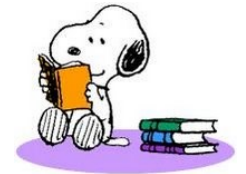




# RGS: Bonkers About Books!

September 2023



Hellooooo!

Happy new school new year! I hope you are all well and enjoyed some good books over the summer holidays. Remember to let me know all about what you have been reading—I'm ALWAYS looking for an excuse to talk about books!

For those of you who are reading this for the first time, this is the school's monthly newsletter all about books and reading. You'll find my reviews and recommendations but I also love to include reviews from the students too, so feel free to send them to me.

I've a plethora of books to recommend from my summer reading and there are some exciting books due for release soon as well. Read on to find out more!

Happy reading

**Mrs Wall**

## Mysteries At Sea: Peril On The Atlantic - AM Howell

Alice is excited to be spending the summer with her father on board the Queen Mary as it sails to New York. Whilst her father is working, desperate to ensure the ship wins the Blue Riband prize for the quickest crossing of the Atlantic, Alice hopes to explore the delights of the ship; however her plans are quickly thwarted when her father gives her strict instructions not to leave the staff quarters. After overcoming her seasickness, Alice decides to sneak out and explore, but after slipping into the first-class swimming pool before it opens, she witnesses an attack that leaves a member of staff unconscious. Shocked, she determines to find out who carried out the attack and why. Along with her new friend, Sonny, she begins to investigate but the more they discover, the more serious and dangerous things get.

I have enjoyed all of A. M. Howell's books so discovering **Peril on the Atlantic** filled me with joy, more so when I read that it is the start of a new series.

The setting is perfect for a good mystery and wonderfully incorporates the history of the Queen Mary, describing the splendour of it in such detail that I could imagine myself wandering the decks. The enclosed nature of the ship and the multitude of decks, small staff quarters and hidden areas make for a gripping read, and you are very quickly drawn into the adventure. You know the culprit is on board with no way of escape and this certainly adds to the tension and keeps you guessing.

We meet Alice at the very beginning of the book and quickly find that she isn't one to always follow the rules. There is a feistiness to her and she refuses to be treated the way girls traditionally were at that time. She has to be careful though, as part of her rule-breaking involves going against her father's instructions, and she has to make sure she doesn't get caught! Along with the new friends she meets along the way, she is a force to be reckoned with and her bravery will leave readers on the edge of their seat. But, at the end of the day, there is the added question of who can be trusted to add into the mix which only adds to the tension.

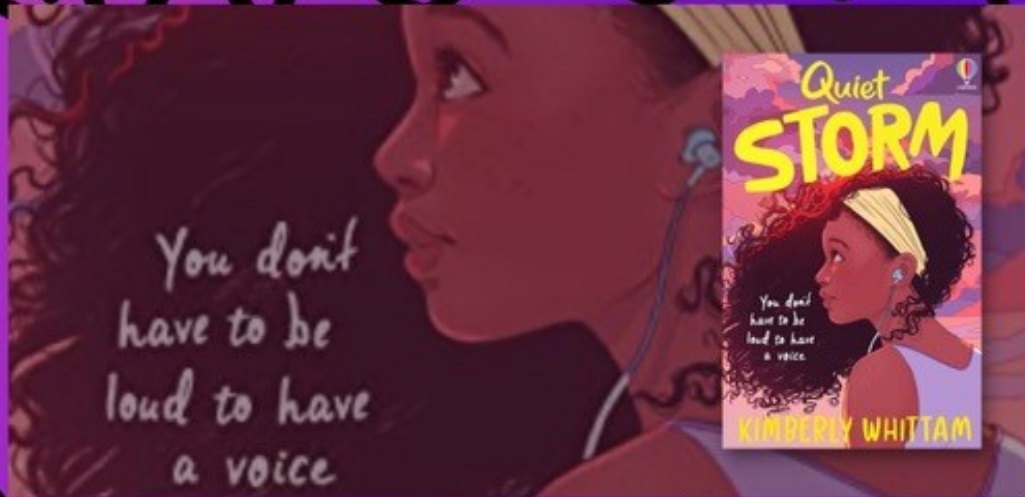
**Peril on the Atlantic** is a gripping adventure with that 'just one more chapter' effect. I gobbled it up in one sitting and I'm so pleased it's the start of a new series as I'm already desperate for *The Royal Jewel Pot*!



