

# **The** *(incomplete)* **Lit in Colour book list**

**100 texts by writers of colour**

Primary edition for Key Stage 2



**Lit in** *colour*

# Why is our list (incomplete)?

We're calling our book list incomplete, because we know it will never manage to be exhaustive or definitive. There are so many fantastic books by writers of colour and those from minority ethnic backgrounds that deserve to be read, studied and celebrated. We wanted to make a booklist that could bring together a small sample of 100 incredible texts published both by Penguin and other publishers.

Our aim is to update and add to this list annually, to capture new writing and to highlight well-loved classics.

This booklist is designed primarily to support KS2 Primary Teachers who want to bring exciting texts into their classrooms. We have listed suitable titles offered by year group, and have done our best to have a variety of books to support different reading abilities. By drawing together a range of books on different genres and subject matters, we hope to show some of the scope of what is currently available.

Feel free to click on book titles and cover images as they are hyperlinked to more information about each book. There is also an index at the end of the list categorised by popular themes and topics.

Don't see a text you think we should include next time?

Please send your suggestions to [Litincolour@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk](mailto:Litincolour@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk)

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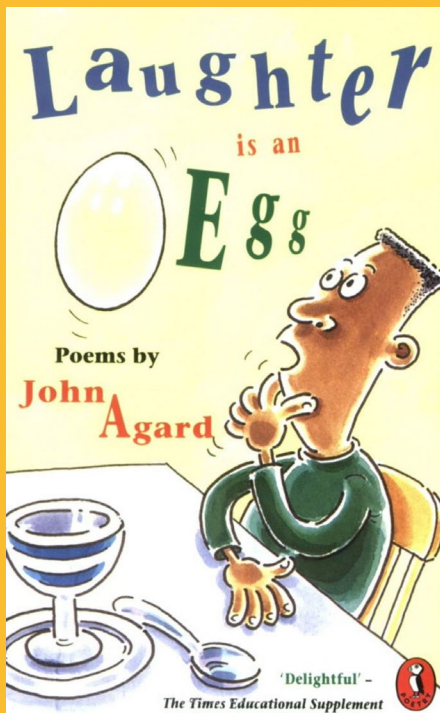
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**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 1990

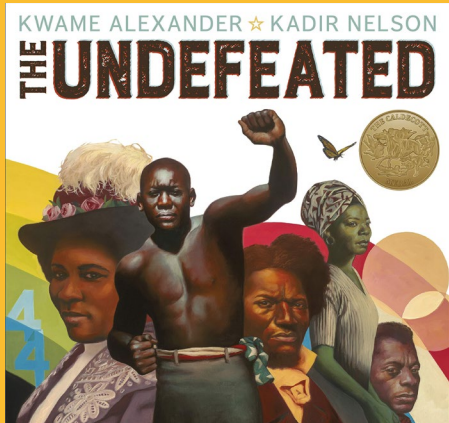
# Laughter is an Egg

**John Agard**

**Themes/topics:** Humour, Poetry

This eggs-traordinary collection of poems, riddles, jokes and ballads are cracking good fun.

Agard is an acclaimed writer and performer of poetry for both adults and children, and has won awards including the Queen's Gold Medal Award for Poetry, the Smarties Award, the Paul Hamlyn Award, the Guyana prize and the CLPE Award.



**Publisher:** Andersen Press  
**Year:** 2019

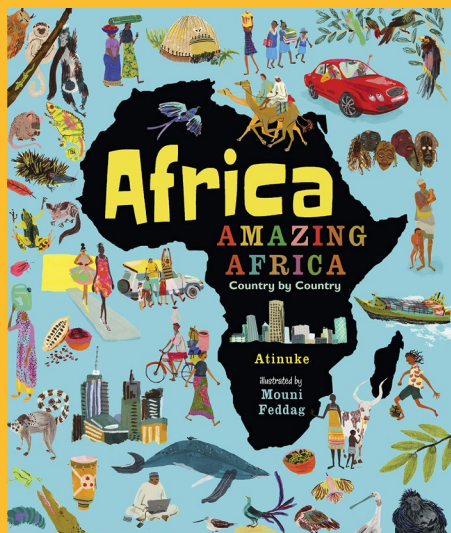
# The Undeclared

**Kwame Alexander, Kadir Nelson (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Black history, Poetry

American writer and poet Alexander's *The Undeclared* is an ode to Black history, and the strength and bravery shown by people everyday. This poem references lyrics and lines originally shared by some of the world's most famous and celebrated heroes, but is also about everyday people.

*The Undeclared* won the Caldecott Medal, awarded to the most distinguished American picture book for children, and the Coretta Scott King Award, which recognises African American authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults. It was also named a Newbury Honor Book for its outstanding contribution to children's literature.



**Publisher:** Walker Books  
**Year:** 2019

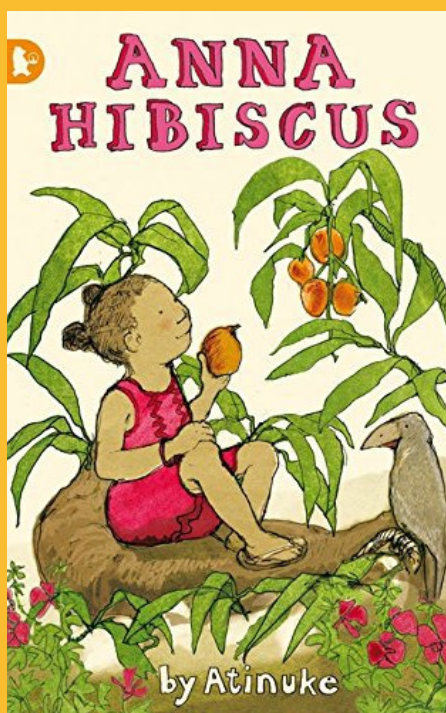
# Africa. Amazing Africa

**Atinuke, Mouni Feddag (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** African history, Non-fiction

British-Nigerian storyteller Atinuke takes readers on a journey around Africa and its 55 countries in this love letter. The book is divided into five sections – South, East, West, Central and North – and each country has a page dedicated to it, filled with facts and colourful illustrations.

This book works as a starting point for those wanting to find out more about Africa and its many diverse countries and communities.



**Publisher:** Walker Books  
**Year:** 2007

# Anna Hibiscus

**Atinuke, Lauren Tobia (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Family, Humour

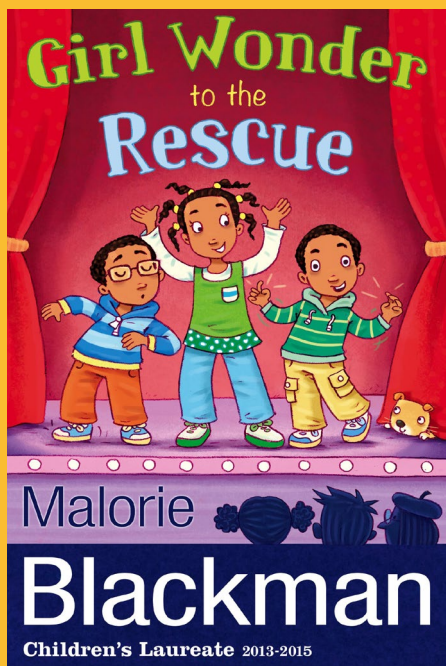
Anna Hibiscus is British-Nigerian storyteller Atinuke's most famous character. This book contains four tales about the girl, who lives with her mother, her father, her baby twin brothers, and lots and lots of her family in Africa.

Atinuke began her writing career by performing stories all over the world, focusing on tales from Africa and the African diaspora.

In 2005, an illness prevented her from travelling, and it was then that she wrote the first Anna Hibiscus stories.

*The Scotsman* called this book a "series of lively, captivating tales".





**Publisher:** Tamarind  
**Year:** 1991

## Girl Wonder series

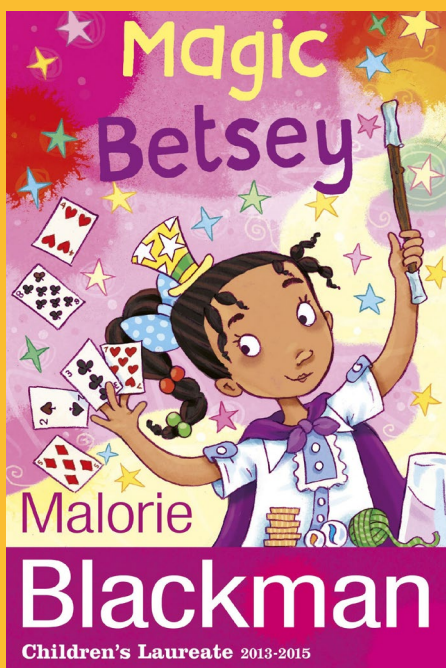
**Malorie Blackman**

**Themes/topics:** Humour, Family, Adventure

Blackman's Girl Wonder books are about the adventures of Maxine, known as Girl Wonder, and her twin brothers Anthony and Edward.

Each of the books - *Girl Wonder and the Terrific Twins*, *Girl Wonder's Winter Adventures*, and *Girl Wonder to the Rescue* - contain multiple short stories about Maxine, who is always getting into trouble, but always has a plan to fix everything.

From building the biggest snowball the world has ever seen to scaring her mum at Halloween, these stories – the first of which were published in 1991 – are full of mischief and humour.



**Publisher:** Red Fox  
**Year:** 1994

## Magic Betsey

**Malorie Blackman, Jamie Smith (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Adventure, Self-confidence, Humour

This book is one of five short story collections by Blackman that feature the character Betsey Biggalow.

In *Magic Betsey*, which contains four funny tales, Betsey puts on a magic show, and learns the importance of practice makes perfect and believing in yourself.

The Betsey series – which also consists of *Betsey's Birthday Surprise*, *Hurricane Betsey*, *Betsey Biggalow the Detective*, and *Betsey Biggalow is Here!* – are good for younger readers to help them build confidence in reading aloud or alone.



**Publisher:** Orion Children's Books  
**Year:** 2020

# When Secrets Set Sail

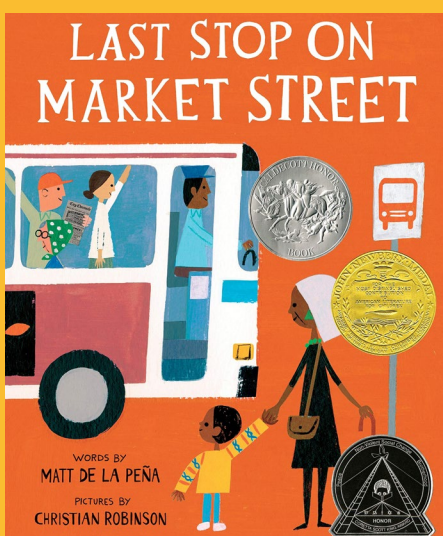
Sita Brahmachari, Evan Hollingdale (illustrator)

Themes/topics: Grief, Adoption, Family

Brahmachari is the author of award-winning children's books, YA novels and short stories.

In *When Secrets Set Sail*, Usha's newly adoptive sister Imtiaz arrives shortly after Usha's grandmother Kali Ma has died; both feel lost, and clash. But when Kali Ma's ghost appears, they discover their house used to be a home for nannies who couldn't return to their Indian homeland, and Kali Ma can't pass on until the girls fulfil a promise she made years before. The pair, with their friend Cosmo and a couple of ghosts, must set off on a quest through London.

Brahmachari's debut *Artichoke Hearts* won the Waterstones Children's Book Prize in 2011, and she has had five nominations for the Carnegie Medal. She has previously served as Writer in Residence for BookTrust.



**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2015

# Last Stop on Market Street

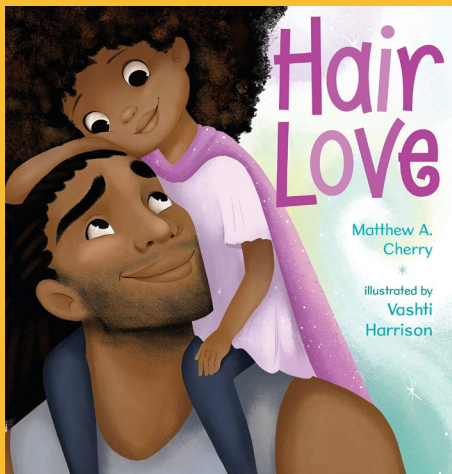
Matt de la Peña, Christian Robinson (illustrator)

Themes/topics: Socioeconomic issues, Inclusivity, Family

This picture book follows CJ as he begins his weekly bus journey through the city with his nana. CJ wonders why he and his family can't drive a car like his friends, but soon his nana helps him see the beauty and fun in their routine.

*Last Stop on Market Street* won the 2016 Newbery Medal, one of America's most prestigious awards for children's writing. Newbery Medal committee chair Ernie J. Cox said of the book: "Read it aloud to someone. The use of language to elicit questions, to spark imagination and to make us laugh is at its best when spoken."





**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2019

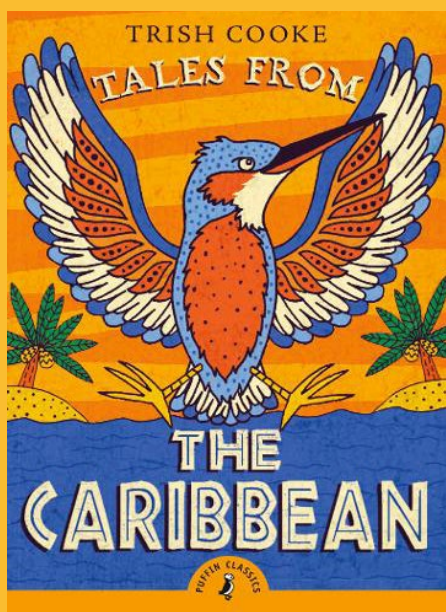
## Hair Love

**Matthew A. Cherry, Vashti Harrison (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Father/daughter relationships, Black hair, Family

*Hair Love* began as a short film written and directed by Cherry, a former American football player, to counter stereotypes about Black fathers.

Based on the film, which won an Oscar for Best Animated Short Film at the 2020 Academy Awards, the book is about Zuri, whose beautiful hair has a mind of its own. Usually, it's up to her mum to style Zuri's hair, but when her dad steps in to style it for a special occasion, he has a lot to learn.



**Publisher:** Puffin Classics  
**Year:** 2017

## Tales from the Caribbean

**Trish Cooke**

**Themes/topics:** Folklore, Mythology

From the first Kingfisher to Anansi, this book features lively retellings of tales gathered from islands across the Caribbean. The book includes endnotes with a glossary and additional information as well as ideas for activities that children can do to explore the stories further.

Cooke has won a number of awards for her picture books, including the Smarties Book Prize, the WH Smith Under-Fives Book Prize and the Kurt Maschler Award, and she has also previously been Highly Commended for the Kate Greenaway Medal.



# Extraordinary Lives Series

Various

Themes/topics: Black history, Feminism, STEM, Women in science, Civil Rights

Publisher: Puffin

Year: 2018 - 2020

Extraordinary Lives is a series of short biographies shining a light on modern and historical figures. The books, which are accessible and educational as well as entertaining, contain timelines and facts, and are illustrated.

*The Extraordinary Life of Serena Williams* by Shelina Janmohamed, illustrated by Ashley Evans, is the story of the legendary tennis player, from her childhood to the hard work she put into her career to her worldwide success.



*The Extraordinary Life of Nelson Mandela* by E.L. Norry, illustrated by Ashley Evans, introduces young readers to South Africa's first Black president, and chronicles his fight for equality and his achievements.



*The Extraordinary Life of Michelle Obama* by Dr. Sheila Kanani, illustrated by Sarah Walsh, is the tale of the former First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, touching on her time in the White House, as well as her childhood and her early career as a lawyer and activist.



*The Extraordinary Life of Mary Seacole* by Nadia Redgrave, illustrated by Aleanna Harris, is about the woman now known for her medical work in the Crimean war. But for a long time, Seacole's story was lost, and this book will introduce readers to a woman who combated racial prejudice and still inspires.



*The Extraordinary Life of Katherine Johnson* by Device Jina, illustrated by Maggie Cole, is the story of Katherine Johnson, who was also one of the subjects of the film *Hidden Figures*. Johnson loved maths as a child, and went on to become one of the most important people in the history of space travel.

