



[Pandora's Box](#) | [Sephy's Story](#) | [Wings of Icarus](#) | [The Story Thief](#) | [The Little Puppet Boy](#) | [The Hound of Ulster](#)

Books Reviewed:

[Pandora's Box](#) [1]

Books Reviewed:

[Sephy's Story](#) [2]

Books Reviewed:

[Wings of Icarus](#) [3]

Books Reviewed:

[The Story Thief](#) [4]

Books Reviewed:

[The Little Puppet Boy](#) [5]

Books Reviewed:

[The Hound of Ulster](#) [6]

Issue:

[169](#) [7]

Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [8]

News to Choice:

off

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Book

BfK Rating:

3

These six books form part of A & C Black's 'White Wolves' series of guided readers. The first three are intended for Year 3 children (7/8 year old) and are retellings of myths and legends. The next set is for Year 4 (8/9 year old) and is given the general heading of 'Stories from Different Cultures' which, in this case, means folk tales. There are other sets of books in the 'White Wolves' series for all year groups from 3-6, and there is a teaching guide for each set, which I haven't seen, which includes literacy lesson plans and photocopiable activities. The whole has been devised in consultation with the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education and is in line with the Literacy Strategy. I am not qualified to comment as to how useful these books might be in the classroom. Kevin Harcombe, in the **TES** in January 2007, welcomed some of the other Year 3 titles as taking the difficulty out of finding differentiated texts for guided reading. As stand alone titles they do rate above the average reader. They are attractively produced, and they feature established authors. The authors, however, are necessarily working within guidelines about vocabulary, sentence length, grammar and so on; and with a brief to fill a precise number of pages and chapters in good sized print, making room for one or two illustrations on each page, which fit more or less comfortably depending on the title. All adopt a spare

storytelling style and some, with the help of their illustrators, carry it off better than others (Malachy Doyle and Andrew Fusek Peters perhaps), but in the circumstances, I have the general impression of retellings which don't capture the excitement and mystery there might be in the original stories. Whatever their usefulness in the classroom, this isn't the way I would choose to introduce children to stories like **Pandora's Box**, Persephone's journey to the underworld (**Sephy's Story**) and Petroushka (**The Little Puppet Boy**). Perhaps reading or telling a more gripping version to the class before they read these for themselves would give children a better idea of why these stories are still worth knowing, apart from their efficacy as reading exercises.

Running Order:

44

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Links:

- [1] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/pandoras-box>
- [2] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/sephys-story>
- [3] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/wings-of-icarus>
- [4] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-story-thief>
- [5] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-little-puppet-boy>
- [6] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-hound-of-ulster>
- [7] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/169>
- [8] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/clive-barnes>