



EmpathyLab

Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.



2021 Read For Empathy Guide

Books to build empathy - for children aged 4-11

#ReadForEmpathy

Why empathy?

Picture books,
early readers,
poetry

Novels,
graphic novel

Top tips



EmpathyLab

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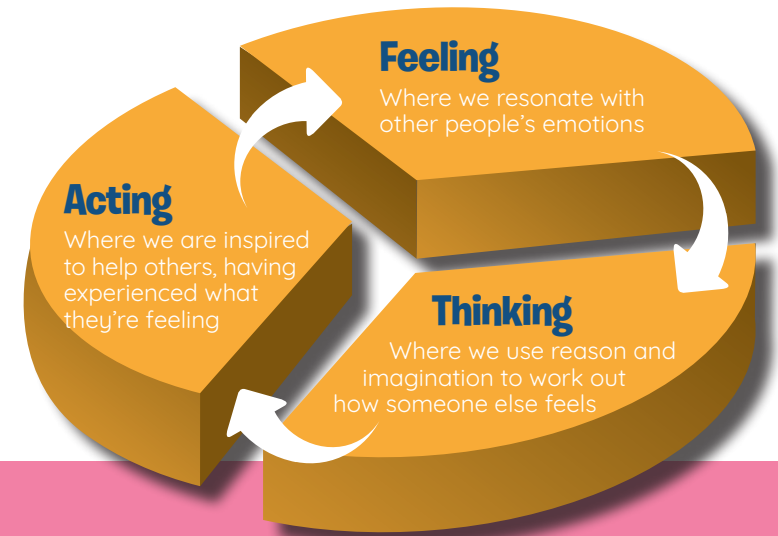
Empathy is our ability to understand and share someone else's feelings. It builds stronger, kinder communities. It's a crucial life skill that children need to learn, thrive and contribute.

We're not born with a fixed quantity of empathy - it's a skill we can all learn. Excitingly, research shows that books are a powerful tool to develop it. When children identify with book characters, they learn to see things from others' points of view. As they read, they are building their empathy skills.



How does empathy work?

Empathy is made up of three main elements.



The 2021 Read for Empathy collection

An expert panel has chosen thirty wonderful books for children aged 4-11. Each one does a specific empathy-building job, like helping children develop new perspectives or recognise and name emotions. They offer powerful insights into different ways of life and how it might feel to be a refugee, or disabled, or homeless. Please use them to inspire children to turn feelings of empathy into action - in their homes, schools and communities.

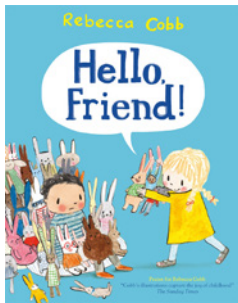
The Guide is brought to you by EmpathyLab, in partnership with book supplier Peters. We also have a Guide with books for 12-16 year-olds.

You can use these all year round, and they will be especially useful in the run-up to Empathy Day on 10 June 2021. Please join in! Register for updates at empathylab.uk and follow [@EmpathyLabUK](https://twitter.com/EmpathyLabUK).

Picture books, early readers and poetry

Twelve superb picture books, three early readers and four poetry collections, perfect for empathy-building reading and discussion with children aged 4–11. We believe no child is ever too old for a great picture book.

Picture books



Hello, Friend! **Rebecca Cobb**

A girl enjoys playing with a friend, but the pictures suggest her friend is experiencing things differently. Gently helps children understand friendships, and great for exploring how body language gives us clues about someone else's feelings.

Macmillan Children's Books



The Suitcase **Chris Naylor-Ballesteros**

An unfamiliar animal arrives unexpectedly with a big suitcase, to a very uncertain reception. Funny, poignant, and excellent for helping children reflect on refugees' experiences, and how they might welcome rather than fear them.

Nosy Crow



Umbrella **Elena Arevalo Melville**

Anything is possible when someone opens this special umbrella. Helpful for perspective-taking as children think about what each character needs. And how a touch of magic might help.

