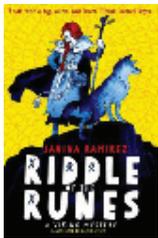


### Riddle of the Runes



Written by Janina Ramirez  
 Illustrated by David Wyatt  
 OUP £6.99  
 ISBN: 978-0192766335

Alva, a headstrong Viking girl, together with her sniffer wolf, Fen, loves nothing more than solving mysteries. When an English monk arrives in her village bringing news of a kidnapper on the mountain, she is the first to follow the trail, much to her Uncle

Magnus' annoyance. But even Uncle Magnus soon realises how important Alva is for the investigation and it is not long before her keen detective skills are leading them to her father's treasure. Historian, Janina Ramirez, accurately conjures up all the treachery and intrigue of the Viking world, with a glossary of riddles and runes adding to the suspense. David Wyatt's black and white illustrations perfectly capture the wooden villages, craggy mountains and pine trees of the Scandinavian landscape.

Richard Monte

### The Girl Who Thought Her Mother Was a Mermaid

Written by Tania Unsworth  
 Illustrated by Helen Crawford-White  
 Zephyr £10.99  
 ISBN: 978-1788541671

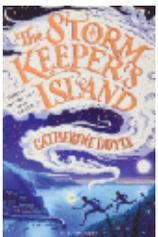


Tania Unsworth grips the reader from the start by providing *unusual* information about the main character very factually. Immediately, the reader wants to understand why Stella Martin keeps having the same recurring dream, why she sleepwalks, and why she is so *strange*, as claimed, albeit kindly, by Mrs Chapman. Stella, who is frightened of water but fascinated with the sea, seeks the answers to the whole mystery of her mother's death, but her father is consumed by grief and her grandmother's memories are fading with dementia. The realistic and the magical are intertwined with exquisite skill so that the implausible becomes plausible and Stella's urgency to find answers becomes the reader's urgency too. This story is a rare treat, being powerfully and beautifully memorable.

Gill Roberts

### The Storm Keeper's Island

Written by Catherine Doyle  
 Bloomsbury £6.99  
 ISBN: 978-1408896884



Fionn and his irritating older sister, Tara, are forced by a family crisis to stay with their paternal grandfather on Arranmore Island. From the moment he arrives, Fionn has strange experiences. He discovers that his grandfather, a secretive and eccentric man, is the Storm Keeper, possessed of magical powers to keep Arranmore safe. But his grandfather is now old and frail, and dark forces are rising. It's time for a new Storm Keeper to be chosen. Catherine Doyle's evocation of the wildness of nature echoing the

chaotic emotions of a bereaved and disintegrating family, and the charm of Fionn and his grandfather, make this tale stand out. It's a satisfying read for young readers new to the genre of magical realism.

Yvonne Coppard

### The Sand Dog

Written by Sarah Lean  
 HarperCollins £6.99  
 ISBN: 978-0008165819

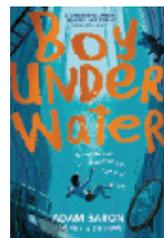


The book begins with Azi worrying about his grandfather's two year absence. Now, he lives on a Mediterranean island with his easily angered uncle - he goes to school and he works at uncle's restaurant, but, who is he, where does he come from, and *where* is Grandad? He loves watching a nesting sea turtle on the beach and is helped by his newly-found stray dog and his new friend, Beth, but he cannot rest until he knows the truth about his birth and why his grandfather abandoned him. There are evocative descriptions of Azi's island home, of the turtles and of the wildlife, but you really come to feel for this spiky, determined little boy who is prepared to risk everything he has to discover who he is. It's a book about families, addiction, migration and finding unexpected happiness around you, with real kindness at its heart.

Tina Massey

### Boy Underwater

Written by Adam Baron  
 Illustrated by Benji Davies  
 HarperCollins £6.99  
 ISBN: 978-0008267018

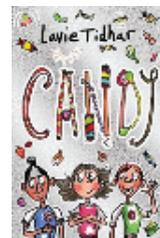


In all of his nine years on this planet, Cymbeline Igloo has never been swimming. Well, with swimming lessons starting this term, all that is about to change. However, when an accident takes place during his first lesson, it sends Cymbeline's mum spiralling into a nervous breakdown and sets in motion a series of events that sees Cymbeline making new friends, ruining old friendships and uncovering life-changing family secrets. Adam Baron's debut is a brilliant look at family, friendship and mental health that is, in turn, heart-breaking and hilarious. Cymbeline is such a loveable protagonist, that he will appeal to both boys and girls alike and have readers wanting to cheer him on and give him a great big hug in equal measure. A hugely enjoyable read from a talented new author.

Becca Watts

### Candy

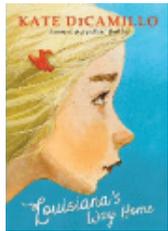
Written by Lavie Tidhar  
 Illustrated by Mark Beech  
 Scholastic £6.99  
 ISBN: 978-1407184272



Nelle Faulkner is 12 years old and a private detective, working out of her garden shed, in a time of prohibition - the prohibition of candy! Candy is banned from this American town, and now there is an underground trade in sweets, chocolate, gum and cakes. When Eddie de Menthe, one of the town's gang leaders, comes to Nelle, with a case of a missing teddy bear, she finds herself drawn into a world of contraband, smuggling and dirty deals. With Sweetcakes Ratchet and Waffles MacKenzie competing for trade and some very suspicious cops on the scene, Nelle has her work cut out to get to the bottom of the mystery and when Eddie goes missing too, there is even more work to be done. Witty and original, this is more than just a mystery as the teddy plays a significant part in the events in the town, past and present. As events move to a satisfying conclusion, layers of story are revealed. Characters

are believable and Lavie Tidhar's prose is flowing and satisfying to read. Mark Beech's popular pen and ink style illustrations, every few pages, add humour and keep the storytelling light.

