



Cover Story ? Garth Williams

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Article Author:

[Pat Triggs](#) [1]

[19](#) [2]

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Other Articles

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Meet **Garth Williams**.

The chicken on our cover and the mother hen casting a beady eye over this page are the work of **Garth Williams** one of America's foremost illustrators.

You can become better acquainted with them in **The Chicken Book**, a picture book based on a traditional counting rhyme which Garth Williams has invested with wit and humour and a delightful line in bewildered, disconsolate-looking chickens.

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The Chicken Book is one of the first titles in Patrick Hardy's new list; but it has been a long time making the journey from the other side of the Atlantic. It was first published in 1946, soon after the start of Garth Williams career as an illustrator of children's books. That began in 1945 when he did the illustrations for E.B. White's first book. **Stuart Little**. Since then his expressive black and white drawings have become an essential part of the pleasure to be found in now classic favourites like **Charlotte's Web** and Laura Ingalls Wilder's **Little House** books.

Although he was born in New York (in 1912) and is an American citizen. Garth Williams' parents were British. He was educated in London and studied at Westminster Art School winning a Painting Scholarship from there to the Royal College of Art. Studies in theatrical design, mural painting, prizes and awards for sculpture indicated a great range of possible careers.

Then came World War II and Garth Williams became a stretcher-bearer in London for the British Red Cross. Injured by a bomb in 1941 and refused as a volunteer by the U S forces he had to return to the USA and went to work for the **New Yorker** magazine.

The success of **Stuart Little** established Garth Williams as an illustrator of children's books and 38 years later he has an impressive list of over 70 books to his credit. He has given definitive shape to the characters of E.B. White and Laura Ingalls Wilder and it would be difficult to imagine Margery Sharp's Miss Bianca or George Selden's Chester Cricket and his friends Tucker Mouse and Harry Cat (who made their first appearance in **The Cricket in Times Square**) except as Garth Williams has drawn them. The delicate and atmospheric monochrome illustration of picture books like **Fox Eyes** (with a story by Margaret Wise Brown) and Garth William's own story **The Rabbits' Wedding** (translated into over 40 languages) show another side of his talent.

Garth Williams is now seventy years old and 'interested in everything, especially living and surviving if possible.' Last year two new George Selden books about Chester Cricket were published in the USA with his drawings. He claims 'I

still have to illustrate more books to avoid the old folks home as inflation and taxes have sorely reduced my living. Fortunately I begin life all over again at least every ten years. and that has kept me young and in excellent health. Several of my aunts and uncles passed 90 which I also hope to do. I have planned to live 150 years. How? ' By doing nothing different.'

The Chicken Book, Patrick Hardy Books, 0 7444 0010 4. £4.95

The Rabbits' Wedding, Picture Lions, 0 00 660643 1. 90p

Fox Eyes, Picture Lions, 0 00 661605 4. 90p

Charlotte's Web, **The Little House books**, and **The Cricket in Times Square** are all available in Puffin.

Page Number:

21

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