



BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Historical stories
- Families
- Victorians
- Indian history
- Feminism
- Identity

Nush and The Stolen Emerald

by Jasbinder Bilan

Nush is maharani of an Indian kingdom. The British East India Company has already taken land and their most divine jewel – an emerald the size of a small apple. This is her moment to shine – and bring back the emerald.



OUR THOUGHTS

“Well paced, gripping historical adventure story with an engaging mystery. The likeable main female character is strong, brave and intelligent.”

TIME TO TALK

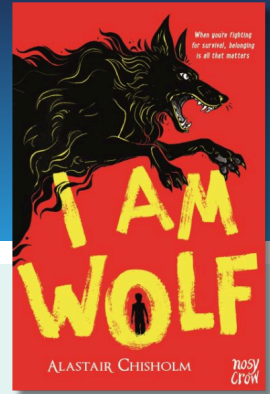
- 1 The Emerald is an important part of the story, what is its significance in both Indian and British contexts? What do you think the emerald is a symbol of?
- 2 What was the impact of the British East India Company on India? What impact does it have on Nush and her family?
- 3 Nush is a strong character, consider her personality and qualities, can you sum up her character in five words?
- 4 There are many themes covered in the book, two of the themes are around identity and feminism. Discuss how the book explores and challenges these themes.
- 5 What do you think Nush is feeling when she finds out her dad has gone? What would it be like living with a different family and in a different country?
- 6 Discuss the motivations of the character Captain West, why do you think the reasons are for what he did?
- 7 Nush has an important bond with her twin brother Arian, what do you think it would be like to have a twin? How is their relationship portrayed in the story?
- 8 What are the differences between India and Victorian England in terms of culture, climate and society?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Belonging
- Self acceptance
- Politics
- Betrayal
- Self esteem

I Am Wolf

by Alastair Chisholm

Coll is Wolf. He lives with his clan on a Construct, a huge technological "creature" driven by the clan's combined willpower. Together they roam their world, fighting other clans and absorbing them into their own.



OUR THOUGHTS

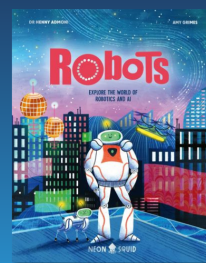
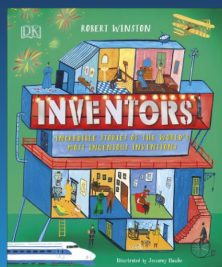
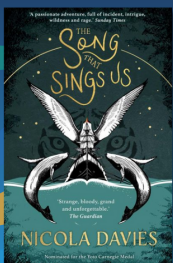
"Imaginative world-building and a gripping plot are boosted by strong, inclusive characters that engage and challenge worth & belonging throughout. First in a trilogy, well-worth having."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 If you lived in Coll's world, which animal would you like to be a crew member of and what skill would you bring to the crew?
- 2 Coll is ostracized by some members of the Wolf crew for being different – if you were a member of the Wolf crew, would you have been Coll's friend?
- 3 Have you ever felt that you didn't belong in any particular group?
- 4 Why do you think Coll finds it difficult to suddenly be a member of Raven's crew?
- 5 Which member of the new Cub crew do you like best and why?
- 6 Why do you think Mayor Ruprecht deceived Alpha and Coll?
- 7 The people of Coll's world are defined by the animal construct that they belong to and their objectives are to fight, win and plunder other animal constructs. What do you think Coll and his new friends could do differently to improve this world?
- 8 What is the significance of the objects in Fillan's leather pouch?
- 9 What is the significance of the objects in Fillan's leather pouch?

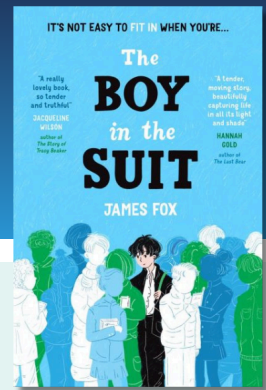


TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Poverty • Bullying • Families
- Schools • Friendship

The Boy in the Suit

by James Fox

Ten-year-old Solo just wants to be normal - not crash funerals with his mum for the free food. But when they get caught at a celebrity's funeral, they become a viral sensation, and Solo's life is never the same again.



