

Children's Book Week

Book Trust's Best Book Guide 2015



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 **BookTrust**
Inspire a love of reading



Introduction

Published to coincide with Children's Book Week, Book Trust's Best Book Guide brings together reviews of some of our favourite books for children and young people published within the last year.

Children's Book Week celebrates reading for pleasure and – to help you find the right books for your readers – we've created this guide, to support children's love of reading and help young minds grow.

The reviews are grouped into five age categories:

- **0-5 years**
- **6-8 years**
- **9-11 years**
- **12-14 years**
- **14 years and over**

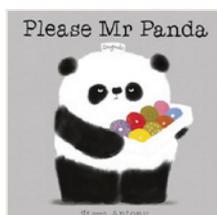
To help guide you, we have recommended a suitable reading age for each title. This refers to the age at which a child is likely to be able to read the text themselves. We have also suggested an interest age – the age at which we think children will start to enjoy the book.

Hundreds of other book recommendations for children of all ages can also be found on our website booktrust.org.uk. You can search our extensive database of book reviews by age, and by genre. Our website also contains features and interviews with authors and illustrators, themed booklists, free teachers' resources, and regular competitions to win free books.

We'd also love to know how you promote a love of reading in your school, library, home or bookshop – email details and photos to cbw@booktrust.org.uk or tweet using [#childrensbookweek](https://twitter.com/childrensbookweek).



0-5 years



Please Mr Panda

Written and illustrated by Steve Antony

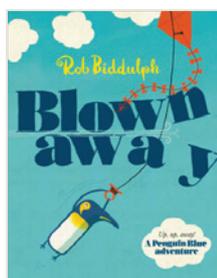
Mr Panda has a tray of delicious-looking doughnuts. He wants to share them, so he politely asks all the animals he meets if they would like one. A penguin, a skunk and a whale all say 'yes', but for some reason, Mr Panda changes his mind each time. It is only when Lemur remembers to say the magic word that Mr Panda is happy to share his tasty treats.

This is a witty and stylishly-presented picture book, in which the black and white animal characters create a vivid contrast with the brightly-coloured doughnuts. Children will love looking through the beautifully-designed page spreads time and time again – and will also pick up on the story's simple but all-important message: good manners will get you anything, including doughnuts!

Publisher: Hachette Children's Group

Interest age: 2+

Reading age: 5+



Blown Away

Written and illustrated by Rob Biddulph

Penguin Blue has got a new toy, and it's the perfect day to try it out. But the wind is a little stronger than expected, and along with the new kite, Penguin Blue is blown away! Friends grab onto the kite string, as the kite soars over the ocean. When at last the animals land in a lush green jungle, they soon become hot and bothered. They will need to work together to find a way to escape the island and find their way back to their cold but comforting home.

Rob Biddulph's debut picture book will charm even the youngest children with its simple rhyme and clean, bright artwork. Gorgeously designed and illustrated, this is an immediately appealing book that announces the arrival of a new picture book talent. A deserving winner of the 2015 Waterstones Children's Book Prize.

Publisher: HarperCollins Children's Books

Interest age: 2+

Reading age: 5+



Over the Hills and Far Away

Edited by Elizabeth Hammill

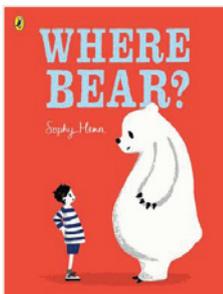
Within the covers of this beautifully-presented collection, readers will find rhymes from all over the English-speaking world. Each page offers something new to discover, from a Trinidadian clapping rhyme, to a Scottish nursery rhyme, to vibrant rhythms from Native American and Maori cultures. The same diversity is reflected in the illustrations: each spread has been created by a different artist, including the likes of Nick Sharratt, Shaun Tan, Marcia Williams, Axel Scheffler, Satoshi Kitamura and many more.

This is a treasure trove of nursery rhymes that belongs on every bookshelf. All royalties from sales of the book will go to Seven Stories, Britain's National Centre for Children's Books.

Publisher: Frances Lincoln

Interest age: 1+

Reading age: 5+



Where Bear?

Written and illustrated by Sophie Henn

When a little boy's pet polar bear grows up, he becomes too big for the house, and needs to be found a new home – but where?

In a series of bold, single colour page spreads, the boy and his bear investigate all kinds of possible homes where bears of different sorts might be found – a toy shop, a zoo, a circus, a forest, a cave and a jungle – before at last, back at home, the fridge gives the boy the best idea of all.

In her debut picture book, Sophie Henn presents a delightful tale about a boy, a bear, and finding a place to call home. Full of warmth and humour, this is a picture book that will have plenty of appeal for little readers.

Publisher: Puffin

Interest age: 2+

Reading age: 5+



Once Upon an Alphabet

Written and illustrated by Oliver Jeffers

Oliver Jeffers presents his own original and imaginative spin on the traditional ABC book, bringing the alphabet vividly to life.

Turn the pages of this large format book to discover twenty six (very) short stories, which introduce us to a host of new characters - from dynamic duo Owl and Octopus, to Edmund the astronaut with his awkward fear of heights. (Fans of Jeffers's previous books will find a few familiar faces to spot as well!)

Gloriously-illustrated in Jeffers's distinctive style, it's easy to see why this book was selected as Children's Books Ireland's Book of the Year. A gorgeously-presented picture book that will delight children and parents alike.

Publisher: HarperCollins Children's Books

Interest age: 3+

Reading age: 5+



Wanted! Ralfy Rabbit, Book Burglar

Written and illustrated by Emily MacKenzie

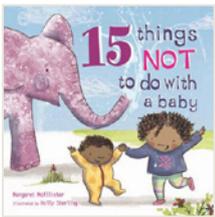
Ralfy Rabbit loves to read! He loves books and wants to read them all the time. This isn't a problem until Ralfy starts nosing into other people's bookshelves while they are asleep – and even starts taking their books home. This bunny has become a book burglar! But when books start disappearing from PC Puddle's shelf, it's time for Ralfy to learn the difference between borrowing and stealing...

