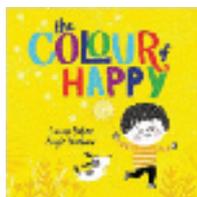


The Colour of Happy



Written by Laura Baker
 Illustrated by Angie Rozelaar
 Hodder £12.99
 ISBN: 978-1444939675

In this simple rhyming picture book, colours represent the moods felt by a small boy as he walks home with his dog, finding and then losing, and eventually regaining a dandelion clock picked for his mother. Each page is flooded with the particular colour in question at that stage of the story, blue for feeling calm as he walks through the park at the start, yellow for happiness (to find the dandelion clock), dark blue for sadness (at losing it), red for anger (as it floats away out of reach), and so on. The story ends with pink for the love the boy has for his mother as he offers her his battered dandelion clock when he arrives home. It's inevitable that sharing this book will prompt discussions about moods as well as colours. If this helps young children to develop the language to describe and discuss their feelings, it will have made a valuable contribution towards their future emotional literacy. Talking through our moods and the colours we each might like to assign to them should provide plenty of fun as well as a valuable learning experience.

Liz Dubber

All the Ways to be Smart

Written by Davina Bell
 Illustrated by Allison Colpoys
 Scribble Books £11.99
 ISBN: 978-1911617556



A glorious celebration of the many and diverse ways in which we can all be clever. Whilst acknowledging the academic, the book explores the creative, the practical, the brave, the kind, the curious... rejoicing in the 'smart' of each. Told in lively rhyme, children will soon find themselves joining in as they enjoy the text again and again. The vibrant illustrations leap off the page with bold use of orange and green throughout. Each face shows such intense interest or joy in what they are doing that *All the Ways to be Smart* is impossible to read without smiling. A powerful message told in a fun and engaging way!

Sue Wilsher

The Tall Man and the Small Mouse



Written by Mara Bergman
 Illustrated by Birgitta Sif
 Walker £11.99
 ISBN: 978-1406366204

On a tall hill, in a tall house, lives a tall man and a small mouse, but neither sees the other until the clock on the town tower breaks down. Even the tall man can't fix it. The mouse, though, is expert at creeping into small places and mending broken things. A little and large partnership is just what's needed to solve the problem. Children will love the gentle, dreamy pastel landscapes and the rhythm of the rhyming narration, which work together to pull the reader effortlessly on. Lovely too, that the smallest creature here has the clever brain needed to solve a seemingly intractable problem. Reading again, they will discover all the tiny creatures, plants and flowers half hidden in the landscapes. Super for bedtime sharing and first steps in reading.

Tina Massey

Look Up!

Written by Nathan Bryon
 Illustrated by Dapo Adeola
 Puffin £6.99
 ISBN: 978-0241345849



We all walk around with our noses in our phones and miss the world of wonder that the main character Rocket finds in everyday life and in her passion for space and the stars. This book gives a well-timed nudge to us all to 'Look up' in case we are going to miss something wonderful, to 'Look up' so that we can engage with each other and even avoid accidents, as Jamal found out to his cost. Rocket has great ambitions and gets things done. The detail in the pictures kept me going back to look again and see the outside world that Jamal and other characters in the story are missing.

Sue Bussey

The Mega Magic Hair Swap



Written by Rochelle Humes
 Illustrated by Rachel Suzanne
 Studio Press £6.99
 ISBN: 978-1787413757

This story gives a gentle nudge towards understanding that being yourself is alright. A lovely tale of friendship that, courtesy of a magic coconut allows two girls to swap their hair and become uncomfortable with trying to be someone that they aren't. Their friendship never alters but this story shows how special you are just by being you. Rachel Suzanne's warm and welcoming pictures help to enforce the message and wrap around a creative use of fonts. I still can't believe that the girls had the chance to wish to ride on a unicorn and they chose a hair swap!

Sue Bussey

Mummy Time

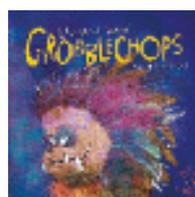
Written and illustrated by Judith Kerr
 HarperCollins £12.99
 ISBN: 978-0008306809



This is a very clever, gentle book. The detailed illustrations are perfect and transport us into the park with Mummy and her young child. However, Mummy is preoccupied on the phone and misses out on what her child is doing. The child's adventures almost replicate what the mother is describing on the phone. This is a deceptively simple book, which will encourage mothers to reflect on everyday situations. There is much to discuss here about the different perspectives, and even the choice of title. Indeed, this is as much a book for adults, as it is for young children.

Brenda Marshall

Gobblechops



Written by Elizabeth Laird
 Illustrated by Jenny Lucander
 Tiny Owl £12.99
 ISBN: 978-1910328415

A traditional Iranian story retold and embellished by a wonderful storyteller. The monster under the bed theme is one that parents the world over have had to contend with. The reasoning that Amir and his father resorts to, helps the situation be

resolved in both a funny and clever way. Who knew that a monster could be your friend! Wonderful pictures add an almost exotic flavour to the tale. Look out for a poster of Rumi the original storyteller.

