

vast and they are available on cassette tape and CD.

The stories are narrated by international stage and screen stars, whose expertise in spoken word is superb. Many stories are narrated word for word: the whole story, while others are dramatised and there are some that are adapted for audio or, in plain English, abridged. All the different formats have a role to play, though the complete and unabridged stories are favoured by the purists and, with the full story in place, these editions are rich feeding grounds for young imaginations. Let a group of children listen to a story, then let each child draw the main character from that story. The results will be fascinating, with great variety. Let a group of children watch a video and then draw the main character - the results will be predictable. Audiobooks work the imagination, videos spoon-feed the imagination. Enjoying an audiobook is an active exercise, it demands a certain level of concentration, watching a video is a passive experience.

There are those that feel that audiobooks should be given more colour than just the words, that is, sound effects. The purists disagree knowing that within minutes of starting an audiobook a child's imagination will be creating his own sound effects.

A child rich in language skills will excel at school and mix easily, he will be confident, will comprehend and interpret situations and be able to grasp new concepts readily, learn to reason and learn logic. In turn, he will be able to express himself clearly and comprehensively and, you know the rest, success breeds success.

A child weak in language skills will experience frustration and his learning ability will be stunted. Poor knowledge of language is a handicap.

Language development is not an overnight event, it takes years and ultimately clearly reflects the exposure to language, both written and spoken, throughout childhood into adulthood.

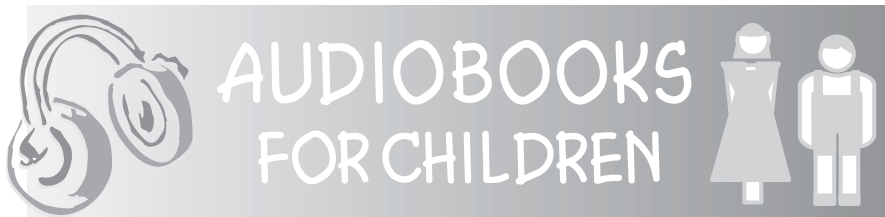
Investing time in developing a child's knowledge of language should be a shared experience: it should be fun.

Parental involvement in storytelling is so important, audiobooks come a close second.

What better place than the library for parents and children to select their audiobooks together.

Try one, you'll be surprised!

2004



KIRSTON HOETS

Booktalk (Pty) Ltd

They're fun! Wonderfully recorded and narrated with such energy and verve that before you know it you're surrounded by the story, the imagery around you crystal clear, and the characters live and oh! so real. It's a rich experience and it depends on nothing but the power of the spoken word.

An art form really, the subtle skill of the professional narrator shaping and manipulating the words on the page into a spell-binding story, full of colour and life.

Isn't that what children's audiobooks are all about? Teaching and re-inforcing the art of language, the art of listening, the art and power of expressive speech - all on an informal basis. In play form really - the way children learn everything.

But because of this informality, the true value of the children's audiobook often goes unnoticed and it is regarded as the lazy option.

'But children must read' is a common cry. Of course they must read, but children must be exposed, too, to the spoken language, to develop their auditory comprehension skills and auditory attention spans, to hear new words (correctly pronounced) and develop their vocabulary, to recognise intonation patterns, learn phrasing, hear emotion, recognise different emotions in speech, and to hear again and again all the fine nuances and flow of the language. Children hear language at home, they hear it socially, they hear it at school. But audiobooks expose children to an even broader range of language than they hear in their everyday lives, but, because of the entertainment factor, children soak up the language on a subliminal level.

What better way to be exposed to language than through audiobooks. From JK Rowling's popular **Harry Potter** series to Philip Pullman's **His dark materials** trilogy to Jacqueline Wilson's stories, to Dick King-Smith's stories (with his wonderful play on words), to **Aesop's fables...** The range is