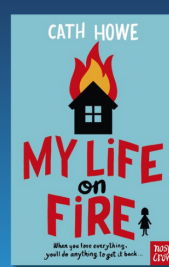
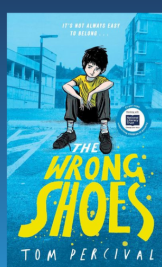
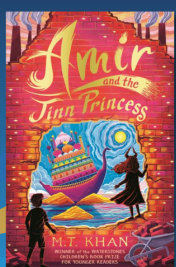
OUR THOUGHTS

"A fabulous tender and poignant novel which grips you immediately. Solo, the protagonist is relatable & endearing, his voice is sensitive, leaving the reader laughing & crying at the same time. Delves into themes of poverty and mental health. Wonderful!"

TIME TO TALK

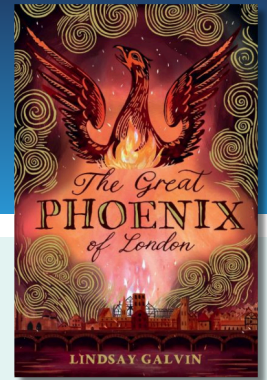
- 1 Solo's mother Morag resorts to stealing food from funerals and uses her son to do this. Why did she do this? Is it ever right to steal? What other things could she have done instead?
- 2 Solo's dad called his mum 'unpredictable. A 'wild card'. In what ways does Morag live up to these descriptions? How does it make Solo feel when his mother behaves like this? Have your parents ever done something unpredictable?
- 3 Solo often gets detention for not wearing the correct uniform. Is it fair that he is being punished for something that isn't his fault? How could the teachers have supported him better?
- 4 How does the media exposure make things worse for Solo? Is it right that newspapers are allowed to print whatever they want to without always telling the truth?
- 5 Solo read the messages on Morag's phone from the internet trolls. How did this contribute to her disappearance?
- 6 Chetna became a great friend to Solo. What do you think she saw in him that the others didn't?
- 7 Morag leaves Solo a message which says: 'I can't do this anymore'. What is right for her to leave him home alone? What could she have done instead? How does this neglect affect Solo behaviour?
- 8 Why does Solo never expose what his mum has done to the teachers? What does this show about him?
- 9 Why does Chetna lie to her parents and say it was her fault they missed the coach back? Is it ever right to tell a lie to protect a friend?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Historical stories • Family • Fire
- Mythical creatures • Great Fire of London

The Great Phoenix of London

by Lindsay Galvin

As he races to beat the inferno spreading across London, neither Gil, nor his new friend Jennet, have any idea that the stone in his satchel is an unhatched bird of myth and fire. And that there are some who will stop at nothing to get their hands on a legendary phoenix...



OUR THOUGHTS

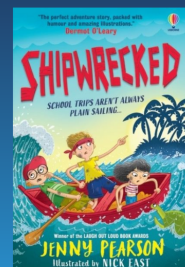
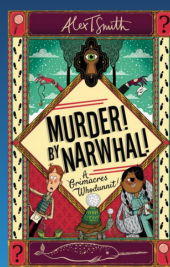
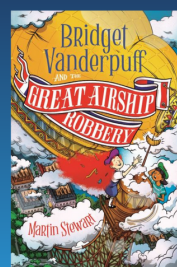
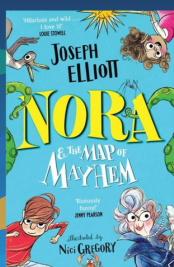
"You feel like you are transported back in time and the characters are so believable. It's truly exciting, tense, emotive and with a brilliant ending that will leave you in awe, or wiping away a tear."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 Who are the main characters of the book and what year did the Great Fire of London take place?
- 2 How does the Great Fire of London affect the lives of the characters?
- 3 What role does the phoenix play in the plot?
- 4 Imagine you were in London during the great fire, what would you do if you encountered a phoenix?
- 5 What historical details does the author include to make the story feel authentic?
- 6 If you could meet a phoenix, what questions would you ask it?
- 7 Imagine you are writing a story about a phoenix, what adventures would the phoenix have? What personality would the phoenix have, would it be scary/angry or friendly/helpful?
- 8 What would the phoenix look like?

