

Best Book Guide

2012

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Booktrust's 2012 Best Book Guide brings together reviews of some of our favourite books published during the last year.

The reviews are grouped into four different age categories:

- **5 years and under**
- **5-8 years**
- **9-12 years**
- **Teenage and Young Adult**

To help guide you, we have recommended a suitable reading age for each title, which refers to the age the child would have to be to read the text themselves. We have also suggested an interest level – the age at which we think children will start to enjoy the book.

These reviews, along with hundreds of other book recommendations for children of all ages can be found on our website **www.booktrust.org.uk**

You can search our extensive online database of book reviews by age range and by genre. Our website contains features and interviews with many of the authors whose books are included in this guide. You can also explore our online illustrators' gallery, read our themed booklists, or access free teachers' resources. Look out for our regular competitions to win free books too.

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5

years
and under

Cats Ahoy!

Written by Peter Bently, illustrated by Jim Field

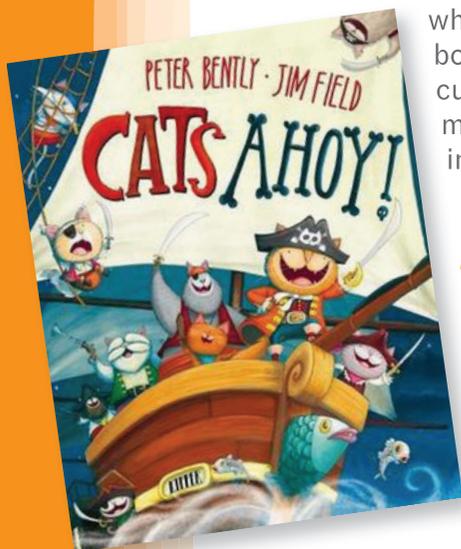
When Alfonso the cat overhears two old men discussing the imminent arrival of a boat catching its largest ever catch of fish, he hatches a plan. It's brave, it's bold and it involves a ghost pirate ship, some rather gullible fishermen and cats... lots of cats. This fun and lively rhyming story is perfect for reading aloud, and the subtle details in Jim Field's stunning illustrations add to the humour of the story.

Cats Ahoy! was the winner of the 2011 Roald Dahl Funny Prize in the category of Funniest book for children aged six and under. Judge Michael Rosen said: 'Cats marauding as ghost pirates to steal fishy bounty from lily-livered humans: what more do you want from a funny book? Jim Field's illustrations of the cunning pirate cats and Peter Bently's majestic rhyming words had the judges in fits of giggles.'

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest level: 3+

Reading age: 6+



The Odd Dog

Written and illustrated by Claudia Boldt

Helmut is an odd dog. He doesn't like bones, but instead he loves apples. The only problem is that Helmut thinks that his next-door neighbour Igor might be plotting to steal the apples from his tree. But when the best and juiciest of all his apples falls into Igor's garden, Helmut is in for an unexpected surprise.

This simple story about sharing and friendship is transformed by Claudia Boldt's light-hearted, witty illustrations, bringing her quirky characters vividly to life. Stylishly designed spreads in a palette of ice-cream colours create an appealing retro feel, but ultimately it is Boldt's surreal sense of humour that will make this book irresistible to young readers.

Publisher: Jonathan Cape

Interest level: 3+

Reading age: 6+



I Don't Want to be a Pea!

Written by Ann Bonwill, illustrated by Simon Rickerty

Friends Hugo the hippo and Bella the bird are excited about going to the Fairytale Fancy Dress Party together. The only problem is, they can't decide on a costume.

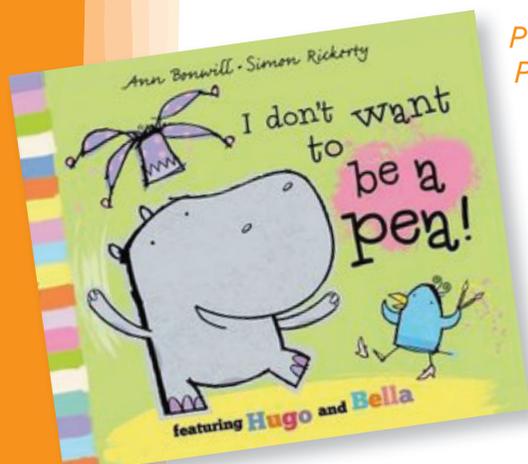
Hugo wants to go as the Princess and the Pea, with himself dressing up as the princess and Bella being the pea. But Bella doesn't want to be a pea – she would rather be a mermaid, with Hugo as a big, grey rock. There are more disagreements ahead, but ultimately Hugo and Bella realise that the most important thing is that they go to the party together.

With a witty text by Ann Bonwill and bold, characterful illustrations by Simon Rickerty, this story about the importance of friendship will delight even the youngest readers and is perfect for reading together.

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Interest level: 2+

Reading age: 5+



First Week at Cow School

Written by Andy Cutbill, illustrated by Russell Ayto

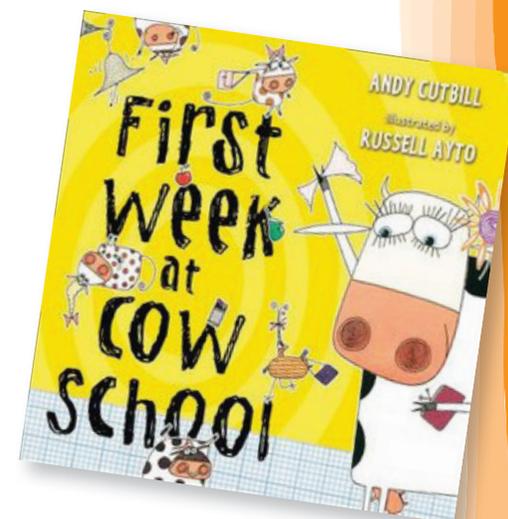
It's Daisy's first day at cow school, and all the cows are enjoying the activities but Daisy feels left out. Her hoof painting looks different to the other cows' and her cowpats are different too – her classmates have lovely steamy round pats but hers are more like raisins. It's the same with cud chewing and mooing and movement – Daisy doesn't have a tail to swish. Daisy is feeling down until the time comes for a flying lesson – and Daisy is best of all.

This hilarious story celebrating difference and acceptance is told with charm and wonderfully illustrated with Russell Ayto's fun and wacky images.

Publisher: HarperCollins Children's Books

Interest level: 3+

Reading age: 6+



The Goggle-Eyed Goats

Written by Steven Davies, illustrated by Christopher Corr



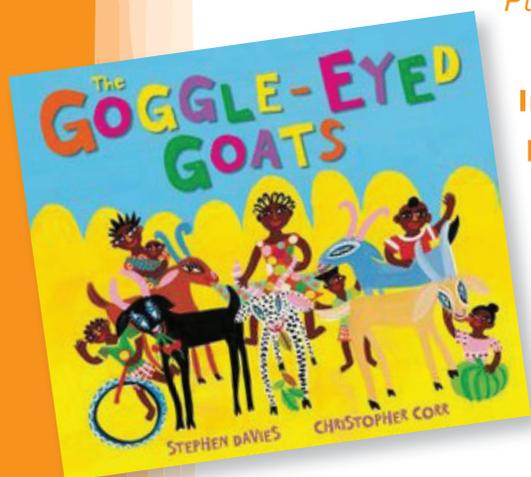
Al Haji has three wives, seven children and an assortment of animals including five goggle-eyed goats. Although he loves his goats dearly they eat everything in sight and his three wives have had enough. And because Al Haji loves his wives more than he loves his goats, he decides they have to go. But can the family really part with them? Al Haji discovers it is harder than he thought...

