



A Day at the Police Station

Written and illustrated by Richard Scarry
HarperCollins £6.99 ISBN: 978-0007574940

Sergeant Murphy works at Busytown police station and because his wife cannot look after their daughter, one Saturday, the sergeant has to take the somewhat reluctant Bridget with him to work. His day is full of surprises with unexpected local incidents and human misunderstandings that offer amusement for the reader. Characteristic Richard Scarry illustrations, graphically rich, subtly colour-coded and endlessly diverting for young readers, contribute further visual information to the various community dramas that the sergeant has to deal with. This is an ideal book to read with young children who are responsive to close observation and detail.

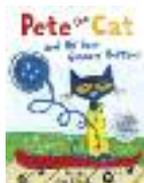
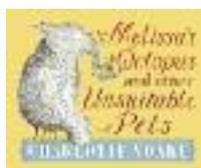
Catriona Nicholson

Melissa's Octopus and other Unsuitable Pets

Written and illustrated by Charlotte Voake
Walker £11.99 ISBN: 978-1406353006

Charlotte Voake has been producing beautiful picture books for thirty-five years now, and this one is well up to her usual high standards. Firmly bound and using little text, it takes young readers through a collection of amiable, exotic pets all of whom have certain disadvantages. The octopus makes a mess in the bath, the mole is always hiding away below the earth and the warthog is simply too disobedient. But the final example, a giant crocodile with sharp teeth, turns out to be the biggest menace of all, very possibly eating all the different young pet owners featured in earlier pages. Recommended for children with an already developed taste in black humour!

Nicholas Tucker



Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons

Written by Eric Litwin Illustrated by James Dean
HarperCollins (eB) £6.99 ISBN: 978-0007553679

Another winner from the Litwin/Dean team, this, the latest in their *Pete the Cat* series, will delight young readers who enjoy the process of subtraction. Singing the praises of his four groovy buttons, rocking Pete manages to pop one from off his shirt at each rendering of the song until all his buttons are lost and he is reduced to staring at his belly button. Undaunted, he continues with his surfing plans, singing his button song to his own tummy. The text with its bold, colourful, quirky fonts will appeal as will the vivid blocks of primary colour that carry the illustrations. Numerical awareness is consolidated by the basic formula for subtraction appearing at the foot of each relevant page. Fun, engaging and predictable with an accompanying website song, this should be popular in homes and nurseries.

Catriona Nicholson

Bruno and Titch

Written and illustrated by Sheena Dempsey
Walker £11.99 ISBN: 978-1406336160

This is the story of a boy and his pet guinea-pig, Titch, told from the animal's viewpoint. The guinea pig waits in a pet shop, hoping to be chosen by a Big Person. Eventually Bruno walks in and carries him home. He immediately starts to play with his new pet, but while Titch enjoys the attention, the games are not at all suitable. After a while Bruno becomes more serious. He bangs about a lot and



hasn't much time to play. Titch is scared of being returned to the pet shop, but to his delight a surprise is revealed. Bruno has built him a Guinea-Pig Palace, complete with a range of suitable accessories for his use and entertainment. This is a simple story in which the guinea-pig's perspective is central to the story. As well as being an entertaining read, it should spark important discussions about how to look after pet animals. The illustrations make Titch's feelings very clear, and will help children to appreciate what type of play is, and is not, appropriate for a pet. A lovely story with lively and amusing illustrations which are fun.

Liz Dubber

Stinky Skunk Mel

Written by Kari-Lynn Winters Illustrated by Paola Opal
Simply Read £12.99 ISBN: 978-1897476833

Stinky Skunk Mel tells the charming tale of how an outcast becomes a hero. Mel is a very smelly skunk, for no matter how hard he tries, he cannot control his stinky smell. The other forest animals soon tire of him and so Mel goes to live alone in the dump. However, when disaster strikes, Mel puts his stinky spray to good use, becoming a hero. Award-winning children's author Kari-Lynn Winters has created an endearing hero and Mel's story is told in simple rhyming couplets that are ideal for those beginning to read. Also, clever use of colour provides prompts for new readers; red, blue and green are used to reflect fire, water and smelly words respectively. The text is on plain white pages, making it easier for children to focus on the words. The traditional cartoon illustrations are perfect for this gentle tale of how an outsider becomes accepted. Primarily using blacks and greys, Paola Opal effectively uses shades of green to emphasise poor Mel's smell. This is a beautiful book with a subtle message of acceptance.

