



The Federation of Children's Book Groups Newsletter

Autumn 2013

Festival of Children's Literature

In the last Federation newsletter we announced the Festival of Children's Literature that will take place on November 9th in Birmingham and invited you all to join us there. Over the last couple of months the FCBG blog has been hosting the authors and illustrators who will be speaking at the Festival, as they revealed more about what's on their minds, and what they might be sharing with us on the day. We are very happy to be able to reproduce some of what they had to say here!

James Mayhew

We're thrilled that James Mayhew will be celebrating with us on November 9. In the morning he'll be running a workshop for children, all about illustrating to live music, and in the early afternoon he'll be illustrating live to a concert performance of Benjamin Britten's chamber suite, *The Sword in the Stone*, which was inspired by T. H. White's eponymous novel.

In recent years live illustration to classical music has become something of a specialism for James. But how did it all start? Here is James' story:

"It was a Federation of Children's Book Groups event in St. Albans that opened the door to painting to music. An illustrated retelling of the *Firebird* story prompted the comment – "wouldn't it be great to add the music?"

"But how?" I answered.

As it happened, the St Alban's Children's Book Group knew an orchestra keen to present a family concert and so, in 2007, I found myself on stage with around 100 musicians, painting at an easel as Stravinsky's glorious score surrounded

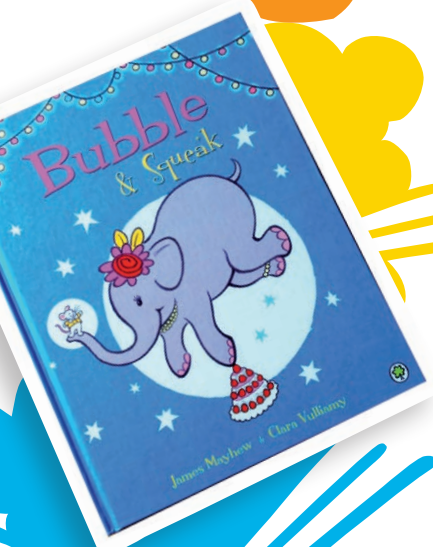
me; the pictures projected onto a vast screen for all to see. I've never been so nervous. But I was heartened by the fact that everyone – the book group, the orchestra and conductor – was prepared to take a risk.

For none of us really knew if such an approach could or would work. But somehow, it did, and *Peter and the Wolf* joined the *Firebird*, and since then *Scheherazade*, *Baba Yaga*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, *Nutcracker*, *Sorcerer's Apprentice* and many others have followed.

[...] My mission is to present concerts of classical music, usually complete works, with the correct story restored to it. Everyone hears famous music in adverts, at the movies, on TV. But very few people (not even orchestra musicians) know the stories that inspired it. And these are fantastic stories! Mostly myths and folk tales, they are stories that deserve to be heard. I rarely work from scripts, which I tend to find a stumbling block in a live performance. Instead I prefer, where possible, to learn all the stories by heart and narrate from memory.

Simultaneously I start to consider what I would like to draw or paint during the playing of the music. This is usually the hardest part to resolve. I need to use quiet, swift materials that will show up boldly on a big screen. Fine details executed on a small scale will not register. This is an entirely different method to my book illustration. I need to create something that fits the story and flows with the music; the brushstrokes are almost choreographically timed."

To read more of James's wonderful post, and learn more about his work, visit <http://www.fcbg.org.uk/musical-pictures-a-guest-post-by-james-mayhew/>



James Mayhew



inside

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- RHCBA 2014 Top Ten!
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- And More...



Clara Vulliamy

From 11.30 on the day of the Festival, Clara will be hosting an exciting mini puppet toy theatre workshop based on *Bubble and Squeak*, a book specially written for her to illustrate, by James Mayhew (who will also be at the Festival). I just know this is going to be a session full of delights, and – most probably – utterly gorgeous haberdashery!

In the run up to the Festival I asked Clara to give us an insight into her session and here's what she had to say... I was so chuffed and delighted to be invited to take part in the FCBG Festival of Children's Literature in November. What an honour!

