THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

LITERATURE FOR CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING

Looking for good reads to share with children aged 5 - 11? Take a look at the recommendations below: all of these books have been tried and tested by the English 4-11 reviews team and the Primary Education Committee. Read on for detailed reviews of each book.

If you buy any of the books, try your local independent bookseller first!

7-9 HISTORY
The Button War by Avi
Walker Books
ISBN 9781406380835 £6.99

9+ CREATIVE WRITING
A Year of Nature Poems by Joseph Coelho
Illustrated by Kelly Louise Judd
Wide Eyed Editions ISBN 978071124 9943 £6.99

9+ HISTORY
Children of Winter by Berlie Doherty
Catnip Publishing Ltd
ISBN 9781846470264 £6.99

7-9 PSHE
Eight Princesses and a Magic Mirror by Natasha Farrant
Illustrated by Lydia Corry
Head of Zeus ISBN 978178854115 £12.99

9+ GEOGRAPHY
Grandpa Chatterji by Jamila Gavin
Egmont UK Ltd
ISBN 9781405212854 £4.99

10+ GEOGRAPHY HISTORY
Amundsen's Way The Race to the South Pole
Joanna Grochowicz. Illustrated by Sarah Lippett
Allen and Unwin ISBN 9781911631408 £7.99

6-8 MUSIC
Fiddle Dee Dee! by Dianne Hofmeyr
Illustrated by Piet Grobler
Otter Barry Books ISBN 978191059756 £11.99

10+ GEOGRAPHY
Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson
Caterpillar Books
ISBN 9781848578937 £5.99

9+ HISTORY
The Saga of Eric the Viking by Terry Jones
Caterpillar Books
ISBN 9781848578937 £5.99

7-9 SCIENCES
Imagine A Special 30th Anniversary Edition
Alison Lester
Allen & Unwin ISBN 9781911631590 £11.99

9-11 PSHE
The Great Animal Escapade by Jane Kerr
Illustrated by Alexis Snell
Chicken House ISBN 9781911490340 £6.99

9+ HISTORY
Kensuke's Kingdom by Michael Morpurgo
Egmont UK Ltd
ISBN 9781405221740 £6.99

9-11 SCIENCES
Our Little Inventor by Sher Rill Ng
Allen & Unwin
ISBN 9781911631309 £11.99

10+ HISTORY
Wolf Brother by Michelle Paver
Orion Children's Books
ISBN 9781842551707 £6.55

7-9 SCIENCES
Bloom by Nicola Skinner
Illustrated by Flavia Sorrentino
Harper Collins ISBN 9780008297381 £12.99

9-11 HISTORY
She Wolf by Dan Smith
Chicken House
ISBN 9781910655931 £6.99

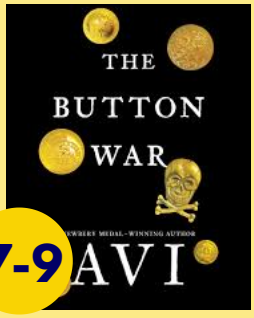
10+ GEOGRAPHY
The White Giraffe by Lauren St. John
Hachette Children's Group
ISBN 9781842555637 £6.99

5-7 SCIENCES
Winter Sleep A Hibernation Story
Sean Taylor and Alex Morss
Words & Pictures ISBN 9780711242838 £12.99

9+ HISTORY
Cloud Boy by Marcia Williams
Walker Books
ISBN 978 14063 8121 4 £6.99

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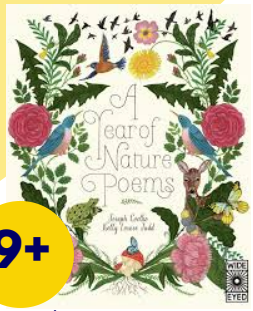


7-9

The Button War by Avi
Walker Books ISBN 9781406380835 £6.99

HISTORY

Set in a village in Poland – which in 1914 didn't exist as a country and was split between Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary – the story begins with a childish challenge to collect buttons from soldiers' uniforms. Every one of a group of friends tries to become 'King' of the Buttons. When a German aeroplane drops a bomb on the village the boys live in, the war comes to their remote part Poland.. A very dark, but readable, story interweaves life and war in an interesting and unusual way.



