

# Junior Novels

Children who are becoming independent in their reading - on average between the ages of seven and nine years - need a wide range of easily accessible material: picture books, puzzle books, non-fiction, folk tales, poetry, short novels, jokes and riddles...we should be borrowing up to our limit on every library visit. The emphasis here is on success and enjoyment. Do not forget that conceptual understanding is usually well below reading age. We love to hear that our eight year old has a reading age of fourteen but that does not mean he or she is capable of reading a fourteen year old's book (we're talking about reading alone). In general, children should be given independent material back one or two levels from what they are reading in instructional material.

Look for well written, entertaining stories that reflect the interests of children of this age. Avoid large quantities of text and/or small print, both of which can be off-putting. A generous sized print, illustrations inserted into the text and short chapters are far more encouraging.

In the May 1996 issue of Voice we published a list of Series Titles such as Jets, Young Puffin and Omnibus Dippers, which are perfect for newly independent 7 - 9 year olds. This time, we thought we would focus on Junior Novels, individually published chapter books of approximately hundred pages, suitable for 7 - 9 year olds to read alone.

Selections are identified by the reviewers initials thus:- Betty Gilderdale (BG), Rosemary Tisdall (RT), Carol Arden (CA), Sally Gallagher (SG), Judy Coleman (JC), Helen Beckingsale (HB).

## *The Last Slice of Rainbow and other Stories*

by Joan Aiken  
Puffin 1988

Nine magical and mysterious tales, some set in faraway fairy-tale lands, some in everyday places, all told by a master storyteller. The type size and layout of the pages with plenty of illustrations make this a very accessible "chapter book" for young readers. (SG)

## *Emily Eyefinger*

by Duncan Ball  
Angus & Robertson 1997

How useful do you think an eye would be on the end of your finger? Anecdotes about Emily's uses for her eyefinger, and several humorous plays on names, will provide lots of laughs for your readers. An easy read with lots of dialogue for 7 - 9 year olds. (CA)

## *Archway Arrow*

by Margaret Beames  
Scholastic 1996

What happens in small town New Zealand when a group of children enter a competition to build a raft for less than ten dollars, then enter it into a raft race. Excitement and rivalry, not to mention having to teach one of their number to swim. (BG)

## *The Shearwater Bell*

by Margaret Beames  
Scholastic 1997

When Rona goes to stay with her grandmother at the beach she is puzzled to hear the sound of a bell ringing beneath her bedroom. The search for the invisible bell leads her both to friendship with a local boy and to unravel puzzles of the past. (BG)

## *Adventure Series*

by Enid Blyton  
Macmillan 1988 (revised)

One of three series of books written by this popular, if at times controversial author. Along with the *Mystery Series* and the *Secret Series* they are all exciting adventure stories of children overcoming evil. (RT)

## *The Adventures of Olga da Polga*

by Michael Bond  
Puffin Books 1993

Any child who keeps pets or likes animals will delight in the lively, humorous adventures of Olga da Polga, who just happens to be a guinea pig. Written in short chapters with well spaced type and plenty of wonderful drawings by Hans Helwig, Michael Bond (author of *A Bear Called Paddington*) has done it again. Chapters can be read individually or in sequence, and sport headings like "Olga Sets A Trap", "Disaster", and "An Unexpected Visit". A well read favourite in our household. (SG)

## *Double Dilemma*

by Tom Bradley  
Harper Collins 1995

In this, the second of the Brightside Bunch series, we meet the Wozinsky Freeman families just after Michael and Paula have married. Both families are living in what was the Freeman house, and it soon become very clear to Sonia and Todd that a new house is needed - a house that belongs to all of them. Also in the series; *Crowded House*, *Trading Spaces*, *Fair Weather*, *Father Daze*. (JC)

## *Mr Majeika*

by Humphrey Carpenter  
Puffin Books 1985

Class Three's new teacher arrives on a magical carpet, so you can



imagine the excitement. He even manages to work some magic on the class pest. Lots of dialogue and small pen sketches throughout. Other titles in this series also suitable at this level - 7 - 8 year olds. (CA)

***Biddy Alone***

by Wanda Cowley

Mallinson Rendel 1988

The young daughter of a conservation officer smuggles her cat onto an island sanctuary. Strong New Zealand setting with good descriptive passages and lively dialogue. A sound conservation message. A good read aloud as well as a satisfying read for individuals 8 - 9. Also the sequel *Biddy and Night Birds*. (CA)

