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Helping you choose books for children

Opening extract from

The Ultimate Book Guide

Edited by

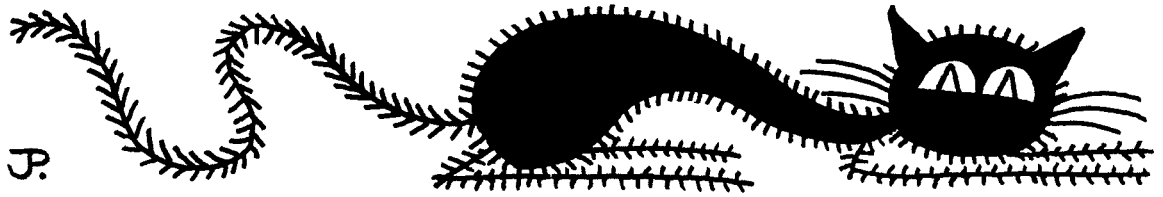
Leonie Flynn, Daniel Hahn & Susan Reuben

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Please print off and read at your leisure.



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Introduction

by Anne Fine



It's every reader's worst nightmare: 'One day I shall run out of books I want to read.'

Trust me. It never happens. However young you are, however old you get, there are always more brilliant books waiting for you. That's partly because the more you read, the wider your tastes grow. But it's also because reading's something at which you get better and better. You soon find that even 'hard' books are a pleasure.

The right book brings enchantment. Books fill your mind, and there's nothing more tiresome to be around than unfurnished minds. Books make you think and make you feel. They teach you about the world, about others and even, sideways, about yourself. They show you you're never truly alone. There's always someone else who thinks, feels, worries or laughs the same way you do.

Yet what a shame it would be if you missed some of the books you might have enjoyed most, or if you didn't come across them at the perfect time. There's nothing sadder than the cry, 'Oh, I would have loved this when I was eleven!'

That's why Danny, Leonie and Susan have put together this amazing compendium of excellent suggestions. The range is astonishing – 'great classics' all the way to 'good laughs'. The only thing these books have in common is that some of your very favourite authors – and surely they should know! – liked them enormously, and want you to give them a try.



Once you've started, follow the pathways from one book to the next. 'If you've enjoyed this, try ...' Treat *The Ultimate Book Guide* as a really friendly and experienced librarian, flattened out into two hundred and eighty-eight pages. It's the *UBG*'s job always to have something else on offer, whether you want more of the same, or are ready to take some great leap in your reading. I've seen too many of you sticking with one author you're really a little bored with, and have just about grown out of, simply because you're not quite sure where to go next.

This book is your road map. So use it. If it does what it's supposed to do, and helps you find your way to more and more books you enjoy, it will become a favourite too.

Happy hunting!

Love,

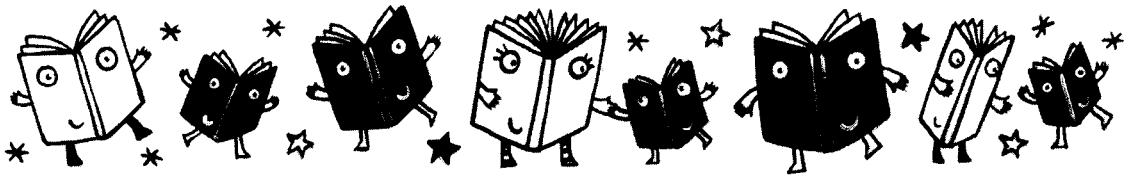
Anne

Anne Fine
Children's Laureate, 2001-2003

PS. A little note on tracking down books you want ...

One problem might be finding what you're looking for first time around. But be resourceful. (I can't see you failing to track down your favourite music.) If it's not on the library shelves, ask them to order it for you. If it doesn't arrive, go back and ask again.

If you can't get to the library, put the title on your birthday list and remind everyone books can be ordered in bookshops. (Little independent bookshops are sometimes the fastest at this.) Even long out-of-print books can be tracked down through the Internet or found in second-hand shops.



How to use this book

Most of this book is self-explanatory, and we hope you'll find it easy to use. But here is a bit of help in case you find any of it confusing.

Most of the *The Ultimate Book Guide* is made up of book recommendations. There are over six hundred books recommended for you by our team of contributors, and these titles are arranged in alphabetical order to make them easy to find. A useful tip: if you don't find what you're looking for first time, think about where else it might be listed. If you can't find **Narnia** under 'N', try looking under 'L' for *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* instead ... And this is how the recommendations work:

This is the book that our contributor has chosen to recommend to you

This is who wrote or edited the recommended book

THE CELLAR LAD **Theresa Tomlinson**

➡ It's Sheffield in 1842 – a city of industry, poverty and revolution. The crucible workshop is noisy, dirty and dangerous, but Ben is soon to take his place there as a cellar lad, doing odd jobs and fetching ale for the men, who need it to survive beside the raging heat of the furnace. There is anger in Sheffield, too, as new inventions put more and more people out of work, the Corn Laws keep the price of bread high and none of the poverty-stricken workers have the right to vote. As the unions take action to protect the people, Ben begins to question the mysterious events in the factories and to take his place in the adult world. *The Cellar Lad* is a gripping story, full of warmth and family love. It's also the most interesting and exciting history lesson I've ever had.

Antonia Honeywell

9-11

Next?
- If you liked the historical setting and want to read more stories about working conditions in factories try Joan Aiken's ***Midnight is a Place.*** (UBG 159)
- If you want to read more about people fighting to get the vote, try ***A Question of Courage*** by Marjorie Darke.
- Theresa Tomlinson also wrote ***The Herring Girls.*** (UBG 109)

And when you've finished with this book, why not check out these suggestions for what to read next?

This is (very roughly) the age-range of readers we think are most likely to enjoy this book

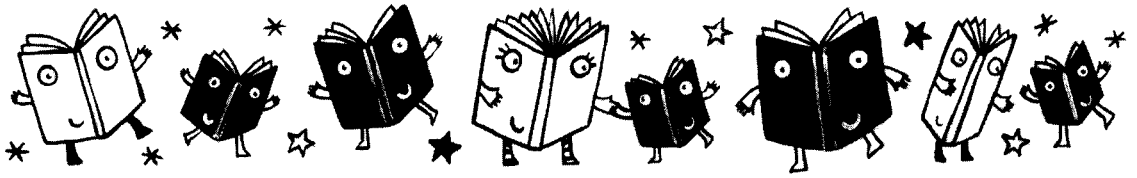
This is the enthusiastic recommendation of the book, written by one of our great contributors

This is who wrote the recommendation. You can find out more about them on pages 276-280.

