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# BookTrust's Great Books Guide 2023

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# Message from BookTrust's CEO Diana Gerald

We create this guide for primary school teaching professionals because your aim to get all children reading for pleasure is also our aim as a charity. Our priority is to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children, and indeed *all* children to reap the many benefits of reading. But we also know you are short on the time it takes to be across all the amazing, diverse and inclusive books published this year. So we've worked with teachers and book experts to create this guide for you, including links to the curriculum for every book.

Here are 100 books that will get children excited about reading. We've arranged them in age categories, but you know your pupils, so this is just a guide. We've also included some titles for more advanced readers which are still suitable for primary school children in terms of content.

Also in this guide, you'll find information on everything BookTrust does to help teachers and pupils read for pleasure. Do visit [booktrust.org.uk/primary](https://booktrust.org.uk/primary) for a brilliant video about reading together to share with families, useful articles and booklists, our BookTrust Represents free virtual author visits to help diversify your bookshelves and information on the Waterstones Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho. And please don't miss our fabulous poster included in this envelope. It is designed to share the benefits of reading with families, so please display it somewhere parents and carers can see it.

We believe the right book is always the book a child wants to read and hope this guide gives you lots of ideas for books that are silly, scary, informative, moving and everything in between. So enjoy. Follow us on social media @BookTrust and share your thoughts!

**Happy reading!**



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**New** for this year is a 'National Curriculum marker'. This will indicate in which subjects our book choices support the **National Curriculum**.

Thanks to teacher Dean Boddington for collating these.

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**BookSpace**



Age  
4-5



### **Dadaji's Paintbrush**

Rashmi Sirdeshpande,  
illustrated by Ruchi  
Mhasane

Andersen Press

**NC** Geography:  
Compare countries

A boy lives with his dadaji (grandfather) in a tiny village in India. They do everything together – from selling fruit in the market to sailing paper boats. But most of all, they love to paint together.

Starting with finger painting, the boy progresses to painting with brushes made from sticks while the village children watch through the window. One day, Dadaji passes away, and the young boy's world turns grey and lonely. Can painting provide a way out of his grief and loss?

Bursting with the colours of India, this touching picture book is full of heart and emotion.



### **The Kindest Red**

Ibtihaj Muhammad  
and S. K. Ali,  
illustrated by  
Hatem Aly

Andersen Press

**NC** RE: Islam

Faizah's teacher asks her class what kind of world they want. Some want an ice cream world or a unicorn world; Faizah would like a kind world, so she and her friend Sophie set about creating one in school.

Faizah and Sophie make an excellent pair, spreading thoughtfulness everywhere, and there is gentle humour in the interactions between the class. The illustrations are dynamic and colourful, with some lovely cheeky expressions on the kids' faces. Faizah also features in *The Proudest Blue*, another excellent picture book by the same creators.



### **Meet the Weather**

Caryl Hart,  
illustrated by  
Bethan Woollvin

Bloomsbury

**NC** Science:  
Seasonal changes

A little girl and her dog soar through the air in a magical hot air balloon, learning about the weather of our planet: clouds, wind, tornadoes, thunder and lightning, fog and snow, sunshine and rain, and – finally – a beautiful rainbow.

The jaunty rhyming text is great fun to read aloud, and there are lots of interesting words to discuss, like 'gusting', 'crackling' and 'clammy'.

Bethan Woollvin's vibrant illustrations are packed with details such as animals and birds interacting with the weather. This makes STEM learning super fun – useful in nurseries and Reception classes alike.



### Out of the Blue

Robert Tregoney,  
illustrated by Stef Murphy

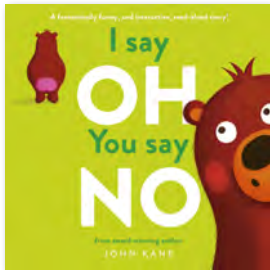
Bloomsbury

**NC** ELG: Personal,  
social and emotional  
development

A young boy lives in a place where anything that isn't the colour blue is banned, by order of the government. But the boy has a secret: he loves the colour yellow. He feels that loving yellow must be bad.

One day, Dad finds the boy's stash of loved yellow things. Luckily, Dad is supportive, and together they decide that it's fine to love yellow.

This gentle, positive story is a gorgeous celebration of being true to yourself.



### I Say Oh, You Say No

John Kane

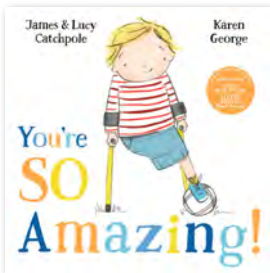
Templar

**NC** Reading for pleasure

Bear is like no bear you've ever met. He's a bear with a BARE BEAR BUTT! And bare butt bears like to dance...

The third in this series, *I Say Oh, You Say No* is a deliciously silly and cleverly crafted book which sets up a series of call and response rules with young readers to create a hilarious performative reading. Simply follow the instructions: if you see a bee, you shout out ME and if you see the colour brown, you jump up and down.

Children and grown-ups will love reading and participating in this joyous book. Hilarious, fun and silly.



### You're So Amazing

James and Lucy  
Catchpole,  
illustrated by  
Karen George

Faber and Faber

**NC** ELG: Personal, social  
and emotional  
development

Joe loves having fun at the playground with his friends. However, on-lookers insist on viewing one-legged Joe as a source of inspiration. So even when his friend Simone is clearly better at high-jumping, or when he's just eating an ice cream, it's always Joe who gets told how amazing he is.

This is a superbly incisive and perfectly pitched picture book about the right of every child to be an ordinary kid. Ironically, it's well-intentioned passers-by and adults who, by their efforts to include and encourage, insidiously single Joe out.

This show-stopper of a book is wonderful, witty and wise.



Illustration © Harry Woodgate





### 1,2,3, Do the Robot

Michelle Robinson,  
illustrated by  
Rosalind Beardshaw

Farshore

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

It's bedtime, but Layla the Inventor is not sleepy at all. So instead, she heads to her science lab, gathering bits and bobs to invent something new – a robot. But it's not just any old robot: it's an utterly fun-tastic robot who loves to dance.

The third title in Michelle Robinson and Rosalind Beardshaw's 1,2,3 series, this is a fun and imaginative picture book, perfect for future inventors. Featuring bouncy text, the rhyme and rhythm are superb, making it great to read aloud – and dance along.

The cute, wholesome illustrations are full of small details that little readers will love to explore.



### Captain Looroll

Matt Carr

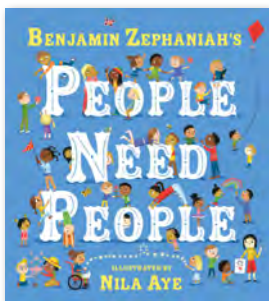
Farshore

**NC** Reading for pleasure

Captain Looroll, a toilet roll come alive, is ready for adventure. Unfortunately, she doesn't get many opportunities in the toilet under the stairs. Ray the Spray and Barbara Bogbrush are equally bored.

However, life gets exciting when they find the naughty ToileTROLL in the upstairs bathroom causing absolute havoc – and turning the whole house bright green with goo!

This is a brilliant book to read out loud, with puns-a-plenty and hilariously named bathroom items coming alive before your eyes. The perfect book to read to little ones who might be toilet training – or just a fun and silly read for any time!



### People Need People

Benjamin Zephaniah,  
illustrated by Nila Aye

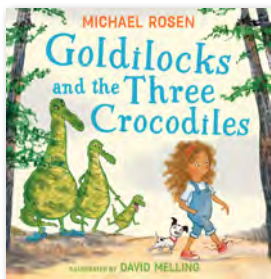
Orchard Books

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

Everyone in the world needs people.

Benjamin Zephaniah's uplifting rhyming text shares the many reasons why people need other people – to play with, to learn from and to hug! The delightful illustrations by Nila Aye show people interacting in all sorts of situations – in the park, the nursery, the airport and a family feast. Every child is having fun in the pictures, and between them they represent a large variety of ethnicities.

It is impossible to read this book and not smile. The poem is perfect to read aloud, as you'd expect from a prize-winning poet. A wonderful celebration of community and connection.



**Goldilocks and the Three Crocodiles**

Michael Rosen,  
illustrated by  
David Melling

HarperCollins

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

Goldilocks and her dog Tiddles set off through a dark wood to find 'that' house – the one with the chairs, porridge, beds and three bears. But instead of a bears' house, Goldilocks and Tiddles are lured by the song of the sea onto a beach, where they find a big cave.

Children who are familiar with the original Goldilocks fairy tale will delight in being able to anticipate the predictable elements of the story. But the original tale has been enhanced by Michael Rosen's wonderful rhyme and repetitive text and David Melling's warm and expressive illustrations.



**Five Funny Animals**

Adam and  
Charlotte Guillain,  
illustrated by  
Tom Knight

Ladybird Books

**NC** ELG: Maths

This charming picture book has five animals on each spread, but some are doing different things. If there are four bears eating honey and one bear reading, how many bears are there altogether? These gentle questions, written in rhyming couplets, mean the child practises counting and is introduced to the concepts of adding, subtracting and number bonds for five, though these concepts aren't named.

The animals' energy is joyful – there are bouncing frogs, sailing goats and singing cats! The delightful illustrations give a friendly feel to the jaunty text, and the whole book is brilliantly interactive.



**If I Were Prime Minister**

Trygve Skaug,  
illustrated by  
Ella Okstad

Lantana

**NC** ELG: Personal,  
social and emotional  
development

If you were prime minister, what new laws would you pass? For one young boy, the possibilities are endless. His new rules range from having libraries open day and night to ensuring that anyone who wanted a dog or a bicycle would have one; and grown-ups would go to nursery once a month to learn how to play.

