



Armadillo
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**Autumn
2024**

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Books Reviewed

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Picturebooks

Ava and the Acorn

Lu Fraser, illus. Paddy Donnelly, pub. Hodder Children's Books

What a truly heart-warming story of love and belief in the future.

We follow Ava and her grandfather as they enjoy seeing the seasons change, and all through the focus of an ancient oak tree. Each season brings its own joys and challenges. These last we see in winter when we get to appreciate the fragility of life for both humans and wildlife. At one point I thought Ava's grandfather would die over the course of the winter, but thankfully he recovered as spring returned to the land. Unfortunately, the old oak tree succumbed to the weather and did not survive. A simple but evocative message about the circle of life is presented. An acorn that Ava and her grandfather had picked the previous autumn gives a glimmer of hope. At the end of the story, we see Ava sitting under the new oak with her own son. A really magical moment that reminds all of us that whilst we may lose something we treasure and love we will one day gain another.

This is a delightful story of the relationship between the two humans and their shared love of the environment in which they live. The illustrations are beautiful and are a perfect echo of the feelings many of us experience during each of the seasons; they have a delicacy that adds to our enjoyment and the colour palettes bring a sense of peace and calm, mixed with an understanding of the realities of nature.

There are so many lessons that we can take from this story. It is both a delightful tale and a first look at the four seasons, mixed with a reflection on how families can share experiences and cope with change. A wonderful story for the early years.

Margaret Pemberton

The Café at the Edge of the Woods

Mikey Please, pub. HarperCollins Children's Books

What a truly wonderful story. *The Café at the Edge of the Woods* is about Rene and her dream to open a café on the edge of a magical wood. Like all chefs she has grand ideas of producing tasty and delicious food for her customers. Unfortunately, the inhabitants of the wood have a very different palette when it comes to food. Business is failing.

When she advertises for a waiter, the only applicant is Glumfoot. Rene is not sure whether he is going to be a suitable employee. However, when an ogre arrives looking for food it is Glumfoot who

understands what the customer wants and changes the dishes, so they look like the food the ogre would normally eat. Glumfoot's help encourages Rene to understand that she needs to rethink the way she promotes her food, to rethink her ideals and helps the café become a great success.

There is lots of humour in this book from the outset as we get to know Rene and Glumfoot. At an adult level you could say it is about knowing your market and clientele, but it also reflects on the way that many people (especially children) can be very picky about their food choices. We all know someone who says they don't like certain foods but love them when they are presented in a different way. The addition of the full colour illustrations really does make the book, adding a lot to the humour we find on every page. This story has much to teach us about not judging people by their looks and being flexible in the way we deal with others. It is a great read for children across the primary age range.

Margaret Pemberton

Don't Think of Tigers

Alex Latimer, pub. Andersen Press

Well, I think I have to start with - if you like tigers, this is the book for you! And if you do not think you excel at anything, this is also the book for you! Alex Latimer's *Don't Think of Tigers* is a brilliant way of showing that it doesn't matter if we do not think we can achieve something, because we will improve, the more we practice.

He does this by opening the story engaging with the reader in a conversation about what he should draw on the next page of the book. It can be anything, so long as he does not have to draw a tiger. He will draw anything that is on the reader's mind. Somehow it is inevitably always a tiger! The banter with the reader continues in a comical way and the tiger pictures become increasingly more ridiculous, until the author succumbs to the understanding that he will only improve on them by drawing even more tigers!

The writing is brilliant, and I can just imagine children laughing at the thought that they have 'tricked' the author into drawing another tiger. The illustration for each tiger is unique, using vibrant colours and bold, quirky shapes and each oozes its own character. The first line of the book tells the reader 'This book in your hands is magic' and it really is. Not just in the words and beautiful pictures, but also the important message that Alex Latimer is conveying to his readers: do not give up; persevere; you will make lots of mistakes before you get things right and that is okay.

An amazing message for children and adults alike to consider, presented in such a hilarious way. I just love it!

Claire Webb

Free as a Bird

Barroux, pub. Otter-Barry Books

Jonas, the lighthouse keeper, dreams that he is flying as free as a bird, as light as a feather – he is carefree and has freedom in movement. He wants to tell his friend Blue, the whale, all about it but when he finds her he notices a small white bird on her head. Through Blue, the bird tells of his plight: a long tortuous journey fleeing from a war-torn country leaving him so exhausted he fell from the sky, landing on Blue. Jonas and Blue take care of the bird and all the others that follow. When they have recuperated most leave but the first bird stays, settled with his new family.

Described as “a parable-like story” this is a deceptively simple and powerful picturebook emphasising compassion and empathy, especially in regard to such serious and timely issues as refugees, displacement, and migration. It would make a good addition to existing themed collections, especially regarding Remembrance Day, with its wealth of talking points.

The watercolour and ink illustrations are engaging and expressive, especially that of a large black figure-shaped shadow looming over the rubble of what were the picturesque buildings of the previous page, filling the white space of freedom that surrounds the bird. Together with the accompanying words: “Before the black veil of war covered everything in its path. I had no choice. I had to leave”, this double-page epitomises the invasive and ominous threat that war brings. The reader is able to sense the bird’s desperation and fright.

The text is deceptively simple, but this is a sophisticated read, slightly tricky to read aloud as it isn’t always clear which character is speaking. However, due to its sombre and complex themes, this isn’t a typical relaxing bedtime story picturebook. It is one that lends itself well to the classroom though. Barroux has created, with this companion story to the multi-award winning international success *I Love You, Blue*, an evocative, emotional, empathetic book.

Natalie McChrystal Plimmer

Frog in a Fog

Marielle Bayliss, pub. Graffeg

Frog loves to dance. Lots of different styles of dance in different habitats with different creatures accompanying him. He begins the story by dancing the two-step knock knees on a log with some bhangra performing bumblebees but choking traffic fumes move him along to the fen where he body-locks with Wren and Snipe until waste streams out of a pipe into the surrounding water. He then meets a female frog in a creek where they perform a romantic rumba but the piles of plastic rubbish

that they are standing on capsizes. As the two frogs perform the shimmy shake with a grayling in a lake they get caught up in a rampaging fire. As they sit by the shore bewildered by the state of the world, questioning who lights fires and walks away; puts litter on the floor; allows pollution, the grayling reappears and takes them to a lush and pleasant nature reserve. A procession of creatures queue to live in the reserve making it a vibrant and rich place where their future is secured by “a number of speckled and jiggling frogspawn.”

This companion to *Frog's Bog* is a lovely story celebrating dance and the environment in an unusual manner. The impact humans have on the world is made very clear – both the damaging destructive force for bad and the caring protective positive effect conservation has. The different waterway habitats are explored a bit more in the glossary alongside a short paragraph explaining each type of pollution ending with Frog's tips.

This rhyming story is amusing and entertaining although sometimes it feels as if the pattern and rhythm are a bit off or too forced. The lovely watercolour illustrations are full of a sense of movement, atmosphere, texture, and character - especially the scene with Wren vibrating to sounds, and the strutting hippity-hop Snipe. With its serious message, it would be easy for the story to lack hope but it's a celebratory book that hopefully promotes mindfulness and leaves you feeling cheered. I will especially remember the joy of the animals' movement – “birds fly, insects creep, fish swim, and deer leap” as they travel to the reserve.

Natalie McChrystal Plimmer

How to Bath a Giraffe

Sam Wilde, illus. Sarah Horne, pub. Oxford Children's Books

This book is both a story and a fact file about all things relating to giraffes.

If you want to bath a giraffe - well that is not going to be easy, as can be seen from Sarah Horne's illustration on the front cover, depicting a giraffe, in a shower cap with its legs dangling out of the bath. As you turn the pages, you get a glimpse as to what a wild animal, like a giraffe, needs to thrive, to survive. For example, it eats the best leaves from the tops of the trees – good job it has a long neck! But when it needs a drink, it must move its legs apart to reach the ground water. In this story the human family of the giraffe try their absolute best to look after it, especially, to keep it clean, which proves a terrific challenge. They soon realise that it is not the easiest pet to keep, nor is it fair for the animal.

Not only is this a story book, but it is a secret fact book too, there are plenty of facts about giraffes to learn as you read! For instance, did you know they have blue tongues and that birds pick the dirt from them to keep them clean? Just as well, as it is not easy to bath a giraffe!

The narrative of this book is designed for young readers to easily understand and is complimented by the brightly coloured cartoon-like illustrations on each page. It ends with a double-page spread of giraffe facts, which are really fascinating. However, this book's most important message is very much a reminder of our responsibilities in looking after animals which it delivers in a fun and exciting way.

Claire Webb

I Am a Courageous Cub

Shoshana Chaim, illus. Lori Joy Smith, pub. Greystone Kids

This is another mindfulness book to complement the first from this pairing - *I Am a Mindful Goldfish*. Once again Shoshana and Lori Joy have explained how to deal with feelings in a clear, calming but fun way through word and picture. The illustrations are big, bold and brightly coloured, showing readers how two friends can help each other by doing simple exercise style poses, challenging the other to copy and then asking how they feel.

Every new challenge comes across a double page spread allowing for the creation of the familiar playground environment. This acts as the ideal encouragement to readers building confidence in playing and interacting with others. Having worked with children who have difficulties with confidence and their feelings, I know this book would work well with them as it demonstrates how actions can help with making you feel strong and brave. By thinking you can be something different with each suggested pose, such as an animal, tree or a ball, author and illustrator are allowing the children to focus and feel powerful within.

