



PARENT NEWSLETTER – SUMMER TERM 2024

Welcome to this half term's reading newsletter! Summer's here, and with the longer days come more chances for children to dive into some brilliant books. We're on a mission to make reading fun for everyone, with books that are as fun as they are thought-provoking.

Inside, you'll find a list of books chosen with your children in mind – stories that are real, vibrant, and full of life's adventures. We've got something for everyone, from laugh-out-loud tales to journeys in fantastical worlds.

Additionally, we're offering tips on storytelling to bring books to life in your home. Whether it's animating characters with different voices, discussing the plot over dinner, or imagining alternate endings together before bed, storytelling can enrich the reading experience. We believe these moments of shared imagination can turn reading into one of the day's highlights, fostering a deeper connection between you and your child, and between your child and the world of books.

Let's motivate children to explore the world of books, finding stories that resonate and inspire. Together, we're creating a supportive reading community. Every bit of encouragement you provide at home makes a significant impact.

Please note that the following texts are suitable from the age group stated, but please do research the books before selecting them to ensure that they are appropriate for your child.



UNLOCKING THE MAGIC OF STORYTIME: CREATIVE STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

Diving into a book with your child is more than just reading words on a page; it's an adventure into new worlds, an exploration of wild imaginations, and a journey through stories that can last a lifetime. To turn reading time into an even more engaging and magical experience, here are some creative storytelling techniques that can bring stories to life for your young readers.

1. BRING CHARACTERS TO LIFE WITH VOICES

Nothing captivates a child's attention quite like hearing the different characters in a story speak in unique voices. By changing your tone, pitch, and speed, you can help each character leap off the page. A deep, grumbly voice for the wise old owl, or a high-pitched squeak for the tiny mouse, adds depth to the narrative and helps children differentiate between characters, making the story more memorable and fun.

2. EXPLORE THE STORY'S THEMES TOGETHER

Every story offers a chance to explore valuable lessons and themes. Take a moment after reading to discuss what the story was about beyond its plot. Ask questions like, "What do you think the main character learned?" or "How does this story make you feel?" This not only enhances comprehension but also encourages empathy and critical thinking.

3. USE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS TO SPARK IMAGINATION

Encourage your child to think beyond the story by asking open-ended questions. Inquiries such as, "What do you think happens next?" or "If you were in the story, what would you do differently?" prompt creative thinking and personal connection to the narrative. These questions allow children to use their imagination and become part of the storytelling process.

4. INCORPORATE PROPS AND VISUAL AIDS

Bringing stories to life doesn't have to be limited to vocal variety; props and visual aids can add an exciting layer to your storytelling. Use anything from stuffed animals to represent characters, to simple handmade drawings or objects around the house related to the story. This visual element can enhance understanding and make the story more tangible.

CREATIVE STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

5. MAKE IT INTERACTIVE WITH ROLE-PLAY

Invite your child to act out parts of the story with you. This could be as simple as making gestures, facial expressions, or fully acting out scenes. Role-playing helps children better grasp the story's events and characters' emotions, making reading a more interactive and immersive experience.

6. PAUSE FOR PREDICTIONS

Before turning the page, ask your child to guess what they think will happen next. This not only builds suspense and excitement but also engages their analytical skills as they try to predict the storyline based on clues and patterns they've noticed.

7. CREATE A READING RITUAL

Establishing a special reading ritual can make storytime a cherished part of the day. Whether it's a special corner of the house dedicated to reading, a specific time of day, or even a unique way of opening a book together, rituals can make reading time something your child looks forward to.

By including these storytelling techniques, reading can become a dynamic and enriching experience. It's not just about the stories themselves but the shared moments of discovery, laughter, and wonder that make reading together so special. So, grab your next book and let the adventure begin!



NEW AND NOTEWORTHY BOOKS

HELP! WE NEED A STORY

BY JAMES HARRIS, ILLUSTRATED BY MARIAJO ILUSTRAJO

A wonderful book about storytelling and the art of creativity with an inspiring rhyming text from James Harris (*The Unbelievable Biscuit Factory*) and beautiful, characterful illustrations from Mariajo Ilustrajo (*Flooded*).