I'll be presenting *Bubble & Squeak*...

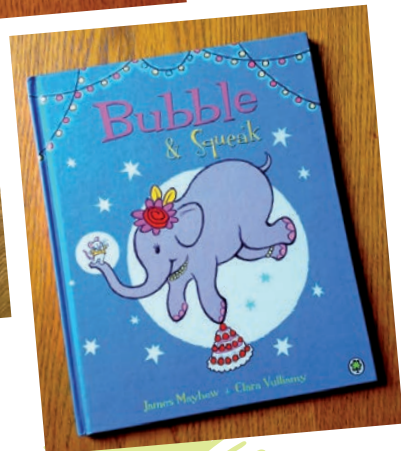
...the first book in a new series written by James Mayhew and illustrated by me. As well as reading the story and doing some drawing to entertain the audience, there will be a chance for everyone to roll up their sleeves and get crafty with a lovely workshop activity.

The day's events seem to have a theatrical flavour, so *Bubble & Squeak* – a story set in a travelling theatre show – is a perfect fit! I'd love to invite you (literally) behind the scenes for a little peek at my initial thoughts.

I have taken a humble kitchen-sized matchbox... looked again at the book for inspiration, done some scribbling, head-scratching, cutting and sticking... (the festival organisers might be reassured to know I'll be doing the DANGEROUS cutting myself at home beforehand!)

And – yes! I think it will work! A mini matchbox theatre for each child to put on their very own *Bubble & Squeak* show... I'll bring some mini Bubbles and mini Squeaks to get the cast of the show underway, but some blanks too, for the young artists to invent their own characters. And plenty of bits and bobs to decorate the outside of the theatre.

So, for a happy hour of miniature marvelousness with *Bubble, Squeak* and me – I do hope I'll see you there!



David Almond

When we realised that in 2013 David Almond would be celebrating 15 years of *Skellig*, we knew he would be perfect for our Festival: *Skellig* has been adapted for opera, theatre and film and so who could be more perfectly placed for exploring storytelling across the Arts than David?

David wrote a short piece for us over the summer, which was shared on the blog in September. You can read a short extract here, but to find out what else was on his mind visit <http://www.fcbg.org.uk/a-guest-post-by-david-almond/>

"It's summer in Northumberland and the sun is shining down. Hadrian's Wall stretches away to over moors and crags to the west. I can hear the North Tyne flowing over its weir a quarter-mile away. [...] Tomorrow I'll take delivery of 800 copies of the beautiful 15th anniversary edition of *Skellig* to sign and send back to the lovely folk at Hodder Children's Books."

"15 years! Who'd have thought it? *Skellig* was a novel that came almost like a dream. I never really knew where it was heading and what would happen next. Until I started writing it, I'd never even thought I'd be a children's writer. Just shows that life takes weird turns, just like stories do. Best not to define yourself too tightly nor to plan your life too closely. The book came with a life of its own and has continued to spread its wings and fly. Flew all around the world, has become a radio play, a stage play, a movie, an opera. Maybe it'll take another surprising flight soon. Who knows? I'll be talking about *Skellig* and its various metamorphoses at the FCBG Festival. Really looking forward to that."



Before

After



EMMA CHICHESTER CLARK

For the final session of the day you'll be able to hear Emma Chichester Clark in conversation with Michael Morpurgo. Together they will discuss their new collaboration, a retelling of *Pinocchio*. Asked to write a little about the challenge of creating the illustrations, Emma had this to say:

"Michael Morpurgo has written his version of *Pinocchio* and – I'm sorry to use this word – but it's a CRACKER! It's a cracking story that races along at a cracking pace with cracking characters. It is TOP fun and has you teetering on the edge of your seat one moment, while rummaging in your pockets for a hankie the next. It's also funny and cheeky – as you would expect, told in *Pinocchio*'s voice, with childlike enthusiasm and innocence."

"So, having read it, I realised I was going to have to try very, very hard to keep the standards UP. Much would be expected of the illustrator..."

