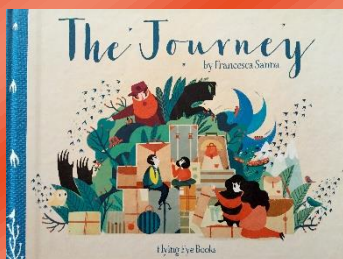


Staff Picks 2016

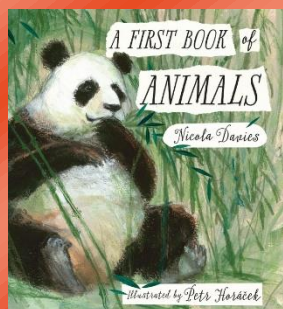
CLPE staff (and their children!) recommend their best children's books in 2016

Anjali

***The Journey* by Francesca Sanna** (Flying Eye) 9781909263994



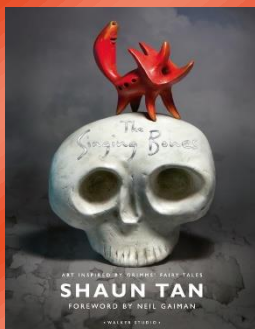
This is one of the most deeply affecting picture books I have ever read. It speaks of the experiences of refugees from many countries through the story of one family with whom we instantly empathise. From the first illustration, Francesca Sanna's mastery with the interplay between no-nonsense text and seemingly stark illustration is apparent. The family relaxing and playing on the beach is recognisable and the scene soothes until you reflect on the fragile nature of the sandcastle city and what it represents, the backward glance of the mother and the darkened sea seeping toward the unsuspecting family. Each spread features a carefully chosen colour palette, depicting the variety of landscapes, real and emotional, through which the family passes, escaping conflict and seeking sanctuary. Images of the natural world permeate the book, one of the most delightful pictures being of a variety of birds migrating, causing the narrator to consider that they do not have to cross borders as people do. The book ends on a hopeful note but makes it clear that most refugees live with continued uncertainty, even when they hope they have reached a place of safety. For me, the resolve of this mother to protect her children from the terrors they encounter and from her own fear and heartache is deeply moving. Such an important book at a time when we may lose sight of the personal story being experienced by each and every mother trying to find refuge for her child; particularly poignant at this time of year.



***A First Book of Animals* by Nicola Davies & Petr Horáček** (Walker) 9781406359633

This is a book crafted by two of my favourites. Nicola Davies is one of the best, most authoritative voices in the world of non-fiction books. She talks of making the words delicious when offering scientific observations and in *A First Book of Animals*, she doesn't disappoint. Her language is never dumbed down. Instead, a well-chosen blend of descriptive and technical vocabulary that both delights and astounds. Her poems demand to be read aloud, lifting the language and meaning off the page; each one celebrating the dazzling variety of wildlife with whom we share the planet. Petr Horáček's illustrations add depth and richness to this gorgeous book, exuding a sense of place and illustrating the individual character of each animal. The Blue Morpho Butterfly spread is a delightful example of the relationship between words and pictures, both reminiscent of Eric Carle's seminal books, '*Suddenly a flash of sapphire, bigger than a dinner plate...*' bringing to mind his '*...flamingo fluting in my ear.*' A stunning book that will engage and inspire readers of all ages to learn about and protect these incredible creatures. Certainly, it will make our family game of 'Guess my animal' all the richer so let's hope Father Christmas is reading this...

Ann

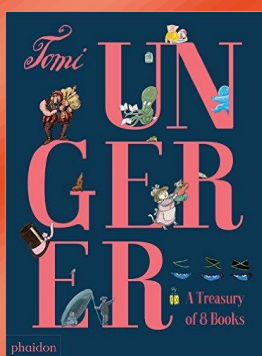


***The Singing Bones. Art Inspired by Grimms' Fairy Tales* by Shaun Tan** (Walker Studio) 9781406370669

I'm always interested in fresh ways of interpreting traditional stories and eagerly anticipated the publication of this book illustrated by photographs of stunning sculptures evoked by the dark side of the tales of the Brothers Grimm. Each plate illustrates a significant moment from one of the stories with accompanying related text on the opposite page. A summary of each complete story can be found at the end of the book along with further recommended reading lists from Shaun Tan and fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes who contributes one of two forewords. The other is by Neil Gaiman who comments: 'There is a tactile quality to the Shaun Tan sculptures. They feel primal, as if they were made in a long-ago age of the world, when the stories were first being shaped, and that perhaps the sculptures came first.'

