

Reading Newsletter

February 2026



The National Year of Reading 2026

Welcome to the first Reading Newsletter of the year.

This year is the National Year of Reading — a Department for Education initiative, in collaboration with the National Literacy Trust. The campaign aims to address the decline in reading among children, young people and adults by promoting reading as a powerful and enjoyable activity. It highlights how reading supports success in school and beyond, boosts wellbeing, builds empathy and brings people together. There will be a range of exciting events and opportunities throughout the year designed to inspire a love of reading.

In this issue, you'll find book recommendations, news about our upcoming World Book Day celebrations and practical tips on how you can support your child with reading at home. We look forward to sharing an exciting year of reading with you!

Mrs Minta
Reading Lead



Vocabulary Talk

At school, we are always exploring new words - whether it's in our reading and writing lessons or while discovering new topics. Words are at the heart of everything we do! Sometimes we come across words we don't know yet — and that's OK! The best thing we can do is ask about them and find out together.

In reading lessons, children are learning to use a range of strategies to help them understand unfamiliar words. They might look up words in a dictionary, use clues from the rest of the sentence to work out what they mean, or talk about ideas and possibilities with their classmates. Most importantly, they're encouraged to ask questions whenever they come across a word they're not sure about.

Reading at home is a great opportunity to explore new words as a family. Chat about the meanings of unfamiliar words, look them up together, or have fun trying them out in conversation.



It's always good to ask these questions when reading together:

- "What does that word mean?"
- "Can we use clues from the sentence to help us?"
- "Can we look it up together?"

Make discovering words fun — spot interesting ones in books, films and T.V programmes, or even while you're out and about! You could keep a family 'New Words List' on the fridge or play games guessing what new vocabulary might mean.

The more words children learn and understand, the more confident and creative they become in their reading, writing and communication.

Author in the Spotlight – Clare Helen Welsh

Clare Helen Welsh is an award-winning children's author whose stories help families explore feelings, kindness, and change. She's written many much-loved picture books, including *The Tide* — a gentle story about memory and love between a grandparent and grandchild — and *The Perfect Shelter*, which looks at hope and togetherness during challenging times.

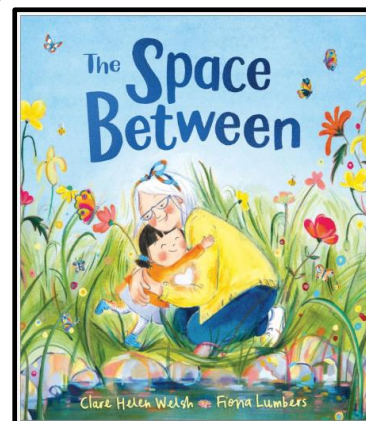
Her latest book, *The Space Between*, tells the story of a girl moving to a new home and discovering that, just like buds before flowers or batter before cake, the "in-between" times are when we grow the most. It's a reassuring read for children (and their grown-ups) learning to face change with courage and heart.

As a former teacher and mental health champion, Clare knows how powerful stories can be in supporting children's well-being. Through her website 'Books That Help', she shares picture books that guide families through life's ups and downs — from anxiety and grief to moving home or family changes. The website offers carefully chosen stories that encourage conversation, understanding, and emotional wellbeing at home and in school.

Read an interview with Clare Helen Welsh here:

<https://thereadingrealm.co.uk/2026/01/15/the-space-between-an-interview-with-clare-helen-welsh/>

Explore her website: <http://www.booksthathelp.co.uk>



Could you be our first Mystery Reader?

We are very excited to launch our brand new Mystery Reader sessions! As part of our ongoing commitment to building a love of reading across the school, we'd love for parents, carers, or family members to come into school and surprise the children by reading a story aloud.

Here's how it works:

- You volunteer to be a Mystery Reader.
- We'll arrange a date and time with you in advance.
- You'll come into the classroom for around 15 minutes, usually at the end of the day.
- The children won't know who the Mystery Reader is until you arrive — we can't wait to see their reactions!

Please come prepared with a favourite story from home that you'd like to share. This could be a much-loved book from your own childhood or one that you and your child enjoy reading together.

If you'd like to take part, please contact your child's class teacher on Dojo to arrange a time to come in.



World Book Day – 5th March



It is **World Book Day on Thursday 5th March** and we are busy planning some exciting activities for the children to enjoy throughout the day!

This year, we would like the children to dress up as a **word** of their choice. The possibilities are endless: *vibrant, athletic, heroic, artistic, fragile, mythical, fatigued...* and many more! We would love the children to be adventurous and creative with their word choices.

Please don't feel that you need to go out and buy anything extra. Costumes can be created using items you already have at home.

I have attached some pictures for inspiration and ideas.