The **Next?** box gives you ideas of what you might like to read once you've finished the recommended book. It might include other books by the same author, or books which are funny/exciting/scary in the same way as the book you've just finished, or which deal with a similar subject in a different way. The letters **UBG** means the book to read next has a recommendation in the *UBG* too, which you can find on the page indicated. For example, if you see ...

- Or for another book about a wizarding school, try ***Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.*** (UBG 106)

... then you can turn to page 106 to read about *Harry Potter*.



There are also eleven short features, not on particular books but on particular types of book – on fantasy books, historical books, school stories, etc. If you have a favourite genre of book, you'll find lots of good suggestions of what to read here. Or if you fancy trying something in a genre you don't know much about ('Hmm, I've never really read much fantasy ...') the features will give you a good idea of where to start. You'll find a list of these features on p. 3.

The features are all written by experts in the field – usually people who write that kind of book themselves (Susan Cooper on Fantasy, Dick King-Smith on Animals, Joan Aiken on Adventure, etc.). And next to them, you'll find lists of related titles too. If any of the titles in the lists sounds interesting, you can usually find out more about it by looking it up in this guide! Simple!

Finally, you'll come across reviews, illustrations and the results of our exclusive *UBG* top ten poll – voted by you, the readers! Check out our website at www.ultimatebookguide.com for more ways of becoming involved in the future.

About the editors

DANIEL HAHN is a writer, translator, editor and researcher (but he sometimes does other stuff too, like teaching or organising charity events). He has written a history of the first English zoo, translated an Angolan novel, edited a couple of reference books, researched an exhibition about Shakespeare's theatre, and now finds himself – rather to his own surprise – putting together a guide to children's books (which you're reading now). The children's books one is probably the most fun.

LEONIE FLYNN has worked with books for most of her life – from working at a small independent bookshop every Saturday when she was a teenager, to the heady delights of editing this book while also being librarian at a boys' prep school. The twin roles have shown that her true skills lie in being very strict, with both authors and boys, and in having serial nervous-breakdowns. She has also contributed essays on popular culture to various publications and reads voraciously, everything including the cornflakes packet.

SUSAN REUBEN never stopped reading children's books after she grew up, so decided she might as well produce them for a living. She spent five years editing picture books at Frances Lincoln, and is now Senior Publisher at Egmont Books, where she spends lots of time in the company of Thomas the Tank Engine and Winnie-the-Pooh. Susan enjoys cooking large meals for lots of people, and reading a good book while eating chocolate.

A.K. Peter Dickinson

➨ Paul Kagomi is a young boy, but the guns in his life are not a young boy's toys – they're real. His A.K.47 assault rifle is his most precious, almost his only, possession. So when the war he has been fighting in for most of his life is over, he doesn't want to give it up. Instead he buries it carefully in the soil out in the bush, and dutifully heads for school. But peace does not last long, and he knows he will need his A.K. again.

Though set in a mythical African country, *A.K.* is full of all-too-real experiences of modern African civil wars. More than just a war story, it also shows the emotional and moral struggles Paul faces to find another, more peaceful way of life.

10-12

Marcus Sedgwick

Next?
- Try some of Peter Dickinson's other books, such as the **Changes Trilogy** (UBG 44), or the strange ***Eva***. Another, set in a distant place torn apart by war, is ***Tulku***. (UBG 249)
- For a book about joining the resistance in a different war, read ***Match of Death*** by James Riordan. (UBG 157)

ABEL'S ISLAND William Steig

➨ Abelard Hassam de Chirico Flint is an Edwardian society mouse. He enjoys a comfortable and civilised life with his wife Amanda until one day, whilst enjoying a pleasant picnic of sandwiches, quail eggs, caviar and champagne, he is swept away and marooned on a river island. His new life as a castaway is very different from the one he is used to, but the proud and resourceful mouse struggles to overcome the many dangers and difficulties he faces, and never gives up hope of seeing his beloved wife again.

The text is mingled with Steig's own illustrations which perfectly complement and enhance his prose – a first-rate book by one of my favourite author/illustrators!

7-9

Neal Layton

Next?
- Why not try some other books by William Steig? ***Dominic*** is the philosophical tale of a piccolo-playing dog who decides to travel the road of adventure.
- For the story of a bear from darkest Peru in London, try ***A Bear Called Paddington*** by Michael Bond. (UBG 24)
- For more mice – or rather, a cat – but a cat who decides he's going to keep mice as pets! Read Dick King-Smith's ***Martin's Mice***.
- You might also enjoy W.J. Corbett's older read, ***The Song of Pentecost***. (UBG 223)

THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD Roger Lancelyn Green

➨ My introduction to the tales of Robin Hood was by way of these books, and I've never read better versions. Roger Lancelyn Green went back to the earliest sources he could find – not all of them English – reinterpreted or refocused many of the tales, added his own spin here and there, and bound them together in continuous narratives where they were not always so bound previously. His language and style – dignified and rich, romantic yet business-like – stirred this young reader as much as the tales themselves.

There's chivalry, adventure, romance, skulduggery and cruelty in abundance here, and none of the watering-down and pussyfooting you find in some more recent interpretations. I'm glad I came upon R.L.G.'s versions at the age I did, in the age I did, before certain themes, attitudes, manners, customs and tastes were deemed inappropriate or offensive by lofty individuals keen to strip verve, sparkle and humour from stories too rich for their own impoverished sensibilities.

9-11

Michael Lawrence

Next?
- Compare this version to Michael Morpurgo's ***Robin Hood.***
- Oh, and do have a bash at ***Puck of Pook's Hill*** by Rudyard Kipling. (UBG 195)
- And more Roger Lancelyn Green? Read his great ***King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table***. (UBG 134)

If you're looking for Adrian Mole's secret diaries, turn to p. 214

Next?
- Two other books by Mark Twain are ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***, which is an older and darker story and ***The Prince and the Pauper*** (UBG 193).
- For characters with something of Tom about them, read ***Frindle*** (UBG 88) and ***A Week in the Woods*** by Andrew Clements.
- Looking for another high-spirited hero? Try Richmal Crompton's **Just William** stories – great for a laugh. (UBG 131)

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER Mark Twain

➨ *Tom Sawyer* is a famous story. A classic. If you haven't read it, you've probably heard of it, and you might know a bit about the story. Tom lives with his aunt Polly in St. Petersburg on the banks of the Mississippi river, and is always getting into trouble. Oh, I didn't mention that besides being a very famous, classic story, it's also a pretty old story, written (and set) in the nineteenth century.

