

Convincing novels



Girls for the Vote

Written by Linda Newbery
Usborne £6.99 ISBN: 978-1474948401

It was first published in 2004 as part of a unique collaboration between Linda Newbery, Adele Geras and Ann Turnbull, under the title *Historical House: Polly's March*. Now, it has been re-issued with a new title and a gorgeous new look. The setting for all the stories in the trilogy is a house at 6 Chelsea Walk and each book tells the story of the inspiring girls and women living there during different time periods from 1864 through to 1941. *Girls for the Vote* is set in 1914 and tells of Polly, a young girl living with her parents in one of the flats that the house has been turned into. Two young women move into the upstairs flat and as Polly gets to know them, she discovers that they are suffragettes. She finds herself becoming involved in the struggle for women's emancipation and learning to stand up for herself. All the stories are well crafted, giving a real feel for the historical period that they are set in and are very readable. This book contains information on a fascinating collection of videos, newsreels, clips and photos about the suffragette movement and everyday life in the early 1900s.

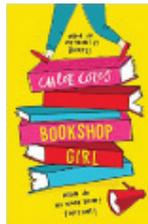
Annie Everall

Bookshop Girl

Written by Chloe Coles
Hot Key £6.99 ISBN: 978-1471407116

Bookshop Girl is the debut novel from Chloe Coles, a book-buyer at Foyles, ideally placed to write a novel about a bookshop. As the story opens, our hero, sixteen year old Paige Turner, learns that Bennett's, the bookshop where she works while at college, is to be closed and demolished for redevelopment. Paige and her colleagues are devastated, because, for some of them, Bennett's is their life. Paige decides that action is needed. They must stop the town's only bookshop being closed and she begins the "Save Bennett's" campaign. This is a light-hearted and fun book with a serious message, the decline of bookshops and libraries. Paige is well written - passionate about books and reading, irritated by her younger brother, 'in love' with the 'art school anarchist' Blaine, and looking forward to leaving her dull home town to go to university. Her relationship with best friend Holly is realistic, as are many of the secondary characters. The style of writing is appropriate to younger teens, and Paige is a great role model for them. *Bookshop Girl* is a fun read, with a passion for books at its heart.

Jane Hall

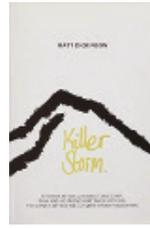


Mud

Written by Emily Thomas
Andersen £7.99 ISBN: 978-1783446896

This brilliant book is written in diary form by Lydia who is nearly thirteen years old. She has three older siblings, Harry, Elsa and Sam. They all look out for her but cannot protect her from the challenges of adolescence, grief and family life. Lydia learns the hard way to cope with the death of her mum, the arrival of a new stepmother and stepsisters, starting at a new school and a complete change of family lifestyle. The new family all move onto a large barge in the Thames estuary which also entails its own challenges and hardships. The story is compelling as we read Lydia's outpourings into the diary her mum had given her. There is humour, anxiety, sadness and a complete belief in all the characters in this excellent story.

Ingrid Fox



Killer Storm

Written by Matt Dickinson
Shrine Bell £6.99 ISBN: 978-1911342366

This is the final title in Matt Dickinson's *The Everest Files* trilogy. Part of its appeal is the international makeup of the characters, with a Brit, an American, two Russians and a wide spread of nationalities from Asia all involved. However, the dominant character that holds centre stage is, undoubtedly, the mighty Everest. Ryan should be studying his books at university, but his mind is totally obsessed with climbing. Getting to the top has only one kind of meaning for Ryan, and for many of his friends. The Russian connection gives the story a serious depth - that which one man can do, can impact, with devastating effect, on millions of lives. While a few earn billions of dollars, millions of people can find their crops destroyed and their children starving. Such is the nature of a world totally interdependent as never before. This is the background to the adventure that Ryan faces and which leads to the killer storm of the title. In this novel, Matt Dickinson creates a fast-moving adventure of life and death action, but also a story that reminds us of the global village of which we are all part.

