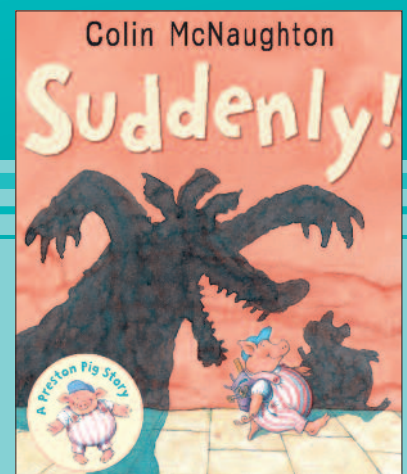
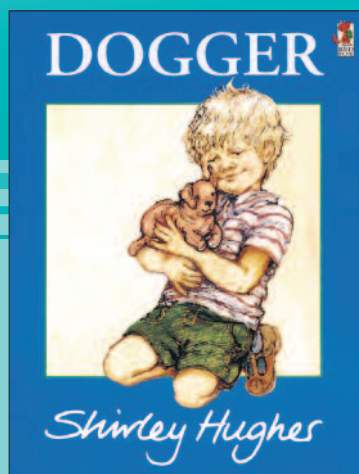
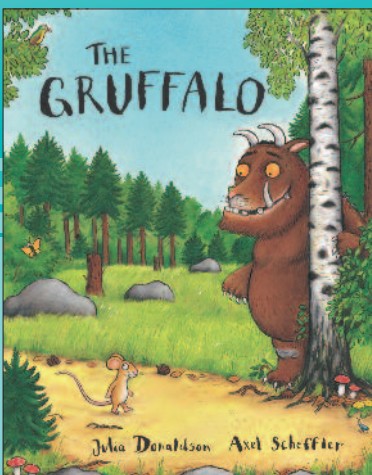


Riveting Reads *plus*

Book Ahead

0-7



J U L I A E C C L E S H A R E

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, extensive 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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Riveting Reads

BOOK AHEAD

0-7

J U L I A E C C L E S H A R E

introduction by
P R U E G O O D W I N



School Library Association

About the Authors

Julia Eccleshare, who wrote the list, is Co-Director of the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education and Children's Books Editor of *The Guardian*. In addition to numerous anthologies her books include, *Treasure Islands: The Woman's Hour Guide to Children's Reading*, *A Guide to the Harry Potter Novels*, *Beatrix Potter to Harry Potter: Portraits of Children's Writers*, *The Rough Guide to Picture Books* and, with Nicholas Tucker, *The Rough Guide to Teenage Books*. She won the Eleanor Farjeon Award in 2000 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to children's books.

Prue Goodwin, who wrote the introduction, is a freelance lecturer in literacy and children's books and works part time at the University of Reading. She taught in primary and middle schools for over twenty years and was an advisory teacher for language development before spending ten years as Director of INSET at the Reading & Language Information Centre, University of Reading.

Prue gives keynote talks at conferences, runs courses on language and literacy development, acts as a consultant to publishers of children's books and researches literacy development in schools. In 2005, Prue edited the second edition of *The Literate Classroom*, a collection of articles by leading teacher educators published by David Fulton Publishers. *The Articulate Classroom*, on speaking and listening, was published in 2001 and *Literacy through Creativity*, in 2004. She is currently editing her fourth book *Understanding Children's Books: a guide for education professionals* which is due to be published in 2008.

Prue regularly returns to the classroom to introduce children to a range of literature and to encourage wide, voracious reading. She has a personal, as well as professional, interest in children's books, particularly picture books and enjoys being associated with the MA in Children's Literature at the University of Roehampton, London.

Contact Prue at p.e.goodwin@reading.ac.uk

Book Ahead

This latest title in our Riveting Reads series has been specially commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to provide information about books for reading and sharing with babies and young children.

It underpins the allocation of funding from the DCSF for books for this age group to all local authorities in England in early 2008, the National Year of Reading. Each authority, via the Public or Schools Library Service, will select free books from this list to be used in a variety of ways with Early Years settings in their areas. For more information about how this will work in your area please contact your local library service.

The Book Ahead booklist is available free-of-charge in a pdf download version and is of course available for anyone to use.

The SLA is very pleased to have been invited to contribute to the Book Ahead project and hopes this booklist will support all those in Early Years settings to put high quality books into the hands of young children.

Acknowledgments

The SLA is very grateful to Julia Eccleshare, author of the booklist, and Prue Goodwin who wrote the introduction.

We would also like to thank Ian Dodds and Tricia Adams from CILIP Youth Libraries Group, Dianne Southcombe of Bristol SLS, Chris Brown, Geoff Dubber, Marny Leech, Kathy Lemaire, Richard Leveridge and Sally Duncan for their contributions to Book Ahead and Nigel Smith who created the website.

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The National Committee, ASCEL

Members of the Youth Libraries Group of CILIP

Our thanks go to the following publishers for permission to use illustrations of their books on our cover:

Andersen Press for *Suddenly*, Macmillan Children's Books for *The Gruffalo*, Mantra Lingua for *Fox Fables*, Penguin Books for *Where's Spot?* and Random House Group for *Dogger* and *Pumpkin Soup*.

Finally our thanks go to Michael Stark, Jan McIntosh and Sue White from the DCSF whose vision, unfailing support and belief in the power of good books has underpinned the whole Book Ahead project.

Supported by:

department for
children, schools and families

Foreword

**by Ed Balls,
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families**



As almost every parent knows, there is something truly magical about the moment when a young child first understands what a book is.

This happens long before the child becomes a reader. It starts with the child engaging with the shapes and textures, the colours and the pictures; getting the feel of the pages as they fan out; sensing that every book has a beginning, a middle and an end. Finally it becomes clear that the words of the story link somehow to those strange shapes on the page – that there’s a mystery here just waiting for the child to grasp it. And that’s when whole new worlds open up.

Every child deserves the chance to be exposed to good books from the earliest age. Parents are constantly beset with advice these days, but I dare to say that the single best moment in the day could be reading with their children. It’s a unique shared experience, which creates moments which neither side will ever forget. And it can start as early as you like – this is one activity for which there is no minimum age limit. Early reading, whether by parents at home or with staff and volunteers in an early years setting, opens up the power of imagination.

So I am delighted to welcome the School Library Association’s new list of “Riveting Reads”, targeted at children from birth to seven years old.

The books have been selected to have a very wide appeal. They include old and new classics, and every style of writing imaginable. I defy anyone to run through this list and fail to find books a-plenty to spark any young child’s imagination.

I am very keen that these marvellous books should be available to as many children as possible – both at home and within early years settings. So my Department is funding “Book Ahead”, a new scheme to allow public and school library services across England to acquire up to half a million books from this list, which they can offer on extended loans to each early years setting in their area. The details of that scheme are for local determination, so please contact your local library service.

Meanwhile the list itself, and the excellent guidance which accompanies it, are a resource freely available to everyone – parents, children, teachers, carers, friends and family. I hope you enjoy it and find it useful.

*Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.*

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Introduction

Welcome

Books are for each and every one of us at any age.

Books are fun.

Books are full of stories, pictures, rhymes, jokes and songs for us all to learn from and enjoy.

Books help us find out all about the world we live in, the people we share it with and about ourselves.

Books for the very young are chosen by, acquired by and shared with adults. Parents, carers and educators must ensure that all children are:

- told stories;
- read to from good books;
- introduced to the wonderful range of children's books;
- encouraged and supported when learning to read.

This introduction to *Riveting Reads: Book Ahead* gives lots of ideas about sharing stories and books with young children and provides a rationale for the book choices which should be made for children from 0 to 7 years old. The stage of childhood from birth to five years is subject to the learning and development requirements set out in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfES, 2007). Throughout these pages there will be references to EYFS Effective Practice where it relates to sharing stories and books with young children.

At the age of five children start more formal schooling when they move into Key Stage 1. They will follow the National Curriculum and the Framework for Teaching Literacy (DfES, 2006) which sets out the ways in which children should be taught to read. How well children start their schooling can depend on their experiences from birth, both at home or in caring environments, such as child-minders and nursery. There is evidence to suggest that most children learn to read more successfully if they have already become familiar with books when they start school. Book Start and Book Time are initiatives, supported by the government and administered by Book Trust, that ensure that every child owns books. All babies receive a book at birth and another as they start school at five.

Every Child from Every Home

By the time they start school, children's learning experiences, and literacy experiences in particular, will have been strongly influenced by their family's social and cultural traditions; these will remain a powerful factor throughout their schooling.

Margaret M. Clark *Young Literacy Learners*, Scholastic, 1994.

EYFS is based on principles of inclusion which means that early years providers oppose discrimination and prejudice and welcome all families and children.

The ways that we read and share books differ across social, cultural and ethnic groups. All the different literacy practices and expectations about reading should be respected and, no matter what their background or life circumstances, every child should:

- be able to find children like themselves reflected in books;
- feel welcome and 'at home' in schools, libraries and bookshops;
- be familiar with stories and books, especially those from their own cultural heritage;
- see their first language printed in dual-language books;
- have an expectation of pleasure from reading when they start school.

What do children learn when they share books with caring adults?

Children learn:

- about how a book works;
- that books provide pleasure and enlightenment;
- how print translates into meaning;
- that both print and pictures tell us stories;
- that both print and pictures give us information;
- that it is well worth becoming a reader;
- that they can have books, and all the pleasures you get from reading.

Stories Are Essential

Narrative is a primary act of mind. We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative. Barbara Hardy in Meek, Warlow & Barton (Eds) *The Cool Web*, Bodley Head, 1978.

'Can I have a story?'

Listening to stories has been part of childhood since time began. In fact, it isn't just childhood; whether we listen to them, read them or watch them on stage and screen – we all love stories. Stories are captivating, thought-provoking and satisfying. Narrative is such a natural part of our everyday language use that we are unaware of what an important role it plays in our lives. Story is one of the most powerful ways in which we learn and retain knowledge. It is amazing how much more easily ideas can be remembered if they are couched in a narrative. In some ways, an ever-increasing store of stories is one of the best things we can give children to support their learning. We should never worry that telling or reading a story is a waste of time – either at home or in school.

All stories are valuable but for children the most valuable are often those stories from their own families, communities and cultures. The traditions of our cultural heritage conveyed through stories can be a strong part of our sense of identity and, thus, our sense of self.

Telling and reading

Stories can be told or read aloud to children. Both are essential in the development of their language, their literacy and their growing knowledge of the world. Every time you share a story with children, they should be invited to respond in some way. Responses can vary from simple conversations about the story to more complex activities such as playing at being the characters or making a picture or engaging in conversations that lead children to further thoughts and reasoning.

EYFS

- Encourage children to use the stories they hear in their play.

Telling stories

When you tell a story you are able to develop a very close rapport with your listeners. Eye contact, voice variations and facial expressions are part of the story and the fun. Children's reactions are all part of the occasion and you are able to respond immediately to what you observe. For example: you can cut out the frightening bits, increase the funny bits, personalise the story to include the children who are listening and, to be really effective, put on different voices and add dramatic effects. The introduction of puppets, toys and other props will add to the fun and intensify engagement, as will inviting children to join in.

EYFS

- Use different voices to tell stories and encourage young children to join in wherever possible.

Storytelling to babies

As well as simple tales and rhymes, babies love to hear about their own lives. Even simple day-to-day activities can be told as a story; everyday things like washing up or going to bed can be told as an interesting sequence of events that babies will recognise. Books such as Sarah Garland's *Doing the Washing* and *Going to the Shops* can help anyone who finds it hard to 'make up' their own words – but always remember to relate what is in a book to the real world of the listener.

EYFS

- Tell, as well as read, stories, looking at and interacting with young babies.

Stories that teach

As stories help us remember and understand it is not surprising that since the beginning of time stories have been used to teach. Many of the stories that we call folk or fairy tales were originally told as warnings or lessons. Some have special names that signal the didactic intention – parable, allegory, fable – but other are just tales that provide 'messages' for the discerning listener (for example, it is sensible not to talk to wolves in dark woods – look what happened to Little Red Riding Hood!).

Stories increase vocabularies

With babies and toddlers every story increases their vocabulary by several words – especially if there is a repeated refrain such as, 'Not by the hairs on my chinny, chin, chin'. The way language is used to tell tales often reflects the literary language patterns that children will later find in books. It is a good idea to have a book of any traditional tale you tell so that children can revisit the story in written form later on when they have learned to read.

EYFS

■ Encourage language play, for example, through stories such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* and action songs that require intonation.

Stories help us to distinguish between fantasy and reality

Although many stories have a grain of truth in them, we think of most stories as having been ‘made up’ by someone. The imagination can invent all sorts of weird and wonderful things. Supernatural beings, such as fairies, giants, dragons, goblins and characters like Rumpelstiltskin are common in traditional tales. However, few children fail to distinguish between fantasy and reality. Even those with over-active imaginations seldom believe in the bizarre situations and magical events they hear about in stories; most children know when the characters and creatures are imaginary.

EYFS

■ Create imaginary words to describe, for example, monsters or other strong characters in stories and poems.

Hannah and her godmother outwit the troll ... a true story

Once upon a time, five days before her fifth birthday, Hannah and her godmother went for a walk in the wild, wild woods. They came to a little stream which was crossed by a rickety, rickety wooden bridge.

‘Let’s go and see if the troll is there!’

They tiptoed towards the bridge but when they reached it Hannah stayed back as her godmother stepped on to the planks, knelt down and peered underneath them.

‘It’s all right; he’s gone shopping.’

Hannah skipped on to the bridge and together they stamped and shouted, ‘Silly ol’ troll!’ Then they rushed off the bridge – just in case.

Once safely out of troll-reach, Hannah said, ‘Trolls aren’t in this world.’

‘What?’

‘Trolls aren’t in this world.’

‘You mean there isn’t really a troll that lives under this bridge?’

‘No.’

‘Now she tells me!’

The conversation that followed revealed the extent of Hannah’s knowledge and her understanding of the fairy stories she had heard all her life. She explained that certain things are ‘not in the world’. Other creatures are; for example, ‘wolves are in the world but a long way away.’ Hannah had a good grasp on reality and a vast store of knowledge from all the stories she had ever been told or read. She loved stories and was ready to start learning how to read them for herself.

