Reviews and Extra Material

Contents:

Not as We Know It by Tom Avery
Illustrated by Kate Grove 2

How to Fight a Dragon’s Fury by Cressida Cowell 4

Demolition Dad by Phil Earle
Illustrated by Sara Ogilvie 6

How to Fly with Broken Wings by Jane Elson 8

The Pirates of Pangaea by Daniel Hartwell
Illustrated by Neill Cameron 10

The Marvels by Brian Selznick 12

The Cake, the Wolf and the Witch by Maudie Smith
Illustrated by Tony Ross 14

My Brother is a Superhero by David Solomons
Illustrated by Laura Ellen Anderson 16

Hamish and the Worldstoppers by Danny Wallace
Illustrated by Jamie Littler 18

Return to the Secret Garden by Holly Webb 20
**Reviews and Extra Material**

**Not as We Know It**
by Tom Avery
Illustrated by Kate Grove
Published by Andersen Press

Jamie and Ned are twins (11). They do everything together: riding their bikes, beachcombing outside their house, watching their favourite episodes of Star Trek. But Ned is sick, and one day, he may leave Jamie behind.

When they discover a strange creature on the beach, Ned wants one more adventure and decides to keep him secretly in their garage. But Jamie begins to hope that the creature might bring some miracle, and stop his brother from going where he can no longer follow...

**Nominated by Diane Gill:**

“It may take a few pages to get into the feel of this book but then you cannot help but become totally caught up in this mesmerising and heart-wrenching tale. A wonderful fantasy, focussing on many layers of real life, the imagined, and different relationships. Tissues an absolute must!”

**Activities:**

- Imagine you are on holiday and see a strange creature coming out of the sea. Describe and draw what you see.

- Ned and Jamie’s grandfather tells them stories of the sea and sea monsters. Research other types of mythical sea creatures and write your own short story about one of them.

- Create a memory box for Ned. What might Jamie put in it? How might he decorate the box?
**Discussion points:**
See link below

**Further reading:**
- *My Brother’s Shadow* by Tom Avery, illustrated by Kate Grove
- *Monster of Shiversands Cove* by Emma Fischel (mythical creatures)
- *Mermaids* by Lori Hile (non-fiction)
- *Lexiland* by Suzi Moore (death of a twin)

**Useful links:**
- Discussion points: [http://www.andersenpress.co.uk/upload/free-stuff/fiction/not-as-we-know-it/not-as-we-know-it--discussion-questions](http://www.andersenpress.co.uk/upload/free-stuff/fiction/not-as-we-know-it/not-as-we-know-it--discussion-questions)
- Author’s website: [www.tomaveryauthor.com](http://www.tomaveryauthor.com)
Reviews and Extra Material

How to Fight a Dragon’s Fury
by Cressida Cowell
Published by Hodder Children’s Books

Hiccup has to stop a dragon rebellion and attempt to save his people and the dragons despite having amnesia.

It is the Doomsday of Yule. At the end of this day, either the humans or the dragons will face extinction. Alvin the Treacherous is about to be crowned the King of the Wilderwest on the island of Tomorrow. His reign of terror will begin with the destruction of dragons everywhere.

The fate of the dragon world lies in the hands of one young boy as he stands on the nearby isle of Hero’s End with nothing to show, but everything to fight for. Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third’s Quest is clear. First he must defeat the Dragon Guardians of Tomorrow and prove that he is in fact the rightful king, even though Hiccup has none of the King’s Things and Alvin the Treacherous has all ten of them.

Nominated by Janette Kerr:
“An expertly crafted magical tale which is never predictable and is alternatively wise as well as highly amusing. This finale to the series has all the makings of an enduring modern classic.”

Activities:
• Run a Dragonese Day (see Cressida Cowell’s website link below)
• In class, you could explore Viking history, brought to life by the How to Train Your Dragon series

• Many children wish dragons were real; use this as a story starter for creative writing

• Encourage pupils to design their own dragon

Discussion Points:
• Hiccup has to believe in himself and recognise the need to be confident to achieve his quest. Use this as an example with your pupils of how they could work on these skills to achieve a personal goal.

