



Ten of my favourite books for Year 6 by Jon Biddle

Jon Biddle is a Year 6 teacher, English coordinator and avid children's books reader. John takes us through his current top 10 books for Year 6.

Follow Jon @jonnybid for info and further recommendations.

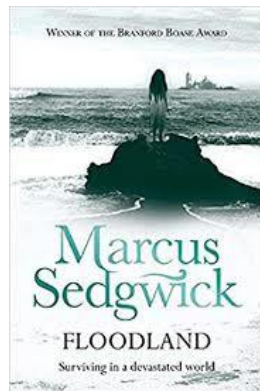
Ghost - Jason Reynolds

Ghost is the first in the wonderful Run series by Jason Reynolds (Patina, the second book, was published in early August, with books three and four on the way soon). It's an emotionally engaging story about a child's battle to overcome the challenges and difficulties he faces at home, at school and as a member of his running team. It delivers a great message about resilience and is full of fantastic characters.



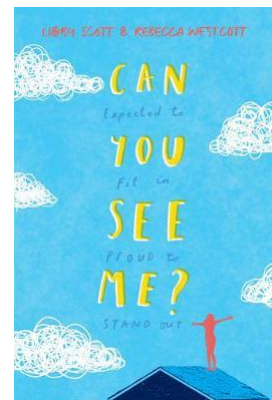
Floodland - Marcus Sedgwick

Due to the ongoing climate crisis, this marvellous novel from Marcus Sedgwick becomes more pertinent every time I read it. Most of England is underwater, with only small islands remaining above the surface. Zoe, a young girl left behind when her parents disappeared, has to survive in this harsh world as best she can. Her resolute belief that her parents are still alive leads her to plan a daring escape from her dangerous island. Floodland never fails to produce amazing writing from the children in my class, often some of the strongest of the year. The book is beautifully written, full of wonderful language and an absolute pleasure to read aloud.



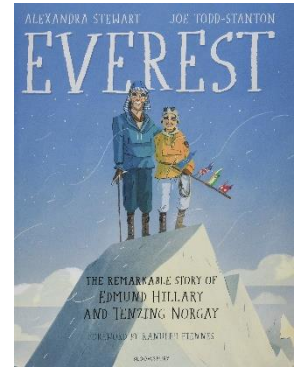
Can You See Me? - Libby Scott and Rebecca Westcott

I've never read anything quite like this before. It tells the story of how Tally, an autistic child, tries to adapt to her new life at high school. Sandwiched between the main chapters are some incredibly powerful diary entries written by 11-year-old Libby Scott, based on her own experiences of growing up with autism, which help give the book a real sense of authenticity. I'm looking forward to sharing this with my next Year Six class because it is so unique.



Everest - Alexandra Stewart and Joe Todd-Stanton

This visually stunning non-fiction book recounts the first successful ascent of Everest in 1953. I am delighted that the book gives Sherpa Tenzing Norgay just as much recognition and attention for the role he played in the expedition as Edmund Hillary. The extra information provided about the support team and the two main protagonists' personal lives gives the tale genuine depth. It's a book that my class dip into regularly as it's so accessible.



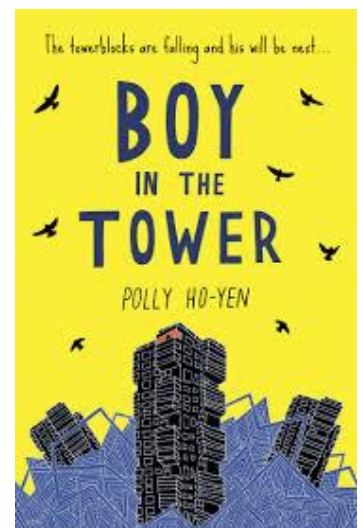
Slick - MM Vaughan

Slick seems to have slipped slightly under the radar, which is unfortunate as it's a gripping read. Eric, who prefers to be known by his nickname of Slick, is the first android child to be given a place in human society. Unfortunately, Slick isn't aware that he's an android and can't understand why he doesn't see things in quite the same way as his friends. Although the clues to the true purpose for his creation are gradually revealed throughout the text, when the readers' suspicions are finally confirmed, it's a hugely powerful moment. It also subtly introduces several ethical issues, such as the exploitation of children. The lively, energetic style of writing, the thrilling story and the range of interesting characters all help make Slick one of my favourite recent reads. Do seek it out!



