

THE
READING
AGENCY



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP
UNITED KINGDOM

READ to the BEAT



Read to the Beat Chatterbooks Pack

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READ to the BEAT

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READ to the BEAT

Summer Reading Challenge 2026



Pick up the tempo this summer with the Read to the Beat Collection!



We are facing a national crisis in children's reading. Recent research shows that only 1 in 3 children and young people now enjoy reading ([Clark, et al., 2025](#)), and **1 in 4 children in the UK cannot read well by age 11.**

The Reading Agency and public libraries are working to change this with the Summer Reading Challenge – a **FREE**, UK-wide programme. Last year, over **575,000** children took part with **nearly 12 million books** being read. Sing from the rooftops! We're so thrilled that the theme for the Summer Reading Challenge 2026 will be music.

Our exciting partnership with Universal Music Group UK will open doors for children to explore the creative power of reading and music. The link between music and storytelling runs deep. Think rhythm, self-expression and creativity. Children will have the opportunity to hear from inspiring musicians at the top of their game, championing the joy of reading. This year's Challenge will harness the universal appeal of music to inspire the next generation of readers in the UK.

The official **Read to the Beat Collection** is available for purchase via library suppliers (including [Peters](#)) or on [Bookshop.org](#). [Discover more about the books on our resources database](#). The Collection includes books about musicians, characters discovering music, sound science, cultural traditions, rhythm, storytelling through sound, breaking down barriers to music, creative expression and following your dreams. **Please note these titles have been broadly divided into age categories for the Summer Reading Challenge Book Collection but you can find more specific age ratings, including any relevant content warnings, on publisher websites to ensure a title is suitable for your child.**

2026 is The National Year of Reading, the biggest campaign in a generation designed to help more people (re)discover the joy of reading and make it a part of their everyday lives. We are asking you to Go All In by supporting the Summer Reading Challenge and encouraging children pupils to join in the Challenge at their local library and celebrate the books in the Read to the Beat Collection.

Together, we can make 2026 even bigger and get even more children fired up about reading!

READ to the BEAT

Warm-up activity

To kickstart the session, ask the children to choose one of the books from the *Read to the Beat!* book collection above. Get everyone to share their first responses to a book. This could be with the whole group - or children could discuss in pairs, and then share feelings and questions with everyone.

Here are some questions to get you going! There are no right or wrong answers to any questions.

What did you like about the book?

If you could step into one scene in the book, which would it be?

Was there anything you disliked about the book?

Was there anything that really got you thinking?

Were there any patterns or connections that you noticed?

What did you think of the way the story was told in the pictures as well as in the words?

What did music mean in the book?

Was there anything that puzzled you?

How would you describe this book to a friend?

Akiko



Akiko lives and breathes words. She loves slam poetry and writing her own music, often pouring her thoughts into lyrics that feel raw and honest. When she needs to unwind, she dives into manga, losing herself in dramatic panels and imaginative worlds.

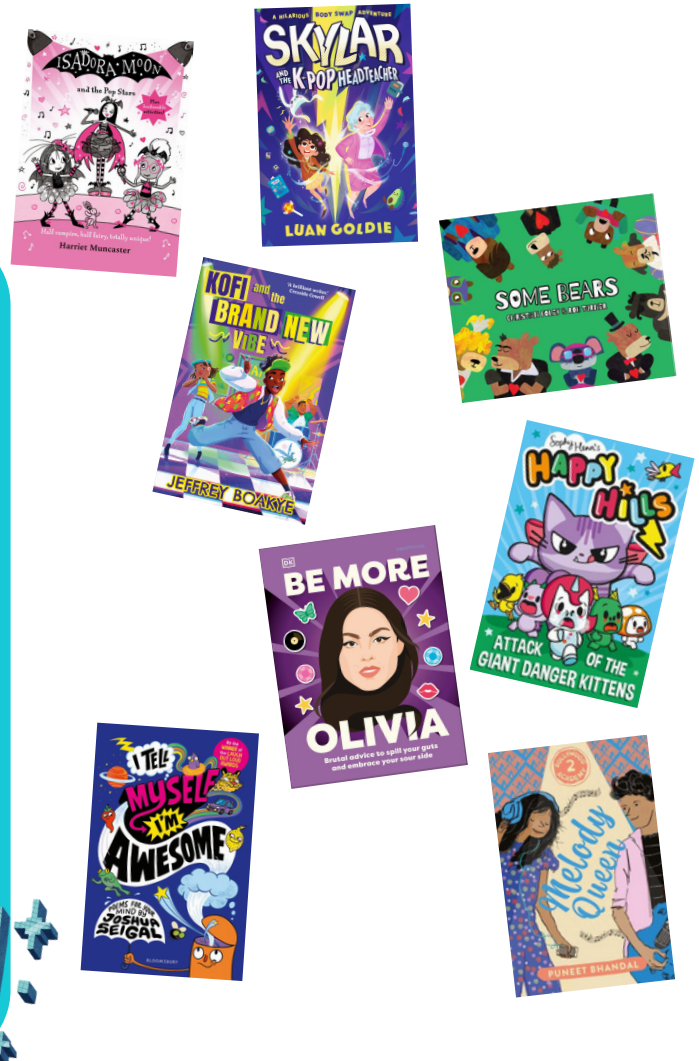
Read some books that Akiko would enjoy

Activity

Akiko loves writing her own music. See if you can fill in the blanks below and help Akiko finish her song! Can you make it rhyme?

'My name is Akiko and ____ is my jam,
My favourite food for breakfast is ____
Reading makes me feel ____
and manga adventures help me ____!

When I hear a beat, I move by ____
____ makes me feel complete,
The best stories are ones that ____
So, come along and imagine with me!

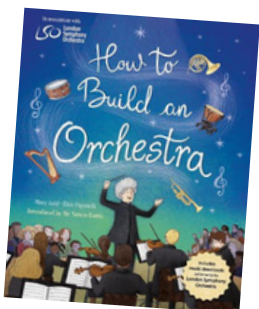


Ezra

Ezra finds inspiration in sound and flavour. A fan of orchestral music and poetry, he enjoys how different elements come together to create something beautiful. When he's not listening or reading, you'll probably find him in the kitchen, experimenting with new recipes and sharing food with friends.



Read some books that Ezra would enjoy





Ezra enjoys orchestral music and the way different instruments come together to create one beautiful melody. Can you help him find the instruments in the wordsearch below?

G	Y	U	I	K	H	V	Z	A
B	C	Y	M	B	A	L	J	O
U	L	O	S	F	R	E	H	T
Q	W	I	K	N	P	U	G	R
B	E	N	A	V	L	N	K	U
P	H	F	C	R	E	T	P	M
V	I	O	L	I	N	E	S	P
L	O	A	E	U	J	M	A	E
N	E	I	N	V	T	I	J	T
B	S	X	Z	O	V	E	O	E



How do you think these instruments sound together? Which is the loudest?

FLUTE
TRUMPET
HARP

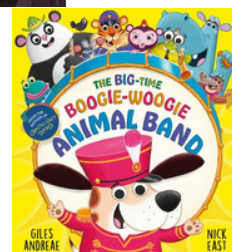
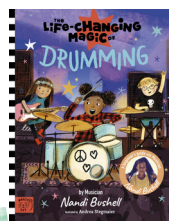
PIANO
VIOLIN
CYMBAL



Moussa

We also have a natural teacher in the group. Passionate about writing lyrics and solving maths problems, Moussa loves breaking things down and helping others learn. He's especially keen on percussion and enjoys showing people how rhythm can bring a group together.

