



## Ahmed, Samira

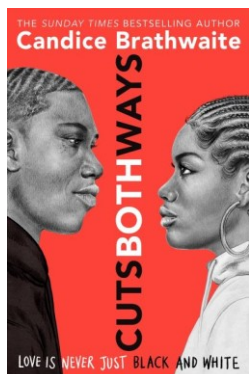
Atom	Pbk	7.99	9780349003955
Interest age:	14+	Reading age:	14+

## Hollow Fires

Safiya Mirza dreams of becoming a journalist. One thing she's learned as editor of her school newspaper is that a journalist's job is to find the facts and not let personal biases affect the story. All that changes the day she finds the body of a murdered boy. Jawad Ali was fourteen years old when he built a jetpack from drink bottles that a teacher mistook for a bomb. This got him arrested, labelled a terrorist—and eventually killed. He is more than "Bomb Boy." He was an intelligent and gentle person with a life worth remembering. Driven by Jawad's haunting voice guiding her throughout her investigation, Safiya seeks to tell the whole truth about the murdered boy and those who killed him because of their hate-based beliefs.

Powerful story about racism and Islamophobia in modern America. The story is based on a real-life murder from 1926 brought up to date for a modern young audience. Told from two viewpoints—Safiya and Jamal, it eloquently expresses the prejudice and fear that is perpetuated by some police, educators, the law and parts of the media, including social media.

**Assessment** - \*\*\*\*



## Brathwaite, Candice

Quercus	Pbk	7.99	9781786541833
Interest age:	14+	Reading age:	12+

## Cuts Both Ways

London is everything to Cynthia, so when her parents move her to a place where there is only one bus an hour and the faint smell of horse manure continuously permeates the air, it's a culture shock, to say the least. As is transitioning to a private school. At her new school, Cynthia immediately finds herself caught between two brothers - head boy Thomas, who is white, and his adopted Black brother, Isaac. There is something about Isaac she cannot quite get enough of - but her father wants her to partner up with someone like Thomas, someone who will be 'better for her future prospects'. When it turns out the brothers have been keeping secrets from her, secrets that link back to the life Cynthia thought she had left behind in London, she realises that not everything is as it seems. How can Cynthia follow her heart when it's being torn in two? Good leisure read with strong themes covered such as what it means to be a black teen in modern Britain, loss, family values, prejudice. Some swearing and sexual references, as well as detailing the murder of Cynthia's brother.

**Assessment** - \*\*\*



## Cameron, Sophie

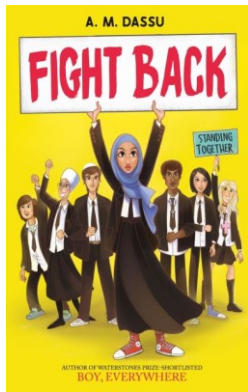
Stripes Publishing Ltd	Pbk	7.99	9781788953917
Interest age:	10+	Reading age:	10+

## Our Sister, Again

Isla and her family live on a remote Scottish island and are grieving the loss of her older sister Flora. They take part in a top-secret trial which revives loved ones as fully lifelike AI robots using their digital footprint. Isla has her doubts about it but the 'new' Flora is a perfect replica. But not everyone on the island feels the same. Isla and her family discover how they can protect the 'new' Flora and bring the community back together.

Powerful and compelling story about grief, what it means to be human, hope, and family. Setting of the Scottish island is described well and there is good characterisation. The intriguing plot will provide good discussion points.

