Oxford Children's Encyclopedia. Edited by Mary Worrall. New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1991. 1,644 pp. Hardcover $200.00

Written in a style that reminds one of the way a good teacher might communicate with children, the *Oxford Children's Encyclopedia* is a storehouse of information presented in a manner that whets the reader's appetite for more. The set, which is intended for children 8- to 12-year olds, is made up of 7 volumes with volume 7 being an index. Entries are arranged alphabetically. Although thematic arrangements are often used in children's encyclopedias, the editors responded to the wishes of their consultants-children, teachers, parents and librarians who said that an alphabetic arrangement was really easier than trying to determine which subject volume to consult. The editors did decide, however, to place all the biographical articles together in volume 6 because, as stated in the introduction, "everyone knows who a person is." The decisions about which topics to include were also influenced by children's statements about what they wanted to know. In all, 112 writers and 60 subject specialists participated in the creation of the encyclopedia.

Although the set includes 2,000 entries, beginning with "Aborigines of Australia" and ending with "Zulus" (aardvarks aren't included and abacuses are dealt with in an article on calculators), there is not an entry for folklore as a topic. There are, however, approximately 50 articles that bear directly on subjects such as myths, legends, and folk tales, as well as numerous others of interest to folklorists. In general, topics relating to folklore are well presented and as precise as can be reasonably expected in an encyclopedia written for young children. The entry for folk music gives a good sense of the scope of the topic and includes margin notes on Cecil Sharp and Alan Lomax as well as interesting asides about classical composers who incorporated folk melodies in their work. The article on folk tales and fairy tales begins, " No one knows who first makes up a folk tale. People (the folk) pass them on by telling them." It makes the major points that folk tales are ever changing, ancient or recent. Some standard patterns are discussed, and the derivation of the term "fairy tale" is explained. Again the margin notes hold interesting tidbits including information about different sources for the Cinderella story, as well as facts about chapbooks and other written sources for stories. Although the article does list Hans Christian Andersen, Perrault, Andrew Lang, and the Grimm brothers as people who retold folk tales, it refers to their works as "folk-tale collections." Unfortunately, no effort is made

here to clearly distinguish between writers who use the folk tale form and collectors of traditional tales. The article on the Grimms' in the biography section, however; does point out that although the brothers claimed that they were true to their sources they actually rewrote most of the tales, and the article on Andersen makes no mention of folk tales at all, referring to Andersen's stories as his own creations.

Missing from the set is any mention of children's games. Under the brief article on children there is a section on play, but it makes no mention of games, jokes, riddles or chants specific to children and reads a bit like a cross between a text on the developmental phases of childhood and a book on how children ought to behave. The article on nursery rhymes fares better with an opening paragraph which provides a good, simple introduction to the topic.

> Nursery rhymes are the best-known poetry there is. You learn them by heart when you are very small and never forget them. When you have your own children they wi11learn them from you. They may not have been written down at all for hundreds of years and we do not know how old they are, or what they mean.

This is followed by some interesting "guesses" about the origins or symbolism of several common nursery rhymes.

American readers will notice a decidedly European if not specifically British focus throughout the set. In the main that translates into more information about Celtic and Norse myths and legends and less about Native American legends and heroes of the Old West. However, there is a Native American legend included in the article on myths and legends, and the entry for ballads refers to Casey Jones and includes the text for "The Streets of Laredo." Also, it can be noted that since Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill aren't mentioned at all they are not incorrectly identified as folk heroes.

American children will no doubt have some problems with terminology and word usage. For example, no effort is made to clarify words like "cooker," "hob," or "cling-film" for the non-British reader, and bowling is the British sport played on a green and not the one we play in a bowling alley. Still, with its wealth of illustrations, photographs, charts, cross-references, and margin notes, the *Oxford Children's Encyclopedia* provides information both directly and incidentally, and most children will find it accessible and enjoyable to read.

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