If your child already has a World Book Day costume in mind, they are very welcome to dress as a character and simply choose a word to match. For example, Harry Potter could be linked to words such as *courageous* or *heroic*.

In each year group, we will be holding a Vocabulary Parade, where children will proudly share and celebrate their chosen words.



World Book Day Tokens

Years 3, 5 and 6 have all been given their World Book Day £1/€1.50 vouchers, which can be used at local bookshops and participating supermarkets to purchase one of the special World Book Day books.

Redemption period:
Thursday 12 February – Sunday 15 March 2026

Find out more about the books available here:
<https://www.worldbookday.com/books/>

Please note:
 Year 4 children will receive their vouchers after half term due to being at Dukes Barn.



Reading Champions Update

Our Reading Champions have been doing a fantastic job in school this term! They've been spending time supporting readers in Year 4, meeting once a week in the library to chat about books, share recommendations and listen to children read. It's been lovely to see how confident and enthusiastic our Reading Champions have become and how much the Year 4 children enjoy reading with them.

Two of our Reading Champions, Thomas and Phoebe, would each like to share a book recommendation.

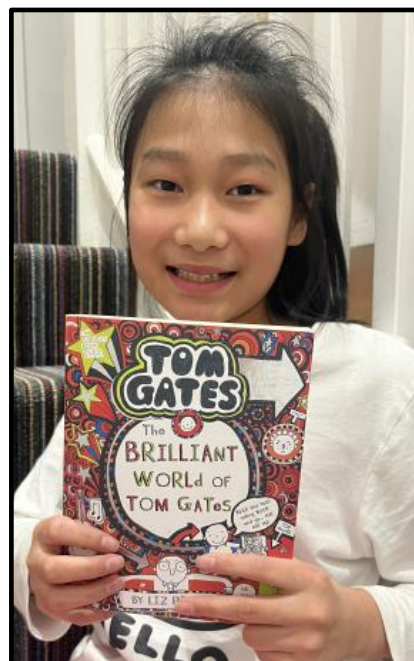
Book: Tom Gates –The Brilliant World of Tom Gates

Author: Liz Pichon

Tom Gates is a book all about Tom's life. It talks about what he does at school, his friends and his family. It also talks about his hobbies. Tom likes to doodle and bother his sister, Delia. He doesn't like his teacher, Mr Fullerman, because he was separated from his best friend, Derek. He likes to draw with Derek and play with Derek's dog.

I like the book because it's similar to the book 'The Diary of a Wimpy Kid'. This book is full of funny pictures and doodles and the storyline is funny and interesting.

I would recommend this book to both boys and girls.



Skandar and the Unicorn Thief

By A.F Steadman

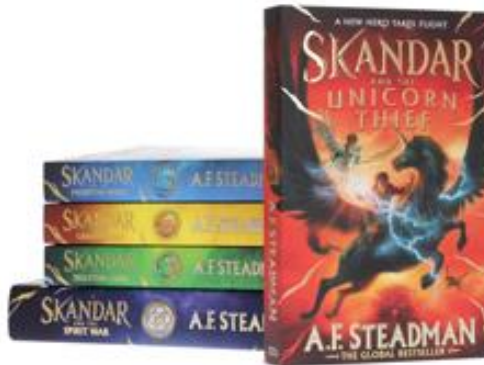
Reviewed by Thomas , Class 11

Skandar is a thirteen year old boy who lives in Margate (Kent) with his dad and sister Kenna. Skandar's ambition is to be a unicorn rider: to travel to 'the Island' and to bond with a unicorn. But these unicorns are not what you would expect! They are unpredictable, blood-thirsty and brimming with elemental power.

Find out if Skandar will fulfill his life-long dream in this thrilling adventure.

I enjoyed this epic series of five books that are full of fun, friendship and magical secrets as well as lots of unexpected twists and turns. If you want a taste of Skandar's world, there is a World Book Day book coming soon too!

Rating:



Recommended Reads – Graphic Novels

Graphic novels are book-length stories told through both text and illustrations. They capture children's attention, make reading engaging and offer an active reading experience where visuals and words work together to tell the story.

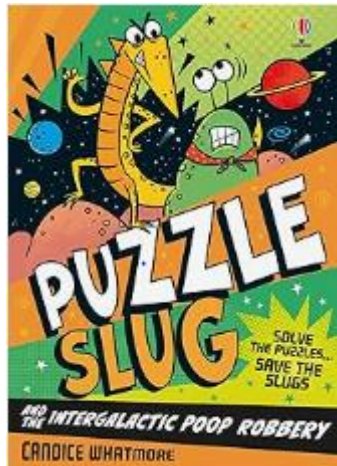
They can build confidence in readers, improve comprehension (especially inference skills), develop visual literacy and support vocabulary growth.

