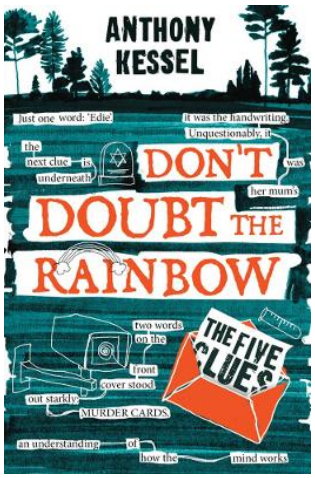
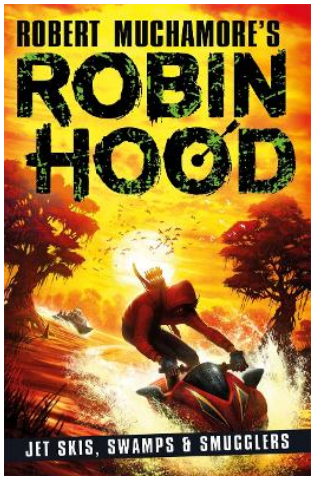
Find our recommendations for books to encourage reluctant readers in Key Stage 3. These books have lively, engrossing storylines, strong characters and are often part of a series.



The Five Clues (Don't Doubt The Rainbow 1)

Author: Anthony Kessel **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/08/2021 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

August 2021 Book of the Month Edie is still grieving for her mother, killed a year earlier in a horrible accident, when she discovers a secret note her mother left for her. It states that the ‘accident’ was anything but, and that this is the first in a trail of clues she has left for her daughter, explaining what it was she was investigating, and why it got her killed. The tension heightens as Edie solves the clues, putting herself in more and more danger. The people who arranged her mother’s murder are utterly ruthless while Edie has very few she can turn to for help. Anthony Kessel handles plot and character well and this DIY detective story will appeal to fans of Holly Jackson and Sophie McKenzie. NB, there’s one particularly violent scene that some readers might find upsetting.



Robin Hood 3: Jet Skis, Swamps & Smugglers

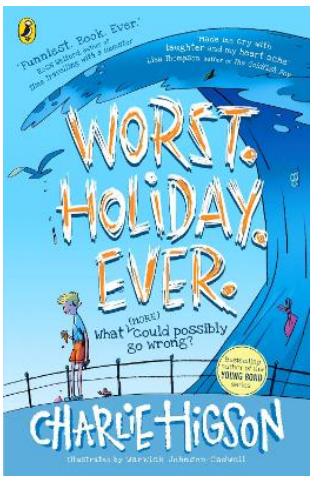
Author: Robert Muchamore **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 08/07/2021 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

The thrilling third book in Robert Muchamore’s Robin Hood series, Robin Hood Jet Skis, Swamps and Smugglers is shot-through with a strong sense of taking down the bad guys, and reels with rip-roaring adventure and perils aplenty. This is Robin Hood reimagined for our times, replete with a people-smuggling plot that takes in the plight of refugees and issues around modern-day slavery as Robin and Marion pursue their quest to quash corruption. With a squad of former special forces soldiers set on handing him over to gangster Guy Gisborne, thirteen-year-old Robin is hiding out (and working out to grime music) in the swampy Eastern Delta with Marion (whatever you do, don’t say they’re in love - don’t even joke about it). But hiding out doesn’t mean hiding away from helping people in need, and soon Marion and Robin are in the thick of finding out who’s behind an abusive people-smuggling operation. With whip-smart one-liners, short sparky chapters and razor-sharp plotting, this comes especially recommended for reluctant readers.

Black Brother, Black Brother

Author: Jewell Parker Rhodes **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 13/05/2021 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

At once hard-hitting and heart-stirring, Black Brother, Black Brother confirms Jewell Parker Rhodes as an exceptional writer whose work resonates with authenticity, empathy, and powerful truths about race and equality. One of the few black boys at his prestigious school, 7th grader Donte has a hard time of it, to say the least. “I wish I were invisible…Sometimes I feel like I’m swimming in whiteness. Most of the students at Middlefield Prep don’t look like me. They don’t like me either.” He’s singled out by teachers, and subjected to racist bullying by his classmates: “You dress thug”. “Your dreads are dreadful.” “Why can’t you be like your brother?” “Can your brother find you in the dark?” The brother in question is Trey, who presents as white and, as a result, occupies a very different place in the world. As Donte is arrested - for nothing - he experiences (yet again) that “Black is not invisible”. So, he resolves to get his own back on the student who got him in trouble, and the best way to do that is to beat the boy at his own game - fencing. Donte’s first-person narrative is pitch-perfect and incredibly powerful, and the brothers’ family life is beautifully portrayed too. Their dad is a computer architect whose family were “poor seafarers from Norway”. Their mom is a social justice lawyer whose family is “descended from captured Africans.” But despite the love and support of his brother and parents, Donte’s loneliness is powerfully palpable, especially when he’s suspended. This makes his determination to track down and learn from an African American Olympian fencer all the more moving, all the more inspiring. What an incredible tale of triumph and fortitude this is. Mention must also be made of the author’s afterword, in which she lays bare historic and cultural prejudices against darker skin, the falsehood of black/white categories, and her fascinating reasons for featuring fencing.

