

St Martin's School

Year 8 Reading List

Catch Your Death by Ravena Guron

Stranded in a snowstorm, three teens find themselves in the middle of a murder plot at Bramble Estate. Are they snowed in with a killer? How much danger are they in? This taut, twisty and compelling thriller, narrated separately by Devi, Lizzie, and Jayne, blends classic suspense with modern gaslighting in a clue-ridden plot. 12+ readers who like puzzles from Cluedo to whodunnit podcasts will love this clever murder mystery that appeals to analytical minds and features an ending no one will see coming. Highly recommended for Year 8 libraries.

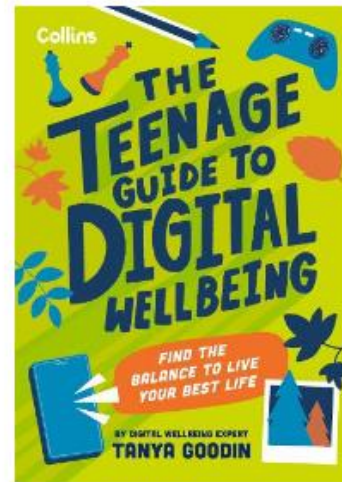
Crime



The Teenage Guide to Digital Wellbeing by Tanya Goodin

Tackling the balance between online and offline life, this guide offers teens practical advice to navigate digital challenges while keeping safe and developing sensible social media habits. With interactive activities, logbook pages, quizzes and step-by-step guides, it will empower KS3 students to set realistic goals, manage their screen time, and concentrate on positive relationships, promoting resilience and self-confidence. It's highly recommended for Year 8s who want to consider their digital experiences and develop a long-term positive mindset.

Internet safety



Like A Girl by Rebecca Westcott

14-year-old Eden tries to avoid a nasty social media-driven clique at all costs. But her love of track running sees her targeted by the "Glossies" and thrown into a dangerous game of loyalty, initiation and peer pressure. Addressing themes of cyberbullying, social conformity, and true friendship, Like A Girl is a powerful story to help discuss the impacts of social exclusion and identity. Highly recommended.

Social Media



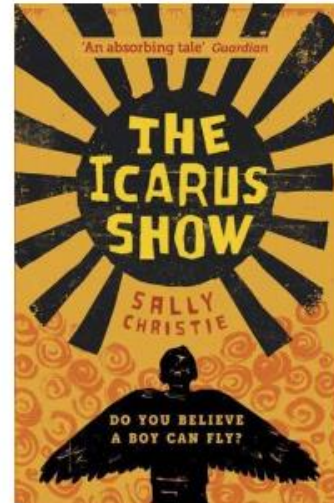
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The Icarus Show by Sally Christie

Alex has his own unique way of dealing with bullies and it works for him. But when he discovers a mysterious note in his schoolbag, he starts to doubt everything he believed to be true. An unlikely friendship develops which thrusts the reader into a journey of self-discovery, compassion, and empathy. A unique and memorable read.

Friendship | Bullying



Thirteen by Tom Hoyle

There's a crazy cult that believes all boys born at the exact start of a new millennium must die before the end of their thirteenth year. And Adam is in their sights. 12 boys have perished so far. Can Adam outwit the cult before it's too late? This dark and gripping thriller delves into adolescence, exploring themes of morality, loyalty, and the high stakes of teenage choices and consequences.

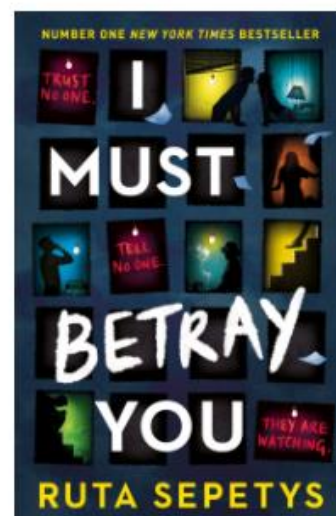
Thriller



I Must Betray You by Ruta Sepetys

Cristian Florescu dreams of becoming a writer, but he lives with the ever-present danger of the secret police and can't write what he would like to. Soon, he faces an impossible choice: betray his loved ones and become an informant or go rogue and try to expose the truth. Who should he trust? This gripping novel takes readers deep into the heart of 1980s communist Romania and explores themes of oppression, truth and loyalty. It's a thought-provoking novel for more advanced readers and book club discussion.

