

## PICK OF THE YEAR FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

### BIG BAD DRAGON CLUB

Written and illustrated by Beach  
Published by Simon & Schuster  
ISBN 978-1398518407

Three wicked dragons set off to do their worst. However, where bad was expected, the outcome was good. Will they have to become good dragons instead or does this wickedly funny story have another ending in store for them?

### CHICKEN LITTLE AND THE VERY LONG RACE

Written and illustrated by Sam Wedelich  
Published by Scholastic  
ISBN 978-1338892420

A hilarious version of the classic story with quirky illustrations. As the chickens prepare for the race it becomes apparent that they are under Hare's spell. Will Chicken Little win the race with his mantra of 'slow and steady wins the race'?

### FLOWER BLOCK

Written by Lanisha Butterfield and illustrated by Hoang Giang  
Published by Puffin  
ISBN 978-0241611371

Something unexpected happens when Jeremiah plants some seeds in his apartment. As he races the plants to the top of the building he brings disparate neighbours together as they join in the adventure. But what is the true magic of the seeds?

### FRIDA THE ROCK-AND-ROLL MOTH

Written and illustrated by Kim Hillyard  
Published by Ladybird  
ISBN 978-0241645130

Frida loves to put on her pointy boots, play her purple guitar and rock out loudly! But has she got what it takes to play with others? Aunt Edna tries to reassure her but Frida has to find her own way to understand she shines just as she is.

### GODFREY IS A FROG

Written and illustrated by Alex Latimer  
Published by Oxford University Press  
ISBN 978-0192789006

A beautifully illustrated version of the life cycle of a frog celebrating all the

changes Godfrey goes through. When they stop he is not sure what's next and the other creatures in the pond have to remind him of all the special talents he has.

### HEN IN THE BED

Written by Katrina Charman and illustrated by Guilherme Karsten  
Published by Nosy Crow  
ISBN: 978-1839946011

This very original counting book based on the traditional "Ten in the Bed" story will have children joining in with lots of animal noises whilst enjoying the hilarious illustrations and learning to count backwards all at the same time.

### LUIGI THE SPIDER WHO WANTED TO BE A KITTEN

Written by Michelle Knudsen and illustrated by Kevin Hawkes  
Published by Walker Books  
ISBN 978-1529517828

A spider moves into a house and makes himself comfy ready to spin webs in dark corners. The old lady who lives there finds him and treats him like a kitten. Does Luigi like this different life or does he want to be loved for who he is?

### POP!

Written and illustrated by Matt Carr  
Published by Scholastic  
ISBN 978-0702306228

On a rainy afternoon with nothing to do, put the saucepan on the hob and release the corny crew. With party popping kernels to count on each colourful page, this pop-tastic tale has an ending fit for every box of popcorn.

### RUNAWAY CONE

Written and illustrated by Morag Hood  
Published by Two Hoots  
ISBN 978-1529026115

Digger and the gang realise that Gary the traffic cone is missing! So begins a madcap adventure as they try to track Gary down. The daft, smiley characters have huge appeal and Morag Hood always delivers a good punchline in her wry and witty texts.

### SMELLY PEGGY

Written and illustrated by Helen Stephens  
Published by Walker Books  
ISBN 978-1529507133

Peggy is a very naughty dog who loves to roll around on everything

stinky she can find. And that's not even the naughtiest thing she does, but her family loves her anyway. A celebration of our smelliest but cherished family members.

### THE CROSSODILE

Written by Rachel Morrisroe and illustrated by Ella Okstad  
Published by Puffin  
ISBN: 978-0241573136

When Hayden gets angry his lizard increases in size and turns into a Crossodile which destroys anything in its path, sometimes with hair-raising results. Can Hayden learn to tame his feelings and gain control?

### THE SHY BOOK

Written by Howard Pearlstein and illustrated by James Munro  
Published by Graffeg  
ISBN 978-1802586725

The book wants to be read but it has a problem. It's feeling shy and worries that the reader will find it silly or, worse, boring, so suggests reading something else. But what will happen if the reader keeps going?