Although this book is aimed at younger children it is perfect for children to look at independently as the pictures tell a story and the words are limited. It would also work for an older group, or a child, individually with an adult, encouraging discussion about other feelings. Plus, the poses can be copied or new ones invented by the children. The author has added a lovely note. She explains to the reader how feelings can stop us from doing things and how they can learn to be brave just as adults can - by doing different poses and imagining you are something else.

Helen Finch

Let Me Do It!

Simon Philip, illus. Ella Okstad, pub. Oxford Children's Books

Teddy wants to be grown up. In this hilarious story Simon Philip shows how a young child, who is no longer a BABY, becomes more confident by doing things for himself – even if there are some disasters

along the way. His family are always fussing over him and still help him to do things but Teddy has other ideas. However, Ella Okstad's illustrations reveal these practical tasks are not always as straightforward as his family wish, leaving them despairing. Whether it is making his own breakfast or getting ready by brushing his hair, Teddy attempts every one of these activities with enthusiasm. With his growing confidence Teddy decides to take on more difficult challenges which do not always go to plan.

Written in the first person with easily understood language, Teddy guides us through this highly entertaining book aimed at children aged 2+. The amusing illustrations highlight the concerns of parents whose little one is navigating the world of growing up and becoming independent. *Let Me Do It!* would be great to share with any child preparing to start school or any situation where basic independent routines are required. It is ideal for children who are certain they are now BIG and no longer a BABY!

Reading this book brought back vivid memories of navigating the world of growing up with my own children. However, even when they reach adulthood there is still an element of parental intervention that is sometimes requested. Maybe I will get them to read it as well!

Helen Finch

Not Fair, Bear!

Lorna Scobie, pub. Scholastic Children's Books

In this picture book, Bear and Squirrel (a red one) are best friends, but playing together proves problematic. They decide to climb a tree, but Bear's weight bends the slender branch that Squirrel is on: Bear falls off, and Squirrel is propelled into the air. "Not fair, Bear!" is the refrain which will become familiar.

Bear's fishing method is much too splashy for Squirrel, and Squirrel is at a disadvantage in everything else that Bear does that day. He goes to sleep, totally fed-up. But for Bear night-time is playtime and he blows a raspberry at Squirrel, so a very cross Squirrel declares that tomorrow will be different. Squirrel dictates what they do the next day, but it's Bear who is now at a disadvantage, especially when they play hide and seek. "It's not fair!" said Bear. "I'm no good at your games."

They each try to play in their own way, but that doesn't work either and they almost decide not to play together anymore. But they are best friends so they say sorry to each other and agree to take turns playing each other's games instead. First they play 'catch' with nuts, as Squirrel chooses, then they play with honey to please Bear. Afterwards eating nuts with honey keeps them both happy but... Then we hear 'Not fair!' from the bees!

Illustrated picturebooks are always a joy and when an author illustrates their own that joy can be heightened as they are able to produce precisely the book they had in mind. Lorna Scobie's illustrations are full of character and fun and her story is ideal for sharing. Encouraging the audience to join in with the big words in the speech bubbles will only add to the enjoyment and remind them how important it is to share.

Diana Barnes

On the Small Hill Where the Girls Take Off Their Shoes

Jairo Buitrago, trans. Elisa Amado, illus. Linda Wolfsgruber, pub. Greystone Kids

This picture book for older readers asks us to imagine all that might have happened on the small hill of the title across the centuries. A dinosaur might have seen a shooting star. A castle might have been built, and later have fallen down, leaving a few stones. An oak tree might have grown and sheltered a family escaping from war. The tree has been chopped down and houses have now been built below the hill. All the while people make babies.

Another tree is planted and grows. It is this tree that shelters the three girls, whose clothing suggests that they have each come from different periods of history. We see them each taking off their shoes. When the red moon rises, they put their shoes back on and go down to the expanding town below. They are going home. It is time. A small lizard (definitely not to scale with the girls, and almost as big as the dinosaur!) sitting on a stone, sees the first evening star. The hill is rather like a child's drawing, an oval with very steep slopes, a lovely idea and appealing to young readers.

Both Jairo Buitrago and Linda Wolsgruber have published many award-winning books which can be found all around the world. This collaboration is listed by the publisher as aged 4- 9, but your reviewer would put it at the higher end of that age group in case the reference to making babies with its illustration of couples shown embracing at two separate windows needs explanation! Curriculum connections on history and communities are provided, and this quietly reflective book which encourages us to explore the incredible things that happened in our world before we were here, is useful in the classroom setting as well as at home and in libraries.

Diana Barnes

Pandora and the Story Forge

Gaynor Andrews, illus. Marie-Alice Harel, pub. Rocket Bird Books

Pandora is an adorer of beautiful words and a hoarder of wonderful sounds. She collects the finest words in her net and keeps them safe in her box before forging them with fire to create the most incredible stories.

This creative tale holds story creation at its heart and celebrates how intricately stories are put together before being shared and enjoyed by all. Pandora collects words and mixes them together to forge new stories for all to enjoy. Once those stories are shared, the magic unfurls and create new beginnings, more creativity and further opportunities for children to start forging their very own stories, bringing unlimited joy and endless prospects. Pandora's work results in a whole new generation of story-tellers – a perfect, inspiring message not only to all readers, but to budding authors as well.

Gaynor Andrews weaves this story together in real-time with the reader through Pandora, the forger of stories. The classical font gives a traditional feel, almost as if this is the first story ever told and the basis of all other tales. Marie-Alices Andrews' illustrations are great; there is an interesting blend of traditional fairy-tale style with patterns and key words integrated into the illustrations in banners, and vibrant illustrations that have contrasting colours making key details stand out. The combination of text and illustrations definitely give a Middle-Ages feel, taking the reader back to simpler times!

This tale has adventure mixed in with classical story-telling – a fun mix which indeed forges a great book.

Tom Joy

The Tantrum

Louie Stowell, illus. Isobel Lundie, pub. Little Tiger

A picturebook with a map to help readers orient themselves into the world that they are about to experience. This is important for when you discover that a certain bear named Bill lives in a treehouse in a clearing in the woods I am sure that you, like me, want to know more. Where are the woods, where in the woods is the clearing and what is the tree like which holds this bear's house? It must be a strong one surely. Then of course come the questions, who is Bill the bear, can you take the tour of his house and meet his friends and what is this about their theatre, The Glade.

Do I sound like anyone you know when you are reading a new, or even a much-loved story? Always questions and if those questions don't have satisfactory answers, if the answers don't come fast enough are there consequences which can involve raised voices and tears? Tantrums don't often, thankfully, happen as a result of books but they do feature in them. Especially in picturebooks where they might be trying to help their reader understand why they aren't always helpful. The story of Bill the bear and his friends does involve a tantrum, a very big one. The clue is in the title, *The Tantrum*

(A Tempestuous Tale!). Adults, I hope you see the nod here to a somewhat famous play... Now I know you are wondering why Bill the bear is having a tantrum... Well, Bill is having one of those days – you know the ones, which start with falling out of bed or some other equally annoying happening and lead to a day of nothing going as it should. This is Bill's bad day and just as he is getting himself under control ... he falls headfirst off the stage ...

Tantrums are not unfamiliar territory for anyone who has young children in their lives, this charming and very funny story is perfect for shared reading. Louie Stowell portrays tantrums, patience and understanding perfectly whilst Isobel Lundie's illustrations leap off the page with their vibrancy but not quite as forcefully as falling bears!

Louise Ellis-Barrett

Junior Books

A Riddle for a King

Mark Forsyth, illus. Matthew Land, pub. David Fickling Books

There are some books that, the moment you open them, you quickly discover that you are reading something extremely special. That is exactly how I felt when I opened this book, Mark Forsyth's *A Riddle for a King*.

Philo is the main character, a young boy who is living with his aunt and uncle when somehow he manages to fall out of the human world only to end up in a parallel magical world. Once he is there he seems only to be able to get into the type of trouble that only he can get back out of! Trouble of his own making means a journey filled with lots of challenges along the way but he does manage to make a couple of new friends. When, and I don't think this counts as a spoiler, he eventually makes it back to his world he starts to see everything and everyone around him in a different way.

Mark Forsyth has written this story to make the reader feel as if the book is talking directly to them and that the characters are including you in the storyline. It makes for lots of fun as you find yourself falling into the story. There are many funny parts in the book too, most of which will have you laughing out loud. And, as if that was not enough to enjoy, throughout the book there are riddles that you will need to work out with the characters so be prepared! With all this going on you'll be relieved to know the story runs at a good pace. You could even consider making this book a class reader to be read aloud! There's something special about this book. Make sure to find yourself a copy.

Helen Byles

Badgers Are Go!

Susannah Lloyd, illus. Nici Gregory, pub. David Fickling Books

An odd title, a compelling one. After all aren't you all now curious. Who are these badgers, how many of them are they and where are they on the go to?

Lulu Whifferton-Rear is a young badger who loves to scamper about woodland glades, listen to birdsong and daydream. Lulu loves to mind her own badgery business, but when she discovers that there are some important humans who are actually BOPs (Badger Operated Persons), she is thrust into the world of the Rumpington Academy of Badgering. Are you with me still, keeping up? This book is very funny and moves at a great pace. Wondering about this Academy yet? I know I was and Lulu is too, why would a young badger who loves the outdoors need to go to an academy? Well, it

seems to have something to do with some special training she needs to undergo. Why? Can you keep a secret...? Okay then, listen carefully, she is being trained to take part in a Top-Secret mission to secure world peace.

