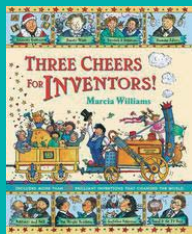


# Book Reviews



## Three Cheers for Inventors!

(Walker Books, 40 pages)  
By Marcia Williams  
(Age 8yrs+)

Getting ready for school, my six-year-old is sitting on the loo, 'toilet paper on a roll was invented by in 1882 by Walter Alcock.' Downstairs the nine-year-old is hurriedly trying to finish his homework, 'and the ballpoint pen was invented by a Hungarian called Ladislao Biro in 1938. Over 14 million ballpoints are sold everyday!'

In the hall we are searching for shoes, 'Velcro, invented by George De Mestral, 1956, Switzerland and inspired by cocklebur seeds that stuck to his clothing!' We jump in the car, 'the motorcar, 1885, Germany, Karl Benz.' It's raining of course, 'the windscreen wiper! First invented in 1903 by a woman, she was an American called Mary Anderson.'

How do we have all these fascinating facts at our finger tips? Because we have been reading *Three Cheers for Inventors!* By Marcia Williams. If you are looking for the perfect Christmas present for that curious child in your life, the search stops here.

This is a great book, not only does it tell us all about those really famous and important inventions: the printing press ('Hooray for Johannes Gutenberg'), electricity ('Light Up for Thomas Edison'), the aeroplane ('Three Zooms for Wilbur and Orville Wright'), but there is a whole category devoted to the inventors of useful everyday items as well, and a section on women inventors and Marcia Williams' own personal favourites.

This bright sturdy hardback is packed with information delivered in a comic strip style. Funny illustrations are bordered by little woodland creatures offering witty asides. Combined with well-researched detail and amazing facts, this title spans a wide age-group. From little ones, who will like it for the pictures and jokes, to older brothers and sisters able to read it to themselves and learn loads. What more could you want?

Elizabeth McFarlane



## The Wolf's Story

(Walker Books, 32 pages)  
By Toby Forward  
(Age 5yrs+ read aloud, older children read alone)

The prospect of a good read in a cosy chair in front of the fire, suitably shored up with blankets, cognac and/or sticky toffee pudding, makes the winter months seem more than bearable. It's particularly nice to see some stories for young children which pick up on the theme of the cold outdoors and encourage some literary snuggling up.

*The Wolf's Story*, by Toby Forward, introduces the tale of Little Red Riding Hood from the point of view of the defendant. (You may have come across *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs!*, also told by a lupine member of the criminal community.) It's witty – Little Red's grandma could well have perished from an irony overdose – and very good for helping children learn to see situations from different perspectives. The wolf directly addresses his listeners as he protests his innocence in a slightly less than convincing manner (what could his real motivation possibly be?) and this means plenty of adult-child interaction and, of course, lots of scope for 'funny voices'.

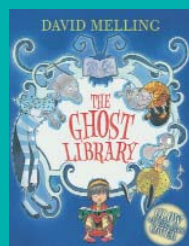
'I'm versatile. Sort of a new wolf. Vegetarian cuisine a speciality. If I eat any more lettuce I'll turn green. But that's too much

information.... Are you sure you wouldn't like to sit just a little closer?'

Izhar Cohen's atmospheric illustrations are sophisticated and reference the text very closely, the pictorial clues offering evidence that rather undermines the wolf's testimony – this is definitely a book to look at as well as hear. The unwritten conflict between the visual tale and the wolf's own words opens the story up to discussion throughout. '... it may have looked as though I was going to eat her or something. Then she started screaming. 'WOLF! WOLF! You've eaten my grandma!' Do I look the sort of wolf who goes around eating grandmas?' Well, sorry, son, but yes you do.

The story can be read at a number of levels and, despite being a picture book, could be enjoyed by children from early Key Stage 1 through to Key Stage 2 (if you don't tell their friends). The overall tone is surprisingly creepy for such a funny book, even with repeated readings, and I was left remembering just why I used to check the wardrobe for wolves at bedtime.

Fiona O'Cleirigh



## The Ghost Library

(Hodder Headline, 28 pages)  
By David Melling  
(Age 5yrs+)

Despite the subject matter, *The Ghost Library* isn't really very scary and deals with spooks of the Caspar rather than the Hammer Horror variety. Bookworm Bo likes to read in bed at night: in so doing, she attracts the attention of a gang of ghosts with no books of their own to read. When they steal her favourite, she follows along in spirit to their incorporeal library. The shelves are all empty and Bo realises that the ghosts just need someone to read them a story.

Bo duly reads her book to them and then, encouraged, she extemporises, showing the ghosts how stories exist all around us, ready for the taking. This greatly pleases the ghosts. The book is illustrated by its author, David Melling, and the inventive drawings, if anything, take precedence over the text. It also sports a rather natty glow-in-the-dark cover.

It doesn't have quite the same adult-appeal as *The Wolf's Story* and struck me as too obviously designed to reinforce the idea that 'reading is fun' – and virtuous. Having said that, my daughter found it difficult to nominate her favourite of the two, so kid-appeal it definitely has.

Fiona O'Cleirigh