This beautiful picture book set in Africa is full of vibrant colour and humour. Bursting with activity, there is a wealth of detail to explore on every page and children will delight in spotting the various characters as well as having fun practising their counting.

Publisher: Andersen Press

Interest level: 2+

Reading age: 5+



The Singing Mermaid

Written by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Lydia Monks

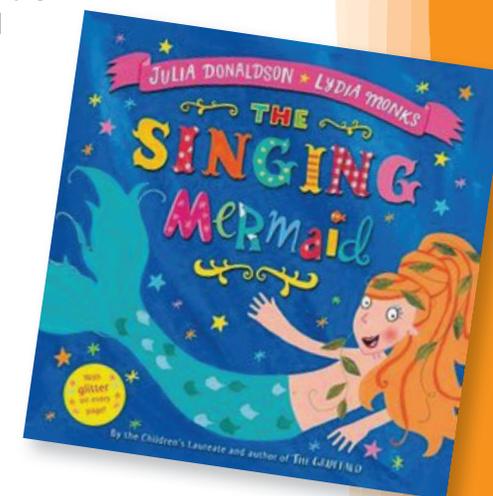
The team behind favourites *What the Ladybird Heard* and *The Rhyming Rabbit* return with another wonderful picture book. When Sam Sly invites the Singing Mermaid to join the circus, she is excited by the promise of fame and fortune. But things are not what they seem, and the Singing Mermaid soon finds herself confined to a fish tank, longing for the freedom of the ocean. Luckily a sharp-eyed seagull and a clever circus acrobat come up with a plan to help the Singing Mermaid escape.

Children's Laureate Julia Donaldson's engaging rhyming text brings a hint of magic to this lively story that is perfectly accompanied with Lydia Monks' vibrant illustrations. Young readers will enjoy exploring the bright and bold spreads, complete with sparkly glitter on each page, which vividly recreate the Singing Mermaid's underwater home and the colourful world of the circus.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest level: 3+

Reading age: 6+

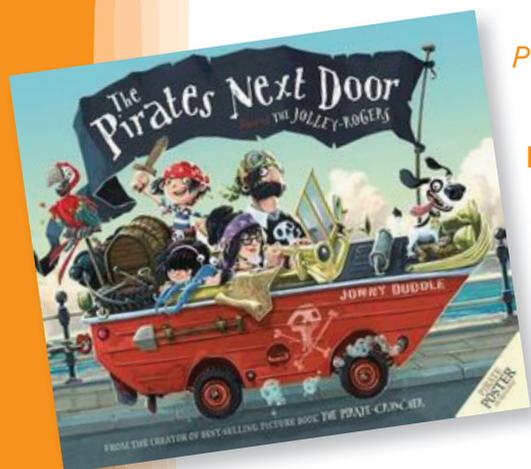


The Pirates Next Door

Written and illustrated by Jonny Duddle

In Matilda's neat, child-free neighbourhood on Dull-on-Sea, the house next door is for sale, and she yearns for a family to move in. Then the Jolley-Rogers arrive, and the neighbourhood is not impressed with their messy garden, scruffy clothes and abundance of cannons and cutlasses. There's constant hammering from their ship repairing – and they even make the postman walk the plank! Only Matilda is delighted: in Jim she's found a friend and she alone is sad when the Jolley-Rogers leave. Then the neighbours discover what the pirates have left behind – and Matilda soon discovers that Jim hasn't forgotten her.

Lots of humour, generous fold-out pages, a bold cartoon-like style, and of course, irrepressibly rakish pirates combine in this entertaining book about looking beyond appearances, which won the Waterstones Children's Book Prize 2012.



Publisher: Templar Publishing

Interest level: 3+

Reading level: 6+

Arthur's Dream Boat

Written and illustrated by Polly Dunbar

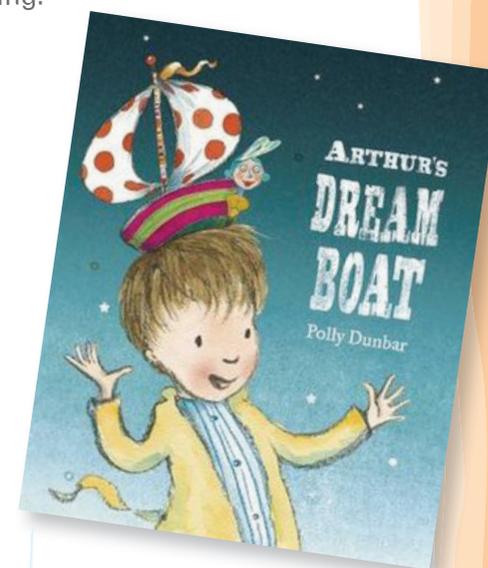
When Arthur wakes up from an amazing dream, he can't wait to share it with his family. So share it he does and the beautiful boat of Arthur's dreams gets bigger and more colourful with each description. However, his big brother is too busy tapping on the computer to listen; his mum would rather feed the fish, his dad is distracted by the newspaper and his baby sister throws her food around the room instead of listening to her brother. Arthur eventually resorts to shouting about his dream boat and before long, his family are climbing aboard and sailing away with him.

This beautifully-illustrated picture book, from former Booktrust Online Writer in Residence, Polly Dunbar, takes readers on a vivid visual adventure – some spreads are entirely wordless. A delightful book that is perfect for sharing.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest level 2+

Reading age 6+



I Want My Hat Back

Written and illustrated by Jon Klassen

A bear sets out in search of his missing hat. Along the way, he asks all the animals he meets if any of them have seen his hat. They all say no... but one of them is lying.

Told in a refreshingly deadpan manner, this quirky and distinctive picture book from US author and illustrator Jon Klassen will delight young readers. Beautiful and stylish illustrations, in a palette of muted colours, provide the perfect complement to the understated text.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest level: 3+

Reading age: 6+



Bedtime for Monsters

Written and illustrated by Ed Vere

Do you ever wonder if somewhere, not too far away, there might be monsters?

