

booktrust



best book guide



From books for babies to teenage fiction, many outstanding children's titles were sent to us during the last half of 2006 and beginning of 2007. We've reviewed some of our favourites in this guide.

All of these reviews, along with hundreds of other recommendations for all ages, can be found on our website www.booktrusted.com

www.booktrusted.com

Our website contains features and interviews with many of the authors whose books are included in this guide, and we've highlighted these links in our reviews. You can also explore the work of contemporary children's book illustrators and, if you are a teacher, access free educational resources from lesson plans to subject book lists.

The reviews are grouped into four different age categories:

- > 0-5 years**
- > 5-8 years**
- > 9-12 years**
- > Teenage**

Reading age and interest level

For each book we have recommended a suitable reading age (marked RA), which refers to the age the child would have to be to read the text themselves, and interest level (IL), the age range that may enjoy the book, whether they read it themselves, or have it read aloud. You can also search for book recommendations at www.booktrusted.com by reading age and interest level.

Booktrusted.com keywords

We have provided a list of keywords for each title, to help you identify the themes and issues dealt with in each book. You can also use these keywords when you visit our website www.booktrusted.com, where you can search our extensive online database of reviews for other titles containing the same or similar themes.

about booktrust

Booktrust is an independent national charity that encourages people of all ages and cultures to discover and enjoy reading. The reader is at the heart of everything we do.

Booktrust runs a variety of schemes, projects, prizes and websites, all of which aim to promote books and reading. Listed below are just some of the things we do relating to children's books.

> **Bookstart**

A national programme that works through locally-based organisations to give a free pack of books to babies with guidance materials for parents and carers.

It aims to promote a life long love of books and is based on the principle that every child in the UK should enjoy and benefit from books from as early an age as possible.

www.bookstart.org.uk

> **Children's Book Week**

Celebrating the wonderful world of children's books.

Each year schools, libraries and bookshops hold events and activities that focus on the enjoyment of reading and aim to encourage as many children as possible to enjoy books.

Booktrust provides colourful and useful resources to help run successful book weeks or events.

www.booktrusted.com

> **Writing Together**

Visit **www.writingtogether.org.uk** for advice on organising author visits to schools.

> **Bookmark: Books and Disability**

This website is for anyone looking for information or advice about reading difficulties, disability and children's books.

www.bookmark.org.uk

> **Children's Laureate**

The post of Children's Laureate is awarded once every two years to an eminent writer or illustrator of children's books to celebrate outstanding achievement in their field.

www.childrenslaureate.org

> **The Big Picture**

A new campaign to celebrate and reawaken public interest in picture books.

www.bigpicture.org.uk

> **Booktrust Early Years Awards**

This prize is divided into three categories: Baby Book Award, Pre-School Award and Best New Illustrator Award.

www.booktrust.org.uk

> **Nestlé Children's Book Prize**

Formerly the Nestlé Smarties Book Prize. Awarded to the nation's best children's books in three age categories, as voted for by children themselves.

www.booktrust.org.uk

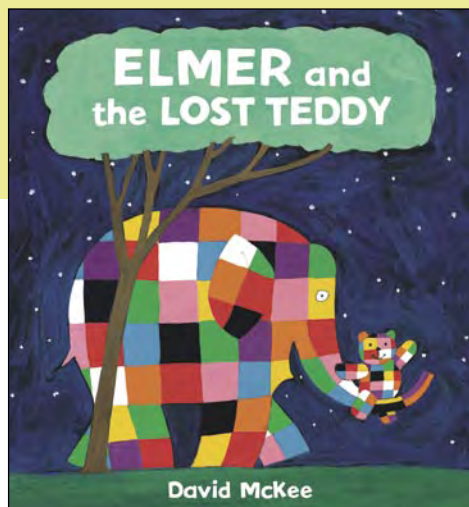
> **Booktrust Teenage Prize**

Recognises and celebrates the best contemporary teenage fiction.

www.bookheads.org.uk

**5 years
and under**





Reading Age: 5+
Interest Level: 0+
Keywords: bedtime, being different, familiar objects/ environments, friendship