When she reports for duty, Lulu worries that she's not like the other badgers, who are all terribly keen, efficient and competent. Nevertheless, she's determined to give it her best shot. She discovers that, for many years, badgers have been infiltrating the human world in the form of mechanical Badger-Operated Persons, or BOPs, in order to bypass human incompetence and get things done. This particular mission involves the deployment of the British Prime Minister (a BOP), who must persuade the world's leaders to sign a global declaration of peace. However, not everyone wants an end to war, and a dastardly double agent intends to use an unwitting Lulu to sabotage the peace deal. Can Lulu overcome her fears and use her imagination, tenacity and courage to save the day?

This book was exciting to read, the illustrations are just as fun, the characters are crazy! I for one certainly hope it is the start of a series.

Helen Byles

The Boy in the Suit

James Fox, pub. Scholastic Children's Books

A book of our times. A book for our times. *The Boy in the Suit* is hard-hitting. Be warned, there are some tough issues covered but in a sensitive way. It is important to be able to offer younger readers books which tackle tough issues, which look at the world around us and help them come to understand it, in their own way and in a safe way too. This is what James Fox is offering readers, don't shy away from it. It's an engrossing read.

This story is presented to the reader through the voice of ten-year-old Solo who is facing the daily humiliations of poverty. Then there is the crushing weight of responsibility that is far beyond his years, things a child should not be expected to have to take on. From the outset we are drawn into the story, and soon discover why Solo wears his suit. Moreover, we learn about his relationship with 'Morag' who is actually his mum. Solo is his name, and this is indeed how he sees himself in life. At school, he is very much alone and does not trust those around him. He is bullied by his classmates (and perhaps, it is hinted at, by his teacher), until new pupil Chetna arrives and becomes his first real friend. Yet the situation at home is worsening. The Big Bad Reds have taken over and life begins to spin out of control.

This hard-hitting story covers tough issues, including food poverty, poor mental health, bullying and separated families. It is a book which many will find they can see parts of themselves in. I admit the

part I found it hard to believe was that children would be left behind on a class trip (I am a teacher) but much of the content is believable. A worthy read that I will be sharing with my Year 6 class.

Hayley Reeves

Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody

Patrick Ness, illus. Tim Miller, pub. Walker Books

This hilarious adventure, with its hilarious title, is about a mismatched group of animals attending school together. The quirky cast includes monitor lizards, a wombat school principal, a wildebeest teacher, a pony, some egrets, a hawk in sunglasses and a nasty pelican who is the school bully.

To start with you may not be sure what you are reading, not sure that this is really a story, but something will eventually click as the silliness and wackiness kicks in. You will get the total chaos and crazy fun. Younger readers will probably relate more easily and quickly to the madcap mix of animal characters. It is imaginative and very funny with laugh out loud moments. More than that, it is downright brilliant and bonkers. The story is all about the characters. The main characters of Zeke, Daniel and Alicia are all likeable creatures. Each animal has its own personality, and each becomes a hall monitor. They must all impose order on arrogant lions, excitable seals and pandas. Can they save the school from being destroyed by the megalomaniac pelican, who is the villain and school bully? Can the monitor lizards protect the school from loads of outlandish threats?

This is more than just a crazy, hilarious and wild school story. The creatures have some sound advice and wise words to give. Issues faced every day by children are tackled with humour and in a sensitive way-bullying, intimidation, mental health problems, insensitivity to disabilities and appearance. There is clever handling of inclusion, depression and friendship all done in a funny way. It is both hilarious and at times a little absurd, but these real issues are dealt with in an age-appropriate way. This is much more than a school bully story featuring a bunch of crazy creatures. It is funny, simple, weird and sensitive all at the same time. Children will love the story, and it may even help them to come to terms with some of the everyday issues and problems they face at school.

Gary Kenworthy

The Colour of Revenge

Cornelia Funke, pub. Chicken House

From Cornelia Funke, the author of the multi-million copy selling *Inkheart* series, comes a brand new adventure that sees us returning to the captivating Inkworld, a place she created and has continued to develop. The series has a complex and intricately woven storyline, which sees 'Silvertongues' speak

people into and out of books through the power of voice. It's a novel twist on books about books, for booklovers, that sees no end of chaos ensuing.

In *The Colour of Revenge*, we see themes of retribution and vengeance in an all new form from the infamous Orpheus. In keeping with the themes of the world (or perhaps I should say worlds!) Cornelia Funke has created, our new form of magic revolves around not the words, but the illustrations within books. Orpheus seeks revenge in the cruellest of ways on our favourite cast of characters from Inkworld, trapping them in a book of his formulation. We follow the twists and turns of the story as those who have escaped the entrapment work tirelessly to ensure their companions' freedom. This really explores themes of good versus evil and the grey areas in-between that characterise people's actions. Jehan and Lilia make a powerhouse team, perfectly complement each other, working with a wider cast of characters to free their loved ones and put an end to the wicked ways of Orpheus.

I did find the writing style felt a little dated, particularly in some of the use of language (though this be in keeping with the previous books and author being a native German speaker). However, the storytelling and worldbuilding are the intricate work of a mastermind. Perhaps I am in the minority with this, but I found the original *Inkheart* books to be a bit too long. The lower page count really worked for me and ensured I could retain the complex storyline and bulging character list.

Hannah Bartleet

Evenfall: The Golden Linnet

Alexander Armstrong, illus. Tom Roberts, pub. Farshore

This fantasy novel centres around a character called Sam. He lives with his unwell dad in a small house by a busy main road. Strange things start to happen to Sam on the eve of his thirteenth birthday. He thought he was just an ordinary boy, but there is nothing ordinary about this adventure story. It is a story crammed with magic and danger, but also friendship and family, making sure we see the importance of both.

The book features an ancient secret society. They are The Order of the Evening and they must rise again after being dormant for decades. Sam doesn't only have to deal with them, he must also deal with the mysterious Seal of the Golden Linnet, uncover family secrets, face deadly enemies and complete perilous journeys. He must unlock his true powers. And... There is a powerful magic, which in the wrong hands could destroy the world. This magic can be found at the heart of the lost palace. Guess where Sam has to go?

The plot is inspired by the ancient history of the northeast of England. There are some lighter moments, but it is mainly a thriller with adventure and dark moments. The story features ancient

magic, secret societies and dangerous enemies. Sam's world is blown apart when he learns that his family was once at the centre of a secret society, one that had long protected the world. A powerful enemy is closing in, destroying all in its path. Only Sam can stop this. Time is passing. Sam holds the future of the world in his hands.

This is a fantasy adventure that has everything-secrets, clues, artefacts, a gripping storyline and lots of twists and turns. Who can Sam really trust?

Gary Kenworthy

The Haunting of Fortune Farm

Sophie Kirtley, pub. Bloomsbury Children's Books

Sophie Kirtley's third book is set in Northern Ireland where she grew up. It's a thrilling story buried deep in Silent Valley, a secret place beside a lough, or Irish lake. Difficult to access and perfect for family holidays. An archetypal location for mysterious, supernatural goings on and action-packed adventure.

We join Edie and her brother Pip with their mother as they travel to visit their paternal grandmother with whom they used to spend the holidays. After their father died they haven't seen Lolly for a long time. Mum is dropping them off so that she can attend a conference which could have important ramifications for her future career, hopefully making life easier, and Mum less like "a balloon blown up too full." Leaving behind a reluctant Edie and a super excited Pip to explore their new home for the next few days.

Viking history, a famous sword, several ghosts, kennings, runes and - horror of horrors - the Viking warrior Ivarr the Restless now make an entrance disturbed into action by Edie's curiosity and subsequent interference. The nub of the matter is this missing sword called the Story Sword, once found in Silent Valley, and then lost, along with a diary, located by Edie in a secret hiding place in Fortune Farm.

Things are not all they appear to be at Fortune Farm. Settling in proves difficult. Lolly enjoys Pip's company but not Edie's. Why could this be? The ghosts of past history at Fortune Farm soon reveal themselves helping Edie to figure it all out, ultimately with the help of Lolly.

Avoiding hidden grief by simply chatting is the underlying message to the reader, rather than burying emotions in the subconscious mind. The storyline is then interwoven into Viking culture, where the dead live on with the living. Memories are less destructive if they are openly acknowledged by those left behind. They can provide strength. Edie is saved from a dangerous situation when she recalls her father's words and actions. Pip is extricated from Ivarr the Terrible's grasp by memories of his dad. A

gripping read for any 7-12 year old. It's well written and sensitively handled with a powerful message about healthy emotional survival after the death of someone close. An ideal book for school discussion groups.

Elizabeth Negus

Heartseer: The Tale of Anise Star

Rowan Foxwood, pub. Usborne

Sometimes you open a book and magic simply spills out. *Heartseer: The Tale of Anise Star* is one of those books. This delightful debut from Rowan Foxwood delivers the most wonderful magical setting along with a brave and resourceful heroine, and a whole cast of magical and believable characters.

Following the death of her beloved mother and having been separated from her older brother, Sage, whilst he's away on his apprenticeship, Anise finds herself living alone in Patchwork House in the White Wood, with just her daemon-dog, Wolf, for company. As a Heartseer, like her mother before her, Anise has the rare ability to see the daemons and deities that live around them and her job is to help humans and daemons live happily together. A letter brings the heart-breaking news that Sage will be staying in the Capital by order of the High King and Anise finds herself a custodian of the evil Mr Babbit, the banker, who has evil plans for Anise, Patchwork House, and the woods surrounding it. Together Anise and Wolf embark on a perilous journey to the Capital to find her brother and to ask the High King for help. Along the way they are joined by a young mandolin-player, Robin, and an intriguing fox deity, Whin.

