



Reading with your child in Year 6



The National Curriculum

Year 6

By year 6, pupils should be able to accurately read aloud a wide range of poetry and books written at an age-appropriate interest level at a reasonable speaking pace. They should be able to read most words effortlessly and work out the pronunciation of unfamiliar written words with increasing automaticity. If the pronunciation sounds unfamiliar, pupils in year 6 should independently ask for help in determining both the meaning of the word and how to pronounce it correctly.

Year 6 pupils should be able to read texts aloud with appropriate intonation to show their understanding. They should be able to summarise and present a familiar story in their own words. They should be reading widely and frequently for pleasure and to retrieve information, outside of school as well as in school. They should be able to read silently with good understanding. They should be able to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words and then discuss what they have read.

During year 6, pupils should continue to expand their vocabulary through exposure to stories, plays, poetry, non-fiction and textbooks, both read by them and to them by others. They should be given the opportunity to listen to books and other writing that they have not come across before – hearing and learning new vocabulary and grammatical structures, and having a chance to talk about this. Their confidence, enjoyment and mastery of language should be extended through public speaking, performance and debate.

By the end of year 6, your child's reading should be sufficiently fluent and effortless enough for them to manage the general demands of the curriculum in year 7, across all subjects, in order to enable them to learn the necessary subject-specific vocabulary.

What the National Curriculum Means for Parents

- Give your child access to plenty of texts on many different topics and by a wide range of authors who write in different styles, e.g. Roald Dahl, Michael Morpurgo to Anthony Horowitz.
- Encourage discussion with your child when pronouncing new words if their reasonable attempt does not sound correct.
- Broaden the vocabulary you use when speaking to your child and be prepared to clarify the meaning of a wider range of words, modelling them within sentences.
- Encourage your child to read silently to themselves but check their understanding of what they have read after doing so.
- Read difficult texts to your child and allow them the chance to listen and ask questions.

Questions To Ask Your Child

Year 6 children are expected to:	To support this, you could say:
apply their knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes, both to read aloud and to understand the meaning of new words they meet	Can you find a word which begins with the prefix dis-? What does the prefix anti- mean? So what could this new word mean?
maintain positive attitudes to reading and an understanding of what they have read	Did you enjoy that book? Why? What kind of text would you like to read next?
continue to read and discuss a wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction, reference books and textbooks	What did you think about...? Shall we go and watch a play about...? Have you ever read a... poem?
read books which are structured in different ways and written for a range of purposes	Can you see any subheadings in this text? Why are they used? What organisational feature is this?
increase their familiarity with a wide range of books, including myths, legends, traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from our literary heritage and books from other cultures and traditions	What type of story is this? Have you ever read a...? Let's go to the library and see if we can find a book from... What other cultures would you like to read about?
recommend books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices	Would you recommend it? Who do you think would like this book? What makes it so good?
identify and discuss themes (such as loss or heroism) and conventions (such as the use of first person in diary entries) in and across a wide range of writing	Can you see a theme running through this story? What is it? How often is it mentioned? How does this text differ to a story?
make comparisons within and across books	Is that what... said had happened too? How is... similar to...? Do they differ?
learn a wider range of poetry by heart	Can you recite...?
prepare and perform poems and plays outloud, showing an understanding through intonation, tone and volume so that meaning is clear to the audience	Would you like to try going to a local drama group? Think about your voice when you read that; how might the witch speak?