Jane Hall



A Really Super Hero

Written and illustrated by Charlotte Lance
Allen & Unwin £7.99 ISBN: 978-1743361382

A really comical look at a little girl's desire to realise her superhero potential. Charlotte Lance's delightful rhyming text works well on two levels; light-hearted humour and detailed illustrations will appeal to the target audience, while adults reading the book aloud will be entertained by Mum's long-suffering indulgence of her daughter's quest for hero status. Words and pictures take equal importance in the story-telling of this enjoyable nod to the transient, but treasurable, era of childhood imaginings.

Megan Stanfield

How the Library (NOT the Prince) Saved Rapunzel

Written by Wendy Meddour Illustrated by Rebecca Ashdown
Frances Lincoln £11.99 ISBN: 978-1847804327

A modern-day, very bored Rapunzel sits upstairs at the window of her apartment, gazing out at the world, growing her long red hair. The lift is broken, and she refuses to use the stairs to answer the door. Even when a dashing prince arrives on his scooter with flowers and chocolates, she refuses to stir. As Rapunzel's energy declines, her aunt becomes concerned and climbs up to provide a nourishing meal. Then, the postman delivers a letter bringing the exciting news that Rapunzel has got a job at the library. Her life is transformed and she soon becomes an avid reader, acquiring all sorts of new knowledge and skills. This engaging tale is told through simple yet imaginative rhyming text which reflects beautifully the boredom of Rapunzel's life before the library, and the pace and excitement



of it afterwards. The story is amply illustrated in bright colours, with the text cleverly placed in an assortment of positions on the page for variety and interest. There is plenty of interesting detail which children will love to identify and discuss, and Rapunzel's flowing red hair creates movement and excitement on every page. A very satisfying story.

Liz Dubber



Harry and the Monster

Written by Sue Mongredien Illustrated by Nick East
Little Tiger £5.99 ISBN: 978-1848952997

Night terrors are difficult at any age, but most frightening for younger children. This brilliant picture book sets out to help them cope with unwanted visitations in their dreams. Harry starts the week waking up the family with screams about a "big, scary monster". As the week continues, Mum suggests ways to make the monster less frightening when it returns. Unfortunately, her ideas, from imagining pink panties on its head to tickling it, only make the monster angrier. Dad suggests that Harry imagines his Mummy telling off the monster. Luckily, there's nothing scarier than a cross Mummy, and the monster becomes Harry's friend. The colourful and soft illustrations convey the story beautifully without adding more fear to a difficult topic. Told with warmth and humour this is ideal for any child who wakes up screaming and any parent who is looking to sleep soundly again.

Benjamin Scott

The Dragon Stoorworm

Retold by Theresa Breslin Illustrated by Matthew Land
Picture Kelpies £5.99 ISBN: 978-1782501176

This title is one of the first to be released in the *Traditional Scottish Tales* series. Pleasantly narrated by Theresa Breslin with Matthew Land's vibrant illustrations depicting a truly huge dragon, almost capable of covering the whole of Scotland, against a haunting backdrop of hills, lakes and castles. The story of how the King of Scotland's daughter, Princess Gemdelovely, and her faithful swain, Assipattle, finally defeated the dragon, Stoorworm, is not for the squeamish, but no-one would begrudge them their final scene playing a duet together with a plate of shortbread within reach.

Nicholas Tucker



My Teacher is a Monster!

