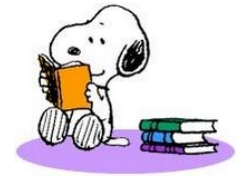




RGS: Bonkers About Books!

April/May 2024

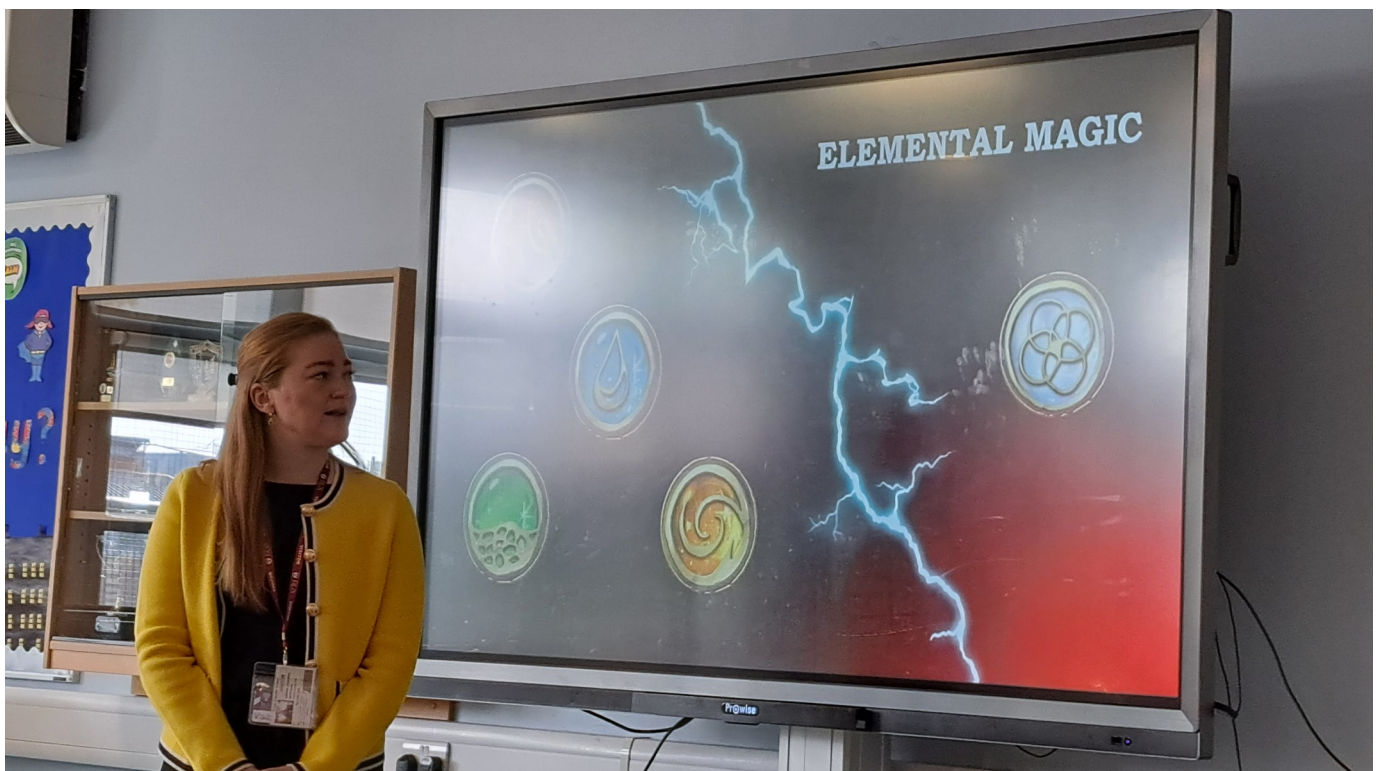
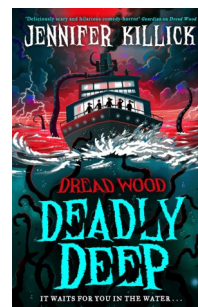
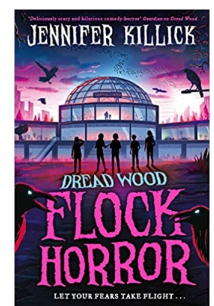
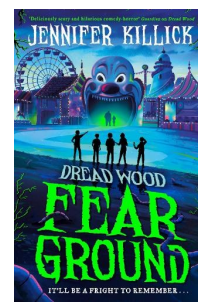
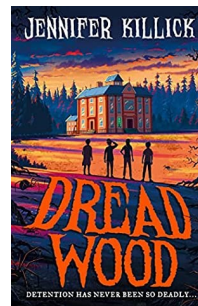


