EmpathyLab

Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.

2019 Read for Empathy Guide

15 books to build empathy - for young people aged 11-16

#ReadForEmpathy

How does empathy work?

Graphic novels

Poetry

Novels

Top tips
Empathy is a human super-power which helps us all understand each other better. It is also an essential social and emotional skill, crucial if young people are to thrive.

We’re not born with a fixed quantity of empathy – it’s a skill we can learn. Excitingly, research shows that stories are a powerful tool to develop it, because in identifying with book characters, young people learn to see things from other points of view. So as we read, we can build our empathy skills at the same time.

How does empathy work?

Empathy is made up of three main elements.

**Feeling**
Where we resonate with other people’s emotions

**Acting**
Where we are inspired to help others, having experienced what they’re feeling

**Thinking**
Where we use reason and imagination to work out how someone else feels

The 2019 Read for Empathy Guide

This guide is for people living and working with young people aged 11–16. You’ll find fifteen fantastic empathy-boosting books – chosen by an expert panel – to inspire young people to make a positive difference in their homes, schools and communities. The books offer powerful insights into other people’s feelings, ways of life and the experience of facing challenges like becoming homeless, or a refugee.

The guide is brought to you by EmpathyLab, in partnership with book supplier Peters. You can use it all year round, and it will be especially useful in the run up to Empathy Day on 11 June 2019. Please join in! Register for updates and toolkits at www.empathylab.uk.
Graphic novels, poetry and novels

Nine superb stories, three poetry books, two graphic novels and a short story collection, all chosen to help young people develop real-life empathy. Perfect for young people aged 11–16, with this symbol* showing those which are more emotionally challenging, or have language or themes more suitable for older teens.

**Noughts & Crosses**
Malorie Blackman

Sephy is a Cross, and Callum a Nought. Their friendship is threatened by mounting racism and violence. A much-loved, gritty classic, exploring the absurdity of our tribal ways of thinking. Now being made into a BBC TV series.

**Booked**
Kwame Alexander

Pacy, funny, moving verse novel, with an emotionally engaging central character. Nick’s family is breaking up. To cope, he’s drawing on football, friendship and poetry.

Keep an eye on www.empathylab.uk for extra resources
Graphic novels, poetry and novels

**Alpha**
Bessora & Barroux
Translator Sarah Ardizzone
Totally brilliant, troubling graphic novel about a migrant’s journey. Alpha is a cabinet maker from Cote d’Ivoire and we viscerally experience his powerlessness as he faces endless horrific situations. A jolting book which triggers a determination to stand up for the displaced of this world.

The Bucket List, Barrington Stoke

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**Car Wash Wish**
Sita Brahmachari
We’re inside Hudson’s head. He’s a 14-year-old with Asperger’s Syndrome, trying to make sense of his parents’ separation and his grandfather’s death. Short book packing a big punch.

Barrington Stoke

**Every Thing All at Once**
Steven Camden aka Polar Bear
Unmissable poetry collection about life at secondary school, with rhythms of rap running through. Each voice has a different perspective, with sharp insights into anxieties about fitting in, first love, hiding in the loos.

Macmillan Children’s Books

**A Change is Gonna Come**
Mary Bello, Aisha Bushby, Tanya Byrne, Inua Ellams, Catherine Johnson, Patrice Lawrence, Ayisha Malik, Irfan Master, Musa Okwonga, Yasmin Rahman, Phoebe Roy, Nikesh Shukla
Inspirational short story and poetry collection from 12 Black, Asian and minority ethnic writers. Voices and topics which build understanding and insight – such as bereavement, Islamophobia, sexuality, racism and mental health.

Stripes Publishing
Graphic novels, poetry and novels

**Rosie Loves Jack***
*Mel Darbon*

On one level this is a touching story about Rosie and Jack finding love in the face of adversity. On another, it offers a rare, life-affirming chance to see through the eyes of a girl with Down’s Syndrome, with profound insights into living with a learning disability. Feisty Rosie is an adorable, unforgettable character, who will do anything to be with the boy who makes the sun shine in her head.

*Usborne*

**The Pavee and the Buffer Girl***
*Siobhan Dowd*

Illustrator Emma Shoard

Very few books offer insights into traveller communities and this does it superbly. Through an unfolding boy/girl relationship, we experience the perspectives of both the resident community and the travellers (Pavees), feeling the tensions and prejudice.

*The Bucket List, Barrington Stoke*

**Boy 87***
*Ele Fountain*

Shif wants to be an engineer, but the soldiers come for him. Heart-stopping as he is imprisoned, escapes, journeys perilously… survives. Fiction can help us understand the refugee experience like nothing else.