Publisher: Andersen Press
Format: board
Price: £4.99
ISBN: 978 1 84270 648 0

Elmer and the Lost Teddy

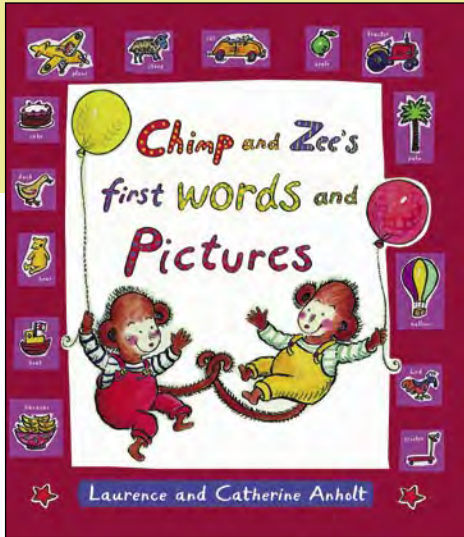
**Written and Illustrated
by David McKee**

When Baby Elephant loses his teddy and can't sleep, Elmer lends him his own, promising to help find the lost one.

As he searches the forest for the missing bear he discovers that each of the baby animals there has a teddy which is special for them.

McKee's Elmer has now dazzled eyes young and old in more than a dozen books for nearly 20 years, and the message throughout has been to celebrate difference.

In this republication of a 1999 title, McKee shows young readers that we each have special things which nobody else loves quite as we do. The pages are alive with vivid colour and pattern, and we meet old friends from other Elmer books.



Reading Age: 3+

Interest Level: 2+

Keywords: animals, colours, numbers, opposites, rhyme

Publisher: Frances Lincoln Children's Books

Format: hardback

Price: £9.99

ISBN 978 1 84507 375 4

Chimp and Zee's First Words and Pictures

Written and Illustrated by Catherine and Laurence Anholt

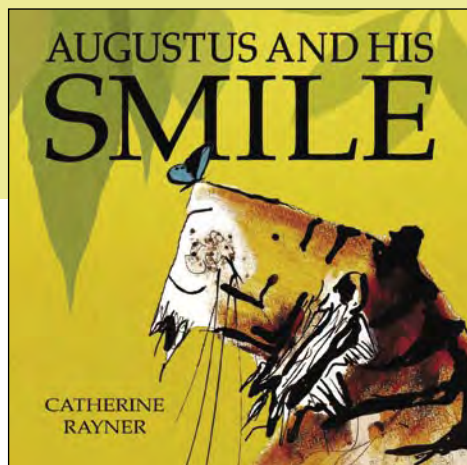
'This is Chimp. This is Zee. Point to everything you see!' Never has acquiring language been such fun, or so enchanting.

Cheeky monkeys Chimp and Zee invite to you to learn all sorts of new words, ranging from clothes to food, colours, numbers, animals and weather.

They encourage you to point and join in and they're often hiding somewhere in the picture. You can't help but want to step into their colourful world!

With a different subject per spread, jaunty, satisfying rhymes, a joyful use of colour and two exceedingly charismatic guides, this is a delightful book to share.

Whether it's bears, boats or bananas, answering the questions on each page and matching words with pictures is enormous fun.



Reading Age: 3+
Interest Level: 2+
Keywords: animals

Publisher: LittleTiger Press
Format: paperback
Price: £5.99
ISBN: 978 1 84506 283 5

> Winner of the 2006 Booktrust Early Years Award for Best New Illustrator. Visit www.booktrusted.com to see more of Catherine's illustrations.

