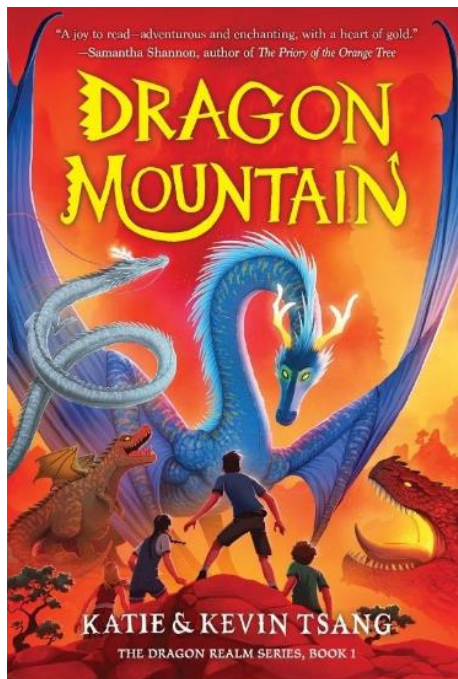


Discovering Children's Books: *Step Inside Your Story* fantasy book list

Dragon Mountain (The Dragon Realm series)

Written by Katie and Kevin Tsang



Series published: *Dragon Mountain* (2020), *Dragon Legend* (2021), *Dragon City* (2021), *Dragon Rising* (2022), *Dragon Destiny* (2022), *A Dragon Realm Adventure* (2023).

Recommended reading age: 9+

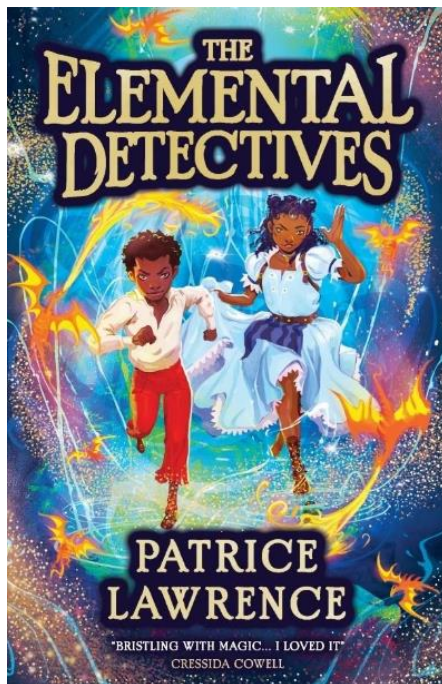
Format: Chapter book with illustrations

Dragons, magical realms, and a fight between good and evil: this series has all the hallmarks of a classic fantasy adventure.

12-year-old Billy Chan is dismayed when he's sent by his parents to a summer camp in China. But there he meets Dylan, Charlotte and Ling-Fei, and together they discover a secret realm of mythical creatures. Deep within the mountain behind the camp are four warrior dragons who were trapped there in an ancient conflict. To set the dragons free and prevent a great catastrophe, Billy and his friends must go on perilous journey to the dragon realm.

The Elemental Detectives

Written by Patrice Lawrence



Series published: *The Elemental Detectives* (2022), *The Case of the Chaos Monster* (2023)

Recommended reading age: 8 to 9+

Format: Chapter book

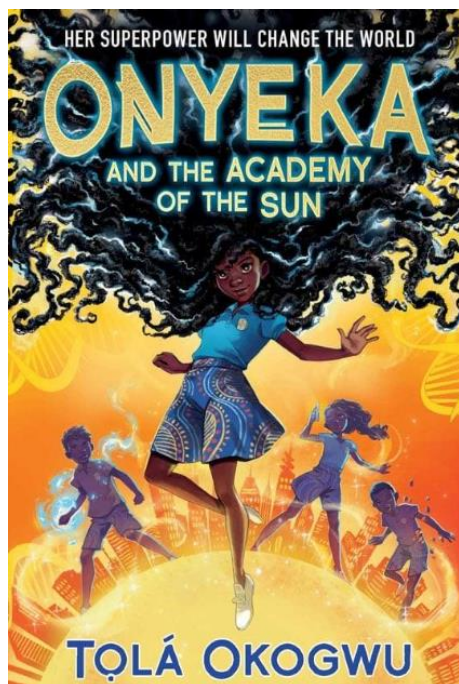
This story brings together historical and imaginary worlds, creating a recognisable but reimagined fantastical London brimming with hidden magic.

