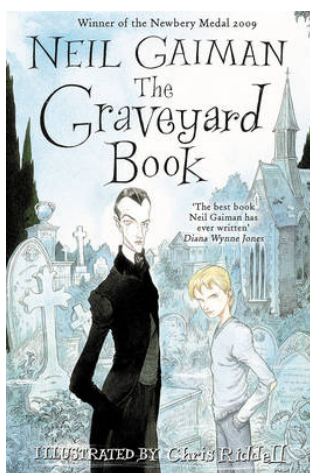


A selection of books especially selected for children in Year 6 (10 - 11 year olds) of average reading ability for the 2025/26 academic year.

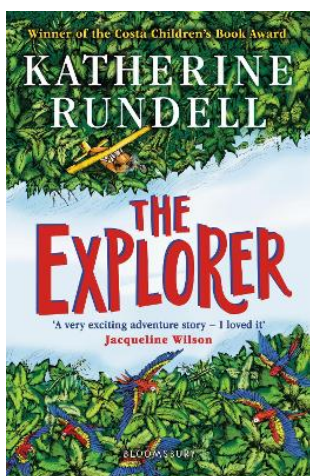
If your child is a competent reader or has read all these titles then try the books from the Year 7 list. Alternatively if these books are a little challenging try books from the Year 5 list. Our overall mission is to promote reading for pleasure with quality texts that are perfectly pitched for the age group and the curriculum. We have particularly avoided blockbusters, classic or set texts, known to everyone, so that we can include poetry, stunning information texts and inspirational books in which all children and young people can find themselves reflected.



The Graveyard Book

Author: Neil Gaiman **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/10/2009

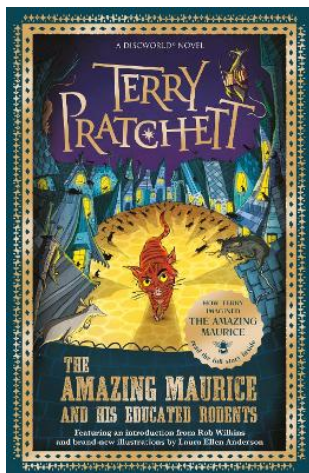
11+. Winner of the Carnegie Medal in 2010, shortlisted for the Kate Greenaway Medal in 2010, winner of Best Novel at the Hugo Awards 2009 and of the prestigious Newbery Medal. Spooks galore in this brilliant and fantastic story of life in the graveyard. When Baby Bod escapes a murderer intent on killing his whole family, he is taken in by the graveyard ghosts. In eight chapters, each of which depicts every other year of Bod's life, a separate story of Bod's life unfolds and always in the background there is the sinister, haunting presence of a killer. Bod's curious tale is a masterpiece of original, absorbing and unstoppable storytelling.



The Explorer

Author: Katherine Rundell **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/01/2018

After crashing hundreds of miles from civilisation in the Amazon rainforest, Fred, Con, Lila and Max are utterly alone and in grave danger. They have no food, no water and no chance of being rescued. But they are alive and they have hope. As they negotiate the wild jungle they begin to find signs that something - someone - has been there before them. Could there possibly be a way out after all?



The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents

Author: Terry Pratchett **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 26/04/2018

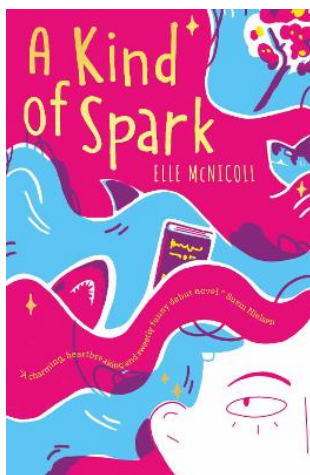
A Carnegie Medal winner that is the perfect introduction into the comic, yet thought-provoking, Discworld created by the late lamented Sir Terry Pratchett.



Beetle Boy

Author: M. G. Leonard **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/03/2016

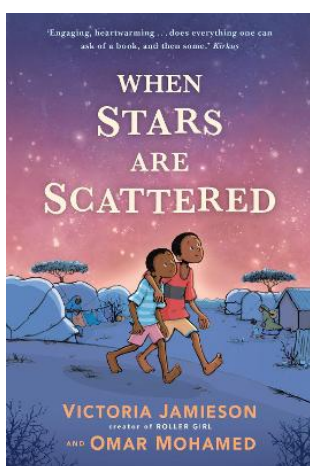
Winner of the Branford Boase Award 2017 | One of our Books of the Year 2016 | Shortlisted for the Children's category of the Books are My Bag Readers Awards 2016 | Longlisted for the UKLA 2017 Book Award and March 2016 Julia Eccleshare's Debut of the Month A rollicking adventure spiced up with fascinating information about beetles, this debut novel fuses science, survival and sleuthing! Darkus's life is turned upside down when his father goes missing. Darkus refuses to accept that his father is dead and he is determined to find out what happened for himself. Sent to stay with his uncle, he discovers the strange neighbours have a yard full of junk - and beetles. Darkus is befriended by a handsome, giant beetle who seems to understand Darkus and is also connected to his dad's disappearance. What is going on? And who is Lucretia Cutter, one of the best villainesses since Cruella de Vil? Books in The Battle of the Beetles Series: 1. Beetle Boy 2. Beetle Queen 3. Battle of the Beetles



A Kind of Spark

Author: Elle McNicoll **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/06/2020

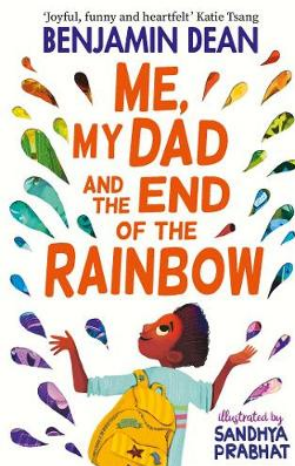
Shortlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2022 ages 7-10 | Winner of the Blue Peter Book Awards 2021, Best Story | Shortlisted for the 2021 Branford Boase | Award Shortlisted for the Little Rebels Award 2021 When 11 year old Addie, who is autistic, learns about the 16th century women who were persecuted for witchcraft, she starts to lobby for a local memorial in her small Scottish village. With the help of a new girl at school, she fights valiantly against injustice and oppression. The Branford Boase Award Judges said: 'Phenomenal'; 'I loved it'; 'brings a brand new voice into children's books'; 'deals with ideas of difference without being heavy handed'. Find out more about the Branford Boase Awards [here](#).