check that the book makes sense to them; discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of new words in context.	Tell me about what you've just read. Were there any words you didn't quite understand?
questions to improve their understanding	Is there anything you don't understand that you want to ask me about?
draw inferences, such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justify inferences with evidence	How do you think... is feeling? What makes you say that? Show me in the text. Why do you think... acted in that way?
predict what might happen from details stated and implied	What might...? What makes you think that? Show me in the text.
summarise the main ideas drawn from more than 1 paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas	What theme can we see across these paragraphs? Is anything mentioned more than once?
identify how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning	Why is this text set out this way? How does that help you as a reader?
discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, and consider the impact on the reader	Can you find an example of figurative language on this page? Why might the author write in this way?
distinguish between statements of fact and opinion	Do you think... is a statement of fact or an opinion? How do you know?
retrieve, record and present information from non-fiction texts	Find the part of the text about... What does... mean?
participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read themselves, building on their own and others' ideas and challenging views courteously	I think that.... do you agree? Why do you agree / why not? Tell me your opinion about... I don't agree. I think that... In my opinion...
explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary	Over the holidays, I would like you to plan a presentation for me on... Can you explain to me why... is the best snack? I think... is. Let's debate it. Can you think of three reasons why...?
provide reasoned justification for their views	Why do you think that? What evidence supports that idea?



**Suggested
books to
share with
your child...**

Pie Corbett's Reading Spine

Here is my selection of great novels for Year 6 children. Do also look out for Doris Lessing's *Through the Tunnel* (HarperCollins), which is a fabulous and challenging short story. These books are the reading rites of passage that pave the way for the great literature that lies ahead. The books are intense reads, meaty books that are crafted beautifully. They will stay with the reader forever. These books are life-changers. Do read them before sharing with the class as some touch on challenging themes.

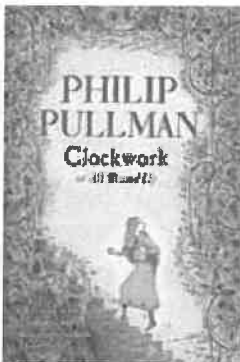


Holes

READ & RESPOND

Louis Sachar (Bloomsbury)

Invite the children to keep a diary for each of the key events – and by contrast, write a letter home from the camp. Together collect information about the main characters and discuss why they behave as they do. Ask: *Why did the author give Stanley a palindromic name?* Draw two timelines to track the present and past events. In role as journalists, encourage children to carry out interviews and write a news item for the start and end of the book. Ask: *Why is the book called 'Holes'?* Talk through all the possibilities. Discuss *'the holes in their lives'*. Then make a comparison with the film (it has a PG certificate, so you might want to check with parents before showing it). (See the *Read & Respond* title for further ideas.)



Clockwork

Philip Pullman (Random House)

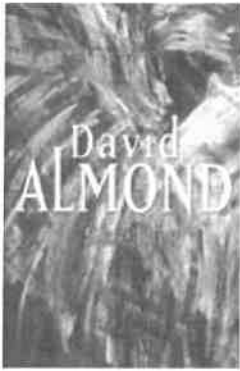
Before reading, ask: *What does the cover suggest the book will be about?* While reading it in class create a story map of the story and show how the main events and characters interconnect. Ask: *Which are the good/bad characters? Where is your evidence?* Together compare Karl and Gretl using evidence from the text. Ask: *In what way is the book like 'clockwork'? How are our lives like clockwork? In what ways do we 'wind up the future like clockwork'?* Re-read the book and pause at the places where there is the most suspense. Ask: *How does Philip Pullman create suspense? What techniques does he use? How does he keep the reader 'all wound up'?*



The Hobbit

J.R.R. Tolkien (HarperCollins)

With the class create maps and a timeline for the adventure. Can they write messages in runic code? Invite them to write letters to Bilbo to persuade him to join the journey. Together create a set of instructions, such as 'How to Trap a Troll'. Role play the Troll scene in lesson. Invite them to write riddles for Bilbo to use against Gollum or the Dragon. Provide time to write Gollum's story, asking: *How did he get inside the mountain and how did he come by the ring?* Together write a poem listing what you would do with a magical ring. After each key part of the story, interview a child in the role of a dwarf and ask them about what has happened or create and film news bulletins. Challenge children to draw or describe Smaug, as well as write an 'end of term report' for Bilbo. Ask: *How has the journey changed him?* Work out the underlying pattern of the Quest story – and the key archetypal characters – then create your own quest in chapters.