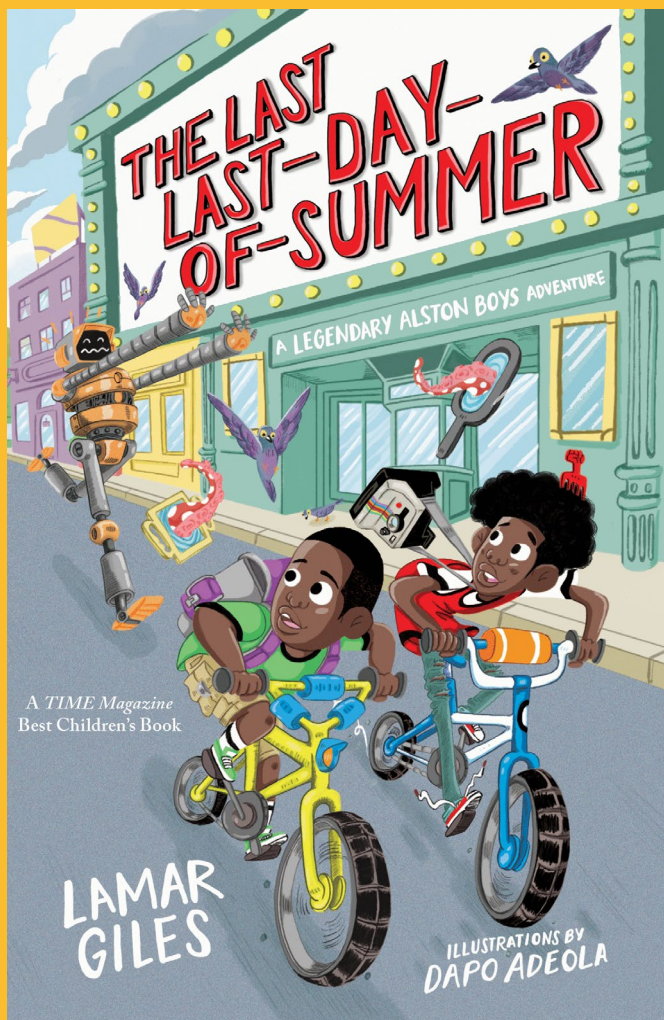


*The Extraordinary Life of Rosa Parks* by Dr Sheila Kanani, illustrated by Nan Lawson, focuses on Rosa Parks, who was known for refusing to give up her seat on a bus in Alabama. Kanani's book will give young readers more information on the woman behind the activist.



*The Extraordinary Life of Malala Yousafzai* by Hiba Noor Khan, illustrated by Rita Petralucci, is about education campaigner Malala Yousafzai, from her childhood in Pakistan's Swat Valley to her speeches at the United Nations.





# The Last Last-Day-of-Summer

Lamar Giles, Dapo Adeola (illustrator)

Themes/topics: Adventure, Friendship, Mystery

Publisher: Versify

Year: 2019

These books feature Otto and Sheed, cousins, mischief makers and local sleuths in their zany town in Virginia, America.

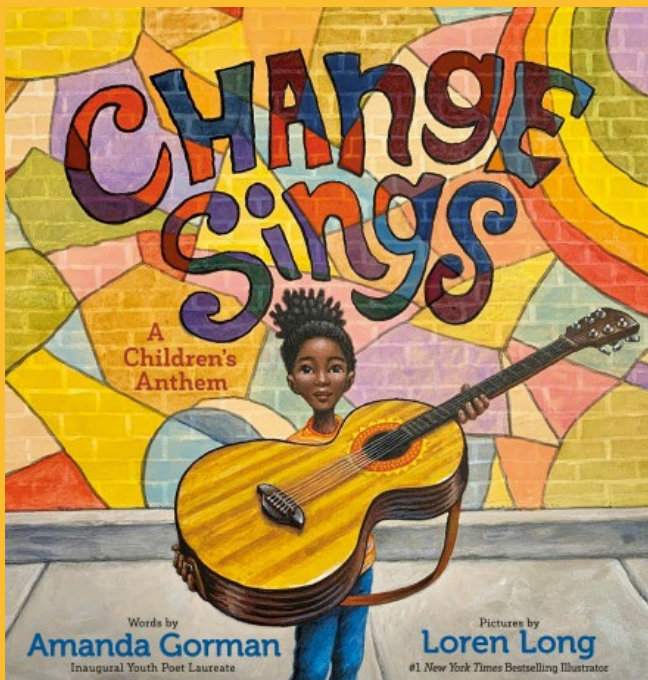
In *The Last Last-Day-of-Summer*, Otto and Sheed are bickering when a mysterious man appears with a camera that literally freezes time. With the help of some strange people and even stranger creatures, Otto and Sheed will have to put aside their differences to save their town before time stops for good.

The pair's second adventure, *The Last Mirror on the Left*, takes place a year later. Unlike the majority of their town, Missus Nedraw of the Rorrim Mirror Emporium remembers the time freeze from *The Last Last-Day-of-Summer*, and how Otto and Sheed took her mirrors without permission in order to fix their mess. She's willing to overlook their misdeeds if they help her capture one of her worst prisoners, who has escaped.

Giles is an award-winning American author of young adult novels and short stories, while Adeola is a rising British illustration talent, whose other books include the Look Up! series created with Nathan Bryon.

“With total mastery, Giles creates in Logan County an exuberant vortex of weirdness, where the commonplace sits cheek by jowl with the utterly fantastic, and populates it with memorable characters who more than live up to their setting”

-Kirkus Reviews



# Change Sings

Amanda Gorman, Loren Long (illustrator)

Themes/topics: Inclusivity, Community activism

Publisher: Puffin

Year: 2021

This lyrical picture book is by Gorman, who was widely celebrated for 'The Hill We Climb', the poem she read at the inauguration of President Joe Biden in 2021.

In *Change Sings*, a young girl leads a cast of characters on a musical journey where they learn that they have the power to make changes in the world, in their communities, and in themselves.

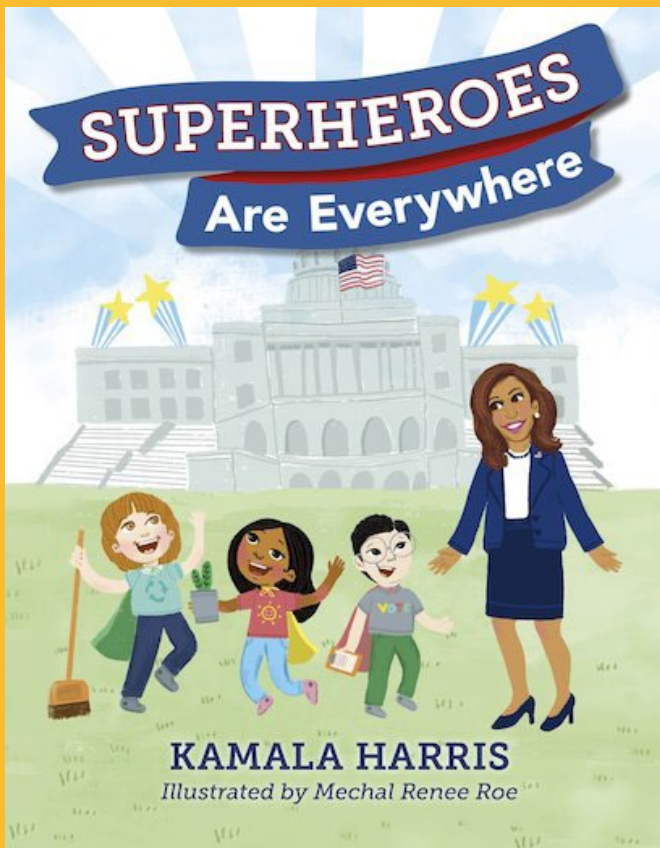
Gorman is the youngest presidential inaugural poet in US history, and was named the first ever National Youth Poet Laureate of the United States.

Also in 2021, Gorman will release a collection of poems that includes 'The Hill We Climb'. The inaugural poem is also available as a book on its own, with a foreword by Oprah Winfrey.

“Amanda Gorman’s The Hill We Climb is exactly what she performed it as: hope epitomised”

-Sophia Thakur





# Superheroes are Everywhere

Kamala Harris, Meechal Renee Rowe  
(illustrator)

Themes/topics: Biography, Politics, Society

Publisher: Puffin

Year: 2019

Written before she became the first woman, and the first African American and first Asian American, vice president of the United States, Harris wrote this inspirational tale about how there are superheroes everywhere.

Full of joy, *Superheroes are Everywhere* takes readers through Harris' story, and shows how the power to make the world better lies inside us all. It also contains a guide at the end to being a superhero.

Harris was only the second Black woman ever elected to the US Senate when she took up her position in 2017.

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# Little Leaders Series

Vashti Harrison

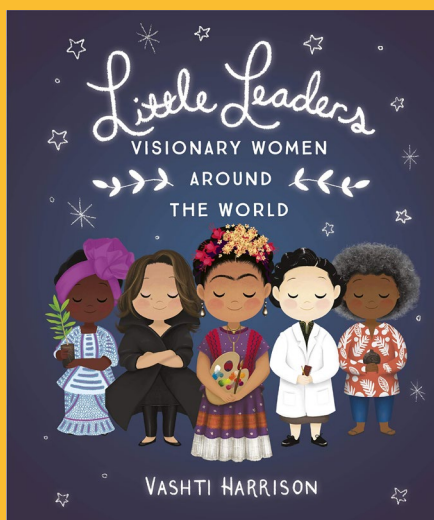
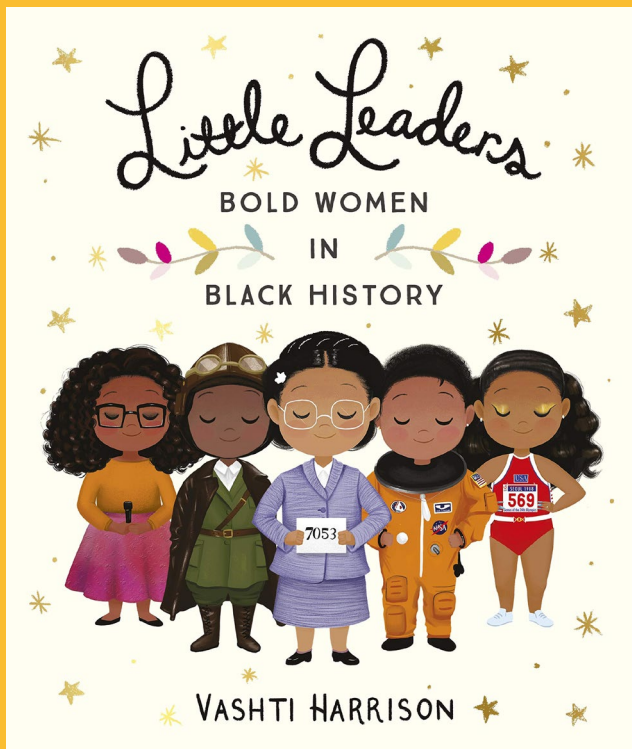
Themes/topics: STEM, Women in history, Black history

Publisher: Puffin

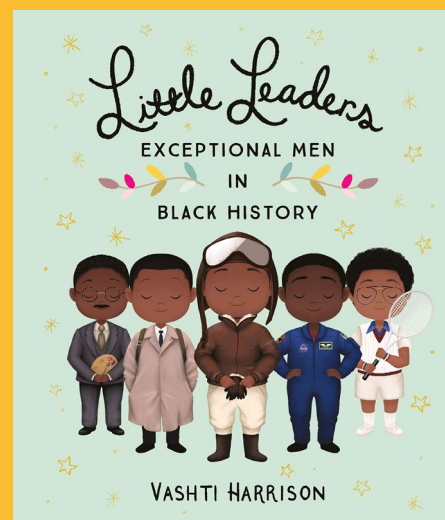
Year: 2017 - 2019

Harrison is the author and illustrator of the Little Leaders' series, which brings to life the true stories of people throughout history.

*Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History* is the first book, and was based on her popular Instagram posts from Black History Month in 2017. It features 40 biographies of African American women that helped shape history.



In *Visionary Women Around the World*, Harrison looks at 40 more women, including writers, artists, scientists and more. Among those featured are well-known names like architect Zaha Hadid and actor Hedy Lamarr to lesser-known women like environmental activist Wangari Maathai and Chien-Shiung Wu.



The men featured in *Exceptional Men in Black History* broke barriers, fought injustice and realised their dreams. Among those readers will learn about are diplomat Kofi Annan, comic book author Dwayne McDuffie and Doctor Harold Moody.





# Mayhem Mission

Burhana Islam, Farah Khandaker  
(illustrator)

Themes/topics: Family, Humour, Adventure

Publisher: Knights Of

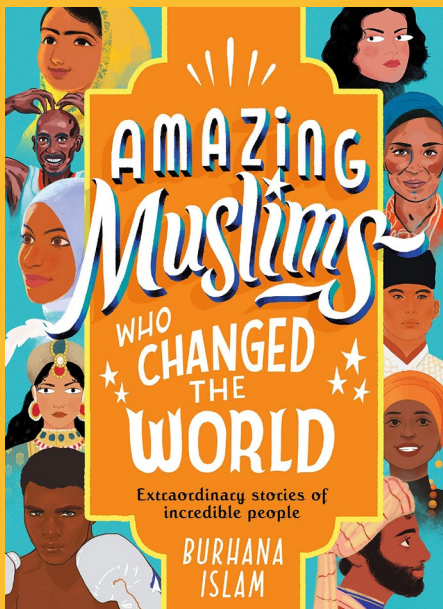
Year: 2021

*Mayhem Mission* is the first in a new series – My Laugh-Out-Loud Life – by Islam, who is also the author of the non-fiction book *Amazing Muslims Who Changed the World*.

This novel follows Yusuf, whose older sister is getting married. While Yusuf is happy that delicious food, lots of presents, and time spent with his cousins are on the horizon, he's not prepared to take his sister's place as the responsible one in his family. And so, Yusuf is left with one option: cause chaos and ruin the wedding.

Islam said of the book: "*Mayhem Mission* is a love letter to every multi-generational and multicultural family out there... In this day and age, it sometimes seems that there are too many expectations on people of colour to write narratives centred on heavy themes of inner-turmoil and identity. To combat that, Yusuf's story is a comedic celebration of what it means to be loved unconditionally — even if that love has a funny way of manifesting itself."

● Perfect for fans of the Tom Gates' books by Liz Pichon.



**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2020

# Amazing Muslims Who Changed the World

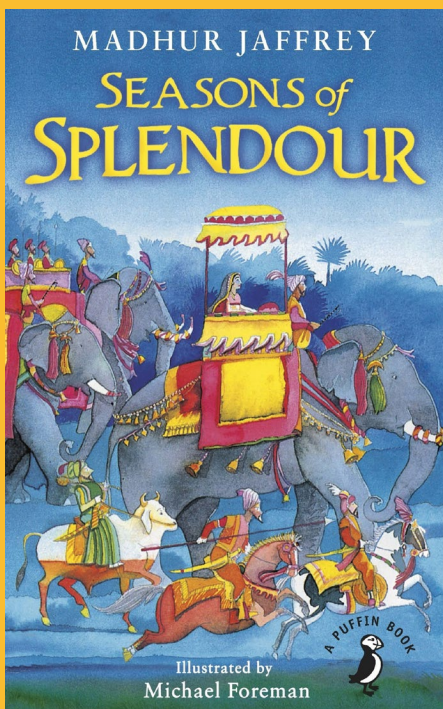
**Burhana Islam, Various (illustrators)**

**Themes/topics:** Muslim history, Women in history, Biography

Part of the popular anthology trend profiling well-known (and not so well-known) individuals, this book focuses on those from Muslim backgrounds.

*Amazing Muslims Who Changed the World* profiles Muslims such as Muhammad Ali and Noor Inayat Khan, as well as shining a light on some lesser-known people. These include Hasan Ibn Al-Haytham, the first scientist to prove theories about how light travels, and fearsome female ruler Sultan Razia. Each profile features an illustration by an artist of Muslim origin.

Islam is passionate about exploring themes of heritage, belonging, identity and faith in her children's and YA works.



**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 1985

# Seasons of Splendour

**Madhur Jaffrey, Michael Foreman (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Folklore, Mythology, India

Legendary chef Jaffrey turns her hand to telling classic folktales in this collection of mythological stories drawn from a heritage of Hindu epics.

The stories, including that of the great god Krishna and the tale of how the monkey god Hanuman helped defeat the Demon King Ravan, are arranged according to the sequence of the Hindu year.

Jaffrey introduces every story with a short anecdote from her childhood, and the book is illustrated throughout in black line and tone by Michael Foreman.





Publisher: Puffin  
Year: 2017

## Tales from Africa

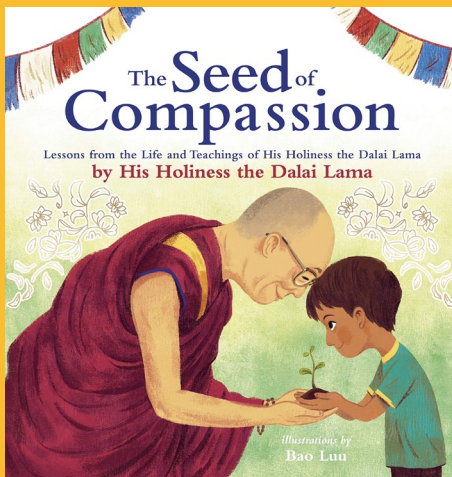
K. P. Kojo

Themes/topics: Folklore, African culture, Mythology

This is a collection of stories drawn from the the folklore of countries throughout Africa. Among the tales brought to life with humour and rhyme are the story of how the Lion got his comeuppance, and a look at a Frog wedding in the Sky Kingdom.

