

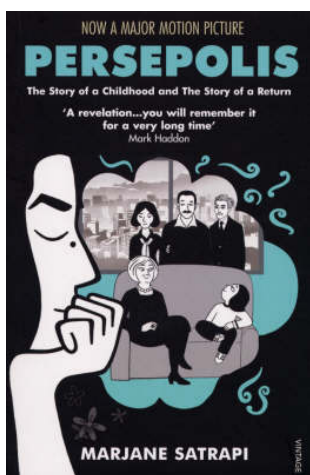
Recommended reading for Years 11 to 13, with an emphasis on Reading for Pleasure, for the 2024/25 academic year.



Ready Player One

Author: Ernest Cline **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/04/2012

Matt Dickinson, our Guest Editor for January 2013 - This is an excellent new thriller for teenage/YA readers. I discovered it recently and devoured it in a few days. The story is set in the future, and features a bunch of teen characters on both sides of a 'virtual reality' game called OASIS that has become the universe's most popular entertainment. We see their seedy, poverty-stricken, real worlds and the glamorous 'virtual' world of possibility that they can access through VR suits whenever they choose. At the heart of the story is Wade Watts, a boy who might—JUST—have the skill (and knowledge of obscure 80's cultural references) to win a competition which will make him the richest person in the universe—and the most powerful to boot! Of course there are evil forces out to stop him and this provides a most gripping climax to the tale. A perfect book for any teenager or young adult obsessed with games and game culture—or parents with fond memories of Dungeons and Dragons etc., from a misspent youth!



Persepolis I and II

Author: Marjane Satrapi **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/03/2008

Selected by a distinguished independent panel of experts including our editorial expert, Julia Eccleshare, for Diverse Voices - 50 of the best Children's Books celebrating cultural diversity in the UK. March 2012 Guest Editor Sally Nicholls says: "I am a big fan of books which write about dark subjects with lightness and humour. Marjane Satrapi's story of growing up in Iran after the Iranian Revolution is funny, wise, and very real. The child Marjane is an admirable character, and the humour in her story makes the events surrounding it all the more horrifying."



Beloved

Author: Toni Morrison **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/12/2007

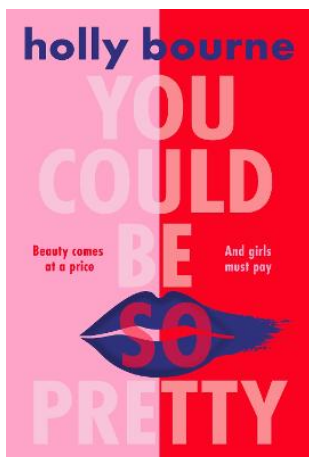
Sharon Dogar, April 2011 Guest Editor: "I read this as we drove across the US in 1991. As the American landscape unfolded in front of me, a particular part of its history, that of slavery, unfolded within the narrative of this novel. I love the mysteriousness of the girl with the 'tree' on her back, I love the inventiveness of the plotting, the sheer poetry of the language, and the heartbreaking beauty of its telling. This book is a work of genius, and has that rare quality of a timeless telling." For more books on this theme head over to our sister site, LoveReading4Schools topic list - The Slave Trade



Beautiful Broken Things

Author: Sara Barnard **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 15/04/2021

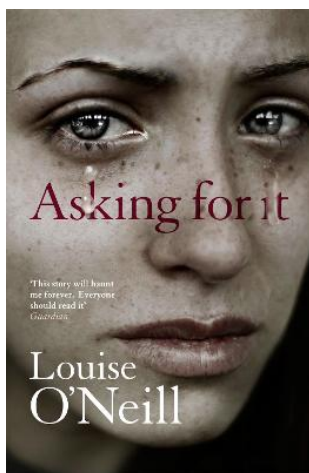
Shortlisted for YA Book Prize 2017 | One of our Books of the Year 2016 | February 2016 Debut of the Month 16-year-old Brightonians Caddy and Rosie have been best friends all their lives, their relationship enduring even when Caddy's aspirational parents send her to a private school. But when an enigmatic new girl arrives at Rosie's comprehensive, Caddy's longing for "something of some significance to happen" in her "hopelessly average" life is set in motion, along with a shift in the dynamic of her relationship with Rosie. While Caddy is initially terrified that the beautiful, impulsive Suzanne will replace her, the three of them form a deep friendship. As Suzanne's self-destructiveness escalates, it emerges that she's struggling to cope with the ordeal of having suffered physical abuse at the hands of her stepfather, and Caddy finds herself laying everything on the line to save her downward spiraling friend. This powerful, punch-packing debut is an utterly compelling, authentic portrait of the intricate ebbs and flows of friendship, and of a young adult trying to navigate the tempestuous waters of past traumas. Accessible and profoundly moving, Caddy, Rosie and Suzanne's story is sure to resonate with many a young woman - a phenomenal feat for any writer, let alone a first-time novelist.



