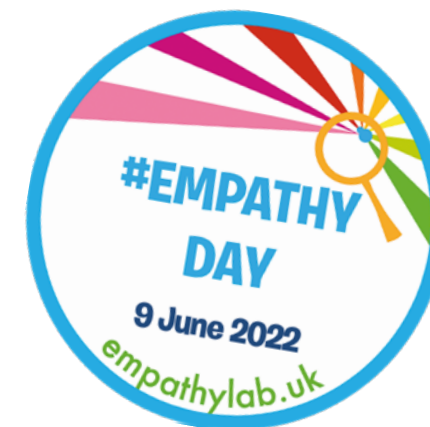
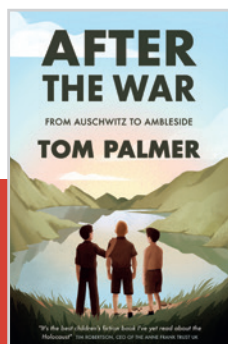




EmpathyLab



Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.



2022 Read For Empathy Guide

Books to build empathy - for young people aged 12-16

#ReadForEmpathy

How does
empathy work?

Graphic and
verse novels

Poetry and
non-fiction

Novels

Top tips



EmpathyLab

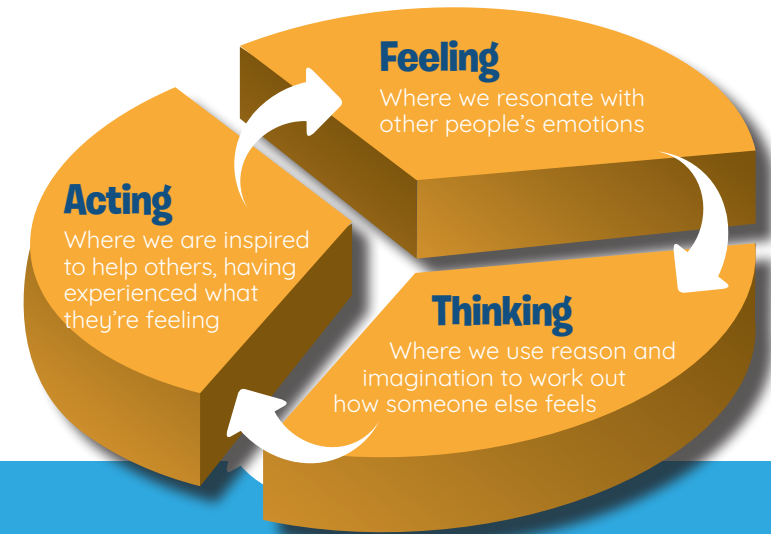
Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.

Empathy is our ability to understand and experience someone else's feelings. It builds stronger, kinder communities. It's a crucial life skill that young people need in order 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 young people 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 2022 Read for Empathy collection

This Guide is for people living and working with 12–16 year olds. You'll find twenty-five fantastic empathy-boosting books – chosen by an expert panel – to help young people gain insights into other people's feelings, perspectives and ways of life.

If ever we needed a world with more empathy, it's now. Please use the books to inspire everyone to put empathy into action – in 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 4–11 year olds and a Welsh collection for 4–16 year olds. You can use these all year round, and they will be especially useful in the run-up to Empathy Day on 9 June 2022. Please join in! Register for updates at www.empathylab.uk and follow [@EmpathyLabUK](https://twitter.com/EmpathyLabUK).

Graphic and verse novels, poetry, non-fiction and novels

Twenty-five powerful books, including novels, non-fiction, verse novels, poetry and graphic novels. All chosen to help young people aged 12–16 develop real-life empathy. We have used this symbol* to indicate those that are suitable for older readers, and books with themes that may need to be introduced with caution.

Graphic and verse novels



Little Light Coral Rumble

Ava is enchanting, collecting friends wherever she goes. But her life is challenging as her family escapes an abusive situation. This heart-warming verse novel gives us a sense of how love and empathy can make a difference to traumatised children.

