

A writing magazine

CELEBRATING OUR 10TH ISSUE

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# PaperBound

Issue 10 Winter 2022-23

For the young, and the young at heart

## AUTHOR INTERVIEWS with

HELENA CLOSE  
A.F. HARROLD  
MAGGIE HORNE  
MAYA MACGREGOR  
ELOISE WILLIAMS  
& LAUREN WOLK

### PLUS

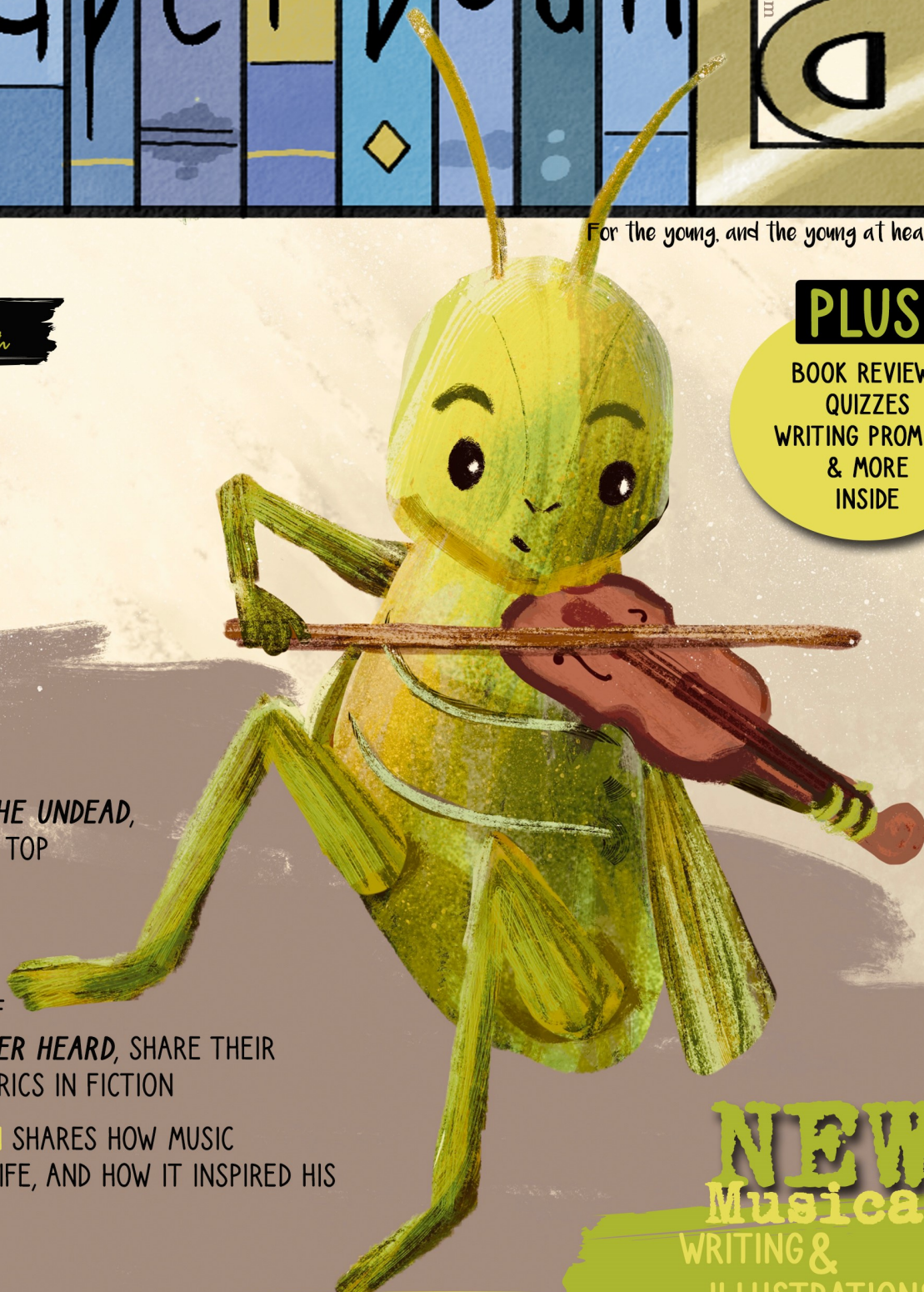
BOOK REVIEWS  
QUIZZES  
WRITING PROMPTS  
& MORE  
INSIDE

## DON'T MISS

AUTHOR OF *MINA AND THE UNDEAD*,  
**AMY MCCA**W SHARES HER TOP  
SPOOKY WINTER BOOK  
RECOMMENDATIONS

**BECKY JERAMS** AND  
**ELLIE WYATT**, AUTHORS OF  
*THE SONGS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD*, SHARE THEIR  
TOP TIPS FOR WRITING LYRICS IN FICTION

AUTHOR **MARK BALLABON** SHARES HOW MUSIC  
CAN BRING A STORY TO LIFE, AND HOW IT INSPIRED HIS  
NOVEL, *HOME*



**NEW**  
**Musical**  
WRITING &  
ILLUSTRATIONS  
From

STEVE BLACKMAN

CARMEN CARREIRA

STEPHANIE HENSON

JAYNE LEADBETTER

CLAIRE LEWIS

CHRISTY MIHALY

ELLIE MITTEN

LISA VARCHOL PERRON

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CARYS TOMOS



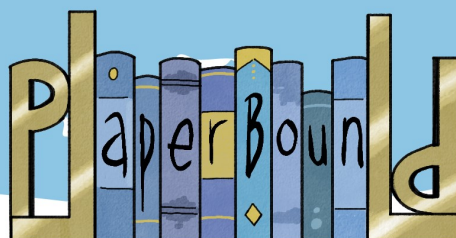
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Find out more about our cover illustrator,  
Shirley Shelby, on page 62.

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PaperBound Magazine is a quarterly online magazine for the young, and the young at heart. It is dedicated to showcasing authors and illustrators of children's and young adult fiction. It strives to deliver inspiring content, new and exciting writing, book recommendations and top tips for aspiring young writers. PaperBound has been created by Emily, Lucy and Rayan who met while studying an MA in Writing for Young People at Bath Spa University.

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# Letter from the editors

## Winter 2022-23

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our 10th issue! Can you believe it? We hope you enjoy our new issue, full of music inspired writing and illustrations, author interviews, inspiring articles, book reviews, and more.

Huge thanks to all of our contributors, and to the publishers and publicists who help put us in touch with the fantastic authors and books you see featured every issue. We couldn't do any of it without your help.

If you'd like to be a part of a future issue, please get in touch. We're always on the look out for new writing and illustrations as well as interviews, articles and book reviews. Our spring 2023 theme is GREEN. Check out our website for more details.

We hope you enjoy the winter issue!

Happy reading!

Emily, Lucy and Rayan

If you would like to contribute to a future issue, tell us what you thought of this one, or contact us about anything else, we'd love to hear from you.

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# Contents

Winter 2022-23

## Special Features

### 10 Chilling YA Horror Recommendations

Author of the *Mina and the Undead* series, **Amy McCaw** compiles her top spooky reads for the winter.

### 35 How to Write Lyrics in Fiction

Top tips from **Becky Jerams** and **Ellie Wyatt**, authors of *The Songs You've Never Heard*, on how to write lyrics in fiction.

### 44 Composing a Soundtrack to a YA Novel

**Mark Ballabon**, author of *Home: My life in the Universe*, shares how music inspires his writing.

## Regular Features

### 9 Your Letters

### 18 Printable Writing Prompts

### 29 Music Bookshelf

This issue's bookshelf is packed full of books about music, perfect for middle grade and young adults. Happy Reading!

### 37 Book Review Corner

Here you'll be able to find reviews of new releases, those coming soon and reader favourites.

### 56 Quizzes

Once downloaded, this contents page is interactive. To jump to a page just click on the article you want to read.



# Interviews

## 6 Lauren Wolk

Author of *Wolf Hollow*, Lauren Wolk, tells us all about the sequel, *My Own Lightning*.

## 14 Helena Close

We chatted to Helena Close all about her brand new novel, *Things I Know*.

## 20 Maya MacGregor

Maya MacGregor spoke to us about the inspiration behind their new novel, *The Many Half-Lived Lives of Sam Sylvester*.

## 32 Maggie Horne

Read all about Maggie Horne's new and important novel, *Hazel Hill is Gonna Win This One*.

## 40 A.F. Harrold

A.F. Harrold gives us an insight into writing his new novel *The Worlds We Leave Behind*.

## 52 Eloise Williams

We caught up with Eloise Williams to chat about her new middle grade novel *Honesty and Lies*.

# New Music Writing & Illustrations

## 12 Nature's Soundtrack

by Stephanie Henson

## 17 Conductor

by Christy Mihaly

## 25 Dad's Guitar

by Karen F. Pierce

## 30 City Song

by Lisa Varchol Perron

## 47 The Music of the Vale

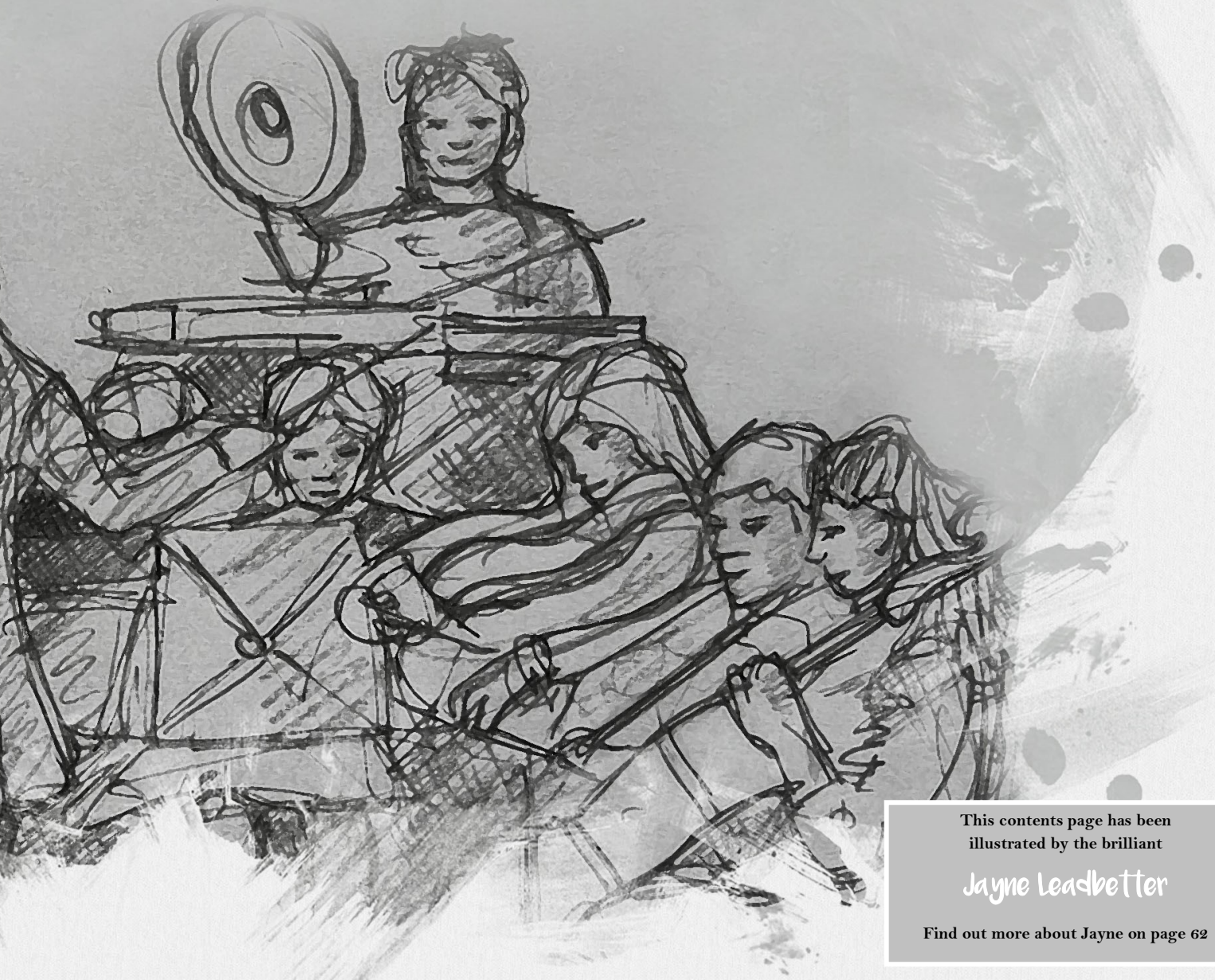
by Steve Blackman

## 58 The Boy and the Music Box

by Ellie Mitten

## 62 Meet the illustrators

Read all about this issue's featured artists and illustrators: Shirley Shelby, Carys Tomos, Carmen Carreira, Claire Lewis, Ellie Mitten and Jayne Leadbetter

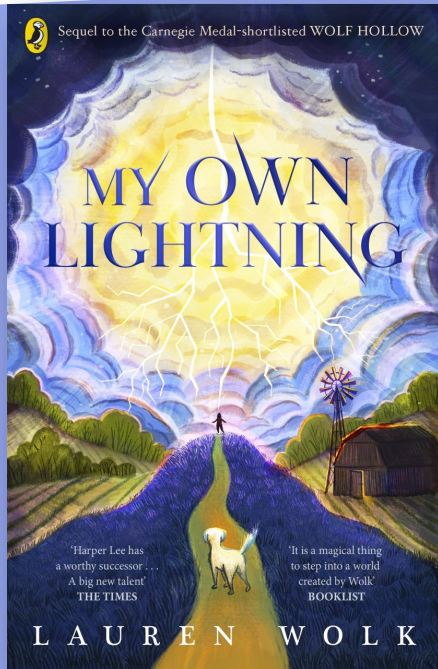


This contents page has been illustrated by the brilliant

Jayne Leadbetter

Find out more about Jayne on page 62





# Lauren Wolk

Join Lauren Wolk as we hear all about her new novel *My Own Lightning*, dubbed as a modern classic.

Could you tell us a little about *My Own Lightning*, and the inspiration behind it?

*My Own Lightning* is a sequel to *Wolf Hollow*, something I never expected to write. It's a product of the pandemic, a time of such turmoil and uncertainty (both because of COVID and the political situation in the U.S.) that I longed for the safety and security I had always felt on the family farm that inspired *Wolf Hollow*. But I was also intrigued by how I was being influenced by the chaos around me, and I wanted to explore how Annabelle would react to a similar shock. How it would make her see the world differently. How it would teach her to look past the obvious to hidden truths ... about herself and others. Since I've always been fascinated

with the untapped potential of the hidden brain - and how some of its mysteries are revealed by lightning strikes and other traumatic events - I decided that Annabelle's "shock" should be literal. So I sent her out into a summer storm and then watched what happened next.

