

A selection of books especially selected for children in Year 7 (11 - 12 year olds) of average reading ability for the 2026/27 academic year.

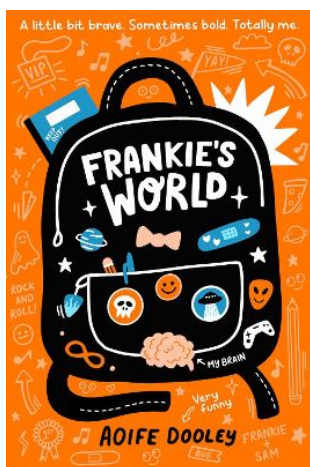
If your child is a competent reader or has read all these titles then try the books from the Year 8 list. Alternatively if these books are a little challenging try books from the Year 6 list. Our overall mission is to promote reading for pleasure with quality texts that are perfectly pitched for the 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.



When the Sky Falls

Author: Phil Earle **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/06/2021

A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month June 2021 | Winner of the British Book Awards 2023 Fiction Book of the Year | Shortlisted for the Yoto Carnegie Medal 2022 | Longlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2023 ages 7-10 Chosen by our Guest Editor for May 2023, Jacqueline Wilson, as one of her must-reads - "This story about a fierce lonely boy and his bond with a huge gorilla called Adonis is exceptionally moving." No wonder he is angry! Bombs are raining down on the city that Joseph is sent to as an evacuee. And anyway, who came up with the stupid idea that he should live with Mrs F. who doesn't even like children! He knows he should just run away but where would he go? Instead, he finds himself inexorably drawn into Mrs F's life and the zoo and the animals she is fighting to keep safe - in particular, Adonis, the powerful silverback gorilla. Every night when the bombs fall, Mrs F rushes to the zoo. She risks her life to be with her animals safe knowing that, if the very worst happens and the zoo is bombed she will have to take exceptional and radical action. Will she be brave enough? And would Joseph be? In this deeply moving story of Joseph's journey of self-discovery Phil Earle not only tells a brilliant story of a child's emotional development but also added an important and true dimension to World War 2 stories.

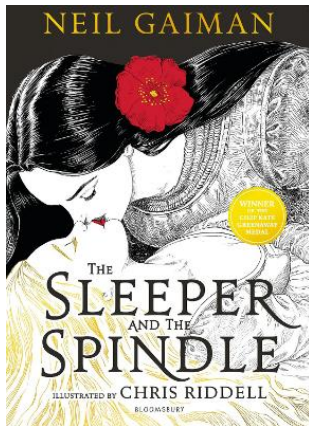


Frankie's World

Author: Aoife Dooley **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/01/2022

Winner of the Week Junior Book Awards 2023 - Children's Illustrated Book of the Year Dooley is an Irish autistic author and illustrator who writes with authority, empathy and humour about the world as viewed by Frankie. Frankie believes she is an alien; she is the smallest person in her class - and she is accused of talking too much! But really all she is different - neurodivergent, though it is not until nearly the end of the book that Frankie gets an insight into why she views things differently. Frankie's Dad left when she was a baby and she, with friend Sam, decide to track him down. I found it refreshing that Sam is wheelchair bound but that no reference is made to this. This book so easy to relate to - the world from a child's point of view is such a confusing place - but this helps us all see how it may be even more confusing if one's reactions are different from other people. Plus, if we

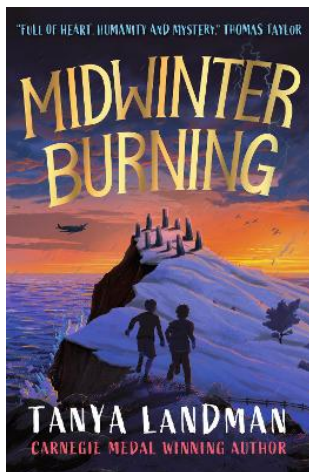
all give time and some empathy, we may be in a better position to befriend and understand. This sounds as if the book is preaching to us – it is most definitely not – it is a delight to read - funny, sympathetic, and ultimately uplifting. Drawn in a very simple two-colour cartoon style it should be easily accessible across a range of readers. Highly recommended for all readers offering perspective on autism whilst maintaining care and affection for the protagonists.



The Sleeper and the Spindle

Author: Neil Gaiman **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 14/11/2019

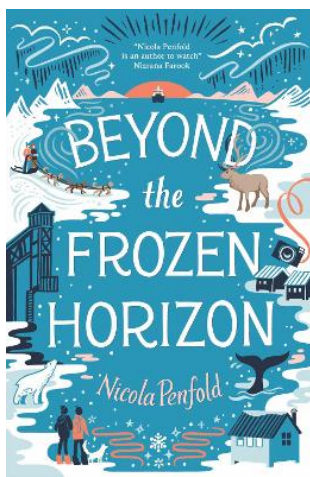
Winner of the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal 2016 Award-winning Neil Gaiman shows all his story telling skills in this gripping fusion of familiar fairy tales told in a dark-hearted version with some original characters. Especially a bold-hearted queen. Not far from where the queen lives, a princess is under the spell of an enchantress who has put a whole country to sleep. Despite it being the eve of her wedding day, the bold queen decides to take action. Slipping into her mail shirt she arms herself with her sword and sets off out of the palace accompanied by the three dwarves who will lead her through the tunnels...The dark magic, great courage and spell-binding imagination that power this story is perfectly realised in Chris Riddell's awesome illustrations.



Midwinter Burning

Author: Tanya Landman **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/11/2022

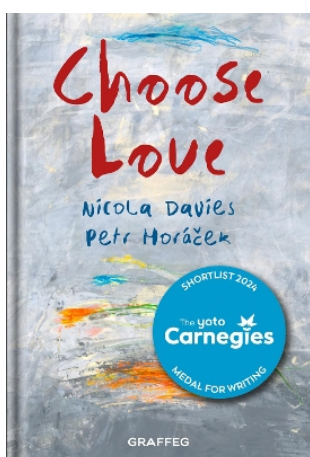
Landman is a prize-winning author who writes about a wide range of topics in an accessible, engaging way for many different age groups. This book looks at the story of Alfie Wright – evacuated at the beginning of the war from an unhappy home life things can't be any worse for Alfie - wherever he ends up being placed. Happily, gentle Auntie Bell, who runs a farm in rural Devon, is welcoming and caring. Her son is a giant of a man, a little intimidating, he is a taciturn though accepting presence. As Alfie settles amongst the cows and geese on the farm – and becomes accustomed to the work and the ways of his charges – he is the happiest he has ever been in his short life. The war seems a long way away. Life gets even better when he makes friends with Snidge. But is Snidge exactly as he appears – or is he mysteriously connected to the Midwinter Burnings that usually take place in the standing stones? Auntie Bell says the burnings are a bit of superstition – but Snidge seems to be threatened by them. Can Alfie help him, or is his fate sealed? This is a fascinating, engaging timeslip novel with a dual narrative that shows us life as an evacuee and through ancient history. The landscape is vividly described adding layers of interest to the tale. Excitement, fear, and horror make this a page turner that will keep readers engrossed to the very end.



