

A selection of books especially selected for children in Year 8 (12 - 13 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 9 list. Alternatively if these books are a little challenging try books from the Year 7 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.



Bog Child

Author: Siobhan Dowd **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 30/07/2015

A challenging book full of mystery and shadows. Both terrifying and fascinating from the start, Bog Child is a must-read. The plot follows Fergus, a boy who finds the body of a child and it looks like she's been murdered. All of a sudden a little voice is coming to him in his dreams and Fergus must cope with getting caught up in further troubles around his home of Northern Ireland.



The Swallows' Flight

Author: Hilary McKay **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 27/05/2021

Longlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2022 ages 11-14 Described as a companion piece, rather than a sequel, to the acclaimed Skylark's War, it is nevertheless a real joy to meet some of the original characters again, but new readers fear not, this book absolutely stands alone. I think that this author is unsurpassed in character development, with every wonderfully economic, but beautifully crafted phrase or fragment of dialogue we are drawn deeper into these young lives. At first overshadowed by the threat of war and then trying to survive within it are cousins Ruby Amaryllis and Kate and across the channel and on the other side of the conflict, best friends Hans and Erik, who bond initially over saving orphaned fledgling swallows. Indeed swallows become a motif for hope throughout the book. Another real strength of the writing is in depicting recognisably real family dynamics and relationships. As the war tears families apart, we see how the strength of family can also bring people together. The multiple perspectives (including eventually Dog, the mistreated scrappy dog abandoned in the Blitz) build a really rich and unbiased picture of lives gradually and increasingly impacted by war. Allowing readers to empathise with the different plights on each side of the conflict is a real asset for those studying the history of the period and whilst not skirting over or underplaying any of the true horrors of war, the underlying message is one of hope in the capacity of humanity to show compassion across all borders and barriers. Sensitive, perceptive and immensely powerful, this superb novel is a beautifully

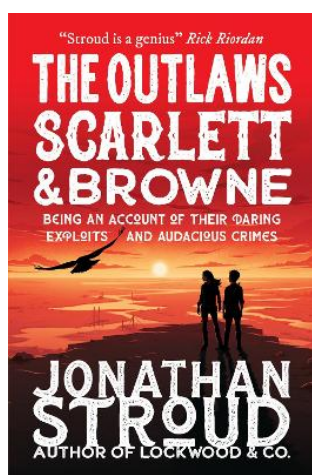
polished gem that will leave an indelible impression on the reader.



The Summer We Turned Green

Author: William Sutcliffe **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 08/07/2021

July 2021 Book of the Month Having demonstrated in *The Gifted*, the *Talented* and *Me* a real comic gift for creating believably awkward adolescent males, William Sutcliffe does it again with 13-year-old Luke. His family life has been turned upside down as first his stropy elder sister and then his father join the climate rebellion activists 'across the road,' squatting in a house scheduled for demolition in a controversial airport extension plan. While poking gentle fun at Nimby's and career protestors alike, there is an underlying core of real science and justified outrage about the environmental crisis for the planet in this hugely enjoyable story. Other serious themes are touched upon in this subtle and deceptively light-hearted narrative. The role of protest, politics and the media, the need for tolerance and understanding of different lifestyles, responsible parenting and the need for us all to stand up for what really matters. Luke learns a lot about himself and his own prejudices when he comes up against Sky – a child born into alternative lifestyles and protest, who yearns for stability and the privilege of attending school. These are both great characters, frequently displaying wisdom and courage that their elders lack. Making serious points while provoking laughter takes real skill and this excellent novel undoubtedly demonstrates that. Highly recommended.

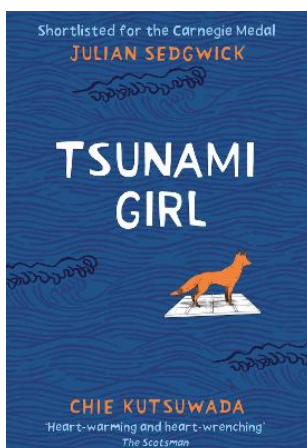


The Outlaws Scarlett and Browne

Author: Jonathan Stroud **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/04/2021

Shortlisted for the Books for Older Readers category, Children's Book Awards 2022 | Shortlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2022 ages 11-14 | April 2021 Book of the Month Bravo to Jonathan Stroud! With its cast of charismatic characters and extraordinary world-building (think broken Britain with Wild West vibes), *The Outlaws Scarlett and Browne* is an audacious firecracker. And, in even better news for fans of funny, inventive adventure fiction, this is but the beginning of what's set to be an extraordinary series. "Britain was a land of ruin...the country was maimed and broken - but full of strange fecundity and strength". It's also brimming with the likes of bears, wolves, flesh-eating spear-birds and gruesome cannibal creatures, all of which whip-smart, cuss-uttering Scarlett takes into her swaggering stride. She makes an unforgettable impression from the off: "A slight slim figure in a battered brown coat, weighed down with...all the paraphernalia of a girl who walked the Wilds." After killing four grown men who'd tried to rob her, Scarlett struts into a bank and proceeds to hold it up (turns out she needs money to repay a debt). On fleeing the

scene, Scarlett finds a crashed bus, all its passengers dead but for a lone boy hiding in the toilet. Enter Albert Browne, “awkward, skinny and wide-mouthed, like a frightened skeleton”, and seemingly a piece of powdery chalk to Scarlett’s pungent cheese. Her scathing sarcasm (and Albert’s obliviousness to it) provides many a laugh: “You just holler if I get in your way,” she seethes as he admires a seed pod while she sets about making a fire, cooking a bird and establishing a camp for them, and all while they’re being pursued. But, for all his unworldliness, Albert turns out to have hidden talents. Sensing he might be of use to her after all, Scarlett agrees to help him accomplish his own mission. Albert wants to reach the Free Isles, remnants of London that “don’t have any restrictions on who you are or what you can do. They welcome people who are...different”, unlike the dictatorial High Council of the Faith Houses, which is “desperate to keep the old ways going”, and “on the watch for any kind of deviation.” Trouble is, as their respective pursuers close in, time and space is running out for our unforgettable outlaws. What a story, what characters, and what a wait it will be until the second instalment. I defy any reader not to fall for Scarlett and Albert, and to become gasp-out-loud, laugh-out-loud invested in their quest.



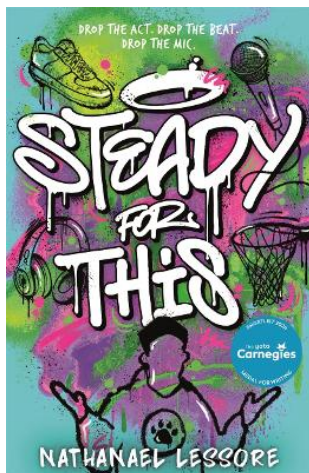
Tsunami Girl

Author: Julian Sedgwick **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/03/2021

Shortlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2022 ages 11-14 |

Shortlisted for the Yoto Carnegie Medal 2022 15-year-old

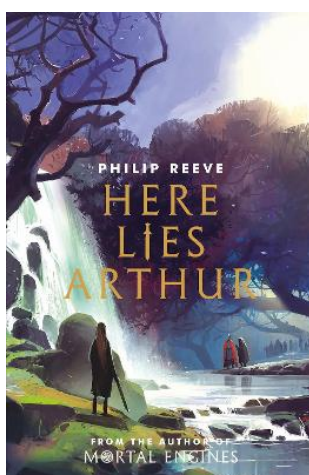
Yūki Hara Jones is only ¼ Japanese, but she has a deep bond with the country and her beloved grandpa there. Suffering badly from anxiety she feels she will be helped by a visit to see him. Her grandpa, a renowned Manga artist, feels she can be helped by rediscovering the small girl who loved to draw, but just as they are opening her old albums, the earthquake hits and although she survives he does not. Trying to recuperate back in England she can still feel there is unfinished business in Japan and is determined to try to understand it. Helped by her friend Taka, who has also lost everything in the disaster and has his own demons to follow, they take their quest illegally back into the disaster zone. This is an incredibly intense and atmospheric read- the prose descriptions of the disaster and its aftermath are breathtakingly powerful. But it is also a story suffused with Japanese legend and modern-day ghost stories. Manga is an important theme throughout the book - Yūki’s recovery is bound up with the creation of her own manga story and manga is so important to the character of her grandpa and her own love of Japan and so it is entirely appropriate that manga is used to tell the story. The superb drawings seamlessly reveal the other worldly and spiritual nature of Yūki and Taka’s story and the multi-layered whole becomes a truly immersive and compulsive reading experience that will linger long in a reader’s thoughts. Highly recommended.



