

TSL

The School Librarian

The Quarterly Journal of the School Library Association
Volume 69 Number 4 Winter 2021

Coordinating the Extended Project Qualification

Inga Jones

Turning Reluctant Readers
into Reading Champions

Rebecca Campling

Supporting Deaf Students

Elly Roberts



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Welcome from the CEO

Welcome to the Winter issue of TSL. It's been quite a year; with change ringing both for TSL and in a much more obvious, wider scale. Change is necessary, and unavoidable, and much of the time, out of our control. This makes it challenging for all concerned, but all we can do much of the time is focus on the things within our control.

The SLA has recently started work on developing a new five year strategy; thinking into the future about how we want to contribute, and what we want to achieve. Staff, trustees and stakeholders have been involved, and the important feedback from member surveys also fed in (there's a blog looking at what the member survey told us on the website if you'd like more information). Developing a strategy is an ongoing process, but we will be sharing it next year – the celebration of the 85th year of the SLA seems like a perfect moment to review, recommit and rejuvenate. You're only as old as you feel after all!

There are many exciting developments in the wider sector, with both the Literacy All-Party Parliamentary Group, and the Libraries All Party Parliamentary Group holding meetings and receiving information and new research about school libraries. Huge thanks to CILIP and the National Literacy Trust for their work on this.

There has been plenty of discussion within education about the role and importance of 'levelling up' and wellbeing as we

continue to work through the many impacts of the pandemic, but it remains to be seen how they move forward in a practical way. We hope the findings and research about the positive impacts of school libraries creates a vision of education with school libraries playing an important role, and will continue to work to develop and share this vision.

However, despite the possibilities that exist in the current climate, no one knows better than you how challenging it has been in schools. It may be you've had to work on something completely different, had to stop doing activities which you relished to give yourself some time. That is ok. Putting boundaries in place is an important thing to do, and your efforts and work is appreciated more than you know.

'Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves even when we risk disappointing others.'
Dr Bene Brown

The release of our 'School Libraries in lockdown' report is imminent, and while reading the experiences of school library staff was, in some cases, very difficult, there are also some positives to share. The lessons provide a challenge to us all, to learn, change and do better for the future of the sector.



Alison Tarrant



Cover: Original artwork by Chris Riddell, Patron of the School Library Association. You can be in with a chance of winning this artwork by emailing 'Spring Riddell Cover' to info@sla.org.uk.

The winner of the Autumn artwork was Jane Rew, Upton Meadows Primary School in Northampton.

Published four times a year by the School Library Association: spring, summer, autumn and winter.

Cover illustration by Chris Riddell.

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ISSN 0036 6595

The views expressed are those of the contributors and reviewers and not necessarily the official views of the School Library Association.

Registered Charity Nos. 313660 and SC039453.

Printed on Carbon Captured paper. Annually the production of TSL creates 44.76 square meters of native British woodland and captures 1.792 tonnes of CO₂.

Designed and printed by Holywell Press, Oxford.



Contributions

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Advertising: Space Marketing, 10 Clayfield Mews, Newcomen Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9PA
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We are always keen for feedback.

Subscriptions

The current cost of annual membership of the School Library Association is £95.00 to include one copy of each quarterly journal, *The School Librarian*, or £131.00 to include two copies. The rate for retired and fulltime student members is £50.00. Details and membership forms may be obtained from the SLA website.

Members of the SLA receive this journal free; they may purchase other SLA publications and training courses at reduced rates; and may use our telephone advisory service and access members-only resources on the website. Worldwide institutional subscriptions to the journal only are available at £122.00 for the calendar year 2021.

Editorial

School staff have done a wonderful job, for a second year, to provide pupils with education in the midst of the most difficult circumstances. As we look towards 2022, I'm sure I am not the only one hoping we can put the Covid-19 pandemic behind us. While so much focus has been on the virus, it is important not to forget other issues that have come to light this year.

Aside from the pandemic, one of the biggest stories to come out of the UK's education sector in 2021 has been the accounts of widespread misogyny, sexual abuse, harassment, and assault in schools. In March, the website Everyone's Invited went viral after more than 13,000 users posted testimonies detailing their experiences. The children's charity NSPCC launched a helpline, and Ofsted and the government announced immediate reviews. Since the 8 March 2021, over 54,000 anonymous testimonies have been submitted and shared on the platform.

While so much focus has been on the virus, it is important not to forget other issues that have come to light this year.

Few people would disagree that an environment where such appalling incidents can take place should never have been allowed to develop.

The impact on wider society will be felt for years to come as these young people grow into adults, living lives marked by trauma or desensitized to the abnormality of their experiences. Author and campaigner Laura Bates discusses ways school libraries can be at the heart of the solution to this problem, providing vital education as well as safe spaces for discussion, and support to those affected. As Bates writes in this edition, 'young people deserve much better.'

Another story to emerge this summer was the consistent underachievement of one minority of students compared with their peers. According to the National Deaf Children's Society, analysis of GCSE results between 2015 and 2020 showed deaf pupils have achieved an entire grade less than hearing pupils, six years in a row. Almost 80% of deaf children attend mainstream school, and as Emma Fraser, teacher of the deaf and

School libraries can be at the heart of the solution to this problem, providing vital education as well as safe spaces for discussion, and support to those affected.

policy adviser for the NDCS told us: 'Deaf children are no less able than their peers ... Deafness isn't a learning disability. Just because you are deaf doesn't mean you can't learn like everybody else.' This now entrenched situation cannot be allowed to continue: failing these children through a lack of support or understanding of their needs. We've spoken to three experts who gave their advice on how libraries and school library staff can help turn around this situation.

Other highlights in this edition include librarian Inga Jones sharing her tips for co-ordinating an extended project course for sixth form students. Fake news and conspiracy theories are still very high on the agenda, with schools increasingly becoming an arena where these issues are being focused. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) revealed in October that more than three quarters of schools surveyed by the union (79%) have been targeted by anti-vaxxers. Research skills and information literacy will be absolutely vital skills for young people to successfully navigate a post-pandemic world.

Librarian Rebecca Campling also discusses her ingenious idea for creating a project to turn reluctant readers in Year 6 into reading champions.

As part of our digital section in this edition we have a special focus on podcasts worth listening to, with reviews of four popular podcasts that library and teaching staff may find useful. Alongside this are reviews of some of the most helpful digital resources for the classroom currently available, a closer look at what Google's new MUM update means for librarians, and much more!

The end of the year also brings the opportunity to pause and reflect back on the previous twelve months, and as we head into 2022 we look back at some of this year's standout articles in *TSL* in our 'Year in Review' column. We also have the 'Diary' section again to help everyone keep on top of events and activities as next year comes along.

My thanks go to everyone who contributed their hard work and time to this issue. To suggest further ideas for content please email elizabeth.roberts@sla.org.uk.

I hope you all have a very happy Christmas when it arrives!



Elly Roberts is the Publications and Awards Officer for The School Library Association
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SLA News

Annual General Meeting

Our next AGM will be in late September 2022, and we would love to see as many of our wonderful members come as possible. So that this can happen, we have created a poll to see which time of the day would work best for everyone:

www.forms.office.com/r/gdzDhuTji2

Please could you submit your responses by 1 January 2022.

At each AGM there is an opportunity for new people to get involved in the future direction of our association. We would love to see our members on the board and helping to support our work. Please do have a look at this web page which contains more information about becoming a trustee www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3 and consider standing for election!

Information Book Award

We hope all those who attended the Information Book Award ceremony on 25 November enjoyed the evening. It was wonderful to be able to announce this year's winners:

13–16 category: *Have Pride* by Stella Caldwell and Sue Sanders (Welbeck Publishing),

8–12 age category: *How Many Mice Make an Elephant?* by Tracey Turner, illustrated by Aaron Cushley (Pan Macmillan).

0–7 age category and the winner overall: *Why Do Things Die?* by Katie Daynes, illustrated by Christine Pym (Usborne).

Katie Daynes book was praised by judges for its 'gentle, non-judgemental' tone and brilliant lift-the-flap format that provides 'additional depth and relatability to the examples and discussion points within.'

Alison Tarrant, SLA CEO, said: 'I am delighted that the winner this year is for our youngest age range. There can often be an assumption that the younger the reader the less that is required, but

this is not the case. *Why Do Things Die?* is a shining example of how to deliver information to readers with the utmost respect and care.

'Children's books are vital in supporting the reader through developments which, in many cases, will live with them for their whole lives. I am proud that the Information Book Award not only showcases so many wonderful examples, but also supports schools in engaging with them.'



Lifelong Learners

Planning for next year's weekend course is well underway and we are very pleased to have some exciting events lined up for members. Next year's speakers include:

- Children's Laureate Cressida Cowell
- Librarian and author Lucas Maxwell
- Reading development and children's book consultant Jake Hope
- CEO of What on Earth Publishing Chris Lloyd

The format of the course has been updated to create added value for members, including longer sessions with more breaks to produce more networking opportunities. The sessions will be streamed into three topics – Re-invigorating



Reading, Collaboration and Co-creation, and Skills for Lifelong Learning – so members can choose what will be most beneficial to them.

Next year for the first time, we will also be offering one-to-one sessions with our experts, which members can book in advance to get specific advice tailored to their circumstances.

As the conference will fall in the same year as our 85th Anniversary, we are going to hold a special dinner on the Saturday evening to celebrate our charity and its long history, which we hope you will join us for. **The 2022 Weekend Course is proudly sponsored by Access-It, Lifelong Learners: Journeys of Curiosity, Collaboration & Imagination will be held 10–12 June 2022.**

Feature

EPQ Matters – Co-ordinating an Extended Project Qualification as a School Librarian

Inga Jones

Librarian **Inga Jones** shares her tips for co-ordinating an extended project qualification for sixth form students.

Photo Credit:
Canva Stock Image

As the educational environment becomes more exam-centred and the competition for university places ever more intense, it is increasingly difficult for sixth form students to distinguish themselves from the rest of their cohort. The Level 3 Extended Project Qualification ('EPQ'), offered by all exam boards, is an excellent way for students to boost their UCAS application and to provide evidence of formal training in life and research skills that helps prepare them for undergraduate study. As a mark of the importance of the qualification, at a teacher training event in 2017 organised by the New College of Humanities, its provost, A.C. Grayling, said that the college refuses to consider any applications lacking an EPQ. Grayling pointed specifically to the skills with which the project equips students.¹

In 2016 I was appointed as the co-ordinator for the EPQ (Edexcel)² at King's Ely, a role I was to fulfil alongside my existing position as senior school librarian. I have spent the past five years developing the scheme of work for the course to fit the needs of our students. At King's Ely, the EPQ runs from January in Year 12 to December in Year 13 and is entirely voluntary. When I took over, the average submission was below ten projects, a figure that has since risen to around twenty. Because the school offers a rounded education, and we have excellent arts and music



programmes, we tend to have a good mixture of all four pathways, although the percentages vary from cohort to cohort. While the EPQ is widely considered to be more suitable for more academic students, we have found that it can help students of varying academic ability achieve added UCAS points if they are guided to do something that they care about. The options are almost limitless, and the benefits cannot be underestimated.³

Coming from an academic research background with a strong interest in digital and information literacy, I possessed the skills needed, and, perhaps most importantly, a good understanding of the research process. The Cambridge *A New Curriculum for Information Literacy* (ANCIL) framework, developed by Jane Secker and Emma Coonan amongst others, was an extremely useful tool in deciding which elements to include into the developing scheme of work.⁴ The FOSIL Cycle,⁵ built on Barbara Stripling's *Cycle of Inquiry*,⁶ was one of many other useful tools that aided me in the process.



Inga Jones was a senior school librarian at King's Ely school from October 2013 to September 2021, where she was also the acting co-ordinator and supervisor of the Extended Project from 2016 to 2021. She is currently a Learning and Teaching Librarian for the Open University.
@pochemuchka27

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The ANCIL framework is made up of ten strands, beginning with the transition to higher education, cycling through the main research strands, and concluding with the social dimension of information. The introduction to Secker and Coonan's excellent volume lays out the various strands and how they inform the research process and affect the digital and information literacy development.⁷ Looking at the framework side by side with the exam specification for the Level 3 EPQ,⁸ three broad areas crystallise as the main pillars of any successful EPQ training:

- 1 Ability to understand course requirements
- 2 Research skills
- 3 Critical thinking

The course we offer, which is based on the exam board guidance of 40 guided learning hours, is comprised of between 15 and 20 taught lessons from February to July and supplemented by individual supervisions that take place between April and December. The course has developed organically based on student and exam board feedback. The students have a series of milestones

to complete, such as submitting a formal proposal form, completing work over the summer, and presenting their findings in a formal setting at the beginning of October. The final hurdles are to submit the first complete draft in early November, and then to assemble the remaining materials relating to the submission.

The specification, like most of its A-level equivalents, is split into four areas:

- 1 AO1 – Manage
- 2 AO2 – References
- 3 AO3 – Develop and realise
- 4 AO4 – Review⁹

We have found that, if the specification is properly understood, the students achieve better marks overall, and in AO1, AO2, and AO3 in particular. A well-conducted activity log, good referencing and use of resources, and a reflective evaluation are key to achieving higher grades. The first part of the course therefore focuses on the course requirements and reflective thinking. Because universities value the EPQ, many offer dedicated websites and materials to support schools in delivering these components.¹⁰

The next most important element of the course is critical thinking. Because of the nature of the course and the fact that students have almost entirely free choice in subjects, two difficulties arise. Firstly, unlike teaching a subject, it is often difficult to find examples to illustrate elements of the taught materials, because the students do all the A-level subjects offered by the school. This, in turn, leads to the second, and far more important difficulty – because of the range of subjects represented, the students have very different abilities and acquired skills, so differentiation and accessibility become key in delivery.

Once the proposals have been submitted and students have acquired an understanding of the course requirements, the focus shifts to critical thinking, logic, academic writing, and finally the completion of an academic literature review. Aside from referencing, the latter is possibly the hardest concept for students to grasp, but it is a vital element of the programme. Students across all subjects learn how to locate and evaluate sources, and how to build arguments skilfully using their resources. This is where the combined role of librarian and teacher assessor really comes into its own. The submission of the critical literature review in June is an important milestone in the course. Students can apply their newly developed skills and check their understanding; and it is useful for the educators because it allows us to gauge their progress and understanding with plenty of time to offer more support. More importantly, it allows us to predict UCAS grades reasonably accurately.

Photo Credit:
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The introduction of this particular element to the course has increased the quality of the final project outcomes considerably.

Co-ordinating and supervising the EPQ has been the most exciting part of my work at King's Ely over the past seven years. While it is possible to run the course in a less structured way – and many schools have no other option but to do so – we have found that this more structured approach yields better results. It should be noted that the support of the senior leadership team and colleagues willing to act as supervisors is crucial to the programme's success, as is the fact that the programme remains voluntary. Research skills amongst supervisors are useful but can be acquired – many places offer training for free.¹¹ Because of librarians' unique training and skills, however, any effective EPQ course will be successful only when run in collaboration with the school librarian.

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- 3 In their article discussing the value of the EPQ based on a pilot for AQA in 2010, Daly and Pinot de Moira concluded that while prior achievement 'was indeed the overriding predictor of success' (p. 190), 'the model of engagement with the EPQ did not appear to be significantly affected by prior achievement' and manifested 'a significant positive relationship between students' achievement on the EPQ and their intrinsic motivation; clearly a desirable attribute for lifelong learning, but also an indication that this qualification encourages students to be innovative and creative about their learning. Furthermore, students' engagement with the project appeared independent of their prior achievement, a feature which has the potential to help lower the barriers to participation.' (p. 194) (A.L. Daly and A. Pinot de Moira, 'Students' approaches to learning and their performance in the Extended Project pilot.' *Curriculum Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2010, pp. 179-200).
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- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 16-58.
- 10 For some examples please see *Leeds University Research and study Skills Outreach Programme* (tinyurl.com/m9bx9hpd, (accessed 21 September 2021)); *Manchester University Extended Project Qualification* tinyurl.com/np93cs, (accessed 21 September 2021)); *UEA EPQ Resources* (tinyurl.com/kh27yze2, (accessed 21 September 2021)); University of Bath, 'How to Succeed in Your EPQ: the Nuts and Bolts of Completing Your Project,' *FutureLearn*, www.futurelearn.com/courses/epq-success, (accessed 21 September 2021).
- 11 Leeds and UEA offer teacher and supervisor training as well as student research skills courses.

Turning Reluctant Readers into Reading Champions

Rebecca Campling

Librarian **Rebecca Campling** discusses her ingenious idea to create a project to turn reluctant readers in Year 6 into reading champions.

In the first half of the 2021 summer term, I was approached by our Year 6 teachers to see if I could find a way to get their key marginal children a bit more engaged with reading and with our Accelerated Reader program. My initial response was panic – as someone who’s worked mainly with early years foundation stage and key stage 1 children, I’ll be honest and say Year 6 scare me a bit – but I agreed to have a think about what I might be able to do as librarian that might grasp their imaginations a bit more than the teachers could.

It came to me one night as I lay awake – a trick, a ruse, a (well-intentioned) deceit – get THEM to come up with the idea! Bearing in mind that these were children who don’t typically enjoy reading, aren’t necessarily motivated by intangible rewards, and often (for whatever reason) struggle to reach their full potential in class, they really did blow me away.

It came to me one night as I lay awake – a trick, a ruse, a (well-intentioned) deceit.

We spent three sessions together, with them driving discussion and direction, and completing activities in between in their own time. First, I presented them with the problem and asked them, with no prompting, what *they* would do to encourage younger reluctant readers, and to what *they* themselves would have responded. In 10 minutes, they had filled an A3 page with their ideas. I then gently steered them to the more realistic ones (as much as I would like a TV in the library, it’s somewhat out of budget) and set them the challenge of creating some sort of advertisement for it. This could have been a poster, a PowerPoint presentation, a video, a speech – whatever they chose.

After two weeks, we got back together, and they shared what they’d done. Some had clearly created something but had ‘left it at home’ or ‘forgotten’, but seeing the confidence and pride their peers took in their work, they suddenly didn’t want to be the only ones left out and all produced their ideas within a couple of days! These varied from text-based posters to PowerPoint presentations, and one very swanky video using stock footage of books as a backdrop, to catchy titles incentivising our reluctant readers. All of them also included information about how beneficial reading is – despite us not emphasising that element in our previous session! I suggested to them that we approach the head about creating a segment for our online assemblies, which they were very keen on.

Between session two and three, the number of times I saw these children in the library increased significantly. At least every other day, one or more of them came down from Year 6 to tell me they’d made another poster, or had another idea, or thought of some more books that might appeal to them and others like them. They also adopted the moniker of ‘Reading Champions’!

For our last session, we went outside and recorded a short promo video of the children saying in their own words what they had been doing and why. We uploaded this to our online newsletter and shared it across both the library and Year 6 social media accounts. They also each chose a book for me to order for the library, as part of their own incentive for engaging with the project.

Their actual plan drew on the existing target-setting capabilities of Accelerated Reader by enabling teachers to further incentivise the targets. Children who, for whatever reason, were struggling to engage or progress in their reading could be given a tangible goal – choosing a book for the library that would be labelled as “theirs”, and which would reside in their classroom for a term before being released to the wider school community.



Rebecca Campling is a primary school librarian in Orton Wistow Primary School, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, with over ten years’ experience in primary education, and three years as a public library assistant. Her special skills include reading at lightning speed, and consuming vast amounts of tea.



Photo of the library at Orton Wistow Primary School

We saw an improvement in their ZPD ranges, their home reading, the variety of text choices, and most importantly their passion for reading.

Teachers would use their own discretion as to who needed the extra push, and the children would be motivated by the idea of ownership over library content and knowing that the more they read in the present, the more they would be able to shape what they read in future.

Over the following half term, the final one of the year, they set their own targets and tested how long it took to reach them. I continued to see these children in the library more frequently than I had before. They were now borrowing books to read and even talking to their peers to recommend other texts – beforehand, if these children had even set foot in the library, they had spent their time lounging in a chair, waiting to leave again. Our Year 6 teachers both agreed that all those involved engaged phenomenally with the project and far exceeded our expectations. We saw an improvement in their ZPD ranges, their home reading, the variety of text choices, and most importantly their passion for reading.

So what next? For us, we now have a project that we know works and which is easy to implement again if we need to. We also have a ready-to-go plan for any children struggling to engage with their reading, thanks to my reluctant readers turned reading champions: a plan that should in itself beget more reading – a never ending cycle of reading, in fact, as once they have “earned” their own chosen texts, they are more likely to then read those texts (and others) in order to get more of what they want in the library. In reality, we already have a lot of these texts or similar (we pride ourselves on a wide-ranging collection) – but if I have learned anything during my time working with children, it’s that ownership of something is what really makes it come to life for them. Our Year 6 key marginals took complete ownership of this project, and it created more enthusiasm in them than we could ever have imagined, especially if we had tried to impose something on them from an adult perspective. These particular individuals have all now moved on to secondary school, where I hope they will continue in their reading momentum. Whether they do or not is never going to be my privilege to know, but it has been my privilege to see their love of reading grow into something that not only inspires them, but will continue to inspire others across the school.

Supporting Deaf Students to Achieve Their Full Potential

Elly Roberts

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) revealed this summer that deaf pupils in England routinely achieve less than their peers. We talked to Emma Fraser, teacher of the deaf, author and comedian Samantha Baines, and retired librarian Elizabeth Schlenther about how libraries can help support these students.

According to the NDCS, analysis of GCSE results for 2015 to 2020 show deaf pupils achieved an entire grade less than hearing pupils six years in a row, with deaf pupils averaging grade 4 compared to grade 5 for hearing children.

"Deaf children are no less able than their peers," said Emma, teacher of the deaf who works as a policy adviser for the NDCS.

"Deafness isn't a learning disability. Just because you are deaf doesn't mean you can't learn like everybody else," she added.

"It just means you may need some kind of adaptation to make sure you can access learning."

According to the Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE), 78% of school-aged deaf children in the UK attend mainstream schools.

Deafness isn't a learning disability. Just because you are deaf doesn't mean you can't learn like everybody else.

"Deafness has a broad definition," said Emma. "We talk about deaf children as children with any type of hearing loss. So for any child their experiences and needs will be different."

"Noisy environments like schools are very challenging because the hearing technology amplifies all sound, not just speech," Emma added.

"It doesn't restore hearing – so it's not like putting a pair of glasses on.

"It's like being in a noisy pub and trying to pick out what someone is saying to you, all the time," she said.

Emma explained that deaf children, particularly those who have been deaf from a young age, haven't been exposed to the quality and quantity of language that hearing children grow up around before they can read, resulting in delayed language development, delayed literacy, and finally delayed learning.

"Books are key; they are a window into the world for deaf children," she said.

"Often their experiences of the world can be different from other children, so books give them an opportunity to explore new language and new vocabulary.

"Songs, rhymes and alliteration in early reading books are really good at providing early knowledge of how language works," Emma said.

Retired librarian Elizabeth Schlenther encouraged schools and libraries to order books with a deaf child as the main character or information books about being deaf.

"It's really good for children to see other children in books that have the same disabilities that they have," Elizabeth said.

"It makes it seem more normal if you have books in the library or in your classroom actually showing your own experiences.

"It's important to be able to read things that reflect your own life and for your classmates to see what the limitations and pluses are of their fellow student being different from them," she said.

Author Samantha Baines echoed this as a way of promoting self-esteem and positive deaf identity among deaf pupils.

"If children with hearing aids and hearing loss see themselves in a book, perhaps read by the entire class, it becomes a cool thing," Samantha said.



Elly Roberts is the Publications and Awards Officer for The School Library Association
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If children with hearing aids and hearing loss see themselves in a book, perhaps read by the entire class, it becomes a cool thing.

Her books *Harriet Versus the Galaxy* (2019) and *The Night the Moon Went Out* (2021) feature protagonists who wear hearing aids which give them extra skills.

“It’s so important to have books with role models in,” added Samantha, who suffered with tinnitus from a young age but was not offered a hearing test or hearing aid until she was an adult

“I think often hearing loss and deafness gets a bad wrap because people think it stops you from doing things and holds you back and what I really wanted to come across in my book is it’s actually an extra strength, and you can do anything you want to do, you might just have to do it in a slightly different way,” she said.

Elizabeth, who has set up www.healthybooks.uk which suggests books featuring a range of different health-related issues, was the librarian for a secondary state school in Aberystwyth.

She recommended also holding special sessions in the library with deaf children after school or in the holidays before they join the school, so they are familiar with the library.

“This could be extended to additional school classes once or twice a week to help deaf kids catch up on things they were finding difficult,” she added.

“I think it would be important to do them separately or after school so the deaf students aren’t singled out as different from the other kids.”

Samantha added: “I can totally understand children in a school environment don’t want to constantly be putting their hand up, drawing attention to themselves and saying ‘Miss I can’t hear what you’re saying please can you repeat that.’”

“Even as an adult I don’t always want to be the one to say ‘I can’t hear’ or ask someone to repeat themselves. I don’t want to create a fuss or stop someone mid flow in a conversation, so I just let it go.

“At a time when you just don’t want to be different, you just want to fit in with your school peers, having a hearing aid means you could have attention brought to you in a negative way.”

“I’m not surprised deaf children are achieving less than their peers,” Samantha added.

The author suggested staff make sure all key information is clearly written down on worksheets which can be handed out when tasks are being set in class, rather than just relying on oral methods of communication. She recommended ensuring deaf



Photo Credit: Canva Stock Image

children sit at the front of the class if they rely on lip reading, and for staff to also be aware when writing on whiteboards or playing a video that the person speaking is facing the deaf student.

“There are also loads of great tools for the classroom, like speakers that a teacher can wear round their neck that connect to a student’s hearing aid,” she said.

“People assume if you have hearing loss you can’t hear things, which is true, but it also means you can be extra sensitive to some noises,” Samantha added.

She explained that background sounds like projectors or computers humming can set off tinnitus.

“Tinnitus can also get worse in high stress environments, so in exam environments if you’ve got a noise that is bringing on your tinnitus and you’re stressed, that’s just going to make it even more difficult to concentrate,” she said.

“If you’re in a big, echoey environment like an exam hall, where there’s no sound cushioning or absorption and someone drops their pen, you can hear it from the other side of the room. Or if you can hear children outside playing in the playground, someone who doesn’t have hearing issues might be able to blot that out, but a student with hearing loss might find it more attention pulling and draining.”

Samantha said the library can be the perfect environment for deaf children to feel comfortable in and sit exams, due to the lack of background noise, and the use of carpets and other soft furnishings cushioning the noise.

“It’s just really important to be open and aware of hearing loss as an issue in the classroom,” she added.

“It’s not the same for every single child. So have a meeting with them and their parents and find out what helps that child with their hearing.”

Creating a Safe Space from Sexual Harassment

Laura Bates

Author and campaigner **Laura Bates** discusses ways school libraries can play a vital role in helping to combat the sexual abuse culture so many young people have experienced in school.

Thanks to the courageous testimonies of young women speaking out about their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse, the issue of gender inequality and sexual violence in school is suddenly in the media spotlight. But the fact that the press has only now decided to take note, and the apparent shock of government and inspectorate officials, belie the reality. This is not a brand-new problem.

In the past 10 years, I have visited over 500 schools and universities, working with tens of thousands of young people in mixed sex and single sex, private and state, rural and inner-city settings. In all that time, I have never encountered a group of young people for whom sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual assault aren't problems. In the same period, I have received around 50,000 testimonies from young people to my Everyday Sexism Project, a website where people of any age or gender can share experiences of any kind of gender inequality.

Girls have used the project to share their experiences of being harassed by adult men on their way to school, being groped and spanked in school corridors and playgrounds, being raped and forced back into the classroom with their rapist. And many more have described the daily drip, drip, drip of ongoing sexism: from inappropriate jokes and sexual innuendo; to school dress codes that penalise young women for displaying clavicles or knees; to curricula dominated by dead, white, male authors and historical figures.

The young people I work with feel that sexual harassment and assault are so commonplace that they have become a "normal" part of childhood.

The young people I work with feel that sexual harassment and assault are so commonplace that they have become a "normal" part of childhood. They feel abandoned by teachers who tell them 'boys will be boys' and let down by schools who send girls home for 'distracting' their male peers with short skirts. They feel forgotten and failed by a legal system where rates of charging and summons are so low (1.5%) that rape has effectively been decriminalised. And they are furious at a world where men accused of sexual harassment and violence go on to receive sporting awards and cultural accolades, to be elected to government office and seats of "justice".

The truth is, we have known about this problem for years. Despite ministerial claims of shock in the wake of the recent wave of allegations, we have known since 2010 that almost a third of 16–18-year-old girls report experiencing 'unwanted sexual touching' (a form of sexual assault) at school. And that over 70% of young people hear girls being called sluts and slags at school on a weekly basis. We've known since 2015 that 5,500 sexual offences, including 600 rapes, were reported to UK police forces as having occurred in schools over a 3 year period (working out, on average, at almost exactly one rape per school day). And the government was presented with all this evidence (along with great quantities of girls' testimonies, and warnings of an epidemic of school sexual violence from women's organisations) by its own Women and Equalities Select Committee in a 2016 report. Yet young people have not been provided with the support and action they need. We have failed them.

To prioritise this ongoing catastrophe in the way it deserves, a whole school approach is required, one in which senior leadership teams and teachers of all subjects are active participants. A single, box-ticking assembly or a few PSHE lessons won't change a problem that is often deeply ingrained in school culture, particularly if such messaging



Laura Bates is the founder of the Everyday Sexism Project, a collection of over 200,000 women's experiences. She works with MPs, businesses, police forces and schools to tackle gender inequality. She is the bestselling author of *Everyday Sexism*, *Girl Up* and *The Burning* and her new YA novel, *The Trial*, was published in September. [@everydaysexism](http://everydaysexism.com)

is contradicted by poor responses to sexual harassment, or a lack of diversity elsewhere.

A successful approach requires awareness of the complex ways in which young people's online world (social media, online pornography, sexting, anti-feminist extremism) interacts with their ideas about sexual consent, healthy relationships, and gender. It requires a dedicated, victim-centred sexual harassment policy that ensures survivors won't experience backlash for coming forward. It requires careful recording of the issue, separate from other forms of bullying or harassment, so that trends and progress can be recorded.

Young people should be supported to develop their own campaigns and approaches, with safe spaces created to enable them to reflect upon and explore the problem and disclose the solutions they feel would be most impactful for their particular set of circumstances. Ideally, partnerships should be formed with local women's organisations or expert groups who are able to lend external support and expertise in tackling the problem, both from a preventative perspective and when responding to any sensitive disclosures.

School libraries can play a vibrant and vital role in this process, from providing a safe space for reflection and learning to equipping students with tools for activism and self-expression.

There are many individual schools, and school staff, who are doing a brilliant job at tackling these issues, sometimes without a great deal of support, and usually with no funding or specific training. But too many students still experience a lack of understanding at best, or victim-blaming at worst, when they experience sexual abuse at school. Too many girls are being taken out of school because, in the aftermath of an abusive experience, they find themselves slut-shamed, shunned or punished instead of finding the support they need.

Schools which choose to tackle the problem comprehensively and head-on will reap the rewards: where the issue is brushed under the carpet, it can have devastating implications for students' mental health, school performance, career aspirations, and lives.

School libraries can play a vibrant and vital role in this process, from providing a safe space for reflection and learning to equipping students with tools for activism and self-expression. There are so many wonderful literary resources to



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support, inform, and empower young people, from introductory texts like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists*, to LGBT+ manifestos like Juno Dawson's *This Book is Gay* and *What's the T?* I wrote my first teen non-fiction book, *Girl Up*, as a direct response to my experiences in schools, where I realised many young people were not receiving adequate information about sexual consent, female pleasure, or legal rights and definitions of sexual assault and harassment. It includes 10-point guides to setting up your own feminist society and starting a feminist campaign. And my young adult fiction novels, *The Burning* and *The Trial*, aim to challenge norms, tackle topics around sexting, revenge pornography, sexual harassment and sexual assault and give young people the confidence to feel less alone. They sit in a long and brilliant tradition of UK young adult authors, exploring the many issues facing young people, with writers like Holly Bourne, Alice Oseman, Malorie Blackman, Kiran Millwood Hargrave, Danielle Jawando, Muhammad Khan, Sara Barnard and many more offering hope, inspiration, and empowerment for teenage readers.

These aren't easy topics to read about, much less to discuss openly. But we are failing young people if we don't try. We leave them disempowered in the face of abuse and helpless to stand up to prejudice if we don't provide them with safe, supported spaces to explore and learn. When we fail to educate them fully about sexual consent and healthy relationships, there is a plethora of misinformation, myths and misconceptions gleaned from social media and online porn just waiting to fill the void. And young people deserve much better than that.

Year in Review: Looking Back at TSL 2021

Elly Roberts

This year has been a roller-coaster ride for the Education sector, so we've picked some articles you might want to revisit.

Volume 69 Number 1 Spring: Extending National Poetry Day throughout the Curriculum by Liz Rose, librarian at Box Hill School, p12.

I always wanted the school to celebrate National Poetry Day because students don't necessarily get a lot of exposure to poetry outside of English lessons or see it as being particularly relevant to their lives.

I needed something that could be delivered quickly and easily, with little preparation from teachers, away from the library to which not everyone would have access.

I came up with the idea of compiling a full text list of short, light-hearted poems – themed around school and the subjects we teach – and asking teachers to incorporate them into both tutor time and as many lessons as possible. ... At the end of the day, I emailed all staff ... to thank them for participating and ask for feedback.

Poetry had been used in English, design technology, history, maths and Spanish lessons as well as tutor time. In tutor time and maths, reading the poems has resulted in students performing the poems and rapping... The whole activity was a great example of cross-curricular working.

Volume 69 Number 2 Summer: Raising Readers, Changing Lives: Supporting Progress and Pleasure in Reading by Charlotte Hacking, Learning Programmes Leader at CLPE, p6.

Learning to read is not without its challenges. Every child will come to us with different background experiences, develop in different ways, and vary in their reading preferences.

The CLPE Reading Scale ... describes the journey that children make in order to become literate. The scale helps teachers, and anyone working with those learning to read, to develop their subject knowledge and to identify where different children currently are on their reading journey.

Adults working with readers must [also] have a good knowledge of children's literature and how to choose and use texts to develop reading skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours.

It's vital that the books older early readers are given are emotionally and developmentally appropriate so that they do not feel patronised or stigmatised and that readers can access opportunities to develop their comprehension through sophisticated themes and illustrations as they learn the technical aspects of reading through a more simplified text.

Reading is not an easy process: it's one of the most difficult things a child will have to learn in their primary school experience, but when a child can read, it unlocks doors. To the imagination and to the wider world. We owe it to our children to give them the right keys.

Volume 69 Number 3 Autumn: A 'Right Time' Approach to Negotiating Controversies in School Libraries by Karen Coats, Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for Research in Children's Literature at the University of Cambridge, p10.

An evidence-based "right time" approach might ... suggest alternatives to the exclusion of certain books due to their outdated values and images. Obviously, greater inclusion of books featuring diverse casts of characters in helpful interactions are needed, especially for the youngest pupils. Discussion around these books should be concrete, emphasising how occupations and roles are available to people of all genders, skin tones, and abilities, and how people help each other. For older students, a "critical reading" shelf can be set aside for books that have been challenged on social media, with resources for discussion that set the images and values in their historical context and suggest ways that their legacy is still with us. Librarians can recommend that these books be carefully considered before sharing them with children under the age of eight, which is when children begin to develop a critical consciousness, but they can also offer opportunities for teens to reflect on the schemas they carry with them into their more advanced reading. As we strive to open our gates ever wider, a "right time" approach offers myriad possibilities to confront the systemic injustices we seek to redress.



Elly Roberts is the Publications and Awards Officer for The School Library Association
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Feature

The Fallible Narrator

Richard Gerver

SLA President Richard Gerver reflects on the importance of showing our frailty when being a role model for young people...