### WHO ATE STEVE?

Written by Susannah Lloyd and illustrated by Kate Hindley  
Published by Nosy Crow  
ISBN 978-1839946219

In this clever book we meet big bird Marcel and small worm Steve. Unfortunately, Marcel is intent on eating Steve from page one and no amount of persuasion and telling off will stop him. The twist at the end comes as quite a surprise.

### WHO RULES THE ROCKPOOL?

Written and illustrated by Matty Long  
Published by Oxford University Press  
ISBN 978-0192784551

Crab and Prawn tell of their adventures through speech bubbles and text. When they decide to move to a bigger rockpool, they are concerned about who will be in charge; will they be strong enough to survive? Lots of information about who lives in these watery communities.

## PICK OF THE YEAR FOR YOUNGER READERS

### ALEX VS AXEL: THE IMPOSSIBLE QUESTS

Written by Sam Copeland and illustrated by Dotty Sutton  
Published by Puffin  
ISBN 978-0241573136

Normal kid Alex and monster-slaying hero Axel mysteriously swap places and have to complete each other's quests. Can the two boys find a way back to their own lives, or will they both discover they don't have a life to come back to?

### ALYSSA AND THE SPELL GARDEN

Written by Alexandra Sheppard and illustrated by Bex Glendinning  
Published by Little Tiger  
ISBN 978-0571377428

Eleven-year-old Alyssa goes to stay in London with unknown relatives and finds her aunt runs a magical school in her spell garden. But the magic is running out. Can Alyssa use her new-found powers to save their neighbourhood?

### DINO DAD

Written by Andy Day and illustrated by Steven Lenton  
Published by Puffin  
ISBN 978-0241642924

Ruby and her dinosaur-expert dad have a secret – when they touch a magic ammonite they can travel to a special island where dinosaurs live. They even turn into dinosaurs themselves and have amazing adventures.

### DUNGEON RUNNERS LEVEL 1: HERO TRIAL

Written by Kieran Larwood and illustrated by Joe Todd-Stanton  
Published by Nosy Crow  
ISBN 978-1839945182

Kit has always dreamed of being a Dungeon Runner so when a space opens up for a new team, he doesn't want to miss this chance to try out! With his new friends Sandy and Thorn, he's ready to take on anything.



### EMBER SPARK AND THE THUNDER OF DRAGONS

Written by Abi Elphinstone and illustrated by Kristina Kister  
Published by Simon & Schuster  
ISBN 978-1398500693

Rusty Fizzbang, vet to magical beasts, takes on Ember Spark as his apprentice. She is sent to help a baby dragon whose parents have gone missing. But arch-villain Jasper Hornswoggle is hot on their heels trying to foil them.

### KITTY QUEST: SINISTER SISTER

Written and illustrated by Pie Corbett  
Published by Simon & Schuster  
ISBN 978-1398525467

In the latest in the hilarious graphic novel series there's a new villain in town: Princess Horribelle of Awfullia. Will Horribelle's visit end in an innocent family reunion with her sister Perigold, or does she have something more sinister up her sleeves?

### MIDDLE SCHOOL AND OTHER DISASTERS: WORST BROOMMATE EVER!

Written by Wanda Coven and illustrated by Anna Abramskaya  
Published by Simon & Schuster  
ISBN 978-1665925280

Witch-in-training Heidi Heckelbeck can't wait to start at her new boarding school. When she discovers her roommate is her old rival Melanie Maplethorpe they find themselves engaged in an epic prank war, but will they go too far?

### MURRAY AND BUN!

Written and illustrated by Adam Stower  
Published by HarperCollins  
ISBN 978-0008561246

Introducing a new comic duo: Murray and his sidekick 'Bun' as the enchanted cat flap transports them back in time to the Vikings, where they are mistakenly taken to be troll hunters. Packed with action, intrigue, clever word play and tons of personality.

