

# A CLPE booklist



Staff Picks 2018

**CLPE staff and their children recommend their best children's books in 2018.**



Anjali



***The Last Wolf* by Mini Grey** (Jonathan Cape)

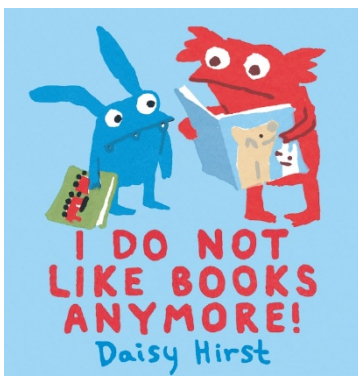
9780857550927

Everybody knows that wolves are the bad guys. Unless you know about wolves. Everybody knows little girls in red coats must not stray from the well-trodden path. There danger lies. Unless you are raising a girl to dare, to question and – in this case – to care. Unless you are a mum that knows there are no more wolves left as you wave off your Little Red who declares she is “off to catch a wolf”, armed with her popgun and a packed lunch.

For this is a tale with a twist by one of the cleverest of them all, Mini Grey. Fans will not be disappointed in everything she offers us in this stunning book; strong characterisation, inimitable language play, nuanced intertextual references, and illustrations that provide additional information. It is the very best kind of picturebook - one that can be enjoyed by young and old on a range of levels and that allows children to engage with complex human themes.

Little Red pounces on bin bags and finds stumps in the shadows of where trees once stood. At last she finds the Last Wolf in the land, along with Last Lynx and Last Bear who tell her of The Good Old Days. What lush forests there were when wolves helped manage the deer who ate the trees who sheltered the wild. What hungry eyes they all have now.

Little Red set off to catch a wolf and instead sets out to save the world, one tree at a time.



***I Do Not Like Books Anymore* by Daisy Hirst** (Walker)

9781406369137

Sometimes an author/illustrator comes along who makes you think differently about your own lives and particularly about the children of our time. This is how it was when Daisy Hirst first brought us *The Girl with a Parrot on her Head* – a girl with a system for organising and shutting away all that is broken, and her worst wolfish fears.

And this is how it is with her new character Natalie, a little girl learning to read for herself. Once more Daisy Hirst provides insight into the mind of a child taking on one of life’s larger challenges. Once again, she does so with deceptively simple illustration and sharp humour that appeal to both adults and children. The genius of this book is that this young reader’s journey doesn’t begin with a decodable book. It begins - as all good stories about learning to reading should - with a home full of stories, rich with talk and knowledge of the rewards reading brings to everyone around her.

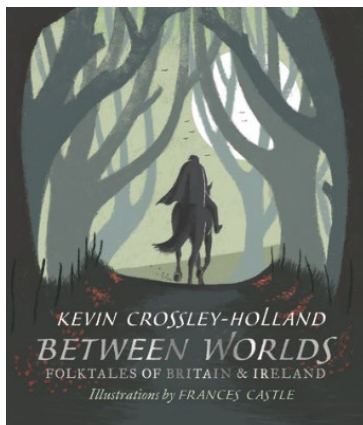
So, when she is at first disoriented by the squiggles on the page, dismayed by the lack of storyline in a cat on a mat, and finally defeated by the sheer effort involved, we know that Natalie will be fine. We know that she will be able to apply her growing phonic knowledge; that she will reap the rewards through practice and perseverance; that she will find ownership and enjoyment in sharing the experience with others; that she will eventually find satisfaction in reading her beloved stories for herself.

For anyone who is concerned with raising readers, this is the book for them. Daisy exemplifies the early experiences, knowledge and skills children need, not only to make a successful start in reading independently but to develop a lifelong pleasure in a world of books. We could do worse than to get this book into the hands of every new parent and teacher. Not all children are as lucky as Natalie and Alphonse but all children are entitled to the right to be literate.