9+

A Year of Nature Poems by Joseph Coelho
Illustrated by Kelly Louise Judd
Wide Eyed Editions ISBN: 978071124 9943 £6.99

CREATIVE WRITING

Each month is represented here by a poem on an illustrated double-page spread prefaced with a short introduction about some aspect of nature. With this structure and the collection's title, the reader might expect twelve straightforward poems about key aspects of the natural world in each month. Instead we are treated to starling murmurations, the emergence of mayflies, jellyfish bloomings and the perils of fly agaric toadstools, whilst the impact of climate change is touched upon gentlyin the decline in frogspawn. More than that, many of them have a poignant melancholic tone drawn from the poet's personal experience of loss, teenage sorrow, familial embarrassment or the camaraderie of friends scrumping together. All are written in Coelho's lyrical and highly metaphorical style which has both heart-stoppingly beautiful images too numerous to mention, along with lines which ache with the rigours of old age and the fragility of life. They are wonderfully offset by Judd's gorgeous decorative designs and illustrations inspired by the poems and nature. They are so full of charm and colour one can, perhaps, forgive the appearance of water lilies in February! There is much here to challenge Y6 in the language, but it could provide the perfect springboard for their own creative writing about what is important to them in the natural world as well as exploring how writing can be cathartic after some experiences.



9+

Children of Winter by Berlie Doherty
Catnip Publishing Ltd ISBN 9781846470264 £6.99

HISTORY

A time-slip story that starts in Derbyshire and takes the reader to the time of the Great Plague in 1666. It is loosely based on the story of the village of Eyam, which lost half of its population to the plague, and isolated itself from the rest of Derbyshire so that no other village would catch the Plague. The book is also about survivors of any kind of disaster.



7-9

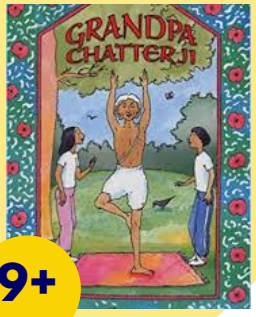
Eight Princesses and a Magic Mirror by Natasha Farrant
Illustrated by Lydia Corry Head of Zeus ISBN 978178854115 £12.99

PSHE

This book is beautiful to look at, and captures all the magic of a traditional book of fairy tales. In its hard-back form, adorned with bright and appealing illustrations, it would make a brilliant addition to a library or school book corner, and also a lovely gift for the home. There is one wonderful and modern exception to the traditional tales within this book – all these stories subvert the usual stereotypes and bring to life princesses who 'refuse to be pretty, polite or obedient'. Instead, these girls are 'fierce,brave and determined to do the rescuing for themselves'. Capturing the current trend for turning traditional tales on their head, the stories contained within this volume are great fun and include strong and aspirational characters. With a vast array of themes and settings, (from mountains and deserts to city tower-blocks and urban dwellings), each tale stands alone. A lovely book to dip in and out of, it would be great as a stimulus in a P4C session looking at stereotypes and how they have evolved over the years. It could be the basis of some great work on re-writing other familiar tales and so perfect for English lessons.

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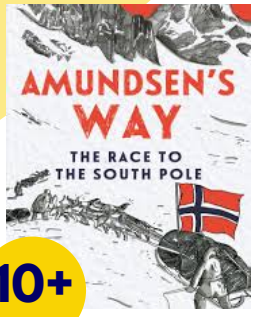


9+

Grandpa Chatterji by Jamila Gavin
Egmont UK Ltd ISBN 9781405212854 £4.99

GEOGRAPHY

Neeta and her little brother Sanjay have two grandpas, Dad's dad, Grandpa Leicester, and Mum's dad Grandpa Chatterji, who live in India. One day Grandpa Chatterji comes to visit them, and the children learn about the difference between Indian and British life.



