



Outside

Written by Sarah Ann Juckes
Penguin £7.99 ISBN: 978-0241330753

Ele has never been outside, but it doesn't stop her knowing it's there. Trapped with only the Others for company and fearing visits from Him, Ele decides it's now or never and makes a break for freedom. *Outside* is a heartbreaking, yet surprisingly heartwarming read that deals with some very mature and upsetting themes. Ele is a fascinating protagonist, conditioned by her abusive, isolated experience of the world. In the hands of a less skilled author, Ele's limited vocabulary and unreliable narration could be jarring and irritating, but Juckes has created an intriguing, feisty narrator, that the reader will root for and feel fiercely protective over. A brave, thought-provoking and powerful novel, Juckes has written an excellent debut that is, at times, a difficult read, though ultimately uplifting and hopeful.

Rebecca Watt

The Colour of Shadows

Written by Phyllida Shrimpton
Hot Key Books £7.99 ISBN: 978-1471407611

For the past ten years, 17-year-old Saffron has believed her mother dead. However, while searching in the attic, she discovers evidence that her mother is still alive. When her father can't properly explain why he lied to Saffy about her mother all those years ago, she leaves home in search of the truth. Ignoring her father's constant pleas to return home, Saffy ends up relying on the help and kindness of the local homeless community. This follow-up to *Sunflowers in February* has a strong and moving plot. Saffy is stubborn and often self-obsessed, which may initially alienate readers. However, this may be a deliberate tactic to emphasise her change and growing maturity as she gradually realises that not everyone enjoys the same privileges as she does. The chapters alternate between Saffy and her friend Tom, and this device enables readers to discover things about them that the other doesn't know. Tom is a sympathetic character, and his kindness helps to balance out Saffy's narcissism. The plight of the homeless features heavily and these sections of the book are powerful and moving. There are plot twists throughout the book, and the end is one readers will find ultimately satisfying.



Jane Hall



Potter's Boy

Written by Tony Mitton
David Fickling £7.99 ISBN: 978-1910989357

This is the story of a young potter's boy who is restless and reluctant to accept the life easily on offer to him. He is impressed by the actions of the fighter who cleverly dealt with the threatening 'brigands' intent on wreaking havoc in his native village in the mountains of Old Chazan and yearns to learn his skills. And so, Ryo embarks on his life's journey to realise his ambition and find his true self. It's a journey of hardship, danger, loneliness and pain and he learns much enroute from The Old Hermit, The Hill Camp and Yuzuko and a whole range of life's teachings. Tony Mitton's book becomes a friend whom it's a profound privilege to know, and in knowing, we humbly grow in our understanding of our own life journey.

Gill Roberts

A Danger To Herself And Others

Written by Alyssa Sheinmel
Atom £7.99 ISBN: 978-0349003283

The title refers to protagonist Hannah Gold, who finds herself in a secure institution, calmly stating that it will be very short-term until judgement is revoked. This claim adds to the horror because it's unnerving that she does not put up a fight, or protest her innocence, and it leads to the reader questioning whether there is a 'misunderstanding' or not. Written entirely in the first person, this is a fascinating and powerful read, with psychiatrist Dr. Lightfoot and Lucy being the other two main characters. But who is Lucy really? And how significant is the behaviour of Hannah's parents? This is a cleverly constructed convincing, unnerving novel which really questions our understanding of the human mind. Don't miss it!

Gill Roberts



Kick the Moon

Written by Muhammad Khan
Macmillan £7.99 ISBN: 978-1509874071

Muhammad Khan's follow up to his remarkable debut novel, *I Am Thunder*, is an equally relevant, cutting edge tale which draws on issues surrounding toxic masculinity. From early childhood, Ilyas has dreamed of creating his own comic-strip hero from an Asian background. Now at a crucial time in secondary school, with GCSE's approaching, his father wants him to follow in the family business, while at school he is being pressurised into a gang culture with increasingly violent and aggressive results. The turning point comes when his newly-formed friendship with a fellow female student forces him to confront his true self. Despite tackling multiple, weighty concerns, this never feels laden down with issues but is a riveting read with an emphatic and believable central character. Strongly recommended.

Elaine Chant

The Million Pieces of Neena Gill

Written by Emma Smith-Barton
Penguin £7.99 ISBN: 978-0241363317

Neena Gill, as the title suggests, does indeed fragment over the course of this book. This is despite everything that those around her do to attempt to help. Mental health is an issue that is spoken of more and more and this book is a tour de force in showing what it could be like to lose total control and let anxiety take over. By adding in perceived societal and cultural controls the reader is also taken on a journey that questions their own pre-conceptions. I have rarely read a book that questions all of the judgements that you make as you watch Neena self-destruct. Neena's voice throughout this novel is loud and the language as beautiful as the art that she produces. The lyrical, sensitive writing from Emma really allows us a glimpse into the pressure and the workings of the teenage mind. As Neena says "you just have to be strong and let people and dreams find you again". Issues of grief, first romantic relationships, substance abuse, cultural and religious questions and mental health are all handled in this book. I know many of my students who will be queuing up to read this. I will certainly be recommending it.



Sue Bussey