

CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK



Best Book Guide 2013

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Booktrust's Best Book Guide 2013 brings together reviews of some of our favourite books from the last year.

The reviews are grouped into four different age categories:

- 0–5 years
- 6–8 years
- 9–11 years
- 12–14 and beyond

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

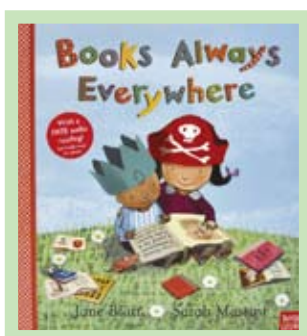
These reviews, along with hundreds of other book recommendations for children of all ages can be found on our website www.booktrust.org.uk

You can search our extensive online database of book reviews by age range and by genre. Our website contains features and interviews with many of the authors whose books are included in this guide. You can also explore our online illustrators' gallery, read our themed booklists, or access free teachers' resources. Look out for our regular competitions to win free books too.



0–5 years

This selection offers a diverse range of titles for toddlers, pre-schoolers and early years children. With read-aloud text, repetitive rhyme, interactive opportunities and integrated illustration, these books are perfect for sharing stories together.



Books Always Everywhere

Written by Jane Blatt and illustrated by Sarah Massini

Big and small, wide and tall, there are all kinds of books to enjoy in this charming celebration of reading for even the youngest children.

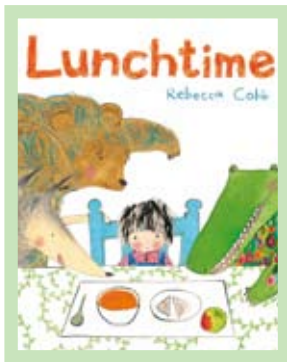
Sarah Massini's appealing illustrations depict a whole host of babies and toddlers delighting in books - whether they are building with them, using them as hats, looking at them on the swings or reading them at bedtime. The simple, repetitive text is perfectly pitched for toddlers, and each page spread is teeming with lively details to explore together, and ask questions about.

Vividly conveying a simple but very important message that it is never too soon to start sharing and enjoying books, this joyful picture book will leave little ones in no doubt that reading is fun!

Publisher: Nosy Crow

Interest age: 1+

Reading age: 4+



Lunchtime

Written and illustrated by Rebecca Cobb

A little girl is busy drawing. Even though it's lunchtime, she's not hungry. But then the crocodile, wolf and bear from her pictures come to life - and it turns

out that they are starving! Luckily they aren't interested in eating small children - what they really want is the little girl's delicious lunch.

This charming picture book is gorgeously illustrated by rising picture book star Rebecca Cobb, who brings humour, fun and imagination to a simple story about a little girl who doesn't want to eat her lunch. Both parents and children will enjoy the colourful and scribbly textures of Cobb's drawings, as well as the delightful characters of Bear, Wolf and Crocodile. From its sumptuous endpapers to the final appearance of the little girl with a plate of biscuits on the last page, this award-winning book may just persuade even the most reluctant toddlers to tuck into their lunch.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest age: 2+

Reading age: 5+



Just Ducks

Written by Nicola Davies and illustrated by Salvatore Rubbino

Every morning when she wakes up, a girl hears the ducks quack down on the river that flows through the town.

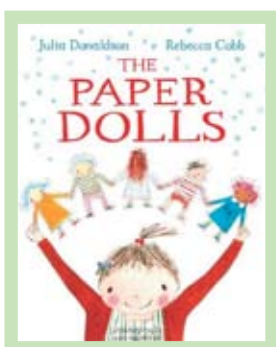
Summer and winter alike, she watches the ducks dabbling and diving - and morning and evening, the ducks are always there.

Salvatore Rubbino's watercolour illustrations perfectly capture the distinctive personalities of the ducks in this beautiful picture book. Nicola Davies' lyrical story, narrated in the voice of the girl, is combined with plenty of bitesize, easy-to-read facts, allowing young readers to learn about everything from what ducks eat, to where they sleep, and even why they quack. This first fact book will appeal to any child who enjoys feeding the ducks - and proves that ducks really are 'just amazing'.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest age: 3+

Reading age: 6+



The Paper Dolls

Written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Rebecca Cobb

A little girl makes a string of paper dolls with her mother, and then takes them off to play in an imaginative world of her own in this picture book from former Children's Laureate Julia Donaldson. The dolls jump, dance and sing on their fantastical adventure through the house and out into the garden, avoiding a toy dinosaur and an oven-glove crocodile along the way - but then an all-too-real pair of scissors threatens to spoil everything.

Evoking both a sense of childhood loss, and the power of memory and the imagination, *The Paper Dolls* is a gentle, moving story that marks something of a departure from Donaldson's usual style. This is the first time she has been paired with Rebecca Cobb, but the combination is evidently a winning one: Cobb's sensitive illustrations have a childlike, wistful feel that provide a perfectly-pitched companion to Donaldson's rhyming text. With beautiful page spreads to pore over, this lovely picture book is ideal for reading together.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest age: 3+

Reading age: 6+





Superkid

Written by **Claire Freedman** and illustrated by **Sarah McIntyre**

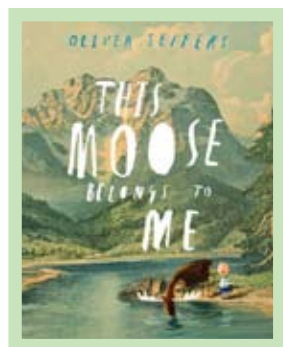
Never fear, Superkid is here! Author of *Aliens Love Underpants* Claire Freedman has teamed up with illustrator Sarah McIntyre to create this lively story about incredible superhero Superkid. When his X-ray eyes spot someone in trouble, Superkid is always ready to save the other children from all kinds of horrors – from playground bullies to grandma's broccoli, or most terrifying of all, having to tidy up their bedrooms!

