

PaperBound

Issue 18 Spring/Summer 26

*With
Articles from
authors*
STEVE BLACKMAN
MONIQUE TURNER
JEN CARNEY

*And
Interviews
with*
EMILY HOURICAN
CASSIDY ELLIS SALTER
HOLLY WEBB
& PATRICK
NESS



NEW
WRITING &
ILLUSTRATIONS

STEPHANIE BUOSI VICTORIA GATEHOUSE
ELIZABETH HOGARTH LAURI C. MEYERS KIM WAGNER NOLAN CATHERINE OGSTON
CLAIRE SCHLINKERT SHIRLEY SHELBY JACQUELINE SHIRTLIFF WEBB SMITH

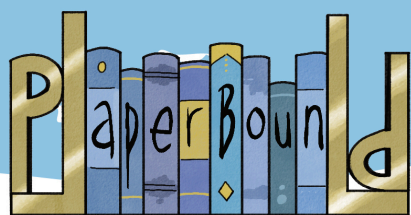
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Cover illustration by Kim Wagner Nolan.

Find out more about all our illustrators on page 63

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PaperBound Magazine is an online magazine for the young, and the young at heart. It is dedicated to showcasing authors and illustrators of children's and young adult fiction. It strives to deliver inspiring content, new and exciting writing, book recommendations and top tips for aspiring young writers. PaperBound has been created by Emily, Lucy and Rayan who met while studying an MA in Writing for Young People at Bath Spa University.

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

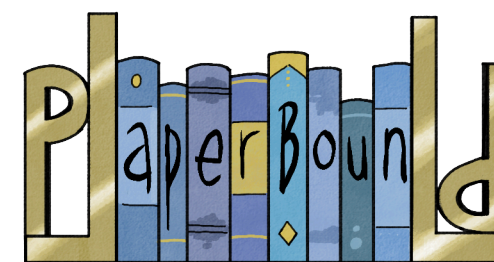
Welcome to the new issue of PaperBound. Thank you so much for downloading a copy. We hope you enjoy it.

As always it's packed full of new writing, illustrations, author interviews, articles and more. Huge thanks to our contributors and the publishers who put us in touch with such fantastic people!

Remember, there is an absolute treasure trove of additional content on our blog, and our whole back catalogue is available to read for free on our website - that's almost six years of bookish goodies!

Happy Reading!

Emily, Lucy and Rayan



www.paperboundmag.com

Contents

The Wonder Issue

Illustration by
Stephanie Buosi

Find out more about all the
illustrators you see in this
issue on our Meet the
Illustrators feature on
page 63

New Writing and Illustrations

- 14 *Aurora Borealis*
by Jacqueline Shirtliff
- 20 *Sloth's Sonnet*
by Claire Schlinkert
- 26 *The Meaning of Wonder*
by Victoria Gatehouse
- 32 *V Formation*
by Lauri C. Meyers
- 38 *The Teenager in the Moon*
by Webb Smith
- 44 *The Ship of Wonders*
by Catherine Ogston
- 58 *Phoenix*
by Elizabeth Hogarth
- 63 *Meet the Illustrators*
Read all about this issue's
illustrators: Stephanie Buosi,
Shirley Shelby and Kim Wagner
Nolan.

Regular Features

- 9 Middle Grade Book Reviews
- 51 Teen and YA Book Reviews
- 60 Printable Writing Prompts

Author Interviews and Articles

Interviews with:

- 16 *Holly Webb*
author of *A Girl's Guide to Spying*
- 28 *Cassidy Ellis Salter*
author of *These Shattered Spires*
- 40 *Patrick Ness*
author of *Piper at the Gates of Dusk*
- 48 *Emily Hourican*
author of *Murder at the Ivy Hotel*

Plus articles:

- 6 *Facing a Future That Is Still
Being Written*
by author of *Zero Override*, Steve
Blackman
- 22 *When Admiration Turns to
Obsession*
from author of *Sweet and Sour*,
Monique Turner
- 34 *Ten Top Tips for Author-
Illustrators*
from author of *The Day My Brother
Got Famous*, Jen Carney

Once downloaded, this contents page is interactive. To jump to a page just click on the article you want to read. To get back to the contents page, just tap the star at the top of the piece you're reading.

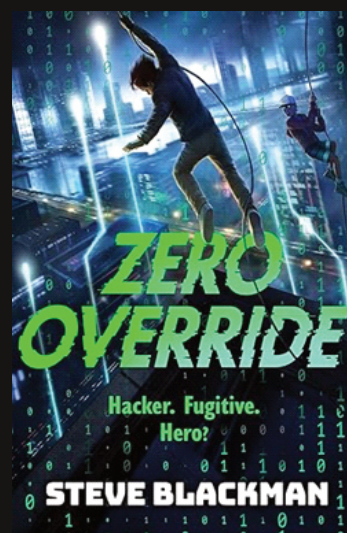


FACING A FUTURE THAT IS STILL BEING WRITTEN

by Steve Blackman

England, 1818 – a nation in the grip of the Industrial Revolution and experiencing unprecedented change. Our traditionally agricultural existence was pivoting to support intense industrial production, transforming people’s lives beyond recognition. The rise of science was challenging the hold of the church and prompting questions about faith and humanity. It is little wonder that, in the midst of this huge societal shift, a novel in which a scientist plays God and creates an uncontrollable autonomous being would demand nationwide attention and cause widespread fear.

Frankenstein was not the first story to explore the giving of



life to something inanimate. It’s an idea that has endured since the golems of ancient Jewish folklore. As a sci-fi obsessed teenage geek, I encountered the theme regularly – HAL in *2001*, Asimov’s Robot series, Mother in *Alien*. But there was a regular sub-theme – the loss of control from the creator to their creation. Ava in *Ex Machina* uses

sentience and empathy to manipulate her examiner and escape the confines of the lab in which she was created. The robots (or ‘hosts’) in *Westworld* turn against humanity. In all these stories, the creations are examples of Artificial Intelligence, so it’s easy to see how *Frankenstein* – in which the constructed creature overpowers Victor both physically and psychologically – is similarly considered a metaphor for AI.

More than 200 years have passed since *Frankenstein* was born, and the fear is still there, though focus has shifted. The business of publishing in particular is nervous about what AI means for its future. And it’s right to be. But as writers, it’s our job to run *towards* difficult topics – especially those of us who write for children.

The fact is, young readers today face countless daily challenges to which many of us were never subjected: not only issues around algorithm bias, digital privacy and the blurring of public and private life, but also the underlying anxiety of navigating a world that can feel

mediated and scrutinised. They are growing up amid enormous environmental, economic and social uncertainty. They experience the growing pressures and cultural dissonance of online spaces like the manosphere and femosphere, where identity and influence are increasingly shaped and distorted by algorithms. They are forced to grapple with ethical complexities, including how to recognise truth in a world where any

potential reality can be generated and edited. In this context, our role is not to simplify these ideas but to help young readers to clarify them.

Whether it’s around technology, personal struggles or global crises, fiction is where children can practise asking the difficult questions. And as the first generation that will never know a world without AI, they’re going to have a lot of questions – not just about what AI can do, but how it shapes the way they think, create and find their own voices. Because

**"But as writers,
it's our job to
run towards
difficult topics
– especially
those of us who
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children."**

alongside all the uncertainty lies possibility: new forms of storytelling, new tools for self-expression. Our responsibility is not to resolve these tensions but to illuminate them, so that young readers are better equipped to face a future that is still being written.

In planning *Zero Override*, I sought to explore some of my own questions. Is it true that a technology (in this case AI) can be neither good nor bad – only its application? Have we come to rely on technology so completely that its failure represents an emergency? Are we right to trust humans more than machines, even when machines tend to behave better? When it came to writing, I strove to avoid the treatment of AI as something that mimicked human thinking or empathy. Instead, AI-enabled characters were intentionally imbued with these qualities as defined on their own terms. For one, this is ostensibly ‘bad’ – a desire to assume power at any expense: “My brothers and sisters will live in a new world. A world you no longer rule. A world where we no longer follow your

arbitrary distinctions of good and bad, of chaos and law.” For another, it is entirely ‘good’ – an indefinable need to behave in a way that respects others: “*I think I behave the way I do because it’s... you know, the right way to behave.*”

We don’t yet have intergalactic ships with maternal personalities, but we are seeing AI being deployed in all areas of our lives. It’s so ubiquitous we’re even assuming its presence in places it doesn’t – or cannot possibly – exist. In early 2026, a passage from *Frankenstein* went viral for being flagged by modern detectors as “100% AI generated”. Maybe that’s not such a surprise when we consider this moment of self-reflection from the eponymous Victor. “*I had worked hard ... for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body ... but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.*” If he were interviewed by Wired magazine today, I wonder if he’d say the same about AI. ^{PB}

Zero Override is published
on 2nd July by Scholastic



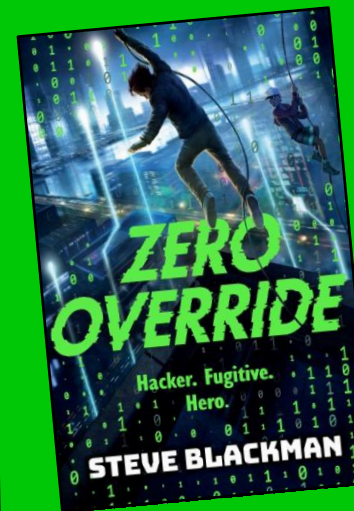
Steve Blackman grew up on a stony stretch of the south coast, nourished by a diet of sci-fi, fantasy, and horror. For a child who read so many books and asked so many questions, it took him an embarrassingly long time to realise that he too could be an author. It took even longer to become one. Following a 25-year career in digital technology, product design and copy editing, he now writes tech-filled adventures for curious young readers. He is not a spy, nor is he a robot. Well, not completely.

★ Book Middle Grade Review Corner ★

ZERO OVERRIDE

BY STEVE BLACKMAN

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND



Zero Override is the fast-paced, whirlwind debut guaranteed to delight young readers who enjoy sci-fi from author Steve Blackman.

Thirteen-year-old Zero is on a mission to sneakily ‘redistribute wealth’ by stealing from the rich to give to the poor by hacking into top money-making (and immoral) corporations – a modern day, digital-age Robin Hood hero who’s not afraid to stand up for what he believes in.

An action-packed ride from start to finish, this dystopian sci-fi novel imagines a future where the human race has relied on digital technology perhaps a little too much, where a world of advanced AI threatens to take over national security and beyond with a deadly leaked virus.

With his team of ragtag underground heroes, Zero takes on the task of a lifetime in trying to save the world from the virus destined to disable all AI-generated programming, in a high-stakes race against time. What makes this mission even more lethal is that Grace, Zero’s younger sister, will die if he fails.

Grace has a machine heart, one controlled by AI, and if the virus spreads, it will mean Zero must face saying goodbye to the only family he has left, after their parents died in a crash that’s left him emotionally scarred ever since.

Full of peril, danger, and exciting high speed chases across London, *Zero Override* is a fantastic debut that will enthrall countless readers and invite them to question what it means to be living in a world seemingly dominated by AI, yet also what joy and positivity it can bring too.

Most importantly, this book features plenty of laughs and witty dialogue, as well as the heartwarming message of what it means to be human from an excellent debut author.

Zero Override is out now,
published by Scholastic

MURDER AT THE IVY HOTEL

BY EMILY HOURICAN

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

We absolutely love the charm and cast of characters in this cosy crime debut from Emily Hourican.

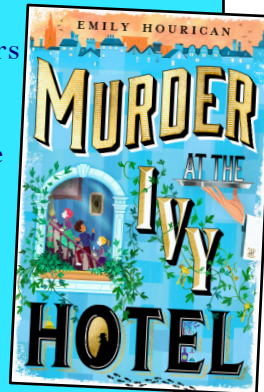
Set across the many floors of a grand old hotel in Ireland, two sisters Meredith and Macy have the time of their lives living in the Ivy.

But when new owners threaten the way their beloved hotel runs - and their mum's job as general manager - they're on a mission to keep the Ivy just the way it is.

Things get worse when a mystery guest is discovered dead in his room and the girls suspect the new owners. Can they bring the truth to light, and save the hotel in the process?

