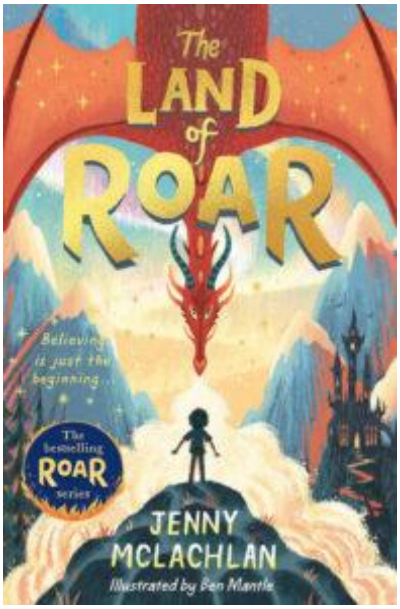
Year 4: 50 Recommended Reads

Find the best books to top up your Y4 book collection with our hand-picked list of storytime favourites, thought-provoking tales, funny books, picturebooks, graphic novels, poetry collections, non-fiction texts and more. We hope that there will be something for everyone, but do keep your eyes open for magical cats, crime-busting pigeons, wish-granting fifty-pence pieces and the odd day of the week that mysteriously vanishes from memory…

Our Year 4 booklist covers a range of genres and themes in order to cater to a range of children's reading levels and interests. This booklist includes some of the most popular Year 4 stories such as The Land of Roar, The Boy at the Back of the Class and How to Train Your Dragon as well as some lesser-known storytime delights that we recommend for Y4, like David Almond's AI-inspired Brand New Boy, Elizabeth Laird's Song of the Dolphin Boy and the super fun choose-your-own-adventure style mystery The Monster Maker.

Favourite Storytime Books for Year 4



The Land of Roar

Jenny McLachlan & Ben Mantle

Chapter book

This story is full of imagination, adventure and excitement and makes for a perfect read-aloud choice for storytime. Land of Roar is an instantly gripping adventure where childhood games become a reality for two twins. I raced my way through it, wondering what dangers twins Rose and Arthur were going to encounter next, whilst simultaneously wanting to visit Roar myself!

Land of Roar makes for a fantastic portal story where you can't help but be dragged into this magical land of make-believe in a story full of adventure, magic and friendship. I love the idea of childhood games coming to life and the idea appeals well to the imaginations of children aged 8 to 10 – old enough to remember make-believe games from a younger stage but still young enough to allow themselves to be swept away by imagination and magic.

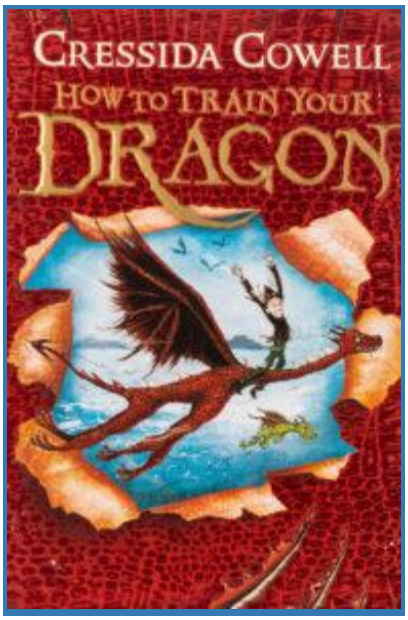
Land of Roar is the kind of fantasy adventure that grips you from the first page to the last and keeps you wanting more…so it's a good thing there's a sequel!

The Girl Who Stole an Elephant

Nizrana Farook

Chapter book

An exciting middle-grade adventure from Nizrana Farook filled with atmosphere, suspense and adventure with elements of Robin Hood and Arabian Nights.
Set in the dazzling landscapes of Sri Lanka, The Girl Who Stole an Elephant is the story of a girl called Chaya and her friends Neel and Nour. Quick-fingered Chaya is a young version of Robin Hood; she steals from the rich to help the poor in her village. However, when she steals the Queen's jewels, things begin to go horribly wrong. Not only does she put herself in grave danger, but her actions also bring harm to her best friend Neel and the people of her village…

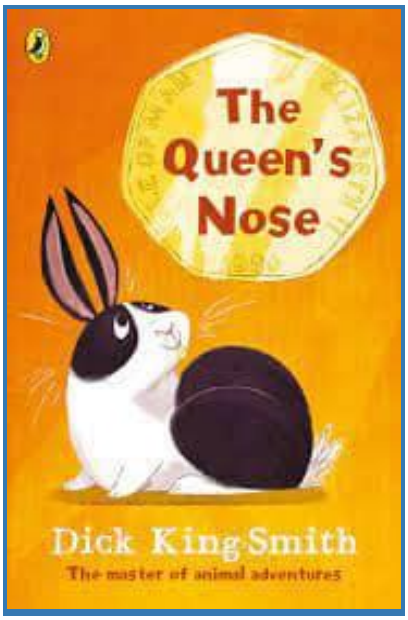


How to Train Your Dragon

Cressida Cowell

Chapter book

An absolute winner of a story and a brilliant choice for KS2 children in Year 4, 5 or 6. Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third is a smallish Viking with a longish name. Hiccup's father is chief of the Hairy Hooligan tribe which means Hiccup is the Hope and the Heir to the Hairy Hooligan throne - but most of the time Hiccup feels like a very ordinary boy, finding it hard to be a Hero.In the first How to Train Your Dragon book, Hiccup must lead ten novices in their initiation into the Hairy Hooligan Tribe. They have to train their dragons or be banished from the tribe FOR EVER!But what if Hiccup's dragon resembles an ickle brown bunny with wings? And has no teeth? The Seadragonus Giganticus Maximus is stirring and wants to devour every Viking on the Isle of Berk . . . Can Hiccup save the tribe - and become a Hero?

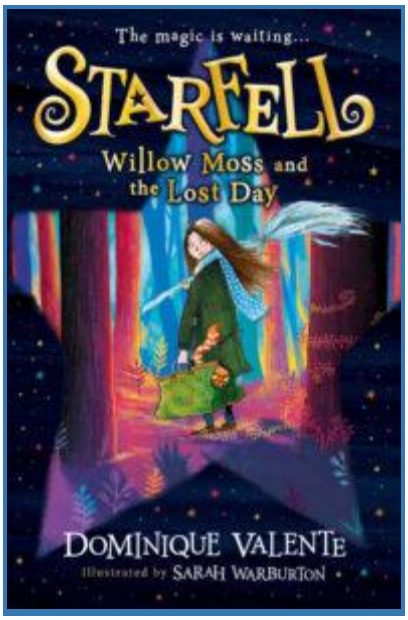


The Queen’s Nose

Dick King Smith

Chapter book

Harmony's uncle sends her on a treasure trail - which disappointingly ends in her finding a 50p piece. But the coin is a magic one, and when you rub the queen's nose, your wishes will come true! From the number one author for animal magic comes this wonderful new edition of a much-loved classic.

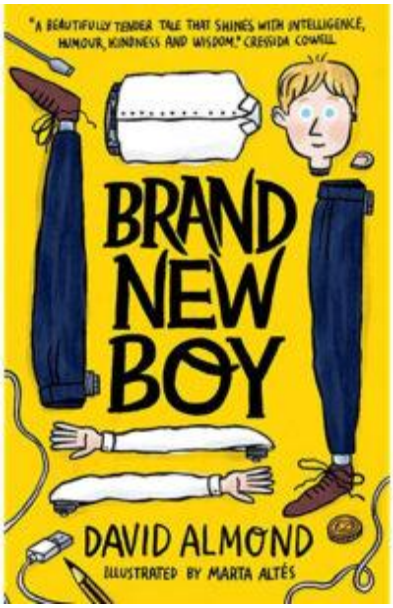


Starfell

Dominique Valente & Sarah Warburton

Chapter book

The first book in a spellbinding children's fantasy series, with beautiful black-and-white inside illustrations by Sarah Warburton.Willow Moss, the youngest and least powerful sister in a family of witches, has a magical ability for finding lost things - like keys, or socks, or spectacles. Useful, but not exactly exciting ...Then the most powerful witch in the world of Starfell turns up at Willow's door and asks for her help. A whole day - last Tuesday to be precise - has gone missing. Completely. And without it the whole universe could unravel.Now Willow holds the fate of Starfell in her rather unremarkable hands... Can she save the day - by finding the lost one?Step into Starfell, a world crackling with warmth, wit and magic, perfect for readers aged 8-12.



Brand New Boy

David Almond & Marta Altés

Chapter book

A simple but punch-packing new tale from storytelling master David Almond.

