

Best Book Guide



booktrust
Inspiring a love of books

Booktrust's 2010 Best Book Guide brings together reviews of some of our favourite books published during the last year.

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

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 and, if you are a teacher, access free teachers' resources. Look out for our monthly competition to win free books too!

You can search our extensive online database of book reviews by age range, as well as by genre and can post your own reviews and comments online.



The reviews are grouped into four different age categories:

5 years and under

5-8 years

9-12 years

Teenage

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

We have suggested classroom activities to accompany some of the books and have highlighted links to further author information and interviews on our website. As the theme to Children's Book Week 2010 is **books around the world**, we've marked any relevant titles.

All these items are represented with the following symbols:



Classroom activities



Links to further information on our website



Books around the world



Interview with 2009 Booktrust Teenage Prize winner, Neil Gaiman



With its publication in separate editions for children and adults and winning of the Booktrust Teenage Prize, *The Graveyard Book* is a true crossover book, and that's the way Neil Gaiman planned it. 'I'd always thought in my head of *The Graveyard Book* as being an all-ages book in the same way as I think of *The Jungle Book* as an all-ages book,' the author explains.

Suspenseful, funny and moving, *The Graveyard Book* is the story of Nobody Owens, orphaned after his family's murder and raised from babyhood to young adulthood by the wise vampire Silas and an eclectic community of ghosts. In each chapter Bod ages by two years, and each one stands as a discrete story.

'People say, "Isn't it rather creepy, isn't it rather morbid, writing a book about death, a book set in a graveyard?"' says Gaiman, 'I try and explain that it's not a book about death; it's a book about life. Which is one really good reason for setting it in a graveyard. It's a book about family and community. It's about potential and the idea of potential.'

It was important for Gaiman, not just as an author but as a parent, to impart to young readers some of his insights about life and living. 'There were lots of things I thought it would be good to tell kids,' he admits. 'One: you're alive, and you can change things. And you can change the world. Once you're dead that stops.'

I thought it would be good to tell kids that if you're walking through a graveyard there are things that you could be scared of, but they're all standing behind a grave and breathing. They're not six feet under and they're not incorporeal.'



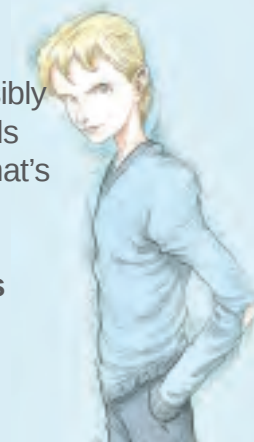
Gaiman's facility with constructing a beautiful sentence coupled with his ability to tell a good story have undoubtedly contributed to his unusual status as a writer who manages to be both popular and respected by the literati.

It's the emphasis on enjoyment that is most important to him as a reader. 'If I make a division in my head it's between books I love and books I don't love: books that took me somewhere wonderful and books that didn't take me

anywhere at all. I have read fine, beautifully written prize-winning books that took me nowhere and I have read other authors who took me to fine and wonderful places. I was always very pleased that I discovered Stephen King as an author before he was famous because I always worried that if I had discovered him once he was this huge, monolithic, popular author I never would have read him or I would have read him with some kind of disdain. As it was, he was an author I discovered, so I thought, this guy's brilliant, and just watched him grow into "Stephen King".

'You can't make a book popular; you can't make a book be loved. By the same token you can't make a book be something that awards' committees and judging panels decide needs their imprimatur. As an author what you can do is write the best book you possibly can and hope it finds its audience. And that's what I try and do.'

By Madelyn Travis



5 years
and under

Oliver Who Was Small but Mighty

Written by Mara Bergman, illustrated by Nick Maland

Oliver isn't quite sure about bath-time, and when there's a storm going on as well, it's a frightening prospect for a small boy.

Nevertheless he steps into his bath and his toy boat transports him through towering waves and a multitude of terrors, all of which he faces and overcomes. Eventually his parents gather him up from the bath and, clean and warm, he falls asleep.

This is the third story about Oliver and as in previous tales, the reassuring text moves rhythmically and repetitively, engaging the youngest of readers who can quickly learn to join in with the rhymes. The illustrations are as wild as the bath-time weather, and as energetic as the wave-borne text, funny, simple but laden with additional information.

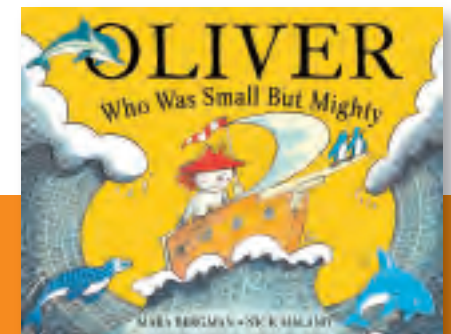
Publisher: Hodder Children's Books

Interest level: 3+

Reading age: 5+



*Winner of the 2009 Booktrust Early Years Award
for Best Pre-School Book, find out more at
www.booktrust.org.uk/prizes-and-awards*



www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk

The Big Night-Night Book

Written and illustrated by Georgie Birkett

Baby says 'night-night' to everything before he goes to bed.

He undresses, brushes his teeth, then has a story and his cup of milk before he is tucked up in bed with his 'snuggly blankie' to go to sleep.

Babies can join in with the refrain of 'night-night' and can touch the soft fur of a toy giraffe, move aside the curtains to look out of the window and pull the cover over the baby in the cot. They will also have fun spotting the teddy bear hiding in a picture on every page. A delightful, rhyming bedtime boardbook with lots to touch and feel.