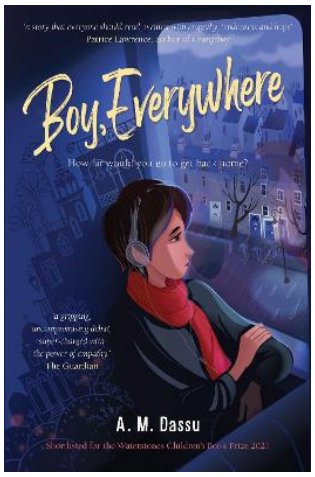


Worst. Holiday. Ever

Author: Charlie Higson **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 29/04/2021 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

Not since Adrian Mole opened his diary have the thoughts and innermost feelings of an adolescent boy been examined so precisely or with such heart. Stan is twelve, shy and a worrier, so the thought of a holiday in Italy with his friend Felix and Felix’s family freaks him out. He’s going though: we meet him at the airport drawing up a ‘duck-it’ list of things he hopes he’ll never have to do. Little does he know that he’ll tick off six out of ten of them on his holiday, and enjoy it too. The first-person narrative lets us in on all Stan’s thoughts, but he’s a good observer of others so we learn loads about the others in the holiday party too, kids and grown-ups. There are laugh-out-loud scenes and moments of pure agony, and through it all Stan is learning loads about himself and life in general. Honest, revealing, compassionate and so

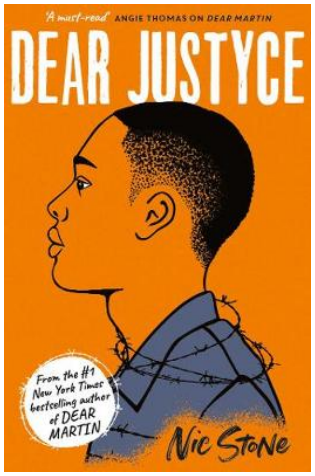
entertaining, this is a must read for all the Stans out there – adults, give yourselves a treat and read it too.



Boy, Everywhere

Author: A. M. Dassu **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 22/10/2020
Year Groups: Key Stage 3

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

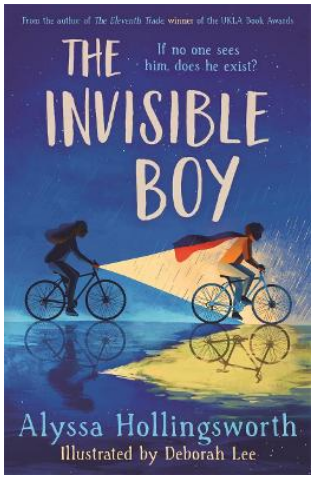


Dear Justyce

Author: Nic Stone **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/10/2020
Year Groups: Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4

October 2020 Book of the Month In this brilliant and emotionally gripping sequel to her best-selling debut novel, Dear Martin, the author's focus shifts to a minor character: Vernell LaQuan Banks Jnr. Unlike Justyce, the hero of the first book who is now a law student at Yale, Quan is incarcerated and charged with the murder of a policeman. In Dear Martin, Justyce wrote letters in his journal to his hero Martin Luther King Jnr to work through his thoughts and vent his frustrations about life as a Black American. Here Quan actually does write to Justyce, inspired by reading that self-same journal and through these and a series of flashbacks his painful story is revealed. From the trauma of witnessing his dad's brutal arrest and the domestic abuse his mother experiences from her new partner, to taking responsibility for protecting his small step-siblings to the extent of stealing food to feed them, Quan had none of the love and support that helped Justyce overcome the

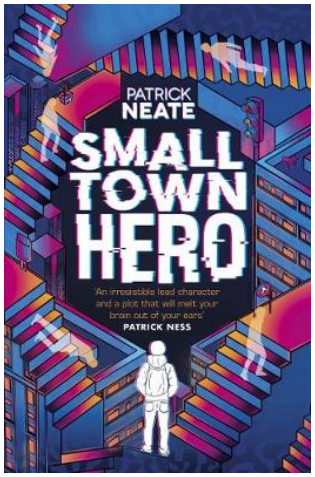
tragedies in the first book. In fact it is the need for a ‘family’ that embroils Quan into joining the Black Jihad and then loyalty to them which keeps his mouth shut about the fact that it was not his gun, left at the scene, which fired the fatal bullet. Through these letters we can really see Quan developing as a character and benefiting from studying with the tutor Justyce sent him. Evaluating himself and how he got there as well as the obvious racial disparities in the criminal justice system and how hopeless the future seems for black youths like him. Eventually the truth about his mental state, his coerced confession and the police procedural failure to gather ballistics evidence is revealed and Justyce launches a legal challenge to get the charges against Quan dropped and, just as importantly, find a way to reconcile him with his family and to be released from obligations to the other ‘family’. This is an unforgettable insight into lives where options and choices are so limited by systemic and institutional racism that despite every effort to the contrary the pathway to prison seems inevitable. In the afterword the author reveals just how many true stories are so authentically reflected here. Dear Justyce is an absolute must read, giving a voice to those who need it the most.



