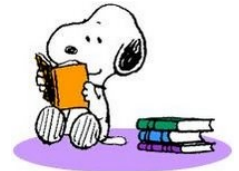




RGS: Bonkers About Books!

June 2025



Hi,

And just like that another year has rolled by! I hope that the selection of books this year has provided entertainment and has sparked a love of reading. There are some exciting books publishing in the next few weeks which will make great summer reads so I hope that the sun shines wherever you may be and that you have plenty of books to keep you entertained. I shall be squeezing as many books as I possibly can into my suitcase and I'm looking forward to sharing them with you come September. Have a lovely break and happy reading!

Mrs Wall

Alice With A Why - Anna James

Alyce is living in England in 1919 with her grandmother at Specula House, a place that was, until recently, full of recovering soldiers; however, now that the war has ended it is a much quieter place. Even more so as Alyce's father died during the war and her mother has taken her baby brother off to look after her own mother, leaving Alyce (with a why) with Alice (the original). Unsure as to how to move forward with this new situation, Alyce wanders into the garden where she is hit (literally) with an invitation to a rather mysterious tea party. Considering the invitation to be more useful if it's turned into a boat, Alyce does just that, and it is proving a rather successful decision until Alyce falls into the water and ends up on an adventure that she will never forget.

Let me just say from the start that I adore everything about this book.

From the moment I began reading **Alyce With A Why**, I knew it was going to be something special and I wasn't wrong. From the style of writing to the humour subtly woven in, to the play on words that leads to confusion which is so perfectly timed and cleverly written, this is a book that will delight readers of all ages.

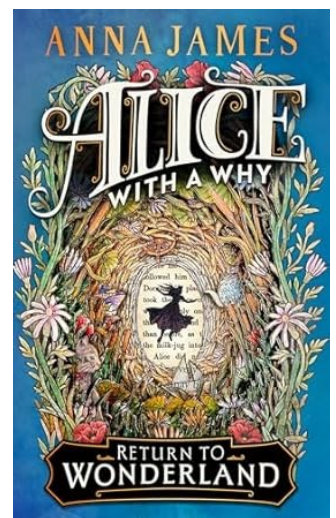
During the war Alyce's grandmother, Alice, transformed the family home, Specula House, so that the place could house and tend to soldiers injured in the fighting.

As well as nursing the soldiers, Alyce's grandmother, Alice, entertained them with magical stories of a place called Wonderland, but people believed they were just that, stories to help those in recovery. However, now the war is over, the soldiers have gone and the house is empty. Alice is clearly mourning the loss of her father and is feeling lost. She wanders to the pond in an attempt to feel closer to him but the unorthodox arrival of the invitation changes everything. The adventure that Alyce goes on is the most magical thing. However, her trip to Wonderland is more than just a physical journey, it's a journey that shows her how resilient and brave she can be; she learns how to face challenges and she discovers what she can actually do. It's a journey that will inspire readers.

Some books demand to be gobbled up in one sitting (I do that a lot!), then there are the books that beg to be savoured and **Alyce With A Why** is one of those books. I have patiently eked this book out from Sunday evening until Thursday, treating myself to a few pages at a time, being sure to read and appreciate every word, for that's what this book needs and deserves. You need to immerse yourself in this wonderful world of fantasy and dreams, of long loved characters and journeys that will transform and bring joy.

There's a comforting warmth to this book that's like being wrapped in a hug, one you never want to leave. You cannot help but get lost amongst the pages and I can't wait to get hold of a physical copy and to see the illustrations that I know will only further enhance the story. Some books stay with you long after you've finished the final page and **Alyce With A Why** is most definitely one of those books—this book is already guaranteed to be one of my favourite books of the year.

Publishing on the 19th June, **Alyce With A Why** is destined to become a classic and Anna deserves all success that this book is guaranteed to receive.



Cruise Ship - Emma Swan

Silver has lived on a cruise ship for most of her life; her best friends are all pensioners and she's never had a best friend her own age; however, when Yana joins the ship as a guest, Silver is hopeful they may become friends, especially when there's a theft to investigate. But can the thief be caught before the end of the cruise?

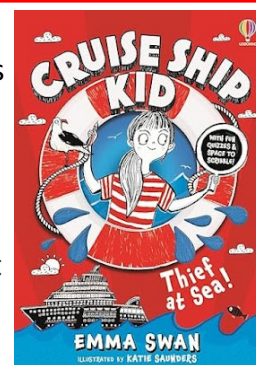
Can I just say from the start that I absolutely loved this book!