The book includes endnotes with a glossary and activities for children to do to explore the stories further.

K. P. Kojo is the pen name for Ghanaian author Nii Ayikwei Parkes, who was one of 39 writers aged under 40 from sub-Saharan Africa who took part in the Hay Festival's Africa39 project in 2014.



Publisher: Puffin  
Year: 2020

## The Seed of Compassion

Dalai Lama, Bao Luu (illustrator)

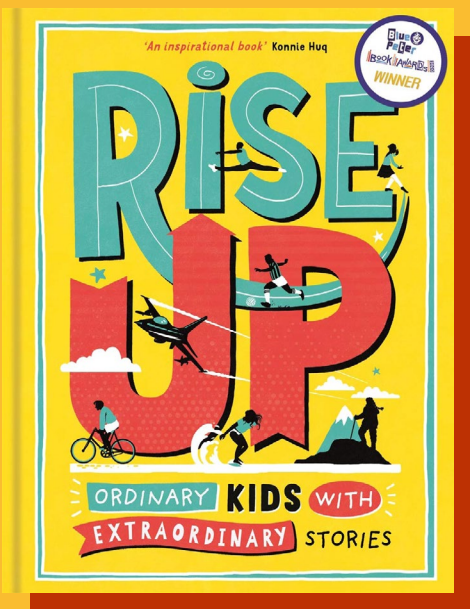
Themes/topics: Biography, Kindness

This book is the first time the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Dalai Lama has addressed children directly.

In *The Seed of Compassion*, he shares his story, from his childhood as a child in Tibet named Lhamo Thondup to his current position. And along the way, he talks about the lessons of peace and compassion he has learned, and passes them on to young readers.

*The Seed of Compassion* is a book encouraging everyone to bring a little more kindness to the world.





**Publisher:** Buster Books  
**Year:** 2019

# Rise Up: Ordinary Kids with Extraordinary Stories

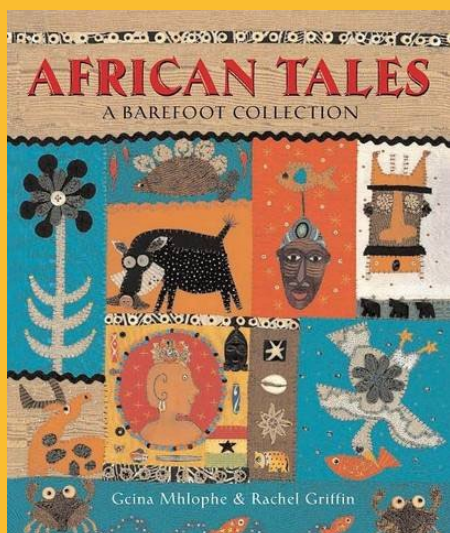
Amanda Li, Amy Blackwell (illustrator)

Themes/topics: Biography, Real-life stories

This book is an anthology of 29 true stories of children from all over the world who have done extraordinary things and overcome challenges.

Among the people featured in *Rise Up* are climate campaigner Greta Thunberg, chess player Phiona Mutesi (who is the subject of the book and film *Queen of Katwe*, starring Lupita Nyong'o), and Boyan Slat, inventor and CEO of The Ocean Cleanup.

Each story is followed by practical tips, such as how to deal with altitude sickness and how to be more green.



**Publisher:** Barefoot Books  
**Year:** 2009

# African Tales: A Barefoot Collection

Gcina Mhlophe, Rachel Griffin (illustrator)

Themes/topics: Folklore, Mythology, Africa

This anthology includes eight traditional tales from all over Africa, with each accompanied by hand-sewn collage artwork decorated with African beads.

Mhlophe is an author, poet, playwright, director, performer and storyteller, who has performed her stories in venues including the Royal Albert Hall in London and the Kennedy Centre in the US. She has also collaborated with Ladysmith Black Mambazo on a children's CD.

# Planet Omar Series

Zanib Mian, Nasaya Mafadarik (illustrator)

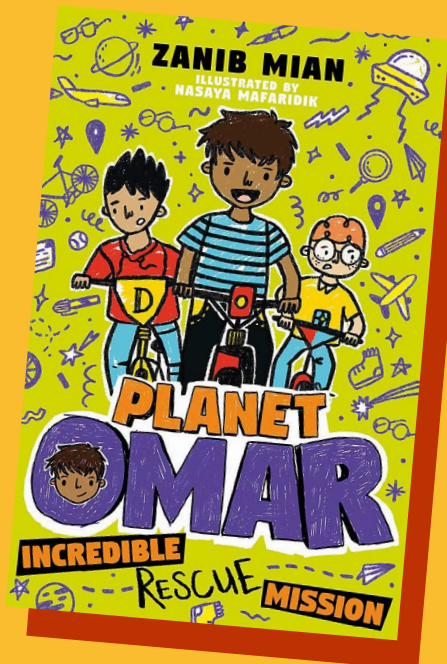
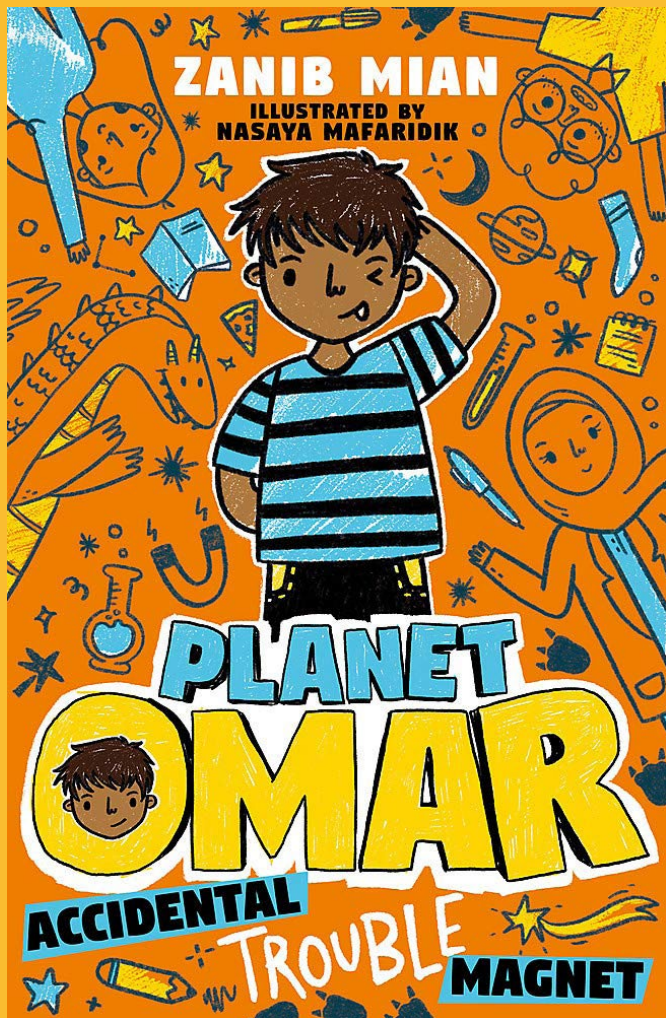
Themes/topics: Family, Humour, Mystery, Adventure

Publisher: Hodder Children's Books

Year: 2019 - 2020

The first book in Mian's series about the hilarious Omar won the Little Rebels Award in 2018 under the title *The Muslims*, before being reissued with new illustrations and revised text.

*Accidental Trouble Magnet* sees Omar trying to stay out of trouble (and not succeeding) when his family moves house and he has to attend a new school.

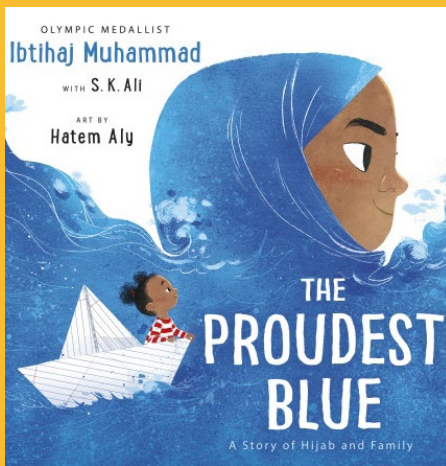


● This series is perfect for fans of Jeff Kinney's Wimpy Kid series.

In *Unexpected Super Spy*, Omar and his friends raise money for their local mosque, a plan that works perfectly until the money goes missing. Omar needs to work out who has the money in time to stop the mosque closing down.

In the third book, *Incredible Rescue Mission*, Omar thinks his lovely teacher, who is now much more grumpy, has been abducted by aliens. He persuades his friends to mount a rescue mission, but what they find is suprising.





**Publisher:** Andersen Press  
**Year:** 2020

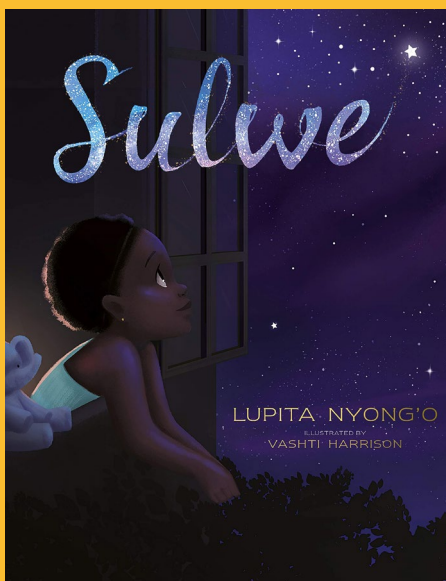
# The Proudest Blue

**Ibtihaj Muhammad and S. K. Ali, Hatem Aly (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Self-confidence, Religion, Bullying

*The Proudest Blue* is the story of Faizah, who is embarking on her first day at school, and her older sister Asiya, who is wearing hijab for the first time. But while Faizah thinks her sister's blue hijab is beautiful, not everyone feels the same. Faced with hurtful words, Faizah has to find new ways to be strong.

This is an uplifting story by fencer Muhammad, the first Muslim American woman in hijab to compete and to win a medal for the United States in the Olympic Games, and novelist Ali, with gorgeous illustrations by Aly.



**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2019

# Sulwe

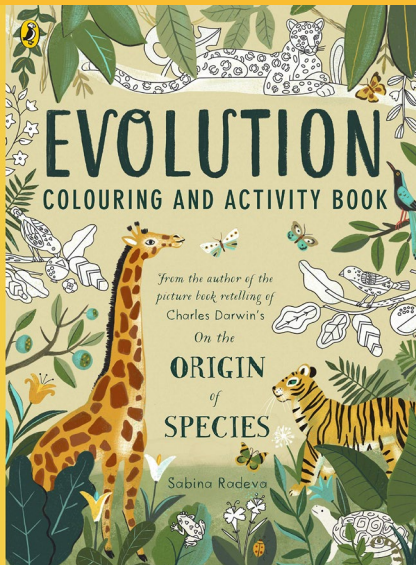
**Lupita Nyong'o, Vashti Harrison (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Colourism, Beauty standards, Self-confidence

In this sweet and moving picture book from Oscar-winning actor Nyong'o and illustrator Harrison, the focus is on Sulwe, whose skin is the colour of midnight.

Darker than everyone in her family and at her school, Sulwe longs to be bright, until a magic journey through the night sky changes her view of her own beauty.

Inspirational, this is a look at individuality and colourism.



**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2020

# Evolution Colouring and Activity Book

**Sabina Radeva**

**Themes/topics:** STEM, Activity, Science

This accessible and beautifully illustrated book will teach children about evolution. It contains detailed colouring pages and mind-grabbing activities, and will inspire creativity as well as helping children understand one of the most fundamental scientific theories of all time.

Radeva is also the author and illustrator of the first ever picture book retelling of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*.



**Publisher:** Tamarind  
**Year:** 2014

# Nina and the Magical Carnival

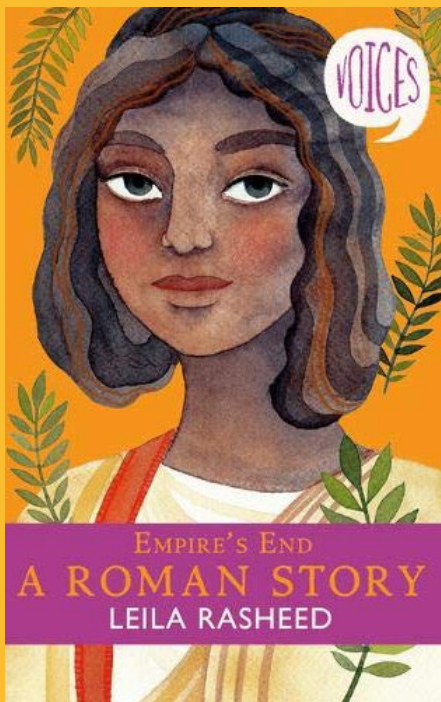
**Madhvi Ramani**

**Themes/topics:** Adventure, Travel

Nina has to take part in the school talent show in just a few days, and hasn't got an idea for what she wants to do. But when her teacher mentions a magical place that could help, Nina journeys to Brazil in a travelling spice shed, and has an adventure involving a mysterious costume, a samba parade and a top-secret mission.

The character of Nina also features in two other books by Ramani: *Nina and the Travelling Spice Shed* and *Nina and the Kung Fu Adventure*.

Ramani is a writer and editor whose work has been published in *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and more.



**Publisher:** Scholastic  
**Year:** 2020

# Empire's End: A Roman Story

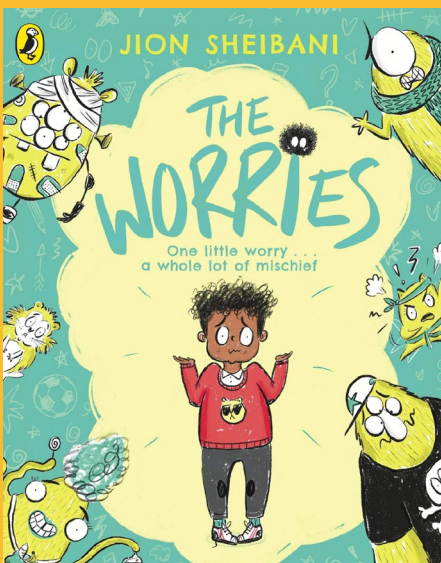
**Leila Rasheed**

**Themes/topics:** British history, Adventure, Politics

This book focuses on Camilla, a young North African girl who travels with her mother and father from Leptis Magna to Rome in 207 AD. Just months later, Camilla and her family are sent to Britannica, where tragedy strikes, leaving Camilla alone to navigate the world of the Empress while her father travels north.

Based on real historical events, this is a look at a largely untold story in British history.

Rasheed is a children's and YA author, and her first book *Chips, Beans and Limousines* won a Red House Read of the Year award.



**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2021

# The Worries: Sohal Finds a Friend

**Jion Sheibani**

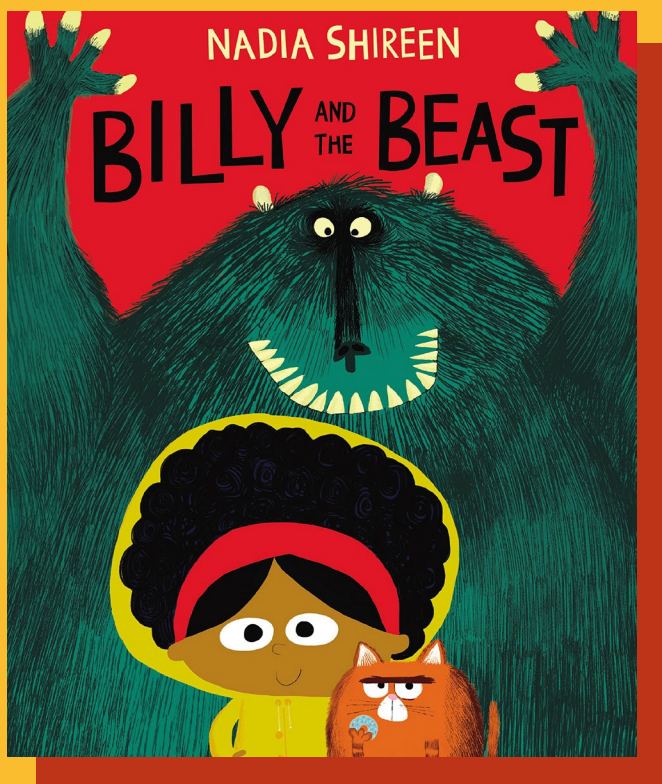
**Themes/topics:** Mental health, Friendship, Anxiety

*Sohal Finds a Friend* is the first in a new series of books that explores common problems faced by children.

Sohal is worried about a lot of things, so draws them to make himself feel better. But when he wakes up the next morning, Sohal discovers a new set of funny, furry friends at the end of his bed. Hurt, Fail, Anger, Big and Alone soon turn Sohal's life upside down, and it's up to him to work out how to keep his worries under control.

This book is a good introduction for talking to children about their anxieties, and perfect for fans of Pixar's *Inside Out*.





