

Convincing novels



The Secret Keepers

Written by Trenton Lee Stewart
 Illustrated by Diana Sudyka
 Chicken House £6.99 ISBN: 978-1911077282

A beautiful antique pocket watch, discovered high up in a hole in an old wall, could be the answer to Rueben's mother's financial worries. However, when he tries to sell his treasure Rueben discovers this is no ordinary timepiece. The magical watch can give him fifteen minutes of invisibility, but it also has other secrets and powers and, as its history is slowly revealed, Rueben finds himself involved in a dangerous mission to stop the watch falling into the wrong hands. This fast-moving tale of old mysteries and new adventures is full of puzzles to be solved, deadly traps to be avoided and, most importantly, villains to be outwitted. The book is over five hundred pages long, but the tension never flags and the hold-your-breath moments come thick and fast. The characters, both good and very, very bad, are interesting, but it is the twists and turns of the plot that make this book so appealing.

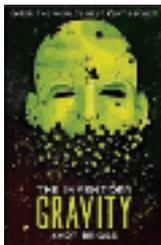
Jan Lennon

The Inventory: Gravity

Written by Andy Briggs
 Scholastic £6.99 ISBN: 978-1407161808

Hidden under a small town, the Inventory hides an amazing collection of incredible technology, for which the world is not yet ready. However, since a catastrophic raid much of this has fallen into the wrong hands. Dev and his friends must do what they can to help Dev's uncle, Charlie Parker, and the rest of the team recover some of the missing items, but at what cost? This is a gadget geek's paradise. Full of amazing, and often scary, technology that allows them to defy gravity amongst other things, this is an action-packed thrill ride for Dev and his friends. From the first page, Andy Briggs throws his reader into the thick of the action, with combat scenes and explosions galore. But, there is also a gentler side to the story, as Dev finds out more about himself and the man he calls his uncle. This title is the third in *The Inventory* series, following on from the equally exciting *The Black Knight* and *Iron Fist*.

Sue Wilsher



Who Let the Gods Out?

Written by Maz Evans
 Chicken House £6.99 ISBN: 978-1910655412

Elliot Hooper lives with his mum on the family farm, but his mum isn't well and we soon realise she has early-onset dementia. Elliot is desperately trying to conceal this fact from school and the authorities, fearing he will be taken into care if they find out. But the bills are mounting up and a loan company used by his mum has just called in a debt. Into this precarious situation crashes Virgo, an immortal being from heavenly Elysium, home of the Gods. When she falls through the cowshed roof, she describes herself as a 'Constellation of the Zodiac Council' on a mission to visit an earthbound prisoner of the Gods. Elliott tags along, but her mission goes horribly wrong. An action-packed adventure ensues, involving several Greek gods who get Elliot involved in dramatic encounters with their enemies. The story moves fast and includes numerous mythological allusions which will be noticed by those who know the Greek myths well. The main characters are well-drawn and although, occasionally, the drama veers into slapstick, overall, this is an exciting read, which those who can suspend their disbelief will enjoy.

Liz Dubber

A Seven-Letter Word

Written by Kim Slater
 Macmillan £9.99 ISBN: 978-1509801121

Scrabble was an obsession Finlay shared with his mum before she suddenly left home. Now his dad won't even have her name mentioned. Contact with a mysterious online Scrabble player plants a sense of unease in the reader and suspense grows. The traumatic effect on Finlay of his mother's disappearance is handled with insight and sensitivity. Finlay's heart-breaking struggle with a debilitating stutter, bullies at school and a desperate search for his mum will have you hooked. There is pace, wit, pathos and humour in a book that looks and feels engaging, inside and out.