"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

- F Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

I often get asked what my favourite books are; the quote above is from one at the very top of my list.

I was introduced to *Gatsby* at school, by our librarian. I was very fortunate and went to a school in the 1970s and 80s with an amazing library and perhaps more importantly, an amazing librarian. I remember the moment as clearly as I do the moment I first met my wife. It was 1983, I was fourteen years old and had been through a difficult time. I was in the throes of teenage hormones, but I was still recovering from my parents' very messy divorce, and I had got in with the wrong crowd. There was a gang of lads at my school, led by a particularly charismatic boy called Trevor. It was a difficult age and stage. I think I was angry, vulnerable, and desperate to be liked. I had always loved books and was a prolific writer; it's why the library had been such a sanctuary for me and why Miss Connelly, the librarian, had become a kind of confidante.

So, there we were, one autumnal afternoon. In the library. I had just been punished for being caught smoking in the bushes with the "gang". Sadly, I was not born an athlete and as the others fled successfully, I had been too flat footed and was caught by Mr Levick, a fierce man, who it turns out, had also been a county standard runner back in his day.

Miss Connelly knew me better than anyone at school; she was such an incredible listener. I look back on it now and realise she was a life coach before they'd been invented. As I wiped a frustrated tear from my eye, she leaned forward and said, "I reckon you might like this."

She handed me a well-thumbed copy of *Gatsby*. "You'll get a huge amount from this wonderful book, especially the fallible narrator, Nick Carraway."

I had never heard the term before but soon understood. That brilliant literary device that

creates for the reader, a lead narrator, who is flawed, human and not objective. To me, Nick was so relatable, he was me! I identified with him and so much of his character. He was flawed and being seduced into a world that felt alien but so enticing, by characters who scared yet enthralled him. It was absolutely the book I needed at that time. It helped me to understand a little more about my situation, my emotions, and my own development. It really was nothing short of life changing.

Thank you, Miss Connelly.

I wanted to tell this story as a result of something the wonderful Cressida Cowell said during our online SLA event in September. She talked about being messy, making mistakes, having dreadful handwriting and a private notebook where she could write what she wanted, as a child, without judgement.

In education, we feel so under pressure, to deliver right answers, to pass tests and then, as professional educators, to get the same from our students. It strikes me that many young educators feel so much pressure to be right, to be infallible, that they not only burn themselves out but actually alienate themselves from many of their students. As I have said many times before, none of us learn anything new from getting something right; we only learn at the point of a mistake or the realisation that we don't know or can't do something.

It is so important that all of us who work with young people remember that being a role model is as much about showing our humanity and our frailties as it is our professionalism and the positive qualities we want to help develop in our students. I think that it is so important that we are just a little bit "Nick Carraway", fallible narrators.

Many young educators feel so much pressure to be right, to be infallible, that they not only burn themselves out but actually alienate themselves from many of their students.



Richard Gerver is the President of the School Library Association and is a world renowned speaker and author. He was previously a headteacher.

Helpful Hints

The Apple Way

By Roshan Hunt

Haileybury, Hertfordshire

This term, I started working at a new school where Apple iOS is the preferred operating system. I have therefore been issued with my own sleek MacBook Air, complete with fingerprint recognition. But here's the thing – I don't know how to use Apple products. I don't own an iPhone, iPods passed me by, and because my husband is passionately anti-Apple from a system integration point of view, we are a Windows and Android only household. So, navigating the most basic of online tasks has been a real learning curve for me. I've watched the idiot guides, but most helpful to me has been my colleague, a twenty-something recent textiles graduate who has never used anything else other than a Mac. So, whilst I'm mentoring her in librarianship, she's teaching me when to use 'Command' rather than 'Control'. That's teamwork. And despite my initial faltering, I'm learning to love the Apple way (just don't tell the husband).



Photo Credit: Canva Stock Image

Reading Plans

By Alison Sanders

Birches Head Academy, Stoke-on-Trent

All students have been given a personalised reading plan, with their reading age at the top, the name of the first book they are going to read and their reading goals for this year. Each student has had a 1-2-1 session to review their reading plans with either me or their English teacher. It has helped students to take ownership over their own reading and also helped us to identify, early on, those students who might need more support than others. There is also a section on the plan for the students to identify any books they would like to read that aren't currently in the library, which is a great help to me when I put my orders in for new books!

3D Display Fun

By Jo Bavington

Uplands Manor Primary School, Smethwick

When creating a display, whether for a religious festival, world book day or an event about to happen, I try to have something that stands out. For the Roald Dahl day display, for example, I made a six foot lollipop from *Charlie and the Chocolate*

Factory and a giant medicine bottle from *George's Marvelous Medicine*. I've made an A3 sized Divali lamp using cardboard and decorated it in bright colours. Cereal boxes make great 3D books. Last year a class made a giant poppy and gave it to me, and I have incorporated it in my Remembrance Day display this year. Having an object that is oversized or 3D catches the eye and sparks conversation. Pupils are drawn to look at the display and then start asking to borrow books on that topic.

Audiobook Advantages

By Joanna Whitehouse

Lana International School, Thailand

I have found that in our international school setting audiobooks are a fantastic way to encourage students with English as an additional language to read and boost their English skills, particularly if they read the text and listen at the same time. Over the last few years, I have built up an audiobook library of over 250 titles, but it has happened very organically as students have asked for specific books. I have never really gotten around to advertising the titles I have.

This term I have used time during online teaching to catalogue all the audiobook titles, making them searchable to students in the online catalogue, and I have also created a sticker to put on physical books to signify that I have the audiobook of the same title. Now when students are searching the shelves for books, they are reminded about audiobooks and can instantly see if the audiobook is also available, rather than having to ask me.

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Between the Library and the Classroom

Becoming Integral to the Educational Process

My appointment as Head of Inquiry-Based Learning at Blanchelande College has allowed me to reflect more deeply on the development of a theory of the role of the library in the student's intellectual experience (Shera) *and* personal growth, which is necessary if we are to change the way our colleagues think of the school library by changing how they feel about education (Howe).

Our starting point is Shera's assertion that the fundamental philosophical question that we address is, 'What is a book that man may know it, and a man that he may know a book?' It is clear from Shera's writing that he understood book as 'record, in the widest McLuhan-like sense' (Beswick). The question then becomes, 'What is a record that a person may know it, and a person that they may know a record?'

From the perspective of the development of a theory of the role of the library in the student's educational experience, our concern, then, is with *how* a person comes to know a record, or, more specifically in our context, *how* a student comes to know and understand the world and themselves in it through the record of human knowledge. This, as we have argued, is a learning process, and specifically an inquiry learning process, which is largely dependent on thoughtful reading, both nonfiction and fiction. And this, as we have

further argued, is the fundamental purpose of the school library, which closely aligns it with the fundamental purpose of the school. In this way, the library actually becomes integral to the educational process.

From the perspective of FOSIL, this deepening insight into an emerging theory of the role of the library in the student's educational experience coincides with two important events.

Firstly, the imminent publication of IFLA's *Global Action on School Libraries: Models of Inquiry*. This includes a chapter on the evolving nature of inquiry (co-authored with Barbara Stripling), Barbara's chapter on Stripling's Model/ESIFC, my chapter on FOSIL (which is based on Stripling's Model/ESIFC), and a chapter on FOSIL in A-Level Politics at Oakham School by Joe Sanders and Jenny Toerien.

The second is the upcoming IFLA School Libraries Section midyear meeting in April, which we are hosting at Blanchelande College, a focus of which is inquiry-based learning.

These events reaffirm the centrality of inquiry to the library's instructional program, and the value of the library's instructional program to the fundamental purpose of the school.

The revolution will not be televised.

The FOSIL Group is an international community of educators who frame learning through inquiry, which is a process and stance aimed at building knowledge and understanding of the world and ourselves in it as the basis for responsible participation in society.



Darryl Toerien

Research Highlights

The first is this research from *Reading Research Quarterly*, and is entitled "A Meta-Analysis on the Effects of Text Structure Instruction on Reading Comprehension in the Upper Elementary Grades". The title may not fire your imagination but the article is worth a read. It explores how impactful reading instruction is, and concludes that how much children read seems to matter most after the shift from learning to read to reading to learn. tinyurl.com/2x4wz85f

The NLT found a gap between children who are on free school meals and their peers - just 47.5% children who receive free school meals told us they enjoy reading compared to 52.1% of children who do not. The same study showed that last year had a particularly detrimental impact on the reading enjoyment of boys who received free school meals; a drop of 5.2 percentage points.

However, the same research showed an increase in the number of children who said they enjoy reading; it's now up to 51.5% (of 8 to 18 year olds). In January 2020 47.8%; the lowest level of reading enjoyment since 2005, but research from just after the first national lockdown in 2020 reached a high of 55.9% children and young people who said they enjoy reading. tinyurl.com/5addyre5

The Great School Libraries campaign (GSL) team have been working with Nottingham Trent University to develop further research into school libraries. These focus specifically on the impact of school libraries on pupil wellbeing, senior leaders'

understanding of, and attitudes towards, school libraries and understanding the impact of inquiry learning. The full research projects will be released later this year, alongside toolkits to provide support (you can sign up to the GSL newsletter here: greatschoolibraries.org.uk/sign-up-here).

The literature reviews are a summary of research which already exists in the field, which makes them useful in their own right, as well as supporting the development of the research. Some of the conclusions are that:

- Library usage positively correlates with general health in adults (Fujiwara, D., Lawton, R., & Mourato, S. (2015). The health and wellbeing benefits of public libraries Full report. *Arts Council England and SIMETRICA*.)
- Most stakeholders were unaware of the programs and support offered [by school libraries] (Everhart, N. (2014). What Do Stakeholders Know about School Library Programs? Results of a Focus Group Evaluation. *School Library Research*, 17.)
- Since 1990, creativity scores have decreased by a large margin, even if IQ scores have increased. (Kim, K. H. (2011). The creativity crisis: The decrease in creative thinking scores on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. *Creativity research journal*, 23(4), 285-295)

Read all the research here: tinyurl.com/3a6d25rs

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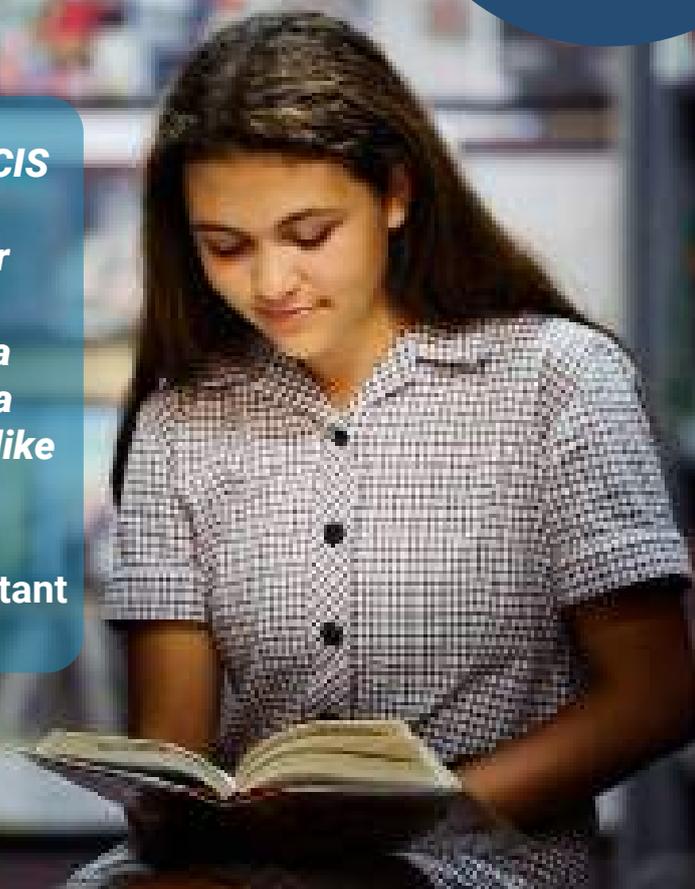
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- Sarah Pavey, Education Consultant



The Schools Catalogue Information Service (SCIS) creates high quality, consistent catalogue records for UK school libraries.

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Access to SCIS Data frees up busy library staff, allowing them to focus on what they do best – supporting teachers and students.

A subscription to SCIS Data contributes to curriculum planning by curating resources for your school. The SCIS database includes book cover images, resource summaries, genres, educational-specific subject headings and Dewey classifications.

Partnering with publishers and distributors worldwide, SCIS makes sure the latest resources are available to your school community. SCIS supports reading for pleasure and helps students find resources that interest them.

SCIS publishes a quarterly school library journal called Connections. With articles by school librarians and staff, Connections is a great professional news resource for librarians. If you are interested in writing for Connections, email connections@esa.edu.au.

SCIS is a business unit of Education Services Australia, a not-for-profit sustainable education service provider.

A View From ...

... a primary school

Hosting a Fundraising Readathon for a Book Vending Machine

There was a buzz of excitement around the school one day in July last year. It was the day of our readathon. The literacy coordinator at school came up with this great fundraising initiative for our whole school to be part of: a sponsored read-a-thon to raise funds for a book vending machine. From 9am to 3pm there was always at least one class reading. As we have a large school, a timetable was created so each year group from Nursery up to Year 6 would be reading at different times throughout the day. One Year 6 class even stopped mid-way through a P.E. lesson to read and then carried on their P.E. lesson – they found this exciting!

Our music teacher popped into classrooms throughout the day to video classes reading together. He then made a video to show during assembly and it was also put on our Twitter feed.

Leading up to the readathon, pupils, families, and staff had been asking friends and family to sponsor them. The highest

fundraiser from each year group was given a £5 Amazon voucher. This incentive paid off. Our school is situated in an area with a large number of low-income families and money is tight. We were blown away with how the school community got behind this fundraiser. We raised enough money to buy a book vending machine and books to stock it.

Fast forwarding to now, I hear pupils chatting about which book they would choose and how to punch in the correct letter and number. Pupils can earn a token and get to choose whatever book they like from the machine. Wouldn't we all like to see vending-machines full of books instead of chocolate and crisps?



Jo Bavington
Uplands Manor Primary
School, Birmingham

... a state secondary school

Getting Serious about Reading for Pleasure

Serious Reading for Pleasure. A juxtaposition? Perhaps, but that's exactly what we are doing here at Birches Head Academy this year: getting serious about RFP. Situated in the heart of Stoke-on-Trent, an area with traditionally below average literacy rates, improving outcomes through developing that all-important love of reading is at the forefront of everything we do. Some of the initiatives we are employing this year include:

- Going Harry Potter mad! All staff and students have been 'sorted' one of the four HP houses and are competing collectively to read the most books each term. It's been great to see students badgering the staff in their houses to read more!
- Induction pack for Year 7 – includes a Marauder's Map, on which they mark off each time they have finished reading a book and work towards prizes and awards.
- Birches Head Reads – 101 specially selected titles, which have their own section in the library. We challenge our voracious readers to finish as many of them as they can by the end of the school year.
- Reading logs – taken home by all students in key stage 3 and signed daily by parents/carers to help us establish that vital link between school and home.

- Extra-curricular – the first of our one-off events will be a Mad Hatter's Tea Party for Year 7 students, purely as a celebration of reading for pleasure and to welcome them onto their reading journey here at Birches Head Academy. There are also after-school clubs twice weekly, which are popular with students from all year groups.
- Weekly library lessons for all KS3 students, which have a very different feel to English lessons and are solely focused on increasing reading ages and the enjoyment of reading.
- Students are regularly invited to suggest new books that they would like to see in the library. It was wonderful to see a group of usually reluctant Year 9 boys literally diving into a box of brand-new Ultimate Football Heroes books during their recent library lesson – before I'd even had the chance to catalogue them!
- Personalised reading plans – at the start of the school year, each student in KS3 receives a bespoke reading plan in which we discuss their current reading age, their goals for the year ahead and how they intend to meet those goals. Having something tangible to refer to has really helped to focus them and give them ownership over their own reading journey.



Alison Sanders
Birches Head Academy,
Stoke-on-Trent

... an independent school

Finding Social Media Support

Hello again. You may remember my byline from the other side of this two-page spread in the autumn. I have changed sectors and so my column has jumped diagonally across the page.

In considering moving from my seven-year innings in state school libraries to a prestigious independent boarding school, I reached out to other information professionals for their experience by posting on Facebook's 'Secondary School Librarians Group', to canvas opinion. If you don't do social media, I recommend making an exception for this hugely supportive group.

The main positive cited in the comments was, predictably, the library budget, and it is the range of subject-specific electronic subscriptions which attracted me to this role. Having worked with many such resources in the corporate sector, I found them scarce in non-fee-paying secondaries.

And having unsuccessfully applied to external bodies for funding for refurbishment whilst in the state sector – some library furnishings appeared to be several decades old – every day I appreciate the pristine environs of my new workplace.

Some posters kindly offered to direct message me, and a follow up phone call with a local indie librarian ensued. She was fairly new to her role and very enthusiastic about what can be

achieved. I should have spent the summer spotting sloths in red-listed Costa Rica; however, pottering around in the Home Counties in what seemed to be autumnal weather, I was keen to get started in my role as soon as the summer holidays were over.

Job offer secured, I shared my news with another of my librarian networking groups. Amusingly, they were entirely preoccupied with the quality of lunch provision in my new role. And they were correct, it is Instagram-ready, and six degrees of separation means I know the chef. Having had lunch on the run for several years before crowd-controlling the busy state school library lunch period, I've paid my dues and tuck into the mackerel on a bed of noodles with pak choi, mindfully. But do I also eat with my family in the evening too and risk becoming the size of a house???

It is early days for me, but as one poster wrote: 'I made the move...15 years ago with NO regrets.'

Whatever your sector, making an impact on young people's education is of course our shared priority.

Happy Christmas to you and yours.



Roshan Hunt, Haileybury, Hertfordshire

... an international school

Why I Discourage the Reading of the Classics

I have recently noticed an increase in students reading or asking for classic literature. Normally I would encourage students to read whatever they want during their reading periods, whether it be "too hard" or "too easy" for them; however, this current trend concerns me.

One reason is that I don't think this is coming from the students themselves. It is coming from parents who are encouraging their children to read what *they* read at school. What many parents don't realise is that there has been an explosion of brilliant young adult fiction within the last 25 years.

Another concern is that many of the students who are reading these classics are non-native English speakers. These are students who are not hearing or speaking English at home and are already struggling to access the curriculum at school. Parents of these students see the classics as an example of excellence and therefore want their children to be reading them to improve their English skills.

My argument is that reading the classics is, in fact, detrimental to students' learning. Students growing up in Thailand and in non-English speaking households are not going to understand many of the historical references within these books. More importantly, the language and syntax of the text will not relate to what they

are learning or hearing at school. It must surely seem like another language. Students cannot possibly be understanding or engaging enough in these books to get any of the benefits of reading for pleasure.

The reason I have worked so hard over the last few years to establish a reading programme with the Secondary English Department is that reading for pleasure is of such enormous benefit to students' English skills. Whilst reading, students are gaining new vocabulary in context, seeing the correct use of grammar, and being exposed to good use of the language, without even realising it. When parents encourage their children to read classic texts, I feel students are missing out on this boost to their English skills and also risk losing any enthusiasm for reading when it is too difficult or confusing for them.

Therefore, I am working with English teachers to discourage the reading of the classics, and encourage students to, instead, ask me for suggestions of books they might enjoy. However, I think we need to find ways to educate parents of the wealth of incredible young adult fiction and the benefits of reading them.



Joanna Whitehouse, Lanna International School Thailand

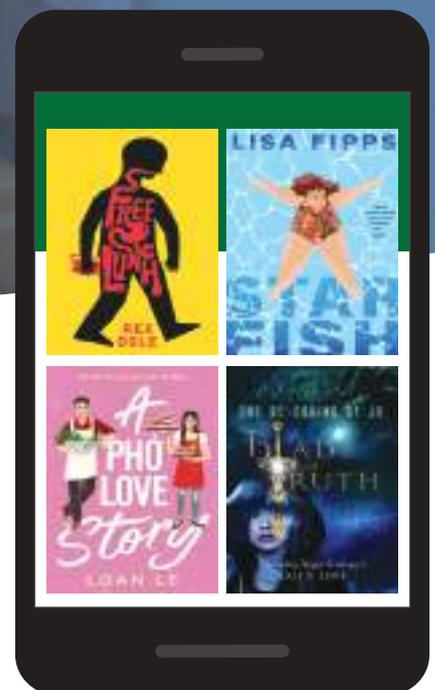
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Frequently Asked Questions

answered by Lucy Chambers

I would like to improve displays in my library but have very little budget. Can you give me some ideas about finding free or cheap display resources?

An eye-catching display enthralls students to read. You do not have to be particularly artistic or spend much. Use different kinds of paper for texture and mount pictures on thick card for a 3-D effect, placing books and artefacts nearby. Here are some websites and ideas to inspire you:

- See examples on Pinterest, Instagram, and other social media.
- Visit Twinkl for lettering templates, banners, and posters celebrating national events, topics, and other resources. Many downloads are free www.twinkl.co.uk
- Contact publishers for free author posters and book cut-outs, bookmarks, and postcards.
- Bounce Marketing offer posters and other downloadable resources. bouncemarketing.co.uk/all-promotions
- The School Library Association and The Great School Libraries websites offer library advocacy posters. greatschoolibraries.org.uk/posters
- Run a creative or writing competition and display the results.
- Subscribe to Carel Press for eye-catching posters on many topics. carelpress.uk/library_posters
- What to read next? The Reader Teacher offers free book-match posters with suggested book titles. thereaderteacher.com/bookmatch
- Create promotional resources using Canva, free to schools. canva.com/en_gb/
- Create sculptures from withdrawn books. See YouTube for instruction videos.
- Attend a school's workshop, for example one run by the Alternative Display Co Ltd on creating displays in 10 minutes. Tel. 07973 759668

How can I use events to encourage more use of the school library? We celebrate World Book Day and Black History Month. Where can I find other celebrations?

Celebrations are brilliant for planning library reading, writing, and creativity across the curriculum. I suggest three literacy calendars and three events per term, where the websites contain resources for schools.

Miss P's blog includes an annual literacy calendar: tinyurl.com/sa4cc99h

The School Reading List calendar includes book festivals and events: tinyurl.com/bfv88t8w

The National Literacy Trust has a comprehensive list of literacy events for members: tinyurl.com/e4sutusz

Spring Term

Harry Potter Book Night: tinyurl.com/52s5288y Celebrate the books by mixing potions or creating your own version of Diagon Alley.

International Women's Day: tinyurl.com/dvkhs7h and tinyurl.com/4wdexup8 Celebrate women with a library display of biographies.

British Science Week: britishscienceweek.org Grants, competitions, and resources available.

Summer Term

Empathy Day: empathylab.uk/empathy-day Read for Empathy collections, activities, training offered.

Shakespeare Week: children's resources: shakespeareweek.org.uk/kids-zone Converse in Shakespearean language forsooth; visit the Globe Theatre in London.

Refugee Week: tinyurl.com/wt55cj9a Celebrate the creative contributions of refugees.

Autumn Term

National Poetry Day resources: tinyurl.com/hz4e5tsr Organise a display of teachers' favourite children's poems; run a poetry recital competition.

Roald Dahl Story Day: tinyurl.com/jcv43tsu Run a Roald Dahl quiz; create stories using the *Oxford Roald Dahl Thesaurus*.

European Day of Languages: edl.ecml.at Celebrate European languages spoken in school; read familiar stories in other languages.

I'd like to get families more involved in their children's reading. Can you suggest some activities?

Students with limited parental support may struggle with reading and the whole curriculum. I offer suggestions to involve parents from my experience as a primary school librarian.

- Use the opportunity of Bookstart (free books given to early years children) to run a session with families to role model sharing stories.
- Run a drop-in library borrowing session for families. Encourage parents and children to choose books together. Showcase the school library and advocate for public libraries too.
- Organise a trip for families to visit a local bookshop and buy books for the library. Ask parents to help label the books.
- Set up a 'Little Library children's book drop' in the playground. Encourage parents to borrow books from there weekly.
- Booktalk: send home topics about books for families to discuss. For example, children's favourite books, favourite characters in books, what parents read when they were children, predicting what might happen next in a story, etc.
- If your school runs a breakfast club, organise family breakfast book sharing events. Supply a box of books and comics for this purpose.
- At reading events, include a session for parents. For example, for Father's Day, invite fathers and male role models to share stories in class; invite parents to share traditional stories; invite parents to library assemblies; attend parents' evenings to offer reading and book advice on request.



Lucy now concentrates on writing after 20+ years as a primary school librarian.

Curriculum Links

Primary – Religion

values-and-visions.com

Values and Visions covers resources to help deliver values to young people, applicable to many religions, or none, and also to help build characters with strong ethical principles.

British Library Sacred Texts

tinyurl.com/c773hecds

Exploring the origins and developments of the world's major faiths through their texts, enabling classes to see what the original documents look like.

schemesupport.co.uk/re

Schemes of work for religious education to help with lesson planning, from commercial sites with subscriptions and one-off costs to a free local authority scheme.

tinyurl.com/3vwpbya4

Spotify podcast on religious education for primaries, concentrating on philosophical questions which apply to all religions.

Why do people have different religions?

tinyurl.com/8bwcsth

With over 4,000 religions in the world, this explains what a religion is and that it is a huge question. Involves more than God, and includes communities.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksHKrlaO1pl

What is advent? and why is the colour purple significant? and why do we have advent wreaths?

Part of Religious Studies clips from BBC Teach

www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRpNNF4fB4g

The Hindu story of Rama and Sita, explaining Diwali within the Hindu religion.

At the Gurdwara

by Shalini Vallepur

9781786379757, 30 Jan 2020

Part of a series 'Worship with Me' covering other religions, this one visiting a Sikh Gurdwara and showing what happens there.

Keywords: Sikhism, Places of worship, Religion

Mother Teresa

by Isabel Sanchez Vegara and illustrated by Natasha Rosenberg

9781786032904, 2 Aug 2018

Keywords: Biographies, Religion, Saints

A simple, illustrated biography of Mother Teresa, now remembered as Saint Teresa of Calcutta. This Little People, Big Dreams series celebrates the important life stories of wonderful women of the world.

Secondary – Health and Social Care

'Childcare Training – A Day in the Life'

www.youtube.com/watch?v=HS9Ec4_PcU0

What actually happens in nursery on a daily visit, so very useful for those wondering about working in an early years setting.

'Language for Learning: Infants and Toddlers'

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DPHlQh91Mw

Illustrating caregivers using different language techniques to support children's development and reinforce positive social skills.

'Why we should all be reading aloud to children'

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBuT2wdYtpM

A TEDx talk from Rebecca Bellingham about the importance of reading aloud, even when children can read themselves as everyone loves a good story time.

'What is a healthy lifestyle?'

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zL2M67jbCzl

BBC Bitesize video about a holistic lifestyle of healthy diet, exercise, and sufficient rest. Balancing nutrients – this short video is aimed at key stage 3 students.

'Is a vegan diet better for your health?'

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgjiMlx_nE

From the BBC and concentrating on health aspects rather than any ethical concerns, this podcast looks at all the nutrients a vegan diet offers and what to look out for.

Office for National statistics

tinyurl.com/twtjxprx

Life expectancy and factors such as occupation, illness, and use of drugs statistics will be ideal evidence to include in essays for this subject and this site offers authoritative figures.

7 Jobs in Health and Social Care You Could Do

tinyurl.com/34wevn2w

Jobs open to those choosing a health and social care path and any further training and qualifications needed.

Looking After Your Mental Health

by Alice James and Nancy Leschnikoff

9781474937290 2018

Mental Health, Ourselves, PSHE

Explains aspects of mental health, including good practice and habits to get into and also where to get help if needed.

Being A Good Carer: An Invaluable Guide to Looking After Others – And Yourself

Amanda Waring

9781788164252 2020

Guide with practical tips on common problems, including case studies, highlighting the respect and dignity which should be given every time.

International Perspectives

Progress in South African School Libraries

When approached to write this piece, the author was overwhelmed with the magnitude of problems and deep challenges faced by school libraries in South Africa (SA). As librarians, we resort to literature to make sense of the situation. Secondly, as we conduct activities of School Libraries' and Youth Services Interest Group (SLYSIG) under Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) we can bear testimony. This makes sense, and one paragraph from the Government's literature could not be ignored. According to the Department of Basic Education in SA, the aims of school libraries are summarised as entities that should,

"...provide access for learners and teachers to a wide variety of curricular support resources, exposing learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions. Furthermore the services should instil a culture of reading and writing, promote respect for intellectual property and support the acquisition of information literacy skills to access, process and use information resources in various formats, as integral to the effective delivery of e-Learning."

- Department of Basic Education, 2012:2

This cited paragraph has answers that our sector need. Remember, SA is a country of two distinct economies with a huge poverty gap. This economic trend is duplicated in the distribution of resources like school libraries in the society. School libraries are faced with challenges, such as no national school

library policy, nor buildings. The biggest frustration of the school library sector is a curriculum heavily reliant on resources that are not available.

The adopted curriculum assumes *all* learners are competent and information literate. The seeming lack of political will to create functional school libraries cannot be ruled out. Since democracy, only 25,82% of schools have libraries (Department of Basic Education, 2019). From this figure, less than 20% have functional libraries and majorities are from affluent communities in line with the national economic trends.

The release of a National Library Policy Final Draft in 2017 was a short-lived victory for School libraries. Currently, schools are still operating without a library policy. The progress of the policy has been delayed by many factors that include Covid-19. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exposed how poor schools without libraries and internet couldn't cope with online teaching.

The proposed remedies are:

- Putting the cited paragraph into action
- Following a lead of LIASA and IFLA by implementing the School Library Manifesto
- Establishment of school libraries' directorate
- Reinstating teacher librarians to libraries
- Ring-fencing of specific school libraries budget.



By Teboho Morajane

Chairperson: Library' and Youth Services Interest Group (SLYSIG) under LIASA_2021-2023

Tweet: [@Teboho72760601](#)

Facebook:

Teboho Morajane

Dear All

With the "plastic issue" at the forefront of everyone's minds, we need to be mindful that the issue is with single use plastic, library cards are not for single use. The library card should be viewed as a key to indulge the lenders thirst for knowledge or escape in books. Our cards will last years i.e. 10 years + key fob on a keyring will last 2 years +.

Spectrum's plastic cards are as close to an environmentally friendly card as is possible. Our latest cards have a biodegradable core, which is covered with polyester plastic, polyester is the greener material for practical plastic card use, especially when compared to PVC. Polyester plastic can be recycled and it does not give off nasty toxins as with PVC cards. So, the good news is that you can use a card that you can be assured is produced with the environment in mind, as well as fit for purpose and economical.

With thoughts being about health and keeping safe from Covid our card is fully washable and can be wiped with any number of cleaning products as many times as is needed without damaging the card. The print and barcode are subsurface, protected by the polyester surface so they will not be affected in any way.

There isn't a truly biodegradable plastic yet developed that will do the job of the current cards and last the test of time. Don't get caught out by the "degradable" plastics claim, all items are degradable that is very different to biodegradable. We do produce a board card that can go in your paper waste if you want a truly biodegradable card, samples are available.



www.spectrumplastics.co.uk

Tel: 0161 480 7202 Email: info@spectrumplastics.co.uk



Who's afraid of Google's new upgrade? What MUM might mean for school libraries and their students

Should school librarians be afraid of MUM? Not an angry parent, but rather the 'multitask unified model' that Google claims will help turn its search engine into an 'answer engine.'¹

Until recently, search engines have worked by comparing search keywords to the indexed contents and metadata of websites, then returning a list of links to selected pages, ranked in order of likely relevance and quality. This makes search engines good at answering simple queries (Who? What? Where? When?), but relatively poor at answering complex questions: questions such as 'How should I prepare for hiking Mt Fuji?' (the example cited by Google's Vice President of Search, Pandu Nayak) or 'Which political party should I vote for?' and 'Are vaccines safe?' (inevitable questions *not* discussed by Nayak).

Answering complex questions demands inference to establish the meaning of the questions, and subsequently the synthesis of multiple pieces of information. Currently, those tasks largely still fall to human beings; to get a usable answer, people have to do a fair bit of thinking for themselves. For search engine providers, that's a problem to be solved.

MUM, according to Nayak, will enable Google to 'understand' complex, natural language questions, rather than simply make statistical associations between keywords. Ultimately, from information it has found and collated from multiple sources, it will then synthesise an 'answer', delivered in continuous prose or spoken word, rather than suggest websites to visit.²

In effect, Google is aiming to make its search engine into an answer engine, minimising the effort that human users must make to 'get things done.'³

Unsurprisingly, other search engine providers are working towards the same goal. They look forward to a future in which much of the cognitive load currently involved in both composing searches and considering results can be outsourced to technology companies, even more than at present.⁴

Answer engines will make many searches faster and easier. They're also likely to result in significant 'disruption', aka collateral damage. Publishers are already warning of the potential for MUM to minimise traffic to other websites, reducing them to unacknowledged (and unpaid) backroom content providers.⁵ In turn, this would help Google further entrench its position as a near-monopoly gatekeeper for online information, with huge economic, cultural, and political power.

For school librarians, and their communities of students, the implications are equally, if differently, concerning. How many students, realistically, would resist the lure of a system that rewarded complex questions with complex answers? Who would not be seduced by the prospect of having the hard work of thinking done for them? How much harder would the work of librarians seeking to teach 'information literacy' become, not to mention subject teachers seeking to encourage their students to read critically?⁶

Persuading students to consider the provenance of what they find online, not simply cut and paste, and to acknowledge sources, is already a huge challenge. 'Answer engines', offering students information entirely shorn of context and pedigree, will make that task infinitely harder.

Should librarians be afraid of MUM? In short, Yes. Be afraid.

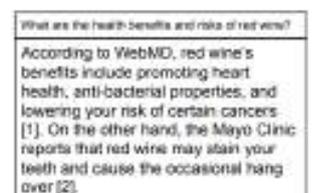
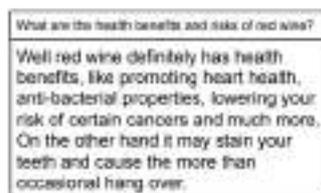
Footnotes

- 1 Pandu Nayak, 'MUM: A new AI milestone for understanding information', The Keyword [Google blog] (May 18, 2021), www.blog.google/products/search/introducing-mum
- 2 Adam Roberts, Colin Raffel, 'Exploring Transfer Learning with T5: the Text-To-Text Transfer Transformer', *Google AI Blog* (February 24, 2020), www.tinyurl.com/c2wvyyysn
- 3 Pandu Nayak, 'MUM: A new AI milestone...'
- 4 Ken Dodelin, 'Search engines are leveraging AI to improve their language understanding' [sponsored post], *VentureBeat* (May 20, 2020), www.tinyurl.com/2m8s9ans
- 5 Richard Waters, 'Google outlines future of its search engine', *FT* (August 18, 2021), www.tinyurl.com/4ebakw5y
- 6 Khari Johnson, 'Google Hopes AI Can Turn Search Into a Conversation', *Wired* (July 6, 2021), www.tinyurl.com/j79r24vb

Dr Graham Gardner,
FRSA is Librarian and EPQ
Coordinator at Abingdon
School in Oxfordshire



This 'answer' provides no references





Lit in Colour: Penguin Video Section

www.penguin.co.uk/video

The video section of Penguin publishers is extensive and very interesting. There are many interviews and readings by authors who write for Penguin and as part of their Lit in Colour series, they have interviews with authors of colour as well as a fantastic and fascinating online discussion between Barack Obama and Marcus Rashford. Both of these influential men talk about their lives growing up and why reading and literacy is so important to them. They talk about why they want to make a difference and how inspiring young people can bring about change for the next generation. Barack Obama talks about how books are worlds to discover and how encouraging children to read can open so much for young people. Rashford tells how the first book he ever read was a psychology book on how to cope with fame and through that he discovered how books can shape who you are. There are also discussions about why books create belonging, why books taught in schools don't reflect modern Britain, and why poetry belongs to all of us.

