

Dr Henry Maurice Saxby AM

The honorary degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred upon Dr Henry Maurice Saxby AM by Pro-Chancellor Mr Alec Brennan AM at the Faculty of Education and Social Work graduation ceremony held in the Great Hall at 11.30am on 8 November 2013.



The Pro-Chancellor conferring the honorary degree upon Dr Saxby, *photo, copyright Memento Photography.*



Dr Saxby, *photo, copyright Memento Photography.*

Citation

Pro-Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to commend Henry Maurice Saxby, AM, to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa).

Throughout a long and distinguished career he has made an outstanding contribution to Australian children's literature, reading pedagogy and children's writing. His work in the field has received international acclaim and has influenced the thinking of the broader Australian community about the important role that quality children's literature should play in the life of every child.

Born in Sydney in 1924, Henry Maurice Saxby served in the Australian Imperial Forces as a stretcher-bearer and medical orderly from 1943 to 1946, before training to become a teacher. He was Dux of Balmain Teachers College in 1949, becoming a teacher and for a time teacher-librarian with the New South Wales Department of Education (1950-1956). He received a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in English from the University of Sydney (1954) while teaching by day and studying by night having topped English 1 in 1950.

From 1957-72 Dr Saxby was a lecturer in various New South Wales State Teachers' Colleges. He completed a Master of Education (University of Sydney) in 1965. He was Principal Lecturer and Head of English at Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education, 'retiring' in 1985. Dr Saxby graduated with a PhD from the University of Technology, Sydney in 2001.

He was awarded the Dromkeen Medal (1983), an Order of Australia (1995), the Children's Book Council's Nan Chauncy Award (2002) for his contributions to Australian Children's Literature, and in 2011 a life membership of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). This year (2013) he was awarded the Australian Book Industry's Pixie O'Harris Award. Alongside his academic career Dr Saxby has provided mentoring, support and friendship to many Australian authors and teacher educators.

Dr Saxby has written extensively about the history of children's literature in this country. His *A History of Australian Children's Literature (1841-1941)* was the first such survey and has become, along with four succeeding volumes standard reference books on the subject.

One of his major co-authored works, *Give Them Wings: The Experience of Children's Literature* encapsulates his enthusiastic thesis about the critical role quality literature plays in children becoming literate. Later he was to write his own expanded contribution, *Books in the Life of a Child; Bridges to Literature and Learning*.

As Maurice Saxby, this author has also written picture books for children including: *Russell and the Star Shell* (illustrated by Astra Lacis) and *The Great Deeds of Superheroes and The Great Deeds of Heroic Women* (both illustrated by Robert Ingpen) as well as *The Millennium Book of Myth and Story* (illustrated by John Winch) for older readers.

Dr Saxby has always given generously of his time to the profession and has played highly significant roles in a range of organizations that have broadened the community's awareness of the important role of story in our lives. For example, he was the first National President of the Children's Book Council of Australia, and has worked tirelessly for its development. He has been on the judging panel for the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards, as well as for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Competition and is the only Australian to have served on the international judging panel for IBBY's Hans Christian Andersen Awards. He has recently shared his wisdom with a new generation of teachers through his involvement with the Faculty of Education and Social Work.

His leadership and his legacy in the field of children's literature over the last sixty years will be evident for many decades.

Pro-Chancellor, I present Henry Maurice Saxby for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.