



Ten of the Best: books starring children from BAME backgrounds

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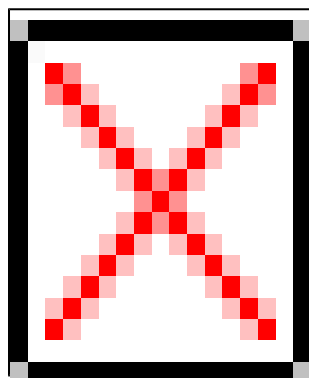
Ten of the Best books starring children from BAME backgrounds chosen by **Farrah Serroukh**

Farrah Serroukh CLPE Regional Learning Programme Leader chooses.

At **Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE)** we are in the unique position of offering a bridge from the classroom to the publishing house. We work throughout the year to curate what for many time-deprived teachers is an overwhelming volume of books and showcase the best that the industry has to offer through our online platforms, professional development programme and extensive reference library. Sourcing books with characters and contexts that resonate with children is paramount to shaping them as readers and broadening their worldview. In 2018 we published the first ever comprehensive study into ethnic representation in UK children's literature as part of our **Reflecting Realities** initiative. The findings revealed a stark under-representation of ethnic minority characters in books published in 2017. For the full findings and recommendations [download the report](#) [3].

Whilst the survey showed us that there is a shortage of quality literature featuring meaningful ethnic minority presence, the books that do it and do it well are true gems that should be treasured by children and adult readers alike. Here are ten of the titles that for me, embody this for primary age children ? of course any list will only scratch the surface of the full range of titles!

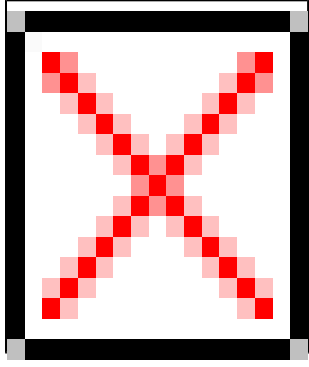
[So Much](#) [4]



Trish Cooke, illus by Helen Oxenbury, Walker Books, 978-1406306651, £7.99 pbk

Every page of this beautiful, beautiful classic exudes warmth, love and heart. It is a playful and joyous celebration of the powerful and unbreakable bonds of familial relationships and community. It's impossible for your smile not to widen at the sight of each family member that greets baby at the turn of every page.

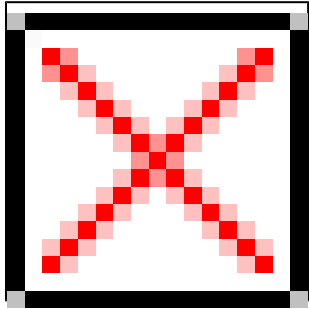
[Home in the Rain](#) [5]



Bob Graham, Walker Books, 978-1406379785, £6.99 pbk

The power of this book is rooted in the way in which Graham captures the very ordinary everyday subject matter with extraordinary tenderness, thoughtfulness and authenticity. Waiting for the torrential rain to pass in the car with her pregnant mother leaves time for young Francie to ponder the exciting changes that the arrival of her new sibling will bring.

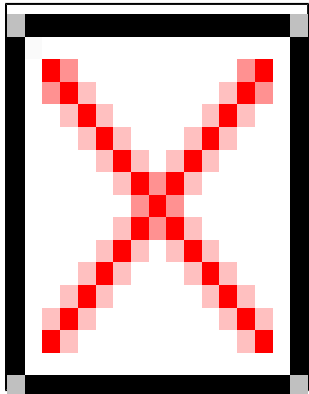
[Zeki can Swim](#) [6]



Anna McQuinn, illus Ruth Hearson, Alanna Books, 978-1907825132, £7.99 pbk

Like his sister Lulu, Zeki's everyday exploits are tremendously important because they provide a platform for both Zeki and Lulu to get busy with living the life of babies and toddlers. Zeki drives the narrative and takes the reader along for a trip to the local swimming pool. The illustrations capture special, heart-warming moments between parents and their children as well as the playful energy of Zeki's friends in the pool. It's perfectly normal to find yourself fully taken by the delightful cuteness of it all, cooing and gushing at the turn of every page.

Ruby's Worry

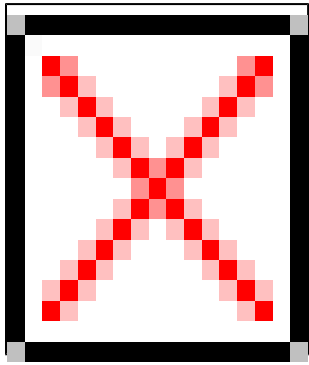


Tom Percival, Bloomsbury Children's Books, 978-1408892152, £6.99 pbk

Like many children, Ruby is happily living life until one day she is visited by a worry that grows over time. She learns that sharing our worries can help ease them and that ultimately we all carry worries of varying sizes at any given point

in time. Percival has a lovely, distinctive illustrative style. A reassuring and thoughtful book that offers an optimistic but realistic resolution.

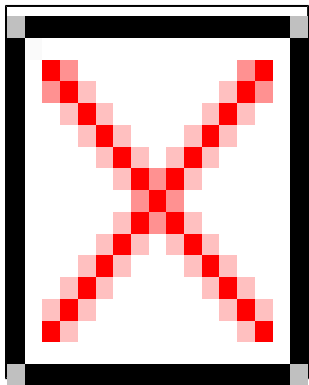
[If All the World Were](#) [7]



Joseph Coelho, illus Allison Colpoys, Lincoln Children's Books, 978-1786036513, £6.99 pbk

Coelho masterfully manages to strike the delicate balance between mourning the passing of a loved one and celebrating the gift of the life they lived and its legacy with moving sensitivity and care. Colpoys's illustrations enrich and deepen our connection with the weight of sadness and height of celebration. An important title to support readers coming to terms with the loss of an elderly relative.