Read some books that Moussa would enjoy



Activity

Drums are one of the most popular and exciting percussion instruments! Can you follow Moussa and explore your rhythm by building your very own drumkit? All you need are some pots and pencils! A cup or container, and maybe a wooden spoon!

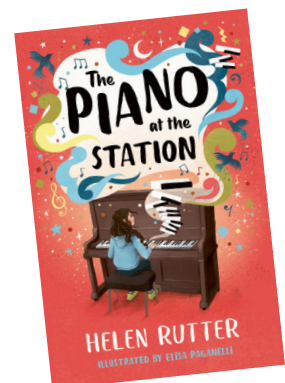
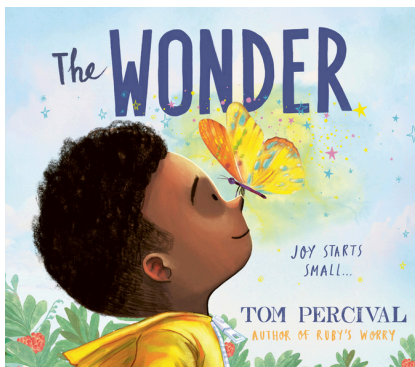
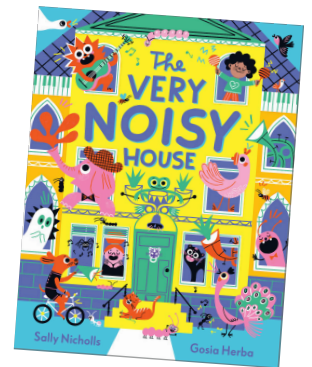
Do the different objects make different sounds? How would you describe the sounds? Can you make your own cool beat?

Nadiyaa

Music takes a different form for Nadiyaa, who's happiest behind a camera or on stage with a band. She loves photography, capturing moments that tell a story, and enjoys mixing music to create new sounds that reflect her mood and personality.



Read some books that Nadiyaa would enjoy





Design your own new musical instrument in the box below!

What sound does it make? Does it go **BOOM**, **WHOOSH**, or **TOOT**?

How do you make the sound - do you tap it with a stick? Shake it? Blow air into it?

What is your new instrument called?

Which character from Nadiyaa's favourite books above would play this instrument in your band?

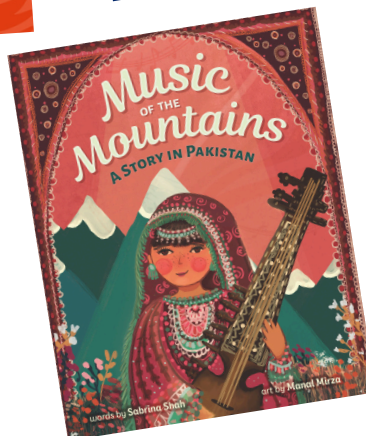
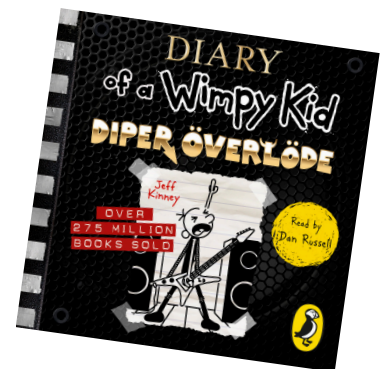
A large empty rectangular box with a thick orange border, intended for drawing and writing answers to the challenge questions.



Skye

If strategy and style are more your thing, you'll love Skye who's into board games, fashion and choreography. She enjoys planning dance routines just as much as putting together outfits, blending creativity with confidence and flair.

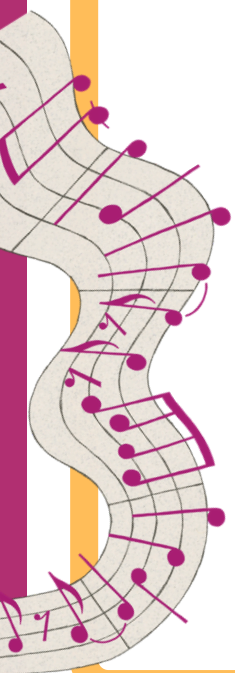
Read some books that Skye would enjoy



Skye loves to put together different outfits, using different colours, patterns and fabrics.

If you were in a band playing at a concert, what would you wear? What would the rest of your band wear?

Think creatively and draw your ideas in the box below. You could have rockets on your shoes to send you flying! Or maybe a black jacket like Gordon the goose?

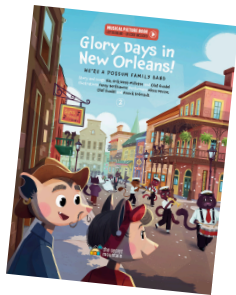


Albert

Albert has a deep love for jazz and a talent for drawing comics. He spends time sketching characters of his own and hunting for new records to add to his growing collection, always appreciating the stories behind the music.



Read some books that Albert would enjoy



Activity

Jazz music is full of surprises! Jazz musicians sometimes make up melodies and sounds on the spot. This is called *improvising*.

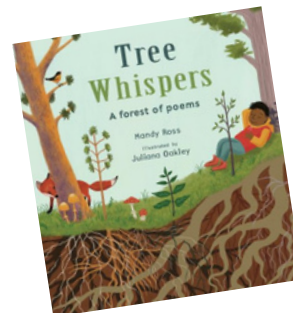
Get yourselves into a group and see what amazing jazzy sounds you can make using just your bodies! Can you stomp your feet? Tap your knees? Click your fingers? Or use your voice to make funny sounds?



Jade

Sport and creativity meet in another member of the group. A football fan who enjoys learning languages, Jade also loves painting, using colour and movement to express ideas that words sometimes can't.

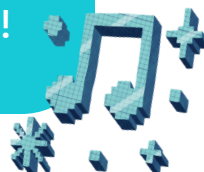
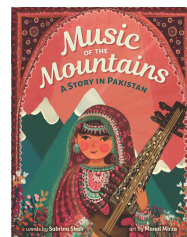
Read some books that Jade would enjoy



Activity

Jade loves exploring the links between music and sport, and is always cheering on her favourite teams with a musical number.

Can you help Jade create a catchy and exciting new musical chant to celebrate her football team? A melody to get the whole crowd singing!



Patryk

Finally, we have the ultimate performer. This character adores making costumes, singing karaoke and immersing himself in theatre and musicals. For Patryk, stepping into different roles is a way to explore the world and himself.



Read some books that Patryk would enjoy



Activity

Musicals are all about how music can tell a story and show what characters are thinking or feeling.

Choose a character from one of Patryk's favourite books above and imagine you are starring in a musical. What would your song be? Silly, serious, happy, dramatic?

Sing it out loud, or write it down. Have a go at making your voice go high and low, fast and slow, loud and quiet. How does this make you feel? Does it change the message?

