

Recommended Secondary Fiction Autumn Term 2025



Brahmachari, Sita

OUP Pbk
Interest 13+
age:

Phoenix Brothers

8.99 9781382064491
Reading age: 10+

When war brings horror and devastation to Amir's homeland, he is forced to undertake a gruelling and treacherous journey to safety, alone. Along with his new friend Mo, another young unaccompanied refugee, he is rebuilding his life, while dealing with the events of his past. At his new school, Amir decides to enter a prestigious public speaking competition to help others understand what he's been through. But can Amir find his voice and reclaim his story? An inspiring short tale of resilience and survival, with compelling characters and short chapters, ideal for reluctant readers.



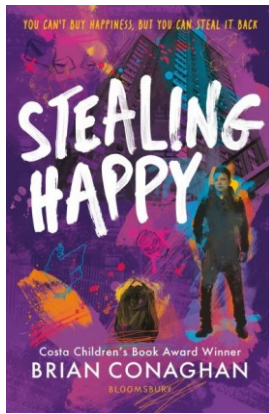
Burns, Peter

Farshore Pbk
Interest 11+
age:

Shadow Thieves

7.99 9780008667818
Reading age: 11+

13-year-old Tom Morgan and his friends live on the streets of an alternate London shining shoes and picking pockets, until one day Tom's friends are caught and sent to a brutal workhouse. Frantic and without a way to save them, Tom bumps into the mysterious Corsair, who offers him an opportunity to train at an elite international boarding school for thieves. Seeing a glimmer of hope, Tom lets himself be whisked away to the snowy Alps in a zeppelin. Swept into a thrilling world of danger and intrigue, the more secrets he learns about the Shadow League, the harder it becomes for Tom to leave. But there are dark forces at work and real danger is coming. Exciting page turner covering a variety of genres, including crime and spies. Some mild swearing and scenes of violence and death, but not graphically described. Good leisure read for Alex Rider fans.



Conaghan, Brian

Stealing Happy

Bloomsbury Pbk 7.99 9781526653987
Interest 13+ Reading age: 12+
age:

Where Sonny lives, the loan shark Chick Lennon is notorious, and not for anything good. So when Sonny discovers his mum has borrowed money from Chick to pay the rent, he finds himself in need of the quickest of get-rich-quick schemes. With the help of best mate Jonah and quiet genius Carolina, he hatches a plot to pay back what his mum owes using Chick's own ill-gotten gains. It's not a fool-proof plan, and it's not helped by Sonny's Tourette's making him blab very loud under stress, but he feels it's down to him to save his family. Sonny is a very well drawn and likeable character and the first person narrative really gets across his OCD and how he deals with the world around him. Dark and funny narrative with plenty of details to keep the reader's attention.

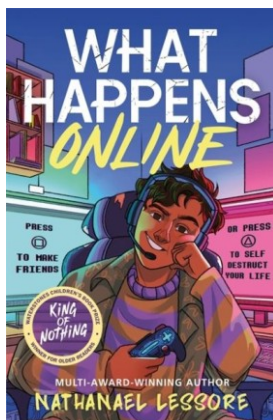


Jonsberg, Barry

Darkest Night, Brightest Star

Allen& Pbk 7.99 9781761180385
Unwin
Interest 13+ Reading age: 11+
age:

Thirteen-year-old Morgan lives with his dad and his older brother, Mitch. He hasn't heard from his mum since she left when he was two. He has no self-confidence and no friends. He keeps his head down at school and works hard on his football skills, striving to meet his father's high expectations and 'be a man'. But what that means isn't always clear-cut. When Morgan makes a friend at school, gets injured in a game, and his long-lost mum turns up, everything changes. Then, when he meets an old woman in need of help, Morgan must decide what kind of man he wants to be. Very compelling character driven narrative that grips the reader from the beginning, with intense dark themes of bullying and misogyny. Nevertheless, a satisfying and quality read.

