

IGNITING LEADERS CHANGING LIVES

PiXL Reading

READING FOR PLEASURE



Welcome to our latest newsletter, a celebration of the wondrous world of reading for pleasure. In our bustling, fast-paced lives, it's vital to remember the unique magic and tranquillity that comes from losing oneself in a good book. This newsletter is your gateway to that serene world, one that your children are exploring with every page they turn.

Recent studies highlight the immense benefits of reading for pleasure, particularly for young minds. For instance, the National Literacy Trust found that children who enjoy reading have a significantly higher reading age than their peers who don't read for enjoyment – a difference that can be as much as 14 months in some age groups. This isn't just about academic advantage; it's about the joy, empathy and broadened horizons that come from reading diverse stories.

In this month's edition, we dive into a handpicked selection of books that promise to transport young readers to realms of fantasy, adventure and discovery. These are not just stories; they're portals to worlds waiting to be explored, fostering imagination and a lifelong love of reading.

Whatever you and your child choose to read, we hope you enjoy it!

Please note that the following texts are suitable from the age group stated, but please do research the books before selecting them to ensure that they are appropriate for your child.



EMBRACE THE ART OF STORYTELLING

We are thrilled to bring you two exclusive videos that promise to deepen your and your child's reading experience.

1. DRAWING WITH GUY PARKER-REES:

Join the renowned illustrator Guy Parker-Rees in a delightful session where he shows us how to draw Num Num Elephant. This interactive tutorial is not just an art lesson; it's a gateway into the world of creativity, encouraging your children to visualise and bring to life characters from their favourite stories. Insert video



2. STORYTIME WITH DERMOT O'LEARY:

Settle down for a captivating chapter from Dermot O'Leary's new book, Wings of Glory. His engaging narration brings the story alive, offering a perfect example of how a good book can transport us to extraordinary places. Listening to stories read aloud can be a powerful way to inspire a love of reading in children, showcasing the rhythm and emotion behind the words. Insert video.



WORDS FROM AN AUTHOR:**Embracing Diversity and Empowerment in Children's Literature: A Spotlight on G.M. Linton**

In this edition, we're thrilled to feature an inspiring article by celebrated author G.M. Linton. With a passion for creating vibrant, relatable characters, Linton delves into the world of children's literature with a clear mission: to provide a fun, positive and genuine role model for Black pupils and all young readers. Her latest book stands as a testament to this commitment, addressing the unique experiences and challenges faced by young Black girls. Through her captivating storytelling, Linton opens a window to diverse perspectives, fostering a sense of understanding and empowerment among her readers.

Why I wanted to create a fun, positive and real role model for Black children – and all children – through my book and explore some of the issues, in particular, young Black girls can face growing up.

I loved reading children's books when I was growing up, but there were never any main characters who looked like me or who did the same things as I did at home. As a young Black-British girl, I seemingly didn't exist in literature. That was in the 1980s. We are now in the 2020s – a new century – but until the last few years, the situation with representation hadn't changed much at all. Research from the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education shows that the percentage of books published featuring a main character from a minority ethnic background has risen year on year but remained low at nine per cent in 2021. So, wider representation in children's books has improved, but there is still such a long way to go. I very much hope this isn't a phase, but part of lasting change.

Do we really need to see change and an increase in representation? Isn't a good story a good story no matter what the characters look like? Should we draw attention to difference – shouldn't everyone just be treated the same? There are of course many examples of classic children's literature – many of which I enjoyed when growing up. But Britain is an increasingly diverse society and children deserve to see themselves reflected in a range of stories, as well as reading about children whose lives and cultures may be different from their own. We live in a big world and children should be free to explore and embrace it. My Sunshine Simpson series tries to reflect the common concerns of all children right at the beginning of growing up, as they discover more about themselves and their developing personalities. Sunshine Simpson is ten years old, and in Year Five, when we join her in the first story, My Name is Sunshine Simpson. Sunshine struggles with self-confidence and her 'frenemy', Evie, only makes the situation worse. In the second story, Sunshine Simpson Cooks Up a Storm, Sunshine has moved into Year Six. The story deals with the nerves of preparing to move up to secondary school, her desperation to have a phone of her own, and the ups and downs of having Best Friends Forever.



