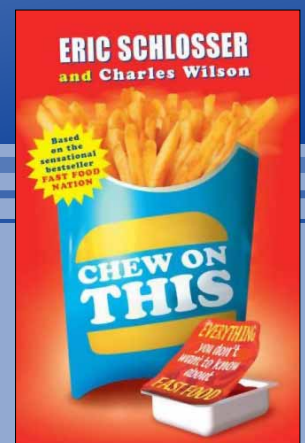
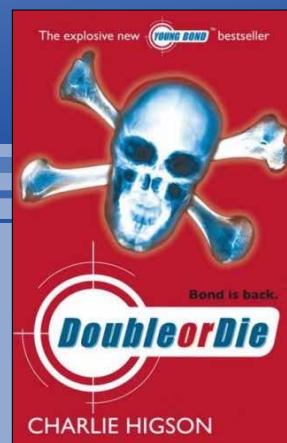
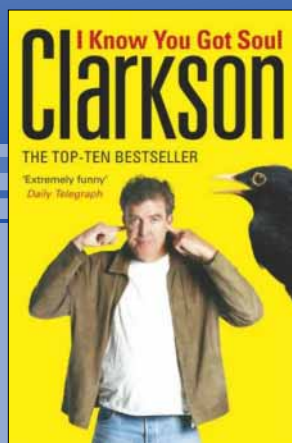
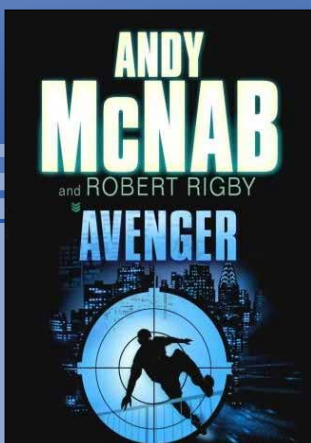


# Riveting Reads *plus*

## Boys into Books

11-14



E I L E E N A R M S T R O N G

Supported by:  
department for  
**education and skills**



# Riveting Reads

## Boys into Books

11-14

E I L E E N   A R M S T R O N G

introduction by  
A L E C   W I L L I A M S



*School Library Association*

The School Library Association is an independent organisation and registered charity which was founded in 1937 to promote the development of libraries in schools. Today the SLA exists to support and encourage all those working in school libraries, raising awareness and promoting good practice through an effective training and publications programme. Membership of the Association brings many benefits including an advisory/information service for national and international enquiries, an excellent quarterly reviewing journal, website resources, and reduced rates for all publications and training courses. For full details, contact the SLA office in Swindon (address and telephone number below).

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**Alec Williams**, who wrote the introduction, has had over thirty years' experience managing school library services in Chester, Lancashire, Calderdale and Leeds. A former SLA Chair, he now works freelance, providing training and consultancy, and is a frequent speaker at meetings and conferences. Himself a 'Reading Champion', Alec is also a regular visitor to schools, where his high-energy poetry and storytelling also keeps him in touch with children and their reading, and provides a role model for boys in particular. Comments from librarians and pupils respectively range from 'Afterwards, I had a positive scramble in the poetry section of the library by boys, a sight I've never witnessed before', to 'You were just like Mr Bean'. Alec has written articles on libraries, and on storytelling, and his work now takes him around the UK and abroad (he regularly works for British Council, and is Secretary of IFLA's Reading Section). At heart though, he is still a boy into books.

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# Boys into Books

This latest title in our *Riveting Reads* series has been specially commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), responsible for schools in England, to support the reading needs of boys in Key Stage 3. It is the foundation of the project Boys into Books, which aims to provide information about titles which might attract and enthuse boys of 11–14 about reading for pleasure, and is funded by the DfES.

The booklist is available online at <http://www.sla.org.uk> as a searchable database and also in pdf version. State schools in England having at least 20 boys of this age group are also able to order, via the website, 20 titles from the list free of charge, and also two sets of three Boys into Books posters and 450 postcards. The project runs until the end of August 2007, although the online edition of *Riveting Reads: Boys into Books 11 – 14* will remain on our website and is of course available for anyone to use, even if not eligible for free books.

The SLA is delighted to be involved with this project and hopes that it will support school librarians in the good work they are already doing and in particular in their quest to get Boys into Books.

## Acknowledgments

We are very grateful to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Alan Johnson, for his acknowledgment of the importance of school librarians in developing literacy and a love of reading in students, to the Minister for Schools, Jim Knight, for taking the project forward, to the DfES for funding the project and in particular to Michael Stark of the Schools Directorate for responding to queries promptly and with encouragement and support.

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# Foreword

by **Jim Knight, Minister for Schools and 14–19 Learners**



Reading opens doors; reading expands horizons; reading enriches lives. That's true for adults, and it's even truer for young people. Anything which gets children reading is to be welcomed without reservation.

Reading isn't confined to books – we are bombarded daily with written words; in fact often we face information overload. But books are pretty much essential to our experience of reading for pleasure. A book is quite different from a newspaper, a magazine, a poster or an advertisement. A book is not like a text message, nor a quick email. You can get books on the internet, but few people – adults or children – would choose to read an extended piece of writing on a computer screen. There is something uniquely personal and satisfying about a book. You can curl up with it, alone even in a public place. You can hold it in your hands and turn the pages. You can feel the sense of beginning, middle and ending of a story, through the pages read and the others still to go.

Many children read books avidly, from the moment they acquire the skill. But it has to be admitted that there are more girls in this category than boys. There is a close link between reading and overall achievement at school. This is part of the reason why, sadly, boys tend to do less well than girls in English and other subjects which depend on literacy.

Hence I am delighted to welcome the School Library Association's new list of *Riveting Reads*, targeted at teenage boys. The books have been selected to have a very wide appeal. They include old and new classics – fact and fiction – and every genre and style of writing imaginable. I love the headings, which form a sort of alphabetical instruction to boys to open up their minds to new ideas:

Boggle, discover, experiment, explore, fear, go wild, investigate, laugh. . .  
ending up with:  
play, survive, train.

That list makes a pretty good statement of what a good education should encourage!

I believe there is something here which will appeal to every boy – and I hasten to add, also to very many girls. I enjoyed reading the list, with its crisp, fresh summaries, and was immediately tempted to read several items myself.

But now it's over to schools, parents and above all young people themselves to pick out the books with the strongest appeal. The Government is supporting the SLA to enable publicly-funded secondary schools to get a selection of twenty of these titles free for their library – and of course schools and parents can buy others for themselves.

Thank you to the SLA, and a warm welcome to *Boys Into Books*.

*Jim Knight MP*  
*Minister for Schools and 14–19 Learners*  
*Department for Education and Skills*



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# Introduction

## Why should you read the introduction?

Books, like introductions, are only the beginning. Encouraging more boys to read is a complex business, and choosing the ‘right’ books is only part of what it takes to make headway. If you can’t wait to look at the booklist, do go ahead (you won’t be disappointed!) – but don’t forget to come back here later, for the rest of the story...

This introduction looks briefly at some key research on boys’ reading, and asks some challenging questions about what boys want, and why the school library can be at the forefront of meeting those challenges, and a powerhouse for reading. It makes four assumptions:

1. That boys’ reading is a part of the overall boys’ achievement issue.
2. That boys’ reading is an area you want to address in your school – though remember that in many schools, boys are reading well – and there are keen readers everywhere!
3. That although reading by girls and boys is equally important, the present focus will be on boys.
4. That although some initiatives may relate to boys only, the general approach should not be to always treat boys separately. A successful spread of initiatives in mixed schools includes those involving both sexes (but perhaps deliberately including ones known to be successful with boys).

We hope you enjoy using this introduction, and the booklist, to give a fresh impact to boys’ reading in your school, and that you’ll keep in touch with the SLA and tell us of your successes in getting even more boys into books. Good luck!

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## Do boys read?

'Boys do read – sometimes more than girls. They just don't talk about it as much, or pretend they're reading, as some girls do, to keep you happy!' The general assumption that boys don't read, as this comment from Eileen Armstrong illustrates, needs challenging in several ways.

If we interpret the question in a narrow sense – do boys use the library to borrow fiction?, for example – we'll miss out a lot of boys' reading that is happening around us. Many boys visit the library to browse, without borrowing; they may borrow non-fiction, graphic novels, or joke books; outside school, boys may be reading magazines about computers, reading adverts for bikes in newspapers, reading text messages, reading emails and websites on screen, reading comics, reading CD sleeves, Sky TV listings, takeaway menus... and much more. You may want them to discover the pleasure of reading fiction, but it's important to value their own choices, and start from where they are.

It's important not to get in to the mindset of assuming boys don't read. As well as the range of reading above, there are plenty of boys who are very keen readers, and read a lot – including meaty fiction titles, award winners, and adult novels. These boys are our strongest weapon, because we can use their enthusiasm to spread the word to others. As boys move up to your school, assume from the outset that they are readers – or that they are going to be! – and make it your school's job to feed their enthusiasm, reveal their hidden reader, or tempt them to read even more.

Nationally, there's concern about boys' achievement, and the more we can encourage boys to read, the more it will help their overall progress. For some recent evidence on boys' reading, look at:

*Young People and Reading* (National Literacy Trust, 2005), a study carried out as part of the Reading Champions project.

[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/Reading\\_Champions\\_survey.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/Reading_Champions_survey.pdf)

*Children's and Young People's Reading Habits* (National Literacy Trust, 2005), a survey carried out as part of the Reading Connects project

[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/Reading\\_Connects\\_survey.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/Reading_Connects_survey.pdf)

*Social Inclusion and Reading: an Exploration* (National Literacy Trust, 2006), a study based on the Reading Connects survey above.

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/SocInc.pdf>

You will also find data of interest in the two recent international reading surveys:

*Reading all over the world: PIRLS national report for England* (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2003. ISBN: 1903880432), and...

*Literacy Skills for the world of Tomorrow: further results from PISA 2000* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2003. ISBN: 9264102868)

For some even more important evidence, look at your own data. Do you fully exploit the information available from your library management system? Do you know the titles most read by boys, individual boys' reading patterns, and so on? Do you have a mechanism for recording book use in the library itself? Do you talk to boys (especially non-users), and their parents? Do you also know who the keenest readers are? You may not – because boys don't own up to it! – but they can be your allies, working with you as role models and reading champions.

## Is it my problem?

Yes and No. Clearly boys' reading is part of the wider issue of boys' achievement in general, and all staff need to work together to affect this. In this sense, *everyone* needs to be involved – and it's therefore everyone's opportunity.

On the other hand, literacy is traditionally a weak area for boys, but its importance in terms of accessing other curriculum areas has, if anything, increased in recent years. Ofsted and others have commented regularly that literacy is an area that needs special attention for boys. Literacy and reading – and the school library – is therefore able to make a big difference to boys' self-esteem and their progress in other subjects, and schools that are successful with boys are characterised by *particular input to literacy and reading*. In this sense, libraries can lead the way in unlocking the key to boys' improved achievement. As school librarians, it's truly our opportunity – but we still need to get lots of people on board to make it happen.

## What's the background?

How much do you know about overall achievement by boys in your school? Schools where boys thrive are those where hands-on learning is part of the agenda; where time at desks is punctuated by more physical activity; where there is regular feedback and guidance offered; where boys' improvement is praised, across the board if possible, rather than within subjects; where there is chance to do out-of-school activities; where special attention is given to the learning styles that suit boys (for example, visual and kinaesthetic styles) – and where there is a bit of fun thrown in! If school librarians talk the same language as teachers, they will be part of this whole-school process, and the library will be embedded in any across-the-board range of boys' achievement strategies.

It's not what's on the menu that matters, it's also what's missing. Whilst both boys and girls will excel if attributes like those above are present, in their *absence*, boys will disengage and become disruptive much more often than girls, who evolve ways to cope with more passive learning.

How badly does your school want boys' achievement to improve? Many so-called problem areas are treated in a piecemeal fashion, jostling for priority along with other matters; what would be the effect if the *whole* school took on one major topic – like this one – for a year or more?

## Isn't it too late by Key Stage 3?

It's true that boys' views of reading will have been heavily influenced before they reach secondary school. It may be that their primary school has not had enough books that appeal to them, and few if any male role models.

Liaison with primary colleagues (e.g. transferring data about boys' reading habits, and their views on reading; sharing a visit from a male author, arranging for boys to visit partner schools in the summer transition term) can strengthen links at transition, and prepare you both for building on boys' strengths, and for catching any weaknesses early.

Amongst your other transition strategies, the public library's Summer Reading Challenge ([http://www.readingagency.org.uk/projects/children/reading\\_challenge.html](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/projects/children/reading_challenge.html)) is a valuable way to keep boys reading over the summer break. The challenge aspect of the scheme, plus the accompanying stickers, badges and incentives, gives it particular boy appeal.

This year, there's a unique opportunity to boost Year 7 reading with the planned Booked Up distribution of free books. Make the most of this initiative, with events to celebrate the choosing of books, and lots of

follow-up about sequels, and other titles to try. You can capitalise even further next year, as 2008 sees another National Year of Reading. Lots of publicity will be available soon, and it's a perfect time to launch books-based initiatives.

## What do boys want?

Our school libraries will remain largely unused by boys if we don't have what they genuinely want to read. There may well be many books in our libraries that will benefit boys, broadening their experience, helping them mature, widening their vocabulary, giving them confidence, and aiding the rest of their learning; books achieve such things not by their high literary quality – though some of them will have this – but *by being read*.

Our challenge is to value boys' reading tastes, whatever they are; to feed demand for the popular; *and* to tempt boys by the very best. Our libraries need a hugely varied reading diet, because boys, like all children, have hugely varied needs and demands.

We can never be confident that we know enough about which books boys want to see in their school library – or even more crucially, about which books would draw in those who never visit it. Our own guesswork is not good enough – we need to learn from the users.

Talk to boys; if you are genuine about your need to know their reading tastes, they'll respond to this – though allow for them sometimes telling you what you want to hear! Floor walking in the library, personal interaction, observation, surveys, suggestion boxes, requests, online polls on the school/library website, etc. – all can tell us what boys want from their library.

Be careful to distinguish between so-called reluctant readers and boys with genuine reading difficulty. Boys may not use your library for either reason, and although the situations sometimes overlap (and some materials may be useful for both) it's important to identify individual boys' circumstances.

What succeeds in one school may not succeed in another. Your school's profile is unique – and it changes every year – so you'll need to keep the ideas changing, sometimes revisiting them, and adapting them to suit your situation. Best of all, allow the boys freedom to organise events and initiatives themselves, for each other.

Start from where boys are, not where you would like them to be. Once you've engaged boys' interest in an idea, they'll amaze you by how much they do.

Here are some frequent conclusions from surveys and experience; test them with boys in your school:

- Boys are more likely to read for a purpose, if they can 'see the point in it'. Margaret Meek's conclusion that 'To benefit from reading, students need to work out what reading is for'<sup>1</sup> is especially true of boys.
- Boys often prefer non-fiction; illustrated books; and 'fun facts' material.
- Boys frequently choose books 'because they feel they have to', but may be more susceptible than girls to recommendations from librarians and teachers.
- Boys are drawn to fiction related to out of school interests – sport, computers, music.
- Boys enjoy fast-paced stories, with plenty of action.
- Boys often have crazes for the subject of the moment, and switch to new ones fast.
- Boys may have more difficulty identifying themselves in stories.
- Children can seem like 'grazers rather than diners' in their reading, and boys in particular will dip into books, lacking reading stamina.
- Boys visit libraries, but to meet, browse, and play games. Far fewer of them take books out.

Every one of these conclusions has exceptions! Resist any habit of pigeonholing boys, and base your library's actions on your library's readers.

## I've got the books – where are the boys?

Books are only one ingredient in the boys' reading mix. Think about other factors, including:

### Reading's profile in the school:

Take the library out of the library. Can people tell, *before* they get to the library, that yours is a school that values reading? This should happen right from the school reception area! Have plenty around school – posters, signs, photographs, or even small collections of stock in other locations (sports books in the gym, magazines in the dining room) – to connect with the library.

### Library design:

Is your library central within the school, and on traffic paths, so that it can be noticed? If not, is it clearly signposted from all areas of the school? Crucially, has it enough space? Has it got plenty of face-out display for books, dumpbins, and reading corners? Does it have floor cushions, easy chairs or sofas to aid browsing; listening posts for CDs and story tapes? If your library/classroom needs a re-vamp, get some boys in to advise – or to help with carrying out the makeover. These things attract all users, but are all the more critical with boys.

### Ambience:

Is your library welcoming, especially to boys? Does it say 'be yourself' or 'be careful'? Right from the start – the displays outside, signs on the door, and the first things they see as they enter – does it look like a comfortable place, one that intrigues, and one that's cool for boys to be seen in? Does it have big posters of boys reading, particularly ones they know? Is it somewhere boys can drop in, play board games, and meet friends? Do students feel a sense of ownership about your library? Is the library yours, the school's, or theirs? Boys are more likely to use a facility that other boys endorse, and are involved in.

### Stock arrangement:

Can boys find genres that interest them, even in A to Z sequences? Is your library always changing, with 'author of the month', 'book of the day/week', mixing of fiction and non-fiction? Are signs exciting and eye-catching (*Dare you read these?* rather than *Ghost Stories*)? Get pupils to help you choose the genre names, to make them meaningful and catchy. Many boys say they don't know what to choose, so make it easier, using the returns trolley, lots of recommendations, leaving books out on tables, and other bookshop techniques. Show boys that you have a huge range of material, including comics and magazines, short stories, quick reads, poetry, jokes, graphic novels, picture books, and more.

Finally, make sure that all library staff or helpers (both adults and pupils) are sensitive towards boys, and that boys – especially those venturing into the library for the first time – are genuinely welcomed.

## But what about the girls?

Most good ideas to get Key Stage 3 boys reading are good ideas for all young people, and boys are more likely to read if the whole school community, including girls, are readers.

You can gain much, in 'keeping the connections'. How about a list by boys of books they think girls would like, and vice versa? Keen readers like to compete with the girls to see who reads most and tops the reader charts.

Many ideas in this introduction can be re-branded for girls. For a national example of this process, the National Literacy Trust's excellent Reading Champions scheme (<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/Champions/index.html>) now has an equivalent Reading Angels scheme for girls (<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/Champions/readingangels.html>).

Don't forget to use the boy/girl dynamic to your advantage. What about a 'Reading gets you the girls' message?<sup>2</sup>

## Who else can help me get them reading?

Most librarians, and very many teachers, are women. Female librarians do exceptional work in engaging with boys, as well as fulfilling valuable social roles in the school community – boys will frequently confide in librarians rather than teachers or parents.

What boys also need, however, are male role models. Many of them lack this even in their own families, and it's even more important that they experience such models at school. When male role models are known to read, are seen reading, talk about reading, and enthuse about reading, boys take notice.

Make the most of any male role models you can, from school and the wider community – either in real life, on posters, on video, or through quotations of their words. Involve men in library activities (the co-host of a reading group, for example), *and* encourage them to talk about reading throughout the school. Celebrities, well-liked teachers, older boys, and peers all have a role to play.