When Stars are Scattered

Author: Victoria Jamieson, Omar Mohamed **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/07/2020

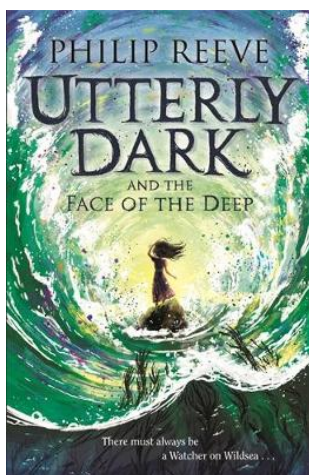
Shortlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2022 ages 7-10 Omar Mohammed spent his childhood at the enormous Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya after fleeing the war in Sudan with his younger brother, having seen their father killed and becoming separated from their mother. Eventually resettled to America, he was already working on his memoir for adults when he met the Newbery Honor winning author who persuaded him to turn his story into a graphic novel. This accessible format and the first-person narration create an intimate picture of a very real boy and what life in a refugee camp is really like. It importantly puts a face and a personality to the refugee crisis. We feel the hunger, the physical drudgery, the monotony and the frustrations, but also the sense of community, the love and support of friends and neighbours and the moments of joy and the passion for learning. Omar and his friends Jeri, Nima and Maryam all want to learn and aspire to escape to the West. The injustice of the lack of spaces for older children, of girls who are not allowed to study and of who gets selected for resettlement are unforgettably conveyed. The relationships between Omar and Hassan, his mute and damaged brother, and with Fatima who lost all her sons in Sudan but cares for them is beautifully and movingly portrayed. They never lose hope that they might find their mother and in the afterword we discover how that story turned out. Readers cannot help but develop empathy and compassion for people like Omar. This is an outstanding book that is truly engaging, educative and heart-breaking but ultimately a story of hope and doing the best you can. An essential purchase for schools.



Me, My Dad and the End of the Rainbow

Author: Benjamin Dean **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/02/2021

Longlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2022 ages 7-10 | March 2021 Debut of the Month | Selected for The Book Box by LoveReading4Kids 12-year-old Archie Albright is a character who instantly grabs the reader's attention with his natural, chatty narrative voice. His family is splitting up, he doesn't know why, and he knows there is something they are not telling him. After a disastrous parents evening and an overheard conversation, Dad has to finally confess to Archie that he is gay. Archie just wants everyone to be happy again. He desperately wants to understand and to help. His Dad drops a leaflet about the PRIDE march and Archie decides he will find all his answers there and luckily, he has two staunch friends who see all the pitfalls of this expedition but decide to help him anyway. Needless to say everything goes wrong! There are so many things to love about this splendid book. Every character, including the joyous cast of LGBTQ+ characters that they meet and are helped by on their adventure, rings authentically true. The dialogue is witty, but realistic, not played just for cheap laughs. But there is a lot of genuine humour in the situations the children find themselves embroiled in and a fair bit of nail-biting tension too! It is also so refreshing that this is not a story about overcoming homophobia- all the main characters are totally accepting of Archie's Dad's right to determine his sexuality, while not denying the pain that comes from family break up. It deals honestly with difficult emotions and conveys a strong message about empathy and tolerance. This is such a rewarding, positive and inclusive read that it deserves a place in every school and in every home.



Utterly Dark and the Face of the Deep

Author: Philip Reeve **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/09/2021

A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month September 2021 | September 2021 Book of the Month Award-winning author Philip Reeve is gifted at creating alternative worlds which feel both comfortingly familiar and thrillingly new and original. The watery landscape of the Autumn Isles does just that providing the backdrop for a gutsy and gusty story of powerful old magic, new-fangled science and the perennial battle for the critical balance of power between land and the sea. It is the setting for a roller coaster of a story with the survival of orphaned Utterly Dark, one of the most charming and feisty young heroines, at its heart. Washed up on the shore of the Autumn Isles, Utterly is rescued and adopted by Andrew Dark, the Watcher of Wildsea, whose job it is to keep the islands safe from the many dangers forces that threaten the land, in particular, the terrifying Gorm, a fearful sea dwelling creature who threatens the life of the Islanders. When her guardian drowns in curious circumstances, Utterly must maintain the watch until a new Watcher arrives. But the new Watcher is sceptical of

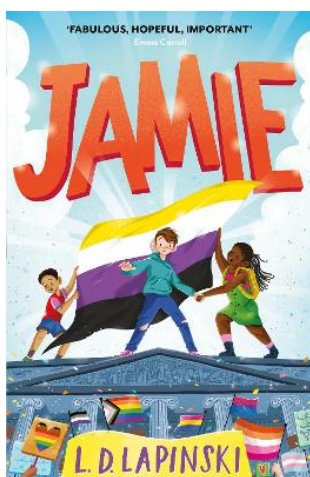
the old magic until his rash actions reveal the full power of the Gorm with almost fatal results. Can Utterly set the watery world of her home to rights?



Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun

Author: Tolá Okogwu **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 09/06/2022

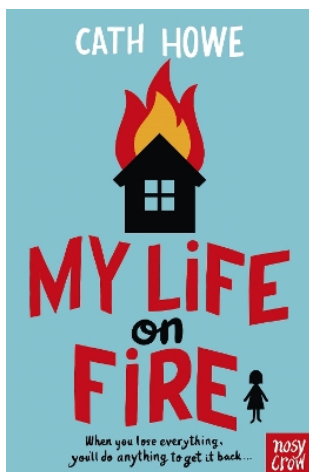
Longlisted for the Jhalak Children's & Young Adult Prize 2023 | Shortlisted for the Week Junior Book Awards 2023 | Shortlisted for the British Book Awards 2023 Black Panther meets Percy Jackson in this action-packed and empowering middle-grade series about a British-Nigerian girl who learns that her Afro hair has psychokinetic powers.



Jamie

Author: L.D. Lapinski **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 30/03/2023

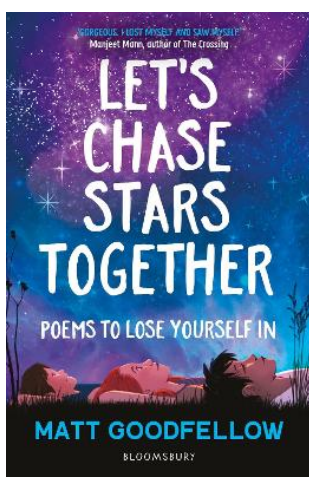
This book is a joy. I read it in one sitting; I couldn't put it down. I implore you and everyone you know, young and old to read this book. It's urgent. It's important. It promotes understanding and it's a beautiful read. Jamie Rambeau first told their secret to their best friend Ash in year 4. "I'm not a girl or a boy Ash. Don't use 'he' or 'she' when you're talking about me. Neither of them sound right. They're not...my words." Jamie was good until year 6 but they were about to find out that despite what they thought, not everyone else was happy with them. The gut punch was when they realised there was no place for them in secondary school. There was one school for boys and one for girls. But no place for Jamie. As they guide us through the words to use, and educate us on life under the rainbow flag, we see what it means for those who are non-binary. We see that it should be a joyous thing and that we should celebrate people discovering themselves. But it isn't. Jamie shares: "It doesn't take anything away from you or make your life more difficult making space for me. It doesn't mean you have to give up your seat." As Jamie finds their true self and finds ways to celebrate who they are, they find their voice and start to make a real difference. With their trusty friends by their side every step of the way. This book is a riot of rainbows, a celebration, an education, full of hope and heart and shows us that the world is full of possibilities if you have the courage.



My Life on Fire

Author: Cath Howe **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/04/2023

There can be no doubt that Cath Howe's teaching experience contributes to her ability to create such nuanced and believably real children in her stories and when she places them in difficult circumstances, the way in which they cope and learn and grow from their experiences has an undeniable aura of truth. The reader can empathise and learn alongside the characters they quickly become so grippingly concerned about. It can also be rare to find such multifaceted adult characters in children's fiction. It is so important for children to understand that adults are not perfect, can make mistakes but can also learn from them. Ren's home has burnt down, and her family have lost everything. They move in with her stern grandmother whose house rules are very different, and her parents are so wrapped up in insurance claims and trying to save their business that nobody notices how much Ren and her little brother are struggling. We see how Ren's distress provokes her to steal precious things from other people but although she feels compelled to do it, she is simultaneously wracked by guilt. The story's other narrator is a wonderful character called Caspar who talks and thinks and shares just a little more than is normal, which can be exasperating but his good intentions can never be doubted. Caspar is on the trail of the missing objects but also wants to help Ren. Is it possible to do both? This would make an excellent class read because of the complex moral choices and social issues the characters have to navigate and will really stimulate discussion. Like all her novels this is a primary library must-have.