It is the book that I didn't have growing up all the way back in the 1980s. As well as Sunshine dealing with doubts about her appearance and dealing with prejudice, it is also a joyful, positive celebration of heritage, including the music and food of the Caribbean, and about the rich legacy passed down from the Windrush generation. I would have loved a funny and loyal friend like Sunshine Simpson when I was growing up, and I hope today's children can find a good friend in Sunshine, too.

I've heard many people say that this is a golden age of children's literature – I agree; and a door has opened to experience much more of the world through storytelling. Who needs to spend thousands of pounds to travel around the globe when we can escape to places through our own imaginations? I hope we get to see further books from a range of diverse backgrounds, because there are exceptional stories being told.

ALL children deserve that choice.

MY NAME IS SUNSHINE SIMPSON AND SUNSHINE SIMPSON COOKS UP A STORM

BY G.M. LINTON ILLUSTRATED BY FUUJI TAKASHI

My Name is Sunshine Simpson and Sunshine Simpson Cooks Up a Storm are both out now. A new Sunshine Simpson book will publish in 2024.



BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

You may have recently heard about the passing of Benjamin Zephaniah, a revered British writer, poet, and actor. Known for his extraordinary contribution to contemporary literature, Zephaniah's unique fusion of poetry with the rhythms of reggae earned him a distinctive place in the literary world.

Born in Handsworth, Birmingham, to a Barbadian postman and a Jamaican nurse, Zephaniah's early life was marked by significant challenges. He grappled with dyslexia and left school at the age of 13 without the ability to read or write. Despite these hurdles, his incredible journey from humble beginnings to being recognised as one of Britain's top post-war writers by *The Times* in 2008 is a testament to his resilience, talent, and enduring impact on British culture and literature.

PEOPLE NEED PEOPLE BY BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH. ILLUSTRATED BY NILA AYE.

To walk to

To talk to

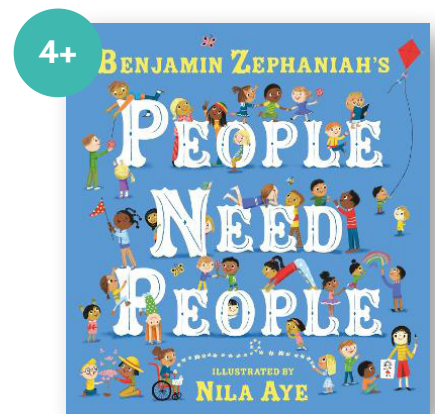
To cry and rely on,

People will always need people ...

From the creators of *Nature Trail* comes an uplifting picture book about the power of people, and the importance of connecting with others. This timely poem reminds us all to be kind to one another.

FUNKY CHICKENS BY BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH.

A reissue of the wonderfully irreverent collection of poetry for young people, touching on anything from vegetables to the Queen and from sewage to the sun.



KEY EVENTS THIS TERM:

WORLD READ ALOUD DAY 7TH FEBRUARY 2024

World Read Aloud Day is a celebration of the joys of reading aloud. It's an opportunity for both children and adults to pick up a book and read aloud to an audience. Celebrated in over 173 countries, this event was established by LitWorld, a non-profit organisation, with the aim to connect people and communities through the shared experience and power of storytelling.

WAYS TO CELEBRATE:

Family reading time:

Designate a special time for the family to gather and read aloud together. Each family member can choose a favourite book to read a part from.

Create a reading nook:

Set up a cosy corner at home dedicated to reading. Fill it with comfortable seating, good lighting, and a selection of books.

Themed readings:

Choose a theme for the day – it could be adventure, fairy tales, or science fiction – and read books related to that theme.

Character dress-up:

Make reading interactive by dressing up as characters from the book you're reading. This can be particularly fun for younger children.

Storytelling chain:

Start a story and have each family member add to it, creating a unique family tale.