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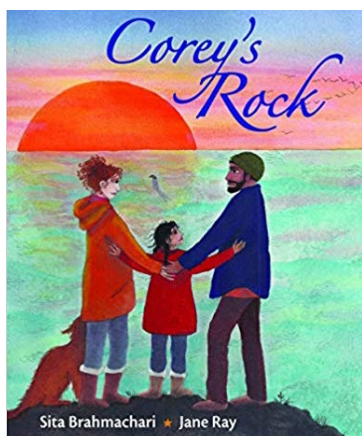


Ann



***Between Worlds* by Kevin Crossley-Holland, illustrated by Frances Castle (Walker) 9781406381252**

The part of the CLPE library I treasure most is our vast collection of traditional tales and I'm delighted to be able to add this volume to it. It's a freshly illustrated edition of a collection of stories from around Britain and Ireland retold by a writer steeped in folk and fairy tales, myths and legends who interprets them for a modern audience while paying respectful attention to the rich flavour of the language in which they were recorded. The contents of the collection have been reshaped into thematic sections such as Magic & Wonder, Fairies & Little People, Wits, Tricks & Laughter and Ghosts. Included are the Cinderella variant 'Mossycoat' and 'Tom Tit Tot' which is a version of Rumpelstiltskin. Among my own favourites are those which I've heard told orally by storytellers including Hugh Lupton and Daniel Morden, such as 'Fairy Ointment' and 'The Three Blows'. I also love the ballad 'Tam Lin' and relish reading aloud 'King of the Cats'. A collection to which you can return to find humour, darkness and mystery.



***Corey's Rock* by Sita Brahmachari, illustrated by Jane Ray (Otter-Barry Books) 9781910959978**

One of the stories in Crossley-Holland's collection is 'Sea-Woman' a selkie story, a tale type especially prevalent around the coasts of Ireland and Scotland. Sita Brahmachari subtly and skilfully weaves a selkie skin into this story which has a contemporary setting in the Orkney Islands. Jane Ray's luminous illustrations evoke the aquatic environment and the liminal space between sand and sea where Isla and her family are seeking a new beginning following the loss of her brother Corey. Halfway through the story a Celtic knot design common to Isla's father's Yoruba heritage and her mother's Orcadian one twines across the page visually uniting the strands of her dual heritage. A beautiful collaboration between an author and illustrator, who have both been involved in their local centre for refugees and migrants, which brings together themes of loss and new beginnings, friendship and cultural heritage.

Charlotte



***The Secret Sky Garden* by Linda Sarah, illustrated by Fiona Lumbers (Simon and Schuster) 9781471119262**

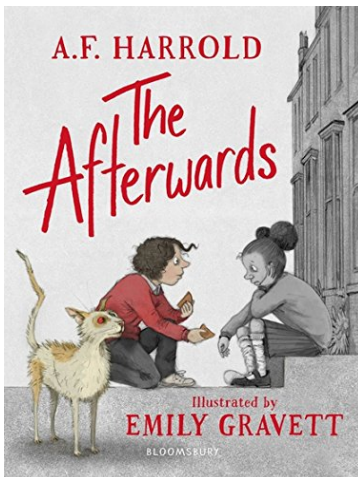
I'm a huge fan of Linda Sarah's writing. *On Sudden Hill*, her collaboration with Benji Davies, is also a firm favourite. Her stories are always heartfelt and emotionally engaging and her writing is full of imagery and poetic language.

Funni loves hearing the planes and watching the sights from the abandoned airport car park, but she feels that something is missing. Over the course of the book, she transforms the abandoned area into a beautiful garden and, with it, discovers a new friend.



A wonderful story sharing the impact small actions can make on a community and on ourselves and one that could be used to encourage children to value and consider how to improve their own environment.

Sarah pairs with exceptionally talented up and coming illustrator Fiona Lumbers (*Luna Loves Library Day*), who uses colour and layout cleverly to chart the transformation from urban desolation to a sumptuous explosion of nature. A perfect picturebook for readers of all ages.



