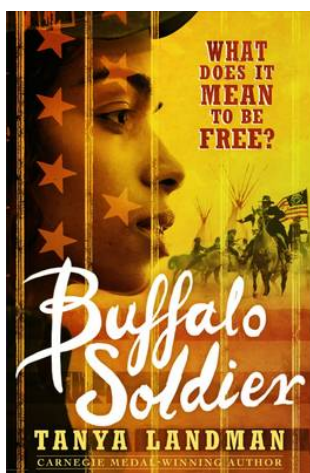


## A selection of books especially selected for children in Year 9 (13 - 14 year olds) of average reading ability for the 2024/25 academic year.

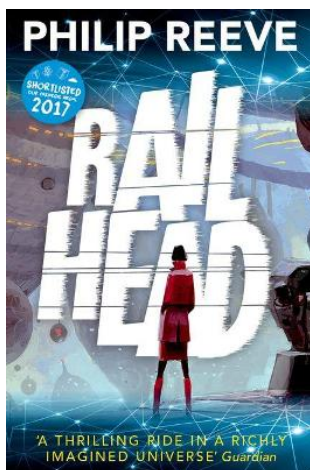
If your child is a competent reader or has read all these titles then try the books from the Year 10 list. Alternatively if these books are a little challenging try books from the Year 8 list. Our overall mission is to promote reading for pleasure with quality texts that are perfectly pitched for the age group and the curriculum. We have particularly avoided blockbusters, classic or set texts, known to everyone, so that we can include poetry, stunning information texts and inspirational books in which all children and young people can find themselves reflected.



### Buffalo Soldier

**Author:** Tanya Landman **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/04/2014

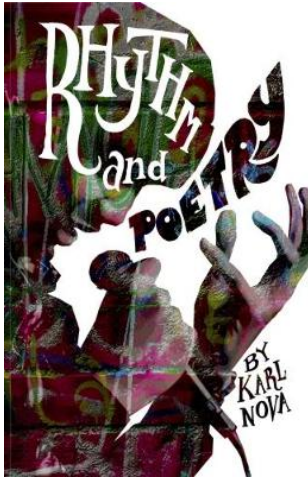
**Winner of the 2015 CILIP Carnegie Medal** What does freedom really mean? Tanya Landman pushes back against all kinds of prejudice in this action-packed, emotionally rich and vividly told story about one girl's struggle to find out. When Charley is freed from slavery at the end of the Civil War between the Yankees and the Confederates she imagines a new world of unlimited opportunities. Instead, she finds a life that is more dangerous than ever before. Her only way to survive is to disguise herself as a boy and join the army. But the army, like everywhere else, is riddled with prejudice and danger. It is only when Charley is sent to fight against the Apache Indians, another much discriminated against group, that she begins to learn what it could mean to be free. For more books on this theme head over to our sister site, LoveReading4Schools topic list - The Slave Trade



### Railhead

**Author:** Philip Reeve **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/08/2016

Set in a shining future world, where trains rumble not just through towns and countryside but across whole galaxies, Philip Reeve's new novel drenches its readers with extraordinary scenes, images and ideas. Zen Starling is a petty thief; offered the chance of a brand new life in return for carrying out one small job of course he accepts, and is immediately caught up in a war that could destroy his entire world. Beautifully written, brilliantly inventive, this gripping adventure, a combination of sci-fi utopia, conspiracy thriller and romance, will set hearts racing. Thoughtful readers prepared to take their time will find echoes of many other great works of fiction, all of which add to Railhead's richness. And who could resist the trains - 'the old, wise trains of the Network, barracuda-beautiful, dreaming their dreams of speed and distance as they raced from world to world'? It will turn us all into railheads.

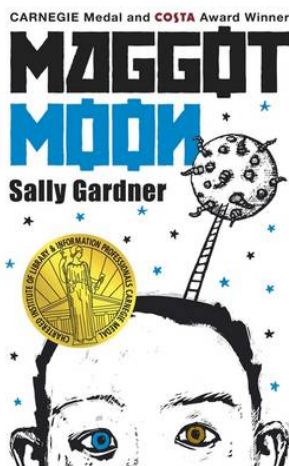


## Rhythm and Poetry

**Author:** Karl Nova **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 27/07/2017

### Winner of the Centre for Literacy in Primary Poetry Award 2018

The first published collection from Hip Hop poet Karl Nova has a refreshing directness, honesty and authenticity. Many of the poems are drawn from the workshops he does with children and young people as well as from his performances. Notes accompanying the poems give insights into his process and encourage children to believe that they are poets too. The poems capture the rap beat and tone, demonstrating the currency and significance of rap as a form, especially for young people. A book that opens doors.



## Maggot Moon

**Author:** Sally Gardner **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/01/2013

Winner of the two most prestigious children's book awards - the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2013 and the Children's Costa Award 2012. Sally Gardner tells a story that is rich in drama and ideas as Standish Treadwell, an unlikely hero, takes on the vicious forces of the repressive motherland in a novel set in a bleak world that is redeemed only by the very human qualities of some of the survivors. Standish and his remarkable grandfather keep going, eking out a living after the disappearance of Standish's parents. Standish struggles at school and is the victim of relentless bullying. But then he finds a friend in the newly arrived Hector. When Hector is taken, the only hope lies in Standish... Luckily, Standish has just the qualities that are needed. September 2012 Book of the Month.



