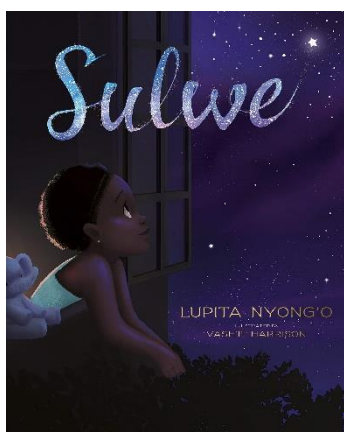


Staff Picks 2019

CLPE staff and their children recommend their best children's books in 2019.



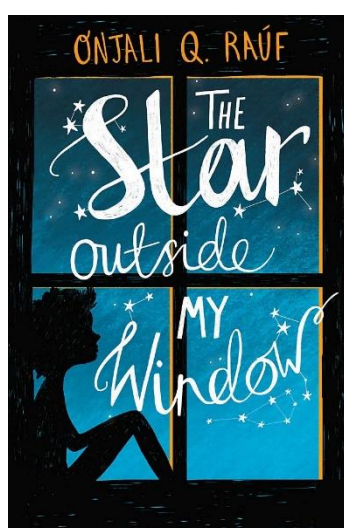
Anjali



***Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong'o and Vashti Harrison** (Puffin)

978-0241394328

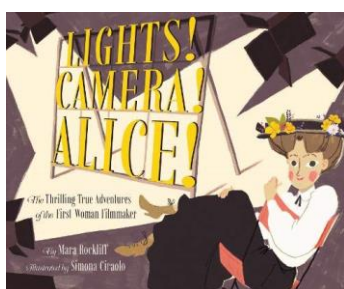
This beautiful picturebook is written by an Academy Award winning Kenyan actress and producer and illustrated by the wonderful author-illustrator of *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History*. It tackles the issue of colourism in the most sensitive and heart-warming way without shying away from the impact it has on an impressionable child's sense of belonging and self-worth, in this case, Sulwe, a little girl who longs for skin as bright as her sister and mother. It had me barely suppressing sobs in the middle of a bookshop. It is beautifully crafted and multi-layered, with a story within the story of sisters Day and Night, told by Sulwe's mother to help her daughter embrace and express her own beauty. 'Could it be that Night did not need to change, not even a little, not even at all?' Gorgeous inside and out.



***The Star Outside My Window* by Onjali Q. Rauf** (Orion) 9781510105157

I won't lie, I had to put this book down after the first few chapters because I was so heartbroken for ten year old Aniyah and her little brother Noah who we meet two days into foster home, bewildered and confused, having lost their mum at the hands of their abusive father. However, as with all thoughtfully crafted children's books that deal with hard hitting issues, my response as an experienced adult is different from that of my ten year old daughter for whom it is written. She doesn't look at the imperceptible acts of thoughtlessness by adults which make you want to scream whilst hoping that you would never do the same under pressure. She empathises solely with the bewildered but determined viewpoint of Star Hunter Aniyah who takes us on a page-turning journey to name a new star after her mum so that she isn't completely lost to them, to take back control. A book of hope and of humanity by one of our brightest new authors.

Ann

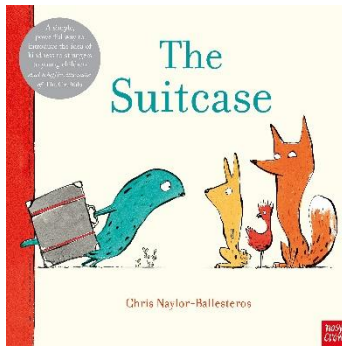


***Lights! Camera! Alice!* by Mara Rockliff and Simona Ciruolo**

(Chronicle) 9781452141343

Alice Guy-Blaché was the first woman filmmaker and most of her work has been lost or forgotten. Her life is portrayed in this picturebook biography, from her childhood in France where her love of stories began, feeding into her movie-making when she moved to the USA as an adult. Title cards with the names of her films intersperse each episode. This book appealed as it combines my interests in women's history, biography and film and there are signposts to further information about Alice which I will be exploring.





