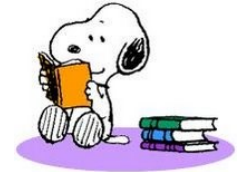




RGS: Bonkers About Books!

June 2022



Hello,

I can't quite believe that we are the end of the academic year already. What a year it has been for books: we've had some exciting new releases and saw the return of author visits to school—look out for more of those next year. So, as we head for the long hot (hopefully) days of the summer holiday, what do I recommend you read? I have some suggestions below. I'll be packing my suitcase full of books to keep me company on the beach this summer, and I'll tell you all about those in September. In the meantime, have a wonderful holiday and happy reading.

Mrs Wall

Looking For Emily - Fiona Longmuir

Lily has just moved to the town of Edge with her mum, a quiet place by the sea which Lily hates as soon as she arrives. Reluctant to make friends, Lily spends her lunch-times eating in the classroom with her English teacher, Miss Hanan. However, when the teacher sets her homework to pick somebody in school and talk to them, Lily is sent into a panic. On her way home, she stumbles across a museum that seems to have been abandoned. It's a rather unusual place in that it appears to be full of everyday objects belonging to somebody named Emily who disappeared years ago.

When she finally plucks up the courage to complete her homework, Lily makes a new friend in Sam and, together with another friend, Jay, they delve into the mystery of discovering who Emily is and what happened to her. But can they solve the mystery and why is there a strange man also looking for Emily?

I loved everything about this book: the setting, the characters, the adventure, the thought of eating chips covered in salt and vinegar whilst at the beach...!

Set in a sleepy seaside town, the descriptions evoke images of winding streets and whitewashed houses that lead to the pebble and shell-covered beach, and to the sea. With the squally weather and salt and vinegar chips to lure me, I was sorely tempted to step inside the pages - the setting certainly helps to create and build the atmosphere.

At the beginning of the book, Lily is clearly having trouble adjusting to her new life and has chosen to close herself off, hiding in the classroom instead of making friends. However, Miss Hanan's subtle (or perhaps not so subtle) efforts mark a change for Lily. Meeting Sam, who happens to live close to Lily, means she is also introduced to Jay and the trio make quite the team. I like the fact that there are fallings out and things said that they don't mean: it makes the characters very real and their differences make them a strength to be reckoned with.

Told in dual perspective from both Lily's and Emily's point of view, **Looking For Emily** lures you further and further into the story as you become desperate to know what is happening to each of the characters. The pace is fast and the short chapters keep you hooked (just one more chapter...!). There is humour mixed in with the adventure at just the right level to make things suspenseful but not too dark. There are nail-biting moments that will have you shouting at the book and willing the characters to hear you, and the twists will keep you guessing. Overall, this is a book that you will want to dive into and devour, but will be sad when you reach the final page.

Looking For Emily is the perfect blend of friendship, adventure and danger that will have readers looking for hidden museums so they can follow in Lily's footsteps.



The Mermaid Call - Alex Cotter.

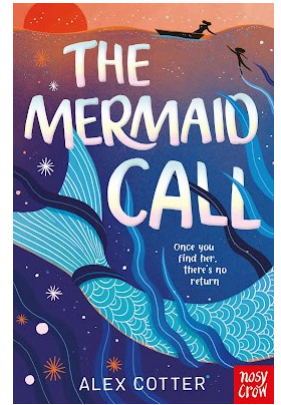
Vivien lives with her grandmother (Mimi) in Lake Splendour where legends of mermaids are what keeps the tourists flocking there and helps the town stay afloat. Every year, the town holds its mermaid festival where the parade and winning the Mermaid Crown is the heart of the festivities. However, Vivien doesn't think she will ever win the crown so when Alice DeLacey asks her to help her find the mermaid of the lake, she jumps at the chance. But behind the legend, there are watery secrets that will lead to danger. But will the truth be revealed before it's too late?

Vivien is a complex character, dealing with lots of different things. She lives with her grandmother as her mother works away on the cruise ships and it becomes apparent that her mother is elusive and unreliable, leaving Mimi to bring Vivien up. The family run Enchanted Tails, a shop selling mermaid memorabilia. Money is tight so Vivien doesn't have the latest technology and her clothes are second-hand. She feels different from the other girls in school and certainly doesn't feel like her appearance fits with winning the Mermaid Crown, perhaps this is why she is lured by Alice into stealing Alice's auntie's diary so they can find the mermaid. Their new friendship comes with gifts (the latest phone, new clothes and hair straighteners which allow Vivien to have the straight hair she has always desired), but it also changes her and that affects her existing friendships. It is clear that Vivien is desperate for her mum's attention and approval and this drives a lot of what she does in the book.