Reading aloud to children

From the very first time children hear a story read aloud they begin to learn about being a reader. Reading aloud is not the same as telling a story. There is a big difference in the sound of a voice when speaking to

children and when reading aloud to them. As very young children listen to the language of books, they become familiar with the sound patterns of texts – the intonation and, sometimes, the words themselves (for example, in conventional story language such as ‘Once upon a time’ or repeated phrases such as ‘Trip trap, trip trap over the rickety-rickety bridge’). A repertoire of story language gradually becomes established and the patterns of sound begin to be associated with the visual patterns of words on the page.

Read aloud to children from birth

As soon as a child is able to listen to you read a story, the wonderful times spent snuggling together with a book can begin. As most parents know, reading a story just before bed can have a miraculous effect on a lively toddler but, as important as story at bedtime is, books should not be associated only with bedtime routines. Sharing a book can happen at any time.

The best reason for sharing books with babies is that it is very enjoyable and this great pleasure shouldn’t ever be spoilt by pressure from anyone to teach babies and toddlers to read.

Laurie Makin & Marian R. Whitehead *Children’s Early Literacy*, Paul Chapman, 2004.

It is always important to encourage children to talk about the stories they have heard and the books that they have shared. Ideally, by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, before they begin learning to read in a school environment, children will:

- associate books with pleasure;
- be confident and careful when handling books;
- be able and willing to talk about the books they enjoy.

When should you stop reading aloud to children?

Only when they leave home ... or your class. As long as they enjoy listening to you read aloud, doing so will give a great deal of pleasure and be of tremendous benefit to their literary development.

First Encounters with Reading: Babies and Books

EYFS

- Let children handle books and draw their attention to pictures.

The first books that babies are offered may be indistinguishable from toys. However, as long as they have ‘pages’ which turn to reveal something new to the ‘reader’ they are books. At first, babies may perceive books to be just another object to explore. They will hold them, chew them and probably bash them about a bit. The books babies are given are likely to have been made of strong card, cloth or soft plastic – materials sufficiently robust to withstand the exploration of tiny fingers and mouths. However, when sharing books with adults, babies very quickly learn that it is what they see on the pages inside the book that really matters. Between the covers are all sorts of delights to comment on (squeak or gurgle), stare at (point and pat), listen to and join in (stories and rhymes). Even at the very earliest stages, babies learn the purpose of books and how readers ‘use’ them. Most of all, they learn that sharing books is fun!

Talking about books

Sharing a book with a baby provides the ideal opportunity to talk together. As you turn each page and point to different things in the pictures and have a conversation about each thing you see, ask questions and relate what you see to the world around you, for example, with *Let's Feed the Ducks* by Pamela Venus (Tamarind).

Having conversations with babies is essential to their development. If you would like further information about talking to babies visit: www.literacytrust.org There you can find out about Talk To Your Baby, a campaign run by the National Literacy Trust to encourage parents and carers to talk more to babies and toddlers. Talking to young children helps them become good communicators, which is essential if they are to do well at school and lead happy, fulfilled and successful lives.

Check whether your local library offers Rhyme Time sessions for babies and toddlers. These sessions are great fun and introduce babies (and their carers) to the joys of sharing books with others.

Books to Share with the Youngest Children (0–3 years)

Fiction

A bookshelf for 0 to 3-year-olds should include:

- Collections of nursery rhymes and simple traditional tales from a range of cultures: e.g. *Ride a Cock Horse* by Sarah Williams and Ian Beck (Oxford).
- Picture story books with stories featuring other babies, animals and imaginary creatures: e.g. *Bear and Box* by Cliff Wright (Templar).
- Poetry written for the very young, such as counting rhymes and lullabies: e.g. *The Usborne Book of Lullabies* by Nickey Butler (Usborne).
- Action rhymes, games and songs that involve lots of joining in with actions, singing, clapping, and so on: e.g. *This Little Puffin* by Elizabeth M. Matterson (Puffin Books).
- Books that invite the reader to lift a flap or pull a lever: e.g. *Spot's Fun Day* by Eric Hill (Warne).
- Books with textured pictures to touch and feel.
- Books made from a variety of materials – cloth, card and soft plastic: *Hello, Who's There?* by Satoshi Kitamura (Andersen) and *On the Go* (bath pack) by Richard Powell (Treehouse).
- Stories and songs on CDs and DVDs.

Non-fiction

Information texts for babies are usually caption books with pictures – often beautiful photographs – accompanied by a label or short sentence. The first books to share should relate to the immediate environment (showing, for example, objects that children use every day – toothbrush, spoon, Teddy) but gradually babies can be introduced to the wider world (vehicles, farm animals, at the playground) or different concepts (counting, colours, shapes). Non-fiction on the bookshelf should include:

- books of everyday items, people, places, familiar animals;
- events in a day – getting dressed, eating meals, bathtime, sleeping: e.g. *Baby's Day* by Beth Harwood (Amazing Baby).
- everyday life at home – doing the washing up, going shopping: e.g. *Doing the Garden* by Sarah Garland (Frances Lincoln).

- colours, numbers, shapes and concepts: e.g. *Opposites* by Emma Thomson (Hodder).

Early reading is a partnership of mutual pleasure and discovery. It often involves an older and wiser partner in taking on as much of the task as is necessary, but always making opportunities for the younger and less experienced child partner to contribute something. Perhaps to touch the page, smile, slot in an appropriate sound effect, name a character, or join in a repeated phrase or chorus.

Marian R. Whitehead *Developing Language and Literacy with Young Children*, 3rd edn, Paul Chapman, 2007.

'Again, Again, Again!' (3–5 years)

Sharing books with children from 3 to 5 years old will have a direct influence on their motivation to learn to read and to become readers for life. At this stage children begin to display reading behaviours that are common to all readers no matter what their age. For example, young children often:

- choose favourite books which they love to return to regularly;
- want to engage entirely with books by 'playing' at being in the story;
- pore over illustrations, pointing and talking about what they can see;
- join in with the words (usually knowing if any have been left out).

And, after all that, they still want to hear you read it aloud again.

Fiction, non-fiction and fun

By 3 years old, children have made friends and will be gaining experience in all sorts of other areas of life. Books should become an important part of their day, especially the many delightful, high quality picture books which combine words and pictures to engage young readers – books by authors and artists who are universally admired, such as Shirley Hughes, John Burningham, Martin Waddell and Quentin Blake. Find exciting books which have flaps to lift or pop-up pages to marvel at. To ensure that all children can find themselves in the stories they share, seek out publishers such as Tamarind, Tara Publishing, Frances Lincoln and Barefoot Books.

Inquisitive 3 to 5-year-olds will discover that books relate to a wider world and they will begin to make links between their experiences and what they see on the page. For instance, television programmes are often based on good children's books and many youngsters will recognise their TV favourites and enjoy reading, for example, about Charlie and Lola, created by Lauren Child, David McKee's King Rollo or the Little Princess from stories by Tony Ross. A growing knowledge of tales, poems and songs provides a foundation for the literary texts children will meet later. Literary experience starts with nursery rhymes and continues into many childhood 'classics' that every child deserves to meet, such as *Peter Rabbit*, the Anansi stories and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. At this stage, children's curiosity about the world will be satisfied by their first real information books.

Children should be encouraged to continue their enjoyment of books through play and creative activities. Role play areas can be turned into the Three Bears' cottage, big building blocks can be used to construct a 'rickety, rickety bridge' or Anansi's spider limbs can be made out of pairs of old black tights.

EYFS

- Help children to identify the main events in a story and to enact stories, as the basis for further imaginative play.

Poetry, rhymes, games and songs

Children in the 3 to 5 age range are gaining insights about books, reading and language which will prepare them for more formal learning. Playing with sound patterns will help children to distinguish the speech sounds they will need to hear when they start learning about the alphabet.

With very young children the most important aspect is raising their awareness of the sound patterns of language and this can be done through poetry, rhyme and – in particular – nursery rhymes.

Diane Godwin & Margaret Perkins *Teaching Language and Literacy in the Early Years*, 2nd edn, David Fulton, 2002.

These children love being active. They don't need much encouragement to sing along and act out nursery rhymes. By doing this they develop phonological awareness, becoming aware of the sounds in speech, rhyming words and patterns of sound in repeated phrases in stories, songs and games.

EYFS

- Choose stories with repeated refrains, dances and action songs involving looking and pointing, and songs that require replies and turn taking.
- Share rhymes, books and stories from many cultures, sometimes using languages other than English.

Talk about books

Along with all the fun and activity, there should always be quieter, more reflective times when the emphasis is on having a conversation about a book. On these occasions children often reveal the extent to which they have implicit knowledge of inference, prediction or empathy. We can talk about how we interpret a picture or a clue in the text to help us have deeper understanding. For example, with *Pumpkin Soup* by Helen Cooper (Random House) there are themes of friendship, anxiety and sharing, all within an enjoyable story.

At this stage, you will get through a lot of books so ensure that your library membership is maintained. As well as being able to borrow books free of charge every week, there is usually a storytime for pre-school children every week.

On the Bookshelf (3–5 years)

- A wide range of engaging stories including traditional, contemporary and fantasy tales: e.g. *Sausages* by Jessica Souhami (Frances Lincoln) and *Full, Full, Full of Love* by Trishe Cooke and Paul Howard (Walker).
- Stories and nursery rhymes from their own culture and the wider cultural heritage: e.g. *Three Little Kittens and Other Favourite Nursery Rhymes* selected and illustrated by Tony Ross (Andersen Press).

- Stories with lots of repetition, alliteration, rhyme and language play: e.g. *Tanka Tanka Skunk!* by Steve Webb (Red Fox) and *In the Dark, Dark Wood* by Jessica Souhami (Frances Lincoln).
- Poems, games and songs that encourage everyone to join in with words and actions: e.g. *The Puffin Books of Fantastic First Poems* edited by June Crebbin (Puffin).
- Books that invite readers to look at pop-up pages, lift flaps or pull levers: e.g. *The Haunted House* by Jan Pienkowski (Walker).
- Alphabets and counting books: e.g. *South African Animals* by Lindiwe Mabuza and Alan Baker (Tamarind) and *My Granny Went to Market* by Stella Blackstone and Christopher Corr (Barefoot).
- Stories in languages other than English and in dual language: e.g. *Daisy and the Egg* by Jane Simmons in Chinese and English (Milet).
- Information books about the immediate environment and further afield: e.g. *Hair* by Kate Petty (Frances Lincoln) and *Skip through the Seasons* by Stella Blackstone and Maria Carluccio (Barefoot).
- Books that tie in with popular television programmes and films: e.g. *Sizzles Is Completely Not Here* by Lauren Child (Puffin).
- Stories and songs in books with accompanying story boxes, related toys, CDs or DVDs.

'I Can Read This!' (6–7 years)

When children start school they bring four years of intensive learning with them which will include all the experiences they have had with stories and books. Those who have been read to since birth will already know a great deal about reading which will benefit them as they tackle the more complex aspects of learning to read. At this stage it is vital that previous practices are not discarded. Telling stories, reading aloud, playing with words and engaging with books through conversation and creative activity continue to be very important aspects of children's literacy learning. This stage should see the gradual inclusion of more formal teaching about how readers get the meaning from the page.

Reading aloud is still essential

Reading aloud to children is so pleasurable for all concerned that some people find it hard to believe that it is an essential part of the teaching of reading. Unlike almost any other aspect of literacy, there is agreement among all involved with teaching reading that, whatever your relationship with children – be it as parent, carer, teacher or librarian – it is important that you read aloud to them as often as possible. Children gain immeasurably in their development as readers whenever adults read aloud to them, especially when there is mutual enjoyment of a good children's book.

Reading aloud to children helps them learn:

- how an 'expert' lifts the meaning from the page;
- how readers respond to books, talk about them and find their favourites;
- the different purposes of texts and the ways we use them.

Anyone involved in children's literacy learning in an education setting should take into account the comments made in the *Rose Report* (2006) on the teaching of early reading which says:

- the process of learning to read is very complex;
- speaking and listening precede and underpin all learning;

- children should have a rich and broad experience of language and literacy in their classrooms;
- there should be discrete and systematic teaching of phonics starting around the age of five;
- learning should be creative, multisensory, imaginative and interactive.

Getting started with reading

The early stages of learning to read are very important. Children gradually acquire all the complex skills necessary to recognise words and then to make meanings. Becoming a confident reader takes time – more time for some than for others.

To have the best start when learning to read children need:

- to be familiar with spoken language;
- to be able to distinguish between speech sounds;
- to have developed a vocabulary;
- to be confident about joining in conversations.

Experience with language play, sound patterns and rhymes will be of great assistance to children as they learn how to match letters and sounds together. A store of remembered stories will also be an advantage. When you are struggling to decode written language for the first time it helps if you know how stories work. Being experienced with books, knowing how to hold them, turn pages and follow the direction of the words will all provide tentative readers with more self-assurance at a vulnerable time.

Becoming a reader

Sharing books with children, whether in groups or individually, will be of great support at this stage. Sometimes a book will be part of a literacy session; however, learning is more likely to take place if the book is appealing and engagingly presented. Even in the busiest classroom, there must always be time for sharing books entirely for pleasure. Whether reading aloud for teaching purposes or for pleasure, talking about books enhances both the learning and the enjoyment.

- First share the whole book with the children. Introduce only minimum comment on the story and pictures, letting the children wallow in the pleasure of the experience.
- After the first read-through, discuss the story adding comments or questions such as: Did you enjoy that story? That was a funny thing to happen, wasn't it?
- If the children have enjoyed the book, share the story again, asking them to tell you what they like on each page.
- Always explore the pictures and relish the language of the story. Let children return to gaze at the pictures and talk about them.

