



In close-up: the Bloomsbury Readers series

[243](#) [1]

Byline:

Discover the new **Bloomsbury Readers** list

Patrice Lawrence, Tony Bradman, Margaret Mahy, Joan Aiken, Andrew Fusek Peters, Michaela Morgan, Geraldine McCaughrean and Narinder Dhani: any list that brings together such a quality line up of authors is going to be welcomed. Congratulations to **Bloomsbury** therefore who have all of the above and more on their **Bloomsbury Readers** series.

Bloomsbury Readers are aimed squarely at children in Key Stage 2 and designed to support them as they start reading independently and while they continue to gain confidence and understanding. The books cover a wide range of genres, from historical stories to tales of myth and legend, school based adventure and even a retelling of **Macbeth** (that's Tony Bradman's). They're banded by colour: the lime green band is for those 6 and up; brown is for readers 7+; grey is for those aged 8 and above; dark blue is for 9 year olds and above; and dark red is for those aged 10+.

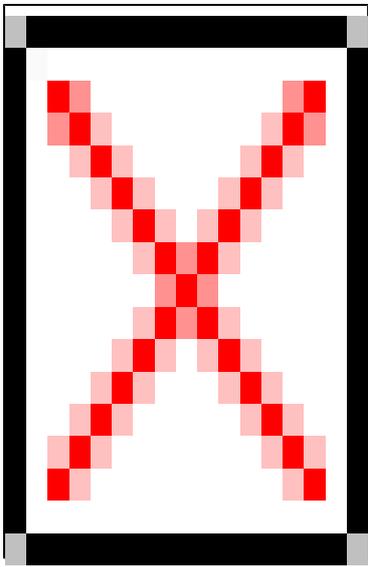
All the books include black and white illustrations and by talented illustrators too: David Wyatt, Doffy Weir and Peter Bailey amongst others. Further, very useful added extras include end notes to help teachers or indeed parents. These pose questions under various headings such as *What Do you Think?* and *Storytelling Toolkit* to tease out understanding of the story, and of the means in which the information was conveyed and received. There are fun *Quiz* questions too and suggestions for ways to *Get Creative*. The latter range from coming up with ideas for inventions, to writing your own story. Later in the summer, you'll also be able to access more guided reading notes written by the experts at the **Centre for Literacy in Primary Education**.

Visit [the website for further information and a complete list of titles](#) [2].

While a good number of the books are reissues, there are brand new stories too. Here are some we'd like to highlight:

The Boy in the Jam Jar (Lime Book Band)

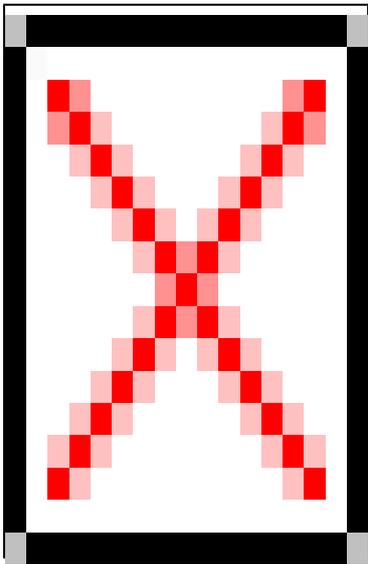
Joyce Dunbar, ill. John Shelley, Bloomsbury Education, 48pp, 978-1472973931, £6.99 pbk



Dunbar very cleverly and sensitively explains what it means to be deaf in a story that is also full of drama, together with some very accurate depictions of everyday school life. Dylan is losing his hearing and doesn't like the way it means he is sometimes left out or treated differently by his friends; but nor does he like the hearing aids that make everything too loud. His problems are resolved in a very unusual and exciting way, but the experiences we've lived through with him are what readers will really remember.