Scallywag Press



Clean Up! **Nathan Bryon & Dapo Adeola**

Join Rocket as she tries to clean up the beach on a family visit to Jamaica. About empathy for sea creatures and the environment, working together as a community, and how energetic, empathetic children can make a real difference to the world!

Puffin

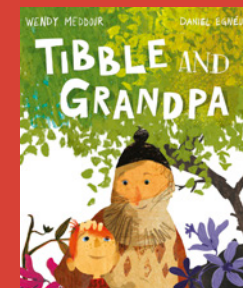


Felix After the Rain **Dunja Jogan**

Translator Olivia Hellewell

Superbly illustrated, this translated text focuses on how emotions can weigh us down. Through an act of catharsis, Felix is uplifted and begins to embrace the world as the world embraces him.

Tiny Owl



Tibble and Grandpa **Wendy Meddour & Daniel Egnéus**

Empathy is all about feeling 'with' someone. Young Tibble beautifully demonstrates this as he shares his grandfather's grief and instinctively knows the very best way to bring comfort. An enchanting picture book.

Oxford University Press



Maia and What Matters **Tine Mortier & Kaatje Vermeire**

Translator David Colmer

A visually stunning, hugely powerful picture book about the depth of inter-generational relationships. At its heart, a determined young girl who wants to do one last thing for her grandma.

Book Island



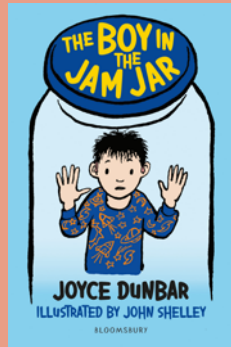
Ride the Wind **Nicola Davies & Salvatore Rubbino**

Javier rescues an injured albatross, but he has complicated feelings for the bird, connected to his unacknowledged grief. Events triggered by the bird's arrival open his father's eyes, allowing him to take Javier's perspective and understand his feelings. Simply beautiful.

Walker Books

Picture books, early readers and poetry continued

Early readers

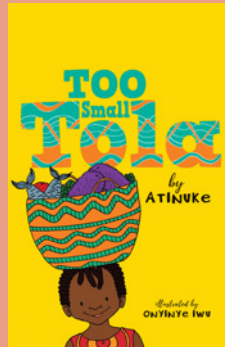


The Boy in the Jam Jar Joyce Dunbar

Illustrator John Shelley

A lovely story with empathetic insights into life as a young boy with a hearing impairment. We feel deeply with Dylan as he copes with schoolwork, friendship groups and communication, and we are heartened by the cheering resolution.

Bloomsbury Education

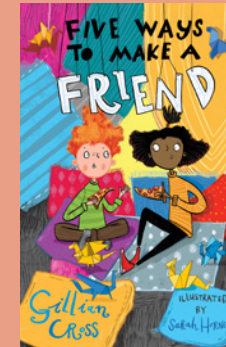


Too Small Tola Atinuke

Illustrator Onyinye Iwu

A small but mighty girl with a talent for numbers demonstrates that being small need not hold anyone back. Great for expanding children's world view, with insights into Tola's Nigerian life, in which people with different religious beliefs live in community. A fantastic early reader.

Walker Books



Five Ways to Make a Friend Gillian Cross

Illustrator Sarah Horne

Ella desperately wants to make friends in her new school. But sometimes what we're looking for is right in front of us. Perfect for challenging tribal thinking about who is our 'in-group' and for exploring what friendship really means.

Barrington Stoke

Picture books continued



The Lost Homework Richard O'Neill & Kirsti Beautyman

Very few books give children insights into life in a Traveller community, and this is a gem. A cheerful, uplifting story about what happens when Sonny loses his homework, and the valuable skills he learns when out of school.

