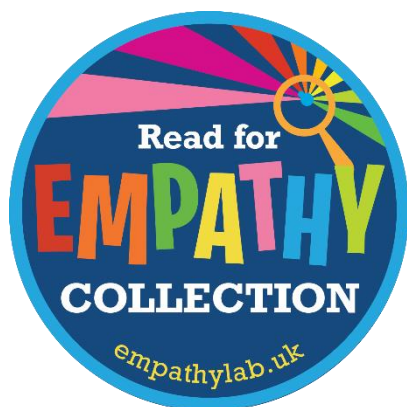




## 2023 *Read for Empathy* book collection announced

65 books for 3-16-year-olds – books and stories  
are the greatest empathy engines ever invented!

Rocket fuel for a growing empathy education movement



Today (08/02/23), **EmpathyLab** unveils its **2023 *Read for Empathy* book collection** by some of the world's best-loved children's authors and illustrators. Selected by expert judges, the **65 books for 3-16-year-olds**, chosen for their empathy-building insights, will be used in homes, schools and libraries in a focused drive, to help young people learn more about empathy - and put it into action.

The ***Read for Empathy* collection** and the annual **Empathy Day** (taking place on **Thursday 8 June 2023**) focus on using books – and talking about them - to build an understanding of the importance, and practice, of empathy. The non-profit **EmpathyLab**

launched in 2015, and these are now key planks in its mission to raise an empathy-educated generation, empowered to build a less divided world.

The **2023 *Read for Empathy* collection** is based on scientific research\* showing that empathy is learnable, and that books and stories are an important empathy-building tool: identifying with fictional characters' feelings helps build real-life empathy.

The primary collection features 40 books for 3-11-year-olds; the secondary collection has 25 books for 12-16-year-olds. They include picture books, novels, poetry, non-fiction, graphic and verse novels. Each offers young people different ways of experiencing, understanding and building empathy – ranging from inspiring social activism to exploring the power of empathy to heal difficult relationships. Many help young readers gain insight into different life experiences, from homelessness to hearing loss, economic hardship to war. Guides to the **2023 *Read for Empathy* collection** (in partnership with book suppliers Peters) are available as free downloads from: [empathylab.uk/RFE-2023](https://empathylab.uk/RFE-2023) (from 8 February).

**EmpathyLab's** founder, **Miranda McKearney OBE**, said: *“Each of the collection's wonderful books has been chosen to do a specific empathy-building job, giving educators practical tools to raise an empathy-educated generation. Imagine the power of every child being inspired to learn about the importance of empathy, and develop this critical life skill – the future would be in safe hands.”*

Worldwide, there are different approaches to empathy education, but the UK is unique in trialling **EmpathyLab's** strategies which systematically exploit the power of literature to build empathy. Teachers using **EmpathyLab's** approach report that using empathy-rich texts and focusing on characters and feelings changes the classroom dynamic, and builds mutual understanding. Impacts include improved behaviour, including a playground culture in which children themselves are helping resolve disputes.

*“Pupils are seeking out injustices and using empathy to resolve differences in the classroom and playground. There have been fewer incidences of racism since we began our empathy journey”* says **Michele Thomas, Headteacher, Pembroke Dock Community School.**

The twelve judges\*\* responsible for choosing the **2023 Read for Empathy collection** are national experts and grassroots practitioners from schools, public libraries and organisations such as the Open University and the School Library Association.

**The judges** said: “We’ve been reading for nine months, carefully choosing a 2023 Read for Empathy collection with maximum relevance, against the background of everything our young people face, from societal divisions to the pandemic’s aftermath. The books help young readers learn about empathy’s power to connect us and develop understanding of other people’s experiences and ways of life. They do not shy away from life’s difficulties, but bring hope and healing in the face of these.”

The judges highlighted the collection’s wider age range than before, and its diversity. For instance of the 134 authors and illustrators, 61 are people of colour; neurodiverse and LGBT+ authors and topics are included. Judges also drew attention to the collection’s powerful themes:

- **Changing society for the better:** empathy builds kinder communities, and several of the books focus on social change: *Fight Back* challenges racism; *Sorya and the Sun Bear* features empathy for animals and environmental activism.
- **Handling and sharing emotions:** a new section for 2023, featuring seven picture books to help young readers understand their own and other people’s emotions: *Sometimes I am Furious* focuses on anger, and *What If, Pig?* on worry.
- **Understanding other cultures:** some books were chosen for their ability to help young people understand and relish different cultures: *I am the Subway* imagines the lives of people travelling on the Seoul subway; *The Can Caravan* celebrates the culture of Travellers.
- **Power of empathy in healing relationships:** powerful characters help young readers learn how empathy can transform difficult lives: *When I See Blue* features an empathic friend helping Ben overcome his OCD; in *The Dream House*, a godfather helps bereaved Rex express his feelings.

The **2023 Read for Empathy collection** of books will be used by parents, carers, teachers and librarians, using books to develop empathy, in the run-up to and beyond **Empathy Day**.