The Invisible Boy

Author: Alyssa Hollingsworth **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 17/09/2020 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

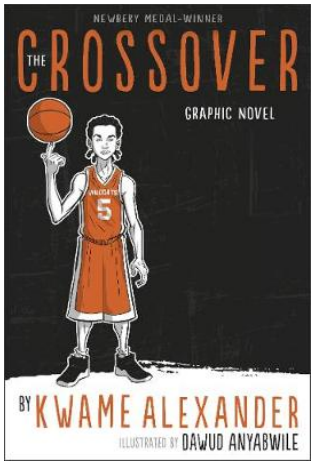
A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month September 2020 Cleverly blending an upbeat story of a girl who loves Superman comics and is determined to be a super sleuth in the style of Lois Lane and a contemporary story of a child being trafficked and held in slavery, The Invisible Boy is a fast-paced read with a strong message. When Nadia’s dog is rescued by a boy she has never seen in the neighbourhood before, she immediately labels him ‘The Invisible Boy’ and is determined to find out who he is. Influenced by the comics she reads Nadia is used to making up dramas, often jumping to the wrong conclusions! How Nadia pieces together the real story of her new friend is a well-crafted drama. Nadia’s shock and horror is powerfully conveyed.



Small Town Hero

Author: Patrick Neate **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/08/2020 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

Patrick Neate's Small Town Hero melds a sensitive handling of real-life loss with alternate world weirdness to create a surprising, unique novel. There's grief and gaming, family secrets and football, and the interwoven themes of loss and science will appeal to readers who liked Christopher Edge's The Many Worlds of Albie Bright and are now a little older. Everything changed for thirteen-year-old Gabe when his dad died in a car accident. First there's his grief, which has created a "black hole inside me." Then there's his unsettling new ability: "the stories I imagine become real." Reeling with grief and confusion, Gabe finds he's not entirely alone when he spends more time with his estranged Uncle Jesse, writer of an online game called Small Town Hero, which - to make matters even weirder – appears to echo Gabe's life. Jesse believes "there aren't just a few realities, but a countless number" and explains that when Gabe shifts realities and sees alternate versions of his present and future life, he's crossing something called an "event horizon". As Gabe's reality-shifting plays out, he also falls out with his best friend. Still, he has Soccer School to look forward to, and here Gabe takes on pertinent football wisdom from one his Watford icons: "Football's a game of moments. You get the ball, you choose a pass and, whether you chose right or wrong and did it well or badly, the moment's gone and you gotta move on…the game makes you live in the here and now – you can't change what's gone and you can't see what's coming." For similar books you can find an exciting and varied selection in our new Gritty Reads section

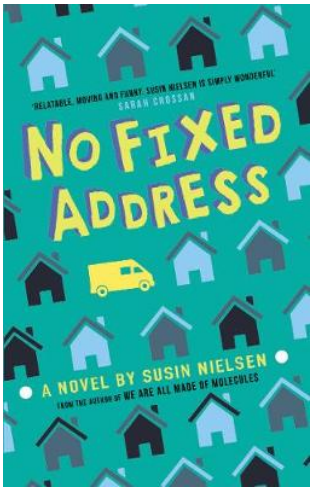


The Crossover Graphic Novel

Author: Kwame Alexander **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/03/2020 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

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

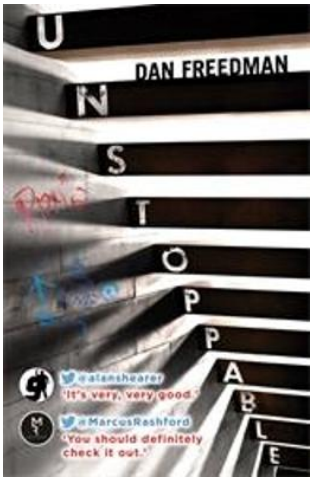
expressions and movement to an already great novel.



No Fixed Address

Author: Susin Nielsen **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 20/02/2020 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

Winner of the UKLA Book Awards 2020 Susin Nielsen's new novel features unforgettable central characters, and is beautifully written; her ear for dialogue – young teen to teen, young teen to parent, young teen to emergency services – pitch perfect. Despite being a story of homelessness and poverty, it will leave readers cheered and thoroughly reassured about the strength and resilience of the human spirit. Twelve-year old Felix lives with his mother Astrid, only rarely seeing his dad. Astrid has a flexible attitude to truth and Felix has developed a chart to measure the lies she tells as they navigate their lives. These range from 'the invisible lie', through the 'no-one gets hurt' to the biggest, the 'someone might lose an eye' lie. As they struggle to cope living in a (stolen) camper van, Astrid uses her panoply of lies to the full and Felix reluctantly goes along with it, ready to support his mother even when it's really difficult. Nielsen gives him good friends, and a talent for memorising facts, both of which help to set up a better future for him. Both painful and funny, this is a book that will have readers alternatively shouting at its central characters, and cheering them on.

