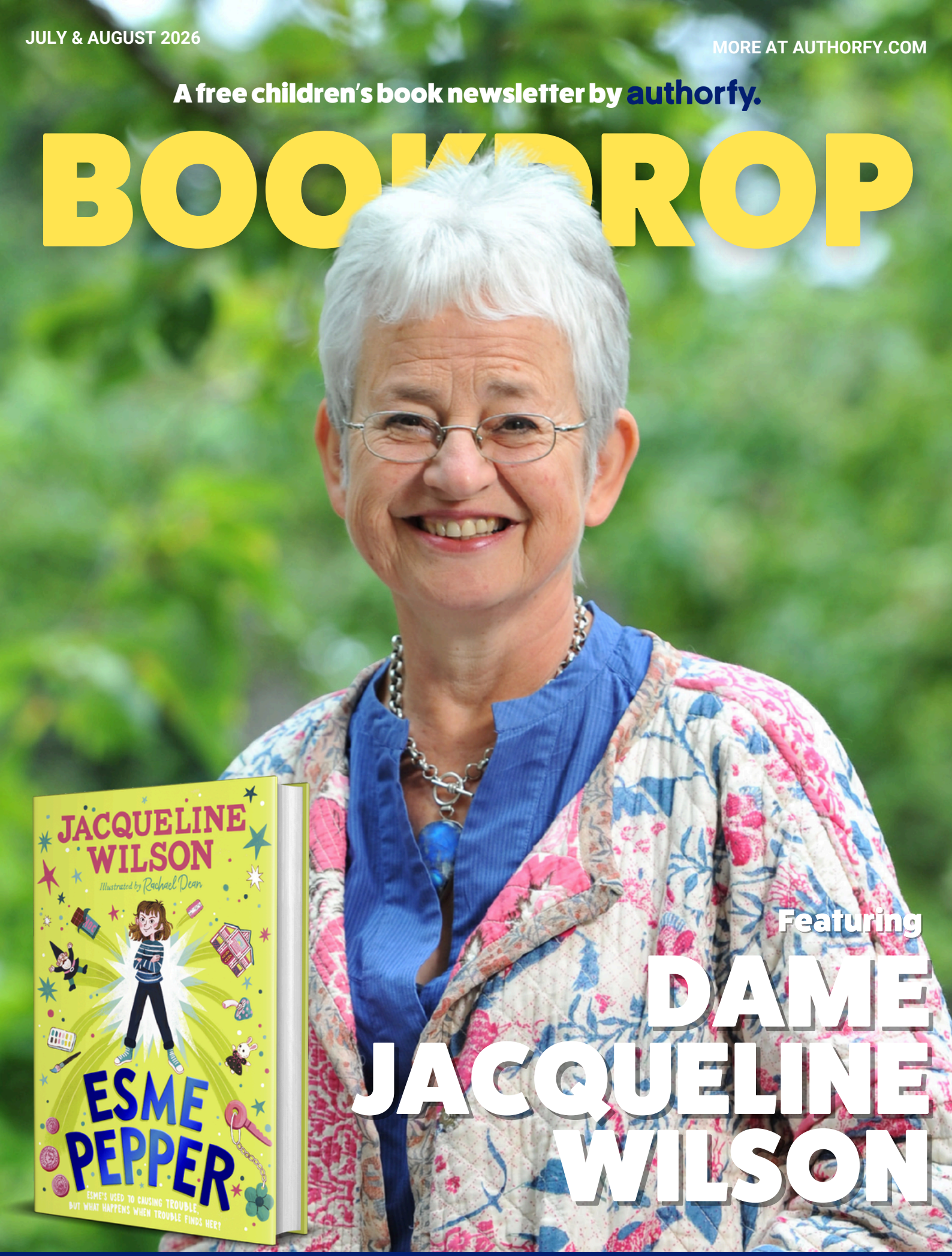
JULY & AUGUST 2026

MORE AT AUTHORFY.COM

A free children's book newsletter by authorfy.