It is 1764, and London is inhabited by supernatural 'Elemental spirits' hiding in plain sight: the fiery Dragons, the airy Fumis, the watery Chads and the earthbound Magogs.

Marisee's grandmother is one of the few people familiar with the spirits, but one day she goes missing. When a sleeping sickness spreads across London, the infected fall into a dangerously long slumber, trapped in their own dreams. It falls to Marisee and Robert, the Elemental Detectives, to track down the vengeful Shepherdess and look for answers. Encountering hostile magical creatures along the way, the children must race against the clock to prevent London falling into an eternal sleep.

Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun

Written by Tola Okogwu



Series published: *Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun* (2022), *Onyeka and the Secret Superhero* (2024)

Recommended reading age: 9+

Format: Chapter book

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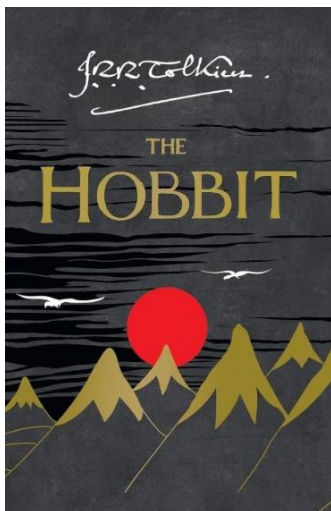
12-year-old Onyeka is a British-Nigerian girl living in London with her mum. She feels she doesn't fit in and is used to getting unwanted attention for her hair. But as the story unfolds, she discovers that her hair is *really* her superpower.

When Onyeka and her best friend Cheyenne go swimming one day, Cheyenne nearly drowns – but Onyeka's hair seem to come alive, and it pulls her friend from the water.

Onyeka's mother reveals that she is a Solari, one of a special group of people born with superpowers unique to Nigeria. Knowing that she has inherited this power from her father, she is whisked away to Nigeria to look for him. There she enrolls at The Academy of the Sun. As she tries to find her place, she learns to control her powers and understand herself better. All the while, dark forces threaten the natural and supernatural worlds, and Onyeka must join the fight.

The Hobbit

Written by J.R.R. Tolkien



Published: 1937

Recommended reading age: 9+

Format: Chapter book

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This classic fantasy epic is beloved for its expansive imaginary worlds and pantheon of mythical creatures.

A hobbit named Bilbo Baggins' leads a comfortable life in the Shire, until the wizard Gandalf appears on his doorstep. Gandalf asks Bilbo to accompany him and 13 dwarves on an important quest to reclaim their ancestral land Erebor and retrieve the treasure guarded by the thieving dragon, Smaug.

Journeying across the mythical realms of Middle Earth, the group must cross forests and mountains, and confront trolls, goblins and other foes who stand in their way. The story is brought to sparkling life by Tolkien's own hand-drawn maps of Middle Earth, created before he wrote any of the stories.

Hilda

Written and illustrated by Luke Pearson



Series published: *Hilda and the Troll* (2010/reissued in 2013), *Hilda and the Midnight Giant* (2012), *Hilda and the Bird Parade* (2016), *Hilda and the Black Hound* (2014), *Hilda and the Stone Forest* (2016).

Recommended reading age: 7+

Format: Children's graphic novel

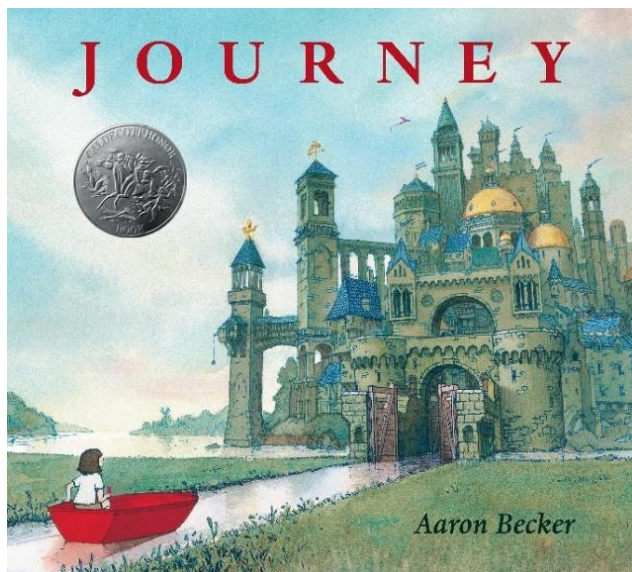
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Inspired by Scandinavian folklore and set in the Nordic countryside, Luke Pearson's delightful series of graphic novels encourages curiosity and exploration of the unknown.