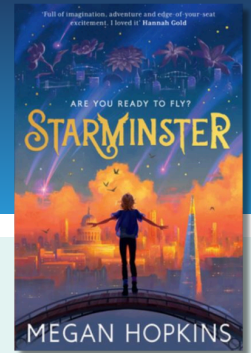


TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Home • Freedom
Equality

Starminster

by Megan Hopkins

When a stranger with wings whisks her away to a secret city above London, Astrid discovers she is a Librae, and will grow wings of her own. But danger has been waiting in this glimmering city, waiting for Astrid...



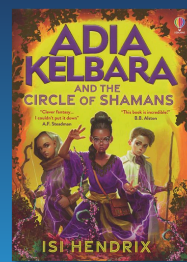
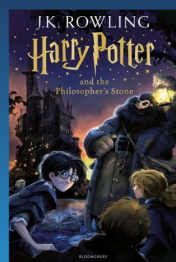
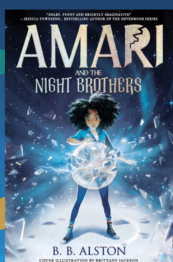
OUR THOUGHTS

"This book draws you in from the very beginning and is a real page-turner. The world-building is effortless so the pace of the action is kept up. There's lots here to appeal to fans of fantasy, mysteries and adventure."

TIME TO TALK

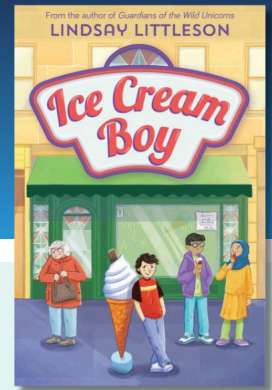
- 1 Astrid's Mama was trying to keep her safe. Do you think she did the right thing? she was locked in the shed? What everyday experiences would you miss the most?
- 2 When Astrid is picked up by the police, she already views London Overhead as her home. What makes you think of home?
- 3 Do you think it was fair that the unfledged students had to sit on the floor?
- 4 If you were to grow wings, what sort of bird would you like to be? Maybe you could use the guide at the back of the book if you're not sure.
- 5 Can you think of some of the places/experiences that Astrid missed out on, when
- 6 Mr Finifugal captured birds to find out more about the Librae. Do you think it's acceptable to experiment on animals to gain scientific knowledge?
- 7 Would you choose being able to fly and live in London Overhead if it meant you had to leave your family behind in London Underfoot?
- 8 Do you wish you were a Librae? Or, would you choose to be a different hybrid creature such as a mermaid or a centaur?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Dementia • Family • Bullying
Legacy • Friendship

Ice Cream Boy

by Lindsay Littleton

Twelve-year-old Luca Verani has his future all mapped out: who needs school when he's going to take over his family's ice cream cafe? But then his aunt announces she's selling the struggling business, and Luca realises that his nonna's memory is disappearing.



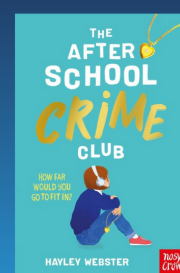
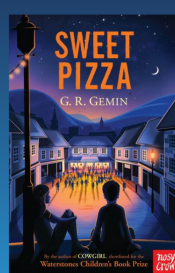
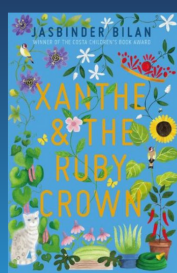
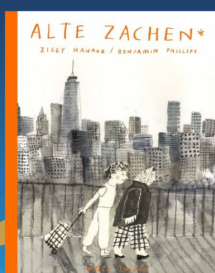
OUR THOUGHTS