With perfect cosy charm and clever storytelling that makes reading this book a total breeze, this middle grade debut is definitely one to add to your bookshelf if you're a fan of the *Murder Most Unladylike* series by Robin Stevens and cosy crime kidlit.

Murder at the Ivy Hotel is published by Scholastic and out now



THE SERIOUSLY EPIC HOLIDAY OF LOTTIE BROOKS

BY KATIE KIRBY

REVIEW BY AOIFE, AGE 10

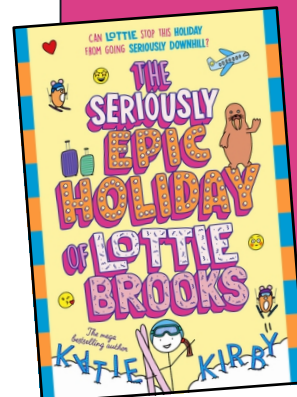
The Seriously Epic Holiday of Lottie Brooks is an extremely funny book that I could not put down. I read it under three days! It's perfect for fans of the series and anyone aged 10 and up.



This book follows Lottie as she goes on a skiing trip in France with her friend Amber and how their friendship builds back up after an argument. Lottie expects to be a skiing pro, but is actually a skiing disaster, and ends up having to take lessons which go wrong in so many hilarious ways. It doesn't help that her old French frenemy Antoine comes to visit her.

The Seriously Epic Holiday of Lottie Brooks is full of humour, disasters and love. This book is absolutely worth reading - it made me laugh the whole way through.

The Seriously Epic Holiday of Lottie Brooks is out now, published by Puffin



MAX AND ELLA, STUCK TOGETHER

BY KRISTINA RAHIM

REVIEW BY LAURA JONES



A heart-warming celebration of family life and friendship, this dual narrative, middle grade story introduces Max and Ella as they navigate their own challenges, with more in common than they realise.

After a tough start to secondary school, Max has lost his confidence and hopes meeting his sperm donor will take him on a journey of self-discovery. Meanwhile, super-organised Ella is enjoying her summer holiday before starting Year 7.

It should be a holiday filled with family time and a camping trip, but things are changing in ways she doesn't like and, when she finds out her dad was once a sperm donor, she is forced to spend time with Max.

With Max and Ella both trying to find their place in the new family dynamic, they must learn to work together before it's too late.

Beautifully and sensitively written, Rahim's exploration of inclusive and diverse families sits gently within a storyline that is relatable to readers of all ages and reflects her own family experiences.

A perfect follow-up to the award-winning *The Doughnut Club*, Max and Ella's story takes a much-needed look at the concept of family in all its different constructs: same gender parents, single or unmarried parents and donor siblings.

Refreshingly, this book shows how adults, as much as children, face challenges and big decisions as they navigate family life but that communication (and a big pile of biscuits!) makes change and uncertainty easier to navigate.

Max and Ella Stuck Together is published by Nosy Crow and out now

DIFFERENT LIKE US!

INSPIRING REAL-LIFE STORIES FROM KIDS EVERYWHERE

BY MARGARET ROOKE

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

'We're all normal. We just have different experiences.' This is the key message that Margaret Rooke's book holds, sharing real children's voices and experiences from around the globe on what it means for them, in their own words, to be *different*.

This is a remarkable book enabling young people to not only find their own voice but share it with others.

Spanning experiences from young refugees, children with disabilities, or those who come from different religions and faiths, and more, what stands out most is the courage these individuals have shown, not only in writing their own experiences down, but in sharing them with strangers.

In a world where conflict seems to be growing abundant, we need books like this to speak to, and empower, young people. In this, Margaret Rooke has done a wonderful job, with helpful advice and further resources for readers to find at the end of the book.

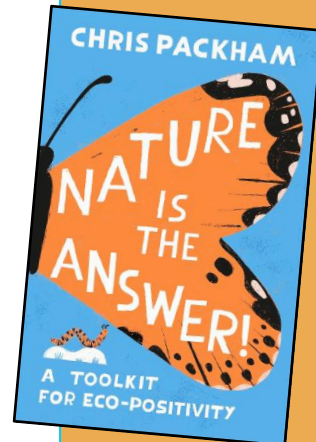
With accompanying illustrations representing each child and their story, this book encourages the strength we can create as allies to not only make the world a better, kinder place but to allow children to strive for their dreams.

Different Like Us! Inspiring Real-Life Stories from Kids Everywhere is published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers and out now



NATURE IS THE ANSWER!

BY CHRIS PACKHAM
REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND



Nature is the Answer! – A Toolkit for Eco-Positivity is a wonderful little field guide for all budding environmentalists growing up in our current age, where it feels like all people can think about is climate change.

The tagline states this is a ‘toolkit for eco-positivity’ and this is a completely true statement. The book manages to balance discussing recent serious changes to our climate and environment with positive developments in the world of wildlife conservation, while also making concepts such as activism and mindfulness accessible to children, creating a joyful, affirmative read, while making sure to keep the core message of protecting the environment at the forefront of your mind.

Chris adds anecdotes from his own experience working with nature and his own relationship with it, which for a young audience not used to reading non-fiction outside of school textbooks, helps connect young people with the idea of fun and deeply informative creative non-fiction.

A hopeful book with a great guide for the environmentally curious.

Nature is the Answer! – A Toolkit for Eco-Positivity is published by Dorling Kindersley Ltd. and out now

WHEN THE WORLD ENDS

BY JOANNA NADIN

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

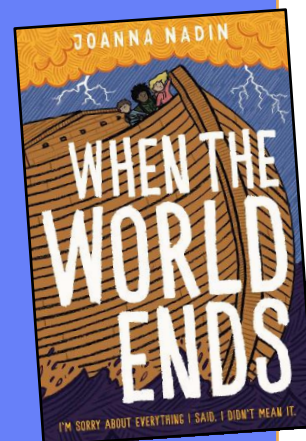
When the World Ends is a spectacle of storytelling, set at a time when the world seems to be ending and a group of kids band together in an attempt to reach safety.

We adored how stripped back, yet full of emotion, Nadin’s writing is throughout this book - with multiple points of view told in a mixture of prose and verse, and distinct voices for each character.

Nadin manages to weave a heartbreaking image of a broken world while trusting the reader’s intelligence. We particularly enjoyed the moments of verse that flowed off the page seamlessly, and how each part was so quick to read though we took in every word.

Here at PaperBound, we’re always in awe of Nadin’s dedication to the craft of writing.

When the World Ends is published by Fox & Ink Books and out now



KAMIZEN: FORTRESS OF LOST MEMORIES

BY WILLIAM YAMAGUCHI DOBSON

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

Kamizen: Fortress of Lost Memories is a fantastical middle grade adventure, full of action, magic and heart.

Jonty’s gramps is living with dementia and trying to remember key moments from his past for his memoir, but his memories are slipping away and Jonty is desperate to help him. When a talking Bonobo appears, it seems he might have

found a way to do just that. Jonty is introduced to a magical world, inspired by Japanese folklore, where lost memories can be recovered. But it’s not easy and soon Jonty faces a series of tricky trials and an enemy set on destroying the very memories Jonty needs to take home.

Kamizen blends a fast-paced and fantastical action-adventure with real-life emotional depth. It touches on important and delicate themes, but is sensitively handled and heartfelt.

It is also beautifully illustrated by Sawa, bringing the story even more to life - a gorgeous looking and stunningly written book that readers can lose themselves in completely. *Kamizen* is full to the brim with imagination. The yōkai creatures are all wildly different and thoroughly entertaining and the world Jonty enters into is so original, you won’t want to leave.

Kamizen: Fortress of Lost Memories is published by Scholastic and out now



You can read an interview with Will on the PaperBound Blog, where he talks about inspiration behind the book: paperboundmag.com

A GIRL'S GUIDE TO SPYING

BY HOLLY WEBB

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

A Girl's Guide to Spying is a thrilling historical middle grade, full of mystery, friendship, and spies!

When Girl Guide Phyl gets a job as a messenger for MI5 during the First World War, she is thrilled to be able to help with the war effort. However, it doesn’t all go to plan; Major Warren makes her life a misery from the start. But then he disappears.

Believing him to be a spy, Phyl and her sister Annie start digging into the truth, with the help of the rest of the Rose Patrol. Will they find the truth before it’s too late?

A Girl's Guide to Spying features a courageous and inquisitive main character, and follows the underestimated but brilliantly clever Girl Guides, and their much unknown work for MI5 during the war.

This book is a real page turner, easy to read and original. Historical fiction with a feminist touch. An excellent first book in a brand-new series. Roll on book two!

A Girl's Guide to Spying is out now, published by Rock the Boat

Read an interview with Holly on page 16



Aurora Borealis

by Jacqueline Shirtliff

JACQUELINE SHIRTLIFF

Jacqueline Shirtliff is a poet and primary school teacher on the Isle of Man. One of her favourite things is helping children to love poetry and reading and encouraging them to be writers themselves. She lives with her husband in a rose-covered cottage near the sea and enjoys gardening, crochet, and playing the tuba and violin, but not all at the same time! She has had poems published in several anthologies, and magazines such as Little Thoughts Press, The Toy and Tyger Tyger. Her first collection of children's poetry will be published by Troika in 2027.



Follow Jacqueline @jacqsalpoet (Twitter/X) and @jacquelineshirtliff (Instagram)

It's the iridescent patterns
that dance across the night,
the shimmering greens and purples,
the glimmering, eerie light.

It's the flickering opalescence
glowing, fading, leaping high,
the kaleidoscope of colours
that ribbons through the sky.

It's the pinks, blues, reds and yellows
as they ripple, pulse and arc,
an ever-shifting spectrum
that illuminates the dark.



WE CAUGHT UP WITH HOLLY WEBB TO CHAT ABOUT HER FIRST BOOK IN AN EXCITING NEW SERIES, *A GIRL'S GUIDE TO SPYING*.

COULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR NOVEL, *A GIRL'S GUIDE TO SPYING*?

A Girl's Guide to Spying is a mix of so many things that I love – it's a mystery, a spy novel, a historical novel, and it's all about Girlguiding – all tied into one!



GIRL GUIDES ARE VERY MUCH AT THE CENTRE OF THIS STORY, WHICH IS LOVELY TO SEE, AND YOU ARE VERY MUCH INVOLVED IN THE GUIDES NOW TOO. WHEN DID YOU FIRST FIND OUT ABOUT THE ROLE THEY PLAYED DURING THE WAR, AND WHEN DID THE IDEA TO WRITE ABOUT THIS FIRST COME TO YOU?

About ten years ago a lovely bookseller gave me a book to say thank you for doing a World Book Day event at their shop. The book was *How the Girl Guides Won the War*, by Janie Hampton, and it's brilliant. There's a tiny mention – less than a page – of the Guides who worked as messengers at MI5 during the First World War. I've been mulling it over ever since.

I should add here that I am a Girlguiding leader, but I do not support Girlguiding's current

policy excluding trans girls and women. Many Girlguiding leaders across the country have joined Guiders Against Trans Exclusion, and we are working for all girls to be welcome in Girlguiding again, as they should be.

THE BOOK COVERS SO MANY GRIPPING THEMES: WAR, SUFFRAGETTES, SPIES, MURDER, FRIENDSHIP AND BETRAYAL. WHAT WERE THE INSPIRATIONS BEHIND IT?

My first inspiration was the discovery of the MI5 Guides – but having said that, I've been a Girlguiding leader for 29 years, and I've wanted to write about Guides for a long time. They've had tiny mentions in some of my other books, but I'm fascinated with Girlguiding history, and I've loved getting to find out more about this time. I've also written about Suffragettes previously, and I really wanted my Guide leaders to be linked with the Suffragette movement.



WRITING HISTORICAL FICTION CAN SEEM QUITE DAUNTING TO ASPIRING WRITERS. HOW MUCH RESEARCH DID YOU HAVE TO DO FOR THIS BOOK ABOUT THESE HISTORICAL ELEMENTS, THE LOCATIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE GIRL GUIDES? DO YOU HAVE ANY RESEARCH TIPS FOR NEW WRITERS THINKING ABOUT EMBARKING ON A STORY LIKE THIS?