How to join in with the Challenge



If you are a parent/carer

- Parents/carers can find details of their local library, or sign up and create accounts for their children to take part in the Challenge online at summerreadingchallenge.org.uk
- You can also sign up for regular newsletter updates from The Reading Agency about the Summer Reading Challenge and our other programmes and campaigns at readingagency.org.uk/sign-up-for-our-email-newsletters

If you are a teacher

Head to the **School Zone** and **register** to receive:

- 'Presentation slide deck' for assemblies, Parents Evenings and other events
- Invite to Summer Reading Challenge to share with parents and carers
- Copy template for newsletter, website, WhatsApp groups, emails

Plus, more ways The Reading Agency can help support you for the rest of the year. You may also want to sign up to take part in the [Teachers' Reading Challenge](#) during the summer

If you are a librarian

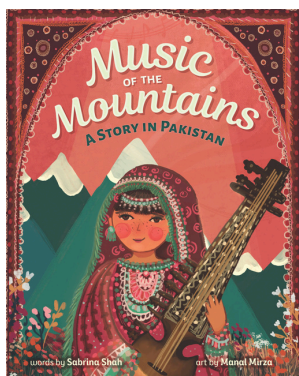
- The Reading Agency produces a range of participation and promotional materials for the Summer Reading Challenge for sale to libraries and library authorities to run the Challenge. This includes sticker booklets, certificates, medals, posters and more.
- Our 2026 promotional brochure contains details of the full range of resources available and can be [downloaded from our resource bank](#).
- To sign up to receive regular updates about the Challenge email us at summerreadingchallenge@readingagency.org.uk

Younger books



The Very Noisy House by Sally Nicholls and Gosia Herba, Andersen Press, ISBN: 9781839132889

In this noisy adventure jam-packed full of sounds, you'll make your way through the mixed-up room (where elephants say baa!), down into the spooky cellar (look out for the ghost!), through the super-quiet secret passageway (shhh, whispering only!) . . . and if you're feeling brave, you could even try opening that grrrrrowling cupboard. A noisy adventure with a quiet bedtime ending that encourages little ones to play along.



Music of the Mountains by Sabrina Shah and Manal Mirza, Barefoot Books, ISBN: 9798888593677

Roohi's most treasured time of the day is when she gets to listen to her grandfather play the rabab, the traditional stringed instrument of the Pashtun people. All she wants, more than anything in the world, is to be able to play songs full of rhythm like him. But even with lessons everyday, she sounds nothing like Neeka Baba's clap-de-clap-clap rhythm and beautiful melodies.

With Eid celebrations coming up, Roohi is supposed to play the rabab at a school concert, but Neeka Baba has fallen ill, and she must perform without his help. He tells her, "Play with the courage of those who came before you." Can Roohi draw on her ancestors' strength and share the melody in her heart at the Eid concert?



The Missing Piece by Jordan Stephens and Beth Suzanna, Bloomsbury, ISBN: 9781526618047

Sunny loves jigsaw puzzles - the bigger the better. When she completes one, she gets a warm, happy honeybee buzz. One day, her gran gives her a ONE-THOUSAND-PIECE puzzle. Piece after piece, all by herself, she puts together the picture, until... DISASTER! The final piece is missing!

Sunny may be small, but she is very determined - so she sets off to find it. As the day whizzes by in a whirl of new places and friends, Sunny discovers that looking for something is every bit as fun as finding it, and that perhaps the missing piece was there all along...

Younger books



Busy Little Fingers: Music by Eva Wong Nava and Eleonora Marton, Bonnier Books - Big Picture Press, ISBN: 9781800786455

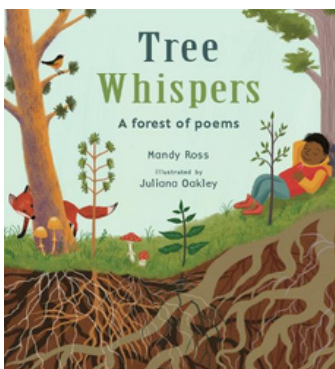
Can you make a noise like a trumpet? How do you sing the blues? This bright and busy book provides a fun first look at music, and is jam-packed with things for busy little fingers to try!

This vibrant little book is the perfect introduction to music for children aged 4-6. Featuring 10 need-to-know movements from Jazz to Hip Hop, learn all about each one and its defining characteristics, before trying your hand at creating your own funky beats!



Some Bears by Christian Foley and Rob Turner, Caboodle Books, ISBN: 9781919614885

Here's a book to get your bearings...Will you open up today?
Some bears cry
All bears feel
Some bears share it
All bears heal, don't just grin
and bear it



Tree Whispers by Mandy Ross and Juliana Oakley, Child's Play, ISBN: 9781786286826

"Our leaves rustle, Our roots whisper. If you were a tree, what would you whisper to me?"
Mandy Ross has been listening closely to the trees, from the willow to the eucalyptus, and the sycamore to the oak. These fascinating poems, beautifully illustrated by Juliana Oakley, imagine the songs they are singing to us and the verses they speak.

With a strong environmental message, the book awakens us to the rich, unique and irreplaceable biodiversity of tree life and the many species that depend on it - including ourselves.

Younger books



My Little Drummer by Sian Radford and Gwen Millward, Farshore, ISBN: 9780008762162

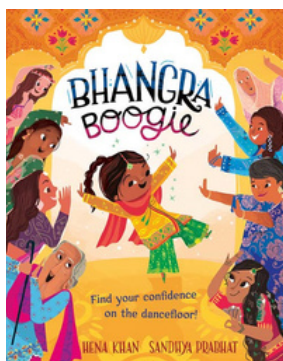
A joyful rhyming picture book exploring neurodiversity that's perfect for EVERY young reader.

There's a drummer in my head.

They are tiny, but they're there.

And they tap-a-tap-tap and pa-rum-pa-pum-pum
All day without a care...

Sounds distracting? It can be! When this little girl is overwhelmed, her little drummer beats fast and loud. She taps out a rhythm when she's trying to concentrate... And the little drummer knows just how to make her smile...



Bhangra Boogie by Hena Khan and Sandhya Prabhat, Farshore, ISBN: 9780008756000

From award-winning author Hena Khan and acclaimed illustrator Sandhya Prabhat is a sweetly authentic story about overcoming anxieties and dancing your way to confidence!

Talia wants to be as graceful as the bhangra dancers at the mehndi – a traditional South Asian pre-wedding celebration. But her feet drag and her arms freeze when she tries to dance in front of others. Instead, she sits in her chair.

But with some help from her dadi (grandmother), will Talia find the courage to take to the floor? And can she convince Dadi to join her?

A beautifully crafted story, with lyrical text that is brought to life by vibrant illustrations.

Younger books



1, 2, 3, Do The Unicorn by Michelle Robinson and Rosalind Beardshaw, Farshore, ISBN: 9780008522001

The irresistible unicorn follow-up to 1, 2, 3, Do the Dinosaur, shortlisted for the 2020 BookTrust Storytime Prize

Cleo and her unicorn friends are having fun dancing, prancing and swishing their tails in the magic forest, until – oh no! – their noise wakes the big, scary GIANT.

But not all is what it seems . . . and a FE FI FO turns quickly into friendship!

A fun-filled, rhyming adventure, with a message about not judging others by appearances!

Move over Ten Minutes to Bed, Little Unicorn . . . this one's got A GIANT!



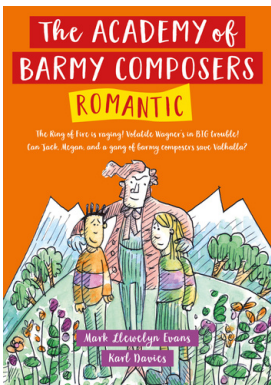
Put Your Records On by Corinne Bailey Rae and Gillian Eilidh O'Mara, Fox & Ink Books, ISBN: 9781917894029

Inspired by Corinne Bailey Rae's award-winning hit song, this picture book celebrates music's unique power to soothe or energize us when we need it most.