You Could Be So Pretty

Author: Holly Bourne **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 28/09/2023

Belle and Joni live in a society firmly controlled by the Doctrine; Belle is a loyal follower, Joni is not. Belle is the most successful Pretty in school, a Chosen One and soon to be crowned winner of The Ceremony – she Has It All. Joni is Objectionable, she is hated by everyone for her repulsive looks and opposition to the Doctrine. The Doctrine insists that the Bad Times are over, that True Equality has been achieved and every woman has a choice how they live. But when a woman’s worth is judged solely on appearance, how much choice does she really have? This is a scathing comment on modern image-obsessed society, which holds a mirror up to much of the ridiculous expectations and controls placed on women of all ages. With hugely impressive skill, Bourne has created a world that is undoubtedly familiar, but distant enough to allow objective consideration of the societal norms and illusion of choice that Belle and Joni exist under. Language is played with to present familiar objects and concepts in new lights, making the reader consider not only the story presented, but their own lives and society. This is one of those rarest of reading experiences – a book that you consume rather than simply read, a book that will change the reader forever. It will make you both angry and tearful for what women and girls smilingly endure. It belongs in the hands of every teenager and everybody who cares about them.



Asking For It

Author: Louise O'Neill **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 07/07/2016

Irish Book Awards 2015 Book of the Year A courageous, unflinching and emotionally challenging novel, focusing on sexual consent and the issues surrounding social media commentary and uprisings. Covering two time periods, a year apart, a vivid picture emerges of Emma. Emma is a fascinating character, bright and beautiful, she loves to be the centre of attention, however she is manipulative and able to use her looks to her advantage. Beneath the surface, there is much more to discover, and as her story is written in the first person, a fuller picture of Emma starts to emerge. Louise O'Neill describes the events that occur with consideration, yet most importantly with a frank honesty, meaning at times this is not only an uncomfortable but also achingly difficult read. Distressing, bleak yet compelling, this is a significant novel that will encourage contemplation and discussion, about a painful and challenging subject. This title is recommended for older teens due to the content.



Patron Saints of Nothing

Author: Randy Ribay **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 27/06/2019

Shortlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2020 Jay Reguero plans to spend the summer playing video games before heading to university in the autumn. But when he discovers that his Filipino cousin, Jun, has been murdered as part of President Duterte's war on drugs, and no one in the family wants to talk about what happened, Jay travels to the Philippines to find out the real story. Hoping to uncover more about Jun and the events that led to his death, Jay is forced to reckon with the many sides of his cousin before he can face the whole horrible truth - and the part he played in it.

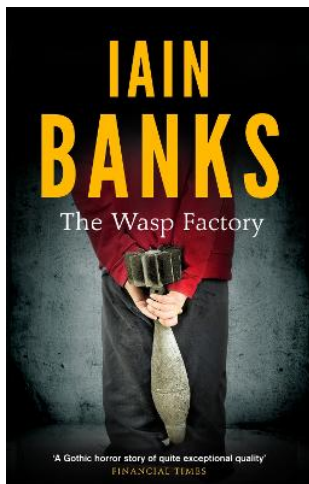


The Great Godden

Author: Meg Rosoff **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 10/06/2021

Shortlisted for the YA Book Prize 2021 | Shortlisted for the Costa Children's Book Award 2020 | July 2020 Book of the Month

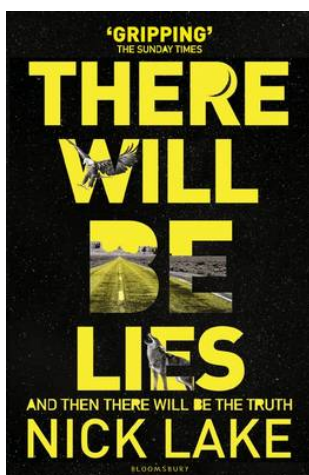
With characteristic vision and grace Meg Rosoff has done it again in this exquisite novel that merits a place alongside *I Capture the Castle*, *Bonjour Tristesse* and *The Lost Estate (Le Grand Meaulnes)* for its coming-of-age, loss-of-innocence excellence. Though contemporary, it feels timeless and elementally affecting, much like the *Great Godden's* impact on the family whose story it tells. With an idyllic seaside summer stretching ahead, the tingling anticipation of *The Great Godden's* unnamed teenage narrator is deliciously palpable: "This year is going to be the best ever: the best weather, the best food, the best fun. The actors assembled, the summer begins." But there are still two more actors to take to the stage - enter the Godden brothers in a shiny black car. The narrator's older sister Mattie is immediately smitten by magnetic, handsome, self-assured Kit: "She was desperate to lose her virginity, and what sort of person would say no to Mattie? Surely not some movie star's kid, fresh off the plane?" Though Mattie is certainly attractive, it's obvious that charmer Kit has the upper hand of any situation, but might he also be a trouble-maker, as his curt, less-of-a-looker brother warns? Such wonderings underpin some of this novel's essence. With the stage fully set and summer speeding towards the climax of a wedding, it poses fundamental questions about motivation, and the nature of agency, of lust, of the desire to be seen for who you are. Quivering with unease, passion and paranoia, it also reveals how past experiences engrave themselves upon us, creating fault-lines that may crack and cause future ructions. Sophisticated, seductive and smoothly readable, this is a summer story par excellence, and a coming-of-age tale for all times. Find out more about the YA Book Prize including all the shortlisted titles.



