



Peas and Tickle

Written by Kes Gray Illustrated by Nick Sharratt
Red Fox (R) £4.99 ISBN: 978-1782951506

A bright, breezy re-issue of two 'Daisy' stories from 2000 and 2003: the award-winning *Eat Your Peas* and *You Do!* The first tale does have a bit of the feel of a bygone age – would modern parents spend precious time trying to persuade a child to eat peas? – but the punch line at the end is still funny and makes its point. The second story takes a humorous swipe at the universally recognisable 'do as I say and not as I do' school of parenting. The winning combination of Kes Gray's clear, accessible text and Nick Sharratt's distinctive, bold illustrations makes this a lovely book for an early reader to experience, alone or with an adult.

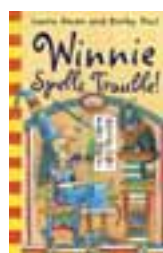
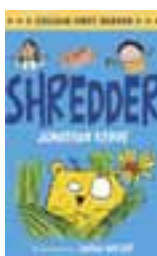
Yvonne Coppard

Shredder

Written by Jonathan Kebbe Illustrated by Sarah Naylor
Corgi (R) (eB) £4.99 ISBN: 978-0552568982

The story of the fall and rise of Shredder, the class gerbil, told over five chapters, is presented in large, clear font with quirky, clownish illustrations on every page. The first person form of narration by the gerbil allows readers to see the class, the kindly teacher, the formidable Head and the only named child, Dino, through Shredder's eyes. Dino is an unusual, solitary child, devoted to the gerbil. Shredder relates how Dino, in an affectionate moment one playtime, takes him from his cage. The gerbil, sensing danger when the teacher returns, finding refuge in a tissue box that contains one hundred pounds in note form, the money collected by the children for their annual seaside trip. Whilst the class is hunting for their gerbil, the tissue box, with the hidden Shredder, is taken to the Head for safe-keeping. The story ends in an unexpected way but with Shredder's role and reputation within the school assured. Accompanying notes by reading specialist Prue Goodwin offer helpful advice to teachers.

Catriona Nicholson



Winnie Spells Trouble!

Written by Laura Owen Illustrated by Korky Paul
OUP (eB) £4.99 ISBN: 978-0192736680

Winnie the Witch picture books have been delighting children since 1987 with their funny and flawed central character and frenetic illustrations. This series of easier-to-read, shorter format stories, allows newly confident readers direct access to Winnie's world. Each book contains four stand-alone stories, enabling readers to reach the end of a story relatively quickly, and then have the satisfaction of completing something akin to a short chapter-book by the end. Korky Paul's distinctive illustrations are on every page so there are still plenty of visual cues to help readers along. In this particular collection Winnie is left in charge when she runs an after-school club and makes the toys and playground come alive. Then, Winnie eventually manages to share her lunch when Aunt Aggie arrives unannounced. In the third story Winnie magics up a double for herself and Wilbur, the cat, has two mistresses to contend with. The final story has Winnie back with the school children, this time helping out on a trip to the museum. These books are part of a series that young readers can work their way through, cementing their reading skills whilst enjoying Winnie's unpredictable mixture of mischief and magic.

Annalise Taylor



The Little Nut Tree

Written and illustrated by Sally Gardner
Orion (eB) £4.99 ISBN: 978-1444010275

Based on the nursery rhyme, this little story is narrated by the recipient of the little nut tree and imagines the tale behind the growth of such an unusual gift. Each page has delightful colour illustrations of the little girl and her family in period costume when the King of Spain's daughter arrives with suitable pomp and ceremony. The story is taken beyond the traditional rhyme, which means there is a happy resolution after the horrid princess takes the original tree home, for a twig left behind grows into a new tree overnight. The vocabulary is simple and with around two lines per page is ideal for those developing confidence in reading alone and making the transition from picture books.