Freedman's fun rhyming text works beautifully in tandem with McIntyre's bold, brightly-coloured illustrations, creating a picture book that is certain to be attractive to young readers. Be sure to watch out for Superkid's trusty sidekick Super Hamster: he is never mentioned in the text but pops up on every page, and even appears as the star of his own comic strip. It's exactly this sort of fun, creative attention to detail that makes this book such a delight: spot a recurring alien, a flying ketchup bottle, and on the final pages, the writer and illustrator team themselves, transformed by McIntyre into superhero characters.

Publisher: Scholastic

Interest age: 4+

Reading age: 6+



This Moose Belongs to Me

Written and illustrated by **Oliver Jeffers**

Wilfred owned a moose. He hadn't always owned a moose. The moose came to him a while ago and he knew, just KNEW, that it was meant to be his.

The earnest Wilfred, in his bow-tie and braces, names his new friend Marcel, and immediately sets about explaining the rules of How to Be a Good Pet. The problem is that Marcel doesn't seem to be too bothered about rules – he's really much more interested in apples. All the same, they get along just fine, until one day in the woods, someone else claims the moose as their own...

Taking a typically inventive and ingenious approach to the picture book format, Oliver Jeffers has placed his own simple illustrations against the background of landscape paintings by American artist Alexander Dzikirski. The dramatic mountain ranges and grand, sweeping plains create an absurd and very entertaining contrast with Wilfred's far more mundane struggles with his reluctant pet. Full of wit and warmth, this is a captivating picture book about friendship and the nature of ownership, which is sure to please Jeffers' many fans.

Publisher: HarperCollins Children's Books

Interest level: 4+

Reading age: 6+



Toys in Space

Written and illustrated by **Mini Grey**

Left outside in the garden one summer night, a group of toys begin to feel worried in the dark. To pass the time until morning, Wonderdoll decides to tell them a story...

Wonderdoll decides to tell them a story...

In Wonderdoll's tale, a mysterious spaceship appears in the night sky. Inside is a strange space creature, the Hootopize, who looks rather like a glove and is wearing pyjamas. The Hootopize is sad because he has lost his own beloved toy, Cuddles: travelling the galaxies to find him, he has filled his spaceship with a thousand lost toys, collected from gardens all over the earth. Worried about the toys, Wonderdoll and the others help the Hootopize to return them to their owners – and then throw a party to help take his mind off the missing Cuddles.

The illustrations are full of warmth and humour – and there's a pleasingly reassuring happy ending. Wonderdoll and all the other toys are brilliantly characterised, and any young reader who has ever misplaced a much-loved toy will empathise with the plight of the unhappy but endearing Hootopize.

Publisher: Jonathan Cape

Interest age: 3+

Reading age: 6+



Oh No, George!

Written and illustrated by Chris Haughton

George is a dog with a big personality. He loves cake, rubbish bins and chasing Cat.

After he behaves badly when his owner is out, he tries harder on a trip to the park – but will he be able to resist temptation?

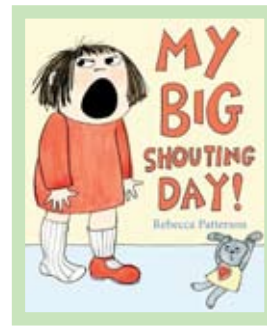
Being a former Booktrust Best New Illustrator, you'd expect Chris Haughton's artwork to be special – but these rich, sophisticated, jewel-coloured pages offer both adults and children something really beautiful to look at. George's facial expressions (for example, a subtle positioning of his ears) and body language (a paw gently offering his favourite rubber duck as an apology) are full of humour, and will prompt young readers to delve in and notice all the funny details in the illustrations.

George's naughty behavior will be familiar to dog-lovers, but is also sure to resonate with children, who will soon find themselves joining in with the refrain of 'Oh no, George!'

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest age: 2+

Reading age: 5+



My Big Shouting Day

Written and illustrated by Rebecca Patterson

When Bella wakes up, her little brother Bob is licking her jewellery! This puts her in a bad mood, so she shouts and complains

all day long. She doesn't like her breakfast or her shoes. Her biscuit breaks and she doesn't want to play nicely with Sasha. Ballet is itchy, her peas are too hot and her bath is too cold. She doesn't want a story and she certainly doesn't want to go to bed! But Mum gives her a kiss and cuddle, and reads Bella her favourite bedtime story anyway – and at last she says 'sorry' for her Big Shouting Day.

Funny and well-observed, with big bold illustrations and telling facial expressions, *My Big Shouting Day* is certain to tickle toddlers and young children. Patterson's lively sense of humour makes this a deserving winner of The Roald Dahl Funny Prize 2012.

Publisher: Jonathan Cape

Interest age: 4+

Reading age: 6+



Black Dog

Written and illustrated by Levi Pinfold

An enormous black dog appears outside the Hope family's home. As each member of the household sees it and hides, the dog grows bigger and bigger. Only Small, the youngest member of the family, has the courage to face the Black Dog. Even when it chases her through the forest, she shows no fear, and it soon grows smaller and smaller. Finally, back to the size of a normal hound, the Black Dog is welcomed into the Hope household as the newest addition to the family.

