



Contemporary Children's Books: Recommended Titles

(synopses from Amazon, The Guardian and Shrewsbury Bookfest's website)

Books for Pre-Schoolers

Richard Byrne, *This Book Just Ate My Dog!*

In this wonderfully inventive book, Bella is taking her dog for a stroll across the page but halfway across, he disappears! Unable to quite believe what's just happened, Bella watches, transfixed, with changing emotions of surprise, indignation, moments of renewed hope (as the authorities arrive to take control) followed by shock (as they too succumb to the book's inexplicable behaviour) and finally action, when Bella marches toward the dangerous middle of the book . . . only to disappear herself! At this point, the book has consumed its characters and it's down to the reader to step in to help...

Rob Biddulph, *Blown Away*

Meet Penguin Blue, in this Waterstones Children's Book Prize winning tale. It's a windy day, and he has a brand new kite – but where's he going on this maiden flight? Penguin Blue and his friends go on a gloriously illustrated adventure full of good ideas, homesickness and the perils of kites!

Gareth Edwards, *Fabulous Pie*

Deep in the forest, a very bad bear is baking a fabulous pie. All the woodland animals want to help him find the perfect filling, so they bring him their favourite foods: berries, nuts, honey and salmon. But the bear has a better idea as to what can go in the pie ...

Kes Grey, *Oi Frog!*

Cats sit on mats, hares sit on chairs, mules sit on stools and gofers sit on sofas, but Frog does not want to sit on a log! Jam-packed with animals and silliness, this original rhyming story will have young children in fits of laughter.

Ed Vere, *Max at Night*

Max is tired and all ready for bed, but when he can't find the moon to say goodnight to, he sets out to find it. However, that's not as easy as Max had hoped. . . Witty and heart-warming, stylish and beautifully illustrated. An excellent bedtime read.

Books for 4 years +

Patricia Cleveland-Peck, *You Can't Take an Elephant on the Bus*

Never put a camel in a sailing boat, or a tiger on a train, and don't even THINK about asking a whale to ride a bike ... This riotous picture book is filled with animals causing total disaster as they try to travel in the most unsuitable vehicles. A real romp of a book, with hilarious rhyming text.

Drew Daywalt, *The Day the Crayons Quit*

The Number One New York Times Bestseller! Debut author Drew Daywalt and international bestseller Oliver Jeffers team up to create a colourful solution to a crayon-based crisis in this playful, imaginative story that will have children laughing and playing with their crayons in a whole new way. Poor Duncan just wants to colour in. But when he opens his box of crayons, he only finds letters, all saying the same thing: We quit! Beige is tired of playing second fiddle to Brown, Blue needs a break from colouring in all that water, while Pink just wants to be used. Green has no complaints, but Orange and Yellow are no longer speaking to each other. The battle lines have been drawn. What is Duncan to do?

The Tear Thief, *Carol Ann Duffy*

Each night, in the hours between supper and bedtime, the Tear Thief carries her waterproof, silvery sack as she steals the tears of every child who cries. But what does she do with all those tears? This warm, poignant and beautifully illustrated story offers a thought-provoking message and a starting point for discussing children's emotions.

Claire Freedman, *Oliver and Patch*

Oliver is finding the big city a lonely and scary place but when he finds a little lost dog he makes his first friend in the city. The trouble is, he knows that somewhere out there, someone is missing the little dog just as much as he is loving having him...so, with a heavy heart, Oliver sets about doing the right thing. A beautifully told story with a lovely, uplifting ending.

Benjamin Chaud, *A Funny Thing Happened on my Way to School...*

Excuses, excuses! Or are they? First, some giant ants steal breakfast. Then there are the evil ninjas, giant blob, massive ape, mysterious mole people, and countless other daunting (and astonishing) detours along the way to school. Are these excuses really why this student is late? Or is there another explanation that is even more outrageous than the rest?

Books for 7 years +

David Almond, *My Dad's a Birdman!*

A warm and wonderfully wacky tale told with heart and hope by the Carnegie award winning author David Almond. Lizzie and Dad live in a rainy town in the north of England. It's just the two of them, and Auntie Doreen, who pops round to check Lizzie's spellings and tell Dad he's daft - and make them nice hot dumplings. But today there's something unusual going on: why is Dad building himself a pair of wings and studying the birds to see how they fly? The Great Human Bird Competition, of course!

