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DICTIONARY  
OF  
BRITISH  
CHILDREN'S  
FICTION

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Books of Recognized Merit

A-M

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A—M

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AND

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## PREFACE

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The *Dictionary of British Children's Fiction: Books of Recognized Merit* contains 1,626 entries on such elements as titles, authors, characters, and settings based on 387 books published from 1678 to 1985. Like the two earlier companion volumes, *Dictionary of American Children's Fiction, 1859-1959: Books of Recognized Merit* and *Dictionary of American Children's Fiction, 1960-1984: Recent Books of Recognized Merit*, it is intended for the use of everyone who is concerned with children's literature in any way: librarians, teachers, literary scholars, researchers in comparative social history, parents, booksellers, publishers, editors--those to whom literature for children is of vital interest professionally or personally. A later reference will deal with award-winning books in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and English-speaking countries of Africa and Asia. Periodic updates are planned.

We have long been aware of the need for such references, and a volume dealing with fiction from the British Isles was part of our plan from its inception. The response to the American volumes has shown that the need and interest which we had perceived is indeed real. Although we realized from the first that we could not include all the thousands of novels published for children, we hoped to present the best and those most representative of each period, and to do so, of course, we needed to consider the many fine books written by British

authors.

Rather than depend upon our own subjective judgment about which books are best or most significant, we have included those books that have won or been finalists for major awards in children's literature, using the award lists in *Children's Books: Awards & Prizes* published by the Children's Book Council. We have not included translations or any strictly regional awards, nor those issued by organizations to their members only. We also excluded those given to books chosen by children, since the selection of books made available to the children who are polled is necessarily limited. For this book we have relied mainly upon the British: the Carnegie, the Whitbread, the Guardian, the Young Observer, and the Children's Rights Workshop Other awards. We have also included books by British authors appearing on lists that consider both American and British books, for example, the *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award* and the Children's Literature Association Phoenix Award.

Some books that clearly have become important as literature for children, however, were published before awards were given or were overlooked at the time of their publication by editors and award committees. Others, although perhaps of less-than-award quality, have become popular or have come to be considered standard novels that should be part of any representative collection for young people. We have, therefore, added several other lists that include both British and American books: the *Choice* magazine list of children's books for an academic library (1974, 1978, and 1983 editions); the lists of classics, both early and contemporary, published by *Horn Book* magazine; May Hill Arbuthnot's choices in *Children's Books Too Good to Miss* (1963, 1966, and 1979 editions); and the Children's Literature Association Touchstones. We have also included a type that has become increasingly important among books for young people, mysteries which have been nominated and selected as winners of the Edgar Allan Poe Award. Altogether, we have drawn books from twenty-one award and citation lists. A compilation of lists appears in the front matter.

While *Dictionary of British Children's Fiction* is not a history of children's literature

or even of fiction for children, these many inclusions have given us a broad spectrum of the fiction recognized for merit by a wide variety of experts in children's literature. The awards reflect contemporary critical attitudes toward books for young people. Of course, the selections on various lists result from the application of somewhat different criteria, since the purposes of the awards vary. Although the selection committees all want to provide interesting, well-written books for children, some place more emphasis on social or spiritual values, like the Other, Christopher, and Child Study awards, and others on entertainment, like the Edgar Allan Poe Award.

Because our study is of fiction and not of illustration, we have not included fiction in picture book form, since the texts of such books can seldom stand alone and their analysis requires a consideration also of the illustrations. Somewhat arbitrarily, we have set 5,000 words as a minimum; most books need at least that number to develop a story that can work without pictures. Books of more than 5,000 words are included, even if the illustrations are very prominent.

Collections of short stories also require a different sort of analysis and plot summary from novels. Episodic books with the same characters in each chapter, like A. A. Milne's Pooh books, are included. Books of unconnected stories are not, even if technically they are fiction. Retellings from the oral tradition are included if the material has been developed like that in novels. A few books by Australian, New Zealand, American, and Indian authors have been included when they have won British awards.