Steady For This

Author: Nathanael Lessore **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 27/04/2023

Winner of The Branford Boase Award 2024 | Shortlisted for the Children's & YA Jhalak Prize 2024 | May 2023 Debut of the Month MC Growls (or Shaun to his mum) has his eyes set on fame and fortune, he's going to win Raptology, establish himself as a top rapper and get the girl. There's just one problem...he's not very good. Cue lots of hilarity in this incredible debut novel. When he accidentally goes viral for all the wrong reasons, Growl's is left a laugh stock. His dreams of stardom quickly fading. But a new friend and a lot of spirit might just launch the comeback of the year. Not only is this laugh-out-loud funny, it's also a uniquely warm and clever funny that is so rare to find. The writing style embraces the use of modern slang, and feels fresh, current, and alive. There are no obvious, yet stale jokes here, instead we delight in witty and inventive wordplay that makes every page an absolute pleasure. Yet it's not all gags and laughs, behind the humour Lessore masterfully and honestly covers a range of difficult subjects, including young carers, poverty, bullying and mental health problems. This is done with the gentlest of touches, never shirking from the truth but never dwelling in the darkness either. Giving the novel an emotional depth and impressive balance. MC Growls is the realest of teenage boy characters – warm, caring, a bit inept with girls and charmingly naïve. The perfect antidote to toxic masculinity and talk of “alpha males”. Likewise, the friends and family surrounding him leap from the page and feel very real. Just like in real life, the characters in *Steady For This* are all dealing with their own issues, often with care, humour and resilience. This is a refreshing, modern triumph of a novel that I can't recommend enough.



Here Lies Arthur

Author: Philip Reeve **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/07/2019

Prize-winning author Philip Reeve gives a brilliant new take on the legend of King Arthur. Myrddin rides with Arthur spinning tales for and about him but what is the truth and can Gwynna discover it? Bridging the past and present *Here Lies Arthur* is the story of how heroes and the legends about them are made. On winning the CILIP Carnegie Medal he said “I didn't believe it at first, but as I got over the shock and it began to sink in, I felt totally honoured. It is very special to win the CILIP Carnegie Medal. It has such a history and I admire so many past winners' work it is quite humbling to be ranked alongside them.” “*Here Lies Arthur* is an outstanding book, and deserving winner,” said Tricia Adams, Chair of the 12 strong librarian judging panel. ‘Reeve’s is a consistent story-telling voice that brings us a subtle and credible retelling of the King Arthur myth. It is both a page turning adventure story and a clever historical novel. It also has clear political resonance for our times, demonstrating humanity’s need to sustain hope and

optimism, and our tendency to favour myth over reality to achieve that end.'



Kicked Out

Author: A. M. Dassu **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 19/10/2023

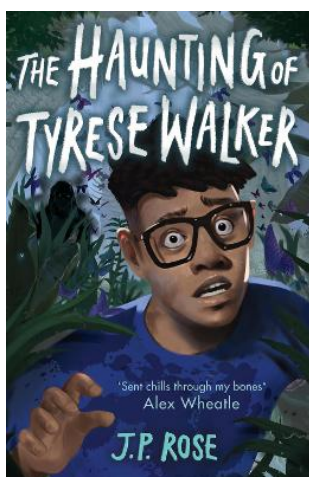
October 2023 Book of the Month Fans of the unforgettable *Boy Everywhere* will be keen to revisit the world of Sami, the refugee from Syria, whose horrific journey before finding a safe home in England and some good friends in Mark and Ali, had us all so gripped. Ali becomes the narrator for this sequel, which again puts our society in the spotlight. At first the friends appear to be living the dream. Mark's single parent Mum won the lottery, and they now live in an amazing house with a pool which the boys are looking forward to using all summer. Sami's family have taken in Aadam, an unaccompanied minor seeking asylum, and Mark's Mum is employing him as a gardener, just one of the many jobs he has taken on to earn some cash. When he can, he joins the lads playing football, but unlike them he cannot attend school and be on the school team. It all starts to go horribly wrong when Aadam is threatened with deportation and his appeal is turned down, and then he is accused of theft by Mark's Mum's new boyfriend. Sami and Ali are literally kicked out and Mark is forbidden any contact with them. To add to Ali's stress, his missing father has moved back to the area complete with his new family, which awakens all of Ali's abandonment issues and self-doubt. What follows is a beautifully nuanced and entirely credible story which exposes the casual racism that Ali, Sami and Aadam face every day and the cruel injustices of the asylum process. It empathetically explores family issues too. Mark and Ali had bonded over their lack of a father and are both fiercely supportive of their mothers. This means Mark is reluctant to interfere with her newfound happiness with the boyfriend Callum, despite his suspicions and dislike of Callum's controlling behaviour. But once again the author shows us that it is humanity, compassion and hope that can win against all odds. The inspirational way in which the boys remain loyal to each other and are galvanised to take action to save Aadam can show young readers that they are not powerless and may well encourage them into their own social activism. Any book which challenges the hateful rhetoric around refugees and asylum seekers is hugely important and for it to be so uplifting is a rare bonus. This book should be in every library and on every bookshelf, a thoroughly rewarding and powerful read.



Mortal Engines

Author: Philip Reeve **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/07/2018

A stunning blend of past and future technologies, *Mortal Engines* sets the scene for a stunning quartet of action-packed novels set in a richly inventive world in which wheeled cities hunt each other across the dried up sea bed. Big cities gobble up smaller ones and London rules above them all. Tom Natsworthy, a third class apprentice in the Guild of Historians, has the adventure of his life after he sets out to try to find out what has happened to his parents. With a cast of inventive characters including Shrike, Anna Fang and Stalker, a deadly robot killer with a human brain, and cities whose imaginary and multi-layered architecture dazzles, this is a creation on a vast and imaginary scale.

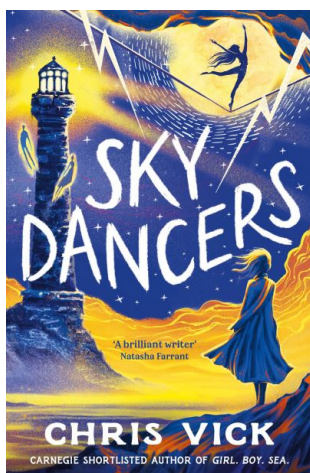


The Haunting of Tyrese Walker

Author: J P Rose **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/10/2022

November 2022 Book of the Month | Longlisted for the Jhalak Children's & Young Adult Prize 2023 | Shortlisted for The Branford Boase Award 2023 Grief, ghosts, family roots, and new-found friends, JP Rose's *The Haunting of Tyrese Walker* is at once an adventure-packed thriller and a moving story that sees a boy navigate darkness to live in light. With a rich and palpable evocation of Jamaican landscapes, communities, culture and folklore, this chilling mystery has tremendous heart. Struggling with the loss of his dad, Tyrese and his mum are spending summer with family in Jamaica. The last time Tyrese came to see his wonderful Grammy was just before his fourth birthday, and rural Jamaica feels a universe away from his Manchester home. After driving up "steep winding roads where the clouds wrapped around the mountains like a thick white ribbon," Tyrese felt "as if he'd entered a secret land above the earth" — his sense of awe, and alienation from everywhere, and everyone, are superbly evoked. On his first evening, Tyrese heads out to walk off his frustrations and stumbles upon a gravestone engraved with the image of a snake eating its own tail. And then Grammy asks him to finish scattering rice over her porch to "keep the good duppies in and the bad ones out", explaining that duppies are spirits of the dead, and by the time they've collected each grain of rice, the "sun will be rising and dem will lose most of their power." Thinking this is "totally crazy", he discards the rice. From that moment, matters escalate fast. Tyrese meets a stranger on a beach who tells him the Shadow Man is coming for him. Three pricks of blood appear on his finger. There's no denying, in the words of his cousin Marvin, that "bad things a gwaan." Fabulously paced, the story snakes towards a chilling conclusion during a raging storm in the mountains, with all manner of terrifying beings testing Tyrese's grip on reality, among them the witch-like, bloodsucking soucouyant, and the shapeshifting, hooved La Diabliesse. And all this is underpinned by Grammy's wisdom that "darkness can't drive out darkness, only light can do dat." This is the perfect book for readers who

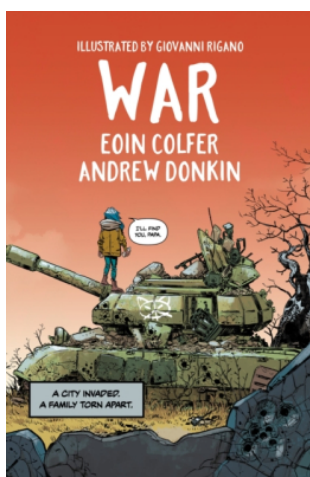
relish scary adventures, epic settings, and characters who have you rooting for them every step of the mountainous way.



