

Publisher Picks 2026: Best Books for Book Clubs

11 September is [Book Club Day UK](#)! We have asked our publisher partners and team at The Reading Agency to share their book club picks based around the theme. These publisher picks should spark conversation, so get your book club together or even [start one](#), pick one of these books and enjoy talking about it together.



From magical adventures, friendship and resilience to gripping mysteries, romance, history and thought-provoking explorations of identity and community, there's something for every reader. Discover a new favourite, find your next book-club pick and celebrate the joy of sharing great stories.

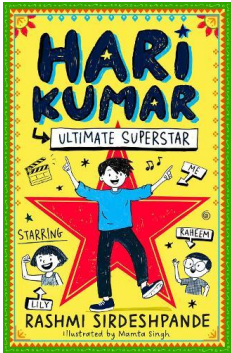
Book Club Day UK (11 September 2026) will be a day that celebrates the joy, connection and impact of shared reading, while supporting more people to start or join book clubs in their communities. For 2026, we are inviting people to be a reading rebel and join a book club, make their book clubs more visible or invite someone new to join their club in September. [Discover more.](#)

This booklist brings together titles submitted by our publisher partners and some members of The Reading Agency team. These titles were not selected through The Reading Agency's formal Book Selection Framework but were instead specifically curated from publisher picks for the Best Books for Book Clubs theme. You can see previous themed booklists [here](#).

Please note some of these books may have mature themes and potential triggers, you can find more specific age suggestions on publisher websites including content warnings. We have included content warnings if they have been stated by the person recommending.

Children

Hari Kumar, Ultimate Superstar by Rashmi Sirdeshpande (author) and Mamta Singh (illustrator), HarperCollins, ISBN: 9780008738198

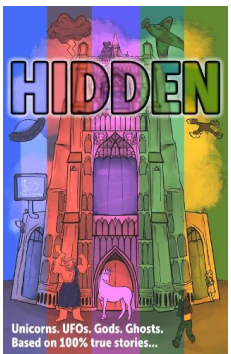


The Reading Agency's Staff Member three-word description: Funny, joyful, warmth

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...?

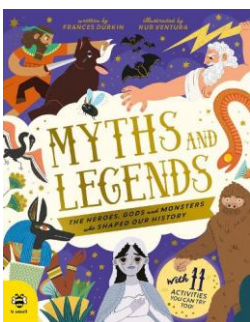
Hidden by Matt Killeen (author), Amy Scott Robinson (author), Chip Colquhoun (editor) and Bethany D'Arcy (illustrator), Epic Tales, ISBN: 9781915703453



Publisher three-word description: Intergenerational, imaginative, life-affirming

Ghosts, dragons, gods, and UFOs fill these 27 imaginative tales, each created by children aged 9+ and adapted by much-loved children's authors – but each hides a real human experience drawn from the lives of those raised in the 1940s. Thrilling but moving, this anthology for ages 9–12 shows how extraordinary adventures can grow from ordinary lives.

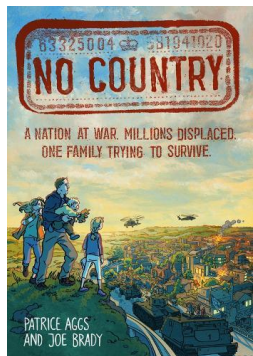
Myths and Legends by Frances Durkin (author) and Nur Ventura (illustrator), b small, ISBN: 9781916851993



Publisher three-word description: Biographies, diverse, activities

Flashes of lightning, blood-sucking creatures, mind-blowing tricks and tales of epic adventures ... myths and legends have always fascinated people. Here are 20 incredible stories that tell us about creating countries, controlling the weather and even stealing children.

No Country by Joe Brady (author) and Patrice Aggs (illustrator), David Fickling Books, ISBN: 9781788451833



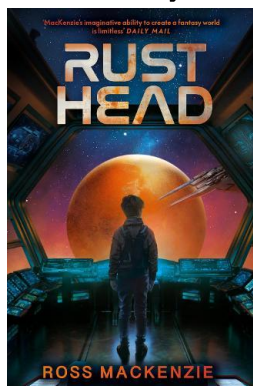
Publisher three-word description: Powerful, thought-provoking, timely

What would you do if your home wasn't safe anymore?

