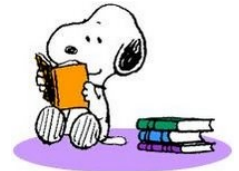




# RGS: Bonkers About Books!

March 2025



Hi,

Last month you may remember that I included a review of *Dragon Riders of Roar* in the newsletter; well I'm very proud to say that words from my review were picked up and turned into a poster to promote the book!

This month I have very exciting news for all Jennifer Killick fans (and I know there are lots of you!); Jennifer's new book is out at the end of this month!

**Mrs Wall**



## **Serial Chillers The Witch In The Woods - Jennifer Killick**

During a school trip, Travis and Zayd being paired up with Danielle and Seline for their project is met with much consternation - they don't get along and there is history between Travis and Danielle. It's Seline who instantly takes control which is not unexpected as she's always bossy, but when she announces they'll be researching the legend of Blood-Eyed-Mary, the boys begin to have their doubts, especially when she announces that their work will involve a field-trip into the heart of Mary's Woods. Just a quick trip in, long enough to get some evidence for their project; but all is not what it seems and strange things are afoot. Is the legend of Blood-Eyed-Mary just that or is there more to things than they know? One thing's for certain, their trip into the woods is going to be one they will never forget.

There is a reason that Jennifer Killick is known as the queen of MG horror. Her *Dread Wood* series propelled her to that title and enabled her to wear the crown with pride, and **Serial Chillers** clearly shows why she is so deserving of the title.

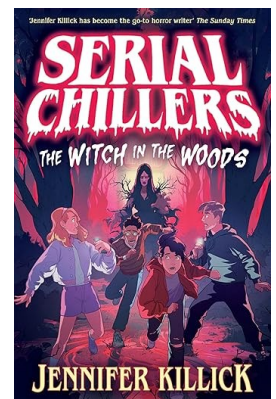
**Serial Chillers The Witch In The Woods** is a book I've been anticipating since first hearing about it, so arriving home one Friday evening a few weeks ago to find a copy waiting for me meant that my plans for Saturday were immediately changed as curling up with the book became my priority.

**Serial Chillers** is set in the small town of Hazard where the place is famous for its sinkhole, its numerous tragedies and its unsolved mysteries; in fact the town actively encourages tourists to visit because of these things. By the end of chapter one, you get the distinct impression that life in Hazard is not a jolly holiday but one that comes with risk and a constant sense of darkness. Jennifer builds an image of a macabre (to steal Mrs Tiwana's word) place that's better to visit for a few hours than live in. The chills build from the very start of the book.

Then there are the characters. Jennifer has a real knack for creating believable, multi-layered characters that readers will want to get to know. Travis and Zayd, Danielle and Seline are very different and I loved the disdain between them at the idea of working together; the dialogue between them feels very real.

The plot is fast paced, gripping and a master-class in horror writing for kids: the town's history woven into the present day; the visit to the woods at dusk; unexplained events; phones low in charge; chapters that end in cliff-hangers ... the whole thing is brilliantly crafted to keep readers on their toes and on the edge of their seat. The chills are there in abundance and I jumped on more than one occasion, but in true Killick fashion, there is also humour woven in that will definitely make readers chuckle!

**Serial Chillers The Witch In The Woods** is a book that will scare and delight in equal measure. I can absolutely see it being an epic book to read aloud to a class (and those cliff-hanger chapter endings will guarantee cries of, 'Just one more chapter!').



This edition of Bonkers About Books was proof-read by:

Maddie, Amira, Rae



### **Clem Fatale Has Been Betrayed - Eve Wersocki Morris**

Set in London in 1951, Clem works with her father, a jewel thief, as part of the notorious Spider Gang. But when a mission to steal the Fool's Canary, one of the most prized jewels in London, goes wrong and Clem's dad goes missing, she is determined to find him. With only Gilbert to help, can she get to the bottom of things before it's too late?

Clem was my lunch date on Friday and she made the most excellent company! From the very beginning, the book is a rip-roaring adventure with twists and turns that are guaranteed to keep you reading (I genuinely couldn't put the book down and had finished it by Friday evening!). It's a fast-paced plot with giggles along the way and there are a heap of brilliant characters that you will love (with the odd one you'll love to hate!). The illustrations by Honie Beam enhance the story-line perfectly and I can't wait to see them in the book (I've read an early digital copy).

Clem is fiercely determined to save her dad and will stop at nothing. She's head-strong and loyal with a big heart and readers will adore her from the start. I loved the idea of the main character being a villain - so many detective/mysteries are told from the point of view of the victims so this was a refreshing change, especially as Clem is so likeable.

Much as I love Clem, for me Gilbert took the crown my absolute favourite character. His role as kidnapee/partner in crime (it depends on who you talk to!) was wonderful, and his chatter-box way and polite manner made him a rather funny chap that I couldn't help but warm to (especially in his pyjamas!).

Without giving the plot away, I loved the 1950s setting and the insight some of the characters gave to attitudes at the time (Winnie in particular). The book will make the perfect class read and I can already imagine some interesting discussions coming from the plot (and also some brilliant accents for teachers to tackle!).