The town of Lake Splendour is built around the legend of the mermaids (hailing from 1914, when two 15-year-old girls announced that the Lake Mermaid spoke to them) and everything is linked to this, including the name of every shop in town (Splash Tearooms; Poseidon, the fish and chip shop; Fin's Waves, the ladies' hairdressers...). It's a small place where everybody seems to know everybody else and the older residents are resistant to change. The place feels as though it is living in the past somewhat but the mermaids is all it has.

The Mermaid Call is a beautifully told tale full of mystery and secrets that will entice you in and then surprise you with its twists. It's a captivating story about mermaids, friendship and finding your true self with an ending that I loved and had me cheering!

Released on the 7th July, **The Mermaid Call** will make a wonderful summer holiday read.



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“
Children's books
remind us in
uncertain times that there
is still much we do know.
Kindness matters.
Laughter is essential.
Caring for each other
is everything.
-The Eric Carle Museum
of Picture Book Art

The Consequence Girl - Alastair Chisholm

Thirteen year old Cora lives in the middle of nowhere with Seleen, who has been her carer since the death of her parents. Their cabin is on a mountain, kilometres away from anyone else and from the cities of Recon, Sheen and Base which together make up the world of Colony. They survive alone with Seleen only venturing to Recon every few months to get supplies. It is whilst Seleen is away during one of these trips that Cora encounters Kai, who falls out of a tree near the cabin. Afraid, Cora runs away (she'd allowed him to see her, the one thing Seleen insists she must never do); however, the snow and cold mean that Cora returns the next day and, realising that Kai is seriously injured, she takes him to the cellar in the cabin, ties him up so she feels safe, and nurses him back to health again. When Seleen returns a few days later, she is furious at Cora for having taken Kai in, and even more annoyed when she discovers that Cora has revealed her ability to *fix* the past. Declaring that they can't trust anyone and fearing that, if anyone finds out about Cora's powers, they will use her, she throws Kai out. When their cabin is invaded the following evening, Seleen and Cora are forced to flee and head to the places Seleen has kept Cora from for the past thirteen years. On the run, how will Cora cope, can she discover who she really is and can her powers help to *fix* Colony?



Once again, Alastair has masterfully built a dystopian world that is vivid and imaginative; set in the future, it feels current and futuristic at the same time. The world of Colony has been in dire straits since the loss of the Glories (humans with technological advances) and is now run by a government who are determined to control everything. Lead by Thorsen with Sisal as the head of protection, Colony is not a safe place for Cora to be.

I loved meeting and getting to know Cora who is a wonderful character. Having spent her entire life hidden away and knowing nobody but Seleen, she is thrust into a world where danger lies round every corner for her. If her powers are revealed, she has no idea what will happen to her. Kai is clearly the crux of the story as his arrival from the tree marks a major change in her life; through him, she begins to learn how to form friendships and has to decide whether she can trust him or not (you'll have to read the book to find out whether she can/does). Her ability brings so much responsibility for her and the pressure of whether she should use this ability to *fix* things. There is an inner strength that emerges in her as the book progresses as she faces some very difficult decisions.

The idea of being able to *fix* the past is a powerful topic to broach and one that I know will provoke much discussion in school when children read it. As the book shows, it's not just the immediate fix but the ripple effects and consequences that this has on everything else.

The Consequence Girl is another gripping sci-fi from Alastair Chisholm and a book that will leave you thinking. With themes of friendship, secrets, trust and consequences, this is another guaranteed hit. Alastair has quickly become one of those authors whose books I get excited about before they arrive and then need to devour as soon as they arrive - I can't wait to see what's next.

Book News For Parents.

In September, I will be launching not one but two parent lending libraries. One will be based in the reception of Lambton House, with the other across the road in the reception of Brandling House. I'll give you all more details next term, but parents will be welcome to donate and/or borrow books from each one so feel free to begin to put aside any good books you read over the summer that you think other parents would like to read.



Can You Feel The Noise? - Stewart Foster

Sophie has been having problems with her hearing for a while but when she wakes up one morning to discover that she is completely deaf, her entire life changes. How is she going to be able to play her guitar? And with the Battle of the Bands competition looming, what is she going to do?

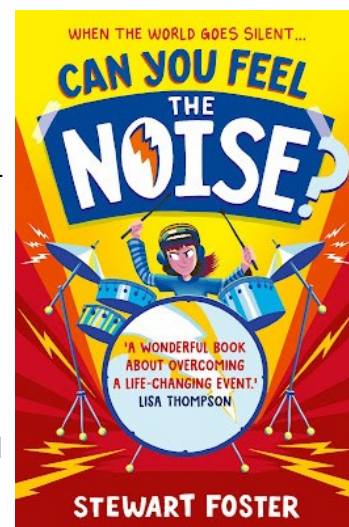
Can I just say from the get-go that **Can you Feel The Noise** is a phenomenal book? Foster's portrayal of Sophie is superb and his attention to detail really helps the reader to understand exactly what she is going through. It wasn't until I had finished the book and I was reading the author's note and acknowledgements at the end that I discovered that Stewart himself is hard of hearing and I began to realise that this must have been an incredibly personal book to write - it's no surprise that it moved me so much.

