



The Duck and the Darklings

Written by Glenda Millard
Illustrated by Stephen Michael King
Allen & Unwin £9.99 ISBN: 978-1743362983

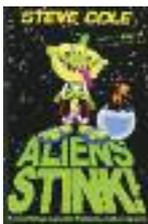
This stunning new picture book is set in a post-apocalyptic world. Peterboy lives with his Grandpapa in a desperate underground world appropriately named 'The Dark'. On his trips above to the "Finding Fields" Peterboy longs to find some "wonderfulness" that will return the light to his Grandpapa's sad eyes. One day he finds a "broken" duck and takes her home to recover. This is a beautiful tale of caring, memories and hope. Glenda Millard's creative use of language is entrancing with new words such as "remembery" (memory) and "sorrydrops" (tears) which will spark the imagination of young readers. The topic is an unusual one for such young readers, but perhaps also an ideal one to teach them the importance of caring about each other and their planet. The stark illustrations perfectly complement the tale, with dark shadows gradually gaining perception and colour as the story progresses and hope for the future grows. The pencil drawn Darklings are lovable, again contrasting against the harsh background of their world. This is a most captivating and heart-warming book.

Jane Hall

Aliens Stink!

Written by Steve Cole Illustrated by Jim Field
Simon & Schuster £6.99 ISBN: 978-0857078728

Planet Earth is in trouble. There is a strange sweet smell pervading the air, weird lights in the sky and the ozone layer is repairing itself. Tim and his scientist Dad are kidnapped, along with his talented goldfish, and taken to a super secret base. Tim meets ultra-clever children, a huggy alien and a very sad guard. They discover the evil plan of the aliens and somehow must fight to save their planet. This book is full of zany and humorous illustrations, jokes and underlying serious issues. It tackles pollution, family issues, bullying and friendship. It is action packed and exciting.



Ingrid Fox



Boyface and the Tartan Badger

Written by James Campbell Illustrated by Mark Weighton
Hodder (eB) £5.99 ISBN: 978-1444918045

In this, the fourth instalment of the escapades of Boyface, fans will not be disappointed by the tale of the tartan badger. New readers will be brought up to speed by a brief introduction and soon will be laughing out loud. Boyface has been given the worst possible pet by his parents, Mr and Mrs Antelope. It smells, attacks him and uses his underwear drawer as a toilet. Yet, when he and his friend, Clootie, find that the tartan badger has been kidnapped they proceed to track it down and rescue it, ultimately learning that there is more to the tartan badger than meets the eye. Along the way readers will meet the wonderfully named Mandala Eyelash, the local beauty who is able to tell fortunes from the positions of the sultanas in scones. Don't worry; a full scone-reading guide is included at the back of the book. A few threads are left untied leaving the reader eager for the next adventure, whilst maintaining a satisfying resolution to the story. Genuinely funny, heartening and a little bizarre in places, readers will enjoy this book tremendously. Black and white line drawings scattered throughout add humour and curiosity. Astonishing!

Lucy Russell

Elf Girl and Raven Boy: Terror Town

Written by Marcus Sedgwick Illustrated by Pete Williamson
Orion (eB) £6.99 ISBN: 978-1444005271

Terror Town is the fifth of the six part *Elf Girl and Raven Boy* series by Marcus Sedgwick. Our two intrepid heroes are nearing the end of their quest to defeat the wicked Goblin King. They are now in Terror Town to find the Singing Sword which, along with the Tears of the Moon, will help them to save the world from the evil Goblin King. Instead, they find a hoard of zombies, hungry werewolves, and the Horror Hotel where nobody wants to stay. This amusing and exciting book can be read as a standalone, but it will make readers want to discover what has happened in the previous adventures and, of course, whether the two achieve their mission. The books are quite short, but there is plenty of fun, excitement and scares to thrill young readers. Elf Girl and Raven Boy work well together, bouncing ideas and insults off each other, while their sidekicks Rat and Shona, the flying carpet, along with some unconventional villagers, add to the comedy. Pete Williamson's wonderful illustrations add to the gothic feel of this darkly comic tale.