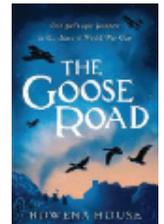
Trevor Thompson

The Goose Road

Written by Rowena House
Walker £7.99 ISBN: 978-1406371673

This excellent debut novel is set, with wonderful historical accuracy, in rural France during the First World War. The men have gone to war, and so, for the women left to work the fields, bring in the meagre harvest and care for the livestock, everyday life is a battle. Then, the dreaded Requisition appears and all the produce is taken to feed the troops at the front, leaving families without the food to survive the winter. Whilst, fourteen year old Angelique cannot mourn the death of her violent father, she is determined they will not lose the farm, so that, when her brother comes back from war, life can return to normal. Her only chance lies with her flock of fine Toulouse geese which will sell for a good price if she can get them to the right buyer. So, off she goes, bravely outwitting those who seek to cheat her or steal her precious birds. This beautifully written tale shows the effects of war on the French countryside and on the behaviour of the general population. In this centenary year of the end of the First World War it is a timely reminder that wars are not *only* fought on the battlefields.

Jan Lennon



Hidden

Written by Miriam Halahmy
Troika £6.99 ISBN: 978-1909991620

Alix is already struggling to cope with the departure of her father and her mother's illness, together with the subsequent financial crisis, and now is added the grief for her recently deceased grandfather. She befriends a new boy at school, Samir, a refugee from Baghdad, and they see a drowning man in the freezing sea. Together, they pull him out. He is an illegal immigrant who has been tortured and is very weak. Alix and Samir hide him and there begins a tense and frightening period for the two teenagers. They need to care for the very sick Mohammed, whilst trying to face up to intense racism and two very inquisitive policemen. *Hidden* is a well-written, thought-provoking book which deals with topical and complex issues - grief, prejudice, teenage angst, bravery and family relationships.

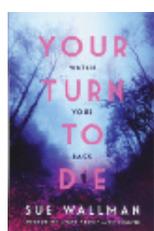
Ingrid Fox

How to Bee

Written by Bren MacDibble
Old Barn £6.99 ISBN: 978-1910646441

What happens when all the bees disappear? In this story, set in Australia sometime in the near future, the fruit trees are pollinated by small children who climb along the branches while even smaller children are on the ground hunting the pests that threaten the crop. Nine year old Peony wants to be a bee, but, when she is almost old enough, her mother drags her away from the farm to work as a servant in the city. Although she befriends the agoraphobic daughter of the house where she is in service she still longs to be back with her grandfather and her sister working in the trees, and so, she carefully plans her escape. This story, set in a dystopian landscape, reminds us of the vital role played by the bees that we take so much for granted, but there is even more to the story than environmental issues. We see extreme poverty and domestic violence but also courage and the ultimate insignificance of material comforts when compared to the love of friends and family.

Jan Lennon



Your Turn to Die

Written by Sue Wallman
Scholastic £7.99 ISBN: 978-1407181585

A genuinely suspenseful read and a thoroughly engaging psychological thriller for younger teens. Fifteen year old Leah and her two friends love their annual week together at the old house in the countryside celebrating the New Year. However, when the body of a teenage girl is

discovered in the garden, and they are joined by a new girl, Tatum, who is super-pushy and has her own agenda, their carefree week is derailed. Becoming increasingly frightening, their week culminates in a truly shocking climax. The book is well-plotted, with great atmosphere and memorable characters and, unsurprisingly, is better written than a number of similar thrillers written for adults. Not for the faint-hearted, but, for teens who love an exciting and scary read, this book is a guaranteed page-turner.