This joyous picture book is a beautifully illustrated story which gets young readers thinking about what they would change if they were in charge. It covers major socio-political themes including education, immigration, healthcare and the environment in a child-friendly, approachable way.



**Pick a Story: Pirate + Alien + Jungle Adventure**

Sarah Coyle,  
illustrated by  
Adam Walker-Parker

Farshore

**NC** Reading for pleasure

Vincent has lost his dog Trouble at the park, and he needs YOUR help.

Bringing the fun of choose-your-own-adventure stories to the world of picture books, this energetic, interactive book sets up three alternative tales based around pirates, aliens and the jungle.

Throughout, readers can devise their own story based on decisions that send them back and forth through the pages. With twists and turns and hilarious characters, Trouble's fate is completely in your hands.

The dynamic and detailed illustrations match the bonkers settings of the different story paths perfectly, making this a fun and interactive read.



### The Goat and the Stoot and the Boat

Em Lynas,  
illustrated by Matt Hunt

Nosy Crow

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

Stoot is floating in his favourite boat until he is disturbed by a goat who fancies a float in the boat. But Stoot is not at all happy – this is Stoot's boat and it's certainly no place for a goat!

A chaotic battle begins as Goat tries everything possible to climb aboard Stoot's boat. Can Goat and Stoot stay afloat? More importantly, can Goat and Stoot find room for them both?

With a clever rhyme scheme and tongue-twister text, this book is huge fun to read aloud. Children will love the silly humour and delight in seeing the animal antics unfold.



### Dodos Are Not Extinct

Paddy Donnelly

O'Brien Press

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

Whether it's strapping on a beak to look like a bird or suiting up in a tuxedo to fit in with the penguins, dodos have found a way to go about unnoticed.

Dodos aren't the only masters of disguise. A whole cast of famous 'extinct' animals – from the woolly mammoth to the sabre-toothed tiger – have found inventive ways to blend in to their surroundings and fool us all!

This brilliant, playful picture book is packed full of silly humour as well as informative content about famous extinct creatures. Young readers will love spotting the extinct animals beneath the funny disguises, too.



### Martha Maps it Out

Leigh Hodgkinson

Oxford University Press

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

Martha loves drawing maps to make sense of the world around her. Beginning in outer space, each map in the book zooms in closer and closer to Martha's own inner world. There's a map of planet Earth, a map of the city, tower block and bedroom where Martha lives – and even a map of Martha herself.

Combining factual labels with quirky details specific to Martha's own perspective, this is a book which offers both light-touch learning and a positive message about dreaming big. The delightful textured and patterned illustrations perfectly complement Martha's optimism and creativity.



### Speak Up!

Nathan Bryon,  
illustrated by Dapo Adeola

Puffin

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

Rocket loves her weekly trips to the local library with her mum and older brother. So she is heartbroken when she discovers the library will be closing down forever!

Then Rocket, who recently borrowed a book about Civil Rights activist Rosa Parks, decides to speak up and save the library. Rocket rallies support from her classmates, and together they lead a peaceful protest.

The third book featuring the brilliantly passionate Rocket, *Speak Up!* is an engaging and timely story that empowers young readers to fight for libraries and community spaces.



### The Artist

Ed Vere

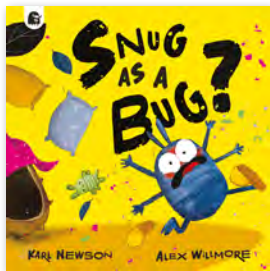
Puffin

**NC** ELG: Expressive  
arts and design

A young dinosaur artist sees the world full of joy and beauty – something that some dinosaurs are too busy to notice. She draws and paints that joy and beauty and makes it into her art.

Later she decides to go live in the city with lots of empty walls to paint so more people can see her art and really look. But she has a crisis of confidence when she starts to make mistakes and colour outside the lines. She almost gives up on art until she finds out it's the heart in art that really matters.

This book is perfect to read with children who have started drawing but sometimes feel disheartened when their drawing doesn't turn out exactly as they see it in their heads, as so often happens.



### Snug as a Bug?

Karl Newson,  
illustrated by  
Alex Willmore

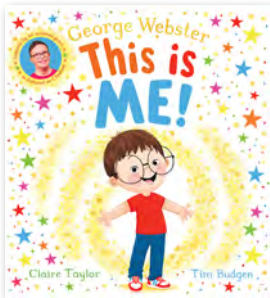
Happy Yak

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

Ronald the bug is very snug and cosy until he makes the mistake of answering the door to Snake, who tries to eat him. Sadly, it's the beginning of a predator-filled day for poor Ronald, with not only Snake, but Mole, Frog, Bird and Crocodile also having a go at making him lunch.

Finally, Ronald snaps. He's determined to get back home to be snug again, just like the mighty little bug he is. But, just when he's safe and sound back home, who's that knocking at the door?

This charming, funny picture book also provides simple and accessible information about nature for young readers. Brilliant!



### This is Me!

George Webster  
and Claire Taylor,  
illustrated by  
Tim Budgen

Scholastic

**NC** ELG: Personal,  
social and emotional  
development

We all have our individual likes and dislikes, and have the ability to shine in our own ways. We each have a unique set of ingredients that make us, us.

In George's case, one of the many ingredients that make up his unique recipe is that he happens to have Down's Syndrome.

Many children will recognise the star of this book as CBeebies presenter George Webster, transformed into a picture book character by illustrator Tim Budgen. Inspired by a poem, and joining forces with co-author Claire Taylor, this book shares George's wisdom and zest for life in a celebration of diversity, friendship and being yourself.



### There's No Such Thing as Dragons

Lucy Rowland,  
illustrated by  
Katy Halford

Scholastic

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

When a little boy is told by his grandpa that there's no such thing as dragons, he refuses to believe it. After all, he's somewhat of a dragon expert himself. But he needs proof! So he sets off on a dragon hunt. From high mountains and dark forests to castles and beaches, he looks everywhere for a real fire-breathing dragon. Just when he's close to giving up on his search, he spots smoke in a nearby cave. Perhaps dragons DO exist...

Filled with vibrant, colourful illustrations, there's lots of details to enjoy, including hidden dragons that children will love spotting.



### Let's Stick Together

Smriti Halls,  
illustrated by Steve Small

Simon & Schuster

**NC** ELG: Personal, social  
and emotional  
development

Squirrel and Bear are the best of friends, but sometimes they don't see things the same way. When Squirrel decides they should have a party, Bear feels anxious but then ends up enjoying it; Squirrel is gung-ho for the party at first, and then feels unexpectedly lonely.

Thankfully, Bear is there to pull Squirrel out of the grumps and take her back to the party where they both have a super time.

This rhyming story from Halls and Small is the latest in the *I'm Sticking With You* series and will be an instant favourite for anyone who has ever felt a little left out.



### Bork

Rhys Kitson

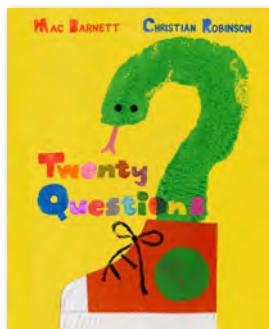
Sunbird Books

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

In English, dogs say 'woof', but in French, dogs say 'ouaf ouaf', in German they say 'wau, wau' and in Japanese they say 'wan-wan'.

In this charming picture book, one dog maintains that the right way to woof is to say 'bork'. Desperate to persuade the international cast of dogs, it's an uphill task until a cat arrives, and all the dogs unite to bork at it.

As well as highlighting interesting different dog sounds from around the world, which little ones will love to imitate, the overall message here is that there's more that unites us than divides us. Lovely!



### Twenty Questions

Mac Barnett,  
illustrated by  
Christian Robinson

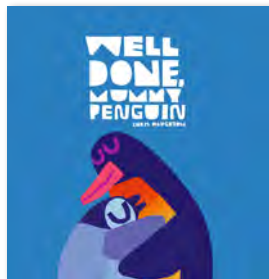
Walker Books

**NC** ELG: Understanding  
the world

Where did the bandits bury the treasure? What would you do if you found it?

This brilliant picture book is fantastic for sharing with inquisitive minds. It poses a range of questions to the child, and there is no wrong answer. From considering what present a lamb might give a lion, to what a little boy might be hiding behind his back, the reader is asked to use their creative imagination to its fullest extent.

Playful and profound with bright artwork that seems deceptively simple, this is sure to be a future classic in the vein of John Burningham's *Would You Rather?*



### Well Done, Mummy Penguin

Chris Haughton

Walker Books

**NC** ELG: Personal,  
social and emotional  
development

It's dinner time in the Antarctic and Mummy Penguin sets off to search for fish. Little Penguin and Daddy Penguin watch on anxiously as Mummy braves the icy waters to bring back their food. With each hurdle, Little Penguin cheers with pride. Well done, Mummy Penguin!

Chris Haughton's distinctive graphic illustrations bring lots of humour and expression to this suspenseful story. Children can follow the story easily even without the text, although the use of text repetition adds to the anticipation. Seeing Mummy's adventure from Little Penguin's point of view will likely have little readers cheering on Mummy Penguin too!