"Despite being slightly nervous, I was, at the same time, desperate to get my hands on the little varmint – *Pinocchio*, not Michael – AND the blind cat, lame fox, shark... and, and, and... there is so much to draw in it. It is, as visual treats go – the equivalent of the Fortnum & Mason chocolate counter."

"I began by working out how I thought *Pinocchio* should look, which didn't take long as I'd been able to picture him so clearly while I read the 200 or so pages of the manuscript. Cheekiness, combined with innocence and intelligence, while remembering that he was a wooden puppet. If you go to Italy there are *Pinocchio* puppets everywhere. They are always painted green and red and they're fun – I have one – but I don't much like green and red and luckily for me, Michael had described his clothes as being made out of an old bedspread – so it could be anything!

I don't usually use collage but to start with, I drew him and stuck down four different collaged outfits, just to see. I had intended to paint the actual pattern in an approximate way, but I ended up liking the flatness of the collaged printed pattern, so decided to use it as it was – enlarging and reducing it on a photocopier, depending on how near or far *Pinocchio* was in the picture."

"Gradually, collage filtered into the landscapes of all the illustrations – not in a main subject sort of way – more like a garnish."

It made a huge amount of mess all over the house and there were little bits of gluey paper stuck to my clothes, my hair, the dog – but illustrating *Pinocchio* was the best fun I've had for a long time and I hope it shows. I grew very fond of him."

Blog Exclusive

You can also find an exclusive download on the FCBG blog, of an excerpt from Michael Morpurgo's retelling of *Pinocchio*:

<http://www.fcbg.org.uk/an-exclusive-preview-of-pinocchio-retold-by-michael-morpurgo-illustrated-by-emma-chichester-clark/>

Thanks to Zoe for all the hard work put in to organising these guest posts for the blog, and to all involved for allowing us to re-use their content in the newsletter as well. And if you are still not following the blog, we really do encourage you to do so! It's very easy to sign up on the website – all you need is an email address.



red house children's book award!

TOP TEN Announcement!



Time to start getting excited about Red House Children's Book Award 2014, as we announce this year's top ten shortlist!

Books for Younger Children

Julia Donaldson – *Superworm*, published by Scholastic
Rachel Bright – *Walter and the No Need to Worry Suit*, published by HarperCollins
Helen Stephens – *How to Hide a Lion*, published by Scholastic
Jeanne Willis – *Hippospotamus*, published by Andersen

Books for Younger Readers

Norman Messenger – *The Land of Neverbelieve*, published by Walker
Jennifer Grey – *Atticus Claw Breaks the Law*, published by faber and faber
Alex T Smith – *Claude in the Country*, published by Hodder

Books for Older Readers

Eoin Colfer – *The Reluctant Assassin/ Warp*, published by Puffin
Anne Cassidy – *Killing Rachel/ The Murder Notebooks*, published by Bloomsbury
Rick Yancey – *The 5th Wave*, published by Penguin

Don't forget that if you are not part of a Top Ten testing group then votes can still be registered online for each category at www.redhousechildrensbookaward.co.uk, but we do ask that every book in a category has been read before voting!

Information will soon be available for the 2014 Imagine Festival, including our award ceremony, so if you want to be there, keep an eye on www.southbankcentre.co.uk and the FCBG blog and website – we'll keep you up-to-date!

National Non-Fiction Day Competition



This year (2013) NNFD is working with the fantastic Chris Lloyd, author of the amazing *What on Earth* books and wallbooks. Together we are celebrating the launch of Chris' new wallbook *The Wallbook of Science* (with the Science Museum) which contains, in chronological order the greatest scientific discoveries and inventions ever! Science and engineering has played such an important part in shaping our lives from the beginning of time that it is hard to imagine what our lives would be like if we weren't constantly attempting new things and pushing boundaries whilst extending our knowledge.

For this year's NNFD we are asking all our Book Groups, schools and individuals to design their own wallbook in the style of Chris Lloyd. We would like to know your top 10 greatest scientific inventions/discoveries and for you to put them into your own illustrated timeline. We will be providing a template for people to use but if you feel you can design your own style, all we ask is that it is in true chronological order.