Sky Dancers

Author: Chris Vick **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 13/08/2026

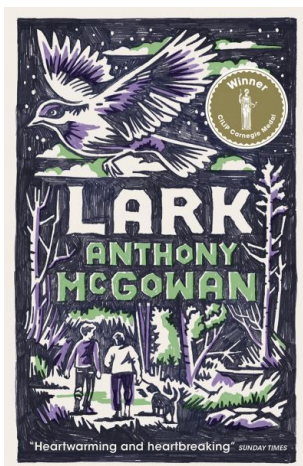
A new 11+ story of dangerous enchantment and sorcery set in the 1950s and contemporary times, from Carnegie-shortlisted Chris Vick. When Isla was a girl in Cornwall, she lived in the old cliff top lighthouse. She slept where the lamp once shone over the dark sea. In her dreams she flew; over cliffs and steeples, fields and towns and along the shoreline, up to the stars, down to the inky sea. And Caleb and Ari were always there to help her. Farmers, fishermen and village folk saw... a witch. An angel. A ghost. A mermaid. Then Isla's dreams stopped. Many years later, Hilly Seaborne (14) moves to the same Cornish village. She's a dreamer, a skilled acrobat and an outcast. Visiting the old deserted lighthouse she uncovers tales of strange sightings and unnerving events. And she is fascinated by them. Clues lead her to an eccentric old woman living in a remote cottage. And a story of deadly magic unfolds. More to discover: Topical interests in Sky Dancers South-west England rep; a fantastical coming-of-age story in modern-day Cornwall Astronomy, marine biology and meteorology References to The Tempest make it a great companion to studies of Shakespeare The housing crisis, 'blow-ins' and the upheaval of moving house



War

Author: Eoin Colfer, Andrew Donkin **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 13/08/2026

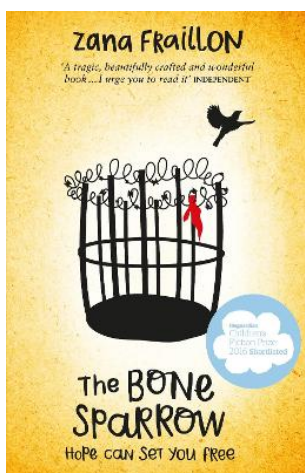
Sally Nicholls chose War as her Guest Editor's Book of the Month - Kat is a teenage graffiti artist living with her parents and younger sister in an unnamed city, when war comes. Kat's parents are desperate to escape. But when her father is arrested by the invaders, Kat knows she has to rescue him. She just has to figure out how ... Colfer is great at writing young people and family relations, and Kat and her little sister Deena felt very real. He also conveys how quickly the unimaginable becomes ordinary. The graphic novel is mostly about Kat, but also features sections from Adam, a young conscript in the invading army who misses his farm and is, in a different way, another victim of the war. The book deliberately doesn't name the conflict, but Colfer took inspiration from conversations with Ukrainian refugees. A moving and horribly plausible book.



Lark

Author: Anthony McGowan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 13/03/2025

Winner of the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2020 | Longlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2020 | February 2019 Book of the Month | A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month July 2020 | Interest Age Teen Reading Age 9 Cleverly set within a gripping adventure, *Lark* is a deeply touching story of the special bond between brothers. Older brother Nicky narrates the story of the day he and his younger brother Kenny set out on a simple day out on the moors. Proposed by their father as a way of filling time while they wait nervously for their mum to return from her new life in Canada, it is meant to be a fun day out tinged with a bit of nostalgia as they are retracing a walk that he used to enjoy. But the simple walk which begins in a light hearted way soon becomes a deadly dangerous adventure as the weather conditions close in, the boys get completely lost and Nicky has to show exceptional courage and intelligence to make sure he can get Kenny home safely. Anthony McGowan maintains the intensity of the story throughout while also keeping the writing simple.

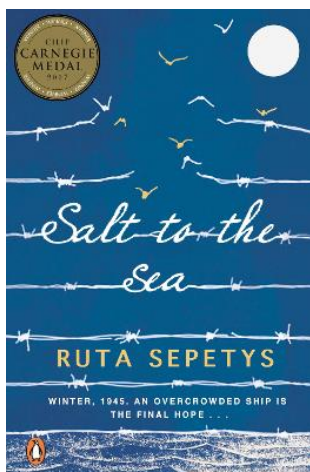


The Bone Sparrow

Author: Zana Fraillon **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 12/01/2017

Longlisted for the UKLA 2018 Book Award | Shortlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2017 and awarded the Amnesty CILIP Honour | Shortlisted for the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize 2016. A heartfelt, harrowing insight into life as a Rohingya refugee in an Australian detention centre, told through the unforgettable voice of an unforgettable boy. Subhi is one of the Limbo kids in a permanent Australian detention centre, the first to be born in the camp after his Maá and big sister Queeny fled violent persecution in Burma. While he's only experienced life within the cruel confines of the camp, Subhi's rich imagination has conjured a magical, solace-giving world in which the Night Sea from his Maá's tales brings him treasures from his dad. Stories are Subhi's lifeline. He needs them "to make my memories" and imagines a blanket of stories, a "gigantic blanket big enough to warm everyone". A new story treasure transforms Subhi's world in the form of Jimmie, a local girl who finds her way into the camp. She too knows heartache. She's lost her mum, who used to tell her special tales and gave her a bone sparrow necklace that "carried the souls of all her family". When Jimmie enters Subhi's life, he wonders if she's his guardian angel, though he hadn't expected an angel to have more holes in her clothes than him. And, on meeting Subhi, Jimmie realises that she's "never had a friend she wanted to share everything with before", and so she shares her mum's stories with him, stories he reads to her since she's unable to read them herself. Subhi's unique voice will weave its way into your heart and under your skin. His descriptions of life in the centre are hauntingly evocative. You feel, for example, the heat of days

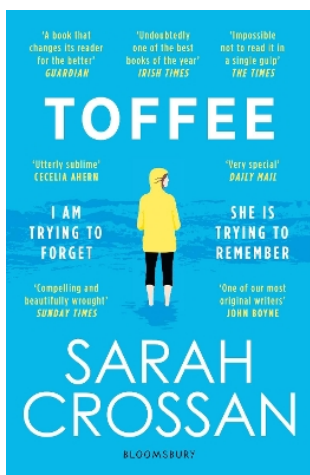
that get his “skin creeping” and make everything “jangly and loud and scratchy”. Through Subhi, readers experience how it might feel to have no home or voice, and how friendship can lighten the darkest of circumstances. One hopes, as Subhi’s Maá says, that “someday they see we belong.” Both elegant and raw, this is an important and timely novel that bears witness to the risks people take to make their voice heard, and to the resilience of the human spirit.



Salt to the Sea

Author: Ruta Sepetys **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/02/2016

Winner of the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2017 | Longlisted for the UKLA 2017 Book Award It's early 1945 and a group of people trek across Germany, bound together by their desperation to reach the ship that can take them away from the war-ravaged land. This inspirational novel is based on a true story from the Second World War. On winning the CILIP Carnegie Medal Ruta Sepetys commented: “As a writer, I am drawn to underrepresented stories and history in hiding. I spend a lot of time pondering the question – why do some parts of history penetrate our collective consciousness while others remain hidden? When I began work on the novel years ago, I had no way of knowing that when it was published, we would be amidst a refugee crisis. Then and now, my thoughts return to the children.” She added: “History allows us to examine decisions. Yes, history can be full of sadness and pain but it also shines light on hope, freedom, courage and the miraculous nature of the human spirit. History divided us, but through reading we are united in study and remembrance. That is the power of books.”

