

Make time for books

ISSUE 145
MAR/APR 2024

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Booktime

Percival
Everett

Author of the
BOOKER PRIZE-SHORTLISTED
The Trees

JAMES



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ARE MY
BAG**
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Contents

04 & 05

Wayfarer by Phoebe Smith



06 & 07

March & April's Choice

08

On This Holy Island by Oliver Smith

09

Looking Back

10

How to Solve Your Own Murder by Kristen Perrin

11

Caledonian Road by Andrew O'Hagan

12

The Science of Happiness by Bruce Hood

13

Crime & Thrillers

14

1000 Tudor People by Melita Thomas

15

Leave No Trace by Jo Callaghan

16 & 17

Orphia & Eurydicius Elyse John

18

Memoir & True Stories

19

Clear by Carys Davies

20 & 21

Breakthrough by Dr Ahmed Hankir

22

History & Politics

23

How to be a Bad Botanist by Simon Barnes

24

Family Adventures by Bex Band

25

Wisdom from The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben

26 & 27

Crime & Punishment

28

I Promise It Won't Always Hurt Like This by Clare Mackintosh

29

Stowaway by Joe Shute

30

Small Hours by Bobby Palmer

31

Fiction

32 & 33

Easy Wins by Anna Jones

34 & 35

Sunken Lands by Gareth E. Rees

36

Cull of the Wild by Hugh Warwick

37

James by Percival Everett



38

Non-Fiction

39

The Last Murder at the End of the World by Stuart Turton

40

Sharp Scratch by Martine Bailey

41

Mr and Mrs American Pie by Juliet McDaniel

42

Hacked by Jessica Barker

43

The Household by Stacey Halls

44 & 45

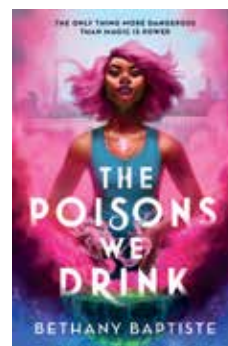
Ten Seconds by Robert Gold

46

Wilding by Isabella Tree & Angela Harding

47

Gardening



47

The Poisons We Drink by Bethany Baptiste

48

Books for Little Ones

49

A Drop of Golden Sun by Kate Saunders

50

Picture This

51

Black Hole Cinema Club by Christopher Edge

52

Twice Upon a Time by Michelle Harrison

53

That's Mathematics by Chris Smith, Tom Lehrer & Elina Brasliņa

54

Animal Magic

55

Secrets of the Snakestone by Piu DasGupta

56 & 57

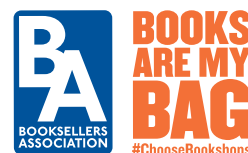
Peregrine Quinn and the Cosmic Realm by Ash Bond

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Editorial Sharon Benton

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58

Young Reads



59

Shadow Fox by
Cartie Sorosiak

60

Reading Delights

61

Skandar and the Chaos Trials by
A.F. Steadman

62

Who Rules the Rockpool? by Matty Long

63

Children's & YA Fiction

64

*Happy Hills: Attack of the Giant Danger
Kittens* by Sophy Henn

65

SuperQuesters: The Case of the Angry Sea
by Lisa Moss & Dr Thomas Bernard

65

*How to Teach Grown-Ups About
Climate Change* by Patricia Daniels &
Aaron Blecha

66 & 67

The Reappearance of Rachel Price by
Holly Jackson

68 & 69

Where Sleeping Girls Lie by
Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé

71

Puzzletime Book Quiz

All prices and book details were correct at their time of going to press but may change without prior notification. The prices listed in this magazine are the Sterling published prices and may be adjusted to reflect currency fluctuations outside the UK.



Welcome to Booktime!

Welcome to March & April Booktime! In this bumper edition, we have a wealth of author interviews. Phoebe Smith tells us about her book which blends memoir and travel writing as she walks Britain's pilgrim routes (see pages 4 & 5), Oliver Smith about his book about modern pilgrimages (see page 8), Gareth E. Rees about his book detailing his travels through flooded landscapes (see pages 34 & 35), and Bex Band about her guide to having adventures with the whole family (see page 24). We talk to Elyse John about her novel which reimagines a classical legend (see pages 16 & 17), to Kristen Perrin about her murder mystery with a twist (see page 10), to Robert Gold about the third book in his crime series (see pages 44 & 45), to Jo Callaghan about her second book to feature AI detective Lock (see page 15), and to Stuart Turton about his new mind-boggling high-concept novel (see page 39).

We interview A.F. Steadman about her latest story to feature unicorn-riding Skandar (see page 61), Sophy Henn on her superbly silly new graphic novel series for kids (see page 64), Michelle Harrison on her mystery story of magical twins (see page 52), Chris Smith about his book which makes learning maths fun (see page 53), and Piu DasGupta about her adventure story set in 19th century Paris (see page 55). There's also a new page-turning YA thriller from Holly Jackson (see pages 66 & 67), a dark and compelling YA story set at an elite boarding school (see pages 68 & 69), a fantastical tale set between different realms, with an unforgettable heroine (see pages 56 & 57), and two new charming animal picture books (see page 54). These books, and the many others we recommend in this edition, will put a spring in your step!

Ruth Hunter, Editor

We hope you enjoy this new edition of Booktime.

To enter our competitions online, please visit the webpage:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BooktimeMarch2024

Or write to us at the address below.

For any other queries, please email:

booktime@booksellers.org.uk

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6 Bell Yard, London, WC2A 2JR**

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BOOKS ARE MY BAG

#ChooseBookshops

Books Are My Bag

is a year-round campaign to celebrate bookshops across the UK and Ireland. It was established in 2013 by the Booksellers Association, working closely with its members (both independent and chain bookshops) publishers, authors, illustrators, poets and many other partners within the book world and beyond.

Books Are My Bag

exists to make connections between bookshops and people who value them; to champion the work booksellers do within their communities; and to remind people of the joy and benefits of doing their book-shopping with their local bookshop.

For more information follow **@booksaremybag** and **#ChooseBookshops** on social media or visit booksaremybag.com

Please note: Booktime is available exclusively from independent bookshops, please do not contact us for copies. Please do not send us unsolicited books, manuscripts or reviews, as all material is chosen and written in-house.

“A powerfully delicate book of love, loss and discovery,”

Raynor Winn



“Raw, honest, powerful. I couldn’t put it down.”

Cerys Matthews

The Wanderer’s Way

In *Wayfarer* travel writer Phoebe Smith reconnects with history, spirituality and the landscape, as she walks the oldest pilgrim paths of Britain. She also writes candidly about toxic relationships, grief and mental health, and how nature and place can heal past wounds. We interviewed her to discover her inspirations.

The book is partly a travel writing, part memoir, where did it begin, and did it change as you wrote it?

I always knew I wanted to write about pilgrimages. From the moment I did the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage, which is where the book starts, I felt that there is something about the act of doing a pilgrimage, even for someone who’s not religious, that was quite powerful. I’d tell people I’d done the Camino, and then I’d tell them that I’m going to walk a pilgrimage in the UK. The people I’d tell, no matter who they were, or whether they were into walking and the outdoors, they would just suddenly get this look on their face, and say ‘I’ve always wanted to do one of those’. And I couldn’t work out why everyone almost had this nostalgia about something that they’d never done. I knew there was something about it that I wanted to capture in a book but I totally didn’t know what that book would be.

When I first got the deal with the publishers they knew it was going to be about walking pilgrimages, and they knew it was going to include some personal stuff, but they didn’t know exactly what they were going to get because I didn’t know what I was going to give them! It was just one of those really strange things – as I started writing it, stuff just kind of came out of me. And I realised as it was happening that this was actually the story I needed to tell as well, and the two were so intertwined that I couldn’t possibly separate them. I couldn’t just write a book about beautiful walks on pilgrimages because it wasn’t just my experience of them, they

were so much more to me than that. I’ve always been quite private in my writing. As a travel writer you’re supposed to write yourself out of your stories. You’re just the eyes and the ears on the ground for the reader, to transport them there. But suddenly my brain wouldn’t let me do that anymore, it forced me to put myself into it as well, and the more I did it, it was almost like turning on a tap that was impossible stop, I just had to see it through.

You write honestly about mental health, did you find that walking and also writing were cathartic?

I found the walking even more than cathartic, it was necessary. It’s just the purpose: this is the start point, this is the end point, there’s a mission involved. You don’t have to think about it, you can just follow. And I think I needed that, because so many adventures I’ve done have been about planning my own thing, thinking about the logistics, having to route plan on maps. Suddenly here were these routes that, back in the day, hundreds if not thousands of people would have walked, and they decided they needed to walk them. So it was almost like allowing someone else to navigate for me which is something that, as an adventurer who does a lot on my own, I’ve not really been used to doing.

I found the writing of it hugely cathartic, more so that I ever thought I would. People who have seen it’s coming out have contacted me saying they can’t wait to read it because they’ve been through some kind of trauma, and they’d like to work through it. I honestly would say write it

down, even without publishing it or sharing it with anyone. When I finally finished the manuscript, even when no one had read it, I felt like the burden had been lifted. I write about the John Bunyan trail and the pilgrim who had a burden on their back, it did feel like that. A lot of the things I write about in this book I’d never told anyone, some things I’d never even allowed myself to say out loud or think about. I suddenly felt free of them because they were down on paper, I hope it helps some people who are either going through these things or have come out the other side and are just trying to make peace with what they’ve been through, which is something that I don’t think I had allowed myself to do. I feel like it’s worth baring my honesty on the page if it helps someone like me.

Did you find that your relationship with religion changed as you went on the pilgrimages and wrote the book?

I was surprised. In school we were taught religious education, but it was just Christianity and the bible, that was the only religion we were taught about. In my role as a travel writer I’ve been fascinated by other religions and have taken time to learn about them. Because if I’m travelling to a country where there is another religion, whether it’s Hinduism or Buddhism, or something else, I want to know about it, be respectful of it, and understand the history of it. I realised that I’d not really taken the time to do that with Christianity, I guess because there was no choice in school. Similarly, I never really enjoyed history at school, because I found the way it was taught felt so disconnected

from me. It was very male, we learned about King Henry VIII and his wives, and the Second World War. Those are the only two things I remember learning about. By doing the pilgrimages, I suddenly understood why religion was such a big part of our history here in the UK. I don't necessarily believe these stories, but they are stories to help people through certain situations, and help them make sense of things. There's always a grain of truth somewhere in these stories, and I'm a storyteller, so I love hearing and telling the stories. It made me look at our country and the predominant religion of the past in a different way.

You write about how your mother could be feminist in her views and sometimes was not. Would you regard yourself as a feminist?

I definitely would. To me, feminism means that women are equal to men. I think a lot of people have misappropriated the meaning to mean a man-hater or an extremist. A friend of mine described themselves as an 'equalist' because they believe men and women should be equal – but that's what a feminist is! I think that is the problem, the misunderstanding of words. The world as I see it, it's still not equal. I still do get people questioning me going off on my own to do a pilgrimage, over several days camping out. Things have changed from when I first started writing about going out on my own into the wilderness, but it's not gone away, there's still that stigma to it. We're still not equally paid, we're still much more likely to be in poverty versus our male counterparts, we're still more likely to be passed over for promotions.

You also write about music in the book, and how you used to sing in a band. Do you think that there's a connection between music and motion, in relation to the pilgrimages?

Music was a massive part of my life, before I discovered walking and the outdoors. I grew up next to the sea, and Snowdonia National Park was nearby but I had no way of getting to it. This goes back to the male / female dynamic – I couldn't join the scouts because then they only accepted boys. I couldn't afford any of the specialist kit that I thought you needed, and I didn't understand what a right of way was. So back then music was my escape. I remember saving all my money to buy a guitar and paying for lessons and learning all I could. And singing, it was a way of being someone else, when you're on stage. It was my first experience of putting on a performance. I loved it, and, until I got into my first relationship, it was my release. But when it stopped being something I could do and I stopped trying to do it, I lost that. I'd still write songs and music and poems just for me. It was lyrics that I loved, for the band I was in I wrote the words for everything. It wasn't until I went on a pilgrimage with the British Pilgrimage Trust and I realised that I couldn't make myself sing, that I realised what I'd lost. Now, I often sing out loud.

Has having a child changed your attitude to adventures, will you take him on pilgrimages?

Yes, he comes with me on a lot of trips, if it's feasible and practical to do it. He's three

now, so he's a little bit heavy to carry for any length of time. He loves walking himself but he obviously can't walk as far and as fast as an adult. I take him whenever I can and I write quite a lot about family adventures and holidays. To show that you don't have to give it up, because if I did give it up, it would change something in me and that would affect him. One of things we did last summer was a pilgrimage trail on bikes, in Herefordshire. It's called the Golden Valley Pilgrim Way. We did it over three nights and we camped in churches – they call it champing. I got an e-bike to make it easy and a trailer to put him in, as well as a seat on the back. He absolutely adored it, and loved the churches. A church has all the best things for a little kid – he can run up and down and wear himself out. There's a lot of toys in churches because they often have parent and toddler groups there. And the buildings and graveyards are great to play hide and seek in. Someone said to me 'isn't that disrespectful?'. But if I was buried six feet under and there was a two-year-old screaming with joy, I think that would be great to hear!

“Brave, bold and fearless.”

Steve Backshall

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

One of the earliest authors of memoir that I encountered was Maya Angelou. We were taught *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* in school, when I was about 14 or 15. I absolutely adored it, it was the first time I'd read anything that wasn't a storybook, and the first time I'd read something that wasn't all happy, there was trauma in it. I remember going home and saying to my mum that I wanted to read more by her. I saved up my pocket money to buy her books. And the poetry she wrote about being a woman, that definitely had an impact on me. In terms of travel writing, my mum was a massive Bill Bryson fan, and would always buy his hardbacks when they came out. So his was a name around the house a lot, but I didn't start reading them until I was older. And then I could totally understand the appeal, especially *Notes from a Small Island*, to have that outsider looking in, critiquing in a very endearing way. In the last few years, I've been fascinated by Nan Shepherd's work, and people like Gwen Moffat, who wrote *Space Below my Feet*. And Robert Macfarlane, classic nature

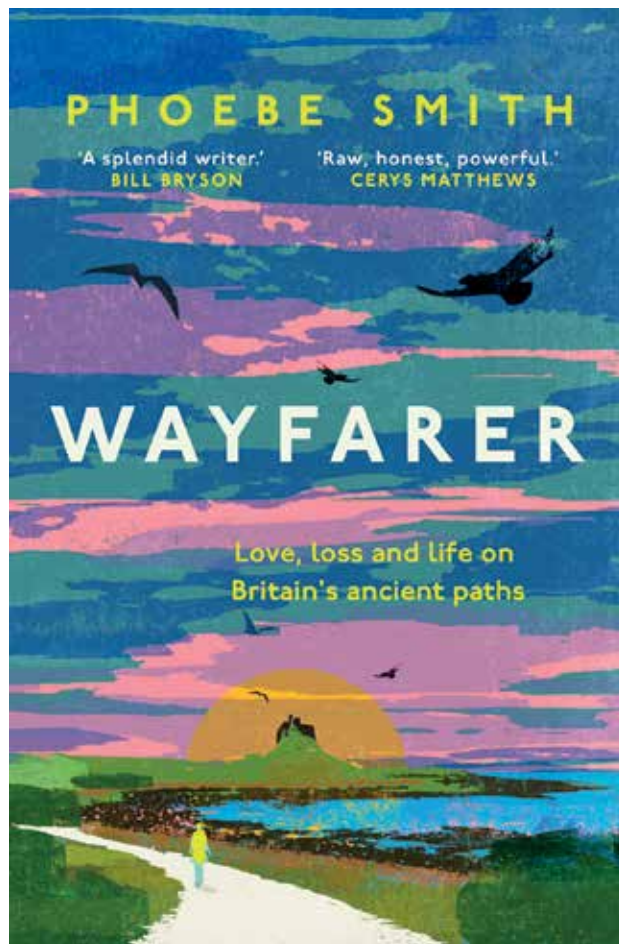
writing. Also Amy Liptrot – her being so honest and brutal about herself made me feel that it was okay as a woman to do that too, to show the 'ugly' side of ourselves. I do a podcast called Wander Woman. It's a travel podcast, but in every episode I look at a historical woman, who has passed away. She'll be someone that, if she was a man, everyone would know her name, but as she's a woman she's often unknown. Doing that I've discovered incredible women, such as Katherine Routledge, who went to Easter Island. The men on the mission were all about measuring and getting facts, but she spoke to the elders and got the story. It's because of her that we know so much about that culture. I've made it my mission to find these women who have incredible stories, and give a voice to them.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

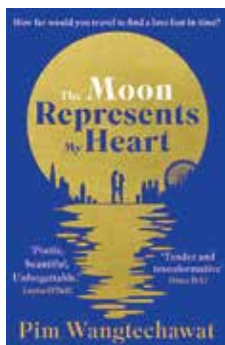
It's the people. They don't just sell books, they see the authors of the books on their shelves as friends. The enthusiasm they have when you ask for a book recommendation is something you don't get in the big chains. They put the book into your hands and they care about what you think about it, and what you bought last time you were in there. I'm so pleased that independent bookshops still thrive in these times, because the high street would be a poorer place without them.

Wayfarer

by Phoebe Smith
HarperNorth • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780008566524
Published 28th March



March & April's Choice



A debut novel about one extraordinary family, the gift that threatens to tear them apart and the love that binds them together, now in paperback. Tommy can't tell Peggy the truth about where he comes from, because his family all share a secret gift: they can travel through time. When a freak accident leaves Tommy and his sister Eva alone, grieving and desperate for answers, the siblings must decide how much the present day means to them...

The Moon Represents My Heart

by Pim Wangtechawat
Maggie • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9780861544660
Published 4th April



A moving novel that charts three women's shifting relationships against a modernising, volatile Nigeria. Ego, Zina and Eriife were always destined to be best friends, ever since their grandmothers sat next to each other on a dusty bus to Lagos in the late 1940s, forging a bond that would last generations. But over half a century later, as the three young women navigate the incessant strikes and political turmoil that surrounds them, their connection is shattered by a terrible assault.

We Were Girls Once

by Aiwanose Odafen
Scribner • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781398506169
Published 25th April



A unique collection of twelve contemporary short stories by new and experienced writers, exploring our deep attachment to flowers and plants and the meanings they hold. From tokens of love to neolithic burial gifts, bridal bouquets to seasonal wreaths, healing potions to artistic masterpieces, flowers and plants have a long and complex relationship with all our lives. With a foreword by Colin Will, former head librarian of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

Botanical Short Stories

Edited by Emma Timpany
Illustrated by Sarah Jane Humphrey
The History Press
HB • £14.99
ISBN 9781803993096
Published 4th April



A witty and hopeful novel about four gifted Irish sisters. Olwen was plunged prematurely into adulthood when her parents died in tragic circumstances. She and her three younger sisters – each single, each with a PhD – are now in their thirties and leading disparate lives. Until one day Olwen, a geologist haunted by a terrible awareness of the Earth's future, abruptly vanishes from her home. Her three siblings go in search of a sister who doesn't actually want to be found.

The Alternatives

by Caoilinn Hughes
Oneworld
HB • £18.99
ISBN 9780861545865
Published 16th April



Cyrus Shams is lost. Ever since his mother's plane was senselessly shot down over the Persian Gulf when he was just a baby, Cyrus has been grappling with her death. Now, newly sober, he is set to learn the truth of her life. When an encounter with a dying artist leads Cyrus towards the mysteries of his past he finds himself once again caught up in the story of his mother, who may not have been who or what she seemed...

Martyr!

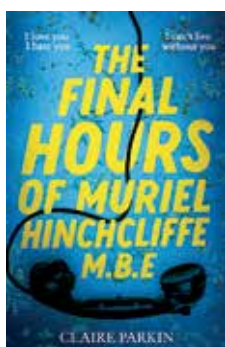
by Kaveh Akbar
Picador • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781035026067
Published 7th March



A debut novel from a bestselling Irish author. On a wild and rugged island cut off and isolated to some, artist Nell feels the island is her home. It is the source of inspiration for her art, rooted in landscape, folklore and the feminine. The mysterious Inions, a commune of women who have travelled there from all over the world, consider it a place of refuge and safety, of solace in nature. One day, Nell is commissioned to produce an art piece by the Inions to celebrate their history...

Hagstone

by Sinéad Gleeson
Fourth Estate
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780008626648
Published 11th April



Muriel, a former bestselling romantic novelist, and Ruth, a journalist, are best friends. Inseparable since they were little, they've shared everything; unable to be without each other, even after the most vicious of fights. Now fate has left them living together in a North London home, with Ruth caring for Muriel in her deteriorating health. Then one afternoon, Muriel makes a shocking and sinister announcement, sending Ruth's world into chaos.

The Final Hours of Muriel Hinchcliffe M.B.E

by Claire Parkin
Macmillan
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781035028450
Published 21st March



A new novel from the author of *The End of Mr Y*. Evelyn and Richard arrive on a tiny Greek island for their honeymoon. Evelyn is soon wary of the hotel's owner, Isabella, who seems to only have eyes for Richard. Isabella is also preoccupied with the story of 'the sleepwalkers', a couple who stayed at the hotel recently and drowned... A suspenseful and funny novel which asks urgent questions about relationships, sexuality and the darkest elements of contemporary society.

The Sleepwalkers

by Scarlett Thomas
Scribner • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781398528406
Published 11th April



A dazzling novel filled with sex, wit and literary references, from the author of *Property* which won the Women's Prize for Fiction. It is 1954, and prostitution is legal in the tropical haven that is Verona Island. Here, Lila Gulliver runs a brothel that promises her exclusive clientele privacy and discretion. When nineteen-year-old Carità, beautiful and blind since birth, comes to her door seeking employment, Mrs Gulliver sees a business opportunity and takes a chance.

Mrs Gulliver

by Valerie Martin
Serpent's Tail
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781800815391
Published 7th March



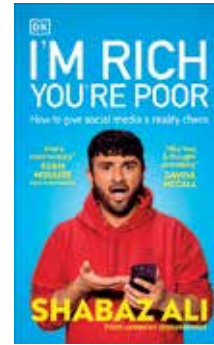
The Four
by Ellie Keel
HQ • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780008580346
Published 11th April

A dark novel which will appeal to fans of *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt. 'We were always The Four. From our very first day at High Realms. The four scholarship pupils. Outsiders in a world of power and privilege. It would have made our lives a lot easier if Marta had simply pushed Genevieve out of our bedroom window that day. Certainly, it would have been tragic. She would have died instantly. But Marta didn't push her then, or at any other time...'



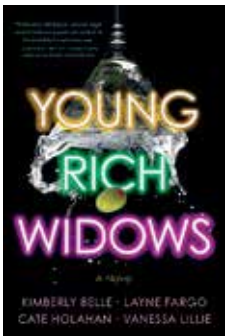
Milk Without Honey
by Hanna Harms Flint • HB • £17.99
ISBN 9781803995311
Published 11th March

An impactful graphic novel about the plight of the bees, translated from the German by Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp. We could live in a paradise where insects, especially bees, pollinate fragrant oceans of flowers whose fruits we harvest. Instead, patio wastelands and utilitarian lawns are now displacing flower gardens, and agriculture is dominated by monoculture. If this carries on unchecked, honey will be just one of the many foods no longer available to us.



I'm Rich, You're Poor
by Shabaz Ali
DK • HB • £14.99
ISBN 9780241689325
Published 26th March

The world is full of books about how to be rich. This is *not* one of them. Today, many of us are feeling the pinch – and being bombarded with portrayals of social media 'perfection' is making that pinch feel more like a punch. Comedian Shabaz Ali wants to help you see the funny side of social media again. Because while it *looks* nice to live up in an ivory tower, this book reminds us that it is much more fun to be part of the baying mob that surrounds it.



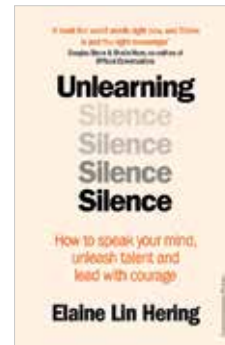
Young Rich Widows
by Kimberley Belle, Layne Fargo, Cate Holahan & Vanessa Lillie
Sourcebooks
Landmark
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781464224331
Published 2nd April

An original thriller. 1985, Rhode Island. A private jet carrying four partners of a Providence law firm crashes outside New York City, killing all aboard but leaving behind more questions than answers and setting the stage for four widows to find the truth. They are Justine: a former fashion model; Camille: a beautiful second wife; Meredith: a stripper who was in a relationship with the firm's only female partner; and Krystle: a wife committed to her sons' legacy.



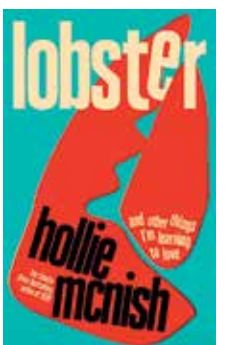
Doma
by Spasia Pandora Dinkovski
DK • HB • £22.00
ISBN 9780241636039
Published 4th April

Take a mouth-watering trip to the Balkans and celebrate the spirit of North Macedonia with this book which includes traditional recipes, joyful stories, and a new generation of dishes. The food of the Balkans features flavours and textures that tantalise every palette – from sweet and salty pickles and crisp salads, to deliciously savoury, flaky pastries, rich winter warmers, and indulgent desserts, and this book experiments with traditional flavours, whilst forging a modern take.



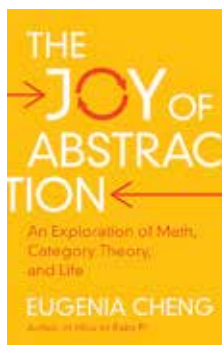
Unlearning Silence
by Elaine Lin Hering
Cornerstone Press
HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781529900170
Published 21st March

Drawing on her experience as a lecturer at Harvard Law School and as a Managing Partner at one of the world's leading leadership development companies, in this book Elaine Lin Hering delves into the roots of silence, examining the patterns that keep us trapped, and showcases the impact that rewiring unconscious behaviours can have on innovation, creativity and collaboration. From the boardroom to the classroom, she shows us how we can have more authentic conversations.



Lobster
by Hollie McNish
Fleet • HB • £18.99
ISBN 9780349726649
Published 14th March

This book of poetry is written out of both hate and love for the world. As people, we are capable of both love and hate; amazement and disgust; fun and misery. We are told to be repulsed by our own bodies, bodies that let us laugh and sweat and eat toast; to be ashamed of pleasure; to be embarrassed by fun. In *Lobster*, Hollie McNish brings her inimitable style to the question of what we have been taught to hate, and how we might learn to love again.



The Joy of Abstraction
by Eugenia Cheng
Cambridge University Press • PB • £14.99
ISBN 9781108708449
Published 4th April

Mathematician and popular science author Eugenia Cheng is on a mission to show you that mathematics can be flexible, creative, and visual. This joyful journey through the world of abstract mathematics into category theory will demystify mathematical thought processes and help you develop your own thinking, with no formal mathematical background needed. For fans of *How to Bake Pi*, this will help you dig deeper into mathematical concepts.



Female Founders' Playbook
by Anne Boden
Kogan Page
PB • £16.99
ISBN 9781398616158
Published 3rd March

How do female entrepreneurs overcome hurdles, redress power imbalances and create a business with coveted unicorn status? This book brings together the experiences of leading women entrepreneurs and VC investors. These successful businesswomen share their thoughts on every aspect of launching a high-growth business, from coming up with a unicorn-worthy idea, through to building a multi-talented team, to winning investment.

Journeys of the Heart

In this book, acclaimed travel writer Oliver Smith sets out to radically reframe our idea of 'pilgrimage' in Britain by retracing twelve sacred journeys made across time, from the depths of Ice Age to new pilgrimages of the 21st century, and meeting many people along the way. We interviewed him to discover more.



At the beginning of the book, you write about how if you lost your job you'd like to go on a pilgrimage, but the pandemic meant that this pilgrimage would be in the UK. Is this how the book came about?

It's one of those things I always said, if I got made redundant I'd like to go to Spain, to Camino de Santiago! But, for this book, I like the idea of there being travel with an extra dimension to it. So much of travel has been demystified by so many people being able to travel easily. It's a bit of a false to say that there's nowhere left to be discovered, that's not really true, but there's a sense that the terra incognita is now found in those inward journeys, where there's something that's not visible. My book is a bit different to books about pilgrimage that have gone before, because they are often about personal journeys, and mine isn't about that. It's about the places I visited, and I consider them through several different frames. For me, the definition of a pilgrimage is a super-charged journey, with something at play beyond what's visible, which you can't see unless you experience it.

How did you choose the places you went to in the book?

There are two things at play, time and character. I liked the idea of moving through time, but certainly not evenly because the gaps between the periods I'm focusing in on are quite wide. Different periods have different characters, from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic, and then moving on early Christian and Celtic Christian ideas, and from there to the secular pilgrimages. I

wanted to consider a broad span of time, and the different features of the landscape as well. The chapters are arranged different geographical features. Part of it is about time, and part of it is about the character of these different places, how it informs ideas of pilgrimage, and how it interplays with people's needs and people's desires. A cave can be a sanctuary, but it also can be quite forbidding; a mountain has a proximity to heaven, but at the same time it can feel remote, lonely and windswept. If you're a travel writer, you're not really bound to do anything definitively. These are twelve places that appealed to my imagination.

"One of the best and most thoughtful travel writers working today."

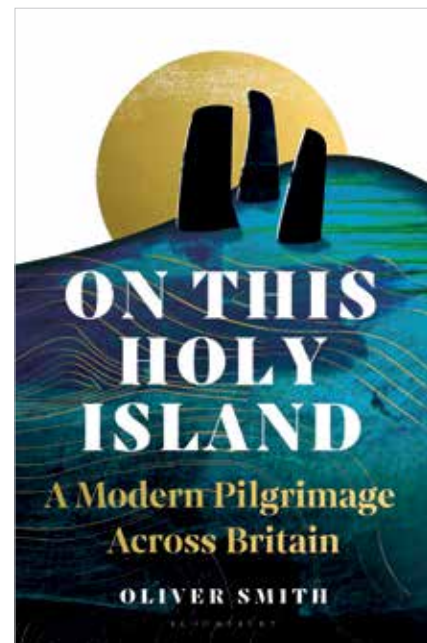
Cal Flynn

Did you do a lot of historical research into all the places you visited?

Yes. This book happened during a window in time, after the pandemic but before the British Library had been hacked. If that had happened three or four months earlier, this book would be stuffed! I wouldn't have been able to research it. Having that free resource enabled me to write the book. I'm not a historian, I'm a travel writer, but history does play a bit part in the book, through the lens of the present.

How did you go about writing the book – did you record or take notes of all the people you met, or did you remember it all?

Dictaphone all the way! In nearly all cases, I recorded the conversations, and in a few cases I took notes in a notebook. Some of the people I met along the way were very religious, others more secular. It was meeting other people which really made the book unfold, because it's about the places and the people who are drawn to them.



On This Holy Island

by Oliver Smith

Bloomsbury Continuum • HB • £20.00

ISBN 9781399409032

Published 28th March

You write about how, today, fewer people take pilgrimages for religious reasons, but there are other reasons for pilgrimages – connecting with nature and history, and pilgrimages of sport and music. Do you think there is a unifying commonality between these different impulses?

Yes, it's as simple as: people make meaning by making journeys. People have always done that, and this impulse is not going to stop surfacing, even though we live in a secular age. One of the chapters is about a pilgrimage to Anfield stadium in Liverpool, in the wake of the Hillsborough disaster. This is not something that happened in the dim and distant past. It's extremely raw, and recent, and there is the idea that to make a journey is to make meaning, and to heal. By sharing the load as you walk, that's a universal human instinct.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

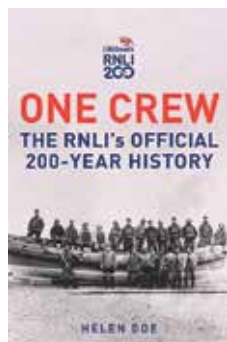
I've been a travel writer for so long, it's a lot of the classic travel authors who have guided me. Books like *The Songlines* by Bruce Chatwin, and authors like Paul Theroux, Patrick Leigh Fermor and Jan Morris. That golden period of travel writing in the 1970s and 1980s, that's been a bedrock for me. There are fantastic travel books that are being written now, whether they are called travel writing or not. One of the books which has really resonated with me is *The Book of Trespass* by Nick Hayes. And I really loved *Islands of Abandonment* by Cal Flynn.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I live in an area where there isn't an independent bookshop nearby. But when you do go to one, often in a market town, they are the beating heart of a community. So often towns have the same assortment of chains, so having something that stands out like an independent bookshop can really help characterise a place.

Looking Back

Rediscover your love of all things history with these new books from Amberley Publishing, a leading publisher of non-fiction titles.

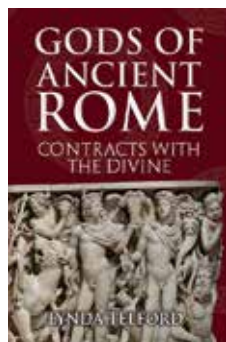


One Crew: The RNLI's Official 200-Year History

by Helen Doe
Amberley Publishing
HB • £22.99
ISBN 9781398122352

Out Now

This book takes a fresh look at the creation of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and its early founders, and examines how it has responded over 200 years. The RNLI has overcome many obstacles and is now one of the UK and Ireland's most respected organisations. How it became so is a story of determination, acumen, skill and bravery. More than 700 names are inscribed on the RNLI Memorial at RNLI Support Centre in Poole Dorset.

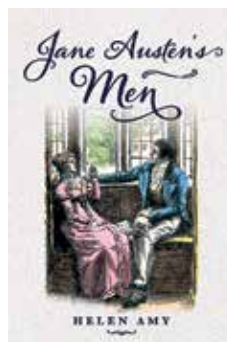


Gods of Ancient Rome: Contracts with the Divine

by Lynda Telford
Amberley Publishing
HB • £22.99
ISBN 9781398111646

Published 15th April

From the family shrine, the Lararium, to huge public festivals, which embodied the sanctity and viability of the state itself, religion permeated every aspect of Roman life. Roman religion was a very definite 'contract' with the Gods, offering devotion and the blood sacrifices which 'fed' and nourished the gods, in exchange for their continued protection and for Rome's security and prestige. This book presents this complex but fascinating subject in a comprehensive way.



Jane Austen's Men

by Helen Amy
Amberley Publishing
HB • £22.99
ISBN 9781398110434

Published 15th April

This book explores the lives of the men in Jane's life, her relationships, how typical they were of men of their time and their impact on her life and writing. It also considers how accurately the novels portray the lives of men and what they reveal of their author's views on the relationship between the sexes and the male domination of society. The author is a respected authority on the subject and her works include *Jane Austen's Marriage Manual*, *The Jane Austen Files* and more.



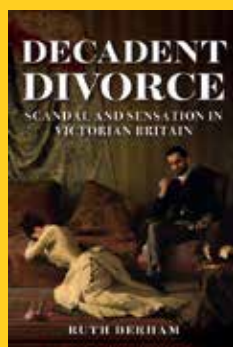
The Trojan Kings of Britain

by Caleb Howells
Amberley Publishing
HB • £22.99
ISBN 9781398112759

Published 15th April

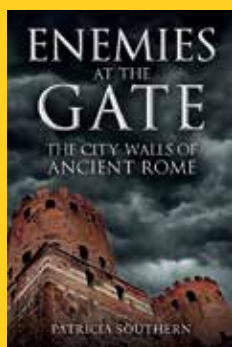
In this book, Caleb Howells, author of *King Arthur: The Man Who Conquered Europe*, argues that the legend of Brutus, descendant of Aeneas of Troy, migrating to Britain with many other Trojan descendants, is based on real historical events. Constructing a compelling argument based on a re-examination of original sources, the book offers a tantalising fresh perspective on the history of Britain and its rulers. It also draws parallels between historical individuals and other legendary characters.

Coming Soon



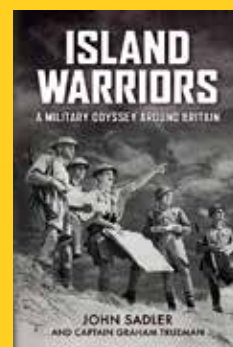
Decadent Divorce: Scandal & Sensation in Victorian Britain
by Ruth Derham
Amberley Publishing
HB • £22.99
9781398108943
Published in May

A fascinating, revealing examination of divorce in Victorian Britain – and what it meant for society as a whole. It is a story of high drama, humour, pathos and tragedy, brimming with moral comment that throws a light on the preoccupations of the age. It takes a peep through the keyhole of the court to witness, not just 'what the butler saw', but what the world was invited to see; to explore what this microcosm of late Victorian society tells us about society at large.



Enemies at the Gate: The City Walls of Ancient Rome
by Patricia Southern
Southern Amberley Publishing
HB • £30.00
9781398112971
Published in May

In this book, the walls of Rome provide an ever-renewed palimpsest of the Empire's history, from the 8th century BC to the fall of the Western Empire and beyond. The legend of the foundation of Rome by Romulus in 753BC accords very well with the earliest defensive walls on the Palatine Hill. But by the 6th century AD, General Belisarius was desperately shoring up the walls with marble slabs from altars and gravestones.



Island Warriors: A Military Odyssey Around Britain
by John Sadler & Captain Graham Trueman
Amberley Publishing
HB • £22.99
9781398114791
Published in May

War was Britain's furnace for two thousand years, and we are that forging. All of this experience and the many traditions it has fostered are preserved in the aspic of our military museum collections, the broad threads of history and grand strategy but also the human dimension of individual stories. Author John Sadler, in the company of Captain Graham Trueman, formerly of 3rd Battalion the Light Infantry, has visited 50 museums to tell 50 of those stories in this book.

Murder in Mind

“Warm, clever and wildly original”

Elly Griffiths

In this innovative new mystery novel, Frances leaves strict instructions to her great niece Annie to investigate her murder after her death. Can Annie solve the case and claim her inheritance? We interviewed the author Kristen Perrin to discover more!



What inspired you to write a novel in which a character writes instructions on how to solve their own murder?

There were a lot of things that contributed to the final set-up. It took me a while to distil them all into one place. I returned to cosy crime because I've been writing middle grade for a long time. Then the pandemic happened and I think a lot of us just wanted to return to doing things that were comforting. It sounds grim, but I think we developed a worry about our health and our futures. I thought we've got to find a way to balance this because you can't live your life afraid of everything that could possibly happen to you. Then I thought: what if someone did? Not in the pandemic situation, but what if someone had a reason to be absolutely worried that something was going to happen to them? What would that be, and how could that be convincing? And it just sort of grew from there. I wanted to make it as unreal but real as possible.