Skellig **READ & RESPOND**

David Almond (Hodder)

Together in class discuss Mina's views on education. Ask: *Who or what is Skellig? What is the book about? Invite them to collect key lines to talk about, such as 'truth and dreams are always getting muddled'.* In role as Mina, encourage children to write her diary extracts about what is happening. Perform and talk about 'Tyger' by William Blake. Provide time to write Michael's story for Miss Clarts in Chapter 33. Ask: *Why does Michael want to call the baby 'Persephone'?* Tell the class to read 'Mina – my story' and write a sequel to *Skellig*. (See the *Read & Respond* series for further ideas.)



Fireweed

Jill Paton Walsh (Hot Key Books)

This book benefits from background knowledge about the bombing of London in 1940 and the evacuation. Split the class in two with both halves keeping diary entries for the two main characters. Hold discussions after each chapter as this is a demanding read. Pause for 'think alouds' where children in role think aloud about their thoughts, hopes, motives, and so on. Discuss with the class what happens in the last two chapters. Ask: *Why is the story called 'Fireweed'?* Also, read *Dolphin Crossing* (Faber) by the same author (about Dunkirk).



River Boy

Tim Bowler (Oxford University Press)

This is another mysterious book and you should read it before reading it to the class. Ask: *Who, or what, is the 'river boy' and how can he be 'part of her'?* *What does Grandpa want? How can Jess 'be his hands'?* When reading Chapter 17 discuss the relationship between the painting and the river boy and Grandpa. Discuss the importance of the swim and ask: *how does this help Jess come to terms with Grandpa's death? By the end of the book who has changed and how?* At the end of the book discuss *the spirit of the river boy was in her alone*. Try to summarise what the book is about and what it means to the children. Some of these meanings might be private.



The Arrival **Picture book**

Shaun Tan (Hodder)

Before reading this in class you may find it handy to explain immigration, especially the migration to America at the end of the 19th century (Ellis Island). Read carefully and discuss. Study each section at a time. Ask: *What is happening?* As there are no words, the reader has to work hard! Discuss in class how the story makes you feel – and how the characters seem to feel. (Being in a new country, migrants often feel at a loss in the same way that the reader does.) Discuss the three 'helpers'. Invite the children to write the letters that they send. Ask: *What is the story about? Are all the illustrations real or in someone's imagination? Are they symbols for anything?* Encourage the class to write story sections to go with different parts of the book or diary entries for characters. Also, read other Shaun Tan books, such as *The Lost Thing*, *The Red Tree* and *Rules of Summer* which makes a good model for writing. Also, check out picture books by Armin Greder, *The Island* and *The City* (Allen & Unwin).

Age 10–11



Embassy of the Dead Will Mabbitt

Orion Children's Books

Staying alive has always come naturally to Jake, until the day he accidentally takes delivery of a severed finger and unleashes the wrath of the Grim Reaper...

Witty and creepy – but not too scary – this wacky adventure is packed with ghosts, grave robbers and gruesome beasts. A hilarious fright-fest!

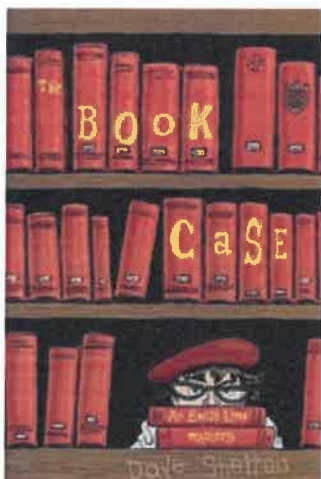


Suee and the Shadow Ginger Ly, Illustrated by Molly Park

Amulet Books

When Suee has to transfer school to lame Outskirtsville, the local kids don't get her quiet ways and black clothes. Yet when a shadow-girl attaches itself to her and refuses to let go, Suee, Haeun and Hyunwoo – the Zero Detective Club – investigate the matter further.

A delightfully dark and spooky graphic novel for younger readers.



