

Make time for books

ISSUE 146
MAY/JUN 2024

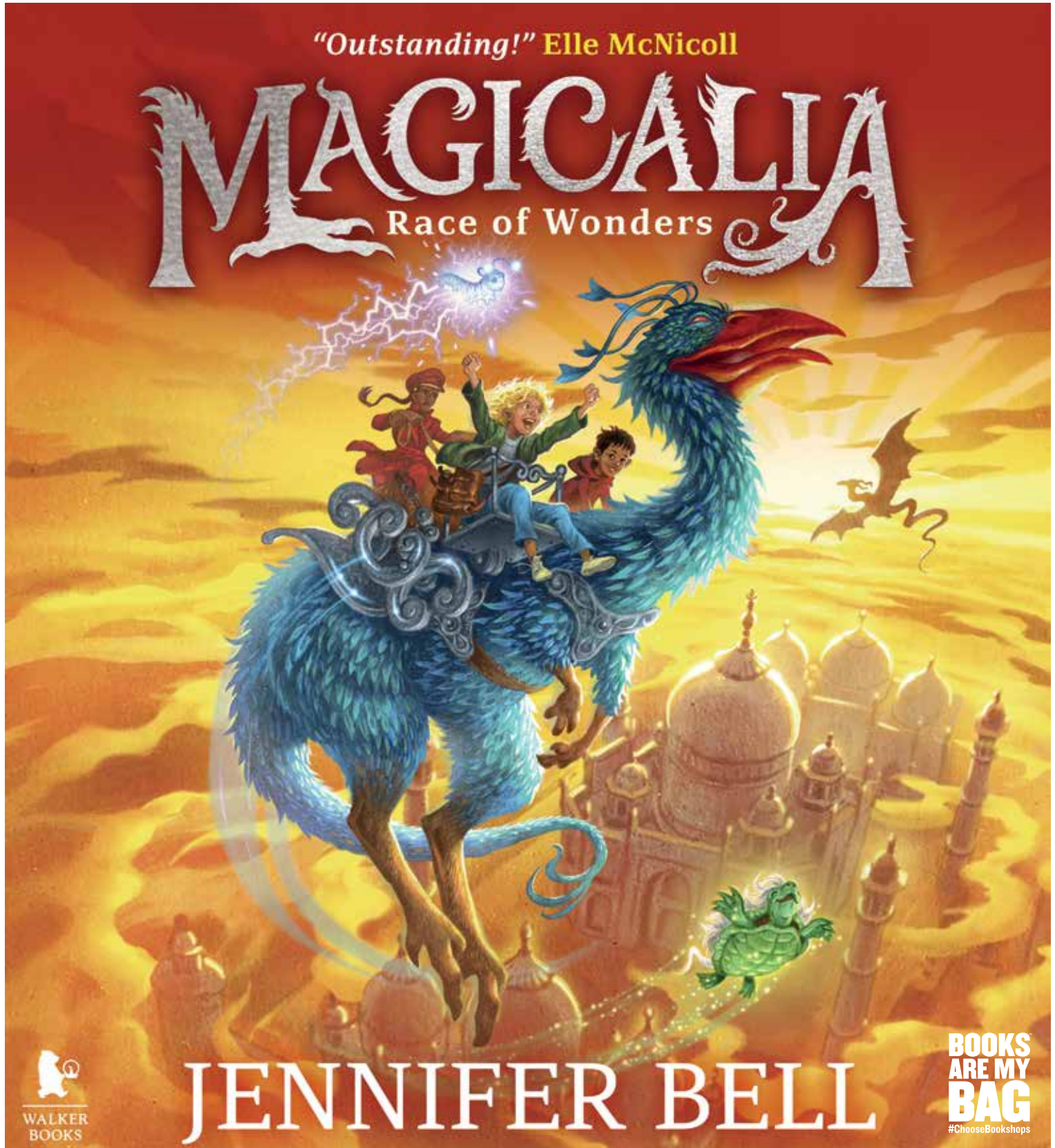
FREE!

Booktime

"Outstanding!" Elle McNicoll

MAGICALIA

Race of Wonders



WALKER
BOOKS

JENNIFER BELL

BOOKS
ARE MY
BAG
#ChooseBookshops

* WIN! All five books in the *Forbidden Iceland* crime series by Eva Björg Ægisdóttir!

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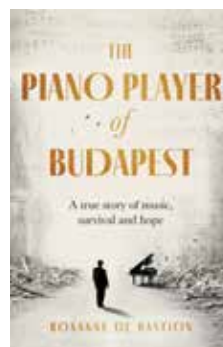
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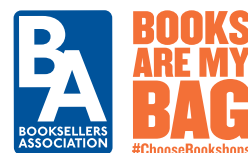
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Editor Ruth Hunter
Design jimmyscofield.com
Editorial Sharon Benton

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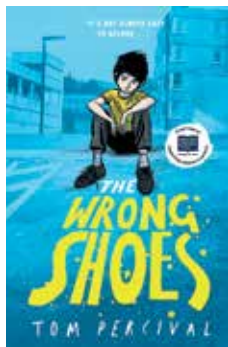
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All prices and book details were correct at their time of going to press but may change without prior notification. The prices listed in this magazine are the Sterling published prices and may be adjusted to reflect currency fluctuations outside the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



Welcome to Booktime!

Welcome to May & June Booktime! In this edition, we interview Charlie Higson about his new James Bond novel (see page 9), Juli Min about her innovative novel taking us back in time through the lives of one family (see page 19), Bridget Collins about her evocative new novel (see pages 4 & 5), Mark Billingham about his second crime novel to feature DS Declan Miller (see page 24), Joseph Kanon about his latest thriller set in wartime Shanghai (see page 18), Gabriel Smith about his original debut novel (see page 25) and Johanna van Veen about her sinister gothic novel (see page 37). We also talk to Giles Smith about his book charting ABBA through the ages (see page 10), Sandro Farmhouse about his feel-good cookbook (see page 16), Kacie Rose about her memoir and guide to emigrating (see page 27), Alex Christofi about his book which takes in the history of Cyprus (see page 35), Lottie Gross about her guide to holidaying with dogs (see page 26), and Roxanne de Bastion about her book charting the remarkable life of her grandfather (see page 38).

We also interview Abi Elphinstone about her fun and magical new adventure series (see page 42), Kieran Larwood about his entertaining story of dungeons and heroes (see page 41), Catherine Fisher about her book based on Welsh Arthurian legend (see page 47), Alastair Chisholm about his original tale of powerful machines (see page 50), Harry Woodgate about his picture book sequel featuring a Pride parade (see pages 52 & 53), Megan Hopkins about her super story set in a city in the sky (see page 54), Adeola Sokunbi about her funny illustrated book of a monstrous sleepover (see page 59), and Tom Percival about his new story which explores childhood poverty (see page 60). These books, and the many more we recommend in these pages, will see you through spring and into summer.

Ruth Hunter, Editor

We hope you enjoy this new edition of Booktime.

To enter our competitions online, please visit the webpage:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/BooktimeMay2024

Or write to us at the address below.

For any other queries, please email:

booktime@booksellers.org.uk

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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.



Quietly Yours

A deeply atmospheric novel set in the 19th century, *The Silence Factory* is a story about love, desire, perception and corruption. We interviewed the author Bridget Collins, whose work also includes *The Binding* and *The Betrayals*, to discover her inspirations.

Henry Latimer works for his father-in-law in his shop in London selling hearing aids. One day, the handsome and enthralling Sir Edward Ashmore-Percy appears in the shop, and Henry soon finds himself going to visit him in the town of Tilverton. There, Sir Edward has a factory creating a special spider silk with unusual properties. One side blocks out all the noise of the outside world, but the other side seems to have dangerous side effects. Henry wants to market the silk, but is his attraction to Edward blinding him to the darker side of Tilverton?

A generation earlier, Edward's great-aunt Sophia has travelled to the Mediterranean with her husband James, who is eager to discover a special spider silk rumoured to exist there. Sophia soon falls in with a local woman, Hira, despite James's disapproval. But who poses more danger – Hira or her own husband? Chilling and gripping, *The Silence Factory* is an intricate web of mystery and intrigue.

What inspired you to write *The Silence Factory*? Did you always have the two stories, Henry's and Sophia's, in mind?

Actually no. I started out with Henry's story. This is a book which has been redrafted four or five times, it's been through a lot of iterations. Originally it was just Henry's story, then I realised that I wanted to get in the back story of the silk. I wanted to make it more plausible, in terms of where it's come from, and also I wanted to invoke that exotic, mystical, almost mythical place. In the first draft, Henry discovered a diary which gave him a bit of an idea, and he gave it to Sir Edward and that was the way they discovered that the silk had these potential other uses. My agent said 'can we have more of the diary?'. And it was interesting because as I started to write it I realised that it was really important as a base-note to the story, and without it it does lack something. I recently did the female narrator for the audio book, and it was interesting, because I felt that it was the most authentic bit in some ways, because it comes from my experiences talking about

the female body. There was something closer to me in Sophia's sections than in Henry's sections.

What is it about this period of history which draws you to write about it?

There are reasons in terms of the industrial revolution, and the image of Victorian factory, it's very much a trope that we're familiar with. It's a metaphor which speaks immediately to people because it's familiar and yet it's got that historical exoticism. I like writing about the 19th century because for me I think historical fiction is almost like travel writing, you're writing about a different country. So you have this element of seeing things which are different from our world, and yet the Victorians are close enough we can see the ways it translates. A lot of the stuff which is going on in *The Silence Factory*, about capitalism, noise, and controlling women's voices, is still absolutely at the forefront of what we're thinking about now.

"I loved it. A delicately woven novel with an utterly original premise, it ensnared me from the very first page"

Emilia Hart

Was the town of Tilverton based on a real place?

Yes, it's based on Tilverton. Before I started writing the book, I'd already been thinking about factories and fabrics, and then I went to Tilverton. I visited Knighthayes Court, which is this National Trust property on the hill. It was built by the family who built the factory, so from the main bedroom you can look out and see the factory chimney. I researched that, and suddenly it came together. Interestingly, the factory in Tilverton

was a lace factory, and now makes some sort of high grade mysterious fabric that they use in the military. Obviously I didn't want to set it in Tilverton, because I wanted it to be slightly to the side of reality.

Did you do any research into spiders?

I researched into spider silk, and it was amazing. They have, in the past, made fabric from it. The more research I did, the more I thought that it was not such a far-fetched premise. Somebody sent me an article about moths, there's a certain type of moth which has a plumage which baffles the sonar of bats. So they are using it to evade sonar. The more I read about it, the more I thought that this could totally happen.

In your books, there is often a mysterious sense of the unknown. Is it something that you always set out to create?

I always want there to be an element of mystery, and something unspoken, and I think that part of it is that whenever you write about anything profound you have to have that sense that there is more that isn't being said. If it feels like it's all there on the page, it feels very flat. What you want is for the reader to think that there's a world outside this book, and all it can do is give me a window into it. They're more likely to believe that the world is really there and is solid. For me, the process of plot is all about revelation and the dance of what you know and what you don't know, what order you know it in, and the stuff that never gets said and is for the reader to think about.

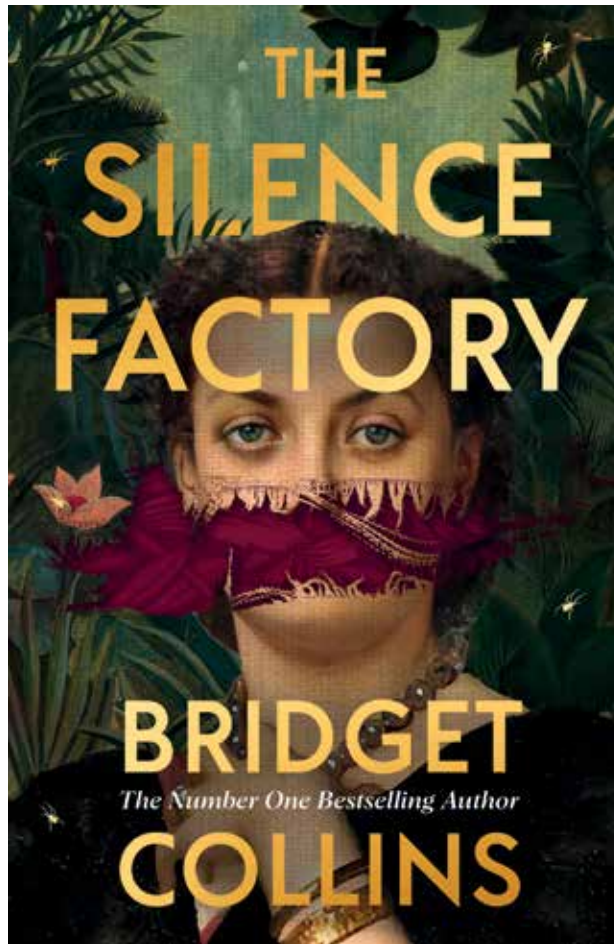
Did you plot the book out beforehand, did you know where it was going?

Normally what happens when I write is that I have stepping stones which tend to stay constant. In this book, I knew the beginning and I knew the end, but the bit in the middle was just blank. I started writing it too soon, which was I had to keep redrafting it, and instead of finding the best line between those two points, I went all over the place.

I like the character of Hira, how did you create her?

“Brilliantly conceived and complex”

The Bookseller



“This is storytelling at its most immersive”

Erin Kelly

I've never actually visited Greece. I don't know if my imaginary Greece is like the real one, although I of course researched it. Hira has to be wise, the guardian priestess, who opens this world to Sophia and enables that process. But I also wanted her to be someone you'd fall in love with. One of the things that came out in later drafts was finding that vulnerability and that backstory. The essence of her character is how you transmute pain and bad things into something that has this incredible strength to it.

Henry is attracted to Edward, and Sophia is attracted to Hira. Is this part of the power of the silk?

I think there is a kind of magic about the silk. I want it to be not only glamorous and beautiful in itself, but also show how it makes you react to the world differently. There is a sense that the silk makes you fall in love. But when you're writing about erotic or romantic relationships, you've got to do more than just say 'it's magic'. It has to be based in something that you can describe. I wanted those characters to be charming, so that the reader, who isn't being entranced by the silk, could understand their attraction.

Do you think that the silk would be popular now?

I'd buy some! I was talking recently to someone about noise-cancelling headphones and what a great thing they are. One of the things I do in *The Silence Factory* and in *The Binding* is come up with something that, in the moment, you absolutely think you want, and then you ask yourself do you really want it? Whenever something emerges which a lot of people want, someone will take it and use it for something sinister. It's like any new technology – there is someone who will use it in a negative way.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

I try to read as widely as I can, and I read a

lot of non-fiction too. Someone like Sarah Waters inspires me – she writes amazing historical books and they've always got this emotional drive, but are also very literary. Daphne du Maurier is one of my influences. She's doing intelligent historical thrillers which press all my buttons.

Do you regard your novels as fantasy?

I tend to describe them as historical magical realism. Fantasy is very interesting, because sometimes they've been described as fantasy, and in some ways they are, because there's magic going on. But when hardcore fantasy readers review my books, they often say that they're not doing what they want them to do. Fantasy is not just about the trappings of magic, the question in fantasy is often 'how do we save the world?'. And my books are more about how we live in a world that is fundamentally unsafe.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

There's a kind of romance about them. My favourite is probably The Bookshop in East Grinstead. It's almost like an old-world library, there's a character about it, it has such a sense of place. There's a combination of romance and the familiar, it's like the wardrobe leading to Narnia. It looks like it's from this world, but there's a sense that from that place you can go wherever you want to go.

In this extract Edward gives Henry a sample of the silk:

For an instant Henry had the sense that he heard high notes in the air – or rather, *had* heard them, like the aftermath of a dream. Obediently he looked at the little scrap of silk in his fingers. It was so thin he could

hardly feel it; supple as oil, light as air, and with a lovely watery lustre that made the coils of silver and mother-of-pearl on the shelves around him seem dull in comparison. It was as if the light around him had been quenched; and a different, unearthly radiance was welling through the threads of the silk. He said, 'It is beautiful,' but before the last syllable had left his lips he started and glanced over his shoulder: he was sure he'd heard an answering whisper, just at the edge of audibility.

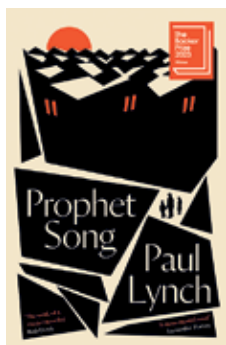
Ashmore-Percy laughed 'Put it to your ear,' he said. 'No, the other way up. Here, let me.' He turned it over in Henry's palm with warm fingers. 'Now try.'

Henry lifted it, cupping his hand. He did not know what he was expecting: perhaps the shh-shh of a seashell, or a softening as though a curtain had been drawn between his mind and the outside world. In spite of what Ashmore-Percy had said, he was not expecting silence. Or, at least, not this silence. Not utter nothingness; not an absence as complete as an earful of clay... He jerked it away, and the familiar noises of traffic and rain flooded back. 'What is it?'

'Astounding, isn't it? Keep it, if you like. Recommend it to anyone who wants to cut out the noise of the street. I suppose it's your line of work, in a way.'

Henry stuttered. 'That's very kind,' because he could not think of anything else to say.

May & June's Choice



Prophet Song
by Paul Lynch
Oneworld • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9780861545896
Published 9th May

Now in paperback, this original novel set in a totalitarian Ireland won the Booker Prize. On a dark, wet evening in Dublin, scientist and mother-of-four Elish Stack answers her front door to find the GNSB on her step. Two officers from Ireland's newly formed secret police are here to interrogate her husband, a trade unionist. When her husband disappears, Elish finds herself caught within the nightmare logic of a society that is quickly unravelling.



Counting in Danish
by Celia Berggreen
Cranthorpe Millner
PB • £10.99
ISBN 9781803782133
Published 28th May

A novel set in Sussex and Denmark. After her sister's tragic death, Jess is forced to confront the world alone for the first time. Always the quieter, more anxious twin, Jess feels lost without confident, risk-taking Sophie. The twins had always planned to travel together, to find their birth father and Jess is determined to make the journey. As she fights to overcome her fears, Jess discovers that Denmark may hold the key to more than just her past...



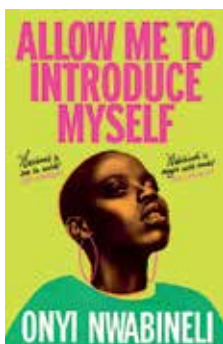
For Such A Time As This
by Shani Akilah Magpie • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780861546923
Published 20th June

Gabby and Jonathan cross paths at a wedding and wonder if this could be the start of something. When Niah tries to call out her employer about diversity and inclusion, she comes face to face with racism reaching right to the very top... A collection of short tales which bring to life the stories of Black British Londoners as they explore friendship and romance, community and independence, and navigate their way through the relationships that make them who they are.



Breaststrokes
by Margaux Vialleron
Simon & Schuster
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781398525771
Published 9th May

A new novel from the author of *The Yellow Kitchen*, this is a story of consent, told in five acts over the course of one weekend. Cloe and Gertrude and the Jenkins-Bell sisters, Mathilde and Sarah, have never met. It's Sunday morning, and Cloe has woken up in someone else's home; Gertrude starts her shift in the pub kitchen, and Mathilde and Sarah are on their way to lunch. Soon, these four women's lives with overlap as the past catches up with them.



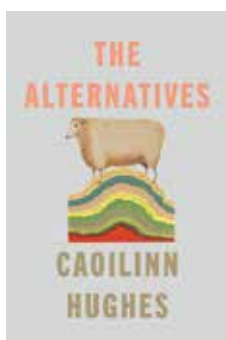
Allow Me To Introduce Myself
by Onyi Nwabineli
Magpie • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780861546879
Published 23rd May

A darkly hilarious novel from an exciting new voice. Anuri's stepmother, Ophelia, is the ultimate 'mumfluencer'. Throughout Anuri's childhood, she catalogued every minute, milestone and carefully curated family outing on social media, cultivating a devoted – and sizeable – following. Now Anuri is twenty-five years old, and life looks pretty perfect on the outside. But when she sees her little sister being pushed down the same rocky path by Ophelia, Anuri decides to take back control.



Call It What You Want
by Alissa DeRogatis
Sourcebooks
Landmark
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781464227660
Published 18th June

It's 2016, and Sloane Hart's senior year of college is bound to be the best one yet. The last thing she needs is for a guy to get in the way of her goals. With graduation so close, she just needs to focus on landing a job and enjoying this last year with her best friends all under one roof. But that plan becomes a little more complicated when her upstairs neighbor, Ethan Brady, enters the picture. Sloane finds herself falling deeply in love, but will Ethan ever be ready to catch her?



The Alternatives
by Caoilinn Hughes
Oneworld
HB • £18.99
ISBN 9780861545865
Published 2nd May

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...



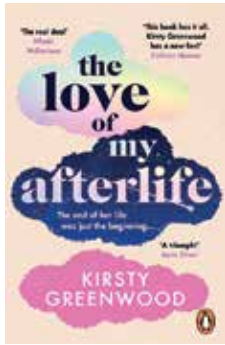
Blue Ruin
by Hari Kunzru
Scribner • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781398528918
Published 14th May

A profound novel about beauty, power, and capital's influence on art, from the author of *White Tears* and *Red Pill*. Once, Jay was an artist, tipped for greatness in London, but now, undocumented in the United States, he lives out of his car and delivers groceries. And then he encounters Alice, a former lover who ghosted him and left for America with his best friend, Rob. Alice invites Jay to stay at her and Rob's prosperous home, where he must confront his past.



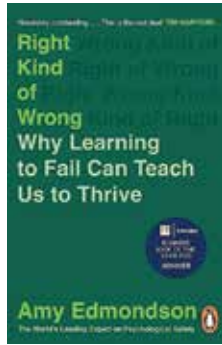
Hits Different
by Tasha Ghouri & Lizzie Huxley-Jones
Hot Key Books
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781471415098
Published 6th June

A romance novel from *Love Island* star and disability campaigner Tasha Ghouri. Cassie needs a change. She's in a job she hates, dating a guy who couldn't care less about her, and secretly dreaming of making her dance ambitions a reality. But that's all they are, dreams. Because no way could she actually do it... right? But then an opportunity to dance on tour with a global superstar presents itself and Cassie decides to give it a shot.



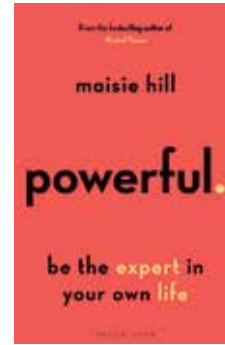
The Love of my Afterlife
by Kirsty Greenwood
Penguin • PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781804949115
Published 20th June

If she wasn't dead already, Delphie would be dying of embarrassment. She's entered the afterlife wearing the sort of pyjamas you don't want *anyone* to see and finds herself face-to-face with the most handsome man she's ever encountered. Then someone sends the dreamy stranger back down to earth. Delphie is offered a deal in which she can return to her previous life and reconnect with the mysterious man – but she only has ten days to find him. And he will have no memory of her...



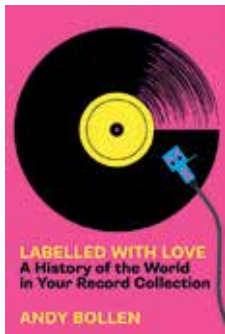
Right Kind of Wrong
by Amy Edmondson
Penguin • PB • £10.99
ISBN 9781847943781
Published 30th May

We used to think of failure as a problem, to be avoided at all costs. Now, we're often told that failure is desirable – that we must 'fail fast, fail often'. The trouble is, neither approach distinguishes the good failures from the bad. As a result, we miss the opportunity to fail *well*. Here, organisational psychologist Amy Edmondson reveals how we get failure wrong, and how to get it right, drawing on four decades of research into the world's most effective organisations.



Powerful: Be the Expert in your own Life
by Maisie Hill
Green Tree
PB • £15.99
ISBN 9781472978929
Published 9th May

Bestselling author, life coach and hormone expert Maisie Hill shows you how to take back control of your life through harnessing your stress hormones. Are you a people pleaser? Do you have difficulty with procrastination or react to situations defensively? Are you stuck in a vicious circle of prioritising others leaving you feeling irritated, worked up or just completely overwhelmed? Then this book is for you. It distils the essence of all Maisie teaches into an empowering guide.



Labelled with Love
by Andy Bollen
The History Press
PB • £20.00
ISBN 9781803994338
Published 9th May

An informative and revealing look at the influential record labels, bands and music that rocked our worlds and shaped our lives. From the quintessential cool swing of 1950s Capitol with Sinatra, to the legal difficulties of Hendrix and The Who at Track. From the professional stewardship of 4AD and Domino, to the excess of Creation and Casablanca Records, this book skilfully gets under the bonnet of record labels in an enlightening way.



This Is Mothership
by Samantha Silver & Gemma Rose Breger
Piatkus • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9780349440170
Published 16th May

Balancing a busy social life, maintaining healthy friendships, managing the motherload, focusing on family, running a home and working on your career goals leaves little time for anything else. Finding the headspace to look and feel great while you are trying to do it all can be completely overwhelming. Beauty journalist Samantha Silver, and fashion stylist Gemma Rose Breger, founders of This is Mothership, have the perfectly honed hacks to make it feel effortless.



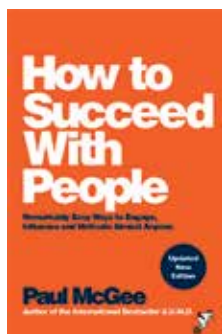
The Green Camping Book
by Martin Dorey
Conway • PB • £23.00
ISBN 9781844866793
Published 23rd May

From Martin Dorey – lifelong camper, campervanner and committed environmentalist – comes a manifesto on how to camp greener and more responsibly while enjoying the outdoors. It signposts you towards making more sustainable choices about kit, where to stay, how to travel, what to wear, and what we can keep doing to fight for green spaces we love. It encourages us to think about our impact and to take urgent, important steps to soften our footprint on the world.



Everything Under the Sun
by Mike Cormack
The History Press
HB • £25.00
ISBN 9781803995359
Published in August

This is a high-level, fully sourced and footnoted analysis of the music of Pink Floyd, and the first serious survey of the group's work and achievements. It is also a cultural history of the UK, seen through the prism of the band. In addition to song-by-song analysis, it includes exclusive band interviews, a full chronology and gig guide, and a full bootleg guide, and so is a truly comprehensive record of the band.



How to Succeed With People
by Paul McGee
Capstone • PB • £12.99
ISBN 9781394233069
Out Now

In the newly revised second edition, bestselling author and international keynote speaker Paul McGee delivers yet another exciting and inspiring guide to improving your communication skills and transforming how you interact with others. Perfect for young professionals, managers, executives and supervisors, it will also prove invaluable in helping your relationships outside of work – from dating to parenting, and from motivating others to difficult conversations.



The Telegraph Tax Guide 2024
Kogan Page
PB • £19.99
ISBN 9781398617490
Published 3rd May

Get on top of your tax with the bestselling book on the market which advises on how to complete self-assessment tax returns and provides expert advice on a range of tax saving tips. Now in its 48th edition, it helps ensure that you are as tax efficient as possible, offering practical advice, timetables and examples that make the complex and challenging world of tax returns easier to understand, whether you are self-employed, work part time, work full time, are unemployed or retired.

Graveyard of Ambition

From the bestselling author of *The Doll Factory*, *The Burial Plot* is a gothic novel set in the 19th century. Lovers Bonnie and Crawford are London tricksters. But now a man is dead, and Bonnie must take up a position as a lady's maid at Mr Moncrieff's grand house. Can they turn Mr Moncrieff's obsession with building a mausoleum for his dead wife to their advantage? Read this interview with the author to discover more.

Photo © Matt Smith Photography

What inspired you to write *The Burial Plot*?

I have always loved walking in cemeteries, filled as they are with fragments of history and past lives. One day, when I was walking through Tower Hamlets Cemetery, opened in 1841 and now in disrepair, I wondered what it was like to see something this grand being built. The pulleys winching the stones of the chapel into place, the vaults and mausoleums being constructed. This became both my setting and plot: the cemetery and its income are the high stakes prize for two tricksters.

What is your favourite line from *The Burial Plot* and why?

'These plans were a thing of careful study: every person had their own set place.' Although this refers to the plans for a beautiful cemetery, so much of the book is about plots and manipulation. All the characters have their own agenda.

Tell us what you enjoy most about writing books set in Victorian London?

Above all, it's the ambition of the age that I love writing about: a deeply stratified society is always filled with ordinary people hoping to transcend their situation. It's what drives Bonnie in her scheme to take over the grand house: this hope of bettering herself, of believing there is a better future waiting for her to step into.

How did it feel to have *The Doll Factory* adapted into a major television series?

It was completely surreal! I still can't quite believe that a world that I'd imagined quietly at my desk had been turned into a tangible thing with sets and costumes and actors. My

toddler and I even got a cameo role, which was a definite highlight.

"I genuinely could not put this down"

Stacey Halls

If you had to be transported into the world of *The Doll Factory*, *Circus of Wonders*, or *The Burial Plot* – which would you choose?

Oh, tough question! I think it would have to be *The Burial Plot*. I based the strange isolated house on Strawberry Hill House, which I often visit. It's a warren of small rooms, its hallways curiously lit by red and blue stained-glass windows. I'd love to wander through the house as it was two-hundred years ago, especially if there were secrets to uncover like in *The Burial Plot*.

If your collection of books was ravaged by a fire and you could save only one, what would it be, and why?

When *The Doll Factory* was published, my husband gave me a first

edition of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. I really treasure it; it is on my top bookshelf, well out of the reach of sticky-fingered toddlers.

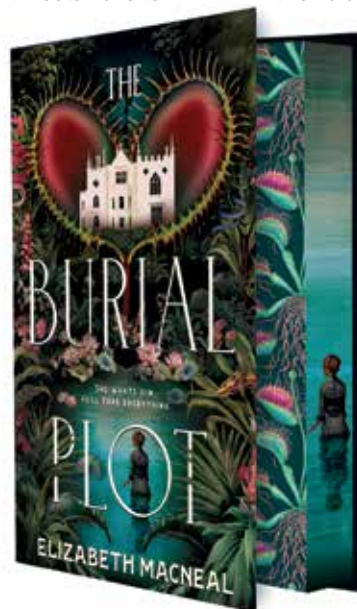
Can you recommend a historical fiction novel that you think deserves more attention than it received?

I adored *The Age of Light* by Whitney Scharer.

Do you have any advice for aspiring authors?

I'd say, practise and be resilient. My debut novel was technically my fourth novel. Just like I didn't sit down at a pottery

wheel for the first time and make a beautiful bowl, so too did I need to spend time practising and understanding how to build a plot, a character, a sentence. But, it was hard!



The Burial Plot

by Elizabeth Macneal
Picador • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781529090949
Published 6th June

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

Strong Bonds

Now in paperback, *On His Majesty's Secret Service* is an official adventure featuring James Bond, as 007 is tasked with preventing the disruption of the Coronation of King Charles III. We interviewed the author, Charlie Higson, to discover more.

Photo © Stuart Bertie Photography



***On His Majesty's Secret Service* features an adult James Bond. How different is writing about Bond as an adult to writing about him as a youngster?**

The core of it is the same, because for this book and for my kids' books, I went back to Fleming. My inspiration was to go to Fleming rather than the films. I always thought that if I did go on to write an adult Bond novel it would be a continuation of the timeline from my *Young Bond* books which are all set in the early 1930s. My brief for those was to fit in as far as possible with Ian Fleming's timeline. So I thought I might do Bond as a young man getting involved in the Second World War, and getting his Double O status. It would have been a direct continuation from the *Young Bond* books. What I did in those books was to start with a fairly ordinary schoolboy and show, through the extreme experiences that he's put through, how that boy might grow up to become a hired assassin for the government, a cold-hearted killer. But last year was the 70th anniversary of *Casino Royale*, the first book in the series, and for the first time the Fleming estate were publishing the books themselves. It was also the 60th anniversary of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, and the Coronation was coming up, and so they approached me to write something for charity. All they had was the title *On His Majesty's Secret Service*. I got very excited by the idea, but I realised,

if it was to have a resonance around the Coronation, it would have to be contemporary. So I had to completely rethink the Bond that I was writing about. Suddenly I was writing about a contemporary young man – Bond always needs to be roughly 35 in the adult world. I had to rethink the details, but, at the same time, I really wanted to keep the core of Fleming's Bond, who had been the core in my *Young Bond* books too.

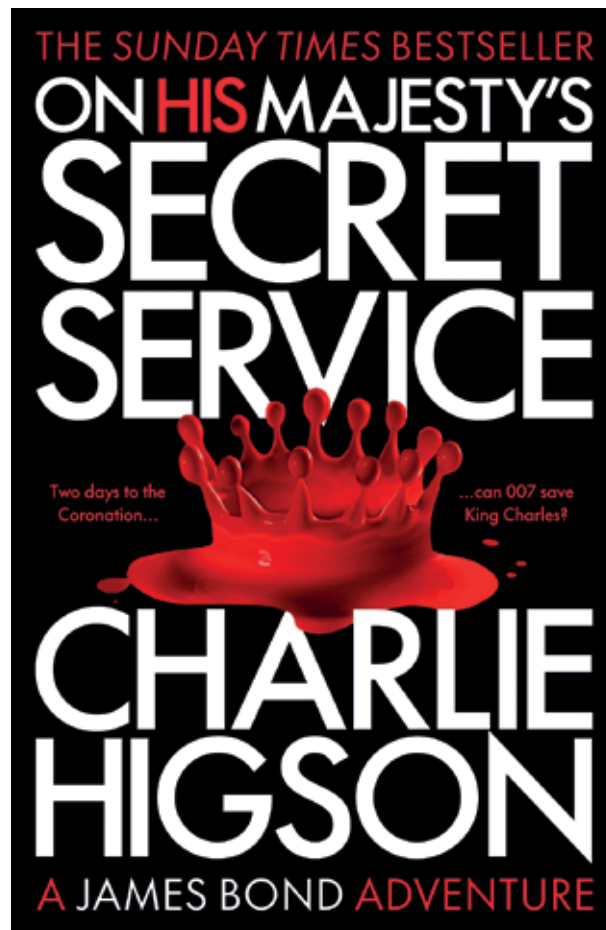
Did you immerse yourself in the works of Ian Fleming to write about Bond?

Totally. I only had a month to write it and these things normally take about three years. So I went back and reread all of Fleming's short stories just to see how he did it, how he got the essence of Bond into a short story and how he managed to set up all the characters and themes he needed – the villains, the girl, the plot, an action sequence – and then put that into a vignette. Also, I reread them to get Fleming's voice back into my head – I'd never tried to copy his writing style. It's interesting, when Sebastian Faulks did the first of the contemporary adult continuation novels, *Devil May Care*, it said in big letters on the front 'Sebastian Faulks writing as Ian Fleming' – he approached it as a pastiche. I never wanted to do that, I wanted to get the spirit of Fleming, I wanted to have his voice in my head, but I knew I didn't want to, and I couldn't, copy his style. It's unique and it's what gives such a lot of character to the books. But I very quickly got back into the world of Fleming and the way that he writes, and the fun that he has with things. So that was my first inspiration and then, when I started writing the story, I got a bit carried away!

"I wanted to get the spirit of Fleming"

The book features a group of far-right extremists who wish to disrupt the Coronation of King Charles III. Did you research these groups and their ideologies?

They are all around us! The drift towards polarisation and extremism, has been such a major part of what's been going on in society – online, and on TV, and in the newspapers. You can't escape it. These populists, given a chance, would be right-wing dictators. I am a classic, woolly, liberal centrist, I don't like extremes on either end, and I gave those thoughts to Bond. Because that's what he has to be – he works for the civil service, and his job is to hold the centre. Behind a lot of the extremism and populism is essentially



**On His Majesty's Secret Service:
A James Bond Adventure**

by Charlie Higson
Ian Fleming Publications • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781915797117
Published 6th June

hucksters – capitalists trying to make money out of the system. That is what Trump and the likes of Farage are doing.