It's a dull day in the jungle and Artie the macaque's friends are bored, bored, BORED! But with paper, pens and ink, a splash of inspiration, and a pinch of imagination, Artie creates something magical... a book! Filled with hordes of zombie hens, a fire-breathing dragon and robot sharks (yikes!), Artie's newly-created book busts the friends' boredom, and the next day they can't wait to do it all over again.

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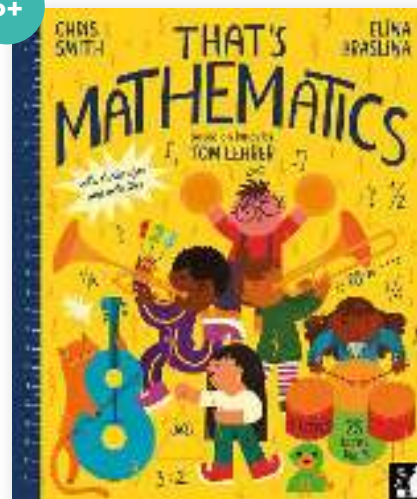
THAT'S MATHEMATICS

BY TOM LEHRER AND CHRIS SMITH, ILLUSTRATED BY ELINA BRASLINA

That's Mathematics is a maths book like no other. It's a vibrant, colourful book for young children showing them that maths is useful, interesting, fun and EVERYWHERE! They use it every day when they count, share, play, do sport, make cakes or move to music. Aimed at children from 5 to 8 years, the youngest can enjoy it as a picture book, reading Lehrer's rhyming song lyrics and looking at Elina Braslina's joyful illustrations. They will pick up a basic understanding of real-world maths and learn some core maths language along the way.

Older children are challenged to 'Try This' and 'Explore This' by author Chris Smith, who is a maths teacher, musician and all-round maths enthusiast. The activities are designed to deepen their curiosity and knowledge. There are supporting online activities to continue the fun, plus notes for parents to encourage you to get involved and help you discuss topics covered and keep the learning going after the book is closed.

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BLACK HOLE CINEMA CLUB

BY CHRISTOPHER EDGE

Another edge-of-your-seat adventure from the award-winning author of *Escape Room*, Christopher Edge. A trip to the cinema will never be the same...

When Lucas meets his friends at the local cinema - nicknamed 'The Black Hole' - they're excited about the movie marathon ahead. Non-stop action, blockbuster special effects and all the snacks they can eat. But as the lights go down, Lucas, Ash, Maya, Caitlin and Finn watch in disbelief as a jet-black tidal wave comes crashing out of the cinema screen and the five friends find themselves swept into an epic adventure.

Secret hideouts. Prehistoric monsters. Lost cities. Impossible missions. Being the hero of your own film should feel like fun. But as the cliffhanger scenes they're pitched into become ever more perilous, Lucas and his friends start to wonder if these movies are really make believe. Can they save the day before the end credits roll? The fate of the world might just depend on it...

An ode to movies, to the power of imagination, and to being the hero of your own story, book your ticket for the blockbuster read of 2024!

CELEBRATING THROUGH STORIES

CONNECTING KEY EVENTS WITH BRILLIANT BOOKS

With each passing month, we're greeted by special days that highlight important themes – from the environment to empathy, each offers a chance to reflect, learn, and connect. These moments are more than dates on a calendar; they're opportunities to bring to light the shared values and hopes we have for our community and the wider world.

In our Celebrating Through Stories section, we link these significant times to the engaging world of books. Events like Earth Day and National Share-a-Story Month each carry a message that's relevant to our everyday lives.

We've handpicked books that pair with these occasions, aiming to spark not just a celebration but a deeper insight into what these days stand for. From stories that open our eyes to the beauty of Earth, to tales that underscore the importance of empathy and environmental care, each book is a doorway to understanding and inspiration.

Let's dive into these stories, using them as a springboard for meaningful discussions and new perspectives. It's an opportunity to approach important issues through the engaging lens of literature, fostering conversations that leave a lasting impact.



NATIONAL PET MONTH

April is National Pet Month, a special time to celebrate our pets and learn about taking good care of them. It's all about how pets and people help each other. This month is not just for fun; it's also about teaching everyone how to look after their pets the right way. Events happen all over to help with this, and it's something we think about all year, not just in April.

WHY PETS ARE GREAT:

- They're good friends, making us feel less stressed when we hang out with them.
- Walking or playing with pets, like dogs, keeps us active and healthy.