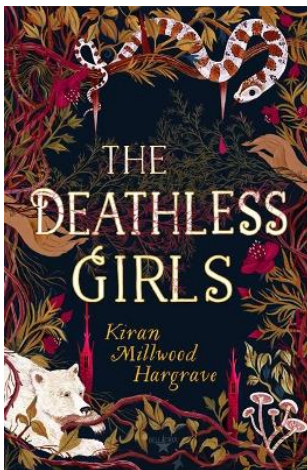
## And the Stars Were Burning Brightly

**Author:** Danielle Jawando **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/03/2020

### Shortlisted for the YA Book Prize 2021 | Longlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2021 | March 2020 Debut of the Month

The author has revealed just how much of this searing novel is based upon her own experiences at school which lends credibility and authenticity to the situations described, but she has also created utterly believable and relatable characters with truly authentic teen voices and dialogue. Within a few pages we are thrust into the raw pain of grief and utter disbelief in the aftermath of a teen suicide. The narration alternates between 15-year-old Nathan, the younger brother who discovered Al's body and Megan the school friend who shared Al's passion for art, but each chapter is cleverly introduced by the voice of Al himself. Both Nathan and Megan are wracked with guilt, blaming themselves for

letting Al down. Nathan, by not picking up the call from Al on that fateful afternoon and Megan by sticking with the 'cool' kids and not acknowledging Al as a friend. Nathan wants to understand why Al was driven to suicide and Megan wants to prove to the world how special he was. Gradually we develop a deep and nuanced understanding of their growing relationship and of all the characters involved: be they friends, family or even 'villains'. There are no cardboard cyphers here. The thought provoking, intelligent writing also reveals the overwhelming influence of social media on the lives of young people. Megan can use Instagram and Facebook to positively celebrate Al's artwork, but together they discover the extremes of cyberbullying he had been exposed to and which ultimately pushed Al over the edge, helped by the casual spite which colours so much daily interaction on social media. This devastating, truthful and important novel is an essential school purchase, and will no doubt provoke valuable discussion both in classrooms and between peers. Find out more about the YA Book Prize including all the shortlisted titles.

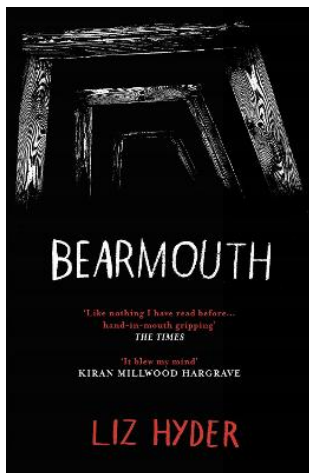


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## **The Deathless Girls**

**Author:** Kiran Millwood Hargrave **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 19/09/2019

Born under a blood moon, twin sister travellers, Kizzy - a brave, voluptuous bear dancer - and Lil - slight in frame and blessed with a beautiful voice - are captured after their camp is ransacked on the eve of their divining, the coming-of-age rite that would have seen them learn their fates. With many kinsfolk slain, the twins are enslaved by Boyar Valcar and set to work in the castle kitchens, where rumours about the notorious Dragon loom large over all the female slaves. Separated when Kizzy is snatched away, Lil escapes to search for her sister with Mira, a fellow slave. As they race against time to save Kizzy, encountering the terrifying strigoi (undead) along the way, powerful desires are awakened, which adds extra conflict as the story winds to its transfixing climax. Driven by the sisters' passion and revenge, loyalty and love, and powerful on the persecution of travellers, this is a dazzling female-focused reimagining of vampire legends, with the writing infused with a lyrical earthiness throughout.

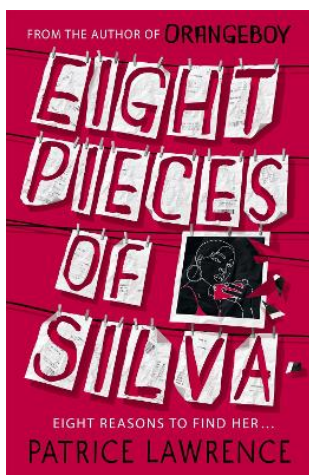


## Bearmouth

**Author:** Liz Hyder **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/02/2020

**October 2019 Debut of the Month | Longlisted for the Branford Boase Award 2020**

Told in narrator Newt's distinctive phonetic English, this dark debut dazzles with originality and delivers a potent case for combatting inequality. Bearmouth is home to a grim mining business, where men and children labour under inhumane conditions to make their Master wealthy. They work under the earth, under the omniscient Mayker who - so workers are told - "sen us down into the dark Earf/To atone for the sins o our forefarvers an muvvers". Naïve Newt hasn't seen daylight in years, but takes pride in being taught to read and write by fatherly Thomas, blithely accepting this lot until the arrival of new boy Devlin. Devlin's talk of "revolushun" makes Newt feel that things are "unravellin slowly slowly lyke a bootlayce comin all undun." Life in Bearmouth is beyond bleak, but the sparks of Devlin's revolutionary spirit catch light and drive Thomas to ask the Master for "more coinage" for the workers, to question why they must pay for essential clothes, to demand to know when the promised safety lamps are coming. Then when tragedy strikes, Newt too realises that things "ent bloody well ryte" and takes on Devlin's insurgent tendencies, with explosive effects. Emotionally engaging, this searingly original novel about standing up to abuses of power and fighting for freedom is radiant with story-telling excellence. The Branford Boase judges said: 'Astounding!'; 'I loved every single second'; 'plot, story and voice are superb'; 'I was totally invested in the characters'; 'interesting, challenging and original'.



## Eight Pieces of Silva

**Author:** Patrice Lawrence **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/08/2020

**Shortlisted for the YA Book Prize 2021** From the multi-award-winning author of Orangeboy, an addictive mystery that refuses to let you go long after you turn the final page. Can Becks piece the jigsaw together and find her sister before Silva loses herself? Find out more about the YA Book Prize including all the shortlisted titles.