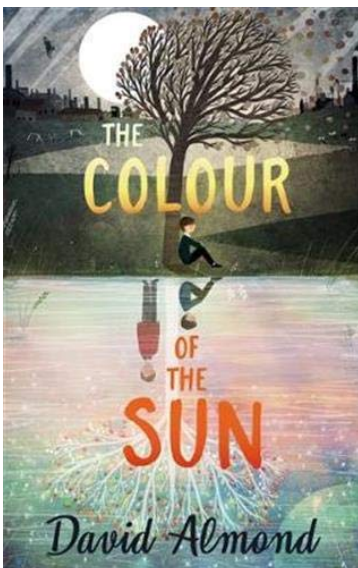
***The Afterwards* by A.F. Harrold, illustrated by Emily Gravett** (Bloomsbury)  
9781408894316

A.F. Harrold's storytelling never disappoints. *The Afterwards* tells the tale of December, who has already lost her mother and then has to confront the death of her best friend. A chance encounter with her distant Uncle Graham and a mysterious cat offers a way for her to travel into the Underworld and explore the lengths she will go to for those she loves.

A moving tale of loss, love and bravery told in a voice that is honest, heartfelt and deeply poetic. Clever design work emphasises the poetry in the language, with text layouts that resemble concrete poetry in parts. A wealth of lavish illustrations by the unmistakable hand of Emily Gravett intertwine with the text, adding depth to our understanding and relationship with the characters we meet.

I couldn't help but think of one of my favourite poems of all time, 'The Taste of a Biscuit' from Harrold's fantastic collection *Things You Find in a Poet's Beard*, whilst reading this story. Harrold shows young readers that as well as writing being entertaining, it can also help us to share our emotions and make sense of the world around us. A book that has so much to offer for readers in upper primary.

Darren



***The Colour of the Sun* by David Almond** (Hodder)  
9781444919554

For fans of David Almond, 2018 has had some wonderful treats: not one, or two, but three new publications. A picture book, *The Dam*, with Levi Pinfold; an illustrated story, *War Is Over*, with David Litchfield; and this outstanding novel. All of them lyrical, moving, evocative and magical.

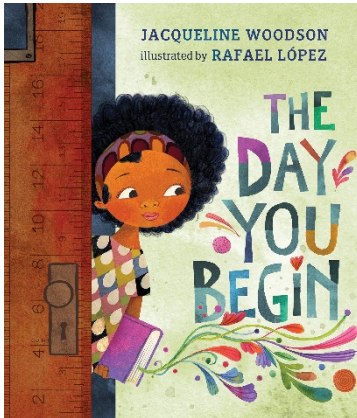
Everything, starting with the very first sentence of *The Colour of the Sun*, evokes the glorious mixture of the everyday with the myth and magic that we have come to expect when we enter David Almond's world: "It's an ordinary summer day, the day that Jimmy Killen dies and comes to life again." From this point, we follow Davie, a Tyneside schoolboy, as he journeys through and beyond his hometown, out and into the countryside in search of answers to mysteries both concrete and abstract. As he walks and wonders, he meets a wide range of characters, some funny, some sorrowful, others hopeful or angry or confused. All of them prompt Davie to reflect on life's fundamental questions and his place in it; the nature of life and death, families and friends, loyalty and betrayal, nature and creation and eternity.

The immediacy of Almond's writing, his evocation of a specific and yet universal childhood, and his seamless blend of the real and unreal, allow you to enter the world of the text much as you would a dream. And much like a dream, as the final page is turned, Davie's world will follow you back to waking, leaving you feeling strangely altered, nostalgic and ultimately hopeful for Davie and ourselves.

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It's hard to capture the impact on this story in a short summary and, unsurprisingly, Almond himself probably describes it best: "I guess it embodies my constant astonishment at being alive in this beautiful, weird, extraordinary world."