## Billy series

Nadia Shireen

**Themes/topics:** Self-confidence, Humour, Adventure

**Publisher:** Jonathan Cape

**Year:** 2018 and 2019

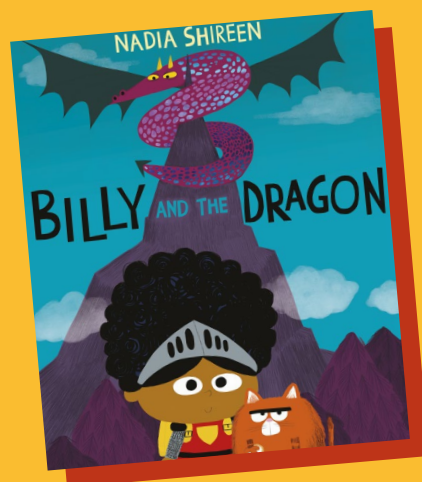
Author and illustrator Shireen's Billy is a heroine for our times, and has so far been the subject of two books.

In *Billy and the Beast*, she's exploring the woods with her trusty sidekick Fatcat when she hears a terrible rumble from a Terrible Beast. The Beast is making a Terrible Soup from all Billy's friends, but Billy has some tricks up her sleeve (or in her hair) to save everyone.

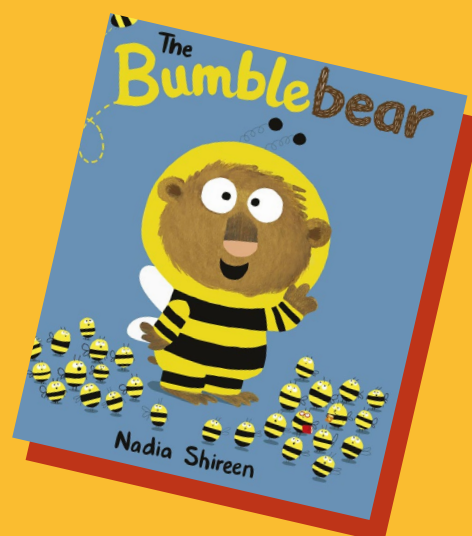
In her second adventure, Billy is at a fancy dress party. But instead of enjoying herself, disaster strikes when her sidekick Fatcat is kidnapped by a fire-breathing dragon. Luckily for Fatcat, Billy doesn't hesitate to go on a brave rescue mission.

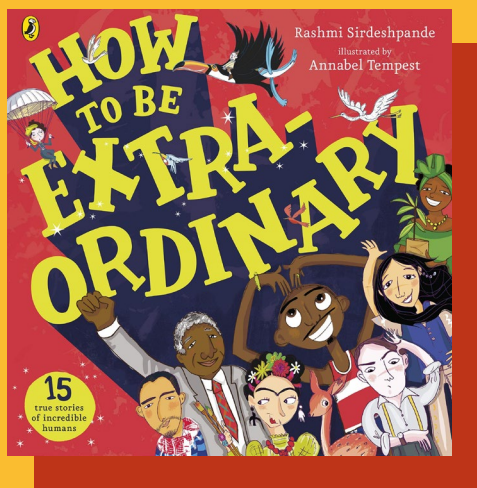
*The Guardian* said of *Billy and the Dragon*: "It's a great story for everyone, especially those not used to seeing themselves centre-stage."

Shireen previously served as writer-in-residence at BookTrust, and is also the author of books including *The Bumblebear*.



● *Billy and the Beast* was named one of The Observer's Best Children's Books of 2018.





**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2019

# How to be Extraordinary

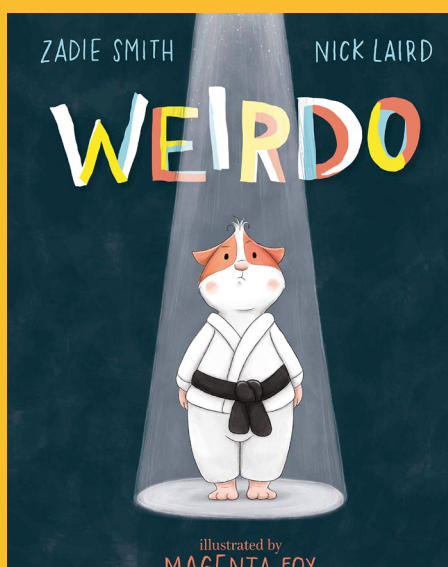
**Rashmi Sirdeshpande, Annabel Tempest (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** History, Biography

An inspirational book, *How to Be Extraordinary* gathers together the tales of people including runner and Olympian Mo Farah, Syrian musician Aeham Ahmad, who dragged his piano through war-torn streets to perform songs of hope and unity, and Sau Lan Wu, a Chinese American particle physicist.

The 15 people featured are all united by common themes of hard work, perseverance and their remarkable achievements. Each person is profiled in a double page spread, and there are full colour illustrations throughout.

Sirdeshpande writes both fiction and non-fiction picture books, and was chosen as one of 11 writers for Penguin Random House's WriteNow mentoring programme in 2018.



**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2021

# Weirdo

**Zadie Smith and Nick Laird, Magenta Fox (illustrator)**

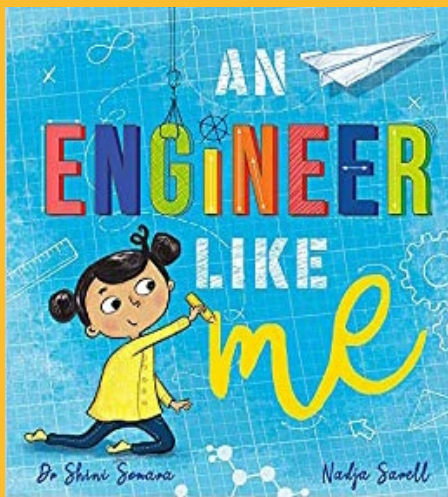
**Themes/topics:** Loneliness, Friendship, Self-confidence

Two veteran writers, Smith and Laird, come together with debut illustrator Fox to tell the story of Maud, a guinea pig who inexplicably wears a judo suit – and not everyone understands or approves.

When Maud is thrown into a new and confusing situation, it takes brave decisions and serendipitous encounters for her to find her place and embrace her individuality.

Smith is the author of a number of novels for adults, including her hit debut *White Teeth*, while Laird is a novelist and poet, who also edited *Zoo of the New: Poems to Read Now*, with Don Paterson.





**Publisher:** Wren & Rook  
**Year:** 2020

# An Engineer Like Me

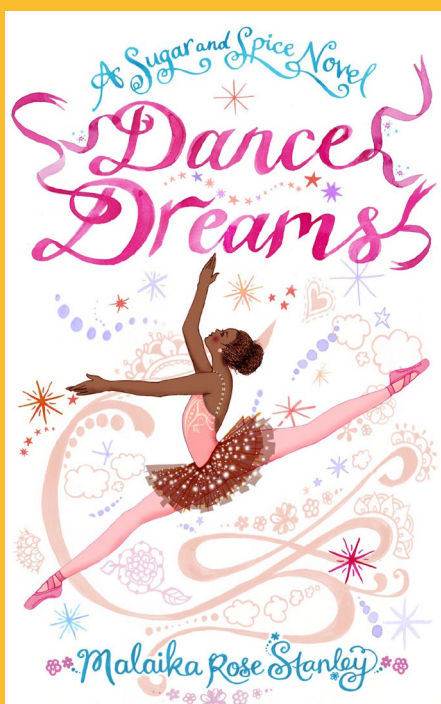
**Dr Shini Somara, Nadja Sarell (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** STEM, Women in science

This empowering illustrated story introduces children to the worlds of engineering and problem-solving through the character of Zara.

Curious about everything, Zara travels around the city with her gran, marvelling at how planes stay up and roller coasters do loop-the-loops. As she goes on her journey, Zara learns about brilliant engineers who have shaped the world around her, and who inspire her to come up with her own inventions.

Engineer and TV presenter Somara has also included pages encouraging children to try making the perfect paper aeroplane and drop an egg safely from a height.



**Publisher:** Tamarind  
**Year:** 2013

# Dance Dreams

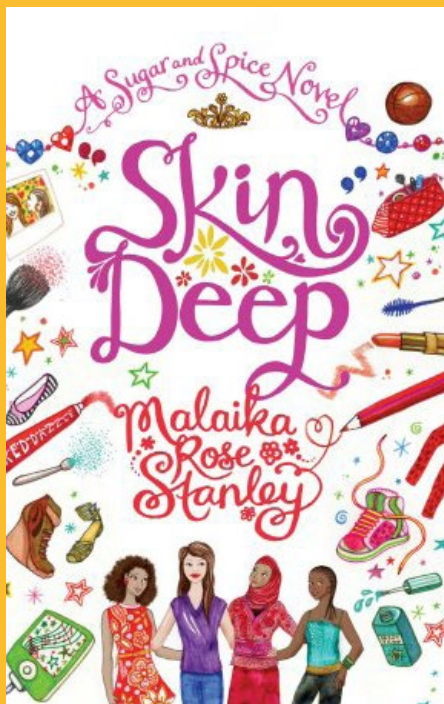
**Malaika Rose Stanley**

**Themes/topics:** Dance, Arts and culture, Friendship

Stanley's book fills a much-needed gap by telling the story of a Black ballet dancer.

*Dance Dreams* focuses on 13-year-old Keisha, who is over the moon to receive a callback from the Birchwood School for Dance. But while Keisha knows the school could get her closer to her dream of being a ballerina, attending would mean leaving behind her friends. Will Keisha's dreams turn into a nightmare?

Stanley grew up in Birmingham, and worked as a teacher in Zambia, Uganda, Germany, Switzerland and Britain, before becoming a full time writer.



# Skin Deep

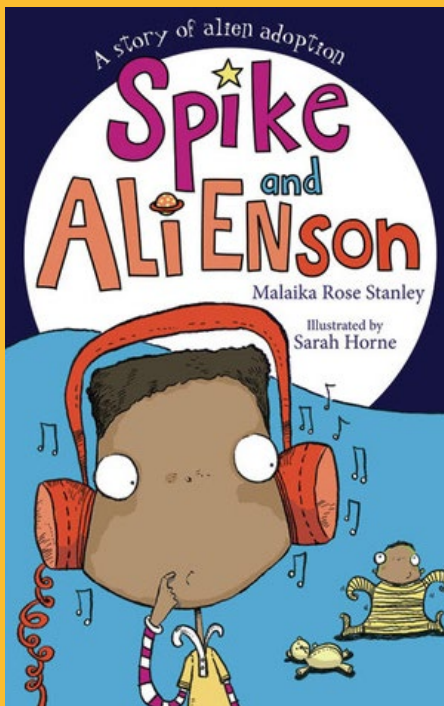
Malaika Rose Stanley

Themes/topics: Bullying, Friendship, Family

Stanley's 2011 novel follows Destiny, who enters a beauty contest behind her mum's back, and is determined to use it to prove she has talent and brains.

With her cousin Keisha and best friends Ebyan and Bee, there are plenty of challenges to deal with, including confrontations with bully Bella.

**Publisher:** Tamarind  
**Year:** 2011



# Spike and Ali Enson

Malaika Rose Stanley, Sarah Horne (illustrator)

Themes/topics: Family, Humour

Everyone loves Ali, Spike's baby brother, but Spike isn't so sure about him. With his bright poos and slightly scaly-looking skin, there must be something strange about Ali, thinks Spike. As he delves deeper to find the truth, Spike begins to realise his family is more different than he thought.

**Publisher:** Tamarind  
**Year:** 2010



**Publisher:** Barrington Stoke  
**Year:** 2021

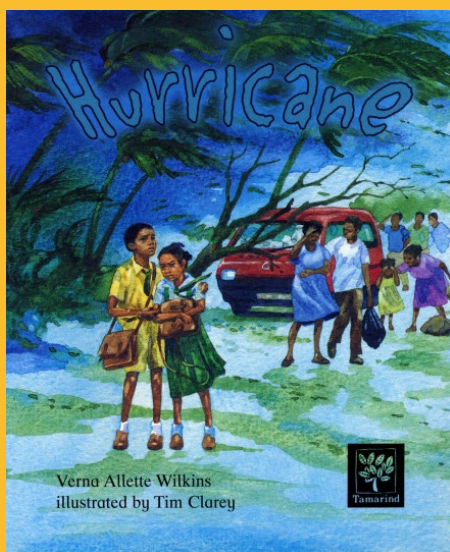
# The Humiliations of Welton Blake

**Alex Wheatle**

**Themes/topics:** Bullying, Coming-of-age

*The Humiliations of Welton Blake* starts on a high, as the title character asks out Carmella McKenzie, and she's said yes. But trouble strikes when Welton's phone breaks, kickstarting a series of humiliating events. This is a funny tale about teen life.

Wheatle is the author of a number of YA and children's books, and has won prizes including the Guardian Children's Fiction Award for his book *Crongton Knights*, and in 2008 he was made an MBE for services to literature.



**Publisher:** Tamarind  
**Year:** 2004

# Hurricane

**Verna Allette Wilkins, Tim Clarey (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Family, Adventure, Climate change

*Hurricane* is about Troy and Nita, who are sent home early from school because of a hurricane warning. But instead of going straight home, they stop to visit a friend, getting caught up in a terrible storm.

This book is about the how a hurricane can change a small tropical island, and works as a tool for discussing weather and climate, and its devastating effects.

Wilkins, who was born in Grenada and lives in London, is the author of more than 40 picture books and biographies for young people. Wilkins is also the founder of Tamarind Books, a publishing company she set up in 1987 to publish books giving black and brown children a sense of self and personal value. The company is now part of Penguin Random House.



# Young, Gifted and Black

Jamia Wilson, Andrea Pippins (illustrator)

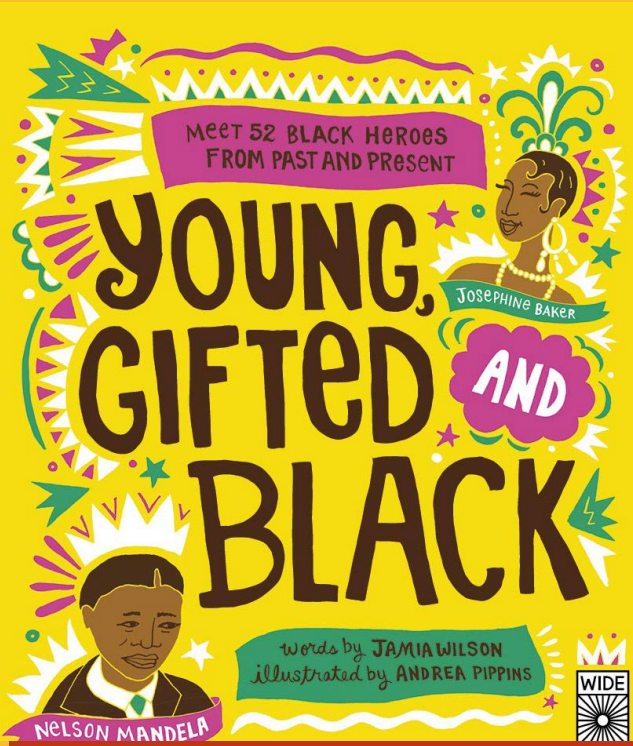
Themes/topics: Black history, Biography

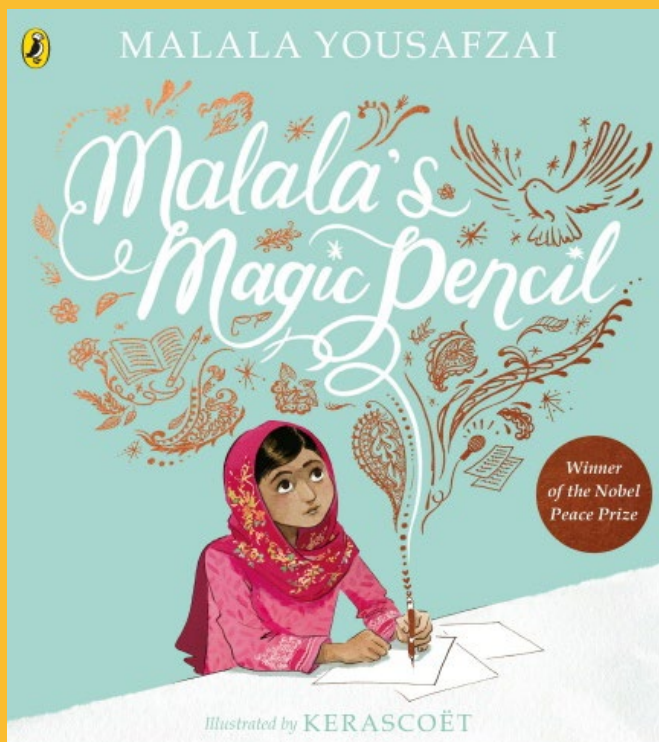
Publisher: Wide Eyed Editions

Year: 2018

Bringing together 52 icons from the past and present, this book will introduce children to people from a variety of careers, including author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, filmmaker Ava Duvernay and singer Nina Simone.