Why did you set most of the novel in Hungary?

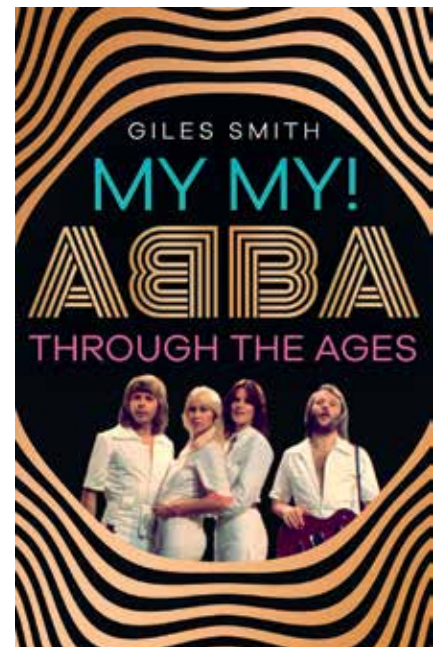
Bond is MI6. MI5 is the domestic branch of the secret service, MI6 is the foreign branch. So Bond has to be sent on a foreign adventure. So even though the idea was to disrupt the Coronation, the plot had to be run from a foreign country. It is that fake nationalism from people who don't actually live in the country. Also, I had just been to Hungary when I was offered the chance to write the book, and I very much like Hungary. Fleming always wrote about places that he'd travelled to and enjoyed being in. Plus, of course, Orbán is in charge there, and he's another one of these populist leaders.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I love all bookshops. If I'm travelling, if I visit any town centre, I will automatically go to the bookshop. If I'm lucky enough to be somewhere that has a good independent bookshop, that is fantastic. I did an event in Bath for Topping Books, and it's amazing what they are doing. The night I was there they had three different book events at different venues around Bath, and they were all sold out. So, when you get a great independent bookshop like that, the amount that they can do for the local community is fantastic, and it's great for authors too.

Thank You for the Music

My My! is an entertaining and personal look at the enduring popularity of ABBA and their music, from one of their fans, journalist and author Giles Smith. We interviewed him to discover more.



What inspired you to write the book?

I realised that this band's music had been in my life for fifty years, and I was puzzled about why. How has it managed to stick around? I have a friend who worked on ABBA Voyage and I had tickets to the opening night in 2022. I hadn't really thought about ABBA for years until I went to the show. It's a strange thing, because you go there not knowing what you're going to see – what is this virtual concert, how is it going to work? But it does, strangely, grab you in this very emotional way, and you end up engaging with what is basically thin air! At the same time, I was being reminded about these songs, and how they trigger all kinds of memories. And this year is the fiftieth anniversary of *Waterloo*. It's quite unusual that you can date precisely when a band enters your life, but in the case of people my age, you can date it to that moment sitting in front of the telly watching the *Eurovision Song Contest* in 1974. We'd never seen ABBA in the UK until then, they were well-known in Sweden and in other parts of Europe, but not here. I can remember being open-mouthed about that performance, it was so unlike anything else that *Eurovision* had presented at that time. They leapt out of the screen at you.

You write a lot about the different appearances they had on TV in the UK – did you have to go back and find them?

Yes – some of them I remembered almost as vividly as the *Eurovision* one. It's hard to explain to younger people, but your access to bands at that time was so limited, you really did just go from one TV appearance to the next. Specially in the case of ABBA, who were Swedish and remote, they weren't present in your life to anything like the degree that bands are present in your life now. You can find them all on YouTube now though! Their career was slow to take off. History compresses it for you, but they didn't have instant success after *Eurovision*, it took them years to get going. They almost lost it, their UK record label didn't know what to do with them. There was a strong resistance to anything that came out of *Eurovision*. And they were described in the press as 'European', a lump of stuff which was not to be taken seriously for a lot of the critics.

Do you have a favourite ABBA song?

It comes and goes a bit, but pretty consistently, I've always loved *Knowing Me, Knowing You*. *S.O.S.* has a particular place in my heart because I bought that record as a single, and it was the moment at which they became a certain kind of pop group. *Waterloo* is a glam rock song, and there's no other ABBA song that sounds like it. That's one of the amazing things about ABBA, there's little that connects any of the songs to each other, they always seem to be starting afresh every time they release something. With *S.O.S.* they became an exciting pop group, and *Knowing Me, Knowing You* is an excellent pop song. Another of the reasons they survive is that they don't sound like their era too strongly, but one of the moments where they do sound like their era is the electric piano in *Knowing Me, Knowing You* which is a very seventies sound. For me, who was there at the time, it's nostalgia-inducing!

“The music floats free of its time.”

Why do you think it took so long, after their break-up, for them to appeal again to a new generation of listeners?

It was easy to deride them in the eighties because they were very much of the seventies. And the clothes they wore were so ridiculous. But there's a depth in the songs that enables you to feel differently about them later. A song like *Dancing Queen*, which is basically somebody's fantasy about themselves as a seventeen-year-old, it will strike you differently when you're seventeen to when you're thirty or forty. It's music that you can grow older with because it hits you in different ways at different times in your life. They came back largely on the back of the *Mamma Mia!* musical, and the movie. My daughter is twenty and she knows ABBA inside out, but through the movie, and that's true of her generation. But there's something about the songs which survives repeated listening, and I think it's to do with the way that they are built. It's the brilliance

My My! ABBA Through the Ages

by Giles Smith

Gallery UK • HB • £20.00

ISBN 9781398529700

Published 9th May

of their construction, the brilliance of their production, and the fact that they have their own sound. The music floats free of its time, and here we are, fifty years later, listening to it.

Would you like to meet ABBA?

I think I'd be a little bit overcome. I was a pop journalist for a while, and I was once sent to interview Paul McCartney. It was in the offices of his company in Soho Square, and he was about 40 minutes late. Suddenly I heard this voice behind me, and it was him. We sat down and I thought I was going to faint! He was so nice about it, and I got my act together. But I'd be worried about that happening with ABBA. I'd like to talk to Benny and Bjorn about writing the songs, that fascinates me. How they worked in the studio, the decisions they made about putting the songs together. It would be good to have a nerdy conversation about recording!

Do you think ABBA will still be listened to fifty years from now?

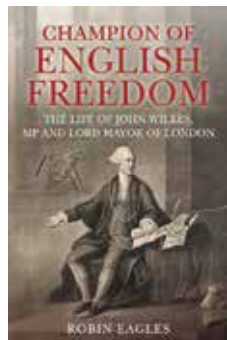
The ABBA Voyage show could run indefinitely in their absence, it's in its third year now. I think they have every much of a chance of their songs remaining popular as The Beatles' songs, they are that strong. But who knows, the same thing could happen to them again as happened to them in the eighties, they could go out of fashion.

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

Yes. In terms of writing memoir, Nicholson Baker wrote a book called *U and I* and the 'U' stands for Updike. It's basically a memoir of his obsession and fandom for John Updike. It's very funny, and has always struck me as a great model for writing. And Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* is another favourite.

Pathways to the Past

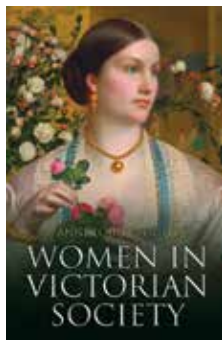
Rediscover your love of all things history with these new books from Amberley Publishing, a leading publisher of non-fiction titles.



**Champion of English Freedom:
The Life of John Wilkes, MP and
Lord Mayor of London**

by Robin Eagles
Amberley Publishing • HB • £22.99
ISBN 9781398111707
Published 15th June

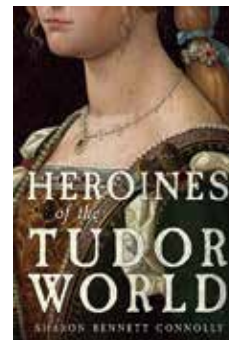
2024 marks the 250th anniversary of John Wilkes becoming Lord Mayor of London. A man simultaneously full of contradiction and principles, Wilkes was a giant of eighteenth-century England and helped shape modern Britain. Throughout his life, he adopted multiple guises, undergoing a series of apparently contradictory reinventions. This important biography by renowned political historian Robin Eagles reveals the story of his life, and seeks to uncover the enigma of a man who fascinated his own period and remains an important symbol of freedom to this day.



Women in Victorian Society

by Anne Louise Booth
Amberley Publishing • HB • £22.99
ISBN 9781398105409
Published 15th June

In this highly readable and illuminating book, Anne Louise Booth looks at the status of society women during the Victorian period, the expectations and limitations they faced, and the ways in which these norms were challenged and boundaries were pushed. Drawing on a wide range of archival sources, case studies and character portraits, the book explores the character and influence of the Victorian society woman in both town and country. By examining key events in history, defining moments and the roles these women played in shaping and redefining society, the changing world of the Victorian society woman is brought vividly to life.

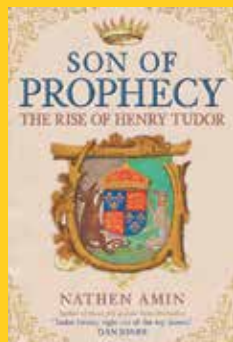


Heroines of the Tudor World

by Sharon Bennett Connolly
Amberley Publishing • HB • £22.99
ISBN 9781398109735
Published 15th June

In the era defined by the Renaissance and Reformation, this book examines the threats and challenges faced by the women of the Tudor period, and how they overcame them. Some of the women included are famous, some infamous and some are less well known. They include Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth Barton, Catherine de Medici, Bess of Hardwick and Elizabeth I. From writers to regents, from nuns to queens, this book shines the spotlight on the women helped to shape Early Modern Europe. Written by expert author Sharon Bennett Connolly, it is wonderful companion volume to her popular previous book *Heroines of the Medieval World*.

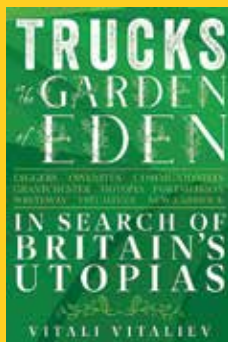
Coming Soon



**Son of Prophecy:
The Rise of
Henry Tudor**

by Nathen Amin
Amberley
Publishing
HB • £25.00
9781398110472
Published in July

In this book, masterful historian Nathen Amin charts the rise of Henry Tudor. It deftly explores how one redoubtable Welsh family thrived during lean years of political chaos, national instability, and inter-generational bloodshed to leave behind a complex legacy that changed the face of England and Wales forever. It is a passionately told tale of treachery, cunning, love, and heartbreak. From Penmynydd to Bosworth, this is the enthralling, action-packed story of the Tudors, but not as you know it.



**Trucks in the
Garden of Eden:
Journeys in
Search of
Britain's Utopias**

by Vitali Vitaliev
Amberley
Publishing
HB • £22.99
9781398100244
Published in July

Award-winning Ukrainian-born journalist Vitali Vitaliev takes a journey around Britain in search of that most elusive of ideas – utopia. Laced with humour and trenchant insight, he reflects on utopian ideals in the United Kingdom and his own Soviet upbringing, this is a distinctly British adventure – made in the USSR. Vitali poses questions about whether the utopian idea has proven to be a useful or harmful throughout history, and what, exactly, utopia means in Britain today.



**What is Better
Than a Good
Woman? Alice
Chaucer,
Commoner and
Yorkist Matriarch**

by Michèle
Schindler
Amberley
Publishing
HB • £22.99
9781398109698
Published in July

Granddaughter of Geoffrey and grandmother to three Yorkist claimants to the throne, Alice Chaucer is one of the most important female figures of the 15th century. This is the first biography of this extraordinary woman, an aesthete, a political schemer, a survivor of the disasters of Henry VI's reign. Is it going too far to call Alice Chaucer a proto-feminist? If one considers her choices of subject matter as an art patron, it might not be.

Cross Country

In this memoir, Muhammad Tarbush combines his own remarkable story with an incisive political and economic commentary on the tumultuous events that shaped the history of Israel, Palestine and the Modern Middle East.

Mohammad Tarbush was born in British Mandate Palestine. As an infant, he and his family were forced to evacuate their village together with its entire population after the establishment of Israel. As landless refugees in the West Bank, the family sank into poverty. Tarbush felt he had no choice but to travel further afield, and so he left home one day, under the pretext of visiting relatives in Jordan.

In fact, he set off on a year-long hitchhiking journey to Europe, where he would eventually become a highly successful banker and a key-behind-the-scenes promoter of the Palestinian cause. *My Palestine* takes us through his life, beginning with his parents' experiences of fleeing Beit Nattif in 1948, and their lives as refugees, first in Bethlehem then Jericho, where the author grew up and went to school. It then moves on to his time in Italy and Switzerland, his move to Britain in the 1960s, and finally describes his life as a writer and campaigner. His story is complemented by a range of photos and images throughout the book.

In this extract, the author describes coming to live in the UK in 1966:

On arriving at London's Victoria Station, the first thing that struck me was the ethnic diversity of the people. The whole of what was, until the Second World War, called the British Empire was there: Asians, Africans, Caribbeans but remarkably few Arabs. That first impression was amplified on my Tube ride to Covent Garden, where the youth hostel was located. There was

a huge map of London, stuck with little red pins, hanging on the wall facing the reception. Would this vast maze of streets and the occasional expanse of green ever make sense to me?

My course in Braintree was starting ten days later. I decided to spend that time exploring London. On the first evening I studied London's underground map. Figuring out directions, especially in Central London, could be handy for working there during school holidays. I improvised a simple formula for memorising the map and started implementing it the following morning.

"As impressive a man as the Arab world has to show."

Edward Said

It consisted of taking the Tube from point A and getting off at point B, the next stop, then walking back to A to discover the above-ground area, then again taking the Tube from A, but this time getting off at C and walking back to B, and from there taking the train to D and so on. Within one week, I could visualise Central London in my head. Sometimes, in the evening, I walked slowly without any purpose along streets that glistened from the inevitable recent rainfall, ignoring the buses flashing past, spraying water from puddles the likes of which I had never seen before. Despite my financial difficulties, one evening I went to see my first movie in London, *My Fair Lady*.

From my ten months' work at the Goetheanum, after sending a monthly stipend to my family in Jericho, I had managed to save about a hundred and twenty pounds. I had to cut my expenses to the minimum possible. It was late spring, and when there was no rain some days were sunny and warm in London. I left the hostel and moved into Regent's Park. When it was properly dark I spread my sleeping bag on a plot of long grass I had spotted during the day and lay down watching the bright stars flickering and glittering – those same stars I had previously gazed at in my Palestine. Feeling light-headed, I dozed off. Gradually I arrive in the year 1187. I am a knight at the Battle of Hattin. We are galloping behind the sultan, Saladin, fighting against the crusaders, when I am knocked off my horse. I

lie on the cool grass, holding my aching shoulder and watching the belly of my stallion. 'Watch out!' a woman shouted, waking me from my dream. 'You almost crushed someone lying on the ground,' she called to her riding companion. I opened my eyes, and the soft trotting died away into the distance.

'You must be an incarnation of a cat,' I said to myself. I was still tired and wanted to go back to sleep, but fear drove out exhaustion. Determined to enjoy myself, I decided to spend that day walking, exploring London: Trafalgar Square with its majestic fountains and huge flocks of pigeons; Piccadilly Circus with its famed advertising lights; Oxford Street; Leicester Square, studded with plush cinemas and nightclubs, completely inaccessible to me with my meagre resources. London was a city of contrasts, a glittering velvety world of artificial glamour that came into its own after dark, a city of drabness with monotonous strings of grey houses, a city of green parks, a city of sinister back streets and drunkards. I looked on London with a mixture of fascination and a growing sense of alienation. Exasperated, yet dependent on the place, I was overwhelmed by the scale of it all.

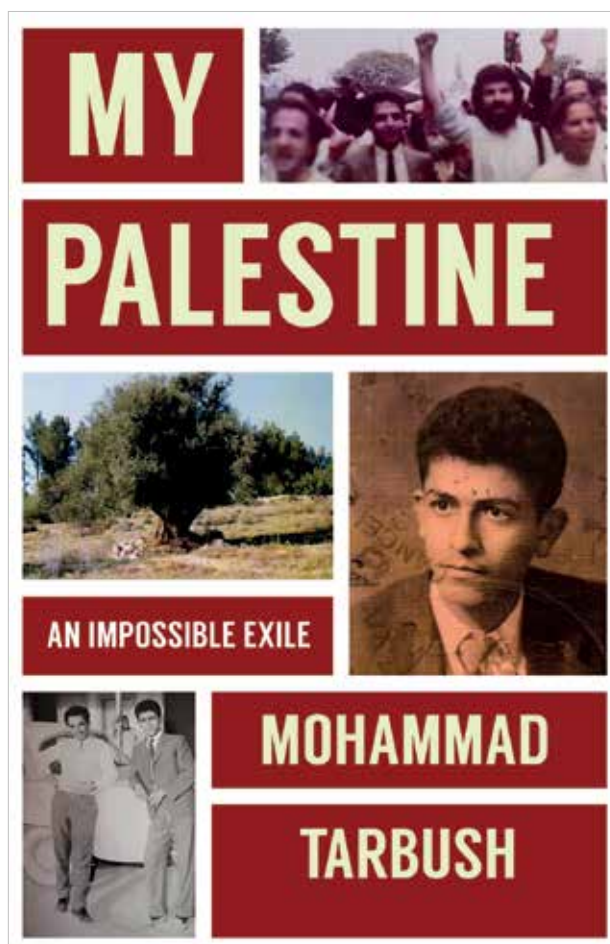
My Palestine: An Impossible Exile

by Muhammad Tarbush

Haus Publishing • HB • £22.00

ISBN 9781913368999

Published 23rd May



Island Story

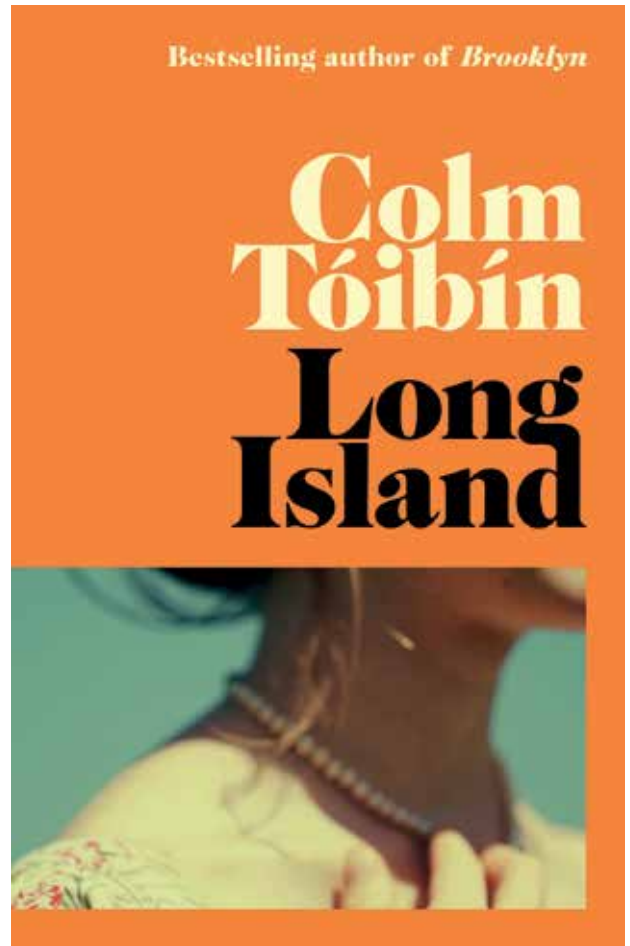
Colm Tóibín's award-winning novel *Brooklyn* followed Eilis as she emigrated from Ireland to New York in the 1950s, and it was adapted into a popular film. Now the author returns with the sequel, *Long Island*, which continues Eilis's story. This interview with Colm Tóibín reveals more about his creative process.

Photo © Reynaldo Rivera



Long Island
by Colm Tóibín
Picador • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781035029440
Published 23rd May

Look out for a special signed edition, with exclusive content from Colm Tóibín, available only from independent bookshops!



What was the moment of inspiration for *Long Island*?

In the few years before I wrote *Long Island* I taught a course on the novel at Columbia University. Some of the books on the course were: *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy; *Victory* by Joseph Conrad; *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton; and *The Golden Bowl* by Henry James. I remember in the seminar room sometimes realizing that a tiny moment in one of those novels, or the way the story was structured, had really interested me, like it was part of real experience. (I suppose it was, since reading for me is a fundamental part of experience.) But I never imagined that all of this was going to become the impulse for writing a novel. And one day I got the opening scene. It came from nowhere. It was just a few pages. But I realized that, once it was written down, the rest of the novel would be a response to it. In other words, the opening pages don't set a scene or establish a character. They are a kind of action. And the novel would be the consequences of that action. I had never done that before in a novel.

And the novels by Hardy, Conrad, Wharton and James that you mention, how did they make a difference?

The opening of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is a lesson to anyone who seeks not just to get the reader's attention but also to create a scene that is bound to have many complex consequences. In *Victory*, Conrad offers many different perspectives on the same story. In *The Age of Innocence*, a man is about to get married and marriage is always a drama. In *The Golden Bowl*, there are very few characters and their intense relationship to

one another does not preclude an immense number of secrets being held. I was re-reading these books for class. I am not sure they had an actual influence on my book, but they made me feel that such stories were worth telling.

"A masterful novel full of longing and regret..."

Douglas Stuart

The ending of the novel is incredibly intense. Did you know how the novel was going to end when you began?

Yes, I did. But I had no idea how I would get to that ending. I needed to let the reader know only as much as the three main characters themselves might know. And then I realized that, in order to make this work, I would have to tell the story from three different perspectives. And then it became a question of who knows what, when. I had to put a lot of energy into the opening pages when the perspective changes so that the reader is really and fully in the world of Jim or Eilis or Nancy, as the case may be. Also, this is a story that happens over a summer, a summer that must end as August ends. Slowly, the reader must realize, as some of the characters do, that time is running out. A decision will have to be made. But no one knows enough to make a real decision. So then a sort of impetus starts. The novel will end, the summer will end. Will everything become known by the end of the summer?

Has Eilis changed much between *Brooklyn* and *Long Island*?

She is more than twenty years older. She has had two children. And she has lived most of her life in America. She is still self-contained and not someone who looks in the mirror a lot or worries about what people think of her. And she still manages to get people to like her. Her intelligence has developed; she is sharper and more in command. She is very close to her two children, who are both very different from the other. I would like to think she is more complex now.

Many readers of *Long Island* will have seen the film of *Brooklyn*. Did any of the film's images or performances affect your writing of *Long Island*?

Yes, I was fascinated by Domhnall Gleeson's performance in *Brooklyn* as Jim. I thought it was powerful, subtle, understated. In films and books and plays, men tend to assert themselves, they swagger and talk too much, or try to look like something they are not. Domhnall didn't do any of those things and yet, or perhaps because of that, I could feel real coiled emotion coming from him in the film. I think that made a difference to how Jim emerged in the new novel.

Will this become a trilogy?

I had no interest in writing a sequel to *Brooklyn* and would not have done so had that opening scene not occurred to me. And that was about a dozen years later. So I don't think the chances are high of me writing a third in the series. But who can tell?

Fiction



Wolves of Winter
by Dan Jones
Head of Zeus
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781838937966
Published 23rd May

The epic sequel to *Essex Dogs*, now in paperback. 1347. Bruised and bloodied by an epic battle at Crécy, six soldiers of fortune known as the Essex Dogs pick through the wreckage of the fighting – and their own lives. Now a new siege is beginning, and the Dogs are sent to attack the soaring walls of Calais. King Edward has vowed no Englishman will leave France until this city falls. To get home, they must survive a merciless winter in a lawless camp deadlier than any battlefield.



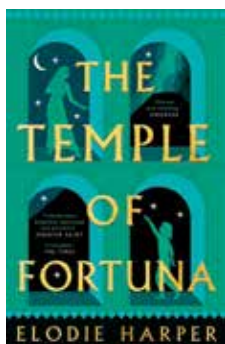
Sisters Under the Rising Sun
by Heather Morris
Zaffre • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781786582256
Published 20th June

Now in paperback, this novel from the bestselling author of *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* follows the women imprisoned by the Japanese during the Second World War. 1942. Singapore is falling to the Japanese Army. English musician Norah Chambers places her eight-year-old daughter Sally on a ship leaving Singapore. As the island burns, Australian nurse Nesta James joins the terrified cargo of people, including the heartbroken Norah, crammed aboard the HMS *Vyner Brooke*.



The Theatre of Glass and Shadows
by Anne Corlett
Black & White
Publishing
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781785305528
Published 23rd May

In an alternative London, the city's Theatre District is a walled area south of the river where an immersive production – the Show – has been running for centuries. Juliet's mother died when she was a baby. It's only when her father passes away that Juliet – now nineteen – learns her birth was registered in the District. Desperate to belong somewhere at last, she travels to London where she hopes to unearth the truth about her identity...



The Temple of Fortuna
by Elodie Harper
Apollo • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781838933630
Published 9th May

The third and final instalment in the *Wolf Den* trilogy, now in paperback. Amara's journey has taken her from a lowly slave in Pompeii's brothel to a high-powered courtesan in Rome. While Amara is caught up in the political scheming of the Imperial palace, her daughter remains in Pompeii, raised by the only man she ever truly loved. But the year is AD 79, and Mount Vesuvius is preparing to make itself known...



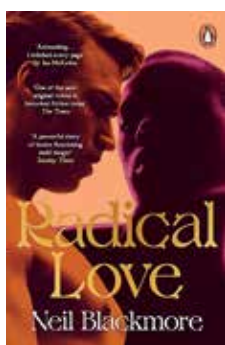
Queen of None
by Natania Barron
Solaris • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781837860616
Published 23rd May

The first in a new trilogy, *The Queens of Fate*. Married at twelve, and a mother soon after, King Arthur's sister Anna did not live a young life full of promise. She bore three strong sons and delivered the kingdom of Orkney. She did as she was asked, invisible and useful – for her name, her dowry, and her womb. Now, twenty years after she left her home, Anna is summoned back to Carelon with the crown of her now-dead husband, to face the demons of her childhood.



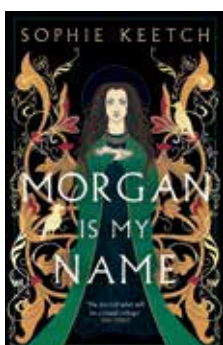
Missing White Woman
by Kellye Garrett
Simon & Schuster
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781398517660
Published 9th May

A dark and sophisticated new thriller from the author of *Like A Sister*. It was supposed to be a romantic getaway to New York City. Breanna's new boyfriend, Ty, took care of everything – the train tickets, the sightseeing itinerary, the four-story Jersey City rowhouse with the gorgeous view of the Manhattan skyline. But then Bree wakes up one morning and discovers recently missing dog-walker Janelle Beckett dead in the foyer. Ty is gone, vanished without a trace...



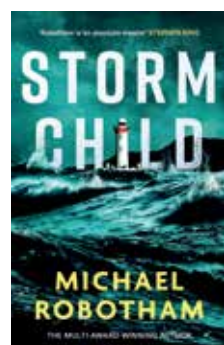
Radical Love
by Neil Blackmore
Penguin • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781529158762
Published 30th May

A novel based on the true story of one of the most important events in queer history. London, 1809. By day, minister John Church preaches to a congregation of commonfolk in Southwark. By night, he is drawn to the secretive, alluring world of a molly house on Vere Street. There, ordinary men reinvent themselves as outrageous queens, and lads on the make flirt with labourers and princes alike. Then he meets and falls in love with Ned, an African abolitionist...



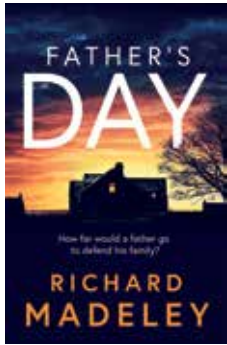
Morgan Is My Name
by Sophie Keetch
Magpie • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9780861545216
Published 2nd May

An atmospheric, feminist retelling of the early life of famed villainess Morgan le Fay, set against the colourful chivalric backdrop of Arthurian legend. When King Uther Pendragon murders her father and tricks her mother into marriage, Morgan refuses to be crushed. Trapped amid the machinations of men in a world of isolated castles and gossiping courts, she discovers secret powers, and it's not long before Morgan becomes a worthy adversary to Merlin, influential sorcerer to the king.



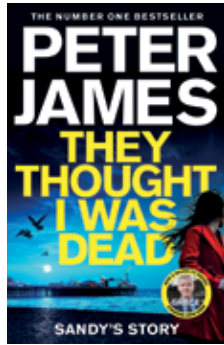
Storm Child
by Michael Robotham
Sphere • HB • £22.00
ISBN 9781408727201
Published 26th June

A new thriller featuring forensic psychologist Cyrus Haven. The most painful of Evie Cormac's memories have been locked away, ever since she was held prisoner as a child – a child whose rescue captured hearts and headlines. Cyrus's mission is to guide her to something near normality. But today, on a Lincolnshire beach, seventeen bodies wash up in front of them, with one survivor and two women still missing. And Evie's nightmares come roaring back...



Father's Day
by Richard Madeley
Simon & Schuster
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781471182945
Published 23rd May

A new thriller from the TV presenter and bestselling author. When Nick Wychwood loses his wife Elise in a shocking accident, he is left to bring up their daughter Lucy on his own. A move from Cornwall to the Cotswolds should give them the fresh start that they need. But Lucy, as a teenager, is fragile, vulnerable, easily led. When someone offers her their shoulder, the warmth and that she thinks she needs, she is accepts, unquestioningly. But this 'someone' is an online monster.



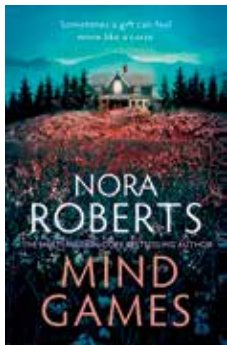
They Thought I Was Dead
by Peter James
Macmillan
HB • £22.00
ISBN 9781529031430
Published 9th May

For the first time, the bestselling author Peter James reveals the truth behind the disappearance of Sandy Grace, the wife of Detective Superintendent Roy Grace, in this thrilling new novel. There's more to Sandy than meets the eye – she's a woman with a dubious past, a complicated present and an uncertain future. Her disappearance caused a nationwide search. They thought she was dead. But what would cause a woman to leave her whole life behind and simply vanish?



The Housemaid is Watching
by Freida McFadden
Poisoned Pen Press
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781464223310
Published 11th June

The latest instalment in the *Housemaid* series, which can be read as a standalone novel. 'I used to clean other people's houses – now, I can't believe this home is actually mine. My husband and I saved for years to give our children the life they deserve. But my husband leaves the house late at night. And when I meet a woman who lives across the way, her words chill me to the bone: *Be careful of your neighbors*. Did I make a terrible mistake moving my family here?'



Mind Games
by Nora Roberts
Piatkus • HB • £22.00
ISBN 9780349437606
Published 21st May

A brand new standalone thriller from the hugely popular and prolific author Nora Roberts, whose books include the *In Death* series, written under the pseudonym J.D. Robb. Thea Fox is just twelve years old when her parents are brutally slain. With Thea's help the police put their murderer – a psychotic serial killer called Ray Riggs – behind bars for life and Thea and her family try to move on. But Ray isn't willing to let Thea go quite so easily...



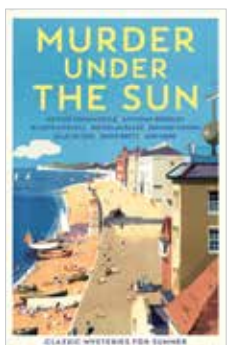
The Potting Shed Murder
by Paula Sutton
Renegade Books
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780349703763
Out Now

The first in a new cosy crime series from Instagram influencer Paula Sutton. Daphne Brewster has left London behind and is settling into her family's new life in rural Norfolk, vintage hunting for their farmhouse. But when the local headmaster is found dead in his potting shed, amongst his allotment cabbages, the village is ablaze: Who would kill beloved Mr Papplewick, pillar of the community? Daphne soon comes to realise perhaps the countryside isn't so idyllic after all...



The Shadow Network
by Tony Kent
Elliott & Thompson
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781783967148
Published 6th June

The fifth thriller from criminal barrister and crime author Tony Kent, featuring barrister Michael Devlin and agent Joe Dempsey. When the lawyers of alleged war criminal Hannibal Strauss are caught up in a terror attack in The Hague, Devlin suspects all is not what it seems. Teaming up with Dempsey, they must find who's behind it all before any more innocent lives are lost. But their only lead is a codename: the Monk, a legendary foreign agent.



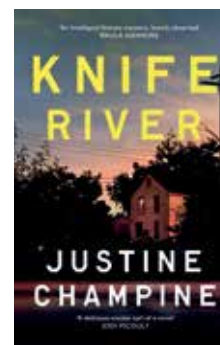
Murder Under the Sun
Edited by Cecily Gayford
Profile Books
PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781805222163
Published 9th May

A collection of classic crime stories of midsummer murder and madness. From beneath the beach umbrella, all might seem idyllic – children playing, sunbathers relaxing, ice slowly melting in a cocktail glass. But look a little closer, and all is not as it seems... Prepare to spend this summer holiday with some shady characters (in sunny places) and immerse yourself in tales of mystery and depravity at home and abroad.



Vengeance
by Saima Mir
Point Blank
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780861541560
Published 6th June

The gritty sequel to the bestselling thriller, *The Khan*. Two years into running her organised crime syndicate in the north of England, Jia Khan stumbles on a notebook her father – the previous Khan – kept on arrival from Pakistan in the 1970s. And what Jia finds in the journal sends her deep into the family's past. But once the sleeping dogs from those years are woken, they are set for attack. Soon, one of her staff is found brutally slain...



Knife River
by Justine Champine
Manilla Press
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781804185759
Published 6th June

In this debut thriller, a young woman returns home to the small, claustrophobic town of Knife River. When Jess was thirteen, her mother went for a walk and did not return – now, fifteen years later, bones have been discovered in the woods nearby. Jess's sister has remained in their childhood home – her life, their home and the town itself seemingly frozen in time. As days turn into weeks, the list of suspects responsible for her mother's terrible fate becomes more ominous.

Feeling Good

Sandro Farmhouse wowed the judges and the viewers when he appeared on *The Great British Bake Off* in 2022. Now he's on a mission to share his love of baking in this indulgent and uplifting cookbook of more than 75 recipes. It's all about feeling the vibes, picking up the whisk and baking with love! We interviewed him to discover more.

You say in the introduction that it's long been a dream of yours to write your own cookbook. How does it feel to publish it?
It's pretty exciting because I never thought I'd be able to. I remember being in school and being part of the dyslexic group. When you're put in that group and you're spoken to in a certain way, it discourages you from being confident of ever writing. There were points when I was writing the book that I thought 'Am I good enough for this?' But having a copy of the book myself, it's definitely a confidence boost.

What was the best thing about appearing on *The Great British Bake Off*?
I would say, now, it's the long-term connections that I made. I became good friends with Maxy and Rebs, and they are part of my life. I take that as a valuable thing. The experience itself, there were so many beautiful moments with the team and the production, everyone who was involved with it.

Did you get onto the show on your first try, and was it you who decided to go for it?
It was my second attempt! At first it was one of my friends who encouraged me to go on to it. Sadly, she's no longer with us, and so part of my drive to get on the show that second time was that, really. I was doing it for her, I was doing it for me and for everyone who'd believed in my baking abilities.

What advice would you give to someone baking for the first time?
Have fun, buy my book and follow the recipes!