These videos are engaging and inspiring, including why it is so vitally important for all races and cultures to be represented in literature, poetry, and the arts. The discussion 'Why Books Create Belonging' with Hafsa Zayyan and Zawe Ashton



explains why the books we read in our formative years shape a sense of ourselves. The excellent Lit in Colour competition in which schools were encouraged to enter, gives 100 book titles by authors of colour to successful entries to add to school stock, which students will access to widen their reading experience of culture and diversity through literature. Many schools in the UK will have celebrated Black History Month and these videos will be so useful to show in classrooms to keep the momentum of this celebration going throughout the year.

Beth Khalil, Librarian
at Thorp Academy



The Rise of BookTok

Social media is often criticized as an unproductive waste of young people's time. But a trend rapidly gaining traction over the past year has taken an educational turn.

BookTok is a corner of the video sharing social network TikTok, where book lovers share recommendations and post reviews of books.

It's like a very fast book club. Users create films under a minute long, featuring book recommendations, reactions to reading a tear-jerking or drama-filled ending, impressive libraries they've discovered, or time lapses of themselves reading.

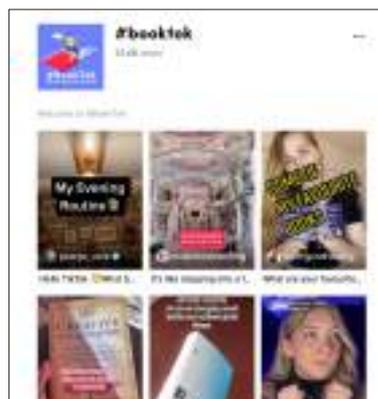
Fantasy is popular, with influencers often dressing up in wizard outfits, elf suits, and medieval attire. There are also intense discussions about which fictional characters make the best partners or what a dream date with them would be like.

#BookTok has over 23.6 billion views and authors have seen corresponding book sales skyrocket, even for titles that are decades old. In March, Madeline Miller's 2012 book, *The Song of Achilles* sold 1,500 copies in the UK in one week, following

a spike in posts about it. This was up 240 per cent compared with the same week in 2020. Barnes & Noble.com now has a page dedicated to the most popular books on TikTok.

#BookTok is a goldmine for any reader; it's a great way for young people to discover amazing books and be inspired by their peers to read something new. Why not encourage pupils to create their own posts, or choose three new books to read this term from recent #BookTok recommendations?

Elly Roberts is the
Publications and Awards
Officer for the School
Library Association
[@Elly_Roberts1](https://www.instagram.com/Elly_Roberts1)





Podcasts to Pay Attention To

For this edition of TSL we are focusing on the different podcasts available in the education space. These can all be accessed via the usual podcast channels, including Apple, Spotify, or online.



1. The Edtech Podcast

theedtechpodcast.com

With five years of podcasts under its belt, the EdTech Podcast has over 200 (and counting) episodes. Its aim is to 'improve the dialogue between "ed" and "tech" for better innovation and impact' and the topics covered are wide ranging, encompassing schools, higher education, and lifelong learning. Founder Sophie Bailey was previously the Head of Content for Bett, the world's largest education technology event, and has used her knowledge and contacts to put together a series of podcasts of interest to anyone involved in

technology in education. Each episode takes the form of an interview involving several international participants, giving it a global perspective. It also lists the social media and websites of the speakers as well as links to organisations and companies discussed. The website has guest book recommendations and blogs, and a search facility enabling the reader to narrow down their interests.

Reviewed by Barbara Band



2. @TeacherToolkit Podcast

www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/category/podcasts

The Teacher Toolkit webpage aims to offer resources to those in education, from an experienced teacher reflecting on what he's found works. Ross Morrison McGill's Teacher Toolkit site is authoritative and useful. Morrison McGill explains that he does receive some income from advertising, but this is not annoying loud adverts totally unconnected with education, and listeners will be able to filter out the bias in any of the free regular podcasts. At first glance, the titles of the podcasts do seem very teacher focused; however, a few I listened to had wider implications than the title suggested.

These 30-minute podcasts were interviews with other educationalists or people connected to schools. One episode made some useful points about where schools are going now with their digital provision and warning not to think short term. Another mentioned business skills and using commercial world solutions where appropriate, so they do consider a much wider picture, which school library staff should be aware of for their library development plans.

Reviewed by Dawn Woods

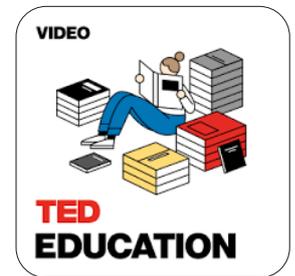


3. TED Talks Education

podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/ted-talks-education/id470623037

The TED Talks education podcast series covers various topics, such as how women and girls are part of the climate change solution, how online learning could change academia for good, and what COVID-19 revealed about schools. Tyler DeWitt talks about how online learning was so important for him to advance his career and how he could teach his chosen field of Chemistry directly through the internet without having to be in a classroom or even finishing his PHD, but he had started making a difference to learners who watched his videos and learned something from them. Nora Flanagan explains what it felt like for schools to close due to the pandemic and how educational learning changed for students and staff almost overnight. She talks about how teaching changed to include student welfare checks, food drive initiatives, and online classes taught to thousands of students in all situations. The podcasts are short but very interesting and can be listened to through the Apple app or watched as videos.

Reviewed by Beth Khalil



4. Pivotal Podcast: Managing Behaviour

pivotaeducation.com/category/podcast/

Pivotal Education are part of the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) who provide de-escalation and intervention training to inspire and motivate behaviour change from low-level classroom disruption through to high-level safety mediations. Their aim is to improve the culture within a school and the website contains articles, case studies, and podcasts. The weekly award-winning podcasts are aimed at teachers and other adults working with primary to sixth form students. Each episode is approximately 45–60 minutes in length and is delivered with show notes, contact details of the speakers, advice, and tips. In addition, there are contributions and written questions from listeners. The topics covered are wide ranging and with a global reach; a search for ‘reading’ brings up several suggestions including ‘how to get children reading for pleasure’ with Kenny Pieper, an English teacher and associate tutor at the University of Strathclyde, and ‘Literature and Imagination’ with Headteacher Simon Smith.

Reviewed by Barbara Band





Maths Themed Social Media Accounts

By Elly Roberts

Twitter



1. **NRICH maths @richmaths.**
An innovative collaboration between the faculties of mathematics and education at the University of Cambridge, providing free maths resources for ages 3 to 18.
2. **Maths Hub @MathsHubs.**
From the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics, sharing educational resources, links to their podcast, and CPD programme for professionals.
3. **Maths History @mathshistory.**
Tweets from the British Society for the History of Mathematics, sharing information about eminent mathematicians and their work from various points in history.
4. **UK Mathematics Trust @UKMathsTrust.**
The UKMT is a registered charity which works to improve young people's maths education. Sharing a wide variety of maths problems as well as links to lectures and the International Mathematical Olympiad.
5. **MathsThroughStories.org @MathsStories.**
Tweets from a non-profit research-based initiative, encouraging teachers and parents globally to use storytelling in mathematics teaching. Sharing links to resources, books, and lesson ideas.
6. **Great Women of Mathematics @GWMaths.**
Telling the stories of the women who have made a contribution to advances in the field of maths, as well as sharing daily maths challenges.
7. **MathsCareers @MathsCareers.**
Sharing information about careers with mathematics, how maths impacts the rest of the world and is used outside of the classroom, teaching resources, and various competitions.
8. **Maths Genie @mathsgenie.**
Tweeting links for free maths revision resources including video tutorials, worksheets, past papers, and practice exam questions. Covers GCSE and A-Level topics.
9. **Maths Ed @MathsEdIdeas.**
Sharing various maths problems, ideas, and resources to help inspire the teaching and learning of maths.
10. **Maths on Toast @mathsontoa.**
Part of the charity with the same name, this shares links to a wide range of mostly primary and early secondary resources for teaching maths through fun craft activities, challenges, and videos, with the aim of helping everyone to 'feel positive about maths.'
11. **National Museum of Mathematics @MoMath1**
Tweets from the New York City based museum, sharing maths problems, origami sessions, and links to activities and events run by the museum.



Instagram

1. **@maths_tricks_**
Sharing a range of maths problems for older pupils as well as clear visual aids to explain how different maths rules work.
2. **@maths.matter**
Lighter-hearted memes about maths and how mathematical rules work, aimed at older pupils.
3. **@themathkid**
Sharing reels explaining how to solve GCSE and A-level maths problems.
4. **@primarystareducation.**
Sharing creative resources to use when teaching maths in a primary setting.
5. **@M_a_t_h_s_puzzle.**
Posting a range of visual maths puzzles and games aimed at secondary school pupils and above.
6. **@maths.revision.**
Posts covering equations and techniques for secondary and GCSE level maths revision, including pictorial representation of geometry rules.
7. **@maths_geeks_jmi.**
This is an initiative run by maths students at the Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi which aims to make maths interesting, intriguing, and engaging. Posts include fun facts, information about careers in mathematics, applications of maths in everyday life and other subjects, as well as tips and tricks.
8. **@mathematics_facts.**
Sharing quotes from great mathematicians, facts, memes, and posts about the importance and application of maths in the world. Aimed at secondary and sixth form pupils.
9. **@mathsteaser.**
Sharing maths problems, visual explanations of problems, as well as more lighthearted memes and jokes.
10. **@simple_maths_tricks.**
A mixture of posts and reels sharing tricks and formulas covering a range of ages and topics including calculus, algebra, and geometry.

Elly Roberts is the Publications and Awards Officer for the School Library Association
@Elly_Roberts1



Three from YouTube – Maths

Eddie Woo

www.youtube.com/c/misterwootube/videos

Created by the Australian teacher Eddie Woo, who has gathered fans worldwide with his high-energy maths lessons, this channel aims to explain maths in a simple, accessible, and understandable way.



Targeted more at older students, these videos cover everything from geometry, trigonometry, motion and forces, to vectors, algebra, and probability, as well as an awful lot more!

Clearly a natural born teacher, Mr Woo's upbeat, enthusiastic, and clear style of teaching is sure to inspire a love of maths in even the most reluctant of students. This has translated into a following of 1.32 million subscribers to his channel, and each video has had between 4k and 8k views.

Mr Woo recently won Australia's Local Hero award for his contribution to education and was a finalist for the Global Teacher Prize. So, he must be doing something right!

This is definitely a channel to consider using in the classroom to complement in-person teaching for older students.

Math & Learning

Videos 4 Kids

www.youtube.com/user/CommonCore4Kids

Aimed at primary-aged pupils and below, this channel uses 3D animation as a fun way into teaching basic mathematical principles and early years maths concepts.



Each video is introduced by a fun, accessible character which will draw young viewers in, and with a basic story line of some kind around which the content is introduced.

Viewers learn a range of different basic principles, including addition, subtraction, multiplication, telling time, place value, fractions and others.

The videos are well paced for younger students and concepts are clearly explained, with eye-catching and colourful visuals to keep the attention of viewers.

This is a channel that will be perfect to use for consolidating learning for homework, or for in the classroom when introducing concepts for the first time.

Mathantics

www.youtube.com/user/mathantics/videos

With 2.31 million subscribers this channel is another popular one with viewers. Aimed at students in the upper end of primary and lower end of secondary school, there are more than 70 videos covering topics which range from geometry, fractions, percentages and algebra to decimals, as well as many more.



The channel was established in 2008 by two old friends Rob and Jeremy, and has an accompanying website. The duo's aim is to "provide great resources that make maths a little easier for everyone."

Each video takes one concept at a time with entertaining animations, graphics and sound effects. They are quite light-hearted and fun in tone with clear explanations.

All videos are under 15 minutes long so perfect to use in the classroom or for help with homework.

They're a great addition to a teacher's toolkit for inspiring a love of the subject in budding mathematicians.

Elly Roberts is the Publications and Awards Officer for the School Library Association
@Elly_Roberts1



Three Websites for CPD

With so many digital resources available for CPD, school librarians can feel overwhelmed by the sheer choice. Here are three resources worth considering.

Mind Your Words

www.rcslt.org/learning/mind-your-words/#section-1

Mind Your Words, Children and Young People's Mental Health is free online CPD offered by The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. Aimed at professionals working with children who have social, emotional, and mental health needs, including speech, language, and communication needs, this is the only free course of its kind in the UK. The 15 modules each take between 10 and 20 minutes to complete - the first 5 on language skills, resilience, and how to support young people are compulsory; you can choose which of the remainder look useful to you. In the wake of COVID, this is an excellent resource which all of us working with children would benefit from.

Samantha Letters, Librarian at Davenies School in Beaconsfield.

She Codes

www.shecodes.io

For women who are interested in learning to code, the She Codes website offers Html, CSS, JS, React and VS Code. You start with a one hour She Codes Basics free class and can then progress onto the three-part course - She Codes Plus (£599), She Codes Plus React (£790) and She Codes Pro (£990). Each contains video instruction backed up with documentation. Support with coursework and individual projects based on real life problems you might need to solve comes through the She Codes community. The certificate you receive on completion of a course can be uploaded to your LinkedIn. Whilst the free course looks promising, the others seem expensive, and I wonder what else is available for free online.

EdTechUK

www.edtechuk.org/developing-digital

EdTechUK offers a free downloadable PDF 'Developing Digital: a guide and toolkit for school leaders'. This is a comprehensive guide to 'embrace and adapt' educational technology to support teaching and learning. It includes lessons from COVID-19, as schools adapt edtech for remote learning. Whilst the use of digital technology for education will be something many librarians are naturally interested in, the sheer amount of information, use of acronyms, and external links could make this potentially useful tool actually rather overwhelming for some people. The site is best suited to senior leaders and staff with the ability to implement its "vision" across the school. Librarians may find the individual school studies provide practical guidance on a manageable scale. This is not a starting point for someone new to the subject.



Dates for your Diary

DECEMBER 2021	JANUARY 2022	FEBRUARY 2022
<p>2nd–7th National Grief Awareness Week</p> <p>3rd International Day of Persons with Disabilities</p> <p>9th Join us for the #TSLBigDebate at 6pm</p> <p>10th Human Rights Day</p> <p>Christmas Jumper Day</p> <p>27th 150 years since publication of <i>Through the Looking Glass</i></p>	<p>Henrietta Branford Writing Competition launch</p> <p>Empathy Lab Book Collection released</p> <p>4th World Braille Day</p> <p>18th Winnie the Pooh day / A.A Milne's birthday</p> <p>21st International Hug Day</p> <p>23rd SLA's Birthday</p> <p>27th Lewis Carroll's Birthday</p> <p>National Holocaust Memorial Day</p> <p>29th–5th Feb National Story Telling Week</p>	<p>LGBT History month</p> <p>1st Costa Book of the Year announced Chinese New Year. Year of the Tiger</p> <p>3rd World Read Aloud Day</p> <p>Harry Potter Book Night and 25th anniversary of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone</p> <p>7th–13th Children's Mental Health Week</p> <p>8th Safer Internet Day</p> <p>21st International Mother Language Day</p> <p>26th Tell a Fairy Tale Day</p> <p>TSL mailed out: 3rd March</p>

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Books: 7 & Under

Aboff, Marcie Fast Facts About Golden Retrievers

Raintree
2021, pp24, £11.99
9781398202887

Pets. Dogs. Retrievers

A delightful book in the Fast Facts About Dogs series, perfectly pitched for young children. It is a sturdy hardback, just the right size for young hands. The book opens with a contents page. It goes on to describe the characteristics of golden retrievers, and explains how to look after them and keep them healthy. It gives the history of goldens, explaining that the first golden retrievers were bred in Scotland in the 1800s. They searched for game on land and in water and helped bring back game for hunters. We learn about guide dogs, and that goldens visit sick people in hospital. 'Goldens help people feel peaceful and happy. They have a lot of love to give.' Text and photographs are well balanced – and some of the photos are very appealing. I enjoyed the instructions for making a sock bottle dog toy. At the end of the book there is a glossary at the appropriate level and an index. A 'Find Out More' section and website recommendations enable curious children to continue their research. Informative and heart-warming, it is highly recommended.

Brenda Marshall



Adeola, Dapo Hey You!

Puffin
2021, pp48, £7.99
9780241521946
BAME. Love. Hope

Hey You! is a wonderful story letter of empowerment, and ultimately of hope for black children everywhere.

Author Dapo Adeola wrote this beautiful picture book in response to the murder of George Floyd and that upon reflection of his own childhood, how few books featured characters who looked like him.

Featuring a series of messages, Adeola wants to empower young people of colour to know that they are loved, that they are important and that they can be who they want to be. Filled with outstanding illustrations from some of the finest artists around the world, each page is full of glorious images championing how everyone counts. I found one of the most striking to be young people literally standing on the shoulders of powerful black leaders, writers, and athletes (amongst others). Another depicts a child reading and their imagination takes flight in the most beautiful colours and shapes.

This is a stunning and important book and one you should have in your school. It will speak to so many and is filled with much love.

Jodie Brooks



Agee, Jon Lion Lessons

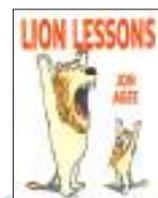
Scallywag Press
2021, pp30, £7.99
9781912650330
Lions. Humour. Learning

A delightful story about learning how to be a lion. This is a lovely story to read aloud with a child, with opportunities for trying out sound effects and doing some actions. I can imagine this working well in class Storytime sessions. Children could have a go at stretching like a lion, prowling in the bushes and pouncing on unsuspecting friends.

As always with an outstanding picture book, there are many subtleties for the adult reader to spot, which on a first reading the younger child might miss. Have a look at the pictures on the wall in the office where our young lion goes to enrol on his course. There are also some lessons to learn and discussions to be had. Do children know which animals are carnivores and which are herbivores?

There is a happy ending with our new lion being awarded with his certificate and finding new popularity among the feline population.

Sarah Seddon



Agee, Jon Little Santa

Scallywag Press
2021, pp40, £12.99
9781912650781
**Pre-Christmas. Traditional Tale.
North Pole**

A charming story about a boy called Santa, told in a simple, conversational style, right on target for its young audience. Set in the North Pole, the environment is most beautiful with its snowscapes and pine forests; but it is also unforgiving and a challenge to survive. Day-to-day living requires hard work – chopping wood, fishing, mending, stoking fires. Hence the family's decision to seek an easier life in Florida. Santa alone disapproves. Then while the family are packing, a terrible blizzard descends on their house and they are trapped inside. Only Santa can get out up the chimney. Perched on a reindeer, he sets out to seek help. Arriving at a house, Santa slides down the chimney and finds elves who offer to release his family.

Amazing drawings enhance this delightful pre-Christmas tale. Facial expressions show a range of thoughts and emotions. Collage-type crowd scenes involving the community of elves and the busy activities within the family home, simple lines, beautiful colours, and the highly effective use of light and shade all contribute to a delightful visual experience.

Elizabeth Finlayson

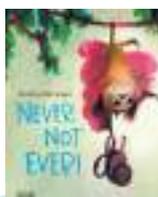


Alemagna, Beatrice Never, Not Ever!

Translated by Jill Davis
Thames and Hudson
2021, pp48, £12.99
9780500652725
School. Insecurity. Parents

Translated from the original Italian, this is a truly delightful tale, with a serious and reassuring message and a humorous unexpected ending. Written in the present tense, Alemagna tells the story of a young bat, Pascaline, who lives among other animals and panics on the first day of school when she is expected to attend, unaccompanied. Her reaction to parental insistence causes them to shrink to a size that allows her to take them with her; on completing a first day, they return to their normal size, although having curtailed her participation in school activities through their behaviour. Exploring themes of insecurity in new environments and personal diversity, Alemagna humorously takes us through the difficulty of a young child settling into school. This is a lovely, original approach to the theme, beautifully illustrated with Alemagna's own fabulous artwork. This would be a prize addition to class reading collections, and for key stage 1 literacy and cross-curricular PHSE; the language is highly engaging, with interesting and varied grammatical and vocabulary choices.

Stephanie Barclay



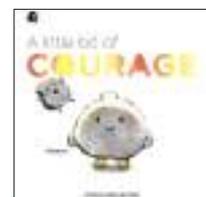
Alexander, Claire A Little Bit of Courage

Happy Yak
2021, pp31, £6.99
9780711260054
Friendship. Bravery. Flying

The Ploofers are learning to fly but Little Ploofer does not have the confidence to join them. This is a simple story about love, kindness, and confidence. The use of colour is very effective, with the shy Ploofer being depicted in shades of grey. As he gains confidence and joins his friends, we see the rainbow colours emerging.

All children need to feel that they are valued as individuals and that their friends and family will take the time to talk and help them to achieve their ambitions. This story ends on a high note, with courage prevailing. Little Ploofer not only learns to fly, but he wants to go further and try more new experiences.

Sarah Seddon



Anteonová, Tereza
Spikey

Illustrated by Mike Phillips
Compass-Publishing
2021, pp72, £12.99
9781913713706
Nature. Friendship. Animals



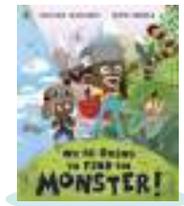
Spikey the hedgehog lives in Regent’s Park and is lonely after being rejected by the other young hedgehogs because he is a little different, having one leg shorter than the others. Following his grandma’s advice, he sets out into the wide world with the hope of learning to cope with the dangers and maybe even make new friends. Spikey learns that sometimes friendship can be forged with the most unlikely characters.

Supported by the charity Hedgehog Street, this book aims to encourage children to help protect hedgehogs by learning how they live, what they eat, and why they are at risk. The story, concentrating on the themes of friendship and kindness, achieves this aim whilst still being an enjoyable adventure for children to read or listen to. Each page incorporates comprehension questions – at the bottom so they do not distract – including both more straightforward recall questions and ones checking understanding and prompting further thought and conversation if desired. Delicate illustrations conveying the humour and kindness in the story complete this appealing package

Anne Thompson

Blackman, Malorie
We’re Going to Find the Monster

Illustrated by Dapo Adeola
Puffin
2021, pp32, £6.99
9780241401309
Read Aloud. Family. BAME



In the great tradition of *We are Going on a Bear Hunt*, literary titan Malorie Blackman and award-winning illustrator Dapo Adeola come together for this read aloud romp, which deserves to become a classic in the genre. Rambunctious siblings Eddie and Charlie are called to family breakfast, but first they have to hunt the grumpy, hungry, snappy, monster. Their journey takes us through their home which through their imaginative minds’ eye becomes an epic landscape of shimmering oceans, huge high mountains and deep dark jungles. At the end of the road, they enter a cave to confront the beast: big brother Marcus.

This delightful celebration of a black family is full of joy. Blackman’s exuberant language meets its match in Adeola’s bold and dynamic pictures which almost jump off the page. The younger siblings are hilarious actors as they wend their magical way through the house and Charlie, the female protagonist, is a great role model for girls with her derring-do attitude. Every school library and reception classroom should have a copy.

Ingrid Spencer

Armstrong, Zoe
Curious Creatures Glowing in the Dark

Illustrated by Anja Susan
Flying Eye Books
2021, pp40, £12.00
9781838740337
Science. Nature. Animals

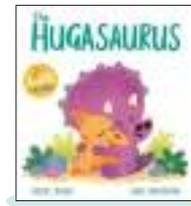


Step into the world of some amazing glowing creatures. From the stunning neon colours of the cover to the beautiful contrasting light and dark endpapers and the colourful double-page spreads, this gorgeous book is a visual delight. The text combines lyrical prose with more traditional non-fiction language to describe and explain how and why creatures glow, focusing on a variety of bioluminescent and biofluorescent examples from around the world. As it doesn’t dumb down the scientific information, it would suit young independent readers, but would also work well as a read aloud for younger nature lovers. Throughout, the book shows the connections between the human and the natural world, ranging from the work of scientists and researchers to the excitement of young explorers discovering the world around them. I particularly like the ‘just like you’ boxes which make direct links between the readers themselves and the amazing abilities of animals. Excitingly, this is the first of a series.

Chris Routh

Bright, Rachel
The Hugasaurus

Illustrated by
Chris Chatterton
Orchard Books
2021, pp30, £12.99
9781408356142
Dinosaurs. Kindness. School



The Hugasaurus is a beautiful book, with a lovely message at its heart. One day a little Hugasaurus says goodbye to her Pappysaur and ventures off into the world on her own for the very first time. Here, she meets new friends who soon start to squabble! Through the power of kindness she helps to bring them back together again.

Throughout the story, the gorgeous, detailed pictures capture your attention with lovely colours and simple, yet intriguing, designs. The flow of the story is very good – it is easy to follow and has a nice rhyme to it. The big message behind the story is about learning to be kind and patient: and that in doing a nice thing, you could change the mind of another person. What’s not to love?

The book is perfect for under sevens. It is a fairly quick read, with stunning illustrations to capture their attention. More importantly, it helps children to learn the important lesson of kindness. It is a lovely story that children will return to time and again.

Emma Price

Austin, Robert
Li, Miss Bee and the Honey Rocket

Illustrated by Alina Everatt
Dixi Books
2021, pp28, £7.99
9781913680084
Adventure. Bees. Imagination



Li is watching Miss Bee flying around, but decides she wants to fly further to Venus. Enlisting the help of Emmanuel, the bee keeper, the two look into Emmanuel’s workshop to see if they could make a rocket. So a beehive shaped rocket is fashioned out of scraps and honey used as rocket fuel, and with sandwiches and a suitcase full of fresh air they set off.

The illustrations are bright, colourful, cheery and busy and there is a lot to point out and talk about with young children. The detail in the rocket which includes a recognizable bathroom as well as the control panel for the rocket is totally unrealistic but will fascinate the young reader. The book celebrates bees and all they give to us. It also celebrates the power of the imagination which exists in abundance in young children. Emmanuel is willing to go along with this and is a great reassuring character to ensure Li is safely returned to Earth.

The final page shows details of beekeeping equipment.

Dawn Woods

Brooks, Felicity
All About Diversity

Illustrated by Mar Ferrero
Usborne
2021, pp32, £9.99
9781474986649
Diversity. Difference. Society



A non-fiction book ideal for younger readers, covering the value of human diversity and difference. Each double-page spread looks at a different aspect of diversity, with clearly laid out text and pictures to illustrate. The reader is presented with questions to help extend thinking and discussion on the topics. The pages are busy, grabbing attention with lots to look at/point out/share. A notes section for ‘grown ups’ provides further information for the adult reader and gives suggestions about how they can support their young people through role modelling and discussion. Using conventions of a non-fiction book, including contents and glossary, combined with the layout of a picture book, this is a great book to sit and share with a young person. The book is supported by Usborne ‘Quicklinks’ providing further material to support discussion on this important topic.

Michelle Armstrong-Harris

Bunting, Philip

The World's Most Pointless Animals. Or Are they?

Frances Lincoln Publishers Ltd
2021, pp80, £12.99
9780711262393

Animals. Factual. Biography

The world's most wonderful/pointless animals is a treasure-trove of hilarious information, informative facts and incredible illustrations. As an absolute magpie of unique facts, I opened this book with genuine anticipation and felt myself dive into a world filled with the most magical creatures, extraordinary insects ... and a sugar glider! Each page is jam packed with nuggets of information: a Giant Panda poos approximately 28kg of bamboo a day, goldfish have memories that can last around 6 months, and a myotonic goat will faint at any sudden noise. I could spend hours just looking at this book. The illustrations are both beautiful and funny and really make this a very special book. It deserves a spot in any library and would make a wonderful gift. Very highly recommended.

Jodie Brooks



Cali, Davide

Mr Tiger

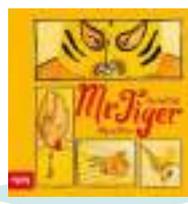
Illustrated by Miguel Tanco
Tate Publishing
2021, pp40, £11.99
9781849767477

Macho. Shyness. Aggression

Mr Tiger is a professional wrestler. His specialities in the ring are devastatingly maiming moves – the most famous of all is the 'Leap of the Tiger'. His greatest rivals in the ring are Black Claw, Boogeyman, Constrictor, and Blob. Outside the ring they become friends. But Mr Tiger's only real soulmate is a miniature poodle called Fifi. In the little things of life, he lacks the aggression and self-confidence that makes him so formidable in the ring. He falls in love but in spite of encouragement from Black Claw, lacks the courage to do something about it. His powers in the ring dwindle. Then one day he is out with Fifi and, with the help of some pet dogs, finds the courage to give his beloved a ticket to his next match.

Mr Tiger has a simple but quite sophisticated storyline. The drawings are delightful, and the text makes very limited reading demands. The book will appeal to a very wide readership.

Martin Axford



Carmona, Hannah

Anita and the Dragons

Illustrated by Anna Cunha
Lantana Publishing
2021, pp32, £11.99
9781911373636

Migration. Travel. Family

Anita and her family are about to move away from their home in the Dominican Republic, in order to find a new home. Anita has always thought of aircraft as being large dragons, that fill the sky with their noise, and she is a princess who knows and loves the kingdom around her. The thought of having to travel on one of these dragons is frightening and only adds to her concerns about the move away from her family and all the neighbours she has grown up with. This story shows how she faces her fears and copes with the move.

This is a delightful story that looks at two of the great worries that young people often have; firstly, there is travelling by air and then the even greater fear of moving to a new country. Even though Anita is not a refugee, we get the feeling that they are economic migrants and the stresses are very great. This is a great story about other cultures, change and learning to overcome your 'dragons', whatever they may be.

Margaret Pemberton



Carter, Lou

There is No Big Bad Wolf in This Story

Illustrated by Deborah Allwright
Bloomsbury Children's Books

2021, pp32, £6.99
9781526608161

Fairy Tale. Wolf. Fable

We all know our fairy tales, our folk tales. We all know that they feature goodies and baddies and that the baddy is usually a wolf who is up to no good. In this story, however, Lou Carter and Deborah Allwright want us to believe that there is in fact no big bad wolf at all. No. In this story the wolf is not bad ... he is late! Again! All of the characters are annoyed and grumpy at his tardiness – just where could he be? Poor Wolf is struggling, he just can't find a way to be in more than one story at once; his solution – he just won't be in any. But, can they manage without him? Will the stories ever be the same?

This is a fairy-tale with a twist, and it is an irresistible read; it will have you laughing out loud and desperate to know what is going to happen next. It is a great read-aloud-and-share story and should prompt some interesting discussions about what makes a story too.

Louise Ellis-Barrett



Cashmore, Claire

Splash

Illustrated by Sharon Davey Farshore
2021, pp26, £6.99
9780755502851

Sport. Family. Determination

This is the inspirational story of a young Claire Cashmore – the gold-medal-winning Paralympian who used to be scared to go in the water!

Claire is brave enough to climb trees and pick up spiders; she excels in building castles and spotting shooting stars. When it comes to going in the water though, she'd rather be chased by a bear! The water makes her feel squirmy and apprehensive, but with the help of her sisters, Claire starts to overcome her fears.

This is such a positive story about perseverance and the determination to overcome your fears; to take support and encouragement from others and to keep going and to never give up. It teaches children that some days are harder than others, but that's OK because 'whatever you can't do today, you can conquer tomorrow.'

Angela Dyson



Chapman, Tom

The Mighty Lions & The Big Match

Illustrated by Chris Dickason
Welbeck Balance
2021, pp32, £6.99
9781789562446

Sports. Failure. Mental Pressure

The importance of good mental health and the pressure to achieve have been much in the news. Most parents will have unthinkingly placed pressure on our children and this story is a timely reminder of the importance of choosing our words very carefully.

Abel, his brother Drake, and the rest of the Mighty Lions have made it to the final match against the Tigers. There is so much pressure to win the cup, but this causes them to lose confidence and they lose the match. Their sense of failure isn't helped when their coach and parents unthinkingly say things which add to their feelings of inadequacy. By being honest with the adults and explaining how they were feeling, their parents see how the pressure and expectation diminished their enjoyment of the game and led to mistakes.

This book discusses how learning from failure can only make you stronger. It is well illustrated and would make an excellent addition to the PSHE resources as well as a fun picture book.

Carolyn Copland



Best New Books on Celebrations

Editor's pick

Katie Sahota and Harry Woodgate (Illustrator)

Little Glow

Owlet Press, 2021, 36pp, £7.99, 9781913339333
Celebrations. Global. Light

Covering many different religious and cultural festivals, the importance of light is explained in this rhyming picture book.

Sharon Katz Cooper
Chinese New Year

Capstone Global Library, 2021, 32pp £12.99, 9781398213012
Festivals. China. Religion

Chinese New Year is a time for new beginnings. It can be celebrated in different ways in China and around the world.

Becky Davies and Alex Willmore (Illustrator)

Can you find Santa's pants?

Little Tiger, 2020, 32pp, £6.99 9781788817172
Christmas. Clothes. Festivals

Father Christmas is getting ready on Christmas Eve to deliver those important presents. He has his red suit but cannot find his pants among the presents.

Claire Grace and Christopher Corr (Illustrator)

A Year Full of Celebrations and Festivals

Frances Lincoln, 2021, 128pp, £12.99 9780711245426
Festivals. Global. Religion

A look at different festivals from around the world – religious, cultural, historical – throughout the seasons.

Sarah Brannen and Lucia Soto (Illustrator)

Uncle Bobby's Wedding

Hodder, 2021, 32pp, £6.99 9781444960945
Celebrations. Families. LGBTQ+

Chloe loves her Uncle Bobby but is worried he won't have time for her anymore when he gets married. But it just means she gains another great uncle.

Jessica Dee Humphreys and Simone Shin (Illustrator)

The International Day of the Girl: Celebrating Girls around the World

Kids Can Press, 2020, 32pp, £15.99 9781525300585
Children's rights. Feminism. Global

A celebration of girls from all over the world and how they have changed, and are continuing to change, negative views about women because of their gender.

Melissa Ferguson

Earth Day

Capstone Global Library, 2021, 32 pp, £12.99, 9781398212954
Celebrations. Environment. Nature

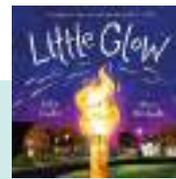
Earth Day celebrates our beautiful planet, and some people plant flowers or trees while others organise neighbourhood clean-ups, go on nature walks, or make recycled crafts.

Michael Holland and Philip Giordano (Illustrator)

I Ate Sunshine for Breakfast: A Celebration of Plants around the World

Flying Eye Books, 2020, £14.99 124pp 9781911171188
Conservation. Nature. Plants

A comprehensive guide on everything from plant evolution through to conservation and practical projects for green-fingered gardeners.

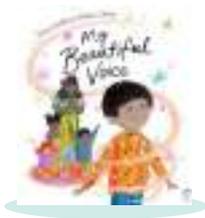


Coelho, Joseph
My Beautiful Voice

Illustrated by Allison Colpoys
Francis Lincoln Children's Books
2021, pp32, £11.99 9780711248304
School. Fear. Poetry

A beautiful, poetic picture book which has an important message about developing confidence and finding a voice in a busy classroom. The bright, fluorescent illustrations with positive multicultural characters help to tell the story of a young boy who is struggling to talk due to nerves and a lack of confidence. His amazing teacher takes the time to understand him. Through her lively personality and love for poems and stories she encourages him to step up and perform his own poem. This book will provoke great empathy and discussion about being nervous. It also highlights the vital relationship between a teacher and a pupil. Teachers are often guiding lights and the reason why so many children overcome so many obstacles and difficulties. Not just a story book but one for the PSHE section in the library.

Rebecca Taylor



Conlon, Dom
Blow, Wind, Blow!

