



*READ IT AGAIN...AND AGAIN...AND AGAIN...AND AGAIN and again!*

**Welcome to the Federation of Children's Book Groups Conference 2010**

**Bradfield College, Reading**



This year's Conference proved to be a celebration of birthdays and anniversaries with the necessary cakes. Thanks to the publishers we ate and drank our way through:

**70 years of Puffin**





**40 years of Mr. Gumpy  
John Burningham  
cutting his cake,  
sponsored by Random  
House**



**10 years of Alex Rider  
with**



And 3 more cakes for Clara Vulliamy, Wendy Cooling and David Melling's Books at Bedtime sponsored by Hachette



**Anthony Horowitz and  
Walker Books**

But the Conference was, of course, about much more than cakes. It is a celebration of children's books and is a highlight of the calendar for children's publishers, authors, illustrators and all those whose mission it is to bring the joy of reading to children throughout the UK.



Over a period of just 48 hours we were treated to uplifting, fascinating and challenging talks from (amongst many) award-winners such as:



Judith Kerr



Jenny Valentine



William Nicholson

And to demonstrations of wonderful illustrations and drawings from (among others):



Clara Vulliamy and her mood board



Greenaway award-winning illustrator Catherine Rayner



Rachel Bright



As ever there was frenetic activity as delegates chatted to publishers, booksellers, authors and illustrators, meeting old friends and making new ones. There was no pause for breath between a wide range of fascinating seminars:

- Paul Dowswell, short-listed author for the Red House Children's Book Award with *Ausländer*, talking with Johnny O'Brien on taking different perspectives on conflicts of the past
- Marcus Sedgwick and Graham Marks exploring truth, lies and violence in children's books
- Verna Wilkins and Jessica Souhami sharing their experiences of working in different schools and cultures across the UK
- Penny Dolan 'following the mouse' and
- Leah Thaxton with Samantha MacKintosh and Helen MacKenzie Smith with Katie Cleminson revealing the strong and trusting relationship that develops between author and editor as a book evolves from initial idea to final product.

As ever, Wendy Cooling presided magisterially over a panel including Clara Vulliamy and David Melling, who shared their experiences of bedtime reading and read some of their own stories to the rapt audience.

The Gala Dinner was a celebration, not just of books, but also of 70 years of Puffin, whose well-loved author, Jeremy Strong, supervised a fiendishly difficult quiz on Puffin books, past and present, after we had enjoyed fascinating descriptions of their work by Puffin illustrators Jeanne Willis, Adam Stower and Rachel Bright.



The Puffin Gala Dinner



Jeremy Strong: Quiz master



Sunday provided a widely varying array of authors and illustrators. Mark Walden and Andy Briggs were ably compered by Graham Marks in their discussions of why women always prefer the anti-hero and why villains are always better characters than heroes and were followed by Judith Kerr who spoke compellingly and movingly about her childhood in Germany just prior to the rise of Hitler and about the flight of her family to Zurich and, ultimately, to England.

Jenny Valentine, Guardian award-winning author, described how she finds characters for her novels from her own life, how the characters in her head seem more real to her than her own family and the life she leads near Hay-on-Wye.

Catherine Rayner was the final illustrator of the weekend, and the Conference was closed by William Nicholson, best known for *The Wind Singer*, and the screenplay for *Gladiator* who challenged the audience to read his controversial new book *Rich and Mad*.

The Conference is also about the Federation and this year was a celebration of new initiatives within the Federation, in collaboration with Scholastic and Puffin.

On Saturday morning, outgoing Chair, Adam Lancaster, launched the first children's National Non-Fiction Day, to be held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November. Working closely with Scholastic, the event began with a bravura performance by Scholastic *Murderous Maths* author, Kjartan Poskitt, teaching all of us about the Fibonacci sequence - how it affects how sunflowers pack seeds and the spiral of the nautilus shell. Scholastic showed their new *Horrible Histories* video on the history of the Kings George 1 – IV, entertaining and educational.

In the afternoon, Puffin's Jeremy Strong took part in a National-Share-A-Story Month first, leading the start of an on-line story from children from Aldbourne Children's Book Group, that is to be added-to and developed throughout the month of May until its final reading by Jeremy in Wolverhampton on 27<sup>th</sup> May.

Next year's Conference is on 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> April 2011 at Worth Abbey, Sussex.

Don't miss the most packed and value-for-money Conference in children's literature.

Visit the web site <http://www.fcbg.org.uk> now to book your place.