Hi,

We started the term with a bang in the first Friday assembly when I was able to reveal the cover of the final book in Jennifer Killick's Dreadwood series in assembly, *Terror Tower*. The children were some of the first in the country to see the cover as the rest of the world didn't get to see it until 4pm on Friday! I don't know about everybody else, but I'm now more excited than ever about reading it!

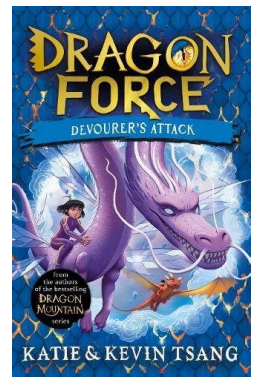
We followed that up with a visit from AF Steadman last Thursday who came to talk all things unicorns and elemental magic with the school. What a visit it was and the book signing at the end was quite the marathon! It's wonderful to see so many children so enthusiastic about books.

Mrs Wall



Dragon Force Devourer's Attack - Katie & Kevin Tsang.

Lance and his sister, Zoe, were thrilled when they were invited to Camp Claw in *Infinity's Secret* (you can read my review [here](#)) and with the end of the book leaving you with sooooo many questions, it's no surprise that **Devourer's Attack** gets right to the action. With the Devourer having captured and frozen so many of the Dragon Force team, it's up to Lance, Zoe, Bea, Arthur and their bonded dragons to get to the bottom of what is going on and to save not only Dragon Force but quite possibly the New World as well. However, facing such a dangerous creature is going to be the biggest challenge of their lives and, with very little training under their belts, will they be able to succeed?



The book begins with a dark and ominous, short chapter that sets the scene, enticing readers in and letting them know that 'The Devourer is coming'. I defy anybody to read it and not be gripped! Chapter two wonderfully combines a recap of *Infinity's Secret* with the beginning of the next instalment, reacquainting you with Lance, Zoe, Bea and Arthur as well as their dragons, Infinity, Violet, Neon and Jaws. The action is there from the start and, whilst discovering more about the main characters and their dragons, you are immersed in Camp Claw and the dangers that lie ahead for the team.

I love the individuality that Katie and Kevin have always brought to their characters and, whilst Lance feels the pressure to lead the group through this situation, it is clear that he is scared and uncertain (quite rightly - I would be too!). With his erhu and his music to guide and help him, he shows readers that it's ok to be scared and I love that. Zoe really captured me in this book with her constant optimism and positivity, but there is something that happens (I'm not giving away any spoilers but... oh my goodness!) that brings home the message about loving people for who they are that highlighted the bond the siblings have that melted my heart.

Like the rest of the series, **Devourer's Attack** is full of imagination, fast-paced action, peril and tension that meant I found it hard to put the book down. The world-building is again wonderfully immersive and the map at the beginning of the book is a real treat (I have a weakness for maps in books!). The book is a great reminder that we are all unique and have skills we should be proud of, whilst also showing us that we work better when we work as a team. With additional messages about friendship and resilience, **Devourer's Attack** is joyous escapism and will leave you impatient for the next instalment as well as desperate to bond with a dragon.

Spy In The Jam Factory - Chrissie Sains, Illustrated by Jenny Taylor

Scooter and Fizzbee are back and the adorable alien and her best friend are continuing to create their unusual jams, a wonderful mix of alien invention and human imagination. However, some of the new jams have created some problems for the villagers (children floating away, vegetables growing to huge proportions...) and Fizzbee's popularity is taking a hit. Scooter is determined to show the village how wonderful she is, however Agent Fleur De Vious of the Alien Intelligence Agency has other ideas and is determined to make Earth an alien-free place.



