

Enid Blyton: The Famous Five Books

by Peter Cash



English Association Primary Bookmarks

No. 5

Enid Blyton (1897-1968)
THE FAMOUS FIVE BOOKS (1942-1963)

by
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

See Appendix A

All 21 books were originally published by Hodder & Stoughton Limited

BIOGRAPHY

Barbara Stoney, Enid Blyton: The Biography, 1974

George Greenfield, Enid Blyton, 1998

'QUEER': THE VOCABULARY OF ENID BLYTON

Personal Introduction

It smelt queer.

No 1 *Five on a Treasure Island* (1942)

Chapter Eight Exploring the Wreck

It was a queer feeling.

No 7 *Five Go Off to Camp* (1948)

Chapter Five Back at Camp Again

"Queer," said Dick.

No 15 *Five on a Secret Trail* (1956)

Chapter Sixteen The Secret Way

"Queer, isn't it?"

No 17 *Five Get into a Fix* (1958)

Chapter Twelve Out on the Hills

Fifty years ago, I was an avid reader of Enid Blyton's Famous Five books. I was introduced to these books at Primary School where, one summer term, my teacher decided to conclude each day by reading us a chapter of ***Five on Kirrin Island Again***, the sixth title in the 21-book series. What I cannot do is pinpoint the precise year of the decade (1950s) in which we sat listening; what I can say is that, since this title was first published in 1947, our teacher was not exactly at the cutting edge of Primary Education, for the book – a hardback, of course – had been available for at least ten years.

What I next remember is a Christmas gift of ***Five Go Adventuring Again***, the second title in the series. I know: no logic here, no concern for a chronological order in those days, not long after War-time rationing had ended, people in Skegness bought what was on the shelves. Every Saturday afternoon, my mother would take me shopping with her and, in response to my pestering, traipse finally into Dutton's on Lumley Road where she would fork out 7s 6d for the next book, selected usually by virtue of its dust-jacket. In this haphazard way, I built up my library of Famous Fives until, by the time that I was at Grammar School, I had read all of the twenty books, purchasing seventeen of them. The last of the books – **No 21 *Five Are Together Again*** – did not appear until 1963 by which time I had turned thirteen and grown out of them

.... or so I thought. This summer, I set out suddenly to complete my collection and found myself able via e-bay to acquire the four hardbacks which were not already preserved in line at the bottom of my bookcase – the three which I had borrowed from other children (No 6, No 14 and No 16) and that final one which I had never got around to reading, No 21. For reasons to which I shall come in my conclusion, I decided then that I would re-read the entire series, subjecting the books to critical analysis in an endeavour to discover why they had captivated me in my childhood.

What was certain was that these children of my own age, living somewhere in the mysterious and superior south of England, in Buckinghamshire or in Dorset, were having exciting times: in fact, Julian, Dick, Anne, George and her mongrel dog Timmy were having an exciting time *every* time that there was a school holiday. Indeed, careful students of the series will notice that the children (who do not age¹) enjoy more adventures than they would have had school holidays! Superficial analysis of the Famous Five series is always quick to suggest that its primary appeal lies in the independence which the Five enjoy: in their adventures, they go 'away on their own' (No 5) and experience that freedom from parental control of which all children dream. In **No 5 *Five Go Off in a Caravan*** and **No 19 *Five Go to Demon's Rocks***, they are allowed to go off on their own to an extent that today would contravene the Child Protection Act (1999) and interest Social Services. What is more, they proceed always to demonstrate that they are worthy of this freedom by means of accomplishments at which the adults – including deferential policemen – can only marvel. In the Famous Five books, Enid Blyton is nothing if not a formulaic writer. For showing to slower-witted adults that the Five are quite capable of handling their freedom, her formula is the discovery of a hidden tunnel: indeed, **No 14 *Five Have Plenty of Fun*** and **No 21 *Five Are Together Again*** are the only books in the series which do *not* feature the sensational discovery and the subsequent exploration of a subterranean passageway; in every one of the other nineteen books, they go underground, often following a 'secret way'. They disarm the threat to the status quo without fail. Because they are such virtuous children, their successes in doing so are rewards enough in themselves.

Famous Food

In 1982, Channel 4 produced a famous satire on the Famous Five books, entitled ***Five Go Mad in Dorset***. That Blyton's series could be subjected to such a treatment says a very great deal for its enduring appeal, especially since that final title had come out all of nineteen years earlier. Inadvertently, this satire got its teeth into an unheralded source of the Five's appeal – one which I too would certainly have overlooked if I had not spent thirty years as an English teacher responsible for marking 11+ Entrance Exams. Marking hundreds of compositions by children of this age, I could not help but notice how many of them, when they were either stuck for something to say or searching for a satisfying ending, described a meal: they would stop for lunch or go home and have tea. It's the same with Enid Blyton: when her narrative stalls, one of the children (usually Dick) will declare that he is hungry – at which point will follow a bill of fare from the 1940s and 1950s. None of the narratives is more often rescued by this strategy than **No 15 *Five on a Secret Trail***.

In ***Five Go Mad in Dorset***, the menu is of 'ham and turkey sandwiches, bags of lettuce, hard-boiled eggs, heaps of tomato, and lashings of ginger beer'. As the Wikipedia entry admits, the catch-phrase 'lashings of ginger beer' (by which Famous Five antics have been subsequently characterised) appears nowhere in Blyton's Famous Five books; the phrase is not hers. Although the children think that ginger-beer is 'a gorgeous drink' and consume it with 'everything', the particular measures are never 'lashings'. This locution, when it *is* used, is used only very sparingly: in **No 11 *Five Have a Wonderful Time***, set in a travelling 'fair'/circus, Dick (Chapter 3) does not fancy having to contend with 'lashings of poisonous snakes'; in **No 12 *Five Go Down to the Sea***, Dick again (Chapter 2) salivates after

¹ In No 1, published in 1942, Julian is twelve, Dick and George are both eleven and Anne is ten; in **No 3 *Five Run Away Together***, published in 1944, they are all one year older; eventually, Blyton stops counting – not least, one supposes, because by 1963 Timmy would have lived far longer than any dog in history.

'lashings of hard-boiled eggs' and Blyton herself puts the coinage in inverted commas (Chapter 5) in order to jest at a feast of 'peas and new potatoes'; in **No 20 *Five Have a Mystery to Solve***, she likewise appropriates Dick's idiom for her own description of a meal and refers to 'lashings of treacle' (Chapter 2). Of course, the echo which catches the satirist's ear is of boarding school slang from the 1950s: in that lost world, 'old' (as applied to the young!) is a repetitive term of endearment, a great many people and things are 'jolly decent' and the well-bred children are always grateful for what they are about to receive. Where food is concerned, the C4 scriptwriters mock their hearty appetites for salads which are not appetising: in No 7, "Spam and lettuce" sandwiches (Chapter 2); in No 11, "two hard-boiled eggs each, fresh lettuce, tomatoes, mustard and cress, and potatoes baked ... in their jackets" (Chapter 7); in No 12, "Lettuce, tomatoes, onions, radishes, mustard and cress, carrot grated up" (Chapter 2). Yummy! Because they are in the 1950s, the children also open a lot of tins of fruit; alternatively, they are somehow able to fill up with either plums or raspberries, often plentiful in unlikely months of the year. So much roughage in their diet! So it's very amusing to note that the Five, the dog included, *never* need to go to the toilet; no matter where they camp, Nature never calls. By the time that I was trying to re-visualise the vague setting for **No 15 *Five on a Secret Trail***, I was feeling distinctly uncomfortable for them. Only in **No 19 *Five Go to Demon's Rocks*** does Timmy give 'a little whine' because he is 'longing for a walk' (Chapter 12)!

Style

I shall not therefore be making special claims for the formulaic plots of the books: after having just read the same story twenty-one times, I'm in no mind to do that.² No: what interests me is the style of writing by which Blyton carries her narratives. In 1998, Enid Blyton's agent, George Greenfield, wrote a succinct biography of his late client. Chapter Five – entitled *Style and Content* – includes this passage:

To apply the strict rules of literary criticism to Enid Blyton's writing would be both unfair and absurd. Her forte was telling stories and her technique was adapted for that purpose. Her sentences tend to be simple and straightforward, with very few dependent clauses. There are few adjectives and those used are the more obvious ones – 'a hot sunny day', 'a short nap', 'sharp eyes', 'poor Margery' and so on. Much of the story development takes place through dialogue, which contains a liberal peppering of exclamation marks

As I have already announced, applying 'the rules of literary criticism to Enid Blyton's writing' is exactly what I want to do – and, indeed, Mr Greenfield himself makes an excellent start. He is right: Blyton does not trouble her readers with complex sentences; rarely does a sentence begin with a subordinate conjunction; in fact, there are hardly any subordinate conjunctions and their 'dependent clauses' to detain us or tax us; there are some semi-colons, but they are widely scattered. Instead, one simple sentence after another begins subject + predicate: "Julian was"/"They went" Mr Greenfield is also right that there 'there are few adjectives' – and, he might have added, few colours other than sea-blue and sky-blue. In the main, this is because – except in No 5, No 11 and No 12 – there is little descriptive writing:

She set a scene quickly and then with her short paragraphs and stripped-down sentences kept the characters on the move. There were no pauses for detailed descriptions of the scenery or subtle characterization.

