



### Some book suggestions for Christmas gifts

#### Year 3 & 4 (ages 7-9)

##### How to Train Your Dragon

Cressida Cowell (Hodder)

How to train your dragon by Cressida Cowell

A laugh-out loud romp of a Viking adventure set on the windy Isle of Berk, this is the first in a hugely successful 10-book series and is now being made into a film. Having just passed his dragon initiation programme, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, a young Viking searching for a way of becoming a hero, sets about the challenge. First, he must catch a dragon; then he will have to train it. Hiccup's attempts are hilarious and charming, and the cold, soggy world of the Vikings provides an endless source of mirth. **Ages 8+**

##### Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Roald Dahl (Puffin)

Against all the odds, poor Charlie Bucket finds a golden ticket to a trip of a lifetime to visit Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. The tour round the factory is every child's dream, but too much of a temptation for Charlie's fellow golden ticket winners. A classic, magical, rags-to-riches moral fairytale. **Ages 8+**

##### The Tale of Despereaux

Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Timothy Basil Ering (Walker)

Despereaux the mouse loves reading and music. Maybe as a result of his poetic nature, Despereaux breaks the great mouse taboo by falling in love with a human princess. Banished to a cellar full of rats, Despereaux discovers the rats' plan to capture the princess and bring her down into the darkness and decides to foil it. Full of charm, this is a heroic story of how goodness and courage can outsmart evil. **Ages 8+**

##### The Arrival

Shaun Tan (Hodder)

Experiences familiar to migrants of all kinds are brilliantly told via the stunning illustrations of this poignant and atmospheric graphic novel set against a changing background of landscapes and peoples, through which the man at the centre of the story carries his suitcase. His feelings of confusion and isolation, the problems of communication and misunderstanding, the despair and then the easing of the experience through friendship spill beyond the individual and offer great insights. **Ages 8+**

##### Matilda

Roald Dahl (Puffin)

Clever Matilda defies her rotten parents by teaching herself to read and getting herself to school. Here, her prodigious talent propels her beyond her mum, dad and nasty

headmistress, supported by her teacher, Miss Honey. Matilda blossoms, but it's not all plain sailing. Roald Dahl's larger-than-life novel is a triumph over bullying. **Ages 8+**

### **Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Book 1**

Jeff Kinney (Puffin)

Now a bestselling phenomenon, Greg Heffley's diary captures the minutiae of his days as he starts middle school. In words and witty illustrations, Greg plots how to improve his life, avoid previous pitfalls – and how to increase his popularity with girls. Easy to read, touching and very entertaining. **Ages 8+**

### **The Demon Headmaster**

Gillian Cross (OUP)

New pupil Dinah finds that all the pupils at her new school are so obedient they mindlessly repeat the headmaster's every word. She starts to ask herself how it is done when it begins to work on her too. An entertaining story that makes good use of familiar school themes about resisting oppression and how innocence can be an advantage. **Ages 8+**

### **Charlotte's Web**

EB White, illustrated by Garth Williams (Puffin)

How do words of praise such as "terrific" keep appearing mysteriously in the spider's web above the pig pen in Farmer Zuckerman's barn? These are the life-saving words that Charlotte the spider spins to save her friend Wilbur the piglet, the runt of a litter that is being reared for one purpose only. Watched over by Fern, a little girl who has adopted the pig as a pet, the interactions of Wilbur, Charlotte, Templeton the rat and the other barn animals as they campaign to save the pig's life is an exceptional story of tenderness and triumph. **Ages 8+**

### **The Sheep-Pig**

Dick King-Smith (Puffin)

When Farmer Hogget wins a pig at the fete, he takes it home thinking of bacon. But Babe soon shows that he is no ordinary pig. Adopted by Hogget's sheepdog, Fly, Babe quickly picks up the necessary skills of a champion herder. It isn't long before Hogget realises that he has a very special pig on his hands and soon the two of them are on their way to fame and fortune. Turned into the film Babe, The Sheep-Pig is a funny, touching story tinged with wonder. **Ages 8+**

### **One Dog and his Boy**

Eva Ibbotson (Marion Lloyd)

All Hal has ever wanted is a dog. His parents refuse to contemplate the idea; a dog would mess up their beautiful house and disturb their busy routine. When they discover Easy Pets, they hire Hal a dog for a weekend thinking that will do the trick. But Hal discovers Fleck has to be returned, so he runs away, and all the dogs from Easy Pets escape with him. Soon, there's a price on his head. How Hal makes his escape and the story of his adventures as a fugitive is both thrilling and moving. **Ages 9+**

### **Kensuke's Kingdom**

Michael Morpurgo, illustrated by Michael Foreman (Egmont)

