RAISING A GENERATION OF EMPATHIC CITIZENS: EMPATHYLAB ANNOUNCES
2020 READ FOR EMPATHY BOOK COLLECTION

“Scientific research shows that reading builds empathy. So let’s use stories to help the rising generation develop superb empathy skills, and build a better world. It’s our best hope for the future.” Judging panel

Today EmpathyLab announces the 50 books chosen by expert judges for the 2020 Read for Empathy collection.

“These books made us laugh, cry, and crucially, hope. We intend them to be behaviour-changing, as children gain insights into other people’s experiences and perspectives.” Judging panel

Two collections (one for primary and one for secondary) consist of 33 books for 4-11 year-olds, and 17 for 12-16 year-olds. Some illuminate the experience of people from a range of cultures or life circumstances. Others help children explore emotions, so they can understand how other people feel. Several reflect stories of our time, such as the refugee experience, or coping with anxiety (one in eight children in England have a mental health disorder, NHS Digital report, Nov 2018).

The 12 judges are national experts and grassroots practitioners from schools, public libraries and organisations such as Amnesty, the School Library Association and the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education.

Miranda McKearney, EmpathyLab’s founder said: “Society faces an empathy crisis. But research shows that 98% of us can improve our empathy skills and that in books we have a hugely practical tool. This collection can play a powerful role in helping raise a generation of empathic citizens, story by story.”

Guides to the collection are available as free downloads for parents, teachers and librarians to use as empathy-building tools - with children and young people in the home or learning settings. The full hyperlink is http://www.empathylab.uk/2020-read-for-empathy-collections. Please do refer to this webpage, but remember the embargo of 8am on 22 January.

Judge Paul Harris, a teacher at the Bethlem-Maudsley Hospital School, says: “Empathy benefits everybody’s wellbeing, and we know its constituent skills can be taught and developed. These books will help young people to better understand themselves and their interactions with each other.”

Judge Jon Biddle is a teacher at Moorlands Primary Academy in Great Yarmouth. He says “I think teachers will find these books can have an enormous impact, including on children’s attitudes towards people from different communities. In our school’s empathy work on refugees, I’ve seen huge changes. One child said it all - ‘I used to think refugees were different from us. Now I don’t.’”

JUDGES’ OVERVIEW. THEY...

- Noted the quality of submissions helping young people make sense of today’s big issues. Chosen titles explore the experience of poverty, prejudice or illness, including It’s a No-Money Day by Kate Milner; No Ballet Shoes in Syria by Catherine Bruton; Lubna and Pebble by Wendy Meddour (illustrator Daniel Egnéus); Can You See Me? by Libby Scott and Rebecca Westcott; Planet Omar by Zanib Mian (illustrator Nasaya Mafaridik); A Story about Cancer (with a Happy Ending) by India Desjardins (illustrator Marianne Ferrer, translator Solange Ouellet).
• Commended the power of books that help children “read” emotions – their own and other people’s. Among these were When Sadness Comes to Call by Eva Eland; Ravi’s Roar by Tom Percival; No Longer Alone by Joseph Coelho (illustrator Robyn Wilson-Owen).

• Observed a welcome trend in titles exploring boys’ perspectives and emotions, and chose several, including some tackling LGBT+ perspectives. Heartstopper: Volume 1 by Alice Oseman; The Black Flamingo by Dean Atta; Julian is a Mermaid by Jessica Love.

• Applauded a rise in books reflecting diverse perspectives and experiences. 40% of selected titles feature BAME characters and 30% are created by BAME authors and illustrators. They include Ghost by Jason Reynolds; Kick the Moon by Muhammad Khan (illustrator Amrit Birdi); Race to the Frozen North by Catherine Johnson (illustrator Katie Hickey) and Two Sides by Polly Ho-Yen (illustrator Binny Talib).

11 year-old Libby Scott is an autistic writer whose book Can You See Me? is based on her personal diaries. She says: “Empathy can save autistic people from harm, because the more people can understand how we feel, the easier our lives will be. Some people even think autistic people don’t feel empathy like we are robots or something, so I hope Can You See Me helps to blow up that myth.”

