

## Growing into reading



### Tomorrow

Written, illustrated and translated by Nadine Kaadan  
Lantana £11.99  
ISBN: 978-1911373438

Yazan can no longer go to the park to play – he is confined to home, and his mother who used to paint with him, just watches the news instead. Yazan doesn't understand that his family is in hiding in a war zone. One day he ventures out to visit the park and is surrounded by a very unfamiliar environment. Fortunately, his father finds him and they return home safely. His parents realise they need to explain things and his mother paints a park scene on his bedroom wall, until he can again visit the real thing. The simple images of this moving picture book convey something of the destruction of a city at war. Blocks of colour suggest buildings with rough added detail indicating bomb damage. Water colour washes and charcoal scribbles suggest smoke and dust. More colour denotes the warmth of mother and the newly painted bedroom wall. This very simple picture book delivers a powerful message about the impact of an urban war on children. It will promote discussion and understanding and help very young readers to appreciate what refugee children at their nursery or school might have experienced.

*Liz Dubber*

### Snowboy and the Last Tree Standing

Written by Hiawyn Oram  
Illustrated by Birgitta Sif  
Walker £11.99  
ISBN: 978-1406358254



Snowboy is playing when Greenbackboy arrives to tell him about a new, more exciting game that takes place in the forest. The game involves cutting down every tree in the forest, which the two boys do - all except for one which was missed because it was under Snowboy's cloak. The reward for winning is money. Greenbackboy has another idea for a game - to catch all the fish in the sea, which they do, all except for two little fish which Snowboy quietly throws back. Of course, again the reward for winning this game is money. Greenbackboy is very happy, but Snowboy knows you can't breathe money or eat it, so he leaves and goes back to where the forests used to be. And there, he finds the one little tree, no longer small, but tall and full of insect life. Snowboy then goes back to the sea and finds it full of fish again. This is a wonderful book to share. The events and their real significance could provide the basis for giving children an understanding of nature and how preserving it also means preserving humanity.

*Pat Thompson*



### Ruby in the Ruins

Written and illustrated by Shirley Hughes  
Walker £12.99  
ISBN: 978-1406375893

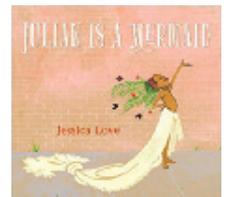
This story is like something from a treasure chest. Big, beautiful and with the right mixture of nostalgia and modern sensibilities, it is sure to

captivate children. Shirley Hughes' illustrations are wonderful - dreamlike and realistic at the same time. The story takes the reader back to a dark period in Britain's history, just after the war, with bombed houses and remains all around. Ruby waits for her father to come home, but when he does, she hardly recognises him, and his presence changes the close relationship she had with her mother. However, when Ruby is in danger, Dad steps in to rescue her. Heart-warming and with plenty to think about - from post-war Britain, to separated families and adapting to change, this is a wonderful read for children, stimulating lots of discussion but rewarding to read alone too.

*Julia Wills*

### Julian is a Mermaid

Written and illustrated by Jessica Love  
Walker £11.99  
ISBN: 978-1406380637



An inspirational picture book that celebrates individuality, self-discovery, acceptance, gender identity, beauty and love. Julian is a boy who goes against masculine norms. He and his Nana are on the subway when he sees three women who are wearing stylish outfits. Their dresses end in fishtails. Julian's imagination is fired and he dreams of dressing up like the ladies. He designs his own mermaid outfit. His Nana supports him and helps him realise his dream. There are very few words in the book, and the illustrations are superb. The mermaid dream sequence, where Julian is part of the undersea world, is almost hypnotic and the parade at the end of the book is vibrant and colourful. Highly recommended.

*Brenda Marshall*



### How Billy Brown saved the Queen

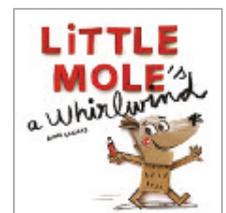
Written by Alison Healy  
Illustrated by Fintan Taite  
Little Island £6.99  
ISBN: 978-1910411957

Billy Brown visits Queen Alicia in her bedchamber in the early hours of the morning (As you do!) to explain a Maths problem that has frustrated her. This sets the scene for an offbeat romp through some weighty themes - power and privilege, culture clash, loneliness, isolation and the nature of friendship. But it's the delicious, comedic absurdity on every page that readers will come away with. The pace is as fast as a stand-up routine and the characters - Billy and his amiable, but hapless, family, the Queen with her pink cashmere dressing gown and gold slippers - are adorable. This is a genuinely fresh, witty tale complemented by cartoon-style illustrations.

*Yvonne Coppard*

### Little Mole is a Whirlwind

Written and illustrated by Anna Llenas  
Templar £11.99  
ISBN: 978-1787412316



Little Mole is hyperactive. He can't stand still, he gets distracted and he never stops! People become annoyed and frustrated with him as he is like a whirlwind. All sorts of labels are assigned to him, and Little Mole "feels he is wearing so many labels he doesn't know who he is". His parents are exhausted, and his teacher is in despair. But then, Serena, the Forest Bunny, comes along offering "creative learning for wonderful children". She listens to his worries, reassures him,

and encourages him to find his passion. Over time, Little Mole finds himself. This book takes a sensitive look at what life is like for a child with ADHD, and for those around him. It gives a compassionate insight into hyperactivity and encourages empathy and tolerance. It is also fun to read, and the collage-style illustrations are most attractive.