Beyond the Frozen Horizon

Author: Nicola Penfold **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/09/2022

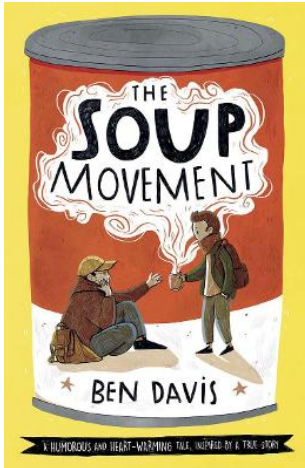
September 2022 Book of the Month This enthralling, atmospheric story once again demonstrates the author's ability to brilliantly weave memorable characters and interesting, relatable family dynamics with strong environmental themes, genuine peril, nail biting tension and wonderfully evoked natural settings. Set in an almost hopeful 2030 where humanity has taken great leaps to avoid climate disaster, passing Universal Climate laws and creating Wilderness Zones to save wildlife and absorb carbon, but one where the recovery is still all too fragile. Rory accompanies her mother, an environmental geologist, to the Arctic Wilderness Zone to approve Greenlight's plans to extract from there the rare earth metals which will be used for 'clean' transport and technology. They discover a tiny, remote community, which is fascinatingly based upon the real Pyramiden in Svalbard, left behind when traditional mining ceased. These forgotten people live in harmony with their harsh, dangerous yet beautiful environment and its precious wildlife, but many are now becoming increasingly suspicious about Greenlight's activities. Isolated and ignored by the locals, Rory experiences physical dangers and unsettling supernatural events before she teams up with local boy Mikkal and in a dramatic and tense conclusion, they have to uncover and reveal the truth of what is going on to her mother and the world authorities before it is too late. The way in which the author demonstrates corporate greed, human selfishness and a lack of respect for the wilderness gives the reader lots of food for thought and really raises awareness of corporate 'greenwashing' techniques. Another brilliantly told and highly effective wake-up call to all of us to protect the world around us before it is too late.



Choose Love

Author: Nicola Davies **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 22/11/2022

Highly Recommended, CLIPPA 2023 Choose Love is a cycle of poems that highlights the experience of those forced to become refugees. The core of the collection was written in 2018 as part of a project with the charity Refugee Trauma Initiative. With the permission of both individual refugees and aid workers, RTI shared with Nicola a number of true and poignant stories which were then used as the basis for short-form poems. Over the following years Nicola added to this core of poems to create a coherent collection on the theme of forced migration, its wider causes and consequences.

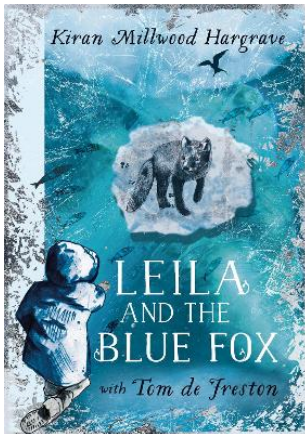


The Soup Movement

Author: Ben Davis **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/08/2020

Longlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2022 ages 7-10 |

Shortlisted for the Little Rebels Award 2021 A thirteen-year-old boy in remission from cancer moves to a new town. When he gets some chips for lunch, he gives the soup his mother had made to a homeless man and so sets in motion a growing trend of acts of kindness.



Leila and the Blue Fox

Author: Kiran Millwood Hargrave **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 29/09/2022

Shortlisted for the Week Junior Book Awards 2023 Based on the true story of an Arctic fox who walked from Norway to Canada in seventy-six days, a distance of two thousand miles, this compelling, emotional and beautifully illustrated story is the perfect gift for 9+ readers.

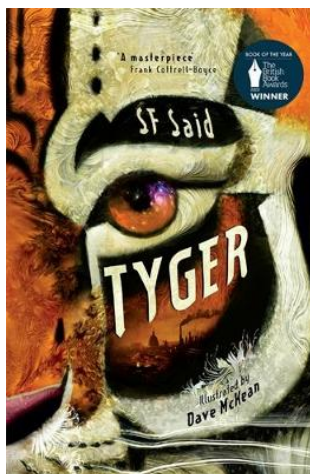


Wolfbane

Author: Michelle Paver **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 10/11/2022

Michelle Paver's *Wolfbane* is a magnificent feat of fiction that may well spark mixed feelings among fans of the Stone Age series that began with *Wolf Brother*. It's a satisfyingly thrilling, beautifully-written adventure but, given that this is the last book in the series, readers might be left with a sense of loss alongside that satisfaction, such is the power and pull of these books. "Prickling with desire, the Demon pushes off on its long bone skates and sweeps downhill." The Demon is watching and waiting, set on claiming Wolf. Around them, Torak and Renn recognise signs of the Demon — a young birch tree "wantonly slashed"; the rotting body of an otter. As Torak knows, "Only a demon kills without reason", and so he and Renn find themselves in a race against time to save their brother, facing perils on land and sea as the Demon advances at a time "when the world teeters on a knife edge between winter and spring, good and evil, life and death." In good news for new generations of readers who've yet to discover the *Wolf Brother*

books, like its predecessors, *Wolfbane* can be enjoyed as a standalone story that will draw them into an unforgettable realm of wild nature and stormy magic. These are books to be thrilled by, to savour, and return to. Stories that reward repeat reads, and blaze with the raw power of story-telling and the magic of unbreakable bonds.



Tyger

Author: S F Said **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 07/09/2023

October 2022 Book of the Month | Shortlisted for the Week

Junior Book Awards 2023 Chosen by our Guest Editor for May 2023, Jacqueline Wilson, as one of her must-reads - "He's written about cats in his Varjak Paw stories. This is a novel in an alternative world about two children and a huge mythical Tyger - it's brilliant." This is a dark and magical story about two children who find a mythical creature - a Tyger - in a rubbish dump in London - set in the near future of the 21st Century. An altered, dark London, where the Tyger is in danger and our protagonists Adam and Zadie are driven to save the Tyger, and in the process save London too. This is a book that looks at spirituality, and ideas of community, whilst the Tyger teaches Adam and Zadie about the sheer wonder of the universe, of nature and about interpersonal relationships. The Tyger helps the children find all their hidden skills and courage and release it all to fight against the awfulness in their world. It is unique book full of adventure, joy and hope in this thrilling read. It is written in a careful, almost distilled down text that fills the reader with hope. Complemented by wonderful black and white illustrations from Dave McKean this will become a classic in the same way as the author's *Varjak Paw* has - and be taught in many classrooms. It is a book designed for readers of 9 to 99 who enjoy escaping into other worlds. Much anticipated and destined to be a classic that will be shared and enjoyed everywhere.