**Assessment** - \*\*\*\*



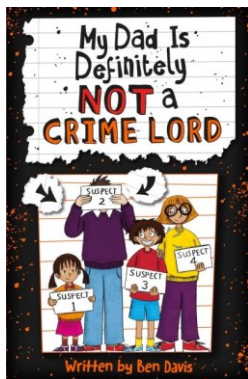
**Dassu, A. M.**

**Fight Back**

Scholastic Pbk 7.99 9780702315886  
Interest age: 11+ Reading age: 11+

When a terrorist attack fuels racist hatred in her area, Aaliyah begins wearing a hijab to school and decides she needs to organise a positive response to racism. Aaliyah is an ordinary thirteen-year-old living in the Midlands - she's into her books, shoes, K-pop and she is a Muslim. She has always felt at home where she lives...until a terrorist attack in her area changes everything. As racial tensions increase and she starts getting bullied, Aaliyah decides to begin wearing a hijab - to challenge how people in her community see her. But when her school bans the hijab and she is intimidated and attacked for her choices, she feels isolated. Soon Aaliyah realises that other young people from different backgrounds also struggle with their identity and feel alone, scared and judged. Should she try to blend in - or can she find allies to help her fight back? Channelling all of her bravery, Aaliyah decides to speak out. Together, can Aaliyah and her friends halt the tide of hatred rippling through their community  
A very powerful and moving story dealing with the sensitive issues of race, discrimination, and identity extremely well.

**Assessment** - \*\*\*\*



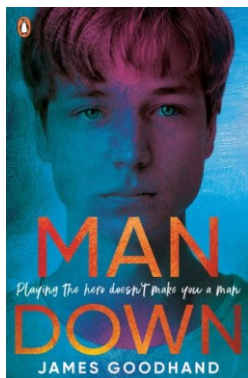
**Davis, Ben**

**My Dad Is Definitely Not A Crime Lord**

Scholastic Pbk 7.99 9780702315770  
Interest age: 10+ Reading age: 10+

Damian and his family, mum, dad and younger sister have to move from their very pleasant and comfortable family home to a council estate. The family also must change their names to conceal their identity. Damian is now Finn and he's completely out of his comfort zone. He quickly finds himself prey to the local bullies. The family need more money so Finn's mum gets a job in the local café. His dad gets a job in the local factory but soon starts to tire and he becomes frustrated. Tensions start to mount within the family and reach a peak when Millie, Finn's little sister goes missing. Damian finds a new friend, Tel alias Star Kid, he and Damian, alias Moon Boy who work together to take down the estate's crime boss. The situation becomes very tense when Damian starts to question the actions and motives of his own father.  
A story of warmth, humour and empathy, dealing with the difficult issues of controlling behaviour, criminal behaviour and dishonest lifestyle choices. Damian/Finn is faced with dealing with these issues head on, which he does with considerable courage with the help of strong friendships and the local community.

**Assessment** - \*\*\*\*



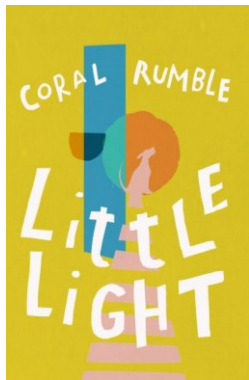
**Goodhand, James**

**Man Down**

Penguin Pbk 7.99 9780241383339  
Interest age: 14+ Reading age: 12+

Will's more at home in the classroom than the gym, and the most important woman in his life is his gran. So how can a boy who's always backed away from a fight become the hero who saves the day? Because a disaster is coming. One that Will can prevent. But only if he learns the most important lesson of all: sometimes to step up, you have to man down.  
Gripping read from the start with a shock at the end. Well written, compelling, original story exploring toxic masculinity, peer pressure, and friendship that will stay with you long after you've finished reading it. Contains conversational swearing throughout, also the depiction of suicidal thoughts, coercive and manipulative relationships, sexual content, and drug use.

**Assessment** - \*\*\*\*

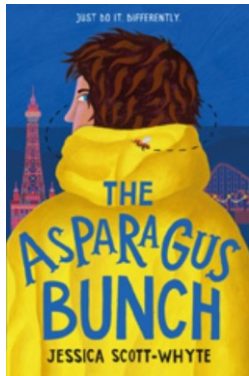
**Rumble, Coral****Little Light**

Troika Pbk 7.99 9781912745166  
Interest age: 10+ Reading age: 10+

Ava is hiding - hiding from the small, cramped hotel room where she lives with her twin baby brothers and her mum, hiding from the taunts and hostility she gets at school, hiding from her sometimes lonely and joyless life. But there is love here too. With her best friends Roxy and Precious, her wise Nana and a stray dog she befriends. Can Ava be brave enough to shine light when life gets dark?

Lovely poignant novel written in verse where hope is never too far away. A leisure read for a serious committed reader.

