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## **CBC Features. Vol. 43, no. 2 (July-December 1990)**

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# CBC FEATURES

Vol. 43, No. 2

July-December 1990



**1990 National Children's Book Week**  
**Poster by Ed Young**

**Featuring MILLIONS OF READERS**

*CBC Features* is available from The Children's Book Council, Inc., 568 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. Telephone: (212) 966-1990. Orders for CBC materials should be sent to Children's Book Council, 350 Scotland Road, Orange, NJ 07050. Telephone: 1-800-666-8608; credit card orders 1-800-999-2160. The Council is the official sponsor of National Children's Book Week, first observed in 1919. It engages in reading development activities both independently and with other national and international organizations. CBC maintains a new book examination center and library open 9:30 am-5:00 pm weekdays. The library is closed many days during the year for meetings; call before planning a visit. The library and offices are closed November 21-23 and for the last week of December, 1990.

# CHAIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Paulette Kaufmann

About fifteen years ago and eight years into my children's book marketing career, I thought I needed a change. So I enrolled in some layout and design courses at the School of Visual Arts here in New York whereupon I began to fantasize that I would one day be working for Ava Weiss, of Greenwillow Books, as a design apprentice. But an offer from the Children's Book Council came along before an invitation from Ava, though I did get to work with Ava once while I was at CBC as Assistant Director.

Later, when contemplating full-time motherhood, I knew that I had another opportunity to consider a career shift. So less than six weeks after my son started nursery school I was interviewing for a job as, what else, Children's Books Marketing Director, which I was for nine years at William Morrow and Company. When I no longer was looking for a change, I was asked to be the editor-in-chief of a new division that William Morrow planned to start. My first answer was "absolutely not." But the chance to continue at Morrow, the best place I have ever worked, and try something new at the same time became irresistible. Since October of 1989 I have been happily involved in Tambourine Books, putting together an editorial team, working with authors and artists and having a ball.

\* \* \*

My son will be attending a preparatory school later this year. While he has been confronting the task of writing essays for admissions committees, I have been thinking a lot about his current state of preparedness.

Until he entered nursery school he spent four years with two primary preparers: me (I had resigned my job as Assistant Director of The Children's Book Council) and my husband. A family of readers and writers, we cared about books and our son cared, too. He loved being read to and taught himself to read before teachers were ready to teach him. He especially loved *Goodnight Moon* (the first book he could identify spine-out and missing its jacket), *Freight Train* (my husband swears that Don Crews' words were the first our son read on his own), the illustrations of Richard Scarry, James Stevenson and Chris Van Allsburg as well as the words of Beverly Cleary (especially *Runaway Ralph*) and Roald Dahl. I know not the connection any one of these has to the other, but there you have it.

We made weekly trips to the local branch of our public library to borrow books or to attend read-aloud programs. Unfortunately the collection and staff suffered from low funding. The branch, located in a marginal neighborhood, had to limp along with limited hours and a collection that had few new books and, by the week, fewer older titles.

Soon a wonderful new bookstore opened in our neighborhood. It devoted almost half of its inventory to children's books. One of the first smart things this store did was to contact the neighborhood schools to offer assistance in developing reading lists. We regularly made trips to this store to shop for new and exciting hardcover books, and paperback editions of those wonderful backlist gems no child should miss.

But by first grade, school had become his primary preparer for math, science, art, social studies, and yes, reading. The school library had replaced the public library and his teachers had replaced me as his reading model. In this progressive school he was exposed to several annual readings of *Charlotte's Web*, book fairs that sold him all the pencils

and puzzle books he could afford and book clubs that offered more posters and sticker books than literature. The use of trade books in the classroom for reading or other curricular areas was almost entirely dependent upon the teacher. Soon homework and sports quickly consumed his after-school time.



Photo by Nancy Crampton

This is not a story about superior achievement or total failure. It's an average experience, that of a white middle class child whose parents cared only that he find reading enjoyable. But what about those other children whose preparation must overcome greater handicaps—no books or readers in their homes, no teachers who dare to deviate from their reading textbooks, no bookstores with children's sections, no school libraries—no money? Any one of these conditions exists for almost every child in this country.

Our challenge for the new decade is an old one. As publishers, teachers, parents and librarians, we want to prepare our children by providing them with more than the ability to decode, comprehend, and perform on tests. It isn't enough to combat illiteracy. The number of people who know how to read but don't, or have no idea what the words mean is growing, too. But what will it take? Teachers as well as parents need both motivation and education. At report card time teachers should be allowed to assess the enjoyment of reading along with decoding and comprehension skills. More parents should select books that will enrich their children's lives, not just instruct or entertain.

What can The Children's Book Council do? An organization dedicated to "encouraging the reading and enjoyment of books for young people," it has been successfully reaching out to teachers for many years. The visibility of children's books has increased tremendously within teachers' professional groups through CBC's booklist activities and programs at professional meetings. Now is the time to reach out to the coordinators, principals, boards of education and parents of school age children who share the responsibility of helping to develop the new readers of the 90's.

*Paulette Kaufmann, Vice-President of William Morrow & Co., Inc., is the 1990 Chairman of The Children's Book Council. She is Editor-in-Chief of the new imprint Tambourine Books at Morrow; its first list will appear in Spring 1991.*

# DENSLOW'S PICTURE BOOKS

Michael Patrick Hearn

Although few have acknowledged it, the father of the American picture book was William Wallace Denslow (1856-1915). There are remarkable earlier examples by such distinguished artists as H. L. Stephens, Thomas Nast, and Howard Pyle, but Denslow's children's books were the first ones published in the United States that built on the high aesthetic principles established by Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway, and Randolph Caldecott at the end of the nineteenth century. These English illustrators, being disciples of the Arts and Crafts Movement, argued that the child's picture book was a unique art form. Every element of the volume's decoration, embracing the covers, endpapers, table of contents and copyright pages, had to harmonize with every other part of the book's design.

