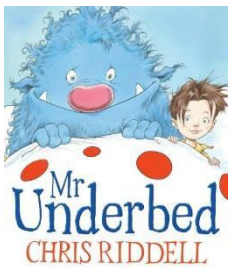


Author of the Month

Chris Riddell

Chris Riddell was Children's Laureate 2015-2017. Chris has produced many wonderful books, some of which he wrote and illustrated, some of which were collaborations. This booklist is a selection of favourites suggested by CLPE staff.

Picture Books



Mr Underbed

Andersen Press 9781842709429

When Jim lets the ungainly Mr Underbed join him under the covers, he doesn't realise that it's the thin end of the wedge and that there all sorts of other surprising creatures hiding in his room who are in search of a comfortable kip. Jim's comical expressions range across puzzlement and irritation but one emotion he never expresses is fear, making this quite a reassuring picture book.

[A CLPE core book](#)

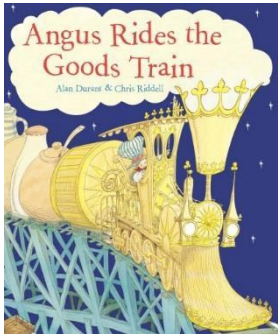


Something Else by Kathryn Cave

Puffin 9780141338675

However hard he tries to join in, Something Else is always excluded by the other creatures because of the way he looks. Then one day, a stranger turns up at his door claiming to be just like him. Will Something Else reject this newcomer or will he let him into his home and his heart?

Included in [this booklist](#)



Angus Rides the Goods Train by Alan Durant

Corgi 9780552569194

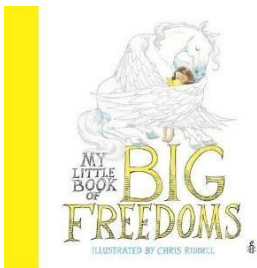
In his dreams, Angus climbs aboard a train loaded up with milk, honey, rice and water and travels the world where he sees widespread hunger, starvation and poverty. The train driver will not stop and share the goods as he is taking them, as instructed, to a king and his courtiers for their breakfast. Angry Angus calls a halt and distributes the food to those who need it declaring, when he wakes, that some day he will drive the goods train. Political cartoonist Chris Riddell is an excellent choice of illustrator for this picture book with a strong idealistic message.

Included in [this booklist](#)

My Little Book of Big Freedoms: The Human Rights Act in Pictures

Buster Books 9781780555065

The Human Rights Act is here distilled into sixteen significant words, each incorporated into an expressive illustration, usually showing an animal protecting or interacting with a human child. The animals could be regarded as symbolic but these images also highlight the interdependence of the human and natural worlds. There is a statement on each facing page amplifying the concepts depicted.



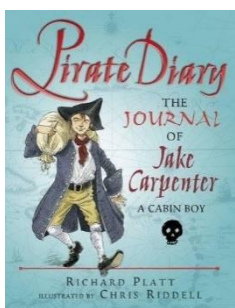
Pirate Diary by Richard Platt

Walker 9781406352658

A fictitious journal, kept during 1716 to 1717, by Jake Carpenter a doctor's son in the American colonies, who signs on as a sailor on a brig called the Greyhound, bound for Martinique. The voyage is an eventful one, as the ship is boarded by pirates. The illustrations complement and add information to the text, for example a cutaway diagram of the ship and a map of Jake's journey. The original large format colour edition won Chris Riddell the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal in 2001. It is now only available in a small format edition with black and white illustrations, nevertheless the humour and attention to detail are still conveyed.

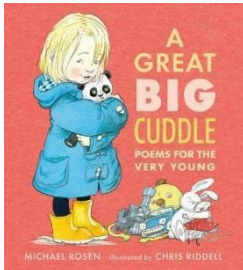
Also: *Castle Diary* 9781406352641

[A CLPE core book](#)



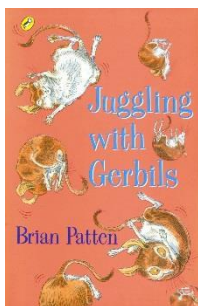
Poetry

A Great Big Cuddle: Poems for the Very Young by Michael Rosen
Walker 9781406343199



This large and beautiful book is a happy marriage between word and pictures, the illustrations being like another version of each poem. The design of each spread is a joy, incorporating the use of different colours and sizes of fonts. Look at 'I Am Angry' for an example where a fierce looking red-eyed mouse appears opposite a verbal expression of ire laid out in rhyming couplets expressed in red typeface, segueing into orange, brown and eventually grey for the final and abrupt denouement. There are conversations to be had around the pictures and poems, not all of which are happy. 'Bendy Man' is quite scary with its hints at someone strange lurking in familiar places and 'Lost' expresses emotions felt by a little one left behind. Joint winner of CLiPPA 2016.

