Anderson, R.J.          A Pocket full of murder

Pbk                     6.99     9781408338933
Interest age: 10+       Reading age: 10+

Isaveth is determined to prove her father's innocence when he is arrested for the magical murder of a prominent citizen in her country. Quiz, the eccentric street boy who befriends her agrees to try and help solve the crime. However, as the trial looms and it seems her father has been deliberately framed, Isaveth discovers that Quiz belongs to one of the ruling families and so may not be trustworthy.

Excellent mystery tale set in a very well imagined magical world. Good characterisation, and feisty heroine. Requires a reasonably mature reader as touches on political motives and religious prejudice. Could be enjoyed by both boys and girls.

Beyond the Stars

HarperCollins Pbk 6.99 9780008113148
Interest age: 9+     Reading age: 10+

A collection of stories on various themes by mostly well–known Irish authors and illustrators. They have been put together to raise money for a creative writing centre in Dublin, which was co-founded by Roddy Doyle. Many of the stories have a supernatural or magical theme, and are all well written. Writers include Derek Landy, Eoin Colfer, Siobhan Parkinson and John Boyne.

Burchett, Jan & Vogler, Sara          First Blood

Orion Pbk 6.99 9781444010671
Interest age: 9+     Reading age: 9+

When Jack Briars becomes an apprentice to King Henry VIII’s spy master, Thomas Cromwell, he is disappointed to be given the boring duties of a clerk. But the king's enemies are everywhere. Soon Jack is facing more adventure and intrigue than he bargained for. If he wants to stay alive and in favour, he will need to learn the arts of stealth, disguise, and deception.

Good main character with lots of action and fast moving plot.
Jacques Papier thinks that everyone hates him. After all, teachers ignore him when he raises his hand in class, nobody ever picks him for sports teams, and his sister, Fleur, keeps having to remind their parents to set a place for him at the dinner table. Then Jacques discovers an uncomfortable truth: He is NOT Fleur's brother; he's her imaginary friend! So begins Jacques' quest for identity... what do you do when you realise that the only reason you exist is because of someone else's imagination? Retains US spellings and terminology throughout. Easy to read and has short chapters.

Izzy is made invisible by one of her grandmother's scientific experiments and does good deeds to help others when she is invisible. Gentle family story for young readers.

First title in a new series about a young witch. Bella is a hopeless young witch banished to the human world by her aunt who despair of her magical ability and forbids her to use magic again. When Bella finds a kitten in trouble, a spell is the only way to rescue it. What is Bella to do? For where there is magic, trouble is never far away! An easy to read story with black and white line drawings throughout to break up the text. One for the girls who like witch stories.

Set in America 11-year-old Rose is autistic and struggles to understand her classmates. When her father gives her a stray dog, which she names Rain, the dog becomes her best friend who helps her deal with issues at home and school. When Rain goes missing during a storm, Rose refuses to stop looking for him. A satisfying story which deals with some tough issues, including autism. Rose is described as hitting herself during some anxiety episodes at school. Also Rose's father has anger management issues. There is one scene in which he physically threatens Rose, and also hits the dog, which may disturb sensitive readers.
Echo come home

Rix, Megan

Puffin Pbk  9780141357669
Interest age: 9+  Reading age: 10+

Echo is the loveable stray training to be a hearing dog. Jake is his new owner. Jake has always found life with his disability a bit of a struggle. With Echo's help, he starts to gain confidence and make friends at school. Then Jake and Echo are separated and Echo embarks upon a long journey to be reunited with him.
Easy to read story written in typical Megan Rix style. Could be good for reading groups as lots of different issues; stray dogs, homelessness, disability, hearing dogs etc.

The Impossible Clue

Rubin, Sarah

Chicken House Pbk  9781910002865
Interest age: 10+  Reading age: 10+

12 year old Alice Jones lives with her dad in Philadelphia, while her twin sister lives with her mum in New York. Alice loves maths and solving puzzles, and is asked by her friend's dad to solve the mystery of a disappearing scientist from his company. Alice is happy to try and solve the puzzle, but is hampered by one of the boys from her class insisting on helping, and the arrival of her sister to stay for the holidays.
An intriguing mystery which may or may not include the use of an invisibility suit. There is an element of danger which makes it more exciting.

The Butterfly Club

Wilson, J

Corgi Pbk  9780552569934
Interest age: 8+  Reading age: 9+

New in paperback. Tina is a triplet, but her sisters Phil and Maddie are bigger, stronger and better at just about everything. They look after Tina wherever they go - but when the girls start in Miss Lovejoy’s class, they're split up, and Tina has to fend for herself for the first time. They are horrified when Tina is paired up with angry bully Selma, who nobody wants to be friends with. When Miss Lovejoy asks them to help her create a butterfly garden in the school playground, Tina discovers she can cope without her sisters and that there’s a lot more to Selma than first meets the eye.
Usual Jacqueline Wilson style, which is easy to read and has Nick Sharratt line drawings throughout.
NB Selma is beaten by her mother, and is subtly belittled by her step-father. This isn’t resolved, but the book ends with Tina’s friendship enabling Selma to get perspective and Tina and her being best friends.

Purchasing these books

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