Where a scene needs setting, Blyton does it briefly and in hackneyed imagery. Although Kirrin (the coastal village where George's parents live) is to be imagined in the vicinity of Corfe Castle in Dorset, readers need not bother going to Blyton for geographical accuracy and topographical precision. A primary attraction of the Famous Five books is that their titles

² In **No 9 *Five Fall into Adventure***, George is kidnapped and held first in a caravan and then in an old house; in **No 14 *Five Have Plenty of Fun***, George is kidnapped and held first in a caravan and then in an old house.

often give a strong sense of the romantic backdrop against which the adventure will unfold: Smuggler's Top, Kirrin Island, Mystery Moor, Billycock Hill, Finniston Farm, Demon's Rocks. But it appears that Finniston Farm of No 18 and Whispering Island from No 20 are (by other names) the only locations actually to exist on a map.

Finally, Mr Greenfield is right that Blyton tends to develop her narratives not through prolonged descriptions of action, but through dialogues – and here (quite literally) is a funny thing: because the dramatic developments of her narratives require the Five to observe incongruous details or comment on untoward events, she *does* need an adjective: 'queer'. Throughout the 21 books, there is a tic-like recourse to this one adjective – always with its original and traditional meaning of 'odd', 'strange', 'curious', 'unusual', 'suspicious'. *Everything* is 'queer': even though she lives in the heyday of Quentin Crisp, Blyton – in stories for children – keeps on repeating this adjective without any sense of its alternative application: in **No 4 *Five Go to Smuggler's Top***, she uses it no fewer than **39** times; thirteen years later, in **No 17 *Five Get into a Fix***, she uses it **30** times. In ***Five Go Mad in Dorset***, the satirists portray Uncle Quentin as a 'screaming homosexual': unless it's because he keeps taking a visiting professor into his study and closing the door, it's hard to say what inspires/justifies this treatment; as a result, we're left looking merely at the three letters of the alphabet with which both 'Quentin' and the ubiquitous 'queer' begin. By a very similar token, she seems oblivious to the screaming possibility that George [= Georgina, the girl who wants to look like a boy, who wants to *be* a boy] is not a tomboy, but an embryonic lesbian, 'Master George'.³ In a proleptic twist, Blyton, writing in 1943, informs us in **No 2 *Five Go Adventuring Again*** that George and Anne attend 'Gaylands School'.

Stereotypes

Although George Greenfield (above) is not writing specifically about the Famous Five series, he may as well have been, for the criticism of Blyton's writing – which began in 1949 and has affected her standing with librarians and teachers ever since – targets both her style and her use of stereotypes, racial and social. In **No 7 *Five Go Off to Camp***, there is this notorious description of George: "Down she came, as black as a nigger with soot" (Chapter 19). In ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***, first published in 1884, Mark Twain uses the n-word on no fewer than 219 occasions and he does so without either qualm or shame simply because in 1884 [= the decade before Enid's birth] it *was* the common noun for a member of a reputedly inferior race, a slave race. It is as a direct consequence of this historic usage – which returns the black man to his servile status in the cotton fields – that the noun is objectionable and offensive. Once again, the problem is Blyton's obliviousness: all too casually, her simile cosies up to the assumption that, among her child-readers, 'nigger' *remains* the common noun for a person of colour. In her biography, Barbara Stoney (1974) rehearses the argument for the defence of Enid Blyton's racism, sexism and class snobbery:

There are also those who see no reason why children should not be allowed to read the unexpurgated versions for themselves, accepting them in the context of the time in which they were written – as they already do with many other works of fiction.

In 1939, Agatha Christie published a detective novel which was **not** originally entitled ***Ten Little Indians*** or ***And Then There Were None***. In 1946, James A. Michener published ***Tales of the South Pacific*** in which his heroine uses the n-epithet eight times in order to explain why she cannot marry a man who has previously had sex with a Polynesian woman. In 1955, the incomparable entertainer Sammy Davis Junior asked an audience, "How'd you like to be the world's only one-eyed Jewish nigger?" In the same era, Blyton's child-readers were collecting tokens from Robertson's Golden Shred Marmalade so that they could send off for a golliwog badge. Although Barbara Stoney's argument is lucid, the case-histories are what clinch it for her. For the past forty years, ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*** has

³ In addition to George, two other female characters in the series hanker after gender-reassignment: in **No 13 *Five Go to Mystery Moor*** Henrietta (Henry) and in **No 18 *Five on Finniston Farm*** Harriet (Harry).

been a set text at O-Level/GCSE Level;⁴ for the past sixty years, Rodgers and Hammerstein's ***South Pacific*** – based on Nellie Forbush's horrified reaction to Emile DeBecque's mixed-race children – has played to audiences around the world. Robertson's Jam ceased to trade off its golliwog-emblem only in 2001.

In the interests of balance, it is only fair to observe that the Famous Five stories are not without active sympathy for characters who exist on the margins of post-War English society. Even though Enid Blyton's 'fair-folk'/gypsies are illiterate, ill-mannered and unhygienic, they are good-natured and capable of praiseworthy deeds. Both Nobby (No 5) and Sniffer (No 13) exhibit fortitude and resourcefulness; both Yan (the 'queer little boy' in No 12) and Aily (the 'queer little thing' in No 17) are 'forlorn little waifs'/^'rascallions' whose helpfulness and resilience command similar admiration. Above all, Jo – the 'ragamuffin' whom the Five befriend in three of the books – is remarkable for her agility and her heroic 'pluck'. Latterly, Blyton's coastal county is nothing if not a country for old men: throughout the 21 books, old people, far from being marginalised, are treated with all due respect, revered, venerated as wise elders. In No 2, the four children visit Old Mr and Mrs Sanders; in No 7, the children humour Mr Luffy, an 'elderly' teacher; in No 8, they are generous to Aggie, 'a poor, miserable, scared old woman'; in No 12, they approach Yan's Grandad [sic] with solicitude; in No 13, they consult Old Ben; in No 16, they are kind to Old Mrs Janes;⁵ and in No 17, they are nice to Old Mrs Jones and Mrs Thomas. In No 18, they are in awe of Great Grand-dad Philpot; in No 19, they turn to Jeremiah Boogle; and in No 20, they help out Mrs Layman. Cruelties to animals, including chimpanzees, are sure signs of vice; in four successive books, Mr Roland, Mrs Stick, Block and Tiger Dan are hostile to Timmy. Conversely, kindnesses to animals, especially to dogs called Timmy, form an infallible index of human virtue

The accusation that Enid Blyton's fiction is not only racist, but also sexist stems from her gender-stereotyping. In the Famous Five series, this charge centres upon Anne who loves to pack, shop, cook, wash up and tidy up: according to her brothers, she is 'a good little housewife (No 3, Chapter 14), 'a very good little housekeeper' (No 5, Chapter 5), 'a very good little housewife' (No 7, Chapter 3), a 'proper little housewife' (No 8, Chapter 3), 'a jolly good housekeeper' (No 11, Chapter 7) and 'a real home-maker' (No 20, Chapter 6). After **No 1 *Five on a Treasure Island***, Blyton reminds us twenty times that Georgina – with her 'short curly hair' and 'boyish ways' – wants to be George because being a girl isn't worth it: " 'It's stupid being a girl,' said George, for about the millionth time in her life" (**No 10 *Five on a Hike Together***, Chapter 4). Primarily, this is because a girl, as embodied by the petite and 'domesticated' Anne, is not robust enough to *enjoy adventures*. In view of this charge, the amount of attention that Blyton pays to Anne is interesting.

A consistent feature of each book is the scrupulous way in which Blyton marshals her main characters. Forensic analysis reveals how *shared* the dialogue is between the four children: in each book, she is concerned to distribute speeches evenly between them, to organise for them equal contributions to the numerous conversations. Here, of course, is Enid Blyton the qualified school teacher who includes each and every child/leaves no child out. For Anne, the consequence of this egalitarian approach is that she is always given her fair say.

In **No 6 *Five on Kirrin Island Again***, Anne says: "It would have been *wizard* to go and stay on the island these *holls*" (Chapter 1). We are reminded that Blyton's daughters – Gillian and Imogen, name-checked on the title-page – both attended Benenden School in Kent in the 1940s, for here (see my italics) is the class-ridden vocabulary of the public school to which another kind of egalitarian objects. Listen, however, to the way in which Blyton *presents* George's reply to Anne's subsequent suggestion:

"As if living on Kirrin Island with Father there would be the same as living there all by ourselves," said George, scornfully.

⁴ Furthermore, there are 15 vituperative uses of this epithet in John Steinbeck's ***Of Mice and Men*** (1937) – a text which is never off the GCSE syllabus.

⁵ See **Appendix C**.

After the unnecessary comma, Blyton introduces her child-readers to the concept of scorn: in reply, George is disdainful and judgemental, scoffing at her cousin for being both female/feminine and younger. The literary value of such retorts is that they oblige readers to re-examine their own values. They demand that readers think

In the Famous Five series, Anne, more than any other character, is the victim of sexist stereotyping. It is therefore strange that Blyton receives so little credit for creating in George a character who rebels against her gender-stereotype with a fierce consistency. I know that I never read this telling-off (from 1951) as a political attempt to put Georgina in her subordinate place:

"You know quite well that if ever you go against the orders of the chief – that's me, my girl, in case you didn't know it – you won't come out with us again. You may look like a boy and behave like a boy, but you're a girl all the same. And like it or not, girls have got to be taken care of."