Publisher: Red Fox

Interest level: 1+

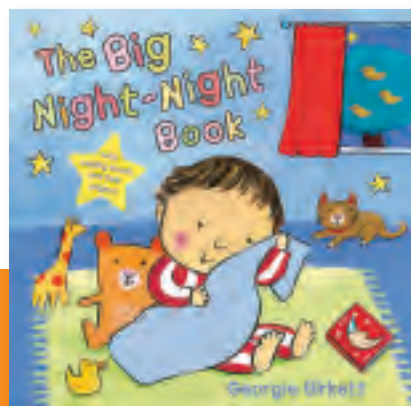
Reading age: 5+



Shortlisted for the 2009 Booktrust Early Years Awards, find out more at www.booktrust.org.uk/prizes-and-awards



Encourage children to share picture books with younger siblings or pupils in school



Box of Tricks

Written and illustrated by Katie Cleminson

Eva is given a big cardboard box on her birthday. She is a magician and for her first trick produces a large polar bear. Next Eva makes hats and rabbits that float in the air alongside the bear. After this she conjures up some delicious party food and a band of animals playing musical instruments. Everyone dances their socks off!

When they are all exhausted Eva clicks her fingers and everyone vanishes – except for the large polar bear! All the characters are drawn in black and white ink but they party against a backdrop of gloriously multicoloured ink blots, which ensures there is plenty to look at in this fun picture book. Every child loves an empty box and here, with the help of some magic, it contains a fantasy birthday party.

Publisher: Red Fox

Interest level: 3+

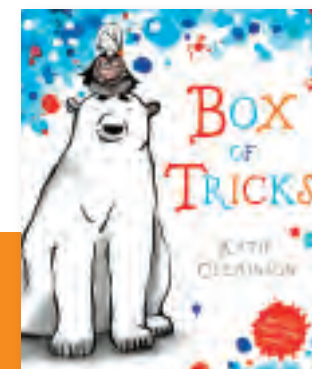
Reading age: 6+



Katie Cleminson was the winner of the Best Emerging Illustrator at the 2009 Booktrust Early Years Awards. Read an interview with her at www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk



Katie Cleminson illustrated Booktrust's Love a Picture Book leaflet, which celebrates the power of picture books, download a free copy at www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk



Big Scary Monster

Written and illustrated by Thomas Docherty

The Big Scary Monster (who lives on top of a mountain not far from here) is convinced he is bigger and scarier than any other creature and delights in terrifying the little creatures that live nearby.

Eventually the little creatures learn to hide from him and he gets bored with no one to frighten, so looks further afield for his fun.

When he spies tiny figures down in the valley, the monster sets off on a scaring spree but as he descends the mountain, the rocks and plants seem to get bigger and he seems to be getting smaller...

A cautionary tale, humorously told and beautifully illustrated, with plenty of scope for noisy participation from young readers.

Publisher: Templar

Interest level: 2+

Reading age: 7+



Visit Thomas Docherty's online illustrator's gallery at www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk/picture-books



www.booktrust.org.uk

Mr Pusskins Best in Show

Written and illustrated by Sam Lloyd

Reputed to be the grumpiest ginger cat around, Mr Pusskins is reluctant to agree with his young owner's decision to enter him in a show.

However, when Mr Pusskins spots the fabulous trophy on offer he changes his mind, and is determined to win the Best-Looking Pet award. Inter-contestant rivalry finds him misdirected to the arena, and his speed and ingenuity in getting there result in a very dishevelled cat arriving for the judging. Fortunately, although he misses out on the prize for best-looking pet, he is awarded an even more spectacular cup for top talent.

Lloyd's typically funny, lively illustrations and simple text both entertain and offer young readers the reassurance that there is more than one way to succeed.

Publisher: Orchard Books

Interest level: 3+

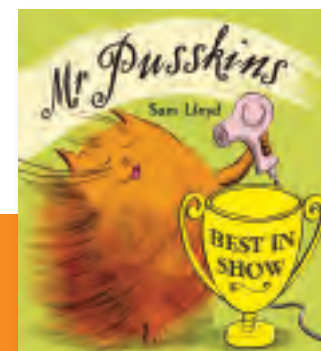
Reading age: 6+



Winner of the 2009 Roald Dahl Funny Prize, for children aged 6 years and under. Find out more at www.booktrust.org.uk/prizes-and-awards



Ask your class to photograph their pets and make a display of the photos, you could hold a competition to judge the cutest, funniest or messiest animal



www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk

Ernest

Written and illustrated by Catherine Rayner

Catherine Rayner, winner of the 2009 Kate Greenaway Medal, returns with *Ernest*, the story of a rather large moose.

Ernest is so big that he can't even squeeze inside the book, that is until his little chipmunk friend forms an ingenious plan and with a bit of extra paper and some sticky tape, together they find a way to make him fit inside the pages.

Ernest's huge, friendly face fills up the spreads of this gorgeously illustrated book. The collage techniques and different sizes of text are appealing, and the fold-out page at the very end makes this tale of teamwork and a big idea, truly special.

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Interest level: 2+

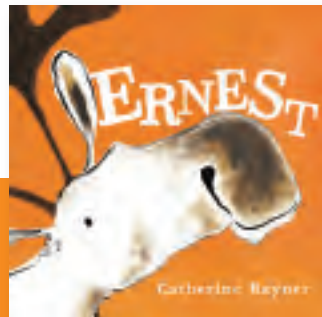
Reading age: 6+



To read an interview with Catherine Rayner and view her online illustrator's gallery, visit www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk



After reading this book use collage techniques to make your own giant moose for the classroom wall!



My Favourite Nursery Rhymes

Written and illustrated by Tony Ross

This book brings together 48 of Tony Ross's favourite traditional rhymes and is accompanied by a CD to teach readers the tunes.