Jane Hall



The Starburster Stories

Written by Berlie Doherty Illustrated by Lesley Harker
Young Corgi (R) (eB) £6.99 ISBN: 978-0552569750

The three hugely popular stand-alone stories featuring the adventures of plucky young Tam have been packaged in this welcome compilation. Berlie Doherty is a writer who understands perfectly how to capture a reader's attention from the opening page and to suspend disbelief until the story finishes. Tam is a delightful character; caring, brave, spirited and his three adventures with the Starburster (kaleidoscope), Humming Machine (harmonica) and Windspinner (plastic windmill) take him on successive journeys through the green passage and into the kingdom of Faery. All the ingredients of a gripping tale are skilfully woven into Tam's adventures: fairy helpers, elves, changelings, hags, wondrous cloaks, blue moons, stories within stories, human transformations. Each adventure introduces new characters, fresh magic and new challenges. Written with engaging clarity and illustrated generously with attractive line drawings, these fast-paced stories are ideal for sustaining a young reader's interest and for building reading confidence.

Catriona Nicholson

Araminta Spook: Gargoyle Hall

Written by Angie Sage
Bloomsbury (eB) £5.99 ISBN: 978-1408851289

Araminta Spook is the founder of Spook Detective Agency, and, along with her best friend, Wanda, she is always on the lookout for a mystery to solve. *Gargoyle Hall* is the sixth book in the *Araminta Spook* series, which centres on the eponymous detective and her ghoulish family. Araminta is faced with a multitude of mysteries to solve when she arrives at the sinister Gargoyle Hall Boarding School for Girls. It is up to the Spook Detective Agency to discover the Hall's secrets. The mischievous antics of Araminta and Wanda are often funny and sometimes fraught with danger. Angie Sage's sharp and witty writing brings Araminta's spooky world to life. The style of the drawings complements the story, combining perfectly to emphasise events that are particularly funny or exciting. *Gargoyle Hall* will not disappoint existing fans of the series and provides a great jumping on point for new readers.



Davy Hall

Billy's Blitz

Written by Barbara Mitchellhill Andersen £6.99 ISBN: 978-1783440856



This Second World War story catches fire at the same time as the London Blitz, with twelve-year-old Billy and his six year old sister, Rose, wondering where to go and what to do when their house is destroyed during a devastating air-raid. Homeless, and having been separated from their mother, Billy and his sister keep just ahead of the Authorities who want to evacuate them. Billy and Rose are

determined to find out what has happened to their mother – to discover whether she is even still alive. They are helped by All-Off, a slightly older street-wise orphan, also living rough. Tension grows with a near-disastrous night-time attempt by the children to locate their mother in a hospital which they are forbidden to enter. By this time, every reader – young or old – will be rooting for a happy resolution that could bring this excellent story to a satisfying conclusion.

Nicholas Tucker

The Dangerous Discoveries of Gully Potchard

Written by Julia Lee OUP (eB) £6.99 ISBN: 978-0192733696

Gully is less than pleased to run into an old school friend, Nathan Boldree. He and his pals were bullies in school, and quickly show that they have not improved one bit. They try to force the innocent-looking Gully into acting as their front man when they attempt various underhanded plots. Meanwhile, in a better part of town, Agnes is surrounded by beautiful objects but is neglected by her selfish parents. When these two young people, both of whom lack self-confidence, happen to meet, events take a surprising turn. From the author of *The Mysterious Misadventures of Clemency Wrigglesworth*, this Victorian page-turner is full of fascinating characters, breath-taking plot twists and enough suspense to keep readers engrossed right to the end of the story.



Marianne Adey

Aesop's Fables

Retold by Fiona Waters Illustrated by Fulvio Testa
Andersen £12.99 ISBN: 978-1849392471

This new edition provides a comprehensive and attractive collection of familiar and meaningful fables. Each short story is presented on a single page of text, with a large colourful illustration on the facing page. The fables are retold simply, in direct language, and the moral of each story is summarised clearly at the bottom of each text page. The choice of the font and the book design are modern rather than traditional, which makes the text appear attractive and accessible. The bright and bold illustrations are powerful in their simplicity and reflect the message of the text truthfully. Some of these fables are quite brutal and Fiona Walters avoids compromising the starkness of their messages. As a result this is a book for older children who can cope with unhappy endings and the negative consequences that result from some of the animals' behaviours. However, the clarity of the moral at the end of each story makes this an ideal book for sharing and discussing either at home or at school. It should be much enjoyed and could become a family favourite as the focus of debate and discussion about a range of moral issues.

