



# BOOK CLUBS

IN SCHOOLS

## Book List 2023-24

This is a guide to the books on our list for teachers and librarians who are leading the book club programme. It contains some spoilers, so there other handouts for sharing with your students to help them choose a book (to be used alongside this list).

We have split the guide into books suitable for primary and secondary (a number of books appear in both as they work for Y6 and Y7). We have grouped them broadly by reading age and given guidance about the type of reader we think the books will be suitable for.

For each book there is the cover image, publisher's blurb, number of pages, approximate reading level/age (RA) and the key themes in the book. Where there is something that may not be obvious from the above information which we think might influence your choice or how it is introduced to your students (e.g. death of a parent, mental health issues, contains swearwords etc.) we have included this.

Our aim is to include a diverse range of authors, genres and formats and pick books that work well for a book club style discussion. We always welcome suggestions for new books to include on our list - so if you have any favourites you would like to see, let us know.

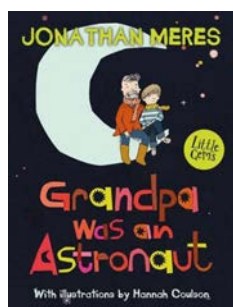


## Primary School Y4-6

### Short, accessible books for developing readers

Aimed at younger readers or readers who are below expected reading levels for their age. These are short books, which are easy to read but engaging and age appropriate. Many of these books are either the start of a series or written by authors whose other books readers could be encouraged to go on to read.

These two books are read together and are covered in a single guide



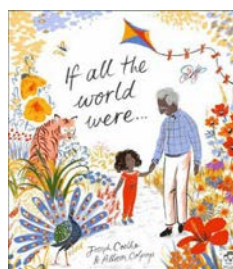
#### **Grandpa was an Astronaut, Jonathan Meres, illus. Hannah Coulson**

Sherman loves the moon and he loves his grandpa even more - he has actually been to the moon! Grandpa was an astronaut and has a chunk of moon rock on his mantelpiece. Playing space games with Grandpa is one of Sherman's most favourite things so he's thrilled to hear that's exactly what a visit to Grandpa will involve.

family • grief • space • adventure

85 pages

RA - 5-6



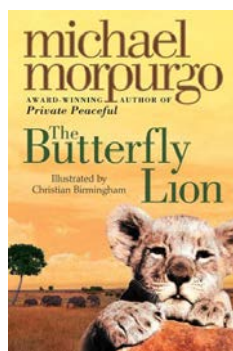
#### **If all the world were... Joseph Coelho and Allison Colpoys**

A moving, lyrical picture book about a young girl's love for her grandad and how she copes when he dies. A beautifully illustrated, powerful and ultimately uplifting text. Works alongside Grandpa was an Astronaut

grief • family • memories

32 pages

RA - 5-6



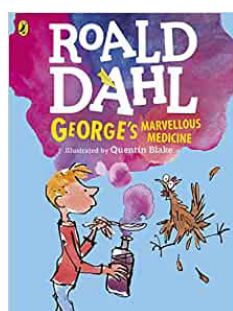
#### **The Butterfly Lion, Michael Morpurgo, illus. Christian Birmingham**

When Bertie rescues an orphaned white lion cub from the African veld, they are inseparable until Bertie is sent to boarding school far away in England and the lion is sold to a circus. Bertie swears that one day they will see one another again, but it is the butterfly lion which ensures that their friendship will never be forgotten.

family • grief • WW1 • adventure • boarding school • nature

128 pages

RA - 7-8



#### **George's Marvellous Medicine, Roald Dahl illus. Quentin Blake**

Young George mixes a medicine to make his nasty grandmother more likeable, and once she drinks it she grows to immense proportions. George's father wants the formula to breed a race of super-size livestock, but George can't duplicate the recipe. His fourth try is a potion that shrinks the drinker to nothing - and greedy Grandma drinks it with expected results.

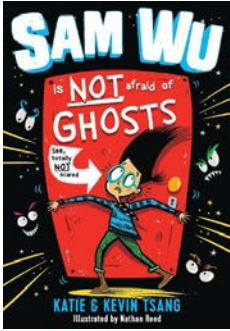
magic • family • humour

160 pages

RA - 7-8



## Primary School Y4-6

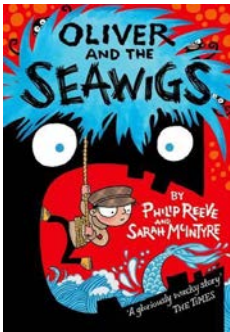


**Sam Wu is NOT Afraid of Ghosts, Kate and Kevin Tsang illus. Nathan Reed**

Sam Wu is NOT a scaredy-cat (except he is). When a trip to the Space Museum goes terrifyingly wrong, Sam begins a mission to prove to the school bully, and all of his friends, that he is a fearless space adventurer. A truly laugh-out-loud, voice-led and madcap story of ghost hunting, snakes and mischievous pet cats called Butterbutt.

school • family • space • humour • bullying • pets

208 pages  
RA - 8-9



**Oliver and the Seawigs, Philip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre**

Along with his new friends, a grumpy old albatross, a short-sighted mermaid, and a friendly island called Cliff, Oliver goes off in search of his missing parents. But before he can put his rescue plan into action there's the evil Stacey de Lacey and an army of greasy, green sea monkeys to contend with. A lively, gorgeously illustrated story.

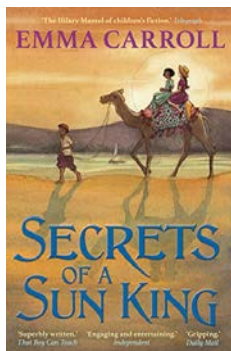
adventure • family • humour • sea creatures

193 pages  
RA - 8-9

## Primary School Y4-6

### Longer accessible books for more confident developing readers

Aimed at readers who are at or slightly below age expected reading levels and/or building confidence to take on longer books. Many of these books are either the start of a series or written by authors whose other books readers could be encouraged to go on to read. There is an overlap between these books and the Y7 books on these lists.