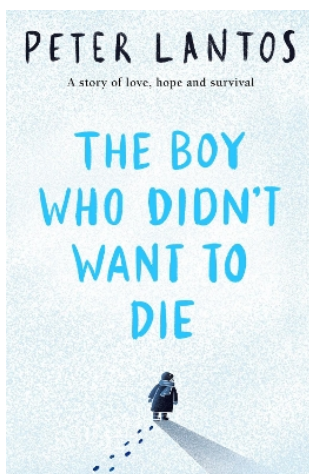


Let's Chase Stars Together: Poems to lose yourself in

Author: Matt Goodfellow **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 15/09/2022

October 2022 Book of the Month | Shortlisted for the CLIPPA 2023 Compassionate, thought-provoking, playful and poignant, Matt Goodfellow's Let's Chase Stars Together is a truly captivating collection of contemporary poems that will surely spark an infinity with poetry in even the most committed "I don't like poems" nay-sayers. With themes ranging from friendship, family life and fitting in, to growing up and anxiety, each and every poem has the power to chime with readers of 10 upwards, whether savoured in solitary moments, or in a lively classroom context. Many will prompt personal reflection, among them A Thought, in which the child narrator poignantly reveals how they wish "Mum's sadness/was a necklace/she could unclasp/from her throat", or Dig, Sid, Dig, a moving, loving tribute to a beloved pet dog. Then there are those that might spark deep discussion, such as First Class which tells of the time "Mum crossed his name out on the letter/and wrote/NOT AT THIS ADDRESS". Quite simply, this breath-takingly beautiful collection has tremendous emotional value — it's a true star

with long-lasting radiance.



The Boy Who Didn't Want to Die

Author: Peter Lantos **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/01/2023

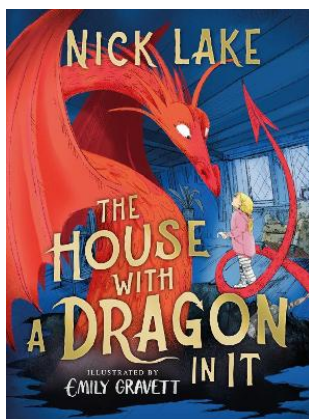
The Boy Who Didn't Want to Die by Peter Lantos is a remarkable, vital, and heartbreaking true story of a young Hungarian Jewish boy's experience during the Holocaust. It's not an easy read, but it is an important one. It is also one that manages to find hope even in the darkest places. ~ Katya Balen's Book of the Month, Guest Editor January 2023



Nic Blake and the Remarkables: The Manifestor Prophecy

Author: Angie Thomas **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/04/2023

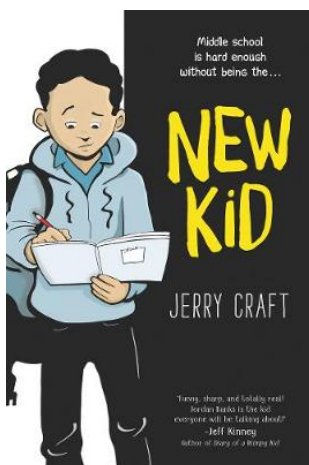
April 2023 Book of the Month The Manifestor Prophecy, the first book in Angie Thomas' keenly anticipated Nic Blake and the Remarkables series, is an exhilarating ride of super-charged family magic, friendship, African American history and fantasy adventure, with a wonderful heroine driving the action to overcome injustices. Sharing the inspirational message that power comes from within, it feels both fresh and timeless, and brings zing to the Middle Grade fantasy landscape. Nic has just turned twelve and been gifted a hellhound, Cocoa, for her birthday. She's also a Remarkable who lives with her dad in the Unremarkable world, which makes for a tricky existence. As a Remarkable and a Manifestor, Nic has powers she hopes to hone to become as special as her dad. As Nic explains, "although we Manifestors are born with the Gift inside of us, we still have to learn how to use it". And, as Dad explains, "nothing about any Black people started with slavery. For us Manifestors, the Gift was first given to our ancestors, the Wallinzi, in Africa". Moreover, as Nic's Uncle Ty shares, "The beauty of the Gift is that it helps us when we need it. It knew that our ancestors needed to fly and it helped them to do so". Through a speedily unfolding plot and escalating sense of peril, Nic is subjected to shocking blasts from her past as secrets come to light about her family. Why has her dad been lying, and who's stolen the magical Msaidizi, a powerful weapon that "changes form to be whatever the person it answers needs it to be"? When Dad is imprisoned for a crime he definitely didn't commit, Nic steps up to the plate and uses her gift to take flight, as her ancestors did before her.



The House With a Dragon in it

Author: Nick Lake **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 22/06/2023

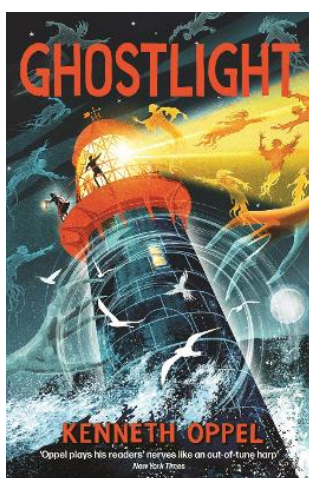
An adventure to treasure from two multi award-winning creators, discover a classic story of family, friendship and believing in your own magic. When Summer and her foster family are having lunch one day, a hole appears in the middle of the living room. That hole leads to a dragon and the promise of three wishes, granted by a very unusual witch. Summer wishes for popularity and plenty of money, and things are looking up . . . until she realizes that the hole in the floor is getting bigger and the witch is getting more sinister. As things begin to unravel, will Summer get her dearest most secret wish? Nick Lake's classic story of dragons, witches and wish-fulfilment is beautifully illustrated by Emily Gravett.



New Kid

Author: Jerry Craft **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 21/02/2019

Winner of the Newbery Medal, Coretta Scott King Author Award, and Kirkus Prize for Young Readers' Literature Perfect for fans of Raina Telgemeier and Gene Luen Yang, New Kid is a timely, honest graphic novel about starting over at a new school where diversity is low and the struggle to fit in is real, from award-winning author-illustrator Jerry Craft.



Ghostlight

Author: Kenneth Oppel **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 13/10/2022

Featuring authentic friendship dynamics, a thrilling race against time, and chilling atmosphere, Kenneth Oppel's Ghostlight is a great read for fans of fast-paced adventures with supernatural edge. In 1839 a lighthouse keeper and his daughter fall to their deaths from Gibraltar Point Lighthouse. This arresting opening scene takes place just after the keeper reveals he belongs to the Order, a secret society that dates back to the days of the ancient Greeks and the Alexandrian Pharos lighthouse, and exists to "stand guard over the night, to protect the living from the wakeful and wicked dead". So far, so gripping... This haunting historic story lives on in the contemporary world when teenage history-buff Gabe gives ghost tours of Toronto Island. Though he doesn't believe the tales he tells tourists, worlds and eras and collide when Gabe encounters Rebecca's ghost for himself. But hers isn't the only

spirit the island should be worried about, for it's also under threat from far darker forces. All of which makes for a rollercoaster ride that's resplendent with spirits from the past and latter-day heroes.