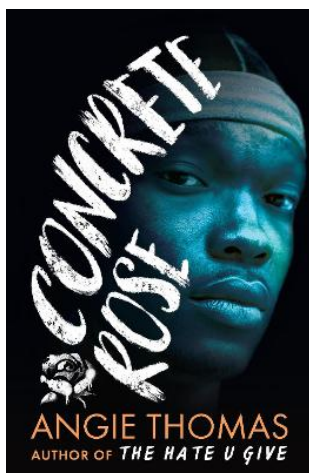




## First Day of My Life

**Author:** Lisa Williamson **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/07/2021

Voiced by three unforgettable characters – Frankie, Jojo, and Ram, Frankie’s ex boyfriend - whose lives are inextricably bound by unexpected, life-changing circumstances, this impactful novel sparkles with heart, hope and a riveting storyline. Jojo and Frankie have been best friends since forever. Both promising actresses, their lives are on the brink of new horizons, so when Jojo doesn’t turn up to collect her GCSE results, Frankie is frantic with worry. Then, when she eventually hears from Jojo, and also hears a baby crying in the background, Frankie puts two and two together to get six. Could Jojo be responsible for the stolen baby that’s being reported on the local news? Fearing the worst, Frankie does what she must for her dear friend. She tracks her down and discovers an unimaginable truth that truly tests their relationship. Radiant with uplifting portrayals of friendship, and demonstrating that it’s possible to find a way through even the most seemingly impossible situations, this poignant page-turner packs a whole lot of punch in the author’s inimitably empathetic style. Of particular note is the way the novel shows that adults don’t always have the right answer, that life can be confusing no matter what your age, which demonstrates Williamson’s singular respect for her YA readers - she never talks down, and always writes in a spirit of openness.

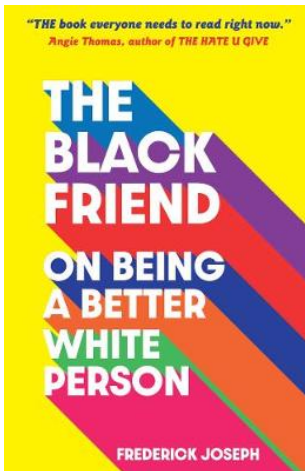


## Concrete Rose

**Author:** Angie Thomas **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 12/01/2021

This book is set 17 years before the action in Angie Thomas’s *The Hate U Give* – showing how Star’s father in *THUG* became the man he is. Maverick is an average teenage boy in the Garden Heights area – selling drugs to help the budget at home as his father is in prison. His Mum works two and sometimes three jobs to try to make ends meet – and Maverick knows he needs to graduate High School to stand any chance of becoming the man he wants to be. That is, until he discovers he is a father, and the baby’s mother can’t cope and hands baby Seven (named after Maverick’s lucky number) to Maverick to care for. The difficulties of being a single parent, and the strong community who try to rally to Maverick’s aid are wonderfully depicted in this powerful exploration of what it is to be a teen parent. But, it is never so simple as the community pulling together, Maverick also has to turn away from his gang life, standalone – but then his cousin Dre, who was more like a brother, is killed in a gangland shooting and dies in Maverick’s arms. This is such a powerful book – totally honest in its appreciation of the difficulties of life, but so filled with humanity you cannot help but root for Maverick, even when you are scared what he might choose to do. This is one of those books that stay with you – that will change people’s thinking, highlighting as it does some of the social injustices of growing up young and black in today’s world. Read it, then read *The Hate u Give*

– if you haven't already read it!

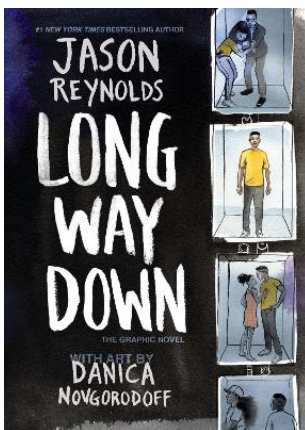


## The Black Friend: On Being a Better White Person

**Author:** Frederick Joseph **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/04/2021

**Longlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2022 Information Books**

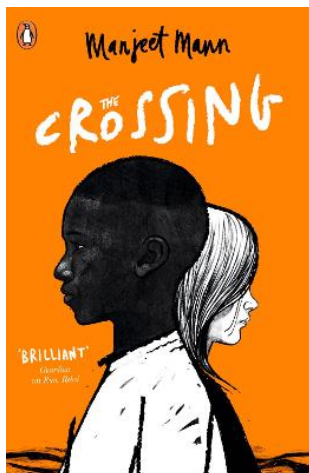
**3-14** Highly educative but engaging, personal and friendly and unpatronising tone makes this an essential read.



## Long Way Down The Graphic Novel

**Author:** Jason Reynolds **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 19/11/2020

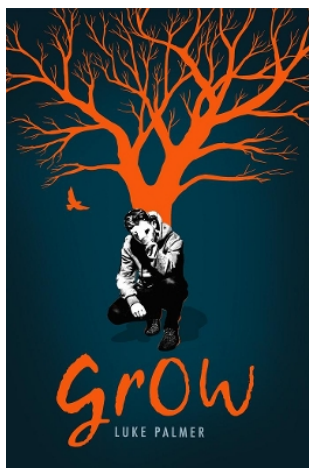
**Winner of the Yoto Kate Greenaway Medal 2022** Shortlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2019, Jason Reynolds's original Long Way Down novel-in-verse (stunningly illustrated by Chris Priestley) has here been adapted into a glorious graphic novel. The story is as gripping and moving as ever, its atmosphere perhaps even more poignant courtesy of Danica Novgorodoff's impactful watercolour illustrations. It's an incredibly poignant story about breaking the cycles of brutal gang culture that will surely now find an even bigger audience. Two days ago fifteen-year-old Will witnessed the fatal shooting of his big brother. The initial smart of his grief is evoked with characteristic cut-to-the-point lyricism, hauntingly portrayed in a murky, lilac-hued street scene: "When bad things happen, we can usually look up and see the moon, big and bright, shining over us. But when Shawn died, the moon was off." Tragically, Will knows the drill in these situations - no crying, no snitching, take revenge. "The Rules weren't meant to be broken. They were meant for the broken to follow," so Will gets his brother's gun and heads into the elevator to exact revenge on Shawn's murderer. But at each level Will encounters figures from his past, among them his friend Buck who died last year, Dani who was shot in a playground, his Uncle Mark, his father. So many lives lost to violence, and their reappearance causes Will to think; to question his plans and question the rules.