Thriller



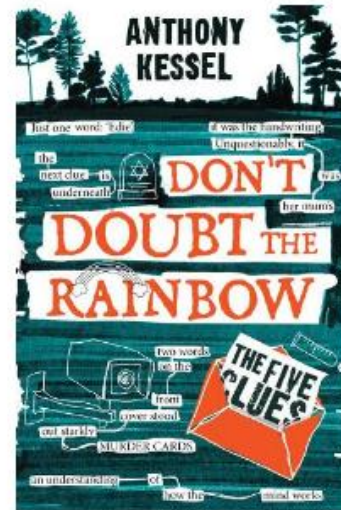
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The Five Clues by Anthony Kessel

This gripping murder-mystery thriller follows 13-year-old Edie Marble as he searches for the truth one year on from her mother's mysterious death. After finding a note from her mother, she follows a trail of clues that leads her to expose a pharmaceutical company's sinister secrets. What were they hiding and how far would they go to keep it secret? The Five Clues is a compelling and fast-paced read that's perfect for readers who enjoy themes of friendship and resilience. The first in the 'Don't Doubt the Rainbow' series.

Mystery



Rugby Flyer by Gerard Siggins

Rugby action collides with mystery sleuthing in this exciting adventure book series. When Eoin joins a prestigious rugby academy, he uncovers ghostly secrets and faces tough challenges both on and off the field. This sports-soaked thriller explores teamwork, friendship, and determination. Highly recommended for less confident readers.

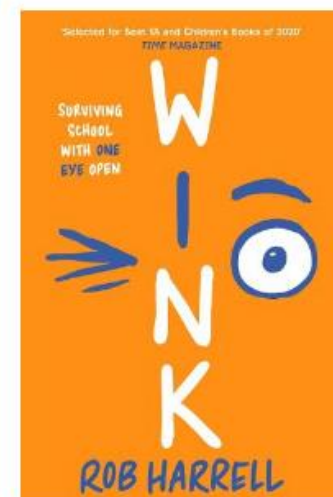
Sport | Ghost story



Wink by Rob Harrell

Based on the author's own experiences, the reader follows the life of Ross, a boy dealing with a devastating diagnosis of eye cancer. While he strives to maintain normality and his dignity, Ross finds imaginative and inspirational ways to get through life at school and at home. At times heartrending and at times funny, this is a must-have title for secondary libraries, and a great book to discuss in lower KS3 book clubs.

Resilience | True story



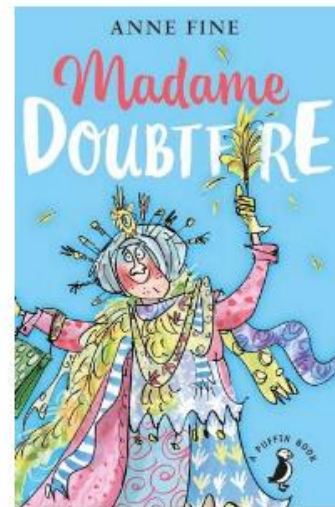
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Madame Doubtfire by Anne Fine

Lydia, Christopher and Natalie's parents have divorced. When their mum looks to hire a nanny, their Dad, Daniel gets the job – using a cunning disguise. An easier read for Year 8 pupils.

Family



Liccle Bit by Alex Wheatle

Lemar is desperate to catch the eye of Venetia. But he thinks that being short is holding him back and he believes his so-called friends when they dismiss his chances and call him 'Liccle Bit'. Suddenly someone is interested in him – a local crime lord – and Lemar is forced down a path that he might not be able to control. The first of a series, this is an urban thriller with bite for more mature pupils in year 8.

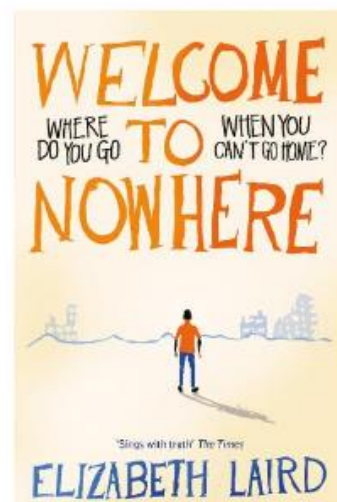
Crime | Thriller | Diverse



Welcome to Nowhere by Elizabeth Laird

Omar dreams of being a successful businessman and ruling the world. But living in Syria, this 12-year-old's dreams are set in a time and place where things can change rapidly – especially when his older brother finds himself in a dangerous situation and the whole family has to flee to safety.