The Book Case: An Emily Lime Mystery Dave Shelton

David Fickling Books

At St Rita's School for Spirited Girls, bookworm Daphne meets Emily Lime, the terse yet intriguing pupil Assistant Librarian – and immediately strange things start happening.

Loosely set in the 1930s – a bit like a funnier Famous Five or Secret Seven – this sniggeringly funny, totally deadpan book is a joy to read.



Age
10–11



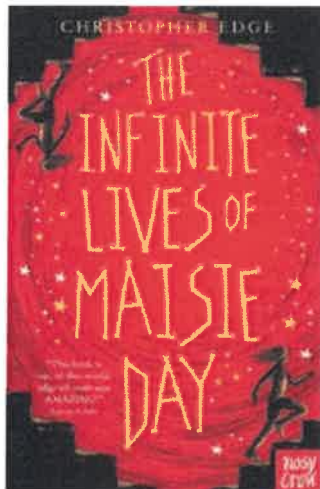
The House with Chicken Legs

Sophie Anderson, Illustrated by Elisa Paganelli

Usborne

Marinka's grandmother is a Yaga, someone who guides the dead through the Gate so they can make their way back to the stars they came from. Although she's expected to follow in her grandmother's footsteps, Marinka herself is desperate for a normal life.

Marinka's story is magical, delightfully macabre and utterly engrossing.



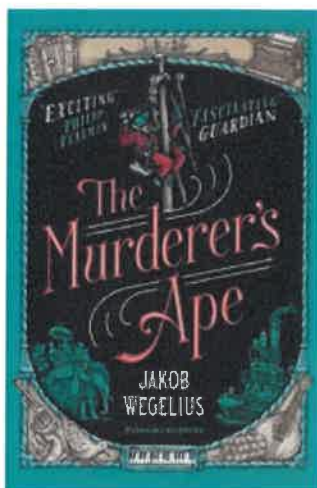
The Infinite Lives of Maisie Day

Christopher Edge

Nosy Crow

Maisie is no ordinary 10-year-old: she passed her maths GCSE at age 6 and is now studying for a degree. Yet on her birthday she finds that her family have disappeared and her house is being consumed by darkness.

A brilliant introduction to physics wrapped inside a great story.



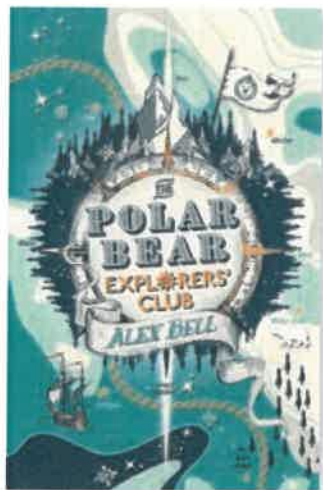
The Murderer's Ape

Jakob Wegelius, Translated by Peter Graves

Pushkin Children's Books

Sally Jones is an engineer and loyal friend to Captain Koskela. She's also an ape. When Koskela is falsely accused of murder, fado-singer Ana and a local music shop owner help Sally follow the clues to unravel the mystery.

A brilliant adventure, rich with multi-dimensional characters and a European setting full of warmth and community.

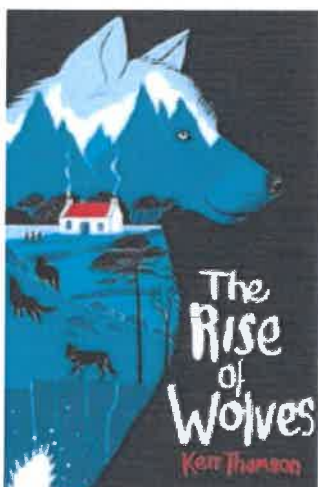


The Polar Bear Explorers' Club
Alex Bell, Illustrated by Tomislav Tomic

Faber & Faber

Stella's adoptive father, Felix, is a member of the Polar Bear Explorers' Club. Technically, girls aren't allowed to join the Club, but when the chance arises, Stella is determined to prove she can be as good an explorer as anyone.