I loved doing the research. I already knew quite a bit about early Girlguiding history, as it was something I'd been interested

“It really helps to be writing about something you love, and that you're excited to research.”

in as a Girlguiding leader, but I was able to find out lots more through the National Archives – which are a fantastic, digitised resource. They also had a wonderful joint exhibition with MI5 last year, where I saw a photograph of the messengers, with their names! That was wonderful. It really helps to be writing about something you love, and that you're excited to research. My favourite way to research, though, is to read books from the time you're writing about. Books written for Guides in the 1920s

have been a fantastic resource for me!



THE CIPHERS INCLUDED IN THE STORY WERE ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT. THEY MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE FUN TO RESEARCH AND CREATE. ARE THESE SOMETHING WE MIGHT SEE AGAIN?

Definitely! I loved working on these, although I'm still convinced a reader is going to let me know I've got the Vigenère cipher wrong... There's a brilliant way of sending coded messages in the second book in the series – *A Girl's Guide to Going Undercover*. And I got to give my Guides some spy tools, too. Exploding buttons! I absolutely loved that little nod to James Bond style spy-tech, 1915-style.

WE LOVED ALL THE CHARACTERS, ESPECIALLY HECTOR! DID YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE WHEN WRITING? WHAT WAS IT ABOUT THEM THAT YOU LOVED? CAN WE EXPECT TO SEE

MORE FROM THESE CHARACTERS IN THE FUTURE?

Hector was heavily inspired by my childhood dog, Alice, a beautiful bull terrier. I absolutely love him, and I do feel he might have taken over the end of the book in the best way. Bull terriers are determined like that. I also love Phyl, as she's very much a mix of my daughter and me, and I just want to hug her (which she would hate) and tell her that everything is going to be OK. Phyl, Annie, Minna and Ruby will be back in the second book, and Hector is all set to steal the show again.



Alice

WE CAN'T WAIT FOR BOOK 2 – WHAT ELSE CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT IT? WHAT CAN READERS LOOK FORWARD TO? IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'RE WORKING ON?

Nor can I! I've loved getting to continue the story. Phyl and her

friends from the Rose Patrol are going undercover in a London theatre. MI5 are sure that someone at the Aldwych Theatre is sending coded messages about British shipping movements to Germany, but they're not sure who. Who better to seek out a spy than three resourceful Girl Guides? I'm also planning the third book in the series – I definitely want to put a Guide camp in this one! [P3](#)

A Girl's Guide to Spying is OUT NOW and published by Rock the Boat.

HOLLY'S WRITING PROMPT

How would you send a secret message that absolutely must not be discovered?

“Who better to seek out a spy than three resourceful Girl Guides?”



HOLLY WEBB

Holly Webb lives in Reading with her family and two cats. She started writing 23 years ago, while working as a children's book editor, and has since written over 170 books for children of all ages.

You can find her on Instagram [@hollywebbauthor](#) and her website is [www.holly-webb.com](#)

Sloth's Sonnet

by Claire Schlinkert

CLAIRE SCHLINKERT

Claire Schlinkert's children's poems have been published by *Tyger Tyger*, *Northern Gravy*, *Little Thoughts Press*, *The Toy* and *The Dirigible Balloon*, and have been included in several anthologies, most recently by Macmillan and Valley Press. Besides writing, she enjoys spending time with her family, singing in the Brussels Chamber Choir, and going for walks in nature.



I inch along the branch, no need to rush.
Today I seek no mate; my errands, few.
The sun is warm, the canopy is lush.
But life like this on land's not *all* I do.

For when in water – *whoosh!* – I move with ease.
My arms extend and paddle: I'm a boat!
Digesting, without haste, my lunch of leaves,
I make the gas that helps me stay afloat.

I hold my breath. The dolphins are no match!
My skills turn heads (though not so far as mine).
I swim to seek a suitable new patch,
then come ashore and start my steady climb.

(To those who thought I only did things slowly,
you never took the time to get to know me.)

Sloths are excellent swimmers, and swim about three times faster than they walk. Their extra neck vertebrae can keep their head above the surface, but they are also able to hold their breath for up to about 40 minutes (far longer than dolphins!). A sloth's head can rotate 270 degrees, which means it can swivel much further than a human's head can.

★ WHEN ADMIRATION TURNS TO OBSESSION

By Monique Turner



making a lasting impression on them, it's the hours dedicated to consuming their art and content and covering our rooms in their merchandise and memorabilia, or absorbing ourselves in the history of an artistic project.

Most fans do not pose a threat to the celebrities they follow or admire.

In fact, without the unwavering loyalty and enthusiasm from fanbases, we wouldn't have celebrities. It's the fan pages, the social media edits, the deep-divers, and overnight campers waiting for ticket sales that push an artist's work into the mainstream media and then thrust the artist into the limelight so they can receive their accolades for said art.

Most often, parasocial relationships are relatively harmless; they're daydreams about bumping into our favourite celebs on the street and

entertainment industry afloat. But it's when admiration turns into obsession that these relationships start to have a negative psychological impact on all involved.

We've all heard the horror stories of stalking, doxxing, and threats made to celebrities and their families by people claiming to be fans, but do we really know where this behaviour stems from?

In 2006, researchers David Giles and John Maltby coined three levels of parasocial relationships:

1. Entertainment Social: Public figures are appreciated by fans for their work and creations and are viewed primarily as a source of entertainment or information.

2. Intense-Personal: Individuals develop an intense connection with the public figure, oftentimes daydreaming fake scenarios and believing they share a special or personal bond with the celebrity, such as being "soulmates".

3. Borderline-Pathological: The individual's obsession with the celebrity causes their behaviour to become extreme, such as doing anything for the attention of celebrity, including: illegal activities, stalking, doxxing, sending threatening messages to the celebrity or their

loved ones, or holding delusional beliefs.

There isn't a specific type of person who forms these obsessive relationships with the people they see on screen or in magazines; anyone can unintentionally swing from a casual fan of someone's work to a mega fan who follows the artist on tour and ultimately become a stalker trying to take pictures through their home windows.

Connection is a fundamental human need and when we are deprived of that in our real lives,

we often look toward fictional characters or public figures to fill that void, to offer us emotional comfort, companionship, and to make us feel chosen in a world where we've previously felt overlooked and replaceable.

Parasocial relationships are complex and the individuals experiencing both intense-personal and borderline-pathological need professional intervention, as ostracization from a fanbase typically only deepens the parasocial bond between the individual and the public figure offering a safe escape from reality.

"But it's when admiration turns into obsession that these relationships start to have a negative psychological impact..."

When we've been hurt or feel abandoned and betrayed by the real people in our lives, it becomes easy to project onto strangers an ideal image of a person who would never do us harm. A public figure is largely inaccessible to the individual fan, positioning themselves as a blank canvas for others to paint their own desires and beliefs onto.

A celebrity who barely interacts with their fans beyond their creations, messages of gratitude and love, and rare public sightings, is someone who can become anything the individual fan wants them to be, including a romantic partner or a friend.

Parasocial relationships often tend to sour when the individual loses control of the narrative they've created for the public figure. So, when the celebrity "goes off script" or acts in a way that contradicts the life created for them by the individual, such as entering a real life relationship, getting married, having children, moving house, or even leaving a band or TV show, that's when we start to see the negative implications of those parasocial relationships.

This is a topic I explore in depth in both of my books. In *Island of*

Influencers, the protagonist, Harper, indulges in intense-personal relationships with the creators she watches online, and her world shatters when she realises that her idols in reality are nothing like their social media personas.

In *Sweet and Sour*, we see the detrimental effect that borderline-pathological relationships have on the protagonist, Mikah, when he and his friends are over-sexualised and harassed online, stalked, doxxed, and threatened, making them afraid to leave their content house.

Research indicates that around 51% of people experience parasocial relationships during their lifetime. Though, it's largely accepted that this figure would be higher if the subject were less taboo and people felt more comfortable being honest about their experiences. My aim with these books is to open dialogue surrounding topics like this. **PB**

Sweet and Sour by Monique Turner is out now in paperback, published by Chicken House.



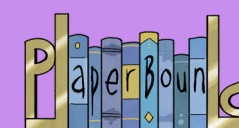
Monique Turner was born and raised in the cold north of England on a diet of strong brews and thick gravy. Whilst growing up, she struggled to find her place in the world, so she vowed to create stories where those who don't fit in can finally feel like they belong. When Monique isn't writing, she can be found roaming the southern coast.

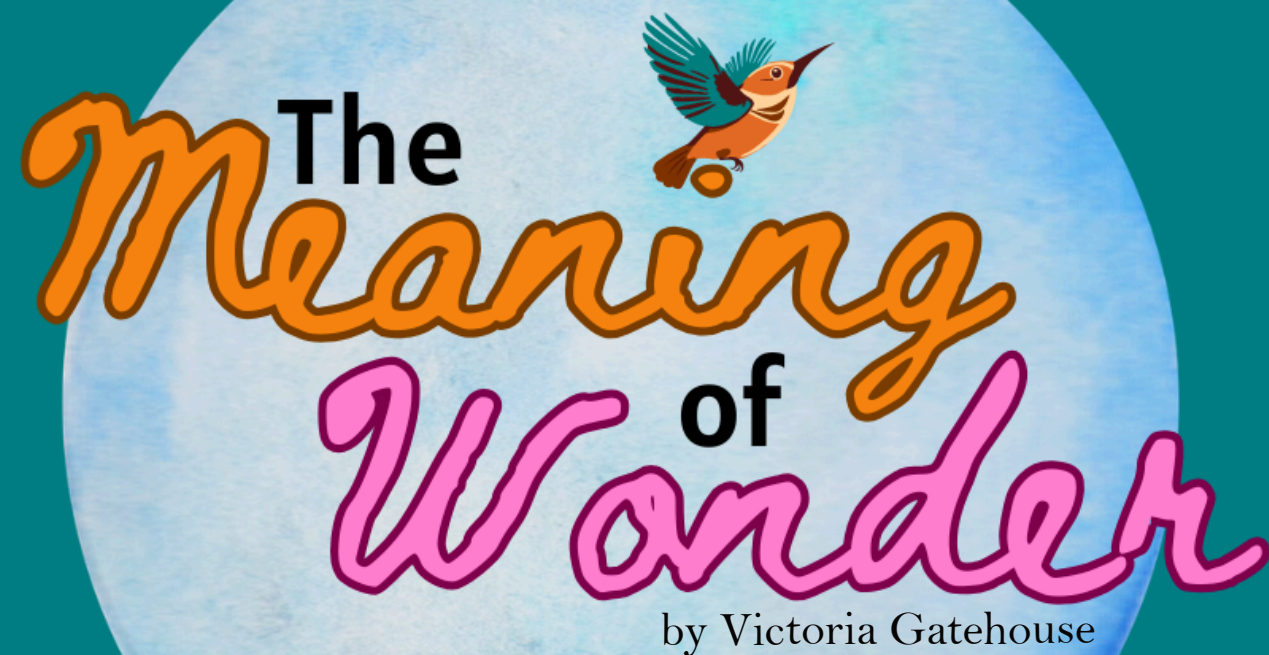
Find out more at islandofinfluencers.com
And follow Monique on Instagram @authormturner

Did you know PAPERBOUND MAGAZINE ALSO HAS A BLOG WITH EVEN MORE BOOKISH CONTENT?



Check it out at
paperboundmag.com





The Meaning of Wonder

by Victoria Gatehouse

For dogs it's the whiff of a lamppost,
for hamsters, a spin on the wheel,
for cats it's a warm pool of sunshine,
for bees it's a lavender field.

For chefs it's a grating of nutmeg,
for midwives, a baby's first cry,
for poets it's finding that *perfect* word,
for surfers, the swell of the tide.

For ghosts it's a newly-washed bedsheet,
for werewolves, the gleam of the moon,
for vampires, the swirl of a velvet cloak,
for witches, a zoom on the broom.

For my sis it's a kingfisher's feathers,
for Gran, that first glimpse of the sea,
for me it's a ball in the back of the net,
for Dad it's a BIG hug from me!

VICTORIA GATEHOUSE

Victoria Gatehouse is a poet and picture book writer who originally trained as a zoologist. Her debut children's poetry collection, *Aardvark Day*, published by The Emma Press in May 2026, has been selected as one of the best new reads by both The Guardian and the School Reading List. Victoria is based in Yorkshire and loves to read poetry in schools, bookshops and at festivals.



