



### Crabtree School: The Girl Who Stole the World

Written by Lauren Pearson Illustrated by Becka Moor  
Scholastic £4.99 ISBN: 978-1407153261

Eight-year-old Isabel prides herself on being well-behaved, particularly as her younger twin sisters, Ruby and Scarlett, are a nightmare to live with. The trouble is, she doesn't seem to get noticed at school or at home. She is the best at recycling at school, so when the winner of the coveted 'Beautiful Green Planet Intergalactic Environmental Award' trophy is announced she is sure she will be the winner. Unfortunately, she isn't and so she does the naughtiest thing a Year Three pupil has ever done and she steals the trophy! Not only that, Isabel decides that enough is enough and she starts misbehaving at home too. It all comes to a head though, when the wasps buzzing in her tummy are making her feel too guilty about what she's done, so she comes up with a plan to get the trophy back. Will she own up to her stealing? This is the third in the series and the story is a funny, light-hearted representation of the typical sorts of adventures happening in primary schools all over the country, with just the right blend of morality and humour.

Nicole Jordan

### Pocket Pirates: The Great Cheese Robbery

Written and illustrated by Chris Mould  
Hodder £4.99 ISBN: 978-1444923650

This is the story of a pirate crew who live in a ship in a bottle on a dusty shelf in an old junk shop. One day, the ship's cat, Jones, is kidnapped by Pepper Jack and his gang of mice who live behind the skirting board. The price of Jones' release is a huge piece of cheese. To fulfil this demand the pirate crew will need to venture into the kitchen and, even worse, into the "freezing cold place where it is always winter." – the fridge! This is quite a challenge when you are only a few centimetres high! The story tells of the epic adventure to gain possession of the cheese and to rescue Jones. The pirates lurch from crisis to crisis and escape disaster by a mixture of bravery, skill and good luck. The book moves along at a fast pace. It is lively and very entertaining, with the text being supplemented by very amusing line drawings.



Patricia Thompson

### Mariella Mystery: The Disappearing Dinner Lady



Written by Kate Pankhurst  
Orion £5.99 ISBN: 978-1444012347

Diana Dumpling, the school's Dinner Lady, has disappeared. Could the culprit be Saffron Cauliflower from the 'Ladies Who Lunch' Dinner Lady agency? And who has smuggled rogue ingredients into the school meals? Mariella and her friends set out to solve the mysteries. The plot twists and turns to keep the reader guessing and interested throughout. There are crazy vegetable costumes for a school play, together with a copious amount of itching. The story is told in a lively diary format, with numerous cartoon style illustrations and graphics to engage the reader and break up the text. A neat summary at the end takes us over the whole story, reinforcing and reminding us of the plot and its conclusion – a satisfying way to bring things to order. The tale is full of humour and good natured fun, and shows that entertaining stories can

come in a variety of formats. More confident readers should enjoy this zany school story.

Liz Dubber



### Fox Investigates: A Whiff of a Mystery

Written by Adam Frost Illustrated by Emily Fox  
Stripes £5.99 ISBN: 978-1847156433

Wily Fox, private investigator, has been hired by Adolfo Aroma, the famous perfume maker, to investigate a very mysterious burglary at Adolfo's house. The fact that nothing has been stolen raises Wily Fox's suspicions. In addition, the fact that Adolfo is about to launch his brand new perfume raises his suspicions even more. A disaster at the launch leads Wily Fox on a very long, complicated, and sometimes dangerous, journey around the world to track down the thieves and stop an even more serious crime from happening. There are disguises everywhere and so Foxy has problems deciding who is real and who is not. Using equipment worthy of James Bond, Wily Fox manages to track down the thieves, but is he in time? Children will enjoy trying to see who are the 'goodies' and who are the 'baddies'. This is a brilliant book – a real thriller. It's an edge-of-the-seat story.