## Blue Peter Book Badge

Great news: you can now earn yourself a Blue Peter Badge for reading! Follow the link to find out more: [Blue Peter Book badge | Find out how to earn the Book BP badge - CBBC - BBC](#) It looks easy to do so why not have a go? If I was young enough, I'd definitely be applying as it was my childhood dream to own my own Blue Peter badge!





You don't  
have to be  
loud to have  
a voice

Quiet storm is the best  
book I've ever read.

I really recommend it  
too. It's all about how even if  
your quiet you can use your  
voice to speak up for yourself.

It is also very funny!

By Eva

Storm is the main character  
who speaks up for herself. She  
is really fast when she runs  
and that is when she realises  
she has friends that care about  
her much more than  
others. Storm is in year seven  
in a school in Manchester.

This book is about  
believing in  
yourself, overcoming your  
fears and never giving up.

PIC•COLLAGE

## The Boy At The Back Of The Class - Onjali Rauf.

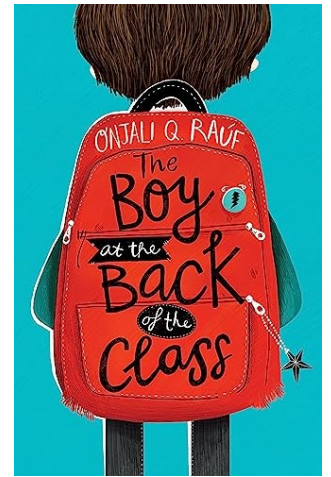
This story is about a nine and three-quarters year old named Alexa and her friends, who felt pity for a refugee boy named Ahmet. Ahmet ran away from a war in Syria. He sailed the sea and walked for days. Alexa and her friends came up with a plan just to help Ahmet find his family. You have to read the book to find out how they do it!

Ahmet is a quiet boy. Although he ran away from a war, he is not mad and is a really nice boy, despite how many people laugh at him and bully him.

I liked this book because it has a meaning. It tells you that if you are nice to someone, the kindness will come back to you. When Alexa gives Ahmet sweets or fruit, he figures out that not everybody wants to hurt you, but maybe help you and no matter where you are from or what language you speak, someone will like you for who you are. Alexa's courage and care towards Ahmet made a huge difference bringing happiness into his life and taking away sadness and loneliness.

The Boy At The Back Of The Class is a heart-warming story that teaches people about the power of kindness towards others. I highly recommend this book, especially to people who like realistic and adventure stories.

**Oorja**



## Code Name Kingfisher - Liz Kessler

Travelling home from my holiday in July, I had fully expected to spend the majority of the flight sleeping (it had been a fairly busy trip); however, the first leg of the journey saw me begin **Code Name Kingfisher** and suddenly the any idea of sleeping went right out the window!

Set in Holland during the Second World War and also modern day Britain, the book follows Liv who has been tasked with a school history project to discover her family tree. With a small family, and her grandmother closed off after the death of her grandfather, Liv thinks this is going to be an impossible task, but the discovery of a box hidden in her grandmother's attic opens up a whole new world. Through the contents of the box, Liv is transported back to 1942 Holland where Mila and her sister Hannie are forced to leave their family home and their parents in order to live with strangers; their identities and their Jewish background are kept strictly secret to protect them from the Nazis. However, as the story unfolds, Hannie finds it increasingly difficult to simply sit and watch what is happening to other Jewish children and is determined to do all she can to help. But do she and Mila know who they can trust and can they stay safe?

I have a real weakness for books set during WWII but I don't think I've read many that are set in Holland. I'm well aware of the plight of Anne Frank and her family, as well as the brave resistance fighters who helped them, but this gave me a different perspective on life for Jewish families at this time. The idea of parents deciding to entrust their children to strangers to save them broke my heart and I admired Mila and Hannie's parents' strength immensely; also that of the Van de Bergs who take them in. There were so many acts of bravery like this during the war and I always feel that it's important that they aren't forgotten.

Although Mila and Hannie are sisters, they are clearly two very different characters, both very strong in their own way but different in how they deal with things. I don't want to say any more so as to avoid spoilers but they are characters I won't forget in a while.