Little book lovers will adore this story about naughty Ralfy. The illustrations are fun, with lots to look at – sharp eyed young readers may even spot the appearance of the Bookstart Bear in one page spread. A great tribute to the value of libraries – a place where Ralfy can take whatever books he fancies, the only condition being that they are returned so someone else can enjoy them – this is a delightful picture book that deserves to be shared time and time again.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest age: 2+

Reading age: 5+



Fifteen Things Not to Do With a Baby

Written by Margaret McAllister and illustrated by Holly Sterling

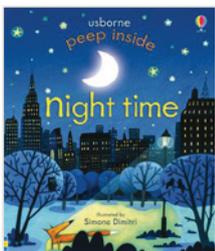
There's a new baby in the family! It's a lot of fun being a sister or brother, but there are some simple rules to follow to make sure baby is safe and happy.

Full of tongue-in-cheek helpful advice like 'don't peg the baby on the washing line' and 'don't swap the baby for a guinea pig', this picture book will delight toddlers who are dealing with a new arrival. Holly Sterling's illustrations are inclusive, fresh and fun, with some lovely silly scenes as baby is put in all sorts of perilous (cuddling an octopus!) and not so perilous (eating all the chocolate!) situations. A sweet picture book that is certain to make young readers giggle.

Publisher: Frances Lincoln

Interest age: 2+

Reading age: 5+



Peep inside the Night Time

Written by Anna Milbourne and illustrated by Simona Dimitri

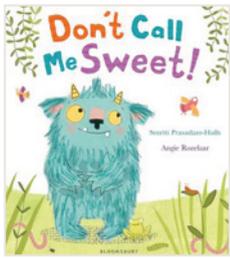
From Usborne's 'Peep Inside' series comes this lovely board book all about the night time. Lift the flaps in the dark, sleepy, silent night-time scenes to reveal all the secret activity going on beneath – from foxes and owls searching for food, to bakers making bread for the morning, to a sleeper train travelling through the night.

The robust flaps are just right for little fingers to lift easily, and the atmospheric illustrations from Simona Dimitri vividly conjure up the night time world. Perfect for sharing and enjoying together, this is makes the ideal bedtime book.

Publisher: Usborne

Interest age: 2+

Reading age: 5+



Don't Call Me Sweet

Written by **Smriti Prasad-Halls** and illustrated by **Angie Rozelaar**

Little Monster revels in his sharp claws, spiky teeth and terrifying roar; he's often slimy and stinky and loves bug-eye stew. Don't ever pat him on the head. And don't ever, EVER, call him 'sweet'. Little Monster's mission is to terrify everyone he meets... or at least it is until he meets someone even more monstrous than himself.

With a lively rhyming text, this is a lovely book for reading aloud. The lively illustrations veer from dark chaos to demure pastels, expressing visually Little Monster's inner contradictions. Great fun for small monsters who wish they were bigger!

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest age: 3+

Reading age: 5+



bookstart



Little Red and the Very Hungry Lion

Written and illustrated by **Alex T Smith**

Little Red sets out to visit her auntie, who is poorly. She walks under the giraffes, over the sleepy crocodiles, past the enormous elephants, and by the chattering monkeys. Then a Very Hungry Lion approaches, wanting to gobble her up! But despite all his cunning plans, Little Red proves much smarter than Lion, and soon takes charge...

This delightful spin on the classic fairy-tale by bestselling illustrator Alex T Smith is set against a vibrantly coloured African landscape. Visually stunning, with lots of clever touches that will make both parents and children smile, this is a gorgeously warm and fun-filled take on a much-loved story that young readers will find impossible to resist.

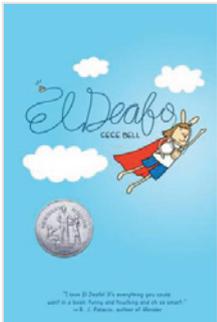
Publisher: Scholastic

Interest age: 3+

Reading age: 5+



6-8 years old



El Deafo

Written and illustrated by Cece Bell

Based on the childhood of US author/illustrator Cece Bell, this graphic novel starts when Cece is four, and is diagnosed as deaf following a bout of meningitis. As the story progresses, Cece faces the challenges of starting school where she is the only deaf child, and must learn to understand other people's reactions and attitudes.

Cece soon discovers she has a 'superpower' – her Phonic Ear (an unwieldy 1970s hearing device) can enable her to hear what teachers are up to when they leave the classroom, gaining her the admiration of her classmates. She soon finds friends, and by the end of the story, is successfully becoming the 'El Deafo' alter ego of her imagination – capable of taking on the world.

With quirky illustrations and an engaging comic strip format, this is a story told with great charm and plenty of humour – whilst also offering readers a fascinating insight into what it can be like to be severely or profoundly deaf.

Publisher: Abrams and Chronicle

Interest level: 8+

Reading age: 8+



The Spy Who Loved School Dinners

Written by Pamela Butchart and illustrated by Thomas Flintham

Izzy is really excited to have been chosen to look after the new girl in her class – but Mathilde isn't quite what Izzy and her friends were expecting. Firstly she's tall. Very tall. And her hair is short. Very short. But strangest of all, she LOVES school dinners. No one likes school dinners. There's only one explanation... the new girl must be a SPY!

Packed full of hilarity, excitement and fun, *The Spy Who Loved School Dinners* is a real stand-out. The engaging plot, bold illustrations and short, sharp chapters make it a perfect book for children to tackle independently. The winner of the Best Story category in the 2015 Blue Peter Book Awards, this lively and humorous story is guaranteed to grab the reader's attention.

Publisher: Nosy Crow

Interest age: 7+

Reading age: 7+





Mad About Monkeys

Written and illustrated by Owen Davey

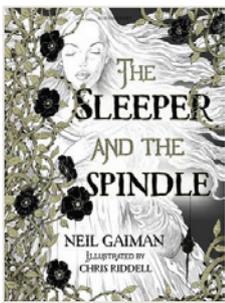
Monkeys are always a favourite with children, and this beautiful book explores some of the 250 species inhabiting our planet – from the smallest Pygmy Marmoset to the largest Mandrill. Each striking double page spread is bursting with monkey facts for children to discover, as well as plenty of Owen Davey's striking artwork.