Fortunately Denslow avoided most of his predecessors' eccentricities that tended to date their efforts. Crane used his toy books to express his opinions of contemporary taste, introducing "not only pictorial ideas which influenced one at the time, but any passing impression, or whim of fancy and form, as in details of dress, furniture, and decorative pattern." Greenaway was more concerned with archaic costumes than with dramatic pictorial storytelling, and Caldecott included in his books for babes several texts (such as Oliver Goldsmith's *An Elegy on the Glory of Her Sex* and Robert Bloomfield's *The Farmer Boy*) which were not written for boys and girls. Denslow, however, was more conscious of his young audience. He said that the aim of his work was "to make books for children that are replete with good, clean, wholesome fun from which all coarseness and vulgarity are excluded."

William Wallace Denslow Jr. was born in Philadelphia, but he grew up in Inwood-on-Hudson, on the northern part of Manhattan. He began drawing when still a boy, and he was only fourteen years old when he entered Cooper Union to study art. At fifteen he was a founding member of the Salmagundi Club in New York and had already gone out on his own as a professional illustrator. As the office boy of a large magazine and book publisher, he worked with Mary Mapes Dodge just prior to her founding of *St. Nicholas Magazine*.

In his early twenties Denslow began freelancing, drawing advertisements for patent medicines, theater posters, and pictures for county atlases. He eventually drifted into newspaper illustration, working in New York, Chicago, Denver, and San Francisco. After a dispute with William Randolph Hearst while on the staff of the San Francisco *Examiner*, Denslow returned to Chicago in 1893 for the Columbian Exposition; and he quickly established himself as one of the city's best-known illustrators.

Here he met a former crockery salesman named Lyman Frank Baum who was then editing a magazine for window trimmers. Baum had written a collection of children's verse that he wanted Denslow to illustrate, and the two produced *Father Goose, His Book* (1889). To everyone's pleasant surprise this thoroughly American picture book became the best-selling juvenile title at the time, and the following year Baum and Denslow made literary history with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

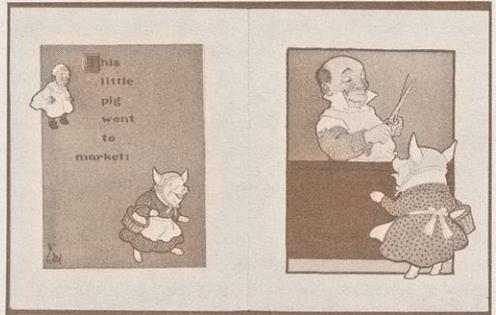
W. W. Denslow was in an enviable position at the start of the new century. The enormous success of his books with Baum made him the preeminent American children's book illustrator of the day; and on severing his ties to Baum in 1901, Denslow was well aware that a book's reception could now depend on his name alone. He immediately produced a new collection of old nursery rhymes called *Denslow's Mother Goose* (1901) and followed that popular work with *Denslow's Night Before Christmas* (1902), his own interpretation of Clement C. Moore's famous holiday poem. But the most ambi-



"The Tin, the Lion, and the Scarecrow."

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

tious of his contributions to juvenile literature was "Denslow's Picture Books for Children," of 1903 and 1904, his eighteen-volume American equivalent of the English toy books. He wrote a few of the texts himself, but for the others he relied on traditional nursery rhymes and tales, borrowing some subjects from Crane (such as *Old Mother Hubbard* and *5 Little Pigs*) and others from Caldecott (such as *The House That Jack Built*) while giving them a fully contemporary American character.



5 Little Pigs

Denslow, like Baum before him, recognized that much of the old lore was no longer suitable for children. He agreed with his former collaborator that "all the horrible and bloodcurdling incident devised by their authors to point a fearsome moral to each tale" should be eliminated from juvenile literature. "Modern education includes morality," Baum noted in his introduction of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*: "therefore the modern child seeks only entertainment in its wonder-tales and gladly dispenses with all disagreeable incident." Denslow found "Jack and the Beanstalk" particularly appalling. He complained that the old story shows how "a lad gains admittance to a man's house under false pretenses, imposing on the sympathies of the man's wife. Then he commits theft after theft. . . . When the man attempts to defend his property he is slain by the hero who mutilates the corpse to the extreme gratification of his mother. All childhood classics are not such glaring instances of rapine and murder,

but they nearly all have a tendency in that direction." Consequently the illustrator rewrote them to introduce "a cleaner and healthier tone" to the famous texts. "I believe in pure fun for the children," Denslow said, "and I believe it can be given them without any incidental gruesomeness."

Consequently he wrote several new verses for *Old Mother Hubbard* to replace those that had originally appeared in Sarah Catherine Martin's edition of 1806:

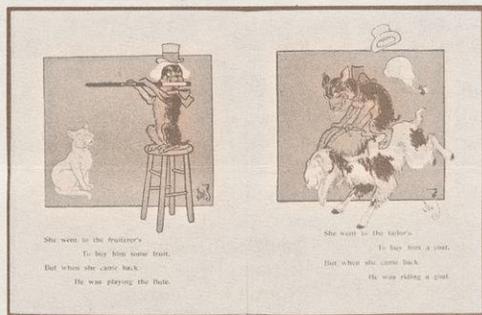
She went to the Bakers  
To buy him some beer;  
When she came back  
The Dog was dead!

She went to the Undertakers  
To buy him a Coffin;  
When she came back  
The Dog was laughing.

She took a clean dish  
To get him some tripe;  
When she came back  
He was smoking his pipe.

She went to the Alehouse  
To get him some beer;  
When she came back  
The Dog sat in a Chair.

She went to the Tavern  
For White wine and Red;  
When she came back  
The Dog stood on his head.



Old Mother Hubbard

Denslow's alternatives actually improve on these old lines by offering more childlike incidents free of references to death, coffins, drinking, and smoking. Making only slight variations, he strung together several adventures of Simple Simon (here appropriately depicted as an amusing little boy) gleaned from little-known chapbooks. He also transformed the old minstrel song "Animal Fair" into a charming children's verse by expanding on the well-known lyrics. Surely one of the subjects Denslow thought particularly inappropriate for children was drunkenness; the only beverages mentioned in his version were tea, lemonade, and ginger ale.

The pictures also add considerably to establishing a new tone to the old favorites. Denslow adroitly turned Sarah Josepha Hale's overtly earnest poem "Mary's Lamb" (first published in *Juvenile Miscellany* for September-October 1830) into a childlike romp without sacrificing the usually deleted final moralistic stanza.

