

Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children's Books

By Kathryn Row

Seven Stories is Britain's home for children's literature. We celebrate the art of children's books, their place in our childhood and in our culture. Seven Stories opened on the 19th August 2005, to showcase a national collection of manuscripts and illustrations of some of the UK's finest authors and illustrators for children.

We select original artwork and manuscripts - from first scribbles to finished work - to make our exhibitions, events and learning programmes. Exhibitions currently on show are *A Squash and a Squeeze: Sharing Stories with Julia Donaldson* and *Daydreams and Diaries: the Story of Jacqueline Wilson*. In October 2012 we will be launching *A Viking's Guide to Deadly Dragons with Cressida Cowell*.

Our aim at Seven Stories is to create a national archive of modern and contemporary children's literature, which is not generally represented in the collections of other major institutions in the UK like the British Library.



Our focus is not just the finished work, but all that goes into the making of a book – roughs, drafts, dummy books, correspondence and other papers. Today, the Seven Stories collection

includes original artwork and manuscripts by around eighty authors and illustrators, including Philip Pullman, Robert Westall, Enid Blyton, Edward Ardizzone and Judith Kerr, and about 30,000 books. Seven Stories believes these materials have a unique educational and inspirational value. We aim to make the collection accessible not only to researchers but to young people and their families, through our exhibitions and learning programs.

It's so important to see where work comes from and how writers write, how illustrators illustrate. What people see in the Seven Stories archive is that making books, making pictures, making stories is actually a very ordinary thing that they can become involved in." David Almond, author and collection donor and Seven Stories patron.

Seven Stories is a registered charity, supported by Arts Council England and Newcastle City Council, and relies upon grants and voluntary donations.



Exhibitions

A Squash and a Squeeze: Sharing stories with Julia Donaldson

From 17 March 2012 until May 2013

This exhibition brings Julia Donaldson's captivating stories to life. Find out how she wrote modern classics such as *The Gruffalo*, *Princess Mirror-Belle* and *The Troll* and most recently *The Highway Rat* and explore original artwork by her many illustrators – most famously Axel Scheffler.

Follow her journey from song writer for children's television to current Children's Laureate. See how she inspires her readers with story rhyme and rhythm. Children and their families can

share stories and explore sensory environments based on Donaldson's books.

Follow in *Toddle Waddle's* footsteps, climb into the cave with *Cave Baby* and meet *The Gruffalo*. Sing-a-long to her songs on Julia's Jukebox or perform a play on our stage.

I am thrilled that my work, and that of my illustrators, is to be presented in such a stimulating and child-friendly way, with so many mini-words and activities. Because of my love of drama and song, I am particularly excited about the theatre and the juke box!" Julia Donaldson.

Supported by Scholastic, Macmillan Children's Books and Alison Green Books.



Daydreams and Diaries: the story of Jacqueline Wilson

From 15 October 2011- September 2012

This is an exclusive chance to find out about Jacqueline Wilson, in the first ever exhibition dedicated to the best-selling author. Let Jacqueline guide you through a journey of her favourite stories, characters, daydreams and working process. We'll show you how your favourite characters began including Tracy Beaker, Hetty Feather and The Illustrated Mum, from ideas to text and working with illustrator Nick Sharratt to bring her stories to life. Be inspired to create your own stories, sit and daydream or join Jacky's HUGE fan base from all over the world.

I'm so pleased and proud that Seven Stories are having a special exhibition all about me. It's been extraordinary delving into basements and garages and finding long forgotten childhood stories and old manuscripts and mementos. I've been writing all my life but it was only when I

met my dear friend Nick that my career really took off. I'm so lucky to have Nick illustrate my books. The exhibition starts with a replica of my childhood bedroom where I read and wrote and daydreamed - and ends with a mock-up of my room now, where I still read and write and daydream." Jacqueline Wilson.

Supported by Random House Children's Books.



A Viking's Guide to Deadly Dragons

Opening 27 October 2012

The brand new exhibition developed by Seven Stories and Cressida Cowell, will include Cressida's original drawings, manuscripts and working processes from her hugely popular *How to Train Your Dragon* book series, which have also been made into popular films by DreamWorks animation.

This exciting exhibition will take visitors to a time and place when dragons lived among us and we could speak to them in Dragonese. Be guided through Hooligan Village by Gobber the Belch, discover where going to school meant learning what it means to be a hero. Discover the Wild Dragon Cave, sail on a Viking long ship and share Viking stories in the Great Hall.

Seven Stories is a wonderful gallery, and I am incredibly excited and honoured that the How to Train Your Dragon books are to be the subject of an exhibition. I hope that a whole new

generation of children will be as fascinated by dragons and Vikings as I was when I was a child." Cressida Cowell.

Supported by Hodder Children's Books.



Seven Stories' collection

Seven Stories is the only place in the UK dedicated to protecting our literary inheritance for children. We are custodians of the only archive in the country that tells the story of British children's literature from the 1930s to the present day and has grown to represent the work of over 100 British authors and illustrators. We draw upon the Collection to curate our lively exhibitions, to inspire events and learning activities for children and to provide a unique resource for researchers.

The most notable acquisition in 2011/12 was Edward Ardizzone's complete artwork set for *The Little Train* written by Graham Greene and *The Nine Lives of Island Mackenzie* and *Tea with Eleanor Farjeon*, also by Ardizzone. Thanks to V&A Purchase Fund, the Art Fund and Friends of the National Libraries who made these acquisitions possible. Added to our holdings of the complete artwork for *Tim and Charlotte* and *Tim in Danger*, Seven Stories is custodian of the largest public collection of Ardizzone work for children.

Other acquisitions of original material in 2011/12 included artwork by John Burningham and Pat Marriott. The majority of growth this year was in books, with holdings reaching 30,000, including

many titles which are difficult to find in other public collections. Use of the Collection is also rising, with [online catalogues](#) and [highlight pages on our website](#) attracting increasing numbers of enquiries and research visits from all over the world.

The building

Seven Stories is housed in a Grade II listed seven-storied Victorian warehouse at 30 Lime Street, built in 1872 to store flour for Proctor & Sons. GWK Architects planned and designed the ambitious conversion of the building and were keen to ensure that the conversion should cause as little interference as possible to the integrity of the listed structure. Much of the original interior is retained intact, such as the exposed cast iron pillars, restored windows and most notably the roof timbers in the attic, which still bear the remains of historic winch gear.



The modernisation of the building was extensive, however, since it needed to ensure high standards for the care and display of original artwork and for the safety and comfort of the thousands of young visitors that would be expected every year. The white entrance and first floor gallery above are inspired by the shape of an open book, and visitors are greeted by the artwork of eight award-winning illustrators etched above the entrance, creating a welcoming focal point and a presence on Lime Street that encourages people to visit the Centre.

The building itself is on seven floors, where Seven Stories also gets its name, and the fact that all stories are based on one of seven basic story plots. (These are rebirth, comedy, rags to riches, overcoming the monster, tragedy, voyage and return and the quest). The centre includes

a café and independent specialist children's bookshop as well as two exhibition galleries, the Artist's Attic for storytelling and dressing up, the Creation Station for art and craft activities and Storylab for digital exploration of the collection. Regular events with authors and illustrators are scheduled as well as themed days/weekends, workshops, school visits and a specific under 5 programme.

Seven Stories

Adults £6.50 Child/Concession £5.50 Family £19 Annual passes available.

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