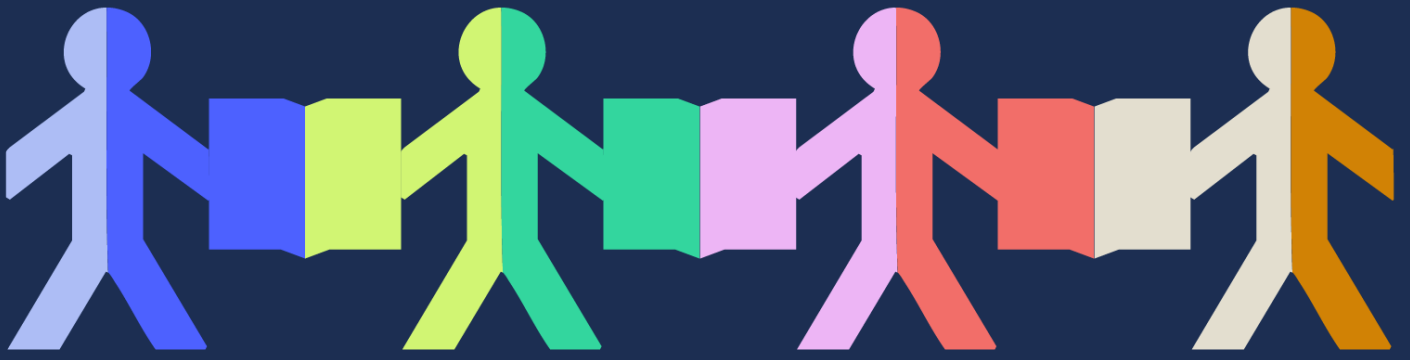




See Myself in Books

The Ethnic Diversity collection

Delivery guidance and resources for primary schools



Manchester

In partnership with

**National
Literacy
Trust**

Change your story



**MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL**

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‘Books create belonging. They help us see each other and understand one another. They shine a light on the world. It’s vital that the books we read in our formative years reflect the rich diversity of the society we live in.’

Penguin Random House – Lit in Colour

Introduction

Read Manchester has created a mini library of 25 books for primary aged children to reflect the ethnically diverse communities that make up Manchester. The books within our *See Myself in Books* collection are written by ethnically diverse authors and their central characters are children from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds.

These aren’t the only books of course and you may have your own favourites. *See Myself in Books* is designed to prompt debate and discussion in the classroom and support you in diversifying your book collections in school.

In this guide, you’ll find information about the books within the collection, as well as teaching resources to support you in exploring the books with your classes.

Why See Myself in Books?

Research shows how important it is for children to see themselves reflected in the books they read, yet the publishing industry has some way to go to redress the imbalance.

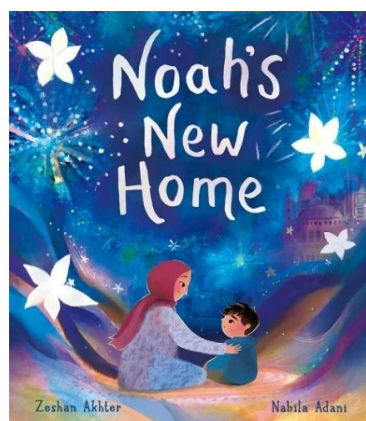
- Research by the National Literacy Trust’s (2023 Reading Trends report) showed that 1 in 3 (31.5%) children and young people aged 8-18 said that having books that represent them would make them want to read. Furthermore, in 2022, 2 in 5 (38.9%) children and young people agreed with the statement, “Reading about characters that are like me makes me feel more confident about myself”, yet 2 in 5 (38.9%) said they found it difficult to find books with characters or people like them, increasing to 1 in 2 (53.1%) children aged 8 to 11.
- According to the CLPE’s Reflecting Realities surveys, the proportion of children’s books published in the UK that feature racially minoritised characters has risen and dipped over the last decade. In the most recent 2025 report (covering 2024 publications), 24% of children’s books featured racially minoritised characters, the highest recorded level of main character inclusion in the survey’s history, up

from 17% in 2023. While this trend highlights a positive shift compared to earlier years like 2017–2021, representation remains inconsistent year on year, showing the ongoing importance of actively building diverse reading collections in schools.

- As highlighted in The Reading Framework (DfE, 2023), it is crucial that children are exposed to a wide range of literature that offers the opportunity for both:
 - **Mirrors:** to encounter characters, situations and viewpoints that mirror their own to ensure they feel recognised, represented and valued.
 - **Windows:** to encounter characters, situations and viewpoints outside of their own lived experiences to build both understanding and empathy for the lives of others. Books create a sense of empathy and help us to put ourselves in other people's shoes.

