

PICK OF THE YEAR FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

DON'T TRUST FISH!

Written by Neil Sharpson and illustrated by Dan Santat
Published by Andersen Press
ISBN 978-1839136429

A mysterious narrator warns readers not to trust fish, those slippery, gilled creatures with their mysterious underwater lives and vacant stares. As we get increasingly absurd reasons for distrust, the laughs build until a brilliant twist flips everything on its head and we discover who's telling the story!

HOW LONG IS THAT DOG?

Written and illustrated by John Bond
Published by HarperCollins
ISBN 9780008506193

Evie has found her favourite 'long dog' that she wants for her birthday, but only if she can guess how long the dog is. The fun of the colourful illustrations is Evie imagining the length of the dog!

I COULD BE EATEN BY A SHARK

Written by Marcela Ferreira and illustrated by Mark Chambers
Published by Oxford University Press
ISBN 978-0192789594

Louie imagines sharks everywhere, which affects his enjoyment of life. Grandpa explains that fear may not go away, but, with time and hard work, you can learn to live with it. An uplifting book which helps children deal with their fears.

I HATE EVERYTHING!

Written and illustrated by Sophy Henn
Published by Simon & Schuster
ISBN 978-1398526792

Got the grumps like Big Ghost? Feel as if you hate everything? Here's a helpful book to brighten your day by showing you, when you think about it and with the help of a friend, that all may not be as it seems.

KERFUFFLE BIRD

Written by Helen Docherty and illustrated by Gwen Millward
Published by Oxford University Press
ISBN 978-1382053822

Everyone in Hushville is quiet and polite, but Maeve longs to express her feelings. When the Kerfuffle Bird stirs

things up can they learn to live in harmony? With lively illustrations that bring every flap and fumble to life, children will be swept into this playful story.

MR NORTON'S NEW HAT

Written by Huw Lewis Jones and illustrated by Corey Egbert
Published by Little Tiger
ISBN 9781838917104

As Mr Norton cycles to work every day, more and more animals and birds attach themselves to him. The story gathers momentum with hilarious illustrations until "enough is enough". Does he prefer to be on his own? And what is in his mysterious parcel?

MY DOG

Written by Olivia Wakeford and illustrated by David Litchfield
Published by HarperCollins
ISBN 978-0008658588

Rhys finds a mysterious black Labrador under his mother's hospital bed. Only he can see this dog, as he hides it in the shed from his dog-hating father. Will it help him survive the changes in his life in this poignant story?

MY SISTER IS A TREASURE

Written by Tracy Darnton and illustrated by Yasmeen Ismail
Published by Simon & Schuster
ISBN 978-1471187711

A little girl imagines the adventures she will have with her new baby sister based on the various terms of endearment used by her family. A book about accepting a new sibling, with beautifully expressive illustrations.

ONCE I WAS A TREE

Written by Eoin McLaughlin and illustrated by Guilherme Karsten
Published by Nosy Crow
ISBN 978-1805137207

Explore the life cycle of trees through encounters with the animals of the forest. With vibrant, textural illustrations and playful shifts in page orientation, this is a joyful celebration of nature that's educational and fun.

PERLA AND THE PIRATE

Written by Isabel Allende and illustrated by Sandy Rodriguez
Published by Bloomsbury
ISBN 978-1526669056

When Nico goes missing, Perla must find him, teaming up with the mysterious Pirate next door. Full of imagination, friendship and courage, the story sparkles with playful energy and heartfelt moments throughout.

THAT'S NOT STELLA

Written and illustrated by Donna Fredin
Published by Flying Eye Books
ISBN 978-1838743314

Is pet cat Stella just trying out new things or, as Milo suspects, is this a different cat altogether? And if so, what has happened to Stella? And keep an eye on the dog!

THE DAY THE CRAYONS MADE FRIENDS

Written by Drew Daywalt and illustrated by Oliver Jeffers
Published HarperCollins
ISBN 978-0008735517

Duncan's crayons, known for their escapades in several books, go off adventuring. They send letters to Duncan so he won't worry! Each colour has a colour-appropriate adventure. Written with gentle humour and illustrated with Jeffers' customary delightful flair – a new family favourite.

