

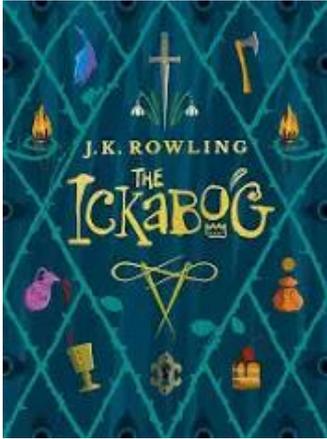


Books of the Year Reading Recommendation List



There have been so many great books published this year, far too many to choose from. These are recommended alongside the lovable classics we all enjoy.



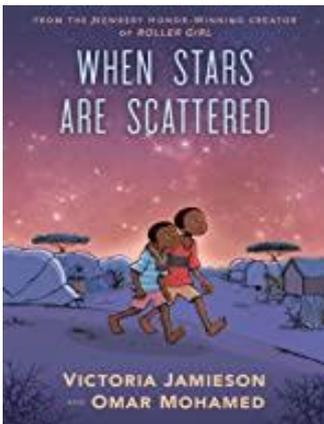


The Ickabog is coming... A mythical monster, a kingdom in peril, an adventure that will test two children's bravery to the limit. Discover a brilliantly original fairy tale about the power of hope and friendship to triumph against all odds, from one of the world's best storytellers. The kingdom of Cornucopia was once the happiest in the world. It had plenty of gold, a king with the finest moustaches you could possibly imagine, and butchers, bakers and cheese mongers whose exquisite foods made a person dance with delight when they ate them. Everything was perfect – except for the misty Marshlands to the north which, according to legend, were home to the monstrous Ickabog. Anyone sensible knew that the Ickabog was just a myth, to scare children into behaving. But the funny thing about myths is that sometimes they take on a life of their own. A beautifully written story for everyone to enjoy and I believe will become a children's classic in years to come.

Books of the Year Reading List

When Stars are Scattered

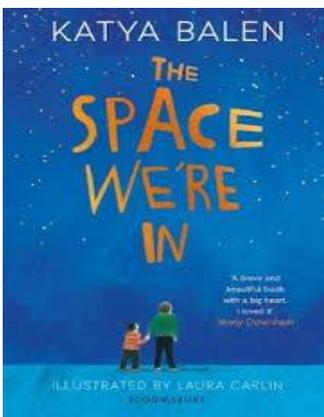
by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed



Nominated for the Carnegie Medal 2021 . A heart-wrenching true story about life in a Kenyan refugee camp that will restore your faith in real-life happy endings. Omar and his brother Hassan, two Somali boys, have spent a long time in the Dadaab refugee camp. Separated from their mother, they are looked after by a friendly stranger. Life in the camp isn't always easy. The hunger is constant . . . but there's football to look forward to, and now there's a chance Omar will get to go to school . . . With a heart-wrenching fairytale ending, this incredible true story is brought to life by Victoria's stunning illustrations.

The Space We're In

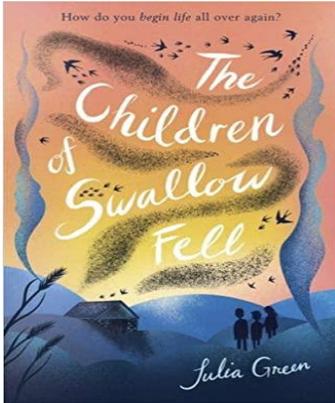
By Katya Balen, illustrated by Laura Carlin



Nominated for the Carnegie Medal 2021. We are her world and her universe and her space and her stars and her sky and her galaxy and her cosmos too Frank is ten. He likes cottage pie and football and cracking codes. Max is five. He eats only Quavers and some colours are too bright for him and if he has to wear a new T-shirt, he melts down down down. Sometimes Frank wishes Mum could still do huge paintings of stars and asteroids like she used to, but since Max was born, she just doesn't have time. When tragedy hits Frank and Max's lives like a comet, can Frank piece together a universe in which he and Max aren't light years apart? This jaw-dropping, heartbreaking and hopeful novel from debut author Katya Balen will remind you we are all made of stardust.

The Children of Swallow Fell

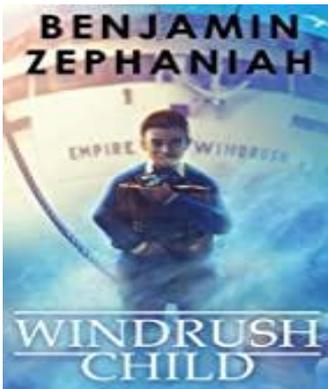
by Julia Green



The world's in trouble. When war comes to the heart of the Italian city where Isabella lives with her family, everything changes. She makes the long journey with her dad to a safer place - the old house where he grew up in the north of England. Isabella must adapt to a completely different life. No shops, no electricity, no phone signal. No friends or neighbours - until she meets two 'wild' children. Rowan and Kelda live by themselves, hidden from the world, survivors of the sickness that swept through the valley. When Dad fails to return from a trip to find food, Isabella has to work out what to do and how to survive. Together, can the children build a new life, a life for the future? What do we really need for a happy life?

