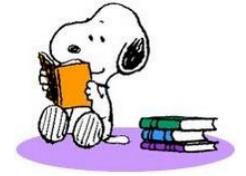




# RGS: Bonkers About Books!

September 2024

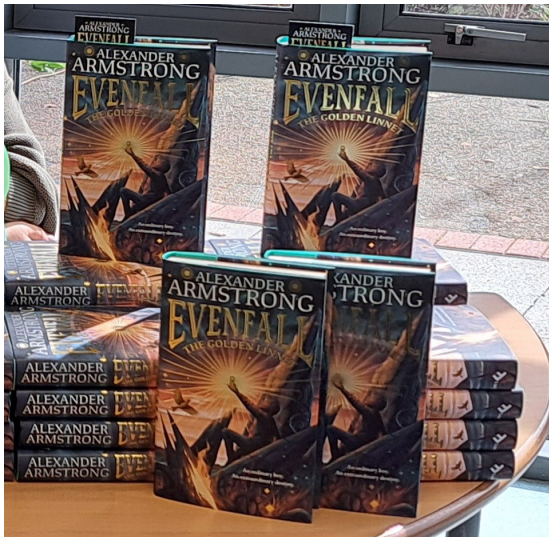


Hi,

Happy new school year to you all! What a bookish start to the term Year 5 and 6 have had with author Alexander Armstrong visiting to talk about his first middle grade book, *Evenfall: The Golden Linnet*. He enthralled students and staff and it's now lovely to see so many children reading and talking about the book.

Don't worry, Year 3 and 4, there are more authors lined-up for later!

Mrs Wall



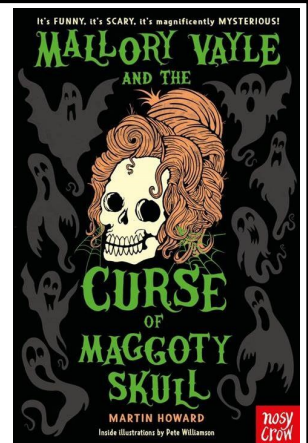
## **Mallory Vale and the Curse of Maggoty Skull - Martin Howard**

When Mallory's parents die suddenly, she believes she is destined for a life in the orphanage; however, when her long lost Aunt Lilith arrives at the funeral, she swoops in to save the day and takes Mallory to start a new life at Carrion Castle. It is here that Mallory quickly discovers that her aunt is a fraudulent psychic conning people out of their hard-earned money. At the same time, she also admits to herself that she has always been able to see the dead; indeed, she constantly sees and talks to her dead parents. So when an evil spirit kidnaps them, Mallory has no choice but to reluctantly use her necromancy powers to help get her parents back, but this will also release the evil spirit back into the world.

There is something deliciously creepy and yet also gigglingly good about this book that makes it an irresistible read. Dark and dusty Carrion Castle makes the perfect setting for this gothic comedy that will leave you chilled and chuckling in equal measure.

Mallory is a rather reluctant necromancer who is still reeling from death of her parents, and although she can still see and talk to them, she is the only one, so when they are kidnapped, she feels powerless to do anything but save them; however that means using her new-found skills and she is most reluctant to do that. It is only with Maggoty's help that she gets through everything. And can I just say what a brilliant character Maggoty is? Trapped for eternity in his own skull, Maggoty makes the perfect skide-kick: witty and cheeky, daring but encouraging; I defy readers not to warm to him.

**Mallory Vale and the Curse of Maggoty Skull** is a perfectly spooky read that will delight fans of Wednesday and How Not to be a Vampire Slayer. With stunning illustrations by Pete Williamson that would make brilliant art on their own, **Mallory Vale and the Curse of Maggoty Skull** is a book that you really need to read.



### Hero Wanted! - Mark Powers, Illustrated by Coraline Muce

Grace's life changes completely when she is abruptly woken in the middle of the night by a horse in her back garden. She is then informed by a girl, also named Grace, that it is her destiny as the fifteenth Grace to win the Worthy War. She is immediately taken to Brokenshire where she has to battle a host of magical creatures to save the world. But can a twelve year old girl, a quick-witted horse and a vegan t-rex do what all the other Graces before her haven't done?

With absolutely no sword skills, Grace is forced into a quest that she is completely unprepared for; however, she realises that it's a way to escape the fact that she's recently damaged her brother's guitar so throws herself into it. Grace is a wonderful character and proves that even the very best heroes make mistakes and get things wrong. She learns as she goes along and her determination and bravery are wonderful to see, as is her desire to get to the bottom of why the war between the People of the Day and the People of the Night is raging.