**Assessment** - \*\*\*\*

**Scott-Whyte, Jessica****The Asparagus Bunch**

Welbeck Pbk 7.99 9781801300469  
Publishing  
Interest age: 11 Reading age: 11

Leon John Crothers is thirteen years and one month old and has been moved on from six different schools, most people think he has an attitude problem. Leon doesn't like for the label, in the same way that he doesn't care for Tim Burton, supermarket trolleys, train fanatics or Bounty bars. He feels isolated but this time, things may turn out differently, as help comes from where he least expects it - Dr Snot, a physician at pains to help Leon navigate 'normal'. When school bully Glen Jenkins humiliates Leon in the school canteen and almost destroys Lawrence, Leon very reluctantly agrees to the formation of a club, The Asparagus Bunch.

A positive story, full of hope as Leon manages to navigate school woes and family drama - and ends up with two friends. A perceptive debut novel full of neurodivergent characters which uses humour and tackles difficult topics.

**Assessment** - \*\*\*\*

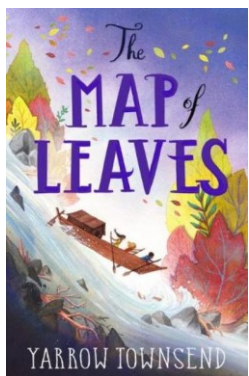
**Smith, Eloise****Sister to a Star**

Chicken House Pbk 6.99 9781912626717  
Interest age: 9+ Reading age: 9

Evie is forever crossing swords with her twin. While she practises her after-school fencing, Tallulah is winning movie auditions. Neither of them could have imagined how their worlds would collide, but when Tallulah goes to Hollywood Evie goes too - as her sister's identical stand-in. But that changes, when the film needs some all-action sword-play. Soon Evie's the one enjoying the limelight - that is, until Tallulah goes missing in strange circumstances.

Easy to read, action packed adventure story with surprises, twin rivalry, glamour, and fencing set on a Hollywood film set. Good for reading for pleasure. The author is an ex-Olympic fencer enabling authenticity.

**Assessment** - \*\*\*

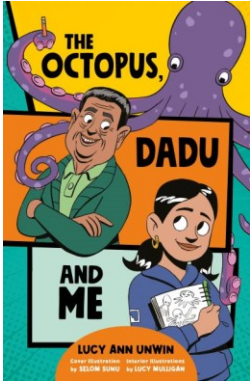
**Townsend, Yarrow****The Map of Leaves**

Chicken House Pbk 7.99 9781913696481  
Interest age: 9+ Reading age: 9+

Since Ma died, Orla has lived alone in a woodshed by the river. Her garden provides everything she needs. But when people begin to fall sick, Governor Atlas decrees that the plants are the cause and must be destroyed. Armed only with her mother's book of remedies Orla sets out on a barge-boat to discover the truth, find a cure for the sickness and save her garden. But, she soon finds that despite her strong determination to go it alone, she needs the help of her two unlikely fellow travellers, as the journey becomes even more dangerous.

Very good adventure tale with a mystery to solve at its core. Excellent characterisation, plenty of jeopardy and some well described villains, and a race against time to help the plot rattle along. Good to have a feisty but flawed heroine, and refreshing for science and plant lore to be central themes rather than magic. Great leisure read.

**Assessment** - \*\*\*\*



**Unwin, Lucy Ann**

**The Octopus, Dadu and Me**

UCLAN Pbk 7.99 9781915235039  
Interest age: 10- Reading age: 10+  
12

Sashi is 12 and close to her Dadu (Dad's dad) but after a visit to his care home with her Mum and Dad, her dad decides they should no longer visit, as Dadu has been shouting and does not remember them. Sashi's Dad is worried about his daughter and that her happy memories of her grandfather will be overtaken by ones caused by his dementia. Sashi finds peace at the local aquarium and here she meets Ian, who she believes should be with his family and not trapped. Sashi decides she will help him escape, but Ian is an octopus! Sashi is part of a mixed-race family and her Dadu has been a wonderful Grandpa, spending a lot of time with her growing up, but this is changing with the onset of his dementia.

A story told with wonderful empathy. Sashi loves drawing so has some of her cartoons included.

**Assessment - \*\*\*\***

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