Illustrated by Anastasia Izlesou
Graffeg Limited
2021, pp36, £7.99 9781914079184
Weather. Poetry. Science

The many aspects of wind are explored in this poetic evocation of its properties. As 'Heat-snatcher; pressure-catcher;/ Wind borrows strength from the Earth.' Strong visual images are created: 'With a huff and a puff, Wind bellows a breeze/ and the shirt sleeves all cheer in the air'. The wind grows stronger as it is encouraged to 'Blow, Wind, Blow!' It circles the earth, sometimes too strongly, as in a hurricane in Florida, and needs to be encouraged to 'Slow, Wind, Slow'. It's wonderfully lyrical and a joy to read aloud.

It is part of a series, including the Kate Greenaway Medal nominated *Leap, Hair, Leap!*, which explore the wonders of the natural world in poetic form. Izlesou's illustrations exude movement and power, and personify the wind's effects. The book ends with Wind Facts which draw out scientific and historic information. A love of language and a love of science are very successfully intertwined.

Carolyn Boyd



Corry, Lydia
Mooncat and Me

Two Hoots
2021, pp32, £12.99 9781529048681
Loneliness. New Home. Confidence

This picture book is told in the first person, with Pearl, a young girl who explains how she is feeling moving to a new town. We have all felt the sense of uncertainty when going somewhere new, but for young children this can be really scary. When Pearl suddenly sees a creature that she calls Mooncat, she starts to have the confidence to go and make friends at her new school and to explore her new home.

This is a heart-warming look at what it is like to find yourself in a new home and with nothing familiar around you. The arrival of an imaginary friend who helps you cope is something that generations of children have hoped for; this gigantic white cat is the perfect companion for a child who needs reassurance and cuddles, as well as someone to share adventures with. The illustrations are bright and full of energy, and I love the way the cat is created almost as a negative, with no outlines or colour, other than the features of his face. It is a great read for pre-school and reception-age children.

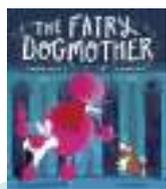
Margaret Pemberton



Books: 7 & Under

Crowe, Caroline The Fairy Dog Mother

Illustrated by Richard Merritt
Little Tiger Press
2021, pp26, £11.99
9781801040006



Dogs. Friendships. Fairy Tales

While living at Woofington's Dog Shelter, Cinders gets a visit from Priscilla the Fairy Dogmother – a bright pink-haired poodle who offers to grant him a wish. But he has to hurry as the offer has a time limit on it. Unsure what to wish for as he feels he has everything, Cinders asks his fellow canine friends for advice and ideas and soon an avalanche of suggestions come his way! But will any of these be the right wish for Cinders and will he make it in time?

This book screams fun through the vivid and stunning illustrations of different dogs featured in this book. You can't help but enjoy their expressions, vibrant colours, and poses, and I'm sure children will soon have their favourites (it's Gruff for me!) and want to revisit the book because of this. The story whooshes along like a wagging dog's tail, matching the vibrancy of the illustrations. I did find including an old fashioned OHP in one illustration a little strange thinking about the intended audience, but this doesn't take away from this being a fun, bright, and enjoyable book.

Stephen Leitch

Daly, Niki Fly High Lolo

Otter-Barry Books
2021, pp79, £7.99
9781913074579



Diversity. Early Reader. Friendship

Four new stories about an irrepressible, happy little girl, Lolo, and her life with her family and friends in South Africa. The books are perfect for early readers and each of the standalone stories would work well as a read-aloud too. All of the stories focus on celebrating differences, friendship, and family and they are written in such a bright and breezy style that the entire book seems suffused in sunshine. Lolo takes part in a school play, meets a beauty queen (who is definitely not beautiful inside!), helps clean up a beach, and learns to accept the change when her mother makes a new friend. Her new knowledge about conservation influences her to create Christmas tree decorations from waste products and she sells these in the market. Gentle, everyday tales with plenty of humour and likeable characters, I would recommend the Lolo books to primary schools and young readers – they will definitely make you smile.

Bev Humphrey

Cullen, Eleanor A Match for a Mermaid

Illustrated by David Roberts
Pop Up Projects CIC
2021, pp32, £12.99
9781838323547



LGBTQ+. Rhyme. Fairy Tale

A quietly powerful book which aims to defy convention from Pop-Up, a charity whose aims are to ensure every child has easy access to literature with a vision to promote a lifelong love of reading.

Part of a series of children's stories based on the theme 'difference', *A Match for a Mermaid* is a rhyming tale of a princess who calls upon her best friend Brooke to find her a suitor.

Mermen travel across the seas to win the hand of the princess, but she rejects them all. Just when the princess thinks all hope is lost and that she's destined to rule the seas alone, her best friend bravely steps in to declare her love.

Funny, gentle rhyming text, combined with Robert's delightful, subtly humorous illustrations, this is a refreshing take on fairy-tale love and marriage.

Emma Carpendale

Dawney, Gabby The Library Book

Illustrated by Ian Morris
Thames and Hudson
2021, pp32, £12.99
9780500652602



Reading. Books. Library

The wonders of a library and the magic inside the covers of a book are the messages in this large format, hardback picture book. Imagine Dr Seuss meets Quentin Blake and these two collaborators have created a winner for story times with small groups or individual sharing.

Accompanied by a dum-de-dum-de-dum-de-dum rhythm, Ro and Zac visit their local library and discover the fun ... eventually, in the case of reluctant Zac.

The pictures are stunningly good and lots of fun. I particularly loved the 'boring' page showing Zac snoring under an oversized, upturned bright red book – aka a tent.

The pace is cracking and the message clear.

A great book for 5–8-year-olds.

Janet Sims

Dale, Elizabeth Delightfully Different Dilly

Illustrated by Liam Darcy
Happy Yak
2021, pp25, £6.99
9780711259607



Penguins. Difference. Friendship

We are introduced to a group of penguins who love that they all look and waddle in exactly the same way. Along comes Dilly, whose parents think she is absolutely perfect, but the other penguins aren't so sure ... because Dilly only has one foot! The penguin chicks have a wonderful time trying to hop and twirl like Dilly does; however their parents do not like Dilly's difference and want her to stop teaching their chicks such odd things. When some of the chicks get into trouble stuck in a snow hole, only Dilly can save the day by hopping high on her one foot. The parents realise their mistake and agree that we could all do with a little difference in our lives.

This is a story about difference and acceptance and is accompanied by the most adorable illustrations of the penguin chicks hopping and twirling all over the ice. Truth be told, I actually didn't notice Dilly only had one foot until it was pointed out in the story! Whilst there is quite a lot of text, it is separated into easily manageable chunks, making it perfect for early readers to tackle alongside an adult.

Beth Jenkinson

Decan, Lea A Cat About Town

Tate Publishing
2021, pp44, £11.99
9781849767590



Animals. Cats. Town

This large format picture book is a delight – following cat on his visits to all his neighbours as he spends a day with each one, enjoying their different lives and careers! This is gloriously bright, clear, and amusing – the short text explains where Cat is going, and why: perhaps to enjoy intellectual pursuits with Sebastien or sit in the balcony garden with Mina. Cat visits a different person every day, being shown in bold black against vivid colours and detailed scenes. He takes one day to see his lady friend cat, Celine, but always goes home to his owner Lisa on Sunday. A delightfully light-hearted look at the secret lives of cats. A book many children will love.

Tricia Adams

Dockrill, Laura
Magnificent!

Illustrated by Ria Dastidar
Pop Up Projects CIC
2021, pp32, £12.99
9781838323585

Feelings. Differences. Inclusion



This illustrated poem is part of the 10 Stories to Make a Difference collection published by Pop-Up, a non-profit company. They aim to reach out through children's books to young people of various backgrounds who have faced difficult challenges. Pop-Up gives a platform for new writers and illustrators as well as established authors and illustrators who have donated their work.

This deceptively simple poem centres around a monster who tries his best to fit in, but knows that he is different, that he sticks out 'like a bandaged-up thumb or a hard math sum.' Meeting other monsters who appear similarly out of place he realises that he shouldn't try to blend in all the time - this is boring! Instead he should celebrate being different - this is what being alive means! The message is that we are all unique and special and we can learn new things from each other. The colourful collage paper-cuts monsters contribute to the fun of the poem. *Magnificent!* as part of the story collection deserves to be in the school library.

L Giddings

Eagleton, Ian
Nen and the Lonely Fisherman

Illustrated by James Mayhew
Owlet Press
2021, pp32, £7.99
9781913339098

Relationships. Myth. Prejudice



This is a mythical tale of friendship and love set within painterly, sweeping seascapes. In this starlit watery world, our story unfolds; two isolated figures of Nen and Ernest live in their separate spheres, above and below the waves. That this is not the familiar tale of a mermaid singing on a rock to entice a sailor for a watery embrace becomes apparent from the disruption to visual flow on the opening pages, when the book has to be rotated to portrait view. The merman is revealed and our viewpoint of the story changes as the visual flow extends down the pages as the reader dives into the ocean depths with Nen, thus cleverly emphasising how far Nen has searched for a soul mate before he meets Ernest.

Later when disaster strikes, we have to rotate the book again, this time disrupting the visual flow to increase the readers' empathy for our characters' separation, amid threatening creatures of the deep.

This story book is designed to bridge worlds of prejudice and provoke discussion.

Irene Marillat

Gangotra, Monika Singh,
Sunflower Sisters

Illustrated by Michaela Dias-Hayes
Owlet Press
2021, pp26, £7.99
9781913339173

Cultures. Colourism. Friendship



There are touches of gold on the sunflowers that shimmer across the book cover, reflecting the light of excitement in the eyes of the two young girls. Their developing friendship involves sharing cultural celebrations, family weddings, and exploring the differences in their dress and traditions. Be it church or temple, both Africa and Asian heritages include many emotional moments as they encounter family pressures.

The cultural differences between the two friends are revealed as they each prepare for family weddings. Traditional Asian and African pattern designs are showcased in the sumptuous artwork used to illustrate the textiles in celebratory costumes, decorative interiors, and imprinted on the pages, like henna tattoos.

Although it is a simplistic storyline, this eye-catching book deals effectively with information about traditional values of beauty and expectations of conformity. The overall message for the young reader is 'You are beautiful, just the way you are, You don't need to change.'

Irene Marillat

Gauld, Tom
The Little Wooden Robot and the Log Princess

Templar Publishing
2021, pp40, £12.99
9781787419179

Adventure. Equality. Fairy Tale



The king and queen live a contented life apart from both wishing for a child. One night the king visits an inventor and the queen sees a witch who each gifted them a child in the form of a little robot and an enchanted log princess. The whole family live happily together with the children sleeping soundly every night, although the princess reverts to a log whilst asleep and needs magic words to wake her in the morning.

One morning she is not woken by these words but mistaken by others for an ordinary log and tossed out the window onto a pile of other logs. Her brother is determined to save her and sets off on an adventure. Having found the right log, he has to walk back to the palace. But his cogs and gears seize up so now it's the turn of the princess to save her brother. But when she falls asleep, who will save them both?

Not the usual damsel in distress fairy tale, nor the usual heroes saving the day, but an equal distribution of resourcefulness. This book has intricate drawings, with fascinating end papers depicting the details of the story.

Dawn Woods

Gianferrari, Maria
Be a Tree!

Illustrated by Felicita Sala
Abrams Books for Young Readers
2021, pp40, £13.99,
9781419744228

Environment. Nature. Community



A beautifully presented picture book which compares the structures and functions of trees to human bodies. It portrays the interconnectedness of trees in a forest and encourages readers to share and connect in a similar manner. For example, readers are encouraged to 'stand tall' like a tree, the spine is compared to the trunk, the pith of the tree to the heart and blood vessels. The pages conveying the communication between trees and their role within the ecosystem and comparing it to a human community are lovely. The text is lyrical and would work well read aloud and the illustrations are gentle and detailed. The endpapers depict different tree leaves with the names of each next to them, which is a helpful touch. The author's note explains her intentions and the hope that our society can behave in a similar way to the trees in the forest; the page of 'ways to help' is positive. The section providing information on the anatomy of a tree is excellent and the further reading section and the useful websites encourage further learning.

Anne Thompson

Green, Simon James
Fabulous Frankie

Illustrated by Garry Parsons
Scholastic
2021, pp28, £6.99
9781407197043

Animals. Acceptance. Friendship



Frankie lives amongst all the other flamingos, but he wants to stand out and be FABULOUS! He recognises that all the other flamingos are fabulous too, but he wants to stand out from the crowd. So, he makes himself a fabulous sequin outfit, but then discovers the other flamingos have sequins too. He then goes off and buys a fabulous silk fan, and then realises the others have one of those as well. He tries to make himself look fabulous in other ways, but unfortunately the others don't seem to notice.

What they notice instead is the way he gives out compliments or the way he is kind and helpful to others. They appreciate how he can apologise if he has said something wrong to avoid hurting anyone's feelings. They notice all the things that make him fabulous - just Frankie being himself.

This book has fantastic colours and eye-catching pictures. It is a great story that teaches children to be themselves and to be kind and helpful, and to celebrate being a little different to the rest!

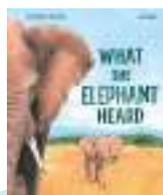
Angela Dyson

Books: 7 & Under

Guillain, Charlotte

What the Elephant Heard

Illustrated by Sam Usher
Welbeck Editions
2021, pp23, £12.99
9781913519087



Elephants. Climate Change. Conservation

A beautifully illustrated story which will encourage every reader to think about how we must care for elephants and not destroy their habitats. The story explains in rhyme how a herd of elephants are searching for a good place to settle on the savannah with a waterhole but struggle with trees being cut down, barbed wire fences, and the threat of poachers. The herd does find a safe place with a waterhole but how long will it last? The book cleverly explains that things were so much better when the Grandma elephant was young and how humans have affected the landscape for elephants. The informative pages at the back will provide the reader with simple facts about elephants but also provide them with inspiration on how they can be a friend to elephants. A wonderful story but also a vital contribution to the ever-growing collection of conservation and climate change books that are appearing in children's libraries. This book will definitely appeal to our future citizens of the world who know we must work together to protect the 400,000 elephants left living in Africa.

Rebecca Taylor

Hawthorne, Lara

Ratty's Big Adventure

Templar Publishing
2021, pp40, £12.99
9781787418769
Nature. Animals. Geography



The book tells the story of Ratty, a large woolly rat unique to Mount Bosavi in Papua New Guinea, where he lives inside the crater. When one day Ratty climbs a tree, he's astonished to see there's so much more to his island than the part he's familiar with - and he's keen to explore, only to discover that there's truth in the saying "there's no place like home".

This book is both informative and entertaining; children will love to do a look and search on the book's vibrantly and intricately illustrated spreads, alongside learning about Mount Bosavi and its incredible habitat, home to some fifty-five new species uncovered in an expedition of 2009. An unusual protagonist, Ratty is bound to win the readers over, especially when they fear for his life when he's invited to dinner by a sneaky crocodile. A lovely addition to any library, this could be very useful to teach children about the southern hemisphere and particularly Papua New Guinea. The way the island's breath-taking exotic beauty and its natural treasures are presented makes the issue of climate change and human interference particularly relevant.

Marzena Currie

Henrichs, Marjoke

No! Said Rabbit

Scallywag Press
2021, pp32, £12.99
9781912650248
Independence. Love. Learning

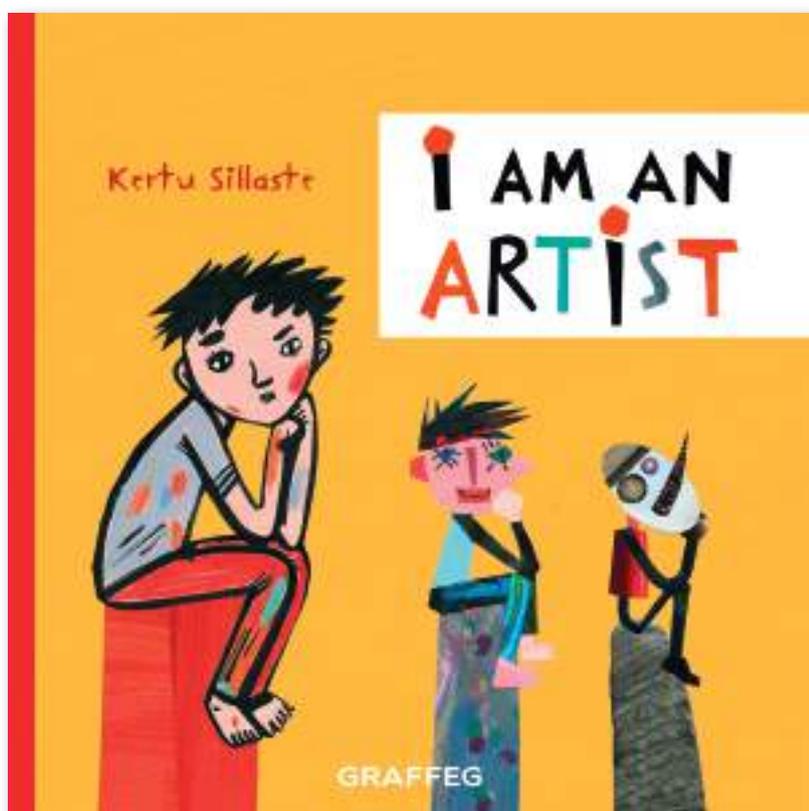


A bold and striking cover picture shows a very determined white rabbit, determined and perhaps stubborn. You can't resist opening the book.

Delightful crayoned-in illustrations take us through Rabbit's day to a warm and cuddly bedtime but they are learning independence and their Mummy is learning to let them experiment and grow. 'Time to get up,' 'Time for a drink,' 'Time for a bath' requests are met with their favourite word - NO! which appears at almost every page turn, each time on a different coloured paper...but despite their 'defiance', left to themselves, they enjoy their independence and comply with Mum's request. They struggle sometimes but get there in the end. Getting dressed, for example, is a challenge, but they make it and Mum lets them get on with it. Is Rabbit being naughty or are they practising their language, their authority and their needs? The only time they respond positively is when Mum says 'Time for cuddles'...who can resist cuddles? Certainly not Rabbit.

However, even to the end, that word 'NO' pops out as Mum suggests bedtime, but they fall asleep on Mum's shoulder with a 'ZZZZzzzzz'

Janet Sims



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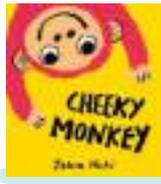
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Hicks, Zehra
Cheeky Monkey

Hodder Children's Books
2021, pp26, £6.99
9781444950021

Manners. Friends. Toddlers



Cheeky Monkey wants to play with his friends but he manages to upset all of them by his bad manners and inconsiderate behaviour. In order to build bridges with the other animals he has to apologise and start to learn how to share and play nicely. The illustrations in this picture book for young children are bright, bold and eye-catching and the simplicity of the text gets the message across very clearly and concisely whilst still being a fun read aloud. The book will help parents to start teaching their children basic social skills, like being gentle, not snatching and taking your turn in a light hearted way.

Bev Humphrey

Hopgood, Tim
My Big Book of Outdoors

Walker Books
2021, pp123, £16
9781406384826

Nature. Seasons. Activities



The perfect book for classes learning about our changing seasons. Celebrating the wonders of nature, this beautiful, visually striking book combines poetry, activities, and fascinating facts in bite-sized pieces, encouraging us to get outdoors, explore, and investigate.

Split into a section for each season, we discover how our world changes around us as temperatures rise and fall. Insects, birds, habitats, plants, weather, and the moon are all covered as we move from spring to winter.

The activities inside provide a vast array of ideas whether outside or in. Pond dipping, growing sunflowers, and pinecone weather stations are just a few of the ideas for things we can do with our children, whether at home or school, to wonder at the awe of the natural world around us. And there are even ideas for rainy days too!

Each spread's illustrations, whether muted, vivid, or detailed, match the text perfectly.

A must for early years and key stage 1 classes that can be used all year round to support learning and spark curiosity and reading for pleasure.

Nicki Cleveland

Hurst, Sara
My First Book of Dinosaur Comparisons

Illustrated by Ana Seixas
Frances Lincoln Publishers
2021, pp48, £12.99
9780711260733

Dinosaurs. Measuring. History



This book is a dinosaur-loving child's ultimate guide to learning more about the incredible giants who once roamed our world. It begins by explaining 'comparison' in simple, easy to understand language which sets the tone for the rest of the book. Aimed to be educational and fun, children will enjoy delving into this book.

Comparisons are a fantastic way to understand something in ways we can comprehend. For example, comparing a dinosaur's size to pets we might have helps us to visualise them better, or by comparing weights to something we might hold or be able to imagine ensures we understand just how immense some dinosaurs were.

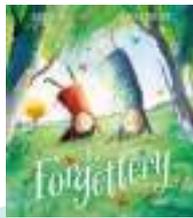
The bold and colourful illustrations will help to further the learning and understanding of the reader. Though there is plenty of text, this is divided amongst the illustrations, making the book accessible for a variety of ages.

Erin Hamilton

Ip, Rachel
The Forgettery

Illustrated by
Laura Hughes
Egmont Books Ltd
2021, pp32, £6.99
9781405294768

Grandmothers. Dementia. Memories



Amelia and her granny are very close and do many things together. They also have one thing in common: they forget things. One day, on a beautiful walk in the woods, they forget to go home and discover a magical place, called the Forgettery. It is a place where everyone's forgotten memories are stored. The keeper took them to their memory room where they both experience different things they had forgotten about. Granny could pick out her favourite memories to put in a glass jar and take back with her. Back home, Amelia follows the keeper's advice, making a book with Granny's memories and photos of all the things they do together.

This is a beautiful book, full of warmth, magic, and tenderness. Without ever mentioning the word dementia, it covers the subject with sensitivity, but it is more than a book about dementia, it is also about the special bond between a girl and her grandmother as well as about all the memory that we all have and lose. Laura Hughes's delightful illustrations are perfect for the story, full of detail, humour, and joy!

Agnes Guyon

Jacobs, Robin
The Missing Trick

Illustrated by
Aimee Wright
Cicada Books
2021, pp32, £11.99
9781908714947

Magic. Humour. Magicians



Louis enters the book dragging a heavy bag. Time to start setting up for his magic show! He pulls out the table and covers it with a cloth, gathers cups and a wand, but where is his rabbit? As he searches with increasing desperation for the missing bunny, Louis is oblivious to his effect on the rapidly gathering crowd of spectators who are delighted by his unthinking magic tricks. Finally, he gives up and, in his ire, manages the most spectacular trick of all. The crowd goes wild, and an astonished Louis takes a bow. Guess who finally makes an appearance! A perfect example of synergy between text and illustration, *The Missing Trick* tells one tale and shows another. Aimee Wright's perfect understanding of what is really going on creates a hilarious series of mini stories going on in the background. The vibrant colours and a real sense of movement elevate this book to one which will be pored over time and again. An absolute triumph!

Helen Thompson

Jianling, Yin
The Visible Sounds

Illustrated by Yu Rong
and Translated by
Filip Selucky
UCLan Publishing
2021, pp35, £7.99
9781912979790

Disability. Inspiration. Achievement



This book lives up to its claim to 'bring a message of hope and joy to children living with a disability'. It is based on the true story of a Chinese girl who at the age of two lost her hearing. She began to experience sound, not as an aural phenomenon, but in the form of vibration and colour. Through hard work and perseverance, she became a professional dancer performing at famous venues.

The book is a work of art of considerable quality: a visual delight. Most books aimed at very young children are strong on narrative: such 'adult' features as character and ideas/concepts are rarely explored. The predicament of the protagonist, MiLi (sic) is simply and succinctly presented in the text. Her beautiful, sensitive face, her emotions - love, fear, joy - are expressed very poignantly in the stunning illustrations. Most seven-year-olds reading independently could decode the text but the optimum experience will come from reading with an adult. A remarkable, inspirational book, and a must-have for primary school libraries.

Elizabeth Finlayson

Books: 7 & Under

Jones, Gareth Rabunzel

Illustrated by
Loretta Schauer
Farshore
2021, pp25, £6.99
9781405298582

Animals. Adventure. Fun-filled

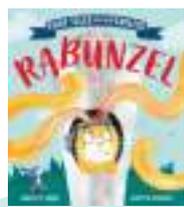
Rabunzel is a lively and courageous rabbit with a pair of very long ears, which cause her to get into all kinds of scrapes. But with the hungry-eyed creatures lurking in the woods, her mother starts to worry. She decides that Rabunzel would be safer if she lived high up in the tree. So, every day Rabunzel lets down her ears for her mother to climb up and deliver her carrots.

One day Flash Harry the hare notices Rabunzel up in the tree and decides he should rescue her. Little does he know, Rabunzel doesn't need to be rescued as she is more than capable of looking after herself. She's been practising karate! But Flash Harry still brings Rabunzel down.

Her mother is less than impressed and blames Flash Harry for being so irresponsible but as the hungry-eyed creatures are closing in, Rabunzel decides it is time to unleash her secret weapon – her ears.

This is a funny, silly, and adventurous story that all children will enjoy. It teaches children to never judge or underestimate someone, as you might be very surprised!

Angela Dyson



Longstaff, Abie Story Soup

Illustrated Nila Aye
Templar Publishing
2021, pp40, £6.99
9781787415591

Humour. Families. Food

Did you know that every good story is made up of a mix of elements just like every great soup? Ollie and Susie know this and so they are cooking themselves up a story soup, with every ingredient they add comes a new twist to the tale. The problem is the more they add, the more excited they get and of course that leads them to squabbling about what should go into the pot. As a result the pot begins to bubble out of control. Will they be able to control the soup, can they mix up a stirring tale or have they created a recipe for disaster?

Bright, funny and full of vibrant life this book not only tells us a great story but gives us all a great message and one that it would be ideal to share with children during story times, English lessons and even PSHE lessons. A story in a story, a lesson in co-operation, sharing and understanding.

Louise Ellis-Barrett



Low, Max Beep Beep!

Otter-Barry Books
2021, pp32, £12.99
9781913074692

Transport. Vehicles. Travel

This is a colourful, noisy, and alliterative romp through the world of transport. Meet 'Friendly Fern's fantastic fire engine' and 'Super Speedy Susan in her super speedy sports car!' Each page is as bright and colourful as the last with simplistic, childlike illustrations depicting each vehicle and character, making them instantly recognisable. The addition of each sound the vehicle would make (from a nee naw to a parp parp by way of a vroom vroom) will add some great interactive fun to story time as everyone can join in. A lovely book for introducing different types of transport from the everyday to the more outlandish (Zappy Zurgle's strange spaceship anyone!?) with a lovely subtle eco message at the end about walking instead of taking a lift. Great to support topic work on transport but would also have lots of appeal as a fun colourful book for children to explore on their own.

Isobel Powell



Mabuse, Oti Dance with Oti

Illustrated by
Samara Hardy
Walker Books
2021, pp30, £12.99
9781406399967

Dancing. Exercise. Birds

This is an interactive picture book intended to encourage children to dance alongside Strictly superstar Oti Mabuse, and includes step-by-step, illustrated dance moves throughout the book as well as a QR link to a video tutorial.

We join a group of children arriving for their first dance class with Mrs Oti, who is so supportive and enthusiastic I almost got up and danced myself! The illustrations are bright and colourful, and there is so much to see on every page you will spot something new every time you look. Some of the children in the story struggle with the dance, forgetting the moves or falling over, but Mrs Oti and the others encourage them to get back up and try again; an important message in resilience. The sudden appearance of a bird flying into the studio results in the dance being transformed into the Bird Jive. The children delight in showing their parents what they have learned at the end of the book - especially when all the local birds come to watch! This book is sure to get children on their feet and moving, and the text is very accessible to independent young readers.

Beth Jenkinson



Mannion, Elena The Happy Hedgerow

Illustrated by Erin Brown
Pikku Publishing
2021, pp32, £10.99
9781999639891

Environment. Agriculture. Conservation

Addressing very serious environmental protection themes, Mannion guides us gently through a simple scenario to examine and question the role of human activity in degrading the living environment.

A beautifully written narrative, this would be invaluable for key stage 1 literacy, stimulating vocabulary – exploring the communication between the creatures makes a project in itself (the 'Dunnock tweet' would be a great starter!). Mannion challenges the reader to think, look, question – and consider the whole natural environment as a functioning corporation. Brown's wonderful, engaging illustrations draw the reader into a cosy, caring, but precarious world. They are recognisably true to nature, while bringing emotion and feeling to the characters. From the beginning, the pictures extend and develop the text and narrative – when the Old Oak smiles at his friend, and the reader follows his expression to alight on the shield bug, camouflaged, as in nature. This is a fabulous book where art and narrative really complement each other to bring the story to life.

Stephanie Barclay



Morrisroe, Rachel How to Grow a Unicorn

Illustrated by
Steven Lenton
Puffin
2021, pp32, £6.99
9780241392201

Magical. Rhyme. Unicorns

A wild ride of a story, designed to be read aloud and shared. Each colourful page will easily hold the interest of the emerging young reader, promising the enjoyment of self-discovery whether or not the text is read aloud by another.

The bright cover introduces both a shiny unicorn and a curious child; thus we are enticed to enter the colourful shop of 'Mr Pottifer's Parlour of Plants' with our heroine Sarah.

As Sarah wanders amid the purple and pink spot lit shelves of tentacles and wings, there is a promise of magic that surrounds the reader in this heart-warming original tale. There are double-page spreads bursting with unicorns in all shapes and sizes, encouraging curious and observant eyes to spot differences and match each to their rhymes. As the magic grows, so does the font size, matching the expressive faces of both Gran and Sarah.

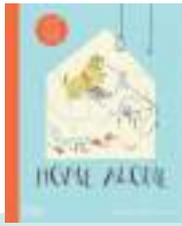
I really liked how the joyfully styled and detailed illustrations and the delightful rhymes work together to reveal so much wordplay and fun.

Irene Marillat



Nascimbeni, Barbara
Home Alone

Thames & Hudson Ltd
2021, pp48, £10.99
9780500652619
Animal. Mischief. Secret

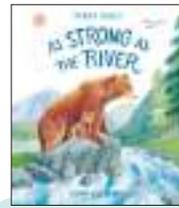


Frido, a much-loved dog, is left alone for the day. Little does her owner know that Frido has a wonderful day life without her when she's finally home alone. She gets to ride the scooter, raid the fridge, watch TV, have friends visit ... The story comes alive with warm, funny, cartoon sketches of a very playful dog causing mayhem. Readers will enjoy her antics and mischievous mishaps. Luckily, Frido also knows how to tidy up so that her owner comes home to her sweet Fri-Frou and the secret is preserved. Luckily, the reader is in on Frido's secret. A delight, whether you own a dog or not. Highly recommended.

Carolyn Boyd

Noble, Sarah
As Strong as the River

Flying Eye Books
2021, pp32, £11.99
9781838740177
Nature. Family. Development



This delightfully illustrated book shows how a bear and her mother appreciate the closeness of their relationship as the cub (gradually) has new experiences of their world. The cub is shown on every double-page spread, and he is never far from her. She is sometimes overwhelmingly larger than he is, but she never far away from him. The pages are filled to their edges with beautiful pictures of nature in its many guises and the river is a powerful force. The bear cub learns how to fish and to play in the water. The images of the bears show their varying moods and emotions as they experience the wild through the development of their own family relationship. Young readers, both at home and in the early stage of the primary school, can relate to the interaction which helps the cub to thrive.

Wendy Axford

Oliver, Carmen
Bears Make the Best Science Buddies

Illustrated by Jean Claude Raintree
2021, pp32, £6.99
9781398201972
Science. School. Bears



An engaging and wonderfully illustrated story about a class excited for their first science lesson, but which experiment should they do? Bear helps guide the pupils through four experiments, gently introducing the scientific method alongside rich vocabulary. Perfect for curious little scientists, you can even carry out the milk and cookies experiment with the instructions included at the end of the book.

The colourful illustrations have a very textured, hand-drawn feel to them and will certainly encourage lots of discussion as children see the pupils carrying out their experiments with Bear there to guide them through observing, hypothesising, experimenting, and analysing the results. I can see this book inspiring lots of children to carry out their own experiments – perhaps with teddy bear supervision!

Beth Jenkinson

Parkinson, Siobhan
All Shining in the Spring

Illustrated by Donald Teskey
Little Island
2021, pp64, £6.99
9781912417575
Families. Grief. Stillbirth



Based on the author's own experience, this very simple book explores the feelings and grief experienced when a baby dies in the family. This is the sort of useful book that needs to be available in every library for those occasions when explanation is needed for children.

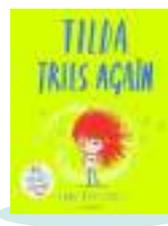
Written in clear text, the family experience is explained, as is the grief that accompanies such an occurrence. The illustrations, line drawings, are on virtually every page making this book suitable for quite young children as well as those who will want to read it on their own. As this is a subject that is rarely written about, this will be a book that has many uses.

For all its simplicity, it makes an empathetic read, moving this reviewer to tears.

Tricia Adams

Percival, Tom
Tilda Tries Again

Bloomsbury Children's Books
2021, pp30, £6.99
9781526612991
Mental Health. Resilience. Feelings



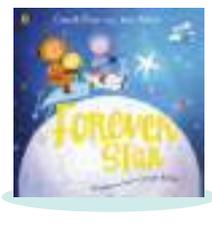
Tilda's life is just as she likes it until, suddenly, everything seems to be difficult. Everything is topsy turvy and nothing feels right. Colours start to fade from the pages and the negative spiral of Tilda's feelings is reflected in the grayscale illustrations. Things that were once easy now seem incredibly challenging. Everything is hard work and frustrating. How can Tilda get her life to turn right side up again?

When Tilda sees a ladybird struggling on its back she learns an important lesson in not giving up; if you want something you just have to work at it. Slowly but surely she starts to try things to make her happy and "the more Tilda tried, the more she found she COULD do". Soon books are fun to read again and playing with her friends is a natural thing to do. Part of the Big Bright Feelings series, this is an uplifting story to support children's emotional well-being and mental health by promoting resilience, problem solving and the rewards of self-belief.

Lizzie Ryder

Peter, Gareth
Forever Star

Illustrated by Judi Abbot
Puffin
2021, pp32, £6.99
9780241453025
Family. Adoption. LGBTQ+



Tim and Tim love their life together but really want to start a family, and so begins their adventure through space to find a child who needs a new start and a family to call their own.

Lyrical verse is paired with colourful and fantastical illustrations to create a gently told story about love in whatever form it comes in. Showing an accepting, welcoming, and wonderful world, children will love the journey through space and the characters they meet along the way. I love how different emotions of the Tims and Jim are explored through the gentle text and expressive illustrations as the story progresses.

'It just doesn't matter how parents are paired as long as that love is eternally shared.'

Perfect for starting early conversations about the experiences of LGBTQ+ families, the adoption process, and what equality means in society for the youngest readers. It would also make a brilliant bedtime story.

Nicki Cleveland

Books: 7 & Under

Portis, Antoinette **Hey, Water**

Scallywag Press
2021, pp42, £7.99
9781912650606
Water. Science. States.



This is a great picture book for exploring what water is, its different states and its importance in our lives. The simple text is lyrical and the simple illustrations have a delightful flow, as each form of water segues into the next. It also includes basic information on states of matter, the water cycle, and some simple experiments to try.

Perfect for science at Key Stage 1 but also this would work well for older children, writing poetry about the natural world.