Silver has lived a pretty unique life on board a cruise ship and whilst that might be exciting, it certainly seems to mean that she doesn't have any friends her own age. The Gang, however, are rather wonderful and a brilliant group of 'old people' who very nicely prove that being old doesn't mean being boring. Silver just wants to be accepted by children her own age so when Yana befriends her, she feels the need to change herself to suit Yana (please never do this- being yourself is the only thing that counts). Silver is a character that readers will love and will get behind; full of empathy, the book makes the perfect discussion point for friendships.

A cruise ship is such a great setting for a novel with endless possibilities. It's easy to see that Emma, like Silver, grew up on a ship and the information about life on board and sea terminology really bring the ship to life for readers. My parents have cruised for years and loved it, so I'm used to hearing tales from sea. Whilst the stops along the way were certainly ones my parents experienced, and life on board as a passenger was something I'd heard about, the idea of investigating a theft creates a brilliant adventure with numerous suspects in both the staff and passengers. Silver is excited at the perspective of being a detective and hunting down the missing watches, and what ensues is a humours hunt for the culprit where everybody is a suspect.

The story was full of humour, clues and guessing who dunnit. The diary-style writing makes it an easy paced, friendly and enthralling read. I loved Silver's way of chatting to readers and the various ways readers are able to interact with Silver (there's space to respond to her questions and the quizzes), and the illustrations by Katie Saunders perfectly enhance the plot.

Publishing 3rd July, **Cruise Ship Kid** is a delightful adventure where mystery and comedy combine seamlessly, and the book is going to make the perfect summer holiday read. I can't wait to see what's in store for Silver next.



The Last Journey - Stacy Gregg

Pusskin has lived a privileged life with 11-year-old Lottie, who clearly adores him; however, when the birds and insects begin to disappear, life changes for everyone, especially cats. Believing they are to blame for the decline, the government orders curfews for cats and then termination for cats of a certain age. It's at this point that Pusskin knows he has to act if he is to save his friends and, indeed, himself. Making the heart-breaking decision to leave Lottie in search of a hidden island where they can live in peace, Pusskin and his friends begin a journey that has the potential to change lives forever.

Having heard Stacy talk about **The Last Journey** during the Simon And Schuster brunch, I was intrigued by the book so I was pleased when a proof copy arrived at home for me. I have to admit that I'm more of a dog than a cat person, but Pusskin quickly captured a place in my heart and I found myself thinking of him whilst I wasn't reading the book.

Pusskin is the epitome of a true hero: brave, puts others before himself, treats everyone as equal, and doesn't realise the impact of what he is doing. I defy readers not to will him on and want to reach into the pages of the book to hug him.

The journey is one of adventure and new experiences for the band of cats and, their travels will both break and warm your heart in equal measure.

Publishing 3rd July, **The Last Journey** is an epic story of life, friendship and fighting for what's right.



Runaways - E L Norry

I was drawn to **Runaways** having recently read reviews by book friends. Starting it on a Sunday evening, my first regret was that I'd picked it up at the end of the weekend and not the beginning!

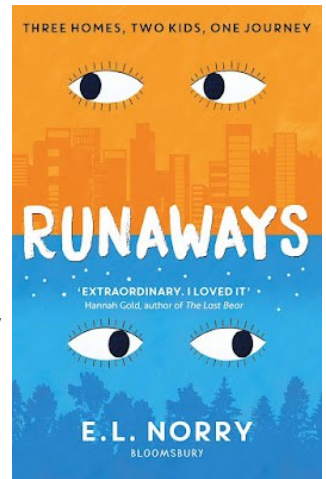
Runaways tells the story in dual perspective of 2 very different people, Jamie and July. Through different circumstances, they meet at Waterloo Station and then again on the train to Bournemouth. Both intent on finding somebody they care for who they feel can help them with problems at home, the pair end up supporting each other because running away from home isn't as easy as they think it will be.

At first glance, July is strong and resilient; she's had a tough life so far but has known love, and she cares about those around her. She clearly worries a lot and, coupled with the grief she is carrying and the latest change in situation with her mother, she feels she has no choice but to take drastic action. Jamie, on the other hand, has lead a more sheltered life in many ways; however, although he lives in a nice house and there is money to spare, life is difficult for him at the minute. He's desperate to be heard and loved but he feels everyone is too busy for him. Despite only being 11 years old, both feel they have no option but to runaway.

I'm sure there are many of us who thought about running away when we were children, but that was just it, a thought. For July and Jamie, they feel they have no other option. Running away is a serious issue (as Norry states, over 100,000 children and young people go missing every year, with a third of those being 13 and under). Through **Runaways**, it's very easy to see how children can end up alone and with nowhere to sleep; it's a scary situation and the book portrays this well. The idea of forming a simple plan that falls apart when ideas don't fit into place quickly becomes a reality for July and Jamie, and I found myself incredibly pleased that the pair had each other.