In the 1960s, Frances receives a prediction from a fortune teller that she will be murdered, but it doesn't happen for more than 60 years. In a way, do you think that it's a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Yes, I wanted that almost circular element in the story. I wanted the reader to think about that a little bit. If she hadn't believed in it so fiercely, maybe her life would have gone differently. Because when you start worrying about who could possibly be your murderer, and digging into everyone's secrets, you're getting knowledge that could put you in danger.

The book is told partly in the first person from Annie, Frances's great niece's point of view, and partly through a diary from the 1960s. Why did you write it in this way?

I actually wrote the book in one complete draft without the 1960s diary, it was just first person from Annie's point of view. The part of Frances that was on the page were her files and notes. It was vaguely inspired by Janice Hallett, to have these documents. It functioned as a book, but it didn't have the heart of the murder victim in it, because there was a distance between her documents and her worry and paranoia. I found that element of it a bit too flat. Instead of pulling the whole thing apart and inserting the diary, I just started over again. I rewrote the entire thing. I still have it, what they call a 'zero draft' of 90,000 words. The only thing I kept was the prologue. As soon as Frances's voice was on the page, I realised I had to rewrite Annie's point of view because I needed those two pieces to lock together and interact with each other even though they're 60 years apart.

The setting of Castle Knoll is a tight-knit, small community. Was it based on a real place?

Yes, it's very closely based on the town where my husband spent his childhood. He grew up in Dorset in Corfe Castle. He spent half his life there and half in Swanage. My extended family still live in Swanage, so we're in that area all the time. I wanted to set it in that region, but I wanted to rename everything because I knew I'd get in trouble if I named it Corfe Castle! So I invented a town, which meant that I could play around with it, but a lot of it is very much based there.

You are American but have lived in the UK for many years. Do you think there is a big difference between American and British crime writing?

Yes, but I think it's getting closer together. Richard

Osman has been very popular in America, he's captured their heart and soul, which is wonderful. The traditional, cosy, Agatha Christie-style of crime writing is experiencing a revival. Years ago I was a bookseller for Barnes & Noble, when I lived in the US, and the mystery section was very different. A lot of the authors that were very popular are still popular there, like Janet Evanovich, Nora Roberts writing as J.D. Robb, and Sue Grafton. But it was very much police procedural, with a bit of humour, there wasn't this small town setting. I don't want to misrepresent it, because of course there are a lot of books out there, but I do think that traditionally they have been different for a long time, and they're just coming into step with one another, which is good to see.

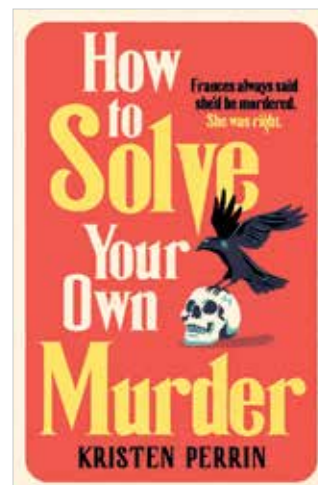
Which other authors have inspired you in your writing?

One area where there is a big difference between the UK and the US is in children's books. My husband would say, did you never read *Stig of the Dump* by Clive King? And I'd never heard of it. Or *Kestrel for a Knave* by Barry Hines. But I had my own versions of these, which were mystery stories such as *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin or *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg. *The Westing Game* is an inheritance story, almost a competition, in a similar way to my book. So it definitely pays homage to that, but it's not one that I think British readers know. Outside of that, I read just about everything. *The Death of Mrs Westaway* by Ruth Ware has a similar feeling to my book. During the pandemic I watched a lot of *Jonathan Creek*. In that, there's always a strange happening, and people keeping secrets. I was hooked by it!

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

They are at the heart of their community. I've visited a lot of independent bookshops in the run up to publication, and I've got to chat to booksellers. I spent a couple of hours in Gullivers Bookshop in Dorset, and got to talk to the customers and get that sense of how well they know their community. Similarly with Westbourne Bookshop. They are people who love their books and their community and are able to serve their community

by sharing stories. People are becoming very cynical of the idea of books as product, a flashy item rather than a story. But independent bookshops have a way of selling and talking about books that you can't get anywhere else.



How To Solve Your Own Murder

by Kristen Perrin
Quercus • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781529430059
Published 26th March

City Break

Set over the course of one year, *Caledonian Road* is an epic novel by the author of *Mayflies*, following one man's fall from grace in London. Campbell Flynn is an art historian living a privileged life in Islington. But that's about to change...

"I loved this novel – loved its ambition and scale and scope and certainty,"

Peter Morgan

"Lyrical and profound."

Nina Stibbe

It's May 2021, and, as the country comes out of the Covid lockdowns, Campbell Flynn is entering middle age. Campbell is married to therapist Elizabeth, the daughter of a countess, his son Angus is an international DJ, and his daughter Kenzie an ex-model. Campbell has come a long way from his childhood in working class Glasgow, fuelled by a passion for the finer things in life.

Maybe his biggest mistake was to borrow money from his old friend William Byre, a businessman now steeped in scandals of financial and sexual offences. Or perhaps it was to author his self-help book about masculinity anonymously, and entrust its promotion to a young actor, Jack Hart-Davies. Or was it to form a friendship of sorts with one of his students, Milo Mangasha, a brilliant young hacker with a plan of his own? A plan to bring down all those involved in the web of corruption he sees around him, including Campbell Flynn. *Caledonian Road* is a wryly humorous and immersive social novel which takes in the lives of the privileged and the lives of the exploited.

In this extract, Campbell invites Milo to meet him at The Fumoir, a bar at Claridge's:

He felt unusual that night, having a drink with a student; it felt slightly wrong, not like it would if Milo was a girl, but overloaded with potential for things to get wayward. Milo spoke with no discernible hesitation or self-consciousness, though Campbell wondered then, as he would later, if there wasn't a fear of falling in Milo

too, a youthful amateurism at the heart of his mastery, a tincture of pain. And he had a face he used for seriousness. He deployed it now.

'Obsessing over personal failings of speech,' he said, 'is a cynical distraction from looking at the system of injustice that really controls our lives.'

It was a carbon copy of what Campbell himself believed, but said by somebody different, somebody who was making the time to get to know him.

"A Dickensian dream that blazes with profundity and philosophical inquiry."

Nikita Lalwani

'As I said, there's a digital selfhood,' Milo went on, 'and I'm all about that.'

'Don't be too earnest,' Campbell found himself saying. He didn't mention the other half: is a thing with the young – like A.J. – the urgency for rectitude.

'Times out for flippancy,' Milo said.

'This book I've written,' Campbell said, feeling suddenly high, 'it's a sort of self-help book. I'm going to let an actor go out as the author. It's a bit daft, when you think about it. He can do the festivals, the

TV shows, the meet-the-author events. All that.'

'That's cool,' Milo said. 'It's all about staying anonymous.'

He was very earnest. And yet true to something.

Campbell ordered again. He tried to say anonymity was fine but what about the authentic self?

'Eh?'

'What about Henry James?'

'F**k Henry James. We're all on the Net.'

'But private life makes a person.'

'Maybe in your world,' Milo said.

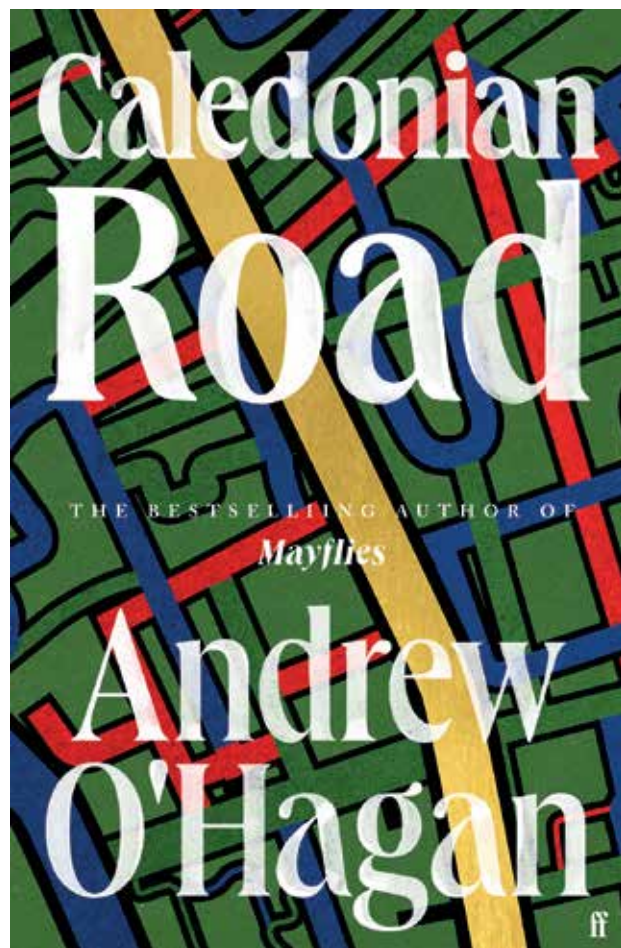
Campbell didn't say much more of a personal nature that night, but he felt he could have. His student had lots to say, much of it political and personal at the same moment. He ordered another round. Before midnight, he felt he had to go; he had the flight to Venice in the morning and he hadn't packed. Milo asked if he could stay on in the bar, to watch people and finish his drink.

'Of course,' Campbell said. 'Look, why don't we exchange phone numbers?'

He was stepping over a line. He didn't have a single student number in his phone. But there was something different here, maybe the beginnings of a mentorship, a political rapport he knew he needed.

'Yeah, man. Good idea.'

Milo took out his phone and did the whole thing in seconds. When Campbell glanced back from the door, he seemed serene, the possible friend in his young suit, drinking this drink, looking at the people in the mirror.



On The Up

Leading psychologist and happiness expert Bruce Hood offers seven simple but life-changing lessons to break negative thought patterns and reconnect with the things that really matter, in this new guide. We interviewed him to discover more.

Photo © Kim Jacobson



Your new book is about the science of happiness. How did you come to write it? Is happiness something you've always been interested in?

Well, I like being happy (who doesn't?) but it was a book borne out of necessity. My students were preoccupied with their grades and really not enjoying the opportunities that university can provide. I loved my time at university (which is why I am still here) but it was so frustrating to see how miserable they were making themselves. That's when I heard that a former student of mine, Laurie Santos, had launched a course at Yale on happiness that had become a phenomenal success. I contacted Laurie and she sent me her notes that became the basis of my own course which I offered at lunchtimes back in 2018. It was such a huge success from the start, that Bristol University gave me the green light to make it an official credit-bearing course the following year and we haven't looked back since. The book covers many of the things I teach but what makes it truly new and unique is the central theme (at odds with many self-help books) about the need to shift our focus away from the egocentric self. This is why I call it a self-*destruct* book rather than a self-help book. I also think it will become a welcome antidote to the current focus on self and identity which I believe has gone too far down the path of selfish obsession.

In the book, you write about how important connecting with and helping others is to our own sense of happiness. Do you think that the pandemic and lockdown changed the way we connect with others?

Lockdown forced us to realize the importance of social connection as well as the value in taking time to appreciate

things we had taken for granted. People were desperate to socialize which is why it impacted so many, especially the younger generations. It basically set back normal development by two years which is now showing up in the behaviour and education of the youngest. Working practices have changed as people became used to working from home and I doubt we will ever return to pre-pandemic days. Mental wellbeing was already a rising problem, but the pandemic exacerbated it, and we are still in turbulent waters today dealing with the fallout.

How do you take the reality of the science which each chapter considers, and turn them into practical advice?

Much of the practical advice was already common wisdom dating back thousands of years that has been woven into the fabric of society by groups seeking to improve the human condition. What I did, was discover why these practices work which is the main contribution of the book. Sometimes answers stare us in the face that we fail to recognize.

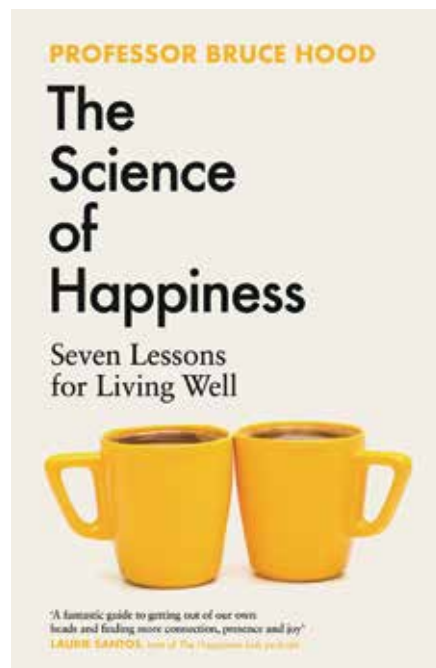
“Grab this fantastic guide!”

Laurie Santos

Is happiness the same for everyone, or do different people find different things that make them happy?

That's an old question that the ancient Greek philosophers argued over. Happiness is used in different ways to refer to different states of mind. It's a positive feeling as well as a sense of fulfilment. You don't have to be happy all of the time and indeed you can't. That would be a form of mental illness like mania. Rather, happiness for me is about balance. It's being ok with yourself, ok with your current situation and ok about the future. The way you achieve that is the main message of the book – becoming less egocentric and more allocentric or other-focused.

Did you plan the whole book out beforehand, or did you find new conclusions and ideas as you were writing it?



The Science of Happiness

by Bruce Hood

Simon & Schuster

HB • £22.00

ISBN 9781398526372

Published 14th March

For me writing is a process of coming to understand your own mind. I am someone (and I don't think I am alone in this) who doesn't know what I am going to say until I have said it. When I hear it out aloud it makes sense to me (or not) but I don't have a pre-emptive sense of understanding. The same is true of my writing. Sometimes I really surprise myself and there are many times when I don't recognize things that I've previously written. Maybe it's like Elizabeth Gilbert's TED talk – all of our creative efforts really come from the Muses, and we shouldn't take credit for it, or blame ourselves when we get writer's block..

Do you think that it's helpful to categorise ourselves as optimists or pessimists, or do you think that thinking about our ourselves in this way can limit us?

We are both. It depends on whether you are thinking about yourself or the world in general. Unless we are depressed, we tend to think that the world is going to hell in a basket but that personally we will be ok. That's an important distinction to recognize because all-too-often, we think things are bad.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

I have always admired Richard Dawkins' poetic style when it comes to explaining complex ideas and Steven Pinker's sense of humour and wit. I wish I could combine the two. Thankfully, I have had the good fortune to work with both of them.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

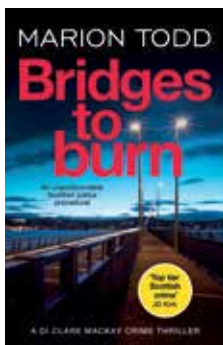
Independent bookshops represent a bastion of standards and good taste. We need experts to curate content and shine a light on quality.

Crime & Thrillers



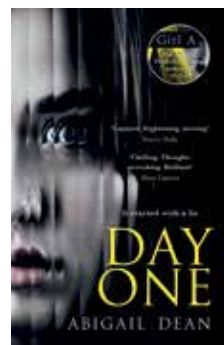
The Turnglass
by Gareth Rubin
Simon & Schuster
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781398514522
Published 25th April

Now in paperback, this innovative historical crime novel tells two intertwined stories, printed back-to-back in a tête-bêche. Once you've read the first one, turn the book over and read the second. In the 1880s, a young doctor is called from London to treat his cousin in the bleak island of Ray, off the Essex coast. In 1930s California, celebrated author Oliver Tooke, the son of the state governor, is found dead in his writing hut off the coast of the family residence, Turnglass House...



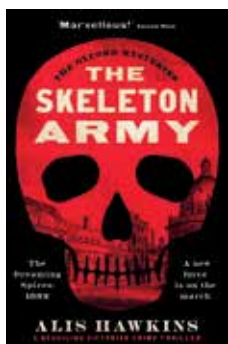
Bridges to Burn
by Marion Todd
Canelo Crime
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781804362150
Published 7th March

The eighth book in the Scottish crime series featuring DI Clare Mackay. Clare is called to Albany High, where the body of a girl has been found. A suspected suicide – yet Sophie Bakewell was by all accounts a cheerful, talented student. Why would she kill herself? And it's not the only disturbing case Clare is working on. Across town an elderly man is in danger, though from whom is strangely hard to determine.



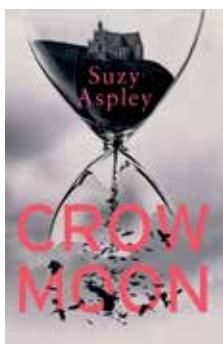
Day One
by Abigail Dean
HarperCollins
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780008389260
Published 28th March

A new novel from the bestselling author of *Girl A*. Marty told the reporters that she saw it happen. That when the gunman entered, she saw her mother die trying to protect her pupils. That's the version of Day One Marty wishes was true. But strange inconsistencies in her story begin to surface. Details that don't add up. Questions she can't answer. The story ignites. Amidst the media frenzy, conspiracy theorists become obsessed with exposing what really happened...



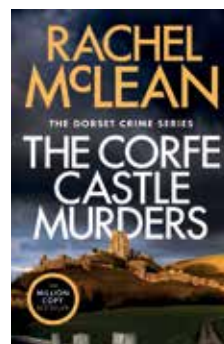
The Skeleton Army
by Alis Hawkins
Canelo Crime
HB • £18.99
ISBN 9781804367148
Published 4th April

The second book in the *Oxford Mysteries* series, following *A Bitter Remedy*. The so-called Salvation Army has come prancing from London's slums into Oxford's poorest quarters. But then an Army soldier is brutally killed, and a note suggests that the Salvation Army's shadowy enemy, the Skeleton Army, is responsible. With the police unwilling to investigate, Rhiannon 'Non' Vaughan, an aspiring journalist, steps in, aided by tutor Basil Rice.



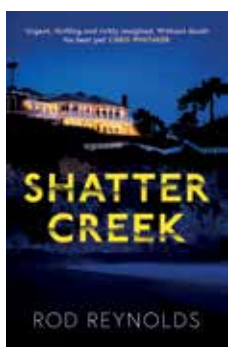
Crow Moon
by Suzy Aspley
Orenda Books
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781914585500
Published 14th March

A debut thriller, and the start of a new series. Martha Strangeways is struggling to find purpose in her life, after giving up her career as an investigative reporter when her young twins died in a house fire. Overwhelmed by guilt and grief, her life changes when she stumbles across the body of a missing teenager – a tragedy that turns even more sinister when a poem about crows is discovered inked onto his back.



The Corfe Castle Murders
by Rachel McLean
Canelo Hera
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781804367605
Published 25th April

A bestselling crime mystery, now in paperback. Meet DCI Lesley Clarke. She's a straight-talking city copper who doesn't suffer fools gladly. After being injured in a bomb attack, Lesley must undertake a period of respite in the calm of rural Dorset. But things don't stay calm for long. Before she's even started her new job, Lesley is dragged into investigating a murder at one of England's most iconic landmarks, the imposing Corfe Castle.



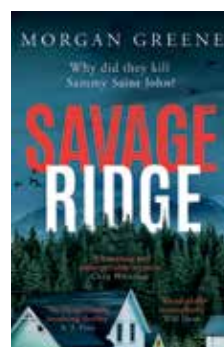
Shatter Creek
by Rod Reynolds
Orenda Books
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781916788091
Published 25th April

The sequel to the twisty bestseller *Black Reed Bay*. Hampstead County Police Department is embroiled in scandal after corruption at the top of the force was exposed. Cleared of involvement and returned to active duty, Detective Sergeant Casey Wray nonetheless finds herself at a crossroads when it becomes clear not everyone believes she's innocent. Partnered with rookie Billy Drocker, Casey works a shocking daytime double-homicide in downtown Rockport...



Blood Roses
by Douglas Jackson
Canelo Action
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781804367483
Published 7th March

A thrilling novel set in Warsaw in 1939. As the Nazis roll into the city, another hunter begins to prowl. Former chief investigator Jan Kalisz lives a dangerous double life, forced to work with the occupiers as he gathers information for the fledgling Polish resistance. Even his family cannot be told his true allegiance. When the niece of a Wehrmacht general is found terribly mutilated, Jan links the murder to other killings that are of less interest to his new overlords...



Savage Ridge
by Morgan Greene
Canelo Crime
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781804367308
Published 21st March

A pacy whodunnit set deep in the American Northwest. In the small pine-shaded town of Savage Ridge, Nick, Emmy and Pete have murdered their high school classmate, Sammy Saint John. His body is never found, and with no crime to answer for they make a pact to escape – and never come back. Ten years later, each has been drawn home, seemingly by coincidence. But private investigator Sloane Yo has them in her sights.

Bygone Lives

In this new highly illustrated and accessible book, historian Melita Thomas profiles a thousand prominent people who lived during the Tudor period. We interviewed her to discover more.



What inspired you to write the book – what is it about the Tudor period which draws you to it?

Like lots of people, I was initially inspired by a television programme. From the good old BBC, *The Six Wives of Henry the Eighth* with Keith Michell and *Elizabeth R* with Glenda Jackson. I was a child when they came out but they really inspired the imagination. It's an era in which, in some ways, the people were very like us, and because of Hans Holbein's portraits, they seem real in a way that medieval people don't. At the same time, their world construct was very different. It's a really interesting mix of the familiar and the strange. And, from the part of view of drama, it's hard to beat as a period in British history.

How did you go about researching for the book?

The research was really important. I'm currently studying for my doctorate so I wanted it to have academic rigour without it being an academic tome with 25 yards of footnotes. I looked at the basic stuff like the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *History of Parliament*. But they are very old fashioned, they've got a traditional view of history. They are very misogynistic because a lot of the entries were written in the 1910s and 1920s. But for every single article I wrote, I read at least two academic articles or a chapter from an academic book.

The book begins with some general information about the Tudor period, and a timeline. Was it important to you to put the lives you write about into the context of the times?

Yes, absolutely, because if you don't understand people's social and economic circumstances, you don't know why they behave the way that they do. One of the really interesting economic areas is around the wool industry. The wool industry powered medieval England, but by the middle of the Tudor period it had

collapsed. It was a massive structural change in economics, and it was made worse by activities in the New World. All this Spanish gold and silver coming into Europe led to massive inflation, and they didn't know how to deal with it. It's likely that in the 1590s working people had the lowest wages that they've had in recorded history. Added to this was a massive religious, social and cultural change. One statistic – over 130 people of the 1000 people included in the book died unnatural deaths, and 111 of those were executed.

How did you choose the 1000 people you profile? Were there any that you wanted to put in but had to leave out?

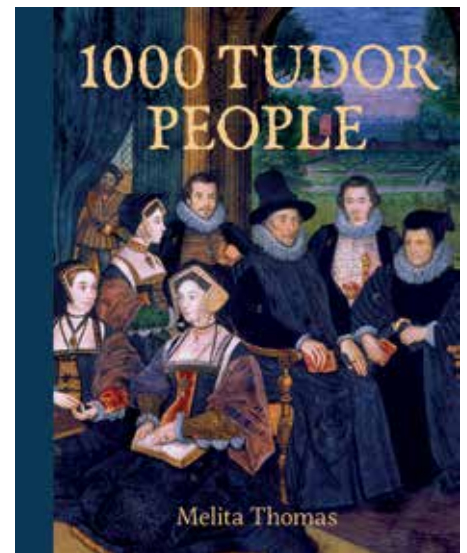
I have a waiting list of 250 people saying 'Why aren't I in it?'. I started out with the figure of 1000 and I thought, this is a bit of a task. You've got to have the monarchs in, and the rich and famous who surround them. But I found, as I researched each person, it mentions other people. You read about Shakespeare, then you've got Ben Jonson, and Marlowe, and the you get into Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey. You go down these rabbit holes.

"I cannot recommend it highly enough."

Alison Weir

A lot of the people you write about are monarchs and nobles – is this because their lives were documented more than commoners?

That's partly it. I did want to write about as wide a sector of society as I could, but of course the rich, the nobles, the kings, they are the ones we have records about. But also, many of the people who ended up as nobles didn't start as nobles. You've got people like Thomasine Bonaventure. She was the first woman below noble status to found a school. Her husband was Lord Mayor of London, so she was eventually Lady Bonaventure, but she came from a middle class background. Then there's Thomas Tusser, who started out as a musician to Sir William Paget, who as a Privy Councillor. But he left the court in disgust as the shenanigans and he wrote very well known books on gardening and husbandry. Another interesting one is Alice Bradbridge, from the middle ranking London merchant elite. She



1000 Tudor People
by Melita Thomas
HB • Graffeg • £40.00
ISBN 9781802583083
Published 28th March

was a silk woman, and as a citizen's wife she could trade on her own account, she wasn't under her husband's control. She commissioned the first known portrait in English art of a woman writing.

What is the biggest misconception that people have about people of the Tudor period?

One of the big ones is about family, particularly around marriage. Marriages were all arranged, you didn't marry the man or woman of your choice. It was an economic thing, not a love thing. It was almost impossible to run a household or to live economically as a single person, you needed two people. Marriages were usually arranged by the parents, and it was your duty to accept the person chosen and to love them. It's not the same as a forced marriage, people could refuse, but arranged marriages on average work out just as well as non-arranged ones. They lost many children in childhood, but that doesn't mean that they didn't love them. They accepted it, because they knew it was likely to happen and was God's will, but they grieved for their children.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

I like people who can explain a complex scenario clearly, and one of the best for this period is Professor Kate Williams, who wrote *Rival Queens*. I also like writers who are sympathetic but not partisan. Leandra de Lisle and Dr Linda Porter I find very balanced. One of the best history writers is Dan Jones. He's so accurate, so well-researched.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

They are the lifeblood of reading, and of many small towns. I live in South Wales, and my first bookshop talk is at Rossiter Books in Ross-on-Wye. What's great about independent bookshops is that you know that the owner loves their product, and they take the time to help you think about something that you haven't read before.

Digital Detection

Leave No Trace is the second book in Jo Callaghan's original crime series featuring DCS Kat Frank and AI detective Lock. Young men are being targeted by a brutal serial killer – can Kat and Lock work together to find the killer? We interviewed the author to discover her inspirations.

The series features an AI detective, Lock. What inspired the creation of Lock, and do you think that this technology will be available to us soon?

Yes, although *In The Blink of an Eye* was my first published book I've actually been writing for 40 years – before that I wrote middle grade and YA books. I wanted to do an adult crime novel, as I was reading more and more crime, but needed to think of something different in such a crowded market. My job involves future planning the workforce and I was working on the impact of AI on the cancer workforce in particular. There were lots of debates about what AI can and can't do, and I thought 'What if you had a AI detective?'. I did a bit of research, and found that the police are already using AI in the form of algorithms, image recognition and predictive policing. That opens up all sorts of debate about bias and prejudice, and how we make decisions. So I thought I'd have a human detective, DCS Kat Frank, and an AI detective. Kat is loosely based on me, she's middle-aged, and a widow. Most of the things about AI which I put in the book either exist now or will do in the future. The technology may change, but the issues I'm raising are fundamental.

In *Leave No Trace*, DCS Kat Frank is living quite a lonely life, after the death of her husband and her son's departure for university. Do you think that AI like Lock can ever take the place of people?

At the time I was writing it I was in a similar situation to Kat, my son had left for university. I think you are vulnerable to loneliness then, and AI does blur that line between a machine and a human. Lock's always available to

discuss the case, and he gets to know Kat, and becomes enmeshed in her life. It's like our mobile phones, satnavs or smart speakers, it's all convenient and easy. Where do the boundaries lie, and you start to see AI as a friend? We impose our own human-centrism on to AI assistants, we give them names, we start to think of them as people. I was trying to play with that idea.

Lock is originally employed not only to do digital work in a fraction of the time a human would, but also to ensure that the police are not behaving in a prejudiced way. Do you think that this is a big problem for the police at the moment?

Yes. There's a tendency in some crime novels to ignore this debate, the police are quite often depicted as the heroes. We know right now that there are lots of debates about racism, sexism, misogyny and homophobia within the police, and you can't ignore that. Lock has that pure ability to expose their decision-making processes. Although sometimes Lock can be quite clumsy, it does force a glass-box way of thinking, because you have to explain your decision-making processes a bit more. Professor Okonedo, who created Lock, absolutely believes that policing is too important to be left to human beings, and evidence-based algorithms are the way to get true fairness and equality. But there are some limitations to that, as Lock's decision-making process can also be flawed.

Did you find that some of the minor characters developed as you wrote *Leave No Trace*?

Yes. Writing a series is fantastic, because I find developing the characters is the

Leave No Trace
by Jo Callaghan
Simon & Schuster
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781398511200
Published 28th March



hardest thing. The story arc is Kat and Lock's relationship, but you also have DI Rayan Hassan and DS Debbie Browne, who are quite different characters and make decisions in different ways. Rayan is like a mini-Kat, he's more instinctive and confident, and Debbie is more like Lock, more cautious and evidence-based. Then there's Professor Okonedo, who Rayan has a massive crush on! We see a bit more of her in *Leave No Trace*, and even more in the third book.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

Lots! Susie Steiner, she has humour and warmth as well as pace. Jane Casey, Belinda Bauer, and Kate Atkinson's Jackson Brodie series, which has a great internal narrative. Fiona Cummins is a much darker writer than me, but she does inspire some aspects of my writing. M.W. Craven – I like books that are clever and told with humour.

“A smart, agile, immaculately plotted and moving thriller,”

Nicci French

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

My favourite bookshops are independent, my local one Birmingham is called The Heath Bookshop, which is quite new. That was the first shop I had the courage to go into with a proof of my paperback, and I did one of my first author talks there. Catherine and Claire run it, and they're doing their first festival this April. Bert's Books have been a great supporter of me as well. As a reader, when you walk through the doors of a shop, you want to find a story. And the booksellers, they are smaller and they know their stock, they can help every reader find the right book, and that's a great skill.

Look out for the first book in the series:



In The Blink of an Eye

by Jo Callaghan
Simon & Schuster
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781398511194
Out Now

Ancient & Brave



In *Orphia & Eurydicus*, author Elyse John reimagines the ancient Greek myth of Orpheus & Eurydice in a unique and beautiful way, by changing their genders. We interviewed her about her inspirations, the power of poetry and more.

Orphia dreams of transcending her training to be a warrior on the Whispering Isle. She has a great talent for poetry, and her words can move flowers to bloom and forests to grow, but her father, the god Apollo, has forbidden her to practise this art. When she meets a young shield-maker, Eurydicus, she begins to fall in love. She wields her poetic power, defeats one final champion, and wins the protection of the Muses, powerful goddesses of the arts, who welcome her to their sanctuary on Mount Parnassus.

“Poetic and evocative... this story will thrill readers”

Pip Williams

But she cannot forget Eurydicus, and when Jason asks her to join him on a voyage to capture the Golden Fleece, Orphia is not sure if she should choose love or fame. Seeking guidance from the Oracle at Delphi, she soon realises that she has a darker journey to make, when tragedy strikes to her heart. Bold and lyrical, *Orphia & Eurydicus* is a unforgettable novel which playfully reinterprets a classical tale.

What is it about this particular myth that drew you to it, and why did you change the genders?

I was drawn to the story of Orpheus and Eurydice after my brother's death and I was really motivated to write this book in tribute to my brother. The Orpheus myth touches on the depths of love and grief and I related to its themes: the agony of being physically parted from somebody that you were close to; the desire to bring them back; the idea of trying to bargain for them; the concept of being willing to go to the most dangerous place in the world if it meant you could return them to life. My brother also liked the aria from Gluck's opera where Orpheus laments Eurydice, and I found that he'd kept a copy of the lyrics. So there's a profound personal connection to the legend for me. I also felt an affinity with Orpheus's character because he was a poet and artist and his fame came through storytelling rather than combat. The power of Orpheus's creativity really chimed with me and so did the idea of stories creating magic.

Changing the characters' genders came naturally to me, but I was also interested in how it could subvert some of the stereotypes related to heroism, creativity and romance. So often, the heroes of myth are assumed to be men, and the stereotype of the creative genius has historically been male too. I was interested in centring a woman as both a hero and an artist, and having her male partner be her support and muse. When it came to romance, I thought there was something quite beautiful and romantic about Orphia being the one

actively wooing and courting Eurydicus. I think stories that show a woman as a romancer can speak to the potential for women to reject those elements of passivity and dependence that are sometimes subconsciously baked into gendered dating rituals. And the other side of the coin is that men who prefer not to lead can enjoy that kind of romance too. So to Eurydicus, Orphia seems intriguing in that way.

Did you research the many different versions of the legend of Orpheus before forming your own version?

I was interested in some of the ancient works that mention the Orpheus and Eurydice myth. I was struck by how colourful and lively the language was in Ovid's version, in the *Metamorphoses*. Perhaps the most striking part of that version, for me, is the extended performance that Orpheus gives in the underworld: poetry is his best tool to win back Eurydice. It exemplifies Orpheus's quality as a creator-hero or artist-hero. In his key heroic scene, storytelling is his weapon instead of his spear. On the other hand, I liked how Virgil integrated Orpheus's story into a work that is supposedly about agricultural life. The chapter in which Orpheus's story appears is meant to be about bees and beekeeping. There's something fascinating, I think, in how Virgil can shift subjects from farming to the mythic and then back again. I like the idea that the mythic speaks to all of us, and it's not only interesting or useful to the wealthy few, but also to all kinds of workers in society. There were other texts I looked at too, like Boethius's work *On the Consolation of*

Philosophy which mentions the Orpheus and Eurydice myth in an interesting way, and other ancient poems and plays that told some of the stories that were connected to the Orpheus myth, like the *Argonautica*. And I also read some histories that shed light on the period and different aspects of ancient Greek life.

In the book, Orphia's creation of music and poetry has a magical, material effect in the world. Do you think music and poetry can change the world?

There's a transformative power in the creative arts, I think. We often call upon poetry at weddings and funerals to give voice to some of our strongest emotions, and memorialise these important days. And I think poetry can get straight to the core of emotion, and can compress it into a single image. The brevity of it is powerful. Music speaks to us in a different way, but I think with equally potent impact. In the story, Orphia's poetry has magical effects, as it does in the myths about Orpheus. In some ways, it reflects how storytelling can cause emotions to spread. The trees and animals are drawn to Orphia in the way readers or listeners are drawn to stories they connect to. The magic reflects the process of the author or creator finding their voice, but I think it's also about the reader finding that connection with the story. I like the idea of mirroring that in how Eurydicus responds to Orphia's stories, and also in how Orphia responds to Calliope and Hera, and others who inspire her.

Orphia goes to the Oracle at Delphi for advice and prophecy. If you could know the future, would you want to know it?

As a child I would probably have said yes, but as an adult I'm not so sure! I think there's a beautiful mystery in the unknown, and the more we open ourselves to it, fearlessly, then the less trepidation can rule us. At the same time, sometimes we do receive warnings about the future and fail to act on them. As an Australian, I can't help but think of recent events. It had been predicted that climate change would hit hard enough for our country to have a new level of fire risk by the summer of 2020. Our leaders had known this for a long time and had ignored the issue, with devastating results that the whole world saw. So I think sometimes our challenge isn't just about seeking more insight into the future, but also making sure that we act on those insights.

Orphia learns from her mother, the Muse Calliope, about her grandmother Mnemosyne and great-grandmother Gaia, having never heard of them before. Do you think there are still lots of stories about women which we haven't heard?

Undoubtedly. We're having a renaissance of these stories in publishing at the moment, with books like *Clytemnestra* by Costanza Casati, *Winter Harvest* by Ioanna Papadopoulou and *The Heroines* by Laura Shepperson. And it's not only Western mythology at the forefront of it: there are books like *Daughter of the Moon Goddess* by Sue Lynn Tan, which retells a Chinese myth about a fascinating goddess. There are also new works of alternative history and myth about people outside the gender

binary, across a wide range of cultures. In *Orphia & Eurydicus*, I was spurred on by a desire to celebrate women's artistic and knowledge communities as well as celebrating women of myth. So the Muses have their own community, and their artistic knowledge flourishes in this female-centric environment. I also thought it was important to include mythic women with different personalities and talents, like Medea, as well as reinterpreting Hera and celebrating her power.

Did you plot the book out in advance, or did you write instinctively?

I tend to plan ahead, but I also find that the story changes as I write. Having a plan gives me structure, but the story is shaped by how it grows and evolves, and by the characterisation and style that emerges. There has to be enough structure for it to proceed, but there's also a kind of magic that comes organically in writing and there needs to be enough space for that magic to flourish too.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

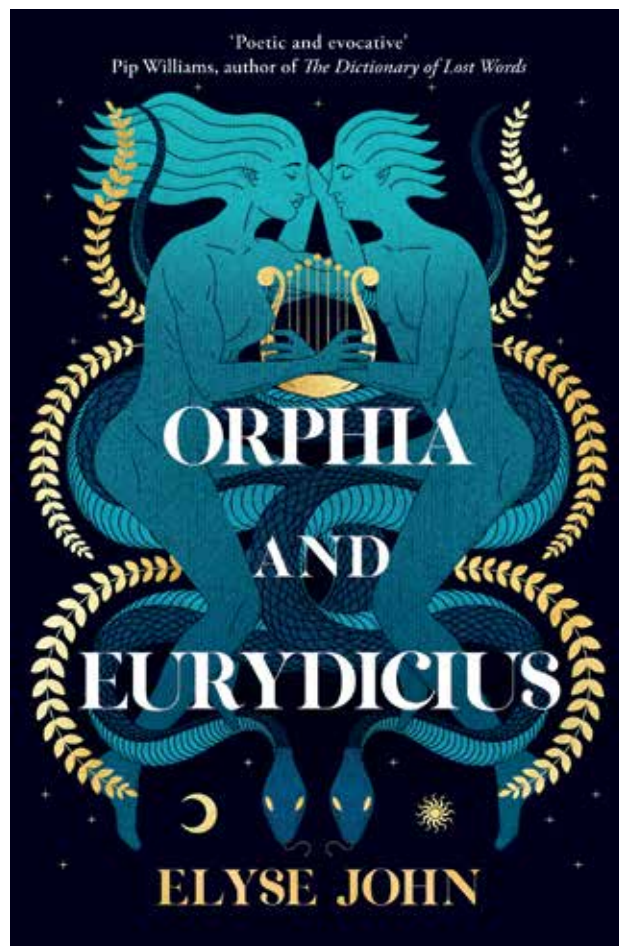
So many! From the ancient world, I found works by Euripides, Homer, Ovid, and Virgil interesting and relevant to my work. I'm fascinated by Euripides's *Medea* and I drew on some elements of that story. I was also inspired by the research I did on site in Greece, walking on Mount Olympus and Mount Parnassus. It was an unforgettable experience to take in the sights and smells and sounds of those places where the mythic events were meant to have occurred. From later periods, I'm a lover Dante's poetry and Keats's poetry. Both authors write so beautifully about love and death and the entanglement of those things. In more contemporary times, I really love Hilary Mantel's writing, and Susana Clarke's, I think both of them have been incredibly bold, inventive with language, voice and storytelling. They're certainly women who blaze.