The Wasp Factory

Author: Iain Banks **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 27/06/2013

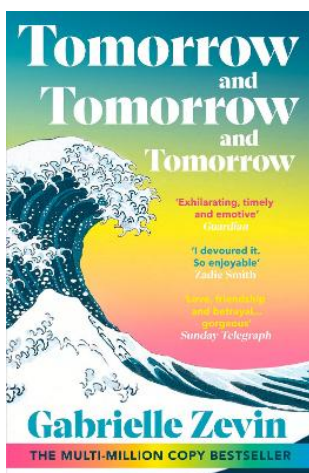
The Wasp Factory is a bizarre, imaginative, disturbing, and darkly comic look into the mind of a child psychopath - one of the most infamous of contemporary Scottish novels. 'Two years after I killed Blyth I murdered my young brother Paul, for quite different reasons than I'd disposed of Blyth, and then a year after that I did for my young cousin Esmerelda, more or less on a whim. That's my score to date. Three. I haven't killed anybody for years, and don't intend to ever again. It was just a stage I was going through.' Enter - if you can bear it - the extraordinary private world of Frank, just sixteen, and unconventional, to say the least.



There Will be Lies

Author: Nick Lake **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/06/2015

Award-winning Nick Lake tells a complex story fusing two strands of narrative into a richly woven single thread. Seventeen-year-old Shelby Cooper has always been very protected by her mother; she guesses it is partly because she is deaf, partly because her dad is dead and partly she had a terrible accident when she was a baby. But when she is knocked over by a car, her life takes a whole new turn. Suddenly she and her Mom are on the run and everything that she has known about her life before is suddenly questioned. What is the truth? And will she ever discover it? As her life unravels, Shelby retreats into a fantasy world of the Dreaming a place infused with old, old Mythology. Part-adventure, part-mystery and part a teenager's journey of self-discovery, There Will Be Lies is dramatic and unexpected in equal measure.

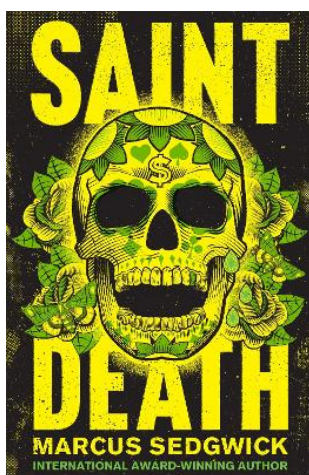


Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow

Author: Gabrielle Zevin **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 29/06/2023

What a beautiful, heart-wrenching story from a writer with exceptional talent for delivering extraordinary story contexts with so much humanity. Gabrielle Zevin's Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow is a devastating, nourishing novel that unlocks truths about love, life, and bone-deep bonds of a lifetime. Refreshingly, the novel also explores the power of work and play - "To allow yourself to play with another person is no small risk. It means allowing yourself to be open, to be exposed, to be hurt...To play requires trust and love." As one of the main characters remarks, commenting in his capacity as a creator of visionary video games: "There is no more intimate act than play, even sex." In 1987, it was through play that Sam and Sadie struck up a close friendship in childhood when she was the only person he'd talk to in hospital after

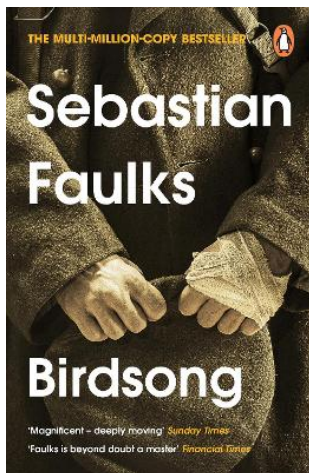
surviving a terrible car accident. After a falling out, they encounter each other again by chance when she's a student at MIT and he's at Harvard. She gives him a disk of a computer game she's working on, Solution, which pushes gamers' ethics to the limits. Together they create a game, and form a soulful bond, with Ichigo, their game and its Sam-like protagonist, very much their baby. After commercial success in their early twenties, Sadie and Sam fall-out over what to create next, with Sam imploring Sadie to make a third Ichigo: "You can't abandon our child in a shitty sequel". As they become luminaries of the gaming world, with old college friend Marx at the business helm, the imperfections of the real world infringe on the thought-provoking worlds Sam and Sadie have devoted their lives to creating. There's painful tragedy and failure alongside the money and glory, with the needs, flaws, and complexities of each character incredibly evoked. As Sadie remarks, "How strange and beautiful human beings are. And how fragile". This novel, too, is strange and beautiful, and presents a powerful presentation of human fragility.



