

EmpathyLab

Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.



2020 Read For Empathy Guide

Books to build empathy - for children aged 4-11

#ReadForEmpathy

How does
empathy work?

Picture books

Novels, poetry,
graphic novels

Top tips

EmpathyLab

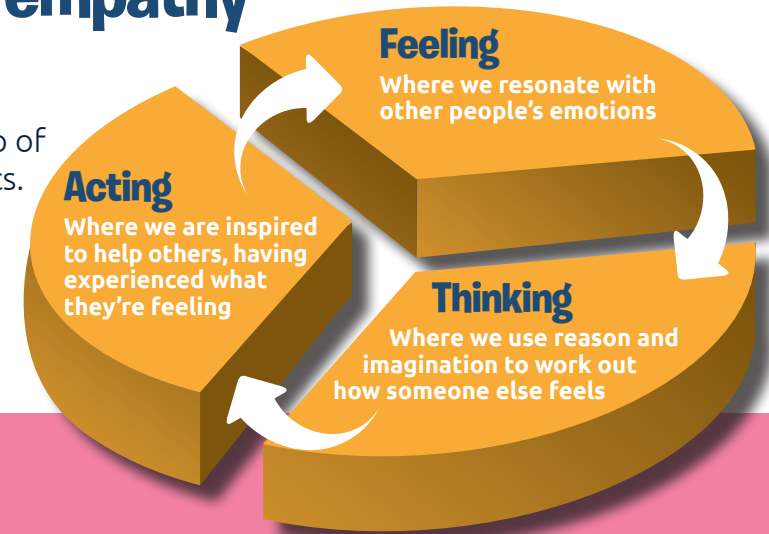
Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.

Empathy is our ability to understand and share someone else's feelings. It is an essential life skill, crucial if children and communities are to thrive.

We're not born with a fixed quantity of empathy – it's a skill we can learn. Excitingly, research shows that books are a powerful tool to develop it, because in identifying with book characters, children learn to see things from other points of view. As they read, they are building their empathy skills.

How does empathy work?

Empathy is made up of three main elements.



The 2020 Read for Empathy collection

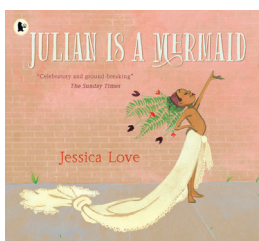
An expert panel has chosen thirty-three fantastic books for children aged 4–11. Each one does a specific empathy-building job, such as developing new perspectives or recognition of emotions. They offer powerful insights into different ways of life and what it might feel like to be a refugee, or homeless. Please use them to inspire children to turn feelings of empathy into action – in their homes, schools and communities.

This guide is brought to you by EmpathyLab, in partnership with specialist children's book supplier Peters. You can use it all year round, and it will be especially useful in the run up to Empathy Day on 9 June 2020. Please join in! Register for updates at www.empathylab.uk and follow [@EmpathyLabUK](https://twitter.com/EmpathyLabUK).

Picture books and poetry

Fourteen superb picture books and two poetry collections, perfect for reading and discussing with children aged 4–11. We have used this symbol* where they are best suited to older children. We believe no child is ever too old for a great picture book.

Keep an eye on
www.empathylab.uk
for extra resources



Julian Is a Mermaid **Jessica Love**

Pure joy! A story about the power of acceptance, as Julian's grandmother affirms his right to be different. Creates a space to talk about what characters are really thinking, but not saying.

Walker Books



Lubna and Pebble **Wendy Meddour**

Illustrator Daniel Egneus

A deep, emotional story about life in a refugee camp, and how human connection can bring comfort, even in extreme circumstances.

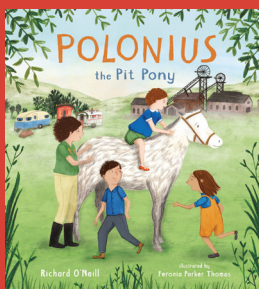
Oxford University Press



Super Duper You **Sophy Henn**

A brother writes funny, quirky messages to his younger sister about what makes her unique, and multi-faceted. Brilliant for sparking close, creative observation of other people and how they work.

Puffin



Polonius the Pit Pony **Richard O'Neill**

Illustrator Feronia Parker Thomas

A sweet story about a brave little pony who saves the day when fog threatens the livelihood of a Traveller family. A rare, positive chance to understand this community.