Denslow's humor was uniquely his own and tailor-made to the tastes of preschoolers. "Action and expression . . . are two of my mainstays," he said in describing his method, "and when you add the incongruous you have the triad I rely on." He was also not above inserting into his pictures private jokes. For example, perched on a pole behind the farmer sowing his corn in *The House That Jack Built* is the Scarecrow from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*; and the policeman at the end of *5 Little Pigs* is none other than L. Frank Baum himself.

"I'd rather please the kids than any other audience," Denslow once admitted. "If I can reach them . . . I ask for little more."



Animal Fair

Michael Patrick Hearn teaches the history of children's book illustration at Columbia University and was the 1990 Ezra Jack Keats Lecturer at the University of Southern Mississippi. This essay is an expanded version of his introduction to Denslow's Picture Book Treasury to be published by Arcade this Fall.

## LOVABLE LAPIN RUN-OFF

According to Publishers Weekly, October 27, 1989, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* is the all-time bestselling hardcover children's book in the U.S. It has sold 9,000,000 copies.

Yet Bugs Bunny has recently been referred to in product promotion as "everybody's favorite rabbit."

Readers of *CBC Features* now have the chance to settle this raging debate. Send your vote for the lapin you love most (Peter or Bugs) to:

CBC Features—LOVABLE LAPIN RUN-OFF  
The Children's Book Council  
568 Broadway  
New York, NY 10012

Mail your vote no later than October 15, 1990. The winner will be announced in a 1991 issue of *CBC Features*. No prizes will be awarded, but those of you who vote for the winning rabbit may treat yourselves to a delectable, crunchy carrot.

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# PUBLISHING

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## MASS MARKET CHILDREN'S BOOKS: HOW EDITORS MAKE THEM POSSIBLE

Eric Suben

While participating in a panel discussion about juvenile publishing, I once hazarded the remark that "there are only about a dozen themes for preschool children's books." My reward was a disapproving shake of the head from a distinguished colleague/competitor on the panel. She, at the time the doyenne of perhaps the finest of what we mass marketers call "trade" houses, directed a publishing program where the quantity sold was traditionally secondary to the quality and variety presented. This company and others like it have long taken justifiable pride in publishing responsibly and in specifically addressing special interests in school curricula and young people's lives.

This same company, minus my co-panelist, has lately been trumpeting its entry into the mass market. What does mass market mean? And are there really only twelve themes for preschool children's books?

The distinction trade publishers make between "trade" and "mass market" books is a false one in the universe of book publishing. In truth, a trade book is any book sold through trade channels; textbooks, books sold through the mail, and encyclopedias are examples of genuine nontrade books. If K-Mart sells a book in its book department, that makes K-Mart a bookseller and the book a trade book.

But the reality of selling to K-Mart is different from the reality of selling to independent bookstores. Where bookstores "hand sell" books, highlighting their special features and addressing customers' individual needs and interests, books featured by mass merchandisers must do all the work themselves. They need attractive covers and titles that announce their themes in no uncertain terms.

Mass-market books are not ordered or sold to retailers by title, but in assortments. In this sales format, the store orders multiple copies of six or a dozen titles grouped under a general heading, such as "Christmas Stories" or "Preschool Concepts." The publisher may have several groups of titles available under each heading; by periodically rotating the groups when restocking its displays, the publisher can satisfy the store's need to feature "fresh" merchandise.

The publisher thus becomes responsible for putting together a group of books that offers the consumer variety and that addresses children's interests. An ideal of mass-market editors and publishers is for the strength of the overall assortment to help carry one or two truly special-interest titles with less sales potential. However, in today's world of increasingly sophisticated marketing techniques and "product tracking," a story about a Hispanic family's new baby does not survive long once it has been identified as a poor or regional "performer."

Despite their up-to-the-minute sales and distribution techniques, mass-market publishers are not well-equipped to get books to special niches in the children's book market. On the contrary, publishers

who distribute to schools and libraries remain the most reliable and consistent sources of specialized material. Low retail book prices promote literacy and give a child the sense of proprietorship and involvement. Even so, most mass-market publishers still cannot get books to children who are out of the mainstream. In this context it is ironic that low prices are possible only if tremendous sales volume can be guaranteed. The children who might benefit the most from low-priced books may easily be left out in the cold.

One way caring editors get around the strict categorization of assortment selling is by mining the work of an outstanding author for its most commercial theme and then featuring that theme in the book title. Depending on the inventiveness of the author and editor this approach can slyly circumvent the expectations generated by the cover and offer unexpectedly rich stories to children.

Consumer feedback surprises by showing that parents who buy mass-market books seldom take the time to familiarize themselves with a book's contents before taking it home. The scenario goes like this: They've gone to the display of their favorite "brand" of books, selected one that appeals, and taken it home. Parents relinquish responsibility to the publisher for the books's subject, message, and suitability.

For example, parents may buy Margaret Wise Brown's Little Golden Book *Mister Dog* because of the gold spine, the cute title, Garth Williams' winning cover, and their child's known love of dogs. But their child will discover inside a strange, charming world that appeals to his deepest fantasies of independence and companionship. It is the mass-market editor's duty to see that each and every book lives up to its title while remaining the offbeat, unique experience each and every book should be, regardless of its title, cover design or market.

The world of mass-market children's publishing has been blessed by gifted authors who want to invite the widest audience into their special worlds. Margaret Wise Brown, Ruth Krauss, Lillian Moore, and Peggy Parish are some who enriched the field in the past; more recently, Jan Wahl, Phyllis Krasilovsky, Joanna Cole, and Joanne Ryder are to be commended for their work in the mass market.

Quality is the name of the game in children's publishing, and talented authors and the editors who publish them are helping to guarantee that children everywhere will know what quality is, in addition to knowing their ABC's and animal sounds.

And what about those twelve themes? Well, preschool concepts, growing up, self-discovery/self-esteem, Mother Goose/classics, home/neighborhood, adventure, through the day... are there even twelve? The trappings may change—the neighborhood may be an African village, Grandpa may have Alzheimer's disease. But any publisher can be mass-market if its editors learn to see—and exploit—that which is most universal in any book.