THE MUSHROOM OF DOOM

Written by Becky Davies and illustrated by Thomas Elliott
Published by Little Tiger
ISBN 978-1838918385

Mushroom is having the worst day ever and vows to take revenge. Delightfully dark and very silly, will mushroom learn to change his ways? Bright illustrations unleash chaos and calamity on every page.

THE RABBIT, THE CLOUD

Written and illustrated by Nicola O'Byrne
Published Nosy Crow
ISBN 978-1839943263

Rabbit is going fishing, and he's certainly not going to let the weather stop him. A beautiful story of friendship and feelings, with a gentle environmental message. Fun, colourful illustrations make the

adventure lively and engaging for young readers.

WHAT'S THAT NOISE?

Written by Charlie Higson and illustrated by Nadia Shireen
Published by Simon & Schuster
ISBN 978-1398535350

What happens when there's a big box with many noisy toys, plus a boy full of mischief and fun inside? Lots of noise, things to remember, big silences, confused passers-by, and a silly story with fun illustrations.

PICK OF THE YEAR FOR YOUNGER READERS

ALICE WITH A WHY

Written by Anna James
Published by HarperCollins
ISBN 978-0008611477

Alice lives with her grandmother, the original Alice from Lewis Carroll's stories. An invitation to a tea party lands Alice in a different Wonderland, but can she set it right? A clever, heartfelt adventure which celebrates questioning the world, embracing change, and finding your voice through imagination.

BOSS OF THE UNDERWORLD: SHIRLEY VS THE GREEN MENACE

Written and illustrated by Tor Freeman
Published by Hodder & Stoughton
ISBN 978-1444976397

Shirley teams up with her enormous cockroach friend George to tackle the Green Menace. Packed with vibrant artwork, clever humour and imaginative action, this graphic novel transforms an odd duo into unforgettable heroes in a delightfully quirky underworld adventure.

CROAKY: CAVERNS OF THE GEMOSAURUS

Written and illustrated by Matty Long
Published by Oxford University Press
ISBN 978-0192785237

Croaky and his friends have an adventure while trying to find a mythical creature made of gemstones.



Colourful and highly illustrated, there are clever puzzles to make it perfect for young explorers seeking excitement and fun discovery.

CRUISE SHIP KID: THIEF AT SEA!

Written by Emma Swan and illustrated by Katie Saunders
Published by Usborne
ISBN 978-1835409954

Silver lives on a cruise ship. Her best friends are a gang of pensioners, but, when two expensive watches go missing, Silver must track down the thief and perhaps find a new best friend. An original and lively book with interactive elements to engage readers.

DONUT SQUAD: TAKE OVER THE WORLD!

Written and illustrated by Neill Cameron
Published by David Fickling
ISBN 978-1788453400

In the first of a new graphic novel series, meet Sprinkles and his friends in a world where where donuts have big plans for world domination! Get ready for a sticky adventure with a lovable character who adds extra charm to this entertaining, lighthearted read.

PRESS START: SUPER RABBIT ALL-STARS!

Written and illustrated by Thomas Flintham
Published by Nosy Crow
ISBN 978-1805134626

In the latest book from the CBA 2024 winner, Sunny's playing his favourite video again! The Super All-Star Games tournament is coming - does Super Rabbit Boy have what it takes to win? Fast-paced, action-packed and full of energy.

REGGIE RABBIT: ROBBERY AT THE MASQUED BALL

Written by Swapna Reddy and illustrated by Becka Moor
Published by Oxford University Press
ISBN 978-0192788351

When jewels are stolen from the ball, young detective Reggie Rabbit hops into action to solve the case. The latest in the graphic novel series is a lively mystery filled with disguises, clues and clever twists, making a fun read for young detectives.

SCARLET: DEFENDER OF THE UNIVERSE

Written by James Davis and illustrated by Dotty Sutton
Published by HarperCollins
ISBN 978-0008653620

A job advert in The Beano, must be a joke? Determined to outdo her brother, Scarlet's application says, "Make me Supreme Defender of the Universe; you will not regret it." It's no joke, and with every living thing relying on her, will she regret it?

THE ADVENTURES OF RAP KID

Written by MC Grammar and illustrated by Alan Brown
Published by Simon & Schuster
ISBN 978-1398537613

Z doesn't talk at school but as the Royal Rap Rumble approaches, he is transformed into Rap Kid with the help of his teacher and friends – can he win the Golden Mic? A high-energy, music-filled journey full of rhythm, laughs and clever wordplay.

