

Publisher Picks 2026: Solving crimes & thrilling reads



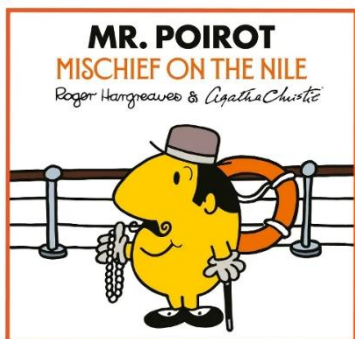
June is [National Crime Reading Month](#)! We have asked our publisher partners and team at The Reading Agency to share their book club picks based around the theme 'Solving crimes & thrilling reads.' So, pick up a book, tablet or your headphones and follow the clues, uncover secrets and lose yourself in stories packed with mystery, suspense and unexpected twists. Whether you're a budding detective, a fan of thrilling adventures or a seasoned crime-fiction reader, this booklist offers gripping reads for every age.

Please note some of these books may have mature themes and you can find more specific age ratings on publisher websites including content warnings.

This booklist has been collated from publisher picks and has not been endorsed by The Reading Agency as it has not followed our Book Selection Framework applied to programme content. You can see previous themed booklists [here](#).

Younger Children

Mr. Poirot: Mischief on the Nile by Roger Hargreaves (creator) and Adam Hargreaves, HarperCollins, ISBN: 9780008740948



Publisher three-word description: Colourful, Timeless, Brilliant

Agatha Christie's most famous detectives receive the Mr Men Little Miss treatment!

Hercule Poirot meets Mr Men and Little Miss in this new story, written and illustrated by Adam Hargreaves. Loosely inspired by *Death on the Nile*, but with a charming and humorous twist for younger fans, this is a mystery that requires 'little grey cells' to solve it!

Introducing Mr Poirot – a new Mr Men character who is a famous Belgian detective, like someone Agatha Christie fans have already met!

Mr Poirot is escaping the winter gloom with a sunny cruise on the River Nile when he meets his friend Colonel Rush, who travels the world tracking down criminals. His relaxing holiday soon includes much mischief and a mystery to solve, with many Mr Men and Little Miss suspects, including Mr Tickle with his extraordinarily long arms! Can Mr Poirot use his little grey cells to solve this most mischievous mystery?

This is the first Mr Poirot mystery in a mischievous new partnership, publishing alongside Little Miss Marple: Muddle at the Vicarage.

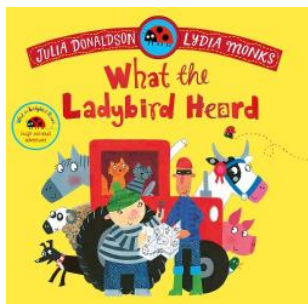
The Elephant Detectives by Ged Adamson, Nosy Crow, ISBN: 9781839942891



Publisher three-word description: Picture book, Charming, Delightful

A charming, funny adventure about missing elephants and finding friends. It's the perfect kind of day until Alan's elephant goes missing! Lucky for him, Edie's an Elephant Detective and she knows exactly where to look. Together they examine doughnut shops, investigate dinosaur bones, and search the skies from a cable car, but they can't find him anywhere! Will Alan EVER find his elephant? And might he also find a new friend along the way?

What the Ladybird Heard by Julia Donaldson (author) and Lydia Monks (illustrator), Pan Macmillan, ISBN: 9781035049141

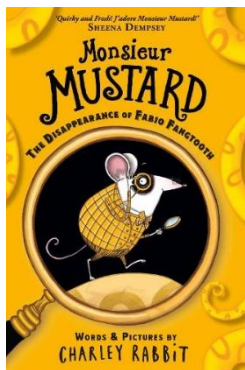


Publisher three-word description: Wonderful, Rhyming, Colourful

Join in the farmyard fun in this brilliantly funny rhyming adventure from the stellar picture-book partnership of Julia Donaldson and Lydia Monks. Hefty Hugh and Lanky Len are two crafty robbers with a cunning plan to steal the farmer's fine prize cow. But little do they know that the tiniest, quietest creature of all has overhead their plot, and she has a plan of her own...