"Today I'd like to do something I've never done before," Bea tells her great aunt Portia during one of their Sunday visits. And before she knows it, she's being led upstairs to an attic room she didn't know existed--a wonderful haven full of Portia's cherished items, including shelf after shelf of records.

"There's a song here for every emotion--for the whole rainbow of feelings," Portia tells Bea. Then they listen together, dancing to a celebration song, laughing along with a circus-happy song, and feeling held by a song that comforts them during a thunderstorm. Bea heads home at the end of the day, excited to continue learning about herself and her world through music.

Younger books



ABC of Opera: Romantic by Mark Llewelyn Evans and Karl Davies, Graffeg, ISBN: 9781917467841

Jack and Megan are sent on a great quest to save the legendary Romantic composer, Wagner, from the Ring of Fire in Valhalla helped by many of the eras famous composers including Humperdinck, Verdi, Bizet, Tchaikovsky and Puccini.



The Big Time Boogie-Woogie Animal Band by Giles Andreae and Nick East, Hachette, ISBN: 9781408370384

Join in the counting musical fun with this brand-new picture book from the author of Giraffes Can't Dance!

When a music-loving dog meets a fox with a fiddle, they decide to start a BOOGIE-WOOGIE ANIMAL BAND!

Before long, the pair are joined by a lion with a lute, a tiger with a tuba, and a piano-playing penguin. As more friends join them, the band keeps getting bigger and bigger and BIGGER!

But there's one band member missing . . . Who could it be?



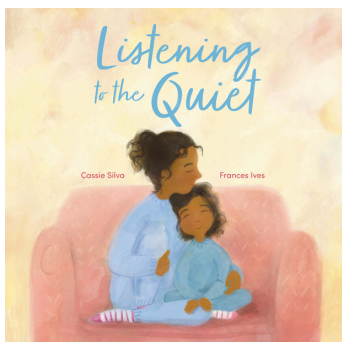
The Paper Piano by Rachel Ip and Natelle Quek, Hachette, ISBN: 9781444965520

When Noah hears beautiful piano music sweeping through the station, he longs to play. Without a piano of his own, he carefully crafts one out of paper, and the notes fill his head night and day.

Until finally, with the help of a neighbour, his musical dream comes true . . .

An inspirational picture book about the power of perseverance and music, celebrating the joy that railway station pianos can bring to all.

Younger books



Listening to the Quiet by Cassie Silva and Frances Ives, Lantana, ISBN: 9781836290216

Jacki's mama has a rare condition. She is slowly losing her hearing. Together, they are learning Sign Language so that they'll always be able to tell each other everything. But as Mama's world becomes quieter, Jacki's remains full of sound, especially on Music Appreciation Fridays. How can Jacki enjoy listening to music when her mama can no longer hear it?

A heartfelt story, inspired by the author's childhood, about a young girl coming to terms with her mother's hearing loss and finding new ways to experience the world together.



Carnival Queen by Donette Williams-Harry and Amélie-Anne Calmo, Little Tiger, ISBN: 9781838917579

Today is Kayla's favourite day of the year: carnival! Smoky spice fills the air, steel pans TING, TING, TING and Caribbean music is pumping. Kayla cannot wait to show off her BIG ENERGY! But when her costume ends up in shreds, it looks like it's time for Kayla to face the music and ask for help. Can her community rally to save the day? Or will carnival end up in tatters?

This energetic picture book is a beautiful take on bravery and the power of community. Amélie-Anne Calmo's vibrant illustrations are a visual feast of culture, bringing the sounds, sights and smells of carnival flooding off the page. Inspired by the author's own personal experiences of attending Notting Hill Carnival, and featuring an informative end matter that explores carnivals around the world, this is the perfect book for anyone who is looking to dig deeper into a rich tradition.

Younger books



All the Wonderful Ways to Move by Laura Baker and Sandra de la Prada, Little Tiger, ISBN: 9781838917227

Jump up off your bottom and get in the groove!
Wiggle your body, let's see how you MOVE!
We'll start nice and simple, just lift up your feet.
STOMP STOMP STOMP and feel the beat.

This playful book inspires ALL children to find their own wonderful way of moving. From an energetic warm up, to a wacky freestyle section and a calming cool down, this is the perfect book to encourage little ones to get active.

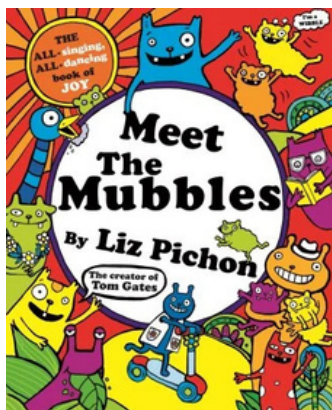


Doggy Dance Off by Steve Smallman and Robert Starling, Little Tiger, ISBN: 9781801044974

Head down to the Doggy Dance Off, where all the cool dogs meet to wag their tails and stomp their feet. There's body-popping pug, Doug. Duke Doggy Doo, the punk rocker cockapoo! Eva, golden retriever and dance floor diva and . . . one mysterious masked dancer. Who is that body-popping, hand-jiving, groovy mover?

This dazzling doggy dance off has a feline twist in its tail. With its fun rhyming text and upbeat colourful illustrations, alongside a fabulous message of inclusivity

Younger books



Meet the Mubbles by Liz Pichon, Macmillan Children's Books, ISBN: 9781035068333

A FABULOUS, all-singing, all-dancing book of JOY!

Featuring a QR code that will take you to a website full of extra content including arts and crafts and many fun songs from The Mubbles world and the Isle of Smile. Join our ever growing community - with over 150,000 subscribers already!

Meet the Mubbles is the first in a hilarious brand-new, full colour graphic novel series perfect for young readers from Liz Pichon, creator of the global phenomenon Tom Gates series. Filled with colourful characters, boundless fun and lots of adventures this series is a guaranteed hit for kids!



The Life-Changing Magic of Drumming by Nandi Bushell and Andrea Stegmaier, Magic Cat Publishing, ISBN: 9781915569325

A beginner's guide to drumming, with secrets from world-famous musician Nandi Bushell.

Learn how Nandi Bushell, the young drummer who has played with the Foo Fighters at Wembley, discovered drumming when she was just five years old. She shares how she plays - from the simple drumming beats she first learned to drum rolls, fills and backbeats - and offers insider tips and sage advice for young fans around the world.

Packed with step-by-step skills and oozing with passion, these little handbooks are for any young reader who loves life.

Younger books



The Elephant and the Piano by Colette Hiller and Nabila Adani, Magic Cat Publishing, ISBN: 9781917044066

Some stories are true. Others are make-believe. And some true stories are so amazing that it seems they must be make-believe even when they are not...

This is one of those stories.

In a sanctuary in Thailand lived an elephant called Bonti. Short-tempered and destructive, Bonti was alone - the other elephants (and humans) knew to keep their distance. But when a musician came to play the piano for Bonti, something incredible happened...

The Elephant and the Piano tells the spectacular true story of Paul Barton and the elephants who loved to hear him play.



Songs in the Shade of the Cherry Tree by Nathalie Soussana and QU Lan, MMS - The Secret Mountain, ISBN: 9782898360848

A riveting selection of 20 nursery rhymes and lullabies from Ukraine, as remembered by immigrants living in France, Germany and Poland.

