



The Emergency Zoo

Written by Miriam Halahmy
Alma £6.99 ISBN: 978-1846883972

Before the outbreak of WWII the Ministry of Home Security recommended that domestic pets should be humanely destroyed as families would struggle to feed them if food rationing became necessary, and also, frightened, abandoned dogs could be a problem in

bombed areas. London schoolgirls, Tilly and Rosy, decide to hide their beloved pets and luckily they know a suitable derelict shack. Word spreads, other children bring their own pets along for safe keeping, and soon these two twelve-year-olds find they have started a zoo. But, what will happen to the animals when all the children are evacuated? Based on a little known historical fact, this is a charming and heart-warming story, set in a period full of fear and uncertainty as the country heads towards a catastrophic war. The resourceful friends simply refuse to let their pets become the first casualties of the conflict and if that means defying the adults around them then so be it. The author avoids sentimentality and certainly does not ignore the dangers to be faced, but her sympathetic and realistic tone give us a story to remember.

Jan Lennon

Whispers in the Graveyard

Written by Theresa Breslin
Egmont £6.99 ISBN: 978-1405281812

Solomon is having a rough time. Being bullied by his teachers, he hates school. He is dyslexic and he lives alone with his alcoholic father, after his mum walked out. The only place he feels safe is under the rowan tree in the old graveyard, but that all changes when the council move in and uproot it. It is easy to see why this book, so deservedly, won the CILIP Carnegie Medal in 1995. Child dyslexia is a difficult subject and this is explored through a gripping story. When the removal of the tree unleashes an evil power over the village, only Solomon seems to understand the danger. Soon he is battling demons far greater than his own disability and drawing on an inner strength he hardly knew he had. Theresa Breslin never underestimates the seriousness of her subject and the book, once started, is hard to put down.



Richard Monte

The Uncommons: The Crooked Sixpence



Written by Jennifer Bell
Corgi £6.99 ISBN: 978-0552572507

In the world of the uncommons, nothing is quite as it seems. Ordinary household objects, from candles to toilet brushes, have extraordinary and sometimes frightening powers. Ivy and Seb Sparrow discover this world when their grandmother is hospitalised after an accident and her house is ransacked. Their grandmother is in danger, and Ivy and Seb must journey into the hidden world of Lundinor to save her. The pace is fast,

the plot is action-packed and crammed with entertaining details about the quirky, secret world that mere mortals cannot see. There is a good balance of suspense, horror and humour. Seb and Ivy have a realistic, love-you-hate-you sibling relationship and they are characters that readers will warm to.

Yvonne Coppard

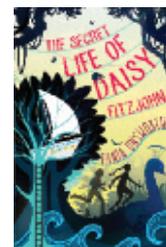
The Secret Life of Daisy Fitzjohn

Written by Tania Unsworth
Orion £6.99 ISBN: 978-1444010268

Daisy Fitzjohn has spent her whole life living in the huge mansion, Brightwood Hall, with only her mother, Caroline, for company. Caroline Fitzjohn lost her whole family when she was very young and since that day has made sure not to lose anything ever again.

She hoards items in boxes and refuses to let Daisy leave the grounds of the mansion. Then, Caroline disappears, leaving Daisy alone - until a stranger arrives at the old mansion. As Daisy has never left the grounds of the mansion, the only help she can rely on to oppose the sinister man in her home is that of her plethora of imaginary friends, a feature which adds a charming fantasy element to the narrative.

Davy Hall



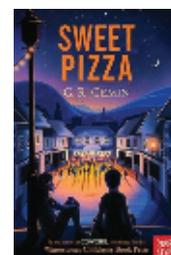
Sweet Pizza

Written by G.R. Gemin
Nosy Crow £6.99 ISBN: 978-0857636300

This skilfully told, heart-warming story of the diverse community in a small Welsh town, and the history of the Italian immigrants who made it their home, is testament to the strength of unlikely friendships and old loyalties. Family-run Café Morelli, is not attracting customers, nor are the other shops in the High Street.

