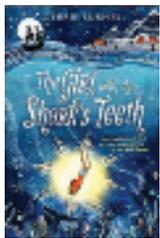


Satisfying stories



The Girl with the Shark's Teeth

Written by Cerrie Burnell Illustrated by Sandra Dieckmann
OUP £6.99 ISBN: 978-0192767547

Minnow and her mother are closely connected to water. Their home is a boat and deep-diving and swimming are central to Minnow's life. When her mother is abducted from the boat by three strange men Minnow begins to learn some of the mysteries of her mother's past and her own. To rescue her mother, Minnow must journey into a dangerous, fantastical world hidden under a treacherous sea, and call on powers she didn't even know she had. The tale is crammed with interesting characters, magic, wonder and action. Cliff-hanger chapters rack up the tension. Above all, the story is carried along by the poetic power of the writing and the superb evocation of the watery world, both above and beneath the waves. You can feel the ocean lapping onto every page.

Yvonne Coppard

The Secret Starling

Written by Judith Eagle Illustrated by Kim Geyer
Faber and Faber £6.99 ISBN: 978-0571346301

The unlikely setting of a remote moorland manor house makes this book initially feel like a re-write of a classic such as *The Secret Garden*. Clara lives with her stern guardian uncle. When he abandons her, and a boy of her own age suddenly comes to visit, the mystery deepens. It is the 1970s, a time before mobile phones and the internet, so the story evolves without the aid of modern communications. An intricate plot eventually reveals that Clara's mother was a promising ballet dancer who died suddenly when Clara was three. The story twists and turns, taking the reader on an absorbing adventure linked to the world of ballet, before the surprising truth is finally revealed. Clara is befriended by a group of local children and their lively approach balances Clara's lack of experience and knowledge of the world. Tension is handled well and we are kept on edge wondering about how the story will resolve. The setting will probably feel very unfamiliar to young readers but the plot holds together and should provide children of around 10-12 years old with a satisfying read.

Liz Dubber



Mossbelly MacFearsome and the Dwarves of Doom



Written by Alex Gardiner
Andersen Press £6.99 ISBN: 978-1783447916

When Roger stands up to a bully in the playground, he knows there will be trouble after school. The bully waits in the park for a follow-up fight, but trouble turns into triumph as Roger receives unexpected help from a passing dwarf. Roger is drawn into a terrifying war between the dwarf Mossbelly MacFearsome and the opposing forces of evil, who plan to take over the world and annihilate all human life. The story that ensues is one of violent battles with an assortment of dreadful creatures. Hardly a page is turned without some fiercely violent confrontation. Somehow Roger and Moss prevail, but the outcome is never certain. Moss is a Scottish dwarf and there are a lot of Scottish idioms in the text, but the dialogue is very readable and speeds the plot along at great pace. There's lots of humour here too – every so often Roger has to phone home to explain why he's late for tea. This is a fast-moving story which will entertain young readers

who like plenty of action and slapstick comedy and who can stomach bloodthirsty descriptions of battles between extraordinarily scary creatures!
Liz Dubber

The Peculiar Peggs of Riddling Woods

Written by Samuel J Halpin Illustrated by Hannah Peck
Usborne £6.99 ISBN: 978-1474945660



There are strange things afoot in the town of Suds. When Poppy visits her Gran and discovers children are going grey, losing the power of speech and disappearing, she decides to take matters into her own hands and unravel the town's secrets. Halpin has created a host of bizarre and thoroughly entertaining characters in this quirky supernatural adventure, full of twists, turns and unexpected surprises. The plot can, at times, turn decidedly thrilling and dark. Myths and folktales are expertly woven into a contemporary novel that will amuse, shock and enthrall in equal measure.

Rebecca Watt

The Magic Misfits



Written by Neil Patrick Harris
Illustrated by Neil Patrick Harris,
Lissy Marlin, Kyle Hilton and David Litchfield
Egmont £6.99 ISBN: 978-1405290999

Actor Neil Patrick Harris shows his writing talent in this book, the first of a series. The book centres on Carter, a young street magician, who runs away and finds his 'family' with a group of youngsters whose assorted and fabulous talents enable them to foil the robbery of a priceless diamond. The book is peppered with magic tricks for children to practise and is told in a bold, narrative style, reminiscent of Lemony Snicket, that challenges, teases and indulges the child reader and adds hugely to the fun. Lively illustrations throughout and challenging puzzles to solve will make this a very popular series indeed.

Julia Willis

Knights and Bikes

Written by Gabrielle Kent Illustrated by Rex Crowle
Knights Of £6.99 ISBN: 978-1999642501



Demelza and her pet goose, Captain Honkers, live on the sleepy little island of Penfurzy. Demelza loves her home there, especially the crazy golf park that her Mum built before she died. Although unexciting itself, Penfurzy has thrilling myths and legends galore. When her Dad decides to sell the family home and business to move into a new house in the village, Demelza and her new friend Nessa embark on a treasure hunt. If they can find the long-lost treasure of the Penfurzy Knights, Demelza might save her home and her Mum's memory. *Knights and Bikes* is a fun action adventure story that will thrill young readers. The plot is fast paced combining ancient myths with modern day life. There is excitement on every page; from defying bulldozers to save the crazy golf to battling with ghostly portraits and bodiless ghosts while treasure hunting. The budding friendship between Demelza and Nessa is realistic and their subsequent bravery and loyalty when facing adversity is heart-warming. There is humour throughout, from their choice of 'weapons' - a toilet plunger, water pistol, and water balloons, to odd companions like the wonderfully loyal Captain Honkers. Overall a fun and entertaining read.