Former Booktrust Best New Illustrator Levi Pinfold's sophisticated illustrations work to great effect in this stunning picture book about the nature of fear and the power of our imaginations. Children and adults alike will be captivated by this unusual book, which won the 2013 CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal.

Publisher: Templar Publishing

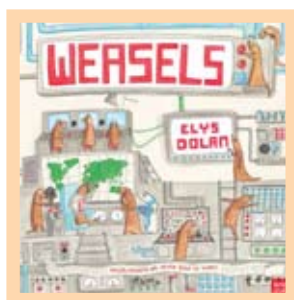
Interest age: 3+

Reading age: 6+



6–8 years

With Carol Ann Duffy's poetry, non-fiction and a graphic novel sitting alongside fiction, this category includes something for every young reader's taste. Children who are gaining confidence in reading independently might tackle some of the books on their own, whilst others will still enjoy reading with teachers, parents and carers.



Weasels

Written and illustrated by Elys Dolan

If you thought that weasels didn't do much except for eating nuts and berries, or hiding in their weasel holes... well, you'd be quite wrong. What they really do is plot world domination – although their dastardly plans don't always work out quite as expected.

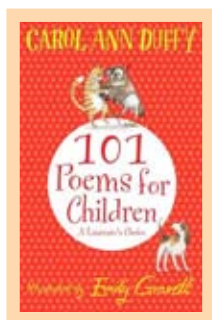
This entertaining book from Elys Dolan takes us inside the weasels' lair, complete with machinery, maps and a top secret laboratory where, powered by biscuits and 'frothuccinos', the weasels put their plans into action. Each and every page of this book is a delight, from the entertaining endpapers to the busy spreads of the weasels at work crammed full of funny details that will amuse both children and their parents. *Weasels* is a wonderfully humorous debut from an exciting new picture book talent.

Publisher: Nosy Crow

Interest age: 4+

Reading age: 6+





A Laureate's Choice: 101 Poems for Children

Edited by Carol Ann Duffy and illustrated by Emily Gravett

In this anthology, Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy brings together a spirited and enriching selection of poems for children. Including both 'big name' poets and some that will be less well-known, this collection explores the world we see around us and what it means to be alive.

Selected with great care, the poems in this anthology will amuse and surprise young readers, encouraging writing as well as reading, and showing us that we can all have something to say. From the first poem to the last, this is an exquisite celebration of

poetry which will encourage children to enjoy sounds, words and language. *A Laureate's Choice* is perfect for both the classroom and the home.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest age: 6+

Reading age: 7+



Operation Bunny: Wings & Co

Written by Sally Gardner and illustrated by David Roberts

Orphan Emily Vole is adopted by Mr and Mrs Dashwood who long for a child of their own – but unfortunately they soon tire of her, and she is demoted to

living in the laundry room and doing housework. Life is pretty miserable, until one day Emily meets her mysterious neighbour Mrs String, and her very large cat Fidget, who both possess some unusual magical abilities.

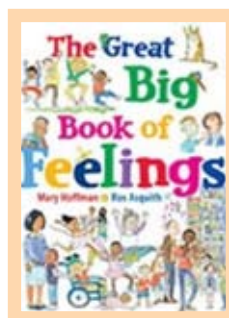
Emily is delighted to make some real friends, but then Mrs String dies suddenly, leaving her with an unexpected inheritance – an old shop and a bunch of golden keys. Emily soon realises it's up to her to bring the long-abandoned Fairy Detective Agency back into business – and to defeat the evil villain Harpella.

This quirky story is packed with magic and imagination with a touch of Roald Dahl-esque darkness. David Roberts's illustrations are the perfect match for Sally Gardner's pleasingly eccentric text, making this a book that will captivate newly independent readers.

Publisher: Orion Children's Books

Interest age: 7+

Reading age: 7+



The Great Big Book of Feelings

Written by Mary Hoffman and illustrated by Ros Asquith

How are you feeling today? Spread-by-spread, this warm-hearted picture book explores a whole range of

different feelings and emotions that children might experience – from loneliness and fear to silliness and happiness.

Mary Hoffman's simple, sensitive text provides an engaging way in to thinking and talking about our feelings, whilst Ros Asquith's wild and witty illustrations brilliantly convey each of the different emotions discussed. Young readers can also enjoy the fun of spotting the yellow-striped cat that appears in each spread, bringing his own perspective to each of the feelings being explored.

As in the award-winning *The Great Big Book of Families*, the lively images in this book represent a true celebration of diversity: as well as being ethnically diverse, the inclusive cast features children with wheelchairs, walkers, and glasses. This thoughtful, engaging and inclusive book has enormous universal appeal, and is ideal for primary schools and libraries, as well as for reading at home.

Publisher: Frances Lincoln

Interest age: 4+

Reading age: 7+



Wendy Quill is a Crocodile's Bottom

Written by Wendy Meddour and illustrated by Mina May

Wendy Quill is a little bit desperate to be a little bit famous. Here are three 'acts' (short stories) detailing some of her attempts, accidental and otherwise. Follow Wendy as she misses out on her rightful part in the school production of Peter Pan and gets cast as one half of a crocodile instead; accidentally appears as a blue munchkin in a tap-dancing version of The Wizard of Oz; and finally hits the headlines when school is struck by the plague.

With illustrations by the author's 11-year-old daughter Mina May this neat little book will entertain newly-confident readers who are looking to bridge the gap between first chapter books and novels. It is particularly perfect for any aspiring actors or stars-in-the-making.