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*Eric Suben was formerly editor-in-chief of Golden Books and a director of The Children's Book Council. He is presently a freelance writer, editor, and consultant on mass-market juvenile publishing and will attend Tulane Law School in the Fall of 1990.*

# MATERIALS AVAILABLE FROM CBC MEMBER PUBLISHERS

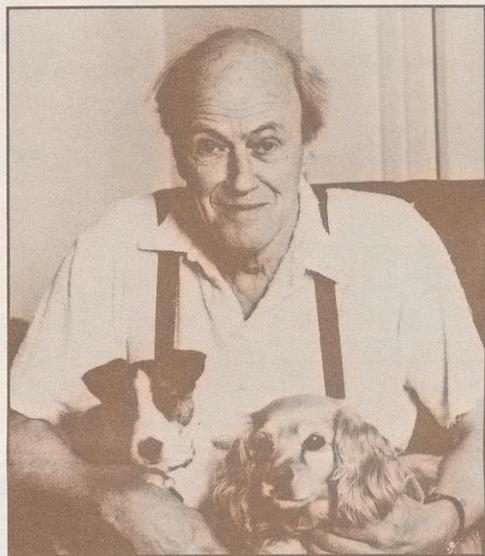
Where you get it	What you get	What you send to get it	SCHOLASTIC HARDCOVER	Four posters featuring <i>The Magic School Bus In Outer Space</i> by Joanna Cole, ill. by Bruce Degen; <i>The Lost Wreck Of The Isis</i> by Robert Ballard, ill. by Ken Marschall and Wesley Lowe; <i>Moog Moog Space Barber</i> by Mark Teague; and <i>Mary Had A Little Lamb</i> by Sarah Joseph Hale, photographs by Bruce McMillan	Self-addressed 9 x 12 envelope (min. size) with \$1.05 postage affixed
CAROLRHODA BOOKS, INC. Attn: Chris Deets 241 First Avenue North Minneapolis, MN 55401	Carolrhoda Books is sponsoring a Sherlock Holmes mystery-writing contest for students in grades 4-6. The winning story will be made into a book. A mystery-writing contest kit is available.	Send the name and address of the person who will organize the contest.	Attn: Elisa Geliebter 730 Broadway New York, NY 10003		
CLARION BOOKS Attn: Alison Wood 215 Park Avenue South New York, NY 10003	a. Two posters, one featuring Word Play Books by Marvin Terban, and the other, <i>Beauty, Brave and Beautiful</i> , by Dick Gackenbach b. Assortment of new author brochures and flyers	a. Self-addressed 10 x 13 envelope with 65¢ postage affixed b. Self-addressed 7 x 10 envelope with 45¢ postage affixed			
FACTS ON FILE Attn: Susan U. Crafford 460 Park Avenue South New York, NY 10016	25 bookmarks featuring <i>The Facts On File Visual Dictionary</i> by Jean-Claude Corbeil, et al	Self-addressed business-size (#10) envelope with 65¢ postage affixed	ALA GRAPHICS The American Library Association 50 E. Huron St. Chicago, IL 60611		
GREENWILLOW BOOKS Attn: Marketing Dept.—CBC 105 Madison Avenue New York, NY 10016	25 bookmarks featuring <i>The Narrow Escapes Of Davy Crockett</i> by Ariane Dewey	Self-addressed 7½ x 10½ envelope with \$1.25 postage affixed			
HARCOURT BRACE JOVANOVIĆ, INC. Attn: Tamara Clark, Children's Book Marketing 1250 Sixth Avenue San Diego, CA 92101	a. Poster featuring <i>Oh My Baby Bear</i> by Audrey Wood b. Poster featuring <i>Aida</i> by Leontyne Price, illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon	a. Self-addressed 9 x 12 envelope with 65¢ postage affixed b. Self-addressed 9 x 12 (min. size) envelope with 65¢ postage affixed			
JOY STREET BOOKS Attn: Children's Marketing Little, Brown and Company 34 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02108	Packet including a poster featuring <i>Lost!</i> by David McPhail; <i>Johnny Appleseed</i> by Reeve Lindbergh; <i>Wing-A-Ding</i> by Steven Gammell and assorted bookmarks	Self-addressed 10 x 13 (min. size) envelope with \$1.65 postage affixed.			
LERNER PUBLICATIONS CO. Attn: Promotions Assistant 241 First Avenue North Minneapolis, MN 55401	A colorful poster designed specifically with school libraries in mind	Self-addressed 8½ x 11 (min. size) envelope with 65¢ postage affixed			
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY Attn: Children's Marketing 34 Beacon St. Boston, MA 02108	Packet including poster featuring <i>Elfabet</i> by Jane Yolen, ill. by Lauren Mills and assorted bookmarks	Self-addressed 10 x 13 (min. size) envelope with \$1.05 postage affixed	CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL, INC. Address for multiple orders of <i>Illustrating Children's Books</i> : 350 Scotland Rd. Orange, NJ 07050 Address for single copies of <i>Illustrating Children's Books</i> , and single and multiple copies of <i>Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children in 1990 and Notable 1990 Children's Trade Books in the Field of Social Studies</i> : 568 Broadway New York, NY 10012		
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD BOOKS Attn: Marketing Dept.—CBC 105 Madison Avenue New York, NY 10016	Poster featuring <i>Frog Went A-Courting</i> by Wendy Watson	Self-addressed 10 x 13 (min. size) envelope with 65¢ postage affixed			
MORROW JUNIOR BOOKS Attn: Marketing Dept.—CBC 105 Madison Avenue New York, NY 10016	25 bookmarks featuring <i>The Twenty-Four Hour Lipstick Mystery</i> by Bonnie Pryor, ill. by Sheila Hamanaka	Self-addressed 7½ x 10½ (min. size) envelope with \$1.25 postage affixed			
WILLIAM MORROW & COMPANY, INC. Attn: Marketing Dept.—CBC 105 Madison Avenue New York, NY 10016	Poster celebrating International Literacy Year 1990	Self-addressed 11½ x 14½ (min. size) with 65¢ postage affixed	THE HORN BOOK Attn: Joe Antonellis 14 Beacon St. Boston, MA 02108		
PELICAN PUBLISHING CO. P.O. Box 189 Gretna, LA 70054	Poster featuring Gaston the Green-Nosed Alligator	Mailing label with \$1.50 enclosed (cash or check) for postage and handling			