Saint Death

Author: Marcus Sedgwick **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/04/2017

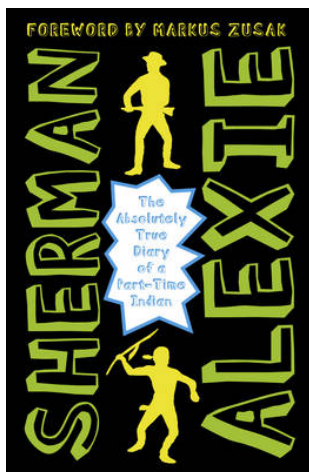
A thought-fuelling thriller set in a gang-run neighbourhood near the border of Mexico and El Norte (America). The writing is poetically punchy. Exquisitely formed sentences are fired-off in smarting succession, and the juxtaposition of contemporary totems like Burger King buildings with the likes of folk saint shrines is smartly done. This is a richly layered novel in which important socio-political issues (gangs, poverty, corruption, migration, social divisions and dissonance) are made potently real through Arturo and Faustino's predicaments. And alongside the enlightening Mexico-specific context, there's much that is universal: friendship, loyalty, and searching for a sense of purpose. As paternal figure Siggy tells Arturo, "You just have to find out what it is you're looking for." Pacey and passionate, this truly exceptional book tells a tale that truly needs to be heard.



Birdsong

Author: Sebastian Faulks **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 15/06/2023

In the heat of the French summer of 1910, young Englishman Stephen Wraysford arrives in Amiens to stay with the Azaire family. But soon a secret passion emerges that threatens to destroy the household. Six years later, Stephen finds himself on the Western Front with civilization itself in the balance. And in a maze of tunnels under the trenches he will fight for everything he has known and loved. An epic of love, death and redemption, *Birdsong* has moved millions of readers all over the world to become a contemporary classic.



The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Author: Sherman Alexie **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 29/01/2015

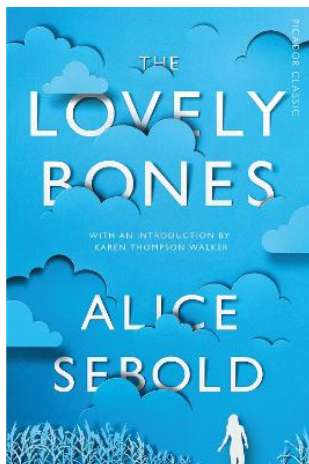
A remarkable and heart warming story of survival that avoids sadness or sentimentality because of its original story telling and brilliant black humour. Junior relates the complicated journey of his life travelling from the poverty and lack of opportunity on a reservation to a new life with different problems a shrewd eye, compassion and exceptional understanding. A fantastic journey of discovery for all readers. Jenny Downham, YA author - "This is a book I discovered only recently. It made me jealous because the writing is so acute and the writer so talented! It delighted me for the very same reasons. This is the funniest, wisest book I've read in a long time. A complex story of identity. Truly beautiful."



Monsters

Author: Emerald Fennell **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/09/2015

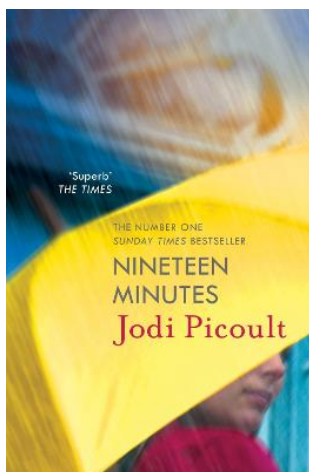
A book about two appalling twelve year olds which is definitely not for children! Featuring a sinister seaside holiday and a spate of murders, it is astonishingly, almost gleefully dark, as you might expect from the screenwriter of *Killing Eve*!



