

DIVERSE THEMES IN KIDS & YA LITERATURE

2024 BOOK LIST

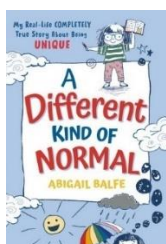


Aleesah Darlison
Award-Winning Author

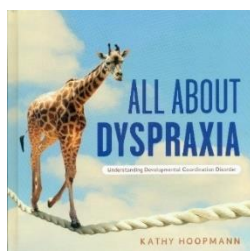
PREPARED BY ALEESAH DARLISON

Aleesah Darlison is an award-winning author, naturalist, and life-long learner. She enjoys sharing her passion and knowledge for the natural world and has made it her mission to champion the cause of children through her writing. She loves creating stories that empower, educate, and inspire readers to celebrate their uniqueness and their strengths.

Aleesah has written over sixty-five books for children including picture books, chapter books, novels, and series and has won or been shortlisted for many awards.



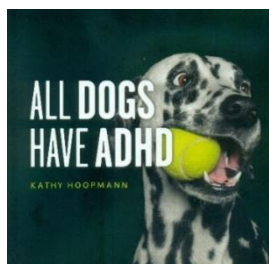
Title: **A Different Kind of Normal**
Creator(s): Abigail Balfe
Publisher: Penguin Random House (UK)
Summary: Abigail's story of what it's like growing up autistic in a confusing 'normal' world. With entertaining anecdotes and accompanying illustrations, Abigail details her experiences and explains autism and neurodiversity.
Themes: Autism, coming of age, neurodiversity.
Genre: Young Adult
Author Website: <https://www.abigailbalfe.com/>
Purchase link: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/708454/a-different-kind-of-normal-by-abigail-balfe/>



Title: **All About Dyspraxia**
Creator(s): Kathy Hoopmann
Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
Summary: Through engaging text and full-colour photographs, this book shows how people with dyspraxia see and experience the world and highlights the unique characteristics that make them special. A perfect introduction to dyspraxia for those recently diagnosed and for families and friends.
Themes: Dyspraxia, developmental coordination disorder, diversity, inclusion
Genre: photo-illustrated junior nonfiction
Author Website: www.kathyhoopmann.com
Purchase link: <https://www.woodslane.com.au/Book/9781787758353/All-About-Dyspraxia>



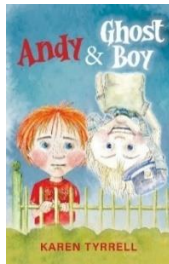
Title: **All Cats are on the Autism Spectrum**
Creator(s): Kathy Hoopmann
Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
Summary: Updated edition providing an engaging, gentle introduction to autism. All-new cats take a playful look at the world of autism, and these fun feline friends will strike a chord with all those who are familiar with typical autistic traits, bringing to life common characteristics such as sensory sensitivities, social issues and communication difficulties.
Themes: Autism awareness and acceptance, diversity, inclusion
Genre: Photo-illustrated junior nonfiction
Author Website: www.kathyhoopmann.com
Purchase link: <https://www.woodslane.com.au/Book/9781787754713/All-Cats-Are-on-the-Autism-Spectrum>



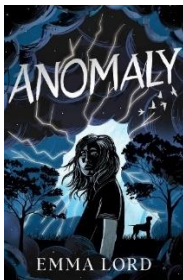
Title: **All Dogs Have ADHD**
Creator(s): Kathy Hoopmann
Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
Summary: This revised edition of All Dogs Have ADHD takes an inspiring and affectionate look at Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), featuring all-new images. This book reflects the difficulties and joys of raising a child with ADHD with humour and understanding.
Themes: ADHD awareness and acceptance
Genre: Photo-illustrated junior nonfiction
Author Website: www.kathyhoopmann.com
Purchase link: <https://www.woodslane.com.au/Book/9781787756601/All-Dogs-Have-ADHD>

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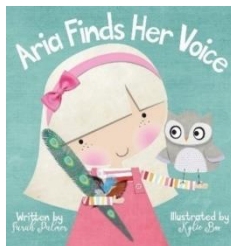
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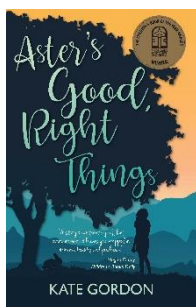
Title: **Andy & Ghost Boy**
Creator(s): Karen Tyrrell
Publisher: Digital Future Press
Summary: Disaster magnet, anxious Andy, dreams of finding one true friend and his forever school, but how can he when Ghost Boy, his rambunctious friend, sabotages everything? Andy and Ghost Boy trigger a catastrophe at school. At Camp Discovery, a bully showdown results in disaster. Can Andy save the day?
Themes: Anxiety, resilience, mindfulness, bullying, identity, self-esteem, trauma
Genre: Middle Grade
Author Website: www.karentyrrell.com
Purchase link: www.karentyrrell.com/mybooks



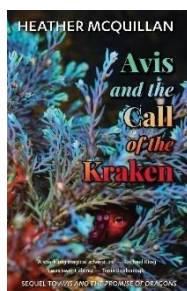
Title: **Anomaly**
Creator(s): Emma Lord
Publisher: Affirm Press
Summary: High-octane YA debut exploring themes of grief, trauma and survival. Emma uses the monsters in *Anomaly*, *Reapers*, as physical representations of mental illness as they feed on the minds of memories of people.
Themes: Mental illness grief, trauma
Genre: Young Adult
Author Website: <https://www.emmalordwriting.com/>
Purchase link: <https://affirmpress.com.au/browse/book/Emma-Lord-Anomaly-9781922848307>



Title: **Aria Finds Her Voice**
Creator(s): Sarah Palmer & Kylie Box
Publisher: Sarah Palmer
Summary: Being an introvert, Aria is always overlooked by others, which leaves her feeling sad and unseen. Encouraged by her mum to speak up for herself, Aria sets off on a journey in the hope of finding her voice. Empowered with positive messages and newfound traits of strength, confidence, happiness and trust, Aria feels more hopeful than ever.
Themes: Mental health, anxiety, selective mutism, mindfulness, hope, confidence
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: www.sarahpalmer.com.au
Purchase link: www.sarahpalmer.com.au



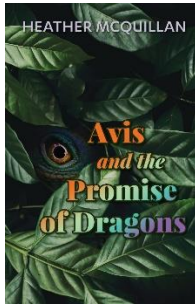
Title: **Aster's Good, Right Things**
Creator(s): Kate Gordon
Publisher: Riveted Press
Summary: Aster attends a school for gifted kids, but she doesn't think she's special at all. If she was, her mother wouldn't have left. And if she isn't careful, everyone else will leave her too. Each day Aster must do a *good, right thing*—a challenge she sets herself, to make someone else's life better. Nobody can know about her 'things', because then they won't count. And if she doesn't do them, she knows everything will go wrong.
Themes: parental separation; mental health, including anxiety and depression; friendship; fostering and parental neglect; diverse characters; growth, change and identity
Genre: Middle Grade
Author Website: www.kategordon.com.au
Purchase link: <https://rivetedpress.com.au/bookshop/aster-s-community-companion-novels>



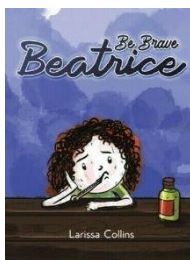
Title: **Avis and the Call of the Kraken**
Creator(s): Heather McQuillan
Publisher: The Cuba Press (Ahoy! Imprint)
Summary: Book Title: Avis and the Call of the Kraken
Keeping Humbert the dragon a secret is getting harder for Avis. One day flying over the ocean they see a disturbance near a drilling rig, and they receive a strange signal. A fantasy adventure bristling with Kiwi courage by the author of 2020 Storylines Notable Book *Avis and the Promise of Dragons*.
Themes: Friendship, ethical decisions, anxiety, conservation, justice, agency
Genre: Junior/ Middle Grade Fiction, Readership age: 9-13
Author website: <https://www.heathermcquillanwriter.com/>
Class materials: Yes
Purchase link: <https://thecubapress.nz/product-category/ahoy/>

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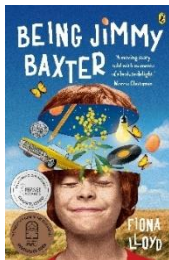
2024 BOOK LIST



Title: **Avis and the Promise of Dragons**
Creator(s): Heather McQuillan
Publisher: The Cuba Press (Ahoy! Imprint)
Summary: Avis has a dream to work with animals, so when a scientist with a witchy-looking house offers her a job as a pet-sitter she jumps at the chance. But it turns out Avis is not looking after pets at all – the animals in Dr Malinda Childes' backyard are as eccentric as she is and Avis has to promise to keep them a secret. Before long, Avis is overwhelmed by responsibilities and one very big dragon.
Themes: Family breakups, ethical decisions, anxiety, secrets and promises, conservation
Genre: Junior/ Middle Grade Fiction, Readership age: 9-12
Author Website: <https://www.heathermcquillanwriter.com/>
Purchase link: <https://thecubapress.nz/product-category/ahoy/>