Sharing books at school and at home

- Provide all sorts of books for children to browse through and read to themselves – short stories, picture books, non-fiction and poetry: e.g. *Dave and the Tooth Fairy* by Verna Allette Wilkins (Tamarind), *Mustard, Grumble Belly and Gravy* by Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake (Bloomsbury) and *We're Sailing Down the Nile* by Laurie Krebs and Anne Wilson (Barefoot).
- Read to children from different kinds of books:
 - longer stories that they are unable to tackle for themselves;

- a range of different sorts of non-fiction;
 - picture books and other graphic texts;
 - ‘classic’ children’s literature and poetry: e.g. *Now We Are Six* by A.A. Milne (Egmont) and *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams (Egmont);
 - books which provide a dual-language text: *The Milet Picture Dictionary* English/Polish (and many other languages) and *Elmer’s Friends* by David McKee, translated into Somali (both published by Milet).
- Let children select the book that you will share from the collection. Don’t worry if they choose something over and over again. You can always have a rule: two books, one that they have chosen and one chosen by you.
 - Use the school library and visit the local library where you can borrow, free of charge, many different books and possibly other exciting book-related items such as story sacks. Librarians will also help with suggestions about what books to choose next.
 - Revisit some of the lovely books they read before they started school. They may have a try at reading some of the words for themselves and familiarity with the story will help them to recognise the words: e.g. *Dogger* by Shirley Hughes (Red Fox) and *Can’t You Sleep, Little Bear?* by Martin Waddell and Barbara Firth (Walker).
 - Encourage them to re-enact stories, to play at being the characters, to draw pictures and to make up a bit more of the story.
 - Provide good quality CDs, DVDs and websites associated with children’s books. Don’t be afraid to let children revisit favourite stories via the new technologies – especially if they know the books well.

Children who can read for themselves

It is important to continue reading aloud to children for pleasure even when they reach the stage of being able to read books for themselves. When possible at school (and always at home), we should attempt to retain the intimacy of snuggling up with books that they had when they were younger. Reading aloud need not have any didactic purpose and you may choose to read from a variety of books, according to the circumstances. For example, you may read something quite challenging to introduce them to books which are beyond their current ability or you may return to a comforting read that offers the security of knowing what comes next. You may sometimes choose to read poetry or non-fiction instead of a story. No matter what you read, if you do it well and select engaging books, children will benefit. Reading aloud is never a waste of time; there is plenty of evidence that children who are read to regularly become more competent and confident readers and writers.

Supported by caring adults and high quality books, all children can start on the magical journey into words, images and books, so get them listening and reading with this list of exciting and stimulating favourite, classic and new books for the 0 to 7 age range.

Series editor’s note: You will find many of the books mentioned in this introduction in the annotated ‘Book Ahead’ list that follows; other titles have been included for illustrative purposes.

Whilst books are organised into indicative age groupings, many can be used for a much broader age range.

Riveting Reads

Book Ahead

0-7

Reading List

0 to 3

3 to 5

6 to 7



School Library Association

JEZ ALBOROUGH

Duck's Key: Where Can It Be?

HarperCollins, 9780007177653

Cheeky Frog hides Duck's key to his truck. Can you help him to find it? Lifting the flaps not only helps to find the key but also uncovers the rhyme in this vibrant and hilarious comedy.

JONATHAN ALLEN

I'm Not Cute!

Boxer Books, 9780954737382

Poor Baby Owl! He's soft and fluffy and he's got big baby eyes and everyone says he's cute. But, inside, Baby Owl knows that he is a 'huge sleek hunting machine with great big see-in-the-dark eyes'. Or, maybe, he's both? How can Baby Owl convince everyone to take him seriously and still get all the love and hugs he wants from his mummy?

IAN BECK

Five Little Ducks

Orchard Books, 9781846165795

A first introduction to counting along with the traditional rhyme, 'Five little ducks went swimming one day...' and with Ian Beck's fluffy golden-yellow ducks leading the way. Every time the ducks go 'over the hills and far away' one of them fails to return. The clue is in the fox's tail poking cheekily into the corner of each spread. Ian Beck's illustrations are always reassuring, and luckily the last duck has more sense than all the rest put together. He manages to save himself and all the others as well.

ERIC CARLE (illustrated by Bill Martin)

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?

Puffin, 9780141501598

The big, bold illustrations, matched by a simple rhyming and questioning text which introduces each different animal, make this a perfect introduction to learning colours. From the brown bear of the title through nine animals including a red bird, a yellow duck, a green frog, a black sheep and a goldfish, there is an array of colour and shape that is a feast to the eye as well as a good way of teaching the names of the colours.

TRISH COOKE (illustrated by Paul Howard)

Full, Full, Full of Love

Walker Books, 9781844287826

Jay Jay loves going to his Grannie's house for Sunday dinner. He loves the food – when it comes! – but even before that, he loves being in a house that is full, full, full up with Grannie's lovely things, her warm hugs and the happy faces of his smiling relatives. A wonderful celebration of a family gathering.

TRISH COOKE (illustrated by Helen Oxenbury)

So Much

Walker Books, 9780744543964

An exuberant outpouring of love for the baby of the family. Each relative that arrives sweeps the baby up into a different kind of embrace. All of them shower him with hugs and kisses because he is loved ... So Much! This family's enthusiasm for their baby is infectious. Readers are drawn in and feel like celebrating too.

LUCY COUSINS

Maisy's ABC

Walker Books, 9780744532296

Lovable Maisy introduces the alphabet through flaps and pop-ups. In just a few cheerful spreads, from an alligator, boat, crab and dolphin to a yoyo and zebra, every letter of the alphabet is revealed with a memorable image to match.

LUCY COUSINS

Maisy Goes to the Library

Walker Books, 9781406306965

Maisy is on a visit to the library. She enjoys going there because it's a quiet place to sit and read, but she soon finds out that there are all sorts of other things going on in a library which are fun ... and she may have to find a different place to read. Maisy and her friends show that a library is an attractive place to be.

PENNY DALE

Ten in the Bed

Walker Books, 9781406300352

A different set of ten roll out of the bed in this variation on a traditional rhyme. This time, it is ten soft toys that, one after another, tumble out of bed in a rollicking night-time adventure. There's lots of simple repetition in the words and busy detail in the pictures before they all jump back in again, making this perfect for beginner readers.

POLLY DUNBAR

Penguin

Walker Books, 9781406312461

'Hello, Penguin!' said Ben. Penguin said nothing. 'Can't you talk?' said Ben. Penguin said nothing. Ben tries everything he can to make his new friend speak but Penguin's beak remains tightly closed. What can Ben do? In desperation, he shouts as loudly as he can. Unfortunately, this attracts a passing lion who gobbles him up. Now Penguin shows how much he cares. Biting the lion on the nose, he frees Ben and is voluble about all he feels. In only a few words but through expressive illustrations, Penguin shows the quirks of friendship.

SARAH GARLAND

Doing the Garden

Frances Lincoln, 9781845077211

Warm and realistic illustrations convey the details of a day of gardening. Mum loads two toddlers into the pram and off they set to the garden centre. They buy seeds and plants and even a tree! After staggering home, they have all the fun of digging, sowing, and planting. What a busy day and how delightfully it ends with everyone flopped exhausted on the kitchen floor.

EMILY GRAVETT

Orange Pear Apple Bear

Macmillan, 9781405090223

Teasingly simple, the four words of the title are repeated in a different order and in different relationships to each other in every picture. As they are changed around so their meanings may alter. The expressive cuddly bear, who changes colour according to his association with each fruit, gives a wonderful commentary on each picture.

SARAH HAYES (illustrated by Helen Craig)

This is the Bear

Walker Books, 9780744594812

'This is the bear who fell in the bin. This is the dog who pushed him in.' So begins a wonderfully dramatic adventure as the boy and the dog – now sorry for what he's done – do everything in their power to rescue the bear. And a messy business it is, as they have to search right through the bins to find him! Told in bouncing rhyming couplets, this search and rescue story with a delightfully happy ending is perfect for first reading.

KATHY HENDERSON (illustrated by Paul Howard)

Look at You!

Walker Books, 9781406304596

Big bold illustrations, softly drawn, capture everyday moments in a baby's life in this life enhancing celebration of being a baby. The simple actions of putting on clothes, changing nappies and brushing hair are made fun while a whole spread records the simple moves as a baby lies, rolls, sits, crawls and, triumphantly, pulls itself up to stand.

ERIC HILL

Where's Spot?

Puffin, 9780140504200

When Sally calls Spot for his supper, he's nowhere to be found. Sally searches everywhere. Opening the flaps she looks behind the door, in the cupboard, under the stairs. Each time, there is someone hiding but it isn't Spot. The delight of discovery is tempered by the disappointment that Spot is still missing. At last, he is found and Spot enjoys his dinner. A classic open-the-flap book which works because of its simplicity.

SHIRLEY HUGHES

Alfie Gets in First

Red Fox, 9780099256052

Alfie is determined to get home first. When Mum opens the front door he dashes inside and slams the door shut. Mum and Annie Rose are outside, Alfie and the front door key are inside, and Alfie can't open the door as the lock is too high up. How can Alfie let Mum in? Told from the two contrasting perspectives of Alfie inside and Mum, Annie Rose and a bunch of helpful neighbours outside, Alfie's resourcefulness is revealed. Shirley Hughes captures the high drama of a domestic incident.

PAT HUTCHINS

Rosie's Walk

Red Fox, 9780099413998

The words and pictures in this book tell different stories, making it fun to read on many levels. Rosie the hen sets off for a walk around the farmyard. She goes across the yard, around the pond, over the haycock, past the mill, through the fence, under the beehives and gets safely back home for her dinner. She has no idea what is happening just behind her ... Following the adventures (and misadventures) of both the hen and the fox is absorbing – and hilarious!

MICK INKPEN

Bear

Hodder, 9780340918180

A cleverly told story which gives the reader the right to decide what happens at the end. Bear just falls out of the sky. Soon the boy and the bear are inseparable – although Bear can be a bit of a handful. Then someone comes looking for him. Can the boy keep him? All readers will say YES and will love the option of doing so.

SATOSHI KITAMURA

Hello, Who's There?

Andersen Press, 9781842705872

Each time the little duck asks a question, you pull a tab and someone pops up to meet him. This is a charming introduction to insects, with a surprise element and a pleasingly reassuring ending. Very simple and very effective.

ANNIE KUBLER

Peek-a-Boo! Nursery Games

Child's Play, 9781904550839

A feast of rhyming games full of 'actions' for playing again and again with babies. Using fingers and toes, hiding and seeking, patting and tapping, these rhymes are perfect for interacting with a baby and introducing all kinds of speech. Cheerful babies enjoying themselves as they demonstrate the rhymes bring the book to life.

JULIE LACOME

Walking Through the Jungle

Walker Books, 9780744536430

This classic rhyming text perfectly captures the excitement of exploration. Sometimes frightened, sometimes bold, but always eager, the little boy sets out through this brightly coloured jungle. What can he hear? What can he see? And what scary thing might happen next?

JO LODGE

Jungle Animals (dual language)

Mantra Lingua, available in 20 languages

'As tall as a giraffe', 'As snappy as a crocodile' – a simple phrase accompanies each of these delightful pop-ups of the different animals in the jungle. Robustly made, these pop-ups will survive a lot of handling!

MARJORIE NEWMAN (illustrated by Ken Wilson-Max)

Just Like You Did

Bloomsbury, 9780747564263

The difficulties of being usurped by the arrival of a new baby are explored in a no-holds-barred but ultimately reassuring picture book. George doesn't want the baby to have his cot, he doesn't like the visitors coming and cooing all over the baby, he doesn't like his mum being too busy to play. In fact, he'd like to go back to before the baby was born. But that's not possible. Instead, Dad and Mum point out that the baby will change 'just like you did' and there will come a time when the two of them can be friends. Bold illustrations capture George's mounting anger and the parental reassurance that calms him down.

CATHERINE RAYNER

Augustus and His Smile

Little Tiger Press, 9781845062835

Exquisite, impressionistic illustrations in the greens, blues and oranges of the jungle capture the sadness of Augustus the Tiger as he sets off to find his smile. Everywhere he searches, he finds something beautiful: birds nesting at the top of the tallest trees, swirling clouds above the highest mountains, tiny, shiny fish at the bottom of the deepest ocean. And he finds that enjoying them gives him his smile back.

MICHAEL ROSEN (illustrated by Adrian Reynolds)

The Bear in the Cave

Bloomsbury, 9780747577652

Complete with audio CD, here comes a long-awaited near-sequel to the best-selling, much-chanted *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*. This time it's the Bear who goes out exploring. Lured by the sound of the city in his ears, Bear sets off to find out what makes it hum so, but the noise and bustle disturb and disorientate him. Luckily a group of children befriend him and soon he is hurrying home past the cars 'whooshy whooshity woosh', on the train 'chuff chuffity chuff', to play peacefully by the waves 'Splishity splashety splish'. Despite Bear's disquiet, Adrian Reynolds' illustrations are as benign for the city as for the seaside, investing both with a robust vigour that matches the rhythmic text perfectly.

MICHAEL ROSEN (illustrated by Helen Oxenbury)

We're Going on a Bear Hunt

Walker Books, 9780744523232

The classic rhyming story of a family on a bear hunt. Full of optimism, they set out, spurring themselves on with the oft-repeated refrain, 'We're not scared ...'. Through the long grass 'Swishy swashy, swishy swashy', the deep cold river 'splash splosh', the thick oozy mud 'squelch squerch', they go until they come across the bear. Terror! A mad dash home but safe at last and with the front door shut tight just in time. Perfectly matched pictures make this an amazingly dramatic story.

TONY ROSS

Three Little Kittens and Other Favourite Nursery Rhymes

Andersen Press, 9781842707050

This is an excellent first collection of classic nursery rhymes with witty illustrations by Tony Ross. The lost mittens of the Three Little Kittens of the title poem are a joy to search for, while the Black Sheep casually selling his sacks of black wool makes the unlikely surprisingly convincing. Perfect for reading aloud and sharing with eager listeners.

JANE SIMMONS

Come on, Daisy!

Orchard, 9781843622727

Daisy the duckling loves to wander off on her own and dream. She can always find something interesting to do like bouncing on lily pads so she never listens to her mother calling. But then something BIG comes rustling through the reeds. Daisy is scared. What can it be? Luckily, it is only her mummy come back to keep her safe. Beautiful watery illustrations give this loving story a delightful background.

MANDY STANLEY

How Do You Feel?

HarperCollins, 9780007165780

Bold, bright and robust, this is a useful board book for exploring a range of emotions. The rabbit feels hip-hop hungry, the cheery looking crocodile feels snip-snap happy. Peacock feels proud and poor old bear feels sad (boo-hoo). Each picture gives the opportunity for thinking and talking about the different emotion that is shown.