The book is written in the spirit of Simone's song 'To Be Young, Gifted, and Black' and features colourful and celebratory illustrations.





# Malala's Magic Pencil

Malala Yousafzai, Kerascoët (illustrator)

**Themes/topics:** Poverty, Education, Women's rights

**Publisher:** Puffin

**Year:** 2017

Yousafzai's story is well known, but for younger readers who may not be aware of her background, this picture book offers an introduction, with Yousafzai sharing how she found her voice and fought for what she believed in.

*Malala's Magic Pencil* is about all the things Malala wants to use a magic pencil for: for gifts to her family, to erase the smell from the rubbish dump near her house. But, even without a magic pencil, Malala realises she can still make her wishes come through.

At age 15, Yousafzai was shot by the Taliban for speaking out for the rights of girls to get an education. She recovered in the UK, and has continued her activism, co-founding Malala Fund, a global movement of support for girls' education. She is the youngest person to ever be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

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# Years 5-6



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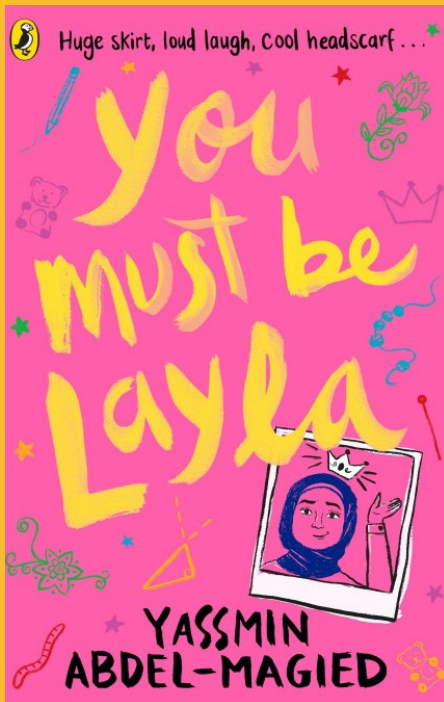
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Publisher: Puffin  
Year: 2020

# You Must Be Layla

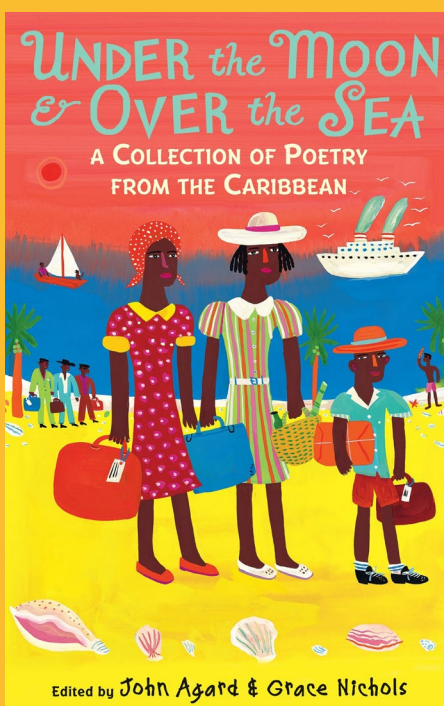
Yassmin Abdel-Magied

Themes/topics: Belonging, Humour

Abdel-Magied had a career as a mechanical engineer – working often as the only female on an oil rig – before she pursued a career in writing.

Her debut *You Must be Layla* follows the title character as she stands up for herself against a bully, and lands herself a suspension at her fancy new school. But Layla knows it's just a setback, and she's determined to prove that she does deserve her scholarship by making new friends and setting her sights on inventing something that could win the big robotics competition.

*The Guardian* said the book was a “warm, humorous account of a larger-than-life Sudanese girl navigating a posh Australian school”. BookTrust picked *You Must be Layla* as an official pick, and Abdel-Magied has also written a sequel, *Listen, Layla*, out in summer 2021.



Publisher: Walker Books  
Year: 2011

# Under the Moon & Over the Sea: A Collection of Caribbean Poems

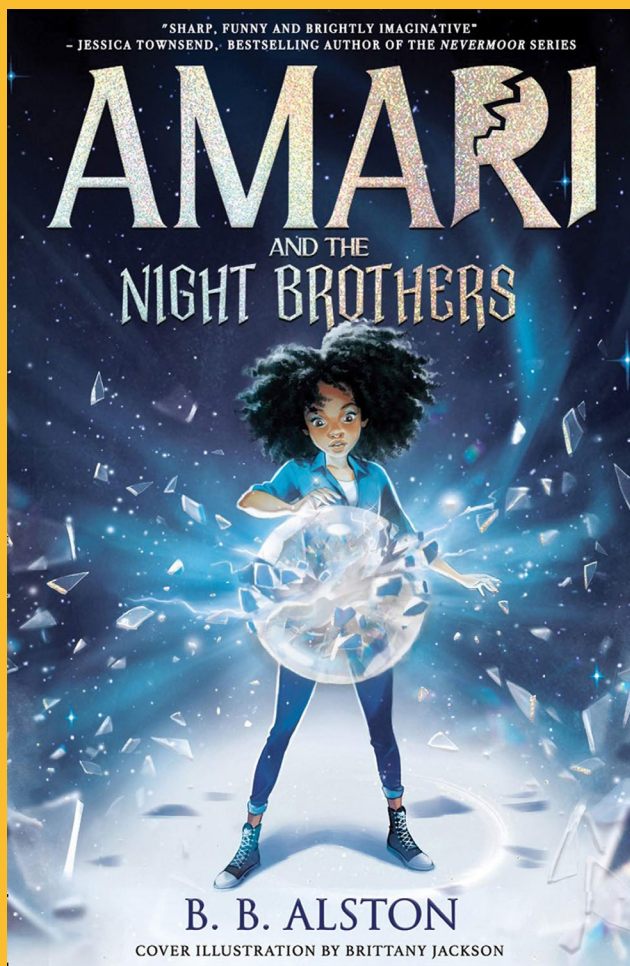
John Agard and Grace Nichols

Themes/topics: Caribbean culture, Migration

This anthology of poetry is about the experience of living in the Caribbean, and was the first winner of the CLPE Poetry Award.

It contains more than 50 poems by over 30 poets, including Agard, Nichols, James Berry, Valerie Bloom and Benjamin Zephaniah.





# Amari and the Night Brothers

B B Alston

Themes/topics: Mystery, Supernatural, Family

**Publisher:** Farshore

**Year:** 2021

Amari Peters' brother Quinn is missing, and when she's invited to the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs, she's sure it's her chance to find him.

Amari is competing against children who have known about the supernatural their whole lives, and while they're given special talents, Amari has an illegal talent that makes her the enemy to her classmates.

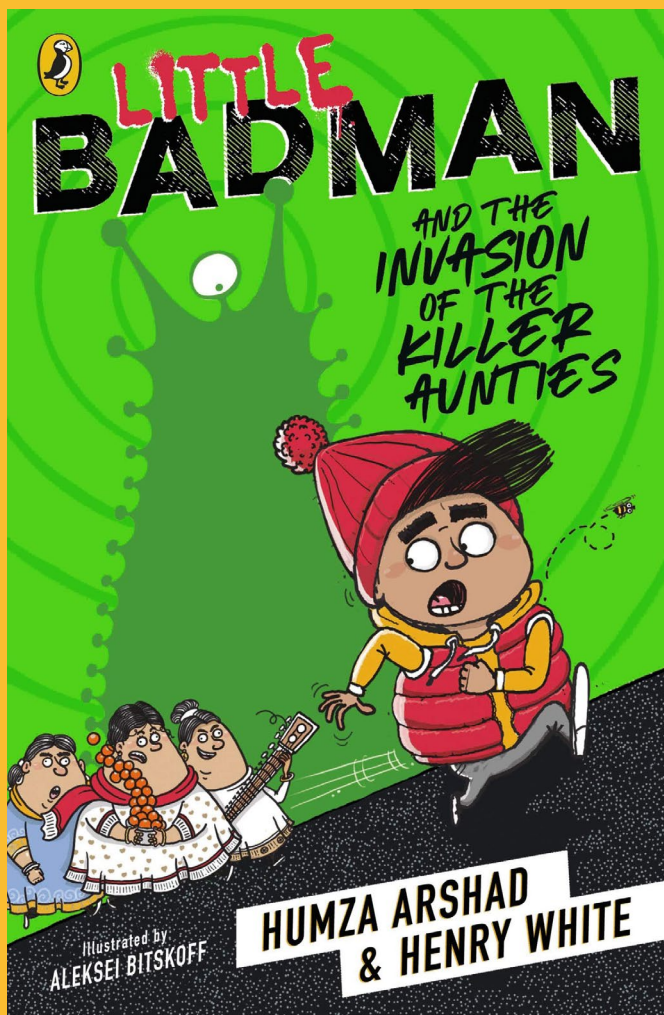
Alston's book, which is perfect for fans of Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series, Jessica Townsend's Nevermoor books, and *Men in Black*, is soon to be adapted for a film starring *Black-ish* actor Marsai Martin.

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## Little Badman series

Humza Arshad and Henry White, Alexei Bitskoff (illustrator)

Themes/topics: Humour, Family, School, Friendship

Publisher: Puffin

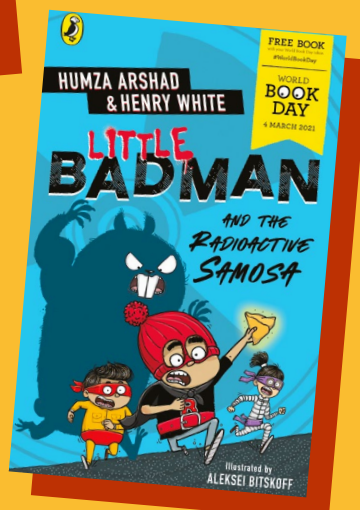
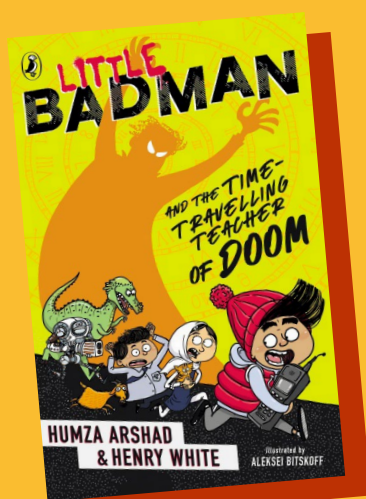
Year: 2019 - 2020

Arshad is better known as the YouTuber behind the hit comedy series *Diary of a Bad Man*, and became the first British YouTuber to have his own scripted comedy series on BBC Three, the mockumentary series *Coconut*.

The Little Badman book series, written with comedy writer White, follows 11-year-old Humza Khan, the greatest rapper the town of Eggington has ever known.

In the first book, *Little Badman and the Invasion of the Killer Aunties*, something strange is happening at school: all the teachers are disappearing and being replaced by aunties. At first, the children don't mind as the aunties keep feeding them delicious snacks, but it soon becomes clear something strange is going on.

Humza's adventures continue in the World Book Day story *Little Badman and the Radioactive Samosa*, and in the full length novel *Little Badman and the Time-Travelling Teacher of Doom*.







# Gavin Aung Than

**Publisher:** Puffin

Year: 2020 - 2021

The Super Sidekicks series focuses on the people who do all the hard work after the superheroes have swept in, done their thing and taken all the credit. But Junior Justice, or JJ, has had enough and is creating his own team, The Super Sidekicks, with Flygirl, Dinomite and Goo.

In their first adventure, ***No Adults Allowed***, the group have to battle the evil Dr Enok, who is annoyed that his favourite pet Goo has left him to join the super team.

In *Ocean's Revenge*, the gang deal with the Mother of the Seas, who is sick of humans using the oceans as a junkyard, so decides to give land dwellers a taste of their own medicine.



***Trial of Heroes*** follows the group as they are invited to join H.E.R.O. – the Heroic Earth Righteousness Organisation – after saving the world. But first the team must pass the hardest challenge in the universe.

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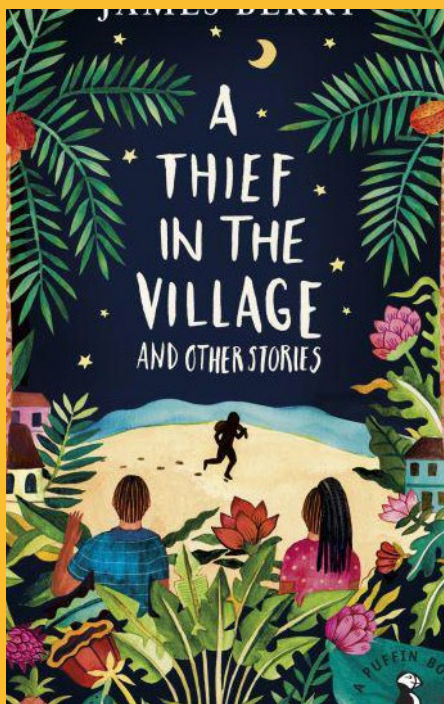
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**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 1987

# A Thief in the Village and Other Stories

**James Berry**

**Themes/topics:** Caribbean literature, Folklore

This collection of short stories brings Berry's childhood in the Caribbean to life. Among the people readers meet are Gustas, who is nearly killed in the hurricane trying to save his banana tree; Nenna and her brother Man-Man, who patrol the coconut plantation in the dead of night, ready to catch interlopers; Becky, who longs for a bicycle; and Fanso, who wants to find his father who walked out 13 years ago.

Berry is a writer and poet, and won the National Poetry Society's Annual Prize for his poem 'Fantasy of an African Boy'. In 1987 *A Thief in the Village* was the Grand Prix winner of the Smarties Prize.



**Publisher:** Chicken House  
**Year:** 2019

# Asha & the Spirit Bird

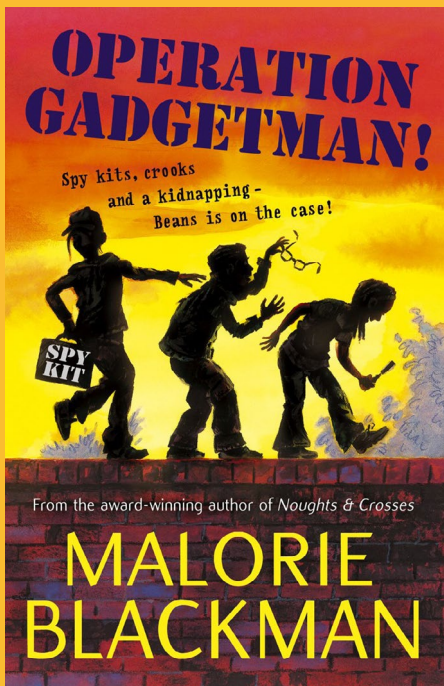
**Jasbinder Bilan**

**Themes/topics:** Adventure, Family, Mythology, Folklore

Bilan entered what would be released as *Asha & the Spirit Bird* into The Times/Chicken House Children's Fiction Competition in 2017, and won.

The book follows Asha, who lives in the foothills of the Himalayas, and sets out to find her father when he suddenly goes missing in the city. But the journey Asha and her best friend Jeevan must take is treacherous, forcing them to cross the world's highest mountains and bringing them face to face with hunger, tiredness and snow leopards. Yet Asha believes she is protected by the spirit bird of her grandmother, helping her on her journey.

*Asha & the Spirit Bird* won the Costa Children's Book Award, was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize, long listed for the Jhalak Prize, and named by *The Guardian* as one of its best books of 2019.



Publisher: Yearling  
Year: 1993

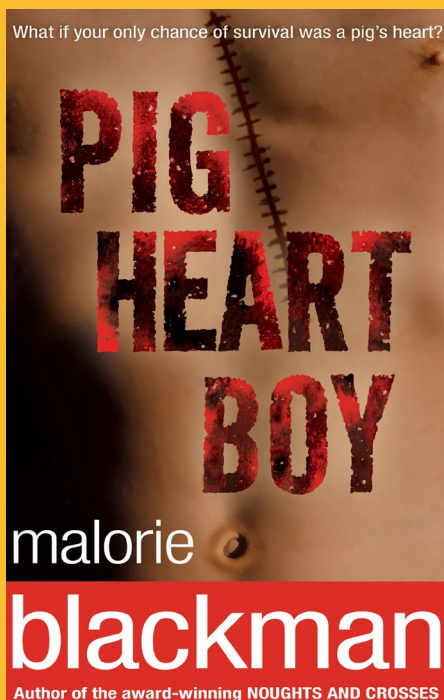
# Operation Gadgetman!

Malorie Blackman

Themes/topics: Adventure, Family

Gadgetman is the name Beans calls her dad, because of the weird and wonderful gadgets he comes up with. But when he accidentally invents a device that could be used to steal millions of pounds, the wrong people find out and Gadgetman is kidnapped.

With the help of friends, and her dad's Spy Kit, Beans is determined to track down the kidnappers and Gadgetman. Will she get to him before he is forced to hand over details of his investigation?