Hilda, our blue-haired, spirited young protagonist, is eager for adventure. She lives in a world where encounters with eccentric mythical creatures like giants, elves and spirits are an everyday occurrence. Accompanied by Twig, her faithful pet deer-fox, Hilda's adventures take her down unexpected paths. In this first instalment, Hilda's tale begins with an expedition to draw the magical creatures inhabiting the snowy mountains near her home.

Journey

Illustrated by Aaron Becker



Series published: *Journey* (2013), *Quest* (2013), and *Return* (2017)

Recommended reading age: 4+

Format: Picture book

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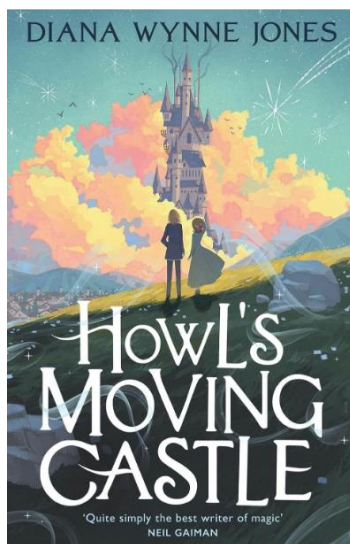
One day in the city, a lonely girl picks up a purple pen and draws a magic door on her bedroom wall. From here, she journeys through limitless realms of the imagination.

Each book offers an immersive journey through watercolour worlds, as the protagonist makes her way overland and underwater, through skies and streams, sand dunes and cities, forests and castles. She meets monarchs, magical creatures, and makes a best friend along the way.

This stunning illustrated trilogy tells an epic story, all without a single written word. Demonstrating the power of visual storytelling, it invites the reader to use their imagination and read between the pages.

Howl's Moving Castle

Written by Diana Wynn Jones



Series published: *Howl's Moving Castle* (1986), *Castle in the Air* (1990), *House of Many Ways* (2008)

Recommended reading age: 8-12

Format: Chapter book with illustrations

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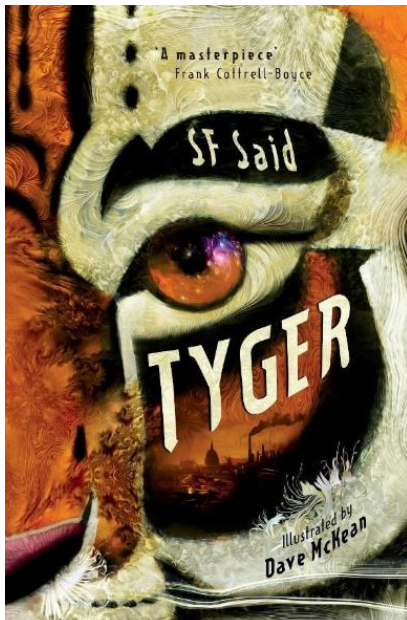
In the town of Market Chipping, 18-year-old Sophie Hatter lives a mundane life running her family hat shop. That is until she meets the Witch of the Waste, who puts a curse on Sophie that turns her into an old woman. The only person able to undo the curse is the notorious Wizard Howl, who lives in a magical moving castle and has a fearsome reputation.

Sophie visits the castle under the pretence of becoming Howl's housekeeper. There she meets a young apprentice named Michael, and the fire demon Calcifer who is bound to Howl by a mysterious contract. Calcifer agrees to help lift Sophie's curse, if she can figure out a way to break this contract.

Set in a world in which magic is part of everyday life, Dianna Wynne Jones spins a charming tale exploring courage and personal growth.

Tyger

Written by SF Said and illustrated by Dave McKean



Published: 2023

Recommended reading age: 9+

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Format: Chapter book with illustrations

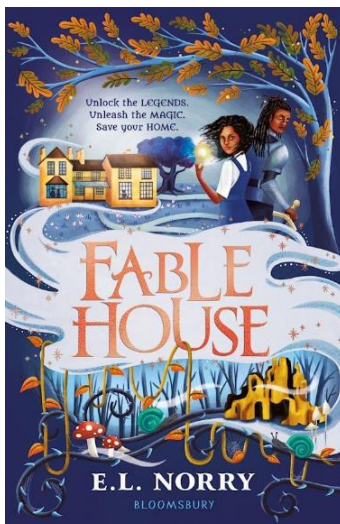
Tyger takes place in an alternative fantastical London where the British Empire still exists, and slavery was never abolished. The city is troubled by extreme wealth inequality and racial segregation and dotted with checkpoints guarded by soldiers.