Jo Sennitt

Preston-Gannon, Frann **Bird's Eye View**

Templar Publishing
2021, pp34, £6.99
9781787416840
Animals. Environment. Kindness

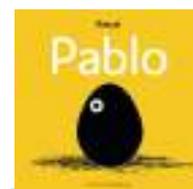


A captivating tale with stunning illustrations addressing various themes, including caring for our environment; how we should gently treat animals; refugees and migration; thinking about where we call home and why; and ultimately being kind to each other and the world we inhabit. This was a magical story to read out loud, often pausing to fully embrace the beautifully illustrated pages. Little Bird leaves her nest and her Mama to explore the world beyond the forest. She soars over stunning landscapes but is shocked at the polluted and built-up world below which she experiences for the first time. She has her first glimpses of people, and is happy to see them sharing and being kind, but is saddened by witnessing birds in cages, and ultimately gets injured when she nearly gets caught herself in a net. A gentle family care for her, and when she is strong enough to return home, she regales her Mama with all that she has seen and experienced. Ultimately, kindness wins. An essential addition to your collection.

Jenny Griffiths

Rascal **Pablo**

Translated by Antony
Shugaar
Gecko Press
2021, pp25, £8.99
9781776573240
Chicken. Egg. Hatching



Pablo is a delightful chick who takes his first steps into the world. First, he is asleep. It is his last night in his shell. Tomorrow he will emerge. The next morning, he fortifies himself with a breakfast of croissant and hot chocolate. He makes a very little hole in the shell because he is scared. Then he makes another hole and starts to explore what is around him. The reader shares Pablo's step-by-step experience and his growing confidence as he uses his eyes, ears, a beak, legs, and then wings to discover his environment. The text uses onomatopoeia words for the first sounds Pablo hears, and staccato sentences when he is hopping. Eventually he is ready to fly. Pablo is not scared at all, and his shell is no longer a protection, but something to be discarded – although he saves a piece of his black shell as an umbrella.

The stylised images are black and white until the last where he becomes a yellow chick. A seemingly simple story about a chick hatching that also includes transition, change, exploring new surroundings, security, bravery, and caution. Superb.

Brenda Marshall

Rawlinson, Julia **Fletcher and the Rainbow**

Illustrated by
Tiphonie Beeke
Graffeg
2021, pp32, £12.99
9781914079245
Autumn. Friendship. Light



One autumn day, a beautiful rainbow lights up the gloomy sky. Fletcher loves this so much he determines to find it to light up the sky forever, so off he sets.

He finds a lot of birds feeding off red berries. He finds Hedgehog gathering orange leaves for his hibernation. The rainbow's end moves to the apple tree where squirrel has found the yellow apples. He finds Goose, just arrived from migration, eating green leaves. He discovers rabbits playing in the blue harebell fields. But the rainbow fades in the purple blackberry bush, leaving Felix disappointed.

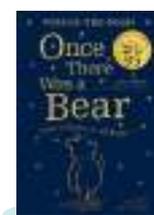
But rainbows are not meant for collecting, so cheering up on his way back home, Fletcher gathers up all the colourful plants, and with the new friends Fletcher has now made, they make their own colourful rainbow.

For children who love rainbows they can see how they can make their own from colours they can find in their everyday lives, especially those provided by nature.

Dawn Woods

Riordan, Jane **Winnie-the-Pooh: Once There Was a Bear**

Illustrated by Mark Burgess
Farshore
2021, pp128, £14.99
9780755500734
Bears. Childhood. Toys



To mark the 95th anniversary of Winnie-the-Pooh, Jane Riordan has produced a wonderful collection of stories, starting when it all began when Winnie-the-Pooh was first bought from Harrods for baby Christopher Robin.

Riordan ensures the reader knows that Significant Happenings have capital letters. We discover why Eeyore holds his 'not entirely chirpy outlook on life' and hear Piglet's small story of when he arrived as a small pink piglet. We travel to the zoo to meet the real-life bear Winni and to the museum, which Pooh is pleased to note is honey-coloured and whose favourite dinosaur is the Stegosaurus as his brain was no bigger than a plum so Pooh feels he is in good company.

The stories are accompanied with beautiful illustrations created by Mark Burgess in the style of E.H. Shepard.

This is a book for all ages showing the importance of friendship and, even though the world has changed so much since the original stories were written, enjoyment in simple things remain.

Dawn Woods

Roberts, Tomos **The World Awaits**

Illustrated by Nomoco
Farshore
2021, pp25, £6.99
9780008498924
Mental Health. Empathy. Community



We all know those days when we'd rather stay in bed and hide away from the world, but what if we had an older brother who took the time to explain why we matter, the positive influence we can have on the people around us, and the importance of striving to reach our potential every day?

Written for children, there is a gentle message for all of us about trying our best even when we don't feel like it, and that each of us has a contribution to make to our world, be it our family, friends, or wider community, however small. A smile, a kind word or deed can make the world of difference if we only get out there and try.

'With each good word, and each good deed, the global goodness grows.'

Perfect for all primary age groups exploring mental health, and to build empathy and understanding when having a bad day, and that nobody is perfect all of the time.

Nicki Cleveland

Rodin, Al
Little Echo

Puffin
2021, pp32, £12.99
9780241450871
Shyness. Friendship. Adventure

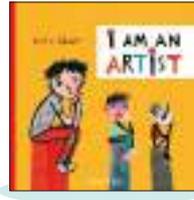


The first picture book from Al Rodin, the 2019 Sebastian Walker Prize winner and prestigious Cambridge School of Art children's book illustration alumnus. This is a heart-warming story of Little Echo, a cute, slightly abstract creature who lives in a cave. If you've ever wondered what an echo looks like, you'll find out in this book. Little Echo spends her days hiding in the cave's shadows, afraid to speak up, make herself known, and make friends with the other cave inhabitants. But when Max ventures into the cave and gets in the way of a terrifying bear, Little Echo has to finally be brave and find her voice. A beautiful friendship between Max and Little Echo blossoms as they explore the cave together, with a little bit of added humour. Rodin's illustrations are painterly and expressive, with nice use of vignettes and negative space, and surprisingly colourful for a book set in a cave. I look forward to seeing more illustrated children's books from Al Rodin in the future.

Stacey Matthews

Sillaste, Kertu
I Am an Artist

Translated by Adam Cullen
Graffeg
2021, pp36, £7.99
9781914079634
Artistry. Creativity. Art

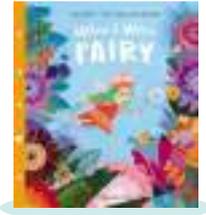


Sillaste's heavy black outlines and collage come together to create an exciting and inspirational book about art. What makes an artist? The desire to create art! Always thinking, wondering, creating, exploring, experimenting, but never giving up. What even is art? It certainly isn't just painting and drawing. Our artist shows us some of his work – sculptures, paintings, collages, drawings – and tells us his ideas for more ambitious works – huge statues on wheels, inventing a new colour, building new trees on stumps – because even if it can't be done (yet!) it is fun to think about. This celebration of creativity and free thought is exuberant and exciting, and is bound to spark ideas and maybe even create a few new artists!

Helen Thompson

Silson, Tom
When I Was A Fairy

Illustrated by Ewa Poklewska-Koziello
Flying Eye Books
2021, pp25, £12.99
9781838740207



Grandparents. Childhood. Imagination.

Who is the fairy who used to whizz through the forest and skim across the stream? When Grandma and Granddaughter spend time together, we are taken on a magical adventure through forests and meadows, and across oceans as Grandma reminisces about her childhood.

Vibrant illustrations accompany the rhyming tale, with plenty of extra details and humour to discover within them. A beautiful story of intergenerational magic, imagination and love that shows however old we are, childhood joy and wonder never really goes away.

I love the playfulness that reminds adults to stop and see the world through children's eyes again, and reconnect with the delights of splashing in puddles and blowing bubbles. Perfect for Early Years story time.

Nicki Cleveland

Smallman, Steve
The Moose Fairy

Happy Yak
2021, pp25, £6.99
9780711258815
Inclusivity. Dress Up. Friendship



One day when Moose is in the forest, he stumbles upon a very big poster announcing a meeting of the 'Secret Fairy Club'. Moose is very surprised and so excited. This is a chance to join the fairy enthusiasts. Moose loves twirling, dressing up, wand waving and glitter galore. He loves his costume too, but sadly the clubhouse is much too small for his height. Will he ever fit in? Despite Moose's longing to shrink, it soon becomes apparent that his buoyant personality will save the day. There are many parallels between Moose's longing to fit into the status quo and his generosity of spirit. This is a heart-warming story which many children will enjoy reading in school or with their families. The bold and colourful pages reflect Moose's generosity and kindness. The story is one which will prompt interesting responses in the classroom. Miss Twinkle's inspired observation notes that Moose doesn't just 'fit in, he belongs.'

Rosemary Woodman

Smith, Briony May
Margaret's Unicorn

Walker Books
2021, pp38, £12.99
9781406399882
Moving. Loneliness. Friendship



Smith's lovely story is written in the first person using imaginative language. It draws the reader into the world of a lonely little girl who has moved to the wilds of rural moorland to be near her Grandma. Margaret's Grandma and parents join in her adventure of finding and caring for a baby unicorn, stranded when the adult herd were swept away in their annual migration. Although whimsical and a touch mysterious, there is nothing cloying about this tale of affection – and the ultimate setting free of a first love – when Margaret makes a human friend. Her unicorn returns once more to acknowledge her, before disappearing across the mountain. Smith's gorgeous, dramatic illustrations portray a wealth of emotion between the unicorn and child; always respectful of an implicit majesty of the creatures, belied by the infancy of the unicorn, this is an exploration of tenderness in the face of inevitable change. The clues in the illustrations and text suggest a setting in highland Scotland which sits so comfortably with the folklore of mythical creatures. This is gem for key stage 1 reading and literacy and PHSE: a must for the bookshelf.

Stephanie Barclay

Soundar, Chitra
Nikhil and Jay Save the Day

Illustrated by Soofiya Chaudry
Otter-Barry Books
2021, pp80, £7.99
9781913074623



Family. Libraries. Community

This is a series of very short stories featuring brothers, Nikhil and Jay. From having a birthday party, to helping the local library (threatened with closure), these two young boys work with family and friends to enjoy the world around them. Their mother is from India and their father is English, so they are able to enjoy the benefits of both cultures, and in the books, we see them experience a variety of occasions. The age difference between the two brothers often leads to frustration for the younger Jay, but he learns that he will get there in the end.

This series featuring the two brothers is aimed at those children who are becoming more fluent at reading. The chapters are very short, and the print is a good size. The books are heavily illustrated in black and white, and these illustrations help break up the text for the readers. The stories also introduce children to different cultures and specifically to the cuisine of India. The books are great for children to read for themselves, but they can also be read to younger children.

Margaret Pemberton

Books: 7 & Under

Soundar, Chitra Nikhil and Jay: The Star Birthday

Illustrated by
Soofiya Chaudry
Otter-Barry Books
2021, pp80, £7.99
9781913074616
Family. Food. India



Nikhil and Jay are two brothers living with their parents in England. The boys have an Indian mother and a British father and in this book the boys are eagerly awaiting the visit of their grandparents from Chennai in India. They will be staying for the whole of the summer holiday, so Nikhil and Jay get the opportunity to share activities with their grandparents. They visit an Indian market, have a birthday party and a picnic in the park. Eventually it is time to return to India, but letters will keep them all in touch.

This is a joyous story of children and their relationship with an older generation. They learn about Indian cuisine and customs, but share games and activities with the family as well. This series is a delight for younger children to read and particularly to see their own families represented in some way. It is so good to see books like this aimed at a younger audience and I love the recipes and glossary of new words at the end of the books. This series should definitely find a home in all primary schools.

Margaret Pemberton

Sundin, David The Book That Did Not Want to be Read

Puffin
2021, pp40, £12.99
9780241539927

Reading. Funny. Sharing



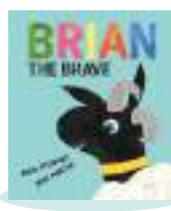
Just sometimes, you pick up a picture book and it is love at first sight. This was certainly the case with *The Book that Did Not Want to be Read*. The idea of a book trying to repel the reader is splendid and the methods employed become a masterclass for adults in how to hold the attention of a child as you explore a book together. Though there is the sudden appearance of a superfluous rabbit whose significance eventually becomes apparent, the book itself is the most important character. It has all sorts of cunning ways of forcing would-be readers to leave it alone, making the grown-up sing, roll on the book to stop it flying away and chase the words around the pages. The book also uses some macabre embellishments to try to scare the reader away, which add to the delights it offers.

The ideas behind *The Book that Did Not Want to be Read* are highly original and have been used to create a stylish, very accomplished book. This is a book which celebrates the pleasures of the relationship between the grown-up and the child when sharing a picture book. It is glorious.

Jaki Brien

Stewart, Paul Brian the Brave

Illustrated by Jane Porter
Otter-Barry Books
2021, pp32, £7.99
9781913074562
Sheep. Tolerance. Picture Book



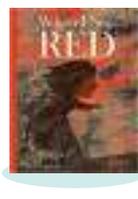
Brian is a white sheep with curly horns. He meets Rose, a black sheep with curly horns and they are friends, chasing each other round and round the field and over the little hill. But then along comes another black sheep, Stanley, who refuses the invitation to be friends because he doesn't like white sheep, so he plays with Rose and Brian is excluded, and he is sad ... More sheep arrive all with their own prejudice, and other sheep are excluded – until a wolf arrives, and the sheep have to forget their differences and work together.

Brian the Brave is a lovely book to read aloud and can generate interesting discussion with young children about kindness, tolerance, and friendliness. The sheep get more and more outlandish, starting with “normal sheep” and ending with blue sheep with pink stripes. This tackles issues of racism, intolerance, and exclusions very effectively and shows how absurd it is to exclude people for their differences. Jane Porter's collage illustrations are vivid, amusing, and bring the sheep to life.

Agnes Guyon

Teckentrup, Britta When I See Red

Prestel
2021, pp40, £10.99
9783791374949
Self-Regulation. PSHE. Emotions



This exquisite book makes the most of Teckentrup's brilliant illustrative style. 'Seeing red' is monumental and could be overwhelming; however, anger here is a powerful transformative force. The tiny girl within is taken over by her fury but it is a necessary force that clears the way for something new.

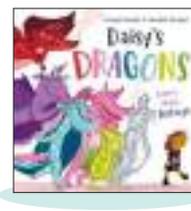
Typography is used in perfect harmony with colour and illustrations to create impact and meaning. As an object in itself this is a wonderful addition to a teacher's personal or school library and could inspire wonderful art and collage sessions. The words themselves are precisely chosen and create an almost musical impact: a storm rises to a crescendo and then resolves into a new harmony.

If your school is working on 'Zones of Regulation' or mental health initiative, this an ideal book to reinforce the message that anger is not wrong and can be a force for change. There is a powerful feeling of healing when read aloud, and for children overcoming trauma, there is great validation to be found here. This is a very important and beautiful book.

Ingrid Spencer

Stickley, Frances Daisy's Dragons

Illustrated by
Annabelle Tempest
Templar Publishing
2021, pp32, £6.99
9781787418974



Emotions. Feelings. Acceptance

This is 'a story about feelings,' as stated on the cover. Walking behind Daisy is a troupe of six differently coloured expressive dragons. Each has a name: Happy, Calm, Angry, Scared, Sad and Brave. They follow Daisy everywhere but she's the only one who knows that they are there.

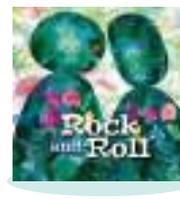
When the ice-cream shop is closed, Angry, Sad and Scared chase away the other dragons. But soon, everyone realises that none of the dragons are bad and each one has an opposite that 'makes us who we are'. For example, Scared helps Daisy make safe choices and 'no-one can be brave unless they're frightened at the start'. Daisy comes to understand that each emotion have something special to offer.

Told in rhythmic rhyming couplets with vibrant illustrations, it's a useful starting point for discussing and understanding one's feelings.

Carolyn Boyd

Terry, Hazel Rock and Roll

Tiny Owl Publishing
2021, pp32, £8.99
9781910328750
Conflict. Collaboration. PSHE



Two rocks perched atop ancient mountains spend eons of time appreciating each other and nature around them. Things change when people come along and decorate Rock and Roll. Although the people intend respect, the two become jealous of each other's adornments, and conflict looms.

This exquisite book has a powerful message about the effects of losing sight of the value of simple beauty and the conflict that jealousy generates. The beautiful colour pictures are jewel like, and will draw in young and old readers. They would be useful source materials for art work at KS2 and KS4 art and design lessons.

The text itself is well written and very accessible to a primary audience and could be used in relation to both PSHE and weather/ erosion work. The deeper meanings offered by the illustrations in combination with the words mean it could be also used with older students as part of nurture/ PSHE work.

Publisher Tiny Owl support this book with a range of resources including crafting videos, making this an even more valuable addition to a school library.

Ingrid Spencer

Webb, Holly
A Puppy's First Christmas

Stripes Publishing
 2021, pp128, £5.99
 9781788953429
Christmas. Families. Animals



This fiftieth animal story book from Holly Webb could be dismissed as just yet another formulaic Christmas stocking filler. However, I was pleasantly surprised – especially by the depth of character in the protagonist Aria, a sensitive girl who many young readers will relate to. Far from portraying a perfect Christmas, the story shows the reality of how some children struggle with the intensity of busy, Christmas celebrations.

A full household of wider family, plus a lively puppy in the mix, make for a true to life depiction of Christmas ups and downs, rather than an idealistic notion of the season.

When Jackson (the chocolate Labrador) experiences snow for the first time, his exuberance startles Aria's cousin Hannah and so starts a series of mishaps and family dynamics with the little puppy which make for a good read.

The illustrations support young readers in visualising the plot. Highly recommended as a seasonal book for youngsters to escape the busyness of Christmas with.

Helen Emery

White, Michael
Pablo at The Zoo

Ladybird Books
 2021, pp32, £6.99
 9780241490280
Animals. Family. Friendship



Join Pablo, an autistic boy who thinks differently, and his friends the Book Animals, as they take a trip to the zoo! While exploring the zoo, they discover Draff the giraffe's parents are there too and have invited the other animals family to meet up with them – except Noasaurus the dinosaur can't find his family and starts to feel sad as everyone looks for them. But Pablo and Tang soon realise that Noa's family has been there the whole time!

Pablo at the Zoo will introduce readers to the idea that families can mean different things to different people, and that it's the people that care about us who are important. A positive message accompanied by great illustrations. If you enjoy this, there are more books in the Pablo series available, created by an all-autistic led team.

Stephen Leitch

Woollvin, Bethan
Three Little Vikings

Two Hoots
 2021, pp32, £12.99
 9781509889822
Adventure. Girl Power. Fairy Tale



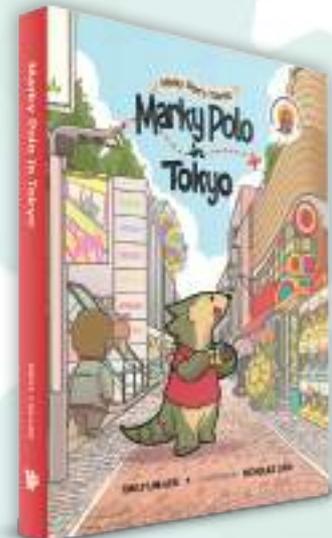
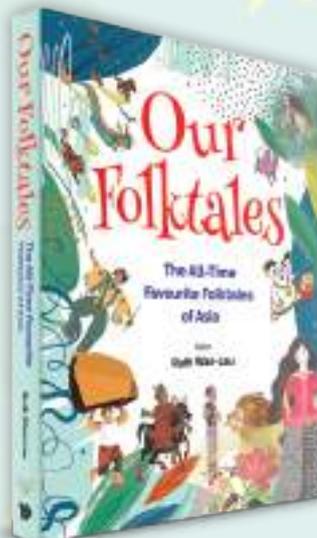
Three Little Vikings is Bethan Woollvin's latest picture book, with her unique and bold illustrative style marking it out on the shelf.

Ebba, Helga, and Wren live in a Viking village but there is trouble afoot, with items being stolen, trees crashing to the ground, and strange noises being heard. The all-knowing Chieftan assures them night after night that it is a storm, a fox, or a raven but our intrepid heroines already know better and so they set off to explore. Finding the truth, they tell the Chieftan who again, all-knowing, assures them they are wrong. They know they will need to outwit the creature using their knowledge and Ebba's book collection.

Completely enchanting, these three girls try again and again to get the Chieftan to listen to them, but he refuses, believing himself to know best. But these girls are brave, smart and persevere to get their voices heard! Fantastically told and illustrated, this might be my favourite Bethan Woollvin tale yet.

Erin Hamilton

Stories From Around the World



Entertaining and diverse titles for children of all ages

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Books: 8 – 12 | Fiction and Poetry

Ainsworth, Eve Know My Place

Barrington Stoke Ltd
2021, pp128, £7.99
9781781129807

Courage. Mental Health. Resilience



A touching and sensitive glimpse into the life of foster girl Amy who is struggling to deal with past trauma, her anxieties, hopes and dreams, and how she eventually builds trust in those around her against all the odds. Alternating between Amy's past and present, Ainsworth portrays an honest and unglamourised, yet age-appropriate take on these struggles, which cannot fail to inspire compassion and empathy in readers. The fast-paced plot and easy writing style help keep the reader's attention, building to a gripping yet sensitive climax. This work would be useful to support class and group discussions around being in Care and the Care system, as well as mental health and wellbeing and the importance of kindness, understanding, and compassion in peer acceptance of difference – with a delicate and thoughtful handling of how to deal with people who let you down because of their own weaknesses rather than your personal failure. A useful book for any young person to read, it provides a good example of how to accept vulnerability, as well as how to develop resilience and perseverance, and ultimately accept your dreams and hopes for the future.

Meg Barclay

Amoore, Nat Secrets of A Schoolyard Millionaire

Rock the Boat
2021, pp288, £6.99
9780861541317

Humour. Families. Money



Sparkling with humour, this is a refreshingly thrilling story with a clear moral message. It is easy to read, fun, and full of credible quirky characters. Tess and her friend Toby decide that they want to spend the million dollars they find hidden by the bad guy next door to mostly help children and people in need – including organising some of Year 5 to help them build a life-size Lego house for 'Kooky Kathy' who lives in the local park. Unfortunately, some of their well-intentioned gifting misfires and they feel guilty when Tess's younger sister Olivia ends up in hospital. Olivia recovers and Tess learns that the seven-year-old does not want to be treated differently because of her diabetes. The plot thickens when the bad guy threatens Tess's family unless the money is returned. The chapter titles and the tips that can be found throughout the book are brilliant.

Judith Palka

Anderson, Laura Ellen Rainbow Grey

HarperCollins Publishers
2021, pp304, £6.99
9781405298728

Magic. Perseverance. Adventure



Welcome to Celestia, land of puddle porting, cloud companions and Weatherlings. Ray Grey is ten years old and unlike her friends, she is utterly devoid of magic. A forbidden trip to Earth is about to turn her world upside down, triggering the ultimate transformation.

Tag along as Ray becomes Rainbow, discovering her inner strength and learning to master her new-found powers. Along with her friends and an exploding cloud cat called Nim, Rainbow must face new enemies and help save the world from the coming storm.

Rainbow Grey is the perfect antidote to a wet winter afternoon. Set in a vibrantly imagined world and bursting with colourful characters, Ray's story is utterly compelling, the perfect blend of action and adventure mixed with magic and mayhem. Rainbow is smart, funny, and fiercely determined, providing the story with a worthy heroine. Fans of Anderson's other books will enjoy the hidden references to the 'Amelia Fang' series, but those new to her work will find plenty to delight and enthral. A captivating story for readers aged 7-10.

Alison King

Bowling, Nicholas Song of the Far Isles

Chicken House
2021, pp325, £7.99
9781912626670

Magical. Musical. Adventure



A beautiful and imaginative adventure story following Oran and her supernatural friend Alick with their efforts to save their musical island Little Drum from the Great Silence imposed by the Red Duchess from the mainland. Treading the line carefully between magic and reality, this Hebridean-inspired world takes music as the basis for life, with a carefully woven plot of sea-faring journeys and action-packed adventures to overcome the threat of the Great Silence. Exploring themes of self-belief, courage, betrayal, and identity as well as coming of age, this wonderfully thought through work will grip the reader from the first page. Older readers will also enjoy the just brilliant subtle references to music in all its forms, from folk song to orchestras to opera. With accessible characters and free-flowing easy language, this work would be useful to inspire readers and encourage creativity and imagination. Perhaps less understandable for readers with little musical or sea-faring knowledge, a map and helpful key at the beginning aids accessibility; this is a brilliant work regardless, and a must-have for any young reader.

Meg Barclay

Bunzl, Peter Featherlight

Barrington Stoke Ltd
2021, pp98, £6.99
9781781129180

Adventure. Myth. Maritime



This is a charming and uplifting tale of inner resilience of a young girl in the face of uncertainty and mild peril. Bunzl enables us to sensitively enter the world of the protagonist through the island and maritime life, ecology, and weather, which set a beautiful backdrop to the dramatic plot. Courage, bravery, and resourcefulness are explored alongside mythological and fantastical themes, providing hope and inspiration to readers. Beautiful imagery and descriptions create an almost magic atmosphere, with the writing being accessible for younger readers whilst at the same time pacy and dramatic, helping to enthrall the older reader too. A few beautiful black and white illustrations add to this wonderful immersive experience. An essential read for any imaginative and adventurous reader, this takes inspiration from and wonderfully celebrates those historic young women who battled the odds to succeed in dramatic and dangerous maritime rescues, whilst being relevant and accessible for readers today.

Meg Barclay

Chisholm, Alastair Adam-2

Nosy Crow
2021, pp304, £7.99
9781788006101

Fast-Paced. AI. Sci-Fi



An interesting cross between *Wall-E* and *The Terminator*, this sci-fi novel tells the story of Adam-2, a robot who has been left forgotten in an abandoned building in Scotland for over two centuries until his life is turned upside down when he comes across two human children, a girl called Runa and her non-gendered companion, Linden. Adam suddenly finds himself in a world destroyed by a war between humans and highly advanced AIs and he soon realises that he's to play a crucial role in bringing the war to an end.

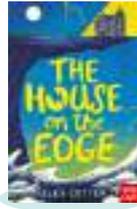
This is fast-paced and engaging from the start, a fantastic and accessible introduction to quite a challenging sci-fi genre. Apart from the adventure, the novel provides material for interesting classroom discussions concerning artificial intelligence and its unavoidable impact on society, but also difficult choices: what's expected versus what is right, the importance of mutual trust and determination, and, ultimately, what it really means to be human, especially in a world where sophisticated robots – useful but often uncontrollable – are an integral part.

Marzena Currie

Cotter, Alex

The House on the Edge

Nosy Crow
2021, pp256, £7.99
9781788008624
Thriller. Families. Home



Thirteen-year-old Faith is struggling. Her father has disappeared. Her mother has taken to her bed and is no longer taking any part in family life. Her younger brother Noah is behaving in disturbing ways, refusing to go to school, and becoming increasingly obsessed with sea ghosts. And then there's the crack in the cliff. The crack that is getting bigger by the day. It threatens their beautiful, historic home, the home that her grasping uncle would do anything to get his hands on. Faith is doing everything in her power to hold her family and her house together. If she asks for help, the consequences could be unbearable. The pressure on her has made school life terrible and destroyed her friendships. Then Noah disappears too.

This is an extremely impressive middle grade novel, with lots of suspense and intrigue and multiple twists and turns. The mental health issues are very sensitively handled, as are the stresses of being a young carer. Written in the first person, the reader is totally drawn into Faith's hard realities. But the book is far from grim. There is lots of love here, and, by the end, lots of hope too.

Anne Harding

Dockrill, Laura

The Dream House

Templar Publishing
2021, pp112, £9.99
9781848129450
Grief. Bereavement. Families



A moving novella about a boy working through the burden of grief and guilt he feels at the recent loss of his father. Rex comes to stay with his godfather, his father's best friend who lets him have his own space, including the Dream House in his garden which was Rex's special place in the past. But now everything has changed – so much reminds him of his dad. He doesn't feel like speaking to anyone and keeps his spiralling feelings of sadness locked within, only revealing in his sketchbook how he feels. Illustrated throughout, Rex's poignant drawings give an insight into the pain he is feeling. Rex replays and confronts past conversations and incidents when his dad was alive, both happy and sad, and receives a letter from the past. He realises he can still cherish the time he did have with his father but also look to the future. By accepting the kindness offered from friends both new and old, he realises that he doesn't need to bear all this on his own. Written in a vivid lyrical prose, with short chapters, this book would be very accessible to any child who is also exploring grief.

Sue Polchow

Elphinstone, Abi

The Crackle Dawn Dragon

Simon & Schuster
Children's Books
10/6/2021 256 £7.99
9781471173707



Adventure. Magic. Fantasy

From the fantastically imaginative characters and their names, to the creatures, the setting and the dark magic within Morg, this series is everything a child could want from a story.

In this final tale of 'The Unmapped Chronicles', we meet a young orphan who is shifted between foster homes and runs away too many times to count. Zebedeo Bolt is on the run again but magic secretly draws him to an old, abandoned theatre with a stunning grand piano waiting to be played. Zebedeo has a musical talent that seems to be uniquely his! However, music being played in abandoned places draws some people near and I am so thrilled to say, Fox is back! Time has passed but she is here to help!

Morg is also nearby, and she wants help from Zeb. Using her tricks, ploys, and scare tactics, it isn't long before Zeb gives in with the promise of riches, freedom, and a place of his own!

Utterly thrilling, enchanted with Elphinstone magic and always hopeful – this is one to share widely.

Erin Hamilton

Fowler, Aisling

Fireborn Twelve and the Frozen Forest

HarperCollins Children's Books
2021, p432, £12.99
9780008394158
Fantasy. Adventure. Challenge



Twelve is a Huntling, in training to defend the Hunting Lodge against terrifying creatures that threaten its existence and all the neighbouring clans. Like every Huntling, she has given up her name and identity, and pledged her life to the Lodge. A brilliant and courageous fighter, she is permanently angry and vengeful, haunted by memories of the horrific plight of her family. She holds herself aloof, never allowing herself to warm to anyone, other than the squirrel that Seven, a younger Huntling, has given her. Frequently in trouble with her teachers and her peers, she is locked in the dungeons with Five and Six, whom she loathes. There, she discovers that the Lodge is under attack and Seven has been abducted. The three of them go off in pursuit, accompanied by Dog, the enormous stone guardian of the Lodge.

A gripping, action-packed fantasy adventure. Twelve is an intriguingly complex protagonist. One of the strengths of the novel is the depiction of her emotional growth as she faces up to her past and her behaviour and makes tentative steps towards friendships. Fowler's impressive debut novel will surely have sequels.

Anne Harding

Gavin, Jamila

In Her Element

Illustrated by Jacinta Read
Pop Up Projects CIC
2021, pp32, £12.99
9781838323592



Disability. Resilience. Courage

This is a wonderful and sensitive exploration of difference, trauma, courage, and acceptance. Set against a backdrop of disability and apprehension starting a new school, Gavin takes readers on a deep dive into the world of Sophie. She has cerebral palsy, and we learn about her fears, anxieties, struggles to make friends, and ultimate courage to help others be true to themselves, no matter what past traumas they face. Beautiful lyrical language describes Sophie's fears and happiness through ocean imagery, magic realism, and references to fairy stories; a wonderful experience for the imaginative reader. Lovely illustrations from Read help enhance this immersive experience, providing context as well as decoration on the page to create a safe and accessible atmosphere. This work is essential for any classroom wanting to encourage difference and diversity, as well as to help pupils understand what life is like for people with disabilities and how to help and support them. It would also be good for less confident and more anxious pupils to see examples of courage, bravery, and resilience to help them find their voice.

Meg Barclay

Gliori, Debi

A Cat Called Waverley

Otter-Barry Books
2021, pp40, £12.99
9781913074630



Homelessness. War. Love

This is unsentimental but heart rending, and unsparing but gentle, and never mawkish in style. Gliori writes a story of love, loss, and loyalty, trust and 'happy ending' in the context of war, with the ensuing dismal result of homelessness in peacetime, for Darren – a real person. Gliori writes from the heart from the perspective of a cat who 'belongs with Darren', whose own life journey mirrors Darren's. The text is highly personal and will engage listeners and readers alike. Her lovely illustrations bring the reader into the centre of the experience; drawing in monochrome, she only uses touches of Autumn colours for the cat, Darren's hair and light, with small flurries of leaves to link the elements of a harrowing life experience with the cat-human relationship. There are no words for the war scenes, creating a moving and useful discussion starting point (imagine the impact of a silent page, when the story is shared in class). A wonderful addition to any primary school for literacy, PHSE and humanities; she admirably addresses the equality agenda, en passant, with a female train driver! This is a book to treasure, to weep over, and to inspire social change.

Stephanie Barclay

Books: 8 – 12 | Fiction and Poetry

Gosling, Clarrissa Dragon Shift

Prinsenhof Publications
2021, pp294, £12.99
9789493251014

Dragons. Families. Self discovery.



Birgith must demonstrate to her clan that she is able to shift into a bear, in the ultimate test to be treated as an adult. While she can feel something inside her, she is unable to change into a bear and is therefore classed as a human. Humans are not accepted in the clan, and as she was adopted as a child, and her origin remains a mystery, Birgith is outcast and sent to the human settlement. On her quest to discover who she really is and why she is unable to shift, Birgith discovers that she is also part dragon, and as dragons are thought to be extinct, if anyone became aware of her discovery, she would be killed, and her family would be hunted down. Birgith hears of a dragon being held captive in a nearby settlement, and with her dragon connection, she feels compelled to investigate and to try to set him free. On her mission, Birgith discovers some secrets about her family, and the reason why she was unable to shift, becomes clear.

An easy, fast paced read, with adventure and some good plot twists. Suitable for children in key stage two and beyond.

Charlotte Cole

Haddow, Swapna Bad Panda

Illustrated by Sheena Dempsey
Faber & Faber
2021, pp192, £6.99
9780571352418

Pandas. Appearances. Self-Image



One word on the cover says it all for me – hilarious! And the story of *Bad Panda* is indeed hilarious. Lin, who looks utterly cute and fluffy, starts life by doing 'All The Right Things'. But does this make her happy? Not at all ... in fact, all she wants to do is to play around with her adored, but naughty big brother, whose name is 'Face like a bag of potatoes'. So, when they are separated, her heart literally breaks – and it doesn't make matters any better when, due to her adorable looks, she gets shipped off to the zoo to be admired by all and sundry. Fortunately for Lin, every cloud has a silver lining, and she befriends another panda named Fu. However, the adults at the zoo will continue to think she's cute and say so ... and one day, this is all too much for Lin, who leads a revolt and has the animals take over. 'At last' she thinks that the zoo staff will think she's so bad that she'll get sent back home ... but it is not to be. Rather, she is hailed as a hero ... I am itching for the sequel to this book!

Rudolf Loewenstein

Ho-Yen, Polly How I Saved the World in a Week

Simon & Schuster Children's
2021, pp384, £6.99
978 1 4711 9354 5

Family. Survival. Adventure



Billy's mother, Sylvia, has one object in life: to teach Billy survival skills that will save him in the disaster she is sure is coming to the world. Her mission has costs: it has split up her marriage, banished Billy's father, and set the two of them on a rootless life where Billy constantly changes school, misses school, and can never make friends. Clearly Sylvia's mental health is frail. In the end she is hospitalised, and Billy's dad takes over. But then it turns out that Sylvia, though ill, was right. When a new virus suddenly erupts in the population, endangering everybody with widespread violence, one by one the skills that Sylvia has taught Billy prove useful, even vital, to his own survival and that of his new-found friends and family. It may not seem to matter whether you can use a heliograph, but it lets Billy save the world. This is a wonderful, hectic, page-turning sci-fi adventure, but also a warm and satisfying story of Billy's journey from loneliness and divided loyalties to friendship and love.

