



Books of the Year 2021 Old Barn Books - Zuntold

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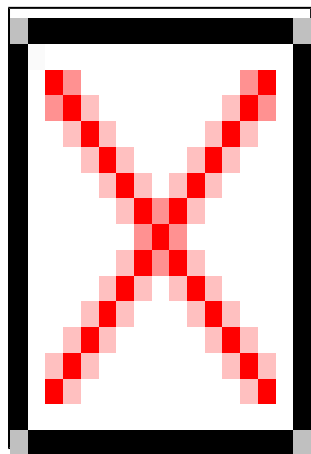
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Books of the Year 2021 (**Old Barn Books - Zuntold**)

Old Barn

Something different from us this year: Paul Jennings? gentle, humorous, autobiography, **Untwisted** (June), weaves together the characters and events that formed the author of **Round the Twist** and our recent **Different** trio of novellas. From dyslexic child immigrant and high school dropout to award-winning teacher and Concorde-travelling author, Paul looks back and unpicks both his life and his writing, reflecting on moments of hubris as he confronts his glass-fronted collection of classic cars and his marriage failure. Raw and revealing, in **Untwisted** Jennings has crafted both a quirky, compelling, narrative and a how-to for students of creative writing and of life. **Ruth Huddleston Old Barn**

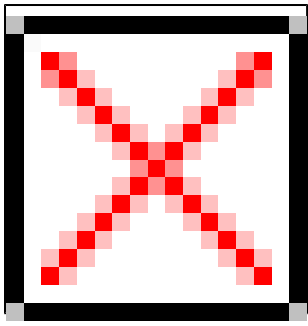
Orion Children's Books



From the *New York Times* bestselling author [Jewell Parker Rhodes](#) [2] we have **Black Brother, Black Brother** (May), an incredibly powerful coming-of-age story about two brothers ? one who presents as white, the other as Black ? and the ways they are forced to navigate a world that doesn't treat them equally. Jewell?s storytelling is poignant and gripping, and tackles the complexities of race and racism in today?s world with heart and empathy. **Kate Agar, Editorial**

Director

Otter-Barry Books



YOU CAN! by Alexandra Strick and Steve Antony (October) is a ground-breaking picture book that will inspire children everywhere to believe in themselves. Exceptionally diverse and inclusive, it follows 14 children from birth to young adulthood as they reach out to the future and take charge of their lives. We see the children learning new skills, exploring new worlds, talking about feelings, being kind, being brave and standing up for their own and others' rights, and most important of all, being themselves. Author Alexandra Strick, co-founder of **Inclusive Minds**, was inspired by conversations with real children from many different backgrounds and experiences, sharing messages of empathy, reassurance and hope. The astonishing visual narrative is by internationally acclaimed illustrator Steve Antony. **Janetta Otter-Barry, Publisher**

Penguin Random House Non-Fiction:

A Different Sort of Normal (July) by Abigail Balfe is an eye-opening true story of one girl's journey growing up autistic. Through Abigail's vibrant words and illustrations, we are told about the highs and lows of her childhood as she navigates the 'normal' world around her. There are funny stories that include her fear of toilets, and an incident involving her dad and a tub of ice cream at the supermarket. And more serious stories: a very difficult experience at a swimming pool, coping with bullies, and dealing with the overwhelming stimuli of a crowded train. Along the way, Abigail also shares crucial information about autism. Working with an exciting new talent such as Abigail would be an incredible thing in any case, but her very personal blueprint for how to understand and accept yourself 'all delivered with her wonderful warmth and humour' is so very important. **Tom Rawlinson, Commissioning Editor, Puffin**

Puffin Middle Grade

It's rare to read the opening lines of a book and realise instantly that you have in front of you something really special, but this was the case with **The Hatmakers** by Tamzin Merchant (February, illus Paola Escobar). This book has completely enchanted me; I haven't felt as immersed in a magical setting since stepping into **Ollivanders**. It's warm-hearted and wise, funny and adventurous, and beautifully written? **Natalie Doherty, Puffin Editorial Director**