Proving just how stylish and attractive illustrated children's non-fiction can be, this informative book is sure to leave readers 'mad about monkeys'. Just one of a wealth of beautiful new illustrated children's non-fiction titles that have recently hit bookshop shelves, this book is a must for young nature enthusiasts. Those who enjoy this title will also love *Beautiful Birds* by Jean Rousset and Emmanuelle Walker, another visually-arresting non-fiction book, this time about bird life.

Publisher: Flying Eye

Interest age: 7+

Reading age: 7+



The Sleeper and the Spindle

Written by Neil Gaiman and illustrated by Chris Riddell

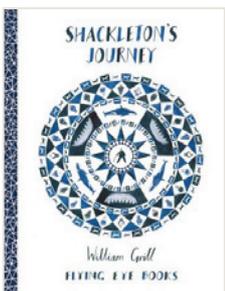
A young queen's wedding preparation is interrupted when she hears of a strange sickness travelling across the land, causing everyone in its path to fall into a slumber. Swapping her gown for armour, she sets out to save her people, determined to locate the sleeping princess whose curse is engulfing her kingdom. But in this fairy-tale, things are not as they seem – and rescuing the princess may not necessarily result in 'happy ever after'.

Neil Gaiman has teamed up with newly appointed Waterstones Children's Laureate 2015-2017 Chris Riddell to combine two well-known fairy stories, challenging all of the reader's expectations in the process. The female characters are powerful and in control of their own destiny, creating a contrast with the traditional fairy-tale princess; whilst Riddell's dark, luscious illustrations create an atmosphere of magic and menace. Both children and adults will be enthralled by this spectacular picture book.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest age: 7+

Reading age: 8+



Shackleton's Journey

Written and illustrated by William Grill

In 1914, Ernest Shackleton and his brave crew set out to cross the frozen waters of Antarctica. Ahead of them lay unimaginable danger – ferocious seas, uncharted mountains, ice and snow. This is the story of how they endured the hardships they faced, and ultimately managed to survive their perilous adventure.

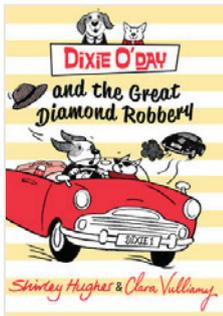
To mark the 100th anniversary of the expedition, William Grill has created a stunning non-fiction book, which combines informative text with a wealth of detailed, coloured pencil drawings. Each page layout is perfectly designed, making clever use of white space to evoke the bleakness of the Antarctic landscape.

Whilst the tale of a long-ago failed expedition may seem a niche subject for a children's book, there's no doubt that young readers will be fascinated by this book and will be attracted by all the quirky details, such as the drawings of all 99 of Shackleton's sled dogs. Carefully-researched and thought-provoking, this is a stand-out work of illustrated non-fiction, which was awarded the 2015 CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal.

Publisher: Flying Eye

Reading age: 7+

Interest age: 7+



Dixie O'Day and the Great Diamond Robbery

Written by Shirley Hughes and illustrated by Clara Vulliamy

Book Trust Lifetime Achievement Award winner Shirley Hughes has teamed up with her daughter, illustrator Clara Vulliamy, for this adorable series about canine driver Dixie O'Day and his good friend Percy. In this story, Dixie and Percy are off on holiday – but when fabulous popstar Peaches Miaow has her priceless diamond necklace stolen from the Hotel Splendide, it's up to the dashing duo to solve the mystery.

This gentle illustrated storybook is full of fun: with a short chapter for each day of the week, and lots of added extras, it makes perfect reading for newly-independent readers. The attractive spreads in a bold colour palette immediately catch the eye, and the compact, chunky format is ideal for small fingers to manage.

Publisher: Random House Children's Publishers

Interest age: 6+

Reading age: 7+



Witch Wars

Written by Sibéal Ponder and illustrated by Laura Ellen Anderson

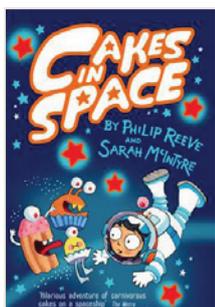
Tiga Whicabim doesn't know she's a witch. Or not until a fabulous fairy shows up and whisks her down the sink pipes to the fabulous witch world of Ritzy City to compete in Witch Wars! What follows is a madcap adventure full of spells, riddles, fantastic hats, cakes, and friendship. But does Tiga have what it takes to win? With the help of her newfound witch friends, she just might...

This delightful book is packed with charming illustrations, hilarious character descriptions and wild and wacky situations. A fresh and fun take on witches, *Witch Wars* will appeal to all young readers who enjoy stories about magic, adventure, fashion and friendship.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Reading age: 8+

Interest age: 7+



Cakes in Space

Written by Philip Reeve and illustrated by Sarah McIntyre

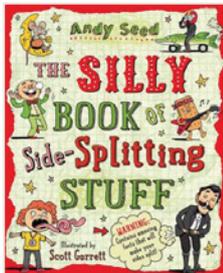
Astrid and her family are off on an exciting journey to start a new life on a new planet! Everyone is tucked up in their spaceship pods to sleep through the long journey to their new home. But when Astrid awakes in the midst of the voyage, she realises something has gone horribly wrong. The Nom-O-Tron machine in the canteen has malfunctioned and now the ship is being taken over by monstrous cakes - cakes with a killer instinct! With everyone else still in a state of suspended sleep, it's down to Astrid and her robot friend Pilbeam to save the day.

This lively and exciting space story from the duo behind *Oliver and the Seawigs* is packed with fun, adventure and plenty of surreal humour. Bursting with McIntyre's engaging artwork, with knowing jokes that will tickle adults as much as kids, this is a wonderfully wacky delight that the whole family will enjoy.