THE BOY WITH BIG DECISIONS

Written by Helen Rutter
Published by Scholastic
ISBN 978-0702314667

Fred is waiting for the bus to his new school when the bus for another school pulls up. Is he brave enough to choose to jump on? A clever adventure where the reader makes choices alongside Fred, which have hilarious, surprising consequences.

THE CURSED TOMB

Written by Iszi Lawrence
Published by Bloomsbury
ISBN 9781801996051

Life in Ancient Egypt is tricky enough for Henut. Unsettled by a vivid dream, a mysterious break-in at her home, and sightings of a woman who may be her dead mother lead her on a quest with some scary moments and startling revelations.

UNFAIRIES

Written and illustrated by Huw Aaron with colours by Elena Dall'Aglio
Published by Penguin
ISBN 978-0241683767

This full-colour graphic novel set in "The Gardens" reveals the truth about fairies: they're sneaky, cunning and always at war with other fairy tribes. Can Pip, our hero, survive the epic battles and come out on top?



ZAK MONROE IS (NOT) MY FRIEND

Written by Simon Packham
Published by UCLAN
ISBN 978-1916747555

Sam is starting secondary school and is anxious about being excluded from his friendship group, although he does have a budding friendship with the weird but resilient Zak. Which side will win? A brilliant book to help with transition anxiety, especially the tips at the back.

PICK OF THE YEAR FOR OLDER READERS

AFTER

Written by Pádraig Kenny
Published by Walker Books
ISBN 978-1529517804

Jen and her father are searching a hostile world for survivors, but his robotic nature must be kept hidden when technology is blamed for the apocalypse. This dystopian sci-fi adventure explores timely themes of technology and AI, and about what it means to be human.

ALEX NEPTUNE: DRAGON CHAMPION

Written by David Owen
Published by Usborne
ISBN 978-1805316824

Alex Neptune discovers he has a powerful connection to dragons and the sea, leading him into a thrilling adventure. Facing danger, secrets and fierce enemies, he must find the courage to become a true champion in this action-packed story. Can he lead his crew to victory?

DRACULA AND DAUGHTERS

Written by Emma Carroll
Published by Faber
ISBN 978-0571388769

Strange things start to happen in Temstown – and the vampires are blamed for it all. Three sisters find they have a family secret, so they set up the first vampire-healing company. A deliciously gothic story, the first in a new series.

LESSONS IN DEATH

Written by Sophie McKenzie
Published by UCLAN
ISBN 978-1398542006

With the killer in their midst, Georgia and friends must be careful as, with many dangerous twists and turns, they work to solve the murder of their drama teacher. In a closed circle mystery, who can you trust when all around are suspects?

THE BOOK OF STOLEN DREAMS: THE FINAL BATTLE

Written by David Farr
Published by Usborne
ISBN 978-1836042372

In this thrilling conclusion to the series, Rachel and Robert must protect the magical Book of Stolen Dreams from falling into the wrong hands. Facing danger and dark forces, they show bravery and teamwork in a gripping story.

THE LAST HOUSE ON THE ROW

Written by Lesley Parr and illustrated by Richard Johnson
Published by Barrington Stoke
ISBN 978-0008680701

Hayley's cat keeps disappearing over the road to the house of a recluse called Lilian. Slowly, the angry Hayley learns her story. Through misunderstandings and emotional upheaval, both of them find a satisfying conclusion. A moving cross-generational story.

THE ELIXIR

Written by Lindsay Galvin and illustrated by Kristina Kister
Published by Barrington Stoke
ISBN 97800008724504

Ann Storer works in her family apothecary, where 12-year-old Isaac Newton boards. She has inherited her grandmother's secret gift of healing, but will she be discovered by a visiting witchfinder? A highly illustrated exciting short read set in the 17th century, when witches were punished.

WOLF SIREN

Written by Beth O'Brien
Published by HarperCollins
ISBN 978-0008642013

A dark, enchanting tale which follows blind Red as she navigates the forbidden woods, uncovers her grandmother's hidden past and confronts magical wolves. Courage,

family secrets, and danger collide, creating a suspenseful, unforgettable twist on a classic fairytale.