DID YOU KNOW:

- More than half the people in the UK have a pet.
- There are about 10.9 million pet cats.
- Nearly 1 in 4 people in the UK have a dog.

DO YOU LOVE PETS? WHY PETS ARE SIMPLY SPECTACULAR!

BY MATT ROBERTSON

From the author and illustrator of the hilarious and fact-packed *Do You Love Bugs?*, the Sainsbury's Children's Book Award 2020 winner

Some pets are cute and cuddly, some are slimy and others might be a bit bitey - but they're all SIMPLY spectacular! Learn all about the world's oldest cat, what makes dogs pant and why chinchillas love dust baths in this comprehensive guide to your furry, slimy, squeaky and squawky best friends. The fifth title in Matt Robertson's award-winning *DO YOU LOVE* series, *DO YOU LOVE PETS?* brings incredible facts, hilarious illustrations and insightful stories about all kinds of pets to life. Even if you don't have a pet of your own, this is the perfect book for children who love pets, animals and fun facts.



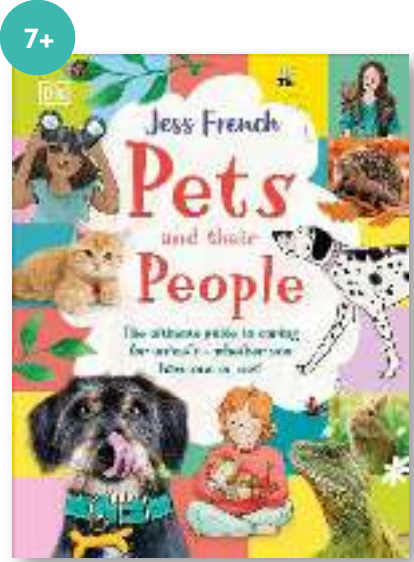
PETS AND THEIR PEOPLE

BY JESS FRENCH, ILLUSTRATED BY BECCA HALL

Learn everything there is to know in this heart-warming guide about pets of all kinds, and the many different ways to take care of them and give them the happiest life possible.

In this ultimate guide to pets, whether you've got them or not, children will enjoy learning lots about the different animals that we might think of as pets, including their history, behaviour, and body language. Discover practical things to do with pets, such as how to treat them kindly, look after their everyday needs, and give them the best life possible.

With author and vet Dr Jess French, delve deeper into the world of pets than you ever have before! The best thing is, you don't even need a pet to enjoy them. *Pets and Their People* provides inspiration for kids aged 7-9 who can't own pets, showing them that we can care for animals in lots of other ways - from volunteering at animal shelters to leaving food for them out in the wild. From old favourites such as playful puppies and cuddly cats, to more unusual pets such as lizards and snakes, to bugs and hedgehogs in parks and gardens, there are many fascinating animals to meet.



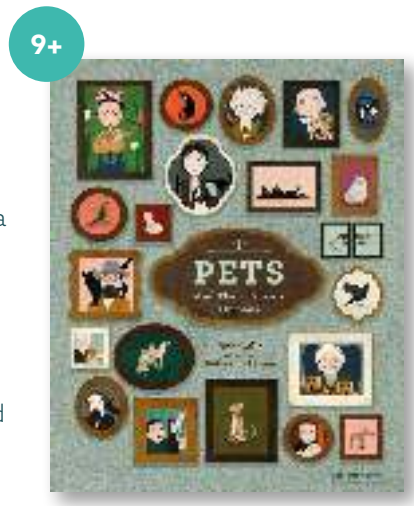
PETS AND THEIR FAMOUS HUMANS

BY ANA GALLO, ILLUSTRATED BY KATHERINE QUINN

Did you know that Mozart's pet starling was the inspiration for his Piano Concerto No. 17? Or that writer *Dorothy Parker* loved animals so much she let a pair of alligators swim in her bathtub?

These are just a couple of the stories in this delightful and surprising collection that profiles the strong bond between humans and their pets. Some of these stories are touching: Frida Kahlo memorialised her pet deer Granizo in her painting *The Wounded Deer*. Some are a little quirky: Albert Einstein, convinced that his parrot, Bibo, was sad, told bad jokes to cheer the bird up.

Each of these wonderfully entertaining stories is made even more appealing by Katherine Quinn's captivating illustrations. Rich in detail and reminiscent of folk art, they capture the humour and poignancy of these fascinating pairings. Together these stories and illustrations will create lasting impressions that will help young readers identify historic figures and spark joy in friendships with the animals in their own lives.



