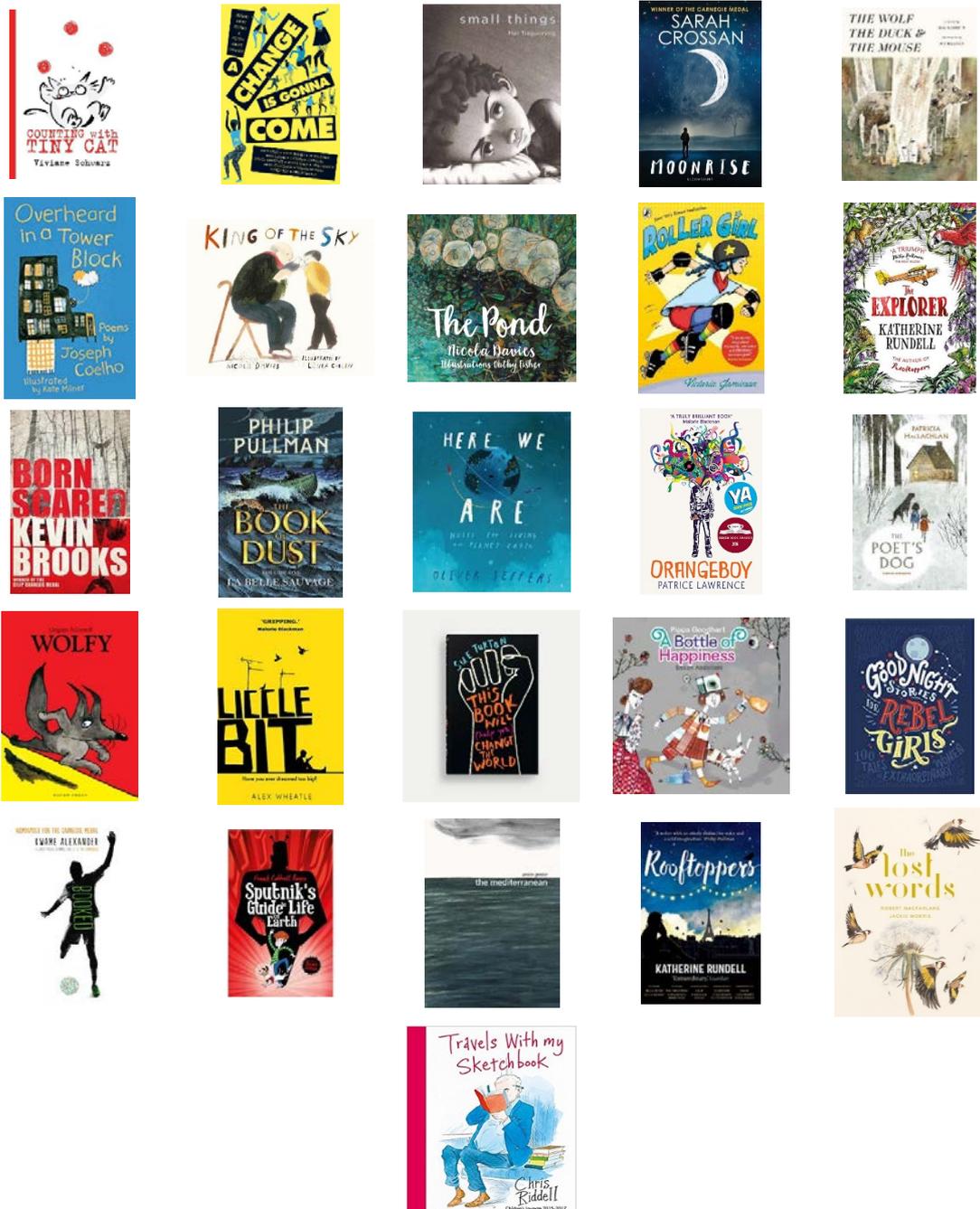


# Staff Picks 2017

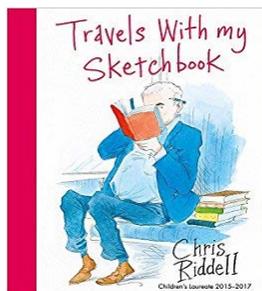
CLPE staff and their children recommend their best children's books in 2017.