### Ministry of Mischief - Alex Foulkes

Joey is on a school trip with her friends to the Abermaple Museum where they are taking part in the Mini Victorian Britain competition. They're hopeful that their diorama will win and there is much excitement as the prize is a trip to The Abermaple Igloo! However, when they arrive, they bump into Harry who used to be their classmate but moved to another school. He seems intent on causing problems so when Joey sees him sneaking off she follows, determined to stop him but what she finds is something she could never imagine: three strange creatures who are on their own field-trip to bring bad luck to humans! They lure Joey and Harry to Impworld and to the Ministry of Mischief. The big question is: how do they get home?



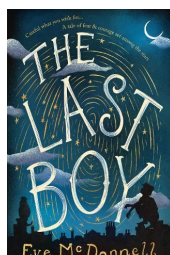
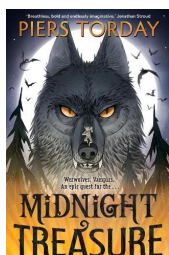
I first read Alex's *Rules For Vampires* back in 2001 and loved it as well as the sequel, *Ghosts Bite Back* (you can read my reviews here: [Rules For Vampires](#); [Ghosts Bite Back](#)) so I was thrilled to learn that she had a new book publishing. **Ministry of Mischief** is another guaranteed hit for Alex and is full of humour with and just the right amount of peril in this adventure.

From the beginning, it's clear that Joey lacks confidence in herself, and you first see this when she is chastising herself for her messy handwriting. She feels she's letting her friends down and I wonder whether this is part of the reason why she goes after Harry when she thinks he's up to no good. Harry, on the other-hand, is uber-confident and seems to be rather full of himself. His arrogance shines, especially in the way he treats Joey. At the beginning, the pair clearly do not get on, so it is interesting to read their dynamic as they find themselves in Impworld (I won't spoil things but...)

The characters we meet in Impworld are rather brilliant, with their names reflecting their role in bringing bad luck to humans. Stubbz, Szlice and Warezit are very different but readers will quickly enjoy getting to know them and exploring Impworld with this strange group.

With illustrations by Nikolas Ilic to add to the atmosphere, **Ministry of Mischief** is a brilliant read and perfect for autumn as the nights begin to draw in.

### Some books I'm looking forward to reading:



This edition of Bonkers About Books was proof-read by

Maddie 6W

Harry 6W





### The Haunting of Fortune Farm - Sophie Kirtley

Edie and her younger brother Pip are heading to spend their October half-term with their grandmother, Lolly, in her remote cottage, Fortune Farm, in the Irish mountains. Eddie really isn't looking forward to it, especially as she fears it will bring back memories of her dead father. However, once she is there she discovers that there is more to the place than she remembered and her curiosity leads her to the search for long-lost Viking treasure. This is a search that could turn dangerous and could uncover more than Edie ever expected.



When **The Haunting of Fortune Farm** arrived, I was excited by the blurb as well as the fact that I have loved Sophie's previous books. Then when other bloggers told me how good the book was, I grew even more excited; however, I also knew that it would be a book I'd be unable to put down so I waited until I was on holiday so I could give it my full attention. Now I admit that sitting in glorious sunshine on the beach in Biarritz probably isn't the atmospheric setting this book deserves, but within a few chapters, I knew I'd been right to wait: I just couldn't put the book down!

Edie is a wonderful character who is obviously doing everything she can to stay strong in the wake of her father's death. She feels she needs to watch over her mum as well as her younger brother so bottles up her own memories and emotions as a result. Spending time at Fortune Farm (somewhere she hasn't been since she was very young) is obviously tough, especially as Lolly appears to be somewhat distant.

What unfolds is a mysterious and spooky quest to put the past to rest in more ways than one. With a menacing and vengeful Viking chief to contend with, as well as the dangers of the Forbidden Sleuth Wood, it's only Edie's new friend Coco that seems to be able to help.

**The Haunting of Fortune Farm** is a wonderfully told story about finding your memories and coming to terms with loss (I can imagine that many children in a similar situation to Edie would feel the same way about being strong for those around them so this book is an important one to show them they aren't alone).

With a sinister plot, the book definitely has that 'just one more chapter' lure to it that makes it an unputdownable read, and the poems between chapters create curiosity (I loved them). **The Haunting of Fortune Farm** is going to make a perfect autumn read.

### The Summer I Saved The Wild - Rachel Faturoti

*'Kamaria loves wildlife and dreams of adventures beyond her strict parents' rules. When a strange and wondrous creature seeks her help, she knows she must find the courage to act. Time is running out as habitats are threatened. Will Kamaria believe in the power of her own voice? Can she really make a difference? This summer, her life will change forever ...'*

Having read *The Boy In The Smoke* last summer whilst on holiday (you can read my review [here](#)), reading **The Summer I Saved The Wild** on holiday this year seemed like too good an opportunity to miss.



