

The *(incomplete)*  
Lit in Colour  
book list

100 texts  
by writers of colour

Key Stage 2 edition

Volume 3

Lit in *colour*



# Contents

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# Why have an (incomplete) list?

We call our book lists incomplete, because we know they will never manage to be exhaustive or definitive when it comes to recommending great books by writers of colour. Instead, we are hoping to offer a snapshot of exciting new texts that have just been published and spotlight older classic texts to support teachers and young people diversify their reading.

All the books listed have suggested year groups as a guide, but we realise this will vary from one individual student to another. So really this is more of a starting point for teachers to familiarise themselves with what is available and build confidence in their subject knowledge of literature by writers of colour.

With the creation of this third volume of the (incomplete) Lit in Colour book list for Primary school age students we decided to bring in Poetry and Graphic Novel Focus pages; these bring together a collection of books that will encourage and inspire children of all writing and reading abilities to use their imaginations and to immerse themselves in stories. We have also incorporated more international voices as we wanted to expand the narratives students encounter beyond Britain, and celebrate cultures from around the world.

We are always really keen to hear what books should be featured next time, so do get in touch if you can't see a favourite book from your own reading - just email [Litincolour@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk](mailto:Litincolour@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk) with your suggestions.

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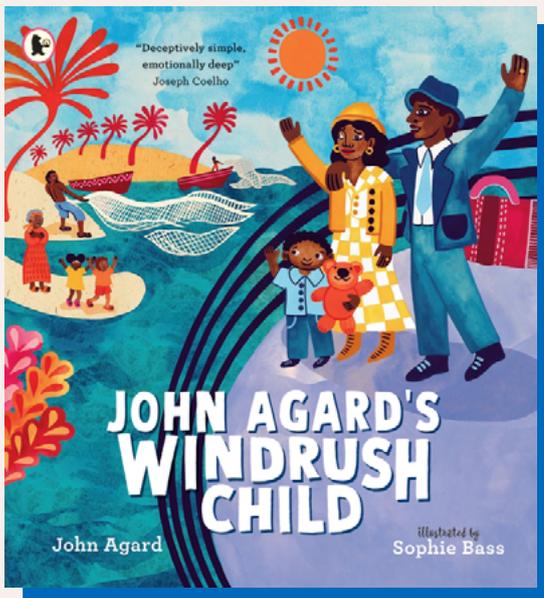
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## John Agard's Windrush Child

John Agard and Sophie Bass (illus)



Windrush child says goodbye to his grandmother and the shores of his Caribbean home and boards the Empire Windrush on a journey into the unknown.

Playwright and poet John Agard's picture book, with images by debut illustrator Sophie Bass, recalls the journey made by thousands of Caribbean children and their families who travelled to Britain as part of the Windrush Generation between 1948 and 1971. Bass' illustrations show the changing landscapes faced by those on the Empire Windrush and other ships that made the journey.

This book is an informative introduction to Windrush, and a great starting point for talking to children about the contribution of the Windrush Generation, and the difficulties and discrimination faced by them in the UK.

**Publisher:** Walker Books

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Windrush, British history

## Mae Among the Stars

Roda Ahmed and Stasia Burrington (illus)



This picture book is inspired by the life of Mae Jamison, the first African American woman to travel in space.

Following Little Mae's journey from when she was a child, dreaming of dancing in space, the book encourages young children to believe in their dreams and work hard. Children will see how Little Mae's curiosity, intelligence, and determination, matched with encouraging words from her parents, paved the way for her incredible success at NASA.

**Publisher:** HarperCollins

**Year:** 2018

**Themes:** STEM, Imagination

# How to Read a Book and How to Write a Poem

Kwame Alexander and Melissa Sweet (illus)

Inspire children to tap into their love of writing and reading with Kwame Alexander and Melissa Sweet's How To books.

The first, *How to Read a Book*, is a poetic adventure about the world of reading, gently urging children to find a space and time to delve into the pages of a book.

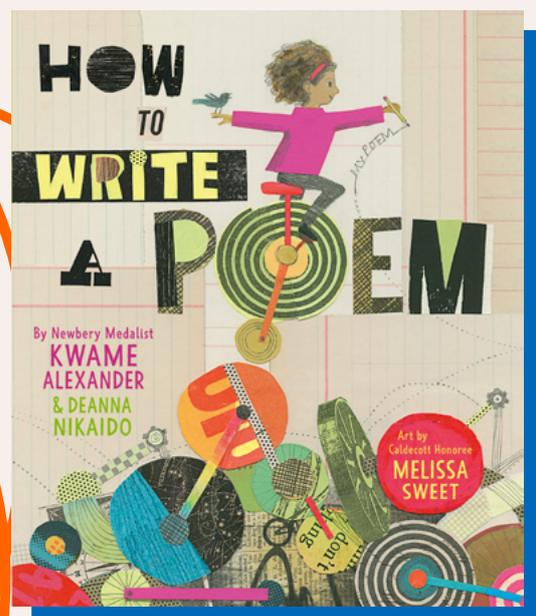
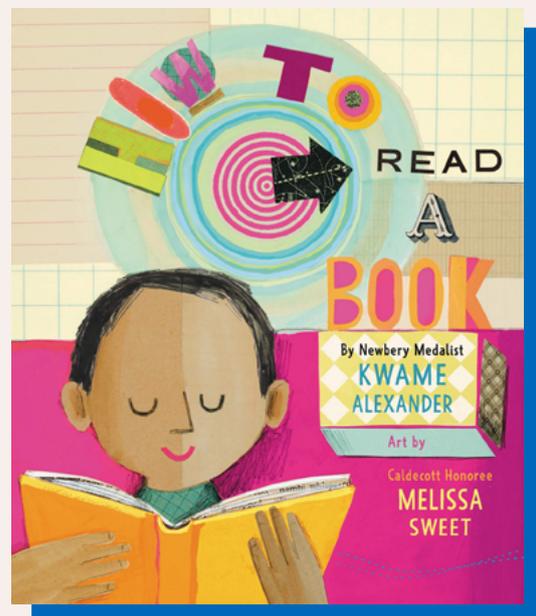
[Kirkus Reviews](#) said: "Reading, captured here in both content and form, is hailed as the unassailably individual, creative act it is."

In *How to Write a Poem*, Alexander teams up with poet Deanna Nikaido on a book about discovering poetry in the world around you. [Kirkus Reviews](#) said it was "marvelously crafted to inspire blooming writers".

Both books encourage readers to listen, feel, and discover words and their power.

Alexander is a poet, educator and producer. His bestselling Crossover series has been turned into a Disney+ show called *The Crossover*, which premiered in 2023. The third book in the series, *Rebound*, was shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal.

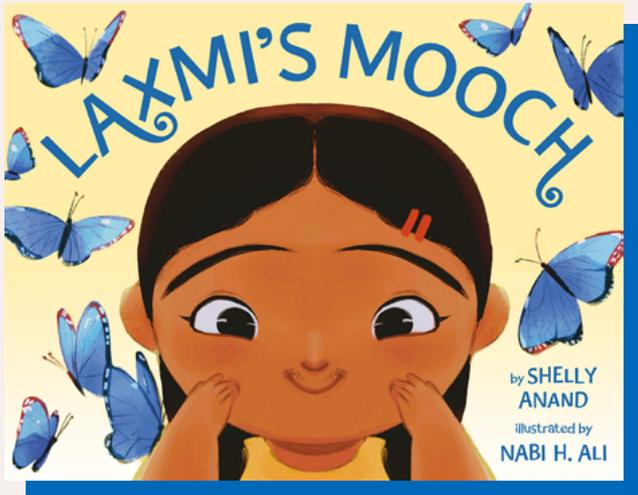
Sweet is an illustrator and writer of nearly 100 books. Nikaido is the author of two collections of poetry.



**Publisher:** HarperCollins  
**Year:** 2019 and 2023  
**Themes:** Writing, Reading, Poetry, Imagination

## Laxmi's Mooch

Shelley Anand and Nabi H. Ali (illus)



This body positive picture book is about a young Indian American girl called Laxmi, who learns to love her differences and celebrate her heritage after being teased about her moustache.

When her friends point out that the whiskers above her lip would make her the perfect cat, Laxmi starts to notice body hair all over – on her arms, legs, and even between her eyebrows. With her parents' help, Laxmi learns that hair isn't just for heads, but that it grows everywhere, regardless of gender.

Shelley Anand's affirming text is accompanied by illustrations from Nabi H. Ali, a Tamil-American illustrator.

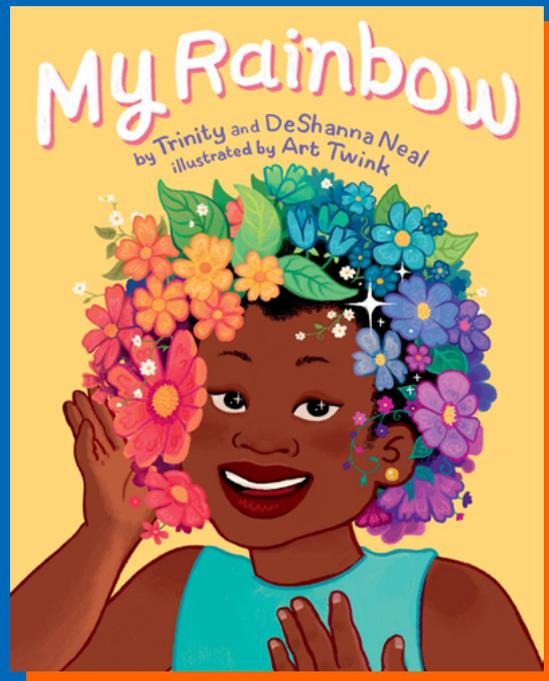
**Publisher:** Kokila

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Body positivity

## My Rainbow

Trinity and Deshanna Neal and Art Twink (illus)



This picture book is based on the real-life story of daughter and mother Trinity and Deshanna Neal, and is about a young transgender girl's journey of self-expression.

When one morning Trinity decides she wants long hair like her dolls, her family decides to take a trip to the beauty supply store, but none of the wigs is the perfect fit. So Trinity's mother leaves with bundles of hair in hand, ready to craft a wig as colourful and vibrant as her daughter.

*Publishers Weekly* said the book was a "joyful family story that emphasises the importance of listening and loving people for who they are".

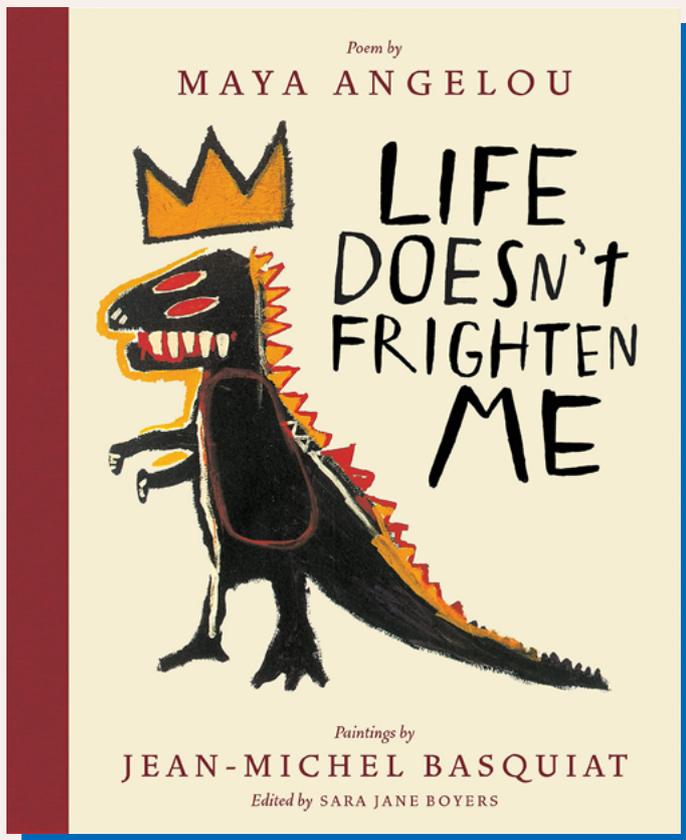
**Publisher:** Kokila

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Self-love, LGBTQ+

# Life Doesn't Frighten Me

Maya Angelou and  
Jean-Michel Basquiat (illus)



Maya Angelou's brave, defiant poem *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* celebrates the courage within each of us. Angelou's strong words are matched by bold paintings by artist Jean-Michel Basquiat.

First published in 1993, the 25th anniversary edition of the book features biographies of Angelou and Basquiat and an afterword from editor Sara Jane Boyers. It also includes a selected bibliography of Angelou's books and a selected museum listing of Basquiat's works to help children further discover the work of both artists.

**Publisher:** Abrams

**Year:** 1993

**Themes:** Self-belief, Courage, Poetry, Art

## Secret Beast Club series

Robin Birch and Jobe Anderson (illus)

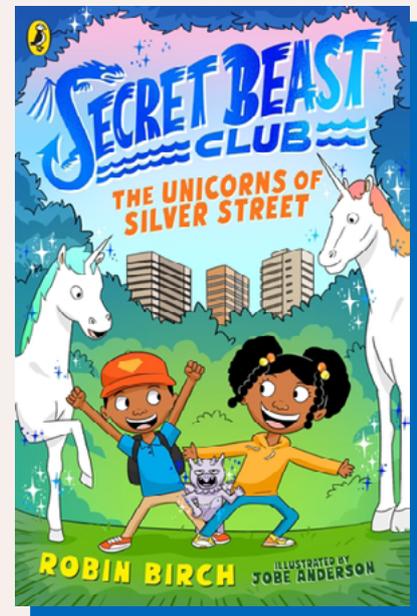
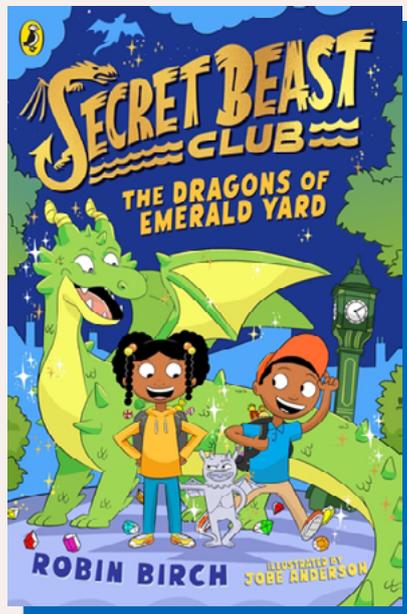
This series is inspired by the real life story of Pablo Fanque, who was the first Black circus owner. Each story features a new magical creature for children to meet.

The *Unicorns of Silver Street* introduces Aisha, who loves being at home playing on her tablet or messaging her friends, and Jayden, who likes to get lost in books. Neither of them are fans of going outside.

But then they are asked to join the Secret Beast Club, a centuries-old secret group that protects mythological creatures. Leaving their comfort zones, Aisha and Jayden discover that real magic could be closer than they think.

In the second book in the series, *The Dragons of Emerald Yard*, Aisha and Jayden are officially members of the Secret Beast Club, and preparing for their second mission... tracking down a dragon who is on the loose in Birmingham, before a dragon hunter finds it.

A third book, *The Mer-People of Crystal Pier*, will be released in 2024.



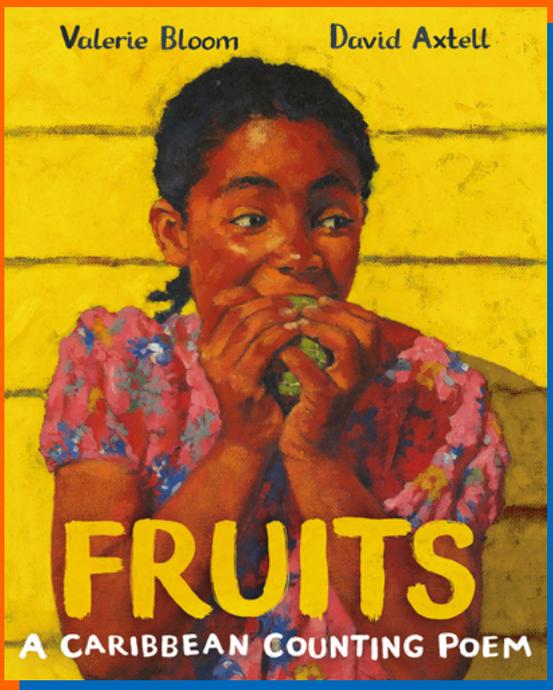
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Adventure, Friendship, Magic

## Fruits

Valerie Bloom



Valerie Bloom's counting poem *Fruits*, which won the Smarties Prize Bronze Award in 1997, is narrated by a small girl.

Illustrated by David Axtell, the creator of *We're Going on a Lion Hunt*, the book follows the girl on a mission to eat as much fruit as she can in one day.

The rhyming text helps children learn to count, and introduces them to the fruits of the Caribbean.

Bloom was born in Jamaica and came to England in 1979. She has performed extensively in both Britain and the Caribbean in schools, universities and theatres, and is the author of two novels and various collections of children's poetry including *Stars with Flaming Tails* which won the [CLIPPA](#) Children's Poetry Prize in 2022.

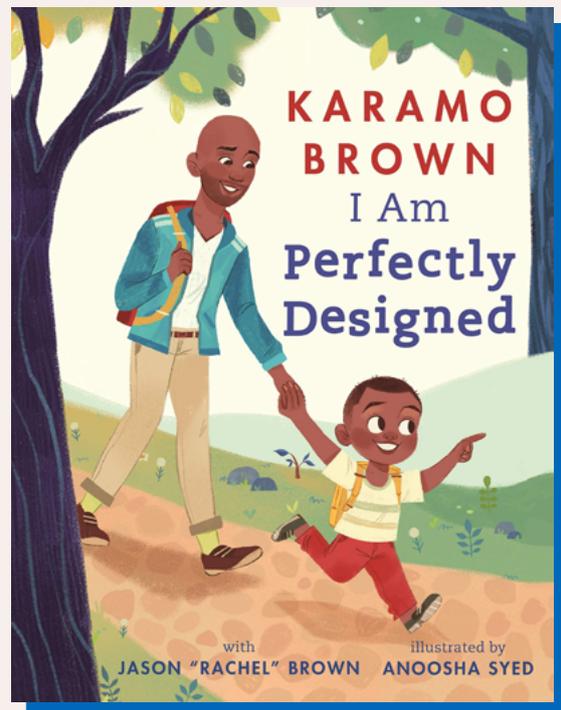
**Publisher:** Macmillan Children's Books

**Year:** 1996

**Themes:** Poetry, Education

## I Am Perfectly Designed

Karamo Brown and Jason Brown,  
Anoosha Syed (illus)



Written by *Queer Eye* star Karamo Brown and his son Jason, *I Am Perfectly Designed* is about a boy and his father spending the day together, and is a celebration of the love between parent and child.

As the pair walk through the city together, playing in the park and eating ice cream on the way, they discuss the ways in which they are perfectly designed for each other.

