

# CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

CLASSIC TEXTS AND  
CONTEMPORARY TRENDS



Edited by Heather Montgomery  
and Nicola J. Watson



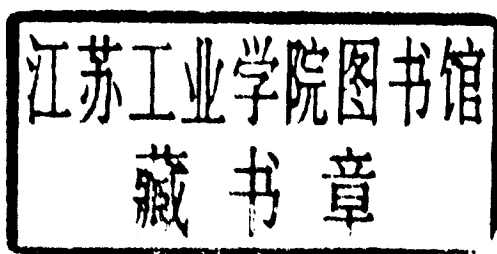
The Open  
University



# Children's Literature: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends

*Edited by*

Heather Montgomery and Nicola J. Watson



palgrave  
macmillan



The Open  
University



©2009 Compilation, original and editorial material, The Open University

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The editors have asserted their right to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2009 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN in association with THE OPEN UNIVERSITY.

The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC,  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries

ISBN-13: 978-0-230-22714-9 paperback

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09

Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

# Plates

(between pp. 80 and 81)

- 1 Front cover, Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (1868), illus. Frank T. Merrill, London: David Boyne, 1880
- 2 Front cover, Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, London: Cassell & Co., [1881] 1883
- 3 Front cover, Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Child's Garden of Verses*, illus. Millicent Sowerby, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905
- 4 Front cover, Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, London: Frederick Warne & Co.
- 5 Design for a theatre poster by Charles Buchel advertising the original 1904 production of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*
- 6 Front cover, Daniel S. O'Connor and Alice B. Woodward, *The Peter Pan Picture Book*, London, George Bell & Sons, 1907
- 7 Dust jacket, A.A. Milne, *When We Were Very Young*, illus. Ernest H. Shepard, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1932
- 8 Dust jacket, Arthur Ransome, *Swallows and Amazons*, illus. Arthur Ransome, London: Jonathan Cape, [1930] 2008
- 9 Dust jacket, Philippa Pearce, *Tom's Midnight Garden*, illus. Susan Einzig, Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1958] 2008
- 10 Dust jacket, Mildred D. Taylor, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, illus. Jerry Pinkney, New York: Dial Press, 1976
- 11 Front cover, Philip Pullman, *Northern Lights* (cover illus. David Scutt), London: Scholastic Children's Books, 1998
- 12 Front cover, J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, (cover illus. Thomas Taylor), London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1997
- 13 Front cover, Melvin Burgess, *Junk*, London: Penguin Books, 1997
- 14 Front cover, Beverley Naidoo, *The Other Side of Truth*, London: Puffin, 2000
- 15 Front cover, Jamila Gavin, *Coram Boy*, London: Egmont UK Ltd, 2000
- 16 Front cover, Philip Reeve, *Mortal Engines* (cover illus. David Frankland), London: Scholastic Children's Books, 2001

# Acknowledgements

This volume was produced by the team responsible for preparing the Open University course in Children's Literature (EA300) and was a collaboration between the Faculties of Education and Arts. Course team members are credited as the authors of the Introductions for each section. In the preparation of this course we consulted widely, and are grateful for advice provided by Peter Barnes, Peter Hunt, Kim Reynolds, Kay Sambell, Philip Seargeant, Nigel Thomas and other critical readers of the material in draft.

The editors would also like to acknowledge the many people who worked behind the scenes to produce this book. At the Open University, we would like to thank Liz Camp, course manager; and Christine Hardwick, course secretary, for all their help with the preparation of this manuscript and for making sure deadlines were met. Gill Gowans and Gary Nelmes also worked tirelessly to ensure that the book came together on schedule.

At Palgrave we would like to thank Senior Editor Kate Haines, Production Editor Sarah Fry, Administrative Secretary Felicity Noble and Senior Marketing Executive Abigail Coften.