"A moving magical ode to the power of using our voices,"

Holly Ringland

Did you go to Greece specifically to research the book?

Yes. I was very fortunate in that it was just before the pandemic began, towards the end of 2019. I'd already started doing some



Orphia & Eurydicus

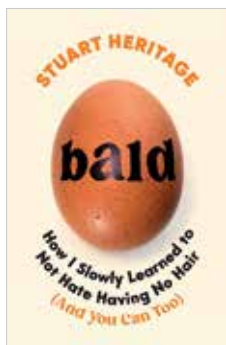
by Elyse John
HarperCollins • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781460763049
Published 28th March

work on the book and then, informed by that, I looked at some sites related to Orpheus's story. I went hiking on the mountains with some local guides. I was lucky to have a guide on Mount Parnassus – Kostis – whose father had a PhD in the endemic plants of Greece. He was able to take me to the ancient olive grove and show me the olive cultivation, and talk about all kinds of plants that I found symbolically and metaphorically interesting.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

They are the lungs of the literary ecosystem, and without them I don't think the book world would survive with the richness and diversity that it offers readers. I regularly see the support and love that independent bookshops give to literary work, and also the vital role that they play in giving authors from marginalised backgrounds a voice. I've also noticed that independent booksellers are some of the most passionate myth lovers around. When they've chatted with me, I've ended up in long conversations about Ovid, French cinema, poetry, and weaving these things back to myth. I've felt their love for stories that are rich and multi-faceted. We need to treasure that meeting of the minds, and independent bookshops are absolutely at the core of literary flourishing.

Memoir & True Stories



Bald
by Stuart Heritage
Profile Books
HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781800818569
Published 25th April

Nobody chooses to be bald. Stuart Heritage has been bald for two years. But before he accepted the inevitable, he spent a number of years ineptly trying to conceal this fact with an array of expensive treatments and terrible haircuts. Part-memoir-part-manual, Stuart brings us a self-deprecating, funny and genuinely helpful guide to being bald: what really happens, why it matters and how to feel much less crap about it.



Unashamed
by Elizabeth G.
Whitefox Publishing
HB • £19.99
ISBN 9781915635792
Published 28th March

This is no-holds-barred, taboo-busting account of the life of a sex worker, and what it's like to build a highly successful career in a multimillion-pound industry that exists largely in the shadows. Elizabeth G. was twenty-two years old and travelling around Australia when she came across a job opportunity at an erotic massage parlour in Sydney. Fast forward eighteen years and she had built up a trusted list of regular clientele working as a high-end London escort.



One Thousand Shades of Green
by Mike Dilger
Bloomsbury Wildlife
PB • £11.99
ISBN 9781472993632
Published 28th March

Now in paperback, this book charts Mike Dilger's nationwide quest to find 1000 wild plant species in a single year. From Cornwall to Kent and Breckland to the Scottish Highlands, Mike meets the resilient reserve wardens and courageous conservationists tasked with protecting some of the nation's richest botanical sites, and experiences firsthand the many difficulties associated with saving our rarest and most charismatic plants.



Sociopath
by Patric Gagne
Bluebird • HB • £18.99
ISBN 9781529094886
Published 11th April

A candid memoir. Ever since she was a small child, Patric Gagne knew she was different. Although she felt intense love for her family and her best friend, David, these connections were never enough to make her be 'good'. As an adult, Patric realized that she was a sociopath. As her darker impulses warred against her attempts to live a settled life with her partner, Patric began to wonder – was there a way for sociopaths to integrate happily into society?



Boy Wanted on Savile Row
by Timothy Everest
The History Press
HB • £22.99
ISBN 9781803993898
Published 21st March

The son of restaurateurs, Timothy Everest wanted to be a racing driver when he was young. His ambition unfulfilled, at 17 he took a job with his uncle, working as a sales assistant at Hepworths in Milford Haven, a high street shop that would form the foundation of the Next retail empire. Everest never looked back. This revealing memoir is the remarkable story of his meteoric rise in the British fashion industry, and plots the evolution of British tailoring over the past four decades.



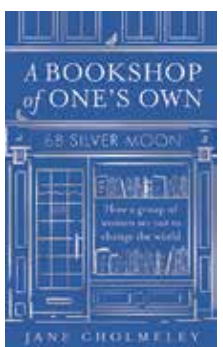
The Eighth House
by Linda Segtnan
Ithaka • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781804184318
Published 25th April

A true crime investigation by a Swedish author, translated by Elizabeth Clark Wessel. In the archives of the national library, Linda Segtnan sees a nine-year-old girl's face in the pages of a yellowed newspaper, and the seed of an obsession is planted in her mind. Birgitta Sivander was brutally murdered one night in May 1948. The culprit was never found. Linda feels a deep connection to Birgitta, and in the months that follow she compulsively researches the case.



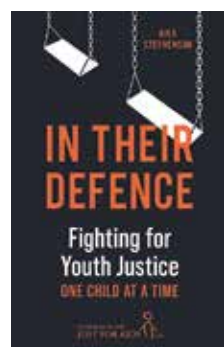
Blue Remembered Hills
by Rosemary Sutcliff
Handheld Classics
PB • £13.99
ISBN 9781912766802
Published 12th March

This is author Rosemary Sutcliff's memoir of her childhood, youth and her first love affairs. It's a classic of perfect writing about her close and not always easy relationship with her bipolar mother, life in the naval dockyards where her father was based, and the beloved family dogs, interspersed with her stoic endurance of physical and emotional pain. Sutcliff writes with joy about her fleeting childhood friendships in a lonely life as an only child, and lyrical descriptions of the beauty around their remote house in Devon.



A Bookshop of One's Own
by Jane Cholmeley
Mudlark • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780008651046
Out Now

The true story of a feminist bookshop. Silver Moon was the dream of three women – Jane Cholmeley, Sue Butterworth and Jane Angerand – a bookshop with the mission to promote the work of female writers and create a much-needed safe space for any woman. Founded in 1980s London against a backdrop of homophobia and misogyny, it was a testament to the power of community, growing into Europe's biggest women's bookshop.

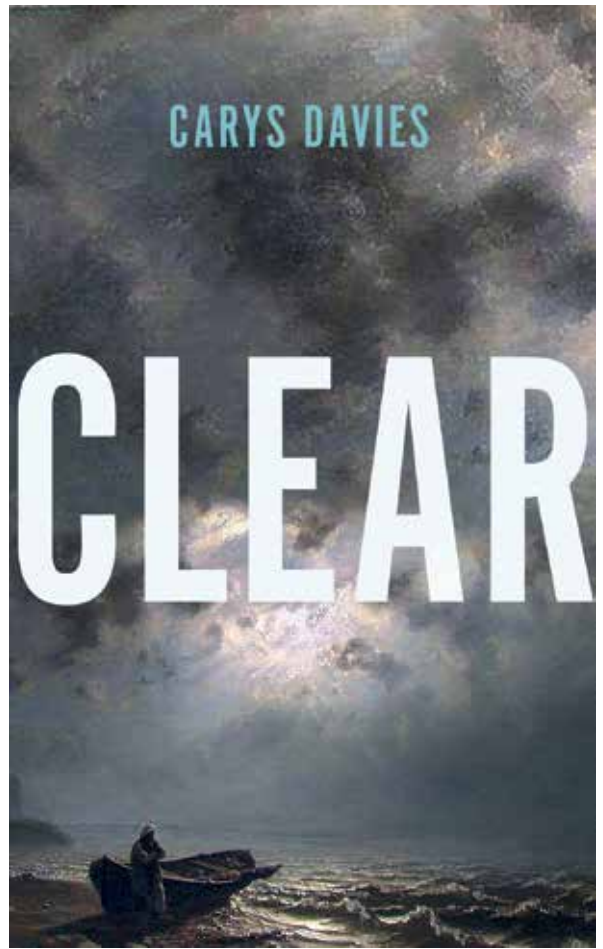


In Their Defence
by Aika Stephenson
Michael O'Mara
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781789294873
Published 25th April

An important and revelatory book which brings together extraordinary cases of youth justice, published in partnership with Just for Kids Law. Aika Stephenson reveals the extraordinary cases she deals with daily. From the obviously vulnerable to the A-grade student from a stable upbringing, Just for Kids Law, the campaigning charity co-founded by Stephenson in 2007, has helped thousands of children and young people overcome the difficulties they face in the legal system.

Alone Together

From the award-winning author of *West* and *The Mission*, *Clear* is a deeply atmospheric novel set on a remote Scottish island in the 1840s. When church minister John Ferguson is sent to the island to remove its only inhabitant, Ivar, he discovers much more than he could have imagined.



Clear
by Carys Davies
Granta • HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781803510408
Published 7th March

It's 1843, and Ivar lives a simple life on the island, alone with his horse Pegi. His family, and everyone else who used to live on the island, have long since departed for the mainland, or emigrated to Canada or the United States. But one day he discovers a picture of a beautiful woman in a frame, and he finds himself treasuring it, keeping it with him at all times. Then he discovers an unconscious, naked man on the beach. He takes the man back to his home and nurses him back to health.

The man is John Ferguson, who has reluctantly been employed to remove Ivar from the island, by force if necessary, so the island's owner Henry Lowrie can use it to graze sheep. The clearances of the Highlands are underway, and many people who have lived there their whole lives have been forced to leave with nothing. It's not a job John wants to do, but he and his wife Mary are struggling financially and he cannot afford to turn the job down. The picture is of Mary, who is waiting for him anxiously to return.

As Ivar tends to John, the two find a way to communicate, and John begins to learn Ivar's language. Ivar knows that John must have come from the mainland, but chooses not to think about why he might be here. And John knows that he has to tell Ivar of his mission, but cannot put it into words. Meanwhile, Mary worries about her absent husband and decides to embark on her own journey. *Clear* is a beautifully written novel about ordinary people buffeted by history, and the extraordinary nature of human connection.

In this extract, Ivar discovers the picture of Mary:

“A compact, taut and brilliant novel with an ingenious premise.”

Anthony Doerr

“Carys Davies has written a masterful, discreetly sublime book”

Hernan Diaz

In the satchel he found a bundle of sodden papers inside a blue cloth cover; a comb like the one Hanus has brought back for Jenny from Bergen, the time he got the tea and tobacco, only smaller and with smoother teeth; a piece of corn-coloured soap, soft and squashy from all the water; a tin containing a small folding knife and what he believed to be writing implements; and right at the bottom, under the papers,

he found a dark-haired woman inside a leather frame, looking up at him from behind a piece of broken glass with a shy and secret smile.

It was impossible to make out her surroundings, which were misty and brown and indistinct, as if she was standing in the grainy gloaming of an early winter afternoon. But the woman herself was as alive as anything he'd ever seen, and more alive, by far, than his memories of Jenny or his mother or his grandmother. In his whole life he had never seen anything like her. He touched her with his finger, almost expecting her to move, and for a long time he knelt before the fire holding her.

It was late when he stood up and propped her against the wall on the stone shelf above the hearth while he separated the soaking papers that were in the bag and spread them out in front of the fire to dry. If there'd been anything written on them, any words in English or Scots or Danish or Norwegian or any other language he didn't know and couldn't read, they had been washed away. The blue cloth they'd been wrapped in he wrung out with his hands and spread that out too. The soap he lifted to his face but it smelled of nothing but the sea and he set it down on the hearth next to the comb and then, even though everything was already illuminated by the fire, he lit the lamp so he could look again at the smiling dark-haired woman who was somehow alive inside the frame and the murky brown darkness that surrounded her.

Road to Recovery

By tracing his own personal recovery journey from being an impoverished psychiatric patient to becoming a NHS Consultant psychiatrist, in *Breakthrough* Dr Ahmed Hankir delivers an unique and powerful insight into mental health and wellness.

In 2005, aged 22, Ahmed Hankir woke up in a dilapidated house in Moss Side, Manchester and cried and cried and cried. He had been in denial about his mental illness, and had burnt bridges with his family and friends. He'd been forced to interrupt his studies at medical school, and was impoverished, shunned and ostracised. He left the house later that day and contemplated throwing himself under one of the buses on the busy Oxford Road. Seventeen years later, in 2022, Dr Ahmed Hankir was selected to be the recipient of the WHO Director General Award for Global Health, and his speech at the WHO World Health Assembly High Level Welcome received a standing ovation.

In *Breakthrough* Dr Hankir tells his own story of as well as exploring many of the issues currently dominating the discussion of mental health and illness, including the impacts of poverty, unemployment, the cost of living crisis, homelessness, addictions, the use of medication to treat mental illness, the widespread prevalence of stigma, discrimination and racism in mental health and much more. He also offers practical advice on overcoming shame and stigma to seek help if you're suffering from a mental illness, and examines how mental health practitioners are family members of people living with mental health conditions can themselves remain healthy as they care for others. It's a resource of hope and a companion for those suffering in silence who feel isolated and disconnected from society, with a clear message that, with the right support, recovery is a reality for the many and not the few.

In this extract, Dr Hankir traces how his parents migrated from Lebanon to Northern Ireland, where he was born, in the early 1980s, and how attitudes towards immigrants can affect mental health:

“Warm, funny and devastatingly honest. An incredibly insightful story full of hope and resilience.”

Dr Amir Khan

My parents, like many other people who migrate, seek asylum or sanctuary, didn't relocate because they wanted to but because the devastating consequences of conflict left them with no other choice. The mental health of this population often falls under the purview of cultural psychiatry for which there is a growing body of research evidence. The data does indicate that being a migrant, asylum seeker or refugee can increase your risk of developing mental health problems. Multiple factors contribute to this such as how we are received by the host country, language barriers, employment opportunities and housing insecurity. Interestingly second-generation immigrants are at higher risk of developing psychosis compared to first-generation immigrants. I would hypothesise that the former have more difficulties grappling with identity than the latter. We all long to belong but for second generation

immigrants it seems, certainly to me, but we struggle with knowing who we are and which tribe we are a member of. My twin brother said something to me once that I'll never forget. Though we are British nationals, it felt as though we were never treated or accepted as such, certainly not by the community we were immersed in when we returned to England in 2000. This despite our best efforts to integrate and the fact that we identified strongly as British. This identity crisis, certainly for me, precipitated emotional turmoil and mended me vulnerable to developing mental health problems in the future.

It seemed to me that the prevailing culture in England was to drink alcohol. For you to be accepted and embraced as 'one of our own' one must subscribe to this culture. Being the Muslim, therefore, didn't stand me in good stead for social inclusion since consuming intoxicants is haram (prohibited) in Islam. I think this only served to alienate me and no doubt many other teetotalers from full social acceptance, which further increased our risk of developing mental health problems.

The rhetoric being espoused by certain politicians about immigration and seeking asylum and the policies, both those being proposed and those that are already implemented, undoubtedly has averse effects on the mental health of those being targeted. Britain's home secretary Suella Braverman has come under scrutiny and criticism for the language she's been using when she is describing migrants and people who seek sanctuary. When dehumanising terms are used to describe people it can have disastrous effects on our mental health.

One of the most striking policies against people seeking sanctuary was

A Story of Hope, Resilience
and Mental Health Recovery

Breakthrough



Dr Ahmed Hankir

Breakthrough
by Dr Ahmed Hankir
Capstone • PB • £14.99
ISBN 9780857089724
Published 18th April

*“An honest,
engaging and
most of all,
hopeful book.”*

Adam Kay

when Donald Trump was in office and he issued an Executive Order that resulted in the forced separation of children from their parents often for protracted periods. Such forced separation can cause irreparable damage to the mental health of both children and parents and, certainly for me, is unconscionable.

Discussions about immigration and seeking sanctuary often in the context of the global North. However, we know most people receive refuge and sanctuary in low- and middle-income countries like Lebanon. Indeed up to one-in-four people in Lebanon is from Syria or Palestine. Refugees in Lebanon are often deprived of health care and doctors would turn them away if they did not have the resources to pay.

My father Dr Zakaria Hankir, however, was the exception. The Arabic word for doctor is ‘Hakeem’ which means ‘The wise one’. I used to shadow my father in his clinic in Sidon, which is the capital of the south of Lebanon. What I witnessed in that clinic astonished and inspired me. In Lebanon, unlike The United Kingdom, there is no universal healthcare, and the poor would bear the brunt of this. However, my father would provide pro bono care to those who could not afford it, and he was affectionately known as, ‘Hakeem el-shaab’ or, ‘The People’s Doctor’. His clinic would be packed with patients from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, many Palestinian and Syrian refugees who were regarded as outcasts and who were some of the most vulnerable people in Lebanese society. I remember many of my father’s patients would be dressed in tattered attire covered in dust after walking for miles (some for an

entire day) to get to the clinic. The blisters on their feet testament to how arduous their journeys were.

Despite my father’s valiant efforts, the physical health treatment gap in Lebanon for refugees remains enormous. The gap, however, is even greater for the treatment of mental health conditions. Indeed, the provision of mental health care for refugees in Lebanon is close to non-existent.

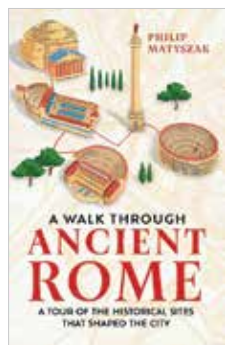
*“Professor Hankir’s
personal journey
bursts with courage,
resilience and hope.”*

Vikram Patel

In this chapter, I’ve briefly traced my parents’ journeys to illustrate the profound influences their life events have had on my own life and trajectory. Much of what happens to us is beyond our control and events that occur even before we are born can place us in disadvantageous circumstances. We often have no power or say over the factors that can increase our risk towards or protect us against developing mental health problems. Migration, conflict, racism, politics and how we are received by the host nation are but some of the myriad factors that can contribute to developing mental health

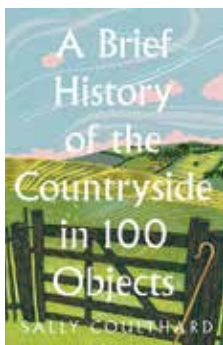
conditions. Immigrants and those of us who seek sanctuary are often stigmatised and socially excluded. We can struggle with identity formation, which can further render us vulnerable to developing mental health problems. Although much of this discourse on asylum seekers and refugees in the international media seems focused on events in the Global North, most asylum seekers and refugees are based in low- and middle-income countries like Lebanon. The provision of healthcare – especially mental health care – for this population in these parts of the world is woefully inadequate. This is deeply concerning especially given the complex mental health needs of this population. Solutions to these problems require political will on a global scale and the mobilisation of resources to fund mental healthcare provision that is grounded on a human rights framework and that is trauma informed. You as an individual can feel powerless but you can make a difference. Simply by being kind and by opening our hearts and minds to people who migrate and who are forced to seek sanctuary can contribute to creating a compassionate culture and atmosphere. This can help to make immigrants and those who seek sanctuary feel accepted, included, welcome and even embraced, the mental health benefits of which cannot be overstated. I know that if I was made to feel embraced when I arrived in the United Kingdom all those years ago, that would certainly have been beneficial for my mental health. Unfortunately, as will be revealed in this book, I was often alienated and made to feel unwelcome by many, which had a profoundly adverse effects on my mental health.

History & Politics



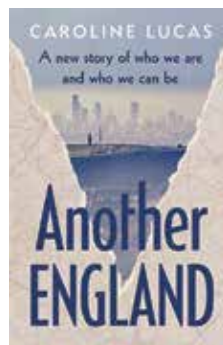
A Walk Through Ancient Rome
by Philip Matyszak
Michael O'Mara
HB • £14.99
ISBN 9781789295221
Published 11th April

In this expert guide to the ancient city, Dr Philip Matyszak takes us on a journey through some of ancient Rome's most historically significant sites and locations, revealing the dramatic stories behind one of history's most fascinating empires. Rome itself was never grander or more magnificent than just before it fell, so be transported back in time to the empire's twilight years at the end of the 4th century AD.



A Brief History of the Countryside in 100 Objects
by Sally Coulthard
HarperNorth
HB • £22.00
ISBN 9780008559427
Out Now

Rural life is oddly invisible in our historical records. The daily routine of the peasant, the farmer or the craftsperson could never compete with the glamour of city life, war and royal drama. But the things we have left behind provide a connection that no document can match; physical artefacts are touchstones that breathe life into its history. From ancient artefacts to modern-day memorabilia, this book weaves a rich tapestry from the fragments of our rural past.



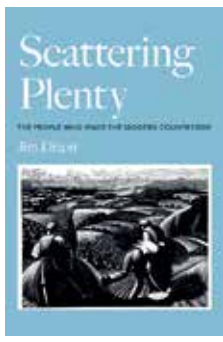
Another England
by Caroline Lucas
Hutchinson
Heinemann
HB • £22.00
ISBN 9781529153064
Published 18th April

In this book, Green Party MP Caroline Lucas asks who English people really are, and offers a progressive vision of what Englishness is and what it might be. Delving deep into our national history, she explores what England's progressive spirit can teach us about the most pressing issues of our time: whether the fraught legacies of Empire, the benefits of migration, or the accelerating climate emergency. And she sketches out an alternative Englishness that progressives can embrace.



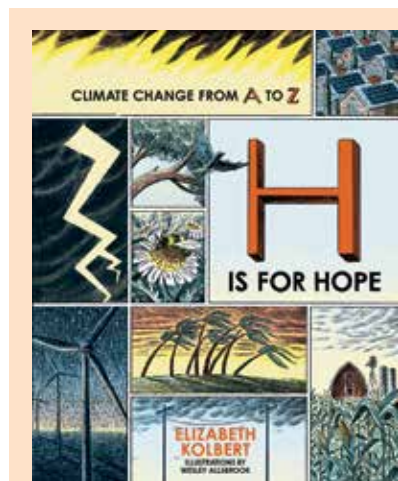
Writing on the Wall
by Madeleine Pelling
Profile Books
HB • £25.00
ISBN 9781800811997
Published 28th March

A brilliant new cultural history of the long eighteenth century, this book is told through the marks its citizens left behind, bringing into focus lost voices from the highest to the lowest in society. From the centre of London to the islands of the Caribbean, Madeleine Pelling goes in search of graffiti, evidence of how ordinary people experienced the world-changing events that defined their lives – from political prisoners to the artisans of the industrial revolution.



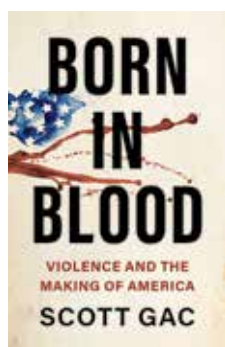
Scattering Plenty
by Jim Dixon
The History Press
HB • £22.99
ISBN 9781803994093
Published 21st March

This book tells the multi-dimensional story of farming and the countryside in the 20th century – through wartime, post-war reconstruction and four decades embroiled in European countryside policies. It tells of the birth of modern farming, of the fight for nature and natural beauty, of the decline of the great estates and their rebirth as pleasure grounds, of access to the countryside, and of the gradual control that state and democratic agencies have had on the land.



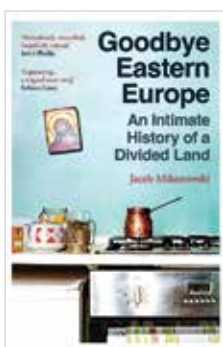
H is for Hope: Climate Change from A to Z
by Elizabeth Kolbert & Wesley Allsbrook
Oneworld • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780861548668
Published 4th April

In this book, Elizabeth Kolbert investigates the history, and future, of climate change – from A, for Svante Arrhenius, who created the world's first climate model in 1894, to Z, for Net Zero. Along the way she looks at Greta Thunberg's 'blah blah blah' speech, flies an all-electric plane, and struggles with the deep uncertainty of the future. Complemented by Wesley Allsbrook's gorgeous, colour illustrations, it offers an inspiring, worrying and hopeful vision for how we can still save our planet.



Born in Blood: Violence and the Making of America
by Scott Gac
Cambridge University Press • HB • £23.00
ISBN 9781316511886
Published 7th March

An investigation into one of history's most violent undertakings: The United States of America. People the world over consider violence in the United States as measurably different than that which troubles the rest of the globe, citing reasons including gun culture, the American West, Hollywood, the death penalty, economic inequality, rampant individualism, and more. This examination explains a political culture of violence from the American Revolution to the Gilded Age.



Goodbye Eastern Europe
by Jacob Mikanowski
Oneworld • PB • £10.99
ISBN 9780861547326
Published 7th March

Now in paperback, this is an epic history of the 'other' Europe, a place of conflict and coexistence, of faith and folklore. Eastern Europe is more than the sum total of its annexations, invasions and independence declarations. From the Baltics to the Balkans, from Prague to Kiev, the area exuded a tragicomic character like no other. This is a paean for a disappearing world of movable borders, sacred groves and syncretism. And an invitation to not forget.

Growing Knowledge

Simon Barnes, author of *How to be a Bad Birdwatcher* and *The Year of Sitting Dangerously*, turns his attention to botanical matters in this new, entertaining guide to wild plants. We interviewed him to discover his inspirations.

Photo © Cindy Lee Wright



In the book, you write about how you thought you knew nothing about plants until recently, but realised you knew more than you thought. But did you do a lot of research about the things you didn't know?

Of course. One of the reasons I wrote it was as a kind of celebration of my own ignorance. Ignorance is the most exciting thing in the world because it's a portal to learning. When something catches your interest, and you say 'I don't know much about that' two things happen same time: you realise that you knew more than you thought and you realise you can learn more and more about it. The process itself is enthralling. Stephen Fry wrote somewhere about people complaining about how they never knew things because they didn't do history at school, or because they did history and not geography. It's like someone walking through a street of gold complaining of poverty. Because information has never been more readily available. You can see a flower you don't recognise, for example, and you can see what it is and why it's there. Then you can ask another question, and another question. My excitement at that process is what started the book and what the book is for.

Do you think that, compared to birds and animals, plants are sometimes unfairly seen as less interesting?

Yes – there is also an attitude to flowers and having an interest in them, some people think it's a bit girly which is pathetic! The thing about birds is, they can fly, and that's one of the most exciting things in the world. For years it was hard me to look at anything else. But I had a Damascene moment when

a colleague of mine, a fellow birder, told me that they'd been so many painted ladies about. That's a butterfly, I knew that much, but I didn't know how to recognise one. And I thought: Which one of us is pathetic? The one who can see a pretty butterfly or the one who wouldn't know it when he saw it? So that started me thinking beyond birds. It was the logical next step to move from the animal kingdom to plants. I was also very much encouraged by my good friend Ralph. We'd had many a walk together, and I'd tell him what birds are singing and he'd tell me about the plants. He's now quite good – he can recognise quite a few birdsongs. And I'm about ten times better at recognising plants.

“Ignorance is a portal to learning”

In the book you write about wild plants – are you a keen gardener too?

Absolutely not! I don't garden at all. I have several acres of common land which I rent and manage for wildlife, in Norfolk. What I have in my garden is marsh harriers, and whooper swans, and there are about ten species of warbler here. It's the plants that make it happen, and they are changing under the gentle management regime. The growing reeds are great for Cetti's warblers, reed warblers and sedge warblers. As the vegetation changes, so the soundscape changes.

What is the most surprising thing you've discovered in the course of writing the book?

I think the most surprising thing was how much I knew. If you're interested in wildlife, by reading and through other means, you want to know how it all fits together. And the name for that science is ecology. And you find, as you start reading about plants, that you know something about it, because you

know something about how it fits together. It all starts with the sun and the sun-powered plants. Coming to that more complete understanding was the most joyful and perhaps the most surprising part of writing the book.

You also refer to many literary works in the book, and you write at one point that you had to choose between arts and sciences at school. Do you think that art and science are intertwined?

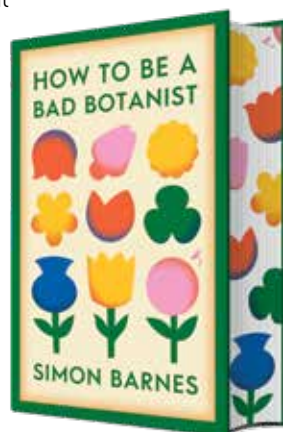
They certainly are in my life. I don't know the extent to which it's still done, but it wasn't just that you had to make that choice at school, but you also had to justify it by becoming proud of your ignorance. You'd say 'I'm an artist, I don't bother with all that science stuff.' And scientists would despise other people for reading *The Wasteland!* I just think – who profits from this? Who comes out looking smart? I had a revelation in my early 30s, when I started reading Stephen J. Gould, and I was enraptured. That started me off on a course of reading and indeed writing about science which has continued until this day. The term 'autodidact' is used as an insult 'he didn't go to a proper university so he's self-taught' – but I think anybody who's not an autodidact is a fool! If we're not teaching ourselves, if we're not learning from every day we live, we're wasting our lives.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

Every great writer you read is an inspiration. *Ulysses* by James Joyce is a book that has haunted me all my life, and I reread it constantly. I read Shakespeare like a novel. Those are the most important books, but I also love great thrillers like Peter O'Donnell's *Modesty Blaise* series. Because they're so beautifully plotted and clearly written, they give you important things to learn from. And your enjoyment of them teaches you that you shouldn't be snobby about reading. It's about writing, about telling your tale as vividly and deeply as you can.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

They are places where you can browse at leisure and be inspired. You can go into a bookshop not knowing what you're looking for, and you can look at the books and pick them up and finding them. That's how I got into Stephen J. Gould, I thought it looked interesting and gave it a try. It's a place that has an uncrowded, relaxed feel to it – and you just think 'I think I might get that!'



How to be a Bad Botanist

by Simon Barnes
Simon & Schuster
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781398518919
Published 25th April

Look out for a special, signed limited edition exclusively available at independent bookshops!

The Great Outdoors

With this practical guide to involving babies and children in all sorts of adventures and outdoor pursuits, you can go wild with the whole family! We interviewed the author Bex Band, founder of the UK's largest women's adventure community, Love Her Wild, to discover more.



Family Adventures
by Bex Band
Conway • PB • £20.00
ISBN 9781844866595
Published 11th April

What inspired you to write the book – have you always been an adventurous person?

Outdoor adventures weren't something that featured much in my childhood, so it wasn't until my late 20s that I discovered my love of the outdoors. Really, it was going on a 1000km hike that cemented this passion! At the time, I'd started getting into hiking and camping at the weekends. However, my weekdays were less happy as I struggled to find a career that I enjoyed, and my mental health battled to keep up with my 9-5 London lifestyle. On a bit of a whim, I decided to take a sabbatical and put myself way out of my comfort zone, spending two months hiking the Israel National Trail. It completely changed my life. Off the back of the hike, I launched the non-profit women's adventure community, Love Her Wild, and continue to test myself in the outdoors on all sorts of adventures. When I became a mum in 2020, I was determined not to lose my sense of adventure. However, I was really disheartened to find little or no advice available for getting outdoors with babies and children in tow, despite it being absolutely possible. This is what inspired me to write *Family Adventures*.

How did having a child change the way you approach your adventures?

As we know, having children changes everything! The main things I've learned about getting outdoors with children is that you have to massively slow down. You need to drop expectations and any sense of reaching a specific goal. And finally, you've got to push through those feelings of nerves and tiredness that often hold us back as parents. If you don't, then you'll never be able to embrace family adventures and all the benefits this rewards you.

In the book, you blend advice and recommendations for adventures with your own family experiences, and pieces by other authors. How did you decide what to include?

It felt important to share my own and others' family adventures with complete honesty – so readers let go of the idea that there's a 'right' way to get outdoors with children. The reality is that most of the adventures didn't go to plan. But even the biggest disasters resulted in a new sense of resilience, family memories, a better connection to nature and lots of laughs. It was difficult to decide what to include, but my favourite part of the book are the stories shared by other families. They are across a range of disciplines – including cycling, hiking, camping, kayaking and climbing – and vary from small local day adventures to bigger overseas challenges.

Do you have a personal favourite adventure that your family have been on?

My favourite so far was a multi-day wild camping and hiking adventure we did in Dartmoor. We loaded our off-road buggy with camping gear, food, nappies and our daughter, who was just a baby at the time. I was close to cancelling the trip! Sleep regression and general life-juggling meant I was exhausted. The thought of organising logistics (especially as we didn't even know it was possible as no one had done it before with a buggy!) just seemed too much. But

I ignored those feelings and committed to going anyway. It turned out to be an incredible adventure. My daughter slept great (better than at home) and was so happy being outdoors. Away from all the house chores and work, when she napped, me and my husband would just rest or talk. I returned home feeling energised and happy. I think it was the first time since becoming a mum that I felt like I had found a bit of the old 'me' again.

How important do you think it is that children should have outdoor adventures?

We all know the benefits of getting outdoors. It's great for physical, mental and emotional health. In a world where our children are facing more indoor and screen time than ever before, outdoor adventures have never been more vital. Doing them together as a family means that the parents also benefit, and it forces quality, uninterrupted time together that will build memories that will last a lifetime.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

This is an impossible one to answer, as every book I've read has provided inspiration or learning in some way. Really my biggest inspiration has been my mum, Barbara Band, school librarian and consultant. She filled my childhood with books, library visits and author events. I have no doubt that it was this exposure that instilled in me from a young age a dream to be a writer myself.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

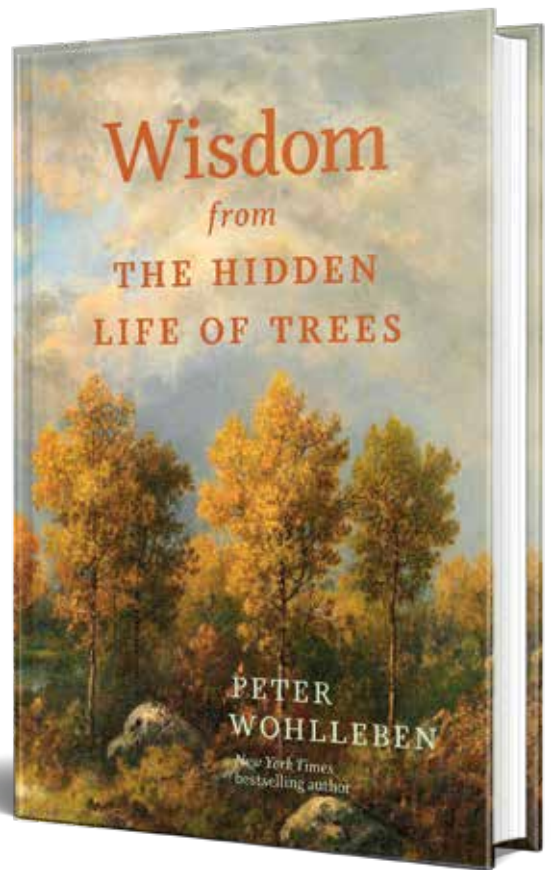
I'm lucky to have a wonderful independent bookshop in Frome where I live. They always have a great selection of books, friendly advice if struggling for a recommendation and organise all sorts of engaging events from book groups to talks. The shop fosters a real sense of community, and it's something that can only be found in independent bookshops, which is why I'm so passionate about supporting them.



Wonderful Woods

This beautifully illustrated collection of insights distils wisdom from the internationally bestselling *The Hidden Life of Trees* by expert forester Peter Wohlleben. It's a perfect inspirational read for anyone who enjoys a walk in the woods.

Translated by Jane Billingham, *Wisdom from The Hidden Life of Trees* is a gorgeous compendium, with a range of classic illustrations from artists such as Christopher Nathe, Henry Farrer, Joseph Bartholomew Kidd, Paul Klee, Henri Rousseau, William Turner many others. Discover the operations of the forest ecosystem where themes of communication, resilience, beauty, age, family, society and survival tie into our human world. It's a treasure of a book which highlights the fascinating interconnectedness of our world and celebrates trees in all their glory, in a handy pocket-sized format.



Wisdom from The Hidden Life of Trees
by Peter Wohlleben
Greystone Books • HB • £9.99
ISBN 9781778401404
Published 4th April

Emily Carr | *Among the Firs* | c. 1931



Trees and Aging

A break in its bark, then, is at least as uncomfortable for a tree as a wound to our skin is for us. And, they say, the tree relies on mechanisms similar to those we use to stop this from happening. Every year a tree in its prime adds between 0.3 to 1 inch in girth. Surely this would make its bark split! It does. To make sure that doesn't happen, the giants constantly renew their skin while shedding enormous quantities of thin cells. In keeping with trees' skin composition in fact, these flakes are correspondingly larger and measure up to 6 inches across.

But not every tree sheds in the same way. There's a species that sheds constantly, then there are others that flake with restraint. In young trees of all species, the outer bark is as smooth as a baby's bottom. As trees age, wrinkles gradually appear (girdled trees behave), and they steadily deepen as the process continues. The deeper the cracks, the more risk runs the tree is so close to bark, and this behavior increases markedly with age.



Clean Air

The air truly is considerably cleaner under trees, because their leaves and needles hang in a steady breeze, catching large and small particles as they float by. Not only do trees filter materials out of the air, they also release substances into it. They exchange sweet-smelling and, of course, pump-out germ-killing phytoncides.

Korean scientists have been tracking older women as they walk through forests and urban areas. The result? When the women were walking in the forest, their blood pressure, their lung capacity, and the elasticity of their arteries improved, whereas an equivalent time taken showed none of these changes. It's possible that phytoncides have a beneficial effect on our immune systems as well as the trees' health, because they kill germs. Personally, however, I think this so-far-fanciful cocktail of tree talk is the reason we enjoy being out in the forest so much.

Henri Rousseau | *The Banks of the Bièvre near Bicêtre* | c. 1908-9

In the forest, the diversity of animal life plays out mostly in the microscopic realm, hidden from the eyes of visitors.



Abbott Handerson Thayer and Richard S. Meryman
Peacock in the Woods, Study for Book Concealing Coloration in the Animal Kingdom | 1907

Henri Rousseau | *The Banks of the Bièvre near Bicêtre* | c. 1908-9

“A paradigm-smashing chronicle of joyous entanglement”

Charles Foster on
The Hidden Life of Trees

Abbott Handerson Thayer and Richard S. Meryman
Peacock in the Woods, Study for Book Concealing Coloration in the Animal Kingdom | 1907

Crime & Punishment

These two new books from The History Press explore a thrilling true crime story from 1930s India, and a sinister chapter of injustice in Cambridge University's past.