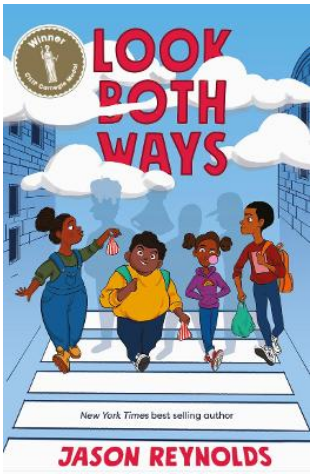


Unstoppable

Author: Dan Freedman **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/02/2020 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4

February 2020 Book of the Month This gripping must-read for sports fans fizzes with a powerful message about picking yourself up and self-belief, and a poignant portrayal of gang culture coercion. I cannot praise Dan Freeman's compassion-rich writing enough. Life's not easy for twin fourteen-year-olds Kaine and Roxy growing up on their London estate. Their dad's lost his job and mum works all hours. But Roxy and Kaine aren't your average teenagers. He's a super-talented footballer with Premier League potential, and she's an outstanding tennis player, tipped for the top. Oh, and they can't stand each other. After being close as kids, they've grown apart, with Roxy loathing the fact that Kaine's always in trouble, and Kaine hating the way Roxy gets all the attention and support, overlooked even when a scout for a Premier League club comes to watch him. Both a bundle of frustration, Kaine is tempted into dangerous territory. If only Mamma, their Barbados-born grandmother, was around to keep Kaine on the right track. Mamma's warm, wise presence is felt throughout the novel. She was the person Kaine turned to in times of need. She'd feed him soul food, remind him that he's special, urge him to "do the extraordinary." Sage advice comes from Kaine's supportive PE teacher too, who counsels "There are paths in life, there are choices. And you are at one

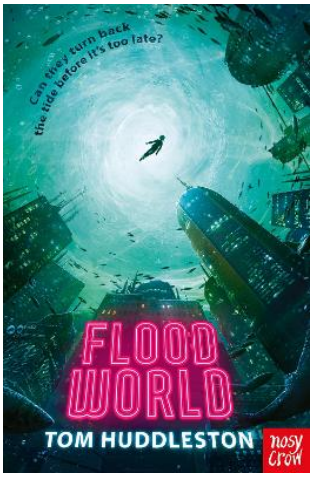
of those crossroads now". When tragedy strikes as Kaine loses his way it takes a whole lot of soul-searching for him to turns things round and become the extraordinary young man he is. And Roxy tackles her profoundly life-changing situation with heartrending courage too. With overriding messages of hope, compassion, doing the right thing and staying true to yourself, this is an absolute galáctico, Grand Slam winner of a novel.



Look Both Ways

Author: Jason Reynolds **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 07/11/2019 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 2

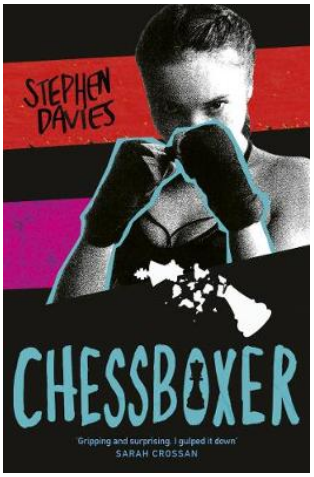
Shortlisted for CILIP Carnegie Medal 2021 | Longlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2021 Smart, incisive, brimming with the breath of human experience and written with engaging age-appropriate verve, this clever concept ("a tale told in ten blocks") is perfectly executed. For the chorus of kids whose lives play out on these impeccably-written pages, the walk home from school represents a rare time of freedom; a period of limbo between being under the watchful eyes of teachers and parents. Unsupervised, the kids reveal their true selves, most of them dealing with hidden heartache and anxieties alongside goofing around, self-reflecting and navigating their way through Middle School. As always with Jason Reynolds, the characterisation is ingeniously vivid, with deep insights expressed through, for example, the different ways kids open their lockers. Many of the stories are intensely poignant, such as that of the Low Cuts crew whose bad behaviour is fuelled by a desperate love for their sick parents. The moment it turns out that Bit the hustler is a "son who was scared. A son who loved his mum" is shatteringly powerful. There's much humour too, such as the laugh-out-loud scene in which smelly Gregory is slathered in VaporRub by friends seeking to beautify him before he visits a girl he's keen on. Bittersweet, hard-hitting and powerfully perceptive, these pitch-perfect reader-centric stories shine a light on oft-overlooked lives and ring with empathy and authenticity.