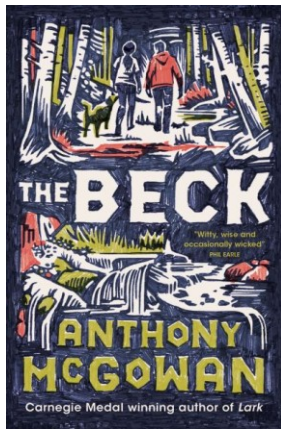


Lessor, Nathanael

What Happens Online

Hot Key Pbk 8.99 9781471418204
Interest 11+ Reading age: 11+
age:

Online, Fred goes by Existor@stmarks. His alter ego is the best gamer around - constantly on a winning streak, with tonnes of followers, and the confidence to go with it. But offline, Fred's life is miserable. His dad's always working, his mum's struggling, and at school, everyone looks straight through him. Until Existor's notoriety spreads to his school, and Fred sees an opportunity: everyone listens to what Existor has to say, so why not use that? Soon, Fred is coming up with outlandish rumours about his classmates, and everyone's lapping it up. His bullies are shunned, and people are finally taking notice of him. But it's a slippery slope and Fred struggles to keep track of all the stuff he's posted as his lies start to wreak unexpected havoc. Fred will have to answer for his crimes against reality, but will he ever find someone to like him for who he really is? Written with humour and strong characters make the story a very engaging and contemporary read.



McGowan,Anthony

The Beck

Barrington
Stoke

Proof
Publishing
13/03/2025

7.99 9780008722296

Interest
age:

11+

Reading age: 11+

Kyle is not happy about getting taken to his grandad's house on a Saturday afternoon. Grandad is a unique character and has a weird three-legged dog. Kyle thinks it is going to be awful, till his grandad introduces him to the beck at the bottom of his garden. Once filthy and full of rubbish, the stream has been cleaned up and is now home to some amazing creatures. However, this is under threat from a new development. Kyle's grandad is determined to stop the builders and has a plan to save the beck. When Grandad falls ill, will Kyle be able to save the day? Great realistic characters and a touching story.



McNicoll, Elle

Wish You Were Here

First Ink
Interest

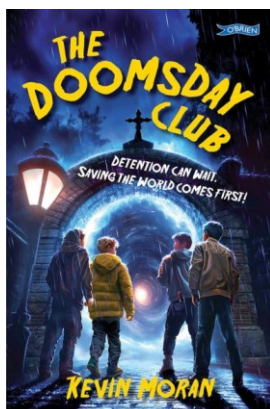
Pbk
14+

8.99 9781035027873

Reading age: 12+

age:

Allegra Brooks has skyrocketed to fame after starring in a hit television show, and she's the overnight success that everyone's talking about. They just don't know she's autistic. Now, all she wants is a normal teenage summer. So she escapes to Lake Pristine and its annual book festival, organized by the dedicated but unfriendly senior bookseller, Jonah Thorne. In small towns like Lake Pristine, misunderstandings abound, and before long the two are drawn into high-profile hostility that's a far cry from the drama-free holiday Allegra was craving. Thank goodness for her saving grace: the increasingly personal emails she's been sharing with a charming and anonymous bookseller who is definitely not Jonah Thorne. Entertaining and fairly light romance novel with good characterisation and well-handled theme of neurodiversity as one would expect from this author. Quality narrative a cut above the usual leisure teen romance novel.



Moran,Kevin

The Domsday Club

O'Brien
Interest

Pbk
11+

8.99 9781788495264

Reading age: 10+

age:

Jack and Conan are stuck in detention with Yash and Jerry after being caught brawling in the toilets. But then they witness a monstrous beast step out of a portal outside their school and wander into the crumbling mansion across the road, where the sinister Mr Kilroe lives. The boys, of course decide to follow it and investigate. Unlocking Mr Kilroe's secrets is only the beginning. Because there's more than one otherworldly horror hiding in that house and confronting it will put Jack and Conan in mortal danger. Very good horror adventure tale set in modern day Dublin. The characterisation and relationship dramas give depth to the narrative, and overall this is a ripping yarn for young horror enthusiasts.



