

Rewarding reads for all the family

## Small Mouse Big City

Written and illustrated by Simon Prescott  
Little Tiger Press £10.99 ISBN: 978-1845067595



This picture book reminds me of some of those great American picture books – matt paper, soft, muted colours and with a

wonderful sense of movement and space. It is the simple story of a country mouse visiting (and being excited by) the delights of the city and friendship of town mouse. But in the end the draw of home proves too strong and country mouse retires to the pleasures and peace of the green fields.

*Enid Stephenson*



## Michael

Written by Tony Bradman  
Illustrated by Michael Foreman  
Andersen Press £5.99  
ISBN: 978-1842709115

Michael is ... different. He is just not like other children and is forever getting into trouble. He is always late, usually scruffy and doesn't listen at all. His teachers despair... and we meet them in the wonderfully zany and detailed illustrations – hilarious individuals who can't quite get to grips with Michael! He isn't being deliberately different – he likes numbers and art and science but not quite like they do in schools. In the end Michael proves to them that being different may be rather special after all, and in a most unexpected way. This can be enjoyed by every and any one who likes a story and is a lesson to us all.

*Louise Stothard*

## The Great Nursery Rhyme Disaster

Written by David Conway  
Illustrated by Melanie Williamson  
Hodder £10.99 ISBN: 978-0340945070



In this topsy-turvy nursery rhyme world, Little Miss Muffett is bored of her repetitive role, and sick of being intimidated by spiders, so decides to break out of her own story to see what is

happening elsewhere. Bumping into all sorts of well-known characters along the way – including the Grand Old Duke of York, Jack and Jill and the Queen of Hearts – Miss Muffett upsets plots all over the place, causing much chaos in the process. It's an amusingly anarchic take on a familiar format, with matchingly madcap illustrations. Satisfyingly silly, inquisitive young minds will no doubt identify with Miss Muffett's need to explore the unknown, though protective parents may not necessarily approve of her rebellious tendencies.

*Rowan Stanfield*

## Bob's Best Ever Friend

Written and illustrated by Simon Bartram  
Templar £9.99 ISBN: 978-1840113730



Bob, the Man in the Moon, has proved an endearing character and we feel for him when we find out how lonely he is. The strong colours paint a detailed picture of life in Bob's world and the pages reward close inspection. Bob, however, is

oblivious to the activities and the strange characters around him. He is looking for a friend and, when Barry the dog shoots out of a crater, he fulfils all the requirements.

*Pat Thomson*

## Friendly Monsters

Written and illustrated by Marcus Pfister  
North South Books £10.99 ISBN: 978-0735822061



A most ingeniously compelling and beautifully illustrated book. By using flaps and 3D pop-ups the monsters emerge unexpectedly out of nowhere. In what appears to be a pleasant landscape – a wardrobe of clothes or a cellar

full of rubbish – each scenario cleverly transforms into something very different. Beware, but the readers are in complete control, so just enjoy the surprises as the monsters move towards you!

*Mike Simkin*

## I Could be a Superhero!



Written by Chris Hornsey  
Illustrated by Gwyn Perkins  
Little Hare £10.99  
ISBN: 978-1921272646

Wondering what he would like to do when he grows

up, a dog swaps places with a child to find out. Murphy the dog imagines all sorts – a tennis player, a chef, a teacher, a magician, even a super hero. At each proposal his little girl owner makes her own supportive and often wry observations including 'you already disappear like magic before bath time.' For Murphy the possibilities are endless, but the story is brought to a satisfying conclusion for dog and readers. The simple cartoon illustrations add much amusement and interest, as well as warmth, to this gentle tale.

*Benjamin Scott*

## What Shall I Make?

Written by Nandini Nayar  
Illustrated by Proiti Roy  
Frances Lincoln £10.99 ISBN: 978-1845079789

The author of this enchanting picture book lives in Hyderabad in India and her illustrator teaches art in Bengal. Together they have produced an



affectionate story involving Neeraj, a small boy who has been given some dough to play with. Making a model of a snake and then a mouse is all

very well, but when a hastily put together cat starts growing and then turning into a lion, it is time to roll the dough back into a ball. Pressed into a circle, it is now ready to turn into a delicious chapatti after being cooked on a tava. Ending with a user-friendly recipe for making your own chapattis, this picture book has something for everyone.