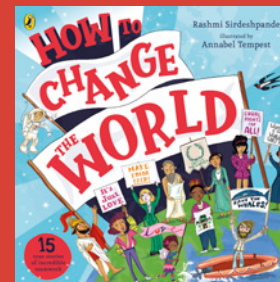
Child's Play



Rain Before Rainbows Smriti Halls & David Litchfield

An exquisite verse picture book exploring emotions through the glories of nature. Ultimately reassuring, it tells us that there will be bad days (when we must support each other), but good days will follow and we must welcome them with grace.

Walker Books



How to Change the World Rashmi Sirdeshpande & Annabel Tempest

Fifteen true stories of how people changed the world, from the abolishing of slavery to the campaign for fairer trade. Through time, empathy has so often been a force for change. Meaningful social action flows from feeling with others and basing action on a deep understanding of what they need.

Puffin



Once Upon a Dragon's Fire Beatrice Blue

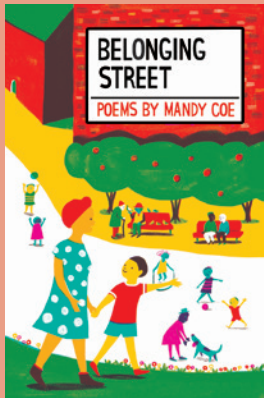
Rumours abound about the fearsome dragon. But it takes two children with open hearts and minds to visit the dragon and recognise what he needs to combat his sorrow and loneliness. A gorgeous picture book about understanding others and the empathetic power of stories.

Frances Lincoln

Picture books, early readers and poetry continued

Keep an eye on empathylab.uk for extra resources

Poetry



Belonging Street Mandy Coe

An inspiring poetry collection celebrating the wonder of moments in nature and human experience, should we only notice them. Encourages empathy with the earth and a feeling of connectedness to others.

Otter-Barry Books



Bright Bursts of Colour Matt Goodfellow

Illustrator Aleksei Bitskoff

One of those rarest of things, a poetry book suitable for every occasion. Funny, thought-provoking and empathetic; an outstanding collection to share, perform and discuss.

Bloomsbury Education



Poems Aloud Joseph Coelho & Daniel Gray-Barnett

A dynamic collection of poems begging to be read aloud. Poems such as 'This Bear' and 'Say How You Feel' explore empathy through a brilliant mix of metaphor, illustration, performance and emotion. Playful, joyous and full of techniques children can mix up and dip into time and again.

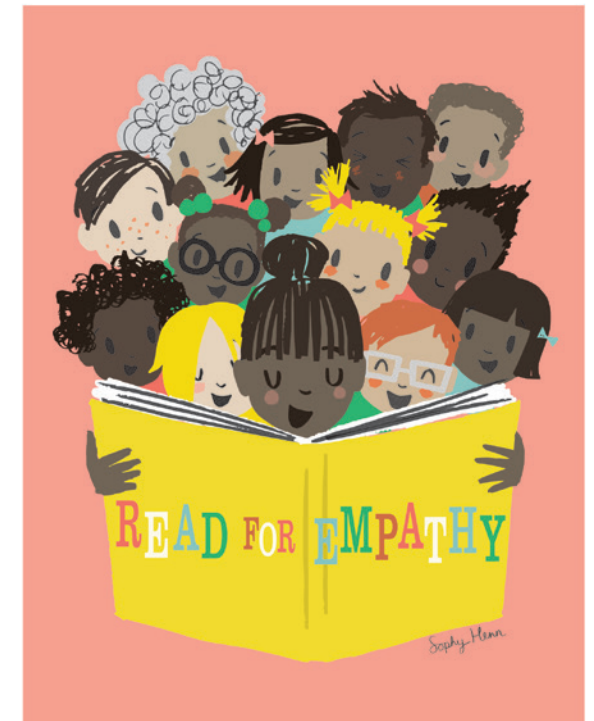
Wide-Eyed Editions



This Rock, That Rock Dom Conlon & Viviane Schwarz

A wonderfully eclectic collection of poems which, at first glance, appear to be about the Moon. Dig a little deeper and discover that they're really about love, family, loneliness and a host of other topics. Excellent for helping children explore and understand emotions.

