

Ready Steady Ghost!

Written by Elizabeth Baguley
Illustrated by Marion Lindsay
Oxford University Press £10.99
ISBN: 978-0192792649

A junior ghost named Bertie gets scared himself on a journey through a dark forest before finally discovering a castle where its owners are more than glad to accommodate a little friendly haunting. The author Elizabeth Baguley has a good ear for memorable language and Marion Lindsay's excellent look-at-me-again illustrations pack a definite charge as Bertie survives a series of near misses. A quality picture book indeed, and one that children will share over and over again.

Nicholas Tucker

The Big Snuggle-up

Written by Brian Patten
Illustrated by Nicola Bayley Andersen £10.99
ISBN: 978-1849392082



It is a cold winter and when Scarecrow is invited into the warm, cosy house he asks if he can also bring a friend – the mouse. Word gets around and more animals arrive at the door to ask if they too can shelter from the cold. The rhyming couplets name the creatures as they arrive and the repetition of the ever-growing list, from butterfly to fox and from lamb to robin, is fun and rhythmic. Brian Patten's poetic descriptions are delightfully complemented by Nicola Bayley's illustrations which give charm and character to each of them.

Louise Stothard

I Don't Want To Be a Pea!



Written by Ann Bonwill
Illustrated by Simon Rickerty
Oxford University Press £5.99
ISBN: 978-0192780188

Hugo the Hippo and Bella the Bird are best friends.

Trouble is, they can't decide which costume to wear to the fancy dress party. Hugo wants to go as a princess, but Bella definitely does not want to go as a pea. Bella wants to go as a mermaid, but Hugo is refusing to be a rock. Their sweetly caustic argument rattles on until they fall out completely and decide to go to the party on their own. However, it's not long before they realise that life and parties without the other are just no fun. So Bella and Hugo find the ideal solution, and their friendship is restored. This is a lovely book about the give-and-take of true friendship. The text and illustrations are witty and engaging, and complement each other beautifully which is ideal in a book all about the joys of co-operative play.

Stella Maden

Knuffle Bunny Free

An unexpected diversion by Mo Willems Walker £6.99 ISBN: 978-1406336498

This is the third and, so it would seem, final picture book about Trixie and her favourite toy – the eponymous Knuffle Bunny – that goes



wherever she goes. As in the previous two, coloured hand-drawn ink sketches of the characters are superimposed onto enhanced photographic black and white backgrounds, thus imparting an intended actuality into the storytelling. Trixie flies with her parents to Holland to visit grandparents. Only when safely settled in Oma and Opa's house does it dawn on her that Knuffle Bunny is missing. Dad's attempts at recovery prove fruitless. Trixie must face life without her beloved toy ... well, almost but not quite. *Knuffle Bunny Free* is a gentle, consoling tale about facing loss and gaining maturity – and the title says it all.

Chris Stephenson

Again!

Written and illustrated by Emily Gravett
Macmillan £10.99 ISBN: 978-0230745360



Share young Cedric the dragon's favourite book at bedtime and be mesmerised by the author/illustrator's unrivalled skills for pictorial storytelling! Each page is underwritten with her humour and dynamic design. The spoken

and unspoken activity between the three dragons, leading to the suitably surprising ending, make this a book to enjoy again and again. Both young readers and older ones will relish the ingenuity and magical narrative of this multi-layered story. A brilliantly created page-turner.

Mike Simkin

Lola's Fandango

Written by Anna Witte
Illustrated by Micha Archer
Barefoot £6.99
ISBN: 978-1846861734



Lola feels that her big sister Clementina is better than her at everything. She is struggling to find something that's just for her until she comes across her mother's flamenco shoes in the wardrobe. Having convinced her father to teach her the flamenco in secret, Lola practises every day – at first just clapping the rhythms, then stamping them out with her feet until she is ready to learn the dance itself. Lola has her lessons up on the roof with only the pigeons watching. Eventually she

is able to surprise her mother, dressed in a brand new polka dress and with special shoes of her own. This book is full of colour and captures well Lola's frustration at always being second best and then her delight as she comes into her own. The images are a mixture of paint and collage and seem to see the world from Lola's perspective. This is a picture book for children ready to hear a real story whose characters are individuals. It comes with an audio CD of the story and original flamenco music.