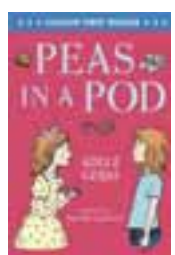
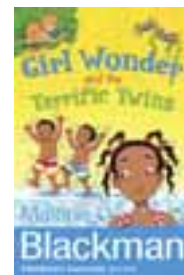
Lucy Russell

Girl Wonder and the Terrific Twins

Written by Malorie Blackman Illustrated by Jamie Smith
Tamarind (R) (eB) £5.99 ISBN: 978-1848531338

One of Malorie Blackman's earliest books, this is the first of a set of three that relate, in short, well-presented chapters, the adventures of the feisty Maxine and her 'Terrific Twin' brothers, Anthony and Edward. Maxine is an exuberant, fearless girl, the twins take their share of household tasks, and their mother, a single parent, enjoys non-traditional occupations. Whilst encouraging her children to be independent this mother also has clear ground rules for acceptable behaviour and it is this level of parental expectation that Maxine, the self-styled 'Girl Wonder', with her ill-considered solutions to situations or challenges, manages to continually subvert to amusing effect. The engaging stories, told from Maxine's point of view, with their snappy dialogue and simple vocabulary, will help build confidence in new readers.

Catriona Nicholson



Peas in a Pod

Written by Adèle Geras Illustrated by Peter Bailey
Corgi (R) (eB) £4.99 ISBN: 978-0552568951

Sisters Lily and Jo have a babysitter who is getting married. Jo is desperate to be a bridesmaid, wear a lovely dress, hold a basket of flowers and sit in a big shiny car. Lily doesn't want to be a bridesmaid or wear a pretty dress – she only wants a new pair of trainers. When the girls discover that Stella isn't going to ask them to be bridesmaids Jo is disappointed and Lily relieved. However, things happen on the morning of the wedding and the two page boys develop German measles. The result is predictable but pleasing and everyone is happy. The illustrations are bold and complement the text. Perfect for the young child just beginning to read on their own.

Ingrid Fox

Mi and Museum City

Written and illustrated by Linda Sarah
Phoenix Yard £7.99 ISBN: 978-1907912283

Mi lives in Museum City, packed full of dull and boring museums. He meets Yu, and they persuade the Mayor to open new and wonderful museums. These include the Museum of Rain, housing three billion



raindrops and one piece of lost rainbow, and the Museum of White Bits on Waves. Quirky and crammed full of tiny illustrations and annotated drawings, this debut picture book is a delight of detail and a celebration of fun and creativity. Readers will pore over the tiny pictures for hours, spotting something new each time they read it, chortling over the Museum of Ridiculous Staircases and speculating about the Museum of Autumn Smells. A delightful book, full of humour and originality, complete with a pull-out poster.

Lucy Russell

Snowy

Written by Berlie Doherty Illustrated by Keith Bowen
Troika (R) £6.99 ISBN: 978-0957301399

This reprint of the original published in 1992 and crafted by the perfect partnership of Berlie Doherty and Keith Bowen, wonderfully captures the beautiful poignancy of Rachel's world and her passionate pride in Snowy, her narrow-boat horse. Rachel is deeply hurt when she can't take him to school, and offended, when the other children laugh as she explains why. Back home on the canal, Rachel's only comfort is to hug Snowy's leg, rest "her head against her soft white side", and cry. Then, thanks to an astute teacher, "Rachel pulled up her socks and folded her arms and smiled" and her status is secured. The class has a valuable learning experience and they all enjoy an extra special school trip. This really is a beautiful, timeless classic that should be on every child's bookshelf.



