

## THE WEEK IN BOOKS

### Poetry pips Angry Birds; publishers woo librarians; and Scorsese's eclectic literary tastes


 So rare are the occasions when poetry tops a bestseller list that it would be a missed opportunity not to congratulate the iF Poems app, which found itself - however briefly - outselling Angry Birds on iPhone and iPad on its launch last week. Essentially an anthology of verse for children, the app is the brainchild of the actor Allie Esiri and former journalist Rachel Kelly, and it topped the paid-for charts by being downloaded more than 2,000 times in a single day. The app contains 230 classic poems, illustrated by Natasha Law, that are infinitely slice-and-diceable into age appropriateness, subject matter - friendship poems, war poems, and so on - or poetic form. All are jauntily read by Helena Bonham Carter (*pictured*) and Bill Nighy and are accompanied by some quirky biographical sketches - John Clare: "There was never enough to eat when he was young, which may have been the reason that he was only 5ft tall." The app also allows you to record and email your own reading of a poem. "We wanted to include classics that have already been passed down the generations and that a parent might want their children to hear," Esiri says.

"Our only other criterion was that they shouldn't be boring, so no 'Hiawatha'."

The app will be periodically updated with new material - Valentine's Day is the next target and then Remembrance Sunday. By which time, as is sometimes the circular way of these things, the app will have become a book. Canon-gate will publish a paper version in time for National Poetry Day 2012. And it's

not only the children of iPhone-owning parents who benefit. Bonham Carter is a Save the Children Fund ambassador, and 10 per cent of all proceeds (the app costs £1.99 on iPhone, £2.99 on iPad) will go to the charity.

**Nicholas Wroe**

 There was a concerted love-in between librarians and the book trade this week at an event held at Waterstone's in Piccadilly by the Reading Agency charity. Publishers want to do more to support libraries in challenging times, while Waterstone's managing director, James Daunt, has called the benefit of libraries "inestimable" and termed it a "point of national scandal" that they should be imperilled.

Now the Reading Agency plans to get everyone working together in what

#### On the website

● Novelists Justin Cartwright and Alex Preston visit the podcast to discuss literary responses to the financial crisis, and Barry Unsworth talks about an earlier era of capitalism in *The Quality of Mercy*.

● Young readers can mark the Christmas countdown with our interactive children's books advent calendar

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