# Age 6-7



## Honey's Hive

Mo O'Hara,  
illustrated by  
Aya Kakeda

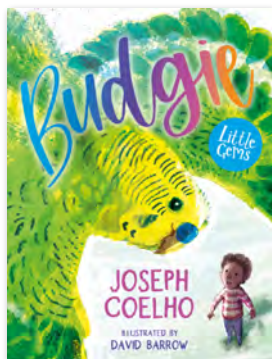
Andersen Press

**NC** Science: Animals  
inc. humans

Honey the bee dreams of having an exciting job like astronaut, dancer or Egyptian Queen. But the only avenues open to her are super boring bee jobs like feeding the baby bees honey or pollinating flowers. DULL!

Yet, when the hive is attacked, Holly realises that it might be up to her to save the day – and the Queen Bee – from epic disaster. Can she build a new hive for her bee community to move into? And who will help her?

There is also a strong environmental theme to the book, which will appeal to younger children who are interested in animal conservation.



## Budgie

Joseph Coelho,  
illustrated by  
David Barrow

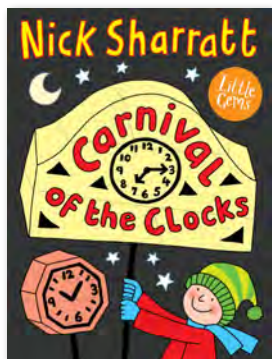
Barrington Stoke

**NC** Science: Animals  
inc. humans

Miles loves climbing the trees near his estate, but his neighbour Mr Buxton constantly shouts at him to stop.

One day, Miles finds a frail little budgie outside their tower block and takes it home to look after it. Miles names him Pippin. And it's thanks to Pippin that Miles ends up talking to Mr Buxton and discovering that they have a lot in common...

This moving and lyrical story is pitched perfectly at young readers. It is short and accessible, yet full of empathy and compassion, as well as beautiful illustrations. Pippin shines brightly out of the artwork, echoing the brightness he brings to everyone's lives.



## Carnival of the Clocks

Nick Sharratt

Barrington Stoke

**NC** Science:  
Seasonal changes

**NC** Maths: Time

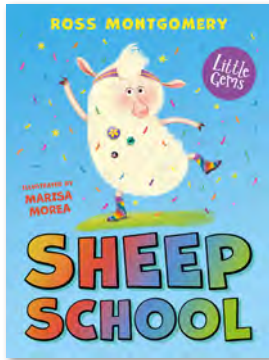
Everyone in Class One has a clock lantern. Some are circular, some are square. Some are fancy, some are simple. Class One have made them from tissue paper and willow sticks.

Why? It's the 21st December – the shortest day of the year. After today, the days get longer. To celebrate, the children of the town parade to the beach with their clock lanterns and put them in a big pile. This lantern mountain is lit, to become a roaring bonfire, and then there are fireworks.

With accessible font as well as full-colour illustrations, this charming story will appeal to a wide range of readers.



Illustration © Anjan Sarkar



### Sheep School

Ross Montgomery,  
illustrated by  
Marisa Morea

Barrington Stoke

**NC** PSHE

William the lamb can't stand still or be quiet for more than a few minutes at a time.

The new head teacher, Mr Howler, has told the sheep the best thing they can learn is to stand still. So William tries his best to stand still and keep his eyes closed like the rest of the flock. Luckily for all, he can't – and so he witnesses the Big Bad Wolf steal his friends and family away! Can just one little lamb save all the sheep?

This enjoyable addition to the Little Gems series is packed with humour, perfect for beginner readers who love to laugh.



### No Pets Allowed

Chitra Soundar,  
illustrated by Fay Austin

Bloomsbury Education

**NC** Science: Living things  
and their habitats

Keva's grandpa runs a pet adoption centre, and Keva loves helping him. Grandpa also has a tortoise called Atlas and he goes everywhere with Grandpa. So when Grandpa goes to hospital, Keva knows that seeing Atlas will cheer him up. But the bossy hospital manager says that pets aren't allowed. How can Keva persuade him that pets should be allowed?

This sweet story centres on kindness and caring – and includes facts about Asian giant tortoises and giant African land snails! With short chapters and lots of fun illustrations, it is ideal for newly confident readers.



### Adventuremice: Otter Chaos

Philip Reeve and  
Sarah McIntyre

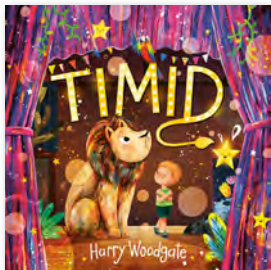
David Fickling Books

**NC** PSHE

Pedro the little mouse has always dreamed of a big adventure, so he sets off with a suitcase and finds himself at a beach.

When he's swept out to sea, Pedro is rescued by Fledermaus, one of the Adventuremice, and taken to the Mousebase. Pedro wants to become one of the brave Adventuremice, but what use can a small mouse be?

The first book in a new series, Adventuremice is pacy with brilliant full-colour illustrations. Fun and heart-warming with just the right level of perilous adventure for the young reader.



**Timid**  
Harry Woodgate

Little Tiger

**NC** PSHE

Timmy, whose pronouns are they/them, loves to perform. But there's a catch... Timmy has never performed in front of an audience. They are very timid, so much so that an inner shy lion follows them around.

When Timmy learns about the upcoming school play, they can't imagine how they'll ever be able to shake off the shy lion. Soon though, Timmy learns that they are not the only person to experience shyness – and that there are ways to overcome it.

A brilliantly helpful book to read with children who may be experiencing shyness, anxiety or struggling with their confidence.



**Gotcha!**  
Clotilde Perrin

Gecko Press

**NC** DT & Reading  
for pleasure

Three fearsome monsters are coming to gobble you up... Hide! First is the house of the three little pigs. Lift the tablecloth to discover extra details. Then there's a house of gingerbread with more flaps to lift. Finally, there's a castle to sneak into, where everyone's asleep. But are you brave enough to stand up to the monsters?

This is a brilliantly interactive fairy tale book with 40 flaps to lift. Its large format makes it ideal to share, though the details bear poring over at closer range. The text includes some stretch words, but it's full of wit.



**Bumble and Snug and the Excited Unicorn**

Mark Bradley

Hodder Children's Books

**NC** PSHE

Bumble and Snug are best friends. Bumble is 50% enthusiasm, 50% energy; and Snug is 33% kindness, 33% caring, 33% brains.

When they meet the magical unicorn Sparklehoof, they team up to be superheroes. Only, Sparklehoof is a little over-enthusiastic and perhaps sometimes 'helps' when it's not really needed. Can Bumble and Snug come up with a plan to calm him down?

This is a story that will have readers laughing out loud. Its fantastic full-colour cartoon-style illustrations are filled with energy and will appeal hugely to young readers, and there's a nice message here about friendship and impulse control.



Illustration © Anjan Sarkar





### Lifesize Deadly Animals

Sophy Henn

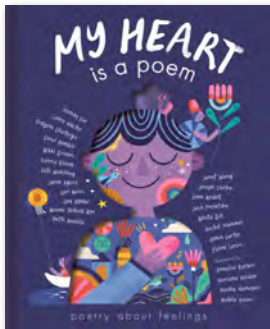
HarperCollins

**NC** Science: Animals  
inc. humans

This clever book shows the exact size of deadly animals – or their key parts. It's fascinating to see how big a caiman's jaws are, and a lion's spiny tongue. The smaller predators are shown in all their deadly glory, including bullet ants, Chinese bird spiders and dragonflies. Yes, dragonflies – the most successful predators!

A final spread compares sizes – the great white shark is 20 Lifesize books long, while the Bengal slow loris is only one book long – and encourages the reader to measure themselves.

Sophy Henn's vibrant illustrations and the bite-size chunks of information add up to a captivating book.



### My Heart is a Poem

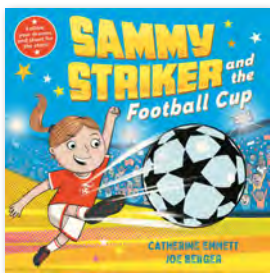
Various

Caterpillar Books

**NC** PSHE

This stunning collection of poems explores and celebrates feelings of all kinds, from excitement to sadness and embarrassment to love. Children will easily recognise these emotions and the situations in which they arise – such as riding a bicycle or feeling frustrated over homework. There are 20 poems – some rhyme, many don't. All will show the child reader that they are not alone when they feel a certain way.

There are 20 different poets and four different illustrators. The book is a large format and illustrated beautifully in full colour. This is a collection to read aloud together and to dip into alone.



### Sammy Striker and the Football Cup

Catherine Emmett,  
illustrated by Joe Berger

Macmillan Children's  
Books

**NC** PE: Football

Sammy loves playing football! One day the coach for the national team spots her potential. But every time she aims for goal, the ball curves away. How can Sammy find the confidence to use her skills in the right way?

The rhyme and rhythm pull you through the story, which is pitched just right for young school children, who are possibly beginning to work through confidence issues. The overall message – that you should celebrate your difference – is lightly done. Fizzing with positivity and action!



### Scientists are Saving the World

Saskia Gwinn,  
illustrated by Ana Albergo

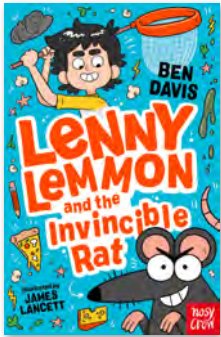
Magic Cat Publishing

**NC** History:  
Significant  
individuals

A little boy is watching TV with his mum one day and starts asking questions about scientists - what are they doing to save the world right now?

So Mum starts to explain all the brilliant ways that scientists are helping us right now, from meteorologists like June Bacon-Bercey predicting sizzling summers, to acoustic biologists like Deepal Warakagoda who listen to and record the sounds of animals in different parts of the world.