Joe is Welsh and half Italian too and he is very proud of his grandfather's café but knows that if takings don't improve they will have to sell up. Along with pizza and Italian opera, Joe is determined to embrace his family roots and he asks his grandfather if he can record an oral history of his past. As Joe becomes fascinated by how the influx of Italian immigrants, during the war years, affected the town and its community, he is determined to bring them all together to revitalise the High Street. Joe attempts to revive the café with real Italian food and proper coffee but it takes Joe's ingenious ideas to get the local people through the door. He discovers that the past can influence the present as the town people work together. The various characters are cleverly drawn with sensitivity and humour. An entertaining read.

Louise Stothard



Echo Come Home



Written by Megan Rix
Puffin £5.99 ISBN: 978-0141357669

Jake's meningitis has left him with severe hearing loss, and the sheer frustration, anger and helplessness he experiences at this sudden powerlessness threatens to make him feel isolated. At eleven, he's moving to a new school and dreads trying to cope and form new friendships. Echo is a street dog living on scraps until animal rescue trains him as a hearing dog - a process engagingly explained by Megan Rix. She catches the reader's emotions effortlessly in her understanding of the problems deaf people face in succeeding in life, and how a loyal, loving, expertly-trained dog may help them triumph. Jake's confidence grows with Echo, he loses the wearying tinnitus which has prevented him sleeping and even makes a new friend who cares about both of them. When Echo is stolen by professional thieves, increasingly common now, Jake, together with his family and friends, set out to find him again. Megan Rix's understated, plain, unadorned writing quietly

touches the heart so that even non-dog lovers will be won over by this lovely story, which feels like real life. Warmly recommended.

Tina Massey

A Strange Land

Written by Alan Gibbons Illustrated by Alan Brown
Barrington Stoke £6.99 ISBN: 978-1781124321

Racist school bullies have a hold over Jack and pressure him to treat his new friend, Hassan, badly. Hassan is a Syrian refugee and the latest target of this group who think that England should be for the English, and white English people at that. Against his better judgement, Jack bows to the pressure.

However, forced to face the effects of his actions, he confesses the truth to Hassan. In the short word count that this format allows him, Alan Gibbons has crafted a moving story of character and friendship that considers contemporary issues of how refugees are integrated into existing communities, the power that bullies can exert in a school and the importance of doing the right thing and braving the consequences. This book will engage reluctant or struggling readers with its realistic characters and dilemmas, short chapters and fast pace.



Annalise Taylor

Operation Blackout

Written by Victor Watson
Catnip £6.99 ISBN: 978-1910611005



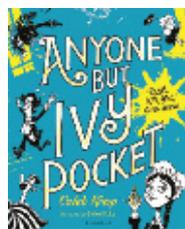
This is two brilliant wartime stories for the price of one - the story of Hannah, whose life is rapidly falling apart in the face of London's Blitz, and the story of Konrad, a half German half English boy who just happens to be related to Adolph Hitler. How these very different tales become one is Victor Watson's triumph. There's danger at every turn, espionage, some really strange characters and kids doing what kids like to do! Descriptions of the settings are so much of their time. The horror of the Blitz, the pure evil of the Nazi's corrupting powers and then the atmospheric grittiness of life in the Fens amongst the poorer farm workers. This was a time when life was anything but easy, but somehow the youngsters manage to win their own little wars within the context of that greater conflict that affects everything around them. When the younger readers have recovered from the roller coaster read that is *Operation Blackout* they will want to talk to their grandparents to find out what life in wartime was really like.

