



## The Caucus Race



### "Author, Illustrator and Editor Sites"

#### *The Dodo (aka Martha Scott)*

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the Caucus-Race. For this issue the Dodo serves up a series of scintillating children's author, illustrator and editor sites. There are so many wondrous sites. Where to begin? What would Alice advise? Let's start with the letter A.

A is for Avi, the versatile author of over 30 books for children and young people, including one of the Dodo's very favourite talking animal stories, *Poppy*. Open [Avi's web site](#) and you are greeted (rather rudely) by Poppy's friend Ereth the insult-slinging porcupine, originator of such unflattering epithets as "bat bilge", "skunk whizzle", "pickled parasite" and "swamp mouth". Descriptions of Avi's books follow, with notes on how he came to write them, biographical information and questions and answers.

Speaking of porcupines, meet Hedgie the hedgehog, star of [Jan Brett's homepage](#). This site is truly outstanding -- informative, interactive, friendly and beautifully illustrated. The Dodo loved the "[All About Newsnotes](#)" which are the stories behind Jan Brett's books and was thrilled to "[Learn to Draw an Armadillo](#)".

Here's a wacky site. British author/illustrator Jonathan Allen's web page, or "Web Thing" as he calls it. In addition to information about the author and his books, expect to find some unusual items such as **The Good Old Rabbit Exercise Page** and **Cat of the Week**. As Alice says in *Through the Looking Glass*, "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas -- only I don't exactly know what they are!"

Next up is [Dav Pilkey's web site](#). ("Warning: this site contains scenes and material which may be considered too silly for grown-ups, small animals and many varieties of houseplants"). It's full of crosswords, trivia, puzzles, jokes, boring stuff for teachers (his phrase, not mine!) and of course information about Dav and his books. [The Almost Completely True Adventures of Dav Pilkey](#) in the Original Cartoon Version (Lots of Graphics but Worth it) or Text Version (Still Fun and Still Almost True) is a must read.

On to some outstanding Canadian sites. First up is "[Paul Kropp's Quasi-Cool Info Page](#)". This entertaining site contains descriptions of Paul Kropp's young adult novels and non-fiction books for parents, plus excerpts, biographical information, lists of interviews, reviews and awards, and for the curious, "**Three Things Only Net Surfers Know (Now) about Paul Kropp**". [Janet McNaughton's Home Page](#) is a good example of the use of the Internet to extend the reading experience. The author provides background information on the setting and time period for each of her three historical novels. Also included are news, reviews, excerpts, lists of recommended books and "**Neat Stuff About Writing**" (for [Young Writers](#) and for [Adults](#)). Writer/storyteller **Sheldon Oberman's home page** is a treasure trove. Lots of great stuff here, including reviews, articles, excerpts, stories to tell, teacher guides, information on Jewish history and religion, advice for writers, activities for kids, links and much more.

One of the Internet's most remarkable qualities is its ability to connect individuals with similar interests. Children's author sites are no exception. Many sites contain an e-mail address, so a child can communicate directly with the author. Failing this the next best thing is the FAQ, or "frequently asked question". "What are your favorite children's books?" "What do you do in your spare time?" "What advice do you have for children who want to become writers?" Even "Where do you get your weird sense of humor and ideas?" ("I only report the truth," replies [Daniel Pinkwater](#).) Answers to questions like these provide the child with a sense of the author as a real person. Check out the



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Internet Public Library's **Ask the Author** site for short bios and FAQs for authors such as **Lois Lowry, Katherine Paterson** and **Jane Yolen**.

Homearts Network's "**Books Every Child Should Read**" is another fascinating place to visit. This site features interviews in which authors, journalists, critics and others discuss their choices for "A Western Canon, Jr.". Some thought-provoking reading here. **Maurice Sendak** talks of the value of "inappropriate" stories for children. **Chris Van Allsburg** reveals his childhood favourites and adds, "I would endorse any book that makes the young person question the nature of reality." **Fay Weldon** tells of the influence of Hans Christian Andersen on her writing -- her parents took his book of fairy tales away from her as a child because she grew hysterical crying over the Snow Queen! **R.L. Stine** describes the impact of hearing his mother read him *The Adventures of Pinocchio* when he was very young: "gruesome...violent... harsh...one of the most frightening books ever written...it was definitely an influence".

Let's not forget the enormous influence of children's book editors. Editor Harold Underdown's award-winning site "[The Purple Crayon](#)" offers an insider's view of the children's publishing world. There's plenty here for both the aspiring author and the general children's book enthusiast. Articles include "[Dealing with a Downsized Market: Top Ten List of Things to Do](#)", "[What Happens Inside a Children's Publishing Company?](#)" and "[Editor as Writer: A Conversation with Arthur A. Levine](#)". "[The How-Do-I-Get-It-Published Quiz](#)" is instructive and fun.

The Red Queen says to Alice, "You can't be a Queen, you know, till you've passed the proper examination. And the sooner we begin it the better." Go to Kay E. Vandergrift's "**On Testing Facts in Children's Literature**" page and test your knowledge of children's authors and illustrators. Good luck! And good-bye!

Your affectionate friend,

The Dodo

*Martha Scott has been called many things including "Dodo". She lives in Toronto and works as Children's Resource Collection Specialist at the Toronto Public Library's Lillian H. Smith Branch.*