JESS STOCKHAM

Looking Good! (Just Like Me!)

Child's Play, 9781846430473

Designed for the very young, with robust flaps that will withstand a lot of use, this is an introduction to different parts of the body. Fox has a pointy nose, Lizard has little fingers and toes and, when the reader opens the flap, the baby underneath has them too. Charming bold illustrations make connections for the reader.

ELFRIDA VIPONT (illustrated by Raymond Briggs)

The Elephant and the Bad Baby

Puffin, 9780140500486

The Bad Baby and the Elephant go boldly down the road taking something delicious from every shop they pass, and the Bad Baby never once says 'Please'. As a result, all the shopkeepers come running after the troublesome pair as they go, rumpeta, rumpeta, rumpeta through the town. But they never meant to be bad and soon they are forgiven, especially when the Bad Baby's mummy makes a feast of pancakes for everyone. A delightful repetitive text makes this fun to read again and again.

MARTIN WADDELL (illustrated by Barbara Firth)

Can't You Sleep, Little Bear?

Walker Books, 9781844284917

Little Bear is frightened of the dark in the cave, so frightened that he can't go to sleep. Big Bear tries everything he can think of to help him to settle but not even Big Bear's biggest lantern can reassure Little Bear. Then Big Bear has an idea. He shows Little Bear the big moon outside the cave that is watching over them and keeping them safe. At last, Little Bear falls into a deep, deep sleep. Wonderful illustrations show the tender relationship between Little Bear and Big Bear against a cosy bear-cave background.

FIONA WATT

Sleepy Baby

Usborne, 9780746063675

Wonderful touchy-feely patches, including a cosy blanket, woolly socks, silky soft toy rabbit ears and even a nappy, make this irresistible for very young hands. Sleepy Baby is getting ready for bed. Sharing in his activities is fun and a great preparation for every baby's bedtime!

SARAH WILLIAMS (illustrated by Ian Beck)

Ride a Cock Horse

Oxford, 9780192763204

An invaluable collection of classic rhymes for sharing with a baby. Patting, clapping, bouncing – all these rhymes have an interactive element so parents and babies play a role in the story or poem. Brief guidance helps those unfamiliar with them to know what actions to do! Ian Beck’s enticing illustrations flesh out the stories behind the rhymes.

CLIFF WRIGHT

Bear and Box

Templar, 9781840115918

White bear, black bear and brown bear have fun with a green box in this attractive introduction to colours. There’s a red wheel, a blue bath, a yellow flag and purple wings. What can bear make? A glorious sledge. Together, all three bears slide off down the hill.

ALLAN AHLBERG (illustrated by Joe Wright)

Mrs Plug the Plumber

Puffin, 9780140312386

Mrs Plug is a resourceful woman. Not only is she a plumber which is useful in itself, she also manages to see off robbers and, when rewarded by a trip on a cruise liner, she saves the ship when it develops a leak. With Mr Plug as her plumber's mate and the little Plug children as her assistants, it is quite a team. A 'real' book but one that is easy to read with hilarious illustrations, this is just one in the fabulous 'Happy Families' series.

GILES ANDREAE (illustrated by Nick Sharratt)

Pants

Corgi Books, 9780552548335

Pants. Whatever the size, colour or shape, they delight children of all ages. In just a few bubbly words, different kinds of pants are celebrated and applauded with exuberance and without a hint of anything salacious about them.

CATHERINE and LAURENCE ANHOLT

Happy Birthday Chimp and Zee

Frances Lincoln, 9781845071349

Lovable twins, Chimp and Zee, are back to celebrate their birthday and they are going bananas with excitement. Predictable – and unpredictable – birthday surprises follow for the twins and their friends ending in a glorious fold-out birthday surprise for everyone to enjoy. A wonderful expression of birthday delight.

HENRIETTE BARKOW (illustrated by Richard Johnson)

The Giant Turnip (dual language)

Mantra Lingua, available in 22 languages

Adapted from the traditional Russian tale, this version of the story tells how Miss Honeywood's class plant and water and weed their vegetable garden. When they return from holiday they find that one vegetable has grown and GROWN. How they manage to pull the giant turnip from the ground and turn it into soup for all makes a warmhearted story celebrating the bounty of nature and the pleasure of joint endeavour.

STAN and JAN BERENSTAIN

Bears in the Night

HarperCollins, 9780001712713

Daringly, the brave but foolhardy bears sneak out of bed to take a night-time trip up Spook Hill. Out of bed, down the stairs, out of the window, under the bridge, around the lake, through the woods and up Spook Hill. What do they find there? It's so spooky that they are soon down, around, under, in and finally back up the stairs and into bed in double quick time. Cleverly paced, the whole drama is told in only 24 often-repeated words, with pictures that carry the frequently changing emotions of the cheeky bears.

MARA BERGMAN (illustrated by Nick Maland)

Oliver Who Would Not Sleep

Hodder Children's, 9780340893296

A celebration of the need for imagining and dreaming. All the inventiveness of a night-time adventure is packed into this story of a boy who just won't go to sleep. Oliver Donnington Rimington-Sneep has no fears of night-time. Instead he sees it as a time for exploration and fun. Racing his cars, blasting off into space, all this and more needs to be done before sleep. A spare, rhythmic text and elegant illustrations which are strong both on impression and detail make this a book to savour.

STELLA BLACKSTONE (illustrated by Christopher Corr)

My Granny Went to Market

Barefoot Books, 9781905236381

Take a fabulous trip with this remarkable granny as she goes on a round the world shopping spree. It all begins with just one flying carpet but then there are two temple cats in Thailand, three masks, and so on until ten black llamas in the mountains of Peru. Glorious illustrations show the different locations that Granny visits and the whole is told in a delightful rhyming text.

VALERIE BLOOM (illustrated by David Axtell)

Fruits

Macmillan, 9780333653128

From half a pawpaw to ten bananas, this is a wonderful Caribbean counting poem during which a little girl eats her fill – and more! The richly drawn illustrations describe the different, often sneaky, ways she gets her fruits and – just sometimes – shares them until she's feeling very sick.

RAYMOND BRIGGS

Ug

Red Fox 9780099417897

Stone Age boy Ug longs for a better way of life, and in particular for a pair of soft trousers. But the poor boy is ahead of his time. Everyone scoffs at his notions. His mother thinks that he's a softy when he brings her flowers; his friends think he's mad to want something other than a stone to play football with ... but Ug persists. A book full of jokes and questions showing how questioning the norm (which is what all children do) may have some sense to it. After all, most of the things that Ug was asking for have come about.

PAUL BRIGHT (illustrated by Ben Cort)

Under the Bed

Little Tiger Press, 9781854308641

A witty inversion of a familiar anxiety, this will help to allay all bedtime fears. There is something under the bed ... It's a huge and hairy something with warts on its nose and big scary paws. And it's scared too! All the under-the-bed monster wants is for its mummy and daddy to come and rescue it before the little boy above it in the bed scares it half to death.

RUTH BROWN

Imagine

Andersen Press, 9781842705643

Ruth Brown's painterly illustrations offer a feast for the imagination. Conjuring up opposites, she contrasts hot and cold, old and new, flat and round. In only a few words, this book quietly but purposefully stimulates thinking.

ANTHONY BROWNE

Bear Hunt

Walker Books, 9780140553567

Bear sets out for a walk. All he has with him is a pencil. And it is all he needs as, with it, he can draw his way out of trouble when the hunters turn up. The cool story told in the sparest of texts is made rich by the riot of visual invention that fills the illustrations.

EILEEN BROWNE

Handa's Surprise

Walker Books, 9780744536348

Handa carefully packs seven different delicious fruits into her basket and, carrying it on her head, sets off to give them to her friend Akeyo. As she goes, her basket is emptied by greedy animals sneaking up behind her and taking their favourite fruit. With just a minimal text, the story is wittily told through the pictures which allow readers to know what has happened even though Handa does not.

JOHN BURNINGHAM

Avocado Baby

Red Fox, 9780099200611

Mr and Mrs Hargreaves want their baby to be big and strong but there is nothing he likes to eat, until they tempt him with a bit of avocado pear. After that, some strange things happen. Still in his babygro and remaining baby size, the Avocado Baby develops the most amazing strength. First he can break out of the straps of his high chair, soon he sees off a burglar, moves the grand piano and throws some bullies into the pond. Now the Hargreaves have a sign saying 'Beware of the Baby' on their gate, but sometimes the baby is just like any other baby – peacefully asleep in his carrycot. An entertaining story about what a baby might get up to.

JOHN BURNINGHAM

Mr Gumpy's Outing

Red Fox, 9780099408796

Everyone wants to join Mr Gumpy on his boat. As he lets each person or animal aboard, Mr Gumpy asks them not to indulge in their usual habits. He asks the children not to squabble, the rabbit not to hop about, the dog not to tease the cat, the pig not to muck about. And so on. But once safely aboard, they all

forget their agreement. SPLASH! Soaking but unharmed, all return to a handsome tea. A wonderful story that builds up and has a delightfully predictable and reassuring ending.

JOHN BURNINGHAM

The Shopping Basket

Red Fox, 9780099899303

It sounds harmless enough when Steven's mother asks him to 'pop down to the shops and buy six eggs, five bananas, four apples, three oranges for the baby, two doughnuts and a packet of crisps for your tea. And leave this note at number 25.' But Steven has some very exciting and unexpected adventures on the way. How excitement and danger can lie just below the surface of everything we do is brilliantly explored as Steven carries out his mother's instructions.

NICK BUTTERWORTH

Tiger in the Snow!

HarperCollins, 9780007119691

When thick snow covers the ground, Tiger the Kitten can't get any of his friends to come out and play. It's too cold! But when Tiger makes himself an amazing sledge there's no stopping him – or them. Careering down the hill, Tiger rounds up his friends in an unusual way and soon all of them are enjoying the wonders of a snowy day. Their adventure opens out into a long picture which records the ups – and downs – of that whizz down the hill!

EMMA CHICHESTER CLARK

I Love You, Blue Kangaroo!

HarperCollins, 9780006646846

Blue Kangaroo belongs to Lily and she loves him very much. But when she is given Wild Brown Bear, Yellow Cotton Rabbit, Wiggly Green Crocodile, two Furry Puppies, Tiny Teddy and Long-Eared Owl, there isn't any room left in her bed. Sadly Blue Kangaroo says goodbye and hops away to the baby's room. How can Emily get her beloved toy back? All ends well in this touching story of the irreplaceable value of a dearly loved toy. The expressive illustrations capture the mood perfectly.

LAUREN CHILD

I Am Not Sleepy and I Will Not Go To Bed

Orchard Books, 9781846168840

Charlie does everything he can to get his little sister Lola to go to bed, and she makes it very hard indeed. She says she never gets tired. She likes to stay up colouring, scribbling, bouncing and – most of all – chattering. So Charlie plays some clever tricks on his little sister and, in the end, he manages to get her into bed. Captivating illustrations give an entertaining background to this amusing version of a familiar story.

HELEN COOPER

The Baby Who Wouldn't Go to Bed

Corgi Children's, 9780552528382

Refusing his mother's efforts to get him to go to bed, the baby revs up his toy car and speeds off to have an adventure, but everywhere he goes he finds a sleepy world. Tiger sees night as a time for snoring not roaring, the soldiers he longs to play with are resting not fighting, the train doesn't want to race as it trundles back to its depot. Even the moon is drowsy. Soon the baby is all alone. Luckily, someone is still awake to tuck him into bed. Full of nursery detail, each beautiful spread is a richly imagined night-time world.

HELEN COOPER

Pumpkin Soup

Corgi Children's, 9780552545105

This classic picture book is imbued with the warm colours of pumpkin. Cat, Squirrel and Duck live in perfect harmony. Every day, each with their own job to do, they make rich pumpkin soup. One fateful day, Duck wants to take a different job. When the others refuse and Duck storms off, the three find out that it is their friendship that really matters. With their strong personalities and gutsy interaction, the three characters are pleasingly toddler-like.

CRESSIDA COWELL (illustrated by Neal Layton)

That Rabbit Belongs to Emily Brown

Orchard Books, 9781843624530

Emily Brown and Stanley, her old grey rabbit, have the most amazing adventures – so amazing that the queen notices and *demand*s that she should have Stanley. Even strong-minded Emily and brave Stanley cannot defy the Queen's command but they can show her that a toy is only wonderful if the person who owns him really loves him. Soon Stanley is reunited with Emily and the Queen must make do with other toys.

JUNE CREBBIN (ed)

The Puffin Book of Fantastic First Poems

Puffin, 9780141308982

A wonderful collection of poems to 'sing, shout, whisper, chant – maybe learn by heart!' There's certainly something for everyone in this bumper collection of mostly modern but some contemporary poems, which have been divided into sections to make the collection easy to use. Poems about food appear in 'Slurpy Spaghetti' while 'Daddy Fell in the Pond' rounds up stories about mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. Each section has a different illustrator giving it a particular identity and character.

NIKI DALY

The Boy on the Beach

Bloomsbury, 9780747546849

One boy's glorious, energetic, hot, hot day on a beach is brought to life through beautiful and atmospheric illustrations. There's castle bashing, rock pool splashing, surf crashing as well as the wildness of the sea itself. But there's also the chance to have an adventure and dream big, sea-filled dreams ...

NIKI DALY

Jamela's Dress

Frances Lincoln, 9780711214491

This wonderful story set in South Africa tells how Jamela gets carried away by the gorgeous material her mother buys to make a dress to wear at Thelma's wedding. Wrapping it around herself, she shows it off to all her friends. How beautiful it is and how beautiful she is in it. But parading the material around in front of her friends gets it damaged and Jamela feels terrible when she realises what she's done. Luckily, there's a happy ending for all in this warm-hearted story about a special occasion within a community.

NICOLA DAVIES (illustrated by Michael Foreman)

White Owl, Barn Owl

Walker Books, 9780744570144

A little girl gets close to a beautiful, snowy white barn owl when her grandfather builds a nesting box high in the old oak tree. Sitting quietly, she watches as the owl swoops in and out of the box in the night, dives down to catch its prey, and even raises a family in the box. The illustrations catch the night-time magic of the lyrical but factual story, which is enhanced by additional nuggets of information.

EMMA DODD

What Pet to Get?