Karamo Brown is the culture expert on Netflix's *Queer Eye* reality show, and made history in 2004 when he appeared on MTV's *The Real World* as the first openly gay African American reality TV star.

The book is illustrated by Anoosha Syed, an illustrator who also works as a freelance character designer with companies including Disney Jr.

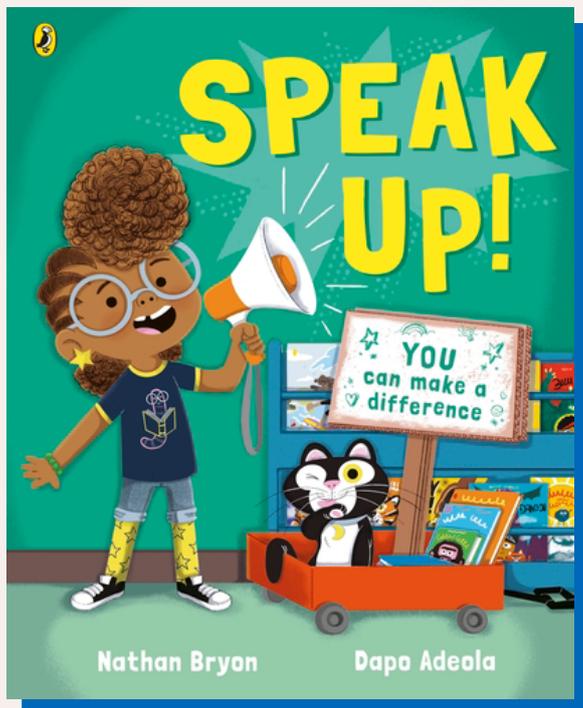
**Publisher:** Macmillan Children's Books

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Family, Love

# Speak Up!

Nathan Bryon and Dapo Adeola (illus)



The latest book in Nathan Bryon and Dapo Adeola's Rocket series follows the protagonist as she goes on a mission to save her local library.

Bookworm Rocket loves going to the library every week and reading about inspirational figures like Rosa Parks. When she learns her library is closing, she's heartbroken. But she soon decides to use what she's learnt from those she's read about, and speaks up to save the day.

This is an empowering picture book about stepping up and speaking out for what matters to you, as well as being a love letter to libraries and the power of reading.

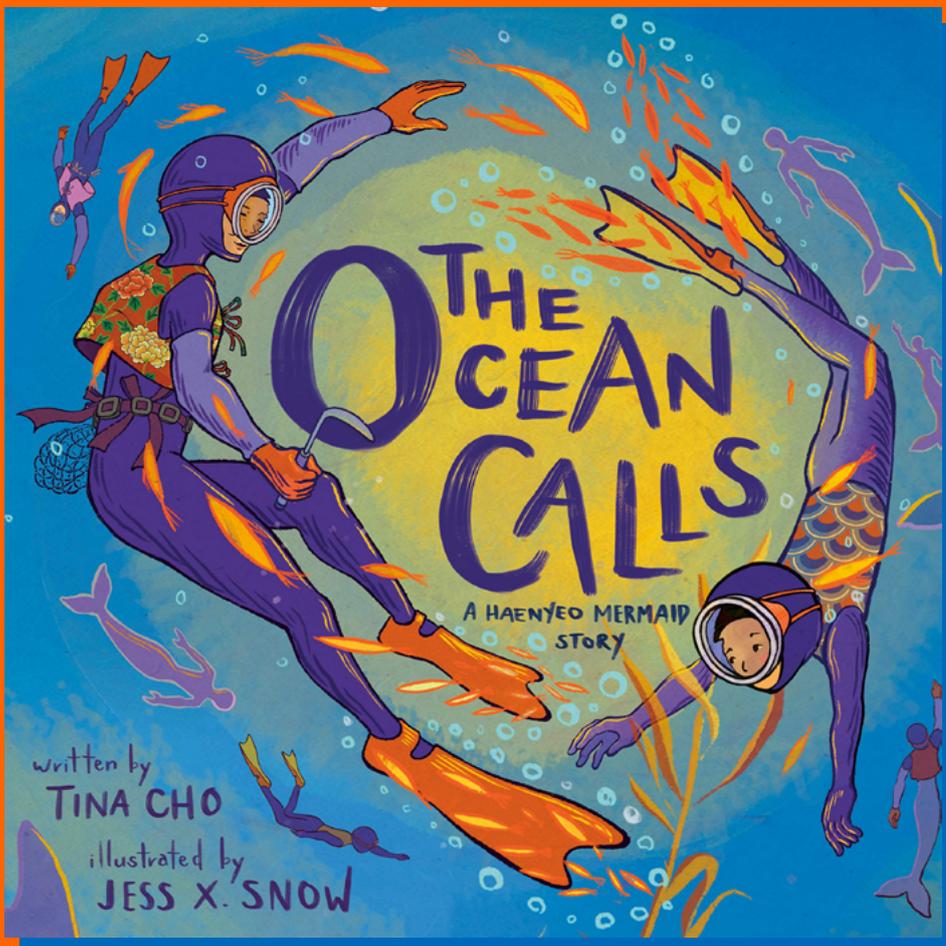
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Activism, Self-belief, Community, Reading

# The Ocean Calls

Tina Cho and Jess X. Snow (illus)



*The Ocean Calls* is about a Korean girl called Dayeon, who wants to be a haenyeo – a free diver – just like her grandmother. The haenyeo dive off the coast of Jeju Island to pluck treasures from the sea, and generations of Korean women have done the same.

Determined to follow in her grandmother's footsteps, Dayeon eats Grandma's abalone porridge and practises holding her breath while they do the dishes. When a scary memory of the sea keeps Dayeon on shore, it's her grandmother's guidance that will help her step forward.

Children will learn about an extraordinary group of women and a traditional practice through this picture book.

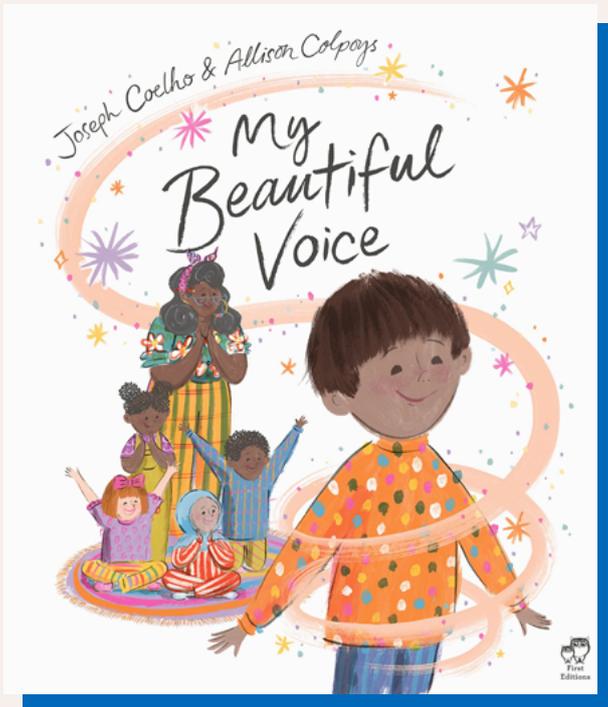
**Publisher:** Kokila

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Family, Love, Self-belief

## My Beautiful Voice

Joseph Coelho and  
Allison Colpoys (illus)



*My Beautiful Voice* is about a shy child unlocking the power of their own voice through poetry and the helping hand of an extra special teacher.

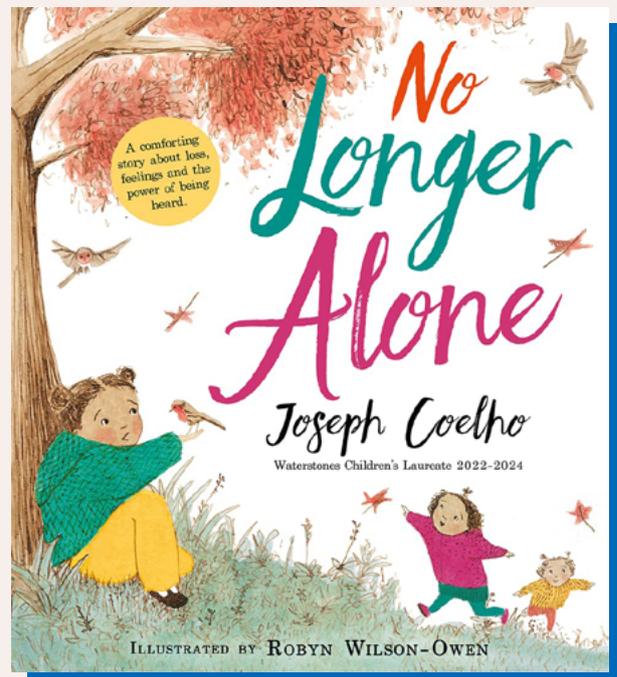
[BookTrust](#) said *My Beautiful Voice* was “a gentle story that pays homage to the people that sometimes come into our lives to guide us through difficult times, and the power of a fantastic teacher”.

Joseph Coelho is the current Waterstones Children’s Laureate, and Allison Colpoys is the illustrator of books including *Under the Love Umbrella*.

**Publisher:** Frances Lincoln  
**Year:** 2022  
**Themes:** Self-belief, Confidence

## No Longer Alone

Joseph Coelho and  
Robyn Wilson-Owen (illus)



Told through the voice of a little girl who is labelled as quiet and shy, *No Longer Alone* follows her tumult of emotions as she navigates the world around her. When she shares her feelings and tells her Dad all the things that are worrying her, she no longer feels so alone.

Children will find Joseph Coelho’s warm and authentic voice relatable.

**Publisher:** HarperCollins  
**Year:** 2022  
**Themes:** Self-belief, Confidence

## In Our Hands

Lucy Farfort



In Lucy Farfort's debut picture book, a group of determined children must grow a seed of hope in a world that is plagued by isolation and cursed to live without colour.

Farfort was awarded first prize for illustration in Faber Children's inaugural FAB Prize competition and is the illustrator of books including *Afraid of the Dark*. She is also one of the illustrators in *Bedtime Stories: Beautiful Black Tales from the Past and Happy Here*.

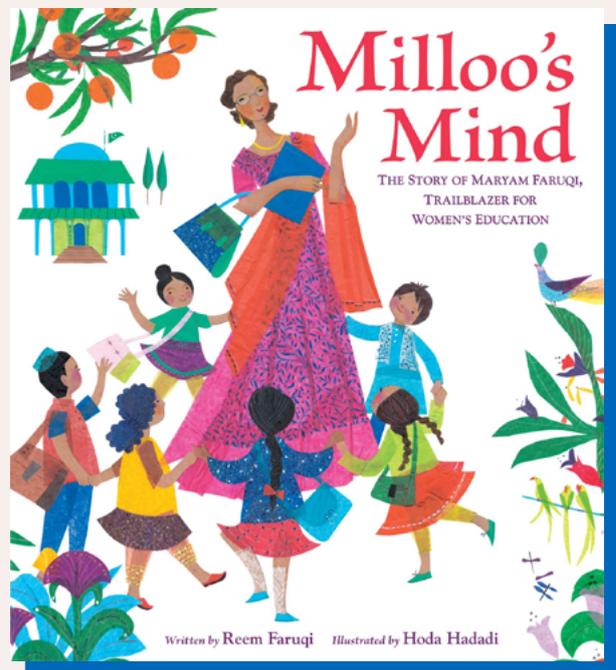
**Publisher:** Tate Publishing

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Community, Activism

## Milloo's Mind

Reem Faruqi and  
Hoda Hadadi (illus)



This picture book is a biography of Maryam "Milloo" Faruqi, the founder of the Happy Home Schools, which provided education to thousands of girls across Pakistan at a time when girls weren't encouraged to go to school. Author Reem Faruqi is also Maryam's granddaughter.

Milloo dreams of becoming a teacher, but her parents tell her she has had enough school. Heartbroken, she finds a way to achieve her educational goals. When she gets married, Milloo's husband tells her to stay home, but instead she opens a school in her house, before fulfilling her dreams by opening more schools around Karachi in Pakistan.

*Milloo's Mind* works well with *Malala's Magic Pencil* by Malala Yousafzai, illustrated by Kerascoët.

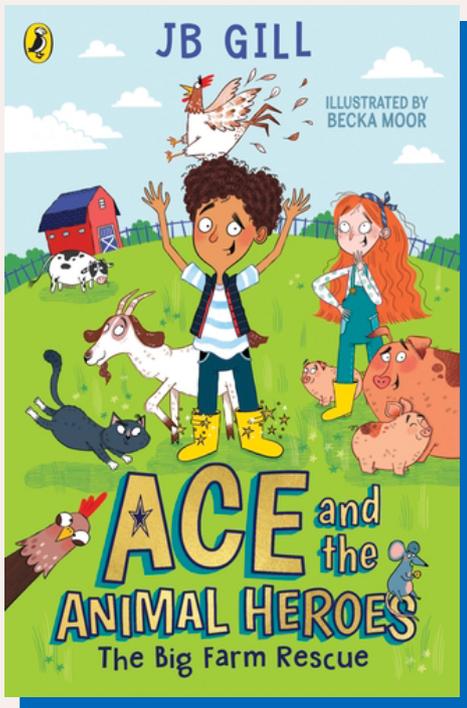
**Publisher:** HarperCollins

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Education, Feminism, Biography

## Ace and the Animal Heroes: The Big Farm Rescue

JB Gill and Becka Smith (illus)



After Ace receives a surprise gift from a long-lost relative, he and his grandparents pack up their life in the city and move to the countryside to live on a run-down farm. When Ace arrives and tries on a pair of new wellingtons, he discovers he can talk to animals.

Helped by Ginger the Pig, some hens, and a new best friend, Ace has to master his skills to take on the evil Councillor Crabbington, who is determined to shut down the farm.

Gill is an award-winning farmer, and was a member of pop group JLS. Illustrator Becka Moor is the illustrator behind Pamela Butchart's Wigglesbottom Primary series.

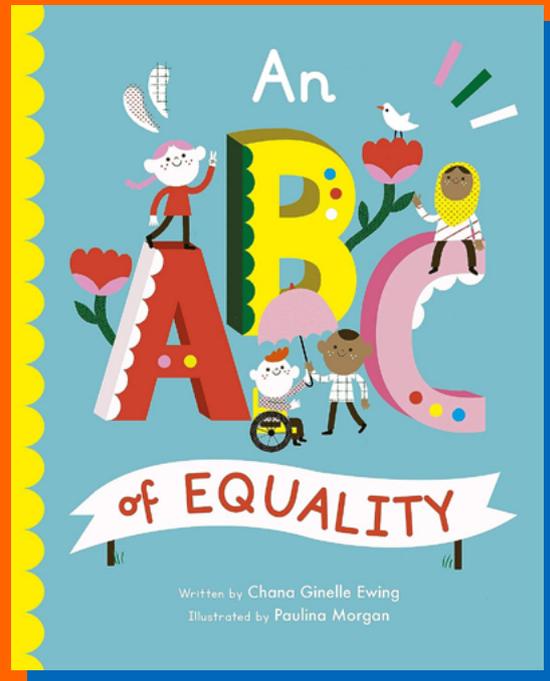
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Friendship, Animals, Family

## An ABC of Equality: Volume 1 - Empowering Alphabets

Chana Ginelle Ewing and  
Paulina Morgan (illus)



Using simple explanations and clear and engaging artwork, *An ABC of Equality* introduces children to complicated concepts around social justice.

Each right-hand page includes a brightly decorated letter with the word it stands for and an encouraging slogan. On the left, a colourful illustration and bite-size text sum up the concept.

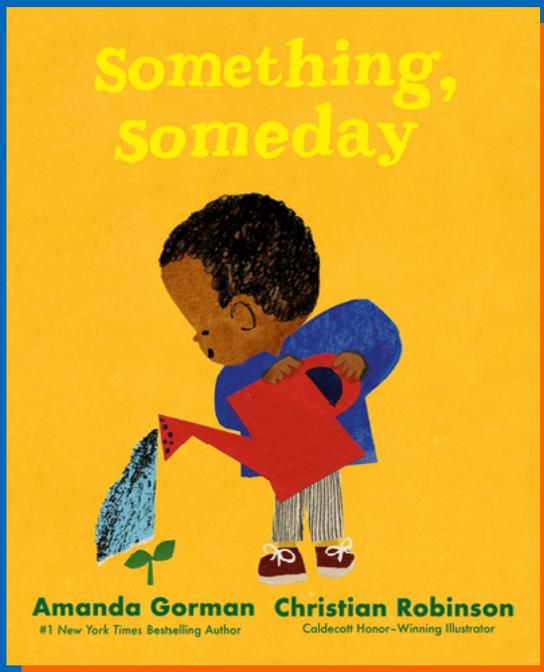
**Publisher:** Frances Lincoln

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Equality, Activism

## Something, Someday

Amanda Gorman and  
Christian Robinson (illus)



Presidential inaugural poet Amanda Gorman, who performed at US president Joe Biden's swearing in, and award-winning illustrator Christian Robinson's *Something, Someday* is a book about hope.

Gorman and Robinson teach readers that even when the world seems broken and problems seem too big to fix, we still have the power to make a difference with small gestures and actions.

Gorman is the author of the poetry collection *Call Us What We Carry* and the picture book *Change Sings*, illustrated by Loren Long. Robinson has won the Caldecott Honour and the Coretta Scott King Honour, two of America's big children's book illustration awards.

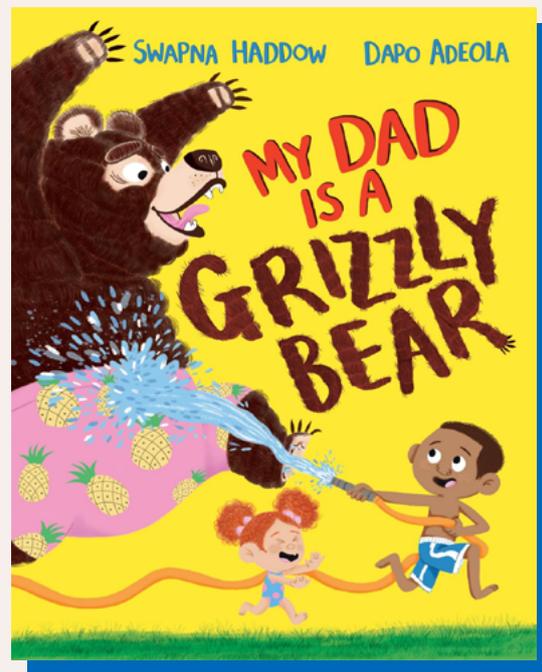
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Activism, Self-belief

## My Dad is a Grizzly Bear

Swapna Haddow and  
Dapo Adeola (illus)



In the family at the centre of *My Dad is a Grizzly Bear*, it's possible that Dad – with his fuzzy furs, enormous paws and love for the outdoors – is a grizzly bear. To add to the case, he often falls asleep in the cinema and he's always hungry. And he also gives great big lovely bear hugs.