10+

Amundsen's Way The Race to the South Pole by Joanna Grochowicz Illustrated by Sarah Lippett Allen and Unwin ISBN 9781911631408 £7.99

HISTORY GEOGRAPHY

This story, from the author of the highly acclaimed 'Into the White', is another masterpiece of narrative non fiction. Using Roald Amundsen's South Polar conquest, Joanna has written a gripping account of how a man will stop at nothing to reach his goal of reaching the South Pole. Joanna fuses the real and the imagined to allow the reader to understand both some history and geography of Antarctica. It is a story of life-threatening challenges, deception, disappointments and triumph written for 10 to 13 year old children. It brings history and exploration alive and allows the reader to consider and come to conclusions on whether the intelligent Roald Amundsen was just a single minded ruthless but deceptive man, who would not let anything get in his way, or a brilliant, dedicated and daring explorer. This book would be ideal for pupils, as a class reader or individually, to extend their literacy while studying at KS2 the history of explorers, or at KS3 the geography of Antarctica.

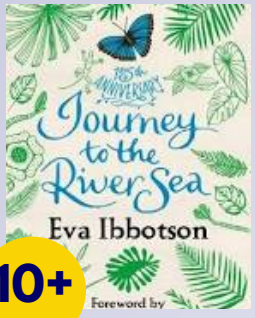


6-8

Fiddle Dee Dee! by Dianne Hofmeyr Illustrated by Piet Grobler, Otter Barry books ISBN 978191059756 £11.99

MUSIC

When Monkey and Hyena's dispute over a musical bow reaches Lion, the solution he comes up with is to keep the bow for himself. It takes all Monkey's cunning to ensure the bow becomes his to keep. Requesting the chance to play the bow one last time, Monkey plays tune after tune, music so irresistible the animals are literally dancing until they drop with exhaustion, begging Monkey to take the bow away. This is a very engaging retelling of a South African trickster tale and explanation of why monkeys live in trees. Well written, it would be an enjoyable read aloud with opportunity to discuss monkey's trick and how children would solve the animals' dispute. The mixed media illustrations are very striking with amusing and very hip portrayals of the animal characters including a cheeky monkey, arrogant lion and sinister hyena. Be aware, the text becomes a little gruesome when hyena's threat to monkey is described. The back of the book includes information about musical bows in traditions across the world. This is a book which may inspire children age 6-8 to create their own tunes, invent dances or even make their own musical bow.



10+

Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson
Caterpillar Books ISBN 9781848578937 £5.99

GEOGRAPHY

A colourful adventure story that makes the Amazon come alive. It is 1910 and Maia, tragically orphaned at thirteen, has been sent from England to start a new life with distant relatives in Manaus, hundreds of miles up the Amazon. She is accompanied by an eccentric and mysterious governess who has her own secret reasons for making the journey. Both soon discover an exotic world bursting with new adventures.

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THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

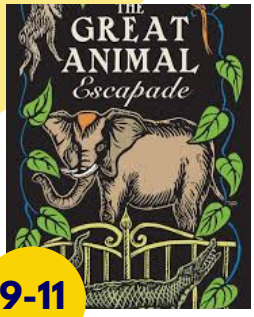


9+

The Saga of Eric the Viking by Terry Jones
Caterpillar Books ISBN 9781848578937 £5.99

Erik and his crew sail in their ship Golden Dragon. They encounter dragons, monsters, the dogfighters, the Old Man of the Sea and many adversaries as they journey to the land where the sun goes at night.