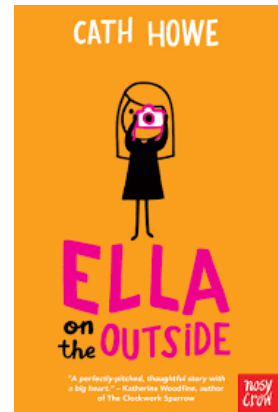
Boy In The Tower - Polly Ho-Yen

There have been some fantastic children's science-fiction books published over the past few years, such as the marvellous Phoenix by SF Said and Railhead by Philip Reeve, but Boy In The Tower is my personal favourite. London is under attack from a mysterious species of plant and its buildings are collapsing everywhere. Ade is trapped at the top of his tower block, with only his agoraphobic mother for company, and his already limited options are running out. I love how the tension and excitement builds relentlessly throughout the story. Boy In The Tower is very reminiscent of the work of John Wyndham, giving the same feeling of impending disaster. A book that, when we read it as a class, we never wanted to end.



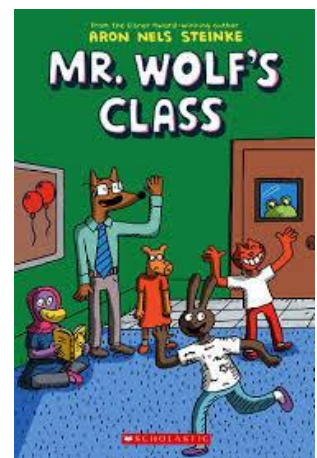
Ella On The Outside - Cath Howe

A great debut novel and undoubtedly our most popular class novel last year. Ella is going through a really tough time; she suffers from acute eczema and she's had to change schools due to a domestic issue. When she's befriended by Lydia, the most popular girl in the school, things seem to be improving...but what are Lydia's true intentions? This book had my class literally begging for more each time we read it together. They were absolutely engrossed by the characters and the situations that developed. A student in my class, who also suffers from severe eczema, repeatedly told me, 'This is the first book I've ever read that's actually about me.'



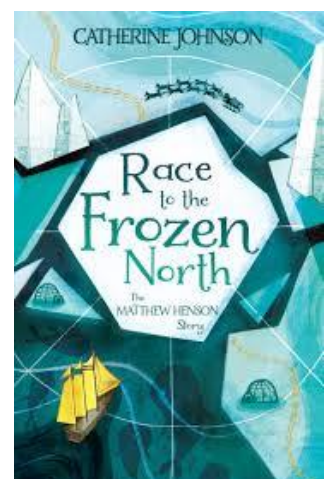
Mr Wolf's Class - Aaron Nel Steinke

A graphic novel that teachers will enjoy as much as their pupils! Mr Wolf is just about to start his first teaching job and is understandably excited, although a little nervous. I love how the first few pages wordlessly demonstrate the different home environments of his new students and really help set the scene for the story. The book highlights the importance of resilience, loyalty and friendship, and the power that children can have when they support each other. It also looks regularly at situations from the point of view of Mr Wolf. He often thinks he's dealt with something far more effectively than his students, a position I'm sure that any teacher can empathise with. This, alongside New Kid by Jerry Kraft, were two of the most popular graphic novels with my last class.



Race To The Frozen North - Catherine Johnson

Catherine Johnson is a fantastic writer and this account of the race to the North Pole is another wonderful demonstration of her skill. It tells the true story of Matthew Henson, a black orphan from the USA, whose determination to explore the most remote corners of the world drives him to overcome any challenges that he encounters. The fact that he is frequently overlooked in American history books is a travesty, and this book goes a small way to redressing the balance. It provides numerous opportunities for discussion about equality, as well as being an enthralling read.



Everything All At Once - Steven Camden

Steven Camden's 2019 CLiPPA winning book should be given to every child leaving primary school as a self-help guide for their transition into Year 7. It's a superb verse novel that anyone who's ever felt nervous or overwhelmed during their time at secondary school will be able to appreciate and enjoy.

There are a wide range of poetic styles used throughout the book and every poem emotionally engages the reader (my own personal favourite is Dear Mum, BTEC). Not all of the poems are suitable for Year 6, but we enjoyed several sharing several of them throughout the year. Even when used out of their wider context, they have the power to generate interest and debate. Everything All At Once is a wonderful achievement, and I'm already excited about the publication of his next book.

