

IGNITING LEADERS CHANGING LIVES

**PiXL** Reading

# SECONDARY NEWSLETTER



## **We hope you and your family had a wonderful Christmas break.**

We are living in an exciting time for children's publishing: there are so many incredible authors writing about key issues and magical worlds. As 2024 begins, we are delighted to highlight some of these new and inspiring texts here – the selection we've collated this term covers a wide range of interests and reading accessibility. We hope this will help your child find a book they love.

Reading is so important for young people – both academically as well as for their personal development, empathy and mental health. The world of books provides so much to benefit them. As you talk to your child about reading, encourage them to follow their interests as well as to try new things. If you're looking for ways to support and encourage your child to read more this year, consider some of the tips below:

- Reading for pleasure increased during the pandemic lockdowns; one of the reasons young people gave for this was having the time to read and having fewer distractions. This would suggest that helping your child to balance their time and factor reading into their schedule in a quiet environment would be beneficial.
- Avoid reading becoming a chore through requests such as 'if you read for 15 minutes, you can...'. Whilst this may work for some, it's unlikely to lead to reading being seen as an enjoyable activity. Instead, focus on finding texts that your child is able to read and which capture their imagination – the selection in this newsletter may provide some inspiration.
- Don't forget that audiobooks are a form of reading too – it is important for young people to hear fluent reading: they don't have to just read with their eyes!
- Help your child to be proactive in their wider reading. For example, if they are covering World War II, explore age-appropriate texts on this through poetry, online articles or novels.
- Often, younger children enjoy reading with their parents and their interest wanes when it becomes an independent activity and they no longer share a connection with someone over a story. Read with them or listen to audiobooks, if you don't feel confident enough to read yourself.

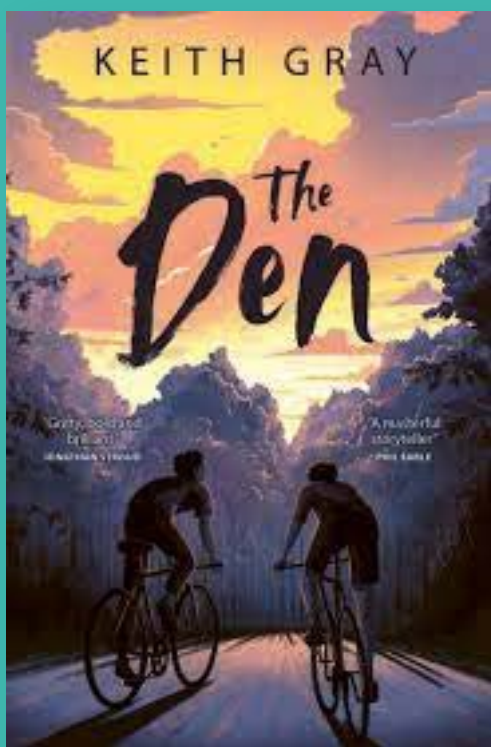
*Please note that unless otherwise stated, the publishers have deemed that these texts are suitable from Year 7 and up, but please do research/read the books before selecting them to ensure that they are appropriate for your child.*

**Whatever you and your child choose to read, we hope you enjoy it and we wish you a great start to 2024!**

**“Reading takes you on all the greatest adventures.”** NAMINA FORNA

## SHORTER-LENGTH READS

The books below are all shorter-length texts, which could be engaging for anyone, but they are published in a dyslexia-friendly font to help make them accessible to all. If your child doesn't have dyslexia, they can still read these wonderful books!



### **The Den** KEITH GRAY

While out on their bikes, two friends stumble across a long-forgotten underground bunker at the edge of the woods. This is the den, and going down inside will stretch their friendship to its limits. There will be rivalry and betrayal, but can wrecked relationships be saved before the summer has even begun?

### **The Piano at the Station**

HELEN RUTTER

Lacey's smart tongue and quick temper are constantly getting her confined to isolation at school. But there's a lot more to her that most people never see, and when Lacey gets sent to lunch-time music lessons to keep her out of trouble, she discovers a love and talent for the piano that opens up a whole new world for her...