Jane Hall

White Feather



Written by Catherine and David McPhail
Barrington Stoke £6.99 ISBN: 978-1781127346

The whole community know that Tony's brother died in front of a firing squad as a result of cowardice at the front during the recently ended First World War. Tony can't believe it and is unable to comfort their mother who is haunted by Charlie, her dead son. When Tony reads Charlie's final letter home, he realises that something about his brother's death is

being covered up. Tony determines to solve the mystery and clear his brother's name. This is an interesting angle on an oft covered topic – heroism and the fallout of the First World War. The intrigue keeps the story moving along quickly and should encourage reluctant readers, alongside anyone else who enjoys a good story. As part of Barrington Stoke's range this volume could appeal to those with a reading age near 8 but the subject matter could engage readers of any age.

Annalise Taylor

Starfell: Willow Moss and the Lost Day

Written by Dominique Valente Illustrated by Sarah Warburton
HarperCollins £12.99 ISBN: 978-0008308391

When your sisters can blow things up and move things telepathically, an ability to find lost things seems pretty underwhelming. Such is life for Willow Moss, youngest witch in a family of spectacular magicians. However, when Willow is visited by the most powerful witch in Starfell, it soon becomes apparent that only Willow's special skills will help find the missing day of last Tuesday. The fate of the whole world may rest in her hands. The first in a brand-new series, 'Willow Moss' is a brilliantly fantastical adventure, reminiscent of Kaye Umansky's *Pongwiffy* series – full of magic, crazy characters and laugh out loud humour. The zippy pace and lovely illustrations make this book perfect for both reluctant readers and those more confident with reading. A hugely enjoyable start to what promises to be an excellent series and a brilliant debut by Valente.



Rebecca Watt



Cloud Boy

Written by Marcia Williams
Walker Books £6.99 ISBN: 978-1406381214

Angie and Harry are the best of friends. Born two days apart and living next door to each other, they share almost everything, including a tree house built by their dads that straddles both properties. This is where they will stare at

clouds together and draw them. Things become complicated when Harry becomes seriously unwell. Told from Angie's point of view this book could veer into sentimentality or simply be depressing, however Marcia Williams has astutely paired the friends' story with that of Angie's grandmother, Gertie, who was a prisoner of war in Changi, Singapore during the Second World War. Gertie's letters from within the camp are interwoven with the main narrative and give the two children something external to focus on. Gertie is also able to understand Angie when she is angry with Harry for his illness and help explain just how confusing emotions can be. Harry's eventual death is handled matter-of-factly and not lingered on. Emotions are expressed clearly and interpreted sensitively. The parallel story set in Changi will be little known to readers and has the added element of photographs of the real woman on whom Gertie is based.

Annalise Taylor

The Legend of Sally Jones

Written and Illustrated by Jakob Wegelius
Translated from the Swedish by Peter Graves
Pushkin Press £12.99 ISBN: 978-1782692331

This unusual and beguiling book is a prequel to the award-winning *The Murderer's Ape*, but deserves recognition in its own right. A cross between a graphic novel and an illustrated story, it recounts, in mesmerising narrative and beautiful colour pictures, the many journeys, adventures and travails of a gorilla, Sally Jones. Sally is stolen from her mother as an infant and her life takes many twists and turns. Although the cruel, greedy and exploitative aspects of human nature are seen in Sally's treatment, her experiences contain considerable hope and humour as well. Much of the humour is revealed through the witty and superbly executed illustrations on each page. Despite hardships, Sally makes some deep friendships and learns many enterprising and unexpected skills, including how to read, drive a van and crack open a safe! The warmth of the book comes through Sally's strength of character and her partnership with The Chief, a good-hearted ship's engineer who rescues her and trains her as his assistant. A wonderful and unexpected adventure with a deeply satisfying ending.



Anne Walker



The Dog Who Saved the World

Written by Ross Welford
HarperCollins £6.99 ISBN: 978-0008256975

Georgie says that Mr Mash, the refuge dog she loves, has saved the world, but it is really she and her best friend Ramzy, a refugee from far off wars, and his ferocious Auntie Nush, who are the real heroes.

Georgie and he are befrienders at St Woof's shelter, caring for and exercising the dogs. Mr Mash, despite wind problems which would empty rooms, is her absolute favourite, even when he injures an old lady on the beach. To mollify her, the children promise to visit her virtual reality lab atop the Spanish City (a real building in Whitley Bay). There they are rapidly drawn into Dr Pretorious' virtual reality experiments, even briefly visiting their own future. When a deadly virus spreads from St Woof's dogs, threatening dogs and potentially humans, too, martial law is imposed and, armed soldiers exterminate every dog they encounter. Georgie and Ramzy need all their common sense, courage and imagination to work out how to save the world. It's a story about growing, learning who to trust and how overcoming your own prejudices helps form alliances and friendships. Firmly based in the north east, children of the region will especially enjoy tracking the action in its real localities.

Tina Massey

The Tunnels Below

Written by Nadine Wild-Palmer
Pushkin Press £7.99 ISBN: 978-1782692232

In this debut novel full of fantasy and adventure, twelve-year-old Cecilia has become separated from her family and, horrifyingly, is hurtling along on an empty tube train heading to who-knows-where. When the train eventually stops, she is in a network of tunnels that don't appear on any London Underground map and are inhabited by strange creatures with animal heads and human bodies. The creatures are kind and friendly, but their lives are made miserable by the tyrannical Jacques D'Or and his entourage, the Corvus. Cecilia realises that she must help destroy the power of the Corvus before she can go home and, actually, she just happens to have the crucial thing in her pocket. This underground fantasy world, with a whole host of magical creatures, is wonderfully imagined. There are some memorable scenes that show that life underground is rich in its own culture, traditions and celebrations.



Jan Lennon