FloodWorld

Author: Tom Huddleston **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/10/2019 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

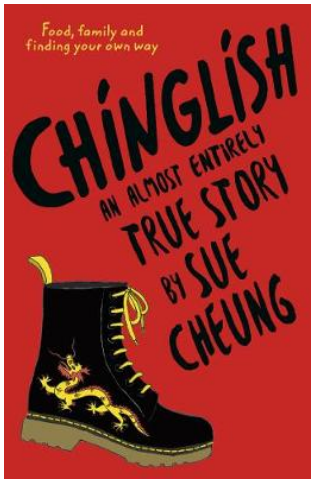
Set in a flooded future world, Tom Huddleston's book is a thrilling adventure, in which two young people are caught up in a world of pirates, gangsters, power struggles and corruption. Kara and Joe live in a floating slum on the edge of what is left of London after rising seas have drowned our civilisation. They've always been told that the Mariners, gangs who live entirely at sea, are terrorists. But then Joe's life is saved by a Mariner, who entrusts him with a secret map. It's a story that poses questions about our future, individual responsibility and the morals of political activism. Timely, thought-provoking, and action-packed.



Chessboxer

Author: Stephen Davies **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/10/2019 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

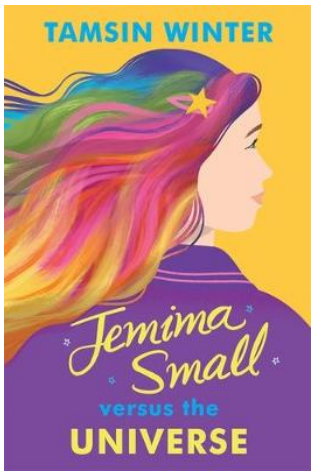
October 2019 Book of the Month New Yorker Leah is a tenacious, snarky queen of quips. She's also an exceptional chess player but decides to give up the game after losing a match that, had she won, would have seen her move up the rankings to grandmaster status. Feeling the pressure of her mom and coach, feeling that she's let down her beloved dad, she decides to get a tattoo, "proving to myself and the world that there is life after chess and that I'm not just a pawn for other people to push around." Leah's certainly not a girl given to being pushed around but, with the skills of a master weaver, the author sensitively shows how grief's deep wounds underpin her anger and tendency to drive people away. When her tattoo plan is foiled by one of her blog readers, Kit, who makes big bucks from illegal chess hustling, Leah winds up making a thousand dollars in a couple of hours. It's through the police busting one of the illegal games that she finds out about chessboxing, "the ultimate contest of brains and brawn". The thrill Leah feels for this hybrid sport's speed and tension is palpable, and she's a natural at it too, with her boxing coach praising her exceptional resilience: "You never know what's inside a fighter until they're flat out on the canvas", a perceptive comment that encapsulates Leah's story journey. She's grappling with grief, but making emotional breakthroughs and learning new skills, to the point that she's ready to fight Death (a formidable champion chessboxer) in Vegas. With a truly pulse-quickening climax, this exceptional novel rages with raw emotion. It's a bona fide page-turner seared with life-affirming insights into grief, friendship and finding new paths.



Chinglish

Author: Sue Cheung **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/09/2019
Year Groups: Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4

September 2019 Debut of the Month Jo is the kind of open, honest, amusing character readers immediately care about. Told through her wittily illustrated diary, Jo's tale begins with a(nother) upheaval. She and her family have just moved to their new Chinese takeaway, but her hopes for a fresh start are immediately dashed when she sees there's no living room, and she has to share a room with little sister Bonny while big brother Simon lives with their grandparents. Jo's experience of feeling "doubly different" is poignantly portrayed – she's an outsider at school because she's Chinese, and an outsider among her wider Chinese family because her own family is dysfunctional, and because she doesn't speak the same language. Thank goodness, then, that she forms a friendship with fellow outcast, Tina the Goth, who stands up to racist school bullies. But while Jo begins to feel hopeful about her future and takes steps towards realising her dream of working in fashion, she and Bonny are increasingly neglected by their parents, and then there's Dad's aggressive outbursts. The mid-1980s setting prompts many amusing references, from ra-ra skirts and Gary Kemp's perm, to sending drawings to Take Hart and going to Wimpy for a Knickerbocker Glory - but above all this is a highly readable, highly empathetic, impactful novel about familial abuse and neglect, trying to fit in, and finding your way in the world. Based on her own experiences, author Sue Cheung's big-hearted story will chime with readers of 12+ who know how it feels to fall between cracks and dream of a different life.

