STRONGER LEADERS, STRONGER SCHOOLS

PiXL Reading

READING FOR PLEASURE



HOME NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN 2 2026

Welcome to the second half of the autumn term. This newsletter is full of ideas for sharing stories through the darker months, with twelve books to try, some questions to spark a good chat and some lovely ways to give a book as a gift.

Whatever your family's evenings look like, there's room for a story in them. It might be ten minutes together, a book on the bus, an audiobook while you cook, or a story before sleep. It all counts, and none of it needs to be perfect.

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.



READING FOR PLEASURE

STORIES FOR THE DARKER EVENINGS

The reading routines from September might still be going strong. They might have slipped a bit. Both are completely normal.

When everyone is tired, lighter reading can be a good choice. Comics, joke books, fact books, annuals, magazines, a favourite book read for the tenth time: it all counts as reading. The end of term is not the time to worry about whether a book is hard enough.

Listening to a story counts as reading too. Audiobooks can fill a journey, a quiet afternoon or the time before sleep. You can listen together, or your child can listen on their own. They also let children enjoy stories they can't yet read by themselves. Most libraries lend audiobooks for free through an app — ask at your local library or at school, and someone can help you get started.



Last half term, we shared some ways to start a chat about books. Here are a few more questions, for when you want to go a bit further. They work whether or not you've read the book yourself, and they're just as good for audiobooks, books in any language and stories told out loud.

- *What would you have done if you were in the story?*
- *Was anything in the story unfair?*
- *Did you change your mind about anyone?*
- *Who else in the story might tell it differently?*
- *What do you think happens after the last page?*
- *If you could ask the writer one question, what would it be?*
- *Who would you give this book to, and why?*



Some of the best answers turn up days later.



GIVING A BOOK

Books make brilliant gifts, and some of the best have already been loved. A few ideas:

Pass on a favourite,
with a note inside saying why you loved it.

Look in a charity shop.
Many have a children's shelf.

Choose a library book for someone,
and tell them why you picked it.

Tell a story you know,
or one you loved growing up.

In Iceland, many families give each other books on Christmas Eve and spend the evening reading together. It's an idea that works for any evening in the holidays.

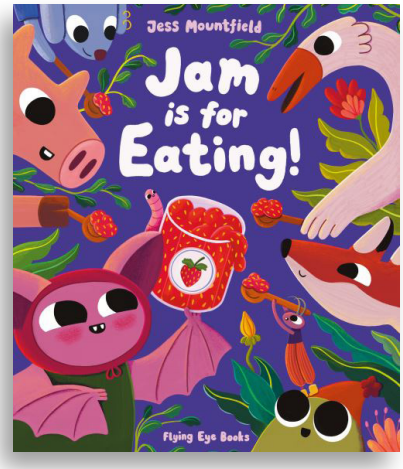
The best book to give is usually one about whatever your child loves right now.



Books to enjoy at home

Twelve books for the darker evenings – some snowy, a few festive, and some simply good for curling up with. The ages are a rough guide only. Many of these are also available as audiobooks, so it's worth checking your library app.

Picturebooks to share

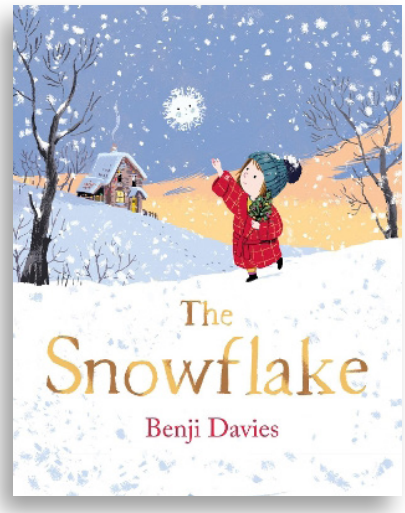


JAM IS FOR EATING!

JESS MOUNTFIELD (AUTHOR)

3+

Benny the bat has made his best ever jam, and he can't wait for his friends to try it. But his friends find all sorts of other uses for it – and none of them involves eating a single spoonful. Sticky, silly and brilliant fun to read aloud.