The See Myself in Books Collection

Key Stage One



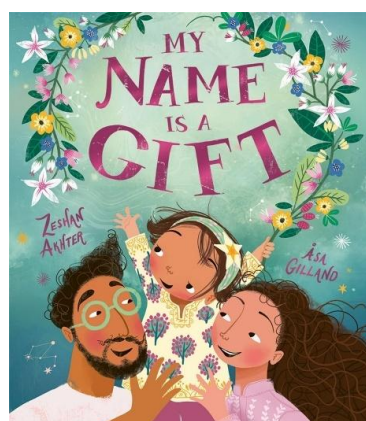
Noah's New Home – Zeshan Akhter, illustrated by Nabila Adani (KS1)

This timely and heartfelt story is a deeply emotional exploration of the lasting impact of the refugee experience.

Key themes: Migration, refugees, belonging, new beginnings, empathy

Teaching resources: Classroom lesson plans and printable activities addressing themes of home and belonging

<https://www.bonnierbooks.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Noahs-New-Home-Resources.pdf>



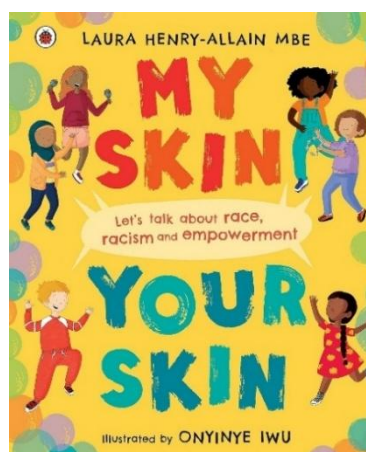
My Name is a Gift - Zeshan Akhter, illustrated by Åsa Gilland (KS1)

This heartwarming story not only teaches us the significance of our names, but it also highlights that trying to say names correctly, or asking if you're unsure, goes a long way. The book also includes a spread for a child to fill in about their own name.

Key themes: Identity, names, self-worth, cultural pride

Teaching resources: Read Aloud video with Zeshan Akher

<https://youtu.be/dMa7O6Nvkxw?si=if7D4mqptplMgF-w>



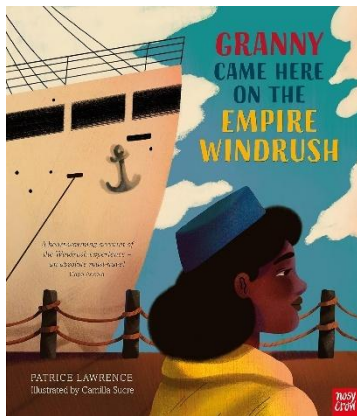
My Skin, Your Skin - Laura Henry-Allain MBE, illustrated by Onyinye Iwu (KS1)

My Skin Your Skin is a powerful book to help children and adults have meaningful discussions about race and anti-racism. The book empowers children to be the best versions of themselves; to have self-love, self-esteem and self-worth, irrespective of their skin colour.

Key themes: Diversity, race, inclusion, empathy, respect

Teaching resources: Activities exploring anti-racism and empowerment

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/about/social-impact/lit-in-colour/teaching-resources/my-skin-your-skin-ks1>



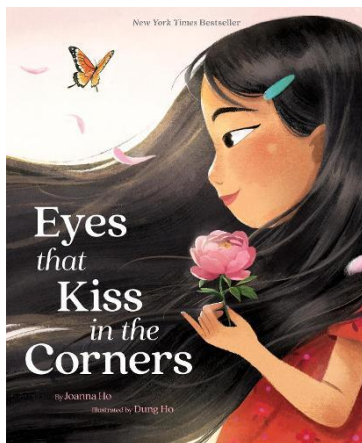
Granny Came Here on the Empire Windrush - Patrice Lawrence, illustrated by Camilla Sucre (KS1)*

This heart-warming and heartfelt debut picture book from multi-award-winning author, Patrice Lawrence, will help ensure that the struggles and achievements of the Windrush generation are never forgotten.

