



Puffin Plus

Article Author:

[Pat Triggs](#) [1]

Article Author:

[Jessica Yates](#) [2]

[49](#) [3]

Article Category:

Other Articles

Byline:

Like pretty much every other children's paperback publisher Puffin has just launched a new teenage series - Plus.

GET SMART GET PLUS

Like pretty much every other children's paperback publisher Puffin has just launched a new teenage series - Plus.

<!--break-->

Unlike other publishers, though, this is not Puffin's first venture into this territory. Rather a case (they hope) of fourth time lucky.

It was Kaye Webb who first tried to bridge the gap between Puffins and adult literature by identifying a range of titles that might appeal to this awkward age. In 1963 the stylised Peacock with the broad, trailing tail fronted a list that included: John Buchan's **The Three Hostages**, Dodie Smith's **I Capture the Castle**,

D K Broster's **The Flight of the Heron**, Masefield's **The Bird of Dawning**, along with **Shane** and **Walkabout** (given a new title since its first publication by Michael Joseph in 1959 as **The Children**) - adventure, historical romance, narratives with youthful heroes/heroines. 25 years on, this selection of titles drawn from adult lists suggests a picture of the Puffin readers of the early sixties - literate, comfortable with long narratives from the past - who perhaps were well able to find their own way to adult reading. Gradually these books were joined by sprinkling of titles - early occupants of the category 'teenage novel' - Beverly Cleary's **Fifteen** from the USA, Garner's **The Owl Service**, John Gordon's **The House on the Brink** from Britain.

The 'swinging sixties' and the publication by The Bodley Head, in 1969, of Paul Zindel's **The Pigman** perhaps made all these long historical novels and recollections of long past adolescence begin to seem dated and out of touch. But Peacocks persisted. In 1973 A P Herbert's **The Water Gipsies** joined the list - first published in 1930, paperbacked by Penguin in 1960, nearly 400 pages long.

In 1977 the Peacock mark 2 arrived - the broad trailing tail was gone, replaced by a sharp featured profile in cameo, looking left. The relaunch brought a sheaf of new titles: contemporary adult fiction from the Penguin list, specially commissioned non-fiction, and more 'teenage books'. So **The Catcher in the Rye**, **Girl with Green Eyes**, **Bonjour Tristesse** and **The Millstone** appeared alongside **Goodnight, Prof**, **Love**, **Basketball Game**, **The Son of Someone Famous**, **The Summer after the Funeral** and **A Very Long Way from Anywhere Else**. Non-fiction on contemporary issues like **Conservation Scene** and **Overkill**, autobiography, and a sprinkling of 'old' Peacocks were packaged in bright, attractive covers. Unfortunately for the future of Peacocks one or two titles, most notably Barry Hines' **The Blinder** (first published 1966, Penguin 1969, and 'Peacocked' on the strength of the huge success of **Kes**), drew complaints from parents about the 'bad language' and the sex. And booksellers didn't know how to accommodate these

in-between books. So from 1979 adult titles were dropped from the list and Peacocks slowly declined.

By 1981 'teenage novels' were a well established form - many of them as controversial as **The Blinder**. Puffin Plus was invented as a way of alerting parents and teachers to titles more suitable for 'older readers'. But how old is 'older'? And there were still those who saw the Puffin and missed the Plus. Complaints continued in a steady stream. Meanwhile Fontana Lions, unhampered by Puffin's long-standing reputation for wholesomeness, took back Garner and cornered the Americans - Zindel, Cormier and Hautzig.

Last year saw the launch of Corgi Freeway, Methuen Teens, Virago Upstarts, Women's Press Livewires and, most significantly of all, Pan Horizons - teenage novels, uniformly packaged and with an adult imprint. And it's the Pan road that Puffin has chosen. **Plus**, edited by Puffin, will carry the Penguin imprint and logo. Puffin Plus will gradually be phased out with popular titles repackaged on reprint and added to the **Plus** list.

Twelve titles launched the list in February and eight more will join in April. The white and red on black spines and cover logo are certainly eye-catching and in addition each title is given a genre label (or combination of labels!): Romance, Thriller, Drama, Fun Drama, Romance/Drama, and, oddly, Fiction.

A fashionably overcrowded launch poster/news sheet carries photos and quotes from an assortment of 'names' including Lenny Henry, Sarah Greene, Jonathan Ross, Samantha Fox, David Jensen, David Owen, Glenys Kinnock and Edwina Currie (unpick that lot to find the assumed reader!). Eleven of the **Plus** authors describe their teenage reading habits - Brian Patten writes a thank-you note to Enid Blyton, Bernard Ashley recalls **The Blue Lagoon**.