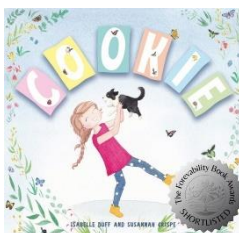
Title: **Be Brave Beatrice**
Creator(s): Larissa Collins
Publisher: Austin Macauley
Summary: Be Brave Beatrice is about a girl who is sick. All she can do is lie in bed and feel terrible. She wants to run and play and go outside. She wants to see her friends, but sicker and sicker she gets. The only way to get better is to take foul-tasting medicine, so she tries it.
Themes: Health, wellness, facing fears, making good choices, positive thinking
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.austinmacauley.com/author/collins-larissa>
Purchase link: <https://www.facebook.com/larissa.collins.9822/>



Title: **Being Jimmy Baxter**
Creator(s): Fiona Lloyd
Publisher: Penguin Random House Australia
Summary: This story centres around twelve-year-old Jimmy Branthwaite who lands in a new town whilst on the run from his violent father. Starting again as Jimmy Baxter, Jimmy must do everything he can to help his mum get better when she starts suffering from depression.
Themes: Coming-of-age, grief, domestic violence, parental depression, anxiety, loneliness, racism, bullying, resilience, hope, perseverance
Genre: Middle Grade (upper)
Author Website: www.fionalloyd.com.au
Purchase link: <https://www.penguin.com.au/books/being-jimmy-baxter-9781760148515>



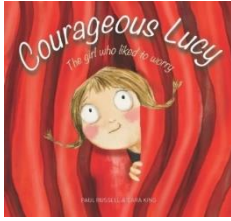
Title: **Bernice**
Creator(s): Ann Harth
Publisher: Odyssey Books
Summary: Bernice Peppercorn's imagination fills her mind and her notebooks with adventure and intrigue. She sees crimes where there are none and races to the local police station daily to fulfil her civic duty. When a real robbery is committed in town, Bernice dives into detective mode and stumbles across vital clues that could find the thieves.
Themes: Inclusion, neurodiversity, ADHD
Genre: Junior Fiction/Middle Grade – ages 8-11
Author Website: <https://annharth.com/>
Purchase link: <https://www.odysseybooks.com.au/titles/9781925652918/>



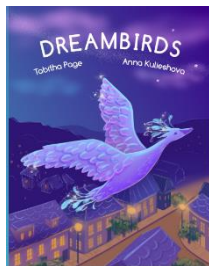
Title: **Cookie**
Creator(s): Isabelle Duff & Susannah Crispe
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Cookie loves Girl more than anything – even chasing balls and smelling smells! Sometimes Girl is too sad to play with Cookie, but that's okay because Cookie is good at sad. You can lick it off, you know. With beautiful words and playful illustrations, Cookie is both a heart-warming tale about the love between a dog and their person, and a sensitive exploration of depression and anxiety.
Themes: Empathy, childhood depression, anxiety, pet therapy.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <http://www.isabelleduff.com/>
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/cookie/?v=6cc98ba2045f>

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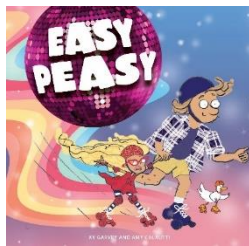
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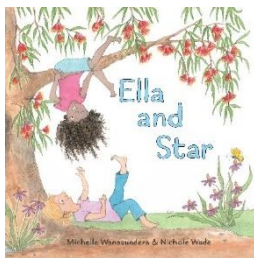
Title: **Courageous Lucy**
Creator(s): Paul Russell & Cara King
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Her knees may knock, her tummy ties in knots and Lucy may worry quite a lot, but with a small sprinkle of courage, Lucy takes tiny steps of bravery to be in the school play and becomes the best tree ever, despite her anxiety. One tiny step is all it takes to be courageous!
Themes: Anxiety, courage, trying new things
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website:
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/courageous-lucy/?v=6cc98ba2045f>



Title: **Dreambirds**
Creator(s): Tabitha Page and Anna Kulieshova
Publisher: Self-published
Summary: When a parent passes away, it is a difficult and confusing time, even more so for a child. What happened? Where did they go? Can they see me? Although we may never know for certain, it is comforting to imagine that our loved ones continue to watch over us as we go about our lives.
Themes: Death of a parent, grief, loss, acceptance
Genre: Picture Book for older children
Author Website: www.tabithajeangepage.com
Purchase link: <https://www.amazon.com.au/Dreambirds-Tabitha-J-Page/dp/0648270491>



Title: **Easy Peasy**
Creator(s): Ky Garvey & Amy Calautti
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Easy Peasy follows Ruby, who has a brand-new pair of roller skates. Ruby is sure skating will be easy, but after a few tumbles she realizes she may need her dad's help after all. Embracing themes of independence, perseverance, and family relationships, this is a fun, engaging story for children learning how to do something for the first time.
Themes: Independence, perseverance, asking for help.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://intheirownwrite.wordpress.com/2023/01/27/meet-the-author-ky-garvey/>
Purchase link: www.ekbooksorg



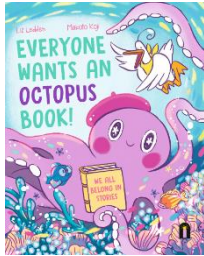
Title: **Ella and Star**
Creator(s): Michelle Wanasundera & Nicole Wade
Publisher: Little Pink Dog Books
Summary: Bonny has the best friend in the whole world who understands her sensory issues and is so much fun! But when Ella moves away, what will Bonny do? With the help of new, unexpected friends, Bonny finds hope that not only she will have someone special again, but someone who will be at her side and help her go on many new adventures.
Themes: Autism, sensory issues, friendship, acceptance, special needs
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website:
Purchase link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/ella-and-star-michelle-wanasundera/book/9780645418415.html>



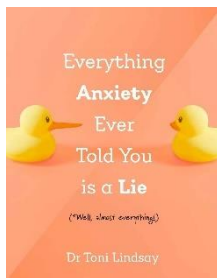
Title: **Esme in the Limelight**
Creator(s): **Kate Gordon**
Publisher: Riveted Press
Summary: Esme doesn't like the girl she sees in the mirror. Not pretty enough. Not thin enough. Not smart enough or talented enough. Nothing at all like her big sister, Ro. Then, a new friend comes into her life—a friend who wants Esme to be exactly who she is, or so Esme thinks.
Themes: Perfectionism, parental expectations and eating disorders
Genre: Middle grade
Author Website: www.kategordon.com.au
Purchase link: <https://rivetedpress.com.au/bookshop/aster-s-community-companion-novels>

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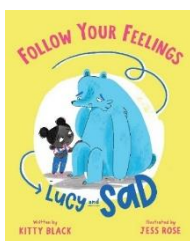
Title: **Everyone Wants an Octopus Book!**
Creator(s): Liz Ledden and Makoto Koji
Publisher: Bright Light (Hardie Grant Egmont)
Summary: A thought-provoking picture book about how everyone deserves to see themselves in books. Inky the octopus wants to read a book with a character that looks like them. With their best friend, Quack the duck, they scour every shelf, but all they seem to find are more books about ducks! Why aren't there any stories with octopuses? They decide maybe it's time for one.
Themes: Diversity, inclusion, differences, belonging
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: www.lizledden.com
Purchase link: <https://www.amazon.com.au/Everyone-Wants-Octopus-Book-Stories/dp/176121084X>



Title: **Everything Anxiety Ever Told You is a Lie**
Creator(s): Dr Toni Lindsay
Publisher: Exisle Publishing
Summary: Practical and therapeutic guide to managing anxiety, written specifically for those aged 14–25 by a psychologist with over 15 years of experience working with adolescents and young adults. Contains concise, impactful chapters and strategies that can be realistically applied even in a busy and changeable time of life.
Themes: Anxiety
Genre: YA, self-help, non-fiction
Author Website: www.tonilindsay.com.au
Purchase link: <https://exislepublishing.com/product/everything-anxiety-ever-told-you-is-a-lie/>



Title: **Exit Through the Gift Shop**
Creator(s): Maryam Master
Publisher: Pan Macmillan
Summary: Anahita Rosalind Ghorban-Galaszczuk (Ana for short) is discovering that life is absurd. As if dying of cancer at the age of 12.5 isn't bad enough, she still has to endure daily insults from her nemesis, Alyssa (Queen Mean) Anderson. Ana's on a wild roller-coaster of life and death, kindness and cruelty, ordinary and extraordinary before she exits...
Themes: Serious illness, childhood, loss, courage.
Genre: Middle grade
Author Website: <http://www.panmacmillan.com.au/9781760983512/>
Purchase link: <https://www.panmacmillan.com.au/9781760983512/>



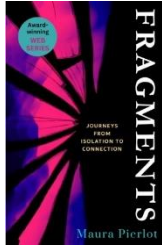
Title: **Follow Your Feelings: Lucy and Sad**
Creator(s): Kitty Black & Jess Rose
Publisher: Affirm Press
Summary: Lucy struggles at school, feeling sad and heavy as she's followed around by a giant, blue bear – who represents her feeling of being Sad. This book goes through the initial body feelings of sadness then common strategies for avoiding difficult feelings before Lucy finally works with and accepts her big feeling of being Sad.
Themes: Emotional awareness, emotional literacy, big feelings, sadness, depression, community, emotional acceptance.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.kittyblackauthor.com>
Purchase link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/follow-your-feelings-kitty-black/book/9781922419781.html>