#### Secrets of a Sun King, Emma Carroll

When Lilian Kaye finds a parcel on her grandad's doorstep, she is shocked to see who sent it: a famous Egyptologist, found dead that very morning! The mysterious package holds the key to a story about a king whose tomb archaeologists are desperately hunting for. Lil and her friends must embark on an incredible journey - to return the package to its resting place, to protect those they love, and to break the deadly pharaoh's curse . . .

adventure • family • Egyptology • mystery • friendship • adoption

282 pages  
RA - 9-10

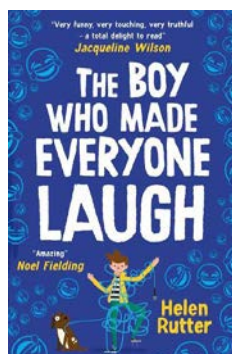


#### Running on Empty, S.E. Durrant

AJ's grandfather has always been the one to keep his unusual family together, so when he dies things start to unravel at the edges. AJ is worried about his parents but they don't really seem to notice. In order to deal with his grief and to keep his anxiety at bay, AJ does what he and his grandfather did best: running. Round and round the Olympic Park, aiming for the cross country trials. Running to escape, AJ only seems to be heading ever closer to disaster.

running • family • Olympics • grief • disability • young carer • social services

226 pages  
RA - 9-10

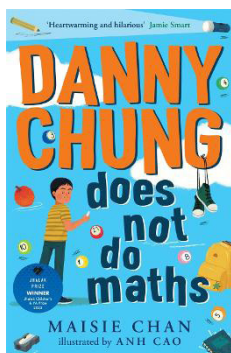


#### The Boy who Made Everyone Laugh, Helen Rutter

Billy Plimpton is an eleven-year-old boy with a big dream. He wants to be a stand-up comedian when he grows up: delivering pinpoint punch-lines and having audiences hang on his every hilarious word. A tough career for anyone, but surely impossible for Billy, who has a stammer. How will he find his voice, if his voice won't let him speak?

school • family • humour • bullying • disability • friendship

295 pages  
RA - 9-10



#### Danny Chung does not do Maths, Maisie Chan, illus. Anh Cao

Eleven-year-old Danny Chung loves drawing more than anything—certainly more than maths, which, according to his dad and everyone else, is what he is 'supposed' to be good at. He also loves having his own room where he can draw in peace, so his life is turned upside down when a surprise that he's been promised turns out to be his little, wrinkly ex-maths-champion grandmother from China. What's worse, Nai Nai has to share his room, AND she takes the top bunk!

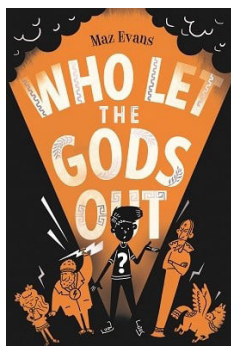
school • family • humour • maths • stereotypes • art • friendships • bullying

275 pages  
RA - 9-10

## Primary School Y5-6

### Fast paced, engaging books to encourage secure readers to read more

Aimed at readers who are reading at age expected levels, but may not have developed the stamina yet to take on a longer book or don't choose to read. These are fast paced books that offer lots of prompts for discussion and engagement. Some are part of a series and all are by established authors that offer other books which book club members can read next.

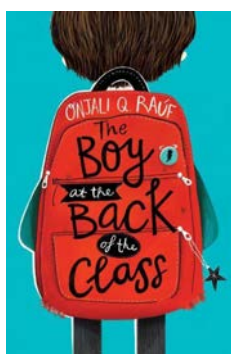


#### Who Let the Gods Out, Maz Evans

When Elliot wishes upon a star, he doesn't expect a constellation to crash into a dungheap on his family farm. The star is Virgo. She thinks she's perfect. Elliot doesn't. And together they release Thanatos, evil Daemon of Death ... epic fail. They need the King of the Gods and his noble steed. Instead, they get a chubby Zeus and his high horse Pegasus. Are the Gods really ready to save the world? And is the world really ready for the Gods?

adventure • humour • Greek Gods • family • friendship • dementia

367 pages  
RA - 9-10

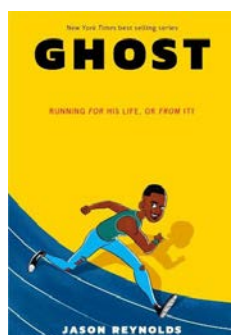


#### The Boy at the Back of the Class, Onjali Q. Rauf

When a new boy joins their class, a group of children try to befriend him. They soon learn that Ahmet is a refugee and has been separated from his family. None of the grown-ups seem to be able to help him, so the friends come up with a daring plan, embarking on an extraordinary adventure. Told with heart and humour, this is a child's perspective on the refugee crisis, highlighting the importance of friendship and kindness in a world that doesn't always make sense.

refugees • adventure • friendship • family • separation from family

296 pages  
RA - 9-10



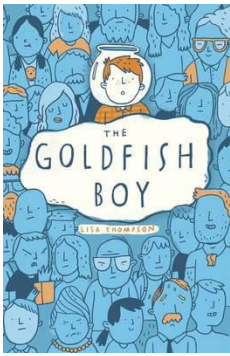
#### Ghost, Jason Reynolds

Running. That's all Ghost (real name Castle Cranshaw) has ever known. But Ghost has been running for the wrong reasons - until he meets Coach, an ex-Olympic Medallist who sees something in Ghost: crazy natural talent. If Ghost can stay on track, literally and figuratively, he could be the best sprinter in the city. Can Ghost harness his raw talent for speed, or will his past finally catch up to him?

school • family • running • Olympics • friendship • domestic violence

208 pages  
RA - 10

## Primary School Y5-6

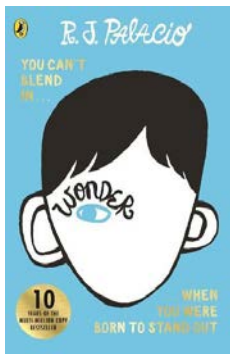


### The Goldfish Boy, Lisa Thompson

Twelve-year-old Matthew is trapped in his bedroom by crippling OCD, spending most of his time staring out of his window as the inhabitants of Chestnut Close go about their business. That is, until the day he is the last person to see his next door neighbour's toddler, Teddy, before he goes missing. Now Matthew must turn detective and unravel the mystery of Teddy's disappearance - with a little help from a surprising and brilliant cast of supporting characters.

mental health • family • mystery • grief • friendships • death of a sibling

393 pages  
RA - 10-11



### Wonder, RJ Palacio

Auggie wants to be an ordinary ten-year-old. He does ordinary things - eating ice cream, playing on his Xbox. He feels ordinary - inside. But ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. Ordinary kids aren't stared at wherever they go. Born with a severe facial abnormality, Auggie has been home-schooled by his parents his whole life. Now, for the first time, he's being sent to a real school - and he's dreading it. All he wants is to be accepted - but can he convince his new classmates that he's just like them, underneath it all?

bullying • family • school • grief • disability • death of a pet

313 pages  
RA - 10-11



### First Light, Rebecca Stead

Peter can't wait to join his parents on an expedition to the ice caps of Greenland to study global warming. But while he's there, he begins to suspect there might be another reason for this trip other than scientific research. And in another world, there is Thea, who lives with her family under the ice, and is desperate to see what's above it. When Thea and Peter meet, two worlds will collide, and a host of secrets will be released.

climate change • adventure • friendship • family • mystery

328 pages  
RA - 10-11



### When the Sky Falls, Phil Earle

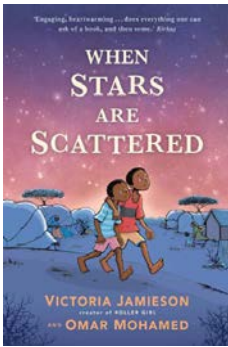
1941. War is raging. And one angry boy has been sent to the city, where bombers rule the skies. There, Joseph will live with Mrs F, a gruff woman with no fondness for children. Her only loves are the rundown zoo she owns and its mighty silverback gorilla, Adonis. As the weeks pass, bonds deepen and secrets are revealed, but if the bombers set Adonis rampaging free, will either of them be able to end the life of the one thing they truly love?