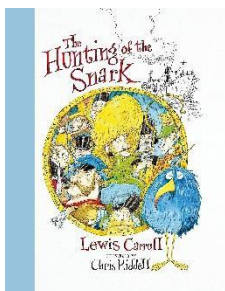
A teaching sequence for this book is available on the Power of Reading website.
[A CLPE core book](#)



Juggling with Gerbils by Brian Patten
Puffin 9780141304786

Brian Patten describes animals' lives from the inside, whether it's the rabbit left alone while its owners go on holiday, or a fly on a statue. His poetry is frequently thought-provoking, often humorous, but with a tinge of sadness or the macabre. Chris Riddell discreetly but effectively picks up on this range of emotions.

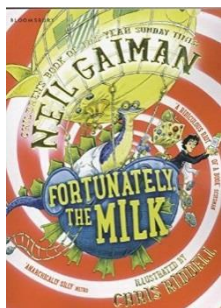
[A CLPE core book](#)



The Hunting of the Snark by Lewis Carroll
Macmillan 9781509814336

Whether he's creating the visual image of a Boojum, a Beaver or the Bellman Chris Riddell's unique style of comic characterisation is strongly suited to Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem about a voyage to find the mysterious Snark.

Fiction



Fortunately, the Milk by Neil Gaiman

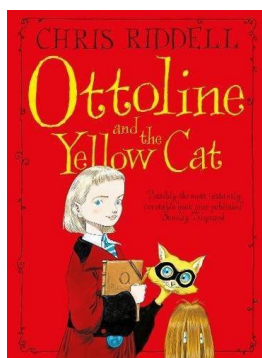
Bloomsbury 9781408841792

In a story which is reminiscent of Jill Murphy's *On the Way Home*, a dad goes out to buy some milk and is gone for some time... When he eventually returns, he regales his children with tales of how he has been lost in space and time, beginning with an encounter with aliens and moving on through meetings with pirates, dinosaurs and worshippers of Splod, not to mention wumpires. His adventures are creatively and comically captured by Chris Riddell.

[A CLPE core book](#)

Ottoline and the Yellow Cat

Macmillan 9781405050579



Ottoline lives on the twenty-fourth floor of a building known colloquially as the Pepperpot Building. Her parents travel extensively and her constant companion is Mr. Munroe, who is small and hairy and comes from a bog in Norway. Together they set out to solve a spate of burglaries in their district. Words and pictures are completely integrated in the telling of the tale with devices such as labelled plans and diagrams, postcards and newspaper reports conveying additional detail as well as being germane to the story.

Ottoline makes further appearances in:

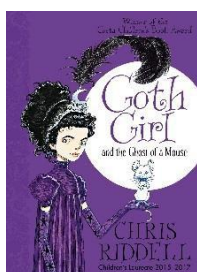
Ottoline Goes to School 9780330472005

Ottoline at Sea 9780330472012

Ottoline and the Purple Fox 9781447277927

Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse

Macmillan 9781447201748



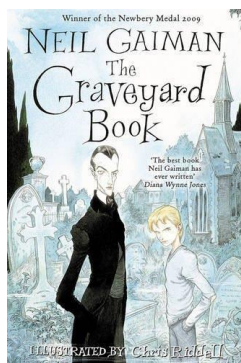
This ghostly tale places the emphasis on humour rather than horror. It features a host of gothic elements including an historic house, Ghastly-Gorm Hall, complete with a ghostly white nun, a black monk and a range of other apparitions. Ada has a strained relationship with her father Lord Goth but she is no swooning heroine. She teams up with two visiting children and a ghost mouse ('Call me Ishmael') and together they defeat the plans of the dastardly indoor gamekeeper, Maltravers. This book can be mined for its wealth of literary references such as governesses with names like Hebe Poppins and Becky Blunt, a Secret Garden and an Even-More-Secret-Garden in the hall's grounds and a surely self-referential Martin Puzzlewit, the radical cartoonist.