***Teacher's Pet***

by Jenny Dale

Macmillan 1997

One of the excellent "Puppy Patrol" series, based on a family which runs a boarding kennel. Here the son, Neil, faces a tricky situation when he is asked to train his teacher's dog - a very naughty Dalmatian. (BG)

***Dog at the Door***

by Lucy Daniels

Hodder Headline 1997

Mandy's parents are vets whose surgery is called "Animal Ark". This is also the name of the series which features a number of different animals. This latest book tells the story of an abandoned golden retriever - just before her puppies are due to arrive. (BG)

***Bill's New Frock***

by Anne Fine

Methuen 1990

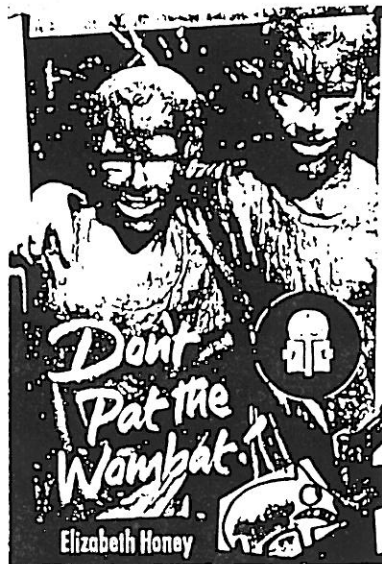
A very funny account of a young boy who wakes up one Monday morning to find he is a girl. Forced off to school in a frilly pink dress, Bill finds things are just *different* for girls, and falls headlong into trouble. Winner of the Smarties Book Prize 1989. (SG)

***Only A Show***

by Anne Fine

Hamish Hamilton 1990

An amusing and reassuring story about Anna who feels very ordinary and thinks she cannot possibly do anything special for the class 'show'. However, she discovers, quite by chance, that what she regards as ordinary, seems very special and exciting to her classmates. Also recommended; *How to Write Really Badly, Diary of a Killer Cat*. (JC)



***Don't Pat the Wombat***

by Elizabeth Honey

Allen & Unwin 1996

Written from the viewpoint of the main character, ten year old Mark Ryder, complete with a ten year old's nutty drawings (the author's son) and a number of crazy photographs, *Don't Pat the Wombat* is a hilarious account of a ten year old's life. The stories, observations and escapades are irresistible. They're close to home too. A Children's Book Council of Australia Honour Book. (SG)

***The Iron Man***

by Ted Hughes

Faber & Faber 1989

An extraordinary and compelling modern myth, full of power and fantastic imagery which children of this age can relate to. The Iron Man appears mysteriously and causes problems for the people,

eating anything made of iron. Hogarth, his father and other villagers try to get rid of him, but eventually realise he has an important role to play in not just saving them, but the whole planet. (JC)

***The Iron Woman***

by Ted Hughes

Faber & Faber 1993

This is a sequel to *The Iron Man*, equally powerful and similarly a message about the relentless pollution of the Earth, through dumping of industrial waste. Lucy needs to save her Dad from harm when the Iron Woman decides to destroy the waste-disposal factory, where he works. Who better to ask for help, than Hogarth and the Iron Man? (JC)

***Little House on the Prairie***

by Laura Ingalls-Wilder

Harper Trophy 1971

Young Laura's adventures continue on from *Little House in the Big Woods* in this gentle story of her family, early American settlers, making their home on the Prairie - in Indian territory. Readers read in awe as Laura's father builds the house and barn, ploughs the fields, helps new neighbours, hunts, plays the violin and generally develops their new life in the West, without the use of modern tools or inventions. (RT)

***Denzil's Great Bear Burglary***

by Sherryl Jordan

Scholastic 1997

A welcome re-appearance of Denzil, a medieval sorcerer's apprentice. Denzil has promised his master never to use magic on animals - but what is he to do when he sees a dancing bear cruelly ill-treated? His solution is to time-travel to 20<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand, with hilarious results. (BG)

***A Mouse called Wolf***

by Dick King-Smith

Doubleday 1997



Another of King-Smith's unusual animals - this time a mouse who can sing. This is because he is named after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Wolf for short). An endearing, and very funny story, with a brief account of Mozart's life at the end. (BG)