Ross sets the nursery rhymes within a brief story of a small girl and her granddad, who teaches her that these rhymes are centuries old and based on real history.

At the end of the book the little girl's mother calls them, telling granddad – her dad – that it's the child's bedtime, showing how the rhymes have been passed through many generations.

The illustrations combine Ross's customary lively, humorous images with historical detail. This is an enormously valuable and entertaining tool to help families and schools keep alive a tradition that is under constant danger of vanishing from popular knowledge.

Publisher: Andersen Press

Interest level: 3+

Reading age: 6+



Ask your class to illustrate nursery rhymes for a younger sibling or pupil



Baby's Very First Outdoors Book

Written by Jenny Tyler, illustrated by Stella Baggott

This little board book features a series of high contrast illustrations, which are perfect for very young eyes to focus on.

Each page depicts an animal or outdoors object and the text tells us what noise they make – so amongst other things, we see a flutter-fluttering butterfly, a plane zooming and a rain cloud pitter-pattering.

An ideal first book, with familiar, easily identifiable images offering plenty of opportunity for interaction between adult and child.

Publisher: Usborne

Interest level: 3 months +

Reading age: 4+



Shortlisted for the 2009 Booktrust Early Years Awards, find out more at www.booktrust.org.uk/prizes-and-awards



Through Bookstart, Booktrust aims to give a free set of picture books to every baby and toddler in the UK, find out more at www.bookstart.org.uk



www.booktrust.org.uk

Chick

Written and illustrated by Ed Vere

Hatching from an egg and being transformed into a fully-functioning chick is a lively and noisy business, as youngsters can discover with this beautifully engineered pop-up book.

Using bright primary colours and plenty of action (and the occasional sound effect if pages are suitably manipulated), a simple idea has been rendered simply wonderful with an injection of humour as chick proceeds through his first day discovering the pleasures of pecking, pooping and cheeping.

Text is minimal but there is plenty of opportunity for toddlers to join in and add their own sound effects.

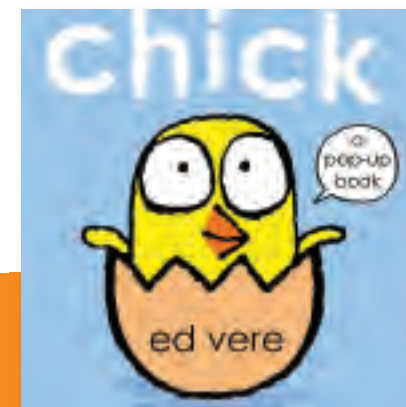
Publisher: Puffin

Interest level: 18 months +

Reading age: 5+



To watch a video interview with Ed Vere and find out more about his books visit www.booktime.org.uk



www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk

Lenny has Lunch

Written and illustrated by Ken Wilson-Max

Lenny is in the kitchen with Daddy and Wilbur, the dog. Bright, simple illustrations and a repetitive text take youngsters through their morning together, filled with chopping vegetables, singing, cooking, tickling, playing and having lunch.

Through familiar activities (and quite a lot of messy eating!) the special bond between a little boy and his Daddy is beautifully depicted.

In a small format, with sturdy pages of thick paper, this is a perfect book for sharing with the very young.

Publisher: Frances Lincoln Children's Books

Interest level: 1+

Reading age: 7+



Use this book when discussing food and healthy eating. Ask pupils to draw their favourite food on a paper plate and make a wall display on a giant table cloth with the finished artwork



5 - 8 years

A Necklace of Raindrops

Written by Joan Aiken, illustrated by Jan Pienkowski

This was a personal childhood favourite – I adored the magic in these stories, the places they took you to and the down-to-earth natures of the characters, juxtaposed with their magical gifts and powers. Happily, re-reading them in this new edition remains a pleasure.

Filled with poetic repetitions, each story beautifully balances the prosaic with the wondrous – the old lady who mistakenly slips a bit of sky into her pie, which then floats her away; the little girl who finds elves in the shelves and a tiger in the house on her birthday night, and the mesmeric fable of three railway men manning a desert station who dream of travel.

And then there are Jan Pienkowski's lacelike pencil-sharp silhouettes, standing out against exotic swathes of colour and light. Magical indeed!

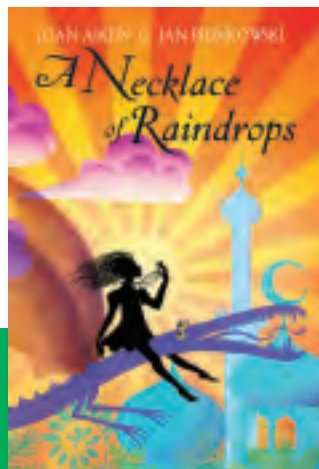
Publisher: Jonathan Cape Children's Books

Interest level: 7+

Reading age: 7+



Suitable for use in the English or Art curriculum, use this book to inspire pupils to make their own cut-out silhouettes to accompany a traditional tale such as Little Red Riding Hood



Amina and the Shell

Written by Deborah Alexander, illustrated by Kim Harley

Terrible storms are destroying the crops on Amina's tropical island. Desperate to help her family, she climbs the forbidding mountain behind her home to reach the beach inhabited by the Sandy Bay Giants.

Hiding in a shell, Amina is captured by the giants, but thanks to a friendly mouse, she escapes in a beautiful carriage with four giant golden coins as wheels. Welcomed home by her delighted parents, Amina gives them the giant wheels to spare them from poverty.

Richly-coloured illustrations accompany this gentle tale of a young girl's determination to bring hope back into her parents' lives. Amina realises that being small as a mouse doesn't mean you can't change your world for the better.

