BookTrust
Getting children reading



100 BOOKS INSIDE

Illustration copyright © 2021 by Nadia Shireen

BookTrust's Great Books Guide 2021

With thanks to our sponsors:

RENAISSANCE · BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION · READING EAGLES · Winckworth Sherwood · USBORNE · Readmio · Readingmate · tonies · Oxford Children's Books · Pickatale

Message from BookTrust's CEO Diana Gerald

Welcome to BookTrust's Great Books Guide 2021. At BookTrust, our priority is to get children excited about books, stories and rhymes, because if reading is fun, children will want to do it.

That's why we've put together this guide full of books we think are absolutely brilliant.

Inside you'll find 100 books that are silly, scary, informative and moving (and everything in between). They've been carefully chosen to engage and excite children all the way up to age 11.

At BookTrust, we believe the right book is always the book the child wants to read. We hope this guide inspires you to find that book.

Happy reading!



Illustration copyright © 2021 by Nadia Shireen

booktrust.org.uk

Follow us on soical:

Charity number 313343

Discover our screen-free portable audio player for children, filled with music, stories and learning.



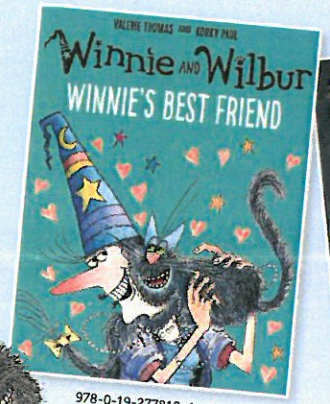
Use code **Booktrust10** for 10% off starter sets valid until 01.09.22

www.tonies.com
Listening is believing

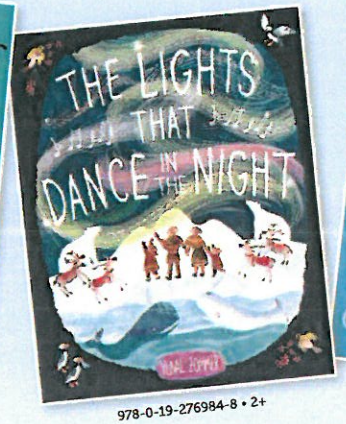
Oxford Children's Books

Inspiring a lifelong love of reading

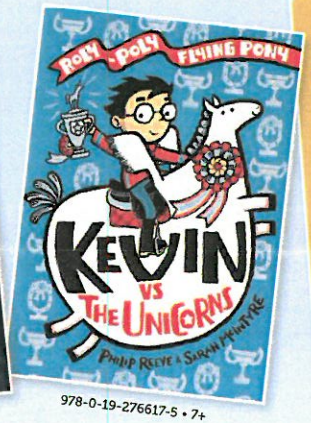




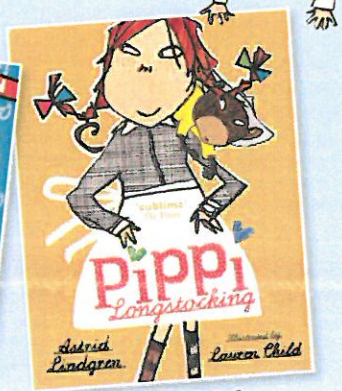
978-0-19-277815-4 • 2+



978-0-19-276984-8 • 2+



978-0-19-276617-5 • 7+



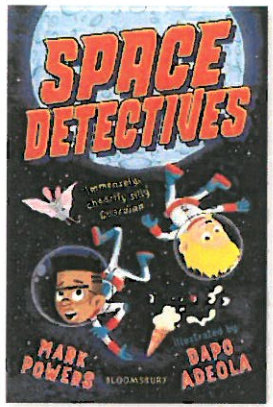
978-0-19-277970-0 • 5+



Artwork © Lauren Child and Korky Paul

OXFORD

Age 6-7



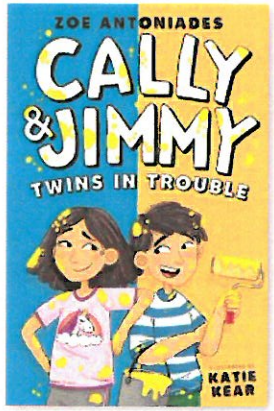
Space Detectives
Mark Powers, illustrated by Dapo Adeola

Bloomsbury

When Starville is dramatically thrown out of orbit onto a collision course with the moon, do Connor and Ethan have what it takes to save everyone from certain death?

If the thought of meeting a Snargletoothed Grizloid or a swarm of Neptunian Bat-Rats doesn't worry you, or if you like the sound of a zero-gravity bouncy castle, a hover scooter, snorgleberry drizzle cake or swamp-lizard drumsticks, then this is a book you'll definitely enjoy.

Packed with witty and dynamic black-and-white illustrations and a very human underlying message, this is an ideal chapter book for newly independent readers.



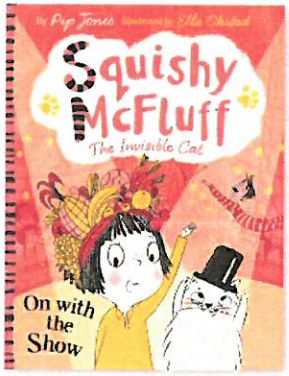
Cally and Jimmy: Twins in Trouble
Zoe Antoniades, illustrated by Katie Kear

Andersen Press

Cally and Jimmy are twins but they couldn't be more different. Cally sits on the 'top table' in class and enjoys school. Jimmy has problems sitting still and often gets into trouble.

However, Cally and Jimmy agree that they don't like the attention Mum is getting from Grant, the fix-it man, so they hatch a plan to keep them apart. They also make an alarming batch of 'revenge' brownies and have the best separate/together birthday party too.

This collection of four short stories is funny, touching, enlightening and ideal for newly confident readers. The black-and-white illustrations on every page capture the fun and chaos of life in a complex family.



Squishy McFluff: On with the Show!
Pip Jones, illustrated by Ella Okstad

Faber & Faber

Ava and her best friend Squishy McFluff, the invisible cat, are thrilled to hear that Bing's Big Top Circus is in town. Ava and Squishy supposed to be helping Mum clear out the garden shed, and if they do a good job, Mum and Dad will take them to the circus in the evening.

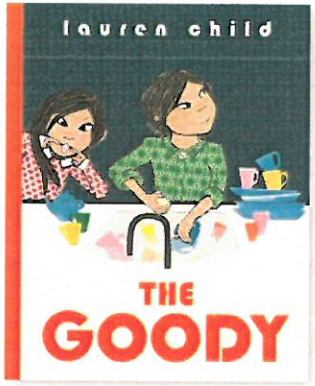
But when celebrity clown Hank Honk doesn't turn up, Ava and Squishy find themselves starring in the show rather than just watching it!

Ava and Squishy's adventures are fun, engaging and a great way to enjoy a shared story and to encourage the first steps towards independent reading.



Illustration © Anjan Sarkar

Age 6-7



The Goody

Lauren Child

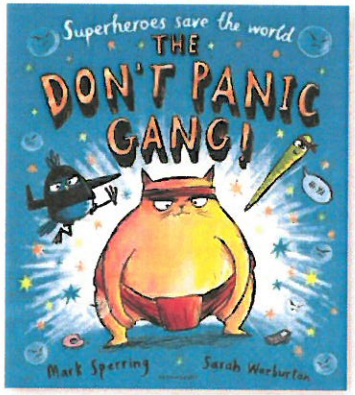
Orchard

Chirton Krauss is such a well-behaved child that he eats broccoli, even though he doesn't like it.