**Clem Fatale Has Been Betrayed** is publishing on the 3rd April and I'm already excited to see what this brilliant duo get up to next.



### **Race To Imagination Island - Mel Taylor-Bessent**

Imagination Island: a place where anything you imagine comes to life, and the time has come to find four new protectors to dream, invent, explore and observe.

Ten year old Luca is terrified of everything and he feels he's the last person qualified to head to the island. But when he and his siblings discover the lightstream that can take them to the quest, it's Luca who is pulled through, transporting him to a competition that terrifies him but has the potential to change his life forever.

I'm a huge fan of Mel's Christmas Carolls series but I have to admit that I'm woefully late to the party when it comes to **Race To Imagination Island**. My World Book Day token allowed me to rectify that and yesterday evening, with an Easter egg for company, I curled up and headed in.

Oh boy, this is a gloriously inventive read a joy-filled page turning adventure, and I adored every single page! Filled with humour and the most vivid world-building, this really is a feast for the imagination.

Luca is a most unlikely hero whilst also unwittingly being the perfect candidate for the job. His siblings tease him for acting younger than his ten years as he prefers imaginative play instead of computer games; he is terrified of everything and his anxiety rules his life. When he ends up being drawn to the island through the lightstream, he is convinced that he wants to head straight home, so why can't he? All he has to do is imagine himself there. Perhaps the island, the competition and the new friends he is making are doing him more good than he thinks?

As well as being a lesson in how to use your imagination, **The Race To Imagination Island** is a reminder to be brave, to be true to yourself, and that sometimes taking a risk is worth it.

Now, how long do I have to wait until I can get my hands on book 2?!



### **Café Chaos: My Family Is Not A Piece Of Cake - Catherine Wilkins**

Life is chaotic for Hope whose family runs the local café, Café Crumble: not only is she navigating the start of secondary school and a school bully, but life at the café is far from straightforward with the arrival of her Auntie Rita whilst her parents are struggling to balance the books. Can Hope be the one to save the day?

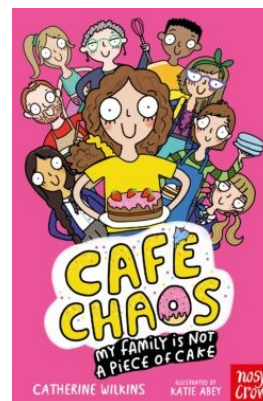
Catherine's books are always a joy to read with plenty of laughs woven into issues that many children struggle with, and **Café Chaos** is no exception; reading it over half-term was just the injection of fun I needed.

Hope is a resilient character and despite the challenges she faces, she never gives up. She's coping with a lot, not least the fact that her parents seem to be too busy saving the café to appreciate what she is going through at school - thank goodness for her best friend, Leila.

Auntie Rita made me laugh! She arrives unannounced and plonks herself on the family with her son, Connor, and just expects them to allow her to do what she wants - I'm sure there are many readers who will recognise a family member in her!

Then there's the café itself which sounds like a great place to visit, and I love the different ways everyone tries to drum up more trade; some clearly more profitable than others!

With wonderful illustrations and page art that further brings the story to life, **Café Chaos: My Life Is Not A Piece of Cake** is guaranteed to bring joy to all who read it when it publishes on the 15th March. Huge thanks to Nosy Crow for my proof copy as well as the finished copy.



### **From The Library:**

#### **Penrith:**

#### **House of Secrets - Chris Columbus & Ned Vizzini**

*HOUSE OF SECRETS follows three siblings and their family as they are forced to move to a mysterious new house in San Francisco and end up embarking on a journey to retrieve a dark book of untold power. The first story in an epic fantasy adventure trilogy! When Brendan, Cordelia and Nell move to Kristoff House they have no idea that they are about to unleash the dark magic locked within. For the house once belonged to a crazed writer, whose stories have come to life. Literally. Now the Walker kids must battle against deadly pirates, bloodthirsty warriors and a bone-crunching giant. If they fail they will never see their parents again and a power-mad Witch will take over the world. No pressure then!*



First published in 2013, House Of Secrets is an epic adventure that you'll find hard to put down. This is the first book in the series and you'll find it in the library.

#### **Lambton:**

#### **We Won An Island - Charlotte Lo**

Since Luna's granny died, things have been different - Luna's dad has been depressed and the family have ended up owing too much rent on their flat and are forced to find somewhere else to live. Just in the nick of time, they win their very own Scottish island in a competition; however, when they arrive, they discover it's over-grown and the house is run-down.

As they begin to tidy up, Luna decides that holding a festival on the island would help raise funds for the donkey sanctuary she intends to open. But planning a festival isn't easy, especially when you're trying to keep it secret from your parents! Will she be able to pull it off?

I chuckled my way through this book and smiled a lot at the bond between Luna and her siblings, Margot and Fabien. Published in 2019, this will be a great read for those who love summer and made me want to head back up to Scotland to dance on the beach!