Runaways is completely engaging and draws you in from the beginning (hence the reason why I wished I'd start it at the beginning of last weekend!). Readers will empathise with the characters and I think that's incredibly important in this book as this will undoubtedly instigate some interesting and important conversations.

Publishing on the 3rd July, **Runaways** is a book about searching for answers, family, forging friendships in times of need and being heard. With messages about staying safe, being brave and speaking up when you are worried deftly woven through the plot, readers will see that running away isn't the answer but finding a way to get your voice heard can be tricky. This is a great book for Years 5 and 6.



READING

What it looks like

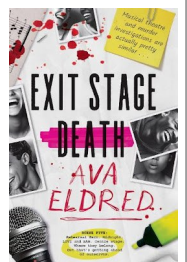


What it feels like



Exit Stage Death—Ava Eldred

Last month, I included **Exit Stage Death** in my newsletter. I should point out that this is a book that is more for the upper Junior School market and YA (young adult market). Whilst the plot line is suitable, there is one swear word that is used in it.



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

Maddie, Amira & Rae



Gargoyles books 1 & 2 - Tamsin Mori

When Callen and his family move to his father's childhood home, Callen doesn't realise how big it is going to be or exactly what awaits him there. He didn't know his late grandmother so he is shocked when the family arrive at a boarded up mansion complete with stone gargoyles, and is even more shocked when he sees the state of ruin it is in. He's far from happy about the move but then he discovers that the gargoyle outside his room is alive and things begin to take a very dramatic turn. With danger lurking as magic is reawakened, it is up to Callen and his new friends to discover the Gargoyle Guardian in an attempt to stop the threat.



I had read great reviews for **Guardians Of The Source** from fellow book bloggers, but alas, it became one of those books that fell through the net and I didn't read when it published, so when I got the chance to read **Guardians Of The Source** and **The Watcher** together, I jumped at the chance. I have to say that, in many respects, I was glad I had both books to read at once as the end of the first book left me so desperate to know what would happen next that it took me mere minutes from finishing book 1 before I dove into **The Watcher** (at which point I was eternally grateful for my flight home which provided uninterrupted reading time).

I'm going to do my best to give nothing away, but I have to say that both books are pure escapism and gripping adventures. Magic, mystery and mythical creatures combine with friendship, family secrets and just the right amount of peril to ensure that both books are unputdownable.

Callen is clearly upset by the move to his dad's family home, and I can't blame him really: he's being taken away from friends and the life he knows to a place he's never been to before and where a relative he'd never met lived. I think most people would find it unnerving, and that's before the rundown state of the mansion is revealed. The plot quickly unfolds and Callen realises there is much more to the building and his family than first meets the eye. It is fortunate that he meets Yasmin, Raf and Angus who live in cottages owned by the family estate and each have their own magic creatures. Their bond is forged quickly but isn't without its trials over the two books as the friendship grows and the four get to know each other.

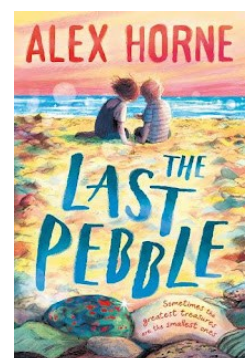
The Watcher creates new problems and tests for Callen and his friends in different ways. Darkness is lurking again and they need all the help they can get, but exactly who should they trust?

I'm so pleased that I've read these books and I'm now excited for the third instalment which I know Tamsin is editing at the minute!

The Last Pebble - Alex Horne

Trader loves nothing more than spending time with his grandpa, especially when they are combing the beaches of Bognor Regis together for unusual stones to add to their collection. When Trader finds a pebble that proves particularly special it opens up a secret that was never supposed to be discovered.

There is often speculation about 'celebrity authors' but if there's one thing I've learnt as a book blogger it's not to judge an author by their celebrity status. Alex Horne has clearly written this book from the heart, and the letter that accompanied the book explains why **The Last Pebble** was inspired by his own grandfather and his love of geology, as well as trips to Bognor with his own family. This is absolutely a book written with love at its core and I adored reading it.



Trader loves stones, he loves spending time with his grandfather and he has a unique take on the world and I love that about him. He finds making friends difficult and struggles with small talk; however, when Charlotte comes along, he seems to have found the perfect fit in a friend. Watching their friendship grow as the book progresses is a joy to see and proves that being yourself is always best.

In the acknowledgements, Alex calls the book 'old fashioned' but I think it's anything but that. **The Last Pebble** is the most gorgeous book, gentle and heart-warming it is a story of love, faith and hope; about knowing who you are and being true to your unique self. To me, that's anything but boring.

Publishing on the 3rd July, **The Last Pebble** is going to make a perfect summer read. A book about finding treasure in everyday objects, finding the joy in the little things and spending time with family and away from technology - what could be more perfect for the summer?