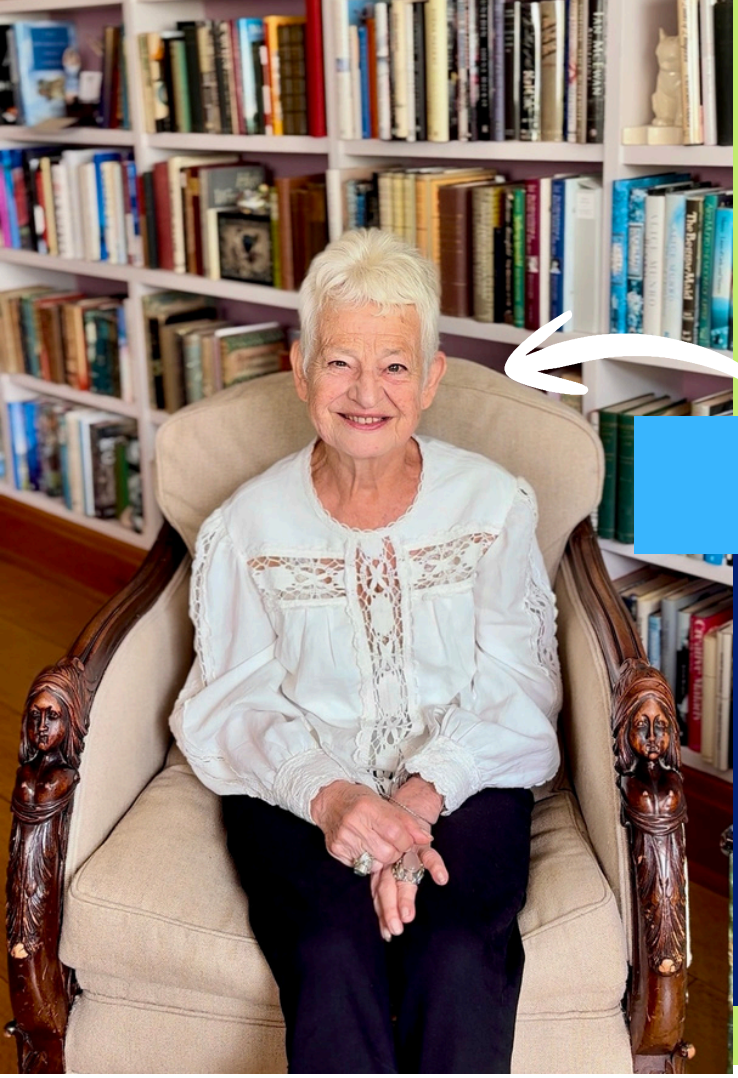
BOOKDROP



Featuring

DAME JACQUELINE WILSON

Also featuring: Harriet Muncaster, Leia Ham, Tom Percival, Pamela Butchart, Alex Milway and more



Q&A

WITH JACQUELINE WILSON

Jacqueline Wilson wrote her first novel when she was nine years old, and she has been writing ever since. She is now one of Britain's bestselling and most beloved children's authors. She has written over 100 books and is the creator of characters such as Tracy Beaker and Hetty Feather. Jacqueline is a great reader, and has amassed over 20,000 books, along with her famous collection of silver rings!

Q What inspired you to write ESME PEPPER?

I'll give you a really weird answer: garden gnomes! I've always been fascinated by the way some people display them in their gardens, making them peep out from behind bushes, perch on a step, even fish from a little pond, as if they were real. I imagined an elderly man collecting his gnomes and pottering with them in his front garden, almost as if he were playing with them. I wondered what would happen if a small fierce streetwise child came into his life. How would they get on? Perhaps she could be a foster child, bitterly resenting being taken into care? But though she could be difficult, she'd also have a vivid imagination and be fascinated by the gnomes. And then what might happen?

Q Is Esme similar to Tracy Beaker in any way?

Esme is even fiercer than Tracy – but in a different sort of way. She's wily and tough and is very good at getting her own way, but inside she's vulnerable and missing her mum terribly. She's not afraid to take on the biggest scariest boy at her new school, but she also wants to play with her new friends and be one of the gang.

Q How long did it take you to write the book?

I think it took me four or five months to write Esme Pepper's story. I thought about her for a while when I was finishing another story, and then I wrote about her quickly with great enthusiasm. It was great fun pretending to be such a spirited child and seeing what she'd get up to next.