Patricia Thompson

### Katy's Pony Challenge

Written by Victoria Eveleigh Illustrated by Chris Eveleigh  
Orion £5.99 ISBN: 978-1444014518

Many readers will already be familiar with the characters, both human and equine, and their home on Exmoor. In this story Katy is introduced to a new sport called 'Horse Agility' and she wonders if this might be a new way of training and using her ponies. It might also be a way of connecting with a young autistic boy, James, who is newly arrived in the area. This is an excellent series for readers who love pony books, but there is more to these stories than jodhpurs and gymkhanas. On the surface it may seem that Katy leads a charmed life surrounded by the horses she loves, but there is another side to living in the country. She has to pull her weight on the family farm helping with lambing and the other tasks that make a farm run productively and the horses have to be kept clean, fed and watered. Katy's fans will not be disappointed with this latest realistic glimpse of life on Exmoor.



Jan Lennon

### The Terrible Two

Written by Jory John and Mac Barnett Illustrated by Kevin Cornell  
Abrams £6.99 ISBN: 978-1419716676



*The Terrible Two* is a laugh-out-loud book filled with fun facts about cows – yes, cows. They play a major role. Miles Murphy has moved to a new town and wants to establish himself as the best prankster in his new school, just like he was at his previous school. However, from his first day it is clear that the school already has a much better prankster than Miles, but this one prefers not to be known. Miles is shocked when he finds out who his rival is, and even more shocked when he is invited to join forces to pull off the biggest prank the school has ever seen. *The Terrible Two* is a joy to read, full of laughs and absurdity. Many of the adults are caricatures, especially the hapless principal, which adds to the humour. The growing relationship between Miles and his fellow prankster is lifelike – antagonism to begin, then a

growing sense of respect and ultimately great friendship. The pages are full of amusing illustrations which perfectly complement the tone of the book.

Jane Hall



## The Royal Bake Off

Written by Clémentine Beauvais Illustrated by Becka Moor  
Bloomsbury £5.99 ISBN: 978-1408863923

A helpful introduction to the characters sets the scene for this laugh-out-loud rollercoaster ride of an international Bake off competition with a twist. When King Steve of Britland is invited to compete in the Royal Bake off in Americanada, he relies on the

help of his son and his friends, Pepino, Anna and Holly, to help him win. But the Uber-Sheriff of Germanisland has other ideas and it requires the three children's wit and quick-thinking to save the day. There are brilliantly funny touches, familiar to all who watch *The Great British Bake Off* and other reality TV shows. The host of ridiculous characters, scenarios and places will entertain and amuse younger readers. They will enjoy the tale, which is fast-moving and readable, with no more than a paragraph per page. Plenty of black and white illustrations are dotted throughout adding interest and humour to this frolicking frivolous read.

Lucy Russell

## The Summer Lion

Written by Margi McAllister  
Scholastic £5.99 ISBN: 978-1407145570

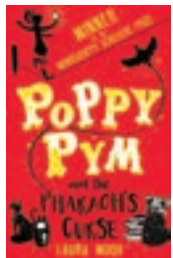
*The Summer Lion* is the latest animal adventure story from Margi McAllister. Drina's family own a circus, where they "don't have to ill-treat animals to get people to come and see (us)". They do have a lion though, Jampot, rescued from another circus. Drina and Jampot are best friends and go to look after Drina's grandmother following an accident. However, when the new Lord of Twidings-on-Lullwater, the evil Gerbil Cravat, plans to turn the castle into a hotel and theme park, with Jampot as the main attraction, it falls to Drina and her friends to save the village and Jampot. Drina is a brave girl, full of imaginative ideas to help save her friends' homes in the village. The sensible looking cover belies how much zany humour is in this book. There are deliciously daft names, such as the Reverend Benedict Goodenough and Squire Thumping-Jolly, which perfectly complement the eccentric characters. Gerbil Cravat is a devilishly evil villain, and the story has adventure and mystery. This enjoyable tale of friendship and loyalty has an old fashioned feel to it, and is ideal for newly confident readers.