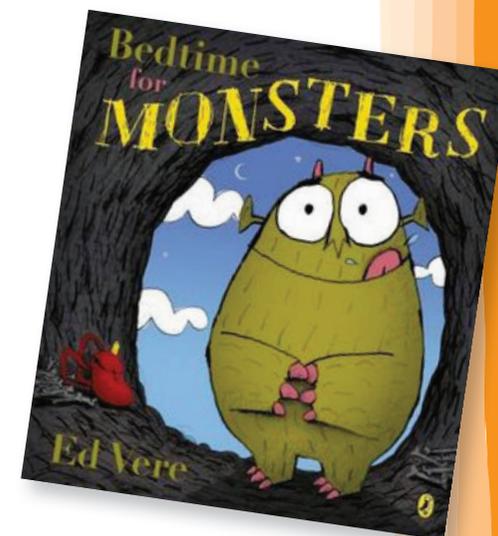
What if this monster wanted to eat you and was making his way from his home in the hills towards you in your cosy home? Watch out as he bicycles through a dark and terrible forest, crosses a gloopy, schloopy swamp, climbs cold and snowy mountains and up the stairs into your house...

Fun, colourful illustrations and playful language combine with great effect in this clever, funny picture book from Ed Vere, which will have young children squirming with fear and pleasure in equal measure.

Publisher: Puffin Books

Interest level: 2+

Reading age: 5+



5-8

years

One Cool Cat!

Written by Susannah Corbett, illustrated by David Roberts

White Cat is one cool customer – far too laid-back to care about silly superstitions. He doesn't heed the warnings of a black cat who tells him to avoid cracking mirrors, walking underneath a precarious ladder and stepping on the pavements cracks, responding to warnings with a succession of boastful retorts. But, as we all know, pride comes before a fall and eventually White Cat tries one boast too many, with hilariously disastrous consequences.

David Roberts' illustrations are as stylish as ever in this new picture book written by Susannah Corbett. White Cat, with his artful quiff and insouciant manner, is a memorable character that children will love.



Publisher: Egmont

Interest level: 5+

Reading age: 6+

A First Book of Nature

Written by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Mark Hearld

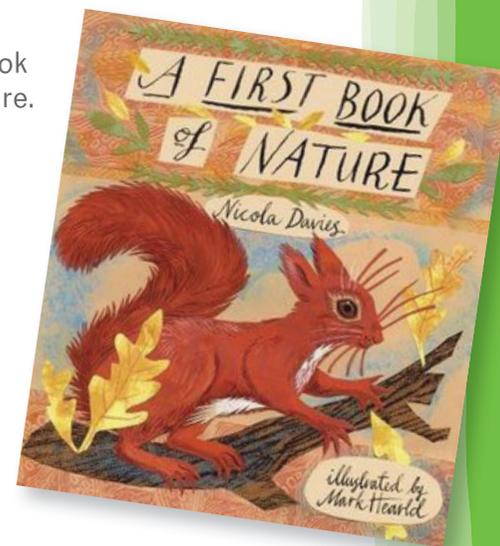
Discover the world of nature and follow the changing of the seasons with this beautiful book from award-winning children's author Nicola Davies. Artist and printmaker Mark Hearld's nostalgic illustrations are the perfect accompaniment to this lovely chronicle of a child's first experiences of nature, divided into 'Spring', 'Summer', 'Autumn' and 'Winter' sections. Davies's simple but lyrical text sensitively evokes everything from hearing bees buzz on a summer's day to eating apples fresh from the tree to hunting for bird tracks in the winter snow.

Part poetry book, part scrapbook of recipes and facts, *A First Book of Nature* is a delightful way to begin to learn about the natural world, and is full of ideas for fun outdoor activities from beachcombing to baking a berry crumble. With lots to see in the richly-coloured spreads, this is a very special book to explore together and to treasure.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest level: 4+

Reading age: 7+



Introducing Limelight Larry

Written and illustrated by Leigh Hodgkinson

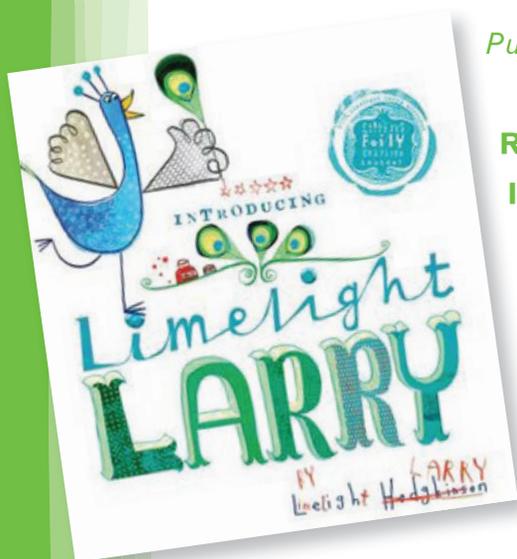
Brash peacock Larry attempts to chase off interrupting characters and unwanted woodland tea parties to secure the pages of this beautifully-illustrated book all for himself. However, Larry soon discovers that showing off all by yourself isn't actually all that much fun.

Larry's zealous self-promotion is undercut by witty narration and tongue-in-cheek humour that lifts the characters off the page in this delightful picture book. A touching story about the value of friendship delivered with vibrant illustration and a fresh, imaginative twist.

Publisher: Orchard Books

Reading Age: 6+

Interest level: 4+



Welcome to Bugville

Written by Paul Howard



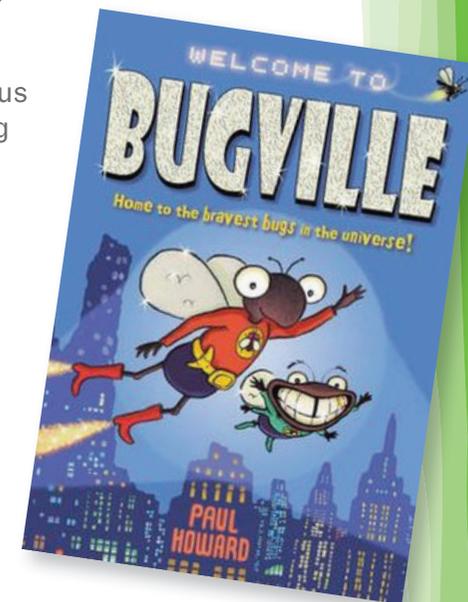
Welcome to Bugville, the thriving metropolis home of millions of bugs. In the old days it was rotten, crime-infested and smelled of underpants; only the epic endeavours of superheroes, Superfly and Midge, redeemed it from darkness. They still patrol the streets, but some long for the past: lurking in a shady dive, dastardly Electro Slug and his repulsive sidekick, Loo, are plotting to destroy our heroes. Their devilish plan involves daring raids, outrageous disguises, and disrupting the Annual Bugville TV Awards. Can Superfly and Midge stop them?

The format of this beginner reader, with plenty of cartoon-style illustrations throughout the text, provides the perfect complement to this fast-moving tale of heroic heroes and villainous villains, packed with cliff-hanging action.

Publisher: Egmont

Interest level: 7+

Reading age: 7+



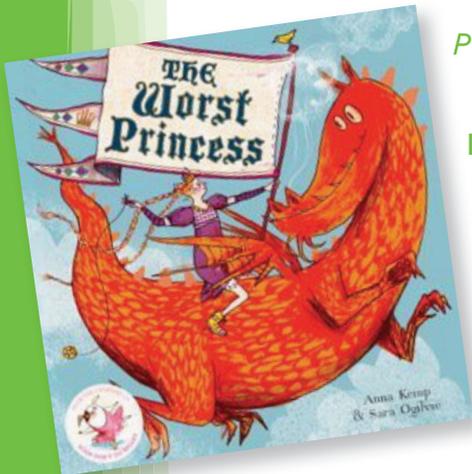
The Worst Princess

Written by Anna Kemp, illustrated by Sara Ogilvie

“Some day,” she sighed, “my prince will come, But I wish he'd move his royal bum.”

