

# TOPIC: SOME FAVOURITE READS

## WILD ABOUT HARRY

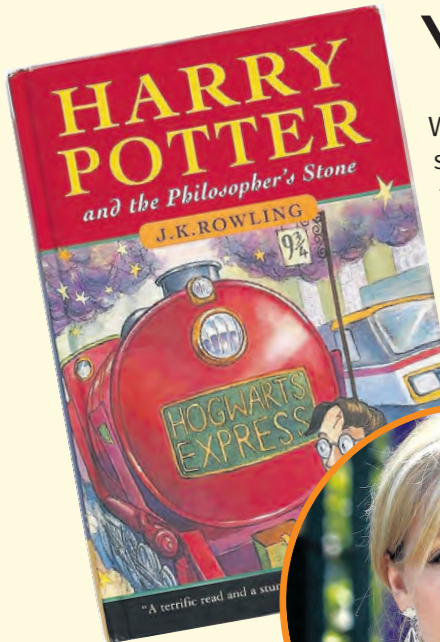
You can't have a conversation about children's books without mentioning Harry Potter. J.K. Rowling's seven-book series tells the story of the adventures of an adolescent wizard, Harry Potter, and his friends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, as students at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry is in a quest to overcome the evil of Lord Voldemort, the dark wizard said to have killed Harry's parents. Many fans have grown up with the young wizard and when the final instalment was published, many readers felt they had lost a good friend.

### J.K. Rowling

The magic began back in 1995 when Rowling finished her manuscript for Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone on an old manual typewriter. Supposedly Rowling sat in local cafes writing her stories which were initially rejected by 12 publishing houses. It wasn't until the eight-year-old daughter of the chairman of a small publishing firm called Bloomsbury read the very first chapter of the story and demanded to read the rest that Harry Potter found a publisher. To date, the series has sold about 450 million copies and has been translated into 67 languages. The last four books set the record as the fastest-selling books in history and today Rowling's fortune is said to be about \$1 billion.

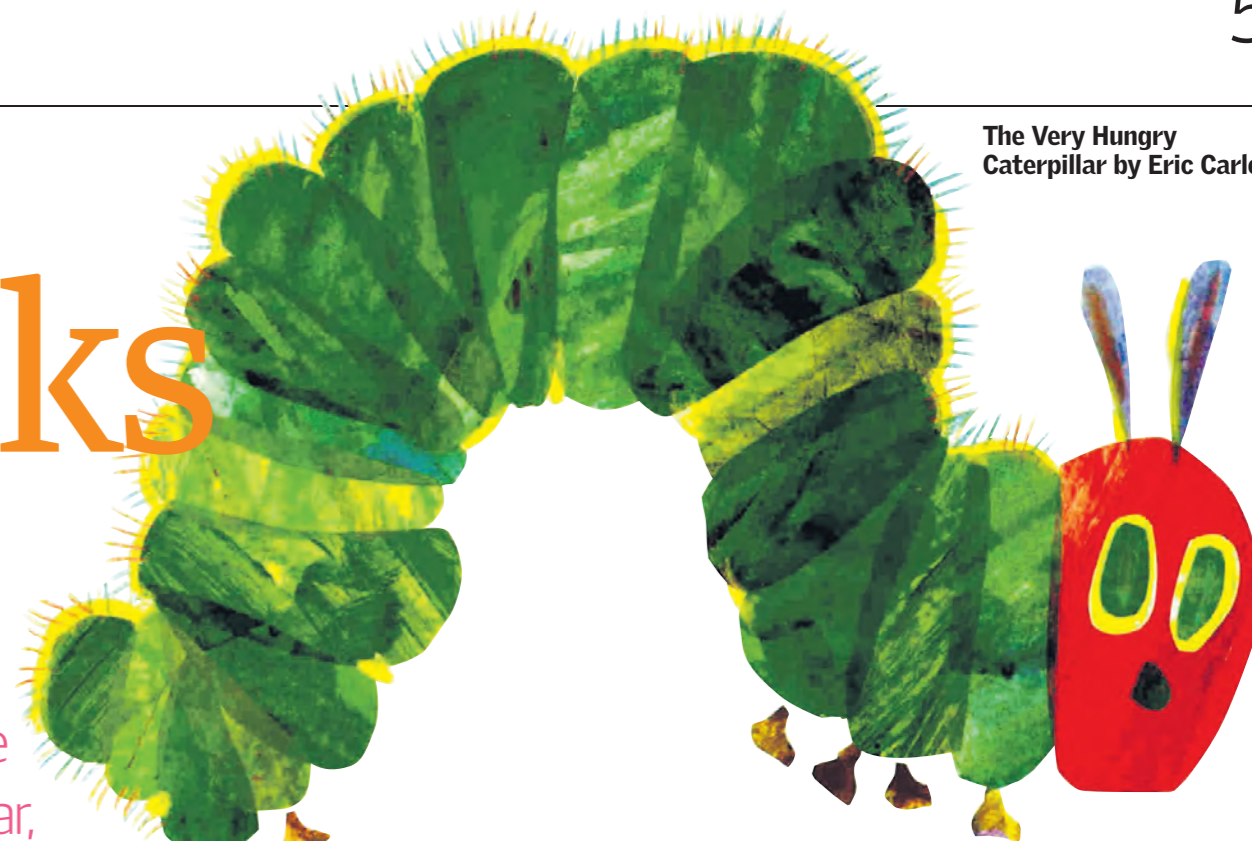
### Did you know?