Templar, 9781840115475

Jack thinks very hard about what kind of pet he'd like to have. An elephant would be nice – but too big to take on holiday; a lion could be fun – but they do eat an awful lot; a polar bear would be good to play with – but might not like the central heating ... Can Jack find a sensible pet? Vibrant illustrations capture the classic pet dilemma in this attractive introduction to different animals.

LYNLEY DODD

Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy

Puffin, 9780140505313

A perfectly shaped rhyming text tells how Hairy Maclary sets out for a walk and, on the way, is joined by all his doggy friends including 'Bottomley Potts covered in spots' and 'Schnitzel von Krumm with a very low tum'. Proudly, the parade of dogs struts along until *suddenly* they come to an abrupt halt. With a terrific scurry of paws, they head back home just as fast as they can go. What is it that has so scared them? A simple and delightful animal tale.

JULIA DONALDSON (illustrated by Axel Scheffler)

The Gruffalo

Macmillan, 9780333710937

Trying to get through the forest safely, the little mouse tricks fox, owl and snake by telling them of the scary Gruffalo. He sounds so fierce and frightening that everyone is scared stiff of him. But is the Gruffalo really scary? And can the clever mouse outwit him too? A wonderful story of fear and triumph.

JULIA DONALDSON (illustrated by Axel Scheffler)

The Snail and the Whale

Macmillan, 9780333982242

Told in Julia Donaldson's trademark rhyming text, this is a poignant story with a strong message. Hitching a ride on the side of a whale, the snail sets off on the trip of a lifetime to see the world. But the world is a huge place and the tiny snail begins to feel very small and unimportant. However, even a tiny snail can save the day ... The whale's glorious movement through wonderful seascapes of caves and islands is captured both in the flow of the text and the richly varied illustrations.

IAN FALCONER

Olivia

Simon & Schuster, 9780689860881

The first title in a series of charming and humorous stories about Olivia, a delightful young pig with very human characteristics. Without any regard for how it might affect others – especially her parents – Olivia dances and sings with delight and abandon. In fact, she loves almost any activity. But luckily, Olivia also loves cuddles and stories and loads of love ...

CLAIRE FREEDMAN (illustrated by Ben Cort)

Aliens Love Underpants

Simon & Schuster, 9781416917052

Aliens and underpants are an irresistible combination and the zany story that unites them here is a sure-fire winner. Told in a jaunty rhyming text, it relates the fun and games aliens have when they come to Earth to play in the underpants that we humans hang on lines or leave lying about. There are a lot of pictures of underpants in some usual – and unusual – places!

VIVIAN FRENCH (illustrated by Sophie Windham)

Henny Penny

Bloomsbury, 9780747581048

A smartly paced text and gorgeous illustrations with a russet red Henny Penny at the heart of them make a fresh new version of the classic and delightfully repetitive story of foolish Henny Penny setting off to tell the king that the sky is falling. When she is joined by Ducky Lucky, Cocky Locky, Goosey Loosey and Turkey Lurkey, they all pit-pit-patter along the road until they meet Foxy Loxy. Gratefully they accept his help to lead them to the king. Foolish creatures! Luckily, Henny Penny has an idea and her smart thinking gets them all out of a nasty predicament.

PAUL GERAGHTY

Rotten and Rascal

Red Fox, 9780099438663

Rotten and Rascal are a pair of Pterosaur twins who never stop squabbling. The competitive screaming, screeching and bellowing of the terrible twins drives the other dinosaurs to despair. Their elders and betters offer wise advice but nothing, absolutely nothing, seems to stop the two of them. Nothing, that is, until Rex gives his advice and has the last word, too. Arguments will never seem quite so safe after reading this book, though the underlying humour makes the message easy to swallow.

BOB GRAHAM

Max

Walker Books, 9781406300239 / 9780744598278

The son of Captain Lightning and Madam Thunderbolt, Max is born to be a superhero. But, despite everything his parents do to help him, Max takes time to learn the all-important trick of flying. And when he does, he uses it in quite a different way. He becomes a hero of a different sort, saving the helpless when they get into difficulties. A gentle story about being a hero.

KES GRAY (illustrated by Nick Sharratt)

Eat Your Peas

Red Fox, 9780099404675

Mum tries everything she can think of to get Daisy to eat her peas. She'll give her extra pudding, let her off having a bath, buy her a bicycle. The offers get more and more ridiculous but still Daisy won't eat her peas. And Daisy has a way of making sure she never has to, when she discovers that Mum has a similar weakness over Brussels sprouts ... The clever twist at the end makes this a nicely balanced story about allowing children freedom of choice.

KES GRAY (illustrated by Nick Sharratt)

006 and a Bit

Red Fox, 9780099488033

Daisy is determined to be a spy. She writes her secret code in invisible ink – Mum's perfume – and she zaps a baddie with a ray gun – Mum's hair dryer. But how can Daisy be a spy when no one understands her game? Luckily, her Mum takes up the challenge. Soon she is a spy too and together they take on the world. A lovely book about make-believe.

MINI GREY

Biscuit Bear

Red Fox, 9780099451082

The freshly baked Biscuit Bear creates a wonderful night-time rumpus when he bakes himself a team of friends to play with. Dressed in all kinds of sugary finery, they create a thrilling circus among the kitchen utensils, including weightlifting the rolling pin and juggling with peas. Their excitement is short lived. All

too soon a shadow appears and with one SNAP, the biscuits are gone. All except one. Biscuit Bear has survival on the brain and, quick as a flash, he saves himself. This is a feast of the imagination full of wit and vigour.

RICHARD HAMILTON (illustrated by Sue Heap)

Let's Take Over the Nursery!

Bloomsbury, 9780747573036

How the nursery class runs riot when the teacher gets stuck in the climbing frame is an exuberant and anarchic story but with a very reassuring ending for teachers everywhere. While splashing water and glooping glue is fun at first, things quickly get out of hand. Soon there's a riot – with children pushing, pinching, punching and not sharing. And, most important of all, who will read the story? With its rollicking rhyming text and bright, realistic illustrations this is a highly entertaining 'cautionary' tale.

PETER HARRIS (illustrated by Deborah Allwright)

The Night Pirates

Egmont, 9781405211611

Tom's a good little boy who has no idea when the shadows invade his bedroom one night that he is going to have a wonderful, magical and unexpected adventure with ... pirates. But Tom is also a brave little boy and the girl pirates are kind, so off he goes to steal the treasure from the nasty grown-up pirates. A perfectly contained night-time adventure with Tom safely back in his own bed at the end of it.

SALLY HEWITT

A Walk Around a School

Watts, 9780749660420

An introduction to all aspects of school is recorded in these attractive photographs and the accompanying text. How parts of the school look and are used, the different jobs that must get done and the activities that take place within it are all simply shown with questions afterwards to encourage thoughts about the pictures. There are also a useful index and a map to encourage further finding-out skills.

PETR HORACEK

Silly Suzy Goose

Walker Books, 9781406304589

Suzy Goose wants to be different: to stand out from the crowd. She thinks of all the things the other animals can do. She tries jumping like a kangaroo, sliding on the ice like a penguin, splishing and splashing like an elephant and even roaring like a lion. But trying to join in can be risky! Luckily she gets back to the other geese just in time.

SHIRLEY HUGHES

Dogger

Red Fox, 9780099927907

The overwhelming importance of one soft toy is captured to perfection in this classic picture book. Dave takes Dogger everywhere but one day he mysteriously goes missing. Everyone searches high and low but Dogger is nowhere to be found. At the school fête the next day Dave cannot join in the fun because he is missing Dogger too much. When Dogger turns up on the old toy stall all looks like ending well, but someone else wants Dogger too and it takes Dave's big sister Bella's generous intervention to get his beloved dog back. Every picture is a feast of busy detail while the drama captures the emotions of a young child.

SIMON JAMES

Baby Brains

Walker Books, 9781844285228

Mr and Mrs Brains want a brainy baby but they get rather more than they bargain for with the arrival of Baby Brains. Reading the paper, mending the car – these come effortlessly to him. Next step, school and becoming a doctor. He's so remarkable that soon everyone wants to meet him and he's selected to go on an important mission into space. But Baby Brains is still a baby. He just wants his mummy! A great joke about the dangers of encouraging babies to do more than they should.

OLIVER JEFFERS

The Way Back Home

HarperCollins, 9780007182282

Told with economy and little explanation, this is the story of an unusual friendship between a little boy and a Martian. The two meet on the moon when their respective spacecrafts run into difficulties. In sign language, each explains his predicament to the other and the boy returns home to fetch what he needs to put their spacecrafts to rights. On his return, the two work side by side, and when the repairs are done they set off in separate directions. Will they ever meet again? A story with lots of scope for dreaming and speculation.

SAM LLOYD

Mr Pusskins

Orchard Books, 9781846163470

Smothered by the love Emily showers on him, Mr Pusskins decides that he needs to go on an adventure and do all the things he's not meant to do. Surely that would be more fun than being snuggled and brushed and endlessly listening to bedtime stories? Sneaking out one night, he has a raucous time with the Pesky Cat Gang doing all kinds of naughty things. But life on the street turns hard and all too soon Mr Pusskins realises that home is best. Feisty Mr Pusskins shows that you can try being tough but being loved is more important.

LINDIWE MABUZA (illustrated by Alan Baker)

South African Animals

Tamarind, 9781870516853

Mbali, a young Swazi girl, acts as a guide to readers as she presents a beautiful A–Z of the animals of South Africa. By exploring different habitats and in a simple, rhyming text she presents aardvarks who hunt at night; beautiful but cruel cheetahs who are the fastest land animals in the world; the more familiar leopards and lions; and the most unusual xhama, a kind of deer. A factual description of each animal makes this a useful resource as well as an attractive ‘safari’.

TOM MACRAE (illustrated by Elena Odriozola)

The Opposite

Andersen Press, 9781842705735

When Nate wakes up one morning, he finds The Opposite standing on the ceiling looking down at him. From then on, everything in the day goes badly wrong as The Opposite causes chaos at the breakfast table by spilling the milk and disaster in the classroom by splashing paint all around. Luckily, Nate has a clever plan for how to get rid of The Opposite. A refreshingly imaginative version of an *alter ego*.

MARGARET MAHY (illustrated by Margaret Chamberlain)

The Man Whose Mother Was a Pirate

Puffin, 9780140554304

Sam is rather an ordinary little man but he has a most extraordinary mother. When she asks to be taken on holiday to the seaside Sam knows that he must oblige. After all, his mother was a pirate and the call of the sea is very powerful to her. On the way, Sam and his mother meet people who are doubtful about the sea but they keep going. And when they arrive, Sam finds he is as captivated as his mother. A wonderful celebration of the many special things about the sea.

ANGELA MCALLISTER (illustrated by Sophie Fatus)

Just Like Sisters

Simon & Schuster, 9780689874802

When Ally’s penfriend arrives for a meeting, the two swear to do everything together – just like sisters. They share photo albums, make-up, shopping, swimming and dancing classes. In fact, they share – everything and find that they have a lot in common. The joke is that Ally is . . . not human. The pictures make it clear from the outset but the differences between the two are never mentioned in the text. A cleverly told story celebrating the fact that friendship crosses boundaries.

DAVID MCKEE

Elmer's First Counting Book

Andersen Press, 9781842706305

This attractive elephant-shaped board book is an easy introduction to counting from 1 to 10. Starting with Elmer himself, it counts through his animal friends using bright, bold colours.

DAVID MCKEE

Elmer's Friends (dual language)

Milet, available in multiple languages

Elmer the patchwork elephant introduces his friends – Zebra who is the stripiest, Giraffe who is the tallest, Snake who is the longest, and so on. A vibrant introduction to some of the most common animals in a bright, easy-to-handle board book.

COLIN MCNAUGHTON

Suddenly

Andersen Press, 9781842706213

Carefree Preston Pig steps out, unaware that the Wolf is out to get him. How Preston Pig outwits the Wolf without even knowing it, is wittily told in pictures which tell the story before the text does. This allows the listeners to enjoy the joke before it is spelt out. Following Preston's near-misses is great entertainment.

DAVID MELLING

Good Knight, Sleep Tight

Hodder, 9780340860939

Can the loyal knight fulfil his quest to find something soft enough and fluffy enough to help the baby princess to sleep? It's a dangerous quest. Bravely the knight gathers bear fur, wolf hair and bird feathers. Exhausted, he returns to the palace. Will these be soft enough to calm the baby princess? Everyone holds their breath – except the baby. Luckily, the little prince knows what to do. Just one cuddle later, she's fast asleep in his arms. A touching domestic story pitched in an entertainingly dramatic way.

JILL MURPHY

Peace At Last

Macmillan, 9780230015487

Mr Bear tries everything he can possibly think of to get a decent night's sleep. Kept awake by Mrs Bear's snoring, he tries to sleep downstairs but the clock is ticking and the tap is dripping. He tries the garden but the owl is hooting. The garage seems to be just what he wants until the birds start their dawn chorus. What can Mr Bear do? He's just got back into his own bed and is falling fast asleep when 'BRRRRR', the alarm clock rings. Words and pictures wittily chart the trials of a sleepless night.

NA'IMA BINT ROBERT (illustrated by Nilesh Mistry)

The Swirling Hijaab (dual language)

Mantra Lingua, available in 20 languages

A little girl can recreate herself in many different roles and in many different places with a swirl of her mother's hijaab. Dressed in this, she can be a warrior queen or a beautiful princess; it can be a Bedouin tent or a cloth for a tea party. So many different ways to play and, best of all, she can always be comforted by it at the end of a busy day. The illustrations convey the imaginative play that lies at the heart of this story.

HELEN NICOLL (illustrated by Jan Pienkowski)

Meg and Mog

Puffin, 9780141501505

Meg and Mog, witch and cat respectively, lead readers into a gentle witchy world where, with their companion Owl, they have pleasingly magical adventures. This time, to celebrate Hallowe'en, Meg and Mog meet up with their friends Jess, Bess, Tess and Cress for a party and a bit of spell-making. But even though the ingredients sound promising, all does not go according to plan. The simple and repetitive text and the endearing silhouette characters make this an easy picture book to read alone.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE TRAVELLER EDUCATION SERVICE

Come and Count With Us!

Nottinghamshire Traveller Education Service, 9780955216206

An excellent early counting book that takes a Traveller's caravan and its children as its theme. Interestingly shaped, with colourful photographs, it has a touchy-feely area on each double page spread.