## Who picked what?

Read on to find out who liked what and why in 2017



## Whole Staff Choice

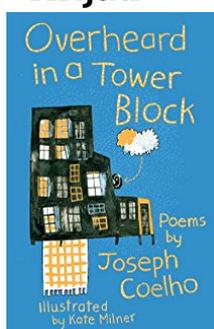


***Travels with My Sketchbook* by Chris Riddell**  
Macmillan 9781509856565

This record of Chris Riddell's time as Children's Laureate demonstrates the versatility and vitality of his work. He draws every day and everywhere he goes so there are entertaining comments in pictures and words on the innumerable events he participated in for children and for adults.

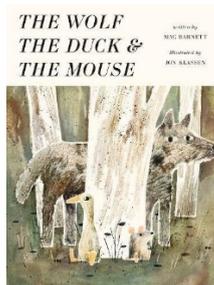
2017 is the second year that Chris has live drawn the [CLiPPA](#) (CLPE Poetry Award) ceremony and CLPE is happy and honoured to have been on the receiving end of his generosity in giving time to what we do. His first time live drawing the ceremony in 2016 makes an appearance in this book as does his talk at our Power of Pictures conference and the occasion when he drew on the wall of our Riddell Café and illustrated quotes from the *Reading for Pleasure* publication in our [What We Know Works](#) series.

## Anjali



***Overheard in a Tower Block* by Joseph Coelho, illustrated by Kate Milner**  
Otter-Barry Books 9781910959589

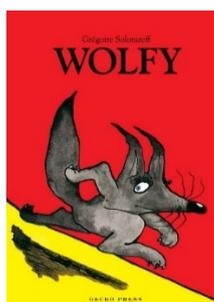
Winner of our [CLiPPA award](#) 2015, Joseph has surpassed himself with this breathtaking collection of poems for older children. With a deft touch, he lends his voice to a child growing up in a city tower block. Each poem gives pause, whether to linger over the language or for sharp intake of breath as the heartache washes over you like his Mermaid-Queen mother's tears. Kate Milner's black and white illustrations perfectly enhance the narrative that forms around the boy at the centre of this world. This collection will stay with you always.



***The Wolf, The Duck and The Mouse* by Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen**  
Walker 9781406377798

I admit that I would pick up any book illustrated by Jon Klassen, such is my love of his darkly humorous depictions and his evocative artwork. Pairing with Mac Barnett once more, this book doesn't disappoint. From the moment we meet mouse on the inner title page - stock still, looking warily behind him - we know this won't end well. A cautious turn of the page and the genius of both author and illustrator is illuminated. *'Early one morning, a mouse...met a wolf...and he was quickly gobbled up.'* One sentence, two continuous spreads and the best kind of storytelling begins. Words and pictures work in utter harmony to bring readers the quirky, hilarious and philosophical story of a mouse devoured by a wolf, only to discover a duck who explains in no uncertain terms, *"I may have been swallowed but I have no intention of being eaten."* To the wolf's discomfort, they set about creating a safe and cosy home inside his belly. Until, one day, a hunter threatens to ruin everything. Read this book then pick it up and read it again and again. It will amuse and delight readers of all ages as should any great picture book. Genius.

## Ann



***Wolfy* by Grégoire Solotareff, translated by Daniel Hahn**  
Gecko Press 9781776571567

I am so happy to see the classic *Loulou*, the creation of one of the most popular French picture book makers, available in English at last. It is nearly 30 years since it was first published in France and the story of a wolf and a rabbit who have a reassuring relationship is as timeless as ever. The wolf has never seen a rabbit before and the rabbit has never seen a wolf but they are both aware that wolves are reputed to eat rabbits. However, they become firm friends and learn from each other. One day a game of *Who's-afraid-of-the-big-bad-wolf?* gets a bit too real for the rabbit. Will Wolfy be able to convince his friend that he will never eat him? Participants in our French picture books course [Lire, Dire et Rire](#) will discover more of Solotareff's work.



### ***A Bottle of Happiness* by Pippa Goodhart and Ehsan Abdollahi**

Tiny Owl 9781910328200

When Iranian illustrator Ehsan Abdollahi was refused a UK visa to attend the Edinburgh Book Festival earlier this year, an outcry from the children's book community in the press and on social media resulted in the government decision being reversed, demonstrating the power of peaceful protest. Here he illustrates, in a patchwork of colours of both bright and more subtle shades and geometric shapes and patterns, Pippa Goodhart's story about learning to share.