Bea and her family are trying to live as if everything is normal. She and her sister Hannah look out for one another, at home and in school. But their country is starting to fall apart. A civil war is raging, and it's getting closer. Bea is desperate not to leave home, but how long will it be before they have to run?

Publisher highlighted content warnings: war

Rust Head by Ross MacKenzie (author), Andersen Press, ISBN: 9781839136320



Publisher three-word description: Fast-paced, sci-fi, adventurous

Kol and Sully are best friends living miserable lives as rustheads – treasure hunters who must search planet Rust's vast desert of scrap for useful odds and ends. But everything changes when the boys stumble upon a long-dormant spaceship hidden deep beneath the junk.

When the ship comes to life and propels them away to deep space, they find out that they are not the only ones on board. A mysterious girl is there too, and she has a mission:

free the galaxy from the oppressive rule of the robotic Reaper empire. Before they know it, Kol and Sully are dragged into a galaxy-spanning adventure.

Six Weeks by Matt Goodfellow (author) and Joe Todd-Stanton (illustrator), Hachette Children's Group, ISBN: 9781444982886



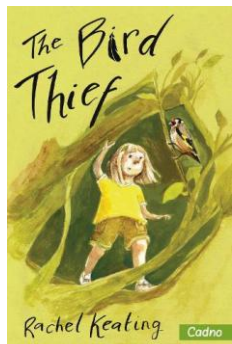
Publisher three-word description: Poignant, poetry, funny

Alfie Piper has six weeks of summer – and nothing left to lose.

Since his mum died, Alfie's world has unravelled. The silence between him and his stepdad roars louder than ever. So, he does the only thing that makes sense: grabs his bike, and rides. In these long summer days, can Alfie rebuild what was broken?

Publisher highlighted content warnings: grief and bereavement

The Bird Thief by Rachel Keating (author) and Naomi Bennet (illustrator), Graffeg Books, ISBN: 9781802586848



Publisher three-word description: Thought-provoking, nature, empathy

A Caravan holiday in the Welsh countryside sounds like the perfect getaway, but for Erin and her family their daily struggles are not so easy to escape from. After a mystical accident in the woods leaves Erin with the extraordinary gift of bird abilities, she is forced to face her own internal battles, as well as new threats like the mean and persistent intruder, Bess. Being able to fly, slow down time and communicate with her new feathered friend – a goldfinch called Fable – all prove vital when Erin comes across birds being deliberately trapped and killed. Can her superpowers save her and everyone she loves when she finds herself fighting for her life in a forest fire? And what happens if her powers disappear?

Publisher highlighted content warnings: mental health (OCD), parental depression

The House with Chicken Legs Runs Away by Sophie Anderson (author), Usborne, ISBN: 9781803704364



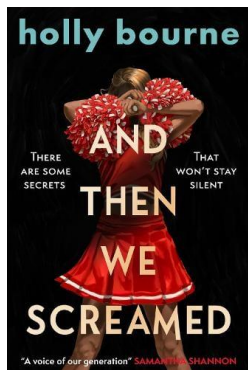
Publisher three-word description: adventure, fairy-tale, magic

All Marinka's life, she has lived in her house with chicken legs. Running across the world on magical adventures, Marinka knows how her house is feeling, and it listens to her, too. But something is wrong. And before anyone can stop it, the house has pulled itself apart and run away. With her friend Benjamin and crow Jack, Marinka races after it to find answers. Travelling across far-distant lands, through new realms and magical places, Marinka must face up to her fears to save her friends. But her house might not want to stop running...

Publisher highlighted content warnings: grief

Young and new adult books – please note these may have mature themes. Find age suggestions and content warnings on the publisher websites.

