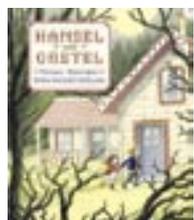


Hansel and Gretel

Written by Michael Morpurgo
Illustrated by Emma Chichester Clark
Walker Books £12.99 ISBN: 978-1406304176



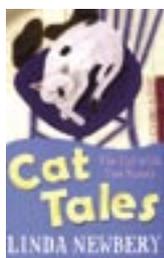
Readers will relish the twists and turns of this extended retelling of the Grimms' tale where the wicked witch orchestrates the events right from the opening page. She happens upon a radiant couple,

Gabriel and Lisette, and their children, Hansel and Gretel and immediately falls in love with Gabriel. Casting a spell on Lisette, she transforms her into a weeping willow tree and usurps her place. The children's rejection of their new stepmother is their undoing, leading to their abandonment in the woods. Rhythmic and alliterative, the story is steeped in fairytale elements in which enchantment and shape-changing loom large. The expressive artwork of bleak forests and cheerful interiors echo the many moods of the story, at once cheerful and joyous, threatening and evil. Filled with colour and cadence, this is a spellbinding book that weaves its very own magic in words and pictures.

Anne Faundez

Cat Tales

Written by Linda Newbery
Illustrated by Stephen Lambert
Usborne £3.99
ISBN: 978-0746096147



Cat had a home once but his owners moved away, leaving him behind and he is alone and hungry. It is hard to find food and shelter, but one day a kind lady sees him sitting under the bird table waiting for scraps to be dropped by the birds. She takes pity on him and Cat has a home at last - but it is not quite as he would have wished. This endearing tale of how Cat eventually finds a home (or, in fact, two homes!) to suit him, is straightforward and simply told. The language is skilfully chosen and evokes and explores the world as seen and experienced by a cat. Stephen Lambert's line drawings are also simple but convey the feelings of Cat and the people who come to love him and offer him a home.

Louise Coppard

Agent Amelia - Hypno Hounds

Written and illustrated by Michael Broad
Andersen Press £4.99 ISBN: 978-1842708163

Amelia is a secret agent determined to save the world from mad scientists who want to take it over. There are three simple stories recounted here, all hugely entertaining with line drawings that add to the fun. In the first she encounters the

hell hounds who are terrifying everyone around their holiday cottage. She solves the mystery surrounding the disappearance of the entire stock of a department store's Turbo Teds, and finally, encounters a scientist who isn't so mad after all.



Jackie Marchant

Daisy Dawson and the Secret Pool



Written by Steve Voake
Walker Books £3.99
ISBN: 978-1406304015

A second book about Daisy, a little girl who can talk with the animals. She has amiable parents and an ordinary school but her projects about animal habitats will clearly be more than ordinary for this is a

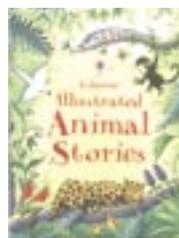
girl who has friends among the local wildlife. An adventure ensues when her successful day with a pair of otters goes wrong as the river flash floods. A simple plot, and the right emotional register for younger readers.

Pat Thomson

Usborne Illustrated Animal Stories

£12.99 ISBN: 978-0746095850

These ten animal stories are a mixture of traditional tales, old favourites and stories from other lands. Each has a different author and illustrator which gives a great variety of voices and moods. There is the delightful silly *Chicken Licken* and the four clever friends in *The Musicians of Bremen*. The story of *The Little Giraffe* is illustrated with the hot colours of his East African home and we learn how he came to have such a long neck. In contrast are the gentler colours of the tale about *The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs* whilst the final story is Aesop's fable of *The Hare and the Tortoise*.



Louise Stothard

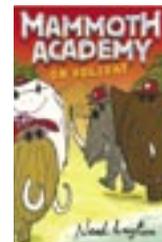
Mammoth Academy on Holiday

Written and illustrated by Neal Layton
Hodder £4.99 ISBN: 978-0340930311

A light-hearted story from Mammoth Academy which sees pupils embarking on their first school trip, a visit to 'The Palm Tree Springs Study Centre'. On arrival, however, they find the river polluted, the flora wilted and the fauna departed ... Who could be behind this assault upon the Earth? None other than the humans! Oscar, Arabella and Ormsby set about finding a way to be rid of the blight triggered

by them, but in doing so Ormsby is endangered. A spare style of writing, accompanied by illustrations suffused with warmth and good humour, make this immediately inviting and accessible to inexperienced readers.