WW2 • family • grief • friendship • separation • corporal punishment

304 pages  
RA - 10-11



## Primary School Y5-6

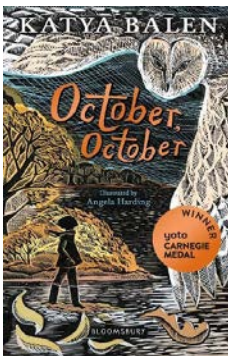


### Where the Stars are Scattered, Omar Mohamed and Victoria Jamieson

A heart-wrenching true story about life in a Kenyan refugee camp that will restore your faith in real-life happy endings. Omar and his brother Hassan, two Somali boys, have spent a long time in the Dadaab refugee camp. Separated from their mother, they are looked after by a friendly stranger. Life in the camp isn't always easy. The hunger is constant . . . but there's football to look forward to, and now there's a chance Omar will get to go to school . . .

refugees • family • football • school • graphic novel

264 pages  
RA - 10-11



### October, October, Katya Balen, illus. Angela Harding

October and her dad live in the woods. They know the trees and the rocks and the lake and stars like best friends. They live in the woods and they are wild. And that's the way it is. Until the year October turns eleven. That's the year October rescues a baby owl. It's the year Dad falls out of the biggest tree in their woods. The year the woman who calls herself October's mother comes back. The year everything changes.

separation • family • school • injury • nature • mudlarking

287 pages  
RA - 10-11



### Dread Wood, Jennifer Killick

It's basically the worst school detention ever. When classmates Hallie, Angelo, Gustav and Naira are forced to come to school on a SATURDAY, they think things can't get much worse. But they're wrong. Things are about to get seriously scary. What has dragged their teacher underground? Why does the creepy caretaker keep humming the tune to Itsy Bitsy Spider? And what horrors lurk in the shadows. . .? Cut off from help and in danger each time they touch the ground, their only hope is to work together.

creepy • adventure • friendship • school • mystery • humour

314 pages  
RA - 10-11

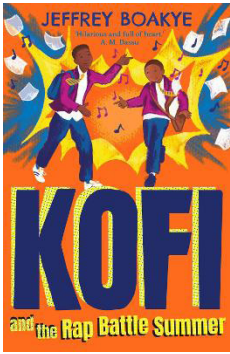


### Like a Charm, Elle McNicoll

Edinburgh is a city filled with magical creatures. No one can see them... except Ramya Knox. As she is pulled into her family's world of secrets and spells, Ramya sets out to discover the truth about the Hidden Folk with only three words of warning from her grandfather: Beware the Sirens. Plunged into an adventure that will change everything, Ramya is about to learn that there is more to her powers than she ever imagined.

witches • family • magic • adventure • friendship • neurodivergence

320 pages  
RA - 10-11



### **Kofi and the Rap Battle Summer, Jeffery Boakye**

Kofi is used to stuff going wrong, he's usually in detention or about to be. But when he finds out his best friend Kelvin has a photographic memory, he comes up with a genius money-making scheme. The whole school is obsessed with music, no one can ever make out the words, so the boys hit the jackpot selling a new fanzine full of song lyrics: PAPER JAM. Kofi struggles to find the balance between what he wants to do and what he should do. In his rush to make money he makes some bad decisions which involve all his family.

music • school • family • rap • friendship • police • racism

245 pages

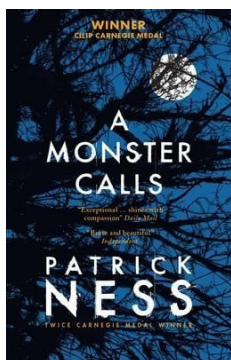
RA - 10-11



## Primary School Y6

### More challenging books for secure and confident readers

Aimed at more mature readers who are reading at age expected levels or above and are ready to move on to more challenging books. These books offer lots of prompts for discussion, engagement and different perspectives and writing styles. The aim is to encourage readers to read something they may not have picked up otherwise. Some of the themes and language may be more challenging and more suitable for older readers.



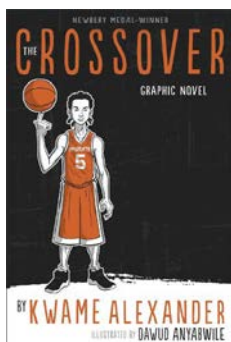
#### A Monster Calls, Patrick Ness and Siobhan Dowd

Conor has the same dream every night, ever since his mother first fell ill, ever since she started the treatments that don't quite seem to be working. But tonight is different. Tonight, when he wakes, there's a visitor at his window. It's ancient, elemental, a force of nature. And it wants the most dangerous thing of all from Conor. It wants the truth. Patrick Ness takes the final idea of the late, award-winning writer Siobhan Dowd and weaves an extraordinary and heart-breaking tale of mischief, healing and above all, the courage it takes to survive.

cancer • family • school • mental health • nature • death of a parent

237 pages

RA - 11+



#### The Crossover, Kwame Alexander, illus. Dawud Anyabwile

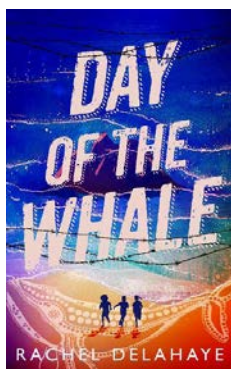
12-year-old Josh and his twin Jordan have basketball in their blood. They're kings of the court, star players for their school team. Their father used to be a champion player and they each want nothing more than to follow in his footsteps. Both on and off the court, there is conflict and hardship which will test Josh's bond with his brother. In this heartfelt novel written in verse, the boys find that life doesn't come with a play-book and it's not all about winning.