## Charlotte

### ***Counting with Tiny Cat* by Viviane Schwarz**

Walker 9781406371024



This deceptively simple picture book opens the door to huge concepts around mathematics and wider, more critical thinking. The quality of the illustration is well worthy of the Greenaway award nomination it has received. The thoughtful placement of the red balls with which Tiny Cat is presented throughout the initial number spreads is a wonderful way in to deeper conversations about the concept of numbers and allows children to visually explore 'the threeness of three'.

The book also invites children to explore wider vocabulary around amounts and estimation, through phrases like 'even more' and 'about a dozen'. The cleverly placed visual representations can also be explored as models to group objects and calculate exact amounts. As Tiny moves into larger and larger amounts, we see through the wide and graphic range of facial expressions and body positions the excitement of having 'lots', the struggles of having 'too many' and the comfort of having 'enough' which could lead into wider conversations about wider social and emotional concepts. The glorious endpapers representing Tiny in all manner of situations are an open invitation to making up further adventures. Another stroke of genius from Viv Schwarz and an essential addition to any children's library. We were honoured to see an early draft of this book being formed during the bookmaking session of Viv's Power of Pictures course at CLPE. Participants in our course [The Power of the Picture Books for Teaching Mathematics in the Early Years](#) will each receive a copy of this book.

### ***A Change is Gonna Come* by Various Authors**

Stripes 9781847158390



The foreword by Darren Chetty to this rich and varied anthology epitomises the importance of this book. He writes: "As a teacher I want those I teach to believe that the stories they write can be about people like them. Yet many don't, and indeed one child in my class announced that he thought 'stories have to be about white people.'" Children's reading is reflected in their writing and this anthology is an important step in a much anticipated wave of change that will allow more children to see themselves reflected in what they read.

The anthology is a rich mix of genres and styles. It begins and ends with thought provoking poetry by Musa Okwonga and Inua Ellams, giving the reader time and space to reflect on important issues raised in each poem and woven throughout the anthology. Catherine Johnson's writing always explores a richer dimension of history than the curriculum ever provides, reminding us once again that Black and Minority Ethnic Britons have been part of our rich history since Roman times. Her story 'Astounding Talent! Unequaled Performances!' is based on the life of renowned circus performer and owner William Darby. Other highlights for me were the stories from Tanya Byrne ('Hackney Moon'), Nikesh Shukla ('We Who?') and Patrice Lawrence ('The Clean Sweep') - her novel *Indigo Donut* is also one of my YA must reads of this year. Saying that, I enjoyed absolutely every piece of writing in this anthology; in a packed collection, there was never a dull moment. A must have for YA readers, with a piece of writing for everyone.

## Darren

**King of the Sky** by Nicola Davies and Laura Carlin

Walker 9781406348613

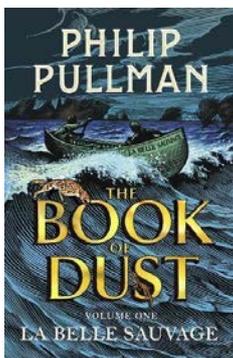
Is Nicola Davies one of the most prolific writers working in the UK today? It seems barely a month goes by without another release. What a treat and relief then that the quality of each book remains exceptionally high. This new collaboration with Laura Carlin (they previously worked together on the moving and very popular [The Promise](#)) is a joy to behold.

The deceptively simple, and simply told, story (a young Italian boy recently arrived in a South Wales mining town in the 1920s finds friendship and camaraderie with the old man next door via the experience of tending and training homing pigeons) has a richness of language, a depth of emotion and a cultural relevance that few can equal.

A perfect partner to the poetic text, Laura Carlin's illustrations manage to evoke each location, each expression and each movement with a naturalistic fluidity and great tenderness. A reader can't help but linger over the luxurious, wordless double-page spreads as King of the Sky takes flight.

The dedication from Nicola at the start of the book says it all: 'For all children who have to find home in a new place.' It is perfect to read aloud and I can't imagine anyone who does being able to avoid wiping away a tear as they turn the final page.