But here's the thing – it might surprise you to know that this old, famous, classic book is also really, really good! Tom is a great hero (and is bound to remind you of someone you know – or yourself, perhaps), and Mark Twain is a very funny, lively writer. Just read a page or two and you'll forget that this is one of those books people keep saying you *ought* to read – once you've met Tom you'll *want* to read it. You'll want to keep his company, to meet his friends (especially that other great troublemaker, Huck Finn), and follow their adventures up the Mississippi.

There's a good reason everyone remembers this book, and still talks about it more than a hundred years on. But don't take my word for it – just give it a try; you'll see why soon enough.

10+ **Daniel Hahn**

AESOP'S FUNKY FABLES

Vivian French, illustrated by Korky Paul

➨ Everyone knows some of these stories off by heart. Aesop wrote them two and a half thousand years ago. They must be good stories if they're still around after all that time!

Vivian French has taken old favourites like 'The Tortoise and the Hare' and 'The Boy who Cried Wolf', and made them funky! Yes ... funky! Can you hear the bass? Can you hear the drums? Get in the groove and me oh my, that Aesop was a funky guy. And the pictures? Man, they're off the wall. All of them drawn by Korky Paul!

6-8 **Shoo Rayner**

Next?
- If you enjoy these, you'll really like ***Groovy Greek Hero Raps*** by Tony Mitton – a load of stories that you know already, all done up in fancy rap rhyme.
- What about reading Marcia Williams's ***Greek Myths***? (UBG 166) Again, stories that you should know, but this time they are in a cartoon strip form ... good fun, too!
- If you like that, try ***Asterix the Gaul*** by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo. (UBG 21)
- And what about the very funny ***Helping Hercules*** by Francesca Simon?



BY JOAN AIKEN

ADVENTURE STORIES

'X' marks the spot

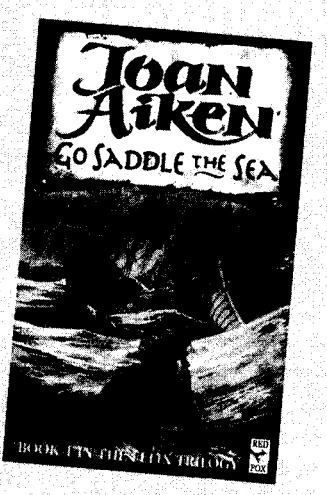
When I was a child, my favourite room was my elder brother John's ground-floor bedroom. It had a brick floor, a bookcase full of his books, and an old purple sofa. John was away at college and I used to spend hours in there reading those books. And such books! *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *Kidnapped*, *Treasure Island*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *Dracula*, *The Swiss Family Robinson*, *The Call of the Wild*, *The Man in the Iron Mask*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Kim* ... not only those but all the other books by Kipling, Mark Twain, Conan Doyle, Stevenson, Jules Verne, Dumas and the rest.

There were a lot of ghost stories, too. From age six to twelve I simply loved being terrified. I could gulp down books then that I'd hardly dare open now ... Ballantyne's *Coral Island* had wonderful scenes in underwater coral caves but also TERRIFYING descriptions of South Sea savages and the things they did to their prisoners ... *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was fairly hair-raising, too, and so were some of Kipling's short stories.

★ JOAN AIKEN'S TOP TEN ADVENTURE STORIES

- ***Captains Courageous*** by Rudyard Kipling
- ***Kim*** by Rudyard Kipling
- ***Emil and the Detectives*** by Erich Kästner
- ***The Hobbit*** by J.R.R. Tolkien
- ***The Midnight Folk*** by John Masefield
- ***The Bird of Dawning*** by John Masefield
- ***She*** by H. Rider Haggard
- ***The Sword in the Stone*** by T.H. White
- ***Tom Sawyer*** and ***Huckleberry Finn*** by Mark Twain





Kipling was just about my favourite author at around age seven or eight. I knew the poems in the *Jungle Books* by heart and spent whole afternoons being Mowgli on the thicketty South Downs, half a mile away. My favourite Mowgli story was the one in which he saves his friends the wolves from an invading pack of Dholes, wild red dogs ... but there was another beauty about a wicked old white cobra guarding a hoard of long-forgotten royal treasure. And then there was *Kim*, which my mother and I read aloud to each other every evening. Meanwhile, I was made to drink a glass of milk every night; I cannot stand the taste of milk, still loathe it to this day, but the story of *Kim* was so marvellous that somehow I managed to get the milk down. I still link the taste of milk with the scene of Kim steering the old llama through the Himalayas and foiling the Russian spies.

A solitary child, I loved the company of those brave characters in my brother's adventure books. They seemed to come in fours: the Four Musketeers (including D'Artagnan), the Walker children in Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* books, the Four Just Men, the four March girls in *Little Women* (that was my sister's); I collected a whole army of my own, using these warriors, and made up new exploits for them, led by me, riding on a white charger ... The Psammead's friends were my friends too.

Now I know that it was not the characters but the books – and their authors – who were my lifelong friends.

★ MORE FAVOURITES CHOSEN BY THE EDITORS

- **His Dark Materials** trilogy by Philip Pullman
- ***The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*** series by Joan Aiken
- ***Go Saddle the Sea*** by Joan Aiken
- ***The Hound of the Baskervilles*** by Arthur Conan Doyle
- ***Kidnapped!*** by R.L. Stevenson
- ***Treasure Island*** by R.L. Stevenson
- ***Stormbreaker*** and its sequels by Anthony Horowitz
- ***Around the World in Eighty Days*** by Jules Verne
- ***Journey to the River Sea*** by Eva Ibbotson
- ***Kensuke's Kingdom*** by Michael Morpurgo
- ***Hatchet*** by Gary Paulsen
- ***Amazon Adventure*** etc. by Willard Price
- ***Hornblower*** by C.S. Forester
- ***Biggles*** by Captain W.E. Johns
- ***Eagle of the Ninth*** by Rosemary Sutcliff
- ***Holes*** by Louis Sachar



EVERYBODY'S FAVOURITE...