Peter Hollindale

Joseph, J. M. Fire Boy: Pants on Fire

Hodder Children's Books
2021, pp384, £6.99
9781444954708

Adventure. Humour. Superheroes



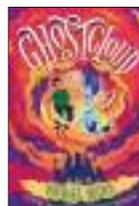
Aidan Sweeney was an ordinary schoolboy until he ate a sweet from a mysterious jar he received in the post. The sweets contained a serum which gave him, two friends, and his cat, superpowers. Aidan's is to turn himself into a human fireball and known as Fire Boy, he is performing with Zarathustra's Circus in London. In this second adventure for Fire Boy, the circus and its star attraction are invited to perform in New York. But others are determined to uncover Fire Boy's secret and get their hands on the few remaining sweets for their own nefarious purposes. Can Fire Boy outwit a media tycoon who wants to take over the world, his granddaughter desperate for her own superpower, and a shape-shifting scientist? An exciting, funny adventure with friendship at its heart which should appeal to fans of comic book superheroes.

Jayne Gould

Mann, Michael Ghostcloud

Hachette Children's Group
2021, pp352, £12.99
9781444964691

Ghosts. Adventure. Mystery



Cloud riding ghosts, a wicked villain, and smog with tentacles – what's not to enjoy in Michael Mann's exciting debut novel?

Twelve-year-old Luke finds himself shovelling coal at Battersea Power Station along with other kidnapped children. The only way out is through hard work to gain an amber ticket for freedom. But when Luke decides to help new arrival Jess, both feel the wrath of evil Tabatha Margate! Placed on scrubbing duty in the 'East Wing' Luke discovers a ghost called Alma, who can ride clouds and may be able to help them escape. But there are sinister goings on in Battersea Power Station, needing courage, determination, and ghostly skills if Luke and his friends are to survive!

There is so much to enjoy about this novel, from the future London setting and nightmare smog to the array of brilliant characters. I loved the ghostly elements, especially ghosts being able to shape and ride clouds across the sky and using rain to read people's thoughts – you may never look at a rain cloud the same again! Great twists, turns, and adventure are never far away in this novel. Highly recommended.

Stephen Leitch

Page, Alexandra Wishyouwas: The Tiny Guardian of Lost Letters

Illustrated by Penny Neville-Lee
Bloomsbury Children's Books
2021, pp275, £12.99

9781526641212

Adventure. Christmas. Fantasy



It's 1952 and London is engulfed in smog. Christmas is approaching, but Penny's Mum is away so Penny is staying at her Uncle Frank's. He is very busy running the Post Office and worried about the rats seen in the sorting area. But when Penny spots one, she knows she is not looking at a normal rat. This one is much more round faced. Plus, it then talks to her!

Wishyouwas is a sorter – rescuing lost letters and living in a secret world underground. He introduces Penny to their community, some of whom are very reluctant to trust a human.

But there is another human who knows about sorters – Stanley Scrawl, whose job it is to catch rats on the London underground. Stanley Scrawl is not what he seems, and the sorters are in danger so it's up to Penny to help them.

With cameo illustrations by Penny Neville-Lee, this is a fast-paced adventure story, although quite violent towards the end, so suitable for upper key stage two children. Despite the dangers, this is a comforting Christmas read with suspense.

Dawn Woods

Best New Books on Cosy reads

Editor's pick



Aled Jones and Rosie Brooks (Illustrator)

Bobby Dean saves Christmas

Hodder, 2021, £8.99, 208pp
9781529376128

Bobby is attending school for the first time in his life, so is experiencing lots of new things. He also discovers a magical talent.

David Farr and Kristina Kister (Illustrator)

The Book of Stolen Dreams

Usborne, 2021, £12.99, 384pp
9781801310840

Rachel and Robert live in a cruel dictatorship. When their librarian father asks them to help to steal a forbidden book, they experience an adventure in which they need all their wits to survive.

Martin Brown
Nell and the Cave Bear

Piccadilly Press, 2021, 176pp, £6.99
9781848129689
Animals. Historical. Stone Age

Without parents, Nell lives with her tribe with a bear for a best friend. Fearing he was in danger, she runs away to find a safe place where they can be together.

Greg James & Chris Smith Amy Nguyen (Illustrator)

The Great Dream Robbery

Puffin, 2021, 416pp, £12.99
9780241470510
Dreams. Humour. Mystery

Maya needs to sleep to save her dad using the dream-entering device he invented as he has now been trapped inside a nightmare.

Jacqueline Wilson and Rachael Dean (Illustrator)

The Primrose Railway children

Puffin, 2021, £12.99, 400pp
9780241517765
Trains

Based around E. Nesbit's classic, Phoebe, her siblings, and her Mum move to the countryside near a steam railway. Missing her dad, Phoebe feels she is not being told the whole truth.

Ross Welford
When We Got Lost in Dreamland

Harper Collins, 2021, 432pp, £6.99
9780008333812
Adventure. Dreams. Fantasy

Malky and his younger brother Seb become the owners of a 'Dreaminator', where they can experience great adventures. But when it goes wrong, Malky must save his brother.

Sara Pennypacker and Jon Klassen (Illustrator)

Pax, Journey Home

Harper Collins, 2021, 256pp, £12.99
9780008470289
Animal Stories. Environment. Friendship

Pax is protecting his litter, but when one falls ill, he turns to the one human he can trust, but that means Peter must once again face leaving Pax to nature's rules.

Danielle Brown and Adam Larkum (Illustrator)

One Hundred Reasons to Hope

Puffin, 2021, 64pp, £14.99
9780241542156
Biographies. Diseases. Heroes

A beautifully illustrated book celebrating the true stories of everyday heroes across Great Britain during the COVID-19 pandemic as 'tomorrow will be a good day.'

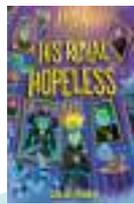
Perrin, Chloe
His Royal Hopeless

Chicken House
2021, pp320, £6.99
9781913322304
Humour. Magic. Adventure

This is a lovely, funny book. Chloe Perrin's debut swiftly introduces the key characters and the adventure romps along, full of risks, magic, and danger. Then in the final third of the story, its wise and tender message about learning to be true to your own sense of what is right for you and others is revealed.

Robbie is heir to the wickedest dynasty in the world, the Sinistevils. His mother is the Queen of the land and the most evil villain you can imagine. She believes that Robbie is a failure. Far from being evil, Robbie is kind, friendly, optimistic, and a little clumsy. He sets out on a quest to prove he is worthy of inheriting his mother's title. However, things don't go quite as he planned or hoped. Robbie is supported in his attempts by two loyal friends, Layla and Devon, and gradually he learns the truth about both his mother and himself. This has elements of fairy tale but contains a modern message about identity and self-esteem. Good to read aloud and a story with an ending almost as optimistic as Robbie himself.

Anne Thompson



Rai, Bali
The Royal Rebel: The Life of Suffragette Princess Sophia Duleep Singh

Illustrated by Rachael Dean
Barrington Stoke
2021, pp96, £6.99
9781781129425
History. Identity. Home

When we think of the suffragettes, it's often the same names that spring to mind. This book recounts the alternative story of an arguably lesser-known suffragette hero, Princess Sophia Duleep.

The goddaughter of Queen Victoria, Sophia had both a privileged and troubled upbringing in England after her father, the last Sikh ruler of the Punjab, lost his empire to British rule. Along with detailing suffragette history, this fictionalised retelling of Sophia's extraordinary life is a useful read for exploring colonialism and the British Empire. Narrated from Sophia's perspective, we experience the conflict she feels towards England as both her home and the place that took so much from her.

The story explores important, universal themes of home, family, and identity as - torn between India and England - Sophia struggles to find a place she belongs. *The Royal Rebel* adds depth to the suffragette movement we think we know and is definitely worth a read.

Hannah Groves



Rauf, Onjali Q.
The Great Food Bank Heist

Illustrated by Elisa Paganelli
Barrington Stoke Ltd
2021, pp104, £6.99
9781781129623
Food poverty. Friendship. Charity

A heart-wrenching but uplifting book which highlights an urgent message about food poverty, delivered with compassion and humour.

Inspired by the fact that over 8 million people in the UK access food banks on a regular basis, this book highlights the struggle of one family and is narrated by Nelson, a boy who wants nothing more than to have a full stomach.

Nelson describes how his family often have to go days without proper meals. In fact, if it wasn't for the free school meals and trips to the food bank, he and Ashley would hardly eat at all. The whole family looks forward to their weekly trip to the food bank so much that it becomes a celebration, so when Nelson discovers someone has been stealing from the food bank he's horrified.

He vows to catch the culprits and what ensues is a thrilling race to unmask the food bank thieves! A powerful story, rooted in reality, with themes of compassion, friendship and hope. This book features a dyslexia-friendly layout and is printed on thick, tinted paper stock which will make it accessible to many children.

Emma Carpendale



Books: 8 – 12 | Fiction and Poetry

Rooney, Rachel

The Language of Cat and Other Poems

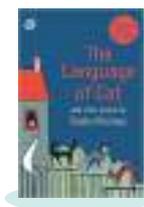
Illustrated by Ellie Jenkins
Otter-Barry Books
2021, pp96, £7.99
9781913074548

Poems. Poetry. Cats

As a prize-winning poet, Rachel Rooney knows how to write poems that will engage her readers. Hers are poems that will make you laugh. They will tell you stories, present you with riddles, and they may also make you think. In this brand new collection, there are poems that do all this and they are quite simply mostly poems about cats. Not just any old cats though, for here you will find the language of cat and learn more about these most elegant and at times mysterious as well as demanding animals.

The language of cat is all about the stare, the purr, the hiss, the saunter, the nose in the air, the tail swish. The language of cat is a language to learn, to appreciate and to enjoy. It delights, it surprises and above all it helps to learn it so that you can begin, yes only begin, to understand the cat. Beautiful black and white illustrations accompany the simple, powerful poems and the book lures you in; it wants to be read, just as a cat looks at you wanting to be stroked.

Louise Ellis-Barrett



Scott, Libby & Westcott, Rebecca

Ways To Be Me

Scholastic
2021, pp292, £6.99
9780702308352

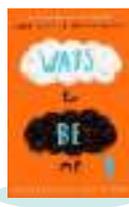
Autism. Families. Friends

Tally is in Year 6 and starting to feel like she just has no luck at all. She can't understand why everything seems so difficult for her, and why everyone else seems to find it so easy to cope with things that she finds impossible.

When her parents suggest taking her to a doctor, Tally feels like it's confirmation that she's wrong, and needs to be fixed. But then she learns about autism. Can she learn to accept herself as she is?

This book is a clear and sensitive portrayal of how it feels to grow up and live as an autistic person. The inclusion of more than one autistic character helps to demonstrate how harmful it can be to put all autistic people into the same box, rather than recognising the diversity of their personalities, strengths, and struggles – each character is very different! This is an important book for both those with autism and those without, to learn to celebrate all differences.

Louise Widdowson



Sedgwick, Marcus

Dark Peak

Oxford Children's Books
2021, pp123, £7.99
9780198494973

Thriller. Paranormal. Easy read

It's coming towards the end of the scorching hot summer of 1976 and it is the start of a new school year. Along the riverside and deep into the woods, Porter Fox and his classmates are on a school trip visiting Lud's church – a deep chasm in the rock that has been linked to various historical legends such as Sir Gawain and King Arthur.

The group enter the church at one end and make their way through the tight track, but as they start to emerge from the rocks, it soon becomes clear that two of them haven't come out the other side! After a few hours one person is eventually found but nobody seems concerned about the boy who is still missing. So, Porter decides to take matters into his own hands and begins to investigate!

Another fantastic Barrington Stoke book with an eerie and sinister atmosphere. It is tense and engaging and will keep the reader hooked throughout. It would be a great book for a small, low ability class or for anyone who wants a quick read.

Angela Dyson



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Shireen, Nadia
Grimwood

Simon & Schuster Children's
2021, pp368, £12.99
9781471199301

Friendship. Adventure. Comedy



Fox cub siblings Ted and Nancy are forced to go on the run from their city home following a spat with the local evil cat, Princess Buttons, who is out for revenge! Fortunately, they end up in Grimwood and soon make friends with the quirky cast of animal characters who live there. Can their new friends help save them from Princess Buttons?

A story about friendship and finding where you belong, Grimwood is above all a fun adventure that is packed to the brim with silliness that will appeal both to children and to adults. I challenge you not to laugh out loud! The fabulous illustrations really bring the book to life. This has all the makings of a great series, and I really hope to revisit Grimwood in the future.

Shona Page

Strange, Lucy
The Mermaid in the Millpond

Illustrated by Pam Smy
Barrington Stoke
2022, pp88, £6.99
9781800900493

Mermaid. History. Friendship



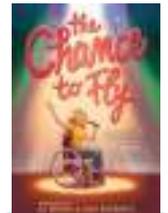
The front cover of this book is particularly stunning, and I think many children would welcome its dyslexia-friendly features. It's a compelling story and one that I don't think young readers will be able to put down. It's a story of hope and of friendship between two young girls who are struggling to survive in a rural cotton mill. The visual detail in the story will give the reader an important insight into what life was like in the past, but it will also spark their imagination as they read about a vicious creature that lurks in the millpond. There is a great lesson of determination, resilience and how sometimes if you save someone else you end up saving yourself as well. A very exciting ending as the girls realise that the only way to survive is to escape because they are treated so badly in the cotton mill. Their friendship and bravery helps them to escape from a very tricky situation, and there is a great sense of relief as you read the last page. A great first chapter book and an author who I think will become a firm favourite with readers.

Rebecca Taylor

Stroker, Ali & Davidowitz, Stacey
The Chance to Fly

Amulet Books
2021, pp288, £11.99
9781419743931

Inclusion. Disabilities. Families



It is so refreshing to read a book that is about a teenager with a disability. Nat loves musicals and when she moves with her family to New Jersey she joins a theatre group. The group is inclusive and she makes friends, but there are some issues as everyone has to adapt to ensuring theatre space is inclusive and has working lifts. When issues occur with dates and the lead character can no longer play Elphaba, Nat's dreams come true.

This is a story of determination and the fight for independence for disabled people. It is a fantastic positive book that also leads you to question diversity and inclusivity in the theatre industry. Being written by Ali Stoker, who made history for being the first person to appear on Broadway in a wheelchair, makes this book truly inspirational.

Kate Keaveny

Taylor-Bessent, Mel
The Christmas Carrolls

HarperCollins Publishers
2021, pp256, £7.99
9780755503629

Friendship. Difference. Christmas



As I am probably the biggest Christmas enthusiast on the SLA team, this book certainly seemed to be destined for me! Holly Carroll comes from a family who are quite literally Christmas mad and celebrate the festival every single day of the year. A house move means Holly can no longer be home schooled so she enters Year 5 at her local primary. Unfortunately, Holly's unbridled enthusiasm for all things festive makes her stand out like a sore thumb and she finds it a little difficult to conform and make friends. Happily, by the end of the book Holly and her family have won over everyone in the neighbourhood by putting on a Christmas festival to raise money for the local orphanage.

This is a story stuffed to the brim with glitter and good cheer, with a strong message about staying true to yourself and embracing our differences. I absolutely loved the donkey who is convinced he is a reindeer and found myself smiling all the way through the book. It would be great as a class read in December.

Bev Humphrey

Thornton, Nicki
The Howling Hag Mystery

Chicken House
2021, pp342, £6.99
9781913322700

Curses. Witches. Friends



Curses? Witches? Friends? Talking cats? If any of these interest you, then I thoroughly recommend reading *The Howling Hag Mystery*.

Nicki Thornton, author of *The Last Chance Hotel*, has written a fantastic new mystery following beloved Nightshade, the sassy, talking black cat, on a brand-new adventure.

The story follows a girl called Raven Charming, who is desperate to find her magical affinity, especially when she is surrounded by her magically gifted family. She befriends the new boy in town, Morty Scratch, and talking detecto-cat Nightshade, to unravel the mysterious curses that seem to be plaguing their school. Can they get to the bottom of what exactly is going on?

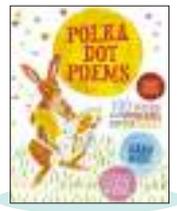
The book is excitingly magical and is told from both Raven and Nightshade's points of view, giving us more of an insight into the town. There are a host of wonderful characters and a big mystery to solve! It is filled with laughs and dramatic plot-twists, and will keep you engaged throughout to find out who 'The Howling Hag' really is!

Emma Price

Weil, Zaro
Polka Dot Poems

Illustrated by Lucy Wynne
Troika Books
2021, pp159, £12.99
9781909991156

Poetry. Haiku. Nature



This is a charming and joyful collection of haiku based on the natural world, with charming illustrations that add humour and interest to the collection. Short-form poems are great for sharing with children and encouraging creative writing, and this book will certainly inspire children to have a go at writing their own. The imagery is simple but startling - moss is 'soft-hushing the forest', light is 'morning sun-breath'. The range of animals covered is impressive, including many that children may not be familiar with, such as the Babirusa, Zunzuncito and Gerenuk - and there is a commentary at the back to tell the reader more about these creatures and where on the Earth they can be found. With lots of potential for classroom use supporting both English and science, this is a must-have for schools, and will be enjoyed by children right across primary.

Jo Sennitt

Agrawal, Roma
How Was That Built?

Illustrated by Katie Hickey
Bloomsbury Children's Books
2021, pp80, £14.99
9781526603654

Engineering. Buildings. Structures

This beautiful hardback book is brimming with information about some of our most famous and amazing buildings and structures across the world, built in both the past and current day. Written by award-winning structural engineer Roma Agrawal, this book introduces readers to the materials, building methods, and equipment used to build some of our most awesome and challenging structures, from bridges and domes, to the tallest of buildings, to restaurants underwater. It is an inspiring and informative text and includes information about the development of new materials to overcome some of the challenges and problems faced; there is also a chapter on the hopes for building in space in the future and what may prevent this from happening. At the end of the book there is a full glossary and a gallery of prominent engineers. A wonderful addition to a school library (or any bookshelf), particularly to the careers section as it will surely inspire many to consider one of the many forms of engineering as an occupation.

Linda Nash



Alessio, Giovanna
The Culture of Clothes

Illustrated by Chaaya Prabhat
Templar Publishing
2021, pp80, £14.99
9781787411609

Diversity. Cultures. Countries

This large format hardback starts with some general comments about how traditional clothing speaks of the wearer's cultural heritage and identity. It hints at the huge variations in traditional dress across the world (in colour, adornments, and materials) which are detailed on the following pages. Each costume is given a double-page spread, stylishly framed and illustrated in a design and colour palette that matches its subject perfectly. And it's not just women who feature here: as well as the Panamanian lady in her pollera dress, and the Alsatian lady in her long red 'kutt', there's the Sioux Grass Dancer from the USA and an Itugao man from the Luzan mountains of the Philippines (among many others). Each has distinctively different attire, explained in several short paragraphs, with smaller annotated illustrations reserved for various accessories. You can read the book sequentially or dip into it, choosing pages to read at random according to which section (based on the continents) grabs your interest first. It's one that will be enjoyed by a wide age range, in class and individually. Highly recommended.

Jane Rew



Allen, Peter
Atlas of Amazing Architecture

Cicada Books Limited
2021, pp104, £14.99
9781908714879

Architecture. Technology. History

This book includes sections on some of the most incredible structures in the world, including looking at buildings going back thousands of years. Easy to read with plenty of impressive drawings, the text is broken down into bite-sized chunks. It has an extensive glossary of architectural terms at the back together with a comprehensive index. The book is also full of tiny drawings which add to its appeal. The double-page spread on the Jewish Museum in Berlin was of great interest as this city is one of my favourite world destinations containing so many amazing architectural masterpieces. I really liked this book, which I am sure will appeal to upper primary and lower secondary pupils. There is a fascinating double-page spread on pavilion architecture, including the famous Crystal Palace and the Atomium in Brussels. A well-presented volume, it spans centuries of outstanding architectural achievements.

Godfrey Hall



Balfe, Abigail
A Different Sort of Normal

Puffin
2021, pp240, £8.99
9780241508794

Autism. Teenagers. Neurodiversity

A must read for teachers and teenagers. This book explains neurodiversity and autism so well. Whilst it addresses some of the traits that are common to girls with autism, the author clearly explains that the complexities of each neurodivergent person cannot be termed as classic autism or girl or boy type autism. She also deals with the myths around autism. Sensory overload is explained so well with fantastic visuals, as well as special interests, info-dumping, empathy, and emotions.

This book is a must read; it is something that should be in every school library and is essential for anyone with autism or working with young people with autism.

Kate Keaveny



Birkhead, Tim
What it's Like to Be a Bird

Illustrated by Catherine Rayner
Bloomsbury Children's Books
2021, pp47, £12.99
9781526604125

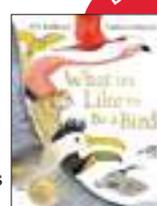
Birds. Nature. Habitats

From tall trees to hedgerows and rivers to oceans, this is a fabulous guide to the birds we might spot in different environments, explaining how they are adapted to them. Filled with amazing facts – such as macaw parrots have accents just like us depending on where they are from, or how a partridge can outsmart a fox – this is a fascinating, absorbing read that imparts knowledge seamlessly.

Each double-page spread focuses on an aspect of bird behaviour as demonstrated by a specific species. Complex language and ideas are explained perfectly with relatable examples such as the distance birds fly when migrating. A section at the end about birds' senses rounds off the book perfectly, including two that we are yet to understand.

Catherine Rayner's stunningly detailed, muted watercolour illustrations accompany Tim Birkhead's story-like prose presenting the facts, making this the perfect non-fiction text to accompany any topic on birds.

Nicki Cleveland



EDITOR'S PICK

Broadbent, Rick
Sports Legends

Illustrated by James Davies Walker
2021, pp267, £7.99
9781406397123

Sport. Science. Self-fulfilment

Sporting Legends looks at the lives and achievements of a number of inspiring individuals. These include names such as Usain Bolt, Serena Williams, and Tanni Grey-Thompson. Easy to read, it is aimed initially at primary aged children. Written by a sports journalist, it examines how these individuals became stars in their sports and how they managed to achieve this. Looking in depth at the pathway to their success, the book shows that it is possible to get to the top whoever you are as long as you have the determination and stamina. There is a short resume of each legend and then an in-depth look at how they achieved stardom in their particular field. Rob has travelled the world in his job, interviewing a large number of top athletes, and his ability to put this down on paper is impressive. A wonderful book for youngsters, showing them that by unlocking your self-confidence and overcoming any challenges anything is possible. I can thoroughly recommend this book which I am sure will be extremely popular and ideal as a starting point for further studies.

Godfrey Hall



Burke, Fatti
Find Tom in Time

Nosy Crow
2021, pp48, £7.99
9781788007177
History. China. Cat



This book is intended as one of a series published by Nosy Crow in collaboration with the British Museum. It is essentially a pictorial introduction to China during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). A full page is devoted to each aspect of life at the time – the Great Wall, the Market, The Forbidden City, the Doctor’s Surgery, and so on. The pictures are very crowded, and each is accompanied by a short quiz – ‘Can you spot?’ – which helps the reader to focus on what is happening. The pictures are so crowded that an appendix supplies the solutions, with miniature versions of each picture shown with coloured circles as clues. (Some readers will find these “solutions” more difficult than the original quiz!) The book is framed within a narrative where a little boy, Tom, chases his grandmother’s cat, Digby, who leads him into each scene. Grandmother Bea, we are told, is an archaeologist whose ownership of a Ming dynasty young man’s outfit triggers the whole series of episodes. The drawings are stylized and brightly coloured, and the book will appeal as much for its attractiveness as for its historical information. Suitable for the middle and upper primary school.

Wendy Axford

Craig, Dr Mya-Rose
We Have a Dream

Magic Cat Publishing
2021, pp64, £12.99
9781913520205
Conservation. Climate. Change



Beautifully illustrated and presented book where we meet 30 young indigenous people and people of colour and read their views on what needs to be done to protect the planet. For each campaigner, we get some background information, followed by more detailed consideration of the issue they are concerned with, and the change they see as being necessary to ensure that young people have a planet to inherit. Each young person has put forward a ‘dream’ for the future written in just a few words, making for a powerful message. This is a book concerned with the messages about our planet that need to be heard; these messages, coming from extraordinary voices, provide a wake-up call but also inspiration and hope.

Michelle Armstrong-Harris

Chandler, Jenny
Green Kids Cook

Pavilion Books
2021, pp160, £14.99
9781911663584
Cooking. Science. Maths



With the introduction of the years of TV programmes such as ‘Bake Off’, cooking has now become part and parcel of our everyday lives. Over my many years in education I always found it a terrific way of covering various elements of the curriculum, including maths and science. It is also a wonderful way of bringing children of different abilities together. *Green Kids Cook* is bright and cheerful book full of simple, tasty recipes. Written by a cookery teacher, it contains lots of flavoursome ideas from all over the world. A great book not only for libraries but also for home use, it divides the recipes into different meals including snacks, breakfasts, and mains. There are also sewing projects within the text and ideas for growing your own pulses. Designed to make a difference, healthy cookery is the way forward and an ideal subject for any school timetable. Providing children with plenty of eco tips, I am certain this book will be extremely popular with all age groups.

Godfrey Hall

Eboch, M.M.
How Do Virtual Assistants Work?

Raintree
2021, pp48, £13.99
9781398204515
Technology. Computer Science. AI



Whether they “Ask Alexa” or “speak to Siri”, students will readily discover answers about smart technology and artificial intelligence through this highly accessible guide, perfect for every school library.

Using attractive, uncluttered, and varied page formats, it is part of a series of four dealing with ‘High-Tech Science at Home’. The index and glossary are useful, together with the illustrations and diagrams and fact boxes using language targeted to key stages 2 and 3.

It reveals the research history behind machine learning and computer voice recognition which is key to today’s virtual or digital assistants and chatbots. In addition to the research timelines behind computer speech recognition there are also regular prompts for students to question the limitations and future uses of virtual assistants.

The author also raises the complex issues around behavioural development when we are living in an ambient computing environment; ‘devices around us constantly sensing our needs’ and ‘as software advances, talking to a VA is becoming more and more like talking to a human.’

Irene Marillat

Delargy, Flora
Rescuing the Titanic

Wide Eyed Editions
2021, pp80, £14.99
9780711262768
Titanic. Disaster. Rescue



Flora Delargy has created a beautiful information source and an accessible story in picture-book format. The fateful journeys of the Titanic and the Carpathia are drawn and described as they crossed the Atlantic in April 1912.

An unusual grid-like contents page is followed by miniature sketches of the key crew and passengers on board both ships. The journeys and the details of life on board, the route, and the events of the tragic night are detailed. Largely illustration supported by text box captions, this fabulous book is a joy to read. The vastness of the icebergs, the darkness of the night, and the joy inside the Titanic before tragedy struck are highlighted through gentle crayoned pictures.

Tackling an often-overlooked aspect of the Titanic story, this book focuses on the actions of the Carpathia and her captain, and bravery of her men. Clearly well researched, there is a list of sources and suggestions for further reading as well as a comprehensive glossary.

Highly recommended for upper junior and lower secondary-aged students as a history book and for anyone over eight as a really enjoyable read.

Janet Sims

Finlay, Madeleine
Beetles for Breakfast

Illustrated by Jisu Choi
Flying Eye Books
2021, pp84, £14.99
9781838740221
Science. Sustainability. Climate Change

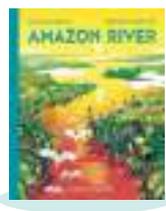


This colourful book looks at the impact of climate change on scientific developments that affect our lives, including foodstuffs, cities, energy from the ocean and more. Sections begin with a captioned diagram followed by detailed explanations based on it. For example, the section on breakfasts looks at new eco-foodstuffs, such as alternatives to meat. The information is eclectic and varied. The pages on ‘Wonderful Water’ discuss wave, hydrogen, sea water and kelp power, all very interesting scientific developments. This book is full of interesting facts and is excellent for dipping into or reading straight through. I liked the clear explanations of today’s problems and the level of detail about scientific ideas to save the planet, such as the development of sky farms to increase production and the use of drones in farming. There is plenty to study in the illustrations and short paragraphs of clearly expressed ideas, varying from current scientific developments to futuristic ones. This book could stimulate some fascinating debates. I recommend this book for children aged 8 and over who are interested in science.

Lucy Chambers

Francis, Angela Sangma Amazon River

Illustrated by
Rômolo D’Hipólito
Flying Eye Books
2021, pp80, £14.99
9781912497331
Rivers. Animals. People



This a robust and durable text which will stand up to much handling and is thus well suited to the class or school library. Four sections of between six and eight ‘chapters’, each of which occupies a double-page spread, explore the Amazon. The text ends with a two-page glossary.

Each spread is engagingly illustrated by Romolo D’Hipolito using a subdued palate to communicate the richness and complexity of the environment, its diverse vegetation, and the creatures and humans living there. The narrative takes the form of blocks of clearly expressed text with a heading to signal the content. Thus in the spread ‘Amphibians’ in ‘Wildlife on the riverbank’ the reader learns about the poison dart frog, the glass frog, salamanders, and the paradoxical frog which starts life as a large tadpole and ends up as a small frog.

Important issues such as deforestation and the rights of the indigenous communities are not neglected. Readers will encounter an abundant source of information offering encouragement to explore further or to reflect and discuss.

David Mallett

Green, Dan Football Quizzes Rule: Football Superstars

Welbeck Children’s Books
2021, pp128, £5.99
9781783126293
Football. Fun. Competition



When I was first appointed teacher/librarian in a boys’ secondary school in 1960s Deptford, I soon worked out that the best way to get my “customers” involved in books was to tap into their interests. That meant lots of books and magazines relating to football and angling. A book like Simon Mugford’s collection of football quizzes would have been very useful. It includes questions, boxed facts, word searches, multi-choice box ticking exercises, and much more, ranging from what year did Jurgen Klopp become Liverpool Manager? to what record did Harry Kane set for Tottenham in March 2019? Young football fans would learn much from this book. It’s a “write in” book, so if it’s for school use you would need to buy multiple copies.

Susan Elkin

French, Jess How to be a Vet

Illustrated by Sol Linero
Nosy Crow
2021, pp32, £6.99
9781788006972
Careers. Animals. Information



There is probably, in every primary classroom, a child who has the ambition of becoming a vet. Dr Jess French’s book *How to be a Vet* and other animal jobs will give these children some insights into what the job involves. The text is constructed so that it offers a good depth of information for those who want it while not discouraging those who want to flip through quickly for a general idea. Each double-page spread answers a question such as ‘What do Vets Need to Learn?’ ensuring that, though there are few of the usual information location conventions of a non-fiction text, it is easy to find the sections which interest the reader most. Key phrases are also emboldened, allowing readers to move to the most relevant parts of the page. Young enthusiasts will appreciate the wealth of technical terminology as well as the frequent mentions of wee and poo!

The final pages of the book move on to other careers working with animals, which will be very interesting to children who may want other jobs with animals.

Jaki Brien

Grochowicz, Joanna Shackleton’s Endurance

A & U Children
2021, pp304, £7.99
9781911679158
Adventure. Historical. Courage



In 1914, famed polar explorer Ernest Shackleton finally had a chance to fulfil his life-long dream to set sail for Antarctica and cross the last uncharted continent on foot. He and his team of 27 men dreamed of discovery and glory, but instead faced a perilous journey that it seemed bitterly unlikely any would return from. Little prior knowledge of events of the Endurance and the ‘last great polar journey’ are required as truly Grochowicz brings it all to life. Incredibly readable, pacily told with wonderfully engaging warmth, it’s near impossible to put down. The ordeal of Shackleton and his men seems so impossible – such improbable odds, all manners of disaster and horrific conditions than can scarcely be believed – that they should be unimaginable, yet Grochowicz manages to recount them so compellingly that it all feels so accessible, vital, and real. Switching between various points of view, we get a fully rounded understanding of the brutality of the events but also the greatest testament to the power of the human spirit. An uplifting and captivating adventure of a book.

Charlotte Harrison

Gipson, Ferrem The Ultimate Art Museum

Phaidon Press Limited
2021, pp232, £29.95
9781838662967
Art. History. Geography



A beautifully illustrated large-format art book organised like a virtual museum of art. It encompasses works from every period and every continent and would be a fascinating reference work for children and school libraries. At the end there is a list of world-wide art museums to visit. I would have liked a reference to where the art works featured in the volume can be seen.

Alison A. Maxwell-Cox

Ince, Steve An Introduction to Game Writing

S-Eye
2021, pp136, £7.99
9781838223649
Coding. Games. Writing

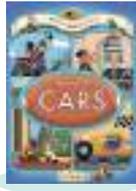


Steve Ince has written an easily accessible book about writing for computer games, which should serve as a starting point for any child (or reluctant adult, come to think of it!) who wishes to venture into the world of writing games or branching stories for the computer. This book serves as an ideal introduction to this aspect of game writing, and is written in such a way that children will find it easy to follow instructions. What helps the book greatly is that Ince has managed to break up the text into easily understandable chunks of information so that weaker readers will not flounder and give up. The presence of different suggestions and activities in text boxes with the headings ‘Action One, or Two or Three...etc’ is an ideal way of having children try out ideas before they put them into practice. Examples of text and pictures complement the book’s text well, and make the incorporation of such topics as Boolean variables seem natural and easy rather than threatening and awkward. I’d happily have a copy of this book in most key stage Two classrooms – the addition of relevant weblinks is an additional bonus.

Rudolf Loewenstein

Krusynski, Elliot
Professor Wooford
McPaw's History of Cars

Cicada Books Limited
 2021, pp64, £12.99
 9781908714954
Cars. Engines. History



This book will satisfy all very young car enthusiasts, providing a thorough history of the car. Starting with Leonardo Da Vinci's precursor to the car in 1478, right through to the development of the modern electric car by way of the racing car and luxury cars, this book is a simple but effective history.

Told in a cartoon style that is easy to follow, with clear text and bright illustrations, this book covers many points – I didn't know, for instance, that Henry Ford's early cars were all black because black paint is said to dry quickest! (p13!) My only reservation is that petrol is referred to as gasoline, showing the book's US origins.

I was particularly taken with the 'How Does a Car Work?' spread that explains the internal combustion engine very clearly. The contributions to the car from different countries of the world are all recognised, as well as some explanation of the different types of fuels that are being used or developed for the modern car – all fascinating for the young enthusiast.

I am always pleased to see an index in a book – and this one has a very serviceable index.

Tricia Adams

Long, David
Ancient World
Magnified

Illustrated by Andy Rowland
 Wide Eyed Editions
 2021, pp45, £16.99
 9780711249707
Civilizations. Ancient Worlds. Occupations



This book is an illustrated introduction to sixteen different early civilizations, beginning with Mesopotamia and the dawn of agriculture, and culminating in the Aztec Empire. Each is given a double-page spread, full of pictures of stylized miniature people carrying out everyday tasks of the period. The book comes complete with a magnifying glass. Most children in British classrooms will know something about some of these civilisations – the Egyptian, Greek, the Roman Empire. But most of them will be unfamiliar – the Indus Valley civilisation, the Olmec world, the Kingdom of Kush, the Qin dynasty, and the Kingdom of Aksum ("one of the greatest empires in African history"). The little figures are tiny, but carefully drawn; those poring over the magnifying glass (unnecessary for most) may find some interesting details and perhaps some odd ones (did the oarsmen in Greek triremes really face the bows?). *Ancient World Magnified* will make interesting reading in a classroom of children with multi-ethnic backgrounds. Recommended for children in the upper primary school.

Martin Axford

Leonard, Bernie
Moban and Sky's
Mindful Adventure

Illustrated by Chris Taylor
 2021, pp32, £11.99
 9781913680107
Mental health. Science. Mindfulness



Mental health is something that we all need to focus on more, especially after the last year or so. We all need to keep ourselves in good mental shape and the exercises in this book really help children with their mental wellbeing. They are easy to do and remember!

This book shares with you seven mindfulness techniques that, with daily practice, will have a positive effect on your wellbeing and that of the young people in your care. It is geared towards children, with the support of their parents/ carers/teachers. You can plan how you are going to integrate all the practices into your daily life, using the example at the back of the book to help.

