



HOME NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN 1 2025

Welcome back to a new school year. However your summer looked, whether it was busy, quiet or somewhere in between, we hope the start of term has been a positive one for your family.

In this edition of the newsletter, we're highlighting a few national events and themes that you might like to explore at home. Roald Dahl Story Day is a great opportunity to dip into some well-loved stories or discover a new favourite. The return of the **500 Words competition** gives children the chance to try out their own storytelling, with no limits on imagination or ideas.

October also brings **Black History Month**, a chance to celebrate and reflect on stories by Black authors and illustrators. It's a valuable opportunity to share books that showcase a wide range of voices and experiences, helping children connect with stories that reflect both their own lives and those of others.

You'll also find information about the **Take 10 to Read challenge**, which encourages everyone to set aside ten minutes for reading. Whether it's with a picture book, a comic, an audiobook or a few pages of a chapter book, it's a simple and flexible way to enjoy some shared reading time.

In this newsletter you'll find ideas and suggestions for reading at home. Whether it's a shared bedtime story, listening to an audiobook on the go or talking about a book your child has brought home, every little moment with stories counts.

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.



BACK TO SCHOOL: SETTLING IN WITH STORIES

The start of a new school year can bring a mix of feelings for children: excitement, nerves, curiosity or uncertainty. Whether your child is starting school for the first time or moving up a year, stories can be a gentle way to explore these emotions and make sense of new routines.

Reading books about school can open up space for conversation, especially if your child is adjusting to changes, making new friends or simply finding their feet. These stories can offer comfort, humour or reassurance, and show that it's normal to feel lots of different things at the same time.

Here are a few ideas that might support children through the transition back to school:

Share a story set at school:

This could be a book you read together, an audiobook you listen to or a story your child looks at independently. Afterwards, you might chat about what felt familiar or different.

Capture the week:

If your child enjoys drawing or writing, they could create a memory page or a short diary entry about something that happened — a moment that made them laugh, someone they spoke to or something they learned.

Build in quiet story time:

Even ten minutes of reading, at any point in the day, can be a helpful way to slow down and connect.

YOU MIGHT ASK:

- What part of the day did you like most?
- What would you like to know more about?



Recommended Reads:

SUPER MILLY AND THE SUPER SCHOOL DAY

STEPHANIE CLARKSON (AUTHOR),
GWEN MILLWARD (ILLUSTRATOR)

On Superhero Day, Super Milly helps out her school friends with the best superpower of all... her super-kindness! It's Superhero Day at school, and Super Milly can't wait to wow everyone with her costume and amazing powers! The only problem is she can't actually fly, climb buildings or do force fields.

But when Superhero Day doesn't go to plan, Milly realises she only needs her super-kindness to save the day! With its superhero theme and energetic and hilarious main character, this upbeat and very funny picture book about the power of kindness will inspire children to help others and have confidence in themselves.



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TWINSEPARABLE

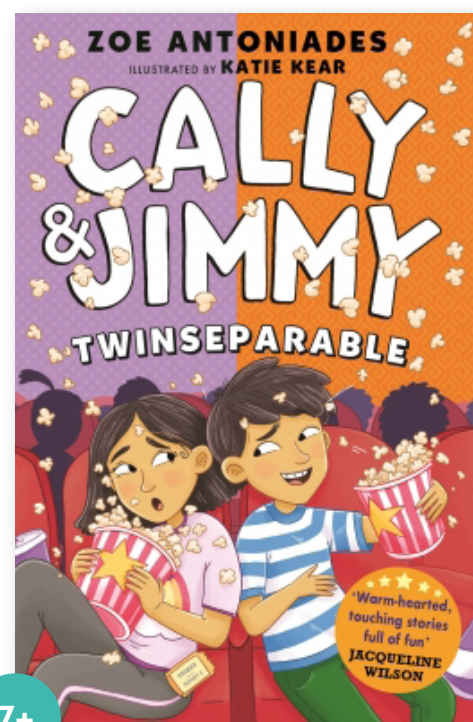
ZOE ANTONIADES (AUTHOR),
KATIE KEAR (ILLUSTRATOR)

Book 4 in the much-loved *Cally & Jimmy* series, which features four short stories about a headstrong girl and her twin brother who has ADHD. While it usually means double trouble, this twinseparable pair will always have each other's backs.

Can Cally and her twin, Jimmy, be trusted to walk home alone for the first time? Will there be mayhem at the movies?