Gill Roberts



Choosing Crumble

Written by Michael Rosen Illustrated by Tony Ross
Andersen £4.99 ISBN: 978-1849395281

This is a short story for those who are yet to develop the confidence to tackle books with several chapters. It tells a simple story of how Terri-Lee visits a pet shop with her Mum to buy a dog, but instead of them choosing the dog, the dog interviews and then chooses them! Lively and amusing pictures by Tony Ross convey the humour of the story as the dog, Apple Crumble, raises questions about its care. What will it eat? Where will it sleep? The dog, Terri-Lee and her Mum are clearly sizing each other up and although the match isn't perfect they agree that it's likely to work. Dog-owning children will find the hints at real doggy behaviour very amusing, but this is a delightful, short story for any child. As one might expect from this author, the language is completely natural yet spiced with an everyday humour that children will find appealing, and the subtle way in which Mum makes sure Terri-Lee speaks sensitively to the dog to avoid hurting his feelings over any shortcomings offers a master-class for everyone.

Liz Dubber

Young Werewolf

Written by Cornelia Funke Illustrated by David Roberts
Barrington Stoke £6.99 ISBN: 978-1781122686

This short novel will provide an entertaining read whether the reader needs the dyslexia-friendly presentation or not. When Matt is bitten by a strange animal in a dark underpass he starts changing into a werewolf and, along with best friend Lisa, must try to find a cure before a full moon leaves him a werewolf for life. Mr



Foulweather – a biology teacher with a strange fascination for all things monstrous – is soon following Matt around in a menacing manner but it is their much friendlier form-teacher, Mrs Ruskin, who takes Matt's problem seriously and helps him find a way to reverse his condition. Throughout the story we get a clear picture of Matt and Lisa's strong friendship, one that survives the taunts of boys in the class, and see how being inhabited by the spirit of a wolf helps Matt grow stronger and more able to stand up to bullies.

Annalise Taylor

Pigsticks and Harold and the Incredible Journey

Written and illustrated by Alex Milway
Walker £6.99 ISBN: 978-1406340556

More a book with illustrations than a picture book, this story about a wandering pig and his hamster companion is full of inconsequential humour, just right for children already developing an early taste for the eccentric. Pigsticks and his companion, after many adventures, are finally threatened by a herd of goats looking more like yetis than the real thing. But everything works out in the end with many visual jokes packed in along the way. Original and unusual, this odd little book is certainly well worth a punt.



Nicholas Tucker



The Mountains of Tibet

Written and illustrated by Mordcai Gerstein
Barefoot (R) £10.99 ISBN: 978-1782850472

The ancient Buddhist teachings of Tibet, as laid out in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, taught that life and death cannot be separated and that to truly understand the meaning of life, one had to go beyond the noisy hustle and bustle of the ordinary world and seek a deeper calm within, a place where consciousness existed after death. Mordcai Gerstein's beautiful tale illustrates this concept in the simple story of a woodcutter who dies regretting that he hasn't seen more of the world, having never left his valley. He is given the chance to choose a new life, and the choices he makes allow him to see the universe in all its complexity, eventually bringing him full circle back into a world full of beautiful places, creatures and plants, where he decides to live his life as a girl content to fly kites all day. A delicate book, full of the kind of wisdom which is needed so much in our hectic modern life.

Richard Monte

What's Your Favourite Animal?

Written and illustrated by Eric Carle and Friends
Walker £12.99 ISBN: 978-1406356519

Produced in collaboration with some of the best-known picture book illustrators, this fun-packed extravaganza of various animals includes Peter Sis's Blue Carp, inspired by the giant barrels of live carp set up in the streets of Prague on Christmas Eve, Chris Raschka's Snail who works at her craft day after day until she leaves behind a beautiful stripy shell and Tom Lichtenheld's meteorological Giraffes, with their heads like barometers stuck firmly in the clouds. Carle provides the Cats, in what is a glorious celebration of picture book art which is not only entertaining, but is sure to provide inspiration for all budding young artists. The volume is complete with short insightful biographies of the contributors, accompanied by a childhood picture of each artist and an explanation as to why they chose their favourite animals. With all proceeds from the book going to The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, this is a thoroughly worthwhile project organised by one of the world's best-loved picture book writers and illustrators.



Richard Monte