These modern folk interpretations of popular traditional songs tug at the heartstrings and reveal a rich, vibrant culture. Native singers are accompanied by musicians playing instruments like the bandoura, sopilka, and accordion, making each song a delightful, enchanting homage to Ukrainian heritage. Lyrics appear in the Ukrainian alphabet and Latin characters alongside English translations.

Notes describing the cultural background of each song are also included, along with a QR code to access the accompanying recordings.

Younger books

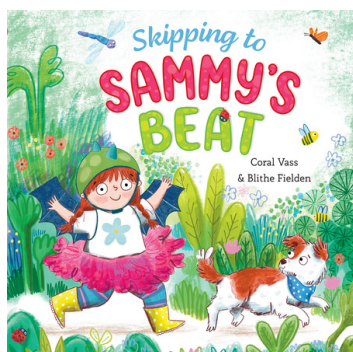


The Piano by Joaquin Camp, MMS - The Secret Mountain, ISBN: 9782898360541

Children discover that a piano can give life to their feelings. Music can give life to anything and everything. And that's exactly what happens when a boy and girl play their brand new piano for the first time. As they take turns tapping keys, the children discover that even the simplest melody can stir up a symphony of sensations.

This playful tale invites children to explore how music makes them feel. Hear how sounds attune to emotions. See how music colors the imagination. From synesthesia to onomatopoeia, these musical sketches show that learning big words and even bigger ideas can be as simple as PLINK, PLANK, PLONK.

The accompanying animated video can be accessed with a QR printed in the book.



Skipping to Sammy's Beat by Coral Vass and Blithe Fielden, New Frontier Publishing, ISBN: 9781916790575

Sammy loves to splash in puddles, dangle from trees, look for ladybirds and skip and dance down the path to her very own beat.

TAP, DA-DUM, TAP, TAP, DA-DUM!

But when Sammy turns five, she feels silly wearing her tutu and gumboots and so she stops dancing altogether. Eventually, Sammy can't hear her beat any more - the very beat that makes her special. How does Sammy find her beat again?

Younger books



Marching Band by Kael Tudor and Kate Hindley, Nosy Crow, ISBN: HB: 9781839948978 PB: 9781839948985

Who wants to join the marching band? EVERYONE is welcome in this energetic, anarchic adventure with artwork by award-winning Littlest Yak illustrator Kate Hindley.

This band gets bigger and louder on every page! Watch out for wrecking balls on the building site, tigers roaring in the jungle and yetis on the mountain. Everyone wants to join the fun . . . even aliens in outer space! Then it's time to zoom back home, wishing everyone goodnight, one by one.



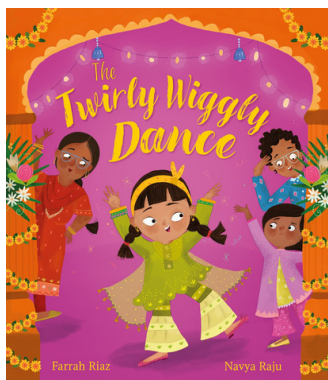
The Rock Family Band by Robert Tregoning and Laura Brenlla, Oxford University Press, ISBN:9781382054683

Meet the Rocks.

Dad is a rock guitarist, Pops is the singer, Liv is the drummer, and Bo is keyboardist and writes the lyrics. Oh, and Nan and the dog are in the band too. It's a household of big shoes, big hair, and GLAM ROCK. Except for the youngest child, Sam. Sam is a flautist who likes peace, quiet and classical music. He doesn't feel like he fits in and he's dreading his end-of-year school recital. Can he trust his family to sit and listen?

But when stage fright hits, maybe Sam's rocking, grooving, clanging family might be just what he needs.

Younger books



The Twirly Wiggly Dance by Farrah Riaz and Navya Raju, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 9780192789679

Based on debut author Farrah Riaz's own childhood experiences comes *The Twirly Wiggly Dance*, a relatable story about dancing to your own beat set against the celebratory backdrop of a South-Asian Muslim wedding, bursting with colourful illustrations by Navya Raju. Perfect for entertaining young twirlers and wigglers! Little Intisar has a BIG job at her Auntie Mahira's wedding: she's going to dance in the group performance!

As she practises, she realizes there is one dance move that she just can't do—no matter how hard she twirls and wiggles. Intisar worries she'll ruin the whole routine, and disappoint Auntie Mahira. Can Intisar's family of movers and groovers show her that being herself is far more fun than being perfect?

Extra pages at the back of the book with non-fiction information about all the events of a Muslim wedding, make this a perfect book to read and talk about together



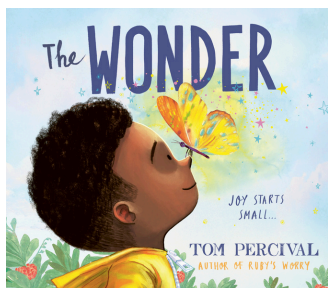
Little Sheku and the Animal Orchestra by Sheku Kanneh-Mason and Rekha Salin, Penguin, ISBN: 9780241588574

Little Sheku can't wait to play his cello in a concert with the animal orchestra. But when they discover a dragon has stolen the conductor, Little Sheku and the animals must embark on a music-filled adventure to the dragon's cave. Will they rescue the conductor in time to finish the concert?

From globally renowned, award-winning cellist, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, comes this magical, musical picture book adventure that will inspire a love of music in readers of three and up.

Sheku's lyrical writing weaves musicality into every sentence, drawing on his life-long love of the cello to tell his tale. Rekha Salin's stunning illustrations send music springing and singing from every page.

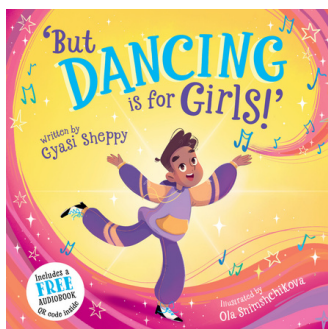
Younger books



The Wonder by Tom Percival, Simon & Schuster Children's Books, ISBN: 9781398515116

From bestselling author-illustrator Tom Percival comes a poignant picture book that encourages us to take notice of all the wondrous little things that happen to us each day.

Daniel is having a terrible day. From the rain that tumbles down from the dark, grey skies to the puddles that soak his shoes, Daniel's convinced that nothing will lift his mood. But everything changes when he hears the sweet, delicate sound of music, barely audible beneath the rain. Perhaps, if he looks carefully enough, Daniel might find that there are moments of joy and wonder that can brighten even the darkest of days . . .



But Dancing is for Girls! by Gyasi Sheppy and Ola Snimshchikova, Sweet Cherry, ISBN: 9781802638011

When Chester starts tap class, it's like a dream come true! He finally gets to join his best friends and perfect his dance moves. But what will Dad think of his son's tap-dancing dreams, and how can Chester make him see that if something makes you smile, nothing should stop you from enjoying it?

With fun rhyming text by CBeebies star Gyasi Sheppy and beautiful illustrations by new talent Ola Snimshchikova, this colourful story encourages young readers to be themselves and follow their dreams – no matter what!

Younger books



Coorie Doon by Jackie Kay and Jill Calder, Walker Books, ISBN: 9781529532210

Every night, Shona is tucked into bed by her loving parents, who sing her old and familiar folk songs: Tìree Love Song; Goodnight, Irene and Will Ye Go, Lassie, Go? And as Shona sleeps, we follow the people and places that drift into her dream world: her best "fiere", Ali, her dog, Marley, her cat, Flo...

Then, years later, we meet Shona when she is sixty – actually sixty years old! – as she tucks her daddy, now an old man, into bed. And it is her turn to sing to him: "Coorie Doon, Coorie Doon, wee Daddy".