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND Lewis Carroll

➨ Alice follows a white rabbit down through a rabbit hole into a strange world inhabited by playing cards. Babies turn into pigs, white roses are painted red, the Mad Hatter, the March Hare and the Dormouse are involved in an endless tea party. The book is alive with parodies of poems that were well known at the time. By now the original poems are forgotten: it is Lewis Carroll's parodies that we remember. Intelligent and puzzled, Alice moves through Wonderland, growing smaller then taller then smaller again until she finally grows so tall she pulls Wonderland into pieces around her.

Most Victorian stories had stern morals attached to them, but *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is told simply for the fun of Alice's adventures and for the fun of the language. Indeed, many of its situations and pronouncements have become part of the language and imagination of the English-speaking world.

Margaret Mahy

➨ This is the book that got me hooked on reading. I remember sitting on the stairs, transfixed by the dream-like quality of the story. It seemed, somehow, to be from my own dreams: a mixture of the strange, the funny, the absurd and the frightening. I was especially captured by the illustrations – the original ones by Tenniel, which portrayed Alice as stern and 'unpretty'. The book is a long journey during which she has a series of the most extraordinary encounters with bizarre characters, from the gently eccentric White Rabbit to the terrifying Queen of Hearts. This is a book that stretches your imagination and plays games with all that is logical and sensible, until nothing is what it seems and you start to see the world in a different way!

9+ **Jane Ray**

Next?
- Alice's next adventures, ***Through The Looking Glass***.
- Or Neil Gaiman's ***Coraline*** – also about a girl entering a different world uncannily like her own. (UBG 51)
- Charlotte Haptie's ***Otto and the Flying Twins*** has the same sense of oddness and wonder as Alice. (UBG 178)
- ***The Phantom Tollbooth*** by Norton Juster is another surreal story filled with strange events and verbal nonsense. (UBG 185)

DEATH AND THE ARROW

Chris Priestley

➨ It's London, 1715. Another murder has taken place, and again the murder victim is found with a 'death and the arrow' card on him – a card showing the figure of death, pointing, and brandishing an arrow, about to hurl it ...

When his friend, Will, becomes involved with these terrible murders, Tom Marlowe just has to do something about it. Tom has some serious sleuthing to do – and fast, before the murderer strikes again ... But what do all these victims have in common? And how is Will implicated? And who is the shadowy, caped figure on the roof?

Chris Priestley's detailed creation of eighteenth-century London is totally convincing, and captivating (it's quite a shock to come to the end of the book and find yourself back in the twenty-first century), and the story is absolutely gripping. Here's hoping for more Tom Marlowe adventures like it!

9-11 **Daniel Hahn**

Next?

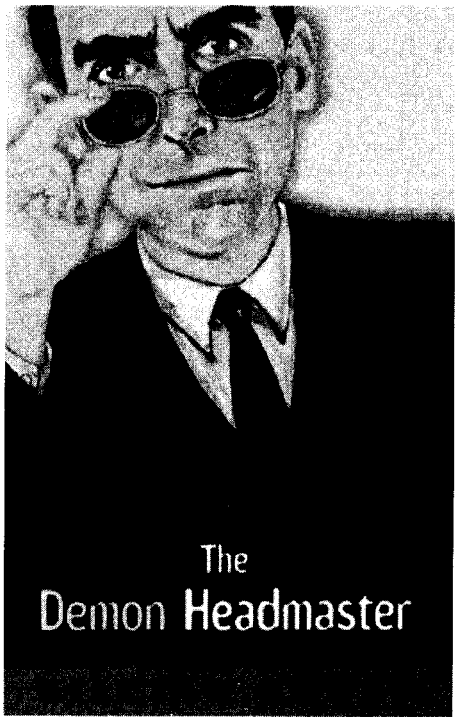
- Tom Marlowe returns in the brand-new sequel, entitled ***The White Rider***.
- Alison Prince writes really good historical mysteries; try ***Oranges and Murder***. (UBG 177)
- Or what about Sophie Masson's ***The Tempestuous Voyage of Hopewell Shakespeare***? Apprenticed to a boring trade, Hopewell envies his distant and famous cousin Will. Given the chance to join the crew of *The Golden Dragon* he jumps at it, and ends up embarking on a adventure that may feel curiously familiar.

THE DEMON HEADMASTER

Gillian Cross

➨ 'What's the worst thing you can imagine in a school?' For new girl, Dinah Hunter, the answer to this question is as unexpected as it is chilling. She realises something is wrong before lessons have even begun. The pupils stand around in the playground, quietly chanting the times tables and testing one another on geography questions. The prefects' word is law, and they are obeyed without question. A large poster in the corridor proclaims: 'The man who can keep order can rule the world'. And soon she will meet that man, the mysterious and terrifying demon headmaster himself. What is the nature of the hold he has over the school? And is there any limit to his craving for power?

9-11 **Thomas Bloor**



Next?

- The series continues with ***The Prime Minister's Brain***, ***The Revenge of the Demon Headmaster***, ***The Demon Headmaster Strikes Again***, ***The Demon Headmaster Takes Over*** and ***Facing the Demon Headmaster***.
- The origin of ***The Demon Headmaster*** is in another Gillian Cross book, ***Save Our School***, where there is a reference to a story about a wicked headmaster.
- The Demon Headmaster is reminiscent of some of the villains from the classic TV series ***Doctor Who***. There are many Doctor Who novels by various writers, among whom Terrance Dicks is a stalwart. Amongst other titles, ***Doctor Who: The Web of Fear*** is a classic.
- For a more gothic take on the misuse of power, try Stephen Elboz's ***The House of Rats***.