Publisher: Corgi Children's  
Year: 1997

# Pig-Heart Boy

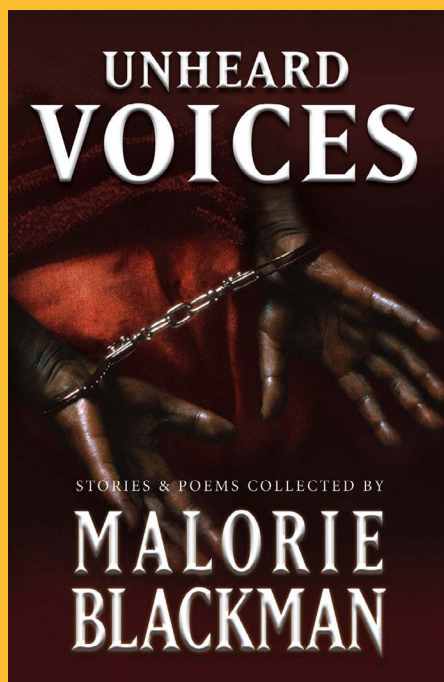
Malorie Blackman

Themes/topics: Family, Health, Animal rights

Shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal, *Pig-Heart Boy* is about 13-year-old Cameron, who is in need of a heart transplant. When a pioneering doctor approaches and says he can give Cameron a new heart – from a pig – Cameron accepts, tired of sitting by and watching life go by.

Blackman's 1997 novel, which was adapted for a children's television series on the BBC, is about family, the consequences of going viral, animal rights, and what it means to fight for what you believe in.





**Publisher:** Corgi Children's  
**Year:** 2007

## Unheard Voices

**Collected by Malorie Blackman**

**Themes/topics:** Slavery, Racism, British history

This anthology was published in 2007 to mark the bicentenary of the official abolition of slavery with an 1807 act by the British Parliament making the trading and transportation of slaves illegal. Although slavery still persisted for a number of years, the act was a big step forward in the emancipation of a people.

*Unheard Voices* includes new short stories and poetry from writers including Blackman, Benjamin Zephaniah and James Berry, as well as first-hand accounts of slavery from freed slaves including Olaudah Equiano and Harriet Jacobs.



**Publisher:** Macmillan  
Children's Books  
**Year:** 2014

## Red Leaves

**Sita Brahmachari**

**Themes/topics:** Family, Refugees, Adoption, War, Friendship

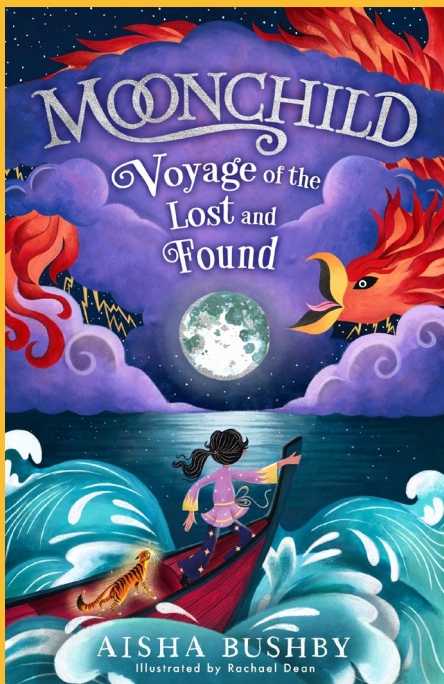
This novel follows two very different characters: 13-year-old Aisha is a refugee living in London, while 12-year-old Zak is trying to cope with parents' divorce.

Aisha, happy for the first time since leaving her war-torn home, is devastated when her foster mother announces that a new family has been found for her and she will be moving on. Feeling rejected and abandoned, she runs away to some nearby woods.

Zak, feeling unsettled and alone, starts researching the history behind his home and finds a connection with a young soldier from the past, which leads him to an old air-raid shelter in the same woods.

Both children meet in the heart of the ancient woodland and come into the orbit of Elder, a strange homeless woman who lives amongst the trees.





**Publisher:** Egmont  
**Year:** 2020

# Moonchild: Voyage of the Lost and Found

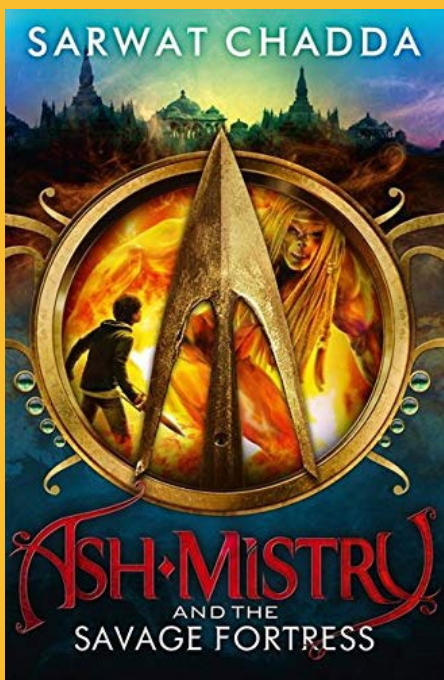
**Aisha Bushby, Rachel Dean (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Mythology, Adventure, Magic

Bushby's novel is about Amira, a 12-year-old who has only ever known a life at sea with her sea-witch mothers. When their ship is wrecked, Amira has an opportunity to explore land with her best friend Namur, a jinn in cat form. Soon, Amira comes across a boy who has a jinn like her, and learns their companions are connected to the storm which is getting stronger every day.

When Namur goes missing Amira has to visit a magical place where lost things can be found. Along the way, she gets the chance to discover her own destiny, and find out what it truly means to be a Moonchild.

*Moonchild: Voyage of the Lost and Found* is inspired by *The Arabian Nights*.



**Publisher:** HarperCollins Children's Books  
**Year:** 2012

# Ash Mistry and the Savage Fortress

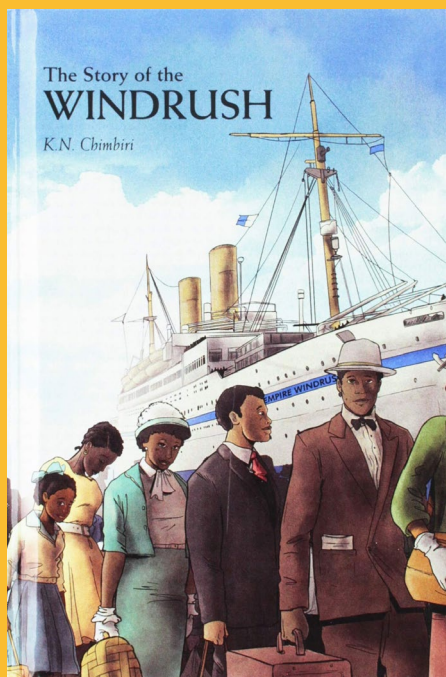
**Sarwat Chadda, Joshua Khan (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Mythology, Family, Adventure

Ash Mistry hates India, but that's where he is after his uncle takes up a dream job with the mysterious Lord Savage in Varanasi.

Ash immediately suspects there's something very wrong with the eccentric millionaire, and soon uncovers a plot by Lord Savage to open the Iron Gates that have kept the demon king Ravana at bay for four millennia.

Ash's adventures continue in *Ash Mistry and the City of Death* and *Ash Mistry and the World of Darkness*.



**Publisher:** Scholastic  
**Year:** 2018

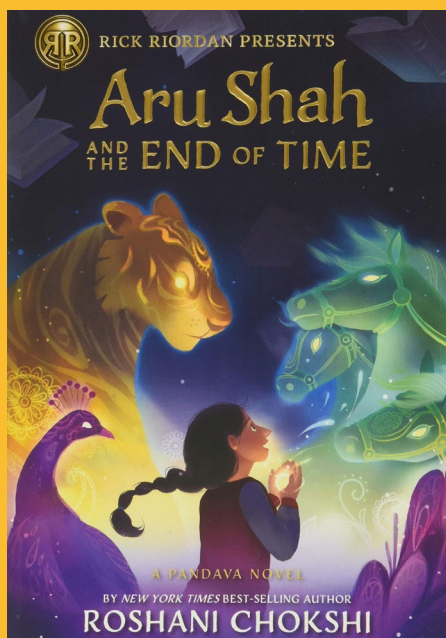
# The Story of the Windrush

**K.N. Chimbiri**

**Themes/topics:** British history, Windrush, Migration

This book celebrates the legacy of pioneers from the Windrush generation.

Chimbiri's book combines facts with contemporary photographs, maps and sepia toned images. Woven throughout are the stories of individuals who made the journey on the Empire Windrush in June 1948.



**Publisher:** Scholastic  
**Year:** 2018

# Aru Shah and the End of Time

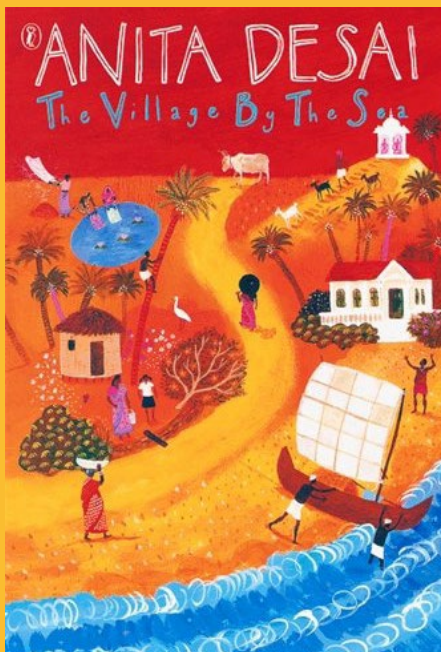
**Roshani Chokshi**

**Themes/topics:** Mythology, Friendship, Family, Religion, Adventure

*Aru Shah and the End of Time*, which *Time* named one of the 100 Best Fantasy Books of All Time, was the first book from Rick Riordan's Rick Riordan Presents imprint.

Aru is due to spend her autumn break at the Museum of Ancient Indian Art and Culture. When her classmates catch her lying, Aru must prove her claim that the Lamp of Bharata is cursed by lighting it. But doing so frees the Sleeper, an ancient demon whose duty is to awaken the God of Destruction. The only way to stop the demon is to find the reincarnations of the five legendary Pandava brothers of the Hindu epic poem, the Mahabharata, and journey through the Kingdom of Death.





**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2015

# The Village by the Sea

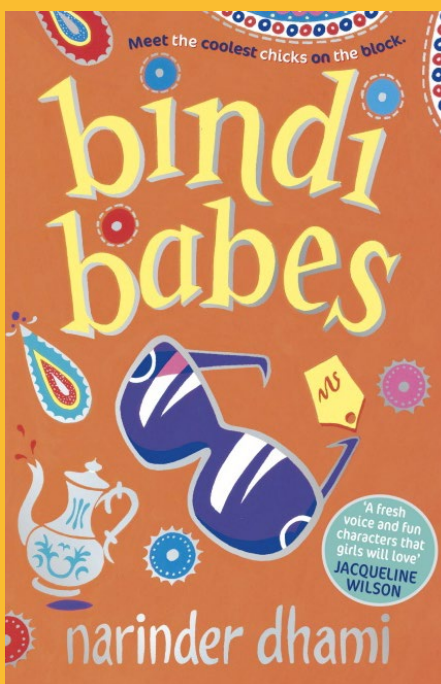
**Anita Desai**

**Themes/topics:** Poverty, Child labour, Addiction

Desai is the author of a number of novels and short stories, and has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times (although she has never won). Among her work is the children's book *The Village by the Sea*.

Set in a small fishing village near Bombay, the book follows 13-year-old Lila and 12-year-old Hari, who are struggling to keep the family, including two young sisters, going when their mother is ill and their father usually the worse for drink. When Hari is forced to go to Bombay to find work, Lila seems to be responsible for everything.

*The Village by the Sea* is a look at poverty and child labour, and is a story about the strength of family.



**Publisher:** Yearling  
**Year:** 2003

# Bindi Babes

**Narinder Dhani**

**Themes/topics:** Family, Grief

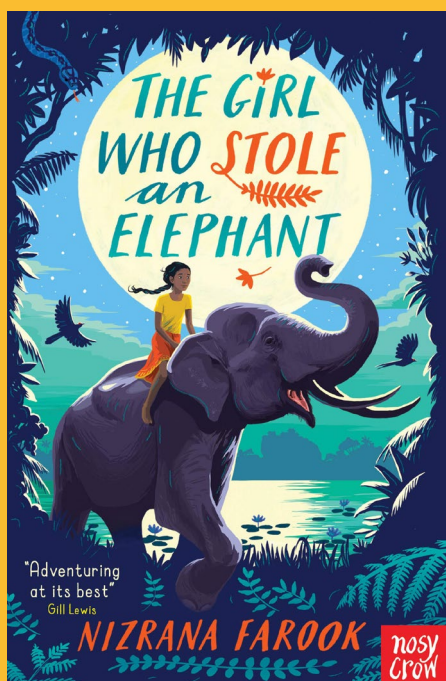
Dhani's series of books focuses on three Anglo-Asian sisters who rule the roost over their dad since their mum died. They're the coolest, most sorted girls in school, and they definitely don't need an Auntie-ji from India coming over to England and cramping their style. But that's what their dad has arranged to happen.

The sisters decide the only way they can keep the lifestyle they love is to arrange for their aunt to get married. And so they set about trying to get her together with Mr Arora, a dream boat teacher who just might whisk Auntie off in his arms and into the sunset.

The series continues in five more books.

Dhani worked as a primary school teacher for a decade before becoming an author after winning several short story prizes.





**Publisher:** Nosy Crow  
**Year:** 2020

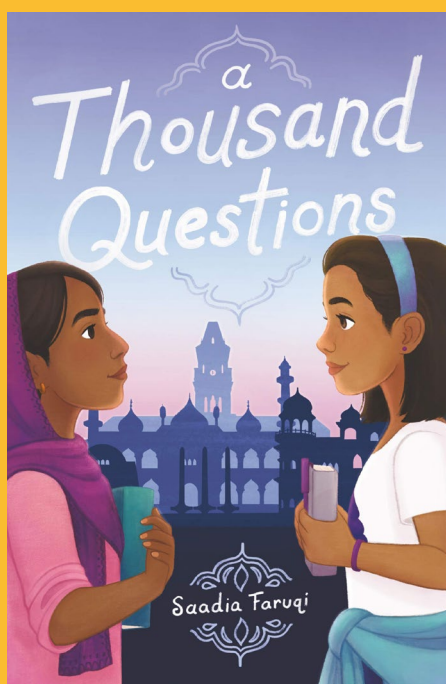
# The Girl Who Stole an Elephant

**Nizrana Farook**

**Themes/topics:** Adventure, Family, Mystery

This novel is about Chaya, a no-nonsense and outspoken hero who leads her friends and a beautiful elephant through a jungle where revolution is stirring. The gang has a plan to steal the queen's jewels, but will it be the beginning or the end for them?

*The Girl Who Stole an Elephant* is Farook's debut novel, and was longlisted for the Blue Peter Book Awards 2021. *The Observer* review of the book said it "positively rustles with the textures of rural Sri Lanka. It introduces an author keen to write a love letter to her culture, and upend preconceptions too. More like this, please."



**Publisher:** HarperCollins  
**Year:** 2020

# A Thousand Questions

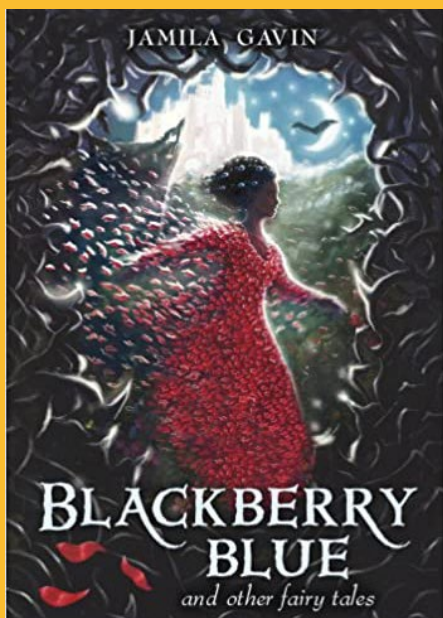
**Saadia Faruqi**

**Themes/topics:** Family, Loneliness, Education

Mimi is spending the summer in Karachi, Pakistan, with grandparents she's never met, and she's not happy about it. She secretly wants to find her long-absent dad, and plans to write to him in her beautiful new journal.

Meanwhile, cook's daughter Sakina still hasn't told her parents that she'll be accepted to school only if she can improve her English test score. Even then, her family couldn't afford to lose the money she earns working with her father in the kitchen of a rich family.

While Mimi and Sakina initially don't have much in common, as the summer goes on they become friends and discover that they need each other to help them get what they want most. This coming-of-age story is about two girls navigating a time of change, and dealing with family upheaval.