Swept overboard from his parents' boat by a giant wave, Michael and his dog Stella Artois



are washed on to a desert island. There is no sign of food or water, so he prepares for the inevitable. Having given up all hope, Michael wakes one morning to find food and drink have been put out for him. Who is the mysterious old man who brings it and can Michael trust him? Michael Morpurgo draws on the best traditions of Robinson Crusoe in this dramatic and touching adventure. **Ages 9+**

### **Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone**

JK Rowling (Bloomsbury)

The most read book for a generation, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone is the first in JK Rowling's phenomenally successful series, in which the boy wizard first takes up his place at Hogwarts school for witches and wizards. Accompanied by his two best school friends, Ron and Hermione, Potter encounters a rich and colourful cast of characters. **Ages 9+**

### **A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning**

Lemony Snicket, illustrated by Brett Helquist (Egmont)

A phenomenal and curious success, The Bad Beginning is a gothic tale of three orphan siblings who thwart their wicked uncle's ideas to steal their inheritance with a clever plan. Ironic, gloomy and heroic, this brief but detailed story launched a series that has spawned many imitators. **Ages 9+**

### **The Graveyard Book**

Neil Gaiman, illustrated by Chris Riddell (Bloomsbury)

A gripping and deliciously chilling story that unfolds at a stately pace one intriguing episode after another. Bod is a perfectly normal boy in many ways, except that he is brought up in a graveyard and nurtured by ghosts following the death of his parents. The graveyard itself is full of danger, but greater peril lies outside in the land of the living and Bod's experience of both and ability to survive either is compelling. Chris Riddell's illustrations are terrifying and also irresistible. **Ages 9+**

### **Artemis Fowl**

Eoin Colfer (Puffin)

Eoin Colfer's riotous imagination gives life to farting fairies and hi-tech gizmos in this fantastic and original fantasy. Cunning Artemis Fowl is a criminal mastermind; his ambition is to get his hands on fairy gold. The plan is simple – Artemis will kidnap a fairy and demand the gold as a ransom. The kidnap goes to plan, but Artemis hadn't bargained on the particular ways of fairies and especially not on the fairy in question, Holly Short. Somehow the fairies weave a magic over Artemis Fowl, who discovers that he may not be as cold-hearted as he had always thought. **Ages 9+**

### **Friendly Matches**

Allan Ahlberg, illustrated by Fritz Wegner (Puffin)

The draw of Friendly Matches is not so much that the poems are about football but that they use such a variety of poetic forms. There's The Goals of Bingo Boot – a ballad of an old footballing legend; The Lullaby for a Referee's Baby, Soccer Sonnet and The Song of the Sub with its poignant refrain: "I'm a sub, I'm a sub and I sing this song/ And I'm only ever wanted when things go wrong." **Ages 9+**

### **The Unforgotten Coat**

Frank Cottrell Boyce (Walker)

Looking back on something that happened when she was in year six, Julie tells the story of the unexpected arrival at the school of Chingis and Nergui, two brothers from Mongolia. When they ask her to become their "Good Guide", Julie gets completely caught up in their stories, and it is hard to tell the imaginary from the horribly real dangers they face. A gem of a story by award-winning author Frank Cottrell Boyce. **Ages 9+**

### **Sparks**

Ally Kennen (Scholastic)

When Carla's recently deceased grandfather leaves a note wishing for a Viking funeral at sea, burning pyre and all, she decides to fulfil his wishes. Subverting the plans of the adults, and risking flouting the law in the process, Carla leads her siblings on a thrilling and original adventure. A highly entertaining and spirited adventure (pictured below). **Ages 9+**

### **A Greyhound of a Girl**

Roddy Doyle (Marion Lloyd)

Roddy Doyle's wonderful, funny and warm-hearted family story is about four generations of women and coping with death. Mary's great grandma appears as a ghost with a message for Mary's gran, who is about to pass on. Mary's relationship with her gran and the feelings she has about her death will touch the heart of readers of all ages. **Ages 9+**

### **Eating Things on Sticks**

Anne Fine, illustrated by Kate Aldous (Corgi)

Anne Fine is more entertaining and acerbic than any author about the complex interactions of families. Having burnt down the kitchen by mistake, Harry saves himself from the fate of a week spent with aunt Susan by blackmailing his uncle Tristram into taking him on holiday. Setting off for a remote Scottish island, Harry and Tristram ignore the strange warning the ferryman gives them, but soon wish they hadn't. Harry endures rain, floods, Tristram's mystic girlfriend Morning Glory and a host of wonderful misunderstandings. Harry and Tristram's holiday adventure is pure joy. **Ages 9+**