• This series of books has been used as the basis of two films so far. Ask pupils what differences they noticed between the films and the books, and why this might be the case.

Further reading:
• The Flame Dragon by J R Castle

• The Incomplete Book of Dragons: a Guide to Dragon Species by Cressida Cowell

Useful links:
• Author’s website: www.cressidacowell.co.uk

• Official site of the series: www.howtetrainyourdragonbooks.com
Demolition Dad
by Phil Earle
Illustrated by Sara Ogilvie
Published by Orion

This is the story of Jake Biggs and his dad, George. George spends all week knocking down buildings... and all weekend knocking down wrestlers. He's the Demolition Man, and Jake couldn't be prouder.

But when Jake hears about a pro-wrestling competition in the USA, and persuades his beloved dad to apply, things don’t quite turn out the way he expected...

Nominated by Becca Barr:
“This story is both funny and sad in equal measure but at the heart of it all is the wonderful relationship between a boy and his dad. It’s a brilliant stand-alone read and the witty illustrations really bring it to life. Lovely.”

Activities:
- Design your own wrestling outfit and character – come up with a name and a signature move
- Design and make your own pizza and then give it a wrestling themed name, for example ‘Demolition Dad’s dangerously hot pepperoni pizza’
- Jake’s dad is a demolition man by day. Follow the link below and have a look at forces and ‘wrecking ball science’
Discussion points:

- Why do you think Jake gets bullied by Masher Milner?
- What do you think is wrong with Jake’s dad? Why does he stay in bed all day? Discuss your ideas.

Further reading:

- Danny the Champion of the World by Roald Dahl, illustrated by Quentin Blake
- Brilliant by Roddy Doyle
- Big Rock and the Masked Avenger by Jim Eldridge

Useful links:

- Author’s website: www.philearle.com
- Illustrator’s website: www.saraogilvie.com
Reviews and Extra Material

How to Fly with Broken Wings
by Jane Elson
Published by Hodder Children’s Books

Twelve-year-old Willem has Asperger’s Syndrome and two main aims in life: to fly and to make at least two friends of his own age.

But all the other boys from the Beckham Estate do is make him jump off things - first his desk, and now the wall. As his toes teeter on the edge, Sasha Barton gives him a tiny little wink. Might she become his friend? Bullied by Finn and his gang the Beckham Estate Boyz, Willem has no choice but to jump. As he flies through the air he flaps his arms, wishing he could fly and escape into the clouds. Instead he comes crashing down and breaks his ankle.

Sasha, angry with herself for not stopping Finn and his Boyz, is determined to put things right. And soon, while the gangs riot on their estate, Willem and Sasha form an unlikely friendship because they share a secret. Sasha longs to fly too. And when Magic Man Archie arrives with stories of war-flying spitfires, he will change the lives of the kids on the Beckham Estate forever. And perhaps find a way for Willem and Sasha to fly...

Nominated by Katie Hamnett:
“At once heart-breaking and full of hope, this beautifully written story captures the grim reality of inner-city life without being too heavy-handed. The split narrative allows the characters’ personalities to shine through, and I loved Willem and Sasha so much I didn’t want to share this book!”
Activities:
- Research and produce a poster about one of the following – Spitfire planes, women during World War II, or the London riots of 2011
- Re-write a chapter of the story from the point of view of either Finn, Gracie or Archie
- Design either your dream outfit, or your dream aircraft

Discussion points:
- Why do you think Finn is part of the Beckham Estate Boyz gang?
- Students with disabilities, like Willem, are often bullied. What do you think could be done to help prevent this?