I was very excited when **Spy In The Jam Factory** arrived, along with my very own Fizzbee (who now has pride of place on the bookshelf in my office!) and the book zoomed to the top of my reading pile. I adore Scooter and Fizzbee's inventions and jamtastic creations and the mishaps had me chuckling. The book is full of humour and warmth, adventure and jammy antics that readers will love.

Both Scooter and Fizzbee have been firm favourites for me since book 1. Scooter has always been a proud advocate for cerebral palsy and I love that there is information in the back of the book about the condition to educate readers. His inventions and ways of getting around are brilliant (especially RALPH). And I love that the message about being proud to be different shines through.

Fizzbee remains adorably cute but she is missing her family. She has always been a character in have loved and her sense of right and her desire to always do the right thing is adorable but really shines in this book.

I have to mention Fleur who makes quite the villain and her ruthless determination made for a page-turner of an adventure.

Once again, Jenny Taylor's illustrations make a visual feast and really help to add to the story in the best way.

Spy In The Jam Factory is a fitting end for Scooter and Fizzbee and I have adored this series.

Twice Upon A Time - Michelle Harrison

Merry and Spike Morrow are twins born either side of New Year's Eve who have an unusual talent: they can stop time. It's something they keep secret, even from their mother (although she does know that clocks play up whenever they are near them). With their mum working as an art restorer, they are always on the move and, as the book opens, they are heading to spend their holidays at Fox House, a manor house where their mum has been commissioned to restore a piece of art by Lady Belmont.

When they arrive, their mum reminds them to stay away from the clocks and then disappears into her work. It's not unusual for her to get lost in her work and forget to surface so the twins are left to their own devices. The housekeeper, Miss Burdock, introduces them to Ben Gumbley who shows them around the house and the grounds and tells them about the history of the house, including the secrets that are held there. The more the twins discover, the more they realise that they need to use their ability to stop time to try to solve the mysteries that have plagued those who live there for years.

It really is no secret that I'm a huge fan of Michelle's books and the arrival of **Twice Upon A Time** was genuinely met with a squeal of delight. Of course, it completely skipped the reading pile and I even cheated on the book I was reading in order to dive straight in. (it's fine, it wasn't an MG book!).

I love the sense of mystery that weaves its way through this book; the unanswered questions that mount up and the secrecy that lurks in the abandoned hallways and passages of the house. In fact, the house itself creates its own sense of mystery with its attics that hold dusty relics; the rooms that have secret hideaways; the long corridors and creaking floorboards that wend their way through the building. You could feel the mystery and suspense seeping from the pages.

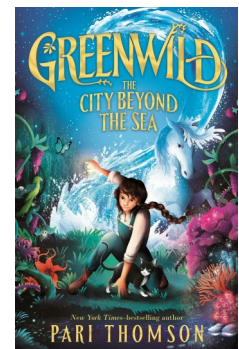
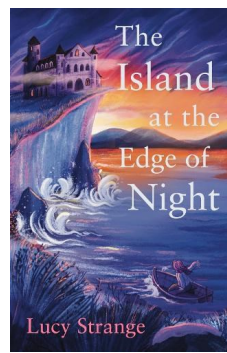
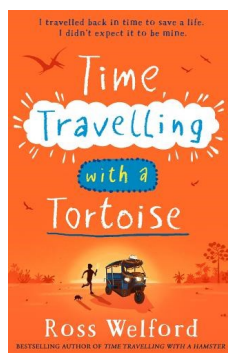
There are a host of perfectly formed characters to get to know; some you will love, whilst others will frustrate and annoy you! Merry and Spike are two very different people, despite the fact they are twins. Their names definitely suit their characteristics, however, their differences balance them out and, despite their grumbles about one another (I liked this about them), together, they make a great team.