Readers will be sucked into Stella's enchanting world for an unforgettable adventure.

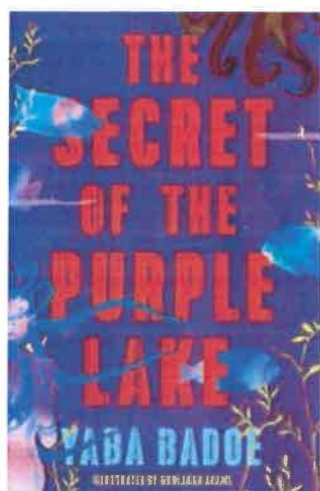


The Rise of Wolves
Kerr Thomson

Chicken House

When Innis spots a large, black wolf on his island home, he thinks he must be hallucinating. Wolves became extinct in Scotland centuries ago – didn't they?

This tale of conflict between ancient traditions and contemporary technology features a gripping plot, stunning setting, great characters, and an underlying theme of loyalty to family and friends.



The Secret of the Purple Lake
Yaba Badoe, Illustrated by Gbolahan Adams

Cassava Republic

Metamorphoses abound in this collection of interlinked folk tales – with strong, bold princesses and kind, loving princes transformed into birds, walruses and spirits of the sea.

With a truly global feel, these stories reach from Africa to the Orkney Islands, by way of Spain and Norway.



Age
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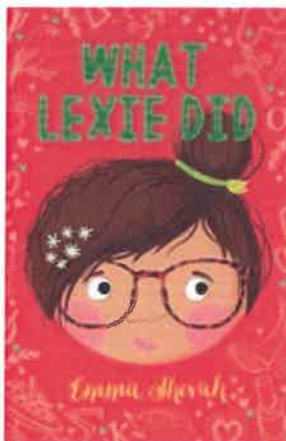


The Wizards of Once
Cressida Cowell

Hodder Children's Books

Wish is a girl from a warrior tribe and Xar is a boy from a wizard tribe, living in a world loosely based on Iron Age Britain. Wish has a secret magical object that she'll do anything to hide – and Xar will do anything to get his hands on.

A fabulously imaginative, funny and unpredictable adventure.

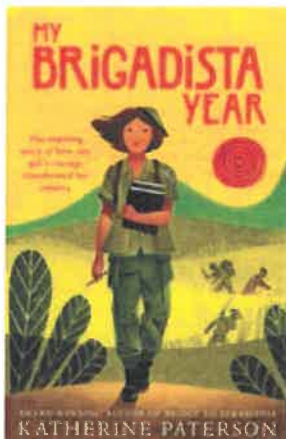


What Lexie Did
Emma Shevah

Chicken House

Lexie lives in London with her huge Greek Cypriot family, but things get complicated when she's caught between telling the truth and lying – and what she decides to do ends up splitting her family apart. Can Lexie figure out how to bring them back together again?

Full of distinctive style, charming illustrations and heaps of thought-provoking moments.

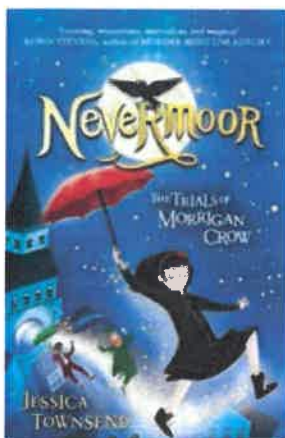


My Brigadista Year
Katherine Paterson

Walker Books

In post-revolutionary Cuba, 13-year-old Lora volunteers to spend a year in the mountains teaching an illiterate family how to read and write. But the mountains are also home to vicious *bandidos*...

Based on real events, this is a fascinating look at a period of recent world history seen through the eyes of an idealistic young woman.