Follow Victoria on Instagram @vickygatehouse



CASSIDY ELLIS SALTER

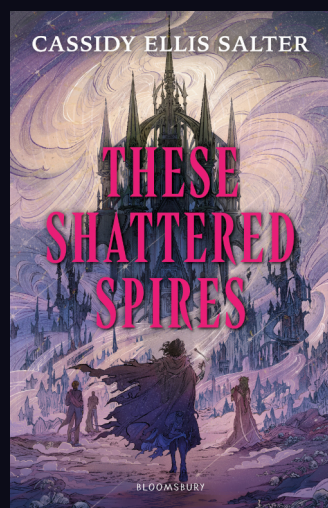


CASSIDY ELLIS SALTER SPOKE TO US TO ABOUT THEIR NEW NOVEL *THESE SHATTERED SPIRES*, THE FIRST IN A THRILLING NEW TRILOGY.

COULD YOU SHARE HOW YOUR NOVEL, *THESE SHATTERED SPIRES*, CAME INTO FRUITION AND WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE THIS STORY – THE FIRST IN A TRILOGY!

There was a lot on my mind before I started writing. I wasn't in a great place by any measure, and I was very newly out as a nonbinary person. It felt like I'd held in so much frustration and anger for so long and, for me, writing is therapy. So one day I decided to stop writing what I thought I should, and just do exactly what I wanted, making it as dark and weird and over the top and queer as I felt like, as well as throwing in all my favourite things – a decadent gothic aesthetic, conflicting points of view, and bones. I didn't expect it to go anywhere, but after the first draft I was like, *hang on. There's something here.* So while it's a book about magic and murder and

undead nuns and crumbling libraries, it's also about coming out, and knotty friendships when you're young, and razing your life to the ground to start fresh.



THE WAY YOU HAVE CAPTURED EACH MAIN CHARACTER IN THIS BOOK IS BRILLIANT, FROM THE CHARACTER PROFILES (COMPLETE WITH ILLUSTRATIONS) AT THE START OF THE BOOK TO HOW THEY INTERACT WITH THE WORLD AROUND THEM. WHAT WAS

THE CHARACTER-WRITING JOURNEY LIKE FOR YOU, AND WERE THERE ANY CHALLENGES ALONG THE WAY?

Thank you! Character is my favourite part of writing – I want the reader to be really close to them, like in-their-pocket close. I got so much joy from having the four protagonists interact with each other and read the same situation completely differently. In the first two chapters alone, one person's *I loathe you* is another's *I love you*. There are huge chasms between what one person thinks and how the other interprets it, and the reader is the only person who can see the miscommunication. I love that stuff!

The hardest part was finding that balance between likeability and the worst aspects of their personalities. I love writing people who make bad decisions in slow motion, and who lie and are obsessive and can be incredibly annoying. But there has to be a core of vulnerability and empathy that makes readers stick with them.

WE WERE BLOWN AWAY BY THE SHARP PROSE AND YOUR TALENT FOR METAPHORS AND SIMILES IN THIS BOOK. HOW MANY DRAFTS DID YOU HAVE TO WRITE BEFORE YOU FELT LIKE THE

NOVEL WAS READY FOR READERS' EYES?

Honestly, so many drafts I've lost count! Books never feel ready, really. My 'first draft' – the one that I shared with some close friends – was probably the third or fourth rewrite, and before that I'd played with some different iterations where one of the protagonists had a completely different personality that just didn't work. Then I did another couple of drafts by myself, and once the trilogy

had been bought, it was another four or five edits, going from developmental changes to line edits. (Although I can't help line editing myself every single time as well, which makes my job very slow.) It's true that most writing is rewriting. Instead of me deciding to stop, someone has to wrestle it out of my hands.

THIS BOOK IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF YOUR GOTHIC WYRDOS TRILOGY. DID YOU ALWAYS SET OUT TO WRITE A SERIES, OR WAS THIS SOMETHING THAT TOOK SHAPE ALONG THE WAY?

I always knew it was going to be a trilogy, even though I had never written one before. It just felt like a big story, and in my mind there were three distinct stages to the characters' journeys that just wouldn't fit into a single book. A

few people warned me that it's hard to get a trilogy published as an unknown writer, and I was like, *Fair. I believe you. But I also don't know how else to do it.* It worked out, luckily!

THERE ARE SO MANY INTENSE SCENES IN THIS BOOK, FROM BLOODTHIRSTY NUNS INTENT ON THEIR NEXT KILL TO FAMILIARS BEING FORCED TO CHANNEL THEIR MAGIC – ALL FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS' GREED. WERE ANY PARTS MOST FUN TO WRITE (WITHOUT SPOILERS)?

Ooh, it's hard to choose, but I definitely had a lot of fun with the duelling scene in the middle of the book. Two of the main characters, Taro (a snarky bone witch) and Alis (a librarian's assistant whose best friend is a set of disembodied fingers) have to fight to the death in front of an audience, without using magic. I won't tell you how it comes about, or how it ends, but I just had so much fun with these two people who hate each other and have this really complex argument going on over another character. Even better, they're both completely useless at physically fighting. I went for full-on rage combined with physical comedy combined with absolute desperation, and it's probably the fastest chapter I've ever written.

THE WORLDBUILDING FOR THIS SERIES MUST BE AN ENORMOUS TASK. DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS ON HOW TO ACHIEVE THIS FOR ANY WRITERS OUT THERE, AND WHAT METHODS WORKED BEST FOR YOU?

The thing I've found most useful is to first ask the question, *what scenario am I trying to set up for the characters?* One of them, in *These Shattered Spires*, is that everyone has to be trapped together in a small world. Then you brainstorm the most unhinged things you can think of that answers that need; people can be trapped in bottles, in castles, on fly paper, in an alternate dimension, by soldiers, or under a dome of teeth and bones. You think, *oh, I like that one.* Then you play the 'so what' game. So, let's play with everyone living under a dome of teeth and bones... How would that affect the smallest facets of life? Does it change how it rains? (Yes, maybe it rains spittle). How do they get daylight? (The sun is filtered by the teeth, so the light would be grey, so maybe they call it...greylight?) Does everyone therefore have a vitamin D deficiency? Does that make them pale? Does it smell like bad breath because of the teeth?

Basically, take every question to its furthest possible conclusion, even if it sounds insane. A lot of stuff won't end up in the story,

but whatever is left over, you weave together with your characters: like, okay, it rains spittle, so maybe this strange side character I have collects it, and that tells us something about him *and* the world.

The most important thing is to have ideas like nobody's watching and feel absolutely no shame in being silly. You'll pluck something great from the chaos.

THESE SHATTERED SPIRES HAS BEEN PITCHED AS PERFECT FOR FANS OF THE ATLAS SIX AND GIDEON THE NINTH, WHICH APPEALED TO US GREATLY WHEN WE FIRST HEARD ABOUT THIS BOOK. ARE THERE ANY OTHER BOOKS YOU WOULD RECOMMEND TO FUTURE READERS OF THE GOTHIC WYRDOS TRILOGY?

My favourite question! It depends on what readers enjoy most about *These Shattered Spires*. If it's the gothic rot and the botanic apocalypse, *Don't Let the Forest In* by CG Drews. If it's the political machinations of the sprawling

castle, and you want to try an absolute classic, it's the *Gormenghast* trilogy by Mervyn Peake (which inspired the aesthetic of *Fourspires*). And I'll always recommend *Ninth House* by Leigh Bardugo for darkness and mild body horror; it takes place in a very different world, but it has the same feeling of an ancient and troubling institution, dark magic, and death always being a single wrong turn away.

IF YOU WERE AN ARCANIST, WHICH MAGICAL DISCIPLINE WOULD YOU BE MOST DRAWN TO?

I change my mind every day, but I currently think bone. I would be great fun to reanimated skeletons and have them do my bidding, and the robes are cool (very gothic, very dramatic). PB

These Shattered Spires is published by Bloomsbury in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia and is OUT NOW! With more translations coming soon!

CASSIDY ELLIS SALTER

Cassidy Ellis Salter is the author of *These Shattered Spires*, the first book in the Wyrdos gothic fantasy trilogy. They live in London with their partner and a pile of bones they've rescued from the Thames. They hold a BA and MA from the Warwick Writing Programme.



CASSIDY'S WRITING PROMPT

In TSS there are four types of magic: stone, bone, blood, and botanic. Users can take these materials, draw magic from them, and manipulate them. (For example, magic can be drawn from a bone, then used to reanimate a skeleton.)

What could a fifth type of magic be, and how would it change the world? How could it be used to murder, deceive, or save someone? How valuable would that magic be in comparison to other types, and who would its opponents be? Using these questions, write an introduction to your new magic for budding witches.



LAURI C. MEYERS

Lauri C. Meyers writes in a nook in her New Jersey home when her shih tzu isn't demanding belly rubs. Writing lets her explore her wonders and find her place to fit in. Her poetry has appeared in Paper Lanterns, Little Thoughts Press, Nimblewit, and others.

You can find her at www.laurimeyers.com or @laurimeyers (bluesky, twitter), lauricmeyers (insta)



Squawks above me
call my gaze—
a flock in flawless V.
Supportive sisters
sharing work—
efficient symmetry.
I spread my arms,
and hope these geese
create a space for me,
to fly with friends
who lift me up,
to finally feel free.



Jen Carney's

TEN TOP TIPS

FOR ASPIRING

AUTHOR-ILLUSTRATORS

plus some practical challenges!



TIP 1: READ

Read lots of genres and a variety of authors.
Reading helps you to explore voices while you're finding your own.



Challenge:

Join your local library and use it - free books at your fingertips!

TIP 2: EXAMINE

Examine the illustrations in graphic novels, comics, illustrated middle-grade and picture books. Think about what you like/dislike about them.



Challenge:

Pick a frame, scene or page from a random book
and try to draw an alternative picture in your own style.

TIP 3:

NOTEBOOKS

Inspiration strikes at all manner of times. You might see/hear/think of something interesting or funny, or come up with an amazing idea when you're not at your desk ready to write or draw. For me, this often happens in the middle of the night, or when I'm out and about. Keeping small notebooks handy is a brilliant way to help you to remember your brainwaves. Plus ... who doesn't love a stationery haul!

Challenge:

Keep a notebook and pen beside your bed ready for your next genius idea!



TIP 4: WRITE REGULARLY

Writing is just like learning to play the trumpet or improving your keepy-uppy score. The more you do it, the better you'll get.

Challenge:

Write SOMETHING every day for the next week. It could be a poem, one amazing sentence, a short story, your own diary, anything!



TIP 5: DAILY DRAWING PRACTICE

See Tip 4 - the same goes for drawing: practice makes progress!

Challenge:

Ask a friend or family member to 'name anything'.
Have a go at drawing it.
Check your sketch against a real picture of that thing and then make improvements.



TIP 6: DIVERSIFY OCCASIONALLY

Sometimes, putting aside the project you're working on and making yourself think about a different idea can really get your creative juices flowing.

Challenge:

Get a friend to say a random first name, an everyday item and a problem. Write a short story (or even just a paragraph) that incorporates those prompts. Draw accompanying pictures. Here are some prompts from me in case your friend isn't nearby:

Name: Delia
Item: a salt cellar
Problem: running late.

TIP 7: GET IT DOWN ON PAPER

When you have an amazing idea for a story, write it from start to finish before you worry about editing it.



Challenge: (This is a toughie!)

The next time you start writing, **DO NOT** re-write a single sentence until you have finished the whole story!

TIP 8: EDIT YOURSELF

Once you've written something you're really happy with, put it in a drawer for at least a week. When you re-read it with fresh eyes, try to make your sentences super sparkly, lose irrelevant details, and make sure your reader can picture your setting and understand how your characters are feeling.

Challenge:

Check that your writing includes sensory information (smells, sights, sounds etc.) and that you have remembered 'Show, don't tell'. E.g. 'Her shoulders slumped when she heard the news.' gives a better picture than, 'The news made her sad.'

TIP 9: CALL ON SOMEONE YOU TRUST

After self-editing, get someone else's opinion before you, for example, send your work to a literary agent or publisher.