Six Weeks

Author: Matt Goodfellow **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/06/2026

June 2026 Book of the Month Following on from his award-winning success with *The Final Year* and its sequel *The First Year*, and in partnership again with illustrator Joe Todd Stanton, Matt Goodfellow has written another breathtaking verse novel, which I think is his best work yet. I have always described the power of verse novels as 'mainlining emotion'; with each carefully placed word you are drawn completely into the character's heart and mind. The opening suggests that Alfie Piper is writing this himself as a means of trying to understand his life, which changed so dramatically when his mum died of pancreatic cancer just two weeks after her diagnosis. Alfie warns the reader 'you might need to take a breath' before he describes what has happened. The intensity of his grief and that experience is symbolised by the black

pages the heartbreaking words are written on. Black is used very effectively in another way. After the funeral, Alfie insisted that he wanted to live with his dad, Sophie and baby Alice born the day after his mum's death, and not him, his mum's partner, whose references are always in bold to signify Alfie's long-standing animosity towards his stepfather. The book then moves on to the beginning of the next summer holidays, the titular six weeks, during which he will have to face the anniversary. Alfie has a lot to contend with - understanding why his parents split up, why his Gran is so difficult and why she has not contacted him since the funeral and why his mum chose him. He understands only too well why his friends have disappeared 'Fun isn't being the kid who's got the dead mum,' but he knows that he has pushed them away. Week by week and verse by verse we follow Alfie's emotional journey towards some light and hope in his life and to a moving reconciliation, just as his mum had begged him, to Chris; whose first naming by Alfie is incredibly poignant. This is a masterful, subtle and utterly authentic portrayal of grief in all its complexities and differences for different people. As Alfie begins to understand the full back story of the people in his life, there is room for him to find some peace and to be able to move on. Truly outstanding, this is a moving and unforgettable read.



Windrush Child

Author: Benjamin Zephaniah **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/11/2020

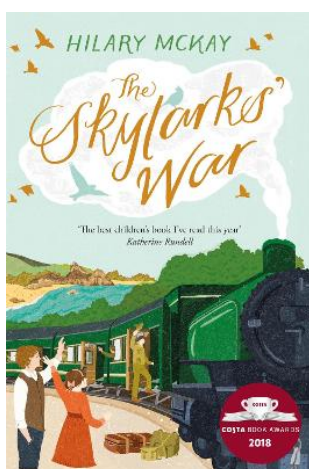
This novel, by Birmingham born poet Zephaniah, is the fifth book in the Scholastic Voices series - highlighting the situation and stories behind the myriad of people who have arrived from all over the world to the UK. Leonard's father is one of the many Jamaican born men who came to Britain at the request of the UK government to help rebuild the country after the second World War. So, when Leonard and his mother arrive in Southampton the 10-year-old had to get to know a father he barely remembers and learn to live in a climate, both physical and social, that was alien to him. This is a carefully written account which does not shirk from exploring the society and the racism that Leonard encounters in his school and in being a part of 50's and 60's society in Manchester - where Leonard's father was a bus driver. It's aimed at KS2 children and the language, plus seeing everything through Leonard's often confused eyes makes it a valuable lesson for children to read. The book takes Leonard's story to the present day where he is one of the Windrush generation who now struggle to prove his right to be in the UK - making this a strong story on which to base vital lessons on the morality of government policies. Highly recommended.



Be Resilient: How to Build a Strong Teenage Mind for Tough Times

Author: Nicola Morgan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/07/2021

This is a book that was inspired by the issues teens were facing as a result of the lockdowns and lack of contact with peers and school. Nicola Morgan, known for her no-nonsense very approachable way with incredibly difficult and important subjects for teenagers set herself the task of writing this very readable guide to growing their own resilience. The pandemic was not a situation any one person could control – but this book sets out lots of strategies for dealing with whatever the world throws at you – be it pandemic, personal crisis, or just navigating that difficult time we call teenage! The book is arranged into five specific areas that will work in different combinations for individuals. Not every reader will need every section, but there is definitely something in here for everyone. Reading this book will give everyone a set of tools – whether to build your personal network, or in coping strategies or other areas with an approach that uses character studies, simple activities, as well as giving lots of space and time for reflection on what has been read. Knowing Nicola is an expert on the teenage brain and mental health you know the subject is well researched and based on the latest scientific research. The topic I had not encountered before in any other book was the idea of ‘heartsong’ and knowing what your heartsong is. Heartsong is defined by Nicola as a feeling of joy, of satisfaction, of fulfilment, of happiness – different from well-being – a positive emotion just for the individual. It’s the ‘I’m glad I did that’ of life. I’m glad I read this – and I know just the right person who will value this, too. Meanwhile, every school with teenagers in it should have this book available in multiple copies for their students – so many will get benefit from it.

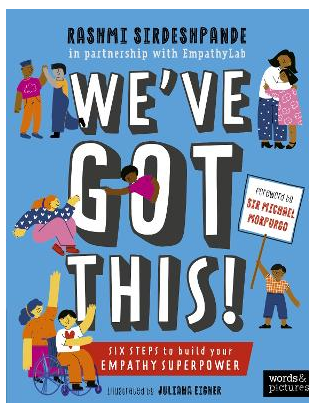


The Skylarks' War

Author: Hilary McKay **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 27/12/2018

Winner of the Costa Children's Book Award 2018 | A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month October 2018 | One of our 2018 Books of the Year Award winning Hilary McKay tells a captivating and deeply moving story of three young people growing up in the years before and during World War One. How their lives were totally changed by the War, how what really happened to the soldiers could never be talked about and how a girl like Clarry suddenly had opportunities because of the war are all touched on in a story that is also about universal adolescent relationships and the timeless concerns of being a teenager. Following their mother’s death at her birth, Clarry and her older brother Peter live a joyless life with their gloomy father. The pair live for their summer holidays in Cornwall with their grandparents which they share with their older cousin Rupert. Here, the trio are free to be themselves and to begin to break away from the constraints of family

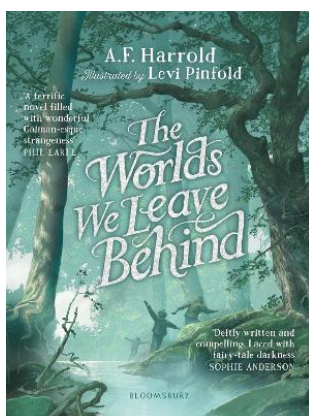
expectations. When war is declared Rupert enlists: his family is horrified and Clarry and Peter are left trying to work out where he might be, how they themselves should react to the war and, above all, whether Rupert is safe. Hilary McKay has a rare gift for novels about families and their interplay. Here, she weaves her story round one of the most powerful backdrops in history. And she does so with the lightest of touch which makes her history come alive.