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Interest age: 7+

Reading age: 7+



Pirates 'n' Pistols: Ten Swashbuckling Pirate Tales

Written and illustrated by Chris Moulds

It's a bit of cliché to describe a collection of short stories as a 'treasure trove', but in this case it's entirely appropriate.

Tales range from Mould's own inventions, such as the speculation on the origin of the legend of Davy Jones's Locker, via excerpts from famous (and not so famous) adventures such as Treasure Island or Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Gold Bug', to the re-tellings of various nautical narratives from myths and folk-tales, each of the stories in this glittering hoard is superb. Mould's scratchy illustrations are lively, funny and slightly unruly, giving the book an appropriately roguish and disreputable character.

Narrated with verve and an ear for the piratical, this swashbuckling collection will appeal to the bloodthirsty buccaneer in all would-be pirates.

Publisher: Hodder Children's Books

Interest age: 6+

Reading age: 8+



Mariella Mystery: The Ghostly Guinea Pig

Written and illustrated by Kate Pankhurst

Mariella Mystery is a totally amazing girl detective, aged nine and a bit. In her top secret

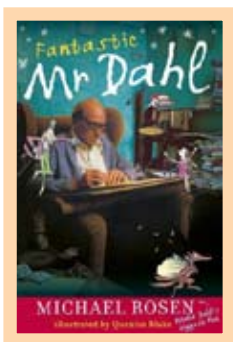
detective journal, she documents her investigations with the help of her fellow Mystery Girls, Poppy and Violet. In this story, the three set out to solve the strange case of the ghostly glowing Guinea Pig, in between practising their tap-dancing routine for the local talent show. There are plenty of tips for aspiring young sleuths, including instructions on everything from setting up your own detective headquarters, to undercover surveillance.

Illustrated throughout with Kate Pankhurst's zany artwork, the first book in the Mariella Mystery series is perfect for children who are beginning to develop confidence with chapter books. Pankhurst puts her own tongue-in-cheek spin on the conventions of the detective story to create a lively and enjoyable story that young readers will find irresistible.

Publisher: Orion Children's Books

Interest age: 7+

Reading age: 7+



Fantastic Mr Dahl

Written by Michael Rosen and illustrated by Quentin Blake

This new biography of Roald Dahl has been published especially for children by two former Children's Laureates

Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake. Rosen says he is Dahl's biggest fan, and relays his own memorable past encounter with the great man himself.

This accessible book goes on to tell the story of Dahl's life in three segments, covering his childhood through to his pilot days during the war, and finally his adult life with his family and his writing career. To support the narrative, there is a family tree, a selection of photos and letters (complete with spelling mistakes) from the Roald Dahl Museum's archive.

Rosen's voice is pitch-perfect for young readers: whilst this is a factual book, his ability to tell stories means this book is particularly immersive. Adhering to Dahl's own advice 'it has to be funny', Rosen has created an entertaining biography which is great fun to read.

Publisher: Puffin Books

Interest age: 6+

Reading age: 8+



The Sleepwalkers

Written and illustrated by Viviane Schwarz

Do you have a bad dream that will not go away? Are you afraid to sleep at night? Call the Sleepwalkers! Write us a letter, put it

under your pillow, and we will come and save you!

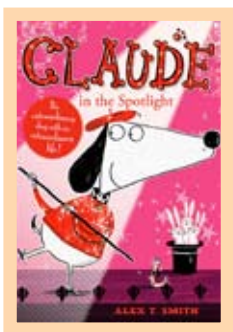
From their dream-proof Safe House, three friendly sheep known as the Sleepwalkers navigate the world of dreams, rescuing children from the horrors of their nightmares. When apprentice Bonifacius the bear is recruited to join them, he must master his own fears in order to brave the dream world that lies outside. Will he be able to rescue the children in need?

Viviane Schwarz takes us into the weird and wild world of dreams and nightmares in her first graphic novel. Illustrated in Schwarz's idiosyncratic style, it also includes instructions on how to make your own sock monkey and how to concoct a tasty breakfast drink. Wonderfully inventive with a powerful message about facing up to our fears, this is an original and striking book that cements Schwarz as one of our most exciting young illustrators.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest age: 6+

Reading age: 7+



Claude in the Spotlight

Written and illustrated by Alex T Smith

Alex T Smith's adorable Claude – a small plump dog in a stylish red sweater and beret – is back for a new adventure. Joined by sidekick Sir Bobblysock, this story sees a walk into town unexpectedly lead to Claude joining in Henrietta Highkick-Spin's dance class, performing in a variety show, saving Mr Lovelybuns the baker from terrifying peril, and even encountering a ghost.

This highly visual story is illustrated throughout in an elegant, 1950s-inspired style, in a distinctive palette of red, white and black. Smith's off-the-wall humour and sense of

fun will keep both children and their parents entertained from beginning to end: *Claude in the Spotlight* is an utterly charming book for emerging readers.

Publisher: Hodder Children's Books

Interest age: 5+

Reading age: 6+



9–11 years

Children within this age group will enjoy the chance to choose stories for themselves. The books in this section include something to suit a wide range of tastes – from action and adventure, via magical fantasy, to stories of everyday family and school life.



The Boy Who Swam with Piranhas

Written by David Almond and illustrated by Oliver Jeffers

When all the jobs on the quayside disappear, Stanley's Uncle Ernie comes up with a new money-making scheme and transforms the family home into a fish cannery. Stanley's life becomes a whirl of 6am starts, the stench of mackerel and the clang of machinery. But when Uncle Ernie cans Stanley's beloved pet goldfish, he finally decides enough is enough.