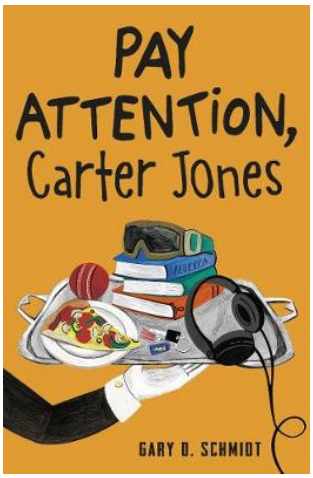


Jemima Small Versus the Universe

Author: Tamsin Winter **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 28/06/2019 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

"It would be so much better to have kind arms, or intelligent legs... Why did our good qualities have to be so invisible to everyone?" Wise words from our protagonist Jemima that expose what our world does - and doesn't - value most. Namely, the exaltation of narrow ideas of the "body beautiful" over the likes of intelligence, kindness, empathy and loyalty. Ultra-intelligent Jemima Small knows this better than most. Small by name, she's big in brains and body size - "It's typical of my life that I look the exact opposite of my name" - and constantly wounded by people weighing her with their eyes and the cruel body-shaming bullies at her school. That and the fact that her mum has abandoned her family has left Jemima with an empty space in her heart that "felt bigger than the universe sometimes." But with the support of her sweet best buddy Miki and the inspiring leader on her Healthy Lifestyle Class (AKA "Fat Club"), Jemima finds the strength to compete in Brainiacs, a national TV quiz for super-bright students. Adopting a mantra written by a teacher describing her chance in the quiz - "Jemima Small: difficult to beat" - Jemima's story will have readers rooting for her every step of the way.

This is a mightily big-hearted book, with honest, vital messages about believing in yourself and flourishing in your own skin.



Pay Attention, Carter Jones

Author: Gary D. Schmidt **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/05/2019 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

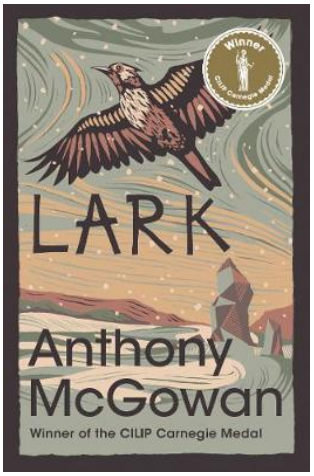
Shortlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2020 | May 2019 Book of the Month Like all classics of American middle grade fiction - as this may well be esteemed in future - this is radiant with humour, heart and a whole lot of indelibly authentic child-centred observations and emotions. With his dad away on army service, and faced with being plunged into the jungle of middle school, Carter already has plenty on his plate when his family inherits the services of an eccentric British butler. While Carter is quick to revolt against the butler's rigorous regime of tea-drinking, homework and housekeeping (including folding underwear, can you believe it?!), the butler's ways, wisdom and polite-but-firm guidance (AKA being "a pain in the glutes") casts a healing spell over the family's soul, exactly when they need it most. Then, as the butler shares his love of "the most lovely and sportsmanly game that mankind has yet conceived" (AKA cricket) with Carter's schoolmates, Carter himself comes to share his troubles and release his anger and grief so he can keep the metaphoric "bails from coming down". Suffused with the same warmth, compassion and originality of the author's stunning debut, Orbiting Jupiter , this funny, moving middle grade novel is a true treasure with broad appeal and rich rewards.

The Disconnect

Author: Keren David **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 15/04/2019 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

May 2018 Book of the Month | Interest Age Teen Reading Age 8 When a billionaire phone-tech entrepreneur challenges the Year Eleven pupils in her former school to switch off their phones for six weeks, Esther is determined to rise to the occasion. With her American-born dad, sister and baby nephew now living in New York, she has her sights firmly fixed on the £1000 prize, which she'd use to visit them, plus she could do with a break from the constant peer pressure to share super model style selfies. But almost immediately, Esther's FOMO (fear of missing out) "is at emergency levels", not least because she has no idea what her friends are up to. As a result, she and a few fellow participants set up a support group in her mum's new cafe, among them River, who gives an impassioned speech about how social media users are "just pawns in the hands of people making money out of us". Alongside an engaging exploration of the pros and cons of online life, there's a sensitive sub-plot about the complications of family life, with the downsides of digital media touched-on through that too (her mum's café is struggling to find customers in the wake of a poor online review), and

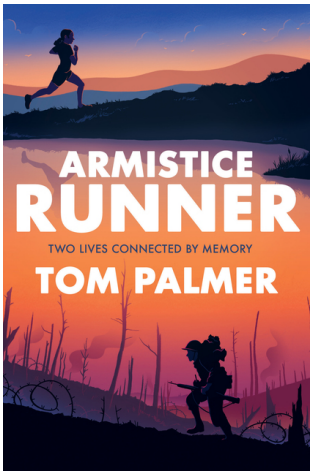
reference to being aware of “fake news” and inaccurate reporting. Thought-provoking and topical, this pacey read is especially suitable for reluctant and dyslexic teen readers. Particularly suitable for struggling, reluctant or dyslexic readers aged 13+



Lark

Author: Anthony McGowan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 17/01/2019 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

