaries' early days in Fiji, this book creates authentic primitive settings and cleverly portrays a range of characters. Hannah Stanton, an orphan, has been sent to live with her missionary uncle and aunt and their family and she faces many challenges and mysterious happenings. 9 plus readers. (CA)

### ***The Wreck of the Zanzibar***

by Michael Morpurgo  
William Heinemann & Mammoth, 1995

Written in the form of a diary, kept by 14 year old Laura, this story is set in the Scilly Isles in 1907. Life is difficult for the Islanders, and many families move to the mainland. Laura's family is due to follow, but a violent storm brings an unexpected bonus - thanks largely to Laura. Suitable for competent 8 - 12 year olds. (JC)

### ***The Toby Man***

by Dick King-Smith  
Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1989

Set in 1730, this is the tale of a young boy, Tod Golightly, who becomes the family bread-winner after his father, a footpad, was killed while working one night. He finds it more difficult than he thought to follow his late father's advice and

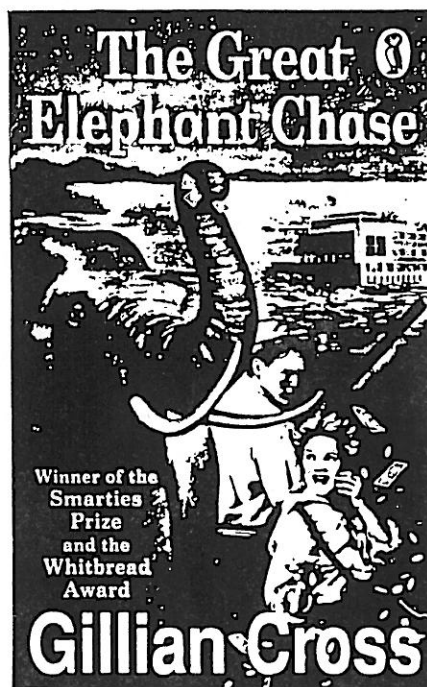
what ensues makes for a humorous, and occasionally touching story of friendship and adventure with a difference. 8 - 10 years olds. (JC)

## **Adventure**

### ***Elephant Gold***

by John Campbell  
Macmillan, 1997

An exciting story illustrating the terrible destruction of elephants, through senseless poaching, and one girl's involvement to protect them from a man bent on revenge. For good readers, aged 12 plus. (RT)



### ***The Great Elephant Chase***

by Gillian Cross  
Puffin, 1992

Tad and Cassie struggle to save an elephant by trekking across America to find refuge at Cassie's aunt's farm. The hard part is hiding the elephant along the way!! A fun, exciting story for 9 years plus. (RT).

### ***Take It Easy***

by David Hill  
Mallinson Rendel, 1995

A tramping adventure goes very wrong when the adult leader dies unexpectedly. Should the group stay put and wait for help, or try to find their own way out? A valuable book to help teach some basic facts of tramping in the bush, pertinent to New Zealanders especially! For 12 years plus. (RT, JC)

### ***Trapped***

by Judy Knox  
Scholastic, 1997

Paula disobeys her father, goes where she shouldn't out on the farm, and falls into a disused mine shaft with her dog. She spends the next few days trying to survive, and keeps her spirits up. She does some good hard thinking about life and her feelings for her dying grandfather. For 9 years plus. (RT)

### ***The Penguins' Day Out***

by Vivienne Joseph  
Mallinson Rendel, 1997

Two zoo-based penguins seize the opportunity to have day on the town. They enjoy an adventurous day performing to school children and being heroes. The vibrant wash and crayon drawings are delightful. (JS)

### ***Strange Company***

by Helen Beaglehole  
Cape Catley, 1996

A family's Christmas sailing holiday in the Marlborough Sounds turns into quite an adventure when the children stumble upon a gang of tuatara smugglers. Well written with plenty of suspense and a very realistic cast of characters. It is refreshing to read about a functional family who actually holiday together. This is a great New Zealand read, especially if you're into yachting. 9 - 12 years. (SG, JS)

### ***A Dolphin in the Bay***

by Diana Noonan

Omnibus Books, 1993

Seb is a ten year old boy with many talents but no sports skills and a fear of the sea. During a summer holiday on the coast he becomes fascinated by dolphins and this leads to a nerve wracking adventure. Good character portrayals and a mix of dialogue and descriptive prose make this a great read for 8 years plus. (CA, JC)

