



Korky Paul:

It's been a great ride with Winnie

ANY CONGRATULATIONS TO VALERE THOMAS AND KORKY PAUL who, with Oxford University Press, are celebrating 25 years of Winnie the Witch. Currently there are twelve titles in the large picture book set and six in the smaller new story series with Laura Owen. The original title, *Winnie the Witch* won the Federation of Children's Book Groups Award in 1988 and they have never looked back since. Today, all the new titles shimmer with re-branded covers and this rightly suggests that each book embodies brightly coloured storytelling action and each spread is dynamically designed. They all exude thrilling drawn detail and are plied with entertaining playfulness, highlighting surprising alliances and connections to engage the reader. Korky has the skill to adapt reality and make ordinary objects, situations and characters become something extraordinary and highly memorable. At the same time he exhorts the reader to use their own curiosity and imagination when looking at the world afresh, such as when he wanted to express the idea of magic coming out of the end of Winnie's wand and he playfully adapted the vapour trails of the Red Arrows RAF display team into magical abracadabra wand sequences. Whether the objects and subjects are animate or inanimate, Korky has the skill and ability to imbue everything with a magical appeal and a fresh identity. Like his books, Korky himself is hugely colourful, dynamic, funny, with an outreaching zest for life. His spreads are laced with action and humour, indeed one could take each spread of the Winnie Series in turn and spend endless hours delighting in the full meaning of each illustration. Every spread has been very thoughtfully constructed. He instils in his readers a curiosity, self belief and the confidence to believe in their own powers of imagination but above all, a "get up and go" attitude to make untold discoveries, not only in his books but life in general.



Winnie began life as an idea for a story in a reading book programme when Ron Heapy first introduced Korky to

the text. Korky thought it was a lovely story and ideal for a picture book. He said, "I just had a vision of a witch," he went on, "the house was black and the cat was black so the witch had to be colourful. The biggest inspiration was the yellow and red striped tights," then he promptly hitched up his trousers to show off the same striped socks he still wears. Korky's solution of moving from monochrome to full colour was a masterstroke. The sequence took the reader by surprise and into a completely different world where full colour at the end of the book celebrates the moment when all the misadventures and problems had been happily resolved.

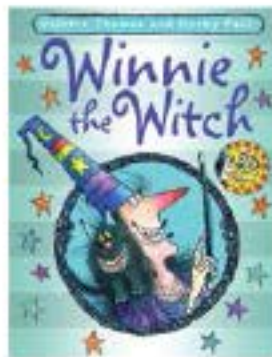
His rapport with children is immense, not only do they enjoy his books but he reaches out and includes them by encouraging young children to design his end papers. This came about from his daughter Zoe's head teacher, the amazing Sue Matthew,



Left: Korky reading *Sir Scallywag* and, right, modelling Winnie socks.



who suggested the idea and Zoe did the first set for *Billy Bumps Builds a Palace* when she was seven and three-quarters in 1995. Four years later, her brother Oska likewise decorated the endpapers for *Winnie Files Again* when he was aged seven and a quarter. The decorative endpapers have now become an established feature of the Winnie picture book titles.



life characters such as Professor Puffendorf, Skumskins O'Parsley, Captain Teachum. Other titles include *Professors Puffendorf's Secret Potions*, *Rascally Cake*, *The Fish Who Could Wish*, *Magic Poems*, *Sanji the Baker* and the most recent release, *Sir Scallywag and the Golden Underpants* – see p.14. The latter was written by Giles Andreae and we were lucky to be treated to our very own private reading by Korky in his garden, wearing the said golden underpants on his head!

A hallmark of the quality of Korky's books is his instant reaction to words. He himself says, "I am not good with words but if I see a word, a picture comes to mind." To correspond with, and vastly enhance, the text of *Winnie the Witch*, Korky gives a visual thrust to illustrating the humour as a highlight of this fabulous story. It is situation/consequential visual humour at its most spontaneous, mainly as a result of the magical and colourful transformations brought about by Winnie's wand and "Abracadabra". There is a smile waiting on every spread for individual or subjective interpretation. Just enjoy the pacing of the story and, not least, spreads nine and ten where you will find the most amazing transformation of Wilbur into full colour and then Wilbur being embarrassed on the top of a tree.

Amongst the other Winnie titles, one of his most exhilarating, thrilling and mind blowing pictorial narratives is found in *Winnie in Space*. The essence of space exploration, it's fantastical drama and action with futuristic technology are shown against his magical layering of luminous planets and a moonscape. The adventure is depicted in panels of all shapes and sizes to be viewed mainly in the landscape mode but sometimes to highlight the visual impact he engages the reader by demanding that the book be turned vertically to portrait mode in order to enjoy the full experience. This is a truly active book experience of searching, finding and feeling excited by the story, not only to be enjoyed in it's own right but also to bring about an encounter with the space rabbits! The latest title in the series, *Winnie's Dinosaur Day*, written by Valerie Thomas, is due out in September this year.

Since 1987, besides the Winnie series, Korky has created and published numerous titles. He has collaborated with many different authors and in his books hosted many larger than

In the unfolding history of children's books, Korky has brought to the genre of pictorial storytelling immense innovation, vitality and has generally invigorated the genre since 1987 onwards. At the same time, Winnie and Wilbur should take their place in the heritage of children's book characters. Without exception, his numerous titles succeed in taking the reader out of themselves into other worlds to meet new and amazing situations and characters which are largely based on his imagination and observations from life. The Winnie titles are a very balanced menu of fantasy, alongside factual reflections of contemporary culture and technology. All details are concentrated on the page by Korky's imaginative, highly focused lens and incisive drawing skills.

Mike and Theresa Simkin.

Below: Illustration taken from *Winnie in Space*.



Details of some titles all published by Oxford University Press:

Winnie the Witch 1987 (reissued 2006) ISBN: 978-0192726438

Billy Bumps Builds a Palace 1995 ISBN: 978-0192722454

Winnie Files Again 1999 (reissued 2006) ISBN: 978-0192726469

Winnie in Space 2010 ISBN: 978-0192732194

Winnie Shapes Up 2011 ISBN: 978-0192729903

Winnie Under the Sea 2011 ISBN: 978-0192757494