The Lovely Bones

Author: Alice Sebold **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/01/2015

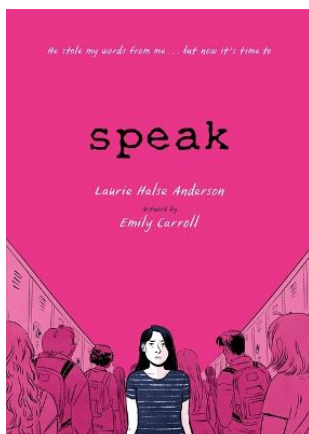
The internationally bestselling novel that inspired the acclaimed film directed by Peter Jackson. With an introduction by Karen Thompson Walker, author of *The Age of Miracles*. My name was Salmon, like the fish; first name, Susie. I was fourteen when I was murdered on December 6, 1973. In heaven, Susie Salmon can have whatever she wishes for – except what she most wants, which is to be back with the people she loved on earth. In the wake of her murder, Susie watches as her happy suburban family is torn apart by grief; as her friends grow up, fall in love, and do all the things she never had the chance to do herself. But as Susie will come to realize, even in death, life is not quite out of reach . . . A luminous, astonishing novel about life and death, memory and forgetting, and finding light in the darkest places, Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* became an instant classic when it was first published. There are now over ten million copies in print. It inspired the film starring Mark Wahlberg, Rachel Weisz, Susan Sarandon and Saoirse Ronan.



Nineteen Minutes

Author: Jodi Picoult **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 15/08/2013

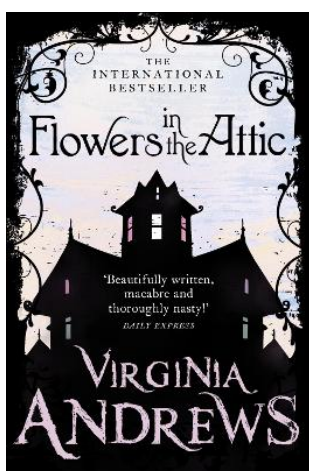
Examining the aftermath of a school shooting in a small American town, this is an unflinching novel that asks difficult and important questions.



Speak

Author: Laurie Halse Anderson **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 22/08/2019

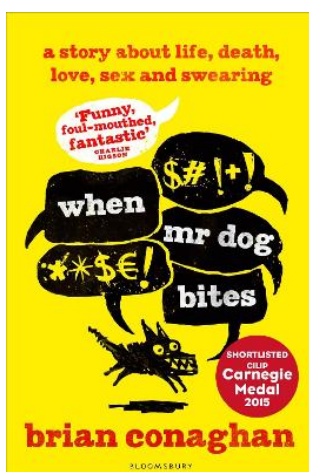
From the 2023 winner of the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, this is a powerful and enduringly relevant story of sexual assault.



Flowers in the Attic

Author: Virginia Andrews **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/09/2011

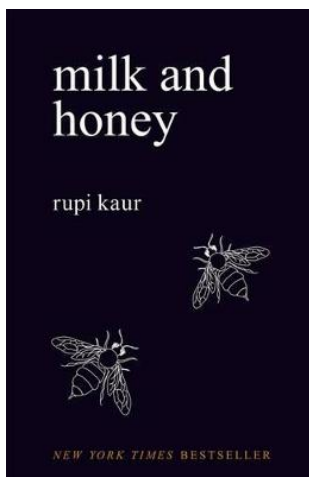
The cult classic gothic tale of forbidden love, family secrets and destructive greed. A macabre yet compelling novel that has been enjoyed and deservedly talked about in hushed whispers for decades.



When Mr Dog Bites

Author: Brian Conaghan **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 12/03/2015

This is the poignant and hilarious story of Dylan Mint, a teenage boy with Tourette's syndrome. Controversial yet full of compassion and warmth. Brian Conaghan makes you travel every step of the way in Dylan's shoes, laughing and crying - often at the same time - as Dylan faces the twists and turns of an unfair world with glorious optimism and wit, raising important questions of inclusion, marginalisation and neurodiversity with sensitivity and insight. This barnstorming debut was shortlisted for the prestigious Carnegie Medal, and Brian has gone on to write many stunning, award-winning novels for teens and younger readers, including the Costa-winning *The Bombs that Brought Us Together*.



Milk and Honey

Author: Rupi Kaur **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/11/2015

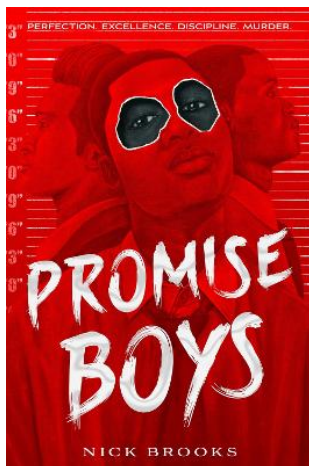
The Sunday Times bestselling poetry collection for modern young women. Relatable and honest, these poems lead the reader from despair to hope. A collection to devour.