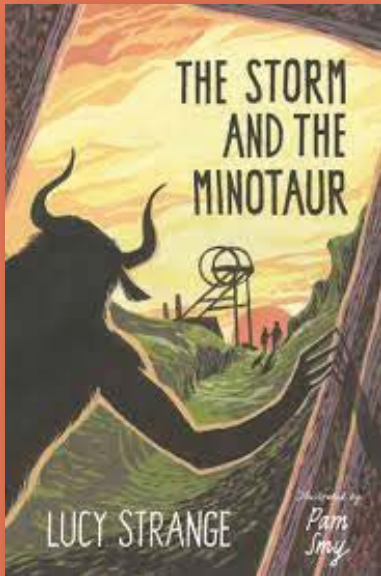


### **Needle** PATRICE LAWRENCE

13+

Charlene is a demon knitter. It's the only thing she enjoys and the only thing she believes she's really good at. So when her foster mum's son destroys her latest creation, Charlene loses it and stabs him in the hand with her needle. Despite getting sucked into the criminal justice system, Charlene's not sorry and she's never apologised to anyone. But people keep telling her that if she says sorry, they'll go easier on her...





## The Storm and the Minotaur

LUCY STRANGE

Money is scarce in George's family and so, at the age of nine, he has to join his father underground, hewing coal in the local mine. It's far from the dreams George had of continuing his education, and it's also a dangerous way to earn a living that has already claimed the life of his dad's older brother. Not long after he starts work, a summer storm leads to flooding in the mine. Trapped down in the dark, George spots a shadowy figure that seems to be telling George to follow him...



## Finding Her Feet

EVE AINSWORTH

Lily always feels a little bit left out. Shy and anxious, she finds school really hard, particularly as most of the other girls all seem so confident. Most of the time, she wishes that she could just disappear. But during a game of football in PE, her teacher spots her natural talent and invites Lily to join the local girls' team, where she starts to make friends with some of the other players. Finally, she thinks she's found a place where she fits in, but will a vicious argument with one of her teammates put all her progress in jeopardy?

**LONGER-LENGTH READS**

## Impossible Creatures

KATHERINE RUNDELL

Christopher is stunned when he discovers a passage to the Archipelago: a cluster of magical islands where all the creatures of myth still live and breed and thrive in their thousands. There he meets Mal: a girl from the islands, who is in possession of a flying coat and a baby griffin, and who is being pursued by a killer. Together they embark on an urgent quest to discover why the creatures are suddenly perishing, voyaging across the wild splendour of the Archipelago, where sphinxes hold secrets and centaurs do murder, in a bid to save both the islands and the world beyond them from a rising evil – before it's too late.



## A Place Called Perfect

HELENA DUGGAN

Violet never wanted to move to Perfect. Who wants to live in a town where everyone has to wear glasses to stop them going blind? And who wants to be neat and tidy and perfectly behaved all the time? But Violet quickly discovers there's something weird going on in the town – she keeps hearing voices, her mam is acting strange and her dad has disappeared...





## 21% Monster: Ice Giant

P.J. CANNING

### THE SECOND BOOK IN THE SERIES

Since Darren Devlin and Marek Masters joined forces, there has only been one thing on their minds – taking down XSP, the secret organisation that transformed them into genetically-modified superhumans. Even with 21% monster Darren's incredible strength, and 19% alien Marek's super intelligence, XSP is more than a match for them. But what if there was another survivor of XSP's experiments? A tall, tough, athletic teen girl able to withstand sub-zero temperatures and track potential predators? A girl who's 17% sabre-tooth polar bear, and out for revenge...

## On Silver Tides

SYLVIA BISHOP – PRE-ORDER FOR 1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY

Kelda has always protected her little sister Isla from danger on the rivers, and from the suspicions of their community. For Isla cannot breathe underwater – and so her very existence is forbidden by silvermen's Lore.

Now the rivers of England are growing sick: monstrous creatures are awakening and a fierce torrent of blame falls upon Kelda's family. When betrayal comes, the sisters escape on a desperate journey upstream. Joining forces with a mysterious boy, Kelda discovers the darkest depths of her kind's secret history. But to save both her sister and the very life of Britain's waterways, Kelda will have to make a sacrifice – one that will change her life forever...

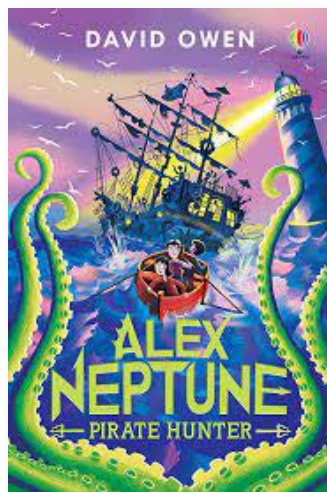


## Alex Neptune: Pirate Hunter

DAVID OWEN

*Join Alex Neptune, the boy with the power of the ocean in his hands, on his second adventure!*

Alex Neptune is struggling to get to grips with his new oceanic powers... so the last thing he needs is Haven Bay being attacked by pirates in a ship made of rubbish. The marauders are hunting for the missing egg of the elusive water dragon – and Alex is determined to reach it first to stop them stealing its power...