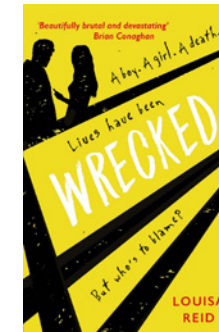
Troika Books



The Crossing* Manjeet Mann

A brilliant verse novel told from the perspectives of British teenager Natalie and refugee Sammy who is struggling to reach UK shores. We become deeply involved in characters who feel all too real, making this a profound and unsettling read.

Penguin Books



Wrecked* Louisa Reid

A courtroom verse novel from a fine writer. Teenage couple Joe and Imogen stand trial. As the story unfolds, readers share Joe's growing understanding of how toxic the relationship has become and the impact it will have on both their lives.

Guppy Publishing



Punching the Air* Ibi Zoboi & Yusef Salaam

Based on true miscarriage-of-justice events, this is the story of Amal, a black teenager whose life has been blighted by racism and prejudice. An exceptional first-person verse novel through which we experience Amal's dreams, regrets and memories. A visceral experience of the impact a lack of empathy and understanding has on people who are unjustly treated.

HarperCollins



The Sad Ghost Club Lize Meddings

Themes of loneliness, isolation and belonging are reflected in this unusual graphic novel. It conveys the powerfully compassionate message that it's OK to feel sad and go through difficult times, and celebrates empathetic friendship.

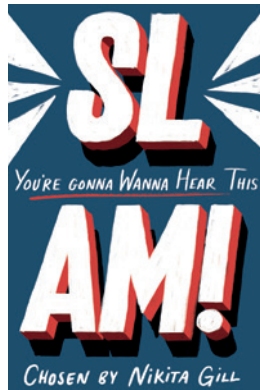
Hodder Children's Books

'The only way problems are solved politically and historically in this world is through understanding and empathy. I know no better pathway to understanding than books.'

Michael Morpurgo, Author

Graphic and verse novels, poetry, non-fiction and novels

Poetry



SLAM! You're Gonna Wanna Hear This* **Chosen by Nikita Gill**

A brilliant anthology of diverse performance poetry, covering a range of emotions around love, anger, injustice, identity and acceptance. Features up-and-coming poets with guest stars such as Dean Atta and Sophia Thakur. A cry for social justice and equality flows through the whole collection.

Macmillan Children's Books



The Curious Case of Karl Nova* **Karl Nova**

'Some things don't make sense until they are past tense.' Brilliant poet Karl Nova shares his life experience in raw, powerful, personal poems and prose, moving between the UK and Nigeria. His wise and honest life reflections frame the poems in a particularly engaging way. Fantastic platform for deep discussions with young people.

Caboodle Books

Non-Fiction



This Book Is Cruelty-Free **Linda Newbery**

'It's not difficult to realise animals have feelings.' Linda Newbery challenges us to live differently, with empathy for animals, and her book is packed with inspiring, do-able ideas for how we can avoid being cruel to our fellow creatures.

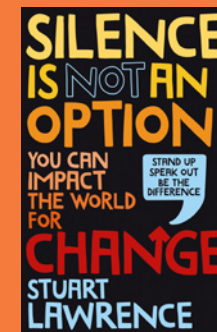
Farshore



Black and British **David Olusoga**

A revealing history of British black heritage from the Romans onwards. We are horrified by the cruelty and racism displayed to black people, grateful to those who felt empathy and fought for justice. A fight that continues!

Macmillan Children's Books



Silence Is Not an Option **Stuart Lawrence**

Empathy often underpins our desire to make a difference. Stuart Lawrence is the brother of murdered Stephen Lawrence, and in this powerful non-fiction book he gives young people tools to 'stand up, speak out, be the difference.'

Scholastic

'I really truly believe that increased empathy will change the world, maybe even save the world. Reading and writing and creating are one of the best ways to harness our empathy superpower.'

Holly Bourne, Author

Graphic and verse novels, poetry, non-fiction and novels

Keep an eye on empathylab.uk for extra resources

Novels



Splinters of Sunshine* **Patrice Lawrence**

Richly drawn characters are key to this book which tackles life's realities for so many young people. Issues of family breakdown, prison, racism and county lines are woven together in a mystery story about understanding each other, forgiveness and love.