As the story unfolds Foxwood skilfully leads us into a fantastical yet believable world full of daemons, deities, and a whole host of other magical beings and objects. Facing dangers such as a deadly poisonous ink monster and the cunning Magpie Queen, Anise soon learns that it's not just the daemons of the White Wood she must save, but all the daemons of the world.

Mystical, compelling and steeped in folklore, this spellbinding story is reminiscent of the tales of Neil Gaiman, and with a wonderfully interwoven message: the paramount importance of balance within the natural world, seems set to become a classic. As the plot twists and turns, it keeps you turning the pages, guessing who can be trusted whilst also subtly addressing issues such as friendship, trust and respect for others.

The bonus of a beautiful cover design and glorious chapter headings from illustrator Katarzyna Doszla simply adds to all that is truly wonderful about this book. I for one shall return to it and cannot wait for the authors next tale.

Tracey Corner

Midnight Treasure

Piers Torday, pub. Hachette Children's Books

In the war between the immortals and the mortals, the mortals lost. Now the immortals want to vanquish them forever, heralding in an eternity of darkness. To do so they must find the Midnight Treasure by midnight on Spectre Night. Tibor, due to celebrate his thirteenth birthday on Spectre Night, when he will finally become a full-grown werewolf, is the only one with the gift to find the treasure.

There is however treachery in the White Prince's realm. Baron Ambrus, a mighty and influential vampir has shown Tibor and his best friend Roza, a vampir transformed into a black Alsatian, great kindness. The Baron adopted Tibor and Roza from the orphanage in the Town of Terrible Children, bringing them up in luxury in his House of Gold. The wizard and scientist, Professor Kira Halim seems to be conspiring against Baron Ambrus, harbouring an ancient festering animosity, yet she also seems to be someone the Baron trusts. The Baron sends Tibor - so Roza goes along as well - with the Professor to the White Prince's Palace and the Hollow Ball, joining the other hunters of the Midnight Treasure.

Perhaps Tibor and Roza are too naïve. They are little more than children, having no memory of their parents and circumstances by which they came to be in the orphanage that the Baron saved them from: Roza cannot even remember how she was transformed into a dog, only knowing she is a vampir. *Midnight Treasure* therefore is a sinister tale of rediscovery, of them finding a past whose vague memories haunt Tibor's unconscious mind and appear fleetingly in his dreams. Tibor is a restless, unsettled character, acting on instinct without fully thinking it through, whereas Roza is loyal, warning Tibor of impending danger and lies and when he ought to take care. Like Tibor and Roza, the reader is for much of the story shrouded in the lies spun by others.

Midnight Treasure is truly an epic adventure as the fate of all immortals and mortals depend upon Tibor's quest to find the treasure. What Tibor finds and what he does will either bring light and life or night and death. The world of the Claw and the Age of Darkness rests on his young shoulders.

Simon Barrett

Popcorn

Rob Harrell, pub. Bonnier Books

A simple and intriguing title offers us a far from simple but very intriguing story. Its narrator is a boy called Andrew.

Andrew suffers from anxiety, and this burden is interwoven through the narrative. There are some great illustrations, and something known as 'The Anxiety Files' which are cartoon depictions of his physical and psychological responses to these stresses. He uses a 'Popcorn Meter' to chart his feelings from 'chillin' to 'poppin' depending on how he is feeling that day. Andrew makes use of other coping strategies too, ones that he has learnt to help with his OCD and anxiety. He lives with his mum in a cramped apartment, and his grandma has Alzheimer's so is also staying with them. Andrew is effectively mourning the loss of his bubbly grandma to this condition as she gradually forgets who he is. Everything definitely seems stacked against Andrew who is a sympathetic character we really want to see achieve peace and happiness. He is simply trying to get through the day and get a good school photo for his mum, but things keep getting in the way, such as bullying classmates, cartons of juice and science experiments gone wrong.

The author warmly presents relationships, and sensitively shows how difficult living with anxiety can be. The novel is funny and moving, and Harrell's bringing to life of the central friendship is really well written. The portrayal of surviving family stress and middle school through the child's perspective would make great reading for children and families coping with anxiety, but really, anyone interested in people would enjoy it.

Steph Robertson

Shadow Creatures

Chris Vick, pub. Bloomsbury Children's Books

Family memories and Norwegian history are the inspiration for *Shadow Creatures*, which recounts the experience of a village during the Nazi invasion of Norway.

Tove and Liva are two young girls when the German troops invade Norway. They live in a fishing village with their parents and their older brother Hakkon. At the news of the invasion the men of the village leave to fight the invaders. Soon, tight rules are established in the village by the occupiers. Agna, an older girl, displays her rebellious streak, which is at the same time feared and admired by the two sisters. Despite their mother's efforts, Liva in particular is drawn to Agna and becomes involved in her adventures, until one day she joins her as part of the local recruits working in a prisoner's camp in a nearby island. Becoming increasingly conscious of the evil at play, Agna and Liva try to convince Hakkon, who now collaborates with the resistance, to help the prisoners. Events take over however and an act of rebellion causes Agna in particular to pay its consequences.

While the pressure on the Nazi invaders grows in Europe, and the fate of Norway is uncertain, Agna, Hakkon, Liva and Tove do what they can to protect their loved ones and to follow their ideals.

Chris Vick's story illustrates the hardships suffered during the war in Norway, but also illustrates the bravery and resilience of many of its inhabitants. Some, like Hakkon, joined the resistance network called Milorg. Others chose civil disobedience as a way to hinder the invading forces progress. Skilfully narrated and with plenty of tension to keep the readers hooked and sufficient focus on some characters to show how war affected all in so many ways. This is a book which will help lower secondary pupils learn more about the past, and about our future. A book I think we might be seeing featured in many shortlists.

Laura Brill

Witchspark

Dominique Valente, pub. Usborne

Magic, mystery, friendship and resilience.

Eglantine lives in the magical house of Huswyvern situated in the seaside town of Felixstowe, Suffolk. But this is not Felixstowe as you know it! Great Britain is now known as the Magic Isle after a great volcano released a substance called Isle Spark which, as well as awakening magical creatures from stone, turned some people magical too. Eglantine's mother was a witch but sadly Eglantine failed her magical test. Now her uncle, with the evil Whistlewitch by his side, has kidnapped Eglantine's father, holding him to ransom, to gain ownership of the house, Huswyvern. But Hus and Eglantine, and her faithful dragon Arthur, are determined to not let this happen.

In London, Princess Victoria as a member of the royal family is not allowed to possess magic. However, things are getting out of hand as her witchspark is activated and she begins to unwittingly cast spells, including freezing people and turning back time. She is desperate for the magic to be bound to avoid being found out. Both girls apply to Miss Hegotty's course for Aspiring (and ungovernable) Witches who send lessons - reminds me of an online course - to help them get started. But they need more. Will they find each other in time?

This is a great adventure story with great characters and humour. The house, Hus, is hilarious and it would be amazing to live in a place like this, where you are woken up with a shake and the rooms are decorated to suit your mood (to name but a few of its assets). Eglantine is a brave and determined young lady who has to fight for everything and has her faithful dragon Arthur to help. Princess Victoria is helped by the brave servant Eoin and his rat Lord Byron (do look for the poetry reference).

It is a fun magical adventure full of hope when all seems lost. I loved it and look forward to passing it on to the children in my class.

Hayley Reeve

Young Adult Books

The Dagger and The Flame

Catherine Doyle, pub. Simon & Schuster Children's Books

This is one of the very best fantasy/YA/Gothic/romance novels I've read of late. Moreover, it is the first in a new series called *The City of Fantome*, which I am certain readers will await with great enthusiasm and which is certainly an intriguing name!

Catherine Doyle is already an established author, with more than a dozen books for middle grade and older readers, with *The Dagger and The Flame* definitely a YA+ novel. Curiously there are some reviewers who consider the novel is suitable for middle grade readers, but that makes me wonder if they actually finished reading the story, with its steamy later sessions. I think Bowdler would turn in his grave! The novel swiftly and delicately engrosses readers into the world of Fantome, a kingdom of cobbled streets, safe by day but absolutely terrifying by night.

When her home has been burnt and her mother has been killed by Daggers, who form one of the two rival enemy guilds, the eighteen-year-old heroine, Seraphine (Sera to those in her new life) has taken refuge in House Armand, headquarters of the Cloaks. In good romantic style Sera meets Ransom, the heir to the Order of Daggers, and therefore an enemy, but gradually their love/hate turns to a secretive passion. Time after time Ransom prevents Sera from putting herself in the way of danger, but it is clear that at the end of this book there is a lot more danger and excitement to come in the following novel. I have to admit that, as a dog lover, I also greatly enjoyed Pippin's part of the story, and I very much hope he continues to entertain readers in the sequel! There is only a slight drawback in this otherwise unusually enthralling, well written and lengthy first episode. It is somehow in the last quarter of the book that we feel that some of the excellence of both story and writing drifts into more conventional and less enthusiastic chapters. While Sera and Ransom's passion for each other grows, we feel that the author's ideas wain somewhat.

Nevertheless, this is undoubtedly outweighed by the overall quality and YA/adult readers will look forward to the next instalment/s, and an equally enthralling and excellently written novel soon appear.