***The Suitcase* by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros (Nosy Crow) 9781788004473**

A weary animal arrives in a new place dragging a suitcase behind him. The animals he meets are very curious about its contents. He tells them what is inside but they are sceptical. To say more would give too much away about this important story that demonstrates simply and thoughtfully the necessity of being welcoming to strangers who are missing their home, as it benefits from an element of surprise on first reading. The strength and simplicity of this picturebook's message is enhanced by the use of a limited but carefully chosen palette set against white space.

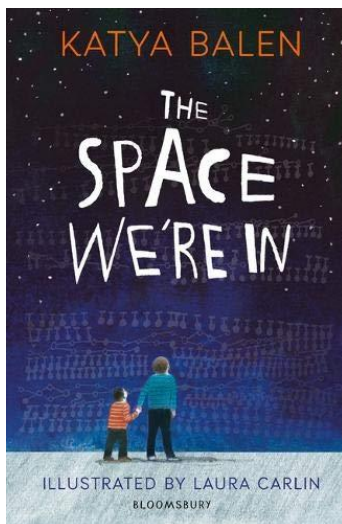
Charlotte



***Winter Sleep, A Hibernation Story* by Sean Taylor and Alex Morss,**

illustrated by Cinyee Chiu (Words & Pictures) 9780711242838

Sean Taylor is a master storyteller. He weaves words that draw in readers and hold them captivated. This quiet, enticing walk into the natural world, in which he partners with ecologist Alex Morss, is no exception. We begin the story in summer, with a young boy staying at Granny Sylvie's, on a walk to their secret glade, taking in the wonder of the vibrant wildlife all around. We next meet them in winter, with the delights of the summer hidden; only able to be visualised by the boy through Granny Sylvie's rich and vivid descriptions. Readers, however, get a peek into this secret world through Cinyee Chiu's carefully depicted illustrations. These work alongside the rich, poetic language to create a sense of awe, wonder and joy in the natural world. An appended information section provides an illuminating guide for young explorers. A beautifully produced book by Quarto imprint Words & Pictures, who also published another of my favourite picturebooks of the year, *A Little Bit Different* by Claire Alexander.



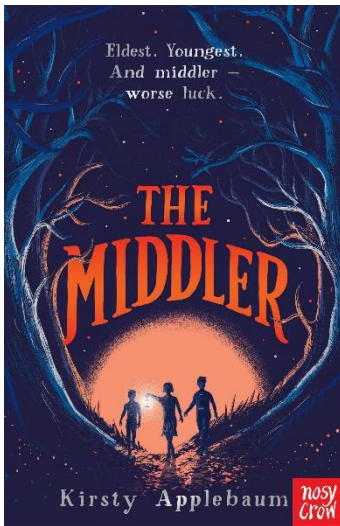
***The Space We're In* by Katya Balen, illustrated by Laura Carlin**

(Bloomsbury) 9781526601940

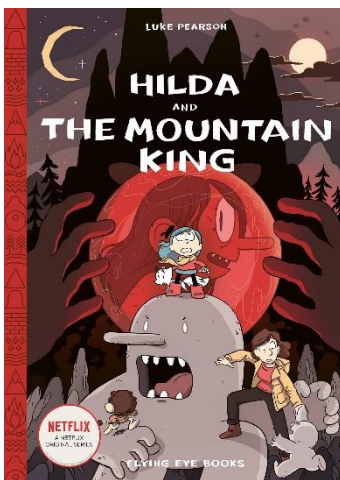
The bookmark which came with my copy of this book summed it up in three words; jaw-dropping, heartbreaking and hopeful. That, it certainly was. Katya Balen's expertly crafted and emotionally engaging storytelling, mixed with Laura Carlin's insightfully chosen illustrations take the reader on a rollercoaster journey of emotions. The first person narrative, told in the utterly authentic voice of ten year-old Frank, immediately brings us into the immensely loving, but difficult world of his family, turned upside down since the birth of his brother, Max, who is autistic. Touching moments of joy, friendship and understanding sit alongside frustration, shame and strain, making for a carefully painted and realistic picture of their everyday life. Chapter titles presented in Frank's favourite number-letters-spiral cipher code, draw us further into his world and fascinations, heightening our empathy for him. A sudden tragedy brings the family to the depths of despair, but the love and understanding they have for each other brings a hopeful and uplifting ending. The book that made me cry and smile the most all year, and has stayed with me since. Just beautiful.



