



Mrs Cockle's Cat

Written by Philippa Pearce
Illustrated by Antony Maitland
Jane Nissen Books (R) £6.99
ISBN: 978-1903252338

An extremely welcome reissue of this short and perfect novel by one of the great children's writers aided by atmospheric line drawings. It seems a simple story, Mrs Cockle loves her cat and her cat loves fish. And the cat goes missing in search of that elusive fish. But there is more to it – you can believe the wonderful sequence where Mrs Cockle walks on the clouds; you will feel overjoyed at the conclusion and for a short period you will have lived in another world. Few writers can achieve such perfection.

Enid Stephenson

Christian the Lion

Written by Anthony Rourke & John Randall
Red Fox £5.99 ISBN: 978-1862309562

When friends, Ace and John, find lion cubs for sale in Harrods how can they possibly resist buying one? The cubs are cooped up in small cages and the friends desperately want to rescue them from their confinement. So they purchase one very small cub, who they call Christian and their adventures begin when they get him home to their small London flat. The little cub does not stay small for long and he develops into a mischievous young lion. The friends soon realise that Christian is going to turn into a magnificent beast who is not suited to life in a London flat. They know they will have to make other arrangements but how can you give a lion more freedom when you live in London? This is the story of a captive lion being reintroduced to the wild. It is already well known having been recently televised and film clips are available on YouTube, but young readers will enjoy reading about Christian's exploits for themselves in this book. There are photographs illustrating the lion's progress throughout, and bite-size information on the authors, lions and other protected species. Whilst being educational, it's also a very enjoyable story.



Anna Elliott

The Magician's Elephant

Written by Kate Di Camillo Illustrated by Yoko Tanaka
Walker Books £8.99 ISBN: 978-1406324471

Any story for young readers with an elephant in it is off to a good start, and in Kate Di Camillo's hands it is something very special. Her elephant makes



an unusual entrance: conjured by a magician whose intention was to produce a bunch of lilies, she crashes through the roof of an opera-house. At the heart of the story, set in a vaguely mid-European city, is good-hearted Peter, an orphan in search of

his lost little sister; he's a boy who believes that impossible things may happen if he wishes for them hard enough. Soon his own quest is overshadowed when he sees the elephant's sorrow, and knows that she will die if she stays in this wintry city far from home. A charming and memorable tale, the atmospheric pencil illustrations add to its traditional, reassuring feel. Lovely to read aloud and equally enjoyable for readers who are beginning to immerse themselves in a story independently.

Linda Newbery

The Lorax

Written and illustrated by
Dr Seuss
HarperCollins (R) £7.99
ISBN: 978-0007305827

Every child, and adult for that matter, should read this Dr Seuss title. Originally published in the UK in 1972 its meaning is still as pertinent today as it was nearly forty years ago. Behind the fabulous story line the message is quite clear: cutting down trees and forests for the sake of profit and greed leads only to the devastation of the earth. Dr Seuss' metaphor for the environment is no dreary preaching or didactic sermon, but a wonderful book full of mouth watering words like 'Truffuls Trees', 'Thneeds', 'Brown Bar-ba-loots', 'Swomee-Swans', not to mention 'Lerkim' and 'Lorax'. It oozes charm and eccentricity but at the same time paints a colourful picture of a world teeming with life, so fragile and delicately balanced that it only takes the greed of the "Once-ler" and his axe to alter the status quo and turn this paradise into a deserted wasteland. And like all tales which stand the test of time, the ending is upbeat and positive, suggesting that we have the chance to learn from past mistakes and make good.

Richard Monte

The Ogress and the Snake

Written by Elizabeth Laird Illustrated by Shelley Fowles
Frances Lincoln £5.99 ISBN: 978-1845078706

The storyteller's voice rings loudly in these stories, from Somalia, of magic and shape changing, cunning and comeuppance, in which good is rewarded and evil punished. A head with no body but clever enough to win the hand of a princess, a



white-feathered raven that flies too close to the sun and two tricksters conned by each other – these are just some of the extraordinary characters that fill the pages. The eight traditional tales and myths set out here are the culmination of a journey

the author undertook meeting with storytellers across the country. The resulting collection is lively, fresh and entertaining, filled with wisdom and wit. While the stories' landscapes belong to the country, the characters and predicaments are, as with all traditional tales, universally recognisable.