Leaving the life he has always known behind him, Stanley takes the dramatic step of joining the fair, where he gets a job working on the hook-a-duck stall. But events soon lead him to Pancho Pirelli, an extraordinary blue-caped 'piscatorial genius' – otherwise known as the

man who swims with piranhas. But will Stanley be brave enough to follow his destiny and dive into the churning waters himself?

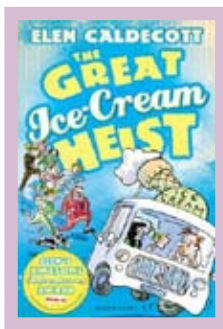
Multi-award-winning author David Almond returns with this tale of an ordinary boy who embarks on a very unusual adventure. Full of surreal, fairy-tale touches, this is a joyful and warm story of self-discovery, perfectly accompanied by illustrations from Oliver Jeffers.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest age: 9+

Reading age: 9+





The Great Ice Cream Heist

Written by Elen Caldecott

Eva leads a quiet life with her protective Dad, until the noisy McIntyres move in next door. Intrigued by her new neighbours, Eva becomes especially curious about Jamie,

whom she sees escaping the rest of his boisterous family on the roof of the garden shed.

When Grandma arranges for Eva to spend the summer holidays at the local youth centre, she has the chance to get to know Jamie better. The two swiftly become friends, but then everything goes wrong: Jamie is in trouble and it's down to Eva to help him. Who would ever have imagined that shy Eva could kidnap a social worker, broadcast on the radio, and go on the run in an ice-cream van – all to help a friend in need?

Moving but never heavy-handed, this may be Elen Caldecott's best novel yet. Eva is a wonderfully sympathetic heroine, facing her fears and anxieties to help someone she cares about. Approaching issues such as bereavement and children in care with sensitivity and directness, this carefully balanced story is also full of humour, with a clear message about the value of friends, family and the local community.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest age: 9+

Reading age: 9+



Darcy Burdock

Written and illustrated by Laura Dockrill

'Have you ever noticed you're noticing? Sometimes I notice that I notice so much that I get trapped in noticing my noticing.'

Ten-year-old Darcy Burdock is one of life's noticers, spotting

the extraordinary in the everyday and coming up with ideas for wild and wonderful stories. Her lively imagination helps her put her own unique spin on day-to-day family life with Mum and Dad, little brother and sister Hector and Poppy, and pet lamb, Lamb-Beth.

Laura Dockrill's first book for children is packed with all the colour, energy and fun that fans of her writing and illustration have come to expect. Both boys and girls will find Darcy's bubbly first-person narrative impossible to resist. Fans of Tom Gates and Clarice Bean will especially love the offbeat humour and exuberance of this story. Bold, fresh and deliciously mischievous, *Darcy Burdock* firmly establishes Laura Dockrill as an exciting new talent in children's fiction.

Publisher: Corgi Children's

Interest age: 8+

Reading age: 9+



Wild Boy

Written by Rob Lloyd Jones

Wild Boy leads a miserable life as a spectacle in a travelling freak show. Completely covered in hair, he's used to being treated as a monster, excluded from society and abused by his cruel master. Taking refuge in watching the world around him, he develops a Sherlock Holmes-style talent for observation. But when he witnesses the murder of Professor Wollestonecraft, even his keen wits can't help him when the folk of the fair decide that he must be the guilty party.

Soon, Wild Boy is on the run with circus acrobat Clarissa. Together, the pair must use their unusual talents to avoid the police, follow the clues, and discover the identity of the true killer – the sinister hooded man.

Set in 1840s London, this is a pacy and atmospheric historical romp. Rob Lloyd Jones does an impressive job of evoking a dark, sinister and seamy Victorian underworld. An exciting tale of murder and mystery, *Wild Boy* is also a powerful story about difference and accepting who you are.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest age: 9+

Reading age: 9+



Binny for Short

Written by Hilary McKay

Since her father died, Binny and her family have struggled. Moving from one shabby flat to the next, there's not even enough money to spare for Clem's flute lessons. Worst of

all, Binny's beloved dog Max has been disposed of by horrible old Aunt Violet. But then life takes an unexpected turn when Aunt Violet dies and – to everyone's astonishment – leaves Binny and her family a house by the sea. Their new seaside home brings new friends and even a dangerous adventure for Binny – but she still can't help longing for Max...

Hilary McKay is a wonderful storyteller, with a special gift for writing about families and bringing the thoughts and feelings of children vividly to life. Responsible older sister Clem, unpredictable little brother James, and Binny's enemy-next-door Gareth are all well-drawn characters, whilst Binny herself is sure to win readers' hearts. This gentle but enormously engaging story about family and friendship will enthral readers right up until its satisfying happy ending.

Publisher: Hodder Children's Books

Interest age: 9+

Reading age: 9+



The Poison Boy

Written by Fletcher Moss

Dalton Fly is a poison boy: his job is to taste the food and drink of Highlions' rich and powerful citizens and identify any traces of poison that may have been planted by their enemies. It's a

dangerous job but luckily Dalton has developed a refined palate that allows him to identify traces of poison from even the faintest scent or flavour.

When a job goes badly wrong, Dalton is plunged into sudden danger. Joining forces with an unlikely ally, Scarlet Dropmore, a wealthy young girl from one of Highlions' most powerful families, he embarks on an adventure which leads him to tangle with the city's complex and unstable politics – and ultimately to discover some surprising information about his own past.