***The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by Rafael López (Penguin USA)**

9780399246531

*The Day You Begin* is the latest beautiful picture book from writer Jacqueline Woodson. It pairs her rich and poetic text for the first time with illustrator Rafael López. A widely-read writer in the US, Brooklyn-based Woodson has written extensively for children and young adults, including the wonderful verse novel *Locomotion*. Recently both her free-verse memoir *Brown Girl Dreaming* and her picture book *Show Way* (illustrated by Hudson Talbot) received the Newbery Medal Honor.

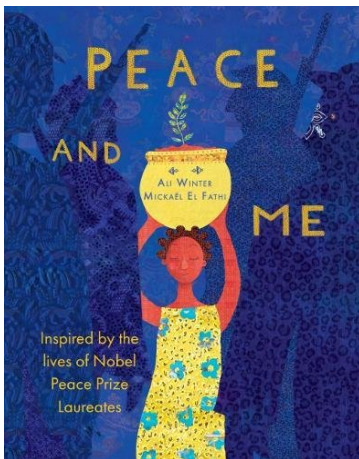
Jacqueline Woodson's lyrical language takes us into a world in which being different from the other people you meet, being the only one with your skin, your clothes, your hair, your language and your experiences can be both frightening and lonely, but ultimately is something to be celebrated; that once you are able to share your story, your words, your song, "the world opens itself up" and you can find the places "where every new friend has something a little like you – and something else so fabulously not like you at all."

Rafael López's dazzling illustrations fill every page with colour and life and movement, effortlessly reflecting the positive finish of the story. The classroom shared by the children is filled with swirls of colour, glowing lights, blooming flowers and soaring birds, yet can simultaneously capture the loneliness and isolation of the figure who is struggling to feel as though they belong – while a group of children shout and swing and play on one side of the spread under a canopy of brilliant green, yellow and orange leaves, at the opposite end of the image one boy watches and leans against a fading autumnal tree under a greying sky.

This is a book which recognises and acknowledges the harder days and the more difficult emotions, but ultimately finds reason within its young people to be optimistic and hopeful for the future we share together. It is a book bursting with the possibilities of what storytelling can do. A book, a message and a hope that richly deserves a place on every classroom, bedroom and library bookshelf.



Farrah



***Peace and Me* by Ali Winter, illustrated by Mickael El Fathi** (Lantana Publishing)  
9781911373650

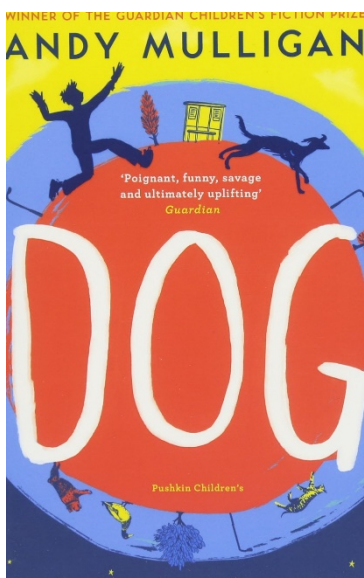
This timely and beautifully illustrated title offers insights into the work of a selection of Nobel Peace Prize winners from around the world. The illustrative style draws on an array of rich textiles to create delicately detailed collages on each double page spread. This alludes to the tapestry of lives that shape and inform the stories of our world and how we are all intricately bound. The insights from such a range of inspirational historical figures encourages the reader to draw inspiration from these stories and consider ways in which we might contribute to making our world a better place to be. A lovely addition to any non-fiction shelf.



***Everything All at Once* by Steven Camden** (Macmillan)  
9781509880034

The masterful way in which Steven Camden weaves words to capture the spirit of secondary school life is what makes this a very special collection. He captures the humour, heart and soul of school cloakrooms, corridors and classrooms with such authenticity that it transports older readers straight back into the space and no doubt serves as a mirror for younger readers. A definite highlight from my reading list this year that I would recommend wholeheartedly.

