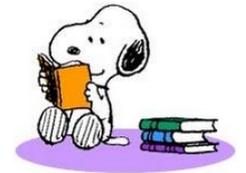


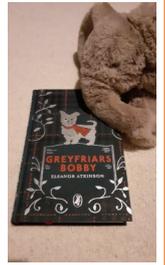


RGS: Bonkers About Books!

January 2021

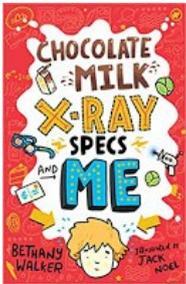


Happy New Year and welcome to the first edition of Bonkers About Books of 2021! I hope you all had a good holiday and that you managed to enjoy some reading during the festivities. One of my favourite Christmas presents this year was a beautiful, cloth-bound edition of Greyfriars Bobby by Eleanor Atkinson - my son bought it for me along with a Jellycat elephant so I have spent much of the holiday cuddling the elephant and reading! If you've enjoyed a book over Christmas, why not write a review and email it to me so I can include it in the next edition of the newsletter?



January is always a busy month for new releases so you'll find plenty to keep you occupied. If you need any recommendations, don't forget to get in touch. Whilst we're all enjoying remote learning, you can contact me via email or direct message on Teams.

Chocolate Milk, X-Ray Specs and Me - Bethany Walker; illustrated by Jack Noel.

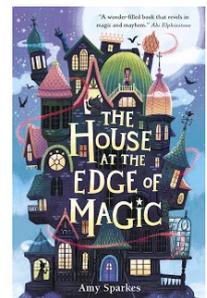


Freddy Spicer's parents are currently working as Brussel-sprouts farmers in Outer Castonga ... or so he believes. In fact, they are secret agents working on a highly classified mission. Completely oblivious to the strange goings on around him, Freddy just wants his parents to come home so he can have a birthday party at Blast Yourself Bonkers!

Written in letter format, this is a hilariously funny book and Freddy's obliviousness to the strange events that are going on around him make things even funnier (his very glamorous new neighbour falling for his grandad; the unusual gadgets he keeps finding; the much older pupil who arrives at school...). Oh and the sprouts, I have to mention the sprouts which poor Freddy is forced to eat all the time (with obvious consequences!). You'll find yourself rooting for Freddy whilst laughing along with him. A great read!

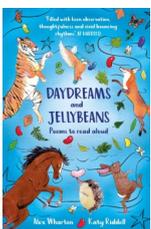
The House at the Edge of Magic - Amy Sparks

The story follows Nine, an orphan who is desperate for a home to call her own. After stealing an ornament from a stranger, she gets more than she bargained for when the ornament grows into a house! However, this isn't like any other house; inside Nine finds Dr Spoon, Eric the troll and Flabberghast who tell her that the house has been cursed - this means that they are unable to leave, but also that there are many strange things that happen inside, including the tea cupboard being enchanted, the toilet walking around ... and it's up to Nine to undo the curse.



This was a great book with a whole heap of wonderful characters. The plot is an exciting one and full of imagination and magical surprises; the sense of urgency is there, especially when Nine discovers that the house and its residents will be shrunk until they no longer exist if she cannot break the curse - you won't help but be pulled in. There is very much a fun element to this book which will make you laugh; however, there are also themes of friendship, supporting each other and sibling rivalry which are high on the agenda.

Daydreams and Jellybeans - Alex Wharton; illustrated by Katy Riddell



From the very first poem, Night Music, the pages are just bursting to come alive and the poems are begging to be read aloud. With themes ranging from snails to maths tests; jam to painting lines on the road, this collection is full of poems that will invoke a full range of emotions. These are poems that are begging to be heard and need to be read aloud so they can live in the air and dance into other people's minds to be savoured and enjoyed. The book is like a hug and the emotionally positive lift we all need at the minute.

Ever Dark - Abi Elphinstone

The prequel to Rumblestar, Ever Dark is the story of Smudge and her monkey, Bartholomew, who set sail from Crackledawn in an attempt to stop Morg, the evil harpy who is determined to steal Crackledawn's magic.

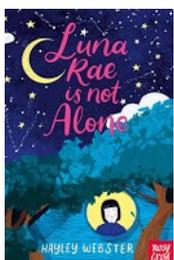
This was as wonderfully written as I have come to expect from Abi's writing. The description paints vivid pictures of wonderful new worlds that emerge from the page and allow you to imagine you are there with Smudge as she ventures on her quest.

Smudge is a determined character but rather clumsy; she's full of heart and kindness, and is very much a character that readers will want to get to know; however, I have to say that I had a real soft spot for Bartholomew, the monkey whose grumpiness is rather endearing, as is his loyalty to Smudge.

Full of positive messages and full of adventure, this edition of Ever Dark is being published in a dyslexia-friendly format and is available to buy from 7th January - it will just about help get me through to May when I can dive into The Crackle Dawn Dragon, the final instalment of the Unmapped chronicles series.



Lua Rae Is Not Alone - Hayley Webster (Due for release 4th February)



Luna and her family have just moved into their first home which means a new school and making new friends. Luna finds this difficult, especially as she is worried about everything at home. However, when her school announces a family Bake Off competition, she feels that this will be the answer to everything and is desperate to enter with her mum. There's only one problem: she hasn't seen her mum in several days.