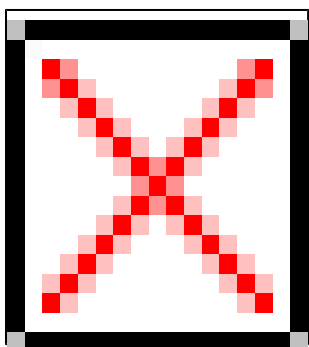
[Ada Twist Scientist](#) [8]



Andrea Beaty, illus David Roberts, Abrams Books, 978-1419721373, £13.99 hbk

Ada is an inquisitive scientist driven by a thirst for knowledge and problem solving. Inspiring yet relatable she offers a fantastic role model for readers. The playful rhythm of the text works in total harmony with the witty charm of the illustrations. A real treat of a book.

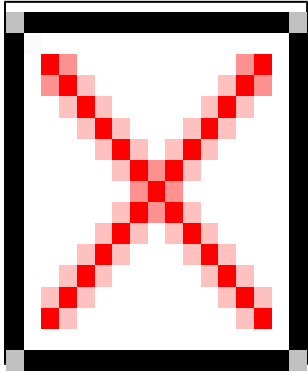
[Splash, Anna Hibiscus!](#) [9]



Atinuke, illus Lauren Tobia, Walker Books, 978-1406354683, £7.99 pbk

Anna is a curious, kind and thoughtful child with a loving extended family full of well-drawn and relatable characters. Through her visits to family in Nigeria we are offered an important glimpse into everyday family life and community that is far more nuanced than the gross generalisations and portrayals of countries from the continent that have traditionally featured in children's literature and other forms of media.

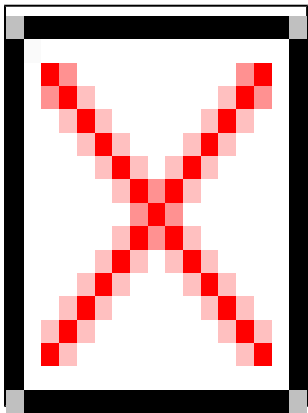
Little Dreamers: Visionary Women Around the World



Vashti Harrison, Puffin Books, 978-0241346877, £12.99 hbk

The trend of titles focusing on the theme of pioneering female figures has been phenomenal over the last couple of years. Harrison's latest addition profiles a wide range of inspirational figures from around the world. Due consideration is given to highlighting a broad and varied selection of individuals expanding upon more commonly documented women. Harrison's unique, ethereal illustrative style complements the magical celebratory tone of the book.

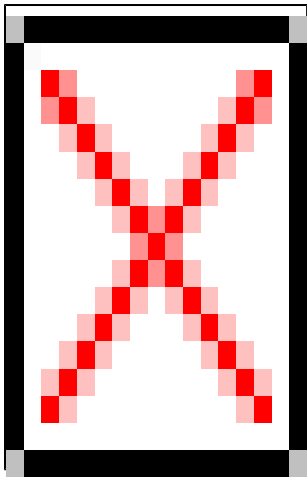
[Corey's Rock](#) [10]



Sita Brahmachari, illus Jane Ray, Otter-Barry Books, 978-1910959978, 310.99 hbk

A touching and sensitive exploration of the challenges of a family coming to terms with the upheaval caused by the loss of the youngest child told through the perspective of the sibling. The words and illustrations weave seamlessly and beautifully together to bring the world of this family to life connecting the reader to the pain of their present and the hopes for their future. There is a real magical quality to this book stemming from the synergy between Brahmachari and Ray. I hope that we see more collaboration between these two talents in the future.

Blackberry Blue



Jamila Gavin, illus Richard Collingridge, Tamarind, 978-1848531079, £6.99 pbk

A magical selection of fairy tales that draw inspiration from the European cannon but have a very distinctive quality of their own. Gavin firmly places characters from a range of backgrounds centre stage, each leading the narrative in their own clever, brave and beautiful ways. The descriptions are so vivid you can almost taste the words in your mouth and the delicate illustrations beautifully complement and frame each story.

An experienced teacher and senior leader, Farrah Serroukh has always been a passionate advocate of every child's right to access high quality literature and experience the best education possible. She coordinates CLPE's partnership and regional work and is the author of **CLPE's Reflecting Realities Survey of Ethnic Representation within UK Children's Literature 2017**, which is the first of its kind in the history of UK children's publishing.

Page Number:

12

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[3] <https://clpe.org.uk/library-and-resources/research/reflecting-realities-survey-ethnic-representation-within-uk-children>

[4] <http://wvjxyve.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/99/childrens-books/reviews/so-much>

[5] <http://wvjxyve.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/222/childrens-books/reviews/home-in-the-rain>

[6] <http://wvjxyve.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/192/childrens-books/reviews/lulu-reads-to-zeki>

[7] <http://wvjxyve.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/231/childrens-books/reviews/if-all-the-world-were>

[8] <http://wvjxyve.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/221/childrens-books/reviews/ada-twist-scientist>

[9] <http://wvjxyve.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/170/childrens-books/reviews/anna-hibiscus>

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