### ***Donkey Dust***

by Jane Buxton

Mallinson Rendel, 1997

Three children with a donkey and cart make a holiday trip to find their father. Their devious dealings and ingenious antics make for a good adventure story. The ending resolves a complicated family situation. Will be enjoyed by 8 - 10 years olds. (CA)

### ***Night Race to Kawau***

by Tessa Duder

Puffin Books, 1985

Recently rejacketed, this book tells of a family's adventures aboard their yacht during an overnight race to Kawau Island. A change in the weather changes many things. Accurate boating terminology (excellent glossary) and well paced authentic situations make this a gripping story for 9 plus readers. (CA)

### ***Biddy Alone***

by Wanda Cowley

Mallinson Rendel, 1988

Biddy has been told that she is not allowed to take her cat with her when the family moves to an island bird sanctuary for her father's new job. The consequences of her disobedience make great reading for 8 - 10 year olds.

The sequel, *Biddy and the Night Birds*, involves Biddy in a mystery involving protected species. Both books have a strong conservation message. 8 - 10 years olds. (CA)

## **Fantasy**

### ***Northern Lights***

by Philip Pulman

Scholastic, 1995

Lyra's quest to find her friend Roger, takes her to the bleak North, where armoured bears rule the ice and witch-queens fly through the frozen skies - and where a team of scientists is conducting experiments too horrible to be spoken about. A long story suitable for good readers over 12. (RT)



### ***My Sister Sif***

by Ruth Park

Puffin, 1988, 1996

Erika is concerned about what is happening to her home under the sea. When the scientist, Henry Jacks, falls in love with her sister, Sif, she becomes concerned that everything will be ruined, including their family secret. A moving story based on Conservation of our Earth, suitable for 12 years plus. (RT)

### ***Harriets' Hare***

by Dick King Smith

Doubleday, 1994

Harriet meets up with Wiz, a talking hare, a very unusual hare from the far-off planet, Pars. He becomes her friend and plans a wonderful surprise for her. A moving, funny story for 8 years plus. (RT)

### ***Dragonfox***

by Andrew Lansdown

Scholastic, 1997

A sequel to *With my Knife* (but not essential to have read it before reading this one). Colyn returns through the triangular entry to the land of Klarin, where the dragons live, to prevent them entering his land and destroying it. An exciting story of fantasy, of boy against beast, for 10 years plus. (RT)

### ***Howl's Moving Castle***

by Diana Wynne Jones

Methuen, 1986.

Mammoth

Paperback

This is quite a challenging read for 10 and upwards but is a wonderfully witty fantasy containing a moving castle, a wizard, a fire demon, a witch, three beautiful daughters and an abundance of spells and charms all mixed into one of this author's special recipes. Try also *The Lives of Christopher Chant*. (HB)

### ***Wild Magic***

by Tamora Pierce

Atheneum, 1992. Scholastic, 1993.

This is the first book in a four part fantasy which follows on from the *Song of the Lioness* series. Daine, a thirteen year old orphan, discovers she possesses "wild magic" which enables her to communicate with animals and harness their minds. Adventure as well as fantasy for 10 years plus. (HB)

### ***The Enchanted Forest Chronicles***

by Patricia Wrede

*Dealing with Dragons* Harcourt  
Brace Jovanovich, 1990

*Searching for Dragons* Harcourt  
Brace Jovanovich, 1991

*Calling on Dragons* Jane Yolen  
Books, 1993

*Talking to Dragons* Harcourt  
Brace Jovanovich, 1993

The first two titles are available in Scholastic Point Fantasy as *Dragonsbane* and *Dragonsearch*.

A lighthearted fantasy series which turns the conventional expectations of fairy tales upside down, beginning with the Princess Cimorene taking refuge with a dragon to escape from unwanted suitors and refusing to be rescued. Great fun for 8 or 9 years plus. (HB).