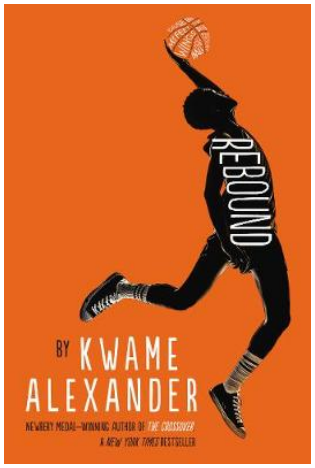
Winner of the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2020 | Longlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2020 | February 2019 Book of the Month | A Julia Eccleshare Pick of the Month July 2020 | Interest Age Teen Reading Age 9 Cleverly set within a gripping adventure, Lark is a deeply touching story of the special bond between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



Armistice Runner

Author: Tom Palmer **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/09/2018 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

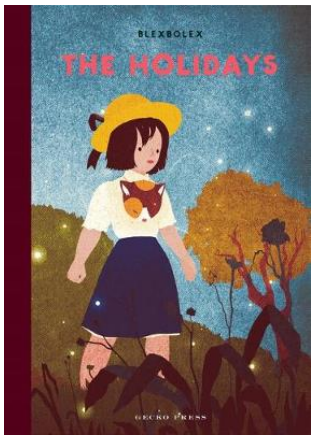
Shortlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2020 | Shortlisted for the Children's Book Awards 2019, Books for Older Readers Category Interest Age 8-10 Reading Age 8 | World War One remains a subject of fascination for readers of all ages, but Tom Palmer finds an original way in to the topic in this poignant new story. Lily is a keen fell runner, though she’s fed up of coming in as runner up in races. A visit to her grandparents reveals a surprise: her great-grandfather ran on the fells too. His experiences are recounted vividly in his diary, both his runs in his beloved Cumbria and his experiences as a soldier, recruited to run between positions on the front line, carrying crucial information to the allies. Their shared experiences form a powerful connection, and help Lily to understand herself better, and also to help her grandma when she needs it most. Today and yesterday are seamlessly woven together in a story that will move readers in lots of different ways.



Rebound

Author: Kwame Alexander **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/04/2018 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4

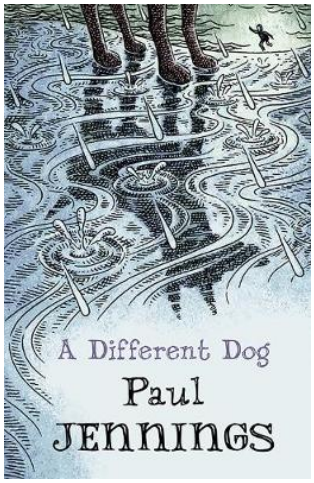
Shortlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2019 A dynamic slam-dunk of a book in which a boy lost in grief begins to find his feet on the basketball court. Slickly blending stirring verse-form storytelling with ingenious jump-off-the-page comic strip illustrations, this is a poignant, powerful page-turner that will find fans among a broad range of reading levels in the 12+ age group. It's 1988 and Charlie Bell (Chuck to his Granddaddy) feels utterly isolated by grief after losing his dad. And, since he can't seem to stay out of trouble either, his despairing mom leaves him with Grandma and Granddaddy for the whole hot summer. There Chuck discovers an affinity with basketball through his cousin Roxie, but when a friend from back home says he can help Chuck get hold of a pair of genuine Jordan sneakers at a discount, the ensuing chain of events could land him in serious trouble. Though this is a prequel to the author's Newbury Medal winning The Crossover, it can be read and relished as a standalone novel (for those who have read The Crossover, Chuck is Josh and Jordan's dad). This is a joyous parade of poetry that packs incredible emotional depth. The language soars and sings, and the vibrant interspersed comic strips by Dawud Anyabile enhance the immersive experience with panache.



The Holidays

Author: Blexbolex **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 01/03/2018 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

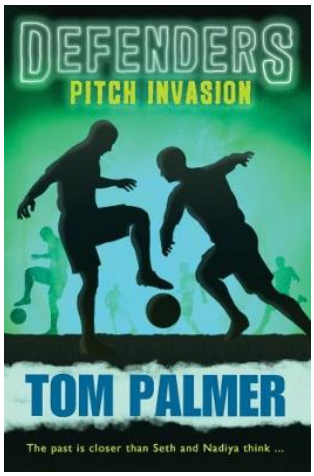
Wordless picture book of Novel length - complex and enthralling with loads to discuss, and stories to explore.