And what could possibly go wrong when they go to work at Dad's office or camp out in the forest on a school residential trip?

Plus, there's a new girl at school who's not quite as perfect as she might at first seem...



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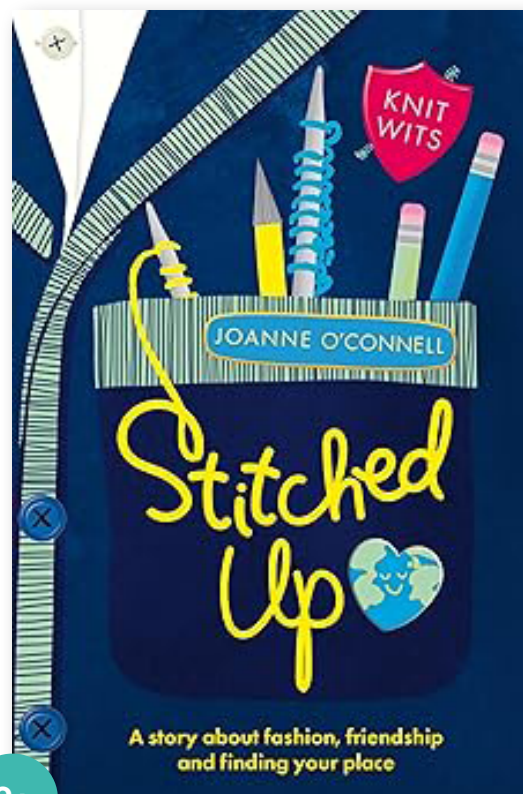
STITCHED UP

JOANNE O'CONNELL (AUTHOR)

Cassie has a passion for fashion so when the opportunity to redesign her school uniform comes up Cassie is thrilled. The only problem? She's stuck between eco-conscious Fern and label-loving Azra.

As the competition heats up, Cassie joins The KnitWits — a local knitting group that immediately makes Cassie feel at home, especially once she sees that it's secretly attended by the coolest girl at school.

As Cassie's skills grow, she has to learn to balance Azra's obsession with trends with her own love of sustainable fashion. But will the pressure cause the ultimate bestie break-up?



500 WORDS: A CELEBRATION OF CHILDREN'S IMAGINATION

The 500 Words competition is back this autumn, offering children the chance to tell their own stories and let their imaginations run wild. Created to support and celebrate creativity in young people, this national writing competition invites children aged 5 to 11 to write a story of up to 500 words on any topic they like. It could be funny, spooky, thoughtful or completely out of this world.

It is not about spelling or perfect grammar. What matters most is the ideas, the voice and the power of imagination. Children can write about anything that inspires them. It might be a talking cat, a magical forest, a footballing robot or something entirely personal. Whether they want to enter the competition or just enjoy writing for fun, it is a great way to build confidence and explore storytelling.

If your child enjoys making up stories or already writes little tales at home, this could be a lovely opportunity to support that interest. And if they are new to writing creatively, a few prompts or a story starter might help them get going.



Here are a few gentle ways to support writing at home:

Start with talking:

Ask your child to tell you a made-up story. You could jot it down for them or help them write it together.

Build on what they love:

If they are into dinosaurs, outer space or football, encourage them to use that in their story.

Keep it relaxed:

There is no pressure to submit an entry. Just having a go can be a fun and rewarding activity in itself.

The competition runs from September to mid October and is open to all children aged 5 to 11 living in the UK. Entries can be submitted online with the help of a parent or carer. Find out more [here](https://www.pixl.org.uk/500-words).

Further resources:

- Be inspired by the [top 50 stories](#) from the 2024-25 Competition.
- Authors share some [Tips and Tricks](#) on how to write your best story.
- Find ideas to support and inspire young writers [aged 5-7](#) and [7-11](#) from the BBC and partner organisations.

ROALD DAHL STORY DAY 13th SEPTEMBER

Each year on 13 September, Roald Dahl Story Day celebrates the stories and characters created by one of the UK's most well-known children's authors. From the magical powers of *Matilda* to the inventive chaos of George's *Marvellous Medicine*, Dahl's books continue to capture the imagination of many readers.

His stories are often full of humour and adventure, but they also explore themes like fairness, courage and standing up for what's right, all seen through the eyes of bold and curious children. While some of his books were written many years ago, they remain part of the reading lives of many families, and can offer great conversation starters about character choices, justice and kindness.