Challenge:

Ask someone you trust to read your story and look at your pictures. Ask them what they like and what they think could be better, then work on making further improvements.



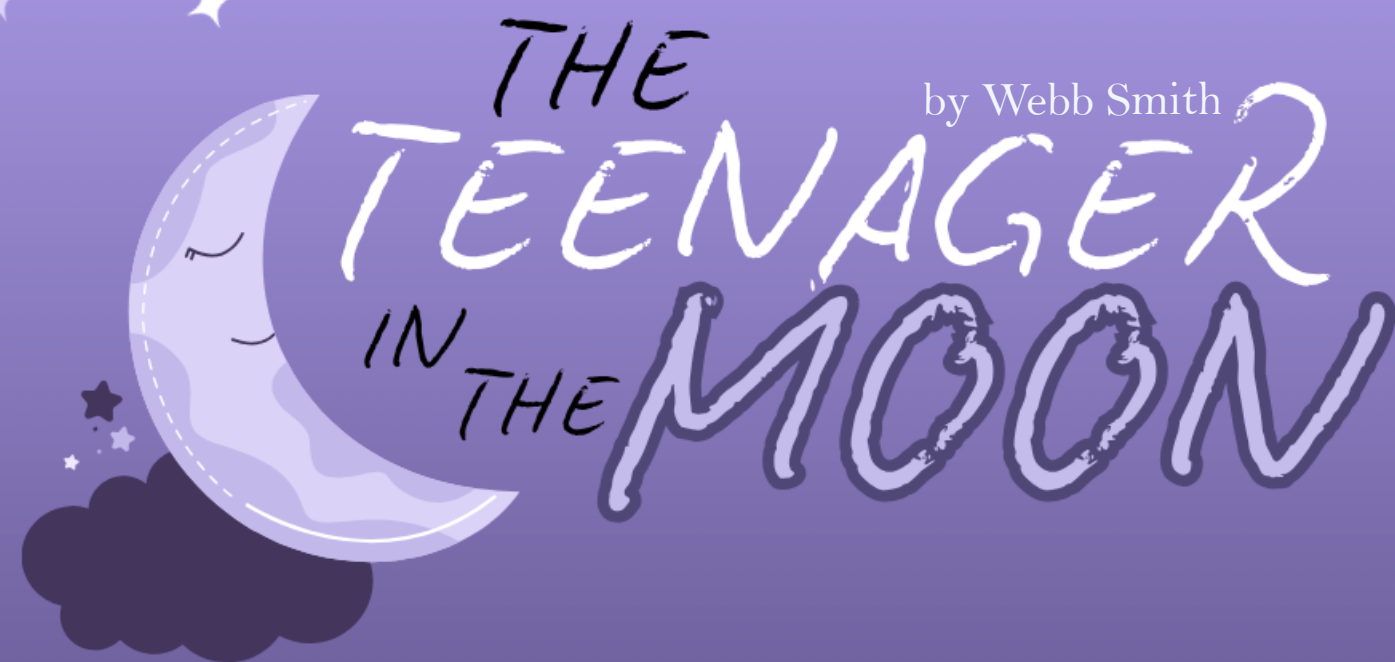
TIP 10: DON'T GIVE UP

I wrote my first book when I was eight years old. I got a book deal when I was forty. If your dream is to be an author or an illustrator, or both, keep working hard to give yourself the best chance of success.



The Day My Brother Got Famous is published by Puffin and is out now!

Jen Carney is an author-illustrator who lives in Lancashire with her wife and three children. She writes contemporary laugh-out-loud middle-grade fiction that celebrates diversity and modern families.



by Webb Smith

WEBB SMITH

Webb Smith is a former firefighter who loves Halloween, pizza, and everything about the ocean. He wrote, illustrated, and self-published a collection of poems called *Spoiled Endings: Tales of Mishap and Misfortune*.

Find out more at webbsmithbooks.com



Please excuse our teenage moon
He's acting quite nefarious
He skipped the autumn equinox
And blamed it on Aquarius

He waxes when he's told to wane
He fails to raise the tide
He's up all day and sleeps all night
And flaunts his darker side

The experts say, "It's just a phase"
They tell me to ignore it
But what's a mom supposed to do
Each time he leaves his orbit

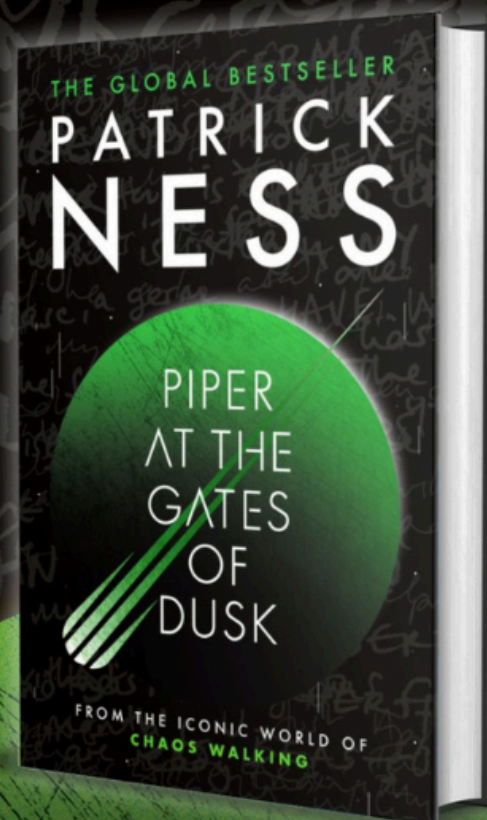
He's headed for a bad eclipse
He's growing up too soon
I pray somehow, he comes to be
The man in heaven's moon





PATRICK NESS

THE BRILLIANT PATRICK NESS TELLS US ABOUT HIS NEW BOOK, *PIPER AT THE GATES OF DUSK* – A NEW SERIES FROM THE WORLD OF THE *CHAOS WALKING* TRILOGY.



CAN YOU INTRODUCE *PIPER AT THE GATES OF DUSK* TO US IN YOUR OWN WORDS?

Piper at the Gates of Dusk is the first book in a new trilogy that is set about 20 years after the original *Chaos Walking* trilogy. It's about the sons of our heroes from the first trilogy Todd and Viola, Ben and Max. Something approaches in the night sky, and it's sending a signal that may be causing some real problems on New World... It turns out that there is an even bigger threat than they thought.

“ I always said ‘never say never’ when people asked if there would be more... ”

means that I will really, really pay attention.

DO YOU FEEL THAT A NEW READER, UNFAMILIAR WITH THE WORLD OF *CHAOS WALKING*, WOULD READ AND ENJOY *PIPER*?

Yes, yes they would. I worked really hard to make sure that nobody felt lost. You're not going to have a whole lot of background dumped in there, but you're never – hopefully – going to be lost. That's what I was really trying for.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO RETURN TO THE WORLD OF *CHAOS WALKING*?

It was purely the idea. I had been very clear in my head that *Chaos Walking* was finished, although I always said ‘never say never’ when people asked if there would be more, while secretly thinking probably never. But then I got an idea centred around the *Pied Piper*, and I thought, oh, that feels really interesting and honestly, a little terrifying, because I didn't want to go back to the trilogy and potentially screw it up. Being fruitfully nervous is the best way to write for me, because the worry that I'm going to mess it up

IT'S BOTH INTERESTING AND IMPORTANT TO EXPLORE THE EXPERIENCE OF A TRANS BOY WITHIN THIS WORLD AND HIS COMING OF AGE IN A WORLD OF NOISE – WAS THERE ANY PARTICULAR REAL-WORLD INSPIRATION BEHIND TAKING THIS CREATIVE DECISION?

I have been vocal for a long time about trans rights. I have trans people in my family and very good trans friends, and I do get a lot of trans readers at my events, particularly trans masculine people. And it's interesting culturally, and of course it's interesting politically, but it's also interesting creatively.

That's really where it comes from: that it is so interesting to see this world, where I've spent, at least 1700 pages previously, and look at it with a

completely different set of eyes. So I did my research, I've had a sensitivity read and I've talked to trans male friends. I'm not a spokesperson; trans people can and should speak for themselves. Creatively this came first and it's just then a matter of making sure I don't mess it up or get it wrong because that's a big sin.

JIM KAY HAS RETURNED TO WORK WITH YOU ON THE ENDPAPERS FOR PIPER – CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT HIS WORK / WORKING WITH HIM?

Jim is the nicest, kindest, sweetest man you'll ever meet. He's so busy and he puts himself through so much work for every drawing. And so we asked if he'd be interested – in a way where there was zero pressure – and to my absolute delight, he said yes and turned in this incredible painting that has become the end papers to the hardback.

IS THERE A BOOK YOU FEEL EVERYONE SHOULD READ?

People are so different, I rarely recommend books to people because

it's so private and personal. There are books that I love, like *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* by Michael Chabon, which is so much fun, it's a great American book. I love *Darkmans* by Nicola Barker, I think it's just a brilliant, great English book, you know, and *Oscar and Lucinda* by Peter Carey, a great Australian book. But then again, find yours for yourself, there's no wrong answer here.

WHERE DO YOU PREFER TO WRITE? AND DO YOU HAVE ANY WRITING ROUTINES, QUIRKS OR TRADITIONS?

The technical answer is a bit dull because I write at my desk. I try to keep up office hours because you can always find a reason not to write.

I used to have really set rules where I would know the first line, the last line, I would know three or four big events and I began to worry that those were crutches. I never want to feel like when I'm setting out, that this is going to be great because I've done it before. I feel like that's the first step towards massive mediocrity. So I try to make it scary every time which makes the process not always so much fun but, you know, it keeps

“ So I try to make [writing] scary every time which makes the process not always so much fun but, you know, it keeps me awake. ”

me awake. I do 2000 words a day. I do a thousand words before lunch and a thousand words after lunch because those are both very easily attainable goals. Then when I can rewrite, I rewrite with great joy and turn the book into what it should have been in the first place.

WHAT'S NEXT – CAN YOU GIVE US A TINY HINT AS TO THE NEXT INSTALMENT?

Let's just say there are some surprises in store about where the missing young people might be and what might be hunting them and who might have stolen them... PB

Piper At the Gates of Dusk is published by Walker Books and is OUT NOW!

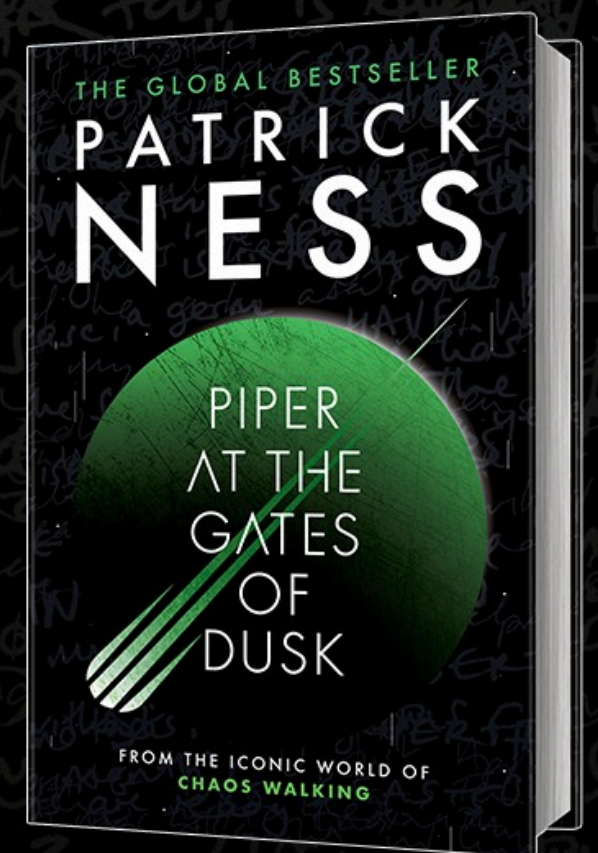
PATRICK NESS

Patrick Ness is the multi-award-winning author of books for adults, young adults and children. *A Monster Calls*, inspired by an idea by the late Siobhan Dowd and which Patrick also adapted for the screen (2016, starring Sigourney Weaver, Liam Neeson and Felicity Jones), is published in 40 languages. An adaptation of the first in his Chaos Walking trilogy – starring Tom Holland (Spiderman) and Daisy Ridley (Star Wars) – was released in 2021.