Once in a House on Fire

Author: Andrea Ashworth **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/01/2015

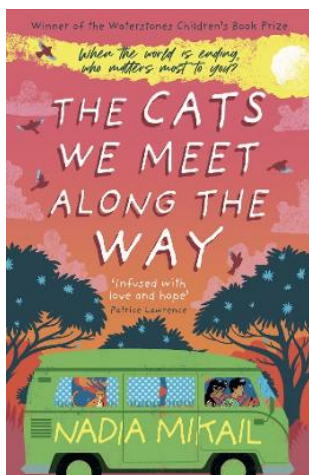
With an introduction by Eimear McBride. A devastatingly powerful, moving and uplifting memoir - now a classic of its genre - that inspired others to tell their own true life stories. When our stepfather staggered home reeking of whisky, ceramic hit the wall. We got used to the smash and the next-day stain, but eventually the wallpaper began to fade . . . For Andrea Ashworth, home is not a place of comfort and solace, but of violence and fear. Her father died when she was five, leaving her close-knit, loving family to battle with poverty, abuse and the long shadow of depression. But from the ashes of 1970s Manchester and the hardships of her coming-of-age in the late 1980s, Andrea finds the courage to rise . . . Written with eye-opening honesty, rare beauty and intense power, *Once in a House on Fire* is a ground-breaking memoir, endearing in its humour and compassion, and life-affirming in its portrait of terrible circumstances triumphantly overcome.



Promise Boys

Author: Nick Brooks **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/02/2023

Brilliantly told from multiple points of view, including secondary sources and media reports as well as narrative voices, this is an intensely gripping and powerful story that really highlights how young people of colour are failed by the education and law enforcement systems that should be protecting them. Trey, J.B and Ramón are three very different characters with different aspirations attending Urban Promise Prep School, which was set up to give disadvantaged kids a second chance. Principal Kenneth Moore runs the place with strict rules and brutal discipline and when he is shot dead while the three are in detention, they become the immediate suspects in his death and they have to join forces to prove their innocence. These characters are extremely well drawn and all the additional sources really build a picture of their community and the challenges they face. Needless to say media reports are biased against the boys from the start, because of their colour and where they are from and it is fascinating to see how the boys are perceived by others and how they see themselves. This is a nuanced and wholly authentic look at societal injustice but wrapped up in a page turning and nail biting mystery which will keep readers gripped and engaged. The author's screen writing background really shows in the vivid scene setting and economy of language. This is an absolute must have for school libraries and a richly rewarding text for classroom study.

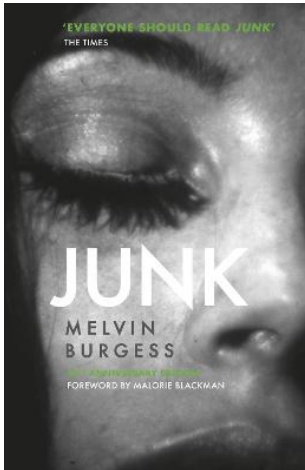


The Cats We Meet Along the Way

Author: Nadia Mikail **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/02/2022

February 2022 Debut of the Month | Winner of the Waterstones Childrens Prize 2023 | Shortlisted for the Branford Boase Award 2023 | Shortlisted for the YA Book Prize 2023 When dynamic independent children's publisher Guppy Books put out a call for submissions from unpublished, un-agented writers in 2020, Nadia Mikail answered with *The Cats We Meet Along the Way* - a poignant debut with a punch-packing, end-of-the-world set-up, and unconditional love at its heart. Through its deeply endearing characters, this tells a stirring story of family finding a way through loss, loneliness and feeling abandoned to embrace what's really important. Until the Announcement "Aisha had been a seventeen-year-old student, who treasured her lie-ins and whose mother shouted about breakfast to wake her up. Now time was precious". And the Announcement? Nothing less than the imminent end of Earth, with predictions of "the world wreathed in fire and smoke" in the fatal wake of an asteroid collision. How's that for a mind-blowing set-up? But that's not all Aisha has to deal with. Three years ago, before the Announcement, her older sister, June, left home and hasn't been seen since: "she had chosen to disappear from their lives without a trace, and had chosen not to come back". Now, mere months before the world will end, Aisha and her mother Esah want to find June, so they embark on an emotional road-trip across Malaysia with Aisha's adorable boyfriend, his

compassionate parents, and Fleabag the cat. Though the scenario is urgent, the author has a powerfully steady style, as seen in her measured, bone-deep evocations of memories, and characters' mourning of memories that will never be made - their sorrow and grief is profoundly palpable. Then there's Aisha and Esah's deep-rooted connection to the place they were born, where they hope to find June, and an unleashing of pent-up anger, grief and guilt before a love-filled sense that light may be found through even the darkest of days.



