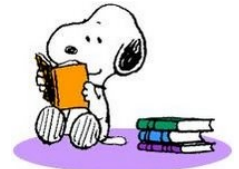




# RGS: Bonkers About Books!

October 2025



Hi,

Half-term is nearly here and, for me, it's going to be a time to make a dint in my ever-growing pile of books that are waiting to be read (28 at the last count!); I hope you all have plenty of exciting books to get lost in too.

As part of the Junior School drive on reading, I'm going to start sharing three questions every month that you can ask your children about the book they are reading. You'll find the first three at the bottom of this page. Remember that it's good to talk about books as well as reading them!

Happy reading.

**Mrs Wall**

## **Hero The Highway Girl - Penny Chrimes**

Hero is a young girl who has lived a life of luxury; however, all she has wanted is freedom. She was taken away from her mother as a young child and her grandmother has never shown any love towards her. At her next birthday, her 13th, she will be forced to sign a betrothal which will legally bind her to marrying a stranger, and it is for this reason that she is determined to run away and become a highwayman. When Jack hijacks her carriage, he is surprised to discover that not only is Hero willing to hand over her jewels, but also insists upon Jack kidnapping her so she can escape and achieve her dream of freedom along with her wolf. But the life of a highwayman is plagued with danger and isn't quite everything Hero thought it would be. How long can she, Wolf, Jack and his horse Diablo live this life of freedom?



Told in dual narrative, this is a book that gives you insight into Hero and Jack's perspectives on the plot as it unfolds, and they are very different at times. Whilst Jack has lived a hard life and has had no choice but to become a highwayman, Hero has lived the life of a 'toff'; whilst she has had her difficulties, she has had the comfort of money, food and a roof over her head. The pair have had very different upbringing but both crave companionship and despite their differences, I think this is what keeps them together.

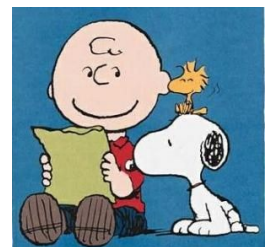
Hero is a character I know people are going to love - I absolutely adored her! She's fierce, headstrong, determined and hugely resilient. At a time when women had no voice or power and were brought up to be subservient, she is a breath of fresh air and I found myself willing her on, even when she didn't always get it right.

Ultimately, this is a gripping adventure about finding yourself, chasing your dreams and finding family in whatever shape that may be. It's a reminder to fight for truth and never to take people at face value - you never know what's going on behind the scenes.

**Hero The Highway Girl** is a book that will gallop its way into readers' hearts.

## **Parent Prompts**

- Explain what has happened in the story so far.
- What do you think will happen next in the story? Why do you think that?
- Find a word in the text that means...



### Role Model - Elle McNicoll

Ariel's life changes forever when her mum is elected Prime Minister. Without being asked, she is thrust into the public eye and becomes a role model and the voice of autistics. But it isn't what she wants.

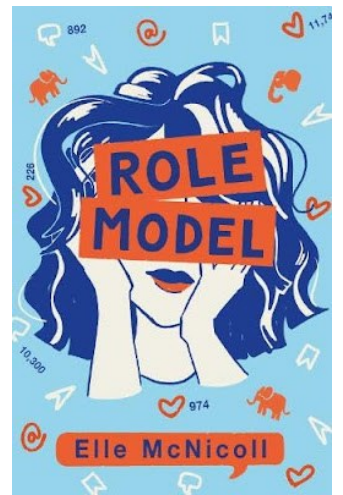
Everything has changed for Ariel: she's moved from her home in Scotland to the unfamiliarity and bustle of London; she has a new school to contend with and new routines to get to grips with; this is difficult at the best of times, but factor in the fact that your mum has just become Prime Minister so the whole world is watching you, and this adds a whole extra level of complications - just the thought of that makes me panic.

**Role Model** gives the world an honest insight into one autistic person's life and highlights the fact that all autistic people are different. Ariel's internal monologue, which is often different to the words she actually says, gives us a real idea of what she experiences, and the letters that she writes to her autism are particularly poignant and thought-provoking (especially the last one).

Without realising it, Ariel becomes the hero of her own story. Learning to be yourself is incredibly difficult but she shows readers that it's important to do that; the character who desperately didn't want to become a role model has become a role model through this book. Talking of heroes, it would be remiss of me not to mention Fizz in my review: she's a wonderful character who gets Ariel and I was so pleased that she was there for her. Everybody needs a Fizz in their life.