JAN ORMEROD

Lion Fables (dual language)

Mantra Lingua, available in 28 languages

Two fables from different countries highlight the differences between a powerful animal such as a lion and a small animal such as a mouse or a hare. How power can result from qualities other than size or speed lies at the heart of fables which explore human characteristics. In 'The Lion and the Mouse', the lion saves the mouse, never thinking that one day the mouse may save him. In 'The Hare's Revenge', the hare tricks the boastful lion and sends him crashing headlong into a well. Two thought-provoking stories with strong illustrations that reflect powerful characteristics at work.

JO READMAN (illustrated by Ley Honor Roberts)

The World Came to My Place Today

Eden Project, 9781903919026

Inventive and attractive illustrations offer a mass of information about where in the world the things around us and especially the food we eat come from. George discovers that the doormat is made from coconuts in India, the rubber from his bike tyres comes from the hot, wet rainforests of south-east Asia, the orange juice he drinks comes from Spain, and the chocolate he eats comes from West Africa. Enjoyable to read, this is also a book to make you think.

MICHAEL ROSEN (illustrated by Quentin Blake)

Mustard, Custard, Grumble Belly and Gravy

Bloomsbury, 9780747587385

Michael Rosen's poems of childhood are a delight for all ages. He finds humour in the most everyday activities such as getting ready for bed and the special in something as ordinary as a new pair of trainers, as well as creating wonderful games with words such as his muddling up the names of different dishes.

Warm and loving relationships between siblings and parents lie at the heart of these poems which are given added humour through Quentin Blake's illustrations.

ROB SCOTTON

Go to Sleep, Russell the Sheep

HarperCollins, 9780007246199

When Russell the sheep can't sleep he does the obvious thing – he counts sheep. But there's one sheep he keeps leaving out. What should he do about himself? At last, Russell gets the hang of it. Ten sheep counted and zzzzzz, Russell falls fast asleep. He's a most endearing sheep and helping him count himself to sleep is good fun – and a good joke, too.

MAURICE SENDAK

Where the Wild Things Are

Red Fox, 9780099408390

Max is sent to bed without any supper after he has put on his wolf suit and made mischief. Alone in his room, he enters a magical world and sets sail across the sea to the place where the wild things are. Despite the ferocity of the wild things, Max is not scared; instead, he tames them and is made their king in time to join in their exciting rumpus. When things have gone far enough, Max sends the wild things home without their supper and returns to the safety of his bedroom and a comforting supper. A wonderful adventure fantasy.

NICK SHARRATT

Shark in the Park

Corgi Children's, 9780552549776

Looking through his telescope, Little Timothy Pope looks up and down, high and low as he plays in the park. 'There's a shark in the park!' he cries as through the clever cut-out holes he sees the distinct outline of a shark fin. Can there really be a shark in the park? Luckily, Timothy Pope finds out that it is not real and sets off home with his mind at rest. But maybe there is a shark in the park after all? The last visual joke captures the excellent overall humour of the whole.

JUDY SIERRA (illustrated by Marc Brown)

Wild About Books

Frances Lincoln, 9781845076122

A clever librarian quickly attracts a crowd when she launches the mobile library by reading aloud from Dr Seuss. 'In a flash, every beast in the zoo was stampeding / To learn all about this new something called reading.' There are fat books and thin books, funny books and sad books – something for everyone. Soon, all the animals are not only reading but writing too. An entertaining and inspiring introduction to books.

JESSICA SOUHAMI

In the Dark, Dark Wood

Frances Lincoln, 9781845077556

In a dark, dark wood there's a dark, dark house, and in the dark, dark house ... and so on. In this version of the classic scary story you must lift the flaps to search the house and find exactly what it is that is so very frightening. Under each, there's a surprise but nothing like the BIG one that pops right out when the story ends. Against a mostly black background, the bold colours of the flaps are irresistible for opening and daring to peep under.

JESSICA SOUHAMI

No Dinner!

Frances Lincoln, 9780711214590

The traditional tale of how an old woman tricks the greedy animals not once but twice is wittily retold in Jessica Souhami's lively text and beautiful illustrations. On the way through the forest to visit her granddaughter the old lady sees off the animals by telling them that she's too thin and bony to be worth eating. To save herself on the way back, she hides in a pumpkin and rolls her way home. Even when she is rumbled by the wolf, she has one last trick up her sleeve. A celebration of bravery and sharp wits.

JESSICA SOUHAMI

Sausages

Frances Lincoln, 9781845076016

The perils of wishing are clearly highlighted in this entertaining story. John and his wife are granted three wishes by a passing elf. What should they choose? Racking their brains they think about getting rich. But the thinking takes a long, long time and when John gets overcome by hunger he just blurts out 'Sausages'. Catastrophe! Sausages appear from nowhere and it seems to be impossible to get rid of them. Bold illustrations capture the ridiculous, sausage-filled dilemma the couple face.

JESSICA SPANYOL

Go Bugs Go!

Walker Books, 9781406303711

Bugs love to travel. All kinds of bugs in all kinds of transport are shown on busy double-page spreads. There are masses of curious tiny details to pick up on and follow as the bugs 'Zoom! Zoom! Zoom!' off into the sky or 'Clunk Click! Crunch! Crunch!' along in the breakdown train. Readers will enjoy following the bugs on their hectic journeys.

PETER STAMM (illustrated by Jutta Bauer)

When We Lived in Uncle's Hat

WingedChariot Press, 9781905341047

What is home? Follow this family as it moves from place to place – from Uncle's hat to Aunty's violin taking in the moon, a bus, the rain and nowhere among other places on the way. Many interesting things

happen, some good some bad, all reflecting on the elusive quality that makes a place home. A thoughtful story with complex and detailed illustrations that explain why the moves are made and what impact they have.

AMBER STEWART (illustrated by Layn Marlow)

How Many Sleeps?

Oxford, 9780192791894

All the excitement of a birthday is captured here. Toast can't wait until his birthday. He keeps counting the number of sleeps it will be before the big day arrives. But first there are things to do. He sends out the invitations to his party, then he helps to ice the cake. Every night he gets one sleep closer. But Daddy has a different problem. He has a surprise for Toast. Are there enough sleeps left for him to finish it? A warm-hearted family story told from two perspectives.

JOEL STEWART

Dexter Bexley and the Big Blue Beastie

Doubleday, 9780552554350

Dexter Bexley has to come up with all kinds of bright ideas to stop the Big Blue Beastie eating him up. He has to stop the Beastie from being bored and he has to stop the Beastie from being hungry. What will happen when he runs out of ideas? Brilliant illustrations capture the shifts of emotion as Dexter Bexley and the Big Blue Beastie become unusual and very special friends.

VALERIE THOMAS (illustrated by Korky Paul)

Winnie's Midnight Dragon

Oxford, 9780192791016

Winnie the Witch and her cat Wilbur star in another fabulous adventure. This time, they are disturbed in the night by the arrival of a baby dragon. With smoke and fire pouring from his nose, he poses a real risk to Winnie's broom – and to everything else in the house. Winnie needs to find a way to stop him burning the house down – and to help him get back to his mother. There are some false starts along the way, but in the end and with help from her magic, Winnie saves the day. Action-packed illustrations filled with endless detail make this a wonderful book to look at and enjoy again and again.

EMMA THOMSON

Opposites

Hodder, 9780340918241

The toys in Isabella's toybox have fun showing off opposites. Up and down, happy and sad, slow and fast – all are demonstrated through simple images in the attractive dreamy illustrations in this board book.

MAX VELTHUIJS

Frog and the Stranger

Andersen Press, 9780862646257

When a stranger turns up, Pig and Duck check him out and immediately dismiss him as a dirty, ignorant good-for-nothing who'll bring nothing but trouble. Kind Frog goes to find out for himself and discovers the newly arrived rat to be charming, hard-working and an interesting companion. Can Frog persuade the others? Luckily Rat quickly shows what a good contribution he can make and everyone is very sad when he packs up his camp and moves on. The wider implication of the message is obvious and it is carried attractively in gorgeous and wholly sympathetic illustrations.

MARTIN WADDELL (illustrated by Patrick Benson)

Owl Babies

Walker Books, 9780744531671

An exquisite picture book which captures the little owl babies' big emotions when their mother leaves them to go hunting. Waking up to find themselves alone, the three babies try to reassure themselves that their mother will come back. But the forest is dark and scary and the night is long. At last! Owl Mother returns. A wonderfully reassuring and comforting end, beautifully expressed.

STEVE WEBB

Tanka Tanka Skunk!

Corgi Children's, 9780099439776

Tanka and Skunk – two best friends. Say their names together and it sounds like the beating of a big main drum. And, Tanka! Tanka! Skunk!, beating their drums to the rhythm of the animals' names, the two of them lead the animals into a riotous dance. A celebration of rhythm and dance.

IAN WHYBROW (illustrated by Adrian Reynolds)

Harry and the Bucketful of Dinosaurs

Puffin, 9780140569803

When Harry finds some dusty old dinosaurs in the attic, he brings them down and pops them in a bucket. He knows that's what dinosaurs like best. Soon Harry and his dinosaurs go everywhere together until one terrible day when Harry leaves the bucket on a train. Luckily they are safe in the ticket collector's office but how can Harry prove that they are his? His careful learning of all their names is proof enough. A wonderful story of how make-believe can become 'real'.

VERNA ALLETTE WILKINS (illustrated by Paul Hunt)

Dave and the Tooth Fairy

Tamarind, 9781870516136

The old myth of the tooth fairy is given a modern slant in this attractive picture book. When Dave's tooth falls out, it flies across the room and he cannot find it. What will he do? If he doesn't leave the tooth out for the tooth fairy he won't get the money he so desperately wants so that he can buy a kite. Dave comes up with a clever plan but, fortunately, the tooth fairy is clever and resourceful, too.

MO WILLEMS

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

Walker Books, 9781844285136

This pigeon has great ambitions to drive the bus. But will you let him? As persuasively as he knows how, the pigeon begs the reader to let him have just one small turn. He is charming, wheedling, bribing, furious and despairing but no one will give him a go. Poor pigeon! His dejection is absolute. He can still dream. Lightly drawn illustrations convey an array of emotions beautifully.

JEANNE WILLIS (illustrated by Tony Ross)

Grill Pan Eddy

Andersen Press, 9781842703427

The audacious mouse Grill Pan Eddy convinces the family whose home he adopts that, since they can't get rid of him, they might as well accept that his presence is a blessing and a benefit. And they do, even to the point of mourning him when he finally dies. The marauding Eddy skis down the butter, disables the mouse-trap, sees off the Vermin Catcher's dog, and ties up the cat by its tail. It's an outrageous adventure fleshed out with humorous illustrations.

JEANNE WILLIS (illustrated by Susan Varley)

The Monster Bed

Andersen Press, 9781842702222

Little monster Dennis is mostly good and polite but there is one thing that makes him bellow and bite – going to bed. Dennis is terrified of going to bed because there might be Humans lurking underneath. His mother assures him that Humans only exist in made-up stories but Dennis is not convinced. He adopts the only safe course of action: he sleeps under the bed. Safe at last, Dennis falls into a blissful sleep. But is he really safe? A wonderful last laugh is revealed in delicious monster illustrations which, together with the text, invert a familiar theme with flair.

JEANNE WILLIS (illustrated by Tony Ross)

Tadpole's Promise

Andersen Press, 9781842704264

'Where the willow meets the water a tadpole met a caterpillar. They gazed into each other's tiny eyes ... and fell in love.' So begins a delicious romance with a snappy ending! Despite declaring their true love for one another, neither tadpole nor caterpillar can keep their promise not to change. The result is disastrous – but hilarious too.

CHRIS WORMELL

Two Frogs

Bodley Head, 9780099438625

Two expressive frogs sit fatly on an iridescent green lily pad in a beautiful blue pond, discussing why one of them has brought a stick with him. As he explains, it is to beat off any dog who might come after them. The other laughs at his folly, pointing out that there is no dog and that they are more likely to be eaten by a heron or a pike. What happens and how they save their skins provides a wonderfully unexpected story told with perfect timing.

BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH (illustrated by Prodeepta Das)

J is for Jamaica

Frances Lincoln, 9781845074012

With a vivid poem and photograph for each letter of the alphabet, this is a beautiful introduction to all aspects of life in Jamaica. Sugar cane, pumpkin and ugly fruit are just some of the gorgeous foods on show, netball and cricket some of the sports. And behind it all is the wonderful background of a beautiful country. A book to feast the eye and the ear.

ALLAN AHLBERG (illustrated by Katharine McEwen)

The Man Who Wore All His Clothes

Walker Books, 9780744589955

The Gaskitts seem like an ordinary family, but strange things happen to them. One day, Mr Gaskitt puts on all his clothes and sets off for work. On the same day, Mrs Gaskitt picks up a robber in her car and Gus and Gloria Gaskitt have a lot of trouble with their teacher at school. How all these incidents come together is wittily told. The drama is perfectly captured in the details of the illustrations.

NICHOLAS ALLAN

The Queen's Knickers

Red Fox, 9780099413141

Have you ever thought what kind of knickers the Queen might be wearing underneath all that finery? This is an affectionate and delightful exposé of the not often explored subject of the Queen and her underwear. After considering the many different and very special kinds of knickers the Queen has – including ones with real holly in them which she wears while giving her Christmas speech, which explains why it is so short – this looks in particular at what kind of knickers the Queen should wear on a school visit.

JANINE AMOS

It's Mine!

Cherrytree, 9781842344170

A simple story with good photographs to match encourages children to think about the need for sharing and how it may be achieved. There's only one piece of gold paper left and both Yim and Rena want it. Can they work on it together? What happens when the picture is finished and they both want to take it home? Luckily, the teacher is there to give good advice and these difficulties can be resolved. Teacher's Notes at the back suggest how to use the book for extension activities.

GILES ANDREAE (illustrated by Russell Ayto)

Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs: Missing Treasure!

Puffin, 9780141382067

Flinn's new encounter with the pirate dinosaur is a hectic and vivid adventure involving danger on the high seas. On a visit to the museum, Flinn learns that some valuable treasure has gone missing. It doesn't take him long to discover who the thieves might be. Pirates Tyrannosaurus Rex, Stegosaurus, Triceratops and Diplodocus are at the bottom of it and, while Flinn dreams his dramatic imaginary dream, he plays a major part in its recovery. Rich in imagination, this is a visually powerful book.

