



Some book suggestions for Christmas gifts

Year 1 & 2 (ages 5-7)

Big Bad Bun

Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross (Andersen)

Think of all the things that are seen as bad behaviour and Fluff the rabbit – or Big Bad Bun as he becomes – does them all. From dyeing his tail to piercing his ears and crashing his bike, Fluff is a typical tearaway. Or is he? As the joke of the story warns, pushy parents should take heed – there are worse things than a bad report. And they might also do well not to believe everything children say. As ever, Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross have created a picture book to entertain all ages. **Ages 5+**

Where the Wild Things Are

Maurice Sendak (Red Fox)

When Max puts on his wolf suit and makes mischief, his mother calls him a "wild thing" and sends him to bed without any supper. Alone in his room and furious, Max sets sail across the sea to the place where the wild things are. The wild things roar their terrible roar and gnash their terrible teeth and roll their terrible eyes and show their terrible claws. How Max tames them, is made their king and joins in the rumpus before returning home to his bedroom – complete with a comforting bowl of supper that is still hot – is brilliantly told in Sendak's classic illustrations. **Ages 5+**

The Wild Washerwomen

John Yeoman and Quentin Blake (Andersen)

The never-ending deluge of grubby hankies, horrid socks and grimy nightshirts imposed on the seven washerwomen by their skinflint employer pushes them to go on strike. So they set out in a cart intent on having fun for a change. But having fun is so enjoyable that they go on the rampage every day, causing havoc wherever they go. Then seven woodcutters set out to frighten the washerwomen into submission by appearing as the filthiest things they've ever seen ... A rollickingly good story; Quentin Blake's illustrations capture every madcap moment irresistibly. **Ages 5+**

The Man on the Moon

Simon Bartram (Templar)

Bob, the man on the moon, keeps the place swept and tidy for the tourists, who he entertains with a bit of moonwalking before selling them souvenirs to take home. Having checked that all the visitors are gone, Bob packs everything up and heads for home. But there's one thing that Bob doesn't know anything about – aliens! Readers do, and they love the joke that is going on in the illustrations behind Bob's back. **Ages 5+**

The Cat in the Hat

Dr Seuss (HarperCollins)

The bestselling classic rhyming verse story of The Cat in the Hat remains as fresh today as when it was first published in 1957. Arriving unannounced and uninvited, the exuberant Cat leaves total mayhem in his wake. Sally and her brother are alarmed and worried what their mother will think when she returns. But the Cat is an unstoppable force. Young readers will love the chaos he causes and recognise the children's horror. Just when disaster seems to be inevitable as mother returns, the Cat unveils his tidying-up tricks. **Ages 5+**

The Church Mouse

Graham Oakley (Templar)

A brilliant picture book (thankfully now back in print) telling the entertaining story of how Sampson the cat and Arthur the church mouse take over the local church – despite the reservations of the congregation. Stunning, detailed and humorous illustrations stuffed full of tiny, mouse-filled details to pore over. **Ages 5+**

Not Now Bernard

David McKee (Red Fox)

Bernard's ignorant parents never listen. "Not now, Bernard," is their standard refrain. They are oblivious even when Bernard is eaten by a monster, and fail to notice when the monster, rather than Bernard, comes into the house and heads upstairs. Or is Bernard now a monster? A black comedy with scope for much individual interpretation. **Ages 5+**

The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch

Ronda and David Armitage (Scholastic)

Every day, lighthouse keeper Mr Grinling heads out to make sure his lighthouse shines brightly across the sea, keeping the ships safe. And every day, Mrs Grinling cooks him a delicious lunch, which she packs in a basket and sends across to the lighthouse on a wire suspended high above the sea. But one day, three scavenging seagulls attack the basket and eat his lunch. How can they be stopped? This is an original and fascinating story, capturing the details that make a lighthouse keeper's life so different and special. The attempts to outwit the seagulls, whose greedy comments are fun to read in speech bubbles, are hilarious. **Ages 5+**

Stick Man

Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Axel Scheffler (Alison Green/Scholastic)

Lovable Stick Man lives happily with his family in the family tree until disaster strikes when a dog mistakes him for any old stick. Soon, poor old Stick Man's life is not his own; he is swept along in a series of dramatic adventures that may reach a sticky end. As ever, Donaldson and Scheffler combine excitement and fear before wittily reaching a comforting resolution. **Ages 5+**