WRONG TRACKS

Written by Susan Brownrigg and illustrated by Jenny Czerwonka
Published by UCLAN
ISBN 978191974734

It is 1829. With the upcoming Rainhill Trials and a chance to supply locomotive engines on the new railway, fierce rivalry, spying and sabotage abound. Regardless of the dangers, Edward and Prudence must protect Stephenson's Rocket ... the rest is history.

AND FOR MORE MATURE READERS

EVERYTHING AMPLIFIED

Written by Sarah Lippett and Ziggy Hanaor and illustrated by Sarah Lippett
Published by Cicada Books
ISBN 978-1800660601

15-year-old Nel finds life a grind while her twin brother Ludo glides effortlessly through. Feeling isolated and overlooked, Nel finds solace in music, learning to navigate her own path to positivity and self worth through the lyrics. A graphic novel with some explicit language.

MAKE ME A MONSTER

Written by Kalynn Bayron
Published by Bloomsbury YA
ISBN 978-1526680433

Meka, a grieving teen mortician's assistant, faces restless corpses, circling ravens, and unsettling whispers. As shadows of family secrets and dark forces emerge, she must summon the courage to navigate a world where life, death and power dangerously intertwine.

TRAUMALAND

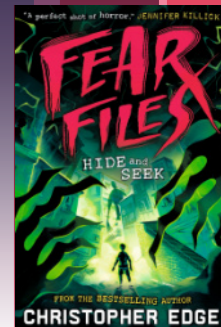
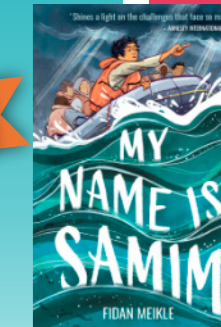
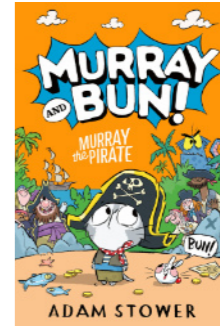
Written by Josh Silver
Published by Rock The Boat
ISBN 978-0861549283

After a near-fatal accident leaves him numb and with amnesia, Eli seeks sensation at TraumaLand, an underground VR club. Immersed in Jack's story, he discovers the club's thrill hides darker, dangerous truths, forcing him to confront emptiness, fear and reality.



Children's Book Award

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



The Federation of Children's Book Groups

Registered Charity No. 268289

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 2025 voting period over 57,000 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 27,000 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 and

are their favourite books from all those published in 2025. 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. 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 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 around the country.

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.

You can follow the Award on Instagram and Threads: @fcbg_news, through the FCBG Facebook page and website: www.fcbg.org.uk

SHORTLISTED BOOKS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN



CATEGORY WINNER

GOZZLE

Written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Sara Ogilvie
Published by Macmillan
ISBN 978-1529076417

This beautifully illustrated story is about a gosling who, once hatched, imprints on the first thing she sees: a large grizzly bear. Hence, "Gozzle" is born. She follows bear everywhere, and the hilarious consequence of her attachment gives pages of amusement as bear tries to escape her clutches. As Gozzle grows, she meets Gus, another young goose, who teaches her swimming, flying and winter migration. Bear misses Gozzle through the winter, but she returns in the spring, eventually rewarding bear with five grandchildren!!

CREEPY PAIR OF UNDERWEAR!

Written by Aaron Reynolds and illustrated by Peter Brown
Published by Simon & Schuster
ISBN 978-1398542037

Jasper Rabbit is desperate to prove he is not a little rabbit anymore. When he spots the Creepy underwear in the shop with his mum, he begs for a pair to show how brave he is. When the pants glow eerily in the dark as he puts them on, he begins to wonder if it was a good idea. The comic style illustrations and effective use of colour move the quirky story along as Jasper explores ways of getting rid of the pants. Will he succeed?!

THE TORTOSAURUS

Written and illustrated by Katie Cottle
Published by Little Tiger
ISBN 978-1838917265

Dot is starting a new school, and she desperately wants to fit in. But Dot is shy and she finds it hard to pluck up the courage to join in. When her teacher asks about their pets, Dot sees a way to make friends but is pretending her tortoise, Monty, is a tortosaurus a good idea? Things spiral out of control, but Dot learns that the best way to make true friendships is to be yourself. A lovely story about being true to yourself.

THERE'S A SHARK IN MY PANTS!