Publisher: Tamarind

Interest level: 5+

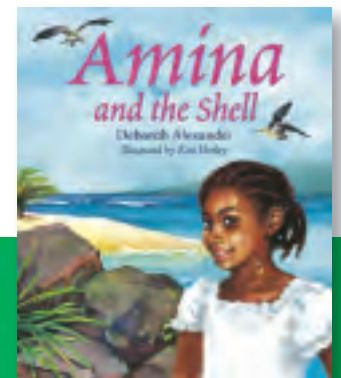
Reading age: 6+



This book explores other cultures as well as looking at the theme of climate change; providing plenty of scope for Key Stage 2 classroom discussions



Download the 2009 Children's Book Week pack at www.childrensbookweek.org.uk for more activities themed around this book



Grubtown Tales: Stinking Rich and Just Plain Stinky

Written by Philip Ardagh, illustrated by Jim Paillot

Welcome to Grubtown, where the eccentric residents are desperately trying to banish local stinker, Manual Org! With gloopy, greasy locks and green shoots growing from his ears, Manual's odorous stench is angering the people of Grubtown. It falls to official duck-gatherer Jilly Cheater to break the news to Manual.

However, when Jilly and Mango Claptrap discover a gargantuan diamond, they begin to piece together the truth about Manual Org and his filthy habits. The first book in a series, this madcap story combines outlandish characters and a witty narrative with comical illustrations. A valuable lesson about overcoming fear and the acceptance of others cleverly weaves through this fantastically filthy tale!

Publisher: Faber

Interest level: 7+

Reading age: 7+



Winner of the 2009 Roald Dahl Funny Prize, in the 7-14 category. Find out more at www.booktrust.org.uk/prizes-and-awards and children can visit the world of Grubtown at www.visitgrubtown.com



*If your pupils enjoy this book, encourage them to read *The Twits* by Roald Dahl or the *Mr Gum* books by Andy Stanton next*



The Great Dog Bottom Swap

Written by Peter Bently, illustrated by Mei Matsuoka

Why do dogs sniff each other's bottoms when they meet? Here is the answer to that question!

Dogs arrive for their Summer Ball and hang up their bottoms in neat rows in the cloakroom. They eat and drink and enjoy some doggy entertainment. Everyone is having a good time.

Then disaster strikes! A fire breaks out and all the dogs flee the building. In their haste they all grab the first bottom they can reach in the cloakroom but unfortunately, they each take the wrong one. Now, whenever they meet each other in the street they sniff each other to try to find their own bottom again.

A cheeky, rhyming picture book for curious dog lovers.

Publisher: Andersen Press

Interest level: 6+

Reading age: 6+



Shortlisted for the 2009 Roald Dahl Funny Prize, find out more at www.booktrust.org.uk/prizes-and-awards



*For more traditional examples of animal fables, try reading Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* with your class*



Tabby McTat

Written by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Axel Scheffler

Tabby McTat is a purrr-fectly happy busker's cat, until one day he falls in love with Sock, a gorgeous green-eyed cat.

But when his busker Fred is hurt and taken away to hospital, Tabby can't find him and misses him terribly. Sock soon has three kittens, the littlest with a deafening miaow and powerful purr. When Tabby finally finds Fred, he is torn between Sock and the lonely busker. All is resolved when the littlest kitten begs to be the busker's cat.

A poetic story of love, adventure and music that demands to be read aloud or possibly sung, depending on the power of the reader's purr. Young children can follow the whole story through the colourful, action-packed illustrations.

Publisher: Alison Green Books

Interest level: 4+

Reading age: 6+



Read an interview with Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler and find out about how they created The Gruffalo at www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk



The rhyming text in this book lends itself to dynamic reading; rehearse reading and acting out the story with your class



www.booktrust.org.uk

Elephant

Written and illustrated by Petr Horáček

Imaginary friends come in all shapes and sizes, but an elephant provides scope for great games and a wonderful excuse for large-scale mess!

Horáček pictures a small boy at his grandparents' house, without a playmate. His grandparents are too busy to play with him, so he imagines an elephant with whom he can play football and then take into the house.

Unfortunately, in the process flowerbeds get trampled, floors dirtied, and newly-baked cakes disappear. Blaming his elephant, he is challenged over his truthfulness and the boy sulks, but then he discovers a wider world of imaginary games and a reassuring resolution when granddad finishes his gardening. Horáček's illustrations vividly supplement this many-layered story of a lonely child who finds solace in an imaginary world.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest level: 4+

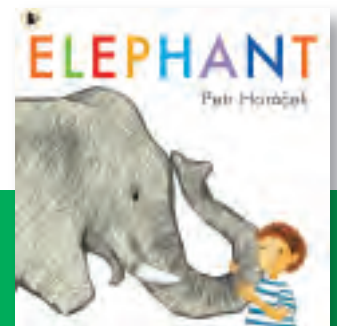
Reading age: 5+



Visit Petr Horáček's online illustrator's gallery at www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk/picture-books



After reading Elephant, ask your class to draw pictures of their own imaginary friends



www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk

Umpteen Pockets

Written by Adrian Mitchell, illustrated by Tony Ross

A valedictory celebration of Mitchell's wonderful poetry for young people, this collection demonstrates the rich variety of his work.

Containing material from many of his previously published works, including the complete contents of *Balloon Lagoon* and *Daft as a Doughnut*, and a selection of new poems Mitchell wrote for this book, it reveals the rhythmic compulsion that dominates his verse, and their child-centric, direct and often irreverent content.

The selected poems are divided into sub-collections including magic, scenery, people, and animals, which Ross's illustrations perfectly reflect.

This book is a splendid memorial as well as an endlessly entertaining, inspiring and special present for children.