This picture book is a warm and funny story about family and the imagination. Swapna Haddow is the author of books including the Dave Pigeon series. Dapo Adeola, who was named Illustrator of the Year at The British Book Awards in 2022, is the illustrator of a number of books, including the Rocket series with writer Nathan Bryon.

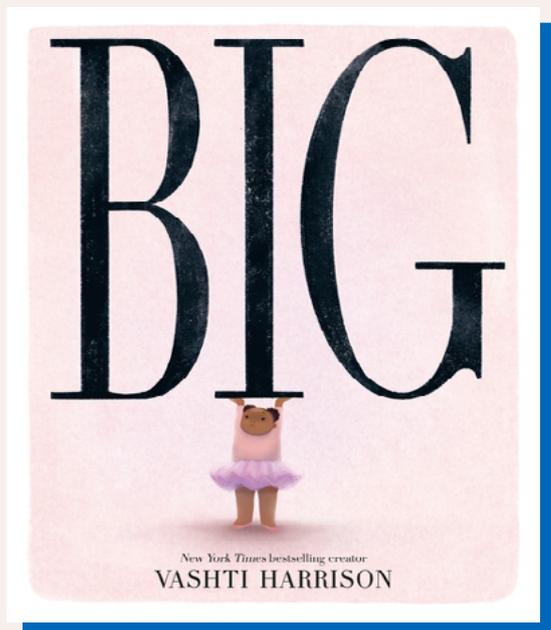
**Publisher:** Pan Macmillan

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Family, Love

# Big

Vashti Harrison



At the centre of Vashti Harrison's *Big* is a girl with a big laugh, big heart and big dreams. But when she begins to grow big herself, the world begins to make her feel small, out of place and invisible.

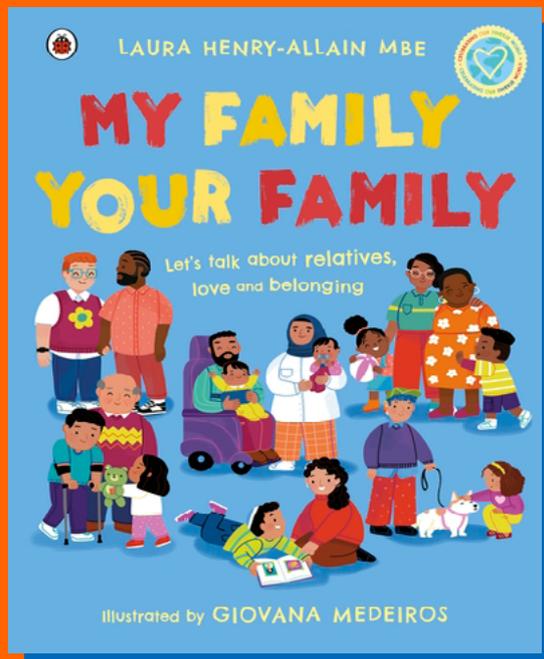
*Big* is a book about inner strength, and looking past hateful words to see how perfect you really are.

Harrison is the award-winning creator of the Little Leaders series, and *Big* is the first picture book she has written and illustrated.

**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2023  
**Themes:** Self-love

# My Family, Your Family

Laura Henry-Allain and  
Giovana Medeiros (illus)



*My Family, Your Family* is a powerful non-fiction book that focuses on what makes a family and how families come together, and illustrates how every family is unique.

The book aims to help children and adults have meaningful discussions on family and belonging in an accessible and approachable way.

Laura Henry-Allain is a producer, educator and consultant. She is also the author of *My Skin, Your Skin*, illustrated by Onyinye Iwu.

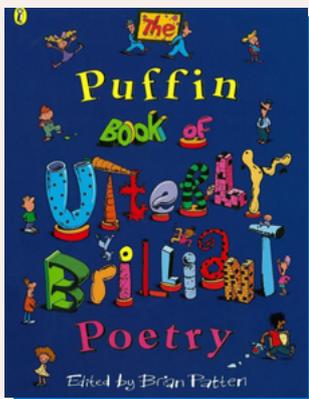
**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2023  
**Themes:** Family, Love

# Poetry focus

Children and young people who read poetry have higher levels of reading engagement than those who do not read poetry, according to research from the [National Literacy Trust](#).

The 2022 research also found that more children who read poetry said that they enjoy reading (62.3% vs. 42.0%), read daily (37.7% vs. 24.3%) and see themselves as good readers (85.5% vs. 78.2%).

These books will encourage children to read, write and perform poetry – be it haiku, stories told in verse, sonnets and more – and encourage them to creatively express themselves.



## The Puffin Book of Utterly Brilliant Poetry

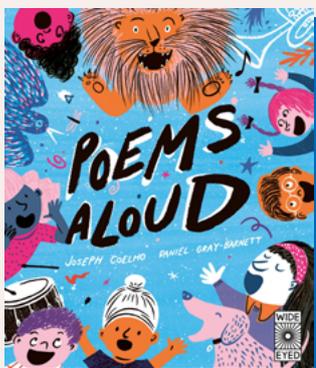
Edited by Brian Patten

This collection of poetry will introduce children to a wide variety of voices, writing in different styles. Each poem is also illustrated by a different artist, encouraging children to tap into the sensory experience of poetry.

Poets in the collection include Benjamin Zephaniah, Jackie Kay and John Agard.

**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 1999



## Poems Aloud: Volume 1

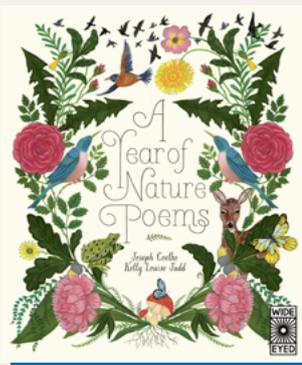
Joseph Coelho and Daniel Gray-Barnett (illus)

*Poems Aloud* is the perfect book to teach children about the oral nature of poetry. In this collection of original poems, children will learn 20 techniques for reading aloud by trying out funny and thoughtful poems by Waterstones' Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho.

Poems include tongue twisters, those that will help children project their voices, and verses to whisper. The book is illustrated by Daniel Gray-Barnett.

**Publisher:** Wide Eyed Editions

**Year:** 2022



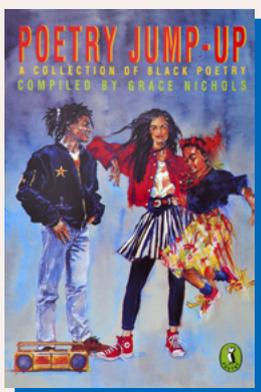
## A Year of Nature Poems

Joseph Coelho and Kelly Louise Judd (illus)

*A Year of Nature Poems* is a collection of monthly nature poems by Coelho, illustrated by Kelly Louise Judd. From the cycle of plants and trees to how animals behave through the seasons and the effects of climate change, the poems are inspiring and will help foster a love for the natural world. [BookTrust](#) said the book was “fuel for creative children who want to channel their own emotions into writing, inspired by the variety in the world around them”.

**Publisher:** Wide Eyed Editions

**Year:** 2020



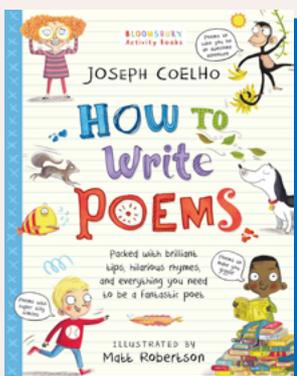
## Poetry Jump-Up

Edited by Grace Nicholls

*Poetry Jump-Up* is a collection that brings together the voices of Black writers from Britain, Africa, America, Asia and the Caribbean. Poets with work in *Poetry Jump-Up* include Don L. Lee, Dione Brand, and Nikki Giovanni.

**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 1990



## How to Write Poems

Joseph Coelho and Matt Robertson (illus)

Arm children with the techniques and confidence they need to write their own poetry with Coelho's guide. The book includes a number of activities which aim to get children's imagination flowing, from carving out a mud poem to going on an outdoors simile hunt.

**Publisher:** Bloomsbury

**Year:** 2017

## Further reading:

### [The \(incomplete\) Lit in Colour book list: volume I](#)

*Laughter is an Egg* by John Agard

*The Undefeated* by Kwame Alexander and Kadir Nelson (illus)

*Under the Moon & Over the Sea: A Collection of Caribbean Poems* by John Agard and Grace Nichols

*Talking Turkeys* by Benjamin Zephaniah

*Funky Chickens* by Benjamin Zephaniah  
*Cloud Busting* by Malorie Blackman

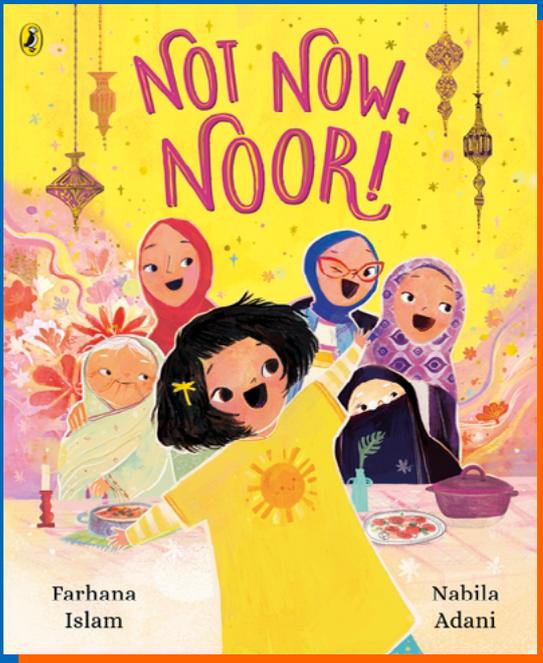
### [The \(incomplete\) Lit in Colour book list: volume II](#)

*Wicked World!* by Benjamin Zephaniah

*Cloud Busting* by Malorie Blackman

## Not Now, Noor!

Farhana Islam and Nabila Adani (illus)



Noor loves her mum and all the other hijabi women in her family, but she's curious about why they wear headscarves. From her aunts to her grandmother, Noor sets out on a journey to discover their reasoning, speculating along the way as to whether they're hiding snacks or concealing a superhero identity.

But all the women are too busy to answer Noor's questions. All, that is, except her mum.

*Not Now, Noor!* is a warm-hearted introduction to the concept of the hijab, and a loving celebration of Muslim women.

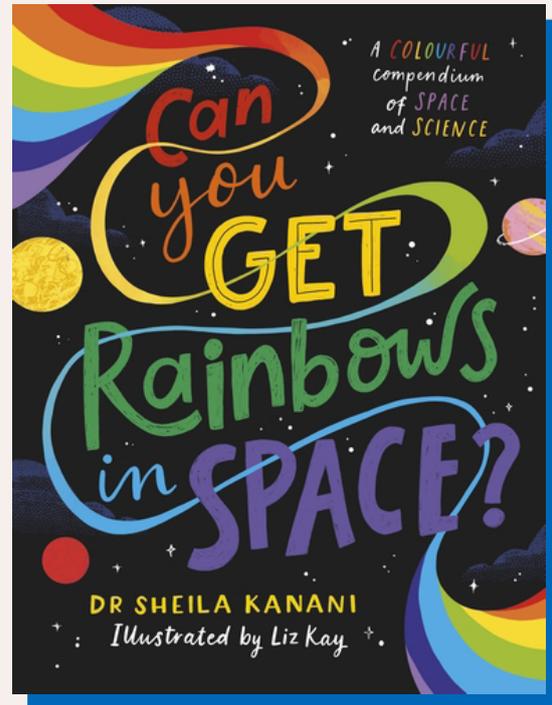
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Islam, Religion, Feminism, Family

## Can You Get Rainbows in Space?

Dr Sheila Kanani and Liz Kay (illus)



Curious children's questions, from why blood is red to why the sea looks blue, are answered by Dr Sheila Kanani in this non-fiction book.

Kanani is a planetary physicist, science presenter, secondary school physics teacher, space comedian and published author, with a background in astrophysics and astronomy research from UK universities. She is the education, outreach and diversity officer for the Royal Astronomical Society.

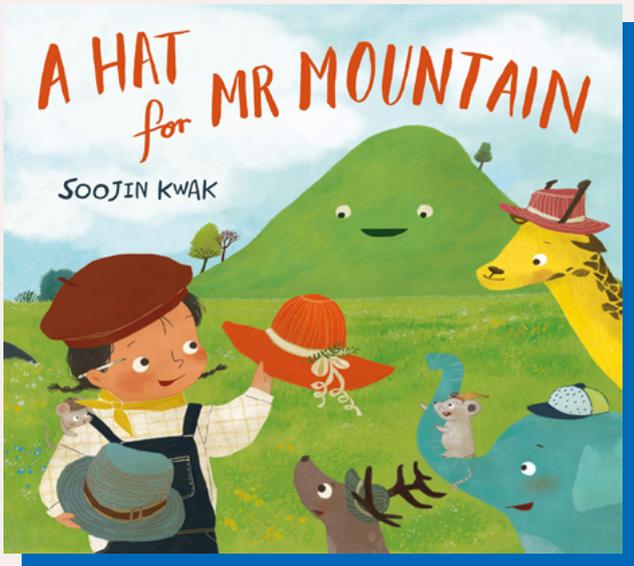
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Science, Education

## A Hat for Mr Mountain

Soojin Kwak



Nara makes hats of all shapes and sizes for the animals who visit her workshop, but one day she gets a special request in a letter: Mr Mountain wants a hat, too. Nara first knits him an enormous woolly hat, but it shrinks in the rain, while the leaf hat she makes is eaten and the stick hat burns to the ground.

Soojin Kwak's book is an exploration of different materials and their properties, and as well as being a fun story is also a useful book for primary school STEM lessons.

Kwak won second prize in the Macmillan Prize for Illustration 2018.

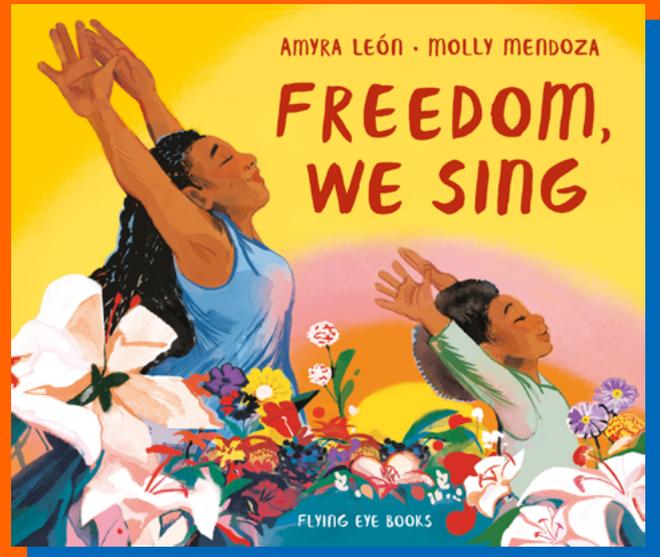
**Publisher:** Two Hoots

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Science, Friendship

## Freedom, We Sing

Amyra Leon and Molly Mendoza (illus)



*Freedom, We Sing* is a lyrical picture book which asks children to consider what it means to be free, and where exactly freedom resides.

Molly Mendoza's immersive, lush illustrations invite children into the text by musician Amyra León.

**Publisher:** Flying Eye Books

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Freedom, Activism

## The Little War Cat

Hiba Noor Khan and  
Laura Chamberlain (illus)



*The Little War Cat* follows a little grey cat who is caught up in the bangs and crashes of humans in boots, as her home city of Aleppo in Syria changes rapidly. Roaming the streets looking for food and shelter, the cat comes across an unlikely friend who shows her that kindness can still be found even in the most difficult of places.

Hiba Noor Khan's book is inspired by a true story, and will introduce young children to war and its devastating effects in a gentle way.

**Publisher:** Macmillan Children's Books  
**Year:** 2020  
**Themes:** War, Friendship

## Fadya and the Song of the River

Laura Nsafou and Ros Schwartz (trans),  
Amélie-Anne Calmo (illus)



*Fadya and the Song of the River* is inspired by traditional tales from continental Africa, and tells the story of Fadya, the youngest of the Luminaries, a group of women with powerful magic.

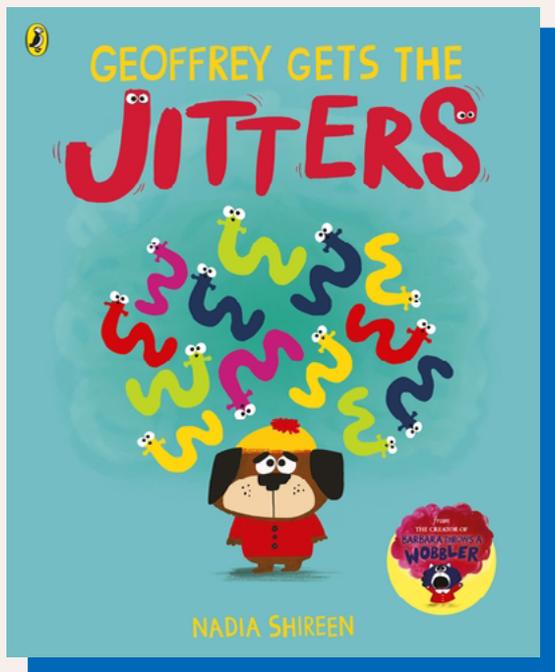
Fadya encounters and helps two fishermen who have inadvertently awoken the wrath of the Goddess of the river.

Laura Nsafou, also known as Mrs Roots, is an Afrofeminist blogger and author.

**Publisher:** Tate Publishing  
**Year:** 2022  
**Themes:** Mythology

## Geoffrey Gets the Jitters

Nadia Shireen



When Geoffrey started thinking about school, he got a funny, wiggly feeling in his tummy that grew and grew and is still there the next day. But it's only when Geoffrey's tummy jitters start talking to him that he knows they're out of control, and that he has to do something about them.

Through a laugh-out-loud story and loveable character, Nadia Shireen has created a story showing children how to understand and dispel their anxieties.

Shireen has previously been shortlisted for the Roald Dahl Funny Prize and the Waterstones Children's Book Prize, and is the author of books including *Bumblebear*, *Billy and The Beast* and *Barbara Throws a Wobbler*.

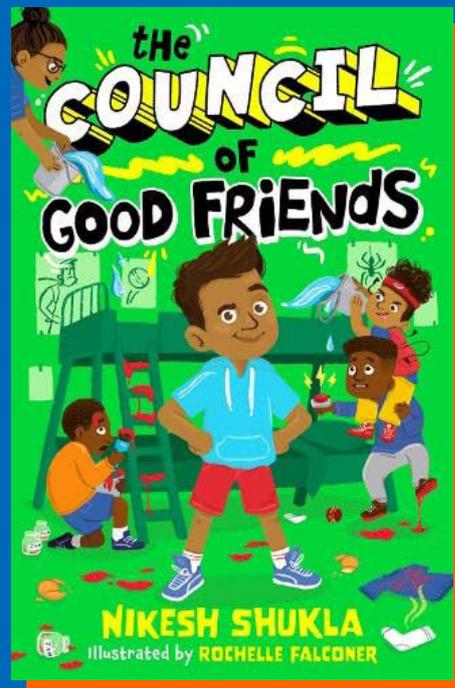
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Mental health, Anxiety

## The Council of Good Friends

Nikesh Shukla and Rochelle Falconer (illus)



Vinay, Musa, Inua and Nish are best friends and it seems like nothing can separate them. Nothing that is, apart from Vinay's cousin, who comes to share his room. When a prank war starts, the friends have to remember what really matters.

