

‘Picturebooks with which we have measured out our lives’

Professor Martin Salisbury and Professor Morag Styles use their specialist knowledge to trawl through 60 years of CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal winners.

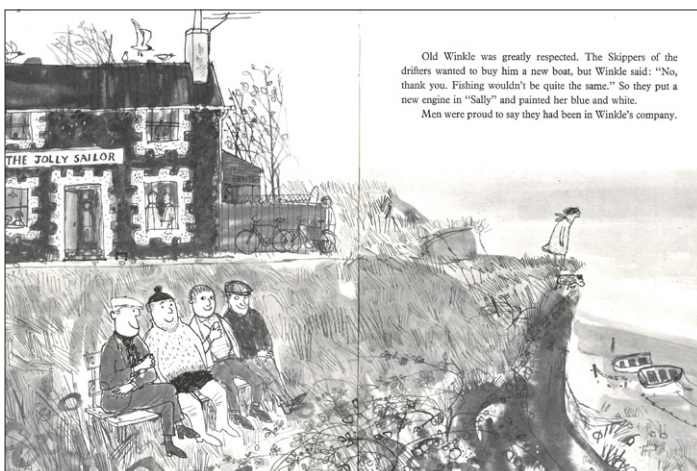
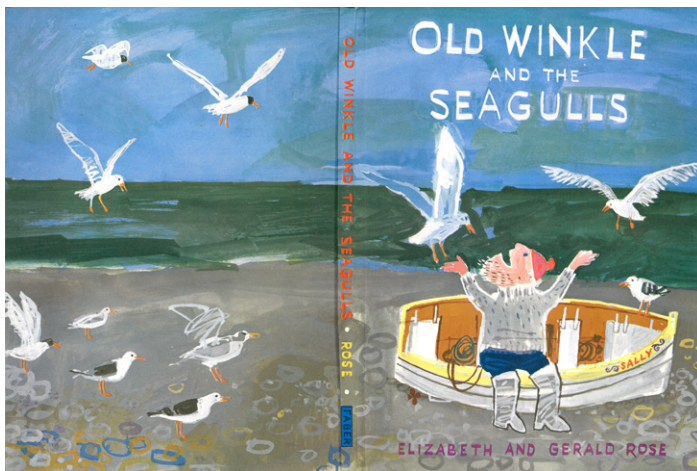


Fig.1 Elizabeth and Gerald Rose, *Old Winkle and the Seagulls*, Faber and Faber, London, 1960; front and back cover and inner spreads; re-published by Puffin in 1976.

Martin Salisbury writes:

It is something of a labour of love for me to trawl through the gallery of past CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal winners. As well as my obvious professional interest, there are also many personal connections for me. As an illustration student at Maidstone College of Art in the 1970s, I was taught by Gerald Rose, whose wonderful *Old Winkle and the Seagulls* (1960) was one of the earliest winners (fig.1). I was oblivious to this at the time – Gerald was and still is so modest about his work. The college Principal was William Stobbs, an illustrator who had won the medal for each of the previous two years. We never saw him, but we knew when he was in because his Rolls Royce would be parked outside! My own experiences were far from unique, as illustration courses at art school have been and continue to be taught by leading illustrators. Many Greenaway winners have been part-time tutors at British art schools – for example Raymond Briggs at Brighton School of Art, Charles Keeping at Camberwell College of Art and Quentin Blake at the Royal College of Art. The generosity of these busy artists in giving their time to the education of their successors is key to the rich landscape of illustration in the UK. Most would also argue that they themselves also learn from their students!

The CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal winners through the 1960s and 1970s represent a roll call of some of the finest draftsmen of the time. Will we see again the kind of virtuoso draftsmanship that Victor Ambrus, Charles Keeping and Brian Wildsmith displayed? Their formal art education and utter devotion to drawing was, and in the case of Ambrus still is, breathtaking. No one can draw horses like Ambrus. As the picturebook has evolved as an increasingly authorial medium over the following decades, so the selection of winners



Fig.2 Emily Gravett, *Wolves*, MacMillan Children's Books, London, 2005; inner spreads.

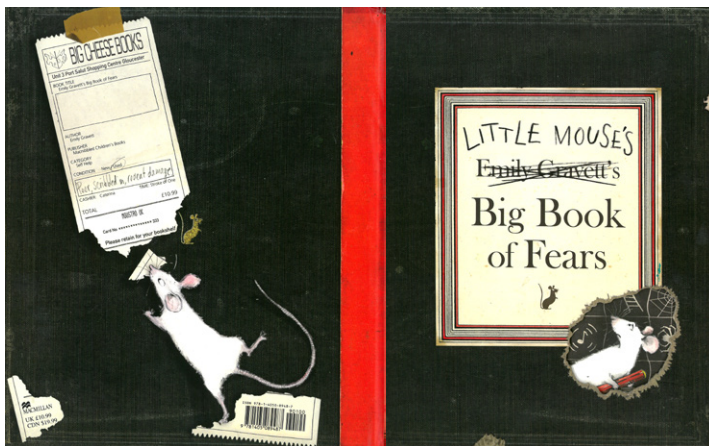


Fig.3 Emily Gravett, *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears*, MacMillan Children's Books, London, 2007; front cover and back cover.

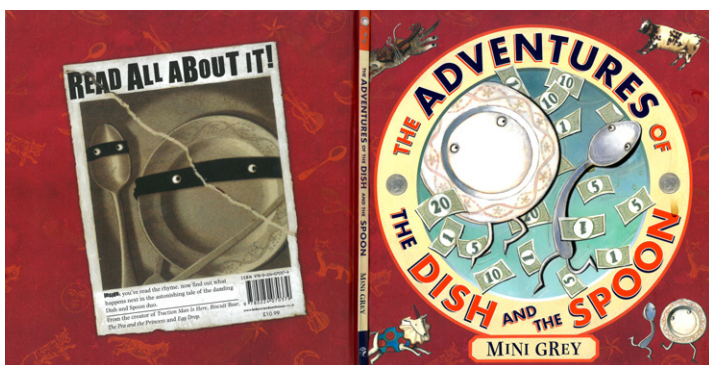


Fig.4 Mini Grey, *The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2006; front and back cover.

increasingly reflects the all-round 'bookness' of works such as *Wolves* (2005, fig.2) or *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears* (2007, fig.3) by Emily Gravett, *The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon* (2006, fig.4) by Mini Grey and *This is Not My Hat* by Jon Klassen (2012). These are all examples of the new picturebook-maker, or 'auteur' to use the analogy of film. Words such as 'illustrator' or 'writer' are no longer adequate to describe those who 'make' books whose meaning is delivered through all-round control of integrated image, word, design, typography and production.