# Blackberry Blue

Jamila Gavin, Richard Collingridge (illustrator)

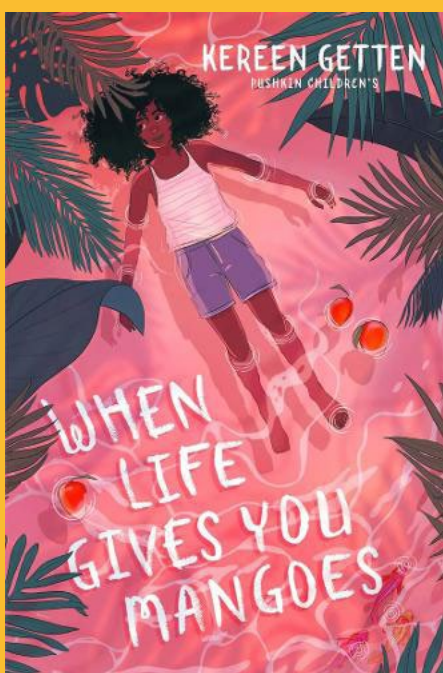
Themes/topics: Bravery, Fairytales

This is a collection of six original stories by Gavin, who trained as a music student at Trinity College of Music in London and worked in radio and television before turning to writing.

The Blackberry Blue of the title refers to a fairy who rises from the bramble patch, while other characters in these unique fairytales include Emeka, a pathfinder on a mission to save a lost king, and Princess Desire, who gallops across the Milky Way on her jet-black horse.

**Publisher:** Tamarind

**Year:** 2013



# When Life Gives You Mangoes

Kereen Getten

Themes/topics: Friendship, Memory

Clara lives in the small village of Sycamore, loves eating ripe mangoes, and escaping to her secret hideout with her best friend Gaynah. There's just one problem: Clara can't remember anything about what happened the previous summer.

And then Rudy arrives from England, and Gaynah stops acting like a best friend; instead Rudy and Clara roam the island and discover an old family secret. As the summer reaches its peak and storms approach, Clara's memory begins to return, and she has to face the truth of what happened the year before.

**Publisher:** Pushkin Children's Books

**Year:** 2020





**Publisher:** Tamarind  
**Year:** 2015

# Shine

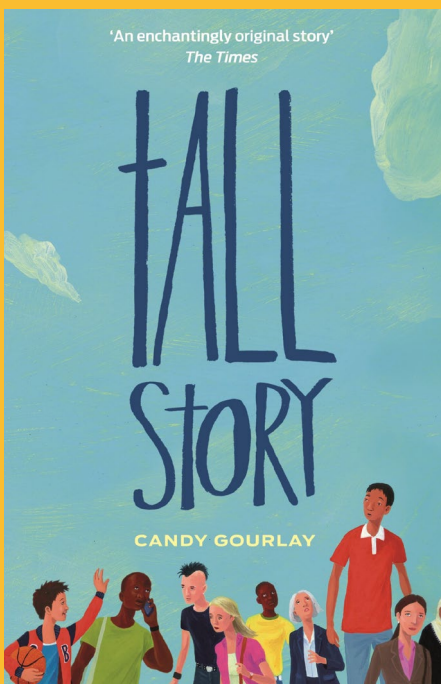
**Candy Gourlay**

**Themes/topics:** Disability, Online culture

*Shine* weaves myths, ghosts and monsters into a modern setting. Its protagonist is Rosa, who suffers from a rare condition that renders her mute. She's shunned on her home, the island of Mirasol, by a superstitious population who believe people with Rosa's condition must be monsters.

And so Rosa lives in an isolated house, with only the internet for a social life. One day, she's befriended by a boy who calls himself Ansel95, and is tempted by a friendship that could take place in the real world. But can she really trust him? And what happens when the mother Rosa thought was dead turns up at her door?

*Shine* was longlisted for the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize.



**Publisher:** Tamarind  
**Year:** 2016

# Tall Story

**Candy Gourlay**

**Themes/topics:** Adventure, Self-confidence, Humour

Gourlay's 2010 novel *Tall Story* is the tale of separated siblings and the clash of two very different cultures.

It follows Andi, who wishes she was taller and could play on the school basketball team. But mostly, she wishes that her long lost half brother Bernardo could come and live with her in London.

When Andi's wish comes true, she's excited about becoming someone's little sister, and hopes Bernardo loves basketball as much as she does, and that he's tall. When he finally arrives, he's not just tall, but a giant.

*Tall Story* was listed for 13 prizes, including the Carnegie Medal, the Blue Peter Book Awards, and the Waterstones Children's Book Prize.





**Publisher:** Corgi Children's  
**Year:** 2017

# Fly Me Home

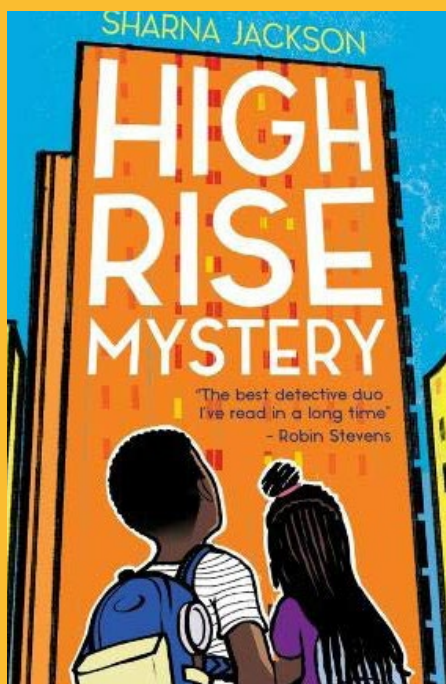
**Polly Ho-Yen**

**Themes/topics:** Immigration, Loneliness, Magic

Ho-Yen's book is a moving portrait of one family's struggle to adjust to life in a new country. Its protagonist Leelu is feeling lost and alone in London, and wishes she could fly back home to where her dad is, thousands of miles away.

But someone is leaving gifts outside Leelu's house for her, which give her curious magical powers and make her feel less alone. Those powers might just help Leelu find her way home.

Ho-Yen's debut novel *Boy in the Tower* was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize and the Blue Peter Book Award.



**Publisher:** Knights Of  
**Year:** 2019

# High-Rise Mystery

**Sharna Jackson**

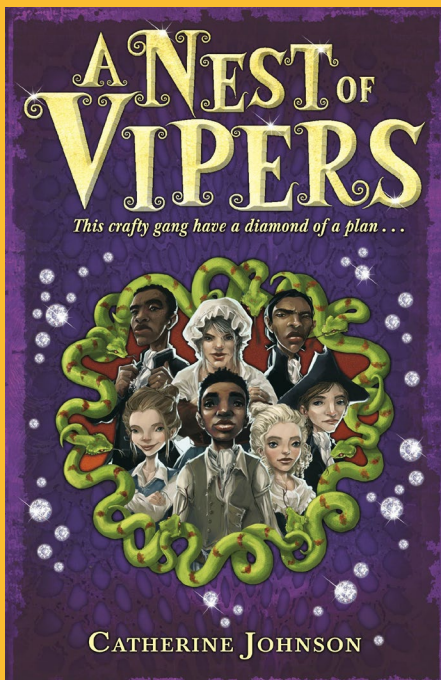
**Themes/topics:** Mystery, Friendship, Family

Jackson's debut novel, which was published by inclusive independent publisher Knights Of, won the Waterstones Children's Book Prize Best Book for Younger Readers Award in 2020.

It follows detective duo Nik and Norva, sisters who find their community art teacher murdered on their tower block estate. Before the police have arrived, the pair have a list of suspects, and a plan of action.

But soon the evidence starts to point in a confusing direction – one they don't really want to think about.

*High-Rise Mystery* is the first in a new series. Jackson is a member of BAFTA's Children's and Learning and New Talent committees and the Children's Media Conference advisory board, and artistic director of Site Gallery in Sheffield.



**Publisher:** Corgi Children's  
**Year:** 2008

# A Nest of Vipers

**Catherine Johnson**

**Themes/topics:** Slavery, Friendship, Adventure

Johnson's fiction has often been inspired by the stories of people largely ignored by history, whether real (such as *The Race to the Frozen North*, about Matthew Henson, the first man to reach the North Pole, who was denied official recognition because of his skin colour), or fictional.

In *A Nest of Vipers*, Johnson weaves a tale about a group of larger-than-life con artists: Cato Hopkins, the youngest member of Mother Hopkins's 'family', a group of skilled fraudsters and pickpockets; Addy, who can become a very convincing boy when she needs to; Bella, who can charm any rich young man out of his fortune; and Sam, an escaped slave. Old age is slowing Mother Hopkins down, and she wants to carry out one last con, so the gang sets about bringing ruin upon the cruel slave captain, Captain Walker.



**Publisher:** Scholastic  
**Year:** 2018

# Freedom

**Catherine Johnson**

**Themes/topics:** Slavery, Family, British history

This action-packed story is about Nathaniel's experience of slavery in Britain. Nathaniel doesn't want to move to England with his master's family, as it means leaving behind his mother and sister on the Jamaican plantation. But then he remembers that his mother told him that once a slave sets foot on English soil, they're free. Perhaps, Nathaniel thinks, he can earn his fortune and buy back his family's freedom.

*Freedom* is a fictional story based on historical events, and keen readers will identify many people who really existed, including slave-turned-author-and-abolitionist Olaudah Equiano, white abolitionist Granville Sharp, and former soldier Shadrack Furman, who was the first Black pensioner. A historical note at the end of the book summarises slavery for readers. *Freedom* won the Little Rebels Children's Book Award 2019.

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**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2021

## Kiki's Delivery Service

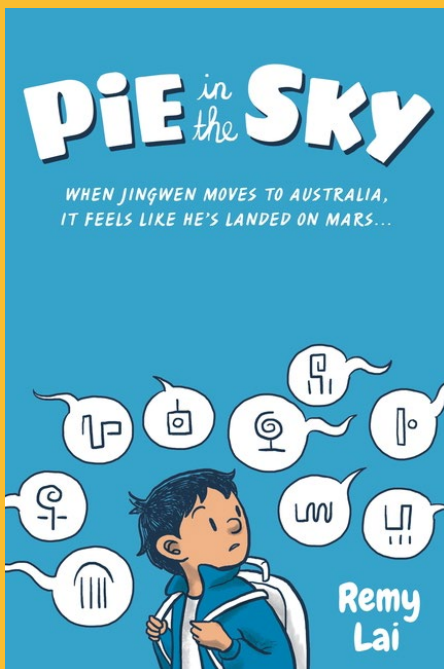
**Eiko Kadono, Joe Todd-Stanton (illustrator), Emily Balistrieri (translator)**

**Themes/topics:** Magic, Friendship, Adventure

Kadono's novel was first published in Japanese in 1985 (and this year in English by Puffin), and adapted into an animated Studio Ghibli film, written, produced and directed by the legendary Hayao Miyazaki.

The magical story is about trainee witch Kiki, who on her 13th birthday must follow tradition and leave home to find a new village.

Kiki is no good at potions or spells, so decides to use her flying abilities to make her own way in the world, accompanied by her beloved black cat Jiji.



**Publisher:** Walker Books  
**Year:** 2020

## Pie in the Sky

**Remy Lai**

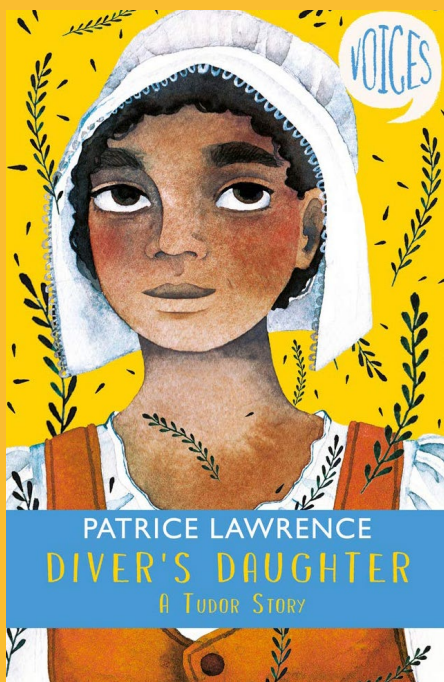
**Themes/topics:** Grief, Family, Belonging, Migration

Jingwen has moved to Australia, and it's a bit like living on Mars. He hates school, and since he doesn't speak English, making friends is impossible. And on top of that, he's stuck looking after his little brother Yanghao.

To distract himself from his loneliness, Jingwen daydreams about making all the cakes on the menu of the bakery his father had planned to open before he unexpectedly passed away.

But his mother has a rule: no using the oven while she's at work. So Jingwen and Yanghao must bake in secret, and come up with more elaborate excuses to continue the dream their father started.





**Publisher:** Scholastic  
**Year:** 2019

# Diver's Daughter: A Tudor Story

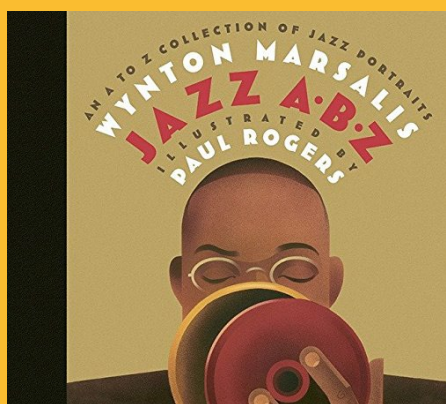
**Patrice Lawrence**

**Themes/topics:** British history, Adventure

Award-winning writer Lawrence's *Diver's Daughter* is about Eve and her mother, who was stolen from her family in Mozambique as a child.

When they hear from a survivor of the sunken Mary Rose that one of the African free-divers who was sent to salvage its treasures is alive and living in Southampton, they decide to try and find him, and attempt to dive the wreck of another ship, rumoured to be rich with treasures.

Lawrence's story is inspired by real life events, and is part of the Voices series, which aims to tell the authentic, unsung stories of Britain's past.



**Publisher:** Walker Books  
**Year:** 2005

# Jazz ABZ

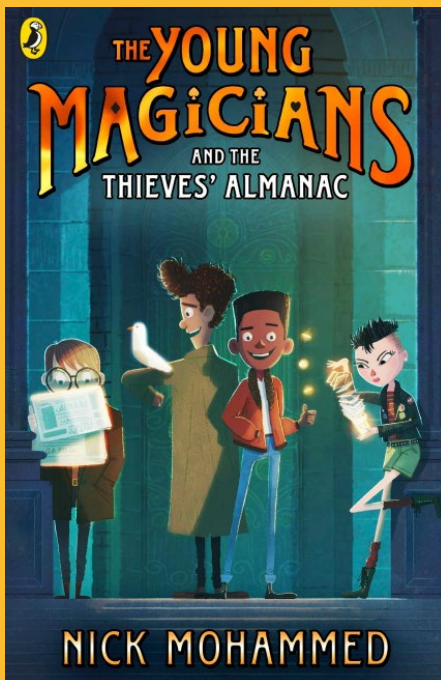
**Wynton Marsalis, Paul Rogers (illustrator)**

**Themes/topics:** Music, Poetry, History

American trumpeter and composer Marsalis, who is artistic director of jazz at Lincoln Center in New York, teamed up with poster artist Paul Rogers for this book about 26 jazz performers.

From Louis Armstrong to Count Basie and Sarah Vaughan, this book profiles each jazz artist using a different poetic form. The book contains two foldout spreads of Rogers' illustrations, notes on the poetic forms used, and has endpapers that mimic a vintage record sleeve.

*Jazz ABZ* is an introduction to jazz for those new to the form, and an appreciation of it for afficianados.



**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2017

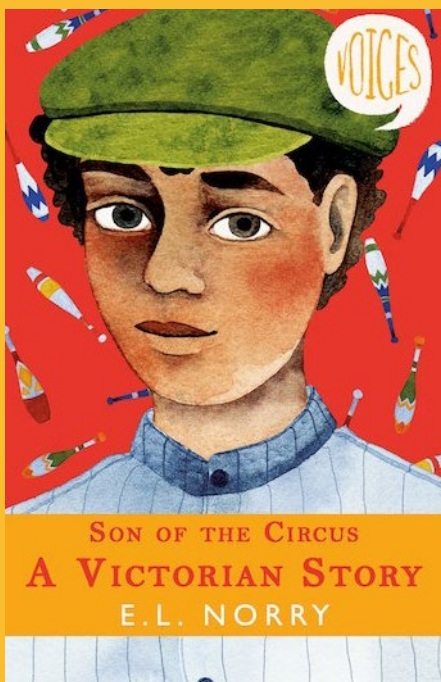
# The Young Magicians and the Thieves' Almanac

**Nick Mohammed**

**Themes/topics:** Magic, Adventure, Friendship, Belonging

The first book in Mohammed's series introduces four unlikely friends. Alex doesn't say much and once jumped when handed a satsuma, but is amazing with a deck of cards; Zack is one of the best pickpockets in the country (but always puts things back); Sophie once convinced her Brown Owl that all the other Brownies were jellyfish thanks to her nifty hypnosis skills; and Jonny is quite possibly the tallest boy in the universe and mixes science and magic with spectacular, mostly explosive, consequences.