Anyone too shy to talk, or too busy to visit the library can at least contribute information on what they're reading at the moment; a picture of themselves when a boy, with their favourite book then; anecdotes about what their parents caught them reading; their favourite place to read, and so on. The web lets you create an ideal showcase of who's reading what and why around the school. Try these ideas:

- Encourage male teachers to visit the library – a male presence at lunch and break times is particularly useful.
- A male Head Teacher can model the importance of reading at the highest level – can he regularly talk about reading, or share his book choices? Can he visit staff and student reading groups? He can also talk about reading at staff meetings, and invite others' book choices.
- Involve other men in the school – caretakers and administrators, for example.
- Make use of male school governors, to talk about their reading, and what reading means to them.
- Invite fathers, grandfathers and uncles into school.
- If you have parent volunteers to help with reading, is there a fair balance of men involved? In the North of England and the Midlands, Reading Matters for Life (<http://www.readingmattersforlife.org.uk/>) can support this.
- When choosing authors, illustrators or storytellers to visit, feature men regularly.
- Male poets and poetry rappers may be especially effective.
- Invite other kinds of guests (cartoonists, songwriters, sportsmen, DJs, graffiti artists).
- Don't forget community figures (local policemen, firemen, chefs, business leaders) Seemingly non-book related guests are valuable a) because the visit happens in the library, and b) because you can pull out library materials to link in, and for follow-up.

## Which activities work?

All the ideas below are tried and tested. You need a range of activities at any one time, to hit specific targets (e.g. catching the new intake; keeping existing users; attracting non-users), and if your ideas bank

is as varied as boys themselves, you're ensured of some success every time! Plan it so that you hit all age and ability groups – but don't wear yourself out! Tie it in to annual school targets and priorities, to ensure staff and senior management team support.

If you've got a ready-made focus group – pupil librarians, or a reading group, for example – ask them which ideas *they* think will work best, so that they're involved. If some ideas don't work, don't dismiss them for ever – it may have been the wrong term, the wrong year group, insufficient publicity, or other factors. Try the ideas again another time.

- Involve children in book selection – a good opportunity to include boys, who respond to responsibility.
- Showcase books for boys in displays. Try to be ahead of the game in matching displays to latest trends, and pay particular attention to highlighting books appearing on film or TV.
- As well as making fast-paced action heroes easy to find, remember to show different kinds of masculinity in fiction. There are some great examples in this present list – try Tom Kelly's *The Thing with Finn*, or Alex Shearer's *Tins*.
- Make connections between fiction and non-fiction. Not just curricular connections (the holocaust and *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, for example), but fun connections, and ones that link curricular subjects to leisure reading – the science behind science fiction, for example.
- Read aloud: taster extracts from books that might appeal to boys, such as a dramatic opening, or an exciting episode. 'Personal interaction, book waving and raving, is more important than any number of written reviews or computer listings' (from *Young People's Reading at the end of the Century*).<sup>3</sup>
- Remember storytelling, either by guests or school staff. Traditional tales often address powerful issues that contemporary fiction would shy away from, and there are some great ghost stories that will appeal to the horror fans!
- Use book boxes for tutor time. This may be one area where you *can* do something different just for boys – how about a boys only box sometimes?
- Try a boys only lunchtime in the library occasionally.
- Do work on 'how we choose books' (title, author's name, cover design, blurb, first paragraph, etc.). Boys often comment that they don't know what to choose, and this will strengthen their confidence. Carel Press's *The Reading Game* (<http://www.carelpres.co.uk/librarianskills.htm#reading>) may help here, and there can be much useful discussion about 'What makes a boy book/girl book?'
- Feature boys' reading choices (presented by boys, if possible) at assemblies or tutor times.
- Discuss fiction, to draw out current and relevant meaning, and help boys 'see the point'.
- Identify peer leaders and opinion formers among boys. Any connections made here will be very powerful in reaching others, and you could find candidates for Reading Champions (<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/Champions/index.html>).
- Identify any enthusiastic boy readers and use them as book promoters. 'Students are four times more likely to read something recommended to them by a peer than by a teacher' (MORI poll, 2003).
- Use committed older boys as reading buddies for younger ones, or pair readers of a similar age.
- Use short-term reading challenges, with prizes and lots of feedback. Boys like to know how they're doing, and have achievable goals.
- Organise schemes like Readathon (<http://www.readathon.org/>). They will often appeal to boys' sense of challenge – the badges and stickers help too, as does the money-raising dimension.
- Target boys to recruit as pupil librarians. Boys respond well to being given responsibilities, and it can help their self-esteem.

- Involve boys as Book Consultants' in the scheme run by publisher Barrington Stoke (<http://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/>), which uses students to test new manuscripts, and offers books and incentives.
- Encourage boys who like to show off their speaking skills. If you have a debating group, what about a book-related debate? What about using boys to read funny poems aloud? They could do this on to CD, complete with different voices and sound effects, or make a podcast reading their favourite extracts from books for the school website, for other pupils to listen to or download. A great opportunity to work with your drama department!
- Organise inter-class (or inter-house) book events – quizzes, for example – can help boys gain prestige by representing their team.
- Use the library as an event venue – Games Workshops (Lord of the Rings-based 'Warhammer' gaming clubs), chess tournaments, talks, quizzes.
- Enter the Kids' Lit Quiz (<http://www.kidslitquiz.com/>), which can motivate boys particularly, appealing to their competitive instincts.
- Get boys involved in book awards – either shadowing national ones, like Carnegie and Kate Greenaway, or judging for one of the growing number of lively local ones. Regional book awards give an opportunity to meet up with reading boys from nearby schools, and other reading groups.
- Organise reading groups, which can be mixed gender (useful for boys to share their reading tastes with girls, and vice versa), or 'boy only'. They could be themed (Harry Potter Fan Club, Graphic Novel or Manga Group), or they could feature a boy-friendly genre like sports stories or science fiction.
- Include reading plays together, introducing non-fiction books about a hobby or interest and researching author details on websites as Reading Group activities. These can particularly attract boys, and they'll tell you of others.

Many schools report that once boys find success and enjoyment in club-type activities, this spills over into academic life too.

### Doesn't technology appeal more to boys?

For many boys, yes – so don't set up a 'books versus technology' vibe – use them both together. For example: books and magazines help boys get the most out of computers, and websites about reading can help lead boys back to books. Remember how much reading is being done from the screen, and the natural narrative quality of many computer games.

- Websites can include review sites, authors' own sites, word game sites, book festival sites, and a variety of games sites – some of which are book-related. Vampirates (<http://www.vampirates.co.uk/>) is an example, and you'll find more given in the book list.
- Get boys involved in designing and maintaining the school library's own website. There are lots more ideas in the SLA's *Fully Booked* guideline, Appendix H (see <http://www.sla.org.uk/sla-guidelines.php>).
- Use mind mapping software to create bookmap reviews and flowcharts of recommended reads.
- Programmes like Star Reader and Accelerated Reader can create quizzes based on your library stock.
- Boys can enjoy being involved in the technical aspects of producing a school library newsletter – and in this way they can start to become contributors.
- Make public use of your library management system data – publish regular top tens for both boys and girls, for example, and announce chart positions at assemblies.

Don't forget other technologies, too, many with huge appeal to boys...

- Using video cameras (to film dramatised versions of books; readers [including teachers] talking about books; author visits; adverts for the library etc.)
- Using mobile phones to do short text reviews, or send video reviews.
- Using PDAs to read e-books, or swapping 'book bites'.
- Using digital cameras to photograph readers with their favourite books.
- Making short radio programmes that can be podcasted in and beyond school.
- Using videoconferencing with other readers, across the region or across the world, though paired schools. The British Council's Global Gateway (<http://www.globalgateway.org/default.aspx?page=0>) is one approach to this.

There are many more tips on using technology in the SLA's *Fully Booked* guideline; 25 great ideas in Appendix G alone! (See <http://www.sla.org.uk/sla-guidelines.php> for details.)

### Can't parents help?

Yes! They can reinforce what you're doing, attend events you plan, and Dads especially can model the fun of reading – even if it's simply through magazines and newspapers. It's important that any worry about their sons doesn't show through, but with a light touch they can show interest in what boys are reading, and help boys realise that everyone's interested in reading for fun, not just school.

- Are parents given advice on how they can support boys' reading, or offered sessions on choosing and sharing books with boys?
- Try 'Lads and Dads' projects – reading groups, reading challenges.
- A 'Dads into School' day.
- Invite Dads to evening events – e.g. visits by sports stars.
- Use your school website or VLE – have reading lists for parents to use with their children, with reader comments. Love Reading 4 Schools (<http://www.lovereadingschools.co.uk/>) can help you create these, as well as getting money for more books for your school!

### How do I know if I've succeeded?

Encouraging more boys to read (and boys to read more) should be a long-term campaign. Have clear aims at the outset, decide which activities you'll try in the first year, the second year, and so on; build in milestones and celebrations; keep collecting evidence.

As elsewhere, evidence can be *quantitative* – number of boys in the library; borrowing data from library management system; and remember to keep event attendance figures by gender – or *qualitative*, covering improvements in boys' curriculum work; improvements *you* have noted, in confidence, writing reviews, behaviour, etc.; and anecdotes from boys themselves. There are many more aspects you can measure (increased motivation, for example), and ways of measuring (observation, survey, interviews, polls).

Remember that 'a picture is worth a thousand words', so photograph all you do, circulate these, and add them to reports. Quirky photographs of boys reading in the library bring home the impact you're having.



## What's in this list?

This list contains around 170 titles guaranteed to get boys reading, arranged by genre. There are plenty of up-to-the-minute titles, some modern classics, and one or two old favourites.

Its focus is fiction – though there are some non-fiction titles amongst the others – and it doesn't include the whole range of other material that you could use to tempt boys into reading. These include things like puzzle books, magazines, comics, newspapers (including those for young people), DVDs, CDs and so on; you can add as many of these as your boys tell you they need.

We hope you enjoy browsing the list, giving your library a fresh injection of great titles to get boys into books!

## What shall I do with this list?

Make the most of this list, by:

- Inviting boys themselves to browse the choices. A great job for your keen readers!
- Using the online version to order your 20 free books (for eligible schools)
- Checking stock and ordering sequels and follow-on titles, to keep boys reading
- Ordering additional titles from this list, beyond the initial allocation, from your usual supplier
- Checking the websites listed, and adding any to your own favourites. Make sure they're featured on the school website, and on library computers
- Copying it to other colleagues, for comment.

## What else can I do about boys' reading?

- Make some easy changes first. Schools ordering free books can also receive free Boys into Books posters and postcards. The posters will brighten your library and the postcards will make great collectables or prizes for boys.
- The National Literacy Trust has free posters (see [http://www.renaissance-learning.co.uk/nlt\\_posters/](http://www.renaissance-learning.co.uk/nlt_posters/)) for a quick face-lift, and there are some great posters on the Reading Champions website too, featuring football, cricket and wrestling stars (see <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/Champions/index.html>).
- Make a point of reading more boy-friendly fiction yourself. Boys know when you're bluffing about books, and it's important to gain their trust when creating readers.
- Make sure you promote boy-friendly genres and material with the same enthusiasm as any of your own personal likes.
- Keep the library fresh, by regular changes.
- Plan a boys' reading campaign in school, enlisting help from a team of others. Raise it at senior management level, and embed it in the school improvement plan. If there's a whole-school initiative on boys' achievement, be a leading part of it.
- If you're an SLA member, keep up the debate by using the Discussion Forum in the Members' Area (<http://www.sla.org.uk/members-area.php>). Join the SLA at <http://www.sla.org.uk/membership.php>
- Find local partners – the public library service, the School Library Service, nearby schools.

## Where else can I get help?

- The School Library Association (<http://www.sla.org.uk/index.php>) provides advice and support, training and conferences. Local, regional and national branches provide support for those running school libraries and its Advisory Librarian is available to support members from its UK headquarters. There is also lots of advice on its website at <http://www.sla.org.uk>.  
Its extensive publications include *Riveting Reads* booklists (<http://www.sla.org.uk/riveting-reads.php>), such as those for 8–12s and 12–16s; and Guidelines (<http://www.sla.org.uk/sla-guidelines.php>) such as *Fully Booked* on reader development and *Brilliant Books: Running a Successful School Library Book Event*.
- The National Literacy Trust (<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/index.html>) has several important initiatives to help boys' reading. The Reading Champions scheme (<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/Champions/index.html>) celebrates the motivational power of male reading role models, who can be men or other boys, with a series of certificates and awards; there's a reading champions toolkit, and now 'Reading Champions Dads' ideas. Reading the Game (<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Football/index.html>) works with football clubs to promote reading, with lots of football-themed ideas. Reading Connects (<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/readingconnects/index.html>) supports schools in building a whole-school reading culture; it has an extensive website, with case studies, downloadable resources, research, and practical ideas.
- The Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP) (<http://www.cilip.org.uk/default.cilip>) is the leading professional body for librarians, information specialists and knowledge managers. It has a range of special interest groups, the three most relevant of which are given below.
  - The School Libraries Group (<http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/school/>) supports CILIP members in school libraries, through conferences, regional training courses, publications, and a journal, *School Libraries in View*.
  - The Education Libraries Group (<http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/education/>) supports CILIP members in both schools and colleges.
  - The Youth Libraries Group (<http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/youth/>) supports CILIP members working in public library children's services, and school library services.
- Local library services (both public libraries and School Library Services, where available) can either be traced through local authority websites and telephone directories, or approached directly through your nearest branch library.
- Other colleagues, through school library service-based support groups, and School Library Association branches (<http://www.sla.org.uk/branches.php>).

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<sup>1</sup> Meek, Margaret. *On Being literate*. Bodley Head, 1990. 978-0-370-31190-6

<sup>2</sup> <http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,6000,1233121,00.html>

<sup>3</sup> National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, Roehampton University, 1996. 978-1-871954-65-4

## Key to the list

*There's no such thing as a reluctant reader, there are only readers for whom the right book has not yet been found*

(Paul Jennings)

Bearing this in mind, every effort has been made in compiling this book to offer something for everyone whatever their reading experience, ability and attitude to reading. We've aimed at a range of books which allow every boy to see themselves reflected, a collection which caters for avid, enthusiastic readers as well as occasional and 'books are boring' readers. The majority of books are paperbacks and the latest in their series, so your collection can be bang up-to-date.

The following selection guides are included:

AA are for those with reading difficulties; reading age is included in the annotation

◆ is an easy read in either content or style

◆ is more challenging reading

▶▶ indicates audio version available.

Of course the attraction of lists like these is that not everything can be included and some favourites have inevitably had to be left out. This is of course guaranteed to open up hours of passionate debate with boys, and no doubt girls too, in your school. Get reading!

## BOGGLE

RUSSELL ASH

### **The Top 10 of Everything 2007**

Hamlyn, 9780600615323 (2008 edition available in the autumn)

The trivia buff's ultimate book of lists; over 600 on everything imaginable, well illustrated and with full colour photos. Where the *Guinness Book of Records* presents only one of something this book offers a list of the 10 best, worst, biggest, strangest... Plenty here to pore over, memorise and amaze your friends with.

HERBIE BRENNAN

### **Strange Powers of the Human Mind (Forbidden Truths)**

Faber, 9780571223152

A mindblowing series which makes the impossible seem possible, looking at all kinds of unusual phenomena from parallel worlds to lost civilisations.

This book looks into vast capabilities of the human mind; time travel, telepathy, hypnosis, mind control, out of body experiences, illusions and even why surgeons can slice into your brain without you feeling a thing. An astonishing, make-you-stop-and-think series to make you question everything you've been taught at school.

BILL BRYSON

### **A Short History of Nearly Everything** ❖ ▶▶

Black Swan, 9780552997041

A mindboggling but highly accessible popular science book offering answers to all the questions you've ever wanted to ask, and some you've never even thought of, about the planet we live on. Bryson manages to cut through the controversy surrounding vast topics like evolution and the origins of the universe, making science fascinating and fun.

[www.randomhouse.com/features/billbryson/](http://www.randomhouse.com/features/billbryson/)

JEREMY CLARKSON

### **I Know You Got Soul**

Penguin, 9780141022925

All kinds of breathtaking, awe-inspiring machines with a definite wow factor, all lovingly described and explained by someone who knows. From zeppelin airships to battleships and space shuttles, Clarkson looks at the machines and tells the stories of the inventors, geniuses and eccentrics who created them. He injects a fair selection of random but fascinating and proven trivia too; who would win if Superman, James Bond and Terminator had a fight and the safest place to be in a nuclear war. Clarkson's infectious enthusiasm and passion for his subject shines through, making it an easy book to race through and return to time and time again.

[www.topgear.com](http://www.topgear.com)

GUINNESS

**Guinness Book of Records 2007**

Guinness, 9781904994114 (2008 edition available in the autumn)

Containing over 1500 new and updated records and contemporary categories such as highest computer games scores and most downloaded podcast, this is still the definitive trivia guide and works hard to stay ahead of the rest. With 100% new photographs, illustrative fold-outs, interactive spreads of records you can try yourself at home and a huge sport reference section this is definitely the one boys keep coming back to and want to keep reading. No library, home, school or classroom can have enough copies.

[www.guinnessworldrecords.com](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com)

RICHARD HORNE

**101 Things To Do Before You're Old and Boring**

Bloomsbury, 9780747580997

Bursting with fun things to make, do, learn and think about this is the ultimate boy's handbook. From being a spy to starring on TV, learning to juggle and make origami models this is an inspired and inspiring checklist of ideas; some easy to achieve, some less attainable. Great for starting discussions about achievements, experiences and ambitions.

[www.101thingstodo.co.uk](http://www.101thingstodo.co.uk)

RICHARD HORNE

**101 Things You Need To Know (And Some You Don't)**

Bloomsbury, 9780747584766

Brilliantly explained, short and snappy answers to the 101 tricky questions you've always wanted to ask and probably some you haven't even thought of yet. Small in format, big in ideas this is a superbly illustrated book to dip in and out of and to find something new in every time.

[www.101thingstodo.co.uk](http://www.101thingstodo.co.uk)

ROBERT LE ROY RIPLEY

**Ripley's Believe It or Not!**

Century, 9781846051494 (2008 edition due September)

An all-new, mindboggling collection of the weirdest, wackiest and most wonderful individuals on planet earth, all with bizarre habits and hobbies. Superbly documented in full colour photographs, captions and snappy text box descriptions this is cool and quirky reading, easy to pick up, impossible to put down, which quickly acquires a huge fanbase.

[www.ripleys.com](http://www.ripleys.com)

GUY MCDONALD

**The Boys' Book; How to be the Best at Everything**

Buster Books, 9781905158645

A retro-style book which every boy has been waiting for, a book which shows readers how to be the best at everything, gives them the confidence to have a go and believe they can do anything. Simple, informative and attractively illustrated it covers every eventuality – from annoying brothers and sisters to bending it like Beckham and being the best in different languages, from hypnotizing a chicken to performing maths magic, playing a toilet roll and winning at computer games. Guaranteed to keep readers quiet for hours you'll need to buy several copies – there's no way they'll share this one with their friends!

MICK O'HARE

**Why Don't Penguins' Feet Freeze?**

Profile Books, 9781861978769

This quirky little book contains the answers to some of life's most baffling questions. Taken from the Last Word column in *New Scientist* magazine it offers a range of reader responses to some very tricky questions; everything from why grilled cheese goes stringy to why dogs' noses are black and why your knuckles crack. Entertaining and informative.