Further reading:
- Al Capone Does My Shirts by Gennifer Choldenko
- The Icarus Show by Sally Christie
- Caesar the War Dog by Stephen Dando-Collins
- The London Eye Mystery by Siobhan Dowd
- Stonebird by Mike Revell
- The Machine Gunners by Robert Westall

Useful links:
- http://www.janeelson.com/ - author’s website
- https://www.childline.org.uk/Explore/Bullying/Pages/Bullying.aspx - information and advice about bullying and being bullied, from the charity Childline
The newly discovered island of Pangaea is the most dangerous place on Earth, where dinosaurs still walk the land. Sophie Delacourt has been sent to Pangaea to stay with her uncle. But little does she know its perils - for Pangaea is a lawless wilderness, teeming with cut-throat pirates!

Kidnapped and imprisoned, Sophie must escape from the ruthless Captain Brookes and embark upon an epic journey to find her way home.

Nominated by Lucy Forrester:
“An enthralling adventure that will leave you hungry for the next instalment.”

Activities:
- The plot is what’s known as a mash-up – different themes that don’t traditionally fit together made into one story. In the case of The Pirates of Pangaea, Georgian adventure stories are mashed up with dinosaurs. Can you think of any other combinations of themes that you would like to see? Mind map some ideas for a story based around your mashed-up themes.
• Design an island, using the maps and scenery of Pangaea for inspiration. Think about what ocean your island would be in, what kind of climate and landscape it has, whether it has human inhabitants, and what sorts of animals may roam on it. You could even give it grid references, like a real map.

• Sophie uses the skills she learned training horses to help her tame the T Rex, Cornflower. Can you think of any unusual skills that may come in unexpectedly useful in a dangerous situation? Maybe you could write a story about it.

**Discussion points:**

• How do you feel about the way dinosaurs are presented? How does that differ from other stories or films with dinosaurs in?

• How have the indigenous people of Pangaea adapted to being colonised by the British? How are they protecting their culture?

• Sophie has been brought up as a young lady in Georgian society. What sort of behaviour would be expected of her? How does she defy these expectations?

**Further reading:**

• **Z Rex** by Steve Cole (a thrilling dinosaur adventure)

• **Troy Trailblazer** by Robert Deas (a comic strip sci-fi adventure with alien zombies)

• **Curse of the Night Wolf** by Paul Stewart, illustrated by Chris Riddell (a Georgian adventure with supernatural monsters)

**Useful links:**

• **The Phoenix Comic**, in which the story first featured: https://www.thephoenixcomic.co.uk/

• Daniel Hartwell’s Twitter: https://twitter.com/CynicalMongoose

• Neill Cameron’s website: http://www.neillcameron.com/
The Marvels
by Brian Selznick
Published by Scholastic

The illustrated story begins in 1766 with Billy Marvel, the lone survivor of a shipwreck, and charts the adventures of his family of actors over five generations. The prose story opens in 1990 and follows Joseph, who has run away from school to an estranged uncle’s puzzling house in London, where he, along with the reader, must piece together many mysteries.

Nominated by Debbie Bradley:
“TThis is a beautiful book to look at, read and take in. Selznick’s ability to tell a story in illustration is wonderfully cinematic, and his weaving-in of the illustrated and prose stories combines to make a unique read.”

Activities:
• In the book, Joseph’s uncle has restored his house to replicate what it might have looked like when it was first built. Research the history of your house (or that of a relative). What did it look like when it was built? What kind of furniture and fittings might the original owners have had in their home?

• Write a fictional history of a family ancestor. This could be based on a real relative from the past, or a made-up one.

Discussion points:
• Joseph’s relationship with his parents is not a happy one. Why was Joseph unhappy before, and what changed when he ran away to live with his uncle?
• Not everyone is bought up in a traditional family unit of mum, dad and child. What other kinds of families do people have?

Further reading:
• The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick

Useful links:
• www.dennissevershouse.co.uk – The site which tells you about the actual house in London that the house in the book is based on, and the man who restored it.
After Max's mum died, he's dedicated the last two years of his life to making sure that everything stays exactly the same. Somehow, though, Dad managed to get out of his sight long enough to fall in love with Alarming Ilona.