Author Tony Ibbotson whose book The Unexpected Find is included in the collection says: “To walk for a while in someone else’s shoes, that is how we can make the world work, it is our duty and our only hope. And reading is how we do it. There may be other ways, but there are no better ones; I’m sure of it.”

The publishing industry plus schools, libraries and youth organisations are backing EmpathyLab’s campaign to use books to raise an empathic generation – in the run-up to Empathy Day on 9 June, and beyond. The book collections can be purchased from Peters book suppliers as well as select independent bookshops.

Ray Dyer, Peters’ Managing Director, comments: “We have been proud supporters of the Read for Empathy Guides for the past three years. Let’s get these books into children’s hands as a matter of urgency, as part of EmpathyLab’s drive to build a more caring and integrated society.”

EMPATHY DAY 2020

The 2020 Read for Empathy Guides will be used by parents, teachers and librarians in the run up to Empathy Day on 9 June and beyond. This annual event focuses on using books – and talking about them – to build understanding of the importance and practice of empathy. Schools nationwide will run empathy assemblies, host author visits, make Empathy Awards and more. Libraries will participate nationwide (in 2019 98 library services took part, up from 19 for the first Empathy Day). The Empathy Circle, a group of leading children’s publishers, will launch bespoke initiatives to amplify the Day’s message and everyone is encouraged to find and start an empathy-boosting book through a social media #ReadForEmpathy campaign.

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ABOUT EMPATHYLAB
EmpathyLab is passionate about the power of stories to build empathy and the power of empathy to make the world a better place. The social enterprise has founded Empathy Day and is developing an empathy, literature and social action programme for young people. It was started in 2014 by Miranda McKearney OBE, who also founded The Reading Agency.

Notes to Editors: EMPATHYLAB ANNOUNCES 2020 READ FOR EMPATHY BOOK COLLECTION

1. THE BOOKLISTS

READ FOR EMPATHY BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AGED 4-11

Picture books and poetry

- Poetry: *Hopscotch in the Sky*, Lucinda Jacob, illustrator Lauren O'Neill, *Little Island*
- Poetry: *The Noisy Classroom*, Leva Flamingo, illustrator Vivianna Maria Stanislavska, translators Žanete Vēvere Pasqualini, Sara Smith, Richard O’Brien, *The Emma Press*
- *When Sadness Comes to Call*, Eva Eland, *Andersen Press*
- *It’s a No-Money Day*, Kate Milner, *Barrington Stoke*
- *Ravi’s Roar*, Tom Percival, *Bloomsbury Children’s Books*
- *Mum’s Jumper*, Jayde Perkin, *Book Island*
- *Polonius the Pit Pony*, Richard O’Neill, illustrator Feronica Parker Thomas, *Child’s Play*
- *The Rabbit Listened*, Cori Doerrfeld, *Scallywag Press*
- *The Truth About Old People*, Elina Ellis, *Two Hoots*
- *The Steves*, Morag Hood, *Two Hoots*
- *Super Duper You*, Sophy Henn, *Puffin*
- *Lubna and Pebble*, Wendy Meddour, illustrator Daniel Egnéus, *Oxford University Press*
- *I Do Not Like Books Anymore!*, Daisy Hirst, *Walker Books*
- *Julian is a Mermaid*, Jessica Love, *Walker Books*
- *Captain Rosalie*, Timothée de Fombelle, illustrator Isabelle Arsenault, translator Sam Gordon, *Walker Books*