Ben is always kind, gentle and friendly, despite the start he has had in life (or perhaps because of it) and he puts up with a lot from Alastair who is a character that is clearly troubled - his arrogance is clear from the start. It is evident that he feels superior to everyone and, on so many occasions, I wanted to adopt my best teacher voice and give him a good talking to! I have to also give a nod to Nanny Natter who stole my heart - she is somebody I would love to get to know.

At its heart, **Twice Upon A Time** is a mystery story and one the twins are determined to solve. I promise that the writing will lure you in from the start and the more the mystery reveals itself, the more you will be hooked, until you find yourself unable to put the book down. The ending in particular is page-turningly gripping with secrets revealed that you won't see coming.



Some books I'm looking forward to reading



This edition of Bonkers About Books was proof-read by

Oorja and Sharanya



Keedie - Elle McNicoll

Before there was Addie, there was Keedie.

Firecracker Keedie has had enough of bullies and has had enough of conforming to convention. As she sets out to right wrongs and stand up for the truth, the sleepy town of Juniper is about to wake up and see that Keedie is one of a kind.

Keedie is a book I've been looking forward to reading for quite some time, so when my pre-order arrived early, it didn't go anywhere near the tbr pile! I began reading it yesterday evening and stayed in bed this morning until I was finished: I simply couldn't put the book down. It. Was. Brilliant. (But then I didn't expect anything else from Elle whose writing always captivates me).

So, why did I find it so good?

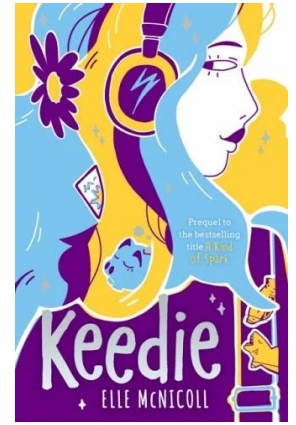
Having first met Keedie in *A Kind of Spark*, I was keen to get to know her more in this prequel, and I definitely got to know her. She is a force of nature whose sense of justice is strong (I love her for this amongst many other things), and she is fiercely loyal to her friends as well as her family, especially Addie who is only six at the time of this book. I know that Keedie finds so many things in life tricky but, to me, she is a powerhouse with an inner strength I admire.

Returning to Juniper was lovely, and there were a few subtle nods and leads to *A Kind of Spark* (however, not so many that you couldn't read this as a stand-alone). Gaining an insight on the place through Keedie's eyes means I now want to go back and reread *A Kind of Spark*.

Having seen the relationship between Keedie and Addie in *A Kind of Spark*, seeing how that builds here felt special; it was just wonderful to read and incredibly touching (yes, I cried).

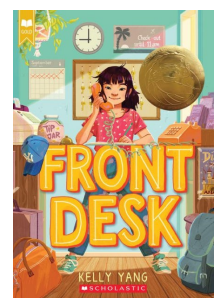
The ending: oh wow! the whole book packs a punch (rather like Keedie herself) but the final few pages ... Wow! It was an ending that left me sitting quietly, processing and absorbing the book, and I've yet to begin a new book, such was impact (which, those of you who know me well will know is incredibly unusual).

Keedie is a book full of heart, emotion and empathy that packs one heck of a punch; it's a book about friendship, bullying, the importance of kindness and of being proud of being unique. It's a book that made me laugh at times, and cry a lot. Elle has a way of folding you into a story that makes you feel like you're doing so much more than reading words on a page. She makes you feel what the characters feel, experience exactly what the characters are feeling and live the life they are living. She has a way of including phrases and paragraphs that touch your heart and help readers to know they are not alone (I have numerous post-its dotted through the book to remind me of sentences that have jumped out at me) and I, for one, am truly grateful that she writes from the heart. Thank-you, Elle, for being you and for sharing your books - the world is a better place for them.



