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JOANNA SKIPWITH'S TOP TEN BOOK LIST

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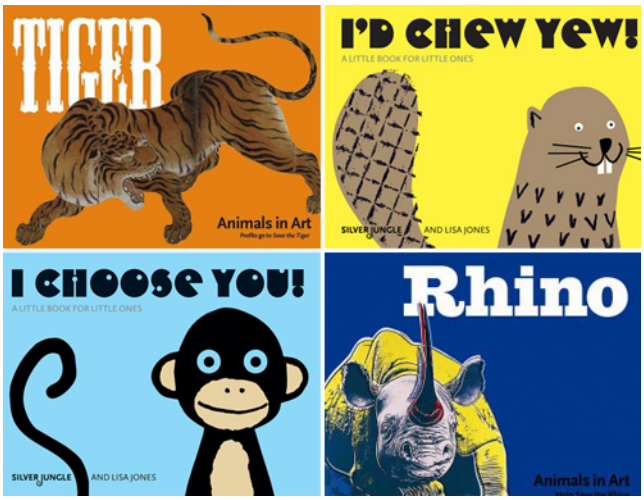

It's been a long time since we've published a Top Ten Book List, but it is still a series we really love and we will try to bring you more book lists in the coming months. Today we have a list from Joanna Skipwith
, author of the Silver Jungle books (pictured above) which we've mentioned here before. Joanna's latest book, One Timid Babbler
, is a counting book featuring loads of beautiful birds, and is just as catchy as her others. We are delighted to share her book list featuring her family's favourites (with photos of her very own copies, below!).

Only 10, how difficult. I have chosen books that have been enjoyed by at least two generations of my family (sometimes 4) and ones that were fun to read with my boys before Horrid Henry, Torak and Alex Rider took them off into their own realms. I have photographed our copies: battered, bruised, very well-thumbed, some no longer in print.

Winnie-the-Pooh
by A.A. Milne, illustrated by E.H. Shepard, 1926
The edition I grew up with was printed in 1936. It says ?Sixteenth Edition (Cheap form)?. The first volume is my favourite because it contains the cunning plan to catch a Heffalump.

... but there was just one other thing that had to be thought about, and it was this. Where should they dig the Very Deep Pit? Piglet said that the best place would be somewhere where a Heffalump was, just before he fell into it, only about a foot farther on ...

The Lorax
by Dr Seuss, 1971
Janet and John at school, Green Eggs and Ham at home. I certainly preferred learning to read with Dr Seuss and enjoyed

the process all over again with my sons. The way he combines rhyme, colour, layout and humour ... bold, spontaneous genius, or so it appears to me. The Lorax is also a poignant warning about consumerism and the despoiling of our planet. There it was, forty years ago. It is a melancholy tale but full of humour and a GREAT pleasure to read:

At the far end of town
where the Grickle-grass grows
and the wind smells slow-and-sour when it blows ...

Edmund Dulac'S Picture Book For The French Red Cross
, 1915!
I loved this collection of fairy tales, handed down from my grandmother. After a diet of bears and bunnies, it was probably my introduction to princes and princesses, but exotic ones from Persia, China and Carthage. Dulac?s exquisite images were ?tipped in? (pasted in by hand, along one edge), so I had to take great care turning the pages.

Red Rackham's Treasure
by Hergé, 1944
I remember the thrill of a new Tintin book and the suspense if my brother was allowed to read it first. As a child I was caught up in the plot and the characters, now I appreciate the graphics even more. Red Rackham?s Treasure was my favourite, perhaps because Calculus makes his debut. His shark submarine is a beauty and his deafness provokes many a ?blistering barnacle? from the captain.

The Gruffalo
by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, 1999
I think you might have read this one already! We all loved it and read it so often that the boys knew it by heart very quickly. I?m a little disappointed that we have moved on ... and will sneak down to the library to read ... The Highway Rat.

Mother Goose, Nursery Rhymes
illustrated by Brian Wildsmith, 1964
These nursery rhymes and Brian Wildsmith must have crept into my machinery at an early age. I soaked up his rich velvety colours, and the rhymes now seem to be creeping out whether I want them to (Diddle, diddle,) or not (dumpling). His ABC influenced the format of the Tiger and Rhino books I produced. I took a copy with me to the first design meeting.

Fidgit
by Dale Maxey,1965.
This was one of my favourites, the large format so much larger then. It is a very friendly tale of a ?fidgit?, who helps the other animals at the zoo. They take him for granted until an accident proves how much they love him. I have included it partly because I loved it but also because there is so little about this illustrator on the internet.

Flat Stanley
by Jeff Brown, illustrated by Tomi Ungerer, 1964
Deadpan humour and just enough words to make you smile. Stanley?s predicament is met with British stoicism and a bit of sibling ?pique?, which is very amusing. Stanley, on the whole, remains cheerful throughout his ordeal. ?Can I eat my sandwich now?? he asks from his envelope as he is airmailed off to California.

Nicholas
by René Goscinny, illustrated by Jean-Jacques Sempé, 1959
The boys still ask me to read this to them and I try to with as few pauses as possible, like an overexcited child. As with Milne and Shepard, the illustrations suit the story perfectly. Nicholas and his friends are delightful trouble-makers, innocently undermining the best-laid plans. My sons enjoy the gleeful punch-ups. I, meanwhile, empathise with the collateral damage, especially the exhausted parents. It is written as if by Nicholas:

?Our teacher was very cross and she gave Eddie lines to do ? I must not refuse to change places with a friend who has dropped a piece of bread and jam on his shirt.?

Cockatoos
by Quentin Blake, 1992
We spent many happy evenings counting up naughty cockatoos. They belong to Professor Dupont and decide to disrupt his daily ritual by hiding throughout the house. Like Dupont, my children enjoyed the same old routine and were quite happy to count up cockatoos even when they knew exactly how many there were and where to find them. The hiding places are often comical and sometimes difficult to spot among the rampant lines and theatrical flourishes of colour.

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