Written in verse - the book guide is based on the graphic novel edition

basketball • family • friendship • school • growing up • death of a parent

218 pages

RA - 11+



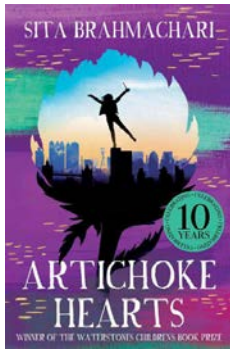
#### The Day of the Whale, Rachel Delahaye

'Follow the big blue'. That was the last thing Cam's father said to him. Cam follows Big Blue - everybody does on the island of Cetacea. Their lives take place within his rules, delivered to them by enigmatic whale-talker, Byron Vos. Byron was once a marine scientist but is now organising an epic clean-up operation to revive the ocean after centuries of human greed and neglect. And yet Cam wonders if there is a more complex truth. A truth that may be connected to his father's disappearance. Cam's quest to understand Big Blue leads him to new friends and shared adventures - but the truth, when he finds it, is more dangerous than ever he could have imagined.

whales • family • friendship • power • science • death of a parent

292 pages

RA - 11+



### **Artichoke Hearts, Sita Brahmachari**

Twelve-year-old Mira comes from a chaotic, artistic and outspoken family where it's not always easy to be heard. As her beloved Nana Josie's health declines, Mira begins to discover the secrets of those around her, and also starts to keep some of her own. She is drawn to mysterious Jide, a boy who is clearly hiding a troubled past and has grown hardened layers - like those of an artichoke - around his heart. As Mira is experiencing grief for the first time, she is also discovering the wondrous and often mystical world around her.

secrets • family • friendship • grief • growing up • death of a grandparent

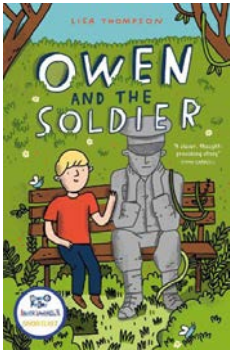
320 pages

RA - 11+

## Secondary School KS3

### Short, accessible books for developing readers

Aimed at readers who are below expected reading levels for their age. These are short books, which are easy to read but engaging and age appropriate. Many of these books are either the start of a series or written by authors whose other books readers could be encouraged to go on to read.



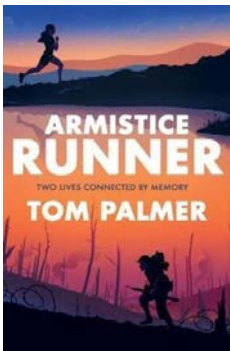
#### Owen and the Soldier, Lisa Thompson

A crumbling stone soldier sits on a bench in the park. Only Owen understands how important he is. At home, Owen and his mum are struggling and there's nobody he can talk to. Hidden away in the park, Owen feels free to be himself. When the war-weary soldier is listening, his worries slip away. But nobody else cares about the soldier, and the town council want to tear him down. Owen is the only one who can save him but can he find the courage to speak up before it's too late?

war • family • school • grief • mental health • activism • death of a parent

87 pages

RA - 8



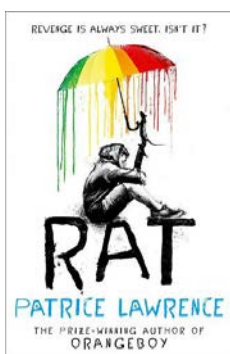
#### Armistice Runner, Tom Palmer

Lily has lots of worries. She's struggling to compete in her fell-running races and, worse, she's losing her gran to Alzheimer's. But then she discovers her great-great-grandfather's diaries from the First World War. Could his incredible story of bravery help her reconnect with her gran and even give her the inspiration she needs to push through and win?

WW1 • family • grief • mental health • running • dementia

194 pages

RA - 9



#### Rat, Patrice Lawrence

When his mum is sent back to prison, Al knows exactly who's to blame. Mr Brayker from downstairs has been making trouble for Al's mum ever since they moved in. Al is determined to get his revenge with a plan that involves the only two creatures he can rely on: his pet rats, Venom and Vulture. But things don't turn out exactly as he'd imagined ...

prison • family • community • parent in prison

136 pages

RA - 9



#### Running on Empty

AJ's grandfather has always been the one to keep his unusual family together, so when he dies things start to unravel at the edges. AJ is worried about his parents but they don't really seem to notice. In order to deal with his grief and to keep his anxiety at bay, AJ does what he and his grandfather did best: running. Round and round the Olympic Park, aiming for the cross country trials. Running to escape, AJ only seems to be heading ever closer to disaster.

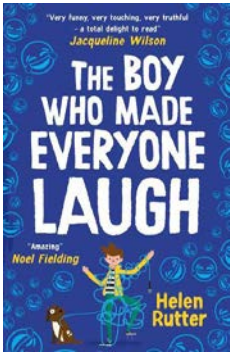
running • family • Olympics • grief • disability • young carer • social services

226 pages

RA - 9-10



## Secondary School KS3



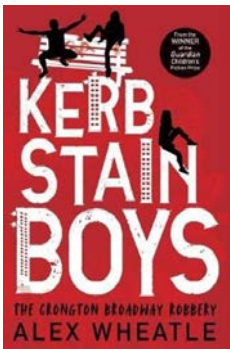
### The Boy who Made Everyone Laugh, Helen Rutter

Billy Plimpton is an eleven-year-old boy with a big dream. He wants to be a stand-up comedian when he grows up: delivering pinpoint punch-lines and having audiences hang on his every hilarious word. A tough career for anyone, but surely impossible for Billy, who has a stammer. How will he find his voice, if his voice won't let him speak?

school • family • humour • bullying • disability • friendship

295 pages  
RA - 9-10

The following books include themes that make them more suitable for 12+ readers



### Kerb Stain Boys, Alex Wheatle

Life on the Crongton estate can be rough for Briggy. Dad's lost his job, Mum's working so hard to make ends meet, and big brother Kingsley just wants out. With all of the shouting and arguing it's difficult not to get lost in the mix. So when his best mate Terror and coolest chick in the year Caldonia, cook up a plan to make a quick buck, Briggy hopes this time it might be his chance to shine. Robbing the Post Office ... what could go wrong? A brilliantly real and funny novella of life on one of London's toughest (fictional) estates.

Some themes more suitable for 13+

school • family • relationships • crime • humour • gangs • drugs

145 pages  
RA - 9



### The Harder they Fall, Bali Rai

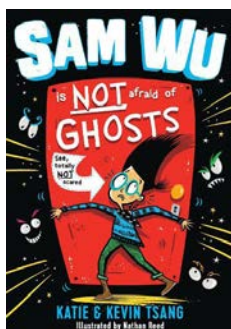
Cal wants to help new boy Jacob, but Jacob doesn't want anyone's help. Most of all, he doesn't want anyone to know that his whole family needs help – and they're getting it from the local food bank. But Cal and his mum are volunteers there, and so Jacob's secret is out. Cal wouldn't dream of betraying him, but there are others at school who can't pass up the chance to pick on the kid who's different.

school • family • relationships • food banks • bullying

105 pages  
RA - 9

## Secondary School KS3

The following books have a younger interest level, but may also be suitable for developing KS3 readers