*Scientists are Saving the World* is an original and very appealing picture book, outlining a variety of different kinds of sciences for young children in a friendly and colourful format.



**Lenny Lemmon and the Invincible Rat**

Ben Davis,  
illustrated by  
James Lancett

Nosy Crow



Year 5 are dressed up for a day at 'Olden Days School'. There will be a prize for whichever class does best, and usually 5A win everything. They have perfect costumes, a perfect play – they even line up in the playground perfectly. But Lenny's determined that 5B will win it this year. Once everyone sees his olden-times rat, the prize is as good as won.

But then Ratty escapes... and the hilarity begins.

This is a very funny story. Lenny and his friends try to catch Ratty with increasingly destructive results, and of course learn something about friendship along the way.



**Press Start! Game on, Super Rabbit Boy!**

Thomas Flintham

Nosy Crow



Sunny is playing his new computer game, Super Rabbit Land.

In the game, the townspeople have fun all day. Singing Dog sings for them and everyone is happy. But King Viking, who lives on Mount Boom, kidnaps Singing Dog. Sunny – also known as Super Rabbit Boy – must complete all six levels of the quest and rescue Singing Dog. But will he have enough lives to do it?

This chapter book has brightly coloured blockish illustrations designed especially to look like Minecraft and Lego, so has enormous young gamer appeal. The first in a super-fun colourful and accessible young series aimed specifically at early readers.



**Who Ate all the Bugs?**

Matty Long

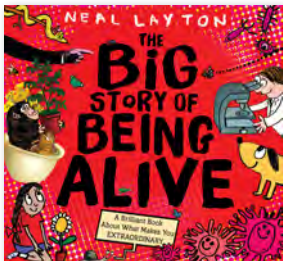
Oxford University Press



Snail and worm are out for a stroll one beautiful day when disaster strikes: someone or something is eating all the bugs!

Outraged, Snail decides to investigate. Their suspicion lands first on Bird, but it turns out that Bird has only eaten seeds all day. Next, Snail finds Snake, but Snake eats rather slowly and tends to look for bigger prey than bugs. Perhaps Spider is responsible for eating all the bugs?

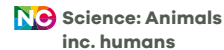
This delightful and very funny cartoon-style guide to food chains is a brilliant introduction to the concept, and gives young readers some simple facts about a range of animals and their eating habits.



**The Big Story of Being Alive**

Neal Layton

Wren & Rook



What does it mean to be alive? Is a rock alive in the same way that a flower is? Why not? What about a robot?

In this clever picture book, we learn that there are some things that everything alive has in common: they are cellular, they grow and they can reproduce.

There are some higher-level concepts here, such as the notion of philosophers and their different takes on the meaning of life. Layton's illustration style uses a mixture of collage and crayon-outlined colour pictures, which are fun but also clear and helpful when it comes to explaining big ideas.



**Secret Beast Club:  
The Unicorns of  
Silver Street**

Robin Birch,  
illustrated by  
Jobe Anderson

Puffin

PSHE

Best friends Aisha and Jayden are intrigued when a colourful canal boat moors up near their London block of flats. They are astounded to learn that the boat is actually the headquarters of the Secret Beast Club, an undercover society set up in the 1800s to protect magical creatures. Head of the club, Leila Fanque, is delighted to discover that both children have the gift of magic sight, enabling them to see magical realms which are invisible to most humans.

This exciting first book in the Secret Beast Club series features Black main characters and is ideal for confident young readers who enjoy fantasy adventures.



**Our Tower**

Joseph Coelho,  
illustrated by  
Richard Johnson

Frances Lincoln

PSHE

Three children who live in a very high grey tower hear the song of a tree calling to them. They creep out of the tower, past the cars and lampposts, to the woods that border the estate. There, inside the tree, they meet a tree-grown man who gives them a magic stone. Through the hole in the stone they see their tower re-imagined. Instead of windows, it has eyes of love, an elevator mouth and balcony eyebrows.

Written in a lyrical, rhyming lilt, this is a celebration of all who live in tower blocks and on estates.



**Bear and Bird:  
The Picnic and  
Other Stories**

Jarvis

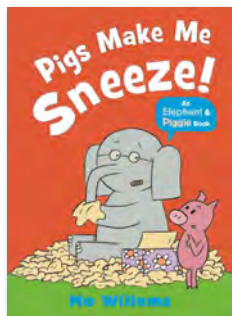
Walker Books

PSHE

Bear and Bird are best friends and, like many friends, sometimes they have a disagreement. Luckily, though, they're good enough friends to get past any hiccups or mishaps they might encounter.

Containing four amusing short stories, Bear and Bird tells us the story of a picnic that doesn't quite work out as it was intended to, a day of painting, a really fluffy blanket that is hard to move from under, and an unfortunate misunderstanding with a talking flower.

A really lovely book for emerging readers, or a brilliant bedtime book for those who want something just a tiny bit more involved than a picture book.



**Elephant and Piggie:  
Pigs Make Me Sneeze**

Mo Willems

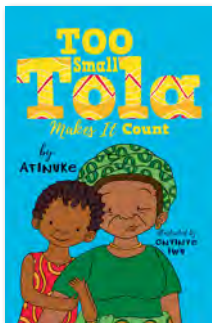
Walker Books

PSHE

Gerald the elephant can't stop sneezing – and, every time he does, he blasts his poor friend Piggie into the air. What if pigs make him sneeze? Luckily, Doctor Cat is on hand to be sneezed at, and to diagnose the problem...

A very funny story told entirely in short speech bubbles, Elephant and Piggie is hilariously melodramatic, and Gerald's facial expressions, along with Piggie's and Doctor Cat's, will have adults and children chortling.

Perfect for beginner readers, this is a very appealing next step after picture books thanks to its large font and simple storyline. There are 16 books – and counting – in the series to enjoy.



**Too Small Tola Makes It Count**

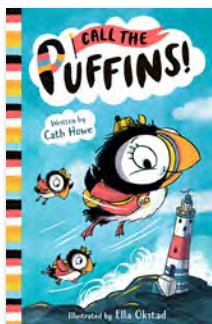
Atinuke,  
illustrated  
by Onyinye Iwu

Walker Books



This brilliant collection of three short stories stars Tola, who lives in a one-room flat in Lagos, Nigeria, with her grandmummy and older brother and sister. In each story, Tola helps her family and community. But Tola's having trouble at school with friends. If only life were like maths, with easy answers. Will the people whose lives she's touched help this little girl with a big heart?

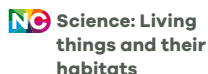
The short stories make this book easy to dip into, and the warm illustrations bring Tola's world to life with humour. An excellent celebration of community, family and love.



**Call the Puffins!**

Cath Howe,  
illustrated by  
Ella Okstad

Welbeck



It's time for Muffin the puffin to leave the family burrow and apply to join the Puffin Rescue Team on the Island of Egg. But Muffin's feet turn up at the ends, unlike most puffins. Will she be able to join the rescue team, or will her feet let her down?

This is a charming story, beautifully illustrated in black and white with adorably cute puffins. Young readers will understand Muffin's worries about fitting in at 'school' and making friends. The message that you too can rise to the challenge even if you're different from others is subtle and makes for a satisfying read overall.



**Lizzie and Lucky: The Mystery of the Disappearing Rabbit**

Megan Rix,  
illustrated by  
Tim Budgen

Puffin



There's a magical competition in town and Lizzie, her dog Lucky and her friend Ted are very excited to be watching it. The famous Lady Azeena will be performing with her rabbit Ruby – and she's Deaf, like Lizzie, so the event is extra special. Yet, when Ruby goes missing, it's time for Lizzie and Lucky to sniff out some clues.

Lizzie and her family all use sign language, which is effortlessly incorporated in the story. The author's own experience of partial deafness means that she's keen to share this beautiful language, and at the back she's included the letters of the alphabet in British Sign Language, too.



**Magic Faces: Heroes of the Pirate Ship**

Esi Merleh,  
illustrated  
by Abeeha Tariq

UCLan Publishing



When twins Austin and Alanna find a magic face painting set at their aunt's house, their adventures begin. They and their dog Ozzy suddenly arrive on a pirate ship! Luckily, the pirates on the New Leaf are friendly. But when two new pirates start snooping around, Austin and Alanna are suspicious. Can they help their crew mates before their time in this world is up?

This is the first in a charming new series. With friendly illustrations in colour on every spread and short chapters, this is a good choice for newly confident readers looking for a gentle adventure.

# Age 8-9



### Next to Alice

Anne Fine, illustrated  
by Gareth Conway

Barrington Stoke

**NC** PSHE

When Ben has to sit next to Alice in class, he's not happy. Alice is scary. Soon Alice is pointing out his sloppy drawing and scribbly handwriting. But when Ben thinks about what Alice has said and makes a few changes, he's pleased with the results. And then he has the chance to go back to his old seat. Will he take it?

Few authors capture classroom dynamics as well as Anne Fine, and children will recognise the subtle undercurrents. This story has gentle humour and the message of putting in effort to see the reward is lightly done.



### The Thames and Tide Club: The Secret City

Katya Balen,  
illustrated by  
Rachael Dean

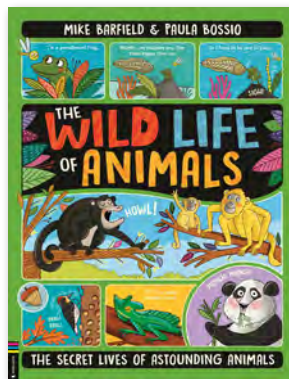
Bloomsbury

**NC** History: Local history

Clem and her friends Ash and Zara are mudlarks. Every week they walk the shores of the river Thames discovering lost objects that have washed up.