Readers will be gripped from the gruesome opening pages of this richly-imagined story from the winner of the Times/Chicken House Fiction Competition. Action and suspense are balanced by well-drawn characters and convincing relationships, and the shadowy city of Highlions is an appealing fantasy setting.

Publisher: Chicken House

Interest age: 10+

Reading age: 10+



Oksa Pollock: The Last Hope

Written by Anne Plichota and Cendrine Wolf

Thirteen-year-old Oksa Pollock is beginning an exciting new life in England with her parents and grandmother, Dragomira. She's nervous about starting a new school, but at least her loyal best friend Gus will be at her side. But then all of a sudden, Oksa discovers she has strange new powers: she can shoot fire from her hands, move objects with her mind and even fly.

Things become even more confusing when Dragomira discovers what Oksa can do, and tells her the truth about her secret birthright. The Pollocks are exiles from an invisible magical realm, and Oksa herself holds the key to the last hope of them ever returning. As Oksa struggles to reconcile herself to her destiny, she must also deal with the challenges of her new school life – friends, bullies and an unpleasant maths teacher, the sinister Dr McGraw.

The Oksa Pollock series has legions of fans all over the world, and this first installment will leave readers in no doubt why. A thrilling magical adventure with a charismatic and inspiring heroine, it is certain to capture children's imaginations.

Publisher: Pushkin Children's Books

Interest age: 10+

Reading age: 11+





Rooftoppers

Written by Katherine Rundell

Found floating in a cello case in the middle of the sea on her first birthday by eccentric young scholar Charles, Sophie seems to be marked out for an unconventional existence. Growing up in Charles's shabby home in England, she learns to love music and to read Shakespeare, but very little about being ladylike. On her 12th birthday, the disapproving authorities intervene, but before they can take her away to an orphanage, the discovery of a clue in her cello case leads Sophie and Charles to decide to run away to Paris in search

of Sophie's long-lost mother.

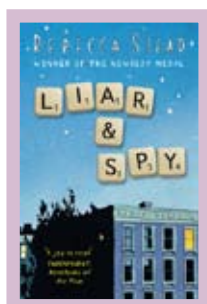
In Paris, Sophie discovers some unexpected allies on the rooftops: Matteo, a boy who walks tightropes, and his friends Anastasia and Safi, wild girls who live at the top of Paris's tallest trees. Following an elusive cello melody across the rooftops of the city, with the help of her new friends, Sophie is determined to find her mother, before it is too late.

There is a wistful, old-fashioned charm to this lyrical story. Beautifully-written and as carefully balanced as the tightrope Sophie learns to walk, *Rooftoppers* is a sensitive, emotionally-resonant novel, with an uplifting message about the power of hope.

Publisher: *Faber and Faber*

Interest age: 10+

Reading age: 10+



Liar & Spy

Written by Rebecca Stead

Georges (the 's' is silent) is having a difficult time. His father is short of work, his mother is never around, and his former best friend Jason has dumped him in favour of the popular kids, leaving

him to be taunted by the school bullies. But things look up when Georges meets Safer, and is recruited to join his Spy Club to investigate the sinister Mr X. Georges is welcomed into Safer's bohemian family life. Yet as Safer strives to teach Georges everything he knows about the art of espionage, the boundaries between games and reality, truth and fiction, soon begin to blur.

Award-winning author Rebecca Stead has written a thoughtful novel about friendship and family, set in Brooklyn. Sensitive-written, with a whimsical yet always convincing cast of characters, it deals with bullying and family instability without these issues to dominate the narrative. Intelligent, subtle and affecting, this novel will captivate readers at upper primary level and beyond.

Publisher: *Andersen Press*

Interest age: 10+

Reading age: 10+



The Dark Lord: The Teenage Years

Written by Jamie Thompson, illustrated by Freya Hartas

The Dark Lord falls to earth, crash-landing in a suburban car park, in the body of a teenage boy. His lieutenant, Dread

Gargon, has disappeared, along with his powers of Domination and Destruction. Social Services can't locate his home, the Iron Tower of Despair, so 'Dirk' finds himself placed with a foster family, and forced to go to school. Desperate to return home, he tries to open a Portal between Earth and the Darklands, but ends up accidentally setting fire to the cricket pavilion. And then the terrible White Beast of his nightmares appears...

This hilariously bizarre and melodramatic tale was the winner of the 7–14 category of the 2012 Roald Dahl Funny Prize. With unexpected happenings on every page, it is a wonderfully absurd story that will entertain young readers in search of excitement, fun and plenty of laughs.

Publisher: *Orchard Books*

Interest age: 9+

Reading age: 10+



12–14 and beyond

Older readers will be ready to take on more challenging books that engage with a variety of subjects, including provocative or serious issues. The books in this section include new titles from well-established authors for teenagers, such as Melvin Burgess, Terry Pratchett and Malorie Blackman, but also fresh new voices such as Julie Mayhew, Nick Lake and Annabel Pitcher.



Noble Conflict

Written by Malorie Blackman

Years after a war has wiped out most of the world, Kaspar has grown up in the peaceful, prosperous Alliance. Following in the footsteps of his parents, he decides to join the Guardians – an elite peacekeeping force charged with protecting the Alliance against brutal attacks from the Insurgency, violent rebels who want to overthrow society. Taking the moral high ground, the Guardians are trained not to harm their opponents, equipped with weapons that incapacitate but don't kill, and Kaspar is proud to be one of them. But when he is involved in an action that sees his best friend killed, he finds himself questioning everything he has been taught.