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Reading Age: 7+

Interest level: 6+



The Silly Book of Side-Splitting Stuff

Written by Andy Seed and illustrated by Scott Garrett

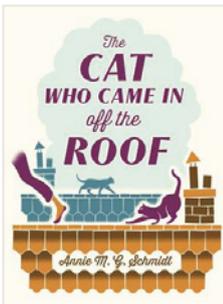
Ever wanted to know how much gravy the boot of a Mini Cooper Convertible can hold? What about which country's residents dine on maggot cheese? Find out all the silly and side-splitting facts you could ever imagine in this humorous non-fiction book.

With a clear and easy-to-read layout, complete with well-placed black and white line drawings, this witty book of facts, stories, jokes and lists covers a wide range of topics. The winner of Best Book with Facts in the 2015 Blue Peter Best Book Awards, it will have children (and an adult or two) laughing out loud, trying out silly things to do, and telling all their friends about their new-found knowledge.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest age: 7+

Reading age: 7+



The Cat Who Came in Off the Roof

Written by Annie M G Schmidt, translated by David Colmer and illustrated by Nathan Burton

Reporter Tibble is in trouble: he is about to be sacked because all the newspaper stories he writes are about cats! But when a young woman is chased up a tree by a dog, Tibble rescues her and then discovers she was once a cat called Minou. With her feline friends listening out for all the local human news, it looks like his new friend might prove to be the answer to all Tibble's problems.

Translated into English from Dutch, young readers will be enchanted by this humorous and slightly surreal tale, with a charmingly old-fashioned feel.

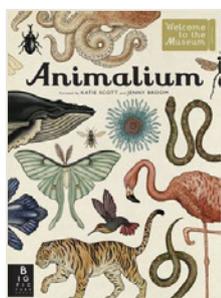
Publisher: Pushkin Children's

Interest age: 7+

Reading age: 8+



9-11 years old



Animalium

Written by Jenny Broom and illustrated by Katie Scott

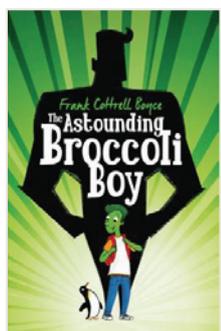
Take a leisurely wander through a marvellous museum of animals with this incredible book endorsed by the Natural History Museum. There are more than 160 different animal specimens to discover in its pages, which are cleverly laid out in the style of carefully curated museum exhibits.

Quirky yet authoritative, this book is bursting with information to engage young naturalists, whilst the spectacular illustrations in a rich colour palette give it real 'wow' factor. Children will enjoy poring over all the details in each gorgeous page spread, and the large format makes it ideal for sharing with a friend, or in the classroom. Stylishly presented, this is a stand-out fact book that will captivate children – and adults too!

Publisher: Big Picture Press

Interest age: 8+

Reading age: 9+



The Astounding Broccoli Boy

Written by Frank Cottrell Boyce

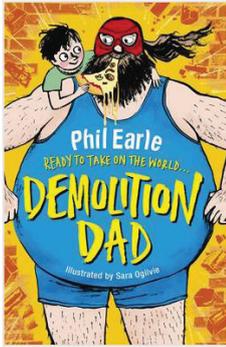
Rory Rooney is unremarkable in almost everything, apart from his capacity to attract the attention of the school bully. But when he suddenly and spectacularly turns green, he becomes a superhero! With an enhanced, 200% brain and an ability to slightly teleport, what other explanation could there be for his greenness?

Rory and two other mysteriously green children are confined to a hospital isolation unit, but they know that they must escape to start the business of righting wrongs and fighting injustice. Featuring a dramatic fall from a 12-storey building, a close encounter with a gorilla and a rather unfortunate accident with a bin lorry, the latest hilarious offering from much-loved author Frank Cottrell Boyce makes for compulsive and hugely appealing reading.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 9+



Demolition Dad

Written by Phil Earle and illustrated by Sara Ogilvie

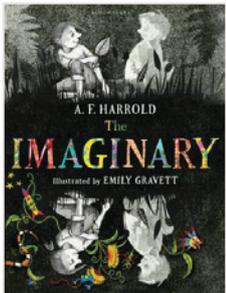
By day, Jake's dad George knocks down buildings, but on the weekends, he suits up in spandex and is a wrestling champion on the local circuit, with Jake by his side as his number one fan. Jake is bursting with pride, and wants to tell the world, but George prefers to keep his wrestling a secret. At last, Jake decides to enter his dad into a big wrestling competition in the USA – but things don't go exactly as planned...

Known for his gritty young adult novels, Phil Earle proves he is a natural at writing for a middle grade audience in this funny, exciting story. Authentic, heart-warming and full of witty and wonderful lines, *Demolition Dad* is perfect for fans of David Walliams and Roald Dahl.

Publisher: Orion Children's Books

Interest level: 8+

Reading age: 9+



The Imaginary

Written by A F Harrold and illustrated by Emily Gravett

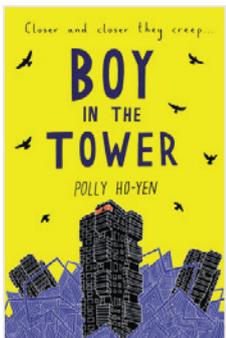
When Amanda finds an imaginary friend in her wardrobe, he turns out to be the perfect playmate. It doesn't matter that no one else can see Ruder: together, they can lose themselves in their own imagined play-space. But when a suspicious stranger arrives with his own imaginary friend in tow, Ruder and Amanda are suddenly in very un-imaginary danger. A wonderfully atmospheric sequence of chills and thrills sees their adventures take a turn for the terrifying – but ultimately, the power of friendship and imagination prevails in this magical and memorable tale.

With shades of Maurice Sendak and Neil Gaiman, this beautifully-produced book is young fiction of the very best quality, with the potential to become a family favourite.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest level: 8+

Reading age: 8+



Boy in the Tower

Written by Polly Ho-Yen

From the seventeenth floor of the tower block where he lives, Ade watches as the buildings fall around him. The Bluchers – a strange and terrible kind of plant – are taking over the city, and everyone is being forced to evacuate, but his mother refuses to leave her room. And so Ade watches alone as the city slowly empties, and the Bluchers creep closer...