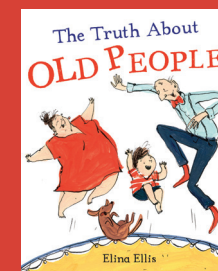
Child's Play



The Rabbit Listened **Cori Doerrfeld**

Being able to listen really well is a key aspect of empathy. This lovely book perfectly explains how *not* to listen, and how nourishing it can be when someone tunes in 100%. Finally Taylor feels understood, after his tower of bricks is knocked down.

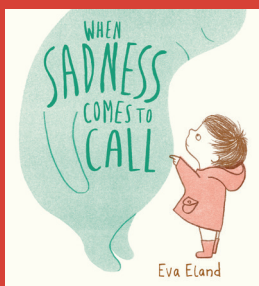
Scullywag Press



The Truth About Old People **Elina Ellis**

A celebration of empathy for the elderly. A superbly comic book which challenges stereotypes and encourages young people to shift their perceptions of older people.

Two Hoots



When Sadness Comes to Call **Eva Eland**

Being able to recognise, name and share emotions is a key empathy skill. This lovely book personifies sadness, and gently walks the reader through how it feels. A reminder that sadness is not to be feared.

Andersen Press

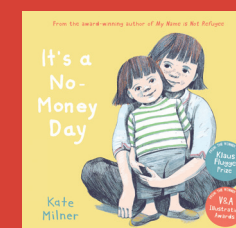


All About Feelings **Felicity Brooks and Frankie Allen**

Illustrator Mar Ferrero

A great starting point to talk about feelings, why we have them and how we express them. Informative, well-illustrated non-fiction book with useful prompts for activities and reflection. Especially useful for supporting children finding it difficult to understand emotions.

Usborne Publishing



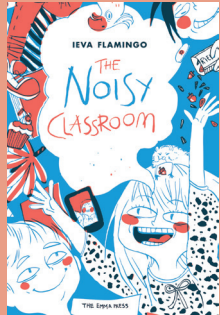
It's a No-Money Day **Kate Milner**

It is a painful reality that families are having to use food banks and cope with poverty. This book deals with the subject sensitively and without stigma.

Barrington Stoke

Picture books and poetry continued

POETRY

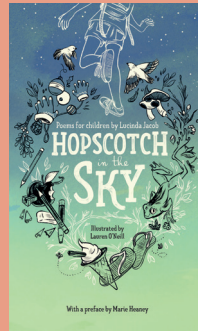


The Noisy Classroom **Ieva Flamingo**

Illustrator Vivianna Maria Staņislavska
Translators Žanete Vēvere Pasqualini, Sara Smith, Richard O'Brien

These poems from Latvia explore the feelings of children in the noisiest class in the school. Beautifully explores struggles with homework, the impact of technology and just trying to fit in. Includes great poetry prompts at the back to inspire empathy-focused writing.

The Emma Press

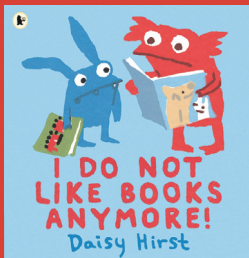


Hopscotch in the Sky **Lucinda Jacob**

Illustrator Lauren O'Neill

A magical poetic journey through the seasons of the year. With wonderful insights into the depths of a child's experience of school, the natural world, friendship and family.

Little Island



I Do Not Like Books Anymore! **Daisy Hirst**

So many children experience frustration with learning to read. A hilarious book, in which despairing Natalie finally gets there. Added bonus of superbly illustrated facial expressions, useful for helping children recognise emotions.

Walker Books



Mum's Jumper **Jayde Perkin**

A wonderful, tear-jerking book about grief and eventual recovery, with a message that lingers. Helps both adults and children understand the experience of any child who has lost a parent.

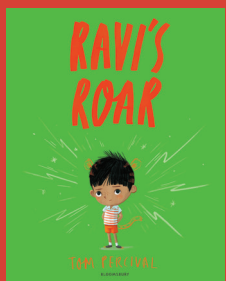
Book Island



The Steves **Morag Hood**

Two absurdly competitive puffins (both called Steve) vie to be the best. Having endlessly put each other down, they finally get some perspective and realise how silly they're being towards each other. Great for discussion.