Anne Faundez

How Kirsty Jenkins Stole the Elephant

Written by Elen Caldecott
Bloomsbury £5.99
ISBN: 978-0747599197

Hurrah... a funny and wise story for children all about an allotment, a promise and an elephant. There is feisty Kirsty who made the promise to her grandfather, the disputed allotment, the miserable official from the council and the wonderfully awful half-sister Dawn, the agreeable half-brother Ben and how the three of them sort out absolutely everything with the help of an elephant. Adults sharing it will enjoy the skit on officials but this is really a most enjoyable story for children pure and simple.

Enid Stephenson



The 13 Clocks

Written by James Thurber
The New York Review Children's Collection (R) £9.99
ISBN: 978-1590172759



A handsome prince in disguise, a cruel Duke and his beautiful niece, a seemingly impossible task – James Thurber's tongue-in-cheek fairy tale is reissued in handsome and collectable hardback, with colour illustrations by Marc Simont and an introduction

by Neil Gaiman, who describes Thurber as tossing out "magical, wonderful, tasty words ... like a happy madman". Certainly wordplay is well to the fore in *The 13 Clocks*. Thurber's coinages for sound-effects (*squutch* and *gleep* and *zicker*), the eccentric logic of the characters' deductions, and the slipping in and out of rhyme all make the story ask to be read aloud, promising great fun for both adult and child readers.

Linda Newbery

Do Goalkeepers Wear Tiaras?

Written by Helena Pielichaty
Walker Books £4.99 ISBN: 978-1406317305



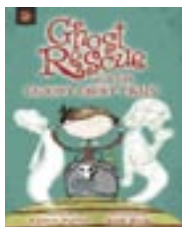
Megan is football mad but as one of the younger players she soon realises that she is in for a long wait to be part of the school team. Are there other options? A chance encounter with older members of an all-girls' team gives Megan and her friends a taste of real coaching and the possibility of forming their own under-elevens team. This book, and the series to follow, will have a broad appeal for all girls who love sport.

Marianne Adey

Ghost Rescue and the Gloomy Ghost Train

Written by Andrew Murray Illustrated by Sarah Home
Orchard Books £8.99 ISBN: 978-1846163531

Max, Mary and Yatterdee are ghosts bored with their usual haunt and they succumb to temptation and accompany Briggs to his fairground thinking it will be more fun. On arrival Briggs' attitude changes and the ghosts realise he has his own agenda. He insists that they terrify his customers on the Ghost Train ride and make it the number one fairground experience. Full of action and fun, the plentiful large illustrations make it accessible for those children who are less enthusiastic about reading longer stories.



Gill Roberts

Clementine

Written by Sara Pennypacker Illustrated by Marla Frazee
Hodder £4.99 ISBN: 978-0340956977



Clementine is a delightful little character, full of good intentions that go disastrously wrong and full of hopes and fears with no way to articulate them except through actions that get her into trouble. The black and white drawings bring Clementine and her family to life, and the story zips along combining laughter and poignancy as Clementine tries her very best to make a difference and gets knocked back. Is she the thinking reader's Horrid Henry? No. Clementine is naughty, certainly – but she doesn't mean to be, and underneath the humour you get the sense of a real child trying to get to grips with the unfathomable puzzles thrown up by her environment. No stereotype here, but a gentle, affectionate insight into the complexity of one girl's inner life. Children and adults will love her.