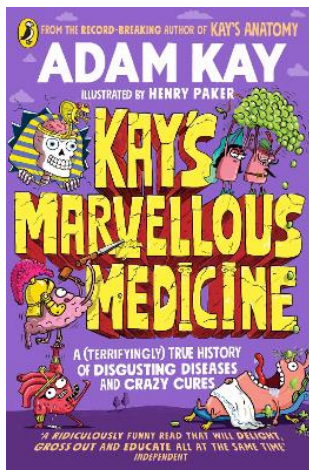
Swimming on the Moon

Author: Brian Conaghan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 16/02/2023

March 2023 Book of the Month | A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month February 2023

Faced with the collapse of their parents' marriage, twins Anna and Anto know that only one thing really matters to them: they must never be split up. It's a twin thing. Anna knows that whatever the differences between her and her brother Anto - and there are many including that Anto is autistic - they are each half of a whole and cannot manage without each other. Anna narrates the emotionally insightful and deftly told story of how she and Anto, two children facing up to their parents separating with a well-judged mixture of sad reality, tremendous warmth and relieving humour.

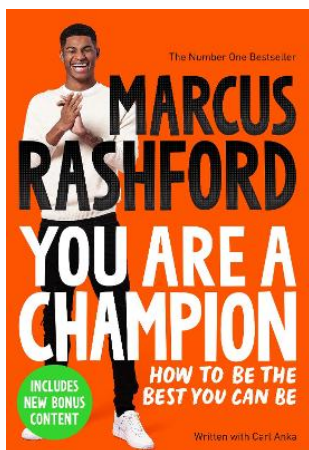
----- A review from Joanne Owen : We're huge fans of Brian Conaghan's wise, warm-hearted novels here at LoveReading, and *Swimming on the Moon* really does have the feel of a book that'll stand the test of time and become a pre-teen classic. Exploring how it feels to fear your parents are splitting up, and showing the beautiful bond between a compassionate twelve-year-old girl and her nonverbal autistic twin brother, it's moving, funny and utterly adorable. Anna's biggest fear is that her constantly arguing parents will split up and separate her from her twin brother Anto. Of course, as with all brother-sister relationships, there are times when he's annoying and frustrating, but Anna's patience and protectiveness, and her ingenuity at helping Anto communicate with Lego is gorgeous. She's proud of him too: "Anto gets to experience the world in a very unique way...He's not some secret to be locked in a box". Then, when Anna discovers her dance group is going to compete in Italy, she sees a bright light of hope. Her parents are never happier than when they're on holiday, so she just has to convince them all to go to romantic Rome. But with more surprises ahead, Anna digs deep to understand adults' baffling behaviour, all the while looking out for Anto. Fittingly, given Anna's love of the author, *Swimming on the Moon* is Judy Blume-level brilliant at evoking a 12-year-old's perspective on life, and through her we gain compassionate, wise insights into how Anto experiences the world.



Kay's Marvellous Medicine A Gross and Gruesome History of the Human Body

Author: Adam Kay **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 21/07/2022

Following the enormous success of Kay's Anatomy, this is another tour-de force of informational writing. Children will be rolling around with laughter at all the gags, including a scribbled commentary from Great Aunt Prunella, who does not approve of the author's obsession with farting and poo, and the hilarious comic strips and copious illustrations from the talented Mr Paker. But don't be fooled – they will be learning an enormous amount about how humans came to understand the workings of the human body and how to fix it when it went wrong. Kay obviously relishes the ridiculous theories that abounded from ancient times through to relatively recent history and the frankly bizarre and terrifying treatments that were developed, as well as having a sincere respect for the pioneers who took the science forward. There is a great Doctorography section at the end to remind readers of all the stories they have read in the course of chapters which look at different parts of the body as well as individual sections on Surgery, Infections and Genetics. Each chapter ends with a look at the Future and Adam's Answers where he explains facts and fallacies too good to miss out! The pioneers of medicine generally have a little feature Five Facts and A Lie about them, so the author is actively encouraging critical reading as he does with True or Poo fact boxes about some familiar misconceptions. He is also at pains to highlight the women who, despite being banned from medicine throughout most of its history nevertheless managed to innovate and discover. In a hugely enjoyable, page-turning read, this librarian particularly enjoyed the fact that the excellent index also contained jokes. Do see if you can spot them!



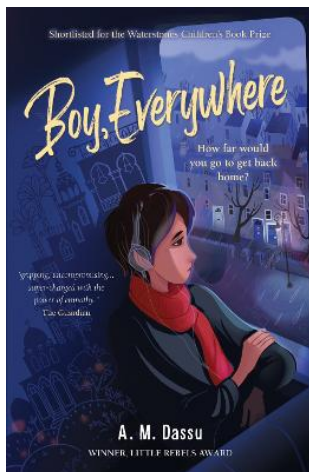
You Are a Champion

Author: Marcus Rashford, Carl Anka **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 27/05/2021

Winner of the British Book Awards 2022 Non-Fiction category

Dedicated to every young person who is trying to find their way and his mum for helping him to believe that dreams can come true, this is a motivational book by the man of the moment, the inspirational Marcus Rashford, and co-writer Carl Anka. It's a positive and inspiring guide for life, packed full of stories from Marcus's own life and calling for the readers to be their OWN champion, and that if they believe in themselves, incredible things can happen. With engaging black and white illustrations and infographics, it's a great book to inspire any child to be the best they can be. Marcus Rashford MBE is Manchester United's iconic number 10 and an England international footballer. His lobbying of the UK government during the pandemic made Marcus a household name, outside of sports fans, as he successfully lobbied a u-turn of their policy around free school meals. Before he became a global star, Marcus was just a young boy, an average kid from Wythenshawe in South

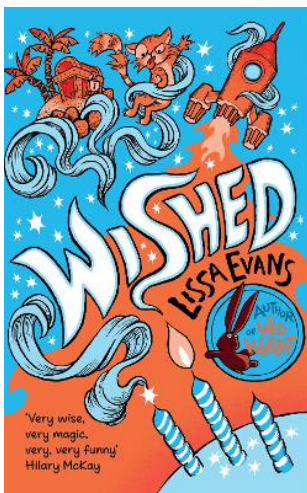
Manchester – with a dream. This book gives every child the tools they need to reach their full potential. With chapters covering everything from building your confidence to navigating adversity, finding your team, using your voice and stand up for other. And never stopping learning. With action points at the end of each chapter featuring brilliant advice and top tips from performance psychologist Katie Warriner, this is a practical guide for every child to believe that their dreams can come true.