THE PUTNAM & GROSSET BOOK GROUP Attn: Marketing Services Dept. AD 200 Madison Ave. New York, NY 10016	A packet including posters for the 1990 Caldecott Medal winner <i>Lon Po Po</i> by Ed Young and Hans Christian Andersen's <i>The Ugly Duckling</i> retold and ill. by Troy Howell and 25 bookmarks each of <i>Thunder Cake</i> by Patricia Polacco, the <i>Grosset &amp; Dunlap Junior Classics</i> series, and <i>Whitebird Books</i> series	Self-addressed 10 x 13 (min. size) envelope with \$2.40 postage affixed	INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION (IRA) 800 Barksdale Rd. P.O. Box 8139 Newark, DE 19714-8139		
SIMON & SCHUSTER BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS Attn: Ken Geist, 12th Floor 1230 Avenue of the Americas New York, NY 10020	Packet including posters for <i>The Happy Prince</i> by Oscar Wilde, ill. by Ed Young, <i>The Color Craft Books</i> with an activity from the <i>Paper</i> book by Hannah Tofts, and <i>Elizabeth and Larry</i> by Marilyn Sadler, ill. by Roger Bolen; 25 postcards each of <i>Esmeralda And The Pet Parade</i> by Cecil Schoberle and <i>Wildlife 1 2 3: A Nature Counting Book</i> by Jan Thornhill	Self-addressed 10 x 13 envelope (min. size) with \$1.45 postage affixed	OFFICE OF BRANCH LIBRARIES The New York Public Library 455 Fifth Avenue New York, NY 10016		
				Materials Available from Other Sources	
				a. 1991 <i>Caldecott Calendar</i> highlights important dates for The Year of the Lifetime Reader. Each month features a full-color illustration from an award-winning book with notes about the illustrator; lists all Medal and Honor Books since 1938. 12" x 9"; opens to 12" x 18"; available now	a. A check or money order (no cash) for \$8.95 plus \$1.00 handling
				b. <i>The U.S.A. Through Children's Books</i> , (1990) a pamphlet identifying outstanding books from 1988 and 1989 that present aspects of the cultural diversity and lifestyle of the people of the U.S., from picture books to YA books, fiction and nonfiction, selected by the International Relations Committee of the Association for Library Service to Children.	b. A check or money order for \$20.00 plus \$1.00 handling for 100 pamphlets. Single copies are not available.
				a. 1990 revision of <i>Illustrating Children's Books</i> , a pamphlet for new children's book illustrators with a selected annotated listing of suggested reading; decorated with art by well-known children's book illustrators; available now	a. \$9.50 for ten copies; orders under \$20.00 must be prepaid by check or money order. A single copy is available for a one-dollar bill (no checks) and a stamped, self-addressed business size (#10) envelope with 1 oz. postage attached.
				b. <i>Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children in 1989</i> reprint of the annual list sponsored by the NSTA-CBC Joint Committee; appeared in March, 1990, issue of <i>Science and Children</i> ; available now	b. Single copies are available for a stamped (3 oz.) self-addressed 6 x 9 (min. size) envelope from CBC; 5-20 copies, 90¢ each; payment must accompany bulk orders
				c. <i>Notable 1989 Children's Trade Books in the Field of Social Studies</i> reprint of the annual list sponsored by the NCSS-CBC Joint Committee; appeared in April/May, 1990, issue of <i>Social Education</i> ; available now	c. Single copies are available for a stamped (3 oz.) self-addressed 6 x 9 (min. size) envelope from CBC; 5-20 copies \$1.25 each; over 20 copies \$1.00 each; payment must accompany orders
				a. <i>Children's Classics: A Booklist for Parents</i> , a 20-page pamphlet listing titles recommended by <i>The Horn Book</i> , from picture books to YA literature; available now	a. A check or money order (no cash) for \$3.00, plus 50¢ postage and handling
				b. <i>The Laura Ingalls Wilder Commemorative Issue</i> , a 48 page paperback compilation of a variety of articles that have appeared over the years; available now	b. A check or money order (no cash) for \$4.00 plus 75¢ postage and handling
				<i>Children's Choices for 1990</i> , reprint of the annual list sponsored by the IRA-CBC Joint Committee; appears in October, 1990, issue of <i>The Reading Teacher</i> ; available November	Self-addressed 9 x 12 (min. size) envelope with 85¢ postage affixed; quantities can be purchased; specify 1990 list if request sent before November
				a. <i>Books for the Teenage 1990</i> , a 70-page booklet listing recommended books for young adults; available now	a. A check or money order (no cash) for \$6.00 plus \$1.25 postage and handling
				b. <i>Children's Books 1990</i> , a pamphlet listing recommended books for children; available November	b. A check or money order (no cash) for \$2.00 plus \$1.00 handling
				c. <i>The Black Experience in Children's Literature 1989</i> , a 70-page booklet listing recommended titles	c. A check or money order (no cash) for \$5.00 plus \$1.00 handling
				d. <i>Libros en Español Para Pequeños 1990</i> , a 70-page booklet listing recommended books in Spanish for children	d. A check or money order (no cash) for \$5.00 plus \$1.00 handling