The book is separated into different chapters based on feelings and vibes. How did this structure come about?

When I first started baking as a hobby I was feeling quite sad because I'd just had the news of my father passing away. From there, it just became I thing I do, no matter what I'm feeling. If I'm sad or happy, baking is therapeutic for me, and a way to manage my emotions. That's why food for me is my love language, I love creating food for people and sitting back and watching them enjoy it.

"Baking is therapeutic for me"

If you had to choose, what is your favourite recipe in the book?

I do love the Prosecco and Raspberry Cake, that's one of my favourite cakes ever. But it's a tough one – there are so many great recipes. The Caramel and Banana Cake is another favourite.

You have an online workshop Baking on the Spectrum, for neurodiverse children. How do you develop neurodiverse-friendly recipes?

It's more about the technique in the recipes than the recipes themselves, it's about how we actually bake. It's about not using machinery, eliminating the motor sounds which a lot of children don't like and find scary. It's also about using our hands, so you get that sensory play aspect of it. The vegetables, all the ingredients that we're using, we use all our senses to feel them – smelling, feeling, tasting. No recipe is super-hard, really, although I don't do anything too intricate like profiteroles! But we explore so many different things in the programme, and it's just about the method, really.

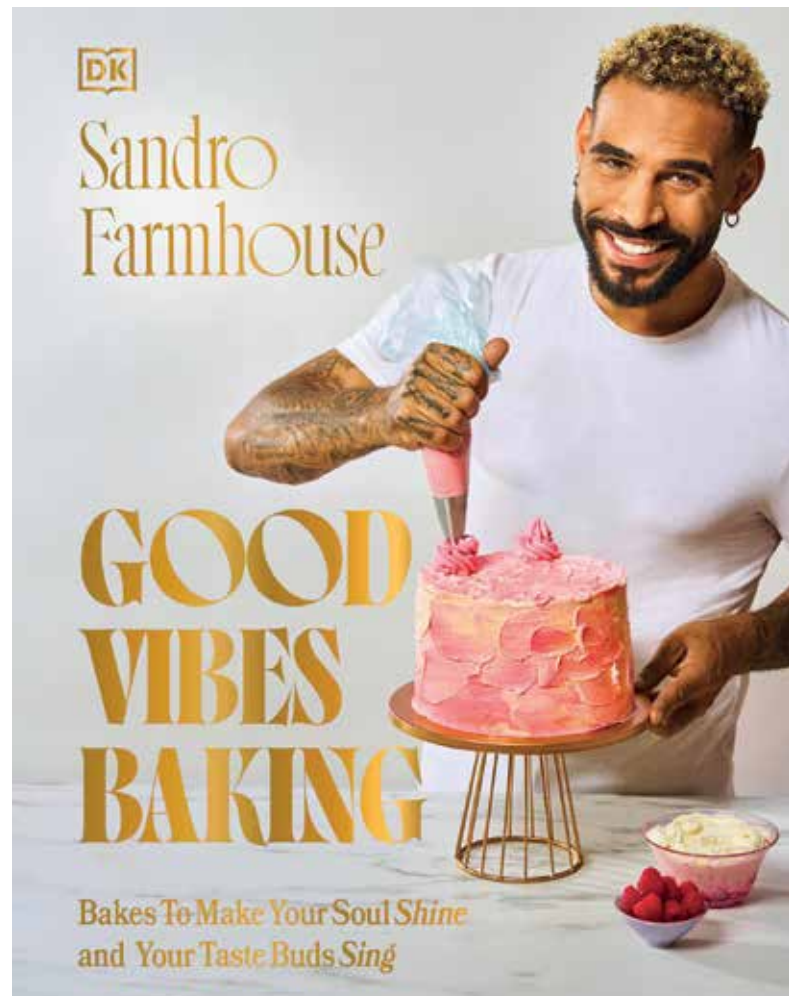
Are there any other chefs or bakers who inspire you in your work?

I love the foodie community. There are a lot of online creatives who I find super inspiring to me, the way they keep it going with the recipes. Crystelle Pereira, from the *Bake Off*, she's a big inspiration to me. That sort of community group is what inspires me the most. What used to inspire me was Paul Hollywood, chefs and bakers, but I'm more about the online bakers now!

Do you still watch the *Bake Off*, and were you pleased with the last series?

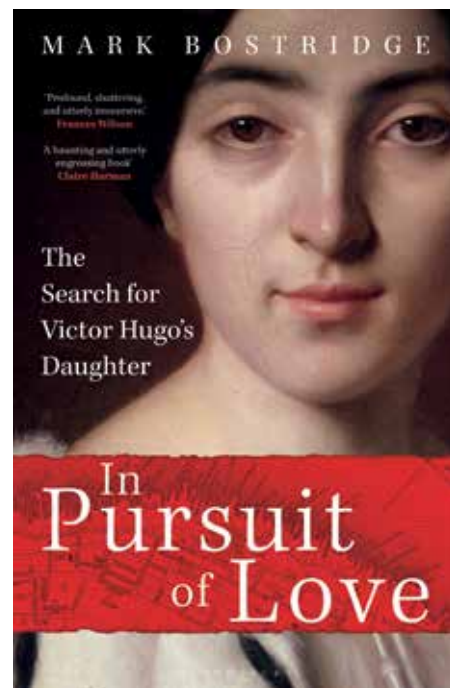
I would say that they had it much easier than we did! But I met Matty and he's a lovely guy, so I'm pleased that he won and was able to do something with it.

Good Vibes Baking
by Sandro Farmhouse
DK • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9780241657263
Published 23rd May



Chasing Passion

**In Pursuit of Love:
The Search for Victor
Hugo's Daughter**
by Mark Bostridge
Bloomsbury Continuum
HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781399416023
Published 6th June



Combining a travelogue with biography, history and memoir, *In Pursuit of Love* chronicles author Mark Bostridge's search for the truth about Adèle Hugo, the daughter of French writer Victor Hugo, and her unrequited love for a British soldier. We interviewed the author to discover more.



What inspired you to write *In Pursuit of Love*?

Two things really. There is a mystery at the heart of the book, because people had written about Adèle Hugo before, both in England and in France, but they'd never really pinned down the man that she was in love with. Over a very long period of time, I kept putting my toe in the water and tried to find out what I could, and I eventually managed to track down his descendants. They had this extraordinary piece of evidence. That was one thing, the other thing was more commercial. I think that conventional biography, both historical and literary, is largely dead commercially and in terms of reader interest. The readership of biography is dying out and it seems unlikely that you'd get younger people to read these often vast books. I also feel you need to have a new approach to biography. One of the things that's interesting is the relationship between the person writing the biography and the person they are writing about. Why are they writing about them, what is it that they bring to the subject? I think people should be more open about that, otherwise we just get endless replays of the same thing.

The book blends history, travel and personal memoir. Do you see this as a new genre of writing?

One of the biggest influences on this book was a classic, which was published in 1934, *The Quest for Corvo* by A.J.A. Symons. It's a quest to discover more about the life of this very strange, mysterious author called Baron Corvo, who was a Victorian and an Edwardian. I like Richard Holmes's work too.

But I think my book is quite extreme in that its subject slots into my own autobiography more. I'm not proposing that everyone should do it, but I think authors should be more honest about why they are writing about someone. In the old days of the 1980s and 1990s, there was always this idea that a biography could be definitive, which is obviously nonsense.

Did your perception of your own life change as you wrote the book?

I suppose, looking back, I was able to see it much more clearly, as a biographer. I saw how things slotted together, and bring it together in a plausible narrative. But there is no plausible narrative really, we just make one up!

Did you plan the book out in advance?

I've thought about this book for about ten years. Originally, 25 years ago, I started writing a novel about it, in order not to write a book I was meant to be writing! It was an impossible non-fiction book with lots of material, and I thought if only I could write this novel quickly instead. As I researched Adèle Hugo's story I started to see parallels with my own. The great attraction to the story was the idea of unrequited love, which a lot of people go through. But, as the book illustrates, you pursue a story but then the story starts to pursue you, and things that happen in the story start to be reflected in your life after you start writing.

"A haunting and utterly engrossing book"

Claire Harman

How did you source the photos in the book?

Some were ones I took – when I went to Halifax I took photos of the citadel, a great military bastion which Adèle Hugo stood outside waiting for this British soldier to be

present. Some of them are from French museum collections. There's a picture of the man Adèle Hugo was in love with – this turned up in the Bedfordshire regiment archives. No one knew what he looked like before. So there were a mixture of places to find the images.

Do you see Adèle as a tragic figure?

She was caught in the web of a great man's life and had very limited means of self-expression. She did express herself through music, but it wasn't easy for her to get it performed or published. There were great restrictions on her freedom which surprised me. For a French woman of the 19th century, the restrictions were greater than for her English counterparts. She couldn't go out without a chaperone, and the family would essentially choose who a woman would marry, and issues of love had little to do with it. But in another sense I think what's so extraordinary about her story is that she wants her freedom so much she will ultimately take that terrible, decisive step of crossing the ocean. She wanted to try and make the man she loved marry her, because by that time she had no other option. She was in her early 30s, which was quite old for a woman of that time to find someone. It's an extraordinary step to take, one that was reflected later in the writings of authors such as H.G. Wells and Ibsen. So in that sense she's more than a tragic figure. That's one way in which biography has changed, in that we now look at people who are below the surface, and these people are often women of a certain time, who didn't have the means to make a public expression of their lives.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I live in a place where there are two Daunt bookshops, and there's a small bookshop in Primrose Hill. They are incredibly important to me because you have a relationship with the bookseller. So I would always support the small bookshop.

City Life

“The most accomplished spy novelist working today”

Sunday Times

In this new thriller from the bestselling author of *Leaving Berlin*, Daniel Lohr manages to escape Germany in 1939 on a ship heading for Shanghai. There, he starts working for his uncle Nathan in a shady underworld. We interviewed the author Joseph Kanon to discover more.



Shanghai is set during the Second World War. What draws you to write about this period in history?

The war is the central event of the century. In a sense, the end of it is the beginning of our time. I was born in 1946, so I'm a total post-war baby. Several of my books are set in this period, and I think it's an important hinge moment in everyone's history, particularly in the west. Once you have the atomic bomb test, the world has changed and it will never be the same. Ordinary people, like you and me, are making decisions that will affect people in 50 years to come. It's an inherently dramatic time, and it raises a lot of questions that we're still struggling with today.

Did you do a lot of research into life in Shanghai at the time?

Yes and no. I went to Shanghai, which was how I had the idea for doing the book in the first place, just before the pandemic. I would have had ample reason to go back, but I couldn't, so I had to confine myself to one trip and do a lot of the research out of books and printed material. Because the book is set in 1939, you can get away with it to some extent. Although the Shanghai you see if you were standing on the Bund

looks exactly the same as it would have to the characters in the book, but if you look across the river at what is today picture postcard Shanghai with the light shows and flashing buildings, none of that existed then. So knowing that area does nothing for you if you're writing about 1939.

Daniel is drawn into the world of crime almost against his will. Do you think that in certain circumstances we're all capable of dark things?

Yes, and the real question the book poses is: How far do you go? When do you cross the line? We're talking about people who had just escaped the Gestapo and the coming Holocaust, and they're prepared to do anything to survive. I got interested in this because when I was there as a tourist I came across the history of these central European Jews who'd escaped. They were denied visas all over the world, but they could in fact arrive in Shanghai without a visa. 20,000 people saved themselves by doing this, and that fascinates me because I didn't know anything about it. But the more I read about Shanghai during that period, the more interesting and exciting it became to me, because it's almost a byword for vice. It was a great night-life centre with an incredible club scene, a bit like Weimar Berlin or Prohibition Chicago. There was lots of gang warfare, anything went. Not only are people arriving as refugees without passports or money, for them it was like going to the moon. And they find this almost Wild West city, which is not exactly lawless, there was a municipal council, but was pretty lawless, in the way that rowdy seaports can be. Here you have this anomaly, these trading concessions that were given to westerners, even though it remained Chinese territory. You didn't have to obey any Chinese laws, and if you violated anything you only be tried by a court in your own country, which means they usually weren't tried at all. What happens when desperate refugees meet this rollicking crime-ridden city? It was a lot of fun to write about.

Daniel falls in love with Leah on the boat to Shanghai. Was it important to you to include some romance as well as intrigue?

There's almost always a love story in my books because there's usually one in life, and we need to be reminded of that. It also explores how these bonds are affected by what is happening around them. History impacts everything, even our most intimate lives. This is a book that in many ways takes things from the movies. Then you get feedback loops where one is affecting another and we go into that cycle. Clubs that opened in Shanghai look like those in Hollywood movies, and increasingly the Hollywood movie clubs begin to look like those in Shanghai!

I really liked the character of Irina, she struck me as an independent, strong woman. What inspired her?

There were two sets of refugees who came to Shanghai, and Irina is part of the earlier group of Jews who escaped through Russia. This was a group of unbelievably tough women who were responsible for the survival of their families, and who became, if not cynical then very worldly-wise. One of the ways they would support the family was by becoming sex workers or working for gangsters, doing things that they were not brought up to do. Irina is someone who has been through it, and she's in love with Nathan. She knows him for who he is, but she takes him as he is because she's wise to the world and she's seen a lot worse.

Do you plan the story out before writing?

No. You have to have some idea if there's a murder committed – who did it. But most of the time I make it up as I go along. It's complicated, and not that easy to do, but it's so much more interesting to me. You want to be surprised, and see the book take off in directions you didn't know at the beginning. I'm not suggesting that it's controlled by something spiritual, I am in control of it, but nevertheless, different emphases will happen. You'll be in the middle of a scene and people will say things to each other that suggest taking the storyline somewhere you didn't originally intend it to go. It's interesting to follow your nose in those situations.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

It's such an interesting question and my answer is usually: everybody! People can be very self-important about it, citing Shakespeare or F. Scott Fitzgerald. But I don't think it works that way. I think that everything we've taken in is fuel for the grey matter, and we draw on it over the years, not just the actual experience we've had, but also the authors we've read. It all goes into that mix. I could read Evelyn Waugh again and again, but my books don't read like his. Is he an influence? He must be in some ways, but you don't see it directly on the page.



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

Shanghai
by Joseph Kanon
Simon & Schuster
HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781398519770
Published 23rd May

Family Lives

This ambitious and brilliant debut novel follows a Shanghai family – Leo, Eko and their three daughters – backwards in time from 2040 to 2014. We interviewed the author, Juli Min, to discover her inspirations.



The book begins in 2040 and then goes backwards in time. Why did you write it this way?

There are so many reasons! One of the things that the book is always questioning is what is our capacity for change, as individuals, in a relationship, through time, as a country or as a culture. When you think about 2040, it feels like it might be far away but actually it's very close. Part of the intention was to play with the reader's expectations for the future, and also reflect the way that the characters change and do not change. Another reason for moving backwards in time is investigating how a family got to a point of self-destruction. The impact of a long-term relationship is enormous, and even if it changes, and breaks apart, it's always there. Those marriage and family relationships are, in a way, everlasting. And ending with the beginning provides a bit of hope!

Did you plan the novel in advance, or did you write each part separately?

It started out as separate pieces. I had a swathe of Shanghai characters in mind, in the vein of *Dubliners* by James Joyce, which was my inspiration. But halfway through I was thinking about how to put it all together, and I read a lot of linked collections of short stories and novels. There are so many ways that a book can be structured, and through reading and playing and trying different things, I decided to go for this structure. I want the reader to experience a little bit of surprise, and perhaps some dissonance with their initial judgements of these characters. I liked the idea of opening up to a place of more grace, understanding and empathy for the characters.

You also include the stories of people in the family's wider circle, such as the nanny and the driver. Why did you include these characters too?

My initial mission was to portray

contemporary Shanghai, but obviously one book cannot contain everything. I wanted to see it through the lens of this family. What's so fascinating about Shanghai is its incredible wealth and privilege, and I was interested in capturing that socioeconomic diversity. Those two characters are the only ones who speak in the first person. I wanted to them to really speak to the readers and have as much space in the book as they could. I felt their voices very strongly. They were some of my favourite pieces to write, and very different from the rest of the book. They are an essential part of the family, but the family don't think about them much! Yet they have these rich lives that are just below the surface.

“Smart, tender, and lyrical”

Jiaming Tang

Yumi, Yoko and Kiko are quite different characters, even though they are sisters. Do you have an affinity for any of them in particular?

They all hold a special place in my heart. Kiko has such a bright personality, she's the baby. She's an actress, and has these desires that are outsized. She is really a pleasure to behold, and she was a lot of fun to write, because she has such a big personality. Yoko goes through a lot, she has a tough relationship with her older sister Yumi, and yet she has a lot of the same talents and ways of thinking as her father, which are very particular, mathematical and rational. For her, I wanted to capture the challenge of being so rational and yet craving love and acceptance from a tyrannical older sister. The toughest character to write was Yumi, the oldest sister, the most difficult, in some ways the most charismatic, the most mysterious, and the most cruel. I knew she would be this leader among the pack of girls, and I had to write various backstories and chapters to understand her more, and round her out. She's a human being, she has her good and her bad, she's young and struggling, and she's mean!

Leo has a fixation with the end of the world. Do you see this as rooted in his childhood?

It's hard to draw a straight line with any human being, from the past to the present to the future, because humans are so complex



ShanghaiLanders

by Juli Min

Dialogue Books

HB • £18.99

ISBN 9780349704074

Published 9th May

and layered. But I definitely do see one of the threads of his life coming from the trauma of his youth, and the way that he grew up. Then of course, there's the incredible insecurity of his country, as China became this construction site for development and prosperity in the 1980s and 1990s. This period of growth which is dynamic and incredible, this climate of optimism, hope and change, is a kind of instability as well, because everything is being developed and redeveloped. Chinese history in the past century is one of constant seesawing and zigzagging into the future. Leo has been traumatised in his family life, and he's experienced incredible growth in the life of his country. And he has a particular mind that can understand how things work in a rational way. All of those things, plus the person he married and the family that he has, come together to give him a shaky foundation in his mental health.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

There are so many. But I put in two epigraph from the same novel, *Half A Lifelong Romance* by Eileen Chang. One of them is incredibly romantic and lovely, about the beginning of a relationship, and one is cynical and realistic, about false love. That novel was incredibly influential for me, and I love her writing in general. She's a modernist writer from Shanghai, and she's playing with language, time and form. She's very interested in power and family relationships, all of those things that I'm interested in. My novel is set in contemporary China but Shanghai is this city that's always recontextualising its history, sometimes glorifying it and sometimes muting it. As a visual, aesthetic place, it's got a colonial past, with tree-lined streets and the markers of a European city, but it has a very complicated relationship to that past. The title of the novel *ShanghaiLanders* dates back to the early 20th century, and that's also the time period when Eileen Chang was writing. Even though my book is not about the past, it's still connected to that history.

Core Values

In this new book, Wyl Menmuir explores how our lives are intertwined with those of the trees and woodlands around us, as he travels around Britain and Ireland and meeting the people who plant and study trees, and who use them to create objects and help others. In this extract from the book, Wyl explores the land surrounding his father's house in North East Wales.

This is hard land on which to grow anything. For a start, sitting at a thousand feet above sea level, winters finish late and arrive early here. The sun may have been out but only the day before we had woken to a thin covering of snow, and it was well into April. And year round, winds roar up the valley. It takes constant effort to grow things here.

On one edge of the fields of trees is the kitchen garden in which my father grows vegetables. A second edge runs alongside the road. The far end abuts the top field of a neighbour's farm, the fourth has for its boundary the river Cynllaith, marking the border between England and Wales. The narrow river, as far as we can see, is dead, a victim of agricultural runoff from the farms upstream.

Beyond the stream, the land rises sharply. When my father and stepmother first moved here, a large section of the hillside was a dark plantation of conifers. The plantation was harvested five years ago, after which the clear-felled hillside looked like a badly shaved head. The first time I saw it after the harvest, I was shocked. I have no love for serried, uniform rows of conifers but to see them stripped back like that was hard. This year, this hillside had started to show some small signs of recovery. Some thin larches had started to regrow in small patches, showing bright green on the upper slopes, and further down, a half-hearted scattering of broadleaf trees that were planted as part of the foresters' agreement for growing the crop of conifers were starting to show through too. But that was to see the hillside through generous eyes. The damage was clear. Many of the trees had been left where they were felled or simply left standing dead, stripped of leaves and bark, bonelike and monolithic on the hillside.

Even several years on, it had the look of a battlefield weeks after the conflict had

The Heart of the Woods

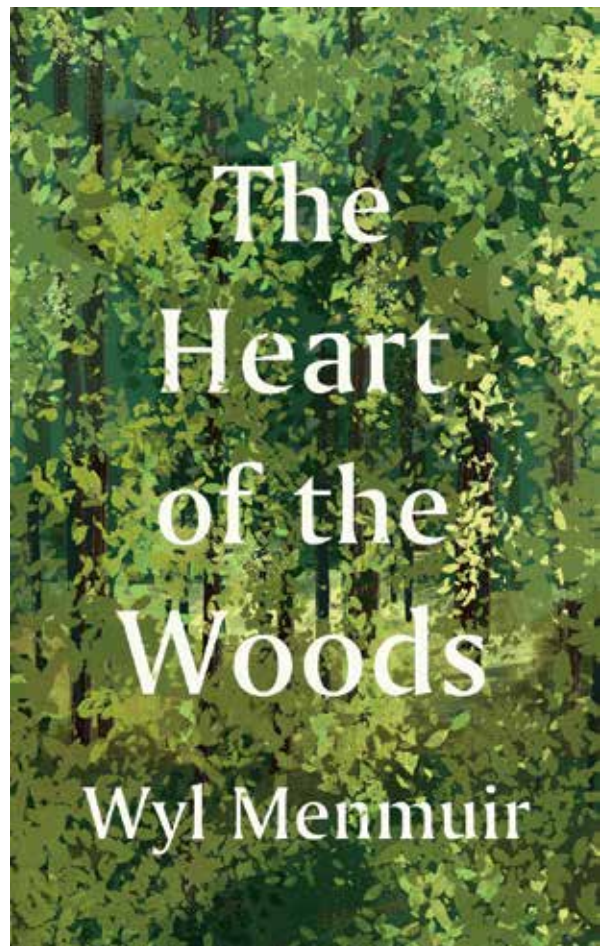
by Wyl Menmuir
Aurum • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780711289246
Published 6th June

finished, still reeling from events. Like many conifer plantations, it was a poorly thought through scheme and cannot have been particularly profitable. The land was too steep and, when the contractors arrived with heavy machinery, the tree harvester slipped off the thin path they cut through the trees: it took them days to work out how to recover it.

When my father first moved into the house, I thought the hillside looked forbidding in its dark, deep, regular and regulated coat of green. After the hillside was razed, it just looked sad and mangled.

“It takes constant effort to grow things here.”

Beyond the hill and for miles and miles beyond, much of the area is given over to sheep farming. It is, in miniature, a reflection of the decisions made in the twentieth century across Britain and Ireland, to replace woodland with rolling monoculturally green hills of sheep, and to favour fast-growing crops of conifers over the slower, messier tangled web of broadleaf trees we are now trying to reinstate. It raises questions about what a woodland is 'for', what purpose it serves and the broader conversation going on across the country about our place in the landscape. About how we can be a part of the natural world here rather than pushing out all other comers.



Look out for the Roger Deakin award-winning previous book by Wyl Menmuir:



The Draw of the Sea

by Wyl Menmuir
Aurum • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780711273962
Aurum • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9780711273979
Out Now

“Light and wonder illuminate the pages of this magical book, a fitting tribute to the majesty and mystery of the sea.”

The Observer

“Wyl Menmuir explores the different ways in which people can be drawn to the sea, content to leave it a mystery why they are drawn – and perhaps the mystery is the point... The best compliment I can pay *The Draw of the Sea* is that the moment I finished it I signed up for lessons with the local sailing club.”

The Spectator

“Beautiful, intriguing, salt-tanged, this wonderful book has the power to transport us to the ocean. If you can't get to the sea, Wyl's book is the next best thing.”

Cathy Rentzenbrink, author of *Dear Reader* and *The Last Act of Love*

Branching Out

From the bestselling author of *The Leviathan*, *The Puzzle Wood* is an unsettling gothic novel set in 19th century Herefordshire. At Locksley Abbey, nothing is as it seems...

Locksley Abbey is located in the foothills of the Black Mountains, where England bleeds into Wales. When Catherine Symonds arrives to take up a post as a governess, she encounters a near empty house with a skeleton staff. The ancient forest that surrounds the Abbey, known locally as the Puzzle Wood, is enshrouded in myths and mystery. And the master of the house, Sir Rowland, encourages dogs to stalk the grounds, baying for blood.

But Catherine has come to Locksley Abbey with a mission of her own. Her reference and identity are fraudulent, and she's travelling in disguise to investigate what happened to the last governess, who took her own life out in the woods. That governess, Emily, was Catherine's sister, but until now Catherine had believed Emily had died many years before, when they were just children. In the wake of her husband's death, Catherine is determined to find out the truth about Emily and the Puzzle Wood.

In this extract, Catherine arrives at Locksley Abbey:

Catherine's ears rang with the howls of the dogs. She looked away from the stag with her stomach heaving, as Sir Rowland, a hard satisfaction in his face, plunged his hunting knife deep into the sinew of the animal's neck. He pulled. Its eyes rolled back in its head as it died, shuddering. Catherine felt outside herself, as if someone else had watched it reel and stumble, and now waited for its muscular form to fall still.

The trap had descended the steep valley, crossing a small arched bridge over a rocky river bed. They had climbed a track on the opposite side, eventually joining a cedar-lined drive approaching Locksley Abbey. Rather than taking the straight to the door, Parry had suggested he should first find Sir Rowland. They had circled the

grounds behind the Abbey and now stood on the edge of the deer course, an expanse of meadow sloping eastward, towards the river. From here, her first full view of the house was from the back. She saw a sprawling place nestled in a dip between two forested slopes. A mock-turreted tower

"A richly layered Gothic mystery with delicious undertones of menace throughout, The Puzzle Wood is a story full of dark twists with an even darker heart at its sinister core"

Susan Stokes-Chapman

faced west, part of an older, red-brick structure that seemed to lurk behind the newer sections. The whole thing had a faded grandeur about it. She felt a sadness, but was not sure whether she was coming to it, or if she had brought it with her.

She had dismounted the cart and waited a hundred yards from where Sir Rowland stood with several men. Parry mumbled to the pony, which stomped and snorted, unsettled by the slaughter. The stag must have bled out quickly, but to her tired eyes the flow of blood appeared impossibly sluggish, and the patch around the fallen beast was as black as tar. The huddled brown form taunted her, the rawness of the scene disturbing some memory – she could not hold on to the feeling, but had a sense of having witnessed something like it before.

It's nothing.
How tired she was. And so thirsty.

Before their arrival, the stag would have been flushed out and hemmed in by the dogs, but they

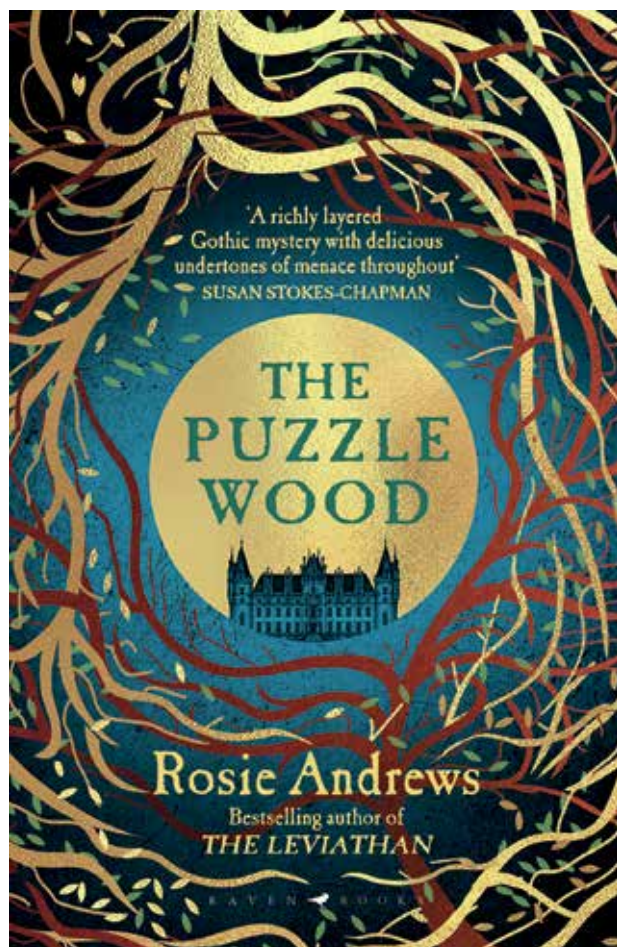
had been called in by Sir Rowland, each handed off on a heavy chain to be held by shabby-coated men.

'What are they?' she muttered, almost to herself, but Parry heard.

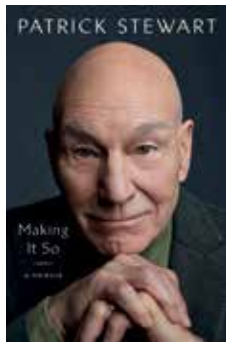
'Alpine mastiffs,' he said, watching too as she counted five of the huge creatures hauling at their changes, long-legged and brindle-coated. Parry said their names: Zeus, Apollo, Dionysus, Tartarus, Morpheus. He explained, 'Old Sir Maurice brought them back from his travels. He showed their dam in Liverpool. They say they're the biggest dogs either side of the border.'

Catherine could believe it. They were truly enormous. As if their size alone didn't make them fearsome, someone had hacked away the soft parts of their ears, giving their heads a skull-like appearance, emphasising their black, drooling mouths. *Don't go near 'em*, Parry had said. She would take that advice gladly.

The Puzzle Wood
by Rosie Andrews
Raven Books • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781526637376
Published 9th May

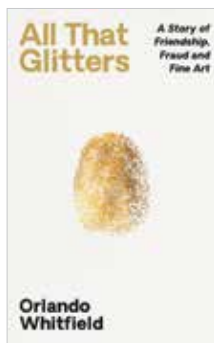


Non-Fiction



Making It So
by Patrick Stewart
Gallery UK
PB • £10.99
ISBN 9781398512979
Published 6th June

Now in paperback, this is an insightful memoir from the beloved actor Sir Patrick Stewart. He describes his humble beginnings in Yorkshire, his seminal roles as Captain Jean-Luc Picard in *Star Trek* and Professor Charles Xavier in Marvel's *X-Men* film franchise, as well as his more than forty years as part of the Royal Shakespeare company, and much more. It's a revealing portrait of a driven artist, spanning six decades on stage and screen.



All That Glitters
by Orlando Whitfield
Profile Books
HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781788169950
Published 2nd May

A sparkling sharp memoir of greed, ambition and madness, which will take you to the heart of the contemporary art world. When Orlando Whitfield first meets Inigo Philbrick, they are students dreaming of dealing art for a living. Their friendship lasts for fifteen years until one day, Inigo – by then the most successful dealer of his generation – disappears, accused of a fraud so gigantic and audacious it rocks the art world to its core.



Seaglass: Essays, Moments and Reflections
by Kathryn Tann
Calon • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781915279620
Published 9th May

On a windswept stretch of the Durham coastline, there's treasure to be found: jewels of shining sea glass, swept in by the tide after years at sea. Gathered together in a jar on the windowsill, each seaworn pebble is a moment in time. This book is a collection of such moments; essays blending creative non-fiction with nature writing and memoir, and portraying with powerful observation and moving honesty the journey of a young woman navigating modern adulthood.



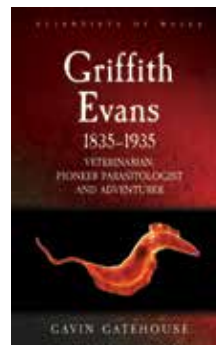
One Ukrainian Summer
by Viv Groskop
Ithaka • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781804184868
Published 23rd May

A poignant and often comical account of coming-of-age in the time after the Cold War and before Putin. Autumn 1993. Viv is about to turn 21 and is on a study year abroad, supposedly immersed in the language, history and politics of a world that has just ceased to exist: the Soviet Union. Instead, she finds herself immersed in Bogdan Bogdanovich – the lead guitarist of a Ukrainian punk rock band... All proceeds from this book will go to the charity Pen International.



The Garden Against Time
by Olivia Laing
Picador • HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781529066678
Published 2nd May

In 2020, Olivia Laing began to restore a walled garden in Suffolk, an overgrown Eden of unusual plants. The work drew her into an exhilarating investigation of paradise and its long association with gardens. Moving between real and imagined gardens, from Milton's *Paradise Lost* to John Clare's enclosure elegies and beyond, Laing interrogates the sometimes shocking cost of making paradise on earth, in an exacting account of the pleasures and possibilities of gardens.



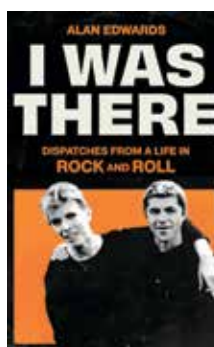
Griffith Evans: 1835-1935
by Gavin Gatehouse
University of Wales Press
PB • £16.99
ISBN 9781837721238
Published 15th May

In 1880, Griffith Evans, an army veterinary surgeon in India, made the seminal discovery that blood parasites – then universally considered benign – were pathogenic. Spurned by peers and colleagues, his conclusions from experiments with diseased horses were acknowledged by Koch and Pasteur, but it took many years before his achievement received general recognition. This fascinating biography of a forgotten pioneer is part of the *Scientists of Wales* series.



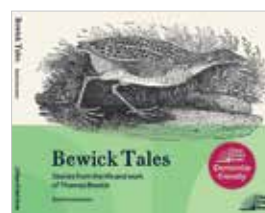
Seventeen
by Joe Gibson
Gallery UK
HB • £10.99
ISBN 9781398522503
Published 20th June

A gripping account of a shocking abuse of authority, now in paperback. In 1992, Joe was seventeen and at a private school, when his teacher, an attractive woman in her mid-thirties, took an interest in him. For his final two years at school, he is bound to her, a woman twice his age, in an increasingly tangled web of coercion, sex and lies. Thirty years on, this is Joe's record of the illicit relationship that dominated his adolescence and dictated the course of his life.



I Was There
by Alan Edwards
Simon & Schuster
HB • £25.00
ISBN 9781398525245
Published 6th June

A memoir from the godfather of modern music PR, whose list of clients has ranged from the Rolling Stones to the Spice Girls. Alan Edwards describes getting his break in the mid-1970s, his encounter with London's thriving punk scene, and his work with the likes of Blondie and David Bowie, which took him to the US and beyond. There are entertaining tales of debauchery and rock and roll antics, but also fascinating observations about many brilliant artists.



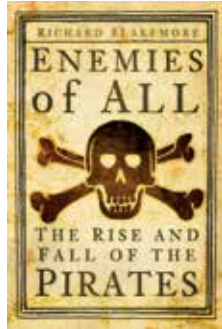
Bewick Tales
by Sarah Lawrence
Designed by Wendy Lewis
Open Ended Books
HB • £15.99
ISBN 9781738522903
Out Now

The first publication from Open Ended Books, a new publishing initiative from creative ageing charity Equal Arts. The book follows the course of world-famous artist and wood engraver Thomas Bewick (1753-1828.) An uplifting dementia-friendly book, written and designed with and for people with early to moderate dementia, it is designed to create a shared reading experience with a focus on creativity and culture.



What's Her Name
by Katie Nelson & Olivia Meikle
Michael O'Mara
HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781789295382
Published 20th June

A journey through thousands of years of human history, now with the women put back in! From the earliest human civilizations through to the present day, the stories of countless influential women – leaders, artists, warriors, scientists and more – have been ignored, forgotten, or actively suppressed. In this book, authors – and sisters – Olivia Meikle and Katie Nelson weave together the stories of these figures to tell an alternative, enthralling and deeply researched historical narrative.