Magnificently illustrated by Jill Calder, this is a truly original picture book that celebrates the small, perfect rituals of childhood and how they become a vital part of who we are. The book also includes a QR code to scan that will link through to a video from Jackie Kay and free audio recordings of songs from the book from legendary folk singers Peggy Seeger, Claire Brown and Suzanne Bonnar.

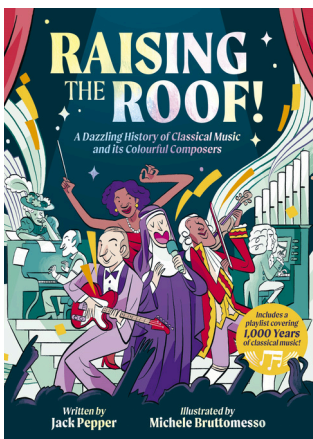
Older books



I Tell Myself I'm Awesome by Joshua Seigal and Chris Piascik, Bloomsbury Education, ISBN: 9781801997904

A delightfully uplifting new collection of children's poetry from Joshua Seigal, winner of the 2020 and 2023 Laugh Out Loud Book Awards and 2024 Reading Rocks Award.

Whether you are in the mood for something hilariously silly or sentimental, this new collection of witty, reflective, and rather ridiculous poems will lift your mood, spark your imagination, and give your mental health a little boost! Joshua Seigal's verses will have you pondering life's big (and small) questions as you encounter a waxy pet lemon, spicy jalapeños and a valiant dog who proves that even the smallest of us can be heroes. This book is a must-have for imaginative young readers and aspiring poets aged 7+.



Raising the Roof by Jack Pepper and Michele Bruttomesso, Bonnier Books - Templar Books, ISBN: 9781835873298

Composer and broadcaster Jack Pepper introduces the world of classical music - and its colourful characters - as you've never seen it before... LET'S ROCK!

Take a tour of musical history, and learn your timbre from your tempo, your tuba from your cello and your symphony from your concerto. Rub shoulders with 20 great composers - including child prodigy Mozart, pioneering musician Florence Price and film score composer Hans Zimmer - and find out what it really takes to write a timeless classical hit!

Listen as you read, using the playlist inside, with over 40 classical pieces covering 1,000 years of music. The story doesn't stop here, as Classical continues to influence music today and future sounds.

Older books



Girl on the Fly by Nansubuga Nagadya Isdahl, David Fickling Books, ISBN: 9781788451840

1992, Philadelphia, USA.

Kamaria Kessy is 13, independent, confident and loving life.

But BIG change is coming!

She's fallen out with her best friend, Odie, and she has no idea how to talk to him about it.

Plus her Tanzanian aunty is about to be her new roommate - NIGHTMARE!

All Kam wants to do is focus on winning big with her relay team (and best girlfriends)! But to fly down the race track she's going to need to learn what truly makes her soar.



Be More Olivia Rodrigo, DK+, ISBN: 9780241745298

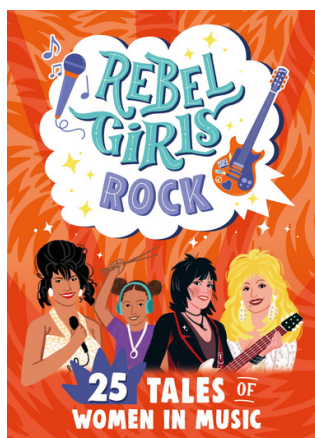
Learn to live like pop sensation Olivia Rodrigo, whose very own words of wisdom will help you spill your Guts and embrace your Sour side!

“What Would Olivia Do?”

What do you do when your ex moves on a little too quickly? Or calls you in the middle of the night, and you know it's a bad idea to answer? Or when it feels like you're pushing everyone away? You kick back, put on Guts and listen to Olivia go through it all with you...

In her short career, she's already accumulated three number ones, thirteen GRAMMY nominations, millions of devoted fans and one driver's licence. Her brutal honesty, impeccable style and fearless activism have catapulted her straight into our hearts – and now, you can learn to be more like her through everything life throws at you.

Older books



Rebel Girls Rock: 25 Tales of Women in Music, DK - Rebel Girls, ISBN: 9781953424440

TRUE STORIES OF WOMEN WHO RAISE THE ROOF!

This collection features 25 stories of extraordinary women in music—women who have moved hearts and minds with their lyrics, uplifted other musicians, and gotten people to jump, dance, and sing along with their music.

Belt out pop anthems with Lizzo, bang on the drums with Nandi Bushell, and write country hits with Dolly Parton. The women in this book come from all around the world. They play different instruments, experiment with new sounds, and stand out in their genres. But one thing is true of them all: They rock!



The Color of Sound by Emily Barth Isler, Carolrhoda Books, ISBN: 9798765688755

Twelve-year-old Rosie is a musical prodigy whose synesthesia allows her to see music in colors. Her mom has always pushed her to become a concert violinist, but this summer Rosie refuses to play, wanting a "normal" life. Forced to spend the summer with her grandparents, Rosie is excited to meet another girl her age hanging out on their property. The girl is familiar, and Rosie quickly pieces it together: somehow, this girl is her mother, when her mother was twelve. With help from this glitch in time—plus her grandparents, an improv group, and a new instrument—Rosie comes to understand her mother, herself, and her love of music in new ways.

Older books

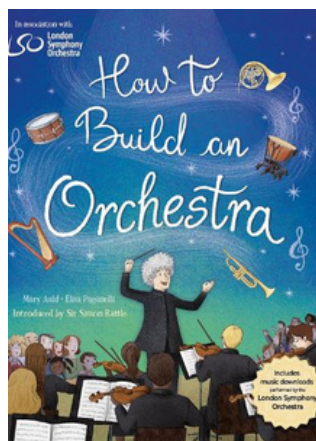


Kofi and the Brand New Vibe by Jeffrey Boakye, Faber, ISBN: 9780571396436

Third book in a brilliant trilogy about one ordinary schoolboy with a passion for music, a great sense of humour . . . and a rap competition to win! Fans of MC Grammar will love this series.

Kofi is having so much fun! The success of Clipper FM has led to Kofi and his crew becoming underground stars in their local area and beyond. But then the radio recognition draws the attention of a new rapper on the scene, Snipa, who seems determined to take the top spot.

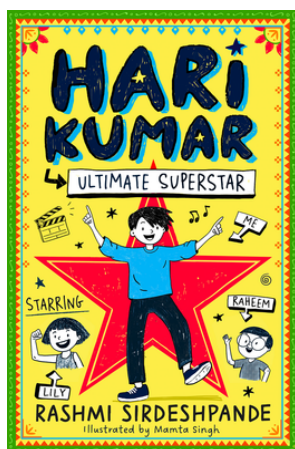
Will Kofi be able to reach his dreams of success? And can he avoid getting dragged into trouble?



How to Build an Orchestra by Mary Auld and Elisa Paganelli, Hachette, ISBN: 9781526309846

Find out what makes up an orchestra and learn about its different instruments with this beautifully illustrated book, produced in association with the London Symphony Orchestra. This wonderfully illustrated story follows a conductor who is auditioning each instrument for his orchestra. Accompanied by music download links, follow our conductor on his journey and discover the beautiful music of an orchestra. With pictograms of a full-size symphony orchestra and information on all of the music featured, as well as a foreword by Sir Simon Rattle, Music

Older books



Hari Kumar, Ultimate Superstar by Rashmi Sirdeshpande and Mamta Singh, HarperCollins Children's Books, ISBN: 9780008738198

Hari Kumar: 10 years old, 75% Indian, 25% French, and 100% going to be a superstar. All Hari needs to make it big is a lucky break – a chance to get his name out there. And when that arrives in the form of a film festival competition at school, it's Hari's chance to shine.