[www.newscientist.com](http://www.newscientist.com)

ERIC SCHLOSSER

**Chew on This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food**

Puffin, 9780141318448

Discover the shocking truth about the fast food industry. These are the inside truths Ronald McDonald doesn't want you to know; how fast food started, what really goes on in the slaughterhouses, labs and factories, the extent of global advertising and merchandising, the reach into schools, how the outlet workers are exploited and the effect on the environment, health and childhood obesity. Lively in tone, extensively researched and with quotes from young people this is an eye-opening, stomach-churning yet matter of fact presentation of the facts which lets readers make up their own minds on the issue.

[www.chewonthis.org.uk](http://www.chewonthis.org.uk)

ANDY SEED

**How to Spot a Hadrosaur in a Bus Queue**

Hodder, 9780340893036

An impossible to resist, intelligent and hilariously illustrated blend of wacky words, bizarre facts, jokes and trivia about all the things people are really interested in; animals, music, monsters, maths, sport, superstitions, baddies, bananas, costs, catchphrases, rude words, TV and loads more besides. Striking just the right balance between sensible and silly this is a must-have book for all lovers of lists.

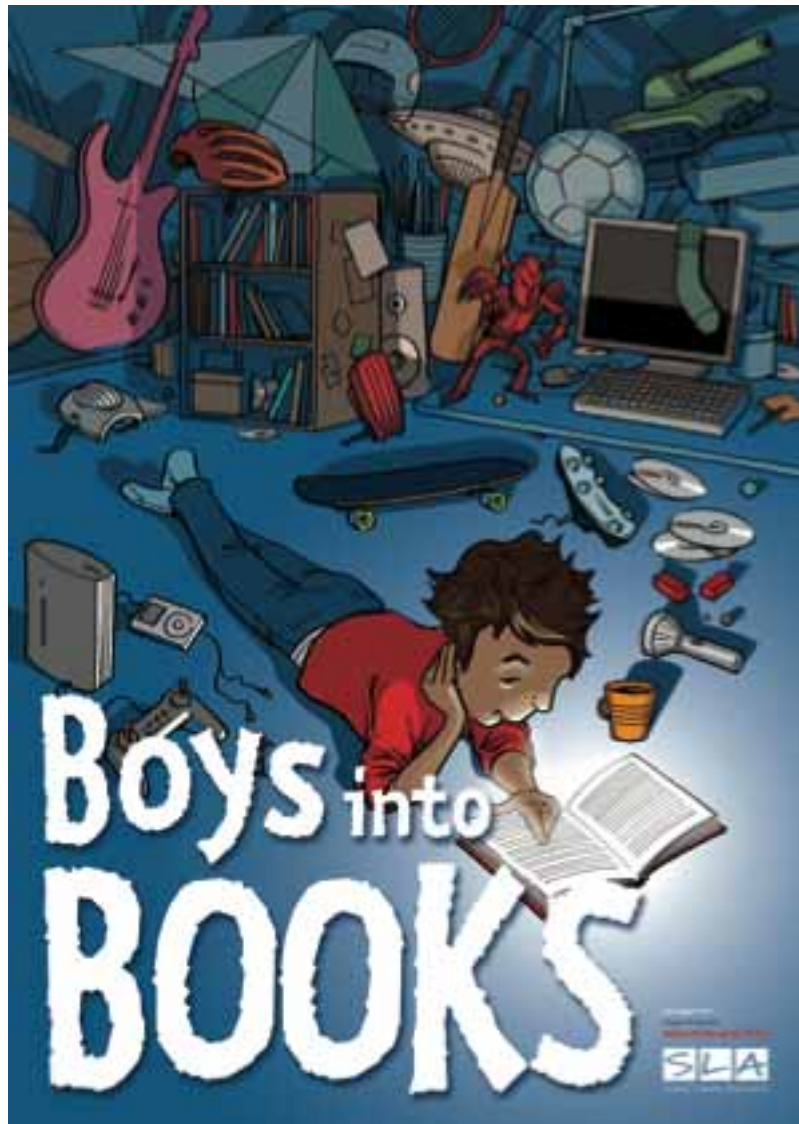
[www.andyseed.com](http://www.andyseed.com)

MITCHELL SYMONS

**How to Avoid a Wombat's Bum**

Doubleday, 9780385610728

A handy, bright yellow, smaller than A5 size compendium of fascinating facts and totally useless trivia, randomly arranged in categories covering everything from eccentric events to daft labels, from potatoes to people who used to be waiters, from wombats to bungee jumpers. Simply written and made even more accessible with a huge variety of comic line drawings throughout, boys' brains Hoover up lists like these.



## DISCOVER

DOUGLAS ADAMS

### **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy** ▶▶

Macmillan, 9780330438957

With the earth unexpectedly demolished one Thursday lunchtime to make way for a new hyperspace bypass, Arthur Dent is not only homeless but set to discover what a strange place the galaxy really is. A cult classic.

[www.douglasadams.com](http://www.douglasadams.com)

DANIEL DEFOE

### **Robinson Crusoe** ▶▶

Puffin, 9780140367225

A fictional autobiography of Robinson Crusoe who defies his family to become a sailor and is beset by a series of disasters on the high seas, including attack by pirate ship, culminating in shipwreck. The sole survivor, he is washed up on a remote desert island, salvages what he can from the ship and lives alone off his wits for years, honing his survival skills before befriendng a native, Friday. Presenting fictional events as fact makes for a riveting read.

H RIDER HAGGARD

### **King Solomon's Mines** ▶▶

Penguin, 9780140621235

An adventure story set in the heart of scorching deserts and dangerous African mountains as three men go off in search of the mythical King Solomon's hidden diamond mines and the missing brother of one of the men, a search which leads them into a remote and unknown land cut off from the world. A real pageturner pitting brave heroes against hostile nature. Written in the form of a journal, it incorporates the explorers' thoughts and feelings as the significant events of their journey are described. Crackling with suspense and danger, the twists of fate keep the pages turning.



PHILIP PULLMAN

**Northern Lights (His Dark Materials) ▶▶**

Scholastic, 9780439951784

Part one of an epic and captivating fantasy trilogy telling the story of an orphan Lyra, a strong-minded, free-spirited girl living in an Oxford college with a unique destiny already mapped out for her. When her friend Roger disappears mysteriously, along with other children in the area, she sets out with her daemon Pantalaimon on a dangerous mission to find him. Together they journey to the frozen ice kingdom of the north, a bleak and awe-inspiring place where armoured bears rule, witch queens fly and scientists conduct sinister experiments. Pullman offers a rare gift to his readers, wrapping up very big philosophical and theological themes and scientific ideas in an engrossing and human story. Stunning in scope and scale and breathtaking in its originality it is an absolutely unforgettable story to grow up with and repays repeated re-reading.

[www.philip-pullman.com](http://www.philip-pullman.com)

MARY SHELLEY

**Frankenstein ▶▶**

Bloomsbury, 9780747587514

Behind the doors of his private lab Victor Frankenstein plays with science and life, finally creating a living being from the body parts of corpses dug up from their graves. The consequences of his actions are horrific in this terrible and terrifying gothic horror, introduced here by Benjamin Zephaniah.

R L STEVENSON (adapted by ALAN GRANT)

**Kidnapped AA ▶▶**

Barrington Stoke, 9781842995013

A full colour graphic novel version of the classic with stylish sophisticated illustrations, dyslexic-friendly font and an adapted text making it accessible for reading age 8. When David Balfour's father dies his greedy uncle tries to cheat him out of his inheritance and has him kidnapped and sold off as a slave. When the ship taking him away is shipwrecked David is befriended by the only other survivor and together they fight to win back David's rightful inheritance amid false accusations of murder. Set in Scotland in 1751 with the conflict between the Jacobites and the supporters of King George the Second raging, this is a real swashbuckling read to fire the imagination.

R L STEVENSON

**Treasure Island ▶▶**

Bloomsbury, 9780747587477

Finding a map hidden in an old chest young Jim Hawkins sets sail in search of Treasure Island and into a series of unexpected adventures en route. With Long John Silver's devious plotting, pirates and a mutinous crew of colourful characters this journey is bound to be an exciting one which neither Jim nor the reader will ever forget. Part of the Bloomsbury Classics series, this edition has a riveting introduction by Darren Shan.

J R R TOLKIEN

**The Hobbit** ▶▶

HarperCollins, 9780261102217

Bilbo Baggins, a quiet and contented hobbit of no great ambition, finds himself dragged against his will into a quest for stolen treasure by 13 dwarves and a mysterious wizard Gandalf. The treasure is guarded by a fearsome dragon Smaug, the last of the great dragons. This is the story of Bilbo's hazard-filled adventure, the original and still the best fantasy ever written, fantasy with a dark edge and the inspiration behind all fantasy writing since.

<http://www.theonering.net/>

J R R TOLKIEN

**The Hobbit** ▶▶

HarperCollins, 9780261102668

A vibrant and carefully abridged graphic novel version of the classic story.

<http://www.theonering.net/>

MARK TWAIN

**The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn** ▶▶

Penguin, 9780140366761

Huck escapes from his drunken and brutal father in America's Deep South and teams up with a runaway slave boy escaping even greater oppression. Together they journey down the Mississippi River becoming embroiled in one adventure after another before the outbreak of the American Civil War. It's a journey full of excitement, adventure and a range of emotions which teaches the boys and the reader today much about life.

MARK TWAIN

**The Adventures of Tom Sawyer** ▶▶

Penguin, 9780140366730

Tom Sawyer is a normal boy who likes to spend his time skipping school to get out and have fun with his friends Huck and Joe and getting into a myriad of scrapes he has to use all his imagination and ingenuity to get out of. From playing pirates to whitewashing the fence as punishment for a misdemeanour, witnessing a murder in a graveyard and falling in love, every incident is cleverly recorded and easy for boys to identify with. Through Tom's adventures Twain paints a wonderful and often very funny picture of childhood in the American South in the 19th century. The plot moves swiftly, imparting important life lessons still relevant today quite painlessly.

# EXPERIMENT

TONY BRADMAN (ed)

## **Like Father Like Son**

Kingfisher, 9780753411193

12 very different and brand new stories from the best contemporary children's writers all about boys and their dads. With digital dads of the future and dads with dark secrets, devoted dads and dads who know everything, superdads and dads with disgusting habits this is a fabulous collection of stories, some to make you smile and some to make you think, but which together highlight the many and varied roles a dad can play.

PAUL JENNINGS

## **Unreal!** ❖ ▶▶

Puffin, 9780140370997

Eight very silly, very surprising stories which are bound to make you laugh out loud. Start with Wunderpants or Cow Dung Custard. This is one of a series of hugely engaging short story collections by Jennings all guaranteed to win over the reading resistant.

[www.pauljennings.com.au](http://www.pauljennings.com.au)

KAZU KIBUISHI

## **Flight** ❖

Image Comics, 9781582404776

An awesome anthology of comics from a range of artists; established masters and up and coming talents, all varying in style and storyline. A fascinating introduction to the graphic novel medium covering everything from monsters to robots and a real visual treat. Perfect for dipping in and out of.

GARTH NIX

## **One Beastly Beast** ❖

HarperCollins, 9780007234097

A colourful collection of four magical adventures featuring rude rats and pirates, sea serpents and penguinmaids, ideal parents and inventors, princesses and monsters who are terrible outside but less so on the inside. Spellbinding storytelling, a keen sense of the absurd, a huge helping of magic and gripping action make for four stories it is impossible to stop reading.

[www.garthnix.co.uk](http://www.garthnix.co.uk)

JON SCIESZKA and LANE SMITH

### **The Stinky Cheese Man**

Puffin, 9780140548969

Adaptations and imaginative retellings of traditional and fairy tales like you've never heard them before, including the Princess and the Bowling Ball and Jack's Bean Problem. Hysterically funny bite-sized twisted tales brought to life with sophisticated and surreal full colour illustrations by Lane Smith.

[www.guysread.com](http://www.guysread.com)

ART SPIEGELMAN

### **It Was A Dark and Silly Night**

HarperCollins, 9780060286286

Imagine a dark and silly night and just what might happen during it... Innovative cartoonists and children's storytellers partner up and do just that in this richly imaginative collection of comic strip stories, some twisted, some exuberant, some sidesplittingly funny, some just downright weird. Compiled by an expert of the genre Art Spiegelman and with offerings from Lemony Snicket and Neil Gaiman among others, this beautifully packaged large-format hardback can't fail to attract new readers and forms a fantastic introduction to the art and reading of graphic novels.

BILL WATTERSON

### **Scientific Progress Goes Boink (Calvin and Hobbes)**

Time Warner, 9780751504811

One of the most popular comic strips of all time featuring a smart but always in trouble 6-year-old with an overactive imagination who never goes anywhere without his stuffed toy tiger.

[www.calvinandhobbes.co.uk](http://www.calvinandhobbes.co.uk)

BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

### **Talking Turkeys**

Puffin, 9780140363302

The perfect medicine for poetryphobes. Zephaniah's high-energy rap-style poems leap (almost literally) across the pages, his brain bouncing between issues he cares passionately about; politics, racism, animal cruelty and the environment, as well as all-important human emotions. This is a well-illustrated and varied collection of cool verse which crackles with fun and excitement but also subtly engenders respect for others and for all living things.

## EXPLORE

LUC BESSON

### **Arthur and the Invisibles**

Faber, 9780571232468

Arthur can't believe the tiny tribe he's read about are really real until he finds a secret message and map and is shrunk down to Minimoy size himself. There is an exciting, danger-filled world and one which is under threat. With the help of a feisty, stop-at-nothing Princess and her brother, will Arthur be able to save the Minimoy Kingdom and find the buried treasure? Small in the size of its characters but big on thrills and action, this is now a major mainstream adventure film.

N M BROWNE

### **The Spellgrinder's Apprentice**

Bloomsbury, 9780747579250

An orphan boy in a dark cellar apprenticed to grind spellstones, stones with great magical powers, makes a daring escape. Normally escape is punished with a terrible death but Tommo claims a stay of execution under a long forgotten law and aims to flee the country, advised by a bird flock with strange human faces. One man, the most powerful in the land, the Protector, is convinced the boy possesses the earth magic he is desperate to eradicate from the world and replace with his own spellstone wizardry. Whatever it takes the boy must be stopped. Vivid characters, pacy plotting and a satisfying conclusion are wrapped up in a complex fairytale.

[www.nmbrowne.com](http://www.nmbrowne.com)

LOUISA DENT

### **The Forgotten Spell (Spellcaster Gamebooks)**

Wizard Books, 9781840467314

The world of the Fey is a strange and menacing one beyond the reach of mortals, which few can find and from which even fewer return, for the Fey are evil, brooding creatures. The powerful warlock Olcrada both devised and destroyed a powerful spell and it is this forgotten spell readers must find, choosing their own path through the evil enemies in the city of Suidemor, casting spells and solving puzzles. This is not a normal book but a gripping game in which readers decide their own strategy and determine how the story develops.

[www.louisadent.com](http://www.louisadent.com)

DAVID EDDINGS

### **Castle of Wizardry (The Belgariad)**

Corgi, 9780552148108

Garion and his companions must now attempt to return the Orb of Aldur to its rightful home on the island of Riva. The journey will not be an easy one for soldiers and sorcerers lie in wait ready to destroy them with dark magic and the evil god Torak is readying himself for the final conflict.

Epic finely-detailed fantasy.

CORNELIA FUNKE

**Dragon Rider**

Chicken House, 9781904442486

With his friend Ben and brownie Sorrel, an enchanting young dragon Firedrake sets off, armed with a map and some old dragon tales, on a magical adventure to find a mythical land. Silver dragons can live there in peace forever thereby saving the whole of dragonkind from the dragonhunters and from Nettlebrand a deadly goldplated monster. Stunning, mindstretching fantasy of the very highest order.

[www.corneliafunkefans.com](http://www.corneliafunkefans.com)

NEIL GAIMAN and DAVE MCKEAN

**Mirrormask**

Bloomsbury, 9780747581116

Helena is born to a family of circus performers and longs to join the real world. One fateful day she wakes up to find herself in a dreamworld inhabited by a myriad of weird and wonderful creatures and about to embark on a journey...

Told through a mesmerizing and dizzying mix of art from the film; stills, sketches and striking images, this is a challenging fantasy story in content and format, as visually stunning as it is scary. A book to challenge perceptions of reading.

[www.mousecircus.com](http://www.mousecircus.com)

[www.neilgaiman.com](http://www.neilgaiman.com)

JASON HIGHTMAN

**Samurai (Saint of Dragons)**

HarperCollins, 9780007159093

Imagine waking up to discover you're a dragonslayer descended from St George and expected to carry on the family tradition in a mad world where dragons revel in human misery, live alone and are cunningly disguised in human form. While Simon St George is still learning his dragonhunting trade with modern ways and weaponry he is stunned to learn he is not the last of the dragon hunters as he thought. An imaginative, adrenalin-fuelled, frenetically paced thrill ride.

STUART HILL

**Blade of Fire (The Icemark Chronicles)**

Chicken House, 9781905294299

Queen Thirrin and her husband defended their kingdom some 20 years ago and their defeated enemy Scipio Bellorum returns now, bringing his bloodthirsty twin sons as backup. Thirrin's own family are called into action but her daughter Medea is as coldhearted as her crippled brother Charlemagne is courageous setting out to search for allies. The epic battles sweep the story along through sky and sea and under ground, from the cold north to the heat of the dusty deserts, magical creatures like the Vampires of the Air and Snow Leopards adding to the danger. Vividly drawn landscapes, flashes of humour and very human characters keep the pages turning faster and faster.

CHRISTOPHER PAOLINI

**Eldest**

Corgi, 9780552552110

Picking up where *Eragon* left off, *Eldest* sees Eragon and his dragon Saphira heading off to the Land of the Elves for advanced training in magic and swordcraft. Although the battle was won, the rebel state saved from destruction and the status of shade slayer earned, King Galboratrix is still at large and a real danger. In a parallel story Eragon's cousin Roran is escaping enemies and facing battles which may ultimately endanger Eragon's life. With the dual narrative serving to increase the suspense of the adventure this is epic and involving, richly-detailed fantasy.

PAUL STEWART and CHRIS RIDDELL

**Clash of the Sky Galleons (The Edge Chronicles)**

Doubleday, 9780385607216

The penultimate book in the Edge Chronicles sees Quint and his father on a mission to track down and bring to justice the man who started the fire which killed his family. Fresh out of Knights Academy Quint is keen to begin life as a sky pirate, learning from his father. Preoccupied with revenge though his father puts his son's life in danger. Huge sky ship battles, terrifying creatures and secret weapons make this a real pageturner with a twisty turny plot brought to life through Riddell's characteristically detailed and quirky line drawings.

## FAST FORWARD

MELVIN BURGESS

### **Bloodsong** ❖

Puffin, 9780141316215

Set in a not so distant, savage and corrupt future, two rival gangs struggle for control and power over the ruined remains of London, but that's just the start. Warlords, genetically-engineered halfmen, shapeshifters, one-eyed men, suicide missions and living killing machines all have their place in this gripping and gruesome story of war, betrayal, revenge, love, hate, death, intrigue, corrupting power and magic. In this second book Sigurd is back from death to try to re-unite the kingdom. Successfully combining a post-apocalyptic sci-fi thriller with Icelandic Volsunga myths, Burgess creates a disturbingly described story both memorable and moving and unlike anything you've read before.