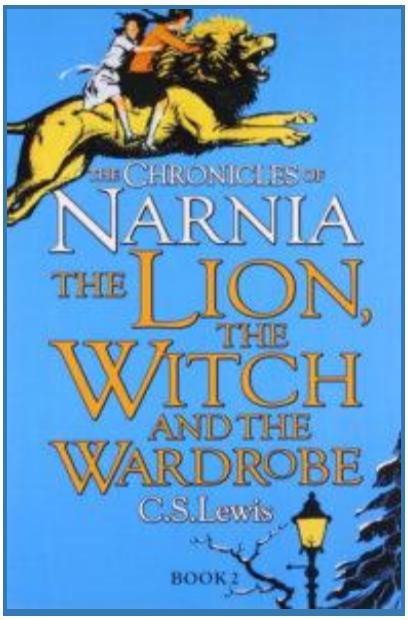
When a brand new boy called George starts at school, Daniel and his best friend Maxie are looking forward to getting a chance to enjoy the company of a new classmate. Daniel agrees to keep an eye on the new boy, although he has to admit there are few unusual things about George. Whether it's the way that Miss Crystal watches his every step and makes ongoing observations in her notebook or the way that George can answer complicated maths questions without having to think about them, yet doesn't seem to have an understanding of some of the very basic chatter between Daniel and his friends, something seems amiss.

Daniel's chance to get to know George better arrives when the adults in school ask Daniel to invite George round for tea. But it comes with a caveat: Miss Crystal must come too, and George must only eat a few drops of olive oil and a small piece of dry bread. Welcoming

George with warmth and hospitality, it’s as clear to Daniel’s Mum as it is to Daniel that there’s something unusual about this new boy. Every experience seems new to him, whether it’s meeting Kushko the cat or hanging out to chat in Daniel’s bedroom. A series of questions without answers begins to unravel – like why George is ushered unwillingly into a black van at the end of the play date, or why the teachers seems to have a weird response to George in class, or why there’s a sudden announcement that George will leaving the school. And what exactly is inside that tall box that is wheeled into assembly the following weekâ€¦?

This is an innovative story that weaves themes of compassion, hope and community as well as what it means to be alive. Martha Altés’ illustrations bring out the characters brilliantly and provide extra hints and clues along the way. The dignity and compassion with which Daniel and his friends treat George is beautiful. I also loved the characterisation of Daniel’s mum, who is full of love, acceptance and a happy dose of Geordie warmth. Her dedication to protecting Daniel’s childhood innocence clearly has an impact that Daniel passes forward in the way he cares for George, recognising the importance of playing out in the wild, enjoying songs and stories together as well as providing a safe space for George to make decisions for himself. The way people have been treated in the family home often naturally affects how they treat strangers, and Daniel is a prime example of this. The dangerous impact of technology on children is touched upon, but so is its potential to enhance human experience when treated sagely, with respect for human experience kept at its heart. Equally, the school system is shown to be able to make children feel like robots or cogs in a machine, but can also be wonderful, life-affirming and experience-bringing, as embodied in the music teacher Mrs Imani, whose positive impact also rubs off on the way the children treat George when they play together.

True to style, David Almond weaves a thought-provoking tale with hints of darkness, plenty of hope and pause for reflection on what it means to be alive.



The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

C. S. Lewis & Pauline Baynes

Chapter book

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is the second book in C. S. Lewis's classic fantasy series, which has been drawing readers of all ages into a magical land with unforgettable characters for over sixty years. This is a stand-alone read, but if you would like to explore more of the Narnian realm, pick up the full series.

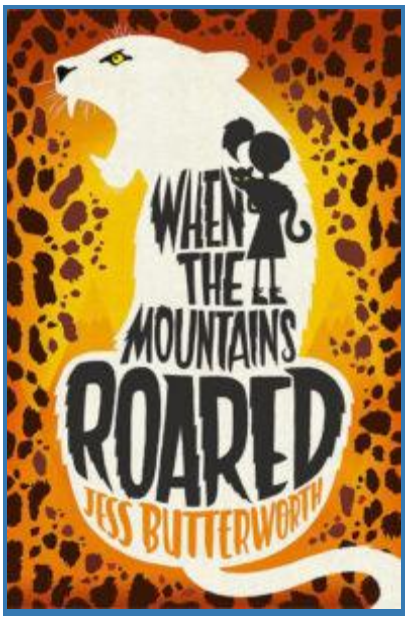
The idea that undiscovered magic is on your doorstep, or possibly even in your bedroom, is wonderful. This remains a favourite childhood book and a true classic for children in KS2.

Matilda

Roald Dahl & Quentin Blake

Chapter book

Roald Dahl's much-loved Matilda has become a classic children's story, made popular through film and musical adaptations.Matilda Wormwood's father thinks she's a little scab. Matilda's mother spends all afternoon playing bingo. And Matilda's headmistress Miss Trunchbull? Well, she's the worst of all. She is a big bully, who thinks all her pupils are rotten and locks them in the dreaded Chokey. As for Matilda, she's an extraordinary little girl with a magical mind - and now she's had enough. So all these grown-ups had better watch out, because Matilda is going to teach them a lesson they'll never forget.



When the Mountains Roared

Jess Butterworth

Chapter book

When the Mountains Roared is the much-enjoyed second novel from Jess Butterworth, and one that has gone down a storm in Key Stage 2 classrooms. The physical book itself is actually really beautiful both inside and out, with its stunning cover by Rob Biddulph and the leopard-print design of its pages.

The story follows Ruby, a twelve-year-old girl who is grieving the recent death of her mother and has become filled with fear since her mother's car accident. Ruby is an animal lover and she enjoys photographing wildlife. At the beginning of the story, Ruby faces the devastating news that her Dad is planning to uproot them from their Australian home and relocate to a remote mountain village in India to run a hotel.

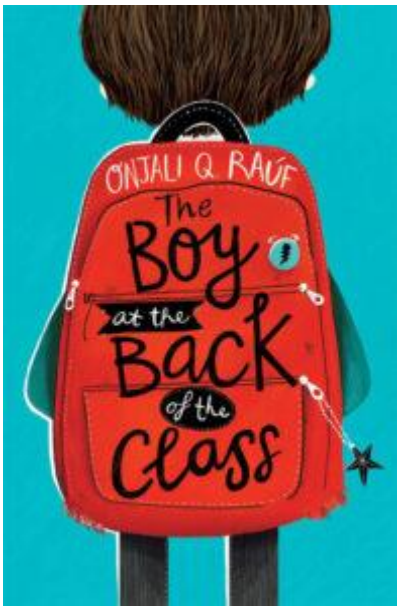
Unimpressed when she arrives in her new home, Ruby does manage to find some things to like about the foreign setting. Jess Butterworth's descriptions of the mountain landscape are beautiful and evocative as nature-lover Ruby takes in the new smells, colours and wildlife of

the Himalayan habitat. Although the hotel is quite isolated, Ruby quickly befriends a local shepherd boy called Praveen, who shares Ruby's admiration of the natural world.

Together, Ruby and Praveen set about to protect the few remaining leopards from the threat of poachers. The story is full of danger and adventure as Ruby undertakes a perilous trek through the mountains and comes face to face with some very hostile poachers, putting aside her own fears in order to save the leopards.

This is an atmospheric and enticing animal rescue story that explores an important theme about preservation.

Thought-Provoking Stories for Year 4

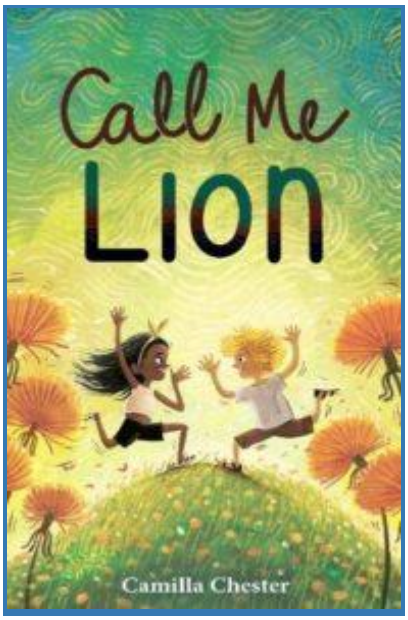


The Boy at the Back of the Class

Onjali Q. Rauf & Pippa Curnick

Chapter book

Told with heart and humour, The Boy at the Back of the Class is a child's perspective on the refugee crisis, highlighting the importance of friendship and kindness in a world that doesn't always make sense.There used to be an empty chair at the back of my class, but now a new boy called Ahmet is sitting in it.He's nine years old (just like me), but he's very strange. He never talks and never smiles and doesn't like sweets - not even lemon sherbets, which are my favourite!But then I learned the truth: Ahmet really isn't very strange at all. He's a refugee who's run away from a War. A real one. With bombs and fires and bullies that hurt people. And the more I find out about him, the more I want to help.That's where my best friends Josie, Michael and Tom come in. Because you see, together we've come up with a plan. . .



Call Me Lion

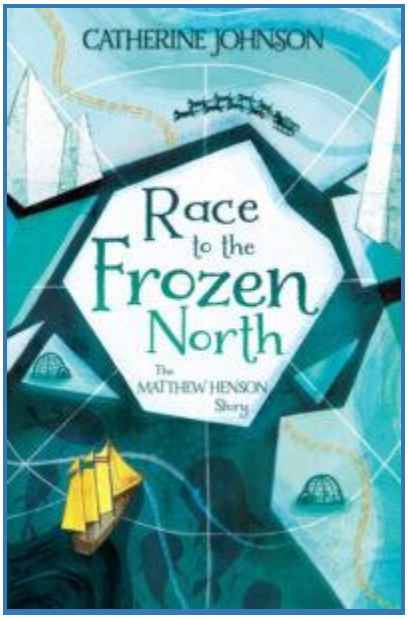
Camilla Chester

Chapter book

Leo wants to talk but he can’t. He has all the words but fear means they won’t come out. When Risha moves in next door, he’s worried that when his new friend finds out his secret he’ll be left alone again. But when he learns her secret, he hopes to help her and make her a permanent friend,

This book sensitively explains selective mutism for young (and older) readers. Told beautifully over a hot summer, we are let into the world of a young KS2 boy who is often treated as though he's not there. He really wants to participate in school activities and make friends, but anxiety stops him. As the story progresses, we're taken on a journey as Leo takes steps to achieve his future dream of dancing in The Lion King. However, if his selective mutism stops him from dancing in the summer dance show how can he ever dance on the West End Stage?