Click here to watch Jacqueline's video

illustrations (c) Sr Sanchez 2026

AN EXTRACT FROM 'ESME PEPPER'

ONE

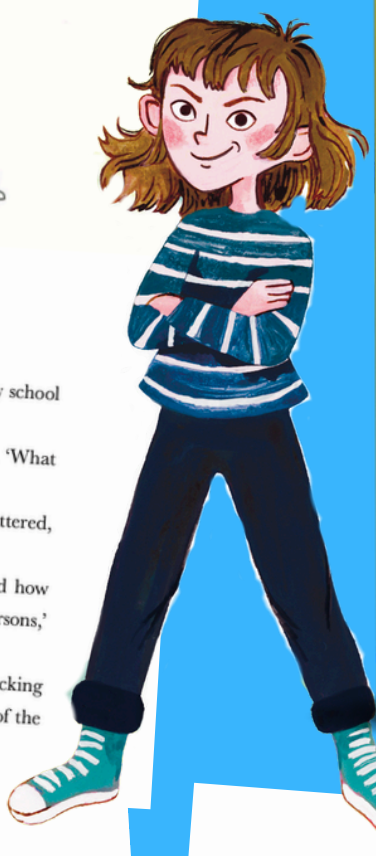
The bell rang. Home time! I jumped up, grabbing my school bag, and tipped my chair straight over.

'Esme Pepper!' said Mrs Parsons, sighing heavily. 'What on earth do you think you're doing?'

'Going home, miss,' I said. And then I muttered, 'Obviously,' which wasn't wise.

'Please don't talk back to me like that, Esme. And how many times have I told you, I'm not "miss", I'm Mrs Parsons,' she said snippily.

'Sorry, Mrs Parsons. I'm just in a hurry,' I said, picking up my chair and straightening it behind my desk. One of the



Click here to read the full extract

legs looked a little bit wonky, but I hoped it was nothing to do with me.

'I'm sure the whole class is in a hurry, but now you're the one holding everyone up, Esme, because you didn't wait until I said you could all stand up and go,' she said, folding her arms and shaking her head at me. 'Now you can sit down again and wait quietly until I'm ready to say you can leave.'

She was unbelievably strict. She was like that with all of us, but particularly me. Mum said she'd come down to the school and have it out with her, but I didn't think that was wise either. I had a feeling she'd only make the situation worse. Mum had a habit of falling out with people. Never me though. She's the best mum in the whole world to me. That was why I was so desperate to get out of school today. She'd promised she was getting me a big surprise – and I was pretty sure what it was going to be!

I was fizzy in my head with excitement, wanting to jump up and down, but I knew that would irritate Mrs Parsons even more. In fact, she might just keep me in all by myself out of spite. So I said in my head, '*Calm down, Esme!*' and I managed to sit down meekly on my chair and murmur, 'Sorry, Mrs Parsons.'

I think it annoyed her even more that I was doing as I was told because now she had no reason to keep telling me off. She

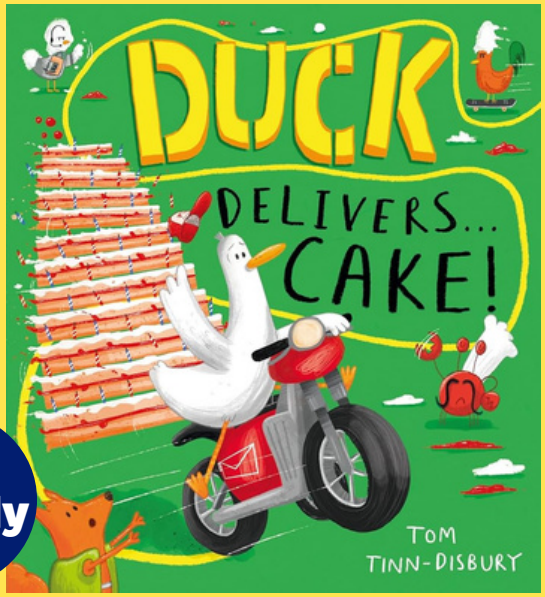
waited several beats, her chin up hopefully for further signs of protest, but I stayed sitting where I was, though my legs were so fidgety I had to rock the chair a little bit.

Disaster! The chair collapsed under me, I fell to the floor, yelling a very rude word indeed, and the whole class roared with laughter. Mrs Parsons treated me as if I'd done it on purpose and was very, very angry. You know, purple face, spittle coming out of her mouth, hands clenched. I bet she wanted to unclench them and go smack-smack-smack but teachers aren't allowed to do that. Mum said she used to get whacked quite a lot when *she* was at school, but that might just be one of her stories.

NEW CHILDREN'S BOOKS:
Picture Books & Early Readers

Out 2nd July

Pog and Pickle take young readers on a wildly entertaining and unexpected adventure of bravery, friendship and new experiences.