Trevor Thompson

Anyone but Ivy Pocket

Written by Caleb Krisp Illustrated by John Kelly
Bloomsbury £6.99 ISBN: 978-1408858646

Ivy Pocket is a young lady's maid, with a lively mind and a daring personality. She is full of remarkably inventive stories, and is afraid of no-one. Abandoned by her employer in Paris, she is soon recruited to deliver a precious and unusual jewel to a wealthy heiress in Suffolk. The story of Ivy's journey is filled with twists and turns, ghosts, magic and intrigue. Ivy is a determined girl, but invariably fails to see beyond the obvious to the deeper meaning of events and people. As a result, the reader is better informed than she is, as we deduce the dangers and recognise insincerities that she simply cannot see. This clever literary device keeps us reading, wondering when our intrepid but rather blinkered heroine will see the light. A highly entertaining and very funny read, combining drama, action, mystery and intrigue. Scary ghosts pepper the gruesome scenes of violence, but with a highly humorous touch. Recommended, but not for the faint-hearted.



Liz Dubber



We Are Giants

Written by Amber Lee Dodd
Quercus £6.99 ISBN: 978-1784294212

This debut novel by a young writer introduces readers to the challenges and advantages of dwarfism. She weaves into her compelling storyline such issues as family diversity, bereavement, displacement and friendship. The telling voice is authentic, the tone positive and the novel's central issue is conveyed with sensitivity, understanding and insight. Sydney, the narrator, at nine and a half years, has many reasons for feeling different from her friends. Her mother, Amy, is a mere 124 centimetres and her beloved father, also of diminished stature, has died. Sydney's one wish is to be small like her parents and to this end she practices, unsuccessfully, shrinking mantras taught to her by her late father. Unhappily, for economic reasons, Sydney, Mum and sister, Jade, have to move from their home in London to be near overbearing Grandma who lives in Portsmouth. The move triggers much emotional trauma for the family and the reader is drawn into Sydney's personal distress and her confrontational responses to challenges that face her at home and at school. Written with flair and insight the novel reaches a satisfyingly conclusion.

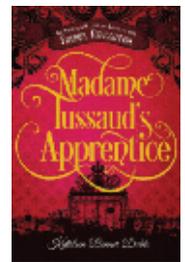
Catrina Nicholson

Madame Tussaud's Apprentice

Written by Kathleen Benner Duple
Alma £6.99 ISBN: 978-1846883811

Set in 18th century Paris, the story follows Celie Rousseau who is forced to resort to petty theft in order to survive. Amid rumours of rebellion and unrest, Celie and her partner in crime, Algernon, struggle from day to day until Celie is caught stealing from the King's brother. Saved from death by her artistic skills and Madame Tussaud's intervention, Celie finds herself taken away from the life she knows and thrust into the extravagance of Versailles. A very well-written novel, steeped in historical detail, this is an excellent introduction to the horrors of the French Revolution and the life and work of Madame Tussaud. The characters are well-developed and engaging, making you care about their fate during this extraordinary period of history. Although there is blossoming romance between Algernon and Celie, their relationship is far more complex than a typical 'teen romance', allowing the exploration of moral dilemmas, idealism and fanaticism. This will offer a very satisfying read to those who enjoy historical fiction, but also to anyone who enjoys a really good story.

Sue Wilsher



Orbiting Jupiter

Written by Gary D. Schmidt
Anderson £10.99 ISBN: 978-1783443949

At only fourteen, Joseph is already labelled a troublemaker for having a daughter, but his new rural foster family accept him for who he is. With clear rules and a compassionate, yet traditional, family, Joseph slowly opens up. However, a father's heartache at not knowing his baby daughter, Jupiter, never passes. Events get dangerously out of control once Joseph learns where Jupiter is being adopted and he leaves his new home to find her. Two-time Newbery Honour winning author, Gary D. Schmidt, has written this highly-thoughtful, compelling page-turner with a deceptive simplicity. It celebrates the uncomplicated life on a rural farm and the rediscovery of childhood through friendship. Despite the unintended yet tragic consequences, it reaffirms the power of love when labels are set-aside for humanity and acceptance. An emotionally powerful story, *Orbiting Jupiter* allows young readers to discover their own understanding of a complex dilemma, helping them on their own way to maturity. But, Si-Fi fans beware, the titles and the book covers can be very deceptive.

Benjamin Scott