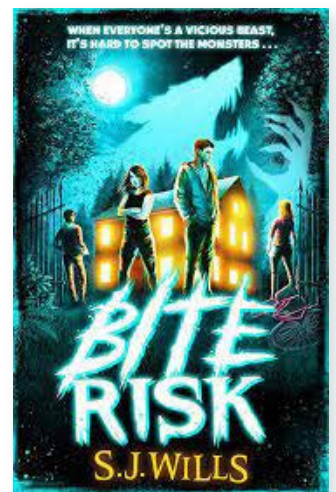


## Bite Risk

S.J. WILLS

12+

Sel Archer lives in a normal town with normal residents, except for one night a month... When the full moon comes out, almost all of the adults turn into werewolves, and it's up to the young people to protect themselves from danger. But, as this quiet life begins to unravel, and the Turned start to escape, can Sel and his friends uncover exactly who – or what – is watching their every move, before it's too late?

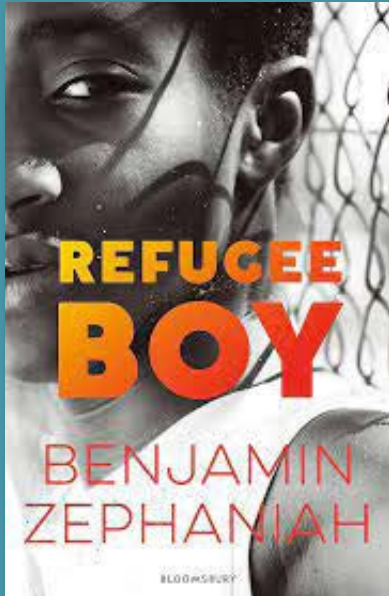


## The Prisoner of Bhopal

TIM WALKER – PRE-ORDER FOR 7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH

Amil has always dreamed of working at the modern, space-age pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, where he lives. Instead, on his tenth birthday, he is torn from his family and taken to work for Mr Kumar and his cruel son, Jalesh, in their dilapidated printing factory. There, hidden in a trunk, he finds a secret First World War journal. As its pages come to life, they reveal not only why Amil is there, but that he and the journal's author – his great-grandfather, Sanjiv – share a magical gift: they can read the wind. Its purpose remains a mystery until, one terrible night, the pesticide plant leaks poison gas into the air above Bhopal...





## Refugee Boy

BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

12+

Life is not safe for Alem. His father is Ethiopian, his mother Eritrean. Their countries are at war, and Alem is welcome in neither place. So Alem is excited to spend a holiday in London with his father – until he wakes up to find him gone. What seems like a betrayal is in fact an act of love, but now Alem is alone in a strange country, and he must forge his own path...

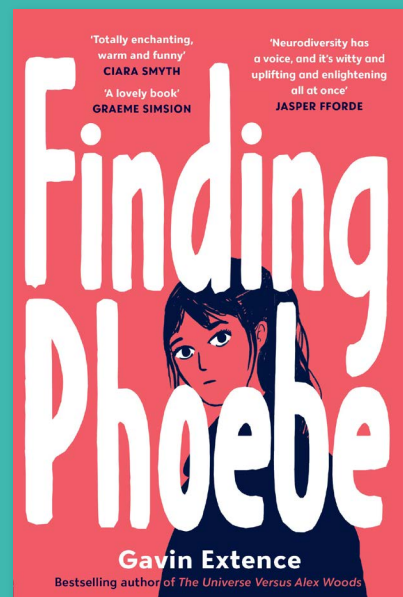
*Benjamin Zephaniah recently passed away – he has left behind an extraordinary legacy and contribution to contemporary literature in the form of novels and poetry, as well as an autobiography. His unique fusion of poetry with the rhythms of reggae earned him a distinctive place in the literary world. You may also enjoy exploring some of his poetry.*

## Finding Phoebe

GAVIN EXTENCE

13+

Phoebe is autistic. She prefers to stay in her comfort zone: walking her dog, writing fantasy fiction, surviving school with as few incidents as possible. When her best (and only) friend rebels and gets a secret boyfriend, Phoebe reluctantly agrees to cover for her. Before long, Phoebe's dealing with all sorts of things she'd rather not, like deception, fashionable jackets, and the bewildering politics of the school chess club. Breaking the rules has never been Phoebe's thing, but as events take a seriously unexpected turn, she realises there's more to her than she ever imagined...