Nikesh Shukla is a novelist and screenwriter whose books include the YA novels *Run*, *Riot*, which was shortlisted for a National Book Award, and *The Boxer*, which was longlisted for the Carnegie Medal.

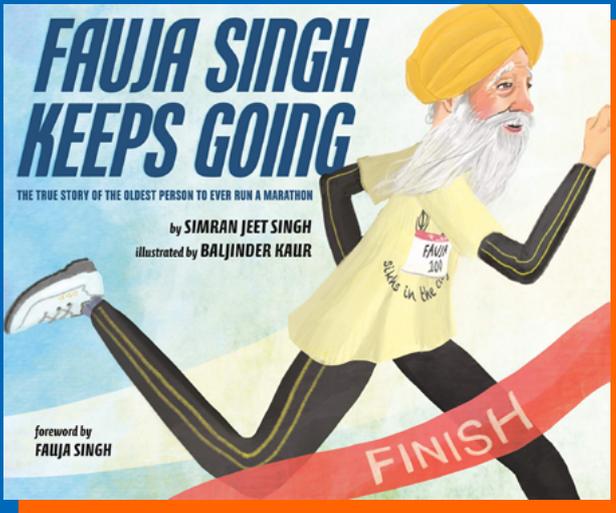
**Publisher:** Knights Of

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Friendship, Comedy

## Fauja Singh Keeps Going

Simran Jeet Singh and  
Baljinder Kaur (illus)



This picture book recounts the true story of Fauja Singh, who broke world records to become the first 100-year-old to run a marathon.

Academic Simran Jeet Singh shares Fauja's life story, from his childhood in the Punjab to deciding to run his first marathon at the age of 81.

*Fauja Singh Keeps Going* is a story about grit and determination, and will show young children about the power of believing in yourself and of trying.

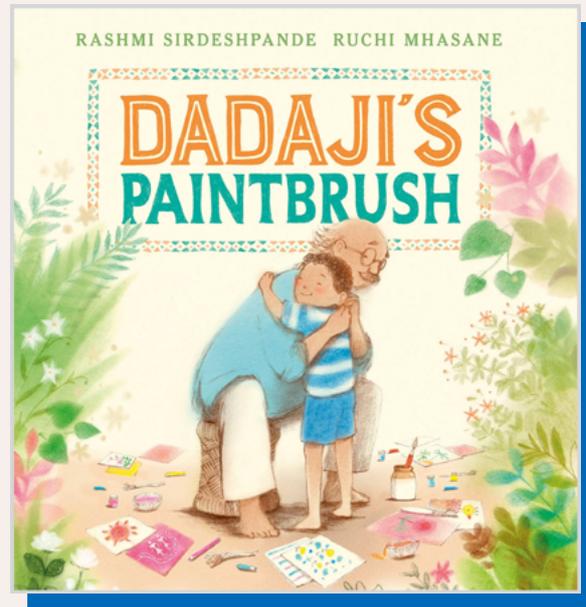
**Publisher:** Kokila

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Self-belief, Biography

## Dadaji's Paintbrush

Rashmi Sirdeshpande and  
Ruchi Mhasane (illus)



Dadaji loved to teach people to paint, but when he passes away, his grandson can't bear to use the paintbrush his grandfather left for him.

It's only when a little girl knocks on the door and the boy discovers how many lives Dadaji touched with his art that he can find a way to continue his legacy.

*Dadaji's Paintbrush* is a good first book to introduce children to concepts of grief and bereavement, and has a focus on continuing a legacy for those who aren't around any more.

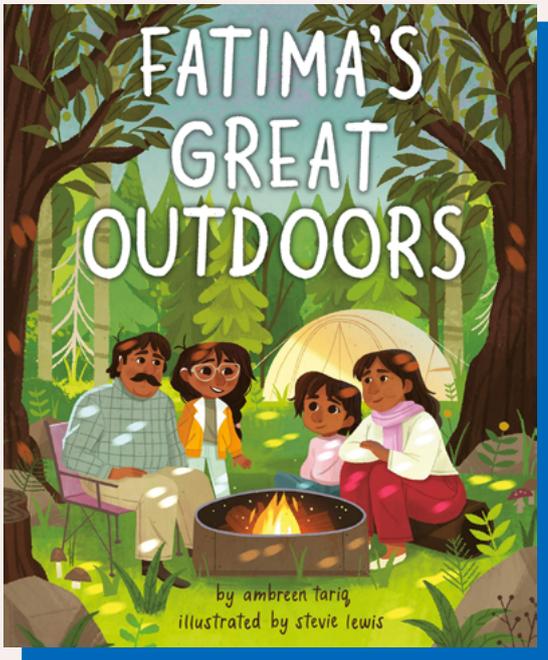
**Publisher:** Andersen Press

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Death, Grief, Family, Love

# Fatima's Great Outdoors

Ambreen Tariq and Stevie Lewis (illus)



Fatima Khazi is excited for the weekend because her family is going on its first camping trip. There, Fatima sets up a tent with her father, builds a fire with her mother, and survives an eight-legged mutant spider with her sister.

*Fatima's Great Outdoors*, about an immigrant family in the Midwest, is a picture book about appreciating the magic of the outdoors.

Ambreen Tariq is an outdoors activist and founder of @BrownPeopleCamping, an initiative that advocates for greater diversity, equity, access, and social justice in the outdoors.

**Publisher:** Kokila

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Nature, Family

## Sam Wu is Not Afraid . . .

Katie and Kevin Tsang

Husband-and-wife writing team Katie and Kevin Tsang's Sam Wu series is all about the title character, who is not afraid of anything. Apart from a big list of things.

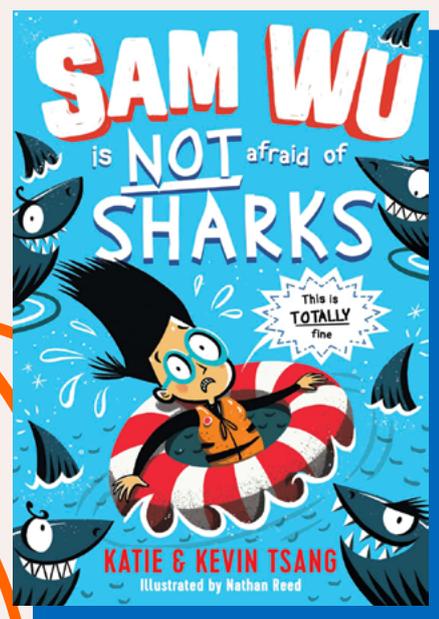
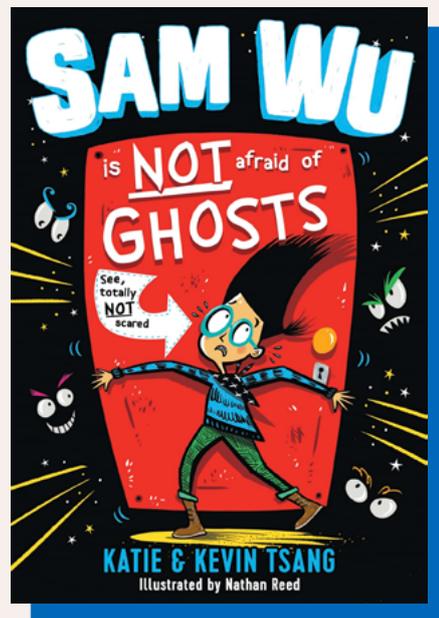
The six books in the series each see Sam tackling a different fear, beginning in *Sam Wu is NOT Afraid of Ghosts!* When a trip to the Space Museum goes terrifyingly wrong, Sam is given the nickname Scaredy-Cat Sam by school bully Ralph. And so Sam begins a mission to prove to Ralph, and all of his friends, that he is a fearless space adventurer.

[BookTrust](#) called it a “funny, fast-paced” book, and said: “Full of humour, black-and-white illustrations and a wacky plot, it is ideal for any readers who enjoy shorter, illustrated books.”

Sam's adventures continue in *Sam Wu is NOT Afraid of Sharks!*, *Sam Wu is NOT Afraid of the Dark!*, *Sam Wu is NOT Afraid of Spiders!*, *Sam Wu is NOT Afraid of Zombies!* And *Sam Wu is NOT Afraid of Space!*

The series is ideal for fans of Liz Pichon's Tom Gates books and Jim Smith's Barry Loser books.

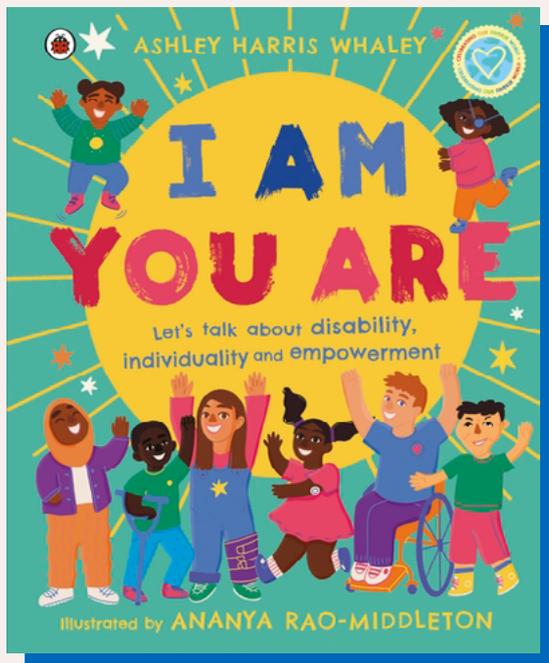
Kevin Tsang is the author of *All About Lunar New Year: Things to Make and Do*. Katie Tsang writes young adult fiction under the name Katherine Webber. Her books include *Wing Jones* and *The Heartbeats of Wing Jones*. The duo are currently working on their new series, *Dragon Realm*.



**Publisher:** Egmont  
**Year:** 2018 - 2020  
**Themes:** Self-confidence,  
Bullying, School

## I Am, You Are

Ashley Harris Whaley and  
Ananya Rao Middleton (illus)



Disability activist Ashley Harris Whaley's *I Am, You Are* aims to support children, parents, teachers and carers by explaining what disability is and why it should be celebrated.

The book is illustrated throughout by advocacy campaigner Ananya Rao-Middleton.

It contains explanations on key words and concepts written in child-friendly, accessible language, with relatable examples, and supports children's understanding in building an anti-ableist stance from an early age.

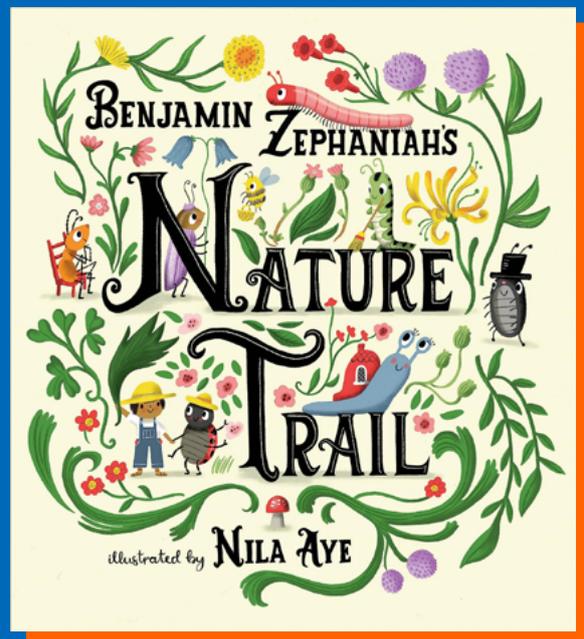
**Publisher:** Ladybird

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Disability, Activism

## Nature Trail

Benjamin Zephaniah and Nila Aye (illus)



Legendary poet and performer Benjamin Zephaniah's *Nature Trail* is a celebration of nature.

Encompassing parks, gardens, flowerpots and pavements, Zephaniah leads children through a world of wonder just waiting to be discovered.

Zephaniah is a British writer and dub poet who was named one of Britain's top 50 post-war poets by the *Times* in 2008. The book is illustrated by Nila Aye, who has also illustrated books including Julia Donaldson's *Book of Names*.

**Publisher:** Hachette

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Nature, Animals

# The Puffin Book of Bedtime Stories

Various



Some of the biggest and best-known names in children's books are brought together in this collection of bedtime stories, poems and illustrations, alongside newer voices.

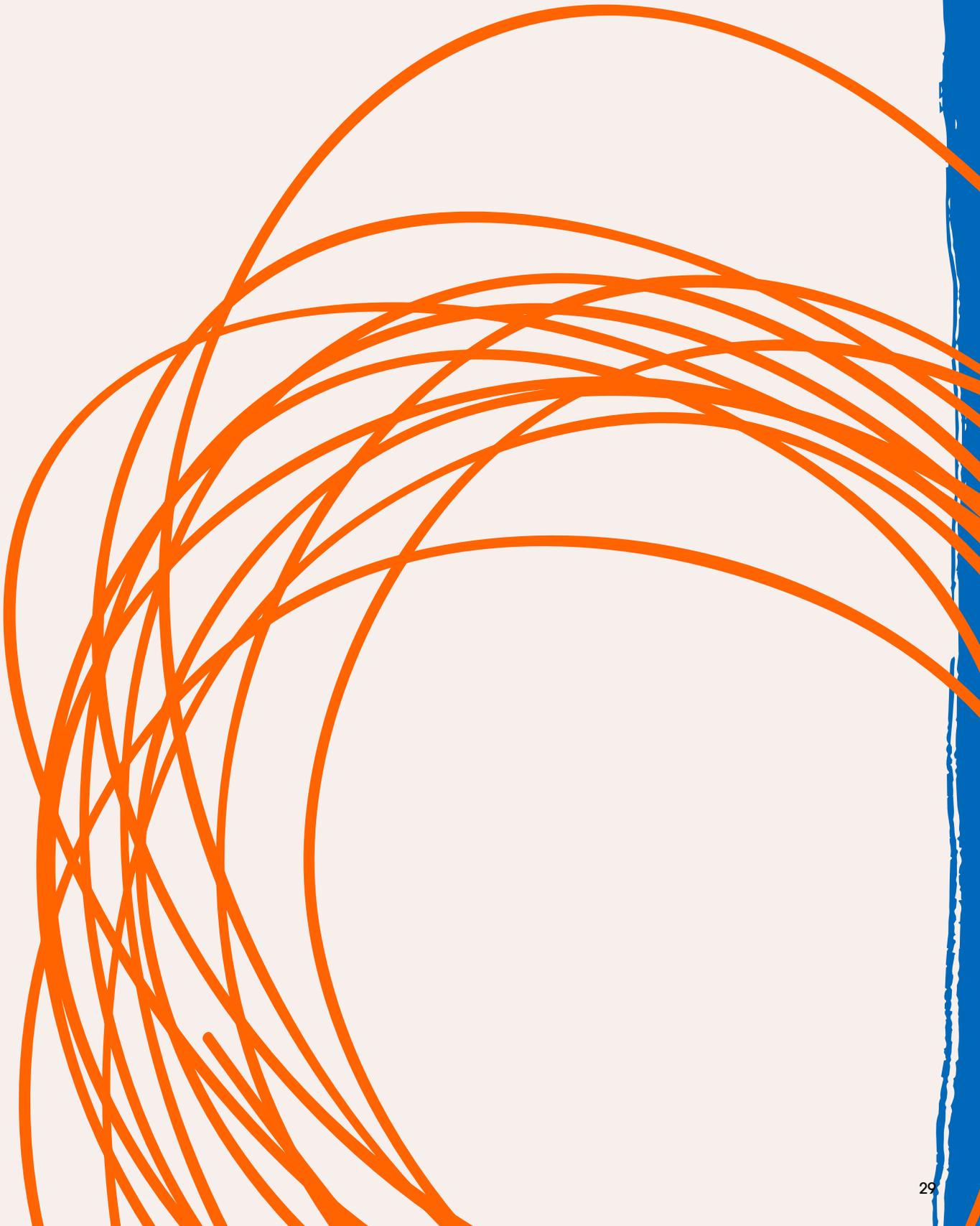
There are brand new stories, poems and illustrations from well-loved and exciting new Puffin talent including Malorie Blackman, Nadia Shireen and more, as well as extracts from classic family favourites by Allan Ahlberg, Michael Morpurgo, Julia Donaldson and others.

The book also includes quotes and motivational pieces from brilliantly inspiring leaders, scientists and actors on their own big dreams. *The Puffin Book of Bedtime Stories* works both for independent and supervised reading.

**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Sleep



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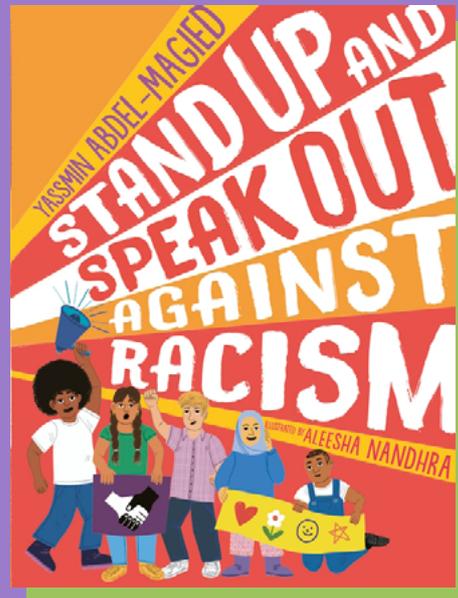
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## Stand Up and Speak Out Against Racism

Yassmin Abdel-Magied and  
Aleesha Nandhra (illus)



Writer Yassmin Abdel-Magied uses questions canvassed from children around the UK as her framework for giving clear context to the racism that persists today. *In Stand Up and Speak Out Against Racism*, she shows young people how to recognise, resist and disrupt racist conversations and attitudes.

The book is a safe space, and Abdel-Magied's friendly, assured tone aims to make young readers feel confident in exploring the topic. Illustrations and infographics from Aleesha Nandhra provide a fresh way for readers to approach this complex issue.

Abdel-Magied is a writer, broadcaster and award-winning social advocate with a background in mechanical engineering. Her other books include the middle-grade novel *You Must Be Layla* and its sequel *Listen Up, Layla*.

**Publisher:** Walker Books

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Racism, Activism, Self-belief

# City of Stolen Magic

Nazneen Ahmed Pathak



The debut novel by academic Nazneen Ahmed Pathak is a look at colonialism through a fantasy lens.