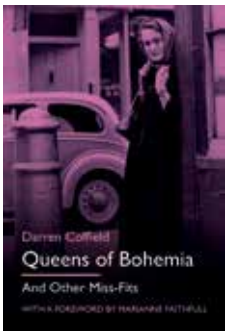
Enemies of All: The Rise and Fall of the Pirates
by Richard Blakemore
The History Press
HB • £25.00
ISBN 9781803991733
Published 16th May

The Hollywood stereotype of pirates – black flags and peg-legs, cutlasses and cannons, exotic yet sinister pets, buried treasure – is familiar and entrancing, but there is much more to be told. This new book takes the reader on a voyage of discovery, investigating who these pirates were, describing their exploits and everyday lives, examining the origins of many myths about them, and explaining their incredible, often unrecognised, impact on history.



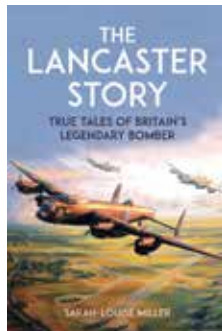
Taking Flight
by Lev Parikian
Elliott & Thompson
PB • £10.99
ISBN 9781783967827
Published 16th May

A mind-expanding book which tells the evolutionary story of life on the wing. The miracle of flight has evolved in hugely diverse ways, with countless variations of flapping and gliding, hovering and diving, murmuring and migrating. In this book, we encounter fourteen flying species, from the first fluttering insect of 300 million years ago to the crested pterosaurs of the Mesozoic Era, to hummingbirds that co-evolved with rainforest flowers, to the wonders of the dragonfly.



Queens of Bohemia and Other Miss-Fits
by Darren Coffield
The History Press
HB • £25.00
ISBN 9781803995748
Published 23rd May

An affectionate record of many remarkable women who made their names in the pubs and clubs of early 20th century London. Through these women, from 'Queen of Bohemia' artist Nina Hamnett to Sonia Orwell, to Kate Meyrick, who ran the legendary Soho establishment, the 43 Club, to Victoriene Berlemont, who owned the French pub the York Minster, we are given a fresh female perspective on life in Britain a hundred years ago.



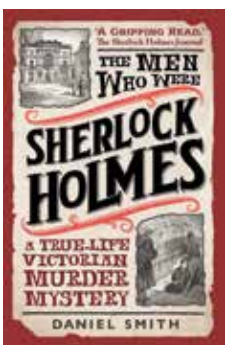
The Lancaster Story
by Sarah-Louise Miller
Michael O'Mara
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781789296396
Published 23rd May

The epic story of the RAF's legendary heavy bomber: the Avro Lancaster. Between its introduction in 1942 and the end of the Second World War, the Avro Lancaster flew more than 150,000 sorties, dropped more than 600,000 tons of explosives and took the Allied fight to Nazi Germany. Combining individual stories into a gripping, panoramic narrative, this book paints a complete portrait of the battle over Europe, and the Lancaster's unique and decisive role in it.



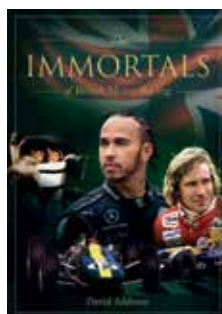
The Good Bug
by George McGavin
Michael O'Mara
HB • £10.99
ISBN 9781789296693
Published 20th June

Following on from the success of *The Good Bee*, this beautifully illustrated celebration of insects by leading entomologist George McGavin highlights the pivotal role they play in our ecosystems, and what we can do to help them survive and thrive. Since they appeared on land 420 million years ago, these small six-legged animals have been pioneers and ultimate survivors. They pollinate plants, maintain healthy soil, assist in decomposition and are essential to the food web.



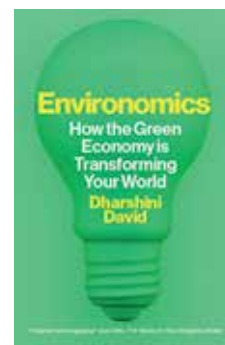
The Men Who Were Sherlock Holmes
by Daniel Smith
Michael O'Mara
PB • £10.99
ISBN 9781789296297
Published 9th May

In 1893, young army officer Cecil Hambrough was murdered at the sprawling Ardlamont estate in Scotland, unleashing one of the most gripping court cases Victorian Britain had ever known. The case brought together two pioneering forensic experts – Joseph Bell and Henry Littlejohn – two men upon whom Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes happened to be based. In this book, Daniel Smith explores the real-world origins of Sherlock Holmes through the prism of this mystery.



The Immortals of British Motor Racing
by David Addison
Gelding Street Press
HB • £22.00
ISBN 9781922662019
Published 9th May

A fully illustrated celebration of the UK's greatest ever racing drivers, this book profiles the best of the best from more than 50 years of Formula 1, the BTCC and the world's classic motorsport events such as Le Mans. Renowned commentator and writer David Addison selects his top twelve drivers then delves into the careers of the true greats, from pioneers such as Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart to heroes such as James Hunt, Nigel Mansell and Lewis Hamilton.



Environomics
by Dharshini David
Elliott & Thompson
HB • £22.00
ISBN 9781783966295
Published 20th June

In this vibrant and eye-opening book, economist and broadcaster Dharshini David follows the course of an average day – from the moment we flick on the light in the morning – to reveal the green changes that are already taking place in every aspect of our world. Exploring industries such as energy, food, fashion, technology, manufacturing and finance, she asks what is happening, how quickly, who is driving it all – and what it means for us.

All in Hand

In this second novel to feature Blackpool detective Declan Miller, he is faced with untangling a mystery involving a stolen briefcase with a pair of severed hands inside. We interviewed the author Mark Billingham to discover how he wrote it.



The Wrong Hands is the second in the series. Did you find it easier or harder to write than the first one?

The second book is scary. With the first book in the series I was fairly confident that all the people who liked my other stuff would give me the benefit of the doubt and pick it up. The key question is how many of them liked it enough to carry on with the series and buy the second one? But I thoroughly enjoyed writing it, because I love spending time with that character. I enjoy being able to let my stupid sense of humour run riot in a way that it can't in the Thorne novels.

Do you find that you're discovering more about the characters as you write?

Yes, and that's always been my method. I've never written a biography of a character. Anyone who's read the Thorne novels knows as much about Thorne as I do, and the same is true with the Miller novels. I don't really know where it's going, I don't know where he's going. I don't know what he looks like, it doesn't matter. I'm getting to know him, and I got to know him a little better with *The Wrong Hands*.

The story follows the police investigation by DS Declan Miller and DS Sara Xiu, but it also follows the criminals who he's pursuing, and other characters such as their wives. Do you enjoy writing about a range of different characters?

Yes! Some of the criminals I've written about in the Thorne books have been extremely dark characters, but most of the criminals that Miller encounters I find quite funny. They do some bad stuff, but some of them are just inept and a bit dim, which to be fair is

what most criminals are like. They're not evil geniuses, they're not Hannibal Lector. Even the ones who aren't dim find themselves in strange predicaments. One character's life is changed for the worse because he throws a cream egg at his wife! It's the banality of it that I find funny.

Severed hands are at the heart of the story – what made you think to include this grisly feature?

The opening scene of the book, in which two thieves steal a briefcase and discover a pair of severed hands was the beginning of a book I wrote 25 years ago. When I was writing my first book, which became *Sleepyhead*, I was writing another book at the same time, a kind of comic caper, and this was the opening of it. It never amounted to anything and I carried on writing *Sleepyhead* and I put it in a file somewhere on my computer. Then, when it came to writing *The Wrong Hands* – it wasn't called that at the time, it was just Miller Book 2 – a little bell rang in my head. I opened that file again and thought 'yes, this is the opening of the book!'

“I adored everything about The Wrong Hands!”

Claire Douglas

Your plotting is quite intricate, do you plan it all beforehand?

No! I'm thinking a couple of chapters ahead, but it's not planned out at all. Halfway through the book I'll realise where I'm heading and what the ending is likely to be, but there is no plan. I know plenty of writers who do use a plan, but it's just never been the way I've done it, and there's this slightly superstitious thing to use the same method I've always used. The problem with having a plan is that you tend to stick to it, without one you can change things up as you go along, which is much more exciting.

The hitman Draper has a liking for *Midsomer Murders* – does this reflect your own taste?



The Wrong Hands
by Mark Billingham
Sphere • HB • £22.00
ISBN 9781408717134
Published 20th June

No, I think *Midsomer Murders* is vaguely ridiculous. I put into the book the episode which finally made me realise that I couldn't watch it anymore –

when someone is killed by a giant wheel of cheese! I had great fun making Draper watch that episode. It's daft, but I suppose that's why people like it.

Are there other crime TV series which you enjoy?

I love *Columbo* because I grew up watching it, and all those American shows that were on at around the same time – *McMillan & Wife*, *McCloud*, *Banacek*. Similarly, the ones we had in the UK – *The Sweeney*, *Inspector Morse*. You'll notice that these are all quite old shows! I don't watch too much cop drama on TV now, because a lot of it annoys me. You can get away with things on a TV crime drama which you can never get away with in a novel. All sorts of holes in the plot, but it's gone in an instant on telly. But if you read something like that in a book you can turn the pages back and analyse it. You've got to be a little more plausible. Having said that, Vera is a huge favourite of mine. My wife has directed it, so I know it pretty well and I love it.

What do you think about the trend in TV shows in recent years where the police are often corrupt, such as in *Line of Duty*?

The book I'm writing at the moment, which will be the next Thorne novel, is dealing with exactly that. How can you not write about it, when you see what's happening, especially in the Met? It's been officially announced as being institutionally racist, homophobic, misogynistic and not fit for purpose. You've got to deal with that, if you're writing about police officers in contemporary Britain. If the person you're writing about is an angel, you've got to make sure that there are plenty of devils around, because that is the way of it.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

They mean everything. When *The Last Dance* came out, I did a big tour of independent bookshops, and they were fabulous. The simple truth is that in these bookshops you're always dealing with people who are passionate about books, and if it's a book they really believe in, they will hand sell it to readers. They know their customers, and what they will like. It's a really different atmosphere, the indies are great and they need to be supported.

Under the Skin

In this innovative debut novel, a young, antagonistic man called Gabriel finds that his skin is falling off. Living in his parents' old house in the wake of his father's death, many other strange things start to occur... We interviewed the author Gabriel Smith to discover more!



What inspired you to write *BRAT*, did you plan the book out in advance, or see where the story took you as you wrote?

I did some film school, and I'm a believer in hacky Hollywood 'storytelling'. I didn't want to write a book that would bore my friends who don't really read fiction. So the plot of *BRAT* was very intricately, deliberately planned, right down to the frequency at which certain words appear. For me the act of writing a novel is closer to musical composition than it is to writing a short story. My planning documents are formally very much like sheet music. As for what inspired it – I have no idea. I found the image of a young man shedding his skin very interesting and frightening. And I knew I wanted him to get punched in the face a lot.

The narrator of the book has the same name as you – are there any similarities between you two?

Yes: the mother's character also has my mother's name, and there are a lot of writers

in my family. One of the things that the book is about is what might come after autofiction. I was trying to kill that thing. So I wanted to use this very autofiction prose style, and have a lot of mirrors to my IRL self, but then explode that into a haunted house book, like a genre book. The real always collapses into the imaginary, once it becomes memory. In the end it's all narrative.

The narrator finds that his skin is coming off. Do you see this as a metaphor for him entering a new period of his life?

No, not really. It's almost too ripe an image, to me, to draw a single meaning from. One of the main ones I was trying to convey was sort of the opposite of that. Underneath the skin he just finds the same skin over again. It's more about the futility of self-knowledge and self-realisation. You always end up becoming yourself, etc. This feels like something young men think about. All these wellness gurus and their endless optimisations. You'll still be you at the other end of that road. The character's arc is about accepting that.

“Gabriel Smith has written a truly unique and surprising book.”

Rachel Connolly

As well as the central narration, the book also includes manuscripts, scripts, and descriptions of tapes which the narrator comes across. Why did you write it in this way?

A couple of reasons. Firstly, I did just want to show off. Like: look at all the shit I can do. English miniaturism? Bang. A sci-fi movie? Bang. A Chekhov riff? A sex-and-death thing about a Russian oligarch and the art world? Lishian intuitive-structural stuff? Bang bang bang. You only get one debut. I think I'm good enough for this to be a career-long game, for me, and I wasn't going to waste words. I wanted to make sure that was really clear to everyone. Then I also have terrible ADHD and living in one voice, for the duration of a whole novel, is a frankly appalling prospect. In terms of music composition, the primary narrator functions as a drone, or a kick drum if we're talking about dance music. You can't have just a drone over the length of a symphony. You need the strings, too. And I was very interested in Jung at the time, in coincidence. In how things echo through time. I wanted readers to see the echoes in these seemingly-unrelated stories and have a puzzle to solve. It's also a value-for-money thing. People don't

have a lot in their pockets at the moment. If someone is buying something I've written, it's genuinely important to me that I give them as much as possible. The least I can do for the reader is the maximum I'm capable of. I owe them that respect.

The narrator discovers that the manuscripts are changing each time he reads them, and considers the possibility of parallel universes. Do you believe in parallel universes?

Yes. Can't you feel them?

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

My mother, Rebecca Smith, my grandmother, Shena Mackay, Patricia Highsmith, Don DeLillo, Scott McClanahan, Lily Hackett, the Coens, William Blake, Daphne du Maurier, Graham Greene, Christine Schutt, Françoise Sagan, Nabokov, Shakespeare and Richard Osman.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

Some of my bleakest and best moments have been those where I'm travelling and need to kill a day, so I find an independent bookshop, buy a couple of interesting-seeming things, then take them to a pub or bar and read until I'm too drunk to. They facilitate and cure a particular kind of loneliness. I'm grateful they exist.

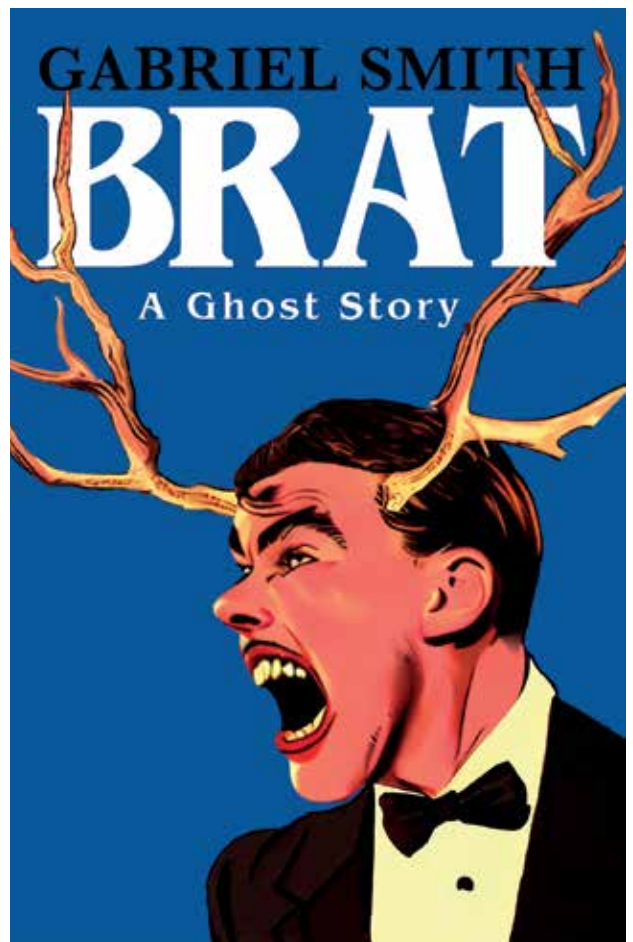
BRAT: A Ghost Story

by Gabriel Smith

Scribner • HB • £16.99

ISBN 9781398525313

Published 6th June



Year of the Dog



Dog Days Out is a beautiful guide to 365 things to do with your dog in the UK and Ireland and is full of dog-friendly places and activities. We interviewed the author, Lottie Gross, to discover more.



What inspired you to write *Dog Days Out*?

It's actually my second dog-friendly travel book. My first one *Dog-Friendly Weekends* came out in 2022. The beginning of my passion for dog-friendly travel started when I got my first dog. I'm a travel writer by trade, I've been writing about travel for more than a decade. I got a dog in 2018 and he used to come with me on various assignments. I realised while I was travelling that there really isn't a lot of useful information out there for dog owners. A lot of the information online was vague and not very helpful. I realised that there was a market for useful, practical and in-depth dog-friendly travel information. Any product that comes to market that fills a gap, you create it because you need it yourself.

What kind of dog do you have?

I have a Manchester terrier, he's three years old and he's called Arty. He's currently asleep in our caravan, we're parked up by the beach in Brittany, France!

Did you visit all the places in the book personally?

I visited about 75% of them. Lots of them I'd been to in the past but without my dog, others I knew other people who had been to them, and who raved about them.

How did you source the photos in the book?

I took some of them – any photos with my dog in are by me! I took them when I was doing on-the-ground research for the book. I spent months travelling around the UK and Ireland doing the research, so that's where the knowledge comes from. Other photos were sourced from agencies. It's quite difficult to find pictures of attractions with dogs!

Do you think that holiday areas, hotels, and pubs, have become more accommodating to dogs in recent years?

Definitely. There have been increases in demand, particularly since the pandemic, that have led to lots of places changing their dog-friendly policies. They've either gone from not dog-friendly to dog-friendly or have bolstered their dog-friendly policies. So they might offer a package where you can get a dog bowl in the room, or a meal for your dog.

“The beginning of my passion for dog-friendly travel started when I got my first dog.”

Is there any particular area in the UK which stood out for you as being dog-friendly?

Yes – two places in the east. Norfolk is exceptionally dog-friendly, particularly on the beaches. Places like Holkham, where you have the lovely Victoria pub, where I had one of the best curries of my life! And at Holkham Hall, you can go into the museum with a dog and walk around the estate. Northumberland is also very dog-friendly. Again, there are beaches without restrictions in summer, and castles where you can visit with your dog, and the National Park is walking central.

What essentials do you pack when you travel with your dog?

I always pack a Dicky Bag. It's a small cylindrical neoprene bag, which has hooks and carabiners on it so you can attach it to anything – your belt loop or a bag that you're already carrying. It has a storage thing in the top with poo bags, and then the bulk of it is empty, so that when you pick up the dog poo you have somewhere to put it, and it won't stink out the rest of your walk. Because my least favourite thing is carrying a carrier bag of poo with me! Picking up dog poo is very important, so the Dicky Bag is essential for keeping things clean. My second essential is a long line – a dog lead which is extra-long. I have a waterproof one that's made of biothane. It's really good as it doesn't tangle. It gives your dog a bit of extra freedom in areas where they must be on a lead, whilst also preventing them from scaring wildlife. It's good for dogs that don't come back when they are called, too.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

Endless possibilities and ideas! What I love about indie bookshops is many of them are dog-friendly. You can go into one and they will usually have local writers' books on their shelves, and I love to see local writers being supported. My local bookshop, Wallingford Bookshop, is very good at highlighting authors in the area. They are an opportunity to get a local flavour of a place, that you wouldn't get in any other shop.



Dog Days Out

by Lottie Gross
Conway • PB • £20.00
ISBN 9781844866502
Published 9th May



On the Move

In 2021, Kacie Rose left her life in New York City, moved to Italy, and became a social media star. In *You Deserve Good Gelato* she shares her story with humour, and offers advice to anyone wanting to embrace travel and different cultures. We interviewed her to discover more.

What inspired you to write the book, did you always have it in mind when you moved to Italy?

Honestly, no. I started creating video content online. It had never crossed my mind to write a book. But after three years of living in Italy, there were a lot of mistakes made and things learned, and it was impossible to put it in a video. When the idea of writing this book came up, the motivating factor for me was that I wanted people to feel that they weren't alone. I'd been through similar experiences, and there's power in sharing those experiences and stories. And so I wrote and

I wrote and I wrote. The main thing I wanted to get across was that no matter what you're dealing with in life, you can walk away.

What are the main differences between American and Italian culture?

One of the most immediate differences was that old saying, that Americans live to work whereas Europeans work to live. Obviously that's not true for all Europeans, but I found it true in Italian culture. I came from New York, one of the most chaotic cities in the world. But Italians really have that balance of knowing when it's time to work and when it's time to play. They recognise that rest is a very important piece of a person's overall wellbeing. It was really difficult for me at first, it was actually one of the things that bothered me the most, this idea of slowing down. Because I had been trained my whole life that rest was demonised and hard work was rewarded. That's not true, but it was what I was taught to believe.

“There's power in sharing your stories”

Do you see your book as a memoir, a guide to living abroad, or as a combination of the two?

I see it as part-memoir, part-manifesto. There's power in sharing your stories, and I wish I'd known the things that I now know before moving and travelling abroad. It's one of those things that no matter who you are or what you're facing – even if you've never set foot outside your home town – there are lessons in here that you can take away and apply to your own life. And I think that was what was important to me, to embody travel, living abroad and seeing the world, because we should recognise that we're so much more capable than we believe we are. We just have to face our fears and learn to embrace them.

Do you think that the pandemic and the lockdown changed people's attitude to travelling?

Yes, absolutely! We were stuck inside, not able to travel, and I think we're still feeling the effects of that even today. But I also feel that a lot of people turned to their phones to travel, and I fell into a very lucky situation in that I started to create content online when I did. It's what people were needed at that time, they were needing to travel through their phone screens. And it's one of the most fortunate things in my life that I was able to provide that for people. But even now, four years after Covid, people recognise that life is short, and it's too short not to do the

s**t that scares you. That became a model that I embraced very quickly and took with me, and applied it to my own life. That's the overarching message of this book. It's ten times scarier to be on your death bed regretting that you didn't do something because you were just too scared.

What is it like to be a social media star, and were you surprised at your success?

When it first started happening, the best way I knew to explain it is that it felt like a speed boat that had taken off before I had time to grab on. I mean that in the best way possible and the worst way possible. There's no guidebook on what to do when you go from having zero eyes on you to a million. You have to learn as you go. On one hand, it was so beautiful because I was able to connect with people all around the world. I started creating content in January 2021, during the pandemic. The first six months I spend in Italy were probably some of the loneliest in my life, and I do think that social media kept me together. But, on the other hand, with popularity also comes a plethora of hate comments and a plethora of nasty messages. That was really tough. I don't believe that, as humans, we're supposed to be exposed to negativity in that way. There are so many wonderful things on social media, but there's also that really negative side that almost led me to leaving it a couple of times. But if somebody's going to take the time to project negativity at you, it's 100% because there's something going on in their life.

How different is travelling alone to travelling with someone else?

I think that everybody, especially every woman, should travel solo at some point in their lives. It's one of the most beneficial gifts that you can give yourself. You are the one that gets to call the shots, to decide what to do. It can be scary, because when you're left alone with your own thoughts you have to come to terms with a lot of things about yourself. But you learn to enjoy your own company, and you learn to become your own best friend. Because you're the only person who has to spend 100% of your life with you, so you might as well enjoy it!

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

I recently read *How to Fail* by Elizabeth Day, and I loved it. One of my favourites is *You Are a Badass* by Jen Sincero – I love that book too, I've read it so many times. And I'm also inspired by people in the travel community on social media. People like Drew Binsky and Nicolò Balini, I looked up to them when I was starting this whole journey.

You Deserve Good Gelato

by Kacie Rose
DK • PB • £12.99
ISBN 9780241678770
Published 28th May



Frozen Crimes

Translated by Victoria Cribb, *Boys Who Hurt* is the new book in the *Forbidden Iceland* series. Fresh from maternity leave, Detective Elma finds herself confronted with a complex case, when a man is found murdered in a holiday cottage in the depths of the Icelandic countryside – the victim of a frenzied knife attack, with a shocking message scrawled on the wall above him.



Boys Who Hurt
by Eva Björg Ægisdóttir
Orenda Books • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781916788206
Published 20th June

“Fans of Nordic Noir will love this”

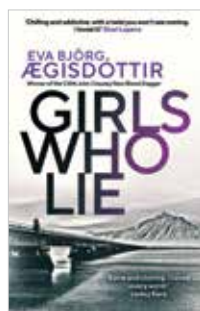
Ann Cleeves

At home with their baby daughter, Sævar is finding it hard to let go of work, until the chance discovery in a discarded box provides him with a distraction. Could the diary of a young boy, detailing the events of a long-ago summer have a bearing on Elma’s case? Once again, the team at West Iceland CID have to contend with local secrets in the small town of Akranes, where someone has a vested interest in preventing the truth from coming to light. And Sævar has secrets of his own that threaten to destroy his and Elma’s newfound happiness.

Look out for the previous books in the series:



The Creak on the Stairs
by Eva Björg Ægisdóttir
Orenda Books
PB • £9.99
9781913193041
Out Now



Girls Who Lie
by Eva Björg Ægisdóttir
Orenda Books
PB • £8.99
9781913193737
Out Now



Night Shadows
by Eva Björg Ægisdóttir
Orenda Books
PB • £9.99
9781914585203
Out Now



You Can't See Me
by Eva Björg Ægisdóttir
Orenda Books
PB • £9.99
9781914585722
Out Now



We have copies of all five books in the *Forbidden Iceland* series to give

away to one lucky winner. For the chance of winning, just answer this question:



What is the capital city of Iceland?

See page 63 for details on how to enter this competition.

The Nero Book of the Year

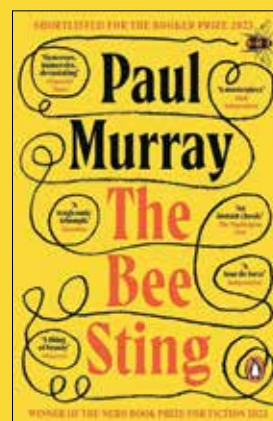
Paul Murray has become the first ever recipient of the Nero Gold Prize Book of the Year, taking home £30,000 for his novel *The Bee Sting*.

NERO
BOOK AWARDS

28 booktime@booksellers.org.uk

2023 marked the first year of the Nero Book Awards, celebrating outstanding books and writers from the UK and Ireland of the last twelve months across four categories: Children’s Fiction, Debut Fiction, Fiction and Non-Fiction. *The Bee Sting* by Paul Murray (Fiction) beat *Close to Home* by Michael Magee (Debut Fiction), *The Swifts* by Beth Lincoln (Children’s Fiction), and *Strong Female Character* by Fern Brady (Non-Fiction) to win the overall prize.

Funny and tragic in equal measure, *The Bee Sting* tells the story of a middle-class Irish family in crisis, as the effects of the post-2008 Irish banking crisis take their toll on the family finances. The judges said: ‘The writing is both accomplished and highly readable, the characters shine, and the family members’ individual story arcs are all equally compelling and gripping.’



The Bee Sting
by Paul Murray
Penguin • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9780241984406
Published 2nd May

Tranquil Trips

These new books in the For Dummies series make travelling easy – whether you're on a budget, want to travel more sustainably or are travelling alone. Filled with tips and advice from expert authors, they are must-haves for 21st century travellers.

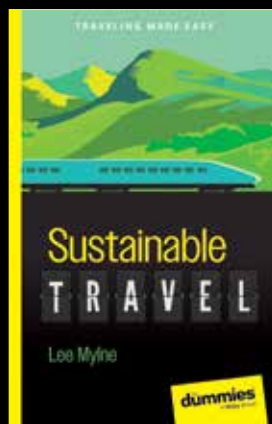


Travelling Made Easy: Budget Travel

by Geoffrey Morrison
For Dummies • PB • £15.99
ISBN 9781394212958
Out Now

From London to Tokyo, New York to Sydney, and everywhere in between, there's a whole world to explore. The trick is affording it. *Budget Travel For Dummies* shows you how to get the most from your adventure while spending as little as possible. From transportation tips to accommodation advice and more, you'll find money and time-saving ideas that will help you not only reduce the cost of your next vacation, but let you afford more frequent travel in the months and years to come.

With this book, you can plan your next holiday and make it affordable. It features tips on how to make the most of your budget and make every penny count. Written by a travel expert who has visited 60 countries across six continents, it will help you find the best deals, including cheap flights and accommodations. You'll learn how to pick a destination, set and stick to a budget, minimize bank and credit card fees, and manage health and travel insurance. For the adventurer within you, this guide is full of tips on traveling without a plan, living for months with just carry-on luggage, and staying flexible in case you need to change your plans. Now you can jump into the adventure you've always dreamed of, without breaking the bank.



Travelling Made Easy: Sustainable Travel

by Lee Mylne
For Dummies • PB • £15.99
ISBN 9781394215102
Out Now

You know travel is hard on the environment, and you want to protect the planet, but you also want to explore it. How do you reconcile these competing interests? *Sustainable Travel For Dummies* has the answers. This friendly travel guide shows you how to travel in a way that minimises harm to the environment. It offers alternatives to airline travel, advice for finding sustainable accommodations, tips for eating locally, and other ideas for sustainable travel practices.

Award-winning travel journalist Lee Mylne brings a global perspective on fun ways to travel responsibly. For travellers of all ages and budgets who want to reduce their carbon footprints, respect and protect the planet, contribute to local economies, and incorporate conservation into their travel experiences, it's an easy-to-read guide. It shows you what sustainable travel is, why it's important, and how to do it – with no travel shaming. A must-have resource for globetrotters and for those whose travels keep them close to home, it covers alternative transportation, unique accommodations, fulfilling cultural experiences, and everything else the eco-savvy traveller needs to know.



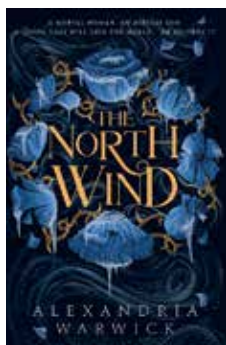
Travelling Made Easy: Solo Travel

by Lee Mylne
For Dummies • PB • £15.99
ISBN 9781394218165
Out Now

Sometimes the travel bug bites, and you can't find anyone to join you on your adventure. What do you do? Go anyway! *Solo Travel For Dummies* gives you the confidence to travel by yourself. Discover how to choose your destination, make travel arrangements, and navigate the locale with safety in mind. You also get tips for meeting new people and avoiding loneliness. You'll return with stories that will make your friends wish they had joined you!

Whether you're a seasoned jetsetter or a nervous first timer, this is a comprehensive guide to travelling alone. Learn how to plan the solo trip of a lifetime with must-know info, insider tricks, safety essentials, and more. Choose your destination, plan a fulfilling itinerary, save money, and stay safe, no matter where in the world you may roam. As a solo traveller, you'll appreciate this book's specific tips on how to avoid loneliness, what to do if you get lost, and how to plan ahead so you can enjoy your trip. Discover unique destinations and can't-miss cultural experiences and get expert advice on safety, budgeting. Tuck this portable guide into your backpack or suitcase, and you'll be ready for your once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

Fiction & Graphic Novels



The North Wind
by Alexandria Warwick
Simon & Schuster
HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781398533660
Published 9th May

An enchanting fantasy romance, inspired by *Beauty and the Beast* and the myth of Hades and Persephone. Wren is no stranger to suffering. With her parents gone, it's her responsibility to ensure she and her sister survive. The land surrounding Edgewood is encased in ice as the Shade, a magical barrier that protects the townsfolk from the Deadlands beyond, weakens. Only one thing can stop the Shade's fall: the blood of a mortal woman...



Lady Eve's Last Con
by Rebecca Fraimow
Solaris • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781837861590
Published 6th June

Ruth Johnson and her sister Jules have been small-time hustlers on the interstellar cruise lines for years. But then Jules fell in love with one of their targets, Esteban Mendez-Yuki, sole heir to the family insurance fortune. Esteban seemed to love her too, until she told him who she really was, at which point he fled without a word. Now Ruth is set on revenge: disguised as provincial debutante Evelyn Ojukwu, she's going to make Esteban fall in love with her...



Alice Never After
by Dan Panosian,
Giorgio Spalletta &
Francesco Segala
Boom • PB • £14.99
ISBN 9781608862146
Published 20th June

A collection of volumes 1-5 of a dark and twisted comicbook series inspired by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. Alice finally got her wish. Wonderland is her new home, but the mad residents of a moonstruck world have turned against her. As Alice's sister Edith and her childhood friend Earl fight for a way to bring her back, Alice has to contend with whether or not her torment is due to her father, herself, or maybe a curious combination of both.



Where The Silence Sings
by Emery Blaine
Wild Door Publishing
PB • £16.99
ISBN 9781738506002
Published 18th June

The gripping first instalment of *The Symphonic Masquerade* series, *Where the Silence Sings* is a character-driven tale about identity, perseverance, and discovery among a future-fantasy backdrop. Drawing upon themes of grief and found family, this story follows a cast of characters thrown into an ancient, dangerous game. It will take each of them coming to terms with their own reflection to shine a light among the vast darkness. A dissonant voice can change everything.



Gate to Kagoshima
by Poppy Kuroki
Magpie • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780861547616
Published 6th June

Scottish student Isla escapes to Japan after a relationship falters, and finds old ghosts and new loves when a typhoon sends her time-travelling to the last days of the samurai, in this action-packed adventure. Back in 1877, Isla meets Keiichiro Maeda, a samurai who introduces her to way of life only previously encountered in books, and she begins to wonder if she has found her true home. Should she forewarn Keiichiro about his fate, or let him have his glorious death?



BRZRKR: Bloodlines
by Keanu Reeves,
Mattson Tomlin &
Steve Skroce
Boom • PB • £14.99
ISBN 9781608861491
Published 23rd May

Discover the brutal hidden history of Keanu Reeves' record-shattering immortal warrior's saga in the collection of two graphic novel stories, soon to be adapted for Netflix! In *Poetry of Madness*, a sea of gore and devastation awaits as B. safeguards the advanced and ancient realm of Atlantis as its unstoppable protector. In *Dead Empire*, a former kingdom eradicated by the BRZRKR has a single living survivor. She and her people knew B. as the God King...



Snowblooded
by Emma
Sterner-Radley
Solaris • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781837860685
Published 9th May

Valour and Petrichor are esteemed members of the Order of Axsten, an assassin's guild tasked with keeping order in the rough city of Vinterstock. Plucked from the streets as children and raised to compete for their guild's approval, Valour uses her brawn to survive, while Petrichor strives to be a gentleman assassin. When they're given their biggest job yet – to kill Brandquist, the mysterious leader of the city's illegal magic trade – it's a recipe for disaster...



Monstrum
by Lottie Mills
Oneworld
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780861545629
Published 16th May

A darkly atmospheric collection of neo-gothic short fiction from the 2020 BBC Young Writer of the Year. Lottie Mills' stories capture the experience of characters excluded by a society that cannot accept their difference, from a father and daughter building a life for themselves on an isolated beach to a young disabled woman who opts to receive a perfect body. Eerie, fantastical and hugely ambitious, this collection announces the arrival of an outstanding young voice.



Wild's End: Beyond the Sea
by Dan Abnett &
I.N.J. Culbard
Boom • PB • £18.99
ISBN 9781608861583
Published 9th May

A graphic novel alien invasion adventure in the spirit of *War of the Worlds* meets *Wind in the Willows*! Skipper, Flo, Roddy, Howie, Stevie, and Eddie – our cast of anthropomorphic sailors – are home from their time at sea to face aliens unlike anything seen before. The crew of The Merry Beet hide from the horrors around them, while the familiar and mundane become weapons of terror. They discover a terrifying plan which will see everyone they know face a fate worse than death...



Growing Hope

In this inspirational new book, Kate Bradbury charts life in her garden through the seasons and writes passionately about how her climate-change anxiety pushes her to look for positive ways to keep going in a changing world. We interviewed her to discover more.