Front Desk - Kelly Yang

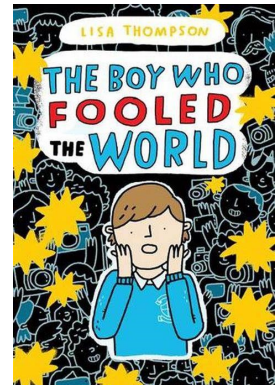
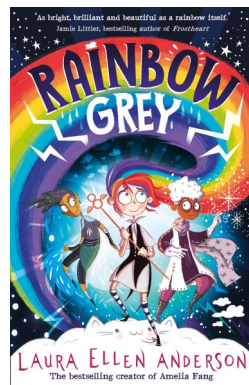
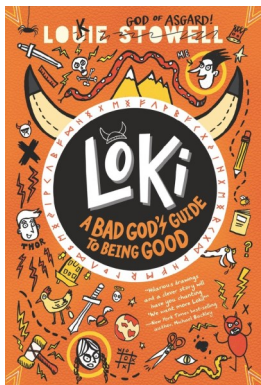
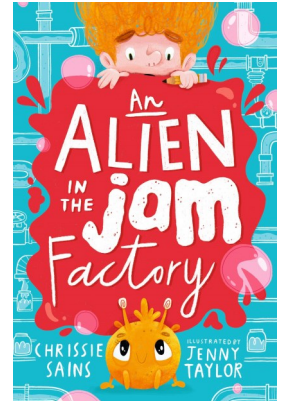
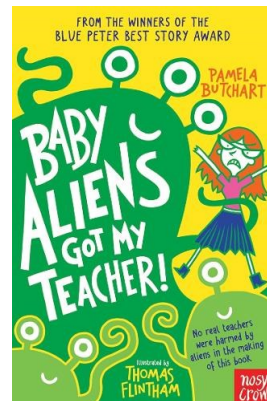
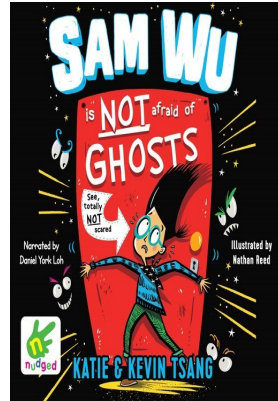
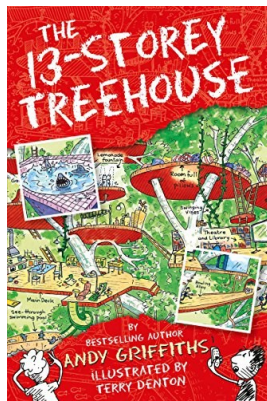
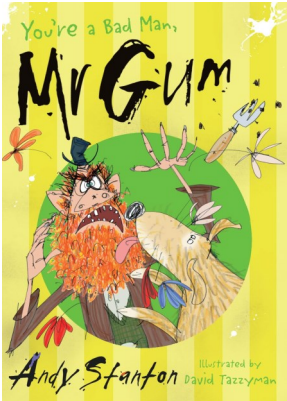
Mia's family moved to America in search of a better life but the reality is very different and the family are struggling to make ends meet. When Mia's mum sees a job running the Calivista Motel, she jumps at the opportunity believing that this is the answer to the families prayers, but the owner proves to be difficult and renegades on many of his promises. Mia, determined to help, begins running the front desk of the motel in the hope of easing the endless hours her parents spend working. As time goes by Mia's parents begin helping immigrants who are in trouble, hiding them in motel when they can - if Mr Yao finds out, they will lose their job for certain. Mia also has dreams of being a writer, however, as English isn't her first language her Mum tells her she will never achieve this, encouraging her to stick to maths instead. Can Mia manage to juggle everything and get through the year whilst keeping her family in their home and their job?



I read this a while ago after a glowing recommendation from a friend and I have to say that he was spot on! This is a wonderful book that had me both laughing and crying! I gobbled it up in a day as I just couldn't put it down and was in awe of Mia and her courage and determination. She is a strong young lady who will undoubtedly inspire everyone who reads the book (I know she inspired me!). If you haven't already read this book, I urge you to get hold of a copy immediately! I'm now heading off to get hold of the other books in this series.

Stuck in a reading rut? Why not try something different?

If you're a Wimpy Kid fan, try...



If you're a David Walliams fan, try...