Written by Michelle Harrison and illustrated by David Tazzyman
Published by Simon & Schuster
ISBN 978-1398511552

Hilarious and imaginative picture book that captures childhood worries with warmth and wit. Through playful rhymes and joke-filled, cartoon-style illustrations, the story follows a girl on her family holiday. She is convinced there is a shark is lurking in her underwear. But is it really there? The escalating absurdity delights young readers while gently reassuring them about facing fears. Perfect for storytime, it blends humour, rhythm, and heart into a memorable, laugh out loud adventure. A joyful read for families everywhere and classrooms.



SHORTLISTED BOOKS FOR YOUNGER READERS



CATEGORY AND OVERALL WINNER

PABLO AND SPLASH: ROMAN HOLIDAY
Written and illustrated by Sheena Dempsey
Published by Bloomsbury Children's Books
ISBN 978-1526662859

Join time-travelling penguins Pablo and Splash as they battle gladiators in Ancient Rome. All they wanted to do was bring back a centurion helmet to prove to their friend, Benji, that they really can travel through time in this latest adventure. But their plan goes astray when the emperor wants to add them to his exotic bird collection. Can the two friends escape the gruesome fate of the Colosseum? Another hilarious instalment of this brilliant graphic novel series!

MURRAY AND BUN! MURRAY THE PIRATE

Written and illustrated by Adam Stower
Published by HarperCollins
ISBN 978-0008561307

Murray, the sleepy cat, and Bun, a sticky bouncing bunny, live with Fumblethumb, an incompetent wizard, who turns their cat flap into a magic portal. The delightful duo love adventures, and as they are hurled through the cat flap by a fit of Bun's sneezing, they find themselves in a land of PIRATES, where they're kidnapped by the dreaded Captain Patch. Will they manage to dig up the buried treasure or risk walking the Plank? Laugh-a-minute comic-style illustrations light up this comic caper.

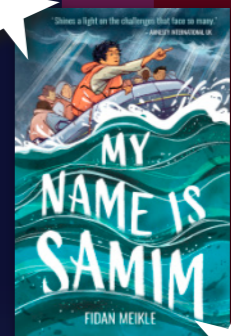
SUPA NOVA

Written and illustrated by Chanté Timothy
Published by Nosy Crow
ISBN 978-1805130666

Supa Nova is a hilarious, action-packed adventure about a young hero who discovers extraordinary powers and a knack for getting into cosmic trouble. From zooming across galaxies to facing quirky villains, every page of this graphic novel is full of surprises, laughter, and heart. The story balances chaos and courage perfectly, showing that even in space, friendship, cleverness, and a little daring can save the day. You're cheering, giggling, and rooting for Supa Nova all the way!



SHORTLISTED BOOKS FOR OLDER READERS



CATEGORY WINNER

MY NAME IS SAMIM
Written by Fidan Meikle
Published by Floris Books
ISBN 978-1782509301

The inspirational story of 13-year-old Samim's perilous journey as a refugee from Afghanistan through Europe to the UK. He has to explain his escape to a government caseworker to try to gain asylum status. Meanwhile, Samim is in a caring foster home and learning to settle in the local school. Luck and skill are on his side when he joins the school chess club! It is a moving story full of dangers and hardship but his resilience, hope and others' kindness help him to survive.

FEAR FILES: HIDE AND SEEK

Written by Christopher Edge and illustrated by Mathias Ball
Published by Walker Books
ISBN 978-1529527377

Think you're playing a normal game of hide and seek? Think again. What starts as harmless fun quickly becomes a spine-tingling nightmare. Adam and his friend follow a strange invitation and find themselves trapped in a deserted town, where the rules of hide and seek turn deadly. Short chapters, creepy twists, and imaginative world-building create constant tension. The reader will be hooked from the start in this spooky, fast-paced adventure story full of suspense and dark surprises.

THE LAST DRAGON ON MARS

Written by Scott Reintgen
Published by Rock The Boat
ISBN 978-0861549993

For Lunar Jones and his crew of fellow orphans, every day on Mars, a wasteland ravaged by wars and storms, is a fight for survival. One day, a scavenging mission goes dangerously wrong, forcing Lunar to hide underground. There, he finds the only hope left for a dying planet: the last dragon. Alarmingly, the dragon chooses him to be the one to save Mars. A highly imaginative blend of science fiction, fantasy, and Greek mythology that captivates from the very first page.