Princess Sue is no ordinary princess. She gets bored hanging around in her tower, waiting for her handsome prince to arrive - and is overjoyed when he at last turns up to rescue her. But having freed Sue from her tower, the prince isn't too pleased when he discovers that she would rather ride horses and battle dragons than stay indoors wearing a pretty dress.

With a rhyming text by Anna Kemp and delightfully humorous illustrations by 2011 Booktrust Best New Illustrator Sara Ogilvie, this entertaining picture book offers a refreshingly tongue-in-cheek spin on the conventional fairy tale princess.



Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Interest level: 5+

Reading age: 6+

The High Street

Written and illustrated by Alice Melvin

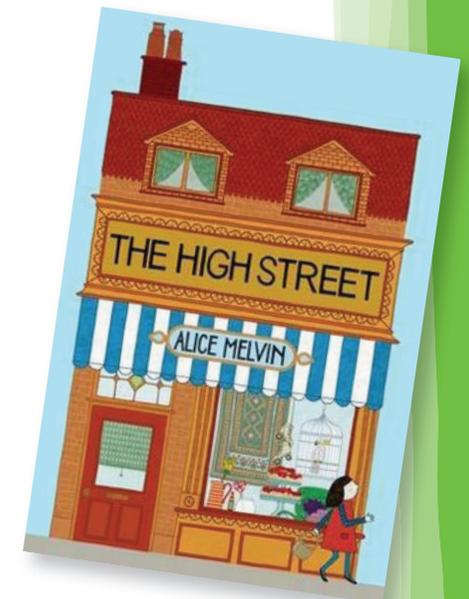
Sally is going shopping and has a list of ten items she needs to buy. Lift the flaps to follow her on her journey along the high street to all the different shops, from the toyshop, to the pet shop to the bakery. Will she find everything on her list?

In this charming picture book, Alice Melvin lovingly depicts a high street of old-fashioned shops in her trademark nostalgic style. Children will enjoy spotting all the different things going on in the detailed spreads, from a Punch and Judy show to a policeman eating an ice-cream. This beautifully presented book harks back to a previous age, whilst retaining a stylishly contemporary feel.

Publisher: Tate

Interest level: 4+

Reading age: 7+

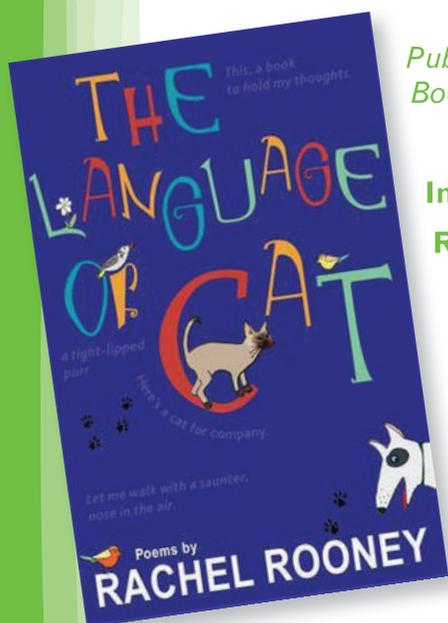


The Language of Cat

Written by Rachel Rooney

Making the ordinary seem extraordinary is something that characterises the poetry of Rachel Rooney. In her first published collection for children (she has contributed to anthologies for a number of years), she explores everyday events and makes them feel fresh, authentic and new.

Suffused with gentle humour and a perceptive wit, the poems in this collection offer an eclectic mix of original wordplay and fantastic flights of imagination. A wonderful testament to the scope and versatility of language, which youngsters are sure to enjoy reading, and which is likely to inspire them to be creative in their own right.



Publisher: Frances Lincoln Children's Books

Interest level: 7+

Reading age: 7+

Fright Forest: Raven Boy and Elf Girl

Written by Marcus Sedgwick, illustrated by Pete Williamson

The first book in a magical new adventure series for younger readers from award-winning author Marcus Sedgwick introduces us to dynamic duo Raven Boy and Elf Girl. Our heroes meet on the run from a dastardly ogre who is trampling the forest, pulling up trees and destroying homes. It soon becomes clear that it's down to Raven Boy and Elf Girl to find the Witch Who Knows Everything, who can tell them how to save the forest and defeat the ogre. But to do this, they must venture into the very heart of the sinister and creepy Fright Forest. Can Raven Boy and Elf Girl save the day?

This hugely entertaining and humorous story in Sedgwick's trademark gothic style will delight young readers, perfectly blending the scary with the silly. Raven Boy and Elf Girl bicker their way through their adventure, dealing with everything from hungry trolls and terrifying beasts along the way. Pete Williamson's characterful black and white illustrations are a wonderful finishing touch.

Publisher: Orion Children's Books

Interest level: 6+

Reading age: 8+



A Boy and a Bear in a Boat

Written by Dave Shelton

Imagine travelling on a boat with a polar bear as your captain... and then imagine your journey across the sea goes on and on, because the bear has got you both lost. That's exactly what happens to the boy in Dave Shelton's quirky and imaginative novel. This beautifully presented book tells the story of what happens when a boy and a rather remarkable bear find themselves stranded in the middle of the sea, the adventures they have, and how they survive.

Both a warm and appealing story about the nature of friendship, and a surreal adventure packed with lively humour, this unusual tale will capture the imaginations of both children and adults alike.

Publisher: David Fickling Books

Interest level: 7+

Reading age: 7+



The Big Adventure of the Smalls

Written and illustrated by Helen Stephens

When Paul and Sally Small sneak out of bed to take a peek at the goings-on at the Small Hall Grand Ball, Mr Puddles the teddy bear has a nasty accident - he falls through the banisters and simply has to be rescued. With a level of excitement to rival an action movie, the siblings begin by sliding down the banisters and eliciting the help of a suit of armour before moving on to explore a dark and spooky secret passageway. Finally, they adopt a number of clever disguises, shimmy up a statue and even swing on chandeliers before they can finally get Mr Puddles back where he belongs.

This delightful picture book is a lavishly-illustrated flight of fancy, interpreting an adult environment through the eyes of small children. Young readers will delight in the excitement of this hugely imaginative adventure, which is great fun to share.

Publisher: Egmont

Interest level: 4+

Reading age: 7+



9-12
years

Twelve Minutes to Midnight

Written by Christopher Edge

In 1899, 13-year-old orphan Penelope Tredwell is the author, editor and sole proprietor of London's most popular magazine, The Penny Dreadful. But when she receives a strange letter, Penelope finds herself drawn into a real-life adventure as thrilling as any she pens for the pages of her magazine.