Pamela Butchart, *Attack of the Demon Dinner Ladies*

Izzy and her friends have never liked school dinners. And they're getting worse. The dinner ladies are acting strangely (making up random rules, wearing hats, and cooking new food, even more horrible than usual). Lollipop man mentions there is a new head dinner lady and calls her "a bit of a legend" (in a bad way) and that she used to be here a long, long time ago and has returned. Izzy and friends wonder if she is the reason for the strange behaviour. They also wonder why she has returned...

Julian Clary, *The Bolds*

The Bold family seems fairly normal: they live in a nice house, the parents have good jobs, and they all love to have fun. One slight difference: they're hyenas. That's right—they're covered in fur, have tails tucked into their clothes, and really, really like to laugh.

Phil Earle, *Demolition Dad*

Demolition Dad is a story about Jake Biggs and his father George, a big man with a bigger heart. By day, George knocks down buildings. But on the weekends, George suits up into his spandex and is a wrestling champion on the local circuit, with Jake by his side as his number one fan. Jake is bursting with pride for George, and wants to tell the whole world how great he is, but his dad wants to keep his wrestling a secret. Then Jake secretly enters his dad into a wrestling competition in the USA but things don't exactly go as planned...

Abi Elphinstone, *The Shadow Keeper*

Moll Pecksniff and her friends are living as outlaws in a secret cave by the sea, desperate to stay hidden from the Shadowmasks. But further along the coast lies the Amulet of Truth, the only thing powerful enough to force the Shadowmasks back and contain their dark magic. So, together with Gryff, the wildcat that's always by her side, and her best friends Alfie and Sid, Moll must sneak past smugglers, outwit mer-creatures and crack secret codes to save the Old Magic. With more at stake than ever before and the dark magic rising fast, can Moll and her friends stop the Shadowmasks before it's too late? Perfect for fans of J.K Rowling, Piers Torday and Michelle Paver.

Jennifer L Holm, *The Fourteenth Goldfish*

Believe in the possible . . . with this "New York Times" bestseller by three-time Newbery Honor winner Jennifer L. Holm. Galileo. Newton. Salk. Oppenheimer. Science can change the world . . . but can it go too far? Eleven-year-old Ellie has never liked change. She misses fifth grade. She misses her old best friend. She even misses her dearly departed goldfish. Then one day a strange boy shows up. He's bossy. He's cranky. And weirdly enough . . . he looks a lot like Ellie's grandfather, a scientist who's always been slightly obsessed with immortality. Could this gawky teenager really be Grandpa Melvin? Has he finally found the secret to eternal youth?

Gabrielle Kent, *Alfie Bloom and the Secrets of Hexbridge Castle*

Alfie Bloom's life is dull. Dull and lonely. All of that changes when he is summoned to the bizarre offices of mysterious solicitor, Caspian Bone, and inherits a castle full of wonders that has been sealed for centuries. Alfie is astounded to learn he was born in that very castle six hundred years ago during a magical timeslip. There, Orin Hopcraft, the last of the druids, hid an ancient magic inside him, which others seek but which should never be used. With the help of his cousins, Madeleine and Robin, a shapeshifting solicitor and a flying bearskin rug, Alfie must keep the magic safe from terrifying adversaries to make sure the secrets of Hexbridge Castle stay secret, forever.

Books for 9 years +

Frank Cottrell Boyce, *The Astounding Broccoli Boy*

Rory Rooney is unremarkable in almost everything, apart from his capacity to attract the attention of the school bully. But when he suddenly and spectacularly turns green, he becomes a superhero! With an enhanced, 200% brain and an ability to slightly teleport, what other explanation could there be for his greenness?

Emma Carroll, *In Darkling Wood*

When Alice's brother gets a longed-for chance for a heart transplant, Alice is suddenly bundled off to her estranged grandmother's house. There's nothing good about staying with Nell, except for the beautiful Darkling Wood at the end of her garden - but Nell wants to have it cut down. Alice feels at home there, at peace, and even finds a friend, Flo. But Flo doesn't seem to go to the local school and no one in town has heard of a girl with that name. When Flo shows Alice the surprising secrets of Darkling Wood, Alice starts to wonder, what is real? And can she find out in time to save the wood from destruction?

Christopher Edge, *The Many Worlds of Albie Bright*

When Albie's mum dies, it's natural he should wonder where she's gone. His parents are both scientists and they usually have all the answers. Dad mutters something about Albie's mum being alive and with them in a parallel universe. So Albie finds a box, his mum's computer and a rotting banana, and sends himself through time and space to find her...