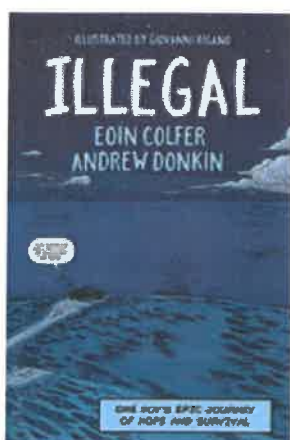


Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow
Jessica Townsend

Orion Children's Books

Morrigan Crow is blamed for every misfortune and destined to die on her eleventh birthday. But when the mysterious Jupiter North takes Morrigan to the magical world of Nevermoor, she enters the trials for membership of the Wondrous Society, with thrilling results.

A relatable main character with a pacy, fantastical plot keeps the pages turning.



Illegal

Eoin Colfer & Andrew Donkin, Illustrated by Giovanni Rigano

Hodder Children's Books

Ebo flees Africa in the hope of a better life in Europe, determined to find his family that have already left. But the boat he manages to find passage on is a small six-person rubber dinghy, now carrying 14 passengers.

An absolute must-read, this graphic novel is thought-provoking, profound, sensitive and totally gripping.



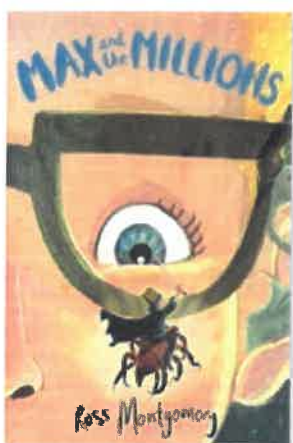
Kat Wolfe Investigates

Lauren St John

Macmillan Children's Books

Kat Wolfe loves her new home in idyllic Bluebell Bay, especially as it comes with a resident wildcat. But when she starts pet-sitting for pocket money, she finds that beneath the town's perfect surface lie some dark and dangerous secrets.

The first in a new adventure series by a very popular author.



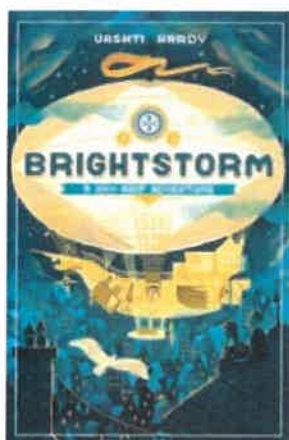
Max and the Millions

Ross Montgomery

Faber & Faber

Ten-year-old Max feels like an outsider at St Goliath's. Then he makes a miraculous discovery – a tiny civilisation in the pile of sand, where three bickering tribes are nonsensically segregated according to hair colour.

A delightfully daft tale complemented by many subtle social comments about inequality, the abuse of power and the futility of war.



Brightstorm: A Sky-Ship Adventure

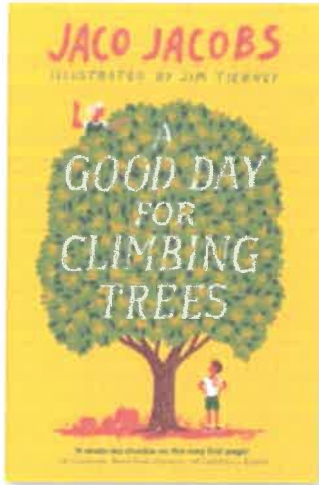
Vashti Hardy

Scholastic

Twelve-year-old twins Maudie and Arthur's world comes crashing down when their explorer dad is reported dead in his mission to get to South Polaris – and word has it that he stole fuel from his competitors before he died. Can they find out the truth, and restore honour to the Brightstorm name?

An unputdownable Victorian adventure with vivid characters that travels at lightning speed.