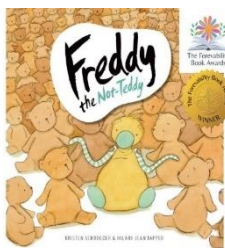
Title: **Follow Your Feelings: Max and Worry**
Creator(s): Kitty Black & Jess Rose
Publisher: Affirm Press
Summary: Max hates maths and worries whenever maths is done at school. Max's worry is personified by a stressed-out meerkat called Worry. Max talks to Worry and questions whether avoiding feelings of discomfort is really the best way to go. Max decides he can feel uncomfortable and still try his best, even if it's hard.
Themes: Worries, big feelings, resilience, emotional awareness
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.kittyblackauthor.com>
Purchase link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/follow-your-feelings-kitty-black/book/9781922419729.html>

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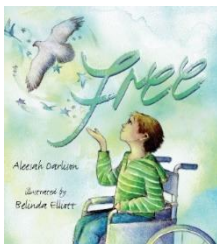
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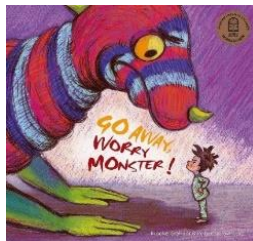
Title: **Fragments**
Creator(s): Maura Pierlot
Publisher: Big Ideas Press
Summary: Eight lives untethered. Eight voices in the dark. Eight stories of adversity. Eight lost souls looking for hope. Tasked with a creative exploration of their mental health and wellbeing, eight students are plunged into the harsh terrain of their psyches, each a fragment of an elusive whole.
Themes: Mental health, wellbeing, neurodivergence, autism spectrum, anxiety, depression, gender dysphoria, family dysfunction, bullying, adolescence.
Genre: Young Adult (hybrid) Fiction
Author Website: <http://maurapierlot.com>
Purchase link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/fragments-maura-pierlot/book/9780645099812.html>



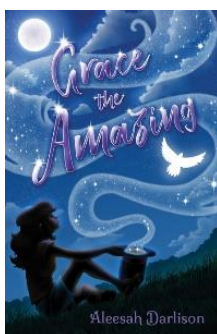
Title: **Freddy the Not-Teddy**
Creator(s): Kristen Schroeder & Hilary Jean Tapper
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Freddy is Jonah's favourite stuffed toy, but no one knows quite what Freddy is – a funky duck, a peculiar platypus, a punk rock penguin? He's certainly not a Teddy, but that won't stop him from being the star of the Teddy Bears' Picnic in this inspiring story about inclusion, friendship and staying true to yourself.
Themes: Fitting in, identity, imaginative play, inclusion, staying true to oneself, friendship, standing up for others, bravery, being yourself, unique, different, feeling different
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://kristenschroederbooks.com/>
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/freddy-the-not-teddy/?v=6cc98ba2045f>



Title: **Free**
Creator(s): Aleesah Darlison & Belinda Elliott
Publisher: Empowering Resources
Summary: A sensitive and nurturing story about a boy who is finding life difficult after becoming a wheelchair user. Flynn's story will inspire children and adults to look beyond their current situation and to dream for their own greatness and freedom.
Themes: Disability, anxiety, worry, sadness, illness, recovery, acceptance, hope.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: www.aleesahdarlison.com
Purchase link: www.aleesahdarlison.com



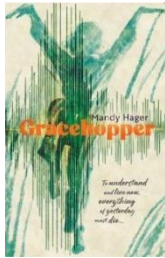
Title: **Go Away, Worry Monster**
Creator(s): Brooke Graham & Robin Tatlow-Lord
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Worry Monster loves 'helping' Archie to worry. Archie feels so anxious that his head hurts, his tummy flutters and his heart pounds. But he soon realizes that the only way to feel better is to make Worry Monster go away by challenging his fears and following a set of steps useful for helping any child to cope with their anxieties.
Themes: Anxiety, worry, resilience, mindfulness, emotional regulation.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.brookegrahamauthor.com/>
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/go-away-worry-monster/?v=6cc98ba2045f>



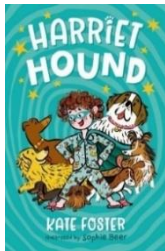
Title: **Grace the Amazing**
Creator(s): Aleesah Darlison
Publisher: Wombat Books
Summary: Grace Marshall is eleven years old. She's curious and creative and dreams of becoming a magician called Grace the Amazing! Grace's only friend is her art teacher, Pamela. When she discovers that Pamela is ill, the fragile certainties Grace relies on threaten to slip away. On her mission to find a cure for Pamela using miraculous magic, Grace asks the big questions about life, love, and friendship. A sensitive story filled with joy, emotion, and special bonds that last a lifetime.
Themes: Resilience, emotional regulation, neurodivergence, love, relationships, acceptance, and loss
Genre: Middle grade
Author Website: www.aleesahdarlison.com
Purchase link: <https://wombatrhiza.com.au/grace-the-amazing/>
Class Resources: <https://wombatrhiza.com.au/teachers/>

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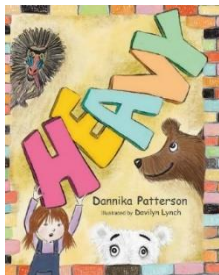
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Title: **Gracehopper**
Creator(s): Mandy Hager
Publisher: OneTree House, NZ
Summary: Born in the middle of Taiwan's 1999 Jiji earthquake, 18-year-old Grace's life has been impacted by its fallout. Now, as she faces an internal quake that's potentially even more devastating, her ex-best friend Charlie suddenly reappears. A story of love and loss, friendship, countering differences, and the search for identity.
Themes: Disability, mental health, PTSD, racism, cultural and disability representation, Jeet Kune Do and the philosophy of Bruce Lee, resilience, identity, self-esteem
Genre: YA recommended for 14 plus
Author Website: www.mandhager.com
Purchase link: <https://bookhub.co.nz/p/gracehopper>



Title: **Harriet Hound**
Creator(s): Kate Foster & Sophie Beer
Publisher: Walker Books
Summary: Meet Harriet Hound. She's eight years old and loves dogs! But Harriet has something else that makes her super ... the power to summon the dogs from her family's rescue shelter every time there's trouble afoot.
Themes: Autism, family
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: www.kfosterbooks.com
Purchase link: <https://www.walkerbooks.com.au/book/9781760654702/>



Title: **Heavy**
Creator(s): Dannika Patterson & Davilyn Lynch
Publisher: Wombat Books
Summary: The strong women in Nina's family do amazing things. They piggyback polar bears and carry boa constrictors. Every day, they pick up more and more. The trouble is, they never put anything down! Will Nina's inventions help lighten their loads?
Themes: Wellbeing and managing stress
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://dannikapatterson.com/>
Purchase link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/heavy-dannika-patterson/book/9781761111020.html>



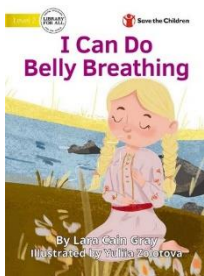
Title: **Heroes of the Secret Underground**
Creator(s): Susanne Gervay
Publisher: Harper Collins
Summary: Part autobiography, part fantasy inspired by the history of Gervay's family, *Heroes of the Secret Underground* is a breath-taking ride through myth, reality and war to find hope. With adventure, courage, humour and hope in the darkest times, Louie and her younger brothers travel back in time to WWII where they meet their grandparents as children and learn about the Jewish youth underground.
Themes: Racism, disability, LGBT, minorities, anxiety, courage
Genre: Middle grade - Young Adult Fiction
Author Website: <https://sgervay.com/heroes-of-the-secret-underground/>
Purchase link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/heroes-of-the-secret-underground-susanne-gervay/>



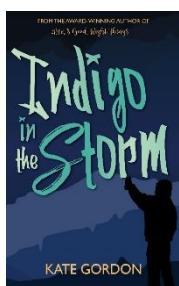
Title: **How to be the New Person**
Creator(s): Anna Branford
Publisher: Walker Books
Summary: Hazel Morrison has a secret habit – pretending to make videos about everyday things. *Eight important tips for successfully buttering toast! Putting your hair in a ponytail: a step-by-step guide!* But when her family move to the outer suburbs, Hazel has to cope with starting at a new school where she doesn't exactly feel welcomed. A school project inspires her to create a real video – a how-to guide for being “the new person” . . . because everyone, sometime, will meet one, or be one!
Themes: Anxiety, new starts, courage, friendship
Genre: Junior Fiction chapter book
Author Website: <https://www.annabranford.com/>
Purchase link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/how-to-be-the-new-person-anna-branford/book/9781760655839.html>

DIVERSE THEMES IN KIDS & YA LITERATURE

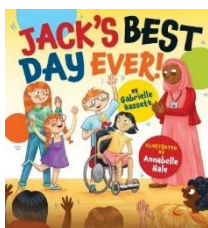
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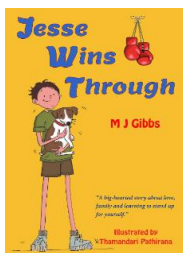
Title: **I Can Do Belly Breathing and other titles**
Creator(s): Lara Cain Gray and other creators
Publisher: Library For All, Australia
Summary: Library For All presents the Social and Emotional Learning book series. 70 diverse, engaging stories help young people acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal goals, show empathy for others and make responsible decisions. Aimed at readers 4 to 8 years old, the series is available in English, Swahili and Ukrainian with more language sets in development.
Themes: Self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, social awareness, responsible decision-making
Genre: Early Reader
Author Website: <https://libraryforall.org/shop-now/>
Purchase link: <https://libraryforall.org/shop-now/>