We've Got This!

Author: Rashmi Sirdeshpande **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 18/05/2023

June 2023 Book of the Month Written in partnership with EmpathyLab, a cross-disciplinary organisation devoted to using stories to develop young people's experience of empathy, Rashmi Sirdeshpande's *We've Got This!* provides users with an informative, interactive, inspirational toolkit for living their best empathetic lives. "If there's something we need in this world now more than ever, it is empathy" – these wise words come from Michael Morpurgo's introduction, in which he also states that "Books and stories to me are the key to empathy and understanding for everyone. They are the pathway to understanding people as individuals." In this context, *We've Got This!* sets out six steps to help kids build their "empathy superpower", with chapters running through what empathy is, how it works, how to use it out in the wild, how to recognise emotions, how to be a brilliant communicator and, finally, how to "become the ULTIMATE empathy hero!" Packed with activities and examples, and supported by clear design and engaging illustrations, readers will come away enriched, and armed with everything they need to become a more empathetic person.



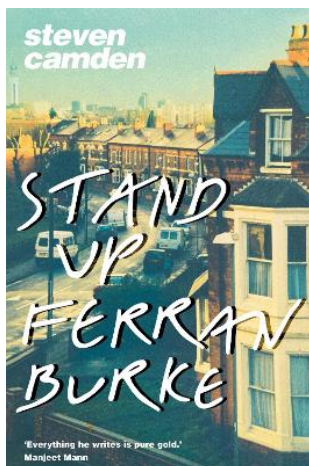
The Worlds We Leave Behind

Author: A. F. Harrold **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 04/08/2022

Shortlisted for the Yoto Carnegie Medal for Illustration 2023

What a compelling read, full of darkness, strangeness and almost fairy tale elements; and yet set in today's world and entirely believable. Written with such style and beauty and full of dark, brooding, beautiful illustrations – all black and white pencil drawn – adding depth and beauty to the experience. A group of friends and their siblings are all pulled into a vortex of wicked magic that can alter the world, as if certain elements of it had never existed – wiping out friends, family, and memories – except for those little flashes of déjà vu we all get. A very philosophical look at what it is like to be a pre-teen and young teenager, dealing with life without necessarily thinking through the consequences. A story that wraps around all the characters as they act and react to friendship, bullying, family breakdown and everyday life – and the consequences of actions – either unintended, planned, or thoughtless. A

powerful read that will live with readers for days. I can see this book winning prizes in the future – for writing and illustration. I do not intend to summarise the plot, that would be just too prosaic an approach for a book that definitely needs reading and sinking into to appreciate it! You can watch AF Harold in conversation here in this exclusive LoveReading LitFest event.



Stand Up Ferran Burke

Author: Steven Camden **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 11/05/2023

In his mind, Ferran Burke is many things But to everyone else he is just one, Emile Burke's little brother and Emile is all about himself. Now Ferran is stepping into the new world of high school alone and needs to learn quickly how to survive. New allies. New enemies. New feelings. New passions. A time capsule coming-of-age story spanning five years of one boy's life as he navigates the chaos trying to find himself. Friends. Fights. Family. Food. Playing with form and visuals throughout Stand Up Ferran Burke is a verse novel as unique as the boy at its heart.



Freedom

Author: Catherine Johnson **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/08/2018

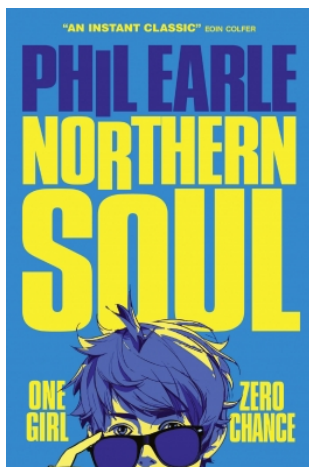
Winner of the Little Rebels Children's Book Award 2019 An action-packed and pacy story about a boy's experience of slavery in Britain. Nathaniel doesn't want to move to England with his master's family, leaving behind his mother and sister on the Jamaican plantation. But then he remembers what his mother told him: once a slave sets foot on English soil, they're free. Perhaps he can earn his fortune and buy his family's freedom, too. For more books on this theme head over to our sister site, LoveReading4Schools topic list - The Slave Trade



The Last Whale

Author: Chris Vick **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 08/06/2023

Charged by super plotting, the infectious passion of young eco-campaigners across three generations, and a powerful environmental call to action, Chris Vick's *The Last Whale* is a rousing, enchanting triumph. In the present-day, Abi's passion for eco-activism has got her into trouble, but she remains set on gathering environmental intel using a sophisticated quantum AI computer designed to collect and analyse ecological data, a machine her little sister names Moonlight. During a family holiday to her grandmother's remote Norwegian island, Abi discovers her great-grandfather's connection to - and rejection of - the whaling industry. Through his recordings and diaries, and with the help of Moonlight, Abi realises that whale song is more than mere song - the songs are maps. But, with Moonlight's owners on her trail, time is running out. With Abi's quest bound up in the interconnectedness of life on earth, and the urgent need to protect and restore the web of life, it has profound power that's passed down the generations when we meet her thirty years later, along with her daughter Tonje. In Tonje's story, mother and daughter are searching for whales. Though the sea is silent and the world's ecosystems are failing, hope comes and Tonje takes up the mantle of her mother's work. Packed with action and a marvellous coming together of nature, technology and the inspirational dedication of young eco-activists, this will have huge appeal for readers who love all-out, character-driven adventure stories, and those who are into environmental themes.