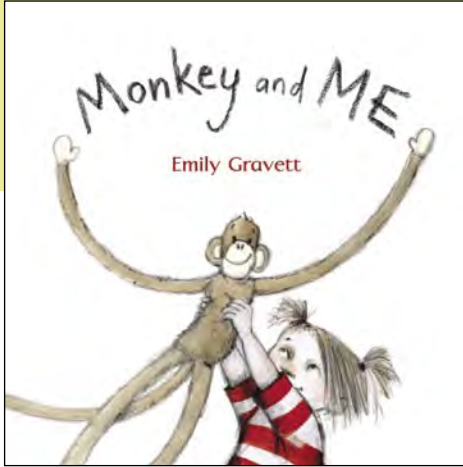
Augustus and His Smile

**Written and Illustrated
by Catherine Rayner**

Augustus is a tiger, who, though large and fearless, is sad, because he has lost his smile. He goes on a journey to find it, but despite looking everywhere, he fails.

Only when it begins to rain and a puddle forms does he find his smile staring back from his reflection, and realises that he will always have his smile, whenever he is happy.

A simple story, well told, with adventurous artwork that really makes this book stand out. The image of Augustus stretches across pages magnificently and children will love accompanying him on his journey through jungle, over mountains and into the sea.



Reading Age: 5+
Interest Level: 2+
Keywords: animals, rhyme

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books
Format: hardback
Price: £9.99
ISBN: 978 1 4050 8949 4

> Visit the illustrators' gallery at www.booktrusted.com for more information about Emily Gravett

Monkey and Me

**Written and Illustrated
by Emily Gravett**

This book marks the welcome return of award-winning author Emily Gravett.

A small girl takes her toy monkey everywhere with her. Together they imitate and then imagine visiting a string of real animals, from penguins to kangaroos, whose glorious images fill the pages.

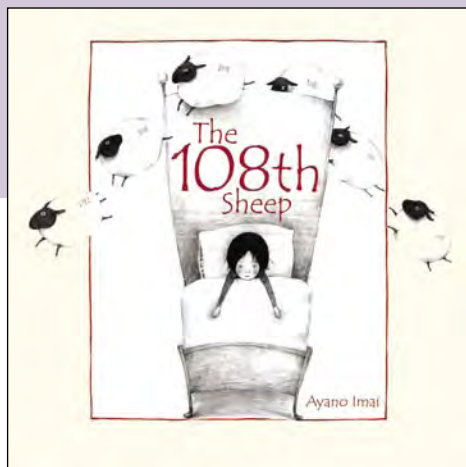
Eventually the pair sit down to enjoy their tea, oblivious to an unexpected visitor, who seems to have followed them back from their travels.

This beautifully illustrated, stylish book is full of energy and fun. The endearing protagonist and her monkey leap around the pages with infectious vigour; each spread featuring the animals is a surprise and delight to behold.

The repetitive, rhyming text lends itself to reading aloud and sharing.



5 to 8 years



Reading Age: 6+
Interest Level: 4+
Keywords: animals, bedtime

Publisher: Bloomsbury Children's Books
Format: hardback
Price: £12.99
ISBN: 978 0 7475 8665 4

The 108th Sheep

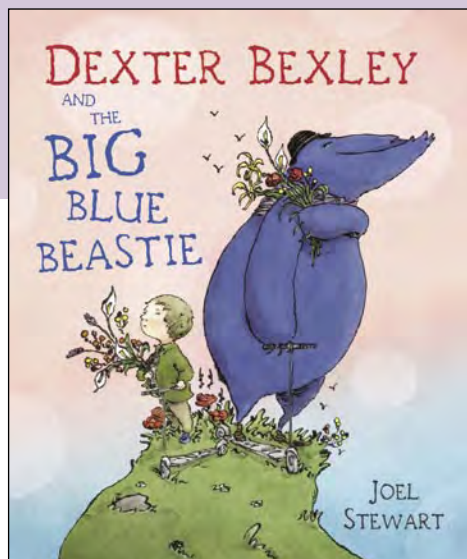
**Written and Illustrated
by Ayano Imai**

Nimitz has tried everything but simply can't get to sleep. She decides that counting sheep might do the trick, so snuggles down and begins to count. However, when she gets to number 107, the next sheep just won't appear.

She finds him lying helplessly on her bedroom floor, because he can't jump high enough to get over her bed. So, Nimitz comes up with a plan to help him and eventually falls into a 'wonderful, peaceful sleep' in the process.