Annalise Taylor

Hubble Bubble Granny Trouble



Written by Tracey Corderoy
Illustrated by Joe Berger
Nosy Crow £6.99
ISBN: 978-0857630285

Would you sooner have a normal Granny who knits or one who is kind of different?

In this amusing book a little girl is embarrassed by how different her Granny is and she tries to make her kind of normalish. They are soon travelling by bus rather than broomstick, with a rabbit for a pet instead of cats and frogs. However, when her Granny becomes sad and bored at being normal, the little girl realises that she loves her Granny no matter what. *Hubble Bubble Granny Trouble* combines catchy rhymes with bright funny illustrations to deliver the age-old message that we are all different in different ways. The illustrations by Joe Berger have an old-fashioned feel to them – reminiscent of Korky Paul – while conveying perfectly the wit and message in the book.

Jane Hall

The Day Louis Got Eaten

Written and illustrated by John Fardell Andersen £5.99 ISBN: 978-1849393874

The central theme of this picture book is that the big prey upon the little, reminiscent in some ways of Bruegel's *Big Fish Eat Little Fish*, only here the fish are replaced by a series of fantastic creatures. Little Louis, out for a bike ride with his sister, suddenly finds himself eaten by a Gulper. This in turn is consumed by a Grabular, which is swallowed by an Undersnatch and that falls prey to a Spiny-backed Guzzler, which is eventually eaten by a Sabre-toothed Yumper. Fardell's ravenous creatures resemble exotic prehistoric animals and while the thought of being gobbled up by one of these might be a bit too scary for some younger children, the ending is reassuring enough to show them that if you have your wits about you there's no need to be scared of anything.

Richard Monte

Zoo Girl

Written and illustrated by Rebecca Elliott
Lion £5.99 ISBN: 978-0745962702



Despite minimal text, this is a haunting picture book with a strong message about love and belonging. It depicts a girl ... *alone and friendless*. She visits the zoo with her class, and immediately feels

at home with the animals. Sadly no-one seems to notice when she stays behind as her school bus departs. The zoo creatures befriend her and she has a wonderful time playing with them. Inevitably she is discovered but doesn't want return to her old life – how fortunate that two zookeepers want to adopt her – at last she has a family and belongs. This remarkable book conjures up a complex story from a text of just twenty words. Extraordinarily powerful atmosphere is created by the language and pictures working together in complete harmony. The illustrations are soft and dramatic using a muted, yet sophisticated, palette and a mixed media approach of mostly pencil with colour wash. The result is a gentle book which speaks to both emotions and imagination.

Liz Dubber

Art and Max

Written and illustrated by David Weisner
Andersen Press £10.99 ISBN: 978-1849392662

Arthur is a lizard who paints realistic portraits. Max is an enthusiastic beginner who takes an unconventional approach to painting his friend.



Before long Arthur has been reduced to an outline of his former self and Max is faced with putting his friend back together. By the end of the story the two are firm friends and Max's liberal attitude has freed up Arthur's art. David Weisner has won the Caldecott Medal three times for previous picture books. With *Art and Max* he has created vivid characters who almost literally leap off the page. In fact this is a picture book that could dispense with words completely – the images propel the story forward. There is a sense of dynamism on every page as the characters' gestures and movements are brilliantly conveyed. Surprising turns in the plot will challenge children to work out what has happened, drawing them in and making them active participants in the story. I imagine that rereading will elicit excited anticipation of Max's disintegration. Highly recommended.

Annalise Taylor

Bumble-ardy

Written & illustrated by Maurice Sendak
HarperCollins £12.99 ISBN: 978-0007447381

Bumble-ardy's porcine parents are **not** the most loving and affectionate in nature. They *frown on fun* and so poor Bumble-ardy is denied the joys of a birthday party for eight years until his



well-fed parents find their way on to food plates. Left in the care of his more amiable Aunt Adeline, Bumble-ardy finally gets

the chance to celebrate on his ninth birthday with a big party (unknown to Aunt Adeline). But too many partygoers arrive and things rapidly get out of hand, much to the consternation of Aunt Adeline when she arrives home after her work shift. Written in rhyme this is a glorious tale of good ideas going wrong and unconditional love. Sendak's illustrations of the masked and fancy dressed party pigs are amusingly grotesque and this is an ideal sharing book for adult and child alike.