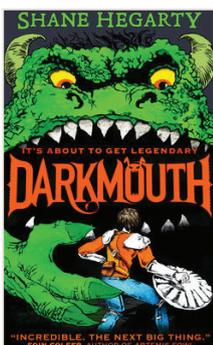
Although it may sound like a science-fiction tale, *The Boy in the Tower* reads more like a fable about friendship, loyalty and bravery. Told in the voice of a lonely boy trying to make sense of everything going on around him – from the extraordinary events he sees from his window, to his mother's illness – it is set in a convincingly urban, multicultural environment that will be familiar to many readers. An impressive, thought-provoking debut novel.

Publisher: Random House Children's Publishers

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 9+





Darkmouth

Written by Shane Hegarty

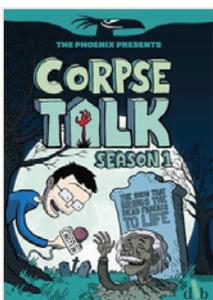
Finn has been born into a line of Legend Hunters. He's doing his best to live up to the family name, but even being a guardian-against-evil in training doesn't stop you getting teased at school. Just as Finn's training nears completion, it becomes clear that a huge invasion of Legends (otherwise known as terrifying, human-eating monsters) is about to begin – and there's a rather frightening prophecy that has Finn's name all over it...

Fans of Darren Shan and Derek Landy will be instantly captivated by this book, the first in a new series. This action-packed and monstrously funny debut will sit perfectly next to *Skulduggery Pleasant* on the shelves of middle grade readers.

Publisher: HarperCollins Children's Books

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 9+



Corpse Talk: Season 1

Written and illustrated by Adam Murphy

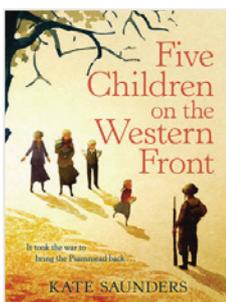
Tune into Corpse Talk: 'the show that brings the dead famous to life!' Join your host Adam Murphy as he digs the dirt on some of history's most famous, infamous and downright incredible men and women, from Cleopatra to Jane Austen to Genghis Khan.

This highly amusing and clever comic book introduces young readers to a wide range of historical figures, taking a fresh, funny and tongue-in-cheek approach to history. Murphy cleverly condenses the key facts about each historical figure into a single or double-page comic strip, packing in plenty of anarchic humour. Hugely appealing and full of fun, this book is certain to make readers of all ages laugh out loud, as well as imparting lots of useful information.

Publisher: David Fickling Books

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 9+



Five Children on the Western Front

Written by Kate Saunders

In this highly acclaimed sequel to the much-loved *Five Children and It*, we rejoin the five children on the eve of World War I. The children have now: Cyril is off to fight, whilst Anthea is at art college, Robert is a Cambridge scholar, Jane is at school, and even the Lamb is now the mature age of 11. The sand fairy of their childhood has become a creature of stories and memory – until he suddenly reappears. This time the Psammead is here for a reason, and before this last adventure ends, things will have changed for the five children forever...

This moving and memorable homage to E Nesbit's classic story is no ordinary children's book. A heart-wrenching and poignant tribute to 'all the boys and girls, 1914-18', it is a must-read for children and adults alike, powerfully demonstrating the impact of World War I on a whole generation of young people.

Publisher: Faber & Faber

Interest level: 10+

Reading age: 10+



The Usborne Official Astronaut's Handbook

Written by Louie Stowell and illustrated by Roger Simo

This funny and factual guide is ideal for anyone interested in outer space and the work that astronauts do. You'll find out how rockets work, what an average day looks like for an astronaut, and even how to use a toilet in space! This book also explores the technology that astronauts use, and the experiments they do on the International Space Station.

This is a fun, fact-packed and practical guide to launching your interstellar career! The attractive illustrations and easy style make it an enjoyable read for a wide age range, and it's fascinating to learn all about how to become an astronaut.

Publisher: Usborne
Interest age: 8+
Reading age: 9+



The Mystery of the Clockwork Sparrow

Written by Katherine Woodfine and illustrated by Júlia Sardà

Enter a world of bonbons, hats, perfumes and mysteries around every corner. Wonder at the daring theft of the priceless Clockwork Sparrow! Tremble as the most dastardly criminals in London enact their wicked plans! Gasp as our bold heroines, Miss Sophie Taylor and Miss Lilian Rose, crack codes, devour iced buns and vow to bring the villains to justice...

Book Trust's Art Project Manager Katherine Woodfine has penned this delightful story set in elegant 1900s department store Sinclair's. The setting and gorgeous Edwardian period details, along with the fast pace and intricate plotting, make *The Mystery of the Clockwork Sparrow* impossible to put down. Sophie and Lil are heroines to root for: smart, resourceful and loyal, they bring out the best in each other, whilst supporting characters Billy and Joe also bring something special to the story. A wonderful adventure, full of friendship, danger and mystery, that is not to be missed.

Publisher: Egmont
Interest level: 9+
Reading age: 9+



12-14 years



Half a King

Written by Joe Abercrombie

Prince Yarvi never wanted, or expected, to be king. He cannot grip a shield or swing a sword – but when his father and brother are killed, he must take on the responsibility of leading his people. Intrigue and betrayal soon snatch the throne from him, casting him into the icy waters of the Shattered Sea. Yarvi swears he will have revenge – but what can he do from the confines of a slave ship, where the physical and mental hardships are overwhelming?

From the first page, Yarvi's story is gripping, fast-paced and impossible to put down. Set in a vividly-imagined fantasy world, this coming-of-age tale explores complex questions of morality, loyalty and obligation. Young fans of *Game of Thrones* will be captivated by this compelling fantasy, the first in a trilogy.

