



### Beauty and the Beast

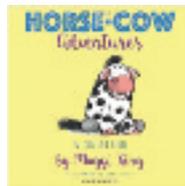
Retold by Anna Milbourne  
Designed by Jenny Hilborne  
Illustrated by Lorena Alvarez  
Usborne £9.99 ISBN: 978-1474920544

This simple retelling of the classic fairytale is presented to the reader in a sturdy, hardback and very attractive format – perfect for a newly independent reader to explore alone. The simple text and the bright, very colourful illustrations, enhanced by the hidden flaps and the intricate, peep-through windows, make this ideal for very young readers. Follow brave Belle to the magical home of the Beast and watch her love set him free by turning him back into a handsome prince. Also in the *Peep Inside a Fairy Tale* series are *Cinderella* and *Little Red Riding Hood*.

Martin Kromer

### Horse-Cow Adventures

Written by Maggi King  
Illustrated by Jake Tebbit  
Matador £9.99 ISBN: 978-1788037365



Horse-Cow is a crazy, mixed-up cuddly toy, half horse and half cow, that belongs to Ella, a lady confined to a wheelchair. This collection of very short stories sees Horse-Cow having five different adventures - meeting Ella for the first time in the hospital, trying unsuccessfully to bake a cake, going boating and falling in the river, going for a walk with Ella's friend and her naughty dog, and playing with Little Gracie when she comes to visit with her dad. However, at the end of each little adventure we see Horse-Cow happily falling asleep tucked up with Ella. With minimal text and hilarious, very colourful, cartoon-like illustrations on every page these stories will appeal to very young readers. Whilst enjoying the five stories young children will come to realise that life in a wheelchair can still be full of fun, despite the challenges that have to be faced.

Sinead Kromer

### Queen Munch and Queen Nibble



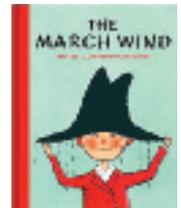
Written by Carol Ann Duffy  
Illustrated by Lydia Monks  
Two Hoots £12.99 ISBN: 978-1509829262

Two delightfully different Queens are as opposite as they could possibly be in this rollicking story by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy. Queen Munch is bustling, jolly, loves brightly coloured frocks and really, really enjoys her food. Beyond the town is the Big Dark Forest, which separates Queen Munch's Queendom from her neighbour, Queen Nibble. Queen Munch invites her to stay but Queen Nibble is quiet and retiring, doesn't enjoy her food at all and is nervous about her visit. Her one delight is making wonderful rain jewellery and it is this skill which brings the two Queens together. The amusing and colourful text is ideal for new readers. The illustrations are a mixture of splashes of rich, warm colours and cooler tones with clever collage, highlighting the differences between the two Queens. Queen Munch is determined to share her love of life and food with her new friend and through gentle persuasion, and the magic of a delicious strawberry, Queen Nibble finds her appetite. The two learn to value and enjoy their very different lifestyles and decide to stay with each other every year. A lovely celebration of character, talents and unlikely friendships.

Louise Stothard

### The March Wind

Written by Inez Rice  
Illustrated by Vladimir Bobri  
The Bodleian Library £12.99  
ISBN: 978-1851244614



On a very windy day in March a little boy finds a large hat in a puddle in the gutter. With difficulty, the little boy puts the hat on his head and becomes a marching soldier, a galloping cowboy, a sneaking bandit, a stately judge, a song-and-dance man, but then someone yells "Hey!". The March Wind, angry at losing his hat, flaps and blusters and blows. He claims the hat as his own and, putting the hat on his head, thanks the boy with a smile and blows away. Did the little boy imagine it all? Will anyone believe him if he tells them his story? The beautifully designed pages portray limited, clear text and captivating illustrations which are vibrant and full of life. The depictions of the March Wind are particularly striking. First published in 1957, this is a wonderful, timeless story about make-belief and the power of the imagination.