Out 16th July

Join the adventure with this laugh-out-loud story about perseverance, delivery chaos and . . . cake! The second title in the hilarious 'Duck Delivers' series.

Out 2nd July

This reassuring and funny book is the perfect springboard for talking to children about asking for help - because giving and receiving help can be one of life's greatest joys.

CLICK HERE TO READ EXTRACTS FROM THESE BOOKS

NEW CHILDREN'S BOOKS:

Middle Grade: ages 7+

Out 2nd July

It's Bella's first day as Captain of the Sunshine! But commanding a legendary cruise ship like the Sunshine is no easy task...

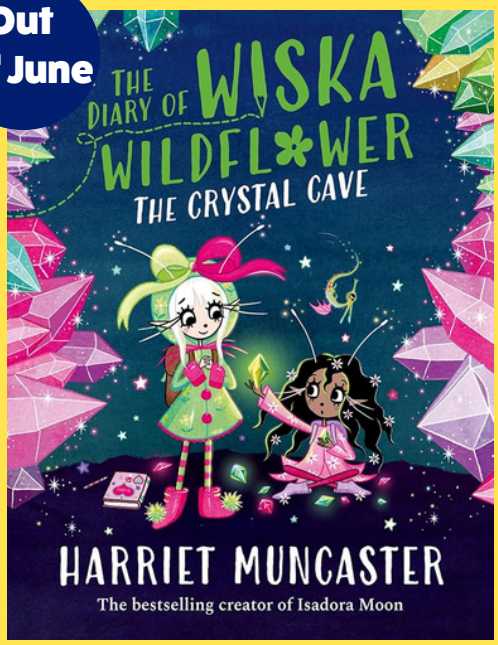
A flamboyantly fun series set on a cruise ship for animals

The first in an enchanting four-book series

Fully illustrated in two-colour throughout

CLICK HERE TO READ EXTRACT

Out 4th June



The enchanting story of Wiska Wildflower's first school expedition - to one of the most dangerous places in all of Wiskling Wood!

Told in diary format and packed with beautiful full-colour illustrations

Follows book 1: THE DIARY OF WISKA WILDFLOWER: THE NEW SCHOOL

From the creator of ISADORA MOON

CLICK HERE TO READ EXTRACT

Out 30th July

Discover whirling planetary jet streams, hurricanes, monsoons, dust storms and other phenomena with TV weather presenter & meteorologist Liam Dutton.

An awe-inspiring take on the weather for curious readers

Learn about the smallest raindrop to the impact of climate change

A globetrotting tour of the world's wildest weather

CLICK HERE TO READ EXTRACT

NEW CHILDREN'S BOOKS:

Middle Grade: ages 9+

Out 2nd July

As rain pours down and the water rises on Jelly's first school trip with her new school, Jelly and Lincoln have to put aside their fears to outrun the storm.

Gripping and thought-provoking

Perfect for fans of THE EXPLORER, WILDLANDS, and FOXLIGHT

From the author of WHERE THE WORLD TURNS WILD

CLICK HERE TO READ EXTRACT

Out 30th July

Gemma is a Taylor Swift superfan. As she journals the build-up to her first Taylor concert, she's also navigating school, friendships AND trying to become a songwriter herself.

A new series about the lives of pop stars through the eyes of a superfan

A warm and funny tween diary narrative about owning who you are and following your dreams

CLICK HERE TO READ EXTRACT

Out 4th June

Welcome to a world that depends on magic - but where each person's magic fades away before they reach adulthood.