Older Children

Monsieur Mustard: The Disappearance of Fabio Fangtooth by Charley Rabbit, Andersen Press, ISBN: 9781839134715



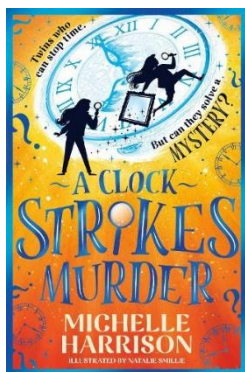
Publisher three-word description: Delightful, Fiendish, Illustrated

Meet the number one, best dressed, and (possibly) smallest detective in the world, Monsieur Mustard.

One evening, way past your bedtime, all was quiet in the city of Bath. Fabio Fangtooth was finishing his alphabet soup. When suddenly . . . Whoomp! . . . he disappeared.

Yes, my friends, this is the most SPINE-TINGLING, CLAW-BITING, POOT POOT IN YOUR PANTALOONS mystery that Monsieur Mustard has ever set his little eyes upon. Can our hero crack the case with the villain hot on his tail?

A Clock Strikes Murder by Michelle Harrison, Simon & Schuster, ISBN: 9781471197697



Publisher three-word description: Quirky, Creepy, Magic

Our story begins with identical twins ...

Spike and Merry are back on the case – and this time they're in Greece. The cursed Medusa painting is up for auction, but anyone who looks at it directly, will die. When one of the bidders is found dead and the painting's owner goes missing, the twins use their time bending powers to investigate. Is it really a curse or is someone out for revenge...?



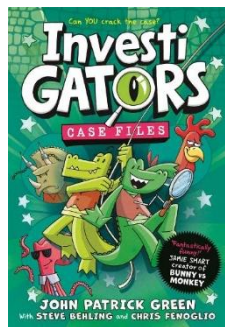
A Girl's Guide to Spying by Holly Webb, Rock the Boat, ISBN: 9781836431213

Publisher three-word description: Historical, Engaging, Suspense

Did you know that the Girl Guides worked undercover for MI5 during the First World War? When Phyl is dragged along to the Girl Guides by her younger sister, Annie, the last thing she expects is the adventure of a lifetime. Then her Guide captain offers her a job as a messenger for MI5. Phyl is desperate to help the war effort and is thrilled to be working with spies.

But she can't seem to do anything right in the eyes of the grumpy Major Warren. When he suddenly disappears, Phyl and Annie suspect that he may in fact be a double agent. The two sisters must solve the mystery of his whereabouts, before it's too late. Luckily their friends from the Rose Patrol are ready to help...

InvestiGators: Case Files by John Patrick Green (author), Chris Fenoglio (author) and Steve Behling (illustrator), Macmillan Children's Books, ISBN: 9781035068043

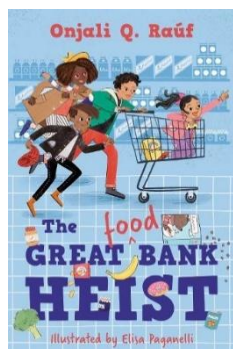


Publisher three-word description: Good-natured goofiness, Interactive, Fun

InvestiGators: Case Files is a special solve-along edition of the laugh-out-loud, full colour comic book series. Find clues, spot suspects and crack six new cases alongside the *InvestiGators*!

Mango and Brash are back, and this time they're asking you to help them crack the case! The *InvestiGators* have been given the G.R.I.D., a brand-new tool to help gather evidence and clues. Using the prompts in each chapter, readers can make their own deductions alongside the Gators and solve the case! Featuring plenty of familiar faces from investigations past, and packed full of hilarious hijinks, join Mango and Brash as they get to the bottom of cases big and small!

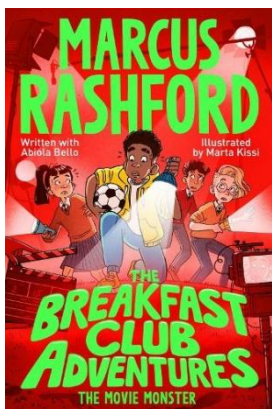
The Great (Food) Bank Heist by Onjali Q Rauf (author) and Elisa Paganelli (illustrator), Barrington Stoke, ISBN: 9781781129623



Publisher three-word description: Empathetic, Tender, Unique

On Thursdays, Nelson, Ashley and Mum head out to the bank. But not just any old bank - the food bank. With its shining tins and packets of food stacked from floor to ceiling, Nelson thinks it's the best kind of bank there is. But there's a thief in town, and the shelves of the food bank are getting emptier each day, leaving people hungrier than ever. For the sake of his family and everyone else's, Nelson needs to make them stop. But can he and his friends really be the ones to catch the bank robber?