Boy, Everywhere

Author: A. M. Dassu **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 22/10/2020

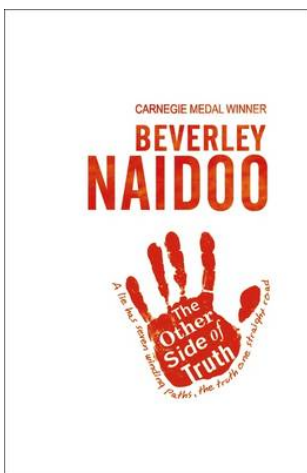
Longlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2022 ages 11-14 | Winner of the Little Rebels Award 2021 | November 2020 Debut of the Month Sami is a very ordinary 13-year-old boy, attending school, playing football, PlayStation and has his own iPad – the only thing different about Sami is that he lives in Damascus. As the war in Syria creeps closer, until a bombing of a local mall affects his family, everything has been good. Now Sami and his family have to leave their home, their friends and their beloved Jadda (grandmother) – not just to move to another town but to start a long and perilous journey to the safety of the other side of the world – to England. The journey, and therefore the story, are not for the fainthearted – Dassau tells the story of the journey, the fear and the privations authentically and we vividly share Sami's upset, anger and fear throughout every page. The portrait drawn of the family in such a stressed and frightening situation has the reader on the edge of their seat and pulling at our hearts all the way through. Written with a deep understanding and meticulous research into similar journeys this is a book that will not leave you for a very long time. The switches from adversity to hope to despair in Sami keep your heart in your mouth and is so realistic I was raging at the government for its inhuman treatment of desperate refugees. Read this book – it's needs to be in classrooms and on bookshelves everywhere – it will change you and stay with you.



Wished

Author: Lissa Evans **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 07/04/2022

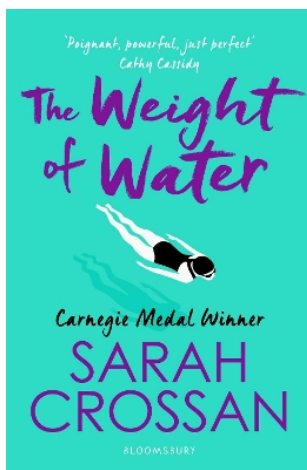
Ed and his sister Roo face an awful half term break when they unexpectedly must be looked after by their neighbour Miss Filey and her extremely smelly old cat! Nothing, it appears can save their break until they find some very old birthday candles which they and their new friend Willard decide to light and make wishes – like everyone does on birthday cakes! It turns out, though, that the wishes they get are not entirely their own and they must work together – including the smelly cat Attlee – who it turns out can talk – to solve the situations they find themselves in! All the elements are here for a series of adventures where our trio discover a huge amount about themselves – and Miss Filey – whilst surviving amazing escapades. Each person discovers a great deal about themselves, and about their friends as they explore, but have fun and laughter along the way. I was particularly pleased to see the way Evans writes the fact Ed is in a wheelchair as he has a condition which makes it hard for him to walk – the way this is handled makes a refreshing change. Ed is fiercely independent, and hates being discussed by others – which feels very authentic. All the characters are well drawn – even the adults, who in some books end up more like ciphers than people. This should most definitely be an instant classic – an overused term but one that is truly meant here. Buy it, read it – you will love it!



The Other Side of Truth

Author: Beverley Naidoo **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 27/04/2000

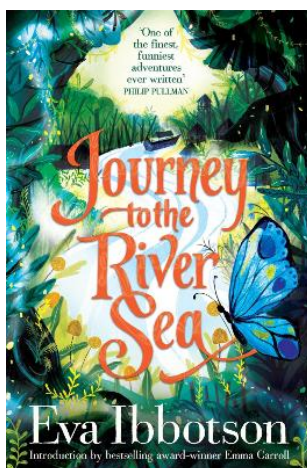
This is the story of 12 year-old Sade and her brother Femi who flee to Britain from Nigeria. Their father is a political journalist who refuses to stop criticising the military rulers in Nigeria. Their mother is killed and they are sent to London, with their father promising to follow. Abandoned at Victoria Station by the woman paid to bring them to England as her children, Sade and Femi find themselves alone in a new, often hostile, environment. Seen through the eyes of Sade, the novel explores what it means to be classified as 'illegal' and the difficulties which come with being a refugee.



The Weight of Water

Author: Sarah Crossan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/05/2019

The Weight of Water is a startlingly original piece of fiction written in verse; most simply a brilliant coming of age story. First love, friendship and quiet courage combine in this spare and beautiful story that will leave you sad, happy and wanting more from this fantastic new voice in children's fiction. It tackles the alienation experienced by many young immigrants. Moving, unsentimental and utterly page-turning, we meet and share the experiences of a remarkable 12 year old girl who shows us how quiet courage prevails. A truly special and remarkable read that should not be missed and, Bloomsbury the publisher has done a wonderful job on the book itself - the best things come in small packages - and this is absolutely no exception, so buy the physical book and not the ebook.



Journey to the River Sea

Author: Eva Ibbotson **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 13/05/2021

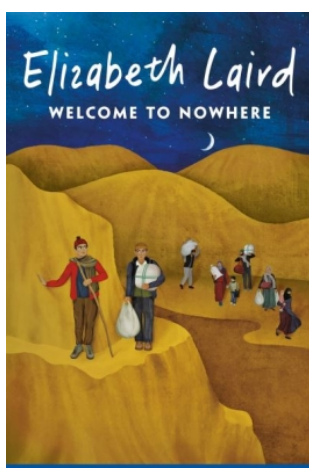
A gorgeous 20th anniversary edition of Eva Ibbotson's award-winning, bestselling classic adventure, with a beautiful cover by Katie Hickey and an introduction by award-winning author of Letters from the Lighthouse Emma Carroll. August 2013 Guest Editor, Lauren St John "To me, Eva Ibbotson is a genius. You can pick up any of her books - The Dragonfly Pool and One Boy and His Dog are also fantastic - and be guaranteed a good read. Journey to the River Sea is about orphaned London schoolgirl, Maia, who, accompanied by her strict but kind governess, is sent to live with her ghastly relatives in South America. Unlike her nature-phobic relatives, Maia loves her exotic, colourful new world. This is a journey of the spirit as well as the globe and the way Maia unfurls like a flower with each new adventure and encounter is one of the many reasons Journey to the River Sea is a classic. A warm, joyous book to be enjoyed by any generation." Chosen by Anne Fine as one of her favourite reads... 'A charming and magical adventure story that is full of wisdom, warmth and understanding. Orphaned Maia is sent off to stay with her relatives far, far away in the heart of the Amazon jungle. She's excited by the prospect of living such an inspiring place but soon finds that life with her twin cousins Gwendolyn and Beatrice is torture.'



The Light in Everything

Author: Katya Balen **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 19/01/2023

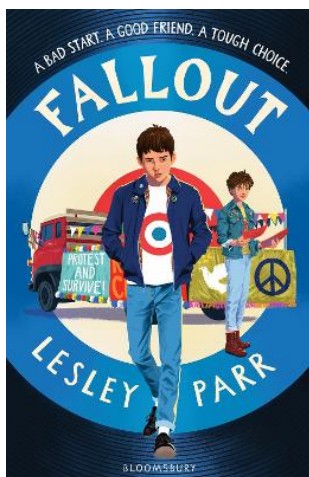
April 2022 Book of the Month | A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month April 2022 | Shortlisted for the Week Junior Book Awards 2023 | Winner of the UKLA Book Award 2023 ages 7-10 No two children could be more different than Zofia and Tom. Noisy Zofia lives happily with her dad as her Mum died when she was born. She buzzes with a wild energy that makes her irresistible but also something of a handful. Quiet, anxious Tom lives with his mum. He is full of fears largely caused by his scarily violent father who is now in prison. He longs to be more outgoing but doesn't know how to manage it. They are about to start living together and also to become half siblings to a new baby in a blended family that neither of them wants to be part of. Each tells their story in a series of contrasting short episodes that brilliantly capture their contrasting characters and their journey towards this enormous change in their lives. Katya Balen has a rare gift for understanding what it feels like to be a child and creating characters that reflect that that vividly.