War | Refugees



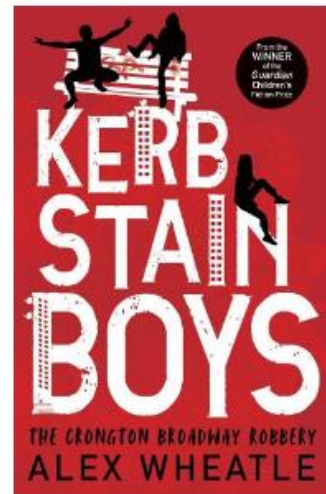
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Kerb-Stain Boys by Alex Wheatle

Set in Briggys world where his mum works all hours, his dad is unemployed and his older brother doesn't want to know, this story follows what happens when Briggys friends cook up a dangerous plan that seems too good to be true. Funny, gritty and true to life, this is an accessible urban thriller with bags of bite for more mature pupils in year 8.

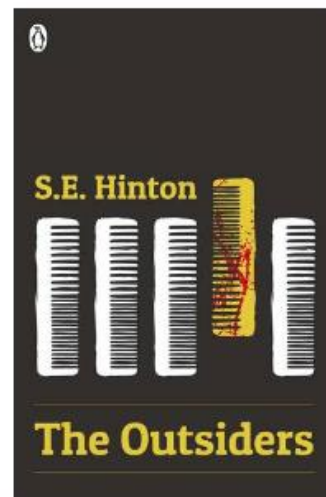
Crime



The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton

A story of struggle, growing up, gangs and peer pressure. A classic of modern teenage fiction.

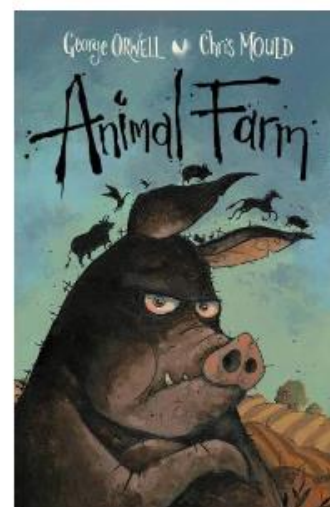
Classic



Animal Farm by George Orwell and Chris Mould

George Orwell's unabridged text is set to new and vibrant cartoon-style illustrations by award-winning illustrator Chris Mould. The images help to lift a classic novel that is too often presented with typesetting from another era that 21st-century teens can find off-putting. Adding fun and pertinent satire, the narrative pictures add a layer of accessibility to a text often studied for 13+ entrance exams or GCSE. These modern touches will prove useful in helping reluctant and less able readers in KS3 and KS4. It's well worth considering a set of these books if you find yourself teaching Animal Farm to teenagers on a Friday afternoon.

Dystopia | Classic



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Be Resilient by Nicola Morgan

Ideal for teens in KS3 and KS4, this book provides clear and practical advice on how to develop strategies, mental toughness and life-long skills to deal with what school and life throw at them. Situations such as COVID-19, who to trust, and keeping healthy are explored, and practical activities such as breathing techniques, visualising success and rationalising worries are detailed. Highly recommended for secondary school libraries.

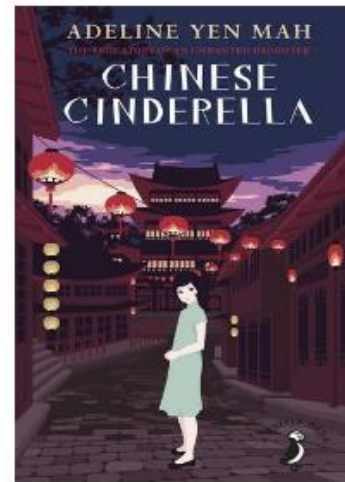
Growth mindset



Chinese Cinderella by Adeline Yen Mah

The unforgettable story of a young Chinese girl's struggle to find acceptance within her own family and her survival amongst siblings and parents who think she represents bad luck. She finds writing a form of release. Based on the author's own life. A great book to read aloud and discuss as a class in Year 8.