Bridget Carrington

The Dark Within Us

Jess Popplewell, pub. Chicken House

When Jenny and Luc meet, their first impressions act as a draw to one another. Jenny is a sixteen-year-old girl experiencing homelessness and complex struggles in her relationships with friends and family, through no fault of her own. Luc however is a demon. A demon who perhaps is a little misunderstood and might just have a heart that does the unthinkable for a demon, it cares.

After a slightly rocky start and a ride in some dodgems, they travel to the depths of All Hell, which has the juxtaposition of well... being hell and therefore full of demons, but also the home of some kind people. The journey is one with a defined purpose, Jenny wants something very personal returned to her and Luc has been tasked by his father to be the one who helps her. There are some sparks that fly, a coy look here and there and a slow-burn build of a connection that is entirely appropriate for a teen audience.

With its contemporary setting, *The Dark Within Us* is clearly aimed at older teens, also being a story that will prove enjoyable to adults who enjoy their stories with a heavy dose of nostalgia. As a teenager of the 00s I certainly felt a familiarity to Jenny's experiences, the music and clothing references and 'probably shouldn't be here' house parties, as well as the dynamics of friendships. I really enjoyed the multiple points of view between chapters, allowing us to understand the motives and backgrounds of characters. We had a full cast of quirky and exciting side characters who hopped in for their own chapters, it really added to building the world of a reimaged hell and embellished it expertly. A brilliant read.

Hannah Bartleet

Desert Echoes

Abdi Nazemian, pub. Little Tiger

Desert Echoes is an Abdi Nasemian's YA novel about Kam, a 15 year old who is head over heels in love with Ash. A trip to Joshua Tree, at the start of the story, ends with Ash's disappearance, leaving Kam reeling for much of the novel. Kam's family are worried about him, as is his best friend Bodie. Later in the narrative, a school trip to Joshua Tree sees Kam returning to the area and he is left wondering what happened to Ash - "I'm here in the present, haunted by the memory."

The chapters of the novel are split into a dual timeline, delving into events from both the past and the present. The COVID 19 pandemic also plays a huge part in the story, with likely familiar themes and motifs to readers such as masks, vaccines and social distancing. However, this is not just another COVID 19 story, with author Abdi Nazemian delicately presenting the topic to readers in the form of Kam's loneliness and his perceived loss of human connections - mirroring our own emotions during the pandemic. While there is some mystery, the narrative is mainly focused on exploring emotional growth and healing, the joy of teen friendships and the difficulty of maintaining them while maturing.

Kam's grief from losing Ash is palpable and is portrayed through his conversations with Bodie as well as the media he consumes. He suffers from survivor's guilt - also a huge theme in the novel, which may mirror the emotions of readers. As the story reaches its climax, it is heartbreaking but also reassuring to see Kam, as the story's protagonist, forgive himself "for surviving." It is a simple sentiment, but one which shows how author Abdi Nazemian is able to convey such heartfelt emotions through the written word. Abdi Nazemian is a superb author of Young Adult fiction and *Desert Echoes* is a fine example, with both happy and sad moments. Love and mystery merge together beautifully in a novel that is already enticing readers with its page-turning narrative.

Chris J Kenworthy

On The Wall

Anne Fine, pub. Old Barn Books

On the Wall is the story of two children, their classmates and teachers. There is a girl called Juliet who is very anxious and worried about school life and a boy called Finley who is relaxed, and self-assured at school. Finley and Juliet have just started at Windfields Secondary School, and this story is about their transition from primary to secondary school. Everything is new and both the pupils and the teachers are getting to know each other. Finley seems different to all the other children. He is calm, composed and unflustered. The main theme of the story is centred around Finley spending his break times sitting quietly and alone on a wall in the playground.

This is a very simple story, but nevertheless a fascinating insight into the lives of the students. There are many questions to consider. What is Finley thinking about? Is he happy? Is he lonely? What is so special about the wall? What would happen if the wall wasn't there? One teacher, Mr. Goodhew, tries to find some answers to the questions they all have. He is fascinated by Finley and wants to find out why he behaves the way he does. Finley tells his teacher that he is happy everywhere, all the time and he is not lonely, even though he spends time alone. Through his calm behaviour Anne Fine shows how students can make their way through school and home life. She shows how we can cope with our worriers and anxieties. Following life in a secondary school over three terms we learn about the value of silence and how we can be happy and content with who we are. Although a slow and gentle read, this story can help children to come to terms with their fears about a new school. Over time, even the other children begin to see Finley as someone who can help them and make them feel happy about themselves. He is even 'worshipped' by the others and his calmness is catching.

Remember Juliet? She has been away from school after a family tragedy and is very nervous about returning. She seems to find answers to her worries when she is on the wall and close to Finley. A very simple storyline still produces a magical and gripping book. This one isn't full of action, but it is an interesting read nevertheless, featuring some unique characters.

Gary Kenworthy

The Seamaiden's Odyssey

Berlie Doherty, illus. Tamsin Roswell, pub. UCLan Publishing

From the author of so many classic books such as *Spellhorn* and *Dear Nobody* comes an exquisite new book perfect for those aged 10+.

When a strange and beautiful sea-creature is brought into the marine sanctuary where Sasha works, she cannot believe what she is seeing, half female human, half large fish – it couldn't possibly be. Could it? The sanctuary director insists that the sea-girl, whom they name Marissa, is kept as an exhibit, after all she will be a 'huge source of revenue', not to mention the need for scientific research. Sasha, knows this feels wrong but desperately wants to know more about her – are there more of her kind? Where has she come from? At first Marissa grows stronger in Sasha's care, but soon her colours begin to fade and finally Sasha makes a promise, a promise in return for a story. It is the story of Merryn, who travels from sea to land and back again in search of herself, a story bursting with cruelty, love, grief and the power of sisterhood.

Flooded with oceanic folklore this timeless tale takes us on a voyage of family, friendships, love and loss whilst subtly posing the question of whether we as a race have the right to intervene in nature, even in attempts to preserve it. *The Seamaiden's Odyssey* draws its reader in from the very first page and sweeps them along to the very last almost without realising. It is a tale of empowerment, of coming of age, of belonging and of how we respond to those who are not like us. It is book which you will fall in love with, and not just for the beautifully told tale. It is also enchantingly illustrated with Tamsin Rosewell's rich and spellbinding silhouettes which so hauntingly enhance the story and emerge you deep into an underwater world.

I felt that I barely drew breath as I read this book and cannot recommend it highly enough. It is a tale that will stay with me forever, a book I will treasure for its beauty and its secrets.

Tracey Corner

Sisters of the Moon

Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick, pub. Faber & Faber

At nearly sixteen years old Suzie Button finds herself in her garden at midnight making a wish on the moon. A year after her mother's death, she's still reeling in sadness and struggling with the loneliness of a new school in a new town. Her father is in the depths of depression, wrapped up in his own grief.

Suzie feels utterly alone. Then, one day a mysterious new girl sits down next to her and becomes the best friend Suzie didn't know she needed.

But Rhiannon doesn't always act like a friend – too many questions go unanswered, like where do you live and why do you go away every few weeks? Plus, strange things seem to happen when Rhiannon is around. Does it have something to do with her constant fiddling of the string bracelets she wears? As Suzie pieces together the clues, she realises a truth that is beyond all reasonable logic. One that Sensible Suzie would never believe. But maybe Rhiannon is something that isn't sensible. And maybe there's something inside of Suzie that believes in magic.

As soon as I saw the cover of *Sisters of the Moon*, I knew it would be a fun YA read. Teens dancing on the beach at night in front of a stunning moon absolutely exudes the aliveness of teenage freedom. Then there's the emotional turmoil – the despair of losing a parent, the drama of high school mean girls and the thrill of a first crush. Add to that a big dose of magical realism and you have a recipe for an absorbing, atmospheric story with a central character that I felt for in every way. The story takes place in a small, Irish town on the seaside – a dramatic setting for an already gripping concept. The mystery slowly unravels like the strings that Rhiannon wears and the ending feels like the cover, a perfect moment in time. Plus, this book might have my favourite first lines ever: “This story ends with me watching my best friend fly off a cliff. Consider yourself warned.” Recommended.

Stephanie Ward

The Skeleton in the Cupboard and other stories

Lilija Berzinska, trans. Zanete Vevere Pasqualini and Sara Smith, ed. Kate Wakeling, des. Normunds Ozols, pub. The Emma Press

Undoubtedly a classic to be! As I made my way through the nine short tales which introduce us to the little creatures who live on the Livonian coast I was reminded more and more of a land in which Moomins lived. It is just about eighty years since the Moomins first emerged in the first of the many books Finnish author Tove Jansson created. Livonia is in Latvia, not quite as far north as the Moomins' home, but very much like it, and the creatures who live in Lilija Berzinska's stories are definitely close cousins! Unlike the Moomins, who are creatures unlike those we can see in the countryside and the sea, Berzinska's are birds, animals, insects, and even sea creatures. Readers can catch a glimpse of these in reality, from slugs (Squishbod) to Boik the sea urchin lighthouse keeper (boik means lighthouse in Livonian!).

There is no doubt that even though these are all real creatures, they have some interesting friends. For example, the first story is 'The Skeleton in the Cupboard', and Squishbod the slug (note slugs do not have bones) is about to open up the cupboard where he keeps a bony item which he spring-cleans in the open once a year! This is a small village in which the inhabitants know each other and often help

each other out. Many of their concerns are very similar to ours, and as we read the stories we discover that whatever we readers are concerned about in our own lives can usually be resolved in a similar way to those Livonian creatures. Friendship, thoughtfulness and helpfulness all make the village a happy one.