Participants in our [Inspiring Writers KS2](#) course will each receive a copy of this book.

**The Book of Dust Volume 1: La Belle Sauvage** by Philip Pullman, illustrated by Chris Wormell

David Fickling Books/Penguin 9780385604413

It seems hard to believe that it's been 17 years since I read the heartbreaking and yet somehow perfect conclusion to Philip Pullman's [His Dark Materials](#) trilogy. Since then, like many others, I have eagerly swallowed the two novella companion volumes, the graphic novel adaptations and the tremendous production at the National Theatre whilst examining every interview with the author to track down clues as to what the long-promised Book of Dust might be and when it might arrive.

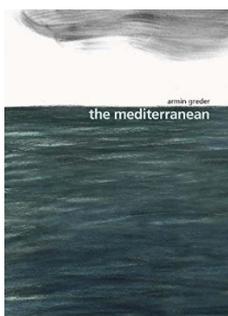
Finally, it's here... and what a thrill it is to find that the story and storytelling have captured lightning again and have lost none of that Pullman magic.

The plot sets a number of plates spinning, but essentially introduces Malcolm, a practical and loyal lad who helps anyone who needs it - his pub-owning parents, the nuns who reside in the neighbouring convent and a certain Lord Asriel who has come to visit his baby daughter, kept safe and secret within the convent. Before long, spy agencies for the church and the government have swept Malcolm and his allies into a grand adventure...

Miraculously, Pullman manages to introduce a new cast of memorable characters that live in the mind long after you've finished reading and, simultaneously, keeps Lyra front and centre. It's fun, thrilling and engaging stuff that barely pauses for breath once the race begins. Read it at once and then join the rest of us in the wait for Volume 2....

All teachers enrolled in our [Power of Reading](#) courses in 2017-18 receive a copy of Philip Pullman's book of essays *Daemon Voices*.

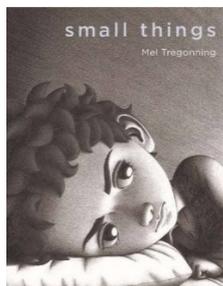
## Farrah

**The Mediterranean** by Armin Greder

Allen &amp; Unwin 9781760634018

The themes explored in children's literature often speak to the core of our humanity, simultaneously exploring our deepest fears and greatest pleasures, whilst mirroring and grappling with the societal challenges of the moment. [The Journey](#) by Francesca Sanna, [A Story Like the Wind](#) by Gill Lewis and Jo Weaver, [Welcome to Nowhere](#) by Elizabeth Laird and [Illegal](#) by Eoin Colfer and Andrew Donkin, illustrated by Giovanni Rigano, all published in the last two years, have each in their own distinctive styles powerfully borne witness to the grave injustices and soul destroying reality of so many who have fled their homelands. *The Mediterranean* by Armin Greder contributes to the ongoing dialogue, broadening our

perspective, deepening our understanding and crucially keeping these realities in our consciousness. Greder's dark, striking and captivating illustrations, as with his previous works, demand our attention and stay with us long after we have turned the page. Through his arresting style he shatters any illusions we may have about our distance from the refugee experience. The book effectively illustrates how inextricably bound we all are and in understanding this we can either go on being consciously complicit or seek to work towards better collective outcomes for all.



### ***Small Things* by Mel Tregonning**

Allen & Unwin 9781743368725

This profoundly moving book captures the heart of what it can feel like to be isolated and burdened with the weight and pressure of life. Every page offers a glimpse into the window of the soul of the late author and a mirror into a corner of your own. Mel Tregonning whose exceptional talent and sensitive attention to detail will live on in the pages of this powerful and beautiful book encourages us all to tread more sensitively and thoughtfully as we make our way through the world.

## Fatim



### ***Moonrise* by Sarah Crossan**

Bloomsbury 9781408867808

This book is another [Sarah Crossan](#) triumph. A brilliantly crafted and beautifully written verse novel it is unbelievably readable and moving. It tells the story of a boy whose brother is on death row and deals with the subject in a sensitive and subtle way. Never belittling the complexity of the situation and without being mawkish or sentimental it is raw and emotional. So much so that when I finished it on the train, people were offering me tissues and asking if I was OK. A total must read of the year.