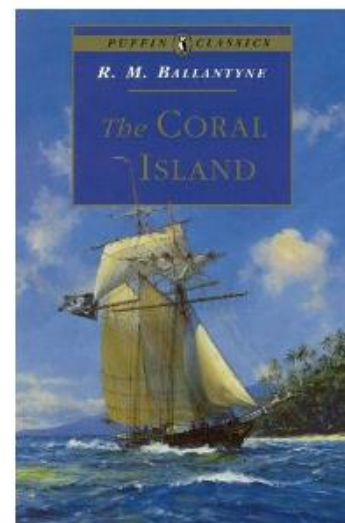
Diverse | Family



The Coral Island by R.M. Ballantyne

A boy's own story of Ralph, Jack and Peterkin who are shipwrecked on a coral island. As they work together and discover how to live and survive on the island their world is suddenly threatened by pirates. A good counterpoint to read with Lord of the Flies.

Adventure | Classic



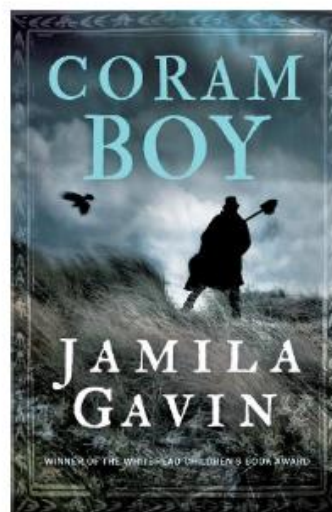
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Coram Boy by Jamila Gavin

A stunning period drama of deception, child stealing, mistaken identity and searching for long-lost families. An amazing piece of historical fiction.

Historical fiction



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time by Mark Haddon

Christopher isn't like other teenagers. He finds it difficult to talk to other people, hates being touched and reacts badly to certain colours. When the neighbour's dog is murdered he causes chaos trying to find out who did it.

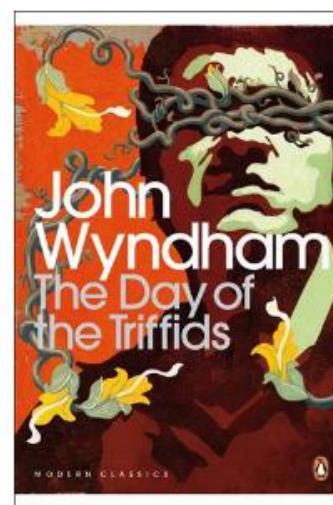
Crime | Mystery



The Day of the Triffids by John Wyndham

Bill wakes up to find he's the only person left on Earth who can see. Everyone else has been blinded by a mysterious meteor event. Can he save the world from extraterrestrial carnivorous plants?

Science fiction



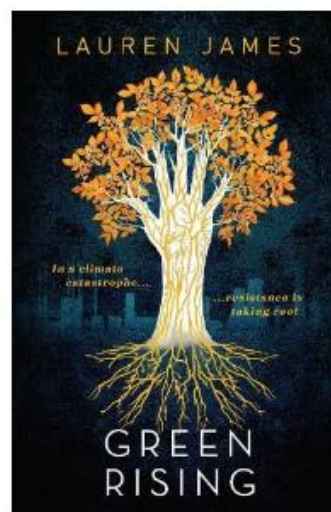
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Green Rising by Lauren James

Climate activist Gabrielle, heiress Hester, and fisherman's son Theo gain supernatural 'Greenfingers' powers to grow plants, as they embark on a thrilling mission to save the Earth from a climate emergency and avaricious, money-driven organizations. This compelling YA novel offers an insightful, political, and ultimately, uplifting take on climate change.

Climate change



Goggle Eyes by Anne Fine

Katy Killin is a world expert on her mother's disastrous boyfriends, and how to try and stop them from developing into unwanted stepfathers.

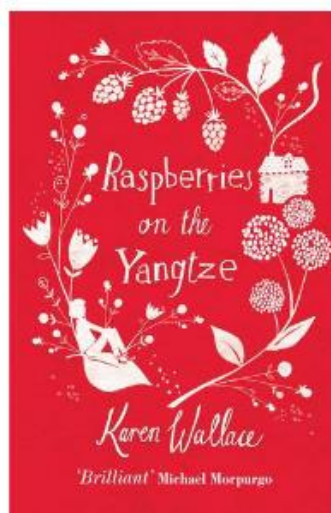
Family



Raspberries on the Yangtze by Karen Wallace

It began, said Nancy, 'the day my brother and I decided to poison our mother.' A memorable story about friendships and growing up from a child's point of view. An easier, yet poignant and thought-provoking, read for year 8 pupils.