Every night at precisely 12 minutes to midnight, the inmates of Bedlam, London's notorious madhouse, all begin feverishly writing - incoherent ramblings that Penelope quickly realises are in fact terrifying visions of the new century to come. But what is causing this strange phenomenon? Together with her trusted companion, printer's apprentice Alfie, Penelope pits her sharp wits against this unearthly problem - and soon plunges into danger.

Pacy and tightly-plotted, this is an exuberant and entertaining tale set in an appealingly foggy and sinister Victorian London. This historical adventure packed with exciting twists and turns will appeal to confident readers, and fans of Philip Pullman's Sally Lockhart series.

Publisher: Nosy Crow

Reading age: 10+

Interest level: 11+



Small Change for Stuart

Written by Lissa Evans

When Stuart and his parents move to his father's hometown of Beeton, he is intrigued to learn that there was a magician in the family – Great-Uncle Tony – who mysteriously disappeared nearly 50 years earlier. Following a series of clues left by his ancestor, Stuart attempts to uncover the mystery of his great-uncle's disappearance and discover the whereabouts of the magician's lost workshop. When he realises that devious Beeton resident Jeannie wants the workshop for herself, he enlists the help of his new neighbour, April, and together they embark on a magical mystery tour of the town.

This humorous adventure is accompanied by atmospheric ink drawings, making this an attractive and compelling book for confident boy and girl readers.

Publisher: Doubleday

Reading Age: 10+

Interest level: 9+



The Abominables

Written by Eva Ibbotson, illustrated by Sharon Rentta

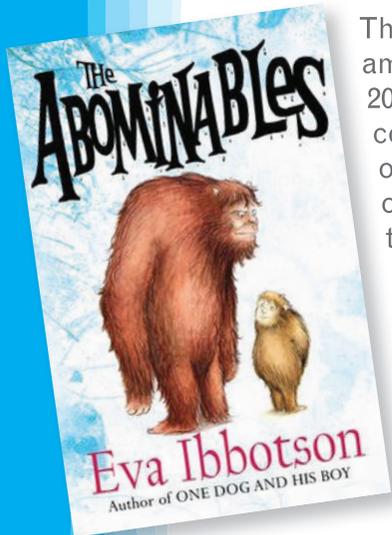
Abducted from her tent on the Himalayan mountainside, Lady Agatha realises she has been kidnapped by the infamous Yeti. But although he is huge and hairy, Agatha soon discovers the Yeti is not so terrifying – in fact he’s a concerned father who needs help raising his loveable family of not-so-abominable snowmen. In a peaceful hidden valley, Agatha embarks on a happy new life amongst the Yetis; but as time moves on, the valley is threatened by developers, and the now elderly Agatha begins to worry about the safety of the family. Luckily, two courageous children are on hand to form a plan to help the Yetis escape to the safety of Agatha’s ancestral home in England. On the entertaining road trip that ensues, the Yetis (and their faithful pet yak) find themselves mixed up in all kinds of adventures – but what will await them on their arrival in England?

The manuscript of this charming story was found amongst Eva Ibbotson’s papers after her death in 2010. Warm-hearted, funny and imaginative, it also contains strong messages about the importance of nature, protecting endangered species, and opposing injustice. Illustrated by Sharon Rentta, this touching and engaging story is irresistible.

Publisher: Marion Lloyd Books

Reading age: 9+

Interest level: 8+



The Considine Curse

Written by Gareth P Jones

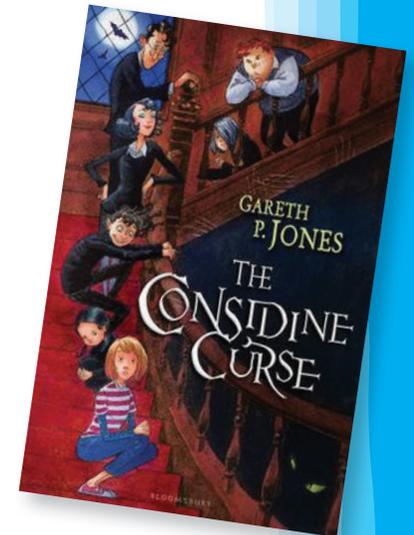
On the day of her grandmother’s funeral, 14-year-old Mariel comes face-to-face with the rest of her family for the first time – including seven cousins she didn’t know existed. The welcome she gets isn’t exactly warm and it quickly becomes clear that the creepy Considine cousins are not what you would call normal.

What with Elspeth whispering malicious poetry in her ear, and Gerald telling her to stay away, Mariel would happily just forget they existed and fly back to her friends in Australia. But, the cousins have a dark secret and Mariel’s curiosity gets the better of her – as will yours once you pick up this eerie and addictive adventure, which won the Blue Peter Best Book of the Year 2012.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Reading age: 9+

Interest level: 9+



The Case of the Good-Looking Corpse

Written by Caroline Lawrence

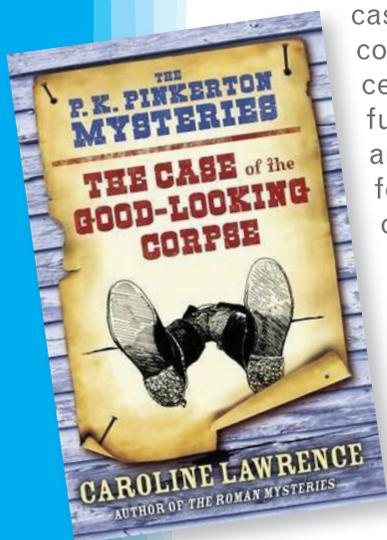
P.K. Pinkerton, intrepid 12-year-old Private Eye returns in the second book in this lively and original series from Caroline Lawrence, set in America's Wild West. Picking up just hours after the first book left off, *The Case of the Good-Looking Corpse* finds P.K. embroiled in a new case to solve – the mysterious murder of Short Sally. Servant girl Martha begs for P.K.'s help to expose her mistress's killer, but then disappears herself, leaving P.K. to try and work out which of many possible suspects could be guilty. As usual, P.K.'s 'Thorn' – an inability to read people and difficulty in expressing emotions – complicates matters, but thankfully poker-player Jace is on hand with some advice, and P.K.'s new interest in collecting tobacco proves unexpectedly helpful.

With plenty of Wild West slang and an engaging cast of colourful gunslingers, gamblers and cowboys, Caroline Lawrence brings a mid-19th century frontier town vividly to life in this very funny page-turner. P.K. makes a compelling and unique hero and readers will delight in following all the entertaining twists and turns of this fun adventure.