Myrtle, by contrast, is never good. She's not expected to eat broccoli, do any chores or be polite and nice, because her parents have decided that Chirton is the Goody, and Myrtle is not.

So what happens when Chirton decides not to be the Goody anymore?

In an entertaining and relatable way and with beautiful colour and style, Child explores the impact of family dynamics that can often label children as 'the good one' or 'the naughty one' – and who we all are under those labels.



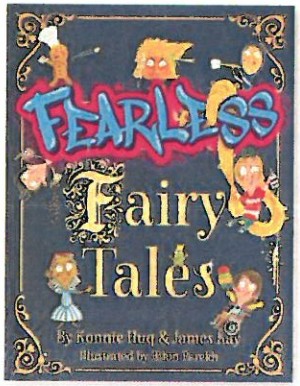
The Don't Panic Gang!

Mark Sperring, illustrated by Sarah Warburton

Bloomsbury

When the Don't Panic Gang receive an urgent call for help, three friends immediately leap into action and, donning their superhero costumes, they transform into Sumo Cat, Ninja Bird and Kung-Fu Worm. Clambering over rooftops, leaping off buildings and scaling walls – albeit, not always successfully – the invincible trio eventually reach the distressed caller, who is at the mercy of something huge and terrifying in the bathroom.

Bright, sketchy illustrations contain a wealth of amusing detail which will captivate and delight young children. With witty text, plenty of anticipation and opportunities to predict what will happen next, this is an exciting and funny adventure, perfect to read aloud.



Fearless Fairy Tales

Konnie Huq & James Kay, illustrated by Rikin Parekh

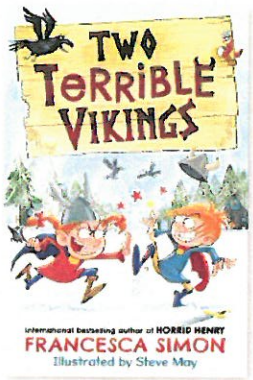
Piccadilly Press

Have you met Sleeping Brainy, whose ambition is to be Chancellor of the Exchequer? Or what about Robin Hoodlum, who collects taxes from the poor for his boss, the billionaire Baron Bottybum? Or Trumplestiltskin, an angry, orange man with ridiculous hair who is obsessed with getting richer and richer?

While traditional fairy tales undoubtedly have their place in children's literature, this subversive and original collection tackles contemporary issues such as equal pay, knife crime, disability rights and fake news with great humour, intelligence and a fresh, exciting perspective.

These 17 stories and rhymes will be devoured enthusiastically by readers looking for fables that are relevant to the 21st century.

Age 6-7



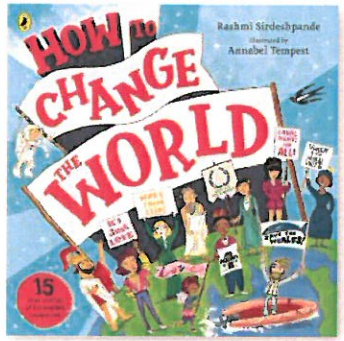
Two Terrible Vikings

Francesca Simon, illustrated by Steve May

Faber & Faber

Hack and Whack are naughty twins living in the snowy fjords of a Viking kingdom. Their parents are very proud of their wicked antics but are worried that Elsa Gold-Hair – who is sweet, kind and into sharing – might be a bad influence on them.

This is a very funny and exciting book from the creator of Horrid Henry, told in three interlinked short stories which make it more manageable for a child who is just beginning to read independently. The wild, laugh-out-loud humour level is well pitched for five to eight-year-olds, with amusing drawings by Steve May.

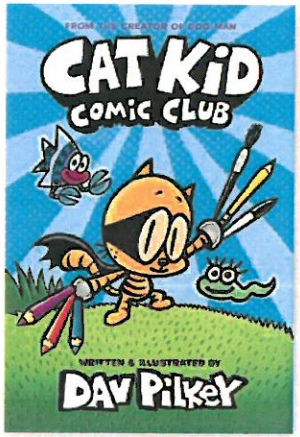


How to Change the World

Rashmi Sirdeshpande, illustrated by Annabel Tempest

Puffin

This fascinating picture book presents a selection of true stories about incredible people who have challenged injustice and worked together to make the world a better place. Readers will learn about the birth of democracy in Ancient Greece, the creation of the International Space Station and environmental campaigns like saving the whales and repairing the ozone layer. These remarkable achievements are sure to inspire young people to stand up for what is right and unite to evoke positive change.



Cat Kid Comic Club

Dav Pilkey

Scholastic

Li'l Petey the cat and his friend Molly have begun the Cat Kid Comic Club, a club for kids that like to draw comics. Li'l Petey and Molly start inspiring their fellow comic makers with ideas, from how to come up with an initial concept to giving awards for the weirdest comic.

Alongside a useful how-to element, there's also a nice story about having faith in your abilities and the importance of persevering to improve your skills.

Perfect for existing fans of *Dog Man* and *Captain Underpants* as well as those new to Dav Pilkey's accessible and zany stories.

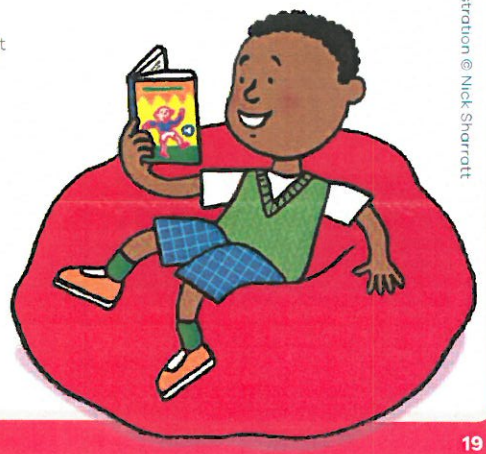


Illustration © Nick Sharratt

Age 6-7



The Ladybird Big Book of Slimy Things

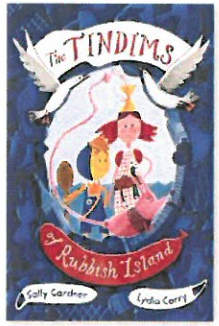
Imogen Russell Williams, illustrated by Binny Talib

Ladybird

Get ready for a tour of all things slime – slimy creatures, slimy things, living slime and slime made by plants or animals – with a host of amusing experts including Doctor Hal O'Vera and Doctor Isaac Newt.

From hippos making their own slime sun-cream to the sleeping bags of slime used by parrotfish to snooze in every night, there's a huge amount to learn about this oozy, icky substance in all its forms.

This is a fascinating book for young readers, written in an engaging and easy-to-read comic-strip style, jammed full of weird and unusual facts and complemented by hilarious illustrations.



The Tindims of Rubbish Island

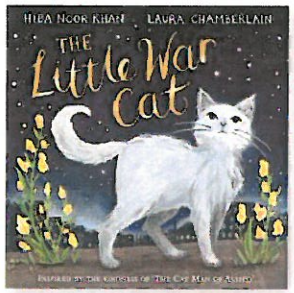
Sally Gardner, illustrated by Lydia Corry

Zephyr

The Tindims are tiny people who live on a floating island in the middle of the ocean. They collect litter from the sea, which they transform into useful items.

Unfortunately, Bottle Mountain, which is constructed entirely from plastic bottles, is now so enormous that Captain Spoons cannot see beyond it to steer the island. The Tindims must work together to find a solution before it's too late.

Combining eccentric characters, short chapters and lively illustrations, this delightful new series is ideal for confident, independent readers. Full of joy and laughter, this quirky adventure also carries an important environmental message about waste, pollution and recycling.