Windrush Child

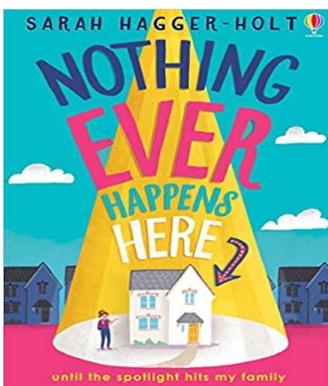
by Benjamin Zephaniah



Leonard is shocked when he arrives with his mother in the port of Southampton. His father is a stranger to him, it's cold and even the Jamaican food doesn't taste the same as it did back home in Maroon Town. But his parents have brought him here to try to make a better life, so Leonard does his best not to complain, to make new friends, to do well at school - even when people hurt him with their words and with their fists. How can a boy so far from home learn to enjoy his new life when so many things count against him? 'Zephaniah pulls no punches in his depictions of the racism that Leonard suffers both at school and in the streets in a powerful, moving account of family and fitting in.

Nothing Ever Happens Here

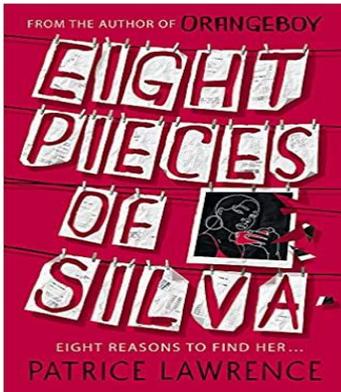
by Sarah Hagger-Holt



Nominated for the Carnegie Medal 2021. Approaching issues of gender and sexuality with a fresh, vibrant slant, *Nothing Ever Happens Here* focuses on the fallout from Izzy's father coming out as a trans woman. Handled with sensitivity and refreshing humour, Hagger-Holt's debut children's novel is a tribute to inclusivity and acceptance that speaks brilliantly effectively to a vitally important topic.

Eight Pieces of Silva

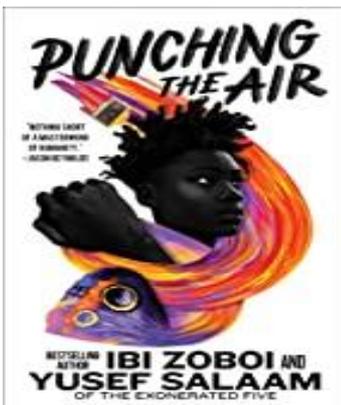
by Patrice Lawrence



Nominated for the Carnegie Medal 2021. Can Becks piece the jigsaw together and find her sister before Silva loses herself? Becks and Silva are opposites, but bond over their mutual obsession with K-pop. When Becks' mum and stepdad go on honeymoon to Japan, Becks and Silva are left alone. Except, Silva disappears. Becks ventures into the forbidden territory of Silva's room and finds the first of eight clues that help her discover her sister's secret life.

Punching the Air

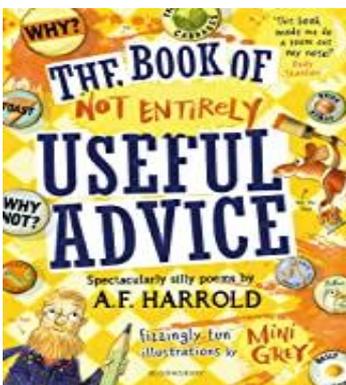
by Ibi Zoboi with Yusef Salaam



From award-winning, bestselling author Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam comes a powerful novel in verse about a boy who is wrongfully incarcerated. Perfect for fans of Noughts & Crosses and The Hate U Give. One fateful night, an altercation in a gentrifying neighbourhood escalates into tragedy. 'Boys just being boys' turns out to be true only when those boys are white. Suddenly, at just sixteen years old, Amal Shahid's bright future is upended: he is convicted of a crime he didn't commit and sent to prison. Despair and rage almost sink him until he turns to the refuge of his words, his art. This never should have been his story. But can he change it?