Welcome to Nowhere

Author: Elizabeth Laird **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 30/05/2024

This is an excellent book for young people who want to know what is happening in Syria and why - serious, thoughtful, sympathetic to the ordinary people caught up in the war; in a highly readable story it gives a real insight into their lives, and how quickly they have changed from something very similar to our own, to something incomprehensible. Readers meet Laird's fictional Syrian family at the beginning of the civil war when life is good, particularly for her central character Omar, a young boy already dreaming of running his own business. But as protests against the government spiral into war, the family are forced from their house, then their country. Omar stays upbeat, even in their refugee camp where hope is in very short supply, a lively, reassuring narrator. Unlike his older brother, he's not interested in the protests, just wants things to be back the way they were; though the book ends with Omar, his mother and sisters escaping the refugee camp, we know that their lives have changed forever.



Fallout

Author: Lesley Parr **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 18/07/2024

July 2024 Book of the Month Lesley Parr is one of the most notable new voices in historical fiction and her new story sends readers back to 1980. The Jam were providing a soundtrack to the summer and people across the UK and beyond were protesting against nuclear weapons. The outside world, in the shape of Paul Weller at least, has infiltrated Marcus' conscious, the CND movement less so; his main preoccupation is navigating school and home life safely. The former is even less happy than it was since he fell out with his best friend, Jezza, and home is difficult for many reasons. His family show him little if any love, and their reputation as career criminals ensures that his neighbours regard him too with suspicion and outright hostility, whether he's done anything wrong or not. No wonder he tends to act up. New friendships with two very different people change his view of himself. First there's Mick, an old man with his very own nuclear bunker; then there's Emma, Marcus' age, newly arrived, 'shouty and political', a passionate member of the local peace group. A new understanding of himself brings Marcus' differences with his family into focus, with violent results. The oppressive atmosphere of a small town and the life-limiting threats of both nuclear war and society's expectations are balanced by a growing sense of freedom as Marcus starts to take decisions for himself. Setting, characters and themes of resilience and self-determination are depicted with assurance and skill and this compelling story should win Lesley Parr even more readers.



Moving On Up

Author: Rosie Jones **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 20/06/2024

June 24 Non-Fiction Book of the Month Although Rosie tells the reader at the beginning that there is no need to read the whole thing at once - just dip in and out to the sections you feel you need - if you do read it in a single sitting as I did, you come away feeling as if you have made a friend. For anyone facing a big change, such as starting secondary school, this is exactly the sort of friend you need on your side. Rosie has put so much of herself into this book, not just her personality, but recounting situations and experiences she has had and talking about the mistakes she made and how she dealt with them. She is so genuine, frank, funny, and wise that she cannot help but make a real connection with a reader. Young people always know when they are being talked down to or patronised and this is the polar opposite of that. The engaging illustrations and layout (each section is prefaced by suggested snacks and drinks to accompany reading as well as suggesting when it might be useful to read this part) ensure that this is a book which will be picked up and will instantly engage young readers. Obviously, Rosie does not claim to be an expert in any area and always suggests where you need to go for proper help, which is just what a good friend would do. I particularly like the little questions she asks of

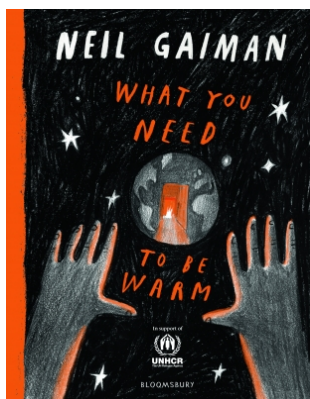
the reader throughout, in order to get them thinking in the right way about themselves. Dealing with friendships, bullying, social media, family, body confidence, puberty and first crushes and published at the perfect time for transition students, this deserves to be snapped up by schools and families everywhere.



The Final Year

Author: Matt Goodfellow **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 07/09/2023

Shortlisted for The Branford Boase Award 2024 | September 2023 Book of the Month A moving debut verse novel from this acclaimed poet introduces us to 10- year old Nate, “a week away from the end of Year 5”, showing us his streets, “not a place of labradors and lattes” and his people: brothers Jaxon, Dylan, his Mum, the missing fathers, Auntie San and PS, “ my best mate since I nicked his biscuit at nursery”. Nate tells us about The Beast too, the anger he struggles to keep under control. Complemented by Joe Todd-Stanton’s illustrations, these word pictures bring Nate vividly to life and throughout this powerful novel we share his innermost thoughts and can really connect with all the pain, anger and love that he feels. He is gutted to discover that he and PS will be in different classes in Year 6 and then during the summer, while Nate lives in the library, discovering a passion for David Almond books, PS is in Benidorm where he meets up with the neighbourhood bully Turner. When school begins again PS and Turner become inseparable. Nate’s lonely struggles and his love of reading do not go unnoticed by his exemplary teacher Mr Joshua, who introduces the class to Skellig and even gives Nate a special notebook and encourages his writing. Nate needs all the help he can get when Dylan nearly dies, but that trauma proves a cathartic healing process for both friends and family: “in the darkness we find our people”. We also see a beautiful demonstration of the power of reading. The similar themes of grief and families in crisis, to be found in Skellig, really help Nate to process what he is going through. Highly accessible, lyrical and life affirming, this is a must-have novel that will authentically resonate with so many under-represented children and perfectly captures what this crucial transition period feels like. As such, it is a must-read for adults as well as the children who will devour it. It will also resonate with children who have made that transition and perhaps help them with their own feelings, as well as encouraging them to write for themselves.



What You Need to Be Warm

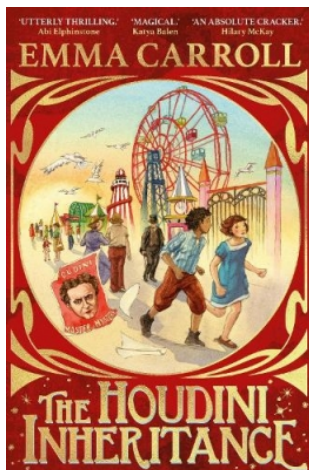
Author: Neil Gaiman **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 26/10/2023

A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month November 2023 Award winning author and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Neil Gaiman saw winter coming and wanted to draw attention to the struggle of many displaced families to keep warm. Asking for memories of being warm, Gaiman received thousands of replies: A baked potato; a blanket; iron radiators; thick gloves; a smile; a kind word and many many more. He turned them into a beautiful poem and invited some of the best illustrators in the world to create images to match the words. The result is a powerful and beautiful book that readers of all ages will return to again and again.

