



Stroud publisher **Real Reads** is flourishing, in spite of doom and gloom within the publishing industry. Established in 2007, **Real Reads** now has a list of 82 titles, with more on the way, and rights currently sold in 15 countries so far. Just this week a £60,000 deal has been agreed with S Korea. 35 of the 82 **Real Reads** titles have been written by Stroud authors. The **Real Reads Oliver Twist**, retold by Stroud author Gill Taver, has already sold over 16,000 copies in the UK alone.

Real Reads are retellings of great literature from around the world, each fitted into a beautifully-illustrated, 64 page book. Although aimed at readers aged between 8-14, they appeal to a wider audience. As Director John Button says, ‘Our books make classic stories, dramas and histories available to intelligent young readers as a bridge to the originals, to language students or anybody seeking access to other cultures, and to adult readers who might, for whatever reason, want a quick fix’.

Drawn from the world’s most influential and important writing, **Real Reads** offer a unique opportunity for international and cross-cultural understanding among the world’s children. The ever-growing list currently includes titles from ten different countries, including UK, India, China, Greece, USA and Italy.

The most recent titles hitting the shelves are bound to attract attention. **Muhammad: The Life of the Prophet** and **Siddhartha Gautama: The Life of the Buddha**, both based on original sources, retell the lives of the founders of two major religions especially for younger readers. Complementing the 2010 publication of the **Real Reads New Testament**, these titles offer to children of all faiths and of no faith an accessible and enjoyable way to begin to understand the faiths influencing the world in which they are growing up.

Other new titles this year mark the 2014 centenary of World War 1: **All Quiet on the Western Front**, **The Riddle of the Sands**, and **The Thirty Nine Steps**. There are also additions to the French and American lists with, among others, **Moby Dick** and **Les Miserables**. For teachers, there is useful guide to using **Real Reads** in the classroom, entitled **Reawakening Literature**. This was written by Jane Campion, editor of The

English Association's journal *The Use of English*. Jane lives in Stroud and teaches English at Katherine Lady Berkeley's School in Wotton Under Edge.

Praise for Real Reads.

Real Reads titles have been praised and endorsed by names such as former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion, Allison Pearson of The Telegraph, Radio 4's Mariella Frostrup, author Jamila Gavin and Paul Trijbits, producer of the recent film version of Jane Eyre among many others.

Some of the praise already attracted by The Life of the Prophet.

This version of the Prophet's life is charmingly written and refreshingly retold, and will appeal strongly to its intended young audience.

Ziauddin Sardar, writer, broadcaster and cultural critic.

The life of the Prophet is full of exciting adventures, and this book captures these in a very graphic and vivid manner. The juxtaposition of Arabic calligraphy, beautiful illustrations and fluent narrative makes this book very attractive. I highly recommend it.

Musharraf Hussain al-Azhari, OBE, DL, Chief Executive and Imam, Karimia Institute, Nottingham.

This account based on original sources is concise, readable and moving. It describes the key moments in the eventful life of the Prophet Muhammad, whose powerful message about worshipping the one true God would transform Mecca, then Arabia, and then the world.

Shawkat M. Toorawa, Associate Professor of Arabic Literature and Islamic Studies, Cornell University.

We best learn about ourselves by learning about others. This book on Muhammad will help Muslims and non-Muslims alike to consider anew their deepest beliefs and convictions.

Paul Heck, Associate Professor, Georgetown University, and Founding Director of the Study of Religions Across Civilizations.

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