**This Dark Descent**

KALYN JOSEPHSON

14+

Mikira Rusel is out of options. With her father imprisoned and facing rising debts, there's only one way to save her family from ruin: enter the Illinir, a high-stakes, cross-country horse race known for its high death toll as much as its flashy prize money. To have any chance of success she'll have to recruit Ari, an unlicensed enchanter, Damien, a lord in the midst of a succession battle, and Reid, the brooding horse trainer who will be the key to Mikira's survival. All her accomplices have reasons of their own to help Mikira – and their own blood feuds to avenge. And as alliances deepen and romances form, Mikira will have to discover where everyone's true loyalties lie.

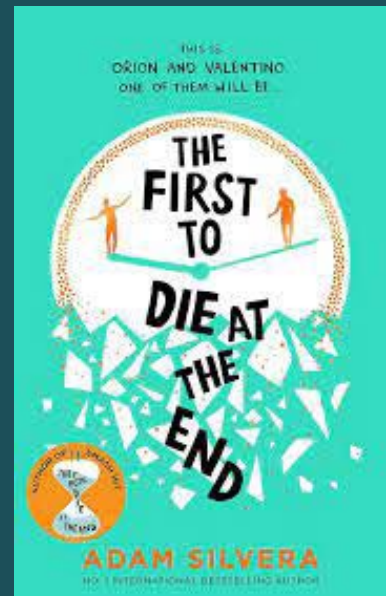


**The First to Die at the End**

ADAM SILVERA

14+

It's the night before Death-Cast goes live, and there's one question on everyone's mind: Can Death-Cast actually predict death, or is it an elaborate hoax? Orion Pagan has waited years for someone to tell him that he's going to die, given his serious heart condition. Valentino Prince has a long and promising future ahead of him and only registered for Death-Cast after his twin sister nearly died in a car accident. Orion and Valentino cross paths in Times Square and immediately feel a deep connection. But when the first End Day calls go out, their lives are changed for ever – one of them receives a call... the other doesn't.

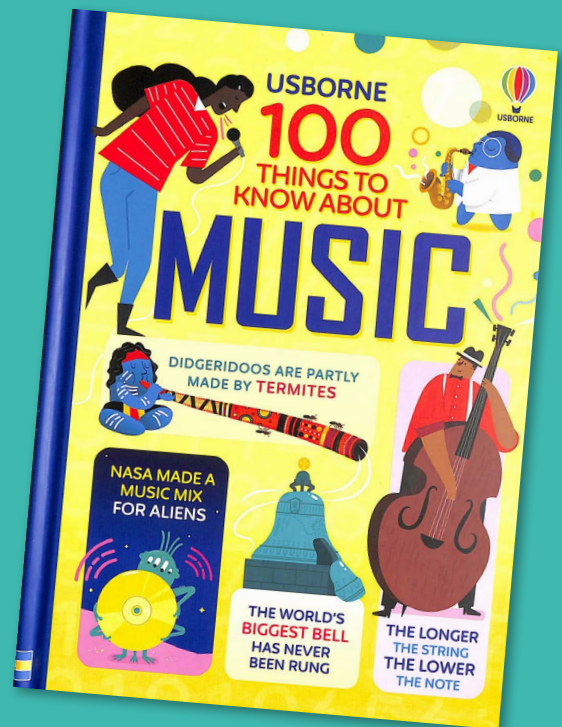




**NON-FICTION RECOMMENDATIONS**

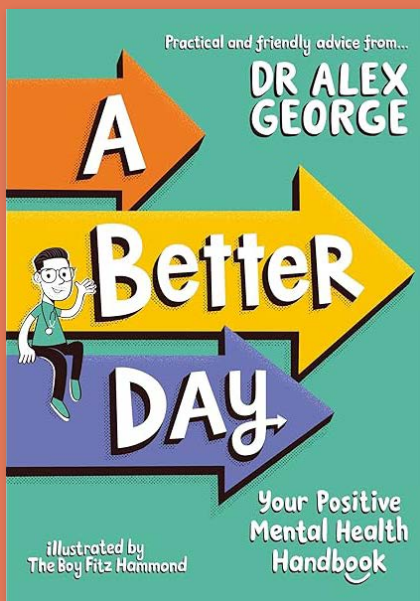
## 100 Things to Know About Music

Which tunes could save a life, and which should come with a health warning? How do talking drums tell the history of Africa? What happens in your brain when you listen to music? Find the answers to these questions and more in this exciting book exploring all corners of the diverse world of music.



## 100 Things to Know About Space

A fun and informative book packed with 100 fascinating things to know about space, from how to escape a black hole to why astronauts learn wilderness survival skills. It features bright, infographic-style illustrations, detailed facts on every page, a glossary and index, and internet links to specially selected websites for more information.