The Book of Not Entirely Useful Advice

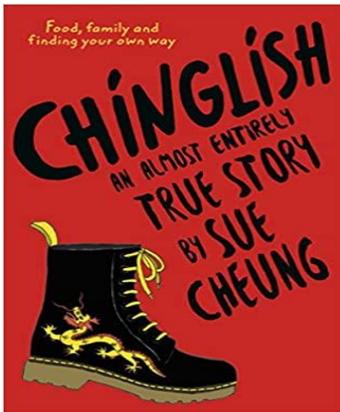
by A.F. Harrold



A riotous celebration of words and a modern take on cautionary tales - featuring advice on parrots, gravy, mathematics, castles (bouncy), spiders, vegetables, breakfast and removing ducks from soup. Not everything in this book is necessarily good advice, and not all of it is sensible advice. (But if you take the bad or un-sensible advice and don't follow it, then it may become useful advice in its own way.) Filled with colour illustrations and packed with silly rhymes, witty wordplay and thought-provoking story poems, this collection will delight children of all ages.

Chinglish

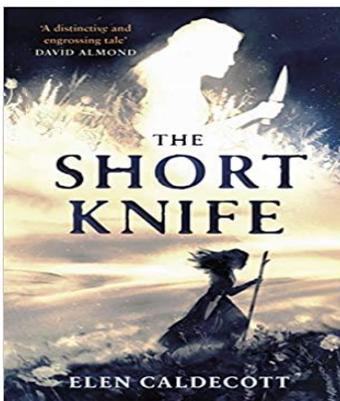
by Sue Cheung



Nominated for the Carnegie Medal 2021 . Jo Kwan is a teenager growing up in 1980s Coventry with her annoying little sister, too-cool older brother, a series of very unlucky pets and utterly bonkers parents. But unlike the other kids at her new school or her posh cousins, Jo lives above her parents' Chinese takeaway. And things can be tough - whether it's unruly customers or the snotty popular girls who bully Jo for being different. All Jo dreams of is breaking free and forging a career as an artist. Told in diary entries and doodles, Jo's brilliantly funny observations about life, family and char siu make for a searingly honest portrayal of life on the other side of the takeaway counter.

The Short Knife

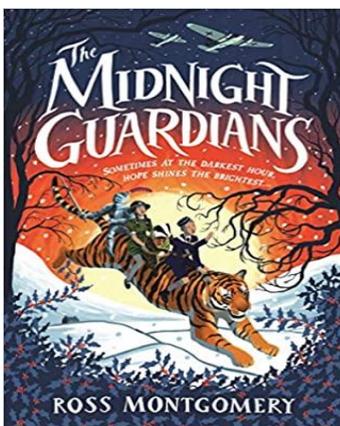
by Elen Caldecott



Nominated for the Carnegie Medal 2021. It is the year 454AD. The Roman Empire has withdrawn from Britain, throwing it into the chaos of the Dark Ages. Mai has been kept safe by her father and her sister, Haf. But when Saxon warriors arrive at their farm, the family is forced to flee to the hills where British warlords lie in wait. Can Mai survive in a dangerous world where speaking her mother tongue might be deadly, and where even the people she loves the most can't be trusted?

The Midnight Guardians

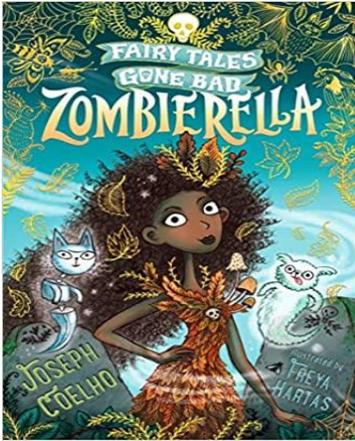
by Ross Montgomery



When Col's childhood imaginary friends come to life, he discovers a world where myths and legends are real. Accompanied by his guardians - a six-foot tiger, a badger in a waistcoat and a miniature knight - Col must race to Blitz-bombed London to save his sister. But there are darker forces at work, even than the Nazi bombings. Soon Col is pursued by the terrifying Midwinter King, who is determined to bring an eternal darkness down over everything.

Zombierella

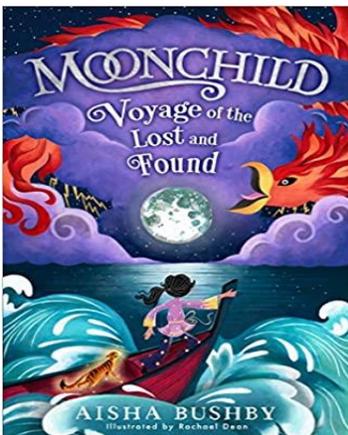
by Joseph Coelho



Providing a deliciously dark twist on the story of Cinderella – Coelho and Hartas’s gothic extravaganza sends our undead heroine off in pursuit of the cruel sisters who tormented her in life. A yellow moon hangs in a satin sky the night Cinderella, barefoot and in hand-me-downs, slips at the top of the stairs ... and dies bones and, for three nights only, Cinderella goes forth as ZOMBIERELLA. With her skin as cold as ice and her faithful horse Lumpkin back by her side, can she seek revenge on her three cruel, fake sisters, once and for all? Crawl out of the grave and step into your mushroom carriage for this haunting and humorous adventure of the undead girl searching for her happily ever after.