Liz Dubber

A Tiger Tale

Written by Holly Webb Illustrated by Catherine Rayner
Scholastic (eB) £5.99 ISBN: 978-1407138633

Grandad has just died, but Kate can't understand why all the grown-ups are cheerfully sharing remembrances about him. Why aren't they as sad as she is? She will miss his so-comforting cuddles and special talks in his shed. When she retreats to the shed for comfort and a space apart, she dozes and apparently wakes to



discover that her toy tiger has turned into the real thing, wrapping itself warmly around her just as Grandad did. Kate keeps the tiger as "her special present from Grandad", telling no-one, and wondering herself whether he is real. When she loses the tiger and weeps bitterly for its loss, her Mum breaks down, sobbing for her lost father. Kate realises that she is not the only one grieving. This is a small, but exceptional, book which weaves a very human story around the aching loss and bitterness of grief, reminding you of that childhood time when the boundaries between real and imagined are blurred, and you don't really know what *death* means. Warmly recommended for confident readers.

Tina Massey

Thor is Locked in My Garage!!

Written by Robert J. Harris
Kelpies (eB) £5.99 ISBN: 978-1782501220

In *Thor is Locked in My Garage!!*, the hilarious sequel to *The Day the World went Loki*, brothers Greg and Lewis find another Norse God, this time in their Dad's shed. The two brothers are tormented by Loki for a second time when he returns to earth looking for the lost treasure that will allow him to bring the dying Asgard back to life and take control of the universe. As Greg, Lewis and their friend Susie try to foil Loki's plans he creates huge blizzards, bringing giant ice monsters to St Andrews in the height of summer. This enjoyable adventure has just the right mix of humour, excitement, thrills and tension to keep children entertained. The brotherly banter between Lewis and Greg will be familiar to those with siblings, although the exchanges between brothers Loki and Thor are slightly more violent! New character Susie is a delight; supremely confident, fearlessly brave and for some reason convinced that it is far more likely their town has been invaded by aliens rather than Norse Gods! This book is great fun and may encourage readers to seek out more novels or non-fiction choices featuring the Norse Gods.

Jane Hall



Nadine Dreams of Home

Written by Bernard Ashley Illustrated by Ollie Cuthbertson
Barrington Stoke £5.99 ISBN: 978-1781123690

Nadine, her mother and her little brother have fled the rebel fighting in Goma, in Africa, for a new life in London but her father has not been able to come with them. Everything about their new world is strange, sad and scary. They now live in a high rise flat in noisy London, surrounded by people speaking a language they cannot understand. Bernard Ashley crafted this story almost eighteen years ago, but, far from being outdated, the timeless sense of confusion, loss, isolation and grief evoked then, are even more relevant, poignant and powerful today. The dyslexia-friendly format aids accessibility and, with a wonderful ending, this is a very special story.

Gill Roberts

Jim's Lion

Written by Russell Hoban Illustrated by Alexis Deacon
Walker (R) £9.99 ISBN: 978-1406346022

There are elements of Patrick Ness' *A Monster Calls*, in this extraordinary, timeless fable by the inimitable Russell Hoban. First published in 2001, this edition is illustrated by Alexis Deacon, whose watercolour drawings probe the depths of Hoban's imagination, as a young boy dreams on a hospital bed. Jim is ill and afraid – afraid that he might never wake from his operation. With the help of nurse Bami, he overcomes his fear by stepping into the unknown and seeking out his animal finder. Only this will lead him back from the land of dreams into the world he almost left behind. This is a hard book to classify. A simple story, yet far more sophisticated and disturbing than a picture book, taking us into the dark corners which usually lie hidden, and, like all Hoban's work, it lingers long in the mind.

Richard Monte