### SHIPWRECKED

Written by Jenny Pearson and illustrated by Nick East  
Published by Usborne  
ISBN 978-1474999908

Sebastian and best friends Lina and Étienne find themselves stranded on an island in a hilarious and epic adventure of survival, pirates, baby turtles and a goat. Amongst the humour there are some sensitively handled serious issues.

### THE BEANSTALK MURDER

Written by PG Bell  
Published by Usborne  
ISBN 978-1805312536

When a giant's massive body plummets from the sky onto the human village of Stump, trainee witch Anwen and her nemesis, trainee sorceress Cerys, find themselves stranded at the top of the beanstalk investigating what turns out to be a murder.

### THE LETTER WITH THE GOLDEN STAMP

Written by Onjali Q Rauf  
Published by Orion  
ISBN 978-1510108929

Audrey is the carer for her mother and younger siblings. When her mum gets sicker, Audrey sets off on a quest to raise the money for treatment to keep the family together. Meanwhile, someone else is on their own secret mission, which will alter Audrey's life forever.

### TOXIC

Written by Mitch Johnson  
Published by Orion  
ISBN 978-1510111929

Beauty mogul Anura Hegarty has pledged to preserve the rainforest but when armed guards appear, friends Jessica and Renata realise something sinister is going on. The rainforest is home to a special frog. The girls know they must try to save it but soon they are running for their lives.

### WIGGLESBOTTOM PRIMARY: THE PIRATE CAT

Written by Pamela Butchart and illustrated by Becka Moor  
Published by Nosy Crow  
ISBN 978-1805131434

In the latest hilarious adventure at Wigglesbottom Primary a cat joins Year 2 on a school trip to the seaside and has a brilliant time chasing seagulls and stealing food. But it's when it goes into the arcade that the trouble REALLY starts.

### YOU AND ME AND THE LAND OF LOST THINGS

Written by Andy Griffiths and illustrated by Bill Hope  
Published by Macmillan  
ISBN 978-1035046140

Join You and Me on a journey to the Land of Lost Things in search of his lucky rabbit's foot. Along the way we meet some wacky new friends, but do we find the rabbit's foot? If you've forgotten you'll have to read the book!



## PICK OF THE YEAR FOR OLDER READERS

### ADELAIDE JUST WANTS TO HELP

Written by Melinda Salisbury  
Published by Barrington Stoke  
ISBN 978-1800902718

Freya desperately wants to be a famous influencer. Adelaide is a home-assistant robot and what she wants most of all is to help her owners. Especially Freya. Adelaide has lots of ideas to help Freya boost her profile but things quickly spiral out of control.

### BLACK HOLE CINEMA CLUB

Written by Christopher Edge  
Published by Nosy Crow  
ISBN 978-1839942730

Five members of The Blackhole Cinema Club find themselves fighting to save the world in a series of high octane adventures. This is cinema with a difference – it's immersive, interactive and intense. 'Just keep telling yourself it's only a movie.'

### BRINGING BACK KAY-KAY

Written by Dev Kothari  
Published by Walker Books  
ISBN 978-1529516043

Lena's brother Kay-Kay has gone missing on his way back from a holiday camp with friends. The police don't seem to be taking the case seriously, so Lena makes her own search and won't give up until she finds the truth.

### DROWNING IN MY BEDROOM

Written by Steve Cole and illustrated by Oriol Vidal  
Published by Barrington Stoke  
ISBN 978-800902961

Gayla uses a wheelchair because of her cerebral palsy. Junjun begs and lives in a shack under a bridge. Their lives collide when a flash flood pours into Gayla's residential centre and she is left stranded. Will Junjun manage to help her to safety?