In *The Thieves' Almanac*, the group step inside the world-conjuring Magic Circle club and on the trail of a secret book, impossible crimes and a flock of very confused pigeons. The series continues in *The Young Magicians and the 24-Hour telepathy Plot*.



**Publisher:** Scholastic  
**Year:** 2019

# Son of the Circus: A Victorian Story

**E.L. Norry**

**Themes/topics:** British history, Adventure, Family

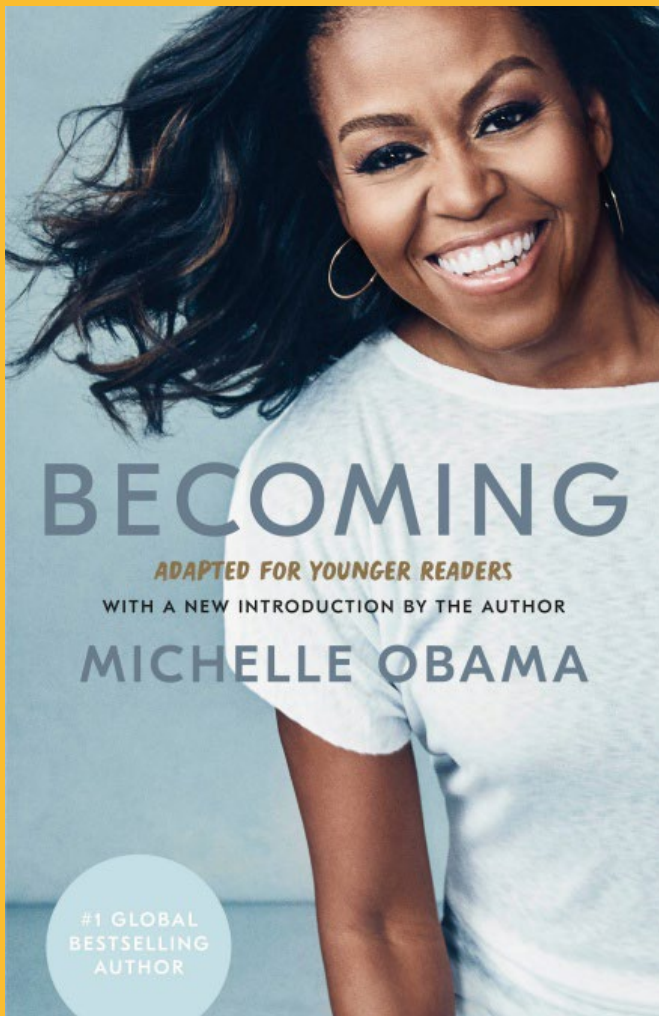
*Son of the Circus* is the tale of Ted, a young mixed-race boy living with his mother and sickly older brother in Victorian Bradfield.

When a stranger arrives in the kitchen, Ted discovers the man – Pablo Fanque – is not just his father, but also the first Black circus owner in Victorian Britain. Pablo is determined Ted follow in his footsteps, and takes the boy to learn the tricks of the circus trade.

But can Ted adapt to his new life? And will he ever see his mother and brother again?

*Son of the Circus* is part of the Voices series, which aims to tell the authentic, unsung stories of Britain's past. The book was shortlisted for the Diverse Book Awards.





# Becoming

Michelle Obama

Themes/topics: Biography, Politics, Family

Publisher: Viking

Year: 2018

Former First Lady Michelle Obama's *Becoming* is a powerful and inspiring memoir.

The book takes readers on a journey through Obama's childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing motherhood and work, and her time in the White House. *Becoming* is deeply personal, and also inspired a documentary of the same name.

Obama has also published a special edition of *Becoming*, which has been adapted for younger readers and has a new introduction.

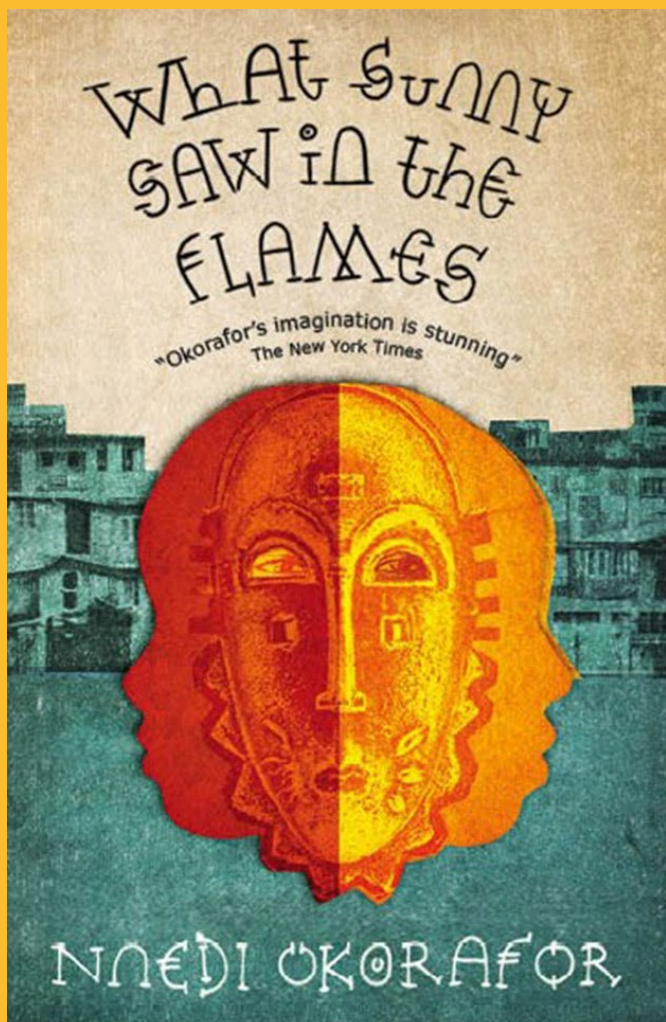
*Becoming* was named memoir of the year by The Sunday Times, and was chosen as a book of the year by publications including *The Times*, *The Observer*, *The Guardian* and *The Evening Standard*. It became the bestselling book in the US for 2018 after just 15 days on sale, and has sold in excess of 14 million copies worldwide.

Obama began her career as an attorney at a Chicago law firm, where she met her future husband Barack Obama. She later worked in the Chicago mayor's office and at the University of Chicago, among others, and also founded the Chicago chapter of Public Allies, an organisation that prepares young people for careers in public service. She served as First Lady of the United States from 2009 to 2017.

“Becoming serenely balances gravity and grace, uplift and anecdote”

-The Guardian





## The Sunny series

**Nnedi Okorafor**

**Themes/topics:** Magic, Adventure, Friendship, Belonging, Mythology

**Publisher:** Cassava Republic Press

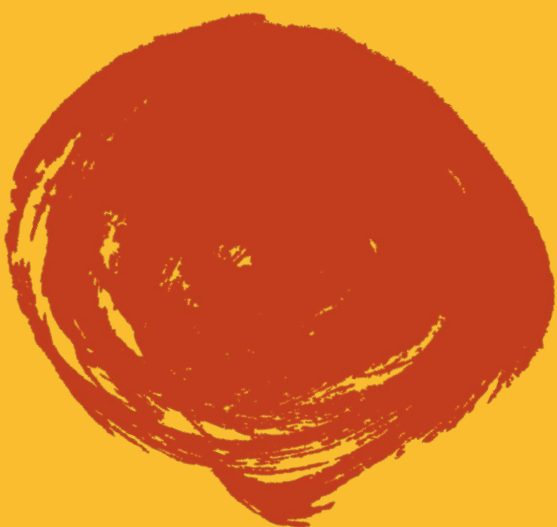
**Year:** 2016 - 2018

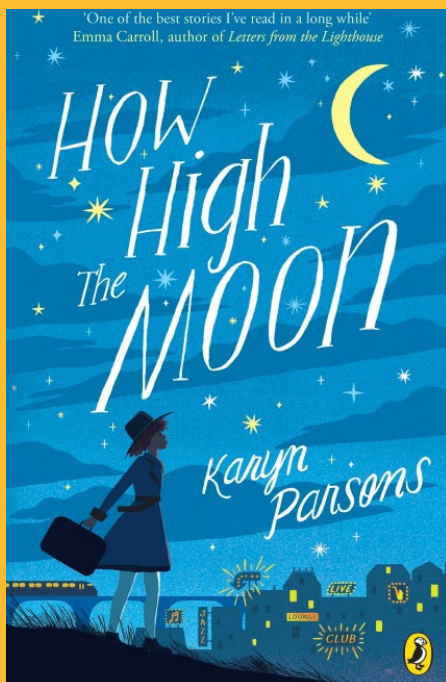
Sunny Nwazue, a 13-year-old and albino, is a little bit lost. She was born in New York and now lives in Nigeria, she's good at football, and she can see into the future.

In *What Sunny Saw in the Flames*, Sunny becomes part of a quartet with unique powers, and with her friends Orlu, Chichi and Sasha explores an exciting realm of strange creatures and dark secrets. But when someone begins kidnapping children, and maiming or killing them, Sunny and her friends are asked to help track down the perpetrator. Sunny has to try and get past her fears to overcome the killer, or risk the future she saw in the flames becoming reality.

In the sequel, *Sunny and the Mysteries of Osisi*, Sunny is settled into life and her magic powers are continuing to grow as she studies her strange Nsidi book and to understand her spirit face, Anyanwu. But Sunny's destiny is to travel to the shadowy town of Osisi, where awaiting her is a battle to determine the fate of humanity.

Okorafor is a Nigerian-American author of Africanfuturism and Africanjujuism books for children and adults, and has won some of the world's most prestigious science fiction and fantasy awards.





**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2019

# How High the Moon

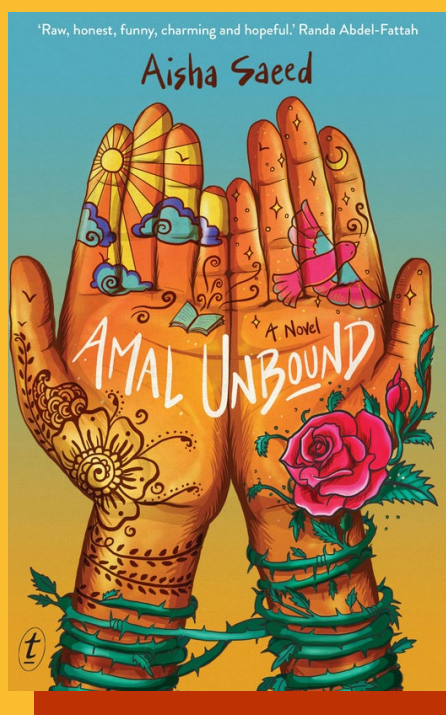
**Karyn Parsons**

**Themes/topics:** Racism, Civil rights, American history

In a small, segregated US town in 1944, 11-year-old Ella spends her summers with her cousins and friends. But her life isn't ideal: there's a deep racial tension in her hometown, and Ella misses her mother, a beautiful jazz singer who lives in Boston.

When Ella goes to Boston, she sees for the first time what life outside segregation is like, and begins to dream of a new future. But when she returns home, it's to the news that her classmate has been arrested for the murder of two white girls.

Parsons is best known for her role as Hilary Banks in the iconic series *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. She has since left acting behind and founded Sweet Blackberry, an award-winning series of children's animated films, to share stories about unsung Black heroes in history.



**Publisher:** Text Publishing  
**Year:** 2018

# Amal Unbound

**Aisha Saeed**

**Themes/topics:** Women's rights, Education, Family

American author Saeed's story is inspired by Malala Yousafzai, and the thought of young people who do extraordinary things that may not get noticed.

The book follows Amal, who lives in a small Pakistani village with her parents and three younger sisters, where she dreams of becoming a teacher. When her mother gives birth to a fifth daughter, Amal has to stop going to school so she can stay at home and help. Frustrated, she loses her temper on a trip to the market and angers Jawad Sahib, a cruel local landowner.

The consequences of Amal's act of defiance are far-reaching, and Amal finds herself working as a servant in Jawad Sahib's house. But as she learns more about his methods of control, she begins to wish she could stand up against the injustice and corruption she is witnessing.





**Publisher:** Stripes  
**Year:** 2020

# Agent Zaiba Investigates: The Missing Diamonds

**Annabelle Sami**

**Themes/topics:** Mystery, Friendship, Adventure

Zaiba wants nothing more than to be a detective, like her aunt who lives in Pakistan, and she's always on the hunt for a mystery to solve. And, at her cousin's mehndi party, Zaiba finds just that when a celebrity's precious dog – and its priceless diamond collar – disappears.

With the help of her best friend Poppy and her little brother Ali, Zaiba puts her sleuthing skills to the test to find out what happened.

*The Missing Diamonds* is the first in a series of mysteries featuring Zaiba; sequel *The Poison Plot* was released in 2020, and the third book *The Haunted House* is out in 2021. This series is great for fans of Robin Stevens and Katherine Woodfine's work.



**Publisher:** Scholastic  
**Year:** 2019

# Oh My Gods

**Alexandra Sheppard**

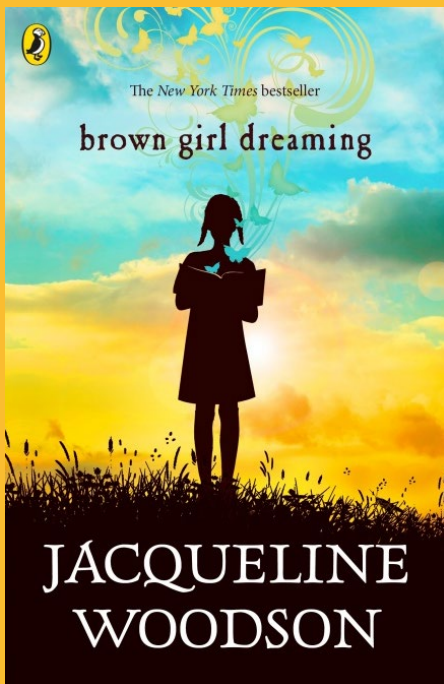
**Themes/topics:** Mythology, Family, Friendship, Romance

What would happen if the ancient Greek gods were still around today, and living among us? It's a scenario that's all too real for Helen Thomas, who has just moved in with her dorky dad and her self-absorbed older siblings. Only her dad is Zeus, and her siblings include Aphrodite and Apollo.

It's no easy thing living with Greek gods, especially as Helen has to keep her family's true identities secret, all while trying to impress new friends and flirting with a cute boy.

This retelling of Greek mythology centres a character of colour, and is funny and charming.





**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 2014

# Brown Girl Dreaming

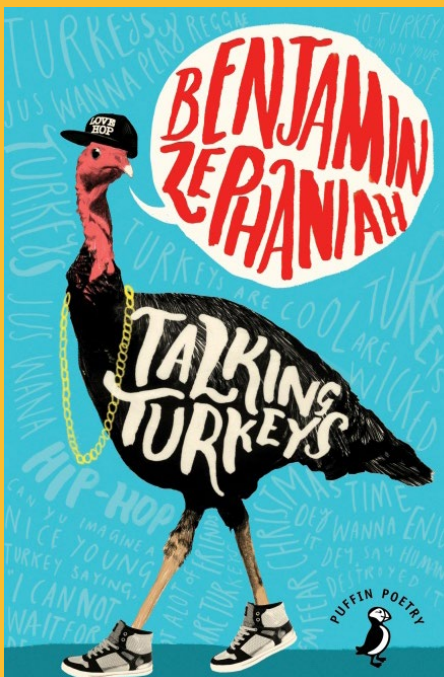
**Jacqueline Woodson**

**Themes/topics:** Memoir, Race, Racism, Civil rights

Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming* is a memoir told in verse and, among other accolades, won the National Book Award for Young People's Literature.

It tells the story of Woodson's childhood spent between New York and South Carolina, and the feeling she had of never truly feeling like she belonged in either. Woodson recounts growing up as an African-American girl in the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of the Civil Rights movement, discovering her gift for writing, and searching for her place in the world.

Reviewing the book for *The New York Times*, Veronica Chambers said it would be to a generation of girls "a history lesson, a mash note passed in class, a book to read burrowed underneath the bed covers and a life raft during long car rides when you want to float far from wherever you are, and wherever you're going, toward the person you feel destined to be".



**Publisher:** Puffin  
**Year:** 1994 - 1996

# Talking Turkeys and Funky Chickens

**Benjamin Zephaniah**

**Themes/topics:** Poetry, Humour, Racism

Zephaniah is one of Birmingham's most famous writers and poets, writing both adult and children's books, and an actor (he played a role in the popular ITV series *Peaky Blinders*). *Talking Turkeys* is Zephaniah's first collection for children, and touches on heroes, revolutions, racism, love and animal rights. *Funky Chickens*, published in 1996, addresses vegetables, the Queen, racism, and more.

Zephaniah is the only Rastafarian poet to be shortlisted for the Chairs of Poetry for both Oxford and Cambridge University and has been listed in *The Times'* list of 50 greatest postwar writers.



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