The story explains some of the frustrations that classmates of those with selective mutism might feel, and how to be supportive. It also gives a voice to those who might feel that, particularly in the classroom, they have none.



Race to the Frozen North

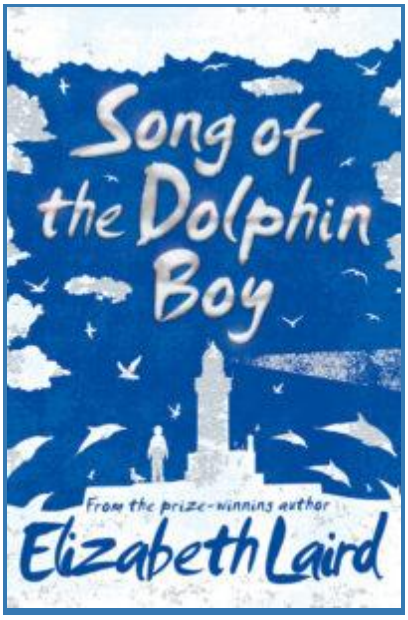
Catherine Johnson & Katie Hickey

Chapter book

The topic of polar exploration is a popular one in primary schools with teachers and pupils easily being able to reel off a list of famous arctic explorers: Shackleton, Scott, Cook, Peary.

But how often do you hear the name Matthew Henson among the list, the man who travelled with Captain Peary and claimed to be the first to reach the North Pole?

In Race to the Frozen North, best-selling author Catherine Johnson offers a fictionalised retelling of Matthew Henson's story, including how his achievements were unfairly suppressed for decades because of the colour of his skin. Published in Barrington Stoke's 'super-readable' and dyslexia-friendly style, this is an accessible read for children in KS2.

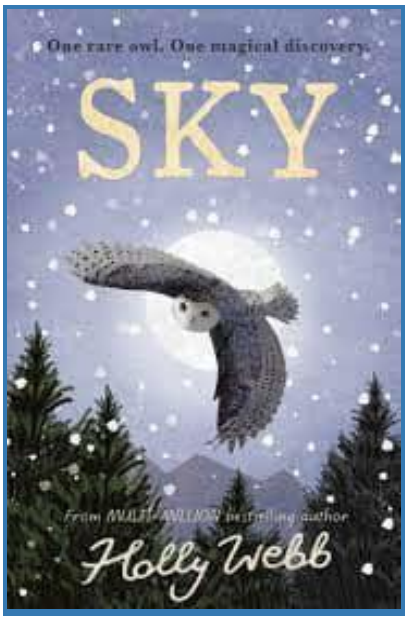


Song of the Dolphin Boy

Elizabeth Laird & Peter Bailey

Chapter book

This story from award-winning author Elizabeth Laird is a great choice for KS2. When young Finn takes a dive in the water near his fishing village, he is delighted to find dolphins to swim with. However, the dolphins face a terrible threat due to the masses of rubbish floating around in their water. It is up to Finn to find a way to save the sea creatures and prevent their natural environment from becoming ruined. This is a topical and thought-provoking novel.



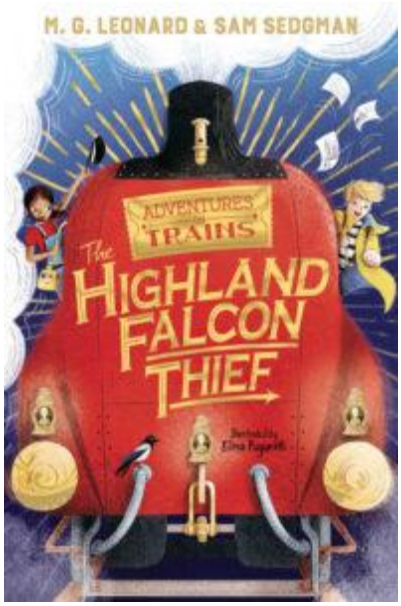
Sky

Holly Webb

Chapter book

Staying with her grandparents in the Scottish Highlands, Lara is fascinated by the rare white snowy owl her grandad has spotted flying nearby. And when she follows the beautiful bird into the woods, it leads her on a magical adventure...Transported a century back in time, Lara befriends Amelia, who confides in Lara about her cruel cousin, who she's sure is trying to hurt the baby owls nesting in the woods. When Lara discovers the hatchlings belong to her owl, Sky, she's determined to help. But how can she protect them when she needs to return to her own time? An enchanting and magical time-slip adventure from best-selling animal story author Holly Webb.

Mystery and Detective Stories for Year 4



The Highland Falcon Thief

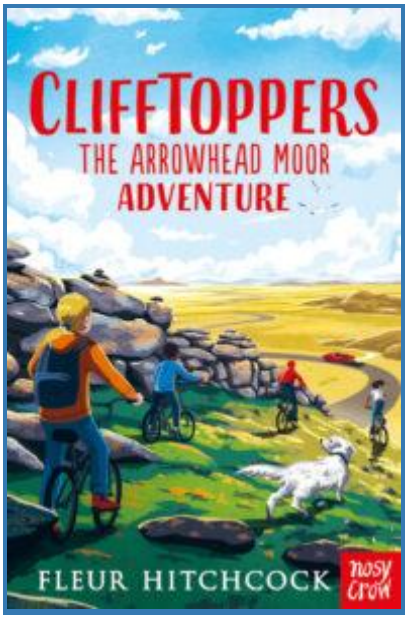
M. G. Leonard & Sam Sedgman & Elisa Paganelli

Chapter book

A full-steam-ahead adventure that had me hooked from the get-go. The Highland Falcon Thief is a middle-grade mystery story set on a steam train. With a high spirit of adventuring and a good-and-proper mystery that unfolds with clues and red herrings along the course, this is a brilliantly fun story that is sure to be on track to find itself set among the very best in the children's mystery genre.

Harrison Beck (Hal) ends up aboard the last-ever journey of a famous royal steam train 'The Highland Falcon', unwillingly accompanying his travel-writer uncle while his parents are occupied in hospital having a new baby. Hal doesn't think much of steam trains – and he is even less impressed when he finds there are no other child passengers on board and no electricity to charge his devices. Before long, Hal finds himself caught up with entertainment of a more old-fashioned kind. A mystery begins to unravel among the passengers – with valuable items disappearing including the princess's diamond necklace – and Hal begins to record what he notices in his sketchbook. What's more, Hal befriends a secret stowaway

girl called Lenny and the pair set to work to solve the mystery before The Highland Falcon reaches the end of its last-ever journey.



Clifftoppers: The Arrowhead Moor Adventure

Fleur Hitchcock

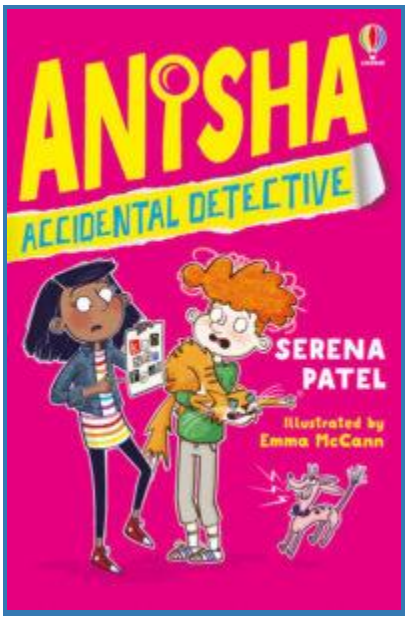
Chapter book

A classic adventure story with plenty of action and daring rescues topped off with a good helping of home-baked scones. Four cousins – Aiden, Ava, Chloe and Josh – are staying with their grandparents along with their pet dog, Bella, at a farmhouse in the country. After nearly getting knocked down by a fast car during a bike ride one day, they discover the woman who narrowly missed them has more to hide than just her bad driving.

After overhearing a suspicious conversation outside a sinister-looking country pub, they decide to follow her and in so doing stumble upon a trail of missing royal diamonds, some stolen sheep and a gang of dangerous, daring jewel thieves. A thrilling chase across the

moors ensues, complete with swirling mist, dangerous bogs and even a spot of breaking and entering. Will the cousins be able to track down the missing diamonds?

Set against a fabulous backdrop of beautiful stately homes and gardens, wild moors and twisting, turning country lanes, this story shares the same sense of adventure as the *Famous Five* but is brought up to date for young readers in the modern age.