This marks a new development in Shaun Tan's book art but those familiar with his work will recognise his style. For example, the shape of a red fox that appears in several pictures is reminiscent of the creature that appears in his superb picture book *The Arrival*. The sculptures make the reader ponder why Shaun Tan might have chosen to depict this particular moment in the story, for example Cinderella is shown in the opening to a hearth at the bottom of a chimney, a golden head with her eyes closed. This book will increase familiarity with the range of tales most people know.

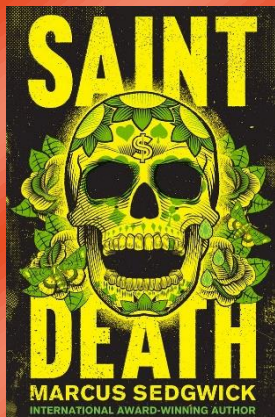
Charlotte



***A Treasury of 8 Books* by Tomi Ungerer** (Phaidon) 9780714872858

I'm delighted that this treasury of eight of Tomi Ungerer's picture books has been published this year. A creative heavyweight, Ungerer always pushes the boundaries with his texts, challenging readers of all ages to think critically about the world around us. The collection includes some of my personal favourites, *Moon Man*, *The Three Robbers* and *Otto – The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear*.

I was lucky enough to see Tomi Ungerer in conversation with Julia Eccleshare at Waterstones Piccadilly last month. When asked about the socio-political nature of his writing he remarked 'Let a spark hit a candle; a bit of light does no harm.' This collection will be a joy for existing fans of Ungerer and will certainly create a spark for a new generation of readers. This sumptuously presented collection, with a fascinating section at the end where Ungerer talks about each of the texts from his own perspective, would make a wonderful Christmas gift for readers young and old alike.

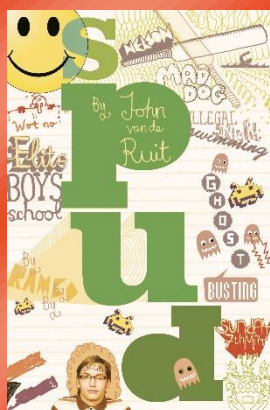
***Saint Death* by Marcus Sedgwick (Orion) 9781444000528**

I've always been an enormous fan of Marcus Sedgwick's engaging and compelling writing and this powerful and timely novel may be my favourite yet.

Arturo lives in Anapra, Mexico, on the border of the fence that divides Mexico with America, one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the Mexican city of Juarez. A visit one night from his old friend, Faustino, a brother to him in his earlier years, changes his life forever. To survive he must set foot inside a dangerous world of drug cartels and gamble with his life.

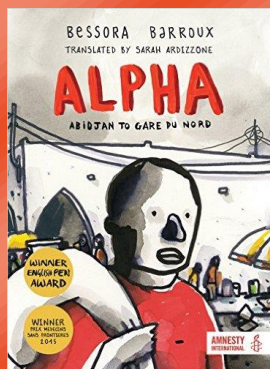
In Sedgwick's other book published this year, for adults, *Snow* (Little Toller), he talks about the film *Il Grande Silenzio*, in particular about the power of the ending being true to the story that's being told. The ending of *Saint Death* may be a shock to the reader, but it is certainly true to the story and packs an emotional punch.

All the way through the text, you live Faustino's journey right alongside him, due to the absolute craftsmanship of the writing. Sedgwick shines a light onto 'big society' and its impact upon humanity. I've recommended this book to almost every adult and young adult I've come across recently; it's a novel everyone should read right now.

