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How to be our best selves

Diverse, inclusive 2021 *Read For Empathy* collection helps raise an empathy-educated generation

"Empathy is learnable – only 10% of our empathic ability is genetic. Scientists say that reading builds empathy, and this collection will play a direct role in helping raise an empathy-educated generation." **Miranda McKearney OBE, EmpathyLab's founder**

Today EmpathyLab launches its 2021 *Read For Empathy* book collection at a time when empathising with others has never been needed more. 50 books for 4-16 year olds are featured, each chosen to do a specific job in building young people's empathy.

The judges said: *"We have an unprecedented chance to do things differently, building on the wave of community caring we've seen in the pandemic. This collection seizes that chance with both hands. The books will help children be their best selves; to think "we", not "me". Right now, what could be more important?"*

The primary collection is for 4-11 year olds and consists of 30 books; the secondary collection features 20 books for 12-16 year olds. Many of the books help readers understand the lives of those experiencing tough situations, from witnessing domestic violence to becoming a refugee. Others gently explore everyday situations and emotions, like friendship problems. Several help readers understand the experience of living with autism. The ebullient range of creators, formats and genres helps expand children's world view and understand others better.

Guides to the collection are available as free downloads for parents, teachers and librarians to use with children and young people in the home or learning settings. See empathylab.uk/2021-read-for-empathy-collections.

Judges' overview

The 12 judges are national experts and grassroots practitioners from schools, public libraries and organisations such as the School Library Association. They...

- Applauded a rise in books reflecting diverse perspectives and experiences – an antidote to hatred and prejudice, and key for building empathic insight. 42% are created by authors and illustrators of colour.
- Relished the sheer range of these: from mystery (Patrice Lawrence) to short stories (Jason Reynolds); non-fiction (Rashmi Sirdeshpande) to early readers (Atinuke/Onyinye Iwu); picture books (including Nathan Byron & Dapo Adeola); verse novels (including Elizabeth Acevedo); novels (including Sue Cheung and Benjamin Zephaniah).
- Noted the quality of submissions helping young people understand others' emotions and deal with heart-breaking situations such as bereavement and

dementia: *Tibble and Grandpa*; *Maia and What Matters*; *The Space We're In*; *Talking to the Moon*.

- Welcomed the strong showing for books about the refugee experience, by Elizabeth Laird; Victoria Jamieson & Omar Mohamed; A. M. Dassu; Chris Naylor-Ballesteros.

EmpathyLab's work on the book collection is supported by Peters – a specialist children's book supplier.

Ray Dyer, Peters' Managing Director, comments: *"We are proud to continue supporting EmpathyLab, particularly at a time when empathy and showing understanding for those around you feels more important than ever. This year's collections contain some fantastic and timely books which will be ideal for both schools and libraries."*

Empathy Day, 10 June 2021

The Read for Empathy collections will be used by parents, teachers and librarians in the run-up to Empathy Day and beyond to instil empathy values and skills. This annual event focuses on using books – and talking about them – to build understanding of the importance and practice of empathy. This year's theme is *Walking in Someone Else's Shoes*. For more information visit empathylab.uk

Training for those working with young people

As well as the book collection, EmpathyLab is running training for teachers and library staff in the run-up to Empathy Day. The sessions happen on 17 and 22 March, and are run in partnership with the University of Cambridge.

Further information

- Fritha Lindqvist: fritha@frithalindqvistpr.com / 07947143778
- Laura Hewett: laura@empathylab.uk

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Notes to editors:

Read for empathy books for children aged 4-11

Picture books

Hello, Friend! Rebecca Cobb, *Macmillan Children's Books*

Umbrella Elena Arevalo Melville, *Sallywag Press*

The Suitcase Chris Naylor-Ballesteros, *Nosy Crow*

Tibble and Grandpa Wendy Meddour & Daniel Egnéus, *Oxford University Press*

Felix After the Rain Dunja Jogan, translator Olivia Hellewell, *Tiny Owl*

Maia and What Matters Tine Mortier & Kaatje Vermeire, translator David Colmer, *Book Island*

Clean Up! Nathan Bryon & Dapo Adeola, *Puffin*

Ride the Wind Nicola Davies & Salvatore Rubbino, *Walker Books*
Once Upon a Dragon's Fire Beatrice Blue, *Frances Lincoln*
The Lost Homework Richard O'Neill & Kirsti Beautyman, *Child's Play*
How to Change the World Rashmi Sirdeshpande & Annabel Tempest, *Puffin*
Rain Before Rainbows Smriti Halls & David Litchfield, *Walker Books*