Publisher: HarperCollins

Interest level: 13+

Reading age: 12+



Love Hurts

Edited by Malorie Blackman

Former Children's Laureate Malorie Blackman brings together a whole host of leading writers for teenagers in this collection of love stories, which makes an ideal starting point for readers looking to dip a toe into the waters of young adult fiction. Featuring both short stories and extracts, it explores relationships at every stage - from first kisses, to final heartbreak.

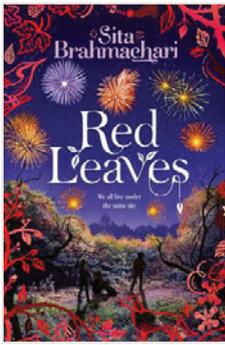
Teens will enjoy dipping in and out of this accessible collection, which includes punchy new stories from the likes of Susie Day, James Dawson and Malorie Blackman herself, as well as longer extracts from books by Patrick Ness, Non Pratt, Gayle Foreman and many more. Depicting a very wide range of romantic relationships and a diverse set of characters, this anthology really does show love in all its forms.

Publisher: Doubleday

Interest level: 13+

Reading age: 13+





Red Leaves

Written by Sita Brahmachari

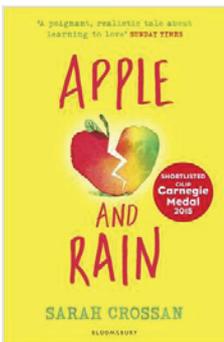
Zak's parents have recently divorced, and he's moved into a new house, just down the road from Aisha, and from Iona, known as Red. As a host of unexpected events bring this unlikely trio together, they gradually learn that they have far more in common than they could ever have suspected.

War is a theme which recurs in this beautiful tale of modern multicultural Britain. Book Trust's online writer in residence Sita Brahmachari has created a cast of characters who come from diverse backgrounds, but are brought together by feelings and experiences they share. Although the story takes place in the UK, Brahmachari weaves in stories about conflicts from across the world, showing how we can all be affected by events taking place hundreds of miles from our homes.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest level: 12+

Reading age: 12+



Apple and Rain

Written by Sarah Crossan

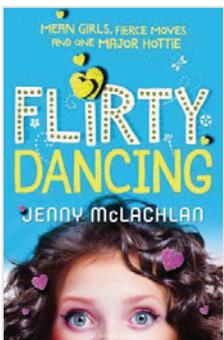
Apple was only a little pip when she watched her mother leave. She's lived with her devout Nana ever since, but at thirteen and a half, she's tired of being picked up from school and missing out on chips at the pier with the popular girls. Then her mum suddenly cascades back into her life in a whirl of inappropriate parties and skipped days from school. Moving in with Mum is a rollercoaster ride, but when Apple meets Rain, it soon becomes clear to her that Mum isn't particularly good at looking after anyone – least of all herself.

Told through an unusual mixture of prose and poetry, this is an engrossing and uplifting novel that will speak to fans of Cathy Cassidy and Jacqueline Wilson. Dealing with issues of family, friendship and love, it is a challenging, charming and beautifully-crafted tale about growing up.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest level: 12+

Reading age: 12+



Flirty Dancing

Written by Jenny McLachlan

They used to be the Ladybirds - Bea, Kat, Betty and Pearl – but now they've drifted apart. Pearl takes delight in tormenting Bea, and when a new teen talent show is announced, things get even worse. Nan arranges dance lessons for Bea, but she's horrified to discover that her partner is Ollie Matthews: school heart-throb, and Pearl's boyfriend. But as she and Ollie learn to jive, Bea finds her confidence unexpectedly beginning to grow alongside her love of dancing.

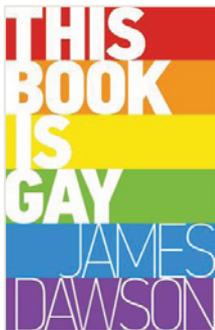
Jenny McLachlan's writing is smart, fresh and funny. In this, the first of a series of four books, she engagingly balances the serious stuff – bullying, friendship and first love – with the joy of jiving and lindy-hop.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest level: 12+

Reading age: 12+





This Book is Gay

Written by James Dawson and illustrated by Spike Gerrell

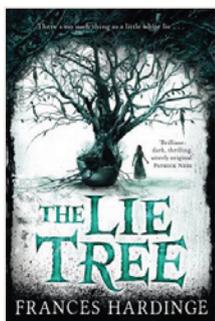
Young adult author and former PSHCE teacher James Dawson offers up a funny, frank look at all things LGBT in this intelligently-written non-fiction book. Including testimonials from people across the gender and sexuality spectrum, this is an accessible and inclusive take on what it's like to grow up LGBT, addressing all the worries and anxieties young people may have about this topic – whatever their own sexuality.

Dawson writes responsibly and sensitively about his subject, but has plenty of fun along the way – and Spike Gerrell's irreverent illustrations add an extra dose of humour too. A fantastic book for classrooms and school libraries, *This Book is Gay* is highly recommended for teachers and parents, as well as teens themselves.

Publisher: Hot Key Books

Interest level: 13+

Reading age: 13+



The Lie Tree

Written by Frances Hardinge

Faith is clever, curious and interested in everything around her – but as a girl in the late 1800s, she is paid little attention. When her father, a famed natural scientist, is forced to flee to a remote island under a cloud of scandal, life takes an unusual turn. Soon, her father is dead in mysterious circumstances, and Faith has discovered a strange plant that had been in his possession – The Lie Tree. Realising she may now have the power to discover the truth about her father's demise, Faith sets out to uncover the answers – although it may cost her dearly to do so.

This dark and enthralling novel delves into the world of religion versus science in the Victorian era. A sense of isolation and mystery radiates off every page, as this gripping tale twists towards its thrilling climax. An exhilarating and challenging novel that will captivate confident readers.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest level: 13+

Reading age: 13+



The Great War

Illustrated by Jim Kay

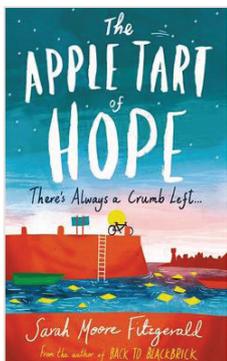
The centenary of World War I has seen a whole host of new books giving an insight into the history of this conflict. Subtitled 'an anthology of stories inspired by objects from the First World War', this beautifully-designed short story collection for young readers is one of the highlights.