You describe the book as 'part memoir, part call to arms'. What inspired you to write it?
I wanted to make people feel, notice things. The climate crisis is the greatest crisis we face and yet most of us aren't paying attention to it. I wondered if I could encourage people to fall in love with their gardens and then notice the effects the climate crisis was having to those that live in it... maybe they would connect the dots and see how it's affecting all of us.

You take us through more than a year, with each chapter describing your life and the wildlife you encounter in each month. Did you keep diaries or did you write each section chronologically?

fences with climbers, plant a mix of trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials to create different layers (height, depth) within the garden. Let some grass grow long, some leaves build up in corners. Grow some native plants to support the caterpillars of moths and butterflies so the birds can feed their chicks. If you have a tiny garden grow pots of Mediterranean herbs, which provide nectar-rich flowers and herbs for you. Don't forget to look out of the window and watch the species that visit – get to know who lives in your garden and build a relationship with them. Don't be afraid to love your robins, to laugh at frogs – it's all part of the joy of wildlife gardening.

I wrote everything as it happened, chronologically. It was supposed to be a 12 month diary but I something happened in spring that was so joyous I had to keep writing about it.

Each chapter ends with a description of a particular species – did you do a lot of research into these species?

Some – I know a fair bit about most garden species but there was the odd one where I had to research its specific lifecycle habits or delve into the weird world of developing false legs to break into bees' nests and eat their young (I'm looking at you dark-edged bee-fly).

How important are people's gardens in the fight against climate change?

Hugely important. In the UK alone our gardens take up more land than all of our nature reserves put together, so that's an enormous potential space to help species to shelter, breed and move north as temperatures increase. By growing the right plants and caring for our gardens with other species in mind, we can save species – it's that simple. And no garden is too small: a balcony or doorstep fits in to the wider landscape and can be part of a corridor of linked habitats.

What advice would you give someone who has a garden and wishes to make it a more environmentally friendly?

Grow more plants!
Cover your walls and

You write a lot in the book about Facebook groups. Do you think they can be a force for good?

Yes, I have a bit of a love-hate relationship with Facebook but it's really good for building communities, finding allies and helping species. I've set up a hedgehog group but there are other, neighbourhood groups in which we talk about nesting birds etc. It's nice to know who else is looking after nature!

Do you think that the pandemic and lockdown brought us closer to nature?

Yes and no. I think a lot of people who suddenly found themselves spending more time at home were able to connect with nature a bit more, and the lack of traffic meant more people noticed the birds singing. But since then many of us have gone back to work and forgotten what we found...

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

I love all of Melissa Harrison's books, I love the way she writes about nature. I've just finished *On Gallows Down* by Nicola Chester and *Forget Me Not* by Sophie Pavelle, and I loved both of those.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

Independent bookshops are the glue that holds communities together! I'm lucky to live near City Books in Hove, which is a great independent bookshop that also puts on brilliant local events. There's a real buzz around the shop and I love it. You don't get that online and you don't always get that in big chain bookstores either – we should cherish the small independents and support them as much as we can.

One Garden Against the World

by Kate Bradbury
Bloomsbury Wildlife
HB • £18.99
ISBN 9781399408868
Published 6th June



Unexplored Past

Providing a fresh look at the later years of Charlotte Brontë and surprising facts about the history of food, these two new books from The History Press illuminate little known chapters of the past.

Everyone knows the story of the Brontë sisters – genius writers, doomed to early deaths. But this new book uncovers a darker side to the Brontë legend, as it focuses on the last years of Charlotte Brontë's life, and the scandals that followed after her death. Charlotte Brontë had a life as dramatic as her heroine Jane Eyre. Turning her back on her tragic past, she reinvented herself as an acclaimed writer, a mysterious celebrity, and a lover. Doing so meant burning many bridges, but her sudden death left her friends and admirers with more questions than answers.

Tasked with telling the truth about Brontë's life, her friend, novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, uncovered secrets of illicit love, family discord and professional rivalries more incredible than any fiction. The result, a tell-all biography, was so scandalous it was banned and rewritten twice in six months – but not before it had given birth to the legend of the Brontës. In *The Invention of Charlotte Brontë*, expert author Graham Watson reconstructs and interrogates known events with a fresh perspective from newly discovered and overlooked archival material, offering a different story than the established narrative. This is the Brontë family as they've never been seen before.

In this extract, it's 1850 and Charlotte returns home to Haworth after a trip away to contemplate her lost siblings' things:

She turned to all she had left of them: their belongings. Handling their pens, used paint boxes and needlework sets, trinkets and small pieces of cheap jewellery only deepened her sense of isolation and in seeking comfort, Charlotte found the opposite. 'I lost in some days of indisposition the additional flesh and strength I had previously gained,' she told a friend. 'This resulted from the painful task of looking over letters and papers belonging to my sisters. Many little mementoes and memoranda conspired to make an impression inexorably sad which solitude deepened and fostered till I grew ill.' She expanded with another, 'My mind had undergone some painful laceration in the course of looking over my sisters'

The Invention of Charlotte Brontë
by Graham Watson
The History Press
HB • £22.00
ISBN 9781803995373
Published 30th May

papers – mementoes and memoranda that would have been nothing to others, conveyed for me so keen a sting.'

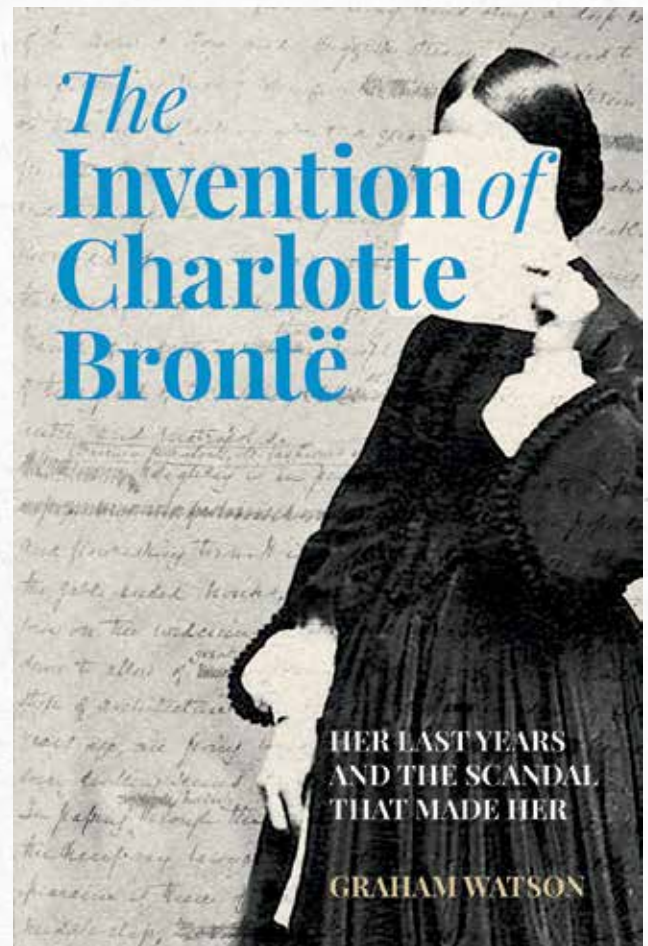
Without friends physically nearby and having resolved to protect her father from her grief like a child, she found 'no means of lightening or effacing the sad impression... Continuous solitude grew more than I could bear.' Reading Emily's and Anne's poetry manuscripts, she wondered if anything new from them could be published. Both had made their own selections in life, releasing with Charlotte what they saw fit for public consumption, and kept their personal and authorial identities separate. All three contributed to *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*, published in the summer of 1846, with Emily's novel *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *Agnès Grey* issued together in a set in December the following year.

"Their literary careers were over after only three years"

Anne published her second and last novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* in June 1848, before *Poems* was reissued the following November. By then, Branwell had died and Emily and Anne had symptoms of the tuberculosis that would kill Emily before the end of the year, then Anne the following spring. After a lifetime of preparation, their literary careers were

over after only three years, amounting to ignored poetry and three disdained novels.

Branwell's predicted glories never rose beyond a few published verses, leaving stacks of unpublished poems and stories. Precocious and gregarious as a child, he identified with the esteemed men of letters and wrote newspaper satires from around the age of 11 when he and Charlotte made tiny handsewn booklets crammed with his classically inflected odes and long-form political diatribes. From adolescence, Branwell cultivated the rakish air of an effortlessly talented Romantic poet: garrulous, supremely self-assured but personally reckless. He published poems and an article in the regional press under the cover of a false name without telling his family, guarding his solitary achievements while he took on dead-end jobs as a railway clerk and a children's tutor. He had started a novel by the summer of 1845, keeping it as secret from his sisters as they kept theirs from him. Addiction, depression and tuberculosis brought him a pitiful death at 31, leaving his novel unfinished and scores of poems unread. After being collaborators in childhood, a divergence had opened between them in their twenties which appears to have never closed, even in memory. Nothing in the surviving record indicates Charlotte ever considered publishing his writing alongside their sisters'. 'It seems a sort of injustice to expose in print the crude thoughts of the unripe mind, the rude efforts of the unpractised hand,' Charlotte reasoned, 'yet...' And yet the alternative was oblivion.



In this fun new book, Uta Seeburg takes us on a rump through culinary history by exploring 50 dishes which have shaped our lives. Did you know that Egyptians mummified beef ribs for their dearly departed to enjoy in the afterlife? That Roman gladiators followed a vegan diet, or that a Portuguese princess helped popularise tea in England? From the grilled mammoth to the icon of molecular cuisine 'liquid olive', each chapter describes a dish and explains why its invention marks a key historical moment. Discover how the Columbian exchange gave Indian curry its spicy kick, how roasted swan became the centrepiece of choice in spectacle-loving 1650s high society, and how the first dish ever to be prepared live on television was an omelette.

The author Uta Seeburg worked for years as an editor for the magazine *Architectural Digest*. There, she reported on design and travel and wrote numerous culinary essays. Today, the PhD in literary studies and author of historical crime novels devotes herself entirely to writing books. With Uta as your guide, you'll learn not only which dishes are linked to key cultural moments, but also how each represents the social hierarchy and values of the civilization that invented it. Foodies and history buffs alike will savour every historical snapshot, from one of the oldest recorded recipes (lamb stew with barley and onions) to out-of-this-world food fit for astronauts.

This extract looks at fish and chips:

c. 1860 CE
Fish and Chips
United Kingdom

The oil bubbles and spits, simmering away in multiple vats. The hot spray sends grease into the air of the narrow room, landing on the hair and clothing of waiting customers. The little shop is situated somewhere in Britain, in an estate of terraced houses – narrow, straight streets surrounded by parades of small redbrick houses. Behind the rudimentary counter, potatoes are being cut into long sticks before being placed in the hot oil; the bubbling beast gulps them down with a cheerful hiss. Next up is the fish – a firm, white-fleshed variety like cod or haddock. The fillets are dunked with practiced ease in a shallow dish containing a batter of milk, eggs, and flour before being placed in the oil. The scent of hot, fried fish emanates into the rainy street where customers are waiting. It's Friday evening and for decades – centuries even – generations of families living here have been standing in line every Fish Friday to purchase their traditional takeaway for a couple of shillings.

Swift hands open a sheet of yesterday's newspaper and heap the hot fried fish and chips on top without much fanfare. These are sprinkled with salt, then malt vinegar, which rains down over the chips like a sour perfume. "Today's headlines, tomorrow's fish and chip paper," so goes the saying in the UK. And yes, headlines

do blur; the grease makes the newspaper print run and come away from the paper and leave black marks here and there on

“The scent of hot, fried fish emanates into the rainy street where customers are waiting”

the golden batter. In the 1990s, wrapping food in newspaper was outlawed on health grounds, but there are still nostalgic voices who claim fish and chips tasted better wrapped in newsprint. The law was primarily aimed at the takeaway dish, flecked with black ink, which would be served up every Friday out of the crackling pages of the tabloids spread across the dinner tables of Great Britain, a deeply rooted sentimental institution. Food and memory, nostalgia and identity—all of these play a significant role in this rather unassuming dish and its history.

The increasing proliferation of faster trading routes, the invention of canning and, of course, industrialization, combined in the second half of the nineteenth century to allow food to travel farther from its source than ever before, meaning people were less and less reliant on seasonal local produce.

The variety of available foods grew, finally becoming accessible to the less wealthy, too. Now, dishes could be produced over again in great quantities to be shared by and to help define whole subcultures. Take fish and chips, the dish of the working class. Its rapid spread throughout the country can be traced back to the flourishing fish trade within Britain and the improving transport links – a national success story. At the turn of the twentieth century, there were already some twenty-five thousand shops, mostly small family businesses, devoted solely to making and selling fish and chips.

Like so many “national” dishes, however, the recipe for the British workers' new meal of choice had its roots in a cultural exchange. Jewish immigrants from Portugal and Spain brought fried fish to the island, while the

Brits have the French or the Belgians to thank for their chips. We can no longer determine who exactly first brought the two elements together, but in the 1860s, the dish was already experiencing success in the working-class districts of London and in Lancashire in the North. The salty-sour addition of vinegar was the wild breath of the Atlantic, which the railways carried with them overnight, along with tons of well-chilled fish, from the coast and into the city. The batter gently caresses the fish; take a bite and the hot air trapped in the fluffy outer layer escapes. The white flesh collapses into soft flakes of fragrant meat. Then there are the chips – their tangy grease still on your lips hours later.

“At the turn of the twentieth century, there were already some twenty-five thousand shops”

How Would You Like Your Mammoth?

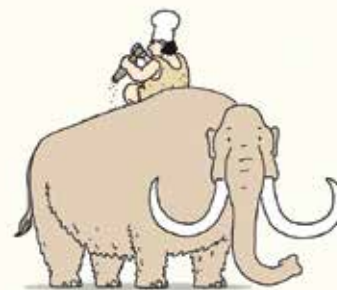
by Uta Seeburg

The History Press • HB • £14.99

ISBN 9781803997322

Published 16th May

HOW WOULD
YOU LIKE YOUR
MAMMOTH?



12,000 Years of Culinary History
in 50 Bite-Size Essays

UTA SEEBURG

Foreword by MAX MILLER,
New York Times–bestselling author of *Tasting History*

Reality Bites

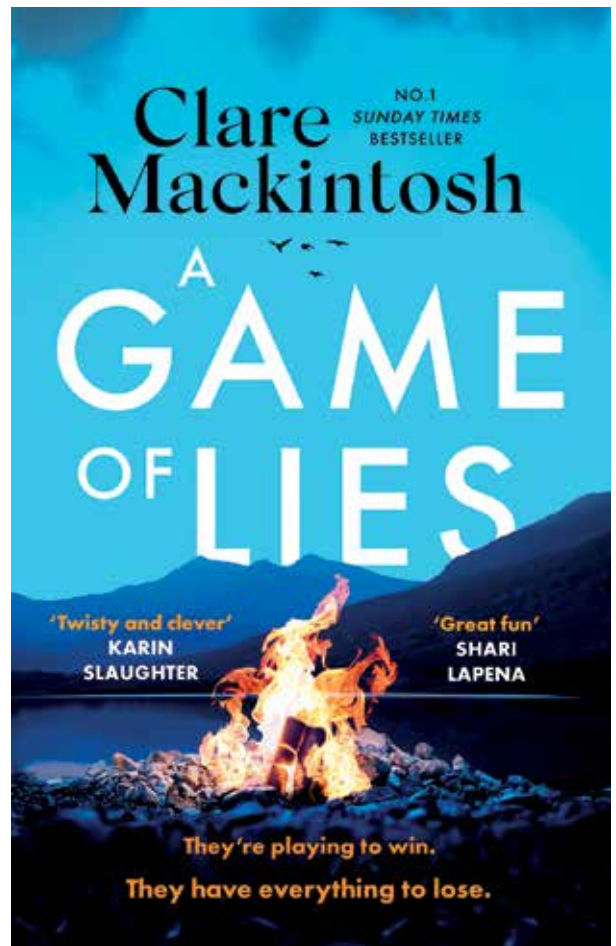
Now in paperback, *A Game of Lies* sees a reality TV show come to the small Welsh border town of Cwm Coed. But the show has a twist, and things are about to get murderous...

A Game of Lies
by Clare Mackintosh
Sphere • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781408725993
Out Now

Look out for Clare's last book, too:



The Last Party
by Clare Mackintosh
Sphere • PB • £8.99
ISBN 9780751577136
Out Now



With a film crew in town, the new TV series *Exposure* sets everyone talking. A local woman, Ceri, is one of the contestants, and detective Ffion Morgan finds herself unwillingly glued to the screen. But then one of the contestants disappears, and DS Leo Brady is brought in from England to help to try and find him. With tensions high, Ffion and Leo must learn to work together if they are to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Because *Exposure* is full of secrets – each of the seven contestants has a dark secret that they are desperate to protect. Could one of these be the reason behind the disappearance? When someone is killed, it's clear that some people will do whatever it takes to stop the truth from being revealed... The follow-up to *The Last Party*, *A Game of Lies* can be read as a standalone, and is a tale full of deception and intrigue, and is perfect for any fan of TV series *The Traitors*.

In this extract, Ffion and new member of the team, DC Georgina Kent, are called to the farmhouse where the production crew for *Exposure* are based:

A few drops of rain hit Ffion's windscreen as she drives to Felingwm Isaf, and as she turns on to the single track road leading to Carreg Plas it begins to drizzle. Georgina is waiting on the drive with a takeaway coffee in one hand and Ffion looks in vain for a second one. She and Leo had established an

unwritten rule when they were working on the Rhys Lloyd murder investigation last year: the first one on the scene brings the brews.

Georgina clearly works to a different set of rules.

"Twisty and clever"

Karin Slaughter

"Clever plot and smart, sharp writing"

Shari Lapena

"Engaging characters and buckets of tension"

B.A. Paris

Dammit – now she's thinking about Leo. Ffion tries very hard not to think about Leo Brady. It had all been going so well, till she messed things up. Ffion doesn't believe in 'The One' – how can there be only one perfect match, in a world with eight billion people? – but she and Leo had fitted together in a way Ffion hadn't thought possible. It had scared her. It'd felt so big, so important

that she didn't fuck up. When the job was over, Leo had messaged to say Will you have dinner with me? and she'd stared at it for so long her vision blurred. She knew what she wanted, but she couldn't say it, and the longer she didn't say it, the harder it became to say anything at all. He never messaged her again. That was it, her one-shot chance. And she blew it.

'The MisPer is Ryan Francis,' Georgina says, walking towards the house.

'Morning,' Ffion says pointedly.

Georgina landed in Ffion's department three months ago, tight-lipped about her reasons for leaving a busy Major Crime office for the relative quiet of Bryndare Criminal Investigation Department.

'What's her story, then?' Ffion asked DI Malik, after he'd told her about the incoming team member.

'Not everyone has a story, Ffion,' Malik said. Ffion didn't buy it. Everyone had a story, and, if Malik wouldn't share it, Ffion would have to go straight to the horse's mouth.

'How come you left Major Crime, then?' She'd planned to soften her interrogation by shouting the new girl lunch in the canteen, but Georgina had brought a sandwich from home and was eating at her desk.

'Just fancied a change.'

'Hell of a commute.'

'I moved house, too.'

'Got family here? Friends?' People moved away from Bryndare, not to it.

'No,' Georgina said, with such coldness that even Ffion didn't dare try again. One thing she was certain of, though: Georgina Kent definitely had a story.

Travels Through Time

“A modern, original book”

Sophy Roberts

In *Cypria*, author Alex Christofi delivers a deeply personal, lyrical history of Cyprus, from ancient times to today, weaving in his own journeys through the island. We interviewed him to discover more.



What inspired you to write *Cypria*, and to combine a travelogue, history and memoir?

One of the things that I find really interesting about Cyprus is that you can almost travel through its history in a literal way. You go to a place, and everything around you is Bronze Age. Or you can go to an amazing amphitheatre on a clifftop, called Kourion, and suddenly you're transported back to early Christianity and late Rome. I really liked the idea of writing the history, but it would have felt weird to write about it without going there and showing what it's like now. Part of what makes it such an interesting place is how history is layered across the island. Some of my favourite historical places are those like the Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque. It looks like a Notre Dame style Gothic cathedral, but it's got a minaret on top. I don't think you could get that anywhere else in the world.

How did you go about writing the book – did you travel first and then research the history, or did you start writing and then travel?

I knew for a long time that I wanted to write a book about Cyprus, and I was building up to it. There are quite a few places in the book that I wanted to write about them in one form or other, about fifteen years ago, but I couldn't quite find the frame. Places like the local café that my family went to, I thought it was an amazing metaphor for the politics of the island. At the bottom of the hill you have your left-wing café, and then up the hill is the right-wing café. You can almost map the politics on to the way the village is. Other places I didn't visit, particularly in the northern part which is occupied.

You write about the *Cypria*, an ancient work which predated the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, but which is now lost. Do you think our perception of Cyprus would be different if we still had it?

In the book, I write that that history becomes this tyranny of the durable. You're working with whatever happens to have survived. Clearly, it was an important place for the embers of Greek history and civilization. The *Cypria* gives us a glimpse of Mycenaean refugees who carried a bit of their culture with them when they washed up on Cyprus. It's really tantalising, especially

that Aristotle quote that you can make one tragedy out of the *Iliad*, but you can make a dozen tragedies out of the *Cypria*. I wish the whole thing had survived.

What's the biggest misconception people have about Cyprus?

In England, it's seen as two things – either Ayia Napa, the clubbing resort, where you can go to check out of the world and not think too hard about the consequences. Or it's this idea of a troubled place, where the locals can't get on with each other and it's hopelessly divided. Like most stereotypes, there's a kernel of truth in both of those facets of the island, but I think it would be a real shame if people thought that's all Cypriot history was. Because it has an amazing 12,000 year story, which crosses over with so many different empires, languages, and culture.

There are photos in the book – did you take them?

Yes, I did take them, it was a photo project for me as well as a writing project. They were taken as black and white photos. I wanted to document the island through my eyes as I saw it, rather than depend on press images. I didn't want to miss the everyday aspects, such as the café owner enjoying his coffee.

Do you think of yourself as a Cypriot?

I think of myself as British Cypriot. I was talking to a friend who has a different mixed heritage. She said, rather than seeing herself as half this and half that, she sees herself as this *and* that. I think that's a really healthy way to view heritage, that it's additive rather than chopping yourself in half! That's what I was trying to do with Cyprus itself, rather than seeing it as something that has been chopped down the middle again and again, I see it as place that has been layered.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

While I was writing this I was reading a lot of the poetry of Anthony Anaxagorou, who is a Cypriot writer based in Britain. He's a prize-winning

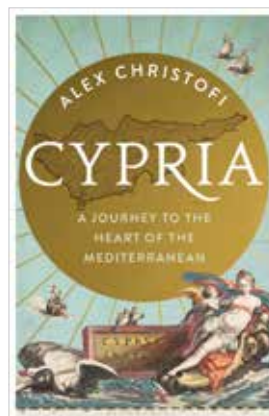
poet and he writes beautifully about heritage and identity. With good poetry it's not easy to articulate how it's enriching you at the time but I felt that it really helped me have a good perspective on the writing project. There are some older books on Cyprus too. One of Colin Thubron's first books was called *Journey Into Cyprus*, and he walked across the island, sleeping on the beach and in monks' cells. He actually did it in the year before the north was occupied, so it's an amazing historical document.

What do you think the future holds for Cyprus?

I'd like to believe that there are way more people who live on Cyprus who want to live peacefully, and who think that what we have in common hugely outweighs the ways in which we differ. A complicated history means compromises, and reaching across the aisle. I know that's not very popular these days, but it's actually not that difficult when the goodwill is there. I think, politically, we have to believe that it's possible to live just as we were living a hundred years ago, mixed in with very little problems. It's easy to forget that the history of national violence in Cyprus is not a very long one, it's actually quite recent.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I love them because you really get to see the tastes of individual people who are arranging the tables. You don't feel like you're bothering someone too much when you strike up a conversation. There are two or three shops I really love going to in London for that reason. You always come out with a book that you weren't expecting to buy. It's really nice to see independents flourishing at the moment.



Cypria: A Journey to the Heart of the Mediterranean

by Alex Christofi
Bloomsbury Continuum
HB • £20.00
ISBN 9781399401883
Published 9th May

It's Not You, It's the Food

Chris van Tulleken's exposé of the food industry *Ultra-Processed People* is a critically acclaimed bestseller. Now available in paperback, it sees him lift the lid on the on the ultra-processed food we eat and what it does to our bodies.

For a long time we've been told that to live a healthy life we need to make different choices about what we eat. But the truth is, so much of the food available to us, has been industrially processed, making it hard for us to make those choices. This is food which was designed and marketed to be addictive, and it's usually cheaper, more widely available, and easier to prepare than the unprocessed alternatives.

In this book, doctor and TV presenter Chris van Tulleken travels through the world of food science and a UPF diet to discover what's really going on. He finds out that exercise and willpower can't save us, and what UPF is really doing to our bodies, our health, our weight and the planet. The hardback edition was chosen by the *Sunday Times*, *Guardian*, *FT* and *Daily Mail* as one of their Best Summer Books of 2023.

This extract from the introduction explains what ultra-processed foods are:

Our senses of taste and smell, our immune system, our manual dexterity, our tooth and jaw anatomy, our eyesight: it's hard to think of any aspect of human biology, physiology or culture that isn't primarily shaped by our historic need for energy. Over billions of years our bodies have superbly adapted to using a wide range of food.

But over the past 150 years food has become ... not food.

We've started eating substances constructed from novel molecules and using processes never previously encountered in our evolutionary history, substances that can't really even be called 'food'. Our calories increasingly come from modified starches, from invert sugars, hydrolysed protein isolates and seed oils that have been refined, bleached, deodorised, hydrogenated – and interesterified. And these calories have been assembled into concoctions using other molecules that our senses have never been exposed to either: synthetic emulsifiers, low-calorie sweeteners, stabilising gums, humectants, flavour

Ultra-Processed People
by Chris van Tulleken
Penguin • PB • £10.99
ISBN 9781529160222
Published 2nd May

compounds, dyes, colour stabilisers, carbonating agents, firming agents and bulking – and anti-bulking – agents.

These substances entered the diet gradually at first, beginning in the last part of the nineteenth century, but the incursion gained pace from the 1950s onwards, to the point that they now constitute the majority of what people eat in the UK and the USA, and form a significant part of the diet of nearly every society on earth.

“If you only read one diet or nutrition book in your life, make it this one”

Bee Wilson

And, at the same time as we've entered this unfamiliar food environment, we've also moved into a new, parallel ecosystem, one with its own arms races that are powered not by the flow of energy, but by the flow of money. This is the new system of industrial food production. In this system we are the prey, the source of the money that powers the system. The competition for that money, which drives increasing complexity and innovation, occurs between an entire ecosystem of constantly evolving corporations, from giant transnational groups to thousands of smaller national companies.

And their bait for extracting the money is called ultra-processed food, or UPF. These foods have been put through an evolutionary selection process over many

'Completely compelling'
Chris Evans

Chris van Tulleken

'It's these books that end up changing the world'
Steven Bartlett

'Changed forever how I think about what I eat'
Hannah Fry

Ultra-Processed People

Why Do We All Eat Stuff That Isn't Food... and Why Can't We Stop?

THE NO.1 SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER



decades, whereby the products that are purchased and eaten in the greatest quantities are the ones that survive best in the market. To achieve this, they have evolved to subvert the systems in the body that regulate weight and many other functions.

UPF now makes up as much as 60 per cent of the average diet in the UK and the USA. Many children, including my own, get most of their calories from these substances. UPF is our food culture, the stuff from which we construct our bodies. If you are reading this in Australia, Canada, the UK or the USA, this is your national diet.

UPF has a long, formal scientific definition, but it can be boiled down to this: if it's wrapped in plastic and has at least one ingredient that you wouldn't usually find in a standard home kitchen, it's UPF. Much of it will be familiar to you as 'junk food', but there's plenty of organic, free-range, 'ethical' UPF too, which might be sold as healthy, nutritious, environmentally friendly or useful for weight loss (it's another rule of thumb that almost every food that comes with a health claim on the packet is a UPF).

When we think about food processing, most of us think about the physical things done to food – like frying, extruding, macerating, mechanically recovering and so on. But ultra-processing also includes other, more indirect processes – deceptive marketing, bogus court cases, secret lobbying, fraudulent research – all of which are vital for corporations to extract that money.

High Spirits

Set in the Netherlands in the 1950s, *My Darling Dreadful Thing* follows Roos on a journey from conducting seances for her abusive stepmother to being taken on by a wealthy widow Agnes. But is Ruth, Roos's mischievous spirit companion, real, or is Roos mentally ill? And who is responsible for murder? We interviewed the author Johanna van Veen about her inspirations.



What inspired you to write the novel?

My first draft was very different from the finished book. It didn't really work out as I was still learning how to write. But I had the characters, and I really liked them, and it was kind of sad that they didn't really do their story justice, so I decided to transplant them into a different setting. One of the things that I did know about was the estate, Rozentuin, which stayed the same, and the main characters also stayed the same.

The book reminded me of the Brontës' fiction – *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights* – but with a supernatural element. You describe the novel as a gothic novel in the

introduction. How would you define gothic fiction?

It's really hard to define it, I don't think there's one definition that fits all gothic novels. But generally it's to do with this atmosphere of dread, and of supernatural things happening. Also, there's usually a distinct sense of place, it might be an estate, that feels like its own character. And secrets, usually family secrets, that come to light.

“Dark and decadent,”

Rachel Gillig

Was the estate of Rozentuin based on a real place?

Not really, there are some estates like it in the Netherlands but there wasn't one particular place that inspired it.

It's set in the 1950s – why did you set it in this period?

The 1950s are an interesting period for the Netherlands, because we'd just had the Second World War and we still had the massive trauma, as we didn't participate in the First World War. The 1950s are a time in which people are still grappling with that trauma, but are also repressing it because they need to leave it behind in order to keep on living. That didn't really make it that much into the book, the Second World War is mentioned, but it's not a big feature of the novel. But I felt that the 1950s was a good time to set it, for that feeling of oppression and secrets.

It's told in the first person by Roos, but also through interviews with a psychiatrist. Why did you write it in this way?

One of things I wanted to do when writing the book was include the seances, but the spirit companions weren't initially part of those sections. I wrote the first 10,000 words then I got stuck for a long time. Until I thought – what if there is something about the seances that is real, but it's just not what people think it is? What if there is a spirit there, but it's just not what everyone believes it is? Then the ball really got rolling, and I was into this theme of what is real and what is not real. I thought the best way to incorporate that and create doubt in the reader's mind was to have a point of view that contradicts what the main character says. And I thought

the psychiatrist was the best way to do that, because he obviously doesn't believe any of it, he has a far more mundane explanation for what is going on. At the same time he was a good tool to drive suspense and keep the reader guessing.

The story concerns spirits and ghosts – do you believe in ghosts?

Not really! I know a lot of people do have ghostly experiences that they can't explain, but I think that just because we can't explain them right now it doesn't mean that they isn't an ordinary explanation for them. I have never experienced anything like that, so maybe I don't have the talent for it! But I don't think ghosts are real.

At the heart of the novel is love. Do you see it as a love story?

I do. It's toxic, violent and perhaps abnormal, but I do think it's a love story. You mentioned *Wuthering Heights*, I'd hesitate to call that a love story in the traditional sense, but there is definitely a lot of feeling there. I think this book is similar in that sense.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

Shirley Jackson, I think she inspires a lot of horror writers. I think it's hard to read her work and not come away inspired. Daphne du Maurier, specifically *Rebecca*. But it's hard to pinpoint exact influences, I think that influence often happens subconsciously, so probably the authors that I read as I was writing it influenced me in that way.

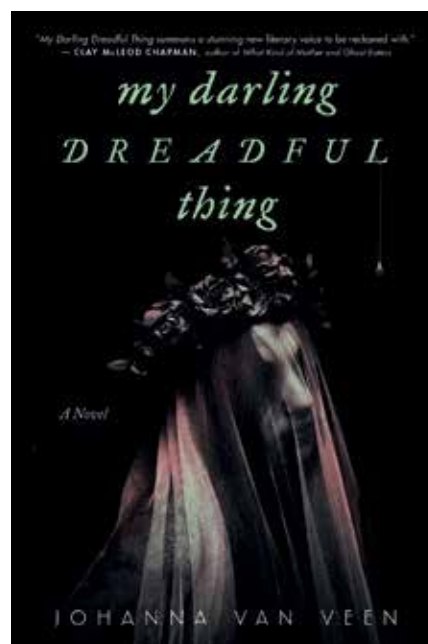
This is your first novel, do you have another one planned?

I actually just got my copy-edits back for the second book. The books are kind of twins, the supernatural element is a bit different to *My Darling Dreadful Thing*, but they deal with similar themes, and have the same gothic atmosphere. They are different, but they feel very similar.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I actually worked for one during the time I was writing this, so they mean a lot to me! In independent bookshops you get a different experience to a chain bookstore. For example, in America, if you go to Barnes & Noble this is very different to going to your local independent bookstore.

My Darling Dreadful Thing
by Johanna van Veen
Poisoned Pen Press
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781464227677
Published 14th May



Music & Memory

“Music is older than language”

Following her father’s death, singer songwriter Roxanne de Bastion inherited a family piano. She also discovered a recording of her grandfather, Stephen, telling his experiences of Holocaust survival. *The Piano Player of Budapest* is that story, and we interviewed the author to find out more.



Photo © Amanda Rose

Did you always have an ambition to write a book?

Not consciously, no. I’ve always had a passion for writing, and songwriting. I’ve always been inspired by my grandfather’s story, and been intrigued by him and his piano, which I grew up with. On some of my earlier albums, I’ve written songs inspired by Stephen. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to write the book.

How much of his story did you know before you heard the recordings?

Well, I knew what you could call the ‘Cliff Notes’! I knew that he’d been in a concentration camp, I wasn’t aware that he’d been in two separate ones. I was aware of his forced labour trip to Russia, and that there had been this infamous walk from Russia back to Hungary. But that was the extent of it, so it was very moving to learn his story in detail.

How did you go about transcribing the recordings?

Initially I just listened to them. It was so magical to learn the story directly from Stephen and in his own words, to get to know him. It felt like I was spending time with my grandfather, who I never got to meet, it felt very special. I truly do feel that I got to know him well in the process. I listened to the tapes through with no distractions at first, and then I did eventually transcribe them. But also, I realised that my sister and I had a treasure trove of memorabilia, and I wasn’t aware that we had these things growing up. A crucial point was when I found a 45-page handwritten letter that Stephen had written to accompany the tapes. That was really helpful. The tapes were beautiful because they had his voices with all his inflections, tone and his sense of humour. But the letter was just rich with details, like the names, places and dates.

You are also a musician like your grandfather. Do you think that an affinity for music is genetic?

Yes, I do, I think most things are genetic. My dad was a singer-songwriter as well. I lost my dad just before I had this opportunity to write the book, so I was getting to know Stephen with that question in my mind. I was intrigued to learn how much of myself and my dad I would find in Stephen.

Did you do a lot of research in the places and the history?

I worked a lot with the Holocaust Library in London, they were very helpful, they helped me find evidence to underpin Stephen’s story. I found that to be hugely valuable, to validate what he was saying. It was the details that found really interesting – I loved looking up venues that he’d played at and performed in, and finding that some of them still exist. It was magical to follow his story, even if it was on Google maps!

Do you think that there’s a connection between music and storytelling?