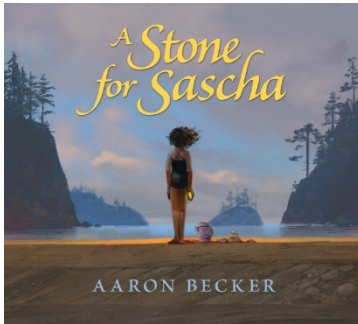
Jonny



***Dog* by Andy Mulligan** (Pushkin Children's)  
9781782691730

I am a huge fan of Pushkin Press, especially their children's division, and especially their books in translation. Andy Mulligan's *Dog* isn't a translation — but what it does translate for us from dog language is the heartwarming story of Spider's friendship with Tom. Mulligan captures and conveys the enthusiasm, simplicity and huge heart of a dog so beloved of canophiles like me, and has created a character that is instantly adorable yet complex; indeed all the characters in the story are drawn with genuine sophistication. Mulligan's characterisation of Spider betokens the kind of insightful and sympathetic understanding of the canine mentality you only find in the best doggy characters — think Chris Haughton's *Oh No, George!* or Marta Altés' *No!* or Patricia Maclachlan's *The Poet's Dog*. It's also an engaging and exciting adventure story with a happy ending that you'll want to enjoy at one sitting. And then enjoy all over again.

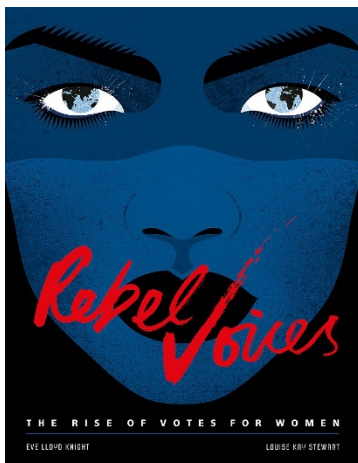
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***A Stone for Sascha* by Aaron Becker (Walker)**  
9781406382457

Those who know *Journey*, *Quest* and *Return* won't be surprised to discover that Aaron Becker's latest wordless picture book, *A Stone for Sascha*, is an utter delight. Its storyline blends the touchingly domestic and the genuinely universal in a narrative arc impressive for its ambition, sweeping from the time of the dinosaurs to the present day, and skilfully, intelligently using its endpapers — who doesn't love clever endpapers? — to map the reader's passage through civilisations and eras. The story is told with deft but powerful illustrations that showcase Becker's mastery of composition, gesture and body language. This is a book to read and reread, to pore over and savour, and a book that stays with you. You'll spend time reading, but even more time wondering, and letting your mind wander down the paths the story opens in your mind.

Katie



***Rebel Voices: The Rise of Votes for Women* by Louise Kay Stewart, illustrated by Eve Lloyd Knight (Wren & Rook)**  
9781526300232

The first time I saw *Rebel Voices* I was grabbed immediately by the arresting cover illustration and bold use of colour. Although there has been a range of well-produced, much needed and long overdue, books for children in the last couple of years that focus on women's history, this book does not shy away from the fact that the fight for the right to vote is a battle and a violent one at times. The fight for universal suffrage is placed within a global context using a unique interplay between text and illustration. Each double page spread describes the situation in a different country, highlighting individual women who struggled for the vote and relating interesting incidents and events distinguishing their campaigns. For me, *Rebel Voices* also stands as a much needed contrast to some of the more sanitised accounts of the fight for the votes for women. For example, the spread depicting the British suffrage movement shows an image of an angry, red eyed woman refracted through broken glass. Symbolising the guerrilla warfare and violent tactics adopted by the suffragettes. It also describes the violence inflicted upon women who fought for their democratic rights and the brutality they faced at the hands of the British authorities. The book also highlights and recognises that universal suffrage was not always granted to all women in the same nation. This is best exemplified in the spread which depicts the fight for suffrage in South Africa. A powerful book that leaves you realising how far women have come, and yet how far we still have to go to ensure that universal suffrage is enacted in reality.