Darren

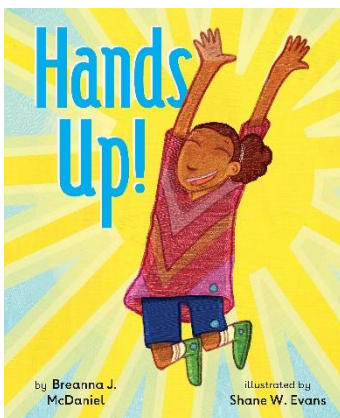


***The Middler* by Kirsty Applebaum (Nosy Crow) 9781788003452**
In her debut novel, Kirsty Applebaum has created a world that alludes to familiar dystopian tropes (a genre usually aimed at more experienced readers) while creating something totally new. Our hero, Maggie, is a 'middler' and deeply unhappy with her position in the family. It just doesn't seem fair that her brother Jed is constantly rewarded and praised just because he's an eldest. *But why are the eldests all sent off to camp when they're 14? Why are they never seen again? Why isn't anyone allowed to go beyond the boundary? And what exactly is so dangerous about 'the wanderers'?* Maggie soon finds herself questioning life-long beliefs and loyalties in her determination to go beyond the expectations that tradition has placed on her. This would make a great class read-aloud - a compelling page-turner with a hugely likeable main character.



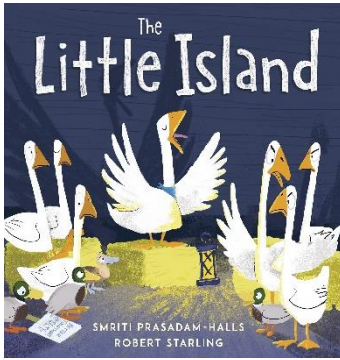
***Hilda and the Mountain King* by Luke Pearson (Flying Eye) 9781911171171**
He made us wait three and a half years, but Luke Pearson has finally resolved the shocking cliff-hanger from the end of *Hilda and the Stone Forest*. Luckily, that resolution is just the sort of satisfying and beautifully-drawn adventure we were hoping for. A modern classic, Hilda – heroic, quick-witted, kind if occasionally selfish, quick to leap into action (sometimes without thinking first), but desperate to do the right thing – is back with a story that manages to feel brand new whilst deeply rooted in a world of legend that could have existed forever. I was very happy to be taken back to Trolberg (and already looking forward to the next adventure).

Farrah



***Hands Up!* by Breanna J. McDaniel and Shane W. Evans (PenguinRandomHouse) 9780525552314**
On the surface, this beautiful picturebook could be read as a simple, joyful celebration of everyday life. At its heart, it is absolutely all of these things whilst simultaneously being so much more. This is a clever, thoughtful, heartfelt and important book for our times. It reclaims and reframes a loaded phrase that has marred the African American community in particular, leading to violent and irrevocably traumatic outcomes for individuals, families and whole communities. Each spread beams with love, hope, optimism, vibrancy and a zest for life, inviting readers to raise their hands to life, live it to the fullest and join in the kinship of humanity to demand better.



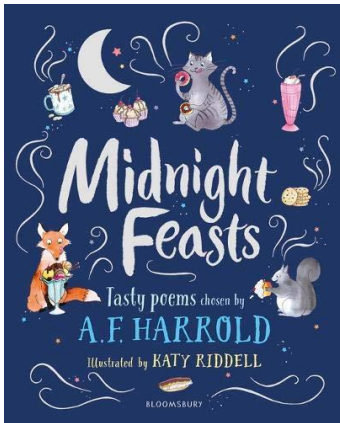


***The Little Island* by Smriti Prasadam-Halls and Robert Starling**

(Andersen Press) 9781783449095

This timely picturebook, inspired by the politically volatile landscape we find ourselves in, provides a perfect vehicle through which to explore, discuss and reflect on the importance of community and co-existence. Reading about how the geese grapple with what kind of island they want to live on and experiencing the potentially horrific outcomes of their isolationist vision, provides a great pre-cursor to reading the classic *Animal Farm*. It is an allegory laced with humour, packed with all too recognisable observations, and alarming hypothesis that ring resoundingly in the ears and hearts of readers young and old.