Morag Styles writes:

For me, like for Martin, scanning the list of titles for the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal was like a sentimental journey into my past – as a mother, teacher, academic and art exhibition curator.¹ With very few exceptions, these are the picturebooks with which 'I have measured out my life', to paraphrase T.S. Eliot. Children's books as literature have been my main focus, but after collaborating with Martin Salisbury and his students I have learned to be much more interested in, and I hope discerning about, the visual side of picturebooks. Even so, I can never examine picturebooks with a true artist's eye, and I am inevitably drawn to the way word and image work together. It is particularly exciting when the written and visual text appear to counterpoint each other in unexpected, sophisticated, moving or amusing ways. A professional lifetime observing children's responses to picturebooks highlights how much they, too, relish the challenge.

A recent CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal winner, *This is Not My Hat* by Jon Klassen, is a perfect example of a complex, ironic picturebook where the minimal written text is subtly contradicted by the illustrations. This is sometimes described as counterpoint, where the words say something different to the image and the reader has to make sense of the conflict between the two semiotic systems. Klassen's skill lies in leaving space for the reader's imagination to fill in the 'readerly gap' and in the act become complicit. The contradictions lie in a game of reversals: the little fish thinks he has got one over the big fish, with the tiniest of clues at



Fig.4 Mini Grey, *The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2006; inner spread.

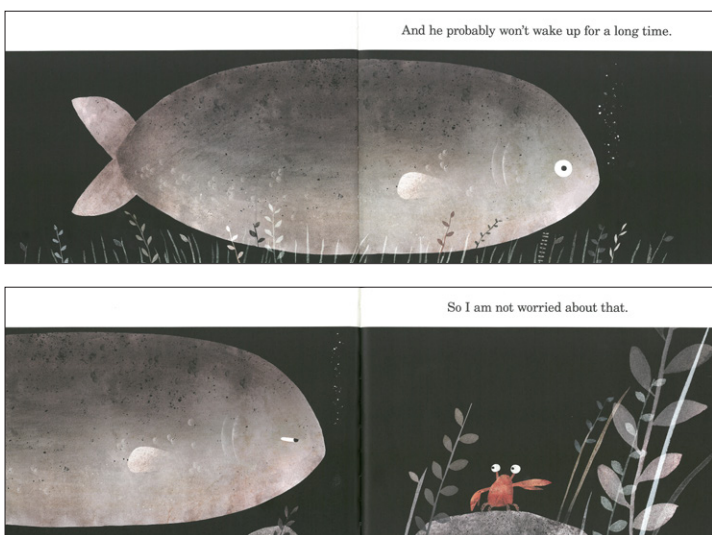


Fig.5 Jon Klassen, *This is Not My Hat*, Walker Books, London, 2012; inner spreads.

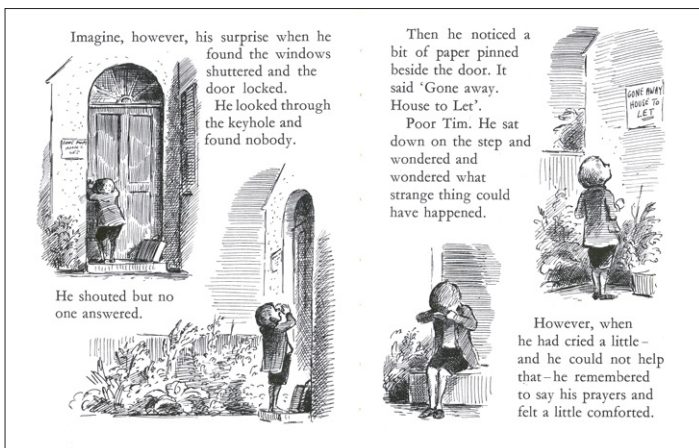
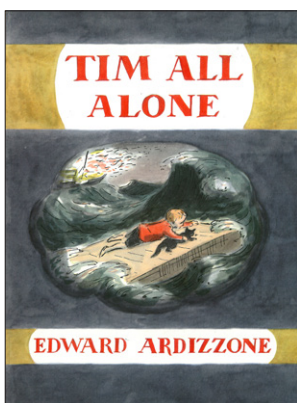


Fig.6 Edward Ardizzone, *Tim All Alone*, Oxford University Press, London, New York, Toronto, 1956; front cover and inner spreads; currently published by Frances Lincoln Publishers, London

first (the big fish's eyes keep changing) hinting that he might be wrong about that! There's the pleasure in unabashed mischief on the one hand and the righting of injustice on the other, though few young readers can cope with the likeliest outcome that the big fish eats the little fish for stealing his hat or just because he can (fig.5)! This book, like Klassen's other *Hat* volumes, can be read on several levels, is worthy of multiple viewings, and asks the reader to think deeply as well as be entertained. These are some of the hallmarks of outstanding picturebooks; we must thank our librarians for being so astute in their selection for the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal over sixty years.

The CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal – the early years

Going back in time, what a delight it is to remember that the first award went to Edward Ardizzone for his much-loved *Tim All Alone* (1956) (also a Top Ten² winner) – a gentle adventure story told with great charm, accompanied by exquisite black and white line drawings overlaid with watercolour washes (fig.6). Ardizzone was never happy with the quality of his black ink line in full colour printing, so he found a way to do the line on a separate overlay. A few years later, *Mrs Cockle's Cat* (1961), by the distinguished author Philippa Pearce, was beautifully complemented by Anthony Maitland's arresting illustrations. Take for example Peter the cat, clearly the hero, who demands attention by staring both at and beyond the reader on the cover. The rest of the illustrations consist of pen and ink line drawings on most pages, which break up the text nicely for newly independent readers. With great economy, Maitland both draws the reader into the story and fleshes it out by bringing Mrs Cockle, her home and her adventures to life through his lively, humorous drawings (fig.7). Maitland demonstrates amazing control of line and texture and an enviable ability to communicate an idea with overall clarity, even within a very detailed image. There are quiet sensitive moments, too, and he is brilliant at cats! Maitland is perhaps not as celebrated as he might be for his understated drawing.