THE DEPTFORD MICE TRILOGY

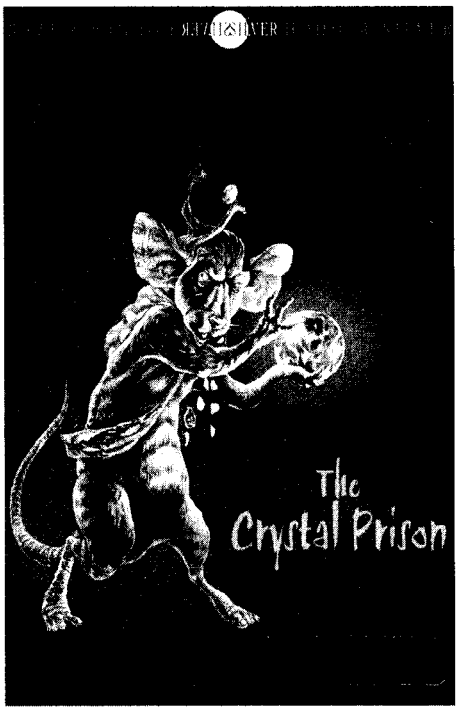
THE DARK PORTAL • THE CRYSTAL PRISON • THE FINAL RECKONING

Robin Jarvis

➨ Don't be put off by the fact that the main characters in this trilogy are mice. There's nothing cute about these creatures! In *The Dark Portal*, Arthur and Audrey's father has gone missing in the sewers that lie beyond the grating in the hall. Believing rats have captured him, they go looking for him. But something terrifying dwells deep in the sewers – it's the lair of the evil sorcerer, Jupiter. As the trilogy progresses, the mice battle again and again to repel the dark magic of Jupiter, and in *The Final Reckoning* he returns to exact his revenge.

This is a fantastically exciting trilogy, fast-paced and tense; but there is humour too and you'll be kept guessing by the twists in the plot.

10-12 **Kathryn Ross**



Next?

- You'll want to read the prequels, **The Deptford Histories**, which provide fascinating detail about many of the characters in **The Deptford Mice.**
- Brian Jacques's famous **Redwall** series has a huge fan-base – his heroes are also mice. (UBG 199)
- ***Silverwing***, ***Sunwing*** and ***Firewing*** are the titles of Kenneth Oppel's thrilling series set in the world of silverwing bats. (UBG 219)
- Back to mice ... don't miss the adventures of the affable watchmaker mouse, Hermux Tantamoq, hero of Michael Hoeye's highly original detective story, ***Time Stops for No Mouse***. (UBG 243)

THE DEVIL'S ARITHMETIC

Jane Yolen

➨ It is Passover, and Hannah is tired of her family constantly dwelling on the past. What does it mean? What is the point? But then, by some strange twist of time, Hannah finds herself in Poland, in 1942, and on her way to a concentration camp. And much as she tries to remember her 'real' family and the future from which she came, she is soon lost in the awful reality of this new 'now'.

This beautifully-told story focuses on a fragment of one of the most despicably vile passages in human history: the Holocaust. But Hannah, out of place, out of time, is not alone. She is bound to those around her through suffering and humanity, and through the devil's arithmetic; counting yourself among the living, one day at a time.

10+ **Simon Puttock**

Next?

- Read something quite different next. Something upbeat that'll reassure you that humans can be nice too ... Or maybe just go and talk to someone you really like.
- And if you then want to come back to this subject, try ***In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer*** by Irene Gut Opdyke. Look for Anne Frank's ***The Diary of a Young Girl*** for the real diary of a girl living through these terrible experiences. (UBG 61)
- Or ***The Star Houses*** by Stewart Ross, based on the memoirs of a survivor.
- ***August '44*** by Carlo Gebler is another deeply moving World War Two story. (UBG 21)

by Walter Farley. In it, a boy has a pony called 'Little Black' who he adores as much as Little Black

Next?
- The rest of the **Tales of the Dark Forest**: ***Trollogy***, ***Whizzard*** and ***Knightmare***, so far.
- Or try the same authors' very funny ***The Lost Diary of Shakespeare's Ghostwriter*** in the **Lost Diaries** series.
- Or for another wacky and fantastical tale, try Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell's ***Muddle Earth***. (UBG 168)
- Or look out for Debi Gliori's very funny **Pure Dead** series that begins with ***Pure Dead Magic***. (UBG 195)

GOODKNYGHT! (Tales of the Dark Forest)

Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore

➨ *Goodknyght* is the wacky tale of the fantastical city of Dun Indewood, where young Willum the swineherd can only dream of going to the famous knyght school. Life has become one long chore for him, as he must serve as the whipping boy for Symon (the son of the city ruler, Lord Gordin). It's all rather strange, but a great read with a rich plot and a totally original idea.

Alongside our friend Willum, you also meet such bewildering characters as Humpfrey the Boggart, Luigi the Pastafarian and the crossbow-toting forest maiden, Rose. They are a stunning group of characters who, coupled with a great storyline, contribute to the amazing atmosphere of the book.

Grab this book if you like a fast and furious read with all the makings of a classic.

Chris Cross

9-11

GOODNIGHT MISTER TOM

Michelle Magorian

➨ A moving and heart-warming tale about a timid young boy and a gruff old man who form an unlikely bond that transforms both their lives.

At the beginning of the Second World War, eight-year-old Willie Beech is evacuated to the countryside. He is billeted on the curmudgeonly Mister Tom Oakley, who is less than pleased to be landed with the responsibility of looking after the scrawny, awkward little city boy. However, the old man soon begins to realise that Willie is hiding an unhappy secret. Gradually, under Mister Tom's care, Willie begins to forget his sad, deprived past and grows in strength and confidence. But when a summons comes from London, Willie is forced to leave his new home and return to the war-torn city to face his mother again.

Goodnight Mister Tom is one of the most gentle, touching and powerful stories ever written.

Victoria Webb

10+

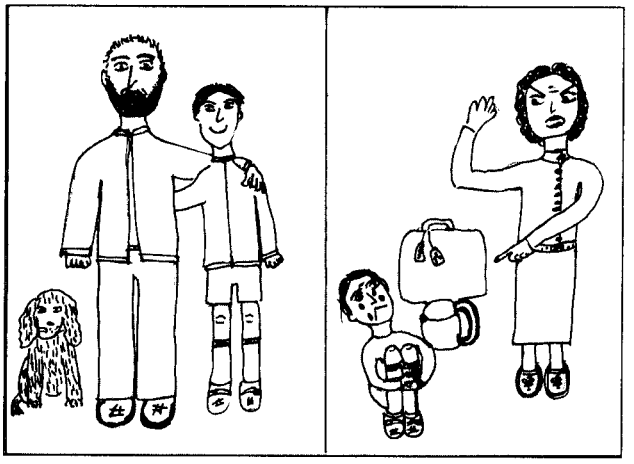


Illustration by Julie Beamond, age 11, Oakleigh House School

Next?
- If you want to read more by Michelle Magorian, try the wonderful ***Back Home***, about another evacuee, a young girl called Rusty, who returns home to England after being sent to America for five years – and finds a very different place from the one she left. You might also enjoy ***A Spoonful of Jam*** by the same author.
- For more stories about children in the Second World War, you might like to try ***Carrie's War*** by Nina Bawden (UBG 41) and ***When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*** by Judith Kerr (UBG 261).