<http://web.onetel.com/~melvinburgess/>

EOIN COLFER

### **The Supernaturalist** ▶▶

Puffin, 9780141317410

Unwanted by his parents, 13-year-old Cosmo suffers the fate of all orphan children in Satellite City in the not too distant future; is dipped in a vaccine vat and whisked off freight class to the Clarissa Frayne Institute for Parentally Challenged Boys. His only hope lies in adoption, death or escape. Grabbing his chance when he can Cosmo gets away, is tracked down, has his life blood sucked out by spooky blue parasites and is recruited by a crew of kids on a death-defying mission to rid the world of the supernatural parasite creatures using Bond-style technogadgets. A funny, futuristic and fantastical adventure bursting with Colfer's hallmark lexical pyrotechnics, wacky humour, spaghetti-like plotting and breathtaking inventiveness.

[www.thesupernaturalist.co.uk](http://www.thesupernaturalist.co.uk)

[www.eoincolfer.com](http://www.eoincolfer.com)

OISIN MCGANN

### **Small-Minded Giants** ❖

Corgi, 9780552554732 (Publication due in July)

When Sol's father goes missing, accused of murder, Sol is determined to find out why. As he searches he is pursued by the security services into both a violent underworld and a society of corporate corruption and killing. He stumbles too upon Ash Harbour, a sinister city with scarce resources, built in a hollowed-out mountain, part of a vast wasteland destroyed by climate change and inhabited by Clockworkers whose frantic comings and goings generate the energy which keeps the system running smoothly. A fast and furious futuristic thriller for fans of Doctor Who with chilling Orwellian overtones.

[www.oisinmcgann.com](http://www.oisinmcgann.com)



GRAHAM MARKS

**Takedown**

Catnip, 9781846470226

In 2667 clean energy is being produced using the Charm Principle but when something goes very wrong with the atmosphere there's only one week left to save the world... and someone has to do it. Dachron Amok is chosen to travel back in time to see if he can correct the error in the energy producing calculation. Hours later Steve Anthony wakes in 2007 with a headache and a ruthless soldier in his brain begging him to save the world. A stunningly imagined and not too far-fetched futuristic thriller.

<http://www.marksworks.co.uk/>

WILLIAM NICHOLSON

**Jango (Noble Warriors)** ❖

Egmont, 9781405231275 (Publication due in September)

Seeker, Morning Star and the Wildman find that not everything in the mysterious sect of the noble fighting warrior monks, the Nomana, is as it seems, so abandoning their dreams, each leaves to follow new destinies, having gained remarkable mental and physical strength. But will this strength be enough with the warlord of the Orlan nation vowing to destroy the rocky island of Anacrea and gathering his forces? Nicholson creates vast, fully realized fantasy landscapes, very different yet still utterly convincing and relevant to our own, posing big questions about the purpose of life, love, courage and friendship. Mindstretching, mesmerizing and compulsively readable adventure to really make you think.

[www.williamnicholson.co.uk](http://www.williamnicholson.co.uk)

JAMES PATTERSON

**Saving the World and Other Extreme Sports (Maximum Ride)**

Headline, 9780755322008 (Publication due in May)

Max, Fang, Iggy, Nudge, Gazzy, and Angel are six extraordinary, genetically engineered kids, 98% human, 2% bird, with extraordinary powers. This is positively the last chance for the 'Flock' to blow apart an experiment to engineer a superior master race but this time, hounded out of America, they're scattered all over the world and it's much harder to work together against the ultimate enemy. Unpredictable, fast-paced, suspenseful read based around an interesting and topical theme sure to keep boys interested in reading. A real thrill ride.

[www.maximumride.co.uk](http://www.maximumride.co.uk)[www.jamespatterson.com](http://www.jamespatterson.com)

PHILIP REEVE

**A Darkling Plain (Mortal Engines Quartet)**

Scholastic, 9780439943468

An action-packed ending which keeps up the momentum of this stunningly imagined and skilfully executed fantasy quartet. Set in a dark and original, post-apocalyptic future where moving cities chug across the globe and feed off each other, nothing is black or white. Reeve has created characters to really care about. Hester is presumed dead, Wren's mother missing and her father hiding something. The shaky peace established between the traction cities and the Green Storm is disintegrating and events look set to spiral out of control with each side desperate to crush the other in the ultimate battle. Prepare to meet familiar faces from the past and some new ones too as events catapult the characters back to a now ruined London where their enthralling story started.

[www.mortalengines.co.uk](http://www.mortalengines.co.uk)

CHRIS WOODING

**Storm Thief**

Scholastic, 9780439959575

Orakos is a dark and dangerous mid-ocean city where anything can and does happen and no-one can ever enter or leave. Terrifyingly powerful probability storms lash the city and rule the lives of its inhabitants. One such storm leaves boy thief Rail with a strange artefact everyone seems to want, particularly the power-crazed Chief of the Protectorate Secret Police. It holds the answer to the secrets of the sea city but also puts Rail's life at risk, forcing him to flee. Wooding's writing zooms along at breakneck pace in this refreshingly different, cinematic sci-fi thriller which won't be forgotten easily.

[www.chriswooding.com](http://www.chriswooding.com)

# FEAR

TOM BECKER

## **Darkside**

Scholastic, 9780439944366

Disappear into another world. The Darkside is ruled by Jack the Ripper's children, it's a dark and deadly dangerous secret side of London, an evil place. Jonathan stumbles upon it by accident. His home has been attacked and his father committed to an asylum but his problems are only just beginning. Nightmares prowl the streets in Darkside, bounty hunters, werewolves and vampires are everywhere and there's no place for Jonathan to hide. A darkly gothic supernatural thriller to leave you holding your breath as you read.

[www.welcometodarkside.co.uk](http://www.welcometodarkside.co.uk)

JOSEPH DELANEY

## **The Spook's Secret (Wardstone Chronicles)**

Bodley Head, 9780370328287

Thomas is the 7th son of a 7th son following his destiny – apprentice to the local Spook charged with seeking out those committing dark and deadly deeds and protecting a region from ghosts and boggarts. This third adventure sees Tom and his master move to Spook's winter house, Anglezarke, where lurk all manner of dark and sinister secrets about Spook's past, not to mention a cellar-bound witch. Set in a Lancashire-like locality in the early 1600s this is cleverly plotted, spooky horror spiked with moody illustrations and a high fright factor.

[www.kidsatrandomhouse.co.uk/spooks](http://www.kidsatrandomhouse.co.uk/spooks)

SAM ENTHOVEN

## **The Black Tattoo** ❖

Doubleday, 9780385609661

Imagine sitting tucking into crispy duck in London's Chinatown with your best friend and his dad one minute then finding yourself in a sinister room high above a theatre the next, about to take the Test and watched by an extremely odd assortment of underworld characters. Jack looks on as his friend Charlie is taken over by a demon which leaves him with a terrifying temper and covered with giant sprawling black tattoos. He follows his transformed friend on a journey through hell, battling black-clothed soldiers, bats and bloodthirsty monsters. Fortunately Jack meets Esme, a young girl with all the martial arts skills of Jackie Chan, and her longhaired father and together they set off to rescue Charlie and thus save the world from evil. This is energetic, exciting writing with a compelling mix of horror and humour, fantasy and martial arts.

[www.theblacktattoo.com](http://www.theblacktattoo.com)

NEIL GAIMAN

**Coraline** ▶▶

Bloomsbury, 9780747562108

Teenager with attitude Coraline is bored to tears with her mundane existence until one day she finds a secret corridor behind a locked door, a corridor that takes her into a house very similar to her own with similar but much more sinister parents. Soon she is drawn into a fight to ensure her very survival. This is an up-to-the-minute interpretation of the Alice in Wonderland story and the kind of book where you turn the last page then start reading all over again.

[www.mousecircus.com](http://www.mousecircus.com)[www.neilgaiman.com](http://www.neilgaiman.com)

ALAN GIBBONS

**Setting of a Cruel Sun (The Lost Souls Stories)** ✦

Orion, 9781842551790

The Helati slave rebels believe they have broken the demonlord Darkwing's powers and are desperate to challenge their Sol-keet rulers. Darkwing however is waiting and watching, ready to unleash his power with the help of the undead as the sun sets and the cruel winter begins, determined still to take over both the gilded cities of the Sol-keet and the wastelands of the slaves. Stunning and unpredictable fantasy peopled with demons and the living dead, shapeshifters and tyrants, it catches the reader up and constantly surprises with plot twists, turns and sudden deaths. An epic read.

[www.alangibbons.com](http://www.alangibbons.com)

ANTHONY HOROWITZ

**Nightrise (Power of Five)**

Walker, 9781844286218

14-year-old twins with a strange psychic bond, Jamie and Scott, perform a mind-reading act in a Nevada theatre. Subsequently Scott is kidnapped by Nightrise, a huge international business corporation, Jamie is accused of his murder and pulled into a plot to assassinate the President of the US. Travelling across the world and 10,000 years back in time, the vividly imagined storyline involves some very bloody battle scenes, a prison breakout, a torture scene, a sinister villain and several large monsters. Horowitz excels at getting inside the minds of his teenage boy characters and testing them to the limits. This is a supernatural thriller all boys will be desperate to get their hands on.

[www.powerof5.co.uk](http://www.powerof5.co.uk)[www.anthonhorowitz.com](http://www.anthonhorowitz.com)

DEREK LANDY

**Skulduggery Pleasant** ▶▶

HarperCollins, 9780007241613

Stephanie's uncle Gordon is famous for his horror fiction but when he dies and leaves his house to Stephanie she soon discovers that his works of fiction were in fact fact, based on all the creepy goings-on in the house. With evil forces threatening her Stephanie finds help against the vampires and villains in the unlikely form of Skulduggery, the witty, wisecracking, singing, dancing skeleton of a dead wizard. Even dead skeletons like Skulduggery can't escape torture in this house though and that's when the battle against evil really has to begin. With its brilliantly drawn bad guys, dark Horowitz-style humour and thrill-a-page plot, boys will never have read anything like this before.

[www.skulduggerypleasant.co.uk](http://www.skulduggerypleasant.co.uk)

CLIFF MCNISH

**Breathe**

Orion, 9781842555590 (Publication due in May)

When Jack's dad dies he moves to an isolated old house with his mum and immediately senses spirits reaching out to him. The most malevolent of these is the Ghost Mother, a spirit torn apart with guilt at the death of her daughter. She draws her supernatural powers from the souls of the children she stops in their passing from the real world to the afterlife and this prevents her from falling into the Nightmare Passage of hell. Will Jack be next?

This is tautly-written, psychological thriller. A genuinely spooky story; the kind you read at arm's length, neck prickling and with the lights on.

[www.cliffmcnish.com](http://www.cliffmcnish.com)

E E RICHARDSON

**Devil for Sale** AA

Barrington Stoke, 9781842994627

A story chilling and thrilling by turns about a boy, Ben, who is under a curse which will kill him unless he manages to sell it on to someone else. Reading age 8 this has an interest level of 12+.

E E RICHARDSON

**The Intruders**

Corgi, 9780552552615

Joel hardly receives a warm welcome from his stepsister Cassie when he moves into his new house, but it doesn't matter because the derelict old house seems fascinating to him. There's something not quite right about it either though, for soon he starts having terrifying nightmares and a strange boy haunts his dreams. He needs to find out who the intruders are and fast. It's hard to tell where reality stops and nightmare begins in this dark, haunting mystery.

DARREN SHAN

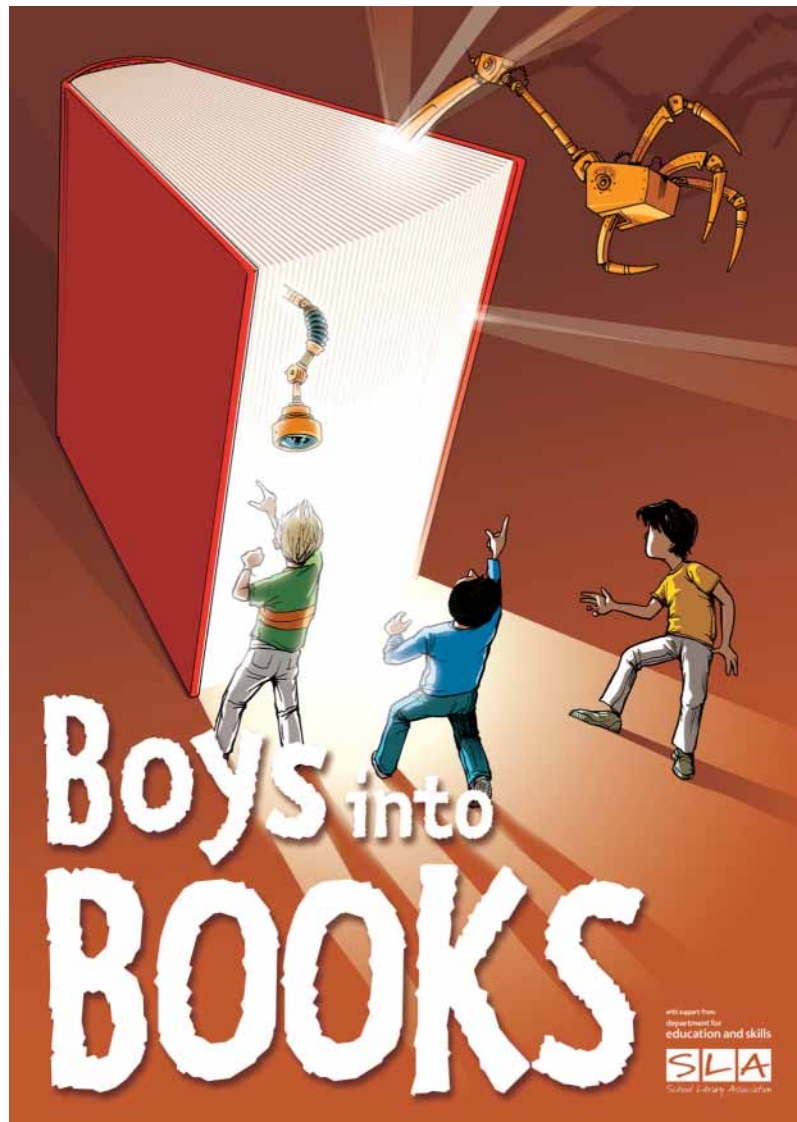
**Blood Beast (Demonata)**

HarperCollins, 9780007231324 Publication due in June

Grubbs Grady fears he can no longer escape his family destiny when he starts experiencing weird symptoms every full moon. Suddenly it doesn't matter that he has cheated death and defeated demons, his werewolf genes are stronger than any magic.

Shan takes readers into new fantasy realms, all of them inhabited by the worst kinds of demons. Gory, stomach-churningly gruesome and edge-of-the-seat exciting, these are fantastic and frightening reads which have boys hooked. Read it if you don't mind having a few nightmares.

[www.darrenshan.com](http://www.darrenshan.com)



## GO WILD

GILLIAN ARBUTHNOTT

### **Crazy Creatures (Reality Check)** AA

Barrington Stoke, 9781842994573

Part of the Reality Check series from Barrington Stoke this is a fabulous collection of fascinating facts about crazy creatures and all kinds of amazing animals, some eye-opening some hilarious and all true. Written for those with a reading age of 8 and well illustrated with black and white line drawings.

MICHAEL COLEMAN

### **The Fighting Pit (Bear Kingdom)**

Orchard, 9781846162145

In a weird world ruled by bears the humans are kept as pets, caged and used for experiments. After escaping the Howling Tower Ben is determined to find his parents but is captured again, taken as a pet sap to the Queen and faces a worse horror than he could ever have imagined. An unusual and original idea skillfully handled.

[www.michael-coleman.moonfruit.com](http://www.michael-coleman.moonfruit.com)

RICKY GERVAIS

### **Flanimals of the Deep**

Faber, 9780571234035

Beneath the world of the flanimals a whole new collection of genuinely funny flanimals lurk just waiting to be discovered. Gervais documents them all in great and almost believable detail here from the Mulgi to the Mulons, the Flambois to the Phlumphs, imaginary creatures who look every bit as weird as their names sound and live in the Deep Oceans. Like them or loathe them, Gervais' originality and imagination are breathtaking and, fortunately for boys (of all ages), show no signs of stopping!

[www.flanimals.com](http://www.flanimals.com)

BRIAN JACQUES

### **High Rhulain (Redwall)**

Puffin, 9780141319605

Tiria Wildlough is an otter maid who sets off from Redwall Abbey to the mysterious Green Isle on a mission to fulfil an ancient prophecy and claim her rightful inheritance. Drama and danger awaits and Tiria must join forces with an outlaw, his otterclan and some hares to defeat the wildcats and become High Rhulain. Jacques imagines completely credible fantasy worlds in which to immerse his readers and peoples them with animal characters who are almost human. Big battles, huge feasts and puzzling riddles to solve are all hallmarks of his masterful and prolific storytelling.

[www.redwall.org](http://www.redwall.org)

ROBIN JARVIS

**The Dark Portal (Deptford Mice)**

Hodder, 9780340930342

Albert Mouse squeezes through the Grill and disappears. In the Deptford sewers below lurks Jupiter, a fierce and fearsome creature intent on taking over the world and worshipped by all the other rats in the sewers. It's no place for a mouse and, on a journey to find their missing father, townmice Audrey and Arthur's chances of survival look very slim indeed. Bursting with action, danger, gruesome detail and some very narrow escapes these are real mouse eye views of our world from a prolific storyteller who excels at anthropomorphic tales such as this one.

[www.robinjarvis.com](http://www.robinjarvis.com)

DAREN KING

**Mouse Noses on Toast** ❖

Faber, 9780571231898

Mouse noses served on toast in a local restaurant? Surely that has to be some kind of sick joke or vicious rumour? Paul Mouse is taking no chances and decides to discover the truth, setting off with his friends to the mouse nose abattoir little suspecting what they will find there....This is a surreal adventure involving mouse activists, cheese addicts, Christmas tree decorations, a sheepdog, insane monsters and a good deal of mayhem. Something completely different and great for those who want a good giggle.

[www.darenking.co.uk](http://www.darenking.co.uk)

MICHELLE PAVER

**Soul Eater (Chronicles of Ancient Darkness)** ▶▶

Orion, 9781842551141 (Publication due in June)

The third part of a fantasy set in the superbly realized bleak, frozen wastelands of the Far North sees Torak and Wolf on a quest to destroy the deadly Soul Eaters. Confronting powerful mages, ice bears and evils of unimaginable proportions on the way, not to mention witnessing the capture of his wolf companion for a terrible sacrifice this is unputdownable, unguessable reading that completely immerses the reader in Torak's unforgiving world and gives a real sense of what it would be like to be in his shoes. Gripping storytelling.

[www.torak.info](http://www.torak.info) / [www.michellepaver.com](http://www.michellepaver.com)

DAVID PETERSEN

**Fall 1152 (Mouse Guard)**

Archaia, 9781932386578 (Publication due in June)

It's not an easy life being a mouse. Bleak weather conditions and dangerous predators mean there's always a need for the Mouse Guard, a group of soldier style mice who ensure that mice can wander freely and go about their mouse business in peace. In the first of the Mouse Guard exploits a merchant mouse goes missing so three of the Guardsmice go off in search of him, discovering what they had never suspected, a traitor mouse among the Guards themselves. Intricately detailed line drawings and warm, vibrant watercolour washes really bring the heroic characters of the mice alive in this engaging collection of far from cutesy comicstrip fantasy adventures.