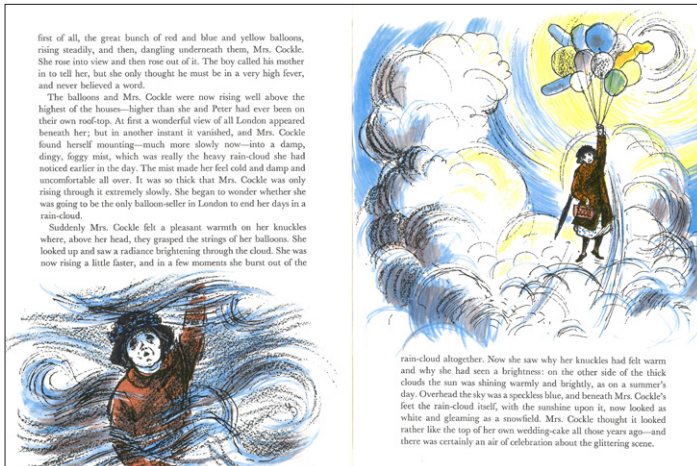


Fig.7 Philippa Pearce, *Mrs Cockle's Cat*, illustrated by Antony Maitland, Constable and Co., London, 1961; inner spreads.



Fig.8 Brian Wildsmith, *ABC*, Oxford University Press, London, New York, Toronto, 1962; two inner spreads; the edition pictured is Starbright Books, New York, 2003.

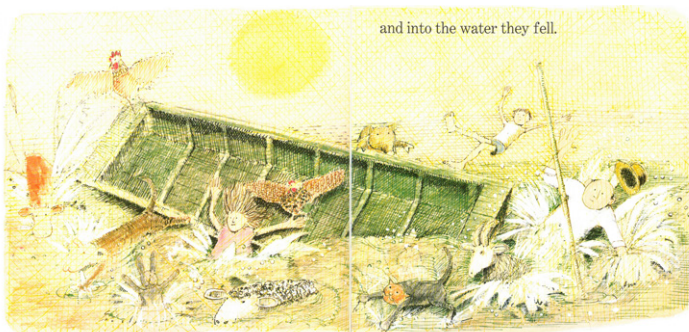


Fig.9 John Burningham, *Mr Gumpy's Outing*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1970; inner spread.

Victor Ambrus deservedly took the prize twice, while Brian Wildsmith, the great colourist, won the award in 1962 for his dazzling and highly influential *ABC* (1962, fig.8), which thanks to the visionary commissioning of Mabel George at Oxford University Press, opened the door to a new era of paint and texture. Ambrus went on to produce many finer works, including his illustrations for *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1966). John Burningham claimed the award in 1963 for his stunning first picturebook, *Borka*, and in 1970 for everyone's favourite, *Mr Gumpy's Outing* (fig.9). At first glance his work may appear simple or naïve, but his ability to create utterly convincing character and setting while leaving so much 'unsaid' is unique. He is undoubtedly one of the most challenging, innovative illustrators of his time, in terms of artistic technique, in his use of intertextuality, in the themes he tackles and in the fact that his words are as interesting and thoughtfully composed as his illustrations. A good example of Burningham's brilliance is a book of his that didn't win – *Oi! Get Off Our Train* (1989). This is a 'green' picturebook in every sense of the word, from the colour of the front cover, the bedroom scenes and the endpapers to its dedication to Chico Mendes, 'who tried so hard to protect the rainforest of Brazil', and the fantasy story about endangered species begging to 'come with you on your train'. While the little boy engine driver and his dog at first respond with the catch-phrase, 'Oi! Get off our train', each animal in turn makes such a pressing plea that the steam train gets fuller and fuller. Through Burningham's glorious artwork, drawing on a range of techniques, they ride that dream train through the seasons across different terrains, many of them polluted, some harking back to the past, others thrilling in the beauty of the natural world, while on the way the illustrator pays homage to artists such as Turner. On the final page, the mother complains to her son about all the animals who have invaded the house, finishing with the powerful question, 'Is it anything to do with you?' Anyone who thinks that picturebooks are simple should consider the multi-layered depth of a book such as this, and the implicit respect the author affords his young audience, as 'reading' something as challenging as this, however delightful, involves serious reading, looking and thinking.



Fig.9 John Burningham, *Mr Gumpy's Outing*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1970; inner spread.

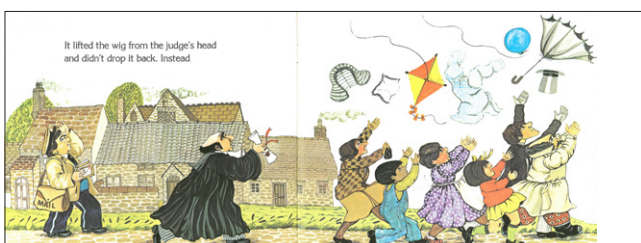
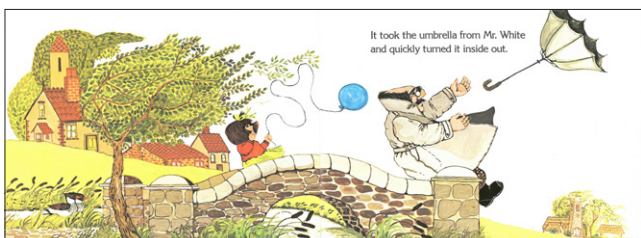


Fig.10 Pat Hutchins, *The Wind Blew*, Puffin Books, London, 1974; two inner spreads.