Friendship



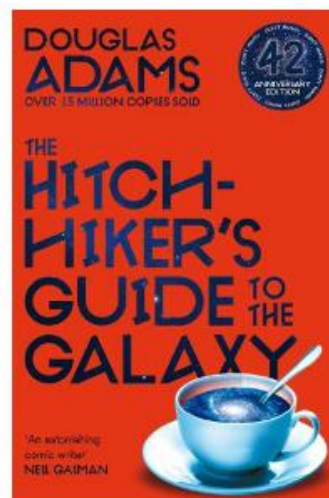
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The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams

Arthur's Friday doesn't start well when his house is demolished. The Earth is obliterated soon after, to make way for a bypass, and then he finds out his best friend is an alien. Can things get any worse?

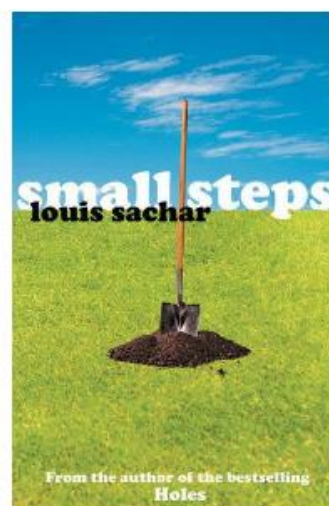
Funny | Classic



Small Steps by Louis Sachar

The sequel to 'Holes'. Armpit is now a gardener living in Texas and trying to stay out of trouble by making the right choices. But things never seem to go his way. Ideal for discussion in Year 8 book clubs or English lessons.

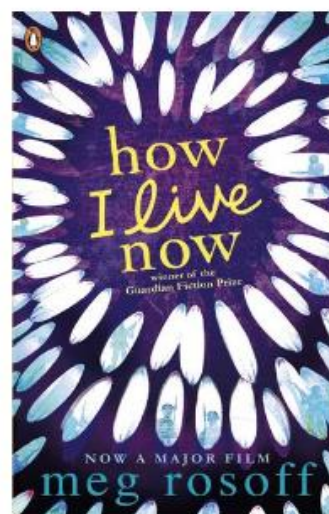
Contemporary



How I Live Now by Meg Rosoff

Daisy, a streetwise American 15 year old and Edmond, her cousin from England are evacuated to the countryside. After briefly falling in love, her world is shattered by an unimaginable event. How will she live now?

Romance | Friendship



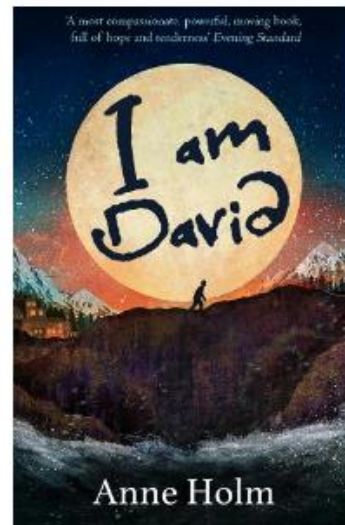
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I am David by Anne Holm

The story of 15-year-old David's quest – escaping from the concentration camp where he has lived his life and travelling across a Europe unknown to him to try and find his home.

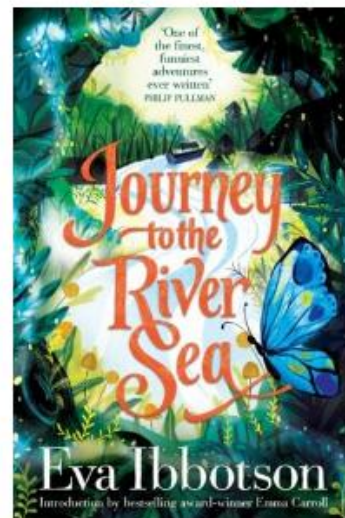
Historical fiction



Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson

An orphaned young girl and her governess travel thousands of miles from boarding school to South America with distant relatives. An exotic and wonderfully described adventure. An easier book to read for Year 8 children.

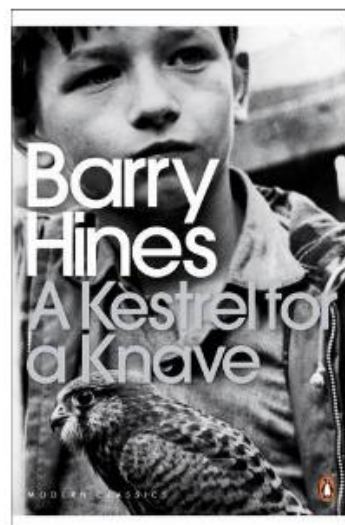
Adventure



A Kestrel for a Knave by Barry Hines

A modern classic and very popular with reluctant boy readers. Billy Casper is a troubled teen growing up in Barnsley. He finds an escape in Kes, a Kestrel, which transforms his life.