A Different Dog

Author: Paul Jennings **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/02/2018
Year Groups: Key Stage 3

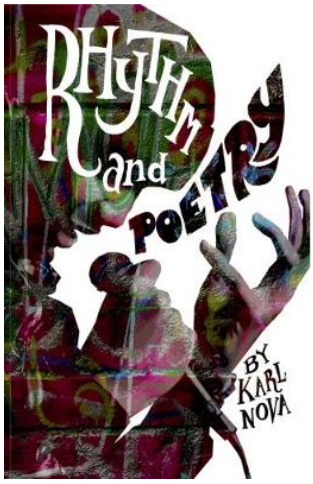
A Different Dog is the story of the special relationship that develops between a boy and a dog and how it saves them both. It's beautifully told in short, spare sentences that will make it accessible to all readers, and full of unexpected twists. The boy at the centre of the story – we never learn his name – is poor, lonely and bullied by other children because of his selective mutism. The dog he rescues from a car crash that has killed its owner is subject to its own set of painful compulsions, finding out why is one of the surprises and rewards of the story. This will absorb readers, from the opening page to its warm, uplifting final line. Readers will also enjoy Pippa Goodhart's A Dog Called Flow, which tells another satisfying story of the special, healing bond between a boy and a dog. Find more books with Positive Images of Disability.



Defenders Pitch Invasion

Author: Tom Palmer **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 15/11/2017
Year Groups: Key Stage 3

Tom Palmer's Defenders series cleverly mixes ghost stories and football and uses past events to throw light on our world. Seth's mum is waiting to hear if she's clear of the cancer she's been treated for and the two are having a weekend in Cornwall to escape the pressure. It's a peaceful place but with his ghost sight Seth is aware of a violent incident that took place there thousands of years ago and which still resonates. That was born out of suspicion and mistrust of new arrivals, and when he meets two young Syrian refugees now living in the town, Seth realises what needs to change. The story will grip young readers from start to finish, and make them think about their own place in the world. In Barrington Stoke style, it's accessible to all readers.



Rhythm and Poetry

Author: Karl Nova **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 27/07/2017
Year Groups: Key Stage 3

Winner of the Centre for Literacy in Primary Poetry Award 2018
The first published collection from Hip Hop poet Karl Nova has a refreshing directness, honesty and authenticity. Many of the poems are drawn from the workshops he does with children and young people as well as from his performances. Notes accompanying the poems give insights into his process and encourage children to believe that they are poets too. The poems capture the rap beat and tone, demonstrating the currency and significance of rap as a form, especially for young people. A book that opens doors.

Flesh and Blood

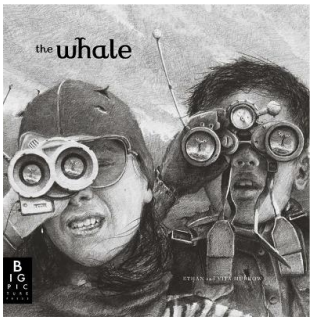
Author: Chris Priestley **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 15/04/2017 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

Interest Age 10+ Reading Age 8 | In a nutshell: creepy war-time horror story | There are all sorts of horrors to be encountered in this thoroughly unsettling wartime story. Evacuees Bill and his sister have returned to London from the countryside, much to his anger, arriving home just as the Blitz begins. Nights are spent cowering in the shelter, before they emerge into a frightening world of rubble and destruction. Dad is a POW and no-one knows if they'll see him again. Even when Bill helps save a boy from a burning building, there's no sense of hope but rather growing unease – the boy is strangely sinister. Chris Priestley knows just how to tell horror stories and this super-readable novella will have readers checking nervously over their shoulder in the dark. ~ Andrea Reece Particularly suitable for struggling, reluctant and dyslexic readers aged 10+ Barrington Stoke is the foremost publisher of dyslexia friendly books and those for reluctant readers. Here on Lovereading4kids we are constantly selecting new titles and refreshing our special dyslexia friendly category. Click here to view our current selection which is broken down by age range.

The Pavee and the Buffer Girl

Author: Siobhan Dowd **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/03/2017 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

Siobhan Dowd's short story first appeared in an anthology published in 2004. It has lost none of its power to move and the sheer depth and emotion packed into this spare narrative is still breath-taking. The book tells the story of Jim, a young Traveller boy, his experiences at the Buffer school (Buffer is what Travellers call non-Travellers) and his developing friendship with a girl called Kit. The story, told through Jim's eyes, is vivid, affecting and, though it has more than its share of sadness, ultimately uplifting. Emma Shoard's equally sensitive and powerful ink and wash illustrations are the perfect accompaniment to the text and this is a book to treasure. ~ Andrea Reece Siobhan Dowd was a passionate defender of human rights and was particularly interested in Traveller communities and the experiences of Traveller young people. She said of her writing: "The protagonists in my stories aren't human rights heroes in the conventional sense. They are ordinary people living in England and Ireland who find extraordinary ways to overcome the difficulties in their lives and for me that's the essence of any good story: it's where the ordinary meets the extraordinary." Emma Shoard says, "It's been wonderful to find out about the lives of Irish Travellers through Siobhan's story and her characters. I've loved bringing them to life through my illustrations and hope that readers will fall for Jim and Kit the way I have."



The Whale

Author: Ethan & Vita Murrow **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 01/09/2015 **Year Groups:** Key Stage 3

Two young whale watchers set out to find a legendary whale - very few words but glorious detailed illustrations to keep the interest high.