Discuss the stories:

After reading, have a discussion about the story. This helps with comprehension and critical thinking skills.

Invite friends or relatives (virtually or in-person):

Extend the celebration by inviting friends or relatives to join via a video call or in person, if possible. Each guest can read a short piece or a poem.

Record a story:

Record yourselves reading a story and share it with family members who can't be there, like grandparents or cousins.

Visit the local library:

If possible, visit your local library to pick out new books to read together.

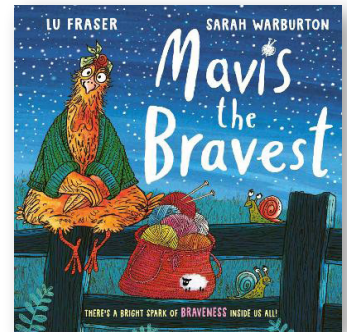
Create your own book:

Encourage your children to write and illustrate their own stories, which the family can read aloud together.

BOOKS TO READ ALOUD:**MAVIS THE BRAVEST BY LU FRASER ILLUSTRATED BY SARAH WARBURTON**

Mavis is not like her adventurous friend Marge. Mavis is a chicken who finds EVERYTHING scary (night-time and daytime and anything hairy!). So when the slumbering peace of their cosy barn is disturbed by someone trying to steal their friend Sandra the sheep, will Mavis be able to find her bright spark of braveness and save Sandra?

This adorably warm-hearted story is brim-full of humour, reassurance – and two exceedingly courageous chickens!



7+

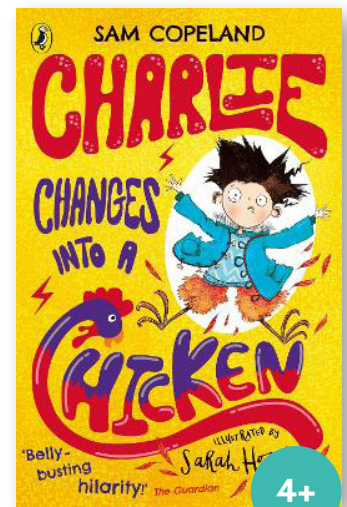
CHARLIE CHANGES INTO A CHICKEN BY SAM COPELAND

Charlie McGuffin has an incredible secret ... He can change into animals. All sorts of animals: a flea, a pigeon, even a rhino. Trouble is, he can't decide when – it only happens when he gets worried.

And right now, Charlie has quite a lot to worry about:

- * his brother (who is in hospital)
- * his parents (who are panicking about it)
- * and the school bully (who has Charlie in his sights).

And even though every kid wants a superhero power, Charlie isn't keen on changing into a chicken in the middle of the school play. So with the help of his three best friends, Charlie needs to find a way of dealing with his crazy new power – and fast!



4+

THE FUNNIEST BOY IN THE WORLD BY HELEN RUTTER

Billy Plimpton took to the stage and captivated the crowd at the triumphant ending to *The Boy Who Made Everyone Laugh*, and in the sequel, he's going to go viral. Celebrity comedian Leo Leggett takes Billy under his wing, as his new sidekick: when Leo tweets a clip of his stand-up act, Billy suddenly becomes the most famous boy in the country. At first, this is GREAT – all the kids at school think he's cool and he gets to appear on his favourite morning TV show. But Leo's motives turn out to be shady and Billy must turn the tables in a very public way...



9+

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS DAY 17TH FEBRUARY

Random Acts of Kindness Day is celebrated on the 17th February. It is a day to promote and celebrate kindness in all its forms. Random acts of kindness are simple yet powerful ways of bringing joy and positivity into the lives of others. Here are some ideas for nurturing kindness at home:

1. Share a Compliment:

Encourage your child to give a genuine compliment each day, whether it's to a family member, a friend or themselves.

2. Help a Neighbour:

Simple gestures like helping an elderly neighbour with their shopping or gardening can teach children the value of community support.

3. Create Kindness Crafts:

Spend time with your children making kindness-themed crafts such as 'thank you' cards or friendship bracelets, which they can give to friends, teachers or family members.