Patrick has won every major prize in children's fiction, including the Carnegie Medal twice, as well as winning the Olivier Award for the stage adaptation of *A Monster Calls*. He created and wrote the eight-part BBC Doctor Who spinoff *Class* and as a screenwriter has written for Fox, Lionsgate, Apple, Warner Brothers and Entertainment One.

The first book in his new middle grade series, *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody*, was published by Walker in September 2024 and sees Patrick nominated for the Carnegie a third time. The second book in the series, *The Hat of Great Importance* was published in June 2025. *Piper at the Gates of Dusk*, the first in Patrick's new *Chaos Walking* trilogy, was published in spring 2026.

FROM
THE ICONIC
WORLD OF
**CHAOS
WALKING**





The Ship of Wonders

by Catherine Ogston

No one bothered with the ancient spaceship on the edge of the galaxy. It had been decommissioned years ago, declared obsolete and left to drift aimlessly. Andra often watched through her telescope, feeling sorry for it as her own spacecraft, busy on its circuit through the stars, revolved past.

‘What was it for?’ she asked her teacher, an artificial intelligence bot that lived inside the electronic panels in her study room.

‘It is not relevant,’ the voice droned, as it collated Andra’s lessons for the day, filling the screen with displays of colourful dots and text and instructional films. ‘It must have been important a long time ago, but it’s a relic now.’

‘Maybe it’s a pirate ship,’ Andra said. A history lesson had taught her about life on Earth hundreds of years ago and she had watched footage as a digital voice reeled off facts about the ocean exploration and seafaring.

‘More like a ghost ship,’ replied her electronic teacher.

Andra wanted to know what that was so the computer told her; empty vessels that had been abandoned with no explanation. The thought was unsettling and yet thrilling at the same time. Andra couldn’t stop thinking about it. She read more and more, downloading files to absorb as much information as possible and she wrote an essay about the Mary Celeste that earned her ten cosmic credits. But she found herself lying awake at night wondering about those ships; the silent rooms, the tables with half-eaten meals, the logbooks left with unfilled pages.

All the thoughts became so loud in her head that she got confused and overwhelmed. ‘What’s happening?’ she typed into her computer.

The screen hummed and clicked for a long moment, then a voice made an announcement.

‘I believe this is something called ... curiosity.’

By her thirteenth birthday Andra accumulated enough cosmic credits that her teacher announced she had earned a special treat.

‘Would you like a simulated walk with dinosaurs? Or a seat at a medieval banquet ... or perhaps a retro shopping experience in a city – how about Edinburgh, before the Great Flood of 2087 of course?’

But Andra knew that she didn’t want any of those. She wanted a visit to the abandoned spaceship, which was still doing lonely circuits on the edge of the starfield. Her teacher seemed confused, and then bemused by this request.

‘Out of all the places you could go?’ it asked, as if it was concerned Andra was having some sort of malfunction.

‘Yes,’ confirmed Andra. ‘I want to know what’s there.’

Andra strapped herself into the visualisation pod and was ready to put on her headset when a robotic voice reminded her that although there was a ninety-nine-point-six percent chance that the virtual trip would go smoothly, there was still a tiny chance something might go awry. ‘In the worst case scenario you could be trapped there,’ the voice told her.

Swallowing down any last-minute nerves she confirmed she still wanted to go. Then there was sudden darkness and a sensation of being whipped forwards through a tunnel, even though Andra knew her body was stationary. The feeling of motion halted, and light gradually appeared. Shapes formed slowly in the gloom until Andra could see she was standing in a corridor with a door in front of her. She pressed down on the handle, the cold stiffness of it real in her hands. The door swung open. Inside was a dark room, some tables in neat rows in the centre, just visible from the corridor’s gleam. They were empty apart from stick-like ornaments, flowerheads blooming from their tops.

‘These are table lamps,’ said the headset’s voice. ‘You can turn them on for more light.’

Andra fumbled for the switch on the nearest one. A warm glow spread out, illuminating the room. She could make out various armchairs, some with cushions with dents in them, as if their occupants had just got up and left. All around the perimeter were tall cases filled with slim cuboids. Hundreds, perhaps more than a thousand, filled the shelves. Andra pulled one out. It had colourful images and large print on the front. Andra read it out loud.

‘Oliver Twist, by Charles Dickens.’

As she handled the object she realised part of it was hinged. Inside there were sheets and sheets of text, fixed together at one side.

‘Is this a book?’ she asked incredulously. She had learned about books but never seen one in real life, and she had most definitely never held one before.

‘Yes,’ said the voice in her ear. ‘The room you are standing in was known as a library.’

But Andra wasn’t listening. She took the volume, plus five or six more selected at random, and perched on an armchair. At first she sat tentatively, then she relaxed into the comfortable padding. Before long she was curled up, engrossed in reading the pages. Occasionally she stood up and gathered a new selection of books before settling back down again. Andra didn’t feel hungry or thirsty, or cold or anything at all. She only felt an unfamiliar rush of emotions as she greedily read as fast as she could, letting the words fill her head in a way she had never experienced. She loved how some of the books felt light while others had weight to them; how some had illustrations, black and white or sometimes colour; how occasionally there was a map of a strange coastline with mountain ranges or winding rivers to trace with her finger; the unfamiliar smell of the pages.

Hours went by until a voice interrupted her reverie. ‘Your visit is nearly over.’

‘How many books are here?’ said Andra and listened as the voice told her a number that made her dizzy.

‘There are four more libraries on this ship,’ said the voice. ‘It was a collection of tomes from Earth, preserved for future generations.’

‘Why was it abandoned?’

The voice stayed silent. Andra could only hear the faint hum of the computer searching its database.

Eventually the voice told her, ‘Answer unknown.’

‘Can I come back?’

Again, the technology hummed while it processed her request. Then, ‘But why? Think of all the experiences I can take you to. All the places, all the people you could meet, all the times in history. But you only want to come here?’

Andra stood in the library and rotated slowly, taking in the vast expanse of stories in front of her. ‘But all those places, and people, they’re here too. And more than that, so so much more.’

‘You can return. But please be aware, every time you visit there is an increased chance that there may be a digital disruption that means you would not get back safely.’

Andra didn’t say anything.

‘Do you understand? Each time you come here, you run the risk that you would have to stay.’

Andra piled up the books on a nearby table and thought about plumping up the cushion on the armchair, but she didn’t. Seeing the imprint of herself pressed into the chair made her feel like she was leaving a part of herself there until next time.

‘I don’t think that would be so bad,’ she whispered as she took one last look at the rows of books, all those stories waiting to be explored. She clicked the table lamp off and once more the room fell into darkness. ■

CATHERINE OGSTON

Catherine Ogston lives in Scotland and writes very short fiction, novels and everything in between. She is the 2026 Scriever for the Federation of Writers Scotland and her cat, Leo, likes to supervise while she types.

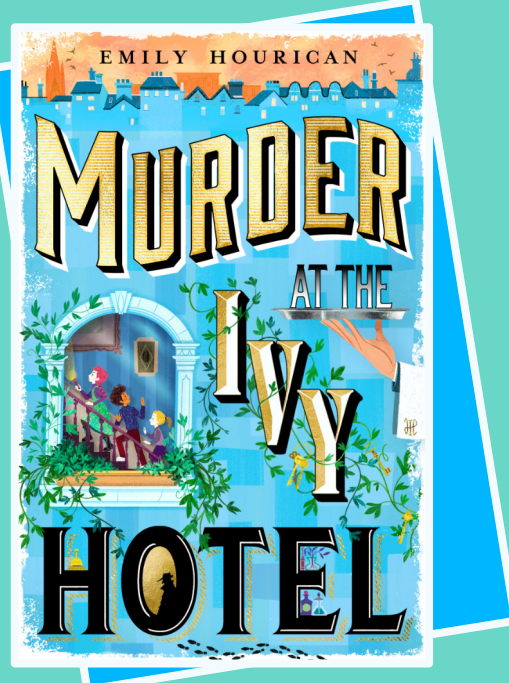
We loved Catherine’s story so much, she’s this issue’s submission winner. Congratulations, Catherine. A little prize will be on its way to you soon.

Follow Catherine on Bluesky @catherineogston.bsky.social



WE CAUGHT UP WITH EMILY HOURICAN TO HEAR MORE ABOUT HER DEBUT MIDDLE GRADE COSY CRIME NOVEL, MURDER AT THE IVY HOTEL.

EMILY HOURICAN



CAN YOU TELL OUR READERS A LITTLE ABOUT MURDER AT THE IVY HOTEL, AND WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE IT?

Murder at the Ivy Hotel is the story of two sisters, Meredith (12) and Macy (10), who live in a beautiful, old, glamorous hotel, the Ivy.

They live there because their mother, Sally, is the general manager.

The hotel is full of their friends: Bob, the doorman; Max, who works in the restaurant; Jake, who works in the kitchen; Agatha, a lady in her 70s who lives in the penthouse with her dog, Milo.

There are some trickier characters too – Jerome, the head chef, is temperamental and explosive; Celine, the events manager, thinks the girls are a nuisance, and Colin, a boy who lives on the fifth floor, won't talk to the girls and rejects their overtures of friendship. But overall, they have a wonderful life here.

Then, the hotel is sold and the new

owners want to make more money from it. By changing so many of the things – and people – the girls love. Just as they are trying to think of ways to stop this from happening – something much worse occurs. A man checks in late at night, with no identification, and no luggage. He calls himself Mr Smith. The next morning, Mr Smith is dead... If

Meredith and Macy can't find out who he was and why he was murdered, their wonderful world is going to change completely.

The inspiration for this book came from many places, but one moment where I really had a strong view of the world of the Ivy Hotel was, during the Covid shutdown of 2020. It was my daughter's birthday and literally the only thing we could do, with everything closed, was a horse-and-carriage ride around St Stephen's Green. She had lived her whole life in Dublin, and we had never done this. It was amazing, really fun.

And something about seeing the city centre – which I know so well – from this different vantage point,

“ I THINK THE BOOKS I READ WHEN I WAS 9-12 ARE STILL THE ONES I REMEMBER MOST VIVIDLY. ”

with the magic sound of horse hooves, just sparked off in me a vision of two sisters, an old hotel, a closed world that comes under threat...

THE WAY YOU WRITE FOR A MIDDLE GRADE AUDIENCE IS UTTERLY CHARMING. WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO EMBARK ON WRITING FOR THIS AGE GROUP INSTEAD OF ADULTS?

Two reasons – first, was watching my daughter, now 15, reach the age of 10-11, and begin to look for more grown-up books to read. I could see she wanted books that were more challenging and exciting, with higher stakes and clues she could follow. She liked books with 'murder' in the title... But I thought a lot of these were just too dark for her age. Yes, they were exciting, but also sometimes a bit grim. So I wondered, could I write something that would satisfy her interest, but protect her innocence?

And, at the same time, I began thinking about how intensely and with how much wonder I read when I was that age. I think the books I read when I was 9-12 are still the ones I remember most vividly. If they were good, they made a huge impression on me, and gave me so many new ways to see the world. I wanted to try and add something to the store of wonderful books for readers in this age group.

THE SETTING IN THIS NOVEL OF A GRAND HOTEL WAS SO MUCH FUN TO READ. WAS IT FUN TO WRITE, AND DID ANYTHING INFLUENCE THE SETTING?

I loved writing it so much. As a kid, I couldn't think of any-thing I'd love more than to actually live in a beautiful hotel, with all the comfort, luxury (and room service!) that would bring. I had a

friend when I was 13 whose father was the general manager of the Sheraton hotel in Brussels, and sometimes I would stay over at their apartment in the hotel, and that was such joy. Although we were only allowed to order room service on birthdays!

The hotel I had in mind when writing was The Shelbourne, on St Stephen's Green in Dublin. That is the physical inspiration for the Ivy. Such a beautiful old hotel, full of charm and history.