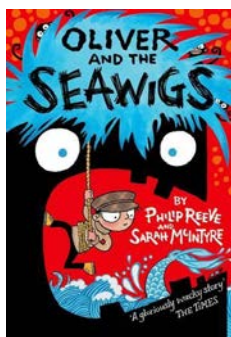


### Sam Wu is NOT Afraid of Ghosts, Kate and Kevin Tsang illus. Nathan Reed

Sam Wu is NOT a scaredy-cat (except he is). When a trip to the Space Museum goes terrifyingly wrong, Sam begins a mission to prove to the school bully, and all of his friends, that he is a fearless space adventurer. A truly laugh-out-loud, voice-led and madcap story of ghost hunting, snakes and mischievous pet cats called Butterbutt.

school • family • space • humour • bullying • pets

208 pages  
RA - 8-9

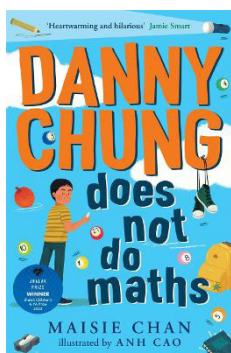


### Oliver and the Seawigs, Philip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre

Along with his new friends, a grumpy old albatross, a short-sighted mermaid, and a friendly island called Cliff, Oliver goes off in search of his missing parents. But before he can put his rescue plan into action there's the evil Stacey de Lacey and an army of greasy, green sea monkeys to contend with. A lively, gorgeously illustrated story.

adventure • family • humour • sea creatures

193 pages  
RA - 8-9

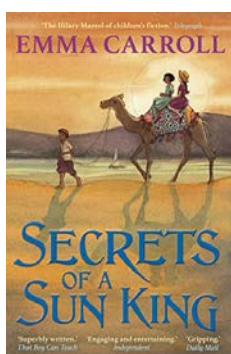


### Danny Chung does not do Maths, Maisie Chan, illus. Anh Cao

Eleven-year-old Danny Chung loves drawing more than anything—certainly more than maths, which, according to his dad and everyone else, is what he is 'supposed' to be good at. He also loves having his own room where he can draw in peace, so his life is turned upside down when a surprise that he's been promised turns out to be his little, wrinkly ex-maths-champion grandmother from China. What's worse, Nai Nai has to share his room, AND she takes the top bunk!

school • family • humour • maths • stereotypes • art • friendships • bullying

275 pages  
RA - 9-10



### Secrets of a Sun King, Emma Carroll

When Lilian Kaye finds a parcel on her grandad's doorstep, she is shocked to see who sent it: a famous Egyptologist, found dead that very morning! The mysterious package holds the key to a story about a king whose tomb archaeologists are desperately hunting for. Lil and her friends must embark on an incredible journey - to return the package to its resting place, to protect those they love, and to break the deadly pharaoh's curse . . .

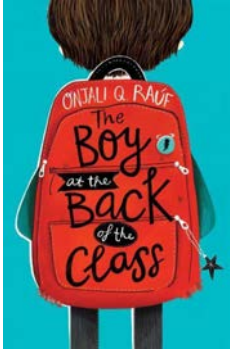
adventure • family • Egyptology • mystery • friendship • adoption

282 pages  
RA - 9-10

## Secondary School KS3

### Longer accessible books for more confident developing readers

Aimed at readers who are slightly below age expected reading levels and/or building confidence to take on longer books. Many of these books are either the start of a series or written by authors whose other books readers could be encouraged to go on to read. There is an overlap between these books and the Y6 books on these lists.

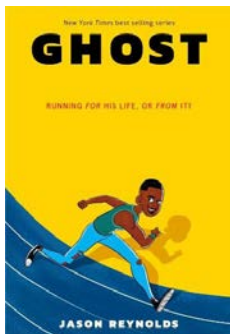


#### **The Boy at the Back of the Class, Onjali Q. Rauf**

When a new boy joins their class, a group of children try to befriend him. They soon learn that Ahmet is a refugee and has been separated from his family. None of the grown-ups seem to be able to help him, so the friends come up with a daring plan, embarking on an extraordinary adventure. Told with heart and humour, this is a child's perspective on the refugee crisis, highlighting the importance of friendship and kindness in a world that doesn't always make sense.

refugees • adventure • friendship • family • separation from family

296 pages  
RA - 9-10

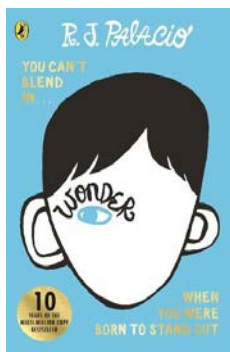


#### **Ghost, Jason Reynolds**

Running. That's all Ghost (real name Castle Cranshaw) has ever known. But Ghost has been running for the wrong reasons - until he meets Coach, an ex-Olympic Medallist who sees something in Ghost: crazy natural talent. If Ghost can stay on track, literally and figuratively, he could be the best sprinter in the city. Can Ghost harness his raw talent for speed, or will his past finally catch up to him?

school • family • running • Olympics • friendship • domestic violence

208 pages  
RA - 10



#### **Wonder, RJ Palacio**

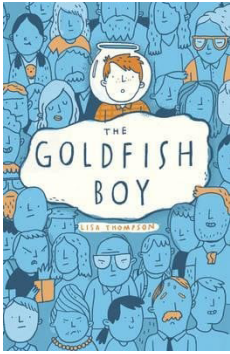
Auggie wants to be an ordinary ten-year-old. He does ordinary things - eating ice cream, playing on his Xbox. He feels ordinary - inside. But ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. Ordinary kids aren't stared at wherever they go. Born with a severe facial abnormality, Auggie has been home-schooled by his parents his whole life. Now, for the first time, he's being sent to a real school - and he's dreading it. All he wants is to be accepted - but can he convince his new classmates that he's just like them, underneath it all?

bullying • family • school • grief • disability • death of a pet

316 pages  
RA - 10-11



## Secondary School KS3



### **The Goldfish Boy, Lisa Thompson**

Twelve-year-old Matthew is trapped in his bedroom by crippling OCD, spending most of his time staring out of his window as the inhabitants of Chestnut Close go about their business. That is, until the day he is the last person to see his next door neighbour's toddler, Teddy, before he goes missing. Now Matthew must turn detective and unravel the mystery of Teddy's disappearance – with a little help from a surprising and brilliant cast of supporting characters.

mental health • family • mystery • grief • friendships • death of a sibling

393 pages  
RA - 10-11



### **First Light, Rebecca Stead**

Peter can't wait to join his parents on an expedition to the ice caps of Greenland to study global warming. But while he's there, he begins to suspect there might be another reason for this trip other than scientific research. And in another world, there is Thea, who lives with her family under the ice, and is desperate to see what's above it. When Thea and Peter meet, two worlds will collide, and a host of secrets will be released.

climate change • adventure • friendship • family • mystery

328 pages  
RA - 10-11

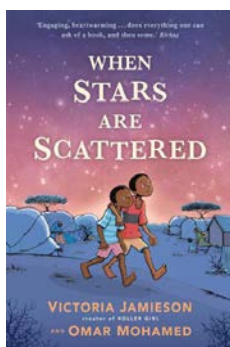


### **When the Sky Falls, Phil Earle**

1941. War is raging. And one angry boy has been sent to the city, where bombers rule the skies. There, Joseph will live with Mrs F, a gruff woman with no fondness for children. Her only loves are the rundown zoo she owns and its mighty silverback gorilla, Adonis. As the weeks pass, bonds deepen and secrets are revealed, but if the bombers set Adonis rampaging free, will either of them be able to end the life of the one thing they truly love?