Sequels: *Goth Girl and the Fete Worse Than Death* Macmillan 9780230759824

Goth Girl and the Wuthering Fright Macmillan 9781447277897

Goth Girl and the Sinister Symphony Macmillan 9781447277941

[A CLPE core book](#)



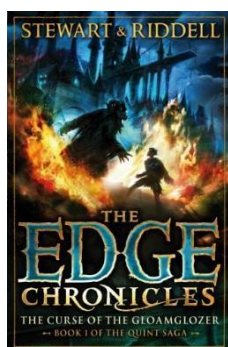
The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman

Bloomsbury 9780747594802

A multi award winning novel with a grim and gripping opening as the man Jack murders a family, leaving only the baby who crawls away and is brought up as Nobody ('Bod') Owens by the community of ghosts who inhabit the nearby graveyard. Bod's upbringing by a crowd of crepuscular characters bears some resemblance to that of Mowgli in *The Jungle Book*, an influence the author acknowledges. Through the agency of his friend Scarlett, he eventually comes face to face with the man Jack. Will this prove to be his nemesis? Chris Riddell's full page black and white pictures bring some deadly characters to life!

Another uncanny novel written by Neil Gaiman and illustrated by Chris Riddell is: *Coraline* Bloomsbury 9781408841754

[A CLPE core book](#)



The Curse of the Gloamglozer: Book 1 of the Quint Saga by Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell

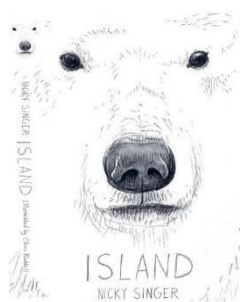
Corgi 9780552569620

Quint, son of a sky pirate, becomes apprenticed to Linus Pallitax, the Most High Academe in Sanctaphrax, a city of rumour and intrigue. What is Linus up to at night in the stonecomb below the city? Quint and Linus's daughter Maris are determined to find out. This exciting adventure is one of the Edge Chronicles, a series co-created by Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell. The evolution of the series and ways into exploring the worlds within it can be found [here](#)

Island by Nicky Singer

Caboodle Books Ltd 9780992938963

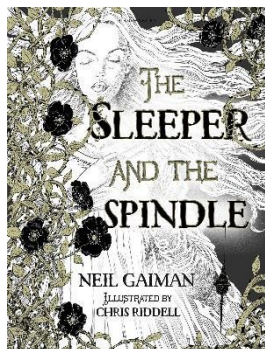
Cameron travels unwillingly to Herschel Island in the Arctic with his scientist mother. His experiences there lead to him 'seeing things in a different light' literally and figuratively. This is due to his friendship with a local Inuvialuit girl who, urged on by her shapeshifting grandmother, introduces him to the culture of her people and shows him how the intervention of Western people continues to destroy their way of life and the environment. The relationship between Cameron and his mother, who is unable to see Inuluk, is a focal point in the novel, and this personal story is interwoven with the strong ecological theme. Chris Riddell has illustrated the book delicately, emphasising the fragility of the environment at its heart. The words relating to culture and myth accompanying the pictures complement the spiritual nature of the story and the depth of feeling within it.



The Sleeper and the Spindle by Neil Gaiman

Bloomsbury 9781408859643

A queen with raven-black hair abandons her wedding day in favour of going on a quest accompanied by three dwarfs. A princess with hair ‘the golden yellow of meadow flowers’ and lips ‘the pink of the roses that climbed the palace walls’ has been sleeping for nigh on a hundred years. What will happen when the two converge? Who is the sleeping girl? Who is the old woman who remains awake in the palace while all others sleep? And what is the history of the queen? The story gives a new slant on two well-known fairy tales but leaves the reader to work out what is going on and who the protagonists are. ‘Names are in short supply in this telling.’ The story is not only seductively told but gorgeously enhanced by the black and white illustrations, framed and adorned in fairy gold, which bring out the humour and the horror in the tale. Illuminated letters entwined with rose briars head each section of the story and there are wonderful details to discover such as the skulls – symbols of mortality - on both women’s bedcovers.



[A CLPE core book](#)

Autobiography

Travels with my Sketchbook

Macmillan 9781509856565

This record of Chris Riddell’s time as Children’s Laureate demonstrates the versatility and vitality of his work. He draws every day and everywhere he goes so there are entertaining comments in pictures and words on the innumerable events he participated in for children and for adults. We get insights into the imagination involved in creating a final book in the Edge Chronicles with Paul Stewart, collaborating with Neil Gaiman and illustrating a new edition of Frances Hardinge’s award winning *The Lie Tree*. In some of the drawings Chris appears alongside his characters such as Mr. Munroe (see the Ottoline books above). There is often a serious edge to the humour as Chris is a well-known political cartoonist as well as a children’s illustrator. His interactions with children and the adults who share books with them are placed in the wider political context of the two year period. His trenchant views about the erosion of library services are often expressed in wise and witty ways. A number of the cartoons that he drew for *The Observer* during this time are reproduced here including the significant one that expresses his anger about the small refugee boy washed up drowned on a shore far from home. Enjoy the entire journey from cover to cover or dip in at random. [A CLPE book of the week](#)