*Brenda Marshall*



## The Great Telephone Mix-up

Written by Sally Nicholls  
Illustrated by Sheena Dempsey  
Barrington Stoke £6.99  
ISBN: 978-1781127353

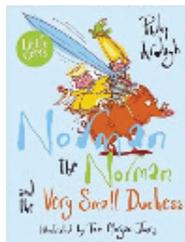
One day, in a little village, there was a great storm and all the telephone lines came down and no-one could use their phone, which worried and annoyed the villagers. However, when the lines were mended, there was another problem - they were all connected to the wrong people, so important messages were not arriving safely. Although there was still confusion and annoyance, there is great amusement for the reader, and there were some very positive effects for the community. This is such a simple idea, but it is brilliantly explored in this book. The village is revitalised and the community is made stronger. Children will love the various situations and enjoy the humour of the mis-directed phone calls. Excellent! Don't forget to read the telephone jokes at the beginning of the book.

*Pat Thompson*

## Norman the Norman and the Very Small Duchess

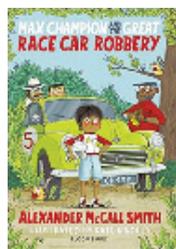
Written by Philip Ardagh  
Illustrated by Tom Morgan-Jones  
Barrington Stoke £6.99  
ISBN: 978-1781127629

Another fantastic book about Norman the Norman from Normandy, with his big broadsword. Matilda, Duchess of Normandy, wants Norman to help her husband William with his "Conquesty thingy". Hilarious adventures follow and the book is enormous fun. A very poisonous toad, plenty of action, slapstick, historical facts, comments from the author and colourful illustrations combine to provide a laugh out loud story. Highly recommended, as are the rest of the *Little Gems* series which are quality stories by famous writers, printed in a dyslexia-friendly font on high-quality cream paper. They are ideal for newly independent readers.



*Brenda Marshall*

## Max Champion and the Great Race Car Robbery



Written by Alexander McCall Smith  
Illustrated by Kate Hindley  
Bloomsbury £9.99  
ISBN: 978-1408886137

This is a fun book to read with black and white illustrations dotted throughout. Max finds an old car that has his name on it and discovers that his grandfather was an amazing car designer and inventor. He would design them, build them and then race them - until the day his favourite car, Arabella, and his design book, were stolen by his arch rival, Mr Grabber. Grandad Gus tells Max all about his adventures as a racing driver and it upsets Max that his wisest and nicest grandad was treated so badly by Mr Grabber. Can Max find a way to get justice for his grandad and find his beloved Arabella? This is an action-packed story with a very real message - that hard work and kindness will triumph over laziness, meanness and greed.

*Ingrid Fox*

## Stick and Fetch Investigate: Barking up the Wrong Tree

Written by Philip Ardagh  
Illustrated by Elissa Elwick  
Walker £6.99  
ISBN: 978-1406376449



There are three hilarious stories in this copiously illustrated book about detective Sally Stick and her partner/dog Fetch. The crimes they investigate may not seem very serious, in fact they may not actually be crimes at all, but Sally and Stick are totally dedicated to righting wrongs in their own madcap way. In the course of the three stories this duo attempt to stop a lady exploding, track down a stolen photograph and investigate a mysterious 80 year old balloon that suddenly appears in the garden. There are bold illustrations, in black, white and yellow, on every page and the font varies to further break up the text and make this a book that newly independent readers will find inviting. It will certainly make them laugh as they spot all the mistakes Stick and Fetch make as they search for clues.

*Jan Lennon*

## Tiny Little Rocket

Written by David Fickling  
Illustrated by Richard Collingridge  
David Fickling £11.99  
ISBN: 978-1910200902



This is a somewhat unusual picture book, as it has no characters other than the reader. It is essentially an illustrated poem about a trip into space and the pilot of the rocket is you, the reader. The text is very exciting and poetic. It is printed in a very small font, which is complemented by the very large and very boldly coloured illustrations which dominate each page.

It is quite difficult to fix an appropriate age for this book, because, as a book for discussion with a child who is interested in rockets and space, it would work well, but the format and layout of the pages is perhaps better suited to a more independent reader.

*Pat Thompson*

## The Day War Came

Written by Nicola Davies  
Illustrated by Rebecca Cobb  
Walker £10.00  
ISBN: 978-1406376326



Inspired by the current refugee crisis and the government's apparent unwillingness to provide shelter, *The Day War Came* is a powerful poem that will make readers sit up and think about the world around them and what *they* can do to help. This is the story of a child who has to flee when war comes and destroys everything around her. All alone, she makes the long and difficult journey, seeking a place of safety and peace. Rebecca Cobb's childlike illustrations are a beautiful juxtaposition to the themes within the poem and help make the issues accessible to a range of ages. A truly important book, *The Day War Came* is both a useful educational tool and a brilliant discussion starter for real humanitarian issues that are affecting children around the world. A sensitive, thought-provoking read.

*Becca Watts*