## Jonny



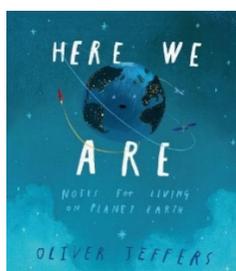
### ***The Poet's Dog* by Patricia MacLachlan, illustrated by Kenard Pak**

Pushkin Children's Books 9781782691686

Too few people know that dogs can speak, perhaps because they can only be heard by poets and children. *The Poet's Dog* rests on this truth, and in its course eponymous Teddy rescues from a snowstorm two children whom he brings back to a cabin in the woods he has shared with the poet Sylvan. A tender, spare and exquisitely told tale unfolds, of love and loss and love, which will have you in tears by the final page. Patricia MacLachlan's taut prose has the deceptive simplicity that is the hallmark of exquisite craftsmanship, and the charm of this tale is impossible to resist. *The Poet's Dog* is a great addition to Pushkin Press's catalogue of cracking titles from distinct and distinctive authors (especially in translation): a moving and perfect book, complemented by beautiful artwork from Kenard Pak.

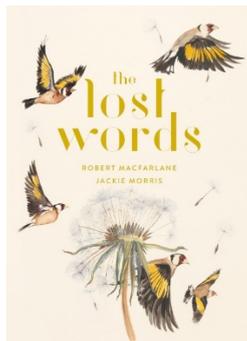
### ***Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth* by Oliver Jeffers**

HarperCollins 9780008266165



Oliver Jeffers is no stranger to "best of" lists, and in *Here We Are* we are treated to the gorgeous, heart-string-plucking artwork with which readers will be familiar from... well, everything he has ever created. But *Here We Are* is a new venture, a non-fiction text, Jeffers' vade mecum for his newborn son Harland, and tells its own tale of wonder and delight, as a father looks with new eyes on the world he is gifting his firstborn. Powerfully moving non-fiction works are happily not a rarity, but *Here We Are* resets the bar, with its wit, and its answers that raise more questions; an uplifting, heartfelt and heartwarming paean to our world, and an invitation to all to share its joys.

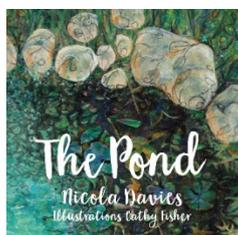
## Katie



### ***The Lost Words, A Spell Book* by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris**

Hamish Hamilton 9780241253588

I had been waiting in eager anticipation to see this book, as Jackie had kindly got in touch to let us know about the work she was engaged in with Robert Macfarlane. Their collaboration, which grew out of the decision to amend the Oxford Junior Dictionary to remove certain words related to nature such as adder, bluebell and conker, is a timely and necessary book about the wonder of nature and the power of naming. Described as a '*modern-day spell-book for the natural world*' they hope that the book will help '*conjure back the words, names and species that were being lost.*' The book works beautifully to record the absence of the creature or plant, then the spell is written as an acrostic, and then the summoned creature or plant is depicted, set against a gleaming background of gold leaf. Finally, there is a double-page spread showing each species back in the landscape. The charms are meant to be read aloud and in doing so the reader feels the power and magic of both the text and the nature it describes. The illustrations, so stunningly crafted, remind you of how important it is to protect our wildlife and to engage young people in this conservation. Find out more about Jackie Morris's books with our [list](#).



### ***The Pond* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Cathy Fisher**

Graffeg 9781912050703

This is another book that depicts the power of nature, in this case the evolution of a garden pond, which develops alongside a boy's emotional journey through different stages of grief. This deeply moving picture book is about a young boy, his sibling and his mother following the death of his father. The boy was going to build the pond alongside his father but was never able to. Instead the pond is developed with the remaining family members and serves as a connection to the man they have lost. Cathy Fisher's rich illustrations add depth to the emotional impact of the text which explores the way in which we can use places, objects and acts of creation to help us to remember those we have loved and lost. The book also reveals the way in which connecting with nature can be a healing process, for many different reasons.