Early readers

The Boy in the Jam Jar Joyce Dunbar, illustrator John Shelley, *Bloomsbury Education*
Too Small Tola Atinuke, illustrator Onyinye Iwu, *Walker Books*
Five Ways to Make a Friend Gillian Cross, illustrator Sarah Horne, *Barrington Stoke*

Poetry

Belonging Street Mandy Coe, *Otter-Barry Books*
Bright Bursts of Colour Matt Goodfellow, illustrator Aleksei Bitskoff, *Bloomsbury Education*
Poems Aloud Joseph Coelho & Daniel Gray-Barnett, *Wide-Eyed Editions*
This Rock, That Rock Dom Conlon & Vivianne Schwarz, *Troika Books*

Graphic novel

Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy Rey Terciero & Bre Indigo, *Little Brown*

Novels

The Space We're In Katya Balen, illustrator Laura Carlin, *Bloomsbury Children's Books*
The Time of Green Magic Hilary McKay, *Macmillan Children's Books*
The Super Miraculous Journey of Freddie Yates Jenny Pearson, illustrator Rob Biddulph, *Usborne*
Talking to the Moon S. E. Durrant, *Nosy Crow*
A Kind of Spark Elle McNicoll, *Knights Of*
Freedom Catherine Johnson, *Scholastic*
The Star Outside My Window Onjali Q. Raúf, *Orion Children's Books*
The Faraway Truth Janae Marks, *Chicken House*
Windrush Child Benjamin Zephaniah, *Scholastic*
The Taylor Turbochaser David Baddiel, *HarperCollins*

Read for empathy books for young people aged 12-16

Novels

Tin Boy Steve Cole, illustrator Oriol Vidal, *Barrington Stoke*
The Last Paper Crane Kerry Drewery, illustrator Natsko Seki, *Hot Key Books*
Eight Pieces of Silva Patrice Lawrence, *Hodder Children's Books*
I Was Born for This Alice Oseman, *HarperCollins*
The Gone Book Helena Close, *Little Island Books*
And the Stars Were Burning Brightly Danielle Jawando, *Simon & Schuster*
On the Come Up Angie Thomas, *Walker Books*
A House Without Walls Elizabeth Laird, *Macmillan Children's Books*
Chinglish Sue Cheung, *Andersen Press*
Scavengers Darren Simpson, *Usborne*
Boy, Everywhere A. M. Dassu, *Old Barn Books*

Graphic novel

When Stars Are Scattered Victoria Jamieson & Omar Mohamed, *Faber*

Short stories

Look Both Ways Jason Reynolds, *Knights Of*

Poetry/prose

Clouds Cannot Cover Us Jay Hulme, *Troika Books*

A Hurricane in my Head Matt Abbott, *Bloomsbury Education*

The Undefeated Kwame Alexander & Kadir Nelson, *Andersen Press*

The Missing Michael Rosen, *Walker Books*

Verse novels

Gloves Off Louisa Reid, *Guppy Books*

Run, Rebel Manjeet Mann, *Penguin Books*

Clap When You Land Elizabeth Acevedo, *Hot Key Books*

Read for empathy judging panel

Fozia Aksar – Service Development Coordinator, Manchester Libraries

Jon Biddle – Patron of Reading coordinator and teacher at Moorlands Primary Academy

Richard Charlesworth – Teacher at Springwell School, Heston and London UKLA representative

Jenny Ford – Headteacher, Treorchy Comprehensive School

Subnum Hariff-Khan – Library and Information Manager, Oldham Libraries

Paul Harris – Teacher at the Bethlem and Maudsley Hospital School, an in-patient mental health setting

Nicolette Jones – Children's book reviewer, *The Sunday Times*

Miranda McKearney, OBE – EmpathyLab founder

Sarah Mears, MBE – Programme Manager at Libraries Connected and EmpathyLab founder

Anna Nolan – Senior Educational Psychologist, Hampshire

Sarah Smith, BEM – Libraries Development Manager, Brent Libraries

Simon Smith – Headteacher, East Whitby Primary Academy

Sonia Thompson – Headteacher, St. Matthew's C.E. Primary School, Birmingham

Dawn Woods – Member Development Librarian, School Library Association

Ordering the books

The primary and secondary book collections are now available to buy from our official book supplier Peters, with **26% off the RRP** plus free delivery. Visit peters.co.uk/empathy2021 to order.