WW2 • family • grief • corporal punishment • friendship • separation

304 pages  
RA - 10-11



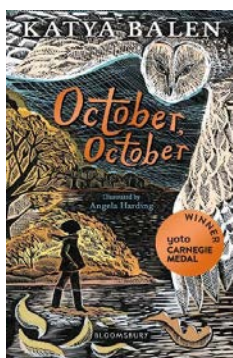
### **Where the Stars are Scattered, Omar Mohamed and Victoria Jamieson**

A heart-wrenching true story about life in a Kenyan refugee camp that will restore your faith in real-life happy endings. Omar and his brother Hassan, two Somali boys, have spent a long time in the Dadaab refugee camp. Separated from their mother, they are looked after by a friendly stranger. Life in the camp isn't always easy. The hunger is constant . . . but there's football to look forward to, and now there's a chance Omar will get to go to school . . .

refugees • family • football • school • graphic novel

264 pages  
RA - 10-11

## Secondary School KS3



### October, October, Katya Balen, illus. Angela Harding

October and her dad live in the woods. They know the trees and the rocks and the lake and stars like best friends. They live in the woods and they are wild. And that's the way it is. Until the year October turns eleven. That's the year October rescues a baby owl. It's the year Dad falls out of the biggest tree in their woods. The year the woman who calls herself October's mother comes back. The year everything changes.

separation • family • school • injury • nature • mudlarking

287 pages  
RA - 10-11



### Dread Wood, Jennifer Killick

It's basically the worst school detention ever. When classmates Hallie, Angelo, Gustav and Naira are forced to come to school on a SATURDAY, they think things can't get much worse. But they're wrong. Things are about to get seriously scary. What has dragged their teacher underground? Why does the creepy caretaker keep humming the tune to Itsy Bitsy Spider? And what horrors lurk in the shadows. . .? Cut off from help and in danger each time they touch the ground, their only hope is to work together.

creepy • adventure • friendship • school • mystery • humour

314 pages  
RA - 10-11

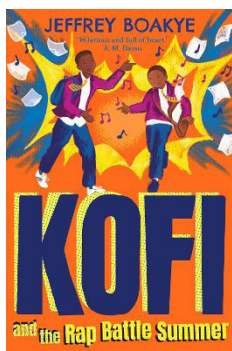


### Like a Charm, Elle McNicoll

Edinburgh is a city filled with magical creatures. No one can see them... except Ramya Knox. As she is pulled into her family's world of secrets and spells, Ramya sets out to discover the truth about the Hidden Folk with only three words of warning from her grandfather: Beware the Sirens. Plunged into an adventure that will change everything, Ramya is about to learn that there is more to her powers than she ever imagined.

witches • family • magic • adventure • friendship • neurodivergence

320 pages  
RA - 10-11



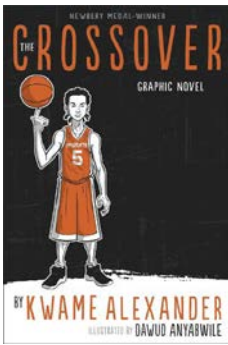
### Kofi and the Rap Battle Summer, Jeffery Boakye

Kofi is used to stuff going wrong, he's usually in detention or about to be. But when he finds out his best friend Kelvin has a photographic memory, he comes up with a genius money-making scheme. The whole school is obsessed with music, no one can ever make out the words, so the boys hit the jackpot selling a new fanzine full of song lyrics: PAPER JAM. Kofi struggles to find the balance between what he wants to do and what he should do. In his rush to make money he makes some bad decisions which involve all his family.

music • school • family • rap • friendship • police • racism

245 pages  
RA - 10-11

## Secondary School KS3



### **The Crossover, Kwame Alexander, illus. Dawud Anyabwile**

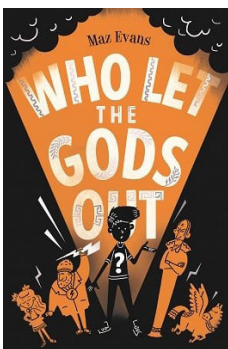
12-year-old Josh and his twin Jordan have basketball in their blood. They're kings of the court, star players for their school team. Their father used to be a champion player and they each want nothing more than to follow in his footsteps. Both on and off the court, there is conflict and hardship which will test Josh's bond with his brother. In this heartfelt novel in verse, the boys find that life doesn't come with a play-book and it's not all about winning.

Written in verse - the book guide is based on the graphic novel edition

**basketball • family • friendship • school • growing up • death of a parent**

218 pages

RA - 10-11



### **Who Let the Gods Out, Maz Evans**

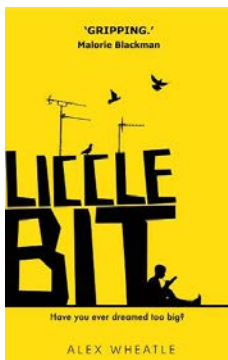
When Elliot wishes upon a star, he doesn't expect a constellation to crash into a dungheap on his family farm. The star is Virgo. She thinks she's perfect. Elliot doesn't. And together they release Thanatos, evil Daemon of Death ... epic fail. They need the King of the Gods and his noble steed. Instead, they get a chubby Zeus and his high horse Pegasus. Are the Gods really ready to save the world? And is the world really ready for the Gods?

**adventure • humour • Greek Gods • family • friendship • dementia**

367 pages

RA - 9-10

The following book includes themes that make it more suitable for 12+ readers



### **Liddle Bit, Alex Wheatle**

What's worse than hiding a secret? Liddle Bit's about to find out... Venetia King is the hottest girl at school. Too bad Lemar is the second shortest guy in his year. Everyone calls him Liddle Bit, and his two best friends, McKay and Jonah, never tire of telling him he has no chance with girls. Things aren't much better at home. His mum is permanently hassled, his sister a frustrated single mum and his dad moved out years ago. Liddle Bit wishes he could do something - anything! - to make life better. A new phone would be a start...