The Little War Cat

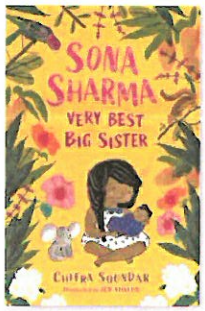
Hiba Noor Khan, illustrated by Laura Chamberlain

Macmillan

In the sunny, thriving city of Aleppo in Syria, a little grey cat enjoys a wonderful life. But on the day the humans with boots arrive, everything changes.

The little cat is scared and hungry until a caring human finds her. He is kind and patient and shows her a safer place where she finds friends, food and peace.

Inspired by the indomitable spirit of Mohammad Alaa Aljaleel, the 'Cat Man of Aleppo', this is the story of how hope can still thrive during times of extreme adversity and of the ripple effect that spreads from small acts of kindness.



Sona Sharma, Very Best Big Sister

Chitra Soundar, illustrated by Jen Khatun

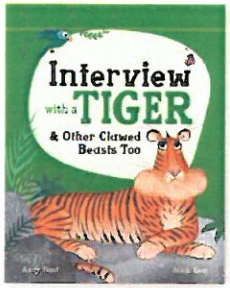
Walker Books

Sona is not at all sure about being a big sister. But when the baby is born, she really wants to be the best big sister ever.

Set in a modern family in India, this book is rich in detail about Hindu beliefs, customs and ceremonies around welcoming a new child into the world. It is extensively illustrated with black-and-white drawings, which are packed full of charm and character.

The illustrations ensure that a reader will fall in love not only with the richness and beauty of Indian culture but also with Sona's kind, warm family.

Age 6-7



Interview with a Tiger

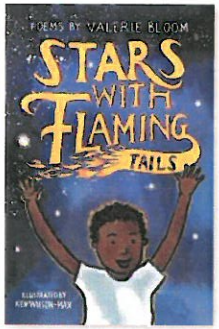
Andy Seed, illustrated by Nick East

Welbeck

Did you know that the sweet-looking honey badger is actually a ferocious killer? The giant anteater, on the other hand, is harmless to humans, although it has 100 teeth.

In an exclusive set of 'interviews' Andy Seed reveals the thoughts, fears and dreams of his animal guests – often with very amusing results.

Packed with quirky and surprising facts, and presented in an accessible and entertaining question-and-answer format, this book is a must for any animal lover or budding conservationist. Each interview covers a double-page spread and is illustrated in full colour.



Stars with Flaming Tails

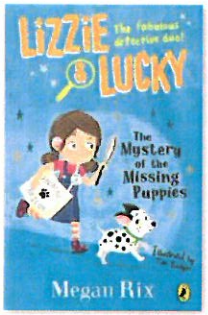
Valerie Bloom, illustrated by Ken Wilson-Max

Otter-Barry Books

From alphabet poems to limericks, riddles, and lesser-known forms such as elfke (a Dutch poem for children featuring only 11 words), Valerie Bloom has managed to put into words how we all feel in this poetry collection for all moods.

Some poems are amusing, some are sad. One poem featuring an 'Isle of Negatyves', where dangerous 'Kantdos' can be targeted with an ointment of 'Willdos', speaks to children who have experienced anxiety and self-doubt.

Bold and seriously stylish illustrations perfectly complement each poem in this powerful and memorable collection.



Lizzie and Lucky: The Mystery of the Missing Puppies

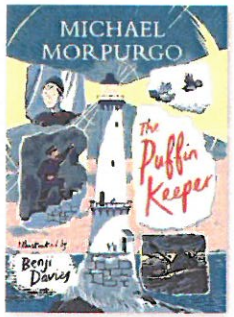
Megan Rix, illustrated by Tim Budgen

Puffin

Eight-year-old Lizzie cannot wait to get a dog. One day, she spots a suspicious person snatching a puppy from a local garden. Outraged, Lizzie is determined to investigate. This could definitely be the start of a beautiful new friendship – and perhaps even a detective career for Lizzie.

Lizzie and her parents are deaf, and the family use sign language and sport colourful hearing aids. The author's experience of partial deafness shines through, with helpful but gentle hints about the importance of accessibility and equality.

Above all, this is a joyous tale celebrating animals, mysteries, family and friendship.



The Puffin Keeper

Michael Morpurgo, illustrated by Benji Davies

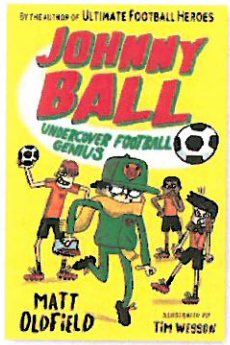
Puffin

Five-year-old Allen Williams is on a ship bound for Liverpool when it's shipwrecked near a lighthouse on the Isles of Scilly. Benjamin Postlethwaite, the lighthouse keeper, rescues the passengers in his small boat, saving them from the icy sea.

As he grows up, Allen writes letters to Benjamin but never receives a reply. Finally, Allen decides to return to Scilly. Yet, when his call-up papers come for the war, he must brave the sea again and face more adventures.

This heart-warming story is a short read, perfect for younger and older readers, with the feel of a classic tale.

Age 6-7



Johnny Ball: Undercover Football Genius

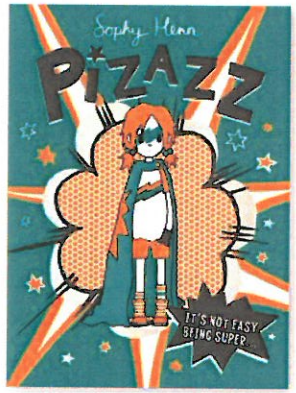
Matt Oldfield, illustrated by Tim Wesson

Walker Books

Johnny Ball loves football. He loves it so much that he's become assistant manager for the Tissbury Tigers Under 15s which, at the age of nine and three-quarters, makes him the youngest coach ever.

Unfortunately, Johnny's older brother Daniel is the Tigers' star player and doesn't want anyone to know they're related. This means that Johnny starts his coaching career in disguise as he embarks on a tumultuous race to finish at the top of the league.

With plenty of helpful advice that works for life in general as well as for football, this is a wise but very funny book with an inclusive message and lots of witty black-and-white illustrations.



Pizazz

Sophy Henn

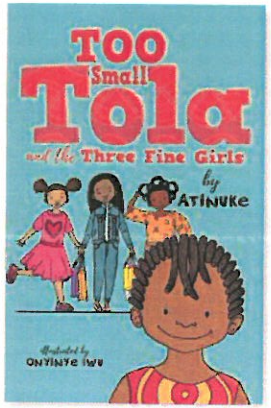
Simon & Schuster

Pizazz is a superhero, but she hates her superpower. In fact, she hates it so much that sometimes she'd rather let the baddies win than to use it because it's so embarrassing.

Yet when Pizazz becomes an eco-monitor at school, she finds out that a local business is planning to steamroller the local park and build a car park on it instead. Can she stop them? And will she have to use her (actually quite fabulous) superpower?

Sophy Henn's zany illustrated adventure is full of friendship, family and positive activism – and completely relatable for anyone who has ever felt that other people's talents are better than their own.





Too Small Tola and the Three Fine Girls

Atinuke, illustrated by Onyinye Iwu

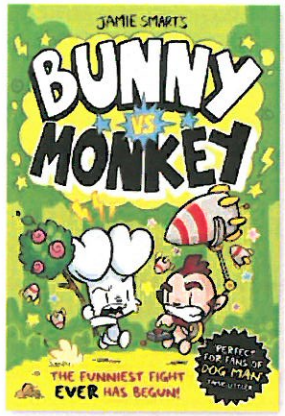
Walker Books

Tola is the youngest of three siblings who live in a tiny flat with their grandmother in the Nigerian city of Lagos. Three stories see the resourceful Tola tricking her elder siblings into helping her with the chores, helping make ends meet when Grandmummy falls ill and being admired by three posh girls at the masquerade party.