***A Skinful of Shadows* by Frances Hardinge (Macmillan)**

9781509835508

I have always found I prefer to learn about historical events through the characters and stories generated in fiction rather than reading weighty tomes on historical periods. This book therefore peaked my interest as it is set just before the start of the English civil war, a period of British history that I have always found fascinating. The book cleverly uses the story of a young girl called Makepeace who can become possessed by ghosts due to her strange inheritance, to explore the danger of inherited power and wealth. Makepeace is part of a family dynasty that can catch ghosts and absorb them into their own minds. Her family currently uses this to ensure the survival of their privilege but Makepeace isn't convinced she wants to be a part of this. The writing is superb and Frances Hardinge deftly weaves the different ghosts and layers their voices through the novel to create a chilling and page turning story. One that leaves you reflecting on much broader and contemporary themes than you would first imagine.

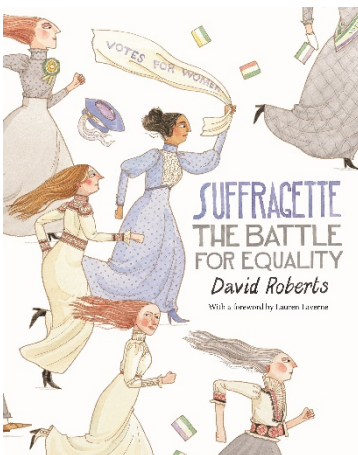
Louise



***After the Fire* by Will Hill (Usborne)**

9781474924153

This is a gripping tale of survival through adversity, it's about trust, about relationships, about rights and is all set in the context of a specific historical event (no spoilers). It's probably a book for secondary rather than primary age children and I first read it as part of the Amnesty Honour judging process. From the moment I started it, I literally couldn't put it down - it has probably been the book I've recommended most this year. The narrative is so cleverly constructed, the reader is immediately drawn into a world that few have experienced but which really makes you think about how we function as societies. And it's heart-thumpingly exciting!



***Suffragette: The Battle for Equality* by David Roberts (Two Hoots)**

9781509839674

I've chosen this beautiful and significant book for so many reasons. Obviously for the clarity and elegance of the illustrations but also for the detail and accuracy of the research, the respectful and comprehensive way it commemorates this important movement and these remarkable women. We were so delighted that we were able to have four panels from this book reproduced (3 metres high) in our new Literacy Library at CLPE and for me, these wonderful illustrations have become a real symbol for this year.

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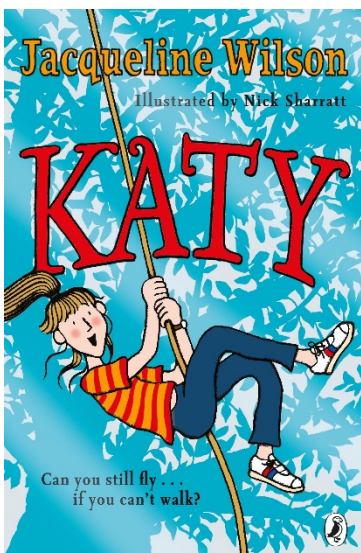
The children of CLPE staff have also been enjoying some good books during 2018



Sonny (Anjali's son aged 7)

**Leaf** by Sandra Dieckmann (Flying Eye)  
9781911171737

This is a beautiful book. I like the shape and the colour in the illustrations. This is the story of a polar bear who drifted away from home because the ice was melting. He was sad because he didn't have his mummy or his family. Some of the animals on the island didn't like him because they were afraid but some of them thought he was beautiful. In the end, they all helped him to fly home. To stop more polar bears drifting off, we should turn off the lights.



Lana (Anjali's daughter aged 9)

**Katy** by Jacqueline Wilson, illustrated by Nick Sharratt (Puffin)  
9780141353982

I liked Katy because something funny or exciting happens in each chapter that makes you want to read on. Another reason I liked Katy was that when she fell off the swing, you would think that that's the end of the story but much more happens afterwards and she makes a new friend in the hospital.