Publisher: Orchard Books

Interest level: 6+

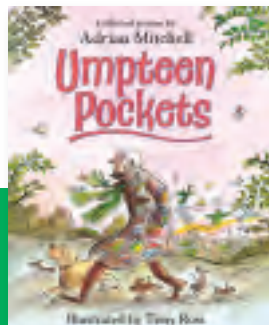
Reading age: 7+



This collection is a great starting point for poetry-themed activities. Follow Michael Rosen's advice on how to create a poetry-friendly classroom at www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk/teachers-resources



Finish each day by reading a poem to your class



www.booktrust.org.uk

The Silence Seeker

Written by Ben Morley, illustrated by Carl Pearce

When a new family move in next door to Joe, his Mum says they have travelled a long way and are asylum seekers but Joe mishears and thinks they are Silence Seekers.

Excited by the challenge of finding silence in the busy city, Joe befriends his new neighbour and tries his best to help him find what he thinks he is looking for.

This is a story of friendship without words or expectations that draws on the natural empathy and understanding between one child and another, however different their histories. It also explores the vibrancy and diversity of city life through gritty, yet child-friendly illustrations that are beautifully atmospheric and evocative.

Publisher: Tamarind

Interest level: 5+

Reading age: 7+



This book is a good starting point for PSHE themed activities. Ask pupils to think about a time that they felt out of place and ask how they would help a new classmate to fit in



www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk

Dear Hound

Written and illustrated by Jill Murphy

Alfie, the deerhound puppy stays at dog kennels while his owners are away; he is sure they have abandoned him. He accidentally touches an electric fence with his nose and in fright and pain he jumps a high fence and runs away into the woods.

Fortunately, two foxes take pity on him and teach Alfie how to scavenge for food. His owners, meanwhile, are distraught and search for him for months without success.

Alfie is caught by rabbit hunters who try to turn him into a hunting dog. When he is accidentally shot and badly hurt, his foxy friends risk their own safety to reunite him with his loving family.

Talking animals, gentle humour, suspense and charming illustrations all appear in this tear-jerking chapter book, from the much-loved creator of *The Worst Witch* and *Peace at Last*.

Publisher: Puffin

Interest level: 8+

Reading age: 8+



Ask children to write their own story, as seen through the eyes of a pet separated from their owner



The Lion, the Unicorn and Me

Written by Jeanette Winterson, illustrated by Rosalind MacCurrach

Jeanette Winterson's beautiful retelling of the Christmas story is seen through the eyes of a donkey, present at the Nativity.

The donkey is chosen to carry Mary to Bethlehem by an angel who prizes the animal's humility over the regal prowess of a lion and the mystery of a unicorn. The donkey bears witness to the birth of Jesus in the stable and is touched by an angel in the process.

Winterson's writing style is gently humorous and her language delightful – a zebra is 'painted black and white like an argument' and the angel who summons the shepherds to the stable, is 'as bright as hope and fast as a chance'.

The illustrations in this book are exquisite and as the story progresses they are splashed with gold, making them look even more special.

A perfect story for sharing with children as Christmas Day approaches.

Publisher: Scholastic

Interest level: 7+

Reading age: 7+



Encourage children to write a story from the perspective of another of the figures present at the Nativity





9 - 12 years

Under the Weather

Edited by Tony Bradman

Here are eight short stories about how climate change is affecting children around the world.

Ben's beautiful Philippino beach is disappearing due to the death of the coral reef. Jess is moved by the plight of Beluga whales in Canada and decides to become a marine biologist. Children's lives are changed by floods in Africa, Bangladesh and Suffolk.

In most of the stories the children seek positive and practical solutions, but sometimes they have no options. Excessive heat and too many mosquitoes in India lead to Chandrika's death from malaria. In Siberia the Nenets family can't afford to look beyond short-term solutions.

A thought-provoking collection emphasising the importance of individual, as well as group initiatives. It isn't too late to save the world!

Publisher: Frances Lincoln Children's Books

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 8+



This collection is ideal for inspiring classroom discussion about the environment and climate change



Z. Rex

Written by Steve Cole

A novel that combines dinosaurs and fantasy is likely to prove popular, but Cole's adventure tale has far deeper and darker undertones for those who read it more closely.

The first in a projected trilogy, Z. Rex is centred on Adam, whose scientist/game-designer father has been missing for two weeks and whose flat is suddenly attacked by a man-eating dinosaur who can talk.

Together they search for Adam's father, to discover why Z. Rex was created and why there are people out to get him.

The outcome offers a disturbing commentary on the ruthlessness of governments, on industrial espionage and on loyalty, seamlessly contained within a gripping thriller.

Adam is an engaging hero, and Cole's descriptions of catastrophic dinosaur-induced events are powerful.

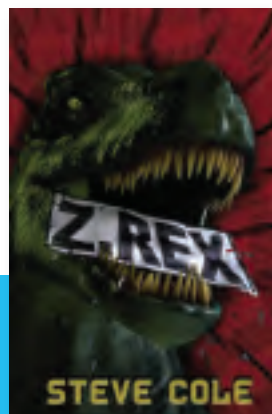
Publisher: Doubleday

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 9+



Particularly good for boys looking for fast-paced action-filled texts!



The Unfinished Angel

Written by Sharon Creech

Not all angels are divine and glorious; the angel in the tower at Casa Rosa is worried he lacks true gravitas and purpose, saying:

'I did not get all the training...maybe I am an unfinished angel.'

When talkative colourful Zola and her father move into the tower to open a school, the angel is increasingly challenged and puzzled by the unpredictable ways of 'peoples'. And when Zola discovers a group of runaway orphans, everyone in this rural Swiss village, along with the angel, must decide how to put their beliefs into action.

Deceptively simple, full of wit, humour and insight, this decidedly non-preachy story about the nature of angels – and friendship, tolerance and understanding – is told with the lightest of touches.