Tola is a fabulous and sweet heroine who proves that though she might be small, she really is mighty, making her a wonderful role model for children. The black-and-white illustrations by Onyinye Iwu are beautifully expressive, bringing Tola, her family and the city of Lagos to life in exquisite detail.

Illustration © Anjan Sarkar

Age 8-9

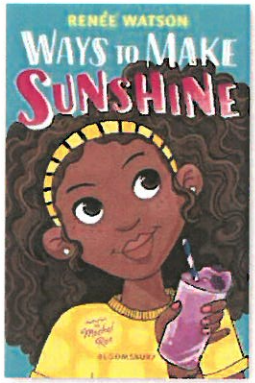


Bunny vs Monkey
Jamie Smart

David Fickling Books

Bunny's tranquil life in the woods is shattered with the arrival of Monkey, a loud, rude and thoroughly annoying megalomaniac. Monkey intends to rule as Supreme Emperor with a little help from genius inventor Skunky, whose wacky gadgets include a formidable Doomsday Device, designed to destroy everything of beauty, annihilate all happiness and bring misery to the woods.

Packed full of hilarious short stories, this bumper collection of cartoons covers an entire year of adventures for Bunny and Monkey. Off-the-wall characters, wacky storylines and hilarious comic-strip illustrations ensure there are plenty of laughs on every page.

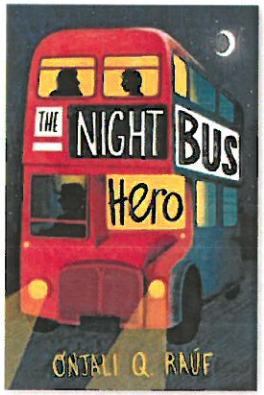


Ways to Make Sunshine
Renée Watson, illustrated by Mechal Roe

Bloomsbury

Everything is changing in Ryan Hart's life. Her father has lost his job so they have to move house and sell the car. Despite the difficulties, Ryan manages to find ways of 'making sunshine', helped by friends who stick with her no matter what, and a caring family who laugh together and bond through their shared love of cooking.

Without ever shying away from difficult topics such as racism and financial hardship, this is a positive, optimistic story. For readers who are going through tough or troubling times, this book will be a welcome dose of happiness.



The Night Bus Hero
Onjali Q. Raúf

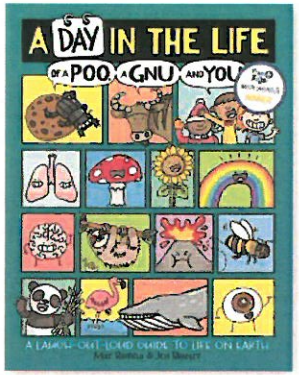
Orion

Hector is a bully. He particularly dislikes teacher's pet Mei Lei, and hates a local homeless man, Thomas.

When a spate of London landmark sculptures are suddenly stolen, Hector reports Thomas to the police, but realises he's got it horribly wrong. Accepting he needs Mei Lei's help, Hector must race against time to make sure justice is done – and that's not the only thing he needs to change.

An engrossing story that will help children understand and think deeply about those whose lives are impacted by homelessness – but with a wider message about the power of kindness, friendship, empathy and how everyone has the potential to change for the better.

Age 8–9



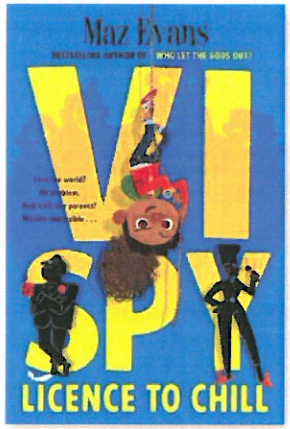
A Day in the Life of a Poo, a Gnu and You

Mike Barfield, illustrated by Jess Bradley

Buster Books

The inside story of brains, eyes, teeth, pimples, farts, porcupines, Bactrian camels, komodo dragons, Japanese knotweed, lichen, clouds, clocks, Mars rovers, snowflakes and everything in between. Each topic gets its own page and is written in the form of first-person diaries, hilariously presented in strip cartoons. This book is fabulously informative and gives the reader the feeling of learning everything worth knowing.

The text and the illustrations are funny and reminiscent of Dav Pilkey's Captain Underpants. This book shouts out to be read, shared and read again. There won't be many children who wouldn't absolutely love this cracking read.



Vi Spy: Licence to Chill

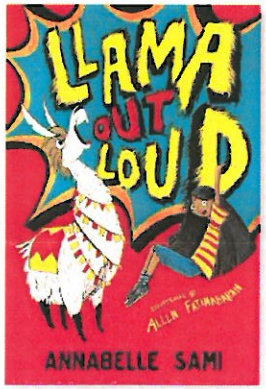
Maz Evans

Chicken House

The day Vi's mum is going to marry Mr Sprout is the day Vi discovers something about her family. As she tries to come to terms with her new knowledge, an evil supervillain emerges from the shadows and threatens everything she values.

Can Vi foil the baddies in time to prevent Mum's brain exploding? Well, maybe, but she might need a little help from her friends – and the OAP branch of the Secret Service...

The first in a new series of adventures for Vi-the-wannabe-spy, this book is packed with jokes, thrills and important life lessons, and the many twists and turns will keep readers guessing.



Llama Out Loud

Annabelle Sami, illustrated by Allen Fatimaharan

Farshore

Yasmin Shah is a quiet girl in a REALLY loud family. It seems like no one's ever listening to her. So, one day, Yasmin decides to stop talking and plays checkers with the people at the elderly day care centre instead.

Then Levi, a talking, joking, laughing prankster of a toy llama, bursts into her life at full volume. It's just a pity that all his pranks are blamed on Yasmin...

This fantastically funny book has a heroine who readers will love, even though she doesn't speak for most of the book. It would suit readers who like a laugh-out-loud story with a big heart and a spark of magic.

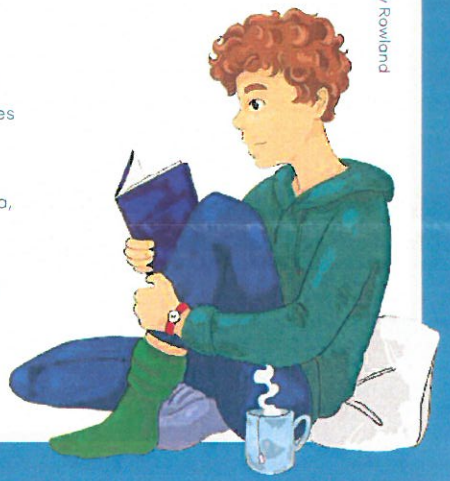
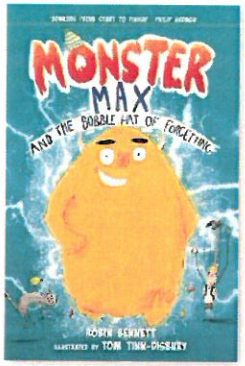


Illustration © Emily Rowland

Age 8-9



Monster Max and the Bobble Hat of Forgetting
Robin Bennett, illustrated by Tom Tinn-Disbury

Firefly

Max has a unique gift: he can transform into a monster by burping and switch back by sneezing! But when his monster mischief makes the local paper, Max decides he wants to do good and fights off thieves stealing school charity funds.