Penguin YA

The Upper World (August) is YA fiction at its absolute best - smart, bold, hilarious and addictive. Debut author Femi Fadugba has skilfully woven together the story of two young teenagers separated by time and fate with his expert knowledge of the physics of literal time-travel. Its ambition and scope is unlike anything else out there: simply put, it's a triumph. Emma Jones, Acquiring Editor

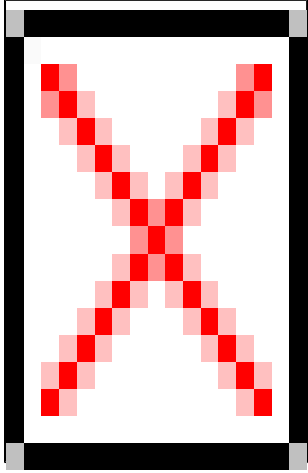
Piccadilly Press (Bonnier)

The Elephant in the Room, from much-loved **Counting by 7s** author, [Holly Goldberg Sloan](#) [3], is a heart-warming, empathetic story about Sila, a young Turkish girl living in America, whose mother has had to return to Turkey to renew her immigration papers. Luckily her dad takes Sila's mind off things by bringing her with him to work, which is how they meet Gio, an elderly man living on his own in a huge house. And which is also how they meet a circus elephant and decide to reunite the elephant with her mother! Wonderfully engaging with important messages about family and friendship. **Emma Matthewson, Executive Publisher**

Prestel

I Saw A Beautiful Woodpecker is the authentic 80 year old diary of an eight year old boy - Michal Skibinski ? who wrote one sentence into his notebook every day during one summer. A long series of laconic sentences tell of peaceful days in the countryside, surrounded by nature ... However, this was the summer of 1939, and school didn't start again in September, instead the Second World War broke out. An extraordinary and touching book with wonderful illustrations that reflect the mood of this special summer ? after which nothing would ever be the same again. **Doris Kutschbach Prestel**

Quercus Children's Books



Piers Torday's **The Last Wild** trilogy won **The Guardian Children's Fiction Prize** and is now much-loved modern classic. In September comes the prequel, **The Wild Before** (September), which is a beautiful, captivating animal adventure. One frosty winter's night, a pure white calf is born by the light of a silver moon. This is the legendary Mooncalf: according to a dream passed down from animal to animal, if the calf dies, a great terribleness will come - rising seas, a plague, skies raining down fire, the end of all things... Little Hare vows to persuade all the animals to protect Mooncalf, whatever the cost? **Sarah Lambert, Publishing Director**

Red Shed (Egmont)

Packed full of super silly pranks, **My Very Very Very Very Very Very Very Silly Book of Pranks** is the hilarious follow-up to Matt Lucas's **My Very Very Very Very Very Very Very Silly Book of Jokes** and the ultimate boredom-busting book for 7+ readers! Join Matt as he introduces silly, safe and brilliantly inventive pranks to play on family and friends. Meet the greatest pranksters of all time, discover the world's most mind-blowing hoaxes, giggle at epic prank fails? and much, much more. Hours of family-friendly fun, laughter and creativity, perfect for brightening up the home-school day or livening up a dull staycation! **Melissa Fairley Picture Books Publishing Director**

Rock the Boat

What am I most excited to be publishing in 2021? That's a tough one, but I'm going to have to go for **Firekeeper's Daughter**, the ground-breaking YA thriller by debut author Angeline Boulley. The story centres around Native American teen Daunis. After witnessing a shocking murder in her community, Daunis finds herself going undercover for the **FBI**. Her journey as she unearths the truth ? and learns what it means to be a strong Anishinaabe kwe (Ojibwe woman) ? will keep you reading well into the early hours? **Katie Jennings, Senior Commissioning Editor**