Recent research highlights their impact:

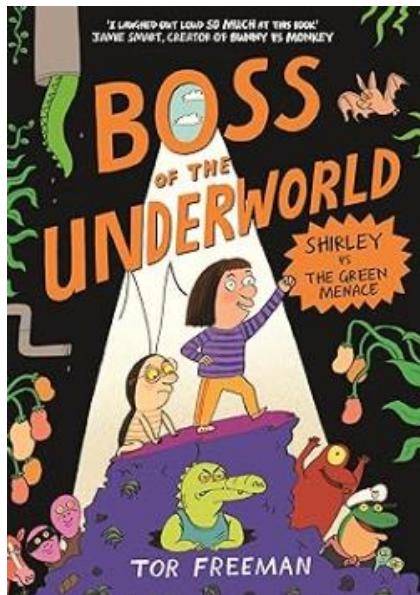
- 40% of children read graphic novels at least once a month.
- Those who read them are more likely to read daily (36% vs 23%).
- 59% of graphic novel readers enjoy reading for pleasure, compared with 33% of non-readers.
- 86% see themselves as "good" or "very good" readers, compared to 76% of others.
(National Literacy Trust, 2023)

Graphic novels are not just fun—they're a powerful way to help children develop as confident, motivated readers.

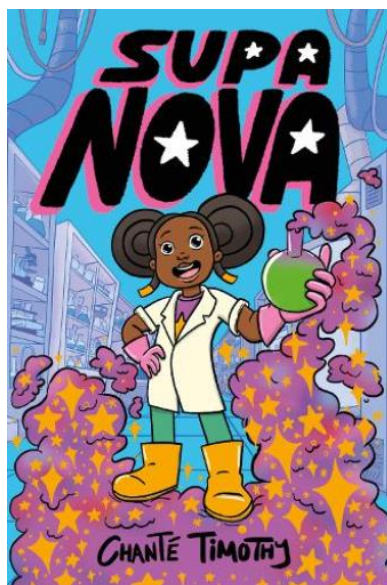
Below are 8 recommendations:



A hilarious comic book introducing Puzzle Slug, who needs your brain power to help him solve puzzles and save his planet!



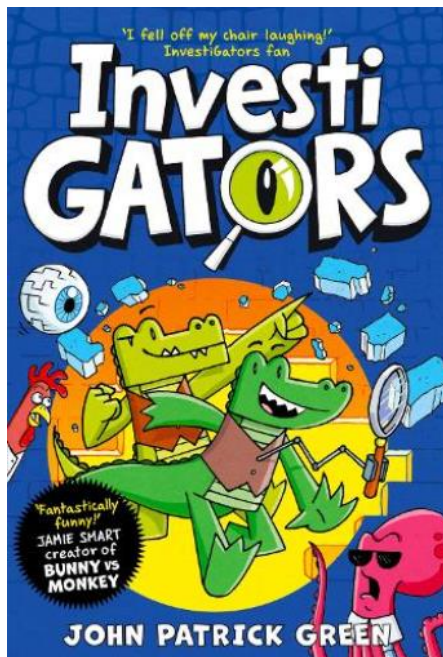
Join Shirley and her giant cockroach friend, George, on a strange adventure through the Underworld. Will they triumph over scary foes, resist eating delicious things in the forest, navigate the Bog of Intense Emotions, and find their way into the dark sewers to confront the Green Menace?



Meet Nova! She's a scientist. Some people say she's a genius. Some people even call her Supa Nova - get it? Like a supernova. Basically she's a huge star, exploding right at you with her adventures!

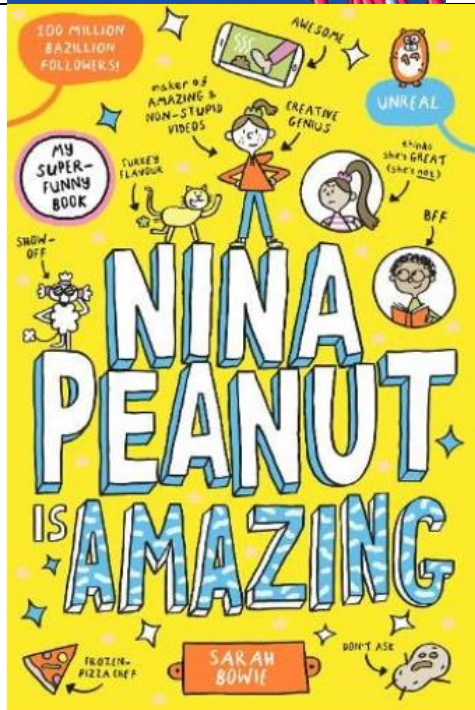
When Nova invents a plastic-eating monster, she thinks she's solved the world's pollution problem. But she doesn't expect her monster to start rampaging through the city! Can Nova find a way to save the day?