On 29 November 1933, Amarendra Pandey was waiting on a crowded Calcutta railway platform when he felt a sharp prick in his arm. Eight days later, he was dead and a manhunt had begun for his assassin. The details of case were so diabolical that they made headlines from London to Sydney and New York. With elements of biological warfare, illicit sex and contested wealth, the murder was reminiscent of the days of the Borgias, according to one newspaper.

In *The Prince and the Poisoner*, Dan Morrison uncovers the gruesome tale of two warring brothers set amidst the febrile atmosphere of Jazz Age India. It is the story of a city and an empire resting blindly on the cusp of cataclysmic change, a moment when centuries-old assumptions and expressions of power are about to be forever scrambled for Indians and Englishmen alike. A thrilling blend of true crime and history, it's a gripping and eye-opening book.

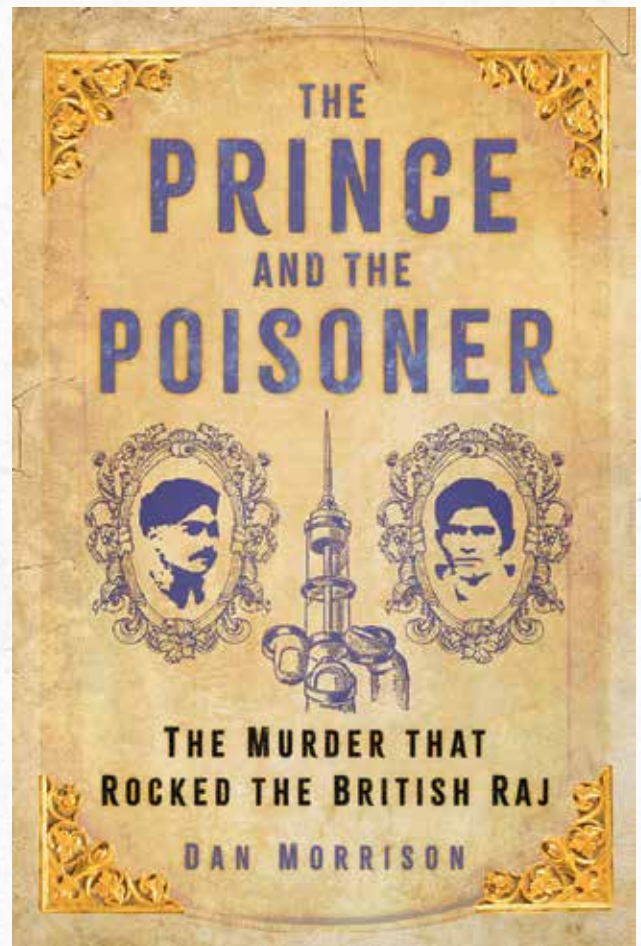
This extract looks at life in 1930s Calcutta:

The city was full of diversions.

Despite the differences in culture and climate, if an Englishman were to look at the empire's second city through just the right lens, he might sometimes be reminded of London. The glimmering of the Chowringhee streetlights 'calls back to many the similar reflection from the Embankment to be witnessed in the Thames', one chronicler wrote. Calcutta's cinemas and restaurants were no less stuffed with patrons than those in London or New York, even if police had recently shuttered the nightly cabaret acts that were common in popular European eateries, and even if the Great Depression could now be felt lapping at India's shores, leaving a worrisome slick of unemployment in its wake.

With a million and a half people, a thriving port, and as the former seat of government for a nation stretching from

The Prince and the Poisoner
by Dan Morrison
The History Press
HB • £20.00
ISBN 9780750999588
Published 14th March



the plains of Afghanistan to the Burma frontier, Calcutta was a thrumming engine of politics, culture, commerce – and crime. Detectives had just corralled a gang of looters for making off with a small fortune in gold idols and jewellery – worth £500,000 in today's money – from a Hindu temple dedicated to the goddess Kali. In the unpaved, unlit countryside, families lived in fear of an 'orgy' of abductions in which young, disaffected wives were manipulated into deserting their husbands, carried away in the dead of night by boat or on horseback, and forced into lives of sexual bondage.

“Dan Morrison has unearthed a fabulous true-crime story”

Robert Twigger

Every day, it seemed, another boy or girl from a 'good' middle-class family was arrested with bomb-making materials, counterfeit rupees, or nationalist literature. Each month seemed to bring another assassination attempt targeting high officials of the Raj. The bloodshed, and growing public support for it, was disturbing proof that Britain had lost the Indian middle class – if it had ever had them.

Non-violence was far from a universal creed among Indians yearning to expel the English, but it had mass support thanks to the moral authority of Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi, the ascetic spiritual leader whose campaigns of civil disobedience had galvanised tens of millions, was then touring central India, and trying to balance the social aspirations of India's untouchables with the virulent opposition of orthodox Hindus – a tightrope that neither he nor his movement would ever manage to cross.

And from his palatial family seat at Allahabad, the decidedly non-ascetic Jawaharlal Nehru, the energetic general secretary of the Indian National Congress, issued a broadside condemning his country's Hindu and Muslim hardliners as saboteurs to the cause of a free and secular India. Nehru had already spent more than 1,200 days behind bars for his pro-independence speeches and organising. Soon the son of one of India's most prominent families would again return to the custody of His Majesty's Government, this time in Calcutta, accused of sedition.

It was in this thriving metropolis, the booming heart of the world's mightiest empire, that, shortly after two o'clock in the afternoon on that last Sunday in November, well below the radar of world events, a young, slim aristocrat threaded his way through a crowd of turbaned porters, frantic passengers, and sweating ticket collectors at Howrah, British India's busiest railway station.

He had less than eight days to live.

Cambridge University is renowned worldwide for its academic prowess, but below the surface lurks a murky past. During the nineteenth century it became infamous for its dogged determination to cling to ancient laws allowing it to arrest and imprison any woman found walking the streets of Cambridge after dark. Mistakes were made. Violence and legal action followed until finally an Act of Parliament put on end to the jurisdiction of the university over the women of Cambridge.

In *The Spinning House*, Caroline Biggs tells the untold story of that darker side to Cambridge University's history, uncovering the true tales of so many women who were imprisoned, none of whom had a fair trial. Drawing on a wealth of unpublished material, and with echoes of *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, it's a story that reveals how a powerful organisation misused that power to intimidate women.

“The hero of the hour at the meeting turned out to be Councillor George Bullock”

This extract looks at a challenge to the archaic laws that imprisoned so many:

As Jane Elsdon laboured away inside the Salvation Army's bookbinding factory in Clerkenwell, opposition to the powers of the proctors was gaining momentum. Only a few miles away from where she sat skilfully twisting her folding stick, her name was being mentioned at a meeting of the South Kensington Women's Liberal Association.

That day in March 1891, the women were debating the 'special powers' held by the proctors in Cambridge. It was agreed they would write to the Mayor of Cambridge, calling for the end of university jurisdiction.

Jane Elsdon would not know that at the same time as the Women's Liberal Association were about to demand an end to the power of the university, so too were the ratepayers of Cambridge. Henry Labouchere was following events too, delighted at the discord he had sown. He was pleased to hear that the town's disgraced MP, Mr Penrose Fitzgerald, had been barred from attending public meetings. With her arrest and imprisonment causing heated national debate, surely the special powers granted to the university four centuries ago would not survive into another?

On a wet Monday morning in the

first week of April, thirty-two members of the borough council filed into the wood-panelled chamber at the Town Hall on the Market Square in Cambridge. A single item stood on the special agenda: 'university jurisdiction'.

Frederick Charles Wace, mayor and graduate of St John's College, embodied a new order of men who wanted to bring harmony to the town. First at the meeting, that drizzly April morning when daylight only shyly peered through the windows of the council chamber, the mayor read out the letter he'd received from the Women's Liberal Association in South Kensington. 'It stated,' he said, 'their disapproval of the "special powers" conferred upon the authorities of Cambridge to arrest and inflict "summary punishment" on persons other than members of the university.'

The letter was not favourably received. The thirty-two councillors unanimously agreed that outsiders had no right to address the council on such a question. The 'interfering' letter was rejected. So, too, was an unsigned petition from local parish clergy stating their fears for the moral virtue of the town without the continued attention of the proctors and their men.

A warning came also in the pages of the *Cambridge Chronicle*, whose editor alerted its readers to the potential financial losses to the town if an Act were obtained to do away with proctorial authority. The newspaper, read mainly by those siding with the university in any matter, underlined the 'financial contribution an additional three thousand and five hundred inhabitants made to the town's population', albeit for only 'twenty-four weeks a year'. Each student, the newspaper pointed out, spent approximately £200 a year in the town. Parents would hesitate in sending their sons to Cambridge if there were not proper measures for maintaining moral authority, the paper warned.

The hero of the hour at the meeting turned out to be Councillor George Bullock who, it was acknowledged a few months later in

his obituary, 'had worked his whole time to serve his fellow townsmen', a possible reason for his untimely death aged only 56. He was a man greatly respected for his fair-mindedness in his role on the Board of Guardians at the workhouse in Mill Road, Cambridge, and his steadfastness in supporting the ratepayers of Cambridge. This esteemed townsman treated the chamber to a short history of town and gown relations.

“A warning came also in the pages of the Cambridge Chronicle”

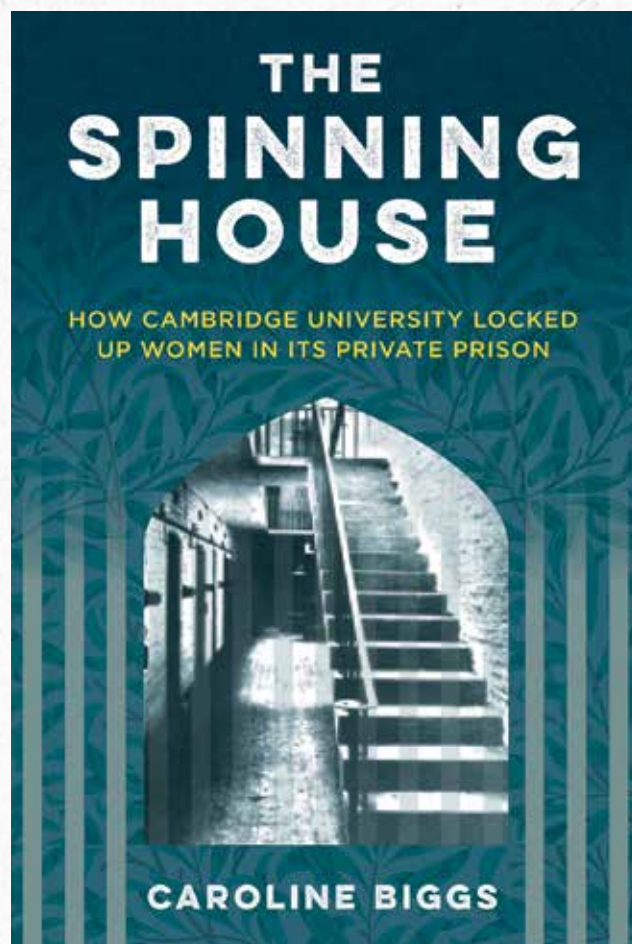
The Spinning House

by Caroline Biggs

The History Press • HB • £20.00

ISBN 9781803995700

Published 7th March



Path Through Pain

In this moving new book, bestselling writer Clare Mackintosh draws on her own experiences of losing her son and her father, to offer 18 short assurances on grief that are full of compassion. We interviewed her to discover how she wrote it.



You write in the book how you posted about grief online in 2020, and in had a big response. Is this what drew you to write the book?

I don't think I would ever have written *I Promise it Won't Always Hurt Like This*, had it not been for the thread on X (then Twitter). I've touched on grief in several of my novels, but although I've talked openly in interviews about the death of my son, I've never taken such a personal approach to my writing. I tweeted because I realised how far I'd come since my son died, and I wanted to offer hope for anyone still in the depths of grief. The thread went viral, and thousands of people sent me private messages, sharing their own stories of hope and loss. I tried to reply to everyone, but it wasn't possible, so I wrote a book.

Did the pandemic change and lockdown change your perception of grief?

I think lockdown offered an opportunity to cut out some of the outside noise and take a look at ourselves. For some people, this resulted in moving away from cities, or leaving jobs or relationships. I felt incredibly lucky to be in a secure position throughout the pandemic; I wasn't vulnerable, I could continue working, I had a big garden and green space all around us. Despite all this, I felt desperately sad for much of the pandemic. I became caught up in the collective grief we were all feeling for our freedom and for the lives lost to Covid. We were all living through the same time, yet experiencing it in so many different ways. It made me realise that although loss is universal, grief itself is unique.

How did you come up with the eighteen promises that form the backbone of the book?

There was no plan for a specific number of promises when I started writing, but it

turned out I had a lot to say about grief and the way we navigate it. As the number of promises grew, I realised the book would publish 18 years after my son died, and that felt a very fitting number to finish on. In fact, the first and last promises are identical – *I promise it won't always hurt like this* – which makes it technically 17 promises, but it's such an important one, I wanted it both as title and bookends.

“Truly the best and most insightful book about grief I have ever read”

Joanna Cannon

Death and grief are subjects which are still very much taboo in our society today. Why do you think this is, and what can we do to change it?

I've found it very interesting to speak to my overseas publishers about this book, as countries have such varied approaches to grief. I think British people have for many generations been conditioned to have a 'stiff upper lip', and as a result we see grieving as a weakness – something to be hidden away and 'got over' as quickly and privately as possible. It's a terrible approach, but I think it's changing, largely as a result of the more open dialogue people are having about mental health in general. There's a tendency to protect children from grief, but having proactive, age-appropriate conversations with them can give them resilience they'll need later in life. There are some superb picture books on grief, for example, but they tend to only be bought after someone dies.

The book is partly a memoir of losing your son Alex, and your grief for him. Did you find writing it cathartic?

I always find writing cathartic, even if I'm not writing specifically

“A book dripping with a compassion”

Greg Wise

about an emotion I'm trying to process. The first draft of *I Promise...* was hard to write, but manageable, and when I finished, I felt lighter. Then my editor asked me to dig deeper, and that's where the real work happened. I had to write in small bursts, switching between projects so I didn't feel overwhelmed, and often writing in hotel rooms when I was travelling, where no-one could disturb me or question my tearstained face. When I finished, I felt wrung-out, but oddly complete, as though I had desperately needed to write this book, long before I realised it.

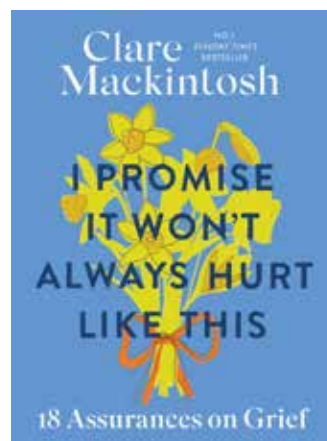
How different is writing memoir and non-fiction such as this book to writing fiction?

The differences were vast. Structurally, the approach was totally unlike my fiction, largely because I wanted to separate this book into specific promises, each relating to a 'symptom' of grief. I could have taken a more narrative approach, following a chronological timeline in the manner of a conventional memoir, but I wanted readers to be able to read chapters out of sequence. It means that each section had to have its own complete shape, as well as forming part of the overall work. Aside from the structural points, I found it strange to write about real people, when I'm used to creating characters from thin air. *I Promise...* is about grief and my own thoughts on it, it's not about my life as a whole, and this enabled me to strike the right balance when talking about my family and friends.

I was struck by your descriptions of grieving for your son, and how in affected you physically. Do you think this one aspect of grief people don't know much about?

I wasn't at all prepared for the physicality of grief; for the sensation of being crushed, of moving my limbs as though they no longer belonged to me. It was then, I think, that I began to see grief as an illness with myriad symptoms, some of which

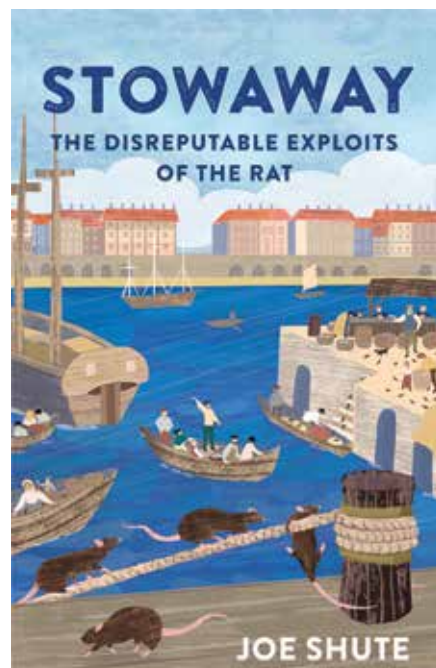
take longer than others to dissipate. Grief is so much more than sadness. Books like *I Promise it Won't Always Hurt Like This* can help to prompt conversations about grief, which leads to much greater understanding.



I Promise it Won't Always Hurt Like This by Clare Mackintosh
Sphere • HB • £18.99
ISBN 9780751584981
Published 7th March

Rat Pack

Stowaway
by Joe Shute
Bloomsbury Wildlife • HB • £18.99
ISBN 9781399402507
Published 11th April



In *Stowaway* Joe Shute examines the life of the rat, around the world, and in culture. Combining history, myth, science, travel writing and memoir, it's an eye-opening exploration of a unique animal. We interviewed the author to discover more.



What inspired you to write a book about rats – is it a subject that you've always been interested in?

I'm interested in animals that are maligned by humans. My previous book, *A Shadow Above*, was about ravens. Like rats, they are a scavenger species and they feature a lot in human folklore, and they are an animal we project a lot of stuff onto. I find that really interesting – a lot of things we blame rats for, as a species, are things that humans do. It's waste, it's dirt, it's disease, it's municipal urban decay. I've always been fascinated by rats, but I was very ignorant about their lives and how they live in cities, and I was quite scared of them, to be honest. There are not many animals that scare me, but rats are one of them! So I wanted to unpick my own feelings about them, as well. Culturally, the books I'd read, and what I had been told about rats, had made me feel this way, and I was interested to see whether that could change.

Did you always plan on it having a broad sweep?

Because rats are a species that have so successfully conquered the world, I wanted it to be a global book. One that's very rooted in Britain and British cities, but also one that reflects how people live with rats around the world. The international aspect of book I found really fascinating, for example going to Alberta in Canada and joining the rat patrols along the border. It was an incredible piece of history I had no idea about, that these patrols had been going on since the 1950s. We were in the Land Rover of the Alberta rat patrol, with blocks of meat on the back seat, and guns. They patrol this massive stretch of border, looking out for a single rat. But even the people in the patrol, who'd worked there for a decade, had seen only a couple of rats in their lifetime. And there were farmers in Alberta who has never seen a rat. It's amazing

how these very butch, masculine Canadian farmers would talk about their terror of rats, because they'd been assailed by this propaganda for years.

'Rat' is also a word for a traitor, someone who betrays you. Do you know where this meaning comes from?

I don't know where it originates from, but the idea of it goes all the way back to the bible, but there's a description of disgusting, crawling things. In western culture, at least, all the early depictions of rats are as an evil species. We apply human morals to animals, and that has invaded our culture, our literature and our language. But in the east, where rats originate, it's completely different. The early depictions of rats were as opportunists and explorers, they had favourable descriptions in Chinese, Japanese and Indian myth and folklore.

“We apply human morals to animals”

In the book, you start to care for pet rats. Did caring for them change your perception of rats?

It did. Sadly Molly and Ermintrude, the protagonists of the book, died. But we currently have two, Aggie and Rita. They feature briefly in the book, they were given us free, by a breeder, at a rat show. There's an amazing society of rat breeders around Britain. Again, I had no idea they existed, but they are a very welcoming community. It completely changed my perception of rats, and it was interesting to see the duality of them. Being out and seeing wild rats in urban locations, talking to people about how they feel about rats and exploring the myths that surround them, and then seeing these beautiful, soft, playful creatures living in our house, how different they really are. They're incredibly sweet, fantastic pets.

You write about how during the pandemic rats came out more to try and find food. Do you think that the lockdown changed the way we interact with the natural world?

Yes. Particularly in urban locations, where wildlife had been drowned out and sadly is

drowned out again. But during lockdown wildlife became so much more apparent – everyone remembers that April of 2020, the birdsong was incredible. Then there was the idea that, as humans retreated, nature advanced. I was sent with a photographer in the first few weeks of lockdown to do a road trip around the country. So we were driving down empty roads, and we saw deer grazing by the side of the A1. It made nature come closer to us and people much more aware. For rats, they've engineered their lives to adapt to human life, they've been our shadows for thousands of years. Suddenly, our routines were uprooted overnight, and it was the same for the rats.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

For this particular book, definitely Robert C. O'Brien's *Mrs Frisby & The Rats of Nimh*. In the book I try and find rats seeking to live away from humans. I found a brief glimpse of that on the Isle of Inchcolm in the Firth of Forth, there's a chapter where I write about the one of the last colonies of black rats, and see them living on a uninhabited island. Hilary Mantel is another influence, I love her brilliant book *Beyond Black*. There's a line in it where she writes about the old myth of never being more than six foot away from a rat, and she flips it on its head and says, 'I wonder how the rats feel about never being more than six feet away from a human'. That's the big effort I've made in this book, writing it from a rat's perspective as much as possible. What's it like for rats to be so linked to humans, and yet constantly running that gauntlet of death as humans try to kill them in every way, but managing to survive.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

They mean a great deal to me, I have a longstanding love of bookshops, particularly as a writer. I have gone on author tours and seen what hubs they can be for the community, and what forums for ideas. I see them as crucial as a pub or a café, and I think there should be one on every high street, they are absolutely vital.

Wild Relations

From the author of *Isaac and the Egg*, *Small Hours* is a brilliant new novel. After losing his job in the big city, Jack encounters a fox, finds himself back in the country village he grew up in, and tries to reconnect with his family. We interviewed the author Bobby Palmer to discover more.

There are many voices in the book – we see things from Jack’s point of view, we enter Gerry’s mind, we go back into Gerry and Hazel’s past and also see things from the point of view of the fox and other animals. How did you put these pieces together? I really like playing around with form and how something looks on the page. It’s really important to me, and with my first book *Isaac and the Egg*, the main character is a children’s illustrator so there’s a lot of bits that look like a children’s book. I couldn’t do that again, but I knew I wanted to do something inventive with the form. The book changed a lot as I wrote it, but what was always there were the sections in between the parts from the point of view of different animals. Each one is shaped differently to represent the animal. The way Gerry is written remains similar to the first time I wrote his mind. It’s a really joyful experience for an author when something works the first time. He has a condition, which isn’t named in the book, but is similar to Alzheimer’s, so for me it was a challenge of how you write a stream of consciousness which lives in the past and the present at the same time. It’s really fragmented on the page, but there’s a kind of beauty to it which was rewarding to explore.

In the novel, Jack meets a talking fox. You write in the afterword that you were inspired by your own encounter with a fox. Do you see the fox as a metaphor?

It happened during the first Covid lockdown. It was a strange time to live in London, in a city that was suddenly like a ghost town. I was on my allotted daily walk and there was no one around, when this injured fox stumbled out of the bushes in front of me, exactly as happens to Jack in the book. There were several hours of calling the RSPCA, and cornering the fox into a driveway, and eventually it got taken away. Then I moved out of the city at the end of that year, and I had an idea to write a book about the relationship we have with the city and country, with the natural world and the modern human world. About slowing down and appreciating the world around us. And it was at that point I thought what if you had this city boy who ended up getting lost in the woods? I wanted to try out the idea of talking animals in a book for grown-ups. I heard about an author who wanted to write about talking animals and their publisher told them that it would have to be a children’s book! It was around that time that I thought I had to write about that thing that happened with the fox. Those two ideas became one idea. The fox was the perfect metaphor to bridge the gap between the old-fashioned Beatrix Potter style England and the very fast-paced, exhausting modern world.

You separate the book into three sections – City, Country and Wild. Do you see them overlapping in any way?

Yes. It was important to me that the book would explore the wild of the city – the bats roosting under a railway bridge, and the hawks making nests on skyscrapers. Because there is no real gap between those worlds, it’s just humans who impose those boundaries. Animals don’t see any difference, and that’s why foxes hunt in the city in exactly the same

way they would in the woods. I structured the book in the three parts, and for me it was more an exploration of Jack’s mindset. He’s the city boy who ends up as the wild man, and I wanted you to travel through those places with him but also inside his mind as he loosens up and realises what’s important.

“A powerful story of losing ourselves and each other”

Joanna Glen

Do you see Jack’s relationship with his sister Charlotte as a reflection of their father Gerry’s relationship with his brother Johnny?

Every relationship is imbued with the context of all the other relationships. On a conscious level, I haven’t interrogated the relationship between Jack and Charlotte in the same way as the relationship between Gerry and Johnny because that relationship was almost a fable that Gerry would take forward about what that fast city life can do to someone, and it defined his relationship with his son. It also a fable for Jack, about the kind of person he wants to become, and the kind of person that his father is. Charlotte was a point-of-view character when I first wrote the book, but it ended up being too busy, with too many voices. For me, I liked the idea that Jack would leave the city behind, but that you would also have a character would want that life and would want something bigger than a life in the countryside. Neither one is better, both are just ways of living, and what’s more important is the way you interact with world around you.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

The authors who generally inspire me are probably not the ones who I took inspiration from for this book, because I immersed myself in a lot of nature writing. I wanted to inhabit the world of the woods, so I read a lot of Robert Macfarlane, Helen Macdonald and Dara McAnulty. I love authors who play around with experience of reading a book, such as Jennifer Egan. I read *Lanny* by Max Porter while I was writing this book, and that’s also got a rural English setting and plays around with form – it’s a book I really love. Then I really researched a lot about animals. There’s an author Lucy Jones who wrote *Foxes Unearthed* which was really helpful to me. She also wrote another book called *Losing Eden* which is about how modern humankind has lost touch with the natural world, and how it affects our mental health. I definitely recommend her.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

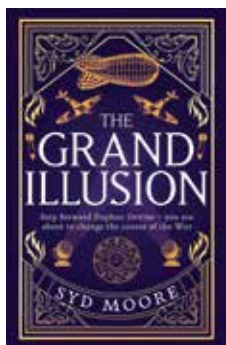
Independent bookshops are the lifeblood of being an author and of the entire book world, really. My answer would probably have been different before I was published but having been through the process of having a book out and having it received especially warmly by the independent bookshops. People will go into a bookshop, as they wouldn’t for many other kinds of shop and ask the bookseller what they should buy and read, and give their trust to them. An industry which is based on the love of the thing that it’s selling is really fantastic.

Small Hours

by Bobby Palmer
Headline Review
HB • £18.99
ISBN 9781035402656
Published 14th March

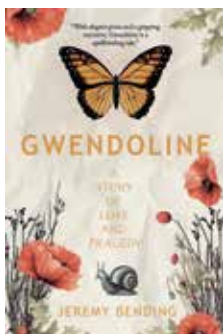


Fiction



The Grand Illusion
by Syd Moore
Maggie • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780861541607
Published 18th April

A historical novel set during the Second World War. June 1940. As the war rages, Daphne Devine remains in London, performing each night as assistant to stage magician Jonty Trevelyan, aka the Grand Mystique. Then the secret service call. For, aware of Hitler's belief in the occult, the war office has set up a hidden cohort to exploit this quirk in the enemy's chain of command. Daphne and Jonty soon find themselves deep inside the lower levels of Wormwood Scrubs prison...



Gwendoline
by Jeremy Bending
Cranthorpe Millner
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781803781891
Published 30th April

Based on a true story, this novel tells the tale of a young girl who struggles to follow her dreams in early 1900s England. Leaving home at twenty-one to enrol as a student nurse, Gwendoline quickly falls in love with Roy, but with the Second World War looming, will their love survive the chaos that ensues? The book explores the challenges facing women in the 1900s and the struggles confronted by individuals suffering from mental health issues.



A Touch of Chaos
by Scarlett St Clair
Bloom Books
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781728277691
Published 12th March

The final instalment in the bestselling *Hades X Persephone* saga. The gods are at war and the Titans have been released. Persephone, Goddess of Spring, never guessed that a chance encounter with Hades, God of the Underworld, would change her life forever. Now they are embroiled in a fight for humanity and, to end the chaos, Persephone must draw upon her darkness and embrace who she's become – goddess, wife, queen of the Underworld.



The Library Thief
by Kuchenga Shenje
Sphere • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781408726846
Published 9th April

A historical mystery from a debut author. 1896. After he brought her home from Jamaica as a baby, Florence's father had her hair hot-combed to make her look like the other girls. But as a young woman, Florence is not so easy to tame – and when she brings scandal to his door, the bookbinder throws her onto the streets of Manchester. Florence talks her way into the forbidding Rose Hall to restore its collection of rare books, but it is a place full of secrets.



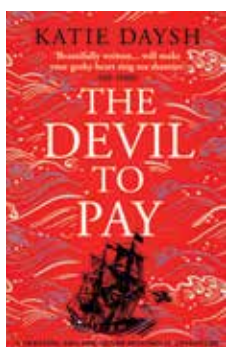
Fruit of the Dead
by Rachel Lyon
Scribner • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781398524996
Published 28th March

A contemporary reimagining of the myth of Persephone and Demeter set over the course of one summer on a lush private island, exploring who holds the power in a modern underworld. Camp counsellor Cory Ansel, eighteen and aimless, is no longer sure where home is when the father of one of her campers offers an alternative. The CEO of a Fortune 500 pharmaceutical company, Rolo Picazo is middle-aged, divorced, magnetic... and is intoxicated by Cory.



A Spartan's Sorrow
by Hannah Lynn
Sourcebooks
Landmark • PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781728291505
Published 2nd April

A story of feminist revenge from the award-winning author of *Athena's Child*. While the rest of Greece mourns for the war that has taken their husbands away, Clytemnestra fears the day it will bring Agamemnon back. When her husband willingly sacrifices their eldest daughter to appease the gods, Clytemnestra vows to do whatever it takes to protect her remaining children. But history turns strong women into monsters, and in saving her family she risks losing them altogether...



The Devil to Pay
by Katie Daysh
Canelo Adventure
HB • £18.99
ISBN 9781804365670
Published 4th April

1802. The French Revolutionary Wars are at an end. Lieutenant Arthur Courtney returns home to England where he expects to languish on half-pay. But within weeks, HMS *Loyal* goes missing en route to Malta. Its disappearance, during this tentative ceasefire, may be enough to ignite war between France and Britain once again... The second book in the *Nightingale & Courtney* series, following the success of *Leeward*.



Rivals In Love and War
by Dan O'Sullivan
Cranthorpe Millner
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781803781877
Published 26th March

A novel based on the interlinked stories of three famed Greek goddesses – Hera, Aphrodite and Athena – and their triumphs in both war and peace. One day, Hera, Queen of the Olympian gods, suggests to Aphrodite and Athena that they should each produce their own autobiography, since accounts by mortals never do them justice. The goddesses agree, thus creating a compendium of connected tales detailing their many experiences.



The Collapsing Wave
by Doug Johnstone
Orenda Books
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781916788053
Published 14th March

A sequel to the bestselling *The Space Between Us*. Six months on, teenager Lennox and grieving mother Heather are being held in New Broom, a makeshift US military base, the subject of experiments, alongside the Enceladons who have been captured by the authorities. Ava, who has given birth, is awaiting the jury verdict at her trial for the murder of her husband. When alien Sandy makes contact, Lennox and Heather make a plan to escape with Ava...



Courgettes Agrodolce with Sticky Onions

Simple Success

Bestselling and award-winning cookbook author Anna Jones returns with *Easy Wins*, a new collection of 125 delicious recipes which celebrate twelve key ingredients. It makes preparing the perfect dish a piece of cake!

“For when it’s 8pm, you’re starving and you want a Tuesday night triumph. An easy, honest, delicious win”

Yotam Ottolenghi



Cherry Chocolate Peanut Butter Sundae

Anna Jones is a cook, food writer and stylist who joined Jamie Oliver's Fifteen apprentice programme in 2004 and worked for him for seven years. She went on to write a column in *The Guardian* and her first cookbook *A Modern Way to Eat* was published in 2014. It soon became a bestseller, cementing her style of championing simple vegetarian ingredients. In 2018, she won the both the *Observer Food Monthly* Cookery Book of the Year, and the Guild of Food Writers' Cookery Book of the Year, for *The Modern Cook's Year*.

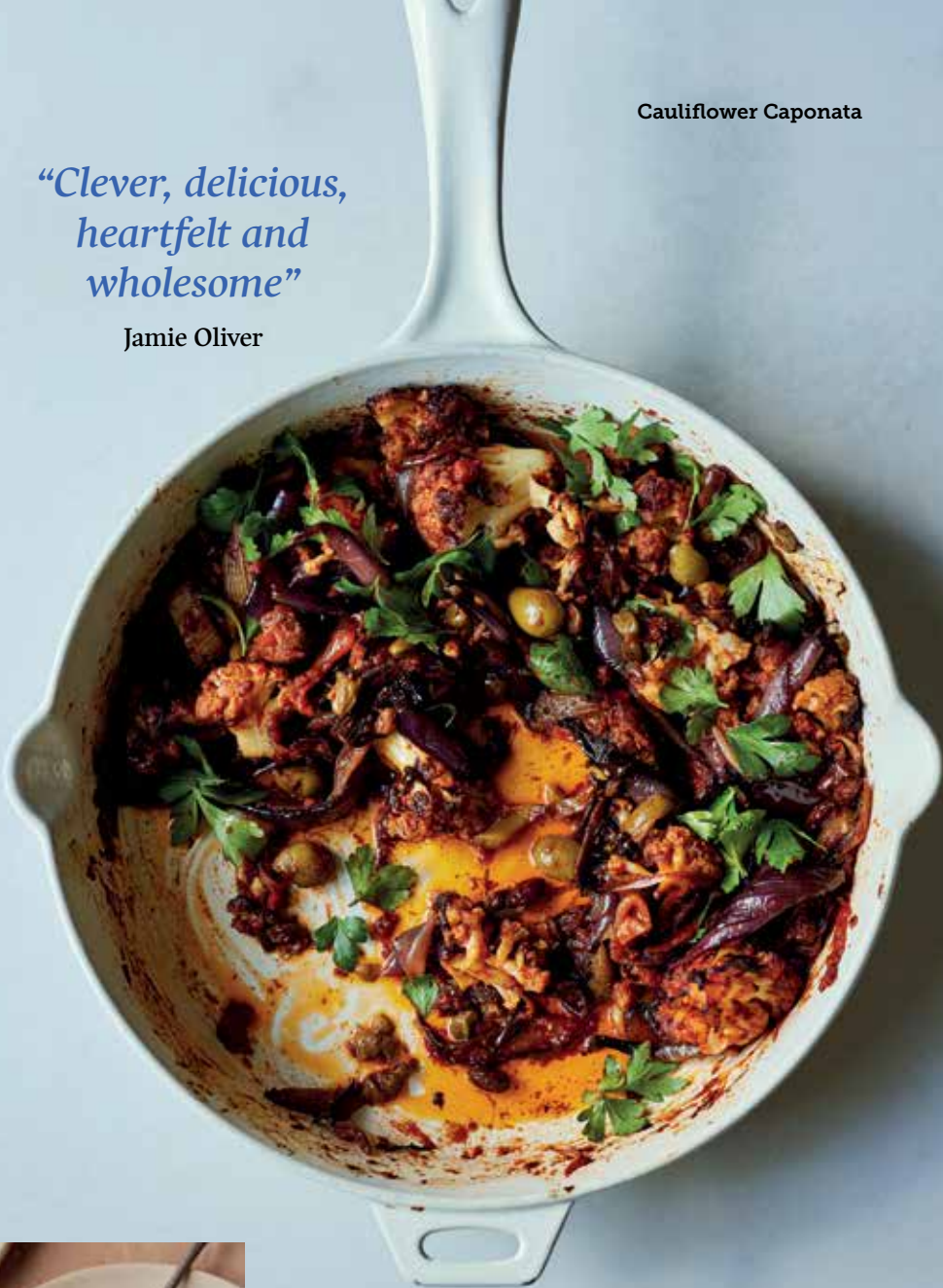
Easy Wins is all about those ingredients that we can't do without, but that we sometimes take for granted. The book is arranged into twelve chapters, each with recipes that centre around one element – lemons, olive oil, vinegar, mustard, tomatoes, capers, chilli, tahini, garlic, onions, miso and peanuts. There are recipes for salads, pasta, pizzas, chutneys, stews, traybakes and more, and also sweet treats such as cakes, ice cream, cookies and scones. As well as the recipes, Anna Jones gives us her golden rules for easy wins in the kitchen, and advice on planet friendly cooking, salt and seasoning, cooking flexibly, how to layer flavour and texture, and which herbs and spices to use.

"If you don't have an Anna Jones cookbook on your shelf, all I can ask is: why?"

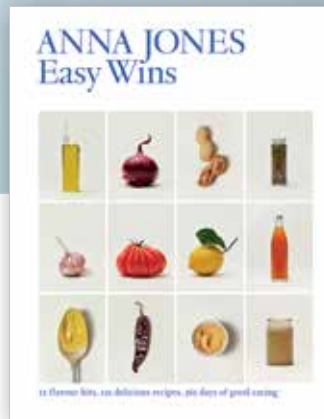
Independent

"Clever, delicious, heartfelt and wholesome"

Jamie Oliver



Lemon Curd Cake



Easy Wins
by Anna Jones
Fourth Estate • HB • £28.00
ISBN 9780008526658
Published 14th March

"Celebrates the perfect capsule pantry of 12 modest ingredients that can transform your weekly cooking"

Gurdeep Loyal

All photos © Matt Russell

“A rich, haunting account of lost lands and vanished futures.”

Professor David Farrier



“An evocative and essential guide to disappeared places and difficult futures.”

Will Wiles

Water Worlds

In *Sunken Lands*, Gareth E. Rees travels through flooded landscapes, from Pett Level in Hastings to New Orleans, and explores their history and mythology. What can these places teach us about our current experiences of climate change? We interviewed the author to discover his inspirations.

The book blends history, travel, memoir and myth. Did you set out to incorporate all these different elements, or did you find yourself adding them as you went along?

The blending of these elements is my style – this is my sixth book, and all of my books have done this. It is a style I started accidentally with my first book *Marshland* which was based on a blog back in 2011. Within that there was stuff about myself, there was stuff about the landscape and history, and there was fiction. There were all kinds of genres and I blended them together. Since then that’s been my mode of operation. Because I’m not an archaeologist and I’m not a historian, my books aren’t trying to be those things. They are about the experience of being in the landscape, but also the experience of picking up cultural signals, stories and mythology and how landscapes and the world around us have that kind of combination of the imagination, of rumour and myth and misdirection, and I try to bring those into my writing.