## For copyright text

The authors and publishers wish to thank the following for permission to use copyright material:

Allyn and Bacon/Merrill Education for material from Cicely Denean Cobb, 'If You Give A Nigger An Inch, They Will Take An Ell': The Role of Education in Mildred D. Taylor's *Roll of Thunder*' from *Exploring Culturally Diverse Literature For Children And Adolescents: Learning To Listen In New Ways*, eds, Darwin L. Henderson and Jill P. May (2005) pp. 196–204. Copyright © 2005 by Pearson Education;

Continuum Publishing Group for material from Claire Squires, *Philip Pullman, Master Storyteller: A Guide to the Worlds of His Dark Materials* by Claire Squires (2003) pp. 115–33;

Copyright Clearance Center on behalf of Taylor & Francis Group LLC for material from Margaret Mackay, *The Case of Peter Rabbit: Changing Conditions of Literature for Children*, Garland Publishers (1998) pp. 3–13; Naomi Wood, 'Lost and Found: Obedience, Disobedience, and

Storytelling' in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman', *Children's Literature in Education*, 32:4 (2001) pp. 237–59; Michael Rosen, 'Robert Louis Stevenson and Children's Play: The Contexts of *A Child's Garden of Verses*', *Children's Literature in Education*, 26:1 (1995) pp. 53–69; Nicholas Tucker, 'Arthur Ransome and Problems of Literary Assessment', *Children's Literature in Education*, 26 (1995) pp. 97–105; Kelly McDowell, 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry: A Culturally Specific, Subversive Concept of Child Agency', *Children's Literature in Education*, 33:3 (2002) pp. 213–25; Anne-Marie Bird, '"Without Contraries is no Progression": Dust as an All-Inclusive, Multifunctional Metaphor in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*', *Children's Literature in Education*, 32:2 (2001) pp. 111–23; Melvin Burgess, 'Sympathy for the Devil', *Children's Literature in Education*, 35:4 (2004); Janis Dawson, 'Beneath their cheerful bunny faces, his slippers had steel toe caps': Traction Cities, Postmodernisms, and Coming of Age in Philip Reeve's *Mortal Engines*', *Children's Literature in Education*, 38 (2007) pp. 141–52; Peter Hollindale, 'A Hundred Years of Peter Pan', *Children's Literature in Education*, 36:3 (2005) pp. 197–215; Roni Natov, *The Poetics of Childhood*, Routledge (2003) pp. 95–101; and Jack Zipes, 'The Phenomenon of Harry Potter, or Why All the Talk' from *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter*, ed. Jack Zipes, Routledge (2001) pp. 170–89;

Feminist Studies, Inc. for material from Judith Fetterley, 'Little Women: Alcotts Civil War', *Feminist Studies*, 5:2 (Summer 1979) pp. 369–83;

Four Courts Press for Anne Bogen, 'The Island Come True: *Peter Pan*, Wild Cat Island, and the Lure of the Real' from *Treasure Islands: Studies in Children's Literature*, eds. Mary Shine Thompson and Celia Keenan (2006) pp. 53–61;

Peter Hollindale for his article 'Aesop in the Shadows', *Signal Approaches to Children's Books*, 89 (1999) pp. 115–32, Thimble Press;

The Johns Hopkins University Press for material from Ken Parille, 'Wake Up and Be a Man': *Little Women*, Laurie, and the Ethic of Submission', *Children's Literature*, 29 (2001) pp. 34–51; Sarah A. Wadsworth, 'Louisa May Alcott and the Rise of the Gender-Specific Series Books', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 25:1 (2001) pp. 17–46; Kay Sambell, 'Carnivalizing the Future: *Mortal Engines*', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 28 (2004) pp. 247–67; Christopher Parkes, 'Treasure Island and the Romance of the British Civil Service', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 31:4 (2006) pp. 332–45; and Hamida Bosmajian, 'Mildred Taylor's Story of Cassie Logan: A Search for Law and Justice in a Racist Society', *Children's Literature*, 24 (1996) pp. 141–60;

Methuen Publishing for material from Jackie Wullschläger, *Inventing Wonderland*, Methuen (1995) pp. 177–99;

The Random House Group Ltd for material from Peter Hunt, *Approaching Arthur Ransome*, Jonathan Cape (1992) pp. 84–99;

Scarecrow Press for material from Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr, 'Peter Pan and the Pantomime Tradition' from *Peter Pan In and Out of Time: A Children's Classic at 100*, eds. Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr (2006) pp. viii–xix; Maria Nikolajeva, *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature* (2000) pp. 103–9; and Carole Scott, 'An Unusual Hero: Perspective and Point of View in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*' from *Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit: A Children's Classic at 100* (2002) pp. 19–30;

Verso for material from Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin, *Narratives of Love and Loss: Studies in Modern Children's Fiction* (1987) pp. 27–39; and Andrew Blake, *The Irresistible Rise of Harry Potter* (2002) pp. 5–26.