Yvonne Coppard

More Adventures According to Humphrey

Written by Betty G Birney
Faber £4.99
ISBN: 978-0571237180

Humphrey is a hamster. He lives in a cage, with a lock-that-doesn't-lock, in Room 26 of Longfellow School, and he's an intelligent observer of everything that happens there. And not just an observer – remember that lock-that-doesn't-lock – he sometimes participates. In this book he is determined to intervene when two lads are heading for disaster on the outing to Potter's Pond. The action is exciting, especially near the end where there is a pirate attack. There are lot of jokes but it is Humphrey's character that makes the book so beguiling, his love of learning, his love of words and his concern for all the children in the classroom. Readers will absorb some useful information while enjoying a warm, light-hearted story.



Julia Jarman



Snow Tigers

Written by Simon Chapman
Barrington Stoke £5.99
ISBN: 978-1842996096

Captain Vladimir Aseniev and his crew of Cossack soldiers are on a dangerous mission to explore and draw maps of the mountains and coastline of south-eastern Siberia. In the process they encounter brown bears, bandits, forest fires, blizzards and the deadliest enemy of all: snow tigers. With the help of his old friend, Dersu Uzala a native tracker who belongs to the Gold tribe, the captain eventually reaches the Trans-Siberian Railway. Packed full of action and adventure, this is the perfect book for getting less-than-enthusiastic boys into reading. The author, an explorer himself, actually travelled the route and came face to face with the majestic snow tiger. Parts of his real life diary about the forests of Siberia are included, with black and white photos at the end of the text which add authenticity.

Richard Monte

Cliffhanger

Written by Jacqueline Wilson
Illustrated by Nick Sharratt
Corgi Yearling (R) £4.99
ISBN: 978-0440868552

This short story by Jacqueline Wilson was originally written as a school television script and works well as a book. Nine-year-old Tim is sent on an adventure holiday by his rather forceful Dad although he would much prefer to stay at home and watch television. Tim is not good at games – however much his father tries to get him to play – and is very concerned about the canoeing, abseiling and other energetic activities in



store for him. He is relieved to find another boy who has similar worries at the camp and when they play a game of Triangles (like Rounders but a different shape) their worst fears are realised. The activities, plus all the postcards home, are wonderfully illustrated and inject much humour into the boys' struggles with the various challenges which they have to face. Tim is able to overcome some of his fears and in the end it is his quick thinking which helps his team to win. He returns home having made new friends and gained some confidence as well.

Louise Stothard

Out of the Woods

Written by Lyn Gardner
Illustrated by Mini Grey
David Fickling Books £12.99
ISBN: 978-0385610360

Storm Eden again takes centre stage in this most enjoyable second outing for the redoubtable Eden Sisters.

Although you can quite happily read this book without having read the first I do recommend, because it is so lively and engrossing, reading *Into the Woods* first (now available in paperback). There is a fun fair (so often a place of mystery and danger), a witch, wolves, a cowardly lion, a mouse, a hero or two and of course a wicked stepmother. Thrills and spills galore all weaving their way with nods to fairy tales and myths and legends. The intelligent attractive illustrations add immeasurably to the text – indeed it is hard to imagine the story without them. What pleasure it is to hold such a well-produced book.

Enid Stephenson

Mondays are Murder



Written by Tanya Landman
Walker Books £4.99
ISBN: 978-1406314601

This is more a week of murders, rather than just Mondays! Tanya Landman gives us unusual and scary scenarios in which uncertainty and chilling reality produce a great mystery for young Miss Marples. Poppy Fields is sent on an adventure holiday to a remote Scottish island while her mum is busy working, and she's looking forward to the experience. However, she starts having doubts on the journey there and by the time she's met all the staff at the centre Poppy's instincts tell her something strange is definitely going on. After the first 'accident' when one of the instructors falls to his death things become increasingly grisly, and when the island is cut off by a storm Poppy's suspicions that they are stranded alone with a murderer are soon realised. Murder follows murder and Poppy and her confidante Graham are soon on the case. Poppy's cynical outlook adds humour throughout and with a convincing twist in the tale this is a really satisfying story.

Sam Cane