A brand new, highly-illustrated magic school series to obsess over

'Truly the stuff of magic' - Jamie Littler

CLICK HERE TO READ EXTRACT

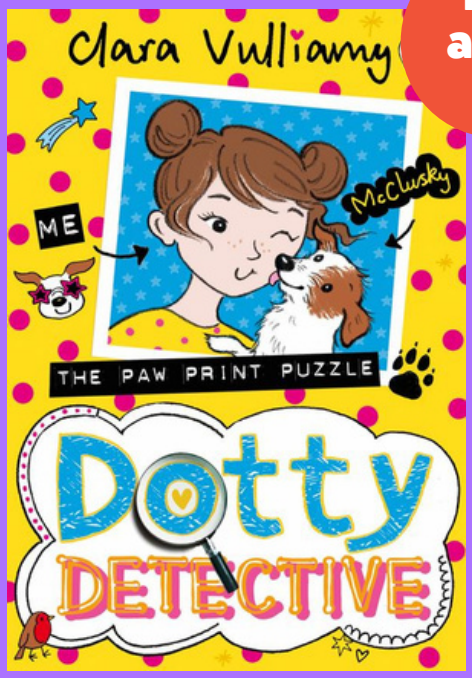
BOOK REVIEWS & RECOMMENDATIONS

For ages 6+

Who knew one guinea pig could get into so much trouble? Well for Harry Stevenson it should be his middle name or in fact first name! Mischievous Harry loves long naps, snuggling in his hay and most of all his owner Billy. There are two adventures in this book to enjoy. The first is about Harry moving house but he ends up in a side salad instead after many mishaps (food features a lot in his life). The second story Harry is at a party in his new house but he goes missing ... again! Harry Stevenson is certainly not your average hamster.

Primary School Teacher Mrs Ravenor

For ages 7+



Dot is a clever, kind character who loves dogs. In this story, her family visit their favourite farm. At the farm, there is a black and white bunny that Dot's sibling twins adore. After a few days, the fruit at home starts disappearing and the twins start acting suspiciously. Dot has to work quickly to solve the case before it ruins her mum's birthday afternoon tea. The book is engaging and interesting. It includes funny phrases in it - an example would be 'we barked up the wrong tree' when solving a mystery about an animal.

Delilah, age 9

Reading for Pleasure

Tips from the Open University team

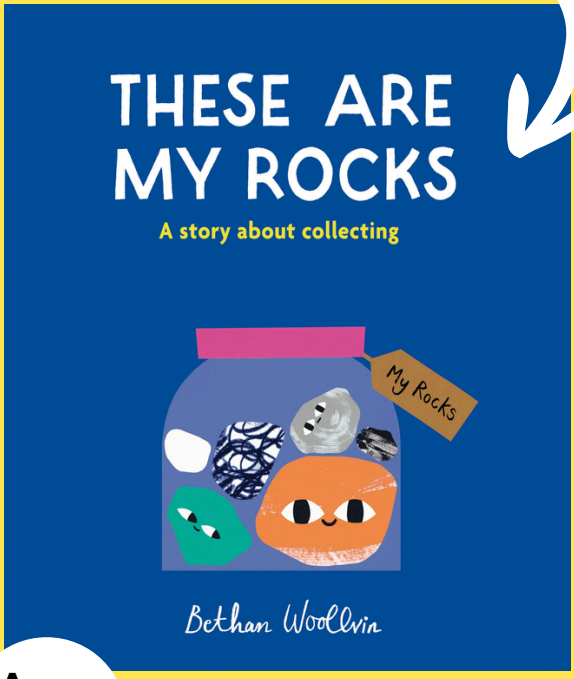
Supporting Summer Reading

Reading can travel with you through the summer holidays in all sorts of ways. You and your child might enjoy:

- Reading outside in a new spot
- Dipping into magazines, comics or fact books
- Listening to an audiobook story on the move
- Revisiting old favourites as well as discovering new ones together

A few relaxed moments of reading together can help keep connection, confidence and enjoyment growing. To download the OU's Summer Reading Adventure resource, click here or visit: ourfp.org/supporting-rah/summer-reading-adventure

The Reading for Pleasure team recommend...



Ages 3+

Playful illustrations

Perfect for sharing, noticing and wondering together

Get ideas for creating your own collections at home!

Reading for Pleasure

The Open University

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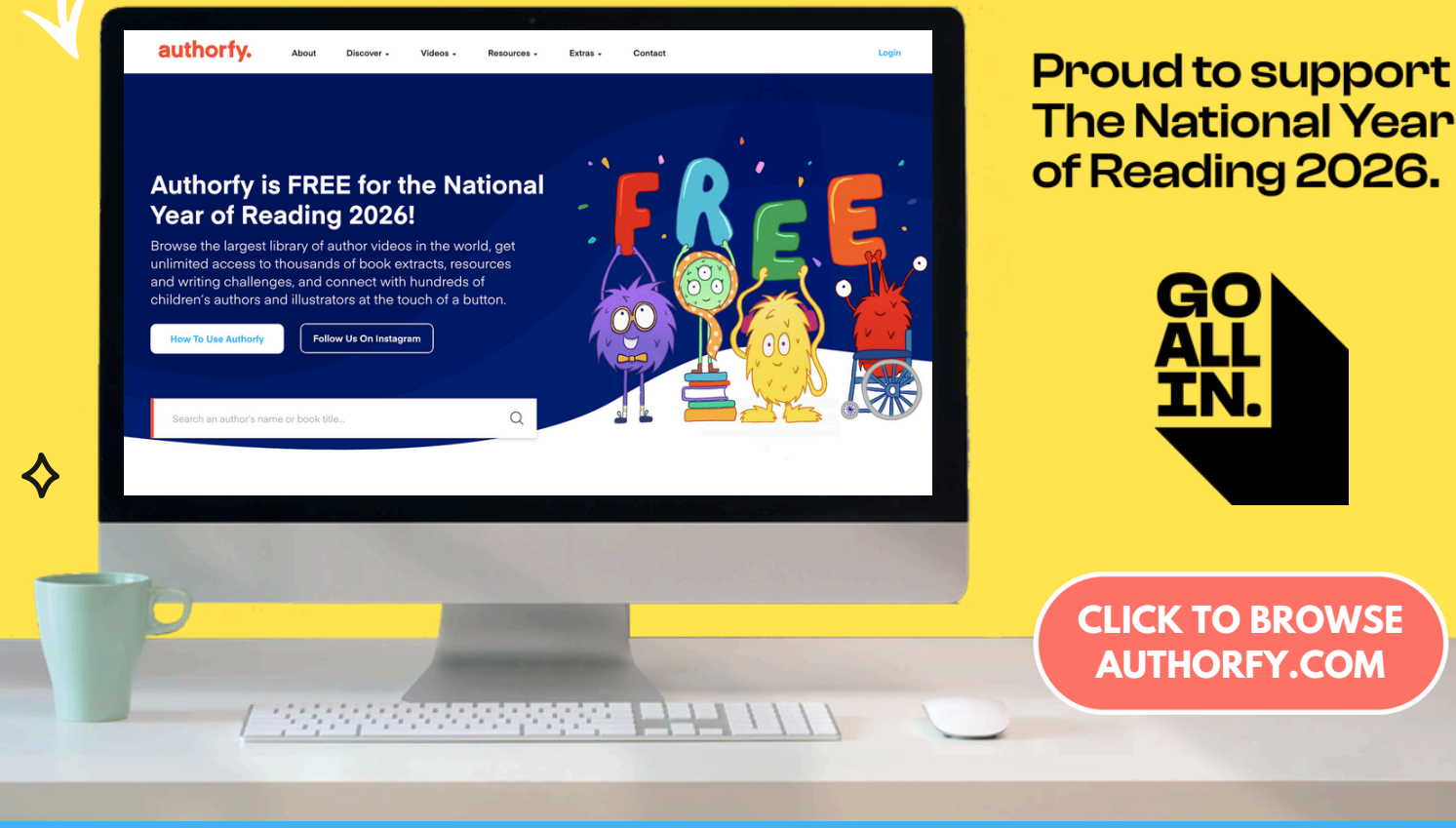

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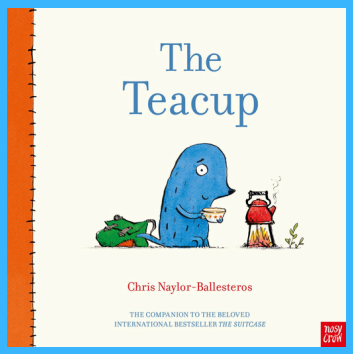
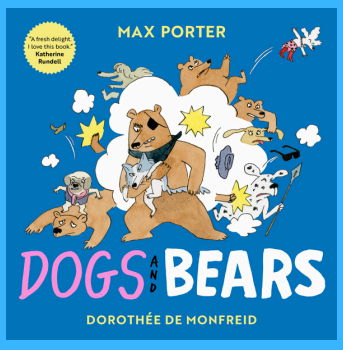
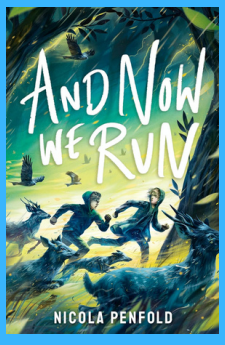
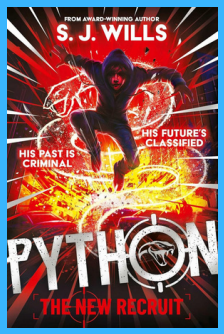
July Books of the Month on Authorfy









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SLA – School Library Association

Reading for Pleasure

Empathy Lab – READ • CONNECT • ACT

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