Young Adam Alhambra lives a difficult and dangerous life, experiencing daily discrimination. One day, he is attacked while passing through a checkpoint. Out of nowhere, a magical creature comes to his rescue: a Tyger. This wise and kind talking beast possesses mysterious magical powers but is in danger and needs Adam's help. Determined to save her, Adam and his friend Zadie will realise it's not just the Tyger's life that's at stake - their whole world is on the verge of destruction. Adam's journey helps him discover his own special powers and his true potential.

With enchanting black and white illustrations, this modern fantasy juggles dark themes with glimmers of hope and magic.

Fablehouse

Written by E.L. Norry



Published: 2023

Recommended reading age: 9+

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Format: Chapter book

Set in 1954, this story weaves together fantasy adventure, Arthurian legend and British social history. Heather has spent her life in care and at age 11, she is moved to new home called Fablehouse: a crumbling clifftop-mansion by the woods. Here Heather finds a haven among other children who, like her, were born to relationships between Black American servicemen and white British women during the Second World War.

One day Heather and her friends discover a magical portal in the woods, leading to a *fae* realm. It is guarded by Palamedes, the legendary Black Knight from King Arthur's round table. He warns them of a dangerous plot from the fae realm to overthrow the human world. When they notice that some of the other children and staff at Fablehouse are acting strangely, Heather and her friends realise their new home is in danger. Heather must set off on a quest to realise her own potential and save the world.

Kwame's Magic Quest: Rise of the Green Flame

Written by Bernard Mensah and illustrated by Natasha Nayo



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Series published: *Rise of the Green Flame* (2024), *Race to the Magic Mountain* (2024), *Bite of the Kaba Lagoon* (2025), *Curse of the Akoma Stone* (2025)

Recommended reading age: 6+

Format: Chapter book with illustrations

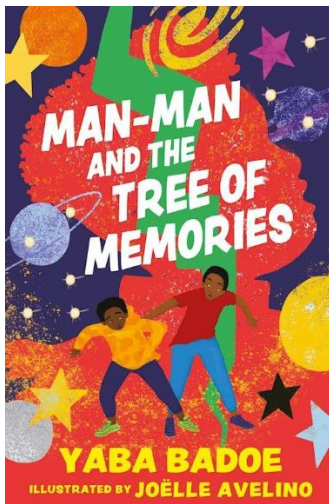
This fully illustrated adventure is inspired by African culture, magic and mythology.

It is time for eight-year-old Kwame to start school – but this isn't just any school. Kwame will be learning magic at the Nkonyaa school.

Following the school's tradition, Kwame receives his first calabash: a magic bowl made from a gourd fruit. But as Kwame's calabash doesn't seem to work, he's unable to access his magical powers. When his friends begin acting strangely, Kwame suspects evil forces at work. Can he uncover who, or what, is responsible, and unlock his powers in time to save his friends?

Man-man and the Tree of Memories

Written by Yaba Badoe and illustrated by Joelle Avelino



Published: 2023

Recommended reading age: 8+

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Format: Chapter book with illustrations

Yaba Badoe's imaginative and emotional tale explores family, Caribbean culture, African folklore, and the painful history of the slave trade. Complemented by Joelle Avelino's exuberant artwork, this story is poignant and joyful.

Man-man lives in West London with his family and is excited to dance at the Notting Hill Carnival. But his mother is suffering from a mysterious illness and unable to join in the festivities. Man-man is desperate to help.

On the day of the carnival, Man-man somehow conjures an ancient spirit: the Queen of Revels. She transports Man-man, his best friend Kareem and his sister Panama to Africa's past where they visit the sacred Tree of Memories. There Man-man begins to find out about the painful experiences of his ancestors. Can understanding the past help him change the future?

In Our Hands

Written and illustrated by Lucy Farfort



Published: 2022

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Recommended reading age: 5+

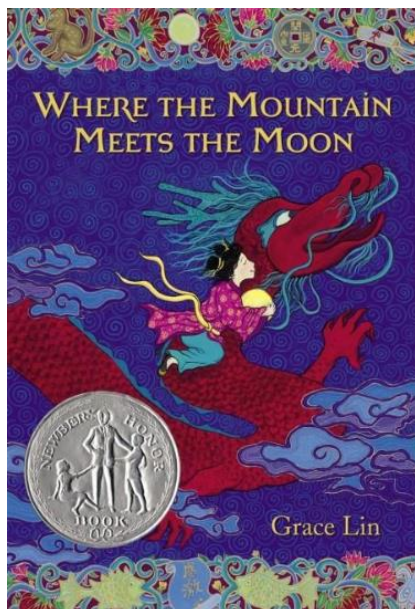
Format: Picture book

One day, the world begins to dull. Little by little, colour starts disappearing, and the change is so gradual that people don't notice at first - or perhaps choose not to see it. As life becomes increasingly grey, people lose hope, turn against each other and become more isolated. But a group of determined children work together to bring colour back to their community so they can build a better future.

