

# When the rain bird sings

It was Sunday and the sky was just a little greyer than usual. A light, dusty wind stirred up the papers and dry leaves in the street, to find a shady corner under the babul trees, where it drove them around in furious circles as Sibi and Monu watched from the last house on the street. The road was deserted. Even the ice cream man and the cornsellers were not around.

Sibi was most concerned about the rain. It always rained on her birthday, but this year there was no sign of it and now a week later there wasn't even a drizzle. Every day, she returned hot and dusty from the playground only to be hurried into the bath and then pulled out unceremoniously by her mother, for a snack and cold milk.

She could wait no longer. Running inside, she found her mother trying

**SHUBASHREE**  
**Sibi was worried that the rains had not come. Then her mother told her about the rain bird...**

to carve a bird from wax. She had already worked out the crude form and was trying to sculpt the shape of the wings in intricate detail. Sibi said, "Ma, when is it going to rain? It didn't rain on my birthday."

"Oh! Didn't you know? The rain bird has not come as yet. That's why."

"What's a rainbird? Does it bring rain? I have never seen it."

"Yes, of course. Just in July, when the clouds are expected, the rain bird comes and sings its sweet song from the top of the Babul tree. And within a day or two the clouds come over, dark and fleecy, the cool breeze takes over and there is rain,

everywhere. Have you not seen the bird? It is red in colour. It has golden yellow feather tips and a long tail. It has a feathery white crest on its head and there are two white spots on its cheeks. It has a cry like that of a koel, and sings only two songs a season. If you hear it singing in the rain and make a wish, it is sure to come true."

Sibi was impressed. "Are you making a rain bird?"

"Hmmm," said her mother.

In the evening the sky had turned pinkish. Sibi sat on the steps, watching Monu swing on the metal gate. Then a light cool breeze blew, the air turned chilly and there was

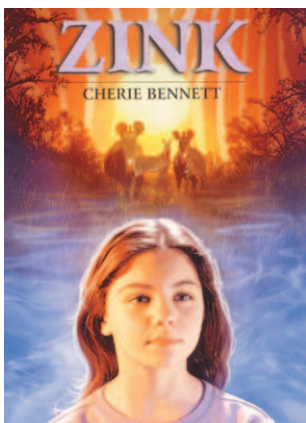
the smell of rain. Black clouds rolled over and covered the last light of the sun. At that moment a sweet sound of bird song filled the air. Looking around, Sibi spotted a boat-shaped black bird with white patches and a long black tail, with a crest on its head perched on the wall. Its feathers ruffled in the wind. Then the bird flew away.

Sibi ran out and tried to follow the bird. She was soon among the trees. She heard the song of the bird again and looked intently. And there it was, on the telephone cable. And that was not the only one, there was another on the mango tree, and two others on the gulmohar, and four on the babul tree. One bird called out to Sibi and as she gazed at it, the first raindrops fell. Sibi thought furiously what to wish for. ☺



K.G.Rangarajan.

## Bookmarks



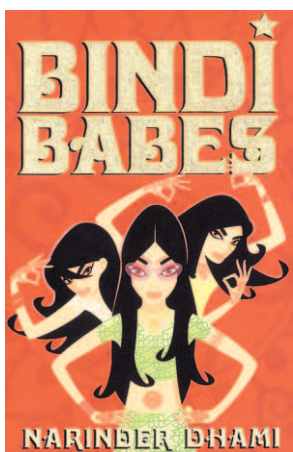
**ZINK**  
**ISBN :** 0440228107  
**Price:** 194.70  
**Author:** Cherie Bennet  
**Publisher:** Dell  
**Rating:** \*\*\*\*+  
**Age Group:** 10+  
**Review by:** Vinaya  
**Age:** 14

A terrible and unexpected thing happens to a young girl: she finds she is afflicted by cancer. Laid up in hospital, Becky is visited by some zebras from the Serengeti National Park. The zebras are invisible to others and befriend Becky and tell the story of Zink, a polka-dotted zebra. Becky begins to think about Zink. When she does so, her

imagination soars and she forgets about her illness. She then makes friends with Shlep, a monkey who is convinced he is a zebra.

*Zink* is written in very simple language and the wildly imaginative stories transports the readers to the wild regions of Africa. It is a compelling page-turner and is recommended for the straightforward and unfussy manner in which the story unfolds. The illustrations in this book are by children afflicted with cancer, which makes the reader empathize with those who suffer from the disease. ☺

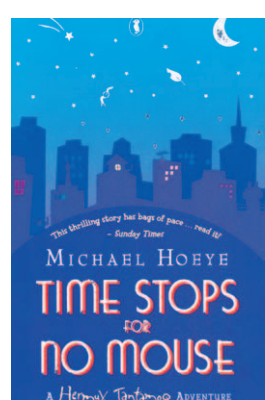
Amber, Geena and Jazz live with their father in the United Kingdom. The three girls are the most popular kids in their school, with both the teachers and students. And at home, their father pampers them. All goes well for them, until one day when disaster strikes the family, in the form of a nosy Indian auntie-ji, who comes to live with them. The girls don't like her at all, and do their best to get rid of her. This is followed by a series of hilarious attempts to pack her off to India, as soon as possible. The author of the smash-hit "Bend It Like Beckham" has written this book. But, in this story, the girls don't learn how to make *aloo gobi* or have any intention of bending the ball like Beckham. The fact that there are too many attempts to get rid of the poor aunt can be overlooked, because the story itself is written in such a way that you won't mind. The book starts off with



**BINDI BABES**  
**ISBN:** 0440865123  
**Price:** 173.95  
**Author:** Narinder Dhani  
**Publisher:** Corgi Yearling  
**Rating:** \*\*\*\*  
**Age Group:** 13+  
**Review by:** Kritiv  
**Age:** 13

a funny flashback (where Amber's friend, Kim, gets stuck up a ladder). This makes you want to continue reading *Bindi Babes*. Its all written in simple English, with some corny jokes, and touching moments — just like a Bollywood movie. The best part is, there are no downsides about the story!