Eshan (Fatim's son, aged 12)***Spud* by John Van De Ruit (Penguin) 9780141323565**

Spud is a brilliantly funny and well written book about a group of school boys nicknamed 'The Crazy Eight' in a boarding school living in apartheid South Africa in the 1990s. The main character is John Milton, but everybody knows him by his nickname, 'Spud'. Nicknames are a school tradition and everybody has one. The book brings to life the many hilarities, difficulties and stresses about being a teenage boy in such a crazy school. Everyone there is mad and it is described as 'a hard place to survive'. The thing that I love most about this book is the fact that it is so cleverly written from Spud's point of view, but still sounds so professionally written. This book will have you howling with laughter, and as it proceeds you become attached the book, and feel every emotion with The Crazy Eight. This book is a must read, and once you pick it up, you won't want to put it down. This is the first heart-warming book in a four piece series, with the hilarity growing with every book.

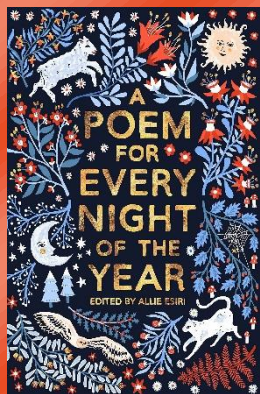
Farrah



***Alpha. Abidjan to Gare du Nord* by Bessora and Barroux, translated by Sarah Ardizzone (The Bucket List) 9781911370017**

I chose this timely graphic novel as it simply and powerfully captures a struggle that is all too often misrepresented and undermined. In recent years there have been significant shifts in the socio-economic and political landscape both at home and abroad. These shifts have culminated in irrevocable suffering and pain across whole communities of people; the depths and extent of which continue to demand that we all confront our own humanity. Alpha's story gives a face and a voice to the millions of women, children and men who have been silenced, dehumanised, demonised and marginalised. Alpha's reality epitomises the lottery of life and highlights that ultimately we all want to feel safe, happy and loved. His strength and resilience highlight the extent to which many will go to strive for this fundamental entitlement. Books like this are crucial and will continue to be increasingly important in the times ahead because in experiencing the humanity of others we are invariably forced to confront our own.

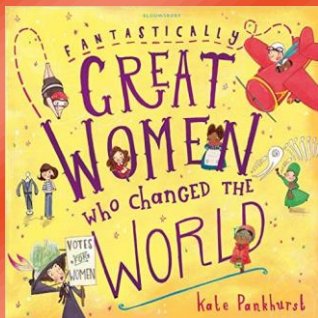
Kate



***A Poem for Every Night of the Year* edited by Allie Esiri (Macmillan) 9781509813131**

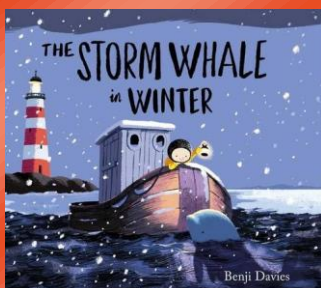
When I was younger I had a treasury of stories for every night of the year and I loved how the stories marked the turning of the seasons and the comfort of rediscovering old favourites each year. This beautiful new anthology has brought back all those feelings and I know will remain a favourite for years to come. It feels like a treat even before you open it with Zanna Goldhawk's beautifully illustrated front cover but it is inside where the real delight is to be found. Allie Esiri has chosen an appropriate poem for each day of the year, sometimes drawing on the season, sometimes on a historical or national event. Each poem has a short and informative introduction so the reader knows why it has been chosen for that day. I really enjoy having the editor's voice amongst the poems. What I love most about this collection though is the choice of poems. Allie has picked some of the poets you might expect, Keats, Wordsworth, Tennyson are all included but there are also poets that are still writing today, Rachel Rooney, Matt Goodfellow, Wendy Cope and Jackie Kay to name a few. It is this balance that is so exciting, finding poems which cross centuries in any given month. So, if you're looking for an anthology that covers the breadth of poetry or for a way to bring poems into your everyday life I strongly recommend having a copy of this on your bedside table.

