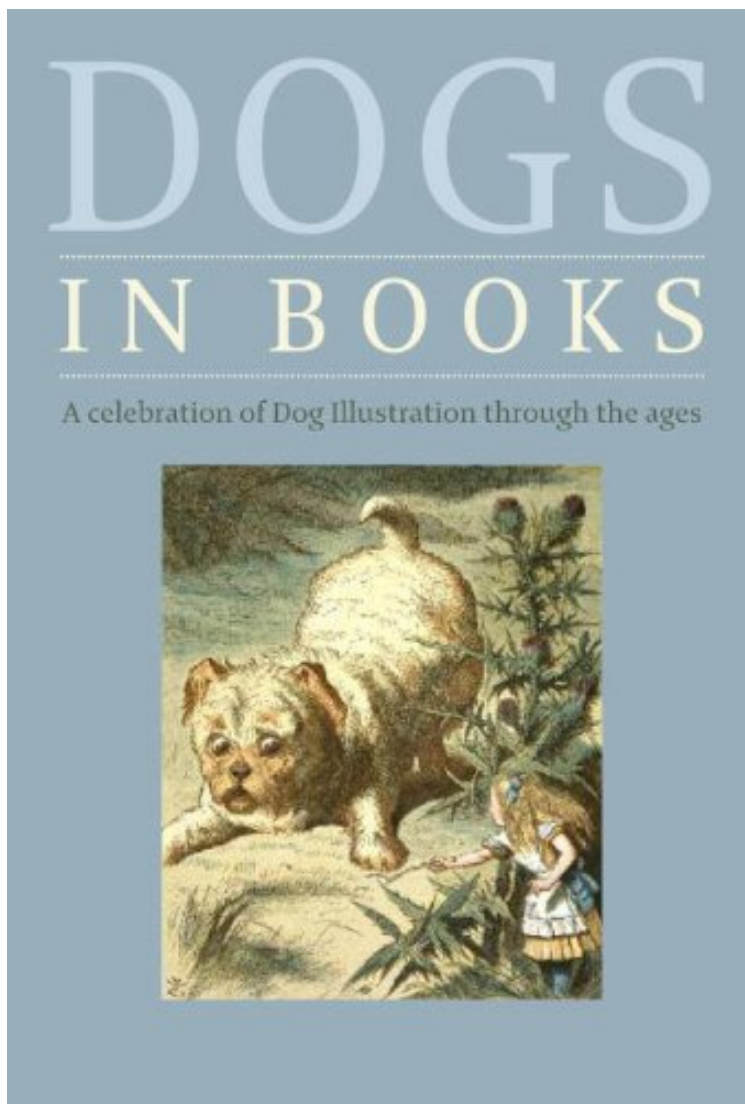


## Dogs in Books

*Catherine Britton*

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**Catherine Britton : Dogs in Books** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dogs in Books:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. more pleaseBy Steve DurningThe images that are included are striking and delightful, but there are not so many images or authors discussed, and the discussions are not scholarly or very informative. Sorry to be negative.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Book for Book-loving Dog-loversBy Rob HardyI love dogs. I love books. So I was a natural target for Dogs In Books: A Celebration of Dog Illustration Through the Ages (The British Library and Mark Batty Publishers) by Catherine Britton, a former senior

editor at the British Library. You surely know people who are other natural targets for such a book, and it would be a perfect little gift. It is only 112 pages long, small in format but heavy on the illustrations, featuring the most famous dogs in literature and their depictions as found in the British Library. None of the dogs or their pictures are so obscure that only the British Library would have them, although the lovely reproductions of medieval miniatures here are not part of popular book illustration. Britton's comments upon the books and the pictures have many remarkable facts, and I learned a lot about the dogs, even those with whom I was already familiar. Dogs turn out to be guardians of the underworld in different religions. The initial chapter of the book is on the three-headed dog Cerberus who welcomed dead souls into Hades but kept them from ever passing out again. "The dog is not a popular animal in the Bible," says Britton, and she understates. Biblical dogs were regarded as cowardly, lazy, and unclean scavengers. Of course, in my view, this reflects the general opinion of the region at the time and not some divine judgement; Mohammed didn't think much of dogs either, but his followers have been far better at continuing the scornful attitude toward dogs than Jesus's have. The dog in *Old Mother Hubbard* is here in 1806 prints, but the nursery rhyme has been illustrated many times. I was glad to be reminded that "so the poor dog had none" isn't the final comment on the dog's fate. He wound up in subsequent verses doing a series of remarkable things, including from the verse illustrated here, "She went to the Tavern / For White wine Red; / When she came back / The Dog stood on his head." There are bad dogs here, however; they have been made villainous because they are owned by villains. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Conan Doyle was drawing upon ancient legends of vengeful phantom dogs, but the poor hound is just doing what it is trained to do. Similarly, Bull's-eye, the "white shaggy dog, with his face scratched and torn in twenty different places" owes his miserable state to being the companion of the horrid Bill Sikes in *Oliver Twist*. The two of them meet fitting ends at the book's finale, but I am sorry for Bull's-eye and glad to be rid of Sikes. Britton admits that in a little book like this one "there are no doubt many favourites that have not been included," and I am glad to play that game. If you are looking for a big time literary dog, you won't find here Garryowen, the irascible dog of the equally irascible "citizen," the hyper-patriotic Irishman in the Cyclops chapter of *Ulysses*. More appropriate to the tone of this light and delightful book would have been Montmorency, who figures in the funny title of the very funny book *Three Men in a Boat (To Say Nothing of the Dog)*, by Jerome K. Jerome, a book illustrated by A. Frederics. It is a surprise to find a picture of Montmorency in the introduction, but no reference made to him, except that he shows up just where Britton is apologizing for not getting all the worthy dogs in. I vote for Montmorency in Volume Two, if there is one. After all, he is the subject of some of Jerome's funniest reflections, like: "We went downstairs to breakfast. Montmorency had invited two other dogs to come and see him off, and they were whiling away the time by fighting on the doorstep. We calmed them with an umbrella, and sat down to chops and cold beef."

As the saying goes, dogs are man's best friend. Since the Stone Age, our canine companions have been illustrated, described, dramatized, and eulogized in one form or another. *Dogs in Books* celebrates the role of dogs in literature, featuring more than thirty famous dogs, from Tintin's white Wire Fox Terrier Snowy, to Lassie, Toto, and Snoopy, as well as dogs from Shakespeare, Jack London, Rudyard Kipling, Charles Dickens, and many more well-known authors. Culled from the British Library's incomparable archives, *Dogs in Books* features illustrations from rare editions of classic literature and contemporary renderings from popular books. Odysseus had his faithful dog Argos and King Lear's pack of dogs barked away at him as if warning him. From narrating an entire story to rescuing our hero, these dogs are critical characters in these books, demonstrating the timelessness of our undying love and respect for dogs and proving that they have always been more than just a pet.

About the Author Catherine Britton is Senior Editor at the British Library.