Yes, music is older than language. It’s something so primal, and is a part of all of our lives. Listening to the tapes, I was in awe of Stephen’s natural ability to share his story. I was gripped to listening to him tell it. I do think that there

are parallels between composing a piece of music, be it a two-minute pop song or the five-minute pieces that Stephen tended to compose, and telling a story. It’s part of the same creativity.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

So many. My dad wrote a book, a memoir, which is yet to be published, but it was certainly an inspiration for this one, because my book is in some ways a prequel to it. I was really inspired by John Banville’s *The Sea*. It has a profound effect on me, I loved the way it was written as if it was a memoir, and was about the protagonist coming to terms with grief. Edmund de Waal, I really love. But the first book of that nature that I read was Hadley Freeman’s *House of Glass*. That was the first time I realised that experiences and traits that I thought were unique to my family, were actually just part of being Jewish.

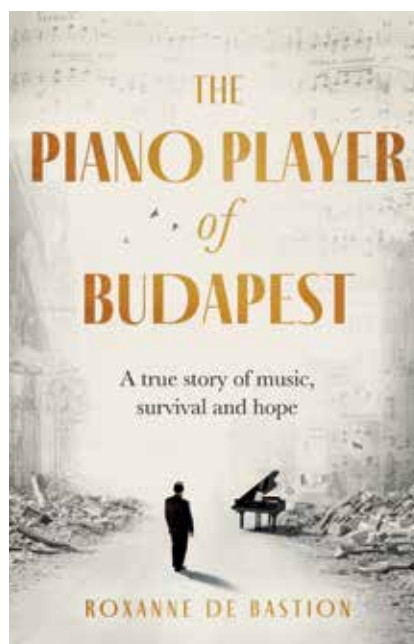
How do you feel about Stephen’s story in relation to the world today?

Unfortunately I think it’s becoming more and more relevant to share stories like Stephen’s. Firstly, it’s just human nature – we tend to forget and not learn from our collective mistakes. This is such recent history, it’s not that long ago, but in our collective psyche it seems like a long time ago, and that’s dangerous. I’m fortunate because I grew up in Germany, and in the school system there you learn about the Holocaust. You need to know how things happened to ensure that they don’t happen again. I do worry that rhetoric and events now are eerily similar to then, but I do hope that we do not go down that same road.

If you could talk to Stephen now, what would you ask him?

I think, mostly, his voice really lights up when he talks about those early days, during his ascent to musical stardom. As an independent singer-songwriter myself,

playing the circuit on a DIY, I’ve had quite similar experiences to Stephen, but 70 years later. If I got to speak with him, I’d love to exchange notes about gigging. I’d love to discuss music and life as a musician.



The Piano Player of Budapest

by Roxanne de Bastion
Robinson
HB • £22.00
ISBN 9781472147844
Published 6th June

Bittersweet Song

Steeped in the atmosphere and music of the 1990s and 2000s, *Honey* is a debut novel charting the rise of superstar singer Amber Young, as she journeys to womanhood and becomes public property.

Amber Young grows up in New Jersey, and is signed by an agent in the early 1990s following a turn at a talent show. In 1997, she is offered a life-changing opportunity – to join girl group Cloud9. She escapes her small town and moves to Los Angeles, where she quickly finds herself in the orbits of fellow rising stars Gwen Morris, a driven singer-dancer, and Wes Kingston, a member of the biggest boy band in the world, ETA.

As Amber embarks on her solo career and her fame intensifies, she increasingly finds herself reduced to a body, a voice, an object. Surrounded by the wrong kind of people and driven by a desire for recognition and success, for love and sex, for agency and connection, Amber comes of age at a time when the kaleidoscope of public opinion can distort everything, and one mistake can shatter a career. Perfect for fans of Taylor Jenkins Reid, *Honey* is a very human story about the pitfall of fame and the music industry.

In this extract, Amber meets Gwen for the first time:

I meet Gwen Morris for the first time in the recording studio bathroom. There is a sudden bang, then the door opening and swinging on its hinge. Flip-flops against the tiles. A tap turning and water spurting out of the sink. Through the slit in the stall, I see her for the first time, but only in fragments. A slice of pale thigh, strands of dark hair.

Staring at her reflection, she bends over and smacks her lips. Then she tugs on her eyelashes and starts pulling out clumps of mascara, rubbing the black goo on the sink's edge. Her lips part in concentration, and a pink tongue flickers inside her mouth.

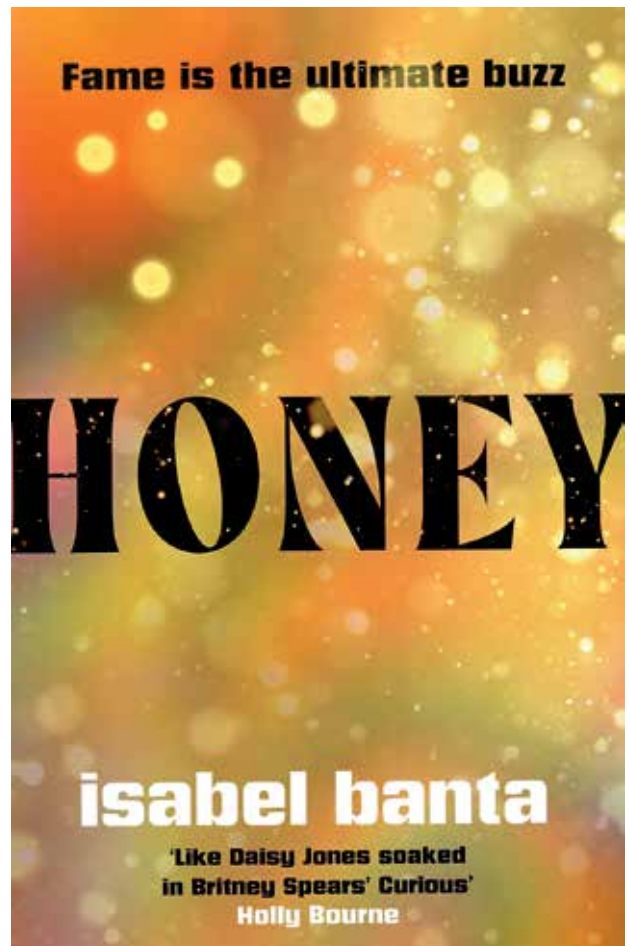
I make a sound and her eyes jump to my stall. I startle, quickly wipe and flush, then shimmy my underwear up my things and unlock the door.

'Sorry,' I murmur. I don't know what else to say to her. She is the most beautiful

girl I have ever seen; her face is a golden ratio. Undeniable, so obvious it slaps you. She has no sunspots or freckles, just a dark mole above her left eyebrow. Her eyes are resort water blue, and she has thin, Linda Evangelista limbs. My features are wider. As I pump soap out of the dispenser, I stand on my tiptoes to lengthen my reflection beside hers.

'Hi,' she says, a little reluctantly. 'I'm Gwen.'

Honey
by Isabel Banta
Zaffre • HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781804184165
Published 25th June



“A sexy swagger of a debut”

Emma Straub

“Like Daisy Jones soaked in Britney Spears”

Holly Bourne

“Full of drama, heartbreak, ambition and desire”

Katherine Webber Tsang

I introduce myself. 'Pretty name,' she says. 'I always wanted a name like that.'

'Um, no you don't. It sounds like a stripper's name.'

'Let's see how you then.' When she smiles at me, I notice her teeth are covered in streaks of plaque. There – an imperfection. It soothes me somewhat.

In the vocal booth, the four of us are lined up in front of music stands. Gwen Morris, Claudia Jeong, Rhiannon Walsh, me. The producers and Simon sit behind the mixing board in the control room, arms crossed over their chests. Only Gwen doesn't show her nerves. The rest of us fidget and pick at ourselves.

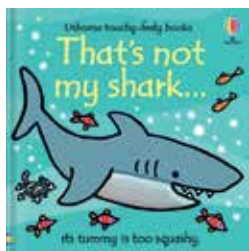
'Let's just sing something you all know,' says Simon. 'The national anthem. Let's just see how it sounds. Okay? Great.' He claps his hands together.

Before we begin, before it all begins, Rhiannon leans over to whisper in my ear: 'They expect us to know the words the f**king national anthem?'

I swallow a laugh. We suck air into our lungs. Our voices are tentative at first, then full. Rhiannon hums most of the words, while the rest of us grasp at lyrics. When we've hit the final note, the four of us look at each other and begin to laugh. I think we are all eager to be part of something. Until then, we had been alone. Alone in our changing bodies. Alone as the world began to look at us differently over its shoulder.

'We've got something here,' Simon says, clapping. 'We've got something. Again, girls. Let's go again.'

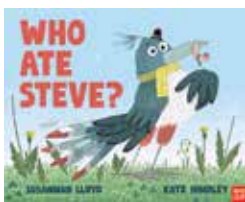
Books for Little Ones



That's not my Shark...

by Fiona Watt & Rachel Wells
Usborne • HB • £6.99
ISBN 9781805316916
Published 9th May
Age range: 0+

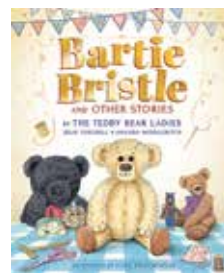
Meet five appealing sharks swimming through this exciting addition to the much-loved *That's not my...* series. With their bright, bold, eye-catching illustrations and fuzzy, furry, smooth and soft tactile patches on each page, babies and toddlers will love these books, which are designed to be shared, and support sensory and language development. Don't forget to spot the little white mouse on every page!



Who Ate Steve?

by Susannah Lloyd & Kate Hindley
Nosy Crow • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781839946226
Published 6th June
Age range: 2+

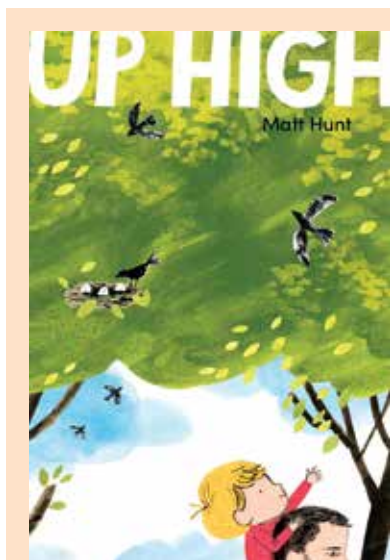
Welcome to this extremely interesting book about size. Marcel is a bird. He is big. Steve is a worm, and he is... Wait a minute! Steve has **DISAPPEARED!** Does Marcel know something about it? And can he be persuaded to return that poor worm **RIGHT NOW!** A hilariously quirky mini mystery reminiscent of Jon Klassen's classic *I Want My Hat Back*, from bestselling and award-winning artist Kate Hindley, who won Oscar's Book Prize in 2021.



Bartie Bristle & Other Stories

by Amanda Middleditch, Julie Tatchell & Elke Boschinger
Walker Books
HB • £14.99
ISBN 9781529513257
Published 6th June
Age range: 5+

A beautiful treasury of six charming teddy bear stories by the best loved Teddy Bear Ladies, Julie and Amanda, soft-toy repairers and stars of the BBC's *The Repair Shop*. Set in a village in the heart of the Old Woods, the magical world of the teddy bear shop and the heart-warming stories of Bartie and his teddy bear friends will captivate children and parents alike. It's complemented with endearing illustrations by Eke Boschinger.



Up High

by Matt Hunt
Nosy Crow • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781805132585
Published 9th May
Age range: 3+

A loving portrait of a father and son relationship in a beautifully illustrated picture book. Going up high on Dad's shoulder's is the *best* way to feel **BIG** when everything makes you feel small. But maybe, just maybe, being down low is just as good as being up high... A simple walk to the park is *everything* in this heartfelt story seen from a child's perspective. It is an instant classic that will resonate with children and adults alike.



Time Runs Like a River

by Emma Carlisle
Big Picture Press
PB • £12.99
ISBN 9781800785946
Published 20th June
Age range: 5+

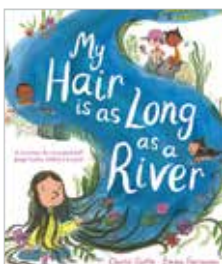
Time runs like a river, never resting, moving steadily on. But if we notice how different each minute can be, we can appreciate them before they are gone. Rivers can be fast-flowing or still, raging or calm, just like us. This lyrical picture book from the award-winning artist Emma Carlisle explores the concepts of time and change through the ebb and flow of a river. With themes of mindfulness and nature, it also includes non-fiction spreads at the back of the book to share with children.



First Little Rhymes: Out and About

by Joseph Coelho & Nicola Killen
Andersen Press
HB • £7.99
ISBN 9781839133794
Published 2nd May
Age range: 1+

A beautifully illustrated board book with selected poems by award-winning Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho. With poems and illustrations selected from Coelho and Killen's collection, *Blow a Kiss, Catch a Kiss*, this board book includes 10 charming poems all about a little one's outside world, and the things they might see and experience going out and about in it. A great introduction to the joy of poetry and words for very young children.



My Hair is as Long as a River

by Charlie Castle & Emma Farrarons
Macmillan Children's
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781035018307
Published 2nd May
Age range: 3+

A joyful celebration of being proud of who you are. People don't always understand the boy with long hair. But he knows that his hair is a part of who he is and who he can be – soft and strong, wild and still, fierce and gentle. He'd like to take you on a journey to show you just how magical embracing who you are can be... Step into an extraordinary world of imagination and adventure, and discover the magic of being unique.



Peculiar Pop-Ups: Get that Monster out of Here!

by Sam Taplin & Fred Blunt
Usborne • HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781803706528
Published 9th May
Age range: 5+

You'd better not open the flaps, because the monsters might get out! There's a hilarious beastie waiting to jump out from behind each flap in this irresistible novelty book. With amusing text and brilliant monster artwork by star illustrator Fred Blunt, the fun and chaos increases each time you turn a page, culminating in a spectacular giant pop-up at the end. Follows the success of *There's a Hippo in my Toilet!* and *Who Let the Dinosaurs Out?*

Race to the Top

Dungeon Runners
Level 1: Hero Trial
 by Kieran Larwood
 Illustrated by
 Joe Todd-Stanton
 Nosy Crow • PB • £7.99
 ISBN 9781839945182
 Published 6th June
 Age range: 7+



The first in a new adventure series, this book sees gnorf (part gnome, part dwarf) Kit team up with new friends Sandy and Thorn to become a Dungeon Runner, competing in a thrilling televised championship. Despite their youth and inexperience, can they triumph? We interviewed the author Kieran Larwood to find out more.



In the story, Kit is bullied by a Breg and his gang. Do you think that it's important to stand up to bullies?

I think it's always important to stand up for yourself, but only if you do it peacefully. Kit gets the better of Breg by proving his cleverness and teamwork are better than Breg's brute strength.



What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I absolutely love going to a good bookshop, having a browse and choosing new books! Bookshops are one of my favourite places in the world, and I think it's essential we support them. You can't beat looking through the shelves in person and chatting to booksellers who are passionate about reading.

What inspired you to write *Dungeon Runners Level 1: Hero Trial*? Are you a fan of *Dungeons & Dragons*?

It actually came about when I was home schooling my son during lockdown. He was not enjoying his work, so I asked him to help me come up with a book idea as a project. We put together the things we had been doing to keep ourselves busy: playing *Dungeons & Dragons* and watching American Football... and the world of *Dungeon Runners* was born!



If you were a Dungeon Runner, would you be a fighter, a healer or a mage?

Well, I'm not the most athletic of people, so I don't think I'd be a very good fighter. I also can't stand the sight of blood, so healer is out. I would have to be a mage, after all, telling stories is a kind of magic, I think!

I love the two presenters who commentate on the *Dungeon Running* – how did you create them?

I was inspired by watching the commentators in American Football games and the way they banter with each other. Then I tried to think of the most unlikely fantasy creatures to do the job, so that it would be funny watching them!



The book is the first in a series – do you have the whole series planned out?

It's actually been quite a while since I got a publishing deal for the story, and I have written four books in the series already! The remaining three are patiently waiting for Joe to do his amazing illustrations for them.

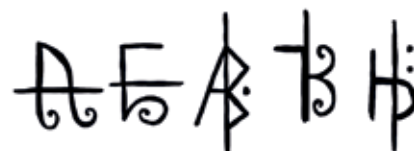
The book incorporates Joe Todd-Stanton's illustrations into the story. How did you work together?

I had already written the story before Joe became involved, but he got to see my sketches for the characters, and I was shown his roughs for the illustrations before he drew up the finished pictures.



Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

My main inspirations are fantasy writers. Reading *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien turned me into a fantasy fan when I was young, and I love the humour of writers like Terry Pratchett and the world building of Ursula Le Guin.



Spark of Adventure

In this fun new story, Ember Spark craves excitement. Then she rescues a hamster with superpowers and soon finds herself on a magical adventure. We interviewed the author Abi Elphinstone to discover more!



What inspired you to start a new series?

I'd done a standalone book, *Saving Neverland*, which was a branch away from what I'd been doing before. I wanted to write something for a younger age group, possibly shorter – I've got three tiny kids at home. It's easier to write shorter books which have a common theme or characters. I remember always wanting a pet when I was little, and eventually I got a rabbit called Doodle. I used to walk him on a lead! He was really cute, and I used to talk to him. The conversations were one-sided but I did feel like he was talking back. I thought it would be fun to write about the bonds between children and animals. A book I loved as a kid was *The Worst Witch* series by Jill Murphy. In it, Mildred Hubble is training to be a witch. Anything in which you're training to be something that involves a bit of magic, I think there's a real hook there. So how about training to be a vet for magical beasts? It brings together two childlike things for me, longing for a pet and training to do something involving magic. I thought it would be fun to do it as a series as I could envisage Ember and Arno going off on different adventures.

Did you have fun inventing the names for the characters and places?

I had so much fun! Naming characters is one of my favourite things about writing.

In my novel *Rumblestar* I named a heroine after a brand of butter – Utterly Butterly became Utterly Thankless. And in *Dreamcatcher* I pinched a name from a shower gel. But I had great fun with *Ember Spark*. I was in the supermarket one day, and in the dips section I saw baba ghanoush, and I thought this is such a fun

word to say aloud! I like names that are fun to say aloud, that have an onomatopoeic value. They often create an image or conversation in the reader's mind, and often have a humour to them. So the teacher in the book is called Mrs Rickety-Knees – I named her after chatting to a really sweet lady in the doctor's surgery, who was complaining about how rickety her knees were. The finding of the names is random, but I am always looking for humorous names!

Ember is guarded and doesn't want to make friends after her dad leaves her. Do you think a lot of children feel this way when their parents split?

Yes. My parents split up when I was young, but I didn't want to write a book about the trauma of divorce. I wanted to write a story about the fact that sometimes families don't stay together, and sometimes it hits you hard, as it does with Ember. For me, I went out a lot into nature. I grew up in Scotland just like Ember, and I drew a lot of solace going out into the wild, usually with siblings or with a friend. I did want to write a book about the transformative power of adventures, of two children coming together to explore the world. Adventures teach us to be curious and to take risks. A lot of good came out of me retreating for a little while, and then finding my way back through adventures. Some children retreat into themselves and then don't find an outlet for their emotions, but I was lucky in that I had friends who got me out and let me explore things.

"Quirky and magical,"

Phil Earle

Arno and Ember are quite different characters, where did that relationship come from?

Arno's role in the book is to come along and open Ember up. He's not a likely candidate for an adventure, he hates risks and loves rules. All he wants to do is get back for after-school club so he can make some meringues! I like the idea that Arno, with his quiet, measured loyalty is just what Ember needs to reengage with the world. On a deep level, the book is about life moving in a difficult direction, and curiosity, courage and friendship drawing you out of the darkness and flinging you back into the light. I named him Arno Whisper, a name associated with quietness, because

that's what Ember needs. There's a lot to be said for quietness, about taking time to think and act. Arno's scared of some things, but he's brave, and when things go really wrong, his courage is insurmountable.

Of all the magical beasts you describe in the book, which is your favourite?

I like the name nibblesqueak! And I like the idea of a hamster being a superhero. So many kids, when I do school visits, tell me about their hamster called Fudge or Caramel. I had to put a hamster in, and one that could glow in the dark and jump huge distances! It was fun naming him Forty Winks, because he sleeps all the time. But out of all the beasts, Smidge is a sweet little silver dragon and I liked writing her story. I like collecting little facts about magical beasts that children might not know, such as that unicorns can fart so loudly that sometimes their farts register as a minor earthquake! And hippogriffs can poo each letter of the alphabet as a party trick!

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

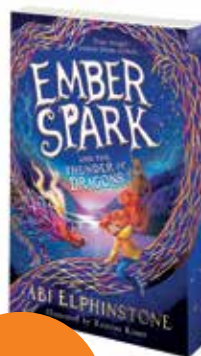
Kate DiCamillo, an American author – I find that reading one of her books is like swallowing a secret. Her books are so powerful, they are short and simply written but so bold and brilliant and expansive in their ideas. I love Katherine Rundell's books, they are full of wisdom and joy. I learned a lot about writing action scenes from Michelle Paver, and I adore David Arnold's *Skellig*. I love Emma Carroll's books, they make historical events so relatable to children now. Nazmeen Ahmed Pathak, her *City of Stolen Magic* was brilliantly researched and I loved it. Michelle Harrison, Piers Torday, Lauren St John, there are so many authors I admire. And picture books – Beatrice Alemagna, *Never, Not Ever!* and *Harold Snipperpot's Best Disaster Ever*, and *On a Magical Do-Nothing Day*. I love both her artwork and her slightly unhinged, off-the-wall storytelling.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I think indie bookshops are the glue that bind the community together. My local indie is Night Owl Books in East Linton. They have a brilliant variety of books, and they also host events which draw in a huge cross-section of the local community. It's always good to see that gathering of people. Plus there are house martin nests, spray-painted gold, in the eaves of the children's section! I feel like the place crackles with magic, and my kids have free rein in there. The manager Rebecca knows us well now, so they come in and make themselves at home. I'm very lucky to have that on my doorstep.

Ember Spark & The Thunder of Dragons

by Abi Elphinstone
Illustrated by Kristina Kister
Simon & Schuster Children's
PB • £7.99 • ISBN 9781398500693
Published 9th May
Age range: 8+



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

Star Car

Published to celebrate its 60th anniversary, this landmark edition of classic children's novel *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* includes brand new illustrations throughout by Thomas Gilbert, a car designer for iconic British marques. Written by the bestselling author of the James Bond novels, it's a beloved adventure featuring a very special car.

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

by Ian Fleming

Illustrated by Thomas Gilbert

Ian Fleming Publications

PB • £7.99

ISBN 9781915797506

Published 13th June

Age range: 7+



[KIDS]



Thomas Gilbert and Ian Fleming

Photo © The Ian Fleming Estate

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang is a timeless classic: a gripping, fast-paced children's adventure story, written by Ian Fleming to read to his son, Caspar. It was first published in 1964 with illustrations by John Burningham. The car was inspired by the racing cars built by Count Louis Zborowski at Higham Park in Kent. Sadly, Ian Fleming never lived to see the book published: he died in 1964, two months before it came out. *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, the feature film, loosely based on the book and co-written by Roald Dahl, was released in 1968.

This extract is from the beginning of the book:

Most motor-cars are conglomerations (this is a long word for bundles) of steel and wire and rubber and plastic, and electricity

and oil and petrol and water, and the toffee papers you pushed down the crack in the back seat last Sunday. Smoke comes out of the back of them and horn-squawks out of the front, and they have white lights like big eyes in front, and red lights behind. And that is about that – just motor-cars, tin boxes on wheels for running about in.

But some motor-cars – mine, for instance, and perhaps yours – are different. If you get to like them and understand them, if you are kind to them and don't scratch their paint or bang their doors, if you fill them up and top them up and pump them up when they need it, if you keep them clean and polished and out of the rain and snow as much as possible, you will find, you may find, that they become almost like persons – more than just ordinary persons: **MAGICAL PERSONS!**

You don't believe me? All right then! You just read about this car I'm going to tell you about! I believe you can guess its name already – her name, I should say. And then see if you don't agree with me. All motor-cars aren't just conglomerations of machinery and fuel. Some are.

Once upon a time there was a family called Pott. There was the father, who had been in the Royal Navy, Commander Caractacus Pott. (You may think that Caractacus sounds quite a funny name, but in fact the original Caractacus was the British chieftain who was a sort of Robin Hood in AD 48 and led an English army against the Roman invaders. I expect since then there have been plenty of other Caractacuses, but I don't know anything about them.) Then there was the mother, Mimsie Pott, and a pair of

eight-year-old twins – Jeremy, who was a black-haired boy, and Jemima, who was a golden-haired girl – and they lived in a

wood beside a big lake with an island in the middle. On the other side of the lake, M20, the big motorway on the Dover road, swept away towards the sea. So they had the best of both worlds – lovely woods for catching beetles and finding birds' eggs, with a lake for newts and tadpoles, and a fine big motor road close by so that they could go off and see the world if they wanted to.

Well, almost, that is. But the truth of the matter was that they hadn't got enough money between

them to buy a car. All the money they had went on necessities – food and heat and light and clothes and all those boring things that one doesn't really notice but families have to have. There was only a little left over for birthday and Easter and Christmas presents and occasional surprise outings – the things that *really* matter.

But the Potts were a happy family who all enjoyed their lives and since they weren't in the least sorry for themselves, or sorry that they hadn't got a motor-car to go whirling about in, we needn't be sorry for them either.

Now Commander Caractacus Pott was an explorer and an inventor, and that may have been the reason why the Pott family was not very rich. Exploring places and inventing things can be very exciting indeed, but it is only very seldom that, in your explorations, you discover a really rare butterfly or animal or insect or mineral or plant that people will pay money to see, and practically never that you discover real treasure, like in books – gold bars and diamonds and jewels in an old oak chest...

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang is a trademark of Danjaq, LLC, used under licence by Ian Fleming Publications Ltd





Meet the Magicores!

From Jennifer Bell the bestselling author of *The Uncommoners*, *Magicalia: Race of Wonders* is the first in an enchanting new series. Friends Bitsy and Kosh find themselves caught up in a magical adventure when they encounter the world of the magicores – strange beasts conjured up by human emotions.

“It’s an absolute triumph!”

Mel Taylor-Bessent

Bitsy and Kosh are best friends, and they love hanging out, playing games and recording a local news podcast. Bitsy would love to be a journalist one day, like her mother Matilda, who died in car accident when Bitsy was five years old. One day, Bitsy and Kosh are in her room when they hear a terrible commotion coming from downstairs. The next thing they know, they are confronted by a monstrous giant hamster with a rhinoceros horn, which seems to be eating everything in sight!

The hamstoceros is a magicore, a creature which can be created from emotions. When her father Eric is kidnapped, Bitsy and Kosh set off on a wild adventure to try and rescue him, an adventure which ranges from London to Paris to India. A new magical world opens up to them, and at the heart of it are the magicores, each detailed in an encyclopedia called the *Magicalia*. Bitsy and Kosh soon become conjurers themselves, but someone is pursuing them. Can they find Eric and discover the truth before it is too late?



“Fun, fast and ferociously readable.”

Elle McNicoll

"A spellbinding read."

Rachel Chivers Khoo



MAGICORE:
HIX

Guild: Clairvoyant, Alpha-level
Source Emotion: Amusement
Powers:

- Persuades people by making them laugh



MAGICORE:
NARPHIN

Guild: Elemental, Alpha-level
Source Emotion: Relief
Powers:

- Generates and controls water



MAGICORE:
QUIGGLE

Guild: Weaver, Beta-level
Source Emotion: Disappointment
Powers:

- Creates Swiss cheese style holes in any material
- Glows in the dark

Magicalia: Race of Wonders

by Jennifer Bell

Illustrated by David Wyatt

Walker Books • PB • £7.99

ISBN 9781529506143

Published 2nd May

Age range: 9+

"A bold and exciting new world of magic."

Amy Sparkes

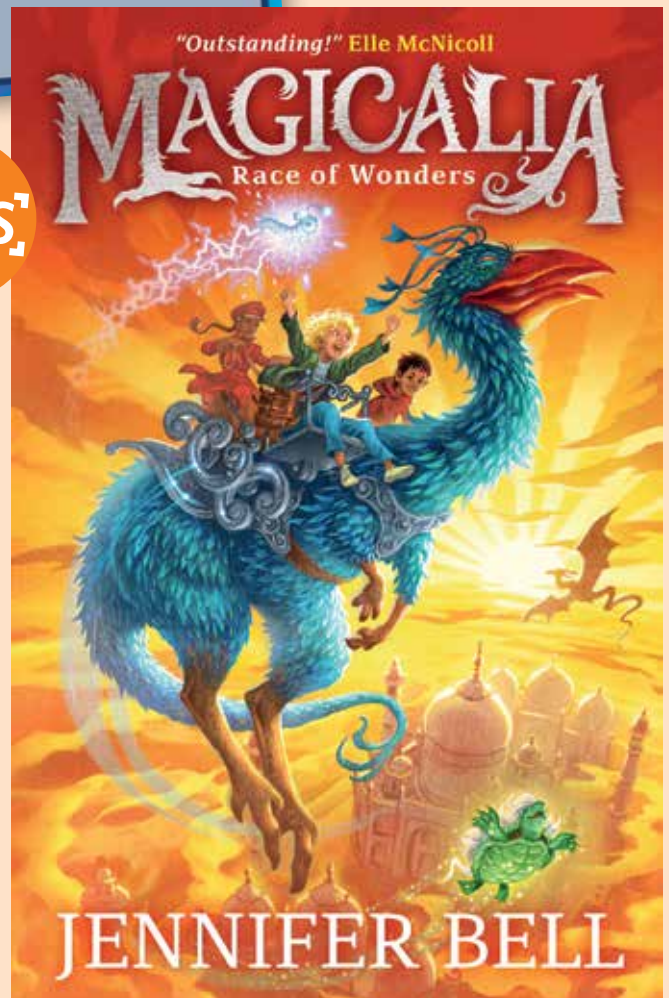
[KIDS]



MAGICORE:
HUFFLUFF

Guild: Armourer, Gamma-level
Source Emotion: Agitation
Powers:

- Flies while carrying extraordinary weight



"Outstanding!" Elle McNicoll

MAGICALIA
Race of Wonders

JENNIFER BELL

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Home Truths

In this fresh and funny new story from the award-winning journalist and author Radhika Sanghani, Priya finds herself in trouble when a magic bangle forces her to be honest!

[KIDS]

“A thoroughly engaging story with a super cast of diverse characters,”

Jen Carney

The Girl Who Couldn't Lie
by Radhika Sanghani
Usborne • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781805316749
Published 9th May
Age range: 9+



Priya Shah has a difficult relationship with the truth. She doesn't set out to deceive people, she just doesn't want to disappoint anyone. And so she lies – just white lies, to keep everyone happy. The one person she could be honest with was Ba, her grandmother. Now Ba is gone, but Priya has a beautiful bangle Ba left her. When she puts it on, however, she finds that it has special powers – she is now unable to lie. She can't take the bangle off, and she can't stop the truths pouring out of her.

She tells her dad that she hates his cooking, she tells Dan Zhang about her huge crush on him, and she shares her best friends' secrets at school. She has to come clean and confess the lies she's told in the past. She finds that her brutal honesty is leading her into more and more trouble, and things go from bad to worse. Is there a way of telling the truth without hurting the people she loves?

In this extract, Priya finds herself being unusually honest with her sister Pinkie and her dad:

'Why are you so desperate to get to gymnastics anyway?' asked Pinkie, who was somehow already fully dressed in her uniform. Priya gave her a look of reluctant admiration.

'Because I get to see Dan Zhang,' said Priya. She yelped and her hand flew to her mouth. She couldn't believe she'd just said that out loud! What was wrong with her?!

Her younger sister looked at her curiously. 'Who's Dan?'

'He's on my team,' said Priya quickly,

hoping she wouldn't say anything weird. 'He's really cute.' Oh no. She ran out of the door before she overshared again and raced down the stairs. Priya paused in the hallway in front of the wide mirror. She stared at her reflection – sensible shoulder-length brown hair, matching brown eyes and a total look of panic etched on her face. This was like being in a waking nightmare – why did she keep saying the opposite of what she wanted to say? She shook her head and gave her reflection a stern look.

“I can't lie! I loved it!”

Maisie Chan

'Priya Shah,' she told herself internally, 'Stop blurting out your every thought. Just... do what you normally do and shut up! Or you are going to RUIN EVERYTHING. Okay? Just... stop it!'

She gave her reflection one final warning look, and then walked into the kitchen.

'Eggs are ready!' called her dad cheerfully as Priya sat down at the table. 'Here you go, mademoiselle – eggs à la Monsieur Shah!'

Priya warily examined the watery eggs seeping onto charred toast, wishing she was upstairs brushing her teeth with Pinkie. How did her sister always manage to miss her dad's worst meals? 'Uh... thanks?'

'I used vinegar to make sure I got a rounder egg,' her dad said proudly,

watching her gingerly cut into it. 'Isn't it round?'

'Yes,' agreed Priya. It was undeniably round, but it was also the wrong consistency and, as she realized the second her fork touched her tongue, it was so vinegary that it was impossible to eat. She swallowed it anyway, trying not to gag.

'Do you like it?' asked her dad hopefully.

Priya smiled, ready to lie to her dad like she did every single time he tried and failed to cook her an edible meal. She opened her mouth to say yes.

'No.'

She gasped aloud. She'd done it again! Why had she said no?! She didn't want to hurt her dad's feelings! She squeezed her eyes shut so she didn't have to see the sadness on his face. 'I'm sorry. I meant it's just a little... uh, undercooked.'

'Oh.' Her dad sounded disappointed. 'I'll, uh, put the eggs back in for minute then! Yes, that's it. They'll taste all right then, don't you think?'

'No,' said Priya miserably, opening her eyes despite herself. Her dad's back was turned towards her as he put the egg back into the pan, and she was glad. Because she knew she really didn't want to see his face when she finished her sentence. She tried to muster up all her strength to stop the words from coming out. She swallowed them back, but she could feel them getting stronger. She tried one last time to keep her mouth clamped shut, but it didn't work. Her lips parted, and the words she really didn't want to say shot straight out of her, right into her father's unsuspecting back. 'They'll still be disgusting.'

Welsh Wonder

In this new story for young readers, author Catherine Fisher retells the ancient Welsh legend of *Culhwch and Olwen*. Culhwch is determined to marry Olwen, but her father, the giant Yspaddaden Penkawr, sets him thirteen tasks to complete first. With help from his cousin Arthur and his court, can Culhwch triumph? We interviewed the author to discover her inspirations.

Photo © Rachel Davis Photography



What inspired you to reimagine the mythical story of Culhwch and Olwen for young readers?

There are many fascinating Welsh stories, but this is the one that has always fascinated me most. I think it's because of its complexity, and the fact that there are lots of stories tangled up together in this one. Whoever compiled it in the Middle Ages wove these stories together. The other thing I like about it is that it's mysterious, but also funny. It has lots of different elements to it.

Did you do a lot of research into the original text?

I read it very carefully, and worked my way through it. There was a lot I had to omit because it would be too complex. In the original there is a great list of Arthur's men, of his court. It's fascinating because obviously there were stories for each of these names which are now lost. But I had to leave that out, because as a book for young readers it had to be streamlined.

Do you have a favourite character from amongst the friends and relatives of Arthur?

My favourite has to be Cai, Arthur's brother or stepbrother. In the Welsh tradition, Cai is very much the hero, a supernatural hero. In the later continental French versions he was diminished a bit, in favour of people like Lancelot. In the Welsh versions he's a great character, an extreme character, so I like him best.

"The quest story is international, and comes up in many different ways."

What is the connection between the Welsh, Cornish and French legends of Arthur?

Where did the Arthurian stories originate? No one really knows, but *Culhwch and Olwen* is the earliest story to feature Arthur as the leader of a court of men and women with strange supernatural powers. The French legends were much later, they came through French writers such as Chretien de Troyes, and also Geoffrey of Monmouth.

You also include quite a lot of poetry in the book – what was the inspiration for this?

In the original there were passages of description, such as a description of Olwen, when we first meet her, which I think were once poems. So I've put it back into a kind of poetic prose. There is also one for the giants, because there is no description of the giants in the original story, and I thought they deserved one!