## The Crossing

**Author:** Manjeet Mann **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 03/06/2021

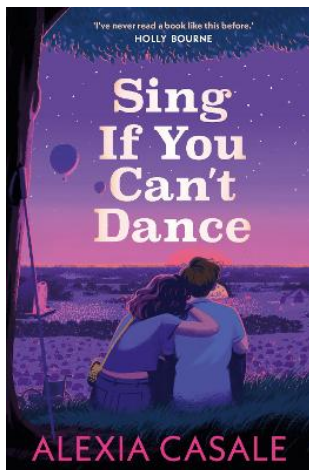
**Winner of the Costa Children's Book Award 2021 | Shortlisted for the Yoto Carnegie Medal 2022 | Shortlisted for the 2022 CLIPPA (CLPE Children's Poetry Award) | Winner of the UKLA Book Awards 2023: 11 - 14** The premise of this fascinating book is two teenagers from opposite sides of the world who form a connection through odd circumstances. Natalie has just lost her Mum to cancer and struggles to find a calm place in the world, whilst her brother reacts by rebelling and joining a hate filled far right anti-refugee protest and action group. Sammy has had to leave his home in Eritrea on the chance of a new life in Europe – running from conscription into the army – which is a form of slavery in his home country. Both characters have huge issues to face. Sammy's seem more obviously dangerous and overwhelming, though Natalie's are equally as difficult – without the imminent danger. Told through a narrative poem using both voices to alternately express their fears, dilemmas and friendships this is a book you really can't put down. You have to know if Sammy and Natalie do get to meet. As the plot carries you along you also want to know more about the plight of refugees and the horrific characters that exploit them in many many ways. Natalie's decision to swim the channel to raise funds for the refugee charities creates a counterpoint in the narrative. The detail of her struggles and training plan seem an unlikely text for poetry – but it works! The author says "I wanted to make sense of what I was seeing, I wanted to do something that would help build empathy and understanding." She has most emphatically succeeded in this aim. This is such a profound story of hope, grief, and strength – I do recommend it to all. Be aware you will weep, too.



## Grow

**Author:** Luke Palmer **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/07/2021

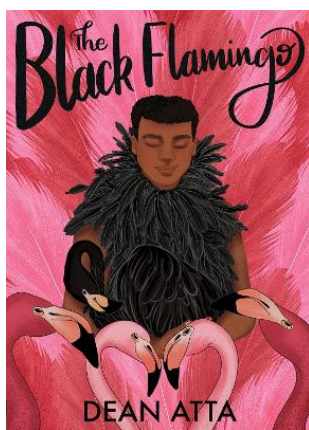
**Shortlisted for The Branford Boase Award 2022** Sixteen-year-old Josh's father was killed in the suicide bombing of a train, while he was going to work. This challenging novel chronicles the grief of Josh and his mother and also the attempt to radicalise Josh made by a group of white supremacists. The judges for The Branford Boase Award commented: 'An unflinching exploration of an important subject'; 'I felt really immersed in it'; 'a powerful read'; 'there's a sense of raw newness'.



## Sing If You Can't Dance

**Author:** Alexia Casale **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/07/2023

If ever a character had the right to be grumpy, sarcastic, and difficult it would be Ven. At 15 she was on the cusp of making the big time with her dance group when she collapsed on stage. Chronic pain and disability have taken that life away from her. But as she says, 'I am the life I make happen' and it is her choice that we never get to hear her diagnosis, because she will not be defined by that. She is still the endearing, loyal, funny, talented daughter, and friend and this is a thoroughly enjoyable teenage summer festival romance, with all the twists and turns, misunderstandings and revelations that readers will love. But what is so outstanding is the authenticity of the disability representation. While we can all feel her anger at things that should and could be better, Ven is no heroic victim wanting pity. Thrown together in a singing group with Ren, the boy who literally and painfully bumped into her life, Ven slowly realises that she still has options. This group, with all its bickering and individuals with their own problems, could be another chance for her dreams. None of this is mawkish or sentimental. These are all beautifully realised and authentic teenagers and even more refreshingly the adults are actually, with exceptions, supporting, loving and trying to help! Ven's unique and unforgettable voice tells a story with a message of resilience and determination to find a new path when life sets you back, that we all need to hear. A book which will allow young people living with disability to see themselves and that will give everyone greater empathy and understanding as well as being a truly enjoyable, entertaining read, is a book that all libraries must have.



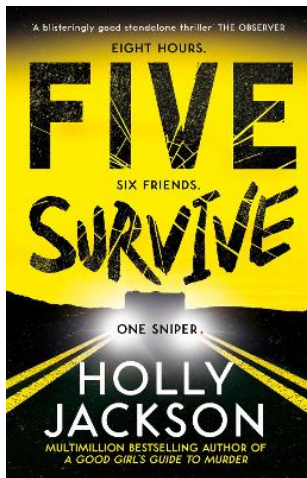
## The Black Flamingo

**Author:** Dean Atta **Format:** Hardback **Release Date:** 08/08/2019

**Shortlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2020 | August 2019 Debut of the Month** Uplifting and dazzlingly unique, this coming-of-age treasure explores identity and sexuality with an emboldening message to remember that "you have the right to be you". As a young Barbie-loving boy, mixed race Michael wonders if he's "only half" of everything, to which his mother poignantly replies: "Don't let anyone tell you/that you are half-black/and half-white. Half-Cypriot/ and half-Jamaican./ You are a full human being." But he doesn't feel like a whole human being. Dubbed a "queerdo and weirdo" by bullies and subjected to "batty bwoy" taunts through his teenage years, he leaves London for Brighton University with hope in his heart. But even here Michael feels "like Goldilocks; trying to find a group of people/the perfect fit for me". He doesn't feel black enough for the Caribbean Society, or Greek enough for Hellenic Society, or queer enough for the LGBT Society. Then Michael finally finds a fit at Drag Society where he becomes The Black Flamingo, "someone fabulous, wild and strong. With or without a costume on." Michael's journey is complex, moving and told with a raw vitality that makes the soul soar and the heart sing, with Anshika



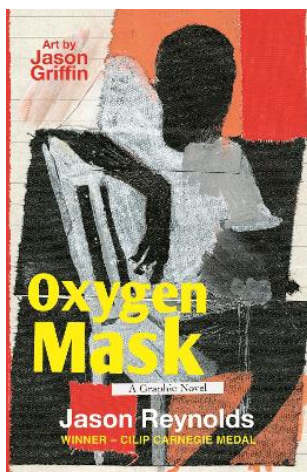
Khullar's magnificent illustrations and the smart design adding further depth, prompting the reader to pause for thought as his story requires.



