

# LINDSAY LOGS IN

## LINDSAY RANDALL



## THE RIGHT LINES

Our very own mummy blogger reflects on how literary classic books compete in modern society.

**W**hen The Husband and I bought our current home, our bookshelves boasted Lonely Planet editions smugly displaying the places we'd visited, Mr & Mrs Smith's collection of beautiful boutique hotels and lots of lengthy fat novels with which we'd curl up on a rainy Sunday and lose all sense of time.

A few months and a thin blue line later, these were quickly replaced with 'Your Pregnancy Bible' and 'Hypnobirthing: The Breakthrough To Easier Childbirth', and later again with 'What to Expect in the First Year' and 'Understanding Your Three Year Old' (this one well-thumbed and am still no closer to an answer).

However, despite our now compromised bookshelves (and lack of spare time to settle down with a gripping read), I'm pleased to say the children have adopted our love of literature with gusto and from an early age they both enjoyed pouring over picture books, wiggling their little fingers through the holes in 'The Hungry Caterpillar' and lifting up endless flaps. Reading to them every night is instrumental to me in their upbringing, no matter how grumpy I am, how tired they are or whether it might delay 'wine o'clock' by ten minutes. And

I have to admit that I quietly consider it to be the mark of a good parent if you can recognise the context behind classic lines like, 'We can't go over it. We can't go under it. Oh no! We've got to go through it'. In fact, my son was recently given a copy of *The Gruffalo* for his fifth birthday and, as he tore off the wrapping, he and I both looked a little perplexed at the choice of present. Surely by the age of five, every child in the land knows that 'The mouse found a nut and the nut was good'?

Still at the picture book stage, my three year old is delighted by classic fairytales, from which she absorbs all sorts of facts to rattle modern day political correctness, frequently announcing with confidence that 'All stepmothers are wicked' or 'I need to look beautiful like a princess'.

When I think back to my own childhood there were many stories which would cause all sorts of ripples today. Two of my favourites, Enid Blyton's 'The Three Goaliwogs' and the Noddy books, have both been under scrutiny since, with Noddy and Bigears being accused of homosexuality for various scenes in which they share a bed. Ridiculously, (in my humble opinion) it's meant that modern editions of the books have had those scenes removed, as well as any mention of the naughty goaliwogs that live in the woods.

My son has just entered the chapter book stage and I've had great pleasure in reading him some of the revised classics from my childhood like 'The Twits' and 'George's Marvellous Medicine'. My mum, whose attic is some sort of tardis-sized tribute to the 1970s, appears weekly with a new dusty (and usually politically incorrect) story book from my childhood that she's 'just dug out from the loft' which she presents to my children who immediately want to read it on their bed while I'm frantically looking for the Febreeze and any signs of bookworms (literally).

Her latest such gift was an original hard backed and beautifully illustrated copy of Enid Blyton's 'Enchanted Wood'. My son is enjoying it thoroughly (as am I) except the language makes it rather slow going as I'm stopped frequently to explain the meaning of words like 'grocer' (as opposed to Ocado delivery driver), 'queer' when describing a funny man and – the most amusing to him – why one of the little girls is called 'Fanny' (changed to 'Frannie' in the modern editions. Of course).

I wonder if history will repeat itself in 30 years time and my daughter will find herself reading 'vintage' Peppa Pigs (from my dusty attic) to her offspring. Although if political correctness continues the way it has, Daddy Pig will almost certainly have been put on the Atkins by then...