This gripping dystopian thriller from Waterstones Children's Laureate Malorie Blackman follows in the tradition of her groundbreaking *Noughts and Crosses* series. Exciting, action-packed and suspenseful, it is also deeply thought-provoking, raising a whole host of challenging questions. Containing violence and some strong language, it is best suited to older readers; however this smart, compelling novel is undoubtedly a must-read.

Publisher: Doubleday

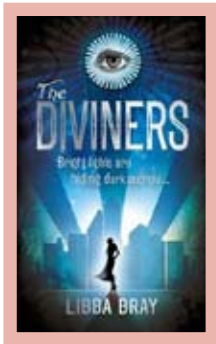
Interest age: 14+

Reading age: 13+

Waterstones
**Children's
Laureate**
2013-2015



12–14 and beyond



The Diviners

Written by Libba Bray

Party girl and troublemaker Evie has been exiled from small-town Ohio, and shipped off to the streets of Jazz Age New York City. Plunged into a giddy world of movie palaces, flapper fashions and neon-drenched New York nights, Evie is in her element. But

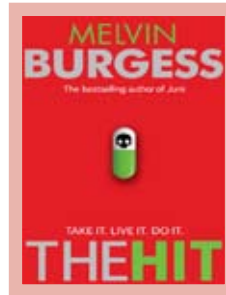
her charmed life of dancing, ragtime and illegal gin is soon disrupted when a sinister string of occult murders come to light and Evie's Uncle Will (curator of the obscure Museum of American Folklore, Superstition and the Occult) is in the thick of the investigations. But what Uncle Will doesn't yet know is that Evie has a secret – a strange power that may now help her to catch the killer. That is, of course, if he doesn't catch her first...

Libba Bray vividly captures New York in the Roaring Twenties in this historical novel blended with dark supernatural murder mystery. Packed with zippy one-liners and intriguing period detail, this is a well-crafted novel with a twisty plot and plenty of spine-tingling creepy moments that will keep readers on the edge of their seats.

Publisher: Atom

Interest age: 14+

Reading age: 13+



The Hit

Written by Melvin Burgess

Melvin Burgess has gained a reputation for dealing with shocking and controversial issues in books like *Junk*, and *The Hit* is no exception.

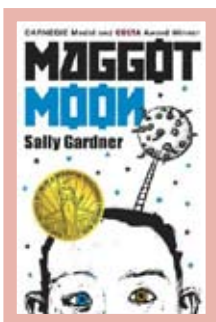
The streets are buzzing with talk of Death - a hijacked euthanasia drug, which offers those that take it the best week of their lives before they die seven days later. Adam's brother is gone, his parents are worn out and he has even lost girlfriend Lizzie, the one good thing in his life. With few opportunities available to him, and the growing sense that his life is worthless, Adam decides to take Death and end it all with the ultimate high. But all too quickly, he realises that he still has a lot to live for.

Brutal, uncompromising and unflinching in its honesty, *The Hit* tackles some of the most important issues facing young people today head on. Set in an urban Manchester torn apart by riots, looting and unrest, this is an intense, dynamic and action-packed thriller that moves at a breathless pace, right up to its dramatic conclusion. Burgess has served up another unmissable novel for young adults.

Publisher: Chicken House

Interest age: 14+

Reading age: 14+



Maggot Moon

Written by Sally Gardner

In an alternate 1950s, Standish Treadwell is growing up in a Britain dominated by the dark, ruthlessly oppressive forces of The Motherland. Life is hard, but Standish struggles onwards - until his best friend Hector is taken away, and events take a dangerous turn. Gradually, Standish comes to realise that it is down to him and his grandfather, together with a small band of rebels, to make a stand, and in a desperate effort to protect the people he loves, he sets out on a heroic mission to expose the truth.

Combining conspiracy theory and dystopia, this hugely original novel will resonate with readers of all ages. Brilliantly written and very readable, the story is told in the first person, in the distinctive and unusual voice of Standish, who although he is far from the standard 'hero' archetype, soon proves himself to be loyal, brave and idealistic.

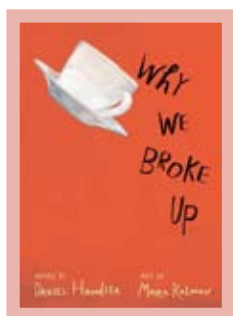
A dark and often deeply chilling read, this is also a story full of hope, which speaks compellingly about the value of trust, courage and freedom. This multi-award-winning novel is an unusual, deeply moving and thought-provoking story, which has clear potential to become a modern classic.

Publisher: Hot Key Books

Interest age: 13+

Reading age: 12+

12–14 and beyond



Why We Broke Up

Written by Daniel Handler and illustrated by Maira Kalman

Min Green and Ed Slaterton are breaking up. To commemorate the end of their relationship, Min has written Ed a letter and is giving him a box containing all the objects that tell the story of

their relationship - from two bottle caps and a movie ticket through to an ugly pair of earrings and a motel comb.

This beautifully presented and unusual young adult novel from Lemony Snicket creator Daniel Handler explores the unlikely relationship between popular basketball player Ed and quirky Min. Min's precocious, witty text is perfectly accompanied by highly-coloured illustrations by Maira Kalman, illustration which catalogue each object Min describes.

Warm, funny and bittersweet, this compelling novel is frank about teenage relationships and sexuality. Handler's characters are kooky but ultimately believable. Highly visual and very engaging, this is a unique and charming exploration of first love – and first heartbreak – which will resonate with mature teens.