### FIREBORN: STARLING AND THE CAVERN OF LIGHT

Written by Aisling Fowler and illustrated by Sophie Medvedeva  
Published by HarperCollins  
ISBN 978-0008394264

In the conclusion to the trilogy, the Cavern of Light may offer hope to save the world. Phoenix struggles to protect her friends but the Master is more powerful than she ever imagined and unthinkable sacrifices will have to be made to defeat him.

### GARGOYLES: GUARDIANS OF THE SOURCE

Written by Tamsin Mori  
Published by UCLAN  
ISBN 978-1915235909

When Callen's family have to move into his father's childhood home, the last thing he expects is a boarded-up mansion covered in gargoyles. A long-forgotten magic is returning and a dark threat is growing in the shadows – only a Gargoyle Guardian can stop it.

### THE MYSTERY OF THE FOREVER WEEKEND

Written by Lisa Thompson  
Published by Scholastic  
ISBN 978-0702322648

Cory dislikes Mondays, as he is being bullied and has a maths test to face. Is the answer to make a wish for the weekend to never end? School-friend Agatha is stuck in the same Sunday; will they be able to solve the conundrum?

### THE WHISPERWICKS: THE LABYRINTH OF LOST AND FOUND

Written by Jordan Lees and illustrated by Vivienne To  
Published by Puffin  
ISBN 978-0241607503

Benjamiah Creek doesn't believe in magic, but when he receives a mysterious gift – a doll that can transform into a bird – he is swept in a dangerous quest into the impossible world of Wreathenwold. Will he discover his connection with this enchanted world?

### THE WRONG SHOES

Written and illustrated by Tom Percival  
Published by Simon & Schuster  
ISBN 978-1398527140

Will has the wrong shoes but has no others, so life is tricky in and out of school. This book is about the power of friendship and how Will survives. It is dramatically illustrated in black and white by the author.

## AND FOR MORE MATURE READERS

### LOUDER THAN HUNGER

Written by John Schu  
Published by Walker Books  
ISBN 978-1529514568

A moving and powerful verse novel narrated by Jake, a teenager who loves Broadway and his grandma but struggles with an eating disorder. The novel diarises the progress of his illness. A story of courage, healing and hope.

### THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

Written by Clare Furniss  
Published by Simon & Schuster  
ISBN 978-1471169816

Set in a dystopian London where civil unrest has reached an all-time high, Clem and her half-sister Billie flee to Scotland, taking nothing but a notebook filled with stories and memories of home. But what is Clem not saying and how will the journey end?

### THIS TALE IS FORBIDDEN

Written by Polly Crosby  
Published by Scholastic  
ISBN 978-0702325601

Nesta lives a secluded life with her grandmother. When her grandmother is abducted, Nesta goes in search of her and finds a misogynistic society where stories that enrich and enlighten are not allowed. Can Nesta find her grandmother and bring magic back to the world?



## Children's Book Award

Owned and Coordinated by the  
Federation of Children's Book Groups  
Registered Charity No. 268289

# THE TOP TEN WINNERS 2025



The Federation of  
Children's Book Groups

Registered Charity No. 268289





# Children's Book Award

The Federation of Children's Book Groups  
Registered Charity 268289

## THE CHILDREN'S CHOICE

The Children's Book Award is the only national book prize given in the UK that is decided by the readers from start to finish – the children themselves. The award is given annually to the most popular work of children's fiction, over 600 books have been read and voted for by young readers and young adults.

During the 2024 voting period over 55,000 votes were cast for the books submitted by publishers in the process to create the Top 50 Pick of the Year, all by young members of ten Testing Groups from the FCBG.

A further 30,000 votes were cast by children all over the country to pick their favourite books from the shortlist to pick out the winners in:

- BOOKS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN
- BOOKS FOR YOUNGER READERS
- BOOKS FOR OLDER READERS

Visit the award page on the Federation of Children's Book Group <https://fcbg.org.uk/cba-home/> to read more about the Pick of the Year and the award in general. You will also find more information and activities for each book, and posters and bookmarks to download.