The real joy of this book is in the exquisite watercolour and pencil illustrations and the luxurious paper on which they are printed.

The softness of Imai's style perfectly reflects the slow, lulling process of falling asleep and the fold-out final page allows young readers to spot the 108th sheep for themselves.



Reading Age: 6+

Interest Level: 4+

Keywords: friendship, monsters

Publisher: Doubleday

Format: hardback

Price: £10.99

ISBN: 978 0 385 61005 6

Dexter Bexley and the Big Blue Beastie

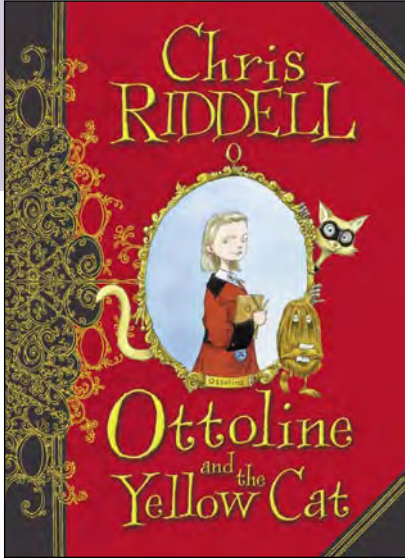
**Written and Illustrated
by Joel Stewart**

Dexter Bexley is scooting along one day when he chances upon a Big Blue Beastie. The Beastie is bored and hungry but young Dexter is canny and thinks of different ways to distract him.

They set up a business together, become private detectives and go for a giant ice-cream feast. But the Big Blue Beastie is still hungry and thinks that Dexter would make a perfect lunch.

Dexter is clean out of ideas but, in the meantime, the Big Blue Beastie has had a change of heart and realises that friendship is the best antidote to boredom of all.

Joel Stewart's beautiful illustrations are reminiscent of Edward Ardizzone's; his palette is rich, and text is depicted imaginatively in speech bubbles and around the page. This book is a visual delight to be revisited time and time again.



Reading Age: 7+

Interest Level: 7+

Keywords: bears, cats, friendship

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

Format: hardback

Price: £8.99

ISBN: 978 1 4050 5057 9

Ottoline and the Yellow Cat

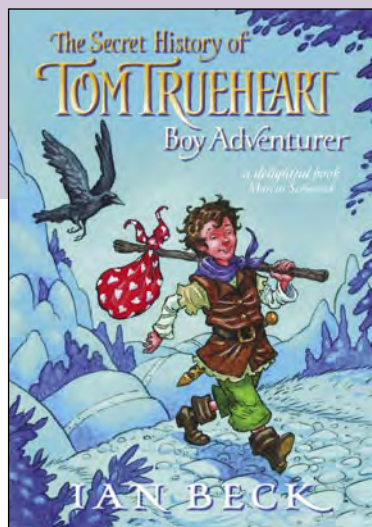
**Written and Illustrated
by Chris Riddell**

Ottoline lives with her hairy companion Mr. Munroe, on the 24th floor of the Pepperpot Building. Her parents travel the world collecting interesting things, but do ensure she is well looked after by the Home Cooked Meal Co. and Smith & Smith Pillow Plumping Technicians.

Ottoline is good at solving mysteries, in part due to her eavesdropping habit and in part because of her qualification as a mistress of disguise.

With the help of Mr. Munroe, Ottoline sets out to solve a spate of burglaries in her neighbourhood, which she links to the disappearance of lap-dogs all over the city.

This highly illustrated, quirky book is great fun to read. The retro illustrations are intricate, with plenty of visual asides to discover.