This day offers a chance to dip into his world or discover it for the first time. Whether through reading aloud, listening to an audiobook or talking about a film version, you might enjoy exploring one of his stories together.



Here are some ways to get involved at home:

Character talk:

Pick a character and imagine what they're like in real life. What would you ask them? Would they be kind or cheeky?

Invent something new:

Inspired by the fantastic inventions in Dahl's stories, create your own magical object or treat.

You can watch [The Marvellous World of Roald Dahl](#), a BBC documentary made in 2016 on YouTube.

Recommended reads inspired by Roald Dahl stories

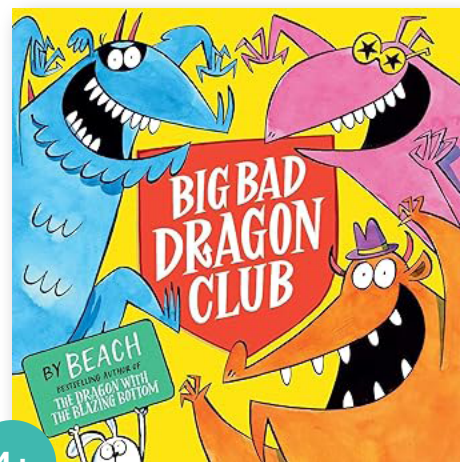
BIG BAD DRAGON CLUB

BEACH (AUTHOR)

From the superstar creator of *The Dragon with the Blazing Bottom* comes a hilarious new story about three wicked dragons who are absolutely determined to be bad.

*We're the Bad Dragon Club and we're bad as can be.
We're rascals and rogues and wrong'uns all three.
We're so full of bad, any badder and we'd burst.
We're the Bad Dragon Club and we're here to do our worst.*

Scorch, Grub and Fang think they are a rather fearsome gang. But when their attempts to cause mayhem somehow keep misfiring and actually HELP people, will these three bad dragons... turn good?



THE TWITS NEXT DOOR

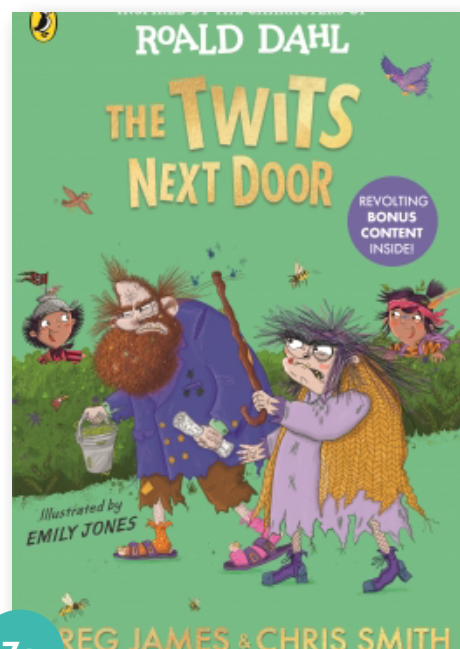
GREG JAMES, CHRIS SMITH, ROALD DAHL (AUTHOR),
EMILY JONES (ILLUSTRATOR)

Mr and Mrs Twit are just about as nasty and revolting as two people can get. The only thing that brings the two of them pleasure is playing pranks on one another.

But, when a new family called the Lovelies move in next door, with their lively 10-year-old twins, they teach The Twits to stop being so mean and horrible and they all live happily ever after...

Ha! Not really. The Twits HATE the Lovelies.

But how far will The Twits go to rid themselves of their horribly nice new neighbours? And what happens when these new neighbours, who are armed with utter loveliness, start to fight back?



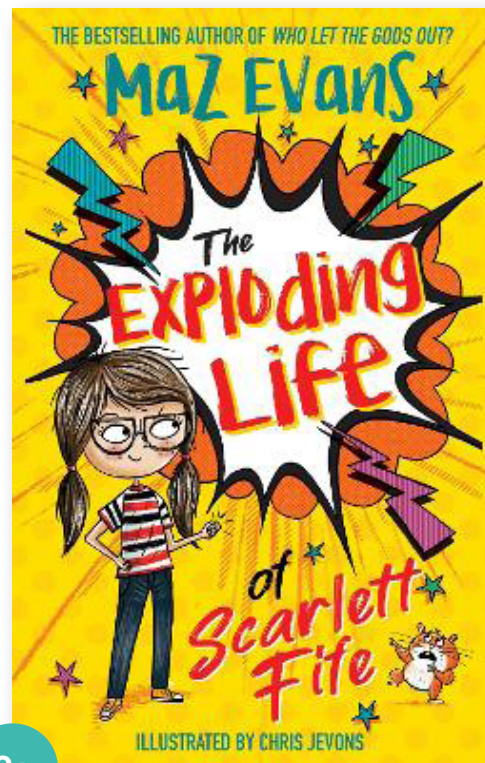
THE EXPLODING LIFE OF SCARLETT FIFE BOOK 1