Beegu

Alexis Deacon (Red Fox)

Beegu is an alien child who falls to earth from a spaceship. Now she must manage on her own. She's determined to make friends, but she can't find anyone who understands her until she makes friends with some children in a playground. When Beegu is finally reunited with her mum, she remembers the love the children showed her and hopes that they will remember her with affection, too. Alexis Deacon's atmospheric illustrations capture the pathos of being an outsider. **Ages 5+**

Ug

Raymond Briggs (Cape)

Ug has a dream: soft trousers, instead of stone ones. And hot food, lightweight footballs; even pictures on the walls. But this is the stone age and Ug, like all thinkers ahead of their time, is ridiculed for his ideas – but he persists. This is a book full of jokes, as well as a reflection on children's natural curiosity and how it should be heeded, given the importance of the things that Ug dreams of and asks for. **Ages 6+**

The Heart and the Bottle

Oliver Jeffers (HarperCollins)

When a young girl's grandfather dies, she grieves terribly. To overcome her sadness and to protect herself, she shuts her heart up in a bottle and hangs it round her neck to make sure she never suffers again. But safety is dull and colourless. Can she get her heart back? With visually spare illustrations, Oliver Jeffers is able to convey deep emotions with a minimum of fuss, while exploring loneliness and loss and how they are overcome. **Ages 6+**

The Diary of a Killer Cat

Anne Fine, illustrated by Steve Cox (Puffin)

Tuffy is a cat with attitude – or is he just doing what a cat does naturally? His owner, Ellie, cries with every victim Tuffy brings through the cat flap. Can she change his violent ways and turn him into the tame pet she'd prefer? Tough-talking Tuffy tells the story from his point of view in this witty and deliciously unsentimental drama. **Ages 6+**

Willy the Wimp

Anthony Browne, (Walker)

Kind, gentle chimp Willy is sick of being branded a wimp and being bullied by the gorillas. Answering an advertisement about body building, Willy begins a strict fitness regime; he trains hard and eats a special diet. Soon he is a muscle-bound hulk. The new-look Willy saves a girl from the bullies, who are now terrified. But inside, Willy remains the same; it is just that others see him differently. Anthony Browne tells a thoughtful story about how misleading appearances can be with style and humour. **Ages 6+**

The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon

Mini Grey (Cape)

Everyone knows that the dish ran away with the spoon, but whatever happened to them next? High on love and romance, the pair sail away to seek their fortune in America. In New York they become rich and famous, but lose everything when their taste for the high life leads them into debt. The downturn in their fortune results in a reckless bank robbery, life on the run and jail ... Romantics everywhere will fall for the visual treat of this nursery-rhyme adventure. **Ages 6+**

A Necklace of Raindrops

Joan Aiken, illustrated by Jan Pienkowski (Cape)

Magic has never been more elegantly shaped than in these effervescent short stories, which weave a speck of the unexpected into the everyday to make worlds that are both familiar and excitingly different. A necklace of raindrops gives a little girl magical powers against the worst excesses of weather, a sip of yeast swells a baker's cat to such a size that it saves the village by damming the flood water, and a bit of sky, caught in the rolling of pastry for an apple pie, makes the pie so light that it floats up and away with the little old woman and the little old man riding high on it. In every story the flight of imagination is delicately captured in Jan Pienkowski's accompanying silhouettes. **Ages 6+**

Dinosaurs and All That Rubbish

Michael Foreman, (HarperCollins)

The conservation message of this book, published in 1972, is ahead of its time. Humans look at a distant star and think it looks a lot more attractive than Earth, so sets out to reach it. But why is the Earth unattractive? Because humans have spoilt it. Built over and rubbish-strewn, it is a mess. But the dinosaurs awaken and begin to tidy up. Humans can only return if they promise to share the Earth in future. Brilliant illustrations convey an important message without preaching. **Ages 6+**

The General

Michael Foreman and Janet Charters (Templar)

General Jodhpur loves to train his soldiers, and has made them the best fighting force in the world. But one day he discovers the beauty of the countryside and realises that saving the flowers and trees and creatures who live in them is more important than fighting. An important message delivered in striking pictures. **Ages 6+**

Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf

Catherine Storr, illustrated by Marjorie Ann Watts (Jane Nissen Books)