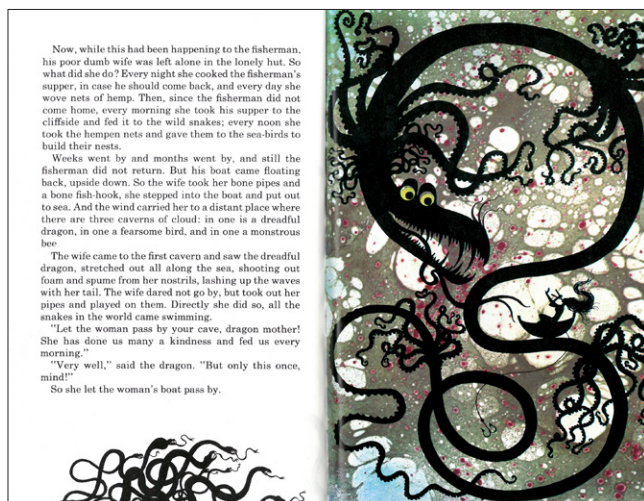


Fig.11 Joan Aiken, *The Kingdom Under the Sea and Other Stories*, illustrated by Jan Pienkowski, Puffin Books, Penguin Books Ltd., London, 1971; front and back cover and one inner spread; currently out of print.

The CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal – 1970 to 1990

The 1970s were an exciting period for picturebooks, and the judging panels for the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal were on the ball. For example, in 1974 they celebrated Pat Hutchins's talents by awarding the medal to the delightful *The Wind Blew* (1974, fig.10), although her work of genius is *Rosie's Walk* (1967), a masterclass in storytelling and one to which many modern picturebook-makers owe a debt. Apart from the delights of Hutchins's artistry, this picturebook can only be fully appreciated by reading the whole story, which is only one sentence long. It is what is NOT said in the words, but only in the pictures, which makes it such a romp. Rosie walks on placidly while the fox gets into trouble over and over again. Brilliant!! Jan Pienkowski's beautiful silhouette artwork in *The Kingdom Under the Sea* (1971, fig.11) showcases his trademark colourful ink washes on a background of black paper cut-outs (his recent works tend to feature computer generated work). Pienkowski's pioneering pop-up book *Haunted House* (fig.12) also ran away with the prize in 1979. Shirley Hughes's *Dogger* (1977), voted by the public as the all-time winner, tells a simple story of a beloved toy that is lost and then found. It features many of Hughes's characteristic traits – appealing, realistic illustrations, the everyday ups and downs of family life, a sort of child's universe bathed in a warm palette (fig.13).

The master of graphic sequence, Raymond Briggs, won with *Father Christmas* in 1973, (another Top Ten winner). The opening pages subvert most of our expectations of Father Christmas, as here he is grumpy ('blooming Christmas') and much prefers summer holidays to the cold and toil of December. Children adore seeing him putting his clothes on, making his breakfast and even sitting on the toilet! (fig.14) Briggs's work not only exhibits exquisite storytelling and explodes with vitality, he also brings grit to the genre, tackling difficult topics head on with no condescension. This is particularly evident in titles such as *Gentleman Jim* (1980), *When the Wind Blows* (1982) and *The Man* (1992), where he tackles issues of class, power, difference, and the aftermath of a nuclear war! Empathy for the underdog is often palpable in his work, yet compassion, kindness and the decency of ordinary people is never far away. Briggs encourages young readers to think critically about the world they are living



Fig.12 Jan Pienkowski, *Haunted House*, William Heinmann, London, 1979; inner spreads; currently published by Walker Books.



Fig.13 Shirley Hughes, *Dogger*, Red Fox, London, 1977; inner spreads.

in, though his lovely sense of fun ensures there is always light as well as darkness. His wordless *The Snowman* (1978) is already a classic, while his philosophical *Fungus the Bogeyman* (1977) is a work of comic genius.

The powerful, atmospheric illustrations which accompany Alfred Noyes's dramatic poem *The Highwayman* (1981, fig.15) were by Charles Keeping, arguably one of the most innovative and creatively ambitious illustrators of all time. In 1967, Keeping also won the award for his own picturebook, *Charley, Charlotte and the Golden Canary* (fig.16). We described him as 'a virtuoso draughtsman whose instantly recognisable line is most familiar from his black and white illustrations for older readers' in *Children's Picturebooks*.³ No one could do emotional intensity like Keeping, who worked with many fine writers, such as Kevin Crossley Holland (*Beowulf*) and Rosemary Sutcliff, and who tackled poetry particularly well (see also his *The Lady of Shalott*). Like Wildsmith, he was one of Mabel George's protégées at Oxford University Press.

Janet Ahlberg won the award in 1978 for a simple rhyme, *Each Peach Pear Plum*. This example reminds us that the heart of an excellent picturebook is the way the words dovetail with the pictures, and Allan Ahlberg deserves to be honoured every bit as much as Janet. This winning partnership's second award was for *The Jolly Christmas Postman* (1991, fig.17), although any of the three *Postman* volumes would have deserved it. The Ahlbergs brought interactive picturebooks with paper engineering to a new level with this series, which both offers so much to children and asks so much of them. New features in this series include the sheer variety of the delights offered beyond the lifting of flaps, such as the opening of envelopes containing letters, invitations, circulars, little books, games etc., introducing children to a range of genres; then there was the wealth of intertextuality of content, which made reference to other texts, including fairy tales, classic fiction and many kinds of information. To savour such books requires active, engaged readers.

Two picturebooks by Anthony Browne, *Gorilla* (1983, fig.18) and *Zoo* (1992, fig.19), both of which won the award, have been staples of Morag Styles' teaching and research. For example, *Zoo* was used as the basis



Fig.14 Raymond Briggs, *Father Christmas*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1973; inner spread; currently published by Puffin Books.

