

Lorraine Harrison's books and her latest reading list

Red Snow – Lorraine S Harrison

- My first book – a mystery story about a girl searching for the truth about the death of her mother when she was much younger. The boy next door has a dangerous secret that could help her. Reviewers say it's a book with adventure, mystery and sensitivity.
- A short book with 153 pp. No illustrations. Cover portrays a lonely girl looking out of a window.
- Storyline – 12yr old Megan thought she knew everything there was to know about the death of her mother, but she was wrong. Why will no-one tell her what really happened and why has she become her father's carer. The boy next door has a dangerous secret that could help, but will she be strong enough to pursue it to the end?

Angel's Child – Lorraine S Harrison

- My second book – very new, so no reviews yet. I read part of it on RadioBlogging.net on May 26th 2020 and had some great reactions from the listeners. The story starts with a short poem about an angel's curse and the book ends with a quiz.
- Average length story 230pp but the quiz at the back makes the book longer at 265pp. Cover has a spooky image of a young girl as if in the sky. It has the caption 'A face at the window/cries in the night/Is this the ghost of the Angel's Child/Or is there another explanation?' Illustrations are mostly at the beginning of every chapter and are sketches made by the 12yr old main character as she experiences the events in the story.
- Storyline – Unexplained, disturbing things happen when 12yr old Amber and her neighbour Emil are left alone to cope with her sick Grandad after a storm. Emil blames the island legend of The Angel's Curse but Amber doesn't believe in ghosts. They both have to face up to dangers as they try to help a mysterious little girl and a confused Grandad.

The Boy Who Fooled The world – Lisa Thompson (art and paintings theme)

- My view - Humorous but tense – about a boy who allows a mistake to escalate into a web of lies. A nail biting ending!
- Colourful cover with spray edges.
- Storyline – A boy from a poor home accidentally produces a work of art that a famous artist thinks is worth millions. There are problems when he is asked to produce another one! He allows the lie to carry on to save his parents from poverty.

Malamander – Thomas Taylor (Upper KS2)

(There is a new book in this series called GARGANTIS – with same characters and setting.)

- My view - A gripping read -but gruesome and scary in parts.
- Intriguing cover with colourful spray edges – a map inside but not really illustrated much apart from above chapter headings. 300+pp
- Storyline - Set in a kind of Victorian era – an orphan boy called Herbert Lemon works in the Lost and Found dept of a Hotel in a seaside place called Eerie on Sea. A girl crashes into his office one day and cries "Hide Me". A great opening which sets them on a mystery involving a weird shop with a mechanical monkey and a pier with a scary creature of legend called a Malamander!

Letters From The Lighthouse - Emma Carroll (World War 2)

- My view - A great war time story bringing out the main events within an Enid Blyton type storyline – secret codes, a missing sister, a strange lighthouse and evacuees etc. A great class read that would support a WW2 topic
- Cover has attractive shiny words and good image but no illustrations in text. 200+pp
- Storyline – 1941 London – Young Olive's beloved 19yr old sister goes missing in a bomb raid. She and her 8yr old brother are evacuated to the Devonshire coast to stay with a mysterious lighthouse keeper. They uncover a mystery involving the war and codes, which link to her missing sister and have adventures in the process.

The Somerset Tsunami - Emma Carroll (upper KS2?)

- My view - Another historical book by Emma Carroll that links to a true event from 1616. However the persecution of witches might make it more suited Year 6. A gripping read nonetheless. It was featured on @RadioBlogging.net in April 2020. Includes interesting Q&A section + responses from the author.
- Powerful image on cover of two girls in a tsunami but no illustrations in text. 170+pp
- Storyline – Set in 1600s, a girl called Fortune from a poor home is sent way to find work in a rich manor house, dressed as a boy. The owner is hunting for witches and the house is close to the sea where the Tsunami strikes. A recipe for mystery and tension.

Nevertell -Katharine Orton

- My view – A great title and an unusual book in that it seamlessly straddles harsh reality and fantasy. A harsh but fascinating beginning with links to labour camps in Stalin's era in Russia. However it soon turns to fantasy involving legends and sorcery. A gripping read. I had it recommended to me by Yr 5 children from a school in Slough.
- Cover implies a magical story but it also reveals the harshness in Russian labour camps. Not many illustrations in text. 170+pp
- Storyline - 11yr old Lina has never seen the world beyond the prison camp until she escapes with a boy called Bogdan. As they attempt to cross the Russian wilderness they're pursued by a vengeful sorceress and a pack of shadow wolves.