*My Own Lightning* takes place in the 1940s and has some beautiful locations, such as the farm and Wolf Hollow. What draws you to this time period? And are any settings based on real locations?

I grew up listening to my mother's stories about her childhood in the 1940s on the family farm in Pennsylvania, and I spent quite a lot of time on that farm

myself. *Wolf Hollow* and *My Own Lightning* are my way of paying tribute to that time, that place, my family, and the natural world. I owe a great deal to my mother, especially, for sharing the memories that inspired my work. But I am indebted to my grandparents and my uncles as well, all of whom devoted so much of their lives to the land.

“ I TRUST MY CHARACTERS ENOUGH TO FOLLOW WHERE THEY LEAD. ”

*Annabelle is struck by lightning at the beginning of the novel and gets heightened senses and the ability to understand dogs. What powers would you want if you were struck by lightning?*

What a great question! Honestly, I'd like a whole boatload of powers – including being able to sing beautifully and fly (of course) – but those are far-fetched. I simply haven't got the mechanics for such things. But people have gained some really extraordinary abilities from lightning strikes and traumatic brain injuries – like being able to compose music and play the piano ... or do complex math ... or speak foreign languages. I'd be delighted to speak another language well. Especially the language of dogs and other creatures. Trees? I'd be over the moon.

*My Own Lightning* is a sequel. What was it like to take the characters from *Wolf Hollow* on a whole new adventure?

Because I write without a map, I'm always surprised by what I encounter as I write a novel. Of course, I have some influence on the route I take, but I trust my characters enough to follow where they lead. And I trust Annabelle to my bones. She's a very able guide. As I wrote *My Own Lightning*, however, I was so baffled by the state of the world in general and the U.S. in particular that I allowed a fair bit of that confusion to muck up the works. Annabelle and I got lost a couple of times, following subplots down rabbit holes, running in circles, and falling down a lot. It was only after a couple of drafts that I managed (with the help of my editor) to shut out the noise around me and listen to what mattered most to Annabelle and her story. In the end, it was a simple one that focused on giving people second chances and doing the hard work it takes to be fair in a world that seldom is.

*Dogs play a big role in *My Own Lightning*. How hard was it writing them in danger?*

It was difficult to put my beloved dog characters in harm's way. But I had made a decision early in the book that I would not allow any of them to die. I rarely make hard and fast decisions about a book, but in this case I did. I was therefore able to put them at risk without losing too much sleep. It was



hard to see them get hurt, but it was very satisfying to see them survive.

“ THEN I REMINDED MYSELF THAT ALL OF ART AND LITERATURE ARE FILLED WITH ECHOES. THEY'RE INEVITABLE. ”

You have been called a successor to Harper Lee by *The Times*, how did that feel?


It's wonderful to be compared to such an icon. Truly. But it's also a bit scary, first because I always want my work to be mine, not an echo of someone else's ... and, second, because Harper Lee has very big shoes I can't possibly hope to fill. I honestly didn't see any parallels between my work and hers, largely because I was so inspired by my own family history and legacy, and I was shocked when people started to point

### LAUREN'S WRITING PROMPT

Write a brief passage describing a place you know well. Make sure you are inspired by all of your senses. Likewise, work hard to include sensory details (how your chosen place looks, smells, tastes, sounds, feels) so your readers can experience it just as you have.

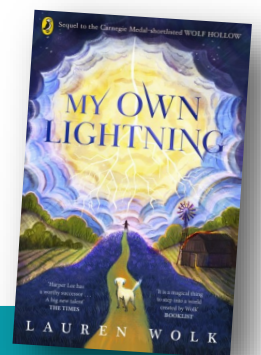
out plot and character similarities between *Wolf Hollow* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Then I reminded myself that all of art and literature are filled with echoes. They're inevitable. But I do work hard to make sure they're not deliberate.

Is *My Own Lightning* the last we might see of Annabelle? Or is there more to come?

I'd love to write a third *Wolf Hollow* book at some point. And I'm excited about writing a sequel to each of my other books as well; *Beyond the Bright Sea* and *Echo Mountain*. (I can't tell you how many school children have asked for such things ... and plotted them all out for me!) But I've nearly finished a brand new novel with different characters, and I have another one I plan to rewrite after that. So it may be a while before I meet up with Annabelle again (or Crow or Ellie). 

*My Own Lightning* is published by Penguin and available in the US and UK.

It will soon be available in several other languages/countries, including France, Germany, and Poland.



## Lauren Wolk

Lauren Wolk is a poet and artist, best known for her novels, especially the New York Times bestselling and Newbery Honor-winning *Wolf Hollow* (2016), its sequel, *My Own Lightning* (2022), the Scott O'Dell Award-winning *Beyond the Bright Sea* (2017), and *Echo Mountain* (2020).



# Your Letters



Dear PaperBound,

As a keen crafter, I love to share my passion at school in our library - this has grown from strength to strength. So much so that for the past 5 years I have run a successful bookmark club. Our Year 7 pupils love it, and we have such fun creating.

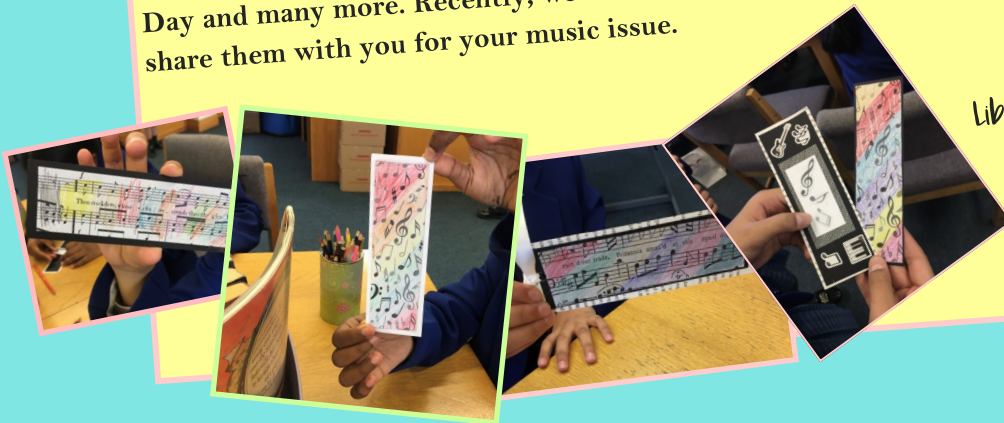
Bookmarks are a BIG part of our library, and we always have lots of free ones available. We also have some extra special ones on display - we just ask for a small donation to the Guide Dog Trust collection box. Last year we raised £50 from donations.

The club attracts between 15/20 pupils per session. It's a way for pupils to really relax and make new friends while learning new crafting skills. It's a vital part of our wellbeing to be able to retreat to a place of calmness. Students have even used the club as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award.

The club costs nothing to run - just passion and interest. We rely on donations from school such as off cuts of card from the Reprographics Dept. Staff members often bring in crafting items we can use, and I am obsessed with collecting anything and everything which will go into helping us create.

Our library is a hive of activity - the most popular club in our library must be our bookmark club. Previous themes have included: Christmas, World Book Day, National Poetry Day and many more. Recently, we created bookmarks on the theme of music and wanted to share them with you for your music issue.

V. B. Dewhurst  
Librarian/Head of Senior Library  
OEGS  
Blackburn



If you're doing anything bookish and would like to share it with us, we'd love to hear from you. Or, if you have any book or writing related questions for us, get in touch: [paperboundmagazine@outlook.com](mailto:paperboundmagazine@outlook.com)



# Chilling

# YA

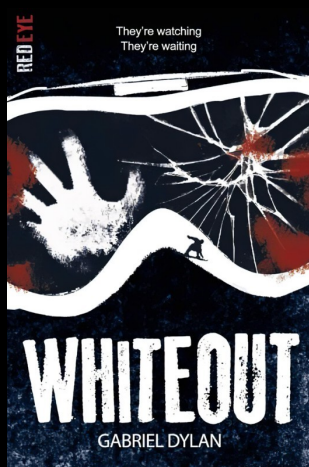
Author of *Mina and the Undead* and *Mina and the Slayers*, **Amy McCaw**, takes us through some of her favourite spooky reads, perfect for winter.



# HORROR

Winter is one of the best times to read YA horror. Long, dark evenings stretch ahead, and the fire is flickering. So grab a hot chocolate and a cosy blanket and pick up one of these spooky offerings.

**Whiteout** by Gabriel Dylan is the



ultimate winter scare fest. Picture a remote ski resort where everyone on a school holiday is trapped. Then the bodies start turning up... The writing is atmospheric, and it's

perfectly paced to keep you turning the pages. This is a truly terrifying vampire story with plenty of jump scares and a dark, twisty plot.

**Wranglestone** by Darren Charlton was one of my favourite reads of 2020.

The human race is threatened by zombies,



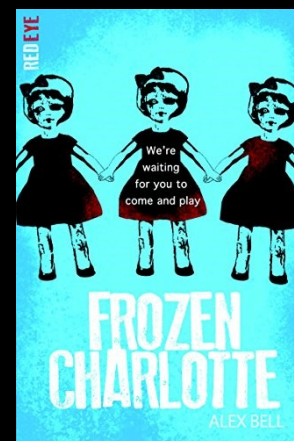
and our main characters wait anxiously as their lake sanctuary freezes around them. It's a tense post-apocalyptic story with a western feel and has a

gorgeous love story between two teenage boys at its heart.

**Frozen Charlotte** by Alex Bell is set

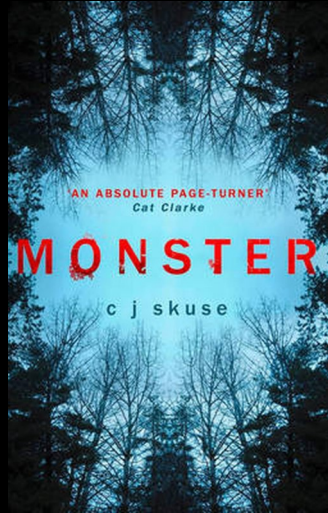
in summer, but it's based on a deliciously creepy winter urban legend. Featuring

haunted dolls and a remote boarding house setting, this one is chilling at any time of year. It's not often that a book seeps into my everyday life – it had me seeing blurs in my peripheral vision!

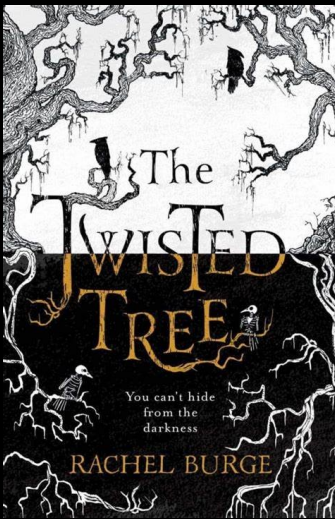


**Monster** by CJ Skuse is a tense

boarding school story about a girl trapped at school over winter break amidst rumours of a mysterious beast stalking the area. The claustrophobic setting just keeps piling on the tension. Even thinking about it is making me want to reread!



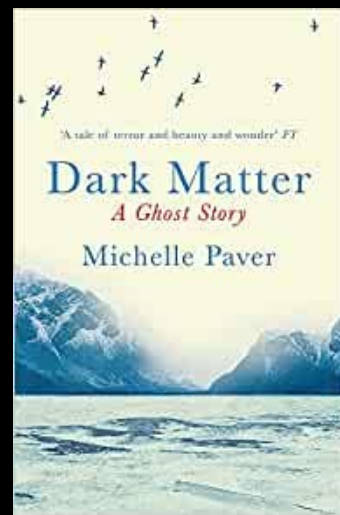
**The Twisted Tree** by Rachel Burge




is about a girl who can tell things about a person by touching their clothes. She goes to visit her grandmother and things take an unsettling turn... It's a contemporary

ghost story set in the remote snowy landscape of Norway, and it's full of evocative descriptions and twists.

**Dark Matter** by Michelle Paver is an adult novel, but I couldn't talk about wintry horror without giving it a mention. Jack joins an Arctic expedition in the 1930s. When they arrive in the Arctic, things quickly turn sinister, and something is stalking the party... It's one of the most genuinely unsettling books I've read, and the writing is beautiful!



I hope some of these books will transport you to their spooky settings while you're tucked up safe inside. Find me on social media if you'd like more book recs! 

## Amy McCaw

Amy McCaw is the author of the award-winning and bestselling debut novel *Mina and the Undead* and the sequel *Mina and the Slayers* (published September 2022). You can find her on Twitter and Instagram @yaundermyskin, @amymccawauthor on Tiktok and at Amy McCaw on YouTube.





New Writing

# Nature's Soundtrack

by Stephanie Henson




## Stephanie Henson


Stephanie lives with her family in Southeastern, Pennsylvania, but is originally from Central, New Jersey. She studied Communications at Rider University, where she is also currently pursuing a Certificate in Publishing and Professional Writing.

Writing and storytelling have been her passion for a long time. She has been published in various publications, including children's poems in *The Dirigible Balloon* and *Buzgaga Online*, and has a children's poetry book *In the Right Lane* scheduled for release in December 2022, in affiliation with *Experiments in Fiction*.

Stephanie enjoys reading, theatre, mindless web searching, Netflix binges, sunflowers, sports, and anything related to coffee!



It was a rainy day when I heard,  
Nature's soundtrack on a loop.  
Droplets of water dancing on the roof,  
Howling of the wind's gleeful approval,  
Tapping of leaves as precipitations weighs,  
Birds chirping in tempo from the safety of their nest,  
Geese cackling at the ripples of the pond,  
The buzz of bees playing trumpets against windows.  
Screaming clicks of the cicadas burrowing down,  
Thunder drums beats of rhythmic patterns in the sky.  
Lightning provides epic strobes of pyrotechnics,  
Oh this melodic performance of Mother Earth -  
I want to perform in nature's concert too.



You can find out more about Stephanie here:  
[www.stephanie-henson.weebly.com](http://www.stephanie-henson.weebly.com) Twitter: @stepha\_henson



# Helena Close



GRIEF.  
FRIENDSHIP.  
BELONGING.

Successful YA author Helena Close has released a new book that we just couldn't put down! We chatted with her about her new release, *Things I Know*, and why she wanted to tell this story, as well as sharing her very own writing advice.

## CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR NEW YA NOVEL *THINGS I KNOW*?

I always find this question so difficult to answer. It's the story of eighteen year old Saoirse and her struggle through trauma, toxic friendship and loss. It deals with mental health, teenage suicide and spiralling anxiety and sadness but it is also a story about hope and recovery.