The images which accompany each tale, usually at the beginning, are delightful, and definitely add a touch of Moomin! When the book first appeared in Latvia it won the 2019 Latvian Literary Award of the Year (Children's Category). It was illustrated in colour, but the English translation revisits and revises the images, which are stunningly beautiful in their black and white ink. This is a lovely book and deserves recommendation for the splendid translation we can now read.

Bridget Carrington

Some like it Cold

Elle McNichol, pub. Macmillan Children's Books

This is a fun and romantic YA novel, Elle McNichol's first foray into YA fiction. She brings her characteristic empathy and as always, her unique insight into the lives of her neurodivergent characters.

In this story it is Jasper, a beautiful 18-year-old dancer, who is struggling to balance her family expectations, her new life at college and her long held dreams. It is certainly a lot to hold on to all at once and for one at a potential turning point of age, from child to adult. She returns to her 'picture perfect' hometown for Christmas and against the backdrop of her domineering sister's wedding, we see the tensions start to build. We are also given the opportunity to see how Jasper's neurodivergence both helps and hinders her when she has to navigate some difficult times. There is a romantic relationship with town 'grump' Arthur, that offers a nice lift to the story and some friendship issues that are tackled sensitively and well.

From the brilliantly conceived cover to the setting of the book with its looming family Christmas and a winter wedding it is perfect for cosy autumn winter reading. It brings us the small-town American dream of winter festivals, snow and ice markets. It makes it all sound incredibly magical and I am certain it is! This is a great book to read as the nights draw in, preferably in front of the fire with a hot chocolate, because that is how it will make you feel.

Marianne Digiovanni

This Dark Heart

Zeena Gosrani, pub. Firefly Press

Prepare to be taken away into the worlds of Indian folklore, into a world full of vivid colours and people in this gorgeous story which is bright as it is dark. This is *This Dark Heart*.

At the heart of this enchanting novel is Princess Thiya, a gifted healer mage whose extraordinary powers draw the attention of another mage, the earth mage Isaac. His immoral decision to take Thiya's true love, Amara, hostage adds an intense layer of conflict, launching Thiya on a harrowing quest to rescue her beloved. This story superbly amplifies the stakes, as it intertwines themes of love and peril, pushing Thiya to confront not only the external dangers posed by the daayan (shadow-like stalkers of the night) but also the internal struggles of her own vulnerability and determination. Thiya shines as a character throughout alongside her supporting characters; her quest is not taken alone, fire mage Kaayan and her brother Lochan are with her. She reveals more about herself with each encounter, illustrating her resilience and strength, revealing a heroine who is more than just her powers. The supporting characters complement the story beautifully, each with their own motives for supporting Thiya and taking on the quest with her and it is these layers that enrich the overall experience.

This story is paced in a way that keeps readers engaged, allowing for both intense action moments and reflection periods. An interesting backdrop is provided by the richness of the world, steeped in Indian folklore. Through the author's descriptive language, the reader is transported to enchanting landscapes and mystical realms, allowing the fantastical elements to feel grounded. I would recommend this moving story to reader's age 13+ who appreciate tales of adventure that highlight love's triumph over adversity. Whether you are familiar with Indian folklore or new to it, this story promises an engaging journey that will leave you feeling satisfied and reflective.

Katy Ralph

Twenty-Four Seconds From Now

Jason Reynolds, pub. Faber & Faber

Jason Reynolds' latest book, *Twenty-Four Seconds From Now* is once again a unique teen book. It explores a relationship from present to past. Neon and Aria are the two main characters in this tale and just as they are about to explore a physical side of their relationship, the story rewinds by 24 seconds then 24 minutes and 24 hours, weeks and days. Neon starts the story for us in the present, from his hiding place in the bathroom, before we go back twenty-four minutes to see him rushing to Aria's house with his fried chicken gift. From there we are taken back twenty-four hours then days, weeks, months to when Neon and Aria first met.

Jason Reynolds takes a very clever approach to storytelling and delivering important messages with this novel. Leading the reader through this big decision and the emotions that have been building

between Neon and Aria that have led them to be here. As you take the steps back into the relationship, getting to know them both, you adjust quickly and it keeps the story going at a brilliant pace. I know readers will find this a compelling read. It is brutally honest and at times awkward as with anything related to sex and teens might be, but Jason Reynolds uses this honesty to dispel myths and to ensure respect and consent are ever present in the conversations the teens have with family and friends.

I found this a brilliant story to immerse myself in and highly recommend it for young adults.

Erin Hamilton

Until We Shatter

Kate Dylan, pub. Hodderscape

The motto of Hodder's 'Hodderscape' imprint and books is 'never afraid to be out of this world.' As such it offers an ever-increasing selection of teen, YA and adult reading for enthusiasts of fantasy, sci fi and horror. Here Hodderscape tell us that 'lovers can hang out and talk books. We're a safe space for fans of sexy vampires, enemies-to-lovers romances, LGBTQ+ fiction, Princes of Hell, sarcastic thieves and deadly assassins, and much, much more.'

Kate Dylan's latest 320 pages (in thirty-two chapters!) certainly fit into Hodderscape's wishes like a glove, presenting readers with a very substantial novel which offers many hours of 'an action-packed, epic heist fantasy.' Just a year old, the Hodderscape label is certainly fulfilling its intentions, and *Until We Shatter* is a novel which covers many of its genres in one fell swoop!

Our heroine, Cemmy, faces death whatever she does – seemingly she can't win, with The Church likely to kill her for having any magic, and The Council of Shades wanting her dead for not having enough. Even more concerning is the possibility that in attempting to resolve the rival Church and Shades parties problems and rivalries she is very likely to destroy the city and its inhabitants, which certainly isn't her wish. Add several teenage and twenties would-be bi, boy and girl lovers, who may appear to be on her side – but are they? – and we have a novel of depth and many twists and turns. So much depth, and so many twists and turns indeed that I sometimes felt that I was missing important clues, and that I needed to re-read some chapters to see what I'd missed. Found families are always a heart-lifting addition to books, and readers will find found families within the narrative, which are both exciting to discover but also psychologically helpful and reassuring. All in all, this is a long, dense and enthralling read for those who like their reading to run to several hundreds of tightly written pages, and to offer us lengthy and complex descriptions of fantasy countries.

Absorbing, complex and thoughtful, those readers will also welcome a forthcoming sequel.

Bridget Carrington

Within the Heart of Wicked Creatures

Rima Orié, trans. Laura Watkinson, pub. Ink Road

Are you ready to enter? This is Rima Orié's *Within the Heart of Wicked Creatures*. There is a curse, an academy for magic users, a dark forest and dangerous secrets...

Priya is desperate to protect her brother and sister: when red light falls from a blood moon, it can fill the pathways of their village with dangerous spirits and primeval creatures. To be caught outside is terrifying. When her brother stumbles and falls on their homeward journey, Priya is jolted by a terrible panic. For the first time they are too slow to dodge the light, and Priya's whole body feels she has failed. Priya's mother is furious at the risk to Umed, as he lies injured after his exposure, and Priya is immediately blamed for not taking more care. She herself will always be safe: as a child born during a blood moon, she need not fear its light. But she cannot escape having put her siblings at risk, and this mistake feels even more painful for someone already at the fringes of both her family and society - all blood children are considered monstrous.

Priya is able to control the will of others, but she works hard to keep this curse suppressed within her. Yet her mother remains full of distrust, and nothing is sharper than these moments of rejection. Attempting to heal Umed leaves Priya in despair: even Master Haripersad, a kind teacher whose home full of books is a safe haven, insists that in all his learning, no cure is proven to work against the light of the moon. The only place that may possess more answers is Kuwatta: the largest military fortress in Awaran - with its very own host of scholars. Kuwatta is the centre for Awaran's rebel army, who hope to bring an end to Awaran's place as a colony of Freeland. Suryans were taken to Awaran to work on plantations, overseen by colonists who acted with awful brutality. At Kuwatta there is a chance to challenge Freeland, and every few years the base holds a contest to choose a potential new scholar to aid its purpose. Priya's sister, Ishani, longs to win, and her admittance to the fortress could save Umed - but something inside Priya would crumble at being left behind...

Priya's narrative is an emotional one, isolated among her family and community, and her longing for a different self is painful. Priya's story feels compelling for lovers of fantasy and mystery, with unsettling forces at work under the moon and an unexpected sighting of another blood child. There are grooves in the soil, pools of strange slime and the possibility of meeting another like herself...

Jemima Breeds

Non-Fiction Books

Amazing Animals with Astonishing Jobs

Simon Philip, illus. Adam Ming, pub. Simon & Schuster

This fun to read illustrated non-fiction picture book is a fascinating and entertaining guide to the world of working animals, full of intriguing facts that will blow your mind!

Is your doctor a donkey? Is your postman a platypus? Probably not but wouldn't that be the epitome of cool! Although it may seem absurd to suggest such a thing, there are many animals that do have jobs they perform on a daily basis. In this epic and whirlwind journey around the globe you will meet some incredible animals and learn all about the incredible jobs they do. From bomb-sniffing bees to detector dolphins and caddy llamas to New York City bodega cats, these animals are doing extraordinary things on land and at sea, in city and town to ensure the safety and security of other animals and people.

There are so many things that readers will learn in this brilliant book that I want to share just a few with you, to give you a flavour of how good it is. You can look at the role that therapy animals play in helping people feel calmer in airports, including LiLou the superstar therapy pig of San Francisco. Or learn how llamas can aid golfers on their journey around the course and no, they don't eat the golf balls or ever leave a mess behind! And then there are the bees which can be trained in order to detect illnesses in people. There is a whole lot more but hopefully this gives you a sense of the wow factor this book delivers.