## Five Survive

**Author:** Holly Jackson **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 20/07/2023

**Shortlisted for the YA Book Prize 2023** An unmissable and suspense-filled thriller from the queen of UKYA crime novels.



## Oxygen Mask A Graphic Novel

**Author:** Jason Reynolds **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/06/2022

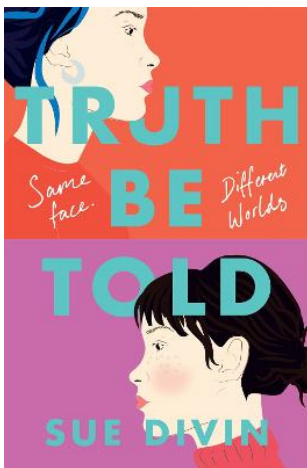
**July 2022 Graphic Novel of the Month** This remarkable collaboration between Carnegie medal winning Jason Reynolds and acclaimed artist Jason Griffin has created both a lasting memorial to what the world endured in the pandemic of 2020 and a testament to the enduring horror of racism and what humans do to each other and the world. Printed on yellowed lined paper with every appearance of a notebook it looks and feels like an artefact of the troubled times we have all survived. This is lived experience we can all share with the creators, who have captured so brilliantly the sheer claustrophobia of being trapped within four walls, as indeed is the narrator. With a mother glued to the news with its rolling horror and a brother glued to his video games, a father coughing in isolation and a sister plotting protest, the boy wonders why the human race seems so intent on destroying themselves. The collage illustrations mainline emotion and every word of the spare poetic narrative hits home. The connection between George Floyd unable to breathe, tear gas victims unable to breathe, COVID victims unable to breathe and the world in the grip of pollution, unable to breathe is truly powerful. But what we and the narrator realise is that the everyday mundane moments that we share with our loved ones is our "oxygen mask" and the repeated refrain as we are reminded to "breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth" brings solace and hope. While capturing a specific moment in time the messages are timeless and enduring. This is essential reading.



## Read Between the Lies

**Author:** Malcolm Duffy **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/02/2023

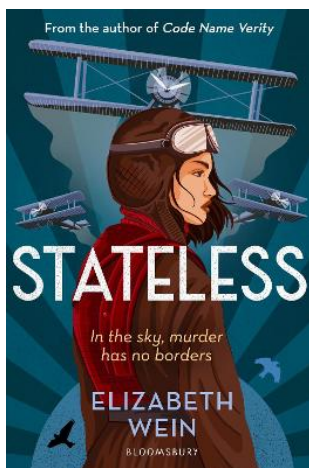
Alternating between the engaging narratives of two teenage boys, Malcolm Duffy's *Read Between the Lies* is a riveting, read-in-one-sitting page-turner, sharing insights into dyslexia as it also explores family frictions and how to support the people around you. Soon-to-be-stepbrothers Ryan and Tommy are as different as ice-cream and cabbage. Tommy has recently been released from a young offenders' prison, while Ryan is a piano-playing good lad who's moved down south with his dad following his parents' divorce. In Ryan's words, "Don't do cooking but hear it's all about the blend of ingredients. Same with families. Ours is all wrong. Like ice-cream and cabbage". Despite their marked differences, the teenagers do have something in common — they're both dyslexic, but have very different ways of dealing with it. Tommy's journey through handling prejudice against his criminal past ("a single bad decision doesn't make you bad") and learning to read is gripping, moving and - ultimately - uplifting, as is Ryan's dedication to teaching Tommy to read. As Ryan's mum announces her plan for them to move, and Tommy discovers long-buried family secrets, the perfectly-paced plot ramps up the stakes, with plenty of humour and touching moments shining through the boys' troubles.



## Truth Be Told

**Author:** Sue Divin **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 14/04/2022

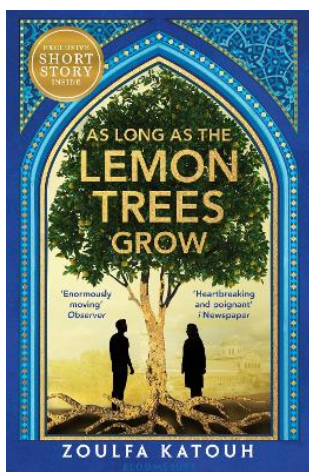
**Shortlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2023: 11 - 14** Following her Carnegie shortlisted debut novel *Guard Your Heart*, this is another searing story set in Northern Ireland in 2019 but gradually revealing the lives of three generations of women affected by The Troubles. The author has a Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies and a career in community relations, which lends an unmistakable authenticity to the narrative. Narrated by two teens from very different backgrounds and dealing with very different issues with each voice unique and distinctive. Tara, the Catholic daughter of a two-generation single parent family from Derry, is angry and grieving after the suicide of her boyfriend Oran. Faith, the daughter of strict Evangelical Protestants from rural Armagh is hiding her true sexuality from her family for fear of being disowned. When they come face to face on an interfaith residential, they discover they look almost identical. When they unite to untangle the mystery, a DNA test reveals they are related and Faith's father is not who she thinks he is, while Tara has never known hers. This powerful and totally absorbing novel, with its unforgettable characters, is at its heart about truth and forgiveness, but inevitably also about social justice and how political decisions and the continuing legacy of violence and conflict continues to affect lives today. A reader cannot help but be moved and informed. A must-have as both a brilliant novel and for valuable insight on a historical period.