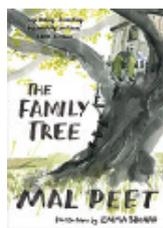
Julia Wills

The Earth, My Butt and Other Big Round Things

Written by Carolyn Mackler
Bloomsbury £7.99 ISBN: 978-1408897058

First published in 2003 and now revised to reflect modern living, this is a warm-hearted story about Virginia who lives with her busy parents and her older brother and sister in an apartment in central New York. Virginia is acutely conscious of being overweight but does not want to be defined by her body shape. Her psychotherapist mother should understand her but problems in the household are never discussed. When her brother, Byron, is accused of date rape, Virginia retreats further into herself and then begins to rebel. Eventually she learns how to stand up for herself and escape from her mother's controlling ways. This is a well written book which keeps us interested and involved throughout. The focus is wholly on Virginia's experiences at school and home, her feelings of inadequacy, her fumbling sexual experiments with school friend Froggy, and the conflict between herself and her mother. All of these are handled really well, through realistic description and natural dialogue. Following on from this revised edition, a sequel has been promised, *My Universe is Expanding and So Am I*.

Liz Dubber



The Family Tree

Written by Mal Peet
Illustrated by Emma Shoard
Barrington Stoke £7.99 ISBN: 978-1781128053

Told in the first person, this is the story of a man finding himself travelling near to where he lived as a child and returning to see the family home. He sees the tree house, lovingly built for him by his dad, now tatty and dilapidated, and so embarks on a journey of remembrance. His memories take him to the times he and his dad had fun spending time in the Nest, as they called it. Then his memories darken as he remembers how his father's mental health took a downward turn and he started living in the Nest. Consequently, family life disintegrated, and he, through his child's perspective, tried to make sense of what was happening. Originally written as a short story for a Tony Bradman anthology, this has now been published as a stand-alone novella. Mal Peet's text is complemented by Emma Shoard's muted gold, green and earth tone illustrations. A powerful and poignant piece of writing, this is a book of emotional complexity and because of the themes and language, it is aimed at an older audience than it might appear at first glance.

Annie Everall

Spark

Written by Alice Broadway
Scholastic £7.99 ISBN: 978-1407172859

This dystopian fantasy is set in a world in which the Marked, whose bodies are tattooed with their life stories, live in state of enmity with the ostracised, unmarked Blanks. The central character is Leora Flint, whose journey of discovery about her identity and past, began in *Ink*, an earlier book. *Spark* commences with Leora being sent to infiltrate Blank society as a spy, but the people and stories she encounters there challenge her to question her deeply-held beliefs and loyalties. *Spark* is a gripping read with many twists and turns. In weaving her dystopian society, Alice Broadway draws abundantly on the language of fairy tale, legend, religion and faith, and brings her world to life using vividly depicted, charismatic characters. As the middle volume of a trilogy, *Spark* inevitably depends to some extent on the reader's knowledge of the backstory revealed in *Ink* - similarly, its inconclusive, open ending anticipates a further instalment. Nevertheless, it is a compelling, thought-provoking book which asks questions about whether differences can be reconciled and invites reflection on profound issues of societal prejudice, state manipulation, cultural and religious differences and opposing belief systems.

Anne Walker



The Art of White Roses

Written by Viviana Prado-Núñez
Papillote £7.99 ISBN: 978-1999776824

This novel, set in Cuba in 1957, interweaves the personal and the political as thirteen year old Adela observes a multitude of changes around her. University students are disappearing from the neighbourhood, there are gunshots in the distance, her policeman uncle is looking strained and stressed and her father has brought upsetting problems into her parent's marriage. The style is very readable and the story moves at a pace, whilst handling some complex material. Life is hard for ordinary Cubans under the Batista regime, yet there have been failed revolutions in the past, so why should they put their faith in the current uprising? For Adela, who feels that she fades into the background both at home and school, this is a time of observing the world and trying to make sense of it. A thought-provoking story of a period perhaps not often discussed for this age group. The novel also avoids making any clear judgements, rather showing the experiences and opinions of characters and leaving readers to make up their own minds, and, possibly, find out more about the conflict and its outcomes.

Annalise Taylor