But life isn't always like the movies. The new kid Hari thought would be his sidekick turns out to have the makings of a true villain, the crack team he's assembled have minds of their own, and censorship (in the form of the Deputy Head Teacher) is looming. Can Hari keep things together and pull off an epic comeback, or will his film-making debut be cancelled before it's even released...?



Melody Queen by Puneet Bhandal, Lantana, ISBN: 9781915244321

Twelve-year-old Simi's life is set. First: graduate from the Bollywood Academy, school to future stars. Second: become a mega-famous actor, just like her showbiz parents. There's only one problem: Simi would rather make music than act, and music is a profession dominated by men. Can Simi navigate the gender barriers of the industry to prove she has what it takes to become Bollywood's next big music composer?

A story of passion for music and courage in the face of overwhelming odds, this second book in the dazzling world of Bollywood is sure to get your toes tapping and head bopping to Simi's beat.

Older books



Hunt for the Golden Scarab by M. G. Leonard and Manuel Sumberac, Macmillan Children's Books, ISBN: 9781035005963

Sim and his mum never live anywhere long. When dangerous strangers appear one night, Sim discovers why. His mum has been keeping secrets: she has the power to open doors in time.

Running for their lives, Sim and his friends are determined to outwit the sinister Council of Keys and be the first to find Nefertiti's lost tomb and a powerful door to Ancient Egypt. They must piece together long-hidden clues if they are to solve the mystery of her golden heart scarab. Can they find it before the Council finds them?



Glory Days in New Orleans! by Bia and Fanny Berthiaume, MMS - The Secret Mountain, ISBN: 9782898360725

A lighthearted tale about two possum musicians who make their way to New Orleans and discover jazz.

Mama and Papa Poss continue their musical odyssey on a boat bound for New Orleans.

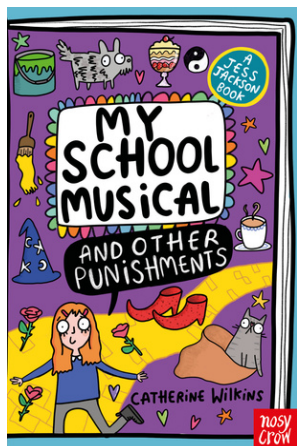
As they make their way down the Mississippi, a sudden hurricane tosses one of the passengers overboard.

Papa Poss jumps to the rescue, pulling none other than Louis Catstrong out of the crashing waves.

In thanks, the famous feline trumpet player takes the duo to his club the French Quarter, where a group of cool cats are scratching up a new kind of music.

Take a trip to the Big Easy in this swinging and scatting tale that pays homage to the city that invented jazz!

Older books



My School Musical and Other Punishments by Catherine Wilkins and Katie Abey, Nosy Crow, ISBN: 9781805137221

The third book in the hilarious Jess Jackson series from much-loved author and comedian Catherine Wilkins, with a new cover illustrated by Katie Abey - perfect for fans of Lottie Brooks!

When JESS gets roped into the school musical she finds herself strangely allied with ARCH-ENEMY Amelia when her best friend NAT becomes crazed with stardom. Meanwhile, Jess's dad is concerned at plans to build a new road through nearby parkland and is now living up a tree. So far, so normal...



Running My Own Race by Abena Eyson, Nosy Crow, ISBN: 9781805133735

Kofi's mum is determined he's going to be 'somebody'. But when Kofi is given a place at a prestigious private school because of his athletic ability, everything changes. Kofi dreams of being a professional athlete - but he soon finds following your heart isn't an easy road.

Under pressure from his mum to make the most of his academic opportunity, his best friend who doesn't want him to change, his community to make them proud, and a rival who will do anything to make sure Kofi doesn't outshine him - Kofi isn't sure where to turn.

Can Kofi find a way to follow his own path?

Older books



Gordon Starts a Band by Alex Latimer, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 9780192788696

Gordon is THE MEANEST GOOSE ON EARTH. Well . . . he used to be, but now, he's trying to change his ways and be a GOOD GOOSE. The trouble is, it's really tricky to be kind and patient and good, especially when you've always been mean.

In *Gordon Starts a Band*, Gordon is in a very bad mood. An annoying whistling noise has kept him awake ALL NIGHT and he's determined to find out what's causing it. His journey will lead him on a mission to try and help a rock 'n' roll moose, a singing crocodile, and a handy hammerhead shark . . . but can he help them without falling back into his mean ways?



Isadora Moon and the Pop Stars by Harriet Muncaster, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 9780192787866

Half vampire, half fairy, totally unique!

Isadora is special because she is different. Her mum is a fairy and her dad is a vampire and she's a bit of both.

Isadora is so excited. She has been invited to go to a pop concert with her friend, Araminta. She has never seen a band like Glitterbat before. The music is gothic and vampire-y and ELECTRIC. She can't wait to show the dance moves to her friends at school. But will they understand, or will they think her vampire music is a bit strange?

Older books



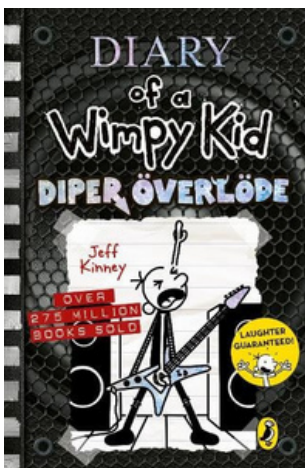
Space Band by Tom Fletcher, Penguin - Puffin, ISBN: 9780241595930

An out-of-this-world new adventure from the bestselling author! George, Neila and Bash are the worst band on Earth. George wants them to be brilliant - but Neila has stage fright, and Bash is too distracted by his obsession with stars, aliens and faraway planets. But what they lack in talent and confidence, they make up for in heart.

They're determined to blow their friends away at their school Battle of the Bands contest. But the moment they start to play... they're beamed up into space!!!

Now the kids face an even bigger challenge: Battle of the Bands, but the intergalactic version. They're competing against alien bands from every galaxy! And if they don't win, they might never make it home again... can the worst band on Earth become the best band in the universe?

An intergalactically awesome tale of celebrating difference, believing in yourself, and the power of friendship.



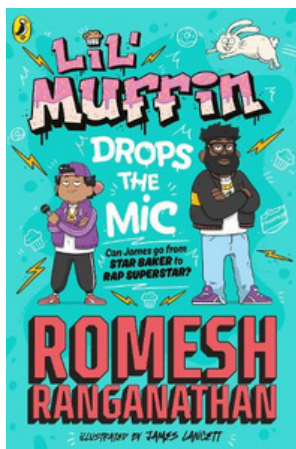
Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Diper Överlöde by Jeff Kinney, Penguin - Puffin, ISBN: 9780241583104

In Diper Överlöde, book 17 of the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series from #1 international bestselling author Jeff Kinney, Greg Heffley is finding out that the road to fame and glory comes with some hard knocks.

When he decides to tag along with his brother Rodrick's band, Löded Diper, Greg doesn't realize what he's getting into. But he soon learns that late nights, unpaid gigs, fighting between band members, and money troubles are all part of the rock 'n' roll lifestyle.