## Stateless

**Author:** Elizabeth Wein **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 16/03/2023

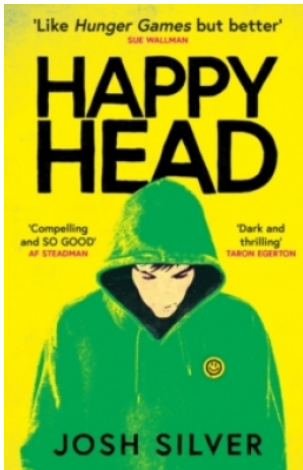
In a stunt to promote world peace just before the outbreak of World War Two, twelve young pilots take to the air. Taking off from Salisbury they loop round Europe travelling through Brussels, Geneva, Venice, Prague, Hamburg and Amsterdam before completion of the circuit in Paris. Stella North, aged just 17, who is representing Great Britain, is the only female competitor. She knows she is as skilful and as fearless as her male opponents. And she has a very special reason to be determined to win! Stella is as British as anyone but her passport defines her as stateless. The stakes and the tension are high. And that's before Stella is the only witness when another competitor dies. The organisers claim that it was an accident. Only Sheila knows the truth!



## As Long As the Lemon Trees Grow

**Author:** Zoulfa Katouh **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 22/06/2023

**October 2022 Debut of the Month** Ferociously affecting and blazing with hope, Zoulfa Katouh's *As Long As the Lemon Trees Grow* tells an unforgettable story of a young woman whose heart is conflicted between love for her family and love for her Syrian homeland. It's a powerful debut that cuts to the core of what it means to feel loss, longing and love. A formidable story about "the ones who have no choice but to leave their home", as the author writes in her afterword. Until the fight for freedom erupted in Syria, 18-year-old Salama was a pharmacy student with a family and future. Now pretty much all she has is voluntary hospital work that sees her strive to save those who've been injured by military bombings and sniper attacks. While dealing with the ethical and emotional challenges of not being able to save all her patients, Salama is torn between needing to leave Syria to survive, and feeling she should stay to save her people and fight for her country. This devastating dilemma is heightened when she meets a young man, Kenan, who has links to her past. "This is my country. If I run away - if I don't defend it, then who will?", he tells her, and asserts he will never leave. As they form a beautiful bond, the young couple realise there's more than one way to rally for freedom, with Salama remarking that, "We are stripped from our choices, so we latch on to what will ensure our survival." Transcending age boundaries, and showing the very worst and best of humanity, this reveals truths about a tyrannical regime that's destroyed the lives of so many Syrians while telling a remarkable tale of love and hope. Read more about this breathtaking debut in a Q&A with the author Zoulfa Katouh.



## HappyHead

**Author:** Josh Silver **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 16/03/2023

**Shortlisted for the YA Book Prize 2024** An epidemic of unhappiness has swept the UK and infected teenagers. Seb wants to make his family proud and show the world what he's capable of, but his head just won't let him. So, when he's offered the chance to attend a radical retreat that aims to eradicate teen unhappiness, he jumps at the offer. Maybe this is his chance of a new future. As assessments, tests and tasks start to grow increasingly strange though, Seb starts to wonder if all is as it seems. A growing relationship with enigmatic Finn only makes him question the system, and himself, further. An exhilarating, action dystopia in the vein of *The Hunger Games* or *The Maze Runner*, but with a distinctly modern twist that gives it a contemporary, topical feel. Silver's writing is immersive to the extreme, I simply couldn't look away from the page at some points. The reader soon realises that something is amiss at the retreat; creating a taut thriller sense of tension, as we, alongside Seb, try to work out just what is going on. Echoes of Silver's other career as a mental health nurse can be heard throughout the novel, there's a raging anger about the state of mental health provision, and a quiet passion for the care and wellbeing of young people. As well as making your heart race, this is a book that will make your brain think and question. Seb's growing relationship with Finn adds a tender element to the tense storyline. Their growing attraction and the salvation they find in each other builds beautifully, leaving the reader fiercely cheering for them. Make sure you have time in your diary before opening this book, once you start reading you won't be able to stop. And you'll be left panting for book two!



## The Poet X

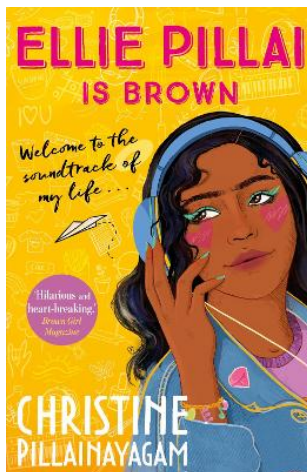
**Author:** Elizabeth Acevedo **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 01/05/2018

**Winner for the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2019 | Highly Commended in the UKLA Book Awards 2019 | Winner of the 2018 National Book Award** Xiomara Batista is a Harlem teenager whose parents moved to the US from the Dominican Republic. She has plenty of thoughts, plenty to say, but she's been rendered voiceless by her domineering mother, by religion, and by the boys and men who objectify her body. She gets "all this attention from guys/but it's like a sancocho of emotions... partly flattered they think I'm attractive, partly scared they're only interested in my ass and boobs". Such is the experience of many young women, but for Xiomara this is exacerbated by racism and her judgmental religious community, and powerfully expressed in her inimitable narrative voice. Talking of which, through the sexual insults, and despite her mother's meting of cruel punishments, Xiomara does find her voice. She keeps a secret notebook of poems, and dreams of joining a slam poetry club. And she finds love too, with Trinidad-born Aman, a compassionate young man with family



heartache of his own. Xiomara's descriptions of their burgeoning relationship are stunning, evoking first love and passion in all its visceral beauty. Somehow, Xiomara pulls herself free from a mire of obstacles. She stands tall, she burns bright - a wondrously authentic character who finds her own faith through writing poetry. Highly recommended for fans of Nicola Yoon, Angie Thomas and Sarah Crossan, this is a dazzlingly affecting feat.