Jane Hall



## Poppy Pym and the Pharaoh's Curse

Written by Laura Wood Scholastic £6.99 ISBN: 978-1407158549



It is so good to have such lively, light-hearted and amusing writing from a new, prize-winning author, Laura Wood. Orphaned Poppy has been brought up by a group of warm-hearted, if eccentric, circus performers. She enjoys candy floss breakfasts, acrobatics and stroking lions, whilst learning how to respect the talents of others. However, they decide she must be 'properly' educated at St. Smithen's Boarding School. Although she has problems fitting in at first, she later settles down, befriendng Ingrid

and Kip, and coping admirably with the school bully, Annabelle. An Egyptian exhibition at school brings a ruby, said to be cursed and blamed for a series of dangerous 'accidents'. Poppy and her friends decide to investigate this mystery. Can the ruby really be cursed? Well-paced, fresh and engaging writing, with credible and attractive characters, will hook many young readers.

Tina Massey



## Suitcases: A Clock or a Crown?

Written by Caroline Logue Illustrated by Sarah Bowie  
Little Island £5.95 ISBN: 978-1910411292

This quirky take on a portal to another world sends a young girl heading for adventure, not through a wardrobe door, but in one of the large battered old brown suitcases which sits on top of it. One glance at the chapter headings, with such titles as *Chapter One-and-a-half*, *Chapter Three-and-rewind*, tells you that this is not going to be an ordinary tale, with a logical beginning, middle and end. The action starts when a gnome jumps out of a hatbox and sends young Jenny on a journey into the suitcase where she ends up in a clock with a street-talking kid called Ben. Together they skip through time on a journey into the past, meeting on their way famous characters like Guy Fawkes, Charles I, Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh. So begins a madcap adventure involving fireworks, a headless king, tobacco, potatoes and a pair of green shoes! If you don't know the history, the author adds a brief explanation at the end. A fun way of getting young readers interested in important historical episodes.

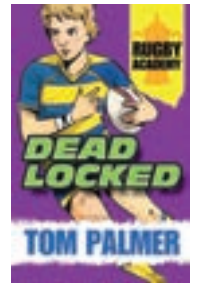
Richard Monte

## Deadlocked

Written by Tom Palmer Illustrated by David Shephard  
Barrington Stoke £5.99 ISBN: 978-1781123997

Part of the Rugby Academy series, the theme of this book is not only about the sport of Rugby but also reading reluctance, which is clever as this book is dyslexia friendly. Owen and his school friends are on their way to New Zealand to play for the World Schools Rugby Trophy. They have to deal with racial tension, homesickness and disruption to the team. Owen also has some big decisions to make and his own difficulties to overcome. Can Owen step up to the mark? As one would expect the text is clear, concise and well spaced. There are black and white illustrations and the end papers have Top Trumps cards with facts about the players. Well-written and exciting.

Ingrid Fox



## Half a Man

Written by Michael Morpurgo  
Illustrated by Gemma O'Callaghan  
Walker £5.99 ISBN: 978-1406360769

Young Michael is unsure how to respond to his grandfather who was facially disfigured by his wartime experiences. However, once they spend time together on the Isles of Scilly, away from Michael's anxious mother, they are able to establish their own relationship. Michael's grandfather shares his story in a matter of fact way and explains what happened when his ship was struck by torpedoes. More importantly, he explains how he recovered physically but struggled psychologically in the post-war years, and the impact that had on his family. Gemma O'Callaghan's beautiful screen prints use a muted palette and stylized images to illustrate both Michael's childhood and his grandfather's past. This book is very accessible to young readers; however, the serious subject matter could earn it an older audience. It confronts difficult issues about the effects of war and also how we relate to people who have been damaged. The simple, direct prose strips events and emotions back in a way that removes any sentimentality and allows children to empathise with all of the characters.

Annalise Taylor