I quite liked the part where they to the Uplands of Hell to confront the witches – we never see what they are like or what they do, just the effects.

Do you think that sometimes the unknown is the scariest thing?

Yes, I think that's true. That part is a very comic part, and it is in the original too. It doesn't tell you what happens, except that the witch is in the cave, until Arthur finally overcomes her. But you don't see that happen. It's good, especially for young readers, to use their imagination as to what's going on in that cave.

Pigs seem central to the story. Does the pig have a symbolic meaning?

I think that they must have done originally, but that meaning has been lost. At the beginning of the story, Culhwch is born in a pigsty, and then he ends up hunting a boar at the end of the story. I wonder if the boar was not his father, or if he was a king who had turned into a boar. I wondered if there

was a connection there, but I didn't put it into the story because it was speculative. But I do think there is some meaning behind the pigs which is missing now.

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

People like Alan Garner, who was writing in the 1960s and 1970s, he was a big influence on me when I was young. Obviously, people like Tolkien. They inspire me, but I don't write like them. They got me into writing. But mainly it's the old legends and myths which I can retell and reuse which are my pure inspiration.

What is it about these myths and legends which mean that they have endured the test of time?

They are mysterious, they seem important. But their meaning isn't always clear on the surface, you have to dig into their meaning and their symbolism, narrative and characters to understand what they're really about. I like the fact that they don't give things away, you have to work at them. The fact that the same myth crops up in different cultures, that's fascinating. The quest story is international, and comes up in many different ways.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I love them because you never know what you're going to find in them, because they are curated by the owner. It's not like going into a standard bookshop, where you know what you're going to get. They are very eclectic, and I like that.

Culhwch and Olwen

by Catherine Fisher

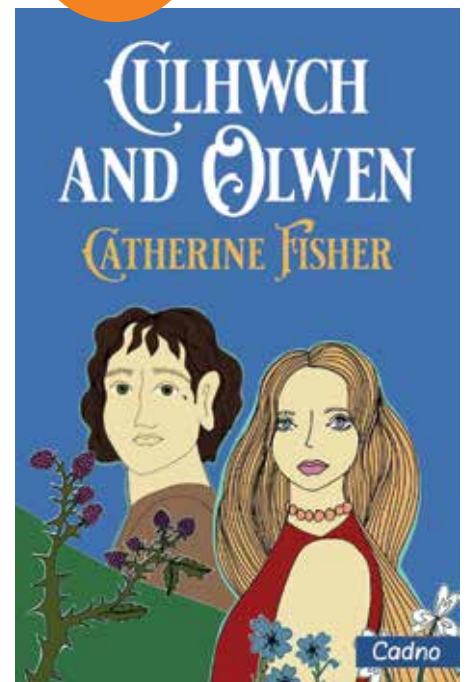
Illustrated by Efa Lois

Cadno • PB • £8.99

ISBN 9781802586459

Published 6th June

Age range: 7+

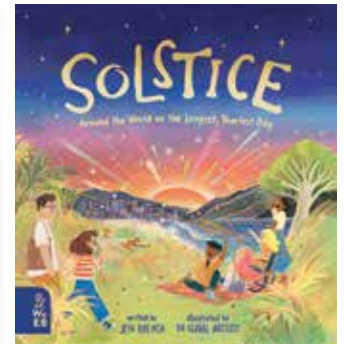
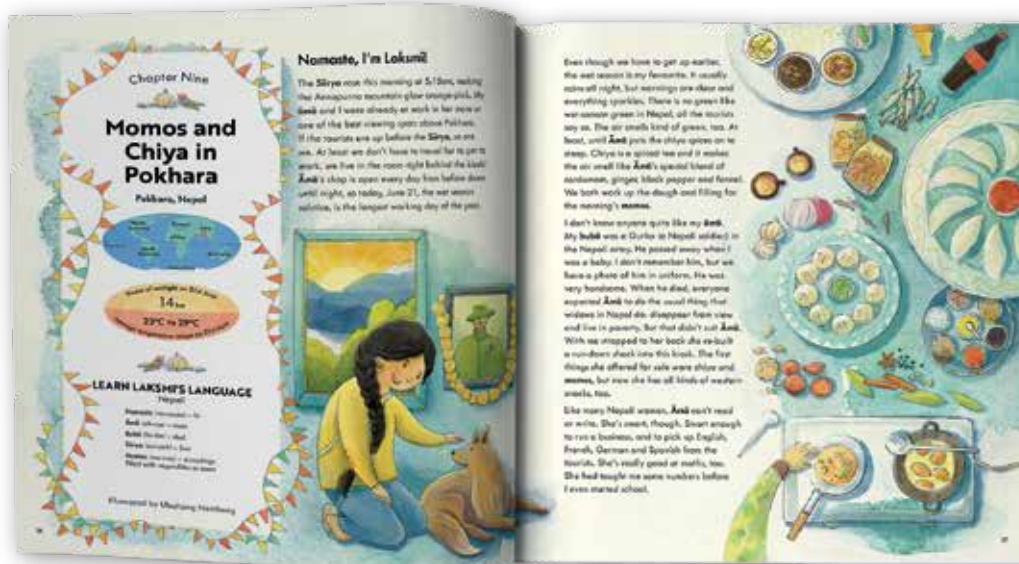


Travel the world in just one day

Explore children's lives on one special day in June.

Meet 14 fictional children in 14 real places and learn how they experience the June solstice. For some, this is a special day full of music, dancing, food and fun; while for others, it's

just a normal day. Discover what life is like in Turkey, China and Argentina... and even at a research station in Antarctica! Each story is brought to life with vivid illustrations by an artist who has a connection with that place.



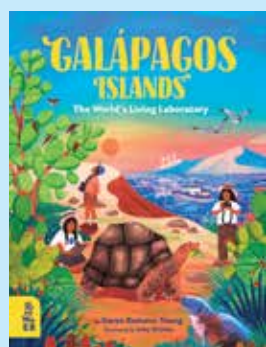
Solstice: Around the World on the Longest, Shortest Day
by Jen Breach
Illustrated by 14 global artists
What on Earth Books • HB • £15.99
ISBN 9781913750770
Published 2nd May
Age range: 7+



Take a voyage of discovery

The Galápagos Islands brought to life for those of us who haven't been there – yet.

Join Karen Romano Young on her travels through a world where locals and visiting scientists work among giant tortoises, salt snorting iguanas, diving penguins and erupting volcanoes. Here she discovers what these remarkable islands can teach us about living and thriving in harmony with nature on the only planet we are ever likely to have.



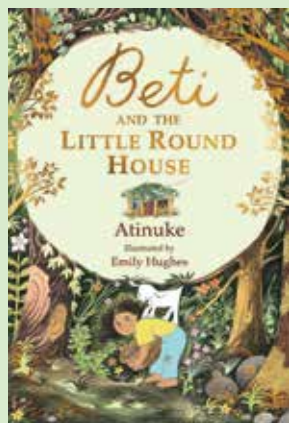
Galápagos Islands: The World's Living Laboratory
by Karen Romano Young
Illustrated by Amy Grimes
What on Earth Books • HB • £15.99
ISBN 9781804661147
Published 6th June
Age range: 10+



Super Stories



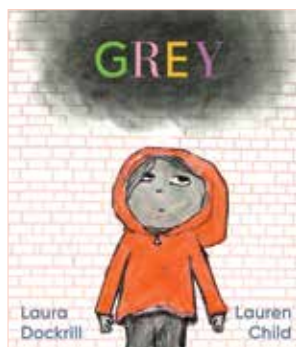
From a collection of tales about a girl and her family, to a reassuring picture book, to a canine adventure, these new stories from Walker Books are engaging reads.



Betty & The Little Round House

by Atinuke & Emily Hughes
Walker Books • HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781406382433
Published 2nd May
Age range: 7+

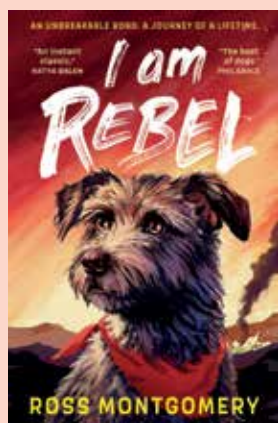
A charming collection of stories from celebrated storyteller Atinuke and with tender illustrations from Emily Hughes. Betty lives in a little round house in the woods with Mam, Tad, Baby Jac, her cheeky goat Naughty and many other farm animals. Every page is rich in humour and filled with touching observations of the family's wild and enchanting way of life. It will inspire readers to reconnect with nature, to find happiness on their doorstep among the love of friends and family.



Grey

by Laura Dockrill & Lauren Child
Walker Books • HB • £14.99
ISBN 9781406389562
Published 2nd May
Age range: 3+

An iconic picture book collaboration about feelings and acceptance from two of the most beloved voices in children's literature. Beautifully crafted compositions together with simple die-cut design, reveal the story of a child who feels as though all their colours have disappeared. The child still feels grey until a reassuring hand reaches out and shares words of kindness. Soon the child begins to see the warmth of colour again, and understands that that they will always be loved.



I Am Rebel

by Ross Montgomery
Walker Books • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781529502909
Published 6th June
Age range: 3+

A heart-warming adventure about the unbreakable bond between a dog and his human from a beloved and twice Costa-shortlisted author. Rebel is a good dog, and he loves his simple, perfect life on the farm with his owner Tom – until one day the war comes too close... Now Tom is determined to join the rebellion to defeat the king's men. But Rebel knows war is dangerous, and he will stop at nothing to save the human he loves. Rebel *must* bring Tom home before it's too late.

This extract is from the beginning of the book:

The day begins exactly as it should.

It's summer, and dawn is poking its nose through the curtains. Our bed is still warm with the night of sleeping. I can hear a cockerel crowing outside in the farmyard. I can smell bacon downstairs, and hear the clatter of pans on the stove, and Tom's mum and dad talking to each other in soft sleepy voices.

I know, from the moment I wake up, that today is going to be perfect.

Tom is still snoring beside me. I stand up, shake out the last dregs of sleep, and snuffle over to him. He always smells most like himself in the morning: groggy and warm and sleep-drunk, all of him Tom.

That's my first job of the day: wake Tom up. I do it by licking his face. I love licking his face. It's the best bit of the day.

'Ugh!' Tom groans. 'Yuk, Rebel.'

That's me. I am Rebel. It's the name Tom gave me. He wipes the slobber off his face and hugs me close to him. I love it when he does that.

'Silly old dog,' he mumbles.

At this point, I should probably mention that I'm a dog.

But I'm not an old dog; I'm only five. And I'm not silly, either. I am a good dog. I know this, because Tom tells me I am good all the time, and Tom knows everything.

Lone Wolf

In this imaginative book, Coll lives with his clan on a Construct, a giant technological creature which is controlled by the clan's will. Coll is Wolf, and together they roam their world, fighting other Constructs. But one day Coll is separated from the rest of Wolf. Can he find a new way to live? We interviewed the author Alastair Chisholm to discover his inspirations.



What inspired you to write *I Am Wolf*? Do you see it as a fantasy or sci-fi story?

I Am Wolf is what you might call 'soft' sci-fi – it has geeky tech, and quite a few explosions, but mostly it's an adventure story. Weirdly, the inspiration was the title itself! It appeared in my head one day and stayed there, before I even knew what it was. First, I figured out that it was about tribalism. Then I realised that *Wolf* was a real thing, a huge mechanical beast... and then I *had* to write it.

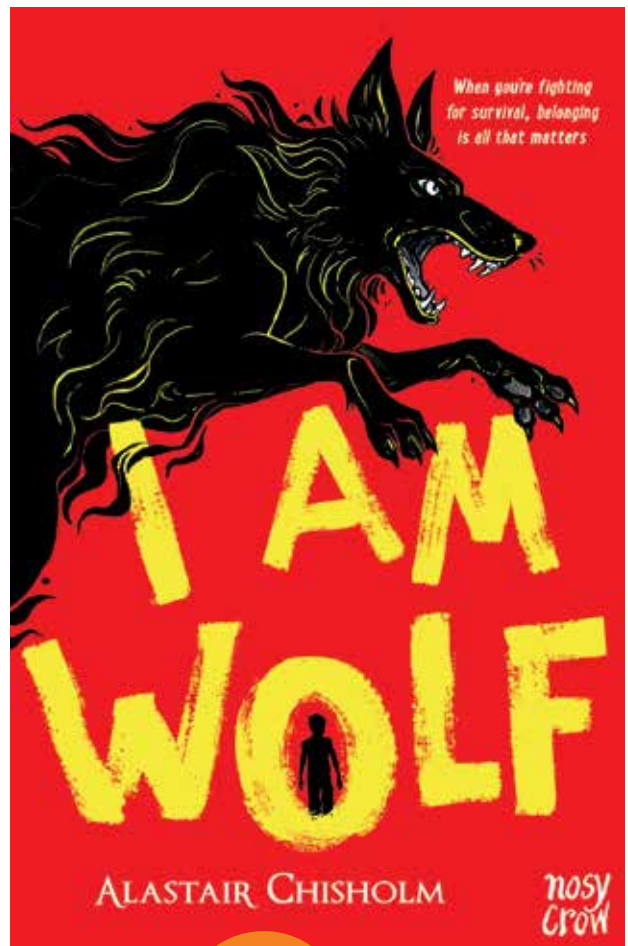
Coll instinctively protects and looks after Fillan. Do you think it is his own difference – the fact that he has prosthetic limbs – which makes him take Fillan on?

Coll's limb difference is important, of course, but I don't think it defines him. I think Coll is just someone who automatically tries to protect people who need protecting. He has a strong sense of what is right. But perhaps his experience aboard *Wolf*, and the way he is treated by others, makes him more aware of what others are going through.

Coll has many of his beliefs challenged when he's left behind by *Wolf*. Do you think that it sometimes takes outside eyes to see ourselves differently?

Absolutely! I was thinking very much about how we tend to form cliques, 'bubbles' of people who see the world exactly as we do. It's so easy to shut out any other ideas – and even start to hate the people in the next bubble...

50 booktime@booksellers.org.uk



Coll has a difficult relationship with his mother, Alpha, and finds friendship with Reika, Fillan and Brann. Do you think that sometimes the friendships we make can be stronger than family ties?

Everyone's family is different, of course! I'm very lucky with mine. But in every case, as we grow up, we'll find our own groups, our own friendships – our own crews. That's how we build new families. And Alpha was an interesting character for me. She's not a good mother, but she *is* a good person in many ways. I wanted to show that it's possible to move away from someone while still understanding them, and even respecting them for their strong qualities.

“A rip-roaring blockbuster of a book,”

Richard Pickard

Alpha tells Coll that he must never show emotions, or be indecisive. But do you think that not being sure, and being in touch with our feelings, can sometimes be a strength?

People who are *certain* are very impressive, aren't they? They stride around so confidently! They get so much done! But I've always been a bit wary of that. Certainty feels like a brittle thing to me – it struggles to adapt to new situations, and can even shatter. Coll starts certain, almost shatters, but learns to adapt, and that's one of the things I love about him.

I Am Wolf

by Alastair Chisholm

Nosy Crow • PB • £7.99

ISBN 9781839945311

Published 9th May

Age range: 9+

If you were part of a Construct, what Construct do you think it would be?

Great question! Probably some kind of happy dog. I don't think we'd fight much – we'd just go around barking cheerfully and thinking how awesome the other Constructs were :). I'm working on book two right now, and there are lots more Constructs. They're great fun to write!

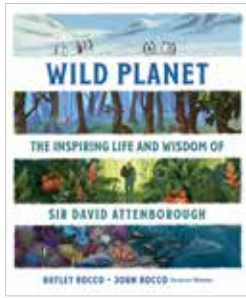
Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

This is a great age for middle grade fiction, with fantastic writers in every genre. I'm currently reading Piu DasGupta's *Secrets of the Snakestone*, and I have Christopher Edge's *Black Hole Cinema Club*, Melinda Salisbury's *EchoStar Is Always Listening* and Kieran Larwood's *Dungeon Runners* on my to-be-read pile – what a mix!

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

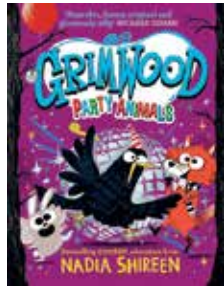
I am so lucky to live in Edinburgh, a city stuffed with independent bookshops (I'm literally writing this at my local, Argonaut Books). The key word is independent. Every indie bookshop has different books on the shelves, a different focus, a different feel. There's a connection between reader and seller that's not possible with your online megastores. I love them!

Young Reads



Wild Planet: The Inspiring Life and Wisdom of David Attenborough
by Hayley Rocco & John Rocco
Rock the Boat
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9780861548972
Published 5th June
Age range: 5+

A picture book biography of broadcaster and biologist, Sir David Attenborough. As a boy, David loved exploring the wild places near his home. When he grew older, he had an idea for a television show: he would travel the world and film animals in their natural habitats. For seven decades, David's documentaries about our planet have been treasured by millions. But over time, he noticed the wild places he loved were shrinking...



Grimwood: Party Animals
by Nadia Shireen
Simon & Schuster Children's
HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781398530027
Published 20th June
Age range: 7+

The unmissable fourth book in Nadia Shireen's bestselling and brilliantly anarchic illustrated comedy adventure series, *Grimwood*. It's perfect for fans of *Dog Man*, *Roald Dahl*, *Loki: A Bad God's Guide to Being Good*, and anyone who likes to laugh. The Grimwood gang, including fox cubs Ted and Nancy and Willow the rabbit, are back and up to mischief as usual. Buckle in for a whirlwind tale of chaos, friendship and of course, treebonking!



Max Magic: The Incredible Holiday Hideout
by Stephen Mulhern & Tom Easton
Piccadilly Press
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781800783843
Published 9th May
Age range: 7+

The new book in the *Max Magic* series, from TV presenter and magician Stephen Mulhern. Max Mullers is ready to take his magic skills to the next level. Then the news hits that the no-good Crayfish Twins have broken out of jail and are ready to get their revenge on Max and his friends. Luckily, Max and the gang are heading to Bupkins holiday resort for a week of seaside fun – it's the perfect place to lie low... With illustrations by Begoña Fernández Corbalán.



Unicornia: Learning to Fly
by Ana Punset & Diana Vicedo
Walker Books
PB • £6.99
ISBN 9781529519860
Published 6th June
Age range: 5+

The first book in a series of magical unicorn adventures. Welcome to Unicornia: the most wonderful place in the world, full of unicorns, glitter and magic. Join Claudia on her first day at the School of Advanced Magic, where she'll be taking potion lessons and a unicorn flying test. Full of cute illustrations and with a simple, humorous text, this is perfect for young readers who love unicorns and want to float on sugar clouds!



Beasts from the Deep
by Matt Ralphs & Kaley McKean
Nosy Crow
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781839943348
Published 6th June
Age range: 7+

A gift book published in association with the University of Cambridge, featuring the world's strangest, scariest and most magnificent sea creatures. Discover a menagerie of monsters that lurk deep down in our oceans – from sharks that can live for five centuries, to fish with teeth so long they can't close their mouths, to jellies that glow and flash in startling colours. Featuring Anglerfish, Giant Squid, Goblin Sharks, Coffinsh, and more!



Wolf Road
by Alice Roberts
Simon & Schuster Children's
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781398521360
Published 6th June
Age range: 8+

Now in paperback, this is an epic adventure featuring a prehistoric girl, from the bestselling author and broadcaster Professor Alice Roberts. Tuuli travels with her tribe through the seasons – as they make camp, hunt for food and protect themselves against the many hazards that the climate throws at them. But she knows there's a bigger world out there, and when she spots a strange boy lurking outside their camp, she realises that he might hold the adventure she is looking for.



Me and my Hair
by Kimberly Kinloch & Jessica Gibson
Usborne • HB • £9.99
ISBN 9781805312703
Published 6th June
Age range: 6+

Follow Kyra as she shares her thoughts and feelings about her amazing Afro hair, and the facts she learns about all kinds of hair types and styles. After a trip to the hairdresser's, Kyra's school friends have lots of questions for her, and she has lots of them too. Learn about straight hair and coily hair, red hair and black hair, cornrows and French braids and more in this celebration of all things HAIR.



My First Day Fishing
by Will Millard & Joanna Lisowiec
Magic Cat
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9781915569288
Published 9th May
Age range: 7+

This comprehensive handbook contains a wealth of information for the young angler and lays out, step-by-step, everything they might need to know on their first fishing trip. Fully illustrated throughout, the book covers everything from tackle to ties, rods to rigs, and from knots to hooks to baits, lures and flies! It also includes a fish-identification guide, together with advice on how to care for your catch, and it is packed with kid-friendly tips and tricks.

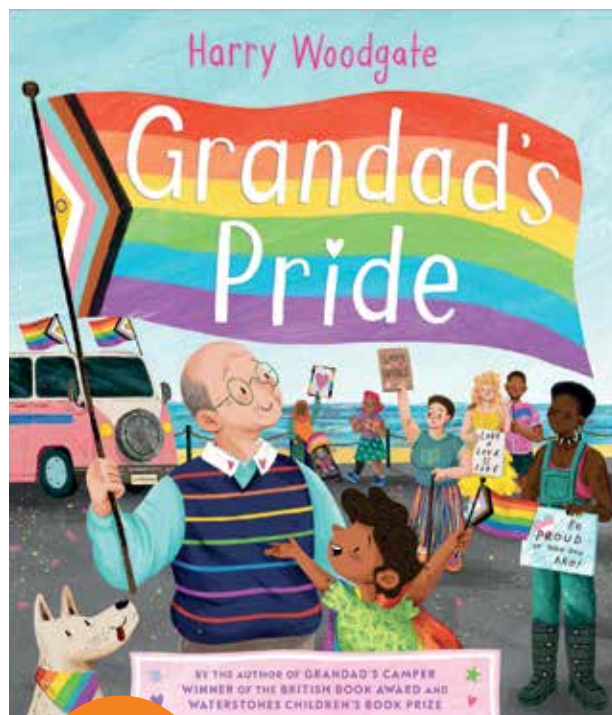


Flame Chasers
by Julie Pike
Firefly Press
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781915444554
Published 6th June
Age range: 8+

An adventure story about friendship and family from the author of *The Last Spellbreather*. All Ember wants is to fly with the flamebirds who stop every year at Bright Beacon before heading west across the seas to their mysterious home. Their fiery arrival is also the signal for the waiting Flame Chasers in the harbour below to prepare to follow the birds, whose glowing tail feathers grant the finder a wish. But when Pa tells Ember he is chasing without her, she is devastated...

Happy Days

Grandad's Pride is the beautiful sequel to bestselling and award-winning picture book *Grandad's Camper*, and it follows Milly as she brings the local community together in a Pride celebration for her Grandad. The author Harry Woodgate has also adapted and illustrated a new edition of Oscar Wilde's classic children's story *The Happy Prince* for a fresh generation of young readers. We interviewed Harry to discover more.



Grandad's Pride
by Harry Woodgate
Andersen Press • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781839132674
Published 2nd May
Age range: 3+

What inspired you to create *Grandad's Camper* and *Grandad's Pride*? Was it important to you to see LGBTQ+ representation in a picture book?

Grandad's Camper was partly inspired by my university research into LGBTQ+ representation in illustrated children's literature, which identified a lack of stories featuring older LGBTQ+ family members, and stories in which a character's LGBTQ+ identity was largely incidental to the narrative, so yes, those were definitely important factors in creating the book. I wanted to capture a portrait of a life well-lived, and not only the wonderment you experience as a child whilst listening to grandparents' treasured stories, but the way in which these memories can be a powerful aid in navigating loss and grief.

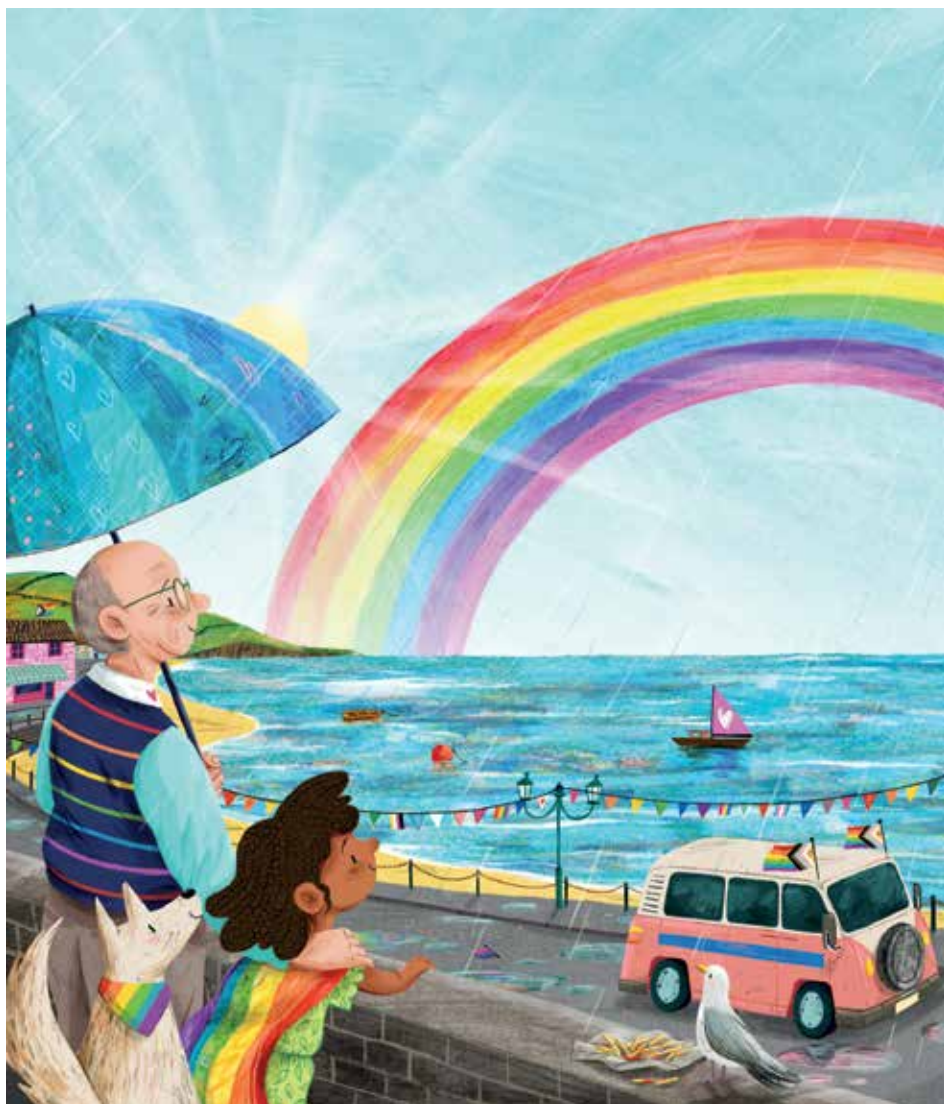
"A beautiful, positive picture book"

Steven Lenton

Grandad's Pride is very much an extension of these themes: I was keen to explore how storytelling and shared history forms such an important part of the wider LGBTQ+ community, in a way that still centred the child's perspective and granted them agency to relate those key themes of empathy and acceptance to their own lives.

How did you first get into illustration and picture book creation?

I have always drawn, since I was very small, and I credit the tremendous care and encouragement of many people, including my family and art tutors throughout school



and university, for fostering the kind of environment that made pursuing a career in illustration feel like a possibility: I believe that is something every child deserves.

After picking up freelance work whilst studying illustration at university, I signed with my brilliant agent Alice at ASH Literary in 2019 and began working on *Grandad's Camper* with Andersen Press. Since then, I've worked on lots more books, and I love that every new project brings a new opportunity to help me develop as a writer and illustrator.

Did you always intend to continue the story, when creating *Grandad's Camper*?

No, I didn't always intend to continue Grandad and Milly's story! I was quite adamant that I wouldn't begin working on a sequel to *Grandad's Camper* unless I felt there was a distinct reason for that story to exist. However, *Grandad's Pride* felt like such a natural progression from the first story, as well as being both a wonderful opportunity to get to know more of Grandad and Milly's world, and to hopefully create something which communicated with sincerity certain truths I believe to be essential: the importance of cherishing time with loved ones, and of choosing compassion and empathy over division and prejudice. It was also very nice just to draw lots of rainbows, ice creams and seagulls.

When you create a book, which comes first, the pictures, the story or the characters?

Generally, I find that the first stage of developing a new book is visualising the world in which the story takes place. Sometimes this takes place in my sketchbook; other times it feeds into the writing process, but regardless of whether I begin with text or image, a particular character or location, a central theme, emotion or narrative moment, I'm always drawn to how each story element might express itself visually, and how that visual identity might resonate with readers.

Your books are all about inclusivity and accepting others without prejudice. Do you find that children are generally more accepting than adults?

I certainly value inclusivity and acceptance, so naturally I try to reflect this in anything I work on. I wouldn't necessarily agree that children are generally more accepting than adults – that feels like a terribly limiting prospect for all of us as we get older! – but I do believe that children have a tremendous capacity for empathy and acceptance, just as they are very much capable of being selfish and unkind. I think my job as a writer and illustrator is to try to speak to readers from a place of respect for their entire selves, and part of that is acknowledging that regardless of age, we all sometimes need to be reminded of our own kindness, just as we all sometimes need space to examine our own shortcomings or prejudices.

One of the features I feel uniquely equips picture books to encourage empathy is the fact that they are so often read by child and parent together, therefore they create opportunities for discussion and reflection for both parties.

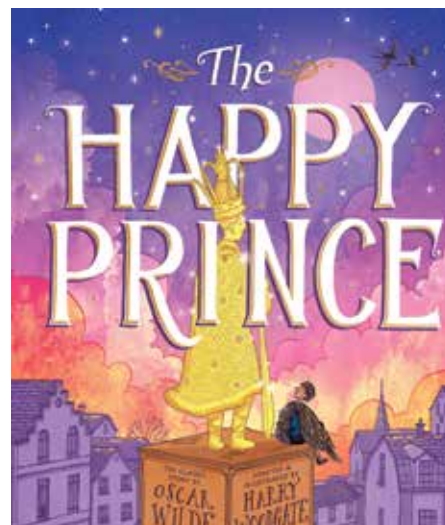
Grandad's Camper
by Harry Woodgate
Andersen Press • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781783449927
Out Now
Age range: 3+

"A colour-flooded riot of memory..."
Guardian

"This book deserves pride of place on any bookshelf,"
Kirkus Reviews

You've also illustrated Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*. How different is illustrating another author's work to illustrating your own books?

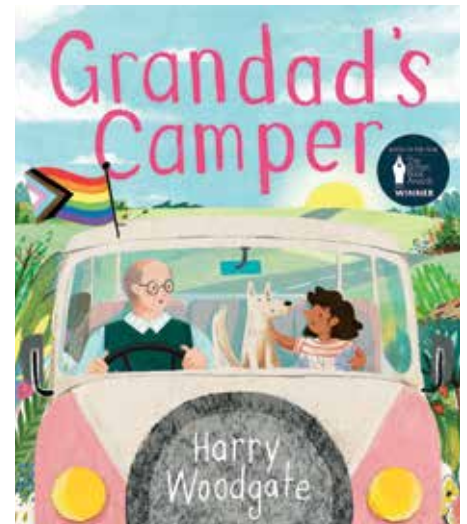
I enjoy illustrating other authors' texts and my own for different reasons! It's always a privilege to immerse myself in a world another writer has created: to seek out the spaces within where illustrations could provide additional insight or depth. I find it quite a conversational process, a kind of call and response where the sum of word and image – of two viewpoints combining to shape a narrative – achieves more than either could do alone. Equally, I enjoy the freedom and cross-pollination that occurs when I'm writing and illustrating, as I figure out which format best communicates each element of a story.



The Happy Prince
by Oscar Wilde & Harry Woodgate
Andersen Press • HB • £14.99
ISBN 9781839134289
Published 6th June
Age range: 6+

"This is both uplifting and a warning against the excess of capitalism"
The Bookseller

The Happy Prince was a particularly interesting story to illustrate because of the frequency with which it's been reinterpreted and reimagined since its original publication. I was keen to find the right balance between maintaining the beauty and integrity of Wilde's classic text and incorporating my own response to it, in a way that encouraged readers to approach it with fresh eyes.



Which other illustrators and authors inspire you in your work?

There are so many authors and illustrators working today whose work I find massively inspiring. I love current Waterstones Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho's and illustrator Fiona Lumbers' charming *Luna Loves* series; Jarvis' playful collage and gentle humour in books such as *Thank You* and *The Boy With Flowers In His Hair*; Beth Lincoln's smartly-plotted mystery *The Swifts* featuring Claire Powell's gloriously scratchy, characterful pen-and-ink illustrations; and Erika Meza's beautiful Carnegie-shortlisted picture book *To The Other Side*, which is one of the most profoundly moving, urgent, and visually striking books I've read in recent years. There are plenty more who inspire me: Elle McNicoll; Theo Parrish; Chloe Savage; Dapo Adeola – and of course I still love classic illustrated books by Richard Scarry, Shirley Hughes, Quentin Blake and others.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

I think there's something magical about any good independent bookshop! They feel, I think, like treasure troves of calmness and discovery sequestered amidst an often-noisy world, and they not only provide such generous and dedicated support to countless authors and illustrators throughout their careers, but foster communities around reading and power local economies.



High Life

In this fantasy story, Astrid has lived all her life in a rhubarb shed. But one day she discovers that she's a Librae, and will soon grow wings! Before long she finds herself in London Overhead, a city in the sky. We interviewed the author Megan Hopkins to discover more.



What inspired you to create the world of *Starminster* – of a secret overhead city above London?

I'd been experimenting with writing a story featuring people that could fly for many years before I lit on the idea of London Overhead. The moment when I first pictured my own city in the sky was when my husband took me up the Shard. I'd always found my eyes drawn to the sky when visiting London, and the enchanted city of London Overhead seemed to construct itself above the famous view. There's something so compelling about the idea of a hidden world, and placing mine in the sky above London seemed to fit with who the Librae are: ordinary people who happen to have wings.

If you were a Librae and had wings, what kind of wings would you have?

My dream wings would be those of an owl, because of their unique ability to fly silently. I would love to experience the heights of the world in silence, without the sound of engines or even

of wingbeats. I believe something within us is programmed to long for flight; it's a wish of mine that never fades away.

Astrid spends much of her childhood confined to a rhubarb shed by her mother. Do you think that some parents find it hard to let their children live their own lives?

Without a doubt. I've seen having a child compared to letting your heart live outside your body, and wander around by itself, unprotected, and that is how I feel about my own children. For parents, love is inextricably bound to terror, and the world is full of dangers. Astrid's mother's decision to keep her daughter locked up to protect her is a reminder that parents cannot allow our fears to take precedence over our children's needs, including the need to take risks and fail.

"A beautifully written story full of imagination"

Hannah Gold

In *Starminster*, Astrid's new friend Pent starts to rebel against the way unfledged students are treated. Do you think that it's important to stand up for what you believe in?

Yes! Most of all, when you see others being mistreated. This can be intensely difficult and requires courage. It is even more challenging when the people mistreating others are adults, who often have so much more power than children. Although young people may lack agency in many parts of their lives, they can still make a difference and stand up for themselves and others.

The society of London Overhead is full of secrecy and bureaucracy. Do you see it as a reflection of London underfoot?

Everywhere has rules and bureaucracy. One of the challenges of growing up is learning to understand those rules, many of which are never directly stated. London Overhead is the same, and like London Underfoot, it is filled with mystery and excitement. It is also a haven for darker secrets, inequalities and dangers, some of which Astrid faces in *Starminster*.

Will there be more adventures for Astrid and the Librae?