HISTORY

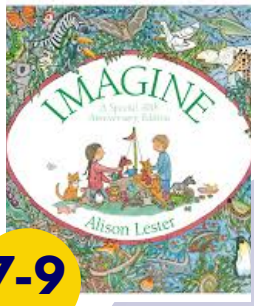


9-11

The Great Animal Escapade by Jane Kerr
Illustrated by Alexis Snell Chicken House ISBN 9781911490340 £6.99

This is the second novel by the critically acclaimed author of 'The Elephant Thief'. It is set in the same world as the first book, but you don't need to have read the earlier book to enjoy this novel in its own right. This is a brilliantly original story with some strong themes of prejudice, identity and belonging. I loved it from the outset, with its authentic feel and important but timely themes. Set shortly after the Victorian era, it might be an interesting novel to read while studying this topic in class. We follow the story of Danny as he cares for the animals in Belle Vue zoo alongside training the famous elephant, Maharajah. When animals start escaping, he is the first to be accused as those around him point to his former life on the streets and his pickpocket past. It would be a fantastic basis for a class debate or mock trial to highlight how our preconceptions can influence our judgements. For fans of mystery and adventure, this is another classic in the making. Age range KS2.

PSHE



7-9

Imagine A Special 30th Anniversary Edition by Alison Lester
Allen & Unwin ISBN:9781911631590 £11.99

What a magical book! The simple premise is that two children, a girl and a boy are playing imaginary games up a tree, in the snow or on the rug inside, each time imagining if they really were in the jungle, under the ocean or back in dinosaur times. This is conveyed for each of the seven habitats by seven lines of image-creating poetic text ending with an ellipsis: the precursor to a magical double-page spread depicting each place in delicate and intricate watercolour detail. Around each spread are listed 20-30 animal names all identifiable thanks to a clever key for each at the end of the book. I came across many names I did not recognise, especially amongst the dinosaurs and was inspired to investigate further. Children from KS1 to KS2 will feel the same. They could also investigate and then create their own pages for other habitats: desert, deciduous woodland, rock pools. The list is endless and can be linked with English, Science and Geography. Equally they could explore that ellipsis technique and think of their own sentence endings. This highly honoured Australian author has produced a timeless classic to introduce children to the wonders of the natural world and to inspire their natural imaginations. Have a copy in every classroom, particularly this attractive edition.

SCIENCES



9+

Kensuke's Kingdom by Michael Morpurgo
Egmont UK Ltd ISBN 9781405221740 £6.99

An exciting adventure about a young boy called Michael who is traveling with his parents around the world on their yacht. During a storm Michael is thrown overboard and ends up on an island.with an elderly Japanese man called Kensuke. We learn Kensuke is a doctor and survivor of World War II. The story involves Nagasaki and protecting orangutans from poachers.

HISTORY

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THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION



9-11

Our Little Inventor written and illustrated by Sher Rill Ng
Allen &Unwin ISBN: 9781911631309 £11.99

SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

At a time when air pollution is an important global topic this beautifully illustrated picture book for young children, will enhance the learning of geography of pollution as well as being a general book of interest to primary school children. Sustainability and the transformation of the global environmental conditions are important topics for the young child to embrace. This book is the story of a young inventor who makes a machine that will clean air. She takes the machine to the large city which has terrible air pollution. After various rebuffs, she persuades the people that she has a solution to their problem. This picture book is a story of hope. It provides an opportunity for primary schools to see the problems of pollution and the chance to see what an active, effective citizen's role could be to make a difference to the global environmental problems. There are many future sustainable concerns and issues. Here is one book which may make the children think about the pollution problem in urban areas.



10+

Wolf Brother by Michelle Paver
Orion Children's Books ISBN 97818 42551707 £6.55

HISTORY

An exciting story about the special bond between a boy and a wolf in ancient times. Evil stalks the land six thousand years ago. Follow Torak and his wolf cub meet a wide range of characters as they travel through forests and across glaciers as they fight to save the world.