THE LITTLE WHITE HORSE

Elizabeth Goudge

➨ Orphan Maria is that unusual combination – a practical girl, who is also completely open to magical possibilities.

Sent to the mysterious, beautiful estate of Moonacre, she finds a place where history, myth and fairytale mingle with her own Victorian world. What is the ancient quarrel that haunts the Merryweather family and makes the vast, dark pine forest so sinister and full of trouble? What is the fatal repeated mistake that has broken so many hearts?

Helped by several astonishing animals and humans, not to mention her own true love, Maria must still call on all her own bravery and determination. But then, she has glimpsed the magical white horse – the horse with the single silvery horn; to see him again, she will risk almost anything.

10-12

Tanith Lee

Next?
- Tanith Lee has written some wonderfully dark stories. Try ***The Castle of Dark***. (UBG 42)
- Why not try Susan Cooper's ***The Dark Is Rising*** and the others in the sequence? (UBG 57)
- Catherine Fisher's ***The Lammas Field*** is another fantastical story with a white horse.
- Or ***The Enchanted Castle*** by E. Nesbit, which has a similar atmosphere of magic. (UBG 73)

LITTLE WOLF series

- **LITTLE WOLF'S BOOK OF BADNESS**
- **LITTLE WOLF'S HALL OF HAUNTED HORRORS**
- **LITTLE WOLF'S DIARY OF DARING DEEDS**
- **LITTLE WOLF, FOREST DETECTIVE**
- **LITTLE WOLF, PACK LEADER**

Ian Whybrow, illustrated by Tony Ross

➨ In the *Book of Badness*, Little Wolf is sent to Cunning College. You'll laugh out loud at his letters home. 'I know you want me to be wild and wicked just like Dad, but why do I have to go so far away? I told you I only cleaned my teeth last week for a joke.'

In *Forest Detective*, Little Wolf, Yeller, Normus and Smellybreff start up a detective agency. 'We are good solvers,' he writes, 'but not Smells. His brane is 2 small.'

They locate the seventy-two missing football boots of Ants United FC: a centipede confesses, 'I just wanted to do loud riverdancing and get faymus.' But Little Wolf's parents don't trust him. They send along Mister Furlock Homes-Wolf, Private Investigator. Whose detection methods will be better?



8-10

Jane Darcy

Next?
- If you liked this series, you might also love the **Molesworth** books: ***Down with Skool*** (UBG 67) and ***How to be Topp*** by Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle. Although they are older reads, you will enjoy tasting bits of them – and marvelling at both the spelling and the illustrations.
- ***Jimmy Zest*** by Sam McBratney is a book about a boy who gets into lots of trouble. (UBG 128)
- If you're looking for another funny and a bit silly series, try the **Dark Claw** books by Shoo Rayner. (UBG 56)

to be Spike Milligan. His poems, his rhymes, his novels, his skits, his drawings, his sketches.

LITTLE WOMEN Louisa May Alcott

➡ Ask women writers of forty or over to name their favourite children's book and you'll find many of them say '*Little Women*'. This is because they identify closely with Jo, one of the March sisters. She's the tomboyish one, the unconventional one and most importantly, the one who wants to be a writer when she grows up. She also resembles Alcott herself.

The book is about the four sisters and how they cope while their father is away fighting in the American Civil War. Meg, the eldest, is good and domestically competent. Jo is next in age, then Beth, who's dreamy, musical and delicate. Amy, the youngest, is a vain little madam who is also very charming.

I adored *Little Women* because I'm an only child and the idea of having sisters fascinated me. By the time you come to the end of the book, you've made four friends. You live through everything that happens to the March girls, and you really feel you're right there in that house. You will definitely cry during the course of the novel but you'll laugh as well.

Adèle Geras

10+

Next?
- The story continues in: ***Good Wives***, ***Little Men*** and ***Jo's Boys***.
- Most people who grow up with the stories of the March family also love L.M. Montgomery's **Anne of Green Gables** books (UBG 17) or the **What Katy Did** books by Susan Coolidge (UBG 260).
- ***The Exiles*** by Hilary McKay, and its sequels, are very different stories about four sisters. (UBG 75)
- ***The Brontë Girls*** by Garry Kilworth is a book about the sisters who *all* became famous authors.

LIZZIE DRIPPING Helen Cresswell

➡ Lizzie Dripping is always in trouble and never quite tells the truth, so of course no one believes her when, one day, she says she has seen a witch in the village. Not that this bothers Lizzie – she knows it's true and life is suddenly much more exciting. The witch (who lives in the graveyard) becomes her best friend, and leads her into all kinds of unexpected mischief!

You can follow Lizzie's wonderfully silly and just a little bit spooky adventures in *Lizzie Dripping Again*, *Lizzie Dripping and the Angel*, *Lizzie Dripping and the Witch* and *Lizzie Dripping on Holiday*.

Eileen Armstrong

8-10

Next?
- Try Helen Cresswell's hilarious **The Bagthorpe Saga**. (UBG 22)
- Belladonna in Eva Ibbotson's ***Which Witch*** longs to be a bad, fiendish old hag instead of a beautiful enchantress.
- Miss Cackle runs an Academy for Witches intent on mischief in Jill Murphy's ***The Worst Witch*** (UBG 272), and ***Pongwiffy*** by Kaye Umansky (UBG 192) has to be the smelliest witch ever!
- If you prefer wizards, Diana Hendry's ***Harvey Angell*** will have you smiling till the very last page. (UBG 107)

LOCOMOTION Jacqueline Woodson

➡ 'So this whole book's a poem because poetry's short,' says Lonnie Collins Motion (Lo Co Motion). Though he's only eleven, he has a lot that needs saying ... About his parents, who died in a fire; his sister Lili, who now has a 'new mama'; Miss Edna, with whom he lives; his fellow students.

His teacher's suggestion, writing poetry, releases Lonnie's imagination. Using a variety of forms – sonnets, haiku, free verse – he reveals his story in poetic snapshots expressing his sorrow, hope, fear, pent-up fury and, ultimately, a quiet but barely-suppressible joy and confidence.

This is a powerful and gentle novel about the emerging dignity and social awareness of a sensitive boy.

