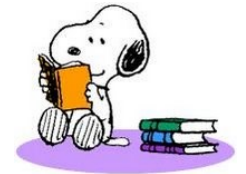




RGS: Bonkers About Books!

February 2024



Hi,

I hope everyone had a relaxing half-term and managed to enjoy a good book or two. A slightly shorter Bonkers for February but March's edition promises to be a bumper one with a whole host of exciting books being released.

In the mean time, don't forget to let me know what you're reading (that's parents as well as students!)

Happy reading

Mrs Wall

Fright Bite - Jennifer Killick

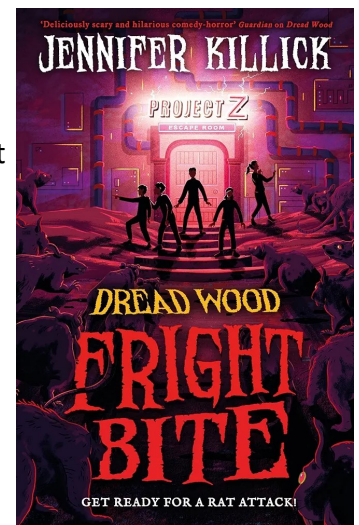
Club Loser are back and this time, they are heading for an evening of fun and frivolity at Neon Perch, *the* place to hang out, to celebrate Colette's 13th birthday. With a kitty for 'noms and spends' in a Mr C-style bumbag and a host of activities pre-paid, the team head in to relax and enjoy themselves. The evening starts well and then they head to Project Z, the escape room where they quickly realise that things aren't right but they have no choice but to keep going. With sinister goings on, unwanted visitors and vicious creatures out to attack, Club Loser's evening takes a very different turn and they are forced into the fight of their lives.

Anybody who knows me will know how much I fangirl over Jennifer's books, and I had the greatest pleasure of reading both *Dread Wood* and *Fear Ground* to my class last term. They are huge fans and insisted on having the lights out and the blinds closed during reading time (they are braver than me!). The arrival of **Fright Bite** was *the best* start to the Christmas holidays I could have asked for and I literally dropped everything to read it. I promise it won't disappoint.

Club Loser are now closer than ever and know each other so very well (Gus' analysis of who he sits next to in different situations highlights this and is genius!) and it's nice to see them heading off for a night of fun, after all, it's what they deserve. Of, course the evening doesn't go as planned (& we readers would undoubtedly be very disappointed if it did!) and the action quickly ramps up - there are some dramatic twists and turns; expect several audible gasp moments and to be creeped out in the very best way.

Gus remains my favourite character and his manner and speech make me laugh and love him in equal measure, but Mr C is still a close second as I just love his attempts to be cool! The girls are fierce and remind us that equality is alive and kicking... and Angelo is an ever level presence. I always feel for him, and his character quietly reminds us that outward appearances can harbour anxieties and struggles that aren't always visible (as do the others to be fair). In amongst the humour and horror is a level of humility that let's children know that it's OK not to be OK, and that everyone has something going on that isn't always obvious.

Out now, **Fright Bite** is scrumptiously scary, frightfully funny and utterly moreish. I've always said that Jennifer is the queen of MG horror and **Fright Bite** proves that she reigns supreme.



This edition of Bonkers About Books was proof-read by

Jamaima and Tiree



A Whistledown Farm Adventure: Finding Hope - Nicola Baker

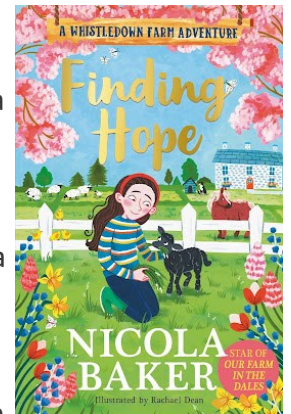
Ava's parents are heading to Chicago for work for two weeks, which means that Ava is spending her holidays with her aunt, uncle and cousin on their farm. Being a city girl, she's not really looking forward to it but things don't seem as bad as she thought ... to begin with. However, the more she tries to help, the worse things seem to get, and it's clear her cousin, Tom, really doesn't want her around. Can Ava turn things around before her parents return and how can a small lamb help?