Now he's got a stepmother (probably evil) and two annoying new siblings (Nettle and Wild). He knows his new life will be awful - after all, he doesn't believe in happy endings.

But when Max, Nettle and Wild are spun away into the magical Land of Ever After, they find themselves stuck in the middle of a very mixed-up fairy tale.

**Nominated by Catherine McKenzie:**
“Fairy tale twists are everywhere but this takes well-known characters and makes something new and exciting. The quest story is engaging in itself but the thing that lifts this above many other fairy tale twists is the way the reluctant hero’s adventure allows him to reconcile himself with his new home life. Lovely.”

**Activities:**
- Pick a scene from the book and act it out.
- Put some words which crop up in fairytales in a bag and either in groups or as a class take one out and start a story; continue by having someone else take out a second word and so on.
• Hotseating – sit in a chair at the front of the class or in smaller groups and become a character in the book. The other children ask questions about their character.

• Make a map tracing the characters’ journey through the book. Mark the places they go and draw the people they meet.

Further reading:
• The Milkshake Detectives by Heather Butler
• Noah Barleywater Runs Away by John Boyne, illustrated by Oliver Jeffers
• The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C S Lewis
• Jelly Baby by Jean Ure
• The Boy Who Sailed the Ocean in an Armchair by Lara Williamson

Useful links:
• The author’s website: http://www.maudiesmith.co.uk/
• The author’s blog: http://maudiesmith.co.uk/blog/?p=257
Reviews and Extra Material

My Brother is a Superhero
by David Solomons
Illustrated by Laura Ellen Anderson
Published by Nosy Crow

Luke is a comic-mad eleven-year-old who shares a treehouse with his geeky older brother, Zack. Luke's only mistake is to go for a wee right at the wrong time. While he's gone, an alien gives his undeserving, never-read-a-comic-in-his-life brother superpowers and then tells him to save the universe.

Luke is massively annoyed about this, but when Zack is kidnapped by his arch-nemesis, Luke and his friends have only five days to find him and save the world...

Nominated by Laura Mulrennan:
“The plot is original, presenting the perspective of the sibling of a superhero instead of the superhero themselves. Popular culture references and boy-humour make for an entertaining read.”

Activities:
- Draw and name your own superhero with abilities so poor they are laughable
- Convert an unusual day of your life into a comic strip, e.g. a holiday or school trip
- Write a poem about an alien or a superhero visiting Earth, and how different we might seem to them
**Discussion points:**
- Debate which superpower, e.g. telepathy or flight, is the best
- Describe occasions when you had disagreements with your brother/sister, and how you resolved them
- Imagine you are an entrepreneur like Christopher Talbot; what kind of business would you run?

**Further reading:**
- *Vile’s Vengeance* (previously *The Vengeance of Vinister Vile*) by Guy Bass, illustrated by Jamie Littler
- *The Baddie* by Anna Maxted, illustrated by Alex T. Smith
- *Invisible Brother* by Pete Johnson

**Useful links:**
Hamish and the Worldstoppers
by Danny Wallace
Illustrated by Jamie Littler
Published by Simon & Schuster

Ten-year-old Hamish Ellerby has started to notice something unusual happening in his boring home town. Every once in a while, everything just... stops. The birds in the air. The cars on the road. The people outside. The people inside. The clock on the wall. They all. Just. Stop. Everything except Hamish, that is.

Hours pass. Or maybe minutes. It’s impossible to tell. Time passes very slowly when literally nothing is happening! And then, like a switch has been flipped, everything starts up again, just like that. But why is it happening? And what are the horribly hideous creatures that Hamish keeps seeing around town?