And Then We Screamed by Holly Bourne (author), Usborne, ISBN: 9781836040729



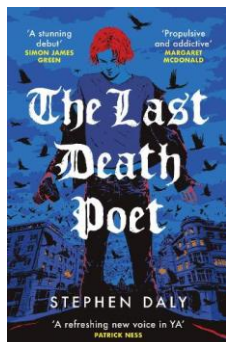
The Reading Agency's Staff Member three-word description: Gripping, powerful, thriller

Everything was perfect in the small town of Maple Lakes...until the cheerleaders started screaming. Clover wishes something would happen in her boring high school - so she can spend more time with her crush Brody, covering it for the school newspaper. But she never wished for this... When cheerleader Abigail starts screaming in the middle of an exam, people laugh.

But as more girls start breaking into uncontrollable screaming fits, it's clear something is seriously wrong. The authorities don't have a clue what's happening - so it's up to Clover and Brody to investigate. What they discover is a darkness beneath the perfect veneer of Maple Lakes - and it is spreading fast.

Publisher highlighted potential content warnings: references to rape and sexual assault

The Last Death Poet by Stephen Daly (author), Rock the Boat, ISBN: 9781836431350

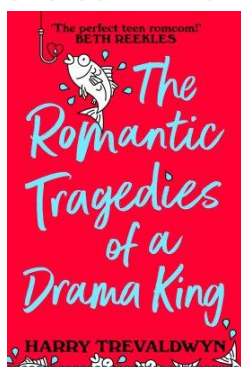


Publisher three-word description: Belfast, identity, magical

'I know about the visions. I have your camera. Call me. Please.' When Michael is uprooted to Belfast, he isn't just hoping for a fresh start. He's determined to discover the truth about his dad's mysterious absence. But from the moment he arrives, he's plagued with visions of the city's troubled past.

Michael begins settling into his new life and even meets a boy who helps erase the painful memories of his ex. But as the visions grow stronger and more intense, the only person he can really confide in is his new friend Meg. As Meg delves into the supernatural source of the visions, Michael begins to question whether events of the past are linked to his dad's disappearance. Can he use his powers to find his dad before he's gone forever?

The Romantic Tragedies of a Drama King by Harry Trevaldwyn (author), Pan Macmillan, ISBN: 9781037412110



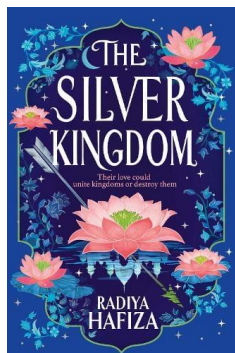
The Reading Agency's Staff Member three-word description: Nostalgic, funny, rom-com

First there was Bridget Jones. Then there was Georgia Nicolson. Now get ready to meet Patch Simmons...

Patch has decided that this is the year he will get a boyfriend. Fate finally intervenes when two new mysterious boys join drama club: Peter, who's just moved from New York (very chic) and his best friend, Sam.

Patch is confident that one of them will be his first boyfriend. So, armed with his over-supportive best friend Jean and an alarming level of self-confidence, Patch sets out to make his mission a success. Whether or not they actually like boys or him is a problem for later.

The Silver Kingdom by Radiya Hafiza (author), Simon & Schuster, ISBN: 9781398546257



Publisher three-word description: Romantasy, slow-burn, magic

Sparks fly when Prince Zayd, fresh from defending the borders of Dakaria meets Princess Layla of Sawan, determined to run away from her cruel, power-hungry mother. But the young royals must marry to build alliances, not for love. As Layla and Zayd struggle between their hearts and their duties, a centuries-old prophecy is set into motion, calling upon a magical saviour to bring the mages out of exile.

When Layla discovers she has latent powers, ones she begins to fear and must keep hidden, and Zayd begins to secretly negotiate with the mages, the young royals' paths become irreversibly intertwined.

But the kingdoms are divided, still suffering from the fallout of colonial rule, and peace between them is fragile. Could Layla be the key to finally uniting the lands, or will forbidden love plunge the lands into a devastating war?