Like Ava, I'm very much a city girl so I think I would feel exactly the same at the prospect of spending two weeks on a farm. Not only does she have to contend with missing her parents, she also has to get used to lots of different routines as she is thrown into helping out on the farm. She's interested and keen to understand but Tom is obviously unhappy at her being there and his superior attitude causes problems. When Ava makes mistakes, things only get worse and I really felt for Ava - she's simply trying to do her best to fit in.

It is clear from the description and the details within the book that Nicola knows her way around a farm and I very much enjoyed getting to know about things such as how to look after an abandoned lamb as well as how to incubate eggs. Readers will delight in the details that paint such a vivid picture. I'm sure they will also delight in the idea of wandering the Durham Dales with Ava and Tom (living not too far from there, this was one of the things I loved).

With messages about friendship, family and learning how to fit in woven perfectly into the plot, and wonderful illustrations by Rachael Dean, **Finding Hope** is a heart-warmingly charming read that will appeal to many, in particular animal lovers.

Publishing on the 29th February, **Finding Hope** is the first in a new series and I can't wait to head back to Whistledown Farm and catch-up with Ava and her family again.



Shadowhall Academy: The Whispering Walls - Phil Hickee

It's the start of term at Shadowhall Academy and Lilian's first term at the boarding school where her mum was also a student. She makes friends quickly with her new room mates, Marian, Serena and Angela (who is also new), and, despite rumours of the place being haunted she thinks these are just stories to scare new students. However, when she awakes one night to find Angela terrified by knocking coming from within the dorm walls, things begin to take a sinister turn.

I am a huge fan of Phil Hickee's Aveline Jones books and love the creepiness he brings to his books (you can read my reviews here: [The Haunting Of Aveline Jones](#), [The Bewitching Of Aveline Jones](#), [The Vanishing Of Aveline Jones](#)) so the thought of a new book sent shivers of excitement down my spine. The book jumped straight to the top of my reading pile and I curled up with it, teddy bear handy, and dove in.

The setting is perfect and sets the story up wonderfully: an imposing boarding school in a grade II listed building; dodgy heating and power which means that it's cold and students sometimes require a torch; basements and long corridors with shadowy stairways ... I think you get the picture.

Lilian is clearly dubious about starting at the school and feels the pressure of her mother's history with the place as well as worrying she won't fit in; however, she and Mariam hit it off quickly. She is a strong character who is determined to get to the bottom of the mystery; she is a loyal friend and one who can empathise with others.

There are also a host of staff members who help to add to the plot, Mr Bullen in particular. He is the sort of character I would love to get to know and I love the sound of his office. But there is something about him that made me curious...

The plot gets to the action quickly and is a wonderfully atmospheric ghost story. It's a book I couldn't put down but genuinely left me needing a cosy blanket to hide under and I was prepared with my teddy to cuddle too! Spine-tingling, utterly moreish and deliciously creepy, **Shadowhall Academy: The Whispering Walls** is everything I hoped it would be and more.



Di Island Crewe Investigates: The Case of the Abandoned Boat - Kereen Getten

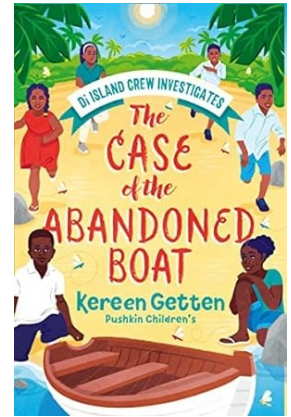
Fayson and the rest of the Di Island Crew are back for their third investigation and this time, it's a two-fold investigation: who sent the email insisting that the crew stop their investigations as they are a nuisance; and who left a boat with two wet life-jackets on board?