Moonchild: Voyage of the Lost and Found

by Aisha Bushby



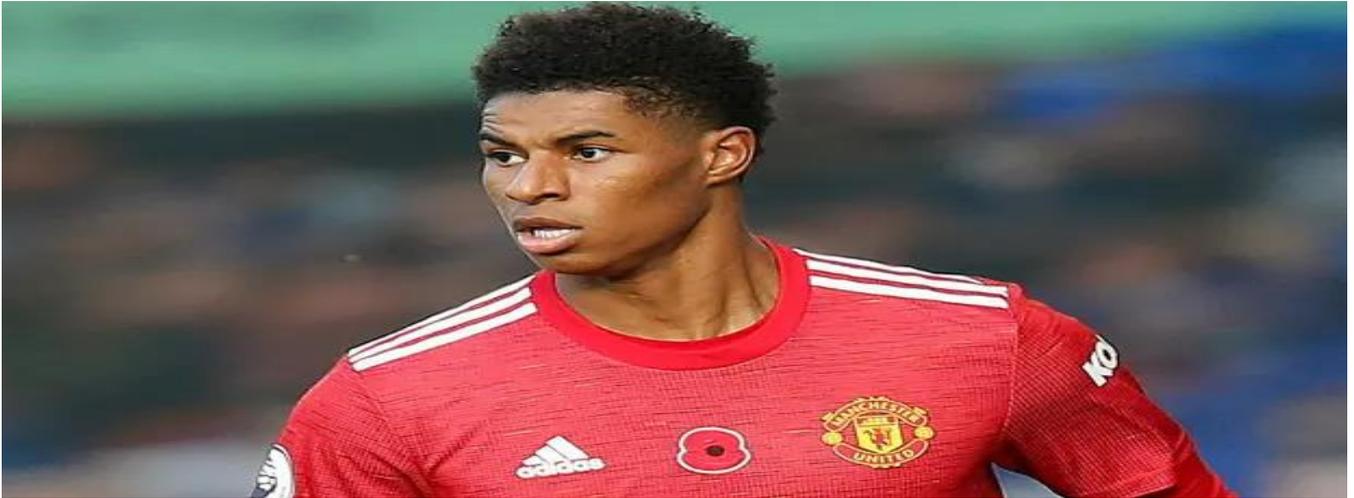
Nominated for the Carnegie Medal 2021. The Sahar Peninsula lies just beyond the horizon, but no maps will take you there, nor can it be charted by gazing up at the stars, or down at a compass. Twelve-year-old Amira has only ever known a life at sea with her sea-witch mothers, so when their ship is wrecked in a great storm, Amira is delighted to have an opportunity to explore land - accompanied by her best friend Namur - a jinn in cat form. Amira soon finds a boy who has a jinn like her, and learns that their spirit companions are connected to the mysterious storm that gets stronger each day. When Namur goes missing Amira discovers she has to visit a magical place; a place where lost things can be found. But will Amira also discover her own destiny, and find out what it truly means to be a Moonchild?

When Life Gives You Mangoes

by Kereen Getten



Nothing much happens in Sycamore, the small village where Clara lives - at least, that's how it looks. She loves eating ripe mangoes fallen from trees, running outside in the rainy season and escaping to her secret hideout with her best friend Gaynah. There's only one problem - she can't remember anything that happened last summer. When a quirky girl called Rudy arrives from England, everything starts to change. Gaynah stops acting like a best friend, while Rudy and Clara roam across the island and uncover an old family secret. As the summer reaches its peak and the island storms begin, Clara's memory starts to return and she must finally face the truth of what happened last year.



Top five books for children recommended by Marcus Rashford

Malorie Blackman – Noughts & Crosses

Described as one of the “great contemporary authors writing for older children and teens”, Blackman’s Noughts & Crosses series is considered [a contemporary classic](#) and explores power and prejudice in a society divided by skin colour.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery – The Little Prince

The classic story ranked highly in a [Penguin readers’ poll](#) of favourite children’s books with fans calling it “a beautiful lesson about the beauty of life and relationships, so precious and fragile at the same time”.

Ellen Raskin – The Westing Game

Gone Girl author Gillian Flynn named The Westing Game as a book that “[completely charmed](#)” her as a child and got her hooked reading. Flynn is one of a number of high-profile fans of the mystery novel and said she still reads Ellen Raskin’s 1978 book once a year.

Matthew A Cherry and Vashti Harrison – Hair Love

Inspired by the experiences of a group of young parents and based on the Oscar-winning short film, this story of a father learning to do his daughter’s hair is part of a [new generation of children’s stories told through a black lens](#).