Publisher: Orion Children's Books

Interest Level: 8+

Reading Age: 10+



The Apothecary

Written by Maile Meloy, illustrated by Ian Schoenherr

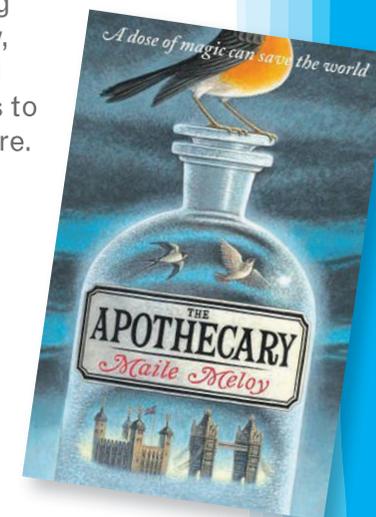
It's 1952 and Janie has been forced to swap sunshine in California for life in cold, grey post-war London. At first, her new home seems unbearably dreary, but then she meets a new friend, the rebellious Benjamin, who dreams of becoming a spy. Things take an unexpected turn when Benjamin's father mysteriously disappears, having first entrusted Janie and Benjamin with a precious book full of recipes for magical potions named the *Pharmacopoeia*. Janie and Benjamin know they must protect the book and keep it safe from the sinister enemies that are appearing on all sides - but what are the secrets that the *Pharmacopoeia* hides?

Accompanied with atmospheric black-and-white illustrations by Ian Schoenherr, the first children's book from Maile Meloy is an intriguing mystery, drawing on everything from physics to alchemy. Shifting between spy thriller and enchanting fantasy, *The Apothecary* skillfully blends the magical with the very real nuclear threat of the 1950s to create an unusual and spellbinding adventure.

Publisher: Andersen Press

Reading age: 11+

Interest level: 9+



Wonder

Written by R J Palacio

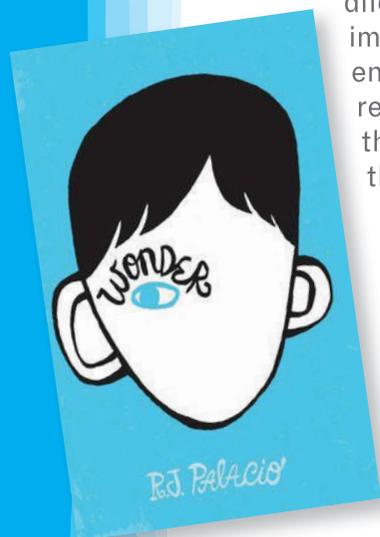
The first day at a new school is always daunting, but for ten-year-old Auggie, the level of the challenge is even more profound. For one thing, he has only ever been home-educated, and for another, Auggie has a facial disfiguration of most severe kind. It invokes widespread reactions of shock, suspicion and fear, and those around him behave in ways that are sometimes thoughtless and sometimes intentionally hurtful and even downright cruel. In other people, it brings out the urge to protect – but in some cases perhaps overly so. But Auggie must find his own way, negotiating the tricky path away from cuddly toys and Star Wars posters and towards independence and friendship.

Upbeat enough to appeal to a wide readership, this touching story has fully-rounded characters, each with their own share of strengths, challenges and moral dilemmas. With a powerful message about the importance of how we treat others, this is a highly engaging story which could also encourage readers to consider that the way someone is on the inside could be just as important as the way they look.

Publisher: Bodley Head

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 9+



The Brilliant World of Tom Gates

Written and illustrated by Liz Pichon

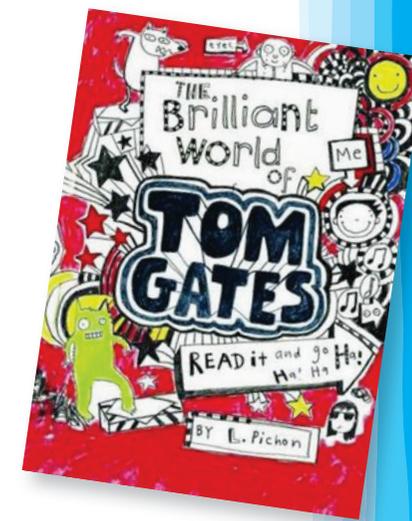
The hilarious homework diary of Tom Gates charts his progress through the trials and tribulations of school and home life, including a disastrous camping trip, his vexed relationship with nosey teacher Mr Fullerman and that perennial domestic trial – parents' evening. Luckily Tom's appetite for humour means he can take such trials in his stride and mine them for comic potential. They also inspire some brilliant cartoons for the reader to enjoy.

Tom scribbles the world from his point of view, each page is an explosion of hand-written rants, funny stories and dynamic cartoons. Oozing personality and with so much going on it promises to maintain the attention of young readers for hours at a time, this book was the winner of the age seven to fourteen category of the 2011 Roald Dahl Funny Prize.

Publisher: Scholastic

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 9+



Goblins

Written by Philip Reeve

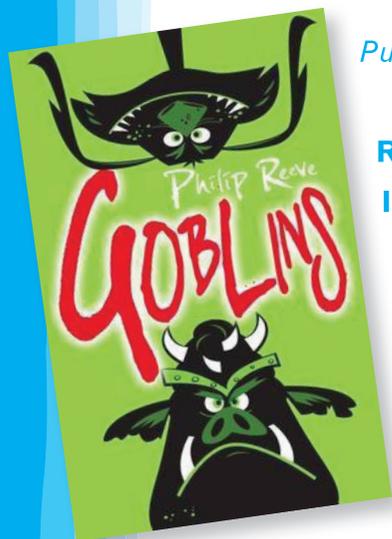
The dark towers of Clovenstone are home to several bands of goblins who spend their time squabbling and fighting each other. But Skarper is different: he is inquisitive and clever and for that is ejected by King Knobbler and thrown off Blackspike Tower. He survives and joins forces with Henwyn, a boy looking for a princess to rescue, and a band of incompetent wizards on a strange yet exciting and dangerous adventure.

Goblins has all the elements of a great adventure story. Skarper's world is brought to life with plenty of imagination and ironic wit in the style of Monty Python. The language is beautifully descriptive; in Clovenstone's towers 'gargoyles lurk in their ivy like lice in beggars' beards'. Entertaining, amusing and an utter delight.

Publisher: Marion Lloyd Books

Reading age: 8+

Interest level: 9+



Green Glass Beads

A collection of poems for girls

Edited by Jacqueline Wilson

'I like to think this anthology is like a very good restaurant. It's got a very large menu ... and you'll hopefully love some things... and maybe wrinkle your nose at a few.'

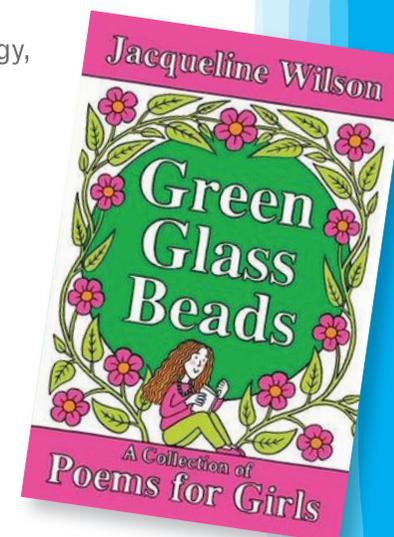
So writes Jacqueline Wilson, introducing this eclectic, unashamedly personal collection of poetry. Classic and contemporary, funny and serious, the poems in this varied anthology are thematically arranged in sections ranging from 'Friends' and 'Family' through 'Birth and Death' and 'Love' to 'Rainbows, Moons and Stars'. Mixing together well-known familiar favourites and delicious new discoveries allows for some wonderful juxtapositions and striking pairings to emerge.

