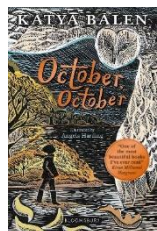




October, October by Katya Balen, illustrated by Angela Harding (Bloomsbury) 10+

A timeless, lyrical treasure that sees a girl who's at one with the wild struggle with the world beyond her woods



October and her dad live in the woods. They know the trees and the rocks and the lake and stars like best friends. They live in the woods and they are wild. And that's the way it is. Until the year October turns twelve. That's the year October rescues a baby owl. It's the year Dad falls out of the biggest tree in their woods. The year the woman who calls herself October's mother comes back. The year everything changes.

Guard Your Heart by Sue Divin (Macmillan Children's Books) 13+

Boy meets girl on the Northern Irish border



Derry 2016. Aidan and Iona, now eighteen, were both born on the day of the Northern Ireland peace deal. Aidan is Catholic, Irish, and Republican. With his ex-political prisoner father gone and his mother dead, Aidan's hope is pinned on exam results earning him a one-way ticket out of Derry. To anywhere. Iona, Protestant and British, has a brother and father in the police. At a post-exam party, Aidan wanders alone across the Peace Bridge and becomes the victim of a brutal sectarian attack. Iona witnessed the attack; picked up Aidan's phone and filmed what happened, and gets in touch with him to return the phone. When the two meet, alone and on neutral territory, the differences between them seem insurmountable. But for both Iona and Aidan it seems like everything is keeping them apart, when all they want is to be together . . .

When the Sky Falls by Phil Earle (Andersen Press) 10+

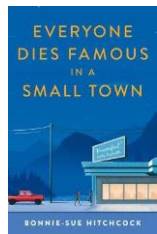
A powerful story of friendship against the odds inspired by real events in World War II



It's 1940, war is raging and one angry boy has been sent to the city, where bombers rule the skies. Joseph has been packed off to stay with Mrs F, a gruff woman with no great fondness for children. Her only loves are the rundown zoo she owns and its mighty silverback gorilla, Adonis. Adonis is ferociously strong and dangerous, but Joseph finds he has an affinity with the lonely beast. But if the bombers set Adonis rampaging free, will either of them be able to end the life of the one thing they truly love?

Everyone Dies Famous in a Small Town by Bonnie-Sue Hitchcock (Faber) 13+

Nine powerful interlinked stories of teenage lives in small town America



These troubled teens encounter love, loss, coming of age, grief, abuse, and friendships with the minutiae of daily life often revealing or foreshadowing a deeper and darker truth. All the narratives share the backdrop of an increasingly devastating forest fire and the history of a little girl's disappearance. Each story relates to these major events in different ways and the links between the individual stories and these shattering events gradually become apparent. What is also revealed is the universal dichotomy of small communities, where everybody knows everybody and yet does not actually know them at all. The struggle to get your voice heard and for people to accept your truth is at the heart of these beautifully crafted stories.

The Crossing by Manjeet Mann (Penguin Children's Books) 13+

Powerful, often heart wrenching narrative poem of hope, grief, and strength



Two teenagers from opposite sides of the world form a connection through odd circumstances. Natalie has just lost her Mum to cancer and struggles to find a calm place in the world, whilst her brother reacts by rebelling and joining a hate filled far right anti-refugee protest and action group. Sammy has had to leave his home in Eritrea on the chance of a new life in Europe – running from conscription into the army - which is a form of slavery in his home country. Both characters have huge issues to face. Sammy's seem more obviously dangerous and overwhelming, though Natalie's are equally as difficult - without the imminent danger. Told through a narrative poem using both voices to alternately express their fears, dilemmas.

Tsunami Girl by Julian Sedgwick, illustrated by Chie Kutsuwada (Guppy Books) 13+

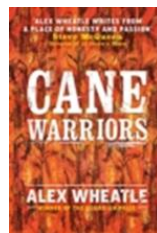
Told partly in manga the story of a girl who survived the 2011 Japanese earthquake and Tsunami



15-year-old Yūki Hara Jones is only ¼ Japanese, but she has a deep bond with the country and her beloved grandpa there. Suffering badly from anxiety she feels she will be helped by a visit to see him. Her grandpa, a renowned Manga artist, feels she can be helped by rediscovering the small girl who loved to draw, but just as they are opening her old albums, the tsunami hits and her grandpa is lost. Trying to recuperate back in England she can still feel there is unfinished business in Japan and is determined to try to understand it. Helped by her friend Taka, who has also lost everything in the disaster and has his own demons to follow, they take their quest illegally back into the disaster zone.

Cane Warriors by Alex Wheatle (Andersen Press) 13+

Real-life story of hope and heroism during a 1760 uprising of Jamaican slaves



Moa is fourteen. The only life he has ever known is toiling on the Frontier sugar cane plantation for endless hot days, fearing the vicious whips of the overseers. Then one night he learns of an uprising, led by the charismatic Tacky. Moa is to be a cane warrior, and fight for the freedom of all the enslaved people in the nearby plantations. But before they can escape, Moa and his friend Keverton must face their first great task: to kill their overseer, Misser Donaldson. Time is ticking, and the day of the uprising approaches . . . Irresistible, gripping and unforgettable, Cane Warriors follows the true story of Tacky's War in Jamaica, 1760.

Punching the Air by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam (HarperCollins Children's Books) 14+

Searingly potent verse novel about racial injustice and the power of art



'Boys just being boys' turns out to be true only when those boys are white. Suddenly, at just sixteen years old, Amal Shahid's bright future is upended: he is convicted of a crime he didn't commit and sent to prison. Despair and rage almost sink him until he turns to the refuge of his words, his art. This never should have been his story. But can he change it?

With spellbinding lyricism, award-winning author Ibi Zoboi and prison reform activist Yusef Salaam of the Exonerated Five, tell a moving and deeply profound story about how one boy is able to maintain his humanity and fight for the truth, in a system designed to strip him of both.