Set in India in 1855, while the country is under British rule, the novel follows Chompa, a young girl whose mother is kidnapped for her magic. Rumours abound that people with magic are being taken to England by the all-powerful and sinister Company, a nod to the real-life East India Company.

Chompa must learn to use her own powerful magic as she hunts for her mother through the streets of Dacca and then London, encountering a host of characters – some friendly, and some not so.

Ahmed Pathak is a British Bangladeshi writer, historian and visual artist. Her research focuses on the geography and history of migration, and she was one of 12 mentees for the inaugural Penguin Books Write Now mentorship scheme, which aims to support and publish underrepresented writers.

*City of Stolen Magic* is Ahmed Pathak's first novel, but her poems and short stories have also been published in *Places of Poetry: Mapping the Nation in Verse*, *The Puffin Book of Big Dreams*, and *A Match Made in Heaven: British Muslim Women Write About Love and Desire*.

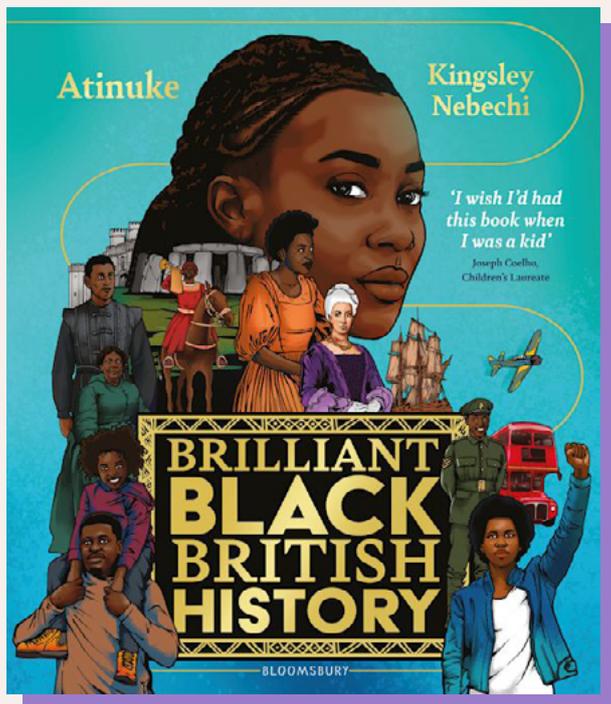
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Colonialism, British history, British Empire, Fantasy, Friendship

## Brilliant Black British History

Atinuke and Kingsley Nebechi (illus)



From the first Britons – who were Black – through to the Black Tudors, Georgians and Victorians who existed in every walk of life here, *Brilliant Black British History* tells the story of Black Britons in every area, from science and sport to literature and law.

Accompanying Atinuke's text are illustrations, maps and timelines by Kingsley Nebechi.

[BookTrust](#) said the book tackled “tough topics, such as slavery and colonialism... in a factual way that doesn't pull any punches”, and added that the book is “informative, eye-opening and a must-have in any school library”.

Atinuke is the author of books including *Anna Hibiscus*. Kingsley Nebechi is a graphic designer, illustrator and artist based in London.

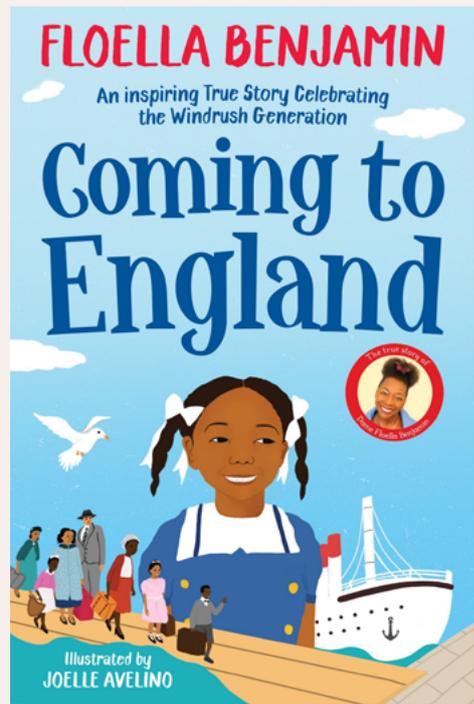
**Publisher:** Bloomsbury

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** British history, Black British history

## Coming to England

Floella Benjamin and Joelle Avelino (illus)



Baroness Floella Benjamin was just a young girl when she, her sister and two brothers arrived in England in 1960 to join their parents, who they had not seen for more than a year. The family left Trinidad to make a new life in London, part of a generation of West Indians who were encouraged to move to Britain and help rebuild the country after the Second World War.

*Coming to England* is Benjamin's classic memoir, available in a new edition for its 25th anniversary. This edition contains a foreword by the author and some additional historical information, and is illustrated throughout by Joelle Avelino.

Benjamin was a presenter of classic children's television programmes including *Play School*, *Play Away*, *Jamboree* and *Fast Forward*.

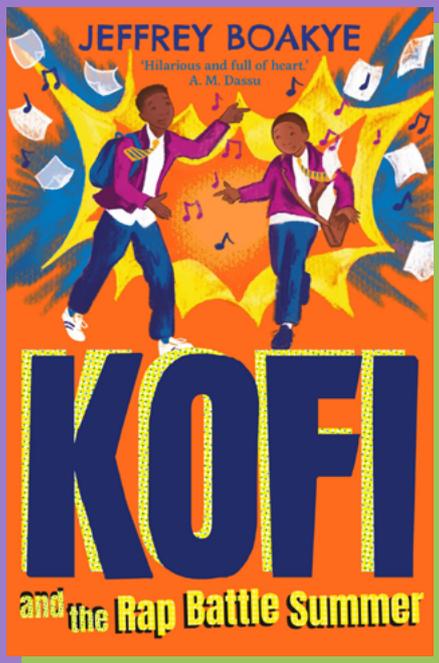
**Publisher:** Pan Macmillan

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Windrush, British history, Family

## Kofi and the Rap Battle Summer

Jeffrey Boakye



Kofi is always getting sent to detention, and is used to things going wrong. But when he finds out his best friend Kelvin has a photographic memory, he comes up with a genius money-making scheme.

He and Kelvin create a new fanzine full of song lyrics, Paper Jam, which is a hit, and Kofi soon realises this could be his best summer ever.

*BookTrust* said: "The chapters are very short, meaning it feels accessible, and even though it's set in the 90s, readers will recognise the playground and family dynamics and the realities of life living on an estate. And of course, it's a love letter to music, and a celebration of how it can speak to everyone."

*Kofi and the Rap Battle Summer* is the debut children's book by Jeffrey Boakye, ex-teacher turned writer, speaker and educator.

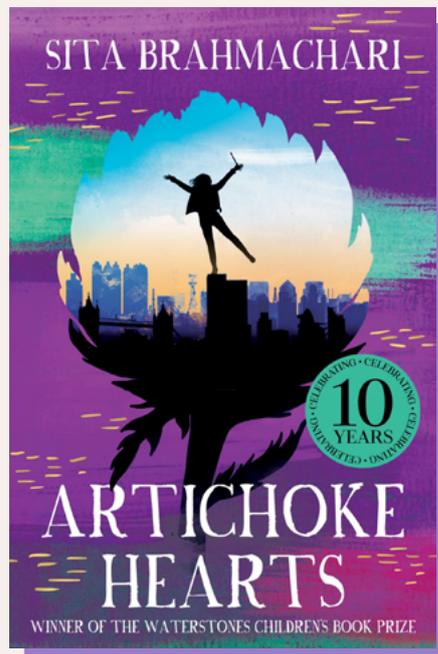
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Friendship, Music

## Artichoke Hearts

Sita Brahmachari



*Artichoke Hearts* is about 12-year-old Mira, who comes from a chaotic, artistic and outspoken family where it's not always easy to be heard. As her beloved Nana Josie's health declines, Mira begins to discover the secrets of those around her, and also starts to keep some of her own.

Mira is drawn to the mysterious Jide, a boy who is clearly hiding a troubled past and has grown hardened layers, like those of an artichoke, around his heart.

*Artichoke Hearts* was Sita Brahmachari's debut children's novel, and won the Waterstones Children's Book Prize. It is an exploration of experiencing grief for the first time, as well as a look at friendship.

**Publisher:** Macmillan Children's Books

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Grief, Friendship, Family

## Keep Dancing, Lizzie Chu

Maisie Chan



Lizzie Chu lives in Glasgow with her grandad Wai Gong, the latter of whom is becoming forgetful and has recently been spending a lot of time talking to his statue of Guan Yin – the Chinese goddess of compassion, kindness and mercy.

Lizzie wants to help her grandad, and comes up with a plan: she's going to take him on the trip of a lifetime, to the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool, where he always longed to go to dance with his late wife Grandma Kam. But how will she get him there?

*Keep Dancing, Lizzie Chu* is a look at familial love, and a story about understanding dementia and learning to ask for help.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) said the book was “a layered, emotionally resonant story”.

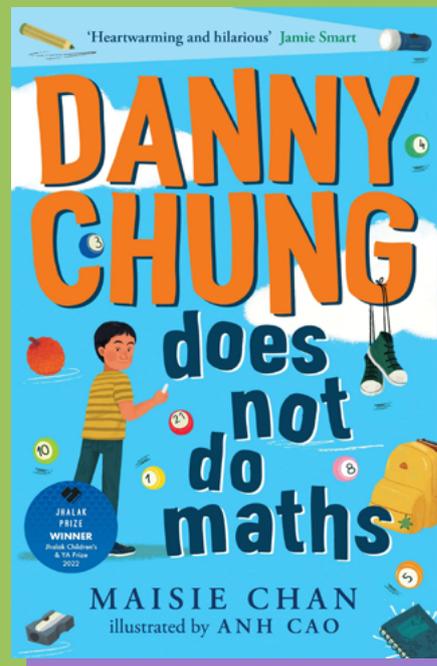
**Publisher:** Piccadilly Press

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Family, Love, Friendship, Illness

## Danny Chung Does Not Do Maths

Maisie Chan and Anh Cao (illus)



Eleven-year-old Danny Chung loves drawing, even though his dad and everyone else thinks he should be good at maths. Luckily, Danny can take refuge in his own room where he can draw in peace, until his little, wrinkly, ex-maths-champion grandmother from China comes to stay, and Danny has to share his space.

Nai Nai can't speak English, which doesn't make things easy for Danny when he is charged with looking after her during his school holidays. While initially he's reluctant to spend time with her, Danny soon realises there's more to Nai Nai than meets the eye.

*Danny Chung Does Not Do Maths* won the Branford Boase Award and the Jhalak Children's and Young Adult Prize, and was shortlisted for the Diverse Book Awards and the Blue Peter Book Awards.

**Publisher:** Piccadilly Press

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Family, Creativity

## Fairytales Gone Bad

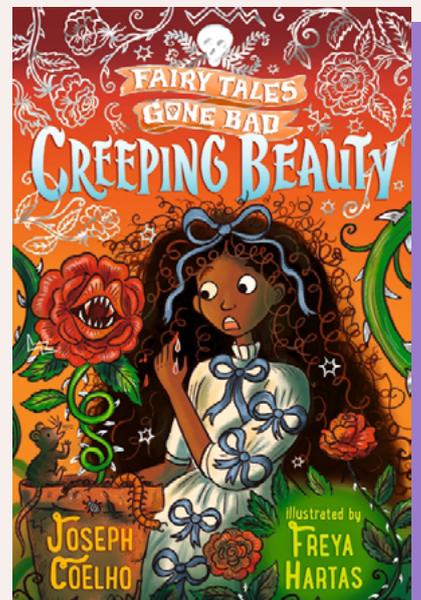
Joseph Coelho and Freya Hartas (illus)

Waterstones' Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho's Fairytales Gone Bad series, written in verse and with illustrations by Freya Hartas, is a spin on traditional stories, tapping into children's love of the gruesome.

The first book, *Zombierella*, is a retelling of Cinderella, where the protagonist slips on stairs and dies at the beginning of the books... but not for long. She soon returns as Zombierella, and for three nights is able to seek revenge – if she wishes – on her cruel sisters.

In *Frankenstiltskin*, a retelling of Rumpelstiltskin, animal-lover Bryony joins the family business and proves to be an extraordinary taxidermist. But when her father boasts about her skill, the secretive King of all Mythica comes calling, locks her away, and gives her three seemingly impossible tasks. When a strange, sinister creature emerges from the shadows of the castle to offer Bryony help, there is definitely a cost.

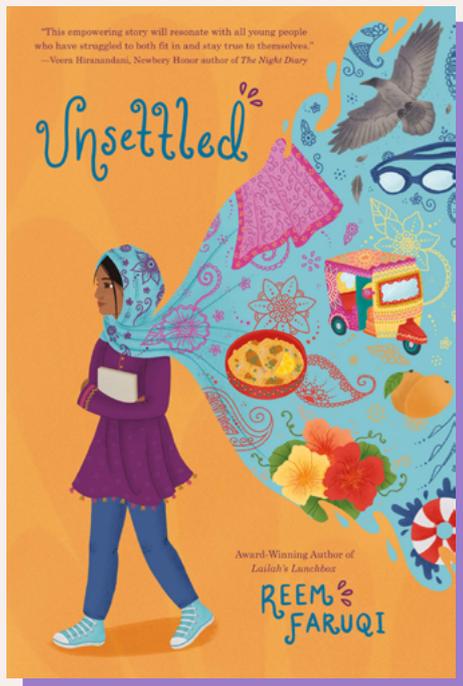
Sleeping Beauty retelling *Creeping Beauty* is about Eshe and her 12 sisters, who are Fairy Godmothers. Eshe can glimpse into the future, and one day foresees a world blanketed in creeping vines and a girl covered in thorns. To stop her vision becoming reality, Eshe has to work with others and access old and powerful magic.



**Publisher:** Walker Books  
**Year:** 2020 - 2022  
**Themes:** Fairytales, Adventure

## Unsettled

Reem Faruqi



When Nurah and her family move from Pakistan to America, all she wants to do is blend in, yet all she does is stand out, with her accent, clothes and skin making her feel excluded. Soon, though Nurah meets Stahr at swimming tryouts, and decides she wants to win medals like her star athlete brother, Owais. When sibling rivalry gets in the way, she makes a split-second decision of betrayal that changes their fates.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) said: “Middle schoolers who struggle with fitting in will resonate with the story while also receiving a glimpse into the lives of a Pakistani immigrant family.”

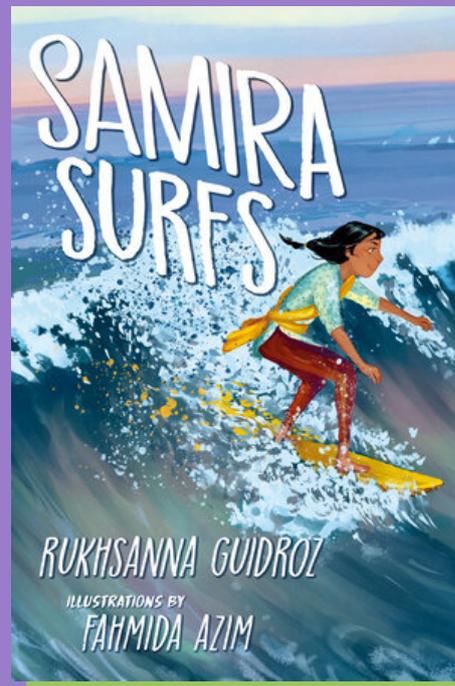
**Publisher:** HarperCollins

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Belonging, School, Sports, Friendship, Family

## Samira Surfs

Rukhsana Guidroz and Fahmida Azim (illus)



Samira is an 11-year-old Rohingya refugee living in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. She thinks of her life as before and after: before the burning and violence in her village in Burma, when she and her best friend would play in the fields, and after, when her family was forced to flee.

Rebuilding a life in Bangladesh with her mother, father and brother – after the loss of her grandparents on their escape from Burma – Samira's life is split into before she saw the Bengali surfer girls of Cox's Bazar, and after, when she decides she'll become one.

Samira Surfs is a tender novel in verse about a young Rohingya girl's journey from isolation and persecution to sisterhood, and from fear to power.

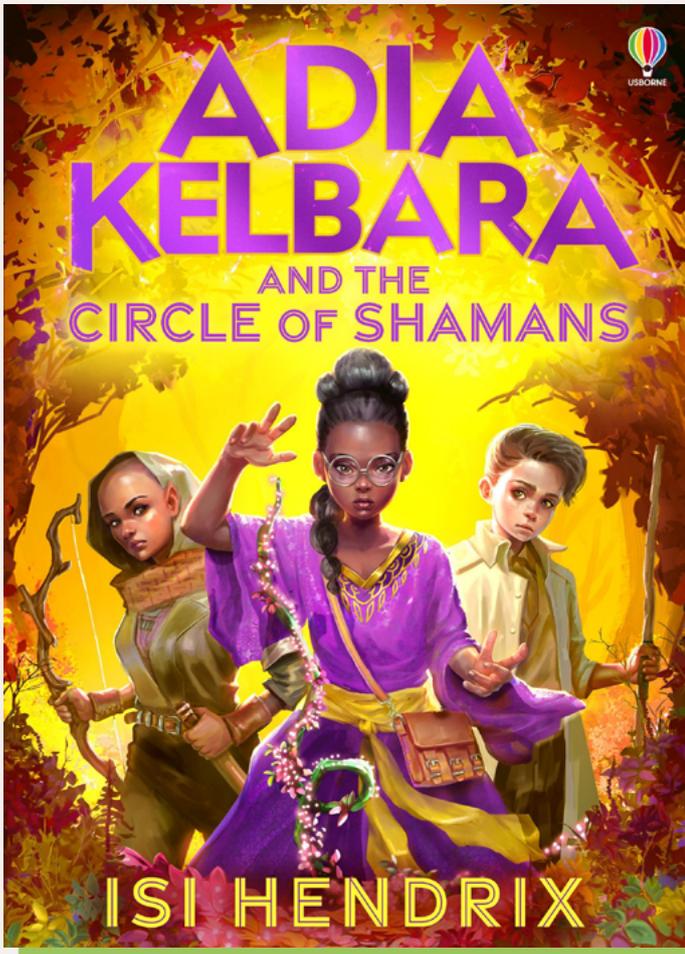
**Publisher:** Kokila

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** War, Refugees, Sport, Friendship, Family, Grief

# Adia Kelbara and the Circle of Shamans

Isi Hendrix



The first in a new trilogy, *Adia Kelbara and the Circle of Shamans* is about 12-year-old orphan Adia, who lives in the Swamplands with her aunt and uncle, who believe she is an ogbanje: a demon-possessed child thought to bring misfortune. When Adia manifests mysterious powers and accidentally destroys her village, she starts to think they might be right.

