

## Titles to engage young readers



### Attack of the Giant Slugs

Written by Kes Gray Illustrated by Garry Parsons  
Red Fox £5.99 ISBN: 978-1782953036

This is a brilliant book, even if the slugs are not even mentioned until page 51. But, the situation does begin to get really serious much later on in the story. Jack Beechwhistle, Junior Defender of the World, and his crew, Harry and Colin, devote all their time to saving the world - at least all their time when they are not in school. Jack is the organiser and trainer. All their missions are imaginary, of course, that is, until the slugs arrive and begin to grow. No imaginary enemies here as the whole school sees the slimy monsters. Jack and his crew do manage to *really* save the world this time. The first in a new series, this is an absolutely marvellous book. It moves at a headlong pace as Jack and his comrades move from one "rescue mission" to another, with barely a pause for breath. Very graphic black and white drawings are on most pages and the text is a good size - clear and easy to read.

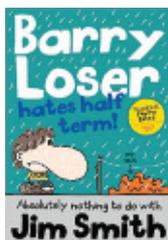
Patricia Thompson

### Barry Loser Hates Half Term

Written and illustrated by Jim Smith  
Egmont £6.99 ISBN: 978-1405269148

This is the seventh book starring the "keelest" (i.e. coolest) loser around. In this latest adventure Barry is not impressed when he is sent to Pirate Camp as he considers he has outgrown the camp, and, what's more, the rest of his gang, Bunky and Nancy, haven't gone, so Barry is left with all "the kiddywinkles". But this year is different, because the camp has been taken over by the cruel and lazy Morag, and its future is in doubt. So, Barry and the kiddywinkles set off to find hidden treasure to save the camp. Barry Loser and his friends are rather odd children, obsessed with their favourite TV character, Future Ratboy, and their obsessive behaviour and constant quoting from the show, may resonant with children who have their own TV favourites. Initially, they may seem rather shallow, appearing silly and annoying, hence Barry being sent to the camp by his parents. However, at heart, Barry wants to do the right thing, making him a good role model for young readers. The numerous, hilarious black and white line illustrations add even more fun to this whacky, surreal story.

Jane Hall



### Jack Dash and the Magic Feather

Written by Sophie Plowden Illustrated by Judy Brown  
Catnip £5.99 ISBN: 978-1846470998

Jack and his family have moved to a new house, in a new town, in the delightfully named road, Quarantine Street. After an encounter with a slightly crazy neighbour called Coco, Jack retreats to his empty new bedroom. Empty, except for an old desk, inside which he finds an old leather book. Inside the book, he finds an envelope, and inside the envelope is a large, very feathery, feather. He soon discovers that whatever he draws with the feather will come to life. But, the drawings have to be very accurate, because the feather brings to life exactly what is drawn. Unfortunately, Jack is not a very good artist. The Mayor of the town finds out about this magical feather and, seeing it as the route to a life of luxury for himself, is determined to get his hands on it. So, after making a truce with his crazy neighbour, Jack and Coco go on the run. The chase has all the elements of a real thriller. Zany, lively and hilarious, the whole book races

along at a furious pace, and is impossible to put down. The text is enhanced by riotous, madcap drawings. Brilliant.

Patricia Thompson



### Mr Baboomski and the Wonder Goat

Written by Richard Joyce Illustrated by Freya Hartas  
OUP £6.99 ISBN: 978-0192744609

This book has a silly title and an even sillier quote on the front cover - "This book is so funny, you will PATOOF yourself". Tom has moved, with his dad, to a caravan in a field in far Cornwall, as his dad has lost his job and his mum is working away. Life is now chaotic and unpredictable and he just really, really wishes it wasn't. Enter circus performer Mr Berto Socrates Baboomski from Escorvia and his strangely talented goat, Zoltan. Mr Baboomski, who speaks highly ornamented, mostly inaccurate English, is laugh-out-loud funny. When underhand, illegal and very unwholesome practices are discovered at a local company, threatening the environment and people's health, Tom and Mr Baboomski work to put things right. We gradually realise that Mr Baboomski may joke and caper to make Tom laugh, but he is also a firm friend - a kind of moral philosopher who is definitely on the side of right, as he pulls Tom firmly away from self-pity and consequent rudeness. A wonderfully zany story which will have you rolling with laughter, whilst also making you stop and think.