Coming of age | Classic



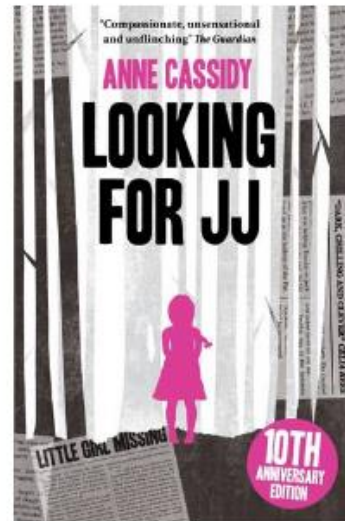
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Looking for JJ by Anne Cassidy

A child killer is living a new life under a new identity after being released. How long can she keep her former life secret, and is she as evil as people believe?

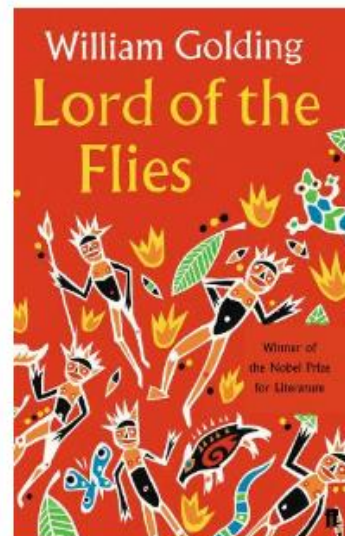
Crime



Lord of the Flies by William Golding

When a plane evacuating a group of schoolboys crashes on a remote island, the boys are left to fend for themselves with no adult supervision. A modern classic.

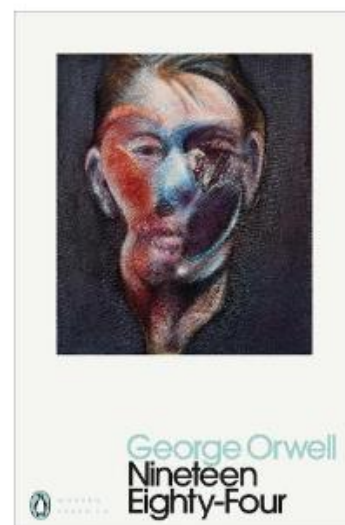
Classic



Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell

The dystopian novel in which the terms 'big brother' and 'room 101' first appeared. Winston Smith works for the Ministry of Truth where his job is to rewrite history. He rebels and longs for freedom. A more challenging novel for students in Year 8.

Dystopia | Classic



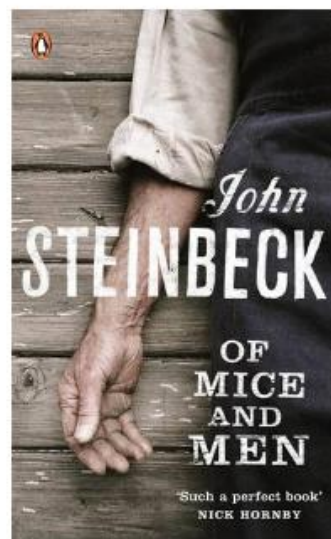
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Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

George and Lennie follow the American Dream and head to California. However, Lennie gets into trouble with his boss's daughter-in-law – trouble that George might not be able to help him with.

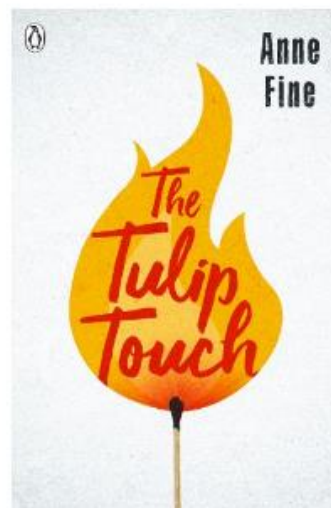
Classic



The Tulip Touch by Anne Fine

No one wants anything to do with Tulip, who is avoided by children and teachers alike. But Natalie is drawn to her and finds her dangerous and interesting. When things go too far, Natalie isn't able to stop events from spinning out of control, leading to a stunning and unexpected ending.