"Relatable main character and a lot of issues that will be familiar to the intended age group. It's lightly handled with a realistic but uplifting ending, and plenty of heart. A very centred, well-rounded family drama."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 How does Luca talk to his Grandma about her memory problems? How does he feel about them?
- 2 Luca, Kamal and Sitara are close friends and try to support each other. What ways throughout the book do they help and encourage one another? Do they ever let each other down?
- 3 Luca has had to go a long time without seeing his father. How do his feelings about his father change over the course of the book? How does Luca's mother react to Luca getting to know his father again?
- 4 In the scene after Luca wins the competition and he tries to convince his aunt and uncle to use his recipe at the café, his uncle is dismissive. How do you think Luca feels about his uncle? What would you have said or done differently in his place?
- 5 The writer describes Luca's father's home town in a lot of detail, and makes it feel special and fascinating through Luca's eyes. Can you write a description of a place you have visited that would make it seem special to somebody who has never been there?
- 6 Luca's love of food and cooking helps him deal with his problems at various times in the book. In what different ways does it help him?
- 7 Have your hobbies ever given you an opportunity to do something interesting or helpful? How do they help you get through difficult times?
- 8 Learning that the long lost family recipe book was hidden in his home all along is a surprise to Luca. How would you have felt in a similar situation?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Friendship • Trust • Adventure
Science vs magic

The Secret of the Moonshard

by Struan Murray

Domino's been trapped in a floating laboratory all her life to protect her from magic - or so she thought. When a mysterious wizard arrives and unleashes total chaos, Domino must discover the truth of her magical city, and the truth of herself.



OUR THOUGHTS

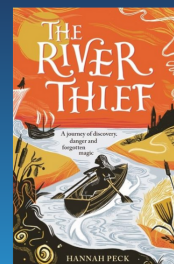
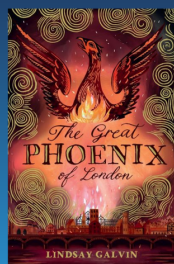
"Fantastic adventure with a host of great characters and a plucky orphan awaiting her destiny. Has shades of Howl's Moving Castle and Spirited Away, but creates its own unique world set-up."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 What do you think of Domino's character? How does she change throughout the story?
- 2 How does the setting of the Scientarium Celestis contribute to the story's atmosphere?
- 3 What role does magic play in the conflict between science and magic in the book?
- 4 Which scene in the book was the most exciting or surprising for you? Why?
- 5 How do Domino's relationships with other characters influence her actions?
- 6 What do you think the Moonshard symbolises in the story?
- 7 How does the author use suspense to keep the reader engaged? Did you want the pages to keep turning?
- 8 Would you like to visit Abzalaymon? Why or why not?



TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Poverty • The power of art • Family
- Hope • Resilience • Friendship

The Wrong Shoes

by Tom Percival

Will feels he stands out for all the wrong reasons. While navigating his family's financial hardship, his life is transformed by the empathy of others, and his own creativity.



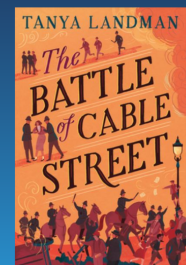
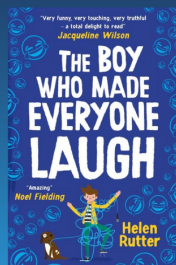
OUR THOUGHTS

"A sensitively drawn main character who many children will sadly be able to relate to. It's a story of resilience and making the right choices. Lots to think about, and illustrations complement the text well. A must have."

TIME TO TALK

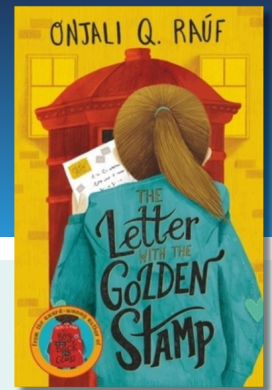
- 1 Why do you think the title is The Wrong Shoes? What's wrong with Will's shoes and is it really the shoes that's the problem?
- 2 Will is a very talented artist and this helps him to focus and escape his reality. Can you think of a time art helped you? It can be any kind of art, photography, making a video, painting a picture.
- 3 What do you think the owl represents and what is happening in Will's life when he sees it?
- 4 Will's haircut was a bit of a disaster! He lied about why he tried to cut it himself and covered it up. If he'd asked for help, would it have made his life easier? Why is it sometimes hard to ask for help?
- 5 Think about Will's relationship with Cameron. Why is he so cross with Cameron when he offers Will his old trainers?
- 6 And think about Will and the bully Chris. How does he fall under his spell and even after he's seen Chris's vulnerable side. Do you think they will actually become friends in the end?
- 7 What is Will's relationship with his dad, his mum and his mum's boyfriend like? How does it change throughout the book?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Friendship • Community • Child carers
- Single parent families

The Letter with the Golden Stamp

By Onjali Q. Raúf

9-year-old Audrey has a secret. She's the main carer for her severely ill mother, who has osteoporosis. With her dad having left half a year ago, Audrey is constantly in fear of being found out by social services, so she has fine-tuned her life into becoming one of the best actresses on the planet.