Jake Hope



Captain Pugwash

Written and illustrated by John Ryan
Read by Jim Broadbent



Frances Lincoln £6.99
ISBN: 978-1845079192

Rascally Captain Pugwash has not lost an iota of his appeal over the years (it was first published in 1957) and is as entertaining as ever. This book introduces the

irrepressible pirate, his ship 'The Black Pig' and his ramshackle, lazy crew. Most importantly, we also meet the cabin boy Tim who is, in fact, the only crew member who knows how to 'work the compass, sail the ship and make tea'. The distinctive illustrations are lively, quirky and full of fun and add to the straightforward and tongue-in-cheek, amusing text. Added to this is the CD of the story narrated by Jim Broadbent's warm tones and accompanied by a very jolly sailor's hornpipe. Certain to be enjoyed by readers and listeners of all ages,

Louise Stothard

Kenny and the Dragon

Written and illustrated by Tony DiTerlizzi
Simon and Schuster £7.99
ISBN: 978-1847384072

Clearly inspired by Kenneth Grahame's classic *The Reluctant Dragon*, this wonderful book underlines the importance of friendship. When Kenny, a book loving rabbit, meets Graeme, an educated dragon with no taste for devouring damsels, they become good friends and enjoy sharing stories. However, the townspeople of Roundbrook have more traditional ideas about dragons and the King persuades George, Kenny's good friend and local bookseller, to come out of retirement as a dragon slayer. The story moves along at a brisk pace as Kenny, horrified at the idea of a showdown between his two best friends, sets about trying to find a more peaceful solution. Charming atmospheric pencil sketches, reinforce the story and help to bring the characters to life.



Jane Hall



Igraine the Brave

Written by Cornelia Funke
The Chicken House £5.99
ISBN: 978-1905294657

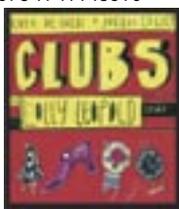
Things go badly wrong at Pimpnel Castle when Igraine's parents turn themselves into pigs by mistake. It is the morning of her twelfth birthday, too. And there is more trouble on the horizon. Osmond the Greedy wants to steal their family's great treasure – the Singing Book of Magic. Can brave Igraine, her magician brother and her new friend, the Sorrowful Knight, win the day? Igraine learns not only how to face dishonest spiky knights but also something about genuine chivalry. The author's expressive illustrations offer visual clues to keep young readers totally involved.

Marianne Adey

Clubs: A Lolly Leopold Story

Written by Kate De Goldi Illustrated by Jacqui Colley
Allen and Unwin £4.99 ISBN: 978-1741148916

Pieced together from papers written by Lolly Leopold, the story is told alongside double-page spreads of mixed-media illustrations. These zany pictures brilliantly capture the individual, sometimes



anarchic, nature of the spirited Lolly. The story tells about the various fan groups and societies which have recently emerged in school from which Lolly has distanced herself. Also alienated by their individuality are Byron and Adele. Could their feelings of being outside these groups somehow be used to link them? Read and find out.

Jake Hope



Tim and Tig

Written by Victor Kelleher
Illustrated by Judy Watson
Happy Cat Books £3.99
ISBN: 978-1905117819

Aunt Ethel brings Tim a cute kitten for his birthday, but it's orange with black stripes and not exactly little. Nonetheless, the whole family adore Tig and spoil him with raw meat and all home comforts, including the furniture. It's when the house becomes increasingly cramped that Tim suggests he take Tig for a walk and is mildly dismayed to find the shopping centre very quiet, with several shoppers playing hide-and-seek or even napping on benches. And when he takes Tig to the cat show he's surprised how many tiny cats dart up trees, not to mention the judges. Indeed, it's only when the Emergency Services turn up at the house that the family face reality. This amusing tale is told with the sort of details that will have children of a wide age range turning the pages to see what happens next. The plentiful illustrations closely follow the text and continue the humour. But what becomes of Tig?