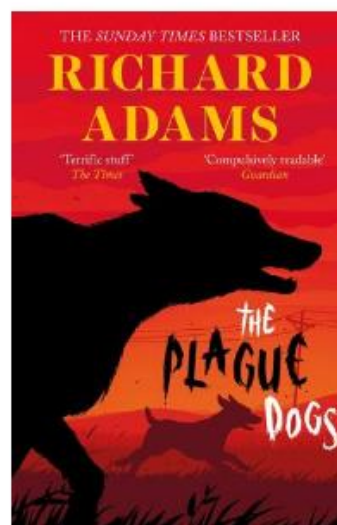
Friendship



The Plague Dogs by Richard Adams

Two dogs, Snitter and Rowf, escape from the horrors of an animal research centre and try to survive in the outside world.

Animal story



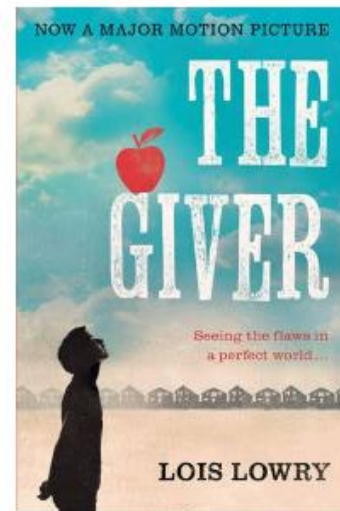
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The Giver by Lois Lowry

12-year-old Jonas lives in a world with no poverty, no crime, and where everyone is the same. But when takes the role of "receiver of memory" he becomes one of the only people to understand how the world he lives in came about. A poignant read for Year 8 children – ideal for book clubs.

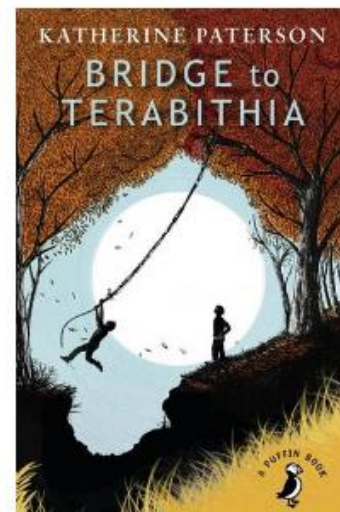
Science fiction



Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson

Jess creates the world of Terabithia to escape from his annoying family. Reached only by a rope swing, he and his friend Leslie live out their adventures, until an earth-shattering tragedy strikes.

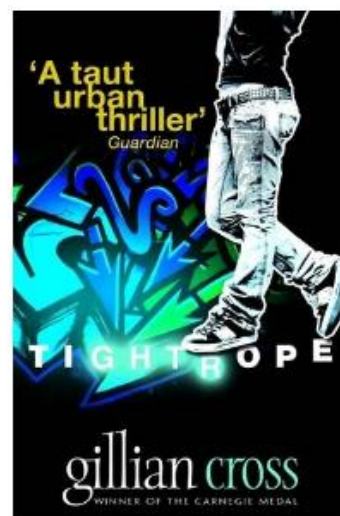
Friendship



Tightrope by Gillian Cross

Ashley has no idea that her late-night graffiti will change her life. First, she feels uncomfortable, then she receives notes and finally, she realises there's a stalker.

Thriller



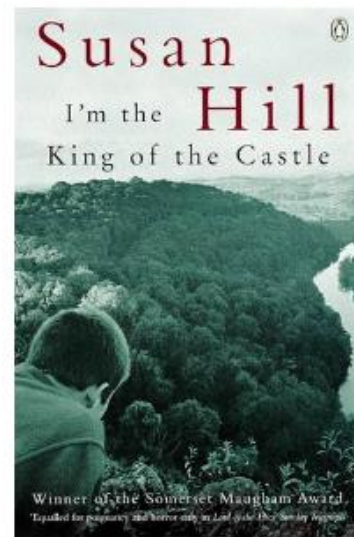
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I'm the King of the Castle by Susan Hill

Edmund doesn't want a new brother and immediately dislikes his stepbrother Charles, who he sees as an intruder in his own home. At home, Edmund terrorises Charles, but in Hang Wood the roles there's a role reversal. A good book for Year 8 pupils to compare to Lord of the Flies.