Written and illustrated by Peter Brown
Macmillan £11.99 ISBN: 978-1447257479

Bobby is convinced that his teacher, Miss Kirby, is a monster, an actual big green monster that is only happy when she is making her students miserable. When he meets her in the park on the weekend, Bobby sees a very different side of his teacher. Meeting in a different context allows both pupil and teacher to share a little of themselves and see each other as individuals. Readers and listeners will enjoy spotting how the teacher transforms from page to page as her monstrous features peel away to reveal a completely ordinary woman who is far from terrifying. The words and illustrations combine to create a gently humorous story of mutual respect. This book is perfect for all those children who secretly believe that their teachers live at school.

Annalise Taylor

Goodbye Grandma

Written and illustrated by Melanie Walsh
Walker £11.99 ISBN: 978-1406346756

Death and dying are sensitive and difficult topics to discuss with young children, and many adults try to avoid the issue by either not tackling it at all or using such circuitous or obscure language that the child is unable to process what is being said. Here, a mother explains to her young child that Grandma has died, and goes on to answer the child's questions directly and honestly at a level the



child will understand. The range of issues tackled includes the philosophical (Why do people have to die? What happens to them?) and the practical (Who will babysit now Grandma has gone? How can we say goodbye?). Big, bold illustrations, with cutaways and peepholes built into the pages, help the child focus and engage with the discussion.

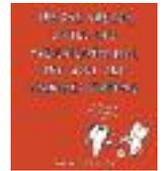
Yvonne Coppard

The Cat, The Dog, Little Red, The Exploding Eggs, The Wolf and Grandma's Wardrobe

Written and illustrated by Diane and Christyan Fox
Words and Pictures £11.99 ISBN 978-1910277003

This is a clever and witty picture book for children who will need familiarity with the tale of Little Red Riding Hood to fully appreciate the story. Cat is trying to read the story, while Dog is intrigued and issues forth an incessant stream of questions, starting with an amusing misunderstanding about the purpose of Red Riding Hood's cape: "Cool! I love stories about superheroes. What's her special power?". Poor Cat persists with telling the story, but Dog's questions and objections are equally persistent. Some older readers may well find their own questions about this story echoed in Dog's questions, and his comment: "It's not a very nice story, is it? Are you absolutely sure this is a children's book?" could lead to some interesting discussions. Text is presented in a handwritten typeface, which is a fitting style for the dialogue between the two characters. Illustrations are mostly black and white line drawings with some patches of colour, but variations in page layout, text size, use of blank space and colour mean this book is beautifully designed. Very entertaining.

Lucy Russell



The Colour Thief

Written by Andrew Fusek Peters and Polly Peters
Illustrated by Karin Littlewood
Wayland £11.99 ISBN: 978-0750280525

A father's severe depressive illness is seen through the eyes of his young son, who struggles to understand what is happening and mourns for the father who no longer seems willing to embrace his family life. It's a difficult topic, but with a quarter of the adult population in the U.K. likely to suffer from depression at some point, it's not one we can afford to avoid. The text is infused with metaphors that give an easy way in to understanding how Dad is feeling. The gorgeous, colour-drenched pictures blend with the tone of the text. This picture book beautifully reinforces the important messages that it is not the child's fault that Dad is ill, and that, with time and the right help, Dad *will* get better. I hope it helps banish the taboos which prevent us talking to children about an illness that may well touch their young lives.

Yvonne Coppard

The Further Adventures of the Owl and the Pussy-cat

Written by Julia Donaldson Illustrated by Charlotte Voake
Puffin £10.99 ISBN: 978-0141332888

For any adult or child who loves Edward Lear, this is a delight. It is a continuation of the adventures of the Owl and the Pussy-cat, told with clever rhyme, emulating the original poetic metre, and with expressive and beautiful illustrations. Whilst the pair are sleeping, a crow flies down and steals their ring. "They dreamed of mice, and raspberry ice, while slumbering cheek to cheek, but down flew a crow who unravelled the bow, and flew off with the ring in his beak" and so, together, they set out, in a beautiful balloon, to find it again. Their journey takes them through familiar 'Lear' land from the Bong-tree glade to the Chankly Bore and on to where the Pobble lives. It is brilliant and although the original was published in 1871 this sequel is not out of place. This will entertain, amuse and delight readers for many years.

Ingrid Fox