YOUR MAIN CHARACTER, SAOIRSE, IS GRIEVING THE LOSS OF HER MOTHER THROUGHOUT THIS BOOK, THEN UNEXPECTEDLY MUST GRIEVE THE LOSS OF AN EX BOYFRIEND TOO. WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE ABOUT THESE DIFFICULT TOPICS?

*Things I Know* follows Saoirse and her journey through the difficulties and traumas of mental illness, suicide, bereavement and eventual recovery. My youngest daughter was diagnosed with cancer, aged just sixteen, and suffered

mental health issues post chemotherapy. She accessed the public mental health system and it was an eye-opener. In some ways, even a shocker. I didn't want to write about mental health – but I had to. I suppose I was lucky (or unlucky) that I had witnessed my daughter's journey and had a body of research already available. I also consulted professionals, teenagers, anyone who would talk to me about their own struggles and experiences. People wanted to talk. I think that surprised me. They wanted to talk about counsellors, good and bad, about medication, about the ongoing day to day struggle, about panic attacks, crippling anxiety, unresolved trauma.

**THIS BOOK IS SET IN A SMALL TOWN, WHERE SAOIRSE FEELS ISOLATED COMPARED TO WHERE SHE LIVED BEFORE. IT ALSO FEATURES IRISH PHRASES AND DIALECT, ROOTING THE READER TO THE SETTING. WAS THIS TOWN INSPIRED BY SOMEWHERE YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH YOURSELF?**

We moved to a small town in West Clare when my youngest daughters were thirteen and nine, and spent six years there before returning to Limerick. It was a stunningly beautiful location but the daughters were city children at heart! I was immersed in a rural community, so dialect, vernacular etc. came easily to me. I think it's important to anchor stories in language that young people are familiar with and use

themselves. Language that comes from the setting. There is a tendency sometimes in writing to sweep dialect and the vernacular away and I think stories lose a sense of place and personality as a result. Language is organic to story, it's not something that should be imposed on it.

“ WE SHOULDN'T SHY AWAY FROM DIFFICULT THEMES, ESPECIALLY WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE CONCERNED. ”

**WHAT DO YOU HOPE THIS BOOK MIGHT OFFER TO A YOUNG PERSON STRUGGLING WITH MENTAL HEALTH?**

I'm not an expert on mental health but I researched extensively to get the balance right. I wanted young people to see themselves in the story, to be able to relate to Saoirse, in all her mess and sadness and hope. We shouldn't shy away from difficult themes, especially where young people are concerned. *Things I Know* is not *Five Go Down To The Sea for Mental Health*. It's an honest and challenging read about mental health and the taboos surrounding it, about grief and how we deal or don't deal with it, counselling, medication and professional help. If the voice and story ring true, young people will get it. They will understand and empathise. They




will see themselves in the story, be comforted and consoled.

“ THERE IS A TENDENCY  
SOMETIMES TO SWEEP DIALECT  
AND THE VERNACULAR AWAY.  
STORIES LOSE A SENSE OF  
PLACE AND PERSONALITY AS A  
RESULT. ”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ASPIRING WRITERS WHO WANT TO WRITE YOUNG ADULT FICTION?

Respect young people. Familiarise yourself with their world, their challenges. Listen to them. To the way they speak, act, respond. Give your work to a teenage reader – that’s how you will know if your story works or not. They are extremely insightful critics. (And terrifyingly honest!)

YOU HAVE BEEN WRITING FULL TIME FOR OVER 20 YEARS. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT MIGHT COME NEXT FOR YOUR WRITING?

I am currently working on a new YA novel. I’m also working on a collection of short stories and have co-written a play for theatre that’s just about to be produced. 



*Things I Know* is published by Little Island Books. It’s currently available in Ireland, UK and America.

## Helena Close

From Limerick City in the west of Ireland, Helena Close has been writing full-time for twenty years. She has written or co-written seven novels, published by Hodder Headline (under the pseudonym Sarah O’Brien), Hachette Ireland and Blackstaff Press. *Things I Know* is her second young adult novel.



# conductor

by Christy Mihaly

Papa plays the saxophone  
and Mama thumps the drum.

Sister toots the slide trombone—  
she makes those low notes hum.

My brother puts on quite a show  
with riffs on his guitar.

But here's the thing that you should know:  
It's me who is the star.

I give a tap of my baton,  
and count off: 'one, two, three.'

Our family band is going on,  
and all eyes follow me.

## Christy Mihaly

Christy Mihaly has published numerous poems and books for young people, including two 2022 picture books: *Patience, Patches!* and *The Supreme Court and Us*. She lives in Vermont, where in her non-writing time she walks in the woods and plays the cello (though not simultaneously).

[www.christymihaly.com](http://www.christymihaly.com)





# PRINTABLE MUSIC WRITING PROMPTS



Don't forget to share your writing with us! We'd love to read it.  
[paperboundmag@outlook.com](mailto:paperboundmag@outlook.com)

★

1. Choose a song
2. Write/print out the lyrics.
3. Cut up each line, fold, and put in a small bag or box.
4. Now choose a piece of paper at random.
5. Use the line you have chosen as your first line, and keep writing.

You can write another song, a story, a poem, whatever you want. This activity can be done solo or in a group! Happy writing!

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# PRINTABLE MUSIC WRITING PROMPTS

**Carmen Carreira** has kindly shared another wonderful illustration with us, and it is just screaming to be used as a writing prompt. Using the image below as inspiration, start writing and see where it takes you. We'd love to read what you come up with so send them along to [paperboundmagazine@outlook.com](mailto:paperboundmagazine@outlook.com).

You can read more about Carmen on page 62





INTERVIEW

# Maya MacGregor



WE CHATTED WITH YA AUTHOR **MAYA**  
**MACGREGOR** ABOUT THEIR NEW NOVEL

*THE MANY HALF-LIVED LIVES*  
*OF SAM SYLVESTER*



★ CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR YA NOVEL *THE MANY HALF-LIVED LIVES OF SAM SYLVESTER*? WHAT A TITLE!

The title was actually the first thing that came to me. Originally, Sam had literal past lives, all of whom died before 19. Sam's 'half-lived lives' morphed to become their autistic special interest, stories Sam felt compelled to keep alive.

Writing Sam was very personal. It's a book about a non-binary, autistic teen who has grown up in rural Montana with their single dad, and after a near-fatal queerphobic attack, they move to Astoria, Oregon to start fresh ... and to a home where one of the half-lived lives ended. With the help of their new friends and love interest, Sam sets out to discover what happened to this boy, bringing them up against a real-life murderer who has been hiding in plain sight for 30 years.

HOW MUCH OF YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE DID YOU DRAW FROM, AS SOMEONE WHO IS NON-BINARY AND AUTISTIC, WHEN CREATING SAM AS A CHARACTER?

A lot! A lot of Sam's experiences in rural Montana are drawn from my own (I lived there from 1996-2003), and that was heavily influenced by the fact I've got two mums, and things were very hostile towards LGBTQ people. I

was deeply in the closet until I was almost 30.

I self-diagnosed with autism in my late 20s and got my formal diagnosis at 36. Sam's story was influenced by my own self-discovery and understanding parts of myself that made me different. I wanted to give Sam that self-knowledge earlier than I had it myself, almost as a way of giving a gift to my inner child.

“ I WANTED TO GIVE SAM THAT SELF-KNOWLEDGE ALMOST AS A WAY OF GIVING A GIFT TO MY INNER CHILD. ”



I think when it comes to non-binary identity, as an agender person who dislikes a lot of language around gender (I don't feel like I 'present' femme; to me, I'm a person wearing people clothes), it can be hard sometimes to assert myself. People tend to make assumptions because I don't bind my breasts, because I love makeup and glitter and dresses. So writing Sam required me to unpack a lot of the internal pressure I feel to be androgynous if I want to be 'taken seriously' as a non-binary person. I still find that difficult. I have a very complex relationship with the word 'woman' as it applies to myself, and I



don't think I was fully ready to write a character who was like me. Sam felt safer in that respect — they're genderqueer, and their personal style does lend itself more to androgyny than mine.

There are also a lot of interesting ways that gender and autism interact —autistics have coined the term 'gendermeh' or 'gendervague' to describe the fundamentally autistic experience of operating outwith [nb: Scottish usage, not a spelling error] expectations for gender and feelings about the same. It took another couple books to really lean into writing a character closer to my identity, but Sam was very important in getting to actively explore non-binary characters explicitly.

“

I THINK I WOULD'VE UNDERSTOOD MYSELF SO MUCH BETTER IF I'D HAD BOOKS LIKE [MINE], LIKE *HEARTSTOPPER*.

”

✦

HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU CONSIDER REPRESENTATION WITHIN YA NOVELS, NOT ONLY WHEN IT COMES TO READERS BUT ALSO TO YOURSELF?

Vital. Absolutely vital. Just a couple weeks ago, I was up in Aberdeen at

Hazlehead Academy, speaking to 70-80 pupils from LGBTQIA+ equality alliances across the city, and it was really emotional. When I walked into the school and saw Pride murals, Pride flags, and more, that struck me so hard. I couldn't have fathomed such a thing when I was that age. And the kids were so eager to speak with me, to ask me everything from how to cope with lack of motivation for writing to how to come out to their parents. It felt acutely important for Sam to exist for them, and for my own visibility.

I think I would've understood myself so much better if I'd had books like *Sam*, like *Heartstopper*, *The Gilded Ones*, *Felix Ever After*, *I Kissed Shara Wheeler* and so many others. The day *Sam* came out, there were eight other queer YA novels published. The same day. If we look at the power stories have to cultivate empathy, representation is integral. Humanity is a vast and vibrant tapestry—and there's room for everyone in this world.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE NOT WRITING?

I'm a full-time editor and a full-time author, and I am also a Gaelic singer and songwriter, so I keep very busy! I like to play video games when I have some downtime, and I love to read.

There's nothing I love more than escaping into the Highlands. Last week, I was in Argyll with my friend Hamish, spending the day hillwalking (25 kilometres, ooft!) and speaking Gaelic.

### WHAT BOOKS DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR FAVOURITES?

This is such a difficult question! I adore *The Shadow of the Wind* by the late Carlos Ruiz Zafón. It's a Gothic novel set in Catalonia after the Spanish Civil War, and it isn't fantasy, but it feels like fantasy. Barcelona is a character in and of itself. Another all-time favourite is *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle; in the book Meg has set ways of doing things, often gets in trouble for being inflexible and is very literal. I related to her so much as a kid. More recently, I absolutely loved Caitlin Starling's *The Death of Jane Lawrence*, which is a fantastic gothic fantasy with an autistic protagonist. Deliciously creepy and beautifully written.

### WHAT COMES NEXT FOR YOUR WRITING? ARE MORE YA NOVELS ON THE HORIZON?

In YA news, Astra Books for Young Readers picked up my option book, *The Evolving Truth of Ever-Stronger*

*Will*, which is in a similar vein to *Sam Sylvester* (non-binary autistic protagonist, some spooky paranormal stuff, resolving trauma and finding family). I'm so excited about this one. I'm actually working on edits for that right now, and you can expect some news about it in the next few months!

Last year, I wrote a YA fantasy called *Eatorra*, which features (surprise!) an autistic agender protagonist who accidentally stumbles upon the Fair Folk in the west of Scotland and becomes one of them.

It's deeply rooted in Gaelic tradition and lore, as well as intergenerational language transmission. We've not found a home for it yet, but as we say in

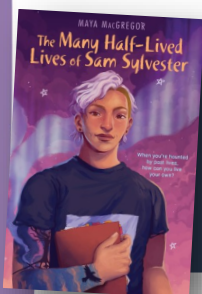
Gaelic, I remain beò an dòchas! (Alive in hope!)

Beyond that, I've got a lot of other projects happening. As Emmie Mears, I'm closing out an epic fantasy trilogy in July 2023 (the *Stonebreaker* series) with *Windtaker*, and that series has solid crossover potential for YA readers. I'm also working on something under NDA as we speak and I also write under a secret pen name, so I'm releasing something entirely different in another genre next month. I keep very busy!

“ HUMANITY IS A VAST AND VIBRANT TAPESTRY—AND THERE'S ROOM FOR EVERYONE IN THIS WORLD. ”



Oh, and I'm also working on my first Gaelic novel, called *Sùgan Sàile*, based on one of my favourite Gaelic waulking songs, 'Thig am Bàta.' ✨



THE MANY HALF-LIVED LIVES OF SAM SYLVESTER IS AVAILABLE WORLDWIDE, PUBLISHED BY ASTRA BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS AND DISTRIBUTED IN THE UK BY GMC DISTRIBUTION

## MAYA MACGREGOR

Maya MacGregor is an author, singer, and artist based in Glasgow, Scotland. *The Many Half-Lived Lives of Sam Sylvester* is Maya's first YA novel, and will be followed by *The Evolving Truth of Ever-Stronger Will*.

A fluent Gaelic speaker, Maya is active in many community activities in Gaelic music, as well as writing contemporary YA and adult fiction (as Emmie Mears and M. Evan MacGriogair).

Maya has a degree in history and is passionate about writing stories for teens they wish had existed when they were younger, and fills them with the type of people who have always populated their world.

Their pronouns are they/them.



Find Maya online at [www.mayamacgregor.com](http://www.mayamacgregor.com) and [www.emmiemears.com](http://www.emmiemears.com)

On social media, find them on Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok as @Maigheach.

(The Gaelic word for hare!) ✨



## Writing Prompt



I'll give you three tarot cards from my Threads of Fate Journeyer edition. Apply them to character arcs, plot and general themes!

### Character Card: Sovereign of Wands

The Sovereign of wands embodies confidence, empowerment, and warmth. This character may start out feeling like they know where they stand in the world—where you take them from there, that's up to you!



### Plot Card: Seven of Coins

This card stands for perseverance, determination, and alignment. The trick with getting positive cards is how you can find the conflict in those things—how can you challenge your character's confidence and make their perseverance believable?



### Theme Card: The Anchor

This full-on rocketed out of the deck as I was shuffling! I always find it fascinating when cards I use for inspiration cluster around a theme, and the Anchor is structure, stability, and leadership. That makes the challenge all yours—this card signals it's time to release doubt and insecurity. Maybe that's a message meant for you; affirm your own creative power, go forth, and write!



# Dad's Guitar



by Karen F. Pierce

The music stopped when Dad died. He was the one who would dig out his old vinyl on a Sunday afternoon and get us dancing round the lounge. He'd find just the right radio station for the drive to school, and he helped me curate the best playlists on my phone. We always joked he should go on one of those pop quiz programmes because he knew so much. Now the house is silent, and the vintage vinyl is gathering dust. Mum turns the radio off in the car, and she says she has a headache if I ask to play tunes in the kitchen.

The silence is a dead weight, a crushing rockpile, almost as heavy as Dad's absence. Sometimes it even makes it hard to breathe.

