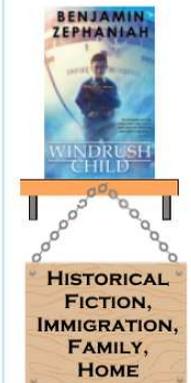
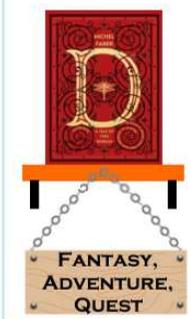
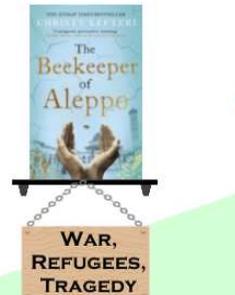
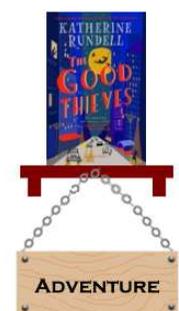
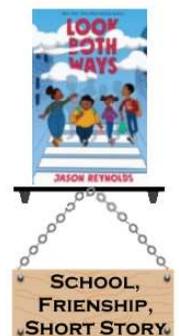
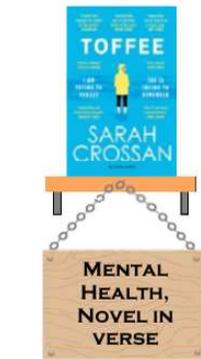
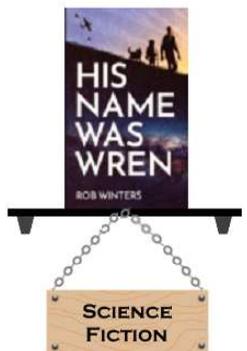


20+ reads of 2020



RECOMMENDED BY
NORTH HERTS SCHOOLS LIBRARIANS

The Black Flamingo by Dean Atta

Coming of Age, LGBTQ+, Year 9 and above

Beautifully written verse novel that follows the story of Michael and his journey from child to adult who does not feel he fits in. As a child, he prefers to play with Barbie dolls rather than traditional boys' toys. He is also mixed race and seems not to fit with either.

At university he finds the Drag Society where he eventually discovers how amazing he is and realises that the only opinion that matters is his own.

A really emotional and empowering novel, fresh and unique, with a great message for all young people.

A favourite line regarding the experience of racist abuse:
"They interrupt our joy"

A good girl's guide to murder by Holly Jackson – Crime, Year 8+

What a great read: mystery, family relations, friendships, bullying, drugs, race, prejudice; and those are just the side-lines for a cracking murder mystery. A book that seems to tick all the boxes without feeling constructed. Well-flowing story, keeps you hooked right through to the end.

Punching the Air by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam

Racism, Novel in verse, Year 9 and above

A very poignant and timely novel told in verse. Amal is a sixteen-year-old with a bright future ahead of him, who is convicted of a crime he did not commit. The story shows the impact on black children in America of a justice system that is stacked against them. Even his teachers at school cannot see beyond his colour. The story explores the shock, despair and loneliness that Amal experiences. Amal, whose name means hope in Arabic, finds solace in his art. Most the poetry in the novel was written by Yusuf Salaam, when he was imprisoned as a teenager as part of the "Exonerated Five".

Everyone should read this!

Somebody give this heart a pen by Sophia Thakur
Performance poetry; real life;

This book has to be in my top three!

This is a book which is calling to be read out loud and promises to get under the skin and into the mind of any young adult. I love the way that this young performance poet addresses her past, present, future life experiences and issues in such an honest way. Poetry of this calibre has a way of opening a door into our own souls :-)....

how amazing it would be to see / hear Sophia Thakur live!

Memorable quote: "I am surprised that my jaw has not unhinged itself with the amount of me I keep under my tongue"

Who would enjoy this?.. Anyone who thinks that poetry is boring read it and pass it onto your friends and teachers!

The Great Godden by Meg ROSOFF - Coming of age novel, Relationships, Family, Young Adult /Suitable for Key Stage 4 and above.

A beautifully lyrically written coming of age novel by Carnegie winner Meg Rosoff.

Name and gender of narrator is never revealed.

Story of one family and one summer when everything changes.

Comparable with Bonjour Tristesse and Call me by my name.

Look Both Ways by Jason REYNOLDS - Short Stories, Reluctant Readers / Quick Read, School, Friendship, Suitable for Key Stage 3

A collection of ten short stories about ten walks home featuring ten different students from Latimer Middle School. The stories centre on their friendships and families. Several stories and characters are interwoven in more than one story. Jason Reynolds writes with humour and compassion.

Book Trust title.

Boy, Everywhere by A.M DASSU - Family, Refugees, Migrants, Suitable for Key Stage 3

A moving empathetic debut novel from A.M.Dassu, telling the story of 13-year-old Sami and his family's perilous journey from Damascus to the United Kingdom. It is a journey from privilege to poverty, shining a light on different cultures and experiences.

Good Thieves by Katharine Rundell - Adventure Kids camaraderie and rich writing set in 1920's New York.

The Ickabog by JK Rowling - Fairy tale

When I look back on 2020, the year of the global lockdown, I will remember the daily release of a new chapter of Ickabog each day, and the routine it gave me at such an uncertain time. See also the amazing illustrations submitted by children around the world. Because you're never too old for a fairy tale.