One day, the weather is behaving strangely and water is spurting out of fountains and up drains. Most worryingly, there are cracks spreading across their block of flats. When Oswald the museum owner sees the item Clem has found, he tells the friends to return it to the river. But what – and who – will they find when they do?

Short chapters and fun illustrations bring huge appeal for readers who are keen to dive in to engaging but accessible stories.



### The Wild Life of Animals

Mike Barfield,  
illustrated by  
Paula Bossio

Buster Books

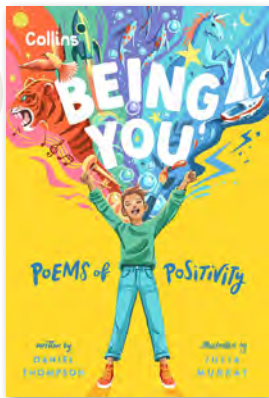
**NC** Science: Living things  
and their habitats

This entertaining book introduces many interesting animals such as flying snakes, vampire squid, pika and cactus wrens. Grouped by habitat and presented in the form of comic strips, it's packed with quirky survival techniques, amazing adaptations and funny behaviour. There is also information on family groups, diet and homes. The variety of animals covered is astonishing.

It's written from the animals' perspectives, making it super friendly. The fantastic colour illustrations showcase each animal as an individual and there are many background details to enjoy too. Perfect for young animal lovers who like their information on the wild side.



Illustration © Sav Akkuz



### Being You

Daniel Thompson,  
illustrated by Julia  
Murray

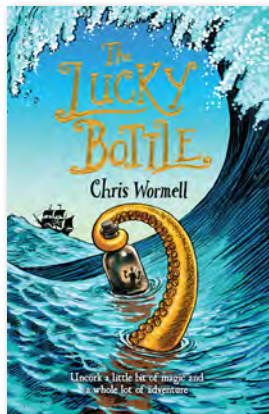
Collins



Sometimes we all need a positive boost, and this book of 50 poems packed with positivity and happiness is just the ticket.

Featuring poems about having purpose, keeping perspective, sharing your feelings, being resilient and ambitious, staying calm and curious (and so much more), this beautifully illustrated colourful book is a real pick-me-up, and a great introduction to poetry for those who don't read it very much.

This is an accessible go-to for motivational quotes and perhaps a daily poem to keep us on an even keel. Lovely!



### The Lucky Bottle

Chris Wormell

David Fickling Books



Ten-year-old Jack is shipwrecked on a desolate island after a terrible storm – and a row with his family. But then he meets Robinson, a man who's been living there all alone for years. Together, they find a way to survive.

But Jack yearns to go home so concocts a plan to do exactly that. It will involve magic, ingenuity and lots of bravery.

This stirring adventure has the feel of a classic, with its nod to *Robinson Crusoe* and the historical setting of a time when ships sailed the seas using only wind power. Chris Wormell's illustrations are brilliantly engaging and add drama and context.



### Looshkin: Oof! Right in the Puddings!

Jamie Smart

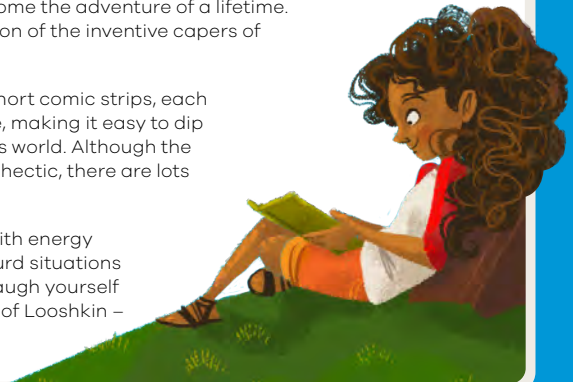
David Fickling Books



Watch out! Wherever Looshkin the cat goes, chaos follows. Here, Looshkin confuses some astronauts, terrifies aliens and gives a garden gnome the adventure of a lifetime. And that's only a fraction of the inventive capers of this irrepressible cat.

This is a collection of short comic strips, each with their own storyline, making it easy to dip in and out of Looshkin's world. Although the events are surreal and hectic, there are lots of laughs throughout.

The illustrations zing with energy and the jokes and absurd situations come thick and fast. Laugh yourself silly reading the antics of Looshkin – 'the maddest cat ever'.





### Space Blasters: Suzie Saves the Universe

Katie and Kevin Tsang,  
illustrated by Amy  
Nguyen

Farshore

**NC** PSHE

Suzie Wen loves inventing things, even if they sometimes go wrong. So when her Super 3DTV Gizmo – designed to make her feel like she’s in her favourite TV show Space Blasters – goes very right, she finds herself on board the spaceship.

But Suzie has no time to wonder how her invention has worked, because the ship crash-lands on Planet Cheddar, where something is very troubling.

It’s up to Suzie and the crew, including Captain Jane, Spaceman Jack and Five-Eyed Frank, to work out what’s happened. Can they save the universe?

Pacy and exciting with a STEM theme, this young chapter book is perfect for newly confident readers.



### Stink

Jenny McLachlan

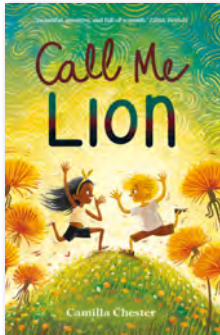
Farshore

**NC** PSHE

Danny doesn’t believe in fairies, so is astounded when he accidentally summons Stink, a feisty green fairy who causes havoc wherever she goes. Stink promises to return to Fairyland if Danny helps her earn enough money to buy some state-of-the-art Silver Bullet wings.

When Danny learns that his next-door neighbour has an infestation of foxes in her garden, it seems like the perfect opportunity for Stink to earn 100 fairy nuggets for doing a good deed. But will it work?

This hilarious chapter book, written as a series of diary entries, is illustrated throughout by expressive, comical artwork. A laugh-out-loud tale that will delight junior readers.



### Call Me Lion

Camilla Chester

Firefly

**NC** PSHE

Low on friends, ten-year-old Leo is passing the lonely summer practising the thing he loves most: dancing.

Then he meets his new next-door neighbour. Confident and chatty, Richa is everything he isn’t, but the two instantly become friends. The only challenge is that Leo has selective mutism, and is unable to speak around anyone outside his immediate family. Thankfully, Richa is completely unphased by this and is a keen dancer too, so the two are a perfect match. It also transpires that she is struggling with a secret of her own...

An enchanting tale of overcoming loneliness, standing up to bullies, overcoming fears and finding true friendship.



### Michael the Amazing Mind-Reading Sausage Dog

Terrie Chilvers,  
illustrated by  
Tim Budgen

Firefly

**NC** PSHE

Michael the sausage dog is extremely talented. No other dog in Snuffles-by-Sea can read minds.

Teaming up with his goofy new friend Stanley Big Dog, Michael enters the local talent show. But Michael is soon to learn the fickle ways of show business and – more importantly – the importance of friendship and teamwork. Can he and Stanley Big Dog make it to the top and get their own TV show?

Readers will love the cute illustrations by Tim Budgen and the large personality of Michael, who does not let his small size let him be ignored!



**Juniper Mae: Knight of Tykotech City**

Sarah Soh

Flying Eye Books

**NC Science: Electricity**

Juniper Mae lives in the ultra-high-tech Tykotech City, spending her days tinkering in her dad's repair shop and dreaming of one day being an inventor at Tykotech Tower.

However, Tykotech City is in trouble. The Core, the energy supply that runs the city, keeps cutting out and plunging everybody into power cuts.

Yet, when Juniper finds herself lost in the forest that borders the city, she realises that it could hold the secret to the Core's problem.

This sweet graphic novel is ideal for less confident readers – the simple text tells a fun and engaging adventure story about a brave girl fascinated by science and technology.



**A Tricky Kind of Magic**

Nigel Baines

Hodder Children's Books

**NC PSHE**

Cooper is brilliant at all kinds of magic tricks. He learned from the best: his dad, the Great Eduardo.

However, Cooper might have Dad's magic skills, but Dad died suddenly a few weeks ago and Cooper, Mum and little brother Fin are lost without him. So when a talking rabbit appears from Dad's top hat and says he knows a place where Cooper might see Dad again, he jumps at the chance.

This action-packed, black-and-white graphic novel is witty, original and dynamic with a unique take on grief and learning to find the magic in life after the loss of a loved one.



**Which Way to Anywhere**

Cressida Cowell

Hodder Children's Books

**NC PSHE**

K2 and his twin sister Izzabird O'Hero, Theo and Mabel Smith, and little Annipeck O'Hero-Smith are fairly ordinary children in a blended family living normal lives on Earth.

But unknown to them, the fantasy worlds that K2 draws are real, one of which being a terrifying alternate world where humans have been hunted to death. Swept away from their ordinary lives into a magical adventure, K2, Izzabird, Theo, Mabel and Annipeck must save their parents and stop the world from ending. And learn to get along...

This is a highly illustrated easy-to-read book, perfect for fans of Cowell's *How to Train Your Dragon* and *Wizards of Once* series.