Hodder Children's Books



Felix Ever After* **Kacen Callender**

Felix is a young trans man, exploring an identity he doesn't quite understand. A deeply felt, authentic depiction of the impact bullying and misunderstanding can have on a vulnerable teenager, and a celebration of empathetic friendship.

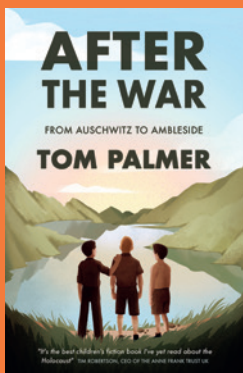
Faber & Faber



Sofa Surfer **Malcolm Duffy**

Tyler's life is disrupted by meeting Spider, who is homeless, and becoming anxious about her. We connect with Tyler's desperation to help her and through strongly drawn characters gain new insights into hidden homelessness. Thoughtful novel.

Zephyr



After the War: From Auschwitz to Ambleside **Tom Palmer**

Illustrator Violet Tobacco

Based on a true events, this is the story of three Jewish boys evacuated to the Lake District from a Nazi concentration camp. We really feel how their terror renders them unable to embrace freedom, and their slow healing. A warning of the consequences when empathy is lost.

Barrington Stoke



When the Sky Falls **Phil Earle**

Deeply moving novel set in 1941 war-torn London. Angry, abused Joseph is sent to live with gruff Mrs F who is struggling to keep her family zoo going and to keep a mighty silverback gorilla safe. She's not an easy woman, but steadfastly keeps on caring for Joseph and doesn't give up on him, no matter how he behaves. Finally, in the novel's extraordinary climax, he learns to trust.

Andersen Press

'Here's the cool thing - when you read, you imagine what someone else thinks, feels, does, is. We become more empathetic and ultimately that makes us become more human.'

Kwame Alexander, Author

Graphic and verse novels, poetry, non-fiction and novels

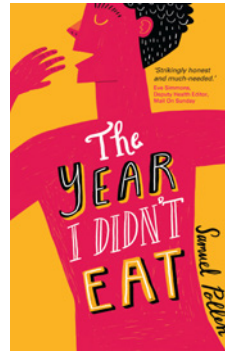
Novels continued



Queen of Freedom* Catherine Johnson

Gripping, tough historical fiction set high in Jamaica's Blue Mountains, in the 1720s. Queen Nanny is the wise woman and guerrilla fighter leading the Maroons (ex-slaves) as they struggle for their freedom. Her voice and perspective give the reader a visceral insight into the passion with which people fight against oppression.

Pushkin Children's Books



The Year I Didn't Eat* Samuel Pollen

Max is loved, but he feels very isolated as he tries to cope with anorexia that threatens to overwhelm him. We are exposed to his inner thoughts through his diary and we are with him as he takes his first tentative steps towards recovery. Books about boys experiencing anorexia are few and far between, so this is very valuable.

ZunTold



In the Key of Code Aimee Lucido

12-year-old Emmy feels out of step in a musical family and new school until she discovers a charismatic teacher, who introduces her to coding. A charming verse novel about not judging others and having the courage to accept your identity.

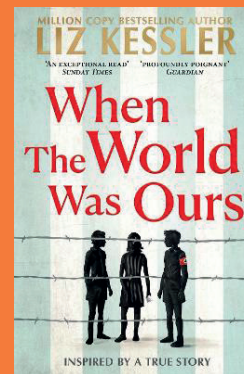
Walker Books



When Life Gives You Mangoes Kereen Getten

Through troubled Clara's resonant voice we discover that she can't go in the water, or remember the events of last summer. Set in Sycamore, a small Caribbean village, an absorbing, moving read as the community gradually helps Clara face what has happened, and the reality about her troublesome best friend Gaynah.