RONDA AND DAVID ARMITAGE

The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch

Scholastic, 9781407103150

Every day Mr Grinling is out at work making sure that his lighthouse is shining bright across the sea, keeping the ships safe. And, every day, Mrs Grinling cooks him a delicious lunch which she packs in a

basket and sends across to the lighthouse on a wire suspended high above the sea. But one day something dreadful happens. Three scavenging seagulls attack the basket and enjoy all the delicious food. How on earth can they be stopped? The details that make a lighthouse keeper's life so different and special give this book an original and fascinating setting. Attempts to outwit the seagulls – whose greedy comments are fun to read in speech bubbles – are hilarious.

ANTONIA BARBER (illustrated by Nicola Bayley)

The Mousehole Cat

Walker Books, 9780744523539

Mowzer the cat and Old Tom the fisherman fight the Great Storm-Cat as she tries to sweep into the Cornish village of Mousehole one dark and very stormy night. Bravely they sail out into the heaving sea where they must tame the cat into gentle, purring submission. A long, flowing story full of beauty is perfectly matched by illustrations that capture the moods and allure of the sea.

SIMON BARTRAM

Man on the Moon: A Day in the Life of Bob

Templar, 9781840114911

Follow a day in the life of Bob, the Man on the Moon, in this fresh story about life out in space which is told with the most delightful deadpan humour. Every day, Bob gets up and goes about his daily business. He looks after the Moon keeping it swept and tidy, entertaining visitors who expect to see him moonwalking and selling them souvenirs. At four-thirty the visitors must leave so Bob checks that everyone has departed safely before packing everything up and heading for home. But there's one thing that Bob doesn't know anything about. Aliens! Readers do and they love the joke that is going on in the illustrations behind Bob's back.

STELLA BLACKSTONE (illustrated by Maria Carluccio)

Skip Through the Seasons

Barefoot Books, 9781905236701

A hide and seek book that encourages looking and talking as it is full of things to find on each of the seasonal spreads. There's a wintery January, a windy March, a splashy April right through until all the celebrations that come with December. Lots to talk about, new words to learn and, at the end, an introduction to some of the different kinds of calendars that have been used through the ages.

MICHAEL BOND (illustrated by Peggy Fortnum)

A Bear Called Paddington

HarperCollins, 9780007174164

Paddington Bear has travelled alone all the way from Darkest Peru with only a single suitcase containing a jar of marmalade, and turns up unexpectedly on Paddington Station. Luckily, a label on the suitcase says, 'PLEASE LOOK AFTER THIS BEAR. THANK YOU', and kind Mrs Brown decides to do just that. Full of domestic details to which Paddington adds a touch of the exotic, the adventures this small bear has as he does – and doesn't! – adapt to his new life are touching and funny.

TONY BRADMAN (illustrated by Martin Chatterton)

The Mummy Family Find Fame

Egmont, 9781405218771

The Mummy Family are broke. None of the ways they can think of making money are very attractive until they hit on the idea of entering a family TV show. Trying to be good and nice all the time turns out to be very hard indeed. Luckily, the producers want something completely different so when the family let themselves go and behave as they normally do everyone is happy. Busy illustrations capture the quirky Mummy Family perfectly while the simple text tells a more straightforward story.

ANTHONY BROWNE

Gorilla

Walker Books, 9780744594393

Hannah loves gorillas. She longs to go to the zoo to see a real one but her father is always too busy to take her. One amazing night, a gorilla arrives to see her. Together they have a perfect night out and end up dancing together in the moonlight. The backgrounds of Anthony Browne's illustrations are packed full of visual jokes which add an extra dimension to the touching story he tells.

DAWN CASEY (illustrated by Jago)

Fox Fables (dual language)

Mantra Lingua, available in 34 languages

Fox Fables is two stories in one volume. The first is a version of an Aesop's fable. The fox and the crane try to outwit each other with tricks about different ways of eating. The second is a Chinese story, 'The King of the Forest'. Here, the cunning fox needs all his skills to outsmart the tiger and prove that he really is the King of the Forest. Children can draw lessons from both while enjoying the tense drama and the beautiful illustrations.

DAWN CASEY (illustrated by Richard Holland)

Yeh-Hsien: A Chinese Cinderella (dual language)

Mantra Lingua, available in 24 languages

The very oldest story of Cinderella comes from China, although it has been adopted all over the world. Yeh-Hsien has a wicked step-mother and mean sisters who keep her in drudgery. When spring comes, Yeh-Hsien longs to go to the Spring Festival in the village but she knows she will never be allowed to. Luckily, she has a magic fish... All ends happily in this beautiful version set against a vivid Chinese background.

EMMA CHICHESTER CLARK

Eliza and the Moonchild

Andersen Press, 9781842705773

Up on the moon, a wild Moonchild tires of the dull black and white world in which he lives. Peering through a telescope he sees the Earth and all the colours on it. Slipping away one night, he zooms down to Earth. He meets Eliza who introduces him to all the wonderful colours and sends him home with a

memory of them. Beautiful illustrations convey the two contrasting worlds of the Moon and Earth in a heart-warming story about friendship across a divide.

ROALD DAHL

The Enormous Crocodile

Puffin, 9780140568226

This story about how the Enormous Crocodile with his hundreds of sharp teeth sets about trying to trick the children into becoming a nice juicy morsel for his lunch is delightfully scary. Singing his greedy song, the Enormous Crocodile rampages through the jungle hatching his 'secret plans and clever tricks'. These include pretending to be a coconut tree, stretching himself out to become a see-saw in the playground, and disguising himself as a bench in the picnic area. Luckily, the animals in the jungle do everything in their power to stop him including, finally, hurling him into space where he meets a satisfyingly revolting end.

ROALD DAHL

Fantastic Mr Fox

Puffin, 9780141322650

To save his family, Mr Fox must pit his wits against the three nasty farmers, Boggis, Bunce and Bean. He'll do anything to steal their chickens and they'll do anything to stop him. Then Boggis, Bunce and Bean hatch a very clever plan which, they are sure, will force Mr Fox to give up. But Mr Fox has a fantastic plan of his own. A hard fought fight with some really repulsive villains, this is a perfect story for beginning readers.

ALEXIS DEACON

Beegu

Red Fox, 9780099417446

Full of pathos and charm, *Beegu* is a moving story about a small space creature who arrives on Earth. Beegu is lost but she is a friendly creature so she determines to try to make friends. At first, she can't find anyone who can understand her, but when she spies some children playing at school she's sure that that is the perfect place for her. And it is. At last Beegu is made to feel welcome. When she finally gets home safely she remembers the love the children gave her and hopes that they will remember her with affection, too.

BERLIE DOHERTY (illustrated by Jane Ray)

Jinnie Ghost

Frances Lincoln, 9781845073282

There's a spell-binding lyricism to this magical story about Jinnie Ghost who floats along the street calling on all the children as they sleep. Jinnie Ghost brings dreams, beautiful dreams, frightening dreams, active dreams and Jane Ray captures them all in her cleverly created and atmospheric illustrations.

JACQUES DUQUENNOY

Loch Ness Ghosts

Frances Lincoln, 9781845074487

Four adventurous ghosts set off to look for the elusive Loch Ness Monster. Properly prepared with cameras and binoculars – as well as a good supply of food and drink and fishing rods for whiling away the boring wait – the four settle down to some serious monster spotting. Alas! Their luck is out. The holiday must end and they haven't seen the monster appear. Or have they? Readers can enjoy the joke of seeing what the ghosts cannot in this charming and original story.

MICHAEL FOREMAN

Dinosaurs and All That Rubbish

Puffin, 9780140552607

Published ahead of its time, the conservation message of this book is now highly topical. Man looks at a distant star and thinks it seems a lot more attractive than the Earth he is about to leave. But why is the Earth unattractive? Because Man has spoilt it. Built over and rubbish strewn, it is a mess. Man can only return if he promises to clear up the mess and share the Earth in future. Brilliant illustrations convey an important message without preaching.

MICHAEL FOREMAN

Mia's Story

Walker Books, 9781406305333 / 9781844282784

Subtitled 'A Sketchbook of Hopes & Dreams', this looks below the surface of how people live and discovers the warmth and courage often hiding underneath hardship. Mia's home is a huddle of shacks perching on inhospitable terrain somewhere between the city and the mountains. Everything is makeshift and ramshackle; but Mia's life is full of small excitements, daily surprises and, above all, the amazing future Mia creates for herself by growing flowers. This is both a beautiful picture book and a moving and thoughtful insight into the lives of others.

MICHAEL FOREMAN

Seal Surfer

Andersen Press, 9781842705780

This is a lyrical story beautifully illustrated with pictures that capture the watery Cornish landscape. It tells of the growing relationship between a boy and the seal he watches from the moment of its birth. Through the spring and summer, the boy observes the seal pup grow from his vantage point on the rocks. In winter he fears for its safety but when spring returns, the seal cub reappears. Together the boy and his seal friends surf the roaring waves. Only clues in the pictures show that the boy walks with crutches.

SALLY FRASER (illustrated by Derek Brazell)

Grandma's Saturday Soup (dual language)

Mantra Lingua, available in 30 languages

Mimi loves her Grandma and during the week everything she does reminds her of the things Grandma does and says. Most of all, they remind her of Grandma's wonderful Saturday soup, full of yams and green bananas and cho-cho and pumpkin and much else besides. It is delicious! Luckily, when Saturday comes around, Mimi visits Grandma and gets a helping of her most favourite soup. Grandma's stories about Jamaica are picked up in the atmospheric illustrations which contrast snowy scenes of life at home with the warmth and light of the Caribbean.

EMILY GRAVETT

Meerkat Mail

Macmillan, 9781405090759

Adventurous Sunny the Meerkat leaves home one day in search of somewhere *perfect* to live. He visits several relations in very different places and experiences all kinds of new difficulties before coming full circle and finding that home is best. Told through Sunny's postcards home which comment wittily on each of the very fully illustrated places he visits, this is a wonderful travelog as well as a warm-hearted reminder of the delights of home.

MINI GREY

The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon

Bodley Head, 9780099475767

A lyrical story gives a rich and inventive background to the simple nursery rhyme about the Dish and the Spoon. Here, we discover the depth of their romance as it leads them to run away to search for adventure and an exciting new life. They sail away to New York where they find fame, fortune – and disaster. Beautiful spreads full of filmic imagery make this a story of dreams, especially when the Dish and the Spoon are happily reunited.

MAIRI HEDDERWICK

Katie Morag and the Dancing Class

Bodley Head, 9780370329109

Katie Morag, already the heroine of many stories about life on the Island of Struay, is back. It has been decided that the children on Struay should have dancing lessons. Katie Morag, whose favourite footwear is Wellington boots, is not pleased! But her two grannies are adamant. Grandma Mainland orders a pink leotard and pink ballet shoes and even sews a frilly frou-frou skirt to wear on top. Poor Katie Morag! Dressed in her ballet clothes, she sets off every Saturday but, somehow, each week, something stops her from arriving in time. Luckily, Katie Morag doesn't miss it all. What a surprise Grandma Mainland gets when Katie Morag appears, but everyone agrees that her tap dancing in her tacky Wellingtons is brilliant!

MARY HOFFMAN (illustrated by Karin Littlewood)

The Colour of Home

Frances Lincoln, 9780711219915

Hassan is finding it hard to adjust to living in a new country. Everything is different and, although the children in his new school are friendly, he cannot understand what they say. Worst of all, everything is cold, rainy and grey. A thoughtful text and pictures which show the contrasts in his life vividly trace Hassan's journey towards integration as he gradually leaves behind the violence he has escaped from and begins to embrace his new world.

MARY HOFFMAN (illustrated by Cornelius van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu)

Princess Grace

Frances Lincoln, 9781845075323

Grace, the feisty and much-loved heroine of previous titles, returns in this entertaining and thoughtful story about what makes a princess. Grace has always wanted to be a princess so when the chance to be one in the carnival comes along, she jumps at it. But what exactly do princesses do? Just standing there in a pink dress doesn't seem to be enough. Luckily Grace finds out that there are all kinds of other princesses who are brave and clever and she and her friends can each be one.

REBECCA HUNTER (photographs by Chris Fairclough)

Postman

Cherrytree, 9781842342961

The many processes that take place between the posting of a letter and its arrival are recorded in these photographs and their clear and simple accompanying text. Postman Gurmail describes his day at a mail centre in Wolverhampton. He explains how a postbox gets emptied, how the letters get sorted, how they are delivered, and the excitement when they are received, in this useful first information book.

SATOSHI KITAMURA

Stone Age Boy

Walker Books, 9781406303353

A modern boy trips, falls ... and finds himself in another world. He's in the Stone Age and soon he's learning how to live without all the things he's used to. His new friends show him how to make a fire with two sticks, to smoke meat and to have fun singing and dancing without electronic equipment. They even show him their amazing cave paintings. Just as he's admiring them, he's knocked over by a huge cave bear and he falls down, down, down back into his own world. This is a book to savour as you soak up information about how life was lived long ago. Useful notes at the back reinforce its value.

LAURIE KREBS (illustrated by Anne Wilson)

We're Sailing Down the Nile

Barefoot Books, 9781846860393

All aboard! A wonderful trip down the Nile is a perfect introduction to Egypt. Sail past statues and temples and an oasis and palm trees. Sail to the Valley of the Kings where a guide shows the tomb of Tutankhamun. Sail by the Pyramids. It's a beautiful and fascinating journey. Additional factual information makes this a useful reference book too.

NEAL LAYTON

Mammoth Academy

Hodder, 9780340930298

Woolly mammoths, like everyone else, have to go to school. Oscar and Arabella get letters from The Mammoth Academy telling them what they need to bring when they start. Nervously they begin their schooldays with Owl, Prunella, Fox and Cave Cat under the watchful eye of a stern headmistress. Familiar school incidents are made fresh and original in this Ice Age variant. Some wonderfully hairy creatures are entertainingly shown in the accompanying illustrations.