**family • friendship • school • growing up • gangs • crime • drugs**

281 pages

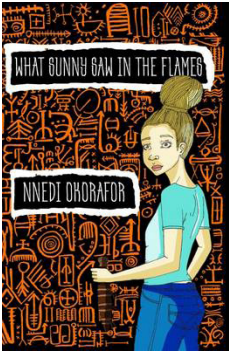
RA - 11+



## Secondary School KS3-4

### Fast paced, engaging books to encourage secure readers to read more

Aimed at readers who are reading at or above age expected levels, but may not have developed the stamina yet to take on a longer book, don't choose to read or need encouragement to be more adventurous in their reading choices. These are fast paced books that offer lots of prompts for discussion and engagement. They include themes suitable for more experienced/mature readers. Some are part of a series and all are by established authors that offer other books book club members can read next.



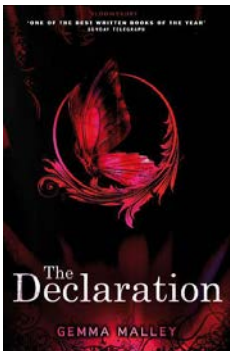
#### What Sunny Saw in the Flames, Nnedi Okorafor

Born in New York, but living in Aba, Nigeria, thirteen-year-old Sunny is understandably a little lost. She is albino. Her eyes are so sensitive to the sun that she has to wait until evening to play football. Apart from being good at the beautiful game, she has a special gift: she can see into the future. At school, she soon becomes part of a special quartet with unique powers. Together, Sunny, Orlu, Chichi and Sasha explore this exciting realm of strange creatures and dark secrets. The good news is that in this world, your worst defect is actually your greatest asset. But there's a catch. Someone is kidnapping children and maiming or killing them.

magic • school • family • mystery • friendship • kidnapping

315 pages

RA - 11+



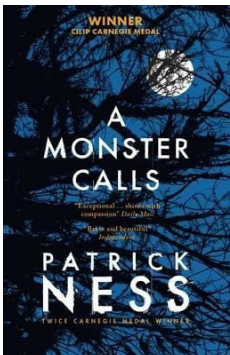
#### The Declaration, Gemma Malley

Sixteen-year-old Anna should not have been born. It is the year 2140 and people can live for ever. No one wants another mouth to feed, so she lives in a Surplus Hall, where unwanted children go to learn valuable lessons . . . at least she wasn't put down at birth. One day, a new inmate arrives. Anna's life is thrown into chaos. He says things about her parents and the Outside that couldn't possibly be true . . . Or could they?

dystopia • school • family • friendship • power

295 pages

RA - 11+



#### A Monster Calls, Patrick Ness and Siobhan Dowd

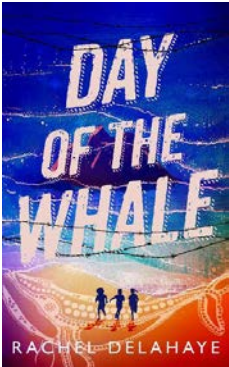
Conor has the same dream every night, ever since his mother first fell ill, ever since she started the treatments that don't quite seem to be working. But tonight is different. Tonight, when he wakes, there's a visitor at his window. It's ancient, elemental, a force of nature. And it wants the most dangerous thing of all from Conor. It wants the truth. Patrick Ness takes the final idea of the late, award-winning writer Siobhan Dowd and weaves an extraordinary and heart-breaking tale of mischief, healing and above all, the courage it takes to survive.

cancer • family • school • mental health • nature • death of a parent

237 pages

RA - 11+

## Secondary School KS3-4

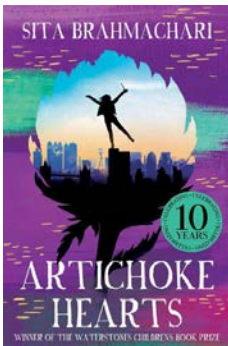


### The Day of the Whale, Rachel Delahaye

'Follow the big blue'. That was the last thing Cam's father said to him. Cam follows Big Blue - everybody does on the island of Cetacea. Their lives take place within his rules, delivered to them by enigmatic whale-talker, Byron Vos. Byron was once a marine scientist but is now organising an epic clean-up operation to revive the ocean after centuries of human greed and neglect. And yet Cam wonders if there is a more complex truth. A truth that may be connected to his father's disappearance. Cam's quest to understand Big Blue leads him to new friends and shared adventures - but the truth, when he finds it, is more dangerous than ever he could have imagined.

whales • family • friendship • power • science • death of a parent

292 pages  
RA - 11+



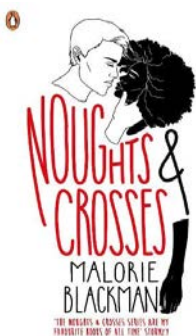
### Artichoke Hearts, Sita Brahmachari

Twelve-year-old Mira comes from a chaotic, artistic and outspoken family where it's not always easy to be heard. As her beloved Nana Josie's health declines, Mira begins to discover the secrets of those around her, and also starts to keep some of her own. She is drawn to mysterious Jide, a boy who is clearly hiding a troubled past and has grown hardened layers - like those of an artichoke - around his heart. As Mira is experiencing grief for the first time, she is also discovering the wondrous and often mystical world around her.

secrets • family • friendship • grief • growing up • death of a grandparent

320 pages  
RA - 11+

The following books includes themes that make them more suitable for 13+ readers



### Noughts and Crosses, Malorie Blackman

Sephy is a Cross: she lives a life of privilege and power. But she's lonely, and burns with injustice at the world she sees around her. Callum is a nought: he's considered to be less than nothing - a blanker, there to serve Crosses - but he dreams of a better life. They've been friends since they were children, and they both know that's as far as it can ever go. Noughts and Crosses are fated to be bitter enemies - love is out of the question. Then - in spite of a world that is fiercely against them - these star-crossed lovers choose each other.

race • school • family • power • friendship • relationships • racism

437 pages  
RA - 11+

## Secondary School KS3-4



### Wranglestone, Darren Charlton

In a post-apocalyptic America, a community survives in a national park, surrounded by water that keeps the Dead at bay. But when winter comes, there's nothing to stop them from crossing the ice. Then homebody Peter puts the camp in danger by naively allowing a stranger to come ashore and he's forced to leave the community of Wranglestone. Now he must help rancher Cooper, the boy he's always watched from afar, herd the Dead from their shores before the lake freezes over. But as love blossoms, a dark discovery reveals the sanctuary's secret past. One that forces the pair to question everything they've ever known.

zombies • family • relationships • growing up • death of a parent • LGBTQI+

371 pages

RA - 11+



### The Eternal Return of Clara Hart, Louise Finch

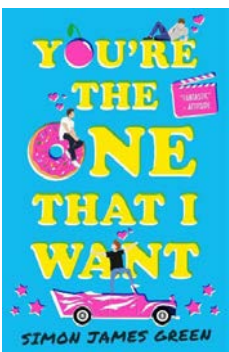
Spence and Anthony have been friends for years, but it's only when he witnesses a classmate die in what looks like a tragic accident at a house party that a flicker in the fabric of time helps Spence 'see' Anthony for the first time. When Spence wakes up to the same day again and sees Clara, the girl who died, alive and well, it's clear he's been granted a second chance. And a third. And a fourth... Caught in a loop, condemned to experience the same 24 hours over and over, Spence tries to prevent the terrible events of the party. To break the spell he has to re-evaluate everything he previously took for granted and find the courage to call out his own and others complicity in events that marked the life and death of Clara Hart.