OUR THOUGHTS

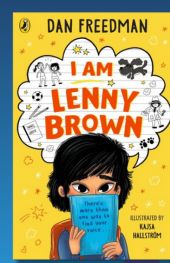
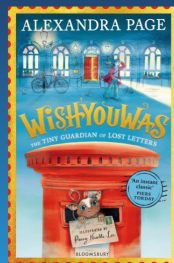
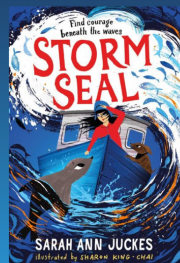
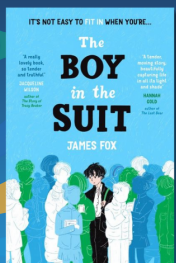
"Deft writing presents Audrey as an authentic, resilient character & her tale is both heart-wrenching & heart-warming. It is a tribute to the power of community and friendship."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 How did you feel when Audrey resorted to shoplifting? Would you have made the same choice?
- 2 Have you ever had to look after a family member, either briefly or for a longer period of time? How did that feel?
- 3 Do you think Audrey's friends were right to help her post herself to London? Have you ever been tempted to try anything bonkers like that!
- 4 The role of the community postman in Audrey's tale and his own background story slowly begin to emerge throughout the book. Is there anyone in your own community that you have developed a connection with, either through activities, cultural background, or other regular events.
- 5 If you were ever offered an award, what would you like it to be for?



TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Family • Anxiety
- Mental health • Mindfulness

Me and My Brian

by Helen Rutter

Josh has always called his brain Brian, and Brian can sometimes be his best friend, helping Josh with tests and giving him brilliant moneymaking ideas. But he can also be Josh's worst enemy, keeping him awake at night worrying, and telling him that his family's problems are all Josh's fault.



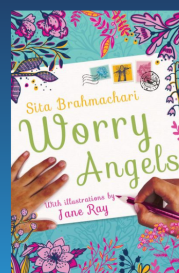
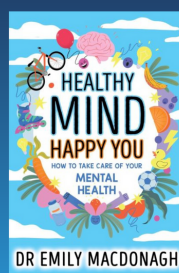
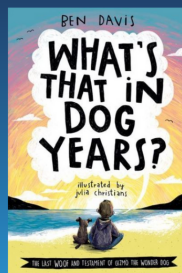
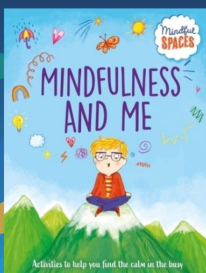
OUR THOUGHTS

"Realistic portrayal of anxiety, with a sympathetic main character. Language is straightforward enough for struggling readers and it has decent appeal."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 Josh's brain "Brian" is often too noisy for him to order his thoughts properly, and causes him anxiety. Do you ever feel like this? What do you do to calm your brain down?
- 2 Do the things Brian says to Josh feel a bit silly and farfetched? Why do you think this is?
- 3 Josh is not the only person in his family who is struggling. Who else isn't coping very well?
- 4 There are some funny parts of the story – how does the humour help with understanding Josh's situation?
- 5 How does the trip to visit Grandma change Josh's outlook?
- 6 When Josh is stacking the logs, he notices things such as the pattern in the wood, the stretch of his muscles, the feel of the air on his skin, and his brain is much quieter. This noticing is a mindfulness technique. Why does it make Josh feel better?
- 7 Why did Grandma go and live like she did? Was she selfish, or did she do it out of necessity to help her mental health?
- 8 Did you like and/or expect the ending? Is it a happy ending for everyone?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Humourous stories • Families
- Death/bereavement • Friendship

The Girl Who Couldn't Lie

by Radhika Sanghani

Priya Shah lies. A lot. She pretends everything in her life is perfect, so she doesn't disappoint anyone. But when she puts on a bangle left to her by her Ba - the one person she was always honest with - she finds herself unable to tell a lie.