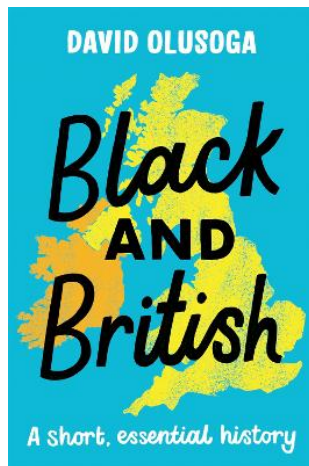


Toffee

Author: Sarah Crossan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/02/2020

May 2019 Book of the Month Another insightful and compassionate free verse novel from the queen of this increasingly admired form, this time exploring the transformative relationship between an abused runaway teenager and an elderly lady with dementia. Allison has grown up “stepping on eggshells” to circumvent her father’s violence. While she often wonders whether his behaviour was “all my fault”, one of his outbursts compels her to run away. With nowhere to go, she finds sanctuary in the house of an elderly woman called Marla. Marla has dementia and thinks Allison is Toffee, her best friend from childhood. After spending some time in Marla’s company, Allison decides to “stop correcting her... I like the idea of being sweet and hard, a girl with a name for people to chew on.” Moreover, in meeting Marla, Allison has found an unlikely kindred spirit: “I am not who I say I am. Marla isn’t who she thinks she is... Here, in this house, I am so much happier than I have ever been”. Returning the favour, Allison enriches Marla’s life – she listens, she indulges Marla’s desire to dance - while Marla’s carer and

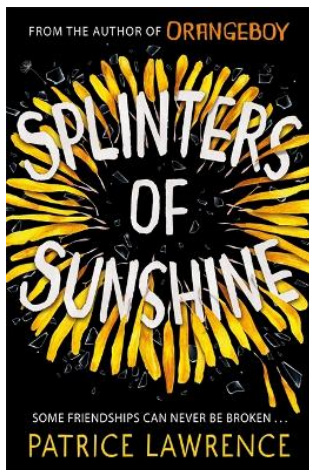
son show no real regard for her happiness, as if she's beyond life, which makes Allison's attentiveness all the more heart warming. Both vulnerable, they find strength through each other. With incredibly moving insight, Marla says of Allison's dad, "none of it was about you. It was about him. It's always about him. Surely you know that." The writing is compellingly fluid, flowing freely between Allison's precarious present and the tragic, abusive circumstances that sent her careering down this path. While fleeting, the impact of their time together is monumental, and I felt privileged to have spent time in their company.



Black and British: A short, essential history

Author: David Olusoga **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/10/2020

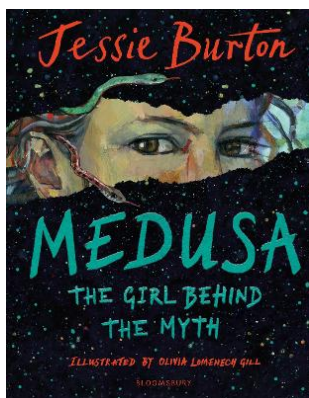
Longlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2022 Information Books 3-14 | Winner of Book of the Year, Children's: Illustrated and Non-Fiction at The British Book Awards | Shortlisted for Waterstones Book of the Year 2020 Adapted for younger readers from his seminal adult edition of the same book, David Olusoga's *Black and British* presents an engaging, illuminating and critically needed account of Black British history. Indeed, this succinct, impactful edition also serves as an excellent primer for adults. The introduction frames the book in the context of contemporary Britain - "Britain's population is changing. More of us than ever are members of families that include people of different skin colours and ethnicities. Black history helps explain how national history is intertwined with our family histories. It helps us make sense of the country we are today." And of course, contrary to popular perception, Black history has long been entwined with British history - it is British history. As the book reveals through lively, clear text - supplemented by fascinating maps and visuals - there's evidence that Africans were part of the Roman army stationed in Britain as far back as 253AD. And contrary to the typical representation of Tudor England as being a white entity, several hundred Black Tudors have been found in historical records. Then, as European trade with Africa exploded - spearheaded by the Portuguese and Spanish who'd begun to buy and transport slaves from Africa - Britain wanted in on the lucrative action, and soon started shipping slaves to their Caribbean colonies. Come the early Georgian era (1714-1776) an increasing number of enslaved Africans were brought to Britain to serve wealthy families, as evidenced by the portraits and newspaper pieces reproduced in this book. Also covering the late Georgian era, the Victorian period, the two World Wars, through to the continuing Windrush Scandal, Olusoga has done an incredible job of correcting misconceptions and presenting the truth of Black British history in engaging, lucid style.



Splinters of Sunshine

Author: Patrice Lawrence **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 19/08/2021

Spey is from a broken home – but happy, settled and doing well at school – living with his Mum and getting on with life. That is, until he gets two surprises one on top of the other. His father, an ex-convict who he has never met before turns up on his sofa for Christmas Day and his Mum gives him a letter that has been stuck in the post for some time... This is the start of an edgy relationship developing with his long-lost Dad as they search for the sender of the letter – a playgroup friend of Spey's who has become involved with county lines drug organisers. Spey is driven throughout all of the novel by the authentic emotions of a teen trying to come to terms with family, broken promises and broken friendships. Told in the voices of Spey and Dee (the county lines member) throughout their lives provide a stark contrast but with both expressing longing for the friend they think they have lost. The novel is set over three to four days one Christmas as Spey sets out on his quest to find his almost impossibly lost friend. Lawrence's writing is always compelling and packed with empathy for her fully imagined characters – this is no different. The sense of place and of alienation is realised in full and the sense of urgency in finding Dee keeps you reading long after you should have closed the book! A sure hand guides this odyssey as Spey searches for his friend whilst full of his own conflicting emotions about his father. An excellent read.



Medusa

Author: Jessie Burton **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 28/10/2021

November 2021 Book of the Month | Shortlisted for the Yoto Carnegie Medal for Writing 2023 Jessie Burton's fiery feminist re-telling of the Greek myth of Medusa blazes with intrigue and beauty courtesy of author's elegant style and Olivia Lomenech Gill's fabulously evocative colour illustrations. It's an incredible feat of intellect and imagination that takes down toxic masculinity and victim-blaming culture through an ingenious reframing, reclaiming of Medusa. The gods have exiled Medusa to a remote island, with no one for company but the snakes she has for hair. That is, until impossibly beautiful Perseus arrives and transfixes her: "I know a lot about beauty. Too much in fact. But I'd never seen anything like him...I wanted to eat him up like honey cake." Desires awoken, Medusa won't reveal her name, or let him see her: "I was just going to sit on the other side of this entrance rock and pretend that boys like him washed up on desert islands all the time." This excerpt encapsulates one of the many marvellous things about this book. The writing – cleverly, and compellingly – feels both timeless and modern. Medusa's narrative, and the dialogue, is laced with wit, and infused with tremendous detail. But betrayal swoops in the wake of desire, and all-too familiar mechanisms of patriarchy come into play with ferocity. Ultimately, though, and with a magnificent sense of

sisterhood, Medusa comes to a new state of being: "Self-awareness is a great banisher of loneliness. And my sisters, the immortals, are with me." This is terrifically inspiring and empowering in the ways of timeless myths, but also in ways that are very, very real - "you will find me when you need me, when the wind hears a woman's cry and fills my sails forward. And I will whisper on the water that one must never fear the raised shield, the reflection caught in an office window, or the mirror in a bathroom."



Hexed

Author: Julia Tuffs **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 08/07/2021

Jessie Jones has just discovered she's a witch. Too bad there isn't a hex to make slimy Callum Henderson and his friends disappear ... yet. The first book in a feisty, funny YA series about discovering your place and your power. New girl, new school, new life on stupid island - thanks Mum. All Jessie Jones wants is to keep her head down, avoid school douchebag Callum Henderson, and coast - middle-of-the-road-like. But when strange powers start to manifest during crippling period pains, flying under the radar seems highly unlikely. Can Jessie embrace her new-found witchiness, control her erratic powers and work out a way to bring down Callum and his cult of toxic masculinity? Sabrina the Teenage Witch meets Sex Education - a YA debut perfect for fans of Holly Bourne.

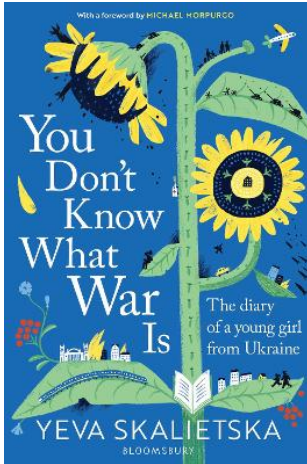


Bad Influence

Author: Tamsin Winter **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 08/06/2023

Clever, diligent and a musical prodigy, Amelia Bright is used to winning. After all, "Brights come first" is her dad's favourite motto. Sadly, when it comes to popularity Amelia is an outright loser. Nicknamed Maggot at the start of Year 7 and bottom of a cruel "Fit List" in Year 8, Amelia is determined that Year 9 will be better. When new boy Evan joins her baseball team and gives her a surprising, but exciting, first kiss it seems her hopes of reinvention might just be possible. Surely if he likes her, it means other can too. But as the threat of becoming Maggot Boy looms, Evan betrays Amelia. Suddenly the whole school has seen much more of her than she ever expected, and they're not just calling her Maggot anymore. This is an honest story about the brutality of high school, where it can feel like being popular is the only real marker of success. Tension and concern for Amelia is skilfully built as we watch her desperately try to fit in. When a photo that was only ever intended to be private is leaked, we're provoked to consider the unfair misogyny of boys getting high fives whilst girls get shamed; alongside the long ranging consequences of things living forever on the internet. Impressively, Tamsin Winter skilfully uses humour throughout so that this story of peer pressure and recovering from mistakes never becomes

too heavy. Instead, we're offered an empowering and hopeful message from a main character who it's impossible not to root for. A perfect read for younger teens, especially those who love Wonder.