The competition will be launching on November 1st and closing on the 30th November. More information can be found at <http://www.fcbg.org.uk/national-non-fiction-day/> and And if you feel in need of some inspiration <https://whatonearthbooks.com/> and website <http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/> seem like good places to start!



www.fcbg.org.uk





CONFERENCE 2014

Books and Beyond

The Federation of Children's Book Groups invite all our lovely members to join us for our annual conference, which will take place at Worth School, West Sussex, 11th – 13th April 2014.

The provisional programme includes speakers such as Anthony Browne, Meg Rosoff, Ruta Sepetys, Justin Somper, Lauren Child, Philip Reeve, Sarah McIntyre and more. Conference is always a lot of fun and I encourage anyone who hasn't made it before to give it a go.

For more information, including how to book and photos of previous conferences, visit www.fcbg.org.uk/conference

A New Book Award

In September Booktrust announced a new children's book award, called the **Booktrust Best Book Award**, with Amazon Kindle as their sponsors. The announcement states that the award seeks "to unearth the very best children's books the UK has to offer, and to honour authors and illustrators who continue Britain's proud heritage of storytelling."

The award will be split into the following categories:

0-5 years - The Best Picture Book;

6-8 years - The Best Fiction Book and The Best Humorous Book;

9-11 years - The Best Fiction Book, The Best Humorous Book, The Best Fact Book;

12-14 years - The Best Fiction Book, The Best Humorous Book, The Best Fact Book

and for **0-14 years** - The Best Tech Stuff, with a lifetime achievement award going to an influential children's writer or illustrator.

A shortlist will be announced in March next year, after which the judging process is being handed over to the children, with a dedicated online site for uploading reviews and votes. The winners will be announced at a ceremony in London, during Children's Book Week, which next year will be 30th June – 4th July.

A Wicked Writing COMPETITION

Wicked, the global musical phenomenon that tells the incredible untold story of the Witches of Oz, is proud to announce the fourth year of its Wicked Young Writers' Award.

Spearheaded by Michael Morpurgo, the Award recognises excellence in writing, encourages creativity, and helps develop writing talent in young people between 5-25 years of age from all backgrounds and areas of the UK & Ireland.

The Award was established in order to link the important messages of the long-running musical with a competition that would inspire young people to use their writing to look at life a little differently. The Award is championed by Patron Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall. Assisting Michael Morpurgo with the judging process will be Michael McCabe, Executive Producer of **WICKED**, and Jonathan Douglas, the director of the National Literacy Trust, and Dean Atta, acclaimed poet and playwright.

The 2013/14 Wicked Young Writers' Award has already opened and the final date for entries is Monday 31 March 2014. Writing styles can vary from poetry to prose and young people will be judged according to five age categories: 5-7, 8-10, 11-14, 15-17 and 18-25.

A shortlist of 100 entrants will be invited to a very special prize event at the Apollo Victoria Theatre in Summer 2014. All 100 shortlisted entrants will see their poem or story published in the Wicked Young Writers' Award Anthology.

Winners from each of the four age-categories will be announced and will receive a certificate signed by Michael Morpurgo and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, the Wicked Young Writers' Award Anthology and £50 books/eBooks tokens to spend, as well as £100 worth of books for their school library donated by Hachette Children's Books.

Entries can be submitted individually or as part of a school group and both online and postal entries are accepted.

Get involved today at
WickedYoungWriters.com



Spider Sandwiches

Spider Sandwiches is a new book from writer **Claire Freedman** (*Aliens Love Underpants*) and illustrators **Sue Hendra** (*Barry the Fish with Fingers*) and Paul Linnet. With spooky goings on becoming a norm at this time of year, we decided it would be the perfect time to catch up with them to ask a few questions...

CLAIRE

Where did the idea for Max and his gruesome meals come from?