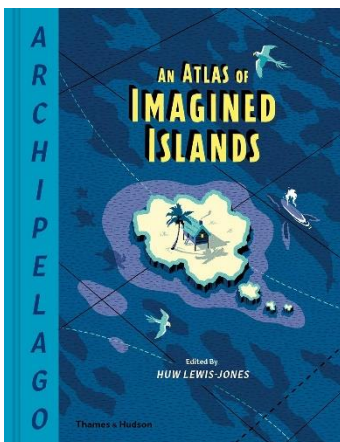
Jonny



***Midnight Feasts*, edited by A. F. Harrold, illustrated by Katy Riddell**

(Bloomsbury) 9781472944078

CLPE stalwart and CLIPPA chair of judges A. F. Harrold's poetry knowledge is encyclopaedic, and this delicious collection evidences the wealth of his mind-palace. His sophisticated and satisfying menu spans time and place, celebrating different continents and cultures — and underpinning all is food and drink. Even those who know poems and poets will find something new to whet their appetite: so many different poetic forms and moods are included here. A. F.'s choices are complemented by Katy Riddell's deft and delightful colour illustrations: his words and her pictures combine to make a moreish book for a peck or a binge.



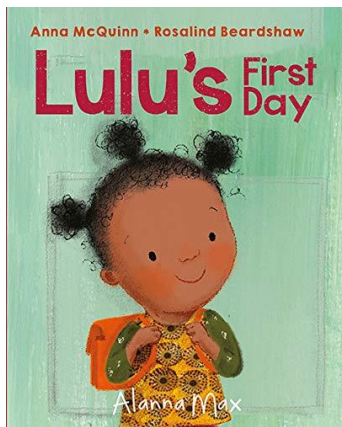
***Archipelago: The Atlas of Imagined Islands*, edited by Huw Lewis-Jones**

(Thames and Hudson) 9780500022566

I've always been fascinated by maps and enjoying them has been a unique and uniquely pleasurable kind of reading for as long as I can remember. And map reading is reading. *Archipelago* celebrates the tercentenary of the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*, and in its pages we travel, in the company of a wonderfully international range of brilliant illustrators — some I already knew and loved, some were delightful discoveries — to remote imagined islands, whose human and physical geography, whose history and culture, they capture. It's a breathtakingly creative adventure that invites everyone to explore, whether reader, illustrator, cartographer, or simply dreamer.

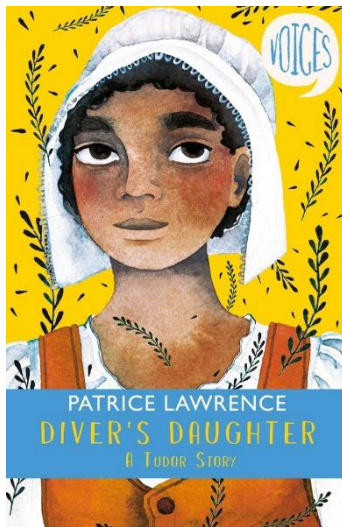


Katie



***Lulu's First Day* by Anna McQuinn and Rosalind Beardshaw (Alanna Max) 9781907825217**

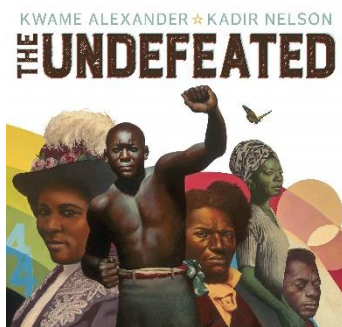
Lulu's First Day is a beautiful evocation of a milestone for every young child; their first day at pre-school. From the moment I opened the book and saw on the title page the incredibly moving illustration of Lulu and her mother hugging goodbye, I was hooked. Children in pre-schools and nurseries will immediately identify with the story, both the emotions depicted but also the way in which the settings they inhabit are so carefully captured. The story is simple and yet sophisticated in the way in which this momentous experience for children, their parents and their teachers is told. A must read for any parent and child about to embark on their 'first day'!