There is no doubt that the witty, fact-filled text written by Simon Philips pairs perfectly with Adam Ming's captivating contemporary art to create an ideal gift for anyone, of any age who loves animals, loves the weird and wonderful and learning something new about our amazing animal friends.

Katy Ralph

An Illustrated History of Urban Legends

Adam Allsuch Boardman, pub. Flying Eye Books

Another attractive and intriguing offering from Flying Eye Books, *An Illustrated History of Urban Legends* is bound to include at least one story that each reader who encounters this book and picks has, at some point been in contact with or heard – after all many urban myths are shared by word of mouth and they are certainly not a new concept.

This attractively presented and illustrated hardback contains an assortment of unexplained mysteries. Readers will find everything from the ancient and well-known tale of the Yeti to the more modern stories of places that may exist somewhere, like the invisible city of Biringan, or are not meant to exist at all and are said to be a myth, like Bielefeld in Germany. Prepare yourself for everything from the completely believable to the fantastical and yet true!

Urban Legends is divided into five sections, each corresponding to an historical era and, within those, further subdivisions gather tales with a similar topic. Some are intriguing, some absurd, some nearly plausible; all of them highlight the power of storytelling. What is also fascinating here is the development of the style in which these tales are told. The advent of technology, far from debunking some of the myths, has actually provided a new tool which has revamped some old ones and created new ones and ensured far-reaching spread, fake news being the latest development.

Urban Legends will entertain and hopefully, while doing that, encourage readers to think critically about stories but about all manner of information shared. It will also introduce the terminology surrounding the sharing of stories. A fascinating rabbit hole to fall into.

Laura Brill

Blue Heart

Nicola Davies, pub. Graffeg

Blue. Not of the sky overhead, or the little swimming pool, but the magnanimous blue of the ocean with its most awe-inspiring creature - the Blue Whale. I've never seen a live whale but I experienced it when I read the great chase of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Nicola Davies' *Blue Heart* reminded me of the mysterious blue whale. An immersive book, a journey into the sea and the lives of blue whales. The author writes about her book that - "It is a celebration in pictures and poems of some of the species of whales I've seen and spent time with. It is a very personal collection, as although it reflects some of the biology of these wondrous creatures, it is mostly about my experiences of them, and the deep and lasting impression they have made on me. I suppose you could say it's an extended love letter."

The reader is submerged, taken immediately under the ocean through the book's tranquil watercolour art and learns about the anatomy of all species of whale. Each description is preceded by a beautiful depiction of the species. We get to know how wonderful these whales are, biologically, physically and in their natural environments. It's not all fact based though, Nicola includes a number of allied poems which define her feelings of awe and wonder on her encounter with the whale:

"From the start I could quote the stats.

A body as long as three school buses, The slow...

wait for it

wait for it
wait for it
BEAT

of a heart the size of a small car,
an aorta you could post a toddler down.

But I did not really understand that humongous, huge, enormous, vast don't work for creatures more like landscape than like living thing."

Blue Heart will keep you immersed under those deep ocean waters, the home of the great whales, for a long time. It's a magnificent read for adults and children, catering to both, with explanatory paragraphs on the scientific expression of a whale and the poetic articulation which seeks to delineate something greater than words. Whales as a wave of emotion, as something sublime. A five-star read for a science and biodiversity enthusiast and a great book for kids, awakening their inquisitive natures.

Ishika Tiwari

Garland of Lights: A Diwali Story

Chitra Soundar, illus. Amberin Huq, pub. Bloomsbury Children's Books

The heart-warming festival filled with swirly Jalebis, Sweet Laddus, lots of lights and Rangolis is coming and I have just the right book to make it even more vibrant for kids: *Garland of Lights*. A beautiful children's book which narrates the joy of the Hindu festival Diwali, on the night of the first new moon of October or November. It is also known as Deepawali which means 'a row of diyas or lights.' For Hindu's the festival marks the return of Lord ShriRam with the Goddess Sita and his younger brother Lakshmana to his birthplace Ayodhya after a 14 year exile following his defeat of the arrogant King Ravana.

The book can be read with ease by children aged 3-6. It's colourful; each page illustrated from edge to edge with scenes from a Diwali day. We see a traditional Hindu family - parents, children and grandparents cleaning and decorating the house for the night of lamps. This is when the Goddess of health, wealth and prosperity – Lakshmi - descends and visits the clean, adorned and inviting homes of those who have love and respect in their hearts. It's a five-day long festival! The author lists the number of deepaks or diyas to be lit during the first day of Diwali by numbering from 1 to 13. The first one is lit for the Goddess of Wealth, the second to thank the sun and moon, the third to let go of spats and fights, and so on. The accompanying verses highlight, with joy and gratitude the significance of Diwali as a festival of greater good. Chitra's words and Amberin's adorable illustrations make this an enjoyable read as she writes the poems-

“Five lamps to mark the five days of cheer. We share mithai this time of the year. Six lamps brighten the rangoli art. We sing the hymns that we know by heart. Seven lamps to greet friends with a smile. Those nearby and friends gone a while.”

Each verse is additionally decorated with a cozy and inviting illustration! There's the warm yellow of a lamp-lit night, and a sparkling firecracker; there's the vibrance of Rangoli on the floor; and there's the festive atmosphere of togetherness, all beautifully presented. This book is a wonderful read, definitely a five-star book for its message of harmony, celebration, thanks and plenty of detail for readers about the festival of Diwali.

Ishika Tiwari

The History of Information

Chris Haughton, pub. DK

With the modern world being so full of information it can sometimes be difficult to know where to turn, how to find something, feel overwhelmed by it all. I have been listening to a fabulous story lately, the type where the main character engages with the reader. It begins in the 1990s when all the tech we have now was just a dream. He mentions phones with cords and the dial up sounds for the internet, reminding younger readers that we haven't always had everything at our fingertips as we do now!

Chris Haughton embraces this concept too in his *The History of Information*. He takes us on a fascinating journey of discovery and you will probably find that you find new information, learn out about new things along the way as you read. That is what information is all about ultimately. It informs us and no-one has all the information so why not find a copy of this book and continue your learning journey?

Are we really in the midst of a technological revolution or has it been happening for years, decades? Yes, technology is advancing, information is now at our fingertips as it has never been before but then that was also the case when the first libraries opened, when the first news programme was broadcast and so on. Humanity is in a constant revolution where technology and information are concerned. To know how this could affect our future we need to look at the ways in which it impacted out past and that is exactly what Chris Haughton does. He takes us back, across history, showing us how we have always been looking for information, looking for ways to make it easier to access and that we continue to do so. The first known city was in Sumeria. Uruk was in what is now Iraq and by 3000 BCE it was the largest city in the world. They needed to do some accounting to manage their population, to do that they needed to know how to write... Writing was beginning its long and varied life over 3000 years ago, information was in its infancy.

Now we have Google and its intelligent ads matching people's searching habits with their buying habits. Everything is driven by information; it has revolutionised over thousands of years and is still going. An utterly fascinating history book with plenty of thoughtful discussion about the past, present and future of information.

Louise Ellis-Barrett

How to Know a Crow: The Biography of a Brainy Bird

Candace Savage, illus. Rachel Hudson, pub. Greystone Kids

Oki, an American crow, is the subject of this book. Her name means 'hello' according to the Blackfeet Indians, living in the Great Plains of Montana and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. The author uses the fictitious life history of Oki the crow to present this non-fiction picturebook. Three biologists contributed the factual content and Candace provided the story, of which she says - if this book were a cake, the recipe would read: Take 4 cups of fact and 1 cup of fantasy, blend well and bake.

Written to promote scientific curiosity in children, it encourages young people to take pleasure in the countryside. From there to enjoy studying natural history or a related subject by joining a club or interest group. 'Bird brain', is a phrase frequently banded about without much appreciation of just how clever some birds can be. Fascinating facts include - a crow's brain is smaller than a walnut, but it is packed with 1,500,000,000 neurons which is as many as some monkeys, five times as many as pigeons. They can identify individual people and distinguish friend from foe. Known individuals are safe but that same known individual plus a ladder is not. Surprised, read on?

The story starts with Oki hatching and being cared for by her extended crow family. Some are more helpful than others, as crows have character traits too. After a while a team of scientists arrive to weigh and measure the 'kids,' as they are called. They draw samples of blood, fit them with identifying bands and tags. All quick and painless. But a cacophony of cawing, sends the intruders away in no doubt that they are not welcome. Bird banding and its usefulness to scientific research is one of the many aspects touched upon. Along with the process of 'budding.' Before you know it Oki has her own nest and family. Fascinating facts include crow funerals and being distant relatives of the dinosaurs. Just look at their feet.

An inspiring book for potential biologists or young readers who want a lovely story about crows, beautifully illustrated and equally at home in a school or home.

Elizabeth Negus

Open Wide!: Jaw-dropping mouths of the animal world

Letizia Diamante, illus. Ed J. Brown, pub. What on Earth!

Well, this is delightful. Here's your dream introduction to animal mouths, from silk moths to bowhead whales. It's genuinely everything you want to see in a fun, thorough zoology book. Perfect for libraries, it's visually exciting, catching the attention of casual readers, moreover thrilling animal lovers. As an adult who reads with children, I want this book in my bag. As a child who obsessed over the natural world, it would've filled me with joy, I wish I could send it back in time to myself.