Two Hoots



Ravi's Roar **Tom Percival**

Ravi's anger makes him feel like a roaring tiger. This beautifully illustrated book offers a creative way to explore how unaddressed anger can build up and the impact this can have on relationships and social dynamics.

Bloomsbury Children's Books



No Longer Alone **Joseph Coelho**

Illustrator Robyn Wilson-Owen

Sensitive exploration of the whirlwind of emotions that can come with grief. Highlights the healing power of a good listener and the importance of allowing space and time. Touching, subtle, heartwarming.

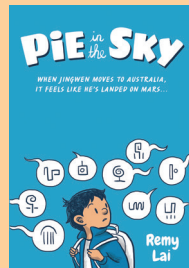
Egmont Books

Novels and graphic novels

Fifteen superb stories and two graphic novels to help children immerse themselves in other people's lives. Perfect for 7–11 year olds. This symbol* denotes books which are demanding reads, suitable for emotionally mature readers. Please read them in order to decide which children they are appropriate for.

Keep an
eye on
www.empathylab.uk
for extra
resources

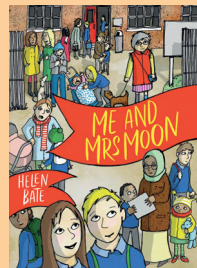
GRAPHIC NOVELS



Remy Lai **Pie in the Sky**

Terrific graphic novel about Jingwen, and the issues he faces in moving to a new country where he doesn't speak the language.

Walker Books



Me and Mrs Moon Helen Bate

A child struggles to cope with her feelings as she faces the challenge of caring for a much-loved neighbour in the early stages of Alzheimer's. Love and hope shine through this book which has an unusual graphic/comic format.

Otter-Barry Books



The Last Human Lee Bacon

A page-turner, in which robots have eliminated humans (or think they have) because they were destroying Earth. But there's one remaining – a girl called Emma – who slowly connects with robot XR-035. Great stimulus for discussing what makes us human and how to read and express emotions.

Piccadilly Press



Ghost* Jason Reynolds

Research shows that identifying with strong book characters builds real-life empathy. Look no further than Ghost (real name Castle Cranshaw) who accidentally joins the track team after his father is imprisoned for trying to murder him and his mother. Raw and real, but an ultimately uplifting tale of hope and renewal.

Knights Of



Check Mates Stewart Foster

A troubled boy and his grieving grandfather find a shared passion in chess. The game becomes the medium through which they learn to understand each other and find their own confidence, focus and peace. This is a tender read about love, understanding and compassion.

Simon & Schuster Children's Books



Two Sides Polly Ho-Yen

Illustrator Binny Talib

Lovely book for younger readers about a broken friendship, and the stubbornness that gets in the way of mending things. The warring girls' two viewpoints are deftly handled and there's lots of scope for exploring emotions, including through the facial expressions in the excellent illustrations.

Stripes Publishing



Planet Omar: Accidental Trouble Magnet Zanyb Mian

Illustrator Nasaya Mafaridik

Great to see a bold, engaging Muslim character featuring in this hilarious but poignant exploration of Omar's world. Seeing things through his eyes brings real insight into the ridiculous, hurtful and almost casual prejudice some people face, and the impact it has.

Hodder Children's Books



The Closest Thing to Flying Gill Lewis

When she discovers a diary written a hundred years ago, Semira finds the friend she desperately needs. An amazing story treating oppression as a truly universal issue, with hard-hitting insights into victims' experiences of people-trafficking and domestic violence. Gorgeous writing.

Oxford University Press



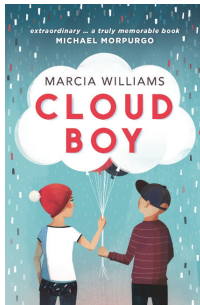
Race to the Frozen North Catherine Johnson

Illustrator Katie Hickey

Wonderfully well-researched book about an important black explorer who was written out of history. Matthew Henson was the first American to reach the North Pole, and this is his life story. Great for building children's empathy for those experiencing blind prejudice.