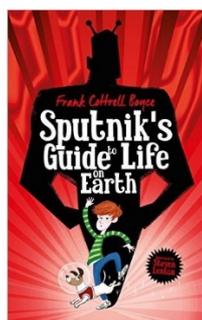
## Louise



### ***The Explorer* by Katherine Rundell, illustrated by Hannah Horn**

Bloomsbury 9781408854877

Everything about this book drew me in from the first moment I saw it. I loved Hannah Horn's illustrations and the whole look and feel of the book and when I started reading I really couldn't put it down. This is a fabulous adventure set in the Amazon rainforest (little bit *Journey to the River Sea*, little bit Willard Price) with well-developed and believable characters and a cracking story. Kate's writing is always elegant and appears effortless and here she manages to tell a story with an ecological message that isn't preachy and to capture the real essence of adventure with emotion and veracity. "Sometimes exploring is a word for walking out into the unknown. Sometimes, it's a word for coming home".



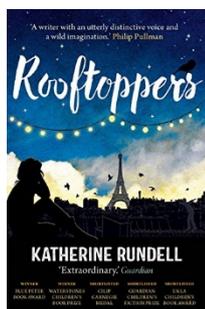
### ***Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth* by Frank Cottrell Boyce, illustrated by Steven Lenton**

Macmillan 9781447237570

I love Frank's writing and the way in which he can make the absurd everyday and the everyday exceptional but I think that Sputnik has become my favourite book of his. It is such a beautifully crafted, funny story which has you both weeping and giggling and paints a picture of a totally bonkers and at the same time desperately real world. This book takes on some tricky subjects, it deals properly and positively with young people in care and the issues around older people and Alzheimer's and yet it manages to be kind and sensitive without being sentimental. Of course, it's a great story where lists, post-its and other messages take us from modern day to Hadrian's Wall and back again, to space and through time. And it has fabulous physics!

The children of CLPE staff have also been enjoying some good books during 2017:

**Catriona (Lindsey's daughter aged 10)**



**Roftoppers by Katherine Rundell**

Faber & Faber 9780571280599

*Roftoppers* is the exciting story of Sophie, orphaned and shipwrecked, who sets out to prove that her mother survived. On the run from the authorities with her guardian Charles in Paris, she meets a boy called Matteo and they continue to look for her mother on the streets and rooftops. What I like about this book is that it is set in Paris and gives a good portrayal of the city and the fantastical, magical feel of the story. I am looking forward to reading more books from Katherine Rundell.

**Eshan (Fatim's son aged 13)**



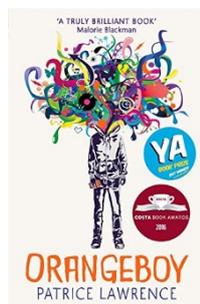
**Liclle Bit by Alex Wheatle**

Atom 9780349001999

*Liclle Bit* is a book by Alex Wheatle that is about gangs and street life in an imaginary place called 'Crongton' that was probably inspired by Croydon or Brixton. This book is based around someone called Lemar, referred to as 'Liclle Bit' throughout the novel. This book explores Lemar's adventures as he gets mixed up with gangs and the dangerous people who run them. This book was brilliantly written and told a great story about gangs and the double life that Lemar was living.

**Orangeboy by Patrice Lawrence**

Hodder 9781444927207

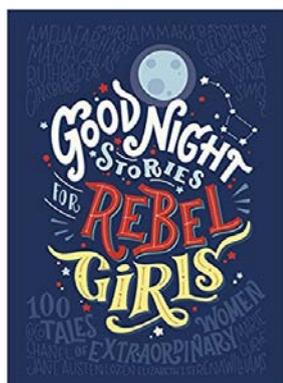


*Orangeboy* is a book by Patrice Lawrence about gangs set in Brixton. The main character in this book is Marlon who gets involved with some gangs from his older brother Andre's past. Andre got caught up with some ruthless criminals as a teenager and tragically ended up with severe brain damage. So much happens in this book as Marlon faces deathly situations while discovering many secrets about gangs and his brother's past. This book was a compulsive read that told Marlon's story compellingly through the description of crime and the introduction of engaging characters.

**Lana (Anjali's daughter aged 8)**

**Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls by Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo**

Particular Books 9780141986005

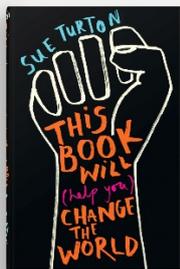


I've been reading *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* since I got it for my 8<sup>th</sup> birthday and now I read it every night. I take it on all my holidays and sleepovers! Mary Anning was useful to read about when I visited Lyme Regis.