Publisher: Andersen Press

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 9+



Find out more about Newberry Medal-winning author, Sharon Creech and download teaching guides for her books at www.sharoncreech.com



New and Collected Poems for Children

Written by Carol Ann Duffy, illustrated by Alice Stevenson

This collection from Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, brings together the best of her poems for children; new poems are mixed in with verse from Duffy's four previous children's collections.

From a poem about Johann Sebastian Baa (a very talented sheep) to The Loch Ness Monster's Husband to numerous poems about friendship and school, there is something for children aged from nine-years-old and upwards to enjoy.

Atmospheric black and white line drawings enhance each poem and help ensure that this beautiful collection is one readers will want to return to time and time again.

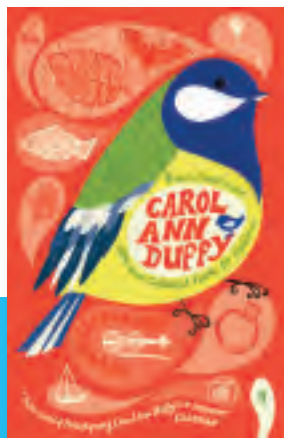
Publisher: Faber

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 9+



Hold a poetry cabaret morning or afternoon for your class, where children learn and recite their favourite poems or write and perform their own work



www.booktrust.org.uk

Toby and the Secrets of the Tree

By Timothée de Fombelle, translated from French by Sarah Ardizzone

In this gripping sequel and conclusion to *Toby Alone*, Toby must find a way to rescue his parents from the hands of the loathsome tyrant, Joe Mitch. His old friend, Leo Blue, now his worst enemy, is hunting him down and has kidnapped and imprisoned the lovely Elisha. Meanwhile, slave labourers are forced to dig a crater deep into the Tree, doing unimaginable damage to the world of all the Tree people.

Fortunately Toby finds many good people to help him and with their heroism and friendship he wins through.

The spectre of slave labour, concentration camps, tyrants and resistance provide a dark realism to the complex miniature fantasy world of the Tree.

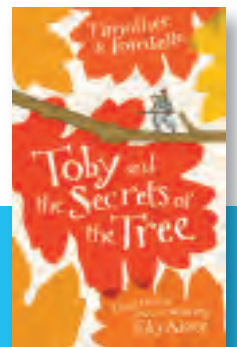
Publisher: Walker Books

Interest level: 10+

Reading age: 8+



Read an interview with the Marsh Award-winning author and translator of this book at www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk



www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk

The Graveyard Book

Written by Neil Gaiman, illustrated by Chris Riddell

After his family are killed, Bod is brought up in a graveyard by ghosts – an array of century-spanning characters who care for him, impart wisdom and even teach body-fading skills. Bod sometimes goes beyond the graveyard into the world of the living – and here his life is under threat from the sinister man Jack, who has pursued him since he was a baby.

Gaiman offers a wonderful story of life, death and coming-of-age in this book, with a brilliantly engaging hero in Bod. This fabulously original story is conjured through humour, surprise and an ability to combine the poetic, the resonant and the gruesome. Chris Riddell's illustrations confirm the delicious sense of unsettling people and presences that run throughout.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest level: 11+

Reading age: 10+

Winner of 2009 Booktrust Teenage Prize, read an interview with Neil Gaiman at the beginning of this guide.



Discuss the themes of boundaries, contrasting worlds and different genres – all of which appear in the novel; download a free reading guide at www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk/teenage-books



Outlaw: The Legend of Robin Hood

Written by Tony Lee, illustrated by Sam Hart and Artur Fujita

Robin Hood: a living legend. His real life and true identity may have been shrouded in mystery for over 800 years but the essence of the man has never died, as subsequent generations of storytellers adapt, and add to, the few known facts.

This stunning and spellbinding graphic novel mixes the innovative with the traditional to present a complete tale spanning Robin's life from boyhood to marriage with the feisty Marian.

Peppered with both wry humour and extreme violence, against a backdrop of the mystical depths of Sherwood Forest, this is a captivating retelling with punchy dialogue and suitably dark and atmospheric images.

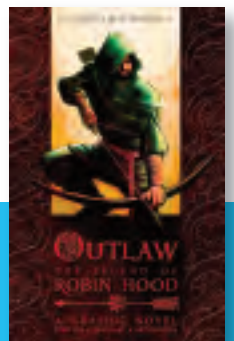
Publisher: Walker Books

Interest level: 11+

Reading age: 9+



Encourage pupils to create their own graphic novel retelling of another story or legend, such as a Greek myth or fairytale



Wishing for Tomorrow

Written by Hilary McKay, illustrated by Nick Maland

Long ago 'The Little Princess' was rescued from Miss Minchin's Select Seminary for Young Ladies, but what about the friends and enemies she left behind? They continued to live and learn there.

Lavinia made friends with the neighbours and discovered to her joy that education could be her route to freedom. A new maid joined the household and altered the balance of power; while Ermengarde missed her friend, Sara, and wrestled with envious feelings when she began her new life away from the school.

Young Lottie continued with her mischievous tricks and started a fire that changed everyone's lives.

Evocatively illustrated, this warm and humorous sequel to Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* provides a happy fairytale ending for all the original characters, even Miss Minchin.

Publisher: Hodder Children's Books

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 8+



Ask pupils to write the first chapter or synopsis of a sequel to their favourite book or traditional tale



No Such Thing as Dragons

Written and illustrated by Philip Reeve

This novel continues to reveal the diversity of Reeve's writing, previously seen in the Mortal Engines series and the award-winning *Here Lies Arthur*.

Here Reeve creates a poetic, fast-moving, medieval adventure story with its roots firmly in traditional folk tale and legend; however, he also examines many issues pertinent to a modern audience of young readers.