How did you decide which places to visit – did you start with the myths that begin each chapter?

I visited the places first. My methodology is to start with place to try not to over intellectualise or to decide before I go to somewhere what it is. I was a literature student back in the day and I guess I’m reading the landscape, and by reading the landscape I’m also reading the stories around it. I usually find the stories of the landscape

online or in books after the event. The book begins, after the introduction, with Pett Level which is my local neighbourhood, ten minutes from where I live. I moved down here about eleven years ago, and it’s a place that I wrote about in my second book, which was a fictional novel. That was the starting block, the inspirational place. From there I thought where else can I look? I did some research, and I thought about other types of sinking land like the fens, a place that is physically sinking. It’s a place that was flooded, and that flood created the fens. Flood isn’t an evil entity in the book, it’s also a creative entity and it’s also what makes a lot of places we know. After that, I wanted to go abroad, to expand it a bit because my books have always been British based and I was keen for me to broaden it out. I didn’t want to be in hypocritical in a book that’s very aware of climate change. So I thought: which places could I carefully select which would give me the most for just a couple of trips? I chose Baia the Roman party town, near Naples, because it was one place where I could dive down to see the ruins. And the second one was New Orleans, because not only do you have this flooded city, but you have the landscape of Louisiana which is the fastest sinking land mass in the world. Those were kind of pragmatic choices because I never had experienced those places before.

In the book, you often reference music, such as David Bowie and Hawkwind. Do you see music as a modern form of myth?

Yes! The book is about oral lore, and while I think books are great, and history and geography books are important, I think how we really transmit our cultural tales has traditionally been orally. It used to be through poetry and oral storytelling, and I believe it was also musically originally. There's some evidence that the earliest human beings sang. A lot of blues music came out of the floods of Mississippi. It's a way for cultures who didn't have the written word, the literacy, to pass this stuff on. Music is very important to me, I think the way music carries these stories takes us closer to how prehistoric people lived. It was there to protect the information and make sure that it was passed on through generations. I'm also in a band, so I love music. I sing and play the guitar, and I have made an album to go with the book. It's my way of adding to oral folklore of these places.

Of the places you visit in the book, which resonated with you most?

It would have to be the final part of the book, when I go to Louisiana. You're seeing a place sinking in real time. People are abandoning their homes, and you see the wetlands around you disintegrating and you can see the dead trees sticking out of the water. To be there was like going back in time to how Pett Level would have looked like once. It was genuinely the last trip I did for the book, and it was raining, a biblical downpour. I'm quite an anxious person, especially about climate change. Sometimes you feel like you're insane, talking about something that's abstract and in the future. But when you stand there with the water rising around you, you feel like you're in it. While that might sound scary, partly why I wrote this book was to let people be less scared. I wanted to create a book that gave solace and looked at a longer view of things.

Often in the book you connect with the natural world. Do you think that our interest in the natural world and nature writing has intensified because of climate change and the pandemic?

Yes. I don't really agree with the concept of 'nature writing'. I don't believe it in, because I don't think that nature is a separate thing. That idea that we go off and write about a natural place, and then come back to a place that isn't natural. Everywhere is connected, and everything is the same thing. There's a dark ecological idea that everything, even the artificial is part of the world we live in, the biosphere is all completely connected. The idea of carbon offsetting, or the idea that we can contain nature in a nature reserve that you can go and visit, to me that's the wrong idea. There is no 'over there' where we can dump all of our stuff that's going to be safe.

Are there any other authors who inspire you in your writing?

I'm most inspired by science fiction and weird fiction. I don't read a lot of landscape writing. I see myself as a different kind of writer, a storyteller and a mythographer. I love Doris Lessing's books about Canopus, and *First & Last Men* by Olaf Stapledon, which takes place over billions of years of time. Also Cixin Liu's *The Three Body Problem* and John Harrison's novels. I like

novels which expand out over huge time scales and see humanity and our place in the world in slightly different ways. Those are the things that inspire me, and I try to take those feelings and ideas and put them into my writing about now and place. Although it's a non-fiction book, I hope with *Sunken Lands* people feel that I'm expanding their idea of the world, time and space.

“A beguiling exploration of lost worlds beneath the sea”

Merlin Coverley

Do you approach writing fiction and non-fiction differently?

They're exactly the same to me. My book of short stories came out last year, *Terminal Zones*. Most of the stories in that are things I wrote while writing *Sunken Lands*. My first book *Marshland* included both fiction and non-fiction. My second book *The Stone Tide* was supposed to be non-fiction, but I ended up writing some fictional stuff about history, and also putting some writing about my own life story into it. I've always combined fiction and non-fiction, but my old publishers told me to start separating them. But it's the same methodology – I go to places and walk through them, and that's where I make the connections. My stories are often about car parks, cliffs and the coast, all the things that I write about in my non-fiction work.

Are you still anxious about the future, or do you think there are reasons to be hopeful about it?

I'm hopeful that the world will go on, but whether it's a world with humans in it, I'm not so hopeful. My feeling is this algorithm of human expansion can't go on, because eventually it will heat up the earth and that will be it, ecosystems will collapse. But something else will come after it, of course. What I wanted to get across in the book is an understanding of that idea, and working out a way of accepting it. Try to live a vibrant, fruitful life and do the best you can. When you see what's going on in the Middle East you just despair. Because we need to come together to come up with a plan – tearing each other to pieces is the worst thing. That's when I get really despairing, even more so that with the state of the environment. We have a capacity, as a global civilisation, to get together

and sort things out. I don't think that there is necessarily a solution but I think that there are ways of organising our society and our culture that are less invasive of the environment. We need to be more accepting of floods, and not build on flood plains. And create homes that allow nature to grow in them. We could be doing this right now. Hopefully, with this book, if anyone feels the same they'll get a better, spiritual sense of something greater than humanity evolving and moving. Nature is an intelligent entity itself, and that's what I put my faith in.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

They're really, really important. All of my book launches have been at independent bookshops. In Hastings we have a bookshop called Printed Matter which is the most supportive place ever. They stock my books, tell their customers about me and run events. Although it's only a small amount of people that go to them, for me they are crucial. In my old days in London, Burley Fisher and the Hackney Bookshop were important to me.

Sunken Lands
by Gareth E. Rees
Elliot & Thompson • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781783967698
Published 21st March



Ecological Matters

In this book, conservationist Hugh Warwick explores the very complicated nature of culling invasive species to protect other species, and has his own preconceptions challenged along the way. We interviewed him to discover more.



What drew you to write about the very complex world of culling animals?

I've been working in this area for decades. The very first hedgehog work I did was about this problem, the introduction of hedgehogs on an island up in Orkney, and their impact on arctic terns. Then I worked on the Outer Hebrides story and I did the research that stopped the cull of hedgehogs in the Uists. At that time, New Zealand was beginning to kill hedgehogs for the very same reason. I met with one of the organisers, and I was convinced that they shouldn't be killing them, until he explained why they were killing them. It became obvious that there wasn't an alternative. Then I was left with this deeply uncomfortable situation of having my knowledge that it was wrong to do this confounded by evidence. That's the essence of science, when evidence creeps up on you and makes you change your mind. So that was the start of it, and these stories often pop up – do we kill grey squirrels to save red squirrels? Do we kill the mink to save water voles? The reason for writing the book is that I feel that ecology is never treated with the seriousness that it should be, unlike economy. There's an old saying – the economy of a country is only a small subset of a healthy ecosystem. Without the ecosystem, there is no economy. But it's treated as if it's the other way round. I want the book to fascinate people, to excite people and teach people to take the subject seriously.

Why do you think people have different attitudes to the culling of different animals?

One of the people I interviewed is Alick Simmons, the deputy head vet at DEFRA for many years. He gave this example about rats

which was so evident as he said it that I felt ridiculous that I'd never thought of it before. You take three imaginary rats. You've got a rat which is your pet, who you will nurture, feed and look after. Then there's the rat in a laboratory. You might be mortified by the idea of people carrying out experiments on animals – I find it deeply, deeply unsettling. If the rules are followed properly, that rat is cared for very well, then euthanised. Named individuals will be responsible for it, and in fact if they break the law and are caught, they will suffer a great penalty. Then there's the wild rat who is eating your bird food, and which you want to get rid of – you can treat this in any way you want. Each one of these rats experiences exactly the same levels of fear, pain, delight, happiness, and suffering. They're the same species but because we give them a different name we feel we can treat them differently.

"Fascinating, intelligent and indispensable"

George Monbiot

I recognise that the ringed-necked parakeets are having a bit of an impact on the ability of some of our smaller birds to thrive in central London. But they're so gorgeous! It's socially unacceptable now to want to remove them. But rats on South Georgia Island in the Atlantic, I can completely understand why people would kill them.

With regard to grey and red squirrels, do you think this is a losing battle, trying to control the population of grey squirrels?

There are two different approaches to squirrels. There are bunch of people in Northumberland whose attitude is to kill as many grey squirrels as possible – but they are talking about control. In the book I also met Craig Shuttleworth, who was talking about the eradication of grey squirrels from the island of Anglesey. He did it, and there are red squirrels on Anglesey which wouldn't be there if it hadn't been for his work. One of

the things which I picked up on as I wrote the book is that if you're going to do these things for control, you'll be doing them forever, and this isn't a morally sustainable position. If you have an island, or an isolated area which is cut off, and you eradicate the grey squirrels from there, then I can see the legitimacy of doing that. But people connect and feed grey squirrels, and those moments of contact with a wild animal are utterly crucial, and we lose them at our peril.

Do you think that, with climate change and migration, we will see more species appearing in places where they weren't before?

Inevitably. That's why it's absolutely crucial that we don't dip our appreciation of the country in aspic and say 'this is what it should be like'. The Lake District is described as a World Heritage Site which makes it hard to change the way it's managed. George Monbiot coined the phrase 'a sheep-wrecked landscape'. It used to be a tree landscape, but the sheep have stopped the tree growth. We need to accept that things are going to change, and I talk in the book about where to draw the line. The ecosystem is not static, it's constantly moving and changing. So much of what we have in this country has moved to this country – society, people, nature. We are a fantastic, cosmopolitan bundle of loveliness, and that gives great variety. We need to diversify as monocultures are prone to collapse. The issue is whether you've got moments of ingress of species which are having a catastrophic impact on a resident species, and whether that is something you do anything about, ecologically or socially. If you don't meet these needs that you simply won't succeed, because all you'll do is end up killing animals and not solving the problem.

What do you think about the future – do you think people will have a more enlightened view on culling?

I hope this book will feed into a bigger debate. I would feel I'd have failed if I hadn't tried. Here's what I think we should do. We should treat ecology more seriously. We should enter into debates knowing that we are all prejudiced. And we should look at other bubbles and realise that they 'know' that they're right in the same way that we 'know' that we're right. Because so much of what we know is going to be proved wrong. We knew that atoms were the smallest

particle, and that the sun goes around the earth, and we knew there were no black swans – until evidence presented a contrary view. The problem is that you still have idiots who think that the earth is flat! I like to think that book is reasonable and honest. My frailties are obvious all the way through the book, but I hope when people read it they also accept their limitations and their frailties, and the fact that they may be wrong.



Cull of the Wild

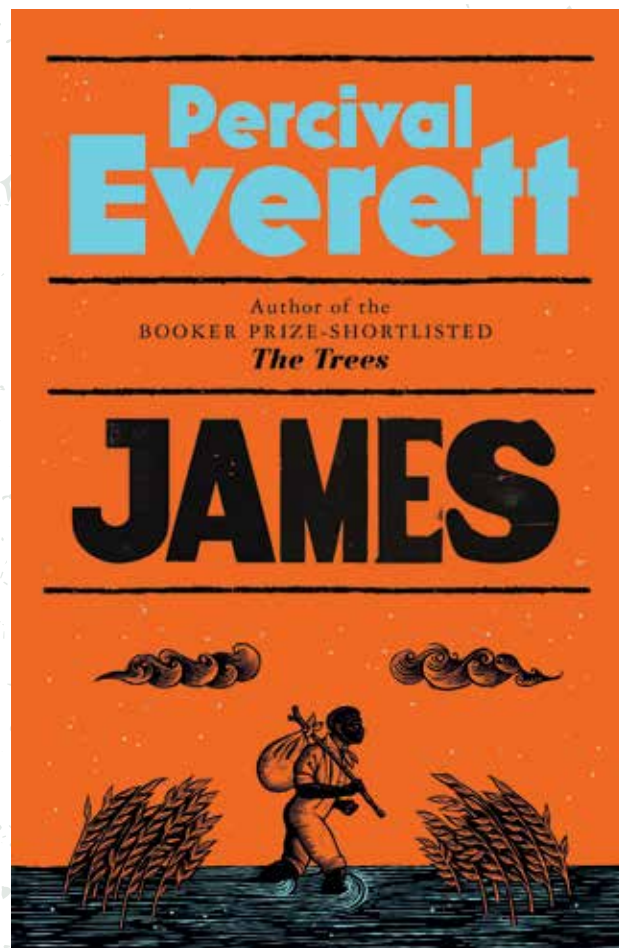
by Hugh Warwick
Bloomsbury Wildlife
HB • £18.99
ISBN 9781399403740
Published 28th March

Speaking Out

Percival Everett's powerful new novel, *James*, reimagines Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by telling it from the point of view of Jim, who re-emerges to reclaim his voice as James. Publisher Maria Rejt tells us more, and shares a short extract.

James
by Percival Everett
Mantle • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781035031238
Published 11th April

Look out for a special edition, with signed endpapers and sprayed edges, available exclusively from independent bookshops!



I am delighted to be introducing you to *James* – the brilliant new novel by Percival Everett, the Booker Prize-Shortlisted author of *The Trees* – by sharing a short excerpt from the novel. You may already have read his most recently published novel, *Dr No*, and are one of the many readers who has recommended *The Trees* to friends. And I hope you will agree that *James* will cement Percival Everett's reputation as one of the most extraordinary and exciting literary voices of our time...

James is a brilliant, intensely moving and – at times – ferociously funny reimagining of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, told from the perspective of the enslaved Jim. His story is heartbreaking, but so very courageous. His voice is humble and steadfast, dignified and poignant. From the shadows of Huck Finn's mischievous spirit, Jim emerges to reclaim his life, defying the conventions that have consigned him to the margins. And his world is one we never forget once we have experienced it through Percival Everett's electrifying prose...

In this extract, Jim finds paper and ink and begins to write his own story:

Though weak, I helped Huck get the canoe from the cave to the river. The flood had receded considerably, but it was clear that the mainland had acquired a new contour. Because of this change it was difficult for us to know just where Huck should put ashore. We made a guess, but as Huck paddled out, it was clear that his hitting anywhere near our selected spot was hardly likely. I watched him for only a short time before I dragged myself back to the cave and the fire.

For the first time in my life, I had paper and ink. I was beside myself. I found a straight stick and shaved it to a point and scratched a groove on one side. I put the paper on my lap, dipped my stick into the ink and wrote the alphabet. I printed letters as I had seen them in books, slowly, clumsily. Then I wrote my first words. I wanted to be certain that they were mine and not some I had read from a book in the judge's library. I wrote:

I am called Jim. I have yet to choose a name.

In the religious preachings of my white captors I am a victim of the Curse of Ham. The white so-called masters cannot embrace their cruelty and greed, but must look to that lying Dominican friar for religious justification. But I will not let this condition define me. I will not let myself, my mind, drown in fear and outrage. I will be outraged as a matter of course. But my interest is in how

these marks that I am scratching on this page can mean anything at all. If they can have meaning, then life can have meaning, then I can have meaning.'

"James is funny and horrifying, brilliant and riveting. In telling the story of Jim instead of Huckleberry Finn, Percival Everett delivers a powerful, necessary corrective to both literature and history. I found myself cheering both the writer and his hero. Who should read this book? Every single person in the country."

Ann Patchett

"Percival Everett is a giant of American letters, and James is a canon-shatteringly great book. Unforgiving and compassionate, beautiful and brutal, a tragedy and a farce, this brilliant novel rewrites literary history to let us hear the voices it has long suppressed"

Hernan Diaz

Non-Fiction



The Camping Bible
by Jen & Sim Benson
Conway • PB • £20.00
ISBN 9781844866281
Published 14th March

A complete reference for newcomers and lifelong campers alike. Discover new adventures and clever hacks for Proper Camping, sleeping close to the earth in a shelter of stretched fabric held taut by pegs and guy lines, surrounded by the sounds of nature. Offering an escape from the stresses of everyday life, the art of camping lies in living simply, well. It's about paring back our busy, hyperconnected modern lives and embracing the many joys of living more slowly.



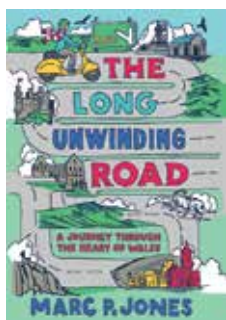
Tir: The Story of Welsh Landscape
by Carwyn Graves
Calon Books
HB • £18.99
ISBN 9781915279668
Published 21st March

In *Tir* – the Welsh word for 'land' – writer and ecologist Carwyn Graves takes us on a tour of seven key elements of the Welsh landscape, such as the *ffridd*, or mountain pasture, and the *rhos*, or wild moorland. By diving deep into the history and ecology of each of these landscapes, we discover that Wales is at base just as much a human cultural creation as a natural phenomenon: its raw materials evolved alongside the humans that have lived here since the ice receded.



British Wildlife Photography Awards 12
by Will Nicholls
Bird Eye Books
HB • £30.00
ISBN 9781802586206
Published 12th March

Celebrating the twelfth British Wildlife Photography Awards, this book features 150 winning and shortlisted images from the thousands of submitted entries. Each photo is accompanied by technical information and the photographer's personal note on subject and composition. The categories include animal behaviour, animal portraits, botanical Britain, black & white, British seasons, coast & marine and more.



The Long Unwinding Road
by Marc P. Jones
Calon Books
HB • £18.99
ISBN 9781915279583
Published 11th April

If you want to see the whole of Wales, from cosmopolitan Cardiff in the south to the historic Victorian resorts of the north, there's one road that will take you all the way: the A470. In the company of Gwendoline, his trusty but ancient scooter, Marc P. Jones follows this long unwinding road on a quest to discover what makes his homeland tick. Taking in the splendour, beauty and history of the communities he travels through, he explores what unites and divides the different regions.



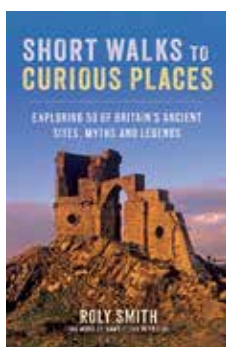
In All Weathers
by Matt Gaw
Elliott & Thompson
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781783967735
Published 28th March

In this book, Matt Gaw embarks on a series of walks across Britain – through rain, fog, wind, ice and snow – to look again at our most widely accessed experience of the natural world, exploring where our weather comes from, the ways it is changing, and how we can embrace it as a positive presence in our lives. It's time to throw open the doors, window and soul to the inspiring wildness of weather, from the howling winds of Skye to the fen-sucked fogs of East Anglia.



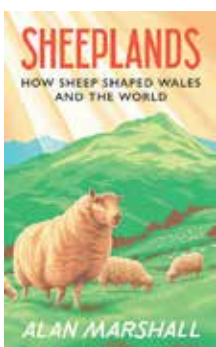
Kokoro
by Beth Kempton
Piatkus • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780349425580
Published 4th April

In this book, join Japanologist Beth Kempton on a pilgrimage through rural Japan in search of answers to some of life's biggest questions: *How do we find calm in the chaos and beauty in the darkness? How do we let go of the past and stop worrying about the future? What can an awareness of impermanence teach us about living well?* It all begins with the *kokoro*, a profound Japanese term which represents the intelligent heart, the feeling mind and the embodied spirit of every human being.



Short Walks to Curious Places
by Roly Smith
Conway • PB • £20.00
ISBN 9781844866373
Published 28th March

Embark on an extraordinary journey through the British countryside, leading to mysterious sites, ancient wonders and legendary landscapes and uncovering 50 of the most intriguing walks in Britain. With each walk ranging from two to eight miles in length and featuring beautiful photography, helpful directions and useful information, this book guarantees captivating experiences for walkers of all abilities, whether you're a casual stroller or seasoned hiker.



Sheeplands
by Alan Marshall
Calon Books
HB • £18.99
ISBN 9781915279408
Published 25th April

From Argentina to Australia and from Mesopotamia to Mongolia, just about every country with hills and meadows has adopted and then developed sheep farming as a way of living. And in Wales in particular, sheep played a central role in shaping landscape and culture. This book outlines the journeys taken by some of these sheep as they voyaged across the world, both by themselves and with human shepherds, from the earliest human settlements to the present day.



Wise Words From King Charles III
Edited by Karen Dolby
Michael O'Mara
HB • £9.99
ISBN 9781789296235
Published 25th April

This book features the very best of the King's wisdom and humour, covering a huge range of topics that have been close to his heart. Lighthearted and revelatory, this is a wonderful celebration of royal wit and a fascinating glimpse into the life of our new monarch. It focuses on the wisdom the King has acquired during his long apprenticeship, told through the wise – and sometimes not so wise – words of the man himself.



Photo © Charlotte Graham

An Inventive Mystery

Set in a small community on a Greek island, many years after a deadly fog killed off most of humanity, *The Last Murder at the End of the World* is an intricate and original murder mystery from the author of *The Seven Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle*. We interviewed Stuart Turton to discover his inspirations.

***The Last Murder at the End of the World* is part classic crime, set in an isolated community, and part science fiction, set in a post-apocalyptic world. Would you call it a mystery or a SF novel?**

It's a crime novel. I think the acid test is to imagine taking away one genre or another, and working out whether the novel would still work. For *Last Murder*, if you took away the crime part of the book you'd be left with a cool setting, and some interesting characters but not much else. If you took

away the SF, you'd still have a fully functioning murder mystery. If you're writing cross-genre getting that balance right is always the most difficult part, and it's often the part I find most difficult to get right.

The book is narrated by Abi, who can enter the minds of all the characters on the island. Do you see Abi a sentient version of the omniscient narrator?

Definitely. Every book I write is an attempt to present the reader with something that feels familiar, but then subvert their expectations. I want to turn their assumptions into red herrings. Abi's an omniscient narrator, but she's not impartial. She's not just telling this story,

hoping readers enjoy it. There's a reason she's doling out the information she is, just as there's a reason she tells the characters in the book the things she does. She doesn't lie, but she's never telling everybody everything. She's probably going to be the most reliable unreliable narrator I ever create. That's such a fun thing to play with.

"I loved it"

C.J. Tudor

Did you plan the book out in advance? What came first – the idea of the island and the end of the world, or the murder?

I planned everything out before I wrote a word of the book, otherwise I tend to get dragged around by every new idea that occurs to me. The genesis of the idea was to invert the traditional trope of murder mysteries, whereby all your suspects have secrets that the investigator has to dig out. I liked the idea of creating a cast of characters who are all completely innocent. Something happened to spur the crime in the book, but these aren't murky people hiding the truth. They're genuinely good people – one of whom may have snapped. This is a book about what the innocent can be driven to do.

Why did you set the novel on a Greek island? Are there reflections of Greek mythology in the story?

I always knew I wanted this novel to be set on an island, because I wanted to limit

the movements of the characters, but still have room for them to roam around and discover things. It became a Greek island, because I grew up loving Greek mythology, especially the stuff to do with the afterlife. The idea of a boatman ferrying people across water from life to death appealed to me, especially in a novel about refugees fleeing the end of the world. Those sorts of echoes occur all the way through, but a lot of them aren't intentional. The stuff I love always seems to worm its way into my work, whether I intend for that to happen or not.

"Utterly mind-blowing"

Will Dean

At the heart of the story is an exploration of human nature. Do you think it can ever be controlled, as Niema tries to do?

I don't think so, but that doesn't mean somebody isn't going to try. I'm not sure there's much point to any of this if we're being controlled, but then I'm not sure there'll be an 'any of this' if some measure of control isn't exerted. Something needs to come along and quell our appetites, and put an end to our excesses because collectively, as a species, it doesn't look like we can do it for ourselves.

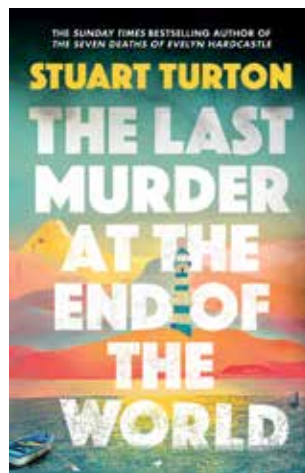
Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

Christie, Chandler, Arundhati Roy and Kafka have probably steered me the most, but there's lot of Wilkie Collins in there too, not to mention Margaret Atwood and Shirley Jackson. Inspiration is this never ending thing. Every book I read has a line or paragraph, or character, that sparks my own imagination or makes me want to do this better. It's the wonderful part of this profession.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

They mean I have a career. I can't emphasise enough how important the support of independent bookshops and sellers has been. They're the reason my books sell. If booksellers aren't recommending them, they sit on shelves gathering dust. Every book needs an advocate. It needs

somebody to shout about it, and booksellers carry on doing that long after me and my publishers have grown tired and given up. That passion for books is why this industry thrives. They're remarkable. I owe them everything.



The Last Murder at the End of the World

by Stuart Turton
Raven Books • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781526634955
Published 28th March

The Killer Within

Sharp Scratch
by Martine Bailey
Allison & Busby
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780749030841
Out Now

Sharp Scratch by Martine Bailey is a chilling thriller about a killer working within the NHS. It is the first in a new crime series which draws on the author's own experience conducting psychometric testing.



It's 1983, and Lorraine Quick is a single mum who works as Personnel Officer at Salford's grim Memorial Hospital. It's not a job she relishes, and now a new General Manager position is being introduced. Lorraine has recently had training in psychometric testing, and will be pivotal in selecting the successful candidate. But then something terrible happens – a substitution of a flu vaccine for a lethal dose of anaesthetic. It's clear that a killer is working at the hospital. Can Lorraine's personality tests lead her to the culprit?

Sharp Scratch was inspired by Martine Bailey's career working in psychometric testing in the NHS, which included assessing staff for high-security hospitals. She was once asked by a Chief Nurse if a multiple murderer such as Beverley Allitt or Lucy Letby could have been identified as dangerous by a psychometric testing, and this gave her the idea for the novel. It takes us behind the scenes of a northern hospital, where clashes between politics and personalities can be fatal.

In this extract, Detective Sergeant Diaz questions Lorraine:

'These records.' He waved his open hand up to the stacks of files. 'There must be lots of secrets down here.'

She didn't even look up. 'Sorry, those files are confidential.'

'There's nothing confidential now.'

She looked up sharply. 'I meant there are strict rules.'

If there was one thing he bloody well

hated, it was being told what he couldn't do. 'There are no rules in a murder case,' he said.

He followed her upstairs to the personnel office beneath the clock tower. She was putting on her coat and packing a beat-up old satchel. The room was crammed with steel filing cabinets, leaflets and rotary phone card systems.

'Have you got everyone's personnel files?'

She checked the clock again. 'No. They're at District HQ. The building will be locked now. Will the morning do? I can call in and fetch them.'

He asked himself if it did matter; if she might tamper with the files.

'And your own personnel file? Where's that?'

'With all the others at HQ. The director of personnel is probably still downstairs if you want to check with him.'

'Bring them in first thing. We'll have an incident room set up by then.'

While she gathered her keys, something on Lorraine's desk caught his attention. A large ring binder with 'The PX60 Test Manual' emblazoned across it. It was a psychological testing manual.

"Taut, twisty and addictive"

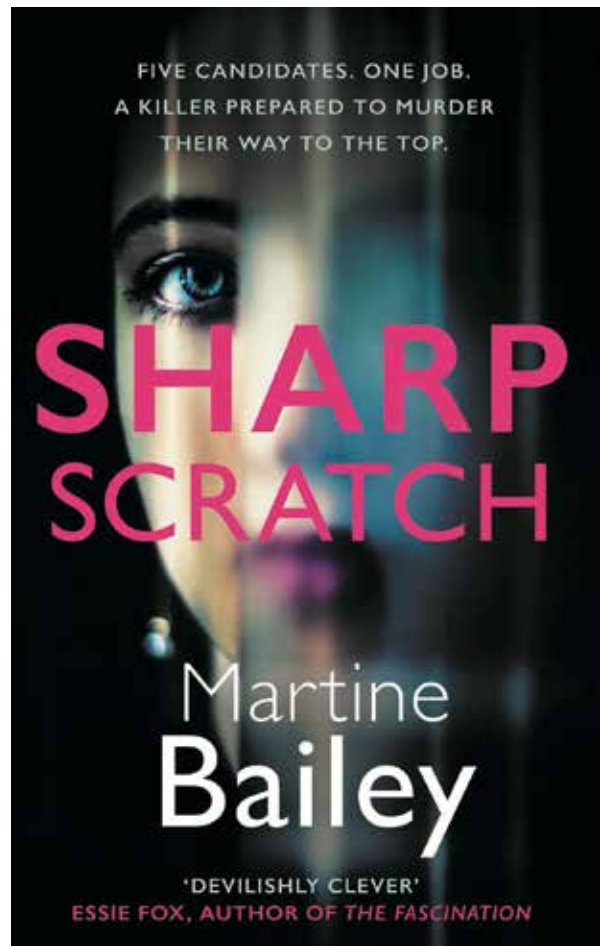
Louisa Treger

'This yours?'

'Yeah, I'm just back from the training course in Oxford.'

'Oxford,' he echoed, reluctantly impressed.

He began flicking over the pages. A rare burst of excitement made him suddenly talkative. 'I love this stuff. There are some



amazing ideas coming out from America, from the FBI. It's nothing like the plod work over here. They're testing murderers. Trying to get under their skin.'

She stepped around the desk to join him.

'And what is under their skin?'

'See this question?' he said. He read aloud. "I am brought near to tears by other people's sad circumstances. A. Often. B. Occasionally. C. Never." What would you say of yourself, Lorraine?'

She shrugged and said, 'You guess. "I'm guessing you don't cry too often, but as I've just witnessed – you do weep for a child who's lost his mother. The implication here is that you're tender-minded. Sensitive. Maybe more insecure than you think. Let's imagine that tenderness entirely wiped out. No tears. No pity for a motherless child. A soul that's cold and cruel and empty.'

She was listening to him now, her lips just parted, so he carried on. 'The Yanks use these to make what's called a criminal profile. Strange personalities, nothing like your common or garden criminal. From the outside they look to be living a normal life. But it's a mask, disguising a personality called a psychopath.' Reflexively, he touched the silver crucifix at his neck.

He found she was watching him, reappraising him perhaps.

'That's what we could have here in Rose's killer,' he added.

It had the desired effect. Lorraine stepped very close to him, suddenly tuned into his message. 'A psychopath? Here at the Memorial?'

Life's Rich Pageant

Mr and Mrs American Pie

by Juliet McDaniel
Inkshares • PB • £13.99
ISBN 9781942645863
Published 14th March

Mr and Mrs American Pie is a bittersweet novel set in 1969 and 1970, which is streaming on Apple TV in March as *Palm Royale*. When Maxine's husband asks for a divorce, she's exiled to Arizona. But she's determined to win the Mrs American Pie pageant...

November 1969. Richard Nixon has just been sworn in as the thirty-seventh President of the United States, and Neil Armstrong has recently become the first man to walk on the moon. Meanwhile, socialite Maxine lives a good life in Palm Springs, California, wife of the wealthy Douglas, who works for Western Airlines. And then, on Thanksgiving, her husband Douglas drops a bombshell – he wants a divorce, and he wants her to leave the home.

Maxine is sent to live in a condo in Scottsdale, Arizona, where she's to stay for at least three years. For someone who loves socialise, Scottsdale feels like the middle of nowhere. But then she meets local tavern owner Robert Horgarth, and falls in with her kid neighbour Chuck Bronski. Can she possibly win the Mrs American Pie pageant, awarded to the nation's best wife and mother? To do so, she'll have to build her own family. Soon to be seen as *Palm Royale*, an AppleTV+ series starring Laura Dern, Kristen Wiig, Ricky Martin, and Carol Burnett, *Mr and Mrs American Pie* is a funny story about finding friends and triumphing over adversity.

In this extract, Robert meets Maxine when she comes into his tavern:

'And that's why I don't like azaleas.' The blonde woman holds her whiskey sour up as if giving a toast down the last bit of it. After moving the lemon paring knife a safe distance from her, because to be frank, if she is this entertaining after only one, I can't wait until she's had a few.

Drink in hand, she's silent once more.

She walked in nearly an hour ago with a halfheartedly folded map in hand and dumped enough dimes into the jukebox to play Neil Diamond's 'Mr Bojangles' over and over as she hummed it quietly to herself. After play number three, I made a mental note to remove the record from the jukebox and replace it with absolutely anything else. By playing number six, I decided a mental note wasn't enough and found some paper to make myself an actual note which I pinned up behind the bar. I lost count of Mr Bojangles in his worn-out shoes somewhere around play number nine, but I did let out an audible reflexive sigh of relief when the bar fell silent as her dimes finally ran out. She hummed for a few more minutes while lazily gazing up at all the framed vintage maps of Arizona I have hanging on the walls.

She sat in a booth, picking the nut dish before I suggested she come keep me company at the bar. She ordered the sour and I asked how her day was going. Normally, I get a 'Fine thanks,' which means 'I'm here for the booze and not the small talk, bub.' Other times it's a 'I'll be a much better once I get a drink in me!' which is a good signal someone wants to discuss the weather or how their sports team is doing, or if I'm really unlucky, politics. But with this woman, she blurted out something about azaleas, and while I'm trying to even picture one in my head, she's off and running with her story.

"I love this story."

Laura Dern

I've heard just about everything in my life behind a bar, but the things she told me, well, I guess *shocking* is the only word that comes to mind? Shocking and sad. That's what I think to myself – and no one else will stop a good bartender keeps his judgement to himself. Customers can get booze just about anywhere in 1969 – even in Conservative-with-a-capital-C Arizona – and bad advice is in even greater abundance worldwide. This lady isn't different from anyone else. I mean yes I

guess she is different in that most ladies don't get naked with the same frequency she seems to. And they don't go all cuckoo on Thanksgiving dinner. What's that saying about everyone living lives of quiet desperation? This woman's desperation might be screaming from the rooftops, but the basic principle remains. Plus, people won't come back to a bar if the bartender gets fire and brimstone on them. This is why I keep my mouth shut, pour drinks, and listen.

Hers is a true story, I can tell. Bartenders learn quick when someone is full of S-H*-T, and this one isn't. Although, I can't figure her out much beyond that. She's in jeans – not quite Haight-Ashbury, but definitely like what the kids wear – and her nails and lipstick are the same shade of blaring red as her shoes and handbag. Her hair is a feat of engineering. I'm guessing she just had it done at that ritzy place around the corner (or at NASA, maybe?). It's tall and taut and yet also full and round, and a blond color you never see out in nature. I do sometimes see it on country-western album covers, and each time, I picture that blonde from The Birds and think of how if she had this hairstyle, the birds would get caught in it and not peck her to death.

'I'm Robert, by the way,' I finally say.

'I'm Maxine Hortence Sim –' She blanches. 'Force of habit. Merely Maxine Hortence now. He got to keep the last name.'

'Really?' I want to keep her talking. She's by far the most entertaining person I've met in a while.



Cutting In

Hacked is a practical guide to cybersecurity with tips and advice as well as a range of fascinating true stories. We interviewed the expert author Jessica Barker to discover more about cybercrime.



What inspired you to write the book *Hacked*, do you think that many individuals and organisations are more vulnerable to cybercrime than they realise?

People are more aware of cybercrime and cyber security than ever before – it is in the news on an almost daily basis and it features in the plot of so many TV shows, movies and books. But for many people and organisations, it does not seem 'real' until they are affected by it. In my cyber security work, I help people and organisations understand how cyber security is relevant to them. I felt inspired to do the same with *Hacked*, to bring cyber security to life for a wider audience and give people the practical steps they can take to protect themselves.

In the book you feature commentary from cybersecurity experts – how did you engage with these experts for the book?

Having worked in cyber security for over a decade, I am fortunate to have a great network of exceptional people in this field. One of the strengths of the cyber security community is the willingness among most people to share information: most people in cyber security are driven by a desire to make the world a safer place.

What is ethical hacking, and can it be used to prevent and combat malicious hacking?

Hackers find vulnerabilities in computer systems and programmes that they can exploit – ultimately to access information, money, or other systems. Criminal hackers do this illegally, for their own gain (mostly for financial gain, but it can also be for political purposes or even just kudos). Ethical

Hacked
by Jessica Barker
Kogan Page • PB • £14.99
ISBN 9781398613706
Published 3rd April



hackers use the same tools, techniques, and tradecraft as the criminals, but they are operating legally and with the consent of the organisation they are hacking. Ethical hackers spend half of their time breaking into systems and the other half writing reports to tell their clients how they were able to break in, so that the clients can fix the vulnerabilities and keep the criminals out!

How has cybercrime evolved over the years that you have been working in cyber security?

Cybercrime has become much bigger and more lucrative, largely driven by financially-motivated organised criminal gangs exploiting connected technology. People often think that hackers are all teenagers in hoodies, but most cybercrime is carried out by groups that operate like enterprises.

What is the biggest misconception you've come across about hacking and cybercrime?

The biggest misconception is that 'hackers would never want my data'. People tend to think that cyber criminals target individuals one by one, and so people don't regard themselves as a likely target. But we all have data that criminals find valuable and most cybercrime is not individually targeted – criminals usually cast a wide net and see how many people (or, rather, devices) they can catch. The second biggest misconception is that you can only work in cyber security if you are technical. While this field is deeply technical, it is also deeply human, as the stories in *Hacked* illustrate.

What can individuals and organizations do further protect themselves after they have been hacked?

My focus in cyber security has always been on empowering people. It can be an overwhelming and scary subject, and the stories I share in *Hacked* will definitely make some jaws drop. But an often-overlooked truth in cyber security is that we can all take steps which hugely reduce the risks of being scammed or attacked online. These foundational steps are:

1. Protecting devices: physically locking devices with strong passcodes, installing updates as soon as they are released to fix known vulnerabilities and wiping data from devices before we dispose of them.
2. Protecting online accounts: using long, complicated, and unique passwords for all accounts as well as enabling two-factor authentication.
3. Protecting communications: being alert to phishing over all communication channels and being especially attuned to the red flags of communications that are unexpected, make us feel something and ask us to do something.
4. Protecting information: being aware of the information we share and who we share it with, for example on social media, and making sure we back up data as well as disposing of it securely.
5. Protecting our circle: being aware of how cyber criminals abuse technology and practising secure behaviours helps keep our friends, families, neighbours and colleagues stay more secure, too; passing on stories and relevant advice can have a positive ripple effect on those around us.