Contains numerous instances of swearing.

family • friendship • school • choices • drugs • sexual assault • death of a parent

260 pages

RA - 11+



### You're the One that I Want, Simon James Green

Freddie is unremarkable - too unremarkable. He doesn't stand out in any way, and in fact teachers and fellow students keep forgetting who he is. Even his mum thinks he's a disappointment, and spends almost all her time at work, producing a TV show. After a particularly awful night, Freddie decides to follow a new, proactive philosophy designed to transform his social and romantic life: saying 'yes' to every opportunity. It works! Freddie finds himself auditioning for the school musical (Grease), actually going to parties, and flirting with hot new boy Zach! He's becoming a whole new Freddie - maybe even one that his mum might be proud of. But the path to love is never smooth, and sometimes getting things very wrong is an important part of figuring out what - and who - you really want.

Contains some swearing.

drama • family • relationships • school • growing up • friendships • LGBTQI+

384 pages

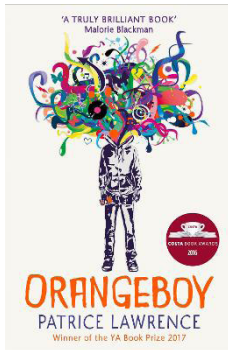
RA - 11+



## Secondary School KS3-4

### More challenging books for secure and confident readers

Aimed at more mature readers who are reading at age expected levels or above and are ready to move on to more challenging books. These books tend to be longer and have more complex language. These are books offer lots of prompts for discussion, engagement and different perspectives and writing styles. The aim is to encourage readers to read something they may not have picked up otherwise. Some of the themes and language may be more challenging and more suitable for older readers (13+).



#### Orange Boy, Patrice Lawrence

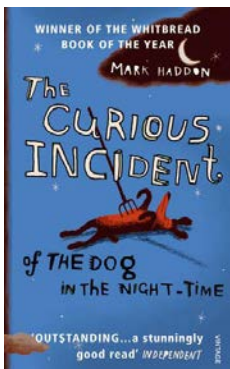
Sixteen-year-old Marlon has made his mum a promise - he'll never follow his big brother, Andre, down the wrong path. So far, it's been easy, but when a date ends in tragedy, Marlon finds himself hunted. They're after the mysterious Mr Orange, and they're going to use Marlon to get to him. Marlon's out of choices - can he become the person he never wanted to be, to protect everyone he loves?

Contains some swearing.

family • relationships • mystery • coming of age • friendship • crime • drugs

432 pages

RA - 12+



#### The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon

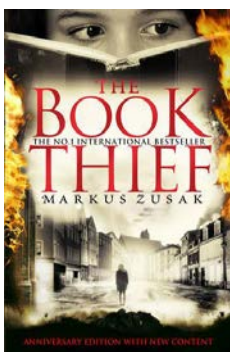
This is Christopher's murder mystery story. There are also no lies in this story because Christopher can't tell lies. Christopher does not like strangers or the colours yellow or brown or being touched. On the other hand, he knows all the countries in the world and their capital cities and every prime number up to 7507. When Christopher decides to find out who killed the neighbour's dog, his mystery story becomes more complicated than he could have ever predicted.

Contains some swearing.

mystery • school • family • crime • relationships • police • neurodivergence

268 pages

RA - 12+



#### The Book Thief, Markus Zusak

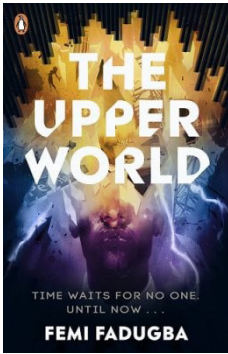
1939. Nazi Germany. The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier. Liesel, a nine-year-old girl, is living with a foster family on Himmel Street. Her parents have been taken away to a concentration camp. Liesel steals books. This is her story and the story of the inhabitants of her street when the bombs begin to fall.

Contains some swearing.

WW2 • holocaust • family • books • death • friendship • violence • fascism

584 pages

RA - 12+



### **The Upper World, Femi Fadugba**

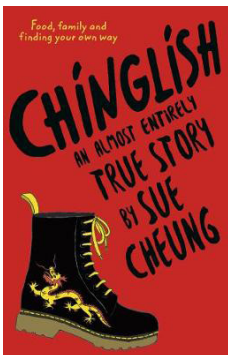
After suffering a knock to the head, 15-year-old Esso experiences a chilling vision: that night he will witness the violent deaths of everyone he knows. He writes off the out-of-body experience as a strange dream - until a series of frightening coincidences prove that the vision is just hours away from coming true. There is only one person who can help him rewrite the future. The trouble is, she hasn't been born yet . . .

**Contains numerous instances of swearing.**

physics • time travel • family • football • mystery • gangs • crime • social care

338 pages

RA - 12+



### **Chinglish - An Almost Entirely True Story, Sue Cheung**

Jo Kwan is a teenager growing up in 1980s Coventry with her annoying little sister, too-cool older brother, a series of very unlucky pets and utterly bonkers parents. But unlike the other kids at her new school or her posh cousins, Jo lives above her parents' Chinese takeaway. And things can be tough - whether it's unruly customers or the snotty popular girls who bully Jo for being different. Even when she does find a BFF who actually likes Jo for herself, she still has to contend with her erratic dad's behaviour. All Jo dreams of is breaking free and forging a career as an artist.

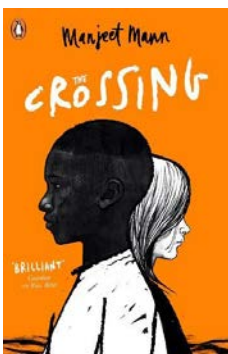
Told in a journal format.

**Contains some swearing.**

family • school • art • friendship • bullying • racism • domestic violence

376 pages

RA - 12+



### **The Crossing, Manjeet Mann**

Natalie's world is falling apart. She's just lost her mum and her brother marches the streets of Dover full of hate and anger. Swimming is her only refuge. Sammy has fled his home and family in Eritrea for the chance of a new life in Europe. Every step he takes on his journey is a step into an unknown and unwelcoming future. A twist of fate brings them together and gives them both hope. But is hope enough to mend a broken world?

Written in verse.

**Contains some swearing.**

war • family • refugees • friendship • death of a parent • bullying • racism

310 pages

RA - 12+