4. Donate to a Local Charity:

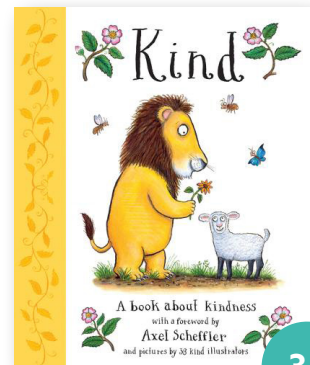
Involve your child in selecting toys, clothes or books they no longer use and donate them to a local charity.



RECOMMENDED READING

KIND BY ALISON GREEN ILLUSTRATED BY AXEL SCHEFFLER

Imagine a world where everyone is kind – how can we make that come true? With gorgeous pictures by a host of the world's top illustrators, *Kind* is a timely, inspiring picture book about the many ways children can be kind, from sharing their toys and games to helping those from other countries feel welcome.



3+

FORGOTTEN FAIRY TALES OF KINDNESS AND COURAGE

A collection of illustrated stories, featuring diverse, inspiring and empowering characters, celebrating kindness, courage and the importance of being true to yourself.

Forgotten Fairy Tales of Kindness and Courage breathes new life into a collection of once much-loved, now forgotten tales, beautifully retold by Mary Sebag-Montefiore. A disabled prince fights for his kingdom and learns the importance of understanding others. A princess finds the courage to rescue her friend from goblins. A girl steps into the world of a book, only to find what it means to be herself.



7+

LET'S FILL THIS WORLD WITH KINDNESS: TRUE TALES OF GOODWILL IN ACTION

In this uplifting collection of stories by Alexandra Stewart, children are introduced to real-life heroes and heroines who have chosen to act in kindness, even when they have been faced with terrible persecution, prejudice, disaster and illness. Aimed at empowering children who feel the weight of the world on their shoulders, these stories are designed to help readers make positive choices in their own lives by embracing kindness as their superpower.

Stories include Harriet Tubman's remarkable rescue missions to free enslaved African Americans; the French village of Le Chambon's protection of Jewish refugees under Nazi persecution during the Second World War; and the Fukushima workers who volunteered to clean up after the nuclear crisis in Japan; as well as everyday examples of kindness in sporting competitions, neighbourly acts of kindness and random acts of kindness towards complete strangers.



3+

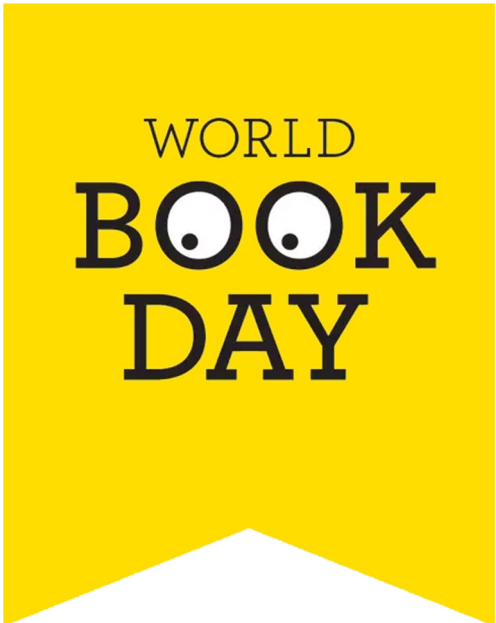
WORLD BOOK DAY

World Book Day, celebrated annually on the first Thursday of March, is a special occasion dedicated to books and reading. In 2024, it will be observed on Thursday, 7th March.

The primary goal of World Book Day is to foster a love of reading among young people. This is achieved through a variety of activities and resources that support the six fundamental pillars essential for developing a habit of reading for pleasure. These pillars are:

1. Regular exposure to being read to.
2. Easy access to books both at home and school.
3. Freedom to choose their preferred books.
4. Ample time allocated for reading.
5. A community of trusted adults and peers for sharing and discussing books.
6. Recognition of reading as an enjoyable and fun activity.