It was a joy to be back with the crew and whilst the weather here is cold and miserable, I thoroughly enjoyed the warmth of the island.

Fayson is excited to be back on the island but also rather nervous when she discovers that her mother is also joining her. She is used to having a level of freedom whilst she's with her uncle and she is worried that her mother will change that, especially as they are sharing a bedroom. As the book progresses though, I think Fayson begins to see her mother in a different light.

The crew waste no time getting to work, trying to investigate the origins of the email, but things take a different turn when they discover the boat and realise there could be strangers on their island. With this news, they become more determined than ever to solve the case.

Di Island Crew Investigates is a deliciously moreish series that combines friendship, cunning and investigative skills in a fast-paced way that makes them brilliant page-turners and perfect for those who enjoy the Famous Five, Anisha Accidental Detective or Agent Ziba Investigates.



Bridget Vanderpuff And The Great Airship Robbery - Martin Stewart

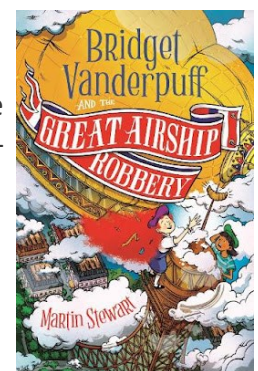
Bridget is back and this time she's heading to Paris with Mr Vanderpuff so he can take part in the Grand Prix de la Profiterole; however, when his golden whisk is stolen everything changes. Without it, Mr Vanderpuff cannot bake so Bridget determines to find it and return it to her dad. With her new friend Stacy, Bridget begins searching the streets of Paris, but things aren't as simple as they first appear. Who can they trust and can they find the whisk in time?

This is a series that has very quickly become a firm favourite with me as well as with my class. The books are guaranteed to put a smile on your face ... and to make you crave pastries! They are an escapism of the very best kind and it's a world you're never quite ready to leave when the book is finished.

Bridget remains a very logical and independent character whose inventions, sense of determination and adventure are truly infectious. Having the security of a home and a family in Mr Vanderpuff and Pascal (as well as her best friend Tom) has given her a new lease of life and she is absolutely making the most of it. As the book opens, she is leading the charge in pursuit of Hungry Horace Harris, the world's most notorious cake thief, and her fearlessness is shining like a beacon. Her sense of logic and being able to read situations is fascinating and I always love reading her deductions. It was also lovely to see the relationship between Tom and Pascal evolving and that's something I'm looking forward to seeing more of in *The Monster Mountain Mystery*.

It's no secret that I have a serious weakness for book set in Paris, so the fact that Bridget and Mr Vanderpuff head there for this adventure was an even bigger treat. I adored being able to picture Bridget and Stacy as they race through Montmartre, along the Seine and ... well, I won't give the game away but, safe to say, there are crêpes involved and a rather unusual train! (shout to David Habben whose illustrations are, once again, the perfect accompaniment).

Bridget Vanderpuff And The Great Airship Robbery is a delicious adventure full of charm, hope, daring-do and culinary creations (be prepared to crave cakes and pastries; better still, have a selection at hand to eat whilst you read!). The book is like a warm hug from an old friend that is guaranteed to put a smile on your face and leave a warm glow in your heart. But the best thing about this book was the reaction I got from a child in my class when they saw it: eyes wide with wonder and jaw open in speechless expectation that reminded me of a kid on Christmas morning. This series is bringing joy everybody and you need it to bring joy to you.



The Snow Girl

by Sophie Anderson

'A magical adventure of bravery and friendship to warm the whole family's hearts.'

If you like magic and adventure, then this is the book for you. Personally, I think this was a great book. Ten out of ten. So the book is about a girl, whose name is Tasha who lives with her grandpa, one day Tasha met a girl called Alyana, a friend made out of wishes, starlight, snowfall and magic, who she played with every night, but do you want to know more about the exciting adventures they will embark on?

Do you also want to know, about what she did before she moved in with her grandpa?

We'll read this book and find out...

By Jamaima (6W)