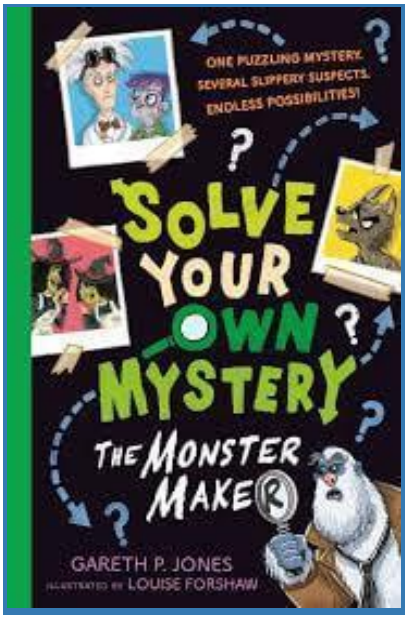
Anisha Accidental Detective

Serena Patel & Emma McCann

Chapter book

This is a delightful book celebrating family and friendships and is part of a very popular series. Anisha is a funny and resourceful character, whose love of STEM and eye for detail makes her the perfect detective in this humorous series of mysteries. Anisha has an extended family that proves to be strong and supportive when things go wrong. There are authentic cultural references exploring Anisha's Indian heritage, particularly around food and family.

The illustrations by Emma McCann help to reflect the humour in the story and the text is often broken up with lists and diagrams, making the book particularly appealing to children who may be daunted when faced with full pages of text.



Solve Your Own Mystery: The Monster Maker

Gareth P. Jones & Louise Forshaw

Chapter book

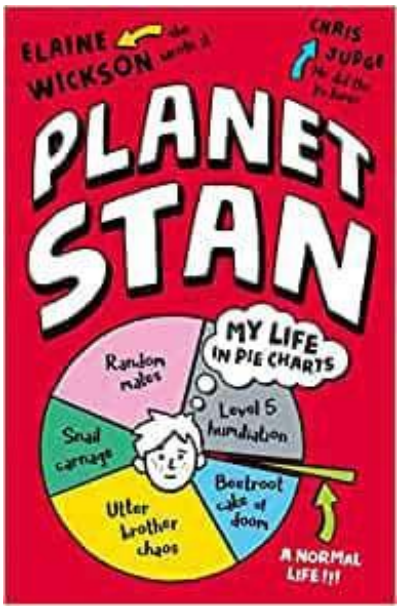
How many of us remember the choose-your-own-adventure stories popular a few decades ago and find ourselves wondering why we rarely see new ones published today? Popular author Gareth P. Jones reintroduces the genre with ‘The Monster Maker’ – an imaginative detective story for readers looking for an interactive adventure, with hundreds of paths to choose from.

Haventry is a town where ghosts, zombie clowns, werewolves and vampires (amongst others) reside happily. That is, until Dr Franklefink’s Monster Maker machine is stolen and everyone becomes a suspect. It is then up to you to investigate and solve the mystery. Your detective partner and boss is none other than private investigator Klaus Solstaag, a yeti

who is on a mission. Will you find the truth? What motive does your prime suspect have? Can you find the missing Monster Maker?

In this solve your own mystery story, readers will enjoy choosing which aspect of the crime to investigate next and sussing out who the real suspects are. For fans of the extraordinary and of detective mysteries, this is a must-read.

Popular Independent Reads for Year 4



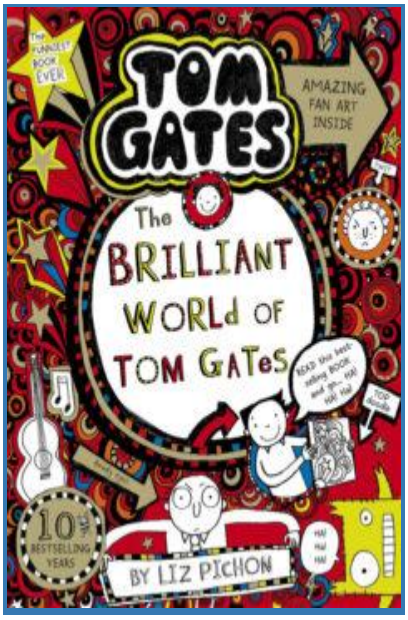
Planet Stan

Elaine Wickson & Chris Judge

Graphic Novel

Stan loves everything to do with space, along with a calming, ordered environment, pie charts, and Venn diagrams. His dinosaur-loving younger brother Fred is the opposite: chaotic, messy, prone to leaving snails under Stan's bed and ladybirds in his lunchbox. Surely they must have something in common? As Stanley struggles to cope with his

high-maintenance brother and his hair-brained schemes, he charts all the ups and downs of his life in a series of hilarious infographics in this highly-illustrated and visually-appealing book.

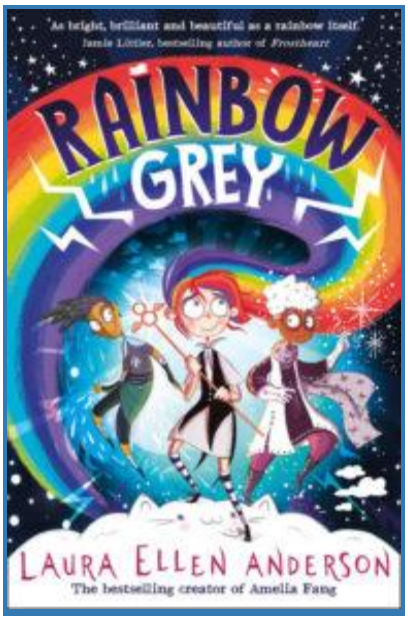


The Brilliant World of Tom Gates

Liz Pichon

Graphic Novel

The first title in the bestselling series from the brilliantly talented Liz Pichon. Tom Gates is the master of excuses for late homework: dog attacks, spilt water and lightning...Tom's exercise book is full of his doodles, cartoons and thoughts, as well as comments from his long-suffering teacher, Mr Fullerton.After gaining five merits for his camping holiday story, Tom's work starts to go downhill - which is a pity, as he's desperate to impress Amy Porter, who sits next to him...Written in diary form and full of Tom's doodles, this first title in the series was the winner of the Roald Dahl Funny Prize.



Rainbow Grey

Laura Ellen Anderson

Chapter book

Rainbow Grey is a funny, smart and creative tale, sprinkled with weather-related characters and places. The characters are not human, but still remain highly relatable; the main characters had friendship issues to deal with, like any children their age, and it's important for children to be able to recognise things that they might be going through in their own lives in a book. Likewise, the nod to dyslexia when Ray describes letters as being jumbled on the page and later on, when reading from coloured paper was referred to, would resonate with a lot of children…

Space Band

Tom Fletcher

Chapter book

Can the worst band in the world become the best band in the universe? This is the strap line for Tom Fletcher's latest story and is the premise behind Space Band.

Music-loving George wants his band, The Earthlings, to be the best. Along with friends Bash and Neila, George prepares to play in his school's Battle of the Bands, despite their lack of confidence and talent. However, when they are transported across the universe to another planet, they must play to save not just themselves, but also the whole of planet Earth.

This is ultimately a story of friendship, belonging and believing. The Earthlings have to work together to try and win the Intergalactic Battle of the Bands and defeat the dastardly Megavolt. Yet when they form friendships with the bands from other planets, they face a huge dilemma when they realise that defeating other bands also means destroying their home planets.

This is a fun story with plenty to keep the reader entertained. The space information appears to be well-researched and adds lots of factual detail. George's song lyrics are included and, by scanning a QR code or visiting the nominated website, you can link to various music providers and listen to the songs, as recorded by McFly. This adds another dimension to the story and could link in some music appreciation along the way.

Peanut Jones and the Illustrated City

Rob Biddulph

Chapter book

National treasure Rob Biddulph, whose record-breaking illustration events during lockdown gained an army of fans young and old, publishes his first illustrated chapter book this month. Peanut Jones is a wonderfully imaginative story with likeable characters and plenty of action and adventure.

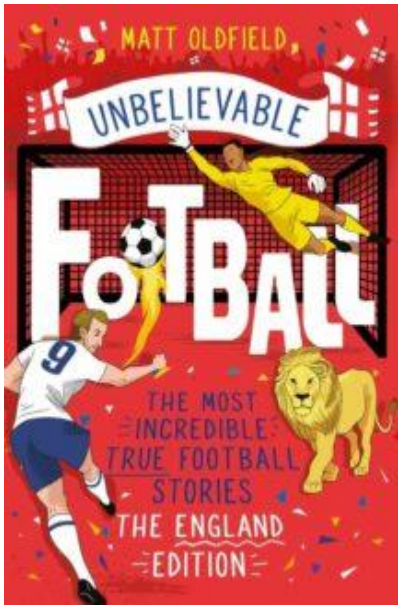
Pernilla Jones (Peanut to her friends) isn't having the best time. Her dad suddenly disappeared over a year ago, her mum is moving on and dating someone Peanut can't stand and she has been made to move schools, leaving her beloved Melody High behind in favour of St Hubert's School for the Seriously Scientific and Terminally Mathematic. Peanut

is paired with Rockwell Riley as part of a study buddy scheme to help new students settle and she couldn't be more disinterested.

One day, when she finds a magic pencil which has the power to make drawings a reality, Peanut sets out to find out what really happened to her dad. She takes Rockwell and her little sister, Little Bit, along for the ride in this alternate dimension where there is always danger and surprise around the corner. The story follows her journey into a hidden world where she must think quickly and use her drawing powers to save herself, her friends and the people she meets from those who wish to destroy all creativity – all the while, searching for the truth about her dad.