Reading Age: 8+

Interest Level: 7+

Keywords: adventure, fantasy, fathers, folk and fairy tales

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Format: paperback

Price: £4.99

ISBN: 978 0 19 279237 2

> Read an interview with author and illustrator Ian Beck at www.booktrusted.com

The Secret History of Tom Trueheart: Boy Adventurer

By Ian Beck

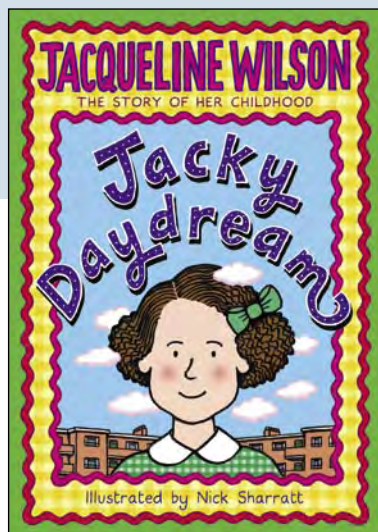
Normally the Land of Story runs like clockwork. The Story Bureau sends a letter outlining the beginning of their next adventures to the Trueheart Brothers, who are all stalwart adventurers named Jack, and off they set.

But when youngest brother Tom turns twelve, it's obvious something's gone horribly wrong. Disaffected Story Bureau employee, the sinister Brother Ormestone, decides he should finish the stories he's created, leaving the Braveheart brothers stranded in their respective adventures and only Tom to rescue them.

Tom's quest to discover his own story and his courage, unrolls through an elegantly described magical landscape, as Ian Beck skilfully weaves familiar tales into his own highly inventive story about the way stories work.



9 to 12 years



Reading Age: 8+

Interest Level: 9+

Keywords: biographical, family, fathers, friendship, grandparents, growing up, mothers, reading, school

Publisher: Doubleday

Format: hardback

Price: £12.99

ISBN: 978 0 385 61015 5

> Find out more about Jacqueline Wilson at www.childrenslaureate.org

Jacky Daydream

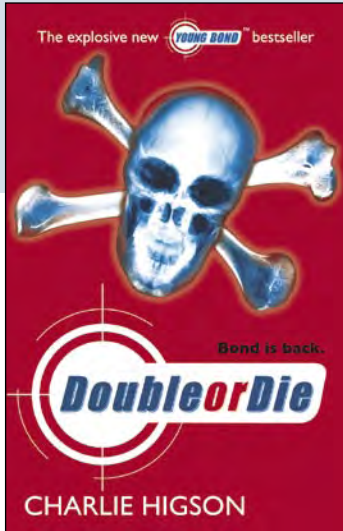
**Written by Jacqueline Wilson and
Illustrated by Nick Sharratt**

Jacqueline Wilson's many fans already regard her as a star equal to the characters she writes about; this autobiography, covering her life up to the age of 11, gives them a rare insight into her own early experiences and influences.

Each chapter ends with a passage from one of the author's books, which has been directly influenced by her own childhood.

As the title suggests, Jacqueline was a dreamy, bookish child. Although she relates many cosy stories of life in post-war London, all was not rosy for young Jacky – as an only child she dealt with her parents' unhappy marriage alone.

Wilson's intimate, conversational style, combined with a selection of childhood photographs and Nick Sharratt's familiar illustrations, makes this a delightfully satisfying read.



Reading Age: 9+

Interest Level: 9+

Keywords: adventure, boys, crime and mystery

Publisher: Puffin

Format: paperback

Price: £6.99

ISBN: 978 0 14 132203 2

Double or Die

By Charlie Higson

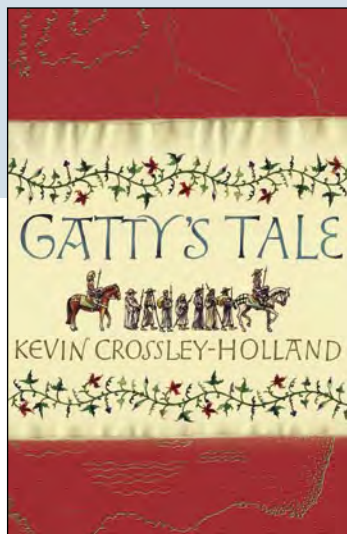
The young James Bond is back for a third adventure and this time he's trying to solve the mystery behind the disappearance of one of his professors.