You Don't Know What War Is

Author: Yeva Skalietska **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 25/10/2022

January 2023 Book of the Month | Shortlisted for the Week Junior Book Awards 2023

With a foreword by Michael Morpurgo, Yeva Skalietska's *You Don't Know What War Is* shares a stirring, child-centred story about the war in Ukraine that the world needs to hear, and everyone should read. "Until you've been there, you don't know what war is." 12-year-old Yeva's words strike bone-deep from the opening of her extraordinary diary. It begins on 14th February 2022 when she's happily celebrating her birthday in her Kharkiv home. A mere ten days later, Yeva's world shatters when she's "woken suddenly by a loud metallic sound that echoed through the streets", and sees Granny "standing by the window, looking towards the Russian border. She was watching missiles flying over the fields." Yeva evokes the immediate aftermath of worrying about friends, finding shelter, and seeing snipers on the streets with chilling clarity. Her voice rings with remarkable honesty — "My heart is full of fear. What will happen next is anyone's guess ..." Then, while sheltering in a basement, Yeva began write this document of her experiences, from dealing with escalating day-to-day dangers, to the journey she and Granny take to Dublin, and beyond as Yeva starts school, makes new friends, while desperately missing loved ones back home. As Michael Morpurgo writes in his introduction, "Once read, we will have lived it with Yeva, through her words. Once read, we don't forget. Yeva's utterly compelling story stays with us." I'll leave the last wise, soul-stirring words to Yeva, though: "I want to finish by saying this: we are only children, and we deserve to live a life of peace and happiness!"



Once Upon a Fever

Author: Angharad Walker **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 07/07/2022

A stunning fantasy novel, perfect for fans of Philip Pullman and shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize 2023. Since the world fell sick with fantastical illnesses, sisters Payton and Ani have grown up in the hospital of King Jude's. Payton wants to be a methic like her father, working on a cure for her mother's sleeping fever. Ani, however, thinks the remedy for all illness might be found in the green wilderness beyond the hospital walls. When Ani stumbles upon an imprisoned boy who turns everything he touches to gold, her world is turned upside-down. The girls find themselves outside the hospital for the first time, a dark mystery unravelling ... The first teen novel from Angharad Walker, author of critically-acclaimed *The Ash House* Angharad's writing evokes the clever, unique world-building and philosophical themes of Pullman's *His Dark Materials* while remaining startlingly original The story follows two sisters in a London-inspired city full of fantastical illness and sprawling, gothic hospitals where dark secrets linger beneath the surface

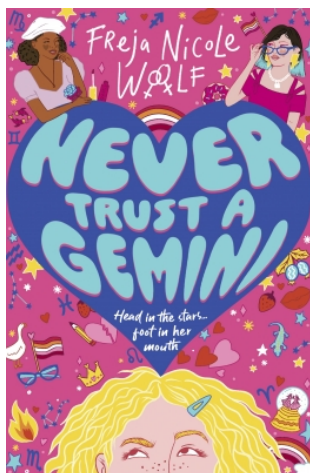


Wild Song

Author: Candy Gourlay **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 02/03/2023

Shortlisted for the Children's & YA Jhalak Prize 2024 | March 2023 Book of the Month This highly anticipated companion novel to the Carnegie shortlisted *Bone Talk* is an even more remarkable achievement. I would not call it a sequel, although we do meet characters again, the voice and perspective is very different. This is Luki's story as narrated to the spirit of her dead mother and from the first sentence we are entirely immersed in her world in the mountains of the Philippines in 1904 and follow her decision to leave her village behind and travel with the charismatic American, Truman Hunt, to St Louis to take part in the World's Fair. I don't think I have ever experienced quite so strongly, the feeling of inhabiting another life as in reading this extraordinary piece of storytelling. There is absolutely no doubt that readers will be changed by this experience, we are not just learning a forgotten history, we are living it. We experience Luki's aspirations, her misgivings, and her recognition of the truth about the people she meets and are ultimately appalled by the treatment they receive. Real people and real events are seamlessly woven into the narrative and the book valuably includes more information and sources at the back. What is depicted here is indeed a shameful episode in American history and reflects appalling attitudes of racial superiority. But this country is every bit as guilty of such colonialism and disgraceful treatment of indigenous peoples and their cultures. Unfortunately, people who are different, whether in appearance, way of life or beliefs also continue to be treated with contempt and even demonised today. Similarly, Luki's quest for more than a subjugated female role and the

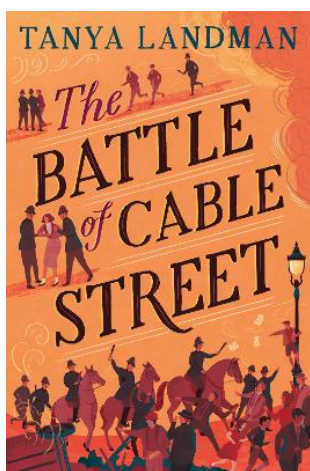
way she kicks against the constraints imposed upon her, while balancing a deep love and respect for her traditions, is a dichotomy that will resonate with many girls and women today. This is a potent and powerful novel that is as unforgettable as it is beautifully and accessibly written. It deserves a place on every award list and to be put into the hands of as many readers of any age as you can!



Never Trust a Gemini

Author: Freja Nicole Woolf **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/06/2023

June 2023 Debut of the Month The first book in what's set up to be a fresh and funny new series, Freja Nicole Woolf's *Never Trust a Gemini* debut dishes up a feast of feel-good fun and swoon-some romance. Fourteen-year-old Cat is a "born clown" (her words), and crazy about astrology. She's also crazy about Alison, a Pisces who, in Cat's loved-up eyes, "really is so perfect. She's half- Ghanaian and her hair is gorgeously dark and curly, and her golden-brown skin glows even in the depths of winter". Sounds like Cat has it bad! In good news, also in Cat's loved-up eyes, she and Alison are the ideal astrological match. With unrequited love expressed in all its achy, pangs pain, and impossibly cool Gemini Morgan adding to Cat's complications, *Never Trust a Gemini* is a terrific blend of humour and relatable teenage troubles, with an ending that'll leave readers desperate for the next book.

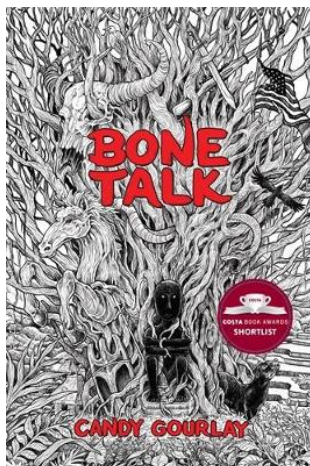


The Battle of Cable Street

Author: Tanya Landman **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/06/2022

June 2022 Book of the Month | Interest Age Teen Reading Age 8+ This is a story that we need to be told. A Carnegie Medal winner, Tanya Landman is one of our finest writers. She is particularly good at writing about historical events, picking out their relevance to our lives today with an unflinching honesty. This short novel is set in the decade before the second World War. Elsie and her family live in a packed, noisy tenement block just off Cable Street in the heart of Stepney. The family are poor, but so are all their neighbours and, despite the daily arguments between Mrs Smith and Mrs Rosenberg, they get along. Until the arrival of Oswald Mosley that is. Elsie's story details the rise of Mosley and his party, and the impact it has in Stepney, turning neighbours into enemies, bringing friends into danger, and playing to the very worst in people. The story concludes with the famous Battle of Cable Street when ordinary East Enders – in defiance of the Home Secretary and the police – bravely barred Mosley's Blackshirt bully boys from marching through their home. The events are as shocking now as they were in 1936 and truths about the reception Mosley received from the British establishment will make you feel 'sweaty and awkward' as Elsie says. The facts speak for themselves, but Elsie's voice is clear,

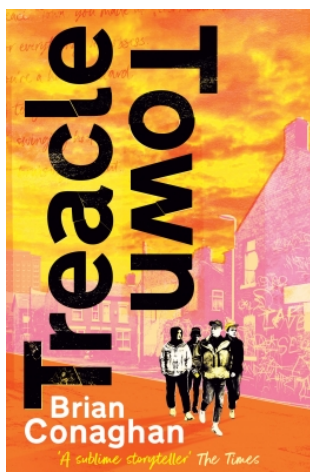
direct, full of anger at the injustice she sees.