Northern Soul

Author: Phil Earle **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/01/2024

January 2024 Book of the Month | Interest Age 11+ Reading Age 8 Phil Earle admits freely that there is more than a little of himself in the character Marv, certainly that would account for the unmistakable authenticity of the language, the people, and the setting. This highly accessible slim volume captures perfectly that moment when a young man, previously only interested in footie and food, suddenly begins to notice girls and one girl in particular. Marv falls heavily for new girl Carly and his attempts at wooing and the mishaps that relentlessly occur are toe-curlingly, excruciatingly hilarious. The fact that he is "helped" in his love quest by the ghost of soul legend Otis Redding just adds another delicious element! His eccentric, croc wearing single parent Dad owns a record shop, mainly for his own pleasure it seems, but he is the one who introduces Marv to the songs of Otis, which seem to describe Marv's feelings perfectly. The advice and scheming of the fast food addicted Otis, who pops up at the most inopportune moments, is less perfect. There are not enough books for this age group which are genuinely funny, nor are there many relatable books about boys and their feelings. I believe this might be the first romantic comedy from this highly talented and much awarded author, but it's a genre that he inhabits

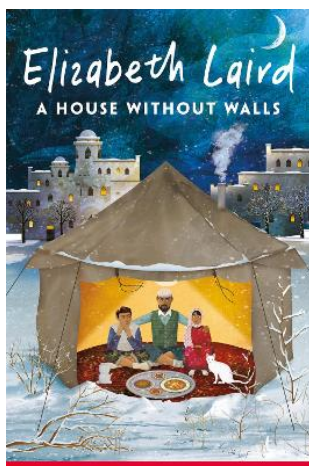
triumphantly with a sureness of touch that will have readers fighting over it. More please!



Ettie and the Midnight Pool

Author: Julia Green **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/06/2024

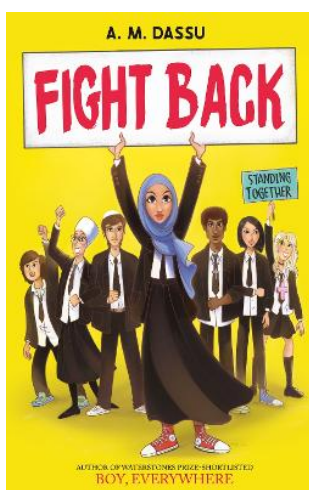
June 2024 Book of the Month This mesmerizingly beautiful and lyrical tale introduces us to 12 year old Ettie, living in a world affected by an unspecified war and a sickness which sounds very much like the pandemic. She lives in the remote self-sufficient High Fell House with her Grandma, having been left behind by her Mother, off travelling to places where she could make a difference as a doctor. It was only supposed to be temporary, but when all the planes were grounded and no one could travel, she could not get back and they have not heard from her in over three years. This sadness lurks deep within Ettie despite her love for their life, living in harmony with the beautiful natural world around them that is described so vividly. But Ettie is on the cusp of adolescence and ripe for wondering if there is more to life and more to her story than she has been told. Enter the mysterious Cora who leads her to the beautiful but dangerous quarry pool and the hidden caves beneath. Ettie now feels bold and brave like her Mother and resents the restrictions and warnings coming from her Grandma. She knows a secret is being kept from her and thinks Cora could lead her to it, but could she be leading to darkness and tragedy? The tension builds inexorably to the dramatic conclusion. Not everything is spelled out for the reader who is given space to form their own conclusions in this haunting, intriguing tale. There is a wonderful use of myth and traditional tales to underpin the message that you cannot, and should not, try to protect children from the dark side of life. We cannot fully appreciate the light without understanding the darkness that exists. Superbly descriptive writing, evocative illustration and psychological depth make this an unforgettable read. You can watch our exclusive event with author Julia Green [here](#):



A House Without Walls

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

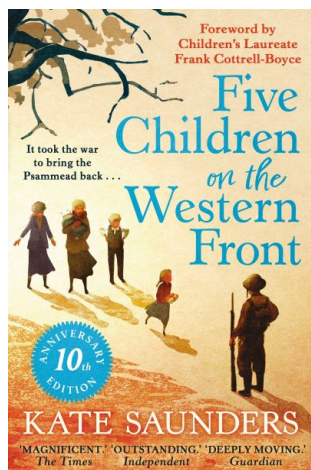
Longlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2021 | A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month September 2019 Award winning Elizabeth Laird brilliantly brings to life thirteen year old Safiya's new world as a refugee after her family flee from their comfortable home in Damascus because of the war in Syria. Safiya, her brother and father arrive in Jordan with nothing and must turn to relatives for help. Safiya has to adjust to living in a tent without running water. Suddenly, she is cleaning and washing and finding clever ways of making do on very little rather than going to school. But resourceful Safiya never gives up hope of going back to a better way for life or of finding her missing twin sister. A House without Walls is a vivid picture of a family facing an extreme experience with courage and imagination.



Fight Back

Author: A. M. Dassu **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/06/2022

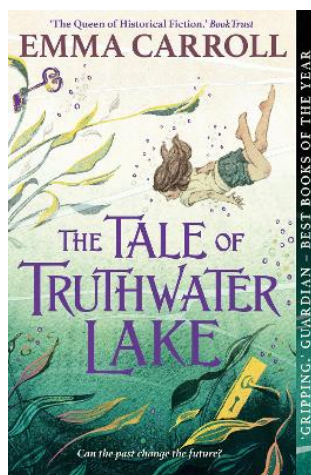
Shortlisted for the Week Junior Book Awards 2023 Exploring pertinent themes of identity, racism and resistance, A.M. Dassu's Fight Back is a powerful, moving triumph. A gripping story that will support and inspire young readers who experience Islamophobia and racism, and enlighten all readers on how to be a better ally. Thirteen-year-old Aaliyah is into reading, K-pop, and loves her best friends Lisa and Sukhi. But life as a Muslim isn't easy in a society that ripples with racism. After a terrorist bombing, she's passed a note in class - "Is the London attacker one of your uncles? I heard your dad got the weapons from Pakistan for him". Meanwhile, Aaliyah's lawyer mum is abused in a supermarket for wearing a hijab. Then, when another attack happens closer to home - very close, in fact - the abuse escalates and Aaliyah is ghosted by Lisa, whose controlling older brother Darren holds despicable "take back our country" views. Though hurt, Aaliyah's response is one of pride and courage. She decides "wearing a hijab would empower me to be true to myself... I'd show everyone a proper Muslim wasn't anything like the few bad ones plastered all over the news. It was time I came out and was confident about who I was. It was time to fight." When her school bans hijabs in response to complaints from pupils and parents, and Darren organises a "BRING BACK OUR SAFE WHITE NEIGHBOURHOODS" protest, Aaliyah decides that enough is enough and speaks out at a public event. Perfectly pitched and paced, and radiant with Aaliyah's courage, Fight Back is an engaging must-read that challenges racist stereotypes as it shines with the vitality of empathy, friendship and positive protest.



