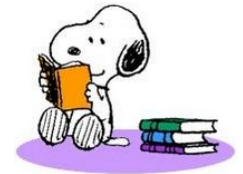




# RGS: Bonkers About Books!

October/November 2022



Hello,

This edition started as an October newsletter but has now become an October/November mash-up. From spooky books for darker evenings, to exciting adventures, there are some wonderful new books just out. Before the end of term, I will do a round-up of Christmas books as well as books to ask Santa for.

In the meantime, happy reading.

**Mrs Wall**

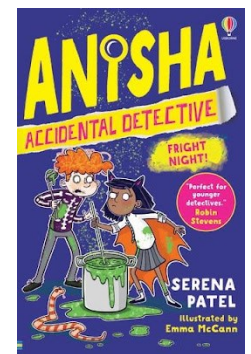
## **Anisha Accidental Detective Fright Night - Serena Patel; Illustrated by Emma McCann**

Anisha is back in her fifth book and this time it's Hallowe'en, and for the first time in years, the school is having a disco. Lessons seem to all be based around preparation and disco fever is in the air; however, strange things start happening and, before long, everybody is convinced there is a ghost trying to scupper their chances of holding the disco. Mr Graft, the headteacher, has said that if these things keep happening then the governors won't give the go-ahead for the disco, so it's up to Anisha to put her detective skills to good use.

This is a brilliant book and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. Fast paced and with some laughs along the way (I loved seeing what antics the ghost had come up with), you are quickly swept up into the disco fever that has infected the students (well, most of them).

I also liked the additional story thread of Anisha's parents deciding to move and Granny Jas's attempts to thwart them. Anisha is a character that will appeal to readers as she is a strong and determined but also has worries which make her feel very normal. However, I think it's Granny Jas who is my favourite character and I can imagine her ruling the roost in any household!

A fab book, perfect for this time of year. I can't wait to see what's in store next for Anisha.



## **The Mystery of Raspberry Hill - Eva Frantz**

Stina has consumption, a disease that she believes will mean she will shortly be dead and she has made her peace with that. But then she was offered a place at Raspberry Hill sanatorium and her mother agreed to let her go, hoping that it would provide a cure for her.

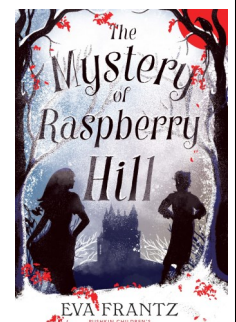
When she arrives, she is greeted by what looks like a fairy-tale castle in the middle of a forest but then she finds that she is the only person on her ward and things become rather lonely. Thankfully, on her first night, Ruben comes to visit and explains that he is from ward 23 but knows the staff so well, he can slip out sometimes.

When she meets Dr Hagman the following day, he explains her treatment and it begins in earnest. But, as the days pass, there are suggestions that all may not be as it seems.

This is a book that is perfect for this time of year, as the nights draw in and the weather grows chillier. The long and echoing corridors of the sanatorium provide an eerie atmosphere, as does the thought that an entire wing is closed off after a fire.

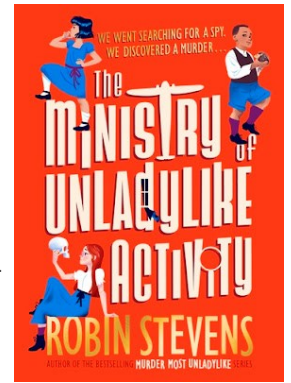
In addition, many of the characters will leave you questioning: some are friendly towards Stina, whilst others are brusque and terrifying, but exactly who can she trust?

**The Mystery of Raspberry Hill** is a shorter book (156 pages) so perfect for those in Years 5 & 6 for whom larger novels can be daunting.



## The Ministry of Unladylike Activity - Robin Stevens

It's December 1940, World War II is underway and Britain is feeling the effects. Meanwhile May Wong is stuck at Deepdean School for Girls, frustrated at being trapped there as a result of the war and determined to do her part to end it. She wants to become a spy and prove to everyone that she isn't too young (ten but nearly eleven) to do what her elder sister, Hazel is doing. As Hazel wouldn't help her (and wouldn't even admit that she was a spy), May sets out to do this her own way. Finding a note in Hazel's handbag which gives details of training in London, she runs away from Deepdean and heads to the capital to attend the training herself. On the way, she meets Eric who also happens to be heading to the same place and so they arrive together, but the pair are instantly turned away amid claims they are too young. However, May is not to be deterred and, discovering new information on the back of the note from Hazel's bag, she decides that she is off to solve a mystery on her own to prove herself worthy. Dragging Eric with her, she heads to Elysium Hall in the countryside and the pair pose as evacuees. But is there more to this mystery than meets the eye? And can May and Eric get to the bottom of things before it's too late?



It's a well documented fact that I am a HUGE fan of the Murder Most Unladylike series and it was with more than a few tears in my eyes that I said good bye to Daisy and Hazel at the end of *Death Sets Sail*. I have to say though, that knowing something new was coming definitely helped to ease the pain. After two years of patiently waiting, I am delighted to say that I have been reunited with Robin's writing and have been able to immerse myself in a new mystery series.