Lucy Farfort's picture book is a short but powerful tale of hope, community, and how we all have the power to enact change - however small.

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

Written and illustrated by Grace Lin



Published: 2010

Recommended reading age: 8+

Format: Chapter book with illustrations

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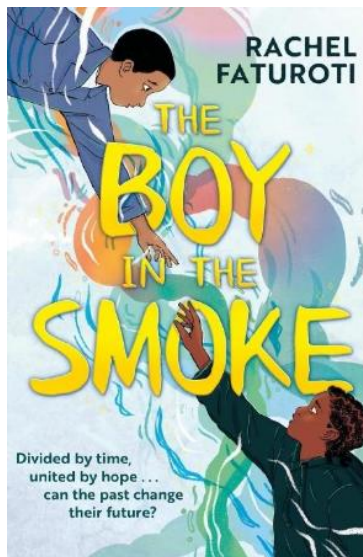
This enchanting chapter book takes readers on an epic journey through the magical realms of Chinese folklore.

10-year-old Minli is an adventurous spirit, who loves listening to her father's fantastical stories. But Minli and her parents, Ba and Ma, live in the impoverished Village of Fruitless Mountain. The land is too dry to farm, and people struggle to put food on the table.

Inspired by the words of a magical goldfish, Minli is determined to take matters into her own hands and change her family's life. She learns that someone called the 'Old Man in the Moon' may be able to help her, and she sets off on a journey to find him. Along the way, Minli meets magical creatures who tell her stories and help on her quest. Her parents try to follow her and go on their own journey of discoveries too.

The Boy in the Smoke

Written by Rachel Faturoti and illustrated by Rumbidzai Savanhu



Published: 2024

Recommended reading age: 9+

Format: Chapter book with illustrations

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Rachel Fatureti's time-bending fantasy explores enduring themes like financial struggle, class, disability, unconventional families and friendship.

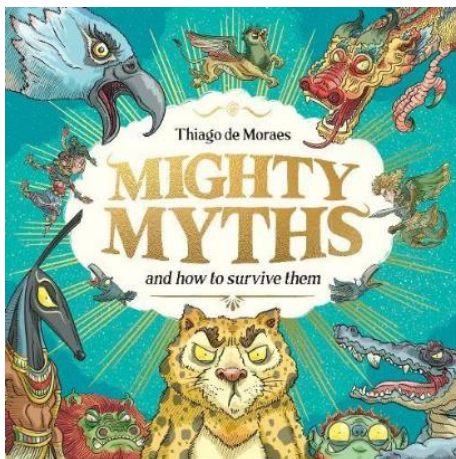
At school, 13-year-old Isiah is known for being smart, funny and positive. But at home he is struggling. While his mother lives overseas, his father is ill and cannot work. Unable to pay the rent, their landlord threatens them with eviction.

When an opportunity arises for Isiah to win a cash prize that could help his family, it leads him to explore the history of his tower block, which was once a Victorian workhouse. Looking around the basement, he finds a forgotten fireplace, and soon realises that it is a portal to the past. On the other side appears Jacob, a boy who lived in the workhouse in the 1830s. He was forced to move there when his father went missing.

Through his research, Isiah realises that Jacob may be in grave danger. Can he find a way to help his friend from the past, and save his home?