***Diver's Daughter: A Tudor Story* by Patrice Lawrence (Scholastic) 9781407191409**

This is the second book in the series Voices which aims to bring to light a diverse range of stories of the past from the viewpoints of young people of the time. I was drawn to the story as I have always been interested in the ways in which our understanding of 'history' is shaped by the stories that are told, or not told. This story focuses on the Tudor period, an area of history I had always considered male, pale and stale. However, in this exciting and sensitive story the lives of two courageous black women bring to life the diverse stories that are part of British history as well as highlighting the real story of the black diver Jacques Francis who appears as a character in the book.

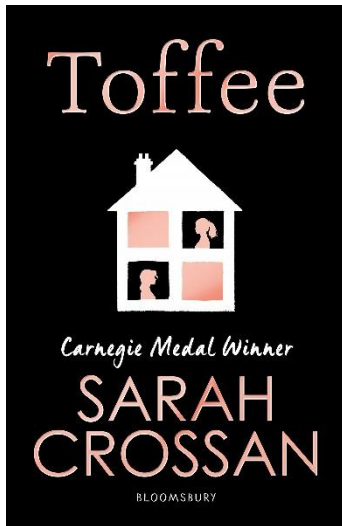
Louise



***The Undefeated* by Kwame Alexander and Kadir Nelson (Andersen Press) 9781783449286**

This book took my breath away the first time I read it and it begs a second, third and fourth reading immediately. The text is a poem by Kwame Alexander highlighting the important contributions of African Americans to history. The elegance of the language and the rhythm of the words are married with Kadir Nelson's heart-stoppingly beautiful illustrations and the outcome is an absolutely breathtaking picturebook. Every word, brushstroke and blank space is wonderfully placed and you are carried through the book on an emotional rollercoaster to the joyous last page.



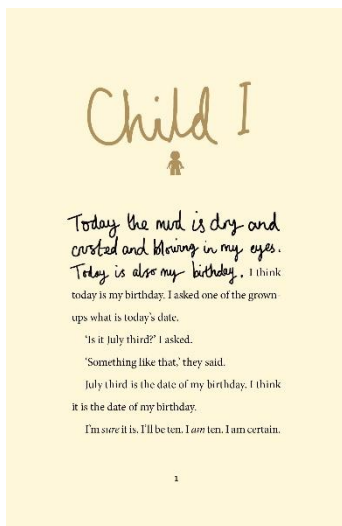


Toffee by Sarah Crossan (Bloomsbury) 9781408868126

I've chosen this book because since I first read it in March, I just haven't been able to forget it. I think it is my 'most recommended' book this year. The verse is both eloquent and accessible and I loved all the characters, none of them perfect, all of them real. It is a story for and about our times and times past. It is relevant and current, it is sad but not mawkish, harsh but kind and all written in that magical Crossan way which means you just have to keep going and simply can't put it down until you reach the end.

The children of CLPE staff have also been enjoying some good books this year

Lana (Anjali's Daughter, aged 10)