For me, it was the details like the different noises that Sophie still heard in her head, the fact that eating crisps 'sounds like bones are crunching inside your head' and being afraid to go outside that helped me to begin to understand what she was going through. She is an incredibly strong character, even if she doesn't know it. Her entire life changes overnight and the things she loves to do most - play and listen to music - are no longer available to her. I can understand her wanting to retreat to her bedroom and not to want to come out, but she has a set of amazing friends (existing ones and new friends she meets on her journey) that help her find her way. I love the vulnerability that we see in Sophie and the portrayal of her doubts and fears; of having to learn how to do things like going for a walk again - it really gives readers a true idea of what losing your hearing must be like. I also like the fact that we get to see the effect it has on Sophie's friends: Mai is a huge support to Sophie but even she doesn't always get it right (do any of us?), but it's Rocco that made me smile the most: he seems determined to find ways to get it wrong at every turn! At first, I thought it was just insensitivity and him being too wrapped up in his dream to win Battle of the Bands but actually, as the book progressed, I began to think it was more than that, and in fact, he just didn't know how to handle the situation.

I found the book compelling, even though it's not an action-packed adventure book. I was desperate to know more of Sophie's story and to discover how she was coping, and I found myself thinking of her when I wasn't reading, particularly whilst I was at school where I began to think about how many things would be different for a child in my class in the same situation (I need to mention Mrs Hopkirk here: everybody needs a teacher like her in their lives) . Although I have never had hearing problems, I found myself being able to empathise with Sophie and, at times, felt almost panicky at what she was going through. There were numerous times I wanted to reach into the book and just give her a hug, and too many times to mention when I shed a tear for her.

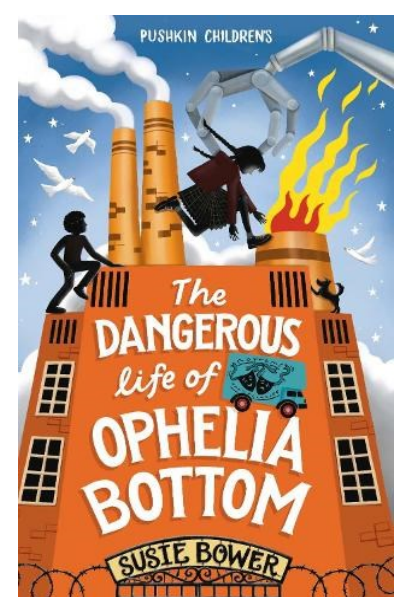
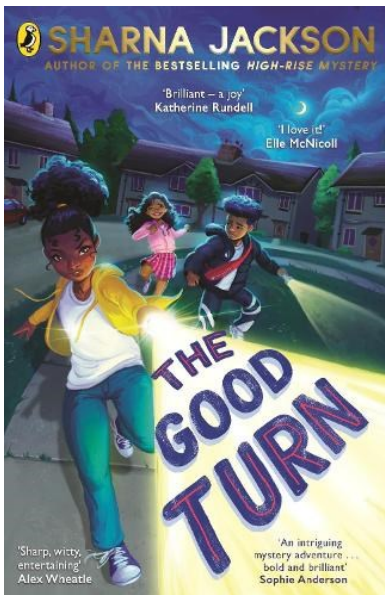
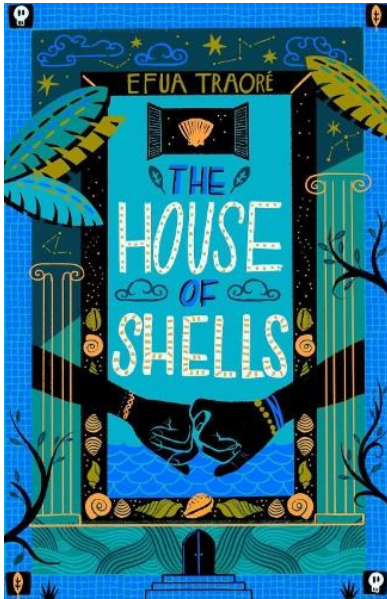
Stewart Foster is one of those authors whose books I know I'm going to enjoy even before I start reading them; however, **Can You Feel the Noise**, I think, is his best book yet. It's a book full of heart and hope; it's a powerful yet sensitively told story about what happens when you think your life has been turned upside down and it's a story about resilience and realising that life-changing events may lead to exciting new beginnings.

Due for release on the 7th July, this is another one to add to the summer holiday reading pile.



Books I'll Be Packing In My Suitcase

Look out for the reviews in September!



Summer Reading

Why not keep track of the books you read over the summer holiday using the book tracker here. Write the title and author of each book you read on one of the spines—you can add colour if you would like to. Then you can bring it in to school in September to show me and your teacher.

Happy reading!