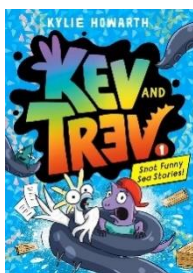
Title: **Indigo in the Storm**
Creator(s): Kate Gordon
Publisher: Riveted Press
Summary: Indigo Michael isn't like other kids. And her mum isn't like other mums. Life for people like them isn't meant to have meaning – it's just something to survive in whatever way you can. When her mum abandons her, Aster's Aunt Noni becomes her foster parent. Suddenly Indigo has a new 'family' – one she didn't ask for and isn't even sure she wants.
Themes: Emotional regulation; depression and anxiety; found family; abandonment; friendship; making a difference; changing the world; art.
Genre: Middle grade
Author Website: www.kategordon.com.au
Purchase link: <https://rivetedpress.com.au/bookshop/aster-s-community-companion-novels>



Title: **Jack's Best Day Ever**
Creator(s): Gabrielle Bassett & Annabelle Hale
Publisher: Woodslane Press
Summary: Jack loves anything that zooms, digs and races. But Jack doesn't like change and he only ever wants to eat peanut butter sandwiches! This heart-warming, hilarious story of friendship explores how it feels to be neurodivergent and introduces children to the idea that there is no one-size-fits all way to be human.
Themes: Disability, neurodiversity, diversity, inclusion.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: www.judithbarkerauthor.com
Purchase link: <https://www.woodslanepress.com.au/>



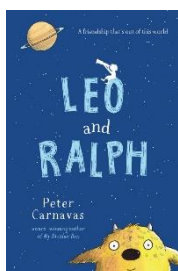
Title: **Jesse Wins Through**
Creator(s): MJ Gibbs & Thamandari Pathirana
Publisher: MJ Gibbs
Summary: *Jesse Wins Through* uses the home and school setting for Jesse Whitford with a cute Jack Russell to train.
Themes: Emotions, anxiety, relationships.
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: www.mjgibbs.com.au
Purchase link: www.mjgibbs.com.au



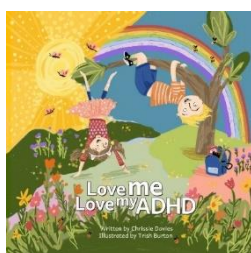
Title: **Kev and Trev**
Creator(s): **Kylie Howarth**
Publisher: Affirm Press
Summary: Join Kev and Trev's epic deep-sea adventure – full of kraken laughs and comic commocean! Dodge flying coconut cannonballs, outrun ghost pirates, escape big sharks, pig sharks, and a punch-throwing pelican, all while hunting for mysterious merpugs and the missing emergency boat snacks! A hilarious graphic novel series by best-selling creator, Kylie Howarth.
Themes: Dyslexia, diversity, embracing uniqueness
Genre: Junior Fiction, graphic novel
Author Website: www.kyliehowarth.com
Purchase link: <https://affirmpress.com.au/browse/book/Kylie-Howarth-Kev-and-Trev-1-9781923022157>

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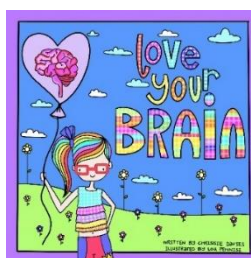
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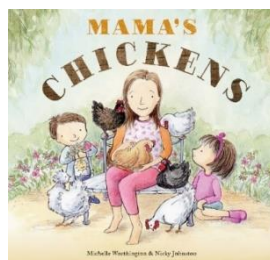
Title: **Leo and Ralph**
Creator(s): **Peter Carnavas**
Publisher: UQP
Summary: Leo and Ralph have been best friends ever since Ralph flew down from one of Jupiter's moons. But now Leo's older, and Mum and Dad think it's time to say goodbye to Ralph. When the family moves to a small country town, they hope Leo might finally make a real friend. But someone like Ralph is hard to leave behind...
Themes: Social anxiety, fitting in, being different, imaginary friends
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: www.petercarnavas.com
Purchase link: <https://www.uqp.com.au/books/leo-and-ralph>



Title: **Love Me, Love My ADHD**
Creator(s): Chrissie Davies & Trish Burton
Publisher: Chaos to Calm Consultancy
Summary: ADHD kids are amazing! *Love Me, Love My ADHD* is about a family that loves and accepts their kids the way they are rather than who others want them to be. The book shows how differently this complex neurotype can present for individuals.
Themes: Neurodiverse (ADHD) children and families, fitting in, acceptance, strategies, celebrating differences.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: Chaos to Calm Consultancy
Purchase link: Chaos to Calm Consultancy



Title: **Love Your Brain**
Creator(s): Chrissie Davies & Lou Pennisi
Publisher: Chaos to Calm Consultancy
Summary: Empowers parents to talk to their children about the importance of understanding their own brains, encouraging brain care and ultimately learning how this impacts on their emotions and behaviour.
Themes: Neurodiversity, brains, emotions, feelings, behaviour.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: Chaos to Calm Consultancy
Purchase link: Chaos to Calm Consultancy



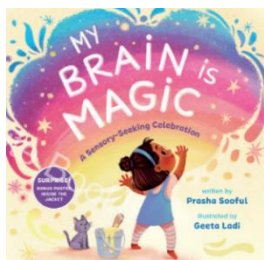
Title: **Mama's Chickens**
Creator(s): Michelle Worthington & Nicky Johnston
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: What happens when a couple of kids and their mother, who has early-onset dementia, welcome some backyard chickens into their lives? This beautifully illustrated book tells an important, much-needed story about disability and acceptance as Mama loves and cares for her chickens - just as she does her children – despite the challenges she faces.
Themes: Early-onset dementia, memory loss, chronic illness, disability, acceptance
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.michelleworthington.com/>
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/mamas-chickens/?v=6cc98ba2045f>



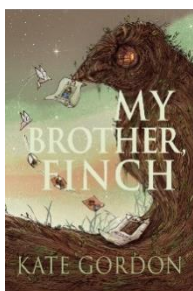
Title: **Mr Bat Wants a Hat**
Creator(s): Kitty Black & Laura Wood
Publisher: New Frontier Publishing
Summary: Mr Bat Wants a Hat is a funny book about an anti-hero bat who steals a baby's beautiful hat and is initially unrepentant. As he begins to realise the impact his actions have had he feels remorseful and returns the hat, who gives him a gift in return. Like Mr Bat, neurodivergent children can be impulsive and take longer to comprehend the responses of others.
Themes: Empathy, kindness, impulse control, big feelings, neurodiversity.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.kittyblackauthor.com>
Purchase link: https://www.booktopia.com.au/mr-bat-wants-a-hat-kitty-black/book/9781922326515.html?source=pla&gclid=CjwKCAjw-bKBhB-EiwA4fvKrNkTfijC8bVkdP-fETF-vPKjOnVHyFZ0UHdg3uWVND7O6mOniJp-xoCUMUQAvD_BwE

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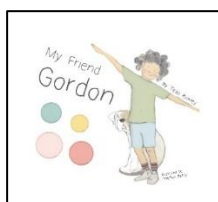
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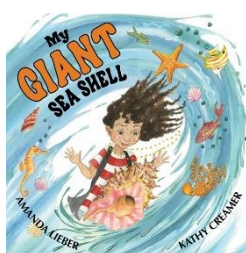
Title: **My Brain is Magic**
Creator(s): Prasha Sooful & Geeta Lodi
Publisher: Soaring Kite Books
Summary: Whether your brain buzzes around the room like a bee or tells you to be loud and roar like a lion, celebrate the many things that it can be! Learn how your brain interacts with the world around you.
Themes: Neurodiversity, sensory processing disorders, family, self-identity.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://au.linkedin.com/in/prasha-sooful-35737118>
Purchase link: [Amazon.com: My Brain Is Magic: A Sensory-Seeking Celebration: 9781953859617: Sooful, Prasha, Ladi, Geeta: Books](https://www.amazon.com/My-Brain-Is-Magic-A-Sensory-Seeking-Celebration-9781953859617-Sooful-Prasha-Ladi-Geeta-Books)



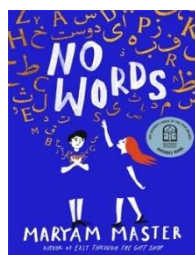
Title: **My Brother, Finch**
Creator(s): Kate Gordon
Publisher: Riveted Press
Summary: Finch and Wren were as close as a brother and sister can be. When Finch vanished, at nine, Wren's world cracked in two. On the same day that Finch disappeared, another girl was lost, too. Her parents were rich tourists, from Sydney. Ava's story got all the media attention. And Finch was forgotten. But not by Wren. Never by Wren. Three years on, Finch is still with her, whispering in her ear, guiding her through life. As Wren begins high school and forms a new, bewildering friendship with a mysterious girl called Freddie, Finch is there, urging her on.
Themes: Mystery, family, loss, grief, haunting, sibling bonds, secrets, friendship, letting go, selective/biased reporting, economic bias
Genre: Middle grade
Author Website: www.kategordon.com.au
Purchase link: <https://rivetedpress.com.au/bookshop/aster-s-community-companion-novels>