Can Greg help Löded Diper become the legends they think they are? Or will too much time with Rodrick's band be a diper överlöde?

Older books

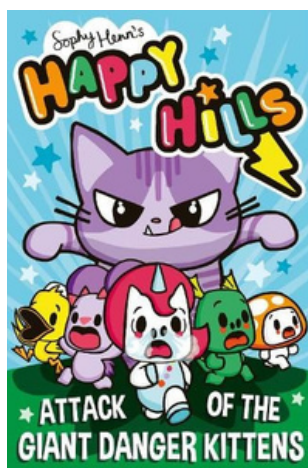


Lil' Muffin Drops the Mic by Romesh Ranganathan and James Lancett, Penguin - Puffin, ISBN: 9780241493250

Ever since his dad left, James can't seem to stop worrying about everything. His favourite hobby, baking, is a fun (and delicious!) distraction, but no matter how many AMAZING brownies he makes, James still feels like there's a missing ingredient in his life . . .

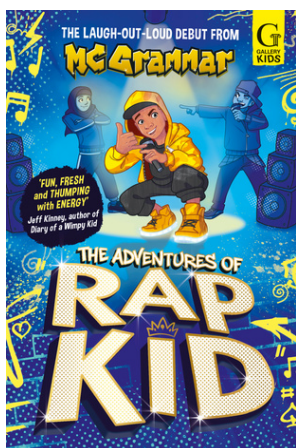
Until he discovers rapping, and he's COMPLETELY hooked. It's not long before James starts writing his own raps about everything - from music and cakes to his giant pet rabbit, Graham!

So when he hears that grime artist star Bruikka is on the hunt for young talent, James starts to wonder: could this be his chance to share his



Happy Hills: Attack of the Giant Danger Kittens by Sophy Henn, Simon & Schuster Children's Books, ISBN:9781398524606

Meet the friendly and not-so-friendly residents of Happy Hills, a place where anything can happen and always does! When unicorn Ace stumbles across happy hills, he is surrounded by the residents who are keen to share their spooky stories, plays a town-wide game of IT, all while avoiding giant danger kittens.



The Adventures of Rap Kid by MC Grammar, Simon & Schuster Children's Books, ISBN: 9781398537613

Z stands for ZERO: being the amount of words that Z speaks at school. Why? Because every time he talks, it rhymes. Every. Single. Time.

But, things are about to change. The Royal Rap Rumble is coming to town in search of the next rhyming rap legend. With the help of his super-cool English teacher, Mr G, his best friend, SFX, and the ultimate hip-hop makeover, RAP KID is born.

But can he become the G.O.A.T and take home the golden mic? Bring on the vibes!

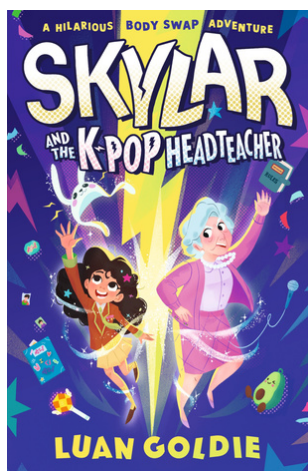
Older books



The Magic Piano: Dahlia and the Land Without Music by James B Partridge and Laura Wood, Sweet Cherry, ISBN: 9781802637465

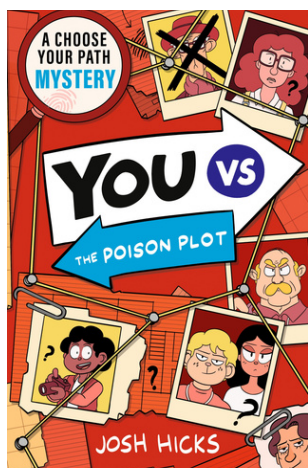
A magical story where music truly can transport you! On her eleventh birthday, music-loving Dahlia is given the key to her late mum's grand piano. She couldn't be happier! But when she plays a special tune with her best friend Tommy, a magic portal appears and Tommy is yanked through it.

Dahlia must launch a daring rescue mission, into a world where time has stopped, music is outlawed and Tommy has been arrested by a wicked queen. She'll need help from new friends, old rebels and possibly a broken drum to sneak in and out of the castle dungeons. But how can she possibly make it home in time for dinner?



Skylar and the K-Pop Headteacher by Luan Goldie, Walker Books, ISBN: 9781529512533

When K-pop obsessed Skylar switches bodies with her super-old headteacher, she's thrown into a hilarious world of dancing old ladies gone viral and school rules thrown out the window, as she tries to figure out how on earth to swap back! But then the chance to meet her favourite K-pop boyband AZ8 in real life changes everything, and Skylar must decide whether her K-pop dream come true is worth risking being stuck as an old lady for ever...



You VS the Poison Plot by Josh Hicks, Walker Books, ISBN: 9781529527193

In YOU VS The Poison Plot, it's the eve of the school talent show, but the school's drama teacher has suddenly collapsed with four witnesses at his side! As editor of the school newspaper and a seasoned journalist, you investigate – and smell foul play. You've got 'til tomorrow's show to follow your nose and unravel the mystery...

More from The Reading Agency

The Reading Agency is a UK charity that inspires social and personal change through the proven power of reading. We work with individuals of all ages, communities and trusted partners to share the transformative benefits of reading for happy, healthy and thriving lives.

Did you know?

- We regularly have free [display materials](#), [activity packs](#) and [book club sets](#) of books available to schools throughout the year. Sign up to our [newsletters](#) on our website to check these out!
- We will be hosting virtual events for schools in July and September, keep your eyes on our [events page](#) to find out more. There are also lots of [events available from authors](#) on the Summer Reading Challenge Collection
- You can find thousands of book [resources](#) for primary school children through us - from fun activity sheets and classroom guides on summerreadingchallenge.org.uk to all sorts of reading activity packs available on our website

Other programmes



The Reading Agency is a UK charity that inspires social and personal change through the proven power of reading. Read, Write, Share is an exciting project from The Reading Agency, funded by the St Paul's Schools Foundation and The Mercer's Company taking place in Islington and Camden. The project brings together local schools, libraries, and renowned writer-facilitators in a comprehensive project designed to enhance children's literacy and communication skills.

Teachers

Reading Challenge

The Teachers' Reading Challenge is an opportunity for school staff to expand their knowledge of contemporary children's books and develop their skills in teaching children to read for pleasure. Run in partnership with The Open University and sponsored by HarperCollins, the Challenge invites participants to join a supportive and inspired community of educators and readers, set their own reading goals, share recommendations, discuss best practice, access resources, and record their feedback. teachersreadingchallenge.org.uk



The Book Club Hub is a platform connecting readers and book clubs of all ages across the UK. It is managed by national reading charity, The Reading Agency. It offers book teachers and librarians the support of providing free copies to your clubs in return with reviews and the latest news and resources to support your meetings. Visit bookclubhub.co.uk and discover how you can make the most of the platform.

A winter version of the Summer Reading Challenge! This is an online reading challenge running between December-February, encouraging children to keep up their reading through the winter break and into the new term. It's free to take part at wintermini.org.uk, where children can log and review books and earn rewards, e.g., a certificate & limited-edition digital badge.

Reading Well for children provides quality-assured information, stories and advice to support children's mental health and wellbeing. Books have been chosen and recommended by leading health professionals and co-produced with children and families. The booklist is targeted at Key Stage 2, and includes titles aimed at a wide range of reading levels. readingagency.org.uk/reading-well