Adult

A Soldier's Goodbye by Norma Curtis (author), Boldwood Books, ISBN: 9781806565504



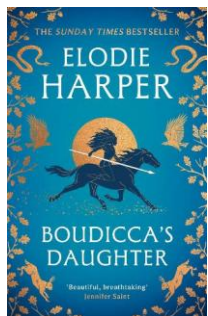
Publisher three-word description: Sweeping, emotional, sophisticated

Wales, 1944. In the heat of a wartime summer, black GIs gather at the Rivoli Ballroom, where music and dancing offer escape from the uncertainty of tomorrow. When local girl Ginny Lloyd asks American soldier Samuel Grant to dance, an unforgettable connection is born – one that will endure long after the war tears them apart.

Fifty years later, Nant is preparing to honour the men it never forgot. Ginny, now married but still haunted by what was lost, reaches out to Dora Grant in Georgia – the mother of the soldier she once loved, and the keeper of a promise made long ago. As the past begins to stir once more, long-buried secrets threaten the fragile peace Ginny has built, forcing her to confront the consequences of choices made in the aftermath of war – and the promises that were never meant to be broken.

Publisher highlighted potential content warnings: references to racism

Boudicca's Daughter by Elodie Harper (author), Apollo, ISBN: 9781804544655



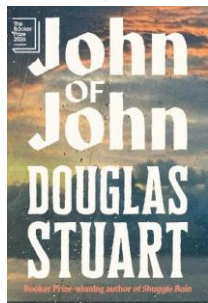
Publisher three-word description: Heroine, warrior, legend

Boudicca. Infamous warrior, queen of the British Iceni tribe and mastermind of one of history's greatest revolts. Her defeat spelled ruin for her people, yet still her name is enough to strike fear into Roman hearts. But what of the woman who grew up in her shadow? The woman who has her mother's looks and cunning but a spirit all of her own?

The woman whose desperate bid for survival will take her from Britain's sacred marshlands to the glittering façades of Nero's Roman Empire... Born to a legend. Forced to fight. Determined to succeed. Meet Solina. Boudicca's Daughter.

Publisher highlighted potential content warnings: references to war, sexual assault, enslavement, genocide

John of John by Douglas Stuart (author), Pan Macmillan, ISBN: 9781035086955

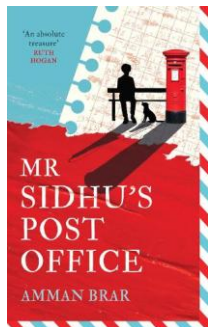


The Reading Agency's Staff Member three-word description: Powerful, beautifully written

Out of money and with little to show for his art school education, John-Calum Macleod takes the ferry home to the island of Harris to find that not much has changed except for him. In the windswept croft where he grew up, Cal resumes his old life, caught between the two poles of his childhood: his father John, a sheep farmer, weaver, and pillar of their local Presbyterian church, and his Glaswegian grandmother Ella, who has kept a faltering peace with her son-in-law for decades. While Cal wonders if any lonely men might be found on the barren hillsides of home, John is dismayed by his son's long hair and how he seems unwilling to be Saved. As the seasons pass, everything is poised to change as the threads holding together the fragile community become increasingly entangled.

The Reading Agency's staff member highlighted potential content warnings: violence and abuse

Mr Sidhu's Post Office by Amman Brar (author), HarperCollins, ISBN: 9780008722234

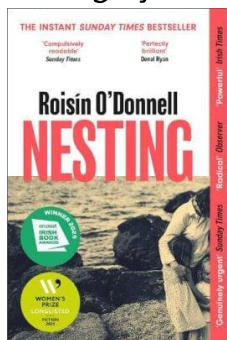


Publisher three-word description: Heartwarming, emotional and inclusive

For years, Mr Sidhu's post office has been a place of small rituals and quiet mercies: news exchanged, kindnesses remembered, a haven for all. Mr Sidhu is confidant, caretaker and witness to a community revealing itself in its loyalties and secrets. But Mr Sidhu is caught between the life he has inherited and the one he has scarcely allowed himself to imagine.