Novels and graphic novels

- Graphic/comic novel: *Me and Mrs Moon*, Helen Bate, *Otter-Barry Books*
- *Race to the Frozen North*, Catherine Johnson, illustrator Katie Hickey *Barrington Stoke*
- *The Great Telephone Mix-Up*, Sally Nicholls, illustrator Sheena Dempsey, *Barrington Stoke*
- *Owen and the Soldier*, Lisa Thompson, illustrator Mike Lowery, *Barrington Stoke*
- *Flight*, Vanessa Harbour, *Firefly Press*
- *Ghost*, Jason Reynolds, *Knights Of*
- *Two Sides*, Polly Ho-Yen, illustrator Binny Talib, *Stripes Publishing*
- *No Ballet Shoes in Syria*, Catherine Bruton, *Nosy Crow*
- *The Closest Thing to Flying*, Gill Lewis, *Oxford University Press*
- *The Last Human*, Lee Bacon, *Piccadilly Press*
- *Charlie Changes Into a Chicken*, Sam Copeland, illustrator Sarah Horne, *Puffin*
- *Check Mates*, Stewart Foster, *Simon & Schuster Children’s Books*
- *Cloud Boy*, Marcia Williams, *Walker Books*
READ FOR EMPATHY SECONDARY GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 11-16

Poetry, verse novels, graphic novels, anthology

- **Poetry:** *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen*, Sophia Thakur, *Walker Books*
- **Verse novel:** *Long Way Down*, Jason Reynolds, illustrator Chris Priestley, *Faber & Faber*
- **Verse novel:** *The Deepest Breath*, Meg Grehan, *Little Island Books*
- **Verse novel:** *The Black Flamingo*, Dean Atta, *Hodder Children’s Books*
- **Verse novel:** *Toffee*, Sarah Crossan, *Bloomsbury YA*
- **Graphic novel:** *DeadEndia: The Watcher’s Test*, Hamish Steele, *Nobrow*
- **Graphic novel:** *Heartstopper: Volume 1*, Alice Oseman, *Hodder Children’s Books*
- **Graphic novel:** *New Kid*, Jerry Craft, *HarperCollins*
- **Anthology:** *A Country to Call Home*, Lucy Popescu (ed.), Illustrator Chris Riddell, *Unbound*

Novels

- **Furious Thing**, Jenny Downham, *David Fickling Books*
- **The Boy Who Steals Houses**, C. G. Drews, *Orchard Books*
- **Kick the Moon**, Muhammad Khan, illustrator Amrit Birdi, *Macmillan Children’s Books*
- **Frankly in Love**, David Yoon, *Penguin Books*
- **A Story About Cancer (with a Happy Ending)**, India Desjardins, illustrator Marianne Ferrer, translator Solange Ouellet, *Frances Lincoln Children’s Books*
- **The Unexpected Find**, Toby Ibbotson, *Scholastic*
- **Can You See Me?**, Libby Scott and Rebecca Westcott, *Scholastic*
- **Jemima Small Versus the Universe**, Tamsin Winter, *Usborne*

2. CROSS-DISCIPLINARY SELECTION PANEL

The judging panel featured a balance of cross-disciplinary experts: six teachers - from Birmingham, Lancashire, London, Great Yarmouth and a school linked to a mental health hospital; a public librarian from Brent Library Service; a CLPE expert in diverse literature; a national children’s books journalist, Amnesty publisher and a librarian from the School Library Association.

- Joint Chairs: Miranda McKearney OBE (founder of EmpathyLab and The Reading Agency); Sarah Mears MBE, (Programme Manager at Libraries Connected and EmpathyLab co-founder)
- Sonia Thompson, Headteacher at St Matthews Primary School, Birmingham
- Jon Biddle, teacher at Moorlands Primary Academy and Patron of Reading
- Paul Harris, teacher at the Bethlem-Maudsley Hospital School
- Farrah Serroukh, Learning Programme Leader at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education
- Jonathan Greenbank, teacher at Kirkby High School
- Sarah Smith, librarian, Brent Libraries
- Nicolette Jones, Sunday Times Children’s Book Reviewer
- Christophere Fila, Publisher, Amnesty International
- Richard Charlesworth, teacher at Springwell School, Hounslow
- Dawn Woods, librarian, School Library Association

3. EMPATHY ANGLES JUDGES LOOKED FOR IN THE BOOKS

- Powerful characters to care about, who expand the reader’s own emotional understanding
- Perspective-taking through different characters’ points of view
• Insight into other people’s lives and experiences
• Empathy for people in challenging circumstances (e.g. disability, migration, bereavement)
• Understanding of human experience at other times in history
• Expansion of young people’s emotional vocabulary/recognition of emotions
• Motivating the reader to put empathy into action