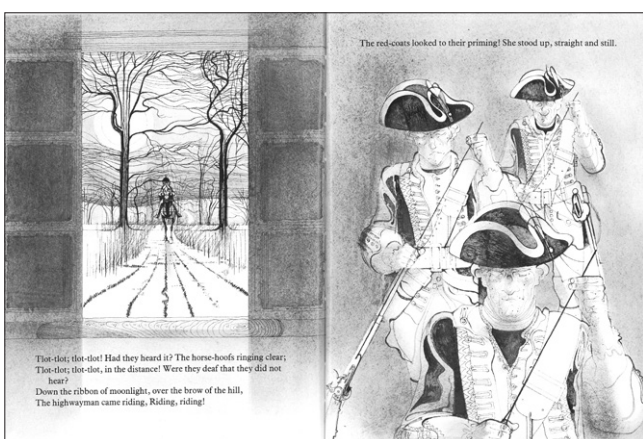
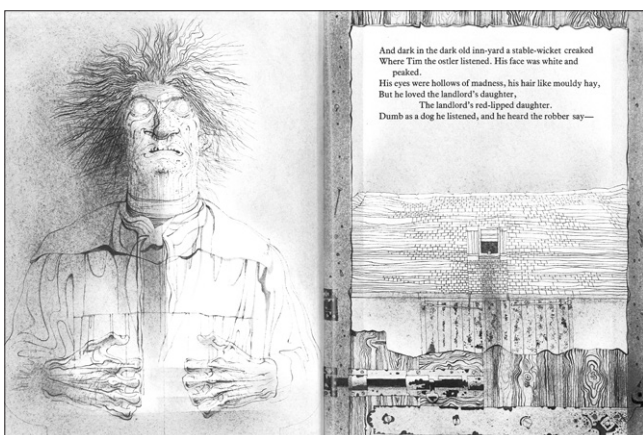


Fig.15 Alfred Noyes, *The Highwayman*, illustrated by Charles Keeping, Oxford University Press, London, 1981; inner spreads.

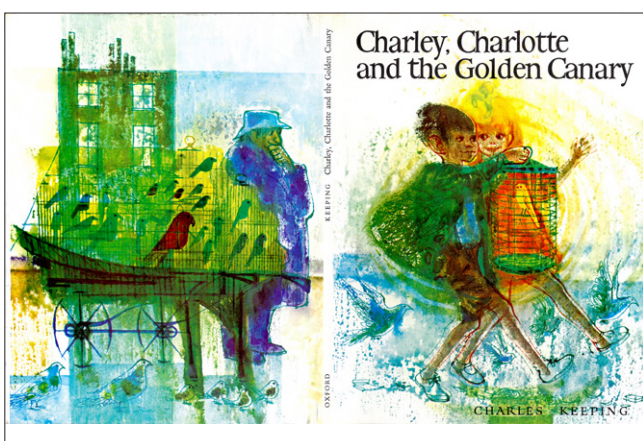


Fig.16 Alfred Noyes, *The Highwayman*, illustrated by Charles Keeping, Oxford University Press, London, 1981; front and back cover

of research into how children from 4-11 read complex picturebooks.⁴ Browne's work was chosen after noting children's powerful responses to his books – the pleasure, concentration and excitement they provoked – and how they invited careful scrutiny. There is a psychological element in Browne's storytelling as well as a wicked sense of humour and a diverse visual vocabulary informed by a range of influences from cinema to fine art.

Mr Magnolia, CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal winner in 1980, is just one of many works by the wonderful Sir Quentin Blake that could have graced the awards list. No one has contributed more to the status of the illustrator's art, both through his own work and through his tireless endeavours to promote illustration. His deceptively 'easy' line is instantly recognisable, yet it can be playful, lyrical and even dark. Michael Foreman won the award on two occasions, first in 1982 for two books published the same year: *Long Neck and Thunder Foot* (fig.20) and *Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Fairy Tales* (fig.21), but it was his impressive *War Boy* (1989) that turned out to be one of his most remarkable and moving contributions to children's literature. The first title in his war trilogy combines a compelling personal story with factual elements (fig.22).

The CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal in the 21st Century

How fitting that the current Children's Laureate, the talented and prolific Chris Riddell, should win the award for the third time in 2016 for his visual retelling of *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Sleeper and the Spindle*⁵ (fig.23), reminding us how often versions of fairy tales and nursery rhymes have featured in this award. Retellings of old tales, and indeed the classics, also figure prominently, as Riddell's inventive, full-length interpretation of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver* (2004, fig.24) testifies. Another example is Helen Oxenbury's splendid *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1999, fig.25), which won her the award for a second time – thirty years after the first, in 1969 – for her delightful illustrations of Edward Lear's poem, *The Quangle Wangle's Hat* (fig.26). *Alice* was a much bigger and more complex undertaking, and her superb draughtsmanship is very much to the fore as she brings a modern looking Alice to life for younger readers using soft pencil and watercolour. However, the picturebook Oxenbury will

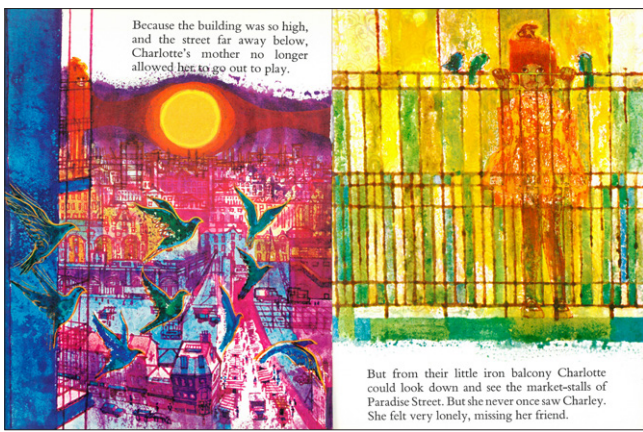


Fig.16 Alfred Noyes, *The Highwayman*, illustrated by Charles Keeping, Oxford University Press, London, 1981; inner spread.

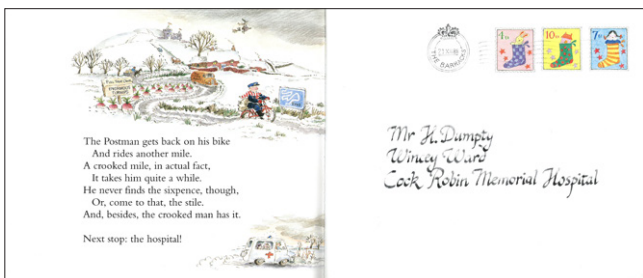
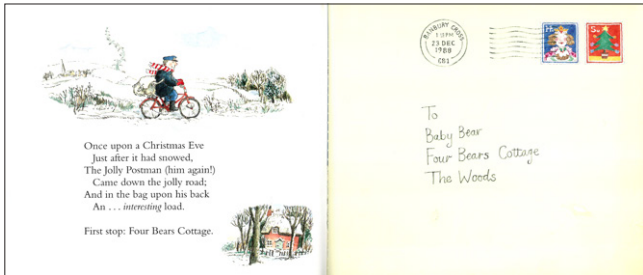


Fig.17 Alan and Janet Ahlberg, *The Jolly Christmas Postman*, William Heinemann, London, 1991; two inner spreads; currently published by Puffin Books.