Throughout the book, there are superb, detailed drawings which are in black, white and orange, giving the book a unique style. This is the first in a trilogy about friendship and creativity. The short chapters make it easy to read and I look forward to the next instalment.

A triumphant entry into the chapter book world from Rob Biddulph.

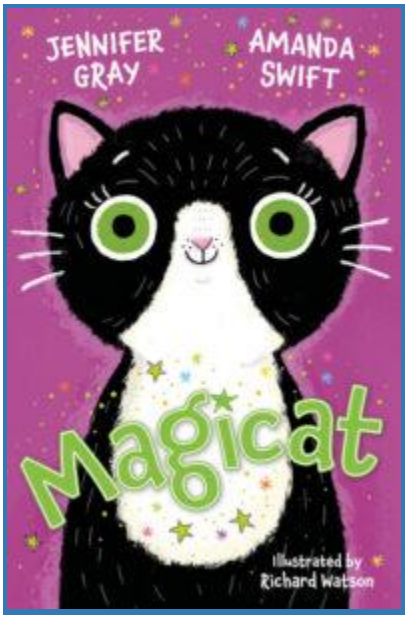


Unbelievable Football

Matt Oldfield

Non-fiction

Think you know everything about the Three Lions and the Lionesses?Have you heard of . . . *The naughty pitch-invading dog that stole the show at the 1962 World Cup? *The English amateurs who achieved Olympic Gold? *The spy who snuck into training? *The Lost Lionesses who made it big in Mexico? *The infamous World Cup handball that sealed England's fate?The beautiful game has always reigned supreme in England. These incredible and sometimes ridiculous stories may give you some idea of why. From penalty pain to unbelievable comebacks, discover some of the best true tales of our beloved national teams.Compiled by bestselling author Matt Oldfield, this is the third book in the award-winning Unbelievable Football series and the perfect gift for young football fans everywhere.Now includes the story of when the Lionesses came roaring back at Euro 2022.



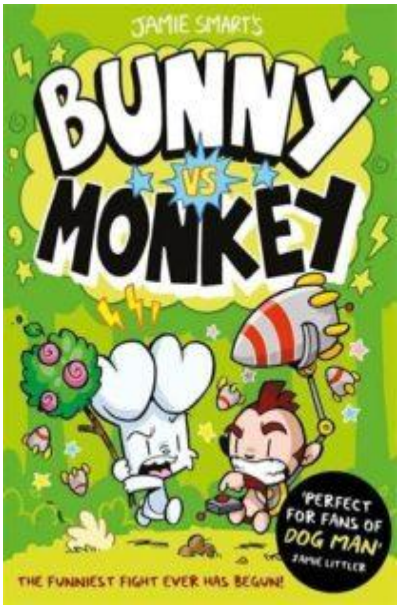
Magicat

Jennifer Gray & Amanda Swift & Richard Watson

Chapter book

Magicat falls from the sky one Haloween night and lands in a treat bucket after being knocked off a witch's broom by a rogue firework. Friends Jessie and Ali think he's oodles of fun – although they have to admit he's not quite as good at magic spells as he'd have them believe. Magic and mishaps aplenty follow is this charming chapter book that caters for newly confident readers in KS2 (8+) – as well as for those who are reluctant or dyslexic readers…

Graphic Novels for Year 4



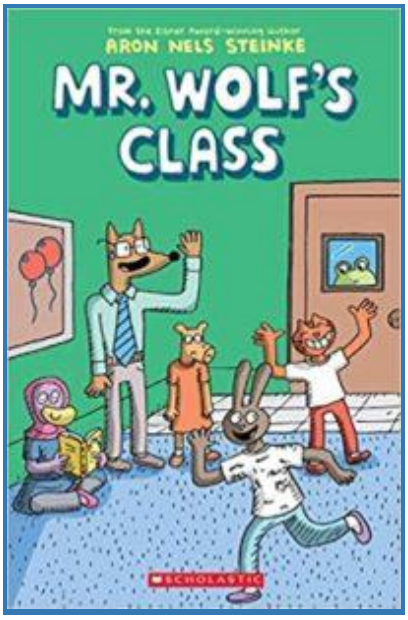
Bunny vs Monkey

Jamie Smart

Graphic Novel

The Bunny Vs Monkey series by Jamie Smart has become a popular favourite with children. The stories started as part of the Phoenix Comic and have now been made into a book series of their own. Teachers are seeing what a big hit these funny graphic novels have been in the classroom and the books have also seen success in bestseller lists and book award shortlists.

The stories follow the whacky tales of Bunny and his friends Weenie the Squirrel, Pig (the pig), Action Beaver and Skunky the Inventor, who all lived a peaceful life in the forest until Monkey's rocket crash-landed and he decided to take over. What follows is a riot of chaotic adventures and mayhem that unfolds through a funny comic strip format.

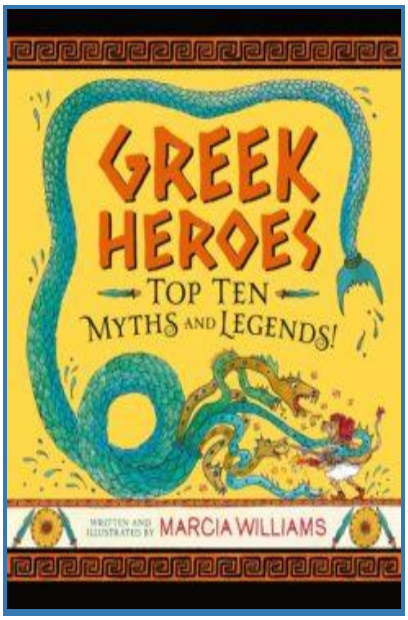


Mr Wolf's Class

Aron Nels Steinke

Graphic Novel

From Eisner Award-winning creator Aron Nels Steinke, a vibrant, funny new series that charmingly captures the everyday antics of a Year 5 classroom! Mr. Wolf has just started teaching at Hazelwood Elementary. He wants the first day of school to go well, but he's got his hands full with his new class. Some of his students include: Margot, who is new in town and is trying to make friends. Sampson, who brought something special to school for show-and-tell. Aziza, who just wants everyone to be quiet and do their work. And Penny, who is VERY sleepy because she has a new baby brother at home, goes missing! This delightful new series captures the everyday -- and unexpected -- ups and downs of a fourth-grade classroom.



Greek Heroes: Top Ten Myths and Legends!

Marcia Williams

Graphic Novel

Discover the magical myths and legendary heroes of Ancient Greece with award-winning author-illustrator Marcia Williams .Travel back in time with goat-footed Pan to explore the myths and legends of Ancient Greece. Meet the mighty gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus and some of the worlds best-loved heroes and heroines. In this book you'll find the stories of Perseus, slayer of Medusa the gorgon; tragic lovers Orpheus and Eurydice; daring Heracles who fearlessly completed twelve Labours and many more. The lively text and humorous cartoon style make these stories accessible and fun for younger readers.

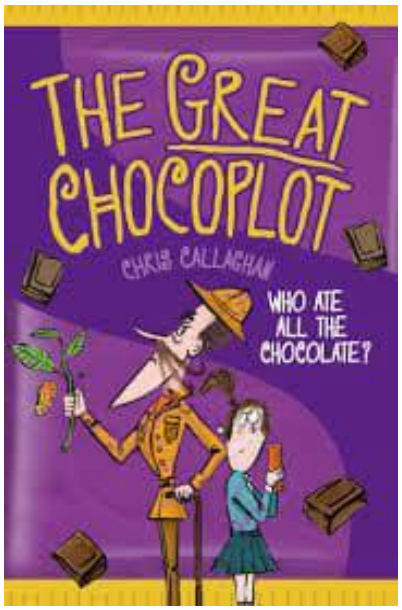
Squid Happens

Isabel Roxas

Graphic Novel

When oddballs Agnes, Roberta and Ruby discover a mutual passion for synchronised swimming, the trio form Team Pom. But between snack time, their favourite TV show and raising pigeons, it can be hard to find time to practice. Tired of their last place, loser status, a crew of self-proclaimed weirdos start their own synchronised swimming club. But on their way to gain the respect and free snacks they deserve, they stumble upon a lonely giant squid in their local pool. Will he be the secret weapon they need to propel them into synchronised swimming super stardom? Or will they end up with ink on their faces? Who are the villainous strangers in bowler hats? And, most importantly, what's for lunch? The first in this series and a debut comic book from award-winning Filipino illustrator Isabel Roxas, Squid Happens is a hilarious read that explores friendship, teamwork and what it means to be yourself.