Barrington Stoke

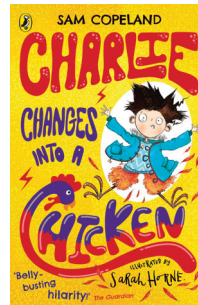
Novels and graphic novels continued



Cloud Boy Marcia Williams

An emotional read in an engaging diary format. Beautifully depicts what happens to best friends Harry and Angie ('almost twins') when Harry's headaches won't go away. Interspersed with a relative's letters from Changi prison in the Second World War. A love letter to what has been lost, and a celebration of life.

Walker Books



Charlie Changes Into a Chicken Sam Copeland

Illustrator Sarah Horne

Every time Charlie is stressed or worried, he changes into an animal, with hugely inconvenient consequences. Highly enjoyable, laugh-out-loud read – an easy way to open up an exploration of what anxiety feels like.

Puffin



No Ballet Shoes in Syria Catherine Bruton

Aya has recently arrived, traumatised, from Syria. Gradually, through ballet and friendship, she begins to see she might be able to feel at home in Britain. The strong central character shows us a fresh perspective on the refugee crisis, focusing on the problems faced once people arrive.

Nosy Crow

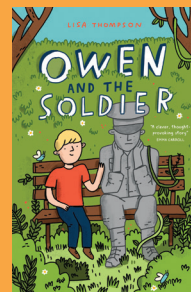


Captain Rosalie* Timothée de Fombelle

Illustrator Isabelle Arsenault
Translator Sam Gordon

A heart-wrenching book about five-year-old Rosalie whose father is on the front line in the First World War, and whose mother is trying to protect her from the sadness of its impact. A harsh, superbly told story for older readers, translated from French. Builds empathy for those whose lives are rocked by war.

Walker Books



Owen and the Soldier Lisa Thompson

Illustrator Mike Lowery

Owen and his mum are alone and struggling. Then he finds a stone soldier, part of an old war memorial, to share his feelings with, and has to find the courage to fight for the soldier's survival. A small book, but big with skilful storytelling.

Barrington Stoke



The Afterwards* A.F. Harrold

Illustrator Emily Gravett

Ember and Ness are best friends and then Ness dies, suddenly and shockingly. In a dark, wonderfully written comic fantasy, we live Ember's grief and her desperate steps to get Ness back from the Afterworld. Thoughtful and evocative.

Bloomsbury Children's Books



Flight Vanessa Harbour

A nail-biting adventure about children who manage to save Lipizzaner horses in the Second World War. Gripping, and excellent for exploring and understanding relationships (and history), with strong characters.

Firefly Press



The Great Telephone Mix-Up Sally Nicholls

Illustrator Sheena Dempsey

A clever early reader about the effect on a village when the telephone service gets scrambled. Everyone is suddenly forced to get closer – taking messages, understanding each other's needs. Great for a social action perspective and how empathy connects people.

Barrington Stoke



Top tips

Help recognise feelings You can help children understand their own and other people's feelings by using lots of different emotion words when discussing stories.

Talk about characters Instead of discussing what might happen next, focus on the characters – what are they afraid of? What might they do next? Which was most interesting? This builds understanding of what drives other people.

Don't forget the pictures Illustrations are especially good for 'reading' other people – can you tell from the picture how the character feels?

Share diverse books try to connect children to stories set in other countries and with characters of different races, religions and experiences. Inspire them to imagine life for people in different situations from their own.

Listen Sometimes we need time to process our thoughts. Listen carefully as children explore what they've learnt about other people. Ask in the days following too – new ideas can emerge over time.

Take it further Has a book made children see the world differently? Do they feel inspired to do something to help others? Can you act on this as a community, or a family?



EMPATHY DAY 9 JUNE 2020 - GET INVOLVED!

READ	CONNECT	ACT
Find and start an empathy-boosting book	Practice listening 100%, especially to someone you don't know well. Use our Empathy Switch exercise	Put empathy into action. Make an Empathy Resolution – special cards available in March 2020
For great ideas, use #ReadForEmpathy and our Guides www.empathylab.uk/read-for-empathy-guide	Link up – share your favourite empathy reads using #ReadForEmpathy	Teachers, librarians, community leaders: be empathy evangelists! Come on our training; use our Empathy Day toolkits
Check out your local library's empathy books and activities	Watch <i>The Empathy Conversation</i> with Children's Laureate Cressida Cowell. Happening 9 June	Talk to everyone about the importance of empathy. Sign up for updates at www.empathylab.uk
		

READ STORIES, BUILD EMPATHY,
MAKE A BETTER WORLD



Go to www.empathylab.uk [@EmpathyLabUK](https://twitter.com/EmpathyLabUK) to find out more, and be sure to share your **#ReadForEmpathy** recommendations on the day!