- Rowling's favourite book as a child was *The Little White Horse* by Elizabeth Goudge.
- The series editor, a man called Barry Cunningham, initially told Rowling to find another job since she had very little chance of making any money writing children's books.
- Sales of the books *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Prydain Chronicles* were said to be boosted due to the success of the *Harry Potter* books.



# So many books

In Children's Book Week it's time to think about your favourite book and it's so hard to choose just one. Maybe your fave is *The Hunger Games*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Captain Underpants* or *Blinky Bill*. With so many great stories out there, Heather Zubek looks at a sample of just some of the books that have proved favourites and their authors.



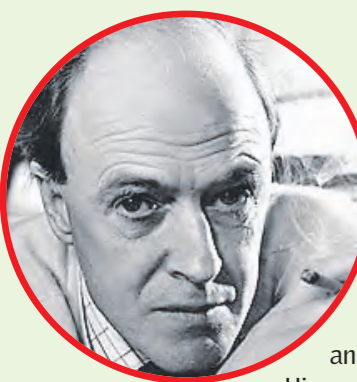
The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle.

## TWITS, WITCHES OR BFG?

What is your favourite Roald Dahl book? *The BFG*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *The Twits*, *Matilda*? The list goes on and on. Dahl's stories are usually told through the eyes of a child and involve villainous adults who mistreat children. Many of his characters are rather gluttonous and are punished for their sins. Augustus Gloop gets sucked up a pipe, Bruce Bogtrotter is forced to eat a gigantic cake, Bruno Jenkins is turned into a mouse and a giant peach flattens Aunt Sponge.

### Roald Dahl

Many experts have written that Roald Dahl is one of the most successful storytellers of the 20th century. Dahl first became interested in children's stories when he was telling bedtime stories to his two daughters and James and the Giant Peach developed.



His second book was *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which became very successful all over the world. Dahl was greatly influenced by the stories of his childhood. His mother, a Norwegian, was a great teller of tales about trolls, ghosts and other mythical Norwegian creatures. During World War II Dahl served in the Royal Air Force and became a flying ace and intelligence agent rising to the rank of wing commander. Dahl died in November 1990 of a blood disease at the age of 74. In his honour, the Roald Dahl Children's Gallery was opened in November 1996.

### Did you know?

- Roald Dahl was buried with snooker cues, good wine, chocolates, HB pencils and a power saw.
- As a school student Dahl used to taste test chocolates from a local chocolate factory.
- Dahl was named after the famous Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen.
- Dahl wrote his stories in a shed at the back of his garden.

James and the Giant Peach. Illustrations: Don Lindsay



### Enid Blyton

In 2007 Enid Blyton was named the fifth most popular author in the world, coming just ahead of William Shakespeare. Over the 40 years of her writing life, Blyton wrote an estimated 800 books that continue to be enjoyed and loved by both children and adults alike. The *Faraway Tree* series and stories about the little wooden boy Noddy are still popular. As a young girl Blyton enjoyed being in the countryside and with nature and this is reflected in her writing. Blyton also loved to read and among her favourite stories were *Black Beauty* (Anna Sewell), *The Water Babies* (Charles Kingsley) and *Little Women* (Louisa May Alcott). Blyton became a teacher as a young woman but spent most of her spare time writing stories and poems. Her very first recorded publication was a poem in a magazine called *Have You...?*



### Perth Lord Mayor Lisa Scaffidi

"I liked the fairytales such as the Grimm Brothers' classic *Rapunzel*. I still have some lovely books that were given to me by my favourite uncle Bill. These books go back to about 1964 to 1966. This was before computers and even colour television so I loved these books, as the pictures were so colourful and big. They had lots of details and things to take in."