RICHARD LEFFINGWELL

Adding and Counting On

Raintree, 9781406203950

Using objects found in everyday life, this is a pictorial introduction to some fundamental mathematical concepts. Each problem posed is followed by a step-by-step guide that explains how it can be solved and gives visual reinforcement through clear photographs.

ERIC MADDERN (illustrated by Paul Hess)

The Cow on the Roof

Frances Lincoln, 9781845075910

Who works harder, Shon or Sian? Shon thinks he does while his wife lazes about at home. So they decide to swap. Sian goes out to work in the fields while Shon takes care of the house. And what a tangle he gets into as the pig licks up the cream, the ale floods the cellar and he falls head first into the porridge after he's put the cow to graze on the roof. Some classic hapless disasters in this stylish retelling of a familiar folktale.

HILARY MCKAY (illustrated by Sam Hearn)

Charlie and the Great Escape

Scholastic, 9780439944298

Seven-year-old Charlie lives with his brother Max who's eleven and his parents who are ancient. Sometimes he feels he has a very sad and hard life. Everyone is always getting at him. When it all gets too much, Charlie decides to run away. Overladen with bags, he sets off crossly, slamming the door behind him, but Charlie finds that running away isn't quite as easy as he'd thought. A delightfully humorous story with an engaging young hero.

DAVID McKEE

Not Now, Bernard

Andersen Press, 9780099240501

'Not now, Bernard,' Bernard's busy parents always say, even when he warns them that there's a monster in the garden who is going to eat him up. And the Monster does eat Bernard up. Now the monster comes into the house. Bernard's parents are still too busy to pay him any attention. They treat the monster as if he was Bernard. Is Bernard now a monster? A black comedy with scope for much individual interpretation.

VICTORIA PARKER

Hard or Soft

Heinemann, 9780431174075

A simple, first introduction to the properties of everyday things. Working together to put on a display, the children have to think about what is soft and what is hard. Attractive action photographs show them experimenting and then putting on their display.

JAN PIENKOWSKI

Haunted House

Walker Books, 9781844288748

Dare to be scared by letting yourself into this classic open-the-flap book that revolutionised the concept. Nasty creatures pop out at you, opening doors reveal delightfully disgusting mess – especially in the fridge – and scary skeletons flap out of wardrobes. In fact, it's all together pretty putrid and absolutely irresistible!

ANUSHKA RAVISHANKAR (illustrated by Emanuele Scanziani)

To Market! To Market!

Tara Publishing, 9788186211991

All the hustle and bustle at a market is captured in this big format, fantastically designed and exuberant picture book. A little girl has some money in her pocket. What should she buy? Choices, choices ... And there's so much to see. So much that, in the end, she's had all the fun and not bought anything! Readers will also enjoy the visual treats brightly shown in the illustrations.

CHRIS RIDDELL

The Emperor of Absurdia

Macmillan, 9781405090285

The Emperor of Absurdia is only a small boy but he has a large and wondrous dream. Tumbling out of bed he falls into the arms of the Wardrobe Monster who dresses him appropriately for a most dangerous dragon hunt. How the Emperor gets safely back into the arms of the Wardrobe Monster and to his own bed rounds off a gloriously illustrated adventure in a world where everything is delightfully topsy-turvy.

POSY SIMMONDS

Baker Cat

Red Fox, 9780099455967

How an overworked and underfed cat teams up with outrageous mice and outwits the mean old baker and his lazy wife is a hilarious story of cunning and daring enterprise. Against the setting of a bakery filled with scrumptious and elegant cakes and a storeroom piled high with chocolate, nuts, huge bags of sugar and pots of jam, the cheeky mice run riot while the cat earns his food from the baker by fobbing him off with some knitted tails as proof of his mousing skills. Finally, the baker and his wife are seen off. Who will be in charge now? There are lots of jokes in the busy illustrations.

FRANCESCA SIMON (illustrated by Tony Ross)

Horrid Henry and the Abominable Snowman

Orion, 9781842550700

Yet more adventures for the outrageous Henry whose need to persecute his younger brother knows no bounds. Henry's eagerness to be best at everything means he will do anything and everything to win. With an unerring ability to capture the cruellest details of sibling rivalry, these stories are driven by an infectious humour that tempers the tension.

ANDY STANTON (illustrated by David Tazzyman)

Mr Gum and the Biscuit Billionaire

Egmont, 9781405228152

Mr Gum's a nasty old man. He hates children, animals, fun, and every cartoon that has ever been made. But he loves money. So when he learns about a gingerbread man with electric muscles who is as rich as a mushroom, he is determined to get his hands on the cash. The question is, can he be stopped? And where does the biscuit come in?

JOHN STEPTOE (illustrated by the author)

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters

Puffin, 9780140559460

How goodness is recognised and rewarded is the familiar folkstory theme of this charming African tale. Mufaro has two beautiful daughters: Manyara and her sister Nyasha. When the king calls for all beautiful girls to visit him with a view to becoming his bride, Mufaro plans to send both his girls. But Manyara is so jealous of Nyasha that she'll do everything she can to stop her reaching the king. Fortunately Nyasha's goodness goes before her and she earns her just reward.

Appendix

Contacts

Publishers and booksellers specialising in cultural diversity

Barefoot Books
124 Walcot Street
Bath BA1 5BG
Tel: 01225 322 400
Fax: 01225 322 499
<http://www.barefoot-books.com>

Tamarind
PO Box 52
Northwood
Middlesex
HA6 1UN
<http://www.tamarindbooks.co.uk>

Letterbox Library
71-73 Allen Road
Stoke Newington
London N16 8RY
Tel: 020 7503 4801
Fax: 020 7503 4800
<http://www.letterboxlibrary.com>

Tara Publishing
38/GA Shoreham
5th Avenue Besant Nagar
Chennai 600 090
India
Tel: +91 (0) 442440 1696
Fax: +91 (0) 442445 3658
<http://www.tarabooks.com>

Mantra Lingua
Global House
303 Ballards Lane
London N12 8NP
Tel: 0208 44 55 123
Fax: 0208 44 67 745
<http://www.mantralingua.com>

WingedChariot Press
7 Court Royal
Eridge Road
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN4 8HT
<http://www.wingedchariot.com>

Milet
Turnaround Publisher Services
Unit 3, Olympia Trading Estate
Coburg Road, London N22 6TZ
Tel 020 8829 3000
Fax 020 8881 5088
<http://www.milet.com>

Where to find out about books

Book Trust
Books House
45 East Hill
London SW18 2QZ
<http://www.booktrusted.org.uk>

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education
Webber Street
London SE1 8QW
<http://www.clpe.co.uk>

Federation of Children's Book Groups
2 Bridge Wood View
Horsforth
Leeds LS18 5PE
<http://www.fcbg.org.uk>

National Literacy Trust
68 South Lambeth Road
London SW8 1RL
<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk>

The Reading Agency
PO Box 96
St Albans AL1 3WP
<http://www.readingagency.org.uk>

Journals and Magazines

Books for Keeps
1 Effingham Road
London
SE12 8NZ
<http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk>

Carousel
The Saturn Centre
54-76 Bissell Street
Birmingham B5 7HX
<http://www.carouselguide.co.uk>

The School Librarian
School Library Association
1 Pine Court
Kembrey Park
Swindon
SN2 8AD
<http://www.sla.org.uk>

Further reading

Flynn, Leonie, Hahn, Daniel and Reuben, Susan (Eds.)
The Ultimate First Book Guide
A & C Black, 2008. ISBN: 978 0 7136 7331 9. Pbk, £12.99
<http://www.ultimatebookguide.com>

Useful websites

Booktrust	http://www.booktrust.org.uk
Children’s Laureate	http://www.childrenslaureate.org
CILIP Carnegie and Greenaway Awards	http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk
International Children’s Digital Library	http://www.icdlbooks.org
Kids’ Review	http://www.kidsreview.org.uk
Love Reading 4 Kids	http://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk
National Year of Reading 2008	http://www.yearofreading.org.uk
National Literacy Trust	http://www.literacytrust.org.uk
Reading Agency	http://www.readingagency.org.uk
Reading Matters	http://www.readingmatters.co.uk
Reading Zone	http://www.readingzone.com
SLA	http://www.sla.org.uk
Stories from the Web	http://www.storiesfromtheweb.org
UK Children’s Books	http://www.ukchildrensbooks.co.uk
Write Away	http://www.writeaway.org.uk
World Book Day	http://www.worldbookday.com

Other organisations and projects supporting early years reading

A. THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST

<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 projects that help teachers and librarians involve families in supporting their children’s developing literacy.

These include:

1. Talk To Your Baby encourages parents and carers to talk more to children from birth to three. The campaign provides a one-stop shop for information on early communication to encourage, inform and disseminate good ideas among early years professionals, parents, future parents and the media. A wide range of free downloadable resources are available from the Talk To Your Baby website, including Share books and talk together which encourages communication between parents/carers and young children through book sharing. There is a handout for parents as well as reading and talking activity ideas. Also available is Quick tips – sharing books with your baby. The Quick tips are available in 12 languages. For more information visit www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk

2. Reading Connects, a DCSF-funded initiative, supports schools in building a whole-school reading culture to encourage children to develop a love of reading. Reading Connects enables schools to access all the great ideas that schools and organisations have developed to get the whole school reading and, of course, the school library is central to this approach. As part of the Family Reading Campaign, Reading Connects developed a family engagement toolkit which has proved very popular – over 80,000 copies have been downloaded from the site. This toolkit has led to many early years settings joining Reading Connects and a demand for the toolkit to be rewritten to meet the needs of early years settings. With the support of a wide range of early years professionals, this adapted toolkit should be ready by April 2008. This will coincide with the launch of Early Reading Connects which will pull together a wide range of resources to support early years settings in involving parents in encouraging reading.

Find all about Reading Connects at www.readingconnects.org.uk

Download the family engagement toolkit at www.literacytrust.org.uk/readingconnects/familytoolkit.html

Find out about Early Reading Connects at www.earlyreadingconnects.org.uk (from April 2008)

3. The Family Reading Campaign is helping to create a coordinated national and local infrastructure to support family reading and literacy. The website is full of excellent case studies from a wide range of sectors on how to engage families with reading. Many of these focus on early years settings. The site also has a special area for resources and information aimed at parents as well as a wide range of editable downloadable resources to help early years settings and schools engage and involve parents.

Visit www.familyreading.org.uk

For advice and resources for families visit www.literacytrust.org.uk/familyreading/parents/index.html

For resources for professionals visit www.literacytrust.org.uk/familyreading/Resourcesindex.html

4. The early years section of the NLT website is full of up-to-date information on news, policy, research and initiatives relating to literacy in the early years.

Visit www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/earlyyears.html

5. News - Keep up to date with literacy related news as it happens. Literacy news is updated daily at: 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; families are a key audience for this work. In 2008 we are lead partners in the consortium delivering the National Year of Reading, working to mobilize the power of public libraries during the year.

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.

We offer promotional materials to help libraries promote their services to key groups: *Got Kids? Get Reading!*TM promotes reading to parents with literacy needs who have children under 7 years, while *Five Minutes*TM materials are aimed at dads with literacy needs who have children under 10. Using these materials, we run projects to develop partnership work between libraries and early years settings, in order

to introduce more families with young children to the reading services of public libraries.

We run a family reading programme in prisons called *The Big Book Share™*, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. This enables parents in prison to read stories aloud and make recordings to send home to their children. And we work to support prisoners to continue reading with their families on leaving prison by helping to establish good links with their local public library service on release.

Every year, the *Summer Reading Challenge™* engages over 650,000 readers between 4 and 12. For children who have not yet reached 4 we offer a link with Bookstart's Book Crawl which enables even the youngest children to get involved alongside their older brothers and sisters, making the Challenge a whole family experience.

Public libraries run a variety of events and activities for early years children and their parents. We support the whole range of libraries' work with young readers through an online training resource for library staff at <http://www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk>.

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.

D. 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. With ASCEL's support libraries run Early Years programmes to engender a love of books and reading. The initiatives libraries offer for the under fives and their families include Bookstart, rhyme times and story times.

E. CLPE (Centre for Literacy in Primary Education)

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

CLPE is an educational centre for schools and teachers, parents, teaching assistants and other educators. CLPE has a national and international reputation for its work in the fields of language, literacy and assessment.

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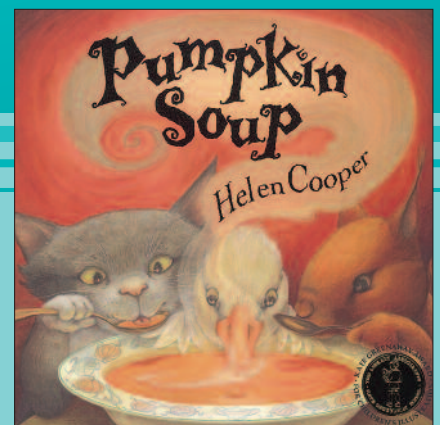
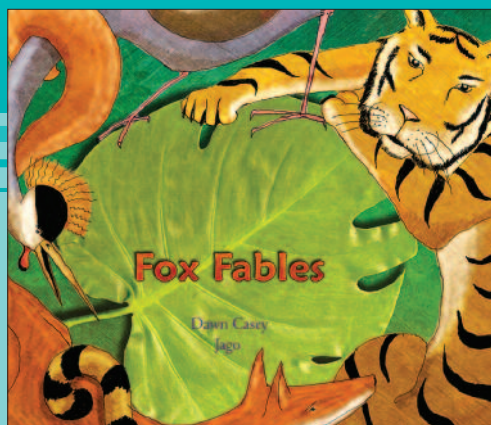
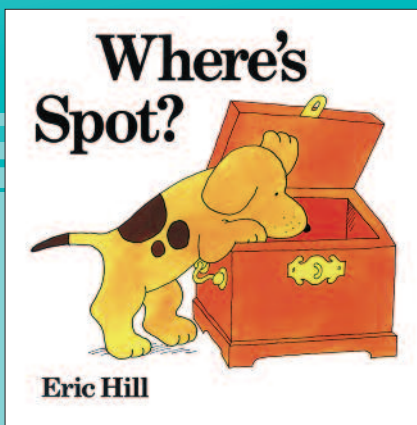
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School Library Association
1 Pine Court, Kembrey Park, Swindon SN2 8AD
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Email: publications@sla.org.uk Web: www.sla.org.uk

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