Meanwhile, Peregrine suspects Max is hiding the monster and invents a machine to capture him. As the boys try to outwit each other, Max spots an odd creature lurking around... Could it be another monster?

Monster Max and the Bobble Hat of Forgetting has mystery, adventure, and is very, very funny. Beautiful illustrations capture the warmth of a story that many will curl up and devour in an afternoon.



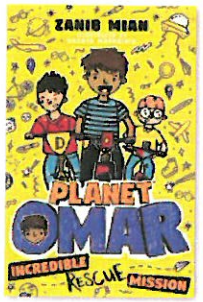
A Mummy Ate My Homework
Thiago de Moraes

Scholastic

It's the first day of Year 6 and Henry can't wait to get back to school. Yet, in maths, Henry is pulled through a time portal and lands smack bang in the middle of Ancient Egypt!

Life is very different in 3100 BC, with pet crocodiles and hunting lessons, but Henry makes a great set of new friends and is pretty good at life in Ancient Egypt. But how can he get back?

Weaving historical fact and fiction together in this highly illustrated and hilarious book really works. Readers get to learn about ancient Egypt and solve hieroglyphic puzzles while reading a very funny story.



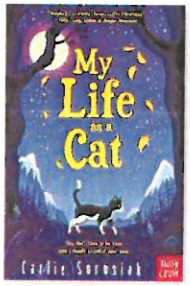
Planet Omar: Incredible Rescue Mission
Zanib Mian, illustrated by Nasaya Mafaridik

Hodder

Mrs Hutchinson is the best teacher in the universe. So when a fierce, crinkly-faced supply teacher replaces Mrs H, Omar is not pleased. Could Mrs H possibly have been abducted by aliens?

Be ready for an alien cat with a malfunctioning fur disguise, irrefutable signs of an alien landing and a spectacular Pakistani wedding that shows no evidence of alien involvement but is great fun all the same.

Omar and his friends bring their own opinions and cultural influences to the story, which gives the friendship real depth and makes them a great team.



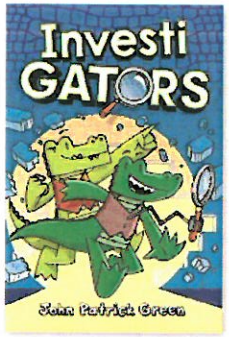
My Life as a Cat
Carlie Sorosiak

Nosy Crow

Olive rescues a cat stuck in a tree during a storm and calls him Leonard. But Leonard isn't a cat – he's an alien who plummeted to earth and ended up in the wrong body. And Leonard needs to make it to Yellowstone National Park for his alien family to collect him. How is he going to get there, and will Olive be able to help?

Whilst neither Olive nor Leonard feel like they fit in to the world very well, their bond as outsiders strengthens their friendship. This is a heart-warming story about making your own family, the wonder of being 'weird' and the importance of friends.

Age 8-9



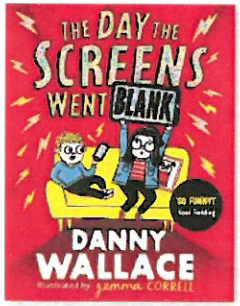
InvestiGators
John Patrick Green

Macmillan

Mango and Brash, two alligator detectives, are investigating the disappearance of the world-famous cupcake chef Gustavo Mustachio.

What is Gustavo Mustachio's big oven doing at the Science Factory, and what caused the massive explosion? And who might be keeping the famous chef prisoner, making him bake dough after dough, searching for the perfect sewer-resistant recipe...?

Fans of *Dog Man* will adore this pun-heavy whodunnit graphic novel, which is just as clearly laid out, colourful and silly as Dav Pilkey's phenomenally successful series. Mango and Brash are an excellent duo that readers will want to see more from after this first in the series.



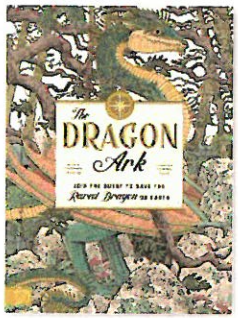
The Day the Screens Went Blank
Danny Wallace, illustrated by Gemma Correll

Simon & Schuster

One terrible evening, every screen in the whole world becomes completely unusable. No computers, no cash machines, no CCTV, no sat nav. And that's not all – no screens also means no post, no email and no shopping. In fact, anything that relies on the internet or other wireless technology just stops working.

Stella and Teddy know they need to check on Grandma to make sure she's OK. It's time for a rescue mission, but without the right technology, that could make for rather a challenging journey.

Featuring fun black-and-white illustrations throughout, *The Day The Screens Went Blank* is interesting, thought-provoking and very, very funny.



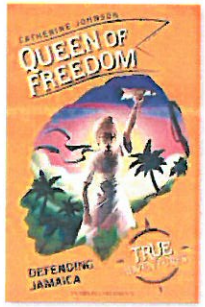
The Dragon Ark
Curatoria Draconis, illustrated by Tomislav Tomic

Magic Cat Publishing

The Dragon Ark offers refuge and help for all dragons while also studying dragonkind – from the sea serpents in the Mariana Trench to the Antarctic Ice Dragon and the seven-headed hydra of the Llullaillaco volcano on the Argentina-Chile border.

However, there is one dragon that the Dragon Protector has never seen with her own eyes: the Celestial Dragon in China. Will readers be able to find it?

An absolute delight of a book, *The Dragon Ark* is a visually stunning and fascinating adventure. A must for all fans of myth and legend – and dragons, of course.



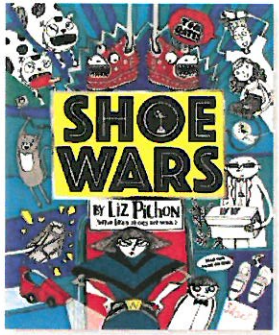
Queen of Freedom
Catherine Johnson

Pushkin Press

Set in Jamaica in the 1720s, this is the incredible true story of Queen Nanny, leader of the Maroons, a community of people who escaped slavery and settled high up in the Blue Mountains. The Maroons are hunted by British soldiers, known as redcoats, and are either killed or returned to a brutal life of slavery. With a skill for strategic thinking and tactical fighting, Nanny does everything she can to protect her people.

Part of the True Adventures series, this powerful tale raises awareness of a rarely discussed episode in British history.

Age 8-9



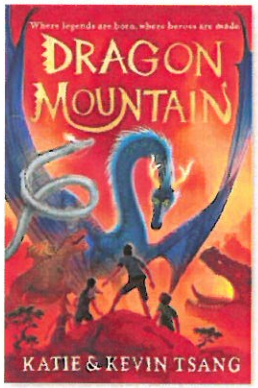
Shoe Wars
Liz Pichon

Scholastic

Wicked Wendy Wedge's ambition is to take over the whole of Shoe Town (and then the world!) and she'll do absolutely anything to achieve it. That includes forcing almost everyone to wear her clumpy, uncomfortable wedges. Oh, and she has made slippers illegal.

All Wendy needs now is the design for the world's first flying shoes. Can Ruby and Bear Foot, and their inventor dad, keep their design safe? Or will Wendy triumph and take her next step towards world domination?

This is a tale oozing with creativity and packed with black-and-white illustrations, exciting typography and visual jokes.



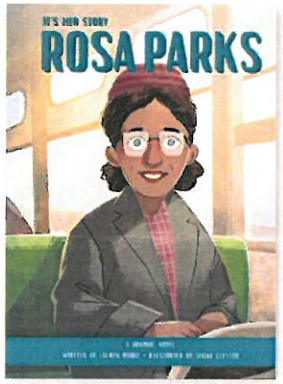
Dragon Mountain
Katie & Kevin Tsang

Simon & Schuster

Billy Chan would rather spend his summer surfing than travelling to China for summer camp. But when he makes a new group of friends – nervous Dylan, kind-hearted Ling-Fei and confident Charlotte – they discover that nothing is as it seems on this particular trip.