Title: **My Friend Gordon**
Creator(s): Tess Rowley & Crayfish Betty
Publisher: Tennyson
Summary: The book is about a young boy named Sam and his new pet Gordon who together navigate anxiety and friendship.
Themes: Anxiety, friendship, mental health
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.facebook.com/tess.rowley.566/>
Purchase link: <https://herplatformshop.com/collections/kids/products/my-friend-gordon-a-book-about-friendship>

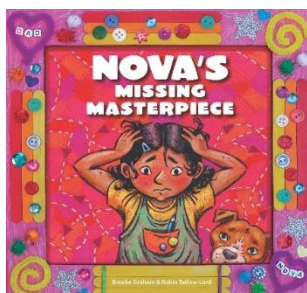


Title: **My Giant Sea Shell**
Creator(s): Amanda Lieber & Kathy Creamer
Publisher: Little Pink Dog Books
Summary: Mummy's stories are magical, her laugh echoes through the house and her sparkly eyes light up the room. But, one day her smile has faded, her stories have stopped and she has drifted away like a shell lost at sea. A sensitively told story shining light on parental-situational depression. It gently addresses a complex topic with love, encouragement and hope whilst showing the importance of being patient, understanding and connecting with love.
Themes: Mental health, depression, sadness, family relationships
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://amandalieber.com/>
Purchase link: <https://littlepinkdogbooks.com/my-giant-sea-shell>

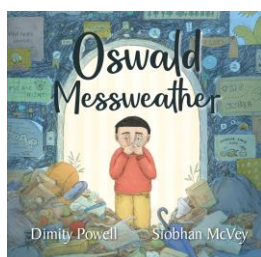


Title: **No Words**
Creator(s): Maryam Master
Publisher: Pan Macmillan
Summary: Hero doesn't feel like a hero, but sometimes she feels as if the universe is asking her to be one. When Aria, a mysterious boy who never speaks starts at school and is picked on, she and her bestie, Jaz, decide to help.
Themes: Anxiety, confidence, bullying, heroes, refugees, finding your voice.
Genre: Middle grade
Author Website: <https://www.panmacmillan.com.au/9781760983529/>
Purchase link: <https://www.panmacmillan.com.au/9781760983529/>

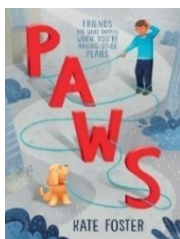
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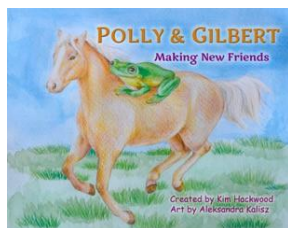
Title: **Nova's Missing Masterpiece**
Creator(s): Brooke Graham and Robin Tatlow-Lord
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: When Nova realizes the artwork she created for Dad's birthday present is missing, her tummy flip flops and her heart ker-thumps. She and her dog, Harley, turn the house upside down, searching absolutely everywhere, but the missing masterpiece is nowhere to be found. Nova loses her temper but Harley remains calm and content. Can Nova learn from her dog, calm herself down and find her Dad's present in time for his birthday party?
Themes: Emotional regulation, frustration, coping skills, problem-solving, family.
Genre: Picture Book, 4-9 years
Author Website: www.brookegrahamauthor.com
Purchase link: [Nova's Missing Masterpiece - EK Books](https://www.brookegrahamauthor.com)



Title: **Oswald Messweather**
Creator(s): Dimity Powell & Siobhan McVey
Publisher: Wombat Books
Summary: Oswald gets jiggly legs and itchy palms all the time. He has no idea how to make them or the chaotic tangle in his head stop. Maybe his CRAYONS hold the answer. A reflection of a child's compulsive anxiety disorder.
Themes: OCD, mental health, school, tolerance, social issues, social skills
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: www.dimitypowell.com
Purchase link: <https://wombatrhiza.com.au/oswald-messweather/>



Title: **Paws**
Creator(s): Kate Foster
Publisher: Walker Books Australia/Walker Books UK/Candlewick
Summary: At home, Alex's best friend is Kevin the cockapoo, although what he wants most is a friend at school. But that is harder than he expected. A touching story about learning that friendship isn't one size fits all.
Themes: Autism, anxiety, friendship, family.
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: www.kfosterbooks.com
Purchase link: [Paws | Walker Books Australia](https://www.walkerbooks.com.au/paws)



Title: **Polly & Gilbert Making New Friends**
Creator(s): Kim Hackwood & Aleksandra Kalisz
Publisher: Ingram Spark
Summary: Gilbert, the shy green frog, spent his days watching the animals play on the farm. He dreamed of making friends and playing with them too. One day, Polly, a friendly Palomino pony, asks him to be friends. She introduces him to all the other animals. Gilbert gets to go on fun adventures with his new friend Polly.
Themes: Self-acceptance, friendship, overcoming insecurities
Genre: Early Reader / Picture Book
Author Website: www.ingramspark.com
Purchase link: [Amazon Australia](https://www.amazon.com.au)



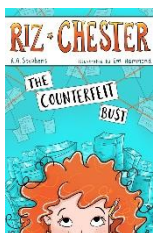
Title: **Queen of the Cosmos: Beatrice Hill Tinsley**
Creator(s): Maria Gill and Alistair Hughes
Publisher: Upstart Press
Summary: Beatrice Hill Tinsley lived every day as if she was on borrowed time. Over her short time on Earth, she was determined to further the world's knowledge of the stars and galaxies. But it was not easy being a female scientist in those times. She would have to make a heartbreaking decision to follow her destiny. Find out about this extraordinary woman, who became one of New Zealand's greatest scientists.
Themes: Gifted (more than likely neurodiverse) child/adult, perseverance, divorce, groundbreaking scientist, universe, galaxy
Genre: Creative nonfiction picture book Readership age: 7-12 years old
Author Website: www.mariagill.co.nz
Purchase link: <https://upstartpress.co.nz/product/queen-of-the-cosmos-beatrice-hill-tinsley/>
Class Resources: <https://mariagill.co.nz/book/beatrice-tinsley-queen-of-the-cosmos>

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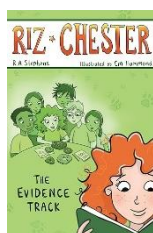
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Title: **Percy Jackson**
Creator(s): Rick Riordan
Publisher: Hyperion Books
Summary: Twelve-year-old Percy Jackson is on the most dangerous quest of his life. With the help of a satyr and a daughter of Athena, Percy must journey across the United States to catch a thief who has stolen Zeus' master bolt
Themes: ADHD, mythology, gods.
Genre: Middle grade
Author Website: <https://rickriordan.com/>
Purchase link: <https://rickriordan.com/>



Title: **Riz Chester**
Creator(s): RA Stephens & Em Hammond
Publisher: Wombat Books
Summary: Ten-year-old girl Riz doesn't think she can do anything. But Riz is particularly observant. When she finds out about a counterfeit ring, can she use her powers of observation to work out who is behind it?
Themes: Forensic science, neurodivergence, counterfeiting mystery.
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: <http://rastephens.com.au/>
Purchase link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/riz-chester-r-a-stephens/book/978176111181.html>



Title: **Riz Chester and the Evidence Track**
Creator(s): R.A. Stephens with illustrations by Em Hammond
Publisher: Wombat Books
Summary: Riz Chester loves mysteries, and with an interest in forensics she keeps finding crime. But nothing has happened for months. With Riz and her friends itching for a mystery to solve, Riz organises the perfect 'match-the-tracks' party. She prepares moulds and muddy prints ready for everyone to work out what's what!
Themes: Strong neuro diverse female lead, science
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: <http://rastephens.com.au/>
Purchase link: <https://wombatrhiza.com.au/riz-chester-the-evidence-track/>



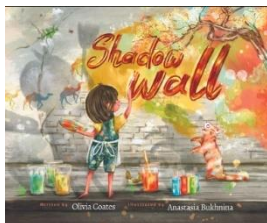
Title: **Riz Chester and the Fingerprint Code**
Creator(s): R.A. Stephens with illustrations by Em Hammond
Publisher: Wombat Books
Summary: Riz Chester has a passion for forensic science. When something goes missing Riz recruits her friends, and breaks out her fingerprint tools. How can they work out what happened when no one will even tell them what is missing? And is the mark left behind in the music room really a fingerprint?
Themes: Strong neuro diverse female lead, science
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: <http://rastephens.com.au/>
Purchase link: <https://wombatrhiza.com.au/riz-chester-the-evidence-track/>



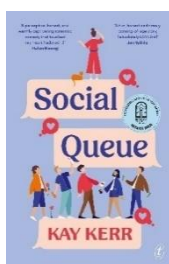
Title: **Running from the Tiger**
Creator(s): Aleesah Darlison
Publisher: Empowering Resources
Summary: When eleven-year-old Ebony meets enigmatic Teena, they become more than the 'default' friends Ebony is used to. Only when the girls come to trust one another do they unlock each other's troubling secrets, enabling their friendship to deepen.
Themes: Domestic violence, courage, anxiety, friendship
Genre: Middle Grade
Author Website: www.aleesahdarlison.com
Purchase link: www.aleesahdarlison.com