A central feature of World Book Day is the distribution of £1 book tokens. These tokens enable children and young people to obtain a free book from a special selection of World Book Day titles offered by participating booksellers. Alternatively, the tokens can be used as a discount towards any book or audio book of their choice. To ensure inclusivity, versions of all World Book Day books are also available in braille, large print, and audio formats.



WORLD
BOOK
DAY



Here are some engaging ways to mark this special day:

- 1. Themed Reading Time:** Set aside specific times for family reading. Everyone can pick books that intrigue them, creating a shared reading experience. Consider making a cosy reading nook with cushions, blankets, and some light refreshments.
- 2. Dress Up as Favourite Characters:** Family members can dress up as their beloved book characters. This is a playful way to bring stories to life and encourage discussions about different books.
- 3. Storytelling Sessions:** Take turns to narrate stories or read aloud from a favourite book. This can be especially enjoyable with younger children, helping to ignite their imagination.
- 4. Create Book-Related Crafts:** Engage in craft activities related to books or characters. For example, make bookmarks, draw scenes from a story or create character puppets.
- 5. Book Swap:** Organise a book swap within your household. Exchange books with each other, offering a chance to discover new stories and authors.
- 6. Write Your Own Stories:** Encourage everyone to write their own short stories or poems. This can be a fun way to explore creativity and storytelling skills.
- 7. Book-Themed Movie Night:** Watch a film adaptation of a beloved book. This can be followed by a discussion on the differences and similarities between the book and the film.
- 8. Visit the Library Virtually:** Many libraries offer online story sessions or author talks. Join these sessions to celebrate the day and learn more about authors and their works.
- 9. Use the World Book Day Token:** If you have received a World Book Day token, use it to get a special World Book Day book or as a discount on another book or audio book.
- 10. Reading Challenges:** Set up a reading challenge for the day or the week. This could involve reading books from different genres, authors or countries.



WORLD BOOK DAY BOOKS:

GREG THE SAUSAGE ROLL BY MARK AND ROXANNE HOYLE. ILLUSTRATED BY GARETH CONWAY.

BRRRIINNNG!!! It's the first day of school!

Greg The Sausage Roll is chilling in the bakery when a little boy comes in with his family, looking for something special to put in his lunchbox to help calm his nerves. In the blink of an eye, Greg gets scooped up and before you can say 'SAUSAGE-ROLL CALL', he's off to school for a SUPER exciting adventure!

Greg is over the moon... music, science, PE – he's ready to try it all! But can Greg, Gloria and the mini sausage rolls help the little boy make a new friend and have the BEST FIRST DAY EVER?!



MARV AND THE ULTIMATE SUPERPOWER BY ALEX FALASE-KOYA. ILLUSTRATED BY PAULA BOWLES.

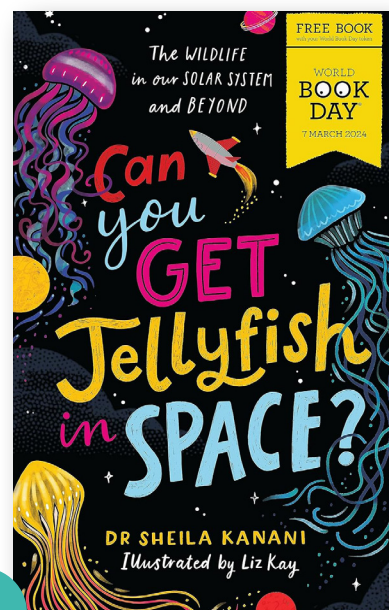
When Marvin puts on his superhero suit he becomes the unstoppable, invincible MARV! Marv can run at super speed, fly through the air, and freeze baddies in their tracks, but all these powers are nothing without kindness – the ultimate superpower! This World Book Day 2024, join Marv in five action-packed mini tales as he embarks on his latest adventures – we'll hear from his trusted robot sidekick Pixel, learn that even super-villains have moments of selflessness, and hear Marv's own super-powered advice on being kind.