Each story is inspired by a different object from World War I, from a soldier's writing case to the nose of a Zeppelin bomb. The collection features new work from well-known writers for children and young adults, including Michael Morpurgo, Marcus Sedgwick, David Almond and Timothee de Fombelle, as well as by adult authors such as AL Kennedy and Tracy Chevalier. Kate Greenaway Medal winning illustrator Jim Kay's artwork in a palette of black, white and grey provides a powerful, hard-hitting accompaniment.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest level: 12+

Reading age: 12+



The Apple Tart of Hope

Written by Sarah Moore Fitzgerald

Oscar makes the world's most perfect apple tarts, bringing hope to the sad or desperate. He is loved and appreciated for his special gift – but when his best friend Meg moves to New Zealand for six months, everything changes.

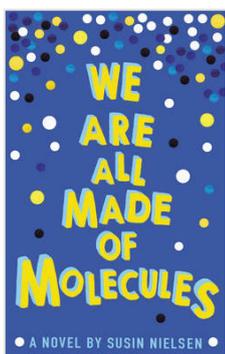
Before long, Oscar is missing, presumed dead – and no one seems surprised except for Meg and Oscar's little brother Stevie. Surrounded by grief and confusion, they set out to find out what has happened to Oscar, and in the process, uncover truths about loyalty, friendship and love.

This is an unusual and touching story peopled with memorable characters. A quirky and inspiring tale of the power of hope, it will leave young readers with plenty to think about.

Publisher: Orion Children's Books

Interest level: 12+

Reading age: 12+



We are All Made of Molecules

Written by Susin Nielsen

Stewart and Ashley could not be much more different. He's super-smart, but socially a little awkward. She's queen of the popular set at school and has no use at all for a geeky new step-brother. When the two become step-siblings, there's a huge culture clash ahead – and things get even more complicated when both attract the attention of school hunk Jared, for very different reasons..

This is a charming story of family, friendship and school life. Stewart and Ashley are utterly believable characters, and Nielsen deals with some serious issues including bereavement, bullying and homophobia, with a deceptively light touch. Funny and moving, teen readers will love this uplifting novel, which is packed full to the brim with warmth and heart.

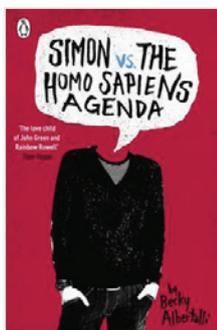
Publisher: Andersen Press

Interest level: 12+

Reading age: 12+



14 years and over



Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda

Written by Becky Albertalli

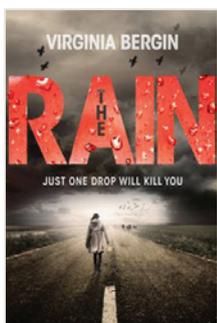
Simon is falling in love with someone he has never seen – the mysterious 'Blue', who he met through a school web chat. Although the boys are able to discuss their deepest fears and greatest hopes, they know nothing about one another that would allow them to be identified in the school halls. But when Simon leaves his emails open, they are seen by a fellow student who decides to blackmail him. Forced into a situation he can no longer control, will Simon lose Blue before he ever really finds him?

Told in a combination of first-hand narrative and the emails sent by Simon and Blue, this is a sweet and intelligent novel. First and foremost a love story, with extremely likable protagonists, this is a book that will resonate with teens.

Publisher: Penguin

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 13+



The Rain

Written by Virginia Bergin

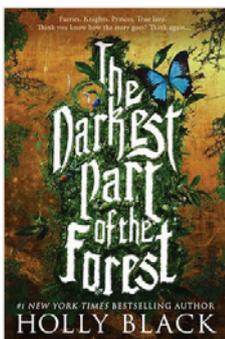
One minute, Ruby is having an incredible time at a friend's house party. The next moment, she's bundled inside. It has started to rain, but this is no ordinary summer storm. This rain will infect you if you let it touch your skin. Even a single drop is enough to infect your blood and eat you from the inside out. Soon, Ruby's life is transformed: her neighbourhood has become a landscape of horror and desolation; her family are gone; and she must set out alone on a desperate and dangerous journey.

Told in Ruby's chatty and irreverent voice, Virginia Bergin's debut sets aside the usual conventions of YA dystopia and instead reads as though a Louise Rennison heroine has stumbled into the apocalypse. The result is an original, offbeat and very British take on dystopia, full of humour as well as fear and suspense, with a sometimes irritating, sometimes loveable, but always believable teen heroine at its centre.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 13+



The Darkest Part of the Forest

Written by Holly Black

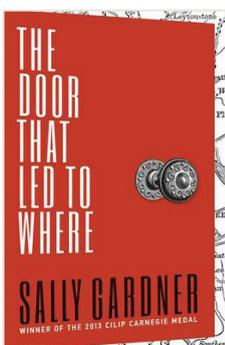
Hazel and her brother Ben live in the town of Fairfold, where humans and faerie folk live side-by-side. In the woods, a sleeping boy with pointed horns has lain in a glass coffin for years, never waking, not even when the local teenagers throw wild parties in his woodland glade. But when one day the sleeper finally awakes, dramatic events ensue. Faced with danger on all side, Hazel recalls her childhood days of pretending to be a knight and fighting evil. But now things are far more complicated: can she become the hero that Fairfold needs?

Putting a refreshing spin on traditional fairy-tale archetypes and gender roles and bringing magic to a contemporary small American town, this is a novel packed full of imagination. With plenty of dark magic, it makes for a bewitching and exciting modern fairy-tale for this generation of readers of YA fiction.