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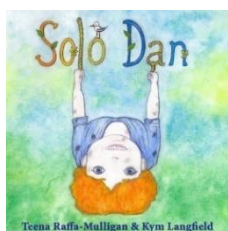
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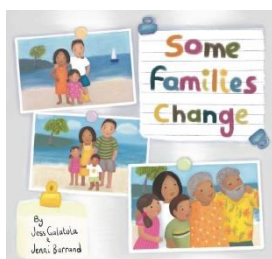
Title: **Shadow Wall**
Creator(s): Olivia Coates & Anastasia Bukhnina
Publisher: Ethicool Books
Summary: When Scarlet moves to the city, the world feels endlessly grey until she discovers colourful gifts that inspire an idea. Through a community mural Scarlet builds connections that enable her to build a new beginning.
Themes: Loneliness, navigating change, friendship, connection, healing through art
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: oliviacoatesauthor.com
Purchase link: <https://ethicoolbooks.com/products/shadow-wall-kids-book>



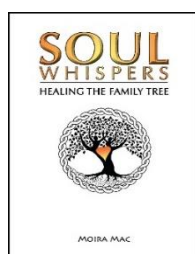
Title: **Social Queue**
Creator(s): Kay Kerr
Publisher: Text Publishing
Summary: Zoe Kelly is starting a new phase of her life. High school was a mess of bullying and autistic masking that left her burnt out and shut down. Now, with an internship at an online media company she's ready to reinvent herself. But she didn't count on returning to her awkward high-school experiences for her first writing assignment.
Themes: Anxiety, romance and dating, disability and ableism
Genre: Young Adult
Author Website: <https://www.kaykerr.com>
Purchase link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/social-queue-kay-kerr/book/9781922458018.html>



Title: **Solo Dan**
Creator(s): Teena Raffa-Mulligan & Kym Langfield
Publisher: Daisy Lane Publishing
Summary: Orphan Dan has never had a place to belong. What he really wants is a forever home. A story of hope and belonging.
Themes: Family, living in out of home care, adoption, love, belonging
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.teenaraffamulligan.com>
Purchase link: <https://www.amazon.com.au/Solo-Dan-Teena-Raffa-Mulligan/dp/0648699889>



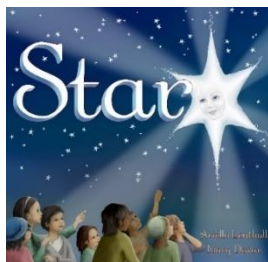
Title: **Some Families Change**
Creator(s): Jess Galatola and Jenni Barrand
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Family changes can be challenging, especially for young children. *Some Families Change* offers a comforting exploration of changing family structures through gentle verse and inclusive illustrations. Covering scenarios including single-parent families, blended families, and the loss of a loved one, it serves as a reassuring guide for children experiencing such transitions.
Themes: Diverse families
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: www.jessgalatola.com.au
Purchase link: <https://exislepublishing.com/product/some-families-change/>
Class Resources: <https://ekbooks.org/product/some-families-change/?v=6cc98ba2045f>



Title: **Soul Whispers**
Creator(s): Moira Mac
Publisher: Moira Mac
Summary: Your soul has a grand design for your life; a much bigger dream than you can imagine for yourself. Adopt a more expansive view of reality beyond basic wants, needs and desires by following ten simple steps.
Themes: Tapping into the soul's dream, step-by-step guidance
Genre: Self-help, Young Adult, adult
Author Website: www.moiramac.com
Purchase link: www.moiramac.com

DIVERSE THEMES IN KIDS & YA LITERATURE

2024 BOOK LIST



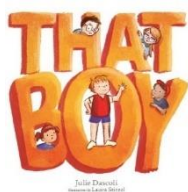
Title: **Star**
Creator(s): Artelle Lenthall & Margaret Dewar
Publisher: Little Pink Dog Books
Summary: Star is like every other in the sky except Star is small. Worse still, Star can't twinkle and nobody ever wishes upon Star. There's nothing special about Star, or is there? In this heartfelt retelling of the Christmas Story, Star finds out what it truly means to be a Star!
Themes: Christmas, love, resilience, faith, self-acceptance, growth, mental health
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.journeygirlontheroadtopublication.com>
Purchase link: https://www.amazon.com.au/s?k=Star+by+Artelle+Lenthall&i=stripbooks&ref=nb_sb_noss



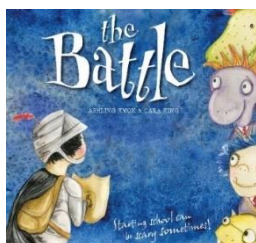
Title: **Superheroes for a Day**
Creator(s): **Craig Cormick** with illustrations by Lauren Mullinder
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: In *Superheroes for a Day*, three autistic friends transform their unique abilities into superpowers to save their school from endless maths. This engaging story normalizes the experiences of Autistic kids in an entertaining and accessible way, making them the heroes and offering a fresh perspective on neurodiversity.
Themes: Autism, teamwork, problem solving
Genre: Middle Grade Fiction
Author Website: www.craigcormick.com
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/superheroes-for-a-day/?v=6cc98ba2045f>
Teachers Notes: https://ekbooks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Teachers-Notes_Superheroes-for-a-day_TG.pdf?v=6cc98ba2045f



Title: **Tabitha and the Raincloud**
Creator(s): Devon Sillett & Melissa Johns
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: As soon as Tabitha wakes to find a raincloud next to her, she knows it's going to be one of those days when nothing goes right. A story of choices, optimism, and perseverance.
Themes: Anger, emotional regulation, optimism, resilience.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://ekbooks.org/creators-2/devon-sillett/?v=6cc98ba2045f>
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/tabitha-and-the-raincloud/?v=6cc98ba2045f>



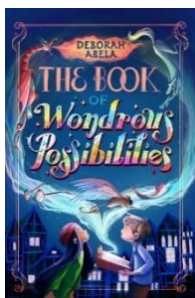
Title: **That Boy**
Creator(s): Julie Dascoli & Laura Stitzel
Publisher: Empowering Resources
Summary: Luca struggles to fit in. Children are afraid of him and parents advise their children to stay away until the teacher explains that Luca has autism.
Themes: Disability, acceptance, friendships, neurodiversity
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: www.juliedascoli.com
Purchase link: www.juliedascoli.com



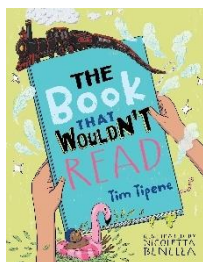
Title: **The Battle**
Creator(s): Ashling Kwok & Cara King
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Edward is anxious about starting knight school so he puts on his armour and prepares for battle. But what happens when his armour no longer protects him?
Themes: Anxiety, bravery, emotions, fitting in, resilience, starting school
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: www.ashlingkwok.com.au
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/the-battle/?v=6cc98ba2045f>

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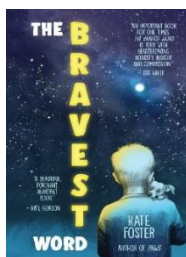
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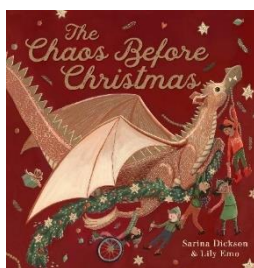
Title: **The Book of Wondrous Possibilities**
Creator(s): Deborah Abela
Publisher: Penguin Books Australia
Summary: Arlo lives with his uncle in a flat above their bookshop. He has no friends, except for his pet mouse. When a girl called Lisette bursts into the shop and begs him to hide her from a murderer, Arlo's life changes forever.
Themes: Adventure, anxiety, courage, friendship, neurodiversity.
Genre: Middle grade
Author Website: <https://www.deborahabela.com/>
Purchase link: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/the-book-of-wondrous-possibilities-deborah-abela/book/9781761044021.html>



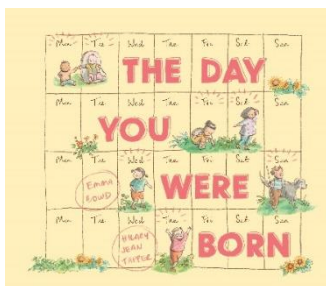
Title: **The Book That Wouldn't Read**
Creator(s): Tim Tipene and Nicoletta Benella
Publisher: Oratia Books
Summary: The boy in this story doesn't like reading until, one day in the school library, he picks up *The Book that Wouldn't Read*. As he makes his way through the story the sentences move up and down, words change colour and disappear and strange typefaces and characters appear that have him jumping around, even burping! ** BILINGUAL English-Māōri ** Finalist in the NZ Children's Book Awards 2024: Wright Family Foundation Te Kura Pounamu Award (winner announced August 2024)
Themes: Spectrums, mental health, anxiety, reading challenges
Genre: Picture Book, older readers aged 7-12.
Author Website: <https://www.timtipene.com/>
Purchase link: <https://www.oratia.co.nz/product/the-book-that-wouldnt-read/>
Class Resources: <https://www.oratia.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/The-Book-that-wouldnt-Read-TR.pdf>