CAN YOU GET JELLYFISH IN SPACE? A WORLD BOOK DAY 2024 MINI BOOK PAPERBACK BY DR SHEILA KANANI. ILLUSTRATED BY LIZ KAY. AGE 7+

You've probably heard of dogs in space. Maybe even chimpanzees. But jellyfish? Almost certainly not! Join Dr Sheila Kanani in this special World Book Day adventure, as she discovers a weird and wonderful cast of animals who have travelled into space, from Ham the chimpanzee to Félicette the cat, and the 60,000 jellyfish who have orbited the Earth (did you know you can also get jellyfish-shaped galaxies?).

You'll meet the microscopic creatures that can survive in the vacuum of space, and wonder – could aliens really exist? This fantastical journey into the wild and surprising realms of space weaves together astronomy, physics and biology, and is sure to inspire space-obsessed and animal-loving kids everywhere.



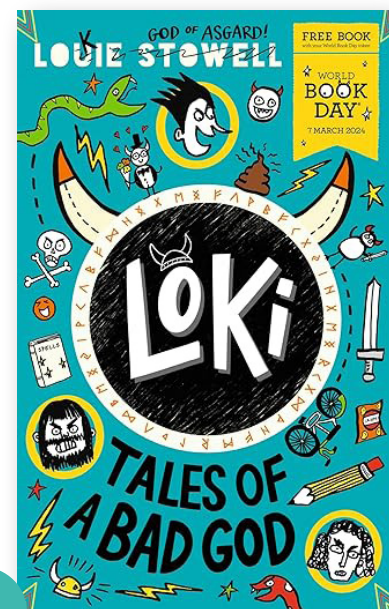
7+

LOKI: TALES OF A BAD GOD. A WORLD BOOK DAY 2024 PAPERBACK BY LOUIE STOWELL. AGE 9+

A collection of three short stories from trickster-god-turned-school-boy, Loki, star of the bestselling Loki: A Bad God's Guide series.

In this doodle-packed diary entry, Loki recounts three spectacular stories, including:

1. Triumphs (and failures) as Loki and Thor take on three tasks for Heimdall.
2. The Norse tale of Thor almost marrying a giant.
3. Loki as a robot. Sort of...



9+

WORLD POETRY DAY

World Poetry Day is celebrated on 21st March. It's a day to celebrate the creativity and diversity of poetry, a form of expression that can be both enjoyable and educational for our children. From classic rhymes to modern verses, poetry offers a unique way to explore language, emotions, and different cultures.

Here are some simple and enjoyable ways to mark the occasion:

- 1. Read Aloud Together:** Choose some poetry books and read them aloud with your children. This can include classic children's poems, funny rhymes, or even modern verse. It's a great way to enjoy the rhythm and sound of poetry together.
- 2. Write Your Own Poems:** Encourage your children to write their own poems. It doesn't have to be complex; simple rhymes or free verse about their day, dreams, or favourite things can be a fun start.
- 3. Create a Poetry Corner:** Set up a cosy corner in your home where you can display poetry books, write poems, or read aloud. Decorate it with drawings or illustrations inspired by your favourite poems.
- 4. Poetry Scavenger Hunt:** Create a scavenger hunt where clues are written in short poems. Each clue leads to a small treat or the next poetic clue, making discovery fun.
- 5. Illustrate a Poem:** After reading a poem, ask your children to draw or paint what they imagine when they hear the words. This helps them connect with the poem visually.
- 6. Poetry-themed Snacks:** Make snacks that are inspired by poems or poets. For example, create a snack that looks like a shape mentioned in a poem or bake cookies and use icing to write short lines from poems on them.
- 7. Watch Poetry Readings:** Look for online poetry readings or animated poems for children. These can be a great way to hear poems read by different voices and perhaps even the poets themselves.
- 8. Share Poems with Family and Friends:** Encourage your children to call a relative or a friend and recite a poem they've learnt or written. It's a lovely way to share the joy of poetry with others.
- 9. Explore Poems from Around the World:** Use this day to explore poetry from different cultures. It's a wonderful way to teach children about diversity and the universality of emotions and experiences expressed through poetry.
- 10. Discuss the Poems:** After reading a poem, talk about it with your children. Ask them what they think it means, how it makes them feel, and which parts they liked best. This can help develop critical thinking and emotional intelligence.