The gang soon become embroiled in a world of magic and adventure as they discover four warrior dragons hidden in a nearby mountain. Teaming up with the incredible beasts, they enter a huge battle to stop powerful dark forces from destroying the world.

With jaw-dropping twists, astonishing creatures and a beautifully realised world, there's great fun to be had in the Dragon Realm.



It's Her Story: Rosa Parks
Lauren Burke, illustrated by Shane Clester

Sunbird Books

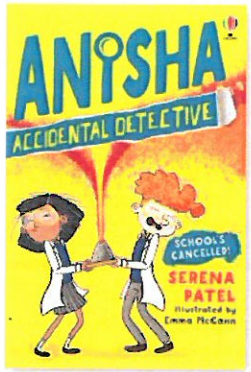
This book explores the life and legacy of celebrated civil rights activist Rosa Parks, whose infamous refusal to give up her bus seat for a white person brought her to public attention. This single, seemingly small, act, which broke the laws of segregation at the time, resulted in her arrest, a 13-month bus boycott by black passengers and an eventual change in the law.

Rosa's story is brought to life for a young audience in this wonderfully accessible graphic novel. As well as learning about a key figure in American history, children will also understand the importance of being fair and always standing up to injustice.



Illustration © Erika Meza

Age 8-9



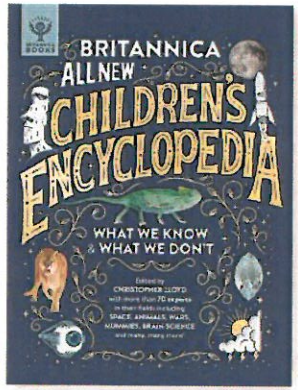
Anisha, Accidental Detective: School's Cancelled!

Serena Patel, illustrated by Emma McCann

Usborne

Anisha likes nothing better than a good mystery to solve, so when someone sabotages her erupting volcano experiment, she expects to find the culprit easily. Yet with Aunty Bindi stressing over Granny Jas's birthday party, Anisha is finding it hard to focus. Luckily Granny Jas has absolute faith in her and, surprisingly, it is the party preparations that give Anisha the tools she needs to unmask the saboteur.

Anisha's experiences shine a light on the difficulties children can experience when facing life changes, but her story is also brilliantly funny and relatable. A super fun read with lots of heart.

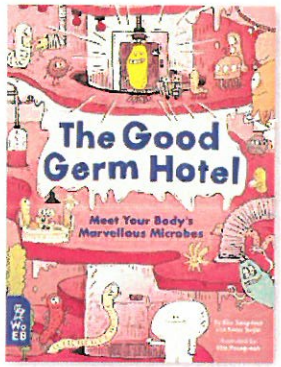


Britannica All New Children's Encyclopedia: What We Know & What We Don't

Christopher Lloyd

Britannica Books

Exploring a wide range of topics with stunning illustration and real-life photography, this brilliant encyclopedia is divided into eight chapters: Universe, Earth, Matter, Life, Humans, Ancient & Medieval Times, Modern Times, and Today & Tomorrow. Its aim is to take children through time from the creation of the universe to the developments we might expect in the future. It will provide the answers to many a question, from facts about space probes to the coral reef crisis and where on the planet you can find volcanoes. It's also perfect for kids who don't love sitting down with a novel but are curious about the world around them.



The Good Germ Hotel

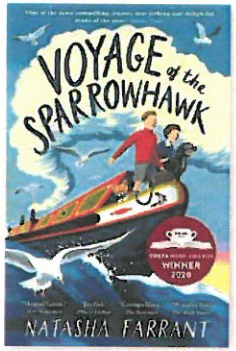
Kim Sung-hwa & Kwon Su-jin, illustrated by Kim Ryung-eon

What on Earth Books

There are trillions of good microbes living in, and on, your body and you've probably never noticed them. But if you'd like to know more, one of the good bacteria that live in your gut is offering a guided tour of the human body and its tiny inhabitants.

Presented as a conversation between a human host and a colonic bacterium, and illustrated in a detailed, comic book style, this book examines digestion, gut health, immunity and antibiotics, and provides context for infections such as Covid-19. Sure to be read again and again, this is complex science made accessible and exciting.

Age 10-11



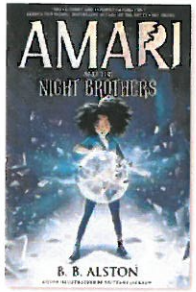
Voyage of the Sparrowhawk

Natasha Farrant

Faber & Faber

It's 1919, just after the end of the Great War. Ben and Lotti, two very different children whose lives have been changed forever by the war, set off for France aboard the barge Sparrowhawk. Ben's father has died and his brother is missing somewhere in France, while Lotti is on the run.

Even readers who wouldn't usually choose a historic adventure story will be hooked from the first page and gripped until the last. The action is fast-paced and fascinating, but it's the characters that really bring this epic tale to life. There is no glossing over the devastation caused by war but it never overshadows the consequences experienced on a personal level by every one of the characters.



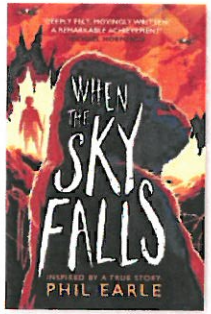
Amari and the Night Brothers

B. B. Alston

Farshore

Amari is a brave black heroine from the projects who struggles to feel like she belongs as a scholarship student at a prestigious private school. When her older brother vanishes, Amari's desperate search leads her to the incredible discovery that her brother was working for a supernatural organisation. And now she's pitted against the most frightening of villains – the dreaded Night Brothers.

This is a funny, gripping fantasy adventure with distinct contemporary influences. With the comforting appeal of an updated, girl-centred *Percy Jackson*, the roots of Amari's story are planted firmly in *Men in Black* and *Into the Spiderverse*.



When the Sky Falls

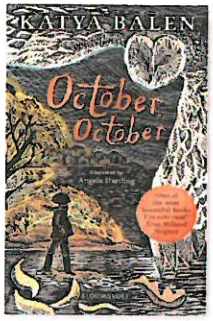
Phil Earle

Andersen Press

It's 1941, and 12-year-old Joseph is sent from Yorkshire to stay with his gran's friend, Mrs F, in the city. She's a gruff, unfriendly woman and he's an angry boy who feels totally abandoned.

In the centre of the Blitz, the only thing Mrs F cares about is the rundown zoo that she owns, particularly a huge silverback gorilla called Adonis. Adonis and Joseph take an immediate dislike to each other but over the course of the story, their bonds deepen to a remarkable relationship.

This is a beautifully written historical adventure that will take readers on an emotional and exciting journey.



October, October

Katya Balen

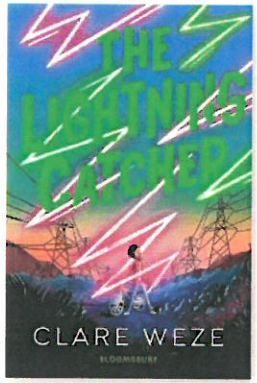
Bloomsbury

Eleven-year-old October lives in the forest with her dad. Yet, when he's injured in an accident, October is forced to stay in London with her mum. Everything in the city is wrong, from the cars and underground trains that make her sick, to school, where the other kids tease her.

Gradually, October makes friends with a boy in her class and discovers mudlarking on the Thames. As she lets her mum into her heart, life starts to change for the better.