*Pushkin Children’s*

**Indigo Donut***
*Patrice Lawrence*

Indigo lives with a kind foster mum, but carries almost unbearable emotional pain. Gritty, powerful read – helps us understand how overwhelming emotions can lead us to reject the very people who care most.

*Hodder Children’s Books*
**Graphic novels, poetry and novels**

**Turtles All the Way Down*\**  
John Green  
Told from the perspective of an older teenager battling anxiety but not letting this define her. A fascinating mystery story is woven into Aza’s journey as she deals with issues of love and friendship. Great insight into debilitating mental-health issues.  
*Penguin*

**No Fixed Address**  
Susin Nielsen  
Felix lives with his mum in a van, facing a daily grind of poverty and stigma. Heavy themes are handled with a beautifully light touch, and moving insights into the feelings of the ‘hidden homeless’.  
*Andersen Press*

**Mike*\**  
Andrew Norriss  
Mike’s family is convinced he’ll become a tennis star. About the emotional challenges in the quest to find out who you truly are, with an exceptionally well-developed central character – to the extent that there are two of him. Magnificent writing.  
*David Fickling Books*

**Running on Empty**  
S. E. Durrant  
Narrator AJ is 11, passionate about running but unable to afford the right trainers. He’s having to grow up fast as he tries to support his parents, who have learning difficulties. We’re right alongside as he finds his way forward. Emotional and life-affirming.  
*Nosy Crow*

‘Empathy is a quality of character that can change the world’  
Barack Obama

*Keep an eye on [www.empathylab.uk](http://www.empathylab.uk) for extra resources*
Empathy in action  Research shows that empathy plays a big role in our hunger for social justice. Look for books with themes that inspire young people to become social activists.

Step into others’ shoes  Challenge young people to read a book which jolts them into understanding lives very different from their own.

Build human connection  Sharing stories connects us to each other in new ways. Read the books yourself as a springboard for deep discussions which help you better understand a young person.

Focus on characters  When discussing books, try focusing on the characters more than the plot. This opens up new possibilities for understanding feelings.

Listen well  Being really listened to is a powerful empathy experience. Try to listen deeply, with 100% attention, as young people talk about their experience of a book.

**Empathy Day, 11 June 2019 - Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.**

Empathy Day is all about helping us understand each other better, the day to take new steps on our empathy journey...

- Have a new conversation about harnessing empathy’s power to build a better world
- Step out of our bubble and make new connections with each other
- Celebrate a dynamic new wave of empathy work, in our schools and libraries

On Empathy Day we want everyone to...

- **Read:** because stories and book characters build our real-life empathy
- **Connect:** make new connections with young people, inspired by sharing stories
- **Do:** put empathy into action, in your home and your community

How to get involved

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<th>READ</th>
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<td>It builds real-life empathy</td>
<td>Join the Empathy Conversation</td>
<td>Put empathy into action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Find and share empathy-boosting books – use #ReadForEmpathy</td>
<td>Snap up tickets to The Empathy Conversation, Waterstone’s Piccadilly, 203-206 Piccadilly, London W1V 9LW, 7 p.m. on Empathy Day, 11 June 2019</td>
<td>Make an Empathy Resolution – special cards available in March</td>
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<td>Use our Read For Empathy Guides for young people <a href="http://www.empathylab.uk/read-for-empathy-guide">http://www.empathylab.uk/read-for-empathy-guide</a></td>
<td>Use #EmpathyDay to share which social issues need more empathy</td>
<td>Teachers: sign up; use our training, booklists, Empathy Day packs</td>
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<td>Check out your library’s empathy books and activities</td>
<td>Meet someone different at libraries’ Empathy Conversation events</td>
<td>Librarians: sign up; pilot the Empathy Conversation events</td>
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<td>Follow the special author blog tour; listen to their podcasts at <a href="http://www.empathylab.uk">www.empathylab.uk</a></td>
<td>Make a giant workplace Empathy Wall – share ideas for changing things</td>
<td>Buy the complete Read For Empathy book collection for 26% off: <a href="http://www.peters.co.uk/empathy2019">www.peters.co.uk/empathy2019</a></td>
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Go to www.empathylab.uk @EmpathyLabUK to find out more, and be sure to share your #ReadForEmpathy recommendations on the day!
Empathy is a beacon of hope in a divided world: join our 2019 programme

EmpathyLab now offers training and Empathy Day toolkits for schools and libraries interested in building young people’s empathy, literacy and social activism.

To find out more, go to www.empathylab.uk. For specific training enquiries, contact miranda@empathylab.uk

How to order the books in this guide

Order the Read For Empathy book collection at www.peters.co.uk/empathy2019 and enjoy 26% off plus a free display poster.

If you have any queries do not hesitate to contact us on 0121 666 6646 or email empathy@peters.co.uk

Thank you to everyone who has helped with this Guide

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