MAZ EVANS (AUTHOR), CHRIS JEVONS (ILLUSTRATOR)

Scarlett Fife has BIG feelings. And she's about to get into BIG trouble. From the bestselling *Maz Evans* comes a heartfelt and hilarious new series, perfect for fans of Roald Dahl's *Matilda*.

Scarlett Fife has BIG FEELINGS. And when she has BIG FEELINGS, they explode out of her like an over-squeezed stress ball. Scarlett's in big trouble after a BIG FEELINGS episode leads to a runaway hamster getting into the vicar's trousers at her aunty's engagement party. If she loses her temper ONE MORE TIME, she's going to miss out on her trip to Mega Awesome Sicky Fun World, the best theme park on the planet. But feelings are like slime in a party bag. No matter how much someone tells you to keep it in, it'll always find its way out. And very soon, Scarlett notices that every time she pushes her feelings down, something explodes. Like... really, properly explodes.

It might be her teacher's slimy green smoothie. A huge pot of purple paint. Or a massive pile of elephant poo at the zoo. And let's hope Scarlett doesn't get mad at Aunty's wedding — that wedding cake is HUGE... Laugh-out-loud action for every child and parent who has ever lost control of their feelings — this is sparkling, heartwarming and beautifully illustrated throughout by the fantastic **Chris Jevons**.



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TAKE 10 TO READ CHALLENGE 10th OCTOBER

Take 10 to Read is a national campaign run by the National Literacy Trust that highlights the link between reading for pleasure and positive mental wellbeing. The idea is simple; everyone is encouraged to pause for just ten minutes to enjoy something to read. The campaign takes place each year on World Mental Health Day, which falls on 10 October.

Even a short break with a book can help children feel calmer and more focused. It is not about how much you read or what type of book you choose. It is simply about finding a moment to enjoy reading in whatever form works for you.



Here are a few ways to explore the idea at home:

Start or end the day with a story:

A short read over breakfast or just before bed can be a gentle way to bring reading into the day.

Read during screen breaks:

If your child takes breaks from the TV or tablet, a quick reading session can be a quiet way to reset.

Let them lead:

If your child wants to reread a favourite book, look at pictures or flick through a comic, that counts. Letting them choose makes all the difference.

Pair reading with something familiar:

Ten minutes of reading while they cuddle a toy, eat a snack or sit with someone they trust can make the time feel relaxed and enjoyable.

Whether it is something funny, familiar or brand new, taking just ten minutes to read can make a big difference to how children feel. It is a simple way to support both reading and wellbeing.

Recommended Reads:

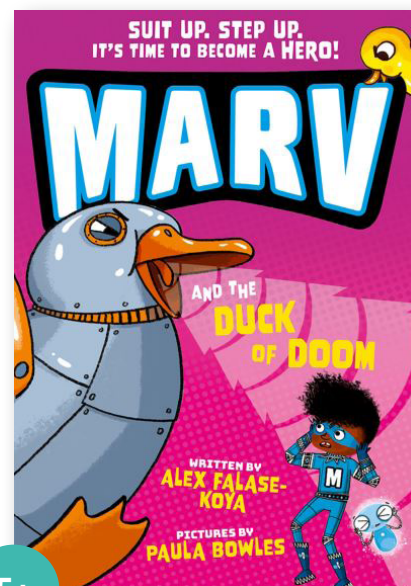
MARV AND THE DUCK OF DOOM

ALEX FALASE-KOYA (AUTHOR),
PAULA BOWLES (ILLUSTRATOR)

Suit up, step up, it's time to become a hero!

When ordinary boy Marvin wears his super-suit he becomes MARV. A superhero with infinite powers...