# BOOKS REMEMBERED

## Roald Dahl

I am a fairly old fellow and my childhood reading days are way back in the nineteen-twenties. When I was eight and was reading voraciously, the year was 1924. At that time no household had either television or radio. The result was that in winter when it was usually too cold or wet to play out-of-doors, we had to find other things to do when school was over in the afternoons. Those things were:

- 1) An hour's homework or prep. Never less.
- 2) Making things with Meccano or other building materials.
- 3) Being read to by one's mother, or in my case because I was at boarding school, by a teacher.
- 4) Reading to myself.



Every one of us became avid readers, but there were far fewer juveniles available in those days than there are now. The only ones I can remember vividly were *The Secret Garden*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Treas-*

*ure Island*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Mr. Midshipman Easy* and *From Powder Monkey to Admiral* (by Capt. Maryatt).

Because of the shortage of children's books and also because we had soon read all those available, we very rapidly graduated to more adult fiction, the Bulldog Drummond series, *Under the Red Robe* (Stanley Weyman), all of Dickens, *King Solomon's Mines* and *She* (Rider Haggard), all of Kipling, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Conan Doyle), all of Jules Verne.

By the time we were ten, we were reading all of Galsworthy, Hugh Walpole, Mary Webb, Hardy and the rest.

At the age of fourteen, I think I had read just about every great classic in literature (Tolstoy, Dostoevski, Balzac, Austen, Brontë, the lot), as well as plenty of others. Reading on this scale would be virtually unheard of among today's young people, but I did it and most of my contemporaries did it. We loved books. We were brought up on them. As a result, we not only acquired a large vocabulary, we assimilated many different styles of writing and we became fluent readers of English prose.

Today, parents who want their children to love books have two problems to contend with. First there is the ubiquitous television. Second, there is the question of knowing which books are going to enthrall and which are going to bore. It is better to give a child no book at all than a boring one. But in these days the juvenile market is so flooded with rubbishy books that it is difficult not to become confused.

The content of a children's book is basically unimportant. The sole purpose of that book is to convince the child that reading is great fun. The book must be so exciting and funny and wonderful that the child falls in love with it. Then the battle is won and the realization that books are easy and lovely and enthralling begins to dawn on the young reader. There need be no message in the book, no moral, just sheer entertainment. Not all writers for children or indeed the critics have come to terms with this simple truth.

*Roald Dahl's most recent book is MATILDA (Viking). The Puffin edition of Matilda was listed as the No. 1 bestselling children's paperback in Great Britain in a January, 1990, issue of The Bookseller, the weekly publication of the British book trade. No. 2 was Danny the Champion of the World; No. 3 was The BFG; and No. 4, The Witches, all by Roald Dahl and all published by Puffin. Mr. Dahl was named Children's Author of the Year in the first British Book Awards program in early 1990.*

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# BREACHING THE BARRIERS

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Mary M. Burns

With the prolongation of childhood by the Victorians, the definite separation between books written for adults and those thought suitable for children seemed not only logical but desirable. The division probably owed as much to economic, technological, and social changes as it did to literary, developmental and pedagogical considerations. Nor was it firmly rooted in historical precedent.

For centuries, the oral tradition, with its dependence on memory, had been the repository of popular literature, creating a class of entertainers, collectively described as storytellers, who preserved history and culture as they developed a sense of narrative. Adults and children alike listened to their tales. At a later time came books such as *Robinson Crusoe* which children borrowed from adults because so little else of interest was available to them. Now we seem to have come full circle as adults discover treasures once relegated to the children's rooms of our public libraries.

A certain number of writers have always had a dual appeal. Stevenson and Twain, for example, because they composed works for both audiences, could be classified as "GREAT WRITERS WHO WROTE FOR CHILDREN"; thus, their books for young readers were respectable. With the evolution of the picture book format in the late nineteenth century, illustrators like Randolph Caldecott, Walter Crane, and Kate Greenaway became equally well-known. Indeed, the last-named inspired a line of children's clothing, foreshadowing the ubiquitous celebrity name brand! Then there were the successors to these early greats, among them Beatrix Potter, whose reputations have remained constant and whom adults have accorded the distinction of critical evaluation, pronouncing them worthy as well as pleasurable.

Now, in the final decades of the twentieth century, certain authors and illustrators have again breached the barriers. That this is not merely opinion is supported by the appearance on the *New York Times* bestseller lists of David Macaulay, Maurice Sendak, and Chris Van Allsburg. Then, there are others, like E. B. White and William Steig, noted contributors to *The New Yorker*, whose fame centuries from now may rest primarily on their books for children. Reproductions of classics such as Boutet de Monvel's *Jeanne d'Arc* and studies of contemporary picture book artists from Sendak to Seuss are still further indications of the growing adult interest in children's books. But what makes a book as attractive to adults as it is to children?

First of all, quality has nothing to do with the age of the intended audience. The unknowing tend to confuse "books for children" with "literature for children." Few confuse "books for adults" with "literature for adults." A fine book is quite simply a fine book, something that many adults are just discovering. Second, children's books, picture books in particular, have become collectibles. Finally, there is that large audience developed through the

current emphasis on literacy, reading aloud, and the literature-based approach to the teaching of reading.

None of these factors, of course, guarantees intergenerational popularity. Educators are often interested in pedagogical, not literary considerations; parents may be attracted to the spectacular at the expense of the incisive but less flamboyant; and collectors may be more interested in fine art than in the art of the picture book, accounting, perhaps, for the proliferation of lavishly produced interpretations of folktales.

But what of the concept that truly excellent books will find an audience regardless of age? What do their authors or illustrators have in common—from Beatrix Potter to William Steig, from Robert Louis Stevenson to E. B. White, from Mark Twain to Patricia MacLachlan? The most immediately perceivable element is tone. None is condescending, none talks down to children. Further, all write with style, incorporating telling details without sacrificing story. All write from an unspoiled perspective, capable of giving adults a fresh view of fundamental truths as does Natalie Babbitt in *Tuck Everlasting*.

Often there is a hint of mystery, of a reality just the other side of daily experience, as in Chris Van Allsburg's *The Garden of Abdul Gazazi* and *Jumanji*. The vision of the artist makes this reality palpable. Nor are the illustrations lesser art because they are found in a book for children any more than are Steig's creations—from Sylvester to Spinky—less ably executed than his cartoons for *The New Yorker*.

Perhaps the genre other than the collectible picture book most likely to attract a dual audience is non-fiction. Characterized by splendid examples such as David Macaulay's *Cathedral*, the first of his books about great architectural triumphs, and more recently his tour de force *The Way Things Work*, today's non-fiction for children has become a distinctive literary form. Elegantly designed, written with flair, thoughtfully illustrated, these books offer insights into times present as well as times past. Titles which immediately spring to mind are Rhoda Blumberg's *Commodore Perry In The Land Of The Shogun*, Jean Fritz's *Homesick: My Own Story*, and Russell Freedman's *Lincoln: A Photobiography*.

Inevitably, selection of examples results in omitting others equally as important such as novelists Robert Cormier, Virginia Hamilton, Katherine Paterson, and Mildred Taylor, who already have a following among adult readers. And this trend will continue as interest in children's literature develops.