Then there is Liv. Living in Britain today, she is dealing with several big things in her life: she is still coming to terms with the death of her grandfather and is also coping with changes in friendships. Friendships often change as children progress through school but I really felt for her. The discovery of the box and the subsequent investigations into its contents come at just the right time for Liv.

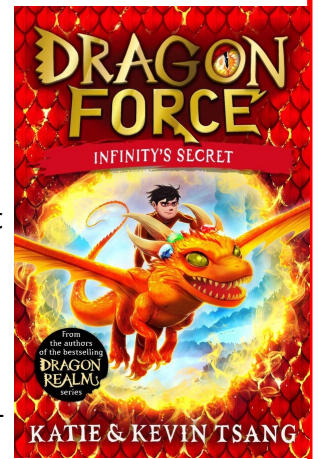
Told in the third person, **Code Name Kingfisher** flits between Liv's story and that of Mila and Hannie, creating a tension that makes you want to read 'just one more chapter'. I found myself very quickly absorbed and fully invested in the lives of all three girls and shed tears on more than one occasion (goodness knows what the person beside me on the plane thought!).

Full of hope, courage, friendship and family ties, **Code Name Kingfisher** is a book that will draw you in and capture your heart. It will remind you that bravery can be found in the most unlikely of places and that you should never give up hope.



## Dragon Force Infinity's Secret - Katie & Kevin Tsang

In the five years since the end of *Dragon Destiny*, humans and dragons have been living alongside each other with Billy and the original Dragon Force crew leading the way. Together, they have set-up Camp Claw where students can develop their skills and learn how to protect the world as they now know it. With heart-bonded humans and their dragons, as well as humans who show potential, being invited to attend, it is a place that many aspire to. When Lance Lo and his sister are walking home from school one day, they are confronted by a Dragon. Whilst Lance fears that the Dragon will attack, Zoe is very calm, especially when she discovers that this is the Dragon she will be heart-bonded with. Whilst Lance is excited for his sister, he is also jealous as he knows this means she will be heading to Camp Claw in the summer and will probably be the youngest person there. When he then receives an invite, it takes much persuasion to convince their parents that both of their children should be allowed to go. After all, it's only for 3 weeks. Upon arrival, they begin their lessons, lead by the original Dragon Force team, but it quickly becomes apparent that life at Camp Claw may not be as safe as it seems. Can Lance, Zoe and their new friends rally to save the day?



It really is no secret that I am a MASSIVE fan of the Dragon Realm series and have been shouting about it to anybody who will listen since well before the launch of book 1. So, having the opportunity to read an early copy of **Dragon Force Infinity's Secret** was met with much excitement (there may have been dancing!).

Whilst Billy, Charlotte, Dylan and Liu are part of this new off-shoot in that they are teachers at Camp Claw, it is Lance and Zoe who are the main characters. Siblings, it is great to see the dynamic between them and the different emotions Lance has when his sister is heart-bonded before he is. He is obviously very protective of her and this is apparent in so many ways throughout the book. I love this as so often sibling rivalry can cause problems. Although Zoe is a fierce and independent person in her own right, Lance's love and closeness is lovely to read.

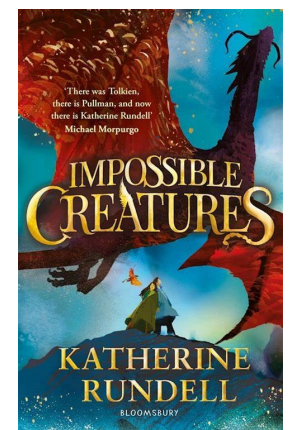
With a new place to discover, Camp Claw is bound to become somewhere readers will want to immerse themselves in. The eating area alone sounds fabulous and the out-of-bounds parts very tempting!

Like the Dragon Realm series, **Dragon Force Infinity's Secret** is a fast-paced adventure that grabs readers from the very beginning. With an ending that will leave you wanting more, this new series is guaranteed to bring a whole new army of fans to the Dragon world. Perfect as a stand-alone but even better if you've read the Dragon Realm series, I predict **Dragon Force Infinity's Secret** is going to be a huge hit.

## Impossible Creatures - Katherine Rundell

Christopher has always had an affinity with animals but it isn't until he goes to stay with his grandfather that he learns exactly why that is: his grandfather is the guardian of one of the entry points between our world and the Archipelago, a group of islands where all animals we believe are mythical live. His grandfather tells Christopher that one day he will become the guardian but, until that time, he shouldn't approach the area. However, when magical creatures appear along with a girl called Mal who begs for his help, he has no choice: he follows her to the Archipelago where the pair face a race against time to find the truth of what is happening to the land.