*Nicholas Tucker*

## Little Louis Takes Off

Written and illustrated by Toby Morrison  
Simon and Schuster £5.99 ISBN: 978-1416904359



Little Louis has a problem. He can't fly, and that's a pretty big problem considering he's a bird. Although it's not mentioned, Louis looks like a swallow and his family

are about to fly south for their holiday in the sun. The little bird is booked onto a jumbo jet and gets there well ahead of his relatives. Alone in a strange land he befriends a flamingo, who takes him to a hotel rooftop, where he almost loses his return ticket when it flies over the edge. In his efforts to retrieve the ticket he throws himself over the wall and learns to fly in the process. With his new found confidence he makes friends with a penguin and when his family arrive they are delighted that Louis has finally mastered the art of flying. But what's he going to do with that return ticket? This is a charming and cleverly thought out picture story which shows young children that they can accomplish anything once they overcome their initial fear.

*Richard Monte*

## The Dragon and the Gruesome Twosome

Written and illustrated by M.P. Robertson  
Frances Lincoln £11.99 ISBN: 978-1845077631



An enthralling, magical adventure begins when George's mother's favourite chicken takes to roosting in a tree and becomes so flustered that she lays an egg which falls on his head. It's a sure sign of

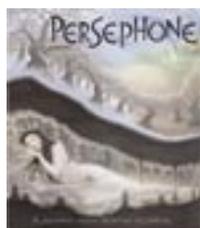
unrest so George summons his very own dragon and off they go to investigate. They discover a kingdom besieged by a Gruesome Twosome – Gobbledegook and Balderdash – terrifying twin giants who

have ravaged and eaten all but *'the rats and stinkin' turnips'* so that the poor and starving quiver in fear of their lives. The king is so desperate he's offering a reward to anyone who can rid the kingdom of them. Exciting, violent and altogether a gripping story with outstanding artwork and an amazingly simple solution – all thanks to brave, yet modest, George and his trusty dragon.

*Gill Roberts*

## Persephone

Written by Sally Pomme Clayton  
Illustrated by Virginia Lee  
Frances Lincoln £11.99 ISBN: 978-1845075330



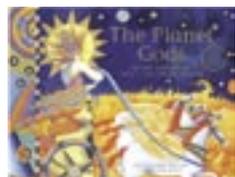
The story of Persephone demands to be told with dramatic words and pictures and you have that here. The words are direct and strong and read well aloud. The colours are intense and the figures commanding. The

earth-black horses of the Underworld contrast with the fresh new colours of Persephone in Spring. The illustrations show movement and power. This story is all about the earth and the artist does justice to the sea and the sky and to the land, both above and below. An excellent version of the myth.

*Pat Thomson*

## The Planet Gods

Written by Jacqueline Mitton  
Illustrated by Christina Balit  
Frances Lincoln £6.99 ISBN: 978-1845079239



This welcome reissue of a title first published as *Kingdom of the Sun*, is the perfect way to get young minds interested in the

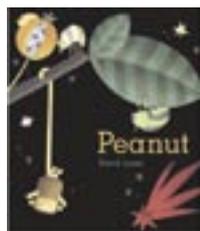
fascinating study of 'the sky at night'. Dr Jacqueline Mitton, a professional astronomer herself, blends 'dry science' with classical mythology to produce a book which is both informative and entertaining. The sun, moon and each of the planets speak for themselves, taking on the personalities and traits of the Greek and Roman gods, and Christina Balit's gold-rimmed paintings capture the glorious colours of the solar system as it dances like a firework display, through the darkness of space. Updated with a short piece on the 'dwarf planets', including Pluto stripped of its status as the ninth planet in 2006, this is a wonderful picture book and a great resource for youngsters' science.

*Richard Monte*

## Peanut

Written and illustrated by David Lucas  
Walker Books £10.99 ISBN: 978-1406310283

A world of wondrous beginnings opens in this story about overcoming fear and the gaining of



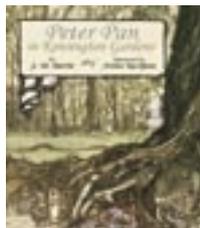
confidence. A magical flower grows one deep, dark night to reveal, by dawn, a tiny creature within its petals. This is Peanut, a tiny monkey who knows nothing of the world. As the day unfolds, he experiences all sorts of strange and frightening happenings.