OUR THOUGHTS

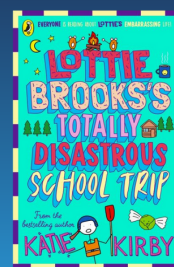
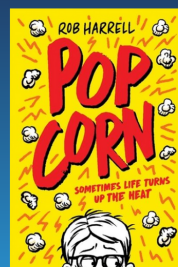
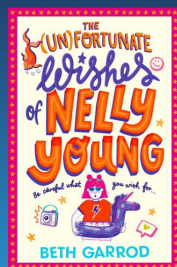
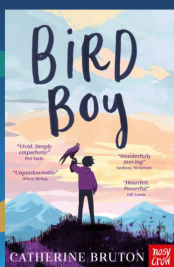
"A poignant story filled with tween angst and a little magic. The messages about friendship and telling the truth to be free, will be enjoyed by readers, who will recognise themselves and their friends in many of the situations."

TIME TO TALK

- 1 Before reading the book: Is honesty always the best policy? Give reasons for your answer
- 2 Priya lies a lot - She pretends everything in her life is perfect, so she doesn't upset or disappoint anyone. Is she right or wrong to do this? Why?
- 3 Priya's parents had a golden rule "Don't air your dirty laundry in public!" What do you think that means?
- 4 Katie was bullying Priya by making her do her homework - How would you deal with a situation like this?
- 5 Priya's friends took advantage of the truth curse by asking her embarrassing questions she would have to answer.
- 6 Priya's grandmother says, "Loneliness comes when we can't be honest with people" Discuss.
- 7 Did this book remind you of anything you have experienced in real life? What was it?
- 8 Which part of the book stands out most to you? Why?
- 9 If someone asked you what this book was about, what would you tell them?
- 10 After reading the book : Is honesty always the best policy? Have you changed your mind about this? Explain.

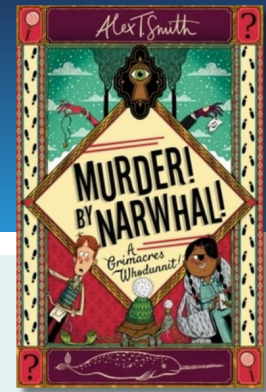


TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

Mystery
Adventure • Humour

Murder! by Narwhal!

by Alex T Smith

When the tyrannical family patriarch Sir Ignatious Gristle is murdered on his 90th birthday at his country estate, every one of his gathered family members is a suspect.



OUR THOUGHTS

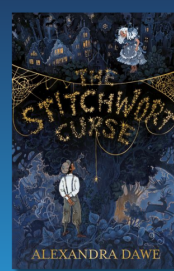
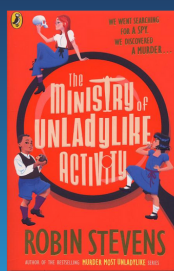
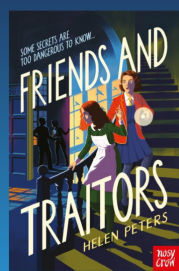
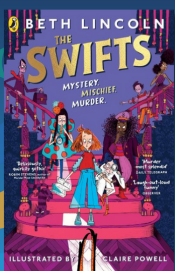
“Absolutely pitch-perfect take on classic crime mysteries, with a lively cast of characters, plenty of twists & turns and fantastic illustrations. Brilliant!”

TIME TO TALK

- 1 Why do you think Edna has a tortoise for a pet? Would any other type of pet suit her?
- 2 Several times in the book, Edna is left out of conversations because she is a child. Have you ever been left out of something because you are a child? How did that make you feel?
- 3 Did you find the chapter header drawings and newspaper articles throughout the book helpful in solving the mystery? What else might help you?
- 4 Why does the author set the book during a bad snowstorm? Would it work as well if the weather were sunny and warm, for example?
- 5 Edna enjoys reading about murder and disease. Do you think this helps when she is the one to find her grandfather?
- 6 How would it be different if Audrey had found him?
- 7 Do you think the names of the characters are suited to their personalities, roles, etc? Can you think of appropriate names for a maid; another sibling of Edna and Audrey; a police officer?
- 8 Giovanna Bellissimo says that she helps return treasures that have been stolen by private collectors, as at Grimacres. Do you think she is doing a good thing? Why or why not?
- 9 The book is set sometime in the first half of the 20th century. Why do you think the author used a historical setting? Do you think the story would work as well if it was set in the present day?