Katherine Rundell is one of those authors whose books I don't need any encouragement to read and so being able to read **Impossible Creatures** before its publication date was something I jumped at. The book starts with a map of the Archipelago and extracts from The Guardian's Bestiary which describes the mythical creatures in the book. Fantastic online, I can only imagine how beautiful this will be in the final, physical book. The writing is beautiful and the world-building incredible, perfectly combining existing mythical creatures and world with Rundell's own new twists. You are drawn in easily and captivated by both the land and the creatures there.

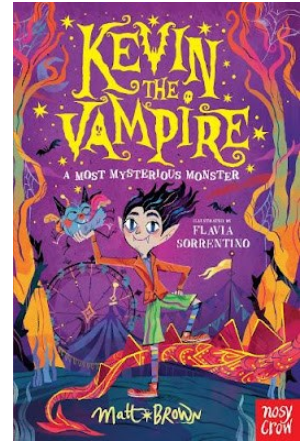


You are drawn into the book from the beginning and the combination of fantasy and adventure is guaranteed to keep readers engaged until the very end as you never quite know what will happen next. It's an escape of the very best nature and is a perfect read for upper KS2 lovers of fantasy but will also appeal to those looking to begin to bridge the MG/YA gap.

**Impossible Creatures** is an immersive read and one which I believe will steal many readers' hearts.

### Kevin The Vampire A Most Mysterious Monster - Matt Brown

Kevin and his family of vampires are part of The Carnival Monstromo and are on the group's train travelling to the Festival of Fear. On their way, they stop at Lower Drudging where they plan to do an impromptu show for the locals. However, the locals are a rather unusual bunch and only want a quiet life for fear of disturbing a creature that has lain asleep in the nearby mountain for 73 years. As a town, they refuse to hold festivals and celebrations so as not to disturb the creature but all that changes when The Carnival Monstromo begin their show and wake the creature. What does this mean for the locals and can Kevin and his new friend Susie save the day?



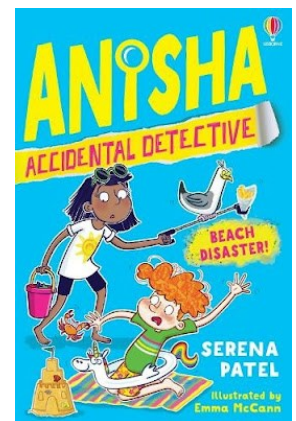
**Kevin the Vampire** is a rather fangtastic book that is guaranteed to lift your spirits. It's full of a wide range of carnival creatures that readers will adore getting to know (I particularly liked the fact files that were dotted through the book). In the same respect, I think readers will also enjoy hating Susie's aunts who really are an unpleasant pair.

I also enjoyed the friendship that builds between Kevin and Susie. Kevin is lonely, spending all of his time travelling with the carnival where there is nobody else his own age; in addition to that, he longs to know what he's good at and feels he's living his his siblings' shadows. Then there's Susie who lives with her aunts after her parents' died. She is treated like a slave with a strict routine and, like Kevin, is keen to find friendship. The pair show that it is possible to feel lonely even when you aren't alone and also that friendships can be formed in the most unlikely of places.

With wonderful illustrations from Flavia Sorrentino to enhance the plot, **Kevin the Vampire** is a story with strong messages about accepting everyone for who they are and not judging people by their appearance and I'm now looking forward to the next book in the series.

### Anish Accidental Detective Beach Disaster - Serena Patel; illustrated by Emma McCann

Anisha is back and this time she's off on a school trip to the beach in Wales to take part in a habitat project that will help to save the beach; however, things don't go as smoothly as they should: first, Granny Jas has managed to get herself a place as a chaperone; and also somebody is trying to sabotage their competition entries. As well as that, Anisha's Aunti Bindi is expecting a baby imminently. With Anisha feeling a little left out at home, she hopes the time away will give her a bit of independence, but why does she feel so unsettled?



I love this series and know how popular it is in school. The book is well-paced and dives straight into the action which I know goes down well with readers; as do the wonderful illustrations by Emma McCann.