She flees to the faraway Academy of Shamans, hoping someone at the school can figure out what is wrong with her and fix it. There, instead, she joins forces with a snarky Goddess, a 500-year-old warrior girl and a status-obsessed soldier boy, to go on a mission through hidden realms to save her kingdom.

Hendrix was inspired to write the book by her work with shamanic tribes in the Amazon and Gabonese rainforests, as well as Nigerian customs, superstitions and stigmas.

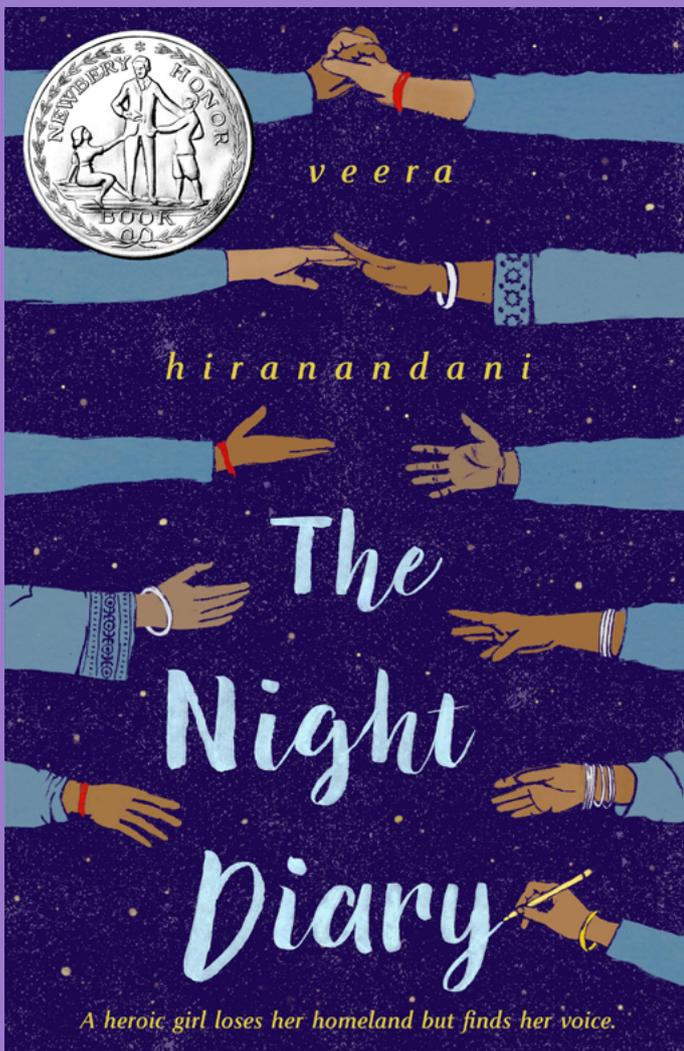
**Publisher:** Usborne

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Self-confidence, Magic, Friendship, Family, Adventure, Fantasy

# The Night Diary

Veera Hiranandani



In 1947, following Partition, half-Muslim, half-Hindu Nisha doesn't know where she belongs or which country is hers anymore.

When her father decides it's too dangerous to stay in what is now Pakistan, Nisha and her family become refugees and embark first by train and then on foot to reach her new home. The journey is long, difficult, and dangerous, and after losing her mother as a baby, Nisha can't imagine losing her homeland, too.

*The Night Diary* is told through Nisha's letters to her mother, and is a story about searching for home, identity and a hopeful future.

*Kirkus Reviews* said *The Night Diary* was a "gripping, nuanced story of the human cost of conflict appropriate for both children and adults".

*The Night Diary* was named a Newbery Honour book in 2019.

**Publisher:** Kokila

**Year:** 2019

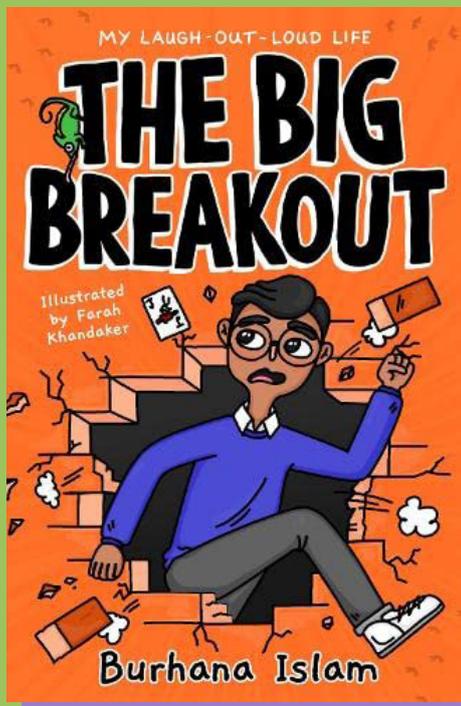
**Themes:** Partition, History, Immigration, Refugees, Family

**"Nisha's voice is the right mix of innocence and strength, and her transformation is both believable and heartbreaking."**

[\*Kirkus Reviews\*](#)

## The Big Breakout and The Dastardly Duo

Burhana Islam and  
Farah Khandaker (illus)



*The Dastardly Duo* and *The Big Breakout* continue Burhana Islam's My Laugh-Out-Loud Life series, which follows the mishaps and adventures of Yusuf and his family.

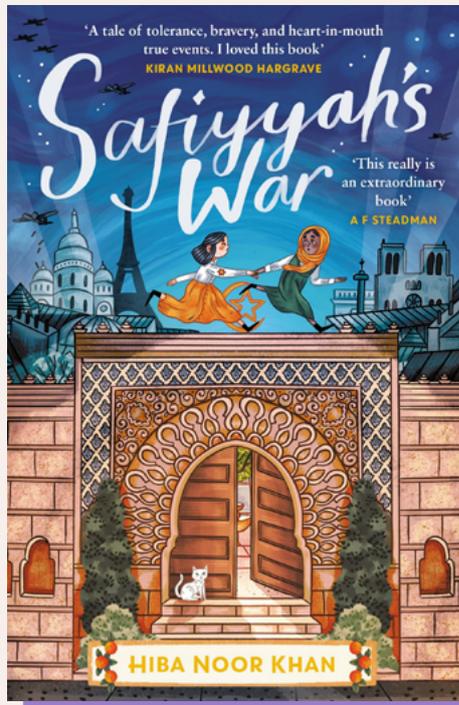
The series began with *Mayhem Mission* ([see The \(incomplete\) Lit in Colour book list: volume II](#)).

In *The Dastardly Duo* Yusuf has messed up big time and needs to defend his family's honour, so decides to run for class president. In *The Big Breakout*, Yusuf's older sister, who is having a baby, is coming to stay. Determined to be the ultimate uncle, Yusuf ropes in his friends for a madcap scheme to help him prepare for the role.

**Publisher:** Knights Of  
**Year:** 2022 - 2023  
**Themes:** Family, Friendship

## Saffiyah's War

Hiba Noor Khan



When war comes to the streets of Paris, Saffiyah's life changes forever. Her best friend's family have fled, and the bombing makes her afraid to leave the mosque where she lives.

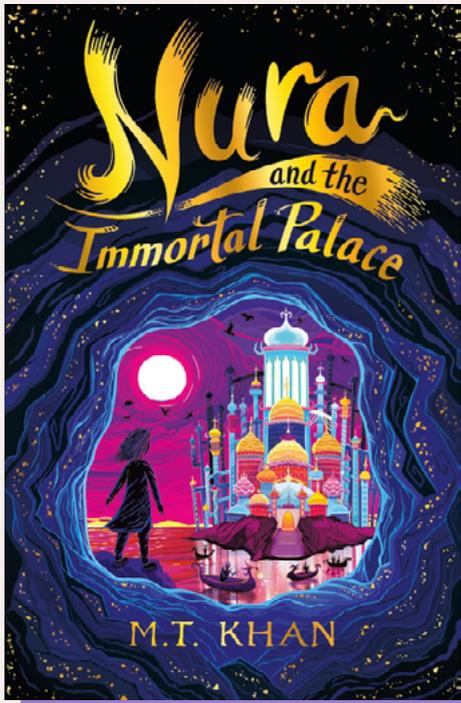
But after Saffiyah's father is arrested by the Nazis for his secret Resistance work, Saffiyah has to step up and run the dangerous errands around the city. When hundreds of persecuted Jews seek sanctuary at the mosque, Saffiyah must find the courage to enter the treacherous catacombs under Paris and lead the Jews to safety.

Author Kiran Millwood Hargrave said *Saffiyah's War* "has the soul of a classic and the urgency of a story for our times."

**Publisher:** Andersen Press  
**Year:** 2023  
**Themes:** War, Refugees, Community

## Nura and the Immortal Palace

M. T. Khan



*Nura and the Immortal Palace* is the story of Nura, who has worked all her life in the mica mines in Pakistan. She wants to find the legendary Demon's Tongue treasure so that she and her family never have to worry about money again.

When Nura's friend is buried in a mine accident, she digs to find him, and finds herself passing over into the magical and terrible world of the jinn. There, she comes to understand that the new world she's come across is as unfair as the real one.

M. T. Khan's debut novel is rooted in Muslim culture and Pakistani traditions, and is a fantasy adventure that also addresses the exploitation of children in a considered and sensitive way.

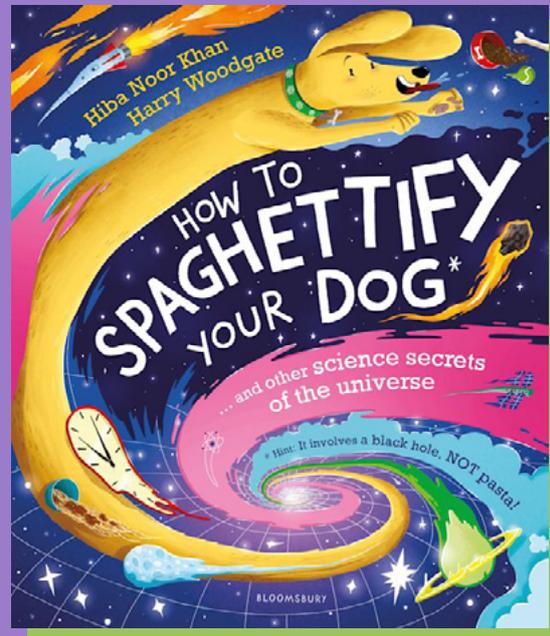
**Publisher:** Walker Books

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Friendship, Adventure

## How to Spaghetlify Your Dog

Hiba Noor Khan and  
Harry Woodgate (illus)



Aspiring scientists and curious minds of all ages will like *How to Spaghetlify Your Dog*, a collection of fascinating physics facts and easy-to-follow experiments that aims to demystify physics.

The Royal Institution said the book was a “wonderfully illustrated, jam-packed, must-have science book for all aspiring young physicists”.

Hiba Noor Khan is a writer whose books include *Saffiyah's War* and *The Little War Cat*. Harry Woodgate is an award winning author and illustrator. Their books include *Grandad's Camper*, which won the Waterstones Children's Book Prize for Best Illustrated Book.

**Publisher:** Bloomsbury

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Science, Physics, Education

## Stand Up, Yumi Chung!

Jessica Kim



Yumi is shy and retiring – on the outside. On the inside, she’s an aspiring comedian who is ready for her big break, and she’s reworked all her mortifying memories, including the bullying she suffers, into comedy gold.

While spending her summer in tutoring, Yumi stumbles on an opportunity that will change her life: a comedy camp for kids taught by one of her favourite YouTube stars. But there’s just one problem: everyone thinks she’s a girl named Kay Nakamura, and Yumi doesn’t correct them.

*Stand Up, Yumi Chung!* is a tale of mistaken identity and a young girl trying to pursue her dreams.

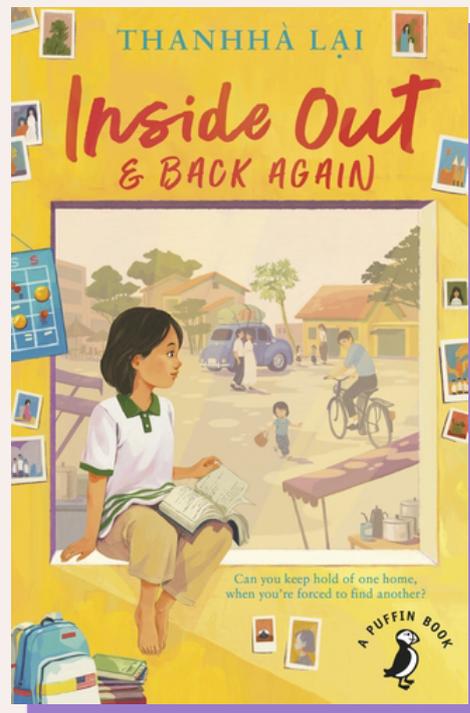
**Publisher:** Kokila

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Self-belief, Comedy

## Inside Out & Back Again

Thanh Hà Lai



Ten-year-old Hà was brought up in Saigon, and it’s the only place she’s ever known. But when the Vietnam War reaches the gates of her home, she and her family are forced to flee.

Their journey on a refugee ship is hard, but it’s not enough to prepare Hà for the strangeness of America, where the language is impossible, the food is strange and not all the locals are friendly.

Among her struggles though, Hà finds joy, friendship - and most of all, the power of hope, love and family.

*Inside Out & Back Again* is a novel in verse. [Kirkus Reviews](#) called it “an enlightening, poignant and unexpectedly funny novel”.

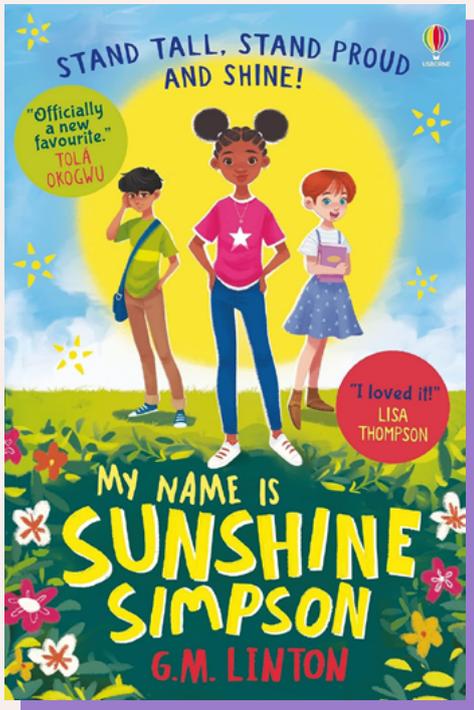
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** War, Refugees, Family

# My Name is Sunshine Simpson

G.M. Linton



Sunshine Simpson's larger-than-life grandad is always telling her to get out and find her own adventures, but unfortunately bad luck has a habit of finding Sunshine.

And that bad luck is manifesting in the fact that her new friend Evie is fast becoming a frenemy, her home haircut is a disaster and the school showcase is stressful. Plus, grandad is getting older every week.

To make things better, Sunshine needs to find her voice and show the world she can shine.

**Publisher:** Usborne

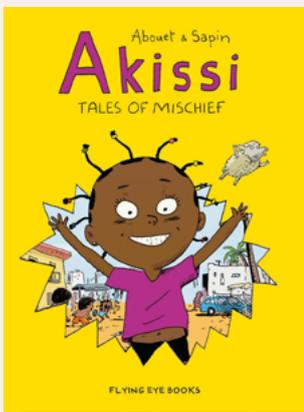
**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Self-belief, Family, Friendship

# Graphic Novel Focus

Award-winning children's writer [SF Said](#) has said it is “so important for kids to know that they can read whatever brings them joy, whatever brings them pleasure”, and is an advocate for children reading graphic novels.

Graphic novels and comic books, says the [National Literacy Trust](#), are “for many children...a welcome change of pace and style, and can be used to introduce readers to a wide range of themes, characters and genres”.



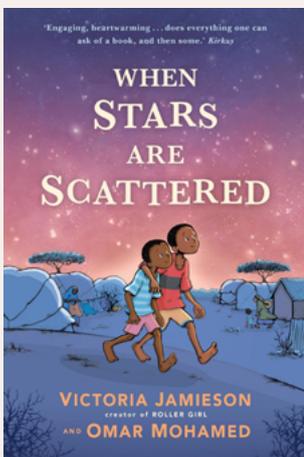
## Akissi: Tales of Mischief

Marguerite Aboutet and Mathieu Sapin (illus), Judith Taboy and Marie Bédrune (translators)

This is a collection of funny stories about Akissi and the mischief she gets up to in her West African village. From neighbourhood cats trying to steal her fish to her little monkey Boubou being in danger, these stories are full of silliness and laughter. [BookTrust](#) said the book was “great for reluctant readers and new readers, too”. Other books in the series include *Akissi: More Tales of Mischief* and *Akissi: Even More Tales of Mischief*.

**Publisher:** Flying Eye Books

**Year:** 2018



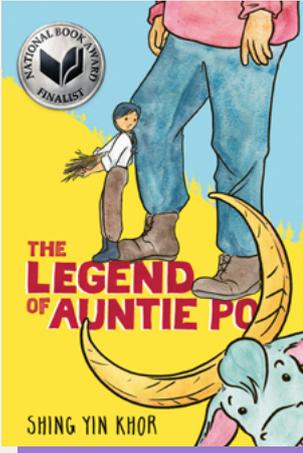
## When Stars Are Scattered

Omar Mohamed and Victoria Jamieson

*When Stars Are Scattered* is the true story of Omar and his brother Hassan, two Somali boys, who have spent a long time in the Dadaab refugee camp. Separated from their mother, they are looked after by a friendly stranger. This book depicts life in a refugee camp in a way perfect for primary school age children to understand.

**Publisher:** Faber & Faber

**Year:** 2020



## The Legend of Auntie Po

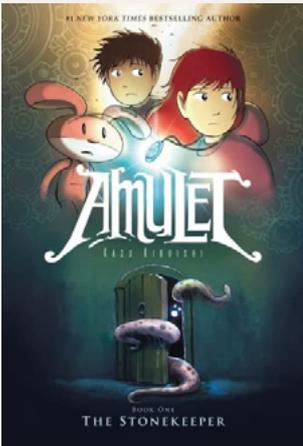
Shing Yin Khor

A finalist for the National Book Award in America, *The Legend of Auntie Po* is part historical fiction and part fable.

It follows Mei, a Chinese heroine working in a Sierra Nevada logging camp in 1885. Mei tries to remain blissfully focused on her job, her close friendship with the camp foreman's daughter, and telling stories about Paul Bunyan, who Khor reinvents as Po Pan Yin (Auntie Po), an elderly Chinese matriarch. Anchoring herself with stories of Auntie Po, Mei navigates the difficulty and politics of lumber camp work.

**Publisher:** Kokila

**Year:** 2021



## The Amulet series

Kazu Kibuishi

The Amulet series is about Emily and Navin, who after the tragic death of their father move with their mother to the home of her deceased great-grandfather. In the strange house, there are dangers everywhere.

When Emily and Navin's mum is lured through a door in the basement, they follow her into an underground world inhabited by demons, robots, and talking animals.