Recommended Funny Books for Year 4

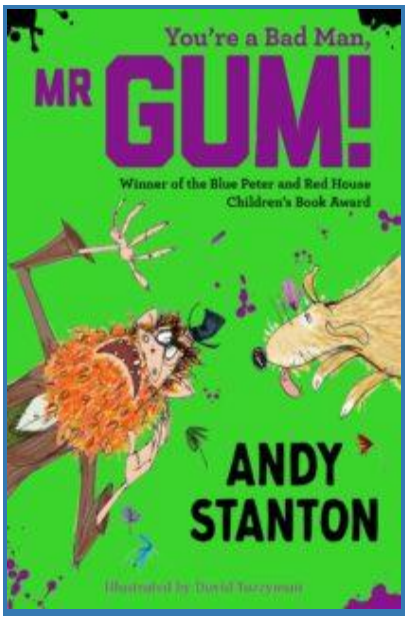


The Great Chocoplot

Chris Callaghan

Chapter book

It's the end of chocolate - forever! At least, until Jelly can solve the mystery of the great chocoplot...Jelly and her family live in Chompton-on-de-Lyte, where everyone loves a Chocablocka bar or two - so when the end of chocolate is announced, she can't believe it.Determined to investigate, Jelly and her gran follow a trail of clues to a posh chocolate shop and its owner, the pompous Garibaldi Chocolati. Gari's suspiciously smug, despite his failing business and yucky chocolate.Is it really the chocopocalypse, or is there a chocoplot afoot?An exciting, laugh-out-loud funny adventure featuring a truly ghastly villain - think evil mastermind meets Willy Wonka! - and a down-to-earth heroine with a sidekick grandma.

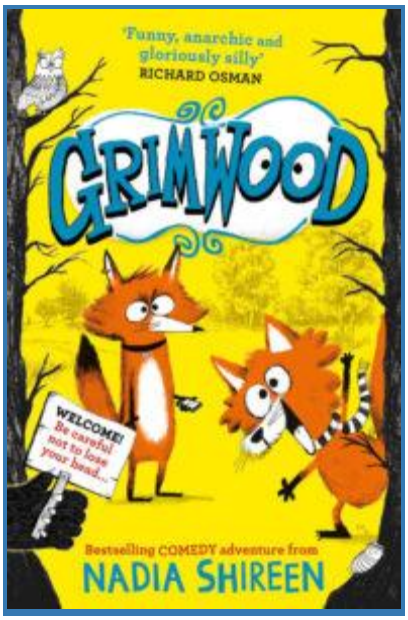


You’re a Bad Man, Mr Gum!

Andy Stanton

Chapter book

Shabba me whiskers! It's a bold new look for Mr Gum, the best-selling cult classic, ready for a new generation of nibbleheads.'It's time for action,' said Mr Gum to nobody in particular. 'Nasty action.'Good evening. Mr Gum is a complete horror who hates children, animals, fun and corn on the cob. This book's all about him. And an angry fairy who lives in his bathtub. And Jake the dog, and a little girl called Polly. And there's heroes and sweets and adventures and EVERYTHING.You're a Bad Man, Mr Gum! is the first book in the internationally best-selling series by Andy Stanton, which has won everything from the Blue Peter Book Award (twice) to the Roald Dahl Funny Prize and the Red House Children's Book Award.

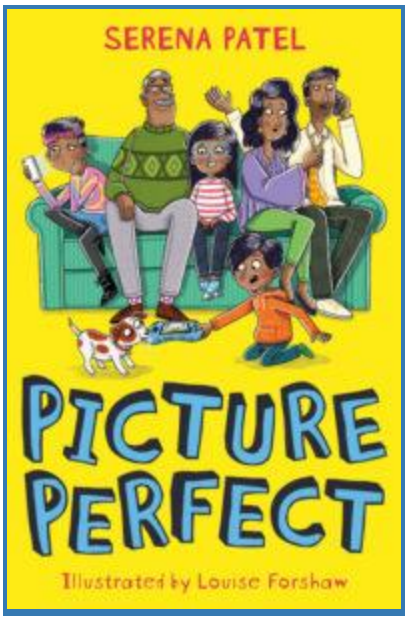


Grimwood

Nadia Shireen

Chapter book

Grimwood is a wacky, anarchic animal story, full of nonsensical mayhem. The story will certainly appeal to KS2 (although possibly not the most sensitive in this age group – as there are incidents of biting off heads, tails or feet!). There's a dark and whacky humour to the story that will delight fans of Dahl or Mr Gum and plenty of discussion points such as the relationship between the fox cubs, the changes in their personalities and the desire to find refuge. The book could work as a class reader and a fun and quirky independent read for ages 7-11.



Picture Perfect

Serena Patel & Louise Forshaw

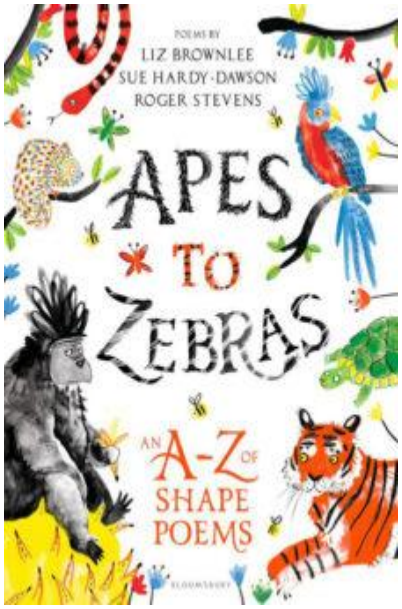
Chapter book

Sonal has chosen ‘family’ as the topic for her school photography project. She thought it would be easy but she’s already regretting it. She can’t get everyone to focus so that she can take a group photo and even the individual snaps feature different members of her family looking at screens of various kinds. Sitting with her grandfather and sadly comparing her photos and family albums from the past shows just how much the digital world has taken over their lives. Egged on by her wise and long-suffering grandpa (who we suspect has thought for a while that a digital detox was in order), Sonal devises a plan for a family camping weekend without any devices at all.

From there, the warmly engaging story follows the innocently well-meaning but accident-prone heroine, whose exploits provide amusement while inviting empathy. Serena Patel captures the rhythms and cadences of modern family life brilliantly, wryly presenting an antidote to the perfect families often seen on social media. I thoroughly enjoyed the realistic perspective on parental and sibling relationships where squabbles and disagreements are normal.

Like the rest of the Barrington Stoke series, it is accessible but well-written and unpatronising, with black and white illustrations that work well with the lighthearted tone of the writing. It would make a great start to discussions of the mismatch between reality and social media profiles within the context of families. The more we expose this in schools the better, and this book does so in a gently unthreatening way.

Poetry Collections for Year 4

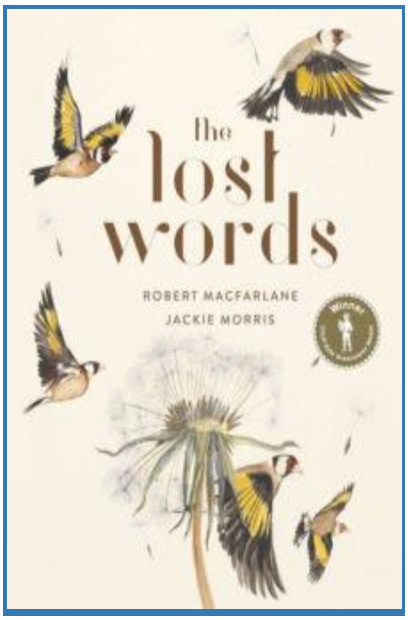


Apes to Zebras: An A-Z of Shape Poems

Roger Stevens, Liz Brownlee & Sue Hardy-Dawson

Poetry

This gorgeous collection of animal poems from Roger Stevens, Liz Brownlee and Sue Hardy-Dawson will entrance and delight in equal measure. Featuring a full alphabet of animals, birds, and insects, with the odd extinct or imaginary creature thrown in, these beautiful shape poems are a perfect way to introduce children to poetry. Some funny, some serious, there is something here for everyone.



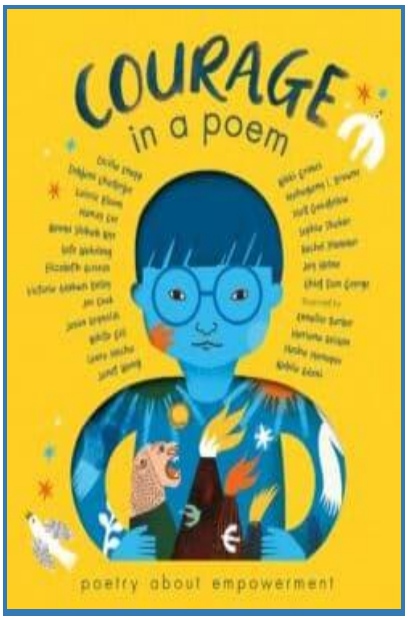
The Lost Words

Robert Macfarlane & Jackie Morris

Poetry

The Lost Words is a collaboration between Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris, seeking to ‘summon what has vanished’ and celebrate a host of disappearing words relating to the natural world. This is a poetry book about preservation – of nature, of language and of childhood – and the beautifully illustrated over-sized hardback volume is in itself a book to preserve and treasure. Inside the book, readers will find acrostic ‘poem-spells’, with each one intending to preserve a nature word that has disappeared from the dictionary as well as to evoke the unique sounds, sensations and moods associated with the experiences of encountering wildlife firsthand.

Inspired by the removal of a number of nature words from children’s dictionaries while the same plants and animals are in very real decline, this magnificent book will please children and adults alike. Each word is accompanied by a breathtaking illustration and poem (or ‘spell’ – the authors encourage you to sing them). Children with an interest in the natural world will discover new words along the way.