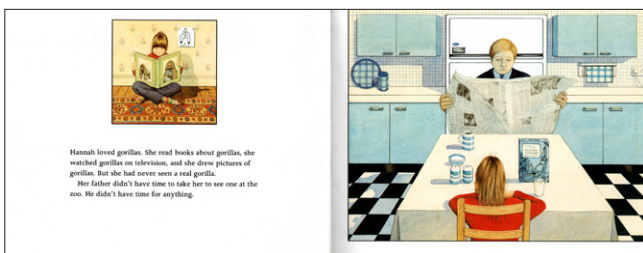


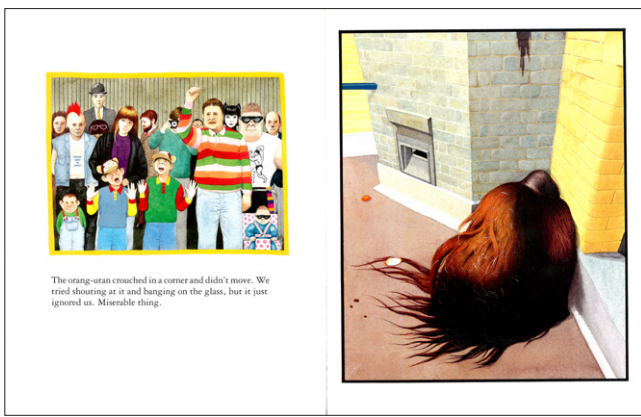
Fig.18 Anthony Browne, *Gorilla*, Julia McRea Books, Random Century Ltd., London, 1983; inner spread; currently published by Walker Books, London.



be most remembered for never made the cut – *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* (1989), for which Michael Rosen supplied the words – although it is already an acknowledged classic, having sold millions of copies world-wide.

The CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal has acknowledged a wide range of inventive illustrators in the last twenty years, including some distinguished examples of illustrated fiction and non-fiction books. It was heartening, for example, to find Jim Kay recognised for his outstanding ink drawings in which figures grow out of complex textures and ink spills and which contributed significantly to the success of Patrick Ness's heartbreaking *A Monster Calls* in 2012 (fig.27). The welcome resurgence of small independent publishers over the last few years is represented in the form of the 2015 winner, William Grill's *Shackleton's Journey* (fig.28), published by Flying Eye Books, the children's book imprint of Nobrow Press. Such small publishers have impacted significantly on the visual culture of children's publishing in the UK, introducing greater sophistication of design and production whilst also expanding the genre of narrative non-fiction. This change has been spectacular, and has led the resurgence in book sales generally. Publishers in this country have been slow to catch up with mainland Europe in terms of appreciating the book as art or as a desirable object, but our publishers were quick to follow the lead of Flying Eye and New Zealand's Gecko Press with new imprints such as Big Picture Press at Templar and Wide Eyed Editions at Quarto. Art publishers such as Tate Publishing and Thames & Hudson have published English language editions of books from some pioneering small publishers, such as Planeta Tangerina in Portugal and Topipittori in Italy.

The last two decades have also seen the rise of popular and accomplished young women illustrators such as Mini Grey, Lauren Child and Emily Gravett, who have been properly recognised by the CILIP Greenaway Medal. Some equally talented men with outstanding titles to their credit have missed out so far: Oliver Jeffers, Satoshi Kitamura and Alexis Deacon come to mind. This is a pity when fifteen illustrators have won the medal two or three times over the last sixty years. On the other hand, it is heartening to be able to confirm our hunch that most



The orang-utan crouched in a corner and didn't move. We tried shouting at it and banging on the glass, but it just ignored us. Miserable thing.

Fig.19 Anthony Browne, *Zoo*, Julia MacRea Books, Random Century Ltd., London, 1992; inner spreads; currently published by Red Fox Picture Books, Penguin-Random House.

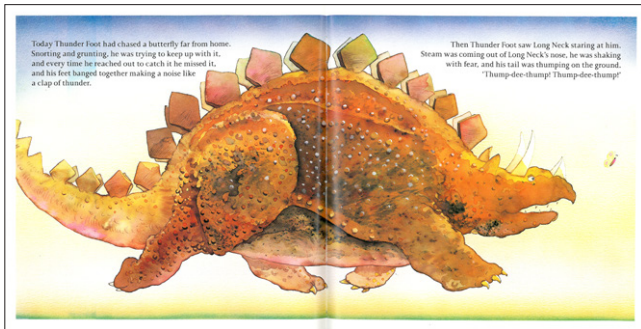


Fig.20 Michael Foreman, *Long Neck and Thunder Foot*, Kestrel Books, 1982; inner spread; currently published by Andersen Press.

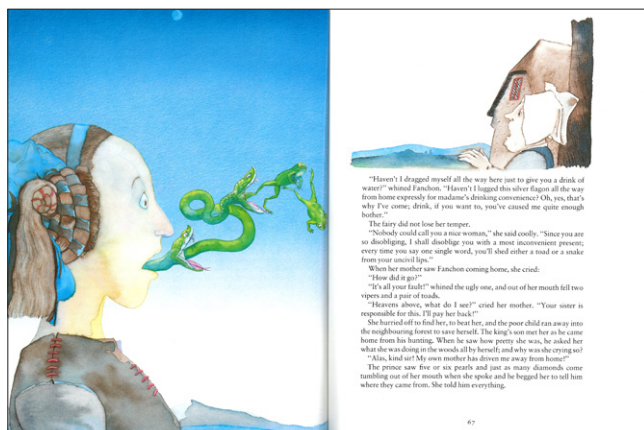
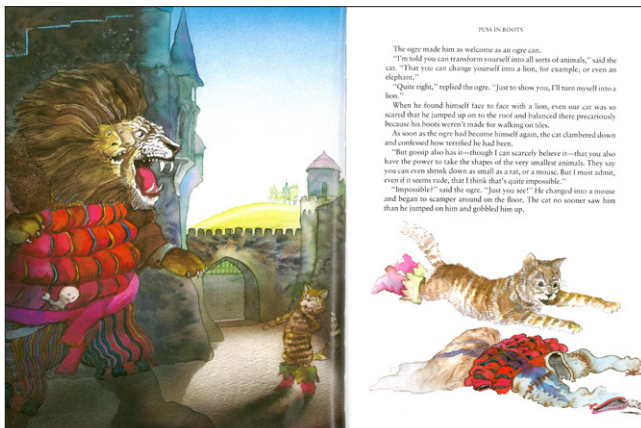