What do you think the future holds for cybercrime and cybersecurity?

Hacked takes readers on a journey. We move from the early, more innocent days of cybercrime to breaking down current threats with the rise of 'cybercrime as a service', cryptocurrency crime and Artificial Intelligence. Criminals are already using deepfakes and other AI technology to make their scams more convincing – we can expect to see much more of this, even over the next year. The challenges we face are complicated and one thing we are assured of is that criminals will endlessly aim to evolve and evade detection and controls. However, we must not overlook the progress we have made – and continue to make – in the short history of cyber security. I'm optimistic that the future will also see us build on our progress, raise more awareness of how to stay safe online and keep findings ways for us all to enjoy the internet more securely.

After the Fall

From the award-winning author of *The Familiars* and *Mrs England*, *The Household* is an atmospheric historical novel set at Urania Cottage, a home for 'fallen' women, established by Charles Dickens and financed by millionairess Angela Burdett-Coutts.

It's 1847, and in a quiet house in the countryside outside London, the finishing touches are being made to welcome a group of young women, who all have one thing in common: they are 'fallen'. Offering refuge for prostitutes, petty thieves and the destitute, Urania Cottage is a second chance for them – but not all the fallen want to be saved.

Meanwhile, in Piccadilly Angela Burdett-Coutts, and one of the benefactors of Urania Cottage, makes a terrible discovery. Richard Dunn, a man who has stalked her for ten years, has been released from prison, and she knows it's only a matter of time before her nightmare resumes once more. As the women's worlds collide, they will all discover that freedom comes at a price. Based on real figures from history, *The Household* is a captivating novel exploring female empowerment and autonomy.

In this extract, Angela hears that her stalker, Richard Dunn, is to be released from prison and reflects on the past:

An hour later, in the bath, Angela washes herself unhappily for some of her most pleasant memories come flooding back. This year marks not only a decade since her inheritance – a gift that came with a curse. Shortly after that update Furnival's in her father forwarded two letters from a man named Richard Dunn to Angela, which declared his love so freely, her father wrongly assumed she had found a lover. Bemused and even a little flattered, Angela presumed they had been written by a madman and forgot all about it.

That autumn, Angela went with Mrs

Brown to take the waters at Harrogate. A day or so after they arrived, Angela found calling card in her hotel room, and she recognised the name instantly. She enquired with a Porter and was thoroughly chilled to learn that Dunn had booked the room opposite hers.

“This is a story richly realised and sympathetically imagined,”

Susan Stokes Chapman

It was then that the hellish game of cat and mouse began. A slim, tall, moderately successful barrister twenty or so years older than herself, Dunn was undeterred when Angela removed herself and her belongings from the Queen's Hotel and found rooms across town. Within an hour, another letter fluttered onto the door mat. She threw it on the fire and braved a walk through the mineral wells with Mrs Brown, but on the second circuit of the flowerbeds, Dunn appeared at her elbow, and for the rest of her stay, not a day passed in which he did not make himself known.

The man was not discouraged by her coldness or the harsh manner she showed him, and so, not wanting to worry her parents, she wrote to Edward Majoribanks, a senior partner at Coutts & Co. and a dear friend of her father's, who advised her to apply for protection from the local magistrate. A policeman, the dependable Ballard, was dispatched from London to the North Riding and, armed with the magistrate's warrant, arrested Dunn one cold, sunny morning in the street outside the house. Though it seemed a drastic step, she was relieved, for a part of her feared he would turn violent; there was something about his smooth, even-tempered exterior that deeply frightened her. She watched from an upper window as he cursed and swore at Ballard and, on seeing her, cried that she was a whore, shouting with such vitriol she was left trembling. The whole experience was so unpleasant that she did not stay in Yorkshire to see him fined.

But Dunn did not pay. Instead, he was sent to prison for a little over a month, during which time Angela returned to London and her parents.

She was twenty-three years old.

Of course, Dunn did not dissolve away, as Angela had hoped. Shut inside her rooms in Harrogate, uneasy and frustrated at the disruption he had caused in her otherwise smooth life, she only ever imagined it was temporary. She could never have dreamt what would follow: a decade of looking over her shoulder, of fear pricking her skin.

Dunn's furious cries returned to her whenever she throws his letters in the fire and watches them flair and curl. Parkinson has asked her to hand all correspondence to him, but she can barely stand to know that something Dunn has touched is in her house. Though left unopened, his letters call out to her with threat and malice, his words scored through the paper like scars.

The bath-water cools, and she forces her thoughts away from Dunn and instead thinks of the duke, who is at home in London. If Dunn is to be released tomorrow, she ought to visit her friend tonight, though her bones ache so, and no matter how much she soaps herself, she cannot clean the dusty road from her skin. It is already growing dark, and in the morning the doorbell will start up again, and the little tray in the hall will fill with cards, and her life will start up again, so go she must.

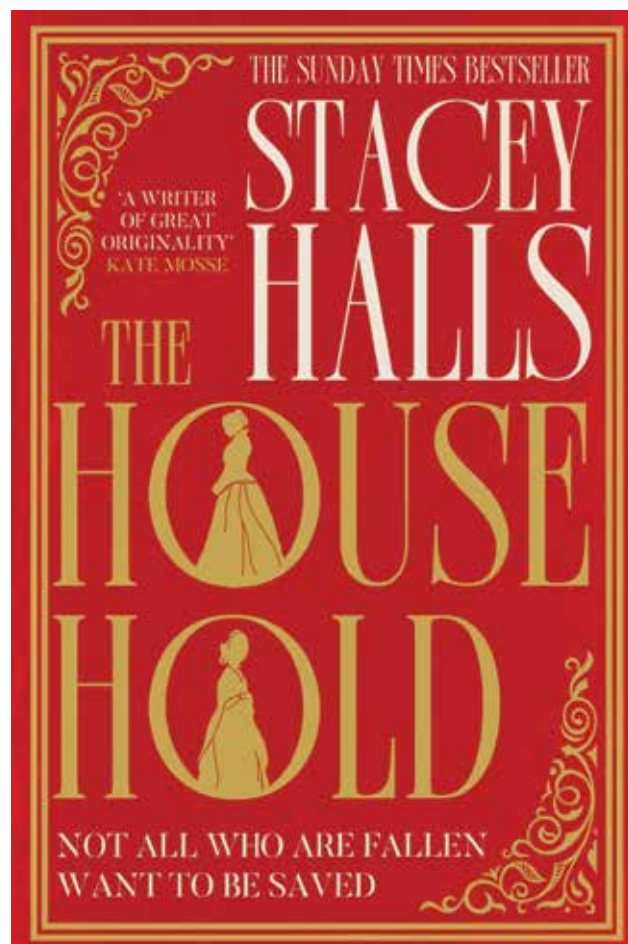
The Household

by Stacey Halls

Manilla Press • HB • £16.99

ISBN 9781838776817

Published 11th April





Counting Down

Following on from *Twelve Secrets and Eleven Liars*, *Ten Seconds* is the third book in Robert Gold's bestselling series of thrillers set in the fictional London borough of Haddley, but can be read on its own. We interviewed him to find out his inspirations.

***Ten Seconds* is the third book in the series. Do you find that you're discovering more about the characters with each book you write?**

Without a doubt, definitely. The dynamic between the two main protagonists of the series, journalist Ben Harper and Detective Constable Dani Cash, develops again in this story. You certainly find out more about them, they both have a back story, they have complex lives. You don't need to have read the previous books to enjoy this one, but there is a development and relationship between the two of them.

"Full of shocking twists"

Karin Slaughter on *Eleven Liars*

Did you always plan it on being a series, and do you have more books planned?

I did always imagine it as a series, with Ben and Dani as the ongoing characters, but each book can be read as a stand-alone. What I try to do, there are characters who are sort of in the background and then they come to the foreground. They may have been mentioned in previous books and then you see more of them. In this book, Detective Sergeant Lesley Barnsdale, who'd been in the previous books as a secondary character becomes one of the main characters. We get to see her home life and find out more about her. There are lots of new characters in this book too.

The book has lots of twists, particularly at the end. Do you plan all these, or find them arising as you write?

For the first two novels I had an idea but I didn't really plan it. The first one, *Twelve Secrets*, is Ben's story, and the second one *Eleven Liars* is Dani's story. Many years ago I read a book called *Run Away* by Harlan Coben. I'm a huge Harlan Coben fan, and I think *Run Away* is one of his best books. It has almost perfect plotting, there's a chase, it was a father seeking to find his daughter. It was brilliant the way one thing triggered the next, it was perfection. I thought one day I'd love to do something like that, a chase. *Ten Seconds* is a kidnap story – Ben's boss Madeline is kidnapped and it relates to something that happened in the past. I plotted this novel more because I knew that one thing had to trigger the next, and that there's a pursuit of the kidnappers. In the first two books, all of the action takes place in Haddley and St Marnham, which are fictionalised versions of areas in West London. For the first time, in *Ten Seconds* the story goes outside of the area, but it still comes back to Haddley. We see different parts of the county, the story goes to Nottingham and Wolverhampton and also around the Cotswolds. So I had to plan a little bit more, because I knew that in a chase each thing triggers the next thing. When I came to write it, I had to consider how each character would react in each situation and I had to work out what they would do next. I had an idea in the middle for a big twist, but I didn't know how to get out of it. It becomes a different kind of novel in the second half because events force things to change. So

I had to work hard, having done that twist, to ask 'What does that mean, what would happen in the rest of the novel?'

I love the character of Madeline – she is a no-nonsense, but moral journalist. Was she based on a real person?

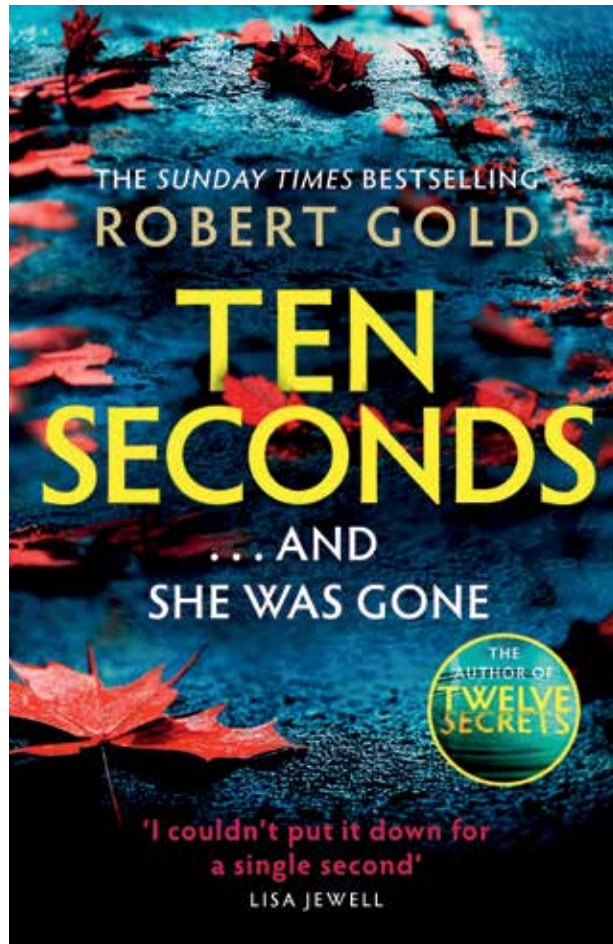
Probably an amalgam of people. She's a great character, she's been in all three books, more so in the first one, and not so much in the second one. *Ten Seconds* is partly her story. She is incredibly strong and I really like her. She's one of those people who you can misjudge, at first she seems hard and brutal, but actually she's got a great heart and protects the people around her. In *Ten Seconds* you see her family dynamic with her father which we haven't seen before. Authors take certain things from people who you know, and I've worked in the publishing industry for many years, so there are all kinds of people who are in Madeline, without a shadow of a doubt.

"Twelve stars!"

Lisa Jewell on *Twelve Secrets*

The novel is partly narrated in the first person by Ben, but also in the third person, as we find out about other characters lives. And there are mysterious passages in italics before each part from another character's point of view, what was the thinking behind them?

What I try to do in all of the stories is portray characters in a way which is not black



Ten Seconds
by Robert Gold
Sphere • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781408730577
Published 14th March

or white, but so that they have more depth to them. All of the characters have got flaws, nobody's completely bad or good, and they all have moral dilemmas that they have to solve. The whole story is about how people are affected by what has happened to them in the past. You see a lot of parent / child relationships in this story, and you see how these relationships work in different ways, and how that impacts on the different characters and how they behave.

You also write about social media – and how some of the characters have unwittingly become famous and how it affects their life. Is social media and new technology something which has changed crime fiction?

It's very difficult to create a world where someone's cut off, because the reader would know that it wouldn't happen! I take the approach that it's in our lives, so you can't ignore it. In the previous book *Eleven Liars* I had a character called Pamela Cuthbert who was in her mid-70s, but she was still on her neighbourhood community app. Every generation gives people an awareness, so I think there's no point in pretending, as people know things very quickly. You have to assume straight away that someone's going to put that on social media. If you didn't have that then it doesn't reflect the reality of the community, and my stories are all about the community and how parts of it interact with each other.

“Excellent”

Lee Child on *Twelve Secrets*

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

As I say, I love Harlan Coben, and he has inspired me over the years. I've just read his new book *I Will Find You* which is fantastic. Then there's Karin Slaughter, I think she's

“Ten Seconds will keep you up all night”

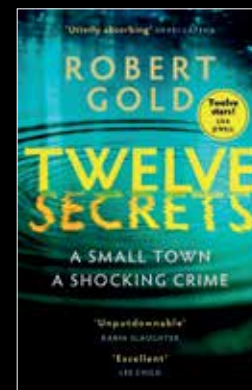
Harlan Coben

an amazing writer. I don't know how many books she's written, but she has a book out every year, and to maintain those characters is not easy. She's had a number of different series, and they've had a big impact on me. But I think any crime writer owes a debt to Agatha Christie, and she's had a big impact on me. Even though my novels are set in the modern day, I love Agatha Christie, you just take those twists and the plotting that she could do. She has a brilliant way of seeding clues in the story right from the beginning. They are a delight to reread, she had a genius in the way she sets up the story. She's probably my biggest influence. The clues are there, and if you want to you can look for them, or you can just enjoy the story.

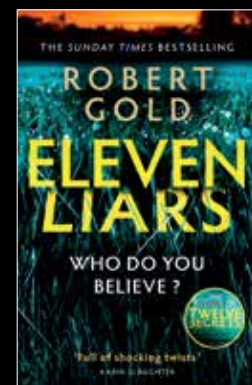
What do independent bookshops mean to you?

The brilliant thing is we're seeing an upsurge in independent bookshops, from the pandemic and beyond, and there are more opening which is fantastic. They are the heartland of talking to your readers and engaging with them. The independent booksellers are so passionate about bookselling and books. They want to give a recommendation, and to talk to their customers, and they're in a unique position to do that. And they do fantastic work for their community, they are the most hardworking booksellers that we have.

Look for these other books by Robert Gold:



Twelve Secrets
by Robert Gold
Sphere • PB • £8.99
9780751582772
Out Now



Eleven Liars
by Robert Gold
Sphere • PB • £9.99
9780751582819
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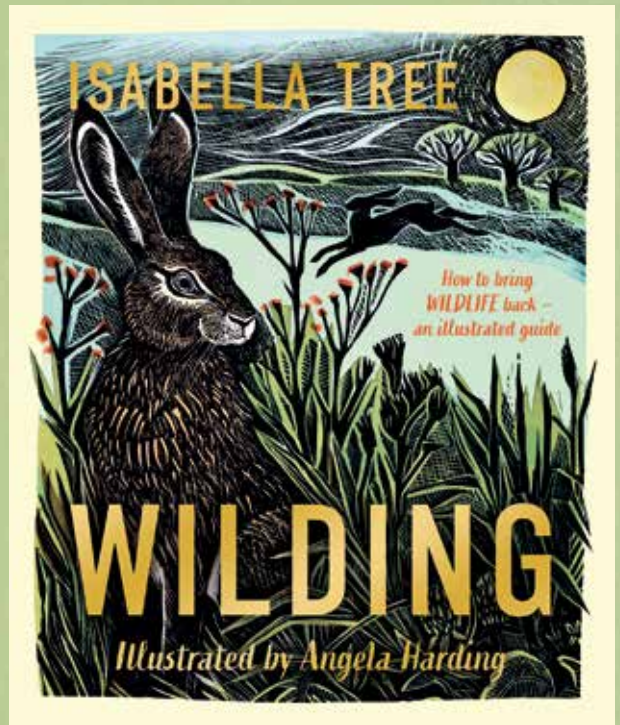
Natural Connection

Look out for a signed edition of this book, with a free print, available exclusively from independent bookshops!

Wilding: How to Bring Wildlife Back – An Illustrated Guide is a beautiful gift book edition of Isabella Tree's bestselling book *Wilding*, with gorgeous artwork by Angela Harding.

Twenty years ago, Isabella Tree and her husband Charlie began a remarkable experiment: to rewild their 3,500 acres of land at the Knepp Estate in West Sussex. Illustrated with lino prints and watercolours by Angela Harding, this book tells their story and explains how rewilding works. It includes beautiful spreads featuring species that have returned and thrive, such as butterflies, bats, owls and beetles.

The book encourages us to slow down and observe the natural world around us, and start to understand the connections between species and habitats, and the huge potential for life right on our doorstep. There are also accessible in-garden activities to re-wild your own spaces, as well as a timeline, a map of the estate and a glossary.



Wilding: How to Bring Wildlife Back – An Illustrated Guide
by Isabella Tree
Illustrated by Angela Harding
Macmillan Children's • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781529092844
Published 7th March



“I hope this book will be a source of hope and inspiration for a new generation”

Isabella Tree

Gardening



Tomatoes & Basil on the 5th Floor

by Patrick Vernuccio
DK • PB • £14.99
ISBN 9780241677742
Published 7th March

This book will help you to get the most out of every bit of balcony space to easily grow your own sustainable, organic, and tasty food. Patrick Vernuccio is a small-space grower with a big message – and even bigger Instagram following. From dividing store-bought basil plants, to harvesting vegetables at the best time of year, to letting plants set seed for the benefit of wildlife, Patrick takes you through myriad ways to get crops and produce out of very limited space.



The Self-Sufficiency Garden

by Huw Richards & Sam Cooper
DK • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780241641439
Published 7th March

Huw Richards and Sam Cooper have spent the past two years planning and trialling their very own self-sufficiency garden in a 10 x 12.5m plot and now they've worked out the perfect formula. Grow six portions of nutritious veg a day per person following their month-by-month growing plan, which is realistic and flexible with cost, space, and time in mind. Discover useful kitchen tips, meal prep, storage and preserving ideas, along with base recipes using your crops.



Small Space Revolution

by Tayshan Hayden-Smith
DK • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780241615041
Published 4th April

In this book, gardener and activist Tayshan Hayden-Smith demonstrates 20 different practical projects you can create to positively change small outdoor spaces and pulls out inspiration from community gardens around the world. His practical advice is accompanied by easy-to-follow steps and inspiring examples of how simple garden projects can open the doors to better wellbeing, uniting communities and reviving natural spaces.

Toxic Love

This new YA fantasy novel is set in a country divided between humans and witches. Venus Stoneheart hustles as a brewer to make illegal love potions to support her family. But she has a dark, sentient magic within her...

Here is an extract from the book:

To survive the outside world, Venus needed to blend in.

To be forgettable.

She gazed into her vanity's mirror, fixing her chestnut wig's blunt bang. Always striving for perfection, she hoped no one noticed because getting caught meant ending up like her father.

Dead.

Childhood photos outlined her mirror frame. She stared at the one of her Dad and a one-year-old her sitting on his shoulders. He grinned with all his teeth while she giggled with all of hers. Venus didn't inherit his deep dimples, but she had his amber eyes. In the picture, her pair and his radiated with warmth. A warmth that petered out as she lived on.

Her mom took the photo mere days before her dad got killed for breaking the law.

The Limit-12 Law.

To witches, Darius Knox was a legend, but to Venus, he was nothing more than a cautionary tale of what happens when you give too much of a fuck.

Her sister meandered in and flopped down on the unicorn-themed bed with outstretched arms.

Janus took in a deep breath and then sighed it all out. 'I'm sorry for being a bitch earlier. I know you do what you do for us. For the family.'

Venus reached for a comb to tame any unruly strands. 'It's cool. You had a long night. I didn't have enough coffee. Shit happens.'

It was only a matter of time before someone offered an olive branch. Neither could ever stay mad at the other for long.

'Now that *all's forgiven*,' Janus began in a singsong voice, 'you need to come with me to this auroras party on Friday.'

Venus stiffened, then unscrewed a tube of magenta lipstick. 'I think I'll pass.'

'Come on, Vee. It'll be so much fun. Ty's coming too,' Janus whined, clasping her hands together in a plea.

Only born a few days apart, Venus and Tyrell were inseparable growing up, causing a lot of hell, headaches, and, eventually, hangovers. As soon as Janus could, she followed behind them like a little duckling.

Their mom never cared if they went to parties as long as they never went alone.

Venus had good reason to be a homebody. She always needed her wits about her, which meant no more alcohol to forget or trysts to remember. Though she hadn't lost her taste for boys and girls, she wasn't about that life anymore.

For everyone's sake, she couldn't be.

Home was her fortress and her bomb shelter.

She'd never forgive herself if something happened to her little sister or big cousin.

The Poisons We Drink

by Bethany Baptiste
Sourcebooks Fire
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781464221323
Published 5th March
Age range: 14+



Books for Little Ones



This is the Ship that Jack Built

by Peter Millett & Sam Caldwell
Buster Books
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781780559346
Published 11th April
Age range: 0+

All aboard the ship that Jack built for a rollicking picture book adventure. Jack's ship has set sail with a precious cargo of gold in the hold, but a whole host of thieves are out to snatch it from under his nose. From the squid that opens the lid and the seal that tries to steal, to the cat and the rat and the whale with its splashy tail, Jack really has his hands full. With a joyful, rhyming text full of super-catchy repeated lines.



Frank and Bert: The One with the Missing Biscuits

by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros
Nosy Crow • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781805130680
Published 14th March
Age range: 2+

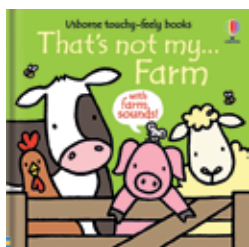
The hilarious fox and bear double act is back for a third adventure. Frank and Bert are off for a picnic in the countryside. And Bert has brought a delicious surprise! But when he falls asleep, Frank can't resist taking a peek... WOW! Bert has made Frank's FAVOURITE biscuits! Surely, he won't mind if Frank eats one... or two... or three... This big-hearted story about friendship and forgiveness is guaranteed to get children giggling!



How Many Dinosaurs is Too Many?

by Lou Peacock & Nicola Slater
Nosy Crow • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781839945519
Published 11th April
Age range: 3+

Meet a riot of cheeky dinosaurs in this adorable story about friendship. When a dinosaur comes to play, you're sure to have lots of fun. But wouldn't 2... 3... 4... or even 10 dinosaurs be better still? Or would they be too big, too messy and just a little bit too naughty? Perhaps one very special dinosaur is just perfect! From Lou Peacock, the author of *Marvellous Margot* and *Charlie Chooses*, with illustrations by Nicola Slater, whose work includes *That's My Flower!*.



That's not my... Farm

by Fiona Watt & Rachel Wells
Usborne • HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781805072515
Published 11th April
Age range: 0+

Discover all the fun of the farm with this sound book addition to the bestselling *That's not my...* series. Turn the pages to explore the farm and meet a soft cow, a fluffy sheep and a muddy pig in this larger format touchy-feely book. Then press the sound button on the final page to hear all the animals on the noisy farm! With their bright, eye-catching illustrations and tactile patches on each page, these books are loved by babies and toddlers.



Hen in the Bed

by Katrina Charman & Guilherme Karsten
Nosy Crow
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781839946011
Published 14th March
Age range: 2+

A crazy, noisy twist on a favourite rhyme in a split-page novelty format. There were ten in the bed and the speckled hen said, 'Roll over! Roll over!...' Bedtime is fun time for the funny animal characters in this hilarious picture book. As each animal noisily tumbles out, one by one, their bed gets emptier and the mayhem in the rest of the room gets crazier. Will anyone ever get any sleep?! Ideal reading for excited little ones at bedtime.



Luna Loves Gardening

by Joseph Coelho & Fiona Lumbers
Andersen Press
HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781839131578
Published 7th March
Age range: 3+

The fifth book in the *Luna Loves...* series brings alive the art of gardening. Luna is wowed by her local community garden, there are squashes and runner beans, potatoes and tomatoes and even an apple tree. But each plant hides a story. Grandpa and Nana show her the Callaloo their family grew in Jamaica. It's time for Luna to grab a trowel and sow seeds that will tell a new story for the whole community as they all discover their connection to the entire world.



Quiet

by Tom Percival & Richard Jones
Simon & Schuster Children's
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781471173912
Published 28th March
Age range: 1+

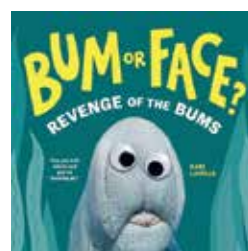
This picture book is a touching tale of courage and how sometimes the smallest voice can deliver the biggest message. It's from highly acclaimed creators Tom Percival and Richard Jones, collaborating for the first time. Tom Percival's work includes the *Big Bright Feelings* series, as well as *The River and The Sea Saw*, and Richard Jones is known for his picture books such as *Little Bear* and *Where Have You Been, Little Cat?*.



The Great Henna Party

by Humera Malik & Sonali Zohra
Lantana Publishing
HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781915244604
Published 14th March
Age range: 2+

A heartwarming story that traces the patterns of family love through the age-old South Asian tradition of painting with henna. Noor's cousin is getting married tomorrow, and tonight, her family is throwing her a henna party. They will have their hands painted in swirling designs using a dye called henna. The henna artist will hide the name of the person Noor loves the most in the pattern she paints on Noor's hands. But whose name will Noor choose?



Bum or Face? Revenge of the Bums

by Kari Lavelle
Sourcebooks Explore
PB • £6.99
ISBN 9781464224010
Published 4th April
Age range: 4+

The second book in the series of hilarious guessing game picture books. Examine a close-up photo of an animal and then guess whether you're looking at the top or the... um... bottom. The answer is revealed on the next page with a complete photo of the animal! Also included are factual animal details along with how these animals use camouflage or other trickery to engage with their home. It's a cheeky challenge with a whole new set of animals from all over the world.

Moving Pictures

[KIDS]

Set in 1973, *A Drop of Golden Sun* follows the fortunes of 12-year-old Jenny, who has been cast to star in a feature film. Can she navigate her way through the glitz and glamour of the acting world?

“Warm and funny and loving, I adored it.”

Ross Montgomery

A Drop of Golden Sun
by Kate Saunders
Faber • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9780571310982
Published 7th March
Age range: 9+



Jenny is excited and nervous when she's cast as Berthe Daudit, one of four siblings in a new film, *The Music Makers*. Soon she's jetting off to the idyllic Chateau Mouchotte in France, where she will join her film family: three other children, Belinda, John and Harriet, and two famous actors, Gerard Marlowe and Trudy Sweet. The film is all about a musical family who must flee Nazi Germany, and Jenny's dancing and singing skills will be put to the test.

Jenny is an only child and her father died when she was three years old. But she's often dreamed of having brothers and sisters, so is keen to make new friends. Being on set is so different to her normal life, but showbiz is never straightforward. When one of the actors threatens the whole shoot, it's up to Jenny and her friends to keep the peace and save the film. Written and edited in the months before Kate Saunders died in 2023, *A Drop of Golden Sun* is a beautiful final book from the much-loved and award-winning author of *The Land of Neverendings* and *Five Children on the Western Front*.

In this extract, Jenny and her co-stars arrive in France:

The heat was the most incredible thing about France. The children all travelled on the same flight, and that was an amazing experience for Jenny, who had never flown before; her ears popped at take-off and stayed popped for ages, so that everything sounded slightly blurred. When they stepped off the plane, she gasped aloud at the glaring, battering sunlight

“A Drop of Golden Sun is radiant storytelling, nuanced and exuberant. Sublime.”

Kiran Millwood Hargrave

“Kate Saunders' writing is pure joy. It sparkles with imagination, magic, and immense talent.”

Jasbinder Bilan

“Delightful, heartwarming, inspiring and funny.”

Francesca Simon

and the heavy heat that fell on her like a blanket. Summer in the Isle of Wight was pale and feeble next to this. Mum said it was like being inside a hairdryer.

They arrived in the late afternoon and a line of taxis took them deep into hilly countryside that was fading into dusk. The heat made them all yawn, and Jenny and Belinda were both asleep when they got to their hotel, Chateau Mouchotte.

Madame Bessier, the owner of the hotel, had a delicious supper waiting for them – fat slices of omelette, thin chips called 'freet' and a green salad – and Jenny's ears finally unpopped. She was very tired and all the impressions of the day, since leaving Gospel Oak in the morning, flew about in a head like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

She heard Harriet's grandmother saying, 'Is this the best they can do?'

'I didn't expect a palace,' said Belinda's mother. 'But this place isn't up to my standards at all.'

Jenny didn't know why they were complaining. She liked every single thing she had seen at the Chateau Mouchotte – including the lavender scent of the sheets on her squasy mattress as she sank into it.

'Well, it all kicks off tomorrow,' said Mum. 'You've got a make-up call in the morning, and then a lunch with the director. Isn't it exciting?'

Jenny started to say she was far too excited to sleep but was interrupted by an enormous yawn.

Mum laughed softly and gave Jenny a kiss. 'Sweet dreams, darling.'

Picture This

Illustrator Jarvis's picture books are beautiful and heartwarming, with engaging artwork and stories. We take a look at his new work, *Thank You* and the latest books in the *Bear and Bird* series.

[KIDS]



Thank You
by Jarvis
Walker Books
HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781529503920
Published 7th March
Age range: 2+

There is so much to be thankful for! In this happy and hopeful picture book for the very young, we see the world through a child's eyes as he thanks all of the things that give him joy – the sun, his bicycle, the jelly in his bowl, and so much more. Jarvis creates beautiful collage art in this first book of gratitude; a book that inspires children to think about what they might like to say 'thank you' to, too!



Coming soon



Bear and Bird: The Adventure & Other Stories
by Jarvis
Walker Books • HB • £9.99
ISBN 9781529514803
Published 7th March
Age range: 5+

The third book in the endearing *Bear and Bird* chapter book series, this includes four new adventures for the firm friends. When Bird feels poorly, Bear arrives with a backpack of goodies to make her feel better. And when they hang out with Mole – who tells absolutely hilarious jokes! – Bird realizes she doesn't need to compete for Bear's attention; that there is lots of laughter to go around...



Bear and Bird: The Picnic & Other Stories
by Jarvis
Walker Books • PB • £6.99
ISBN 9781529513707
Published in May
Age range: 5+

Soon to be available in this paperback edition, the first book in the *Bear and Bird* series includes four illustrated stories full of funny mix-ups and comic misunderstandings, as well as genuine warmth and affection. Bear and Bird are best friends – they may not always agree about everything, but they do agree that they want to make each other happy!

“A sweet, funny book for early readers,”

Irish Independent

Across the Universe

[KIDS]

In this new story from the author of *Escape Room*, Lucas and his friends are swept up in an epic adventure when they go to see a film at the Black Hole Cinema Club. We interviewed Christopher Edge to discover more.



Black Hole Cinema Club
by Christopher Edge
Nosy Crow • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781839942730
Published 14th March
Age range: 9+



What inspired you to write *Black Hole Cinema Club*?

I remember my brother, Nick, taking me to the movies when we were growing up to watch *E.T.* The cinema was sold out and the only seats left free were those on the very front row. My neck ached as I peered up at the screen, but as the film began all thoughts of neckache were forgotten as the darkness suddenly filled with stars and I found myself swept into the story on the screen. Looking back now, what I remember most vividly are snapshots of scenes and the emotions these made me feel. Joy. Wonder. Excitement. Fear. I remember shedding a tear as Elliott reached out his hand towards a dying E.T. and how my heart soared as their BMX bike flew in front of the moon. It was a movie and it moved me, transporting me into a whole new world and, with *Black Hole Cinema Club*, I wanted to write a story that captured the immersiveness of cinema.

In the book, Lucas and his friends find themselves in an immersive cinema experience. Do you think that technology like this will be available in the future?

I think we're already seeing a hunger for immersive experiences in events such as Secret Cinema, where the world of the film is brought to life as the setting for the screening. With advances in virtual reality alongside a digital generation's desire for interactivity, I think the 4Di cinematic experience in the story could well become a future reality. And I think an adaptation of *Black Hole Cinema Club* would make a great first movie!

The book has a dreamlike quality, with the characters moving from one film scenario to another. Did you plan the story in advance, or see where it took you?

The twists and turns in my stories are always very carefully planned, so every movie that Lucas and his friends live through in *Black Hole Cinema Club* link to things that are revealed later in the story. One of my favourite scenarios to write comes near the end of the story in a short chapter which almost felt like a Christopher Nolan movie when I was writing it, and this scene just flowed from pen like a dream.

“One of our most original children’s writers.”

Sam Copeland

Did you have fun putting in the references to many films in the book?

Just like a special edition of a movie on blu-ray or DVD, there are SO many Easter eggs hidden inside *Black Hole Cinema Club*. I wanted to pay homage to many of the films that I loved growing up, but also share the excitement I found in these movies for readers who won't necessarily have seen them, so I really hope *Black Hole Cinema Club* might ignite a love of cinema amongst younger readers, as well as giving any adults who might be sharing the story with them a Proustian popcorn rush of nostalgia too!

If you were in an immersive cinema film, what genre would you prefer to star in?

I'd love the rollercoaster ride of genres that are found inside the story, but I think an Indiana Jones-style adventure would be the most fun to star in. Just as long as there are no snakes...

Did you study the science behind black holes in order to write the book (or did you already know it)?

For me, one of the best bits about being an author is being able to research things that fascinate me and black holes definitely fall into this category. The novel begins with an epigraph from the film writer Mark Cousins which says "...the speed of light, the flickering stuff of cinema, is the only constant in the universe", but as we all know, not even light can escape from a black hole...

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

So many authors. Adult fiction by David Mitchell and Gabrielle Zevin, the science writing of Carlo Rovelli, fellow children's authors like Frank Cottrell-Boyce and A.F. Harrold. I love authors who help me to look at the world differently, finding the wonder that's out there, and I hope my novels do this too.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

Stories live in so many places, from the darkness of a cinema auditorium to the shelves of a bookshop, waiting for a reader to pick them up and start reading. I love the curation you find in independent bookshops and when I step inside one I know I won't be leaving empty handed. That's why they're some of my favourite places in the world.

Mystery Time



What inspired you to write about twins, Merry and Spike?

The inspiration for the book was a news story I saw several years ago. In California there were twins who were born either side of midnight on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. So even though they were twins, they were born on a different day, month and year. I thought, wow, twins being split up by time when everything else about them is identical! It set my mind wondering, and I started to think of all these magical possibilities to do with time – what if they've got special time-related abilities? And this New Year, there was a similar story about twins born in a different year.

Did you deliberately leave the time the book is set undefined?

My editor persuaded me to be ambiguous about it! There are no mobile phones, there's a landline so you know that it's not current, but it's not really historical either. It's deliberately vague because technology ends up spoiling the kind of stories that I want to write!

Merry and Spike have the ability to glimpse moments from the past and the future. If you could see one or the other, which would you choose?

That's quite difficult, but probably the future. I'm the sort of person who couldn't resist, I'd have to look! At least that way you can try and prepare for things, or avoid them if possible.

Each chapter starts with a limerick, written by Merry. Did you have fun creating these?

It started out as fun, but ended up as a headache! I put them all on one document together and as I went through, I realised that I'd repeated some rhymes so had to change them. During the edits, when things changed, the limericks had to change too. Some of them were written while I was writing the book, others went in really late. They were fun, but I don't know if it's something I'll continue with the next book, I might try and do something else, from Spike's side!

There is a murder mystery at the heart of the book. Did you start with the mystery?

From the bestselling author of the *Pinch of Magic* series comes a new adventure story featuring twins Merry and Spike Morrow. Can their strange, time-related powers help them to solve an old mystery at Fox House? We interviewed Michelle Harrison to discover more.

I've wanted to write a murder mystery for a long time. It was always going to be a mystery, a missing person and a question mark about an abandoned baby. During the edits, though, the villains did change a bit!

Did you plot it all in advance?

I did. With my previous books, I'd write an outline, and then write it with more detail. With this one, I planned it out chapter by chapter. It really helped – it was all plotted and sent to my editor before I started to write it. During the edits, we discussed characters and their motivations, and how to make some of the characters more sympathetic.

“I've wanted to write a murder mystery for a long time.”

Alastair's rabbit Jemima is unusually vicious. Is this a reflection of Alastair's own personality?

I just wanted to give him a pet, and the immediate thought is a white cat like a James Bond villain. But I've put cats and dogs in every single story I've written – this is the first one I've written without one. And I thought, a rabbit, because I know quite a few people who have house rabbits. And then there's General Woundwort from *Watership Down*, he's a bit of an inspiration for a vicious rabbit!

Nanny Natter has a bad memory, but can also be perceptive. Do you think that we underestimate people with dementia?

I do. My aunt has dementia, it's come on quite strong in the last year, and it's been awful to see. It's such a strange thing. It must be so awful to say something and know that you're not being taken seriously, and nobody knows what to believe. It's one of those really complex things. It's really interesting,

the link to time and memory, what's real and what isn't. Dementia patients can often recall things really clearly from years ago, but can't remember what happened five minutes ago. I find that really sad, but fascinating as well. A lot of people who have read the book really liked the character of Nanny, and I had a lot of fun writing about her. Because, although there are a lot of sad moments that make you feel for her and empathise with her, she's also quite cheeky as well.

You mention a second book – have you got further books planned out?