Junk 25th Anniversary Edition

Author: Melvin Burgess **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/07/2021

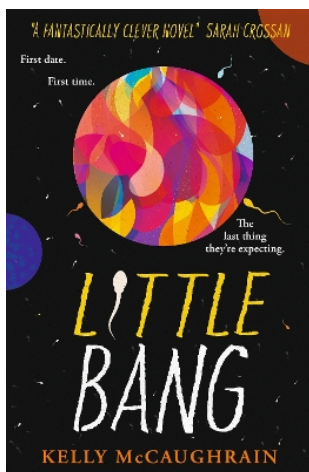
Bold and brutally, brilliantly honest, Melvin Burgess's multi-award-winning (and multi-layered) *Junk* presents the definitively frank account of why young people might head down a drug-taking path - and remain there. A love triangle, of sorts, between its two main characters and their addiction to heroin, once read *Junk* is never forgotten. It strikes deep with unflinching power, never shirking from truths that need to be told, which it does from multiple compelling viewpoints, and with incredible empathy. Smart and thoughtful Tar has been blighted by abuse at the hands of his parents. In contrast, middle class Gemma has attentive parents, which has driven them to strictness, and drives her to leave home. Both on the streets of Bristol, Tar and Gemma fall in together, and fall in love, though it's not long before they tumble into a spiral of drug-related devastation. In a novel packed with agonising episodes, perhaps most poignant of all is witnessing Tar and Lily convince themselves they're in control of their heroin addiction, but since it's exactly that - an addiction - they are not, and their story will cut to your soul.



A Clockwork Orange

Author: Anthony Burgess **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/12/2013

Restored Edition The fully restored fiftieth anniversary edition foreword by Martin Amis first published by William Heinemann in 1962, *A Clockwork Orange* is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential books of the twentieth century. This special edition, compiled and edited by Andrew Biswell, Burgess' biographer, restores the text of the novel as Burgess originally wrote it, and includes a selection of interviews, articles, reviews and other previously unpublished material.



Little Bang

Author: Kelly McCaughrain **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/01/2024

January 2024 Book of the Month I am sure many readers will be stunned to discover that abortions were illegal in Northern Ireland as recently as 2018 and are still more difficult there than the rest of the UK. This is a story that needs to be told and the authenticity and sensitivity with which it is told, bears witness to the award-winning author's direct experience in schools and the stories she has heard from young people. The shy science-nerd Mel and Sid the slacker songwriter, are immediately convincing and the dialogue throughout is laced with brilliantly black Northern Irish humour. But their predicament, falling pregnant after their first inexperienced fumbles, is far from funny. They are from different sectarian communities and watching them struggle with the different societal pressures and family reactions is heartbreaking. They are trying to do the right thing- they both step up to the plate - prepared to accept responsibility, but gradually what dawns on Mel is that this is her decision alone and nobody, even Sid, has the right to tell her what to do. What is so powerful is how the author gives space and voice to the different opinions on abortion and does not dictate how the reader should feel. This is by no means a polemical, issues led book. The characters are so nuanced, and the situations so realistically portrayed that the reader lives this experience with them and is given space to feel for both protagonists and to make up their own mind about the issues. Moving, compassionate and beautifully told this is an essential and important taboo- breaking book for young people to read.

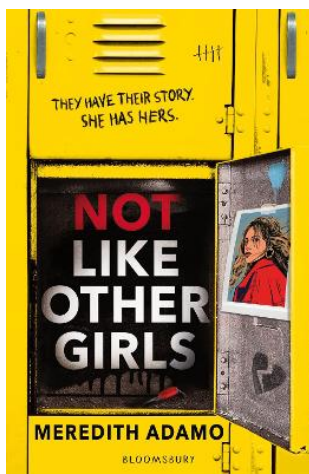


The Things We Leave Behind

Author: Clare Furniss **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 14/03/2024

April 2024 Book of the Month London teenager Clem enjoys her 15th birthday surrounded by friends, family, and glorious sunshine - a perfect day. The world is changing though, and soon everyone and everything she knows, and loves, will be in danger. Set in a not-so-distant future, England is ruled by a racist far-right authoritarian government, as civil unrest grows Clem must flee London with her younger sister, Billie. Safety lies in newly independent Scotland, but to get there the sisters must face unknown danger, suspicious bigots, and a terrifying small boat. This was a gut-wrenching read; the concept was so believable and the writing so powerful that I felt sick on more than one occasion whilst reading it, but I couldn't put it down. Whilst it might technically be described as a dystopia, really it is a modern horror story that could occur tomorrow. Putting a white, British teenager firmly at the centre of a modern refugee crisis, Furniss skilfully blends in events and ideologies of contemporary Britain. Making the reader question themselves and the world we live in. The story is told through a mix of flashbacks, therapy sessions and fairy tales. Our main character Clem is a gloriously

unreliable narrator and keeps the reader guessing until the end. A gentle romance creates further tension, but never detracts from the main story. The cast of secondary characters all leap from the page, they are all perfectly drawn and contain a sense that they too have a story to tell. Bleak and scary *The Things We Leave Behind* reveals the worst that humanity does to each other, but is also full of love, hope and the best of humanity. A moving and thought-provoking must read.