Tina Massey

### One Moonlit Night

Written by T. Llew Jones Illustrated by Jac Jones  
Pont £14.99 ISBN: 978-1848519756

This edition of *One Moonlit Night* originally written by T Llew Jones, and now adapted by Gillian Clark, National Poet of Wales 2008-2016, is a beautiful compilation of traditional Welsh tales. In the collection of twenty-six stories there is something that everyone will enjoy - an assortment of brave young men, scary giants, King Arthur and Merlin, witches and wizards and, of course, tales of love. There is a real sense of atmosphere in the tales. Each one is set in a real location i.e. Snowdonia, Meirionnydd and Cardigan Bay, yet here we also find magical and imaginary lands. Readers who know these areas well may see them with new eyes after reading of their enchanted past. The stunning illustrations by award-winning Jac Jones add a sense of wonder to the legends. This is an exquisite volume; the striking hardback cover hints at the delights inside. It is an ideal gift for young readers just discovering the delights of fables and folk tales, or as a first introduction to Wales and its magical past.

Jane Hall



### Spring According to Humphrey

Written by Betty G. Birney  
Faber & Faber £5.99 ISBN: 978-0571284184

It's an exciting time in Room 26 at Longfellow School as Humphrey, the class hamster, and his friends get ready for Family Fun Night. Humphrey eagerly watches his class plan and make arrangements to make this the best Fun Night ever. Not only this, but Room 26 is on spring watch as they observe the signs of winter ending and the new season beginning. One student brings frogspawn into class which raises new

questions on growing, family and belonging. Humphrey is a gentle protagonist. He quietly observes the goings on in the class and yet he spends time going on secret night-time adventures, visiting pets in other classrooms. He is warm and lovable and has a naïve, but earnest, view of the world around him. As Humphrey explores his surroundings, the reader learns lessons with him, such as a family does not have to be biologically connected, and helpful tips for dealing with stressful situations. Whilst Humphrey is never going to be the fastest paced adventurer a young reader might encounter, he is very appealing to the quieter, more thoughtful child. This satisfying, tender-hearted read, with some lovable characters, is the twelfth instalment in the series.

Rebecca Watts

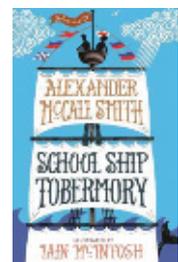
## Help! I'm an Alien

Written by Jo Franklin

Troika £6.99 ISBN: 978-1909991293

Ten-year-old Daniel Kendall, known as Oddbod to his family, is different to them all. He is the only one with brown hair and eyes and is much taller than any of them, in fact, he thinks he is taller than everyone in the world. A comment by his deeply annoying sister, about being an alien, makes him start to think that she is right and that he was left here on earth accidentally. Aided and abetted by his two best friends, Nerdy George and Freddo the Fartmaster, they become convinced that he is from Planet Kepler 22b. Thus begins the hilarious journey to find a way to send him back from whence he came, causing havoc and mayhem for everyone along the way. Told in the first person and enhanced by the black and white cartoon style illustrations, this is a fast-paced and funny story that will make you laugh out loud. However, wrapped up in a very funny book are important messages for children about feeling insecure, the importance of friendships and the need to belong. This is the first in what will be a very popular series about Daniel, his friends and family.

Annie Everall



## School Ship Tobermory

Written by Alexander McCall Smith Illustrated by Iain McIntosh  
Birlinn £9.99 ISBN: 978-1780273334

Setting a school story on board a sailing ship opens up an interesting and varied assortment of plot opportunities. In the first book of the series Ben and his twin sister, Fee, arrive at this highly unusual boarding school. They quickly get to know the sea-faring teaching staff and also their fellow pupils who

have come to the school ship, Tobermory, from all over the world. The excitement starts almost immediately as some of the pupils are chosen to be extras in a film being made aboard the Albatross, another ship in the area. The sharp-eyed children start to suspect that the crew of the Albatross are not actually making a film at all, but are engaged in a rather more sinister activity. The story is full of lively characters who are further brought to life by the many amusing line drawings and whole page illustrations. The second book in the series, *The Sands of Shark Island*, takes the ship, the staff and the pupils to the Caribbean where another thrilling adventure awaits them.