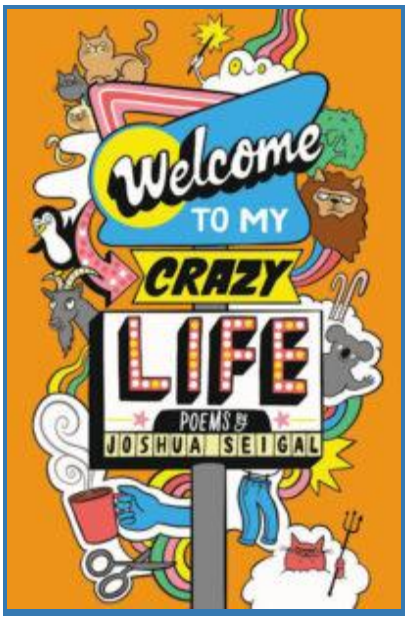


Courage In a Poem

Various

Poetry

This is a book of poetry for everyone.Inside is a treasure trove of writing celebrating courage and empowerment. Read the poems aloud or curl up with them in a quiet corner. Begin your journey into a lifelong love of poetry.Inspire young minds with this beautiful poetry anthology that encourages children to take joy in their identities. From body positivity and facing fear to celebrating heritage and individuality, a variety of contemporary poets will take readers on a journey through the different ways we can feel empowered. Vibrant and mesmerising artwork emphasises the beauty found in courage and being ourselves. This is the perfect book to instil a love of poetry, this title features work from a wide range of voices and illustrators who bring their unique perspectives to the topic of empowerment.



Welcome to My Crazy Life

Joshua Seigal & Chris Piascik

Chapter book

Joshua's newest poetry collection, Welcome to My Crazy Life is fantastic. It's a playful collection categorised by Seigal's love of language and humorous insights into all aspects of life (including poems that offer some very useful advice for all situations, like Don't Forget Your Trousers).

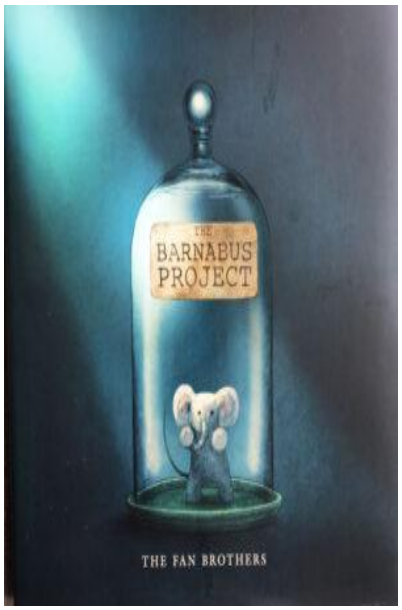
The collection's poems range from those that are brilliant to read aloud – like the onomatopeia-filled What's That Noise? – to those whose visual appeal makes them best for experiencing straight off the page – like the super-alliterative shape poem Catastrophic Carnivorous Creature or the poem Homework, which fills the page with one big visual pun. There are silly poems, witty poems, wise advice and even a poem made up entirely of numbers.

One of the reasons that poetry collections like this are so popular in schools is that readers almost always find something that resonates with their perspective on life, and poetry is

brilliant at capturing shared experiences and emotions. There's plenty that teachers will find relatable too. Flicking through the collection, I found mine straight away – The Coffee Monster may just have easily been inspired by my own early morning pre-coffee prowlings.

Reluctant readers and poetry pros alike will find plenty to enjoy in Seigal's trademark outpouring of wit, wordplay and wackiness.

Recommended Picturebooks Year 4



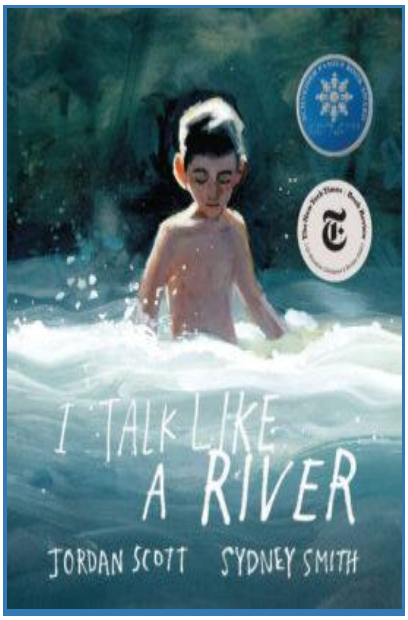
The Barnabus Project

The Fan Brothers

Picturebook

Deep underground beneath Perfect Pets , where children can buy genetically engineered "perfect" creatures, there is a secret lab . Barnabus and his friends live in this lab, but none of them are perfect. They are all Failed Projects. Barnabus has never been outside his tiny bell jar, yet he dreams of one day seeing the world above ground that his pal Pip the

cockroach has told him about: a world with green hills and trees, and buildings that reach all the way to the sky, lit with their own stars. But Barnabus may have to reach the outside world sooner than he thought, because the Green Rubber Suits are about to recycle all Failed Projects . . . and Barnabus doesn't want to be made into a fluffier pet with bigger eyes. He just wants to be himself. So he decides it's time for he and the others to escape . With his little trunk and a lot of cooperation and courage, Barnabus sets out to find freedom - and a place where he and his friends can finally be accepted for who they are. This suspenseful , poignant and magical story about following your dreams and finding where you truly belong will draw readers into a surreal, lushly detailed world in which perfection really means being true to yourself and your friends.



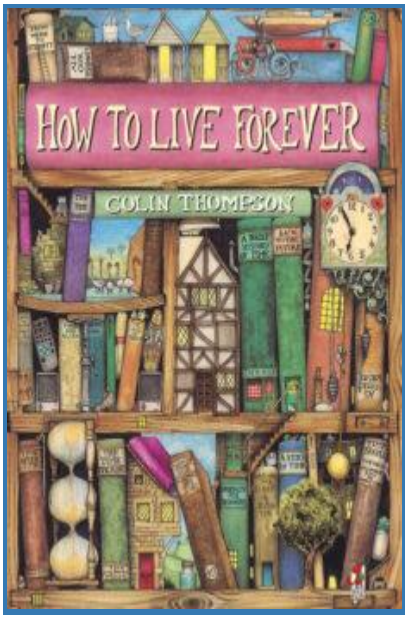
I Talk Like A River

Jordan Scott & Sydney Smith

Picturebook

What if words got stuck in the back of your mouth whenever you tried to speak? After a day of being unable to speak when asked, and of being stared at, a boy and his father go to the river for some quiet time. "It's just a bad speech day," says Dad. But the boy can't stop thinking about all the eyes watching his lips twisting and twirling. When his father points to the river bubbling, churning, whirling and crashing, the boy finds a way to think about how

he speaks. Even the river stutters. Like him. "I talk like a river," he says. An incredibly moving picture book that offers understanding rather than a solution, and which will resonate with all readers, young and old. Masterfully illustrated by Sydney Smith, winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal.



How to Live Forever

Colin Thompson

Picturebook

Colin Thompson's books are mystical and complex, they will appeal to children and adults alike and demand to be returned to as there is always a new image to see . . . something more to catch the eye. Peter and his family live among the Quinces in the cookery section of a mystical library, and at night, when the library comes to life, Peter ventures out of his home to find a missing volume: How To Live Forever.

Joan Procter Dragon Doctor

Patricia Valdez & Felicita Sala

Picturebook

Back in the days of long skirts and afternoon teas, young Joan Procter entertained the most unusual party guests: slithery and scaly ones, who turned over teacups and crawled past the crumpets... While other girls played with dolls, Joan preferred the company of reptiles. She carried her favorite lizard with her everywhere - she even brought a crocodile to school!When Joan grew older, she became the Curator of Reptiles at the Natural History Museum. She went on to design the Reptile House at the London Zoo, including a home for the rumored-to-be-vicious komodo dragons. There, just like when she was a little girl, Joan hosted children's tea parties - with her komodo dragon as the guest of honour.With a lively text and vibrant illustrations, scientist and writer Patricia Valdez and illustrator Felicita Sala bring to life Joan Procter's inspiring story of passion and determination.