THE THEME OF SISTERS, FRIENDSHIP AND COMMUNITY IS SO IMPORTANT IN THIS BOOK, AND WE PARTICULARLY LOVED THE IDEA OF TWO SISTERS SOLVING A MURDER MYSTERY INSTEAD OF A STANDALONE CHARACTER. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO TACKLE THE NOVEL THIS WAY?

I am fascinated by sisters. I have two – both younger than me – and they are the greatest champions I have, and also the people most likely to tell me when I am wrong/ mean/ behaving badly etc. The sisterly dynamic is so subtle, supportive, and sometimes challenging. Also, all the most exciting things I did as a child were done with my sisters (and my brothers, but you can't include everyone 😊) – I couldn't imagine an adventure without them!

THERE IS SUCH A FANTASTIC CAST OF CHARACTERS IN THIS NOVEL AND WE STRUGGLED TO PICK A FAVOURITE! DID YOU HAVE ANY MORE THAT PERHAPS DIDN'T MAKE IT INTO THE FINISHED STORY?

I did actually – and they will, I hope, appear in later books. There's a boy, Macy's age, who appears in the next book. And a few new additions to the hotel...

MYSTERY NOVELS OFTEN REQUIRE HEAVY PLOTTING. DID YOU HAVE TO PLOT THE STORY OUT ENTIRELY BEFORE YOU WENT ANYWHERE NEAR WRITING IT, OR WAS YOUR PROCESS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT?

I am someone who likes to dive right in rather than make notes and pre-plan. This is an approach that has strengths, and weaknesses... However, I don't dive in until I feel I know what I'm doing. So I had the bones of the plot before I wrote anything. I knew who died, why, and who killed them. I also knew what the key plot turns were going to be. Once I had all that, off I went! It did mean that lots of little things had to be ironed out in second, third and fourth drafts...

CAN YOU TELL US WHAT ELSE READERS CAN LOOK FORWARD TO NEXT FROM YOUR BOOKS, OR WHAT YOU ARE WORKING ON RIGHT NOW?

I'm working on *Murder At The Ivy Hotel* Book 2, which is out next year. And I am loving it so much. There is a strong element of the influence the past has on the present, something I am always interested in. All the favourite characters have roles to play, and there are a couple of newcomers... PB

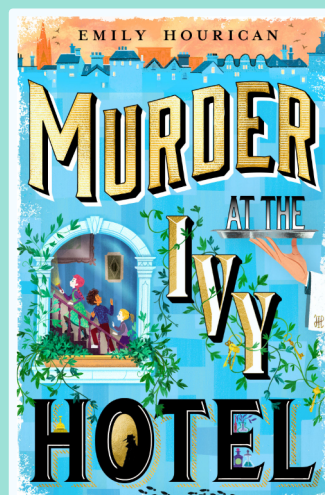
EMILY HOURICAN

Emily Hourican is the author of several Irish bestselling novels for adults, including *The Glorious Guinness Girls* and *A Kennedy Affair*.

She has been an award-winning editor and journalist with the Sunday Independent, Ireland's biggest selling newspaper, for over 20 years.

She lives in Dublin with her husband and three children.

You can find her online at emilyhourican.com, on Instagram at [@emilyhourican](https://www.instagram.com/emilyhourican) and on X at [@EmilyH71](https://twitter.com/EmilyH71).



MURDER AT THE IVY HOTEL IS OUT NOW! PUBLISHED BY SCHOLASTIC



EMILY'S WRITING PROMPT

Grab a pen and a piece of paper... Here is the scenario:

IT'S LATE AT NIGHT. YOU ARRIVE AT THE HOTEL YOU BOOKED AFTER A LONG JOURNEY. YOU ARE VERY TIRED AND ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS FALL INTO BED.

AT RECEPTION, YOU GIVE YOUR NAME AND ASK FOR YOUR ROOM KEY. BUT THE RECEPTIONIST SAYS:

'BUT THAT ROOM HAS ALREADY BEEN CHECKED INTO! SOMEONE ARRIVED, GAVE THE CORRECT NAME AND TOOK THE KEY, HOURS AGO...'

What happens next?



Book Teen/YA Review Corner



THE SECRET WORLD OF BRIAR ROSE

BY CINDY PHAM

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

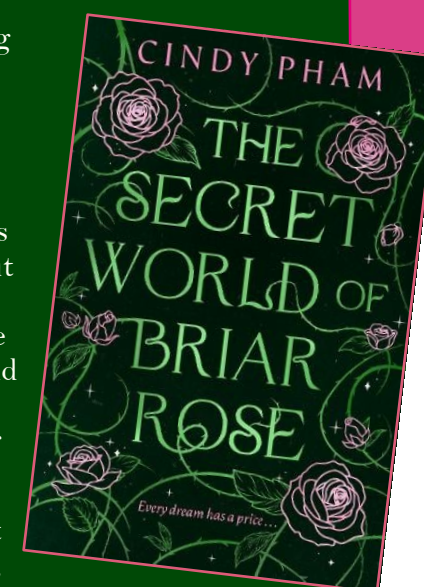
The Secret World of Briar Rose is a lovingly crafted retelling of *Sleeping Beauty*, using the classic fairytale to convey a journey towards self-love and acceptance, persevering in the face of world-crushing grief.

Corin only has her sister left after war has torn apart her reality, but when Elly runs off to find the sleeping princess in the hopes she can fix everything, Corin has no choice but to fulfil her promise as a big sister and follow Elly. Corin's emotions are incredibly relatable throughout - firstly while dealing with her reality, alone and displaced due to war, and then during the journey through a magical realm, as the highly sceptical voice of reason in contrast to her younger sister's whimsical nature.

The book truly encapsulates the concept of escapism - not only are fairytales an escape from reality in the real world, but the legend of Briar Rose is also the shining light guiding the sisters forward.

Author Cindy Pham rose in popularity on BookTube circles for her hilariously engaging videos dissecting YA tropes and hyping up underrepresented voices in the industry. In *The Secret World of Briar Rose*, it's clear Pham adores YA fantasy, incorporating all the bits she loves about the genre and talked about extensively in her videos with her own unique take on *Sleeping Beauty*'s tragedy.

The Secret World of Briar Rose is out now, published by Pan Macmillan



ORBITING JUPITER

BY GARY D. SCHMIDT

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

Republished in celebration of its ten-year release date, *Orbiting Jupiter* is a powerful short novel full of heart and vigour that will leave an impression that stays with you forever.

When twelve-year-old Jack and his parents welcome Joseph, a boy with a difficult past and a troubled reputation into their family, they're faced with people's questions as to why they would want a boy like Joseph in their home in the first place.

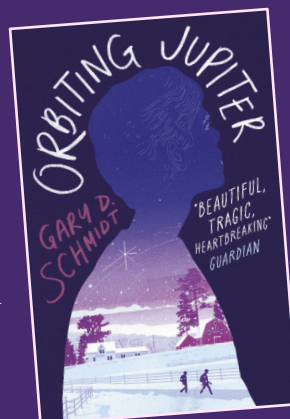
Word has been going round that, at his last school, he tried to kill a teacher, that he went to a young offenders' detention centre before coming to live with them, and that he has violent outbursts.

But they accept him anyway.

As Jack learns Joseph's true history, and Joseph in turn learns to trust again in a new family, together, the two boys embark on a journey to find what Joseph yearns for most of all: Jupiter, his baby daughter, who has been separated from him since before she was born.

Told with sharp, pithy prose that finds its way into your head and settles in your heart to stay, *Orbiting Jupiter* is a heartbreaking modern classic that deserves to be read by everyone, with clever undertones of morality, social care systems, trust and blame, framed through Joseph and Jack's story. An unforgettable read.

Orbiting Jupiter is out now, published by Anderson Press



A TREACHERY OF SWANS

BY A.B. PORANEK

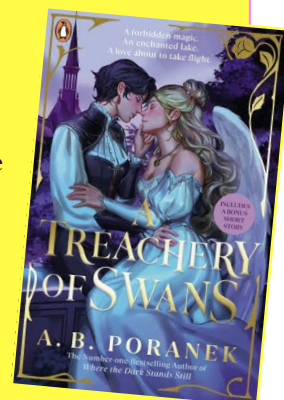
REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

A sweeping sapphic retelling of *Swan Lake*, this story follows streetwise thief Odile, who is under the influence of a sorcerer she calls 'Father' on a quest to restore magic to the kingdom. And the best way to do it is to get close to the prince so she can steal the king's enchanted crown.

Impersonating Marie d'Odette, the princess most likely to gain the prince's hand in marriage at a ball, Odile secretly turns Odette into a swan using magic - but when things go disastrously wrong, entangling them all into a mess of magic and murder on royal palace grounds, can Odile still do what she came here to do without getting caught?

From all angles, this novel invites the reader to discover each character's true self, and watch the attraction unfold between Odile and Odette, in a gorgeous enemies-to-lovers romance set against a backdrop of shimmering lakes, a royal palace, and a kingdom once destroyed by magic.

A Treachery of Swans is out now and published by Penguin



THE ESCAPE GAME

BY MARISSA MEYER & TAMARA MOSS

REVIEW BY LAURA JONES

Puzzles, betrayal and murder: the perfect ingredients for this unforgettable murder mystery thriller from the writing partnership of Marissa Meyer and Tamara Moss. *The Escape Game* is a twisty, addictive and fast-paced novel which seamlessly combines the world's fascination with reality television, the power of social media and the growing phenomenon of escape rooms.

When Alicia Angelos is found murdered on the set of reality TV show 'The Escape Game' in the finale of season 4, her sister, Sierra, is the prime suspect. Six months later, auditions for season 5 are underway and there's a very familiar face in the line-up.

Having seemingly got away with murder, Sierra is back for justice and revenge as she seeks to uncover the truth behind her sister's brutal murder. Uncovering clues that hint at the identity of the real killer, Sierra and her teammates face a race against time - and the escape room clock - to unlock the next piece of the puzzle.

With Sierra, Beck, Carter and Adi all contributing to the unfolding story, the multi-perspectivity of the book mirrors the complexities of real-life when four very different people are thrown together. *The Escape Game* is clearly well-thought out and researched and will have readers desperate to solve the puzzles in each room quicker than any of the other teams.

With secrets, codes and a diverse cast of puzzle enthusiasts, *The Escape Game* keeps readers guessing until the very last game. Perhaps, though, the most exciting reveal is on the very last page... To be continued! This reader can't wait to dive back in for more high-stakes adventure and intrigue.

The Escape Game is out now, published by Hot Key Books



THIS BOY I HARDLY KNOW

BY LISA HEATHFIELD

REVIEW BY LAUREN MARPLES

Separated from her beloved sister Poppy, Dusty Delaney is sent to Keystone children's home. She feels out of luck and frustrated until she meets Cooper, a mysterious boy her age, who also has a plan to escape Keystone.

Intent on finding Poppy, Dusty embarks on an adventure to Newcastle with a boy she hardly knows...

This whirlwind trip takes Dusty and Cooper across the country, and navigating England helps them to explore their connection, bringing them closer together.

A heartwarming story of found family and love, with several emotional scenes, Dusty and Cooper will stick in your mind long after reading. *This Boy I Hardly Know* is perfect for fans of adventure.

This Boy I Hardly Know is out now, published by Anderson Press



BURN THE WATER

BY BILLY RAY

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

A military romance retelling of *Romeo and Juliet*, this novel sets the scene not quite in fair Verona but in a dystopian near-underwater future in the 25th century, based in London where the surroundings are hauntingly familiar, yet almost totally unrecognisable to the reader.

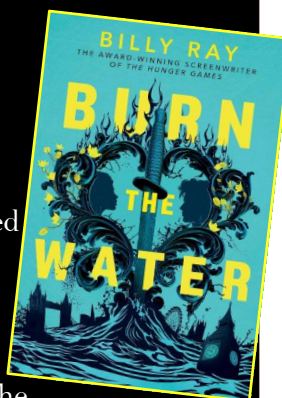
Rafe and Jule are opposed military leaders, both earning respected reputations within their own armies, the Rogues and the Crowns. From the moment the book begins, we know we are in a military setting and it was interesting to see the famous play retold in this vein.

This is war, so it doesn't hold back.

Conflict is abundant throughout the narrative - and when a bigger force threatens to change both armies' worlds as they know it, the stakes soon soar higher, intertwined with complex stakes, opposing armies and their ideologies, and the romance at the heart of it all: Rafe and Jule.