Jan Lennon

## Electricgirl

Written by Jo Cotterill Illustrated by Cathy Brett  
OUP £6.99 ISBN: 978-0192743558

Holly is an ordinary schoolgirl, until the day she falls out with her best friend, Imogen. She goes to the hillside where there is a huge mobile phone mast and, after being hit by lightning, discovers she now has superpowers. Her younger brother, Joe, who is obsessed with superheroes, becomes her mentor. He helps and guides her, showing her how to channel her powers. They then



embark on a frightening mission to thwart the world-domination plans of Professor Macavity and rescue Holly's missing friend. The book is part text and part graphic novel. The numerous pages of illustrations in pen and ink are vivid and really enhance the story, providing impact in tense situations. It is exciting, thrilling, but easy to read - tense enough to create suspense but without the nightmares. The concept is fresh and interesting with the main character a girl with superpowers. Look out for the sequel, *Electricgirl* and the *Deadly Swarm*, when the trio again take on Professor Macavity whilst on holiday in Cornwall.

Ingrid Fox



## The Person Controller

Written by David Baddiel Illustrated by Jim Field  
HarperCollins £6.99 ISBN: 978-0007554546

With a dad obsessed with bacon sandwiches and a mum who cannot drag herself away from 'Cash in the attic', twins, Ellie and Fred, have to occupy themselves. They love computer games, so, when dad accidentally breaks their controller by sitting on it, they look online for a new one, and discover a jewel-encrusted device. From that moment on their lives change, for they can use it to control the person who wears the special bracelet that came with it. Of course, Fred and Ellie are too tempted not to use it! Fred's dream to be a professional footballer, even though he has no football skills whatsoever, look like they might come true as Ellie uses the controller to make him play like a professional. When the school bullies find out about the power of their new controller, it all goes wrong and some very important life lessons are learnt by both parties. With plenty of humour and tongue-in-cheek characters, gaming fans will be wishing they had their own personal person controller!

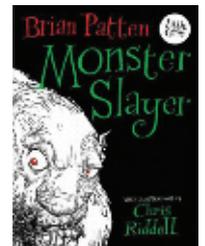
Nicole Jordan

## Monster Slayer

Written by Brian Patten Illustrated by Chris Riddell  
Barrington Stoke £6.99 ISBN: 978-1781125489

The old English tale of the monster Grendel who is outwitted and slain by the heroic warrior Beowulf, is one of the most well-known ancient stories. It is good to see the myth retold in the excellent *Little Gems* series for younger readers. Brian Patten, an established poet, uses lyrical prose to conjure up the grotesque image of the monster who lives in the oozing, festering marshland beyond the majestic Great Hall, where the king and his people live. Children's Laureate, Chris Riddell, adds the illustrations in his inimitable style, as hero and foe fight to the death. The perfect book for getting boys who are reluctant to read, hooked on reading.

Richard Monte



## Moon Princess

Written by Barbara Laban  
Chicken House £6.99 ISBN: 978-1908435934

After her mother mysteriously disappears, Sienna and her father move to Shanghai, where Sienna is left in the charge of a cold-hearted housekeeper. Feeling very alone and unhappy, Sienna and her invisible dog, Rufus, set out to find her mother. What follows is a mystical, action-packed, exciting detective story set against the backdrop of Chinese culture and customs, with preparations for the traditional Moon Festival playing their part in the suspense. The concept of the invisible, protective animal, that can only be seen by those who are tuned in, builds on the enduring and attractive themes of imaginary friends and protective daemons, or guardians. Will Sienna succeed and will the family be reunited once more? A quiz at the end of the book helps children to find out what their own invisible animal might be.

Yvonne Coppard