We were first introduced to May in *A Spoonful of Murder* and then again in *Death Sets Sail*. Time has passed since then and she is now ten years old (but nearly eleven as she proudly declares at the beginning of the book). She is very different to Hazel in that she is feisty and adventurous, which is what drives her on right from the beginning of the book. She isn't about to let her age stop her doing what she wants to do. Eric becomes May's partner in this investigation and he's quiet, thoughtful and seems to be able to stand back and notice things that are often missed by others. Finally, we are introduced to Fionnuala (or Fiona as her English family insist on calling her) who lives at the Hall and with whom May shares a bedroom. We meet her as May and Eric arrive at Elysium Hall and it is her diary entries, along with May's report, that provide the dual narrative of the novel. Fionnuala is clearly adapting to life in England after some major changes and this influences her character - I found her an intriguing person to get to know.

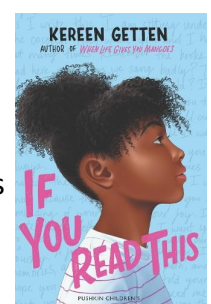
I have a weakness for books set in WWII so I was thrilled that **The Ministry of Unladylike Activity** is set during this time. Robin had clearly done her research and I loved reading the little details such as the description of the streets of London and the details of the Andersen shelter. The book touches upon some of the horrors of the war but does it brilliantly and in a way that is appropriate to the readers, giving them an insight into what people went through without scaring them - I highly advise you to read Robin's Author's Note at the end of the book. In addition, the country house setting added to the mystery perfectly and I found myself imagining myself wandering the hallways and hiding behind the blackout curtains as I read.

There are plenty of twists within the book that kept me guessing and I found the book difficult to put down. **The Ministry of Unladylike Activity** is the start of another stunning series and I, for one, can't wait for book 2.

## If You Read This—Kereen Getten

**If You Read This** is a short book about a girl called Brie who has just turned twelve years old. She feels forgotten and invisible in the eyes of her father who works a lot. Life has changed significantly since her mother died three years ago. The book involves Brie dealing with her grief, newfound friendship and what it means to be successful in the eyes of her father. As a result of the presentation of letters from her mother on her birthday, Brie goes on an adventure of self-discovery over the course of the novel, learning what is important and that it is ok to make mistakes. Pick up this book to go on a journey with Brie and her friends to the fantastical Brim's Island!

**K. Hobson**



### The Arctic Railway Assassin - MG Leonard & Sam Sedgman

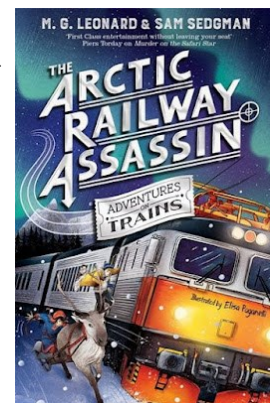
Hal and his Uncle Nat are back for their sixth adventure, and this time they are heading to the Arctic just before Christmas aboard a night train to see the Northern Lights.

Hal meets up with his uncle in Stockholm where Nat has seen his friend, Morti, receive her Nobel Prize. However, it quickly becomes apparent that things aren't quite right when Morti explains that her possessions keep disappearing. When she explains that her prize winning discovery of sound vibrations that can cure cancer, can also be used to kill a person instantly, Hal and Nat agree to help her out. However, the next morning, she has left a note to say that she has had to go and will meet them at her cabin. Uncle Nat and Hal continue with their journey but, as their train leaves Stockholm, they realise that they are being followed. As they near the Arctic Circle, it's up to Hal and Uncle Nat to discover who is following them and why. And with the possibility that Uncle Nat's past has come back to haunt him, it's up to Hal to step-up and take the lead.

I am a big fan of the *Adventures on Trains* series, so I was thrilled when I got to read an early copy of **The Arctic Railway Assassin**. I couldn't resist jumping back on board with Hal and Nat to become completely engrossed in another adventure. As Hal gets older, it's great to see him playing a more independent role in the investigations, but I loved the contrast between his maturity and his treatment by people such as the airline attendant - I can imagine a lot of 13 year olds will sympathise with him.

Once again, woven into the mystery are the descriptions of the country they are travelling through and I always look forward to reading these as they really help to set the scene for me. As ever, Hal's illustrations prove pivotal to the investigations and I always love to spend time studying the detail in each one. Hat's off to Elisa Paganelli for these - they make the best accompaniment to the story; as does the map at the beginning. I do love a book map.

It is with a heavy heart that I have to say that this will be the last book in the *Adventures on Trains* series. This has been a thrilling series and I can only hope that the authors change their minds!



### The Spectaculars - Jodie Garnish

**The Spectaculars** opens with a dramatic evacuation on a train into the mountains; however, the last carriage is left behind and you are left wondering what happened. We then jump five years and are introduced to Harper Wolfe who lives with her mother in the Smoke. However, on the night of the Parade of Progress, Harper's life changes for ever and she is whisked off to the Wondria to start her learning how to become a Spectacular, a magical performer in a travelling theatre. All is well to begin with but when their theatre is in danger, it is up to Harper and Trick to save the day.

Ok, I'm just going to say it: **The Spectaculars** is spectacular! Full of magic, mystery and intrigue in a way that will grab you and draw you in. The idea of a travelling, magical theatre is a rather wonderful one and you are transported into the world along with Harper - I didn't want to leave.

Harper is a wonderful character who is strong and determined, and coming to terms with the idea that her world isn't quite what she thought it was. Imagine being able to pull magic from the stars to create effects through the theatre and then travelling the land to share this with the rest of the world ... this is Harper's new life and she is thrilled to be part of it.

**The Spectaculars** is perfect for fans of *Nevermore* and *Amari And The Night Brothers* and is a book that will definitely brighten those dark and chilly evenings.