All the books in the Pick of the Year were read, tested and voted for by children

You can follow the Award on X (Twitter) @FCBGNews using #FCBGCBA25, and through the FCBG Facebook and Instagram pages

and are their favourite books from all those published in 2024. From picture books to books for sharing, from books for early readers to the more confident, and for longer novels for teenagers and young adults, the Pick of the Year gives ideas for libraries, for gifts and for sharing with your own children. You will find some great suggestions for new authors as well as firm favourites!

If you, your school or your family would like to take part in the only national award where only the children's vote counts and only their vote matters, contact [childrensbookaward@fcbg.org.uk](mailto:childrensbookaward@fcbg.org.uk). Be part of an award that is recognised for picking the stars of the future.

The Children's Book Award is owned and coordinated by the Federation of Children's Book Groups, a voluntary organisation that coordinates national activity for local children's book groups around the UK. Visit [www.fcbg.org.uk](http://www.fcbg.org.uk) to learn more about the charity and how you can get involved. Volunteers run the Award working with local schools, libraries, families and children's organisations and children from ten Testing Groups place their votes throughout the year, resulting in the Top Ten shortlist and the Pick of the Year.

The reviews for the Pick of the Year titles were written by members of the Federation of Children's Book Groups and are listed in alphabetical order of title in each age range.

## SHORTLISTED BOOKS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

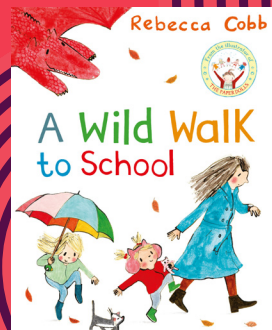


### CATEGORY WINNER

#### GROTTI

Written and illustrated by Leonie Lord  
Published by Walker Books ISBN 978-1529517118

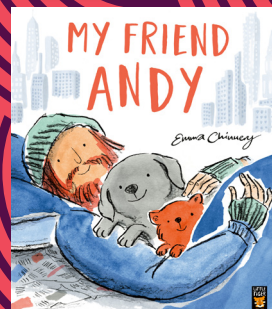
Ever ready to battle beasts and defend kingdoms, this knight has not reckoned on finding a lost baby in need of help. Will he change his plans? It only takes two words and the knight and Grotti set off on their journey. Despite his care and attention, something is wrong – Grotti misses his family. With baby and family reunited, the knight's life goes back to normal. Well, perhaps not quite, as this heartwarming story shows.



#### A WILD WALK TO SCHOOL

Written and illustrated by Rebecca Cobb  
Published by Macmillan Children's Books  
ISBN 978-1529051322

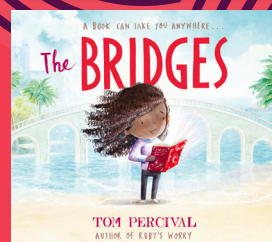
Two adventurous sisters are walking to school, accompanied by their mother. While she worries about them being on time the girls create imaginative adventures from the objects they encounter along the way. Told from the children's point of view we meet molten lava disguised as autumn leaves, and even a sleeping giant that looks a lot like a road speed bump. The illustrations capture details which are not voiced in words. This is a story full of wonder and imagination.



#### MY FRIEND ANDY

Written and illustrated by Emma Chinnery  
Published by Little Tiger ISBN 978-1801045810

When Fluffy walks in the park with Lilly and her mum, she sees Andy and his dad, but she is never allowed to play with him. Fluffy doesn't understand why, after all, she's allowed to play with other dogs. But then Fluffy gets lost and fears she will never find her way home. But then she sees someone she knows. Can Andy and his dad help her to find Lilly? A warm, charming tale which challenges preconceptions about homelessness whilst capturing the budding friendship between Fluffy and Andy.