Scallywag Press

In 1988, as children's editor at **Faber**, I met (in New York) and published (in the UK) a brand-new kid on the block. The new kid was Jon Agee, the book **The Incredible Painting of Felix Clousseau**. Now, 33 years later, it is being reissued here by **Scallywag Press**. In a larger format, and with a masterful cover change, this wonderful book is a triumphant celebration of ?comic absurdity?. And it has an ending so sublimely illustrative of the brilliance of word-and-picture play that, for me, it is a benchmark of picture book genius. Go, Felix, go ? enchant a whole new generation of

children, and their grown-ups! **Janice Thomson, Editor**

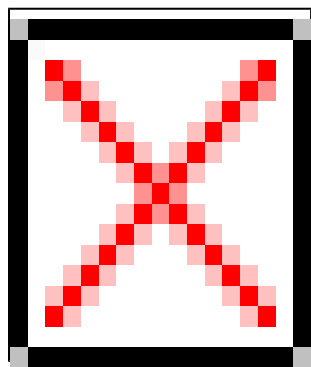
Scholastic

The Nightsilver Promise by Annaliese Avery (November) is an epic, beautifully written debut fantasy adventure acquired in a break-neck pre-empt by our **Commissioning Editor Yasmin Morrissey**. It has future children's classic written all over it: we're in a world where everyone's destiny is pre-determined by a track of stars on their wrist. 13-year-old Paisley discovers that her fate is to die before her fourteenth year is out, and when her mother goes missing and is presumed dead, so begins a breath-taking adventure through an alternative London of Floating Boroughs and a vault guarded by Dragon Walkers. It is full of thrills and bravery and has family at its heart: glorious storytelling and a must-read. **Lauren Fortune, Editorial Director**

The School of Life

I am delighted we are continuing to expand our children's list in 2021, with books designed to encourage emotional literacy for all ages. **Nature and Me; what we can learn from the world around us** (June), complete with gorgeous illustrations, explores the wonders of the natural world from a different perspective. While asking children how nature makes them feel and helping them to engage with it; this book aims to positively influence their emotional wellbeing, which seems so relevant. Ranging from the wonders of a starry night, to an encounter with a cosy hedgehog; children are encouraged to explore various emotions as they relate to the natural world. **Toby Marshall, Head of Publishing**

Scribe



From the author of the **Doodle Cat** series, Kat Patrick and illustrated by Evie Barrow, **Howl (February), Where the Wild Things Are** for girls ?highlighting the importance of letting out big feelings, particularly as a young girl, and underscoring the unique bond between mother and daughter. It tells the story of a young girl, Maggie, who has had a very bad day ? the sun was the wrong shape, her spaghetti was too long and her shoes wouldn't go on properly. When she starts to have wolfish thoughts, she heads out into the moonlit garden with her mother to engage in some wolfish behaviour ? **Sarah Braybrooke, Managing Director**

Studio Press (Bonnier)

How to Mend a Friend publishes in June 2021. This heartfelt picture book is all about sadness and empathy, and it shows children how they can support each other through life's more difficult moments. It's written in a lyrical rhyming style by Karl Newson, and illustrated by the incredibly talented Clara Anganuzzi. Readers will follow a child and a polar bear as they navigate life's twists and turns, and learn how to help their friends when things aren't going so well. From a magnificent lion to riotously colourful parrots, there's something to fall in love with on every page. **Stephanie Milton, Publishing Head**

Sunbird Books

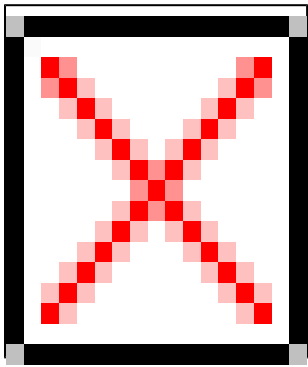
Using creativity to conquer boredom makes for a timeless children's tale, but it has never been as timely as right now. In **Stuck Inside**, gorgeously written and illustrated by Sally Anne Garland (May), Tilly is stuck inside until a storm

passes, and her pup Toby is stuck inside until his paw heals. There is absolutely nothing fun to do? until a hopeful Toby brings something to Tilly, and Tilly gets an idea! This sweet, encouraging story of seeing old things in a new light will spark the imagination of any child who feels cooped up by the pandemic, or anything else. **Susie Brooke, Editorial Director**