*Playing Beattie Bow* ✓

by Ruth Park  
Penguin, 1982

Unhappy and unsettled, Abigail Kirk tries to understand the changing relationships between her parents. She enters into a child's game, called *Beattie Bow* in the street outside her Sydney home and is immediately drawn into a nineteenth century world of horses, carriages, beggars and wooden bridges. Abigail experiences wonderful adventures that ultimately enable her to come to terms with her own unsettled life at home. (JS)

*Ben's Dream*

by Chris Van Ahlsburg  
Houghton Mifflin, 1982

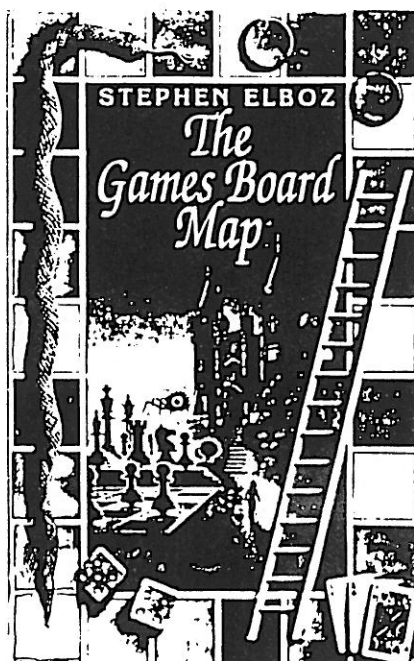
Ben falls asleep reading a boring geography book. He is studying for a test the next day. Suddenly the rain starts falling and Ben's house floats away around the world - visiting the very objects he was learning about. The contrasting details and patterns of Van Ahlsburg's work enhance the quality of this great story. (JS)

*The Games Board Map*

by Stephen Elboz  
Lions, Harper Collins, 1994

Stephen Elboz mixes magic, humour and wit in this fantastical adventure in which the heroine, Hebe Behan, must negotiate a "real life" snakes

and ladders game in order to thwart her despotic cousin, Maxwell and save the kingdom from destruction. Full of the most extraordinary happenings and characters all connected in one way or another with various games, this story will appeal to children with a love of humour, word play and the unexpected. Reads aloud very well. 9 years plus. (SG)



*Rocco* ✓

by Sherryl Jordan  
Scholastic, 1990

Sherryl Jordan has a gift for evoking the atmosphere of other places, other times. One can almost smell the smoke of the cooking fires in this story of a twentieth century teenage boy who finds himself transported to a bare and rocky landscape in what seems to be time past, his only hope of survival being acceptance by a primitive band of cave dwellers. Such is the power of the writing, the reader becomes totally involved in the lives of the characters, so that when all assumptions are turned upside down at the end, the effect is both surprising and unforgettable. 10 years plus. (SG)

*Toots and the Upside Down House*

by Carol Hughes  
Bloomsbury Children Books, 1996

A chapter book fantasy for younger readers. A young girl discovers the fairies that live in the upside down world in the ceiling. She also encounters the sprites and the goblins under the floor boards. The good versus bad antics climax in her involvement to stop Jack Frost freezing the pipes. 7 - 9 year old readers. (CA)

## Science Fiction - Futuristic

*Deepwater Black* ✓

by Ken Catran  
Harper Collins, 1992

Robbie is caught up in a situation he needs to resolve before he and his crewmates are lost forever in the black depths of the universe. Is the spaceship, *Deepwater*, his home, or is Earth? The first in an exciting series for lovers of science-fiction, from age 9. (RT)

*World-Eater*

by Robert Swindells ✓  
Hodder & Stoughton, 1991

Eleven year old Orville suspects something sinister is about to happen when a new planet is discovered. He has a theory, but will anyone listen to a child? A very exciting story what is out there...?. For 9 years plus. (RT)

*Tomorrow When the War Began* ✓

by John Marsden  
Pan Macmillan, 1993

A thought provoking account of a group of teenagers forced to cope on their own and grow up in a hurry when their town is taken over by foreign invaders while they are away camping. This is the first in a series of four books, each of which is equally riveting. For mature readers. (HB)

### ***The Onager***

by Ken Catran  
Harper Collins, 1996

This story is set in the near future when humans have destroyed the environment. To avoid plagues and harsh sunlight they are forced to live in isolation from the rest of the world or underground. Two teenagers, Lana and Chris, are drawn into a dangerous underworld as they strive to find some hope for a better future. (JS)

### ***The Outcast***

by Patricia Bernard  
Harper Collins, 1997

This story is set in a society in which people are either haves or have-nots. Fish is neither a Mega or a Zoner. Born into the Zoner's world of the survival of the fittest, he has the looks of a Mega and is therefore mistrusted by all, even his family. But it is Fish who is destined to bring the two groups together. There is much to think about and discuss in this gripping novel. (JS)