Bone Talk

Author: Candy Gourlay **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 13/12/2018

Shortlisted for the Costa Children's Book Award 2018 This immersive coming-of-age epic is set in the late nineteenth century, when an age-old Filipino culture first encounters the brutal warmongering of white men. Samkad cannot wait to become a man through undergoing the 'Cut' rites of passage observed by his Bontok tribe (later ignorantly mispronounced by American occupiers as "Bone Talk"), though he fears losing his best friend Luki as a result, for Luki is a girl and their relationship will be forbidden, even though they share the same ambitions - to become a warrior, to fight the Mangili. Samkad's absorbing journey to manhood is intensified when a white stranger arrives in his village claiming to be his brother, a stranger who tells tales of a people called Americans. Then, when the Americans arrive, bringing war and destruction to the Bontok's remote mountains, nothing will be the same again. Not for Samkad, nor for his family and culture. By turns universal and unique, historically enlightening and emotionally powerful, this relatable, resonant coming-of-age adventure boasts an abundance of heart, atmosphere and action.



Treacle Town

Author: Brian Conaghan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/10/2023

October 2023 Book of the Month Set in the author's hometown of Coatbridge, this hard hitting, shockingly authentic and unforgettable novel will sadly be all too relevant to far too many other places where poverty, gang violence and substance abuse are rife. He is shining a light on overlooked and ignored communities and the metaphor of the title is poignantly apt for the young people who can see no way out and no future. It opens with a funeral and ends with one, young lives brutally and needlessly cut short. Our narrator is Con, a young man who is no stranger to death, his mother took her own life, and his father has since retreated into a competitive bodybuilding obsession. Friends are all he has left, but, while grieving for Biscuit, killed by a rival gang, he has no desire, despite constant goading, to perpetuate the grim cycle of retribution and revenge. Con, Wee-Z, Trig and Nails are all vividly created characters and the banter between them is fast, often funny, sometimes furious and always foul mouthed, but unmistakably realistic. The book is labelled as unsuitable for younger readers and that is undeniable, but nevertheless this is a book which needs to be read and which should be a wakeup call to those with the power to do something about the future for young people and communities. Although a tough read there is hope for redemption. Con discovers slam

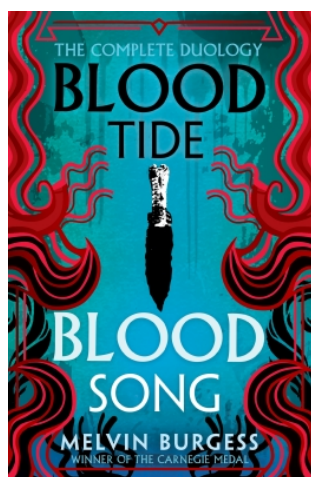
poetry, discovers there is something that maybe he can do, something that can help him break free, rekindling ambition and father son relationships. A hope that survives the guilt and despair of the grim conclusion. This is Conaghan at his brilliant, heartbreaking best. An absolute must-read.



The 10pm Question

Author: Kate De Goldi **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/06/2024

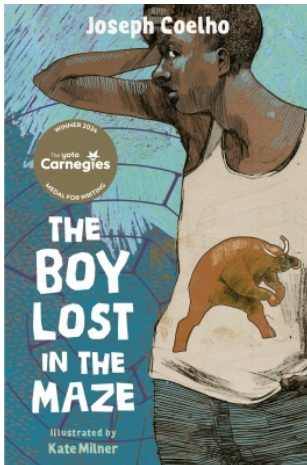
Twelve-year-old Frankie has a long list of worries, from skin cancer and disease, to fire ants, to terrible things happening to his family. A nighttime chat with his mum generally has the effect of calming him down and this '10pm question' is a regular part of their routine. But as the story unfolds, we realise that Frankie's mother hasn't left the house in nine years, that she's unable to do so. The stress that this is putting on Frankie, who feels responsible for his mum, grows and grows, and he becomes concerned that he will turn out the same. Things reach crisis point when his new friend Sydney announces she is leaving. Sydney's mother, in contrast to Frankie's, can't stay in any place for more than months at a time, which is equally problematic for her daughter. Frankie's eccentric but lovable relations and his friends are depicted with immense skill in this extremely engaging, often very funny story. In addition to his other problems, Frankie also has to cope with the usual challenges facing twelve-year-olds and this is also warm, sensitive and credible portrait of a young boy in a unique situation.



Bloodtide & Bloodsong: The Complete Duology

Author: Melvin Burgess **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/08/2024

August 2024 Book of the Month In thrilling news for new generations of YA readers (and adults), this two-in-one tome brings together both books — Blood Tide and Blood Song — in Melvin Burgess' outstanding dark fantasy duology. Merging myth and sci-fi with arresting contemporary style, it's outrageously bold and powerful. First published some 25 years ago, the duology's ferocious world transposes the Icelandic Volsunga Saga to future London. A city destroyed. A city cut off from the rest of the country and wracked by violence as a pair of warring families contest power, with the second novel, Blood Song, revisiting remaining family members some years later. No holds are barred, no topic off limit. There's blood and violence, sex and death, and emotional depths are punch-packingly plumbed as Burgess takes readers to the brink while exploring timeless themes of treachery, revenge, power-play, and bonds that might make or break us with gripping invention.



The Boy Lost in the Maze

Author: Joseph Coelho **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/06/2025

June 2025 Book of the Month | Winner of Yoto Carnegie Medal for Writing 2024 Using the much-interpreted legend of Theseus and the Minotaur – a journey full of dangers and threat, as well as a search for a father as a basis Coelho then weaves around it the story of Theo – also on a journey to find his father. Each is off on a maze-like quest to find their roots, their inheritance with each facing dangers and problems along the way. Not only is this an intricate mix of two stories with echoes of each other, but in places is given over to the reader to control the story arc by choosing which way Theseus would respond, much in the way as the ‘pick your adventure’ stories do. It is heartening to see some of the choices to Theseus age old problems - and note the better responses chosen. Both of our main characters face choices, dilemmas, doubts, difficulties, and danger on their journeys but each responds in the most effective way for themselves! There are countless different poetic forms exhibited here – a sestina is even explained in one of the poems as if it were a lesson in Theo’s school. Our former Children’s Laureate has created another powerful, enthralling story in verse form. Kate Milner has supported these with beautiful black and white illustrations ranging from pieces that look as if they may be ancient Greek illustrations to wonderfully detailed modern depictions. Once you pick it up you won’t want to put it down!

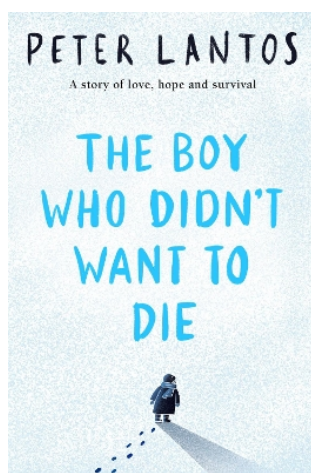


Best of All Worlds

Author: Kenneth Oppel **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 05/06/2025

June 2025 Book of the Month Xavier Oak is a thirteen-year-old who’d rather be doing anything besides embarking on a summer trip with his father and pregnant stepmother. He’d much rather stay home with his brother and mother or play Dungeons and Dragons with Selena, the coolest girl around. Despite all of this, Xavier resigns himself to his fate and goes on the trip to the cottage by the lake. The problem? When he wakes up on his second day at the cottage, the lake is...gone. It’s like the cottage itself has been plucked from the ground by a giant and put somewhere else. On the verge of panic, Xavier, his dad and stepmother go exploring in a desperate attempt to figure out what has happened. They discover two things: They are trapped inside some sort of dome. They are completely on their own. Although they appear to have enough supplies at hand to maintain their survival, a whirlwind of questions pummel their minds. Where are they? Who brought them here? How do they escape? Three years pass before anything happens. Three years of routine and fading hope. Then, out of the blue, another family enters the dome and everything changes. The two groups discover they have nothing in common. In fact, they don’t see eye-to-eye on anything, including the theories as to how they arrived in the dome. What follows is a tense exploration of the power of disinformation, conspiracy theories, captivity, climate change and control. Best of All Worlds is fast-

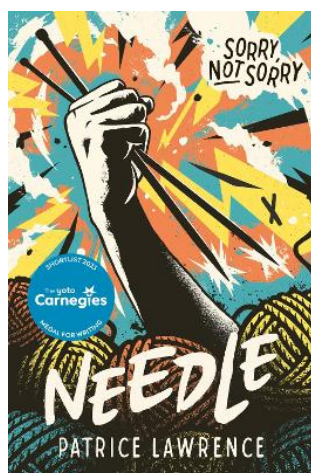
paced and engaging, a thought-provoking look at larger, Us vs. Them rhetoric while still focusing on captivity's impact on the individuals within the dome. I really enjoyed Oppel's deep-dive into current social divides and the long lasting impact it has on our collective psyche. It's a genre-twisting survivalist sci-fi thriller built for fans of books like *Unwind* by Neal Shusterman, *Gone* by Michael Grant and *The Giver* by Lois Lowry.