**Role Model** is an insightful and honest book that shows the world what it's like to be autistic - everybody deserves to see themselves in the characters they meet in books and I am so pleased that Elle's extraordinary writing talent allows autistic children to see themselves in wonderful stories. Thanks goodness the world has Elle; having read the acknowledgements, it is clear this is a very personal book for her and I am eternally grateful that she has been brave enough to share this with the world - it will make a huge difference for so many.

This is a book that needs to be read by everybody ... I was going to say every teacher but I think everybody needs to read this. It's a book that will stay with me for a very long time and it has left me with a major book hangover. It's a shorter novel at 169 pages but by goodness, it really packs a punch.



### The Unfamous Diaries Of Daisy Brewster - Jenny Valentine

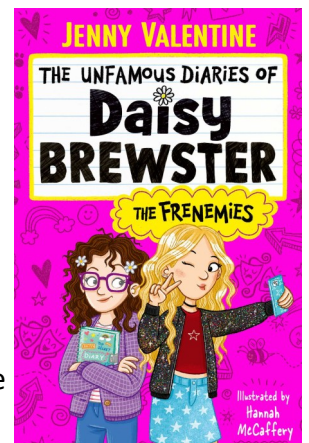
It's the summer holidays and Daisy is looking forward to drama club: she's determined to get the lead in the play and intends to channel all her energies into that. What most people don't know, however, is that Daisy has a cousin in America who just happens to be a famous child actor and the pair lead very different lives. Daisy can cope when they only see each other over video calls, but then Maxxy comes to stay with Daisy and her family. This could be the worst thing for Daisy ... or will it?

Dairy books are incredibly popular in school and I know that **The Unfamous Diaries of Daisy Brewster** is going to be very popular. Jenny has captured the style perfectly: the chatty writing creates the personal feel; sharing emotions and frustrations; Hannah McCaffery's illustrations are fab and even the lines on the pages make the whole book feel like Daisy's diary instead of a novel.

We get to know Daisy very quickly and, with an annoying brother, friendship issues and annoying parents, she really is a very relatable character. Her passion for acting comes through and I can think of several children in school who will love the book because of that.

Daisy and her cousin Maxxy are very different characters; Maxxy is living a life of fame and luxury in Hollywood whilst Daisy is living the life of a typical school girl in England. And when Maxxy comes to stay, Daisy is forced to make lots of adjustments so Maxxy can share a room with her. But is there more to Maxxy than Daisy first assumes?

Out now, **The Unfamous Diaries of Daisy Brewster** is a great read and perfect for fans of Dork Diaries and Lottie Brooks, and Diary of a Wimpy Kid.



### Small Wonder - Ross Montgomery

Tick lived a quiet life in the forest with his grandfather and his brother Leaf.. After his grandfather's death, Tick takes over responsibility for the care of his younger brother; after all, his grandfather taught him well how to protect himself and Leaf and this is useful when the Hunter from Drenish arrives at their cabin. Tick knows he has to flee, so with only their horse Pebble and a knife, the trio head out into the winter forest. With the Hunter and his hawk on their tail, Tick is intent on getting the trio to the King's Keep, a castle in the mountains where Tick believes they will be safe. However, time is not on their side as he knows the gates of the castle soon will close as the Drenish draw in. With danger lurking at every bend, Tick is going to have to draw on all the skills his grandfather taught him if he is to reach his destination safely and on time.



I've said it before and I'll say it again, Ross is a versatile writer whose work I always look forward to reading; whether it's scaring me with *Christmas Dinner of Souls* (which famously kept me awake in a hotel room on my own!), to the magic of [Spellstone](#) or the mystery of [The Chime Seekers](#); not to mention his picture books. [I Am Rebel](#) saw him travel back in time and write from the perspective of a dog, and his first novel for adults [The Murder At World's End](#) is a triumph. He is a writer who seems to be able to create magic whenever he puts pen to paper, so I was utterly thrilled to get home from my recent holiday to find a signed copy of **Small Wonder** waiting for me. I'm sure it will come as no surprise that the book completely by-passed my tbr pile and I began reading it on Sunday evening.

Can I say from the start that the book is just wonderful? In his foreword, Ross talks about his desire to write a book with a simple story and to tell it well and I can uncategorically say that he has absolutely done that. **Small Wonder** (the name his grandfather used for Tick) is an epic adventure of good versus evil and a classic story set in a time when knights and kings ruled their castles and bandits stalked the land.

Told from Tick's point of view, the book is all about the journey that he and his five year old brother make on their horse, Pebble. Faced with having to flee the only home they've ever known without warning, Tick needs to rely on all his strength and the lessons his grandfather has taught him (I love that you get his grandfather's voice throughout the book through Tick's memories of what his grandfather had told him). Danger lurks at every turn and it's impossible for Tick to know who to trust, and readers will find themselves rooting for Tick and willing him on. He is a character who is both brave and tender, loyal and fierce, but most of all, he's a boy who's simply doing everything he can to keep his brother safe.