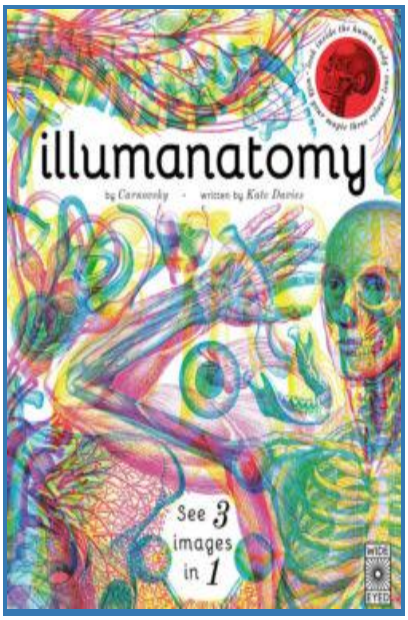
Recommended Non-Fiction Books for Year 4

Earth is Big

Steve Tomecek & Marcos Farina

Non-fiction

This large-format, colourful tome is packed to the rafters with facts, figures of interest. Each matt double-page spread is focused around one particular view of Earth – Earth is old, for example. The next double page provides a contrasting perspective – Earth is young or hot/dry or fast/slow and so on. This format allows for an unusual compare and contrast array of detail and fact and allows the reader to view the fascinating subject of the Earth around us from a multitude of different viewpoints. think Earth Is Big would appeal to children and adults alike; I loved dipping in and out of it and felt enlightened by what I had discovered. Those children who are fascinated by Earth Science and those who come to the concept with fresh eyes will be informed and entertained…



illumanatomy

Kate Davies & Carnovsky

Non-fiction

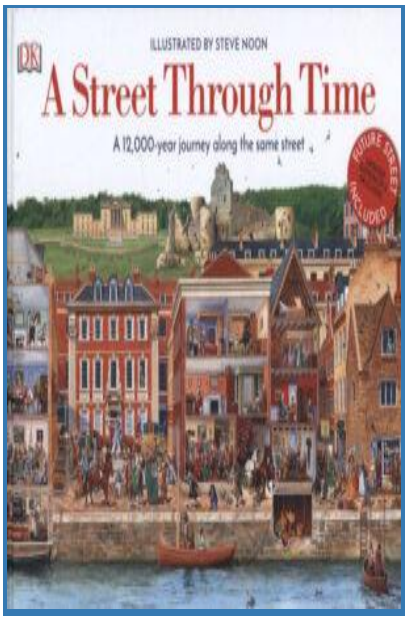
We love interactive non-fiction books and this is one that children can spend hours poring over. Use the different coloured lenses provided to see the different layers of the human body and reveal how the body's systems work together. Really fun but also hugely informative and well pitched for upper KS2, there is plenty to discover in this information text with a difference.

Shackleton’s Journey

William Grill

Graphic Novel

This is a brilliantly visual re-telling of Ernest Shackleton’s adventures from pole to pole, published to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Shackleton’s historic expedition. This engaging text is filled with diagrams, maps, infographics and fascinating facts that will both delight readers and transport them through an imaginary exploration of frozen worlds.



A Street Through Time

DK & Steve Noon

Non-fiction

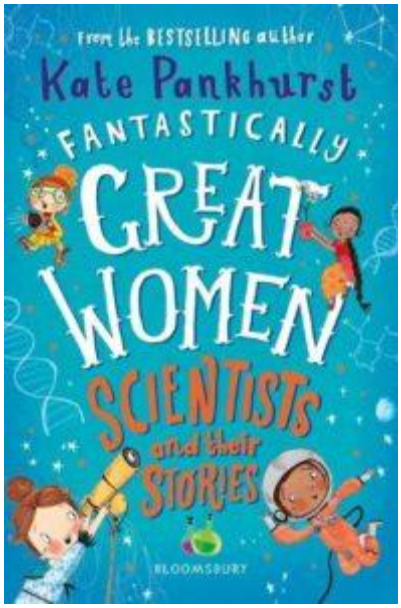
Have you ever wondered what your street was like thousands of years ago? This illustrated history book for children takes you on a 12,000-year journey to find out the story of a single UK street. Think of the street you live on. Now think of how it may have looked in the Stone Age in 10,000 BCE, or in Victorian times during the Industrial Revolution, or how it may look 50 years from now. A Street Through Time takes you on a time-travelling journey that you won't forget. Highly detailed illustrations bring 15 key periods in time un British History to life. You will see magnificent buildings go up and come down, new churches built on the site of ancient temples, wooden bridges destroyed and then remade in stone, and statues demolished then unearthed many years later. You'll find out how people lived long ago - the tools they used, what they wore and what they did all day. Revised and updated for a new generation, A Street Through Time now includes a look at the street 50 years in the future.

The Big Book of the UK

Imogen Russell Williams & Louise Lockhart

Non-fiction

Introduce children to the wonders, history, culture and customs of the United Kingdom with The Big Book of the UK. Learn about the sport of "dwile flonking", find out where black diamonds come from, ,eet the supernatural animal that haunts the Scottish Highlands and discover the British sweets that helped Hillary and Tenzing scale Everest. Filled with facts about wildlife, food, sports, geography, language and some very silly place names, this book will help you uncover national secrets and unearth local legends from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

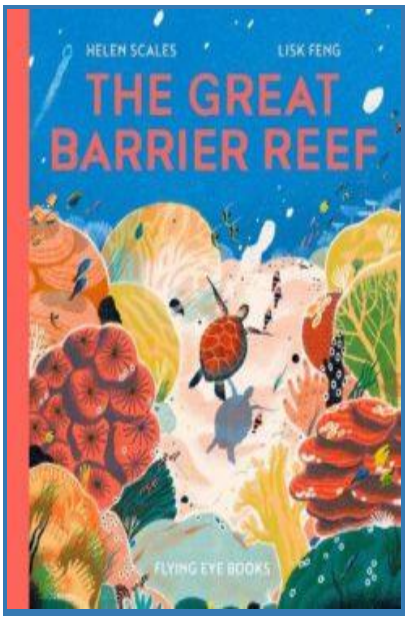


Fantastically Great Women Scientists and Their Stories

Kate Pankhurst

Non-fiction

Prepare to be inspired with this fantastically great new series for young readers from bestselling author Kate Pankhurst, a descendent of suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst. In this first book, read the true stories of amazing scientists and discover things that are out of this world!Women have been responsible for many of the world's most groundbreaking scientific discoveries. These are the stories of incredible female scientists whose hard work and persistence changed our understanding of science, and transformed people's ideas of what women can do.Including comic strips, family trees, maps and more, Fantastically Great Women Scientists and Their Stories is a celebration of women who made some of the world's most important scientific breakthroughs.



The Great Barrier Reef

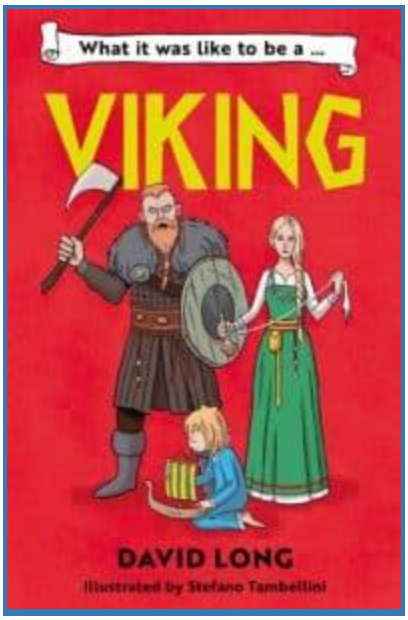
Helen Scales & Lisk Feng

Non-fiction

The Great Barrier Reef is a colourfully illustrated, delightful book full of facts. From the first page, the beautiful illustrations draw the reader in to learn all about the story of the Great Barrier Reef from how it began to the present day.

This book is full of information which could be shared in discussion or independently. You can dip into different sections, and focus on particular areas such as who dwells in the reef to shipwrecks and legendary tales as well as learning from the illustrations, so there is something for everyone. There is a glossary of technical language to explore, linking to science as well as geography.

This beautiful book is a captivating read for children and adults of all ages, with a clear message about protecting the wonder that is the Great Barrier Reef for future generations – not least because there is nowhere else in the world quite like it.

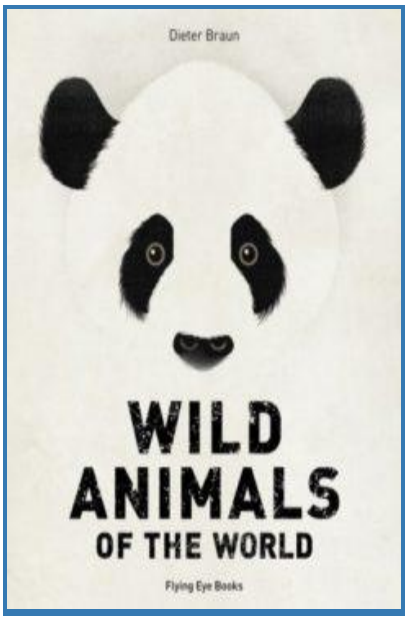


What It Was Like to be a Viking

David Long & Stefano Tambellini

Non-fiction

The Vikings were a terrifying force that changed history across the globe – from Canada all the way to Iraq. But they were merchants as well as marauders, explorers as well as adventurers. The greatest seafarers and shipbuilders of their age, they were also skilled metalworkers and artists, farmers and fishermen, healers and herders. They were even democrats who established the world's oldest surviving parliament. Award-winning writer David Long's concise but wide-ranging account brings their fascinating civilisation into focus, explaining what Viking life was actually like as well as considering their lingering influence throughout the world.



Wild Animals of the World

Dieter Braun

Non-fiction

Famous German illustrator Dieter Braun offers his readers an accurate representation of animals from all around the world in this gorgeously illustrated volume. Our world is full of wonderful animals. From the brightly coloured mandrills in the rainforests of Africa to the majestic humpback whales in the icy waters of the Antarctic. Through his beautiful and colourful illustrations, readers will be dazzled by the giraffes and elephants in Africa, koalas and kangaroos in Australia, huge blue whales in the open oceans, and many more! These animals, some endangered, remind us that nature is incredible, and that we need its diversity more than ever.