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

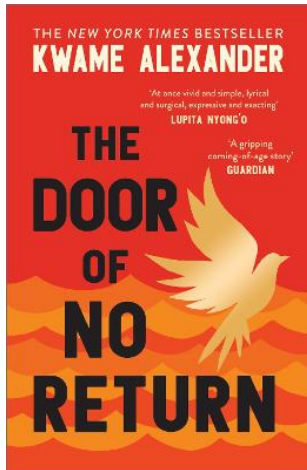


Needle

Author: Patrice Lawrence **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/05/2022

May 2022 Book of the Month - Interest Age Teen Reading Age 8 | Longlisted for the Jhalak Children's & Young Adult Prize 2023 | Shortlisted for the Yoto Carnegie Medal for Writing 2023

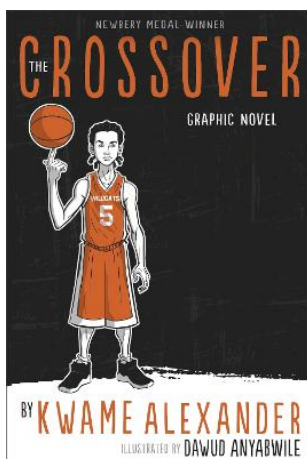
Patrice Lawrence's new book for Barrington Stoke is heartrending and thought-provoking, a taut first-person narrative that many will find themselves reading in one sitting. 15-year-old Charlene is struggling to stay in control of her life. She's been in care since her mother died two years ago and desperately misses her little sister, who is living with her own father. Knitting is Charlene's therapy, the click, click, click of the needles helping her find calm, but the pressures she faces at school and outside are overwhelming. An act of cruelty against her leads Charlene to rage and violence. As the security she has known unravels, readers will understand her despair and frustration, particularly at the constant demands on her to be sorry. Written to be accessible to all readers, *Needle* lets us see through someone else's eyes, highlighting the restrictive effects of society's expectations of individuals. Vivid, powerful and unforgettable. Particularly suitable for struggling, reluctant and dyslexic teen readers



The Door of No Return

Author: Kwame Alexander **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/10/2023

March 2023 Book of the Month Beginning in 1860, Kwame Alexander's *The Door of No Return* — the first powerfully poetic book in a trilogy — shares the stirring story of a family who live in Upper Kwanta in the Asante Kingdom (present-day Ghana). Revealing hidden history and brutal truths, this masterfully conjured novel-in-verse is underpinned by the author's intention to show that, "while the brutal captivity and bondage of Africans was a part of my story, it was not the first chapter, or even the second...I wrote this story because people need to know that the middle was not our beginning. I wanted to speak the truth about the history of African Americans, because while most of us are aware of the American part, it's time for us to know more about the African part, right?" While sharing this important history, *The Door of No Return* is also brilliant at evoking relatable emotions, with the story centred around eleven-year-old Kofi — a boy who loves swimming in the river, loves a "girl/who makes my stomach wobble/and my heart beat", and loves playing oware with his wise grandfather, Nana Mosi, the village storyteller. At school, though, Kofi wonders why they're forced to learn so much British history, "why we do not spend/as much time/learning the history/of our own kingdom", and why pupils are forbidden from speaking Twi. Alongside such cultural oppression, an annual festival honouring a peace treaty sees Kofi's older brother face Lower Kwanta's heir to the throne when he's selected to fight for Upper Kwanta. The result of the contest unleashes a tsunami of trouble, and Kofi faces a "door of no return". Forced to take a "slow passage/over troubled waters" in brutal conditions, he finds some solace in memories, dreams, and singing praise songs to his family. The heart-stopping ending will leave readers desperate to find out what Kofi does next.

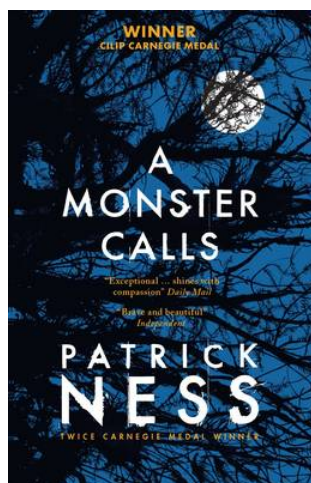


The Crossover Graphic Novel

Author: Kwame Alexander **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/03/2020

March 2020 Book of the Month The novel of *The Crossover* is a Newberry Medal Winner, and a Coretta Scott King Award Winner in the US and was Shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal in the UK. This graphic novel version is the whole story complete with large and small two-coloured illustrations gracing every page. This is a deceptively simple read – a novel in verse about siblings getting through middle school, their lives, their crushes, their family interactions, and basketball. The boys are twins Josh and Jordan Bell, sons of a famous basketball player, and aiming to make a mark in the world of basketball. There are rivalries between the boys, they revel in their differences, but family holds them together whatever the world throws at them. The words and pictures work so well together, you will be on the edge of your seat, rooting for the team as they play and crying with the twins when things

go awry. To tell such a complex story with so few words, with such emotional depth – Alexander is a master of devastating and uplifting storytelling. Anyabwile's illustrations enhance a superb story – adding expressions and movement to an already great novel.



A Monster Calls

Author: Patrick Ness **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 07/05/2015

Prize-winning Patrick Ness displays brilliant new skills of sensitivity in this hauntingly touching story of how a boy deals with the looming threat of his mother's death from cancer. Haunted by a monster in his dreams, denied much information by his family and treated as a weirdo by his class mates and a 'special case' by his teachers, Conor struggles to get to grips with the devastating emotions which threaten to overwhelm him. How he finds the courage and strength to face the end when it happens is both utterly shattering and deeply satisfying. Costa Award winner Patrick Ness spins a tale from the final idea of much-loved Carnegie Medal winner Siobhan Dowd, whose premature death from cancer prevented her from writing it herself. Winner of the Red House Children's Book Award 2012. Winner of the Galaxy Children's Book of the Year Award 2011.

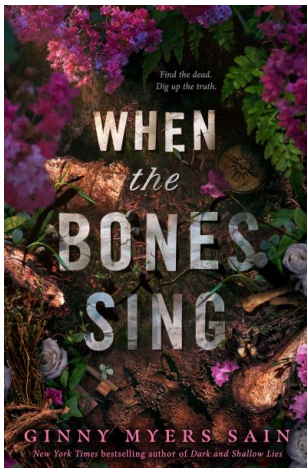


Dangerous Influence

Author: Sally Nicholls **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 24/09/2026

Interest Age Teen Reading Age 8 - September 2026 Book of the Month Pitched for 13+-year-old readers with a reading age of eight, Sally Nicholls' *Dangerous Influence* dissects the dangers of digital "sharenting" with insight, empathy and an accessible lightness of touch. As a result of their mum being a major parent influencer (her vlog and social media channels boast millions of followers), Anna, thirteen, and her sister Josie, fifteen, have lived almost their whole lives online. But, while their mum's success as a "sharenter" has gifted the sisters beautiful bedrooms and expensive holidays, it's also come at a cost. Feeling like she lives in her sister's shadow, Anna has always hated appearing in her mum's videos: "Can't people see that someone who films their kids and puts them on the internet has to be a terrible mum?" Mocked by her peers for the personal things her mum shares online, it doesn't take much encouragement from a cool new girl at school for Anna to refuse to appear in any more content. At the same time, Josie admits she's being stalked by a male follower on her own channel, which brings matters to a complex head. Raising important ethical questions around the agency of children and young people, and showing the pivotal moment teenagers realise "parents are just humans and they make mistakes like everyone else", *Dangerous Influence* is also notable for the way it presents the mum's personal context: "People who think I'm nothing because I'm a single mum. Because I used to be on benefits. Because I'm a woman. Because

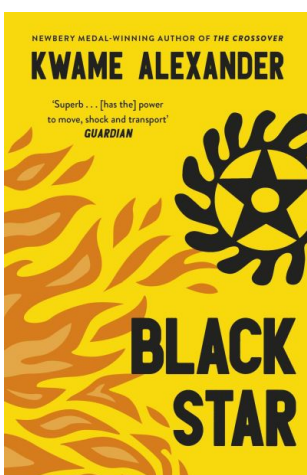
I dare to say out loud that parenting's hard". With a beautifully unexpected ending that reveals how it's possible to find new paths and fix fractured relationships, it really is extraordinary how much Nicholls weaves into such a fast-paced, perfectly-plotted, accessible story. As such, *Dangerous Influence* comes highly recommended for all teenagers and, given its nuanced exploration of a remarkable range of discussion-sparking topics, it's also a great book for the classroom.