It's just one more at the moment! But the set up with the mum being an art restorer means you can take the story anywhere, which is great.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

I really like Emma Carroll's books, I think she has a really nice, direct way of writing. Abi Elphinstone has a great imagination. I love Alex Bell as well, I've read a lot of her teenage books, such as *Frozen Charlotte* and *The Haunting*, I think they're brilliant. And Claire Barker, who wrote *Picklewitch & Jack*, she has the best imagination and she's just

like her books! I also like Anne Cassidy, who wrote *Looking for JJ*, and Cathy Cassidy, who wrote *The Chocolate Box Girls* series. I take something from all these authors when I read their books.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

The one that I support is Chicken and Frog in Brentwood. Natasha and Jim have been a great support to me. It's not just about selling books for independent bookshops, it's a whole lifestyle, and they go above and beyond for children.



[KIDS]

Twice Upon a Time
by Michelle Harrison
Simon & Schuster Children's
HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781471197673
Published 11th April
Age range: 9+

Numbers Game

In this children's book full of activities, maths teacher Chris Smith takes the popular song *That's Mathematics* by Tom Lehrer and uses it to explore how maths is used for so many things in our world. We interviewed the author to discover the joy of maths!



The book is based on a musical mathematical tribute to Tom Lehrer which you co-created during lockdown. How did that come about?

Yes, Tom Lehrer wrote the song many years ago. We set out to do a geeky, uplifting video in lockdown, something to brighten people's day. We were three mathematicians – me, Ben Sparks and Ed Southall. We decided to try and assemble a group of super-geeks, from YouTube presenter VSauce to Rachel Riley from *Countdown*. They all sang a line. I played the music, we sent them a wee snippet, they recorded their vocals, we pieced it all together and put it out on Twitter. It was a massive hit, people seemed to love it. You don't get much from Tom Lehrer, but he gave us a couple of lines about how it brought him a bit of pleasure. That was where it all started, then Penny Worms at Mama Makes Books got in touch asking if I would like to write the book, using the song as a framework. Tom's lyrics are the star of the show, alongside Elina Brasliņa's beautiful illustrations.

The book is all about maths and how important it is to our lives. Do you think that a lot of children (and adults) don't realise its importance?

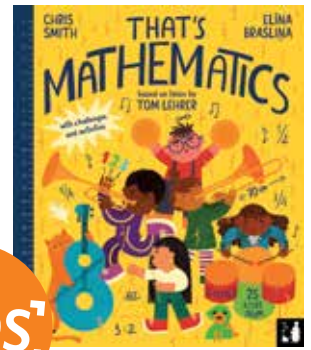
I love maths for two reasons. One is the utility of maths. I went to uni at Strathclyde, and we did loads of mathematics that related to the real world. When I finished my degree I didn't know that I wanted to be a teacher, which is a bit weird because I won Scottish Teacher of the Year in 2018, and an MBE for my teaching. At Strathclyde we did a lot of work with mechanics and motion and stock markets, then I started some research into mathematical modelling of blood-flow in the human placenta. So I was trying to use maths to explain how a baby gets nutrients from their mother. I want to tell kids that maths helps us to understand things that you can't imagine have anything to do with maths. So I love the utility of maths but I also like the beauty of maths, and how enjoyable it is in itself. You can use maths for so many things, but it's also really fun.

“Chris Smith shows that you are never too young to have fun with Maths.”

Johnny Ball

Have you tested the activities out on children?

Yes, lots of them have been used in the classroom over the years. But I've had to adapt some of them because I work in a secondary school, with children aged eleven to eighteen, and the book is aimed at younger children. I have three mini-mathematicians at home, Daisy, Heidi and Logan, and almost all the puzzles, challenges and games we've tried at some stage. There were one or two that we couldn't fit in. There was one in the counting section – have you ever noticed that the words for consecutive numbers: one, two, three, etc, each share a letter? So one and two share an o, two and three share a t, and so on. Can you find two in a row that don't share a letter? Actually there's none! But the downside to that is that once it's been translated into other languages, it isn't true. So being involved in a book making process has been a real eye-opener for me!



That's Mathematics
by Chris Smith

Based on lyrics by Tom Lehrer
Illustrated by Elina Brasliņa
Mama Makes Books • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781739774851
Published 14th March
Age range: 4+

It used to be the case that maths was thought of as a boy's subject, hopefully that has changed now. Do you think that girls are as likely to be interested in maths as boys?

Absolutely. There are many stereotypes attached to maths. My experience is there are loads of really talented girl and boy mathematicians, right up to elite level, which is encouraging to see. Other stereotypes are about the type of people who like maths, that it's a subject for loners and people who can't communicate very well. Hannah Fry, the mathematician and presenter who was on the *That's Mathematics* video is the perfect example of someone who doesn't fit that mould. She's inspiring generations of young girls to take up maths. But maths isn't for loners, it's a collaborative endeavour, people work together. It's not something you do locked away in your bedroom with no one else there.

You mention being Scottish Teacher of the Year – how did that come about?

I got a few nominations for pupils, parents and colleagues, which went off to the Scottish Education Awards and I got into the final three. At that stage they came to interview me and my pupils. And they observed one of my classes and I won. It was amazing.

Did you work closely with the illustrator Elina Brasliņa?

I was put in touch with her through the publisher, and we worked together remotely on Zoom calls. We had ideas for each page, I'd say 'here's what I imagine' and send it to her, and she would create the illustrations. She's got a lovely style, with wee details which tie the pages together. She did a great job and it was dead easy to work with her.

Do you have plans to do any more books?

I've loved sharing the book with friends and family, and giving it out as prizes. I want to get the next generation of young mathematicians excited about maths, so watch this space!

That's Mathematics © 2023 Mama Makes Books Ltd.
Lyrics written by Tom Lehrer with additional text by Chris Smith. Artwork © 2023 Elina Brasliņa

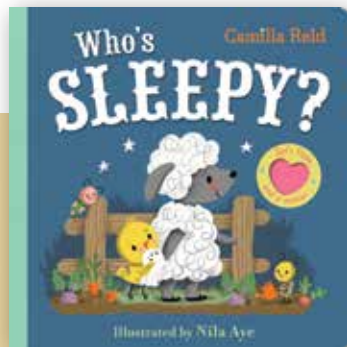


Animal Magic



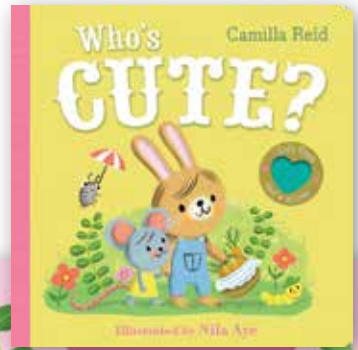
These two new board books with felt flaps bring the animal kingdom to life for very young children, whether in the woodland or on the farm.

Who's Cute? and Who's Sleepy? are charming animal books with soft felt flaps and a surprise mirror endings, and are perfect for sharing with babies and toddlers. Little children will love lifting the flaps to discover who is the cutest or sleepest little person ever. Will it be baby bunny, small mouse or tiny owl? Or will it be a small lamb, baby chick or tiny piglet? They'll find the answer when they look in the mirror hiding under the final flap! With a cast of adorable woodland and farm animals, playfully illustrated by the award-winning Nila Aye, they are the perfect books to share with very young children.



Who's Sleepy?
by Camilla Reid
Illustrated by Nila Aye
Macmillan Children's • BB • £7.99
ISBN 9781035023318
Published 14th March
Age range: 1+

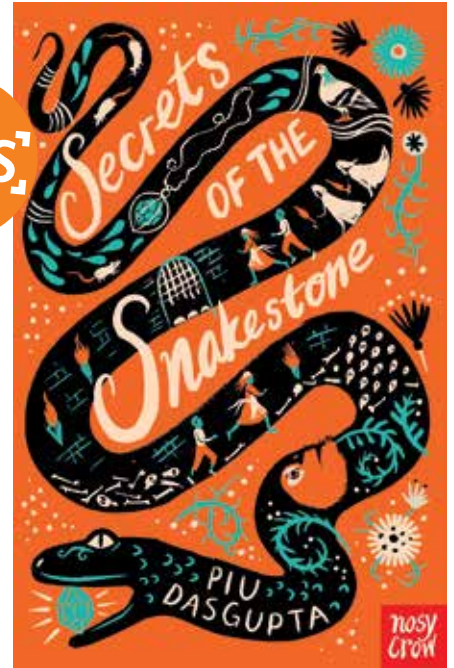
Who's Cute?
by Camilla Reid
Illustrated by Nila Aye
Macmillan Children's • BB • £7.99
ISBN 9781035023301
Published 14th March
Age range: 1+



With a delightful read-aloud text, and soft flaps to lift on every spread!

French Connection

[KIDS]



In this exciting story, Zélie and Jules embark on an extraordinary adventure through Paris in search of the magical Snakestone, and Zélie's missing father. We interviewed the author Piu DasGupta about magic, mystery and history.



What inspired you to write a story set in late 19th century Paris?

I've lived in Paris for almost twenty years, the city is part of my soul. I used to live in Montmartre, the heart of Bohemian life in Belle Epoque Paris. It's a place where the ghosts of the past chatter on street corners, where you can still hear someone singing a street ballad in a café on a Friday night. I wanted to capture that special magic in my story.

Did you do a lot of research into the era?

Snakestone is a magical-realist book, so it's not strictly historically accurate. But I did have huge fun researching the period – I actually managed to find an old *Baedeker's Guide to Paris* from 1895, the year in which the book is set, and it was amazing to walk through the streets with it. I found that in lots of ways, the layout of the city had not much changed! *Baedeker's* provided useful snippets of information to give authentic touches – when Zélie says you can have a bath in the Seine for only four sous, that's the 1895 price!

The book has elements of science – Zélie's parents are scientists – and magic – the Snakestone has magical properties. Do you think magic and science are intertwined?

This is such an interesting question! I think that magic and science are absolutely intertwined, but that there's unfortunately been a tendency in recent fantasy to set the two against each other, as though they were opposing forces. But actually most scientists agree that, the more you understand the world, the more mysterious it becomes. And this is precisely the point made in the book. Zélie remembers her dad taking her onto the veranda to show her the infinitely complex flight patterns of the mynah birds. His favourite saying – the meaning of which Zélie comes finally to appreciate – is that, behind the science, there is always a mystery. Magic represents that ultimate mystery, the essential unknowability of the universe.

Zélie befriends a pigeon and rescues a baby sloth, and Jules has pet snails. Are animals important to you?

I love animals, we have two pet cats and I have witnessed the therapeutic effect they have on my children, especially my youngest son who was once bitten by a dog and consequently terrified of animals. I think children in particular relate to animals, especially to their relative powerlessness in the world, which is one of the reasons they repeatedly appear in children's books. The various animals in *Snakestone* serve a number of purposes: companionship to Zélie in her loneliness; a reflection of her marginalised status; and in the case of Jules and the snails, an aspect of his character, which changes to the point he doesn't need them anymore and sets them free.

“Behind the science, there is always a mystery”

I like the way Zélie often has pep talks to herself to give her confidence. Do you think it's easy for children (and adults) to lose confidence in themselves sometimes?

I think we all lose confidence in ourselves at times, and Zélie little pep-talks are hopefully an inspiring example for children to remind themselves how great they are, and how much they've achieved. It's one of the exercises in my workshops with children: write down at least one thing you can do, and which you love about yourself! However trivial it may seem to you, someone else will think you're awesome.

You reference Victor Hugo in the book, is he a favourite author of yours?

Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is hugely important to me! Its themes of social justice are echoed in my book. I also start with a quote from it in which Paris is described as

having a dark mirror image beneath it: a web of underground tunnels and sewers which are a sinister reflection of the city above, a network covered in slime and filth, where the glitter and glamour is stripped away. In my book, every overground setting has its sinister, underground equivalent. It's the dark side of the City of Light – and by implication, the dark side of nineteenth century notions of science, reason, and progress.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

Oh, so many! I love darkly Gothic writing, so I have Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* hardwired in my brain. On the children's front, I love the elemental magic of Alan Garner and the magic-realist fantasy of Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising*. I adore Neil Gaiman: the scene with Zélie in the laboratory at the climax of *Snakestone* was inspired by the implied horror/menace of the scene where Coraline is led by the Other Parents to the kitchen, where there are laid on a plate a spool of cotton, a silver needle, and two large black buttons. There's no actual violence: everything is left to the imagination, and yet it's utterly terrifying.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I think in this age of digital shopping and social media, indie bookshops are more and more important as a space where people can interact in real life, share ideas, and get personal recommendations from expert booksellers for gems that might not necessarily be on their radar. Indie bookshops are like a beacon of light in the sea of mass commercialisation and uniformity. They stand for individuality, quirkiness, and the fact that nothing can replace the alchemy of human contact.

Secrets of the Snakestone

by Piu DasGupta

Nosy Crow • PB • £7.99

ISBN 9781839946318

Published 14th March

Age range: 9+

Worlds Apart

In this first book in a new fantasy series, Peregrine Quinn is an intrepid young girl whose life is turned upside down when her godfather Daedalus is kidnapped. The portals between our world, the Terran Realm, and the Cosmic Realm have shut down, and Peregrine is thrown into an epic adventure to save her godfather before it's too late.

Peregrine was nine when she realised that Daedalus was not your average godfather, but had powers beyond her understanding. Since then Daedalus has been her guardian, and she's spent three years hearing his outlandish tales. She is eager to go through one of the portals which separate the Terran and the Cosmic Realms. But when the portals are sealed and Daedalus is kidnapped, it's up to Peregrine to try and rescue him.

Fortunately she has the help of dryad librarian Rowan Strong and Olympus Inc liaison Callimachus Thorn, a faun. As Peregrine is swept into a race against time, through the streets of Oxford, and down the riverways of London, to the Under-Ground, she discovers that the creatures from her godfather's stories are not only real, but are shooting at her with laser-beams! Can she and her new friends fix the portals and find Daedalus before an evil rises and chaos takes over? Bursting with unforgettable characters and full of suspense and humour, *Peregrine Quinn & The Cosmic Realm* is a wonderful blend of the fantastical and the mythical, and is ideal for fans of *Percy Jackson* and *Artemis Fowl*.

In this extract, Daedalus is preparing to go away:

Books, socks and underpants whizzed through the air and into the battered old suitcase that lay open in the middle of the room. Peregrine yawned as she watched her godfather throw a travel pillow with the precise aim and determination of a professional basketball player.

She pulled off her black beanie and tossed it angrily onto the sofa. Daedalus had been a whirlwind of activity since they'd returned from the library, just a couple of hours ago. She *could* have had a nap, but she was too twitchy. She knew what a suitcase meant – it meant that Daedalus was leaving. And only one suitcase meant that Daedalus was leaving *without* Peregrine.

**“This debut just sings
with excitement”**

Jasbinder Bilan

The apartment – in which the offending suitcase now sat – was situated above the florist that Daedalus owned, and which he ran with no small amount of help from Peregrine. Though the apartment's rooms were now so stuffed with plants that they looked much less like actual living quarters and more like terrariums with a few sofas in. There were peace lilies in the bath, orchids in the sink, cactuses in the airing

cupboard, ferns in the hallway, banana plants on the balcony and spider plants on the stairs. From each stalk hung a label written in neat copperplate handwriting, stating who the plant belonged to and what the plant needed to bounce back to life. For example:

Mrs E. Russell, 511 Morrell Ave. Three millilitres of valerian essence, a teaspoon of gin and a Shakespearean sonnet twice daily.

Originally, the plants had been limited to the greenhouse, then the greenhouse and the shop, but word of Daedalus Bloom's Plant Clinic had spread so fast that the plants eventually *had* to be moved upstairs.

Peregrine's mum – whose apartment it *actually* was – had not been entirely happy about this, but the Daedalus had reassured her that the plants would absolutely stay in his bedroom 'and maybe a few in the dining room – just to brighten up the place'. This had been the case. For three whole days.

At least Peregrine's bedroom had remained a relatively plant free zone. It was nice – and necessary – to have somewhere she could go to read that wasn't covered in leaves, petals or potentially poisonous thorns.

The number of plant patients only increased as Daedalus's unique approach to botanical health made him famous on the British horticultural scene. He was a regular, if irreverent guest on *Gardener's Question Time*, and his latest discovery, that kitchen herbs preferred to grow to the

[KIDS]

“Mythology with a modern makeover – Peregrine Quinn’s battle to save the cosmic realm is an epic adventure!”

Maz Evans



Peregrine Quinn and the Cosmic Realm
by Ash Bond
Piccadilly Press
HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781800786806
Published 25th April
Age range: 9+

“An electrifying read – full of fast-paced action, endless fun and fearless imagination.”

A.F. Steadman

sound of nineties hip-hop between four and seven in the morning, had caused quite a stir in *Floristry Weekly*.

‘I am calling in reinforcements, Peregrine dear.’ Daedalus threw a toothbrush over his shoulder. It landed neatly in the suitcase, beside a pair of daisy-printed socks that sported the slogan *flowers make you look cool*.

Peregrine’s freckly face paled. ‘No, please. Not –’

‘Ms Kidman.’

‘But she hates me!’ Peregrine dodged a pair of flying sunglasses. Ms Kidman was her ad hoc babysitter, whose idea of a Super Fun Adventure was asking Peregrine to conjugate Latin verbs while she organised the cutlery drawer.

‘She does not hate you Peregrine. Watch out!’

A pair of Bermuda shorts flew past her ear. ‘But she is so boring.’

‘Hmm, yes, she is quite, quite boring. Anyway, I have spoken to your mother and she agrees.’

Peregrine brightened. ‘That Ms Kidman is boring?’

‘Yes.’ He nodded. ‘And that Ms Kidman will look after you while I’m away.’

‘Ugh!’ Peregrine let out a loud huff. Her mum, who was anything but boring, was away again on an archaeological dig in the Jordan Valley, filming series three of *Penelope Quinn’s World of Wonders*, a smash hit with history buffs and armchair archaeologists alike. Smitten scientists, love-struck Librarians and besotted boffins from around the globe were always sending

Peregrine’s mother long, complicated love letters and boxes of expensive luxury chocolates. Peregrine used the letters as fuel for their wood burner and ate the chocolates (apart from the strawberry creams, which she left for Daedalus).

“A whirlwind of waistcoats, lasers and magic! I couldn’t stop smiling”

Amy Jeffs

Her mum phoned every evening at six o’clock exactly, and asked about Peregrine’s algebra, archery, Ancient Greek and akido, and whether she was eating enough leafy green things. She was especially keen on the akido as it was Penelope who had taught her that – before *World of Wonders* had become such a huge hit and Daedalus had officially been named as Peregrine’s designated guardian.

Peregrine felt a familiar not twisting her stomach. This knot tightened with every week her mum was away, and was always there, coiled and heavy. She inhaled slowly, forcing the knot to unwind a fraction.

Out of the corner of her eye, Peregrine spotted another item Daedalus was about to launch into the suitcase. Something that looked very much like –

‘Your passport?’ She shot up a hand

and caught it in mid-flight. ‘Why are you taking your passport?’ A passport meant that Daedalus was not only leaving the city, he was leaving the *country*, and that was far more distance than Peregrine was prepared to put up with. Daedalus had been Peregrine’s primary guardian for the last three years, and since she had already lost her mother to travel’s exotic temptations, she refused to lose a godfather too.

Then another, even scarier, thought struck her. What if he was going somewhere Cosmic, somewhere that Peregrine, as Terran mortal, couldn’t follow? She clutched the passport tighter. What if he didn’t come back?

‘It’s only for a few days.’ Daedalus took off his hat and fiddled with the indigo feather he always kept there. Its reflection in his glasses made his eyes look like they had purple stars swimming in them. ‘That should give me enough time for the round trip.’ He put his hat firmly back on, and held his hand out for the passport.

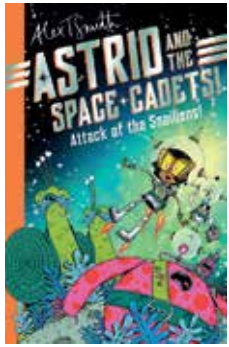
Peregrine hesitated. She went to hand the passport over, but then pulled it back at the last moment. ‘Round trip to WHERE?’

‘Sneaky!’ He snatched the passport and tapped her nose with it affectionately. ‘Well done.’

‘But it’s not even a real passport, is it?’ She scratched her nose where he had tapped it. ‘I mean your name isn’t *really* Daedalus Bloom.’

‘It most certainly is!’ He tucked the passport into his pocket. ‘Well, sort of. And when you have lived as long as I have, you appreciate just how important names are. Remember that, Peregrine Quinn.’

Young Reads



Astrid & The Space Cadets: Attack of the Snailiens!
by Alex T. Smith
Macmillan Children's
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781035019748
Published 7th March
Age range: 5+

From the creator of the *Claude* series comes a funny and fast-paced illustrated adventure through space. Astrid Atomic, a six-year-old human person, goes to bed every night like every other six-year-old human person. But unlike many other six-year-olds she doesn't stay there. The minute the lights are off and the coast is clear the Space Cadet siren goes off, her uniform goes on, and 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 – WHOOSH! – she blasts off on board the spaceship Stardust!



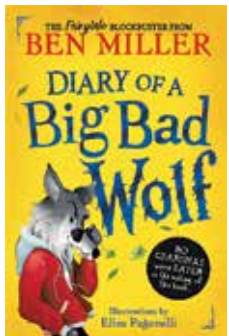
The Inventor's Workshop
by Ruth Amos & Stacey Thomas
Magic Cat
HB • £14.99
ISBN 9781915569271
Published 25th April
Age range: 7+

Join two curious children on a tour through ten inventions that changed the world in the debut children's book from award-winning inventor Ruth Amos. Find out how, when and why these ingenious breakthroughs happened, and learn about all the people who created them. Discover how Ada Lovelace's code inspired Charles Babbage's work on the first modern computer and see how African American Lewis Latimer's technology made Thomas Edison's light bulb possible.



Haru Book 1: Spring
by Joe Latham
Andrews McMeel
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781524884734
Published 11th April
Age range: 8+

A beautifully illustrated graphic novel series, and a coming-of-age tale that spans the changing of the seasons. Haru, a small bird who dreams of flying, and their best friend Yama, a talkative boar, are used to being in the shadows. But when Yama finds a strange artefact that causes sinister effects, the two are swept into an epic journey to destroy the artefact and save the world. A story of heart, growing up, and the sacrifices we make for those we love, it is perfect for middle-grade readers.



Diary of a Big Bad Wolf
by Ben Miller & Elisa Paganelli
Simon & Schuster
Children's
HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781398530362
Published 14th March
Age range: 7+

A brand new, funny fairytale diary from the bestselling author Ben Miller. The big, bad wolf hasn't had a great winter... But things are about to change – he's going to take the Fairytale Woods by STORM. But while he knows he's BIG and BAD, no one else seems to be scared of him, they just keep meddling with his plans – the troll under the bridge, the three annoying pigs, and that pesky Little Red Riding Hood! This is going to take all his brain power and his most cunning smile...



Warning: Magic Can Be Dangerous!
by B. Ware
Cranthorpe Millner
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781803781778
Published 30th April
Age range: 8+

Join 11-year-old Tyler as he embarks on an exciting yet turbulent venture, with newfound magical powers at his fingertips. Unfamiliar with his new abilities, will Tyler be able to control the chaos that is left in his wake? Being able to conjure up a swimming pool and a wodge of cash are certainly perks. Yet the magic proves tricky to control. What's more, it seems to be irreversible... a deliciously entertaining adventure with a huge dollop of magic and a generous sprinkling of silliness.



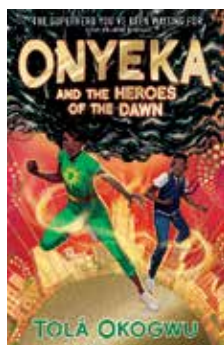
Mysteries at Sea: The Royal Jewel Plot
by A.M. Howell
Usborne • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781801316750
Published 11th April
Age range: 8+

A new instalment of the bestselling *Mysteries at Sea* series. Alice and Sonny are excited for their summer trip, sailing on the luxurious yacht the *Lady Rose*. They're even more excited when they find out the King of England is going to be onboard too! There's also a precious jewel on the boat – a rare opal, kept in a tank protected by a poisonous octopus. Until one morning, Alice discovers that the opal and octopus are both missing...



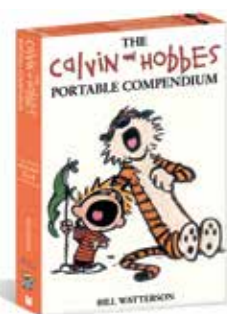
Make Art With Nature
by Pippa Pixley
DK • HB • £14.99
ISBN 9780241630709
Published 7th March
Age range: 7+

This book by artist Pippa Pixley will help you get creative and make incredible pieces of art using rocks, wood, berries, flowers, and leaves. Learn how to pour paint onto a canvas, how to put pencil to paper and draw, how bits of old paper can make a beautiful collage, and how different mediums can come together to create incredible prints. Become inspired as Pippa shows you a wide range of artistic techniques, from colour theory to fluidity.



Onyeka & The Heroes of Dawn
by Tola Okogwu
Simon & Schuster
Children's
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781398523128
Published 14th March
Age range: 8+

The third book in the action-packed superhero series. Solari – children with superpowers – have always been native to Nigeria, but Onyeka and her friends have been alerted to one hidden in England. Tasked with retrieving the young Solari, they successfully complete their mission, arriving safe and sound back at the Academy of the Sun with Tobi in tow. Tobi's identity and superpower remain a mystery, until Onyeka discovers the truth. But someone else has also found it...



The Calvin and Hobbes Portable Compendium Set 2
by Bill Watterson
Andrews McMeel
PB • £16.99
ISBN 9781524888046
Published 14th March
Age range: 8+

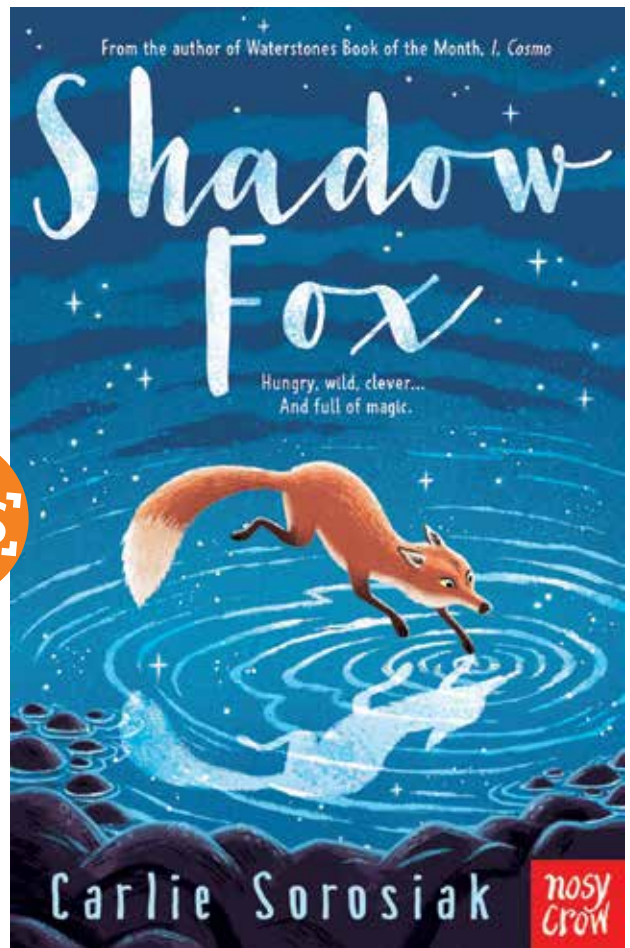
A second set of books collecting Bill Watterson's timeless *Calvin and Hobbes* comics in a new portable format. Featuring nearly 500 comics presented chronologically from March 1987 to July 1988, it also includes an archival slipcase and cover art selected by the author. Now the adventures of a boy and his stuffed tiger are available to a whole new generation of readers, as well as to existing fans of the hugely popular series.

Cunning & Guile

From the author of *My Life as a Cat* and *I, Cosmo* comes *Shadow Fox*, an enchanting story of loss, belonging and affection, narrated by a magical wild fox. When Bee's Nan goes missing, can she and her new foxy friend find her?

[KIDS]

Shadow Fox
by Carlie Sorosiak
Nosy Crow • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781839946585
Published 11th April
Age range: 9+



The narrator of the book is a hungry fox who loves to eat fish and to collect shoes! She particularly loves to eat the fish given to her by Nan every day at the motel. But it's been several days now and Nan has not appeared. Instead, a young girl is there, looking for something, or someone...

Bee's family runs the lakeside motel, offering rest and sustenance to weary travellers. But her grandmother has gone missing, and people suspect that she has drowned. But Bee knows that can't be true. And so does the hungry fox, who is cross that her supply of salmon has dried up and is determined to do something about it. Soon both Bee and the fox are on adventure to find Nan, uncover what's happening to all the secret islands on the Great Lake and learn just how far magical powers can take you... With a playful narrator and a cunning story, *Shadow Fox* takes us on a stirring quest to discover the truth.

In this extract, the fox experiences Bee's dreams:

Do you know that humans dream, just as foxes dream?

Right now, the girl is dreaming.

She's dreaming about them, the two of them traipsing through the snow. Ice crystals cling to their boots. Their footprints shimmer like fish scales. And both of them are dragging large bags of seed: tiny black seeds, yellow seeds, seeds with speckles in the middle.

'Would you like to talk about it?' Nan

asks, graceful on her long, gangly legs. Gentle lines trace the edges of her eyes, skin criss-crossing. One of her eyes is coloured brown, the other blue. Neither hold any danger.

The girl shakes her short, red hair. No talking, this says. *It's OK.*

"Their footprints shimmer like fish scales."

'Because we can,' Nan says, 'if you want to. We have a ways to walk before the last birdfeeder, and my ears – you know, these old ears – they still know how to listen.'

The corner of the girl's mouth tips up into a small, sad smile, right before her throat starts to quiver. 'Well... it's just that...' Her next words come in a burst. 'Do you think my mom likes me?'

Nan stops in her tracks, her face paling, 'Bee, your mother loves you.'

'Yeah,' the girl whispers, staring up at Nan, 'but does she like me? It's always "Bee's too wild, too messy too..."'

Nan drops the bag of seed, cutting her off with a hug. And I feel it – the way nan curls both arms around the girl, shielding her. Nan is a den, the calm in a winter storm. 'There's a saying I love,' she murmurs into the girl's hair. "All good things are wild." And you, little Bee, are the very best thing.'

Then the dream is over.

Once again – horribly, again – Nan is gone.

The girl wakes up, batting her eyelashes, her cheeks wet. The sun is barely golden outside her window, but she climbs out of her bed-nest. She tugs on her boots, the same ones as in the dream, and yanks Nan's woolly sweater over her head. It barely fits her, the fabric pooling around her wrists – but it smells like Nan. Like birds and pine and everything she loves.

Wiping her nose with the edge of the sweater, she heads into the lobby at the motel. Her head cocks. In the lobby, there's a stranger. A man she's never seen before, wearing a scarf made of fishing nets, and offering her a story. *You're supposed to be the chosen one*, he explains fast-fast-fast. *Beatrice is the chosen one...*

How... how did I just see all that? Why was I thinking all that? These are supposed to be my dreams. Mine! Not some sweater-stealing girl's. Even if I miss Nan's fish, even if a part of me is desperate to find her, this isn't right. I shouldn't be thinking what the girl is thinking, dreaming what the girl is dreaming.

So! Inside the shoe tent, the moment I wake up, I squeeze my eyelids shut. I pretend. For a few seconds in the wee hours of the day, I like to pretend that I am not the only fox in the den, not the only one curled in an orange bundle, not the only kit with soft dreams. Listen, there it is. The humming of breath, the *chutter-chutter* of quiet snores...

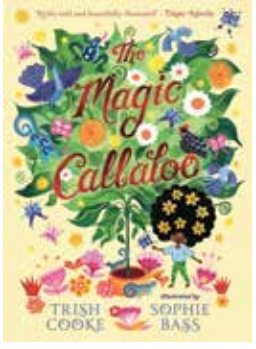
But I can't pretend forever.

At some point, I must open my eyes.



Reading Delights

Including a picture book, a magical story and a funny history of Ancient Egypt, these new releases from Walker Books are perfect for little and young readers.



The Magic Callaloo
by Trish Cooke
Illustrated by Sophie Bass
Walker Books • HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781529504880
Published 4th April
Age range: 3+

A beautiful picture book based on the fairy tale *Rapunzel* and inspired by stories of enslaved Africans. Long ago and far away, a magic callaloo plant grew in a village square. Whoever ate one of its leaves was granted a wish. But a greedy selfish man wanted all the wishes for himself so he stole the callaloo. With only one leaf left, Mister and Missus, desperate for a child, pluck it to make their dream come true. But the greedy man wants *everything* and he kidnaps their beloved daughter, who will ultimately make the most remarkable escape.

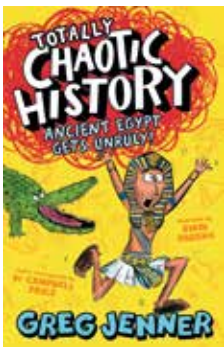


The Magician's House
Winnifred Pixie sat at her kitchen table and eyed the precious jar in front of her. Thousands of golden specks of Wanderdust swirled inside the glass container. Winnifred sensed the restless excitement, the same excitement was inside her own heart. Tonight was the night.
The magician beamed herself boxing up breakables and tying down furniture. It had been years since she'd last travelled via Wanderdust, but she remembered a lot of jostling and bumps along the way. As the snap of Winnifred's fingers, a crystal vase swooped from the mantelpiece and



The Magician Next Door
by Rachel Chivers Khoo
Illustrated by Alice McKinley
Walker Books • PB • £6.99
ISBN 9781529507911
Published 7th March
Age range: 7+

A new magical adventure from the author of *The Wishkeeper's Apprentice*. Late one night a flying house crash-lands in ten-year-old Callie's garden. It is the home of magician Winnifred and all of her magical artefacts. Winnifred asks for Callie's help finding her lost Wanderdust – until she realizes it is Callie's sadness that is the cause of her malfunctioning magic. With Winnifred's most precious magical possessions at risk from malicious pixies and dangerous giants, can Callie and her friend Sam find the Wanderdust in time to save the magician?



Totally Chaotic History: Ancient Egypt Gets Unruly!
by Greg Jenner & Dr Campbell Price
Illustrated by Rikin Parekh
Walker Books • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781406395655
Published 4th April
Age range: 8+

The first book in a funny new history series from the bestselling author and podcaster Greg Jenner. Accompanied by expert Egyptologist Dr Campbell Price and with side-splitting illustrations from Rikin Parekh, Greg's whirlwind tour of Ancient Egypt will cover everything you need to know about the Egyptians and show you what it would REALLY have been like to live through thousands of years of chaotic history. Hold on tight, because, with history, you'll never believe what happens next!



Testing Times

In this third book in the bestselling fantasy series, Skandar and his friends must undertake the Chaos Trials, a series of gruelling and scary tests linked to the elements of earth, fire, water and air. We interviewed the author A.F. Steadman to discover more!



This is the third book in the series, are you discovering more about the characters as you write?

Yes, definitely. They get older every year, so I'm thinking about how they age up, what kind of person they are, and who they are becoming as they mature. That's been a really fun part of the project, the fact that they do grow up and face things. In the Chaos Trials they've got the horror of the challenges to face. It's like a school disco, the first time that happens and you don't really know how to feel about it! Having established the personalities of the quartet – Skandar, Bobby, Mitchell and Flo – early on, and then thinking about how they're going to deal with that part of growing up, I definitely discovered more about them from there. Putting them in situations like the Chaos Trials, where it's very intense and very stressful, I definitely discovered some inner strengths for some of them, and some fears for some of them, that I didn't know was there. I like to think I know everything about them but sometimes they do surprise me!

At the beginning of the book, the unicorns are behaving badly – do you see this as them entering their difficult adolescence, like teenagers?

Yes, I wanted there to be this element, by the time we reach the third book, that the unicorns know that they are stronger than humans, and that they are the ultimate predators. It's a reminder for the reader, as well. By the second book we've really got to know these unicorns, particularly of the quartet, and they sort of feel quite friendly and like something you'd go and give a hug to. So I wanted to put in a bit of a shock – actually these are bloodthirsty unicorns, and they are growing up. The unicorns are growing up and they have their own issues, and the human characters are growing up too. You put that together and you have a very explosive third year of training at the Eyrie.

“The unicorns are dangerous but the island is dangerous too”

The book is all about the Chaos Trials, what was the inspiration for this fantastical tournament?

I liked the idea of collecting something throughout the trials. If you play board games or video games, it's something that's fundamental. I wanted them to collect something physical, because I like writing about things that children can imagine holding in their hands. That's where the Solstice Stones came from, and then I had to think about how the island would test them? How would they deal with the fact that their unicorns are going to be out of control, unless they do something quite scary? I wanted each of the trials to have elements of the elements themselves, so it tells you a little bit more about the people who are allied to each element and also the natural element of the island in itself. It also came from me wanting to expand the world in this book, and to get the riders out into the zones. I wanted to show that the unicorns are dangerous but the island is dangerous too.

In the book, Kenna has to go and hide out in the wilderness with the Wanderers. How to you see the Wanderers, somewhere between the mainstream rule of the Eyrie and the rebelliousness of the Weaver?

Yes, I wanted the Wanderers to be a safe space, perhaps for readers who are starting to question the way that the island operates. As we begin the first book, Skandar accepts that this is the way everything works, that the strongest person becomes the leader. Through the second book, there's a lot going on and it's hard to know what is right and wrong. But I think by the end of the second book, we are thinking, 'hang on a minute, this seems a bit unfair'. The Wanderers are the start of Skandar beginning to question the way the island runs, and whether or not it is how he would want to live there. I wanted them to be these free people who have

rejected everything else. And it's not just a case of being chucked out of the Eyrie and nothing else happens, there's a whole other aspect to the world. Some early readers of the book have said to me 'I think I'd quite like to be a Wanderer – that's where I see myself because I wouldn't want to be battling, and I wouldn't want to be doing anything else towards the Chaos Cup, I'd quite like to be part of the magic, not participating in that fundamental part of it.' They are a middle space, for those questioning where they belong on the island.

The relationships between siblings comes to the fore in this book – Skandar and Kenna, Bobby and her sister Isa, Erika the Weaver and her sister Agatha. Do you think that sometimes these bonds are so close they are easy to break?

I'm the older sister to two brothers. I wanted to show that you can be really, really close and still really, really fall out. It's a relationship where they both still love each other but they're not really sure where they stand. They are growing apart, but they still have all these memories together. With Agatha and the Weaver, there's still that bond there, but so many terrible things have happened between them. I wanted to show the sibling link in a way that explores how fundamental it is, because you're always going to be siblings, no matter what or how much you upset each other. It's pushing those bonds of sisterhood and brotherhood to the limit. It's something that children can relate to, falling out with a sibling, and how they go forward in that relationship.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

They're the doorway to reading for so many children. I think of them as a constellation across the UK. I've always felt like they are safe spaces, very welcoming.