The Movie Monster – The Breakfast Club Adventures by Marcus Rashford (author), Abiola Bello (author) and Marta Kissi (illustrator), Pan Macmillan, ISBN: 9781035082070



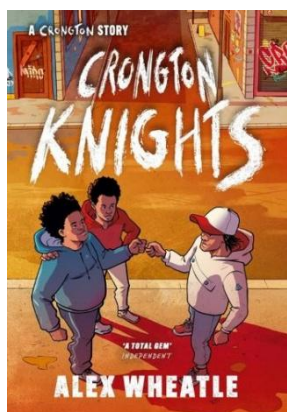
Publisher three-word description: Exciting, Current, Friendship

Join Marcus and friends as they solve another mystery in *The Breakfast Club Adventures: The Movie Monster*. This spooky adventure is the seventh exciting book in the series by England International footballer, child food-poverty campaigner and bestselling author Marcus Rashford MBE. Inspired by Marcus's own experiences growing up!

Marcus is excited to show off his football skills in a video for new students. But whenever he gets in front of the camera, a creepy creature ruins the shot! With the deadline fast approaching the Breakfast Club Investigators are in a race against the clock to catch the monster and save the film!

Young and new adult books – please note these may have mature themes and you can find more specific age ratings on publisher websites including more content warnings.

A Crongton Story: Crongton Knights by Alex Wheatle, Hachette Children's Books, ISBN: 9781444974782



The Reading Agency's Staff Member three-word description: Lots of emotions!

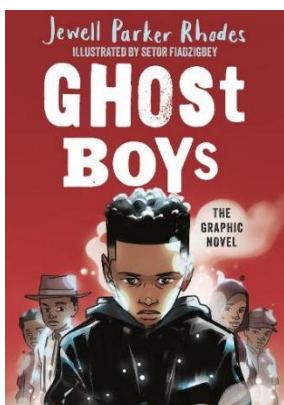
Living on the South Crongton council estate has its worries - and life for McKay has been even tougher since his mum died.

His dad has been working all hours to keep the bailiffs from their door.

His brother is always out riding the streets at night, tempting trouble.

And now, having strayed off his turf on a 'heroic' (if misguided) mission to help out a girl, McKay finds himself facing a friend's crazy ex-boyfriend, some power-tripping hood-rats and a notoriously violent gangster with a vendetta which hits too close to home. Poor McKay. He never asked for trouble... But during one madcap night of adventure and danger, he will find out who his true friends are, what it means to stick with your family and that, sometimes, the lessons learned the hard way are the ones you'll never forget.

Ghost Boys Graphic Novel by Jewell Parker Rhodes (author) and Setor Fiadzigbey (illustrator), Hachette, ISBN: 9781510113916



Publisher three-word description: Poignant, Gripping, Graphic Novel

Ghost Boys, the New York Times bestselling novel about a Black boy killed by a white police officer from award-winning author Jewell Parker Rhodes, is brought to a new audience in this heartbreaking and powerful graphic novel with striking colour artwork by Setor Fiadzigbey.

ALIVE

Twelve-year-old Jerome doesn't get into trouble. He goes to school. He does his homework. He takes care of his little sister.

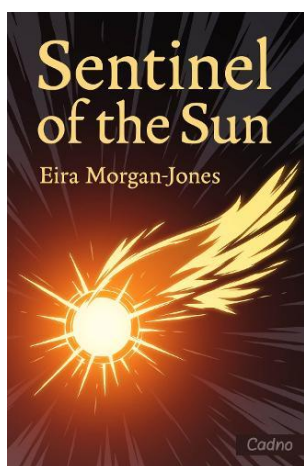
Then Jerome is shot by a police officer who mistakes his toy gun for a real threat.

DEAD

As a ghost, watching his family trying to cope with his death, Jerome begins to notice other ghost boys. Each boy has a story, and they all have something in common...

Bit by bit, Jerome begins to understand what really happened - not just to him, but to all of the ghost boys.