Fig.21 Angela Carter, *Sleeping Beauty and other favourite fairy tales*, illustrated by Michael Foreman, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1982; inner spreads; currently out of print.

illustrators improve with age, as many of those who win the award more than once do so years apart.

There has never been a time when children's librarians were more in need of our support and thanks for bringing some of the best illustrated books to the attention of children – and their parents and teachers – as well as scholars, booksellers, reviewers, publishers, etc. We ought to be shouting from the rooftops how wonderful this genre is, and how lucky we are to have so many magnificent illustrated books to choose from. Most of all, we must loudly declare how much we value those librarians who specialise in illustrated books for young children. We owe a huge debt to their expertise in selecting books that will stand the test of time and give pleasure to millions of readers, never forgetting that what we read in childhood is formative of the adults we will become. That list of sixty titles contains so much to enjoy, laugh at, learn from, sustain, provoke and make us curious about the world and the people in it, and understand it and them and ourselves a little better. Here's to the next sixty years!

¹ I am extremely proud that the work of ten CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal winners was displayed in our exhibition 'Picture This!: Picturebook Art at the Millennium' at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, in 2000.

² In 2007, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal, a panel of children's book experts drew up a list of the ten best winning titles.

³ M. Salisbury and M. Stiles, *Children's Picturebooks: The Art of Visual Storytelling* (Laurence King Publishing, London, 2012).

⁴ See: Arizpe & Stiles, *Children Reading Picturebooks: Interpreting Visual Texts* (2nd edition 2016).

⁵ Neil Gaiman, *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, illustrated by Chris Riddell, (Bloomsbury, London, 2014).

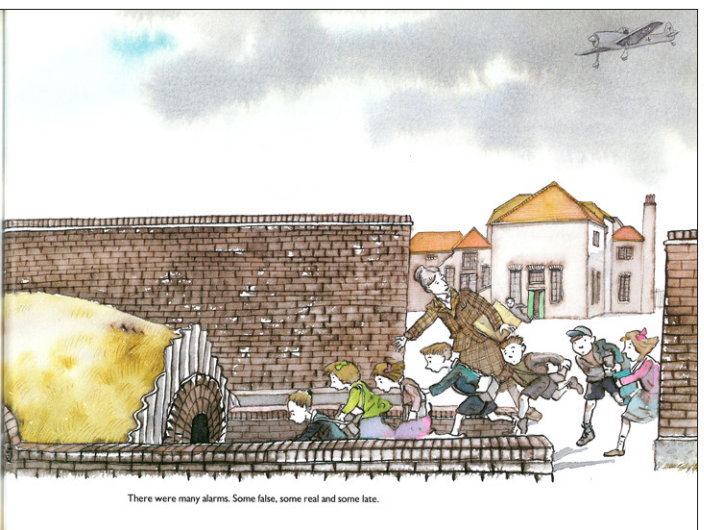
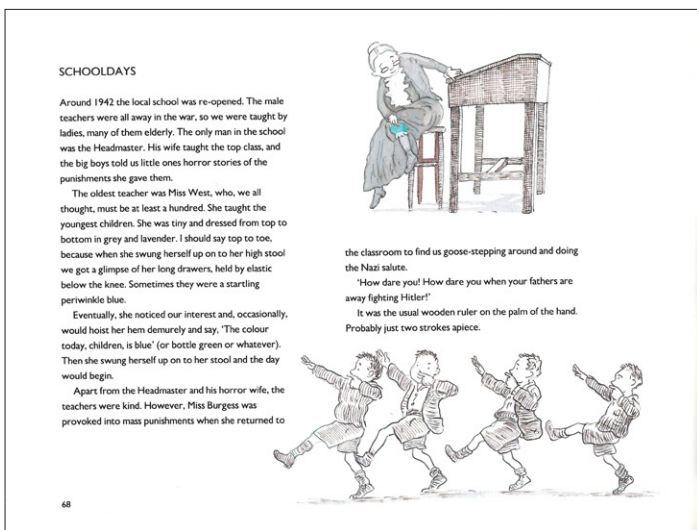
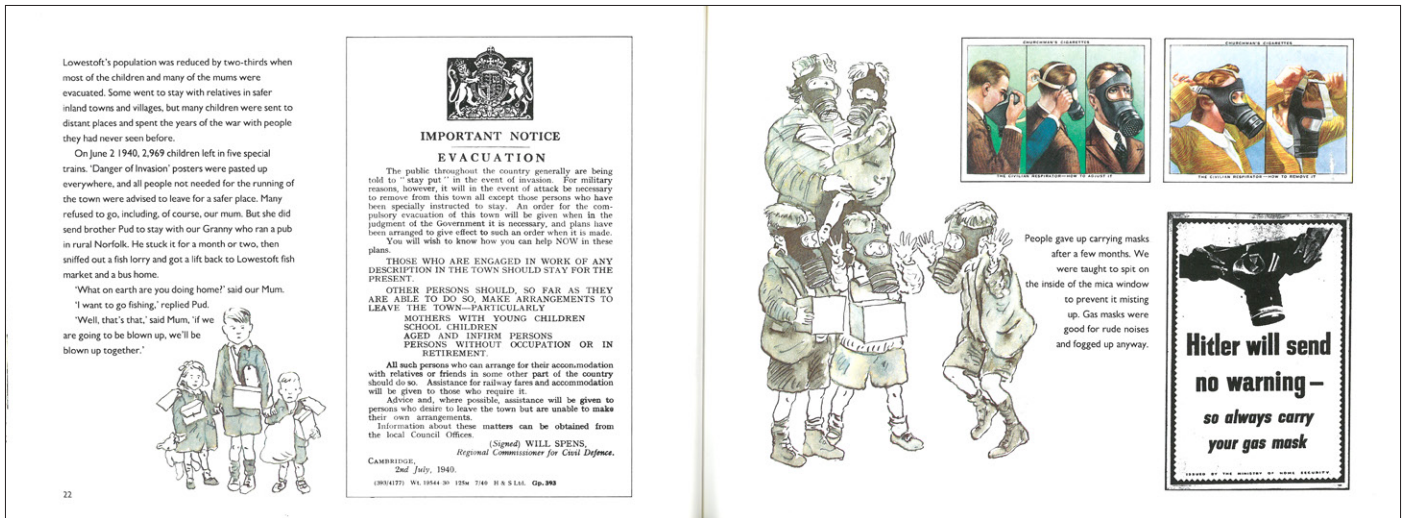