Age
10–11

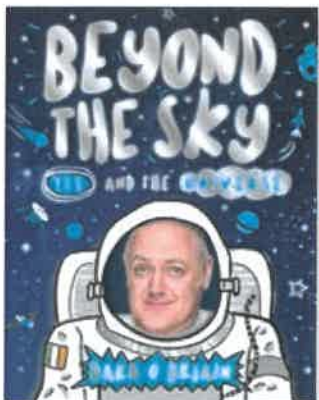


A Good Day for Climbing Trees
Jaco Jacobs, Illustrated by Jim Tierney,
translated by Kobus Geldenhuys

Rock the Boat

Thirteen-year-old Marnus is tired of being overshadowed by his successful brothers. But when Leila shows up at their front door with a petition to save a tree, Marnus finds himself at the centre of an unexpected protest.

A perfect feel-good book that deftly handles issues around family life – as well as activism – with a light-hearted touch.

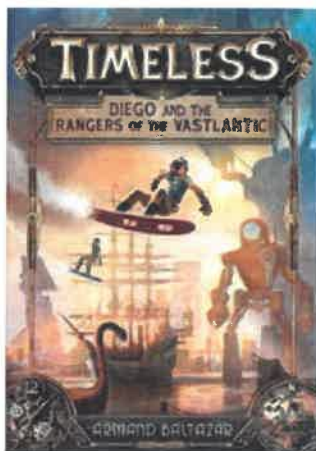


Beyond the Sky: You and the Universe
Dara Ó Briain, Illustrated by Dan Bramall

Scholastic

Beginning with the question, 'So you want to go into space?', this book takes readers on a hilarious journey through the solar system and beyond.

Packed with fascinating facts covering fundamental scientific questions, Ó Briain's genuine love for science shines through, and his chatty, accessible style is perfectly complemented by the witty illustrations.



**Timeless: Diego and the Rangers
of the Vastlantic**
Armand Baltazar

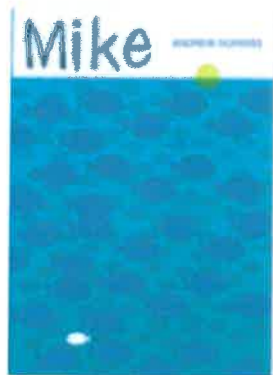
HarperCollins

Thirteen-year-old Diego Ribera has never known a world before the Time Collision; to him, it's natural for giant robots and hoverboards to exist alongside dinosaurs and steam-powered ships. His life, however, is about to get a whole lot more bizarre.

With rich and vibrant illustrations alongside amazingly detailed text, this book is something very special.

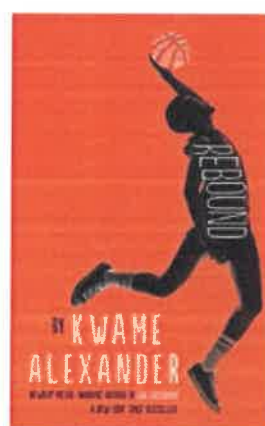
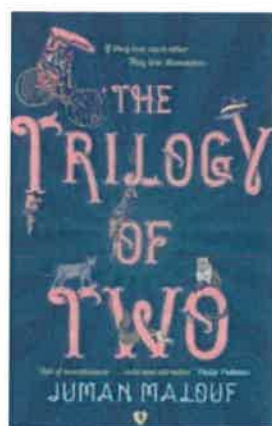
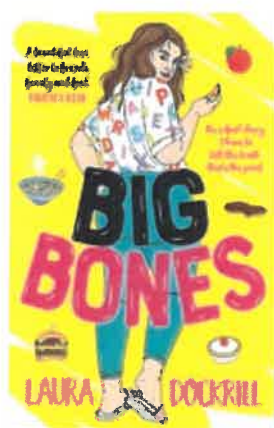
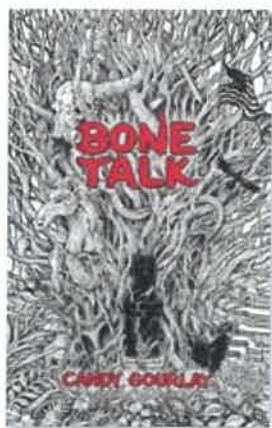
Illustration © Mini Grey

Age
12+



What's next?

Looking for even more books that older siblings or more advanced readers will love? Here are some suggestions!



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