My editor and I discussed the concept, and then I went away and thought up all of the most revolting recipes I could imagine, that would make children go "Yeuch!". I'm especially fond of slug milkshake - drunk through a stinky hosepipe straw, of course! Yum!

It must have been a lot of fun coming up with all those disgusting meals - are there any more that had to be left out?

It was hard choosing which meals to go for - there were lots of disgusting variations on the menu. I won't give too much away as I've saved some for the next book!! Not for the squeamish!

Would you tell us a little about your writing routine?

I write in my little spare room (which is the office!). It is crammed to the rafters with books, papers, files and lots of other stuff I can't bear to be parted from. It overlooks the garden, and from my desk I can watch the birds at the feeder and see the sparrows squabble over who gets first go in the bird bath. We also have a pair of gorgeous robins that nest under the clematis. It's a great distraction from work!

I don't have a regular routine, but when the pressure is on and I have deadlines, the hours go by very quickly and I can be at my desk all day. I write in longhand first, and then lastly onto the computer.

What was your favourite book as a child?

I loved *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

Which other writers do you enjoy reading now?

I enjoy reading Oliver Jeffers (his illustrations are wonderful too!), Chris Haughton - for the witty spare text and great pictures, and Anna Kemp writes lovely texts that are very appealing to me.

You can find out more about Claire and her books at <http://www.clairefreedman.co.uk/>

SUE

What was your starting point for designing Max?

Well, he had to be a greedy monster but he also had to look really friendly and approachable.

Could you tell us about your illustration process?

If you look on the title page for *Spider Sandwiches* you will see that I didn't illustrate this book alone. My partner in crime is Paul. After receiving the text for a book we do lots of rough sketches of all the ideas that we can think of. When we've settled on the image for each page Paul does more detailed sketches which are then scanned and put into a drawing application called Illustrator. I then take over and draw most of the colour artwork in the book. Finally Paul and I add texture and shadow. We draw different elements for the images and put them together, using our strengths. Paul, we discovered during the making of this book is very good at drawing slime and I am good at cockroaches and slugs. We like to make each other laugh, I'd say "Paul, look at this beetle I've just drawn hiding behind the food blender!" Or he'd say "look at this, I've just drawn a packet of sugar guffs!" It was good fun.

Where do you work?

I work in the spare room of our house, at the moment we have builders here knocking down and re-building our basement so it's a bit noisy. I have lots of pictures on the walls mainly pictures drawn by our little girl Wanda. My office is a bit of a mess.

Which other illustrators do you admire, and who are your influences?

I greatly admire Shaun Tann, David McKee, Quentin Blake, Maurice Sendak, Mini Grey. Although my illustrations are nothing like theirs I am definitely influenced by them.

What was your favourite picture book as a child?

I had so many but if I have to pick one it would be 'Mr Silly' by Roger Hargreaves.

And - have to ask! - what is the most disgusting thing you've ever eaten?

I once accidentally ate a flea. My partner Paul put a flea in a glass of water (my cat had fleas and Paul managed to catch one) moments later, forgetting he had just done this I drank it. It was quite embarrassing actually as we'd not known each other long.

To find out more about Sue's books visit <http://www.worldofsuehendra.com/>



NEWS from the groups



Thank you to all the groups who send in details about their events. The web site is regularly updated with group activities.

South Bucks CBG

Were delighted to hold their annual free summer event *A Rainbow of Stories*, alfresco style, in Wycombe Museum Gardens, on the 14th August. They invited everyone to come along dressed in their favourite colours for a wonderful afternoon of colourful stories. The weather was kind, and they had a lot of fun listening to stories, playing parachute games, doing some colourful crafting and singing.

They also recently welcomed children's author Abie Longstaff to talk to the adults and teenage members of the Group at a special Authors Welcome Evening.

They had a very enjoyable evening, with coffee, cakes and a brain tingling Literary Quiz to get us all thinking creatively. Abie was a most entertaining speaker, giving a real understanding of the creative and technical process of book making from planning, writing & closely collaborating with her illustrator, through to publishing her books. The evening was such an enjoyable event, both fun and refreshing for the adults and an opportunity to treat our older children in a more mature fashion.

