

Books to love



Mira's Curly Hair

Written by Maryam Al Serkal
 Illustrated by Rebeca Luciani
 Lantana Publishing £11.99
 ISBN: 978-1911373612

Mira hates her curly, unruly hair and does everything in her power to try and change it, so it's smooth and sleek like her mother's.

However, one rainy, frizz-inducing day, she realises she has a lot more in common with her mother than she thought. *Mira's Curly Hair* is a simple yet effective book that celebrates being yourself, diversity and having natural hair. The illustrations are somewhat reminiscent of Dave McKean's, in their frenetic, surprising clash of images and add a lot of substance to the sparing use of words in the book.

Rebecca Watt

I'll Love You

Written by Kathryn Cristaldi
 Illustrated by Kristyna Litten
 Andersen £6.99
 ISBN: 978-1783448364



I'll Love You is the perfect bedtime story book and will warm the hearts of children and adults alike. Throughout this gorgeous book we see a variety of animals having often silly adventures, with a recurring message of love. Although the book starts with familiarity, "I will love you till the cows come home", we then discover that the cows had been to Mars "in a rocket ship made of glass and stone", which we weren't expecting. This is soon followed by equally wacky images of sheep setting sail, wolves floating over pigs in hot air balloons, and yaks driving in Cadillacs. The gentle repetitive rhymes are full of fun images, and the accompanying illustrations are a real delight. The animals all look as though they are having a good time on their adventurous journeys. The book is ideal for sharing at bedtime as there is much to delight young imaginations. Children will go to sleep with animals having fun adventures in their dreams, secure in the knowledge that they are loved.

Jane Hall



Grandma Bird

Written and illustrated by Benji Davies
 Simon and Schuster £6.99
 ISBN: 978-1471171802

Gorgeously illustrated and touching, this is the story of Noi who isn't keen on spending his summer at Grandma's house. She cooks

strange food, is always busy and keeps her teeth in a jar. But, when he sets off exploring in caves and finds a new friend, he is trapped by the tide. Then he sees Grandma in a very different light and as their friendship blossoms, he begins to wonder what her life is really like. This is a beautiful book to talk about, seeing things from other people's point of view and understanding other people's lives. It enables the young reader to talk to an adult about empathy, about how Noi changes and about the good that he and Grandma do together.

Julia Wills

What Matters Most

Written and illustrated by Emma Dodd
 Templar Books £7.99
 ISBN: 978-1787411920



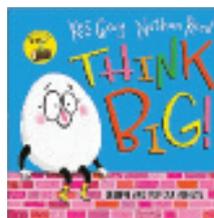
What Matters Most features two horses, one large – an adult, although no sex is specified so it could be a father or mother - and one small.

In each double-page spread, a question is raised, asking the reader to consider two points of view about what matters; ideas such as having lots of stuff or not much at all, being brave or sometimes feeling fear, and going very fast or taking it slow. The gentle illustrations match the ideas and are adorned with shiny silver highlights making the book very tactile. It is a small book that considers huge concepts and each question raised is a great starting point for further discussion with children. It concludes that love is what matters most.

Barbara Band

Think Big

Written by Kes Gray
 Illustrated by Nathan Reed
 Hodder £12.99
 ISBN: 978-1444942125



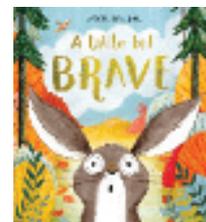
From the author of the ever popular *Oi Frog and Friends* best-selling series, comes this comical tale. Humpty Dumpty is sitting on a wall discussing his future with his friends. When he states that his ambition is to be a boiled egg when he grows up, his nursery tale friends tell him to aim higher. After all, Little Miss Muffet is going to be a scientist. Little Bo Peep suggests Humpty could be a detective.

The Cow who jumped over the moon tells Humpty to aim for the stars! When a wall-related disaster strikes, Humpty must rethink his ambitions! Their dreams are explored in bold, bright bouncy colours, very attractive to young eyes. Readers will enjoy spotting familiar characters and exploring the career options open to those who aim high and think big, but they may well conclude that for an egg, the options are limited! A delightful read.

Lucy Russell

A Little Bit Brave

Written and Illustrated by Nicola Kinnear
 Alison Green Books £6.99
 ISBN: 978-1407181790



Bunnies Logan and Luna share a home, but are 'as different as chalk and cheese'. Logan is home-loving and domesticated, whereas Luna is loud and daring. One day, Luna is so frustrated with Logan's unwillingness to join her on an adventure that she storms off. Logan is very upset. He decides that he must find his friend and make things up with her. So, he packs a bag, summons all his courage and sets off into the forest. He's terrified, but as he meets Luna's animal friends and begins trying new things, his fears start to subside. Little does he know that Luna is in danger nearby. Will Logan be able to be brave and help her? This sensitively written picture book looks with tender humour on both the quiet and the adventurous spirit and values both. After all, Logan's home-made biscuits and knitting come in just as handy as Luna's

loud voice and hiking stick! It is beautifully illustrated, using a warm colour palette, with drawings that incorporate an array of details for young readers to enjoy discovering. A captivating story about overcoming fears, having adventures and appreciating friends.

Anne Walker



What's Next?