Jane Elson, *How to Fly with Broken Wings*

Twelve-year-old Willem has Aspergers Syndrome and two main aims in life: to fly and to make at least two friends of his own age. But all the other boys from the Beckham Estate do is make him jump off things. First his desk - and now the wall. As his toes teeter on the edge, Sasha Bradley gives him a tiny little wink. Might she become his friend? Bullied by Finn and his gang, the Beckham Estate Boyz, Willem has no choice but to jump. As he flies through the air he flaps his arms, wishing he could fly and escape into the clouds. Instead he comes crashing down and breaks his ankle. Sasha, angry with herself for not stopping Finn and his Boyz, is determined to put things right. And soon, while the gangs riot on their estate, Willem and Sasha form an unlikely friendship. Because they share a secret. Sasha longs to fly too...

A. F. Harrold, *The Imaginary*

Rudger is Amanda's best friend. He doesn't exist, but nobody's perfect. Only Amanda can see her imaginary friend - until the sinister Mr Bunting arrives at Amanda's door. Mr Bunting hunts imaginaries. Rumour says that he eats them. And he's sniffed out Rudger. Soon Rudger is alone, and running for his imaginary life. But can a boy who isn't there survive without a friend to dream him up?

Tom McLaughlin, *The Accidental Prime Minister*

When Joe tells a local news reporter exactly what he would do if he were leader of the country, the video goes viral and Joe's speech becomes famous all over the world! Before long, people are calling for the current leader to resign and give someone else a go . . . and that's how an ordinary boy like Joe ended up with the most extraordinary job. Now the fun can really start . . . Hats for cats! Pet pigs for all! Banana shaped buses! Swimming pools on trains! A hilarious story of one boy's meteoric rise to power!

Ross Montgomery, *Perijee and Me*

When 11-year-old Caitlin discovers a shrimp-like alien creature on the shores of her island home, she takes responsibility for teaching it about the world. Mostly, this just involves stopping little Perijee from eating everything! Caitlin becomes increasingly close to her alien friend, treating him like a brother. There's only one problem - Perijee won't stop growing. Then the authorities try to hunt him down and through his fear, Perijee disappears and starts causing trouble. Caitlin must leave home and travel across the country to try and convince Perijee to stop destroying everything - before it's too late.

Michael Morpurgo, *Half a Man*

Revered storyteller Michael Morpurgo remembers the post-war Britain of his childhood in this unflinching and deeply poignant tale of the physical and mental scars of war. From a young age, Michael has been both fascinated by and afraid of his grandfather. Grandpa's ship was torpedoed during the Second World War, leaving him with terrible burns. Every time he comes to stay, Michael is warned by his mother that he must not stare, he must not make too much noise, he must not ask Grandpa any questions about his past...

Mike Revell, *Stonebird*

When ten-year-old Liam moves house to be closer to his dementia-suffering grandma, he's thrown into an unfamiliar place with a family that seems to be falling apart. Liam doesn't remember what his grandma was like before she became ill. He only knows the witch-like old woman who snaps and snarls and eats her birthday cards. He wants to fix it, but he can't. Walking his dog one day, Liam discovers an old stone gargoyle in a rundown church, and his life changes in impossible ways. The gargoyle is alive. It moves unseen in the night, acting out Liam's stories. And stories can be dangerous things...

Chris Riddell, *The Sleeper and the Spindle*

A magical picture book that reimagines fairytale princesses Snow White and Sleeping Beauty with a hint of dark magic. A young queen sets out to rescue a princess from enchantment on the eve of her wedding. With her sword and chain mail, she follows her brave dwarf retainers to the mountain towards the sleeping kingdom. She will decide her own future... but the princess who needs rescuing is not all she seems.

Books for 12/13 years +

Sophie Cleverly, *Scarlet and Ivy: The Lost Twin*

This is the story of how I became my sister...

A spine-tingling mystery set in a creepily atmospheric boarding school. Ivy must uncover the secrets behind her twin sister Scarlet's disappearance before it's too late. When troublesome Scarlet mysteriously disappears from Rookwood School, terrifying Miss Fox invites her quiet twin sister Ivy to 'take her place'. Ivy reluctantly agrees in the hopes of finding out what happened to her missing sister. For only at Rookwood will Ivy be able to unlock the secrets of Scarlet's disappearance, through a scattered trail of diary pages carefully hidden all over the school. Can Ivy solve the mystery before Miss Fox suspects? Or before an even greater danger presents itself? The first in a mesmerising new series – perfect for fans of Holly Webb and Harry Potter and mysteries that demand to be solved!