Gran rings up one day. 'Come over at the weekend, I've got some sorting to do.'

Not the most exciting invitation, but there will probably be cake too, and I haven't seen them since the funeral.

Gran takes me up to the loft which is full of boxes.

'I'm just looking for some old books,' she says. 'Why don't you have a sort through those boxes in the corner. They've got your dad's stuff in.'

It's weird seeing toys and trophies and faded photographs with bent corners that belonged to him. You forget your parents were young once too. I find some tune books, and then, in a battered faded case, an old guitar. I tremble as I run my fingers across it.



‘Look, Gran,’ I call out excitedly.

‘Well, I never,’ she replies. ‘I’d forgotten that was up here. I thought he’d taken them all with him. He had so many guitars at one point. I never could see what made them different, why he needed so many but, apparently, he did.’

We take it down from the loft and Grandad comes to check it out.

‘Hmm, a bit out of tune, but I can fix that.’ He blows off the dust, turns the keys, tightening and loosening strings, until he strums it with a smile on his face.

‘There you go, should sound as good as new now.’

I turn my face away as he wipes his eyes and sniffs a bit.

‘I don’t know how to play,’ I say as I sit with the guitar resting on my legs, but I strum it just the same, copying what Grandad did a moment before.

‘Well, I can probably teach you a few basics, and didn’t you say you found a few of the music books up in the loft too? I think your dad had something like *Guitar for beginners* or the like, that’ll help.’

‘What about those Tube You video things?’ adds Gran. We laugh as I correct her, but actually it’s not a bad idea. For the first time in weeks, I feel lighter inside and can imagine the idea of being happy again. Then I remember Mum won’t have music in the house anymore, and the weight returns. Gran sees my face fall and seems to understand immediately.

‘Why don’t you keep it here for now and come round after school when you can.’

So that’s what I do. Before I know it, I have become obsessed with finding online tutorials and practising what they teach when I visit my grandparents. My fingers ache after each practice and I get a few blisters. Mum doesn’t seem to mind that I’m not at home all the time, but I can’t seem to tell her about the guitar. Our house is still without music, and she frowns at me when I start humming tunes. I escape more and more, leaving Mum and my younger sister Joan sitting in separate rooms.

‘Have you told your mum yet?’ asks Gran one day.

I screw my face up and shake my head, trying to hide behind my fringe.

‘What does she think you do here all the time? She must have guessed you have a new hobby.’

But it’s not just a new hobby, it’s about being closer to

Dad. This was his guitar, and he may have even learnt to play on it just like I'm doing now. I feel closer to him this way. I'm learning the music he learnt. I'm sharing his joy albeit at a distance of many years. Mum would never understand.

One day I come home from school to find Gran and Mum talking in the kitchen.

'He might be gone, but don't let the music die with him. It was part of him, it's a part we can still share.'

'But it's so hard,' replies Mum, and I think she might be crying so I stand quietly in the hall so they don't know I'm there.

'I know, love, but the kids need it. The silence isn't good for them, and it's not good for you either.'

I hear Mum sniff a little.

'I can bring the guitar over anytime, you know,' offers Gran.

'No, not that!' exclaims Mum.

I leave the house because I can't bear to hear any more. Gran has clearly let the cat out of the bag. My guitar playing is no longer a secret and Mum obviously hates the idea. Later that evening, I wait anxiously to be told I'm not allowed to do it. I walk in and out of the kitchen half a dozen times until Joan throws a tea-towel at me and makes me help with the washing up. But Mum says nothing.

I carry on visiting my grandparents several times a week, and the guitar stays where it is. By now I've managed to learn a few tunes, and I think they sound ok – not brilliant of course, but not bad. Grandad films me with his phone one day. I don't realise he's doing it until I finish the tune I'm playing.

'Grandad, no! I sound awful, and I probably had my tongue stuck out, or was pulling a stupid face or something.'

'Ah, don't worry you sounded fine, and your tongue was only peeping out a bit.'

'Nooooo!'

'Don't worry, I'm not going to be showing it around or anything. It's just for me.'

Next time I make sure to keep the door to the spare room shut.

A few weeks later I come home to find both Gran and Grandad talking with Mum.

'Come and join us in the kitchen, love,' Mum calls out.

I do, and find them sat round the table, on top of which is a brand-new guitar case



with a ribbon round it.

‘Surprise!’ says Mum.

‘Is that for me?’ I ask.

‘No, it’s for the man on the moon,’ says Grandad. ‘Don’t be daft, course it’s for you.’

‘But I like using Dad’s old one.’ I look anxiously at them in case something has


happened to it.

‘Yes, well, we talked about that, and decided that you needed a guitar in each house,’ says Mum with a shy look at Gran. ‘So, you can still go and practise at your grandparents.’

‘We’d miss you if you stopped popping round,’ said Gran.

‘And you can start playing here too. I was shown how good you were getting, and thought it was about time that music came back home.’

Mum hugs me, and I catch Gran’s eye and mouth ‘thank you’ to her.

Seems you can’t have too many guitars after all. 



Illustrations by  
*Carys Tomos (aka CAT)*  
Find out more about Carys  
on page 62

## Karen F. Pierce

Karen F. Pierce is a writer, librarian, and artist based in South Wales (although she grew up on the edge of the Pennines). She has a PhD on Helen of Troy, enjoys visiting stone circles, wearing bright clothes, and thinking up stories and poems on her early morning walks. In 2020 she was a winner in the Phoenix Short Fiction for Children Competition and has published stories in Northern Gravy and Bubble.

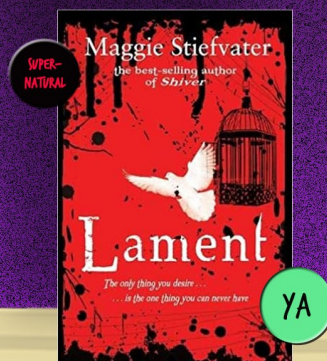
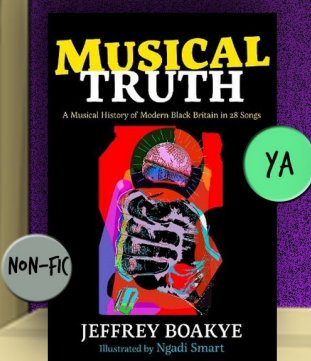
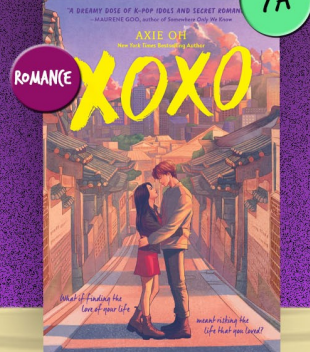
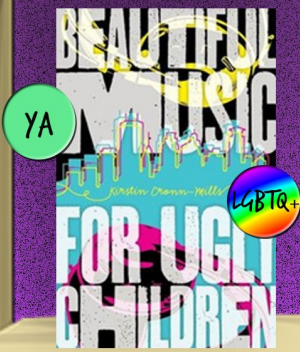
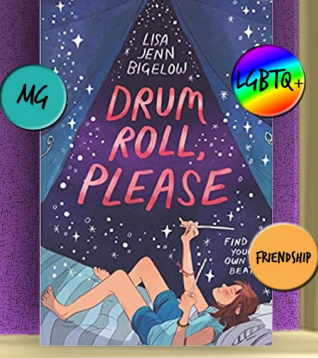
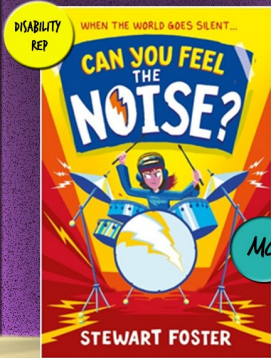
Follow Karen on social media: [@Darklecat](#)





MUSIC

# BOOKSHELF





# City Song

by Lisa Varchol Perron

*Lisa Varchol Perron*

Lisa Varchol Perron loves to write for young readers. Her poems have appeared in various magazines, journals, and anthologies, and she has several upcoming children's books, including *Patterns Everywhere* (Lerner/Millbrook) and *My Love for You* (Little Simon/Simon & Schuster). She lives with her family outside of Boston, Massachusetts.



[www.lisaperronbooks.com](http://www.lisaperronbooks.com)  
Twitter and Instagram: @LisaVPerron





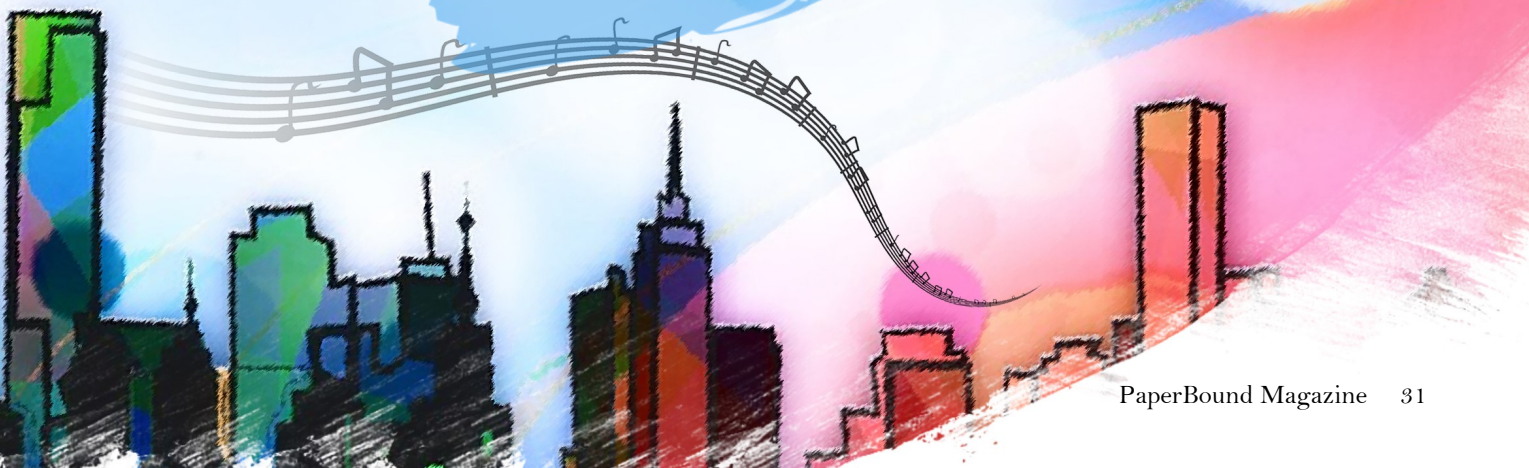
Each morning, it's a symphony.  
The city's filled with song.  
I let the steady stream of sounds  
carry me along.

The hum of traffic flashing past,  
the pounding drum of feet.  
The eager blare of scattered horns  
that syncopate the beat.

The rumble of the subway line,  
the whistle of a cop.  
The screech and hiss when buses brake  
to make a sudden stop.

The lilt of laughter swinging high,  
the clanging of a bell.  
The music that envelops me  
crescendoes in a swell!

I let the steady stream of sounds  
carry me along.  
Each morning, it's a symphony.  
The city's filled with song.







# Maggie HORNE

AUTHOR OF *HAZEL HILL IS GONNA WIN THIS ONE*, MAGGIE HORNE, CHATTED TO US ABOUT THE INSPIRATION BEHIND HER DEBUT NOVEL AND WHAT'S COMING NEXT!



## COULD YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT *HAZEL HILL IS GONNA WIN THIS ONE*?

*Hazel Hill is Gonna Win This One* is about 12-year-old Hazel, who begins the book completely focused on one goal: to win her school's annual speech competition after a humiliating defeat last year at the hands of her nemesis, popular girl Ella Quinn. But when she learns that Ella's being sexually harassed online by a boy in their class, the two girls team up to try and take him down, and Hazel has to choose between winning and doing what she

knows is right.

## HAZEL IS SUCH A BRILLIANT CHARACTER. WHERE DID THE INSPIRATION FOR HER COME FROM?

Thank you! Hazel was largely inspired by my own experience growing up and dealing with sexual harassment at school from a young age. I have a lot of memories from around that time (good and bad!) and tried to really tap into them to make Hazel as authentic as possible.

## DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS FOR WRITING MEMORABLE CHARACTERS?

I think that in middle grade especially people can be tempted to over-explain things or to make sure that each character is specifically teaching the reader a lesson, but I think that creating characters that way can be condescending to the reader. Writing 12-year-olds who are fully fleshed out people in their own right is what makes them memorable!

## FRIENDSHIP IS A STRONG THEME THROUGHOUT THE BOOK. WAS THIS ALWAYS SOMETHING YOU WANTED TO WRITE ABOUT?

Definitely! I always think we should have more friendship stories out in the world, and being able to explore the theme through Hazel, who begins the book almost afraid to even try to have friends and ends it in an entirely different place, was really fun.

## YOU ALSO INCLUDE THEMES AND ISSUES THAT AREN'T ALWAYS TALKED ABOUT IN MIDDLE GRADE FICTION, BUT YOU DO IT IN SUCH A SENSITIVE AND ENGAGING WAY FOR THE READER. DO YOU THINK THERE ARE MORE THEMES AND ISSUES THAT

## COULD BE FEATURED IN FICTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Thank you! Definitely. I think that the middle grade years are often when the differences between you and the people around you start to become something that gets talked about a lot more (for better and for worse), so writing about those differences, first of all, is hugely important. I'd love to see more queer middle grade, and especially middle

“... MIDDLE GRADE YEARS ARE OFTEN WHEN THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOU AND THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU START TO BECOME SOMETHING THAT GETS TALKED ABOUT A LOT MORE (FOR BETTER AND FOR WORSE), SO WRITING ABOUT THOSE DIFFERENCES... IS HUGEY IMPORTANT.”

grade with queer BIPOC protagonists. Beyond that, I think that there was a period of time where writing about things like sexual harassment for young people was seen as more taboo because the topics weren't

seen as “appropriate” for them. But, like Hazel mentions in the book, of course it's not appropriate! That's why it needs to be recognized and stopped, and writing about it is a first step to that.

## WHAT BOOKS/ STORIES/ AUTHORS HAVE BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO YOU, AND YOUR WRITING?

My absolute favourite book when I was Hazel's age was *Olive's Ocean* by Kevin Henkes. I've always loved how thoughtful and precise his language is, and I try to emulate that where I can.




When I re-discovered middle grade in adulthood, I was so excited to see how many authors were bringing diversity to the category! Authors like Claribel Ortega, Ashley Herring Blake, and Mark Oshiro (to name a few!) are doing so much for middle grade.