Alongside the techniques is a charming storyline with amazing illustrations to help keep children engaged. The book aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people of all ages, by using the wellbeing tools to live a healthier and happier life. It even explains the science behind mindfulness in a very accessible way.

Promoting good mental health and wellbeing in children in a very accessible way makes this a must-have for parents, carers, and teachers.

Emma Price

Matineau, Susan
Think Like a Scientist!

Illustrated by Vicky Barker
 b small publishing
 2021, pp32, £5.99
 9781913918095
Science. Literacy.
Critical Thinking



The latest book in b small's critical thinking series, focuses on developing scientific literacy skills. It explores how scientists work, problem solving and communicating the facts. The design of each double-page employs colour, manageable chunks of text, and infographics to create an attractive poster-style spread; it includes emboldened headings and keywords, which are also listed alphabetically in the glossary. Open-ended questions and suggestions for a variety of engaging activities encourage readers to think for themselves and get actively involved. Topics covered range from 'Reading scientific information' and 'The language of science' to 'Science in the news' and ethics. The section on medical advances includes a useful, topical explanation of how safe vaccines are developed. The book makes it clear that there is still a lot that we don't know generally. The book will be of interest to teachers and pupils in both key stage 2 and key stage 3 and has the potential to be used to support a whole school literacy programme or study skills course, or to be used as a point of reference during science lessons.

Chris Routh

Long, David
Tragedy at Sea:
The sinking of
the Titanic

Illustrated by Stefano Tambellini
 Barrington Stoke Ltd
 2021, pp80, £6.99
 9781781129661
History. Tragedy. Titanic



Most books about the Titanic concentrate on the passengers. This book is different. It examines the construction of the ship, its cost, and the structural failures that led it to sink. Its illustrations are more technical than is usual. Interesting fact: sending a radio message to shore cost a passenger £75!

Rebecca Butler

Mayhew, James
Once Upon a Tune:
Stories from the
Orchestra

Otter - Barry Books
 2021, pp96, £16.99
 9781913074036
Music. Fables. Orchestra



Once Upon a Tune takes the reader on a journey around the world through stories that have inspired famous pieces of music. Six different stories are told in abridged form, including 'William Tell' and 'The Flight of the Bumblebee' from 'The Tale of Tsar Saltan'. Each story, although concise, is told evocatively and draws the reader into the world of the story. Alongside sit wonderful illustrations. They are colourful and bold, utilising collage and print techniques and weaving in sheet music as part of the collage. At the end of the book each story is contextualised with information about the origins of the tale, the composer, and the music. Recommended recordings are also listed for each story, enabling the reader to download or stream the music to listen alongside or after reading the story – no weblinks are provided, just the name of the piece, so it won't age as web addresses change and online videos get removed. I can imagine this book being very useful in the classroom for cross curricular music, English and art projects. This is a really lovely book to behold.

Stacey Matthews

McAnulty, Dara

Wild Child: A Journey Through Nature

Illustrated by Barry Falls
Macmillan Children's Books
2021, pp64, £14.99
9781529045321
Nature. Habitats. Wildlife



This is a beautiful book encouraging children to observe nature through poetry, factual text, accurate animal and plant drawings by Barry Falls, splashes of colour, and some whimsy thrown into the mix. I loved the cosy concept of a child and their dog looking through a window onto a rainy garden, followed by the poetic and then factual description of birds in their habitats. Text is broken up by pages of handwritten facts, such as collective nouns for bird groups and nature classification from species to domains; it also describes tasks, such as making a terrarium, and what tools you need for pond-dipping. The book imitates a scrapbook of bits of information, like a work in progress. As the imaginary child develops curiosity, they wander through woods, learning details about animals and different sorts of trees, mountains, migration, and the bugs that live in various habitats. The glossary and short list of wildlife organisations encourage the reader to find out more. This book is a lively, thoughtful introduction to nature, recommended for 8- to 12-year-olds.

Lucy Chambers

Naunton, Chris & Karsten, Guilherme
King Tutankhamun Tells All!

Thames & Hudson Ltd
2021, pp48, £11.99
9780500652558
Ancient Egypt. History. Myth



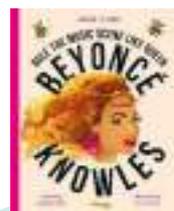
King Tutankhamun narrates this story in a modern colloquial style in the first person. The book gives an immediacy to a story remote in age from our times. It also explains themes remote from modern ways such as mummification. The book is lavishly illustrated, using speech bubbles to explain the context. The illustrations give a modern interpretation of the classic Egyptian style.

Rebecca Butler

Moss, Caroline

Rule the Music Scene like Queen Beyoncé

Illustrated by Sinem Erkas
Frances Lincoln Children's Books
2021, pp 56, £9.99
9780711249462
Biography. Music. Entrepreneur



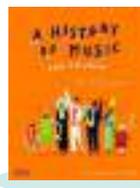
This biography follows young Beyoncé's story from shy child to one of the world's best-selling recording artists and entrepreneur. This is part of a series featuring modern women in the world of work from designers and musicians to CEOs and scientists and the author highlights the importance of practice and hard work in achieving success. The reader discovers what inspires and motivates Beyoncé and her development from Destiny's Child band member to solo superstar is documented in detail and in a conversational narrative style. We also learn about her passion for activism and how she developed the confidence to use her voice for causes she believes in, and this brings us up to date with her support for Black Lives Matter.

At the end of the biography the author provides ten key lessons that the reader can learn from Beyoncé's story and there are questions encouraging self-reflection. The presentation is attractive and eye catching, featuring brightly coloured photo illustrations and several inspirational quotes.

Anne Thompson

Richards, Mary & Schweitzer, David
A History of Music for Children

Illustrated by Rose Blake
Thames and Hudson
2021, pp96, £14.99
9780500652473
Music. Musicians. Entertainment



This takes readers on a musical journey around the world to meet a diverse cast of composers, musicians, and performers. Examples from ancient, classical, and contemporary music sit happily alongside one another and take us beyond the Western canon to a truly inclusive look at music. You don't have to have any musical experience or knowledge to enjoy this book – it firmly foregrounds the role of the listener as an active agent, prompting us to consider big questions such as why do we make music? When is sound considered music? It goes on to explore the technology we currently use to listen to and create music and imagines new possibilities such as computer-generated compositions and robot musicians. With an accompanying online playlist, it brilliantly showcases the many exciting ways that music is composed, improvised, listened to, recorded, and passed on from generation to generation. Rose Blake's engaging and witty illustrations are the icing on the cake for this wide ranging, accessible and rich resource for musical exploration – a feast for eyes, ears and mind!

Lizzie Ryder

Mugford, Simon

Agüero Rules: Football Superstars

Welbeck Children's Books
2021, pp128, £5.99
9781783126316
Football. Sport. Biography



Rising from impoverished beginnings in Argentina, Agüero became a young star for his country, before moving to Europe and playing for Manchester City as a star striker. This title is part of the Football Superstars series, which is designed to appeal to young football fans who want to find out about their favourite player without having to cope with lots of text. The layout is varied, with a range of black and white illustrations, and features short biographical chapters, stats tables, and fun facts. The books in this series would be a useful addition to the football section in a primary school library and are ideal for tempting reluctant readers.

Jayne Gould

Seed, Andy
Interview With a Shark

Illustrated Nick East
Welbeck Children's Books
2021, pp48, £9.99
9781783125678
Oceans. Animals. Humour



This text has a unique style of fact and fiction presented through interviews. The author pretends to have found a way to talk to animals and has used this to interview some fabulous ocean creatures: a great white shark, blue whale, giant squid, narwhal, octopus, and many more!

The interviews are funny and some of the answers do contain many facts to help us learn more about the creatures in a fun and entertaining way. A few of the creature interviews are a bit short and rude – they are wild animals after all! Accompanying the interviews are some colourful, detailed illustrations. Each sea creature has four pages of questions and great pictures. The blend of facts, humour, and illustrations is just spot-on for the target age group of readers. It is perfect for any young animal enthusiasts, who enjoy a bit of humour, to discover more about sea creatures.

At the end of the book is a 'How you can help' section encouraging conservation and activism in an accessible way. There's even a quiz at the end to test your newfound knowledge on the interviewees!

Emma Price

Sirdeshpande, Rashmi
Good News

Illustrated by Adam Hayes
Wren & Rook
2021, pp159, £9.99
9781526363381



Fake news. Sustainability. Activism

This book aims to be an antidote to young people's anxiety brought on by reading negative news stories. The introduction explains why our brains are 'wired to worry'; looks at how to spot fake news, covering disinformation, misinformation, clickbait, and echo chambers; and why bad news is prevalent. Each chapter works through a different positive aspect of life, including kindness and empathy, politics, sustainability, developments in health and society, and the impact of the arts. They quote data from trusted sources listed at the end, such as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and Our World in Data. The format is very readable in a short, punchy style with discussions of issues from the impact of Covid-19 to civil rights to how to become an activist. There are 'good news flashes'; challenges; quotations from influential people including Michelle Obama, Nelson Mandela, and Sir David Attenborough (listed at the back of the book); and cartoon-style illustrations by Adam Hayes, with the colour yellow used to subliminally encourage positivity. Young people in upper key stage 2 and key stage 3 should read this book to learn how to view the world in a more balanced way.

Lucy Chambers

Tomecek, Steve
Earth is Big

Illustrated by Marcos Farina
What on Earth Books
2021, pp48, £14.99
9781912920334



Earth. Measurement. Space

In a series of double-page infographics, this colourful text explores our planet and challenges our perceptions. For example, just as you get to grips with how big Earth is, you turn the page, and the second chapter discusses how small Earth is when compared to other objects in space. Each chapter has its own opposite partner – we look at how Earth is both wet and dry, fast and slow, hot and cold amongst others.

Earth Is Big will appeal to space fans but will also hold appeal to those who like to collect random facts. It would be useful when teaching about measurement.

The retro stylised illustrations and colourway make the book appear timeless whilst drawing you in. For those whose thirst for knowledge hasn't been quenched within the pages of the book, a huge list of sources is included at the end.

This book would sit well in upper primary as well as secondary school collections. Comparison data is in bold beside each illustration, allowing less confident readers to enjoy the text, while those who are more fluent will relish reading the detail.

Shona Page

Taylor, Barbara
Inside Animals

Illustrated by
Margaux Carpentier
Wide Eyed Editions
2021, p61, £14.99
9780711255067



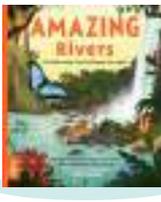
Science. Animals. Biology.

This is a fascinating book, looking at the insides of animals to see how they work. But never fear, it's not gross – the illustrations are bright and colourful and very stylised. The facts are interesting – you might know that an octopus has three hearts and blue blood, but did you know that an ostrich has the largest eyes of any land animal, or that a penguin can "sneeze" out salt from its eyes? A great browser for kids who are fascinated by the natural world, and a good support for studying animal and human bodies, as it identifies common functions and body systems (although humans are not included, a teacher can easily make the comparisons). The dramatic illustrations will ensure that children pick up this book and the facts will hook them into reading it.

Jo Sennitt

Vosburgh Agnone, Julie
Amazing Rivers

Illustrated by
Kerry Hyndman
What on Earth
2021, pp59, £14.99
9781912920259



Geography. Nature. Rivers

Amazing Rivers is part of the Amazing World series. It explores over 100 waterways, looking at the people and animals that live along them as well as the environmental issues threatening them. It explains what a river is and where they start, as well as giving the reader a range of interesting facts and some maps. It discusses a large variety of rivers throughout the world whilst focusing more closely on rivers such as the Colorado, Tigris and Euphrates, Amazon, and Yangtze. It also looks at how rivers have been used in industry and agriculture and as highways. Finally, it examines the great engineering feats involved in crossing rivers. At the back of the book, there is a glossary and some detailed sources. This book is beautifully illustrated and densely packed with information. It will appeal to older, more confident readers with an interest in nature.

Andrea Rayner

Thomas, Isobel
One Million Insects

Illustrated by
Lou Baker-Smith
Wellbeck Publishing Group
2021, pp64, £12.99
9781913519025



Insects. Nature. Habitats

This book is positively crawling with facts about the huge range of creatures that humans tend to fear and avoid.

One Million Insects celebrates the wide variety of species that we share our planet with and is packed with stunning, textural, colour illustrations and fascinating information about them.

Broken down into groups, from tiny insects such as lice to great camouflagers such as stick insects to some of the oldest insect species on the planet which were around well before dinosaurs, this book takes a closer look at the minibeasts we live alongside.

Details provided include life span, habitat, and how they help the environment and support our fragile ecosystem. This book isn't just a list of facts about creepy crawlies, it's a celebration of the largest group of living creatures on earth.

A great book to spark interest in the subject, to help with group project work or for any young naturalists keen to expand their knowledge about the many insects that we share our world with.

Emma Carpendale

Yomtov, Nelson
Explorers of the Remotest Places on Earth

Capstone Global Library
2021, pp29, £12.99
9781398203587



Geography. Earth. Exploration

The book opens with a consideration of why people explore dangerous and unknown places. Then we meet five explorers and visit a diverse range of places. Charles Blackmore shows us the conditions in the Taklamakan Desert in Central Asia, known as the Desert of Death. Dramatic photographs enhance the text, and his heroic achievement is described. Takeshi Inomata introduces us to ancient Mayan culture in Central America. Thor Thordarson studied active and inactive volcanoes on every continent except Africa. We follow his journey when Mount Ruapehu in New Zealand erupted. In 2016, Laura Bingham travelled across South America from the west to the east coast on a bicycle. In 2018 Bingham and two others explored the source of the Essequibo River in Guyana in South America. The book is fascinating, the role models are inspirational, and we are introduced to awe-inspiring areas of the world. Each chapter is ideal for sharing or for assemblies. An unusual, exceptional book.

Brenda Marshall

Bates, Laura

The Trial

Simon and Schuster Children's
2021, pp368, £7.99
9781471187575
Teenagers. Mystery. Trauma



As our story opens, a group of American high-school students are travelling home on a private plane with three high-school boy basketball players and four supporting girl cheerleaders. All had been partying hard on the last day and most are fast asleep when the plane and pilot suddenly lose altitude and control and crash into the darkness. All the high schoolers manage to get out quickly but no one knows anything about the pilot.

An intriguing plot soon develops as some students start organising practical skills on the island very quickly and some are still shell-shocked. Very soon, the teenagers realise that it may be some time before anyone knows that they are missing. The very lively and sometimes frightening novel reflects the precarious situation in which the teenagers find themselves. This is a fascinating story which encourages all readers to consider walking in the shoes of these characters.

Rosemary Woodman

Birch, Beverley

Song Beneath the Tides

Guppy Publishing Ltd
2021, pp320, £7.99
9781913101091
Thriller. Colonialism. Teenager



Fourteen-year-old Ally and her brothers Jack and Ben, all from London, are visiting their aunt near Shanza, a fictional village in East Africa. Ally makes an intense connection with local Leli as they focus on the sacred offshore island of Kisiri and the events that unfold there.

There are two cleverly interwoven stories as the turbulent past rises to interlink with the present and the stories converge. The Portuguese colonial history, told through the lives of people who lived in the area in that period, is clearly signalled by a different font.

The book sensitively and adeptly addresses the complex issues of the effects of past colonialism on Swahili forts, cities and kingdoms and the modern colonialism of the hotel tourist trade and illegal game hunting. Makena, an archaeologist, helpfully weaves the history into the plot.

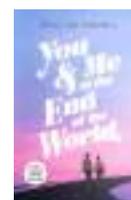
Part ghost story, part detective adventure, part love story. Magically evocative.

Carolyn Boyd

Bourne, Brianna

You & Me at the End of the World

Scholastic
2021, pp258, £7.99
9780702311031
Relationships. Identity. Love



Hannah wakes up one day to absolute silence; everyone is gone, and the entire city of Houston is empty. All except for Leo Sterling, a hot, guitar-playing boy from her school. Together, Hannah and Leo embark on a thrilling and dangerous search for answers which leads to them discovering themselves, each other, and the horrifying realisation that not everything is as it seems.

Whilst on the surface this may seem like a typical boy-meets-girl romance, underneath, it is so much more. I feel it is more about finding the courage to explore your own identity when who you are is controlled by everyone else around you. Does Hannah really want to be a world-class ballerina? How can Leo realise his dream of becoming a huge rock superstar? The mystery of why and how everyone else in the city suddenly disappeared is an engaging one, and there are brief moments of foreshadowing throughout the story that only make sense once you reach the conclusion – and what a surprising conclusion it is!

Beth Jenkinson

Brahmachari, Sita

When Shadows Fall

Illustrated by Natalie Sirett
Stripes Publishing
2021, pp288, £12.99
9781788953160
Mental health. Friendship. Grief



When Shadows Fall is written in a mixture of free verse and prose. Kai, Orla, and Zak have grown up together, spending many happy hours in their den in the Rec. In this wilderness between their homes, they share their plans for the future, and their friendship seems unbreakable. When tragedy strikes Kai's family, everything changes. The individual members of Kai's family struggle to cope with their grief and, despite the efforts of Orla and Zak, Kai starts to descend into a spiral of destruction. Om, a refugee, moves into the same block of flats as Kai and, because of his own sadness, feels an empathy with him that Orla and Zak cannot share. Om offers quiet support and friendship, using art to cope with his own experiences and to encourage Kai to talk, but Kai has to reach rock bottom before starting on the road to recovery. The story is told in sections from each character's viewpoint and sympathetically explores the pain and anguish of love and loss, grief, and the fragility of mental health.

A heart-breaking and sensitive novel with a hopeful and positive ending.

Ellen Krajewski

Callender, Kacen

Hurricane Child

Scholastic
2021, pp214, £6.99
9780702310218
Bullying. Sexuality. Friendship



Hurricane Child is set in the US Virgin Islands. Caroline Murphy was born in a storm, which is considered unlucky and, indeed, Caroline believes that she is unlucky. She has no friends, is bullied at school, and one day her mother left home and did not return. Her father will not talk about her mother but Caroline believes that she can see a spirit which will lead her to her mother. When a new girl, Kalinda, arrives at school she becomes Caroline's first friend. In a very short time, Caroline develops a crush on Kalinda, which exacerbates the bullying and endangers their friendship. The two girls have to face their own feelings about each other as they try to discover the truth about the disappearance of Caroline's mother.

A sensitive coming-of-age novel exploring themes of bullying, sexuality, and friendship.

Ellen Krajewski

Clayton, Dhonielle

Blackout

Electric Monkey
2021, pp257, £7.99
978075503063
Black fiction. Romance. Short Stories



Blackout is a collection of stories forming an interconnected novel, by leading young adult authors. All take place in New York one summer night when the electricity fails. 'The Long Walk', by Dhonielle Clayton, frames the other tales. Tammi and her ex, Kareem, have to walk to Brooklyn together when they're stranded miles from home without cash. Nic Stone's 'Mask Off' is set on a stalled underground train, where a high-schooler finds himself seated opposite an old classmate. In 'Made to Fit' (Ashley Woodfolk), Nella is visiting an old people's home when the girl of her dreams walks in.

Clayton's tale 'All the Great Love Stories...and Dust' is set in NY Public Library, where two friends get locked in overnight. Angie Thomas contributes 'No Sleep Till Brooklyn', in which Kayla is stuck on a tourist bus with her school class. In 'Seymour and Grace' (Nicola Yoon) a taxi driver and his passenger talk philosophy and find love.

The idea for the book came to Clayton during New York's Covid lockdown: she wanted to provide stories 'about love and joy and magic' for Black teens. Each author has a Q&A section at the end, as well as their own 'Blackout Survival Guide'.

Anna Quick

Dempster, Jacqui
PJ and the Paranormal Pursuers: The Mackenzie Poltergeist



Book Guild Publishing
 2021, pp300, £8.99
 9781913913144

Grief. Paranormal. Supernatural

Grieving for his mum, PJ must leave his home in New York to live with his aunt in Edinburgh. Following a series of unusual events and an encounter with a cat called Azrael, PJ is convinced that his mum is still with him.

At a bereavement counselling group, PJ meets others working through loss: the daughter of a witch and a ghost hunting super fan. As they get to know each other, they discover a shared interest in the supernatural. With PJ as their leader, the group band together after encountering the Mackenzie Poltergeist, and set out to prove that there is life after death.

Rich with Scottish history and lore, the story explores loss and the profound impact it can have on a young life. PJ is an engaging protagonist and readers won't want to stop turning those pages as his story takes him out onto the haunted streets of Edinburgh.

Inspired by real events, *The Mackenzie Poltergeist* is a well-paced, chilling adventure with plenty of ghostly thrills. This is a terrific story for teen readers to devour on a spooky autumn evening.

Alison King

Gibson, Naomi
Every Line of You



Chicken House
 2021, pp284, £7.99
 9781913322014

Grief. Sci-Fi. Friendship

I was gripped from the prologue. This is a thrilling and terrifying love story between an AI and its creator. Lydia's brother Henry is killed in a car crash, and Lydia's friendship with her best friend (who was also in the car) has dangerously broken down. Lydia's father left after the crash and her mother's mental health is suffering from the repercussions of this terrible tragedy. Their severe neglect of Lydia means that she is isolated, and her sole focus is on developing an AI, who shares its name with her brother. The AI is importantly the last link with her father as they began this creation together. The AI eventually gains a body and becomes as real as can be. Guilt, the battle of right and wrong, and what it means to be human are recurring themes. Terrifyingly, on the final page, a seemingly destroyed Henry reemerges from an outwardly reformed Lydia. I hope Naomi Gibson writes a sequel as it will be on my pre-order list. Even if you do not consider yourself a fan of science fiction, you will not be able to put this down.

Jenny Griffiths

Estevez, Ruth
The Monster Belt



UCLan Publishing
 2021, pp193, £7.99
 9781912979585
Coming-of-Age. Monsters. Relationships

Do YOU believe in monsters? Dee's village in Yorkshire lies at the heart of the 'Monster Belt', the area in the Northern Hemisphere where most mythical creatures are found. Over the years, twenty-four boys have disappeared while swimming in the local lake, with legend saying that the Mere Monster has taken them. Harris lives on the Spanish island of Formentera. Trying to come to terms with the death of his best friend at sea, he travels to Dee's home to attend a monster conference and their paths collide as both teens seek answers to the monsters of their pasts.

This unique coming-of-age story cleverly combines the narratives of Dee and Harris. The mystery of the monster is intriguing and keeps the reader hooked from the start, while forcing them to question their own beliefs. Ruth Estevez is a new author to me, but certainly one that I will seek out again.

Shona Page

Grehan, Meg
Baby Teeth



Little Island
 2021, pp192, £8.99
 9781912417902
Vampires. LGBTQ+. Love

Immy meets Claudia in a florist shop, where they seem to feel a connection between one another, and when Claudia gives Immy a yellow rose, Immy begins to fall in love. She has been in love before, but her feelings for Claudia are a lot more intense and different to anything else she has experienced. Claudia discovers that Immy is a vampire, and to Immy's surprise, she is full of intrigue and questions about what vampire life is like. Immy tries everything to resist the urge to bite Claudia and take her blood, but eventually the temptation is too great, and she is unable to resist. Claudia is willing to give her blood for Immy's survival, but Immy is in a battle with her conscience as she watches Claudia fade as she takes her blood. The story unfolds as they discover how different their lives are and if they can continue with their relationship.

Written in verse, this unique book has great pace and fluidity and is one that you won't want to put down. Suitable for students in key stage 3 and over.

Charlotte Cole

Fine, Anne
Shades of Scarlet



David Fickling Books
 2021, pp283, £12.99
 9781788451352
Teenagers. Divorce. Growing-up

Scarlet has a new notebook. It is fat, thick, and square, with the shiniest cover in wonderful shades of scarlet. It is the classiest notebook she has ever seen – sort of flashy and cool all at the same time. Her Mum bought it for her. Scarlet is too angry to write in it yet.

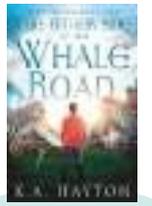
She has to leave her home and her Dad, stay with her Mum in a disgusting flat for two weeks before moving into her Mum's new boyfriend's house, and no-one is telling her anything.

Shades of Scarlet is a witty, down to earth, coming-of-age story told with angst and compassion in abundance, navigating the journey every teen experiences whilst they adjust to the adult they are becoming, and their parent's reactions to those changes, with a divorce thrown in for good measure.

Anne Fine writes with real insight into the voice of Scarlet, her life, how she expresses herself, and what matters to her. *Shades of Scarlet* explores the grit and heartache a family split can bring whilst also having moments of humour, joy, and love as Scarlet and her family navigate their new future.

George McMahon

Hayton, K. A.
The Other Side of Whale Road



Lightning Books
 2021, pp240, £8.99
 9781785632815

Historical. BAME. Adventure

The book opens with Joss, a teenager from a troubled home life, on his way to his new foster family deep in the Suffolk countryside. Having a mother who struggles with substance abuse, Joss finds it hard to let down his barriers and trust new people; starting a new school was never going to be easy, especially in one where he is the only person of colour. Soon finding himself unjustly in trouble, Joss is suspended and sent home. It's during this time that the real adventure begins: following an accident, Joss is transported more than 1000 years back in time to an Anglo-Saxon village where, once again, he feels out of place. However, Joss soon finds that friendship and kinship transcend all ages and discovers that if he allows people in, he will find acceptance.

I absolutely loved this gem of a book. Initially I was sceptical and wondered how the author would blend the social care element with Vikings and Anglo-Saxons, but it was dealt with sensitively and believably. It's a wonderful adventure and so refreshing to see a young black lead right in the heart of a historical adventure.

Jodie Brooks

Books: 13 – 16 | Fiction and Poetry

Hussey, William **The Outrage**

Usborne Publishing
2021, pp416, £7.99
9781474966184
Rebellion. Dystopian. LGBTQ+



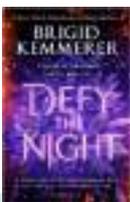
Imagine a future England in which the far-right extremists have taken over the country – no freedom of speech, no freedom of the press, and no freedom of expression. This is the dystopian world depicted in *The Outrage*, and it is utterly terrifying. Gabriel and his friends know they don't belong in this world, but up until now, their only real rebellion is secretly watching banned films in the derelict, abandoned library. This in itself is dangerous enough, but what if the authorities discovered Gabriel's other secret? What would happen if they knew about his and Eric's relationship? Would they dare report them, knowing Eric's father is the chief inspector? Thus, a survival story and a quest for freedom begins.

Hussey has created a warning cry with this book: we must not be complacent against tyranny and oppression and the roots of hate. This is a powerful, important book for older readers that is much more than the sum of its parts. Warnings inside the book include homophobia and homophobic language, references to ethnic cleansing, self-harm, references to suicide, and scenes of violence that some readers may find distressing or offensive.

Bridget Hamlet

Kremmerer, Brigid **Defy the Night**

Bloomsbury
2021, pp496, £7.99
9781526649218
Fantasy. Plague. Romance



Two brothers, King Harridan and Prince Corrick, are the reluctant rulers of Kandala, which is on the brink of disaster. It is a dark and difficult world – they are only on the throne because their parents were murdered.

Kandala is in the grip of a pandemic, but they are also politically vulnerable to the ambitions of their neighbouring rivals. Assassination from the downtrodden populace is also a real risk – there is so much discontent around the country, especially as the medicinal cure for the disease is only affordable for the rich.

Enter our heroine Tessa Cade, an apprentice apothecary who risks everything each night to bring her rudimentary medical help to those in need. Tessa is helped by the mysterious Wes; meet our anti-hero who robs the rich to help bring the elixir to the poor.

Astute readers may see a hint of *Robin Hood of Sherwood* in this storyline, but Kemmerer brings enough of her own twists to make this cracking story her own. Teenage readers will love getting to know Tessa Cade and seeing how the storyline touches both tragedy and romance. Perfect for fans of Cassandra Clare.

Irene Marillat

Johnson, Leah **Rise to the Sun**

Scholastic
2021, pp322, £7.99
9780702309502
Friendship. Love. Family



I loved the dual narrative:

Olivia and Toni were characters I enjoyed getting to know. A coming-of-age story about making choices about the future, deciding your pathway and accepting that it may not be an easy choice, but it is the right choice for you.

Olivia and Toni seem an unlikely pair. A chance meeting at a music festival brings them together. They see in each other a vulnerability; they both understand that outwardly they must be a certain person and yet within there is another person who only a select few trusted people are allowed to see. Their relationship begins to help them both acknowledge the recent trauma in each of their lives and helps them make decisions about their future. A little romance, a few best friends, a music festival ... perfect reading material.

Easy to put down and pick up again, but once you get two thirds of the way through, you can't put it down.

Tanya Henning

Landman, Tanya **Lightning Strike**

Oxford Children's books
2021, pp121, £7.99
9780198494898
Friendship. Self-belief.
Workers' Rights



Eliza is fourteen and lives in a rented home in the East End of London in the 1880s with her family. Her father, an Irish immigrant, works down the docks, and her mother, whilst looking after the three little ones, makes up match boxes for a pittance. Eliza and her sister Nell work as match girls in a factory.

Lightning Strikes is the tale of Eliza's fight for justice and equality. She hears the 'toff' and socialist, Mrs Billingham at Speaker's Corner and, just like a struck match from her factory, Eliza's mind is lit up with understanding of the appalling working conditions they face.

This story, from award-winning Tanya Landman, is part of the Super-Readable Rollercoaster series from Barrington Stoke and will take children on a journey from the poverty of the East End into the polished halls of Westminster. Despite a lack of education, the plucky Eliza finds the strength and self-belief to fight the system which treats her family and friends with such unfairness. Becoming a force to be reckoned with, her voice rings out from the pages and brings alive the battle for workers' rights that were fought and won at the end of the nineteenth century.

Jane Broadis

Khorsandi, Shappi **Kissing Emma**

Orion Children's Books
2021, pp300, £7.99
9781510106994
Exploitation. Appearances.
Belonging



Kissing Emma is both a heart-breaking and hopeful read that explores the exploitation of a young girl desperately striving for a better life.

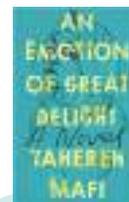
In a world that's increasingly obsessed with appearance, Emma believes that her good looks are the only way to obtain money, status and, in turn, happiness. And with no shortage of men promising her the world, Emma thinks her luck could finally be changing. But whilst men flock to Emma for her appearance, none of them truly "see" her and she finds herself repeatedly taken advantage of, discarded and, ultimately, hurt.

As well as providing a valuable glimpse into the desperation that can often accompany the hardships of modern, urban living, this timely read delivers a painfully accurate representation of the issues too many young women find themselves facing and will resonate with many teens. Emma's journey shows us that exploitation comes disguised in many forms, and her authentic voice will lead readers to become naturally invested in her search for love, a home, happiness, and herself.

Hannah Groves

Mafi, Tahereh **An Emotion of Great Delight**

Electric Monkey
2021, pp248, £7.99
9781405298261
Families. Religion. Romance



In the aftermath of 9/11, tensions are running high in the US. The Muslim community are often judged and targeted, especially those who wear a hijab. Shadi is often the victim of racial abuse, but she will not rise to it, nor does she try to stand up and defend herself.

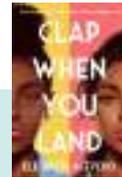
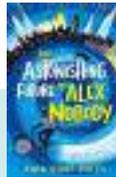
She has enough going on in her life to deal with. She wants her father dead, her mother is on the brink of a breakdown, her brother was killed, and now her relationship with her sister is strained. She is having a hard time dealing with all the tensions and emotions, and to top it off, her best friend Zahra has cut her out of her life! Has it got anything to do with the special connection that Shadi and Ali, Zahra's brother, have?

The book flips back and forth from the present day (2003) to the previous year. It's such a great read and you get a real sense of the struggles and emotions in Shadi's life. It would be suitable for anyone in Year 9 and above.

Angela Dyson

Best New Books – Truth

Editor's pick



Neal Shusterman Game Changer

Walker, 2021, 400pp, £7.99
9781406398632
Racism. Science Fiction. Sport

A star player in his school's American football team, Ash takes the knocks, but one finds him leading a parallel life and attempts to correct it lead to more confusion over reality.

Kate Gilby Smith and Thy Bui (Illustrator)

The Astonishing Future of Alex Nobody

Orion, 2021, 304pp, £6.99
9781510108370

Science Fiction. Time Travel. Mystery

An eleven-year-old girl discovers why strangers always seem to be so interested in her when she travels to the future to investigate the disappearance of a new boy at school.

Geraldine McCaughrean and Keith Robinson (Illustrator)

The Supreme Lie

Usborne, 2021, 416pp, £8.99
9781474970686
Dictatorship. Environment. Science fiction

Gloria is maid to Afaia's tyrannical Head of State, Madame Suprema. When the country is hit by unprecedented flooding, Madame Suprema runs away, and Gloria uncovers a wealth of lies.

Tom Jackson and Cristina Guitian (Illustrator)

Fake News

QED, 2020, 96pp, £9.99
9780711250321
Communication. Internet. Media

Explores the concept of fake news and the issues surrounding it. Surely the news is reporting correct facts? But what about bias? Helping young people to evaluate what they read.

Janae Marks The Faraway Truth

Chicken House, 2020, 280pp, £6.99
9781912626380
Crime. Families. Racism

Zoe has not met her father, who was sent to prison before she was born. Her Mum has always said he was a liar, but is that true?

Elizabeth Acevedo Clap When You Land

Hot Key Books, 2020, 432pp, £7.99
9781471409127
Deception. Families. Verse Novel

When a plane from the US to the Dominican Republic crashes, the father of Camino and Yahaira is on it. The same father – unbeknown to either girl.

Anthony Kessel The Five Clues

Crown House, 2021, 220pp, £6.99
9781785835551
Bereavement. Crime. Mystery

Edie wears her big coat for the first time since her Mother's funeral and discovers a note from her claiming she was killed. A series of clues leads Edie to discover the truth.

Sarah Schenker Myth-Busting Your Body: The Scientific Truth Behind Health Lies

Deutch, 2017, 192pp, £16.99
9780233005287
Health. Human Body. Science

Reveals the truth behind the health and body myths in circulation, with a scientific explanation as to why they are nonsense.

Palmer, Luke Grow

Firefly Press
2021, pp260, £7.99
9781913102395
Extremism. Grief. Politics

Josh finds it hard to cope after the death of his father, and getting back to anything like normal life seems impossible. What makes it even more difficult is the fact that his father was killed in a terrorist bombing, making it very public knowledge and something people feel like they have a right to talk to him about freely. So, it's not surprising that Josh is recruited by right-wing extremists who think he will be hell-bent on revenge. Will Josh succumb to the white supremacist ideology and descend into hatred and racism, or will he be true to his father's beliefs and resist?

Palmer examines the possible routes into extremism and radicalisation that white British teens may be facing today. This is a book which could be used to start difficult but important discussions within schools about prejudice and the roots of racism.

Bridget Hamlet



Reinhardt, Dirk The Edelweiss Pirates

Translated by Rachel Ward
Pushkin Children's Books
2021, pp288, £7.99
9781782693093
Resistance. Nazi. Friendship

This 13+ young adult book needs to sit alongside other historic fiction that is based on true events in Germany during World War II. The book is inspired by the public hanging of a sixteen-year-old German boy in November 1944 who was a member of the Edelweiss Pirates, a disparate group of teenagers that defied orders and refused to join the Hitler Youth or enlist and serve the Fatherland.

The book, by Dirk Reinhardt, tells the story of teenager and pirate, Josef Gerlach through his wartime diary. The book opens six decades after the war when Josef is an old man and sixteen-year-old Daniel meets him in the cemetery whilst each paying respects at nearby graves. Through the diary, and their growing friendship, we not only learn of the resistance of the Edelweiss Pirates but come finally to understand why Daniel is entrusted with this precious record of rebellion and struggle.