## For copyright images

The editors and publishers wish to thank the following for permission to reproduce copyright material:

Alamy Ltd for Plate 2 © Mary Evans Picture Library/Alamy;

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc and Christopher Little Literary Agency for Plate 12, front cover of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling, first pub. 1997, Copyright © J.K. Rowling 1997, cover illustrations copyright © Thomas Taylor 1997;

The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford for Plate 1, front cover of *Little Women* by L.M. Alcott, David Boyne, 1880, shelfmark: Bodley 251 a.110; Plate 6, front cover of *The Peter Pan Picture Book* by Daniel S. O'Connor and Alice B. Woodward, George Bell & Sons, 1907, shelfmark (Nuneham): 2527 d.271; Figure 1, from *Treasure Island* by R.L. Stevenson, first illustrated edition 1885, shelfmark (Nuneham): 253 e.38 and Figure 9, illustration from *A Child's Garden of Verses* by R.L. Stevenson, illus. Charles Robinson, Lane & Scribner 1896, shelfmark: 280 e.1641a.

Chatto & Windus for Plate 3, front cover of *A Child's Garden of Verses*, by Robert Louis Stevenson, illus. Millicent Sowerby, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905;

Curtis Brown Group Ltd for Plate 7 and Figure 10, illustration from *When Were Very Young* by A. A. Milne, illustrated by E. H. Shephard,



23rd edition, Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1932. Copyright © The Estate of E. H. Shepard, reproduced with permission of Curtis Brown Group Ltd, London; Egmont UK Ltd for Plate 15, front cover of *Coram Boy* by Jamila Gavin © Jamila Gavin 2000, published by Egmont UK Ltd, London and used with permission;

Frederick Warne & Co. for Plate 4 and Figures 4, 5, 7 and 8, illustrations from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter, Copyright © Frederick Warne & Co., [1902] 2002;

Frederick Warne & Co. for Figures 2 and 3, from *A History of the Writings of Beatrix Potter* by Leslie Linder and Beatrix Potter, pub. Frederick Warne & Co., 1971, courtesy of the Frederick Warne archive;

Frederick Warne & Co. for Figure 6, illustration and text from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter, Copyright © Frederick Warne & Co., [1902] 2002;

Guildhall Library, City of London, for the John Rocque map of London, 1746 (map and ships) in the front cover design of *Coram Boy* by Jamila Gavin, Plate 15;

Mary Evans Picture Library for Plate 5;

Oxford University Press for Plate 9, cover illustration by Susan Einzig of *Tom's Midnight Garden* by Philippa Pearce (OUP, 1958 and 2008), reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press;

Penguin Books Ltd for Plate 13, front cover of *Junk* by Melvin Burgess (Penguin Books, 1997), Copyright © Melvin Burgess, 1997. Reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd;

Penguin Books Ltd for Plate 14, front cover of *The Other Side of Truth* by Beverley Naidoo (Puffin, 2000), Copyright © Beverley Naidoo, 2000;

Penguin Group (USA) Inc. and Cotsen Children's Library, Princeton University Library for Plate 10, front cover of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney, Dial Press, 1976;

Random House Group Ltd for Plate 8, front cover of *Swallows and Amazons* by Arthur Ransome, illustrated by Arthur Ransome, Jonathan Cape, 2008, first pub. 1930;

Scholastic Ltd for Plate 11, front cover of *Northern Lights* by Philip Pullman. Cover artwork © David Scutt, 1998. Reproduced with the permission of Scholastic Ltd. All Rights Reserved;



Scholastic Ltd. for Plate 16, front cover of *Mortal Engines* by Philip Reeve. Cover artwork © David Frankland, 2001. Reproduced with permission of Scholastic Ltd. All Rights Reserved;