Start at the art, as it's that which demands your time. Simplified reality as is quite typical currently, honestly it's a bit crude but pleasingly charmingly so, excelling in composition, colour and energy. There's nothing polite about it, it clutches your shirt and shouts in your face. It's vivid and feels like a child could have, would have created it, with its roaring, pouncing, swooping, munching glory. I love it, you will too, see the intense Rousseau-esque tiger on page 11. Scary. The words are divided thematically, sections on parts of mouths and sections on uses thereof. There's much more here than you might imagine it possible to say, the text is deep, wide and has the same breathless verve as the art, the two are well matched. Beaver teeth contain iron! Cichlid fish wrestle using their lips! So, so, so very much to learn! Very smoothly and engagingly told.

It is possibly a little uneven, some groups of animals getting more of the spotlight than others, but this is a 60-page book (with a glossary, an index, a further reading list), so I don't feel short-changed by the absence of the frankly fascinating earthworm mouth in favour of being able to tell the difference between falcons and hawks based on their beak dentition. I love knowing that!

On tone, Years 3 to 5; on accessibility certainly younger; on factual content maybe Year 8? In the animal book category, I can't think when I last had this much fun. In any category, it's a joyous, boisterous, fascinating read. Very highly recommended.

Dmytro Bojaniwskyj

Seriously HAPPY: 10 Life-changing Philosophy Lessons from Stoicism to Zen to Supercharge Your Mindset

Ben Aldridge, illus. Michelle Brackenborough, pub. Quarto Books

Seriously HAPPY is a fantastic book for teaching readers about philosophy in a way that makes it easy to understand. Philosophy can be quite a heavy topic with a lot of terminology and challenging thinking behind it. Author Ben Aldridge discovered philosophy as a young man and found it helped him restore contentment, balance and peace to his otherwise tumultuous life – teens I am sure you

know how this feels. He uses his knowledge of that philosophy and shares over twenty practical challenges all of which are rooted in it, which have helped him and hopefully will do the same for you.

Every challenge is based on a philosophical idea – shame attacking for example helps readers to face fears and appreciate even the smallest things in life. There are also techniques for meditation and ancient arts to master. As a book aimed specifically at teens it is formatted in an ideal way to ensure it isn't too text heavy. Ben Aldridge's text is accompanied by Michelle Brackenborough's illustrations. There are images, quotes and challenges to challenge further thinking and to encourage readers to explore philosophy in their own way.

Introducing some well-known philosophers along with some I wasn't familiar with, it makes for a truly fascinating read. I think teens will appreciate the knowledge and lessons they will gain from reading this. At the back of the book is a handy recommended reading list for readers to continue exploring this fascinating topic.

Erin Hamilton

The Super Skeleton

Dr Roopa Farooki, illus. Viola Wang, pub. Walker Books

Scientific books about the human body often focus on muscles, senses or the important organs such as the brain or the heart, but not this one! *The Super Skeleton* focuses on two main things: how the skeleton works and how best to look after your own. This book journeys the reader from learning what the skeleton is and what bones are made from, all the way through to looking at the different types of bones to be found in the human body. With two main sections making up the human skeleton, the central skeleton and the appendages, we quickly see it is essential to understand how these work together to allow movement as well as supporting muscle groups.

Doctor Roopa Farooki shares her knowledge of the skeleton in a way that feels like story-telling whilst remaining informative and factual. Did you know, for example, that babies have more bones in their bodies than adults do? Also included in this book are some useful tips for how to look after your bones and keep them strong; steps that can be as basic as drinking plenty of water and going outside each day. Well-written and accessible for young readers *The Super Skeleton* offers a good balance between text and illustrations. Keywords are highlighted in bold text so that children can clearly see these on the page. Viola Wang's illustrations are highly engaging and help the reader to understand the learning that is presented on each double-page. For example, the diagrams showing types of joints make it easy to see how each type works and shows where each type can be found in the skeleton.

This is an enjoyable, informative read which will extend any child's understanding of the human skeleton and how to look after their body.

Tom Joy

The Ultimate Guide to Money

Emmanuel Asuquo, illus. Selom Sunu, pub. Penguin Random House Children's

An engaging and interactive financial guide aimed at 10 – 13 years, *The Ultimate Guide to Money* aims to make the world of money management fun and accessible. It covers topics such as saving, investing in stocks and property, and even cryptocurrencies.

The book's approach is to use an imaginative challenge, asking readers to turn £1 into £1 million by looking at various financial decisions, with the choices explained along the way. This is accompanied by introductions to concepts such as risk-taking and entrepreneurship. Money matters are often mystifying to young people and this book helps to explain them alongside practical advice and relatable case studies. The text is broken up into bite-sized manageable chunks with good use of black and white illustrations, bold text and sub-headings. I particularly liked the way the book highlights the importance of using wealth for positive social impact. This adds an ethical perspective and encourages readers to give back to their communities, not only in monetary offerings but also by volunteering their time.

Whilst there is a glossary there is no index and the contents page does not make it clear what will be found in each chapter. This makes it difficult to determine whether the book contains the specific information a reader may be interested in. However, those who are familiar with shows such as *Dragon's Den* are likely to enjoy reading it. The book could be useful as a resource for lessons on citizenship or personal finance, and any would-be millionaires are likely to borrow it from the school library. I suspect a few adults may also learn something useful from this book too.

Barbara Band

Why Your Parents Are Hung-Up on Your Phone and What To Do About It

Dean Burnett, illus. Katie Abey, pub. Penguin Random House Children's

I am sure we can all imagine, and some probably know first-hand, that the use of mobile phones is one of the most common causes of arguments between children and their parents/carers. It is certainly a topic that comes up frequently in educational settings with the news often reporting of those schools where they have been banned completely.

Regardless of how you feel about mobile phones and mobile technologies, they are now an integral part of society and are unlikely to go away. That makes it more important than ever that we all learn

how to use them responsibly. *Why Your Parents Are Hung-Up on Your Phone* has been written by neuroscientist, Dean Burnett and explores the ongoing tension around mobile phone use, addressing the question of whether these worries are justified. It gives readers both sides of the debate, acknowledges that some of the parent/carer concerns are justified and offers young readers tools to better understand why people are anxious about their phone use. Based on scientific evidence, the text is both approachable and accessible providing a balanced view without preaching to the reader. Additionally, it addresses topics such as phone addiction, the impact of phones on mental health and the effects of excessive screen time.

There are practical tips for helping families reduce conflict and improve communication around phone use and some very useful sections on misinformation and the trustworthiness of online content. The black and white illustrations by Katie Abey are engaging and add to the visual impact of the text, which is designed to appeal to its intended audience of readers aged 10–13, via the use of bold text, highlighted words and comments. A serious but also amusing book which simplifies complex ideas into an engaging and informative text *Why Your Parents Are Hung-Up on Your Phone* is certain to be and would make a useful addition in school libraries everywhere, perhaps especially in schools which have banned phones.

Barbara Band

Picture books

Ava and the Acorn

Lu Fraser, illus. Paddy Donnelly

The Café at the Edge of the Woods

Mikey Please

Don't Think of Tigers

Alex Latimer

Free as a Bird

Barroux

Frog in a Fog

Marielle Bayliss

How to Bath a Giraffe

Sam Wilde, illus. Sarah Horne

I Am a Courageous Cub

Shoshana Chaim, illus. Lori Joy Smith

Let Me Do It!

Simon Philip, illus. Ella Okstad

Not Fair, Bear!

Lorna Scobie

On the Small Hill Where the Girls Take Off Their Shoes

Jairo Buitrago, trans. Elisa Amado, illus. Linda
Wolfsgruber

Pandora and the Story Forge

Gaynor Andrews, illus. Marie-Alice Harel

The Tantrum

Louie Stowell, illus. Isobel Lundie

Junior books

A Riddle for a King

Mark Forsyth, illus. Matthew Land

Badgers Are Go!

Susannah Lloyd, illus. Nici Gregory

The Boy in the Suit

James Fox

Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody

Patrick Ness, illus. Tim Miller

The Colour of Revenge

Cornelia Funke

Evenfall: The Golden Linnet

Alexander Armstrong, illus. Tom Roberts

The Haunting of Fortune Farm

Sophie Kirtley

Heartseer: The Tale of Anise Star

Rowan Foxwood

Midnight Treasure

Piers Torday

Popcorn

Rob Harrell

Shadow Creatures

Chris Vick

Witchspark

Dominique Valente

Young Adult books

The Dagger and The Flame

Catherine Doyle

The Dark Within Us

Jess Popplewell

Desert Echoes

Abdi Nazemian

On The Wall

Anne Fine

The Seamaiden's Odyssey

Berlie Doherty, illus. Tamsin Roswell

Sisters of the Moon

Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick

The Skeleton in the Cupboard and other stories

Lilija Berzinska, trans. Zanete Vevere
Pasqualini and Sara Smith, ed. Kate Wakeling,
des. Normunds Ozols

Some like it Cold

Elle McNichol

This Dark Heart

Zeena Gosrani

Twenty-Four Seconds From Now

Jason Reynolds

Until We Shatter

Kate Dylan

Within the Heart of Wicked Creatures

Rima Orié, trans. Laura Watkinson

Non-Fiction books

Amazing Animals with Astonishing Jobs

Simon Philip, illus. Adam Ming

An Illustrated History of Urban Legends

Adam Allsuch Boardman

Blue Heart

Nicola Davies

Garland of Lights: A Diwali Story

Chitra Soundar, illus. Amberin Huq

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