Katie



***Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World* by Kate Pankhurst** (Bloomsbury) 9781408876985

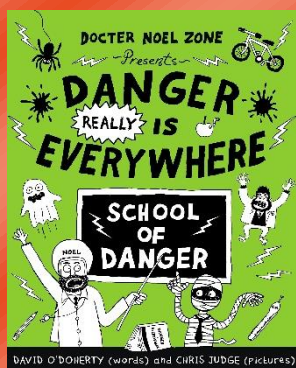
A close friend bought me this book as an early Christmas present, and what a lovely gift it was to receive. The author, Kate Pankhurst, is a descendent of Emmeline Pankhurst, and she has created a beautiful book about women who have changed the world. From Coco Chanel to Anne Frank to Rosa Parks, the book illuminates the lives of these inspirational women using facts alongside stunning illustrations. *Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World* is a perfect introduction to just some of the incredible women who helped shaped history and I know I will be sharing it with as many young people as I possibly can!



***The Storm Whale in Winter* by Benji Davies** (Simon & Schuster) 9781471119989

This book is a follow up to the award winning *The Storm Whale* and having loved the first book I was anxious about this one living up to my expectations, but it ended up exceeding them. This time the winter has set in and Noi's dad has gone on a fishing trip but fails to return. Noi sets out to rescue his dad but soon finds it is he who needs rescuing. In this book the reader also gets to see details such as Noi's bedroom and the inside of Dad's fishing boat that give us further insight into the world they inhabit. This is a touching story about the power of friendship and love which reveals more each time you read it and revisit the illustrations.

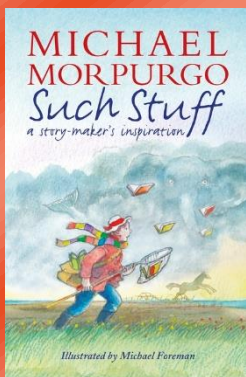
Lily (Charlotte's daughter, aged 10)



***Danger 'REALLY' is Everywhere: School of Danger* by David O'Doherty and Chris Judge** (Puffin) 9780141371108

This is the third book in the *Danger is Everywhere* series and this time, Docter Noel Zone investigates dangers in school. From making Segways safe to looking out for the RULER ANACONDA, Noel explores the hidden dangers lurking in school, whilst at the same time trying to work out who the mystery bike thief is.

I've read all the other books in this series; *Danger is Everywhere* and *Danger is STILL Everywhere: Beware of the Dog*. Docter Noel is a very peculiar character; seeing danger in EVERYTHING he comes across – except for cabbages and his pet stone! He's not your typical hero but adds a lot of humour to the book because of this unusual ways of life – he sleeps in a bath, which he calls George! I especially like the **DETBAFOD** (Dangerology Examination To Become A Full-On Dangerologist) at the end of each book which quizzes you on what you have learnt about Dangerology throughout the book. This book will make you laugh out loud!

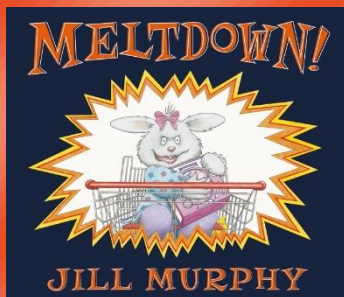


***Such Stuff: A Story-maker's Inspiration* by Michael Morpurgo, illustrated by Michael Foreman (Walker) 9781406364576**

I like this book because it tells you about how Michael Morpurgo wrote some of his many books. At the beginning of each chapter, he talks about 'the dream' – which is how he came up with the idea for the story. This is followed by an extract from the book and then, at the end, there is a factual part. For example, in my favourite of his books, *War Horse*, it talks about the real horses of war.

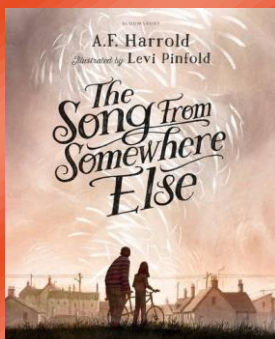
I was lucky enough to be able to attend the launch of this book and to shake hands with Michael Morpurgo and the illustrator Michael Foreman. It was a very special moment for me which I'll always remember.