This is one of those wonderful books where you find yourself completely immersed in the main character's life so quickly that you just want to keep reading to find out what is going to happen. Luna is a sensible girl but one who is known to catastrophise - she sees the worst possible outcome in everything and worries about things. However, this leads her to be a rather wonderful big sister and a daughter, looking out for her dad as much as she can. She finds making friends at school hard so she is pleased when the boy who lives on her street is actually in her class. Together, the pair become firm friends.

Full of friendship, family and messages for adults about not hiding things from children, this is a book that I know will go down well in school.

The Boy Who Met A Whale - Nizrana Farook

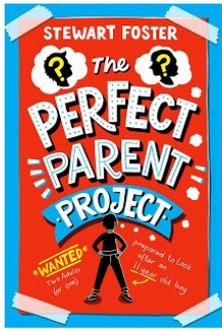
The story follows Razi who lives on the coast of Serendib with his sister, Shifa and his mum. Despite his love of fishing and the water, Razi is terrified of boarding a ship again following the recent death of his father in an accident at sea. Whilst out watching newborn turtles race for the shore one morning, he comes across a boat containing an unconscious boy. Saving him, he quickly discovers that he is wanted by two rather fearsome men who are determined to kill him. Helping him, Razi discovers that the boy, Zheng, has escaped a shipwreck and holds a map which will give the location to some much sought after treasure. Before long, Zheng's life is in danger again and Razi and Shifa become entangled in the hunt for the treasure; a hunt that will take them back out to sea and on the adventure of their lives.



From the beach to the water, this story leads the characters out to sea after Razi decides that saving his new friend is more important than his fear of the sea. The adventure sees them out during a storm, encountering whales, and stranded on a deserted island - but will they succeed in their mission?

The Boy Who Met A Whale is a gripping read that will have you voyaging from the beaches of Sri Lanka out to sea along with the characters - you'll be completely gripped and enthralled. This is a story of resilience, friendship, family; of doing what's right and learning to live again.

The Perfect Parent Project - Stewart Foster

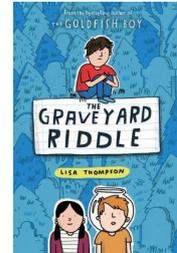


Sam has been passed from foster home to foster home for as long as he can remember and all he wants is a family - parents to call his own. He has a list of what the perfect parents must have which includes owning a BMW MS and going to Disneyland on holiday, but most of all he wants a home (not a house), so when his friend, Leah, suggests that he actively go out and find his parents, he agrees and so The Perfect Parent Project begins. Advertising for the perfect parents, Sam and Leah design posters and deliver them to houses that Sam thinks he would like to live in. But things don't quite go as planned and he begins to wonder if he'll ever find his perfect parents.

A wonderfully written book, this story gets right to the heart of how children like Sam must feel. He is desperate to find a family who will love and hug him, yet having been hurt so many times in the past, he's afraid to show his true emotions and to open up and let his current foster family in. He spends his life expecting to have to pack-up and leave at a moment's notice so spends every day on edge, waiting for the end to come and being afraid to commit to things such as a role in the school production of Bugsy, in case he's moved before he can see it through. He just wants to belong somewhere and call somewhere home.

Stewart Foster has a way of writing books that allow children to become immersed in and understand situations that they may never find themselves in - they help children to empathise with issues that other children will experience in a way that is interesting and gripping. The Perfect Parent Project is a heart-warming story that made me want to constantly reach into the book to save Sam, sometimes from the situation he was in and sometimes from himself. It shows us the importance of trust, friendship and family, of belonging, love and also how much we need hugs. (and yes, I cried and hugged the book at the end!).

Recently Released books that I'm planning to read:



Reviews from Student.

Minecraft the Woodsword Chronicles - Nick Eliopulos and Luke Flowers.

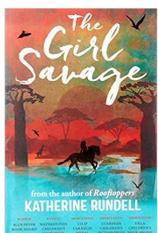
This series is great for people who prefer playing video games than reading books.

The Woodsword Chronicles are about five friends who go on adventures in Minecraft (yes I said in Minecraft.) One day their science teacher Dr Culpepper asks them if they can try something out in the computer room. And those things are some VR goggles (Virtual Reality goggles) but not just any VR goggles these VR goggles let them be in the Minecraft world!

Follow Morgan, Ash, Harper, Po and Jodi on their mission to defeat the Evoker King.
Bernard S



The Girl Savage - Katherine Rundell



We have been reading 'Rooftoppers' in school, and I have previously enjoyed 'The Explorer', so I was keen to read 'The Girl Savage' which is Katherine Rundell's first book.

Wilhelmina Silver is living on a farm in Zimbabwe with her best friend Simon, pet monkey Kezia and her horse Shumba. They live contentedly, enjoying freedom and the beauty of nature. Everything in her life abruptly changes when she is sent to Leewood Boarding School in England, where the girls are snooty and mean.

This book tells a beautiful tale of a small girl and how she learns to "cartwheel in thunderstorms". I particularly like the way this story is written. It has so many imaginative similes and uses vivid descriptions that really help you visualise each scene.

Eleanor AJ