### ***Galax-Arena***

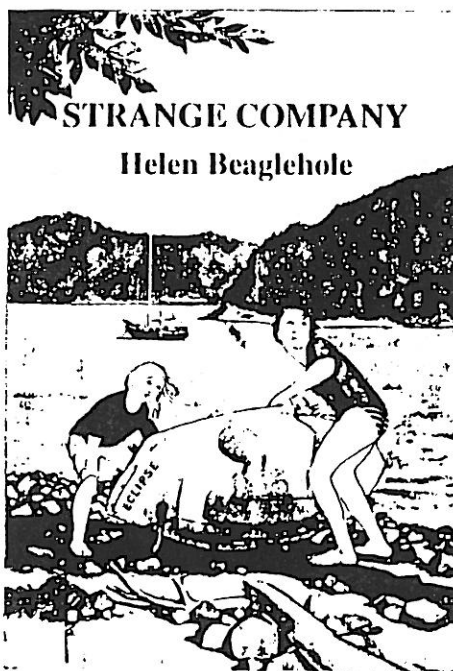
by Gillian Rubinstein  
Puffin, 1994

A brother and two sisters are kidnapped and taken to what they believe is another planet, there to join a group of children kept as slaves and performers for their alien masters. Powerless and grief-stricken, they must adapt or die. Two of them gradually accept their new life but the middle child, Joella, who says of herself "the only thing I've ever been any good at is seeing the truth", continues to question at great personal cost, eventually exposing a monstrous deception. Rubinstein, like Joella, sees the truth. Within a stunningly original plot she explores suffering and pain, beauty and courage, truth versus manipulation and deceit. Recommended for 10 years plus and I imagine it would be good to read aloud. (SG)

### ***The Electric Kid***

by Garry Kilworth  
Orchard, 1995

Inspired by Richmal Crompton's "William" books as a child, Garry Kilworth has invested this futuristic, high tech story with the same feisty spirit and unshakeable code of honour. Kilworth's heroes are a 13 year old girl with a genius for electronics and an 11 year old blind boy who together manage to scavenge a living from the city dump that is their home. Inadvertently coming to the attention of the city's most feared criminal they become involved in a sequence of events that will keep any reader on the edge of his or her seat. 10 years plus. (SG)



### ***Under the Mountain***

by Maurice Gee  
Puffin Books, 1981

Twins Rachel and Theo possess the powers to rid the city of creatures from another galaxy, which are living under the city's extinct volcanoes and which threaten to take over the world. Animated dialogue and descriptive passages create suspense and excitement in this science fiction fantasy. Suitable for 8 plus readers. (CA)

### ***Timedetectors***

by Darrel & Sally Odgers  
Shortland Publications, 1995

The discovery of a skull on a simple weekend camping trip is the beginning of a strange adventure for Tom and Coxie. Buried with the skull is a medallion made of a metal that has never been detected. A second, matching medallion takes the boys into another time to do an important job. Will they ever get back - that is the question? 8 - 9 years plus. (JC)

## **Mystery**

### ***Mysteries of Harris Burdick***

by Chris Van Ahlsburg  
Houghton Mifflin, 1984

Each picture contains a mystery and a story that is either bizarre, funny or scary. What a wonderful tool for the teaching and learning of creative writing, oral story telling or descriptive writing. This sophisticated picture book is for all ages - adults too! (JS)

### ***Ghost at Codlin Castle***

Dick King Smith  
Viking, 1992

Dick King Smith introduces fascinating characters in his marvellously varied collection of short stories. Dip into them now. (JS)

### ***Angel's Gate***

by Gary Crew  
William Heinemann, 1993

A twist of fate leads to murder and to two children living wild in the mountainous region surrounding a small country town in Australia. Crew weaves local history into a tale of rumour and intrigue, the outcome of which leaves its mark on many people in the community, in particular the son and teenage daughter of the local doctor, themselves at turning points in their lives. 12 years plus. (SG)

### **Henry's Leg**

by Ann Pilling  
Puffin, 1989

Family troubles mean that life is complicated for Henry, he has to make do as best he can with odd jobs and temporary schemes to earn pocket money. Then, his passion for collecting junk leads him to find something that someone else wants very much indeed, landing him in the middle of a real life thriller. Funny and exciting with a vivid cast of characters. 10 years plus. (SG)