In the concluding paragraph of *Charlotte's Web*, E. B. White commented: "It isn't often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer." One might extend his idea to observe that it isn't often a writer or illustrator comes along who is celebrated by both children and adults. Today, that seems more and more possible.

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Mary M. Burns is the Coordinator of the Curriculum Library at Framingham State College (MA), and a reviewer for *The Horn Book Magazine*. Ms. Burns chaired the 1988 Newbery Medal Award Committee.

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If you haven't heard the news, we've moved from our old, but comfortable office at 67 Irving Place to a beautiful, new space in Soho at 568 Broadway (at Prince Street). Our neighbors in the building are mainly galleries, designers, and photographers, but we're located on the very literary fourth floor along with the American chapter of PEN and Granary Books, a gallery specializing in the book arts. There is an art gallery on our floor, too. We think you'll like the new building, as well as the neighborhood, which is filled with galleries, museums (have you ever wanted to visit the Museum of Holography?), shops, and restaurants, and is close to Chinatown, Little Italy, and the Village. Please be sure to call before visiting, as there are frequent meetings in our library.

# WHAT BOOKS DO CHILDREN CHOOSE?

Sam Sebesta

*On the twelfth day of Christmas my true mom gave to me: 12 pop-up books. I cried. I hate pop-up books. What I want is pull-tab books. When you pull the tab, a surprise comes out.*

Greg, age 5 now, stands at my office window watching a giant crane. The crane is building—not a nest but a new branch to the campus library. Greg departs only when I promise that on the way home we'll oversee the raising and lowering of the canal drawbridge. Cranes, drawbridges, helicopters. So on our next trip to the library I steer him over to Technology. Ten minutes later he's lost as can be in a beautiful and complicated diagram-filled book. About ballet.

And I keep remembering Fran's child. Fran is a history prof who took his daughter to Washington, D.C. to imprint U.S. history on her mind and make her a chip off the old block. She liked the equestrian statue of General Sherman, so Fran practically smothered her in books about the Civil War. But the books didn't seem to "take" and one day she said, "Daddy, when we went to Washington and saw that statue, who was riding General Sherman?"

Such tales tell that the interests that motivate children's book choices are very specific, sometimes metaphoric, and often oblivious to what adults think they ought to be. This hasn't discouraged adults from trying to break the code of children's choices. The first formal study of reading interests was published in 1897, as near as I can find. By 1967, there were 300. By now there probably are a thousand. They yield lists of topics, titles, and literary characteristics that children profess to prefer, according to sex, age, and IQ.<sup>1</sup> But the best advice is still caution: analyze preferences for a particular child or a particular class.

Some of the research has had good influence, though. Arthur I. Gates' complex study in 1930 found *surprise*, *liveliness*, *animalness*, and *conversation* to be characteristics children prefer in their reading. The most direct effect was on basal reader selections—to make them more child-focused. George Norvell's vast surveys in the 1950s revealed that much of the literature comprising required reading in the schools actually led to abhorrence of reading. The effect, I think, was to bring texts and anthologies more into line with children's interests, though maybe not enough.

Beginning in 1980, my graduate students and I studied Children's Choices, the 100+ books annually selected by children from several hundred submitted by publishers.<sup>2</sup> This was fun. I recommend it as a way to keep up with children's reading interests. We used our accumulating information to predict what the choices would be each following year. That was fun, too, but we've never scored above 82%.

What have we found? Well, it appears that topic and genre are not dependable indicators. Apparently, children will choose almost any topic if it's appealingly presented. Historical fiction and informational nonfiction, less frequently chosen in 1974 when the project began, are on the rise. So are rhymed narratives.

In fiction choices: warmth, optimism, interaction.

Characters like each other and tell each other so. No problem seems too large or ugly to make Children's Choices, but it has to be solved. Children don't choose "downers," books that end sadly. They seem to like explicit themes; there are a surprising number of didactic stories on the accumulated lists.

One other finding may interest authors. Our cumbersome story grammar analysis of Children's Choices revealed significantly more mini-plots than were found in non-selected books. A mini-plot is a problem set up and solved within 2 or 3 pages amid the more sustained action. I don't suppose Louisa May Alcott, Robert Louis Stevenson, E. Nesbit, or Frances Hodgson Burnett ever heard of mini-plots. They just used them.

More is known about *what* books children choose than *why*. But now we have ethnographies, intensive studies of responses of one child or a small group. Such studies seek, among other things, the causes of choices, suggesting the following factors:

1. *Adult guidance.* The studies show increased influence of adults on book choices and amount of voluntary reading in general. Why? Maybe it's because there are more books to choose from, necessitating more help. Perhaps adults seem less authoritative and more consultative than they used to.
2. *Interaction.* Many children read in order to "share." Their impetus for choosing a book includes the prospect of telling about it, e.g., literature circles and response groups.
3. *Levels of response.* Book choices are influenced by response levels of the chooser. Retell and personal involvement come naturally, but readers of all ages can also be helped to interpret and examine values in books they choose.
4. *Accessibility.* One ethnographer, Janet Hickman, found that young children must have a book in hand in order to talk about it—"hands on" accessibility influences choice. Barbara Kiefer found better-considered choices as a result of familiarity through "repeated exposure," a wide variety of books accessible to children day after day.

What books do children choose, then? Optimally, choice depends on a balance between "natural" immediate interests and planned conditions to foster interest. It depends on a continuing supply of good books of all sorts, including pull-tab, ballet, and horses.

No matter how you look at it, the stakes are high. Anderson et al. did a fine study revealing that interest accounts for 30 times more variance in reading comprehension than does readability.<sup>3</sup> Take note. Some of us have underestimated the valence of interest that motivates children's book choices.

<sup>1</sup>See "Reading Preferences" by Dianne L. Monson and Sam Sebesta in *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts*, edited by James R. Squire et al. Macmillan, in press.

<sup>2</sup>See October issues of *The Reading Teacher* (1974 onward) for these lists.

<sup>3</sup>Anderson, R.C., Shirey, L. L., Wilson, P.T., & Fielding, L.G. "Interestingness of children's reading material," in *Aptitude, Learning and Instruction*, edited by R. Snow and M. Farr. NJ: Erlbaum, 1989.