In this story, Marvin meets a blast from his grandad's past when the Duck of Doom shows up at the park, controlled by a new generation of super villain – Professor Feather 2.0. It's time for Marvin to become MARV – unstoppable, invincible, and totally MARvellous! With the Ducklings of Doom also hot on his heels, the odds are quacked against Marv. He's going to have to ruffle some feathers in order to put these dastardly ducks back in their place.



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THE LOST BOOK OF UNDERSEA ADVENTURE

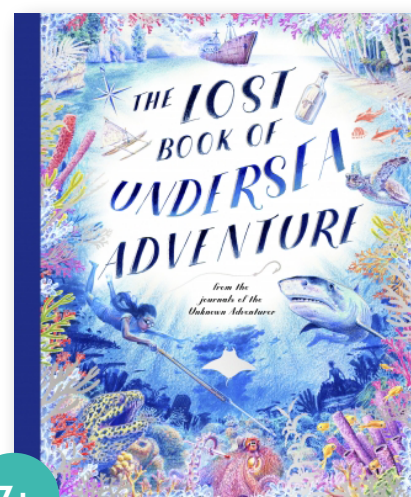
UNKNOWN ADVENTURER (AUTHOR)

After he's flung from a ferry after seeing something so dangerous he would be killed for his silence, the Unknown Adventurer washes up on a deserted island. Completely alone, he puts his survival skills to the test and begins the journal he promised his younger siblings he would write. But after a while he notices that it is not all what it seems on the island and something mysterious lies across the lagoon. Something he must investigate.

Take a deep breath. You are about to enter dangerous waters.

This is a thrilling tale of survival, friendship and underwater discovery that transports you to remote seas that whisper of ancient legends you can only begin to imagine.

Presented like an artist's journal, with handwritten sections, smudged notes and stuck-in pages and illustrated in breathtaking detail, this is a story that will spark a sense of adventure in every reader. A new exhilarating book from the Unknown Adventurer, author of *The Lost Book of Adventure* and *Journey to the Last River*.



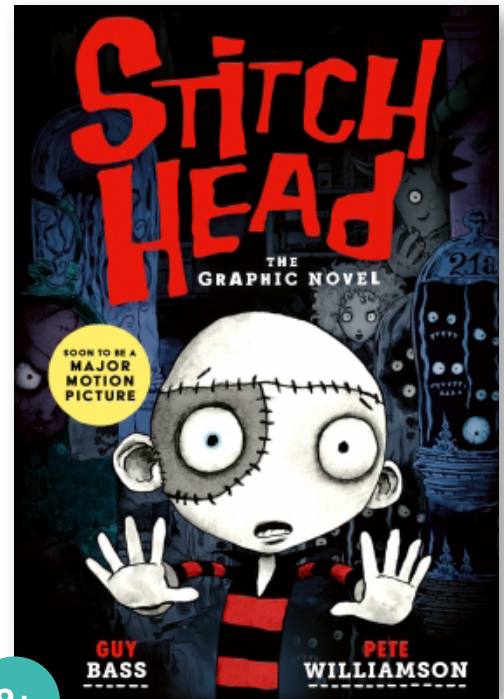
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STITCH HEAD: THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

GUY BASS (AUTHOR),
PETE WILLIAMSON (ILLUSTRATOR)

Enter the darkly funny world of Stitch Head, as he steps out of the shadows into the adventure of an almost-lifetime...

Deep in the maze-like dungeons of Castle Grotteskew, eccentric Professor Erasmus created Stitch Head, a small, almost-human creature. His experiments continued, filling the castle with creations so fabulously monstrous that Stitch Head was long forgotten. Until a travelling circus ringmaster knocks at the castle door, promising to make Stitch Head a star. Is this Stitch Head's chance to venture beyond the castle walls? Or could he be making a terrible mistake...?



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BLACK HISTORY MONTH OCTOBER

Black History Month is marked every October in the UK. It is a time to celebrate Black heritage, culture and achievements, and to reflect on the importance of representation and inclusion in the stories we share with children. Through books, children can explore a wide range of voices, experiences and histories that reflect the richness and diversity of the world around them.

Reading books by Black authors and illustrators, or stories featuring Black characters in leading roles, is one simple way to support this at home. Whether it is through fiction, non-fiction, poetry or biography, these books help children see themselves and others in new ways, and open up conversations about fairness, identity and belonging.