Five Children on the Western Front

Author: Kate Saunders **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 23/10/2025

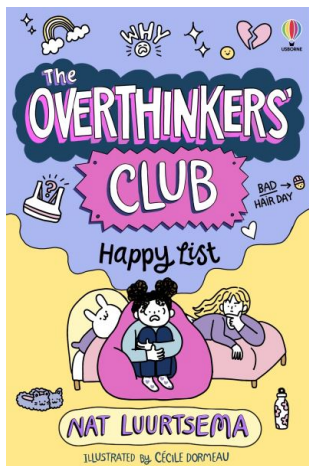
Shortlisted for the 2015 Guardian Children's Book prize - One of our Books of the Year 2014 - October 2014 Book of the Month - Winner of the Costa Children's Book Award 2014 Witty, tender and full of insights into life love and politics, this is a brilliant book in its own right as well as a worthy tribute to E. Nesbit's classic Five Children and It. The year is 1914. Anthea, Robert, Jane and Cyril, who has just enlisted, are now grown up, the Lamb is a schoolboy and even Edie, an addition to the family since the original, is old enough to meet the extraordinary and magical Psammead when he re-enters their life. All the children are longing for some new adventures but has the Psammead still got his magical powers? As befits the serious times, the Psammead plays an invaluable role in helping the family understand the First World War while also sorting out problems from his own past. Action-packed, funny and thoughtful this is a book to fall in love with. Although Kate Saunders' novel takes its inspiration from E Nesbit's Five Children and It, Five Children on the Western Front is an entirely stand alone novel and there is no need to have read the original classic.



The Tale of Truthwater Lake

Author: Emma Carroll **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/04/2023

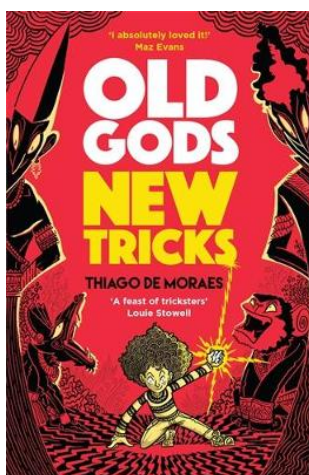
Polly and her brother Joel live in Brighton in 2032 - when it is too hot to go out for vast parts of the day, and the government has to issue alarms to keep people indoors and out of danger. After a swim at midnight - that goes very wrong - the two are sent away to stay with Aunt Jessie - who lives on the shores of Truthwater Lake - a vast reservoir that has been dried up by the lack of rain, and the heat. Whilst at the lake Polly accidentally ends up in 1952 - before the village under the lake was flooded to make the reservoir. She experiences the very different life of a village that no longer exists, the social mores of the time and the privations that existed in 1952 (being so close to WWII). Whilst she can't talk to Joel about it, she learns a great deal about determination, friendship, and channel swimming! This is a change of style for Carroll, as she is known as the Queen of Historical Fiction - but here we have a look to the future through the lens of the past. The story is full of friendship as well as the vitally important message that we should tread lightly on the earth to preserve it for the future. Fans of Emma Carroll will lap this up - and, by taking a slightly different tack, I hope it will bring lots of new readers to her books. A thought provoking read.



The Overthinkers' Club: Happy List

Author: Nat Luurtsema **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 12/03/2026

March 2026 Book of the Month From new bras to sleepover politics, Birdie knows that being 12 is NOT easy. Birdie's mind is full of worries and anxieties, she's what you might call an overthinker. It's no surprise though, she has a lot going on for a 12-year-old girl! From a looming house move which brings with it the prospect of a blended family, to an adored but ancient hamster, to friendship dramas galore, her worries seem never-ending. And even when they do end, her brain is very good at coming up with new worries for her. So, when her form tutor suggests she write and work on a 'Happy List' for a month Birdie is onboard. Some happy suggestions are more successful than others – saying 3 things she's grateful for every morning turns into a positive habit, but fishy banana brainfood for lunch is as unappetising as it sounds! Gradually though the list helps Birdie to recognise when her brain starts overthinking unnecessarily and begin to tackle some of her worries. With lots of gentle humour and understanding of how big even seemingly small worries can feel when you're growing up, The Overthinkers' Club: The Happy List is a perfect read for tween girls. The cute, doodle style illustrations beg to be copied and do a great job of breaking up pages of text. In the style of Birdie's morning gratitudes, here are 3 things I am grateful for: 1. The opportunity to read Nat Luurtsema warm and engaging text. 2. Cécile Dormeau's cute illustrations which kept me giggling throughout. 3. There's a second book to look forward to. Move over Lottie Brooks there's a new girl in school!

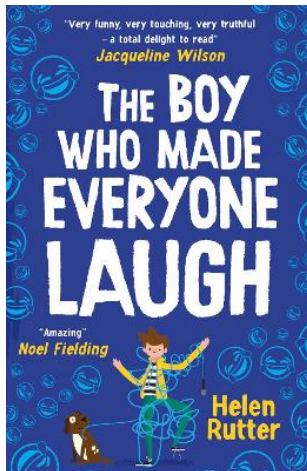


Old Gods New Tricks

Author: Thiago de Moraes **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/07/2023

July 2023 Book of the Month This highly talented author/ illustrator, perhaps best known for his Myth Atlas, translated into 18 languages, puts his depth of knowledge of mythology around the world to very good use in this fresh and original take on a story about gods and humans. Indeed, each chapter starts with a quote from a genuine encyclopaedia of mythology, but this does not overwhelm, just adds another layer to the storytelling and actually visually represents our heroine's research. Trixie is well named and has quite a reputation for trickery herself. She is the fiercely intelligent and independent daughter of two anthropologists, and she uses her passion for studying myths to work out that it is the Gods who have taken power (electricity) from the world threatening total disaster for humans. Not only that, but she plots to enlist (trick) the most famous trickster gods from different cultures to help her steal it back and to save the world. The concept of all the deities knowing each other and squabbling, like all families do, is highly entertaining. Trixie really has to pit her wits against a variety of

challenges to get each god on her team, but she will need them all to face the rip-roaring conclusion on Olympus. Although there is a lot of humour and obviously lots of magical adventures, this is a story with depth, wisdom and pathos which reminded me of Terry Pratchett because the world created is treated with utter seriousness and belief. One almost suspects that Mr De Moreas has met many of these gods himself! The brilliant illustrations only add to the wide-ranging appeal of, what I hope will be, the first of many adventures with the redoubtable Trixie.