Yvonne Coppard

See You in the Cosmos

Written by Jack Cheng
 Puffin £6.99 ISBN: 978-1041365602



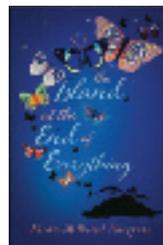
Eleven-year-old Alex takes care of his mum, because most of the time she is unresponsive to him or to her own needs. His father is dead and his brother lives away. All Alex wants to do is build a rocket and launch a golden ipod into space at the Southwest High Altitude Rocket Festival. He believes his recordings, about his life and his world, will help other life-forms in the cosmos understand what life on Earth is really like. In his dysfunctional world, Alex struggles with the big questions – "Where do I come from?", "Who's out there?", and, above all, "How can I be brave?". In his search for answers, he sets off on a remarkable road trip that turns his whole life upside down. An incredibly fresh, original and captivating story. Alex is endearing, funny and at the same time achingly vulnerable. His literal approach and understanding to the people in his life and the events unfolding around him are indicative of someone on the autism spectrum, though this is not stated. Along his journey, he meets an array of other people, many with their own issues, but all of whom end up being fiercely protective of him. A wonderful compelling read.

Annie Everall

The Island at the End of Everything

Written by Kiran Millwood Hargrave
 Chicken House £6.99 ISBN: 978-1910002766

This is Kiran Millwood Hargrave's second novel following *The Girl of Ink and Stars* which won the 2017 Waterstones Children's Book Prize. It is a deeply affecting tale about segregation and its impact on families and communities. Drawing on an episode from history, when Culion Island in the Philippines was home to the largest leprosy colony in the world, it tells the story of Ami who is forcibly separated from her sick mother. When a new regime arrives on the island and clinically sets about dividing 'touched' and 'untouched' people, the harmonious existence, where people have cared for each other, is destroyed, and Ami is sent to an orphanage on another island. Along with two other children, Ami embarks on a remarkable journey to return home.



and be reunited with her mother. Woven through this beautifully written tale is the vivid motif of butterflies which provide hope and inspiration for its young heroine, but whose fragile existence needs protection. This is a story that will move you to tears, but never becomes sentimental.

Elaine Chant



Fir

Written by Sharon Gosling
Stripes £7.99 ISBN: 978-1847158239

This excellent horror novel immediately captures the readers' interest as it sets off at a very fast pace from the very beginning. It employs many characteristics typical of the horror genre, whilst also giving us the original setting of the forests of North Sweden. The huge

house in the fir plantation that the Stromberg family move into comes complete with a terrifying housekeeper and several abandoned rooms that gradually give up their secrets as the novel progresses. The story is grounded in themes of ecological responsibility as the family are warned to inflict no further damage on the ancient woodland that forms a portion of their estate. This, combined with their housekeeper's belief in ancient folklore, creates an ominous atmosphere as the fir trees surrounding the house trap our narrator, closing in on her claustrophobically and potentially hiding all manner of dangerous beasts and spirits. The author brings the whole novel to an ending that manages to be both reassuringly satisfying and intriguingly open. Highly recommended to all those readers that enjoy a sense of tension as they read.

Annalise Taylor

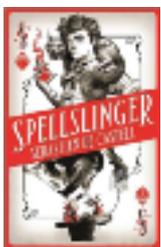
The Trap

Written by Alan Gibbons
Orion £7.99 ISBN: 978-1780622453

Amir's family have been trying to hide and move on ever since his brother Majih was apparently killed in Syria and so labelled an Islamic Extremist. But, like everything in this fast-paced thriller, nothing is as it seems on the surface. Unknown to his family and friends, Majih actually survived and is now an undercover MI5 asset, tasked with infiltrating a new terror plot masterminded by the man who recruited him in the first place. Majih fights both for his freedom and to stop an atrocity in mainland Britain, whilst Amir and his family still have to pay the consequences of being linked to a known terrorist. Alan Gibbons avoids the simplicity of a news story and looks at the complex motivations that lead good people to make bad decisions. He isn't afraid to shine an unflinching and critical spotlight on all the parties involved and show how easy it is to be ensnared by traps on either side of the issue.