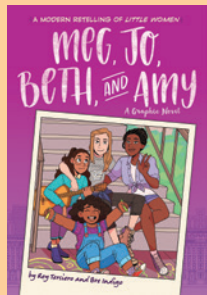
Troika Books



Novels

Ten superb stories and a graphic novel to help children immerse themselves in other people's lives. Perfect for 7-11 year olds. This symbol* denotes books which are demanding reads, suitable for emotionally mature readers. They may have themes and language which need flagging. Please read them in order to decide which children they are appropriate for.

Graphic novel



Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy Rey Terciero & Bre Indigo

A modern retelling of *Little Women* in graphic novel form, with plenty of clues to pore over and subtle nods to the original. Well-formed characters allow readers to take a range of perspectives different to their own. A powerful exploration of sisterhood, blended families and the struggles of growing up.

Little Brown



The Faraway Truth Janae Marks

Feisty Zoe is 12, and all her life has believed bad things about her father, who is in prison. Then a letter from him arrives. Emotionally, we join her and her family on a journey, until he is eventually proved innocent. Great mystery story, and useful for exploring emotions around injustice.

Chicken House

Novels



Talking to the Moon S. E. Durrant

A heart-warming story with strong characters. Iris makes friends, solves a mystery and above all comes to terms with her Grandma's memory loss and onset of dementia.

Nosy Crow

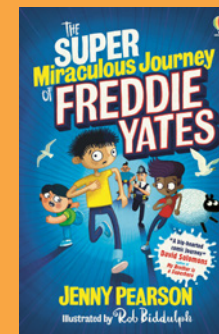


The Space We're In Katya Balen

Illustrator Laura Carlin

Both heartbreaking and hopeful, this beautifully written and illustrated novel focuses on Frank and his younger brother Max, who has autism. Sensitively explores their lives and feelings when their mother dies and their universe falls apart.

Bloomsbury Children's Books



The Super Miraculous Journey of Freddie Yates Jenny Pearson

Illustrator Rob Biddulph

When Freddie's Grams dies, he worries that his family circle is scarily small and goes in search of his biological father. A rumbustious read, combining a memorable adventure with deep emotion – and two great friends who stand alongside Freddie no matter what.

Usborne



The Time of Green Magic* Hilary McKay

Adjusting to blended family life is tough for Abi and her stepbrothers. We experience both the complex feelings the children have around their new relationships and their increasing bond as danger threatens. A gorgeously kind story with a magical twist, and most beautifully written.

Macmillan Children's Books

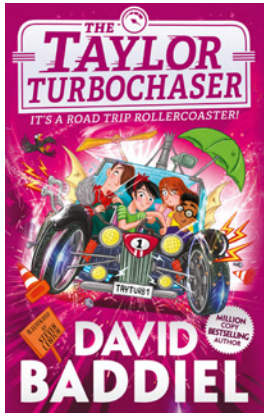


A Kind of Spark Elle McNicoll

An enlightening story of 'outsiders.' The author provides authentic insight into eleven-year-old Addie's experience of autism and a sensitive understanding of Addie's own empathy as she campaigns to commemorate local women tortured as witches because they seemed 'different'. A very impressive debut novel.

Knights Of

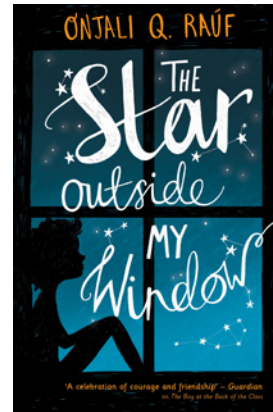
Novels continued



The Taylor Turbochaser David Baddiel

Amy Taylor and friends turn her wheelchair into a super sports car and embark on an adventure to prove her dreams are achievable. A story of hope, friendship, family and breaking down barriers.

HarperCollins



The Star Outside My Window* Onjali Q. Rauf

How does a child cope with the devastating murder of a mother by a father? We are given a heartfelt insight into Aniyah's profound grief and bewilderment, and also her courage. A sense of longing flows through the story as does the power of empathy to comfort and heal.

