



## Children's Books — 1985

*The S.O.O.S.* by Sian Lewis. Published by Andre Deutsch. Price \$13.50.

I enjoyed reading *The S.O.O.S.* a lot. I think it was a well written book.

The book was about a 14-student country school in Pontalaw. There were 6 students in the Top Class and they were the people who formed The S.O.O.S, which stands for Save Our Old School. Their names were Tarquin, Huw, Glyn, Gwen Olwen and Malbi.

The Dyfed Education Committee voted for Pontalaw School to be closed down, but the Top Class wanted it to stay open mainly because they didn't want to go to Morfa School. To get publicity they put out a magazine about the school and then managed to get a photo of Malbi on the front page of the local newspaper.

On a rainy night Tarquin got lost down one of the lead mines. The lead mines hadn't had anyone down them for almost 60 years. All the people in Pontalaw had come to help but they couldn't find him. So in the end the Top Class saved him themselves. Because they were the first people in such a long time to go down the mines they were put on television.

Seeing they had so much publicity, there was a lot of pressure on the Education Committee and the Pontalaw School was kept open.

I found the book interesting because I don't often read about that sort of thing. I liked how Tarquin lost his patience and that puts a bit of humour into it. I was amused by the description of the way they get up the tunnel to Hedgehog, their meeting place, with Fly, Huw's dog, pushing past.



Katie Wingrove  
10 years

A selection of children's books received for review were sent out for the children's own opinions.

*Nicola Mimosa* by Jean Ure. Published by Hutchinson. Price \$15.95.

*Nicola Mimosa* is about a girl who is fourteen and is trying to decide whether to be a dancer or a doctor. She has a sister who is thirteen and she is an actress. Nicola is being pushed from all sides but she wants to make up her own mind. I enjoyed reading the book although I didn't like the ending. It seemed like the author had gone out to lunch and never came back. There were some paragraphs that were a bit boring. They seemed to rave on about something which didn't seem too important. I recommend this book to anyone planning to take up dancing as a career.



Karen Hagarty  
12 years

*Choose your own Adventure: Search for the Mountain Gorilla* by Jim Wallace. Published by Bantam. Price \$2.50.

I liked it. It was exciting as the other *Choose your own Adventure* book I have read.

In this book I'm a photographer and writer for the *African Naturalist* and I am sent to do a story on the rare mountain gorillas in Uganda. I usually find the gorillas. Sometimes I become part of the family and sometimes I don't because the gorillas are scared away by one thing or another. Sometimes I take a chance and choose an adventure where I get killed, or injured. But I like to go back and read what would have happened if I'd chosen the other way.

David Robertson  
10 years

*The Island on Bird Street* by Uri Orler. Published by Hutchinson. Price \$13.50.

This book is about Alex, a Jewish boy who hides from the Germans in a deserted house during World War II in 1943. His mother had been taken by the Germans — somewhere. He didn't know where. Alex hid in No. 78 Bird Street, a deserted house, waiting for his father to come. He had to wait six months.

At night Alex searched for food in other empty houses where Jews had once lived. And he was always fighting the cold, because it was winter and snowing. He must have been lonely, too.

I found the book quite exciting in some parts. I shared his feelings when he was nearly caught by the Germans. I think he was very brave. I don't think I could have done what he did.

At the beginning of the book I would rather have watched *Inspector Gadget* on TV, but towards the end, I couldn't put the book down.

Tom Robertson  
13 years

*Space 9: A collection of science fiction stories*, edited by Richard Davis. Price \$15.95.

There were lots of different stories — one ('No World for the Timid') about the last five people in the world (everyone has died in a nuclear war). Some of these people act like animals, mad animals. It was depressing.

Another story ('Skirmish') is about the day the machines all came alive. I wonder if they really could.

I liked the first story ('R is for Rocket'). It is about a boy who wants to become an astronaut, and his dream comes true. When I finished that story, I knew how it felt to want to become an astronaut.



David Robertson  
10 years



*A Game of Soldiers* by Jan Needle. Published by Andre Deutsch. Price \$13.50.

I like Jan Needle's book *A Game of Soldiers* a lot. It is very realistic. It is a sad story. The main characters are Michael, Thomas, Sarah and Maria. Maria was an injured soldier hurt in battle the previous night, and Tom, Michael and Sarah found him. They swore to kill him but they couldn't. They tried to save him. Some other soldiers with a helicopter came. Gunshots rang and the soldiers took off in their chopper. The three kids returned to where the soldier was, in the shelter, but he was gone. The ending left me wondering about what happened to him. This is a realistic war story because it doesn't have a false happy ending and it is not romanticised all the way through like many other books are. It is very suspenseful and hard to put down.



David Wingrove  
12 years

*Goliath on Holiday* by Terrance Dicks, illustrated by Valerie Littlewood. Published by Piccadilly Press. Price \$12.50.

This book is about a boy and his parents and a dog. They all go on holidays. Goliath gets into lots of trouble. This is a mystery story and David and Goliath find out who the smuggler is.

Brian Ritchie  
8 years

*T.R. Bear: Enter T.R.* by Terrance Dicks. Published by Piccadilly Press. Price \$12.50.

This story is about a boy who gets a bear for a present. The bear and other toys have lots of adventures. I liked this story and I would read it again and again.

Brian Ritchie  
8 years

Books for younger children were also submitted by some publishers. Three children, aged 4, 3 and almost 2 took part in assessing these — with of course a great deal of invaluable help from their families!

*The Big Sneeze* by Ruth Brown. Published by Andersen Press. Price \$10.95.

*Seven Eggs* by Meredith Hooper, illustrated by Terry McKenna. Published by Patrick Hardy. Price \$8.95.

*The Little Red Hen* by Margot Zermach. Published by Hutchinson. Price \$14.95.

*Howard* by James Stevenson. Published by Gollancz. Price \$10.95.

These books went to Dane, aged 3 and his brother Ben, 22 months. Their reactions were provided by their father who read both books to them a number of times during the course of about a week.



Dane Roberts  
3 years

Not being able to 'read' the pictures was the problem with *The Little Red Hen* for Dane. His favourite books are ones where he can follow the story for himself by the pictures and these did not show what was happening clearly enough for him to do that. He decided he preferred his Sesame St. version of the same story!

Definitely the most popular with both children was *Seven Eggs*. The illustrations were very good and Dane was pleased because he could 'read' it for himself. Ben was a little non-plussed by this counting book and was hoping to find a chocolate Easter egg!

Even though it looked suitable for their age group *The Big Sneeze* was enjoyed more by their father than the boys! The story was difficult for young children to grasp and there were too many unfamiliar words. The illustrations did not appeal to the children.

*Howard the Duck*. Not enough story to interest young children and there were too many pages where the characters made very short statements. Dane didn't like Howard being called 'stupid' or being told to 'shove off' and said that the pigeons and cat were very naughty to do that. The pictures were rather vague, too all-encompassing and from unusual angles which were too confusing for the children to understand.



Ben Roberts  
22 months

*Balancing Act* by Marysia Murray, illustrated by Lin Tobias. Published by Sugar and Snails.

*The Other Tansy* by Irena Sibley. Published by Sugar and Snails.

On the first reading of these books Katie showed more interest in *Balancing Act*. Lots of action and lively cartoon-style illustrations. She was very relieved that Selina, the main character, was able to rescue a baby locked inside a house.

She had little to say about *The Other Tansy* initially but specifically asked for it to be read again a day or two later. She was intrigued by all the different kinds of puppets the children made. The story has an Australian setting, which somehow seems self-conscious.



Katie Pittard  
4 years