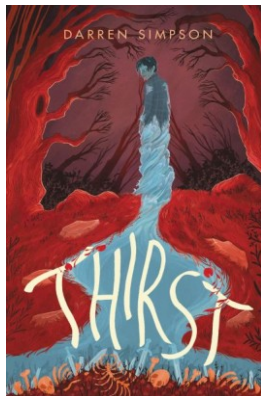
Perry, Poppy T

Dead Real

UCLan Pbk
Publishing
Interest 14+
age:

8.99 9781916747432
Reading age: 12+

Nora Inkwell is totally going to tell her best friend Ruby that she's in love with her. Then she, her parents, Ruby and a random school crossing guy they find along the way, find themselves on the run in a zombie apocalypse. This might just put matters of love and romance on hold. Super fun violent, swearsy, horror action adventure with a strand of romance. Lots of gore and well-described zombie action, and twisty turny plot which doesn't quite hang together, but is great fun. The two central female characters are hugely enjoyable to spend time leisure reading with.



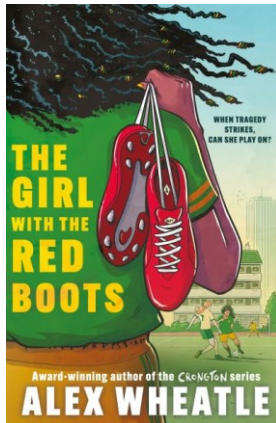
Simpson, Darren

Thirst

Pushkin Pbk
Press
Interest 12+
age:

9.99 9781782695721
Reading age: 12+

Nobody talks about the strange happenings in Mainsbury. Nobody dares whisper their doubts about the river they have worshipped for centuries. Like everyone in Mainsbury, Gorse is used to the sacrifices made every spring to the River Yeelde. The life of a farm animal – in return for a year of plenty. Then a tragedy leads Gorse to a blood-curdling discovery, because this year is a Brim Year, and after giving so much, the river needs more than an animal's life to sate its thirst. A compelling read with a strong sense of place, it's dark and grim but raises many interesting themes.
A very thought provoking and interesting read.



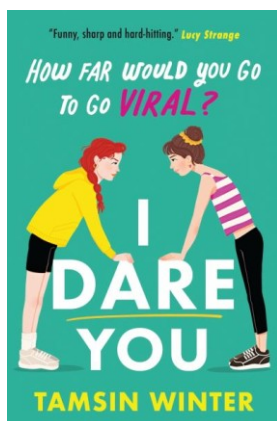
Wheatle, Alex

The Girl With The Red Boots

Hachette Pbk
Interest 13+
age:

9.99 9781444969665
Reading age: 12+

Fourteen-year-old keen footballer Kadeen is sent far away from her home in Jamaica to stay with her Aunt Mel in London after her beloved older brother is tragically killed and she identifies the shooter as a dangerous crime lord. She must carry her grief while adjusting to her new home, and lie low so she isn't recognised. Desperate for a distraction, Kadeen practises football in the local park where she's asked to try out for local a girls' team. But when Aunt Mel finds her way to the top with the team and avoid attracting the crime lord's attention? Very engaging story with a central character that readers will really root for. Lots of appeal in the narrative for football fans, and good added depth exploring friendship and family relationships.



Winter, Tamsin

I Dare You

Usborne Pbk
Interest 11+
age:

8.99 9781805075721
Reading age: 11+

Willow and Alma are best friends, sharing a love of the spotlight. All they want is fame and fortune, and Willow is determined that the best way to get it is to go viral. So they start filming dares. Okay, so getting stuck in a basketball hoop doesn't get them the sort of attention they were hoping for, but as their challenges get more extreme, their fan base grows. Duct-taping themselves to a wall? No-brainer. Eating super-hot chillis? Of course! Waxing an eyebrow off? Super funny! And if they get in a bit of trouble, it's worth it. But if they really want to prove themselves and have to go all-out. They come up with the perfect idea. An idea that causes more than just a bit of trouble. An idea that might destroy not just their ambitions but their entire friendship for good. A modern-day cautionary tale of taking online challenges too far; well written and engaging with sympathetic and realistic characters. A good teen read.

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