Cogheart / Shadowsea - Peter Bunzl (Upper KS2)

- My view - Exciting books about a world with clockwork animals and servants and air ship adventures. I recommend reading Cogheart first but Shadowsea stands on its own. Shadowsea includes a quiz.
- Colourful covers, particularly Shadowsea which has sprayed green edges. Covers both portray interesting aspects of the story. An old map in each, but no illustrations. Cogheart has 360pp. Shadowsea has 330+pp. Both substantial reads.
- Storyline – Cogheart is set in a parallel London 1896 with mechanical animals and servants who talk but need winding up. In Cogheart, Lily is the daughter of an inventor/adventurer going on an airship seeking her missing father. Shadowsea is set in a parallel New York 1897. Shadowsea is another adventure Lily goes on, with a fantastic plot twist that I never saw coming!! Both books have great characters and nail biting storylines in both books. Would make good class reads.

Brightstorm - Vashti Hardy

- My view – Similar in many ways to Gogheart but suitable for all Key Stage 2 as well. A great adventure story in a skyship with great characters. Good as a class read.
- Cover has image of the skyship – no illustration in text. 340+pp. A substantial read.
- Storyline- Twins are told their father has died in a failed skyship attempt to reach the South Pole of this imaginary, Victorian type world. Treated badly as orphans, they follow a clue in the hope he is still alive and join the crew of a flyship to find the truth. Great adventures with good characters that children will identify with.

Orphans Of The Tide - Straun Murray (Upper KS2/KS3)

- My view – definitely not lower KS2 – a gripping dystopian tale with scenes like rescuing a boy from being burned alive by a mob! A wonderful book but not for the faint hearted. It's structure is also sophisticated -like Louis Sachar's Holes - it has 2 stories told alongside each other with seemingly no connection, but as the story unfolds the link becomes obvious. Would captivate some Yr6s who like this kind of a read.
- Cover is dark and evocative with shadows of a group of children. One full black and white illustration inside and a map at the start. 340+ pp. A substantial read.
- Storyline – In an imaginary city of future time, a mysterious boy is found alive inside a whale – but the citizens think he is the embodiment of something they call the Enemy- the god who drowned the world before and would do so again. Ellie, a fearless inventor who is an orphan, believes he is not the Enemy. The Enemy can take possession of any human body and the ruthless city Inquisition are determined to find who it is. Ellie sets out to prove who the boy really is but has a dangerous secret of her own.

The House With Chicken Legs – Sophie Anderson

- My view – Based on a well-known Russian folk tale, this book has a strange setting – a house where dead souls go before being guided to move on – it has chicken legs that let it wander around the country seeking new souls. I found it a bit macabre at first but after a while I became used to it. A sensitive and well told story with heart- warming characters. Includes a Q&A section.
- Cover is fascinating as it shows the house with chicken legs and a fence with skulls on. Text is peppered with small black and white illustrations and the occasional black page with white text. Decorated slightly as well as illustrated. Has a folk tale feel to it. 330+pp. A substantial read.
- Storyline – Marinka lives in the house with chicken legs because her grandma is the Baba Yaga – the famous guider of spirits between this world and the next. She longs to live in one place because the house moves without warning.

The Girl Who Speaks Bear – Sophie Anderson

- My view – A good adventure story based around a Russian folk tale feel - with an interesting twist of a girl who communicates with bears.
- Interesting cover which makes you want to look more carefully. Map at the start with a few full page black and white illustrations and decoration throughout. 400+pp a substantial read with a glossary and epilogue.
- Storyline – A Russian girl Yanka, wonders where she came from as she was abandoned as a baby. Eventually she flees her house to find answers and finds she has a strong link with bears. She faces dangers and adventures on the way. Grounded in ancient fairy tales. A book about being different and friendship.

The Murderer's Ape Jakob Wegelius (Upper KS2)

- My view- One of my favourite books but very long and very unusual. It's a translation but you wouldn't know it. Definitely upper KS2 because of it's content. Written in the voice of a female ape who you soon forget is not human- almost. A highly unlikely story that is full of compassion and emotion as well as adventures and twists and turns in the plot. A long story which kept my interest all the time.
- A huge book with over 500pp but contains some wonderful illustrations. Written in parts to help the reader navigate it all. The title gives it an adult feel – attractive for upper KS2 good readers.
- The Storyline – Sally Jones is a gorilla who is also a ship's engineer, devoted to her chief. When he is falsely convicted of murder, she sets out to clear his name. She travels all over the world on her adventures. The characters are well drawn and Sally is very likeable.

Frostheart – Jamie Littler

- My view – a great adventure story with a comic type feel to it and some humour to lighten the dangers. An imaginary world with lots of creatures, monsters and places with strange sounding names - but the characters draw you in and the ending is riveting. Relationships between the characters are interesting, with messages about friendship and trust.
- The author is also an illustrator and this comes through in the unusual cover with a cut out circle and patterned sprayed edges. There are many black and white comic illustrations that run through the whole book. A substantial read with 400+pp but not all text. Chapters are short with lots of illustrations, some taking up double pages.
- Storyline – Ash is a boy who is an outcast in a strange land of a monster infested Snow Sea – With only a grumpy yeti for a guardian, he yearns for his missing parents, lost at sea. When an accident reveals he has magical powers he is whisked aboard an explorer sleigh called Frostheart where he befriends a daring crew and helps them overcome terrible danger. He also learns about friendship and trust along the way.