In our author entries, we have focused on what in the author's life is most relevant to children's literature and to the particular books in the *Dictionary of British Children's Fiction*. Although several other published sources give biographical information for authors, none considers all the authors whose books are in our study. Having the information in the same volume is not only of convenience for researchers; it is of particular value for those areas where libraries are on limited budgets and do not own the other publications.

In presenting our entries we have tried to follow an arrangement that will be convenient for a variety of users. Entries are of several types:

- A. Title entries. These consist of bibliographical information, including the American title if it is different from the British, and the publishers, the British title listed first even though the book may have been first published in the United States; the sub-genre to which the work belongs; the setting in time and place; a plot summary incorporating the plot problem (if any), significant episodes, and the denouement; a brief literary critical evaluation; sequels, if any; additional entries not mentioned in the summary, if any; and awards and citations in abbreviated form. A list of the complete names of the awards and citations appears in the front matter. Entries vary in length. Length in itself does not indicate the importance or quality of a book, since plots can be summarized more briefly and critical judgments stated more succinctly for some books than for others. Most readers will be acquainted with the terms we have used for sub-genres, but a few terms may need some explanation. By realistic fiction, we mean books in which events could have happened some time in the world as we know it, as opposed to an imaginary or fantastic world, and not necessarily that the action is convincing or plausible. Historical fiction includes those books in which actual historical events or figures function in the plot, as in *The Silver Sword* and *The Namesake*, or in which the specific period is essential to the action and in which the story could not have occurred in any other time, as in *The Iron Lily* and *The Eagle of the Ninth*. Books that are merely set in the past we have called period fiction.
- B. Author entries. These consist of dates and places of birth and death, when available; education and vocational background; major contribution to children's literature; significant facts of the author's life that might have a bearing on the work; titles that



have won awards; frequently titles of other publications, usually with brief information about them; and critical judgments where they can safely be made.

- C. Character entries. These include physical and personality traits for important, memorable, or particularly unusual characters who are not covered sufficiently by the plot summary, and focus on such aspects as how they function in the plot, how they relate to the protagonist, and whether the characterization is credible and skillful. Characters are classified by the name by which they are most often referred to or by the name by which the protagonist refers to them, e.g., Uncle Andrew Ketterly; Caxton, William; Red Queen; Smaug. The name is also cross referenced in the index under other most likely possibilities. If the character's surname does not often appear in the story, it will usually not appear in the index; when it is included, it is usually as a family name: Clock family, Dunham family, etc. If the plot summary gives all the significant information about characters, as with many protagonists, they are not discussed in separate character entries. All major characters, however, are listed in the index.
- D. Miscellaneous entries. These include particularly significant settings and elements that need explanation beyond mention in the title entry.

Every book has title and author entries. When a book has different American and British titles, the complete entry appears under the British title, but the book is also listed under the American title, with a reference to the British title. Unhyphenated two-word surnames are treated similarly. Entries are in alphabetical order for convenience. Asterisks indicate that the item has a separate entry elsewhere in the book. Accompanying entries do not duplicate one another. While a book's title entry gives the plot summary and a critical assessment, other entries provide additional information to give a more complete understanding of the book.



Publishers' names have been abbreviated; a full list appears in the front matter. Similarly, the list of awards and their abbreviations appears at the front of the dictionary. A list of the books classified by awards appears in the index. The index also includes all the items for which there are entries and such items as cross references, major characters for whom there are no separate entries, specific place settings, settings by period, and such items as themes and subjects, books of first-person narration, unusual narrative structures, significant tone, authors' pseudonyms, illustrators, and genres.

The majority of the early classics for children and many of the strongest books in recent years are British. We have treated the American books in separate volumes from the British simply for convenience. Together they make up one large, significant, and cohesive body of literature in the English language. Most of the best books are eventually published in both England and the United States, and the children who read them are often oblivious of their origins, or accept foreign terminology and customs as naturally as those of an unfamiliar part of their own country, indeed often relishing unusual points of view and settings.

Some aspects of British fiction for children stand out. In the first place, many of the earliest novels on the British lists, and even some published in the twentieth century, were not originally intended for children, but have been widely read by them. *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *Robinson Crusoe* were adopted by children before imaginative literature was published for them. The works of Dickens and Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* are shared by young people, even though written for adults.