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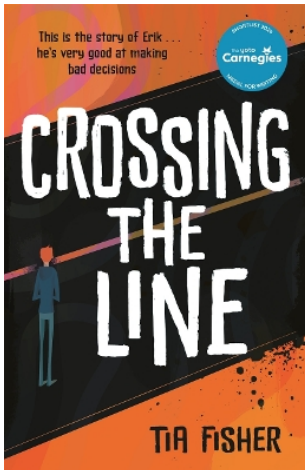


## Ellie Pillai is Brown

**Author:** Christine Pillainayagam **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 05/05/2022

**Winner of The Branford Boase Award 2023 | May 2022 Debut of the Month | Shortlisted for the Jhalak Children's & Young Adult Prize 2023** Navigating loss, love and family strains while standing out as a brown girl in a predominantly white school isn't easy for Ellie, a budding songwriter and music aficionado. A beautiful, funny ode to finding the strength to sing up and stand out, *Ellie Pillai is Brown* is sure to chime with readers who also feel they don't quite fit in, with QR codes peppered through the book bringing Ellie's songs to life, and adding extra depth to the experience. Ellie Pillai is a girl who knows what she loves — music. And, against her parents' wishes, she's set on making a go of her drama GCSE, determined to find a way to overcome feeling invisible. While her family are mourning the loss of her little brother, which has left Ellie and her mum terribly distant from each other, Ellie has the stable support of her best friend. But her life is well and truly shaken up when a new boy and his twin sister arrive at her school. While handsome Ash is the only person who gets all her music references and understands the power of a playlist and finding the right song for every situation, it looks like he's hooked up with her best friend, so Ellie tries to put him out of her mind. At the same time, Ellie's new drama teacher instils her with confidence: "I think you have presence, something special about you. Something different". If only Ellie can stop putting herself in a box and making herself small. Exploring grief, consent, family expectations, self-confidence, first love, same sex love and mental health through its well-drawn cast of characters, *Ellie Pillai is Brown* strikes a smart balance between humour and emotion.

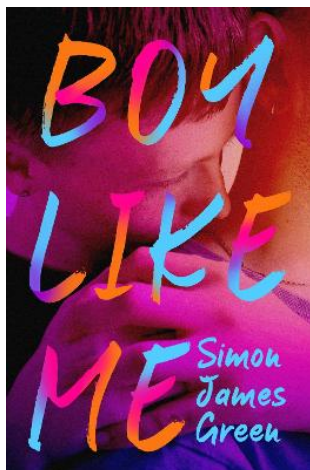
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## Crossing the Line

**Author:** Tia Fisher **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 30/03/2023

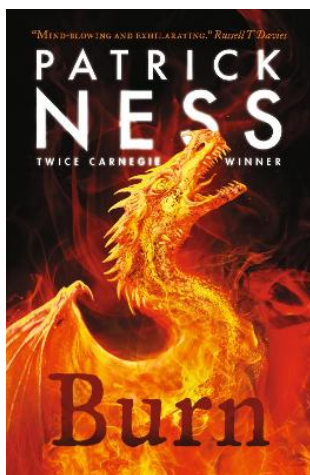
**Yoto Carnegie Shadowers' Choice Medal for Writing 2024 | April 2023 Debut of the Month** A stunning debut that makes full and highly skilled use of the narrative verse format, with imaginative use of font and layout, to tell an important story that the author acknowledges is based upon the real experiences of a friend's son. It highlights how easy it is for young people and children to be entrapped by ruthless drug gangs. But this portrayal of Erik goes far beyond a single issue, it is a thoroughly nuanced, credible portrait of a young man and the complexities of his life. It had been difficult due to bullying and rapidly worsens with the death of his father and then his mother's terrible choice of new partner, who abandons her and their new twin daughters, leaving Erik as her only support. Poverty and sleeplessness take their inevitable toll and behaviour and grades fall. Erik slowly finds himself abandoning his loyal friend Ravi and hanging out more and more with his former tormentors Travis and Ben and their dubious friends. Skipping school turns into shoplifting which turns into drug running. At first, it's easy money and almost a new kind of family. But the casual drop-offs soon escalate, as do the lies and deception. When Erik tries to escape the dark world he's fallen into, his baby sisters come under threat. But a powerfully realistic ending offers a credible way out of the dangerous situation Erik and his family are facing and directs readers to sources of help for those facing similar issues. Erik remains a likeable, self-aware, almost brutally honest protagonist throughout. He should not be defined by his bad choices but neither does he excuse his behaviour. In his portrayal the author shows that those involved in county lines activity should rightly be treated and perceived as victims rather than perpetrators - a stance campaigned for by the Children's Society (who checked the manuscript for authenticity) This is an outstanding and important novel that should be widely read by parents and teachers as well as by the young people who will find it gripping, relatable, authentic and unputdownable. Watch The LoveReading LitFest In Conversation With Tia Fisher, Author of Crossing The Line



## Boy Like Me

**Author:** Simon James Green **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 02/03/2023

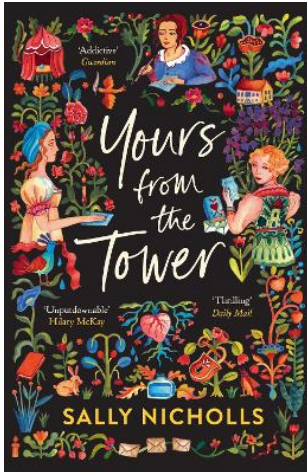
A loud and proud novel about censorship and growing up gay in a hostile world. With endearing characters and masses of optimism, this is a book that will break and the rebuild your heart.



## Burn

**Author:** Patrick Ness **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/05/2021

**Longlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2021** Double Carnegie winning Patrick Ness proves yet again how effortlessly he can weave a tale that juggles apocalyptic themes and astonishing action with the truly personal sphere of beliefs and actions while dealing with issues as powerful as racism, homophobia and the morality of war and underlaying it all with deeply tender stories of love. Sarah Dewhurst, finds herself at the centre of an age-old prophecy about humans and dragons, as revealed to her by Kazimir the sardonic Russian Blue dragon hired by her father in a last-ditch attempt to save their farm from bankruptcy. She also learns that an assassin is heading her way, sent by Believers who want the world emptied of human obstacles to the dragons' dominance. Malcolm, the putative assassin, was raised from childhood in the cult and his evangelical determination to carry out his mission is matched only by his internal regrets for the life that he might have had. The plot twists and turns and grips the reader in a vice and the multiple perspectives, including the FBI agents on Malcolm's trail, create an intense and captivating reading experience. Every character is given nuance and depth, even the extremely unpleasant Deputy Kelby has a recognisable psychology. There are no long pages of exposition, the writing is as spare and beautifully crafted as we have come to expect and yet the world building is entirely credible as well as fascinating. While the book stands satisfactorily concluded there is a tempting suggestion of more to come and I am sure all readers would anticipate this as avidly as I do. Highly recommended.