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	ix
<i>List of Plates</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
Introduction	
<i>Heather Montgomery and Nicola J. Watson</i>	1
<b>Part 1 Classic Texts</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1 Louisa May Alcott, <i>Little Women</i> (1868–9)</b>	<b>13</b>
Introduction	13
<i>Nicola J. Watson</i>	
<i>Little Women</i> : Alcott's Civil War	18
<i>Judith Fetterley</i>	
'Wake up and be a man': <i>Little Women</i> , Laurie, and the Ethic of Submission	31
<i>Ken Parille</i>	
Louisa May Alcott and the Rise of Gender-Specific Series Books	39
<i>Sarah A. Wadsworth</i>	
<b>2 Robert Louis Stevenson, <i>Treasure Island</i> (1881–2; 1883)</b>	<b>49</b>
Introduction	49
<i>Sara Haslam</i>	
My First Book: ' <i>Treasure Island</i> '	53
<i>Robert Louis Stevenson</i>	
Slaves to Adventure: The Pure Story of <i>Treasure Island</i>	60
<i>Diana Loxley</i>	
<i>Treasure Island</i> and the Romance of the British Civil Service	69
<i>Christopher Parkes</i>	
<b>3 Beatrix Potter, <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> (1902)</b>	<b>81</b>
Introduction	81
<i>Sharon Goodman</i>	

Peter Rabbit: Potter's Story	87
<i>Margaret Mackey</i>	
Aesop in the Shadows	96
<i>Peter Hollindale</i>	
Perspective and Point of View in <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i>	100
<i>Carole Scott</i>	
<b>4 Two Classic Poetry Collections: Robert Louis Stevenson, <i>A Child's Garden of Verses</i> (1885) and A.A. Milne, <i>When We Were Very Young</i> (1924)</b>	<b>114</b>
Introduction	114
<i>Nicola J. Watson</i>	
The Contexts of <i>A Child's Garden of Verses</i>	119
<i>Michael Rosen</i>	
A.A. Milne: <i>When We Were Very Young</i>	132
<i>Jackie Wullschläger</i>	
<b>5 J.M. Barrie, <i>Peter Pan</i> (1904)</b>	<b>141</b>
Introduction	141
<i>Nicola J. Watson</i>	
<i>Peter Pan</i> and the Spectacle of the Child	145
<i>Jacqueline Rose</i>	
A Hundred Years of <i>Peter Pan</i>	153
<i>Peter Hollindale</i>	
<i>Peter Pan</i> and the Pantomime Tradition	164
<i>Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr</i>	
<b>6 Arthur Ransome, <i>Swallows and Amazons</i> (1930)</b>	<b>173</b>
Introduction	173
<i>Sara Haslam</i>	
The Lake District Novels	178
<i>Peter Hunt</i>	
Arthur Ransome and Problems of Literary Assessment	188
<i>Nicholas Tucker</i>	
<i>Peter Pan</i> , Wild Cat Island, and the Lure of the Real	193
<i>Anna Bogen</i>	
<b>7 Philippa Pearce, <i>Tom's Midnight Garden</i> (1958)</b>	<b>203</b>
Introduction	203
<i>Heather Montgomery</i>	

	Loneliness, Dreaming, and Discovery: <i>Tom's Midnight Garden</i>	207
	<i>Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin</i>	
	Midnight Gardens, <i>Magic Wells</i>	216
	<i>Maria Nikolajeva</i>	
	<i>Tom's Midnight Garden</i>	221
	<i>Roni Natov</i>	
8	<b>Mildred Taylor, <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i> (1976)</b>	227
	Introduction	227
	<i>Janet Maybin</i>	
	A Search for Law and Justice in a Racist Society	231
	<i>Hamida Bosmajian</i>	
	Child Agency in <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i>	237
	<i>Kelly McDowell</i>	
	The Role of Education in Mildred D. Taylor's <i>Roll of Thunder</i>	247
	<i>Cicely Denean Cobb</i>	
9	<b>Philip Pullman, <i>Northern Lights</i> (1995)</b>	254
	Introduction	254
	<i>Heather Montgomery</i>	
	Dust as Metaphor in Philip Pullman	258
	<i>Anne-Marie Bird</i>	
	Obedience, Disobedience, and Storytelling in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman	266
	<i>Naomi Wood</i>	
	Intertextuality	276
	<i>Claire Squires</i>	
10	<b>J.K. Rowling, <i>Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone</i> (1997)</b>	286
	Introduction	286
	<i>Nicola J. Watson</i>	
	The Phenomenon of Harry Potter, or Why All the Talk?	289
	<i>Jack Zipes</i>	
	The Unthinkingness of Harry Potter	297
	<i>Suman Gupta</i>	
	Harry Potter and the Reinvention of the Past	303
	<i>Andrew Blake</i>	