Sinead Kromer

### Swashbuckle Lil and the Jewel Thief

Written by Elli Woollard  
Illustrated by Laura Ellen Anderson  
Macmillan £5.99 ISBN: 978-1509808847



Despite the title this book contains two short stories, *The Jewel Thief* and *Party, Me Hearty!* about an ordinary little girl with a vivid imagination, and her red parrot called Carrot. In the first story Stinkbeard, the nasty pirate, tries to steal a ruby ring from the museum. Fortunately, Lil, who is actually a secret pirate, is on a school trip to the museum. Can she thwart Stinkbeard's plans? Lil is invited to a boring birthday party, in the second story, but it definitely gets more exciting when Stinkbeard and his pet crocodile turn up, and Lil has to save the day again. Almost pocket-sized, a perfect format for little hands, with very short chapters in each story. Rip-roaring, rhyming text interspersed on every page by lively, whacky, black and white illustrations make this a book that will make young readers chuckle and giggle, returning to it over and over again.

Martin Kromer

### Rabbit and Bear: The Pest in the Nest

Written by Julian Gough  
Illustrated by Jim Field  
Hodder £9.99 ISBN: 978-1444934267

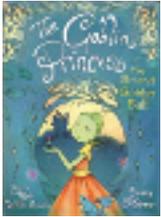


All Rabbit wants is peace and quiet. She has just woken up after her winter sleep and Bear is snoring loud enough to hurt her ears. Very grumpily, she heads back to her own burrow, but then discovers Woodpecker has moved into the nearby tree. The bang, bang, banging as Woodpecker pecks the tree trying to build a nest makes Rabbit angrier and angrier. It is her friend, Bear, who wakes from his sleep and shows Rabbit a different way of looking at the world and a path to finding calm and happiness. The second in this series about Bear and Rabbit is as fabulously funny as the first. Jim Field's rich, glorious,

colour illustrations work in perfect harmony with Julian Gough's text. The messages of the story, about friendship, wisdom and the impact of looking at things in a positive way are powerful, without being preachy, and equally pertinent for children and adults. The fully illustrated stories offer children a great reading opportunity to help their transition from picture books to longer story books that they can read for themselves.

Annie Everall

## The Goblin Princess: The Grand Goblin Ball



Written by Jenny O'Connor  
Illustrated by Kate Willis-Crowley  
Faber & Faber £6.99 ISBN: 978-0571316601

There is going to be a party at Goblin Castle, so there is much work to be done. Cobwebs need to be repaired, maggoty food must be prepared and extra dust must be scattered before the guests arrive.

Everyone is invited except for the hobgoblins who live under Hob Mountain, but it seems that these unwelcome guests are planning to come along anyway. They intend to tidy and clean the castle so thoroughly that the royal family will be the laughing stock of the goblin world. Matty, the goblin princess, and her pet dragon, Smokey, must thwart their plans. Children will love a world where good manners are frowned upon, being as dirty as possible is a very good thing and food fights are an accepted party game. The colour illustrations are great fun and the book ends with some recipes for goblin party food.

Jan Lennon

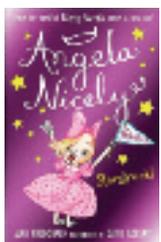
## Polly and the Puffin: The New Friend

Written by Jenny Colgan  
Illustrated by Thomas Docherty  
Little, Brown £5.99 ISBN: 978-1510200906



Polly does not want to go to her new school, mainly because she cannot take Neil, her pet puffin, with her. Then, when she does go she finds it very difficult to make friends. She argues with another child, Ronita, about which bird is best, Polly's puffin or Ronita's parrot. The teacher's solution is that both girls should bring their birds into school. However, when the two birds behave very badly, the chaos that they cause brings the two girls together, and their friendship blossoms. This is a lovely story, about friendship and about the anxieties that children have about first going to school. It is told with humour and sympathy. The text is simple, with no long complex sentences and, using only a limited palette, the illustrations are very appropriate, complementing the text. This gentle story will be very reassuring for any child who is anxious about school and who thinks they will find it difficult to make friends.