THE SNOWFLAKE

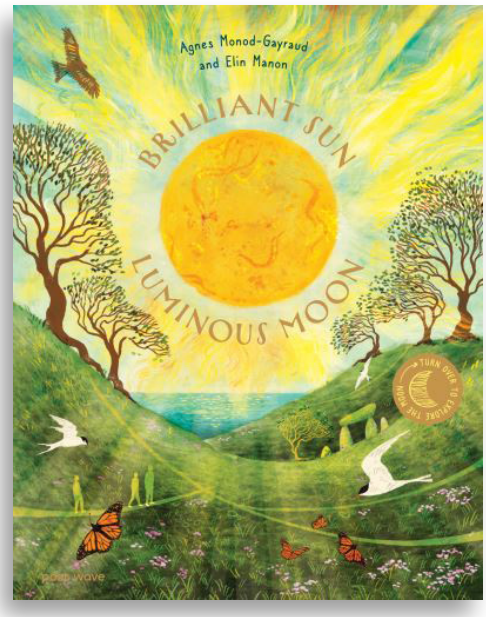
BENJI DAVIES (AUTHOR)

3+

High, high up in the clouds a tiny snowflake is made. Perfectly small, fluffy, crystal and white, it tumbles and bounces inside the cloud. But then she begins to fall…

Exquisitely told and beautifully illustrated, *The Snowflake* tells the tale of one snowflake and one little girl - both longing for something and looking for their own special place in the world.

READING FOR PLEASURE



BRILLIANT SUN, LUMINOUS MOON

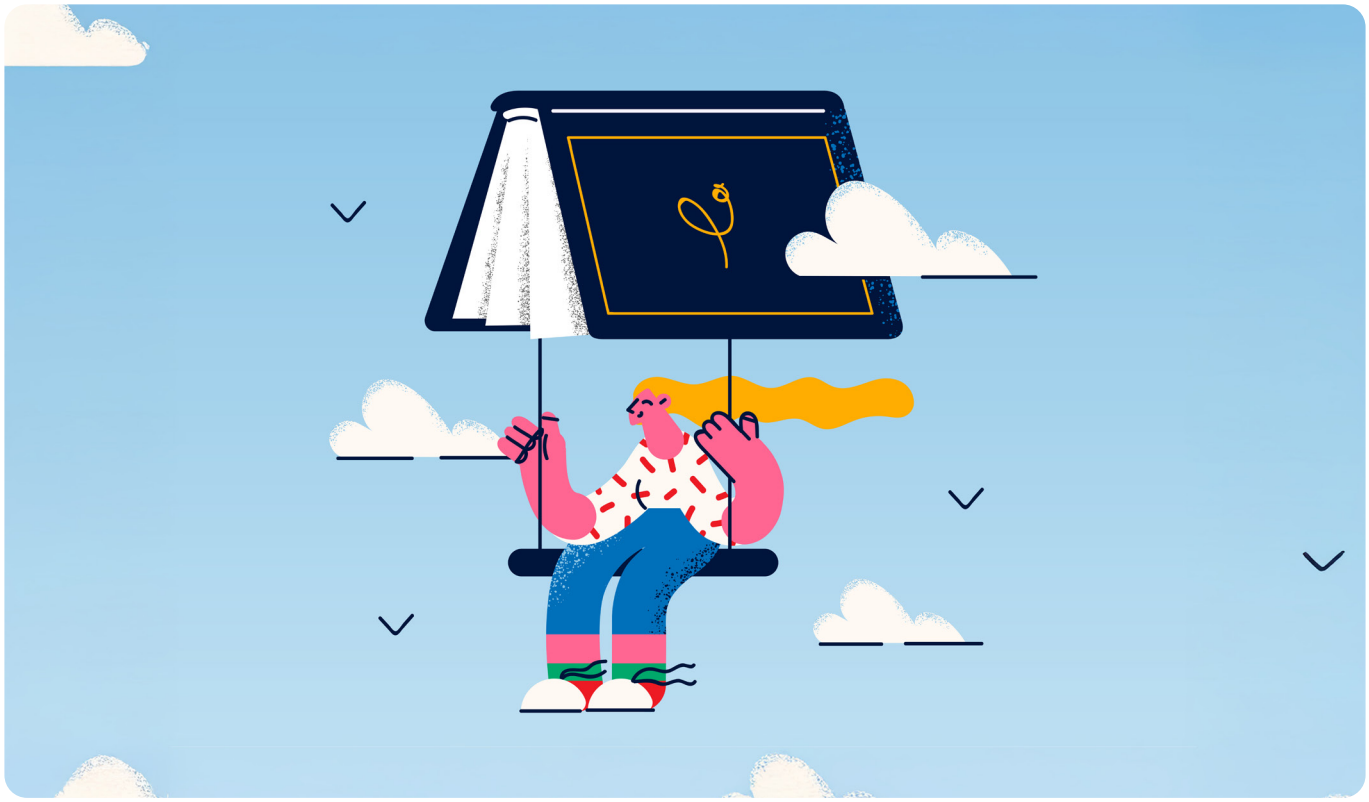
AGNES MONOD-GAYRAUD (AUTHOR)

7+

What makes a solar eclipse happen? Why does the Moon seem to change shape? And how does the Sun keep our planet alive?

For thousands of years, people, from the Ancient Egyptians to the Greeks, have looked up with the same questions. Their stories, observations and growing scientific knowledge have helped us understand how the Sun and Moon influence life on Earth today.

