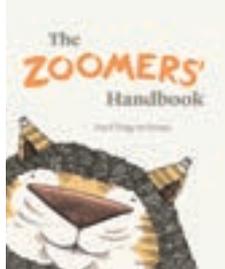


The Zoomers' Handbook

Written by Ana de Moraes Illustrated by Thiago de Moraes Andersen £11.99 ISBN: 978-1783442140

What is a Zoomer and what is their handbook for? Take a look inside this wonderfully imaginative volume and find out. Zoomers are not quite farmers, but neither are they zookeepers. The creatures they care for may seem familiar but are quite unlike any you will have encountered before – shigers with stripy wool, horsodiles for riding underwater, duckaroos whose eggs nest in their pouch, the polar cow who can make ice cream at milking time. These, and other equally whacky creature combinations, are superbly rendered by Thiago de Moraes while Ana de Moraes' entertaining descriptions dance over the pages creating a suitably interactive feel. With additional material to enjoy inside the covers, this is a unique book that children will enjoy again and again.



Megan Stanfield

The Day the Crayons Came Home



Written by Drew Daywalt Illustrated by Oliver Jeffers HarperCollins £12.99 ISBN: 978-0008124434

In this hilarious sequel to the acclaimed *The Day the Crayons Quit*, readers encounter a series of postcards sent to Duncan. They have been written by some of the lost and abandoned crayons, telling him of their experiences. Certain unhappy crayons just want to come home, some because they have been lost down the sofa or have melted in the sun. Others want to go and see the world, such as pea-green, who never gets used for anything. Their different stories are told in childlike coloured writing, with full colour drawings accompanying each postcard. Wonderfully amusing for older picture book readers, and adults.

Lucy Russell

Leo: A Ghost Story

Written by Mac Barnett Illustrated by Christian Robinson Chronicle £10.99 ISBN: 978-1452131566

Leo is a gentle ghost who lives by himself passing the time reading and drawing in an empty, dilapidated house. He is happy when a new family move in. He tries to make them feel welcome by making them tea and generally being helpful, but the family cannot see him and are afraid. Leo knows he has to leave and he sets off into the big, bewildering city looking for a new home and, hopefully, a friend. Happily, Leo meets Jane, a girl with lots of imagination and understanding parents, and they play together all day, but it is at night that the real adventure begins. This is not a scary ghost story. Like any other child Leo wants someone to notice him and love him just as he is. Small children are sure to love Leo just as he is because he is kind, helpful and very friendly. The illustrations have a charming retro feel. Everything is depicted in shades of blue and black, while Leo is shown by just an outline so it is possible to see through him.



Jan Lennon

Rude Cakes

Written and illustrated by Rowboat Watkins Chronicle £10.99 ISBN: 978-1452138510

There are plenty of books around about manners, most with human or animal characters, but this book is about cakes and giant Cyclopes. One of the cakes is rude – never saying please or thank you, sharing or waiting in line, but it is taught a lesson when a giant Cyclops mistakes it for a hat. It turns out that giant Cyclopes have impeccable manners, right down to saying sorry when they are wrong and putting rude cakes back where they belong – ready to go to sleep and have much better manners in the future. Rowboat Watkins, which is a pseudonym, of course, studied under Maurice Sendak, author of *Where the Wild Things Are*, which explains the fantasy and imagination within. The illustrations are light-hearted and full of funny detail, particularly the body language of excited giant Cyclopes. Every page has speech bubbles with funny asides that adults will enjoy even more than the younger audience. The page is used in interesting ways, leading to a smart piece of misdirection that will surprise readers. A sensible message delivered in a fun way.



Annalise Taylor



Flo of the Somme

Written by Hilary Robinson Illustrated by Martin Impey Strauss House £7.99 ISBN: 978-0957124561

This is a very unusual book for the text is written in the same rhythm as *This is the House that Jack Built*, but telling such a different story. The main character is Flo, a mercy dog who served in World War 1. She is representative of all the animals who served in that war and who, although they had no choice about being there or not, each served and did what they had to do to save lives. The poetic and rhythmic text, tells the story of a rescue of two pilots, and shows how many animals were involved, directly or indirectly, in that rescue. The detailed illustrations are painted in the muted colours of the battlefield, apart from the flashes of red on Flo's red cross and on the odd clumps of red poppies. This is a wonderful book, as this year commemorates the centennial anniversary of the battle of the Somme in 1916. This is a fantastic introduction for children into what conditions were like in that infamous battle.

Patricia Thompson

Dorrie and the Blue Witch

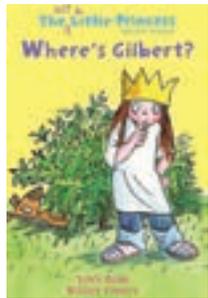
Written and illustrated by Patricia Coombs Egmont £5.99 ISBN: 978-1405277679

This is a beautiful reprint of the original 1974 text and illustrations which would make both a wonderful read aloud and the perfect book for those new to reading for themselves. For the most part, the text is in manageable chunks and the illustrations help to explain the action. Young witch, Dorrie, has been left alone in the house while her mother, the Big Witch, is out at a meeting about the return of Mildred, the bad witch. No sooner has the Big Witch gone than a mean Blue Witch arrives to take Dorrie away. Scary things happen in this story but Dorrie is so down to earth that she calmly solves one problem after another. Dorrie proves her worth time and again amongst a group of adult witches, rather than in a school setting. The pen and ink drawings are inextricably linked to Dorrie's



character, with effective facial expressions and evocative sketches of the witches' home. Will Dorrie be able to save the day? The high production values make this a lovely gift.

Annalise Taylor



Where's Gilbert?