Perfect for use in the classroom, this is a wisely and passionately compiled anthology, ably demonstrating the different things that poetry can do, and constantly inviting readers to try just one more.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Reading age: 9+

Interest level: 9+



Teenage and Young Adult

Verity Fibbs

Written and illustrated by Cathy Brett

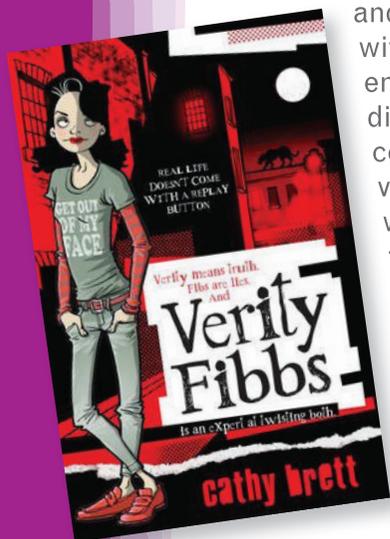
Whether she's impersonating her fashion designer mum to sneak into celebrity night spots, jumping into limousines with mysterious boys, or sneaking her way on board a yacht for an exclusive party, 15-year-old Verity Fibbs is always determined to make life as interesting as possible – even if it means twisting the truth. When she gets bored with reality, she can always escape into the exciting world of the role-playing game *Demon Streets*, in the guise of her online alter ego Maisie Malone. But when mum leaves her home alone, Verity's online world and her real life begin to collide, and she finds herself facing a very real villain.

Touching on some interesting and unusual themes including ethical fashion, celebrity culture and online gaming, this is a fun, lively read with a strong central character and plenty of energetic humour and action. Cathy Brett's distinctive graphic illustrations are the perfect complement to the text, offering a highly visual and appealing reading experience, which is all too rarely found in teenage fiction.

Publisher: Headline

Reading Age: 11+

Interest level: 12+



Heart-Shaped Bruise

Written by Tanya Byrne

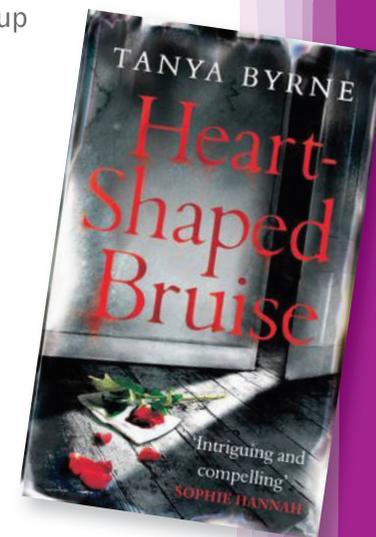
Lying forgotten on top of a wardrobe at the Archway Young Offenders institution is a notebook. Inside its pages, the notorious Emily Koll reveals the story she has refused to tell anyone, even her psychiatrist – the truth about the crime she committed, and why she did what she did to her best friend, Juliet.

This taut, tense psychological thriller keeps the reader guessing as Emily's story is gradually unravelled through the pages of her notebook, blending her experiences of day-to-day life at the institution with her memories of the events that have brought her here. Dark, distinctive and different, *Heart-Shaped Bruise* is a memorable debut, offering an intriguing exploration of revenge, identity and perhaps most of all the intensity of teenage relationships. Teen readers are guaranteed to be gripped by Emily's powerful story right up to the shocking final twist.

Publisher: Headline

Reading age: 14+

Interest level: 14+



After the Snow

Written by S D Crockett

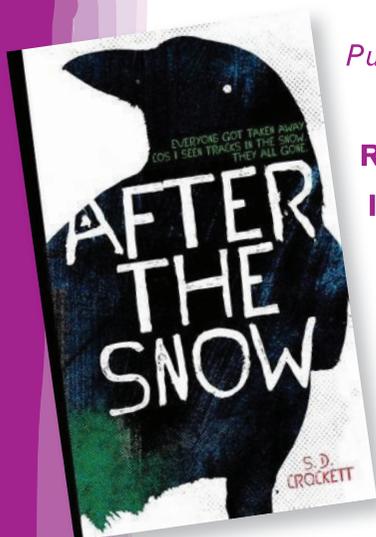
Fifteen-year-old Willo has been left alone in the freezing, snow-covered hills that have been his home for years. Willo doesn't know where his father and the rest of his family have gone, but donning the skull of a dog whose spirit guides him, he resolves to try and find them. Travelling into the dangerous world of the city, where people live in fear and poverty, he soon discovers some unnerving information about his father. As his fight for survival grows increasingly urgent, Willo must draw on reserves of strength he never knew he had.

Taking a different approach to the current trend of dystopian fiction, this bleak novel is set in a futuristic ice-age. With haunting scenes and some strong language, it is a powerful and memorable story, which nonetheless offers an ultimately hopeful resolution.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Reading age: 14+

Interest level: 14+



Hollow Pike

Written by James Dawson

Lis London had hoped that a move to the country would allow her to escape not only the bullies but also her recurring nightmares. Instead, she manages to fall out with the in-crowd and finds herself mixed up in events that may be linked to a brutal murder. Local legends of witchcraft are resurrected in the wake of the terrible crime and an escalation of seemingly inexplicable and sinister events leaves Lis unsure who to trust as she becomes convinced that her nightmares might come true.

Exploring themes of bullying, obsession, hysteria and marginalisation, this thriller truly deserves the epithet 'page-turner'. Cleverly plotted, and beautifully characterised, it is dark, scary and utterly compelling with an ending as unexpected as it is terrifying.

Publisher: Indigo

Reading age: 11+

Interest level: 14+

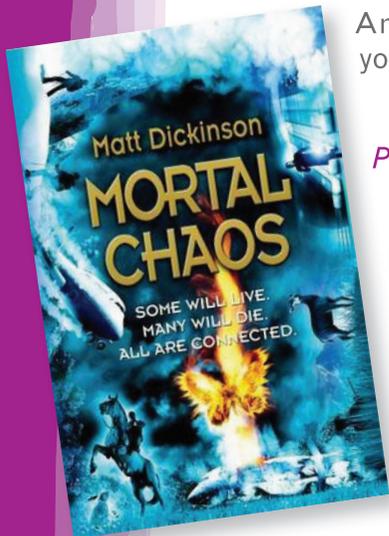


Mortal Chaos

Written by Matt Dickinson

A butterfly in an English wood flutters its wings and so begins a chain of events connecting people whose paths would never normally cross. Airline pilot Tina hits a deer on her way to Heathrow, where a businessman awaits a call from his daughter who is about to conquer Everest. In famine-stricken Africa, Tina's husband tries to save a boy's life, while an American film crew looks on, hoping to capture a good story. It soon becomes clear that these various incidents, unfolding across the globe, are somehow linked.

Mortal Chaos begins with its own, quite literal, butterfly effect, quickly setting in motion a rollercoaster of events. From the outset the reader is hooked, wondering how the various characters will ultimately be connected. Short chapters create a pacy and thrilling read building to a dramatic finale. An imaginative page-turner that will appeal to younger teenagers.