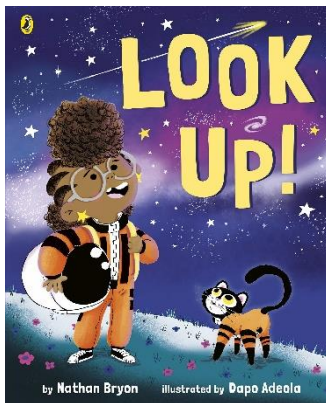


Child I by Steve Tasane (Faber & Faber) 9780571337835

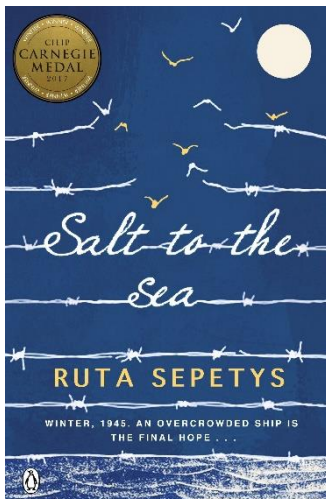
I loved this book because it was based on true life and what is happening right now. The children live in a refugee camp and don't even have real names - they just have letters of the alphabet. They must hunt for food if they want any breakfast/lunch/dinner at all. The guards don't ever believe the children's stories. The only good thing in their tough life is their friends. Their friends are like their family and they always stick together. Child I (the main character) is always trying to keep his friends (child L and child E) happy. E is always hungry and his sister L has to make sure he stays away from trouble because if one of them does get into trouble then they will get separated. L is forever looking on the dark side of things and always tries to be happy but just can't manage it. She always makes E happy though. The only toys they have to play with are a few plastic figures dipped in small buckets of paint. The book isn't really about whether they ever escape the camp but how they help each other get through this. It is a book of hope, friendship and kindness. I promise you won't be able to put it down and I hope you will enjoy it.



Lily (Charlotte's daughter, aged 14)

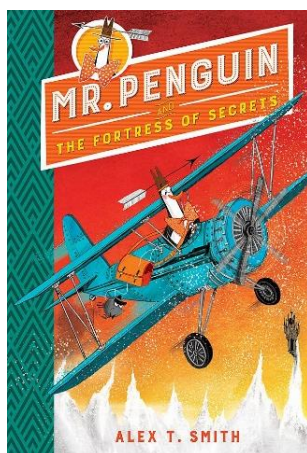


Look Up! by Nathan Bryon and Dapo Adeola (Puffin) 9780241345849
I read this book this year and I really enjoyed it. I like the style of illustration; it's fresh, cool and has the quality of an animation. Rocket is a really awesome character who has a great style - I love her glasses! The story is great for encouraging young girls to follow their dreams and be interested in subjects that people stereotypically think boys would be more interested in. I'm really interested in space, but when we learnt about it, it mainly focussed on the achievements of Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins. Mae Jemison, who Rocket looks up to, is an inspirational female figure who should be more widely known, along with others like Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson, so it's great that this book gives children information about her and her achievements. I also think it's really relevant to now. Everyone knows someone in their life like Jamal who needs to look up from their phone and pay attention to what's going on around them.



Salt to the Sea by Ruta Sepetys (Penguin) 9780141347400
This book won the Carnegie Medal in 2017, but this year was the first time I've read it. My English Teacher gave it to us to read for our Year 9 book club. It's a very moving piece that gives an insight into the sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff, the deadliest disaster in maritime history. It is told from four different perspectives, which give you various points of view and details from different people, meaning you have to piece the story together as it develops, which makes it an engaging read. One of my favourite subjects is History, so the fact that this novel was based on a real historical event was really interesting for me. I'd really recommend it for people of my age or older, as it's really well told and gives an emotional insight into the horror of this devastating event.

Sonny (Anjali's Son, aged 8)



Mr Penguin and the Fortress of Secrets by Alex T. Smith (Hodder) 9781444932102
I was really pleased when I got another Mr Penguin book. I read it nearly all in one go because it was so exciting and full of adventure. I can't wait to read the third book. Mr Penguin crashes his plane and lands on a snowy mountain. On the mountain there is an abandoned fortress. I liked the way he has an arrow through his hat because it makes him look more dangerous. I found it funny when Mr Penguin always carries fish finger sandwiches in his hat. It was very interesting when they keep bumping into people on their way to uncover the mystery. My favourite character was Colin because he wears a funny top hat and has completely straight eyebrows. He is also very weird because he never smiles. This book is about friendship, adventure and fish finger sandwiches. I really enjoyed it and hopefully you will too.