Written by Timothy Knapman
Illustrated by Jane McGuinness
Walker £11.99
ISBN: 978-1406376876

Baby Badger wakes up as night is falling and is taken exploring by his father. First, they go

around his set then out into the forest, where he discovers soft moss and crunchy bulbs until day approaches and it's time for sleep again. However, Baby Badger is curious and, when he can't sleep, goes exploring in the daytime where he discovers a world full of colour and bright sunshine. The muted monotone illustrations at the beginning of the book portray perfectly the forest with its hidden night-time creatures and the dark sky full of stars. The palette then changes to bright greens, blues and yellows showing a daytime world of flowers, grasses and a big blue sky. This is a story about curiosity and belonging, where being with your family is just right. It is also good to have the caring parent role played by a father rather than a mother.

Barbara Band

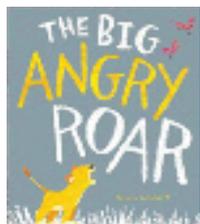
Wizard's Tears

Written by Maxine Kumin and Anne Sexton
Illustrated by Karen Katz
Triangle Square £12.99
ISBN: 978-1609808754

In the mythical village of Drocknock, the old wizard has lost his magical powers and everyone, including the mayor, has got chicken pox. Twenty cows are missing from farmer Macadoo's barn and the town reservoir is drying up. The old wizard decides it's time to retire. The young wizard arrives, finds the missing cows and cures the chickenpox. To end the drought, he needs five of his own tears, but after his resounding success finding the cows and curing the chickenpox, he is so happy he cannot cry. The old wizard suggests he uses an onion to help him but warns that wizard's tears are very powerful. The onion works and the young wizard brings rain. Ignoring the warning, he is careless with his vast supply of onion-induced tears, causing chaos to the town and turning the entire population into frogs. First published in the seventies, this zany picture book, created by two American poets, is the perfect combination of playful language, madcap imagery, nonsense and the kind of gentle wisdom that lasts forever.



Richard Monte



The Big Angry Roar

Written & illustrated by Jonny Lambert
Little Tiger Press £11.99
ISBN: 978-1788810982

This heart-warming tale, written and illustrated by the award-winning Jonny Lambert, is perfect for parents to explain about anger to their young child. Young Cub and his little sister begin to

fight, and Cub gets told off by his Dad. Cub thinks it is unfair that he should be the one to get into trouble, just because he is older, when it was his younger sister who started the fight. Feeling angry with everyone he stomps off. He meets some friends who share their ways of expressing their anger, but none of them work and make him even angrier. When Cub discovers his 'roar' during an increasingly loud argument with Elephant,

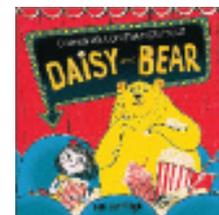
things get even worse. This simply told tale may help children learn that it is quite normal to be angry sometimes, and that there are things we can do to handle these sometimes-scary feelings. It shows that everyone has different ways of managing their emotions, so that you do not hurt those around you. The amusing, eye catching illustrations are set against a stark white background so as not to detract from the message of emotions and reactions.

Jane Hall

Daisy and Bear

Written and illustrated by Fabi Santiago
Scholastic £6.99
ISBN: 978-1407186696

One Sunday afternoon, Daisy decides to take Bear to the cinema, a place he has never been to before. There follows a rather hilarious and disastrous visit during which Bear needs to go to the toilet in the middle of the film, reacts rather loudly to the funny scenes, talks on his phone and finally disrupts the whole show when he causes the popcorn machine to go into overdrive. The illustrations are bright and bold, filling the pages with primary colours and adding details. Bear is adorable – wanting to take his "blankie" and stating that "waiting is boring". Anyone who has ever been to the cinema will delight in this amusing tale, and it is great for talking to children about appropriate behaviour and not disturbing others.



Barbara Band

Kiss the Crocodile

Written by Sean Taylor
Illustrated by Ben Mantle
Walker £6.99
ISBN: 978-1406387926



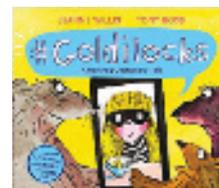
Monkey and his friends are having great fun playing games in the jungle, when they come across Crocodile and his mum, who suggests a new game: kiss the crocodile! Are the friends brave enough to play? And who will wake up the sleeping crocodile? With a lovely opportunity for youngsters to join in with the kissing as they come to double-page spreads (Mwah! Smooch! Smack!), this is a delightful tale of friendship and fun and a story that children can easily follow. The animal friends are colourful and welcoming, with characterful eyes, and the soft colours spread across the pages in a gentle but engaging style.

Lucy Russell

#Goldilocks – A Hashtag Cautionary Tale

Written by Jeanne Willis
Illustrated by Tony Ross
Andersen £11.99
ISBN: 978-1783447176

One of a series of on-line safety picture books, this is a witty, brightly illustrated and clever story about Goldilocks, a little girl who loves posting photos and videos. She spends her time craving likes and, in order to get more, becomes bolder and bolder in the pictures she posts. Looking for more accolades, she films and posts herself breaking into the bears' house and causing mayhem. The fallout of this has a longstanding unpleasant impact on her. It is a terrific warning to youngsters about the longevity of posts and the bad things that can come out of them. Written in verse with bold, boisterous illustrations, this is a book that can be read, enjoyed and learned from. Very inventive and recommended.



Julia Willis