Pushkin Children's Books



When the World Was Ours Liz Kessler

A powerful story told from the separate viewpoints of three best friends in Germany as war begins. It demonstrates how hatred turns to extremism and how humanity is so easily shattered when tribal behaviour takes hold. Empathy is the antidote to tribalism.

Simon & Schuster Children's Books

'Our students are seeing how reading is so much more than just understanding words on a page. Using books to build empathy helps young people share their love of stories, learn about different people and be transported to different places.'

Sarah Higgs, Teacher

Graphic and verse novels, poetry, non-fiction and novels

Keep an eye on empathylab.uk for extra resources

Novels continued



Show Us Who You Are Elle McNicholl

What is perfection? Are all humans equally valued? Cora, who has autism, is confronted by these questions when she gets involved with the futuristic Pomegranate Institute. A compelling novel from an important writer that ultimately celebrates diverse humanity.

Knights Of



In Her Element Jamila Gavin

Illustrator Jacinta Read

Sophie is a non-verbal wheelchair user. Through sensitive narrative, we are privy to her dreams and desires and, as she moves away from her family, we are with her as new friendships help her realise her ambitions.

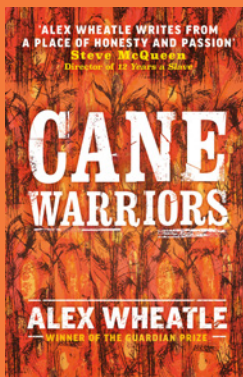
Pop Up Projects CIC



Future Girl Asphyxia

A really unusual novel about sustainability, love, tribal behaviour and negative attitudes towards disability. Through her journals we get to know and understand Piper, a deaf girl who is determined to understand her place in the world and celebrate her true identity.

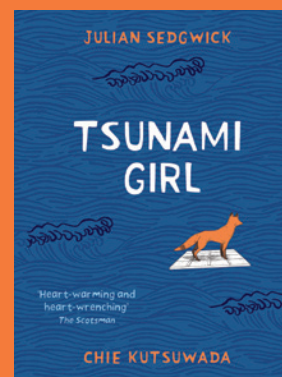
Allen & Unwin UK Children's



Cane Warriors* Alex Wheatle

A hard-hitting, visceral novel based on the true story of Tacky's War against British slavers in 1760s Jamaica. Wheatle forces us to confront painful truths about the experience of slavery, raising questions about violence, retribution and how a society can lose its humanity.

Andersen Press



Tsunami Girl Julian Sedgwick

Illustrator Chie Kutsuwada

Yuki and her grandfather are caught up in the 2011 Japan earthquake. Despite unbearable trauma, her resilience is bolstered by the love and artistic connection to her grandpa. Part prose, part manga, this is a dramatic and moving read, bringing new insights into the experience of living through a tsunami.

Guppy Publishing

'EmpathyLab gives us unique tools to help children bring about social change. If we all work together, I'm confident we can highlight injustice and build empathy, and hope to see a better, more compassionate world.'

A. M. Dassu, Author

Five top tips

Put empathy into action Research shows that empathy plays a big role in our desire to make the world a better place. Seek out books with themes that inspire young people to become empathy activists.

Talk about characters Instead of discussing what might happen next, focus on the characters and their feelings. What are they afraid of? What might they do next? Which was most interesting? This builds understanding of other people.

Build human connections Sharing stories connects us to each other in new ways. Read the books yourself as a springboard for deep conversations to help you better understand a young person.

Share diverse books Challenge young people to read a book that jolts them into understanding lives very different from their own, such as stories set in other countries or with characters of different races, religions and experiences.

Listen well Try to listen deeply, with 100% attention, as young people talk about their experience of a book. Join Adisa and A. M. Dassu for the Empathy Mirror exercise, which is all about using body language to work out how others are feeling <https://bit.ly/3114T6f>.