**Wider than the Sea**

Serena Molloy,  
illustrated by  
George Ermos

Hodder Children's Books

**Science: Living things and their habitats**

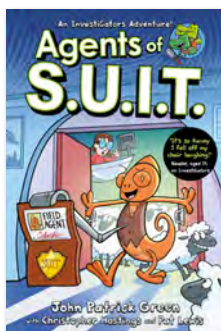
**NC PSHE**

Ró finds it tricky to read. The words dance about on the page, and she hates reading aloud in class.

But Ró doesn't want her parents to know about the parts of her that feel broken, because maybe it's her fault that they're so unhappy. Meanwhile, her friend The Bean has new, popular friends because he's discovered a talent for long jump.

With lots of white space on the page and some beautiful illustrations by George Ermos, this accessible book is written by a dyslexic author who knows the challenges that children can face when they don't have the right support.





### Agents of S.U.I.T.

John Patrick Green,  
Christopher Hastings  
and Pat Lewis

Macmillan Children's  
Books

**NC** Reading for pleasure

Cilantro the chameleon is a new member of S.U.I.T., or the Special Undercover Investigation Teams. Sent on a field mission to a corn field, Cilantro uncovers mysterious crop circles, a robotic scarecrow and some well-behaved sheep. Could aliens be behind the markings in the corn? Or does the constantly videoing conspiracy theorist know more than he's saying?

Action-packed and pun-filled, this is a brilliantly funny graphic novel that's accessible and hugely enjoyable. Fans of the *InvestiGators* series and of *Dog Man* will love this colourful and silly book with a message about not following the herd.



### How To Survive Anywhere

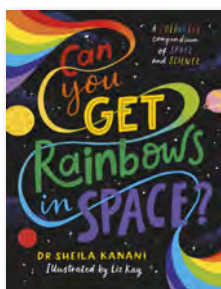
Ben Lerwill,  
illustrated by Daniel Long

Nosy Crow

**NC** Geography:  
Physical geography

Humans need four things to survive: food, water, shelter and warmth. Divided into 12 different terrains, from polar ice caps to rainforests and oceans to deserts, this incredibly practical book provides useful tips for survival in each environment. There are facts about the flora and fauna, plus true-life stories of indigenous people. And there are step-by-step instructions with clear illustrations to show essential skills, like how to build a shelter, find water, stay warm and even where to thump an attacking shark.

Lerwill suggests ways to help the various environments too, for instance not leaving litter. Fascinating, brilliantly illustrated and very useful.



### Can You Get Rainbows in Space?

Dr Sheila Kanani,  
illustrated by Liz Kay

Puffin

**NC** Science: Wide variety

Did you know that hippos have red sweat, blue eyes are actually clear with no pigment at all, and overripe bananas glow indigo under ultraviolet light?

The introduction explains what light is and how the human eye perceives it, and as well as the ROYGBIV colours. There are sections on black and white, fluorescence, infrared and ultraviolet, and an explanation of how some animals can see in the dark.

Vibrantly illustrated in full colour throughout, this non-fiction book is incredibly friendly and appealing. Readers of a variety of ages will find themselves dipping into it again and again.



### A Different Kind of Freedom: A Romani Story

Richard O'Neill

Scholastic

**NC** History: Local history

Lijah is a Romani boy, a Traveller. He, his dad and his older brother collect general scrap – what non-Traveller people call 'rag-and-bone'.

But when the census people come round, Lijah has to go to school, where he discovers football, and loves it, despite the fact that his dad disapproves. Then he learns about a famous Romani player. How can Lijah follow in his idol's footsteps if he has to hide it from his dad?

Written by a Romani author, this story expertly depicts the struggle between tradition and following your own passions, meaning readers will have a lot of empathy for Lijah and respect for Romani customs.



**The Little Match Girl Strikes Back**

Emma Carroll,  
illustrated by  
Lauren Child

Simon & Schuster

**NC** History: Beyond 1066

Twelve-year-old Bridie sells matches on the streets of Victorian London. Her mother works at the Bryant and May factory, which is making her ill. Then, one New Year's Eve, Bridie lights her three remaining matches with miraculous effects.

Some readers might know the fairy tale *The Little Match Girl*, which doesn't have a happy ending. However, this story is a reimagining of historical events where women working in the Bryant and May match factory went on strike because of terrible pay and conditions. In this story, Bridie is their inspiration.

It's a thrilling tale, with Bridie brought stunningly to life in Lauren Child's illustrations.



**Wildsmith: Into the Dark Forest**

Liz Flanagan,  
illustrated by  
Joe Todd-Stanton

UCLan Publishing

**NC** PSHE

When war threatens her city, Rowan and her mother flee to the Dark Forest to stay with her grandpa and his white wolf Arto. Exploring the Dark Forest, Rowan finds a baby dragon, but poachers have captured its mother. Soon she discovers that her grandpa is a wildsmith – a healer of magical animals. And he, Rowan and their friends must defeat the ruthless poachers once and for all.

This is the first in a series of engaging magical animal adventures. It has short chapters and charming illustrations. There is a conservation theme and there are friendship issues to wrestle with too.



**India, Incredible India**

Jasbinder Bilan,  
illustrated by  
Nina Chakrabarti

Walker Books

**NC** Geography: Human and physical features

Thara's nanijee has collected special objects from India throughout her life. Each week, Thara and Nanijee examine a different object and learn about India: its scorching deserts, sacred rivers and precious forests; its vibrant modern cities, ancient temples and snow-capped mountains.

The content covers familiar ground, such as the Taj Mahal, Diwali and Bollywood, as well as many less well-known gems, like the sculptures in Chandigarh Rock Garden, the islands of India and the Bhimbetka cave paintings.

Each fact is presented in a clear and concise manner, accompanied by bright, beautiful illustrations, while the discussion between Thara and her nanijee provides a friendly, accessible way into the information.



**Rex: Dinosaur in Disguise**

Elys Dolan

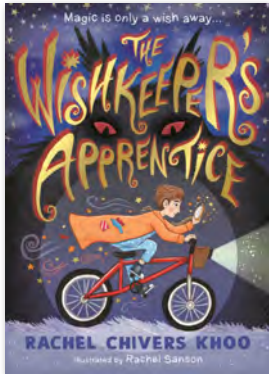
Walker Books

**NC** Reading for pleasure

For millions of years, Rex the dinosaur has been frozen in a block of ice. Yet, when the ice thaws, Rex discovers the modern world, which has changed beyond all recognition since the Cretaceous Period.

Luckily, Rex is spotted by Bigfoot the yeti, who helps him disguise himself. However, Rex's boisterous nature makes it difficult for him to remain inconspicuous and he attracts the attention of Bigfoot's neighbour, nine-year-old Sandra, who is determined to discover his true identity.

Lots of key messages are woven into this hilarious tale, such as making new friends, dealing with bullies and, above all, the importance of being yourself.



### The Wishkeeper's Apprentice

Rachel Chivers Khoo,  
illustrated by  
Rachel Sanson

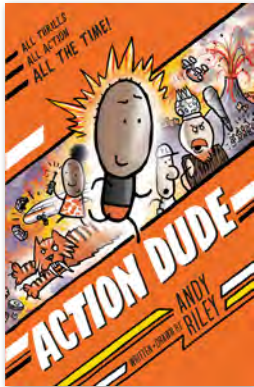
Walker Books



When Felix meets a man fishing coins out of the town's fountain, he discovers that whenever anyone in the town makes a wish, it is Rupus Beewinkle who makes it come true.

The wishkeeper is in dire need of an apprentice to help him, and as Felix is the only one to be able to see him, this becomes Felix's new job. But there's a terrifying wishsnatcher on the loose. Can one anxious boy and one disorganised wishkeeper defeat the wishsnatcher monster?

A delightfully charming and perfectly plotted adventure that packs a real emotional punch.



### Action Dude

Andy Riley

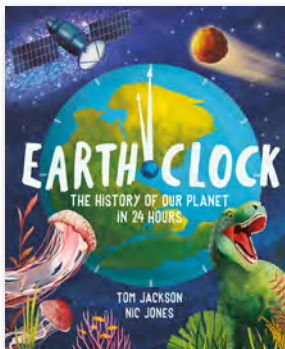
Welbeck



Action Dude – aka Charlie Munderdrew – may be a kid, but he loves danger and to be a hero. So when disaster strikes at 'Prehistoric Land', the Mayor calls on him for help.

The park's super-advanced robots have gone on a rampage! It's up to Action Dude to get past sabre-toothed tigers, woolly mammoths and angry robot Neanderthals, and rescue the park's visitors.

A comedic plotline and clever references to the action hero genre make this graphic novel a highly enjoyable read, with laughs galore and a theme of facing fears.



### Earth Clock

Tom Jackson,  
illustrated by Nic Jones

Welbeck



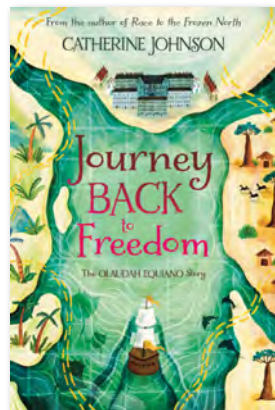
If the Earth's history was 24 hours long, modern humans would have only appeared in the final second. This is a treasure trove of information about the previous 4.4 billion years. Given how much detail on our planet's landscape, plants and animals is packed into it, it is impressively readable. Perfect for science, geology and nature fans, it also provides context for the biodiversity that has evolved to exist now.

The colour illustrations bring extinct species vividly back to life and there is a timeline and index at the back of this large-format book. Fascinating and thought-provoking.