EID

Eid al-Fitr, often simply called Eid, is a significant holiday for Muslims known as the "Festival of Breaking the Fast". It celebrates the conclusion of Ramadan, the holy month during which Muslims fast from dawn to sunset each day. Eid al-Fitr falls on the first day of Shawwal, the month that follows Ramadan in the Islamic calendar.

The timing of Eid al-Fitr changes each year since it's based on the lunar Islamic calendar, which depends on the moon's cycles. The exact date can also vary from one place to another, relying on local religious leaders to spot the moon's first crescent. Usually, Eid starts with the sighting of the crescent moon after sunset. If the moon isn't visible due to clouds or if it's too bright, the celebration is then moved to the day after the 29th day of Ramadan.

This year, Eid al-Fitr is expected around April 11th, but the exact day will depend on the moon's sighting by local mosques or Islamic authorities.

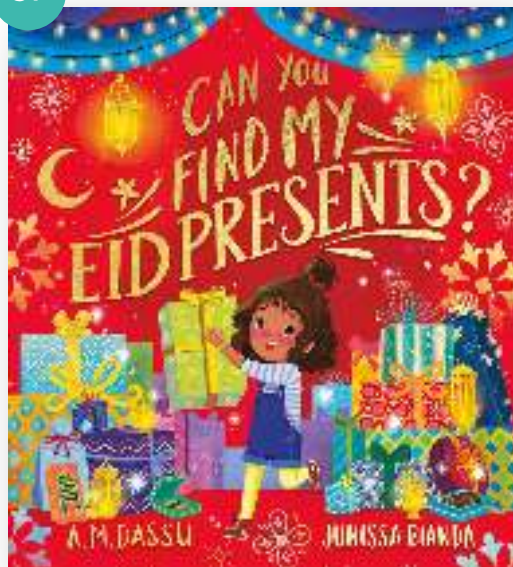


CAN YOU FIND MY EID PRESENTS?

BY A. M. DASSU, ILLUSTRATED BY JUNISSA BIANDA

With vivid illustrations and a heart-warming story, this picture book is the perfect Eid gift! It's the evening before Eid, and Hana is helping her mum lay the table. Hana loves the colourful decorations they've arranged around the house! But there is still much to do, so when Hana's mum asks her to get the Eid presents ready to take to Nani's house the next day, Hana is at the ready to help! There's just one problem: where are the Eid presents? With a gentle search-and-find element running alongside the story, this gorgeous picture book is a wonderful introduction to Eid. Written by award-winning author of *Boy, Everywhere*, AM Dassu with heartfelt illustrations by Junissa Bianda.

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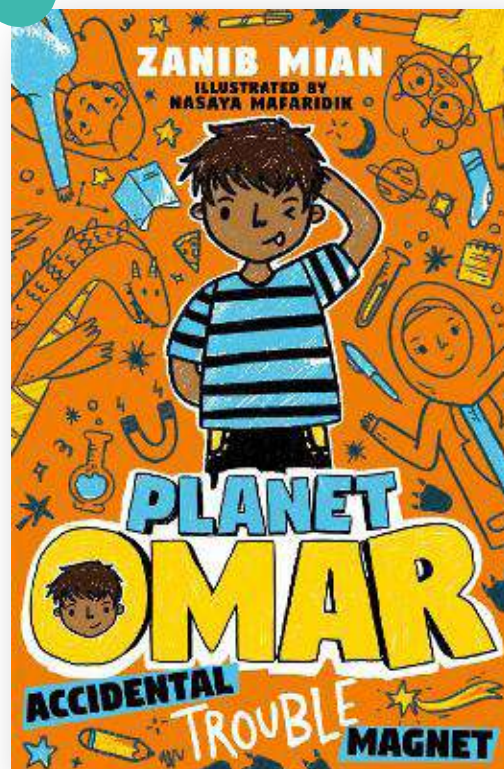


PLANET OMAR: ACCIDENTAL TROUBLE MAGNET

BY ZANIB MIAN, ILLUSTRATED BY NASAYA MAFARIDIK

Welcome, readers, to the imaginative brain of Omar! You might not know me yet, but once you open the pages of this book you'll laugh so hard that snot will come out of your nose (plus you might meet a dragon and a zombie - what more could you want?). My parents decided it would be a good idea to move house AND move me to a new school at the same time. As if I didn't have a hard enough time staying out of trouble at home, now I've also got to try and make new friends. What's worse, the class bully seems to think I'm the perfect target. At least Eid's around the corner which means a feast (YAY) and presents (DOUBLE YAY). Well, as long as I can stay in Mum and Dad's good books long enough... The combination of Zanib Mian's hilarious text and Nasaya Mafaridik's fantastic cartoon-style illustrations make the *Planet Omar* series perfect for fans of Tom Gates and Wimpy Kid.