Gill Roberts, with support from 10 year-old Dan Owen



Dying to Meet You

Written by Michael Cox
A & C Black £4.99
ISBN: 978-0713685732

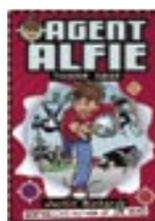
In a (deliberately) highly implausible tale, twins Hailey and Hugo win a weekend with their favourite, and very famous, writer of horror stories – and end up being part of an horrific plot themselves. More twists and turns than a plate of spaghetti that's been dropped and scooped up again, and more comic innuendo and one-liners than your average night at the local comedy club. Juvenile jokes abound, and if the plot is basically there to serve the next joke coming round the corner, I don't think junior readers (or parents blessed with a laddish sense of humour) will mind too much.

Yvonne Coppard

Agent Alfie: Thunder Raker

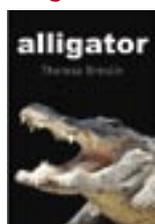
Written by Justin Richards
HarperCollins £4.99 ISBN: 978-0007273577

Alfie's postal worker dad happens to share the same name as the Prime Minister, a happy coincidence when he applies for a place in Thunder Raker Manor – a prestigious local school. But the school is not what it seems. When Alfie takes his place he finds himself being versed in the sinister skills of the secret service, alongside the offspring of Britain's best spies. He has to use these newly acquired skills when he becomes immersed in a skirmish with SPUD – Secret Partners for Undertaking Destruction. Unfortunate acronyms, unintelligent teachers, unlikely scenarios – all blended together to create a fast-paced, exciting race of a read.



Jake Hope

Alligator



Written by Theresa Breslin
Barrington Stoke *gr8reads* £5.99
ISBN: 978-1842995228

Aimed at teenagers, this entertaining story has a teenage hero. But the striking cover – showing an open-mouthed alligator – caught the attention of my seven-year-old grandson, who then read all twelve chapters from cover to cover. The lay-out helped – plenty of wide spaces – along with the whole page black and white drawings. But it was the story that gripped. Jono is tricked into 'buying' a sleeping alligator. In fact, he's given five pounds for taking it off the trickster's hand. Hiding it from his mum is one problem. Protecting himself, (and other people) when the reptile wakes up is another. Credible characters, a satisfying plot and touches of humour make this an absorbing and convincing read for a wide age range.

Julia Jarman

Peter the Penguin Pioneer

Written by Darren King Illustrated by David Roberts
Quercus £9.99 ISBN: 978-1847244345



Sinister things are going on in the Antarctic. The penguins' favourite skating rink has become overcrowded with impostors. It's left to Peter and Punky, his doting and naïve assistant, to uncover which are true penguins and which are squirrels in disguise. Punky is an enthusiastic but unreliable narrator – is Peter the amazing hero he pretends to be? Or is someone taking advantage of Punky? It doesn't get much funnier or more unexpected than this latest book from Nestlé Gold Award winner, Darren King. With playful illustrations by David Roberts, reminiscent of Edward Gorey, this lovely little hardback deserves to be read by a wide age range.

Benjamin Scott

Girl Writer: Spies and Lies

Written by Ros Asquith
Piccadilly Press £5.99
ISBN: 978-1853409547



Cordelia is very keen to be a writer, like her aunt – only better, of course. She is currently working on a stunning 'Jane Bond' novel called *The Girl with the Golden Pun*. Here, we are treated to Cordelia's own story as her overactive imagination gets her into a variety of scrapes, alongside extracts from her Jane Bond novel. Cordelia also shares her aunt's top tips for young writers and adds her own comments. Funny, engaging and unpredictable – just what you would expect from a writer of Ros Asquith's calibre.

Yvonne Coppard

The Library

Written by Sarah Stewart Illustrated by David Small
Frances Lincoln £6.99 ISBN: 978-1845076078



Elizabeth Brown loves books. She reads them as a little girl, she drags them to school in a trunk and collects them as a young woman. Eventually books fill her house from the floor to the ceiling and unable to collect any more she donates them to the town and establishes the 'Elizabeth Brown Free Library'. This book is important for two reasons. It pays tribute to libraries at a time when they are fighting to survive and it celebrates the book itself which is under pressure from many forms of digital media. The faded water-colour illustrations of old fashioned furniture, log fires and pictures of Woolf and Tolstoy on the school walls, evoke an earlier time. The real Mary Elizabeth Brown, to whom the book is dedicated, was born in 1920. The slightly eccentric ending in which Ms Brown ends up as the spinster librarian surrounded by her books and cats, might lead some to think that this is the inevitable outcome for book lovers, but it is Ms Brown's legacy and gift to the community which is important.

Richard Monte