Sarah Crossan, *One*

Conjoined twins, Gracie and Tippi, no longer able to be homeschooled, must brave the outside world of stares and cruelty. But will they find the promise of love and friendships at school? Neither Gracie or Tippi realise the heartbreaking decision that awaits them which will change their lives forever.

J. M. Forster, *Shadow Jumper*

A thrilling mystery adventure story with contemporary themes. A story about friendship, family, loss, bravery and overcoming adversity. Jack Phillips's allergy to sunshine confines him to the shadows, leaving him lonely and at risk of life-threatening burns every time he steps into the light. Shadow jumping on the rooftops at dusk makes him feel alive. And free. But Jack's condition is suddenly worse than ever and only his missing scientist dad can save him. As Jack and his new friend, Beth, begin their frantic search and delve into his dad's past for clues, they have no idea what they are about to uncover. Shocking rumours and dark secrets bombard them at every turn. Shadow Jumping takes courage. But when it comes to the truth, just how far will Jack jump to find it?

Frances Hardinge, *The Lie Tree*

Mystery surrounds the death of Faith's father and when she searches through his belongings for clues she uncovers a strange tree. The tree has an enticing and dangerous secret – it only grows healthy when you whisper a lie, and when you eat the fruit of the tree you will possess a hidden truth. The more people who believe the lie, the bigger truth the person will unearth. Faith, who discovers she is very good at lying, hopes the tree will reveal the truth of her father's murder. But as Faith lies, she starts to lose control...

Rhian Ivory, *The Boy who Drew the Future*

Fifteen-year-old Blaze and Noah live in the same village, Sible Hedingham, more than 100 years apart. They both have the same gift or curse - they find they must draw pictures that later come true. In the 1860s Blaze is bullied, cheated and accused of being a witch and 'swam'. In the present day, Noah is used to everyone, even his parents, being afraid of him and is desperate to keep his drawing a secret. But as he gets closer to Beth, he must decide whether or not he can tell her the truth. Can Blaze's history help Noah and Beth work out their own story? Can the future be changed?

Patrick Ness, *The Rest of Us Just Live Here*

Patrick Ness puts you in the shoes of regular down-to-earth Mikey who just wants to graduate, go to prom and maybe pluck up the courage to ask Henna out. But then someone

blows up the high school and someone needs to fight the zombies or the soul-eating ghosts (or whatever this thing is with blue lights and death). A novel that asks you to find the extraordinary in ordinary life.

Katherine Rundell, *The Wolf Wilder*

Feodora and her mother live in the snowbound woods of Russia, in a house full of food and fireplaces. Ten minutes away, in a ruined chapel, lives a pack of wolves. Feodora's mother is a wolf wilder, and Feo is a wolf wilder in training. A wolf wilder is the opposite of an animal tamer: it is a person who teaches tamed animals to fend for themselves, and to fight and to run, and to be wary of humans. When the murderous hostility of the Russian Army threatens her very existence, Feo is left with no option but to go on the run. What follows is a story of revolution and adventure, about standing up for the things you love and fighting back. And, of course, wolves...

Kate Saunders, *Five Children on the Western Front*

Sequel to E Nesbit's *Five Children and It*, *Five Children on the Western Front* is set on the eve of WWI. Life has moved on since the five children's first adventures with the sand fairy; they have grown up and the war will change their lives forever. But the Psammead reappears and this time his magic will serve a more serious purpose. The two younger children will witness the crippling effects of war from the points of view of nurses, soldiers, factory workers and, of course, the people left behind.

Jon Walter, *My Name's Not Friday*

"This boy has bought me. This white boy who don't even look as old as I am. He owns me body and soul, and my worth has been set at six hundred dollars." Samuel's an educated boy. Been taught by a priest. He was never supposed to be a slave. He's a good boy, too, thoughtful and kind. The type of boy who'd take the blame for something he didn't do, if it meant he could save his brother. So now they don't call him Samuel anymore. And the sound of guns is getting ever closer...An extraordinary tale of endurance and hope, Jon Walter's second novel is a beautiful and moving story about the power of belief and the strength of the human spirit, set against the terrifying backdrop of the American Civil War.