Illustration © Erika Meza

# Age 10-11



## **Journey Back to Freedom: The Olaudah Equiano Story**

Catherine Johnson

Barrington Stoke

**NO** PSHE

**NO** HISTORY

Olaudah is just 11 years old when he is kidnapped and sold into slavery. Set in the 1700s, this is the true story of how Olaudah grew up, becoming an experienced sailor and living all over the world including England's multicultural capital London, where he eventually returned as a free man.

It's a really exciting tale of daring adventures and incredible spirit, of bravery, and of the unimaginable cruelty and injustice of slavery.

This book is the most fascinating introduction to finding out more about such an important figure from British history. It's also a riveting and exciting read.



## **Fablehouse**

E. L. Norry

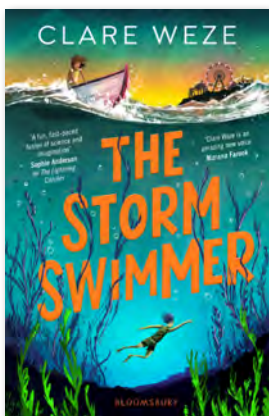
Bloomsbury

**NO** PSHE  
History

When Heather moves to Fablehouse children's home in the 1950s, she finds a safe haven and real friends for the first time in her life.

But as the children roam the ancient woodlands near to Fablehouse, they meet Palamedes, a Black Knight from way back in time: King Arthur's court.

At the same time, the other children and staff in the children's home start behaving oddly, as if they are possessed. It's up to Heather and her friends to defeat the powers of darkness and save Fablehouse and all who call it home. A wonderful book full of hope and magic.



## **The Storm Swimmer**

Clare Weze

Bloomsbury

**NO** Geography: Human  
and physical features

Ginika's mum and dad are in financial trouble and send Ginika off to live with her grandparents by the sea for the summer – and possibly even longer.

At first Ginika misses her parents and London so much, but then she meets Peri, a boy who lives in the sea and speaks a strange bubbly language. He's curious about Ginika's life on land, and a remarkable secret friendship begins.

But then the noise and lights of the human world start making Peri ill – how can Ginika save him? An exciting, unusual and truly imaginative adventure story.



### Where the River Takes Us

Lesley Parr

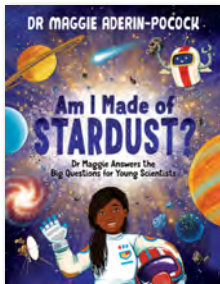
Bloomsbury

**NC** Geography:  
Human and  
physical features

Thirteen-year-old Jason and his older brother Richie have lived by themselves since their parents died. It's 1974 and families have been hit hard by power shortages and a three-day week. Fewer working hours means less money, and Jason discovers that his brother has fallen in with the wrong people to make ends meet.

When Jason hears about a cash reward for a photograph of the big cat supposedly prowling the valleys, he and his friends make a plan: find the cat, take a photo of it, and claim the reward. But can they find the beast before anyone else?

A fantastic exploration of friendship, grief and brotherly bonds.



### Am I Made of Stardust?

Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock,  
illustrated by  
Chelen Ecija

Buster Books

**NC** Science: Earth  
and space

Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock is a real-life space scientist with a passion for sharing the wonders of space and science. This excellent book presents Dr Maggie's answers to some brilliant questions, from 'Did a person drive a car on the moon?' to 'What do aliens look like?' and 'Does it really rain diamonds on Jupiter?'.

Organised into three sections – The Universe, Our Solar System and Humans in Space – readers can dip in and out to answer any specific questions they may have. There's also a useful glossary of space and science words at the end.

A great book for someone just getting started with space science.



### Moonflight

Gill Lewis,  
illustrated by  
Pippa Curnick

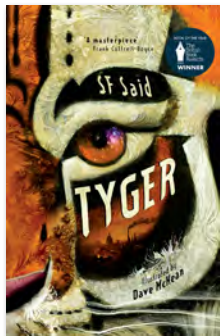
David Fickling Books

**NC** PSHE

Tilbury Twitch-Whiskers is the seventh-born rat of the seventh-born litter – and destined for adventure.

Every year, ratlings are tested in front of the legendary diamond, the Cursed Night. The rat who can open the intricately locked Gilded Cage will break the curse. Now, all Tilbury has to do is return the diamond to the Golden Rats in the City in the Clouds. But there is much adventure to be had – and danger to be faced – along the way.

This is a wonderfully involved story of adventure and daring feats set in a richly drawn world of rats. An absolute delight.



### Tyger

SF Said,  
illustrated  
by Dave McKean

David Fickling Books

**NC** PSHE

Adam lives in London, but not as we know it. In this alternate universe, slavery was never abolished, which has left the UK with rich overlords ruling the poor and people with origins anywhere apart from the UK, all of whom are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Then Adam meets an awe-inspiring talking tiger called Tyger and experiences mysterious powers. But Sir Mortimer Maldedye wants to capture Tyger for his horrible Menagerie. Can Adam and his friend Zadie harness the powers of their imagination and change the devastating course the world is set on?

A thought-provoking, profound, political and spiritual book.



**Kofi and the Rap Battle Summer**

Jeffrey Boakye

Faber and Faber



It's the 1990s, everyone at school loves music, but the likes of Smash Hits magazine never feature lyrics by TLC, Mary J. Blige or Snoop Dogg. Therefore, Kofi and his best friend Kelvin create Paper Jam, a fanzine of song lyrics.

But the venture doesn't make Kofi popular with the teachers, who find him using the school photocopier for Paper Jam. At the same time, Kofi's having issues with Leroy, a new friend who's mean to Kelvin. Where do Kofi's loyalties really lie? And is the money worth losing a friend over?

Packed with snappy dialogue and full of humorous scenes, this is a truly engaging read.



**Lizzie and Belle Mysteries: Drama and Danger**

J. T. Williams,  
illustrated by  
Simone Douglas

Farshore



Lizzie Sancho lives with her large family in their tea shop in the heart of busy London. Dido Belle is a lonely heiress living with her aunt and uncle in a mansion near Hampstead Heath. But when they catch each other's eyes at the theatre one night, each is delighted to see another Black girl her own age.

And when Lizzie's actor father is nearly killed by a falling chandelier, they both know it wasn't an accident. Can Lizzie and Belle navigate their new friendship and stop the would-be murderer?

Packed with atmosphere and charged with tension, this is a hugely enjoyable mystery set in the Georgian era.



**When I See Blue**

Lily Bailey

Orion Children's Books



Twelve-year-old Ben is being bullied. His OCD rules dictate his every action, trying to prevent him from living life like neurotypical people do.

Whether it's avoiding certain colours or doing things repetitively and in multiples of four, it's exhausting trying to abide by a secret rule book – not to mention trying to hide it from others. But if Ben doesn't listen to his brain-bully, surely something dreadful will happen?

Fortunately, with the help of others, Ben can begin to find the strength he needs to start taking back control. A convincing own-voice story, with a light touch and plenty of Dr Who references.



**Cosima Unfortunate Steals a Star**

Laura Noakes,  
illustrated by  
Flavia Sorrentino

HarperCollins



Over the years, 12-year-old Cos has been joined at the Home for Unfortunate Girls by many other 'unfortunates' – disabled children to be hidden away from Victorian society.

When a mysterious visitor wants to adopt all 20 girls for his dubious 'Empire Exhibition', Cos and her friends set out to expose the villain. Along the way, Cos will find clues to help solve another mystery – the identity of her parents.

Cos is a delightful protagonist – determined, flawed and charismatic. The author (like her heroine) has hypermobility spectrum disorder, and effectively blends in authentic detail within the ingenious storytelling.

Funny but also thought-provoking, it's a mystery adventure with a difference.



### **Greenwild: The World Behind the Door**

Pari Thomson,  
illustrated by Elisa  
Paganelli

Macmillan Children's  
Books

**NC Science: Animals and  
habitats**

Daisy and her mother travel the world together, chasing stories for Daisy's mother's job as a journalist.

When Daisy's mother goes missing while working in the Amazon rainforest, Daisy escapes from boarding school and discovers Greenwild, an extraordinary world where botanists use green magic to look after plants and save those facing extinction.

As Daisy makes friends in Greenwild, she discovers that something sinister is going on – and it could affect her world, too. It's time to have a thrilling adventure to save her mother and both worlds!

Exquisitely balancing compelling detail with thrilling action, this has a strong eco message at its heart.



### **Joyful, Joyful: Stories Celebrating Black Voices**

Curated by Dapo  
Adeola with a foreword  
by Patrice Lawrence,  
various illustrators

Two Hoots

**NC PSHE**

This joyous collection of stories, poems and illustrations celebrating Black voices has universal appeal, being a snapshot of a child living their life, whether it's in urban London, a Trinidadian town or a Ugandan farm.

The authors and illustrators are a mixture of established names as well as some new and exciting voices. The result is a fantastic variety of voice, style and atmosphere.

This is a truly beautiful book. All the illustrations are vibrantly colourful, and the overall feeling is of warmth. Finally, the reader is invited to write their own story and there are a couple of blank pages provided.



### **One Home**

Hiba Noor Khan,  
illustrated by Rachael  
Dean

Macmillan Children's  
Books

**NC Science: Living things  
and their habitats**

This is a passionate call to action to save our planet. Eighteen young activists from across the globe, many from indigenous communities, have made an unquestionable difference. Each person's story has facts about their local flora and fauna, and then a 'challenge'. This is achievable and eco-friendly, such as creating bird feeders, growing vegetables in pots and buying from Fairtrade companies.

The large-format book is stunningly illustrated in colour, showcasing the biodiversity in the world. It's hard to talk about climate change optimistically, and tough facts are included, but the message that one person can make a difference is inspiring.