No 10 *Five on a Hike Together* Chapter 4

Here, Julian is pulling male rank expressly in order to protect his ebullient cousin. I thought that, in spite of his patronising epithet ('my girl') and his hectoring tone, he was just being gallant: as an older boy, responsible for the hike, such gallantry is merely what he expected of himself. He sees himself – as I saw him – as simply doing a 'decent' thing. Eleven years later, Dick presents George in a worse light:

"George ought to help more. She's a girl like you – but she never gets the meals or anything. I'll tick her off one of these days."

No 20 *Five Have a Mystery to Solve* Chapter 8

In Dick's opinion, her place is in the kitchen. Blyton, however, is quick to demonstrate that we should be grateful for female contentment in that place by an *equalising* and unusually witty gender-stereotyping of 'ham-handed' boys. Dick's hubristic boast that he is adept at handling crockery meets its immediate nemesis in a dropped and broken glass. Blyton's egalitarian approach to dialogue means that, from the start to the finish of the series, Anne comes up with her fair share of observant remarks and intelligent suggestions: "Clever girl" (No 2, Chapter 15) and "Good idea, Anne" (also No 20, Chapter 10).⁶

Did I, in those days, detect any particular racism or sexism in Enid Blyton's stories? Well, I wouldn't have done, would I? In 1960, Peter Sellers had a No 5 hit with ***Goodness Gracious Me*** – written by Herbert Kretzmer and produced by George Martin;⁷ in 1965, Laurence Olivier starred in a film version of ***Othello***. Meanwhile, ***The Black and White Minstrel Show*** (1958-1978) kept running on BBC Television and touring the nation's theatres. Mainly, Enid Blyton was read – as I, aged 10/11, read her – as a writer for children of *her* times.

If there is an out-dated attitude in the Famous Five books, one largely out-dated even at the time of writing, then it is Blyton's very casual acceptance of corporal punishment. What I do recall of the political incorrectness for which her books were slated can certainly be found here. Let me testify:

"I love dogs, and I shall be thrilled to have Timmy here. But I do warn you that if my stepfather ever finds out we shall probably all get a jolly good thrashing, and you'll be sent home in disgrace."

No 4 *Five Go to Smuggler's Top* Chapter 5

⁶ Questions: Is it sexist to hold open a door for a woman? Is it polite to hold open a door for a lady?

⁷ Does anyone today suggest that we ban ***Les Miserables*** and Beatles' CDs because Kretzmer and Martin once collaborated on a song in which an English Jew mocks an Anglo-Indian accent?

Here, Pierre Lenoir (with whom the children are staying at Smuggler's Top) warns them that, if his step-father discovers their disobedience in bringing and hiding the dog, then he will feel perfectly entitled to 'thrash' them 'all': that is, administer corporal punishment to *other people's* children, girls included. Especially in these earlier books, the threat of punishment by hand is always there: in the 1940s and 1950s, both parents and teachers thought that, in order to bring up children properly, they *ought* to spank them; such strict discipline was a moral requirement. Consequently, the children expect a 'spanking' if they misbehave and they accept this painful lot as if they deserve it: for instance, Toby Thomas says to his little brother Benny, "You wait till Dad hears it – you'll get such a spanking" (**No 16 *Five Go to Billycock Hill***, Chapter 6). In Blyton, being hit by 'grown-ups' is an occupational hazard of childhood. I grew up in Darkest Lincolnshire, but attended there both a primary school and a secondary school at which corporal punishment was no longer administered. So I remember regarding the Blyton chapters which brought up the subject as I regarded episodes of ***Billy Bunter*** (1952-1961) and ***Whacko!*** (1956-1960). Both were *comedies* shown on BBC Television in the early evening: where there were references to 'beating', 'licking', 'spanking', 'thrashing' or 'whipping', they must surely be references to bygone days of which we could safely make fun

Anomalies

Because Enid Blyton was such a prolific author, it was alleged that she did not write all of her own books. George Greenfield, her agent for the final fifteen years of her life, is an authority on her method of composition and can testify to the speed at which she was able to write. In Chapter Five of his biography, he reports that Enid could write a Famous Five book of 45,000 words within a week; he works out that she could average 1,500 words per hour. I cannot say that, as I read – only recently – from one book to the next, I detected any marked differences between the hands at work. I do think that, in **No 5 *Five Go Off in a Caravan***, the descriptions are fuller and more colourful than they are elsewhere, the paragraphs more carefully and patiently crafted; I think also that **No 20 *Five Have a Mystery to Solve*** lacks a certain fluency; but I can nowhere point conclusively to stylistic evidence of another author. On the one hand, we should remember that No 1 was written in 1942 and No 21 was finished in 1963⁸ and that Blyton, in each one of these 21 years, was putting her mind to a huge number of different books; on the other hand, we should acknowledge that, long before the decade was over, she had succumbed to Alzheimer's Disease.

If there is a worrying puzzle, then it has to do with the relationship between Julian, Dick and Anne's parents and George's parents. Julian, Dick and Anne are George's cousins, but it is not clear which two of the respective parents are siblings. Anyone who has got as far as the first page of the first book (***Five on a Treasure Island***) will be wondering what I am talking about, for there Blyton states categorically of Julian, Dick and Anne's father that 'Quentin was his brother, the children's uncle'. For fourteen books, the four children go without a surname. It is not until Chapter 1 of **No 15 *Five on a Secret Trail*** that Blyton refers to George's mother [aka Aunt Fanny] as 'Mrs Kirrin'. In Chapter 1 of **No 16 *Five Go to Billycock Hill***, Blyton confirms that Uncle Quentin is 'Mr Kirrin' and Aunt Fanny 'Mrs Kirrin'; in Chapter 5 of this book, Toby Thomas introduces his friends to Mr Gringle as "Julian Kirrin, Dick Kirrin, Anne Kirrin, George Kirrin their cousin"; this, of course, is consistent with the original statement that Julian, Dick and Anne's father is Uncle Quentin's brother. **But** it is not consistent with Chapter 1 of **No 17 *Five Get into a Fix*** in which Dr Drew enters a room (where the four children are coughing) 'with the mother of Julian, Dick and Anne':

"*Will* they be well enough to go to school, Doctor?" asked Mrs Barnard anxiously.

⁸ Even when she is writing in 1963, Blyton imagines children's lives as if it were still 1942 – albeit without any intrusions from the Second World War. Only once (No 6, 1947) do the four children watch television. Only once (No 16, 1957) do they listen to music: in Chapter 10, Anne precociously looks forward to a radio-broadcast of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony.

Here, Uncle Quentin's brother's wife is not another Mrs Kirrin (as she ought to be) but Mrs Barnard. Now, the family surname is Barnard. Oh no, it isn't! In Chapter 2 of **No 18 *Five on Finniston Farm***, the Philpot twins announce the arrival of 'the Kirrins'. Likewise, Chapter 1 of **No 19 *Five Go to Demon's Rocks*** reverts in its opening line to the styling of No 15 and No 16:

"Fanny!" shouted Mr Kirrin, running up the stairs with a letter in his hand.

Once again, Uncle Quentin is Mr Kirrin and Aunt Fanny (when she speaks) is Mrs Kirrin; in **No 21 *Five Are Together Again***, Aunt Fanny remains 'Mrs Kirrin'. I know: you wait fifteen years for a surname and then two come along at once. What is more, the first surname, though it may be more familiar and logical, is the worse choice, for it is Fanny, whose surname would have changed on marriage, who has lived in Kirrin 'all her life' and who originally owned Kirrin Island. Of course, the four children would *also* be cousins if Julian, Dick and Anne were the children of Aunt Fanny's sister, presumably married to a Mr Barnard – and that, to confuse the matter further, is exactly what Blyton implies when, on the first page of **No 8 *Five Get into Trouble***, Uncle Quentin protests that he can never remember if the four children "are going to be here with us or with your sister." Chaos, Enid: couldn't you have been more a little more diligent?

In **No 20 *Five Have a Mystery to Solve***, there is another puzzling anomaly: whereas in all earlier books (eg. No 5) George has appeared to live some way from her three cousins, in this book her home at Kirrin Cottage is within cycling distance of theirs. Once again, the problem begins in the first chapter of the series: in ***Five on a Treasure Island***, Blyton describes the car journey that Julian, Dick and Anne take with their parents to the coastal village of Kirrin where George lives with hers. This journey is 'to a place they had never been to before' and it is no quick hop. In fact, the drive – beginning north of London – takes the best part of a day: at eleven o' clock, Anne is hungry, but is told that she must wait 'till at least half-past twelve' for their lunch-time picnic. Indeed, her father estimates that they will arrive in Kirrin 'about six o'clock' and he prepares them for 'another long spell in the car'; it is only after their 'tea-time' picnic that they sight Kirrin Bay. In subsequent books, Kirrin Cottage is a place to which Julian, Dick and Anne *travel by train to holiday*: in both No 9 and No 15, Julian, Dick and Anne alight at Kirrin Station; in No 14, Anne speaks of having *arrived* in Kirrin 'yesterday'. In short, the two families (Barnards or Kirrins) do **not** live just around the corner from each other – which is certainly what No 20 suggests.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I think that upon retirement a man may naturally start to wonder why his career took the direction that it did and try to make some philosophical sense of that direction: how did I become the person I became? If he became a teacher of English, then he can wonder especially what lit that spark: was it when I enjoyed reading **No 2 *Five Go Adventuring Again?*** If so, how did that happen? What *affected* me and made an indelible impact? I recall that, as a child, I liked No 2, No 3, No 4, No 8, No 10, No 12 and No 17 of the Famous Five series, but that I did not care much for No 14, No 15 and No 16. With the advantage of fifty years' hindsight, I can see and confirm that **No 2** is a ripping yarn. After all, Chapter 14 does begin:

The four children crept downstairs through the dark and silent night.