When the Bones Sing

Author: Ginny Myers Sain **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 13/03/2025

Romance, secrets and mystery and a teenage girl who hears the bones of the dead... Perfect for fans of Holly Jackson, Adalyn Grace and Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing* 17-year-old Dovie doesn't believe in magic even though she comes from a long line of women who can hear the bones of the dead sing, and for the past few years the bones have been crooning nonstop, calling out to Dovie to dig them up. Because there is a killer on the loose - someone is snatching hikers from the miles of tracks, leaving their mutilated bodies for Dovie to find. And the body count grows ever higher. Some of the old-timers believe that it's the monstrous Ozarks howler snatching people off the Aux Arc Trail. Well Dovie doesn't believe in the howler, and she doesn't believe her best friend - the gorgeous Lo - when he tells her he is being haunted by dark shadows. All she believes in is her talent that guides the local sheriff to the bones when they begin their song, then reuniting the dead with their families to give them some peace. But the truth of their deaths isn't buried with their bones; it's hidden somewhere deep in the hills. And Lo and Dovie must unearth it before anyone else is killed...

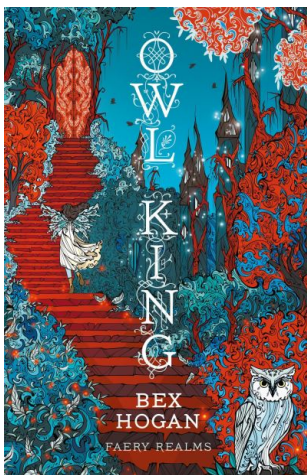


Black Star

Author: Kwame Alexander **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 25/09/2025

Black Star, the second novel in Kwame Alexander's exceptional *The Door of No Return* trilogy, moves from 1860s Upper Kwanta in the Asante Kingdom (present-day Ghana) to the 1920s Jim Crow segregation era in the American South. In this dazzling novel- in-verse, Kofi, the central character of *The Door of No Return*, features as 12-year-old Charley's grandfather, Nani Kofi. A man who keeps his suitcase by the door ready for when he can return to "his old home, back in Africa" aboard Marcus Garvey's *Black Star Line* ship. Charley is an incredibly-drawn character who declares, "the only thing/I love doing/more than listening/to Nana Kofi's stories/is playing ball". She also dreams of being the first female pitcher to play professional baseball — an ambition that's given wings by Nana Kofi's inspiring stories of their ancestors' courage in her present-day context of a racist environment in which she can't cross the bridge in town: "it's dangerous over there... for us".

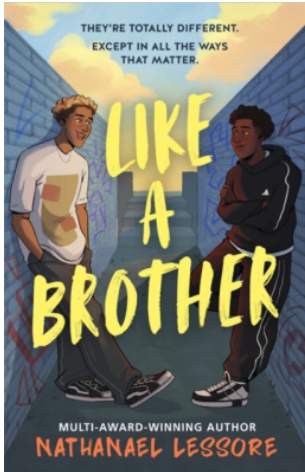
Charley's dreams are further heightened when she's gifted a baseball glove that belonged to a woman who played in a league that started as a result of "colored women in Philadelphia not being allowed to play in other professional leagues". But when Charley bravely stands up to a bully and challenges him to game, an uncontrollable chain of events is unleashed. Luminous and compelling, there's a powerful sense of community, family and coming together throughout the novel: "I love Sunday dinner because...the air around me swells with laughter/because my family can be LOUD/because that means they're happy/because I feel whole". Black Star is also laden with powerful — and often moving — wisdom from Nana Kofi ("When your house becomes a cage, it is better to fly away and find another home"), and pitch-perfect in evoking that liminal space between childhood and the teenage transition to adulthood.



Owl King

Author: Bex Hogan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/06/2026

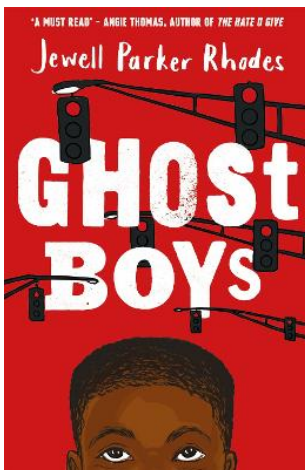
October 2025 Book of the Month "For sisters, we were nothing alike, her features fine where mine were plain, her edges keen where mine were soft...but in one thing we were perfectly matched. Our love for each other". And it's this love and devotion that drives Owl King's beautiful, brambled narrative. Being half-human, half-faery, Ilsette is an outcast in the Realm of Never Moon, a withered, once-lush dominion under the command of the Owl King. In contrast, her sister Lyla is entirely faery, and entirely beautiful, and it's this beauty that sees Lyla forced to marry the Owl King. Without her sister, Ilsette is rendered rudderless: "I didn't know how to exist in a world without my sister. She was my companion, my comfort, my compass. I relied on stories to guide me, and the truth was that as the storyteller, it was Lyla who set my path". Then comes another devastating truth — the Owl King marries to feed off his current wife's magic, casting them aside when they've been drained. And so Ilsette embarks on a dangerous, love-driven quest to find the feather that will save her sister. At the same time, Lyla does what she does best — she tells her captor stories — and in time, the Owl King and his captive bride become close. Meanwhile, Ilsette encounters multiple dangers while grappling with deep-rooted identity anguish: "I was so tired. Tired of hiding who I was, whether faery or human...What might it be like, I wondered, to be myself?" Occupying the same faery realm as Nettle, Owl King sees Bex Hogan share a time-stopping, timeless story of love and survival, nigh-impossible tasks and impossibly difficult truths, shot-through with the message that "stories will save you", as Ilsette once counselled Lyla.



Like a Brother

Author: Nathanael Lessor **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 07/05/2026

Warm-hearted and original, *Like a Brother* skilfully considers the true meaning of family in this tale of an angry, chaotic and grieving teen boy. Owais is non-too-happy when his distant cousin comes to stay, especially when Abass insists on repeatedly picking fights and causing problems. Owais is a character teen readers will instantly warm and relate to – he is full of love for his family, a zest for life and inner anxiety for what his future might look like. Owais’ family life is particularly well evoked, they may not have much materially, but their love and guidance shines from the page. Abass has not benefited from the security Owais has and is a much more complex character. As Owais, and the reader, get to know him though, Abass’ sense of isolation and inner sadness is slowly revealed, showing a caring but scared boy who really only wants love and security. Tackling themes such as racism, classism, masculinity, homophobia, belonging and toxic parenting, *Like a Brother* is an important novel with lots of discussion potential. Combined with Nathanael Lessor’s trademark warmth and wit, this is a novel not to be missed for all fans of contemporary YA literature. This is Lessor’s best novel yet, readers who have previously enjoyed any of his other books should put this straight to the top of their “To Be Read” pile. Perfect for readers who enjoy funny books with depth. Strongly recommended.



Ghost Boys

Author: Jewell Parker Rhodes **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 19/04/2018

UKLA Longlist Book Awards - 2019 A heartbreaking and powerful story about a black boy killed by a white police officer, drawing connections with real-life history, from award-winning author Jewell Parker Rhodes.



Roar

Author: Manjeet Mann **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/10/2025

October 2025 Book of the Month What an apt title for this stunning new verse novel from the multi award-winning Manjeet Mann! This is undoubtedly a book which roars; the author's shock, passion and outrage can be felt in every beautifully placed word. In the author's note at the end of the book, she recounts her horror upon coming across a UN report about the rise of witch-hunting in India, with more than 2500 acts of violence associated with it since the year 2000. What was even worse, was to discover that almost all the victims were lower caste, continuing the systemic oppression that they have faced for centuries. Also systemic is the treatment of women more generally and she was inspired by the real-life story of Sampat Pal and her pink sari wearing gang fighting for justice for abused women and of Phoolan Devi, India's 'Bandit Queen' who became an MP. All these important threads weave into the remarkable story of Rizu, born to privilege in Delhi, who has an accusation of witchcraft concocted by her previous best friend Sonu, over boyfriend issues. With Rizu's life in danger, her father fatally shifts the blame to Jaya, Rizu's gentle servant companion. Rizu cannot live with the guilt of witnessing Jaya's death. Empowered by ghostly ancestral voices and ancient myth, she runs away and joins a vigilante group of women and her search for justice becomes ever more violent until she eventually repents and looks for a more positive way forward. She discovers her old enemy Sonu has also dramatically changed her life in response to the tragedy of Jana and together they start cooperating in building schools for the poorest children. The novel ends with an empowering epilogue poem which is an encouragement to us all to change the world 'because even the smallest ripple can become a wave and every whisper a roar' This novel is such a powerful advocacy of standing up to oppression that it cannot help but leave a lasting impression on the reader.