Key themes: Windrush generation, migration, family history, British identity

Teaching resources: Activities exploring themes of love, resilience, loneliness, missing home, family and courage

<https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/uploads/store/mediaupload/7362/file/Resource%20Granny%20Came%20Here%20On%20The%20Empire%20Windrush%20Read%20Woke%202023.pdf>



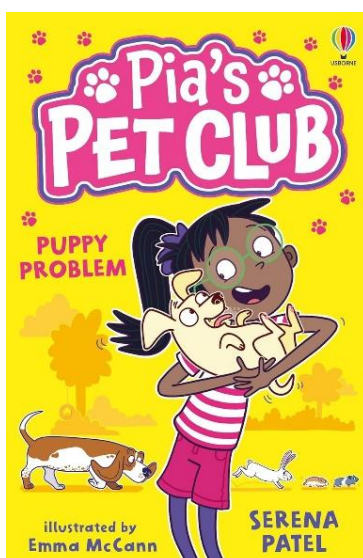
Eyes That Kiss in the Corners - Joanna Ho, illustrated by Dung Ho (KS1)

Eyes that Kiss in the Corners is a dazzling, lyrical ode to loving oneself. Its tender yet powerful words and Dung Ho's vibrant illustrations inspire readers to recognize their own beauty and strength, igniting a revolution of self-discovery and confidence.

Key themes: Self-acceptance, beauty standards, cultural identity

Teaching resources: Lesson plans exploring cultural representation

https://school.teachingbooks.net/clp.cgi?master_id=74888&lf_id=10



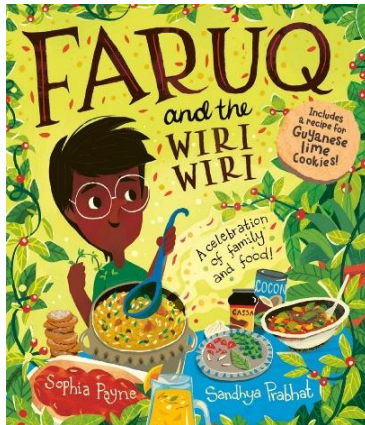
Pia's Pet Club: Puppy Problem - Serena Patel, illustrated by Emma McCann (KS1)

Meet Pia, the girl who loves pets, but isn't allowed one of her own! A brand-new laugh-out-loud series of funny animal adventures packed with hilarious illustrations, from the bestselling and award-winning creators of *Anisha*, *Accidental Detective*.

Key themes: Friendship, responsibility, teamwork, kindness

Teaching resources: Creative activity sheet by Usborne

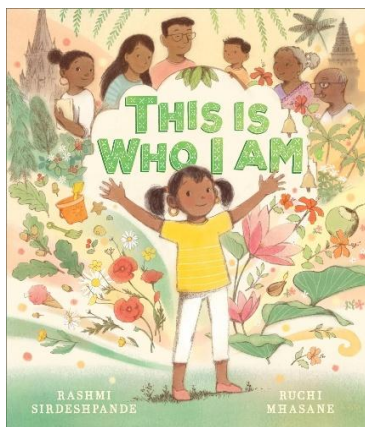
https://usborne.com/media/usborne/teacher_resource/file/p/i/pia_s_pet_club_activity_sheet_digital_1.pdf



Faruq and the Wiri Wiri – Sophia Payne, illustrated by Sandhya Prabhat (KS1)*

This sumptuous story celebrates Caribbean culture and food through Sophia Payne's distinct voice that is reflective of her Indo-Guyanese heritage and is brought to life by Sandhya Prabhat's beautiful artwork. It also includes a recipe for Guyanese Lime cookies to try at home!

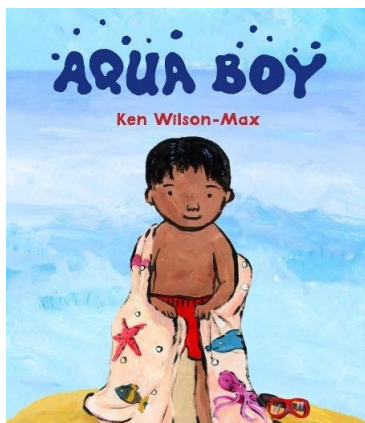
Key themes: Food, culture, family traditions, curiosity



This Is Who I Am – Rashmi Sirdeshpande, illustrated by Ruchi Mhasane (KS1)

A poetic story about a little girl with Indian heritage who discovers all the amazing things that make her who she is.

Key themes: Self-expression, identity, confidence, individuality

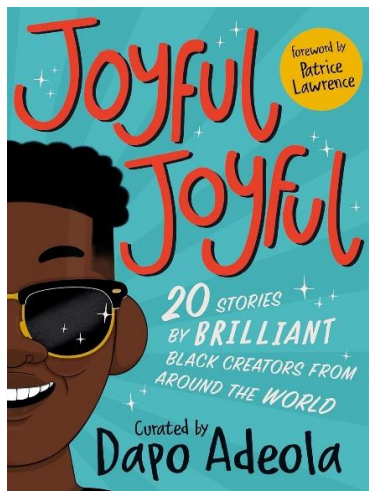


Aqua Boy – Ken Wilson-Max (KS1)

Island boy Aaron loves the sea. But he's a bit scared of going under the water. Then one day Aaron finds an octopus stranded on the beach. And as he helps Dad return it to the water, something amazing happens... a moment of magic between the boy and the octopus.

Key themes: Adventure, imagination, courage, environmental awareness

Key Stage Two

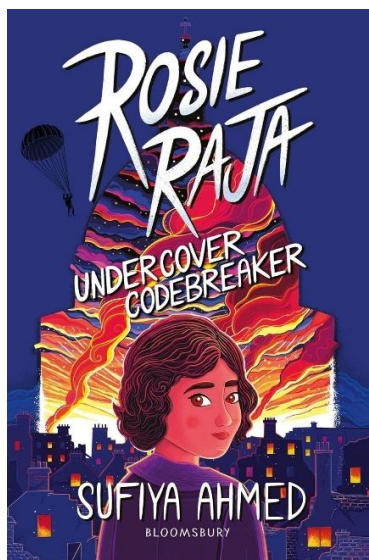


Joyful, Joyful: 20 Stories by Brilliant Black Creators from Around the World – Curated by Dapo Adeola (KS2)

A hugely entertaining, fully colour-illustrated collection celebrating joy, perfect for children age 8 to 12 (and beyond!). Curated by Laugh Out Loud Awards winner Dapo Adeola, with a foreword by the acclaimed author Patrice Lawrence.

Key themes: Joy, celebration, Black identity, creativity, global cultures

Teaching resources: A collection of free activities linked to diverse authors, picture books and inclusive reading topics
<https://www.penguin.co.uk/about/social-impact/lit-in-colour/teaching-resources>

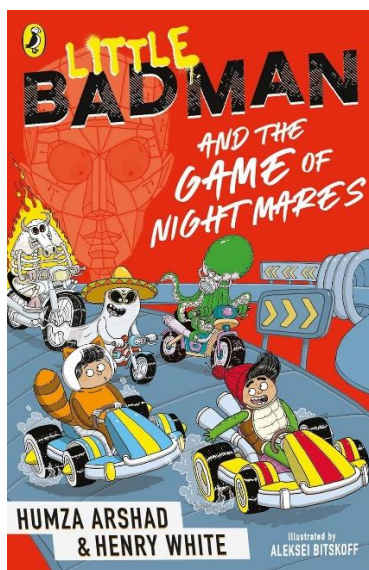


Rosie Raja: Undercover Codebreaker – Sufiya Ahmed (KS2)

A thrilling and empowering coming-of-age WWII adventure set in the heart of the top secret war effort which follows an engaging, determined, Muslim heroine.

Key themes: Problem-solving, STEM, friendship, confidence

Teaching resources: Free downloadable teaching guide with activities and discussion prompts for KS2 reading & history
<https://www.bloomsbury.com/media/pjepy3qk/rosie-raja-undercover-codebreaker-resources.pdf>

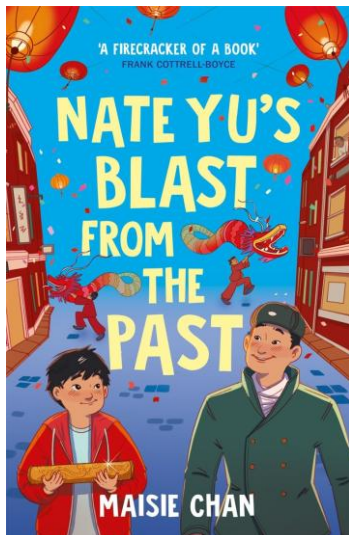


Little Badman and the Game of Nightmares – Humza Arshad & Henry White, illustrated by Aleksei Bitskoff (KS2)

Humza's life finally feels . . . normal. Aliens aren't trying to kill him, zombies aren't trying to eat him, there are no crazy spy missions on the horizon and certainly no mutant hamsters. So why does he still feel stressed? Enter Aisha Mariam Shah a.k.a the girl Humza is desperate to impress.

Key themes: Humour, friendship, fears, resilience

Teaching resources: Little Badman Draw-along with Aleksei Bitskoff
https://youtu.be/edMAHh7BM1E?si=m5_RSA1Rmhlg7fff



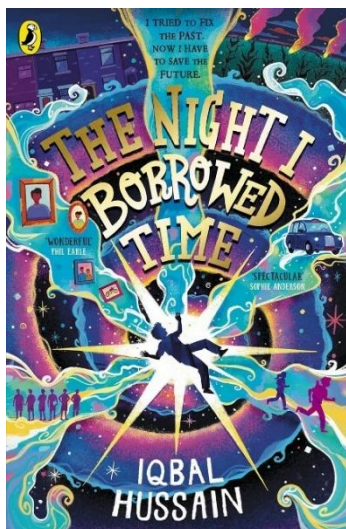
Nate Yu's Blast From the Past – Maisie Chan (KS2)

A bighearted tale of family, forgotten stories and the search for belonging, from award-winning author Maisie Chan. Perfect for fans of Benjamin Dean, Jenny Pearson and Helen Rutter.

Key themes: Family history, cultural heritage, time travel

Teaching resources: BookTrust resource:

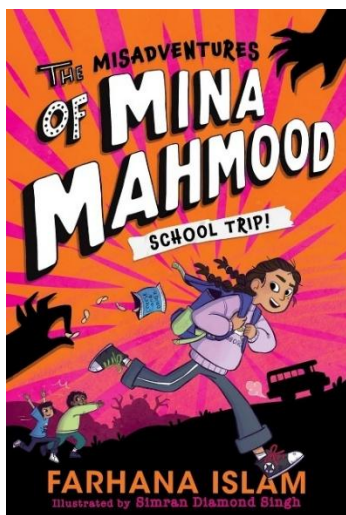
<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/book-recommendations/bookfinder/nate-yus-blast-from-the-past/>



The Night I Borrowed Time – Iqbal Hussain (KS2)

Eleven-year-old Zubair is a seventh son. This means a LOT of big brothers. But when Zubair's granny arrives from Pakistan and gives him a mysterious amulet, he discovers it means something else, too: he has inherited a gift. The seventh sons in his family have the ability to time-travel.

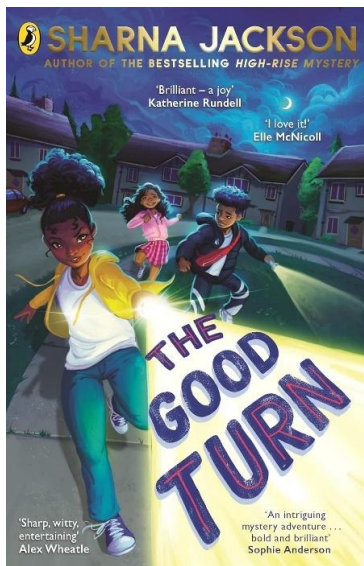
Key themes: Grief, loss, love, emotional resilience



The Misadventures of Mina Mahmood: School Trip – Farhana Islam, illustrated by Simran Diamond Singh (KS2)

Welcome to the joyous world of Mina and best friends Reema and Mobeen. Bursting with friendship, family and fun adventures – and perfect for reluctant readers!

Key themes: Belonging, friendship, school life, humour, identity



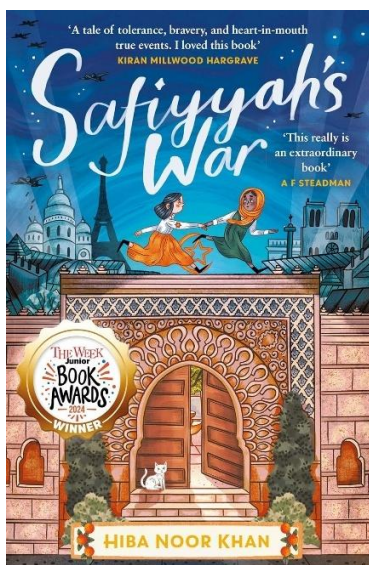
The Good Turn – Sharna Jackson (KS2)*

A thrilling, pacy adventure about friendship, bravery and real-life injustice from the award-winning author of High Rise Mystery. Full of fast-paced adventure, brilliant characters and snappy dialogue with themes of real-life activism and how to help others.

Key themes: Moral choices, responsibility, cause and effect

Teaching resources: Puffin schools resource pack

<https://www.puffinschools.co.uk/resources/ks2-resource-pack-the-good-turn-by-sharna-jackson/>

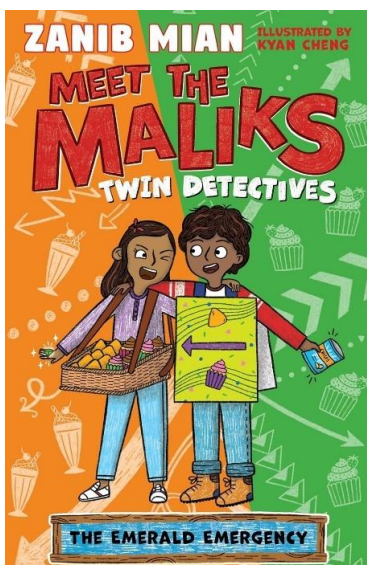


Safiyyah's War – Hiba Noor Khan (KS2)*

War comes to the streets of Paris and Safiyyah's life changes for ever. Her best friend's family have fled, and the bombing makes her afraid to leave the mosque where she lives. But when her father is arrested by the Nazis for his secret Resistance work, it falls to Safiyyah to run the dangerous errands around the city. Can Safiyyah find the courage to enter the treacherous catacombs under Paris and lead the Jews to safety?

Key themes: WWII, courage, Muslim identity, bravery

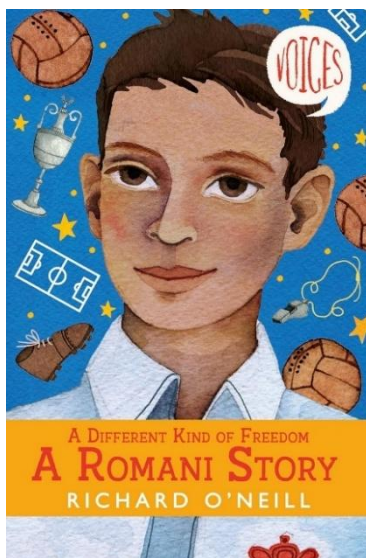
Teaching resources: https://youtu.be/Yxp3FYbMz5k?si=d0-UeYDV75_YcK-B



Meet the Maliks: Twin Detectives: The Emerald Emergency – Zanib Mian, illustrated by Kyan Cheng (KS2)

Meet Maysa and Musa Malik. They might be twins but they are total opposites. And together they make an unstoppable team, especially when trying to solve a mystery!

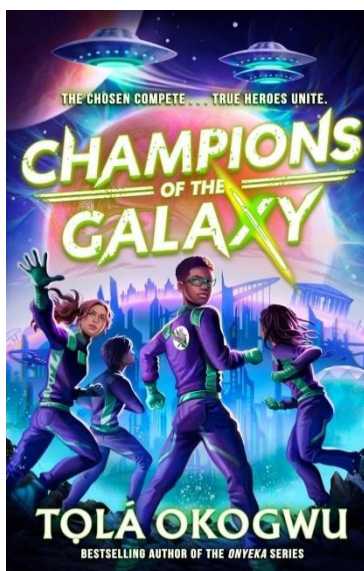
Key themes: Family, teamwork, problem-solving



A Different Kind of Freedom: A Romani Story – Richard O'Neill, illustrated by Alette Straathof (KS2)*

A gripping football-filled adventure based in the Romani community of 19th-century Sheffield. Each story in the series shows that, even in times of great upheaval, a myriad of people have arrived on this island and made a home for themselves – from Roman times to the present day.

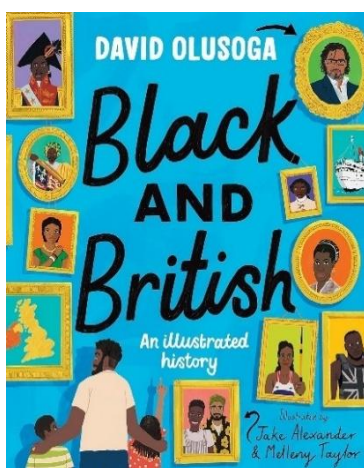
Key themes: Civil rights, Romani history, justice, activism



Champions of the Galaxy – Tola Okogwu (KS2)

A brand-new, epic sci-fi action-adventure where friendship is tested to the limits from bestselling author Tola Okogwu. Perfect for 8+ fans of the Onyeka series, Star Wars and Marvel!

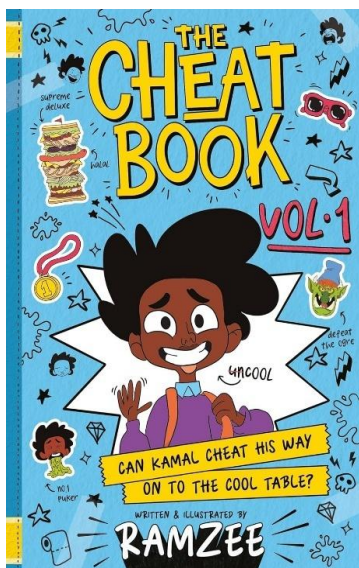
Key themes: Adventure, teamwork, confidence, diversity



Black and British: An Illustrated History for Young Readers – David Olusoga, Illustrated by Jake Alexander and Melleny Taylor (KS2)*

Embark on a journey through Black British history with this beautifully illustrated guide by award-winning historian and broadcaster, David Olusoga. Illustrations by Jake Alexander and Melleny Taylor.

Key themes: Black British history, identity, social justice



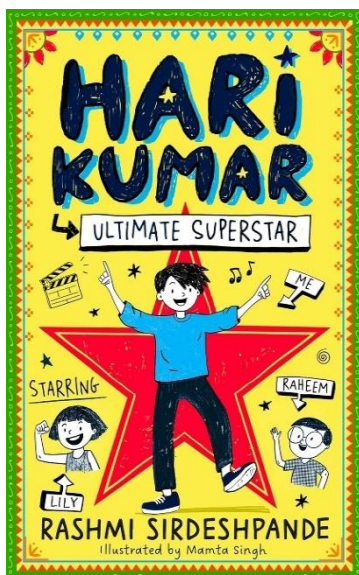
The Cheat Book (Vol. 1) – RAMZEE (KS2)*

This hilarious guide to being 'too cool for school' (or just cool enough) from brilliant author-illustrator RAMZEE. Perfect for 8+ readers of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Loki*, with black-and-white illustrations throughout!

Key themes: Honesty, consequences, peer pressure

Teaching resources: Hachette Schools teaching resource

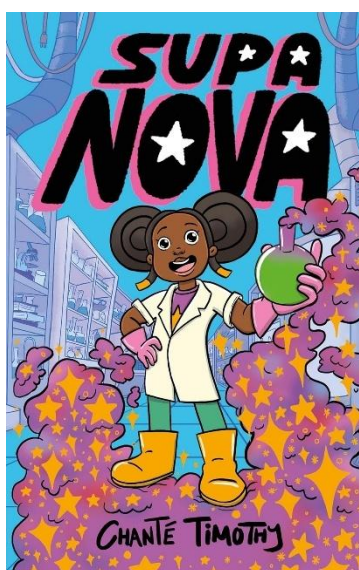
<https://www.hachetteschools.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/The-Cheat-Book-Hachette-Schools-Resources.pdf>



Hari Kumar: Ultimate Superstar – Rashmi Sirdeshpande, illustrated by Mamta Singh (KS2)

Hari Kumar: 10 years old, 75% Indian, 25% French, and 100% going to be a superstar. All Hari needs to make it big is a lucky break – a chance to get his name out there. And when that arrives in the form of a film festival competition at school, it's Hari's chance to shine.

Key themes: Ambition, friendship, self-belief



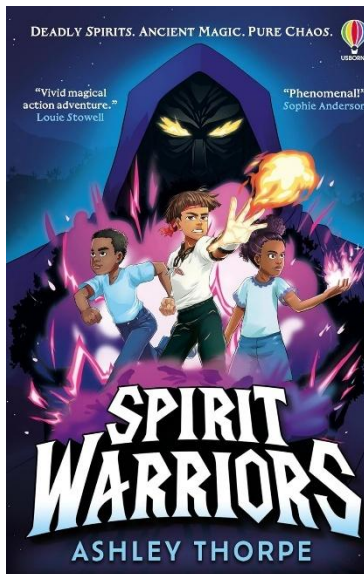
Supa Nova – Chanté Timothy (KS2)*

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

Key themes: Empowerment, creativity, self-expression

Teaching resources: How to draw Supa Nova worksheet

<https://nosycrow.us/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Supa-Nova-Drawing-Sheet.pdf>



Spirit Warriors – Ashley Thorpe (KS2)

Ancient magic and all-new heroes in a battle between the living and the dead – an epic story of chaos, myth and adventure for fans of *Percy Jackson*, from the author of *The Boy to Beat the Gods*.

Key themes: West African and Caribbean mythology and folklore, cultural heritage, bravery

Teaching resources: Accompanying resources on Jamaican History and Caribbean Folklore <https://ashleythorpe.com/resources-for-schools/>

Using the books in the classroom

When reading and exploring the books, it will be important to bear in mind your own pupils, considering whether the texts could support individuals to explore similar situations to their own, or whether it's a text that might offer a window into social and cultural backgrounds or viewpoints that differ from their own.

Below are some ways you could use the books in your school.

- **Exploration and recommendations during class 'Bookclub' time** You could provide teasers by revealing the front/back covers, reading the blurb, providing your own summaries and thoughts about the characters or plot, or even reading aloud a teaser chapter/extract. Afterwards, you could add the text to your class book corner or have a sign-up sheet for borrowing the specially selected titles.
- **Personal pupil recommendations** You may discover a book that you feel would speak to a particular pupil because of a shared interest, a similar book/author they enjoy or to offer something totally new to try. Personal recommendations for your pupils can be powerful, but of course you need to have a strong idea about your students' interests, reading habits and abilities.
- **Class read aloud** Read and share the books with pupils as part of your reading for pleasure time. Encourage and foster booktalk!
- **Reading lessons** You might discover a book that you feel would be suited well to read in your English lessons – perhaps it links to a topic or theme you're exploring, or is one that has potential for brilliant reading and writing outcomes.
- **To add to a reading spine** The DFE's Reading Framework (2023) recommends that each year group has a core reading list of different texts that can be used in English lessons and story times, as well as in foundation subjects. These lists should not remain stagnant, should be reviewed yearly and allow scope for teachers to add their own choices and those that speak to their pupils' interest.

Resources to support your See Myself in Books work

Reading Response Framework (See Appendix 1)

Our Reading Response Framework is designed for you to use with your pupils when exploring picture books, providing the opportunity to reflect on the following:

Observations: I notice that ...

Feelings: ... makes me feel ...

Connections: It reminds me of ...

Questions: I wonder ...

For younger students or for those who need more support, you may decide to complete this as a whole group, focus on just one section of the grid or offer the option of drawing their responses to the prompts. Allow for interpretation and avoid the notion of a right answer. As students begin to look more closely at the illustrations, and the ways in which they interact with the text, discussions will arise. Allow time for the students to share their thoughts and to answer, to build upon or even contradict each other's ideas.

Tiered Critical Literacy Question Prompts (See Appendix 2)

Critical Literacy is an approach that encourages readers to challenge what they read by exploring the reader-author relationship, examining issues such as why the text may have been written, how the author chose to represent information, and what information they chose to include or exclude. Critical literacy therefore encourages all readers to think more deeply about representation and diversity in what they read, as well as author intention.

Embedding critical literacy practices when reading texts will enable students to further challenge what they read and critique representation in texts, whilst building on their existing comprehension skills. We have included some questions you might like to use to foster critical thinking and discussion when reading the books in the collection. When exploring the questions, encourage students to justify or explain their thinking, using textual evidence to support their answers. In turn, this will support their development of reading comprehension skills such as inference and language analysis as they return to the text.

Further references

Manchester Libraries

Manchester Libraries ensures that ethnically diverse authors are represented in the programme of class visits which are free to all Manchester schools, and which include both in-person and online visits. These are advertised on the Schools Hub in the Read Manchester / Manchester Libraries update.

For more information, please contact Cheryl Pridgeon cheryl.pridgeon@manchester.gov.uk or Margaret Duff margaret.duff@manchester.gov.uk.

National Literacy Trust

Find out more about diversity and children and young people's reading here - [Seeing yourself in what you read: diversity and children and young people's reading in 2022 | National Literacy Trust](#)

Find more resources around [Promoting diversity through literacy | National Literacy Trust](#)

[Diverse Libraries webinar recordings | National Literacy Trust](#) are a series of recorded webinars discussing diversity in children's literature and more widely.

Book Trust Represents

[BookTrust Represents](#) is a programme created to promote and improve the representation of people of colour in children's books so that all children read a range of books that reflect them and their wider communities. Their website has an extensive range of research and free resources to support your work in school.

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

Find out more about the Annual Reflecting Realities research reports here:
<https://clpe.org.uk/research/reflecting-realities>

Lit in Colour

[Lit in Colour](#) was created in 2020 by Penguin Books UK and race equality think tank, The Runnymede Trust. Lit in Colour's aim is to support schools to make the teaching and learning of English literature more inclusive. This includes commissioning research to better understand barriers and possible solutions, as well as providing practical support including book donations, free teaching resources and more.

Appendix 1: Reading Response Framework

 Observations I notice ...	 Feelings ... makes me feel ...
 Connections It makes me think of ...	 Questions I wonder ... / I'd like to know ...

Appendix 2: Critical Literacy Question Prompts

Tier 1 – Critical Literacy Question Prompts

Whose point of view do we hear/see? Whose is missing? (Think about both in the text and illustrations)	How would the story be different if it were told from the perspective of ?
Is there anything you'd like to change about the story? Why?	Would you like to live in the world described in the story? Why/why not?

Tier 2 – Critical Literacy Question Prompts

Who do you want to defend/criticise in the story? Why? How have you been influenced?	Who has the power in the story? Who doesn't? Why?
Are all the characters treated fairly?	What message might the author/illustrator be trying to convey?

Tier 3 – Critical Literacy Question Prompts



Has the author/illustrator chosen to represent any groups/communities in the story which we don't often see/hear from?

Why do you think the author/illustrator has chosen to represent these groups of people/communities or this subject?

Would everyone agree with the way in which the groups of people or communities are represented in the story?

Do you think everybody would read and respond to the story in the same way? Why/why not?