Beat that! The clarity and the economy of language fully realise the surreptitious activity in which the children are together engaged and prepare us for a revelation: "Look at that!" said George, in a thrilling whisper." Once again, Blyton's economical use of language swiftly accomplishes its aim, celebrating the startling find [= a secret panel] at the same time as it articulates the need to keep quiet about it. I should hasten to add that **No 10 *Five on a Hike Together*** and **No 12 *Five Go Down to the Sea*** remain equally atmospheric tales, both excellent books of their kind; ironically, in that it was my first contact with the series, only No 6 (Uncle Quentin in that tower on Kirrin Island) now seems to me irredeemably silly –

and No 20, as I've already said, feels unusually dull and uninspired, altogether a bit of a struggle.

So was I, as a youngster, simply engaged by Blyton's page-turning technique? First, I loved the idea that my own three cousins and I might have such adventures available to us on our own nearby beaches – though let it be stressed that we would *not* have kept rushing off to 'bathe' [= their archaic noun and verb for 'swim'] in cold English lakes and seas, once in April (No 8) and once in October (No 10)! Second, I *was* engaged by Blyton's style. It is by no means a weakness that her straightforward syntax and her compact vocabulary set up no resistance to the pace at which a ten-year-old wants to follow her narratives. But there is something else: Blyton directs her dialogue with an instinctive skill that keeps children everywhere listening closely. First, she fits descriptions (of food, of physiognomy, of terrain, of weather) between speeches, but rarely at any great length: how often do we find an atmospheric or dynamic description that runs longer than three/four sentences without either an exclamation (!) or a rhetorical question? Second, she arranges/orchestrates her speakers so harmoniously that, in each book, her ten-year-olds find themselves attentive to a *continuous* flow of excited, inflected talk: in other words, her readers become *at every point* the audience to an unfolding voice-drama between conflicting tones. Above all, Enid Blyton ensures that her stories are *heard*.

By far Enid Blyton's preferred way of acknowledging a speaker is to play safe/be lazy: that is, to use 'said' without any adorning adjunct. But there follow significant enhancements: to complement her safe style, she develops **three ways** to indicate the tones of her speakers and thereby set up the dramatic harmony between them. Between the Five, dog included, the exchanges are tumultuous, setting up emotional resonances – eg. of dismay, of delight – to which her readers can listen and respond. Nowhere does the sound of exchanged speeches fluctuate more expressively and more rapidly than throughout **No 3 *Five Run Away Together*** in which a kind of vocal ping-pong is audible.

Blyton's **first way** is simply to vary the verb: for 'said', there is a vast variety of substitute-verbs which *includes* 'agreed', 'announced', 'asked', 'begged', 'boasted', 'boomed', 'called', 'chuckled', 'commanded', 'cried' (her favourite option), 'complained', 'demanded', 'explained', 'gasped', 'giggled', 'grinned', 'groaned', 'growled', 'insisted', 'murmured', 'muttered', 'ordered', 'promised', 'panted', 'raged', 'rapped out', 'remarked', 'repeated', 'retorted', 'shouted' (another favourite), 'snapped', 'sniffed', 'sobbed', 'squealed', 'stammered', 'suggested', 'thought', 'wailed', 'warned', 'wept', 'whispered', 'wondered', 'yawned', 'yelled'. At once, such verbs ensure that every Famous Five adventure unfolds to a sound-track on which the author is continually adjusting the volume-control.

Her **second way** is to use a past participle in its adjectival form in order to describe the speaker's mood/state of mind: for instance, 'said Julian, disappointed', 'said Julian, taken aback', 'said Dick, amused', 'said Dick, pleased', 'said George, irritated', 'said George, puzzled', 'said Anne, exasperated', 'said Anne, worried'. Even in this form, the narrative offers an essentially auditory experience.

Her **third way** is to place adverbs and adverbial phrases of manner after 'said' in expertly judged rotation. In 1949, the author Geoffrey Trease (1909-1998) claimed that Enid Blyton's style was "drained of all difficulty until it achieved a kind of aesthetic anaemia." So far, it has been accepted that, to the end of the Famous Five series, Blyton constructs her sentences without ambition or sophistication. It has been conceded that her vocabulary remains rudimentary and (as we have seen) unenlightened by any inklings of cultural change: unless you count 'queer', *which I have done*, she does not have a way with describing words. This being so, it is surprising then to discover how often she adds 'ly' to an adjective which she rarely uses in its own right and how often her adverbs add adult bite to the children's exchanges. In fact, Blyton's compendium of adverbs is quite literally remarkable, encompassing – as it does – a mature range of emotional and psychological states. Whenever she wishes to catch a feeling or a thought in a particular tone of voice, she puts an adverb of manner, regardless of any sudden complexity that it may involve. Consequently,

one of her most common and instructive combinations is 'said' + adverb: eg. 'said George, scornfully'. Throughout the Famous Five series, her lexicon of adverbs⁹ is sensitive to a rich variety of such intonations and it thereby licenses the case for a strong defence of Blyton's writing.

Enid Blyton's critics will have nodded knowingly and rightly at my calculation that she uses 'queer' **309** times in 21 books. Who among them, I wonder, will also be expecting to see that her onomatopoeic verbs and her dramatic adverbs offer her young readers quite such a wealth of sensations and reflections? The critics of her 'anaemic' vocabulary will expect to find a recycling of trite adverbs: 'loudly', 'softly', 'quickly', 'slowly', 'coolly', 'warmly', 'happily', 'heartily', 'joyfully', 'politely', 'rudely' and 'suddenly' (itself used a grand total of 145 times); to be fair, they may even be pleased to note that 'indignantly' (x 39) and 'scornfully' (x 43) also are used regularly and widely.* But what about 'airily', 'appreciatively', 'apologetically', 'artfully', 'beseechingly', 'dolefully', 'earnestly', 'exultantly', 'fervently', 'genially', 'gravely', 'imperiously', 'insolently', 'jubilantly', 'peevisly', 'ponderously', 'reproachfully', 'ruefully', 'soberly', 'stolidly', 'sullenly', 'uneasily' and 'ungraciously' – not to mention 'in a tone of amiable surprise' (No 3), 'with her usual irritating vagueness' (No 9) and 'in awe'? All of these adverbs occur/recur in Enid Blyton's Famous Five books.¹⁰

Refreshingly, Blyton's strategy is not to confine herself to the same old monosyllables + 'ly'. The result is a vocabulary wide-ranging enough to enlarge/enrich any child's perception of the world. Even at the lower end of this scale, there are 46 different adverbs for speech-tones in both No 7 and No 10 (both 185 pages); in No 20, a shorter book by 12 pages, there are 41. At the upper extreme, both **No 3 *Five Run Away Together*** and **No 9 *Five Fall into Adventure*** go through no fewer than **79** different adverbs/adverbial phrases which describe varying tones of voice.

No book is more representative of Blyton's preferred adverbs than **No 7 *Five Go Off to Camp*** which, in a sense, supplies a catalogue of her standard uses. Supremely, **No 11 *Five Have a Wonderful Time*** even begins: "I do think it's *mean*," said George, fiercely." The lasting impression, however, is of a thought-provoking breadth: adverbially, the books give repeated airings to the abstract ideas of anger, anxiety, defiance, eagerness, gratitude, haste, impatience, indignation, obstinacy, scorn, solemnity and urgency – not to mention fierceness; in addition, a great many things are said **either** in a certain 'voice' or 'in alarm', 'in astonishment', 'in amazement', 'in disgust', 'in surprise', 'in a low voice' and 'with a grin'. My **Appendix A** (which starts seventy years ago) is designed to show why, even when Dorset is overcast, there is never a dull or a quiet moment.

⁹ In addition, Blyton makes frequent use of eleven adverbs which are applied not to speeches, but to actions: 'cautiously', 'deftly', 'gingerly', 'hungrily', 'intently', 'lavishly', 'methodically', 'sedately', 'valiantly', 'vigorously' and 'warily'.

¹⁰ Blyton tries especially hard with her adverbs: if I am not altogether sure about 'warningly', used a total of 11 times, then I'm even more uncomfortable with other adverbs which she has formed from present participles: 'stumblingly' (No 9, Ch 7), 'beamingly' (No 11, Ch 14), 'wonderingly', 'scoldingly', 'pleadingly' and 'questioningly' (all from No 12) and 'consideringly' (No 14, Ch 7).

