

This autumn, Walker publishes *Beowulf* by Michael Morpurgo and Michael Foreman. In this case, the illustrator read the manuscript and Ben received it marked up, starting with the pictures which Michael Foreman could not bear *not* to illustrate. It was then Ben's job to arrange the text so this could happen. He is particular about the pictures being in the right place. In working with the illustrator, he does not forget the reader. He mentions watching children read and is aware of how placing the text can help or hinder the novice reader. One thing that happens in Walker offices is that they read aloud to each other – to 'test drive' the text.

Michael Foreman wrote as well as illustrated *Mia's Story*. The text is partly presented as notes, written on virtually anything, with sketches. When the art work arrived, as well as the lovely Foreman water colours and normal text, there were lots of handwritten scraps and it was the Designer's job to put them all together. It was, he says, time consuming



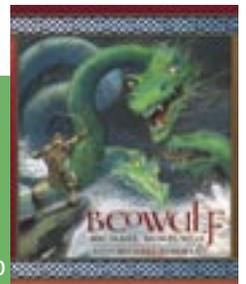
Above: Spreads from *Mia's Story* (see review on page 9)

but interesting and the finished book has the intimate feel of a sketchbook executed on the spot. Perhaps the most difficult part of his job is the need to reconcile the illustrator's vision with the practicalities of getting a book out and into as many hands as possible. It is possible to make astonishing books – at a price – but these will not reach many children and that is not what anyone wants.

In the end, for Ben Norland, it is the illustrator's vision which must prevail. That is how it must be, he says. But the Designer has played a significant role – the *Beowulf* book sits in the hand like a pleasing artefact. So three cheers for the Designer. They may be almost invisible but they are very important.

Pat Thomson

- Beowulf* by Michael Morpurgo & Michael Foreman £12.99 ISBN: 1 84428 754 8
- Imagination* by Norman Messenger £12.99 ISBN: 0 7445 9202 X
- Mia's Story* by Michael Foreman £10.99 ISBN: 1 84428 278 3
- Operation Red Jericho* by Joshua Mowll £12.99 ISBN: 1 84428 625 8
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