Recommended Reads:

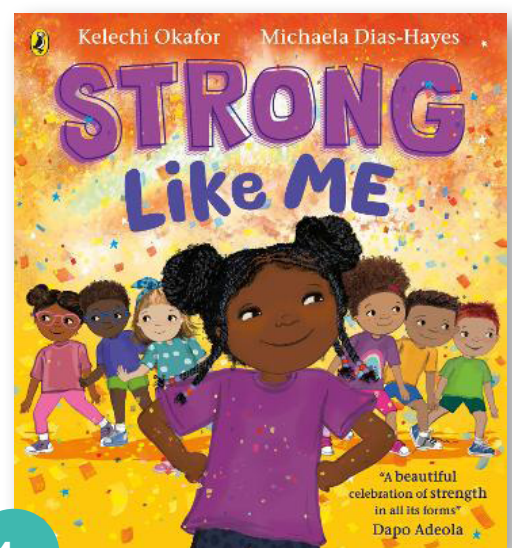
STRONG LIKE ME

KELECHI OKAFOR (AUTHOR),
MICHAELA DIAS-HAYES (ILLUSTRATOR)

Kamara loves being super strong — it makes her feel fizzy and zappy! But her classmates and their negative words lead her to question how strong she really is. With Sport's Day and the Big Race looming, does Kamara have what it takes to reach the finish line?

And can she discover what being STRONG means to her?

Strong Like Me is a timely picture-book debut by writer, social commentator and podcast host, Kelechi Okafor. This inspirational story sets out to help children discover their power, champion themselves, and be unapologetically secure in who they are.



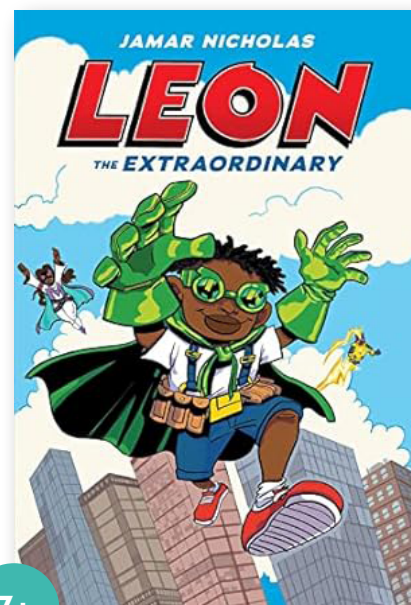
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LEON THE EXTRAORDINARY

JAMAR NICHOLAS, BONAIA ROSADO (AUTHOR)

In the city where Leon lives, superheroes — and supervillains — are commonplace. So how does an ordinary kid like Leon, who has no superpowers himself, become the superhero he wants to be? When all his classmates suddenly become obsessed with a new phone app that turns them into zombies, Leon gets his chance to prove that using his brain and following his heart can save the day.

The first graphic novel in this action-packed, heartfelt, and joyously funny series by Jamar Nicholas reminds readers that when it comes to being a hero, you just need to believe in yourself.



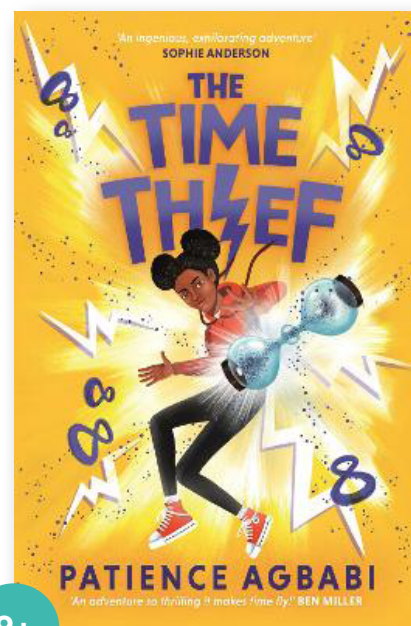
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THE TIME THIEF

PATIENCE AGBABI (AUTHOR)

It's midsummer's day and thirteen-year-old Elle and her Leapling classmates are visiting the Museum of the Past, the Present and the Future. But on the day of the school trip, disaster strikes, and the most unique and valuable piece in the museum, the Infinity-Glass, is stolen! And worse still, Elle's friend and fellow Infinite, MC(2), is arrested for the crime!

To prove his innocence Elle must leap back centuries in time, to a London very different from today. Along the way she will meet new friends, face dangers unlike any she has ever known, and face an old enemy who is determined to destroy her. Can Elle find the missing Infinity-Glass and return it to its rightful home before it's too late?



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PiXL Reading

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