EMPATHY DAY 9 JUNE 2022 - empathy is our human superpower

- Take the brand new **Superpower Challenge** – nine activities to boost your empathy
- Look out for the free **Family Activity Pack** – fun empathy-building activities to do together
- Join us for **Empathy Day Live!** – a superb free online festival, led by authors and illustrators

How to join in the Superpower Challenge

In the run-up to Empathy Day see empathylab.uk for tips and templates to help young people, families and classes complete these activities. We'd love to see young people's responses – do share on social media using [@EmpathyLabUK](https://twitter.com/EmpathyLabUK) [#EmpathySuperpowerChallenge](https://twitter.com/EmpathySuperpowerChallenge)

READ	CONNECT	ACT
Speak Empathy to Power Recommend stories to the decision makers in your life! They need empathy superpowers to help make the best choices.	Human Discoveries Take turns to share something no-one else knows about you – a thought, a dream, a special possession... Have a conversation to discover more.	Unsung Empathy Superheroes Celebrate people making a difference through empathy. Display their achievements on an Empathy Wall of Fame.
Superpower X-Ray Glasses Design your own empathy glasses to help you see the world through someone else's eyes.	Listening-Switch Power Bank Practise your listening superpower – how many listening skills can you switch on?	Empathy Resolutions Make a resolution to change things for the better, then share to inspire others.
#EmpathyPowerPose Empathy readers assemble! Strike a pose with your favourite empathy reads – and share safely on social media.	Empathy Walks Notice and reflect as you take a walk in your local community. How might you put empathy into action to help those around you?	Give an empathy comic strip gift Create a comic strip story about empathy as a human superpower. Give it as a gift or share with someone in your community or school.

Using picture books creatively

Picture books work for all age groups, and have an important empathy-building role. We've paired two books from this collection with picture books exploring similar themes, drawn from our Read for Empathy Guide for children aged 4–11.

Resilience in the face of hardship  The Invisible Tom Percival	Empathy for our fellow creatures  Last: The story of a white rhino Nicola Davies
 Little Light Coral Rumble	 This Book Is Cruelty Free ANIMALS AND US Linda Newbery This Book Is Cruelty Free Linda Newbery

PASS IT ON - inspire someone else to develop their Empathy Superpower

Share your Empathy Day activities & celebrations with us: [@EmpathyLabUK](https://twitter.com/EmpathyLabUK) [#EmpathyDay](https://twitter.com/EmpathyDay)

EmpathyLab

Read stories. Build empathy. Make a better world.

Empathy is a beacon of hope. Join our 2022 programme

EmpathyLab offers training and Empathy Day toolkits for families, schools, libraries and early years providers.

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

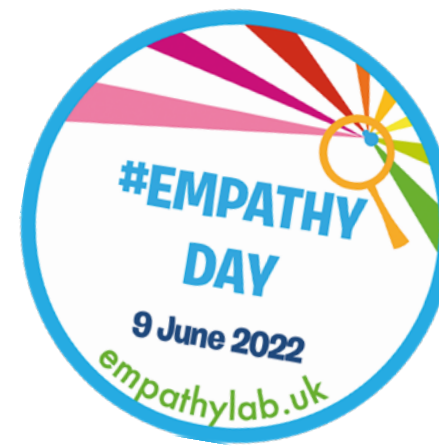
How to order the books in this Guide

To buy the Read For Empathy book collection, please contact your local independent bookshop or Peters, and explore how you can develop empathy through the power of books.

- Independent booksellers: find your local shop here booksellers.org.uk/bookshopsearch
- Peters: peters.co.uk. If you have any queries do not hesitate to contact Peters on **0121 666 6646** or email empathy@peters.co.uk
- You can also borrow the books from your local library

Thank you to everyone who has helped with this Guide

- Selection Panel: Fozia Aksar, Jon Biddle, Richard Charlesworth, Kevin Cobane, Teresa Cremin, Scott Evans, Subnum Hariff-Khan, Paul Harris, Miranda McKearney, Sarah Mears, Sarah Smith, Sonia Thompson, Dawn Woods
- Our partners at Peters and the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education
- Publicity: FMCM, Fritha Lindqvist
- Leaflet editing: Talya Baker
- Read For Empathy illustrators: George Ermos, Binny Talib



Peters

Official book supplier