A great retelling, told in its own way, with striking echoes back to methods of pre-technology warfare set in a dystopian future. Music, as well, is written about beautifully in a world that no longer hears it...

Burn the Water is published by Scholastic and out now



DAY OF NOW

BY MIRANDA REASON

REVIEW BY CAT OULD

Day of Now by Miranda Reason is a post-apocalyptic young adult novel about two siblings who embark on a journey across an infected Earth to find their father a cure, after he becomes ill due to the fungal disease plaguing the world.

The story has a strong sibling relationship which is the heart of the story and makes the reader feel deeply for both Dayna and Pax as they stick together.

There are twists and turns at every corner, with the real scares being other people, rather than the infection itself.

Tensions are high and the commentary on cults becomes a strong part of the novel throughout. It stands out from other post-apocalyptic novels with it being more of an airborne infection rather than zombies or the undead.

The characters are intriguing and you can really feel the danger that they go through and the desperation they feel to try and get back to their father with a cure.

The mystery and suspense is enough to keep the reader turning the page and enticing them to continue so they solve everything themselves.

This book is perfect for fans of *The Last of Us* and *How I Live Now*.

Day of Now is published by Bloomsbury and out now



GONE FOR GOOD

BY SARAH CROSSAN

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

Gone for Good is a twisty YA thriller written in verse, tackling themes of grief and mental health.

The story follows Connie, who is woken in the middle of the night and taken to Silver Lake Academy for 'troubled' teens.

The academy is full of uncomfortable strict rules and, once there, she discovers that she's

replaced a girl called Belle.

But Belle didn't leave because she finished the programme. No. Belle is missing.

The longer Connie stays at the academy, the more she is drawn into the mystery of what happened to Belle, following clues, and falling deeper into a tangle of secrets and lies.

And when everyone seems to be hiding something, who can she trust?

The verse format works brilliantly in this genre, to convey a sense of urgency, mystery and emotional depth.

Perfect for fans of verse novels and thrillers, this highly addictive novel will keep you page turning long into the night.

Gone for Good is published by Simon and Schuster and out now



PIPER AT THE GATES OF DUSK

BY PATRICK NESS

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

In *Piper at the Gates of Dusk*, we return to the world introduced in the Chaos Walking trilogy, now twenty years later. While perfect for fans of the original series, this is also easily read as a standalone.

Ben and Max, children of Todd and Viola from the original, have grown up on the family farm outside the busier town settlement. Tensions between some humans and indigenous species - The Land - still linger, but now a mysterious object has been spotted in the sky, and strange burning God-like monsters start attacking children on the ground.

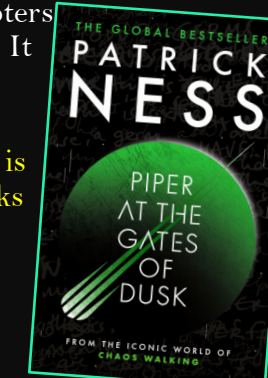
Ben and Max must face their own individual journeys, testing their limits and their beliefs, but will their quests give them the answers they're looking for before it's too late?

This is the first book in a new trilogy, action-packed and thought-provoking from the start. It's full of important themes intricately woven into the plot, while raising questions on identity and morality along with others.

The chapters are shared between Ben and Max, characters who are fully realised and interesting, mirroring the personalities of Todd and Viola which fans of the original will appreciate. The writing itself is addictively brilliant and you'll find yourself whizzing through the chapters and craving the next book. It can't come soon enough!

Piper at the Gates of Dusk is published by Walker Books and out now

Read an interview with Patrick on page 40



HEARTBREAK ERA

BY SOPHIE JO

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

Another fantastic contemporary YA from Sophie Jo which explores real-life teen relationships and the transition from teenhood to adulthood, told with grace and authenticity.

Harley and Freddie are the couple that have been together for years and, at eighteen, they plan on going to university together too. At least, that's what they always planned on.

So when Freddie breaks up with Harley out of the blue, suddenly their plans don't seem to fit together anymore.

Determined to get him back, Harley joins the Recently Dumped Club, where she meets Seth, a boy with chaotic energy who totally gets on her nerves. With a plan to get both their exes back, the unlikely duo form a plan.

With the classic trope of fake dating and Sophie Jo's classic, honest style exploring what a healthy relationship looks like, *Heartbreak Era* is the perfect stand alone follow-up to her debut, *Red Flags*.

Heartbreak Era is published by Scholastic, and out now



You can also read an interview with Tig Wallace on the PaperBound Blog!

paperboundmag.com

STORM BRINGER

BY TIG WALLACE

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND



What happens when you live in a fantasy world where magical storms are deadly?

In *Storm Bringer*, Amelio battles with just that, exploring what it means to be part of two divided provinces - Amrigo and Nimira - separated by magic and science, and figuring out his place within them.

When Amelio's mother goes missing amid a powerful storm, Amelio has no choice but to go out and find her, but is soon separated from his home in the carnage.

Now in Nimira, Amelio is forced to accept things he never knew about himself. Things that have always been kept hidden. And making unlikely friends along the way in a battle to bring peace between the two provinces.

Filled with high stakes, a spectacular cast of characters, and tension between magic vs. science, and of familiarity vs. other, Tig Wallace has crafted a world that feels fully realised - and one that promises a subsequent action-packed sequel before the final instalment in this new trilogy is released.

Storm Bringer is published by Chicken House and out now.

THE BECKETT EFFECT

BY NASHAE JONES

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

A fabulous YA romance with a fresh take on toxic masculinity, a tantalising enemies-to-lovers trope, and an abundance of fun film references laced all the way through.



High-schooler Wren's ultimate dream is to become a film director. So when semi-famous Beckett Lane - a boy she can't stand, and notorious for dating girls and leaving their broken hearts in his wake - shows up in her film class, she's

determined not to let him get in her way. At all costs.

Especially when Beckett already has a celebrity dad giving him a leg up in the industry.

Determined to out Beckett in a documentary for all his toxic masculinity traits in a class project, Wren sets out with best friend Chelsea to destroy Beckett and his reputation, but when things don't quite go to plan, Wren is left wondering if she was right to do this all along. Is Beckett as bad as people say he is, or has he been pushed into the limelight for things he never wanted?

With fun screenplays woven throughout the book and sharp, witty dialogue, as well as Wren having to navigate 'fessing up to her own shortcomings amid tensions with her younger sister, *The Beckett Effect* is a fitting tribute to noughties teen romcoms and a great addition to YA bookshelves.

The Beckett Effect is published by Penguin and out now

STORM OVER CAMELOT

BY SOPHIE KEETCH

REVIEW BY PAPERBOUND

Storm Over Camelot is the conclusion to the highly-addictive Morgan le Fay YA/crossover trilogy, following *Morgan Is My Name* and *Le Fay*.

Morgan is full of rage. She is grieving a devastating loss, drowning in betrayal, and out for vengeance.

But is she losing sight of the woman she once was, and who she hoped to be? Is she headed down a road that will turn her into the villain Arthurian legend makes her out to be, or could she choose a different path - a path of healing?

Full of magic, scandal, tragedy and love, this is a brilliant end to a gripping series. A feminist touch to a well-known legend, with complex characters, immersive world-building and heartbreak. You feel everything with Morgan, the good and the bad, the joy and the devastation, from beginning to end. Sophie Keetch has created a beautifully-written, well-researched, absorbing world that you won't want to say goodbye to.

While this series starts when Morgan is a child, it grows with her and so this series crosses over into adult fiction and is suited to older YA and adult readers

Storm Over Camelot (and the whole series) is published by Magpie (Oneworld Publications) and out now



Phoenix

by Elizabeth Hogarth

ELIZABETH HOGARTH

Elizabeth is from Stockton-on-Tees. Her publications include 'String and Glue' (Pamphlet, Mudfog Press 2024), she features in the anthology 'Blood and Cord: Writers on Early Parenthood' (The Emma Press 2023) and Fig Tree Press (2026). Her poems also feature in Ghost Light Lit Magazine, York Link and Scaryness Express.



When there is nothing left,
but sadness, loss and lies,
when all is burned to ashes
It is then that I must rise.

Climbing. Clambering. Clawing
high over the hillslope.
Wings stretched wide and burning,
an endless flame of hope.



PRINTABLE WRITING PROMPT

Freewriting: Through the Window

Freewriting is a great way of warming up your brain without worrying about spelling, punctuation or grammar.

Set a timer for three minutes.

Using the illustration on the next page as inspiration, start writing and don't stop until the timer runs out.

Don't overthink it. Let your ideas flow freely and just write the first thing that you think of. If you run out of ideas, write the same word over again until another idea pops into your head.

Happy writing!



Illustration by
Kim Wagner Nolan
Find out more about
Kim on page 63

PRINTABLE WRITING PROMPT

We love art over here at PaperBound and, over the years, we have featured so many brilliant illustrations, including several by Shirley Shelby, who has created the image below. (You can find out more about Shirley on page 63.)

One of the great things about art is that everyone sees something different. Using the image below, write a scene set in an art gallery.

Questions to think about:

- Who are the characters and why are they there/what do they want?
- How do they know each other?
- What genre is this story: action/adventure, fantasy, something else?
- What are they looking at?
- What happens next?



★ MEET THE ILLUSTRATORS ★

Kim Wagner Nolan

Kim Wagner Nolan (she/her) is an American children's author/illustrator and museum exhibit designer. She earned her BFA in illustration from the Rhode Island School of Design and is currently a staff illustrator at Little Thoughts Press. Her writing and illustrations have appeared in *The Toy*, *The Dirigible Balloon*, *National Forum*, *Little Thoughts Press*, and now *PaperBound*. Her work has also been displayed in more than a hundred museum and gallery exhibits throughout the United States. Honors include first place in the 50 Precious Words International Writing Contest and the SCBWI Draw This! Contest, two PBParty honorable mentions, and winning two dozen doughnuts in the Krispy Kreme Doughnuts painting contest. When she's not painting for doughnuts, Kim enjoys going on adventures with her husband and foster children and playing the ukulele for her pet chickens. You can find her at kimwnolan.com and on Instagram and BlueSky @kimwnolan.



Kim illustrated the front cover and a writing prompt in this issue.



Shirley Shelby

Shirley Shelby is a children's book illustrator and letterer. She usually works digitally these days using Photoshop or Procreate but also likes to hand draw her illustrations from time to time as well. She has taken several courses in illustration and design and loves to inspire others with her work. She especially loves illustrating animals and nature.

Shirley illustrated a writing prompt in this issue.



Stephanie Buosi

Stephanie is a Canadian illustrator and graphic designer who loves drawing animals, fantasy creatures, and kids on adventures. She's an environmentalist, and in her spare time volunteers with Turtle Protectors in Toronto, assisting mama turtles throughout the nesting season.

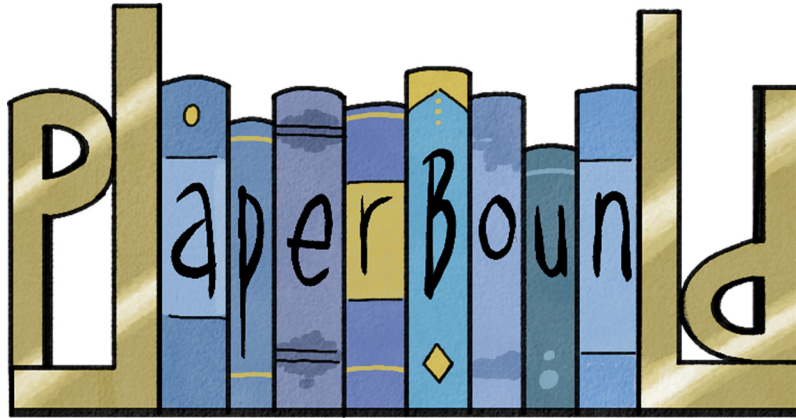
When she's not doodling in her sketchbooks, you can find her outside among the trees, or escaping into new fantasy worlds with a good book and a cup of tea.

Stephanie illustrated the contents page in this issue.

See more of her work at <https://www.stephaniebuosi.com> @stephaniebuosi.com on BlueSky and @stebuosi_ on Instagram



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