The Clockwork Crow – Catherine Fisher

- My view- A really intriguing start, which develops into even more of a page turner. Set in Victorian times, with orphans, creepy houses, strange objects, an entertaining clockwork crow and a missing boy. It merges reality with fantasy. Great for all Key Stage 2 children.
- A relatively short book with 182pp, shortish chapters and accessible print and vocabulary. Attractive cover with gold embossed clockwork cogs on dark blue sky. A few decorated pages but no illustrations. A Welsh author and poet, she was the first Wales Young People's Laureate.
- Storyline – Orphan, Seren Ryhs is given a parcel to look after by a man at a railway station but he doesn't come back for it. On her way to a new home belonging to a godfather she has never met, she takes the parcel with her. It turns out to be a clockwork crow who speaks. She enters a troubled world at her new house and sets out to find what happened to a missing boy. This takes her into a dangerous fantasy world of adventures, offset by the amusing talking crow.

Crater Lake – Jennifer Killick

- My view – Definitely one for Yr6 - if you like thrillers with a bit of humour then you will like this. A science fiction feel about it but set in a very real world of a Yr6 activity break. It's also about team work and the characters are well drawn and believable. Some important messages about relationships in this story.
- Average size book. 242pp. A darkly lit cover that draws you into the scary lake with the caption – 'Don't ever fall asleep.' No illustrations. Accessible print and vocabulary.
- Storyline-A group Yr6 go on a school trip to a new activity centre- Crater Lake -but even before they arrive, creepy things begin to happen. The staff are strange and things get worse at night. They must work together to defeat a swarm of enemies from another world and they must never fall asleep.

The boy, the mole, the fox and the horse – Charlie Mackesy

- My view – a beautiful yet simple book to keep and refer to for ever. Illustrated pages with sayings about life, friendship and love.
- Hardback book- each page a work of art with pen and ink drawings.
- Storyline – a simple hand-written storyline of a boy who befriends a mole, fox and horse and learns about friendship and life along the way.

Street Child – Berlie Doherty

- My view – Based on a true story of the orphan who inspired Dr Barnardo to set up his children's homes for needy children – a gripping adventure with lots of information about Victorian times woven through. As it says at the end of the book – it's more than a story.
- Paperback – 195pp – Well spaced print – no illustrations – published 1993 – new edition 2009 with forward by Julia Golding
- Storyline- Set in Victorian times – the boy Jim is alone in the workhouse after his mum dies and his sisters finally go missing. He faces a constant battle to survive when he runs away, straight into the arms of Grimy Nick and his vicious dog Snipe.

The Longest Night of Charlie Noon – Christopher Edge

- My view – An intriguing adventure book with a strong storyline of 3 children lost in the woods – it becomes surreal but ends up linked to the world wars and has a strong philosophical theme. I couldn't guess the ending and children will want to know too. Important messages/questions about the passage and nature of time emerge at the end.
- Paperback – 183pp – accessible read – well spaced print – some decoration and a couple of diagrams integral to the plot. No other illustrations. Attractive cover and blurb. Good dialogue.
- Storyline – 3 children in the 1930s become lost over night in some woods – but they experience strange, scary almost supernatural events linked to the past which are eventually linked to the 2 world wars. A moving link to real life people in WW2 at the end.

After the War – Tom Palmer

- My view – A short read - A very moving book based on a real life event in 1945, when 300 boys from Nazi concentration camps were housed for a few months in the Lake District, in an effort to help them begin to recover. The book touches on some of the horrors of the war as experienced by some of these children. It is sensitively written in a way that makes it accessible to children of upper KS2 and KS3.
- Paperback - @190pp – well spaced and easy to read – some photos of the real children – few other illustrations – Published 2020 Conkers.
- Storyline –Based on a true event. In 1945 at the end of WW2, 3 boys are amongst the 300 children who arrive in the Lake District, having survived the horrors of Nazi concentration camps. At first confused and overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of those trying to help them, they are haunted by the loved ones they have lost and wait for news of any surviving family. By making new friendships they slowly begin to adjust to their new life with hope for the future.