Blending ancient myths with facts, diagrams and modern discoveries, *Brilliant Sun, Luminous Moon* reveals what we really know about our nearest cosmic neighbours. Beautifully illustrated, the book works in two parts - one side is dark, but flip it over and the other is bright, meeting in the middle in a stunning eclipse.



Chapter books to get lost in



THE CHRISTMAS BOOK

KATHERINE WOODFINE (AUTHOR),
LIZZY STEWART (ILLUSTRATOR)

5+

In Iceland during the Second World War, Tómas is facing his first Christmas without his grandad. He wants to keep his grandad's stories at the heart of the holiday, but the shops are almost empty – all except one bookshop. Inspired by the Icelandic tradition of giving books on Christmas Eve (the one mentioned above), this is a warm, beautiful story about family and the gifts that last.



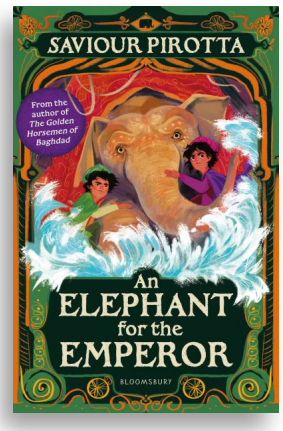
FLYAWAY BOY

JANE DE SUZA (AUTHOR)

7+

A missing boy sparks a quiet revolution in his hometown.

In a quiet hill town full of order and straight lines, Kabir struggles to fit in. At school, he's too different. At home, he's misunderstood. One day, he disappears, leaving his community in panic and confusion. As the search unfolds, so does a deeper story: one of a boy trying to be himself in a world that won't listen.



AN ELEPHANT FOR THE EMPEROR

SAVIOUR PIROTTA (AUTHOR)

9+

Two very different boys set out on an adventure they'll never forget…
The year is 798CE in Baghdad.

Spoilt son of a wealthy merchant, Farouk, loses a valuable falcon of his father's, who decides to send him on the caravan travelling to see the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne in Aachen Germany, to teach him more responsibility.

Meanwhile, after being mistreated at the hospital he works at as a cleaner, bright young orphan Hudayn is going too – as well as an unruly elephant.

With sea storms and bandits at every turn, will they, and their faithful elephant, make it safely to the emperor's court?

READING FOR PLEASURE

Graphic novels

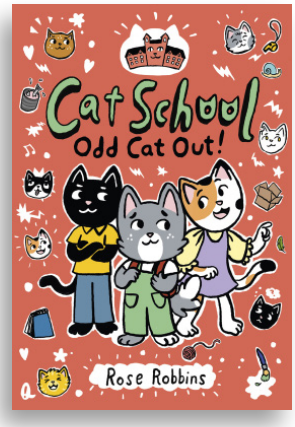


STITCH HEAD: THE GHOST OF GROTTESKEW

GUY BASS (AUTHOR), PETE WILLIAMSON (ILLUSTRATOR)

7+

The ghost of Mawley Crackbone, a villainous ne'er-do-well, is haunting the corridors of Castle Grotteskew, gunning for Stitch Head's heart ... and soul. Certain that his heart once belonged to the wicked rogue, Stitch Head's world starts to crumble. Will he surrender to the evil ghost and agree to do his bidding?

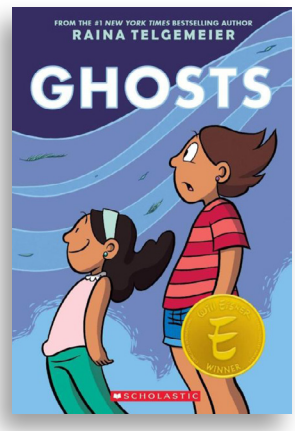


CAT SCHOOL: ODD CAT OUT!

ROSE ROBBINS (AUTHOR)

7+

It's the first day at Cat School, and Tangle and Eno are finding their feet when they meet Pelly – a kitten who feels different and tries to hide parts of herself to fit in. A warm, funny graphic novel about friendship, and about making room for everyone to be themselves.



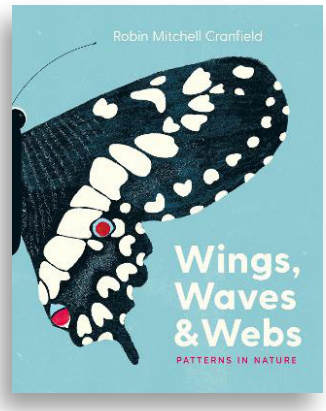
GHOSTS

RAINA TELGEMEIER (AUTHOR)

9+

Cat's family moves to a foggy seaside town to help her little sister, Maya, who is poorly. Maya is desperate to meet the ghosts that are said to live there. Set around the Day of the Dead, this is a moving, warm story about family, being brave, and holding on to the people we love.