**Small Wonder** is a timeless tale of bravery and finding inner-strength that will have readers desperate for 'just one more chapter'.

### Nature Heroes - Lily Dyu

**Nature Heroes** is a new non-fiction book that tells readers all about 20 ordinary people whose passion for nature lead them to do extraordinary things to help preserve the natural world.

Told in very readable and easy to understand chapters, each story gives readers a unique insight into the lives of these extraordinary people, including what lead them towards the path they are on. With stories from all over the world, readers will meet some people they know as well as some who are new, but all have an important story to tell. From understanding gorillas to cleaning up rivers; from rewilding fields to restore the soil to protecting coral, readers will be inspired by each story.

This is a book that will inspire readers to look at what they can do to help; in fact, I used a story from this book in one of my recent assemblies!



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

Hetty & Zeena





## Champions Of The Galaxy - Tola Okogwu

When a spaceship arrives over the Houses of Parliament in London, everyone expects the worst and a taskforce is set up to make contact; however, they are rather surprised to learn that the Onni are there to help Earth, informing them that they are about to be invaded. The Onni take 91 children from across the planet to prove that Earth is worthy of their help.

Kola is 12 years old and has, until the invasion, been preparing to be part of the first team from the new UK Space Agency to include a child to head on a 3 month mission to orbit Earth; however everything changed when the Onni arrived. So he is surprised to discover that he is one of the 91 chosen children. But can he and the other children prove their worth and save Earth?

TolÁ's *Academy of the Sun* series is absolutely brilliant and I have been privileged enough to hear TolÁ speak so being able to read an early copy of **Champions of the Galaxy** was met with sequels of delight, especially as it's a sci-fi book and I love a bit of sci-fi.

The book is pacy and the action starts from the very first line. Usually with sci-fi novels, the plot revolves around aliens descending to invade Earth so I really liked the idea of the Onni being there to help humanity.

The plot quickly moves to space, to the Onni craft where the children have to prove their worth but the group Kola is put into comprises a group of children who are very different and it quickly becomes apparent that they could lose everything if they don't learn to work together. It's a fast-paced, action-packed story that readers will struggle to put down. With a host of fab characters, the book is guaranteed to be a big success with readers as it feels like a new kind of sci-fi and one that will appeal to a wide range of readers.

There are strong themes in the book about understanding people's differences and learning to work together, and about friendship and family which will make wonderful discussion points in school or at home.

**Champions of the Galaxy** left me desperate for a second instalment!



## How To Get Magically Popular - Radhika Sanghani

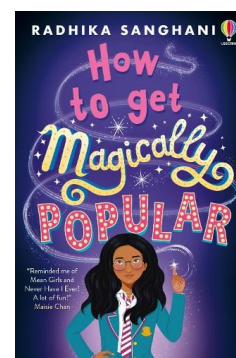
Sabina has just moved from central London to a small village so her mum can set-up her own beauty business. However, Sabina is finding the move much trickier than she expected, especially trying to fit in at her new school, Marston Girls' School, where everybody seems so very different to her. She's also missing her best friends, Harry and Ria, terribly. So when a meditation class leads to Sabina discovering she has psychic powers, she quickly becomes the most popular girl in school but even then, things don't seem to be working out quite how she expected. The question is, can she sort things out before it's too late?

This is a wonderfully readable story about friendship and learning to be yourself, and I just know that children in my school are going to devour it when they get their hands on my copy next term.

Like *The Girl Who Couldn't Lie* ( you can read my review [here](#)), **How To Get Magically Popular** takes an ordinary school girl and looks at what happens when something quite out of the ordinary happens to her (it was lovely to see a subtle nod to TGWCL in this book). It incorporates family life with negotiating friendships and school which are things readers will find very relatable.

Sabina feels that everything has changed for her, and right now she doesn't feel it's for the best. With Freya she finds somebody she can be herself with, but then the lure of popularity rears its head when the Leeshes notice her, but is their friendship real or are they just using her? The book would make a brilliant reading for pleasure book in my Y6 class next term and would definitely spark some interesting discussions.

**How To Get Magically Popular** is a book about friendship, family and finding out how to be true to yourself, and I loved it!



## Calling All Hannah Gold Fans...

Hannah Gold is going to be at Waterstones in Newcastle on **Saturday, 8th November** at **11.00am**, signing copies of her new book, *The Lone Husky*. I'll see you there!