Katy is based on *What Katy Did* but basically the modern version of it. In this book, Katy doesn't get better again but she is learning to have a happy life in a wheelchair. Her dad's friend is also disabled and helps Katy to think of the things that she can do instead of what she can't. This gives Katy a more fun attitude towards life.

Katy's mum died when she was very little and now she has a stepmum who tells her off for being mean to her stepsister, Elsie. Truthfully, Katy is always mean to Elsie but since her accident she starts to think about the way she treats other people and so she starts being nice to Elsie and everyone else around her.

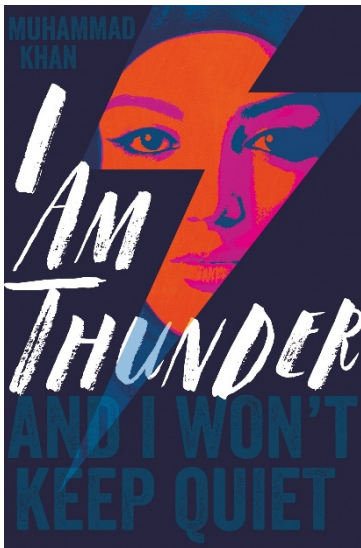


Lily (Charlotte's daughter aged 13)

**Between Tick and Tock** by Louise Greig, illustrated by Aisling Lindsay (Egmont)  
9781405286596

*Between Tick and Tock* is a charming picturebook about stopping and taking a break from the bustle of urban life. When Liesel stops time she adds wonderful and kind touches to a plain town, making it lovely and pleasant for the people there. The illustrations are beautiful and all the characters in the book are all unique and no two are the same, they make the book even more charming. The book is written in a very poetic style, using alliteration and rhyme, making it a very enjoyable read.

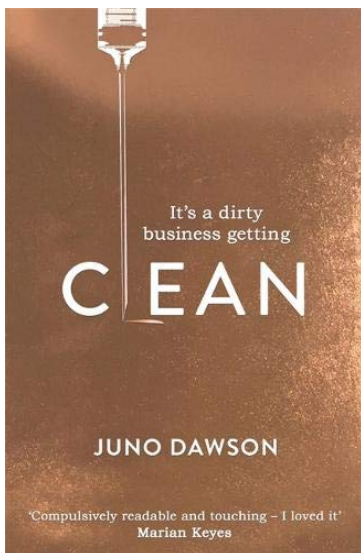




***I Am Thunder* by Muhammad Khan (Macmillan)**

9781509874057

*I Am Thunder* is a political YA novel following Muzna Saleem, a teenage Muslim girl and her struggles. After multiple incidents involving her friends and family, Muzna has to move to a new town and a new school. Although she encounters an Islamophobic girl in her class, she also makes friends and is inspired by her tutor and English teacher Mr Dunthorpe. To her surprise, popular boy Arif Malik takes an interest in her. He starts to influence her and make her think differently about what her parents believe, such as whether or not she should wear a hijab. Even though one of the main subjects of the book is religion, there are bits that everyone can relate to. The book is really well written and makes you change the way you look at the world, especially how the press portray people of different faiths.



Millie (Lindsey's daughter, aged 14)

***Clean* by Juno Dawson (Quercus)**

9781786540362

This is the story of rich, privileged teenager Lexi who is forced to go into re-hab. I found this a great insight into what happens in re-hab and on the experience of addiction. Not all the patients are de-toxing from drugs, some are addicted to anorexia, overeating, sex etc. I enjoyed it because the recovery story of Lexi wasn't sugar-coated although the exploration of the unity between the people in her group was very telling, showing how they find common ground despite having very different experiences. This book is extremely uncomfortable at times and doesn't pull its punches in telling Lexi's downward spiral into addiction and the hard road to recovery.