My Other Life (Brown Book Band)

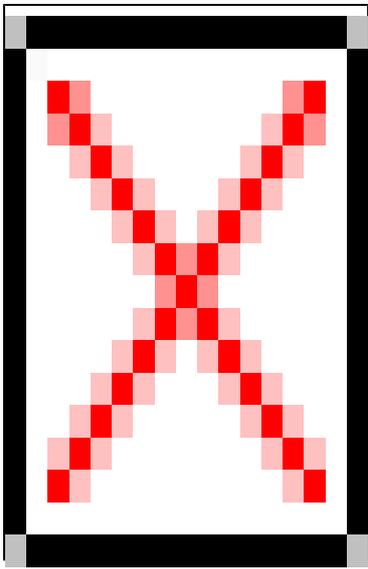
Polly Ho-Yen, ill. Patricia Hu, Bloomsbury Education, 96pp, 978-1472972576, £6.99 pbk



Mae, the central character in Polly Ho-Yen's thought-provoking and original story, is faced with an enormous decision. Throughout her life she's suffered badly from asthma, resulting in lots of dashes to hospital and overnight stays. It's during one of these that she first notices a strange, black hole opening up. Tempted into it, she finds herself living a different version of her life, an asthma-free one. It should be so much better than the life she's left, but she realises that there are other things in her old life that count for so much more. Another elegantly told story that will give readers lots to think about.

My Friend the Alien (Grey Book Band)

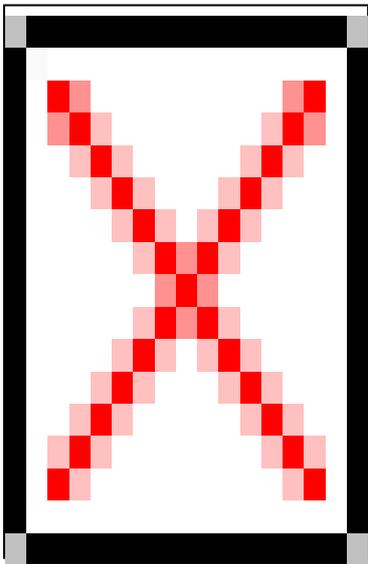
Zanib Mian, ill. Sernur Isik, Bloomsbury Education, 64pp, 978-1472973900, £6.99 pbk



Alien Maxx is sent to Earth from Planet Zerg to research humans and in particular, human feelings. Little does our young alien expect that by the end of the story, not only will he have developed a passion for Milk Chocolate with Hazelnut Pieces Sainsbury's Taste the Difference, but a raft of feelings of his own too. These come about thanks to Maxx's friendship with Jibreel, a boy who has also come a long way, and who is taunted as an 'alien' by other kids in his class. Zanib Mian has a wonderful way with speech - the story is told through Maxx's exuberant first person narrative, and it's an absolute treat, funny, acute and full of heart, even before Maxx has learned emotions. Again, this is a story with lots for readers to discuss and contemplate, and a great book for sharing.

To Liberty! The Adventures of Thomas-Alexandre Dumas (Dark Red Book Band)

Catherine Johnson, illus. Rachel Sanson, Bloomsbury Education, 96pp, 978-1472972552, £6.99 pbk



Catherine Johnson is one of our best writers of historical fiction, and in **To Liberty!** recounts the life story of Thomas Alexandre Dumas, with all the brio and vigour it deserves. Dumas was the son of an enslaved African woman and a French nobleman, father of the novelist Alexandre Dumas and likely to be the inspiration for *The Three Musketeers*. Whether describing his childhood on Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), or his experiences in the Dragoons, she makes his story vivid, alive with the sense of injustices Dumas faced, and his fierce determination to make things better. It's riveting, irresistible reading, the kind of true life adventure that inspires readers to find out more, and to rethink their own view of the world. Don't miss.

Look out too for **The Story Thief** by Andrew Fusek-Peters, with illustrations by Sara Ugolotti. This quirky reworking

of the traditional Anansi stories is also recommended and will be reviewed in our next issue.

Page Number:

22

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Links:

[1] <http://w2w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/243>

[2] <http://www.bloomsburyguidedreading.com>.