Fantasy has dominated British children's fiction. With a very few exceptions, all the major English-language fantasies for children are British and have come to be considered masterpieces of world literature, books that every educated person should know. Whereas in realistic fiction, children's literature has frequently borrowed from that for adults, in fantasy, children's literature has made a major contribution to imaginative writing. In recent

years, books of fantasy, although proportionately fewer in number, have continued to dominate the British children's literature scene in quality, and many of the fantasies of the last two decades are outstanding for their inventive concepts and their daring and skillful style.

At the same time, historical fiction has been a less frequent but nevertheless strong genre, coming into its own in the 1950s. It is impossible to consider British historical fiction without thinking of such major figures as Rosemary Sutcliff, Hester Burton, C. Walter Hodges, and Barbara Willard, although others have also made significant contributions. Settings range over the world and from ancient times almost to the present, with a number of fine World War II books having emerged twenty or more years after the event, an interesting literary phenomenon. Typically, the historical novels reflect sound, accurate research that is skillfully melded with interesting plots to produce powerful stories. The result is that British historical fiction has a solidity which makes the books memorable.

Like historical fiction, realistic fiction has appeared throughout the list, but only since 1960 has it led numerically. The influence of Arthur Ransome, who wrote holiday adventures in the 1930s, persisted for a long time, and British writers were slower than Americans to exploit social concerns. While some recent novels have entered the realm of the gritty, urban working class, the most memorable examples of realistic fiction seem to be based on the authors' own childhoods and have the genuineness of lived experience, for example, *A Sound of Chariots* and *A Long Way from Verona*.

An interesting aberration appears with the works of Joan Aiken and Leon Garfield, which are melodramatic, exaggerated representations of their periods. Their convoluted structures, playful use of conventions, and style full of wit, irony, and humor produce entertainment with unusual depth.

Overall, British children's fiction is rich. It offers a great many examples of strong, subtle characterizations and mature themes, developed without didacticism. Plot structures are often complicated, and style is frequently

sophisticated and demanding. It is safe to say that many of the best books remembered from the twentieth century, as with earlier periods, will be British.

As university teachers of literature for children and young adults for more than twenty years and as people trained in the study of literature as literature, we are dedicated to the idea that books for children must be judged by the same criteria as those for adults, keeping in mind, of course, that children are the intended audience. Our critical comments, therefore, judge each book as imaginative literature, not on other values, regardless of the particular emphasis of the award or list for which it was chosen.

As with the companion volumes on American children's novels, we ourselves have read every book included in *Dictionary of British Children's Fiction: Books of Recognized Merit* and have done all the research and writing in this volume. We have had some valuable assistance from a variety of sources. We wish to acknowledge the help of Eastern Michigan University and the Josephine Nevins Keal Fund with leaves and grants and to express our appreciation to the Eastern Michigan University Library and the Ann Arbor, Michigan, Public Library for the use of their extensive collections. Specifically, we thank Marcia Shafer of the Ann Arbor Public Library Youth Room and her staff for their encouragement and aid in research, Brian Steimel and his colleagues of the Interlibrary Loan Department of Eastern Michigan University Library for their invaluable help in obtaining obscure books, and Jennifer Striker for her expert assistance with computer programming.

# ABBREVIATIONS

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## PUBLISHERS

Abelard	Abelard-Schuman Ltd.
Alden	Alden Press
Allen & Unwin	Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd.
Allied Pub.	Allied Publishers, Private, Ltd., India
Allman	Allman & Son (Publishers) Ltd.
American Humane Ed.	American Humane Education Society
Anderson	Anderson Press
Angus	Angus & Robertson Ltd.
Appleton	Appleton-Century-Crofts
Arrowsmith	J. W. Arrowsmith Ltd.
Arts Council of Northern Ireland	Arts Council of Northern Ireland
Atheneum	Atheneum Publishers
Atlantic/Little	Atlantic Monthly Press in association with Little, Brown & Co.
Baker	J. Baker
Barker	Arthur Barker Ltd.
Barnes	A. S. Barnes & Co., Inc.
BBC	BBC (British Broadcast- ing Company) Publica- tions
Beaufort	Beaufort Books Inc.
Bell	Bell and Daldy
Benn	Ernest Benn Ltd.
Bentley	Robert Bentley, Inc.