The Boy Who Made Everyone Laugh

Author: Helen Rutter **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/02/2021

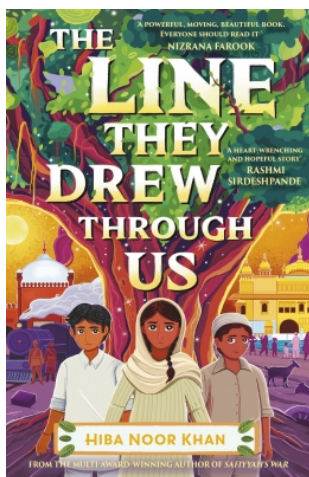
Shortlisted for The Branford Boase Award 2022 | Shortlisted for the Costa Children's Book Award 2021 | Shortlisted for the Blue Peter Awards 2022 Best Story | A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month February 2021 | February 2021 Debut of the Month Both touching and funny this is a brilliant story about being brave, being different and learning that being you is what really matters. Billy likes nothing more than making and performing jokes and dreams that one day he will be a famous stand-up comedian. But Billy has a stammer and it can be hard for him even to get a joke out quickly enough. Just now, Billy has a problem which will strike a chord with many: he is about to start secondary school and knows that it will be all too easy for him to become a target for bullies. Especially because of his stammer. Billy thinks of all kinds of schemes to avoiding speaking while also knowing that staying silent goes right against who he really is. How can Billy show his tremendous inner strength and especially his great sense of humour if he never dares to speak? Luckily Billy makes some good friends, meets a great teacher and, drawing on the support of his family and the work of his speech and language therapist, manages not only to survive but also to succeed! Find more books with Positive Images of Disability.



When Secrets Set Sail

Author: Sita Brahmachari **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 20/08/2020

Set in a perfectly realised East London, the story begins as newly adopted Imtiaz arrives in Usha's home. Initially misunderstandings abound between the two girls. Sadly, Usha's beloved gran, Kali Ma has recently passed away. But when first Kali Ma and then other ghosts appear and task the girls to right a past wrong and reveal the hidden secrets of their house, which is also a refugee community centre and under imminent threat of closure, they and their new Roma friend Cosmo must work together. There is rich historical detail in this complex but very rewarding and thought-provoking story crafted in delicate and thoughtful prose. We learn about the fate of Indian Ayahs travelling to care for children of the British Raj on the long voyages back to the UK and then being abandoned here and also about the first female Asian GP's and the struggles of the Windrush generation. In an interview the author reveals that there has been a recent campaign for a Blue Plaque to commemorate the real-life House of the Ayahs. This is a skilfully woven narrative with a shameful look at just some of the racist colonial attitudes of Britain both past and present and real tension and adventure as the children race to unravel the mystery and save the refuge and a beloved family home.

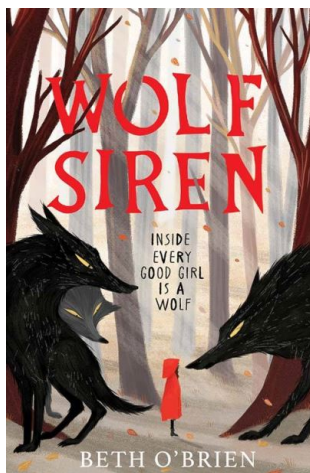


The Line They Drew Through Us

Author: Hiba Noor Khan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/04/2025

April 2025 Book of the Month Shortlisted for the Carnegie and now the UKLA Book Award with her debut novel Safiyya's War, Hiba Noor Khan has written another masterclass in historical fiction, this time shining an unflinching and evocative light on a very dark period of history for the Indian subcontinent. The Partition in 1947 is insufficiently studied or known about and yet it is very much a part of family history for so many in our society and often the reason why families are here at all. With her superb ability to create indelible and credible child characters, that live with you long after you close the book, she enables us not just to learn about what happened in that turbulent time, but to really feel the emotional impact. Narrated through the third person voices of Lakshmi, Jahan and Ravi, all born on the same day in miraculous circumstances and all linked to a remote village nestled under an ancient banyan tree. Lakshmi would remain there, and the boys returned frequently, returning for a family wedding as the book opens. The lyrical descriptions of their life and the close-knit community, where Muslim, Hindu and Sikh co-existed in peace and harmony and all the diverse traditions were celebrated, act as the perfect counterpoint to the horror yet to come. As Lakshmi gets her dearest wish, joining the boys in Lahore to attend school, the political crisis gathers pace and the children become involved in trying to prevent terrorism, but eventually

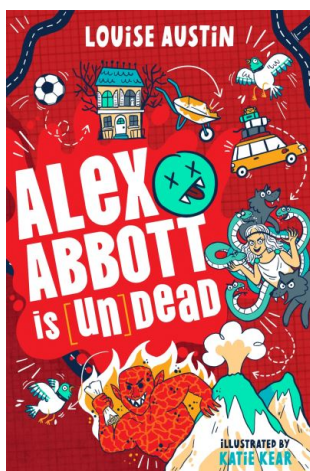
they will become separated as each family struggles to find safety across the arbitrary borders. Yet ultimately the strength of their bond keeps hope alive that they will be reunited. A hope for peace, reconciliation and healing for the whole country. Thought provoking, compelling storytelling, with maps and glossaries to aid understanding, this emotionally charged story is an absolute must read.



Wolf Siren

Author: Beth O'Brien **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 27/03/2025

A vibrant, evocative and magical debut which centres a positive, empowered disabled character at the heart of a reimagining of Little Red Riding Hood. The woods are hiding a secret... but then so is Red... Red is not allowed to go into the woods. Everyone knows that they are dangerous - because of their strange magic and the wolves that lurk there... But Red finds herself increasingly drawn to the woods and the place where her grandmother disappeared without a trace three years ago. When the woodcutter fails to return home one night and wolves are spotted close to the village boundary, fear drives a deep and dangerous divide between the villagers and the nature they live alongside. Only Red seems to hold the key - but she has a secret, and exposing it could ruin her family forever ...



Alex Abbott Is [Un]Dead

Author: Louise Austin **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 23/04/2026

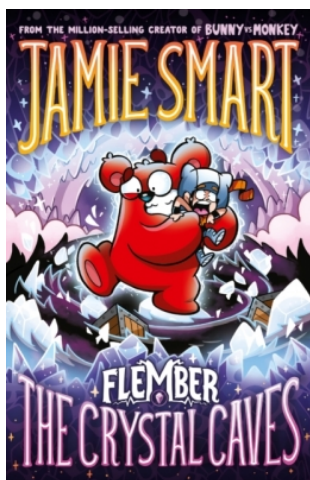
May 2026 Debut of the Month Following an unfortunate playground accident Alex is alarmed to wake up and find himself dead. And even more alarming is finding out he's been turned into a vampire! On a mission to find a way of turning himself back into a human, Alex invertedly breaks an important supernatural pact and unleashes a whole host of monstrous creatures onto his sleepy town of Draihampton. Now he must face an epic journey and a seriously scary ancient demon to save not only himself, but everybody he loves. Full of clever humour and an increasingly chaotic cast of mythical creatures this is a fast-paced story that young readers will love. The gothic moodiness and impending doom are pitched just right to excite without terrifying. Whilst Katie Kear's excellent cartoons bring an extra layer of energy and make this an overall pleasingly accessible read. Great fun with genuine laugh-out-loud moments and a lovely message about friendship, cooperation and belonging, this is a sure-fire hit, perfect for fans of Sam Wu and Loki.