**CAUTION:** Read the book when you're in a happy mood. It's not like a timeless classic, which can be read any time. ☺



**TIME STOPS FOR NO MOUSE**  
**ISBN:** 0141315121  
**Price:** 233.20  
**Author:** Michael Hoeye  
**Publisher:** Puffin Books  
**Rating :** \*\*\*\*  
**Age Group:** 9 to 14  
**Review by:** Megna Sundar  
**Age:** 10

This book is about a mouse named Hermux Tantamoq, a watchmaker. His life was like that of any other mouse until one day,

Linka Perflinger came dashing into his watch repair shop. She had a very beautiful wristwatch that had been badly treated. She was in a hurry and

told Hermux to fix the watch by the next morning. Hermux thought that she looked like a bright and cheerful mouse and he agreed. The next day, to Hermux's surprise, she did not turn up. Hermux got worried. After a week, Hermux thought that something dreadful must have happened to her. So he set off on a long adventure to find out what had happened to Linka Perflinger. This book is about his adventures. The characters are well described. ☺

Mail your responses to [landmarkkidsreview@yahoo.co.in](mailto:landmarkkidsreview@yahoo.co.in)  
Books/reviews courtesy: Landmark

**A collection of stories all about girls...**

You run home from school. Your mother opens the door. But there's two of her — one a smiling cuddly mum, other, a tired worn out one. Which one is the real one? Imagine facing up to the school bully — and seeing double. But wait. This is not your usual scowling bully. Instead it's a person who looks unhappy. That's what happened to Neeti, the heroine of "A Double Vision" in *Not Just Girls* by Deepa Agarwal. This story subtly pushes home the

point that all is not as it appears.

How often do we still hear the patronising statement "she's just a girl". This set of seven short stories features girls like Radha who refuse to deliver drugs for a local goon, Madhuli whose presence of mind saves her grandmother... proving that girls cannot be dismissed so easily.

"Goat bells" is a straightforward adventure story — though one that

## Sugar and spice

R. KRITHIKA



begins slowly. "Fire" is the best of the lot — a little tale of lies, deceit and forgiveness with a realistic end. "Never talk to Strangers" is one that today's latch key children should read. How do you differentiate between strangers and friends unless you talk to them?

The stories flow easily in the language of today's youngsters. The text font used is big and easy on the eye. Perhaps a few more sketches (one per story) would have helped. The book is affordable and a decent read. ☺

**Not Just Girls,** Deepa Agarwal, Rupa & Co., Rs. 70.

## Artistic masterpiece



The Sun temple at Konark.

Indian temples are a storehouse of Indian art. Sculptures and paintings form an essential part of temple architecture. In some temples, the architecture is so unique that besides being an engineering marvel, it is as well an artistic masterpiece.

The Konark temple in Orissa is dedicated to the Sun God. *Kona* means corner and *arka* means Sun. The temple is situated in the north-eastern corner of Puri. The temple is in the form of a chariot with the Sun God as the Charioteer. There are 12 pairs of wheels drawn by seven horses. The 12 pairs represent the months of a year, and the seven horses carved in relief on the staircase sides represent the days of the week. The temple is also famous for its sculptures representing the daily life of warriors, animals and lovers.

There are three images of the Sun God, which catch the rays of the sun at dawn, noon and dusk. The temple built by King Narsimhadeva I, is considered a world heritage by the U.N.

Generally Indian temples can be categorised under three styles — Nagara style or North Indian style, the Deccan or Central style and the Dravidian or South Indian style. While the fundamental rules for placing the god in the *sanctum sanctorum* (*garba griha*) remain common, there are differences in the structures.



**Indian temples are not only engineering marvels but also storehouses of art.**

The towers above the temple called *shikara*, in the Nagara style are conical structures. The Dravidian style has towers (*vimanas* or *gopurams*) resembling rectangular step pyramid. There are various sculptures on the steps, each dedicated to a deity.

The Brihadeeswara temple in Thanjavur, constructed by the King Raja Raja Chola, follows the Dravidian style. The interesting aspect of this temple is its *vimana*, over the sanctum sanctorum. Unlike other temples in the south, the *vimana* of the Brihadeeswara temple is very tall. It is also placed in such a way that the shadow of the monolithic cupola (dome made from a single big stone) at the top doesn't fall on the ground. Sculptures depicting the wedding of Goddess Parvathi and beautiful paintings adorn the temple walls. The main deity of

Shiva is represented by a huge stone lingam.

The Hoysaleswara temple in Halebid, Karnataka, is an example of the Deccan style, built by the minister of the Hoysala King Vishnuvardhan. The temple is built for Shiva but its architecture is different from the Northern and the Dravidian styles. The temple has a horizontal star-shaped structure and has a flat roof without any towers or *shikaras* rising above the sanctum sanctorum or the entrance. Well-chiselled stone sculptures cover the interior and exterior of the temple. There are many sites in India, where beautiful sculptures are carved from hard rock, like the Elephanta caves near Mumbai. These are famous for its sculpture of 'Maheshamurti' — the three headed Shiva, each showing a different aspect of the God — feminine, angry and meditative. The Kailasa temple at the Ellora caves, Maharashtra, is also dedicated to Shiva. Following the Dravidian style, the cave temple has freestanding sculptures of elephants, gods, pillars and towers — all carved out of a hill representing the Kailasa, the abode of Shiva.

Many of these stand testimony to the high level of art that existed in bygone eras. ☺

MALA MAHESH