Non-fiction reads

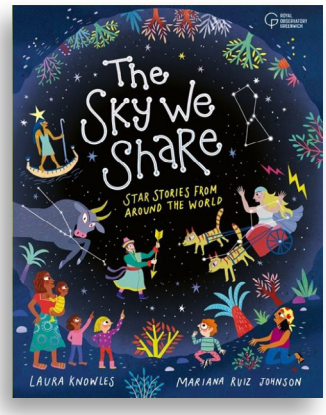


WINGS, WAVES AND WEBS

ROBIN MITCHELL CRANFIELD (AUTHOR)

5+

From the dots on a ladybug to the spiral on a snail, patterns in nature can be found anywhere. This simple and playful concept book introduces the littlest of readers to both math and nature while engaging their creative potential.

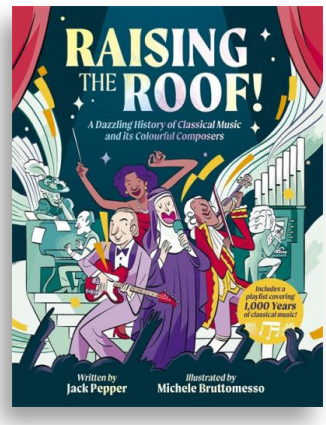


THE SKY WE SHARE: STAR STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

LAURA KNOWLES (AUTHOR),
MARIANA RUIZ JOHNSON (ILLUSTRATOR)

7+

Dark evenings are perfect for looking up. This beautiful book shares star stories from all around the world – from sailors who crossed oceans using the stars, to farmers who watched the sky to know when to plant – alongside real science and tips for stargazing.



RAISING THE ROOF

JACK PEPPER (AUTHOR),
MICHELE BRUTTOMESSO (ILLUSTRATOR)

9+

Informal, raucous and sometimes scandalous, the heroes of classical music are often far from the composed images they're portrayed as. Take a walk in the shoes of 20 original rock stars from the last millennium and find out what it really takes to write a timeless classical hit.

READING FOR PLEASURE

MOMENTS TO CELEBRATE THIS HALF TERM

Non-Fiction November: All Month

Non-Fiction November is a month-long celebration of fact books, run by the Federation of Children's Book Groups. It includes National Non-Fiction Day on **Thursday 5th November**. The month celebrates books about real things, such as animals, space, sport, history, how things work and how the body works. For lots of children, a fact book is the book that first makes them want to read.



Ways to enjoy it:

Visit the fact bookshelves at your library together and let your child choose a topic they already love, or one they know nothing about.

Read a fact book in any order. Jumping to the most interesting page is how most people read them.

Swap facts. Each find one surprising fact and see who can amaze the other.

Look for facts in everyday places, like recipes, football programmes, maps, leaflets and the back of the cereal box. It all counts as reading.

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World Nursery Rhyme Week:
Monday 9th to Friday 13th November

Nursery rhymes are often the first stories children learn, and they're made for sharing out loud. Their rhythm and rhyme help children hear the sounds inside words, which is a big part of learning to read. They're also easy to remember, so even very young children can join in.

Each year, the week picks five rhymes, one for each day. This year's are:

- Hickory Dickory Dock
- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Once I Caught a Fish Alive
- Doctor Foster Went to Gloucester
- Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat
- Row, Row, Row Your Boat

You could try one a day at bathtime, on the walk to school or before sleep. Any rhyme or song counts, though, in any language. The rhymes you grew up with, the ones a grandparent sang to you or songs from your own family's language are all perfect. Older children often enjoy them too, especially if they get to teach a younger brother, sister or cousin.



Libraries over the winter holidays.

Libraries are free, warm and open to everyone, and joining costs nothing. Many run free activities in the holidays, and you can borrow books, audiobooks and e-books without paying a penny. It's worth checking opening times, as some libraries close over the bank holidays.



World Kindness Day:
Friday 13th November

World Kindness Day is celebrated around the world every year on **13th November**. It was started by the World Kindness Movement to encourage people to notice and share small acts of kindness. Stories are full of them, whether it's a friend who stands up for someone, a stranger who helps or a character who changes their mind.

make kindness the norm.
#WorldKindnessDay



Ways to enjoy it:

Talk about kindness in the story you're reading. Good places to start are: *Who was kind in this story, and how?* and *Did you change your mind about anyone?* are good places to start.

Give a book as a kind gift. Pass on a favourite with a note inside, or choose a library book for someone and tell them why you picked it.

Make up a story together about someone being kind, and tell it out loud at bedtime.

Read to someone else. An older child reading to a younger one, or anyone reading to a grandparent, is a kindness on both sides.

Whatever the next few weeks look like for your family, we hope there's a good story in them somewhere. Happy reading!

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