Templar

I am over the moon that Templar are publishing **A Shelter for Sadness** (January). This lyrical picture book has a moving text from Anne Booth and is given wonderful colour and feeling by the illustrations of David Litchfield. The shelter in the book is the comfortable, safe place a child builds to house his sadness. Therein lies this story's vital message ? that sadness is okay and that if you make space for it and accept it, the sun will shine more brightly in other parts of your life. I think it is an important, timely story. **Katie Haworth, Publishing Head**

Tiny Owl



In uncertain times, we all need hope. To be published in March, exactly one year after England's national lockdown, **Unlocked! Stories of Hope from Tiny Owl Artists in Lockdown** is a gorgeous collection of words and pictures which capture a moment in history. Inside you will find contributions from 15 fantastic **Tiny Owl** artists hailing from all around the world.

Reflecting on their experiences during lockdown and how they coped, each illustrator showcases their distinctive styles. Themes of resilience, creativity, and positivity weave their way into every spread, for children and adults to treasure in months and years to come. **Delaram Ghanimifard, Co-Founder and Publisher**

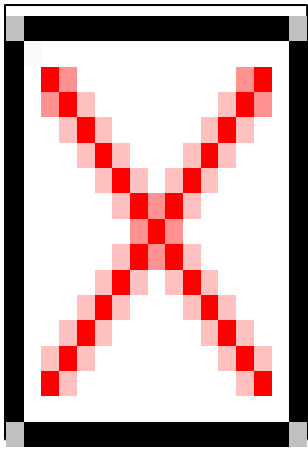
Troika Books

In June we will publish **When Poems Fall from the Sky**, a stunning new collaboration by Zaro Weil and Junli Song, the writer and illustrator of CLIPPA winning **Cherry Moon**. Published in association with the **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew**, the poems, story-poems, raps, rhymes, haiku and little plays inside this fantastical anthology about nature are a riot of imagination, humour and joy. In exquisitely illustrated full colour pages trees, birds, animals, rivers, flowers, mountains and insects each share their own magical stories. And the stories they tell, the 'poems' that fall from the sky, subtly and powerfully illuminate our hope and collective role as guardians of our earth. **Martin West, Publisher**

Two Hoots (Macmillan)

I've chosen **A Song of Gladness** by Michael Morpurgo and illustrated by Emily Gravett. The alchemy of two people creating a picture book is a magical thing, and especially when it involves such towering talents as Michael Morpurgo and Emily Gravett. Inspired by a blackbird in Michael's garden, **A Song of Gladness** is a story of hope and inspiration for us all, encouraging us to come together with nature, and with each other, to save our planet. This joyful masterpiece ? Michael's lyrical, moving text and Emily's extraordinarily beautiful illustrations -? could not be more timely, and is one of my proudest publishing moments. **Suzanne Carnell, Publisher**

Uclan Publishing



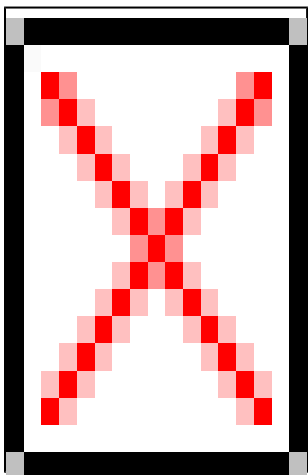
For someone with an overactive imagination I knew **The Weather Weaver** (March) by debut author Tamsin Mori was something special as soon as it landed in my inbox. Full of magic, myths and legends, Tamsin has woven a fantastical story that is so rooted in reality the reader will find it completely plausible that they too might have the power to conjure up their own cloud. Yes, this is a book about magic, but it's also about grief and a girl who yearns to feel at home, finding her independence and own inner strength. I completely love this story, and I'm sure you will too. **Hazel Holmes, Publisher**

