

Reviews Picture Books for everyone

Amazing Mr Zooty!

Written and illustrated by Emma Chiches ter Clark
Andersen Press £10.99 ISBN: 1 84270 480 X

Mr Zooty is a cat with a mission: 'Get out, help out,' is his motto. Strolling in the park one day, he sees the Taylors – a poor, single-parent family, mum, two children, Lucy and Sam – trying to catch leaves, for luck. The kids catch three, which Mr Zooty stores in his little red case; then, with feline cunning, he wangles his way into the Taylors' tatty top-floor dwelling. Good things, conjured from the three leaves, start happening: however, Lucy's wish remains to be fulfilled. But with Mr Zooty in charge, that one wish leads to another and another – a balloon flight, a picnic, a punt ride upriver. Finally, whereas normally it's humans who find homes for cats, here, in a neat reversal, the cat returns the compliment. 'Everybody needs a little help sometimes', he says in farewell, as practical and matter of fact as ever. Compelling text, warm, colourful artwork, another high quality book from this inventive author-illustrator.



Chris Stephenson

No Room for Napoleon

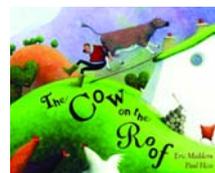
Written and illustrated by Adria Meser ve
Bodley Head £10.99 ISBN: 0 370 32846 9

Napoleon is a small, perky dog who discovers the perfect paradise island. Crab, Bunny and Bear welcome him warmly and prepare a feast in his honour. He promptly engages them to build a house suitable for such a go-getting dog. The enormous castle that took shape darkened the sky like a slag heap. Demanding breakfast, he is astonished to see his three friends enjoying a feast on another island. When he rows across they tell him plainly that there is no room for such a selfish, demanding creature. Much must change before they will consider returning. All seems about to end well, then there's a wry twist in the tale involving a small ginger cat... Stylish and memorable, this picture book has a message about sharing for small children.



Tina Massey

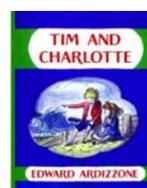
swap roles and Shon soon finds housework is a little more tricky than he first imagined. He spills the cream, wastes the beer, allows the chickens to eat the oats and ends up in the chimney when he ties himself to the cow and lets it eat grass off the roof of the house! Accompanied by Paul Hess's bright, colourful and wonderfully playful pictures depicting rolling hills, fields and farm animals this is a beautiful little book, with a lesson that is still as relevant today. Housework, after all, is hard work, whether it involves churning the butter in an old farmhouse or vacuuming the carpet in a modern flat.



Richard Monte

Tim and Charlotte

Written and illustrated by Edward Ardzzone
Frances Lincoln £10.99 ISBN: 1 84507 545 5

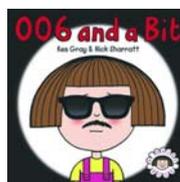


It's fifty years since Ardzzone won the 1956 Kate Greenaway Medal for *Tim All Alone* another in the *Tim* series. *Tim and Charlotte* was actually first published in 1951 and is the story of Tim and Ginger's first meeting with Charlotte. It's a simple storyline of how Charlotte is rescued and looked after, of how friendship grows and how, so very often, people in the biggest houses or with the most toys yearn for simplicity, friendship and time for simple interactive play. Indeed, 'their happiest times were when they played together on the beach, bathing, climbing about on boats talking to the old boatman, or telling each other stories.' Such timeless values cannot help but be relevant to today's children who still love to play despite xboxes, computers and playstations. A true classic.

Gill Roberts

006 & a Bit

Written by Kes Gray Illustrated by Nick Sharratt
Bodley Head £10.99 ISBN: 0 370 32876 0



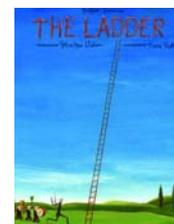
Daisy finds some spy gadgets in her mum's bedroom to go with her dark glasses and spy's moustache. Now all she needs is to speak in code. When I shared this book with a reception class recently they immediately laughed at Daisy's code-speech but only two of them were familiar with James Bond, so the 006 aspect had to be explained to them. Once this was out of the way the book was thoroughly enjoyed. The witty illustrations help to emphasise the play-acting involved. On one page Daisy holds a hair brush to her ear; on the facing page it's a walkie-talkie. But no-one seems willing to join in with Daisy's spy game. Not until *0021 & a Bit* arrives. This turns out to be Daisy's mum and the two collude, in spy speak, to arrange a special midnight feast.

Michael Thorn

The Ladder

Written by Halfdan Rasmussen
Translated by Marilyn Nelson
Illustrated by Pierre Pratt
Walker Books £11.99 ISBN: 0 7636 2282 8

A red ladder left alone in a field – the carpenter who climbed to the very top had simply disappeared – decides to see the world. Every creature or person the ladder meets can't resist climbing the gleaming red ladder and they all disappear. The ladder erupts from the page, pages are elongated upwards and sideways and the wonderful 1950ish illustrations keep the story flowing. Just when one assumes the story is a somewhat whimsical account of death lightning strikes the ladder and they all come down again! We don't see many books from Denmark so it is hard to tell whether this is in a Danish tradition or a stand alone. Delightfully odd.



Enid Stephenson

Jitterbug Jam

Written by Barbara Jean Hicks
Illustrated by Alexis Deacon
Red Fox £5.99 ISBN: 0 099 44795 9

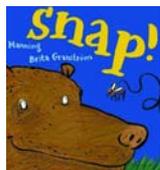
Barbara Jean Hicks has pulled off a tricky switch in this engaging tale. Bobo is a very small monster, scared of a boy with pink skin and orange fur on his head, who hides under Bobo's bed and 'scritch scratch skitters' at bedtime. How Bobo's grandpa, BooDad, helps the little monster to cope with night-time fears makes this a quite magical tale. Alexis Deacon has produced a range of wonderful pictures, with the kind of imaginative placements that pull the reader even more deeply into the story. A rich treat indeed.

Jack Ousbey

Snap!

by Mick Manning and Brita Granström
Frances Lincoln £9.99 ISBN: 1 845 07408 1

A story which illustrates the food chain by an author and illustrator who are known for their non-fiction. Fly is snapped up by Frog, Frog by Duckling, Duckling by Pike and Fisherman catches the Pike. Unflinchingly, they have a bear to complete the cycle – but they all look very comfortable inside the bear.



Pat Thomson

The Cow on the Roof

Written by Eric Maddern Illustrated by Paul Hess
Frances Lincoln £10.99 ISBN: 1 84507 374 6

Eric Maddern's retelling of this European folk tale is full of gentle humour. It pokes fun at Shon, the husband who thinks he does all the hard work while his wife, Sian, takes it easy at home. So they