***George Speaks***

by Dick King-Smith ✓  
Puffin Books 1989

Seven year old Laura has a secret. Her 4 week old baby brother can talk! He gradually introduces more words to his surprised mother, including telling her what he would like for lunch or dinner. Laura helps prepare him for his big speech to the extended family on his first birthday. A very funny book by a very popular author. (RT)

***Sophie's Further Adventures***

by Dick King Smith  
Walker 1997

Sophie is almost superseding "Milly Molly Mandy" in popularity with the younger end of this age group. This is an omnibus edition which includes "Sophie in the Saddle, Sophie is Seven and Sophie's Lucky. Sophie's one ambition is to become a farmer, and she proves to be a sturdy, very independent character who brooks no nonsense in the pursuit of her goal. (BG)

***Trapped***

by Judy Knox ✓  
Scholastic 1997

Paula disobeys her father and goes where she shouldn't out on the farm. She falls into a disused mine shaft with her dog. She spends the next few days fighting to survive and keep her spirits up. She finds herself thinking hard about herself, her life and her feelings for her dying grandfather. (RT)

***Pippi Longstocking*** ✓

by Astrid Lindgren  
Puffin Books 1976

A funny story of a red-haired, very strong girl who lives by herself with

a horse and a monkey. She can do exactly what she likes! And she does, much to the delight of her two friends. (RT)

***The Horribly Haunted School***

by Margaret Mahy  
Hamish Hamilton 1997

Classic Mahy. Monty Merryandrew's sensible parents are horrified to discover that their son can perceive ghosts. He is sent to a School of Sensible Thought to rectify this fault, but when he discovers the ghost of a former headmaster chaos ensues. As always with Mahy, amongst the fun there is an underlying question. Is common sense always right, or is the imaginative approach sometimes better? (BG)



***A Fortunate Name***

by Margaret Mahy  
Transworld Publishers 1994

This is the second title in a riveting quartet of novels about a group of cousins growing up in a small New Zealand town. It tells how the cousins help Lolly, who isn't a Fortune but would like to be, after her parents row and her father leaves home. Led by Tracey - Trace the Ace - the cousins come up with a crazy plan to get Lolly's parents back together again. Other titles in the series; *The Good Fortunes Gang*, *A Fortune Branches Out*, *Tangled Fortunes*. Also recommended by Mahy, *Leaf Magic and Five Other Favourites*

(Waiatarua Publications, 1984) and *The Little Witch and Five Other Favourites* (Puffin, 1987). These two books of amusing and enchanting short stories are ideal for young readers just venturing into the world of literature. (JC)

***Nonstop Nonsense***

by Margaret Mahy  
Mammoth 1990

A delightful collection of poems and stories illustrated by Quentin Blake. Great for children who like to play with words. (HB)

***Why the Whales Came***

by Michael Morpurgo  
Collins Educational 1989

Set in 1914, in the Isles of Scilly, off the coast of Cornwall, this story tells of the curse of the Island of Samson, the strange old man who lives there, and Ceracie and Daniel who befriend him. Sensitive written, this story is suitable for 9 - 10 year olds. (JC)

***The Sandman and the Turtle***

by Michael Morpurgo  
Heinemann 1993

A magical, imaginative and amusing story, about a young boy on a family holiday, and the tales told by his grandfather. (JC)

***The Worst Witch***

by Jill Murphy ✓  
A Young Puffin 1978

The escapades of the students at Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches create all sorts of amusing situations. Traditional silhouettes and delightfully funny ink drawings are interspersed with the text. There are other titles by Jill Murphy in this series. Suitable for 7 - 8 year olds. (CA)

***Seth and the Strangers***

by Jenny Nimmo  
Mammoth Books 1997

Seth and his sister notice tiny silver discs fall from a dark hovering cloud. Bingo the dog is frightened by things unseen. The neighbour

thinks the end of the world is nigh. However, Seth is sure the visitors need help. A science fiction fantasy for younger readers aged 8 - 9 years old. (CA)

***The Owl Tree***

by Jenny Nimmo

Walker Books 1997

Quiet Joe and his tomboy sister, Minna, are staying with their Gran. The neighbour wants to cut down a huge tree, but Joe is determined to save it. Full page pen and ink illustrations for each chapter. Good read aloud at Year 3 level and suitable for 7 - 9 year olds. (CA)