Written and illustrated by Tony Ross and Wendy Finney Andersen £5.99 ISBN: 978-1783443048

It's a quiet day at the palace and the princess is playing with her teddy, Gilbert, in the garden, when her friend Ollie appears. Embarrassed at being found with a teddy, the princess quickly drops Gilbert in a bush – and so begins his traumatic adventure. After a dark night covered in bugs, Gilbert has a variety of adventures,

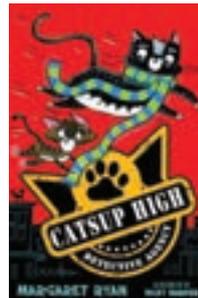
including being dropped in a river, rescued by a dustman, and snatched by an eagle before being dropped like a stone back into the princess' lap. Happily, she is no longer embarrassed to love him and promises never to be mean to him again. This is a great story for building up reading confidence. The six short chapters divide the plot into episodes that can be read separately. The text is presented in a large accessible font and the language is readable without being at all dull. The illustrations add hugely to the text with bright colours, movement and highly expressive faces on all the characters. There is plenty of humour here and some laugh-out-loud moments too.

Liz Dubber

The Catsup High Detective Agency

Written by Margaret Ryan Illustrated by Vicky Barker Catnip £4.99 ISBN: 978-1846471896

Margaret Ryan writes very funny books, usually picture-books, but this short novel is for readers who are already into chapters. When cats in Catsup keep disappearing the whole town is worried. Town detective Malarkey must solve the mystery, but, being the only detective in the agency, he is worried. He really needs an assistant, and so, he advertises. He is rather surprised when a clever kitten, with special powers, walks into his office. Sparkie might even be cleverer than her boss, so tension levels rise. Can the duo work together to find the catnappers, or will they be catnapped themselves? Black and white cartoon pictures break up the text making it accessible to readers moving on from picture books and add a lot to the humour.



Julia Jarman

The Owls of Blossom Wood: A Magical Beginning



Written by Catherine Coe Illustrated by Renée Kurilla Scholastic £4.99 ISBN: 978-1407156637

Best friends Katie, Eva and Alex transform into owls when they hide inside a hollow tree and are whisked away by magic to Blossom Wood. The creatures of the forest are desperate for them to help save the dying Moon Chestnut tree, which provides homes for so many of the wood's animals. Can the girls rise to the challenge? They discover a mole has been digging around the tree's roots, but can they alter the stubborn mole's

behaviour and encourage it to move home. Creative problem solving, teamwork and dealing with difficult people are all wrapped in a delightful and charming tale. Expressive black and white illustrations add additional magic for younger readers. This is the start of a new series that is bound to help children discover the magic of reading.

Benjamin Scott

The Princess in Black

Written by Shannon & Deal Hale Illustrated by LeUyen Pham Candlewick £6.99 ISBN: 978-0763678883

Princess Magnolia has a secret – when trouble calls she abandons her tea parties and heads to the broom cupboard where she transforms into the Princess in Black. Riding her trusty steed, Blacky, she takes on trouble wherever it is found – here, fighting the monsters threatening the goats in nearby fields. But, while our super-hero is away fighting monsters, her nosy aunt is trying to discover the true identity of the Princess in Black, and so the princess must return to the palace quickly before her aunt uncovers the truth and unmasks her. This is a super title for early readers, with plenty of interest – the two strands of the story are interwoven with a satisfying ending. The book is well-produced and feels substantial, but the text is manageable on each page for those growing in confidence and reading independently. Full colour illustrations provide interest and entertain throughout and the characters are clearly portrayed. A feisty female lead is always a winner and this is sure to be a popular series with younger readers.



Lucy Russell

When I am Happiest



Written by Rose Lagercrantz Illustrated by Eva Eriksson Gecko £7.99 ISBN: 978-1927271896

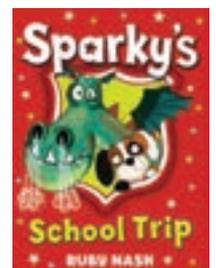
A beautiful story of a girl's love for her dad and how she copes when things go wrong. It's the end of the school year and Dani is starting to come to terms with the fact that her best friend Ella has moved away and she is back to her usual happy self. She's so happy with her life that she decides to write a book about it and she starts to think about all of the happy things that have happened during the past year. So, all is well in her world. That is until her dad, involved in an accident, is rushed to hospital and her life is turned upside down. With her grandparents to take care of her over the summer, while her dad recovers, Dani is happy again, especially when she hears about the surprise they've organised for her. The devastating events are portrayed simply and sensitively. The reader can experience Dani's feelings and how she copes with life through the emotive writing and charming illustrations.

Nicole Jordan

Sparky's School Trip

Written by Ruby Nash Illustrated by Clare Elsom Red Fox £5.99 ISBN: 978-1782953005

Sparky, the lovable, but unmagical puppy, is determined to learn magic, with Carl, his hapless trainee wizard, whilst at Mrs. Mothwick's Magic Academy. In this adventure they are looking forward to a school trip to a magical animal sanctuary. But first, they need to collect three enchanted items to make the Hideaway Spell, so that the Magic Academy cannot be seen by humans. However, things do not go well at the animal sanctuary and it looks as though someone is trying to sabotage their plans, putting the academy at risk of discovery. This is an enjoyable book, ideal for beginner readers moving on to longer books. There are fun illustrations throughout, including a map of the area at the beginning so that young children can see where the adventures are taking place. Onomatopoeias and spells are written in a variety of fonts to illustrate their meaning and add emphasis. The story has gentle excitement and peril which children should enjoy. The fun continues at the end of the book, with magical games and activities.



Jane Hall