### Bajo and Hex from ABC's Good Game:



Bajo, left: "My favourite childhood books started with *Scuffy the Tugboat*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, all of Roald Dahl's books, and the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series. I also snapped up any role-playing books I could find that let me roll dice and battle monsters. But my all-time favourite was *Fox in Socks*, by Dr Seuss. I used to read it over and over with my father, trying to master the complicated tongue-twisters. It was an exciting challenge to master, and I remember the day I read it out loud, with not one mistake. It made my father very proud." Hex: "When I was REALLY young I adored the book *Possum Magic*. When I got a little older I read *The Worst Witch*, like, 50 times! I adored it."

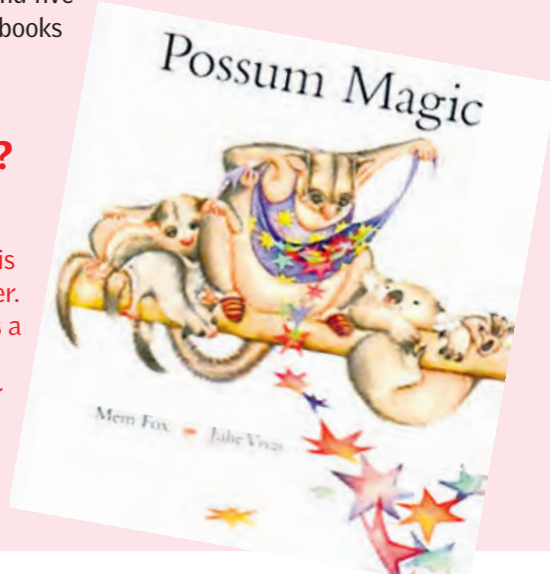
## CHILDHOOD FAVOURITES

## TAKE A JOURNEY

Most young Australians would have read *Possum Magic* as toddlers. It remains the best-known picture book in Australia and continues to be the best-selling picture book ever. To date its sales are nearing four million copies. The story involves Grandma Poss making little Hush invisible in order to keep her safe from harm. But when Grandma Poss can't seem to make Hush visible again they take off on a journey around Australia to cure her.

### Mem Fox

Mem Fox was born in Melbourne but spent most of her childhood in Zimbabwe. Her parents were missionaries and Mem went to school where she learnt how to write by drawing letters in the red earth. As a young woman Fox travelled to London to study drama but returned to Adelaide where she still lives. Fox's first book was *Possum Magic*, a story she wrote while she was a university student. Since *Possum Magic*, Fox has written more than 35 books for children and five non-fiction books for adults.



### Did you know?

- Fox's second book, *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, is named after her father.
- Her daughter Chloe is a politician.
- Fox loves green paper clips.

## TEEN SPIES

Written by British author Robert Muchamore, *Cherub* is a series of young adult spy novels about a division of the British Security Service called *CHERUB*. This division employs teenagers, usually orphans, as intelligence officers. The series begins with *The Recruit* and follows James Adams as he undertakes a variety of missions. Later books focus on James' sister, Lauren. The *Cherub* series contains 12 novels running from the recruitment of James Adams through to his retirement at the age of 17.



### Robert Muchamore

Muchamore wanted to be an architect or a photographer when he left school. He ended up being a private investigator before taking a holiday to visit his sister in Australia. During this holiday, his teenage nephew complained that he couldn't find anything worthwhile to read so Muchamore was set a challenge. He believed he could write a book that would appeal to all teenagers. The *Cherub* series was born.



### Did you know?

- *Cherub* stands for Charles Henderson Espionage Research Unit B.
- The *Cherub* series has been released in 23 countries.
- Muchamore loved to read the series *Asterix* as a child.

## HAVING ADVENTURES

Your parents or grandparents may remember the names Julian, Dick, Anne, George and Timothy as part of the well-known series *The Famous Five* written by Enid Blyton. These novels tell the adventures of a group of young children and their dog who visit the seaside village of Kirrin with their Aunt Fanny and Uncle Quentin during the school holidays. Each book tells of secret passages and smugglers as well as picnics, "lashings of lemonade" and ginger beer. Blyton intended to write no more than eight books for the series but due to its success she went on to write 21 in total. More than two million copies of these books are still sold each year, making them one of the biggest-selling series for children ever written.



### Did you know?

- The village of Kirrin in the *Famous Five* books is based on an island, castle and village that Blyton had visited when she was on honeymoon with her first husband.
- Enid Blyton was also known as Mary Pollock.
- The British Broadcasting Corporation refused to dramatise Blyton's books on the radio for more than 20 years saying that the stories had little literary value.



Noddy