Professor Fairburn has seemingly vanished but does send an odd letter to James' crossword-mad friend Pritpal. It dawns on the boys that this letter is crammed with cryptic clues relating to the real reasons behind Fairburn's absence.

The friends realise that their teacher has been kidnapped and they have 48 hours to try and solve his clues and rescue him.

Soon James finds himself on the tough streets of London's East End, embroiled in the sabotage of a Russian code-breaking machine and facing danger almost everywhere he turns.

Exciting feats of physical and mental dexterity abound in this gripping, pacy read, which should appeal to girls and boys alike.



Reading Age: 10+

Interest Level: 10+

Keywords: adventure, death, friendship, growing up, historical, Italy, religion

Publisher: Orion Children's Books

Format: hardback

Price: £12.99

ISBN: 978 1 84255 273 5

Gatty's Tale

By Kevin Crossley-Holland

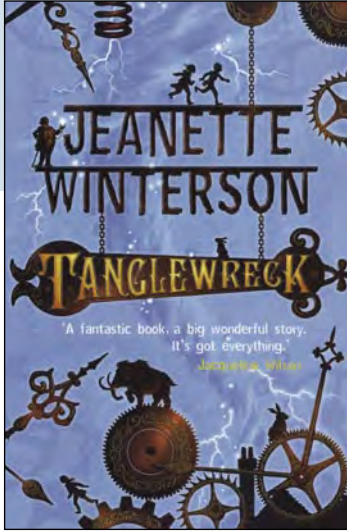
Readers of Kevin Crossley-Holland's acclaimed Arthur trilogy may recognise the eponymous heroine of this book.

Field-girl Gatty is called upon to accompany the serene Lady Gwyneth de Ewloe and a band of others on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Over the course of their long journey, the pilgrims visit exotic countries, experiencing joy and wonder, as well as facing danger and a tragic death. Along the way Gatty is taught to read and write, hones her exquisite singing voice and grows from a girl into a woman.

Gatty is a vital and engaging heroine, whose lively curiosity and enduring love for her absent friend Arthur will endear her to readers.

This exciting story is peppered with memorable characters and the parallels between the religious climate at the time of the crusades and today are particularly relevant.



Reading Age: 10+
Interest Level: 10+
Keywords: adventure, fantasy, friendship, time slip

Publisher: Bloomsbury Children's Books
Format: paperback
Price: £6.99
ISBN: 978 0 7475 80751

Tanglewreck

By Jeanette Winterson

Tanglewreck has been in Silver's family for centuries and she loves the old house as if it were a living, breathing being. Since Silver's parents mysteriously disappeared four years ago, she has been unhappily cared for by the selfish Mrs Rokabye and her spy of a pet rabbit, Bigamist (so called 'on account of his habits').

When strange things start happening to time, it becomes apparent that Silver must fulfil an ancient prophecy and prevent the evil Abel Darkwater and Regalia Mason from taking control of it for good.

Silver embarks on a journey which takes her from the underground tunnels of London to a parallel universe and ultimately learns that love is the most powerful force of all.

This complex but utterly readable book encompasses chaos theory and time travel but is also filled with humorous asides and engaging characters.

teenage





Reading Age: 10+
Interest Level: 11+
Keywords: fantasy, monsters, myths, legends

Publisher: Hodder Children's Books
Format: hardback
Price: £10.99
ISBN: 978 0 340 91162 4

Stone Heart

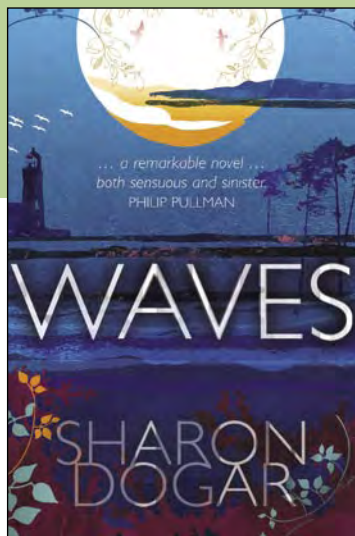
By Charlie Fletcher

When George takes out his frustration on a small dragon carving, accidentally breaking off its head, he awakens a dreadful power which has lain dormant for hundreds of years.