Here are some interactive ideas for celebrating World Poetry Day:

- Waterstones Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho has launched [Poetry Prompts](#), a series of weekly bitesize videos designed to celebrate and demystify the reading and writing of poetry.
- Watch Michael Rosen perform his poems and stories on the [Michael Rosen Video Channel](#).
- Authors Live on Demand has a bank of free recorded events featuring poets performing and talking about their work. See the selection [here](#).
- Find poetry recommendations and reviews at [Books for Topics](#) and [Just Imagine](#).
- Explore the bank of poems for students of all ages on the [Poetry by Heart](#) website and find out how to get involved with next year's [Poetry by Heart poetry speaking competition](#).
- Generate ideas for poetry writing with a jar of [Poetry Stones](#).

RECOMMENDED READING

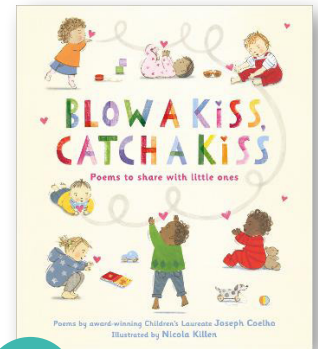
BLOW A KISS, CATCH A KISS BY JOSEPH COELHO. ILLUSTRATED BY NICOLA KILLEN.

A beautifully illustrated anthology of forty-four short poems by award-winning Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho, designed to be shared together.

Blow a kiss, catch a kiss when we are apart.

Blow a kiss, catch a kiss put it in your heart.

From Eye Caterpillars to The Journey Game, and from Dancing Families to Dreamtime, this collection of fun and heart-warming poems from award-winning children's poet Joseph Coelho are perfect for sharing everyday feelings and experiences.



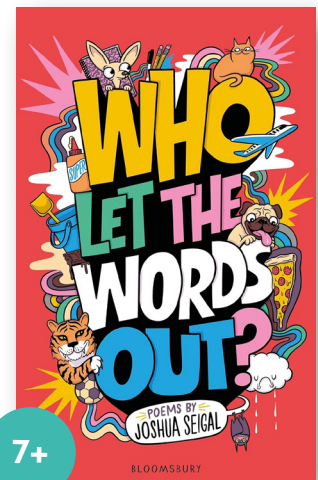
3+

WHO LET THE WORDS OUT? BY JOSHUA SEIGAL. ILLUSTRATED BY CHRIS PIASCNIK.

A marvellous new collection of poems by Joshua Seigal, winner of the Laugh Out Loud Awards – the UK's only prize for funny children's books.

Someone has let the words out... and they're going to have some fun!

In this brand-new collection of poems from award-winning poet Joshua Seigal, words take on a whole new meaning; enter a world of creative word play with silly, funny and downright hilarious poems! With poems about cuddling tigers, pesky pet fleas and even what to do if your teacher is ever turned into a chicken.

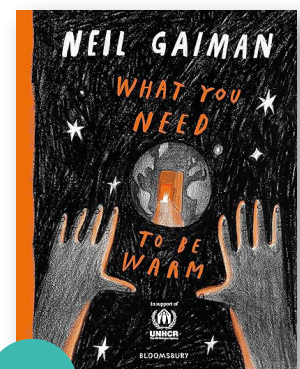


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WHAT YOU NEED TO BE WARM BY NEIL GAIMAN.

Sometimes it only takes a stranger in a dark place... to say we have the right to be here, to make us warm in the coldest season.

In 2019, Neil Gaiman asked his Twitter followers: *What reminds you of warmth?* Over 1,000 responses later, Neil began to weave replies from across the world into a poem in aid of the UNHCR's winter appeal. It revealed our shared desire to feel safe, welcome and warm in a world that can often feel frightening and lonely.



9+

PiXL Reading

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