Orion Children's Books

Keep an eye on empathylab.uk for extra resources



Windrush Child* Benjamin Zephaniah

A novel based on historical events. It faces full on the racism experienced by 10-year-old Leonard, who has to leave Jamaica to join his father in England. In his seventies, Leonard finds that under British law he's an illegal immigrant, one of the Windrush generation. Powerful, important, empathetic.

Scholastic



Freedom* Catherine Johnson

It's 1793 and Nathaniel, a slave in Jamaica, is sent to England to look after pineapples on the ocean voyage. A shocking insight into life as someone's property, but hopeful as we witness the forces that will eventually lead to the abolition of slavery.

Scholastic



Top tips

Help recognise feelings Use lots of different emotion words when discussing stories. Play Empathy Charades with author Joseph Coelho: bit.ly/EmpathyCharades

Talk about characters Instead of discussing the plot, focus on the characters and their feelings. Which was most interesting? What are they afraid of? What might they do next?

Don't forget the pictures Illustrations are especially good for 'reading' other people – can you tell from the picture how the character feels?

Share diverse books Introduce children to stories set in other countries and with characters of different races, religions and experiences. Inspire them to imagine life for people in different situations from their own.




Listen 100% Listening is a crucial part of empathy. Listen carefully as children explore what they've learnt about other people. Use our fun Listening Switch exercise and Listening Vouchers: bit.ly/ListeningSwitch.

Put empathy into action Has a book helped children see the world differently? Do they feel inspired to do something to help others or to combat hatred? Can you act on this as a community, or a family?

EMPATHY DAY 10 JUNE 2021 - change your perspective, walk in someone else's shoes

- Countdown Week starts 3 June, with a special Family Weekend on 5-6 June
- Look out for the free Family Activity Pack – fun, empathy-building activities to do together
- Empathy Day Live – superb online empathy festival, led by authors and illustrators

Here's how you can join in

READ	CONNECT	ACT
Use books to deepen your understanding of others – find and start an empathy-boosting book	Go on an Empathy Walk around your community. Share what you've experienced	Put empathy into action. Make an Empathy Resolution poster and put it in the window
For great ideas, use empathylab.uk/RFE	Practise listening 100%. Use our Listening Switch exercise bit.ly/ListeningSwitch	Teachers, librarians, community leaders: find out more about building empathy into your home and work – come on our training, use our toolkits
Check out what is happening for Empathy Day at your local library or borrow an empathy-boosting book	Link up – share your favourite empathy reads using #ReadForEmpathy	Help drive a new empathy movement. Talk to everyone about why it matters @EmpathyLabUK
		



Go to empathylab.uk
 @EmpathyLabUK
 to find out more.

EmpathyLab

Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.

Empathy is a beacon of hope. Join our 2021 programme

EmpathyLab offers training and Empathy Day toolkits for schools, libraries and early years providers. These help you build young people's empathy, literacy and social activism.

Find out more at empathylab.uk. Training enquiries to laura@empathylab.uk.

How to order the books in this Guide

To order the Read for Empathy book collection and explore how you can develop empathy through the power of books, please visit the Peters website at peters.co.uk/empathy2021.

- The Read for Empathy Primary Collection is available with 26% off and free delivery
- Two primary minipacks are available: 1) Picture books, early readers and poetry 2) novels and graphic novels
- If you have any queries do not hesitate to contact Peters on 0121 666 6646 or email empathy@peters.co.uk.

Thank you to everyone who has helped with this Guide

- Selection Panel: Fozia Aksar, Jon Biddle, Richard Charlesworth, Jenny Ford, Subnum Hariff-Khan, Paul Harris, Nicolette Jones, Miranda McKearney, Sarah Mears, Anna Nolan, Sarah Smith, Simon Smith, Sonia Thompson, Dawn Woods
- Our partners at Peters and the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education
- Publicity: FMCM, Fritha Lindqvist, Jo Reid
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Peters
Official book supplier