### WE'D LOVE TO KNOW WHAT'S UP NEXT FOR YOU. ARE YOU WRITING ANYTHING NEW, OR ANY OTHER EXCITING NEWS?

I'm VERY excited about my next middle grade book, *Noah Frye Gets Crushed*, which will be out in 2024. It's about 12-year-old Noah, who, after noticing that her best friends seem to be suddenly boy-obsessed, decides she can teach herself how to have a crush on a boy to fit in. Noah's story is almost the opposite of Hazel's – where Hazel's lack

of close friends has forced her to have a very strong, independent sense of self, Noah's grown up with an extremely tight-knit circle of friends, and she doesn't quite know who she is without them.

I'll also be debuting a YA book in 2024, *Stay Here With Me!* It tells the story of two best friends who've just broken up, because one of them was outed as a lesbian, finding themselves developing feelings for the same girl. 

**HAZEL HILL IS GONNA WIN THIS ONE** is out now from Firefly Press in the UK, and Clarion Books/HarperKids in the US and Canada.



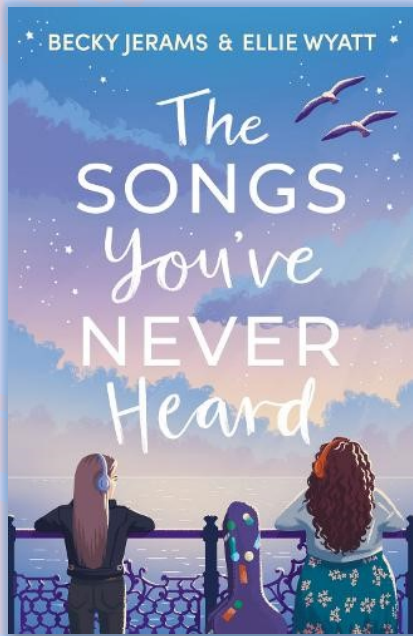
### MAGGIE'S WRITING PROMPT

Hazel loves her school's speech competition, where students speak for 2-3 minutes about something they're passionate about. What would your character write a speech about? (Bonus: write the beginning – or even the whole speech!)

### MAGGIE HORNE

Maggie Horne is a writer and editor who grew up near Toronto, Canada. She studied at Oxford Brookes University, where she obtained both a BA in Publishing Media and a wife, which was a pretty good deal. She now lives outside of Ottawa with her family. Her first novel, *HAZEL HILL IS GONNA WIN THIS ONE*, was an Indies Introduce Summer/Fall 2022 Selection, an Indie Next pick, and a Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection. Her second middle grade novel, *NOAH FRYE GETS CRUSHED*, will release Winter 2024, and her young adult debut, *STAY HERE WITH ME*, is out Fall 2024 with Feiwel + Friends.

[maggiehorne.com](http://maggiehorne.com)



# How To WRITE Lyrics FOR FICTION

AUTHORS OF THE NEW YA BOOKSICAL *THE SONGS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD*, BECKY JERAMS AND ELLIE WYATT, SHARE THEIR TOP TIPS FOR WRITING LYRICS IN FICTION

Are you someone who loves music and telling stories in equal amounts? If so, you might want to include song lyrics in your writing! We recently released the YA fiction book *The Songs You've Never Heard* featuring lyrics from real-life songs we wrote to accompany the story. It has been so much fun to blend our two biggest passions and we wanted to share a few tips we've picked up during the process.

## 1. FOCUS ON THE FLOW

It's important that your lyrics have a strong rhythm when read aloud. You want them to feel punchy and natural, without any jarring words that a reader may trip over. Repetition can be helpful with this, as well as rhymes in interesting places. If you are unsure about the flow then try reading them out loud and see how they feel. You could even try reading them to a beat, or use a similar rhythm to a real song you like.

## 2. FIND A STRONG CONCEPT

There have been millions of songs written about love, but what angle will make yours different from all the rest? If you can find an unusual hook or metaphor then it will make your lyrics stand out. You can also try fun wordplay or listen out for unusual turns

of phrases during everyday conversation for inspiration. Sometimes the most interesting concepts come in the most unlikely moments, so always be alert and write down anything that catches your ear.

## 3. BE VISUAL

Many songs in the charts include lyrics that conjure up a very clear image in listeners' minds (think 'Umbrella' by Rihanna or 'Bleeding Love' by Leona Lewis). Having strong images such as these can really help to get your message across, especially in book form. One of our protagonist Meg's songs is called 'Firework Display' and is about how she feels she is showing all her bright colours to people who aren't watching or appreciating her. We felt this really explained her feelings in an immediate way. Once you have found that concept



or theme, don't be afraid to explore it and add imagery that expands your idea.


#### 4. THINK ABOUT THE DETAILS

Like with writing fiction, the best lyrics are all about the little details. The dates, the times, the smells, the sounds, and all the tiny, passing observations of a situation. It's these details that make a song feel personal and tap into the reader's emotions in a big way. Think about your characters and what you can tell your reader about them through all these small choices.

#### 5. IMAGINE THE WORDS ON THE PAGE

When writing lyrics for fiction, it's helpful to imagine how the words will look when

they are printed on paper. Think about the size, the shape, the font, and how all these choices will impact the reader. Maybe there is one particular hook line that you want to stand out separately? Or is there a repeated chorus or buzzword descending the page? These decisions can help bring a song to life when you don't have the backing music to rely on.

Most importantly, always make sure that your lyrics are from the heart and you really can't go wrong! Good luck with your fictional bands, solo artists and songwriters... we can't wait to read about them in the future! 

*The Songs You've Never Heard* is out now and published by Clock Tower Publishing

You can read PaperBound's review in the Book Review Corner



**BECKY JERAMS** is a singer-songwriter and YA author from the coastal town of Portsmouth, UK.



Becky's love of words began as a child, when her life's mission was to read every Jacqueline Wilson book ever published. After studying music performance at college she worked many glamorous jobs, including selling DVDs at Blockbuster and counting toilet seats in Homebase, all to support her ambition of becoming a professional songwriter. She has since had her songs used in movies, adverts and placed with international artists, including K-Pop girl group 'Red Velvet'.

One day when she was feeling particularly fed up with the shark tank known as the music industry, she decided to write a novel for fun and post it online. The novel gained over 2 million hits plus thousands of encouraging messages from readers all over the world. Suddenly a whole new dream became clear to her...

**ELLIE WYATT** is a BAFTA-winning children's songwriter and musician from Brighton, UK.

Ellie has loved books and music for as long as she can remember and wrote her first song aged 13. She successfully combined these two passions throughout her twenties by joining a touring band and reading her way around the UK in the back of a smelly van.

She is now a songwriter, composer and string arranger whose music and songs have been used on a wide array of film, TV and advertising. She has worked with acclaimed international artists including Nick Cave, Orbital and Caro Emerald. Her compositions can be heard all over children's television, with numerous CBeebies, Sky and Sesame Street projects to her name.

When she's not writing music she is a dedicated environmental activist. She is also possibly the only person in the world to have broken a bone at Book Club...



# Book Review Corner



HUGE THANKS TO THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS! IF YOU'D LIKE TO REVIEW A BOOK FOR PAPERBOUND, WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU. SEE HOW YOU CAN GET YOUR REVIEW IN THE NEXT ISSUE ON OUR WEBSITE. [WWW.PAPERBOUNDMAG.COM](http://WWW.PAPERBOUNDMAG.COM)

IF YOU'RE A PUBLISHER OR AUTHOR, AND WOULD LIKE US TO REVIEW A NEW RELEASE, WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU TOO. PLEASE GET IN TOUCH: [PAPERBOUNDMAGAZINE@OUTLOOK.COM](mailto:PAPERBOUNDMAGAZINE@OUTLOOK.COM)

## ATLAS OF DOGS

BY FRANCES EVANS AND ILLUSTRATED BY KELSEY HEATON

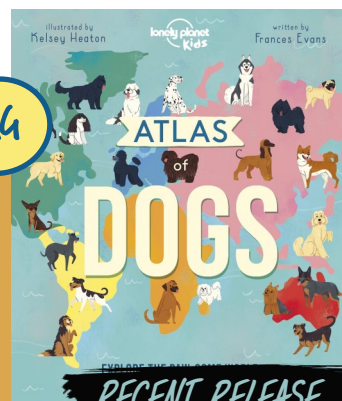
REVIEWED BY DENISE MOHAN

A bright and colourful book with charming illustrations throughout, *Atlas of Dogs* is full of fascinating facts, like the uses of different parts of a dog's anatomy, from their ears to their tail, and their amazing super senses.

The book showcases different breeds of dogs from around the world, one continent at a time, from Labrador Retrievers in North America to New Zealand Huntaways, explaining both their characteristics and roles throughout history.

*Atlas of Dogs* is both informative and entertaining and, although aimed at children, is perfect for dog lovers of all ages from 6 to 96.

ATLAS OF DOGS IS OUT NOW FROM LONELY PLANET KIDS



RECENT RELEASE

## IGLOO BY JENNIFER BURKINSHAW

REVIEWED BY PAPERBOUND

This is an excellent winter read to get lost in a snowscape setting combined with a sweet romance. When Nirvana is dragged to the French Alps on a surprise skiing holiday at Christmas time, she is not impressed. Her parents don't understand her career aspirations, she's away from her best friend, and her skiing lessons are a dud. When she finds an igloo in the middle of nowhere, she finds solace in the secrecy of it. There's just one problem: the igloo belongs to Jean-Louis, a French boy who built it for himself, not Nirvana.

Despite a shaky start, the two become close and share a romance wrapped in snowfall and warmth, away from the troubles of each of their home lives. But when Nirvana's family unexpectedly cut the trip short, she must find a way to reconnect with Jean-Louis despite being hundreds of miles away. This is a cosy winter read full of heart and comfort, yet one that also doesn't shy away from difficult issues, and champions inclusivity.

IGLOO IS OUT NOW FROM BEATEN TRACK PUBLISHING



RECENT RELEASE



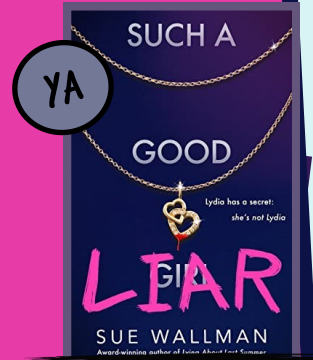
## SUCH A GOOD LIAR BY SUE WALLMAN

REVIEWED BY PAPERBOUND

*Such a Good Liar* by Sue Wallman is a gripping YA mystery-thriller which will keep you on the edge of your seat. Set on a beautiful island full of enchanting views and filthy rich residents, this book spans themes of identity, murder and revenge, because protagonist Lydia Cornwallis is not who she says she is. In reality, she's Shannon Jones. And she has nothing left to lose. Assuming the identity of another teenager, Shannon Jones impersonates spoilt Londoner Lydia Cornwallis in order to get close to the Harrington family on the island of Fengari. The reason? To avenge her mother, who died tragically on the island the previous summer - and the Harringtons have everything to do with it. But as things get heated and the family begin to uncover her schemes, time is running out and Shannon has to decide when, how and *if* she can exact her revenge, with or without anyone's help.

Filled with characters you'll both love and love-to-hate, as well as a truly evocative setting, we highly recommend *Such a Good Liar* if you're looking for a mystery-thriller with scenes full of tension and one that will leave you wondering what will happen next.

*SUCH A GOOD LIAR IS OUT NOW AND PUBLISHED BY SCHOLASTIC*



PAPERBOUND FAVOURITE

## THE SONGS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD BY BECKY JERAMS AND ELLIE WYATT

REVIEWED BY PAPERBOUND

*The Songs You've Never Heard* is an addictive and heart-warming booksical about friendship and musical talent, suitable for teens and young adults.

Meet Meg McCarthy, successful social media influencer and sister of world-famous pop-star – Caspar. To those on the outside, it looks as though she has it all, but Meg has a secret talent all of her own. Knowing all too well about online haters and bullies, she's too terrified to share it with the world. However, when she meets confident Alana Howard, Meg begins to find her voice, and the two girls discover that they are helping each other with both their music and their confidence. But will Meg be able to step out of her brother's shadow?

This book will hook you from the first page. A feel-good, positive novel, which was a joy to read. Plus, the book was dually written by K-pop hit writer Becky Jerams and BAFTA-winning children's composer Ellie Wyatt, and all the songs in *The Songs You've Never Heard* are available as an album too – making the novel come to life in a brand-new way. With themes of female-friendship, body-positivity, family dynamics, and following your dreams, this novel will keep you reading page after page.

*THE SONGS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD IS OUT NOW FROM CLOCK TOWER PUBLISHING*



RECENT RELEASE

## STONE BY FINBAR HAWKINS

REVIEWED BY PAPERBOUND

*Stone* is an emotional and sensitive YA novel about the impact grief can have on friendships and family, with a sprinkling of myth and magic.

The novel follows Sam in the aftermath of his father's death. Unable to make sense of it, or the world, Sam stumbles across a stone, icy to the touch. Once in possession of this stone, Sam starts to experience strange visions. With the help of Oona, a girl Sam is intrinsically drawn to, they start looking closer at the magic around them.

*Stone* is very much an emotional journey, and we are with Sam as he moves through it. He is flawed in many ways, but this makes him all the more real and relatable. With a strong setting and themes of grief, young love, myth and some very well-drawn relationships between Sam and his friends and family, *Stone* is a thoughtful and sensitive read for any young person who has lost someone close to them. Beautifully written and gorgeous illustrations also by Finbar Hawkins.

STONE IS OUT NOW IN HARDBACK FROM ZEPHYR

YA



RECENT RELEASE

## SCATTERED SHOWERS BY RAINBOW ROWELL

REVIEWED BY PAPERBOUND

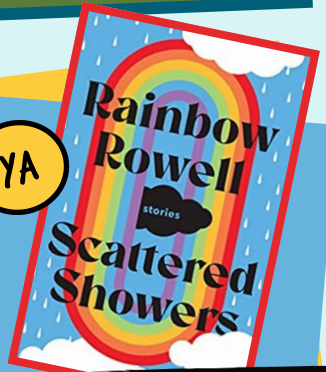
We loved reading this long-awaited short story collection from YA author Rainbow Rowell, filled with nine stories featuring new characters as well as ones readers might already be familiar with (such as Simon Snow from *Carry On* and Reagan from *Fangirl*) from Rowell's previous novels. We loved getting swept away in these stories that spanned love, heartbreak, new beginnings, and camp-outs for Star Wars' release day. Rowell has such a talent for dialogue that grounds readers in characters' lives, and writes young adult fiction with a voice that feels extraordinarily real.

Among our favourite snippets throughout this collection were snapshots of Christmas family struggles in Nebraska during covid-19 lockdowns; an awkward family dinner where sexy vampire Baz brings home heroic Simon Snow to meet his family for the holidays; and two characters finding their way to each other's hearts before, quite literally, finding their way onto the blank page, where their fates will be sealed for whatever Rainbow Rowell writes next.