Blackie	Blackie & Son Ltd.
Blackwell	Basil Blackwell, Publisher Ltd.
Bles	Geoffrey Bles
Blond	Anthony Blond
Bobbs	Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc.
Bodley	The Bodley Head Ltd
Boni	Boni and Livewright
Bradbury	Bradbury Press
Brockhampton	Brockhampton Press
Browne	Browne & Nolan
Burgess	W. F. Burgess
Burnham	T. O. P. Burnham
Cambridge U. Press	Cambridge University Press
Cape	Jonathan Cape Ltd.
Capricornus	Capricornus Press
Carey	Carey, Lea & Blanchard
Cassell	Cassell Ltd.
Century	The Century Co.
Chapman	Chapman and Hall Ltd.
Chatto	Chatto & Windus. The Hogarth Press.
Chetwood	W. Chetwood
Children's	Children's Press Inter- national
Civil and Military Gazette	Civil and Military Gazette
Colburn	H. Colburn
Collins	Wm. Collins Sons and Co. Ltd.
Constable	Constable Young Books
Cosmopolitan	Cosmopolitan Press Ltd.
Covent	Covent Garden
Coward	Coward, McCann
Criterion	Criterion Books
Crowell	Thomas Y. Crowell Co.
Crown	Crown Publishers Inc.
Daldy	Daldy, Isbister
David	David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd.
Davies	Peter Davies Ltd.
Day	The John Day Co.
Delacorte	Delacorte Press
Dennis Dobson	Dennis Dobson
Dent	J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
Deutsch	Andre Deutsch Ltd.
Dickson	Dickson and Thompson
Dobson	Dobson Books, Ltd.

Dodd	Dodd, Mead & Co.
Doran	G. H. Doran
Doubleday	Doubleday & Co. Inc.
Duckworth	Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.
Duell	Duell, Sloan & Pearce
Dutton	E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.
Edling	T. Edling
Eel Pie	Eel Pie
Elder	Elder & Co.
Elm Tree	Elm Tree Books
Elsevier	Elsevier-Nelson
Evans	Evans Brothers Ltd.
Eyre	Eyre & Spottiswoode (Publishers) Ltd.
Faber	Faber & Faber Ltd.
Farrar	Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc.
Fortune	Fortune Press
Funk	Funk & Wagnalls Co.
Gay Men's Press	Gay Men's Press
Gill	M. H. Gill
Gollancz	Victor Gollancz Ltd.
Greenwillow	Greenwillow Books
Grosset	Grosset & Dunlap, Inc.
Hamilton	Hamish Hamilton Ltd.
Harcourt	Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
Harrap	Harrap Ltd.
Hawthorn	Hawthorn Books
Heinemann	William Heinemann Ltd.
Hill	Hill & Wang, Inc.
Hind Pocket Books	Hind Pocket Books, India
Hodder	Hodder & Stoughton Ltd.
Holiday	Holiday House, Inc.
Holt	Holt, Rinehart & Winston
Horn Book	The Horn Book, Inc.
Houghton	Houghton Mifflin Co., Inc.
Howe	Gerald Howe, Ltd.
Hurst	Hurst and Blackell
Hutchinson	Hutchinson Publishing Group Ltd.
Hyperion	Hyperion Press Inc.
India Book House	India Book House
Indiana U. Press	Indiana University Press
International	International Publishers Co., Inc.
Jack	T. C. & E. C. Jack, Ltd.