<b>Part 2</b>	<b>Contemporary Trends</b>	<b>311</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Fiction for Adolescents: Melvin Burgess, <i>Junk</i> (1996)</b>	<b>313</b>
	Introduction	313
	<i>Ann Hewings and Nicola J. Watson</i>	
	Sympathy for the Devil	315
	<i>Melvin Burgess</i>	
	'And it's so real': Versions of Reality in Melvin Burgess's <i>Junk</i>	320
	<i>John Stephens</i>	
<b>12</b>	<b>Radical Agendas: Beverley Naidoo, <i>The Other Side of Truth</i> (2000)</b>	<b>330</b>
	Introduction	330
	<i>Ann Hewings and Nicola J. Watson</i>	
	A Writer's Journey: Retracing <i>The Other Side of Truth</i>	332
	<i>Beverley Naidoo</i>	
	What is <i>The Other Side of Truth</i> ?	342
	<i>Jana Giles</i>	
<b>13</b>	<b>Past Worlds: Jamila Gavin, <i>Coram Boy</i> (2000)</b>	<b>352</b>
	Introduction	352
	<i>Ann Hewings and Nicola J. Watson</i>	
	New Historical Fiction for Children	354
	<i>Christopher Ringrose</i>	
	<i>Coram Boy</i> as History	363
	<i>Jamila Gavin</i>	
<b>14</b>	<b>Future Worlds: Philip Reeve, <i>Mortal Engines</i> (2001)</b>	<b>373</b>
	Introduction	373
	<i>Ann Hewings and Nicola J. Watson</i>	
	Carnivalizing the Future: <i>Mortal Engines</i>	374
	<i>Kay Sambell</i>	
	Traction Cities, Postmodernisms, and Coming of Age:	
	<i>Mortal Engines</i>	387
	<i>Janis Dawson</i>	
	Further Reading for Part 2	395
	Index	396

# Figures

1. Frontispiece, Robert Louis Stevenson, <i>Treasure Island</i> , first illustrated edition, London: Cassell & Co. Ltd, 1885	59
2. Picture letter to Noel Moore by Beatrix Potter from L. Linder, <i>A History of the Writings of Beatrix Potter</i> , London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1971, pp. 7–8	82
3. Picture letter to Noel Moore by Beatrix Potter from L. Linder, <i>A History of the Writings of Beatrix Potter</i> , London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1971, pp. 7–8	83
4. From Beatrix Potter, <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> , London: Frederick Warne & Co., p. 48	102
5. From Beatrix Potter, <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> , London: Frederick Warne & Co., p. 51	104
6. From Beatrix Potter, <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> , London: Frederick Warne & Co., pp. 34–5	105
7. From Beatrix Potter, <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> , London: Frederick Warne & Co., p. 52	108
8. From Beatrix Potter, <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> , London: Frederick Warne & Co., p. 44	109
9. From Robert Louis Stevenson, <i>A Child's Garden of Verses</i> , illus. Charles Robinson, London: Charles Robinson, Lane & Scribner, 1896	130
10. 'Halfway Down', from A.A.Milne, <i>When We Were Very Young</i> , illus. Ernest. H. Shepard, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1932, p. 80	134

# Introduction

*Heather Montgomery and Nicola J. Watson*

Children's literature is, as Peter Hunt has argued, a 'remarkable area of writing: it is one of the roots of western culture, it is enjoyed passionately by adults as well as children, and it has exercised huge talents over hundreds of years' (1994: 1). Choosing just 14 books to represent such a vast field has inevitably been fraught with problems. What does 'classic' mean? Does it mean those books that have retained their popularity over the years? The ones that are representative of a type? The ones that were seminal in the field or spawned many imitations? The ones that are of the highest literary quality (however we might define that)? And if deciding on what constitutes a classic has proved difficult, how much more so is identifying a contemporary trend, and deciding which books might best exemplify it.