Chris Stephenson

10-12

Next?
- Delve into Anne Fine's splendidly personal three-volume collection of her favourite poems, ***A Shame to Miss***.
- A book about a boy's discovery of poetry is Sharon Creech's ***Love That Dog***. (UBG 150)
- Discover the way another boy handles his troubles at school in Jack Gantos' ***Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key***. (UBG 128)
- A tougher read about a boy in care is ***Georgie*** by Malachy Doyle. (UBG 90)

completely involved with what he is seeing and hearing and experiencing. Hoorah! I also read a

THE WANDERER Sharon Creech

➨ When thirteen-year-old Sophie signs on for a boat trip across the Atlantic, little does she know what she is letting herself in for.

Not only will this trip be a chance for Sophie to get to know her two cousins, Brian and Cody, but it will also provide an opportunity for her finally to come to terms with a tragedy earlier in her life – something so bad that she has buried all conscious memory of it. It's only when the crew of *The Wanderer* find themselves fighting for their lives in a tremendous storm that Sophie allows herself to remember the past.

I adored this book. I particularly liked the way that Sharon Creech makes you work at having to slowly piece together what has happened to Sophie, rather than telling you straight. In some ways it's a bit like a detective story and, when you've finished it, I guarantee you'll want to start it all over again.

Laura Hutchings

10-12

Next?
- Try Tim Bowler's haunting ***River Boy***. (UBG 204)
- Sharon Creech has written lots of books, and they are all worth reading – even if some might be a bit harder than this one. Look out for ***Walk Two Moons*** (UBG 256), ***Ruby Holler*** (UBG 205) and ***Absolutely Normal Chaos***.
- Or try a book by Joan Bauer. ***Squashed*** is brilliant (UBG 224), as is ***Rules of the Road*** (UBG 205).

WAR GAME Michael Foreman

➨ How rare that one person is not only a great artist, but a writer as well. Such is the case with Michael Foreman. He creates in words and pictures the story of a football match on Christmas Day 1914, the first Christmas of the Great War. Standing in the mud and rain of the trenches, faced with gunfire, rats and freezing weather, the soldiers long for home. Yet suddenly someone kicks a football into No Man's Land, and a match begins: England v. Germany. No rules. No referee. Greatcoats and caps for goalposts.

This book is all the more moving when you know that the four English soldiers are really the author's uncles who died in the war, aged between eighteen and twenty-four.

James Riordan

8-10

Next?
- You might like Michael Foreman's personal account of the last world war in the prize-winning ***War Boy***, with his own wonderfully moving illustrations.
- Ian Serraillier's ***The Silver Sword*** is about two young children's journey across war-torn Europe. It's an older, tougher read, but persevere – it is amazing. (UBG 219)
- Or try Michael Morpurgo's ***Friend or Foe*** about two boys who find two downed German airmen or another of his books, ***War Horse*** (UBG 258).



series of books about a kid called Birdy. He was very good at whistling and somehow managed to get

Next?
- Look out for Michael Morpurgo's ***Farm Boy*** (UBG 81) or Michael Foreman's ***War Game*** (UBG 257).
- You may like to read other books about animals. A classic is the horse story ***Black Beauty*** by Anna Sewell. (UBG 29)
- Other animals in war may be found in Martin Booth's ***War Dog***, about a poacher's dog trained to track the enemy and rescue the wounded in France during the Second World War. And don't miss Robert Westall's ***Blitzcat***. (UBG 31)

WAR HORSE Michael Morpurgo

➨ In the village hall close to Michael Morpurgo's farm hangs a small, dusty painting of a horse. The inscription says: 'JOEY. Painted by Captain James Nicholls. Autumn 1914.' *War Horse* is Joey's story, straight from 'the horse's mouth'.

Joey sees all the horrors and cruelty of the Great War (1914-18), the slaughter of men and of the horses that had to pull the guns, carts and supplies. Yet he makes it through the war, only to be sold at auction in France – and probably to be killed for meat. Will he be saved by his friend, Sergeant Albert?

You'll have to read this book to find out ...

9-11

James Riordan

THE WAR OF JENKINS' EAR

Michael Morpurgo

➨ 'Take off your slipper!' demands the headmaster.

'Which one, sir?' answers new boy Christopher coolly.

It begins like a normal, old-fashioned boarding school story – Christopher is in trouble for refusing to eat his rice pudding. And yet he is anything but normal. His father is a carpenter and, as he tells his new friend, Toby Jenkins, Christopher can work miracles ...

We, like Toby, are kept on tenterhooks: can Christopher really be who he says he is?

War breaks out between the 'Toffs' from school and the town boys, the 'Oiks'. Christopher's powers are put to the test as he tries to bring peace. Toby's success – with friends, rugby and Wanda, sister of the chief Oik – all depends on him.

9-11

Jane Darcy

Next?
- For more cheery tales of life in a boarding school, try the **Jennings** books by Anthony Buckeridge which are all easy to read and extremely funny. (UBG 126)
- For old-fashioned girls' school stories, try the **Chalet School** series by Elinor M. Brent-Dyer. (UBG 43)
- William Mayne's ***A Swarm in May*** is an imaginative story set in a choir school. (UBG 233)
- Of course, there are Michael Morpurgo's other books. See p. 287 for a list of those reviewed in the ***UBG***.

Next?
- Robert Westall wrote many gripping stories of the supernatural. Try ***The Stones of Muncaster Cathedral*** – terrifying! (UBG 227)
- Ann Halam writes wonderfully chilling horror novels, such as ***The Haunting of Jessica Raven*** and ***The Fear Man***.
- Celia Rees has written a scary supernatural trilogy, of which ***City of Shadows*** is the first title.
- And try John Gordon's ghost story ***The Midwinter Watch***, about a train seen travelling – though everyone knows it hasn't run for years ...

THE WATCH HOUSE Robert Westall

➨ I've always loved the delicious thrill of a ghost story, but good ones are hard to find. With *The Watch House*, you're in the hands of a master of the macabre.

Anne's mother has dumped her for the summer holidays with an elderly couple living on the cliffs above Garmouth. Bored and lonely, Anne becomes obsessed with the old Watch House nearby, and its store of strange salvage from ships wrecked on the Black Middens. On its dusty shelves are the skulls of drowned sailors.