Jarrold	Jarrold & Sons Publishers Ltd.
Joseph	Michael Joseph, Ltd.
Kampmann	Kampmann & Company, Inc.
Kaye	Kaye & Ward Ltd.
Kenedy	P. J. Kenedy
Kestrel	Kestrel Books
Knopf	Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
Lane	Allen Lane
Laurie	T. Werner Laurie, Ltd.
Lawrence	Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.
Lea	Lea and Blanchard
Lippincott	Lippincott & Crowell, Publishers
Little	Little, Brown & Co.
Lodestar	Lodestar Books
Longman	Longman Group Ltd.
Lothrop	Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books
Lovell	Lovell, Coryell & Company
Lutterworth	Lutterworth Press
Macdonald	Macdonald & Co., Ltd.
Macmillan	Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
MacRae	Julia MacRae Books
Macrone	J. Macrone
Maunsell	Maunsell & Co.
McDowell	McDowell Obolensky
McGibbon	McGibbon & Kee
McGraw	McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.
McKay	David McKay Co. Inc.
Meredith	Meredith Corporation
Merrimack	Merrimack Publishing Corp.
Methuen	Methuen, Inc.
Michael Joseph	Michael Joseph Ltd.
Miller	J. Garnet Miller Ltd.
Morrow	William Morrow & Co.
Motte	Benj. Motte
Muller	Muller, Blond & White Ltd.
Murphy	J. F. Murphy
National Foundation for Educational Research	National Foundation for Educational Research
Nelson	Thomas Nelson Publishers
Newnes	Newnes Books



Norton	W. W. Norton & Co., Inc.
Novello	Novello
Nutt	E. Nutt
Oliver	Oliver & Boyd
Orient Longmans	Orient Longmans, India
Osgood	James R. Osgood & Co.
Oxford	Oxford University Press
Page	L. C. Page
Pantheon	Pantheon Books, Inc.
Parents	Parents' Magazine Press
Parrish	Max Parrish & Co., Ltd.
Pelham	Pelham Books Ltd.
Penguin	Penguin Books Ltd.
Peterson	T. B. Peterson and Brothers
Phillips	S. G. Phillips Inc.
Philomel	Philomel Books
Phoenix	Phoenix House Publications
Pitman	Pitman Publishing Ltd.
Ponder	N. Ponder
Prentice	Prentice-Hall Inc.
Putnam	G. P. Putnam's Sons
Rand	Rand McNally & Co.
Random	Random House, Inc.
Rebman	Rebman Ltd.
Redding	Redding & Co.
Religious Tract Society	Religious Tract Society
Reynal	Reynal & Hitchcock, Inc.
Rex Collings	Rex Collings
Robert Bentley	Robert Bentley, Inc.
Routledge	Routledge & Kegan Paul PLC
Roy	Roy Publications
Samson Low	Samson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle
Saunders	Saunders & Ottley
Scholastic	Scholastic Book Services
Scribner	Charles Scribner's Sons
Seabury	Seabury Press, Inc.
Secker	Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.
Seizin	Seizin Press
Sheed	Sheed & Ward Ltd.
Sidgwick	Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd.
Small	Small, Maynard & Co.
Smith	Smith, Elder & Co.
SPCK	Society for Promoting

Stacey	Christian Knowledge
Stanley Paul	Tom Stacey
Stein	Stanley Paul & Co. Ltd.
St. Martins	Stein & Day Inc.
Stockwell	St. Martin's Press Inc.
Stokes	A. H. Stockwell, Ltd.
Stone	Frederick A. Stokes Co.
Strahan	Stone and Kimball
	Strahan & Co.,
	Publishers
Taylor	W. Taylor
Thacker	Thacker and Spink
Ticknor	Ticknor & Fields
U. of London	University of London
U. S. Book	United States Book Co.
Vanguard	Vanguard Press
Van Nostrand	C. Van Nostrand Co.
Viking	The Viking Press, Inc.
Walck	Henry Z. Walck, Inc.
Walker	Walker Books Ltd.
Ward	Ward Lock Ltd.
Warner	P. L. Warner
Washburn	Washburn Press
Watts	Franklin Watts, Inc.
Wells Gardner	Wells Gardner, Darton &
	Co.
Wheaton	Wheaton Publishing
Wiley	John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
Winston	John C. Winston Co.
World	World Book Co.
World's Work	World's Work Ltd.