It will take a genius to figure it out!



Mango and Brash are alligators – who investigate! In their first adventure the crime fighting duo need to go undercover . . . in a bakery?

Armed with a moustache and a rolling pin, the Investigators are on a mission to discover who has kidnapped top chef Gustavo, and stop his recipes from getting into the wrong hands! This case isn't going to be a piece of cake.



Nina Peanut creates amazing videos - so why is it only her nan and best friend Brian who watch them? Surely everyone should be interested in her serious and not-stupid videos about potatoes with faces?

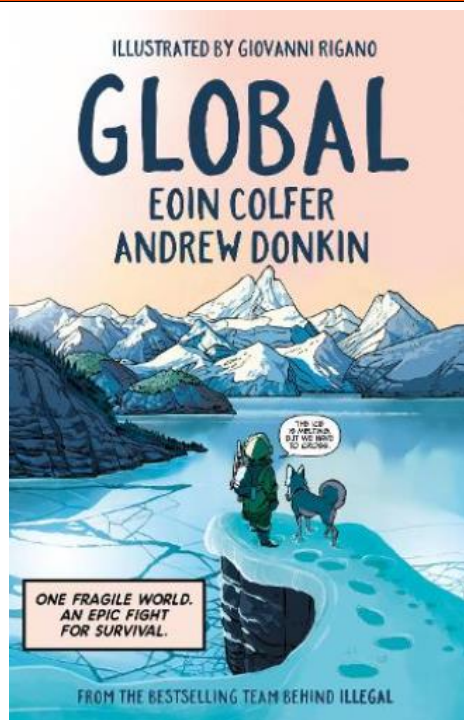
Nina dreams about being as popular as class queen bee Megan Dunne, who films not amazing at all content of her pampered dog, Princess Trixie Bell.

So when Nina's stinky cat Les wanders into one of Megan's videos by accident, and goes viral, Nina and Les are suddenly internet famous! But is overnight stardom as wonderful as Nina always imagined it would be?



ALAN IS KING OF THE UNIVERSE. Well, not yet. But he WILL be.

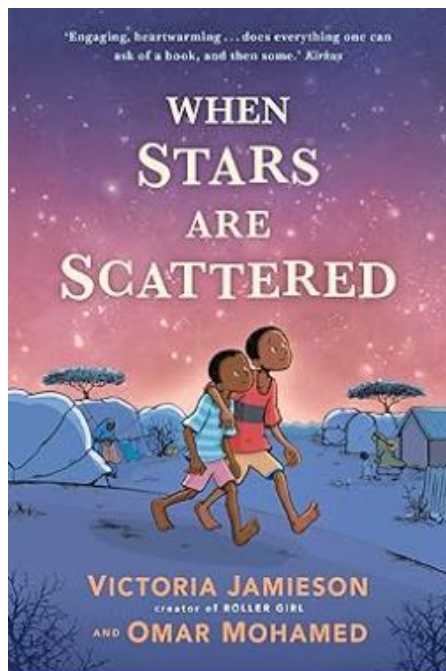
An orange cat blessed with opposable thumbs, Alan is convinced he was born to rule and spends his days scheming up brilliant plans to fulfil his destiny - from creating a brand-new country, Alanland, to cloning himself in an attempt to raise an entire army of Alans. And his hapless dog sidekick Fido is just happy to be along for the ride!



Yuki lives in an increasingly deserted Inuit township in Nova Scotia. One day she sets out into the wilderness of the Arctic tundra planning to photograph a rare grolar bear (a terrifying grizzly-polar crossbreed created by climate change) - if she can prove it's a grolar, she can protect it from being shot. With only her faithful dog for company and adrift on a fragment of melting glacier, she finds herself being stalked across the changing wilderness by a starving grolar bear, with only her wits and her harpoon to keep her alive.

Sami lives in a fishing village on the Bay of Bengal. But because of the ever-rising ocean level, each day is a struggle to survive. One night, Sami sets out to return to his old, submerged family home, alone. He takes a deep breath and dives beneath the moonlit waters, hoping to find his past.

But a cyclone is coming .



Omar and his brother Hassan, two Somali boys, have spent a long time in the Dadaab refugee camp. Separated from their mother, they are looked after by a friendly stranger. Life in the camp isn't always easy. The hunger is constant . . . but there's football to look forward to, and now there's a chance Omar will get to go to school . . .

With a heart-wrenching fairytale ending, this incredible true story is brought to life by Victoria's stunning illustrations. This book perfectly depicts life in a refugee camp for 8-12 year olds.