The series begins with *The Stonekeeper*, and continues in *The Stonekeeper's Curse*, *The Cloud Searchers*, *The Last Council*, *Prince of the Elves*, *Escape from Lucien*, *Firelight* and *Supernova*.

**Publisher:** Scholastic

**Year:** 2017 - 2022

## Further reading:

[The \(incomplete\) Lit in Colour book list: volume II](#)

My Magical Life by Zach King

## Kiki Kallira Breaks a Kingdom

Sangu Mandanna



Kiki Kallira has always been a worrier, and recently her anxiety has been getting out of control. One thing that has always soothed her is drawing, and Kiki's sketchbook is full of fantastical doodles of the Hindu myths and legends her mother has told her since she was tiny.

But one day, her sketchbook's calming effect is broken when her mythological characters begin springing to life and Kiki is pulled into the mystical world she drew and to a band of rebel kids who protect the kingdom. Kiki must overcome her fear and anxiety to save both worlds – the real and the imagined – from the wrath of an ancient, monstrous god bent on total destruction.

*Kiki Kallira Breaks a Kingdom* is inspired by Hindu legends about anxiety, creativity and finding your own strengths.

**Publisher:** Hodder Children's Books

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Mental health, Anxiety, Friendship, Self-belief

## The Dream Team: Naomie Mensa vs. the Future

Priscilla Mante



The third story in Priscilla Mante's Dream Team series follows Naomie Osei, whose friends call her Mensa because she's the cleverest out of her group of friends.

But Naomie is struggling to find answers at the moment, not knowing how to break it to her friends that she might not be going to the same high school as them next term, and concerned about whether her sax-playing is good enough for the big solo at the Midsummer Concert. On top of that, she's also worried about whether Bramrock's top girl's football team, the Dreamers, can save their library from closing.

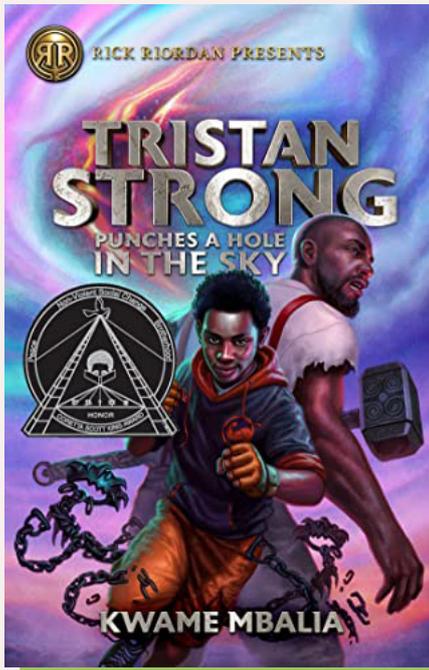
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Friendship, Self-belief, Sport

## Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky

Kwame Mbalia



Tristan Strong feels he doesn't live up to his name ever since he failed to save his best friend Eddie from a bus accident they were both in. He's being sent to heal at his grandparents' farm in Alabama, but on his first night there a sticky creature shows up and steals the journal that Eddie used to write stories in.

When Tristan chases after it and takes part in a tug-of-war beneath a Bottle Tree, he manages to punch the tree and accidentally rip open a chasm into the MidPass, a volatile place with a burning sea, haunted bone ships, and iron monsters that are hunting the inhabitants of this world.

Tristan finds himself in the middle of a battle that has left Black American gods John Henry and Brer Rabbit exhausted, and has to help them entice the god Anansi, the Weaver, to come out of hiding and seal the hole in the sky to save both worlds.

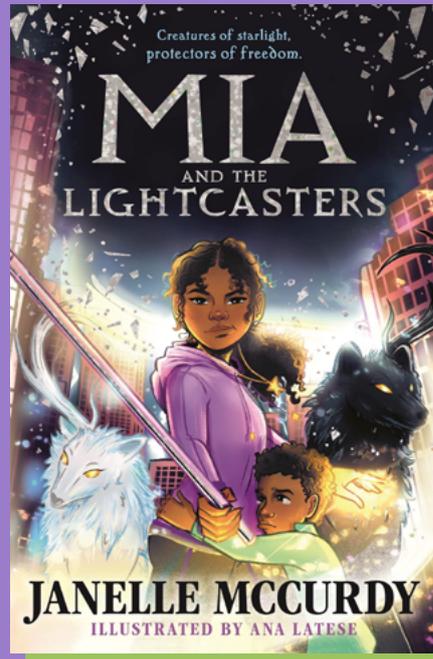
**Publisher:** Rick Riordan Presents

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Grief, Death, Friendship, Fantasy

## Mia and the Lightcasters

Janelle McCurdy and Ana Latese (illus)



The first in a new series, *Mia and the Lightcasters* follows Mia, who dreamed of being an umbra tamer until she met the wild creature on the Nightmare Plains. Since then, she's preferred to stay safe within the walls of Nubis, until a surprise attack forces her to take action.

With her parents captured, Mia's only hope is to travel to the City of Light to find help, accompanied only by her little brother, two friends and one solitary tamed umbra.

*BookTrust* said it was a "truly, incredibly exciting book which will keep readers on the edge of their seats, swiftly turning page after page as the thrilling adventure unfolds".

*Mia and the Lightcasters* is for fans of *Amari and the Night Brothers* by B.B. Alston.

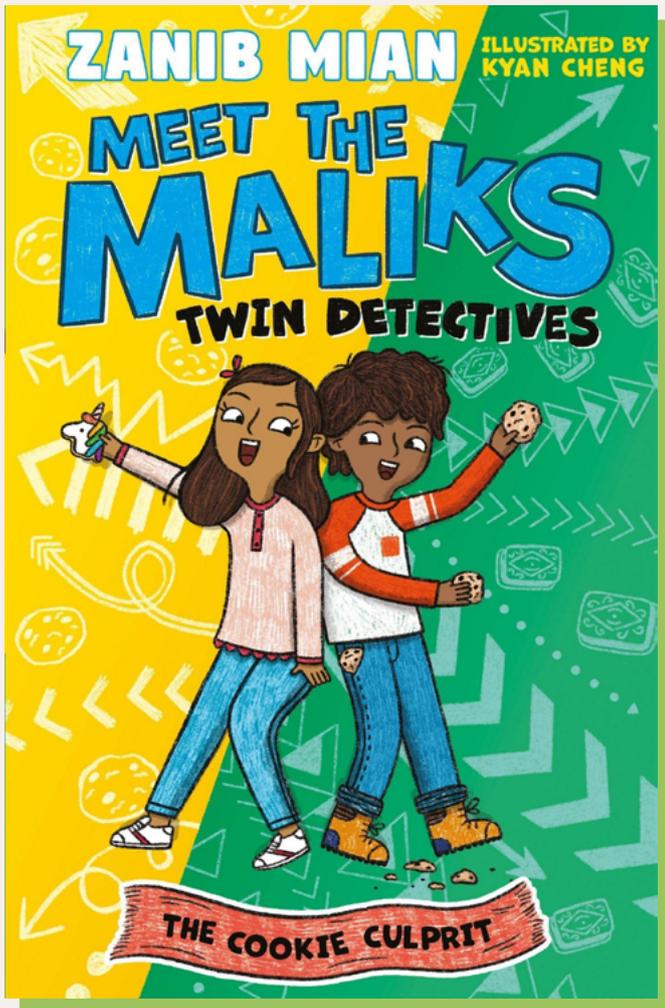
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Adventure, Friendship, Self-belief

# The Cookie Culprit

Zanib Mian



Maysa and Musa Malik are twins, but they're total opposites, which makes them an unstoppable team, especially when it comes to solving mysteries.

Banned from going on a school trip, Maysa tries to change her parents' minds by taking part in a cookie competition at the mosque. But when the cookies are all destroyed, it's up to Maysa, Musa and their neighbour, Norman, to solve the mystery and catch the culprit to help save Maysa's reputation.

Zanib Mian is the award-winning author of the Planet Omar series. *The Cookie Culprit* is the first in the new Meet the Malik series.

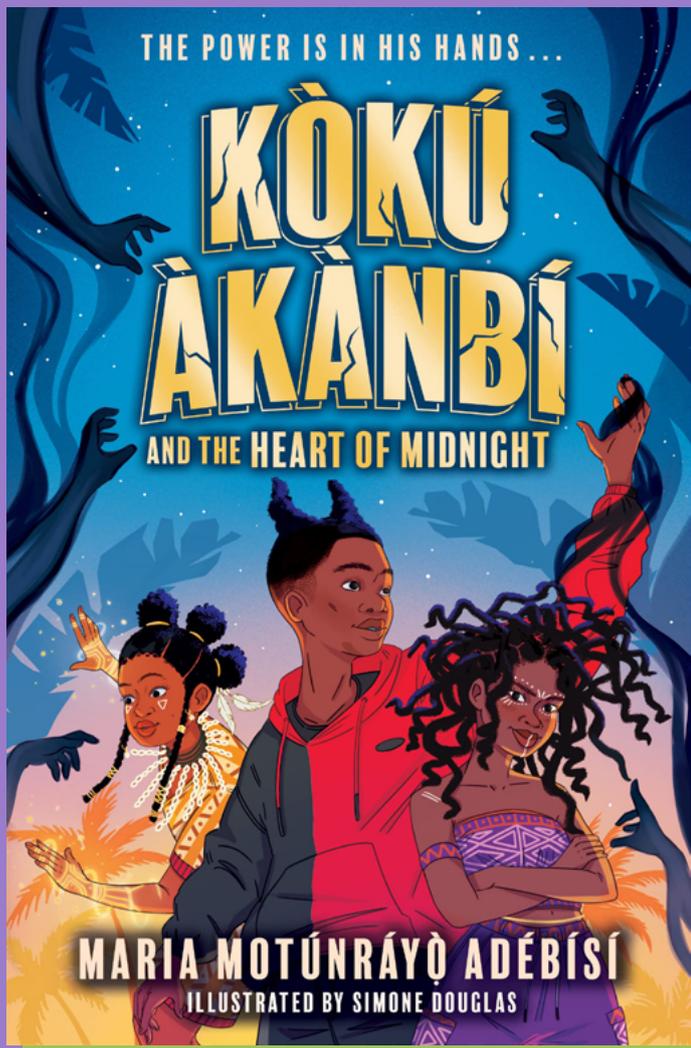
**Publisher:** Hodder Children's Books

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Family, Friendship, Mystery

# Kòkú Àkànbí and the Heart of Midnight

Maria Motúnràyò Adébísí



Koku has always felt like he was cursed with a weird name and an illness to match, but his life gets worse when he unleashes a demon on a school trip. Instead of detention, he's hurled into an impossible quest filled with magical tribes, man-eating monsters and vengeful mermaids.

To escape the assassin sent to hunt him down, Koku has to team up with a clumsy shapeshifter and a moody warrior-in-training to enter the Jujuland Jungle, where Koku has to discover his own power before it's too late.

Maria Motúnràyò Adébísí grew up in Ealing as the middle child to two Nigerian parents of Yoruba descent who wanted her to be a doctor, or at worst, a lawyer. Writing her middle grade fantasy helped her fully embrace her identity as a British Nigerian.

**Publisher:** Orion

**Year:** 2023

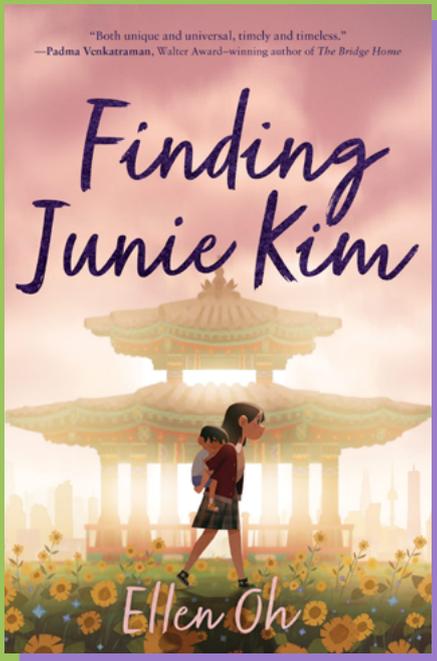
**Themes:** Adventure, Magic, Friendship

**“An action-packed adventure featuring a reluctant and unlikely hero.”**

[BookTrust](#)

## Finding Junie Kim

Ellen Oh



Junie Kim just wants to fit in, so she tries not to draw attention to herself. But when racist graffiti appears at her middle school, Junie must decide between staying silent or speaking out.

Then Junie's history teacher assigns a project, and Junie decides to interview her grandparents, learning about their unbelievable experiences as kids during the Korean War.

Ellen Oh is cofounder of the non-profit grassroots organisation We Need Diverse Books.

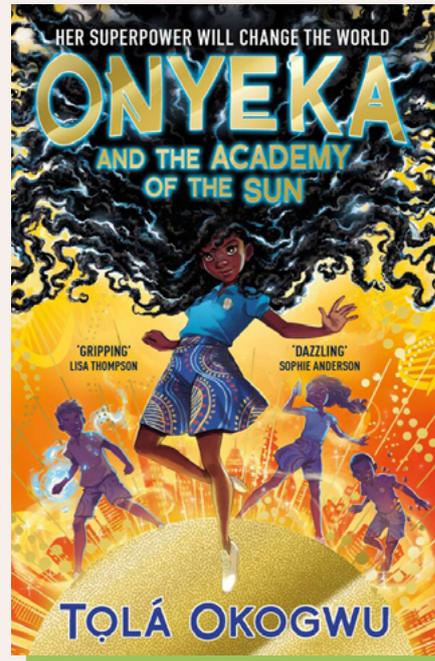
**Publisher:** HarperCollins

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Racism, War, Korean history

## Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun

Tolá Okogwu



Onyeka has a lot of hair, and when she discovers that she can control her hair with her mind, she's whisked off to the Academy of the Sun, a school in Nigeria where Solari – children with superpowers – are trained.

Onyeka and her new friends soon have to put their powers to the test as they find themselves caught up in an epic battle that puts the future of all Solari at risk.

Kirkus Reviews said *Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun* was a “delightful blend of adventure, heart, and Afrofuturism”.

*Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun* is described as *Black Panther* meets Percy Jackson.

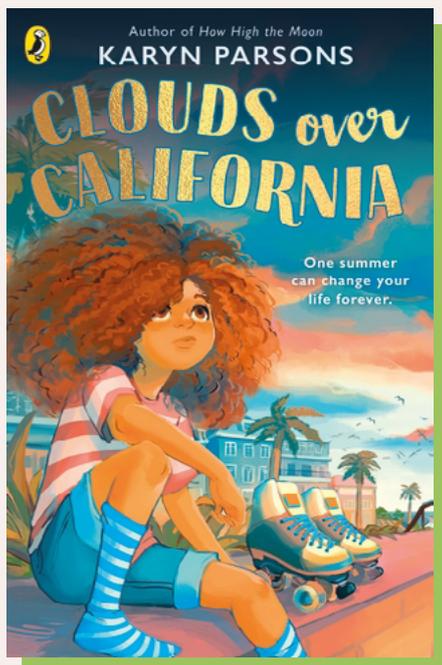
**Publisher:** Simon & Schuster

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Friendship, Superheroes

## Clouds Over California

Karyn Parsons



Eleven-year-old Stevie's parents can't stop fighting, and soon move the family to a totally new apartment, in a totally new part of town, which means a totally new middle school for Stevie. In addition, Stevie's best friend Jennifer won't return Stevie's phone calls, and apparently her new best friends are a bunch of mean girls.

When Stevie's teenage cousin Naomi is sent down in disgrace from Boston, an exciting world is opened up to Stevie: one of Cleopatra Jones movies, women's liberation and an intriguing-sounding group called the Black Panthers.

Karyn Parsons is the author of *How High the Moon*, and is best known as an actor who starred in the *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*.

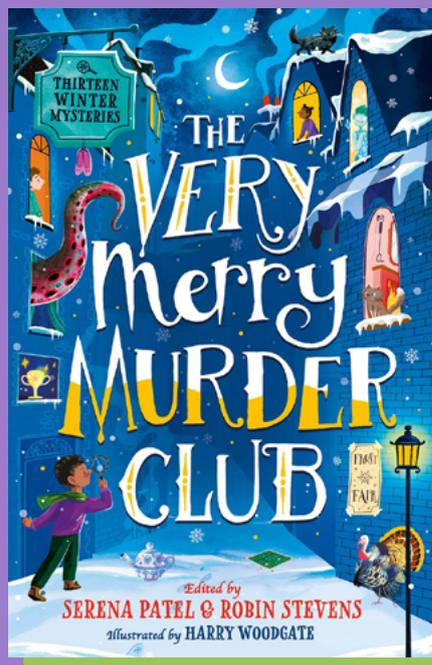
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Friendship, Family, Politics, Racism, Activism

## The Very Merry Murder Club

Edited by Serena Patel and Robin Stevens



Thirteen children's book authors are brought together in this anthology of wintry mystery short stories.

Contributors are Abiola Bello, Annabelle Sami, Benjamin Dean, E.L. Norry, Elle McNicoll, Dominique Valente, Joanna Williams, Maisie Chan, Nizrana Farook, Patrice Lawrence, Roopa Farooki, Serena Patel and Sharna Jackson.

The book is illustrated by Harry Woodgate and edited by Serena Patel and Robin Stevens. Patel was shortlisted for the Asian Writer Short Story Prize and her debut children's series *Anisha Accidental Detective* won the fiction category of the Sainsbury's Children's Book Awards, was shortlisted for a British Book Award and the Blue Peter Prize and selected for The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge.

Stevens is the award winning and bestselling author of the *Murder Most Unladylike* mystery series.

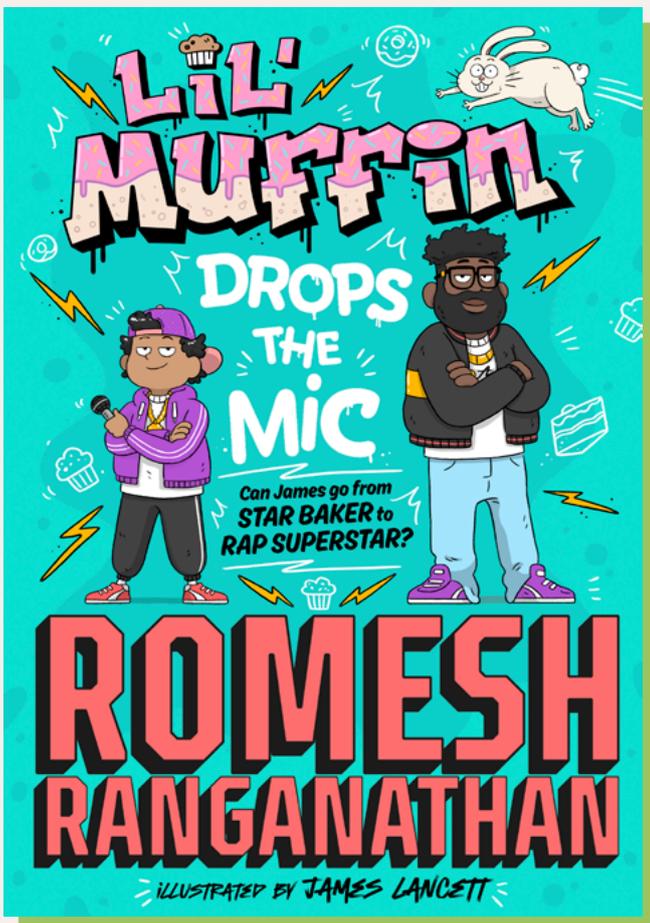
**Publisher:** HarperCollins

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Crime, Mystery

## Lil' Muffin Drops the Mic

Romesh Ranganathan and  
James Lancett (illus)



Comedian Romesh Ranganathan's novel is about James, who worries about everything since his dad left. His favourite hobby, baking, is a fun distraction, but James still feels like there's a missing ingredient in his life.