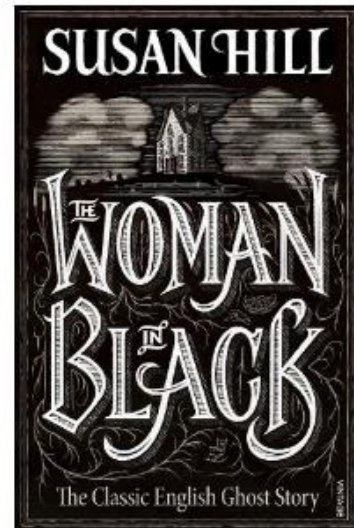
Classic



The Woman in Black by Susan Hill

A chilling mystery about a woman in black who the villagers only talk about in terrifying true ghost stories.

Ghost story



The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett

A spellbinding story about Misselthwaite Manor and an unwanted lonely child who discovers a hidden and magical garden.

Fantasy



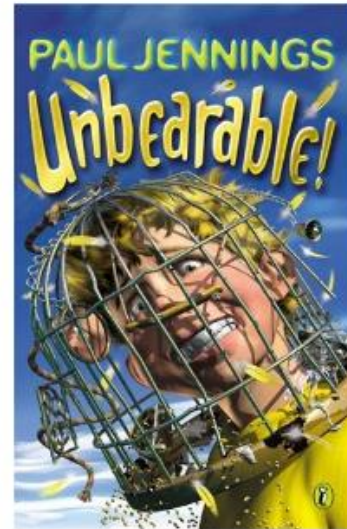
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Unbearable by Paul Jennings

A collection of eight weird, wonderful, strange and occasionally revolting short stories including 'Licked' and 'Smelly Feet'. A funny book for year 8 reluctant readers.

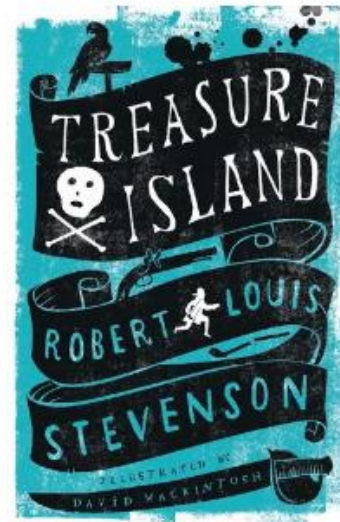
Funny



Treasure Island by R.L. Stevenson

The classic tale of Jim Hawkins and his adventure on the ship Hispaniola sailing to find hidden treasure. Intrigue, treachery, mutiny, castaways, crime and the menacing Long John Silver dominate this roller coaster of cliffhangers and surprises.

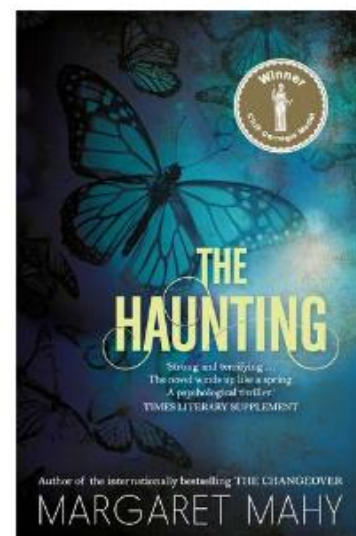
Adventure | Classic



The Haunting by Margaret Mahy

A story of a haunting, and a boy with a very special gift. A compelling and scary novel.

Horror



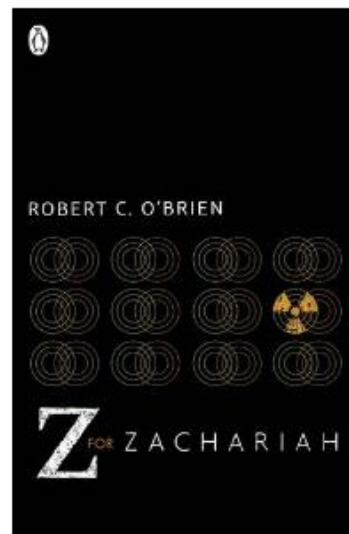
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Z for Zachariah by Robert O'Brien

Ann Burden has survived a nuclear war by living in a valley free of radiation. But when the only other person she knows becomes threatening, she decides to leave the valley to see if anyone else has survived. A more challenging book to read for Year 8 pupils.

Post-apocalyptic



Shadowmancer by G.P. Taylor

Obadiah Demurral wants to rule the universe with magic. Can he be stopped? A dark, atmospheric and gripping novel.

Fantasy