In this stunning debut novel, George finds himself alone and in mortal danger in unLondon, where all the statues in the city come to life and a terrible struggle ensues between the spits and taints – statues with opposing natures.

Whilst being hunted down by a stone pterodactyl, gargoyles and the terrifying Temple Bar dragon, George is forced to rely not only on the World War I Gunner for protection, but also on his own reserves of courage and initiative.

This breathtakingly imaginative and inventive fantasy/horror story should come with a warning that once begun it is impossible to put down. The term page-turner does not do it justice and it will change your view of London forever.



Reading Age: 11+
Interest Level: 13+
Keywords: family break up, growing up, love and romance, sex, siblings

Publisher: Chicken House
Format: hardback
Price: £9.99
ISBN: 978 1 905294 24 4

> [Read an interview with Sharon Dogar at www.booktrusted.com](#)

Waves

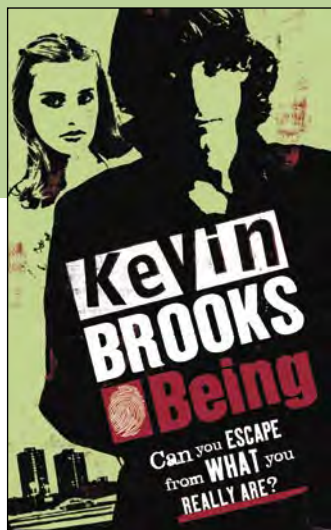
By Sharon Dogar

Hal's annual family trip to Cornwall has changed irrevocably. For the first time he is making the journey without his older sister Charley, who has been in a coma since their holiday the previous year.

Filled with anger and questions about his sister's apparent accident, Hal revisits the places and people Charley spent time with during her last holiday and slowly pieces together her final days.

A picture emerges of the joy and pain of first love combined with the lure of the sea and the freedom it represents, disconcertingly partly through Charley's own voice, which appears with increasing urgency in Hal's mind.

This is a haunting, beautifully written novel, with a gripping narrative, which switches between Hal and Charley and from past to present, carrying the reader along in waves of emotion and suspense.



Reading Age: 10+
Interest Level: 11+
Keywords: being different, crime and mystery, science fiction, thriller

Publisher: Puffin
Format: hardback
Price: £9.99
ISBN: 978 0 141 38144 2

Being

By Kevin Brooks

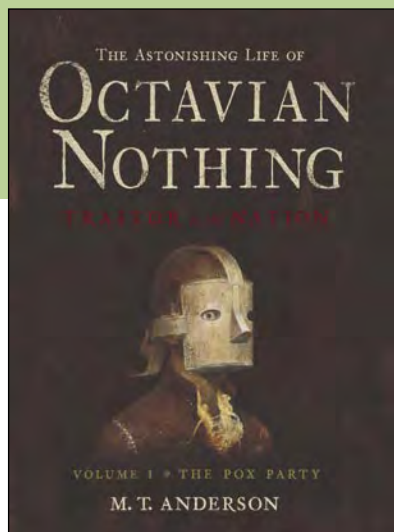
When he turns up for a routine hospital appointment, Robert Smith suspects nothing. By the time he leaves, in a stolen car with a gun in his hand, people are dead and he no longer has any idea who or what he really is.

The doctors found something inside him, something inexplicable and terrifying, and the sinister men in dark suits are sworn to pursue and find him or die in the attempt.

As Robert tries desperately to come to terms with his new knowledge he quickly discovers that there is no escape and life will never be the same again.

Sure to cause a storm and inspire a cult following, this original and startling thriller asks uncomfortable questions about what it means to be human.

Backed up by an internet microsite, author podcast and online debating forum for teenagers, *Being* looks certain to generate plenty of controversy and constructive discussion.



