

# The world of children's literature

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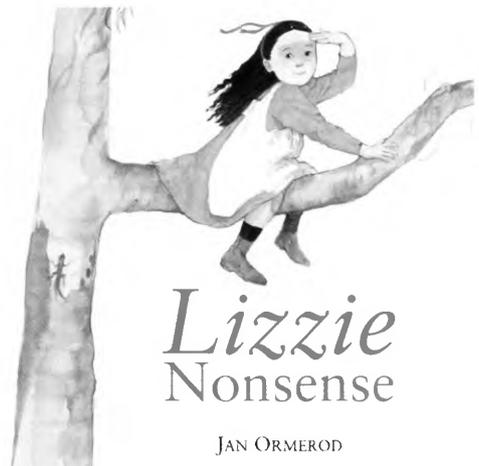
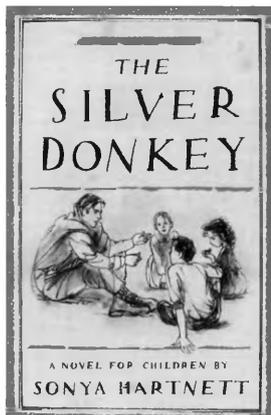
To nominate the Honour Books for writing and illustration is one of the most important tasks of any national section of IBBY, the International Board on Books for Young People, which is an organisation found in some 65 countries, and has its international headquarters in Basel, Switzerland. The works on IBBY's Honour List, to which the Australian Honour Books are added, demonstrate the wide variety of societies, cultures and languages which make up the world of children's literature.

In IBBY's instructions for the nomination of Honour Books, the point is made that the titles appearing on the biennial List are an important element in the encouragement of international understanding through children's literature. Of course, the chosen books must represent the best of the nation's children's publishing.

The titles nominated by all the participating countries are presented at the following IBBY Congress — in this case, to be held in Beijing in September, 2006 — and copies of the books will then be exhibited around the world at conferences and book fairs. Afterwards, the books will be added to important children's literature collections in Munich, Zurich, Bratislava, Tokyo and Evanston, Illinois.

It is apparent, then, that it is an accomplishment by authors, illustrators and publishers to have their work nominated for the Honour List and, equally, the selection process for these titles must involve careful consideration. Therefore, the committee of the Australian section of IBBY took very seriously its role in deciding which books they thought should represent this country on the international stage.

The process first involved all members of the committee suggesting picture books and novels that had been first published in Australia in the previous two years, then each member voted for both the novel and picture book on a scale of votes. *The Silver Donkey*,



Sonya Hartnett's 2004 novel, was the winner by acclamation, while Jan Ormerod's *Lizzie Nonsense* (2004), the picture book, had to fend off the challenge of other worthy entries — demonstrating the strength and quality of local picture book publishing.

So, who are the creators of these two books, and why did they receive the nominations?

Sonya Hartnett is the *enfant terrible* of Australian literature for young people. She was born in Melbourne in 1968, had her first book published in 1984 and has written a number of confronting but brilliant novels for adolescents. She has won awards not only for her adolescent writing — with novels including *Thursday's Child* (2000) and *Forest* (2001) — but also for an adult novel, *Of a Boy* (2002). *The Silver Donkey* is her first work for younger readers: it won the Children's Book Council of Australia award for that age-group, receiving its nomination for the sensitively-drawn characters, evocation of the atmosphere of World War I France and clever use of stories-within-a-story.

Jan Ormerod, in contrast, grew up in the 1950s in small towns in Western Australia, went to art school and became an art teacher and then a lecturer. Her picture books have largely been a celebration of parenthood, and she states that such books are '...almost always shared by the child and a caring adult. I find the challenge of communicating with both child and adult, working on two levels in one book, a demanding, intriguing and rewarding task.' Her most successful works include the Picture Book of the Year winner *Sunshine* (1981), *Moonlight* (1982) and *The Story of Chicken Licken* (1985). *Lizzie Nonsense* was nominated because of the warmth of the illustrations, the depiction of the family relationship and the beautifully executed presentation of the Australian bush. ■