Sue Bussey

Anna and Otis

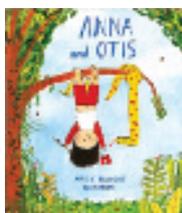
Written and illustrated by Maisie Paradise Shearring

Translated by Laura Wilkinson

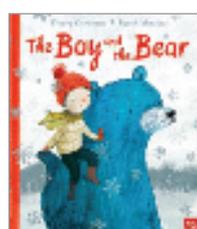
Two Hoots £11.99

ISBN: 978-1509834532

Snakes tend to get a bad press, so it is refreshing to get to know Anna, who is an adventurous child, and her friend Otis, a cheerful yellow snake with red spots. Left to their own devices, Anna and Otis get along splendidly. But when Anna takes Otis into town, she is shocked by how unkind other people can be. She is not having it! She is a bright little thing though, so she avoids confrontation and eventually, everyone else sees Otis's considerable qualities. Endearing characters, charming and rather pleasingly old-style illustrations and excellent design and production make this an altogether delightful picture book.



Tessa Strickland



The Boy and the Bear

Written by Tracey Corderoy

Illustrated by Sarah Massini

Nosy Crow £6.99

ISBN: 978-1788000765

Boy wants a best friend to play with, but there's no one around except Bear, who is too shy to make friends. Paper boats carry messages between them and eventually they do try playing together, but bear is no good at the boy's games. Then bear has an idea and together they build a tree house where they can sit together and be friends. The winter takes bear away into hibernation, so the boy is alone again, but when spring comes the two meet up again – best friends together. Delightful line and wash drawings exactly suit the mood of this gentle story. Soft colours conjure a pretty rural landscape in which the friends meet and play through the passing seasons. The minimal text has been precisely chosen to convey both the story and the underlying emotions of boy and bear. This is a great story for sharing, with huge scope for conversations about nature, the seasons, games and activities, and how friendship can be found with other people (and creatures) of different backgrounds, ages and experiences.

Liz Dubber

Toby and the Tricky Things

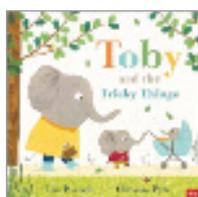
Written by Lou Peacock

Illustrated by Christine Pym

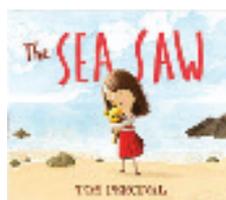
Nosy Crow £11.99

ISBN: 978-1788002653

I warmed to this book as soon as I saw it. Toby enjoys being a 'Big Boy' now, much bigger than his baby sister Iris. He can pour his own milk and even reach the snacks on the "just for mummies" shelf. But there are times when things get tricky, and Mummy is too busy with Iris to help him. Toby decides to go off on his own, with toys that might be useful. He starts well, but then falters and Mummy appears at just the right moment. Toby learns that no matter how big he gets, he will always be Mummy's baby, and she will always be there for him. This is a reassuring story to share with older siblings. Christine's portrayal of the elephant family is enchanting. Her illustrations are wonderful and capture perfectly the emotions and humour of the characters. This is a reassuring story that children and adults will identify with and is highly recommended.



Brenda Marshall



The Sea Saw

Written and Illustrated by Tom Percival

Simon and Schuster £6.99

ISBN: 978-1471172434

Sofia's bear has been in the family for ages. It belonged to her grandfather and her mother. The bear is a friend, who goes for picnics in the park and long walks through the woods. Sofia even takes it to the seaside. But in the rush to leave the beach when a storm strikes, the bear tumbles from a bag onto the sand and appears to be lost forever. All Sofia is left with is the bear's small blue scarf. Only the sea knows where the bear is and seeing it lying on the sand is determined to get it back to the girl. Passing whales, dolphins and octopuses and hitching a lift on a boat, the sea aids the bear on its long journey to find the girl, eventually turning up in a river. This is a beautifully told tale which proves that nothing can replace a child's favourite toy. The illustrations are rich, detailed and evocative and carry you through this heart-warming story. Its gentle wisdom is reminiscent of the Shirley Hughes classic, *Dogger*, and a clever twist at the end makes it even more satisfying.

Richard Monte

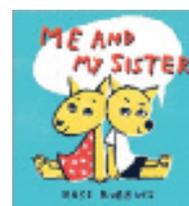
Me and My Sister

Written by Rose Robbins

Sallywag £11.99

ISBN: 978-1912650002

Living with a sibling with autism cannot be characterised as all good or all difficult, because every person with autism is different, as is every individual and family. *Me and My Sister* captures this varied experience as we see situations that feel annoying and unfair alongside the fun and loving moments that siblings share. We also see how members of the public sometimes react to the manifestations of autism and how family members understand so much better. Reading this story could allow siblings to feel a welcome sense of identification with the protagonist. It also gives some insight to children who perhaps go to school with a child with autism. Autism itself is not mentioned at any point and so children with siblings in different situations may also identify. The illustrations are bright and simple, using animal characters that are less threatening than if humans were depicted, for example as disapproving members of the public. An attractive book and useful tool to encourage understanding.



Annalise Taylor

Everybunny Dream!

Written and illustrated by Ellie Sandall

Hodder £12.99

ISBN: 978-1444933864



You can never have too many bedtime bunnies and Ellie Sandall's latest bunny book joyfully celebrates both bunnies and diversity. After a blissful day with some surprising playmates, the young bunnies follow their bedtime routine. When they finally snuggle up for a story, there is even room for a foxy interloper or two to join in. Illustrations are bold and colourful, with just enough details to encourage a closer look and a little pointing finger here and there. The text rhymes without feeling forced, and the gentle rhythm is soothing, just right for bedtime.

Yvonne Coppard