Title: **The Bravest Word**
Creator(s): Kate Foster
Publisher: Walker Books Australia
Summary: When eleven-year-old Matt finds Cliff, a hurt, neglected dog abandoned in the bush, he knows the brave little pup needs saving. He wants to help. But can he?
Themes: Depression; anxiety; intrusive thoughts; friendship; family
Genre: Middle grade
Author Website: www.kfosterbooks.com
Purchase link: [Bravest Word, The | Walker Books Australia](https://www.walkerbooks.com.au/products/the-bravest-word)



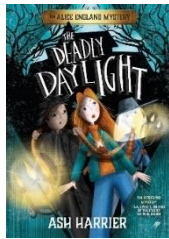
Title: **The Chaos Before Christmas**
Creator(s): Sarina Dickson and Lily Emo
Publisher: Hachette Aotearoa New Zealand
Summary: Elroy McChristmas and his friends are about to sit their final test before Santa decides the best job for each elf. But when it's time to show off their skills, the classroom erupts into chaos! Can Elroy and his classmates restore calm before Santa arrives?
Themes: Learning differences, ADHD, neurodivergent main character, individual strengths, teamwork, self-acceptance, Christmas, dragons & elves
Genre: Picture Book, ages: 3-7
Author Website: www.webandflow.co
Purchase link: NZ www.hachette.co.nz/book/?id=the-chaos-before-christmas-9781869714741
AU www.hachette.com.au/sarina-dickson/the-chaos-before-christmas



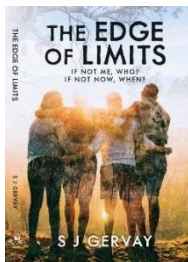
Title: **The Day You Were Born**
Creator(s): Emma Bowd and Hilary Jean Tapper
Publisher: Affirm Press
Summary: *The Day You Were Born* is a love letter to the children of the world, celebrating their differences and unique qualities, and the special light they bring to our lives. It is a modern retelling of the classic nursery rhyme, *Monday's Child*.
Themes: Difference; Diversity; Acceptance; Inclusion; Positive representation of a young wheelchair user
Genre: Picture Book, Ages: ELC & Primary School (Prep - Yr 6); 3yrs - 12yrs
Author Website: www.emmabowd.com
Purchase link: <https://affirmpress.com.au/browse/books/bookseller/9781922863706>
Class Resources: <https://emmabowd.com/2023/07/24/writing-from-the-heart/>

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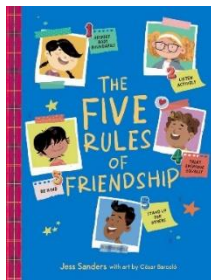
2024 BOOK LIST



Title: **The Deadly Daylight**
Creator(s): Ash Harrier
Publisher: Pantera Press
Summary: Twelve-year-old Alice England is curious, truthful and smart, but when you work in your father's funeral home and you get messages from the dead, it can be difficult to make friends.
Themes: Neurodiversity, autism, mystery, friendship.
Genre: Middle grade
Author Website:
Purchase link: <https://www.panterapress.com.au/product/the-deadly-daylight/>



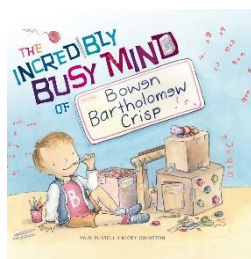
Title: **The Edge of Limits**
Creator(s): Susanne Gervay
Publisher: FEM (Flying Elephant Media)
Summary: Exploring sexuality, mateship, wisdom of the grandfather, leadership, humour, the way boys speak, or don't speak. Sam, 17, is the main protagonist, son of a single mother, with mates from diverse cultures.
Themes: Consent, coming of age, masculinity, anxiety
Genre: Young Adult Fiction
Author Website: <https://sgervay.com/>
Purchase link: <https://sgervay.com/>



Title: **The Five Rules of Friendship**
Creator(s): Jess Sanders, illustrated by César Barceló
Publisher: Affirm Press
Summary: From the bestselling creator of the Life Lessons for Little Ones series comes a practical, positive and uplifting guide to help children navigate friendships. This book was written after Jess's experience working in schools and the regular requests from teachers and parents she would receive asking for advice and resources in navigating friendships.
Themes: Friendship, relationships
Genre: Junior Fiction, ages 6-9
Author Website: www.jessanders.com.au
Purchase link:



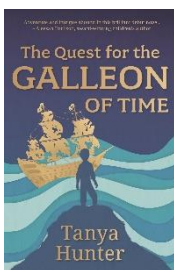
Title: **The Grimmelings**
Creator(s): Rachael King
Publisher: Allen & Unwin NZ
Summary: Thirteen-year-old Ella knows that words are powerful. So she should have known better than to utter a wish and a curse on the same day, even in jest. When the boy she has cursed goes missing, in the same sudden, unexplained way as her father several years earlier, Ella discovers that her family is living in the shadow of a vengeful kelpie, a black horse-like creature.
Themes: Family, folklore, identity, neurodivergence, colonisation, loyalty and grief
Genre: Middle grade fantasy, ages 9+
Author Website: <https://www.rachael-king.com/>
Purchase link: <https://bookhub.co.nz/p/grimmelings>
Class Resources: <https://www.rachael-king.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/9781991006646.pdf>



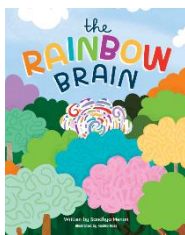
Title: **The Incredibly Busy Mind of Bowen Bartholomew Crisp**
Creator(s): Paul Russell & Nicky Johnston
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Bowen sees the world differently and struggles to fit in. When he turns his uniqueness into his greatest strength, he finds his place in the world.
Themes: ADHD diversity, being different, thinking differently, curiosity, creativity.
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://ekbooks.org/creators-2/paul-russell/?v=6cc98ba2045f>
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/the-incredibly-busy-mind-of-bowen-bartholomew-crisp/?v=6cc98ba2045f>

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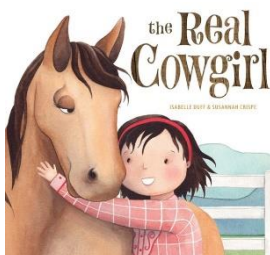
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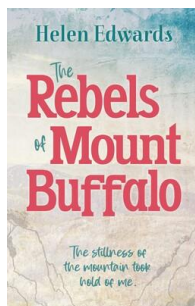
Title: **The Quest for the Galleon of Time**
Creator(s): Tanya Hunter
Publisher: Midnight Sun
Summary: Eleven-year-old Tobias Crane is sent to be a cabin boy on a galleon. When his ship is attacked by a pirate ship, Tobias must discover the truth about his captain, the captain's brothers, and the ghost ship, the *Majestic Maria*.
Themes: Adventure, anxiety, time travel, courage
Genre: Middle Grade
Author Website:
Purchase link: [MidnightSun Publishing](#)



Title: **The Rainbow Brain**
Creator(s): Sandhya Menon & Kushla Ross
Publisher: Onwards and Upwards Psychology
Summary: The Rainbow Brain is simple, factual, and neuro-affirming. It introduces young readers to the way that their brain works and the accommodations they may need through this world.
Themes: Neurodiversity, brains, ADHD, behaviours
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.sandhyamenon.com/>
Purchase link: <https://littletoytribe.com.au/products/the-rainbow-brain>



Title: **The Real Cowgirl**
Creator(s): Isabelle Duff and Susannah Crispe
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Sal wants to be a real cowgirl – brave, strong, wild, smart, kind, fierce, a good friend. Sal feels safe and strong at home, or out riding with her pony, but she finds going to school scary and isolating. Her friends, both pony and human, help her to feel brave and build her up to feel all the wonderful things they can see in her. Sensitively illustrated and written by a talented young author, this is a heart-warming story about being yourself and finding bravery through friendship.
Themes: Social anxiety, friendship, rural life, animals
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website:
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/the-real-cowgirl/?v=6cc98ba2045f>
Class Resources: https://ekbooks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Teachers-Notes_real-cowgirl.pdf?v=6cc98ba2045f



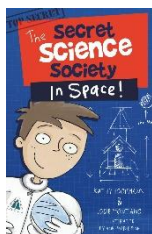
Title: **The Rebels of Mt Buffalo**
Creator(s): Helen Edwards
Publisher: Riveted Press
Summary: It's 1998 and Clara and her parents are staying at the Mount Buffalo Chalet for the Centenary celebrations. It couldn't be more different from their last visit—they were a family of four then. Now they're just three separate people, orbiting each other while trying to navigate their overwhelming grief. After a strange night, Clara wakes up in 1893. There she meets Alice, a girl who lives within the fern-filled valleys.
Themes: Early feminism, bullying, grief, resilience, courage
Genre: Middle grade, timeslip, historical
Author Website: www.helenedwardswrites.com
Purchase link: <https://www.simonandschuster.com.au/books/The-Rebels-of-Mount-Buffalo/Helen-Edwards/9780645218077>



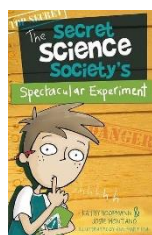
Title: **The Secret of Sapling Green**
Creator(s): Penelope Pratley
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Sapling Green has always hidden her green thumbs. But one day the old schoolyard tree is damaged in a storm. Can Sapling be brave enough to show her classmates her secret and save the tree?
Themes: Differences, being yourself, hiding who you are, friendship, trust, hope, self-awareness, autism, neurodiversity
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.penelopesnest.com/>
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/the-secret-of-sapling-green/?v=6cc98ba2045f>