Not only did we love the writing, but each story is fronted by exquisite illustrations by Jim Tierney.

SCATTERED SHOWERS IS OUT NOW FROM MACMILLAN

YA



RECENT RELEASE





# A.F. Harrold

PAPERBOUND TEAMED UP WITH ONE OF OUR REVIEWERS FROM THE AUTUMN ISSUE, EMMA L. STANFORD, TO ASK AUTHOR A.F. HARROLD ALL ABOUT WRITING AND HIS NEW BOOK, *THE WORLDS WE LEAVE BEHIND*.



COULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT *THE WORLDS WE LEAVE BEHIND*, AND THE INSPIRATION BEHIND IT? DID IT START WITH A SETTING, A CHARACTER OR SOMETHING ELSE?

*The Worlds We Leave Behind* is a strange, slightly dark, slightly creepy, slightly odd story about a boy, Hex (short for Hector), who gets in some trouble down the woods, meets an old lady and her dog in a cottage that shouldn't exist and gets offered a bargain that could change his life. I think that's probably all I could say about the story without saying too much.

The inspiration for it came from the previous book Levi (Pinfold) and I made together, *The Song from Somewhere Else*.

That was a story that I wrote and which the publisher (Bloomsbury) went out and found an illustrator for (which was Levi, obviously). And what Levi did with that story, and what the designer (Andrea Kearney) made of the book-as-object, was utterly delicious, dark and moody and beautiful. Naturally people asked if we were going to do anything else together...

And, a few books later, the thought came of taking one of the minor characters from that book and letting them have a go. And so Frank (the main character in *The Song*...) had a little brother, Hector. What if, I thought, time had moved on five or six years, so that he was now the age Frank had been when she had her

adventure (10-11)? And how might he react put through some of the same sorts of difficulties she was?

The previous books, *The Imaginary* and *The Afterwards* (both with Emily Gravett), and *The Song...*, all have some sort of bargain at their heart. In the two books with Emily the 'villains' of the books have made supernatural bargains to allow them something they shouldn't have, and in the first book with Levi, a boy called Nick's dad has made a bargain with a secret agent to bend the rules... This time, I felt, I could look at one of these bargains being made, with an outer entity.

And so the thought of someone offering Hex the chance to get his own back, to have his revenge on someone who'd hurt him, who'd wronged him... that seemed a good starting point. And the story grew and changed and spread and got pruned and eventually sort of fitted in and around that original thought, and ended up how it looks today. (Thanks to plenty of work with my editor Zöe Griffiths, who asked the important questions and made me stretch for the answers.)

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF WORKING WITH AN ILLUSTRATOR LIKE? WHEN DID YOU START COLLABORATING WITH LEVI? WERE THE ILLUSTRATIONS CREATED AFTER THE STORY WAS COMPLETE, OR DID THEY DEVELOP ALONG WITH THE STORY ITSELF?

Since Levi lives in Australia and I'm in the UK, we've only met, in person, a few times. But when we have met we've got on well, and although he's a decade younger than me, we have enough childhood loves and experiences in common (me growing up in

“It was as if he [Levi] was sat on my shoulder as I wrote and tinkered.”

the pre-internet '70s/'80s, he in the pre-internet '80s/'90s) that we have a shared understanding of the sort of story we're making, and the atmosphere

we want to give. Although the story is 'modern', in that there are mobile phones and computers, it's still very much rooted in our shared '80s memory, I think.

And so, where *The Song from Somewhere Else* was written without knowing who would be illustrating it, this new book I wrote specifically with Levi in mind. So, although it isn't a collaboration in the sense of 'coming up with the story together', it is very much a collaboration in that I was thinking 'What do I want to see Levi draw?' as I went along, knowing the visual language and atmosphere of the previous book. It was as if he was sat on



my shoulder as I wrote and tinkered.

And then, a few weeks before the first lockdown, Levi happened to be in the UK, and he had a spare afternoon so he came over to Reading, where I live, and we had a cup of tea, and we sat in my shed and I told him the story, face to face, and that was a really lovely moment I've not had with anyone else.

And so, then he gets the 'finished' manuscript and goes away and makes his art. And I get to see it at various points and simply be amazed, moved and feel immensely, intensely lucky to know such a man with such a talent!

TIME IS USED IN A VERY UNIQUE WAY IN THIS BOOK. DID THIS BRING UP

ANY ISSUES WITH STRUCTURING THE STORY AT ALL? IF SO, HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

Because of how *The Song from Somewhere Else* had been structured (days instead of chapters), this book was obviously going to be the same, which meant you've only got four days for the story (Monday to Thursday, plus evenings/nights), so it's actually very linear. Things happen in the order in which they happen, and so that's quite simple.

Although there are some wrinkles

(trying to be spoiler free, one might allude to alternative timelines), there is no back and forth time travel or paradoxes to be negotiated (I think of something like Gareth P Jones' *No True Echo* (which I read after seeing it mentioned in a review for *The Worlds...*), where it's proper mind-bending timelines folding in around themselves, past and future and present in a big timey-wimey complex) ... none of that. Just things happening one after another.

“If you don't feel like writing, don't, and don't beat yourself up about it. You don't have to write every day.”


WHAT ARE YOUR TOP THREE TIPS FOR ASPIRING YOUNG WRITERS?

I think my two tips would be unsurprising ones. Firstly, read books. For one thing, reading books is a great way to fill

your time and take yourself to all sorts of places and times and viewpoints you'd not otherwise get to visit (or to see places, people and times that you do know, but with fresh eyes), and secondly, if you want to be a writer, by seeing how other people do it you'll get a feel for how to do it, or how not to do it...

And my second tip is, if you don't feel like writing, don't, and don't beat yourself up about it. You don't have to write every day. Sometimes you'll write loads, and sometimes you won't. Sometimes ideas will pour out of you,

and sometimes they won't. Don't worry, don't panic, don't beat yourself up. You're allowed to not write.

My third tip is have a bath whenever you can. It's a good place to read, and it's a good place to think. 

### A.F. HARROLD'S WRITING PROMPT:

In *The Worlds We Leave Behind*, Hex runs into a part of the woods that shouldn't exist, that he knows can't possibly be there (he ran so far he should be beyond the edge of the trees and into the farmers' field by now, but he's not), and he comes across a clearing with a scary fairytale cottage in the middle of it. In the cottage he meets a woman who offers him a strange bargain, **but what if someone else lived there?**

You might be able to make some sort of story out of this, or you might pick one element and focus in on it, maybe write a poem describing the feeling of being lost in the woods... I'd look at all the prompts first and have a think, before writing, rather than starting at the start without looking ahead, but whatever you do... have fun, enjoy it, be dark and spooky, or light and funny... there are no wrong answers, no wrong ways of having a go.

Good luck! AF.

You can only find this cottage if you are... what? Lost? Scared? Happy? Sad? ('I was feeling X when I stumbled into the clearing...')

Who lives there? A witch? A troll? A butcher? A cat? ('The door opened and I saw X in the doorway...')

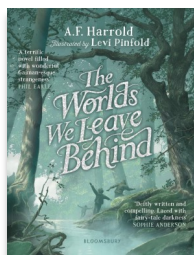
If you go into the cottage with them, what is it like inside? You can use all your senses to describe it. What is hanging from the ceiling? How is it illuminated? Messy? Tidy?

What does the person in the cottage offer you? A cup of tea? A wish? A poisoned apple? A nap in the big chair by the fire? (Think how this might relate to the feeling in question 1 – do they offer the solution to what brought you to the cottage in the first place?)

How do you get away? (It might be an escape, or it might be with a jolly wave...)

What happens when you get back home? Has anything changed, or is something about to change? Have you been missing for longer than you thought? Have you now got the answer to something that was troubling you?

*The Worlds We Leave Behind* is available in the UK, India and Australia NOW from Bloomsbury. It will be out in the USA early next year.



## A.F. Harrold

A.F. Harrold is a poet, performer and children's author who has written funny and spooky books for all ages and who has made art with some of the finest illustrators of the age, including Chris Riddell (*Things You Find in a Poet's Beard*), Emily Gravett (*The Imaginary*), Joe Todd-Stanton (*Greta Zargo and the Death Robots from Outer Space*), Mini Grey (*The Book of Not Entirely Useful Advice*) and Sarah Horne (the *Fizzlebert Stump* series). His two books with Levi Pinfold, *The Song from Somewhere Else* (winner of the Amnesty International/CILIP Honour, 2018) and *The Worlds We Leave Behind* are good things.



# Composing a soundtrack to a YA novel

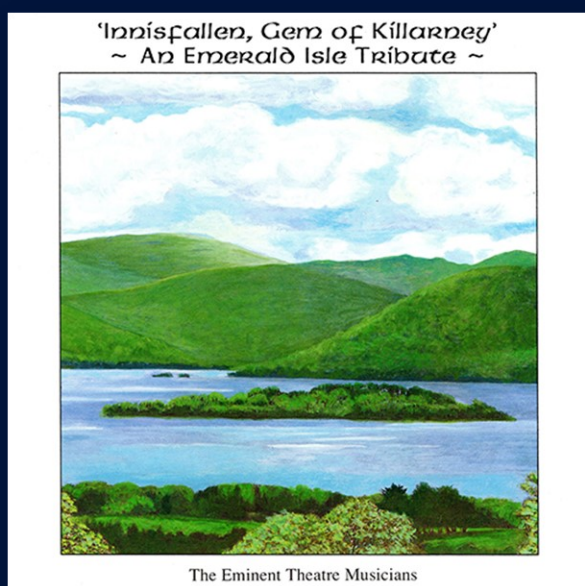
by Mark Ballabon

Philosopher and author Mark Ballabon used to be MD of a music company which won the Queen's Award for Export twice. He's also a musician and co-wrote the music which features in his debut YA novel *HOME – My life in the Universe*. Here he describes how music can bring a story to life.



**W**hy can't YA novels be a multi-media experience, rather than just words on paper? Why can't illustrations and other media like filmmaking, dance and photography be integral to the story? And even though a book can't make sounds, the whole plot becomes much more colourful and rich with a musical soundtrack...

I tried to do this with my recently published YA book *HOME*. The 14-year-old protagonist Leah grew up near the beautiful lake of Lough Lene in Killarney, which has a mysterious, ancient island in the middle called Innisfallen. On a visit there I took my mandolin and stayed in a hotel where I could see the whole lake and island from my window. As I gazed at it, holding my mandolin in anticipation, this sweet piece of music flowed through my fingers which seemed to dance all on their own. The melodies were haunting and astonished me!



On returning to London, I recorded the music in just three takes with a flautist and guitarist and we called it 'Innisfallen, Gem of Killarney'. I knew it had to be part of the soundtrack to 'HOME' and that's what unexpectedly happened...

Read more about *Innisfallen, Gem of Killarney* [here](#).

When Leah goes to summer camp, during project week, she makes a 6-minute film with a team about the climate crisis. They call it 'Home' and show it to nearly 200

guests on Presentation Day. Leah begins to describe it as follows:

*"A starry night fills the screen as the mandolin and flute music of 'Innisfallen' plays softly.*

*The image of thousands of galaxies appears, while the soothing tone of Darweshi's voiceover comes in: "You can relax. You are here. At home in the universe."*

In a scene at the end of their film, Leah chooses another piece of music which I co-wrote with some young musicians called the Trust Companions...

*"Then the scene of Natsuki, barefoot in the forest, eyes closed, doing the meditation. She breathes in rhythm with the movements as a folk song plays – a musical dialogue between a person and the planet, with a duet, harmonising the words 'An Opportunity'."*

All these pieces of music become a soundtrack to Leah's coming-of-age



story... never more so than when she falls in love for the first time with Sean. They are sitting with other campers around a glowing bonfire. Sean picks up his guitar...


*“... when Sean, one of the Irish boys at camp, sang a couple of folk songs... well, I think I entered dreamland. He had longish dark brown hair, with a wavy fringe that swept over his olive-green eyes whenever he swayed his head to the tune.*

*We found an old Irish song we both adored singing – ‘Whiskey in the Jar’... Sean’s raw energy and husky voice brought this tale of robbery and betrayal to life, especially when he sang directly to me. I was breathless in those moments and...”*

My vision is to release the whole soundtrack of ‘HOME’ when the hardback edition comes out.

If you want a book that’s a musical too, or a “booksical” as they call it, try the delightful, *The Songs You’ve Never Heard* by Becky

Jerams and Ellie Wyatt. There’s a full album to accompany the story.

We each have a soundtrack to our life, compiled of those special songs that connect us instantly to a vivid memory and moment in time. So why not create a soundtrack to the books you love, where the music evokes those rich moments in the story which inspire you... or wake you up from a mind-numbing day at work! 

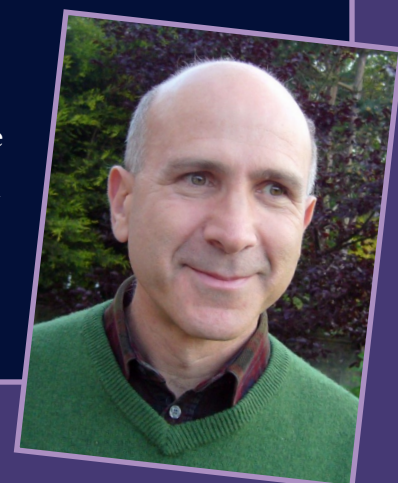


*Home* by Mark Ballabon is out now and published by Eminent Productions Ltd.

The beautiful illustrations in *Home* are by Grant MacDonald

## MARK BALLABON

Mark Ballabon is a philosopher, author and environmentalist. *Home: My Life in the Universe* is his fifth book, but his debut in young adult fiction. Mark’s previous books have been non-fiction and based on philosophy and personal development. He has been giving talks and workshops on these subjects around the world for the last three decades.



# THE MUSIC OF THE VALE

by Steve Blackman

**F**or as long as anyone can remember, we've lived on the floor of the vale. Our village here is safe, protected – a sprawl of houses and schools and shops that line one bank of the crashing river.

On the other side, facing us, is another village, a mirror of ours. The people who live there go about their lives a stone's throw away from us, but we've never met. No bridge has ever been built, and entering the torrent that separates us would mean certain death.

Over the years, many have searched for ways to cross the river, following its course in both directions. None met with success, even those who travelled for many weeks, though they returned with stories of forests, and meadows filled with exotic flowers, and wild deer and bobcats. Most people stay close to the village. Even the farmers on the furthest outskirts of our communities are only a day away, close enough that sometimes – if the wind's in the right direction – we can smell the cows and pigs and sheep in their pens.