Safiyyah's War

Author: Hiba Noor Khan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/07/2023

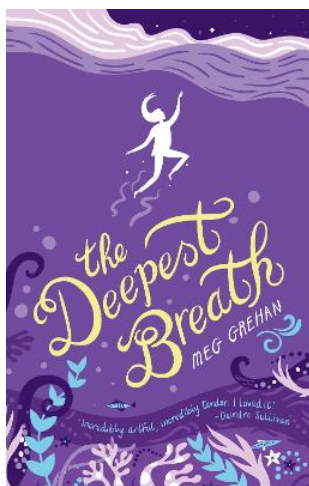
Shortlisted for The Branford Boase Award 2024 | Children's & YA Winner Jhalak Prize 2024 : | A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month August 2023 Richly imagined and vividly drawn, Safiyyah's War is brilliantly told by a young girl whose life is changed when she gets caught up in the French Resistance in Paris in World War Two. Growing up in the mosque, Safiyyah is an independent, adventurous and bookish child who spends a lot of her time in the library where her particular interest in maps is encouraged by the librarians. When news of the war comes to Paris, Safiyyah's life begins to change. She is sad when her best friend is taken away to live in the country by her parents and disappointed when the library no longer provides the welcome and support that it did. Worse follows when she sees terrible scenes of unhappiness and cruelty on the streets of Paris as Nazi soldiers attack her Jewish neighbours. But things really change when her father begins to keep secrets from her and to behave in very unexpected ways. What is her father hiding? When Safiyyah discovers his bravery and compassion as he and colleagues in the French Resistance work to save the lives of as many Jews as they can, she knows that she must do all she can to help, too. With a strong adventure to propel it this is a wonderful story of compassion and courage that illuminates how children's lives can be changed by the big events of history.



The Houdini Inheritance

Author: Emma Carroll **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/07/2024

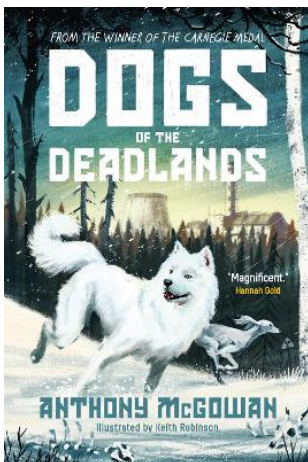
July 2024 Book of the Month Another wonderful historical tale from Emma Carroll. Set in 1926 and based on the larger-than-life story of Harry Houdini and his mysterious sudden death in 1926. Imbued with the spirit of the Vaudeville age, when audiences on seaside promenades and in theatres sat completely captivated by escape artists, magicians, clairvoyants and musicians, this is a compelling story. The wonderfully named Gloria Copperfield (Glory) and best friend Dennis, who is Houdini's greatest fan, grab the opportunity to see him perform in their quiet seaside town of Sidford by the Sea, but soon they are propelled into a greater adventure than they could ever have imagined. They find themselves assisting the great man when it becomes clear that someone is trying to steal his priceless secrets from the mysterious trunk No.8 and they end up on transatlantic trip of a lifetime accompanied by Denis's Gran and Glory's big sister Ettie. Can they help Bess Houdini preserve her husband's legacy? What family secrets will they discover on the way? Touching on some issues still very relevant to our times, like the racism Denis's family encounters or a same-sex relationship that is kept quiet for fear of it not being accepted and with vividly described settings, empathetic characters and an intriguing mystery, this is another absolute winner.



The Deepest Breath

Author: Meg Grehan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 09/05/2019

Stevie is eleven and loves reading and sea-creatures. She lives with her mum, and she's been best friends with Andrew since forever. Stevie's mum teases her that someday they'll get married, but Stevie knows that won't ever happen. There's a girl at school that she likes more. A lot more. Actually, she's a bit confused about how much she likes her. It's nothing like the way she likes Andrew. It makes her fizz inside. That's a new feeling, one she doesn't understand. Stevie needs to find out if girls can like girls - love them, even - but it's hard to get any information, and she's too shy to ask out loud about it. But maybe she can find an answer in a book. With the help of a librarian, Stevie finds stories of girls loving girls, and builds up her courage to share the truth with her mum. Written in accessible verse 'chapters' and in a warm and reassuring style, *The Deepest Breath* will be of special relevance to young girls who are starting to realise that they are attracted to other girls, but it is also a story for any young reader with an open mind who wants to understand how people's emotions affect their lives.



Dogs of the Deadlands

Author: Anthony McGowan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 07/09/2023

Shortlisted for the Week Junior Book Awards 2023 Being published at a time when Chernobyl and the Ukraine have very much been in the news again makes this remarkable story resonate even more powerfully. While it does not go into any detail about the 1986 nuclear disaster itself, that looms oppressively over scenes which can be heart-breaking and brutally realistic. Animals frequently bear the brunt of human disasters, and it is well documented that soldiers were sent to dispatch abandoned pets and livestock. So initially the story is of a young girl Natasha being torn away from her beloved puppy Zoya, when she is forcibly evacuated. Natasha's life is emotionally blighted by this loss, as we see in chapters interspersed with the heart of the story which is of how Zoya survives in this fierce, cold and terrifying landscape where it is not just predators she has to fear. She makes it in the wild, mating with a wolf and raising two cubs, Misha and the radiation damaged Bratan and when she is finally killed in a battle with a lynx the story becomes theirs. Brilliantly told, full of naturalistic details and completely nonanthropomorphic but entirely relatable descriptions of pack dynamics, attachments and characters, this is a totally gripping survival story. Dog lives run a shorter span and when, after 20 years have passed since she left, Natasha returns to the blighted area as a scientist studying radiation levels, it is a very elderly Misha that satisfyingly and credibly completes the circle of both story strands. An unforgettable and moving novel that can genuinely stand up to comparisons with Call of the Wild and deserves similar classic status.

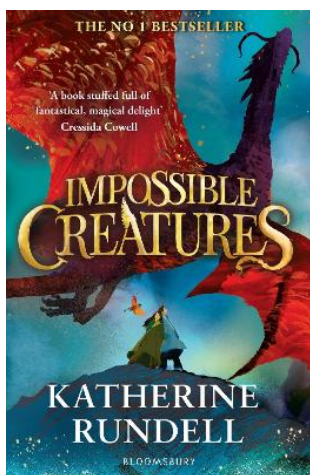


The First Year

Author: Matt Goodfellow **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 10/04/2025

April 2025 Book of the Month Nate is leaving the safe and colourful world of primary school and starting secondary school – alongside his best friends, Caleb and PS, he is a mix of nerves and excitement. And with new friends, old bullies and strict teachers on the horizon, there are challenges ahead, especially when someone he thought was gone forever reappears... There is always a slight trepidation to be found when opening a highly anticipated book, and there are few books more highly anticipated than this sequel to Goodfellow's phenomenal The Final Year. Loved by young readers, teachers and awards judges alike, expectations were high for The First Year. Happily, Goodfellow more than delivers and continues Nate's story with his trademark clever verse style and nuanced characters. Just as The Final Year beautifully encapsulated the monumental feeling of upcoming change brought by finishing primary school, The First Year perfectly captures the excitement and anxiety of suddenly being a small fish in a big pond. As an ex-teacher and still a regular visitor to schools, Goodfellow writes

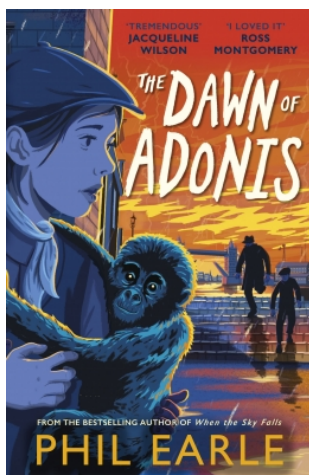
with the knowingness of someone who really understands their setting and characters. From the differences between stark, display-light secondary corridors and the bright halls of primary schools, to the fresh focus on future academic achievements that Year 7 brings – Nate’s new school is so realistically drawn that as a reader we walk through its doors beside him. Nate continues to be a wonderful character, somebody that the reader truly empathises with and roots for. As he struggles to find his feet whilst stood on shifting sands and determines to prove he is not the “kind of kid” some of his new teachers appear to have written him off as, his defeats become our defeats and his pain ours. The First Year sensitively portrays a section of society not often represented in children’s books, as well as being proudly and boldly northern, in it we see a family living with very little money. But poverty is not presented here as a dreadful and sad thing, for Nate it is his normal, everyday life, and that is how we as readers experience his family life. With an estimated 30% of children in the UK living in poverty, this is important representation and countless young people will undoubtedly see their daily realities reflected in Nate’s. Once again Goodfellow demonstrates a huge talent for capturing nuanced and universal experiences, and breathing life into them.