How resourceful Polly outwits the wolf who eagerly stalks her in the hope of eating her is a masterly blend of risk-taking and triumph. In each story, the wolf has a well-thought out plan and Polly manages to circumvent it. Plenty of literary allusions – the wolf is familiar with the story of Little Red Riding Hood and knows all about how magic beans grow. **Ages 6+**

Horrid Henry

Francesca Simon, illustrated by Tony Ross (Orion)

"Henry was horrid. Everyone said so. Even his mother." So arrives Horrid Henry, one of the most successful antiheroes in kids' fiction. Henry snatches, pushes, shoves and pinches. But these acts are nothing compared with how horrid Henry is to his brother, Perfect Peter. In the four stories in this volume, Henry does anything to get what he wants. With an unerring ability to capture the cruellest details of sibling rivalry, these stories are driven by an infectious humour that tempers the tension. **Ages 7+**

Mr Gum and the Biscuit Billionaire

Andy Stanton, illustrated by David Tazzyman (Egmont)

Nasty and disgusting antiheroes of a Dahlesque kind are in vogue; their filthy habits and displeasing behaviour makes them both childlike and a delightful source of easy humour. Mr Gum is just such a character: he hates children, animals, fun and every cartoon that has ever been made. But he loves money and will do anything to get his hands on some. Can anyone stop him? There's a nice little girl called Polly, an engaging dog and a furious fairy. The adventure is weird, wacky, madcap and very, very funny. **Ages 7+**

Fantastic Mr Fox

Roald Dahl (Puffin)

"Boggis and Bunce and Bean/ One fat, one short, one lean ..." Rarely have there been three more brilliantly disgusting crooks. The farmers are the deadly enemies of Mr Fox, who will go to any lengths to keep his family safe, resulting in an audacious scheme. It has to be, because the farmers are every bit as determined to get Mr Fox as he is to outwit them. And though he may be a thief, he is no villain. Rather, he's a hero and readers love him for it.

Ages 7+

The Conquerors

David McKee (Andersen)

In this children's masterpiece, David McKee has created a miniature morality tale. The General leads his army into one country after another, subjugating the population and bringing them under his command. Finally, there is just one tiny country left to invade and the General leads his men forth. But here there is no conquest. Instead, the soldiers join the people and soon two countries are co-existing rather than fighting. Beautifully understated but packs a punch. **Ages 7+**

The Wrong Pong

Steven Butler (Puffin)

Delight in the disgusting in this hilarious story of what happens when Neville gets yanked down the toilet to the land of Under. There he ends up as part of the Bulch family, trolls whose idea of a good time includes feasts of rat patties and earwax brownies. But Under is also a place of new friendships and Neville quickly adapts to his unusual surroundings. **Ages 7+**

Ottoline Goes to School

Chris Riddell (Macmillan)

An entertaining and frothy confection of a story, this spoofs familiar school themes. Ottoline takes up her place at the Alice B Smith School for the Differently Gifted, accompanied by her unusual dog, Mr Munroe. While others develop their particular gifts, Ottoline begins to worry that she doesn't have one. Luckily, there is something special Ottoline can do, as the illustrations help to show. **Ages 7+**

The Iron Man

Ted Hughes (Faber)

Taller than a house and with a head shaped like a dustbin the size of a bedroom, the Iron Man appears at the top of the cliff at the beginning of one of the greatest modern fairy stories. Where he comes from nobody knows. When he topples over the cliff and breaks into tiny bits it looks like the end. But the Iron Man has mysterious powers, which he harnesses to save the world. **Ages 7+**

Iggy and Me

Jenny Valentine, illustrated by Joe Berger (HarperCollins)

Older sister Flo tells these stories of her irrepressible and original younger sister Iggy. Both appalled and enchanted by Iggy's unusual antics, which include changing her name and cutting her own hair, Flo paints a warm-hearted picture of family life. **Ages 7+**

The Worst Witch

Jill Murphy (Puffin)

Long before Harry went to Hogwarts, schools had been training the young in the dark arts. From the first moment that Mildred Hubble is sent to Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches, things seem to go wrong. Her spells backfire, her broomstick won't fly – even her cat is peculiar. Luckily, her best friend always sticks by her. And when things do begin to go her way, it turns out she can be a useful witch after all. **Ages 7+**