



KARIN LITTLEWOOD'S BOOK LIST

May 24, 2011



I've mentioned [Karin Littlewood](#) before in my review of her book, *Immi* (which we still really love!). Karin lives and works in London and has illustrated more than 40 children's books published in the UK and worldwide. I got in touch with her after discovering her books and have since discovered she is not only a talented artist, but also a really lovely person. She kindly took the time to compile her top ten list of children's books for us and I was SO excited to receive a list with not one single familiar book on it. This means I can add ten new books to my Amazon wish-list! Her descriptions and reasons for loving each book are so compelling - don't you just want to read every single one? Here is her list (divided into two sections: books from her childhood and newer books).

CHILDHOOD BOOKS:



I have so many books on my shelves from my childhood, and they still make me feel the same when I look at them now as they did then. It was just too hard to choose only ten as there are plenty more I would love to share with you!

1. *Joba and the Wild Boar*

- *'Joba und das Wildschwein'* by Gaby Baldner, illustrated by Gerhardt Oberlander (a dual language English/German book)

Loose, scratchy, quite abstract black and white line drawings combined with strong blocks of colour. Looking at it now it feels so modern. I love the fact that it's not cute and cuddly, but you love the little stripy wild boar piglet all the more for that. Set in the middle of the Black Forest it's a lost, found, lost and found again story. Definitely something that would never happen in the Yorkshire town I was brought up in, although I really wanted it to! I loved my mum reading it to me, fascinated by her switching from English to her native German.

2. *Little hedgehog*

by Gina Ruck-Pauquet, illustrated by Marianne Richter

Another German translation, and again a very bold use of black and white and alternate colour spreads. Lots of texture with hints of collage. Very different again in style from the English books on the bookshelf. I must have always been aware of the power of illustration, and how different each book made you feel. A naughty little hedgehog is brought home from the woods by a little girl and gets up to lots of tricks, especially with the cat!

3. *The Useful dragon of Sam Ling Toy*

by **Glen Dines**

This is set in Chinatown, San Francisco, although I didn't know it at the time! I just knew that it was 'somewhere else', which is what books are all about aren't they? Sam Ling Toy has a wonderful pet shop, and the little lizard he finds grows and grows and grows into a dragon with one red eye and one green eye, so you can imagine what happens to the traffic when he goes out. But come Chinese New Year, all's well that ends well! The illustrations are done in coloured crayon, and it's like opening a magical sketchbook. I felt like I'd jumped into the book and was one of those kids that had befriended him.

4. *Harold and the Purple Crayon*

by **Crockett Johnson**

Very, very simple 2 colour illustrations and the joy of this story is this Harold draws his way through the book: a pie when he's hungry, an air balloon to stop him from falling, a home when he's lost and a bed when he's tired. This has been reissued, although I like my falling-to-pieces one best!

5. *Algernon*

by **Charlotte Hough**

Wonderful evocative sketchy drawings ... set in a thatched-cottage-filled village, but managing to steer clear of the treetops, where vegetables are still delivered by donkey and cart. But Algernon the donkey can read, which comes in handy when a burglar comes to town! Some pages are two colour, some full colour,The old printing restrictions still proving how great a book with these limitations.

NEW BOOKS:



6. *The Silver Donkey*

Sonya Hartnett, illustrated by **Laura Carlin**

This is an illustrated book for older children and I know it's also the favourite of many illustrators. A beautiful, beautiful book and so good to see illustrations used in a book for older children. I love this one.... Hartnett has such a special way of writing... simple and deep, evocative and beautifully descriptive. A perfect combination with Laura Carlin's illustrations. I could write too much about this book, but I think you should discover it for yourself! Get the hardback version if you can as it's wonderful to hold! Also see Laura Carlin's work in Ted Hughes' 'The Iron Man'.

7. *Tiny Little Fly*

by **Michael Rosen**, illustrated by **Kevin Waldron**

One of the best things about working in a studio is that you get to share with wonderful creative illustrators who just make some of the best books ever! Kevin now lives in New York - he was busy drawing animals here and he still is there ...and what animals! A stunningly designed book, his bold and graphic illustrations fill the page and Michael Rosen's simple rhythms and rhymes roll over from one page to the next.

8. *Halibut Jackson*

by **David Lucas**

Another ex-studio pal who has created an absolute classic story - and what a title! How can you not want to find out about Halibut Jackson, although he's not always that easy to find! This was David's first book, but as soon as I read it I felt as if it had been around forever. I think there's a little bit of Halibut in us all - so why don't you take a look for yourself.

9. *When Martha's Away*

by **Bruce Ingman**

You don't have to be a cat lover to love this book. You definitely don't have to be a cat owner either, but if you are you'll never feel quite the same when you leave the house in the morning! It's not a cutesy cat book at all. I've had this clever, funny, sort of observational book for ages and it still makes me laugh. Brilliant, stylised illustrations.

10. *The Bremen Town Musicians*

illustrated by **Lisbeth Zwerger**

Lisbeth Zwerger is an Austrian illustrator and I know of no-one who draws quite like her. Timeless, beautiful, subtle, traditional and very modern at the same time. Look closely at her drawings and get a sense of how quietly clever she is at placing her characters on the page. She has illustrated so many classic titles I found it hard to choose one for you. I have them all at home so I don't have to have that problem!

PS - Karin is taking part in the *Pop-Up Festival of Stories* event happening on the 9th and 10th of July in Coram's Fields. Check out the site for more info.

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