They were also celebrating National Non-Fiction Day early, with a 'Brilliant Botany' themed event in October!

Oxford CBG

Hosted their one-day conference in October, with... we are looking forward to hopefully hearing more about it in the next issue.

Aldbourn CBG

Recently hosted *Tell Me a Story* - an afternoon of storytelling and activities for all ages. Creating and listening to stories, with a drink and a biscuit - what better way to spend a Sunday afternoon?

They were also celebrating National Non-Fiction Day early, with an event at The Court House in October. With a real, live knight to show them his armour and tell them about his battles, they were hoping for an afternoon to bring history to life, in a setting alive with a real history of its own!

The group are also looking forward to their annual members-only Bonfire Night party in November.

Lewes CBG

"Tom Gates has got my son reading. It's the only fiction he'll read."

This was the comment from a parent after her son heard author and illustrator Liz Pichon talk at a school in April. Lewes CBG arranged the visit, which was the first stop on her promotional tour for her latest book. She did a wonderful, interactive talk with years 3 and 4; showing them a speeded-up movie clip of her drawing; asking them to guess whether there was a caramel wafer in the wrapper (you need to read the books to understand the significance of this!) and taking the children step-by-step through

drawing Tom Gates style pictures. She has written 6 books in the *Tom Gates* series, with another due out in October and an annual at Christmas (a secret that she revealed in her talk!)

The Lewes CBG committee are also hard at work organising their 40th birthday celebrations for next summer; an event we're all looking forward to hearing more about!

Ipswich CBG

had a busy October planned with events with Michael Foreman and Jonathan Stroud.

Michael was talking about his latest work, *The Amazing Tale of Ali Pasha*, the story of a tortoise rescued from the First World War battlefields of Turkey by a young soldier, who brought him back to live in the Suffolk countryside. He was joined by Don Friston, the grandson of that soldier, who showed items and photographs from the family archive.

And later in the month Jonathan Stroud will be introducing the first book in his new series *Lockwood & Co*, which is titled *The Screaming Staircase*, all about young ghost hunters and mysterious goings on.

Yeo Valley CBG

Were looking forward to a Halloween themed event at the end of October, with lots of spooky stories, songs, snacks and fancy dress. They were also encouraging everyone to bring a long an old book for swapping.

Don't forget that you can keep up with events on the website

www.fcbg.org.uk

and many of the groups now have their own website where you can find even more ideas!



www.fcbg.org.uk





From The Blog

Philip and Sarah are both appearing at the FCBG Conference: Books and Beyond next year, to get you in the mood, why not read all about their collaboration Oliver and the Seawigs... <http://www.fcbg.org.uk/gearing-up-for-oliver-and-the-seawigs/>

100 BOOKS THAT YOU SHOULD READ BEFORE YOU'RE 14

Drawing from over 90 years' experience of recommending children's books, Booktrust experts have selected a list of the 100 books that you should read before you're 14. They are asking everyone to join the debate and vote online for their favourites from the list (www.booktrust.org.uk/cbw),— with the nation's top books announced on November 25th. Read more at <http://www.fcbg.org.uk/the-ultimate-list-100-books-to-read-before-youre-14/>

DISCOVER STORY CENTRE 10YRS

The Discover Story Centre celebrated 10 years in October: <http://www.fcbg.org.uk/1-million-children-inspired-with-a-love-of-stories-as-story-centre-celebrates-10-years/>

ROALD DAHL FUNNY PRIZE

Look out for the shortlist for the Roald Dahl Funny Prize, to be announced on October 24th!

Deadline for the next issue is February 22nd 2014

Please send all group news, ideas and photos to Rebecca Knight-Morgan: news@fcbg.org.uk
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Follow us on Twitter @FCBGNews, and on Facebook and don't forget our website: www.fcbg.org.uk where you can subscribe to our blog!

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The next Executive meeting will be in January 2014

All meetings are held in London. Please contact Julia for further information at least two weeks in advance if you wish to attend as an observer.