Benjamin Scott



Spellslinger

Written by Sebastien de Castell
Hot Key £12.99 ISBN: 978-1785761317

Action-packed, often violent, beguilingly unpredictable, peopled with credible, if offbeat, characters in a frontier-land of deserts, forests and caves, *Spellslinger* is also splutteringly funny. Kellen is the son of two great mages, his younger sister

Shalla threatening to outdo both, and yet his own magic refuses to waken. If he cannot prove himself as a Jan'Tep he will be reduced to a Sha'Tep, a mere servant. Kellen is like so many teenagers, wondering who he is, what he can achieve and what kind of person he may become. Faced with a public duel of magic, he uses bluff and psychology to avoid defeat, only for his sister to decry him for cheating. Now, he must live as an outcast, seeking the truth about his society and his own history, and using both quick-thinking and his fighting ability to stay alive. He is supported by Ferius, a kind of gypsy figure with a laconic wit who defers to none, and Reichis, a ferocious, flying squirrel. Kellen learns to listen to what people

say while working out what they really mean and how to temper revenge with humanity. Invigorating, innovative, full of strong female role models, witty and memorable. The first of a series of six.

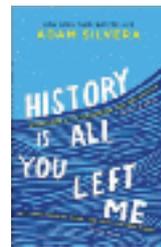
Tina Massey

I Have No Secrets

Written by Penny Joelson
Electric Monkey £7.99 ISBN: 978-1405286152

Jemma is fourteen years old and has severe cerebral palsy. Unable to communicate or move, she has to rely on her family and her carers for everything. She is very smart, has a really sharp mind and has a really inquisitive nature. She knows all sorts of things about everyone because she finds they reveal their secrets to her. A local young man has been murdered and the police currently do not have any leads, but she knows who did it, because he told her, thinking there was nothing she could do about it! This might be about to change but can she find a way to reveal who the killer is before he finds a way of stopping her for good? An outstanding thriller, seen through the perspective of a unique narrator. The plot twists and turns and the tension builds really well. Family relationships and dynamics are explored, characters are well-drawn and Jemma portrays a very positive image, whilst making the reader appreciate the challenges faced by those experiencing this disability. This heart-stopping and totally compelling read is a debut novel from an author who is definitely one to watch.

Annie Everall



History is All You Left Me

Written by Adam Silvera
Simon & Shuster £7.99 ISBN: 978-1471146183

When Griffin's first love, Theo, moves from New York to California for college, the two boys agree to break-up to avoid the pain of a long-distance relationship, whilst vowing to remain close friends. But, even when Theo

meets and falls for a new boyfriend, Jackson, they remain very close, with Griffin still longing for the day when Theo will return and they will be together forever. But, when Theo dies in a drowning accident, Griffin must come to terms with the loss of his first love and his future. This is a sensitive examination of grief and how it affects everyone in different ways. Adam Silvera's writing style will appeal to his YA audience, with its many pop-culture references. The chapters effectively alternate between the present and the past so that whilst readers are sharing Griffin's grief, they are also sharing his growing love for Theo and, eventually, the reason why his grief is so deep. The characters are complex and believable which helps readers to empathise. There is a strong positive emphasis on safe sex, although some readers may find the parents' easy acceptance of young sexual activity somewhat rose-tinted. A moving debut novel.

Jane Hall

Amy Chelsea Stacie Dee

Written by Mary G. Thompson
Chicken House £7.99 ISBN: 978-1910655818

This is a story of the kidnapping and imprisonment of two teenage girls and the resulting terrible consequences for both them and their families. Similarities between recent novels and films can be made, but this novel has an extra unexpected twist. Dark secrets, anguish and fear are intermingled with immense loyalty, friendship and family bonds. Amy was kidnapped six years earlier, together with her best friend and cousin. When she finally returns home, she cannot tell anyone where she has been or what has happened for fear of dreadful reprisals. She is desperate to protect her secrets, but her family are understandably anxious to make sense of her reluctance to tell them everything. This scary, exciting and captivating novel is a real page-turner.

Ingrid Fox