Skandar and the Chaos Trials

by A.F. Steadman

Simon & Schuster Children's

HB • £14.99

ISBN 9781398502956

Published 25th April

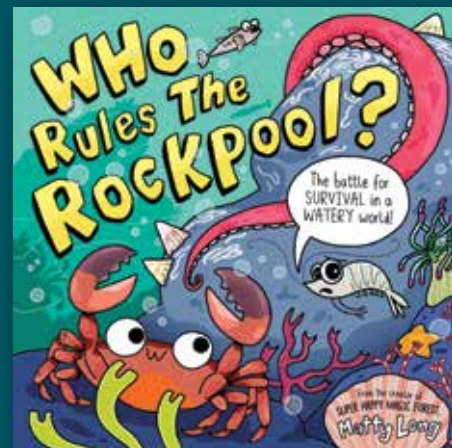
Age range: 9+

Look out for a limited signed edition with special endpapers and a gold ribbon, available exclusively from independent bookshops!

Rocking Out

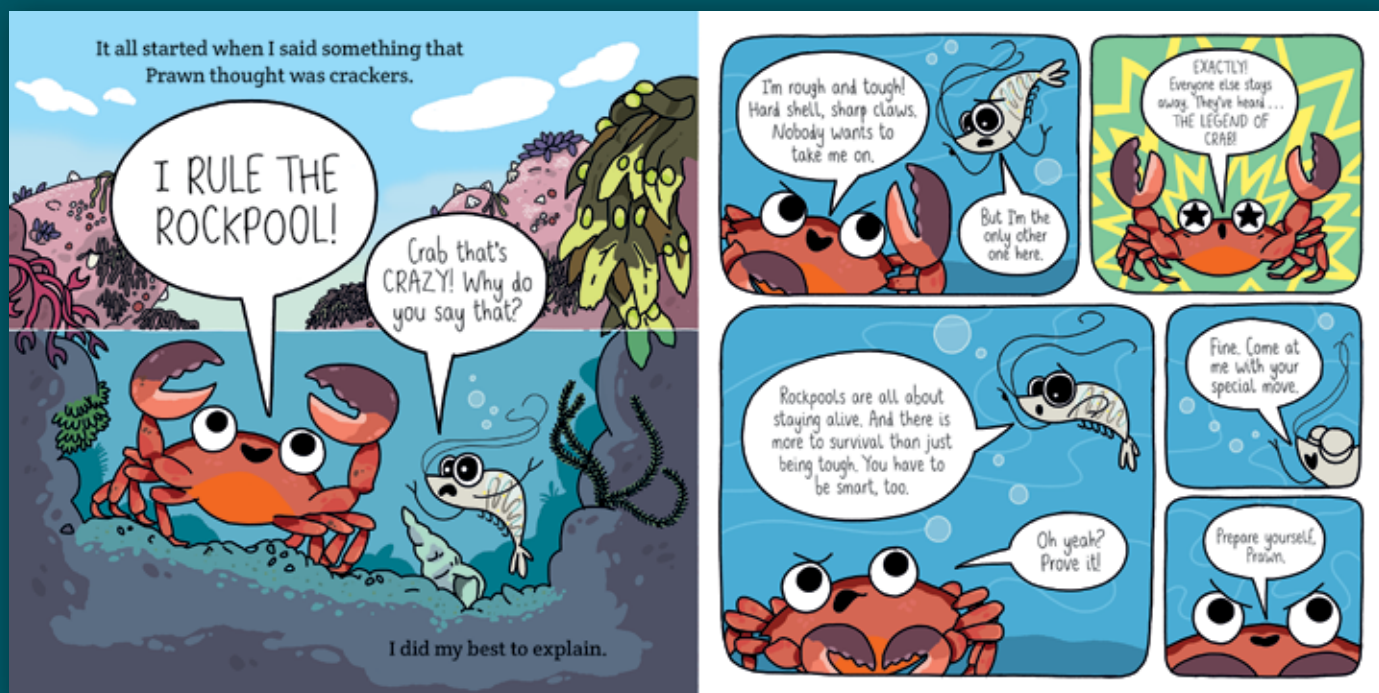
Who Rules the Rockpool?
by Matty Long
Oxford Children's Books
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9780192784551
Out Now
Age range: 5+

[KIDS]



“The colourful, cartoon-like illustrations, speech bubbles and plenty of witty one-liners make this busy picture book an entertaining read.”

BookTrust



Look out for the previous book in the series:



Who Ate All The Bugs?
by Matty Long
Oxford Children's Books
PB • £6.99
ISBN 9780192772633
Out Now
Age range: 5+

Snail is on a mission. Bugs are being eaten all around her and she's determined to hunt down the culprit. But is it a lost cause? After all, as Glowworm explains, 'You can't fight the food chain'. Find out more about the lives of invertebrates with this fun picture book.

“An entertaining and educational introduction to the rockpool ecosystem, Who Rules The Rockpool? is also suspenseful and very, very funny.”

Anya Glazer

Children's & YA Fiction



The City Beyond the Stars

by Zohra Nabi
Simon & Schuster
Children's
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781398517738
Published 11th April
Age range: 8+

The thrilling sequel to *The Kingdom Over the Sea*, set in a lavish world of sorceresses, alchemists, jinn and flying carpets. Confined to the besieged Settlement, Yara longs to return to Zehaira and free her mother from the alchemists. When she receives a message to find the Official Residence of the Grand High Sorceress, she and her friends go to search for it, convinced that they will also find powerful magic to defeat the alchemists.



The Spectaculars: The Wild Song Contest

by Jodie Garnish
Usborne • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781801312561
Published 14th March
Age range: 9+

The second book in the *Spectaculars* series set at Wondria, a magical travelling theatre school. Harper can't wait for her second year of Spectacular training, where a song can send you on a rollercoaster, a dance can lift you into the air, and you can send notes to your friends via a mechanical dragon. This year, Wondria is hosting the Spectacular Song Contest, where theatres from across the Hidden Peaks will compete to win the Wild Song...



King of Nothing

by Nathanael Lessore
Hot Key Books
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781471413247
Published 11th April
Age range: 12+

A funny YA comedy from the author of *Steady for This*. Anton and his friends are the kings of Year 9. They're used to ruling the school and Anton wears the crown. So when he gets into serious trouble at school, he doesn't really care, but his mum most definitely does. She decides it's time for Anton to make some new friends and join the Happy Campers, a local activity group. And then Anton finds out that Matthew, the biggest loser in school, is also a member...



Starminster

by Megan Hopkins
HarperCollins
Children's
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9780008626891
Published 25th April
Age range: 8+

An epic and soaring adventure story. Astrid has lived in the rhubarb shed her whole life. The outside world is dangerous, Mama explains; she will understand when she's older, but she cannot set foot beyond the door. Astrid longs to see the stars. Then one night, a stranger unlocks the shed: a stranger with wings. She has come to take Astrid to a secret city in the sky called London Overhead, far above the highest peak of the Shard. For Astrid is a Librae and will soon also grow wings...



The Prisoner's Throne

by Holly Black
Hot Key Books
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781471411403
Published 5th March
Age range: 12+

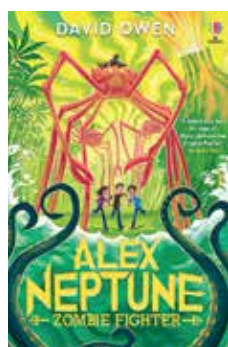
The highly anticipated conclusion to the *Stolen Heir* duology. Prince Oak is paying for his betrayal. Imprisoned in the icy north and bound to the will of a monstrous new queen, he must rely on charm and calculation to survive. With High King Cardan and High Queen Jude ready to use any means necessary to retrieve their stolen heir, should Oak attempt to regain the trust of the girl he's always loved, or remain loyal to Elfhome and hand over the means to end her reign?



The Last Bloodcarver

by Vanessa Le
Rock the Boat
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9780861547968
Published 21st March
Age range: 13+

An original YA fantasy novel. Nhika is a bloodcarver. She has the power to alter human biology – to heal or to harm with just a touch. In Theumas, Nhika is seen as a monster who kills for pleasure, and her gift is highly prized in the city's criminal underworld. When Nhika is finally captured, she is sold to the highest bidder – an aristocratic girl dressed in white. But her mysterious buyer is not looking for an assassin. She needs Nhika to heal the only witness to her father's murder.



Alex Neptune, Zombie Fighter

by David Owen
Usborne • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781805316817
Published 11th April
Age range: 9+

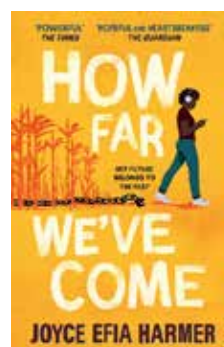
The fourth book in the series of action-packed adventures featuring Alex Neptune. When a creepy fog rolls into Haven Bay, Alex, Zoey and Anil are ambushed by terrifying crab-riding zombies, controlled by the evil spirit of Brineblood the pirate. The only weapon that can stop Brineblood's zombie army is a powerful trident – but it's been broken into three pieces. The three pals must enter three deadly worlds that have been magically trapped in bottles to retrieve the pieces...



The Isle of the Gods

by Amie Kaufman
Rock the Boat
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9780861545834
Published 14th March
Age range: 12+

A riveting romantic fantasy story about a seafaring girl and playboy prince who band together in a perilous journey. Selly has salt water in her veins. So when her father leaves her high and dry in the port of Kirkpool, she has no intention of riding out the winter at home while he sails to adventure in the north seas. But any plans to follow him are dashed when a handsome stranger with tell-tale magician's marks on his arms commandeers her ship under cover of darkness...



How Far We've Come

by Joyce Efi Harmer
Simon & Schuster
Children's
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781398511026
Published 28th March
Age range: 14+

A groundbreaking debut novel of friendship and freedom. Enslaved on a plantation in Barbados, Obah dreams of freedom. As talk of rebellion bubbles up around her in the Big House, she imagines escape. Meeting a strange boy who's not quite of this world, she decides to put her trust in him. But Jacob is from the twenty-first century. Desperate to give Obah a better life, he takes her back with him. At first it seems like dreams really do come true – until the cracks begin to show...

A Cute Angle

In this fun new comic book from the award-winning author and illustrator Sophy Henn, Ace the unicorn is on his way to Sad Valley when he finds himself in Happy Hills. The characters who live there are full of energy and eager for Ace to stick around... We interviewed Sophy to discover how she created it!



What inspired you to create *Happy Hills*? How different is writing a comic book to a picture book or an illustrated children's book?

I really love the cute Japanese kawaii style of illustration. And I loved the idea of taking something that was visually cute and giving it a full-on energy, big personalities and flawed characters. Our modern day quest for perfection, which is constantly thrust at us, is just so silly. I loved the idea of characters who looked one way, but their personalities really contrasted that, and gave them an anarchic energy and a sense of fun. I love comics, ever since my *Twinkle* and *Beano* days as a child. Three of my series have come from a comic book I made for my daughter, quite a while ago now! I did an MA when I decided I wanted to get into children's books, and that's when I created *Where Bear?*, my first picture book. But I also created a comic for my daughter, because we found that the girl comics at the time went one way. So I created a comic book with a variety of characters. *Bad Nana*, *Pom Pom* and *Pizazz* all started life in that comic, which was called *Pickle*. I used comics to tell stories, and *Pizazz* is illustrated fiction but with comics within it. The comic strips became longer and longer within those books, so the next logical step was to go all in! I was very nervous to do it, as it's a lot of drawing, and you always worry when you go into a different format, but it's good to challenge yourself.

Did you come up with the pictures and the characters first, or the story? Or did they develop at the same time?

I mapped out what was going to go on every page, then I wrote and sketched the detail at the same time. I knew what each comic strip within it was going to cover, but then

wrote it as I drew it. I thought of the characters first, they tend to be my starting point. I really enjoyed creating them, and their personalities, which develop over each book. I thought I was going to do it all digitally at first, but then I ended up using a mixture of ink and digital. Possibly not the most efficient way to work, but it gave me what I wanted visually!

Would you like to visit Happy Hills? Or would you prefer to go to Sad Valley?

I think I would fit in at Happy Hills! I do love all the characters, and I think I would equally annoy Ace. My flawed high energy would irritate him!

The many characters have different ideas about how Happy Hills was created – do you think any of them is true?

I think they each believe them to be true, but I think Spatz's more logical idea of how Happy Hills came about is probably the most accurate! But you never know, a town could grow from regurgitated sweets...

Do you have a favourite character from the book?

It's really funny, when I started I didn't. But as the first book went on, I really liked Captain. He's become my absolute favourite, he reminds me of a 1950s film star idol. That very suave personality, but he's also chaotic and silly.

"I think I would fit in at Happy Hills!"

Have you written the tunes to the songs in the book?

When I put down the recorder aged ten, I never picked up another instrument! I'm not very musically minded. But the *Happy Hills Song* and the *Happy Hills Goodbye Song* are to the tune of *O Christmas Tree*. In the second book, there's a big parade at the end and that's written to the tune of *The Liberty Bell*, known for being the *Monty Python* theme music. I had great fun having those playing in my head.



Happy Hills: Attack of the Giant Danger Kittens

by Sophy Henn
Simon & Schuster Children's
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781398524606
Published 25th April
Age range: 5+

The book is the first in a new series – do you have the whole series planned out?

I'm taking it one book at a time. I believe there will be three, and who knows after that. You never know how long you've got to tell the story, but I hope each book stand on its own, and that readers will enjoy the fun and energy, and connect with the characters.

Which other authors and illustrators inspire you in your writing and illustrating?

There are so many. At the moment I've come back to Dick Bruna, who I love for how sparing he was. I love *Miffy*, and also all the *Maigret* covers that he did. I've just finished a picture book, which will be out in 2025, and I'm really excited about it because the illustrations are very sparing. I used to work in advertising and graphic design, so it waking those old skills up again and stripping it down. But Charles Schulz was the absolute master of comic strips, taking those big themes and big ideas and not being afraid to present them in that way, that appeals to everyone, across all the ages. *Happy Hills* was partly inspired by the Hanna-Barbera cartoons, that fun energy.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I've never been shy of declaring my love for independent bookshops and I've happily painted many a window, and done lots of events in them! When you spend a lot of time in these shops, you see how they are such an important part of their community. It's that deep-dive knowledge, that human search engine. They can really get the right books in the hands of the right children. They promote and get authors into schools. Bottom line – they're great!



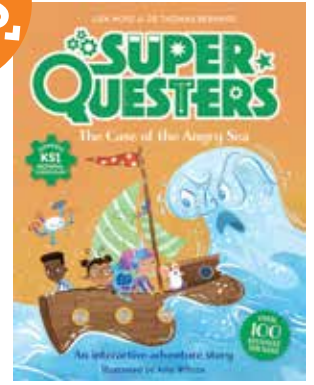
Meet the SuperQuesters!

The superheroes who take children on exciting interactive adventures!

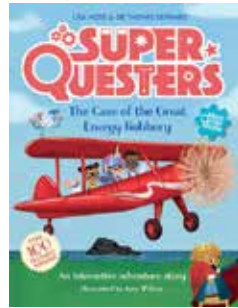
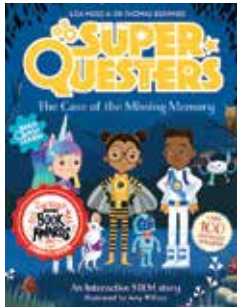
The SuperQuesters – Lillicorn, Bea Bumble and Leo Zoom – love solving problems and helping the Queen of Questland foil Lord Grumble’s latest dastardly plan. But they need the reader’s help to complete each mission in Questland. As young readers enjoy the story and puzzles, they will learn KS1 science, coding and maths skills and become a superhero along the way.



SuperQuesters: The Case of the Angry Sea
by Lisa Moss & Dr Thomas Bernard
QuestFriendz • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9789083294391
Published 14th March
Age range: 5-8 years



Also in the SuperQuesters series



“A fun, interactive book for inquisitive minds.”

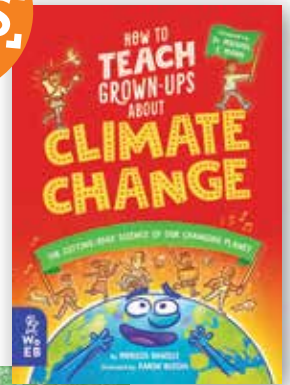
Konnie Huq, author & presenter



Time for the Grown-Ups to get up to Speed!

A cutting-edge guide to climate change, which puts kids in charge!

How to Teach Grown-Ups About Climate Change
by Patricia Daniels
Illustrated by Aaron Blecha
Foreword by Dr Michael E. Mann
What on Earth Books • HB • £9.99
ISBN 9781804660300
Published 7th March 2024
Age range: 8+



Climate change is happening – and it’s happening now! Thankfully, this empowering and entertaining guide is here to help. Faced with even the most stubborn grown-up, young readers will be able to:

- Teach their grown-ups the causes behind Earth’s changing climate
- Explain why we cannot let it get worse – and how to make it better
- Debunk the myths, and present the scientific facts
- Test that their grown-ups have been paying attention, with a helpful quiz at the end



Back to Life

Holly Jackson, author of the bestselling *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder* series and *Five Survive*, returns with *The Reappearance of Rachel Price*, an unmissable new YA thriller. Bel, 18, has lived her life in the shadow of her mother Rachel's mysterious disappearance. But now Rachel is back...

Bel was just twenty-two months old when her mother Rachel Price disappeared, leaving Bel alone in the back seat of her car. Despite not remembering her mother or anything about the day she vanished, Bel has grown up in the small town of Gorham, New Hampshire, with her mother's disappearance hanging over her. Suspicion fell on her father Charlie, but he had an alibi for the time of Rachel's disappearance, and was found not guilty in court.

Now, sixteen years later, Bel and her family have agreed to appear in a new true crime documentary series about the case, directed by British filmmaker Ramsey Lee. But that's just the start of a rollercoaster ride for Bel, when Rachel Price reappears during the filming. Where has she been all these years? A fast-paced mystery with a killer twist, *The Reappearance of Rachel Price* is ideal for fans of Karen M. McManus and E. Lockhart.

*“Twisty, compulsive
and so, so clever”*

Savannah Brown on *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*

This extract is from the beginning of the novel:

‘What do you think happened to your mother?’

The word sounded wrong to Bel when he said it. *Mother*. Unnatural. Not quite as bad as *Mom*. That one pushed between her lips, misshapen and mad, like a bloated slug finally breaking free, splatting there on the floor for everyone to stare at. Because everyone *would*, everyone always did. The word didn't belong in her mouth, so Bel didn't say it, not if she could help it. At least there was a coldness to *mother*, a sense of distance.

*“Jackson is the
queen of young
adult novels”*

Independent

‘It's OK, please take your time,’ Ramsey said, the vowels clipped and exposed.

Bel looked across at him, avoiding the camera. Lines of concern crisscrossed his black skin, pulling around his eyes as they fixed on Bel's, because she was already taking her time, too much, more than she had in the pre-interviews the past few days. He reached up to scratch his temple, right where his dark coiled hair faded out above his ears. Ramsey Lee: filmmaker, director, from South London –

a whole world away, and yet here he was in Gorham, New Hampshire, sitting across from her.

Ramsey cleared his throat.

‘Um...’ Bel began, choking on that slug. ‘I don't know.’

Ramsey sat back, his chair creaking, and Bel knew from the flicker of disappointment in his face that she was doing a bad job. Worse. It must have been the camera. The camera changed things, the permanence of it. One day thousands of people would watch this, separated from her only by the glass of their television screens. They would analyze every word she said, every pause she took, and have something to say about it. They'd study her face: her warm white skin and the flush of her cheeks, her sharp chin that sharpened more when she spoke and especially when she smiled, her short honey-blond hair, her round gray-blue eyes. *Doesn't she look just like Rachel did*, they'd say, those people beyond the television screen. Bel thought she looked like her dad, actually. Thanks, though.

‘Sorry,’ Bel added, pressing her eyelids together, bright orange patches where the three softbox lights glared at her. She just had to get through this documentary, pretend to not be hating every second, talk about Rachel, then life could go back to normal, back to not talking about Rachel.

Ramsey shook his head, a smile breaking through.

‘Don't worry,’ he said. ‘It's a difficult question.’

It wasn't though, not really. And the answer wasn't difficult either. Bel really

didn't know what had happened to her. No-one did. That was the point of all this.

'I think she was—'

Someone stumbled behind the camera, tripping on a cable that ripped out of the wall. One of the lights flickered and died, swaying on its rickety leg. A hand reached out to grab it before it fell, righting it.

“A blisteringly good standalone thriller.”

The Observer on *Five Survive*

'Oh sh*t. Sorry Rams,' the tripper said, chasing the loose wire back to the outlet. Now the light was out, Bel could see him properly for the first time. She couldn't say she'd noticed him before, when Ramsey had introduced the crew, too dazzled by the lights and the camera. He must have been the youngest of the four documentary crew members, couldn't be much older than her. And he was, just maybe, the most ridiculous person Bel had ever seen. He had shoulder-length brown hair that fell in thick curls, pushed off to one side of his pale face, full of angles and shadows. He wore flared tartan pants and a bright purple sweater with little green and yellow dinosaurs marching across his chest.

'Sorry,' he said again, the o giving him away; must be from London too. He grunted as he pushed the plug in and the light sparked back to life, hiding him from Bel. Thank God, that ugly sweater was distracting.

'I told you to gaffer all the wires down, Ash,' Ramsey said, shifting to glance behind the box light.

'I did...' came Ash's voice from behind the light, somehow angular, just like his face. 'Until the tape ran out.'

'Mate, we have like fifty thousand rolls upstairs,' Ramsey replied.

'Fifty-thousand and one,' said the woman standing behind the microphone: a long pole balanced on a tripod, with a fluffy gray head hovering over Bel and Ramsey, just above the shot. Saba, that's what Ramsey had called her, introducing her as *The Sound Person*. She was wearing a huge pair of headphones that dwarfed her face, pushing the brown skin of her cheeks into unnatural folds.

'Sorry,' came Ash's voice. 'I'll fix it later.'

'It's OK,' Ramsey said, his face softening for a second. Then, to the man behind the huge camera: 'James, why are you panning to Ash?'

'Thought we were aiming for a cinema verité style for the doc, that you might want this in,' the camera operator replied.

'No, I don't want this in. Let's re-set the shot and go for another take. And everyone watch where you're stepping this time.'

Ramsey flashed an apologetic smile at Bel, sitting here on a plush couch across from the all, the cushions artfully arranged

and re-arranged behind her.

'Ash is my brother-in-law,' he said, as though in explanation. 'Known him since he was eleven. It's his first job, isn't it Ash? Camera assistant.'

Ash: camera assistant. Saba: sound person. James: camera operator. And Ramsey: filmmaker, producer, director. Must have been nice, to have words like that follow your name, words you'd chosen. Bel's were different: 'This is Annabel. The daughter of Rachel Price.' That last part said in a knowing whisper. Because even though Rachel was gone, everything existed only in relation to her. Gorham wasn't its own place anymore; it was the town where Rachel Price had lived. Number thirty-three Milton Street wasn't Bel's home, it was the house Rachel Price had lived in. Bel's dad, Charlie Price, well, he was *Rachel Price's husband*, even though the Price part had come from him.

'Ash, the clapper,' Ramsey reminded him.

'Oh.' Ash emerged from behind the light, a black-and-white clapperboard clasped between his hands. Printed on it were the words *The Disappearance of Rachel Price*. The name of the documentary. Below that, a handwritten: *Interview with Bel*. And she was surprised, really, that it didn't just say *Rachel Price's Daughter*.

Ash walked in front of the camera, the hems of his pants swishing loudly together.

'Take six,' he said bringing the clapper stick down to the slate with a sharp bang, hurrying out of the shot.

'Let's start again.' Ramsey let out a long outward breath. They'd been here for hours already, and it was starting to show on his face. 'Your mum has now been missing for more than sixteen years. In all that time, there has been no sign of her. No activity on her bank accounts, no communication with family, no body found despite extensive searches. Of course there have been sightings,' he said, leaning on the word too hard so it came out sideways. 'People on the internet who claim to have seen Rachel in Paris. Brazil. Even one a few months ago nearby in North Conway. But of course, these are unsubstantiated claims. Your mum vanished without a trace on February 13th 2008. What do you think happened to her?'

Bel couldn't say *I don't know* again, otherwise she'd never be allowed to leave.

'It's as much a mystery for me as the rest of the world,' she said, and

from the flash in Ramsey's eyes, she knew that was a better answer. OK, keep going. 'I know all the theories people have about what happened. And if I had to pick the one...'

Ramsey nodded, urging her on.

'I think she was trying to leave. She left. Then maybe she was killed by an opportunistic killer – that's the term the media use. Or maybe she got lost in the White Mountains and died in the snow, and an animal got her remains. That's why we never found her.'

“A taut, compulsively readable, elegantly plotted thriller”

The Guardian on *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*

The Reappearance of Rachel Price

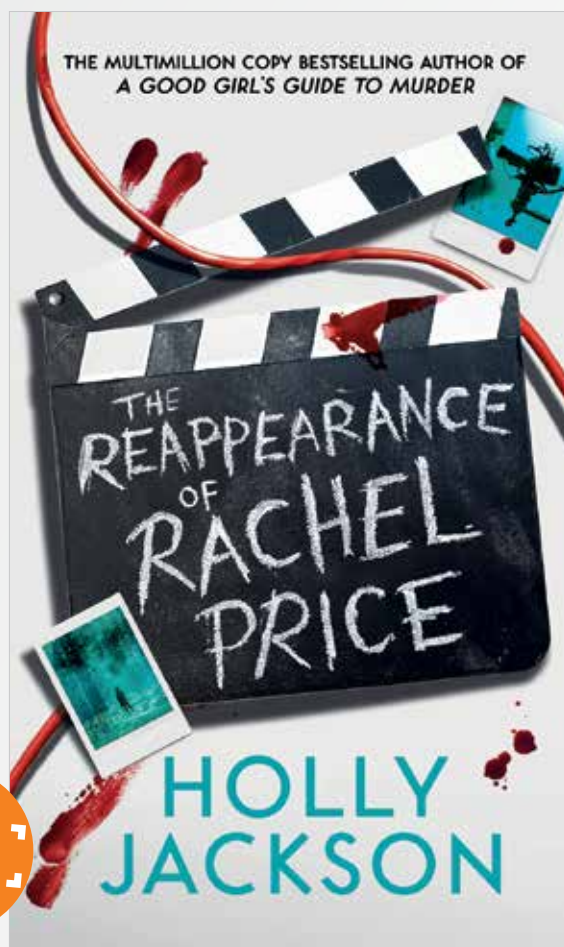
by Holly Jackson

Electric Monkey • HB • £14.99

ISBN 9780008582197

Published 2nd April

Age range: 14+



Secrets & Lies

A new, twisty mystery from the bestselling author of *Ace of Spades*, *Where Sleeping Girls Lie* is set at a prestigious boarding school full of deadly secrets. Can Sade find her way through the web of intrigue at Alfred Nobel Academy?

Sade Hussein has always been home-schooled, so she has no idea what to expect when she steps through the doors of her imposing new home, Alfred Nobel Academy. With both her parents dead, she's hoping that the new school will be the start of a new life for her, and that she will be able to find new friends. The building is beautiful both outside and in, and she soon warms to her new roommate, Elizabeth, and her friend Baz.

But something is amiss at Alfred Nobel Academy. For a start, there's the dead rat left outside Sade and Elizabeth's room. Then, on Sade's very first night at the school, Elizabeth goes missing. And, as the new girl, people seem to think that Sade had something to do with it. Suddenly everyone is talking about Sade, including the Unholy Trinity, a group of the most popular girls at the school, and her hopes of blending in are shattered. Sade wants to know what happened to Elizabeth, particularly as no one else seems to care.

And then a student is found dead. Sade and her new friends must uncover the truth surrounding Elizabeth's disappearance and bring the culprits to justice, before Sade's own secrets catch up to her. Combining an intriguing mystery with a contemporary romance and a coming-of-age story, *Where Sleeping Girls Lie* explores themes of survival, assertion and community.

In this extract, it's Sade's first day and Baz tells her all about the different students in the lunch hall:

'Then over there, you have the theatre nerds; their speciality is randomly breaking out in song and pissing everyone off in the process. But I digress. That guy back there, I heard that at the last Hawking party, he almost killed the orange-haired fellow over there because of a "missing" stash of pills...'

Baz gestured to a red-headed guide at a different table.

"Àbíké-Íyímídé is back with a knife-sharp novel pointed right at the heart of society's darkest corners."

Andrew Joseph White

'He's on the swim team, which is significant because swimmer boy is the stepson of the headmaster and would probably be banished if found with said drugs...'

Baz was throwing so much information at her that it was getting increasing hard to follow.

'What's a Hawking party?' Sade asked instead of trying to understand what he had just said.

'They're essentially high school frat parties thrown by the lowlifes who occupy Hawking House,' Elizabeth murmured, eating her pot of jelly and scrolling through her phone.

'A lot of people would kill to get an invite, Lizzie – myself included. I heard that at the last party, one of the fourth years gifted a Rolex watch to each guest,' Baz said, his eyes wide.

'Baz, you already have a Rolex,' Elizabeth said.

'Yes, but it's not the same as being gifted one by an attractive senior named Chad.'

'Sounds like a lot of fun,' Sade said.

'Far from it,' Elizabeth replied just as Baz exclaimed, 'I bet it is.'

The two began to bicker and Sade found herself zoning out, now watching other groups in the lunch hall and making her own observations. It was like witnessing a social experiment, this seeming primitive instinct to split off and go into these little groups. It was so different from her home life and reminded her of movies she had grown up watching. She wondered whether people were aware of how many clichés they fulfilled on a daily basis.

Between the cliques, the unpleasant matron, and the drama, Sade wouldn't be surprised if she turned around a camera crew along with a studio audience were there watching her first day of high school unfold like a scene out of *The Truman Show*.

A sudden shift in the air pulled her from her thoughts.

The loud rumble of voices in the hall began to soften, heads turning to the



entrance of the room.

Sade turned too, wondering what had caused the abrupt change.

And that's when she saw them: the three girls who had captured everyone's interest.

Sade watched as they took their seats at one of the tables in the centre, seemingly unaware of the way their presence transformed the room.

'Who are they?' Sade asked Baz, staring at the girls, eyes drifting to the blonde with the brown skin and those 1920s finger waves in her hair. She looked as though she'd stepped out from a painting – they all did.

'The wildly attractive girls who just walked in?' Baz asked, looking in the same direction as her.

Sade nodded.

'People call them a lot of things: she-devils, the wicked bitches of the west, and my favourite, the *Unholy Trinity*. Dramatic names, but pretty accurate if you know even a little bit about them. I heard that they get together on the weekends and perform demonic rituals in order to keep their skin blemish free.'

'Baz, don't tell me you actually believe that,' Elizabeth said, giving him a deadpan expression.

'Hey, I'm a social anthropologist. I'm just reporting what I hear!' he replied, holding his hands up.

'Are they popular?' Sade asked. In every movie about cliques, there were always the popular ones.

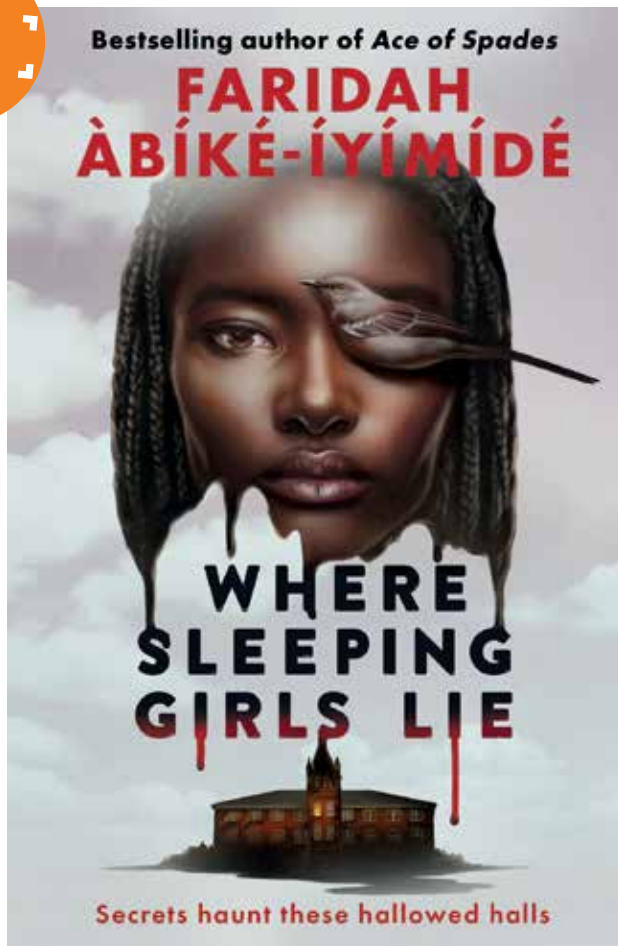
'I guess so, yeah. Not in the same way the Diamond Ring are – those are the girls whose families come from the oldest money you can imagine,' he said, gesturing to a group of glamorous-looking girls on a different table. 'The Unholy Trinity are more popular for being pretty, which is honestly a goal of mine,' Baz said.

Sade chewed on one of her fries, watching the blonde again, feeling the hairs on her arm raise and her chest vibrate.

She turned to look at the other two: a South Asian girl with dark olive skin and long black wavy hair that seemed to flow down past her lower back, and in between them both, possibly the most objectively beautiful girl she had ever seen. And Sade clearly wasn't the only one who had noticed. The girl had everyone glancing her way, though she seemed unconcerned with the hold she had over the people of the lunch hall. She had long, bone-straight black hair, dark skin, and reminded Sade of a younger, curvier Naomi Campbell.

Baz spoke again in a lower tone. 'The one with *the hair* is Juliette de Silva she's the goalie of the girls' lacrosse team and has an encyclopaedic knowledge of everyone and everything... *Allegedly* her dad owns the guy who owns Google.'

Sade wasn't sure if Baz was being serious, but from the look on his face there didn't seem to be irony in his words.



Where Sleeping Girls Lie

by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé

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Age range: 14+

“Flawless mystery.”

Chloe Gong

pushed his jelly pot over to Elizabeth and she accepted it with a faint 'thank you'. It made him smile.

Something about the way the two interacted felt intimate. The sort of intimacy that you share with those you've known for an entire lifetime. Sade felt something twist inside and she swallowed the permanent lump in her throat.

Tearing her eyes away from them, she examined the hall again, focusing on others instead of her own internal demons.

Without meaning to, her guys landed on the unholy trinity again, and she let herself get lost in them.

It was so easy to.

It made sense that their beauty was what they were well-known for. Even she was under their effortless spell.

Her eyes focus on April, who was applying a thin layer of gloss to her lips. Then on Juliette, who was laughing at something someone must have said. Then, slowly, her gaze shifted towards the blonde she had spotted first, stopping short at a pair of curious eyes.

The blonde girl – Persephone, Baz had said her name was – was sipping from a glass, her head slightly tilted, her eyebrow arched as though she was considering something.

But most importantly, she was watching Sade too.

'The blonde, scary one is Persephone Stuart. I heard that just chopped off wise... *appendage*... in his sleep because he stared at her too long, and now she keeps it in a jar in her room,' he continued, rather casually. 'And the one in the middle is their leader, April Owens – she actually used to be Elizabeth's roommate.'

Elizabeth didn't look too happy with Baz offering up that information.

'What happened?' Sade asked.

Elizabeth gave Baz a death glare before stabbing her lunch with a fork. 'Nothing. People change roommates all the time; it's not that big of a deal – can we stop talking about them now? They're just girls.'

Sade remembered Miss Blackburn's comment earlier about transfers being a rare occurrence but decided to drop it, not wanting to make Elizabeth upset and ruin what might potentially be her only friendship for the rest of her time at Alfred Nobel Academy.

“Àbíké-Íyímídé is an incisive force – and a total vibe.”

Olivie Blake

Elizabeth face dulled once again. Sade wondered what the history was there. It was clear it was nothing good.

Baz looked like he felt bad. In what seemed to be a peace offering, he silently



We have a signed copy of *Where Sleeping Girls*

Lie, along with a tote bag, notebook and pencil, to give away to one lucky winner. For the chance of winning, just answer this question:



What is the name of the boarding school Sade attends?

See page 71 for details on how to enter this competition.

"I MIGHT CHOOSE A
SPACE BOOK - OR ONE
ABOUT PANTS."

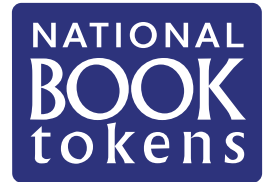
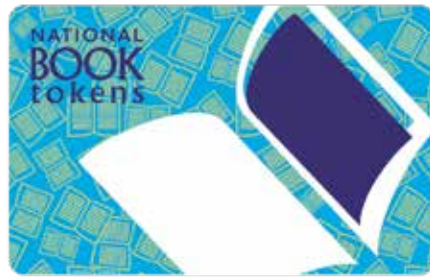
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- 1 What is the name of the book by Jo Baker which is set amongst the servants of Jane Austen's *Pride & Prejudice*?
- 2 Who wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which tells the story of the first wife of Mr Rochester from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*?
- 3 *Fair Rosaline* by Natasha Solomons retells the story of which Shakespeare play?
- 4 Who wrote *A Thousand Acres*, a contemporary novel set in Iowa, based on Shakespeare's *King Lear*?
- 5 *Mrs de Winter* by Susan Hill is a reimagining of which classic gothic novel by Daphne Du Maurier?
- 6 What is the name of the award-winning novel by Barbara Kingsolver, which reimagines *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens, and is set in contemporary Virginia?
- 7 Who wrote *Frankissstein*, a reimagining of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, set in a modern-day cryonics facility?
- 8 Which YA novel by Patrick Ness retells the story of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* from the point of view of a pod of whales?
- 9 Who wrote the award-winning novel *Home Fire*, which retells the story of *Antigone* by Sophocles?
- 10 *Ed King* by David Guterson is a modern reimagining of which other classic play by Sophocles?



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No purchase necessary. Closing date for all entries is Monday 6th May 2024. Please include your name and full postal address on each entry. Responsibility will not be accepted for damaged, lost or delayed entries and the judges' decision is final. Entries are limited to one per person and one per household. Employees and member bookshops of the Booksellers Association are prohibited from entering. Winners will be chosen at random and notified by Booktime. We will print the winners' names in a future edition of Booktime.

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