



FOR THE LOVE OF STORIES

Go to any bookshop these days and among the vast array of new titles you will always find many republished classic works, for both adults and young readers. In fact, you could be forgiven for thinking there's a boom in republished classics, in formats ranging from cheap paperbacks to handsome annotated softcovers and beautiful hardcover editions complete with illustrations and fine bindings. SOPHIE MASSON tells us about her love of classics and her new publishing venture.

What's the appeal of republished classics? Well, it takes only a quick look at the '100 best' type of reader-chosen lists to show that classic fiction often appears in the top ranks, with perennial favourites such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, *Winnie the Pooh* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* frequently earning a high place. Then just think of the many films, TV series, spin-off titles and pastiches based on the great classics and you can see why it's almost a no-brainer for publishers to have at least some of those on their list. Of course, the fact that the pre-twentieth century classics have now entered the public domain means that one of the costs associated with publishing, author royalties, may not need to be paid: though of course, that is not the case with the more modern classics and works in translation.

But the appeal of classics is not only commercial: often publishers themselves loved the books when they first encountered them, especially as young readers. For

me, as co-director of Christmas Press, a small publishing house which specialises in retold traditional tales and republished classic and out-of-print titles, it feels like a privilege to be part of a very practical way of passing on the love of literary classics to a new generation of readers. Our core list, Christmas Press Picture Books, brings the world's great traditional fairytales, myths and legends to children today, in fresh lively retellings by contemporary authors with gorgeous illustrations. Our new imprints, debuting this year, also have that classical focus. Second Look Publishing specialises in bringing great out-of-print Australian children's books – plays, poetry and fiction – back to digital and print life to enthral young readers all over again. The first title to be published is a hilarious collection of plays for children by popular author Duncan Ball, followed by a new edition of Libby Gleeson's powerful first novel, *Eleanor Elizabeth*. Meanwhile, our other new fiction imprint, Eagle Books, will launch with the first English translation in over a hundred years of a novel that has influenced countless French-language writers and readers (including me!): Jules Verne's *Mikhail Strogoff*. Stephanie Smee's brilliant translation, accompanied by David Allan's elegant illustrations and superb design, is an invitation for English-language readers to discover a French classic that has been hailed both as the best adventure novel ever written and the legendary author's masterpiece.

And that, for me, as a publisher, is the most satisfying feeling there could be. 🌟

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