Usborne

Usborne Fiction's 2021 titles feature something for every kind of reader, including Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé's hotly-anticipated thriller and a second laugh-out-loud novel from rising star Jenny Pearson. I'm proud to introduce **A Glasshouse of Stars**, by Chinese-Australian author Shirley Marr; a book that has captured my heart. Shirley has drawn on her own experiences of immigrating as a child to craft the powerful story of Meixing's arrival in the New Land, where everything is scary and different, but a magical glasshouse provides a place to dream. Using an incredible second-person narrative voice, this is a one-of-a-kind gem of a book. **Rebecca Hill, Editorial Director, Fiction**

A sense of wonder, whimsy and fascinating science is what makes **The Book of the Brain** (March) one of the titles I'm proudest to have worked on this year. Created in collaboration with a practising neuroscientist who is also an accomplished artist, the result is an enchanting blend of picture-book, almost comic book, storytelling with non-fiction content. Brain science is one of the great new frontiers in science today. It's been an exciting challenge to create accurate visual analogies of the workings of the brain, enabling us to bring the joy and magic of the subject to very young children. **Jane Chisholm, Editorial Director, Non-Fiction**

Walker Books



Jonathan Stroud, bestselling author of [Lockwood & Co](#) [4] and the **Bartimaeus trilogy**, was once an editor at **Walker Books**, so it is particularly exciting to see him storm onto the Walker list with **Outlaws Scarlett and Browne**, the first in a brilliant new teen fantasy series. In this 'rip-roaring, bullets-flying, hooves-stomping gallop through dystopian

Britain? (Eoin Colfer), England has been struck by a series of catastrophes, destroying cities and forcing the population into fortified towns while strange beasts prowl the wilderness. Anyone who falls foul of the strict new rules faces being killed or driven out into the wilds. Only a few fight back ? among them Scarlett McCain and Albert Browne whose sheer audacity and charisma promises to make them the new anti-hero legends in teen fiction. **Jane Winterbotham, Publisher**

Walker Studio

Award-winning documentary artist George Butler has travelled the world capturing the stories of migration ? whether it be leaving home to seek a better life, to escape war or to flee disaster. In **Drawn Across Borders** his powerful portraits bring to life individual human stories of the people behind the headlines, in their struggle to seek a better life. His powerful visual storytelling will reach out to young readers as a reminder of the humanity we share, and the universal right to safety. This stunning book brings a striking new approach to one of the most pressing issues of our time. **Jane Winterbotham, Publisher**

Wren & Rook

The nation?s favourite paediatrician, Dr Ranj, has been a vital source of trustworthy information for parents during the pandemic, so we couldn?t be prouder to be publishing his puberty guide for boys, **How to Grow Up and Feel Amazing!: The No-Worries Guide for Boys** (February). Filled with easy-to-understand explanations and down-to-earth advice, this growing-up handbook is fit for the 21st century: it covers mental health, social media, friendships and relationships in addition to the all-important physical changes. **Liza Wilde, Managing Editor**

Zuntold

I?m absolutely delighted to be bringing Anna Bowles? wonderful book **Rapids** to market next year. With some really important themes, we chose a publication date during **Mental Health Awareness Week** in May to help highlight this as the newest title in our Fiction as Therapy stable.

Author Anna lives with bipolar herself, and so her voice is really authentic, and her protagonist Yan is an unforgettable one. But beyond this, the book is no ?issue novel? ? it?s a slice of real teen life, by turns serious and hilarious I really think that this will be a huge hit amongst teens and adults alike. **Elaine Bousfield, CEO**

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