The Nightkeeper's Apprentice

Author: Jude Reid **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 19/03/2026

April 2026 Debut of the Month Beautifully-written, and bathed in the magic and majestic wildness of Scottish folklore and island landscapes, Jude Reid's *The Nightkeeper's Apprentice* debut sees its endearing twelve-year-old protagonist Eilidh uncover uncanny family secrets when she's evacuated to a remote Orkney Island. Exploring death and destiny through a thrilling elemental adventure, this wonderful novel has emotional depth, and enduring impact. Eilidh's story begins in 1941 near Glasgow, when "the sky was on fire" and "somewhere out in the Clydebank streets a siren began to wail". With her dad lost at sea, she and her mum head to the air-raid shelter for the first time. Next morning, they emerge to find Clydebank bombed flat. So, Eilidh's mum sends her to live with Aunt Rhona, her father's sister, and her cousin Magnus in their seemingly safe Orkney Island home, where Eilidh's father grew up. As prickly Magnus ferries her to their isolated lighthouse in his Sea Witch boat, Eilidh is fascinated by seals singing on rocks — seeds of enchantment are sown early on. Then Aunt Rhona issues her with two important rules. She's not to enter the lighthouse tower, and she's not to touch anything that washes up on the shoreline. Soon enough, whispered secrets from the sea rise louder and stronger, and big questions swell: what is the "Nightkeep business" Magnus speaks of? Why does the sky light up "in ribbons of colour"? More is revealed when a ghostly boy appears, when Magnus divulges the truth of their Nightkeeper heritage, and when Eilidh sees the beautiful books her father created. Interspersed with the thoughts of Sings-In-The-Shallows, a presence that talks of a time the destructive Landfolk will be gone and the "Finfolk will take back what is theirs", *The Nightkeeper's Apprentice* is a lyrical, suspenseful page-turner that will be adored by thoughtful readers who love darkly magical stories and ghostly tales.



Flember: The Crystal Caves

Author: Jamie Smart **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/11/2025

This is a re-issue of *Flember: The Crystal Caves* 9781788451482 Boy-inventor DEV and his best friend, BOJA, have found a secret map! So now they're on a mission to find more of the magical energy known as FLEMBER! But first they have to travel through the scary WILDENING . . . Survive in a LIFELESS town . . . And harness the power of Boja's FIERY FARTS!



Dracula & Daughters

Author: Emma Carroll **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 25/09/2025

September 2025 Book of the Month A new story from the Queen of Historical Fiction is always eagerly anticipated, but this offers something a bit different for her many fans. Like me, I am sure they will be swept away and thoroughly fascinated by this tale, which puts a unique spin on vampire mythology and, in the process, transforms the genre into an entirely age-appropriate middle grade adventure, with huge appeal to fans of mild horror stories like Jennifer Killick's Dread Wood series. It also has loads of potential to appeal to older readers who will enjoy the clever use of familiar names from traditional vampire tales and even TV series. For example, the three young girls at the centre of the tale are called Bella, Buffy, who has a fabulous pet raven called Poe, and Mina. The story opens with the strange death of the popular star, Elsie Irving, on the stage of the Lyceum Theatre in Temstown, a city which is ruled by the Guildmaster, Mr Montagu Helsing, with its rules and laws, including the eating of garlic, spreading salt and carrying silver, devised to prevent Contagion starting again. It is twenty-five years since the last outbreak of vampirism, but everything is about to change as Mina, our narrator, discovers. She has impulsively set out to rob Elsie's grave. She believes presenting her boss, Dr Polidori, with a real corpse is the only way to get him to allow her to attend the dissection and the full medical training she craves. There is a very compelling strand of feminism running throughout the story. Women have historically been barred from sciences and the professions, which makes Beatrix Drake, Temstown's most successful undertaker, even more remarkable. It is her daughter Bella who discovers, alongside Mina, that Elsie has escaped her grave and a new vampire is on the loose. During this dramatic evening Mina discovers Bella is her cousin and that they share a family secret and have special powers as half-vampires or dhampirs. Together with little sister Buffy they are determined to find and stop Elsie before the next full moon which will spread the infection exponentially. The discovery of a way to heal rather than slay vampires, in an old neglected medical textbook written by Professor Lucy Westenra, could help save their friend Varney, the first of Elsie's victims. This is thoroughly convincing vampiric theory, and the redoubtable trio of girls soon realise the power of collaboration and working together, which is a lovely positive message to convey. Family and friendship are at the heart of this fabulously atmospheric, tense and highly recommended story which will have readers queueing up for the next instalment.



The Feathered Book

Author: Charlie Nutbrown **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 11/09/2025

September 2025 Debut of the Month Charlie Nutbrown's *The Feathered Book* is a debut of the highest order. Think *Wind in the Willows* with added mystery, which begins when *The Feathered Book*, a volume brimming with images of "arcane symbols, strange flowers [and] sinister equipment", vanishes from an underground library. As a result of being authored by an ancient alchemist, and under a curse, the book's disappearance can only mean one thing — danger and, quite possibly, death. Into this, we meet Monty the fox as he makes a big announcement to Nettle, his rabbit companion: "I'm going to be a detective – the greatest detective the Lake has ever known." Which is how Pecksniff the librarian comes to engage Monty to find *The Feathered Book*, to Nettle's dismay, for they are as chalk and cheese. "Where Monty was changeable and unpredictable, Nettle was the opposite: solid, fixed, sensible." Still, Nettle can't help but come to Monty's aid, and the two make a wonderful duo of detection through this witty, atmospheric adventure that sees them endure pirate ambushes, defy death in the form of booby-trapped flying books, and find their first breakthrough through the lens of an astronomer's telescope. Elegantly written (the cadence of words is wonderful — perfectly attuned to atmosphere, pace and character), *The Feathered Book* is classy cosy crime for kids who want to be whisked away on mysterious adventures. Mention must also be made of Ewa Beniak-Haremska's illustrations — detailed, evocative, tangled depictions of character and nature that would look very much at home in a classic fairy tale.