Then he discovers rapping, and begins writing his own raps about everything from music and cakes to his giant pet rabbit, Graham. When he hears that grime artist star Brukka is on the hunt for young talent, James needs to find the confidence to share his talent and his dreams.

Publisher: Puffin

Year: 2023

Themes: Self-belief, Comedy

# The Run Series

Jason Reynolds

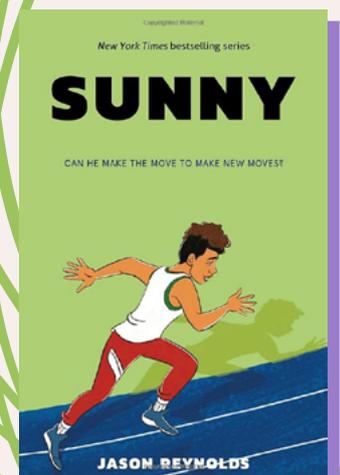
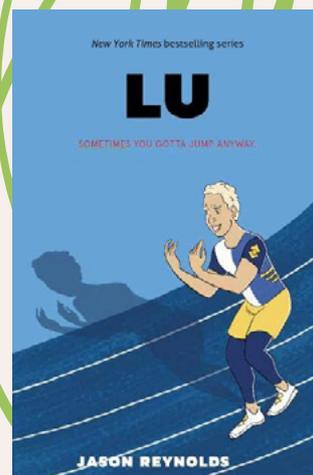
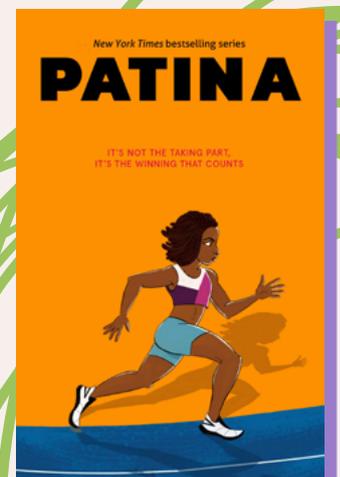
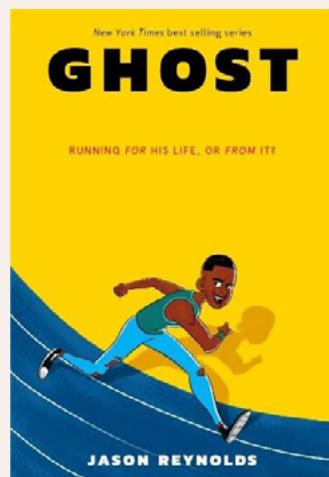
Ghost, Lu, Patina and Sunny are four children from wildly different backgrounds who must learn to work together on their school's athletics team.

Each book in Jason Reynolds' series focuses on a different member of the group and the challenges they face. In *Ghost*, Castle Cranshaw – known as Ghost – has only ever known running, from escaping from his father when he was a young child to running away from his problems. When he meets Coach, the ex-Olympic medallist spots Ghost's natural talent; if Ghost can stay on track, literally and figuratively, he could be the best sprinter in the city.

In *Patina*, Patty runs like a flash, and she has multiple reasons for doing so. Her mother, who she and her sister don't live with anymore, has The Sugar, and Patty is terrified that the disease that took her mum's legs will one day take her away forever. As stress builds in Patty's life, her bad attitude builds too. When Coach places her in a relay team, Patty has to learn to work with and depend on other people.

Sunny is always ready with a bright smile, but underneath he's hiding the guilt he feels at his mother's death while she gave birth to him. The only way Sunny can make his dad proud is to win while running, but Sunny doesn't like to run, and one day stops in the middle of a race. Instead, Sunny wants to dance, and it's only when he discovers a track event that combines running and dance that things begin to get better.

In the final book in the series, Lu knows he can lead Ghost, Patina, Sunny, and the team to victory at the championships, but it might not be as easy as it seems. Suddenly, there are hurdles in Lu's way, and Lu needs to figure out quickly what winning the gold really means.



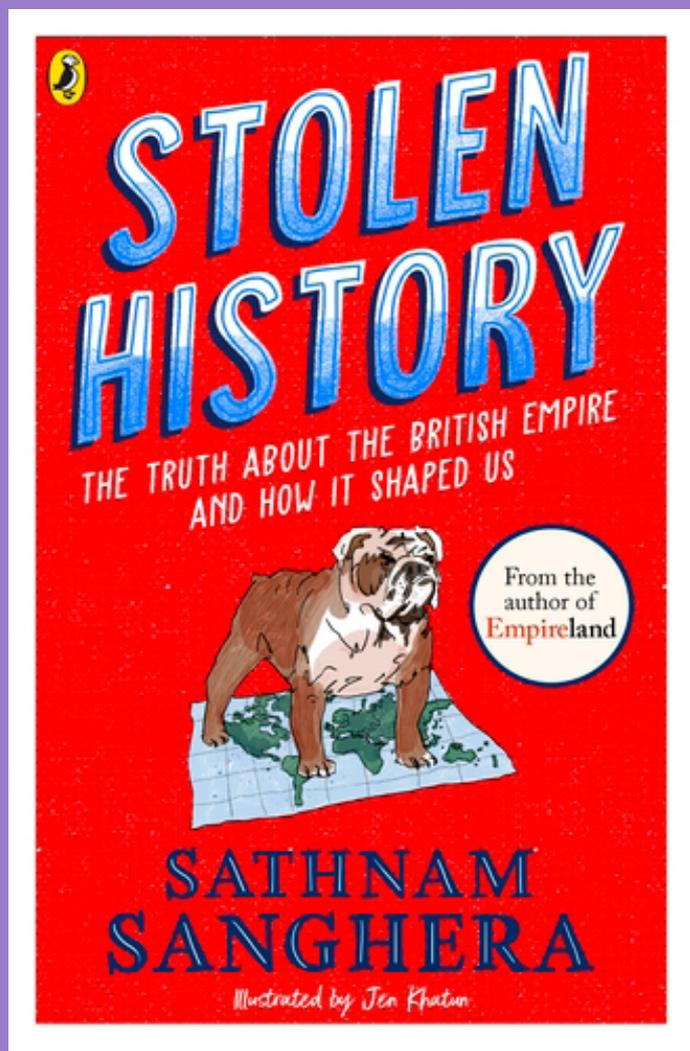
**Publisher:** Knights Of

**Year:** 2017 - 2018

**Themes:** Self-belief, Confidence, Friendship, Family, Teamwork, Health, Grief

# Stolen History

Sathnam Sanghera



Following on from his bestselling non-fiction book *Empireland*, in which he examined the legacy of the British Empire, journalist Sathnam Sanghera has turned his hand to introducing empire to children in an accessible and honest way.

Exploring the ways in which Britain's empire once made it the most powerful nation on earth, the book also looks at how empire affects our lives today, from the language we use to the food we eat and sports we play.

Sanghera has been shortlisted for the Costa Book Awards twice, for his memoir *The Boy With The Topknot* and his novel *Marriage Material*. *Empireland* was longlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction, was named a Book of the Year at the National Book Awards of 2022, and inspired the Channel 4 series *Empire State of Mind*.

**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Colonialism, British Empire, British history

**“Stolen History is a starting point for important conversations about right and wrong, ethics, different interpretations of history and how, or if, countries that once ruled others should make amends.”**

[BookTrust](#)

## Rebel Skies and Rebel Fire

Ann Sei Lin

Inspired by Asian cultures, Ann Sei Lin's trilogy – of which two books have been released – is perfect for confident readers or those who want to be challenged.

The books focus on Kurara, who has worked all her life as a servant on board the Midori, a grand sky ship. In *Rebel Skies*, when Kurara's party trick of making paper come to life turns out to be a power treasured across the empire, she joins a skyship and its motley crew to become a Crafter.

Kurara learns to hunt shikigami – wild paper spirits sought after by the Princess. But soon she begins to question whether the shikigami are just powerful slaves, or whether they are beings with their own souls.

[BookTrust](#) said of *Rebel Skies*: “This immersive adventure novel is set in a fascinating fantasy world, with a great mix of nuanced characters. The plotting and the character twists and turns will keep the reader hooked just as much as the action scenes.”

The second book, *Rebel Fire*, rejoins Kurara and her shipmates after they have escaped the grasp of the princess, whose wish to command them as her own human shikigami would be a fate worse than death. Kurara and her enemies want the greatest paper creature of all, the legendary Suzaku, who could hold the key to releasing all shikigami from their eternal bonds.

The books explore themes of empire, slavery and freedom through a fantasy lens, giving children a new perspective on these topics.

**Publisher:** Walker Books

**Year:** 2022 - 2023

**Themes:** Adventure, Colonialism, Slavery, Empire



## Rani Reports: On the Missing Millions

Gabrielle Shewhorak and  
Satish Shewhorak



Rani Ramgoolam is a roving reporter who has found the perfect story for the junior journalism competition run by the local paper: an eccentric millionaire has created a treasure hunt with a reward for the first person who figures out the clues.

Rani's mischievous Nani is visiting from Mauritius, and has promised to help Rani work out what a priceless painting, a minotaur and a glass eye have in common.

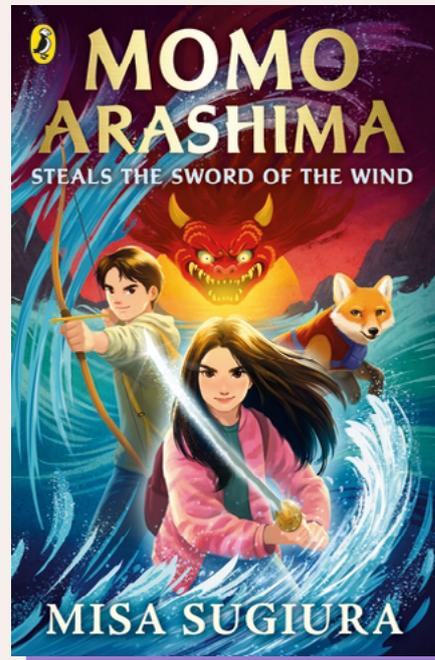
*Rani Reports: On the Missing Millions* was selected as a children's book of the week by the *Times*.

Gabrielle and Satish Shewhorak are a husband-and-wife writing team. Gabrielle is also the author of the *Knights and Bikes* series, written under the name Gabrielle Kent.

**Publisher:** Rock the Boat  
**Year:** 2023  
**Themes:** Mystery, Family

## Momo Arashima Steals the Sword of the Wind

Misa Sugiura



At home, Momo cares for her mother; while at school, her classmates tease her for mixing up reality with the magical stories her mother used to tell her.

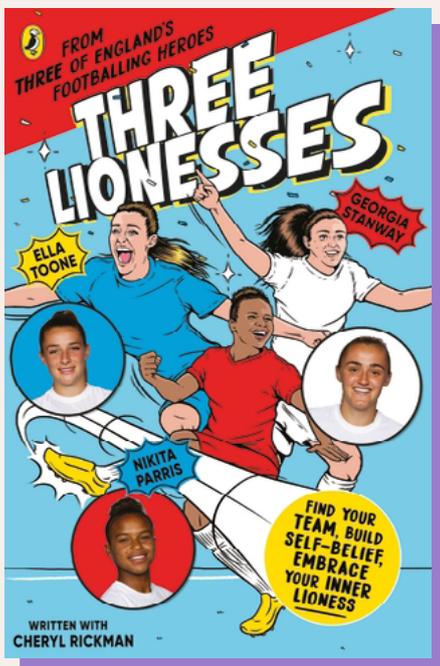
When a terrifying death hag attacks Momo, she realises the stories are true and that her mum is a Shinto goddess who used to protect the gate to Yomi, the land of the dead. Now that passageway is under attack, and Momo, a talking fox called Niko and Momo's former best friend Danny are the only ones who can save the day.

*Momo Arashima Steals the Sword of the Wind* is the first in a new series.

**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2023  
**Themes:** Adventure, Self-belief

## Three Lionesses

Ella Toone, Georgia Stanway and Nikita Parris, Cat Sims (illus)



Three of England's legendary football players – Ella Toone, Georgia Stanway and Nikita Parris – have teamed up to put together this guide on embracing your inner Lioness, finding your confidence, and looking out for your friends and family.

The trio share their stories of how they got to where they are today, along with practical tips to help young readers embrace who they are, ignite their spark, go after their goals and find their team.

*Three Lionesses* is written with Cheryl Rickman and is illustrated by Cat Sims.

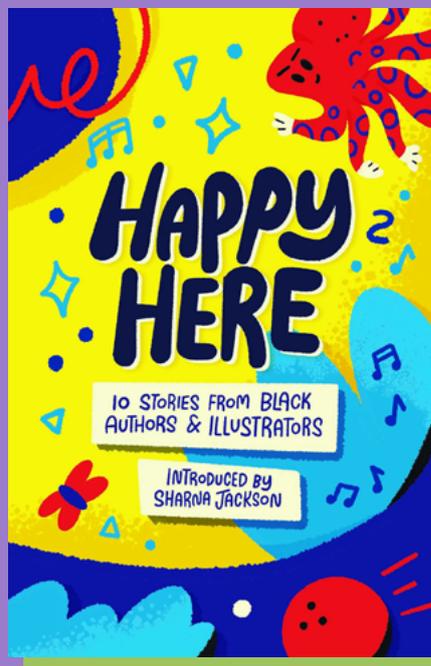
**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2023

**Theme:** Sport, Football, Self-belief

## Happy Here

Various



*Happy Here* is a collection of stories and poems by 10 Black British authors, and features an introduction from bestselling writer Sharna Jackson.

Each author has been paired with a different illustrator to spotlight Black British talent. The writers are Dean Atta, Joseph Coelho, Kereen Getten, Patrice Lawrence, Theresa Lola, E.L. Norry, Jasmine Richards, Alexandra Sheppard, Yomi Sode, and Clare Weze.

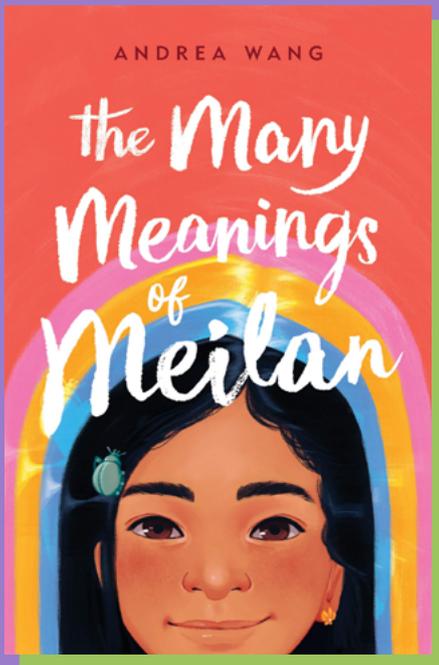
**Publisher:** Knights Of

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Imagination, Creativity, Positivity

## The Many Meanings of Meilan

Andrea Wang



When Meilan Hua's beloved grandmother Nai Nai dies, the family has a falling-out that sends Meilan, her parents, and her grieving grandfather on the road in search of a new home.

They settle in Redbud, Ohio, a world away from Boston's Chinatown, where Meilan grew up. Getting used to their new surroundings is hard enough, and made even harder when Meilan is renamed at school.

To help, Meilan decides she is many Meilans, each inspired by a different Chinese character with the same pronunciation as her name. Meilan keeps her facets separate until an injustice at school shows her the power of bringing her many selves together.

*The Many Meanings of Meilan* is an exploration of all the things it's possible to grieve, of injustices large and small that make us rage, and of learning to find home within ourselves.

**Publisher:** Kokila

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Family, Grief, Death, Self-belief

## Ways to Make Sunshine

Renee Watson and Mechal Roe (illus)



Ryan Hart and her family are moving to a new home following financial difficulties. Each chapter features Ryan facing a different situation or difficulty, and trying to make sunshine out of what happens.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) said *Ways to Make Sunshine* was "another wonderful contribution that allows Black readers to see themselves and all readers to find a character they can love".

**Publisher:** Bloomsbury

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Family, Friendship, Love

## The Front Desk Series

Kelly Yang

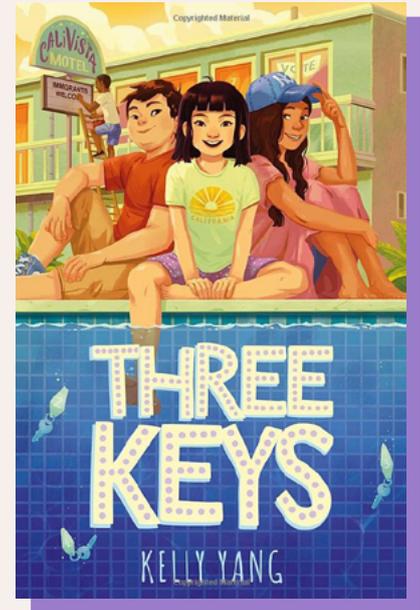
Kelly Yang's Front Desk series, which began with *Front Desk* (see [The \(incomplete\) Lit in Colour book list: volume II](#)), introduces Mia Tang, who lives in a motel and helps her parents out.

The series continues in *Three Keys*, in which Mia is preparing to have the best year ever. She and her parents are the proud owners of the Calivista Motel, Mia gets to run the front desk with her best friend, Lupe, and she's finally getting somewhere with her writing. But being 12 isn't as fun or exciting as Mia hoped, especially when her teacher says her writing isn't great, the motel is struggling, and a new immigration law could threaten everything and everyone in Mia's life.

[BookTrust](#) said: "*Three Keys* considers the power of individual heroes to win within a broken economic system, and takes a realistic look at what it is to be an immigrant in America today. Like *Front Desk*, this is an exceptional book."

In the third book in the series, *Room to Dream*, Mia is taking a holiday to see her family in China, as well as taking on the big motel next door and planning to become a big writer. As always though, with big changes around Mia, she and her family's hotel must battle to survive.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) said the book tackles "complex issues of gentrification, corporate power, racism, and even an unwanted kiss".



**Publisher:** Knights Of

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Belonging, Immigration, Politics, Friendship, Family

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