Publisher: Electric Monkey

Interest age: 14+

Reading age: 13+



Hostage Three

Written by Nick Lake

Teenage rebel Amy is dealing with a host of problems when her super-rich but remote banker father springs a surprise on her: he's taking her and her stepmother on a voyage across the world on a luxury yacht. Resenting this attempt to reconnect with her,

Amy is unwilling – but then the boring family trip she had dreaded takes a truly nightmarish turn when their boat is captured by Somali pirates, and the family find themselves becoming commodities in a deadly transaction. Yet the pirates are not everything she might have anticipated, and before long, Amy finds herself building a powerful but dangerous bond with one of her captors, which could change her life forever.

Grabbing the reader's attention from the first sentence, this is a bold, ambitious and gripping thriller. Nick Lake's sparse, perfectly-controlled narrative bubbles with a potent sense of menace throughout, and he is brilliantly insightful in his depiction of Amy, a complex character struggling to work out what matters to her in a situation far outside her realm of experience. This challenging and often surprising young adult novel will stay with readers long after they have closed the book.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest age: 14+

Reading age: 14+



Red Ink

Written by Julie Mayhew

Growing up in London, 15-year-old Melon Fouraki has been raised on 'The Story' - her mother's magical tales of the Fourakis family, and her own halcyon childhood in Crete. But when her mother is run down by a London bus, Melon finds herself suddenly alone in the world. Struggling to cope with her loss, Melon begins to confront her own childhood memories and unravel the truth about 'The Story', soon realising that the cherished family myths may not be all that she has been led to believe.

This beautifully-written coming-of-age story is at once heartbreaking and full of robust humour and hopefulness. Shot through with black comedy, and with a fantastically frank and funny narrator in Melon, this uncompromising young adult novel interrogates family, identity, memory and the myths and superstitions we create for ourselves. Powerful, unusual and enormously compelling, *Red Ink* marks out Julie Mayhew as a young adult author to watch.

Publisher: Hot Key Books

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 14+

12–14 and beyond



Railsea

Written by China Miéville

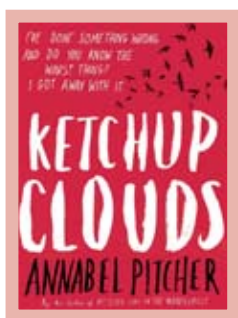
China Miéville is known for his brilliantly imaginative science-fiction and fantasy, and *Railsea* is no exception. Taking inspiration from writers as diverse as Joan Aiken, Herman Melville, Ursula Le Guin and Spike Milligan, this epic adventure is a remarkable book.

On board the moletrain Medes, doctor's apprentice Sham watches in awe as he witnesses his first moldyworpe hunt. But no matter how magnificent the event, Sham feels there must be more to life than his captain's quest to hunt the savage mole that obsesses her, and instead is increasingly drawn to the scavengers and their search for salvage. When the Medes encounters a wrecked train, Sham finds some salvage of his own – but what he discovers soon plunges him into danger. Set in an intriguing fantasy world, with plenty of humour and action, and a plot as full of twists and turns as the tangle of tracks the trains navigates, this is a captivating adventure story. Yet it is also a complex, sophisticated work of fiction. Miéville's playful use of language and dense narrative style make it ideally suited to more adventurous readers; however, those who take it on will be enchanted by this witty, warm and wildly creative coming-of-age tale.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest age: 12+

Reading age: 14+



Ketchup Clouds

Written by Annabel Pitcher

Her highly-acclaimed, award-winning debut, *My Sister Lives on the Mantlepiece* was undoubtedly a hard act to follow, yet Annabel Pitcher's second novel is equally impressive, and won the overall Waterstones

Children's Book Prize 2013.

The story is told through a series of letters written in the frank and often funny voice of a 15-year-old girl struggling to come to terms with her crippling guilt because she is, by her own admission, a murderer. Seeking redemption for her crime, Zoe begins writing to convicted murderer Stuart Harris, awaiting execution on Death Row, confessing the secret of what happened, and spilling out her feelings about a love triangle that went tragically wrong, as well as the family turmoil she has been experiencing.

Dealing with some complex and difficult themes and issues, *Ketchup Clouds* is perhaps best suited to older teenage readers. Blending powerful emotion and darkness with ironic humour, it is a gripping and moving story about secrets, lies and growing up. This is a sensitively-crafted story that will win readers' hearts.

Publisher: Indigo

Interest age: 14+

Reading age: 14+



Dodger

Written by Terry Pratchett

Terry Pratchett once again proves himself a master storyteller in this tribute to one of Charles Dickens' best-known characters, the Artful Dodger.

Pratchett's Dodger is not a pickpocket, but a 'tosher' – a scavenger who combs the foul sewers of Victorian London to find coins and trinkets. Making his home in the rookeries of Seven Dials with the wily but kind watchmaker Solomon, Dodger knows everyone and everyone knows him. But when he saves a beautiful young girl from a beating, Dodger's story takes an unexpected direction. The adventure that follows leads him to become the hero of Fleet Street, face down the demon barber Sweeney Todd, and even to meet the prime minister – as well as to make a new friend, a journalist named Charlie Dickens.

Told with wit and vigour, this is an enormously entertaining story with plenty of in-jokes to tickle fans of Dickens. Pratchett takes obvious delight in bringing Dodger's London vividly to life, peppering his tale with Victorian street-slang, and weaving in a host of historical characters. Yet for all the colour and fun, this is also a deeply humane story about the importance of social justice.

Publisher: Doubleday

Interest age: 13+

Reading age: 14+

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