APPENDIX A

Vocabulary

The purpose of this Appendix is two-fold: **1** to record the number of times in each book that Enid Blyton uses the adjective 'queer' or a variant; **2** to list the adverbs of manner, including adverbial phrases of manner, which Blyton adjoins to the verb 'said'. For different purposes, I have been through each of my 21 tattered hardbacks four times; even so, I cannot swear to the complete accuracy of the following numbers because my method of counting has been no more sophisticated than a sharp(ish) eye, a pencil and an abacus.

Famous Five stories begin on Page 7, on Page 9 or on Page 11 (in equal numbers).

It appears that, for each book, Eileen Soper (1905-1990) was commissioned to produce **32** illustrations/line-drawings. Eleven of the books (*below, marked with a bracketed number*) open with a List of Illustrations; with the exception of No 16, these books are No 8 to No 19 inclusive. Only in No 16 and in No 21 do the illustrations appear without any captions. Otherwise, the eleven Lists are of illustrations beneath which a caption from the text appears: in No 13 and No 15, there are still 32 illustrations, but the 16 half-page illustrations are not captioned and so cannot be listed.

The other ten books are illustrated by Eileen Soper in the same numbers, but carry no such list. This is not because the illustrations are not captioned. In No 1 and No 2, there are 32 full-page illustrations, all captioned; from No 3 onwards, sixteen of the 32 illustrations are half-page illustrations, each – *except as stated above* – with its own textual caption.

How, then, finally to determine how many pages of reading matter there are in each book? This calculation is not straightforward, for it will not always do to subtract a figure (eg. $7 + 24 = 31$) from the number on the final page of the story. This is especially because there are eight books in which *some full-page illustrations, but not all*, appear on uncounted pages. In No 3 and then in No 6 to No 12 inclusive, some full-page illustrations, though not others, do not use up a page-number; at places in these books, the page-numbering resumes only when the writing does. To this present study, such pagination matters only because *four* of these eight books feature between them the highest number of speech-adverbs per 185-page book (79 in both No 3 and No 9) and the lowest number of speech-adverbs per 185-page book (46 in both No 7 and No 10).

No 1 September 1942

Five on a Treasure Island 23 chapters 185 pages Queer x **27**

Adverbs: suddenly x 11, with a giggle, joyfully x 2, in surprise x 8, crossly, in a scornful voice, generously, fiercely, hastily, obstinately, admiringly x 2, eagerly x 7, gruffly x 3, in his deep voice, gratefully, unexpectedly x 2, in dismay x 2, impatiently x 2, artfully, mockingly, in a high voice x 2, angrily x 2, defiantly/in a defiant tone x 2, loudly, indignantly x 3, sorrowfully, in excitement x 3, with a shiver, curiously, politely, in a low tone/voice x 4, wisely, solemnly, surprisingly, in a scared voice, in a determined voice, in panic, excitedly x 2, gloomily x 2, desperately, in a fury, in a cold voice, slowly x 2, in a whisper, anxiously, in a cheerful voice, thoughtfully, in a gentle voice, doubtfully, sleepily x 2

No 2 July 1943

Five Go Adventuring Again 17 chapters 185 pages Queer x **17**

Adverbs: gloomily x 3, politely/in a polite voice x 4, x 2, with a giggle, with a grin x 4, fiercely x 2, with a laugh x 2, suddenly x 7, in a puzzled voice, in a chilly tone, cautiously x 2, shortly x 2, anxiously x 2, in a loud voice, impatiently x 2, indignantly x 2, crossly, in rather a dry sort of voice, in a tight sort of voice, obstinately x 3, with a sigh x 2, happily, defiantly, in surprise x 6, in disgust, angrily x 4, in rather a sneering voice, in a scornful voice, with a laughing look, in a low tone of voice, in dismay x 2, excitedly, warmly x 2, in a low and angry voice, furiously, thankfully, with a smile, quickly, in rather a choky voice, in a shaky voice, truthfully x 2, smoothly, sternly, gently, irritably, slowly, cheerfully, joyfully, unexpectedly, in delight, eagerly x 2, in a thrilling whisper, doubtfully x 2, gladly, in a high voice, in desperation, in exasperation, gleefully

No 3 October 1944

Five Run Away Together

22 chapters 185 pages

Queer x 10

Adverbs: softly, excitedly x 3, cheerfully/in a loud and cheerful voice x 3, happily x 3, furiously/in a fury x 4, in a decided voice/decidedly x 2, admiringly/in great admiration x 3, joyfully/in joy x 3, severely, proudly, irritably, gloomily x 2, sulkily x 2, patiently x 3, in a flash, scornfully x 2, feelingly, indignantly x 5, restlessly, surprisingly, suddenly x 5, fiercely/in a very fierce voice x 2, threateningly, in a more ordinary voice, unexpectedly x 2, in a more polite voice/politely x 3, pleasantly x 2, in a low tone/voice x 2, coolly, in a rude voice, wildly, helplessly, in an exasperated voice, impatiently x 2, dangerously, angrily x 4, airily, in disgust x 2, anxiously, with a grin x 4, in an amazed voice/in amazement x 2, in a quiet voice, in a surly tone, in a tone of amiable surprise, in surprise/in a surprised voice x 5, with a break in her voice, quickly, rather soberly, contentedly, in astonishment, eagerly x 2, firmly x 3, thoughtfully x 4, in excitement x 2, in delight, with a laugh, sleepily, crossly, in alarm, in an urgent whisper, kindly, with a chuckle, regretfully, in a fierce whisper, in enormous surprise, in an injured tone, sullenly, grimly x 2, slowly, doubtfully, in a grumbling tone, amiably, in a startled voice, quickly, mysteriously x 2, urgently, in a cold voice, in a deep voice x 2, warningly

No 4 July 1945

Five Go to Smuggler's Top

22 chapters 185 pages

Queer x 39

Adverbs: in a low voice x 5, with a laugh, sleepily, with a groan, fiercely x 2, soothingly, cheerfully x 2, grimly x 2, suddenly x 15, sulkily, sharply, doubtfully x 4, defiantly, angrily x 2, proudly, airily, scornfully x 3, uncomfortably, in a deep voice, politely x 5, in a most injured tone x 2, impatiently x 3, decidedly, warmly, in amazement x 2, immediately, comfortingly, anxiously, in his monotonous voice x 2, thoughtfully x 4, crossly, loudly, indignantly, brightly, slowly and clearly, in her gentle voice x 2, in disgust x 2, in a curiously soft voice x 2, in despair, roughly, desperately x 3, obstinately, in a trembling voice, forlornly, gratefully, in astonishment, kindly, firmly, quietly, blankly, shortly x 2, in a horrid sarcastic voice, in wonder, sternly, amiably, in surprise x 2, in a funny kind of hissing voice, in a frightened voice, joyfully x 2, uneasily, happily, eagerly, very earnestly

No 5 November 1946

Five Go Off in a Caravan

23 chapters 185 pages

Queer x 9

Adverbs: defiantly, crossly, obstinately, scornfully/in a hard scornful voice x 6, eagerly x 4, earnestly, suddenly x 13, politely x 4, doubtfully x 4, with a grin, indignantly x 5, excitedly x 2, in a stern voice, in a low voice x 4, with admiration/admiringly x 2, sneeringly/with a sneer x 2, dismally x 2, in delight x 2, warmly, in an angry voice, in a curt voice, cheerfully, curtly, in such a fierce voice/in her fiercest voice/fiercely x 3, hastily, in a choking voice, in a small voice x 2, thoughtfully, half-heartedly, grimly x 2, in disappointment, promptly x 2, in a disagreeable voice, in a low urgent voice x 2, in a cold hard voice, with a feeble grin, in a brisk voice, anxiously, in alarm x 2, with a scowl, in a calm voice, truthfully, awkwardly, firmly, in horror, in panic, in a brutal voice, in a cruel voice, gloomily x 2, in fright, mockingly, threateningly, savagely, thankfully, gratefully

No 6 October 1947

Five on Kirrin Island Again

21 chapters 181 pages

Queer x 25

Adverbs: sulkily, scornfully x 2, with a grin x 6, in a teasing voice, politely x 3, suddenly x 12, in dismay x 2, sensibly x 3, with a sigh x 3, nervously, warningly, in delight, crossly x 2, cheerfully x 2, in surprise x 4, proudly x 2, reproachfully, a little peevishly, vaguely, in a sudden surprising fury, hurriedly x 2, indignantly x 2, in distress, gloomily, gravely, warmly x 3, hastily, amiably, in disgust x 2, with a laugh x 2, in excitement x 2, hopefully, sleepily, with a shudder x 2, generously, anxiously x 3, in alarm, thoughtfully x 2, in a pleading voice, in a trembling voice,

in a choky voice, solemnly, with a giggle, triumphantly x 2, in a small voice x 2, in great admiration, bitterly, eagerly x 2, in a low voice x 4, airily, soothingly, impatiently x 2, unexpectedly, softly, sternly, urgently, in a meek voice, thankfully, in a fright, roughly, in exasperation, fiercely, exultantly, dryly, obligingly, in an amiable voice