Balen's touching, perceptive story about a transitional phase in a young girl's life is full of heart, lush description and the love of wild nature.

Age 10-11



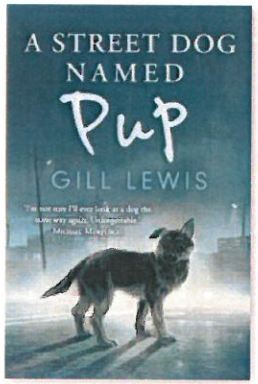
The Lightning Catcher
Clare Weze

Bloomsbury

When Alfie moves to the village of Folding Ford, he is baffled by a series of strange occurrences: a frozen puddle on a hot sunny day, a whirlwind in a bucket and a man with moths attached to his wrists by tiny threads.

Determined to get to the bottom of these mysteries, Alfie enlists the help of his new best friend Sam. Equipped with a notebook and an abundance of curiosity, their investigations lead them to creepy Ash House, home of 'Moth-Man' Nathaniel Clemm.

This exciting, science-packed novel is a cracking read and bursts with action, warmth and humour.



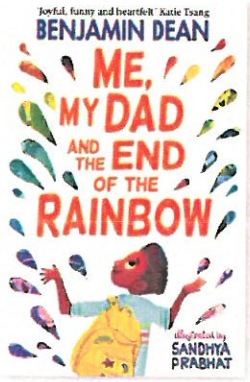
A Street Dog Named Pup
Gill Lewis

David Fickling Books

When Pup is abandoned in a strange, gloomy alley, all Pup wants to do is find his way home to the boy who loves him. But how can he do that when he doesn't even know where he is?

Luckily, there are streetwise dogs around who take him to a place of safety. But safety is always relative and life on the streets is hard, unpredictable and dangerous. Yet Pup never gives up on his dream of finding his boy again.

This epic tale of abandonment, friendship, cruelty and redemption is compelling and hard to put down.



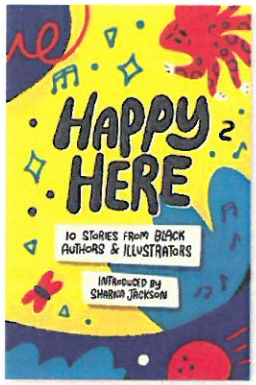
Me, My Dad and the End of the Rainbow
Benjamin Dean, illustrated by Sandhya Prabhat

Simon & Schuster

Archie Albright's parents are splitting up. It's only when he overhears them arguing that he learns why – his dad is gay.

Benjamin Dean crafts some brilliant comedy scenes in this sweet, heart-warming story about Archie's determination to go to Pride in London to support his dad. He is also great at conveying the rabbit-in-the-headlights psychological response of a pre-teen boy who cares about his family but doesn't know how to express his emotions.

A kind book which gently frames the topic of a parent coming out and acknowledges that families come in all shapes and sizes.



Happy Here: 10 Stories from Black British Authors and Illustrators

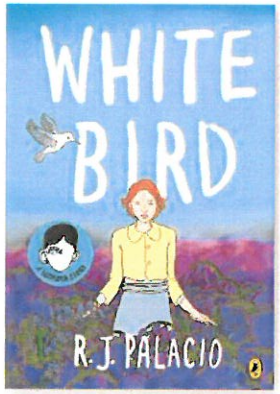
Various authors, with an introduction by Sharna Jackson

Knights Of

In Alexandra Sheppard's 'A House Like No Other', illustrated by Dorcas Magbadelo, Izzy goes to stay with her Aunty V in Brixton and helps her aunt move on from the past as well as find confidence in her skills as a dancer. In 'You're The Boss' by E.L. Norry and illustrated by Chanté Timothy, Ash joins a new school where gaming in lessons is the norm, and children are required to have strange inoculations that make their eyes glow green...

These ten illustrated short stories from some of today's best black authors and illustrators will thrill readers with the stories they've been waiting for.

This book really has everything: a skilfully spun plot, humour and charm, as well as unforgettable characters and poetry in its language.



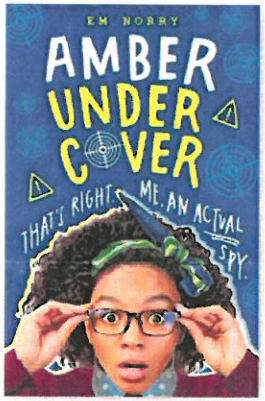
White Bird: A Graphic Novel

R. J. Palacio

Puffin

As a child, Grandmère lost her family when the Nazis rounded up innocent Jews for forced labour or extermination. Left alone, she only survived because of the compassion and bravery of a family of strangers who were prepared to risk their own lives to keep her hidden and safe.

Creative use of darkness and light enhances this beautifully illustrated graphic novel that sounds a warning for our times: evil will flourish unless good people stand up to it. But the abiding message is one of positivity: that humanity and courage are powerful weapons in the face of hatred and persecution.



Amber Undercover

Em Norry

Oxford University Press

When Amber is chosen to be a spy by the mysterious Agency, she's sent to infiltrate an exclusive boarding school that the Agency suspects harbours members of a cybercrime unit.

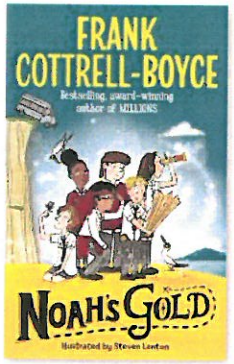
Yet, after a while, Amber realises that she's more than capable of playing the others at their own game – and perfecting her spy skills at the same time.

A fast-paced, thriller-style story with tech detail that doesn't overwhelm the plot and a humorous, likeable main character, Amber Undercover is a truly great read. As well as a cool saving-the-world plot, this is about growing up, finding your niche and learning to value what makes you unique.



Illustration © Erika Meza

Age 10-11



Noah's Gold

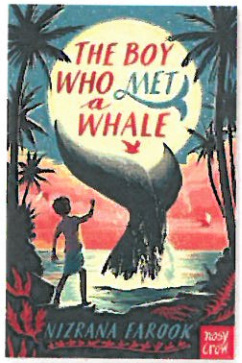
Frank Cottrell-Boyce, illustrated by Steven Lenton

Macmillan

Eleven-year-old Noah is seemingly allergic to any form of electronic technology. So accidentally breaking the internet was always going to happen. Unfortunately, he's currently marooned on a deserted island with five other children.

When Noah finds a treasure map, going on a hunt for gold seems like a good place to start. But the mysterious island holds all kind of treasure – some of it found in very unexpected places.

Frank Cottrell-Boyce has created a brilliantly sympathetic and funny character in Noah, and his insecurity about being the person seemingly responsible for everything going wrong makes him a wonderfully relatable hero.



The Boy Who Met a Whale

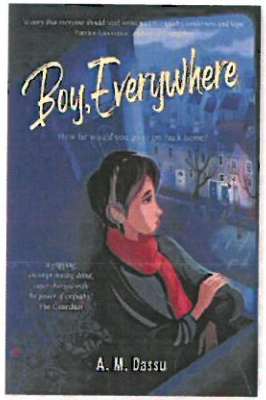
Nizrana Farook

Nosy Crow

Razi can't resist an early morning trip to the beach to watch the newly hatched turtles battling their way towards the sea. But the calm of the day is disturbed when he spots a tiny boat bobbing towards the shore. And hanging over the side is a small, still hand.

The boy in the boat is clearly in a bad way so when he starts telling tales of murdered sailors, missing treasure and giant sea monsters, Razi and his sister can't tell if he's telling the truth or just delirious. But excitement turns to jeopardy as they find themselves pursued by dangerous, ruthless criminals.