7-9

Bloom by Nicola Skinner Illustrated by Flavia Sorrentino
Harper Collins ISBN 9780008297381 £12.99

SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

This is the debut novel by author Nicola Skinner and is an absolute delight. Blossoming with character and humour, this is a story about a girl called Sorrel and her discovery of a packet of 'surprising seeds' and the fantastical notion of flora bursting forth rom heads. It is packed full of vivid and colourful floral descriptions, and the gorgeous illustrations that Sorrentino has weaved throughout really help make this book feel extra special. I loved the imaginative play on words with so many of the names featured in the book ('Sorrel', 'Florence', 'Grittysnit' and and Mossheart'), as well as the links between the appearance of nature and the mood of the characters and places within. Children will love the theme that runs alongside the environmental message that 'wonderful things happen when you break the rules'. The heroine, Sorrel, and her best friend, Neena, make wonderful protagonists and are very likeable from the start. As well as being hugely enjoyable, this could be a great shared story in KS2 to support topics looking at environmental or green issues. It would also provide a great stimulus for a discussion on climate change and youth activists.



9-11

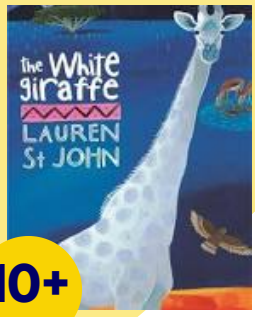
She Wolf by Dan Smith
Chicken House ISBN 9781910655931 £6.99

HISTORY

Set in Northumbria in 866, Ylva, a young Viking girl is washed ashore on a frozen beach. She is a strong-willed Viking and will not cry. A very exciting story, with plenty of tension and twists as brave Ylva learns who she can trust. There are evocative descriptions of wild Nothumbria. and its people. The book contains a comprehensive glossary and a section of historical information. Highly recommended for confident readers at KS2.

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10+

The White Giraffe by Lauren St. John
Hachette Children's Group ISBN 9781842555637 £6.99

A delightful story about myths, dreams and African wildlife. Martine is eleven when she is sent to live on a game reserve in Africa. She loves the mysterious savannah. One lonely night, she looks out of her window and sees a young giraffe, and is drawn to its white and silver coat tinged with cinnamon in the moonlight. The giraffe looks at her as if it is waiting for her...

GEOGRAPHY



5-7

Winter Sleep A Hibernation Story by Sean Taylor and Alex Morss Illustrated by Cinyee Chiu words and pictures ISBN 9780711242838 £12.99

SCIENCE

A charming lyrical informative book. We share winter walks with a child and Granny Sylvie, learning how the Earth prepares for winter and hibernating animals. Cutaway scenes reveal what is happening out of sight. Granny explains how creatures adapt to survive in winter, and what will happen when the hibernating animals re emerge in spring. The reader shares Granny's knowledge and wonder at the natural world and there is an intimacy in the relationship between her and her grandson that is warm and reassuring. The illustrations are atmospheric and complement the text. Annotated illustrations and information at the back of the book inspire further research, together with ideas on how to help creatures. Highly recommended for the classroom and library, and as a present for children aged 5 – 7.



9+

Cloud Boy by Marcia Williams
Walker Books ISBN 978 14063 81214 £6.99

HISTORY

Angie Moon and Harry Christmas were born two days apart; they are best friends and next door neighbours, so close in fact they are almost twins. Their dads build them a tree house hideaway which is just perfect for their favourite occupation, cloud spotting; Harry is a cloud collector and Angie loves drawing them. When Angie's (Great) Grandma Gertie comes to stay, the friends discover she has an amazing story to tell of her childhood as a prisoner of war in Singapore. All goes well until Harry's strange headaches turn out to be very serious indeed and his illness puts a strain on his family and friendship with Angie. Grandma Gertie is a key support for Angie in her grief, understanding her anger and helping her make a special patchwork quilt for her friend, just as she had herself as a prisoner of war.Angie's story is told in diary form, with occasional annotations from Harry. The main narrative is interwoven with Gertie's wartime story told through letters to her pet kitten.Cloud Boy is a very moving story about two young people coping with enormously challenging situations. This is a first novel from an author very well known for her wonderful illustrated histories. It would be a powerful novel to read aloud in Upper KS 2 and is likely to provoke discussion about the sensitive issues it addresses and interest in the real story upon which it is based.