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2024 BOOK LIST



Title: **The Secret Science Society in Space!**
Creator(s): Kathy Hoopmann and Josie Montano, Illus Anne Marie Finn
Publisher: Wombat Books
Summary: Mona is earth-bound. Kiki is mission control. Bart has a galactic space obsession. And Zane's thinking is off the planet. Together, will they solar-brate a win at the Science Expo?
Themes: ADHD, autism, anxiety, diversity, inclusion, science, space
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: www.kathyhoopmann.com <https://booksbyjosie.com.au/>
Purchase link: <https://wombatrhiza.com.au/secret-society-in-space/>



Title: **The Secret Science Society**
Creator(s): Kathy Hoopmann and Josie Montano, Illus Anne Marie Finn
Publisher: Wombat Books
Summary: Mona likes to moan. Kiki is a worry-wart. Bart loves following rules. And Zane HATES following rules. When the four of them are put into The Secret Science Society together, it can only mean one thing: DISASTER!
Themes: ADHD, Autism, Anxiety, Diversity, Inclusion, Science
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: www.kathyhoopmann.com <https://booksbyjosie.com.au/>
Purchase link: <https://wombatrhiza.com.au/the-secret-science-societys-spectacular-experiment/>



Title: **The Thing About Oliver**
Creator(s): Deborah Kelly
Publisher: Wombat Books
Summary: Twelve-year-old Tilly dreams of becoming a marine scientist, but she doesn't even own a swimsuit. She lives in a drought-stricken town with her mum and younger brother, Oliver, who is autistic, and whose meltdowns make life unbearable.
Themes: Autism, family, glass children
Genre: Junior Fiction / Chapter Book
Author Website: <https://www.booktopia.com.au/the-thing-about-oliver-deborah-kelly/book/9781925563818.html>
Purchase link:



Title: **The Unlikely Heroes Club**
Creator(s): Kate Forster
Publisher: Walker Books
Summary: Eleven-year-old Oli is spending his school holidays at Heroes Club, where kids can build friendships and learn about their emotions, but Oli just wants to be home where it's familiar and not-so-boring.
Themes: Autism, anxiety, friendship
Genre: Middle Grade
Author Website: www.kfosterbooks.com
Purchase link: [Unlikely Heroes Club, The | Walker Books Australia](https://www.walkerbooks.com.au/unlikely-heroes-club-the)



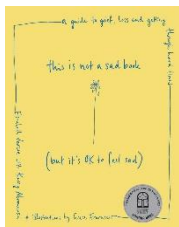
Title: **The Waiting Room of Weathervane Vet**
Creator(s): Marg Gibbs
Publisher: Marg Gibbs
Summary: Set on Uncle Jack's Pigeon Farm and covering the happenings in a vet's waiting room. The main character, ten-year-old Lenny Watts, is orphaned and finding his way through life with the healing power of animals.
Themes: Emotions, anxiety, overcoming obstacles.
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: www.mjgibbs.com.au
Purchase link: www.mjgibbs.com.au



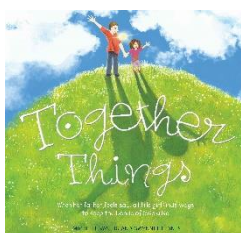
Title: **This is My Happy Place**
Creator(s): Emma Bowd and Jen Khatun
Publisher: Affirm Press
Summary: *This Is My Happy Place* encourages children to use their 'senses' to identify the people, places and things that make them happy, and to spend more time in those happy places.
Themes: Happiness; positive mindset; self-soothing; visualisation; diversity; five senses
Genre: Picture Book, ELC & Primary School (Prep - Yr 6); 3yrs - 12yrs
Author Website: www.emmabowd.com
Purchase link: <https://affirmpress.com.au/browse/books/bookseller/9781922930248>
Class Resources: <https://emmabowd.com/2024/09/05/this-is-my-happy-place-discussion-guide/>

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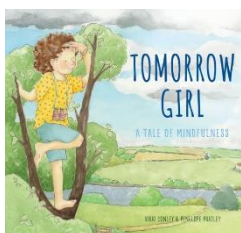
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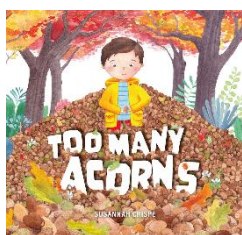
- Title:** **This is Not a Sad Book**
Creator(s): Liz Vercoe, illustrated by Grace Fraraccio (ages 12-17)
Publisher: Affirm Press
Summary: A practical, compassionate guide full of strategies and ideas to support yourself or someone else through grief, loss and hard times. A Children's Book Council of Australia Honour Book. An important resource that reassures young people with a friendly, simple, direct and honest tone.
Themes: Grief, loss, difficult times
Genre: Non-fiction guide, self-help, ages 12-17
Author Website:
Purchase link: [https://affirmpress.com.au/browse/book/Elizabeth-Vercoe,-illustrated-by-Grace-Fraraccio-This-Is-Not-a-Sad-Book-\(But-It%27s-OK-to-Feel-Sad\)-9781922930019](https://affirmpress.com.au/browse/book/Elizabeth-Vercoe,-illustrated-by-Grace-Fraraccio-This-Is-Not-a-Sad-Book-(But-It%27s-OK-to-Feel-Sad)-9781922930019)



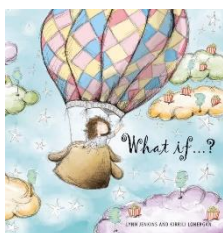
- Title:** **Together Things**
Creator(s): Michelle Vasiliu & Gwynneth Jones
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Sometimes, when mental health issues arise, a parent can't play like they used to. In *Together Things*, a girl faces conflicting feelings toward her depressed father, but she learns they can do different things together.
Themes: Depression, mental health, parent-child relationships
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://michellewrite.com/>
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/together-things/?v=6cc98ba2045f>



- Title:** **Tomorrow Girl**
Creator(s): Vikki Conley & Penelope Pratley
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: Catch up with a girl called Tomorrow – you'd better be quick because she's always in a hurry! When Tomorrow meets Yesterday and trips over Today, her whole world begins to slow down. A quirky tale delivering a timely reminder about the importance of mindfulness.
Themes: Mindfulness, connection
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: <https://www.vikkiconley.com/>
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/product/tomorrow-girl/?v=6cc98ba2045f>



- Title:** **Too Many Acorns**
Creator(s): Susannah Crispe
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: When Patrick suffers a huge loss, he finds comfort in holding an acorn that drops at his feet. The more acorns he collects, the less empty he feels...but as the house fills with acorns, events quickly overtake him. Can Patrick and Dad find a way to move past the acorn chaos and cope with their grief together? An uplifting story about resilience, connection, and growth, perfect for sharing with little ones who are experiencing the loss of a loved one, or any other emotional upheaval.
Themes: Grief, loss, emotional upheaval
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website: www.ohsusannah.com.au
Purchase link: <https://exislepublishing.com/product/too-many-acorns/>



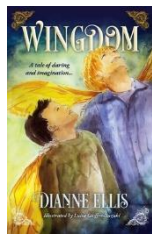
- Title:** **What if ...?**
Creator(s): Lynn Jenkins & Kirrili Loneran
Publisher: EK Books
Summary: 'What if' are two small words that often cause feelings of uneasiness in little worriers, but ... what if... they could lead to happiness and adventure?!
Themes: Worry, anxiety, imagination, anxiety, power of words, power of choice
Genre: Picture Book
Author Website:
Purchase link: <https://ekbooks.org/creators-2/lynn-jenkins/?v=6cc98ba2045f>

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Title: **What Snail Knows**
Creator(s): Kathryn Apel & Mandy Foot
Publisher: UQP
Summary: Lucy moves around a lot with her dad. They don't have much, but Lucy's dad always says they don't need anyone else. She finds a snail (a treasure of her very own!) and takes great care of him.
Themes: Shyness, courage, anxiety
Genre: Junior Fiction Chapter Book / Verse Novel
Author Website: <https://katswhiskers.wordpress.com/>
Purchase link: <https://www.uqp.com.au/books/what-snail-knows>



Title: **Wingdom**
Creator(s): Dianne Ellis & Luisa Gioffre-Suzuki
Publisher: Broлга Publishing
Summary: Flynn's beliefs in saving all creatures make him a target for ridicule. He befriends Jack, a new classmate who shares a love for winged creatures and who was bequeathed a tiny pair of wings from a dying moth, allowing him access into a flying kingdom called Wingdom.
Themes: Friendship, courage, self-belief
Genre: Junior Fiction
Author Website: www.diannellisbooks.com
Purchase link: www.diannellisbooks.com



Title: **Xavier in the Meantime**
Creator(s): Kate Gordon
Publisher: Riveted Press
Summary: Sometimes Xavier wakes up feeling hopeless. His daily affirmations seem to be helping, yet the black dog never really goes away.
Themes: Depression, anxiety, the black dog
Genre: Middle Grade
Author Website: <https://kategordon.com.au/>
Purchase link: <https://rivetedpress.com.au/bookshop/aster-s-community-companion-novels>