That is the beginning of an atmospheric and jumpy ghost story that will grip you all the way through, as Anne's frightened attempts to help the ghost of the 'Old Feller' conjure up a far more malevolent force. You probably won't want to read it if you're home alone ...

11+

Patricia Elliott

himself into a famous pop group. (I can see Justin Timberlake doing a funky dance routine to some

THE WATER BABIES

Charles Kingsley

➨ This is a rather special book. It's nearly one hundred and fifty years old and you might like it best read aloud to you.

Tom is a poor orphan who knows no other life than that of a chimney sweep, working for his cruel master, Mr Grimes. When one day he frightens a little girl, Ellie, asleep in her dazzlingly white room at Harthver House, he is forced to flee for his life. After an epic escape, he drowns – but it's not a tragedy – he turns into a water baby and now his real adventures begin.

He meets all sorts of strange creatures until, guided by Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid and Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby, he begins to learn the way to redeem himself and find Ellie.

Jane Darcy

9-11

Next?
- If you enjoyed this, you might like to re-read your favourite fairy tales – especially ***The Snow Queen***. Read about Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales on p. 76.
- You might also like ***The Secret Garden*** by Frances Hodgson Burnett, which is also about a Victorian orphan. (UBG 215)
- Also try the classic ***The Wind in the Willows*** by Kenneth Grahame (UBG 265) and *any* book written by Noel Streatfeild.

WATERSHIP DOWN

Richard Adams

➨ I have always loved talking-animal books. This novel is about a 'tribe' of rabbits who have to leave their warren when Fiver, who is a bit of a prophet, foresees a terrible future if they stay. The rabbits go on a long journey, full of incidents and accidents, and finally find a new home. Yet, even as they try to settle peacefully on Watership Down, there is another threat to them, coming from a hostile tribe of rabbits who live not far away.

This is an exciting adventure story that draws you into a world of rabbits, who have their own language and religion, their own way of looking at things, their own way of solving tricky problems.

Garry Kilworth

10+

Next?
- The rabbits in this book talk, but they don't wear clothes or fight and play like humans. For books in which the animals do all those things, try **The Welkin Weasels** series by Garry Kilworth.
- A classic animal-as-animal story (without any talking) is Henry Williamson's ***Tarka the Otter***. (UBG 237)
- ***Don't miss our ANIMAL STORIES recommendations on pp. 16-17.***

WEE FREE MEN Terry Pratchett

➨ This is the story of a girl called Tiffany who realises that she can't be the princess because she isn't blonde, so decides to be the witch instead. But when you want to become a witch on Terry Pratchett's Discworld you can't just enrol in a special boarding school. Still, when her little brother needs rescuing from the evil Queen, Tiffany knows it's up to her to save him. She sets out, helped only by a talking frog and the Wee Free Men: a tribe of tiny blue hooligans who speak an incomprehensible Scottish dialect. It's a superb story that keeps as far away from traditional fairy tale assumptions as the Wee Free Men themselves keep away from the only people they fear: lawyers.

Anthony Reuben

11+

Next?
- Eoin Colfer's ***Artemis Fowl*** is another excellent re-evaluation of the role of elves and pixies. (UBG 20)
- Philip Pullman's ***I Was a Rat!*** is another book that questions the fall-out from fairy stories. (UBG 121)
- ***Supergran*** by Forrest Wilson is the only other place where I've found such Scottish colloquialisms as 'Scunner'.
- And of course there are loads more Terry Pratchetts. See p. 287 for a list of those featured in the ***UBG***.
- You might be interested to read Terry's review of T.H. White's ***Mistress Masham's Repose*** – his own favourite 'little people' book. (UBG 162)

spotty Herbert whistling, can't you?) Anyway, I remember enjoying the books very much and they were

THE WEIRDSTONE OF BRISINGAMEN

Alan Garner

Next?
- This was the first of Alan Garner's books. ***Elidor***, with its oppressive twilight world (UBG 71), and ***The Owl Service***, where the three protagonists are dragged into an ancient legend (UBG 179), are as good, if not better! Read them all and decide for yourself.
- And if you like Alan Garner's books, then you should also try Susan Cooper's **The Dark Is Rising** sequence. Dark, powerful and often deeply disturbing, the whole series is superb. (UBG 57)
- Or Catherine Fisher's **The Book of the Crow** series and try and decide if it is fantasy or science fiction. (UBG 201)

➨ This was the first book I ever read that I found totally unputdownable. I was ten at the time, and read it by torchlight under the bed-covers, desperate to discover what would happen at the end.

Colin and Susan are exploring the countryside around Alderley Edge when they are pursued by sinister creatures that are after the strange glowing 'weirdstone' which Susan wears round her wrist. In a breathtaking journey which takes them down claustrophobic mines, over treacherous wintry moorland and a floating island, and through dark, perilous forests, the two children struggle to deliver the stone to Cadellin, the wizard. If they succeed, the evil Morrigan and her deadly morthbrood will be vanquished. If not ...

I won't spoil the ending – but if you like stories with powerful magic and ancient legends, wizards, witches and forces of light and darkness, then this is the book for you.

9-12

Paul Stewart



WHAT KATY DID

Susan Coolidge

Next?
- To follow, there's ***What Katy Did at School*** and ***What Katy Did Next***.
- In the same genre is ***Little Women*** by Louisa M. Alcott. (UBG 146) Also try ***Pollyanna*** by Eleanor H. Porter (UBG 192), ***Anne of Green Gables*** by L.M. Montgomery (UBG 17) and the stories about the ***Little House on the Prairie*** by Laura Ingalls Wilder (UBG 142).
- From a later period, and set in the UK, you might enjoy Eve Garnett's ***The Family from One End Street***. (UBG 78)

➨ This book was first published in 1872 and gives a wonderful picture of American family life at the time. I identified strongly with its heroine, the tearaway Katy Carr, especially when something similar happened to me. She goes on a new swing after being warned not to and injures her spine. At twelve I found myself lying flat in hospital for months, and naturally I re-read *What Katy Did*. The world can be a hard place, and there's nothing the matter with going to books for comfort.

Like most of the stories of its time it verges on sentimentality but I didn't mind that, or probably even notice. I just loved living with this large extended family, with crabby Aunt Izzy and the near saintly Cousin Helen (I certainly didn't identify with her!). I shared Christmas with them and even cried when someone (I won't tell you who) died ... And I much preferred Katy's brothers and sisters, five of them, to my own bossy brother and quarrelsome sister.

9-11

Helen Cresswell