Publisher: Orion Children's Books

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 13+



The Door that Led to Where

Written by Sally Gardner

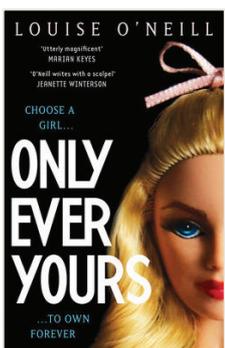
AJ has just failed all but one of his GCSEs, and his future is looking far from rosy. When he is unexpectedly offered a junior position at a London law firm, things begin to look up – but then he discovers an old key in the archives, mysteriously labelled with his name and date of birth. What does the key mean – and where is the door that it opens? AJ finds himself setting out on an unbelievable journey to a very real and tangible past.

The latest novel from award-winning author Sally Gardner is a real treat. There's a Dickensian flavour to this satisfying time-travel tale, which takes its teenage hero on a journey from gritty modern-day London, to the city of the 1800s. Keen readers will be certain to enjoy this clever, intriguing and absorbing mystery.

Publisher: Hot Key Books

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 14+



Only Ever Yours

Written by Louise O'Neill

Best friends Frieda and Isabel are 16, in their final year of school, and hoping to be selected as companions - wives of wealthy and powerful men. The alternative – life as a concubine – is too horrible to contemplate. But as the intensity of their final year takes hold, and the pressure to be perfect mounts, Isabel starts to self-destruct. Then, the boys arrive, eager to choose their brides. Will Frieda fight for her future – even if it means betraying the only friend she has ever known?

This brilliant and terrifying dystopian novel casts a sharp eye upon all that is toxic, competitive and superficial about contemporary society. Full of references to issues that will be all-too-familiar to today's teenagers – from social media bullying to body image – without ever being preachy or pedantic, this is a fast-paced and whip-smart work of speculative fiction. Louise O'Neill's award-winning debut novel is a triumph and a must-read for teens.

Publisher: Quercus

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 14+



Crow Moon

Written by Anna McKerrrow

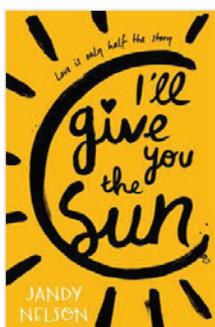
Danny is a fun-loving 16-year old, falling in love with a different girl each day. He has no intention of following in his mum's witchy footsteps, but when his eco-community is threatened, Danny discovers that he has powers of his own. When he meets and falls for Saba, a gorgeous but capricious young sorceress, he decides that maybe being a witch might not be so bad after all. But with his community on the brink of war, Danny soon learns that love and magic are more dangerous than he ever imagined...

Book Trust's Creative Writing Coordinator Anna McKerrrow's debut novel puts an utterly unique spin on witches, dystopia and the environment. Set in a not-too-distant world in which there are no natural resources left, this is a clever blend of magic and reality. McKerrrow perfectly captures Danny's funny, irreverent teenage voice, and the ending will leave the reader anxious to find out what happens next for Danny and his community.

Publisher: Quercus

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 14+



I'll Give you the Sun

Written by Jandy Nelson

Jude and her twin Noah were incredibly close – until a tragedy drove them apart. As they both struggle to put their lives apart, neither realise that they are stronger together than they ever could be apart.

This is a beautiful and unusual young adult novel about family, choices, art and growing up. At its heart is a story about a brother and sister who as they grow, begin to see each other – and their parents – as individuals who fall in love, make mistakes, and are capable of both wonderful and terrible things. Full of beauty and magic, fear and sadness, Jandy Nelson's unique and poetic writing style makes this novel irresistible.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 14+



The Sin Eater's Daughter

Written by Melinda Salisbury

Twylla lives in a castle and is betrothed to a prince – but she's no fairy-tale princess. Instead she is the court executioner: she holds the power to kill with a single touch. But when a new guard arrives, he sees past the executioner robes to the girl beneath, and a friendship blossoms that might become more – were Twylla not already promised to the prince. But romance soon proves the least of her worries when she discovers the power-hungry, vicious queen's horrifying plan. As things begin to spiral out of control, Twylla must decide who to trust – and what she is willing to do to protect her kingdom.

This highly original fantasy is set in a richly-imagined world: Melinda Salisbury deftly weaves in legends, myths and histories to bring Twylla's world vividly to life. Intricately plotted, full of unexpected twists, political schemes and wicked plots, *The Sin Eater's Daughter* is a delicious read for fans of fantasy.

Publisher: Scholastic

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 14+



The Art of Being Normal

Written by Lisa Williamson

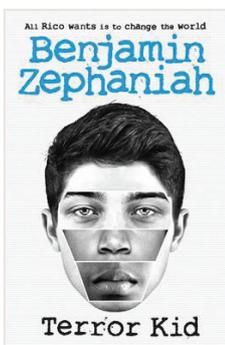
David Piper has always been an outsider, labelled a freak by the school bully. Only his two best friends know the real truth - David wants to be a girl. Meanwhile, new boy Leo Denton is trying to keep a low profile. The two of them couldn't have less in common, but when Leo stands up for David in a fight, an unlikely friendship begins to develop. But events take a difficult turn when the secrets that both Leo and David are struggling to keep buried start coming to light...

This impressive debut from Lisa Williamson is a sensitive, funny and moving novel about two very different teenagers who discover they have more in common than either of them imagined. Challenging assumptions about what it means to grow up transgender, this is a life-affirming, powerful and heart-warming coming-of-age story that will show young adult readers that 'being normal' is not always all it's cracked up to be.

Publisher: David Fickling Books

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 13+



Terror Kid

Written by Benjamin Zephaniah

Rico is honest, hardworking - and very angry. Because of his Romany background, he is always treated as suspicious, and always seems to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Despite his efforts to stay on the right side of the law, he is frustrated at the injustices he sees around him. Acutely socially and politically aware, Rico wants to make a difference. So when an enigmatic stranger offers him the chance to use his hacking skills in a peaceful but very public protest, he finds it impossible to refuse - never imagining what the consequences will be.

From bestselling author and poet Benjamin Zephaniah comes this powerful and accessible novel, with its finger firmly on the pulse of social and political issues. Rico's feelings of powerlessness will be familiar to all too many young people who encounter this timely novel.

Publisher: Hot Key Books

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 13+