The eleven texts discussed in Part 1 of the Reader, *Classic Texts*, therefore, do not constitute some sort of definitive canon, nor do they endeavour to reflect a received canon, nor are they the only classics that could have been chosen. No doubt another collection, even covering the same themes and historical territory, would present a very different selection of books and remedy some of the necessary glaring omissions. This volume, in short, does *not* aim to be comprehensive in any way. Rather, it is designed as a starting point for study. The books considered here were picked because they all still find a favoured place on the bookshelves of today's children and because they have all attracted a body of critical work. Chronologically organised by date of publication and all originally published in English, they span those designed for the very young, for the 8–12s, and crossover fiction which appeals both to teenagers and adults; they include books first popular in the nineteenth century and books wildly popular in the present day, books originating from both the UK and the USA, books 'for boys' and



books 'for girls', books exemplifying the variable mix of the realist and the fantastic that characterises children's books. Included are examples of the family story, historical romance, the holiday adventure, time-slip fantasy, the fantasy epic, science fiction, and teen fiction. In addition to this children's fiction, we have included a picturebook, a play for children, and two classic poetry collections so as to provide a range of genres.

Each section of Part 1 of the Reader serves as a case study of a single book, and is comprised of three or four short critical pieces which, taken together, provide an overview of influential readings of the literary text in question. These essays vary from the seminal to the cutting-edge, from those by authorities in their fields to those by up-and-coming young scholars. They are conspicuously varied, too, in their theoretical and disciplinary orientation, providing a spectrum from the feminist to that which deploys psychoanalytic thinking or multimodal analysis. A short introduction to each section briefly makes the case for the importance of the text within the field of children's literature, situates the text in literary and historical context, lays out the central critical questions around each text, locates the critical material within that general discussion, and supplies additionally as appropriate a sense of the full range of available approaches and interpretations. Each section also comes with a helpful set of suggestions for further reading on the book in question.

The wide variety of contemporary children's fiction allows the critic and reader a dizzying freedom of choice, given that there is no recognised canon of classics on which to draw, no substantial body of literary criticism to consider, and no span of time over which to judge whether such writing has had continuing appeal. Part 2 of the Reader, *Contemporary Trends*, therefore turns to mapping those developments that have emerged in the late twentieth century and are continuing to evolve. Pinpointing such trends is as difficult as identifying the classics. It is hard to know if books being published now will retain their popularity in future years, whether the emerging trends that are apparent in 2009 will come to greater prominence or simply die away, and indeed whether books themselves will be superseded by new technologies as yet unimagined. The essays in this section therefore take an approach that is slightly different to that of Part 1, identifying four types of children's writing selling well in the new millennium, and focusing on one prizewinning text as exemplary of each trend. Included here are three essays by contemporary children's authors, reflecting upon their individual projects and placing them within the literary landscape of the new millennium.

A third noteworthy component of this volume is its reproduction of the colour plates of covers and illustrations to early editions. Perhaps more than

any other category of books, children's books have been published to be attractive material objects, and these pictures are designed to convey something of the materiality of the children's book. Taken together with their extensive captions, these plates constitute a vivid and instructive picture-essay on the changing physicality of children's books from the consciously durable hardbacks stamped in gold of the late nineteenth century to the shiny embossed paperbacks designed to fall apart in three readings that dominate today's bookshelves.

Although this volume is designed so that each section is free-standing and may be used without reference to others, it seems useful here briefly to locate each of the texts featured within a general historical overview of the origins and development of children's literature and related changes in the conception of childhood. When and where to locate the origins of children's literature is a matter of scholarly speculation and controversy; Matthew Grenby has claimed that some of the earliest recorded examples of children reading, and being read to, come from ancient Sumeria (Grenby, 2009), so perhaps a history should start here. The case has been made for fairy tales to be considered as the earliest children's literature, but then it has been made, too, for chapbooks (the cut-down versions of books such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* or John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which were widely circulated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). Yet there is little evidence that any of these books were aimed specifically at children, or viewed as *children's* literature. Children may well have read fairy tales or chapbooks, but such works, with their simple language and woodcut illustrations, were designed for inexperienced rather than specifically young readers and were texts shared between adults and children, according to reading levels rather than age. In general, the origins of a literature designed specifically for children is usually (if not uncontroversially) located in the early to mid-eighteenth century in England with the publication of John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744) and it is in large part attributed to a new sense of childhood as a special state distinct from adulthood.

Although some eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writing for children, mostly rhymes for the young, survives as old favourites to this day, the children's fiction that has retained classic status for modern readers mostly dates from the second half of the nineteenth century and the dawn of what has been called the First Golden Age of children's literature. This may be not merely because such literature had reached a new maturity and sophistication fuelled by a rapidly expanding child readership, but because we are still very much living with the legacy of that period's ideas of childhood.