When his ordered world begins to shift, he is drawn towards a new future and an unexpected love, forcing him to navigate family tensions, shifting identities and the question of who stands beside us when everything changes. And soon, the life Mr Sidhu tended so carefully may no longer be enough...

Nesting by Roisin O'Donnell (author), Simon & Schuster, ISBN: 9781398528567



The Reading Agency's Staff Member three-word description: Compelling, real, emotional

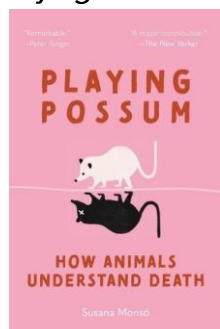
On a bright spring afternoon in Dublin, Ciara Fay makes a split-second decision that will change everything. Grabbing an armful of clothes from the washing line, Ciara straps her two young daughters into her car and drives away. Head spinning, all she knows for certain is that home is no longer safe.

This was meant to be an escape. But with dwindling savings, no job, and her family across the sea, Ciara finds herself adrift, facing a broken housing system and the voice of her own demons. As summer passes and winter closes in, she must navigate raising her children in a hotel room, searching for a new home and dealing with her husband Ryan's relentless campaign to get her to come back. Because leaving is one thing, but staying away is another.

What will it take for Ciara to rebuild her life? Can she ever truly break away from Ryan's control – and what will be the cost?

Publisher highlighted potential content warnings: Domestic violence, emotional abuse

Playing Possum: How Animals Understand Death by Susana Monsó (author), Princeton University Press, ISBN: 9780691260778

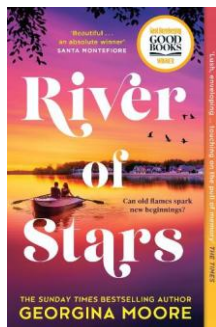


Publisher three-word description: thought-provoking, philosophical, current

How animals conceive of death and dying—and what it can teach us about our own relationships with mortality. When the opossum feels threatened, she becomes paralyzed. Her body temperature plummets, her breathing and heart rates drop to a minimum, and her glands simulate the smell of a putrefying corpse.

Playing Possum explores what the opossum and other creatures can teach us about how we and other species understand mortality, and demonstrates that the concept of death, far from being a uniquely human attribute, is widespread in the animal kingdom.

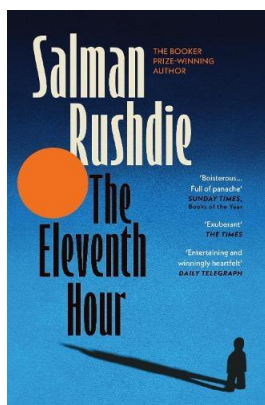
River of Stars by Georgina Moore (author), HQ, ISBN: 9780008506421



Publisher three-word description: Escapist, romantic, compelling

An island summer that could change everything... The Star women have made Walnut Tree Island their home for generations. Jo feels that life is passing her by, but when an old flame returns to the island, he re-awakens a family feud that runs deeper than the river that surrounds them. Sophie is married to a man at the heart of island life who wants her to settle down and have a family, so why is she secretly playing with fire? Over a long hot summer, as old secrets resurface, can love heal the damage that was done so many years ago?

The Eleventh Hour by Salman Rushdie (author), Vintage, ISBN: 9781529968842



The Reading Agency's Staff Member three-word description: Witty, short story collection

If old age was thought of as an evening, ending in midnight oblivion, they were well into the eleventh hour.

Two quarrelsome old men in Chennai, India, experience private tragedy during national calamity. Revisiting the Bombay neighbourhood of *Midnight's Children*, a magical musician is unhappily married to a multibillionaire. In an English university college, an undead academic asks a lonely student to avenge his former tormentor.

If you'd like to read one of these picks, you can visit your local library and online platforms for all formats, order from our [Bookshop.org](https://www.bookshop.org) or see if [Spotify](https://open.spotify.com/) may have an audiobook version. Please share any reviews on our [Book Club Hub website](https://www.bookclubhub.com) to let our wider community know what you thought! Find out more about the current [Radio 2 Book Club season](#).