Anisha is worried about her first trip away from home and this will resonate with many readers. The excitement of what they will be doing becomes Anisha's focus but she gets quite a shock when she finds Granny Jas hiding in the luggage compartment! Residential are an exciting time for many children but for some, like Anisha, they can be the cause of worry; coupled with the imminent arrival of Anti Bindi's baby, the book looks at two events that readers will be able to resonate with. The detective element of the book will always hook readers and clues and red-herrings will leave people guessing.

With humour weaving its way through the book, **Beach Disaster** would be a great stand-alone read and a great book to add to the collection for those who are already fans. I can't wait to see what's install next for Anisha.

## Alice Éclair A Sprinkling of Danger - Sarah Todd Taylor

Alice is back and this time she is investigating who is revealing the mountain locations of some of France's spies. Claude believes that the culprit is somebody working on the film that's being shot at the Palace of Versailles so sends Alice along with Pierre (a new recruit Alice has to train) to investigate. However, Pierre isn't the only thing Alice has to worry about as it turns out she is in more danger than she thinks.

OK, so I absolutely adore the Alice Éclair series and love nothing more than losing myself in one of her mysteries. I was thrilled to have been able to take *A Recipe For Trouble* with me to Paris last summer (you can read my review [here](#)) and also loved *A Spoonful of Spying* (my review is [here](#)) so when my copy of **A Sprinkling of Danger** arrived just before I went back to Paris, well there was nothing else for it: Alice was coming with me!

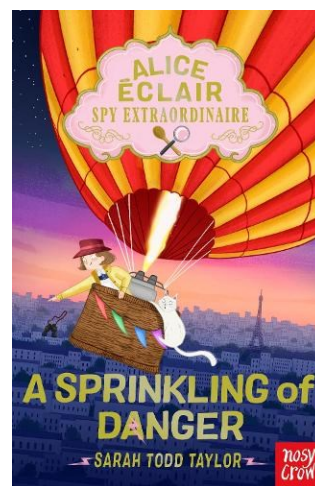
This book is set largely in the Palace of Versailles which is an incredibly opulent setting and, although I didn't get there this time, I have been before and Sarah's description of the grandeur and the elegance are spot on. Trust me, you will want to visit after you've read this (I'm already looking at when I can get back!).

Set in the depths of winter, the third book sees Alice grappling with a new spy whom she needs to train as well as the mission she has, and things really aren't easy. Pierre is a most reluctant trainee and is somebody I quickly began to hate! Full of himself and determined he doesn't need help, he is in an incredibly rude character at the beginning of the book and I defy anybody not to hate him! The winter setting provides the perfect conditions for dastardly deeds with slippery paths and mountains of snow blocking roads, all of which help to enhance the plot.

Alice is a most wonderful character and I love her independence and strength but we get to see a different side to her in this book and I wonder whether, with teasers as to what will happen in book 4 appearing at the end, we will see more of this side of Alice in the future.

I can't finish this review without mentioning the culinary creations. From macarons to show-stopping cakes, Alice once again outdoes herself and I found myself drooling as I read (in fact, I was forced to go and buy macarons!). The bakes are a big draw for me with these books and I always look forward to reading the sumptuous descriptions of Alice's creations. It is, of course, always best to have sweet treats on hand when reading an Alice Éclair book which gives readers the perfect excuse to indulge (with Catrine demanding fresh macarons every day, I can highly recommend having a stash handy!).

I think by now that it's obvious that my love for this series grows with every book. **A Sprinkling Of Danger** is the perfect mix of peril, Paris and patisseries that will have you guessing who the culprit is and desperate to read just one more chapter. Great to read as a stand-alone but even better if you've read the first two in the series, it's a delicious book that I know readers are going to adore. It left me with a book hangover and I can't wait to see what's in store next for Alice.



## Nightshade Revenge - Anthony Horowitz

Alex Rider is back in his fourteenth adventure and I think it's quite possibly his best, most gripping adventure yet. Alex is doing his best to get through his CGSE mocks when Tom is abducted by Nightshade and only Alex stands any chance of saving him. His only hope is to help Freddy Grey (known as Number Nine when he was part of Nightshade) escape from prison and return him to Nightshade. What follows is a rollercoaster adventure that readers will find hard to put down. With loyalties tested and questions raised about who can be trusted, I promise that the end will leave you breathless.