### **Timothy Whuffenpuffen-Whippersnapper**

by Sally Odgers

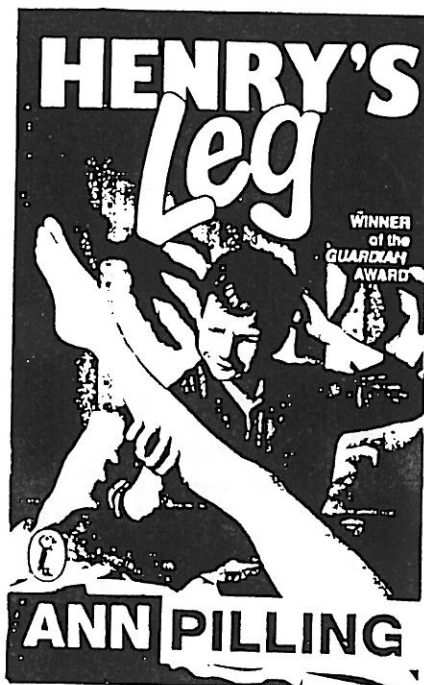
Shortland Publications Ltd, 1995  
Christmas in the Whippersnapper family is regularly enlivened by the arrival, for Marcus, of an extraordinary 'live' gift from his Great Uncle Hinkley, including a llama, frilled lizard and a penguin. This year, a magical flying dragon called Timothy arrives to be joined soon after by Petronella Patella, an acrobatic clown. In no time at all, Marcus finds himself joining them in the search for his Great Uncle. Suitable for independent readers 7 years plus. (JC)

### **Cosmic Cousin**

by Nancy Hayashi

E.P. Dutton (Penguin), 1988

Sci-Fi books are Eunice's favourites. While reading her latest selection from the library she discovers a note, signed Cosmic Cousin. She leaves a note in another book, which leads to yet another note. So begins Eunice's quest to discover the identity of the mysterious Cosmic Cousin. 8 years plus. (JC)



### **Read Alouds.**

Some further suggestions - thanks to Paula Legel, Co-ordinator, Children's and Teenagers' Services, Auckland City Libraries, and a number of her colleagues.

#### **Years 3 - 4 (Std 1 and 2)**

Scieszka, Jon

*The True Story of the Three Little Pigs. The Frog Prince Continued*

Smith, Dodie

*The 101 Dalmations* (3-8)

#### **Years 5 - 6 (Std 3 and 4)**

Adams, Douglas

*Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*

Jacques, Brian

*Mattimeo, Outcast of Redwall* and other titles

Jennings, Paul

*The Naked Ghost* and other stories.

#### **Years 7 - 8 (Form 1 and 2)**

Hill, David *See Ya Simon*

#### **Any Age**

Blacker, Terence *Mz Whiz,*

Grahame, Kenneth

*The Wind in the Willows*

Mahy, Margaret

*Blood and Thunder Adventure on Hurricane Peak*

Milne, AA *House on Pooh Corner*

Taylor, William *Faz Twins*

### **CLA CONTACTS 1997**

#### **Children's Literature**

**Association of New Zealand  
Auckland Central and North  
Shore**

PO Box 26-020, Epsom,  
Auckland

Sally Gallagher Ph: 524-2767

Gail Hofmann Ph: 523-1548

#### **South Auckland**

Secretary: Jane Smith

PO Box 82-313

Highland Park

Ph: (09) 535-9299

#### **West Auckland**

Contact: Frances Plumpton

C/o Waitemata Public Libraries

PO Box 45-012

Auckland 8

#### **Waikato**

Secretary: Louise Clark

PO Box 13-100

Hamilton

Ph: (07) 856-2737

#### **Hawkes Bay**

Secretary: Pam Clare

50 Vigor Brown Street

Napier

Ph: (06) 835-6236

#### **Bay of Plenty**

Secretary: Lee Rowe

C/o Tauranga District Libraries

Private Bag

Tauranga

Ph: (07) 577-7177

#### **Contacts in other main centres**

##### **Wellington**

Wellington Children's Book  
Association

C/o Barbara Murison

PO Box 1242

Wellington Railway Station

Wellington

##### **Christchurch**

Contact: Veda Pickles

64 Winters Road

Papanui

Christchurch

##### **Dunedin**

Contact: Gillian Newman

C/o University Bookshop

PO Box 6060

Dunedin