*Sam Sebesta teaches courses in reading, language arts, and children's literature at the University of Washington in Seattle. A recipient of IRA's Arbutnot Award recognizing an outstanding college or university teacher of children's literature, he has written and edited numerous books and articles on children's literature. He is most interested in the influence of extensions (creative dramatics, literature circles, visual arts) on children's reading interests and voluntary reading.*

# Book Week ■ WONDER THROUGH THE PAGES ■ November 12-18, 1990

## FROM THE CREATORS OF 1990 BOOK WEEK MATERIALS

The seventy-first annual observance of National Children's Book Week is approaching and CBC has commissioned wonderful original materials by top children's book illustrators and authors to help you celebrate.

This year we have once again created terrific materials for young adults. The highlight is a 35-minute audiocassette featuring 10 famous young adult authors talking about their work. We also offer posters by Kam Mak and Rosmarie Hausherr and sets of 25 postcards featuring Ms. Hausherr's photograph.

If you are not on our mailing list you may wish to see the Book Week materials in full color and our other materials. Please send a business size (#10) stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

Book Week Brochure  
Children's Book Council  
568 Broadway  
New York, NY 10012



**KARLA KUSKIN:** "I started out intending to build a verse that would accommodate the pun 'Wonder Through the Pages' and frame the line rhythmically. I ended by renewing my artistic license to concentrate on the phrase's spirit. In other words, here and there I used other words."

Karla Kuskin, the 1990 Book Week poet, is the author of *The Dallas Titans Get Ready for Bed* (Harper) and *Jerusalem Shining Still* (Harper). Harper is publishing a new edition of *Roar and More* this year. Ms. Kuskin is the recipient of the National Council of Teachers of English Award for Excellence in Poetry for the body of her work.

Photo by Sean Kernan



## SPECIAL MATERIALS FOR YOUNG ADULTS IN 1990



Photo © Michael Litchfield

### ROSMARIE HAUSHERR:

"Oh, yes, we do read books together," said Bernadette, my teenaged friend. She mobilized her friends for test photos. The final shooting session took place on my roof. Mimi, Anthony and Vivian, balancing on small stacks of books, pretended to be as tall as Bernadette and Jacob while leafing through the camouflaged elephant book, laughing and joking, as I clicked my camera."

Rosmarie Hausherr has most recently written and illustrated with photographs *Children and the AIDS Virus* (Clarion) and *The City Girl Who Went to Sea* (Four Winds).



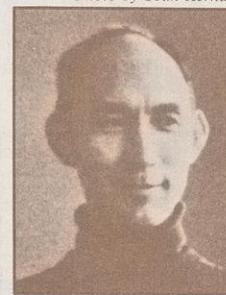
Book Week November 12-18, 1990

**ED YOUNG:** "Books often nurture the mind and give color to otherwise mundane realities. We are thereby enriched in our relationships with all other aspects of our world. In clouds we see all sorts of images of people, animals, and things. This is the inspiration for my poster of an open book of colorful imageries floating against a black and white cloudy sky."

*Lon Po Po*, translated and illustrated by Ed Young, won the 1990 Caldecott Award. His current book is *Mice Are Nice*, poems selected by Nancy Larrick (Philomel). Please see *CBC Features* cover for Mr. Young's poster.

**JEANETTE WINTER:** "I liked the challenge of telling a story on just one long piece of paper—a book without pages."

Jeannette Winter's current books are *Follow the Drinking Gourd* (Knopf) and *The World's Birthday* by Barbara Golding (HBJ).



### AUTHOR TALKS

An Audiocassette

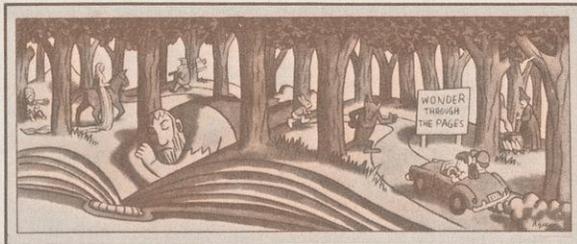
Ten famous young adult authors candidly discuss their work. From serious to comic, the pieces have a broad range of tone, making it the most entertaining and enlightening 35 minutes available on tape for young adults. We also include a bibliography of books mentioned on the tape listing both hardcover and paperback publishers.

#### Side A

Robert Cormier  
Walter Dean Myers  
Patricia MacLachlan  
Ann M. Martin  
Milton Meltzer

#### Side B

Paula Danziger  
Richard Peck  
Norma Fox Mazer  
Jerry Spinelli  
Mildred D. Taylor



**JON AGEE:** "I did several sketches for 'Wander through the Ages' and variations of the theme before I got the words right. In fact, there's still some wandering in the finished picture—but luckily, there's a good deal of wondering, too."

Jon Agee's recent books are *The Incredible Painting of Felix Clousseau* (Farrar), *Dishes All Done* by Lucia Monfried (Dutton) and *The Toy Box* by Mary H. Heyward (Dutton). He is currently working on the lyrics and book for a musical, *The Land Below Christmas*, which will open next year.



Photo by Peter Belamarich

**KEIKO NARAHASHI:** "'Wonder Through the Pages' reminded me of how, as a child, an entire world of imagination opened up for me through books. And I've always loved stars and constellations which have made me wonder about all sorts of things. So, given the vertical shape of the streamer, it seemed natural to have the night sky above this secure and intimate world of a child and his father reading together."

Keiko Narahashi's current books are *Who Wants One?* and *Rain Talk*, both by Mary Serfozo (Margaret K. McElderry).



Wonder Through the Pages  
BOOK WEEK NOVEMBER 12-18, 1990



**KAM MAK:** "The goldfish is a symbol of prosperity for the Chinese people. While growing up, I was always surrounded by them, and the image of them still lingers on today. When I was invited to do this Book Week poster, I thought it was a good opportunity to incorporate goldfish in the poster. The goldfish swim out of water, conveying the unlimited possibility in life, while the tree represents the tree of knowledge sprouting out of a book."

Kam Mak has recently illustrated the jacket for *Child of the Owl* by Laurence Yep (Harper). His current jacket is for *Everywhere* by Bruce Brooks (Harper).

THE CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL

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