The Ship of Shadows – Maria Kuzniar

- My view - A long read but a good book for lovers of high fast paced adventure – an all women crew of pirates challenges gender stereo-types- some well rounded characters with sound messages about friendship and an exciting magical story set in real places. There are long passages of descriptions which, although well written, I found to be a distraction and sometimes difficult to take in.
- Paperback – 324pp – Beautiful, colourful cover with cut out revealing a ship image. – Contains a map of the voyage and a few images at the start of each chapter.
- Storyline – Aleja is a dreamer who longs for a life of magic and adventures. When the mysterious Ship of Shadows arrives in her Spanish harbour city, crewed by a band of ruthless women, she knows it has sailed right out of a legend and it wants her. But life aboard is not easy. She gains skills and learns to trust her fellow pirates to discover what they are trying to find that is so important.

Varjak Paw – S F Said

- My view - An excellent book with all the ingredients of a classic tale about a sheltered pet cat who has to survive in the outside world to save his family. An exciting read with lots of twists and turns, good use of language and wonderful illustrations. Also well structured Highly recommended.
- Paperback – 255pp. Striking cover.- Winner of the Smarties Prize Gold Award.
- Storyline – Varjak Paw is a Mesopotamian Blue kitten living with his family in a house owned by an elderly lady. He has never left home but his grandfather tells him about a secret marital art for cats used by one of his ancestors. When the family are in trouble Varjak has to leave the house to get help and needs to learn how to fight in the gangs of the streets and know who to trust.

The Girl Who Stole An Elephant - Nizrana Farook

- My view - A very exciting adventure story with an arresting opening, set in an unusual place and plenty of tension to keep it a page turner.
- Paperback 247pp. Decorated but not illustrated.
- Storyline – Chaya is a schoolgirl by day and thief by night in her Shri Lanken style village with a strict regime. Escaping on an elephant brings with it a wonderful adventure involving friendship as well as danger.

Dragon Mountain – Katie and Kevin Tsang

- My view – An interesting story of an American child in a summer camp in China, full of excitement and metaphors about identity and friendship. Much more than just a story about some dragons. The ending was left a little in mid air – however there was the promise of another book in the series to conclude it, along with an extract. Some love the cliff hanger ending, but whilst the book was great, I found the ending disappointing.
- Paperback. Bright exciting cover – with the edge of the book decorated with red dragon scales. Very attractive. 319pp not including the extract from the next book in the series.
- Storyline – 12yr old Billy is sent to a summer camp in the mountains of China called Camp Dragon. He and his fellow campmates stumble upon the entrance to a secret mountain where 4 dragons are trapped inside. But they are no ordinary dragons and the dragons have been waiting for the children to arrive.
- Part of Dragon Realm series

Lower KS2+

Land Of Roar – Jenny McLachlan (Lower KS2)

- My view - An exciting story with good characters and all the ingredients of a fantasy land.
- Beautiful cover – Text peppered with illustrations and a map. Over 200 pp.
- Storyline - 11 yr old twins (boy & girl) re- visit an imaginary world linked to their playtimes in the past. But when strange, dangerous things begin to happen to them and their grandad, they begin to wonder if it could be real.

Return to Roar – Jenny McLachlan

- My view – As exciting as the last book- Croaky is even more scary. Great characters make the story swing along.
- As the last book – colourful cover peppered with illustrations and a map. 310 pp.
- Storyline – The 11yr old twins go back to Land of Roar – they're looking forward to seeing their imaginary friends again but things don't turn out the way they thought.

I Cosmo – Carli Sorosiak

- My view – A heart-warming story suited to lower KS2 but would also appeal to older children, especially those who love dogs but good for those who fear them too.
- Cover has image of dog and the title - I Cosmo - gives a sense of the focus. Average sized book.
- Storyline - set in modern day America - told from the perspective of a Golden Labrador that reacts to the emotional problems in his family. He tries his best to solve them in a doggy kind of way and you are willing him to succeed. In some ways he doesn't always get what is going on but in others, he understands things better than the humans. Cleverly narrated so the reader never loses the fact that the main character is a dog – very funny in parts as his doggy habits are revealed- but sensitively and tactfully expressed! You can learnt a lot about dogs and their devotion from this book but you learn something about people too.

The Umbrella Mouse – Anna Fargher (WW2)

- My view -An unusual book – not a comforting story about a mouse. It's a moving story of animals who portray difficult aspects of the war with realistic sharpness.
- A few good black and white illustrations. 270+pp
- Storyline – 1944 a London umbrella shop is destroyed by a bomb forcing Pip the mouse who lived there to find a new home. She joins a secret gang of animals fighting with the French resistance -operating underground beneath the feet of human soldiers. Pip makes new friends and risks everything to save them.

Books on my To Be Read Pile – that others have recommended to me

- **Scouted – from Roy of the Rovers series – football theme- by Tom Palmer.**
- **Asha and the Spirit Bird – Jasbinder Bilan**
- **Brand New Boy – David Almond – out in Nov 2020**
- **The Pair Affair – Judith Eagle**
- **Gargantis - Thomas Taylor**
- **The Castle of Tangled Magic – Sophie Anderson**