Lucy Russell



## Louisiana's Way Home

Written by Kate DiCamillo  
Walker £10.99  
ISBN: 978-1406384208

Very early one morning, Louisiana is awoken by her granny and told that they have to leave home immediately. They end up in a small motel room in Georgia and Granny has no intention of them ever returning. Louisiana is heartbroken at leaving her friends and her pets, but, when Granny then leaves her and she discovers that she has been lied to all her life and she isn't who she thought she was, her world tilts on its axis. Gradually though, her life starts to become entwined with the people of this small Georgia town. She learns that she can decide who she is and how her life can move forward. As always with Kate DiCamillo's books, it is beautifully written, with a cast of characters who stay with the reader long after the book is finished. The storytelling is superb, drawing the reader in from the first page and not letting them go even once the book has been read. It is a truly unforgettable, inspiring reading experience that reinforces your belief in the power of love and the basic goodness of most people in this world.

Annie Everall

## Bone Talk

Written by Candy Gourlay  
David Fickling £10.99  
ISBN: 978-1788450171

This exciting and thought-provoking adventure is skillfully set in 1899, in the remote mountains of the Philippines where white men were unknown. The main concern for young Samkad is when will he earn the right to become a man. Sam and the rest of the villagers follow their ancient customs and tend the terraces of rice fields until a new boy arrives in the village accompanied by an American, and all is changed. As tragic events unfold, Samkad, his father and best friend, Luki, are not sure who to trust as they face new dangers and challenges. Candy Gourlay tells this powerful history of her countrymen with evocative descriptions of the landscape which adds to the strength and poignance of their story.



Louise Stothard



## The Colour of the Sun

Written by David Almond  
Hodder £12.99  
ISBN: 978-1444919554

In this lyrical and moving novel we accompany Davie as he wanders around his Northumbrian town, encountering locals both living and dead. Having seen the apparently dead body of a local boy, Davie heads off alone into the hills, perhaps to find the killer, perhaps to simply wander, draw and think. Davie's father has recently died and, in his wanderings, encounters and musings, we see some of Davie's grief and the very first steps towards adjustments to this new version of life - the beginnings of letting go. The entire novel is suffused with the colour of the sun, perhaps a nostalgic glow as this reads like a memoir. This book would suit a thoughtful child who is open to experience and can allow images to sink in - rather like Davie himself.

Annalise Taylor

## The Wonderling

Written by Mira Bartok  
Walker £7.99  
ISBN: 978-1406379907

Evil Miss Carbunkle runs the Home for Wayward and Misbegotten Creatures, where her young charges existence is one of misery in awful conditions. These are groundlings, a mix of human and animal, who are despised by the rest of society. Number Thirteen is one-eared, part-boy and part-fox, and this is the only life he has known, having arrived as a baby. Usually quiet and solitary, he finds unexpected courage when a young bird groundling, Trinket, is being bullied and he rescues her. Working together, they plan an escape to seek out Number Thirteen's real family, using the tiny scraps of mementoes that he keeps safe. In a richly imagined fantasy adventure, with more than a touch of *Oliver Twist*, we follow Number Thirteen's quest to discover his true identity. Along the way he encounters villains, failure and imprisonment but also learns what true friendship is and that hope overcomes all. A wonderful read with a hero you will take to your heart.



Jayne Gould



## The Fox Girl and the White Gazelle

Written by Victoria Williamson  
Kelpies £6.99  
ISBN: 978-1782504900

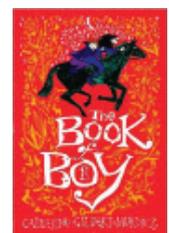
Caylin is eleven and lives in Glasgow. Her mother is an alcoholic and money is short, so Caylin survives by thieving and bullying. Reema goes to the same school and has recently arrived from war-torn Syria. Her father is injured and her big brother is missing. Both girls live in the same block of flats, and Reema would like to be friends, but Caylin bristles with suspicion and mistrust. But, when she finds an injured vixen and her cubs in the back yard, her attitude begins to soften and eventually she discovers that she shares two passions with Reema - the foxes and running. In this very readable novel, chapters are written alternately from Caylin's and Reema's points of view, interspersed with poems representing the vixen's perspective. The first person approach takes the reader right into the lives and experiences of each girl, helping us to appreciate the pressures in their lives. This builds empathy, and also keeps the plot well balanced as the story gradually moves towards its climax and a satisfying conclusion. This is an excellent read which raises a range of important current social issues, offers insight into the lives of others, and celebrates friendship and kindness to animals.

Liz Dubber

## The Book of Boy

Written by Catherine Gilbert Murdock  
Chicken House £6.99  
ISBN: 978-1911490579

When the bubonic plague takes away all those who cared for and protected him, Boy must make himself valuable to the survivors at the manor by herding their goats, but he is marked out as a monster because of his hunchback and his secret ability to talk to animals. When a stranger comes on pilgrimage, Boy is sent along with him to pray for the souls of the dead. As the stranger, Secundus, reveals more about himself and his mission, Boy sees an opportunity for himself. The stranger wants to collect enough relics to be accepted into heaven, and the Boy sees a chance to be healed of his physical deformity. Set in the holy year of 1350, Murdock weaves a mesmerising tale of mysticism, desperation and friendship. Secundus and Boy's journey changes them both in surprising ways. While religion informs the plot, it remains just one of several elements that drive this compelling historical novel forward.



Benjamin Scott