Fig.22 Michael Foreman, *War Boy*, Pavilion Books Limited, London, 1989; inner spreads.

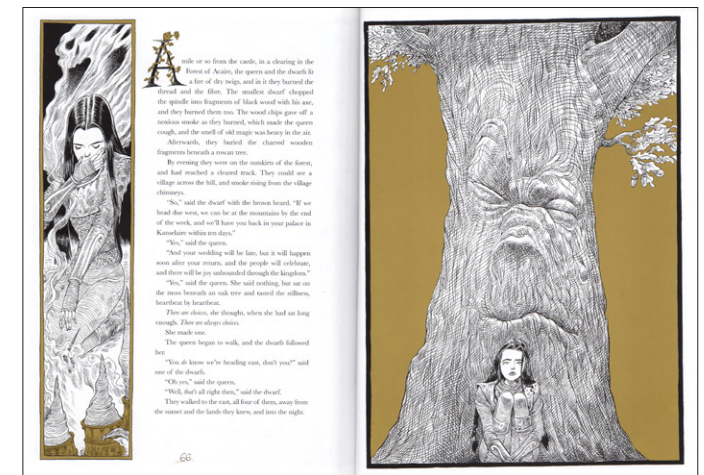


Fig.23 Neil Gaiman, *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, illustrated by Chris Riddell, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, New Delhi, New York and Sydney, 2014; inner spreads.



Fig.24 Johnathan Swift's "Gulliver" retold by Martin Jenkins, illustrated by Chris Riddell, Walker Books, London, 2004; inner spreads.

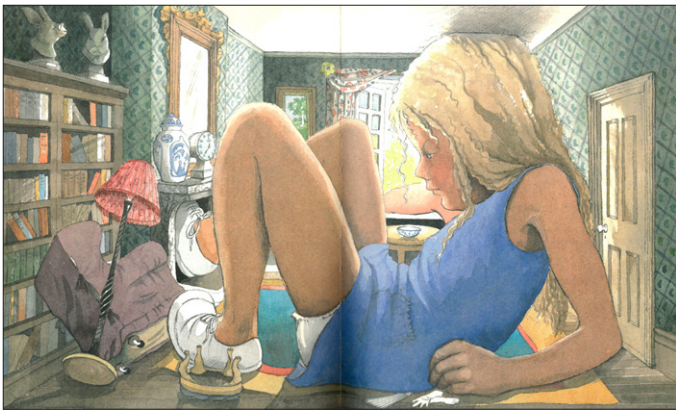


Fig.25 Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, illustrated by Helen Oxenbury, Walker Books, London, 1999; inner spreads.

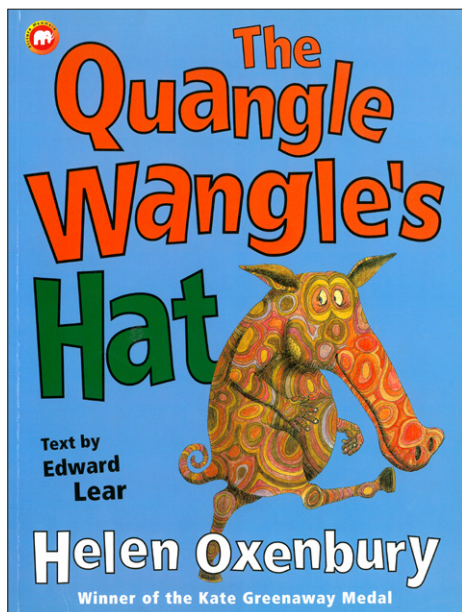


Fig.26 Edward Lear, *The Quangle Wangle's*, illustrated by Helen Oxenbury, William Heinemann, London, 1969; front cover and inner spread; currently out of print.

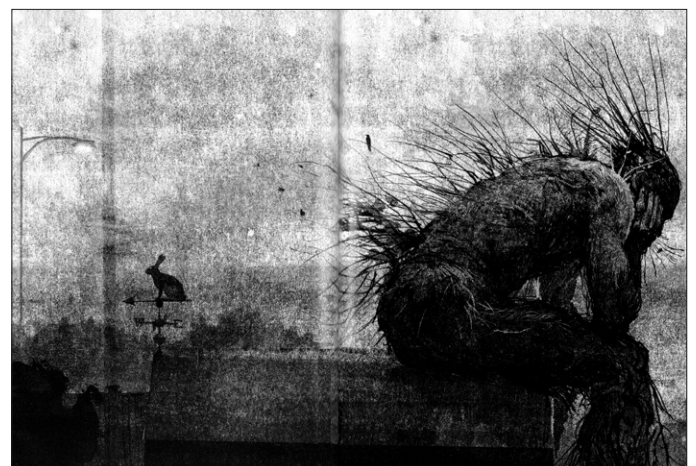


Fig.27 Patrick Ness, *A Monster Calls*, illustrated by Jim Kay, Walker Books, London, 2011; inner spreads.



Fig.28 William Grill, *Shackleton's Journey*, Nobrow Books, London, 2015; inner spreads.

Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles

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