I'm delighted to say that there are at least two more *Starminster* books on their way! The second book is being edited at the moment, and the third is

still swimming around my brain and trying to transform itself from a disjointed series of images and moments into something resembling a story. Keep an eye on my website and social media for updates!

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

I love everything that Philip Pullman writes, most of all the way he never shies away from complex relationships in his work. Frances Hardinge's whimsical, weird, passionate books are perfect in every way. Like many people my age, I grew up alongside Harry Potter and I'll never stop searching for the magic of Hogwarts.

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

My local indie, Sevenoaks Bookshop, is a portal to thousands of other worlds, and yet it's also a beautiful shop populated by knowledgeable booksellers, and a pillar of community and connection. Their writing group was a source of feedback, confidence and industry knowledge and I will always be grateful to have such an incredible resource nearby – something we should all champion and support.

Starminster

by Megan Hopkins
HarperCollins Children's

PB • £7.99

ISBN 9780008626891

Out Now

Age range: 8+



Spark of Love

A funny and poignant Muslim romcom, *Four Eids and a Funeral* sees two award-winning YA authors come together for one big love story. Said and Tiwa hate each other – but can they find common ground?

“Said and Tiwa’s love story is sweet and uplifting,”

Michelle Quach

Said Hossain and Tiwa Olatunji were once friends. But then, many Eids ago, came the *incident*, and they haven’t spoken since. Said went away to a boarding school, but now he’s back in New Crosshaven for the funeral of Ms Barnes, the librarian. Tiwa is still good friends with Said’s sister Safiyah, so she must face him again. But then the town’s Islamic Centre burns down.

Both Said and Tiwa want to see the Islamic Centre rebuilt. For Tiwa, it represents the community that she loves and a way to keep her fractured family together. For Said, it’s an opportunity to build his portfolio for his secret application to art school, where he hopes that he’ll be able to pursue his dreams of becoming an artist, rather than a doctor. Can Tiwa and Said work together to save the Islamic Centre, Eid – and their relationship? Told in alternating chapters by Said and Tiwa, *Four Eids and a Funeral* is a bright and uplifting romance from the author of *Ace of Spades* and the author of *The Henna Wars*.

In this extract, Tiwa and Said are riding to the wake with Safiyah when they notice the Islamic Centre is on fire:

‘What about your summer plans, Said?’ Saf says this slowly. And in the rearview mirror, I can see her glancing at Tiwa. Almost like she’s easing Tiwa into the fact that I’m back for the summer. That annoys me a little, but I have to ignore it.

‘I don’t know. Probably just... catch up with the schoolwork I’m missing this week. Prepare my college applications.’ I shrug. I hadn’t even thought about the summer and what I wanted to do. I hadn’t had a chance. The course load in St Francis is tough. That’s how they ensure that most of their graduates make it into an Ivy League, with major scholarship packets. And with junior year ending, college has been on everybody’s mind. I can’t really tell Saf what my college plans are, though. I haven’t told anyone yet.

‘Wouldn’t want to spend too long here

Four Eids and a Funeral
by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé
& Adiba Jaigirdar
Usborne • PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781805312970
Published 6th June
Age range: 12+

with people like us, after all. Then your fancy private school buddies might not take you back,’ Tiwa says in her sweet-as-can-be voice that’s dripping with sarcasm. I want to reply. I have a million retorts for Tiwa. But I’m not going to stoop to her level. Not today of all days.

“Bursting with joy, humour and so much love.”

Bea Fitzgerald

Not when we’ve just laid Ms B to rest. I know she wouldn’t want this – even if Tiwa doesn’t want to honour Ms B’s memory, I will.

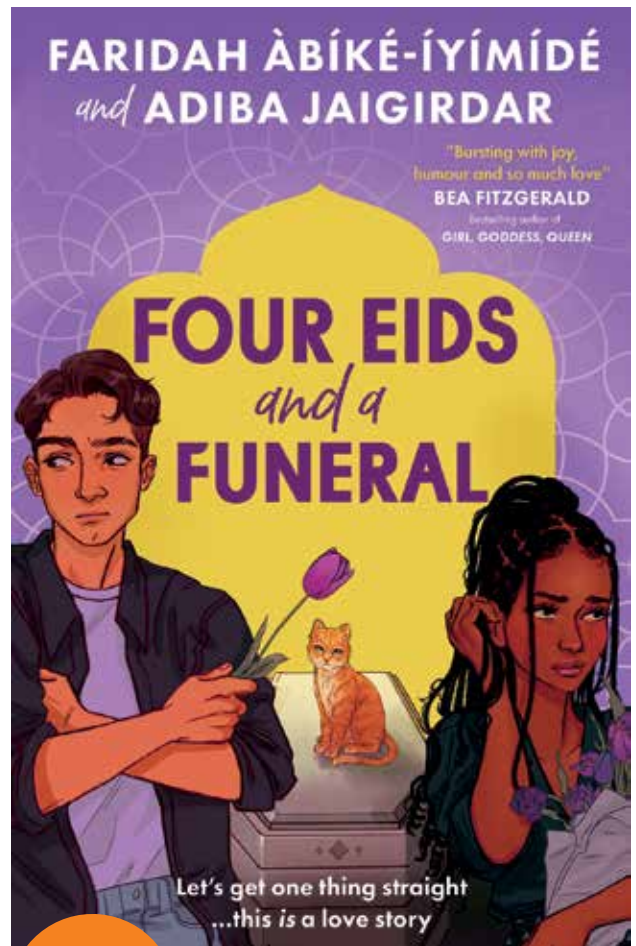
So instead of replying, I pick up my backpack from the floor of the car and put it between us, hoping that creating the barrier means we don’t have to talk to each other for the rest of the car ride.

I hear Tiwa mumble something incoherent under her breath, and I know that she’s insulting me.

I take in a lungful of air to calm myself down as Saf turns onto the road that leads to the Walker centre. I’m thanking God that this miserable car ride will be over soon.

And then I see it.

‘What’s that?’ I lean closer to the window, almost pressing up my face to the cold glass.



Up ahead – there’s something rising in the air.

‘What’s *what*?’ Tiwa’s voice still drips with distaste, but I don’t have time for her now. A sense of dread is building inside me.

‘Saf? Do you see that?’

‘Yeah.’ Saf’s voice is barely more than a whisper. She doesn’t stop the car or pull over. She keeps driving, and I wonder if she’s feeling the same way I am. Like a rock is lodged deep in my stomach, solid and heavy.

Tiwa shifts next to me finally, peering ahead at the darkening sky.

‘Is that... that can’t be...’ she mumbles.

The sound of sirens behind us pulls us back to reality. Saf pulls the car over to the side of the road, and we watch as a fire truck ploughs past us and towards the building encased in smoke and flames.

A building that I once used to know like the back of my hand.

Tiwa looks close to tears now, and I actually feel a bit of sympathy for her.

The Islamic centre is pretty much Tiwa’s life. Has been for as long as I can remember.

Beside me, she unclips her seat belt, pushes the door open, and steps out onto the street, like she wants a close-up view of the centre burning down.

‘Tiwa, wait—’ Saf calls out, but it’s like Tiwa can’t hear her. She closes the door behind her and steps away from the corner and closer to the burning building. Her eyes are glued to the flames rising up.

All I can think is that this is most definitely the worst funeral I have ever been to.



Go Wild!

This fun and engaging wildlife-watching book for kids is full of information, tips and craft activities to attract and help your outdoor friends. We interviewed the author Dan Rouse to discover her inspirations.

What inspired you to write the book?

I always grew up with wildlife, but I also work with children with additional needs. So I wanted to create something that's fun and engaging but also accessible, in the paper colours and the structure of the wording. It's bright, eye-catching and to help kids get into wildlife, rather than throwing them in at the deep end and having them learn the names of every single bird.

The book is all about finding nature close to home. Do you think that the pandemic and the lockdown changed the way we view nature?

Yes, it's had a major impact on what we find on our doorsteps. Before, for me, I would never even imagine doing that – I would

always drive to the coast and find wildlife that way. But during lockdown it was a case of only being able to walk from the house, and it's surprising what you come across. You can find owls in bushes, and squirrel drays in tiny cavities, and you think 'I never thought to look down here!'.

How important do you think it is for children to connect with nature?

It's a calming entity. Everything is so busy, all the time, there's so much pressure. But in nature, you listen to the odd bird, or you watch something scurry across the ground, or you turn over a log and you see things, and connect with them. Children have so much pressure on them in school, they have to meet expectations, and learn things at a certain rate, but in nature you don't need any of that. If you know what something's called, brilliant, if you don't you can look it up in a book. There's no pressure, and being outside gives you a lot more benefits, such as walking, the clean air, and having a little bit of mindfulness.

What was your experience of nature and wildlife when you were a child?

I was feral! My dad always took me and my brother out, because we only had one car and my mum took it to work. It was that easy thing of 'we'll take the kids for a walk around the park, our out on the coast'. Me and my brother would run around and find things, like a rock goby – a type of fish – and bring it back to our dad, who would tell us to put it back! I have such fond memories of discovery. It's important for learning your limits as well, being able to climb trees and run across rocks. Now, as an adult, when I watch some of my friends timidly walk across rocks, I think 'oh I was feral as a kid!'.

Do you think that some kids are a bit too over-protected nowadays?

Yes, and you watch it grow into adults as well. As children, they will make mistakes, they will get bumps and bruises, but that's all part of discovery. If you're in a park, for example, you might get told to not stand on something because it's muddy. But it's much more fun to stand on it, in your wellies, than just telling them no all the time! You never know what might spark from self-discovery. Sometimes, they'll enjoy running so much that they take it up as a career. You never know what that spark might be, so it's good to let them have fun.

Did you do a lot of research to write the book?

Yes, it was really fun writing it, and getting to try out all these DIY ideas. Normally when I'm writing guidebooks it has to be professional and easy to comprehend, but with this one it was more about making it fun and engaging. It was enjoyable, making the tunnels, making the sand print maps, it was like being back as a child!

Did you work closely with the illustrator?

Yes. Abby Cook is brilliant, so creative. When we come up with concepts and have a look at pages, it's great. I'm awful at drawing, so I always have to apologise to anyone I work with about my drawings! I know what I want and I know what will look nice, but I can't tell you how to do it. I have my horrible drawings on my computer, and my terrible scribbles, and they just come back with the most beautiful things, even better than I imagined. Abby's so good at taking what children would feel inspired by and putting that on the page, around my text.

What is your favourite form of wildlife to watch?

I like birds, they are my favourite. I really enjoy the smaller species, such as tree creepers and nuthatches. Tree creepers are shy birds that you rarely see, but nuthatches fling seed everywhere and knock other birds off the table!

Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

There are lots of people! There's a lovely lady called Lucy McRobert, she does adventure-style wildlife books. Her book *365 Days Wild* includes a different outdoor activity for every single day of the year. She also writes a fiction series, *Blue's Planet*, which takes you on a journey through Australia. I never had anything like that as a child. Now nature has become a reality, and people want to adventure through it. It's so exciting!

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

They're some of the most inspiring and humble places to be. For me, as lovely as it is having books in large-scale places, it's the independent bookshops that build that relationship with you. I love travelling to them, because they genuinely enjoy your book, and they want to talk to you about it and work with you. They are some of the most fascinating people, who run these places, and I love visiting them.



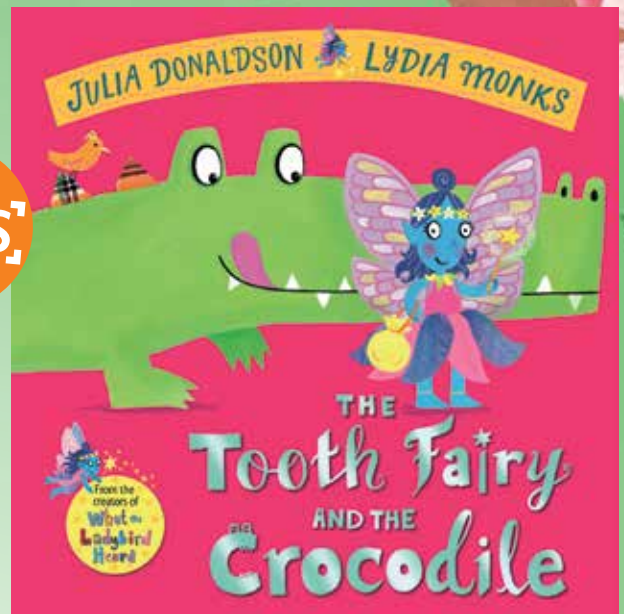
The Children's Book of Wildlife Watching

by Dan Rouse
Illustrated by Abby Cook
DK • HB • £9.99
ISBN 9780241661819
Published 2nd May
Age range: 5+

A Fairy-Filled Adventure

[KIDS]

From the creators of the *What the Ladybird Heard* series, comes a charming story about Ruth Mary the tooth fairy who gets caught up in a jungle adventure when she collects the teeth of a range of animals!



The Tooth Fairy and the Crocodile
by Julia Donaldson
Illustrated by Lydia Monks
Macmillan Children's
HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781447284437
Published 6th June
Age range: 3+

“A terrific and witty adventure”

*The Guardian on
What the Ladybird Heard*



Ruth Mary is a tooth fairy, and she loves flying at night, collecting children's teeth and leaving them a coin in return. But one day the Fairy Queen gives her a different job – to collect the teeth of jungle animals. Ruth Mary sets off with a jar of honey for a bear, a banana for a monkey and a mango for an elephant. But when she notices a crocodile who has also lost a tooth, things get tricky... With a fun text by *The Gruffalo* co-creator Julia Donaldson, and engaging illustrations by Lydia Monks, *The Tooth Fairy and the Crocodile* is full of fun and packed with adventure!



“Bursting with colour and verve”

*The Daily Telegraph on
What the Ladybird Heard*

The Tooth Fairy and the Crocodile © Julia Donaldson and Lydia Monks 2024 - Macmillan Children's Books

True Colours



In this joyful picture book, LGBTQ+ advocates Shane Jordan and Rick Hendrix take young readers on a colourful journey of self-expression and acceptance. Join the Rainbow Parade and celebrate friendship and acceptance!

Set at a stormy pride parade, the story follows a child who is free to express their gender identity, celebrating with their father. But when they come across a non-binary child who doesn't feel comfortable in their own skin, they lend a helping hand and show them that they are seen, accepted, and loved. Gentle storytelling and stunning illustrations play on the magical experience of finding one's community. Featuring expert material at the back of the book, *The Rainbow Parade* encourages children and gatekeepers to break down stereotypes and embrace diversity.

“Knowing that you’re not alone is half the battle, and The Rainbow Parade shines a beautiful light on that.”

Tom Daley



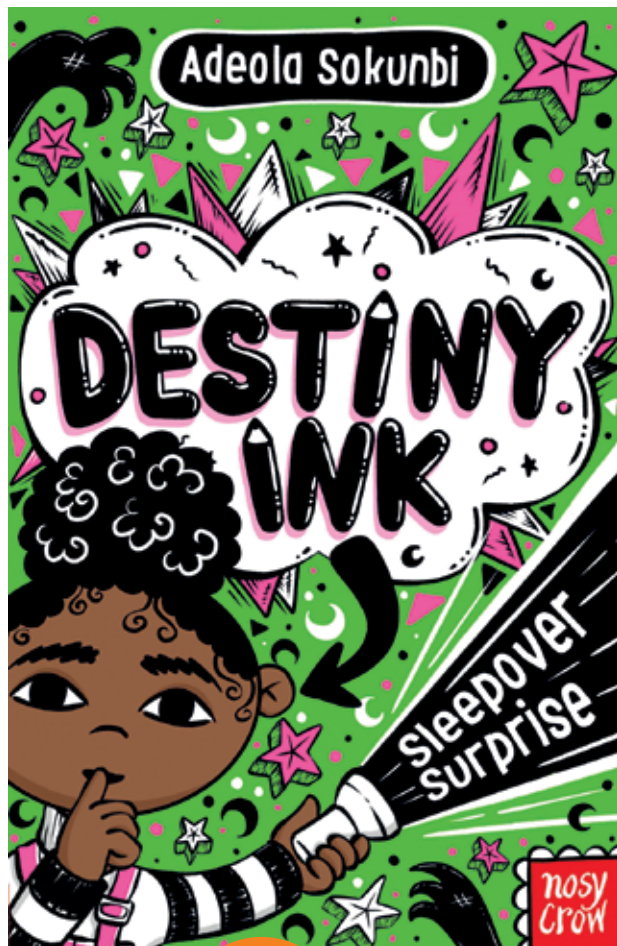
The Rainbow Parade
by Shane Jordan & Rick Hendrix
Illustrated by Jieting Chen
Sourcebooks Jabberwocky
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781464230219
Published 14th May
Age range: 4+



Monster Energy



In this highly-illustrated chapter book, Destiny Ink is excited but anxious about her first ever sleepover at her best friend's house. She uses her sketchbook to work through her worries, and makes a tent in her room to practise in. But, that evening, she hears some noises from the tent and discovers a monster inside! We interviewed the author and illustrator Adeola Sokunbi to discover her inspirations.



[KIDS]



Like Destiny, I draw a lot when I'm anxious. Other things that help me relax are playing games, reading novels and spending time with loved ones.

Destiny is surprised by a monster, Trog, who turns out to be friendly. Do you think that our fears are often that of the unknown?

I think so. The unknown tends to remind us how little control we have and that can be terrifying.



When you created the book, which came first, the story, the pictures or the characters?

The general story came first. Then came the design for Destiny. I went through a number of iterations before I got to what we recognise as Destiny today. After that came the rest of the pictures.

Destiny likes lollies, Trog likes raw onion – what's your favourite snack?

Wine gums are my weakness. I can't get enough of them.

Will there be any more adventures for Destiny?

There will be! *Destiny Ink: Sleepover Surprise* is just the first instalment of the series and there are at least three more books to come out.

Which other authors and illustrators inspire you in your writing?

For writing, Brandon Sanderson is a huge inspiration – I love many of his books and I've spent many hours watching his lectures on writing and world building. For illustration, Dapo Adeola is a big inspiration. I love how charismatic his drawings are. (He has a great name, too!)

What do independent bookshops mean to you?

To me, an independent bookshops is a place with a cosy atmosphere and a personal touch; a place where you can support the local community and get lovely recommendations from the staff. I recently came across an independent bookstore called Melanin Dreams that is a great example of this.



What inspired you to write *Destiny Ink: Sleepover Surprise*? Have you always wanted to be a children's author?

I never actually set out to be an author! During the lockdown, I started doodling all over the walls of my house and I was posting my progress on social media. Jasmine Richards, the founder of Storymix, saw my doodles and asked if I'd like to partner up on a potential book series. Initially, I was just going to be illustrating the book but when Jasmine found out that I liked writing stories as a hobby, she asked if I'd want to do some writing too and I said yes!

In the story, Destiny is anxious about her upcoming sleepover with her friend Olivia. What do you do to relax when you're anxious?



Finding Your Feet

This illustrated story by the bestselling creator of the *Big Bright Feelings* picture books is a sensitive and moving exploration of child poverty. Will has the wrong shoes, and sticks out at school. But can he find the confidence to hope for a better future? We interviewed Tom Percival to discover more.



What inspired you to create *The Wrong Shoes*?

The state of the world. It's a deeply upsetting situation, and there are millions of children whose outcomes are going to be reduced through no fault of their own. People aren't going to meet their potential, and these children won't have the same cultural capital or experiences. It's not only that they won't achieve the same academic results as their peers, but everything about their lives is diminished and harder. I think a lot about social equality, and it really upsets me.

How different is writing a children's novel to creating a picture book?

It's no different to me. I don't think of myself as an author or an illustrator. I do lots of things, I take photos, I write songs, I compose electronic music. It's all storytelling – you can tell a story with pictures, you tell a story with words, you tell a story with music. It's all communication. I have an idea, then I work out the best way to communicate that idea. I enjoyed creating the pictures for *The Wrong Shoes* more than I enjoyed any other project, because I developed a loose, quick, immediate style for them. One of things I'm really intrigued by is the idea that if you play music, playing the piece is the piece. Whereas, if you're drawing a picture it takes a long time, and the act of creating it feels very distant from the completed piece. What I wanted to do was to develop a style that is closer to the feel of playing a guitar, where how I create it is the art itself.

Art and music are Will's escape – do you think it's important to have a creative or cultural outlet in your life?

It depends. If it's something that interests you, yes. This is one of the problems. We didn't have much money when I was a

kid, but I was lucky because I had loads of supportive people around me. The book is in no way autobiographical, but there are facets to Will's personality and experience which I relate to. My art teacher had this amazing skill of slicing great sheets of paper with a ruler, and Will's description of the art room is how I felt about my art room, the comfort and the peace. I had people like the art teacher Mr Prince in my life. Society was more supportive then too – I had a grant to go to university and there were no tuition fees. It wasn't easy, but it was much easier than it is now.

“You have to believe in the possibility that things can get better”

Do you think that it's hard for someone like Will's friend Cameron, whose family is wealthy, to understand what it's like to be poor like Will?

Of course! Because unless you experience something, it's just words. You can tell someone about something, you can show them something, but you don't really learn something until you experience it. When you're a teenager, you're told what you should and shouldn't do, and you often ignore it, make a whole bunch of mistakes, and it's only then you really understand why you should or shouldn't have done these things. Unless you know what it's like to not know where the money's coming from, and that there's no second chance, it's hard to understand. You can empathise, but you don't really know what it would be like.

Chris at one point says 'you make your own luck', and Will's dad says that 'you always have a choice'. Do you think that you do always have a choice, or that some things are out of your control?

We always have a choice, even in the worst moments of survival. But the situation you're put into determines what you view as an acceptable choice. If you come from a family that is together, united and loving, that gives you an advantage, and the opportunity to make certain informed decisions, and it also determines how you treat other people. And the way you treat other people gives you more choices. The book explores financial insecurity, but it also explores vulnerability. Chris is an important character, because both Chris and Will are vulnerable in different ways, and they are both exploited for their vulnerability. This is why I didn't want Chris's character to be a pantomime villain, he's more complex than he seems at first. He's been neglected, and he's trying to find his own way with a really bad set of circumstances. It's very easy to justify bad behaviour to yourself, but we all do bad things and that doesn't make us bad people.

Does the owl which Will sees at certain times in the book symbolise hope?

Yes. I had a difficult childhood, and I think it's really important to have that hope that everything can improve. You have to believe in the possibility that things can get better, as it did for me. We never know what is going to happen, but you have to have hope. That's what I wanted the owl to be. It made sense to me that Will would see that expression of freedom and wildness as hope.

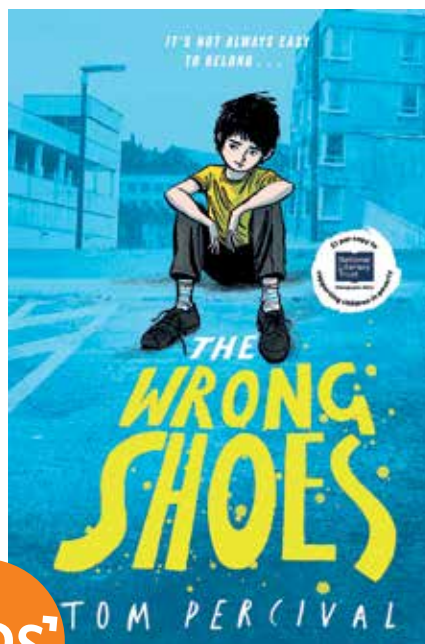
Which other authors inspire you in your writing?

Phil Earle – when I first started creating picture books he was working in sales at the publishers and he was always supportive and generous. I remember reading *Being*

Billy and I thought it was amazing. But equally Lesley Parr is fantastic. We're talking about real kids, real people. It's all about the experience of being human. I relate to any books that feel plausible and have characters who seem real, even if there are threads of magic or unreality running through them.

The Wrong Shoes

by Tom Percival
Simon & Schuster
Children's
HB • £12.99
ISBN 9781398527126
Published 9th May
Age range: 8+



Young & YA Books



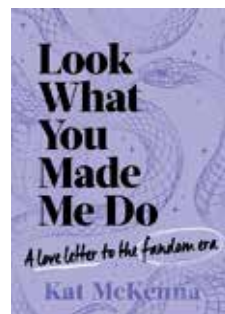
Nomads: The Sky Kingdom Vol 1
by Captain Juuter Boom • PB • £9.99
ISBN 9781608866007
Published 20th June
Age range: 8+

Explore the five kingdoms alongside newly registered Nomad, Lance, as he journeys across sea and sky to find his lost brother! From creator Captain Juuter comes the first print edition collecting episodes 1-23 of comic *Nomads*, originally published on Webtoon. Lance never wanted to be a Nomad, but on his 19th birthday he gives up his homeland in the Sea Kingdom and starts his journey to find his missing brother – and his first destination is the Sky Kingdom.



Royal Scandal
by Aimée Carter
Usborne • PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781803701745
Published 9th May
Age range: 12+

The gripping sequel to *Royal Blood*. When American teen Evan Bright came to live with her long-lost father – the actual king of England – she instantly became the most-hated member of the royal family. The vicious clickbait articles and backstabbing new relatives are tough enough, but now she's facing much scarier threats. They say what doesn't kill you will make you stronger... but what if it's the royal family who wants you dead?



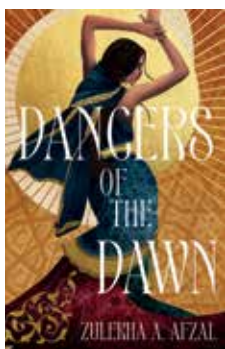
Look What You Made Me Do
by Kat McKenna
Galley YA • PB • £12.00
ISBN 9781398532809
Published 9th May
Age range: 14+

The ultimate guide on how to be a Taylor Swift fan. Fan culture today is more intense than ever, from trolling to stalkers to online warfare. Discover the history of the first fandoms, the many Eras of Taylor Swift, the politics of celebrity and cancel culture, and above all: why being a fan is so special. It features interviews with key Taylor Swift fans, celebrity culture icon *DeuxMoi* and the founder of *Swiftogeddon*.



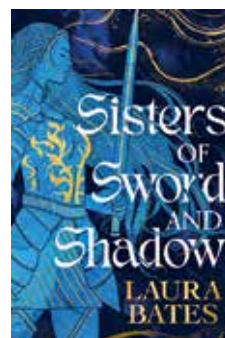
Bird Boy
by Catherine Bruton
Nosy Crow • PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781839946493
Published 9th May
Age range: 9+

After the tragic death of his mother, eleven-year-old Will is sent to stay with his uncle in the mountains. After years trapped in a high-rise flat, with only birds for company, Will doesn't know how he'll survive a place like this, but he soon finds solace in the woods. With his new friend Omar – a refugee from Afghanistan – Will discovers an osprey nest, with two small chicks inside. He forms an unbreakable bond with the birds, especially the smallest chick, who they name Whitetip...



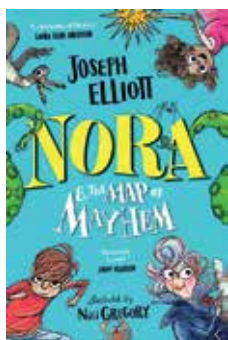
Dancers of the Dawn
by Zulekhá A. Afzal
Rock the Boat
HB • £16.99
ISBN 9780861545070
Published 6th June
Age range: 13+

Under the blazing sun, an elite troupe of dancers are trained to harness their magic. They are the queen's most formidable assassins. Aasira has one of the rarest talents – for she is a flame-wielder. Feared by all and envied by some, she uses her power to execute enemies of the crown. Aasira's greatest wish is to serve her queen. But on the eve of her graduation, she begins to question whether she was truly born to kill...



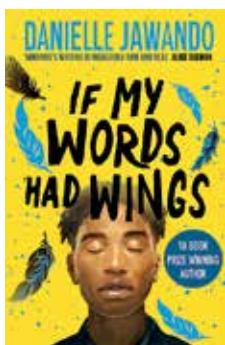
Sisters of Sword & Shadow
by Laura Bates
Simon & Schuster Children's
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781471187599
Published 20th June
Age range: 14+

A fantasy debut, now in paperback, from the bestselling author and founder of the Everyday Sexism Project. Destined for an arranged marriage, Cass dreams of freedom. So when a fierce and beautiful leatherclad woman rides up and offers to take her away, Cass doesn't hesitate to join her. She is introduced to the Sisters of Sword and Shadow – a group of female knights training to fight, protect their community and right the wrongs of men.



Nora & The Map of Mayhem
by Joseph Elliott & Nici Gregory
Piccadilly Press
PB • £7.99
ISBN 9781800784994
Published 6th June
Age range: 9+

An outrageously funny new children's book from award-winning author Joseph Elliott, star of CBeebies' *Swashbuckle*. When Atticus and Autumn's dads leave them with their eccentric great-grandmother Nora for the weekend, they're hoping for a few days scoffing biscuits and playing video games. But when Nora's around, nothing ever goes quite to plan... Before long, Atticus and Autumn are swept away on a hair-raising adventure.



If My Words Had Wings
by Danielle Jawando
Simon & Schuster Children's
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9781398514034
Published 9th May
Age range: 14+

When fifteen-year-old Tyrell Forrester gets caught up in a high-profile armed robbery, he's sentenced to two years in a young offenders' prison. Now he's getting out, and he's determined to turn his life around. But despite his release, systemic discrimination makes it difficult for Ty to truly be free. Inspired by a visiting poet while inside, Ty discovers a whole new world through spoken word and is finally finding his voice. But will society ever see him as anything other than a criminal?



Dead Happy
by Josh Silver
Rock the Boat
PB • £8.99
ISBN 9780861547821
Published 2nd May
Age range: 14+

The nail-biting sequel to *HappyHead*. Welcome to Elmhallow. Seb finds himself on a remote island, along with an elite group of HappyHead participants. Far from home, under the guidance of a mysterious couple, he reluctantly pairs up once again with Eleanor. But where is Finn? Is he even alive? And what does HappyHead have planned next? A scary dystopian novel, perfect for fans of *The Hunger Games* and *Squid Game*.

"I MIGHT CHOOSE A
SPACE BOOK - OR ONE
ABOUT PANTS."

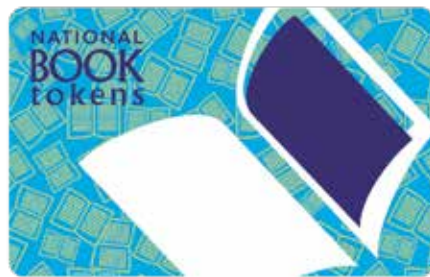
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We have a National Book Token worth £25 to give away to one lucky winner! National Book Tokens can be spent in hundreds of bookshops across the UK, on any book of your choice. Find out more at nationalbooktokens.com. For the chance of winning, just answer these questions on books featuring fantastical creatures, tying in with *Magicalia: Race of Wonders* (see pages 44 & 45).

- 1 In which book by C.S. Lewis does Lucy encounter a talking faun called Mr Tumnus?
- 2 In which picture book by Maurice Sendak does Max find himself in a world of untamed monsters?
- 3 An imaginative story following Christopher, who discovers a hidden realm of magical animals, *Impossible Creatures* is by which author?
- 4 In which classic book by E. Nesbit do Cyril, Anthea, Robert, Jane and their baby brother Hilary come across a grumpy sand-fairy called Psammead?
- 5 In the series by A.F. Steadman, Skandar and his friends train to ride what kind of mythical creatures?
- 6 Zog is an accident-prone dragon created by which bestselling author and illustrator duo, who also created *The Gruffalo*?
- 7 In *The Northern Lights* by Philip Pullman, what is the name of the panserbjørn, or ice bear who Lyra encounters?
- 8 What sort of creature does Alice follow down a hole to Wonderland, in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*?
- 9 In which novel by David Almond does Michael come across a strange creature in the garage?
- 10 In which novel by Norman Juster does Milo meet a ticking watchdog called Tock?



To enter any of our competitions, visit the following web page:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/BooktimeMay2024

Or write to us at:

Booktime,
The Booksellers Association,
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London,
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Closing date:
Monday 8th July 2024

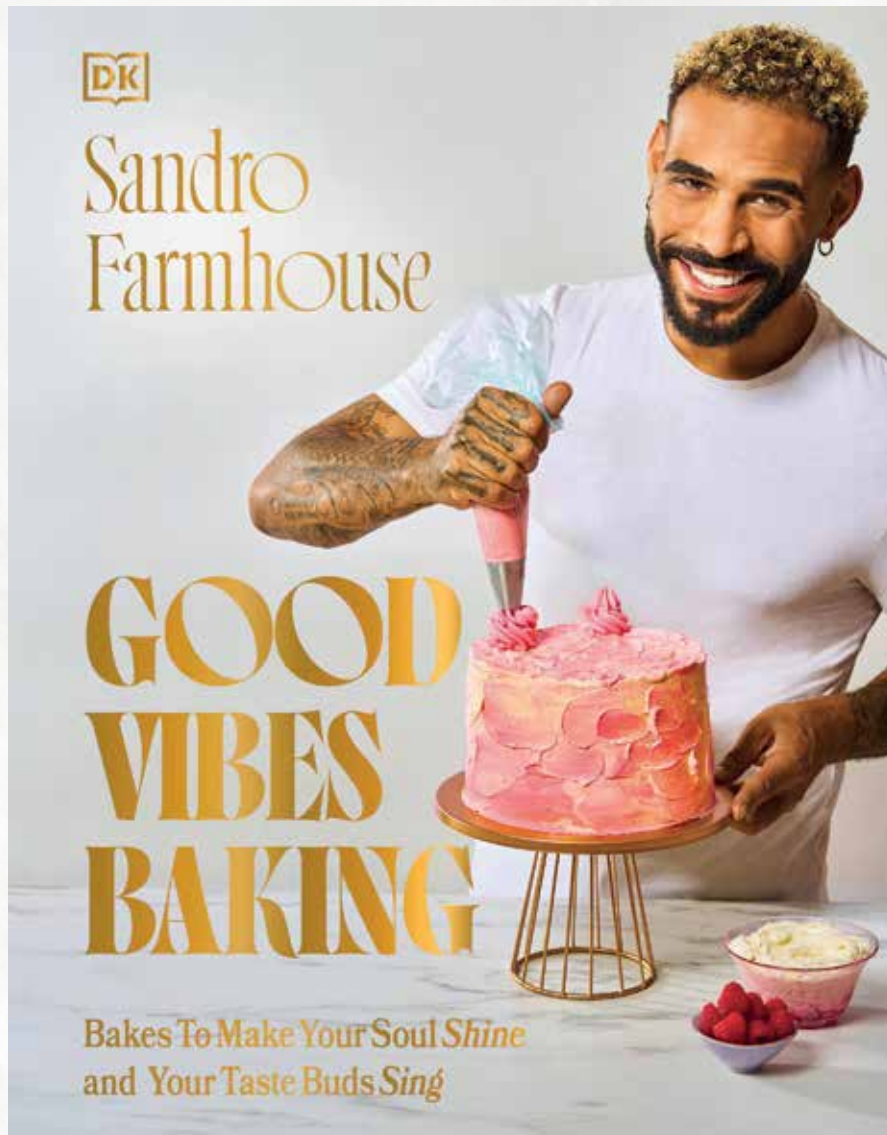
Winners & Answers

November & December 2023

The winners of the competitions were:
Florence Willis, Willesborough; Martyn Cross, Bristol. The answers were: *The Snow Girl* Competition: *The House with Chicken Legs*; Puzzletime Book Quiz: 1. Orhan Pamuk; 2. Wales; 3. Raymond Briggs; 4. Jo Nesbo; 5. *Sea of Fertility*; 6. *Animal Farm*; 7. Louise Nealon; 8. Tintin; 9. A.D. Miller; 10. *Catch-22*

Competition Terms & Conditions

No purchase necessary. Closing date for all entries is Monday 8th July 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.



Turn to page 16 to read our interview with Sandro Farmhouse on his fabulous new cookbook!