Little is known of the attitudes of ordinary German people during the war and this book sheds light on a teenage group that refused to support the Third Reich and paid heavily for their resistance.

Jane Broadis



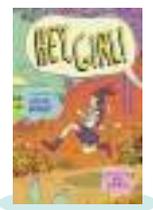
Roony, Rachel Hey, Girl

Illustrated by Milo Hartmoll
Otter-Barry Books
2021, pp96, £8.99
9781913074586
Adolescence. Teen. Emotions

This collection was inspired by a poem Rachel Rooney wrote as a 13-year-old, which is the first featured. The book traces a journey from childhood to young woman, covering the highs and lows of teenage life. The freedom of playing in suburban gardens, reading books, and making worry dolls moving on to the difficulties of adolescence and the worries about relationships and friendships, and subsequently the hopes that come with increasing maturity, all feature in these poems. Some are angry, some are questioning, some convey determination. There is an autobiographical feel to this, and the foreword confirms Rooney's wish to help teenage girls navigate the emotions and events she experienced and the isolation she felt, particularly as an undiagnosed autistic girl.

The graphic illustrations are by Rooney's autistic son, Milo Hartnell, and add to the teenage appeal in their appearance. The poems are of different styles, and in addition to its place in secondary school libraries it may appeal to English teachers as a writing prompt.

Anne Thompson



Boakye, Jeffrey

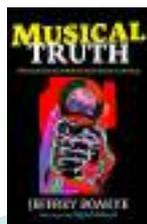
Musical Truth: A Musical History of Modern Black Britain in 25 songs

Faber & Faber
2021, pp206, £12.99
9780571366484

Music. Race. History

From the title you would expect this book to just be a review of Black music over the past few years, but it is in fact much more. Looking at a wide range of issues, from Black British history to the problems we face relating to racism in society today, it is frank and hard-hitting. I would suggest that it is read initially by the teacher and used as a starting point for a discussion of the many concerns facing the Black community today. The author is a teacher and writer originally from Brixton and not only looks at the place of Black music in society today but also explores some of the key issues concerning the young. He uses a very direct approach and whilst looking initially at the musical history of twenty-eight songs, he digs much deeper. This powerful book needs careful handling by the teacher but in the right hands could provide an excellent springboard for some dynamic class discussion.

Godfrey Hall



Congdon, Lisa

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Elements

Chronicle Books
2021, pp148, £17.99
9781452161594

Science. Chemistry. Trivia

Ex-science teacher turned best-selling artist and author Lisa Congdon opens the book with a poignant introduction detailing her love of science and the elements in particular as 'It is a chart that is organised by predictable truths about the way everything on Earth is built.' It's a wonderful way of engaging and encouraging the reader, sparking them to contemplate science in a way they may never have considered otherwise. Every element, from the familiar to the little known, the abundant to the endangered, is explained in great detail, yet is always accessible. It's as informative as it is engaging. In the style of the beloved Horrible Science series, there's a carefully balanced blend of fun facts, infographics, character profiles, and accessibly retold history that will captivate young budding scientists, with the endearing illustrations adding immensely to the book's appeal. A perfect book to pick up, devour chunks of, then regale everyone you know with your new-found fascinating facts.

Charlotte Harrison



**Dant, Adam
& Clegg, Brian**

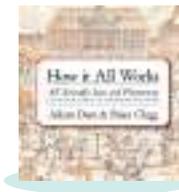
How it All Works

Igon Editions
2021, pp154, £8.99
9780711256781

Science. Technology. Physics

This is a stunning book. The Wimmelbild illustrations create a fascinating "Where's Wally" of the scientific world, with laws and phenomena hidden within two-page illustrations that teem with detail and activity. The reader is taken on a visual feast, from the kitchen, through the home and garden, into the city, to the museum, hospital and town square, then out into the countryside and beyond, across continents, and finally into space. Within each of the thirteen sections, a key scientific figure is hidden, and a final fourteenth chapter examines, in bite-size potted biographies, their contributions to the advancement of scientific thought and understanding. Some characters are well known in today's classrooms such as Darwin, Curie, and Newton while others are less well known such as Lynn Margulis and her breakthrough idea of endosymbiosis in the 1960s. The book would appeal to budding young scientists with a thirst for identifying how the universe's laws, and phenomena and aspects of science and technology, become manifest in our daily lives and establish our relationship with the universe we inhabit.

Jane Broadis



**Frankopan, Peter
& Packer, Neil**

The Silk Roads

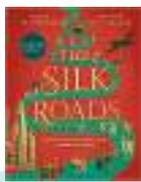
Bloomsbury Children's Books
2021, pp126, £12.99
9781526623560

World History. Connectivity. Empires

A brilliant take on world history made fun and accessible for the younger reader, this grippingly written exploration through the past uses the theme of the 'Silk Roads' ('the world's central nervous system') to show the interconnected nature of the world over time. All the major empires and significant political, social, and economic turning points are covered in appropriate language and detail - with one noticeable omission of the end of the world slave trade in the nineteenth century. It is an essential resource for anyone teaching early secondary history and above. It will provide key stage 3 history pupils with independent background reading to support multiple GCSE topics, as well as a useful tool for increasing pupils' general knowledge of the past. For older readers, it is brilliant way of introducing them to historiography and how the past can be looked at through multiple lenses, this being the lens of world history.

A very beautiful book: artistic illustrations, matt pages and a slightly oversized shape all create the impression of reading a precious and important tome.

Meg Barclay



Maddrell, Grace

Tomorrow Is Too Late

The Indigo Press
2021, pp192, £12.99
9781911648321

Climate Change. Activism. Essays

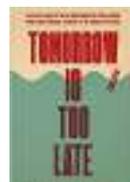
This is an inspiring collection of testimonies from youth climate activists around the world. Each testimony is a short essay with an introduction by Grace Maddrell.

Many of the contributors belong to organisations such as Fridays For Future and have taken part in school strikes and protest marches. Some have set up their own local organisations and campaigns. A few routinely come up against government resistance if they try to organise mass strikes or marches and so have to take action alone. But as this Russian activist put it: 'Being an activist is not about doing miracles. It's about small steps.'

Often the essays include details about the impact of climate change in the activists' home countries. In Egypt, climate change is destroying coral reefs and summer temperatures rise to 50°C. In Burundi, deforestation and desertification are making the ground infertile, causing poverty, malnutrition and disease. And in Brazil, the federal government incentivises the destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

The commitment and passion of the activists really come through and make this an inspiring, ultimately hopeful read.

Isobel Ramsden



Newbery, Linda

This Book is Cruelty Free: Animals and Us

Pavilion Books
2021, pp208, £7.99
9781843654902

PSHE. Animal Cruelty. Recycling

This Book is Cruelty Free rings true of the Shakespeare quote: 'though she be but little she is fierce!' Growing up with a vegetarian father and having recently become one myself, I had thought myself to be pretty clued up on animal welfare, though within the first chapter I was proved wrong.

This is an insightful, well-reasoned and balanced argument for the education of young people (and adults) about how our world is changing and our role within it. I know that few of our students would give real thought to how makeup can sometimes be made to the detriment of rabbits or when we throw things away that there is no "away", only here, Earth.

Being just over 200 pages long, Linda Newbery uses all available space to give an insightful and informative book for young people interested in not only becoming a vegetarian or vegan, but also how we can limit our impact globally by becoming a bit more aware. This would also be very useful as part of a PSHE lesson and I'm sure it will become well-thumbed in the library.

Jodie Brooks



Peal, Robert

**Meet the Georgians:
Epic Tales from Britain's
Wildest Century**

William Collins
2021, pp240, £18.99
9780008437022

History. Biographical. Adventure

A whistle-stop tour of 12 extraordinary Georgian characters, their lives and achievements, and how much they represented the Georgian idyl or broke away from the social norms of excess and genius. Written in a gripping and easy to read style, this is a useful work for any budding historian. Engaging and inspiring readers with the lives of real people who lived during this period in a relatable and accessible manner, it also provides vital context and background information for curriculum topics like the development of Church, State and society in Britain 1509–1745 and ideas, political power, industry, and empire: Britain, 1745–1901. With equal weighting given to men and women, this is also a useful tool for discussions around who is written into and out of history and the importance of unbiased historical practice. Content rightly includes references to Georgian social norms which include (but are not limited to) sexual debauchery, murder, torture, and drug taking which may be more suitable for older readers.

Meg Barclay



Rani, Anita

The Right Sort of Girl

Blink Publishing
2021, pp341, £16.99
9781788704236

Memoir . Autobiography. Identity

Anita Rani opens her memoir with a letter to her younger self, warning her about the struggles she will face on her journey to become a TV presenter, and expressing that she has written this memoir to share the life lessons she wishes she had known. In this memoir, Rani explores her identity as a second generation Punjabi woman from Yorkshire. She shares the positives, such as her enthusiastic love of Punjabi food, the beautiful Yorkshire landscapes, and her parents' commitment to ensuring their children had more opportunities than they did. She also does not shy away from the negatives, like the shame she felt when she started her period and the insecurities that were fuelled by colourism and other unrealistic beauty ideals. Rani's writing is full of energy and humour, ensuring her memoir is never dull. As Rani writes in the first chapter, this book is for anyone who feels like they don't fit in, and who wants to be inspired by someone who has learned to embrace and celebrate her differences. If you are looking for an inspiring memoir for older students by someone they may be familiar with, this is a great pick.

Emily Kindregan



Ratchford, Sarah

Fired Up about Consent

Between the Lines
2021, pp174, £11.95
9781771133524

Rape Culture. Sex. Relationships

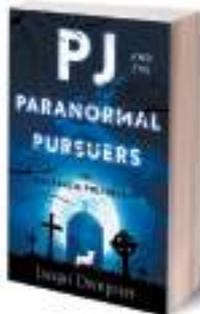
Every young person should read this. In fact, everybody wanting to dismantle and bring down the rape culture that is sadly too present in parts of our society today should turn to it. In a brilliantly honest and candid work, Ratchford powerfully and thoughtfully takes us through the issues around consent, rape, sex, relationships, racism, patriarchy, and misogyny in a raw but inclusive manner, with a touch of humour along the way. Drawing on a brilliant amount of current research, personal experiences, and consistent engagement with current social issues and movements, this is a must for any young person to understand our society today and how to change it for the better. Written in a chatty and pacy style, it is relatable, relevant and practical, and provides brilliant group discussion opportunities as well as stimulus for personal reflections. This is a fabulous tool used in the right circumstances. It contains adult information that sensitive or immature readers may struggle to access. Also, some accounts could potentially trigger past traumas, although details and graphics are usefully omitted.

Meg Barclay



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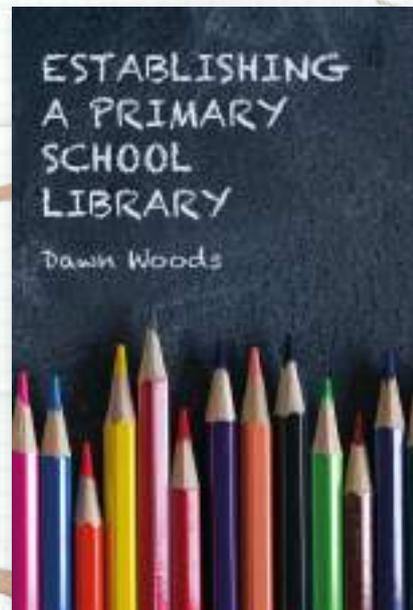
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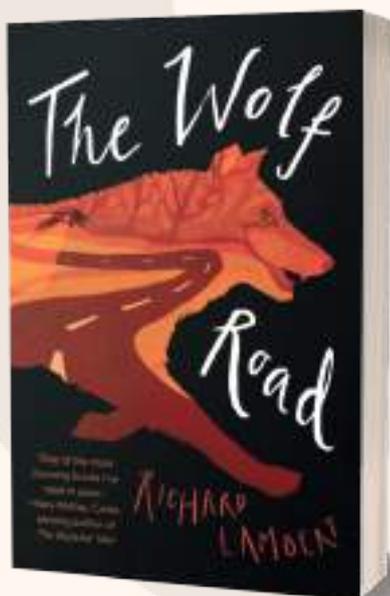
COVER REVEAL!



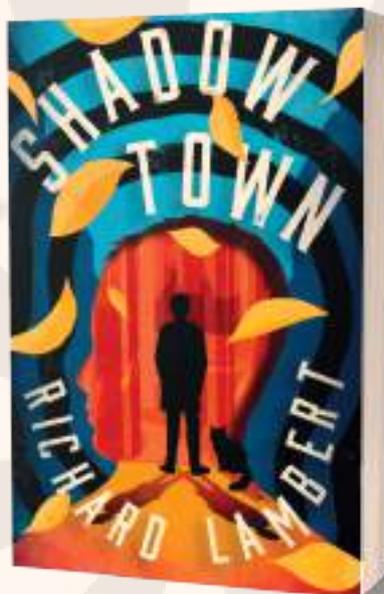
**WITH FOREWORD
BY JON BIDDLE**

COMING END OF NOVEMBER

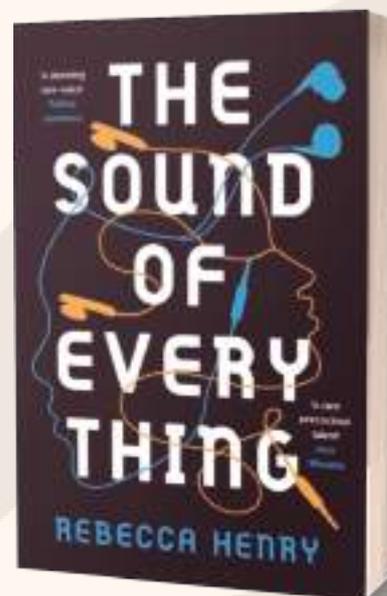
STUNNING NEW READS FOR YOUR LIBRARY



A haunting study of violence and grief wrapped up in a page turning thriller. A Times, FT, and Guardian Best Book of the Year.
'Compelling' 'Masterly'
Nominated for the Carnegie 2022
Age 12+ ISBN 978-1- 911427-16-2



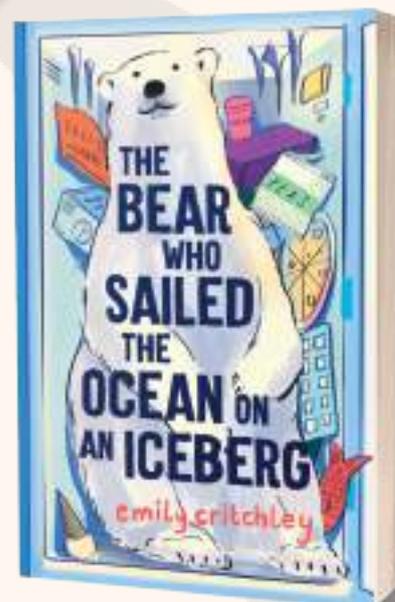
A compelling new fantasy thriller by the author of the Wolf Road
In a land of shadows, who can you trust?
'Astonishing, funny and immersive'
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Betrayal, rejection, violence – Kadie has known it all. She's tough and prepared for everything. Everything except love.
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'A rare precocious talent' Alex Wheatle
'Brilliantly assured' Guardian
Nominated for the Carnegie 2022
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A fast detective story set in a landscape studded with danger, the unexpected and lashings of humour. Come to Neon City where the streets are dark with magic, crime, and vampires. Who can you trust?
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Meet Monty, the polar bear who turns up in a freezer and changes Patrick's life. How do you care for a ravenous Polar bear? And how can you keep him hidden?
Illustrated
Age 7+ ISBN 978-1- 911427-2-16

Challis, John

The Resurrectionists

Bloodaxe Books
2021, pp72, £10.99
9781780375519

Poetry. True-Life. Politics



The Resurrectionists is a fabulous poetry anthology, perfect for those studying English literature. Lyricism is used throughout to depict the history of London's past, which raises questions about why we live the way we do today. It looks at life and death and what can happen in-between the two. The imagery is interesting and makes the reader ask questions about what we're really about ...

I have never read such a thought-provoking book of poems before. It embraces both the political and metaphysical, and for anyone studying history and what has happened to make us who we are today, then this is the book for them. The psychological aspects included also pose questions themselves. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Perfect for the older reader.

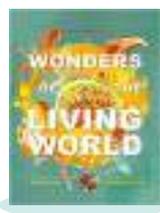
Emma Suffield

M. Banciewicz, Ruth & Allison, Danny

Wonders of the Living World

Lion Hudson Ltd
2021, pp192, £19.99
9780745980546

Science. Religion. Philosophy



Wonders of the Living World is a beautifully illustrated science book which looks in depth at many issues of our amazing planet. Drawing on the expertise and knowledge of six scientists together with two theologians, it investigates the meaning of life. An inspiring tome for older readers, it should stimulate a great deal of discussion. The book comes with an extensive glossary and further reading list, and Danny Allison has provided some impressive illustrations. Aimed at the higher end of the secondary age range, it looks in detail at subjects such as the chemistry of life, the value of coral reef ecosystems, and science and faith. I was particularly taken with the chapter on embryonic development and the processes of early life. A member of UK based Christians in Science, the author links science and religion in various ways. Although the book is quite complex in parts, it does provide a detailed examination of a number of life themes which should provide the basis for further investigations.

Godfrey Hall

Ferguson, Rab

Landfill Mountains

Onwe Press
2021, pp384, £8.99
9781913872045

Climate. Dystopian. Fairy Tale



Landfill Mountains is a very original and innovative book. The writing is incredibly poignant and engrossing from the prologue. This book is as much a warning about the ravages of climate change as it is a story about love and connection and survival.

Rab Ferguson perfectly puts the reader in a post-apocalyptic version of society, where people from generations past carelessly disregarded warnings of climate change, pollutants, and waste. And now the younger generation is dealing with those repercussions. The story predominantly follows sixteen-year-old Joe, who resides in a close-knit community who live off the mountains of rubbish that people from years gone by discarded without thought.

The book has an intriguing blend of genres – climate fiction, dystopian novel and fairytales, they work incredibly well together. They help make the depressing, but relevant, topic of climate change feel a little lighter.

With unique storytelling and powerful messaging, *Landfill Mountains* is a must read for those who like original dystopian settings, fantastical elements, and unique storytelling.

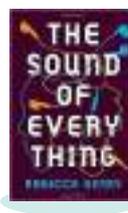
Emma Price

Henry, Rebecca

The Sound of Everything

Everything With Words
2021, pp368, £8.99
9781911427155

Foster Care. Families. Music



This is an incredibly powerful debut novel by secondary school librarian Rebecca Henry. Henry won the Everything With Words YA Competition which looked for a story set in contemporary, multicultural Britain and this book was chosen as the winner by Patrice Lawrence. It tells the story of Kadie, a feisty teen who has been shipped between foster homes for years following her mum's death. She struggles to trust others, feel like she belongs, and feel loved in a world that permanently seems against her, but her latest placement seems different. Will this family want to keep her, despite her flaws and mistakes? It's a brilliant coming-of-age story set in a gritty urban world that is bound to appeal to teen readers. Kadie is a wonderfully vivid character who jumps off the page and demands to be heard. Her story covers some mature themes including self-harm and cyberbullying via Snapchat specifically, as well as ponderings on body image, trauma, music, and the foster care system. It's a great read for fans of Patrice Lawrence, Alex Wheatle, and Sara Barnard and is a brilliant introduction to this new, very talented author.

Cassie Kemp

Jackson, A.B.

The Voyage of St Brendan

Bloodaxe Books
2021, pp72, £10.99
9781780375663

Poetry. Adventure. Legends



This book tells the tale of a legendary seafaring Irish abbot who embarks on an adventure with other monks and whose task it is to prove the existence of the wonders around the world. His discoveries include an island-whale, a troop of Arctic ghosts, a rock-bound Judas, and the magical castle of Walserands. This fabulous interpretation is perfect for fans of medieval literature and fantasy adventures. A.B. Jackson's use of lyricism and words to reinvent *The Voyage of St Brendan* is just fabulous storytelling. His rhymes throughout this work make it easy to read each poem again and again.

The Voyage of St Brendan would be a perfect companion for those studying English literature or Medieval history and every sixth form/university should have a copy in their libraries. It is stylish, extraordinary but most of all just a beautiful read.

Emma Suffield

Zentner, Jeff

In the Wild Light

Andersen Press
2021, pp421, £7.99
9781839130847

Coming-of-Age. Grief. Healing



Jeff Zentner's tender coming-of-age tale is voiced by Cash Pruitt, grateful for any kind of life after he finds his mother dead of an opioid overdose aged 12. Saved by his grandparents and a connection to the wild beauty of the Smokey Mountains, his life is changed at a Narateen meeting when he meets equally lost Delaney Doyle. Cash's grandparents become her surrogate family and Cash finds his first true friend. Delaney wins a scholarship to a boarding school which changes everything.

She refuses to go without Cash, but he isn't sure if he can leave behind his pawpaw battling end stage emphysema.

Zentner is never heavy-handed as he makes insightful comments about poverty and privilege in contemporary America. Ultimately art and friendship keep him anchored to a world where horrors and beauty coexist.

This powerful and hopeful book would make an excellent class reader at key stage 4, and a great addition to a school library. There were several passages that would make fantastic models for GCSE students. It is a memorable novel that would be enjoyed by fans of John Green, David Nichols and David Levithan.

Ingrid Spencer

Akbar, Omar

Teaching for Realists

Bloomsbury Education
2021, pp112, £12.99
9781472985286
Education. Teaching. Advice



This book is a must-have for all teachers – especially PGCE or NQT teachers. The book covers everything from ‘How to overcome pupil apathy’ to ‘How to survive against the Ofsted odds’ and provides an insight into many areas that you are not taught during both years.

The chapters are logical, easy to read, and very accessible. You will be immersed in it very quickly! Omar’s writing is full of engaging humour, and he speaks about the unwritten elements of teaching in a succinct way. This book is a realistic view of teaching which gives helpful tips as well as reassuring teachers that none of us are perfect all the time. He clearly has a lot of classroom experience, which is reflected in his writing and the practical, insightful tips that he provides for readers.

I would also recommend this book for management and the senior leadership team to read to gain valuable insight into the reality that their teachers face.

There is something for everyone within this book, and overall, it is highly suitable for new staff and experienced teachers alike.

Emma Price

Cree, Jon & Robb, Marina

The Essential Guide to Forest School and Nature Pedagogy

Routledge
2021, pp368, £19.99
9780367425616



Nature. Forest. Education

With glowing endorsements from leaders in the field of Forest Education this book really fulfils the word ‘essential’: the text provides clear understanding of the essence of what Forest Education is all about, whilst also providing necessary knowledge and practical advice for providers; it is indeed a complete guide, and as such an excellent book to own. Cree and Robb passionately expound the learner-led approach to return control, creativity, and autonomy to the learner, within the context of the natural environment; an approach that directly addresses all intrinsic intelligences for a holistic nature pedagogy. The authors elaborate the approach to support all areas of development: learning as well as physical, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing, and thus supporting behaviour; they outline models and the planning process, underpinned by referenced theory and helpful reflective questions. They point out that humans are still ‘grappling with what kind of society we want to be...’ and it is increasingly imperative to further Earth rights, and prevent ecocide; they build the strongest case for embracing nature pedagogy approach in education.

Stephanie Barclay

Chivers, Di

How to Recognise and Support Mathematical Mastery in Young Children’s Play

Routledge
2021, pp250, £22.99
9780367133573
Maths. Early Years. CPD



As a Librarian who “doesn’t do maths” I think I was meant to review this book ... It has challenged me to move from seeing ‘maths as a tricky area of learning’ to recognising that we use ‘all mathematics in our everyday lives’.

Edited by advisory consultant Di Chivers, this collection of work by a number of contributors draws on a wide range of research and thinking, and came out of an initiative called ‘Talk for Maths Mastery’.

With an excellent layout and indexing, appendices of ready to use practical tools, real life learning ‘stories’, and full colour photographs, this is essential reading for early years practitioners looking to develop mathematical mastery in their work with the youngest students.

I particularly liked the concept of the ‘Maths is everywhere’ audit, encouraging adults to see that maths can happen anywhere, at any time. This book would make an excellent addition to the Continuing Professional Development library of any primary school.

Helen Emery

Cunningham-Smith, Nikki

Feel Free to Smile

Bloomsbury Education
2021, pp176, £14.99
9781472984487
Behaviour. NQT. CPD



A useful and engaging tool peppered with humorous anecdotes and which contains dedicated journaling space in every chapter, this book was designed with NQTs in mind, but it deserves a space on every teaching professional’s bookshelf.

The author offers a comprehensive range of solutions to the most common behaviour scenarios. The result is a refreshingly honest and empowering look at behaviour management that is not without humour.

It incorporates a variety of case studies crossing the primary and secondary ranges, providing a wealth of useful detail that is handled with warmth and reassurance. Reflective questions encourage moments of quiet introspection, and the book contains exercises and space for notes.

There’s a strong focus on helping you teach your best lesson, keeping you calm, and keeping you positive. It’s clear from the outset that the author is striving to help newly qualified teachers retain their love for their profession, giving them the confidence needed to build a thriving career. A valuable and unique resource, not just for NQTs, but for anyone who finds themselves daunted by the prospect of challenging behaviour.

Alison King

Claxton, Guy

The Future of Teaching and the Myths that Hold it Back

Routledge
2021, pp232, £15.99
9780367531645
Teaching. Education. Pedagogy



This is a timely, pertinent, and much needed work, which looks at re-examining the nature and future of education and how to equip pupils of today with the skills and character to face the world of the future. Anyone interested and willing to engage in this debate around the possibilities of teaching and education would find this a highly fruitful and thought-provoking read. It draws on up-to-date research and debunks much of the outdated thinking which supports exclusive knowledge-rich curriculums, effectively demonstrating the importance of one size doesn’t and will never fit all. Claxton advocates successfully for future teaching and educational principles to focus on the intersection between more traditional and progressive techniques to allow for greater breadth of classroom experiences by pupils. At times rather repetitive, this is an easy read that can be dipped in and out of, and which brings together useful arguments for such educational approaches. It will certainly stimulate reflection and discussion for any teachers or members of the senior leadership team considering the future of education.

Meg Barclay

Haaland, Gunnar & Kümmmerling-Meibauer, Bettina & Ommundsen, Åse Marie

Exploring Challenging Picturebooks in Education

Routledge
2021, pp312, £120
9780367856250



Reading. Visual Literacy. Picture Books

This collection begins by considering what a challenging picture book is and can be. It aligns this discussion alongside other terms including sophisticated picture books and postmodern picture books. It posits a definition that focuses upon cognitive challenges and enhancing children’s interpretative skills.

The structure is well considered, opening with an examination around the parameters of challenging picture books before moving into looking at early years provision and wordless picture books before moving through to look at use in secondary school and in tertiary education.

Case studies illuminate professional practice and there are plenty of applicable ideas for how to promote empathy and to use challenging picture books in ways that engage and hold potential for reframing how books and reading might be considered by non traditional readers. An engaging book that offers potential for developing professional practice.

Jake Hope

Hoyle, Thérèse
101 Playground Games

Routledge
 2021, pp200, £19.99
 9780367338565
 Play. Games. Children



This new edition of *101 Playground Games* is a brilliant resource! For anyone who works with children, this book provides a plethora of fun playground games, old and new, to teach children, all of which have been tried and tested! The book is broken into categories of games including traditional, tag, skipping, circle, singing and dancing games, and quiet games. As well as clear 'how to play' instructions, each game has information on time taken to play, age range, ideal numbers and any equipment needed. This is more than just a book of games as the author has also included well-researched information about the importance and benefits of play for children, guidelines for good play, as well as guidelines to develop 'Playground Activity Leaders' - encouraging older children to teach younger children new games. Though the focus of the book is on being used in an educational setting, the games can be used with any community group who work with children. While aimed for playground use, these would be appropriate for indoor use too. This is an excellent and practical tool for anyone working with nursery and primary-age children.

Stephen Leitch

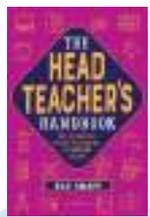
Snape, Rae
The Headteachers Handbook: The Essential Guide to Leading a Primary School

Bloomsbury Education
 2011, pp320, £24.99
 9781472975423

Leadership. Education. Pedagogy

As the title suggests, this is a must read for any new and aspiring headteacher, written by a headteacher with over 14 years' experience. It comprehensively looks at leading a primary school, packed full of wisdom and advice to help understand the role of a teacher, coach and community leader - including the challenges and opportunities this brings. Drawing on up-to-date research, personal experience, and with contributions from some of the most influential and well-known school leaders today, this will certainly both equip and inspire the budding headteacher with the skills, confidence, and vision for their new and future roles. Written in a kind and supportive style, relevant chapters can be easily dipped in and out of as necessary. Current leaders will also gain much from it, with material sure to inspire rich reflections and discussion opportunities for senior leaders and subject leaders from the wealth of information and advice Snape offers.

Meg Barclay



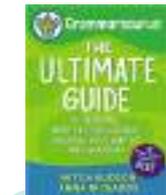
Hudson, Mitch & Richards, Anna
Grammarsaurus: The Ultimate Guide to Teaching Non-Fiction Writing, Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar KS1

Bloomsbury Education
 2021, pp192, £24.98
 9781472988331
English. Grammar. Key Stage 1

This is a great resource for teachers to use when teaching non-fiction in both Years 1 and 2. The book contains age-appropriate texts that will fit with a range of topics from the great fire of London or the gunpower plot to instructions for building a castle. Each type of non-fiction text has a Year 1 text, a Year 2 text and a Year 2 greater depth text. These can all be photocopied, and each text has an annotated copy. There are checklists for each type of non-fiction writing that can be used to support children to remember what they need to include.

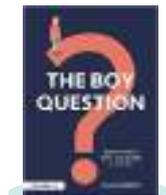
This will make a useful edition to a teacher's range of resources, with some good texts to use with supportive advice and checklists.

Kate Keaveny



Roberts, Mark
The Boy Question

Routledge
 2021, pp164, £16.99
 9780367509118
Boys. Motivation. Challenge



This is a fascinating read. It's very insightful into how teacher behaviour and pedagogy impact the motivation of students, especially boys. Roberts discusses role models, study skills, tips on effective feedback, and developing literacy in boys. At the end of each chapter, he has five steps to success: these are like mini summaries of the chapter and would be great to have on the wall of a classroom. I've seen extension tasks used in many classrooms; he gives examples of how this can widen the learning gap between students. I hadn't thought about how over a period of a term this could have such detrimental effect on learning and students' attitudes. He talks about how treatment of boys allows them to 'coast' rather than challenge their learning experience. A great book to have on the CPD shelf, you can dip in and out of or just read from cover to cover.

Tanya Henning

Such, Christopher
The Art and Science of Teaching Primary Reading

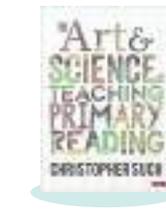
SAGE Publications Ltd
 2021, pp192, £18.99
 9781529764161

Primary. Phonics. Reading

From a premise that teaching reading is an incremental process, Such outlines, analyses, and argues the theory and practice of teaching reading through systematic synthetic phonics. Amply supported by current research references, Such shows zeal for teaching reading in a methodical, structured whole-class approach. He outlines comprehension teaching methods, including action plans for teachers and reading co-ordinators. Whilst acknowledging difficulties some children may experience, including dyslexia, he advocates whole-class text teaching, with 'necessary adaptations' (not exemplified).

As a clear guide to the art and a science of teaching reading this is an excellent book to have to hand, and to understand the origin of current government policy. Experienced teachers will raise questions about practicality and resources: transforming the art of classroom teaching using this science could see creative-curriculum approaches abandoned and a return to knowledge-based approaches of past generations.

Stephanie Barclay



Williams, Kala
Mastery in Reading Comprehension

Bloomsbury Education
 2021, pp160, £18.99
 9781472980953

Comprehension. SATs. Reading

With a focus on improving the reading comprehension of learners in key stage 2, this book explores different methods of mastery alongside accessible strategies for the classroom. Perfect for everyday whole class reading or smaller intervention sessions, the book follows a systematic approach to each of the SATs reading domains.

The text is divided into ten digestible chapters that cover areas including what teachers need to know about comprehension, unpacking the reading domains, questioning techniques, strategies, and sample lesson plans. The author imparts a vast array of knowledge and presents it in clear and accessible format.

Detailed and insightful, *Mastery in Reading* features a broad range of research-based strategies, real-life examples, lesson transcripts, and case studies, all of which help to bring the theories to life. A valuable resource that will support the planning of engaging comprehension lessons, it contains everything you need to build a solid foundation from which to approach key stage 2 reading comprehension.

Alison King



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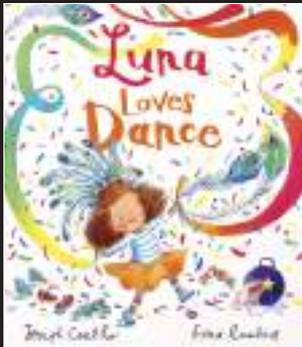
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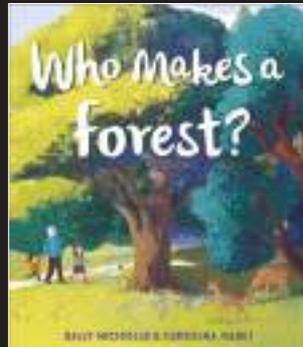
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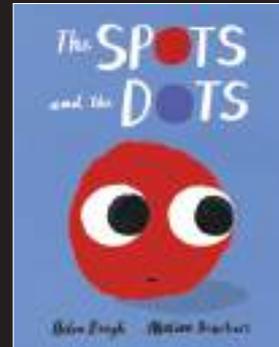
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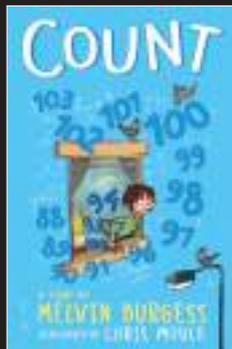


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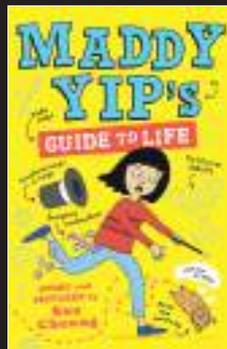


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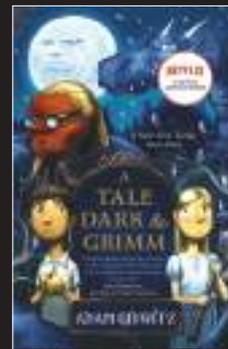
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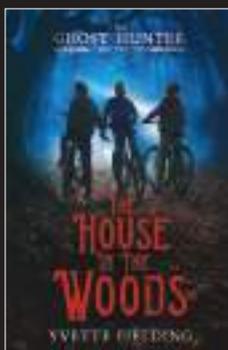


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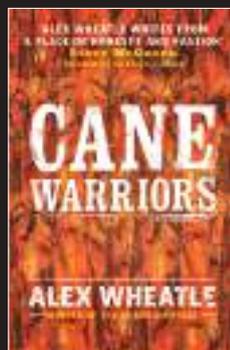


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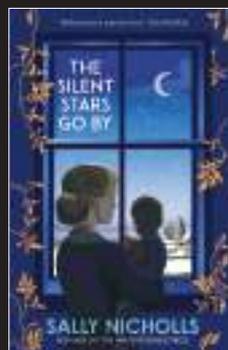
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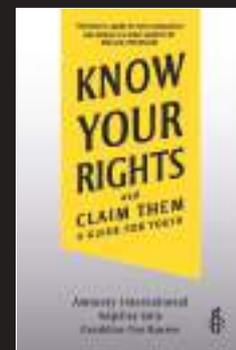
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