EmpathyLab

Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.

Empathy is a beacon of hope. Join our 2020 programme

EmpathyLab offers training and Empathy Day toolkits for schools, libraries and early years providers interested in building young people's empathy, literacy and social activism.

To find out more, go to www.empathylab.uk

For training enquiries contact miranda@empathylab.uk

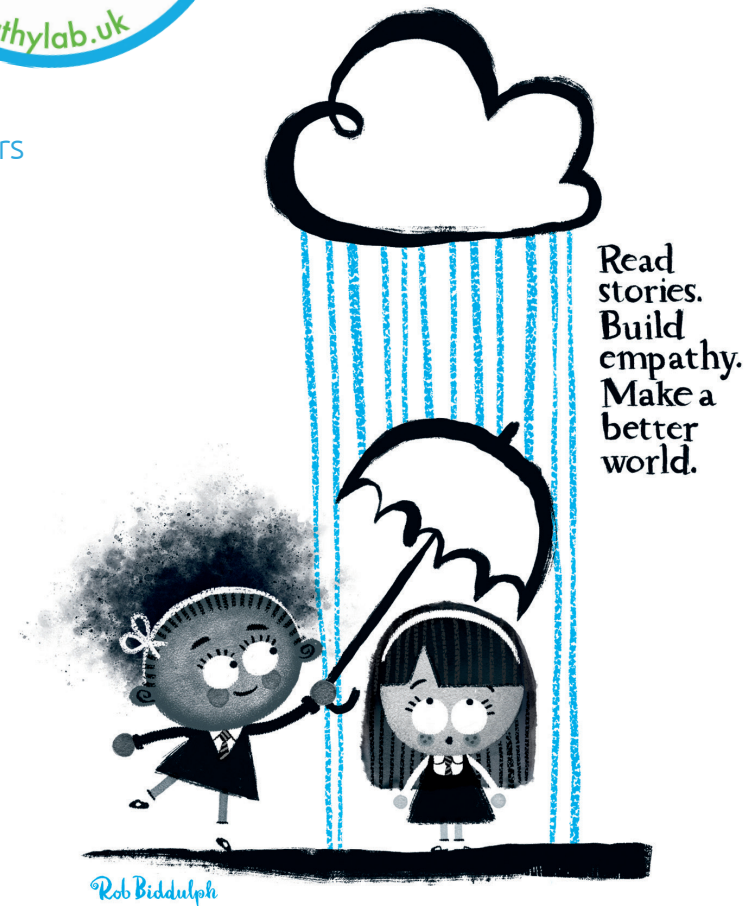
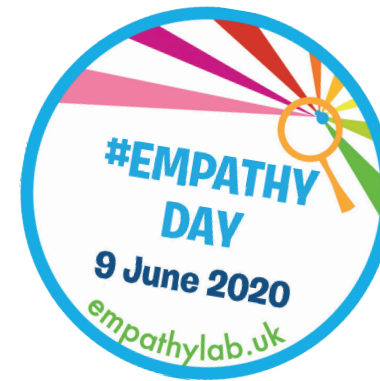
How to order the books in this Guide

To buy the Read For Empathy book collection, please contact your local independent bookshop or Peters, and explore how you can develop empathy through the power of books. Primary schools buying the collection also receive a free EmpathyLab resource containing four assembly outlines.

- Independent booksellers: find your local shop here www.booksellers.org.uk/bookshopsearch to see if they are involved in Empathy Day
- Peters: Visit www.peters.co.uk/empathy2020. If you have any queries do not hesitate to contact Peters on **0121 666 6646** or email empathy@peters.co.uk

Thank you to everyone who has helped with this Guide

- Selection Panel: Jon Biddle, Farrah Serroukh, Paul Harris, Sonia Thompson, Richard Charlesworth, Nicolette Jones, Christophere Fila, Dawn Woods, Sarah Smith, Jonathan Greenbank, Sarah Mears
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- Read For Empathy illustrators: Tom Percival; Tom McLaughlin; Emily Gravett; Isabelle Follath; Rob Biddulph
- Print: Penguin Random House



Peters
Official book supplier