**Empathy Day** is on **Thursday 8 June 2023** and is open to all to get involved and enjoy. Sign up for the **free resources** and a **free online Festival**, where many of the amazing authors and illustrators included in the book collection will feature. Full details to be announced 20 March 2023.

**EmpathyLab** is delighted to reveal their brand new branding and logos which have been lovingly created by the award-winning picture book author and illustrator **Sophy Henn**.

**EmpathyLab** aims to reach 1 million children and young people a year by 2026.

## **2023 Read for Empathy collection: see full list below**

and [empathylab.uk/RFE-2023](https://empathylab.uk/RFE-2023) (from 8 February)

**Illustrations, photography, book covers and new logos for use:**  
[HERE](#)

**For further information and interviews please contact**

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## Read for Empathy books for children aged 3–11

### Understanding and Sharing Emotions

**Sometimes I'm a Baby Bear, Sometimes I'm a Snail** Moira Butterfield & Gwen Millward *Welbeck Editions*

**What If, Pig?** Linzie Hunter  
*HarperCollins' Children's Books*

**Sometimes I Am Furious** Timothy Knapman & Joe Berger *Macmillan Children's Books*

**The River** Tom Percival *Simon & Schuster*

**Storm Goliath** James Sellick & Craig Shuttlewood *New Frontier Publishing*

**Everybody Has Feelings** Jon Burgerman *Oxford University Press*

**The Stompysaurus** Rachel Bright & Chris Chatterton *Orchard Books*

### Picture Books

**I Am the Subway** Kim Hyo-Eun *Scribble UK*

**Our Tower** Joseph Coelho, Illustrator Richard Johnson *Frances Lincoln Children's Books*

**Saving the Butterfly** Helen Cooper  
*Walker Books*

**That's Nice Love** Owen Gent *Book Island*

**The Can Caravan** Richard O'Neill, Illustrator Cindy Kang *Child's Play*

**The Comet** Joe Todd-Stanton *Flying Eye Books*

**The Queen on Our Corner** by Lucy Christopher, Illustrator Nia Tudor *Lantana*

**Valentine's Guest House** Sam Sharland  
*Child's Play*

**Yes You Can, Cow!** Rashmi Sirdeshpande, Illustrator Rikin Parekh  
*Faber and Faber*

### Graphic Novels

**Frankie's World** Aoife Dooley *Scholastic*

**Saving Sorya: Chang and the Sun Bear** Trang Nguyen, Illustrator Jeet Zdung  
*Macmillan Children's Books*

**The Awakening Storm (City of Dragon 1)** Jaimal Yogis, Illustrator Vivian Truong  
*Scholastic*

### Novels

**The Tide Singer** Eloise Williams  
*Barrington Stoke*

**Call Me Lion** Camilla Chester *Firefly Press*

**Can You Feel the Noise?** Stewart Foster  
*Simon & Schuster*

**Children of the Benin Kingdom** Dinah Orji *Dinosaur Books*

**Cuckoo Summer** Jonathan Tulloch  
*Andersen Press*

**Has Anyone Seen Archie Ebbs?** Simon Packham *Firefly Press*

**Keep Dancing, Lizzie Chu** Maisie Chan  
*Bonnier*

**Rosie Raja: Churchill's Spy** Sufiya Ahmed *Bloomsbury*

**The Boy Who Lied** Kim Slater *Macmillan Children's Books*

**The Good Turn** Sharna Jackson *Puffin Books*

**The Last Firefox** Lee Newbery *Puffin Books* [also available in Welsh]

### Early Readers

**All to Play For** Eve Ainsworth *Barrington Stoke*

**Sidney Makes a Wish** Lisa Thompson  
*Barrington Stoke*

**Nikhil and Jay: The Star Birthday** Chitra Soundar *Otter-Barry Books*

**The Boy Who Grew a Tree** Polly Ho-Yen, Illustrator Sojung Kim-McCarthy  
*Knights Of*

### Non-Fiction

**First Questions and Answers: What is Racism?** Katie Daynes, Jordan Akpojaro, Illustrator Sandhya Prabhat *Usborne*

**Who Are You?** Smriti Halls, Illustrator Ali Pye *Red Shed*



[empathylab.uk](http://empathylab.uk)



[@EmpathyLabUK](https://www.instagram.com/EmpathyLabUK)



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## Poetry

**Cloud Soup** by Kate Wakeling, Illustrator

Elina Braslina *Emma Press*

**Courage In a Poem** Cecilia Knapp,

Debjani Chatterjee, Valerie Bloom,  
Mandy Coe and 16 others, Illustrators

Annalise Barber, Mariana Roldan, Masha

Manapov, Nabila Adani *Little Tiger*

**Here Be Monsters** Jay Hulme, Illustrator

Sahar Haghoo *Pop-Up*

**This Is How the Change Begins** Nicola  
Davies *Graffeg*

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## Read for Empathy books for young people aged 12–16