'Stylish' is the now word the publicists have chosen to characterise **Plus**. It's a wide-ranging list, seeking it seems to cater for teenage readers of all kinds - or in a variety of moods.

Straight from Puffin Plus come - **The Village by the Sea** (Fiction), **The Girl Who Wanted a Boy** (Romance), **The Wave** (Thriller), **A Parcel of Patterns** (Fiction/Romance!), **If It Weren't for Sebastian** (Romance/Drama) and **Basketball Game** (Romance/Drama). New, and most welcome from the Kestrel trade paperback list, are Susan Gregory's hilarious **Kill-a-Louse Week**, short stories about practical jokes and first love at a comprehensive school; and Jan Mark's incomparable **Frankie's Hat**. Brian Morse's **Breaking Glass** (Thriller) is a pessimistic story of life in the Midlands after a germ bomb drops. Some have objected to it because of its 'Soviet threat' motif. Also up at the literary end is Margaret Mahy's **The Tricksters** in which a midsummer Christmas in New Zealand is interrupted by three mysterious brothers. It has been labelled Thriller (to encourage reluctant readers?) though Jessica Yates, who thinks it 'a marvellous book', suggests Fantasy Romance would be more accurate as this is 'really for adult fantasy fans'.

With Hamish Hamilton now in the same publishing empire, Penguin have easy access to the very popular Lois Duncan. **Locked in Time**, a supernatural thriller well up to expectations, is about a girl who discovers her new stepmother, a Southern belle, has a voodoo charm to keep her immortal and will murder to preserve the secret.

Pop music has its own category, Music Biz Drama, and enters with **Yatesy's Rap** and **Can't Stop Us Now** - can four girls make it in the music business?

Uneasy Money, another American import, is an entertaining read about a boy who wins two and a half million dollars in a lottery.

To complete the list that has something for everyone are the Crimefile titles, game-books about international crime in which YOU are the super detective, and an American soap opera romance serial **Sisters**, in which three sisters - one glamorous, one sporty, one cheeky - have fun, fun and trouble with their boyfriends. Three books are in the first 20 **Plus** titles.

With so many publishers identifying teenage-to-adult reading, it is now possible for booksellers and librarians to set up separate areas for these books thus making it easier for publishers to bring out good but controversial fiction without provoking a storm of protest from outraged parents.

Plus - the first 20 titles

Yatesy's Rap, Jon Blake, 0 14 03.2107 1, £1.95

Uneasy Money, Robin F Brancato, 0 14 03.2459 3, £1.95

Sisters 1: Three's a Crowd, Jennifer Cole, 0 14 03.2533 6, £1.95

Sisters 2: Too Late for Love, Jennifer Cole, 0 14 03.2534 4, £1.95

Sisters 3: The Kiss, Jennifer Cole, 0 14 03.2535 2, £1.95

The Village by the Sea, Anita Desai, 0 14 03.2505 0, £1.95

Is Anyone There?, ed. Monica Dickens and Rosemary Sutcliff, 0 14 03.2544 1, £2.50

Locked in Time, Lois Duncan, 0 14 03.2380 5, £2.25

Kill-a-Louse Week and Other Stories, Susan Gregory, 0 14 03.2151 9, £2.25

Can't Stop Us Now, Fran Lantz, 0 14 03.2372 4, £1.95

Basketball Game, Julius Lester, 0 14 03.2510 7, £1.75

Frankie's Hat, Jan Mark, 0 14 03.2018 0, £1.95

The Tricksters, Margaret Mahy, 0 14 03.2363 5, £2.50

Breaking Glass, Brian Morse, 0 14 03.2359 7, £1.95

The Wave, Morton Rhue, 0 14 03.2507 7, £1.95

A Parcel of Patterns, Jill Paton Walsh, 0 14 03.2627 8, £1.95

The Money Spider, Robin Waterfield and Wilfred Davies, 0 14 03.2364 3, £2.25

The Water Spider, Robin Waterfield and Wilfred Davies, 0 14 03.2365 1, £2.50

If It Weren't for Sebastian, Jean Ure, 0 14 03.2493 3, £1.95

The Girl Who Wanted a Boy, Paul Zindel, 0 14 03.2496 8, £1.95

* April publication

This feature compiled with the assistance of **Jessica Yates**.

Page Number:

8

Source URL (retrieved on Nov '19): <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/49/childrens-books/articles/other-articles/puffin-plus>

Links:

[1] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/pat-triggs>

[2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/jessica-yates>

[3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/49>