No 7 October 1948

Five Go Off to Camp

19 chapters 185 pages

Queer x 25

Adverbs: with a grin x 6, with a laugh x 4, with a giggle, cheerfully x 2, suddenly x 6, sleepily x 2, happily, impatiently x 2, soothingly, unhappily, comfortingly x 3, solemnly, anxiously x 4, scornfully x 3, proudly, in delight x 2, joyfully/in joy x 2, eagerly x 2, in a horrid voice, longingly, in horror, politely x 5, angrily x 2, lazily, with a chuckle, in a low voice x 5, in surprise x 2, in despair, in astonishment, in a rather trembly voice, cheekily, in disgust x 2, airily, amiably x 2, reproachfully, mildly and disbelievingly, unexpectedly, rather feebly, with interest, miserably, in disappointment, kindly, grandly, urgently, gently x 2, roughly, with a happy sigh

No 8 November 1949

Five Get into Trouble

21 chapters 181 pages (32)

Queer x 10

Adverbs: impatiently, in an innocent voice/innocently x 2, firmly x 2, politely x 3, sleepily x 2, approvingly, with a laugh, doubtfully x 3, drowsily, slyly, honestly, airily x 2, disbelievingly, with a grin x 6, scornfully/in a cool rather scornful voice x 5, surprisingly x 4, aggressively, fervently, eagerly, indignantly x 2, longingly, quickly, cheerily, angrily x 2, sullenly x 4, suddenly x 8, in a growling voice, in a calm voice, in surprise, in a small voice x 3, in a trembling voice, in alarm, in a stronger voice, in a grim voice/grimly x 3, earnestly, coldly, dolefully, hopefully, thankfully, in a scared voice, in a low voice x 4, in great relief, fiercely x 4, bluntly, roughly x 2, cheerfully x 2, anxiously, sneeringly, pleasantly, maliciously, in an irritatingly cheerful voice, beseechingly, in a threatening voice, warmly, coolly, rather gloomily, in sudden fear, in a muffled voice, gravely, sharply, in a loud and interested voice, softly, admiringly, slowly, thoughtfully, in a snarling voice, in sudden astonishment, furiously, truthfully, in a panic-stricken voice, fearfully, in a loud voice, in a most genial voice/genially x 2, awkwardly, happily

No 9 September 1950

Five Fall into Adventure

25 chapters 181 pages (32)

Queer x 13

Adverbs: joyfully, half-jealously, gratefully, regretfully, hurriedly x 2, firmly x 3, thankfully x 3, politely x 2, shortly x 3, in a curious sing-song voice x 3, half-admiringly, sulkily x 5, in glee, anxiously x 3, mournfully, in surprise, cheerfully x 2, with a laugh x 2, indignantly x 2, with a grin x 3, scornfully/with great scorn x 6, promptly, in a low voice x 4, in a loud voice/loudly x 2, awkwardly, angrily x 3, suddenly x 8, surprisingly x 2, in wonder x 2, vaguely x 2, in rather a subdued voice, gravely, in astonishment x 2, kindly/in a kind voice x 3, in disappointment, sharply x 2, fiercely x 2, wearily, feebly, in rather a shaky voice, sternly, in a rage, grimly, furiously/in a fury x 2, miserably, gently, bitterly, hastily, helplessly x 2, curiously, bluntly, impatiently x 3, obstinately x 2, in alarm, rudely, uncertainly, with a sudden gulp, in a small voice, disapprovingly, eagerly, with her usual irritating vagueness, urgently x 2, with a groan, rapidly, earnestly, in a panic, stolidly, contemptuously, in a dangerous voice, insolently, in a suddenly cold voice, brightly roughly x 2, with a shiver, with the utmost conviction, with a sigh, happily, savagely

No 10 September 1951

Five on a Hike Together

22 chapters 185 pages (32)

Queer x 11

Adverbs: impatiently, indignantly x 3, joyfully, in alarm, anxiously, sulkily, mournfully x 2, gratefully, dismally, with a shiver, cheerfully x 4, thankfully x 2, in rather a trembling voice x 2, angrily x 2, firmly x 2, in surprise, suspiciously, politely x 2, scornfully x 2, in a sarcastic voice, in a very grown-up manner, in disgust, severely, regretfully, with a giggle, soberly x 2,

solemnly, with a laugh x 3, with a grin x 2, thoughtfully, comfortingly, sleepily, roughly, loudly, ruefully, crossly, doubtfully, suddenly x 4, fiercely x 2, with a sigh of relief, in a pleased voice, triumphantly, in a small voice, in awe, in horror, in dismay

No 11 September 1952

Five Have a Wonderful Time 23 chapters 183 pages (32) Queer x 8

Adverbs: fiercely x 4, sulkily, generously x 2, happily, scornfully x 2, with a shudder, with a laugh, eagerly x 2, in surprise x 2, with a grin x 8, firmly x 5, anxiously, airily, reproachfully x 2, with a giggle, in alarm, in delight, indignantly x 2, suddenly x 4, uncomfortably, politely/in his politest tones x 5, stiffly, gruffly, shortly x 2, angrily x 5, in a very surly voice, with a chuckle, with a yawn, heartily, patiently x 3, warningly, doubtfully, in a low voice x 2, cheerily, lazily, crossly x 2, with much determination, proudly, with great admiration, casually and most unexpectedly, obstinately, in disappointment, hastily, earnestly, solemnly, in a fierce whisper, softly, quietly, furiously, thankfully, beseechingly, in a panic, in despair, in amazement, in a perfectly ordinary voice, grimly, loudly

No 12 September 1953

Five Go Down to the Sea 19 chapters 180 pages (32) Queer x 10

Adverbs: firmly/in a firm voice x 2, doubtfully, earnestly x 2, solemnly x 4, sternly, hurriedly, in disgust x 2, softly, imperiously, suddenly x 9, cheerfully, fearfully, in delight, indignantly x 2, invitingly, proudly x 2, quickly, in his slow Cornish voice x 2, obstinately, shortly x 3, reluctantly, truthfully, wonderingly, with a sigh, in amazement, curiously, reproachfully, regretfully, urgently x 2, scoldingly, timidly, in an awed voice/in awe x 2, soberly x 2, sharply x 2, firmly, grimly x 2, gratefully, in alarm, desperately, pleadingly, scornfully x 2, in excitement, uneasily, piercingly, fiercely, in surprise, gloomily, hastily, in a low voice x 2, anxiously, surprisingly, warningly, in a pleased voice, with a grin, awkwardly x 2, questioningly, gruffly, thoughtfully, stubbornly, modestly, in an astonished voice

No 13 July 1954

Five Go to Mystery Moor 21 chapters 174 pages (16) Queer x 12

Adverbs: fiercely, with a laugh x 6, pityingly, curtly x 2, stiffly, rudely, indignantly x 2, approvingly, in a low voice x 3, soberly, with a grin x 5, innocently/in an innocent voice x 2, in disgust, happily, in a surly tone, eagerly x 3, longingly, sarcastically, sleepily, scornfully x 3, curiously x 2, joyfully x 2, boldly, comfortably, sulkily, suddenly x 5, anxiously x 3, proudly, warningly, solemnly x 2, with a shiver, impatiently, unpleasantly, sourly, in a cross voice, earnestly, ungratefully, desperately x 2, in delight x 2, doubtfully, contentedly, in surprise, in dismay, hastily x 2, in a harsh voice, thankfully x 2, in awe, loudly x 2, in despair, fearfully x 2, quietly, breathlessly, surprisingly, wildly, in fright, in a panic x 3, suspiciously, truthfully, with a gulp, firmly x 2, urgently x 2, in amazement, in great astonishment

No 14 July 1955

Five Have Plenty of Fun 22 chapters 174 pages (32) Queer x 5

Adverbs: lazily, solemnly, in dismay, hurriedly x 2, with a giggle x 2, urgently x 3, approvingly, annoyingly, in disgust/in a tone of great disgust x 2, helpfully, in a low tone/voice x 4, obligingly, with a small smile, obstinately x 2, amiably, with a grin x 3, with a laugh x 3, with one last sniff, warningly x 3, in surprise x 4, in a fierce voice/fiercely x 2, sleepily x 4, proudly x 2, gruffly, shortly, patiently x 2, automatically, in delight x 3, hastily, firmly x 2, almost in tears x 3, slyly, admiringly/in admiration x 2, unkindly, impatiently x 3, mournfully, in amazement x 3, obediently, suddenly x 10, fervently, in a most peremptory manner, in a whisper x 2, profoundly, uneasily, furiously, soberly x 2, in sudden panic, wonderingly, comfortingly, ponderously, eagerly x 3, sulkily, scornfully, cautiously, loudly, in deep disappointment, in alarm, darkly, desperately, thankfully, gladly and excitedly, with an enormous yawn, rather stiffly, stolidly