[www.mouseguard.net](http://www.mouseguard.net) / [www.comicsworthreading.com](http://www.comicsworthreading.com)



# IMAGINE

L BRITTNEY

## **Nathan Fox** ✦

Macmillan, 9780330441162

14-year-old Nathan Fox is an up and coming gypsy actor in the same company as the young William Shakespeare. His skill as a horseman and acrobat and his innate ability to mimic and pick up other languages ensure he is soon recruited as an agent by the Spymaster General to join the intelligence network which keeps England the mightiest superpower of all. After learning skills of sword fighting, dagger throwing and codebreaking he travels to Venice to form new alliances, becoming embroiled instead in the dangerous Othello/Desdemona affair, a story Shakespeare would love to hear – if Nathan lives that long... A stunning interweaving of historical personalities and technological gadgetry, gory battles and spying this is highly visual and highly addictive writing.

[www.nathanfox-dangeroustimes.co.uk/home/](http://www.nathanfox-dangeroustimes.co.uk/home/)

JULIA GOLDING

## **Mines of the Minotaur (Companion's Quartet)**

Oxford, 9780192754585

The secret Society for the Protection of Mythical Creatures exists to make sure mythical beasts are kept safe from man and man from the mythical creatures. When Connie falls under the influence of the evil shapeshifter Kullervo she develops malevolent powers and her best friend Col begs her to seek help from the Society. Terrified they cast her out and fleeing for refuge to an old mine she discovers all kinds of sick mythical creatures abandoned by the Society. Together with their blind bedraggled Minotaur leader and Col, Connie summons the strength she needs to take on Kullervo.

Environmental issues meet Arthurian legend in this imaginative twist on the traditional good versus evil fantasy story, excitingly told.

[www.juliagolding.co.uk](http://www.juliagolding.co.uk)

JULIA GOLDING

## **The Ship Between the Worlds**

Oxford, 9780192754837

David Jones collects ships in bottles. His newest addition is also his favourite, the Golden Needle. Imagine his surprise then to wake up one morning aboard the Golden Needle and be swept off on a hair-raising adventure on the high seas. The ship is crewed by a motley bunch of pirates all attempting to atone for past misdeeds by sewing together all the worlds in danger of destruction (including ours) with golden thread. The Scythe ship, crewed by evil pirates, is in hot pursuit, trying to steal the thread before it, and time, runs out. If David can't avert the deadly battle it might signal the end of the worlds. Colourful characters in an action-packed, high-octane adventure you won't forget in a hurry.

[www.juliagolding.co.uk](http://www.juliagolding.co.uk)

F E HIGGINS

**The Black Book of Secrets**

Macmillan, 9781405089791

Cruelly betrayed by his parents Ludlow Fitch leaves the stinking city far behind him. He finds a job with Joe Zabbidou, a pawnbroker who trades in secrets for cash and has to record the secrets of the villagers in a leather book. Suddenly no-one is who they seem, even Zabbidou himself. Maybe even Ludlow also has dark secrets to hide..

Grim, atmospheric settings and highly individual and unusual characters give this superb debut novel about murder and the macabre a Dickensian feel and compulsive readability.

JAMES A OWEN

**Here There be Dragons (Chronicles of the Imaginarium Geographica) ❖**

Simon &amp; Schuster, 9781416932499 (Publication due in May)

In 1917 a professor is murdered because of a very special book, the *Imaginarium Geographica*, which maps the worlds of myth and legend, folk and fairytale. One of his students is given the atlas for safekeeping and, knowing that his own life too must now be in danger, he sets off with two companions on a ship which, its eccentric owner claims, will take them through these imaginary lands to the Archipelago of Dreams.

Pursued by all manner of terrible creatures like the half-human half-werewolf Wendigo and the wicked WinterKing, the three boys have to learn to trust each other if they are to defeat the dark forces threatening the real and imaginary worlds. Such vivid experiences hone their storytelling powers and their adventure is loaded with clues as to their real identity which will eventually be brilliantly revealed in an 'I Didn't See THAT Coming' conclusion. A host of classical writers from Dickens to Conan Doyle and Lewis Carroll also make clever cameo appearances.

[www.heretherebedragons.net](http://www.heretherebedragons.net)

PHILIP REEVE

**Here Lies Arthur**

Scholastic, 9780439955331

Myrddin is a renowned bard; a conman, a traveller and a teller of tales. His sidekick Gwyna is just a small mouse of a girl but with Myrddin's transforming power she becomes a warrior, a spy or a goddess. Maybe Myrddin's magic is powerful enough to turn a warband leader into the greatest hero of all time?

This is a miniature masterpiece; at once a sparkling and emotionally engaging reimagining of how the legend of King Arthur might really have been created, a clever historical detective fiction and a superbly crafted story about the immense power of story.

[www.philipreeve.co.uk](http://www.philipreeve.co.uk)

PHILIP REEVE

**Larklight**

Bloomsbury, 9780747584407

Larklight is a huge and sprawling Victorian mansion where Arthur (Art) Mumbleby lives with his father, Reverend Marmaduke and his intensely irritating little sister, Myrtle – and it just happens to be travelling through space. The news that the house is to receive a mysterious visitor comes as a shock but the family's manic preparations have in no way prepared them for Mr Webster when he finally arrives catapulting them into a 'Dreadful and Terrifying' adventure. They travel to a remote outer space far beyond the moon battling against the evil First Ones in a desperate bid to save the Universe as well as themselves.

A completely original and fantastical Victorian space adventure told with style and highly entertaining period jokes.

[www.larklight.com](http://www.larklight.com)

[www.philipreeve.co.uk](http://www.philipreeve.co.uk)

RICK RIORDAN

**Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters**

Puffin, 9780141381497

Percy Jackson is the 21st century son of Poseidon with some very special half-god, half-human friends just like the heroes in the old Greek Myths. Together they fight mythological monsters and titan lords. In this adventure he discovers that the boundaries protecting the summer training camp for the young demi-gods are disintegrating leaving the camp wide open to attack. Only the golden fleece can restore the boundaries, and only Percy can find it, by sailing across the dangerous Sea of Monsters.

High drama, hilarious adventures, quirky characters, witty narration and an imaginative updating of the Greek god myths give this exciting fantasy an extra dimension.

[www.puffin.co.uk/static/cs/uk/15/minisites/percyjackson/](http://www.puffin.co.uk/static/cs/uk/15/minisites/percyjackson/)

ANGIE SAGE

**Physik (Septimus Heap)**

Bloomsbury, 9780747583974

More alchemy and dark adventure as seventh son of a seventh son Heap accidentally releases the ghost of a diabolical Queen who died 500 years previously from a forgotten room. Etheldredda was truly breathtakingly awful and death hasn't changed her a bit. Far from being grateful for her freedom she plans to ensure everlasting life for herself whatever the cost. An original and funny fantasy series packed with wacky characters, wit and wizardry and impossible to stop reading. Short chapters and illustrations add to the appeal.

[www.septimusheap.co.uk](http://www.septimusheap.co.uk)

MARCUS SEDGWICK

**My Swordhand is Singing**

Orion, 9781842555583, (Publication due in July)

All his life Peter and his woodcutter father Tomas have moved from place to place until they pitch up in Chust in a bitterly cold midwinter, a sinister place with inhabitants as inhospitable as the climate. Tomas seems to have closed down and shut out his son. A colourful band of gypsies with a real zest for life offer Peter a diversion but the gypsy princess he falls for is in fact a Vampire Slayer and Chust is a village of the living dead, waiting to take their revenge on the living. Even stranger for Peter, his cynical father suddenly recovers his fighting spirit. Nothing fascinates like the vampire myth and with its bleak landscapes, 17<sup>th</sup> century setting and lyrical language painting vivid pictures this is a well-judged, tautly written interpretation which pulls the reader in with a vice-like grip. Chilling even before the dead come to life, classy and understated it is horror writing at its best.

[www.marcussedgwick.com](http://www.marcussedgwick.com)

MATTHEW SKELTON

**Endymion Spring**

Puffin, 9780141320342

In present day Oxford Blake finds an ancient book of dragon skin in the college library and strange and dangerous things start happening to him. As he looks words appear on its pages meant only for him. The book binds him inextricably to a printer's devil with the name of Endymion Spring working for Gutenberg in the 15th century as printing was becoming widespread. This is no ordinary book however for the secret of all knowledge is held within its pages. Switching cleverly between the centuries this is both an intriguing story of real history and a modern mystery.

JONATHAN STROUD

**Ptolemy's Gate (Bartimaeus Trilogy) ▶▶**

Corgi, 9780552550284

In this concluding chapter strikes and riots are signs that the magician's rule of London is weakening. While Nathaniel is advising the Prime Minister, Kitty is undercover attempting to break the conflict between djinn and humans in order to destroy the magicians. The only person who can help her is Bartimaeus, the last djinni, now trapped on earth and rapidly losing his powers. Together the three must confront the biggest threat ever in the history of magic. Inspired storylines, complex characters and an utterly believable fantasy world from a storyteller at the top of his game.

[www.jonathanstroud.com](http://www.jonathanstroud.com)

# INVESTIGATE

KEVIN BROOKS

## **Bloodline** AA

Barrington Stoke, 9781842992029

The perfect crime story for boys featuring a crazy family, gangster girl, a hold-up at gunpoint and a bag full of cash. It is short, pacy, unbearably tense and full of razorsharp dialogue. Although the reading age is 8 the interest age is 13.

KEVIN BROOKS

## **Johnny Delgado Like Father Like Son** AA

Barrington Stoke, 9781842993583

When Johnny Delgado decides to become a private detective it seems like such a good idea at the time. But on his rough, run-down council estate with its gang wars the reality is not quite so glamorous. In this story Johnny has to find the man who killed his father and exact his revenge. With a reading age of 8 and interest age of 13 this is an easy and exciting read crackling with atmosphere, attitude and suspense.

EOIN COLFER

## **Artemis Fowl and the Lost Colony** ▶▶

Puffin, 9780141320793 (Publication due in May)

Artemis Fowl, criminal teenage mastermind, is a good guy now and close friends with his former adversary Holly. Colfer never takes the easy way out plotwise and where lesser authors might be running out of ideas this adventure is even more original, convoluted – and exciting. Long ago the fairy people in Ireland were defeated and forced to live underground, all except one family: the Demons who are now causing Artemis no end of bother... With the introduction of a new 12-year-old French genius as a rival, a new love interest for Artemis and the same insane mix of ingenious plans, life-threatening dangers, high tech gadgets, codes to crack and witty one-liners the Fowl series just keeps on getting better.

[www.artemisfowl.co.uk](http://www.artemisfowl.co.uk)

[www.eoincolfer.com](http://www.eoincolfer.com)

EOIN COLFER

## **Half Moon Investigations** ▶▶

Puffin, 9780141320809 (Publication due in July)

Fletcher Moon may be half-size and still at school but that doesn't stop him being a fully qualified detective called in to crack many a petty crime that others can't. In this particular schoolyard investigation Fletcher is working for a pink and sparkly Barbie girl, finds himself kidnapped by the chief suspect, framed for fire-starting, flees custody with a known criminal and stars in the school talent show. The internal monologues running in Fletcher's head as he pieces together his evidence are ingenious. Every bit as well drawn as Artemis, Fletcher is definitely a character to watch out for in future.

[www.halfmooninvestigations.co.uk](http://www.halfmooninvestigations.co.uk) / [www.eoincolfer.co.uk](http://www.eoincolfer.co.uk)

FRANK COTTRELL BOYCE

**Framed** ▶▶

Macmillan, 9780330434256

Dylan's parents run the Snowdonia Oasis Auto Marvel garage in a tiny remote Welsh village. As the only boy there he spends his time trying to persuade his sisters to play football and filling in the petrol log which helps him keep track of everyone driving in and out of Manod. A convoy of lorries driving up the mountain towards a disused mine arouses Dylan's curiosity and he turns detective to find out who these people are and what they have to hide there, eventually uncovering millions of pounds' worth of paintings, as well as wild chickens and some very strange cakes! Inspired by a newspaper cutting of what really happened to the National Gallery paintings to protect them during World War Two this is a very funny, easy to read, impossible to put down story about the importance and beauty of art, with characters who really keep you reading.

[www.frankcottrellboyce.com](http://www.frankcottrellboyce.com)

JOSHUA DODER

**Grk and the Hot Dog Trail** ❖

Andersen Press, 9781842705537

This adventure sees schoolboy detective Tim and his crazy canine side-kick Grk holidaying in New York when a priceless golden statue is stolen. Soon the dynamic duo are sniffing for clues and following the trail of hot dogs from Central Park to Brooklyn to try to retrieve the missing dachshund from the hot dog factory owner under suspicion. Hair-raising chases and hilarious incidents make this an ideal easy read series for action adventure fans who like something just a little bit different.

[www.joshuadoder.com](http://www.joshuadoder.com)

MALCOLM ROSE

**Final Lap (Traces)**

Kingfisher, 9780753460054

The next action-packed adventure for Forensic Investigator Luke Harding and his 'right hand robot' Malc who together have the talent to crack any crime. Set in a future reality where the north is the cultural capital and London a slum, technology is king and the Authorities decide your future from the age of 5, this is a real serial thriller. In this episode the Youth Olympic Games about to begin in London are hit by a series of 'suspicious accidents'; a missing director, sabotaged swimming pool and mysteriously murdered construction workers. Luke is called in but after a number of near misses is injured himself leaving Malc and Luke's girlfriend to piece together the clues and find the killer... before he kills Luke... Tight plotting, credible clue trails and last minute twists make this real edge of the seat reading.

[www.malcolmrose.co.uk](http://www.malcolmrose.co.uk)

JAK SHADOW

**The Crime Lord (F.E.A.R. Adventures)** ❖

Wizard Books, 9781840466935

Robbery is rife on the streets of Victorian London. The Crime Lord and his army of child thieves are to blame and the police are powerless to stop them. This is not like a normal book. Instead of reading about child secret agents the reader becomes the secret agent. It's up to the reader to work out the puzzles, pick up the clues, solve the crime and determine how the story works out in the end. This is a novel and hugely motivating series, each set in a different time zone which puts the reader in charge. Exciting, interactive and great fun.

ALEX SHEARER

**Tins**

Macmillan, 9780330431910

Fergus would be the first person to admit he's a bit of a geek; he loves nothing better than buying label-less tins from the local supermarket just for the excitement of finding out what's inside. One day he opens a tin and finds the end of a bloodied finger inside followed by a note with the word 'Help!' on it. Suddenly he's on the trail, determined to find out what's going on at a factory which can produce such sinister products. Totally gross, it's guaranteed to appeal.

ELIZABETH SINGER HUNT

**Great Britain (Jack Stalwart)** ❖

Red Fox, 9781862301269

The Crown Jewels have mysteriously gone missing from the Tower of London. Who else to call in but 9-year-old secret agent Jack Stalwart? Very soon Jack is trying to outwit a master magician in order to return the jewels. Part of a pacy series which sees Jack regularly interrupt his worldwide hunt to find his missing brother in order to solve baffling crimes others can't, like saving the life of a Grand Prix driver, rescuing an endangered giant panda, stopping poachers in Kenya and preventing a genetically-engineered dinosaur destroying New York City.

PAUL STEWART &amp; CHRIS RIDDELL

**The Curse of the Nightwolf (Barnaby Grimes)**

Doubleday, 9780385611886

Tick-tock lad Barnaby Grimes is a regular sight around the rooftops of Dickensian London, running his errands and always on the lookout for a new crime to solve. He stumbles on more than he bargained for the night he is attacked by, and kills, a huge dog.

Maybe there is a connection between the sudden plague of big dogs and the strange tonics prescribed to the poor by the crooked but respectable looking Doctor? Barnaby decides it's his job to find out, especially after his friend goes missing too.

Terrific page-turning fiction which sees the Stewart–Riddell partnership move from fantasy to gripping gothic horror series – but with the same intricately detailed illustrations.

ELEANOR UPDALE

**Montmorency's Revenge**

Scholastic, 9780439942928

The fourth exciting standalone title in the Montmorency series about a Victorian detective who started his life in the sewer and became a gentleman. In this adventure Montmorency is intent on hunting down the terrorists who tried to end his life but in his travels round the globe ends up attempting to prevent the assassination of the President of the US. Goodies and baddies are equally well-drawn in this series and short chapters help keep the reader in suspense, playing a tantalizing game of cat and mouse to try to outsmart their detective hero.

[www.eleanorupdale.co.uk](http://www.eleanorupdale.co.uk)

CATHERINE WEBB

**The Obsidian Dagger (Horatio Lyle)**

Atom, 9781904233794

Strange goings-on in the city of London signal a new case for Horatio Lyle, ex-Special Constable, eccentric scientist and inventor and reluctant amateur detective, called on when things get too tricky for the police. Murders and missing statues are bad enough but when the roof of St Paul's disappears Lyle calls in his reformed pickpocket sidekick and wiser-than-all-of-them-together dog and starts his investigations. Billed by the publisher as Sherlock Holmes written by Terry Pratchett, this bizarre but brilliant tale is packed with action and should satisfy fans of old-fashioned adventure, the supernatural, detective and fantasy fiction.



# LAUGH

DOMINIC BARKER

## **The Boy who was Wanted Dead or Alive – or both (Blart)**

Bloomsbury, 9780747584292

15-year-old Blart has already saved the world from the unspeakably evil Zoltab. Settling down to enjoy his unheroic life on the pig farm with his grandad, Blart's peace is again interrupted by the return of Capablanca. A mistake in Capa's original research means both stand accused of collusion with Zoltab and now have to prove their innocence to keep their lives. A Shrek-like parody of swords and sorcery fantasy with larger than life characters, off the wall humour and delicious verbal invention.

[www.bloomsbury.com/blart](http://www.bloomsbury.com/blart)

PHILIP CAVENEY

## **Sebastian Darke: Prince of Fools**

Bodley Head, 9780370329154

When Sebastian Darke's celebrated father, Prince of Fools, dies suddenly Sebastian must provide for his family. Although Sebastian cannot joke or jest to save his life, he reluctantly sets off for the magical city of Keladon in the hope of being appointed court jester to King Septimus and earn his fortune. Accompanied only by a cheeky backchatting buffalope and Cornelius, a pint-sized but powerful warrior, Sebastian encounters every danger and dark deed imaginable en route from wicked witches to bloodthirsty baddies. Fast paced, funny and studded with sparkling buffalope one-liners this is perfect reading for Shrek fans.

[www.philip-caveney.co.uk](http://www.philip-caveney.co.uk)

STEVE COLE

## **The Moomy's Curse (Cows in Action) ❖**

Red Fox, 9781862301900

Professor McMoo is a cow so clever he can build time travel machines from the discarded parts of farm machinery. He is also the founder member of the CIA or Cows In Action; a crack team of cow commandos. Here they are called to Ancient Egypt to investigate rumours that a time travelling termoonator is impersonating Tutankhamen, and attempt to restore history to the way it should be. Laugh-out-loud funny, escapist reading and one of a highly a-moo-sing series.

FIONA DUNBAR

**Toonhead** ❖

Orchard, 9781846162374

Despite his artistic name Pablo seems to have inherited absolutely none of his parents' artistic talent. He does however have an uncanny knack for drawing cartoons which turn out to predict the future in extraordinary fashion. Suddenly Pablo finds himself kidnapped by gangsters and carried off to Spain in a bookmaking scam.

This original, non-stop adventure includes some of Pablo's cartoons and there's plenty of extra fun to be had in guessing what they might mean before the author reveals all.