Heather Blackham

When Chico Went Fishing

Written by Robin Tzannes
Illustrated by Korky Paul
Oxford University Press (R) £5.99
ISBN: 978-0192729941



Chico wants to go fishing with his father, but his dad tells him he's too young. So Chico decides to try by himself – and gradually works out the best way to catch a fish. The text describes how Chico develops his fishing technique by trial and error, and Korky Paul's quirky and detailed illustrations show him cheerfully improvising rod, line and hook, and eventually adding worms to lure in a spectacular fish. Meanwhile his father's own trip is much less successful. No words are needed to describe his troubles, but children will get lots of fun and entertainment from seeing his antics shown to full effect in the cartoon-like illustrations of him tangling up his line, falling in the water, and losing all his worms! The rainforest setting provides plenty of scope for weird and wonderful wildlife and dramatic river and rock formations, all of which add to the richness of the experience. As the full pleasure comes from poring over the detailed illustrations, this is probably best used in one-to-one situations or with very small groups.

Liz Dubber



Library Lily

Written by Gillian Shields
Illustrated by Francesca Chessa
Gullane £10.99
ISBN: 978-1862338302

Lily always has her nose in a book and just loves going to the Library where there is so much choice. But, like any true bookworm, once she has her head in a book she can't stop and her Mother and friends despair of her. Lily loves reading so much that the wonderful world of her books begins to take over and she forgets to eat and doesn't notice the exciting things happening around her. When Mother takes her to the park, Lily reluctantly leaves her book behind. As she wanders around reading the notices, she meets Milly who is hanging upside

down from a tree. When Lily is persuaded to join Milly in the tree she realizes there are an awful lot of things going on in the world which you can see from the top of a tree. Milly takes Lily on all sorts of adventures and in return Lily persuades her new friend that books are not boring. The two girls become best friends and Lily writes a book about their adventures for them to share. The illustrations are unusual and painterly with rounded blocks of rich colour which add character and warmth to the satisfying story.

Louise Stothard

Black Dog

Written and illustrated by Levi Pinfold
Templar £12.99 ISBN: 978-1848770522

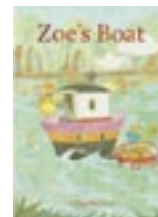
When the Hope family members rise one morning they each see a black dog sitting outside that seems to grow with every family viewing. Terrified, they hide from the scary sight until Small Hope, the littlest family member, decides to go outside and challenge the big Black Dog. She leads the Black Dog on a chase and as the dog follows Small he gets smaller and smaller until he is a normal size. When Small and Black Dog arrive back in the house the other Hope family members are overjoyed that the Black Dog is now neither huge nor scary. With the most enchanting of illustrations, that the reader will really want to look into, this is a hopeful story of confronting fears that will appeal to children and adults alike. This story could also be considered as allegorical with the Black Dog representing depression but it is written in such a positive, uplifting manner that it can't but help to inspire. Wonderful.

Heather Blackham



Zoe's Boat

Written & illustrated by Gillian McClure
Plaister Press £6.99 ISBN: 978-0956510822



The latest offering from this enterprising independent publisher is the story of the indomitable Zoe, a small girl in a yellow party-dress who lives by the river and decides one day that she and her Dog should sail down to the sea. Dog is not so sure, feels a little hard-done-by ("There definitely won't be room for me"), and gets left behind. Everything goes well as Zoe the skipper keeps things shipshape and tends her garden-boat, until she reaches the high seas. Which is when Dear Old Dog – not back at home but following her progress on foot – comes into his own. A story about friendship encompassing cosiness, adventure, excitement, fear and reassurance, told as a graphic novel for younger readers and illustrated with all the characteristic subtlety of Gillian McClure's palette. It could be favourite reading for young readers for a long time to come.

Chris Stephenson