No 15 July 1956

Five on a Secret Trail 20 chapters 173 pages (16) Queer x 13

Adverbs: with tears in her voice, whole-heartedly, in alarm, in an angry voice/angrily x 3, earnestly, in dismay, in a small voice x 2, touchily, in surprise, pityingly, firmly x 2, sleepily x 4, hurriedly x 2, indignantly, loudly, rudely, sarcastically, impatiently, in a scared whisper, crossly, scornfully x 2, in a shaky voice/shakily x 2, quickly, in sudden delight, with a grin x 2, contentedly, curiously, suddenly x 4, defiantly, admiringly, promptly, dolefully, unexpectedly, solemnly, politely, grimly, in astonishment, in deep disappointment x 3, unkindly, eagerly x 2, gently, in wonder, fervently, thoughtfully, doubtfully, warningly, with a chuckle, mildly, exultantly

No 16 July 1957

Five Go to Billycock Hill 21 chapters 171 pages Queer x 12

Adverbs: in his deepest voice, with a laugh x 2, impatiently x 2, cheerfully, slyly, gratefully x 2, promptly x 4, in a business-like way, solemnly x 3, sternly, coldly x 3, with a grin x 3, slowly, in a low voice x 3, curiously, in an awed voice, in horror, hastily, longingly, sulkily, eagerly x 2, furiously, in dismay, in disgust, in his clear pleasant voice, hopefully, severely, hurriedly, proudly, seriously x 3, in delight, with a twinkle, affectionately, with a giggle, sleepily, suddenly x 3, in a queer croaking voice, dismally, forlornly, kindly/in a kind voice x 2, patiently, fiercely, in a most surprised voice, helplessly, gravely, uneasily, in too loud a voice, in a sneering voice, grimly, stoutly, with sudden excitement, apologetically, more graciously, soberly, in a breathless voice, in wonder

No 17 July 1958

Five Get into a Fix 22 chapters 173 pages (32) Queer x 30

Adverbs: solemnly x 4, anxiously x 4, gravely x 2, eagerly x 3, firmly, in a low voice x 4, in a surprised voice/in surprise x 3, shortly, approvingly, enquiringly, loudly and clearly, with a laugh x 2, stubbornly, ungraciously, obligingly, longingly x 2, suddenly x 5, with another yawn, in wonder, in a high clear voice, proudly x 2, thankfully x 3, determinedly, soothingly, with a giggle, in dismay, in his grown-up voice, amiably, scornfully, hopefully x 2, in disappointment, aggravatingly, sleepily, in [a] lilting Welsh voice x 2, teasingly, curiously, slyly, questioningly, in his deep voice x 2, sensibly, impatiently, desperately, in disgust, gently, imperiously, in a panic x 2, sternly x 2, in a trembling voice, sneeringly, sharply, comfortably, gratefully, politely

No 18 July 1960

Five on Finniston Farm 19 chapters 182 pages (32) Queer x 3

Adverbs: solemnly, in surprise x 2, curiously, impatiently, sharply, in amazement x 2, stiffly, fiercely x 5, hastily, bluntly, in a gentle voice/gently x 3, softly, with a groan, in an icy voice, in a low voice x 3, cheerfully, grimly x 3, with a grin, in a half-kind half-fierce voice, sulkily x 2, in a thankful voice, warningly, angrily x 3, anxiously x 4, in a most determined voice, in such a sugary voice, in a small voice, innocently, with much satisfaction, drily, in pleasure, politely, indignantly, triumphantly x 2, sadly, with such dignity, in a voice trembling with anger, in such a stern voice, in an aggrieved tone, shortly, in a whiny voice, in excitement/excitedly/in the same excited voice x 5, with a laugh, proudly, surprisingly x 2, enthusiastically, suddenly x 3, disapprovingly, in a furious voice, mournfully, crossly, with a shout of laughter, jubilantly, with a chuckle, soberly, gratefully, eagerly, in astonishment, in great alarm, in a whisper, in awe, quickly, in his usual jaunty manner, in a business-like voice, sneeringly, quietly, pompously, in a sudden panic

No 19 July 1961

Five Go to Demon's Rocks 22 chapters 182 pages (32) Queer x 5

Adverbs: crossly x 2, firmly x 2, in astonishment, angrily, fiercely x 3, in horror, rudely x 2, sorrowfully, indignantly x 5, suddenly x 6, with a grin x 6, disbelievingly x 2, most surprisingly, politely x 2, sternly x 2, joyfully x 3, eagerly, smartly, slyly, apologetically, impatiently x 2, in tones of great astonishment, in a happy voice, heartily, curiously, teasingly, rather jealously, proudly x 2, rather seriously, with a laugh x 3, sleepily x 2, defiantly, in surprise x 2, grimly, sullenly, solemnly, in disgust, comfortingly, in rather a shaky voice, in his most grown-up voice, gloomily, in amazement, promptly, in alarm, in anger, soberly, in a small voice, jubilantly, in awe, gravely

No 20 July 1962

Five Have a Mystery to Solve 19 chapters 173 pages Queer x 12

Adverbs: with a grin x 3, obstinately, indignantly, in surprise x 3, defiantly, seriously, happily, cheerfully x 2, desperately x 2, fiercely/in a very fierce voice x 3, appreciatively, irritatingly, anxiously x 3, in alarm, suddenly x 5, shortly, sleepily x 2, in a shocked voice, in a trembling voice, in a decided voice, with a groan, in a low voice x 4, in delight, joyfully x 2, with a laugh, angrily x 2, fearfully, urgently, truthfully, thankfully x 2, in a panic, rather sternly, with a chuckle, almost in a whisper, in a peculiar whisper, hopefully, bluntly, grumpily, soberly, softly, scornfully,

No 21 July 1963

Five Are Together Again 17 chapters 173 pages Queer x 13

Adverbs: seriously, with a grin x 3, obstinately, with a chuckle x 2, hopefully, in alarm, cheerfully, dolefully, in a rather croaky voice, mournfully/in a mournful voice x 2, gratefully, in real delight, in a low voice, crossly x 3, politely x 2, in despair, sullenly, firmly x 2, briskly x 2, in dismay, warily, in a deep-down voice/in his deep voice x 2, angrily x 2, good-temperedly, in a horrified voice, disbelievingly x 3, in a most decided voice, sulkily x 2, with great interest, triumphantly x 2, hastily, lazily, in horror, truthfully, heartily, fiercely/in a fierce voice x 2, eagerly, anxiously x 2, gleefully, suddenly x 2, proudly x 2, full of surprise/in surprise x 2, in his deep foreign-sounding voice x 2, almost in tears, in a tone of such disgust, doubtfully x 2, with a sigh, impatiently, modestly, warningly, in amazement, astonishingly meekly, quietly, in his stately voice, furiously, with a regretful sigh

APPENDIX B

Chapter-headings

With her symmetrical titles for these 21 books, Enid Blyton undoubtedly introduces a locution to the language, establishing its cadence – Five Go ... x 8/Five on ... x 5/Five Have ... x 3, Five Get ... x 2 – in every reader's ear.

For each and every chapter, of each and every book, Enid Blyton also comes up resolutely with a heading/a title. In this enterprise, her successes [= Good titles] are mixed with lame and lamentable failures.

To be fair, there are numerous examples of chapter-headings which show that Blyton is not entirely without flair for this device: for instance, there are five chapters in 21 Famous Five books entitled *In The Middle of the Night*. Dramatic use of prepositional phrases and emphatic nouns (with or without exclamation-mark) are always within her range: wherever the Five's activity is nocturnal, she is completely at ease.

Frequently, an exclamation-mark will indicate Enid Blyton's own awareness that inspiration has failed her; across her Contents pages, this punctuation-mark is ubiquitous, being used – as it is – to oxygenate every vacuous heading, every title for which she can think of nothing

better. Whenever Blyton is at a loss, she resorts typically to a present participle adjective: more often than not, 'exciting'. Readers will have their own favourite worst titles: for sheer banality, I consider that *Really Very Thrilling* takes some beating! Less typical contenders certainly include *Several Things Happen*, *Quite a lot happens* and *Everything Okay*.

In No 18 ***Five on Finniston Farm***, the adjective 'queer' is used only three times, the record low number. This is because in this book (far more than in others) there has been a studious attempt to avoid the q-word – even if the impulse to use it remains, only thinly concealed by the substitute-synonyms 'curious', 'odd', 'strange' and 'weird'. Something similar occurs across Blyton's chapter-headings:

No 1 Five on a Treasure Island

Good titles: 6 What the Storm Did, 8 Exploring the Wreck, 13 Down in the Dungeons

Queer titles: 2 The Strange Cousin, 3 A Queer Story – and a New Friend

Failed titles: 4 An Exciting Afternoon, 10 An Astonishing Offer, 12 Exciting Discoveries

No 2 Five Go Adventuring Again

Good titles: 3 The New Tutor, 8 What Happened on Christmas Night, 11 Stolen Papers

Queer titles: None

Failed titles: 4 An Exciting Discovery, 15 An Exciting Journey and Hunt

No 3 Five Run Away Together

Good titles: 2 The Stick Family, 5 In the Middle of the Night, 11 On the Old Wreck,
12 The Cave in the Cliff, 14 Disturbance in the Night, 19 A Scream in the Night

Queer titles: None

Failed titles: 4 A Few Little Upsets, 9 An Exciting Night

No 4 Five Go to Smuggler's Top

Good titles: 2 A Shock in the Night, 4 Smuggler's Top, 5 Sooty Lenoir,
7 The Hidden Pit, 21 A Journey through the Hill

Queer titles: 14 A Very Puzzling Thing, 15 Strange Happenings, 18 Curious Discoveries,
17 More and More Puzzling

Failed titles: 8 An Exciting Walk, 11 George Is Worried, 22 Things Come Right At Last

No 5 Five Go Off in a Caravan

Good titles: 3 The Caravans Arrive, 5 The Way to Merran Lake, 8 Up in the Hills,
11 Fun at the Circus Camp, 18 Inside the Hill, 19 Prisoners Underground

Queer titles: 10 A Curious Change of Mind

Failed titles: 14 A Very Good Hiding-Place, 15 Several Things Happen,
16 A Surprising Discovery, 20 More Excitement

No 6 Five on Kirrin Island Again

Good titles: 3 Off to Kirrin Island, 6 Up on the Cliff, 8 Down in the Quarry,
12 The Old Map Again, 15 In the Middle of the Night,
16 Down to the Caves, 18 Half-past Four in the Morning

Queer titles: None

Failed titles: 10 A Surprising Signal, 20 Everything Boils Up!