Mighty Myths and How to Survive Them

Written and illustrated by Thiago de Moraes



Published: 2018

Recommended reading age: 7+

Format: Picture book

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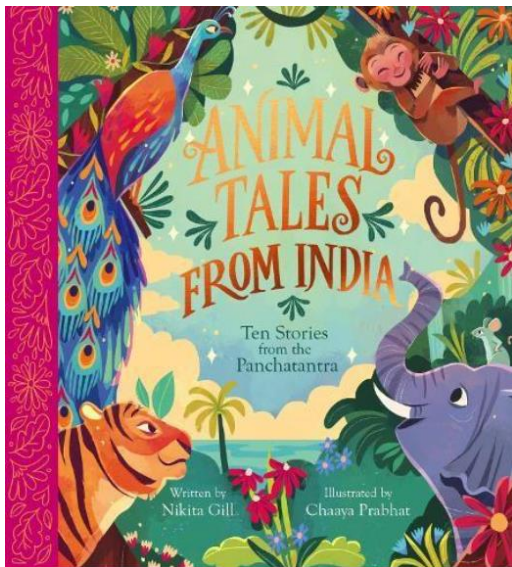
If you're searching for an introduction to the diverse world of gods, monsters and mythical creatures, then look no further. Author-illustrator Thiago de Moraes has created this handy guide packed with fun and good humour.

On this whirlwind tour of myths, legends and folktales from cultures around the world, you'll be safely guided by two ravens. In navigating these fascinating facts and stories, they will help you decipher what is safe, and what is scary.

You'll be introduced to legendary heroes, monsters and creatures, from dragons to Egyptian gods. These characters are brought to life by Thiago de Moraes's rich and expressive illustrations on every page.

Animal Tales from India: Ten Stories from the Panchatantra

Written by Nikita Gill and illustrated by Chaaya Prabhat



Published: 2023

Recommended reading age: 7+

Format: Picture book

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Fables are one of the oldest forms of fantasy storytelling, where universal human dilemmas are explored through the adventures of talking animals. Fables exist in many cultures throughout the world, and this vibrant picture book by Nikita Gill and Chaaya Prabhat delves into those of ancient India.

The *Panchatantra* is a collection of ancient Indian fables, imparting wisdom, morals, and practical life lessons through tales set in the animal kingdom. These stories have been passed down through oral storytelling for thousands of years, and around 200 BCE they were compiled and written down in Sanskrit and Pali.

In this stunning picture book, Nikita Gill has reimagined ten of these tales in her own words. Illuminated by Chaaya Prabhat's artwork throughout, these fantastical fables explore themes like friendship, truth and deceit, and problem solving.

Guardians of the New Moon

Written by Eric Huang and illustrated by Phung Nguyen Quang



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Series published: *Ming and Miaow's Great Race* (2025), *The Year of the Rat* (2025), *The Year of the Ox* (2025), *The Year of the Tiger* (January 2026).

Recommended reading age: 7+

Format: Chapter book with illustrations

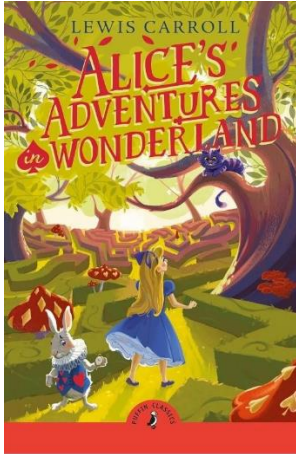
Eric Huang's *Guardians of the New Moon* series is set in a world of legendary gods and magical creatures inspired by East Asian folklore. Within this mythological setting, the books explore friendship and the qualities that make us all unique. Book one, *Ming and Miaow's Great Race*, is based on the legend of the Chinese Zodiac animals.

Miaow is a reserved (occasionally grumpy) black and white cat who is quite happy chasing mice around his temple. Ming on the other hand is a spirited extrovert determined to befriend Miaow. Ming is a shapeshifter, taking form either as a human girl or nine-tailed fox - a magical creature from Asian folklore.

The two characters meet when they are invited to compete in the Jade emperor's 'great race', along with the rest of the animal kingdom. The first twelve to finish the race win a place in the Twelve-year Chinese Zodiac. The animals of the Chinese zodiac each represent a set of character traits, and their personalities are brought to life throughout by Phung Nguyen Quang's beautiful artwork.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Written by Lewis Carroll



Published: 1865

Recommended reading age: 7+

Format: Chapter book

This classic Victorian novel is one of the best loved fantasy adventures in English literature.

One day, a curious young girl named Alice sits bored by the riverbank. That is until she notices a white rabbit running by, frantically checking his pocket watch. She follows it down a rabbit hole and finds herself in an entirely strange new world, with its own nonsensical rules.

There she encounters an array of peculiar characters, including the grinning Cheshire Cat, the Mad Hatter, and the short-tempered playing card, the Queen of Hearts. To get back home, Alice must embrace the chaotic and whimsical ways of wonderland.

Carroll plays with logic and language to create his singular fantasy world, which has been brought to life countless times by different illustrators and filmmakers.