Impossible Creatures

Author: Katherine Rundell **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 29/08/2024

October 2023 Book of the Month Brimful of ideas, award-winning Katherine Rundell’s epic adventure is set in a world that joyfully and provocatively stretches the imagination as Christopher and Mal, two children with exceptional futures, explore the secret and mysterious world of the Archipelago where mythological creatures, sometimes benign but frequently savage, still live. Mal’s destiny propels the course of their thrilling and desperate sea voyage on which so much of the future of the world depends while Christopher’s special qualities are also a mark of the vital role he is to play in it too. Both have skills of strength and insight on an heroic scale especially with regard to caring for and understanding the special qualities of all living creatures – including trees. And both are readily recognisable from other fantasy epics such as Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* and Ursula Le Guin’s *Earthsea* sequence. With her fabulous new bestiary of wondrous creatures with curious confluences of physical and psychological characteristics Katherine Rundell has created a new mythology which is simultaneously crammed with her own innovative ideas and packed with references to other mythologies and imaginary worlds.



The Dawn of Adonis

Author: Phil Earle **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/06/2025

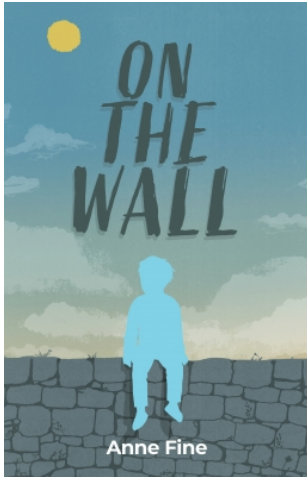
June 2025 Book of the Month One always has a frisson of anxiety when about to embark on a sequel, or in this case prequel, to a much loved and admired book. Will this live up to the excellent *When the Sky Falls*? But really, I was foolish to worry! With Phil Earle you are in very safe hands, and I have to say he has absolutely excelled himself with this powerful, evocative historical adventure. The opening chapter is a masterclass in how to hook a reader; we are deep in the jungle, with ruthless hunters wanting to capture a gorilla and then horrified by the heartbreaking failure of the silverback, who died trying to rescue what we realise later must have been his mate. Then we are immediately immersed into the grim London Docklands in the early 1900's, the destination for the gorilla, who is a rare and exotic animal with a large price tag. We also begin to meet the human characters who will be indelibly ingrained in our minds and weave their way into our hearts. Goliath Deeds is a magnificently terrible villain who has plans to rival Charles Jamrach (an actual historical figure) as a purveyor of exotic animals. We also meet Toff Squabble, an orphan taken from the workhouse by Deeds, who claims to be his uncle. We are not sure what side Toff is on at first. Is he a villain too? Then we meet Nettie and her veterinarian father somewhat unwillingly dragged by Toff to attend a very abused and neglected gorilla giving birth. Nettie is a wonderful, brave, indomitable character who will not contemplate any animal suffering, and she is still grieving for her mother and baby brother who did not survive childbirth. This adds such a poignant element to what turns into a perilous pursuit of Nettie and Toff and the baby gorilla they are trying to save, Toff has definitely joined the right side by this point, with Nettie's compassion and bravery bringing out the best in him. It is almost unbearably tense as the peril seems very real for them all. This is a magnificent, well researched and entirely immersive, can't-put-it-down reading experience, with a deft weaving of character's back story with fast paced action. There are some challenging themes of loss, grief, abuse, greed, oppression and death that are ripe for discussion, so this would make a wonderful class read, as well as one that will be passed from reader to reader. We can only conclude that it is no wonder that *Adonis* captured our heart in *When the Sky Falls* when his life had such a shattering start. Simply brilliant!



Shrapnel Boys

Author: Jenny Pearson **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 08/05/2025

May 2025 Book of the Month While this extraordinary historical novel is a new departure for this best-selling author, it retains her trademark skill in delivering empathetic, nuanced characters and capturing authentic dialogue and childhood relationships. Perfectly published to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the end of World War 2, this gripping story is about the lives of a group of young boys living in London at the start of the war. 12 year old Ronnie, his younger brother Micky and his best friend Lugs are the self-styled Shrapnel Boys, full of banter and bravado, especially with their rival gang, the Wreckers. Initially, the prospect of war is incredibly thrilling with spotting planes overhead and collecting the fascinating 'hard rain', the pieces of shrapnel littering the ground, and having a bomb site for a den. The reality of the danger all around them doesn't really sink in at first and for Ronnie when it does, it is not just the danger overhead, but the danger threatening his family, in the shape of Johnny Simmons, that matters. Johnny came to install their Andersen shelter and wheedled his way into the affections of Ronnie's single parent Mum and of Micky, who is lured into running suspicious errands. Ronnie and Lugs are convinced that Johnny is a Bad 'un but are shocked to discover his potentially traitorous links with the Mosley Blackshirts, particularly because Lugs is Jewish. Can they expose Johnny and the plot before it is too late? What makes this novel so outstanding is not just the depth of research behind it and the authentic view it gives of the Home Front and the terror of the Blitz. Nor is it just the challenging themes which it articulates so well: domestic violence, bullying, crime, fascism, pacifism, coercion and toxic relationships. It is also the way it portrays such a beautifully positive view of boys friendship and the unbreakable bonds of brotherly love. With extremism rearing its ugly head again, it tells a story very relevant to today and shows us the importance of moral integrity and doing the right thing. Perhaps even more remarkably there is still the pure gold streak of Jenny Pearson humour running through it all. Truly outstanding,



On the Wall

Author: Anne Fine **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/10/2024

September 2024 Book of the Month When someone has written more than seventy books, as Anne Fine has done, you don't think you're going to open something as surprising and different as *On The Wall*. This is a book about the transition to secondary school but it's not the usual story of struggles to fit in or difficulties with home life. There's a teacher but he's not a 'hero', there are friendships but they aren't defined by their challenges, there are the pressures of new expectations and of growing up, but they aren't arduous or insurmountable. This is a different kind of story. The main character is Finlay who is remarkable only because he is "happy absolutely everywhere, all the time" and who finds his place in his new school, literally on the wall. Finley has the ability to just be - mostly on the wall. He is totally accepting of himself and the interest in the story comes from how others (adults and other children) learn to 'be' through his example. Only a writer as skilled and talented as Anne Fine could build an entire book around a central character who is totally mindful, calm and without drama. The beautiful prose is very, very readable and hard to put down. This is an unusual book that is written by someone who seeks to observe and understand children. It is such a refreshing and delightful read and would be a wonderful book for any child about to embark on their secondary school journey.