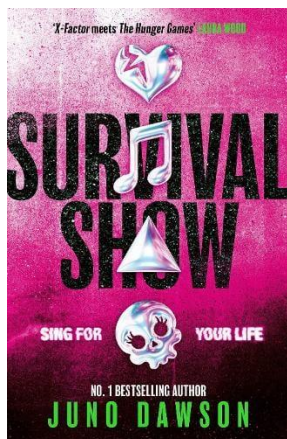
Sentinel of the Sun by Eira Morgan-Jones, Graffeg Limited, ISBN: 9781917467506



Publisher three-word description: Fast-paced, Epic, Fantasy

Since the very earliest civilisation sentinels have watched over humanity, protecting the balance of nature from afar. The assassination of one of their number triggers a cascade of increasingly fierce natural disasters, the latest of which wipes out the rural valley home of seventeen-year-old Alexis, an introverted teenager struggling to find her place in an overbearing religious society. That is, until she learns of the sentinels and that she might just be the murdered sentinel returned. With the help of a mysterious stranger, Alexis must leave the ruins of her home and discover the truth behind her own murder.

Survival Show by Juno Dawson, Simon & Schuster Ltd, ISBN: 9781398547957



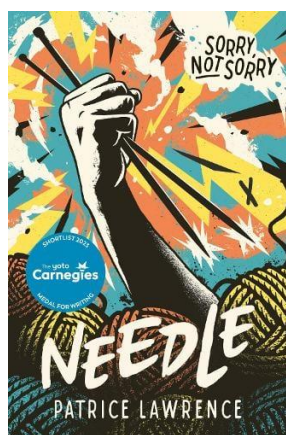
The Reading Agency's Staff Member three-word description: **Dystopian, Emotional, Thriller**

Taryn Beck and her family don't have much, and her younger brother needs vital medication to survive. Medication they can't access or afford. So, Taryn secretly enters *Starmaker*, the most watched reality TV show in the world.

The rules are simple; young women from all over the globe compete to join an all-singing, all-dancing pop group. If you win, a life of luxury, stardom and wealth awaits... But there's a catch. Eliminated contestants are literally eliminated.

Taryn soon realises that reality TV is far from real. She and her fellow trainees are pitted against each other in cruel challenges, and she is determined to expose the brutal regime and destroy *Starmaker* from the inside.

Needle by Patrice Lawrence, HarperCollins Publishers, ISBN: 9781800901018



The Reading Agency's Staff Member three-word description: **Powerful, Heartbreaking, Exploratory**

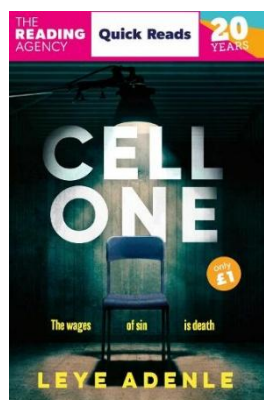
Charlene is a demon knitter. It's the only thing she enjoys and the only thing she believes she's really good at.

So, when her foster mum's son destroys her latest creation, Charlene loses it and stabs him in the hand with her knitting needle. It damages a nerve and she gets sucked into the criminal justice system for assault.

Charlene's not sorry and she's never apologised to anyone in her life. But people keep telling her that if she says sorry, they'll go easier on her. Can she bring herself to say it and not mean it when her freedom's at stake?

Adult

Cell One: Quick Reads 2026 by Leye Adenle, Simon & Schuster, ISBN: 9781398556027



The Reading Agency's Staff Member three-word description: Pulse-pounding, Twisty Thriller

Rookie cop Bobby Fatokun is thrown straight into the deep end in his new job in Lagos, as the superintendent of the force is kidnapped in this thoroughly gripping, fast-paced page-turner.

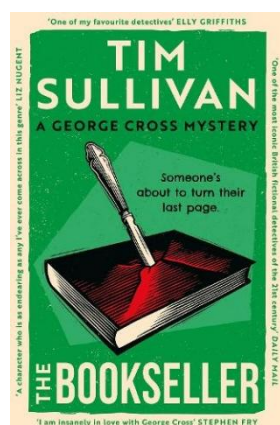
A high-profile kidnapping. A countdown to a live execution. The race is on to find the victim before the clock hits zero...

Rookie cop Bobby Fatokun's first day on the job in Lagos is off to a bad start. Not only has his life in London not prepared him for the hustle of the Nigerian city, but his new boss seems to be missing.

When a popular blog is hacked, the horrifying truth becomes clear – Superintendent Adams has been kidnapped, and his captors plan to kill him live on camera in a matter of hours.

As chaos unfolds and the team scrambles for leads, Bobby begins to suspect that Adams' role in the police may have had something to do with his abduction. But without knowing who he can trust, Bobby will have to rely on his instincts alone to find the truth before time runs out.