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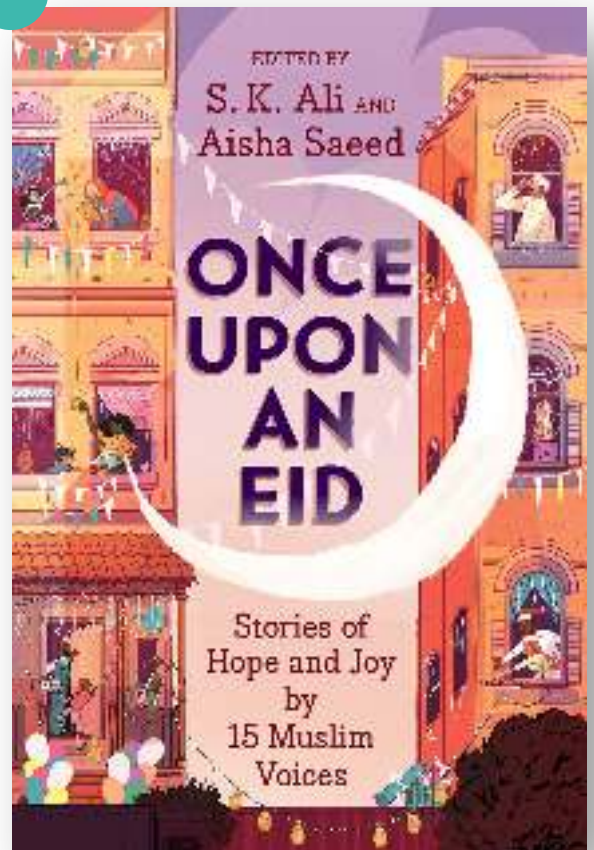


ONCE UPON AN EID: STORIES OF HOPE AND JOY BY 15 MUSLIM VOICES

BY S.K. ALI AND AISHA SAEED, ILLUSTRATED BY SARA ALFAGEEH

Now in paperback, a joyous short story collection by and about Muslims, edited by New York Times bestselling authors Aisha Saeed and S. K. Ali. Eid! The short, single-syllable word conjures up a variety of feelings and memories for Muslims. Maybe it's waking up to the sound of frying samosas or the comfort of bean pie, maybe it's the pleasure of putting on a new outfit for Eid prayers, or maybe it's the gift giving and the holiday parties, or carnival rides to come that day. Whatever it may be, for those who cherish this day of celebration, the emotional responses may be summed up in another short and sweet word: joy. Contributors include G. Willow Wilson, Hena Khan, N. H. Senzai, Hanna Alkaf, Rukhsana Khan, Randa Abdel-Fattah, Ashley Franklin, Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow, Candice Montgomery, Huda Al-Marashi, Ayesha Mattu, Asmaa Hussein, and Sara Alfageeh.

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EARTH DAY

Each year on April 22nd, the world comes together to celebrate Earth Day, a global event dedicated to highlighting the pressing environmental challenges our planet faces. It's a day of action, reflection, and commitment to making the world a safer, healthier, and more sustainable place for future generations. In 2024, under the banner of 'Planet vs Plastics,' Earth Day turns a focused lens on the urgent need to address plastic pollution, inspiring individuals, schools, businesses, and governments to enact change and adopt practices that protect our precious environment.

BEGIN AGAIN

BY OLIVER JEFFERS

A powerful, thoughtful and bold comment on humanity and its future from one of today's most thought-provoking artists. In his first picture book created specifically with a wider audience in mind, Oliver Jeffers shares a history of humanity and his dreams for its future. Where are we going?

With his bold, exquisite artwork, Oliver Jeffers starts at the dawn of humankind following people on their journey from then until now, and then offers the reader a challenge: where do we go from here?