## Yours From the Tower

**Author:** Sally Nicholls **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 04/07/2024

**September 2023 Book of the Month** Set in 1896, *Yours From the Tower* is a clever, compelling epistolary novel that dances with the magic of female friendship, romance, and thought-provoking presentations of its historic context. Told, in the main, through letters between three young women, this splendid story invites “then and now” comparisons as it reveals how restrictive life was for women in the late nineteenth-century, along with the era’s huge social divides. After leaving boarding school, best friends Tirzah, Sophia and Polly are on the brink of leading disparate adult lives. This comes as a result of their very different backgrounds, and from them having very different personalities and dreams. Sophia, whose ambitions of being a journalist have been quashed by dint of her being female, has been ushered into the London Season to find a rich husband — preferably a titled gentleman. Meanwhile, Polly is loving life teaching in an orphanage, finding fulfilment in making a difference to poor children who’ve been dealt terribly difficult starts in life. Then there’s flighty Tirzah. Tortuously frustrated by being forced to act as her strict grandmother’s unpaid companion, she makes a succession of rash decisions and harbours family secrets. With Sophia, in particular, voicing thought-provoking statements on injustices of the age (“It is unfair, isn’t it? If we were men, there wouldn’t be any of this bother about marrying well. We could go off to university and become lawyers or clergymen or go into business... But what are my options if I do not find a husband?”), *Yours From the Tower* also tingles with romance while being underpinned by the nourishing power of female friendship. It’s also peppered with wit, such as this whip-smart quip from Sophia when addressing one of her suitors, bohemian aristocrat Sebastian: “I think you and Helena are absurd to call a policemen capitalist scum, when he earns an honest living and you and she are the grandchildren of an earl.”



## The Big Ask

**Author:** Simon James Green **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 06/06/2024

One of the notable features of YA novellas published by Barrington Stoke is that they’re pithy page-turners — perfectly-paced, authentically-voiced works of short fiction across all genres that’ll keep even the most reluctant readers keen right to the end. In the case of *The Big Ask*, it’s all those things, along with being gorgeously romantic in a way that leaves you longing for more. Super-cute, unexpected, authentically funny and heart-flutteringly dreamy, there are so many reasons fans of YA romance should hope Simon James Green’s Barrington Stoke debut is just the first of many novellas for the publishing house. The story is centred on an unlikely prom date between two ostensibly chalk-and-cheese teenage boys — geeky gay Alfie and super-popular, super-cool Harvey who’s been in a relationship with his female equivalent since



forever. Right before prom, Harvey finds himself single, which prompts Alfie to invite him to the prom, partly thanks to some serious encouragement from his bestie Jas. While the path to prom is strewn with obstacles — including a jealous ex and homophobic meddling — The Big Ask shows how magic can happen when you take a chance, follow your heart, and follow your true self.



## Where Sleeping Girls Lie

**Author:** Faridah Abike-Iyimide **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 14/03/2024

**March 2024 Book of the Month** Bravo to Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé for creating such a compelling dark academia mystery that's also layered with such potent depth. Though just shy of a whopping 600 pages, the pace and plotting of *Where Sleeping Girls Lie* is chef's-kiss superb, with tremendous page-turning power propelling a tale of surviving loss, trauma and abuses of power amidst the dark halls of an elite boarding school. Shot-through with suspense and escalating menace, the story begins when new girl Sade encounters trouble as soon as she sets foot in Alfred Nobel Academy, and her roommate Elizabeth goes missing. As suspicious eyes fall on Sade, she forms a bond with Elizabeth's best friend Baz (real name Basil), and they set about finding out what really happened to Elizabeth. As the duo make dark discoveries, aided by revelations from the "Unholy Trinity (as Baz has dubbed the school's "It girls"), a super-rich male student is murdered, which leads to the unravelling of a web of despicable secrets, lies, cover-ups and toxicity, and the unleashing of revenge.



## Beastly Beauty

**Author:** Jennifer Donnelly **Format:** Paperback **Release Date:** 09/05/2024

**May 2024 Book of the Month** Another powerful and hugely enjoyable feminist retelling of a traditional fairytale, following on the success of *Poisoned* and *Stepsister* which reworked *Snow White* and *Cinderella* respectively. Here Jennifer Donnelly turns her modern gaze upon *Beauty and The Beast* and encompasses a gender swap in the process, which enables her to explore themes like societal expectations, stereotypical gender roles and self-acceptance. The original tale is thought by some scholars to have originated in 18th Century France as a cautionary tale to prepare young women for marriage to 'beastly' older men, as was so often the case. Set in the same period, Arabella was a rebellious and headstrong young woman who is cursed to be a beast because she dared to wish for more than just marriage and to let her anger get the better of her. After being cursed for so many years, she loses hope that the curse will ever be broken. Enter Beau, a handsome thief who breaks into her castle with his gang, but then is abandoned and trapped. At first, we have no more idea than Beau about who or what the Beast is,

but he is as determined to solve the mystery as he is to escape. As each of their back stories is revealed we see that Beau and Arabella actually share a common struggle with their self-perception and self-image and neither think they are worthy of love, so how is the curse to be broken? This is absolutely enthralling storytelling, full of rich symbolism, psychological depth and a touch of magical realism, as well as an occasional thoughtful commentary on fairy tales. The romantic chemistry and witty banter of the lead characters is most enjoyable, but the well-drawn minor characters have their moments too. The reader is thoroughly invested in everyone's survival in the dramatic race against time as the curse counts down. Another winner!

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