Ansel, mute since his mother's death, is apprenticed by his uncaring father to an adventurer, Brock, a self-styled dragon-slayer.

Deeply sceptical of Brock's claims, and angered by the cruelty of superstitious villagers, Ansel undertakes a quest that involves rescuing maidens and monsters, thereby facing danger, death and his own inner demons.

Reeve successfully emulates the content and literary style of the genre, but also provides a satisfying fantasy adventure for the 21st century.

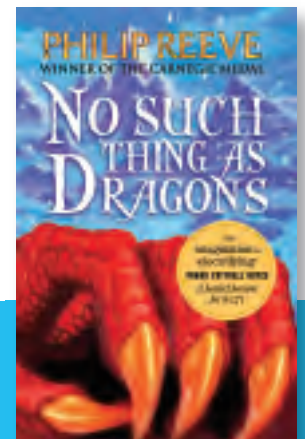
Publisher: Scholastic

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 9+



To find out more about Philip Reeve and to read his blog, visit www.philip-reeve.com



Michael Rosen's A to Z

Edited by Michael Rosen

Former Children's Laureate, Michael Rosen, gathers together the best children's poetry from Agard to Zephaniah in this new collection.

There is a poet for every letter of the alphabet, although there are a few exceptions for trickier letters, where Rosen has played around and given the reader something extra to think about!

From Grace Nichol's poem about her caribbean gran visiting England to Rosen's own hilarious account of his father's intolerance to 'The Noise', there are poems to entertain everyone.

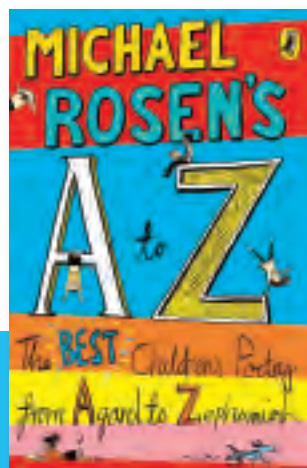
A brilliant book for dipping in and out of and a wonderful opportunity for getting to know a diverse range of British poets.

Publisher: Puffin

Interest level: 9+

Reading age: 8+

 Visit Michael Rosen's website for people in schools who like performing and watching poetry at www.performapoem.lgfl.org.uk



teenage

What I Saw and How I Lied

Written by Judy Blundell

Fifteen-year-old Evie has always felt over-shadowed by her mother's movie-star looks but as American society begins to shake off the austerity imposed by World War II, Evie is filled with a sense of new possibility and the desire to be treated like a child no longer. Evie's stepfather returns from the war and prospers; when he whisks Evie and her mother from their Brooklyn home to a hotel in Florida, their lives are changed forever.

Evie falls in love with a handsome ex-army comrade of her stepfather and her eyes are opened to an adult world where, beneath the glamour, lies a web of anti-Semitism, adultery and secrets. Soon she is forced to make the most difficult decision of her life.

This beautifully written coming-of-age tale juxtaposes the pain of first love with the suspense-laden atmosphere of film noir; it was the winner of the 2008 National Book Award in the US.

Publisher: Scholastic

Interest level: 13+

Reading age: 12+



*Read an interview with Judy Blundell
at www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk*



A Trick of the Dark

Written by B R Collins

Dad's recent affair and Zach's exclusion from school mean family tensions are approaching breaking point during a trip to France. Amid the flaring tempers and ever more bitter recriminations, the significance of Zach's odd behaviour barely registers until his sister, Annis, thinks she sees him die beneath a collapsing wall but then watches him stand up and calmly walk away.

A downward spiral of increasingly dark and sinister events sees the pair attempt an escape to London where they hope to find help but end up facing their worst nightmares.

A powerful and chilling thriller with elements of the supernatural that will have readers gripped and enthralled from the first sentence to the very last word.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest level: 13+

Reading age: 12+



*Teenagers who enjoy this title may
also enjoy B R Collins' Branford Boase
Award-winning novel, The Traitor Game.*



Running on the Cracks

Written by Julia Donaldson

Julia Donaldson's first novel for young adults is a tense thriller about a runaway. Donaldson addresses numerous issues in her gripping text, including: abuse, mental health, family relationships and responsibilities, mixed-race families and, above all, loyalty.

When Leo's parents are killed in a plane crash, she goes to live with her mother's English relatives. Abused by her uncle, she flees to find her Scottish-Chinese grandparents, although she knows that they had been estranged from her family.

In her search she faces great danger, but finds support from unlikely sources and ultimately finds both her family and her future. Donaldson's style engages immediately and through her characters she raises many questions about our attitudes to those perceived as 'different'.

Publisher: Egmont

Interest level: 11+

Reading age: 11+



Winner of the 2009 NASEN award for its positive portrayal of disability; to find out more, visit www.bookmark.org.uk



www.booktrust.org.uk

Ausländer

Written by Paul Dowsell

The German invasion of Poland ends Peter's peaceful life with his parents on their farm in the Polish countryside. Peter's parents are killed and he is sent to an orphanage, but as he is the very epitome of Aryan youth and has some German blood, he is spared the wretched fate of many of the other boys and adopted by a Professor Kaltenbach and taken to live with his family in Berlin.

At first, life in Berlin proves a relief to Peter; he joins the Hitler Youth and avidly listens to the radio reports of Germany's prowess on the battlefields. However, Peter becomes troubled by the activities of the Nazis and finds himself risking his life to protect those who are persecuted. *Ausländer* gives a fascinating insight into life in Berlin during World War II – a perspective not frequently portrayed in young adult fiction. The closing chapters are especially gripping and will keep readers on the edge of their seats.