How can we think about the future of the human race more than our individual lives?

How can we save ourselves?

How can we change our story?

Illustrated in his instantly recognisable style, Oliver Jeffers's exploration of the state of the world today is insightful, moving and powerful. A must-have for every forward-thinking person who wants the next generation to inherit a world to be proud of.



DON'T PANIC! WE CAN SAVE THE PLANET

BY JAMES CAMPBELL AND ILLUSTRATED BY ROB JONES.

Tired of FREAKING OUT about climate change? Want to stop being an eco-WORRIER and start being an eco-WARRIOR? And do you absolutely, positively LOVE laughing? Then this hands-on and hilarious guide to saving the world is for YOU!

Written by award-winning author James Campbell - who lives off-grid and owns a compost loo - find out how cow-farts are wrecking the world, what a fossil fuel even is and why 'earthships' (and not spaceships) are the future!

This book will help you understand what climate change is and how on Earth we can stop it TOGETHER!

A hilarious and light-hearted look at the problems facing planet Earth, perfect for educating and comforting children who are worried about climate change.



FEATHER

BY M.G. LEONARD

The Twitchers have one last mystery to solve - and this time it's a heist! The final unputdownable adventure in the bestselling birdwatching detective series from the internationally acclaimed author of *Beetle Boy* and *Adventures on Trains*, wildlife queen M.G. Leonard.

On a school trip to the Royal Swan Natural History Museum, Ava finds herself at the centre of a heist: hundreds of invaluable bird of paradise skins from the Alfred Wallace Collection have been stolen! When she discovers a large jet-black feather, she's sure it's a clue, but the police won't listen to her. Slipping away, she takes the case to the Twitchers in an investigation that leads them to the bizarre and sinister world of fly-fishing, and to a mysterious girl with a pet Raven called Caliban and a dangerous ring of thieves and smugglers...

Based on a true crime, this is a strange and fascinating mystery full of unexpected twists and turns.

Feather is an exciting winter mystery adventure about friendship, bravery and protecting nature, perfect for readers 9+ and for fans of Robin Stevens, Lauren St John and Jenny Pearson. It can be enjoyed as a stand-alone adventure or read as part of The Twitchers series.



NATIONAL SHARE-A-STORY MONTH

In May, we celebrate National Share-a-Story Month. This year’s theme is ‘A Feast of Stories.’ It’s all about enjoying a wide variety of stories, just like enjoying different kinds of food at a big meal. From exciting adventures to stories that give us a peek into lives around the world, there’s something for everyone.

The idea is to get us all reading, sharing stories out loud, and talking about our favourite books. It’s a great opportunity to explore new stories and share the fun of reading with others.

THE SMILE SHOP

BY SATOSHI KITAMURA

Award-winning artist Satoshi Kitamura delivers the powerful message that kindness is more important than money. Nominated for the Greenaway Medal 2021. Celebrate the power of a smile in this deceptively simple story set in a multi-ethnic market. A small boy is planning how to spend his first ever pocket money when disaster strikes and he’s left with only one coin. His day seems to be ruined until he sees a Smile Shop. In a surprise ending, the world is put to rights and suddenly the whole world is smiling again!



THE THAMES AND TIDE CLUB: SQUID INVASION

BY KATYA BALEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY RACHAEL DEAN

The mudlarkers of the Thames and Tide Club are about to face Squidmageddon in a funny and fast-paced adventure for young treasure hunters. When the director of the mudlarking museum goes on holiday for a week, he leaves three members of the Thames and Tide Club – Clem, Zara and Ash – in charge. They’re determined that nothing will go wrong on their watch, but they haven’t planned on an invasion of squid who will stop at nothing to take over the world ... Join the club and dig for treasure in the wildest adventure you could imagine!

STITCH

BY PADRAIG KENNY

A compelling, atmospheric and gothic Frankenstein-inspired adventure by an award-winning Irish author. Stitch is not a monster – he’s a creation. He and his friend Henry Oaf were brought to life by the genius Professor Hardacre, and have spent all their days in a castle deep in the woods, far from humankind. But when the Professor dies and his pompous nephew comes to take over the laboratory, they soon find out that his sights are set not on scientific discovery, but personal glory. And Henry is his next experiment. Can Stitch and Henry escape his clutches and make their way in a world they were never built for – and may never be ready for them?



PiXL Reading

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