No 7 Five Go Off to Camp

Good titles: 2 Up on the Moor, 4 Spook-Trains, 7 Mr Andrews Comes Home,
9 Night Visitor, 11 Mostly about Jock, 16 In the Tunnel Again

Queer titles: None

Failed titles: 13 A Thrilling Plan, 17 An Amazing Find

No 8 Five Get into Trouble

Good titles: 2 Away On Their Own, 9 Moonlight Adventure, 20 The Secret Room

Queer titles: 6 Odd Happenings, 7 Richard Tells a Queer Tale, 13 Strange Secret

Failed titles: 3 A Lovely Day – and a Lovely Night, 21 A Very Exciting Finish!

No 9 Five Fall into Adventure

Good titles: 3 Face at the Window, 5 Ragamuffin Jo, 7 Policemen in the House,
9 Sid's Wonderful Evening, 14 Simmy's Caravan, 16 Visitor in the Night

Queer titles: None

Failed titles: 18 Things Begin to Happen, 19 Jo Is Very Surprising,
20 The Adventure Boils Up!, 21 A Few Surprises,
24 A Grand Surprise, 25 Everything Okay

No 10 Five on a Hike Together

Good titles: 2 Setting Off, 3 Across the Countryside, 6 In the Middle of the Night,
13 A Night in the Cellar, 16 Out on the Raft, 20 In the Moonlight

Queer titles: None

Failed titles: 4 George Is Worried, 18 A Very Exciting Time,
19 Maggie and Dick are Annoyed, 22 An Exciting Finish

No 11 Five Have a Wonderful Time

Good titles: 4 The Fair-Folk Arrive, 13 Off to the Castle, 14 Faynights Castle,
16 Secret Ways, 19 Jo Joins In, 21 In the Tower Room

Queer titles: 11 A Very Strange Thing

Failed titles: 3 A Pleasant Morning, 9 A Great Surprise, 15 An Interesting Day,
17 Excitements and Shocks, 20 A Lot of Excitement

No 12 Five Go Down to the Sea

Good titles: 2 Tremannon Farm, 7 Out in the Night, 9 The Light in the Tower,
13 In the Wreckers' Tower, 14 The Secret Passage,
16 Wreckers' Way, 19 Mostly about Clopper

Queer titles: 6 A Queer Tale

Failed titles: None

No 13 Five Go to Mystery Moor

Good titles: 1 At the Stables, 2 Julian, Dick – and Henry! 3 Sniffer,
9 The Blacksmith Tells a Tale, 12 The Little Railway,
13 A Noise in the Night, 16 The Terrible Mist, 20 Excitement in the Morning

Queer titles: None

Failed titles: 6 A Grand Day, 11 A Nice Little Plan, 15 A Startling Night

No 14 Five Have Plenty of Fun

Good titles: 2 A Visitor in the Night, 4 Berta, 11 On Kirrin Island Again,
15 Discoveries in the Wood, 16 Jo! 17 To Gringo's Fair

Queer titles: 10 A Puzzling Thing, 12 Very Suspicious

Failed titles: 6 A Few Upsets, 19 An Exciting Plan, 20 A Thrilling Time,
21 Most Unexpected!

No 15 Five on a Secret Trail

Good titles: 4 That Night, 6 Storm in the Night, 13 On Watch in the Cottage,
16 The Secret Way, 18 The Way Out

Queer titles: 7 Queer Happenings

Failed titles: 11 Interesting Discoveries – and a Plan, 12 A Good Hiding-Place,
17 Full of Surprises

No 16 Five Go to Billycock Hill

Good titles: 2 Off to Billycock Hill, 3 Billycock Farm, 6 The Butterfly Farm,
9 Cousin Jeff, 11 A stormy night, 12 What Happened in Billycock Caves,
16 Looking through windows

Queer titles: 20 A peculiar message

Failed titles: 8 A spot of trouble, 17 Quite a lot happens, 21 An exciting finish

No 17 Five Get into a Fix

Good titles: 2 Off to Magga Glen, 4 In the Old Farmhouse
10 In the Middle of the Night, 12 Out on the Hills,
18 Inside Old Towers, 20 In the Heart of the Hill

Queer titles: 9 A Strange Tale, 11 Strange Happenings

Failed titles: 19 A Lot of Excitement, 21 An Astounding Thing

No 18 Five on Finniston Farm

Good titles: 2 Finniston Farm, 4 Junior! 7 The Twins Change their Minds

Queer titles: None

Failed titles: 6 A Little Excitement For Breakfast! 9 A Very Interesting Tale!
10 Quite A Bit Of Shouting!, 11 A Most Exciting Talk, 12 Really Very Thrilling

No 19 Five Go to Demon's Rocks

Good titles: 5 Tinker's Light-House, 9 Inside the Light-House, 11 Jeremiah Boogle,
12 Jeremiah's Tale, 16 Down in the Caves

Queer titles: None

Failed titles: 2 A Little Excitement, 13 A Pleasant Morning – and a Shock!
18 Back in the Lighthouse – and an Exciting Talk! 21 A Wonderful Idea

No 20 Five Have a Mystery to Solve

Good titles: 3 The Cottage on the Hill, 8 Mostly about Wilfrid,
9 Off to Whispering Island, 17 In the Treasure Chamber

Queer titles: 11 A Strange Discovery, 16 A Queer Journey Underground!

Failed titles: 15 Julian Has an Exciting Plan! 18 A Most Exciting Time!

No 21 Five Are Together Again

Good titles: 5 The Travelling Circus, 11 In the Dark of the Night, 16 Night on Kirrin Island

Queer titles: None

Failed titles: 4 Jenny has a very good idea, 6 Getting ready for camping out,
9 A wonderful evening, 13 Quite a lot of plans!

APPENDIX C Nomenclature

Nomenclature in Enid Blyton is exceptionally unimaginative: for instance, Mrs Janes*/Mrs Jones is not a typographical error. Blyton claims in a letter of 1953 (to Scottish psychologist Peter McKellar) to have turned for her surnames to the telephone directory: if so, then it seems usually to have fallen open at **J**: eg. Janes, Jones, Johns, Johnson x 3, Jackson, Jenkins. *Incredibly, there is an altogether different Mrs Janes who lives 'up the lane' to Kirrin Cottage (No 15 *Five on a Secret Trail*, Chapter 1).

Most certainly, **J** is her favourite letter for first names: whilst a leading character is Julian, supporting characters are the family cook Joanna/later Joan, Jake x 2, Jim x 3, Jennifer, James x 3, Jock, Jo, Jan/Yan, Joseph, Jekky, Jet, Jess, Jeff, Janie, Jamie, Junior, Jem, Jeremiah, Jacob, Jenny, Jeremy.

In *both* No 6 *and* No 7, the name of a minor villain (a 'ruffian') is Peters; in No 10, George and Anne's house-mistress is Miss Peters; in No 21, the porter on Kirrin Station *also* is called Peters! The names of the major villains even rhyme: Mr Curton (in No 6) with Mr Perton (in No 8).

In both No 9 and No 12, there is a character called Sid. In No 14, the villainous gypsy is Gringo; in No 16, the cantankerous lepidopterist is Mr Gringle.

In No 15, Guy Lawdler's twin-brother is called Harry; in No 18, Harriet Finniston's twin-brother is called Harry.

In No 16, Julian and Dick's school friend is Toby Thomas; in No 17, the villain is Llewellyn Thomas.

In No 18, the brash American is Mr Henning; in No 19 and No 21, Uncle Quentin's fellow scientist is Professor Hayling.

Ultimately and most famously, there is the name by which Blyton *chooses* to identify George's mother: to George's three cousins, she is not Auntie Frances, but of course Aunt Fanny. Should we be so surprised by the straight-faced innocence of this world: after all, in *Swallows and Amazons*, published in 1930, Arthur Ransome, in a children's adventure story of which Enid Blyton was well aware, chooses to name one of the Walkers' daughters Titty? Perhaps, it is only with the advent of Kenneth Horne's radio comedies in the 1960s that we begin to snigger: sadly, the record for *Round the Horne* does not confirm where Hugh Paddick went for the name of his Polari-speaking character; in view of the possible association, we can only be thankful that, for his character, Kenneth Williams preferred 'Sandy' to the brotherly alternative.

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