Two of my favourites are Malala, who is an activist and who loved school so much but then got hit in the head with a gun on a school bus when she was 14 - just because she talked about these men called the Taliban who were "closing girls' schools because they didn't want women to be powerful." They were the people who shot her but she did not die. Malala was rushed to hospital and got better. She went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize! Another one I really liked was Sonita who is a young rapper who wrote 'Brides for Sale' and put it on Youtube.

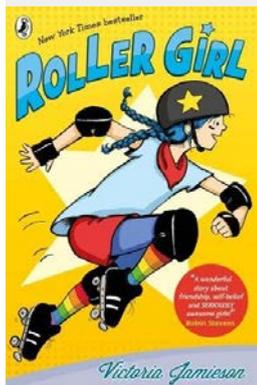
It's hard to believe that these women's lives are real. The book is fascinating and it makes me feel excited to be a girl.

## Lily (Charlotte's daughter aged 11)



***This Book Will (Help You) Change the World* by Sue Turton, illustrated by Alice Skinner**  
Wren & Rook 9781526360908

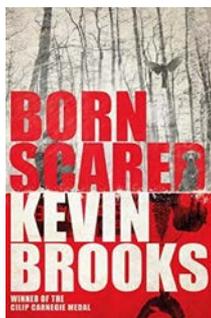
This is an inspirational book for children like me in secondary school who want to make the world a better place and understand the political system, its importance and the problems with it. This book shows kids how to make a difference, despite not being of voting age, through things like getting into Youth Parliament and starting and supporting petitions on things they are passionate about. Full of real life examples of current and past protests and rebellions and tips of how to make some noise yourself in the best way possible, this book has everything you need to help you change the world.



***Roller Girl* by Victoria Jamieson**  
Puffin 9780141378992

This awesome graphic novel explores how friendships and people change and how persevering can help you achieve your dreams. It's got lots of issues that might arise when kids go from primary to secondary school and find new friends they prefer hanging out with. I like reading graphic novels because the pictures help tell the story with the words. My favourite character is Astrid, she has a really cool sense of style and is easy to relate to. She's got herself into a lot of problems that she has to try and work out. I like this book because it shows how girls don't have to be princesses and be obsessed with boys, they can be brave, different and be themselves.

## Millie (Lindsey's daughter aged 13)



***Born Scared* by Kevin Brooks**  
Electric Monkey 9781405276191

This is the story of Elliot, a boy with an extreme fear of the outside world. His pills keep his fears at bay. But then one day, his medication runs out and collecting his prescription will be tricky on Christmas Day. Elliot's Mum goes to get it and doesn't come back. Elliot has two choices: 1) stay at home and wait for his fears to kick in or 2) Go out of his home and find her.... I liked the way this book tackled the much prevalent issue of mental illness in young people and it is fascinating to discover what lies behind Elliot's terrible anxiety but it is also part thriller as Elliot is caught up in a terrible crime. This is a great follow-up to *The Bunker Diaries* with the same pacy style.

## Rafi (Fatim's son aged 10)



***Booked* by Kwame Alexander**  
Andersen Press 9781783444656

[Booked](#) is about a boy, Nicholas Hall, who experiences different events. He is really into soccer. He was asked to play in the 'Dr Pepper Kentucky Soccer Competition' but he is not allowed to go for two reasons; he just fractured his ankle and had his appendix removed due to a 'foosball' (indoor football) accident playing against his best friend Coby. The second reason is his parents divorced and he had to go to counselling when the competition goes on.

His school librarian, Mr Mac, had a 'Dragonfly Box'. He didn't let anyone see or even touch the contents. At the end Mr Mac gives him the box unlocked. He tells Coby what Mr Mac did and Kwame Alexander leaves us on a cliffhanger as Nick was about to tell Coby the contents.

I liked how the book was formatted, it was written as a verse novel. This helped as after every section it gave time to think about what Nick was thinking.

I am now reading *Crossover* which Kwame wrote before *Booked*. It has the same themes; sport and relationships. I would recommend Kwame Alexander to readers.