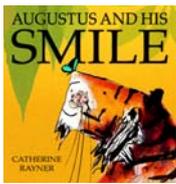


## Augustus and His Smile

Written and illustrated by Catherine Rayner  
Little Tiger Press £10.99 ISBN: 1 84506 282 5



Catherine Rayner is a bold new talent, well worth looking out for. The tiger she creates here is a wonderful animal made up from black ink and brown water-colours, both coming together in one swirling whole. The story is simple and satisfying, involving the Tiger searching for happiness and finally discovering it in the natural world around him. But what remains in the mind afterwards is no particular message but rather the tiger himself, whose appearance causes a mini-sensation on every page.

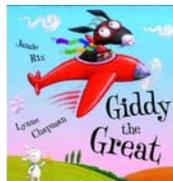
Nicholas Tucker

## Giddy the Goat

Written by Jamie Rix Illustrated by Lynne Chapman  
Orchard £10.99 ISBN: 1 84362 682 9

Giddy Goat is a great climber, though his best friend Edmund – just a hairy mutton, is not. Although sheep are not designed to climb speedily, Edmund does his best. But, in training for the Great Pinnacle Race, Giddy keeps leaving his pal behind. His mother warns him he will lose his best friend but Giddy takes no notice. He goes on a world tour and climbs skyscrapers, the Eiffel Tower, Nelson's Column until he feels he's the best climbing goat in the world. He's back in time for the Great Pinnacle Race. Edmund has entered as well but while Giddy surges to the top, poor Edmund is stuck near the bottom. Giddy, though within inches of winning, comes down to rescue him, realising that keeping friends means more than winning races. A gentle story, very funny but carrying a good message. Inventive and beautifully drawn pictures reinforce the humour and complement the text in a lovely conclusion.

Denis Hamley



## Mr and Mrs God in the Creation Kitchen

Written by Nancy Wood  
Illustrated by Timothy Basil Ering  
Walker Books £11.99 ISBN: 0 7636 1258 8



In Nancy Wood's wry and inventive look at the beginning of time, two chefs, Mr and Mrs God, set out to create our world. Hidden away deep in the universe, they are busy cooking in the Creation Kitchen. Mr God has roasted a star, which turns out to be our sun. Mrs God bakes the earth from a bowl of dough, and cools it down with some clouds, as if she were adding whipped cream to a big round cake. Mr God is having problems. First he makes a mistake by baking dinosaurs and then his bird eats all Mrs God's fish. When everything is ready they make two more creatures from the

leftovers and wonder how they will turn out. Timothy Basil Ering's illustrations of the pots and pans in Creation Kitchen look like planets suspended in space, and his wispy drawings of a peculiar culinary world, are the perfect balance to this unusual and thought-provoking picture book.

Richard Monte

## The Scarab's Secret

Written by Nick Would Illustrated by Christina Balit  
Frances Lincoln £10.99 ISBN: 1 84507 299 5



Christina Balit's stylised artwork, filled with luminosity and geometrical shapes, is perfectly suited to this myth from Ancient Egypt. In his own words, and told as a flashback, the scarab beetle describes how he earned his place in mythology by saving a young prince – and heir to the throne – from treachery and certain death. In return, he is rewarded with immortality, his bravery commemorated in the decorative frieze of the temple built in honour of the young man, now crowned Pharaoh. This is a stunning book with text and illustrations working in harmony. The pictures are bold and striking enough to convey emotional intensity and drama while the text is beautifully written, at times elegant and restrained – the perfect complement.

Anne Faundez

## Mayfly Day

Written by Jeanne Willis  
Illustrated by Tony Ross  
Andersen Press £7.99  
ISBN: 1 84270 492 3



Adult mayflies have very short lives. Jeanne Willis's Mayfly's first day on earth is also her last. During her short span, Mayfly lives a full and intensely happy life – 'This isn't any old day. This is the best of days. She lives for each moment.' She hears the 'crack of dawn', watches buds open, eggs hatch, babies born. She feels the sun's warmth, the 'kiss of summer rain', experiences a rainbow. Breezes blow, bells chime, birds sing; she 'dances to the music of the universe'. Then, in 'the best of nights', she lays her eggs, blesses her offspring-to-be, and sinks down to watch 'the stars go out'. She has lived a wonderful life. Twenty-four pages of text and pictures that disclose a spectrum of emotions and proclaim an overwhelming *joi de vivre*; a perfect combination of succinct prose and with warm, delicately-coloured illustrations. A gem.

Chris Stephenson

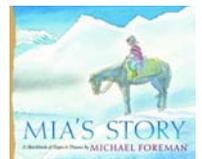
## Mia's Story

Written and illustrated by Michael Foreman  
Walker Books £10.99 ISBN: 1 8442 8278 3

Michael Foreman was travelling from Santiago into the mountainous area of Chile when he met a man who recycled waste from the scrap heaps on the edge of the city and whose dream was one day to build a house of bricks. In the story inspired by

that encounter, Mia is presented with a stray puppy, found by her father on one of his trips to the city. When the puppy goes missing Mia searches high into the mountains where she comes upon a meadow of flowers. Although she does not find Poco the puppy, she digs up some of the flowers and plants them on the rubbish heap which is her home, where they grow and multiply. Eventually she sells them in the city where they are a more successful commodity than her father's junk stall, and the story ends happily as Foreman would like to think it will end for Manuel, the South American he met outside Santiago. The sketchbook type illustrations, with hand-written annotations, give this very special book an air of authenticity.

Michael Thorn



## Night Time Tale

Written and illustrated by  
Alexandra Junge  
Translated by Kate Connolly



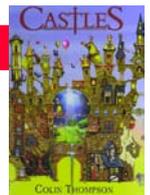
Winged Chariot Press £11.00 ISBN: 1 905 34106 7

This is a thought provoking visual exploration of a child's fear of the dark. Laura is frightened of the strange creatures she sees in the blackness of her room and wonders why it has to get dark. Her interpretation of the consequences of there being no night leads to a reassuring conclusion that helps to tame and overcome her fears. The tempo and settings of this story are depicted through sensitive line illustrations and they are more than complemented by the expressive, dramatic and beautiful images of atmospheric landscapes and phantasmagoric characters which capture the drama of why we all need the night and the dreams that are part of it. An inspirational picture-story book which stimulates and sustains the imagination whilst addressing a phenomena which affects us all in one way or another.

Mike Simkin

## Castles

Written and illustrated  
by Colin Thompson  
Hutchinson £10.99  
ISBN: 0 091 88486 1



In this ingenious book Colin Thompson encourages children to look at the world in a new way. He creates fantastic castles out of commonplace objects and phenomena. Thus the musical castle is assembled from a collection of old instruments; the mushroom castle is glimpsed between the bricks in a cracked path; the castle in the air, so high in the clouds it cannot be seen; the castle of Atlantis, so small it fits inside a rock pool. Reading this reminded me of Calvino's worlds within worlds. The illustrations are exquisitely detailed, reminiscent in places of Hieronymous Bosch (the red castle) and Pieter Bruegel (cold potato mountain). It is a remarkable book, designed to develop children's imaginations by encouraging them to look closely at the pictures, (perhaps with a magnifying glass), and seek out the bizarre kings, queens, princes and princesses which are hidden within each castle.

Richard Monte