### Novels

**Fight Back** A.M. Dassu *Scholastic*

**Nisha's War** Dan Smith *Chicken House*

**No Man's Land** Joanna Nadin *UCLan  
Publishing*

**Our Sister, Again** Sophie Cameron *Little  
Tiger*

**Read Between the Lies** Malcolm Duffy  
*Zephyr*

**Run for Your Life** Jane Mitchell *Little  
Island*

**The Light in Everything** Katya Balen  
*Bloomsbury*

**The Secret Sunshine Project** Benjamin  
Dean *Simon and Schuster*

**This Is My Truth** Yasmin Rahman *Hot  
Key Books*

**Tyger** S F Said, Illustrator Dave McKean  
*David Fickling Books*

**When I See Blue** Lily Bailey *Orion*

**When Our Worlds Collided** Danielle  
Jawando *Simon and Schuster*

**When Shadows Fall** Sita Brahmachari,  
Illustrator Natalie Sirett *Little Tiger*

### Graphic Novels

**The Girl from the Sea** Molly Knox

Ostertag *Scholastic*

**The Golden Hour** Niki Smith *Hachette*

### Non-Fiction

**Queer Up** Alexis Caught *Walker Books*

**You Can Do It** Marcus Rashford, Carl  
Anka *Macmillan Children's Books*

### Short Novels

**Needle** Patrice Lawrence *Barrington  
Stoke*

**Evolution** Zelda Conway *Zuntold*

**The Dream House** Laura Dockrill  
*Piccadilly*

### Picture Books

**What Do You See When You Look at A  
Tree?** Emma Carlisle *Bonnier*

### Poetry

**Let's Chase Stars Together** Matt  
Goodfellow *Bloomsbury*

**These are the Words** Nikita Gill  
*Macmillan Children's Books*

### Short Stories

**Happy Here** introduced by Sharna  
Jackson *Knights Of*

### Verse Novels

**The Silver Chain** Jion Sheibani *Hot Key  
Books*



## **Notes to Editors**

### **EmpathyLab**

EmpathyLab's mission is to raise an empathy-educated generation, inspired to build a kinder and less divided world. The non-profit aims to reach 1 million children a year by 2026. Founded in 2015, EmpathyLab specialises in using literature to build children's empathy awareness and skills – its work is based on scientific research showing that empathy is a learnable skill, and that reading, and identifying with book characters' feelings, builds our real-life empathy.

EmpathyLab's programme consists of:

- An annual Read for Empathy book collection chosen by expert judges. The 2023 collection features 65 books for 3-16-year-olds.
- An Affiliate Schools programme for primary and secondary schools.
- An annual Empathy Day every June.
- *We've Got This!*, a new empathy handbook for children aged 7-12, with six practical steps to develop their empathy superpower. Written by Rashmi Sirdeshpande, illustrated by Juliana Eigner in collaboration with EmpathyLab, and published by Quarto on 18/05/23.

Publishers are important partners, and EmpathyLab is thrilled that 46 children's publishers have now joined a new Empathy Builders scheme: EmpathyLab's work is supported by the Postcode Society Trust.

[www.empathylab.uk](http://www.empathylab.uk) @EmpathyLabUK

### **\*Scientific research**

<https://www.empathylab.uk/research>

### **\*\*2023 Read for Empathy judging panel**

**Jon Biddle** – Teacher, Moorlands Primary Academy & Patron of Reading coordinator

**Richard Charlesworth** – KS2 teacher, reading lead and Assistant Headteacher at Avonmore Primary, London & UKLA representative for London

**Kevin Cobane** – Teacher, University of Birmingham School

**Teresa Cremin** – Professor of Education (Literacy) & Co-Director of the Literacy & Social Justice Centre, The Open University

**Scott Evans** – Teacher & founder, The Reader Teacher

**Paul Harris** – Teacher, Cleeve Meadow School, Kent

**Shaheen Mogradia** Engagement & Programmes Assistant, Bolton Library & Museum

**Sarah Smith** – Libraries Development Manager, Brent Libraries

**Sonia Thompson** – Headteacher, St. Matthew's C.E. Primary School, Birmingham

**Dawn Woods** – Member Development Librarian, School Library Association

**Miranda McKearney OBE** – EmpathyLab founder

**Sarah Mears MBE** – Programme Manager, Libraries Connected & EmpathyLab founder

### **Peters**

EmpathyLab's work on the **2023 Read for Empathy** book collection is supported by Peters – **Ray Dyer, Peters' Managing Director**, comments: *"The reach and impact of EmpathyLab continues to grow and we see this with many of the schools and libraries we work with. Using books to develop empathy is so effective and we are thrilled to play a small part in building the EmpathyLab community."*

### **Accessing the books**

The books can be bought and ordered through local independent bookshops and other retailers – instore or via [bookshop.org](http://bookshop.org).

Sets of the primary and secondary books are available to buy from specialist children's schools and libraries book supplier Peters. Visit [peters.co.uk/empathycollection2023](http://peters.co.uk/empathycollection2023) to order. You can also borrow the books from your local library.

### **For further information and interviews please contact**

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