Reading Age: 12+
Interest Level: 13+
Keywords: Africa, America, growing up, identity, political issues/human rights, racism, slavery

Publisher: Walker Books
Format: hardback
Price: £12.99
ISBN: 978 0 7636 2402 6

> Visit www.booktrusted.com to learn how MT Anderson came to write this book.

The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation; Volume I: The Pox Party

By M T Anderson

This unusual book tells the dark, often harrowing story of Octavian, a boy in the care of a house of rational philosophers in revolutionary Boston.

Octavian is given the best classical education, while his actions and reactions are continuously observed and recorded by the philosophers.

However, as Octavian grows up it becomes apparent that he and his African Princess mother are being kept as living experiments and that there is no prospect of freedom.

As questions about his circumstances begin to form in Octavian's mind, events both inside and outside the house become increasingly dangerous and he wonders how he can escape for good.

This is a powerful book about slavery and revolution, told in a chillingly authentic tone, which is certain to inspire questions and discussion among all who read it.

Here are some more of the books we have enjoyed reading over the last few months; visit www.booktrusted.com to see the full reviews.

> 5 years and under

Little Fish by Guido van Genechten (Little Tiger)

Rainbow-striped Little Fish, is looking for her mummy, and meets different coloured creatures on the way.

Lulu Loves the Library by Anna McQuinn, illustrated by Rosalind Beardshaw (Alanna Books)

Lulu has her card, her rucksack full of books, and a big smile on her face – she's off to the library.

Mr Pusskins by Sam Lloyd (Orchard Books)

A cosseted cat dreams of leaving his comfortable life in search of excitement in this unconventional love story.

Whoosh Around the Mulberry Bush by Jan Ormerod, illustrated by Lindsey Gardiner (OUP)

A rhyme-filled, action-packed journey across the planet, with colourful illustrations.

> 5 to 8 years

Moonbird by Joyce Dunbar, illustrated by Jane Ray (Doubleday)

In this magically illustrated tale, Orla meets the moonbird and learns how

to speak with his hands and listen with his eyes.

Delicious by Helen Cooper (Doubleday)

Duck, Squirrel and Cat can't make their beloved pumpkin soup, so create another culinary delight – but will it taste as good?

Mouse Noses on Toast by Daren King, illustrated by David Roberts (Faber)

Paul the mouse is allergic to cheese; along with his friends Sandra and Tinby he embarks upon an adventure.

Lucy Willow by Sally Gardner (Orion)

Lucy lives in a train, has a pet snail and a talent for gardening, but she isn't impressed by her new baby brother.

> 9 to 12 years

Caddy Ever After by Hilary McKay (Hodder)

The eccentric Casson family returns and, much to her siblings' horror, eldest sister Caddy is getting married!

The Pig Who Saved the World by Paul Shipton (Puffin)

Ancient history is brought to life in this epic quest undertaken by a lazy, talking pig.

**Oranges in No-Man's Land by
Elizabeth Laird (Macmillan)**

Daily life continues in the midst of violent conflict in this vivid portrayal of a city devastated by civil war.

**Alone on a Wide, Wide, Sea by
Michael Morpurgo (HarperCollins)**

Orphaned and shipped to Australia, Arthur experiences cruelty and kindness. After his death, his daughter decides to complete his story.

> Teenage

**Unheard Voices edited
by Malorie Blackman (Corgi)**

An inspiring collection of writing about slavery, from voices both old and new.

**Beast by Ally Kennen
(Marion Lloyd Books)**

The tiny pet Stephen's father gave him years ago has now become a deadly beast; how can he keep this secret?

**The Penalty by Mal Peet
(Walker Books)**

A gripping thriller set in the world of South American football, with a thought-provoking message.

**Henry Tumour by Anthony
McGowan (Doubleday)**

Hector is a boy with a problem – he has a talking, swearing brain tumour – in this funny, shocking book.

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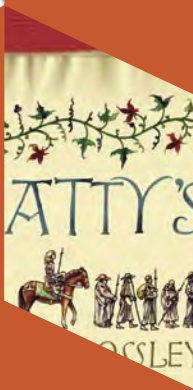
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