Nominated by Emma Higgins:
“I just love everything about this book; from the eye-catching cover and Jamie Littler’s fabulous illustrations to the fun use of fonts and Danny Wallace’s sense of humour that permeates every page. It’s non-stop silliness with hilarious descriptions of strange events, creepy monsters and kooky characters. There is a classic chocolate bar ‘chomp’ obsession alongside adventures on Vespas. What more could you want in a book? This is an entertaining adventure from start to finish. ”

Activities:
• Using percussion instruments, create sound effects for the ‘Terribles’ approaching and retreating during a pause. How would the sounds change throughout the story?
• Imagine you are a new member of the PDF: PDF member #7. Design your own page for the PDF handbook. What would your code name, department, moped, special skills, signature move and secret fact be?

• Pretending to be one of the PDF members, write a diary entry for the day you first realised you were able to move during a pause and no-one else around you could. How did you work out what was going on? What were you doing when time un-paused?

• The reports and articles in the Starkley Post are always very boring and uninspiring e.g. ‘Woman dials wrong number’ or ‘Potato looks a bit like a dog’. Think of some headlines for new articles in the newspaper about the dull, unexciting events that happen in Starkley or create a newspaper advert for one of the boring businesses in the town that would fit right in to the world’s most yawn-making newspaper.

Discussion points:
• Hamish and the other members of the PDF get up to all sorts of adventures when time pauses in the story. What would you do if time paused and you could go anywhere and do anything?

• What do you think about the character of Grenville. Why do you think he is so mean to Hamish? How does his behaviour change by the end of the story and why?

• Discuss what we know about Hamish’s dad. The stranger at the end of the story tells Hamish he helped start the uprising and the Worldstoppers wanted him finished. What do you think this means? What could his job be and where do you think he has gone now?

Further reading:
• The Shark-headed Bear-thing by Barry Hutchison, illustrated by Chris Mould

• The Hamburgers of Doom by Malcolm Judge

• The Parent Agency by David Baddiel, illustrated by Jim Field

• Danger is Everywhere: a Handbook for Avoiding Danger by David O’Doherty, illustrated by Chris Judge

• Wilf the Mighty Worrier Saves the World by Georgia Pritchett, illustrated by Jamie Littler

• The Atomic! Series by Guy Bass, illustrated by Jamie Littler

Useful links:
• Take a look at the Hamish website: http://worldofhamish.com/

• Watch the trailer for Hamish and the Worldstoppers here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd5NK1niwx4
Return to the Secret Garden
by Holly Webb
Published by Scholastic

It's 1939 and a group of children have been evacuated to Misselthwaite Manor.

Emmie is far from happy to have been separated from her cat and sent to a huge old mansion.

But soon she starts discovering the secrets of the house - a boy crying at night, a diary written by a girl named Mary, and a garden. A very secret garden...

Nominated by Hannah Middleton:
“For anyone who loved The Secret Garden as much as I did, the opportunity to revisit Misselthwaite Manor and the characters of Mary, Dickon, Colin and Martha, is hard to resist. Holly Webb clearly has great affection for the classic and it’s interesting to spot both similarities and differences between the two books.”

Activities:
• Emmie is distraught when she is evacuated from London and is unable to take her beloved stray cat, Lucy, with her. Make a list of all the special things that you would want to take with you if you were being evacuated.

• Emmie reads Mary Lennox’s diary. Choose a part of the story that you particularly like and write a diary entry as if you were either Emmie or Jack.

• Design your own perfect secret garden.
Discussion points:

- Contrast with The Secret Garden... Have the characters’ lives turned out as you imagined they would? What similarities does Emmie share with Mary? What differences are there between the stories?

- How does being in the garden make Emmie feel? What do you think about the ‘magic' that the characters talk about?

- Did you like the character of Jack? Why do you think he and Emmie become friends?

Further reading:

- The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett
- Wishing for Tomorrow by Hilary McKay
- Five Children on the Western Front by Kate Saunders

Useful links:

- Lots of information about evacuated children here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/world_war2/evacuation/

- Holly Webb reads an extract from the book: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npBOHGStEEM

- Lots of ideas for projects and ways to get children interested in gardening: http://www.gardeningwithchildren.co.uk/