The farmers and the shepherds are here tonight though, the one night every year when they leave their crops and their animals to join the residents of both villages, lining the steep sides of the vale. Some have used ladders and ropes to climb as high as they can – finding the uppermost rocks and outcrops before the canyon walls become smooth and unclimbable. From where my fellow villagers sit, it's impossible to see the faces of those far away on the opposite side, only shapes, lit by the flickering of torches held aloft or wedged into fissures. Not that they're looking at one another – all eyes are focused down on the open spaces that mark the eastern end of our communities.

That's where I am now. near the bank of the river, me and eleven other cantors and musicians from my village. After fifteen years of watching this ceremony from the side, it's finally our turn. We're facing another group of twelve across the noise and the spray. I recognise the girl at the front of their troupe. I see her sometimes, going to school or running errands. She's just like me: same age, same clothes, same life. Except she's there and I'm here. Still, I feel connected to her somehow, like I know her. Normally, if nobody's around, we might even wave. But there's no waving tonight. We're here to fight for our lives.

I've rehearsed with my troupe all year, but my mum's been preparing me since I was a baby, when she taught me how to understand the sounds around me. I could identify birds from their songs by the time I was five; could predict a change in the weather from the movement of the wind over the rock walls surrounding us. It was her who showed me how to seek the right music; how to know it when I heard it.

Tonight I won't live or die because of how beautifully I sing, but how well I listen.

The hum of the crowd fades as the leader of each village steps onto their podium. Both Alderwomen wear their cloaks of office: ours is thick with black raven feathers that shine in silky highlights of turquoise and purple; theirs is a dazzling white, the soft fur of wolf hides rippling in the breeze. As last year's

winners, it's the other side that begins the ceremony. Sure enough, their Alderwoman lifts the ceremonial mallet above her head, and the silence around us deepens. She stands like that for what feels like an eternity, and when she finally strikes the bell, its ring fills the night. As tradition dictates, our performances must begin before it fades.

There's a chill in the air, but I'm sweating. My heart is racing and my nerves are stretched so tight they might snap. *Breathe*, says my mum's voice in my head.

*Listen*. I wipe my palms on my skirt, and slow my breathing until I find a place of stillness within; until the raging water offers me the tone I need.

Gently at first, I begin to sing, harmonising with the music of the river. Next to me, Silas follows – a baritone murmur that echoes the distant rumbling of the night sky. From the opposite bank comes the high keening of a wooden flute, like a fledgling osprey calling for its mother. A minute later, my best friend, Beth, wakes her marimba with the hollow echoes of the earth below our feet. One by one, the others around me respond to the music they hear in the world.

Before long, around half the performers on both sides have found their own sounds, and already the pull is there – a tug that begins in my guts, compelling me forward. It becomes more insistent every time another voice joins in, calling me, like a siren song, but I clench my fists and stand firm. Beth misses a note, and I know she, too, is resisting the urge to step forward. Soon, someone will lose that fight, and will be pulled into the torrent, and lost forever.

Above us all, the night sky is strewn with so many stars it's hard to see the blackness between them. A pair of shadows float across it, only visible as they blot out the stars above them, and the high mewling call of a female nighthawk floats down. In response, the final member of our troupe begins to sing. Eloise's voice is haunting, ethereal, filled with pain and hope and love. My eyes fill with tears as she completes our number and we become one.

Our song is the world, the land we walk on, the air we breathe. It's part of the night, filling the vale, impossible to resist.



There's a cry from someone in the troupe opposite, and their song falters. It's the opening we need, and we focus our performances on that weakness. But their cantors are strong, and they come together, building their defence. It continues like that, each troupe searching for an opportunity to strike, our songs intertwining, clashing, flowing from one side to the other.


On the edge of my vision there's movement. Silas has taken a shuffling step forward. I reach out to grasp his hand and our fingers intertwine. But he takes another step, longer this time. My pulse thrums in my neck and in my fingertips. It's in Silas's hand too, like we're sharing a single heartbeat. I grip his fingers as hard as I can, so his nails cut into my skin, but it's not enough, and his hand is slowly pulled from mine as he edges forward.

Lifting my head, I sing to the sky, driven by the rhythm of the blood flowing through me, and one by one, more shadows mask the stars. Eloise sings to them, and the nighthawks call back, dipping and swirling with our voices. Silas is making sounds I've never heard before, so deep they seem solid – like I could grasp them. I close my eyes, and listen harder than I've ever listened in my life, and slowly, faintly, it reaches me. Below the constant booming of the water is something else, the rasp of the torrent against its banks, the chattering of the stones racing along the river bed. Those sounds become part of my song, or I become part of them, and I yield to them: irresistible, elemental.

For the first time since we gathered, another voice cuts through the performances – the single cry of a mother, calling *No!* I open my eyes, and my guts cramp like someone's reached in and squeezed them. The girl opposite me is moving. Her eyes are locked on mine, and she's smiling, but tears are flowing down her cheeks. And still she's singing. Her body shakes as she tries to resist, but our call is too strong, too pure, and inch by inch, it pulls her onwards.

I have no choice but to focus my voice on her – we all do – and our performance is so powerful, the air between us seems to bend and shimmer. It pulls her to the edge of the steep riverbank. One more step and she'll be lost, but she plants her feet in a last effort to defy our music. Her eyes are squeezed

shut now, and she's shaking her head, and it's so much effort to stand firm, she gasps, breaking her song. As she does, I change my pitch – an octave higher – and it's like I've pushed a door, opening the way in. The voices around me swirl across the river, wrapping around the girl like a net. She cries out in pain, a high, piercing note, and takes the final step.

When the river swallows her, her voice hangs in the air like the chiming of the bell. Eventually it fades, leaving only the calling of the birds, the rushing of the water. 



### Steve Blackman

Despite his name, Steve's neither the showrunner of *The Umbrella Academy* nor the wrestler, although he'd happily give either a go. He is, however, the inventor of the self-heating soup can, the internet, and sourdough. When he's not inventing, he writes YA novels with STEM themes. Most of the time, he lives in South London with his wife and their two teenage daughters. He still doesn't have a Facebook account.

You can follow Steve on Twitter [@66blackman](https://twitter.com/66blackman)



### WHY WE LOVE *THE MUSIC OF THE VALE*

We absolutely adored this short story. It hooked us from the start and we loved the imagery and ominous tone throughout. The tension was captured perfectly and gripped us to the end.

**Congratulations, Steve! A little prize will be on its way to you soon.**



## INTERVIEW

AUTHOR OF *GASLIGHT*, *ELOISE WILLIAMS*,  
SPOKE TO US ABOUT WRITING, AND HER  
BRAND NEW NOVEL...

*HONESTY AND LIES*

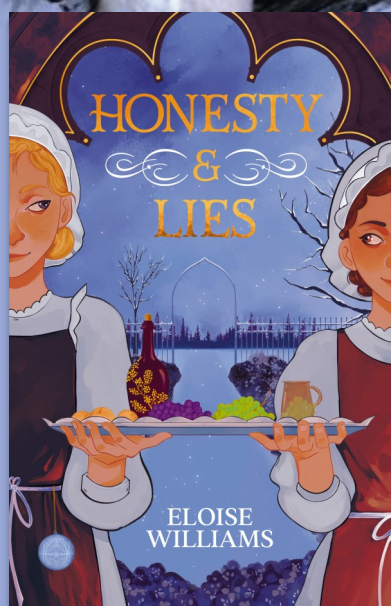
# Eloise Williams



COULD YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR NEW  
BOOK, *HONESTY AND LIES*?

Set in the winter of 1601 and centred around Greenwich Palace, it's the story of two girls and their friendship. Honesty, a Welsh girl seeking fame and fortune, befriends Alice, a maid to Queen Elizabeth 1. But while Honesty looks for attention and praise, to make a better life for herself, Alice must stay invisible, hiding a terrible secret. Can they trust each other?

It's a tale of intrigue, scheming and plots set in the spellbinding world of the Elizabethan court. A thrilling adventure where nothing is as it seems.



WHERE DID THE INSPIRATION FOR THIS STORY  
COME FROM?

Inspiration is always difficult to pinpoint. I adore London and have done since I was very young. I love the history of it and

the way it changes, the size and variety it brings, its scruffiness and its grandeur. Taking a boat from Greenwich to Southwark seems to chime as an important moment in thinking of this story. As does walking along the South Bank of the Thames.

I hadn't written anything historical since *Gaslight* so it seemed like a challenge and I like to challenge myself creatively. I also wanted to write something about appearance and reality, and this seemed the perfect setting for those comparisons. The splendour of the palace, life as a maid, Christmas and Twelfth Night, theatre – both in the real sense with the Globe and in the way that people perform their roles.

### COULD YOU SHARE A LITTLE BIT ABOUT HOW YOU RESEARCH WHEN WRITING A NOVEL? IS THIS SOMETHING THAT YOU DO BEFORE YOU START WRITING, OR AS YOU GO?

I start by doing a bit of very easy research into the period. This could be through reading books and listening to podcasts, watching films, visiting museums and historic buildings. It helps me to get a basic understanding of what life was like for young people at that time. However, I'm always in danger of falling into a research rabbit hole as I get overly

interested in everything, so I have to stop myself after a while. I then write the first couple of chapters which gives me a better idea of the areas I need to concentrate on a bit more specifically. I'm not a historian – though I think it would be fascinating – so I like to give a flavour of the time but only so that it serves the story.

### WHAT TOP TIP WOULD YOU GIVE TO AN

ASPIRING WRITER WHO WOULD LIKE TO TRY WRITING HISTORICAL FICTION?

History is just the backdrop and should help to paint the picture, not detract

from the story. It's tempting to drop facts in just because you've learned them.

You can include some of the weird and extraordinary things you discover – there are lots of things which seem unusual to us now - but only when they illuminate something about the characters, their personalities, journey, or their lives. It's not a history lesson, tempting as it is to make it one sometimes. If you want to put a fact in, try to make it part of the rich tapestry which supports the action.

“ IF YOU WANT TO PUT A FACT IN, TRY TO MAKE IT PART OF THE RICH TAPESTRY WHICH SUPPORTS THE ACTION. ”





**YOU'VE WRITTEN SO MANY BRILLIANT BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, AS WELL AS BEING THE CHILDREN'S LAUREATE OF WALES, AND RECENTLY CREATING AND EDITING *THE MAB*, ALONGSIDE MATT BROWN. WHAT HAS BEEN THE BEST/ MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT IN YOUR WRITING JOURNEY SO FAR?**

Firstly, thank you. It's very hard to think of your own books as brilliant! It's much easier to see what you perceive as the flaws. Stories tend to have a mind of their own and rarely turn out to be the things you had intended them to be.

I've had so many wonderful moments. Every time I see one of my books in a bookshop or library it seems like a small miracle. Discussing stories with young readers is always a highlight. They can be very frank with their questions and opinions so it's always good to have a sense of humour!

Collaborating with Matt Brown and the other brilliant authors and illustrator was such a fantastic experience, and we are very proud of *The Mab*.

I think though, if I were to choose the most memorable moment, it would be when a young person threw one of my books out of their bedroom in disgust and shut the door on it. Her mother told me

that she did it because she was so angry on behalf of the main protagonist. She fetched it again later and loved the story, so it was all okay in the end, but it made me realise how passionately young people believe in the stories they are reading, and I think of it often. It helps to keep me focused on writing the best story I can.

**YOU LIVE CLOSE TO THE COAST IN WEST WALES AND MUST FEEL INSPIRED BY THE LANDSCAPE THERE. DOES MUCH OF THAT INSPIRATION FIND ITSELF IN YOUR BOOKS?**

“ EVERY TIME I SEE ONE OF MY BOOKS IN A BOOKSHOP OR LIBRARY IT SEEMS LIKE A SMALL MIRACLE. ”

Absolutely! It's impossible not to be inspired by the landscape here. Sometimes it presents itself directly in my work – *The Tide Singer*, *Seaglass* and *Elen's Island* are all set by the sea and inspired by the coast of

Pembrokeshire. Other times the love of nature and wildlife I've fostered here comes through in my writing. I talk about birds a lot in *Wilde*, that's a love I've found over the last ten years, and I can't seem to stop mentioning the moon.


**WHAT OTHER WRITERS AND BOOKS HAVE INSPIRED YOU (PAST AND PRESENT)?**

There are so many! Far too many to mention them all. I'm always impressed by anyone committing to writing a book and finishing it. I read widely and find inspiration of some kind in almost every story.

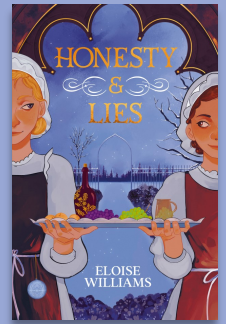
## COULD YOU LET US KNOW WHAT YOU'RE WORKING ON NEXT?

Well, I do have some exciting story news coming up soon but I'm not sure if I'm allowed to talk about it yet!

I'm also at dabbling stage with another new story. This is probably the part of writing I love most and fear most. There's every possibility of it being the story you want it to be, and the empty pages are enticing and exciting. It also feels

somewhere between improbable and impossible that you'll ever manage it and as if there is a colossal mountain ahead. This story is one which has been bouncing around in my head for a while now and it won't let go. It's based on my own family's history, and it's a story of hope, but I don't want to give too much away in case the mountain proves too steep! 

*Honesty and Lies* is published by Firefly Press and available NOW!



### Eloise's Writing Prompt

USING THE LINE BELOW AS A STARTING POINT, START WRITING AND SEE WHERE IT TAKES YOU...

*Storms often wash in strange things from the sea but today I really can't believe my eyes...*

## Eloise Williams

Eloise Williams grew up opposite a library in Llantrisant, Rhondda Cynon Taf, where she spent much of her time reading in the ruins of a castle.

Her middle grade novels have won the Wales Arts Review Young People's Book of the Year, the Wolverhampton Children's Book Award, the YBB Book Award, and have been shortlisted for the Tir na nOg, the NE Book Awards and Wales Book of the Year.

She has an MA in Creative Writing with distinction from Swansea University and was the inaugural Children's Laureate Wales 2019-2021.

Eloise now lives in West Wales, very close to the sea, where she wild swims, collects sea glass and ghost stories, and walks on the beach with her cairn terrier, Watson Jones.