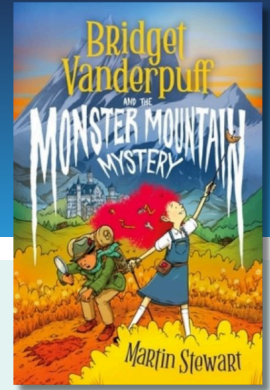


TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Adventure • Magic • Detective
- Families • Humour

Bridget Vanderpuff and the Monster Mountain Mystery

by Martin J Stewart

Bridget and Tom travel to Butterälp to stay with Vivienne Velvete - the world's finest chocolatier. But a horrifying monster is terrorising the villagers and the chocolate festival has been shut down.



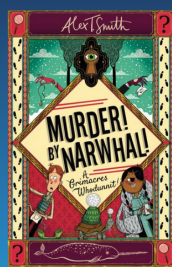
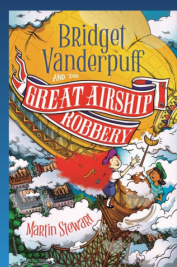
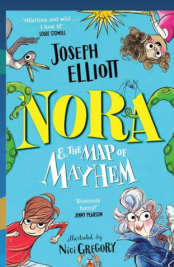
OUR THOUGHTS

"Exciting from the first page, this fourth book in the series will not disappoint fans. The characters, both good and bad, are well drawn and easy to imagine."

TIME TO TALK

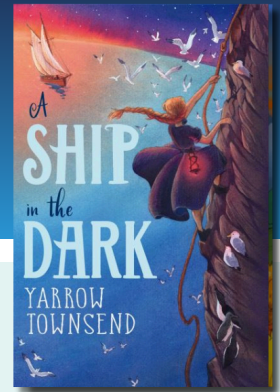
- 1 Bridget and Tom are very good friends. Why do you think this is?
- 2 Why do you think Bridget is such a good detective? What skills does she have to make this possible?
- 3 If you could have a conversation with any character in this book, who would you choose and what would you talk about?
- 4 Bridget always manages to invent some amazing problem-solving tools, often in the form of unusual cakes, to help her survive her adventures. What kind of unusual cake would you invent and how would it help you?
- 5 If someone asked you what this book was about what would you tell them?
- 6 Which part of the book is your favourite and why?
- 7 Do you think this book would make a good film? Explain your reasons.
- 8 If you had to give this book a new title, what would it be? Say why.
- 9 Bridget is lucky enough to have an elf to support her. If you could have an elf what would you like it to be able to do to support you?
- 10 This is the last book in the series, Bridget now has a proper family and real friends. What do you think she might do for adventure and fun in the future with her favourite people?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:





BOOK TALK CARDS



THEMES:

- Adventure
- The sea
- Families
- Mystery

A Ship in the Dark

by Yarrow Townsend

Anna and her friend Mina travel the high seas to find the lost ship before ruthless Society Man, Bartholomew Rime... But without a map, only migrating birds and the song of whales can show the way.



OUR THOUGHTS

"Atmospheric sense of place and forboding menace at every turn, great characters and a pacy story. An engaging, spirited read!"

TIME TO TALK

- 1 What would you do in the same situation Anna finds herself in – would you be brave enough to go off by yourself or instead alert the authorities?
- 2 What qualities would you bring to a big adventure or journey like the girls undertake – they have to be resourceful, brave, use their knowledge and instincts. They also don't know who to trust along the way – how do you know who to trust when you are in an unknown situation?
- 3 There are lots of descriptions of the sea within the story. What feelings do you have when you think about the sea – is it exciting, terrifying, too big – or is it peaceful and calming?
- 4 Smugglers and pirates feature heavily in the story – why do you think these types of characters continue to be fascinating today?
- 5 What do you already know about whales? Has the book told you anything you didn't know about them?
- 6 Anna has a strong affinity with wildlife, particularly the sea birds, living on a small island. Do you think living in a seaside or countryside location puts you more in touch with the natural world? If you live in a city or town is it important to escape into nature from time to time?

TAKE THE TEXT FURTHER WITH OUR TOP 5 TITLES TO CONTINUE THE THEME:

