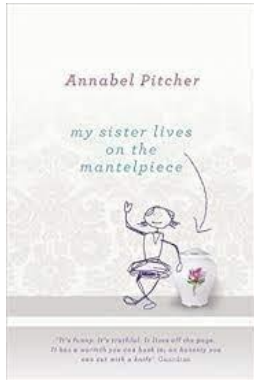


# Real-Life Issues – Year 7 Reading List

## My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece – Annabel Pitcher 12+ (2011)

Winner of the 2012 Branford Boase Award for an outstanding debut novel

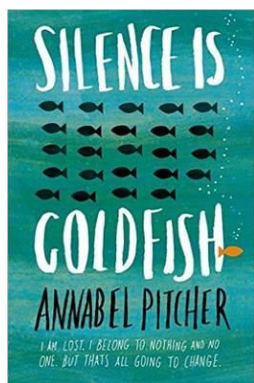
Grief, Terrorism, Racism and Bullying



Ten-year-old Jamie Matthews has just moved to the Lake District with his Dad and his teenage sister, Jasmine for a 'Fresh New Start'. Five years ago his sister's twin, Rose, was blown up by a terrorist bomb. His parents are wrecked by their grief, Jasmine turns to piercing, pink hair and stops eating. The family falls apart. But Jamie hasn't cried in all that time. To him Rose is just a distant memory. Jamie is far more interested in his cat, Roger, his birthday Spiderman T-shirt, and in keeping his new friend Sunya a secret from his dad. And in his deep longing and unshakeable belief that his Mum will come back to the family she walked out on months ago. When he sees a TV advert for a talent show, he feels certain that this will change everything and bring them all back together once and for all. Heartbreaking and funny in equal measure

## Silence is Goldfish – Annabel Pitcher 12+ (2015)

Bullying, selective mutism



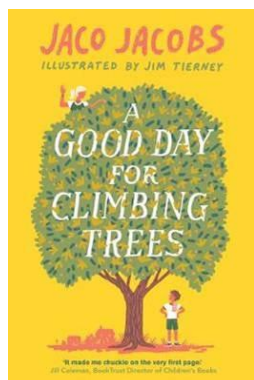
Silence is Goldfish is a story that demands to be heard. 'I have a voice but it isn't mine. It used to say things so I'd fit in - to please my parents, to please my teachers. It used to tell the universe I was something I wasn't. It lied.'

Fifteen-year-old Tess doesn't mean to become mute. At first, she's just too shocked to speak. And who wouldn't be? Discovering your whole life has been a lie because your dad isn't your real father is a pretty big deal. Tess sets out to find the truth of her identity, and uncovers a secret that could ruin multiple lives. But can she ask for help when she's forgotten how to use her voice?

This novel is both heart-breaking and hilarious. Tess is a fabulous protagonist, a strong, outgoing girl who tries her hardest to please those around her, yet one who deals with daily bullying on account of her size and unconventional looks. Her journey of self-discovery is incredibly difficult and you cannot help but cheer her on every step of the way. It is exceptionally well written and an absolute joy to read.

## A Good Day For Climbing Trees – Jaco Jacobs 12+ (2018)

Sibling rivalry, personal/social issues, identity



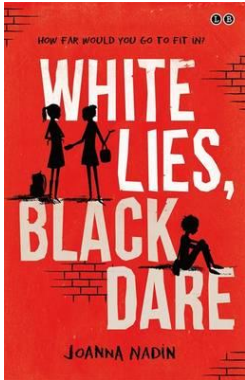
Thirteen-year-old Marnus is tired of being overshadowed. His older brother is a star athlete who gives girls kissing lessons, and his younger brother is a crafty entrepreneur who has tricked Marnus into doing the dishes all summer.

It's the holidays and Marnus is bored, fed up too of being pushed around by his wheeler-dealer little brother, overlooked by his parents, and teased by his big brother. Everything changes when he meets Leila; within minutes he's drawn into her campaign to save a tree in the local park, and actually camped out in its branches in defiance of the man from the water board, and his own mum. Their joint protest turns Marnus and Leila into special friends, and introduces them to a host of other eccentric characters too. When Marnus finally goes home, he's quite a different boy. A lovely story about the importance of

standing up for what you believe in and accepting who you are.

## White Lies, Black Dare – Joanna Nadin 12+ (2016)

Peer pressure, family, illness, bullying, BAME



How far would you go to fit in? When I think of all the people I ever wanted to be, I'm pretty sure this isn't one of them...

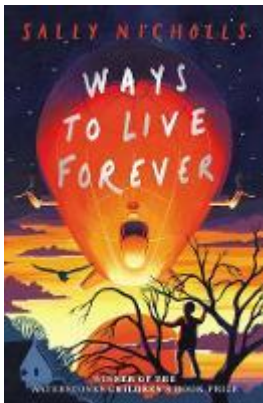
Asha Wright has it all - a barrister mum, a place at a private school, and big dreams of a life where she's a real Somebody. But when her mum gets cancer, Asha's fairytale fades and she finds herself back in Peckham, at a tough new school with new teachers, new kids ...and Angel Jones, queen bee. Angel is everything Asha wants to be - beautiful, brash and, above all, brave. But being one of the gang comes at a cost, and Asha is forced to play a dangerous game of Truth or Dare. Where will it end?

This fantastic story investigates the need to feel accepted and the lengths we go to fit in. It is written from Asha's point of view and flows like her stream of consciousness. This allows the reader to fully understand and empathise with the feisty, confused protagonist who is caught up in a situation out of her control.

## Ways to Live Forever – Sally Nicholls 11+ (2008)

Winner of Waterstone's Children's Book Prize 2008

Illness, family



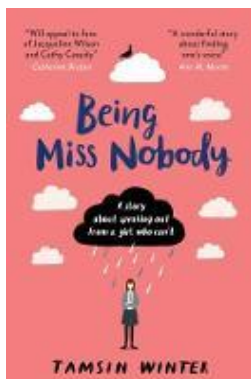
Sam is eleven and has leukaemia. He knows he will die soon.

Annie, the nurse, comes to his house twice a week to give him platelets and Mrs Willis comes most days to 'do school' which mainly involves making things explode in the kitchen. At her suggestion, Sam starts to write a book - not a story or an autobiography but a collection of thoughts, experiences and questions which will live on when he is gone.

This is Sam's book: funny, angry, thoughtful and uplifting.

## Being Miss Nobody – Tamsin Winter 11+ (2017)

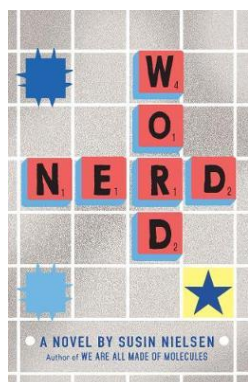
Selective mutism, bullying, self-acceptance



...I am Miss Nobody. Rosalind hates her new secondary school. She's the weird girl who doesn't talk. The Mute-ant. And it's easy to pick on someone who can't fight back. So Rosalind starts a blog - Miss Nobody; a place to speak up, a place where she has a voice. But there's a problem... Is Miss Nobody becoming a bully herself?

## Word Nerd – Susan Nielsen 12+ (2016)

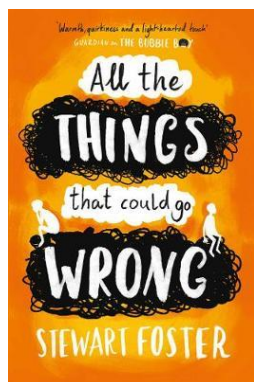
**Bereavement, socially awkward, allergies, home-schooling**



Ambrose Bukowski is a twelve-year-old with a talent for mismatching his clothes, for saying the wrong thing at the worst possible time, and for words. In short, he's a self-described nerd. Making friends is especially hard because he and his overprotective mother, Irene, have had to move so often. And when bullies at his latest school almost kill him by deliberately slipping a peanut into his sandwich to set off his allergy, it's his mother who has the extreme reaction. From now on, Ambrose has to be home-schooled. Then Ambrose strikes up an unlikely friendship with the landlord's son, Cosmo, an ex-con who's been in prison. They have nothing in common except for Scrabble. But a small deception grows out of control when Ambrose convinces a reluctant Cosmo to take him to a Scrabble club. Could this spell disaster for Ambrose?

## All the Things That Could Go Wrong – Stewart Foster 11+ (2017)

**OCD, agoraphobia, bullying**

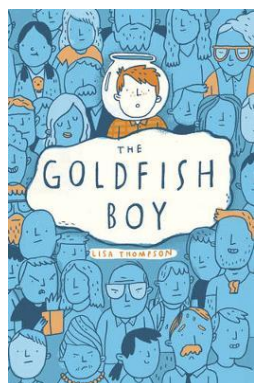


There are two sides to every story Dan is angry. Nothing has been the same since his big brother left, and he's taking it out on the nearest and weakest target: Alex. Alex is struggling. His severe OCD makes it hard for him to leave the house, especially when Dan and his gang are waiting for him at school ...Then the boys' mums arrange for them to meet up and finish building the raft that Dan started with his brother. Two enemies stuck together for the whole of the school holidays - what could possibly go wrong?

## The Goldfish Boy – Lisa Thomson 11+ (2017)

**Longlisted for the Branford Boase Award 2018 | Longlisted for the UKLA 2018 Book Award**

**OCD, anxiety, mental health**



12-year-old Matthew Corbin hasn't been to school for weeks. He passes much of his time observing the goings-on of the local neighbourhood from his bedroom window. He even makes little notes about neighbours' movements. Their everyday activity is nothing out of the ordinary - chatting, gardening, jogging, and going off to work or the shops.

Until, that is, a toddler goes missing, and Matthew realises he may be one of the few people who can help shed some light on the disappearance. However, Matthew has Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and everyday life has become increasingly challenging. Can he possibly play a major role in an investigation into the abduction of a child, perhaps without even leaving his house?

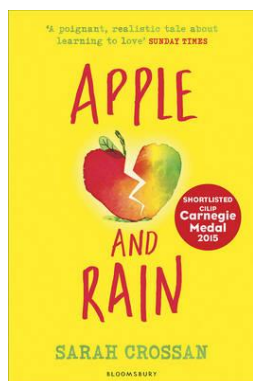
This is an utterly captivating read, combining a compelling whodunit with additional questions about what it was that triggered Matthew's OCD. We see how, with the help of his family and therapist, he can find a way forward and identify strategies to manage the condition.

The reality of struggling with mental health is depicted in a convincing yet accessible manner, and the reader cannot fail to be drawn in by this absorbing mystery and its thoroughly engaging protagonist.

## Apple and Rain – Sarah Crossan 12+ (2015)

Winner of the Children's Book Award 2016, Longlisted for the 2015 Guardian Children's Book prize - Shortlisted for the 2015 CILIP Carnegie Medal

Abandonment, family, siblings



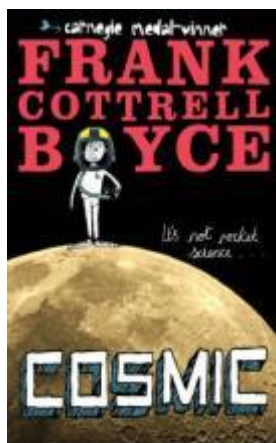
When Apple's mother returns after eleven years of absence, Apple feels whole again. She will have an answer to her burning question - why did you go? And she will have someone who understands what it means to be a teenager - unlike Nana. But just like the stormy Christmas Eve when she left, her mother's homecoming is bitter sweet, and Apple wonders who is really looking after whom. It's only when Apple meets someone more lost than she is, that she begins to see things as they really are.

Apple is an endearing character and her internal struggle to feel any resentment towards the disappointing mother she'd been craving for so long is sincere and believable. Apple and Rain brings fiction and poetry together in a well-crafted story about growing up and learning to love.

## Cosmic – Frank Cottrell Boyce 10+ (2009)

Shortlisted for the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize 2008 and the Carnegie Medal 2008

Discrimination, self-acceptance



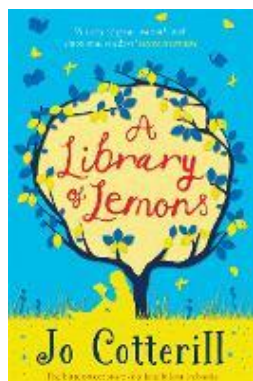
Even though he's only 12, Liam is constantly mistaken for an adult, but he's still a kid who loves playing computer games and riding rollercoasters. His inquisitive nature and adult appearance often get him into trouble but his dad usually intervenes and helps him avert disaster.

When Liam wins a competition to try out the world's greatest thrill ride, he and his friend Florida are whisked away to Infinity Park in China by the mysterious Dr Drax. The friends find themselves competing for the chance to be sent into space; soon Liam is playing a grown-up in a situation that his dad can't save him from.

Fantasy is interspersed with reality in this funny and touching story, which ultimately celebrates parents and the love they give.

## A Library of Lemons – Jo Cotterill 10+ (2016)

Bereavement/grief, Mental Health



A poignant story about dealing with grief through the magic of reading and friendship. Calypso's mum died a few years ago and her emotionally incompetent Dad can't, or won't, talk about Mum at all. Instead he throws himself into writing his book A History of the Lemon. Meanwhile the house is dusty, there's never any food in the fridge, and Calypso retreats into her own world of books and fiction. When a new girl, Mae, arrives at school, the girls' shared love of reading and writing stories draws them together. Mae's friendship and her lively and chaotic home - where people argue and hug each other - make Calypso feel more normal than she has for a long time. But when Calypso finally plucks up the courage to invite Mae over to her own house, the girls discover the truth about her dad and his magnum opus - and Calypso's happiness starts to unravel.

## Girl Missing – Sophie McKenzie 11+ (2007)

Adoption, Secrets

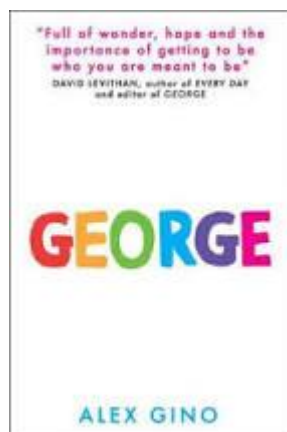
Joint winner of the 2007 Richard and Judy 12+ category. Winner of 2007 Red House Book Award



Lauren has always known she was adopted but when a little research turns up the possibility that she was snatched from an American family as a baby, suddenly Lauren's life seems like a sham. How can she find her biological parents? And are her adoptive parents really responsible for kidnapping her? She manages to wangle a trip across the Atlantic where she runs away to try and find the truth. But the circumstances of her disappearance are murky and Lauren's kidnappers are still at large and willing to do anything to keep her silent...

## George – Alex Gino 10+ (2015)

LGBT, Transgender, identity



To the world around her, George is a boy. Her parents, teachers and classmates all know her as a boy. So when the school puts on a production of Charlotte's Web, it seems obvious that George would be reading for the part of Wilbur.

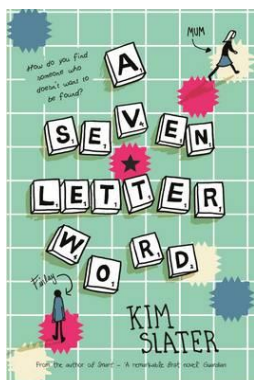
But George longs to be Charlotte, the wise and inspiring spider heroine of E. B. White's classic story. George finds strength in Charlotte's character, which gives her the courage to step out of the shadows and show the world who she really is.

This short, sweet story of embracing your true self and trusting those around you is a light read for such a heavy topic. Gino keeps the story simple and the voice friendly.

George is a relatable character to any child struggling with doubt, a lack of confidence and finding it hard to fit in. It also speaks directly to those dealing with the issues around gender identity. This is a topic that doesn't currently appear in much fiction for young people, but will certainly become more prevalent in society and should be reflected in diverse books like this.

## A Seven Letter Word - Kim Slater 12+ (2016)

Speech impediment (Stammer), abandonment, bullying



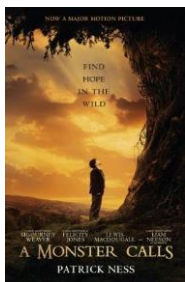
'My name is Finlay McIntosh. I can see OK, can hear perfectly fine and I can write really, really well. But the thing is, I can't speak. I'm a st-st-st-stutterer. Hilarious, isn't it? It's like the word is there in my mouth, fully formed and then, just as it's ready to leave my lips ...POP! It jumps and ricochets and bounces around my gob. Except it isn't funny at all, because there's not a thing I can do about it.'

Finlay's mother vanished two years ago. And ever since then his stutter has become almost unbearable. Bullied at school and ignored by his father, the only way to get out the words which are bouncing around in his head is by writing long letters to his ma which he knows she will never read, and by playing Scrabble online. But when Finlay is befriended by an online Scrabble player called Alex, everything changes. Could it be his mother secretly trying to contact him? Or is there something more sinister going on?

## A Monster Calls – Patrick Ness 12+ (2016)

Winner of the 2012 Carnegie Medal

Illness/cancer, anxiety, bullying, bereavement

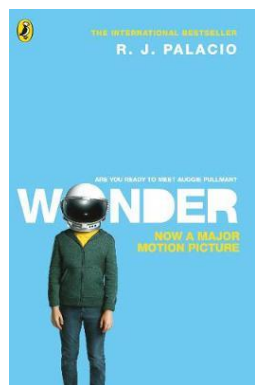


A touching story of how a boy deals with the looming threat of his mother's death from cancer. Haunted by a monster in his dreams, denied much information by his family and treated as a weirdo by his class mates and a 'special case' by his teachers, Conor struggles to get to grips with the devastating emotions which threaten to overwhelm him.

How he finds the courage and strength to face the end when it happens is both utterly shattering and deeply satisfying.

## Wonder – R. J. Palacio 11+ (2012)

Facial disfigurement, bullying, self-acceptance

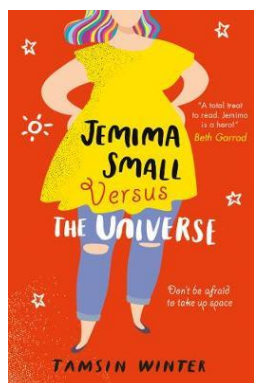


'My name is August. I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse.'

Auggie wants to be an ordinary ten-year-old. He does ordinary things - eating ice cream, playing on his Xbox. He feels ordinary - inside. But ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. Ordinary kids aren't stared at wherever they go. Born with a terrible facial abnormality, Auggie has been home-schooled by his parents his whole life. Now, for the first time, he's being sent to a real school - and he's dreading it. All he wants is to be accepted - but can he convince his new classmates that he's just like them, underneath it all?

## Jemima Small – Tamsin Winter 11+ (2019)

Bullying, abandonment, body-shaming, discrimination



"It would be so much better to have kind arms, or intelligent legs... Why did our good qualities have to be so invisible to everyone?" Wise words from our protagonist Jemima that expose what our world does - and doesn't - value most. Namely, the exaltation of narrow ideas of the "body beautiful" over the likes of intelligence, kindness, empathy and loyalty. Ultra-intelligent Jemima Small knows this better than most. Small by name, she's big in brains and body size - "It's typical of my life that I look the exact opposite of my name" - and constantly wounded by people weighing her with their eyes and the cruel body-shaming bullies at her school. That and the fact that her mum has abandoned her family has left Jemima with an empty space in her heart that "felt bigger than the universe sometimes."

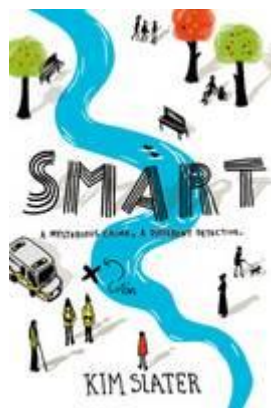
But with the support of her sweet best buddy Miki and the inspiring leader on her Healthy Lifestyle Class (AKA "Fat Club"), Jemima finds the strength to compete in Brainiacs, a national TV quiz for super-bright students.

Jemima's story should be compulsory reading for anyone who has thought to judge someone else for their size, appearance, intellect or anything else. Fighting bullying and discrimination is everyone's responsibility and books like this help to encourage debate and achieve positive outcomes.

## Smart – Kim Slater 11+ (2015)

Shortlisted for Children's Book Award 2016, Shortlisted for the Waterstone's Best Fiction

Autism, domestic abuse, homelessness



'I found Jean's friend dead in the river. His name was Colin Kirk. He was a homeless man, but he still wanted to live.'

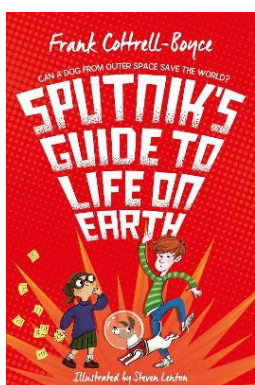
There's been a murder, but the police don't care. It was only a homeless old man after all. Kieran cares. He's made a promise, and when you say something out loud, that means you're going to do it, for real. He's going to find out what really happened. To Colin. And to his grandma, who just stopped coming round one day. It's a good job Kieran's a master of observation, and knows all the detective tricks of the trade. But being a detective is difficult when you're Kieran Woods. When you're amazing at drawing but terrible at fitting in. And when there are dangerous secrets everywhere, not just outside, but under your own roof.

Kim Slater's *Smart*, is a sensitive portrayal of a boy about whom few seem to care honouring the death of one of the countless many that others would quickly brush aside. Addressing such subjects as domestic abuse, homelessness, and treatment of the Autistic, *Smart* would be well suited for a mature young audience, particularly those touched on any level by similar issues.

## Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth – Frank Cottrell Boyce 10+ (2017)

Shortlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2017 | Longlisted for the UKLA 2017 Book Award

Dementia, Foster Care, Selective Mutism, Bereavement



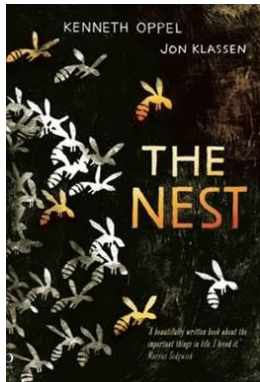
Prez used to live with his grandfather, until there was a misunderstanding with the wrong apartment and a knife, and his grandfather was locked away. Now he is a Temporary kid - sent to a farm to live with the rambunctious Blythe family. It's all been a bit too much for Prez, who has stopped talking. *Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth* is an adventure about the Blythes: a big, warm, rambunctious family who live on a small farm and sometimes foster children. One day Prez answers the door to someone claiming to be his relative. This small, loud stranger carries a backpack, walks with a swagger and goes by the name of Sputnik. Prez is amazed at the family's response to Sputnik's arrival. They pat him on the head, call him a good boy and drop food into his mouth. It seems they all think Sputnik is a dog! Chaos is unleashed when Sputnik arrives as household items come to life - like a TV remote that fast-forwards people and a toy lightsaber that entertains guests at a children's party, until

one of them is nearly decapitated by it - and Prez is going to have to use his voice to explain himself. As Sputnik takes Prez on a journey to finish writing his guidebook to Earth called *Ten Things Worth Doing on Earth*, each adventure seems to take Prez nearer to the heart of the family he is being fostered by but they also take him closer to the day that he is due to leave them forever . . .

## The Nest – Kenneth Oppel 12+ (2017)

Longlisted for the UKLA 2017 Book Award

Illness, anxiety, siblings

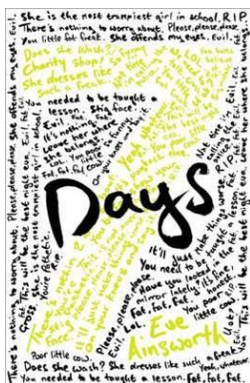


Steve's baby brother, Theo, is sick and doctors are struggling to diagnose exactly what's wrong with him. Even if he becomes strong enough to undergo heart surgery, and even if the procedure is successful, he still won't be completely well. While his parents are preoccupied with Theo, and while Steve struggles with his own anxieties, he dreams of an otherworldly being and her fluttering, glittering companions. 'We've come because of the baby,' she says. 'We've come to help', and Steve wonders if she might be an angel. While she turns out to be something entirely different, she offers Steve the chance to fix the fact that his brother's ill. All he has to do is say yes, which he does. But when these dreams contort into nightmares and the line between Steve's internal world and reality becomes horribly blurred, he wants out of what he agreed to, but is told 'once you say yes, you can't say no'. And then there's the menacing wasps' nest swelling in the roof of the family home, and the sinister phone calls from Mr Nobody... As his world implodes, Steve feels 'all in pieces', but must find the strength to save his brother.

A chilling drama with a heart-racing climax, Oppel's knack of finding an unusual gem of a story that sparkles with memorable moments is in full force here. *The Nest* is a scary place to be, but you'll be so glad you entered... Watch out for the sting in this tale.

## Seven Days – Eve Ainsworth 12+ (2015)

Bullying, domestic violence, single parent, poverty



They call Jess 'stig'; they say she's 'trampy' and fat.

'They' are the bullies at school.

This is the story of one week in Jess's life and that of her tormentor, popular girl Kez. Both girls have problems at home: Jess's single mum household is on the verge of poverty, while Kez's mum lives in fear of dad's next violent outburst. Kez can't stand victims and Jess can't help but be one.

Can the two girls break out of the cycle of behaviour that makes them both victims? Maybe becoming friends will be the answer?