# QUIZZES

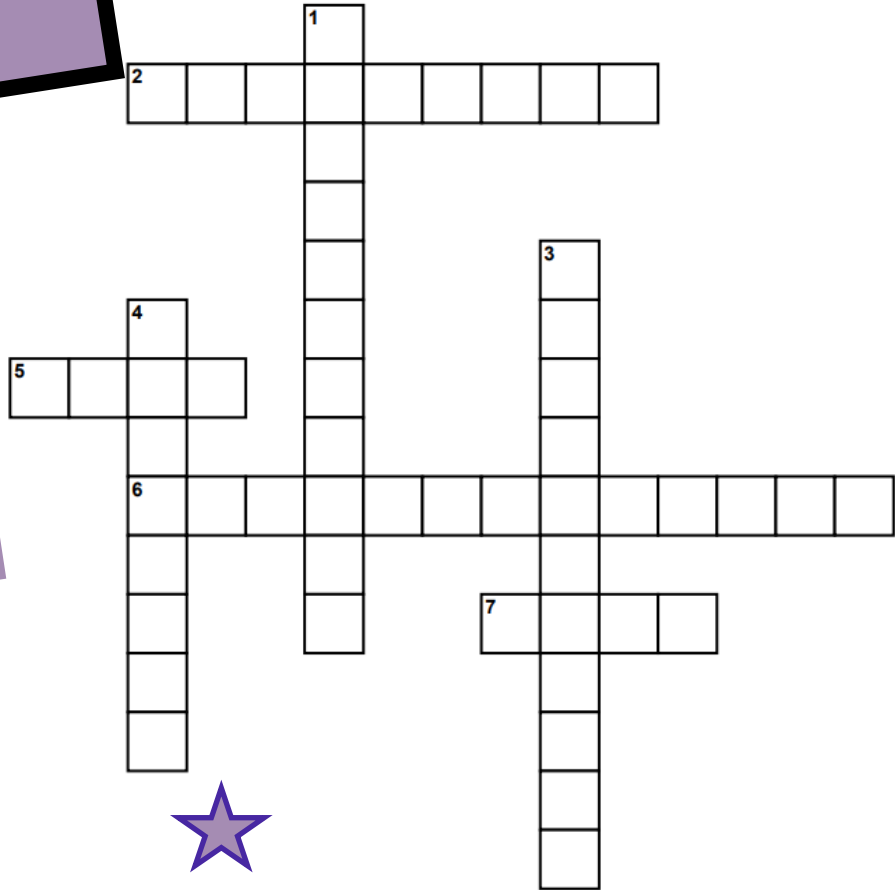
ANSWERS ON PAGE 63

### Across

- [2] What is the name of the protagonist in Maggie Horne's novel?
- [5] Mark Ballabon wrote about how music inspired his novel, but what was the novel called?
- [6] Who wrote The Many Half-Lived Lives of Sam Sylvester?
- [7] Eloise Williams' new novel is called Honesty and ....

### Down

- [1] Who did Ellie Wyatt co-write The Songs You've Never Heard with?
- [3] What is the title of Helena Close's new novel?
- [4] Who wrote our spooky winter recommendations this issue?



CAN YOU FIND ALL THE MUSICAL WORDS HIDDEN IN THIS WORDSEARCH?

- GUITAR
- DRUMS
- MICROPHONE
- RADIO
- VIOLIN
- TRUMPET
- FLUTE
- TROMBONE
- PIANO
- CELLO
- OBOE
- TAMBOURINE
- SING

X	S	V	K	C	E	K	R	X	T	E	Q	Y	W	R
J	X	W	O	G	P	J	K	A	F	G	J	V	E	T
O	L	F	D	Z	X	W	H	Y	D	L	S	O	N	R
E	F	T	F	J	V	Y	A	F	N	I	U	I	C	K
N	W	R	A	D	G	N	I	S	H	T	O	T	L	P
O	H	U	Q	O	R	A	T	I	U	G	N	W	E	Y
H	E	M	M	G	W	D	K	Q	G	A	M	K	O	P
P	N	P	Y	C	E	L	L	O	V	T	V	U	V	F
O	O	E	V	T	A	M	B	O	U	R	I	N	E	O
R	B	T	S	L	N	M	Q	Q	M	L	U	O	B	L
C	M	K	W	W	O	K	B	Y	N	S	N	O	E	U
I	O	R	V	J	G	W	B	U	M	A	E	L	L	M
M	R	H	R	R	O	I	N	U	I	O	Q	U	M	I
J	T	M	J	R	C	J	R	P	Y	Q	J	F	R	H
G	B	H	X	U	M	D	B	I	V	I	O	L	I	N

CAN YOU SOLVE THESE ANAGRAMS?  
CLUE: THEY ARE ALL BOOKS ON EITHER THIS ISSUE'S  
BOOKSHELF, OR FROM AN AUTHOR INTERVIEW

SUCH MULTI ART

BRITTLE LUNATIC TOY

MANTLE

FLEE TENACIOUS HONEY

GLOWING INN MYTH

HANDHELD WEREWOLVES BITE

MEOW MEOW MEOW



Illustration by the  
brilliant

**Claire Lewis**

You can find out more  
about Claire on page 62



New Writing

# The Boy and the Music Box

Writing and illustration  
by Ellie Mitten



**S**amuel couldn't sleep. He tossed and turned in his rickety bed as the wind outside howled. It was nearing midnight, his clock told him, but something was keeping him awake. He was hungry, but that wasn't unusual for Samuel. There was never enough food in his house. Dad didn't often remember to shop. Not for proper food, anyway. Crisps could only fill a growing ten-year old so much.

No, it wasn't the gnawing in his stomach that kept him conscious. It was something else. Something out there. Samuel climbed from his bed and crossed to the window. His eyes found the tree line instantly, almost magnetically. It was lit by moonlight, the innocent line of firs suddenly rendered ominous, or inviting. It was hard to tell.

Without pausing to consider what he was doing, Samuel slipped to the front door, having just the sense to pull on his coat and boots. As he stepped outside the wind dropped at once, the night embracing him fondly. Samuel didn't glance at the other houses, with their twinkly Christmas lights of hope casting his own home into even greater shadow than usual. He could only see the trees.

His feet carried him soundlessly on a path that may or may not have always been there. The dry earth beneath his feet was hard and the night was cold. A chill bit at his skin as twigs cracked under his boots. He didn't realise how deep he'd gone until the path disappeared. The trees closed in, like a pack of curious dogs. Limbs stretched towards him, their green foliage sharp enough to cut. Turning, Samuel realised he was surrounded on all sides, the route he'd travelled gone. And yet, he felt no fear, only anticipation. He wasn't surprised when he spied a small wooden box, sitting serenely on the pine-strewn ground. It shone, impossibly pristine considering its surroundings. Automatically, he picked it up, his fingers gently caressing its smooth sides. Energy vibrated through him, the box humming with life.

A music box, he realised when he saw a small metal winder underneath. Temptation overwhelmed him, but something else too. Was it a warning? Whatever it was, Samuel ignored it. He turned the mechanism. Once, twice, three times.

He barely breathed as he lifted the lid.

Golden light flooded out, caressing Samuel's face as music began to play. It chimed, clear and eerily beautiful.

By the time he realised it was snowing, a thick dusting coated his sleeves. A larger flake appeared before his eyes, suspended. It shimmered like a smile, radiating life. Somehow, when the voice spoke, Samuel knew it was the snow.



‘Thank you,’ it sighed, stretching as he watched. A tiny figure unfolded, so blindingly white he couldn’t make out details beyond a spike of ice hair and a flash of translucent wing.

‘Who are you?’ he rasped. He wanted to say ‘what’ but that seemed rude.

‘My name is long forgotten, but I am eternally grateful for what you have done,’ replied the frost girl. ‘So much so that I’ll grant you three wishes. What is it that you desire most in the world?’

‘A friend,’ blurted Samuel before his brain could properly consider the question.

The frost girl cocked her head at him. Then she nodded once.

‘Let’s go home,’ she said.

The frost girl never left his side on the journey back. Snow had changed his village entirely by the time they emerged from the trees. It spread in a seamless blanket, hiding all imperfections. Sneaking back into bed, Samuel didn't mind the chill as he snuggled down, the frost girl on his pillow in a nest of ice.

Everyone was delighted with the show the next morning.

‘A white Christmas!’ they cried as they frolicked before returning to their warm houses to exchange gifts. Samuel and the frost girl stayed outside; there was nothing waiting for him inside. Numb but happy, they played and chatted until darkness fell.

And so they continued, day after day. Even as the villagers began to complain about the snow. Even when their grumbles grew louder and calls for action could be heard. Samuel didn't notice. He thought the cold was beautiful. It didn’t bother him that spring came and went without a single flower. The villagers, however, called in help. Machines drove snow from the streets. Fires were lit in the square, burning coal and oil so hot that the ice melted into spitting, hissing steam and the falling flakes evaporated before they could land. Every house was made so hot they radiated heat into the streets. Each day, less and less snow could be seen.

‘I am growing weak,’ the frost girl told Samuel as midsummer approached.

‘Stay with me,’ he begged.

Retrieving the music box, he turned the handle and made his second wish. So the frost girl stayed and they continued to play, even if she was a little less solid than before. They slept outside now, in the tiny garden shed, to escape the heat of the house. Samuel’s father still didn’t cook, but he burnt fires just like all the others. When the nights grew

shorter, Samuel hoped the frost girl would regain her strength, that her snow would return, but the land remained hot. The fires continued. The people refused to stop.

‘It is time I found somewhere else to live,’ the frost girl announced. ‘This land, so far North, should be my home, but I can stay here no longer.’

Samuel looked around at his village. At the bare craggy mountain tops above. At the destroyed forests, the trees long since cut and burnt. At the dry river beds, unable to survive the heat.

‘Take me with you,’ he said.

‘Is that your wish?’

‘That is my final wish.’

He retrieved the music box and wound it once more. A single flake fell, dancing in the day’s fading light. Samuel held out his hand and caught it.

Then he was gone.

The villagers never saw him again. All they found was an old music box, silent and broken in the last remaining patch of snow.

## Ellie Mitten

Ellie is a YA and MG author from beautiful Cornwall. Her stories always involve fantasy, and she likes to create worlds to escape into. Having studied History at university, she’s particularly drawn to old myths and legends as inspiration. She currently has two books out, *Garden in the Sands*, a YA re-telling of *The Secret Garden*, and *Finn and the Riddle of the Shells*, a magical Cornish adventure for 8-12 year olds.

You can follow Ellie’s writing journey on Instagram: [@ellie\\_mitten](#), and find out more about her illustrations on page 62.





# ★ MEET THE ★ ILLUSTRATORS

IF YOU'RE AN ARTIST OR ILLUSTRATOR AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOUR WORK IN A FUTURE ISSUE, YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE HERE: [WWW.PAPERBOUNDMAG.COM](http://WWW.PAPERBOUNDMAG.COM)

## SHIRLEY SHELBY

Shirley Shelby is a children's book illustrator and lettering artist. She usually works digitally these days using Photoshop or Procreate but also likes to hand draw her illustrations from time to time as well. She has taken several courses in illustration and design and loves to inspire others with her work. She especially loves illustrating animals and nature. Shirley illustrated the gorgeous musical front cover!



## Jayne Leadbetter

When not hanging out at the beach or the park with Clifford, her clumsy 60-kilo wolfhound, or teaching, Jayne loves illustrating and writing children's picture books and has just completed her first YA/Adult novel. You can see samples of her artwork on Instagram: @jayneleadbetter



Jayne illustrated the contents page of this issue!

## CARYS TOMOS (CAX)

Carys (Cax) is an Illustrator from South Wales who graduated from the University of South Wales Illustration degree in 2018. She has a specific passion for Music in Art and Art in Music, as well as queer expression and activism, poetry, and children's animation. You can also read her writings about Music in Art and Art in Music in her self-published Zine 'The Mid Eight' which you can order online [www.carystomos.co.uk](http://www.carystomos.co.uk). You can view more of her work on Instagram @carys\_tomos. Carys illustrated *Dad's Guitar* in our winter issue.







## Carmen Carreira

Carmen has always loved creating Art. At school it was her favourite subject and she went on to study Illustration at Kingston University. After achieving her degree, she illustrated several books including a cookery book called *Cooking Lessons* and a series for the National Trust and Country Living on subjects such as beekeeping and hen keeping which matched well with her interests. If she could offer any advice to someone considering a career as an illustrator, it would be to always draw from what you know and love. When Carmen's not busy being a mum to her three little boys, she dedicates as much time as possible to creating artworks. Often she'll be working on a custom portrait of a pet, house or person, but more than anything she loves to spend time creating an illustration from her imagination or even just doodling away in her sketchbook. This issue, Carmen illustrated a musical inspired writing prompt.



## CLAIRE LEWIS

Claire is an author/illustrator living in Devon with her family and a charmingly disobedient border terrier. She loves creating funny or lyrical picture books and has also recently begun to dabble in writing illustrated chapter books and middle grade stories. She works for an independent non-profit bookshop, where she is occasionally allowed to paint on the windows as part of a window display. You can follow Claire on Twitter (@ClaireFLewis) or Instagram (@claire\_f\_lewis) and see more of her illustrations on her website: [www.clairelewis.com](http://www.clairelewis.com) Claire illustrated our quizzes page this issue.



## ELLIE MITTEN



Ellie has only recently begun illustrating but has fallen in love with the process, especially how it allows her to bring scenes from her writing to life. She enjoys experimenting with different styles, and is currently creating the illustrations to accompany her newest MG novel. You can follow Ellie's writing and illustrating journey on Instagram: @ellie\_mitten

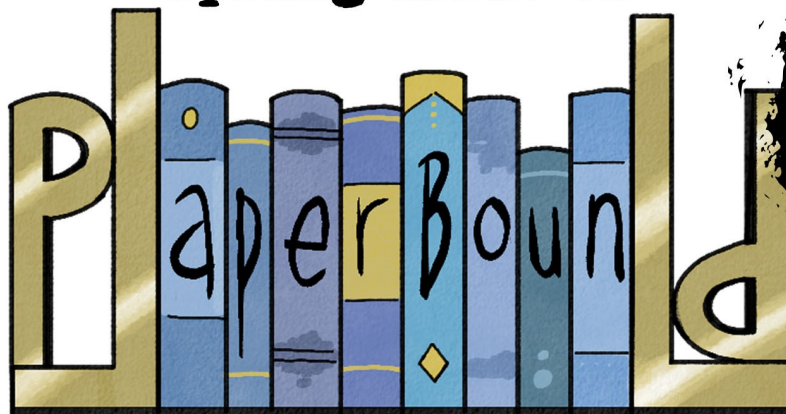
For our winter issue, Ellie illustrated her short story *The Boy and the Music Box*.

Quizzes answers: Crossword—Across: 2. Hazel Hill 5. Home 6. Maya MacGregor 7. Lies Down: 1. Becky Jerams 3. Things I Know 4. Amy McCaw Anagrams: 1. Musical Truth 2. A Little Bit Country 3. Lament 4. Can You Feel The Noise 5. My Own Lightning 6. The Worlds We Leave Behind





Don't miss the green-themed  
spring issue of



for the young, and the young at heart

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**New Art**

**Author Interviews**

**Writing Tips**

**Book Recommendations**

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