A great story with wide appeal for middle grade readers.



Boy, Everywhere

A. M. Dassu

Old Barn Books

Thirteen-year-old Sami has a good life in Damascus. Although he knows there is war in the rest of the country, he never seriously imagines it will reach him.

Yet when a bomb goes off at a shopping mall, shattering his little sister's childhood, his family decide to sell everything and flee Syria. So begins Sami's journey across Europe, and into danger, poverty and fear.

Despite all the trauma, this is an uplifting tale and a realistic representation of the experience of a refugee, though many are not as lucky as Sami. Timely and honest, this is a story that every school should have in its library.

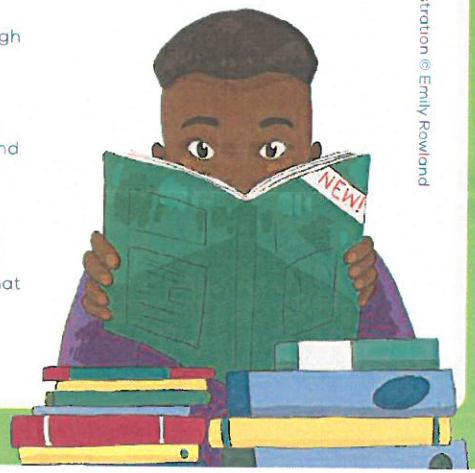
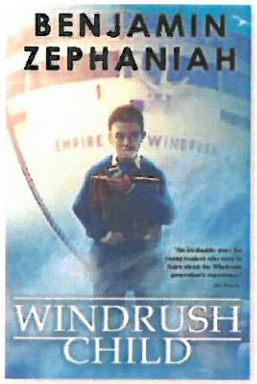


Illustration © Emily Rowland



Windrush Child

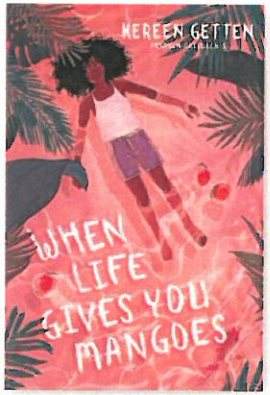
Benjamin Zephaniah

Scholastic

Leonard is part of the Windrush generation, one of thousands of people who were persuaded by the British government to help rebuild England after the Second World War and make a better life for themselves. The story begins with Leonard's childhood, but follows him all the way to 2018 when he is denied citizenship in the country where he has lived his whole life.

In addition to his meticulous research of the period, Zephaniah draws on his own experience of growing up in Britain in the 1960s to describe the difficulties Leonard and his family face.

A brilliant and important book from one of the UK's greatest poets and writers.



When Life Gives You Mangoes

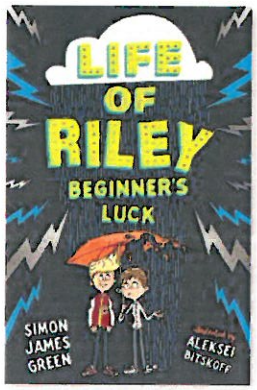
Kereen Getten

Pushkin Press

Something happened last summer – something big – but Clara cannot remember what.

As a new summer stretches out before her, Clara can't help questioning the things she thought she knew about the adults and the world around her. And when magnetic, outgoing Rudy arrives and shakes things up, Clara begins to unlock her buried memories. Will she work out what happened last summer?

This is a beautifully written story of small towns and the eternally shifting sands of friendship and family. It's impossible not to feel everything Clara feels, while the storytelling is as mysterious as it is poetic – with a dramatic twist, too.



Life of Riley: Beginner's Luck

Simon James Green, illustrated by Aleksei Bitskoff

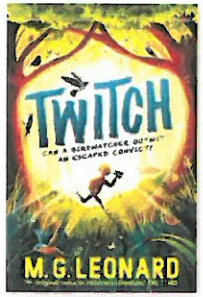
Scholastic

Following a very badly timed sneeze, Riley finds himself cursed by a fortune teller at a funfair and quickly becomes the unluckiest boy alive.

All this changes when Brad Chicago appears. Impeccably stylish and with a stationery collection to die for, he actually wants to be Riley's friend. Riley's luck seems to be turning around at last, but if he wants to keep Brad as his bestie, he needs to get rid of the curse...

This funny, gentle story is packed with snappy humour and hilarious characters. You can't help but love Riley, a brilliant, witty, world-weary kid and long-suffering underdog.

Age 10-11

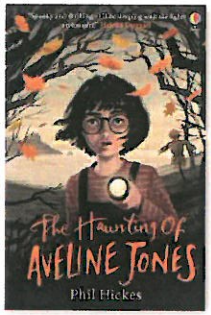


Twitch

M. G. Leonard

Walker Books

Twitch is a kind, sensitive 12-year-old boy who adores birds. He plans to spend the summer at his secret birdwatching hide in Aves Wood Nature Reserve, so is frustrated when his peaceful retreat is overrun with police officers on the hunt for an escaped prisoner. However, Twitch's birdwatching skills of patience and careful observation make him the perfect detective and he is soon drawn into the search for Robber Ryan. This engaging and uplifting tale about friendship, trust and the wonder of nature is seamlessly interwoven with an intriguing detective story. Beautifully written, it is an absolute joy to read



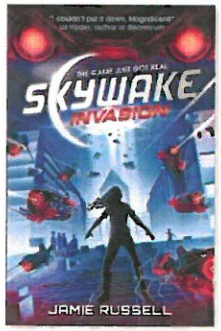
The Haunting of Aveline Jones

Phil Hickes, illustrated by Keith Robinson

Usborne

Aveline spends her half-term with her austere Aunt Lilian in Malmouth, a windswept village on the Cornish coast. Upon finding a book about local ghosts and phantoms in a dusty, second-hand bookshop, she is intrigued to learn that it once belonged to 11-year-old Primrose Penberthy, who mysteriously disappeared from Malmouth 30 years earlier. As Aveline is drawn deeper into the tales, events take an unsettling turn...

With appealing characters, a spine-tingling plot and a fittingly bleak, stormy setting, this chilling book is the first in a compelling series of ghostly mysteries



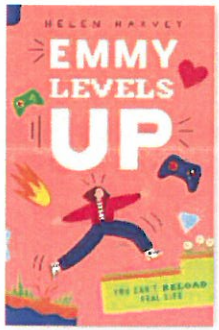
Skywake: Invasion

Jamie Russell

Walker Books

SkyWake is the gaming phenomenon of the year and centres around an intergalactic war between two alien forces, the Red Eyes and the Squids. The best players from around the world are invited to compete in live tournaments, which are held simultaneously in six international cities. As the London tournament draws to a close, Casey and her team, the Ghost Reapers, realise the game has become all too real, and they find themselves literally battling for their lives.

This exhilarating futuristic adventure, the first in a trilogy, is a fast-paced, thrilling read, perfect for gamers and sci-fi fans



Emmy Levels Up

Helen Harvey

Oxford University Press

Emmy lives some of the best bits of her life online. Yet, in real life, Emmy feels inadequate and uncoordinated, and the cool new girl Vanessa has also got Emmy's oldest friend to turn against her

Fortunately, a lunchtime computer club helps Emmy and the other 'geeks' come to realise that what makes them different also gives them strength

This is a hard-hitting yet empowering exploration of the toxic effects of bullying, not just on those who are targeted but also on those who are too afraid to challenge cruel behaviour for fear of becoming victims too. Ultimately uplifting, Emmy's story is funny, touching and a captivating read