D (A Tale of Two Worlds) by Michael Faber – Fantasy, Adventure, Quest

Dhikilo wakes up one morning to find the letter D has gone missing and, to her frustration, she seems to be the only person who has noticed. Her quest to retrieve the letter D before it is too late means she must leave the south coast of England for the snowy, wintry landscape of Limnius with one strange shape-shifting companion and just a few hastily packed chocolate bars to sustain them for the journey. If you have enjoyed visiting other fantasy worlds such as Narnia, Oz and Wonderland, then you are in for a treat. Limnius is a strange and dangerous land populated by Magwitches, and more. Above all this is an adventure story about trying to do the right thing and looking out for your friends. It's also lots of fun!

Gloves Off by Louisa Reid - Verse Novel, Sport Story, Bullying, Transformation, Year8+

Gloves Off is a story about transformation and standing up for yourself. Aimed at older teenagers, it is told in the main part by Lily, who is 16 and relentlessly bullied. The story's told in verse, with short punchy lines that carve out patterns on the white space of the page, and carry the reader along with an edgy rhythm. We see from Lily's point of view how words and actions hurt and how bleak she feels after one particular incident. And then her dad persuades her to take up boxing. The subject matter can be shocking but the intensity of feeling draws the reader in, rooting for Lily and willing her to find her own power.

Windrush Child by Benjamin Zephaniah - Historical Fiction Immigration, Family and Home, Suitable for Ages 10 +
Windrush Child begins with a journey. Leonard has to leave his home in Maroon Town, Jamaica, to come and live in cold, grey Manchester, England. His grandmother has always told him to be like a lion, to roar and never be afraid to speak, and this advice carries him through his life. There are many harsh events in this book, but it is also a story about love and family, and striving to do the right thing against the odds. It is an important story about injustices that are still a reality for many people, and it is a powerful and engrossing read. There is a clarity to the writing and anyone reading this book will have a better understanding of the difficulties faced by the Windrush generation.

The beekeeper of Aleppo by Christy Lefteri – War, Refugees, Tragedy, Year 9/10 +

Very sad, beautifully written story of a couple who, after tragic losses, flee their hometown of Aleppo in the hope of reaching the UK. This is a story of losing a good life to the tragic consequences of war, hardship, determination, how to keep up hope when there doesn't seem any.

Wink by Rob Harrell - Illness, Prejudice, bullying, Year 7+ Really good read about a young boy dealing with cancer, not just the frightening diagnosis but the reactions of family, friends and other people around him. Semi-autobiographical, so the author knows what he is talking about.

Toffee by Sarah Crossan - Mental health, Novel in verse, YA Fiction, Years 9 +

"I am not who I say I am,
and Marla isn't who she thinks she is.
I am a girl trying to forget.
She is a woman trying to remember".

A beautiful cross-generational story written in novel verse from the multi award-winning author and Laureate Sarah Crossan.

Patron Saints of Nothing by Randy Ribay - Crime; real life; global issues, Year 8 +

This novel looks at the contrast between the lives of two cousins and their close relationship. Loss, guilt and grief are issues which are real here, and spurs the main character on to find out what has happened to his cousin. It is a touching yet hard-hitting novel and reveals how different life in the Philippines is compared to that in the West.

Who would enjoy this? Readers who enjoy reading about real life issues and understanding what life is like in other parts of the world.

Pet by Akaeke Emezi - Year 8+, LGBTQ; magical realism; fantasy; issues

The children of Lucille are taught that there are no monsters anymore, so what happens if this turns out not to be true? A moving story of friendship, love and broken trust.

Girl, Boy, Sea by Chris Vick
Adventure, thriller, fantasy,

A beautifully written coming of age novel which we loved reading! The author's story telling is exquisite - I was captivated throughout. The first Chapter is a thrilling opener, so be prepared!! The two main characters learn to communicate one another by Aya telling stories from 1001 Arabian Nights. Their relationship grows as the challenges ebb and flow. I was with the characters all the way; I could feel the burning sun, the hunger, thirst, and the fear of sharks. My heart was pounding as I hoped they would both survive.

Who would enjoy this?

Anyone who likes thrilling adventure stories about survival, courage, relationships about trust, with a touch of magic thrown in!

Crater Lake by Jennifer Killick - Science fiction

Things are not as they should be at Crater Lake Activity Centre. It's a race for five friends to save themselves and all their friends. And they must never fall asleep!

His name was Wren by Rob Winters - Science fiction, Year 8+

Two timelines converge when Max moves to a country village with his mother and uncovers the truth behind a mystery that has surrounded the village for 80 years.

Voyages in the underworld of Orpheus Black
by Marcus Sedgwick and Julian Sedgwick

Historical fiction, poetic fiction, Diary fiction, mythology, war stories, brothers

I really enjoyed this book. It is a beautifully crafted and sensitively written novel. I loved the way that Orpheus in the underworld connected with the two brothers and their close relationship as they experience the impact of war. I liked the unique way in which the story alternated with the mythological poem and how the Sedgwick brothers co-wrote the story. The artwork is brilliant bringing visual impact to the storyline.

Who would enjoy this?...

Anyone who enjoys reading about the real-life experiences of war, mythology and poetry and loves art.