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Interest level: 12+

Reading age: 11+



Shortlisted for the 2009 Booktrust Teenage Prize; find out more at www.booktrust.org.uk/prizes-and-awards For ideas to trigger in-depth discussion about this book visit www.booktrustchildrensbooks/teenage-books/teenage-prize to download a free reading group guide.



www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk

If I Stay

Written by Gayle Forman

Mia has everything going for her – a happy, eccentric family, a cool boyfriend and an audition at the prestigious Juilliard music school. But one snowy morning, a four-ton pickup truck obliterates the rest of her family and Mia's life is left hanging by a thread.

Outside her shattered body, Mia watches her heartbroken grandparents, her best friend Kim and Adam, her distraught boyfriend, visit her traumatised, unconscious self.

Ultimately it is up to Mia whether she lives or dies. Music, memories, love and friendship inform her final, difficult decision. A beautifully written book with moments of real sadness, hope, laughter, tragedy and joy, which make you appreciate all the little things you love, as your eyes brim with tears.

Publisher: Definitions

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 12+



Teenagers who enjoy this book may also like Alice Sebold's The Lovely Bones and That Summer by Sarah Dessen



www.booktrust.org.uk

The Vanishing of Katharina Linden

Written by Helen Grant

Pia's life in the picturesque German town of Bad Münstereifel changes forever the day her grandmother explodes.

The unusual circumstances of her grandmother's death make Pia the subject of local gossip and she is ostracised by her classmates. Befriended by another outcast, Stefan, the two begin to investigate a spate of disappearances amongst young girls in their town.

Little do they realise, their detective work will uncover things more horrifying than they ever dared imagine. The vanishing of the girls is juxtaposed with the disintegration of Pia's home life, as her German father and English mother's marriage crumbles, increasing her feelings of alienation and confusion. This unusual crime novel is both gripping and haunting, and builds to an unforgettable ending.

Publisher: Puffin

Interest level: 14+

Reading age: 12+



Shortlisted for the Booktrust Teenage Prize, find out more at www.booktrust.org.uk/prizes-and-awards For ideas to trigger in-depth discussion about this book visit www.booktrust.org.uk/childrensbooks/teenage-books/teenage-prize to download a free reading group guide



www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk

The Ask and the Answer

Written by Patrick Ness

The Ask and The Answer immediately launches the reader back to the point at which *The Knife of Never Letting Go* reached its nightmarish end, with Todd and Viola at the mercy of Mayor Prentiss in the promised town of New Haven. As Mayor Prentiss and his army inflict their terrifying regime on the people of the town, a resistance group The Ask, led by the healer Mistress Coyle plot a war that pitches man against woman.

Todd and Viola find themselves pulled into opposing idealisms, as the battle to gain power gathers pace before the anticipated arrival of the new settlers from Old World. Themes of dictatorship, terrorism and privacy reign in Ness's darker science fiction sequel, which loses nothing of the fast-paced, original narrative that made *The Knife of Never Letting Go* such a success.

Publisher: Walker Books

Interest level: 13+

Reading age: 11+



Shortlisted for the 2009 Booktrust Teenage Prize, the Carnegie Medal and winner of the Costa Children's Book Award. Find out more at www.booktrust.org.uk/prizes-and-awards



*For a video Q&A with Patrick Ness, as well as a teaching sequence on *The Knife of Never Letting Go*, visit www.booktrust.org.uk/Resources-for-schools/Writer-in-residence*



www.booktrust.org.uk

The Bride's Farewell

Written by Meg Rosoff

Living in rural England during the 1850s, Pell sees a future ahead like her mother's, of marital unhappiness, grinding domestic drudgery and relentless childbearing.

Her flight, with her mute youngest sibling, from this fate, takes her to Salisbury Horse Fair, where she is tricked out of her beloved horse and her brother vanishes. Searching for them she encounters a mysterious gypsy woman whose life is inextricably linked with hers and discovers her own future.

A gripping, poetic coming-of-age tale, which considers issues as relevant to 21st century teenage experience as they were in Pell's time; relationships, duty, love and abuse. Those who know *Tess of the D'urbevilles* will recognise similarities, while those who haven't yet encountered it would certainly also enjoy Hardy's novel.

Publisher: Penguin

Interest level: 13+

Reading age: 11+



*If pupils have enjoyed this book, they might like to try reading Meg Rosoff's *How I Live Now*, winner of the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize 2004 and the 2005 Bransford Boase Award*



www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk

Tales from Outer Suburbia

Written and illustrated by Shaun Tan

This beautifully illustrated book of short stories, explores unexpected and fantastical situations that occur behind an average suburban façade.

A water buffalo is resident at the end of one girl's street. A small alien-like exchange student comes to stay with a family and his unique and surprising parting gift is illustrated by a stunning double-page-spread. Another family discover a secret inner courtyard at the top of their house, where the seasons are reversed. These often thought-provoking stories look at the reactions ordinary people have to the unusual situations they find themselves in and feature a host of different illustrative styles ranging from collage to painterly Edward Hopper-esque scenes. This is a book to treasure, with more to discover on each re-reading.

Publisher: Templar

Interest level: 11+

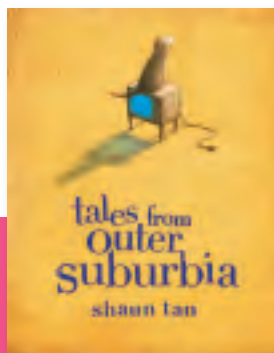
Reading age: 10+



Ask pupils to choose a favourite illustration from this book and use their responses to uncover the numerous layers in each one



Pupils might also like to look at Shaun Tan's wordless picture book, The Arrival, which focuses on themes of alienation and immigration



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