***Dolphin in the Bay***

by Diana Noonan ✓

Omnibus Books 1995

Short-sighted Seb is not enjoying his holiday at the beach until he becomes fascinated by stories of a dolphin in the bay. It's appearance gives him a focus and a challenging task brings new confidence. Well written with good character portrayals and a New Zealand flavour. Excellent read aloud and riveting read for 8 to 9 year olds. (CA)

***Sunny the Hero***

by Jenny Oldfield

Hodder Headline

1997

Another book in the popular, well-written series of "Home Farm Twins". Here the twins take pity on the runt of a litter of pigs. They want to hand rear it and keep it for a pet, but, as always, there are the harsh realities of farming to set against sentimentality. A satisfying end nevertheless. (BG)

***The Firework-Maker's Daughter***

by Philip Pullman

Doubleday 1995

Lila wants to be a Firework Maker, but this is a strictly masculine profession. To prove her capability she has to undertake a perilous journey to fetch Royal Sulphur from

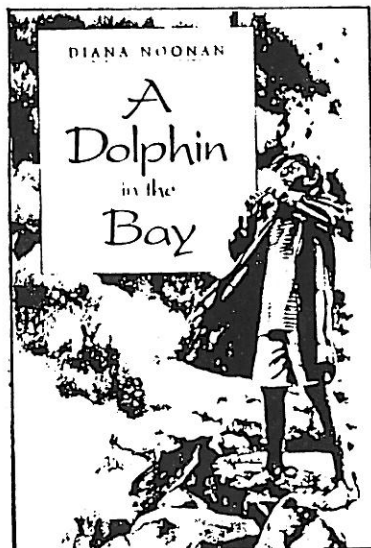
the distant Fire Fiend. This splendid mix of ancient tradition, contemporary attitudes and humour, is spiced with pirates, fiends, music-makers and officialdom. The subtext has to do with creativity and the single-mindedness necessary to achieve a goal., but there's no whiff of didacticism in this sparkling story. (BG)

***Rowan of Rin***

by Emily Rodda

Omnibus Books 1993

A fantasy in which Rowan, a timid boy who is thought of as a weakling, finds he has the ability to face his fears. It is he, rather than the seemingly strong adults, who wins through and saves his village when their water supply fails. Also *Rowan and the Travellers* (Omnibus Books, 1994) and *Rowan and the Keeper of the Crystal* (Omnibus Books, 1996). Two more stories about Rowan who continues to prove his worth to the people of his village. (HB)



***No More Moas***

by Duncan Scott

Scholastic 1997

Some very lively keas being observed by Natural World film makers get tired of the attention. With the help of Morris the Morepork they create a diversion for the film crew. Excellent pen drawings with a touch of caricature. A funny New Zealand book for 8 -9 year olds. (CA)

***The Junkyard Dog***

by Erika Tamar

Alfred A Knopf 1995

A warm hearted story about a young girl who finds and befriends an abused dog, in the process also coming to know and accept her new stepfather. No illustrations but very accessible print. (SG)

***The Suitcase Kid*** ✓

by Jaqueline Wilson

Yearling 1993

"It was as easy as ABC". Well, that is what Andy was told as she had to adjust to her new life after her parents' divorce. An amusing look at the changes a child has to come to terms with in this situation. Written with ABC headings for each chapter to relate to what point Andy is making. (RT)

***Cliffhanger*** ✓

by Jaqueline Wilson

Yearling 1995

Tim is not at all keen to go to Adventure Camp. However, as his post cards tell, lots of things change during a week at camp. A humorous easy read suitable for 7 - 9 year olds. (CA)

Not Junior Novels but not to be missed....

***Shark-Infested Custard***

A Kiwi Kid's Joke Book

by John Barnett and Lesley Kaiser

Puffin Books 1997

An irresistible collection of jokes, puns, brainteasers, riddles and tall stories which every 7 - 9 year old should own. Plenty of reading and plenty of fun. (SG)

***Making Friends with Frankenstein***

by Colin McNaughton

Walker Books 1997

Fifty-six poems about monsters, ghouls, dinosaurs and nutty happenings with titles like Ogre My Dead Body, An Abominable Verse, You Must Be Jealous of Me. (SG)