Louise



***Meltdown!* by Jill Murphy (Walker) 9781406327915**

I'm an enormous fan of Jill Murphy's work – both from a parent's and a teacher's perspective. There are whole sections of *Five Minutes Peace* and *Peace at Last* that I can recite, having read them over and over again to many classes and many children at story time, at bedtime, in cars, in playgrounds, everywhere. *Meltdown!* is a brilliant representation of what it is like to be with a toddler in a supermarket and I'm sure it will resonate with children and adults far and wide. Ruby is a rabbit in a trolley – with a mission to be helpful but somehow things just don't go quite to plan – hers or her mum's. Jill Murphy tells this everyday story in her own exceptional, precise and humorous way – through pictures where every line is drawn and every gorgeous drawing coloured with purpose and resolve and through realistic dialogue and description which adds to the pictures, helping you to see the detail and the nuance in the story. Parents everywhere will know just how Mrs Rabbit feels as she is stared at, trying to fold a screaming, shouting, cake covered two-year-old into a buggy and the words of the adults and Ruby herself will be familiar to every child. This is a funny, familiar and beautiful book which I'm sure is destined to become another classic – every child (and parent) I know is going to get it for Christmas.

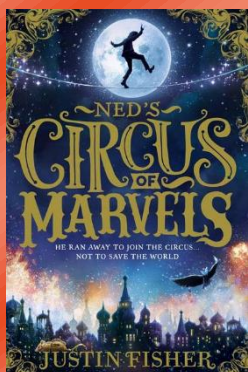


***The Song from Somewhere Else* by AF Harrold, illustrated by Levi Pinfold (Bloomsbury) 9781408853368**

I'm very surprised that I've chosen this book as one of my picks of the year. It doesn't conform to my usual type at all and yet it drew me in from the moment I picked it up and the characters, the story and the illustrations have stayed with me long after I finished reading. It is described on the jacket as "a story about strangeness, strength, friendship and keeping the shadows at bay" and it really is that beautiful mixture. Frank is looking for her cat when she is rescued from some bullies by the class outsider and the story is essentially about how their unlikely friendship develops and she becomes more comfortable in her own skin. But of course, it is not quite that simple and AF Harrold's beautiful prose also tells a story of magic and trolls and music and loss – all in a readable, exciting and fast moving adventure. Just like all the characters (even the cat) nothing is as it first seems and this strangeness, highlighted and enhanced by Levi Pinfold's wonderful illustrations, makes the book a very special and very compelling read.

Millie (Lindsey's daughter, aged 12)***The Red Shoes and Other Tales* by Metaphrog (Papercut) 9781629912837**

The Red Shoes and Other Tales, graphic fiction by Metaphrog (who are Sandra Marrs and John Chalmers) contains *The Red Shoes*, *The Little Match Girl* and *The Glass Case* (an original story). The first two are beautiful takes on two classic Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales. The stunning illustration in this graphic novel accompanies sweet and thoughtful language, perfect for less confident readers. Their original story *The Glass Case* which is about a young boy named Sam with an unhappy home life who becomes obsessed with a beautiful doll in a museum. This story with its bleak themes blends in well with the two other tales, has an updated setting and a slightly gentler tone although it has a similar dark ending. Overall I would give this a five star rating because of its gorgeous graphics and creative original tale.

Rafi (Fatim's son, aged 9)***Ned's Circus of Marvels* by Justin Fisher (HarperCollins) 9780008124526**

This is an exciting book about a boy called Ned whose 13th birthday present turns into a breathtaking adventure. Ned's dad's flying car takes him off into the sky to visit Benissimo's Circus of Marvels. Ned thinks that life is normal until he gets to the circus! If you don't like clowns then don't read the beginning of this book! I like this book because when you read one sentence you can't wait to read the next sentence.

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