NEIL GAIMAN and DAVE MCKEAN

**The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish** ▶▶

Bloomsbury, 9780747575184

All boys like to swap stuff so when a boy swaps his dad for two goldfish he doesn't really think through the consequences. He never realized his dad had such a high value. He's been swapped so many times that getting him back when his mum finds out could be very tricky indeed. Spookily sinister and surreal cautionary tale stunningly enhanced by Dave McKean's dark, spiky and brooding illustrations.

[www.mousecircus.com](http://www.mousecircus.com)[www.neilgaiman.com](http://www.neilgaiman.com)

CLIVE GIFFORD

**So You Think You Know the Simpsons?**

Hodder, 9780340917152

An updated version of the bestselling quiz book about the world's favourite and funniest family. 100 new questions make a mind-boggling total of 1100, divided into easy, medium and hard so you're guaranteed a new one every time with answers provided at the back. Boys are mad about beating each other and will compete for hours. Not the book to buy for a quiet library but perfect for sparking interest in and reading of the original comic books.

SHARON HOLT

**It's True You Can Make Your Own Jokes**

Allen &amp; Unwin, 9781741147339

Ever wondered who makes up jokes? Or why some people can tell them and others can't? The history and the how to of joke-making and joke-telling are revealed here. Packed full of puns and punchlines, riddles, tongue twisters and hilarious joke examples with hints on how best to tell them this is a real crowd pleaser. Even the cover screams 'read me'!

MICHAEL LAWRENCE

**Ryan's Brain (Jiggy McCue)**

Orchard, 9781846162275

Jiggy McCue is in trouble again. This time it's his schoolmate Bryan Ryan's brain which is unstoppably out of control and Jiggy somehow has to stop it taking over the world. Cliffhanger chapter endings keep the pages turning faster in this series of Jiggy McCue adventures, all laugh-out-loud, wickedly funny reads.

[www.wordybug.com](http://www.wordybug.com)

IAN OGILVY

**Measle and the Slitherghoul (Measle Stubbs Adventures)**

OUP, 9780192726162 (Publication due in June)

A slippery, slithery blob of slime has broken out of its prison and has gobbled up some of the weaselly wrathmonks. Having ingested their dislike of Measle the slime is now after him. Measle needs to beat his fear before the slime beats him. Inventive storytelling, witty jokes, rapidfire delivery and zany plots guarantee these magical adventure stories a wide readership.

[www.ianogilvy.com](http://www.ianogilvy.com)

DAV PILKEY

**Captain Underpants and the Preposterous Plight of the Purple Potty People** ❖

Scholastic, 9780439951340

George, Harold and the bionic hamster are back in a backwards reality where the teachers care and have a sense of humour, the librarian lets you read banned books and the school canteen serves up 5\* meals. Trying to carry this hyper-reality into their own world proves a big mistake for the boys discover evil versions of themselves not to mention Captain Blunderpants, who plan to destroy their hometown. It's up to the elderly grandparents to save the day – and the boys! Part novel, part flip-o-rama, part comic strip and written to include all the spelling mistakes of its heroes this is an easy to read, laugh-a-minute series boys devour.

[www.pilkey.com](http://www.pilkey.com)

[www.scholastic.com/captainunderpants](http://www.scholastic.com/captainunderpants)

KJARTAN POSKITT

**Urgum the Axe Man** ❖

Scholastic, 9780439959193

The Lost Desert has never known an Axeman as fierce or as furious as Urgum. He can even catch cannonballs in his teeth, eat live bulls and carry cobras down his vest. Only clean water gives him collywobbles. Returning home one day after a hard day's axeing, tackling the usual carnivorous plants and monstrous creatures, Urgum discovers his wife has redecorated the cave and put in a toylett. The gods too conspire against him, sending him a pre-teen barbarian daughter Molly with a big big attitude to complement his seven savage sons. Philip Reeve's finely detailed and cartoon illustrations bring the comical characters leaping off the page. Laugh-out loud funny and packed with witty wordplay.

[www.urgum.co.uk](http://www.urgum.co.uk)

TERRY PRATCHETT

**A Hat Full of Sky** ▶▶

Doubleday, 978052551441

Tiffany Aching has an invisible hat given to her by the greatest witch of all and is being tutored in all things witchy by Miss Level. She's being stalked however by a malevolent hiver which takes over the brain of its human prey to do evil. She is owed a favour by the argumentative Nac MacFeeple fairies, thrown out of fairyland for their drunken antics, and they are only too pleased to fly to her rescue and stop her going on a powercrazed rampage. With trademark wacky Pratchett humour and a surprise on every page this junior Discworld story will delight diehard Pratchett fans and make him many new ones.

[www.randomhouse.co.uk/childrens/terrypratchett/home.htm](http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/childrens/terrypratchett/home.htm)

PHILIP RIDLEY

**Zip's Apollo**

Puffin, 9780141313849

Zip, his mum and baby brother, Newt, move to Yet to be Named Street in New Town with plastic grass and plastic trees. It's a far cry from their previous home deep in the forest. Everything changes when Zip brings home a shopping trolley from the supermarket. It starts speaking with the family and puts the magic back into all of their lives again. Ridley excels at eccentric characters, wacky imagination, rap-style rhythms, fast-paced plotting and cliff-hanger chapter endings. His urban fairytales make the very ordinary truly extraordinary.

JEFF SMITH

**The Great Cow Race (Bone)**

Cartoon Books, 978007244775

Boys will love the wacky world of Boneville, home to a larger than life, loveable little character who gets into all kinds of crazy trouble. In this episode Bone's cousins Phoney and Smiley show up and Phoney starts playing his old con tricks again, throwing the bets on the annual cow race by entering his own 'cow', really Smiley in a cow suit. Meanwhile ominous stirrings in the woods signal that the rats are ready to go to war again. One of the most phenomenally successful, critically acclaimed comic book series ever, this new glossy, full colour version will more than earn its shelf space – not that the books will spend much time on it!

[www.boneville.com](http://www.boneville.com)

## LOOK BACK

ROALD DAHL

### **Boy and Going Solo** ▶▶

Puffin, 9780141311418

Roald Dahl's life was every bit as dramatic and exciting as his stories and filled with characters who could well have stepped out of their pages. Here he tells of his childhood, schooldays and summer holidays; the tricks played with his friends on the larger-than-life sweetshop owner Mrs Pratchett, regular canings at the hand of the Headmaster and long idyllic, laid-back days in Norway. Leaving England for Africa he travels extensively before joining up with the RAF on the outbreak of World War Two and learning to fly. Serving in Libya, Egypt and Greece, Dahl gives a gripping account of his experience as a fighter pilot, his easy writing style giving the impression that he is actually telling his amazing life story just to you. Moving and memorable, all boys will be hooked by the story of the man behind their favourite books.

[www.roalddahl.com](http://www.roalddahl.com)

MORRIS GLEITZMAN

### **Once**

Puffin, 9780141320632

9-year-old Felix has been placed in a Polish orphanage for safety by his parents. When the German soldiers come and start burning the nuns' books Felix knows he must escape and make sure his parents, who are booksellers, are safe. His journey through Nazi-occupied Poland is a dangerous one but Felix is taken in by Barney, a dentist who hides and protects Jewish children. When they are discovered Barney is forced to make the ultimate sacrifice. A tragic (and true) story, simply told, shot through with flashes of comedy and courage, friendship and hope. One you can't help thinking about when it's over.

[www.morrisgleitzman.com](http://www.morrisgleitzman.com)

ELIZABETH LAIRD

### **Crusade**

Macmillan, 9780330443111 (Publication due in June)

The lives of two boys from completely opposing worlds and faiths coincide in this stunning new historical adventure; Adam a dog-boy for a crusading knight and Salim an apprentice to a travelling doctor. Laird is a master storyteller who stirs up real emotion, draws her readers into the story and really does bring the high drama of history vividly to life.

[www.elizabethlaird.co.uk](http://www.elizabethlaird.co.uk)

ELIZABETH LAIRD

**Secrets of the Fearless**

Macmillan, 9780330434669

Wrongly accused of murder, 12-year-old John Barr, press-ganged into joining the navy, is training to become a powder monkey on HMS *Fearless*. Everything is not as it seems to be on the mighty ship and after a bloody sea battle John is forced ashore with his new friend Kit in a secret operation to outwit French spies but the boys soon find themselves abandoned as the ship sets sail without them. Does John have what it takes to be a real war hero?

With excitement, action and espionage on every page this is a brilliantly crafted historical adventure which wears its learning lightly and paints a vivid picture of life at sea during the Napoleonic Wars.

[www.elizabethlaird.co.uk](http://www.elizabethlaird.co.uk)

NICOLA MORGAN

**The Highwayman's Footsteps** ❖

Walker, 9781406303117

Well to do and wealthy, William has nevertheless had enough of his cruel, corrupt father and bullying brother and runs away... straight into the path of a highwayman, or rather his daughter, Bess, in disguise. The fierce, feisty and beautiful Bess shares her family's story and way of life with William. With a new danger over every page William learns quickly to rely on himself and his wits, on the run from his family and the King's army, living rough on the bleak Yorkshire Dales stealing horses in order to survive. As his self-reliance increases so does his compassion for the poor. Morgan's storytelling style is remarkable, sparing the reader none of the brutal hardship of Georgian life in an atmospheric tale at once gripping and gritty and stomach-churningly gruesome, retaining all of the doom and drama of the Noyes poem which inspired it.

[www.nicolamorgan.co.uk](http://www.nicolamorgan.co.uk)

MICHAEL MORPURGO

**Billy the Kid** ❖

Collins, 9780007105472

An old man watching children playing football in the park on his 80th birthday starts to reminisce about his own life. A champion striker for Chelsea in the 1930s his sparkling career was cut short by the outbreak of World War Two. This is the simply told and lightly illustrated story of his life before and after and it packs a huge emotional punch.

[www.michaelmorpurgo.com](http://www.michaelmorpurgo.com)

MICHAEL MORPURGO

**Private Peaceful**

HarperCollins, 9780007150076

When war breaks out brothers Charlie and Tommo Peaceful enlist and are immediately sent to serve in France. From the trenches they tell terrible heartrending tales of bombs, bullets, brutal regimes, dirt and disease, suffering and sadness. Set against this suffering are Tommo's happy memories of his simple childhood; his first day at school, his special brother and his mother's devotion. Morpurgo is an honest writer who never talks down to his readers about matters of love and loss, life and death, friendship and family. Here he challenges children and young people to understand a wide range of attitudes to and the causes and effects of war, clearly showing his own anger at the appalling treatment of the young soldiers. Seamlessly interweaving important issues and events he never fails to spin an enthralling, emotional and ultimately unforgettable story.

[www.michaelmorpurgo.com](http://www.michaelmorpurgo.com)

JAMES RIORDAN

**Rebel Cargo**

Frances Lincoln, 9781845075255

A twist of fate brings two very different children together – Abena, a headstrong Ashanti girl sold into slavery on the infamous Jamaican trade route and chained up in a filthy prison, and Mungo, a poverty-stricken English orphan cabin boy kidnapped and sold as a white slave. Mungo dramatically saves Abena's life and the pair escape towards a safe camp for runaway slaves but first they must outrun and outwit those sent after them by their owners. Interestingly pirates and plantation owners are allowed to justify their inhuman behaviour in an unflinching, shocking and horribly realistic account of 18th century slavery which packs a huge emotional punch. Although there can be no conventional happy ending, friendship and hope do triumph over desperation and hate.

MARKUS ZUSAK

**The Book Thief** ❖ ▶▶

Bodley Head, 9780370329215

Nazi Germany, 1939. Liesel steals a book carelessly left by the graveside of her brother. It is to be the first of several stolen from the mayor's library and from Nazi bookburnings, all taken at key moments in her growing up. From these stolen books her father teaches her to read and she begins to write down anecdotes about her own life, including the taking in of a Jew to keep him safe which turns her world upside down. These same anecdotes are later used by Death to narrate Liesel's life from 10 to 14. This is a brilliantly crafted and narrated story about life, love and the power of language in our lives. Intense and emotional, it is not easily forgotten.

[www.markuszusak.com](http://www.markuszusak.com)

# PLAY

THERESA BRESLIN

## **Divided City**

Corgi, 9780552551885

Graham's life in Glasgow revolves around playing football with his friend Joe and going to matches with his grandfather. When he finds a young asylum seeker lying bleeding in the street he's reluctant to get involved but knows he has no choice. The Orange Walks have started and tensions between the Catholics and the Protestants are rising. A compelling, skillfully plotted, edgy story which challenges young people to look again at where they belong and encourages tolerance and understanding.

[www.theresabreslin.co.uk](http://www.theresabreslin.co.uk)

ALAN DURANT

## **Game Boy (4u2read.ok) AA**

Barrington Stoke, 9781842994061

JP is addicted to his GameBoy and lives just to try out his next new game. On loading this one though a strange message appears and JP is pulled into a thrilling life and death, touch and go adventure. He'll need all his gaming skills to get out of this one. Written for younger teenagers with a reading age of less than 8 in short chapters with a comic book style illustration on almost every page.

[www.alandurant.co.uk](http://www.alandurant.co.uk)

ALAN DURANT

## **Stat Man (FYI) AA**

Barrington Stoke, 9781842992920

Did you know ...?

From the FYI Fiction Packed with Stacks of Facts series this is the story of Arnie who wants to play for his team in the Cup Final and who knows so much about football his friends call him Stat Man. These facts feature largely in the story. This is a clever story crammed with fascinating facts about the beautiful game – a winning combination for reluctant boy readers with a reading age of 8.

[www.alandurant.co.uk](http://www.alandurant.co.uk)



GARTH NIX

**Lady Friday (Keys to the Kingdom)**

HarperCollins, 9780007175093

The fifth in the series, each taking its name from a day of the week, sees anti-hero Arthur Penhaligon's adventures becoming suddenly more dangerous. Four of the bizarre creatures in the House have already been defeated, their Keys surrendered. Hundreds of elderly people are now missing from hospital, transferred to the Secondary Realms for Lady Friday's own terrible purpose as she sucks out their good experiences in order to grow stronger. It's down to Arthur again to find a way out. Powerful enemies, terrifying new challenges and exuberant writing ensure this surreal, high energy fantasy adventure series retains its popularity. Perfect for computer games fans.

[www.garthnix.co.uk](http://www.garthnix.co.uk)

MAL PEET

**The Penalty** ❖

Walker, 9781844280995

El Brujito (The Magician) is a hugely talented teenage footballer. When he suddenly disappears without trace, South America's leading sports journalist, Paul Faustino, determines to track him down, discovering a story of corruption and murder in a country with a legacy of slavery. A simple story beautifully told and sure to convert even non-readers with its football themes.

[www.paulfaustino.com](http://www.paulfaustino.com)

BALI RAI

**Dream On** AA

Barrington Stoke, 9781842991954

Baljit is mad about football and dreams of playing for Liverpool. His family make him work in his dad's chippy instead of going out to practise so when invited for professional trials he lies about where he's going. He wins his Liverpool place and now has to come clean with his parents. A realistic and readable story about prejudice, ambition, family tradition and friendship. Warmly written and witty it has a reading level of 8 and interest level of 12+.

[www.balirai.com](http://www.balirai.com)

ROBERT RIGBY

**Goal 2: Living the Dream**

Corgi, 9780552554084

Having made it in UK Premier League football as a midfielder for Newcastle United the hugely talented Santiago now signs for world class dreamteam Real Madrid, playing alongside Ronaldo, Beckham and Raul. European football and the Championship league is a whole different ball game though with new pressures on and off the pitch; fighting all the time for a place in the squad, keeping your feet on the ground and staying loyal to your girlfriend back home. An exciting and involving sequel which conveys all the power and passion of the beautiful game while looking behind the glitz and glamour of the celebrity football lifestyle at the frustration and at the commitment needed to get to the top.

# SPY

A J BUTCHER

## **Agent Orange (Spy High)**

Atom, 9781904233398

Spy High is a school for spies and counter-espionage. In this stand-alone mission the school's leader (and Agent Bex's father) seems to be becoming far too self-important. Insisting that Bex's best friend be mind-wiped, sending more spies than ever off on top secret missions and investing in three times more weapons for Spy High, he seems to be plotting a vast army and the Spies need to find out why. All the action, excitement and explosive plotting an aspiring spy reader needs.

[www.theverauxcollege.co.uk/](http://www.theverauxcollege.co.uk/)

MICHAEL CARROLL

## **Sakkara (New Heroes)**

HarperCollins, 9780007210930

Once all the superheroes in the world were wiped out. Colin is still reeling from the shock of discovering his parents were two of those world famous superheroes and is coming to terms with his own inherited superpowers and those of his best friends when the media pick up their story and force the teenagers into hiding in Sakkara, a strange place with secrets of its own. Deciding whether to use his powers for good or evil is vital, especially when confronted with the evil Victor Cross... Carroll's highly visual and spare writing style make this the perfect series for leading comic book fans into fiction.

JOE CRAIG

## **Jimmy Coates: Revenge**

HarperCollins, 9780007232857

The latest high-speed adventure sees Jimmy, a young teenage half-boy half-machine, with mysterious powers, still on the run from NJ7, this time to Chinatown, New York. Once there, Jimmy experiences painful headaches and flashing images. He is becoming increasingly desperate to convince the outside world of the evidence locked inside his head and have his revenge. Packed full of shocks and surprises, constant dangers and near miss escapes from death this is an at-a-sitting read for Bond and Rider fans everywhere.

[www.joecraig.co.uk](http://www.joecraig.co.uk)

[www.jimmycoates.co.uk](http://www.jimmycoates.co.uk)

PAUL DOWSWELL and FERGUS FLEMING

## **True Spy Stories (Usborne True Stories)**

Usborne, 9780746088227 (Publication due in June)

Gripping short stories about real spies, their shadowy double lives and the risks they take to carry out their jobs and to change the course of history.

JOHN FARDELL

**The Flight of the Silver Turtle**

Faber, 9780571226917

While building an electric-powered flying boat Ben, Zara and the Professor discover a clue which leads them to an old invention that could change the world. Someone far more sinister is also after the same invention sparking a dangerous struggle which catapults the friends from Edinburgh museums to Swiss castles and the bottom of Lake Geneva. Spies, aerial chases, inventions and encrypted clues keep the plot speeding along to an exciting conclusion.

DAVID GILMAN

**The Devil's Breath**

Puffin, (9780141323022), (Publication due in June)

Despite having narrowly escaped death at the hands of an assassin in the school grounds Max Gordon has no hesitation in setting off to find his father who has disappeared. Following a secret clue his explorer father drops for him Max ends up in the alien Namibia wilderness, a place where buffalo roam and deadly scorpions lurk, a place peopled by primitive tribes who follow mystical prophecies. His search ensnares him in a potentially massive ecological disaster masterminded by the ice-cool, unscrupulous businessman, Shaka Jang. Determined to get rid of Max's father Shaka now seems intent on disposing of Max too. Death defying action scenes, assassins, a pacy narrative and spaghetti of plot twists ensure this adventure story stands out from the rest. Even Alex Rider is no match for Max as he fights environmental meltdown.