Whilst both books cover family themes in some way, they are very different and I really liked that. **The Summer I Saved The Wild** is a book about environmentalism and saving the green spaces in our local community. Kamaria loves everything to do with wildlife but she is also very keen not to upset her parents. A series of family incidents sees her cousin Precious spending the summer with her and the pair couldn't be more different: whilst Kamaria is keen to keep her parents happy by following their very strict rules, Precious is desperate to follow her dreams, no matter the cost. What unfolds is a wonderful relationship that shows that we don't have to have the same interests in order to appreciate each other. It's wonderful to see how the pair navigate their very different views and life-styles. Family issues are one of the main themes of this book, including the idea of children growing and discovering their own identities. It's something every child has to go through and the background behind this family explains a lot.

The conservation element of **The Summer I Saved The Wild** sings from the pages and will have a big impact on readers. We are losing many of our green spaces and the need to protect them is growing ever more important. I love the messages this book conveys and the idea that finding your voice can make a difference. This book will remind readers of the importance of standing up for what you believe in.

## Maisie VS Antarctica - Jack Jackson

Maisie's dad is a writer, but not normal books! He writes books about how to do things (*How To Wrestle A Crocodile*, *How To Build A Zip Wire*, *How To Defuse A Bomb*). He'll head off for a couple of days and then will write the entire book when he gets back, and Maisie has no idea how he knows to do these things. At the beginning of the Christmas holidays, he announces that he's heading away again to prepare for his latest book, *How To Survive in Antarctica*. However, when the neighbour who usually looks after Maisie says something has come up, he thinks the trip will be off ... until Maisie persuades him to take her along. Unfortunately, things don't go according to plan and their plane crashes into Antarctica, stranding them and the pilot. With no one around, things look bleak, but then Maisie begins to notice strange things about her dad and she's determined to get to the bottom of what is going on.



The plot of most children's books are based on the main characters losing their parents and all other adults so that they can have their adventure, so the idea of **Maisie VS Antarctica** being based around a daughter going on an adventure with her father intrigued me. From the start, Maisie's voice is strong and I thoroughly enjoyed the first person narrative: she's a real character and not afraid to voice her opinions to her dad. It's just the two of them and has been since Maisie's mum died just after she was born. She knows that her dad works hard looking after her, but freely admits that she thinks her father is boring! It's obvious they are close so it comes as quite a surprise when Maisie begins to realise that something strange is happening with her father, and it's her determination to get to the bottom of this that shows what a strong (and stubborn) character she is. I absolutely adored her and I know that other readers will too. A shout out too to Guillermo the pilot: I loved his character and his friendly manner; I got the opinion he's a big friendly giant.

This is a fast-paced adventure that is full of peril but also full of humorous touches that will make you smile. The book was one that captivated me from the start and I really didn't want to put it down (reading it in Paris was a bad idea as I had no choice but to stop reading; still, it gave me an excuse to enjoy the café culture more - stopping for a drink gave me the perfect excuse to read a few more pages!).

## Turtle Moon—Hannah Gold

Silver's parents have been trying unsuccessfully to have another baby for years and it's making them miserable. Although they try to hide it from Silver, she is aware so when her dad (an artist) gets the chance to take them all to Costa Rica for four months where he has been commissioned to paint at a turtle rescue centre, he jumps at the chance, hoping the change will help them. Although a very different way of life, Silver settles into routines but when some rare turtle eggs are stolen, things get very dangerous.



Hannah has the most wonderful way of writing that lulls the reader in with her gentle style, whilst also highlighting important environmental issues and tugging on readers' heart strings. And **Turtle Moon** is no different.

Silver is aware that her parents long for another baby and she quietly worries that she's not enough for them. It's a situation that I can imagine many parents find themselves in and my heart broke for them. Whilst Silver's dad hopes that the four month change will help them all, it seems to have the opposite effect on her mum who becomes more withdrawn. Whilst Silver worries for her mum, she heads out to explore and meets Rafi whose family live at the centre. When he's not at school, Rafi loves nothing more than caring for the turtles and their eggs, and this is how Silver discovers so much about the creatures. Silver is a strong character whose love of nature shines through in the book. But when danger lurks, can she and Rafi save the day?

I also liked the fact that there was strong involvement from adults throughout the book and I need to give a particular shout out to Ana, whose outlook on life was rather wonderful.

The descriptions of Costa Rica and Turtle Beach in the book are rich and wrap the reader in a warm hug. As I read, I could almost hear the thrum of nature from the jungle and feel the warmth of the sun on my skin (just what I needed as the weather turns chilly!).

**Turtle Moon** is a wonderfully written book that highlights the plight of turtles and the threat to their eggs from poachers (the author's note at the end is a very interesting read). It sensitively deals with families going through IVF in a way that children will be able to understand.