### **War of the Wind**

Victoria Williamson

Neem Tree Press

**NC Geography:  
Human geography**

**NC PSHE**

Fourteen-year-old Max is struggling. Two years ago, an accident left him deaf and it's tough trying to adjust.

When members of the local community start discussing a controversial new wind turbine project coming to their remote Scottish island, Max is too distracted by his own problems to take any interest. But then some odd things start happening. Could the sinister goings-on be connected to the spooky looking turbines?

A page-turning adventure with a great cast of characters, powerful food for thought around disability language and preconceptions, plus a timely environmental theme.



**Wild**

**Ele Fountain**

Pushkin Children's Books

**NC Geography:**  
Compare countries

When his dad dies, teenager Jack is devastated. Struggling to manage his grief, Jack spirals out of control.

When Mum suggests they go overseas for a break, Jack is livid when he realises that she has dragged him along on a work trip to South America, journeying into the rainforest in search of an indigenous tribe who are at risk from illegal loggers in the region. Yet, when Mum disappears, Jack is terrified that he has lost her too.

Jack's emotions are powerfully portrayed in this multi-layered tale, which is beautifully written and full of heart. The novel also highlights the devastating impact of deforestation.



**Speak Up!**

**Rebecca Burgess**

Quill Tree Books

**NC PSHE**

Mia has a huge secret – she's Elle-Q online, viral music star and inspiration to many teenagers.

However, in real life, Mia doesn't have many friends and is bullied because she's autistic. Luckily, her best friend Charlie gets her, and they collaborate on Elle-Q's music.

When there's a local talent show, Charlie is desperate to enter. They stand a good chance of winning. But is Mia ready to show the world who she really is?

Written and illustrated in colour by an autistic creator, this graphic novel is accessible and deeply heart-warming. There's a sub-plot about friendship and fitting in, which will resonate with any reader.



**Glitter Boy**

**Ian Eagleton**

Scholastic

**NC PSHE**

James has always loved dancing with his best friend Harriet and singing along to Mariah Carey's songs with his nan.

Then a boy starts bullying him, using the word 'gay' as an insult. James doesn't know if he's gay, but it seems like everyone thinks it's an awful thing to be.

This is an excellent book for showing the impact of under-the-radar bullying and how it can escalate to include lots of class members. However, it's also a joyful story – Nan is a supportive presence, as are James's friends Harriet and Joel. A great book to help with conversations about empathy, bullying and about what being LGBTQ+ means.



**Olly Brown, God of Hamsters**

**Bethany Walker,**  
illustrated by Jack Noel

Scholastic

**NC PSHE**

Olly Brown adores hamsters but is flabbergasted when a horde of them appear in his bedroom after crash-landing their spaceship in his neighbour's garden pond. The small, furry rodents, led by chief hamster Tibbles, are super intelligent, can follow written instructions and, curiously, seem to worship Olly like a god. When he discovers that the hamsters – and the Earth – are in grave danger, Olly must overcome his intense anxiety and find his inner strength to save the day.

Full of humour, this hugely entertaining sci-fi adventure demonstrates the importance of friendship and having the courage to face your fears.





### 21% Monster

P. J. Canning

Usborne



When 12-year-old Darren destroys his school with his bare hands, he is arrested and sent to a high-security juvenile prison. He is 'rescued' by Marek, who explains that they were both created through Project Helix, a series of experiments conducted by secret organisation XSP.

Darren and Marek must combine their superhuman skills and work as a team if they are to stay one step ahead of the ruthless XSP agents, who will not stop until the boys are eliminated.

With extraordinary characters and some awesome futuristic technology, this gripping tale is sure to appeal to fans of Alex Rider and Percy Jackson.



### My Name Is Sunshine Simpson

G. M. Linton

Usborne



Sunshine Simpson is an ordinary ten-year-old girl. And that's the problem. She didn't even win the skipping challenge this year. Her beloved grandad says that life is an adventure to live and that no one should steal her joy. But everyone loves him – he's so chatty and funny. What is special about Sunshine?

A charming and ultimately uplifting story about family, community and self-belief. Told with humour and heart, Sunshine's story of working out who she is, while dealing with school and family, is very relatable. This is an assured debut, dealing with grief, friendship dynamics and individuality in a readable, friendly way.



### Nic Blake and the Remarkables: The Manifestor Prophecy

Angie Thomas

Walker Books



Nic Blake is a Manifestor – Black people who have the Gift within them and who can see vampires, werewolves and all kinds of Remarkables. Her Unremarkable best friend JP lives next door – but he is remarkable in his enthusiasm for the fantasy books of TJ Retro and for hanging out with Nic.

Yet, when they meet their favourite author, everything Nic thought she knew is turned upside down, and the friends must battle to save Nic's dad.

An absorbing, fast-paced fantasy adventure full of humour and heart, with plenty of action and inventive moments to keep readers racing through the pages. Nic's narrative voice is spot on, and JP is a brilliantly funny character.



### You Are History

Greg Jenner,  
illustrated by  
Jenny Taylor

Walker Books

**NO** History: Various

History isn't only found in fancy museums, nor does it have to be about ancient royalty, historical figures or inventors. History is also about us, and the very things we see and use every day!

Jenner tells the fascinating stories behind all manner of mundane things – including soap, cereal, the light bulb, ball games, telephones, sofas and pyjamas, explored with a combination of jaw-dropping facts, eye-watering jokes and exciting real-life stories from across the world and centuries.

A book that puts young readers at the heart of history as a way of keeping them engaged and entertained.



### The Last Whale

Chris Vick

Zephyr

**NO** Science:  
Living things  
and their habitats

Abi is spending the summer holidays on a remote Norwegian island with her family. Using the revolutionary AI unit she has 'borrowed' from tech giants NewTek, she can collect vital data about the whales that may hold the key to saving the planet. Until she almost kills her sister.

With action that spans several decades, this ambitious eco-thriller is not quite an accurate vision of the future but explores one possible scenario for planet Earth if climate change and global warming are not tackled effectively – and soon.

Action-packed, moving and thought-provoking, this book will take your breath away.



### Deadlock

Simon Fox

Nosy Crow

**NO** PSHE

Archie Blake can pick locks. Since his mum died, he and his police officer dad have had races to see who can break into a safe the fastest.

But now his dad has been arrested for stealing a diamond necklace and Archie's on the run. Archie is drawn into investigating a criminal gang in a desperate race to find the evidence that his dad has been framed. But could there be more to the mystery than Archie realises?

A fast-paced and relentlessly action-packed thriller, this book is full of dangerous stunts and real peril, but also explores the choices we make and who to trust.



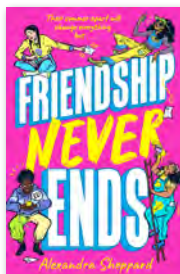
# What's next?

Age  
11+

Looking for even more books that advanced readers will love?  
Here are some suggestions!



**Clicks: How to Be Your Best Self Online**  
Natasha Devon



**Friendship Never Ends**  
Alexandra Sheppard



**Ravencave**  
Marcus Sedgwick



**Ghostlight**  
Kenneth Oppel



**Glow up, Lara Bloom**  
Dee Benson



**Bite Risk**  
S.J. Wills



**Steady for This**  
Nathanael Lessor



**Wild Song**  
Candy Gourlay



**Dogs of the Deadlands**  
Anthony McGowan



**The Haunting of Tyrese Walker**  
J.P. Rose



**Needle**  
Patrice Lawrence



**Rebel Skies**  
Ann Sei Lin



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Our research shows the long-term benefits of families reading together. **Check out the poster** that came with this guide which explains these benefits to families.

**Download our video** for families about the benefits of reading with children, and please share it in your newsletter.



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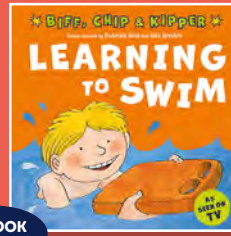


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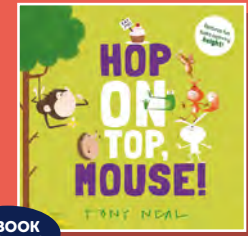


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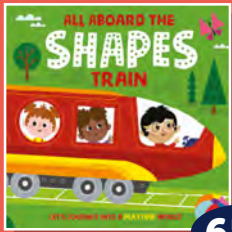


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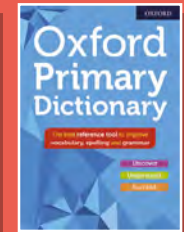
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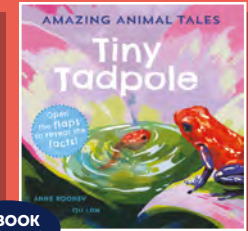
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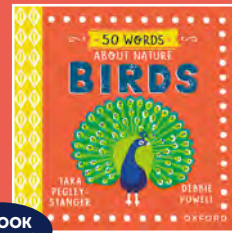


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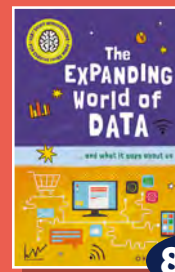


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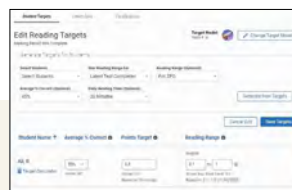
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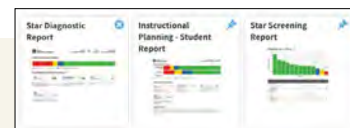
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