CHARLIE HIGSON

**Double or Die (Young Bond) ▶▶**

Puffin, 9780141322032

When an Eton professor is kidnapped in a North London graveyard at gunpoint, James has to decipher the cryptic clues hidden in a suspicious letter delivered to the school. Even if James cracks the clues he only has 48 hours to save the hostage, and the future of the world, from dark forces. Car chases, fire fights, gory run-ins and a real sense of danger force Bond junior to develop the mental skills and tenacity the adult Bond will need to outwit his rivals. A fabulous, edge-of-the seat introduction to the Fleming originals.

[www.youngbond.com](http://www.youngbond.com)

ANTHONY HOROWITZ

**Ark Angel (Alex Rider) ▶▶**

Walker, 9780744583243

Supercool MI6 spy Alex Rider has outwitted criminals across countries and continents, survived snipers' bullets and defeated every danger and death imaginable aided by an array of impossibly inventive technogadgets. In this latest outing Alex takes on an eco-terrorist group who are plotting to bring down the first luxury hotel in outer space and send it hurtling down to earth. Boys just can't get enough of Alex's over-the-top adventures, larger-than-life villains, breathtaking ingenuity and high-speed plotting.

[www.alexrider.com](http://www.alexrider.com) / [www.anthonhorowitz.com](http://www.anthonhorowitz.com)

SAM HUTTON

**Meltdown (Special Agents)** ❖

HarperCollins, 9780007148479

Three tough teenagers tackling crime on the London streets are set up in this latest Special Agents adventure. Working on a difficult drug dealing case one of the teenagers, Maddie, finds herself accused of dealing and subsequently suspended. As Danny and Alex set about proving her innocence and cracking the city-wide crime ring a deadly computer virus destroys vital files of evidence at HQ. Things start to look serious.

H I LARRY

**Deep Waters (Zac Power)** ❖

Egmont, 9781405230926

Zac Power is an ordinary schoolboy hero with a secret spying career and in every adventure he has only 24 hours to save the world, get home for dinner, finish his homework and tidy his room. In this mission Zac has to retrieve top secret information from the bottom of the deepest ocean in the world, rescue a special agent, stop petrol tankers being attacked at the Icy Pole... Just as well no mission is impossible for him armed with his supercool gadgets and gizmos. These are exciting, thrill-a-page adventures guaranteed to keep kids hooked.

[www.zacpower.com](http://www.zacpower.com)

ROBERT MUCHAMORE

**The Fall (Cherub)** ❖

Hodder, 9780340911709

James Adams is now embarking on his seventh heart-stopping mission as a CHERUB agent, this time in Russia. His spy skills are tested like never before as an MI5 operation goes horribly wrong, but luckily adults never suspect that children might be spying on them. At the same time his sister is embarking on her first solo mission investigating a terrible human trafficking operation. These are completely realistic, absolutely compelling spy stories, the kind of books boys force their friends to read.

[www.cherubcampus.com](http://www.cherubcampus.com)

JOHN TOWNSEND

**Deadline** AA

Barrington Stoke, 9781842994610

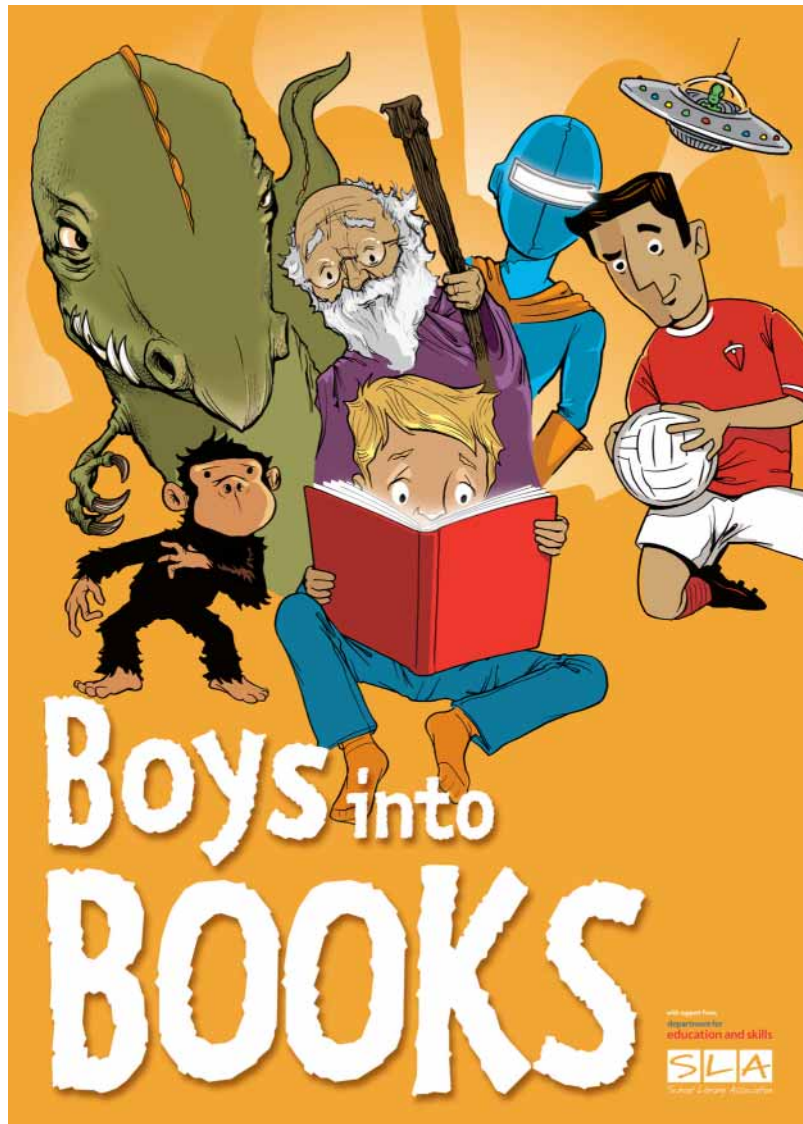
When Barney uncovers a terrorist plot nobody will believe him but he's determined to try to have a go at stopping the killers on his own. Will he manage in time? An edge-of-the-seat thriller in sophisticated packaging but with a reading age of 8.

E L YOUNG

**S.T.O.R.M.**

Macmillan, 9780330446402

Will Knight is invited to join the secret organisation STORM, set up by a 14-year-old software billionaire, whose other members are an astrophysicist and a chemistry genius. Although he knows nothing about them, they are only too well aware of Will's amazing talent for inventing gadgets like brain-controlled rats. When one boy's father is abducted it becomes clear he has been working on a world threatening weapon. The teenagers are determined to uncover the enemy even if it means a round-the-world search. Original and exciting writing.



## SURVIVE

DEAN VINCENT CARTER

### **The Hand of the Devil** ✦

Corgi, 9780552552974

Always on the alert for a good story, journalist for a weird science magazine Ashley Reeves is alerted to the existence of a deadly mosquito, the only one of its kind, on a remote island by a letter from an eccentric insect collector. Feeling that the tip-off is a genuine one he sets off to investigate his scoop and is inevitably cut off from civilization soon after his arrival by a raging storm. Captive, he soon uncovers the horrific truth and a threat to his life.

Macabre and menacing, this is a gruesome and gory page-turner for older readers.

[www.deanvincentcarter.com](http://www.deanvincentcarter.com)

STEVE COLE

### **The Aztec Code**

Bloomsbury, 9780747584278

An elite team of teenage thieves the Coldhardt gang, a sword belonging to a Spanish conquistador stolen from a secure compound, the abduction of a team member and a shadowy organisation the Sixth Sun who want to resurrect an ancient Aztec temple to unleash a vengeful goddess, force Jonah to do what he's best at, use his unusual talent for codebreaking to work out what connects all four before time runs out. This is a far-fetched, high-octane thriller which hurtles along dropping false clues for the unsuspecting reader and roaring with page-turning suspense.

J A HENDERSON

### **Bunker 10**

OUP, 9780192754868

An edge-of-the-seat thriller detailing the 24 hours leading up to the death of 200 people, including seven children, at Pinewood Military Installation, a high security, top secret establishment tucked away in a remote corner of Scotland. With machine-gun delivery and hard-hitting documentary style this is riveting reading.

JACK HIGGINS and JUSTIN RICHARDS

### **Sure Fire**

HarperCollins, 9780007244638 (Publication due in May)

When twins Rich and Jade's mum is killed in a car crash they move in with the estranged father they've never met. Relations are stormy until they see him being kidnapped and are plunged into crisis. Who can help them and more importantly who can they trust? *Sure Fire* will be a surefire hit with boys; pacy, unpredictable, precisely written with lots of detail it will grip from first page to last and provide a perfect introduction to Higgins' adult thrillers.

STEVE JACKSON and IAN LIVINGSTONE

**Bloodbones (Fighting Fantasy)**

Wizard Books, 9781840467659

An evil and much-feared pirate chief, Cinnabar was killed after a long reign of terror by a brave adventurer but is raised from his grave and now has the powers of voodoo magic at his command, not to mention demons, pet monsters and witch doctors. Bad things, very bad things, will happen unless he is put back there – and quickly. The reader's own family died at the sword of the bloodthirsty cut-throat pirate and this is the reader's chance to seek revenge. Making bad choices through the numbered text means devastating losses or even death which means the stakes are high and makes for really attentive reading. Fast-paced action, chilling atmosphere, eery illustrations, seemingly impossible to beat adversaries and several difficulty levels make this original and most extensive (60) interactive series difficult to beat. The play your own adventure books have a high re-read value too since different choices make for a very different adventure indeed. Gaming fans will find a new addiction here.

KATHERINE LANGRISH

**Troll Blood (Troll trilogy)**

HarperCollins, 9780007214884 (Publication due in June)

In a compelling conclusion to the trilogy Hilde begs her parents to let her join the crew of a ship bound for Vinland with Peer to look after her. But the seafaring traders are more dangerous than they seem. Fiery-tempered Harald has already killed a man and Gunnar his father is half mad, believing the ghost of the dead man to be pursuing him. Once ashore the Skraelings and cannibal giants await them in a tense and suspense-fuelled story of thrills, spills and impossible adventures.

CATHERINE MACPHAIL

**The Beast Within (Nemesis)**

Bloomsbury, 9780747582694

Ram is on the run, alone and stalked on an isolated moorland with no memory, having cheated death four times. Taken in by a seemingly kind couple, Ram starts having flashbacks of guns and explosions, flashbacks he senses are important in discovering his own past and on a wider scale too. MacPhail cleverly lets the reader into Ram's head, solving the mystery alongside him. This tense, tautly-written and edgy thriller, the second in the Nemesis quartet, hurtles Ram closer to a confrontation with the Dark Man, his chances of preventing a global terrorist coup ticking away...

[www.macphailbooks.com](http://www.macphailbooks.com)

ANDY MCNAB and ROBERT RIGBY

**Avenger (Boy Soldier)** ✦

Corgi, 9780552552233

With Fergus confined to a wheelchair recovering from injuries Danny and Elena are left to hunt down the bombmaster Black Star and kill him before more suicide bombers can be released. When Elena makes deep web contact and discovers Black Star's location her life is put in danger and only Danny can save her before it's too late. With its SAS technical jargon and shotgun delivery, explosive (literally!) action, complex plot twists and a thrill on every page this adrenalin-fuelled read is sure to be as fought over as others in the series.

[www.randomhouse.co.uk/childrens/boysoldier/](http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/childrens/boysoldier/)

JOSHUA MOWLL

**Operation Typhoon Shore (Guild Trilogy)**

Walker, 9781844286461

After narrowly escaping the pirates in Operation Red Jericho, Becca, her brother Doug and their uncle, scientist ship Captain MacKenzie, are caught up in a typhoon while searching for their missing parents and cast ashore on an island near Borneo. Discovering their arch-enemy and his army of Kalaxx warriors are nearby they're thrown into a nail-biting adventure in the midst of the jungle littered with skeletons.

More documentary and travelogue than novel, Mowll tells their story through an enticing mix of diary extracts, sketches, photos, maps, newspaper clippings, cross sections of ships and all kinds of other technical information and top secret fold-outs. Turning the reader into detective this is the ideal read for Indiana Jones fans.

[www.walkerbooks.co.uk/Joshua-Mowll](http://www.walkerbooks.co.uk/Joshua-Mowll)

DAVID ORME

**Boffin Boy and the Invaders from Space (Boffin Boy)** AA

Ransom, 9781841676135

Rick Storm is an exceptionally clever 14-year-old, obsessed with all things scientific. After his father's death Rick is determined to use his scientific skills to fight evil, here in the shape of invaders from space. A cleverly conceived manga style series of adventures designed for struggling readers age 9–14 with a reading age of 6–7. Future series will have a reading age 8–9 but good use of speech bubbles and the attractive manga artwork guarantees these books wider appeal.



JUSTIN RICHARDS

**Time Runners: Freeze Framed (Time Runners)**

Simon &amp; Schuster, 9781416926429

When everyone suddenly starts behaving as if Jamie Grant isn't there he becomes a bit suspicious. With the friendly Anna's help he discovers that he doesn't exist and never has. He's fallen through a time break and actually lives in a parallel world where he has the power to control time even though he is outside it. As a Time Runner he is tasked with fixing the rips in time, stopping time and history falling apart. Not an easy task with enemies like Darkling Midnight against you and intent on causing chaos. A new twist on the time-travel adventure, gripping and imaginative.

[www.time-runners.com](http://www.time-runners.com)

CHRIS RYAN

**Flash Flood (Code Red Adventures) ▶▶**

Red Fox, 9780099488637

When a ship crashes into the Thames Barrier as a thunderstorm rages it unleashes an unstoppable tidal wave which floods London. Ben tries to cross the city to meet his mother but it's impossible with the streets underwater and crawling with rats from the overflowing sewers and panicking people everywhere. A major international incident looks likely as communication systems fail and politicians, the military and the media are all called in. A highly realistic fight-for-survival story with a subtle underlying message about the devastating effects of global warming.

LEMONY SNICKET

**Book the Thirteenth: The End ▶▶**

Egmont, 9781405226738

Sadly the last story about the unfortunate Baudelaire orphans, tormented by their wickedly devious and scheming protector Count Olaf, and about the last tragedy to befall them. It is tragically told in Snicket's inimitably eccentric fashion and, with all the answers to all the questions promising to be revealed, brings the series to an impossibly tense (and probably unhappy) end. A blockbuster series boys race through then slow to the final chapter because they just don't want the enjoyment to end.

<http://www.unfortunateevents.com/>

STEVE VOAKE

**The Web of Fire**

Faber, 9780571223497

Four years after saving the whole human race from the dark forces of the evil Odoursin, Sam and Skipper return to the Kingdom of Auberon but find it a devastated wasteland. Odoursin, far from being vanquished, is lying low, biding his time until he has gathered his forces to strike back. Furious, Skipper and Sam are determined to help their friends the Vahlzi, and marshal a huge and ferocious force of fighting insects. Not content with destroying the Vahlzi, Odoursin plans to enlist the help of the President of America and destroy the whole of mankind... unless Sam and Skipper can act quickly...

Voake conjures up brilliantly realized fantasy worlds as a backdrop for this very moral tale of good versus evil, wisdom versus greed and the human capacity for heroic deeds.

[www.walkerbooks.co.uk/Steve-Voake](http://www.walkerbooks.co.uk/Steve-Voake)

# THINK

BERNARD ASHLEY

## Smokescreen

Usborne, 9780746067918

An uncomfortably real, contemporary thriller set on London's Regent's Canal. Ellie's mother drowns, leaving Ellie with a phobia about water and understandably traumatized when her father uproots her from her south London home to a new canal-side pub with its criminal underworld connections. Ellie soon discovers that the Friday night music nights are a cover for something very suspicious. Maybe Fang Song Yin, newly arrived in England from China with high hopes of a singing career can help Ellie discover the truth...

A hard-hitting, timely and highly topical story about people-smuggling and wheeling-and-dealing which is cleverly plotted and only too real.

[www.bashley.com](http://www.bashley.com)

THERESA BRESLIN

## Mutant (Gr8reads) AA

Barrington Stoke, 9781842993361

There's something very strange and suspicious happening at the Clone Unit. Will Shaun have what it takes to find out what's going on? A timely and topical story which tackles some very big issues in its 64 pages without any dumbing down. Perfect for those with a reading age of less than 8.

[www.theresabreslin.co.uk](http://www.theresabreslin.co.uk)

KEVIN BROOKS

## Being ◆

Puffin, 9780141381442

In the course of a routine operation something very strange is discovered inside 16-year-old Robert, something which will change his life, something so strange he goes on a journey of discovery, on the run, taking refuge in a criminal underworld. The problem is Robert still wants answers about who he really is or if he is even human at all, answers which may well turn out to be too terrifying to cope with. Pacy, near-perfect plotting, razor-sharp writing and characters so real they come with birth certificates are hallmarks of Brooks. This compelling mix of unravelling romance, nail-biting suspense, action and intrigue will not disappoint, fans can debate the ending online too.

[www.whatisrobert.co.uk](http://www.whatisrobert.co.uk)

MELVIN BURGESS

**Billy Elliot**

Chicken House, 9781903434338

Billy doesn't want to be a miner like his dad or a boxer as his dad wants him to be. He's fascinated by dance and is very good at it but in a harsh northern community torn apart by the miners' strike a dancer is the very last thing a boy can be. With his mum dead from cancer and his grandma going senile Billy is left to fight his own battles. This is the heart-warming story of the screenplay given new depth and humanity by Burgess who cleverly keeps true to the original film while still showing us the differing viewpoints of everyone involved; Billy, his father, bullying older brother and best friend.

Edgy, engrossing and emotional, every boy should read this.

<http://web.onetel.com/~melvinburgess/>

ANNE CASSIDY

**The Bone Room** 

Barrington Stoke, 9781842994498

Paul and Lulu are determined to find out the dark secrets of the Bone Room but aren't prepared for being dragged into drugs, people smuggling and other unspeakable dangers. Cassidy is a pacy thriller writer and this short story with a reading age of 8 (interest age 12+) has all the spine-tingling menace of her longer novels.

DAVID DONOHUE

**Moon Man** 

Egmont, 9781405219983

Some say the moon landings never happened. Walter Spealzebud is a very special boy. He can not only speak and spell backwards he's also determined to use his powers of noitanigami to travel back in time to prove that Neil Armstrong's 1969 moon landing really happened, as his granddad told him. What really drives Walter is the need to take his granddad back in time too and rid him of his Alzheimer's disease.

Part warm family story, part mad adventure, this is a real celebration of imagination, creativity and eccentricity and contains just enough backwards spellings and annotated NASA photos of moon landings to win over the most resistant reader.

ANNE FINE

**The Road of Bones** ✦

Corgi, 9780552554930

Brought up in a place where he is told exactly what to think Yuri knows that people disappear sometimes but little suspects that letting slip a few careless words will lead to what might as well be his death sentence, travelling north as an enemy of the state on a road built of the bones of those who dared to rebel, to a desolate camp set in bleak, frozen wastelands. There he struggles to find something to believe in, a glimmer of hope, a reason to escape or simply to survive. A tough and chilling tale which tackles head-on the terrible and inhuman atrocities humans commit in the name of what they claim to believe in. This intelligently-written and ultimately convincing story about belief and freedom, humanity and imprisonment feels very real, the kind of story which leaves you speechless.

[www.annefine.co.uk](http://www.annefine.co.uk)

TOM KELLY

**The Thing with Finn**

Macmillan, 9781405090216

10-year-old Danny is continually on the run from the memories haunting him after the death of his identical twin brother. A deeply moving and memorable but never sentimental story about life, love and death.