## A Better Day, Your Positive Mental Health Handbook

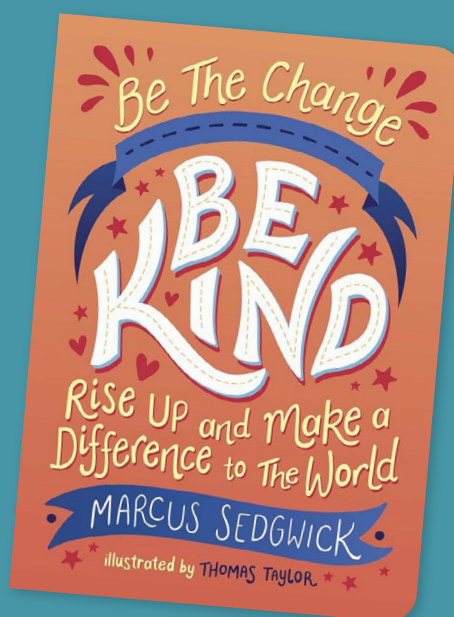
DR ALEX GEORGE

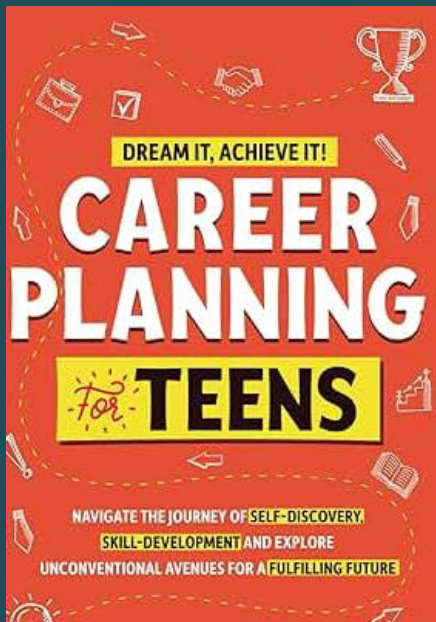
*A Better Day* is a positive, accessible and practical toolkit guiding young readers in how they can care for their mental health with confidence. From peer pressure and exam stress to online trolls and anxiety, life can be mentally draining. But though life is full of ups and downs, there are ways you can stay on top of your mental health – including overcoming stigma, talking about your feelings, developing resilience and switching your mindset. This book provides all the scaffolding and practical techniques to help you do this, so though you might be having a hard time right now, you can look toward your future with optimism and positivity. Because no matter what, there is always hope for a better day.

## Be the Change, Be Kind

MARCUS SEDGWICK

*Be the Change: Be Kind* is your handbook on how to use your own voice to empower yourself and others to spread kindness. Award-winning children's author Marcus Sedgwick tells the story of kindness – where it comes from, what it feels like and perhaps most importantly why it matters – and asks YOU what you would do in different everyday scenarios.





## Dream It, Achieve It: Career Planning for Teens

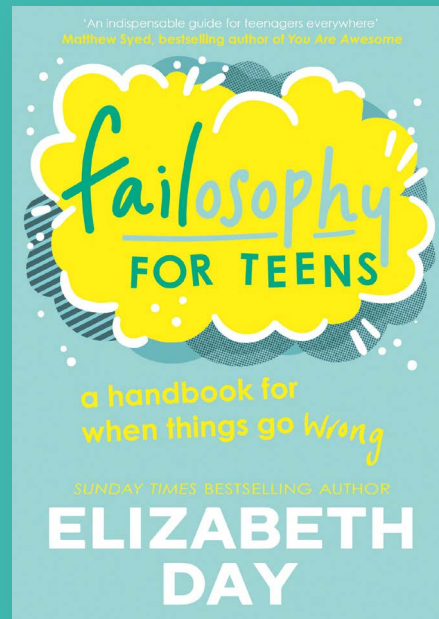
Are you a teenager that doesn't really know what you want to do in the future?

Are you dreading the future rather than feeling excited when you think about it?

Do you want to get on the path to success as early as now?

If yes, then *Dream It, Achieve It* is the perfect guide for you!

Discover your passions, talents, and interests. No big words or confusing stuff here — just simple, easy-to-follow steps that will help you figure out what you really want to do.



## Failosophy for Teens: A handbook for when things go wrong

ELIZABETH DAY

This is an inspiring and empowering guide to those moments when life doesn't go to plan. Using personal experience and stories shared by guests on her award-winning podcast, *How to Fail*, Elizabeth's book is full of creative and inspiring advice on how to:

- talk openly about failure
- turn failure into success
- build resilience for when life sends you curveballs
- reframe negative thoughts about yourself... and much more!