Publisher: Oxford University Press

Reading age: 10+

Interest level: 13+

Everybody Jam

Written by Ali Lewis

This is an unflinching look at life on a cattle station in the Australian outback as a family tries to come to terms with the death of their oldest son from a horrific accident.

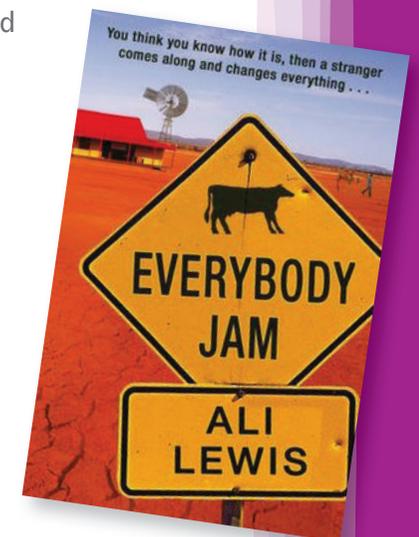
Set during a long, hot summer, the story is told from the perspective of Danny, the youngest son who is learning to live without his older brother and prove himself at the annual muster. His 14-year-old sister is pregnant, the father unknown, and the family recruits Liz, 'The Pommie' to help out in the house. Liz gets off to a difficult start adjusting to the Australian outback and its culture but soon befriends Danny and ultimately carries the family through life after tragedy.

This is an accomplished debut novel for older readers about a stranger arriving and turning everyone's life around. Told in Danny's distinctive voice you can really feel the heat, isolation and ignorance seeping from the pages.

Publisher: Andersen Press

Reading age: 12+

Interest level: 12+



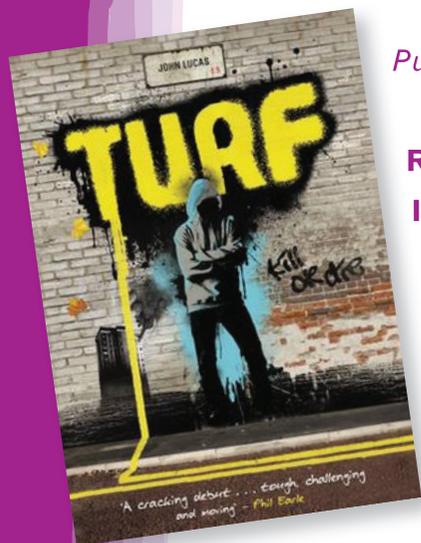
Turf

Written by John Lucas

Fifteen-year-old Jaylon is a member of the Blake Street Boyz gang. He carries a knife and spends his time defending his turf on the Hackney estate. That's how it is.

When gang leader Shads decides it's time for Jay to step up and join the Olders, his initiation involves stabbing and killing a rival gang member. Realising he is not entirely comfortable with the idea, Jay begins to question whether he has a choice.

This compelling story sheds light on the lives of a group of disaffected young people, for whom life is cheap and belonging to a gang is everything. It is about loyalty, love, making choices and living with the consequences. Containing sex, violence and strong language, this is a shocking and heartbreaking novel that will leave readers with plenty to think about.



Publisher: The Bodley Head

Reading age: 12+

Interest level: 14+

My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece

Written by Annabel Pitcher

Told through the eyes of ten-year-old Jamie, *My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece* sensitively tackles issues around grief, terrorism, racism and bullying.

We meet Jamie in the midst of his family falling apart after the traumatic death of his older sister Rose - her urn on the mantelpiece the only constant in an otherwise unsettling life. His mother leaves, his father turns to alcohol and faced with the daunting prospect of their new school in the Lake District, Jamie and his sister Jasmine are left to fend for themselves.

Making some unexpected friends along the way, Jamie and Jas muddle through in the way that only children can. *My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece* perfectly captures the world and its confusing issues from a child's point of view.

Publisher: Orion Children's Books

Reading age: 10+

Interest level: 12+



This is Not Forgiveness

Written by Celia Rees

A year after his brother, Rob's, death, Jamie contemplates Rob's ashes, hoping that retelling last summer's events might be cathartic. Wounded by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan, Rob was desperate to get back there, a rage inside him untouchable by therapy, cannabis or booze.

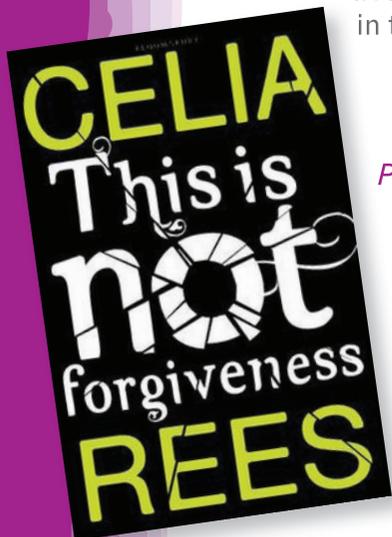
Meanwhile, Jamie was falling for Caro; notoriously bad, expelled from school, shunned by other girls, desperate to do something politically meaningful. Unaware, innocent, Jamie had no idea the two people he loved were so deeply damaged, or that he was entangled between them. He's still struggling to forgive them...

Painful and sad as Rob's and Caro's stories are, it's Jamie's unflinching honesty about his own naivety and about the depth of his deception that stands out in this hard-hitting, compelling novel.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 14+



Code Name Verity

Written by Elizabeth Wein

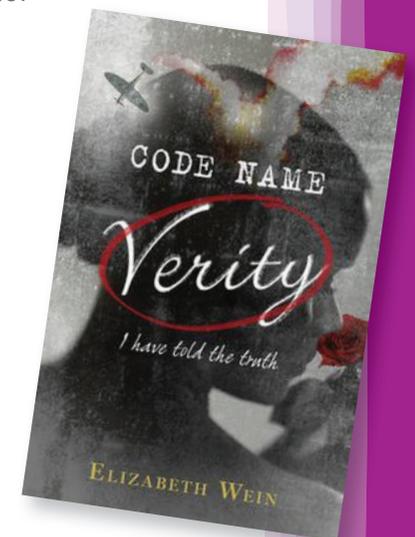
'It's like being in love, discovering your best friend' remarks a character in this tale of friendship, war and espionage. Two British girls from totally different backgrounds, form an unlikely and life-changing friendship when they are stationed together during World War II. Down-to-earth Maddie is a skilled pilot, while bold best friend Julie is from an aristocratic Scottish family – together, as Julie writes, they are 'a sensational team.' However, when Julie is captured by the Gestapo after a mission goes wrong in France, the girls' friendship is tested beyond anything they had every imagined.

This book makes compelling reading; scenes of Gestapo torture are interspersed with stories from the girls' experiences before the war, culminating in a tense and shocking ending. In turns touching and heartbreaking, this book will stay with readers long after they have closed the book.

Publisher: Electric Monkey

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 14+





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Published by Booktrust
Registered charity 313343
Registered office on back page
Registered number 210012
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Written and edited by Katherine Woodfine, Booktrust
Additional contributions from: Bridget Carrington,
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