#### THE BRIDGES

Written and illustrated by Tom Percival  
Published by Simon & Schuster ISBN 978-1398515086

Mia's dull and lonely life is reflected in the colours around her. One day a mysterious package arrives: a book just for her. As she begins to read, Mia notices that with every word, her world becomes less empty. As she continues reading a bridge starts to appear. This powerful metaphor of bridges is perfect to demonstrate how reading, words and books can take you anywhere. In elegant and simple prose and delicate evocative images, this book demonstrates the value of reading.

## SHORTLISTED BOOKS FOR YOUNGER READERS



### CATEGORY AND OVERALL WINNER

#### I AM REBEL

Written by Ross Montgomery  
Published by Walker Books  
ISBN 978-1529502909

Rebel is a dog on a mission to save his human. Set in an unspecified time and place, but which feels medieval, there is an intriguing plot about an oppressive King and a growing rebellion. Narrated by Rebel, the vivid and believable animal and human characters keep the reader really invested in their survival through some narrow escapes and genuine peril. Rebel can teach us all about resilience and bravery and the power of love and loyalty in this really satisfying and enjoyable read.



#### SPOOKSMITHS INVESTIGATE: THE CINDERMAN

Written by Alex Atkinson  
Published by Usborne  
ISBN 978-1835400937

Indigo and Rusty are a pair of bickering twins who discover that they are ghost-marked. This means that when they turn twelve, they can see and hear the dead. The first ghost they have to contend with is the evil Cinderman, who is threatening to smother their town and all the people who live there with ashes. The siblings have to get over their differences and join forces with the town's ghosts to prevent Ashmageddon. The adventure is genuinely scary but also funny.



#### TURTLE MOON

Written by Hannah Gold and illustrated by Levi Pinfold  
Published by HarperCollins Children's Books  
ISBN 978-0008582050

Silver Trevelon and her parents experience the adventure of a lifetime when her father becomes an artist at a turtle rescue centre in the Costa Rican rainforest. Silver explores with her new friend Rafi and together they try to protect the eggs of a leatherback turtle, but when the eggs are stolen, they embark on a perilous journey into the rainforest to save them. This multi-layered story deals sensitively with emotional issues within Silver's family as well as highlighting the urgent need for turtle protection.

## SHORTLISTED BOOKS FOR OLDER READERS



### CATEGORY WINNER

#### SEVEN MILLION SUNFLOWERS

Written by Malcolm Duffy  
Published by Zephyr  
ISBN 978-1800241732

A Ukrainian family has fled the country after an explosion destroys their house. They have been given refuge by an English family, who did not realise what they were taking on and seem more concerned about the cost of living. Kat and Marko learn English and settle into their new life, but the shadow of what they have experienced haunts them and gives Kat dreadful panic attacks. Then Kat meets Felix, whose stepfather is Russian. A powerful story and an accurate representation of the horror of war.



#### DITCHING SASKIA

Written by John Moore and illustrated by Neetols  
Published by Flying Eye  
ISBN 978-1838741556

Living with his grandfather, Damian is struggling to settle in to his new school. When he tries to contact his dead mother for support using a Spirit Flower, he accidentally summons an annoying little girl called Saskia instead. With just a few days before the flower dies can Damian find friends, confess to his crush and help Saskia solve her own troubled past? The grey-toned illustrations in this graphic novel create an other-worldly atmosphere, which is periodically punctuated by the orange of the flower.



#### THE CLOCKWORK CONSPIRACY

Written by Sam Sedgman and illustrated by Stephanie Shafer  
Published by Bloomsbury  
ISBN 978-1526665386

Isaac's dad is a horologist in charge of the clocks in the Elizabeth Tower. Parliament is set to vote on adopting New Time, changing the 24-hour clock to a decimal version. Is it a coincidence that Dad goes missing the night before the vote? With the help of Hattie, Isaac races against time to solve a series of clues to find his dad and stop a disastrous conspiracy. With great illustrations of the Houses of Parliament, a cut away of the Elizabeth Tower and London landmarks, this is a captivating read.