CARL HIAASEN

**Flush**

Corgi, 9780552553551

Noah's father is imprisoned for sinking a casino boat emptying effluent into the sea and killing the Florida aquatic life, leaving Noah and his sister to take up the fight to find out exactly who is pumping raw sewage into the waterways. They need a strong team of allies and a very clever plan to beat the Flusher. A strong conservation message for those passionate about the planet wrapped up in a fast and hilariously funny plot.

[www.haveyouflushed.co.uk](http://www.haveyouflushed.co.uk)

CATHERINE MACPHAIL

**Under the Skin** **AA**

Barrington Stoke, 9781842994535

Omar and his family have found a safe place to live at last but it's still not easy. Sam is always pushing him around at school and on his estate. One day it's different though and Omar starts fighting back. With a reading age of 8 this is a thought-provoking and relevant story about tolerance and difference by a first rate thriller writer which packs a huge amount into its 50 pages.

[www.macphailbooks.com](http://www.macphailbooks.com)

TOM POW

**Captives** ◆

Corgi, 9780552555470

A two-day trekking trip on the sun-drenched Caribbean island of Santa Clara turns into a nightmare when Martin's family and the Deschamp family are taken hostage in a mid-road gunpoint ambush, bundled into the back of a lorry and driven deep into the jungle.

In an unpredictable twist Martin falls for the Deschamps' teenage daughter who in turn is attracted to the youngest hostage-taker. Living so close the families gradually come to understand the political events and people which drove their captors to such an extreme action, an action which has devastating consequences for them all.

Edgy, extreme and uncomfortable reading which is sure to set you thinking.

[www.tompow.co.uk](http://www.tompow.co.uk)

ROBERT SWINDELLS

**BurnOut** AA

Barrington Stoke, 9781842994634

Josh really only enjoys life and feels it has a purpose when he's starting fires. It's all too easy to take things too far as Josh finds out in this short, punchy story for struggling readers; reading age 8 interest age 12+.

# TRAIN

GOSHO AOYAMA

## Case Closed

Gollancz, 9780575077393

An intriguing manga series about an ace high school detective, shrunk to 6-year-old size after being given a poison by two criminals. He takes to solving crimes for his friend's bumbling detective father and, being pint-sized, always escapes detection, enabling him to pick up evidence far faster than the police. Exciting manga which uses the traditional right-to-left format – always an added attraction for boys.

PETE JOHNSON

## Help I'm a Classroom Gambler

Corgi, 9780440866275

Harvey's school just couldn't possibly be any more mind-blowingly boring so he and his friends come up with an innovative scheme to liven up lesson times. Instead of simply trying to avoid being sent out of the room the boys start to bet on how many times the Head will blow his nose or the supply teacher give his nervous twitch or scratch his armpit... the list of possible teacher quirks and mannerisms is endless and soon the gambling game is spinning completely out of control. Pete Johnson's understanding of what makes boys tick (and read) is second to none and in making them laugh uncontrollably he makes them want to read more and more too. This diary-style story with short, punchy chapters and peppered with line drawings is no exception.

<http://www.petejohnsonauthor.com/>

NATASHA NARAYAN

## The Paradise Plot

Egmont, 9781405218788

Winston Wright, 11-year-old genius and son of a dinner lady, blags his way into the country's top public school – his first step to becoming Prime Minister and then the most powerful man in the world. In befriending the school bully's cabinet minister dad he talks himself into work experience at the House of Commons and in playing monopoly with the PM, Winston soon uncovers a shadowy world of bribes and blackmail and a sinister plot to take over an island capable of providing limitless energy for the entire world just with its soil. Despite his speedy mind and breathtaking daring Winston soon finds himself completely out of his depth. Great gadgets and a cut-off ear add to the readability.

ALEXANDER GORDON SMITH

**The Inventors**

Faber, 9780571233106

Nate and Cat love creating, experimenting and inventing and, after turning their headmaster blue, are thrilled to win a year's scholarship with the world's cleverest inventor Ebenezer Saint, studying at Saint's Solutions, a sprawling industrial compound filled with genius inventions alongside 23 other bright inquiring minds. It soon becomes clear that Saint has a hidden and far from saintly agenda and somehow Nate and Cat must out-think and out-invent him to ever see their families again. With imaginative inventions, terrifying villains, cool gadgets and exciting chases this has all the ingredients of a riveting read.

JUSTIN SOMPER

**Tide of Terror (Vampirates)**

Simon &amp; Schuster, 9781416901419

Orphaned twins Conor and Grace took to a life of piracy after a shipwreck, Conor on a pirate ship and Grace with the vampirates. Now enrolled in pirate school both still hanker after the exciting lives they left behind. Danger comes in the form of Sidorio, an evil villain they thought had been expelled from the vampirate ship and more terrifying than ever before.

Set 500 years in the future, this is a breathtakingly original twist on the currently fashionable pirate theme with a swashbuckling start, an exciting finale and many deadly duels and bloody battles in between. Hugely readable.

[www.vampirates.co.uk](http://www.vampirates.co.uk)

ALI SPARKES

**Running the Risk (Shapeshifter) ❖**

OUP, 9780192754660

Just when he is getting used to his new life as a shapeshifter Dax's life is thrown into chaos. It turns out he's been chosen to enroll at a special government training school but as soon as he starts the new term there he's sure something strange and sinister is going on. Intrigue, conspiracy and excitement in a great new set of adventures.

MARK WALDEN

**H.I.V.E. (Higher Institute of Villainous Education)**

Bloomsbury, 9780747583707

HIVE is a high-tech Hogwarts, a top secret school of advanced villainy where students are trained for six years to become criminal masterminds. Otto and Wing, two of HIVE's comparatively good guys, convinced of their own natural aptitude for villainy already, formulate an escape plan and are determined to see it through to completion despite all the setbacks – man-eating plants just for starters. A fast-paced and vividly drawn thriller which already has a huge fanbase.

[www.bloomsbury.com/HIVE/](http://www.bloomsbury.com/HIVE/)

# Appendices

## Reading list and useful websites

Baxter, Judith

### **Making Gender Work**

National Centre for Language and Literacy (University of Reading, Bulmershe Court, Reading RG6 1HY  
Tel: 0118 378 8820), 2001. ISBN: 0704914085

Clark, Christina and Foster, Amelia

### **Children's and young People's Reading Habits** National Literacy Trust, 2005

A survey carried out as part of the Reading Connects project.

[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/Reading\\_Connects\\_survey.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/Reading_Connects_survey.pdf)

Clark, Christina and Akerman, Rodie

### **Social Inclusion and Reading: an Exploration** National Literacy Trust, 2006

A study based on the Reading Connects survey above.

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/SocInc.pdf>

Clark, Christina, Torsi, Stephen and Strong, Julia

### **Young People and Reading** National Literacy Trust, 2005

A study carried out as part of the Reading Champions project.

[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/Reading\\_Champions\\_survey.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/Reading_Champions_survey.pdf)

Gibbons, Alan

**Never try to sound like Eminem.** Article in *The Bookseller*, 18th February 2005.

Gordon-Hall, Heather

### **Boys, Reading and the School Library**

Part of *Teacher Research in the Backyard*, on the British Columbia Teachers Federation website, 2003.

[http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Professional\\_Development/Teacher\\_Research/5.pdf](http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Professional_Development/Teacher_Research/5.pdf)

Myhill, Debra and Jones, Susan

**Noisy boys and invisible girls?** Article in *Literacy Today*, Vol 41, December 2004.

Neall, Lucinda

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Fax: 0116 267 8039, or [www.leics.gov.uk/libraries/lse](http://www.leics.gov.uk/libraries/lse)

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## Author websites

Douglas Adams	<a href="http://www.douglasadams.com">www.douglasadams.com</a>
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Steves (Barlow and Skidmore)	<a href="http://www.the2steves.net">www.the2steves.net</a>
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Bill Bryson	<a href="http://www.randomhouse.com/features/billbryson/">www.randomhouse.com/features/billbryson/</a>
Melvin Burgess	<a href="http://web.onetel.com/~melvinburgess/">http://web.onetel.com/~melvinburgess/</a>
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Paul Jennings	<a href="http://www.pauljennings.com.au">www.pauljennings.com.au</a>
Pete Johnson	<a href="http://www.petejohnsonauthor.com/">www.petejohnsonauthor.com/</a>
Daren King	<a href="http://www.darenking.co.uk">www.darenking.co.uk</a>
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Joshua Mowl	<a href="http://www.walkerbooks.co.uk/Joshua-Mowl">www.walkerbooks.co.uk/Joshua-Mowl</a>
William Nicholson	<a href="http://www.williamnicholson.co.uk">www.williamnicholson.co.uk</a>
Garth Nix	<a href="http://www.garthnix.co.uk">www.garthnix.co.uk</a>
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Steve Voake	<a href="http://www.walkerbooks.co.uk/Steve-Voake">www.walkerbooks.co.uk/Steve-Voake</a>
Chris Wooding	<a href="http://www.chriswooding.com">www.chriswooding.com</a>
Marcus Zusak	<a href="http://www.markuszusak.com">www.markuszusak.com</a>

# Keeping them reading

## Children's books: some general websites for adults and children

### For Adults

ACHUKA	<a href="http://www.achuka.co.uk">www.achuka.co.uk</a>
Book Bars	<a href="http://www.bookbars.co.uk">www.bookbars.co.uk</a>
Children's Laureate	<a href="http://www.childrenslaureate.org">www.childrenslaureate.org</a>
Children's Literature Web Guide	<a href="http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown">www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown</a>
CILIP Carnegie and Greenaway Awards	<a href="http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk">www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk</a>
Contact an Author	<a href="http://www.contactanauthor.co.uk">www.contactanauthor.co.uk</a>
Northern Children's Book Festival	<a href="http://www.ncbf.org.uk">www.ncbf.org.uk</a>
Project Hero	<a href="http://www.mlasoutheast.org.uk/whatwedo/accessandinclusion/casestudies/index.asp?id=1066,1076,9,1080">www.mlasoutheast.org.uk/whatwedo/accessandinclusion/casestudies/index.asp?id=1066,1076,9,1080</a>
Readathon	<a href="http://www.readathon.org">www.readathon.org</a>
Reading Agency	<a href="http://www.readingagency.org.uk">www.readingagency.org.uk</a>
Reading Zone	<a href="http://www.readingzone.com">www.readingzone.com</a>
UK Children's Books	<a href="http://www.ukchildrensbooks.co.uk">www.ukchildrensbooks.co.uk</a>
World Book Day	<a href="http://www.worldbookday.com">www.worldbookday.com</a>

### For Children (and adults too!)

4uReaders.net	<a href="http://www.4ureaders.net">www.4ureaders.net</a>
Betty Bookmark	<a href="http://www.bettybookmark.com">www.bettybookmark.com</a>
Bookbox	<a href="http://www.channel4.com/bookbox">www.channel4.com/bookbox</a>
Bookheads	<a href="http://www.bookheads.org.uk">www.bookheads.org.uk</a>
Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Awards	<a href="http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk">www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk</a>
Children's Authors TV	<a href="http://www.childrensauthors.tv">www.childrensauthors.tv</a>
Children's Book Sequels	<a href="http://www.childrensbooksequels.co.uk">www.childrensbooksequels.co.uk</a>
Children's Poetry Bookshelf	<a href="http://www.childrenspoetrybookshelf.co.uk">www.childrenspoetrybookshelf.co.uk</a>
Comic Book Resources	<a href="http://www.comicbookresources.com">www.comicbookresources.com</a>
Cool Reads (now archived)	<a href="http://www.cool-reads.co.uk">www.cool-reads.co.uk</a>
EnCompass Culture (British Council)	<a href="http://www.encompassculture.com">www.encompassculture.com</a>
Great Books to Read Aloud	<a href="http://www.greatbookstoreadaloud.co.uk">www.greatbookstoreadaloud.co.uk</a>
International Children's Digital Library	<a href="http://www.icdlbooks.org">www.icdlbooks.org</a>
Just for Kids who love books	<a href="http://www.alanbrown.com">www.alanbrown.com</a>
Kids' Review	<a href="http://www.kidsreview.org.uk">www.kidsreview.org.uk</a>
Love Reading 4 Kids	<a href="http://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk">www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk</a>
Mrs Mad's Book-a-Rama	<a href="http://www.mrsmad.com">www.mrsmad.com</a>
Reading Matters	<a href="http://www.readingmatters.co.uk">www.readingmatters.co.uk</a>
Stories from the Web	<a href="http://www.storiesfromtheweb.org">www.storiesfromtheweb.org</a>
Teen Reads	<a href="http://www.teenreads.com">www.teenreads.com</a>

### Just for boys

[www.guysread.com](http://www.guysread.com)

# Other organisations and projects supporting boys' reading

## A. THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST

[www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that creates literacy partnerships to change lives. The Trust has a strong commitment to promoting boys' reading by creating resources and managing programmes to support teachers and librarians. These include:

### 1. **Reading The Game** – a national programme to motivate reading through football.

At [www.readingthegame.org.uk](http://www.readingthegame.org.uk) schools and libraries can access downloadable football-related literacy activities. Resources, practical ideas, case studies and quizzes all aimed at using the great love of football possessed by many children (especially boys) to help create a love of reading are available at <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Football/RTGResources/rtgresources.html>

For some ideas about how you can get a footballer to visit your school or reading club see <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Football/RTGResources/ideas.html#playervisits>

### 2. **Reading Champions**, a DfES-funded initiative supports primary and secondary schools in involving boys and men in creating a reading culture [www.readingchampions.org.uk](http://www.readingchampions.org.uk). The scheme supports schools in changing boys' attitudes to reading by using the motivational power of male reading role models. Through the resources it offers, as well as the tried-and-tested framework to encourage boys to champion reading activity, it has succeeded in turning boys into readers across the country.

To find out what Reading Champions can offer to a school and how it can be used to help get boys reading visit <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/Champions/school.html>

Resources designed to be used by teachers and librarians who are trying to 'get the boys on board' Includes the ever popular Reading Champion posters as a downloadable resource as well as booklists and ideas at <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/Champions/resources.html>

### 3. **Reading Connects**, a DfES-funded initiative supports primary and secondary schools in building a whole-school reading culture which encourages children to develop a love of reading for pleasure at [www.readingconnects.org.uk](http://www.readingconnects.org.uk). By using the Reading Connects method, as well as its resources and networking opportunities, schools are able to bring the school library into the whole-school community and therefore engage target groups such as KS3 boys to read more. The opportunities that Reading Connects provides include:

For practical ideas designed to aid the creation of a whole school reading culture, including a section specifically on boys visit <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/readingconnects/practiceindex.html>

Resources including downloadable materials designed to help create a whole school reading culture at <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/readingconnects/resourcesindex.html>

### 4. **Research**

An overview of the research about boys' reading is at

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/Champions/research.html>

## 5. News

Keep up to date with literacy related news as it happens. Literacy news updated daily at:

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/literacynews/index.html>

## B. THE READING AGENCY

<http://www.readingagency.co.uk>

The Reading Agency inspires children's reading through nation-wide programmes delivered mainly through public libraries. We're a national charity and reading development agency, and work to make reading a bigger part of more people's lives; boys are a key audience for this work.

We help libraries engage actively with readers, through national change programmes and partnerships, through smaller experimental pilots, and by providing practical resources, toolkits and materials which draw on successful project work.

Every year, the **Summer Reading Challenge™** engages over 650,000 readers between 4 and 12. In 2006, 343,200 children read at least 6 books as part of the Challenge, and over 46% of the participants were boys. The spying theme of the 2006 Reading Mission had definite boy-appeal:

*"My favourite Mission was when I had to think of a book title. I really enjoyed doing Mission L.I.B and if I could I would do it again" (Luke, aged 11)*

*"I thought the reading mission was very good. I started reading big thick books" (Matt, aged 9)*

Parents noticed the impact too:

*"Without the Reading Mission I would not have managed to get Nicholas to read as this is not enjoyable to him. Having the certificate and medal at the end of six books has encouraged him to want to read"*

*"Joshua (7) is showing a lot more interest in reading. He has improved dramatically since starting the Mission. We will definitely be doing it next year"*

*"I've been telling Ross that for quite a while that one day he will start reading a book and he won't be able to put it down. Ross found that book and it's now much easier to get him reading. Thank you" (Tye Green)*

The Reading Mission website attracted more feedback from boys:

*I love the reading mission, I wish it could go on for longer. (William, 7)*

*i love secret agent stuff, it cool. its wierd because when i got my 3rd and 4th book was about spys. (joshy, 10,)*

We achieve similar results from other TRA projects where boys are inspired to read.

Around a third of the 5000 children who attend Chatterbooks reading groups in libraries each year are boys. For some, the support that a group of reading friends provides makes the difference for them in becoming a reader. Library staff report a variety of success stories:

*'One child has been reading with his mother. His brother dropped out of school when he was 16, reading, writing skills very low. He started listening to the stories the child and his mother have been reading and has started to read again.'*

The Reading Agency promotes reading for young people for all ages. **Fulfilling their potential** is a programme to help library services transform their reading spaces for young people of today. A successful Big Lottery bid has led to a programme to transform 20 libraries to provide ‘**Book Bars**’ where young people work with library and youth service staff to create a new style of service. Boys are very much part of this development.

### C. BOOKTRUST

<http://www.booktrust.org.uk/>

Booktrust is an independent national charity that encourages people of all ages and cultures to discover and enjoy reading. The reader is at the heart of everything they do.

#### **Bookstart Fathers**

The evidence suggests that if more men shared books with their babies it would have a tremendous impact on family cohesion and child development. This DfES funded project looks at how Bookstart can be better marketed to fathers. Booktrust employed an advertising agency to devise and implement a campaign in male interest magazines and on radio, promoting Bookstart and targeted specifically at men. Meanwhile Brian Lawson of Consilience Consulting has been undertaking research in Sheffield and Cornwall on how the Bookstart scheme can best reach out to fathers, encouraging dads to read with their young children.

For further information contact Chris Meade, Director of Booktrust

<http://www.bookstart.co.uk/Journalist-news-article&newsid=0000047>

### C. ASCEL (Association of Senior Children’s and Education Librarians)

<http://www.ascel.org.uk/>

ASCEL works strategically to support library initiatives for children and young people across the UK. Every library authority is a member. Individual public library services and Schools Library Services are working to support the love of reading for all children and young people, including boys, with ASCEL’s support.

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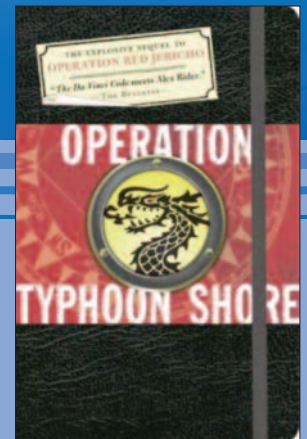
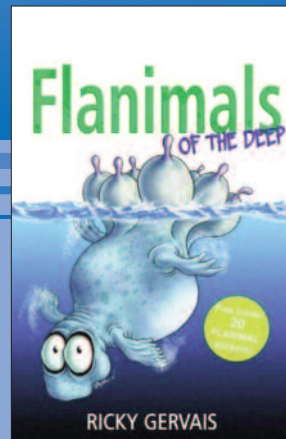
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# Riveting Reads *plus*



## Boys into Books

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