Pat Thompson



## Angela Nicely: Starstruck!

Written by Alan MacDonald  
Illustrated by David Roberts  
Stripes £4.99 ISBN: 978-1847157775

Poor Angela Nicely really doesn't mean to keep getting into trouble, but, just like her next-door neighbour, Dirtie Bertie, she usually does. In this sixth addition to the brilliant series, Angela gets up to trouble in three different short stories. Firstly, she is desperate to meet her favourite boy band, New Boyz, who are performing in her town. So, when mum agrees that she can go to see them, she can't believe it. But in her customary style, she ends up trying to do something she shouldn't and she somehow ends up backstage in the New Boyz dressing room. In the second story, Angela ends up pushing the judge of the local 'Best Kept Gardens' competition into their pond and finally in the third tale, she decides that being an agony aunt is her next adventure, which of course, goes horribly

wrong. With great fun characters and suitably comedic illustrations, here is another winner from this awesome duo.

Nicole Jordan

## Cowboy Pug

Written by Laura James  
Illustrated by Églantine Ceulemans  
Bloomsbury £5.99 ISBN: 978-1408866382



This is the second title in the series about Lady Miranda and her dog, Pug, and their adventures together. The first title in the series was shortlisted for the 2017 Waterstones Children's Book Prize and the third title, *Safari Pug*, will be published in November.

In this story, a game of cowboys with Pug leads them into a visit to the riding stables to look for a horse, meeting new friends, an encounter with the police, exciting times at the county fair and an attempt to stop cattle rustlers. These are simple, light-hearted stories with the gentle slap-stick humour that young children love. The illustrations capture the mad-cap humour of the text. Large font size and accessible language make the book accessible for newly emergent readers.

Annie Everall

## The Scruffs

Written and illustrated by Hannah Shaw  
Scholastic £5.99 ISBN: 978-1407161341

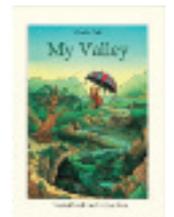


The Scruffs are a motley collection of animals living quite happily in a dilapidated, untidy and flea-ridden pet shop. They are quite determined not to be bought by anyone as they see no reason to leave, enjoying games of hide and seek whilst their owner sleeps away the day. The illustrations are detailed, hilarious and a wonderful accompaniment to the amusing text. When Ursula, a most immaculate, spoilt and jewelled cat, joins the pets, she is most unhappy with her new surroundings. The other animals are not sure what to make of her until she courageously saves Lost, the budgie, from the jaws of a hungry cat and becomes one of the family. So, when it looks as though Ursula is about to be sold, it is up to the rest of the pets to come up with a plan. This is an ideal text for reading alone with plenty of action, straight-forward text and attractive illustrations to maintain interest.

Louise Stothard

## My Valley

Written and illustrated by Claude Ponti  
Translated by Alyson Waters  
Elsewhere £19.99 ISBN: 978-0914671626



Originally published in 1998 in Paris, this work of great imagination is a large format picture book with the potential to absorb and fascinate young children. It consists of large-scale colourful illustrations of an imaginary valley occupied by families of furry-tailed creatures called Twims. At first, we are introduced to the valley, and then to the family of Poochie-Blue, the Twims who acts as the narrator. Ensuing pages offer a series of facts about the valley and its occupants. There is no particular narrative to the book - each page presents an episode or aspect of the Valley, its occupants or its weather or seasons, in no particular order. Nevertheless, some children will enjoy studying the overview illustration to locate the various sites, and may be stimulated to make up stories and adventures of their own, based on the landscape and characters. There's certainly enough here to stimulate some exciting imaginative play and conversation, for those who are willing to suspend belief and become absorbed into this strange fantasy landscape.

Liz Dubber