The petals of the flower drop away, he's threatened by an assortment of fierce-looking animals and heavy raindrops disturb the sky. Frightened, he watches the day explode in a fiery sunset, followed by darkness. It is then he bumps into Beetle – and his adventures take on a new turn. Dramatic images, bursting with contrasting colours and bold decorative shapes, capture Peanut's fear of new experiences, giving way, by the end of the story, to a tranquil scene and a softer palette expressive of his new confidence. This is a treasure of a book, enchanting in its illustration and storyline.

*Anne Faundez*

## Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens

Written by J.M.Barrie Illustrated by Arthur Rackham  
Dover Publications £15.99 ISBN: 978-0486466071



This charming little book was initially published in 1902 as part of a novel called *Little White Bird* in which J.M.Barrie first developed the character of Peter Pan. It tells how Peter 'escaped from being a human when he was

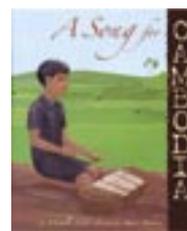
seven days old ... and flew back to Kensington Gardens.' In these six beguiling chapters we come across such wonders as talking elderberry and magnolia trees, a house built by fairies to cover a sleeping child which then shrinks and disappears when she wakes up, and fairy rings where the exquisite dancers of the fairy world waltz and twirl in the open air around mushroom chairs. Into this magical world comes Peter, who learns to fly, sails upon the Serpentine in a thrush's nest and plays his reed pan-pipes at the fairy ball. Add to this Arthur Rackham's finely detailed colour plates, showing among others, how 'Butter is made from the roots of old trees', 'A band of workmen ... sawing down a toadstool', and how 'The little people weave their summer curtains from skeleton leaves'. These made him as famous as Barrie and finished off what has to be one of the most intriguing pieces of literature ever produced for children.

*Richard Monte*

## A Song for Cambodia

Written by Michelle Lord Illustrated by Shino Arihara  
Lee and Low £10.99 ISBN: 978-1600601392

This book tells the true story of Arn Chorn-Pond, whose childhood was blighted by the tyranny of the Khmer Rouge take-over of Cambodia in the 1970s.



It is not easy to envisage the target audience for the book, at least at first. The subdued, alluring colours and the picture-book medium seem to be at odds with the brutal, terrifying experiences

endured by Arn as he is torn from his mother, used as a slave in the paddy fields, sent into war as a child soldier and finally rescued from a devastating flood by the American missionary who later adopts him. These days, Arn campaigns to return music and the arts to his country, where the Khmer Rouge's determination to wipe out any suggestion of a cultural elite all but annihilated culture and creativity. Hope then triumphs over despair in the end. Many of our pampered children here in the wealthy west would do well to share this story, perhaps, and understand how very lucky they are.

*Yvonne Coppard*

## One Boy's War

Written by Lynn Huggins-Cooper  
Illustrated by Ian Benfold Haywood  
Frances Lincoln £11.99 ISBN: 978-1845075286



Sydney, sixteen years old, is swept up by the euphoric patriotism of August 1914. His father volunteers for the army and Sydney wishes he too could go, despite the irritatingly protective

love of his mother. Like many other boys, he lies about his age and is gladly recruited. But chilling disillusion creeps in. His letters to his mother describe an increasingly intolerable situation; rain, mud, rats, lice, cold, death. He sees friends die even as he is talking to them. And then he must go over the top. His letters end abruptly. But, with a terrible irony, there is just one more letter – from Sydney's father, announcing he has received a 'Blighty', is coming home for good and rejoices that both wife and son are safe. This, by any criterion, is an outstanding, fearless book, far more than a mere account. It is based on a true story, that of Sydney Dobson of Durham, who did indeed perish at Ypres. Successive letters show the increasing horror, revulsion and fear – yet somehow Sydney maintains an indomitable cheerfulness, a fine example of an author's empathy at work. And they have a simple, poetic eloquence as well. This is writing of rare sensitivity. Lynn Huggins-Cooper's marvellous text is matched perfectly by Ian Benfold Haywood's atmospheric illustrations. Truly, picture books are remarkably elastic for they can extend the emotions and understanding of readers far older than those for whom they are usually intended. I hope potential readers, teachers and parents understand this and don't dismiss such a wonderful book, because it will be their loss.

*Dennis Hamley*