The Bookseller by Tim Sullivan, Head of Zeus, ISBN: 9781035910410



Publisher three-word description: Methodical, Compelling, Quirky

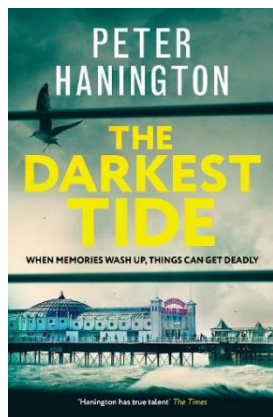
A bookseller is found dead in his shop on a quiet square in Bristol, surrounded by rare books, first editions and a shocking amount of blood.

DS George Cross, usually the first to spot holes in a suspect's story, is distracted. His father's recent diagnosis has left him unsettled, relying on others in a way he is not comfortable with. It's impacting the case – and himself – more than he'd like to admit.

The truth only gets murkier as George uncovers tales of lost manuscripts and rival dealers, revealing how dangerous the rarefied world of bookselling can be – especially when the suspects are so familiar with crime novels. They know exactly

how to get away with murder.

The Darkest Tide by Peter Hanington, John Murray Group, ISBN: 9781399821001

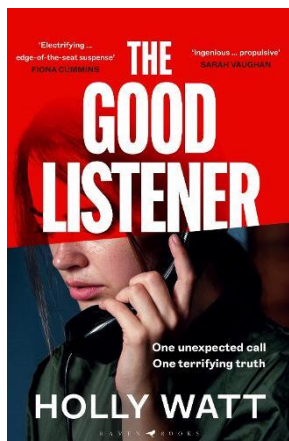


Publisher three-word description: Gripping, Atmospheric, Page-turner

When Arthur Cotton sees a body washed up on the beach, difficult memories come flooding back. He kept the books for the Brighton mob back in the day and got out on friendly terms. But retirement came with conditions - mainly to keep his mouth shut. Fifty years on, it's trickier. Dementia is taking hold and he's getting leaky. His former bosses are worried. Arthur didn't just keep their accounts, he also kept their secrets. Now there's going to be a reckoning.

It's up to Arthur's daughter, Susan, a carer for the elderly, to find out what her father knows. What he's been saying and to whom. There are dangerous people around, and they're beginning to lose their patience. She'll have to turn detective to encounter a Brighton she barely knew existed, and to turn up parts of her father's past that are just as dark.

The Good Listener by Holly Watt, Raven Books, ISBN: 9781526694577



Publisher three-word description: Heart-stopping, Emotional, Thrilling

An anonymous call. A mother desperate for justice.

The Good Listeners are there for anyone who needs to talk.

When the phone rings, a Good Listener has no idea who could be at the other end. The woman cheating on her husband, the man who has lost yet another job, the teenager struggling at school...

And Clara is prepared for every kind of caller. Except this one.

Because the woman on the other end of the line has just told her, 'My husband killed a little girl.'

And two years ago, Clara's own daughter was murdered and her killer never caught.

The police have no leads. This is Clara's only chance of justice. But when the caller is anonymous, what chance does she have of finding them?

The Wrong Man by Chris McDonald, HarperCollins, ISBN: 9780008763022



Publisher three-word description: Pacey, Fast-paced, Fun

When Ethan Adler set up his new PI agency in central Manchester, he wasn't expecting his first case to be so high profile – investigating the mysterious death of rock star Dylan Vy.

Ethan has been avoiding the spotlight ever since his beloved wife Maggie's untimely passing. His grief has been complicated by rumours that Maggie was pregnant with another man's child at the time of her fatal accident. And because said accident took place just hours after Ethan won the lottery, a cloud of suspicion has followed Ethan ever since.

With the help of his assistant Amelia, Ethan throws himself into uncovering the truth about Dylan Vy. In a fast-escalating investigation, they uncover a labyrinth of secrets, lies and deadly connections between bandmates, girlfriends and a volatile manager. And when Dylan's unreleased music is leaked on the dark web, speculation swirls that the lyrics contain hidden clues that might lead to the killer. But who leaked these songs, and what is their secret motive? In the midst of a media frenzy and a storm of fan conspiracy theories, who can Ethan trust?

As Ethan digs deeper, he must also confront his own demons — the lingering questions about Maggie's death and the growing realisation that those closest to him may have played a role...

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