Not Like Other Girls

Author: Meredith Adamo **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 30/04/2024

June 2024 Debut of the Month This complex and twisty thriller has real psychological and emotional depth, with very authentic, relatable characters who simply leap off the page. Vividly voiced by Jo, a high school student, ostracized and slut shamed after stolen private photos of her are leaked to her classmates, she is unable to focus on schoolwork, consequently on academic probation and her parents completely fail to see her struggles. What starts as an investigation into the disappearance of her one-time best friend Maddie, becomes a determination to reveal some much darker conspiracies and secrets and in the process to come to recognise what had been done to her. This is a testament to resilience and a heartfelt exploration of identity and self-acceptance that will undoubtedly strike a chord with young women grappling with what it's like to be a girl in today's world. The book is a page-turning read, but doesn't shy from honestly and realistically exploring important subjects such as toxic relationships, consent, trauma, misogyny, emotional abuse and the pain of broken friendships. Even the enjoyable romantic subplot sensitively explores the challenges of forming any sort of relationship after surviving sexual assault. An extraordinary debut novel, this is both thought provoking and highly readable.



Eddy Eddy

Author: Kate De Goldi **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 14/03/2024

Set in Christchurch in 2012, two years after the first earthquake, Kate De Goldi's *Eddy, Eddy* is a wise and haunting coming-of-age novel populated by authentically flawed characters that command undivided attention. It's also cleverly haunted by Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, with a dead dog named Marley, a countdown to Christmas, and Dickens' three ghosts replaced by women who come into the young protagonist's life as he struggles with grief and identity. Two years on from the earthquake that shattered his city and life, orphan Eddy lives with his uncle Brain in the suburbs of Christchurch, where he works in a supermarket and minds pets of all varieties – from dogs to frogs. Through his pet-minding work, Eddy makes connections with people as well as animals, not least with older women who seem drawn to him,

and he also meets Boo. Nuanced and courageous, subtle and intense, with a very powerful, heartachingly surprising denouement, Eddy, Eddy is a brilliantly bittersweet treasure of the kind you'll most likely want to re-read. In fact, after reading it in one swift sitting, I feel the need to go right back in.



Young Gothic

Author: M.A. Bennett **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/07/2024

July 2024 Book of the Month This book from the bestselling author of the S.T.A.G.S series, is an absolute gift to English teachers and to literature students studying Gothic novels. It takes core elements from the classic set texts and weaves them into a thoroughly modern and enjoyable metatextual analysis of the horror genre across all media. We have four intriguing young people, telling their own stories in wonderfully crafted unique voices, giving subtly different perspectives on the unfolding horror story. They withhold secrets from each other, but not from the reader, who gets the full impact of the building tension and developing relationships. They have been brought together having applied for and won a place on the Young Gothic programme offered by the mysterious Diodati Foundation. They are transported to the same Villa Diodati where four young creatives, Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley and John William Polidori gathered two centuries before. Hal, Griffin, Eve and Ren are each talented in the literary or performing arts and all are obsessed with horror. Their task is apparently to discover the monsters of this modern age. As the characters bond and get to know each other, they themselves discuss horror archetypes and rules whilst subverting them at the same time. The way the plot weaves historical detail into the modern day is exquisite. Events rise to a truly horrible climax when, on the proverbial dark and stormy night, a body is found. Who indeed are the monsters now? As per the meta-analysis of the genre, the sequel hook is there and I for one cannot wait to scare myself rigid with the next instalment of this dark and haunting series.



Twenty-Four Seconds from Now

Author: Jason Reynolds **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 08/10/2024

November 2024 Book of the Month In 24 seconds Neon will have sex for the first time with his girlfriend Aria, right now he's in the toilet trying to calm his nerves. 24 minutes ago he was knocking on Aria's front door, full of love and anticipation. 24 hours before that he was working on his school year book project and receiving romance advice from his big sister. *Twenty-Four Seconds From Now* continues in this unique style, moving back through Neon's story in increments of 24. Hours, days, weeks and months. As we travel back through his life we learn not only the story of his relationship with Aria, but also the stories of his friends, family and community. With Jason Reynolds's unique gift for conjuring up with only a few words the very essence of a character, Neon's world and history is laid before us. From Aria's pushy parents to Neon's grandparents's own love story, Reynolds once again shows that he can say more in a couple of lines than most authors can in numerous chapters. In his acknowledgements Reynolds states that Black boys deserve love stories too, and wow has he delivered. Full of all the tender hopes and fears of first love, Neon's story is honest, authentic and beautifully. A welcome antidote to toxic masculinity, here we have a main character who cries when others cry, and loves without embarrassment. Whilst the friends and family who surround him are equally well-developed, not least his hilariously direct Mum and full-of-wisdom Gammy. At one point Neon's Grandy ponders "But I don't know if you can really be great if you can't... do... romance." If romance is a qualification for greatness, rest assured Reynolds is one of the greatest writers for young people we have. A must read.
